



“Landscapes move us in a manner more nearly analogous to action of music than to anything else...Gradually and silently the charm overcomes us; we know not exactly where or how.”

- Frederick Law Olmsted

Such is a statement of belief from the man who designed more parks and public recreation grounds than any landscape architect before him. One of Olmsted’s greatest philosophies was to create art – an art that redefined the city beautiful movement. During the end of the 1800’s, urban America was becoming more polluted and overcrowded. As such, many began to believe that American cities were unhealthy environments. Frederick Law Olmsted and his successors crafted the contemporary American landscape, and in doing so created an astounding legacy. His principles of design were reinforced in his thoughtful and careful stewardship of the land. He continually wrote on the justification and protection of public green spaces and natural areas, emphasizing that all the public must have “access to natural beauty.”

A leading visionary of his time, Olmsted is credited as being the father of landscape architecture. Having designed such landmarks as New York’s Central Park and Boston’s Emerald Necklace, Olmsted has left, quite literally, his mark on the American landscape. But he has done so in a way that is subtle and quiet. His designs are often so perfect that users of his parks or visitors who stroll along one of his parkways often forget how they got there. In developing his design philosophy, he desired to create spaces that were compelling in their artistic statement, and useful in their physical attributes.

The Louisville Metro has embraced an ambitious vision to become a “City of Parks.” Already known for its public parks system and Olmsted Parks, Mayor Jerry Abramson announced



Louisville's green initiative in February of 2005. This initiative will be the largest expansion of Louisville's park system since the expansion of the Jefferson Memorial Forest in the 1970s. Cornerstone 2020, the comprehensive land use plan adopted in 2000, identified that Louisville would need significant amounts of new park land to accommodate growth over the next 20 years. Officials responded to this tremendous need with the City of Parks initiative. The initiative includes three major tasks: acquisition and development of new park land, provision of a 100-mile paved metro loop trail, and improvements to existing parks.

The two major projects for acquisition and development of new park land include the Floyds Fork Greenway Project and expansion of Jefferson Memorial Forest in southwest Louisville. Floyds Fork Greenway will be part of the 100-mile loop trail and will consist of 27 miles of trails for hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders and a "water trail" for canoes and kayaks. 21st Century Parks, a non-profit organization established to acquire and develop Floyds Fork, has compiled almost 3,000 acres of land in the Floyds Fork watershed, the largest and least polluted watershed in Louisville. The thousands of acres of land will serve as natural reserves and future park land.

The second major task of the City of Parks initiative includes the development of a 100-mile paved loop trail. The 100-mile loop trail will connect Louisville's diverse and active neighborhoods and parks, and will provide an opportunity to link with communities in southern Indiana and neighboring Kentucky counties. The loop trail will also connect with the Olmsted Parkways to unite the outskirts of the community with the urban neighborhoods. This is a major undertaking in terms of providing connections, recreational opportunities and means for alternative transportation modes.

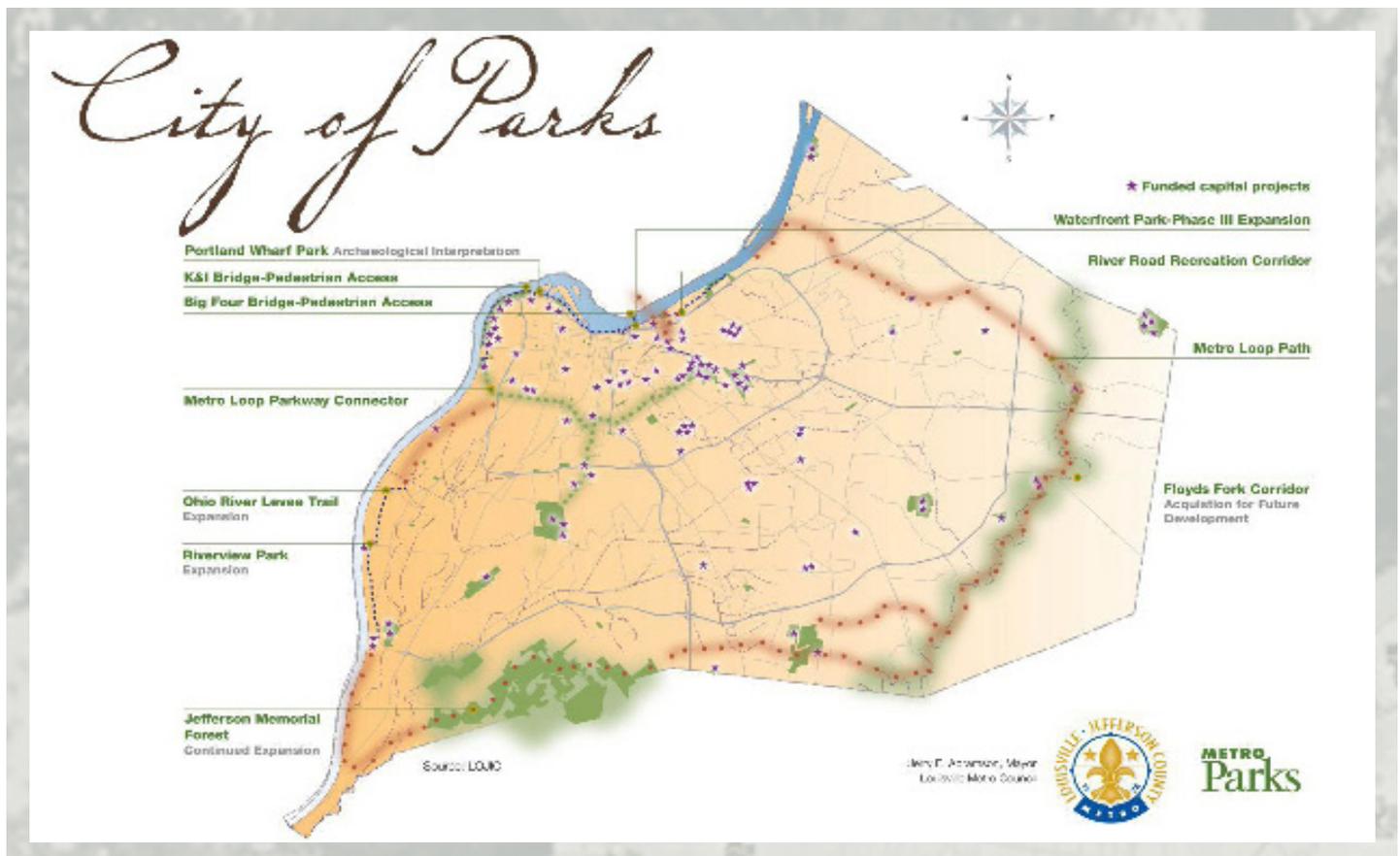


Figure P-1: City of Parks Initiative Map.

This effort has not been limited to the creation of new park land. Louisville is also completing an unprecedented level of improvements to the current park system. Since the merger, Metro Parks has completed 271 capital projects worth \$38.5 million. An additional 65 projects are underway.

Improvements to the current system will help to ensure that all residents of Louisville will have access to high-quality recreational opportunities.

Louisville's City of Parks initiative will ensure the development of adequate park and recreation facilities for the future. Louisville is known nationally for its dedication to parks and open space, as well as its policy of encouraging healthy lifestyles through recreational options. This initiative will continue to build upon Frederick Law Olmsted's original vision for Louisville.

It is the desire of Mayor Jerry Abramson and the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to carry the Olmsted legacy forward by creating a plan that provides a cohesive shared use path system linking several Olmsted Parkways. The end result will provide a shared use parkway with a bikeway trail along all or parts of the total length of Southern, Eastern and Algonquin Parkways and portions of Southwestern Parkway as shown in Figures P-1 and P-2. This project will identify technically sound solutions that address current needs, respond to public input, document the historic parkway system, and incorporate the Olmsted design principles that served as the basis for the original parkways.

At the dawn of the 20th Century, the Louisville Metro adopted a plan that addressed the need for public open space and the right of the citizens to have access to that space. The resulting Olmsted Parks and Parkway System Plan provided a clear vision for the community as they continued to grow and develop over the next several decades. The idea of renewing the parkway as a community resource for a shared-use pathway system boldly carries the Olmsted vision forward.

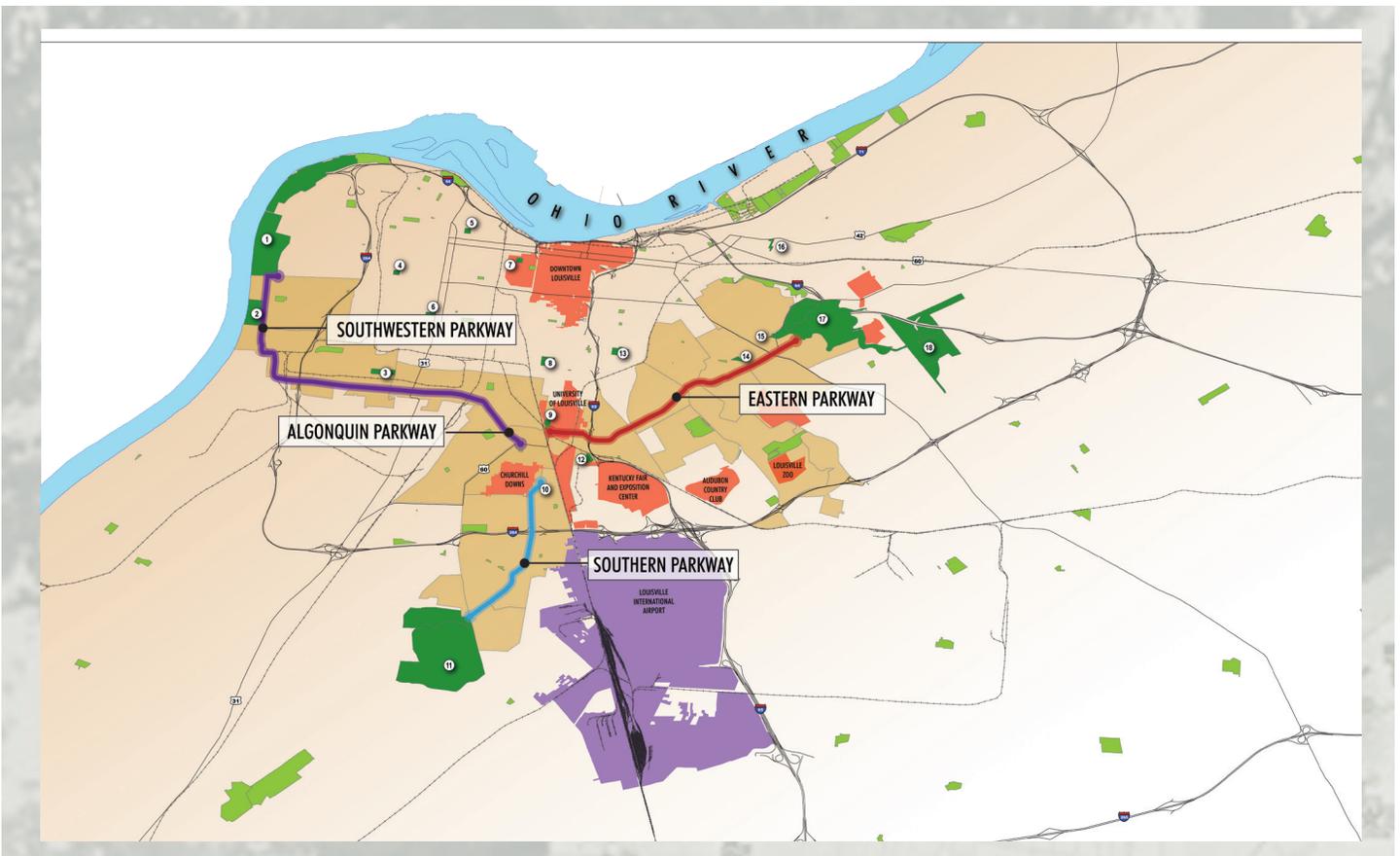


Figure P-2: Olmsted Parkway system key map. The master planning project includes Southwestern, Algonquin, Southern and Eastern Parkways in their entirety.

Project Objectives

The original design of the Olmsted Parkway System provided linear corridors with park-like character that connected multiple parks (Cherokee, Iroquois, Chickasaw and Shawnee) and the neighborhoods of Louisville. Louisville Metro is one of only five cities across the nation that created the integrated system of parks and parkways that embodies Olmsted's concepts of city and park integration. The design of the Louisville Parks and Parkways provides residents with a feeling that they live in a "green Metro." It is a piece of public infrastructure that captures the unique aspects of the diverse Louisville landscape. The parkways serve to connect the system and offer a unique urban, scenic and recreational experience. They provide a greenway between Louisville's neighborhoods and expand the character of the park system into the greater community.

Specific recommendations and design ideas are presented in this master plan that facilitate the integration of a shared use path system into the Olmsted Parkway system. These recommendations are detailed in Chapter Four of this document. Key items addressed as part of this project include:

- Locations for shared-use paths;
- Design details for the bike and pedestrian path system to accommodate walking, jogging and biking;
- Details for the preservation and renewal of the parkway character;
- Details for the addition of parkway trees and vegetation;
- Parkway infrastructure including curbs, utility lines and drainage;
- Parkway character and the creation of a sense of continuity, including visual separation from parking lots or other commercial uses inconsistent with the original Olmsted vision;
- Solutions for multi-modal connectivity within the pedestrian and bicycle systems;
- Parkway amenities;
- Parkway lighting improvements;
- Linkages between the parks, parkways, schools, downtown and university; and
- Various design details to respond to concerns regarding safety or vandalism issues.



Figure P-3: Images taken from the June 14, 2007 community advisory group tour and the subsequent design team workshop session.

Creating the Plan

The process of building on this legacy begins with articulating a vision. The vision is captured by reaching out to neighborhoods and other key stakeholders. This project has been an open process, intended to solicit as much community input as possible. By doing this, the final design recommendations have a key element of ultimate success--the support of the citizens and neighbors who are connected to these parkways.

At the onset of the project, a community advisory group (CAG) was formed to act as a sounding board for the design team. Nearly fifty individuals were invited to sit on the CAG and aid in developing project goals and final recommendations. Participating individuals brought a wealth of information from their local neighborhoods, workplaces and recreational organizations. At the beginning of the project, the CAG was invited to participate in a parkway tour which allowed participants to become informed of the basic goals of the project. They also participated in four workshops over the course of the project that focused on key project milestones such as opportunities and constraints, preliminary alternatives and the final recommendations for the parkways. Input from these CAG meetings (which can be found in Appendix A of this report) was then used by the design team to craft the direction of the project and create the final design represented in Chapter Four.

Two public meetings were held to provide an orientation to the shared-use path planning project and to gain additional feedback regarding the wants and needs of the community. A third public meeting was held to brief the public on the final design recommendations. Information gathered in these public meetings can be found in Appendix B.

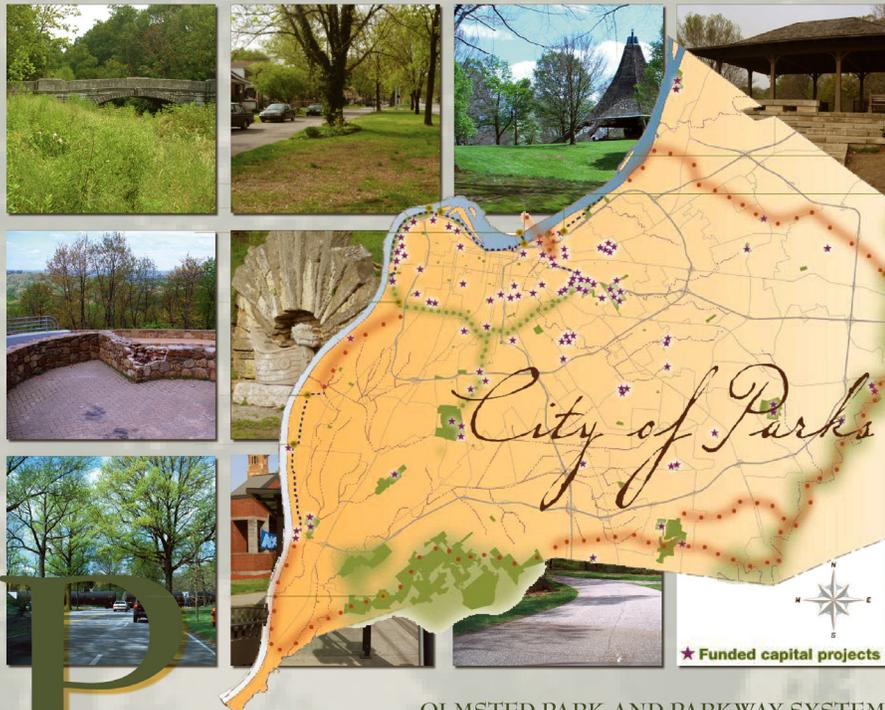
Strong community connections, improved safety and multi-modal transportation, more regional links, stronger local identity and promotion of the city by enhancing quality of life are a small sampling of the ways community input influenced the final design of this project. Just as the creation of the parkway system developed in stages over a time span of nearly 50 years, construction of the shared use pathways is likely to occur over a period of many years. Future implementation recommendations are discussed in Chapter Five of this report.

This project provided an unprecedented opportunity to build on Olmsted's legacy and provide improved connections to neighborhoods, parks, schools, the University of Louisville, workplaces and other key destinations throughout the city.

Connectivity

Olmsted believed that the power of the landscape had the ability to “refresh and delight the eye, the mind and the spirit.” For Louisville Metro, it is the legacy of the park and parkway system designed by Olmsted and executed by his firm over a 50-year period that exemplified his desire to create a series of spaces that are truly sacred. For many, the system in Louisville, one of Olmsted's last and greatest works, is the defining symbol of the community. It was Olmsted who recognized and had the vision to create a system of great parks that were each distinct, but equal. Each would provide a unique experience – scenic reservation, concentrated activity, and picturesque beauty. The framework intended to link these great parks was centered on the creation of a series of grand parkways. The parkway system in Louisville connects not only the great parks of Olmsted's design, but it also links over 24 neighborhoods. This idea of connectivity is paramount in Olmsted's thinking, as he continually advocated an inclusive environment. The environment he designed captures what is special about the Louisville landscape. Retaining this significant cultural landscape is important – because, like Olmsted's philosophy, cultural landscapes are for everyone. Cultural landscapes provide us with a sense of place. They are woven into the very fabric of a community. Unfortunately, neglect and inappropriate development has encroached upon several of these lasting legacies across

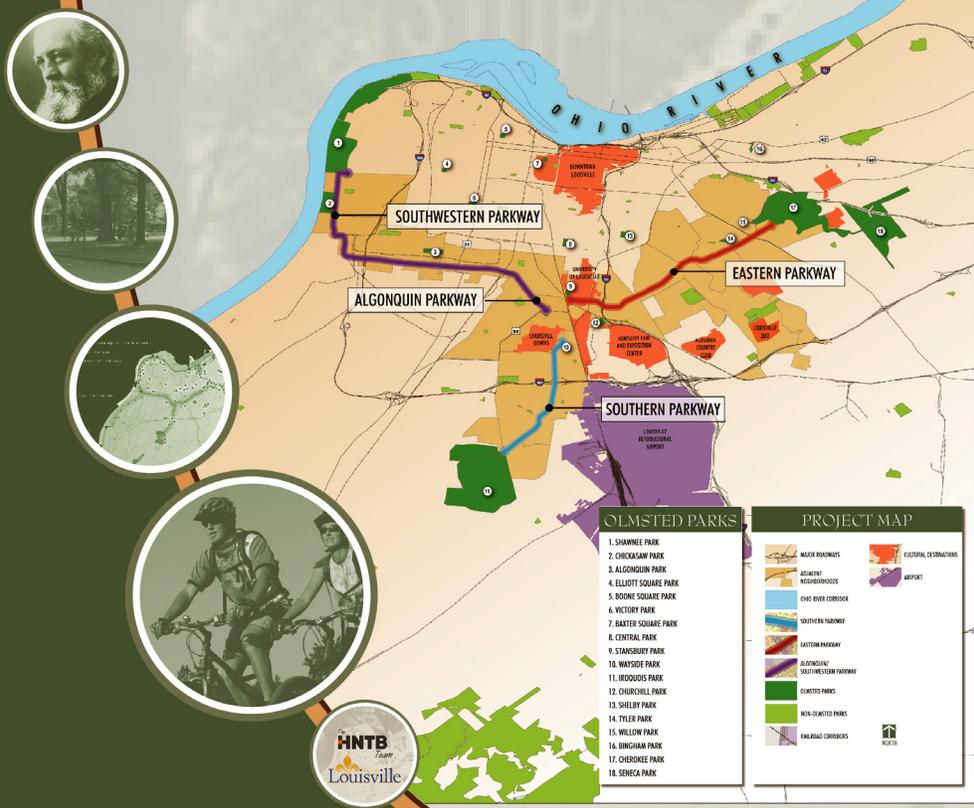
America. Fortunately, the vision in Louisville – that of the great park and parkway system - is still well preserved and is poised to enter the new millennium, building on the foundations that Olmsted originally provided for at the end of the 19th Century.



OLMSTED PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM PROJECT INTRODUCTION



It is the desire of Mayor Jerry Abramson and the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to carry forward the Olmsted legacy by creating a plan that provides a cohesive multi-use path system linking several Olmsted Parkways. The end result will provide a multi-use parkway with bikeway trail along Southern, Eastern and Algonquin Parkways and portions of Southwestern Parkway. The approach to this project will identify technically sound solutions that fully integrate multiple values to include incorporation of current needs, response to public participation, documentation of the historic parkway system and understanding of the Olmsted design principles that served as the basis for the parkways.



Fortunately, the vision in Louisville - that of a great park and parkway system - is still well preserved and is poised to enter the new millennium, building on the foundations that Olmsted originally provided for at the end of the 19th Century.