

# VISION

FOR CHATTANOOGA'S PARKS AND OUTDOORS

CHATTANOOGA PARKS  
AND OUTDOORS PLAN

**POP**

June 2023

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Department of Parks and Outdoors (DPO) would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the organizations and individuals that made this possible. Whether you served on a focus group, attended a meeting or completed a survey, your effort was greatly appreciated.

A special thank you to the Berke Administration and the prior City Council—this work has spanned administrations and is evidence of Chattanooga’s commitment to building a world-class public park system that serves all.

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# VISIONS OF VALUE

BY ERIKA ROBERTS

A POEM PREPARED FOR THE POP, 2023

Parked.  
Pondering.  
Thinking of the past, our history.

?What?  
Freedom.  
Visualizing the trauma that we inherited.

?Where?  
The land.  
Recognizing the healing that must begin.

?Who?  
The  
people.

The bird's justice flies high with privilege but not for all.  
Relations strained and the community left slantly segregated  
with monumental stains & muted memories.  
The fumbling of it All.  
Questions asked.  
Answers incomplete.

Tilling the emotional landscape with rusty tools hurts the hands of the doers and delays the doing.  
In the suntouched waters the nutrients can be felt.  
Gathering the pain and hurt, a new path must be forged.  
Addressing while grieving is the evolution of THIS.  
Abstract are the views until the trees are finally 3D  
Dramatically Deep while Daring to be seen.  
Stuttering are the sounds of the leaves chattering back in the wind.

A physical manifestation of submission.  
An organic conversation meant to be heard with all of the senses.  
What are the top tree branches saying as they gloriously salute the changing seasons?  
No dreams delayed under its shade.  
Bravely blending the water colors of life to bring it all forth.

Vision

Values

Seeds of engagement placed in the mental soil with the intention to nourish.

Valued views clarifying the needs.

Pulling up the weeds of what isn't supplying.

Creating peace for all to flourish.

Picking a time to enjoy.

Love grows here because it was sown.

Intentionality in full bloom.

Stitching together our sacred spaces through the power of pure breath giving pleasure.

Amplifying the gifts of our gardens we find healing here.

Anchoring our sanity in Respite from it all.

We will create our journeys.

Building together.

We will connect our paths.

Strengthening our community bonds.

We will fulfill our vision.

Seeing our future together.

Knowing that this

Space is ours and that it is safe

Let's reignite the invitation because we want you here.

Let's water the welcome and watch the bounty come in.

Planted.

Fed.

Harvested.

Parked.

~Erika Roberts

# LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

June 2023

Mayor Kelly and Chattanooga City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate with city staff, civic partners, and park guests to build a new vision for Chattanooga's beloved public park system. The Steering Committee confidently advances the 2023 Parks & Outdoors Plan (POP) to you for consideration.

Within this plan are bold aspirations for public parks and as a document, it is a vital first step to revitalize our public park system. It is the work of implementation after the plan's adoption that matters most as this will be the tangible public expression of civic spirit and faith in the future of Chattanooga. If we discover the civic capacity to realize these bold aspirations for our public parks, then the effort to create this plan will be worth the effort as we will positively shape the trajectory of Chattanooga's livability for all.

It has been 112 years since Chattanooga's first comprehensive plan for the parks system, and over 25 years since the City of Chattanooga last had a comprehensive plan for parks across the city. The 2023 Parks and Outdoors Plan was developed over the span of two administrations and follows the spirit of the 1911 John Nolen park plan with the understanding that great cities need great parks, and that great parks lie at the heart of healthy and inclusive communities.

Chattanooga cannot be an equitable city without a park system that is well-planned to ensure accessibility to all sectors of the community, well-designed to ensure that every park fulfills its intended purpose at a high standard of quality, and that it is maintained to ensure that it is as vibrant and as relevant on every day as it was on its first day of service.

Chattanooga cannot have the standing it seeks to attract and retain talent and to support a thriving economy without the public parks, trails, recreational facilities, and natural areas required to support active and healthy lifestyles. This plan leans into the natural features and beauty of our region as these green spaces that serve as the natural and intentional value proposition for Chattanooga, and the backdrop upon which life is lived throughout our community.



Mayor Tim Kelly has demonstrated an appropriate seriousness about parks by fundamentally reorganizing how we approach, animate, and maintain our parks — all our parks. But this work cannot be done in silos, and it cannot be done well by the City government alone. It requires partnerships — partnerships across political jurisdictions, partnerships with neighborhoods, local businesses, and philanthropy, and especially partnerships with all its citizens.

The words of John Nolen in the introduction of his 1911 plan for a park system in Chattanooga still ring true for us today:

*...The opportunity that confronts a city to create a comprehensive system of parks is seldom equaled, but Chattanooga is growing steadily, and the value of land is rising rapidly. Therefore, if large and satisfactory results are to be secured, action must be prompt and business-like. It is doubtful if the preparation of park plans could have been undertaken at a more opportune time.*

We recommend adoption of the 2023 Parks & Outdoors Plan followed by focused and urgent implementation of the recommendations contained within.

— Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors Plan Steering Committee



## FROM THE MAYOR

June 2023

Dear Friends,

Join me on a journey to a typical spring morning in 2033 Chattanooga.

Carver Community Park is hosting doctor-led outdoor exercise classes (free of charge) as a community-wide health prescription program that has reduced the community's diabetes rate by 10%. Across the city, youth on spring break are working alongside active seniors to plant dozens of community gardens. The city's 1500-acre park system is nearly double its 2022 size, and because of our new parks and greenways, nearly twice the number of residents live close to a park compared to just 10 years ago.

Entrepreneurs from across the region are gathering at Montague Sculpture Fields for the weekly "art of creativity" workshop taught by emerging Chattanooga visual artists. The program has been featured in *Forbes Magazine* as a model for how parks and public art can boost a city's economic vitality. City leaders, residents, bodies of faith, and non-profit entities are sustaining neighborhood park-centered recreation and event partnerships that have reduced crime across the city, block by block. Thousands of commuters on bikes and e-bikes use greenways across the city daily, helping Chattanooga maintain the cleanest air of any southeastern United States city.

Historical and cultural landscapes, including Moccasin Bend and Lincoln Park, are cared for by a collaborative team of public land managers, allowing timeless and invaluable American stories to be passed on from one generation to the next. All people of all abilities can experience the thrill of play in their local park and the beauty of local forests and streams. Tourists and event planners are drawn to a system of iconic and revitalized signature parks stretching along our riverfronts that define a "Chattanooga vibe" of wildly popular public spaces. Our urban streets are a living, breathing piece of the public realm, and cars cede the asphalt at night for basketball and pickleball leagues, musical performances, pop-up restaurants and local events.

The spring warbler migration is underway, with millions of birds using Chattanooga's network of protected wetlands and urban forest canopy as resting spots as they work their way north from wintering grounds in South America. The American paddlefish thrives in Chattanooga Creek as bald eagles and osprey soar overhead. People of all ages and interests are getting ready for their afternoon softball, pickleball, mountain biking or paddling—just a few of the activities cultivating an energy that has people calling Chattanooga the city where boredom doesn't stand a chance.

Finally, a BBC film crew is in town highlighting how the National Park City designation in 2025 created momentum that established Chattanooga as the United States' sole representative atop the globe's top ten most livable cities, joining places like Vienna, Calgary and Auckland. In Chattanooga, life is lived out loud by all. We acknowledge that bigger isn't better. Better is better.

This future is within our grasp, and the POP here gives us a bold pathway to begin making this possible. It proposes reinvesting in neighborhoods that have borne the brunt of past underinvestment and environmental degradation; securing new park and greenway corridors in advance of new development; and creating opportunities for increased resident-led volunteerism and partnerships that will bring accountability and activity to our green spaces, empowering communities and residents to take an active and leadership role in creating, programming and sustaining these precious shared public lands. It calls for the creation of an urban ecology system that helps protect us from the impact of a changing climate, while sustaining wildlife that depend on our city for their very survival. And it acknowledges that by strengthening our community's shared public places, we most powerfully shape a positive trajectory for our city's economy, health, safety and livability.

The idea of creating a city in a park for Chattanooga isn't a new one. In 1911, our city's first park planner, John Nolen, shared the advice below with the City's leaders. This admonition feels like it could have been written last week.

*To the Board of Park Commissioners,  
Chattanooga, Tenn.*

*I beg to hand you herewith the Report and General Plan for a Park System for Chattanooga. The opportunity that confronts your city to create a comprehensive system of parks is seldom equaled; but Chattanooga is growing rapidly, and the value of land is rising even more rapidly. Therefore, if large and satisfactory results are to be secured, action must be prompt and business-like. It is doubtful if the preparation of the park plans could have been undertaken at a more opportune time.*

*Yours very truly,  
John Nolen, Landscape Architect*

John Nolen's sense of urgency and his appreciation for this special place 112 years ago seems timeless. Our landscape and community can hardly allow this moment to pass us by, as there is no more opportune time than the present to do the hard work of building in Chattanooga the nation's most livable, healthy and vibrant city through a fabric of well-loved and well-used public parks, greenways and conserved special places. What if we succeed in this effort? What if we create a future we desire?

Also Yours Very Truly,



Mayor Tim Kelly



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# POP DRIVING PRINCIPLES

## ACCESS



Making our parks and outdoors safe, clean, fun, welcoming and barrier-free for all Chattanooga.

## EQUITY



Committing to justice, fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.

## NATURE



Celebrating and protecting our timeless geographic and natural features as a framework of the plan.

## PLACE



Recognizing every park's role to authentically amplify the unique character and identity of its community.

## QUALITY



Setting a citywide standard for the design, construction and maintenance of high-quality parks and greenways.

# ABOUT THE POP

Chattanooga is home to world-class parks and a breathtaking natural environment. But its **current system of public parks falls short** of equitably delivering the “city-shaping” benefits of great park and outdoor systems. Some neighborhoods are better served than others, and **for the last 25 years, the City and its partners have lacked a strategic, community-driven vision** to guide park investments.

That's where the Parks and Outdoors Plan (POP) comes in. The planning team took a critical look at the current park and outdoor system—including the quality and **condition of existing parks**; the **number of recreation facilities** per population and whether that meets current and future needs; and **which communities in Chattanooga lack basic access** to the health, wellness and economic benefits of high-quality parks. Based on this analysis and a community process, **the POP offers a road map and path forward** to reinvent Chattanooga as a city in a park.

**The POP has five principles** that are informed by community needs and priorities and by the success stories of the globe's best urban park systems: **Access, Equity, Nature, Place** and **Quality**. These principles drove the planning process, informed a public conversation about Chattanooga's parks and outdoors, and provide the organizational framework for this document and its recommendations.

## HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS PLAN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A quick, high-level overview of the POP.

### CHAPTERS 1-3

Background on the public process, research, and analysis that drove the plan.

### CHAPTER 4

Deep dive on the POP vision, priorities and physical plan.

### CHAPTERS 5-9

Deep dive on each POP principle and associated best practices, actions and next steps.

### CHAPTER 10

How the POP gets funded and maintained over time.

## A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLAN

The POP planning process and final document were driven by community input. The City and planning team asked Chattanoogaans to envision what their parks and outdoors could look like in 100 years, and to describe how the current system falls short of meeting the needs of their families and communities.

The POP and its recommendations reflect what the planning team heard—that Chattanoogaans envision a **'city in a park,'** with **protected and restored natural environments** and a green public realm; interconnected **greenways and blueways**; iconic **signature parks** that bring people together from across Chattanooga and beyond; and a high-quality system of **neighborhood parks for all.**

**The POP is ambitious.** It seeks to build on and complete previous City park visions; correct for gaps in the park system; anticipate future growth; ensure most residents have a high-quality park or trailhead close to home; and lay the foundation for a park and outdoor system that Chattanoogaans feel proud to leave to future generations.

**The POP is also realistic.** POP projects are prioritized using criteria supported by the public, and plan implementation is broken into short-, medium- and long-term investment recommendations. These recommendations reflect community priorities in that some are practical and cost-conscious, and others far-reaching and aspirational. Summarized simply, the plan recommends we **Fix, Build, Connect** and **Preserve** our public spaces now and into the future.

Read on for a summary of the vision, priorities, action items and physical projects that grew out of the POP's community process.



5

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

225

JUNE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

1,400

ONLINE SURVEY NO.1 RESPONSES

12

FACILITATED FOCUS GROUPS

350

PARK LISTENER INTERVIEWS

13

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS AND POP-UP EVENTS

3,500

SURVEYS MAILED TO HOUSEHOLDS

13,200

PAGE VIEWS ON POP WEBSITE, STORYMAP AND VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

100

OCTOBER COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

560

SURVEY NO.2 AND VIRTUAL WORKSHOP RESPONSES

# VISION STATEMENT

↳ *What is Chattanooga's big-picture vision for its parks and outdoors?*

Chattanooga will be a **'city in a park,'** where everyone enjoys **just and equitable access** to breathtaking natural scenery and rich cultural landscapes that are **safe, clean and enjoyable** for all; iconic **signature parks**; authentic and welcoming **neighborhood parks**; the **urban ecology** benefits of beautiful landscapes, climate resilience, wildlife habitat, human comfort and wellness, and citywide air and water quality; and a **greenway and blueway system** that knits the whole city together.

## TOP OF THE POP

↳ *What should the City focus on first?*

- 1** **Initiate a neighborhood park initiative** to upgrade existing parks and add new parks to serve gaps in our community. Set aside land in anticipation of population growth and development.
- 2** Continue to invest in Signature Parks as essential for Chattanooga's **regional economy and iconic identity.**
- 3** **Build safe greenways and trailheads** to ensure that at least 55% of residents have a high-quality park, close to home.
- 4** Sustain **healthy urban ecological systems** and protect our **shared cultural landscapes and stories.**
- 5** Make rapid targeted improvements and create partnerships that **improve the quality of, and activity in, existing parks** serving our most vulnerable communities and residents.
- 6** **Dedicate adequate resources** to care for high-quality public parks that are well-loved, and well-used by residents and guests.



# BIG IDEAS

↳ **What are the specific actions that can bring the vision to life?**

## ACCESS



Ensure access and eliminate barriers

- » Work with community partners to expand park and outdoor activation, with the goal of reaching diverse new audiences and eliminating barriers to use.
- » Connect residents to the information and resources they need to enjoy their parks and outdoors.
- » Launch a 'Safe Routes to Parks' program that improves sidewalk, bike lane and transit connections to parks.
- » Design and retrofit for all physical abilities, languages and other accessibility and safety accommodations in all park and outdoor projects.

## EQUITY



Create a just, fair and inclusive system

- » Prioritize system improvements in areas of the city with a history of underinvestment in parks and other public services.
- » Locate parks and open space to address the city's brownfield legacy—transforming contaminated sites and eyesores into high-quality, community-serving public parks.
- » Incorporate anti-displacement strategies in park design and engagement processes.
- » Train and support Parks and Outdoors staff in promoting equity within the system and the department.
- » Leverage the power of the community in implementation of the POP and to ensure the system serves and reflects all Chattanoogans.

## NATURE



Celebrate and protect our natural resources

- » Celebrate and protect Chattanooga's timeless geographic and natural features as a framework of the plan.
- » Act on the imperative for Chattanooga's parks to promote human comfort and joy, wildlife habitat, and citywide air and water quality.
- » Approach City park projects within the planning and ecological framework of the 16-county Thrive Regional Partnership network.

## PLACE



Amplify local character and sense of place

- » Launch a neighborhood park design initiative to ensure that every community has at its heart a neighborhood park that is authentic to place and serves neighbors' day-to-day recreational, social and wellness needs.
- » Celebrate and protect Chattanooga's cultural landscapes—particularly those that have been underrecognized—as a framework of the plan.
- » Comprehensively view as potential park space the entire public realm—parks, open space, public streets and rights-of-way, urban plazas, even rooftops.

## QUALITY



Set a citywide standard for high-quality parks

- » Implement written design and management guidelines to ensure that all parks meet minimum standards for quality, amenities, programming and maintenance.
- » Identify sustainable funding and partnerships to ensure POP projects get built and all parks are adequately maintained and replenished over time.



→ [CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL-SIZE MAP](#)



# Chattanooga, Tennessee

Streams & Blueways

-  Existing Blueway
-  Proposed Blueway
-  Forest Cover
-  Chattanooga City Limits

5 Miles

Map Created By: Charlie Mix, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 2023.  
 Data Sources: City of Chattanooga, EPA National Hydrologic Dataset, Design Workshop, Esri Living Atlas, USGS 3DEP & PADUS, US Census TIGER, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, & Trust for Public Land.

# BUILDING OUT THE PLAN

The POP uses a **prioritization model** to score and rank the Vision Plan projects and divide them into three phases based on **priorities expressed during the community engagement process**.

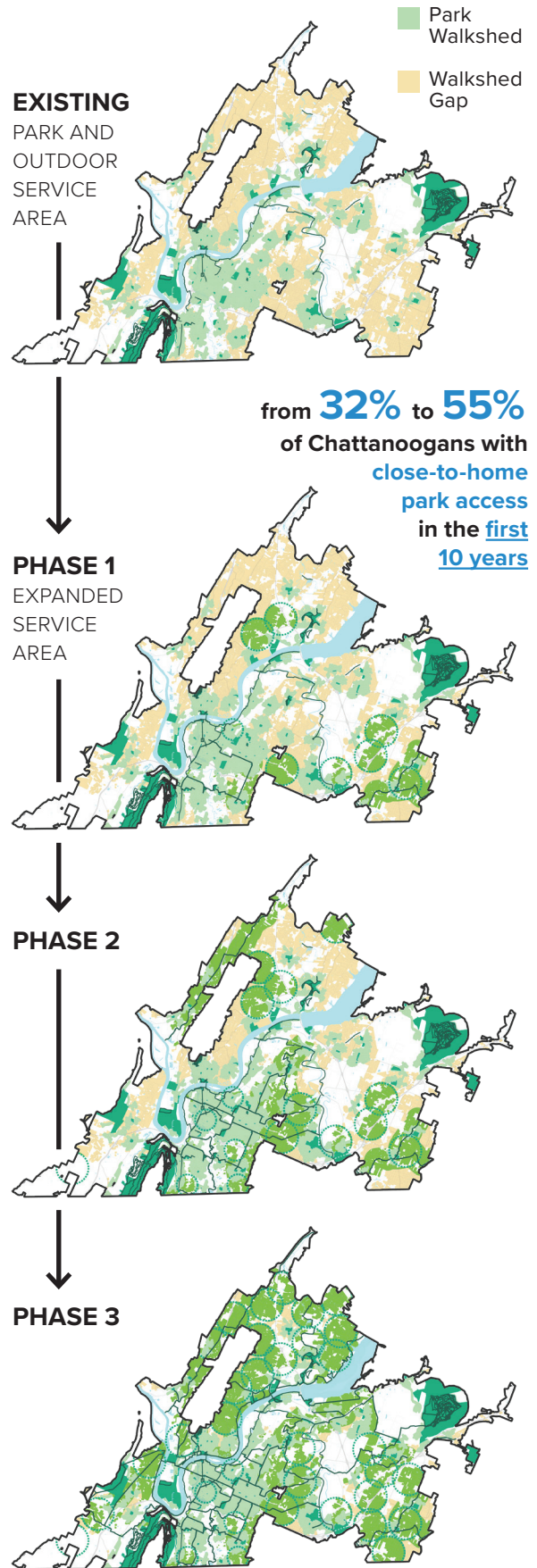
For example, projects received a higher score if they:

- Serve areas of the city with a **history of public underinvestment** and environmental contamination.
- Help to fill the city’s **park walkshed gap**.
- Improve the quality of existing parks in **poor condition**.
- Serve areas of **high population density** or areas of anticipated future growth.
- Support the **preservation or restoration** of natural resources.
- Projects with the highest scores are recommended for **short-term investment**.

The result is a Vision Plan that builds citywide access to high-quality parks, greenways, blueways and natural areas over time, with an **immediate focus on the projects that are highest-impact** for improving park and outdoor equity, quality, access, nature and place.

Table 1: **Anticipated Current and Future Maintenance Needs by Phase**

	RECOMMENDED FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) MAINTENANCE POSITIONS
Existing (2023)	49
Proposed (2023)	55
Phase 1 (Short Term)	58-67
Phase 2 (Medium Term)	70-90
Phase 3 (Long Term)	88-100



**Figure 1:** Expanded Park and Outdoor Service Area by Proposed Phase

Table 2: **Summary of Proposed Projects by Phase**

<b>PHASE 1 (SHORT TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	16 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	7 new neighborhood parks
<b>Park Reinvestment Projects</b>	19 park upgrade or redevelopment projects plus deferred maintenance across the system
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	4 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 28 miles of paddle trail
<b>PHASE 2 (MEDIUM TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	31 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	10 new neighborhood parks
<b>Park Reinvestment Projects</b>	31 park upgrade or redevelopment projects
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	9 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 16 miles of paddle trail
<b>PHASE 3 (LONG TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	71 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	17 new neighborhood parks
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	4 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 8 miles of paddle trail









# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- » How Public Input Drives the POP
- » Outreach Methods
- » What We Heard

# HOW PUBLIC INPUT DRIVES THE POP

The POP is Chattanooga’s first parks and outdoors plan in more than 25 years, and its recommendations look 50 years into the city’s future. This offered a special opportunity to hold a public conversation about the role of parks and outdoors in Chattanooga, and the City recognized the vital importance of creating an engagement process that would give Chattanoogaans an authentic voice in the planning process.

Every recommendation and driving principle in the POP can be traced back to public feedback received through surveys, focus groups, workshops (in-person and virtual), pop-up events and the Trust for Public Land’s Park Listeners program. The POP Steering Committee—with members of diverse backgrounds and expertise, representing diverse user and stakeholder groups from across the city—provided invaluable guidance and leadership through the process.

## OUTREACH METHODS

The following outreach methods were used to reach Chattanoogaans throughout the planning process.

### SURVEYS

The following surveys were asked Chattanoogaans about their park and outdoor vision, current use of parks and outdoors, barriers to use, and planning priorities.

- Mailed scientific survey. This survey was mailed to a random sample of 3,500 households with the option to respond in either English or Spanish. Survey results were weighted so that respondent gender, age, race, housing unit type (attached or

detached), housing tenure (rent or own) and geographical areas were represented in proportions reflective of the entire city.

- Online surveys. Two online surveys were distributed using the Polco platform and SurveyMonkey.
- Printed and intercept surveys. Printed surveys were also made available upon request and at pop-up events, and the Park Listeners program described below administered surveys in person.

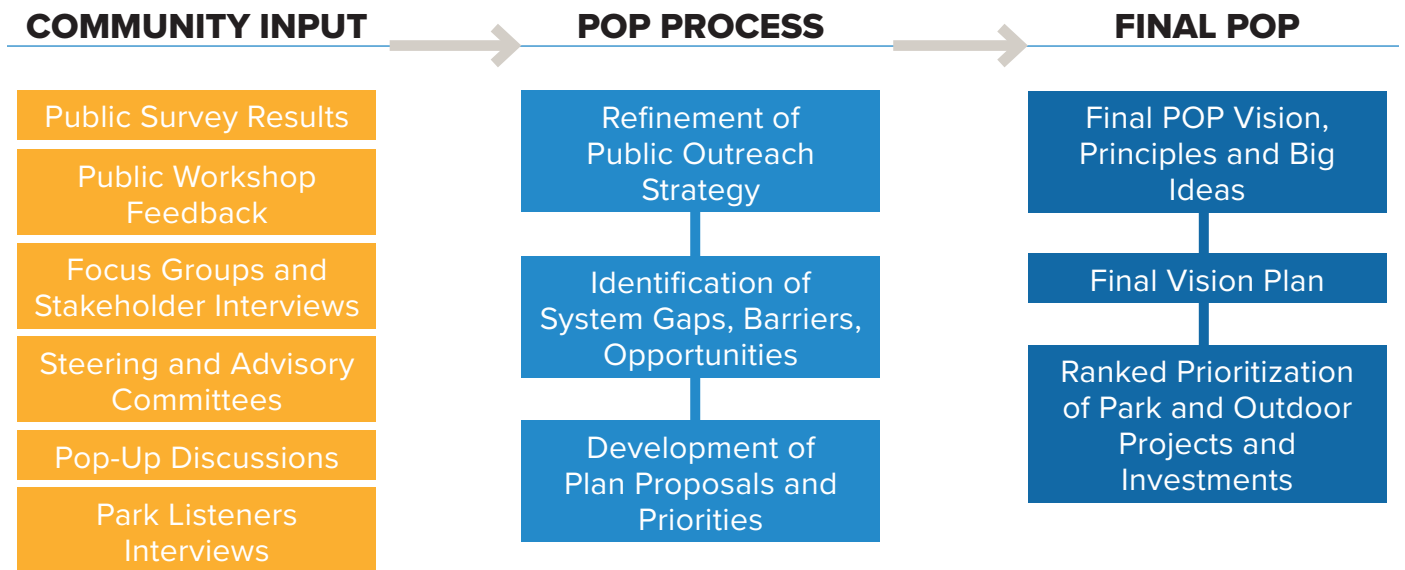
### WORKSHOPS

Two public workshops were held at key milestones.

- The first workshop was held at the Bessie Smith Cultural Center downtown to launch the public

process, share information about the team’s preliminary findings, and ask for feedback about what the community wanted to see from the POP planning process and recommendations.

- The second workshop was held at Avondale Community Center to share the draft POP vision statement, principles and big ideas and to get more detailed feedback about plan priorities and recommendations.
- Materials from the second workshop were also shared via the Konveio online platform as a ‘virtual workshop,’ where people could review the workshop boards and comment virtually.



## FOCUS GROUPS

The planning team facilitated small-group discussions around the following user or stakeholder topics.

- Community Services
- Conservation/ Natural Resources
- Development
- Disability
- Health and Wellness
- Latino Community
- Livability and Aging
- Outdoor Recreation
- Team Sports/ Community Athletics
- Youth

## PARK LISTENERS PROGRAM

The City contracted with Trust for Public Land to pilot a Park Listeners program. Nine neighbors, most bilingual, were paid to engage park users in brief conversations, interviews and surveys, which were offered in Spanish and Q'anjob'al, a Guatemalan indigenous dialect commonly used in Chattanooga.

Engagement was particularly focused on non-English-speaking residents in neighborhoods within ZIP codes that are historically underrepresented

in civic planning processes. Efforts began in 15 parks; because of the low visitor rates to certain parks, 18 neighborhood locations were added in collaboration with community leaders to reach more people.

## NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS AND POP-UP EVENTS

City staff attended neighborhood association meetings, PAC meetings, Council meet-and-greets, local festivals and events, and other standing organizational meetings to present on the POP process, share materials and get feedback.

## PUBLICITY AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The planning team and City staff created plan graphics, flyers and one-pagers to advertise the planning process widely through City and partner communication channels. An [ArcGIS StoryMap](#) provided a virtual, interactive introduction to the planning process and the state of the city's parks and outdoors, and a project website was created to share plan updates and upcoming opportunities to engage.



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PARK LISTENER INTERVIEWS

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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS AND POP-UP EVENTS

3,500

SURVEYS MAILED TO HOUSEHOLDS

13,200

PAGE VIEWS ON POP WEBSITE, STORYMAP AND VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

100

OCTOBER COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

560

SURVEY NO.2 AND VIRTUAL WORKSHOP RESPONSES

## WHAT WE HEARD

The following spreads capture at a high level what the City and planning team heard from Chattanoogaans during the POP engagement process. These takeaways informed the POP recommendations in Chapters 4 to 10.

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**1** Across physical communities and demographic groups, **Chattanoogaans love their parks and greenways.** They use them regularly and enjoy sharing outdoor experiences with their friends and family.

---

**2** **What people value most** about the system are:

- (1)** the day-to-day impact of neighborhood parks on health, wellness and social life, and
- (2)** the citywide and regional impact of connected greenways and protected natural areas.

---

**3** The **biggest barriers** to park and outdoor use include:

- (1)** a lack of easy-to-find information about parks and programs,
- (2)** the difficulty of reaching parks and greenways by bike, foot or transit,
- (3)** concerns about safety at parks and greenways,
- (4)** concerns about the quality and condition of neighborhood parks,
- (5)** limited availability of programs or amenities, and
- (6)** limited parking availability.

---

**4** Chattanoogaans support the plan principles of **Access, Equity, Nature, Place** and **Quality**.

---

**5** There is great interest in **outdoor recreational programming** that is easy to find and access, low- or no-cost, and designed for users of diverse ages, abilities and recreational experience.

### DEEPER DIVE

- » [Appendix: Park Listeners Report](#)
- » [Appendix: Full Survey No. 1 Results](#)
- » [Appendix: Full Survey No. 2 Results](#)

I want every neighborhood to have a high-quality park, so we can meet our neighbors, play and be healthy.

The need for more and better kept parks is dire in Chattanooga. Nice natural areas shouldn't be restricted to those who can afford living on mountains.

I love the goal for every person to be within 10 minutes of a park. Keep it up!

Make a way for all people to maintain safe, quality, affordable housing next to quality parks.

Public ownership or preservation of steep scenic land on Big Ridge and critical flood lands.

That no matter the income of residents or the cost of houses in the areas ...\$ is invested in parks equitably.

Keep nature in the forefront of all Planning.

100% accessible to people who are disabled and/or low income and don't have a car

Every child in the Chattanooga area could have a natural space, easily accessible to their family and neighborhood, to explore and enjoy nature.

As more and more of chatty gets developed I'd like to see our parks stay wild :)

*Community comments from surveys, focus groups and public workshops*



**WORKSHOP NO. 1**



## Current Park Use

**62%**

of respondents use local parks at least several times per month

The three most popular uses are:



**61%**

Paved walking/ biking trails



**41%**

Unpaved walking/biking trails



**27%**

Playgrounds

## 25-Year Vision

Thinking about how the POP could impact what Chattanooga's parks and outdoors look like in 25 years, what is most important to you?



**50%**

Environmental health, natural resources



**48%**

High-quality and connected greenways



**48%**

Residents' health and wellness



**47%**

Neighborhood parks

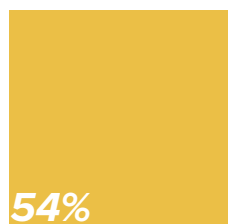
## Park Access

**72%**

of respondents can only reach their favorite park by car

Do you have sufficient parkland in your neighborhood?

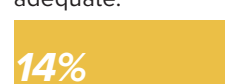
No.



Yes, but they're too small.



Yes, but the facilities aren't adequate.

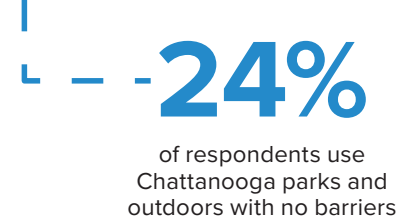
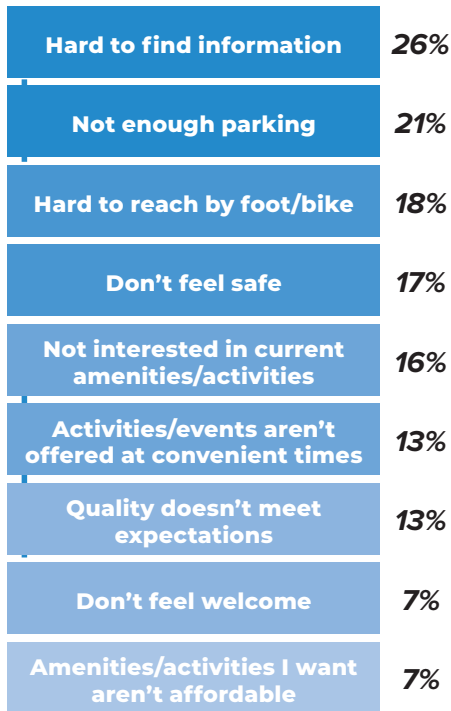


Yes.

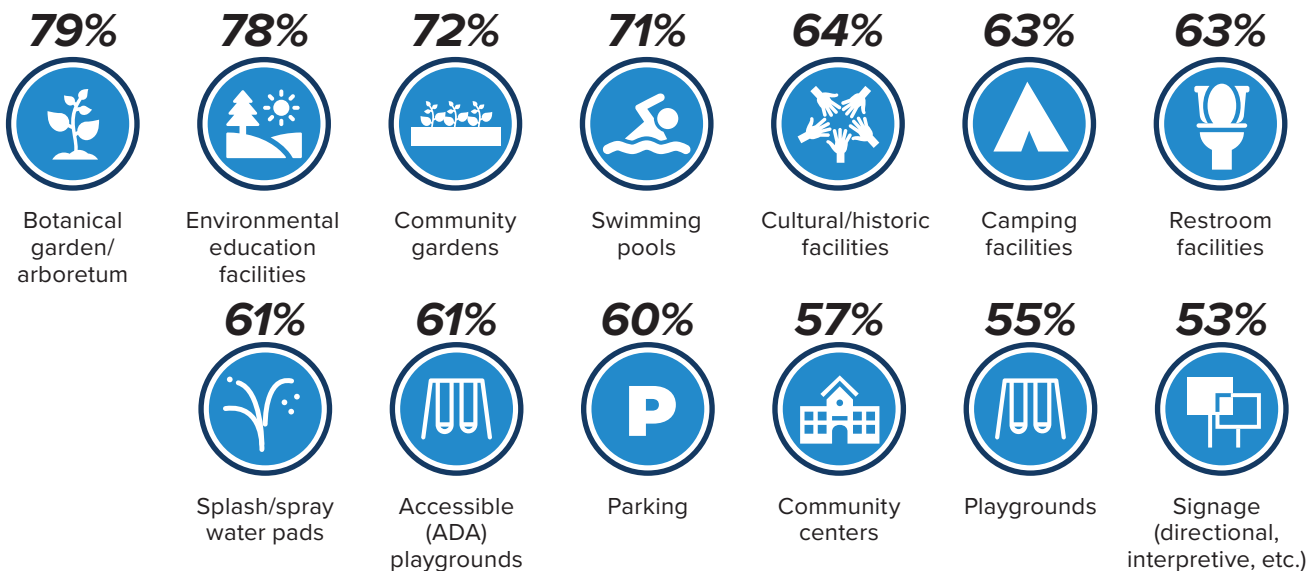


## Current Park Barriers

What keeps you from using Chattanooga parks and outdoors more often?



## Most Needed Facilities (Percent of respondents who said Chattanooga has too few of the following amenities)



# NEW IDEAS AND FEEDBACK

## NATURE

**88%**

of respondents consider it very important to have parks that protect environmental health and natural resources.

Strengthen zoning ordinances to prohibit development on steep slopes and in flood plains. These natural features are part of “the timeless geographic and natural features” that make Chattanooga an exceptionally beautiful city.

Cultivate plant literacy and native plant habitats. Make a commitment to native plant landscaping.

## QUALITY



Bathrooms are never open. When they are, they don't have soap or toilet paper.

I would like to see the interpretive signs repaired and/or installed.

Chattanooga needs a concrete skate park with permanent installations designed by local skaters!

We need playgrounds with the amazing flooring and shade.

## PLACE

I want to see more activities in parks either from shopping, restaurants, beer gardens, equipment-rentals, or “friends of parks” activities.

Would like to see an urban agriculture layer to the plans proposed here. At least pilot it on a corridor then expand.

We spent the entire pandemic walking on the trails of Stringer's Ridge, Greenway Farms, the River Walk and the Hawthorne trail.

Helping create the new disc golf course by The Sinks was a very fun experience, and I hope something like that stays with Chattanooga for a longtime!

We got married at Greenway Farms and it was truly magical.

Change what a park is—not a treeless field with a playground.

*Community comments from surveys, focus groups and public workshops*



# NEW IDEAS AND FEEDBACK

## ACCESS

Let's make it a bike city!

Everyone should be a safe 15-minute walk from a park. Being close to a park doesn't mean anything if you have to cross a busy and fast 4-lane road with no crosswalk.

I wish it could be easier to access our waterways for kayaking and paddleboarding and there were kayak/paddleboard storage facilities at points along creeks and rivers.

Outdoor activity access—gear, shuttles, instruction. Everybody enjoys it if they can do it.



## TOP 4 BARRIERS TO PARK USE

FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESPONDENTS

- 1 Timing of park activities.
- 2 Don't feel safe.
- 3 Availability of activities I want.
- 4 Lack of multilingual signage.

## EQUITY

Provide more signage for accessible and sensory-friendly routes.

More inclusive playgrounds for kids with varying disabilities.

Connect underserved areas in Chattanooga with safe walking and green spaces. More neighborhood parks in underserved areas.

Actively Involve people who don't look like you, with different age groups, different economic groups, and, educational attainment and cultural perspectives



# 62%

of respondents prioritize building new greenways and trailheads to put all residents within a 10-minute walk of the park and outdoor system.

2

# POP CONTEXT

- » Purpose of the POP
- » Our Park and Outdoor Legacy
- » Chattanooga and the Region
- » Population and Recreation Trends
- » Connection to Other Plans
- » Park Partners

## POP DRIVING PRINCIPLES

### ACCESS



Making our parks and outdoors safe, clean, fun, welcoming and barrier-free for all Chattanoogaans.

### EQUITY



Committing to justice, fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.

### NATURE



Celebrating and protecting our timeless geographic and natural features as a framework of the plan.

### PLACE



Recognizing every park's role to authentically amplify the unique character and identity of its community.

### QUALITY



Setting a citywide standard for the design, construction and maintenance of high-quality parks and greenways.



1902 view toward Missionary Ridge from Cameron Hill

city, we have the chance to build one of the nation's most extraordinary public park systems and elevate Chattanooga as one of the best places in America to call home.

For the last 25 years, Chattanooga has lacked a strategic vision to guide park investments. That's where this Parks and Outdoors Plan (POP) comes in. The POP will offer a road map and path forward to reinvent Chattanooga as a city in a park—where a system of parks, greenways and protected open spaces connect people to each other and the natural environment and where all neighborhoods have beloved parks.

The POP has five principles that are informed by community needs and priorities and by the success stories of the globe's best urban park systems: Access, Equity, Nature, Place and Quality. These principles drove the planning process, informed our public conversation about parks and outdoors, and provide the organizational framework for this document and its recommendations.

## PURPOSE OF THE POP

Chattanooga is home to world-class parks and a breathtaking natural environment. But its current system of public parks falls short of equitably delivering the “city-shaping” benefits of great park and outdoor systems. Some neighborhoods are better served than others, and we must do more to integrate nature into all of our neighborhoods and the urban core, which will not only make Chattanooga a better place to live today, but make for a more resilient city for all, tomorrow. In this beautiful



(Source: [chattanoogahistory.com](http://chattanoogahistory.com))

## OUR PARK AND OUTDOOR LEGACY

Chattanooga's position on the fertile banks of the Tennessee River, surrounded by mountains and ridges at the transition between the Appalachian Mountains and Cumberland Plateau, has supported human settlement dating back 12,000 years or more. In the last 200 years, this iconic landscape and its role in the lives of Chattanoogaans has rapidly evolved as war, industry, segregation and development have left their marks on the public realm and natural environment.

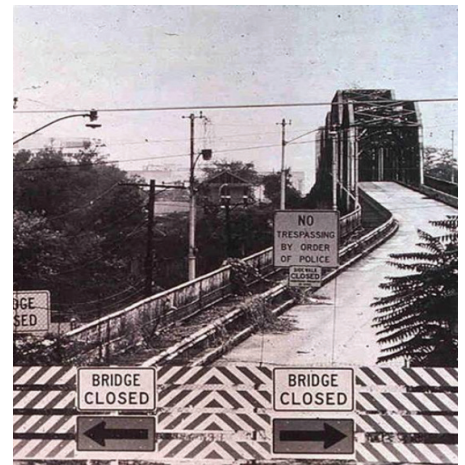
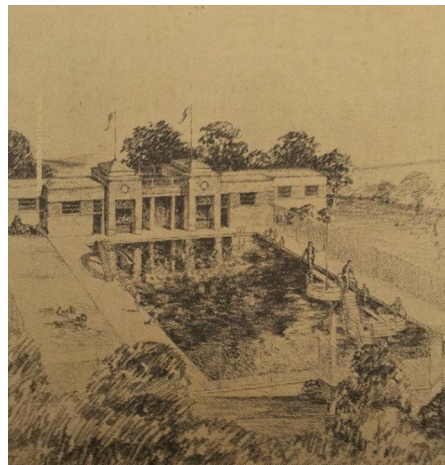
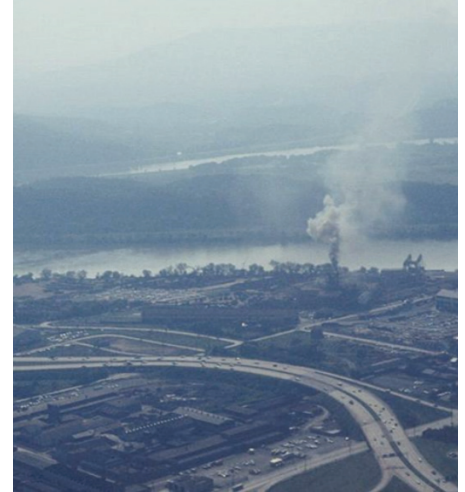
Understanding the environmental history of 'Scenic City' can help us define our park and outdoor vision for Chattanooga for the next 100 years.

## SACRED GROUNDS AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The long human history of Chattanooga can be explored and experienced through the city's parks and outdoor

spaces—from federally protected sites like Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (including Moccasin Bend National Archaeological District) to at-risk cultural landscapes like Lincoln Park. These places allow us to access and reflect upon our shared history. Many of them provide significant acreage of protected open space. Some of them are in need of preservation or restoration. All of them offer opportunities for passive recreation, education, memorial or celebration.

As Chattanooga's park and outdoor assets, these sites are included within the POP's calculation of citywide park and open space acreage, and the POP's chapters on Place and Implementation consider how the City can work with federal, county and private partners to ensure that these sacred grounds and cultural landscapes remain an integral and accessible part of the citywide park and outdoor system.



Images from Chattanooga’s outdoor history—from early 20th century investments in national parks and racially segregated facilities at Lincoln and East Lake Parks, to the environmental impact of the city’s midcentury focus on industry and highway expansion.

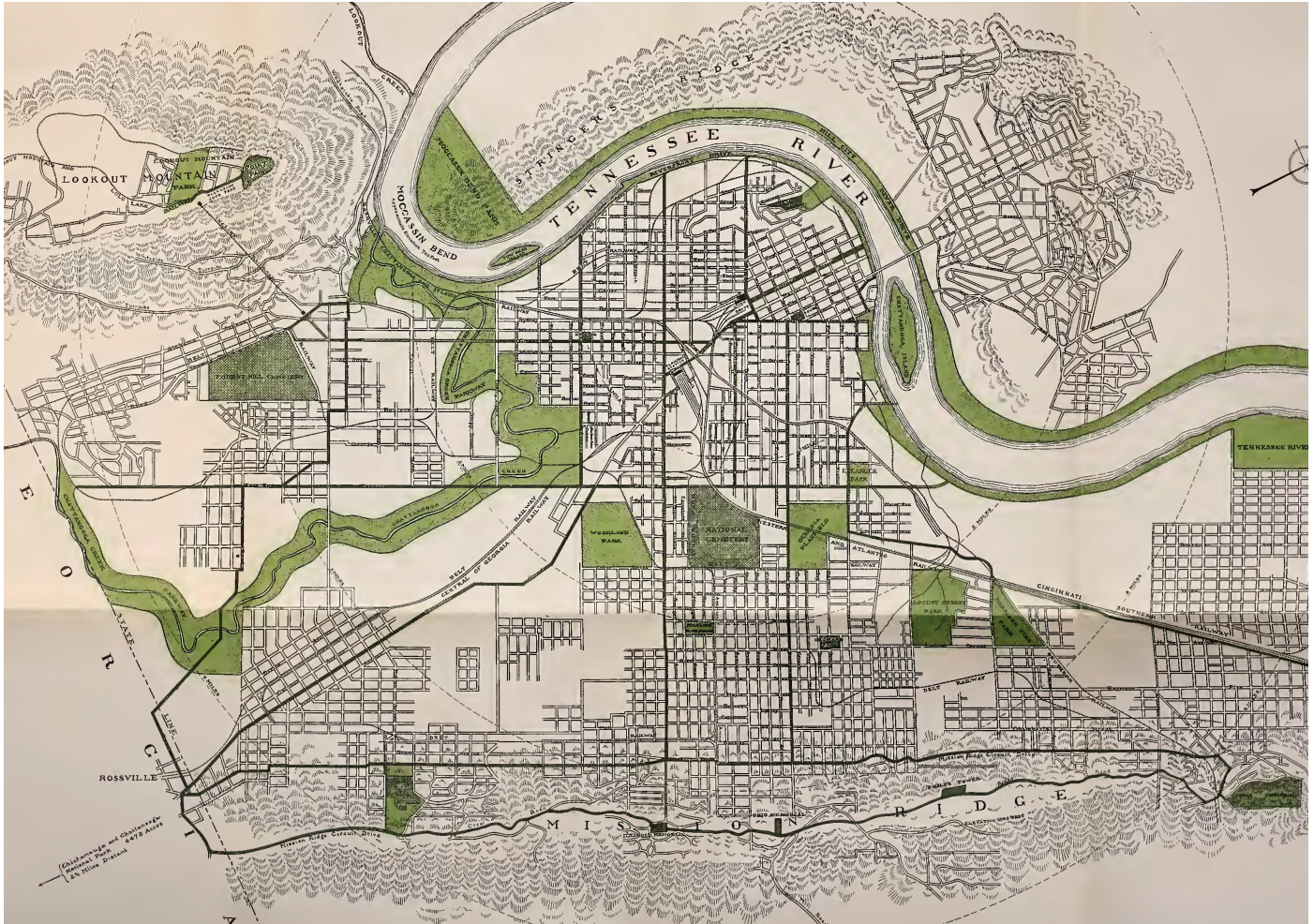
**INDUSTRY AND EXTRACTION**

With its river access and railroads, Chattanooga has been a hub for transit and industry since the 19th century, with boom-and-bust cycles of rapid economic growth followed by periods of depression and decline.

The same mountains that provide Chattanooga’s scenic backdrop have also served to trap industrial pollutants—in 1969, the federal government declared that Chattanooga had the dirtiest air in the country. By the 1980s, the city was in the throes of de-industrialization, with job layoffs, deteriorating city infrastructure, racial tensions and social division. Chattanooga’s population declined by more than 10%.

However, Chattanooga was the only major U.S. city to lose this proportion of its population in the 1980s and then regain the same proportion in the next two decades. The city’s population growth remains strong, with new residents attracted by knowledge industries and Chattanooga’s scenic beauty and outdoor opportunities.

For the POP, the imperative created by this historical trajectory is clear—to protect the lands and waters that sustain our quality of life and attract new residents and visitors, and to reclaim those sites that are still contaminated by our industrial legacy, transforming them into healthy vibrant parks that serve their immediate communities.



Visual from the 'Nolen Plan' of 1911—*General Features of a Park System for Chattanooga, Tennessee*

## ICONIC PARK PLANS

Many of Chattanooga's beloved parks and outdoor environments can be traced directly to past planning efforts. Two of the most important are the 'Nolen Plan' of 1911, a model of early-20th-century park system planning in the tradition of Fredrick Law Olmsted, and the Tennessee Riverpark Masterplan of 1985, a stroke of inspiration that catapulted Chattanooga into a new era of economic development and downtown revitalization.

These plans laid the groundwork for Chattanooga's reputation as 'Scenic City' and for our iconic signature riverfront and center city parks.

The POP will seek to build on the success of those previous efforts.

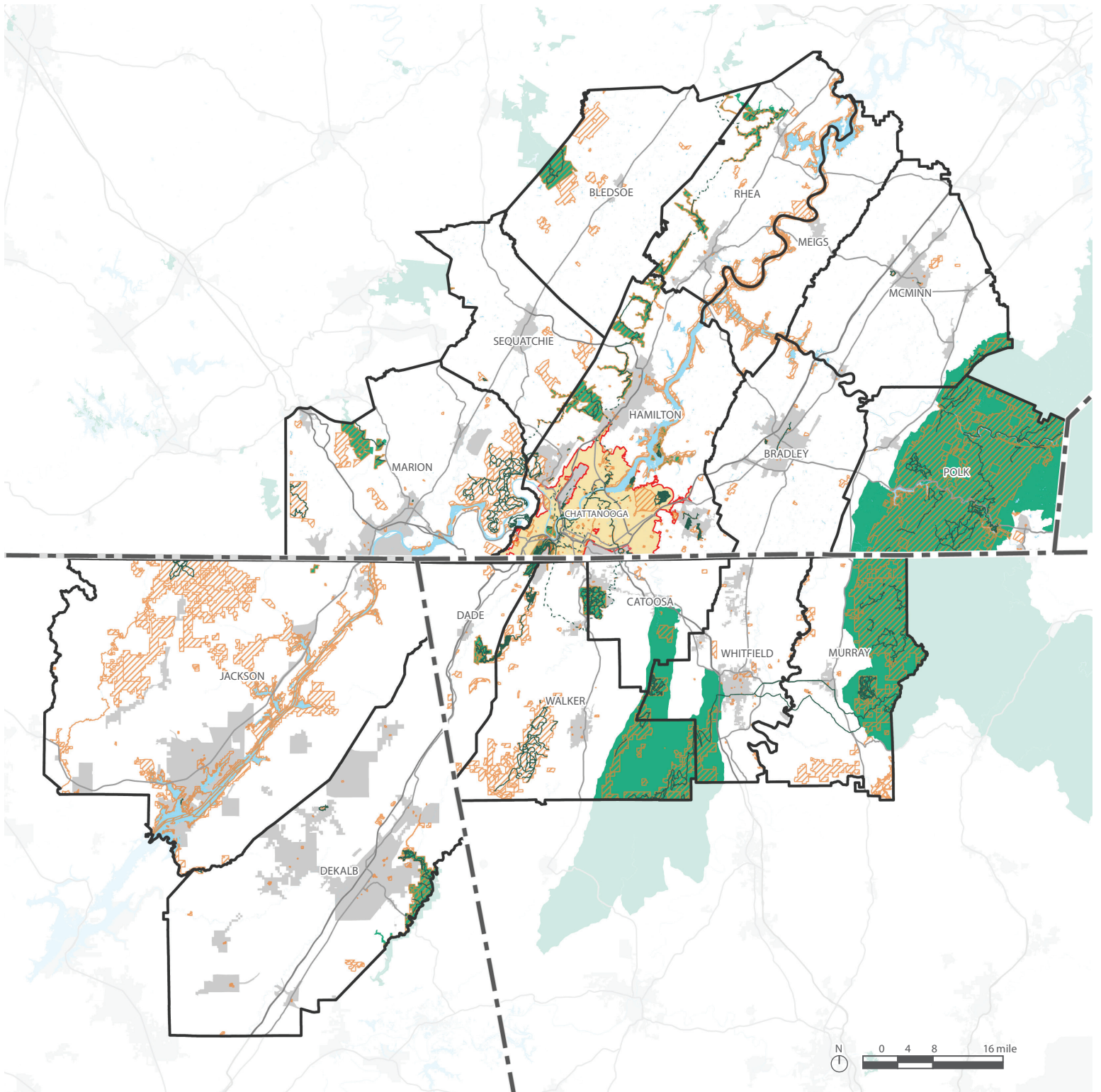
It also seeks to fill the gaps where earlier plan recommendations weren't realized—like the Chattanooga Creek Greenway proposed by the Nolen Plan—or where their goals need updating to reflect our public values today—such as the urgency to address disparities in park access and quality across the city's neighborhoods.

## CHATTANOOGA AND THE REGION

Chattanooga's parks and outdoors are part of a regional system of watersheds and protected lands that are not contained by municipal or county boundaries. It's important that the POP recommendations—particularly for protected natural







## DEEPER DIVE

- » [General Features of a Park System for Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1911 \(also known as the 'Nolen Plan'\)](#)
- » [Tennessee Riverpark Masterplan, 1985](#)
- » [www.ChattanoogaHistory.com](http://www.ChattanoogaHistory.com)



## MAP: 16-COUNTY THRIVE REGION

### LEGEND

-  State Boundaries
-  County Boundaries
-  Chattanooga City Limits
-  Municipalities
-  Highways
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Conservation Lands



areas and greenway and blueway corridors—reflect these regional connections.

Chattanooga lies at the heart of the Thrive Regional Partnership footprint, a 16-county region located where Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama meet. Thrive promotes research and programming to help align regional efforts around open space conservation and planning for growth, transportation and infrastructure.

The POP's natural resource recommendations are informed by analyses produced by Thrive and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Interdisciplinary Geospatial Technology Lab. The plan's greenway and blueway recommendations are also informed by this work and by the expertise of regional greenway advocates who have identified exciting opportunities for local, regional and national trail connections.

Successful implementation of the POP will depend in large part on the City's ability to create partnerships

with its impressive array of public and private partners. The POP's recommendations in this arena are also inspired and supported by the foundational work of Thrive to promote collaboration across regional entities and jurisdictional boundaries.

## POPULATION AND RECREATION TRENDS

Understanding Chattanooga's demographics, growth trajectory and recreation trends can help inform recommendations about the type and distribution of park and outdoor amenities that the community needs now, and what we'll need in the future. Demographic and environmental data also inform identification of the POP Equity Investment Zones, which are described in the Equity chapter.

The planning team used mobility data to get a snapshot of current Chattanooga park users, including where those users live at the U.S. Census Block Group level. This data can help paint a picture

37

MEDIAN AGE

21%

POPULATION UNDER 18

18%

POPULATION 65+

11%

POPULATION WITH DISABILITY

\$55k

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

28%

CHILDREN BELOW POVERTY

+10%

POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 2010

## PARK VISITOR DATA

Park visitor demographics and visit patterns are based on mobility data downloaded from SafeGraph, covering the period of time from January 2018 to September 2021.

## PARK VISITOR DEMOGRAPHIC TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Park visitors are much more likely to live in areas with high home values (32% of park visitors versus 23% citywide).
- 2 Park visitors are less likely to live in areas with higher rates of Hispanic or Latino residents (24% of park visitors versus 31% citywide).
- 3 Park visitors are more likely to live in areas with high educational attainment (32% of park visitors versus 26% citywide).
- 4 Park visitors are less likely to live in areas with higher rates of home ownership (58% of park visitors versus 62% citywide).

of which Chattanooga communities are—and are not—currently served by the park and outdoor system. This data reinforced the need for targeted outreach through the Park Listeners program in the POP public process, and it supported park-by-park condition assessments in highlighting the existing parks that are not currently used by their neighboring communities.

The POP is also informed by planning and growth projection data by the Regional Planning Association; state recreation data from the *2030 Tennessee Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*; national recreation trends from the National Recreation and Park Association and the Sports and Fitness Industry Association; and local recreation and leisure behavior and spending data from Esri.

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

Chattanooga’s projected population growth and its demographic profile

create a sense of urgency for the POP recommendations as we seek to protect open space, expand park access, and deliver park and recreational facilities and programs that meet existing and future needs.

- **Population Growth:** To maximize the benefit and impact of our park and outdoor investments, POP’s phased recommendations for parkland acreage and for the number and geographic service areas of park and recreation facilities should account for our future projected growth. We must begin planning and investing now to ensure park access and quality of life for future generations.
- **Seniors:** There is opportunity through the POP recommendations to envision a system of park and outdoor spaces and programming that are truly multi-generational. National recreation data shows that seniors gravitate toward recreational and outdoor opportunities that promote

## POPULATION PROJECTION TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Chattanooga’s population is projected to pass 250,000 by the year 2050.
- 2 In the short term, the fastest-growing age group will be seniors (aged 65+), who will account for 21% of the population by 2026.
- 3 The proportion of children will remain steady at 21% in that same time period, and Chattanooga will see a slight dip in its working-age population (ages 18 to 64).
- 4 The city’s racial and ethnic diversity will continue to grow, with the fastest growth seen in the proportion of residents of Hispanic origin, who will account for 9% of the city’s population by 2026.

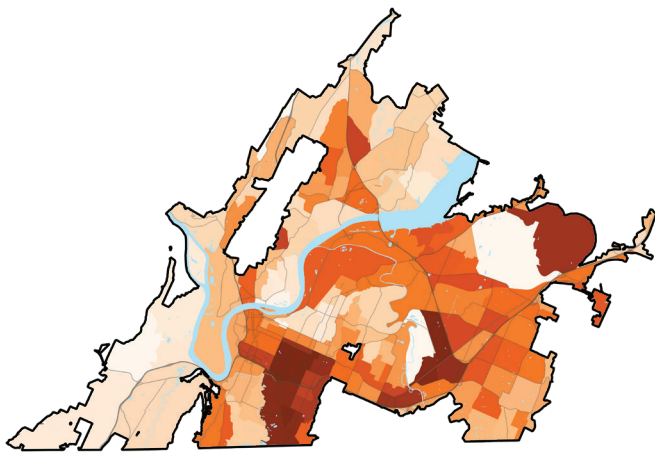
## GROWTH DATA

Current population data and growth projections are sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Regional Planning Association and from Esri Business Analyst.

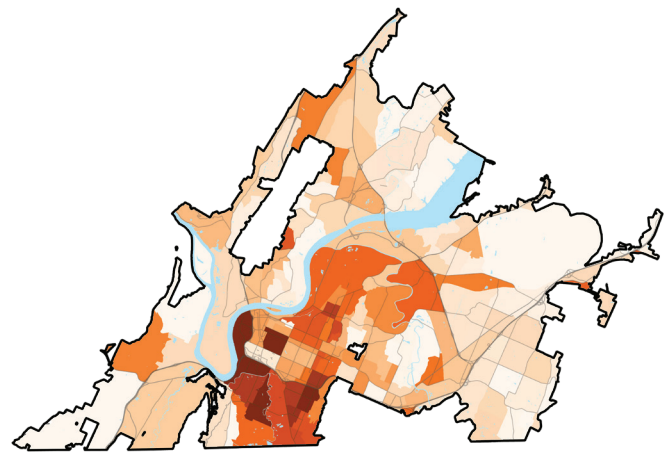
socializing and service; by offering these kinds of opportunities to Chattanooga's growing senior population, the city's park and outdoor system can help seniors stay healthy and active while creating a cohort of dedicated participants who act as stewards and teach environmental and recreational values to younger generations.

- **Children:** Research suggests that spending time in nature promotes physical and emotional

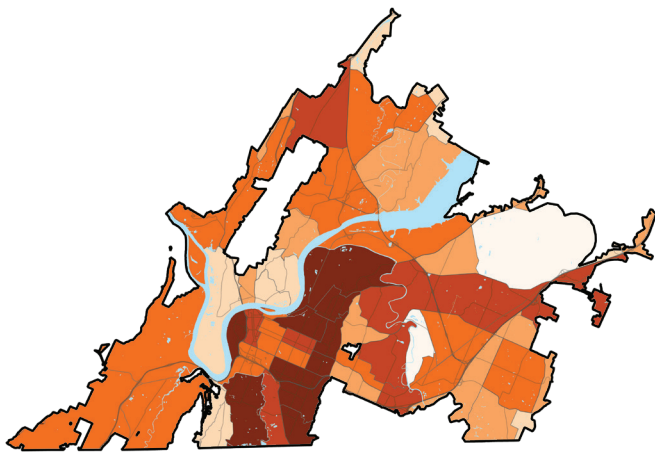
health and ecological literacy in children. Children who engage with sports have been shown to experience long-term benefits including better health outcomes, greater educational attainment, and success at work. However, access to nature and to youth sports is more likely to be limited for children in lower-income families. Nationally, children from the lowest-income homes are more than three times as likely to be physically inactive, and 42 percent of lower-income families cite cost



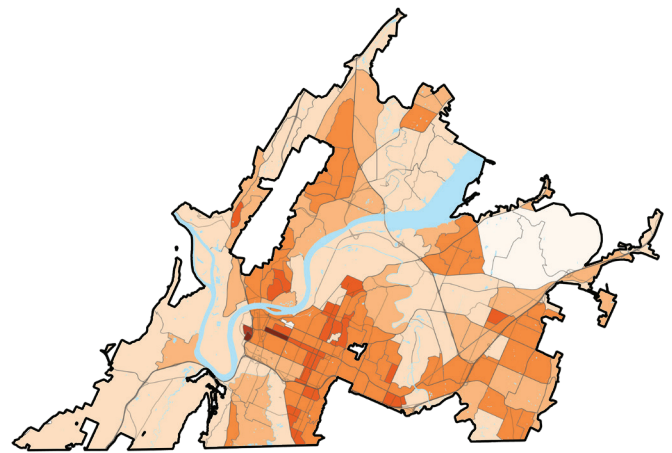
Diversity Index



Poverty Rate



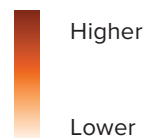
Social Vulnerability Index, Centers for Disease Control



Population Density

## MAPS: COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

### LEGEND



## DEEPER DIVE

» [One Chattanooga Strategic Plan](#)  
[external URL]

as the reason their children do not play sports. For the health of our children and future generations, there is an urgent need for our park and outdoor spaces and recreational programming to be physically and financially accessible and welcoming to families of all backgrounds, particularly for the 28 percent of Chattanooga’s children who live below the poverty line.

- **Income:** The Sports and Fitness Industry Association’s 2021 *Topline Report on Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities* shows that inactivity levels are reversely proportional to income—in 2020, inactivity rates were 41 percent for households earning under \$25,000, compared to just 14 percent for households earning more than \$100,000. In Chattanooga, park visitor data at the Block Group level suggests that Chattanoogans living in areas with higher home values, higher rates of homeownership and higher household income are more likely to visit city parks. These are important drivers for the POP recommendations around system equity and access and for identifying priority projects within the POP Equity Investment Zones.

- **Race and Ethnicity:** Research has shown that people of color are less likely to engage in nature-based outdoor recreation activities, due in large part to historic discrimination and its lingering effects in our parks and public spaces. As described in the *One Chattanooga Strategic Plan* released in October 2021:

*Decades of divestment in our neighborhoods ... has created a city where the experience of life can be vastly different depending on the ZIP code you’re born into and the color of your skin —from health outcomes to economic opportunities.*

The POP offers an opportunity to prioritize park and outdoor investments in areas of the city with this history of divestment; promote marketing and programs that are tailored to reach communities that historically have been excluded from our parks and public spaces, including by eliminating possible language barriers; and ensure that the above improvements and programming are designed with the authentic participation and buy-in of communities they’re meant to serve.

Table 3: **Top 10 Sports and Leisure Activities for Chattanooga Residents by Number of Participants**

ACTIVITY	NO. OF ADULTS PARTICIPATED, 2021	PERCENT	MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)
Walking for exercise	37,904	25%	97
Swimming	21,230	14%	87
Hiking	17,216	11%	88
Jogging/Running	15,809	10%	94
Fishing (fresh water)	15,424	10%	96
Weightlifting	14,382	9%	87
Bowling	14,156	9%	97
Bicycling (Road)	13,901	9%	95
Yoga	13,307	9%	96
Golf	12,501	8%	97

Source: Esri Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report

## RECREATION TRENDS

The POP planning team studied local and national recreation trends that could inform park and outdoor planning for Chattanooga.

Table 3 shows the top sports and leisure activities for Chattanooga residents in 2021 by number of participants, according to Esri Business Analyst. Market Potential Index (MPI) refers to the likelihood that a resident will participate in certain activities when compared to the national average, with 100 representing the national average—figures above 100 represent a higher-than-average participation rate. Table 4 shows the top sports and leisure activities for Chattanooga residents in 2021 by MPI—in other words, those activities where participation in Chattanooga is higher than the national average.

### NATIONAL TRENDS

The Sports and Fitness Industry Association’s 2021 *Topline Report on Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities* sheds light on recreation trends at the national level:

- The most popular sport and recreational activities nationally include walking for fitness,

treadmill, free weights, biking, running/jogging, and hiking. Most of these activities appeal to old and young alike, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of skill level, and have minimal economic barriers to entry.

- When asked which activities they are most interested in but do not currently practice, younger people (ages 6 to 24) predominantly chose active sports, such as basketball, soccer and running. People 45 and older expressed more interest in hiking and fishing. When considering intent to participate by income, fishing is the top category among incomes groups making less than \$50,000, while hiking is the top category for all other groups.
- From 2019 to 2020, the fitness sports that saw the biggest increases in participation were bicycling (13% increase), and skateboarding (34% increase).

The National Recreation and Park Association in its *Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2022* called out the following:

- Parks and greenspaces will continue to be vital tools in communities’ efforts to combat

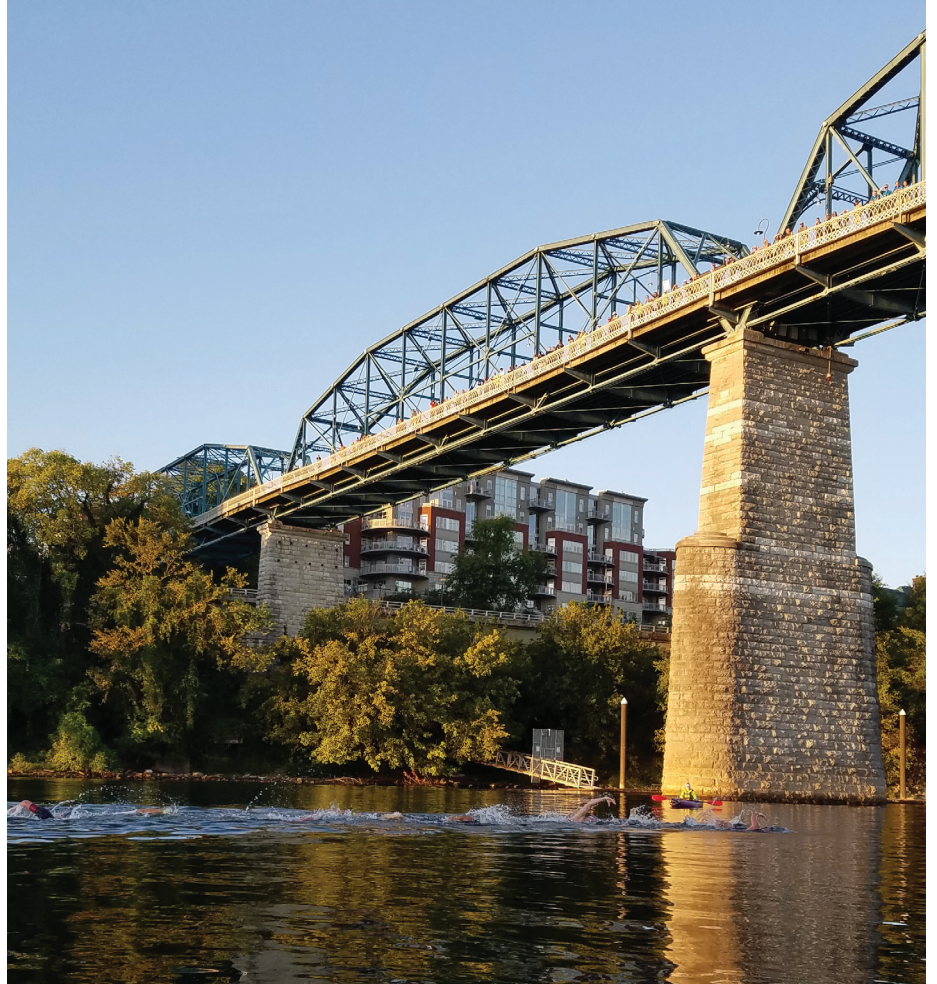
## DEEPER DIVE

- » [Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2022, National Recreation and Park Association](#)

Table 4: **Sports and Leisure Activities for Chattanooga Residents with MPI 100+**

ACTIVITY	NO. OF ADULTS PARTICIPATED, 2021	PERCENT	MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)
Canoeing/kayaking	10,837	7%	105
Football	6,552	4%	105
Archery	4,145	3%	103
Basketball	12,171	8%	102
Softball	3,878	3%	102
Horseback riding	3,587	2%	101
Hunting with shotgun	4,845	3%	101
Pilates	4,665	3%	101
Baseball	5,900	4%	100

Source: Esri Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report



urban heat islands and other impacts of a changing climate.

- Park and recreation agencies are feeling the impact of ‘The Great Resignation’ and will need additional resources to attract and retain workers, particularly the part-time workers that are so important to after-school and summer programming.
- Youth sports participation continues to be on the decline, prompting park and recreation agencies across the country to seek new ways to lower barriers to participation and to get kids excited about community-based sports.
- Pickleball participation continues to be on the rise, with more than 4 million people estimated to be playing it annually.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RECREATION**

According to an Outdoor Industry Association report, outdoor recreation in Tennessee generated more than \$7.2 billion in 2020, which accounted for 2 percent of the state’s gross domestic product (GDP) and made Tennessee’s outdoor recreation industry the 20th-largest in the country. Outdoor recreation in 2020 provided more than 88,000 jobs in Tennessee, accounting for about 3 percent of employment statewide and \$3.7 billion in wages and salaries. Esri reports show that Chattanooga residents spend more than \$200 million annually on recreation.

## CONNECTION TO OTHER PLANS

The POP will build upon previous planning efforts, and its recommendations will align with other City plans and ordinances.

Takeaways from a review of relevant plans include:

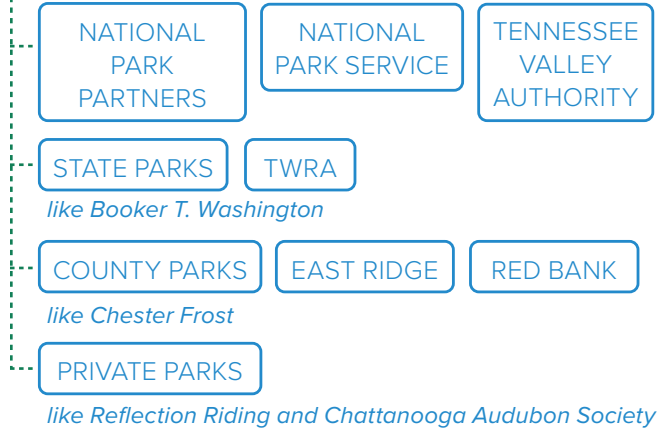
- The plans highlight the relative importance of open spaces and parks to the larger community.
- The City has conducted many studies that focus on open space, trails and parks but few that focus

Table 5: **Summary of Relevant Plan Review and Major Themes**

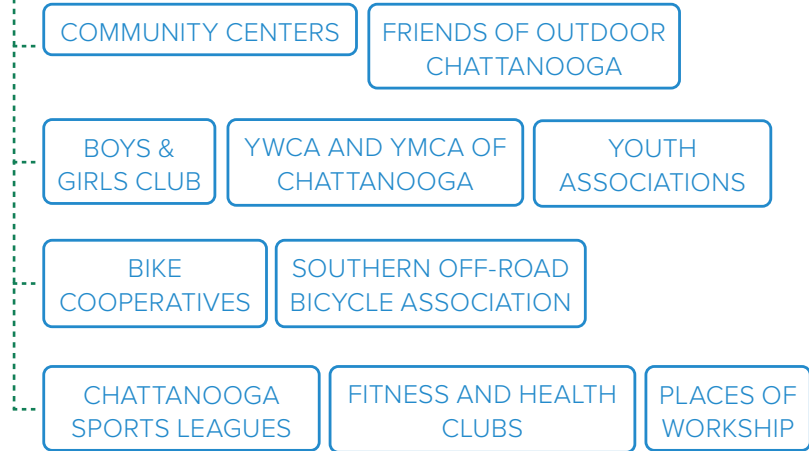
	TRAILS AND GREENWAYS	CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS	OPEN SPACE	PRESERVATION	SURVEY/ ENGAGEMENT	NEEDS ASSESSMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE AND PARK AMENITY INVESTMENT	IMPLEMENTATION/ FUNDING IDENTIFIED
Recreate 2008			●		●	●	●	●
Previous Trail Connectivity Plans and Studies	●	●				●		
Healthy Connected Chattanooga	●	●	●	●		●		
Comp Plan 2030: Renewing Our Vision		●	●		●	●	●	
Tennessee Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thrive Regional Outdoor Recreation Survey					●			
People, Places, Paths	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	●	●				●	●	
RPA Natural Resources Assessment			●	●	●	●		
Pedestrian Action Plan		●				●	●	
Bicycle Implementation Plan	●	●					●	
Complete Streets Ordinance		●						●
Historic River-to-Ridge Area Plan	●	●	●	●		●	●	
White Oak Mountain Area Plan			●	●		●		
Chattanooga Form-Based Code							●	●
Public Art Strategic Plan	●					●	●	●
Chattanooga Skatepark Strategy					●	●	●	
Reflection Riding Framework Plan			●	●			●	
The Ramble Chattanooga Art Promenade	●	●					●	●

# 'ECOSYSTEM' OF PROVIDERS

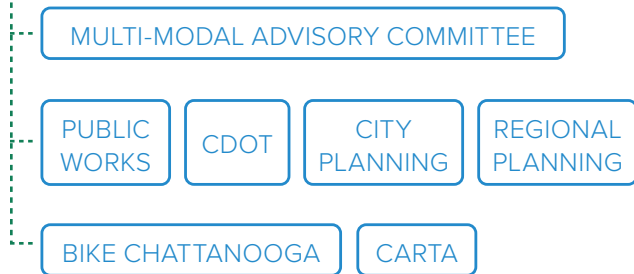
## PARKS



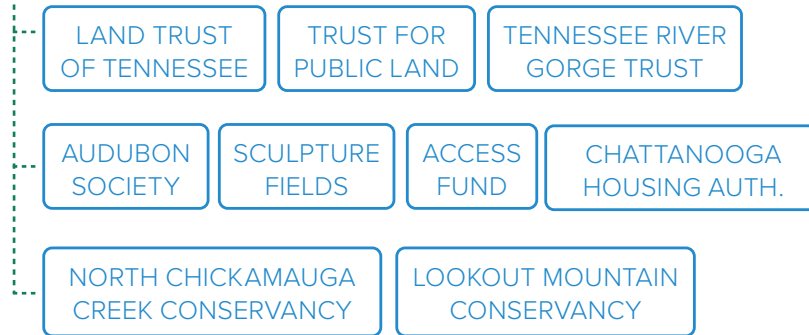
## RECREATION



## MOBILITY



## OPEN SPACE



on implementation through code adoption and funding.

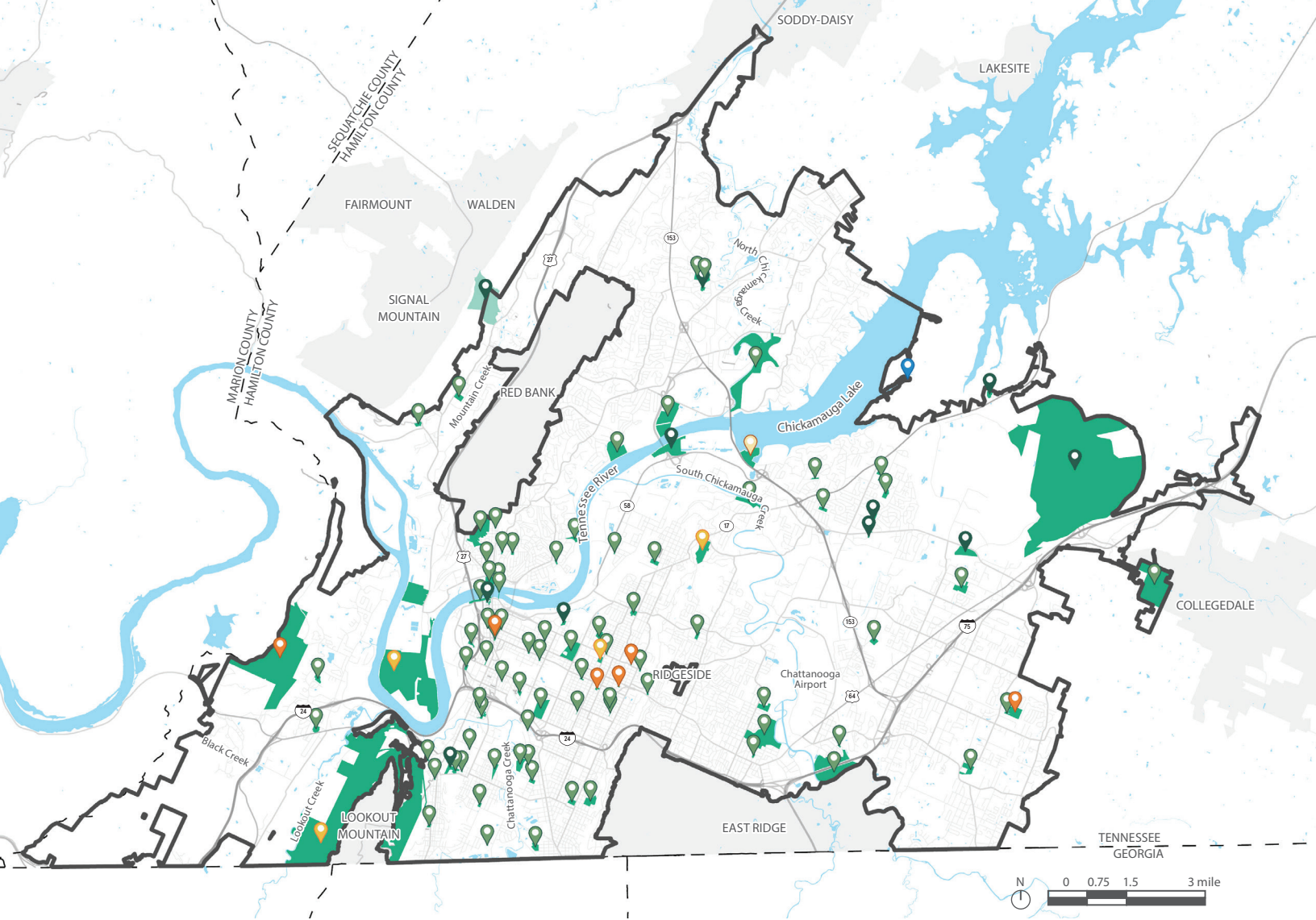
- While parks are a communitywide priority, there is a difference of opinion on what those amenities should be based on respondents' home locations. More urban neighborhoods focus on amenitizing existing parks and improving connectivity between amenities. Wealthier, suburban neighborhoods tend to focus on open space preservation, with less emphasis on connectivity.
- Many plans highlight the poor condition of existing (or non-existent) pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Many residents see our mountains, ridges, rivers, streams and other natural features as amenities that should be preserved.

- There is considerable demand for greenways based on engagement conducted by the various plans.

## PARK PARTNERS

Chattanooga's Department of Parks and Outdoors is fortunate to have many partners—public and private—offering park and outdoor spaces and programming within the city limits. The POP offers a community-driven vision for parks and outdoors in Chattanooga that can be a blueprint for other organizations and help to align the efforts of this 'ecosystem' of providers for the greatest public benefit.



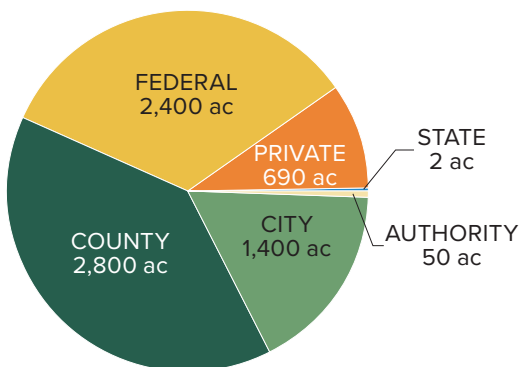


## MAP: PARKS BY OWNER

The POP is a plan for the City of Chattanooga, to capture its current park and outdoor assets and to guide future City investments. But the POP also considers within its analysis and recommendations the full 'ecosystem' of park providers within the city limits. These entities are important partners in realizing the POP's vision and providing high-quality, accessible and equitable park and outdoor spaces and programming citywide.

### LEGEND

- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- Water Bodies
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Existing Parks
- Park Ownership**
- City
- County
- Authority
- Federal
- Private
- State



3

# THE STATE OF OUR PARKS AND OUTDOORS

- » Park Classification
- » Park and Outdoor Access
- » Level of Service
- » System Inventory and Quality
- » Park Visitor Data



Understanding the current state of our parks and outdoors is essential to inform the Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors Plan (POP) process and recommendations.

The planning team used geospatial analysis, mobility data, and on-the-ground inventory to gain an initial understanding of Chattanooga’s parks and outdoors. Those findings were vetted with the Steering Committee and evaluated alongside national and peer-city metrics. This work establishes a baseline from which to build our future park and outdoor improvements and investments.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION

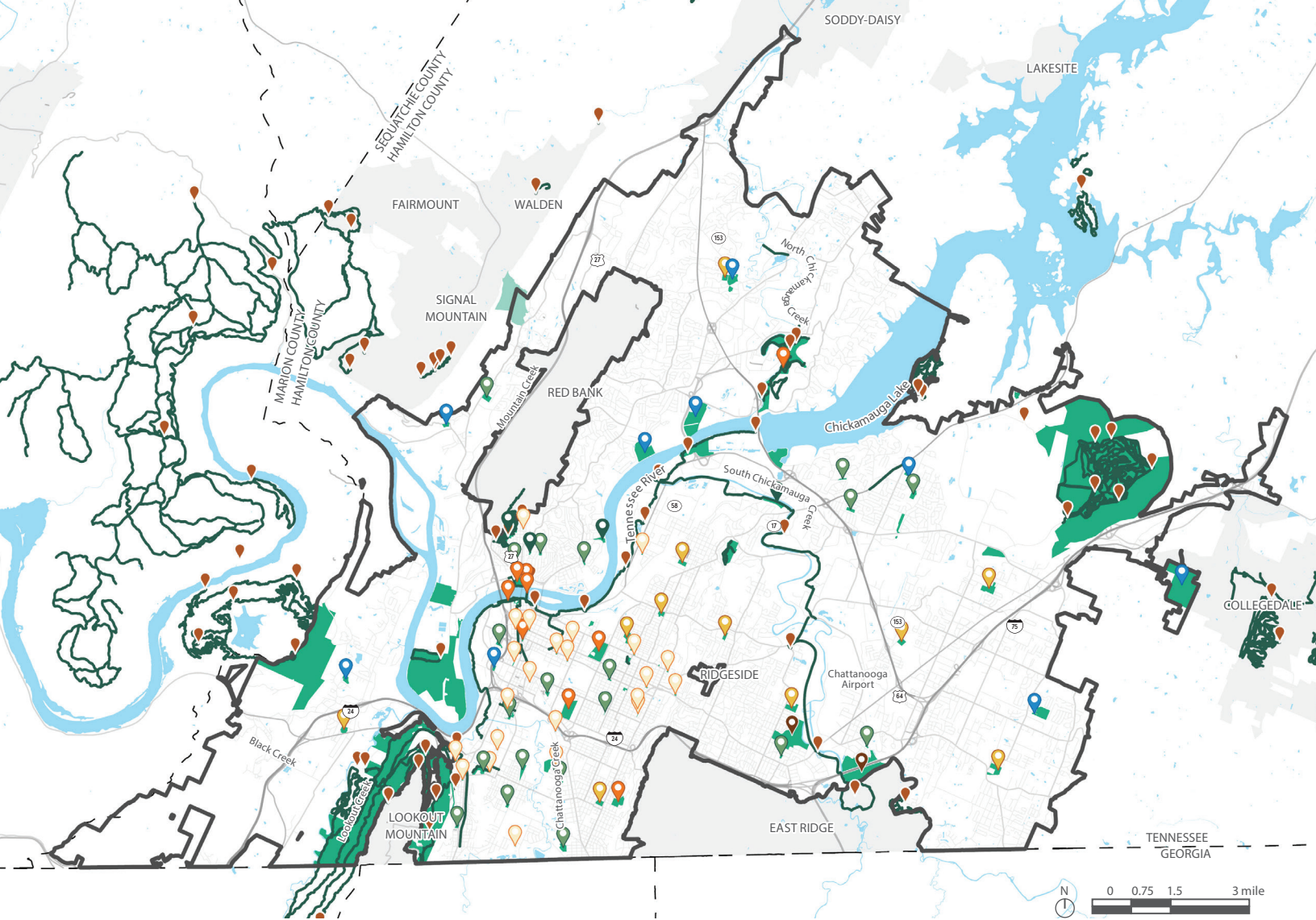
A park classification system allows the City to establish a common language around park types and quality of

amenities. A strong understanding of the types of parks in different areas of the city can inform where access, quality and equity gaps exist.

Park classifications are useful in:

- Communications (internal and external),
- Parkland acquisitions (locations and criteria for future parks),
- Development (level of investment needed in a given park),
- Programming and Activation (the type and scale of activities appropriate to a given park), and
- Operations (the degree of maintenance and regular investment needed).

Table 6 lists the classification categories developed during the planning process to describe City-owned parks in Chattanooga. The planning team based these classifications on park qualities



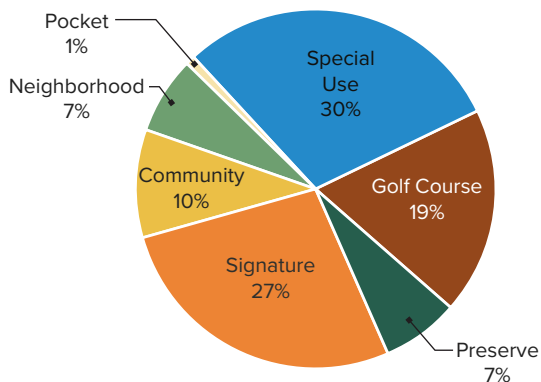
## MAP: PARK CLASSIFICATION

The POP recommends a park classification system for City-owned parks to establish a common language around park types and quality of amenities and to help inform where access, quality, programming and equity gaps exist.

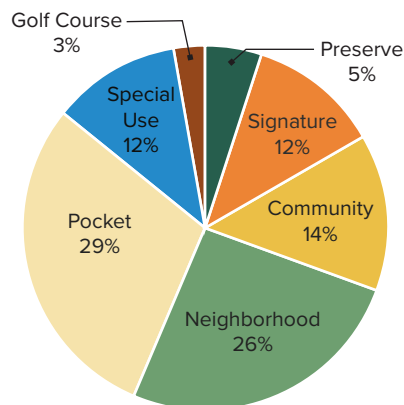
### LEGEND

- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- Waterbodies
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Existing Public Parks
- Existing Trails
- Existing Trailheads
- Park Classifications**
- Signature Park
- Preserve
- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Pocket Park
- Special Use Facilities
- Golf Course

Existing City Parks by Type (Parkland Acreage)



Existing City Parks by Type (Park Count)



## DEEPER DIVE

» [Appendix: Full Classification Descriptions and List of City of Chattanooga Parks by Classification](#)

including size, landcover, amenities, immediate context, and visitor data.

These park classifications help to inform high-level POP recommendations regarding the types of amenities and improvements needed across the system, along with the order-of-magnitude costs of those improvements and ongoing maintenance. See the appendix linked at left for a more detailed description of each classification category, and

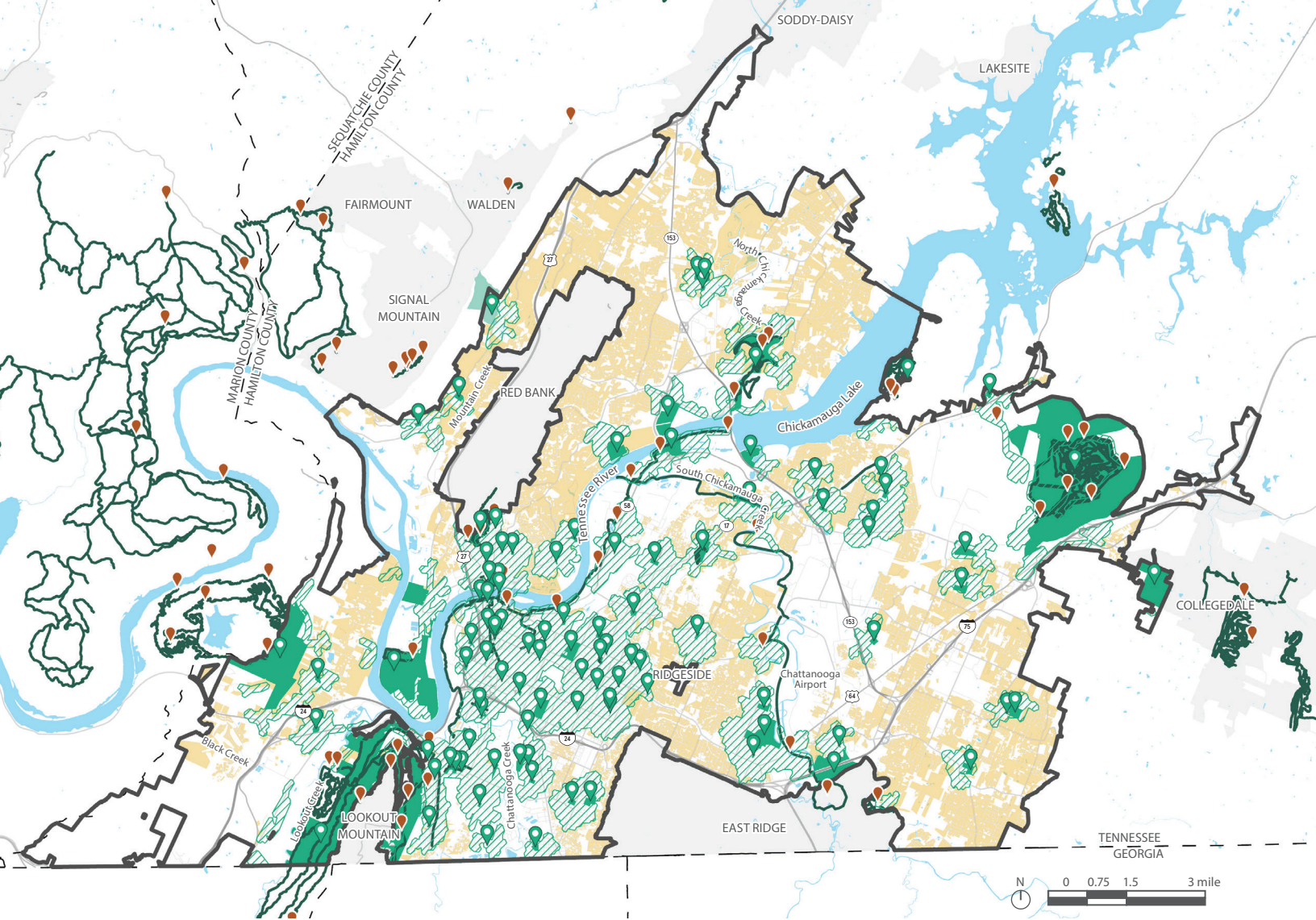
which parks are proposed as needing master planning processes to meet a new and aspirational classification.

## PARK AND OUTDOOR ACCESS

The POP considers a broad definition of access as the opportunity to enter and make use of a space or resource. Park and outdoor access is

Table 6: **City of Chattanooga Park Classification Categories**

	SIZE	SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Signature Park</b>	Size varies	City and region	Parks with at least one function or resource that is <b>unique or iconic to the City</b> and that therefore support a sense of belonging for everyone, including tourists.	Coolidge Park, Warner Park, Ross' Landing
<b>Preserve</b>	Size varies	City and region	Parks for which the primary public benefit is <b>land on which native ecology can be protected and nurtured</b> . While Preserves do not <u>require</u> recreational amenities, they can include features for passive uses such as hiking, biking and birdwatching.	Stringers Ridge, Sterchi Farm, Riverview Bird Sanctuary
<b>Community Park</b>	5-30 ac (avg 12 ac)	One-mile radius, or 20-minute walk	Parks that <b>serve the recreational needs of more than one neighborhood</b> . Community Parks are often distinguished from Neighborhood Parks by the presence of larger or more expensive facilities, such as gymnasiums, pools, dog parks or competition-grade athletic courts or fields.	Carver Park, Avondale Park, Hixson Community Park
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>	1.5-10 ac (avg 5 ac)	Half-mile radius, or 10-minute walk	Parks that <b>serve, and are associated with, exactly one neighborhood, with their design and use heavily informed by their neighborhoods' characteristics and needs</b> . Amenities might include small pavilions, picnic tables, playgrounds or flexible, multi-use fields or courts.	Murray Hills Park, Southside Community Park, St. Elmo Park
<b>Pocket Park</b>	1 ac or less (avg 0.6 ac)	Immediate context and passersby	Parks that take advantage of <b>leftover spaces with amenities that suit their specific context</b> . Because of their size, typically Pocket Parks are more suitable in higher-density settings such as the central business district or more compact walkable neighborhoods.	Main Terrain Park, Perkins Park, Inspiration Park
<b>Special Use Facility</b>	Size varies	City and region	Parks with amenities that <b>serve specific types of recreational users from across the region</b> —such as team sports, aquatics, disc golf players and skateboarders.	Summit Field, Chattanooga Skate Park
<b>Golf Course</b>	100+ ac (av 135 ac)	City and region	<b>Public golf courses</b> , with standards established in a separate planning process and the potential to promote broader green infrastructure and passive recreation.	Brown Acres Golf Course
<b>Greenway</b>	Size varies	City and region	<b>Linear parks with hard-surface trails</b> (min 12' wide) that connect people across the city and region to each other, to nature, and to parks and other destinations.	South Chick Greenway, TN Riverwalk
<b>Blueway</b>	Size varies	City and broader region	<b>Linear parks on waterbodies</b> that include accessible running water deep enough for paddling 90% of the year, with reasonably spaced public access points.	Tennessee River, South Chickamauga Creek



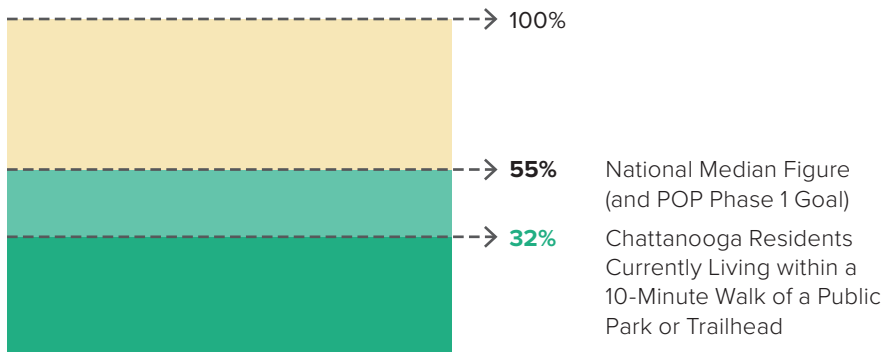
## MAP: 10-MINUTE WALKSHED AND GAPS

Chattanooga is a committed partner in the Trust for Public Land's nationwide 10-Minute Walk Program, which advocates that everyone living in a U.S. city should have access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk of their home.

This map shows the 10-minute walkshed of existing public parks and trailheads generated using ArcGIS Pro Spatial Analyst. All public parks—not just City-owned parks—are considered in this analysis and in the POP's future access goals. The map also shows the 10-minute walkshed gap, or those residential areas of the city that currently cannot reach a park or trailhead within a 10-minute walk. This 10-minute walkshed analysis is one driver of the POP's recommendations for access and equity.

### LEGEND

- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- Waterbodies
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Existing Public Parks
- Existing Trails
- Existing Trailheads
- 10-Minute Walkshed of Existing Public Parks and Trailheads
- Residential Parcels Outside 10-Minute Walkshed



## DEEPER DIVE

» [Trust for Public Land ‘10-Minute Walk Program’ \[external URL\]](#)

considered through multiple factors, including:

- **Distance** between communities and their park and outdoor assets
- **Walkability** or the ability of users of different ages and abilities to safely reach our parks and greenways
- **Quality and universal design** of spaces and activities to be welcoming and usable for all people

A key element of the POP vision is that all households will have a high-quality park close to home. Analysis of the 10-minute walkshed of existing public parks and greenways is one lens through which this is measured.

However, the 10-minute walkshed is not considered in isolation. The POP’s recommendations for system expansion and improvements also take into account factors such as the quality of existing park and outdoor assets; the density of populations served by existing assets; and the history of inequitable public investment and environmental

degradation in Chattanooga communities.

The POP’s goals for improving park and outdoor access are also driven by feedback heard from the community—described in Chapter 1—about the biggest barriers that keep them from more frequent park and outdoor use, and those amenities and events that would make the city’s park and outdoor system more appealing and welcoming.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE

‘Level of service’ refers to the amount of a particular public service or amenity, often expressed as a population-based figure—for example, parkland acreage per 1,000 residents.

The planning team compared the current level of service metrics for Chattanooga’s park and outdoor facilities to national metrics and cross-referenced that information against public survey results. This analysis helps to inform level of service goals—

Table 7: **Demographics of Population within Existing Park and Trailhead Walksheds Compared to Citywide**

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	POPULATION WITHIN 10-MINUTE WALKSHED	CHATTANOOGA POPULATION
Population Density (Residents per Square Mile)	2,161	1,227
Population Growth Rate, Annualized, 2020-2022	1.02% / 179 Index	0.9% / 158 Index
Median Household Income	\$43,398	\$54,716
Median Home Value	\$237,613	\$242,644
Households Under Poverty Level	23%	16%
Households with 1+ Persons with Disability	27%	27%
Median Age	36	40
Households with Children	20%	20%
Households with Seniors	17%	20%
Diversity Index	70	66
White Population	48%	56%
African-American or Black Population	37%	29%
Hispanic Population	11%	9%

Sources: Esri and U.S. Census



or the amount and kind of park and outdoor facilities that are appropriate to the needs and desires of the Chattanooga community and also sustainable, affordable and realistic.

Table 8 shows how Chattanooga compares to national average figures for the number of residents per recreation facility by type. It also calculates, based on the number of facilities in Chattanooga today, how many additional facilities would be needed to meet the national average today, and by the year 2050 to meet the needs of Chattanooga’s projected future population.

These figures don’t represent the POP level of service goals (Chapter 4), which are based on community input and Chattanooga’s specific park and outdoor context. But they inform

**Chattanooga Today\***



**National Average\*\***



**How to fill the gap today?**



**How to fill the gap in 2050?\*\*\***



\* City-owned parks

\*\* Based on national median figures from National Recreation and Park Association

\*\*\* Based on population projections from the Regional Planning Association

those goals and give a sense of how the city currently stacks up against others across the country.

## SYSTEM INVENTORY AND QUALITY

There are big disparities in the quality and condition of parks across the city. Some of the park sites that appear as

### DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 4: POP Recommendations for Facility Level of Service Goals](#)

Table 8: **Population-Based Service Metrics for City-Owned Recreation Facilities Compared to National Metrics**

FACILITY TYPE *	NO. OF FACILITIES **	CHATTANOOGA RESIDENTS PER FACILITY	NATIONAL AVERAGE RESIDENTS PER FACILITY	FACILITIES NEEDED TO FILL THE GAP TODAY	FACILITIES NEEDED TO FILL THE GAP IN 2050
Playgrounds	45	4,000	3,600	+5	+26
Basketball Courts	19	9,500	7,200	+6	+17
Tennis Courts	75	2,400	5,000	-39	-25
Pickleball Courts	0	N/A	28,500	+6	+9
Ball Diamonds	66	2,800	2,700	0	+27
Soccer/Football Fields	28	6,500	3,900	+18	+37
Dog Parks	3	60,700	46,000	+1	+3
Skate Parks	1	182,000	49,750	+3	+4
Golf Courses	2	91,000	86,000	0	+1
Disc Golf Courses	5	36,400	34,500	0	+2
Swimming Pools	4	45,500	52,600	0	+1

Sources: U.S. Census, Regional Planning Association, National Recreation and Park Association and Trust for Public Land

\* Facility types shown above are standard across U.S. cities and are appropriate for a variety of land and development contexts, allowing for straightforward population-based comparisons. This table does not count nature-based facilities such as sites and amenities for rock climbing, whitewater paddling, fishing or mountain biking. Though these types of facilities are important to Chattanooga recreation, sense of place and quality of life, their reliance on unique natural features makes it difficult to derive standardized comparisons across cities.

\*\* Park condition assessments demonstrated that some facilities counted here, including up to 21 tennis courts, are unusable in their current condition, speaking to the need to consider deferred maintenance hand-in-hand with facility counts.

**307**  
BENCHES

**65**  
SHELTERS / PAVILIONS

**299**  
PICNIC TABLES

**4**  
SPLASH PADS

**946**  
LIGHT FIXTURES

**315**  
TRASH CANS

**31**  
BIKE RACKS

**18**  
BATHROOMS

**53**  
GRILLS

**41**  
DRINKING FOUNTAINS

**8**  
COMMUNITY GARDENS

**45%**  
TREE CANOPY COVERAGE

**13%**  
IMPERVIOUS SURFACES  
(PARKING, BUILDINGS, ETC.)

EXAMPLE  
CONDITION  
RATING

**1**



EXAMPLE  
CONDITION  
RATING

**5**



“green polygons” in the walkshed maps above lack the minimal improvements—such as signage, benches or picnic tables—needed for a functional park.

The POP planning team used the ArcGIS Field Maps application to conduct an on-site inventory and condition rating of City-owned parks and their amenities such as signage, lighting, playgrounds and shelters.

The team ranked the condition of parks and their amenities on the following scale:

- 1 — New aesthetically and functionally
- 2 — Moderate loss of aesthetics and function
- 3 — Improvements have reached a tipping point where irreversible decline will occur without reinvestment
- 4 — Marginal remaining aesthetic and functional value

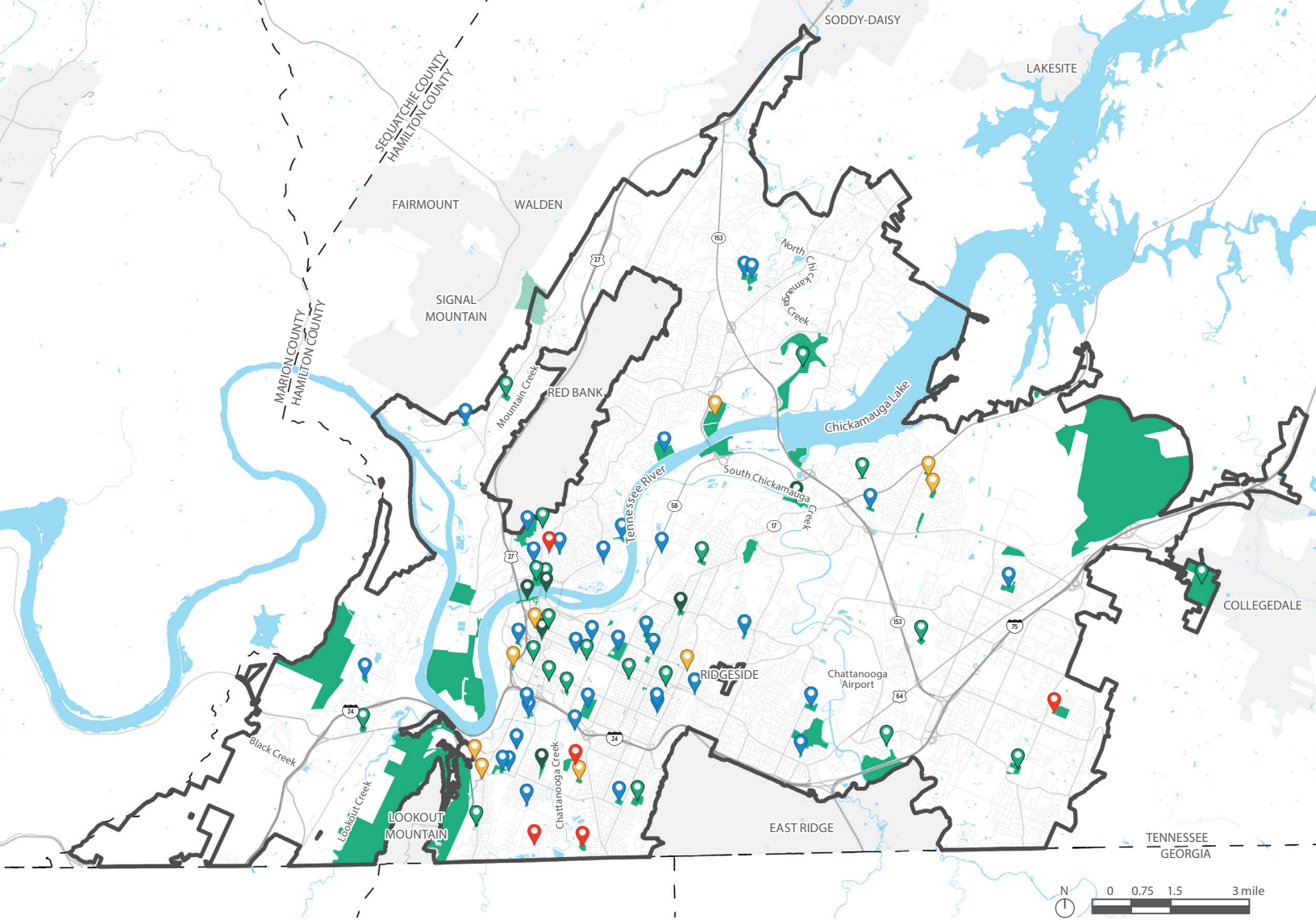
- 5 — Functionally obsolete or unsafe

By offering a big-picture understanding of what the City currently has and where improvements are needed, this inventory helped inform the list of recommended POP projects and priorities listed in Chapter 10, and the Total Asset Management approach to system improvements and ongoing maintenance described in Chapter 7.

## PARK VISITOR DATA

The POP planning team used mobility data from SafeGraph to explore visitation patterns to all parks within Chattanooga’s city limits between January 2018 and September 2021.

Mobility data providers like SafeGraph rely on relatively small sample sizes that are statistically representative of the overall population. Because of



## MAP: PARK CONDITION RATINGS

This map shows the average rounded condition ratings of existing City-owned parks based on assessments by the POP planning team and Department of Parks and Outdoors staff. These ratings inform POP recommendations for system improvements.

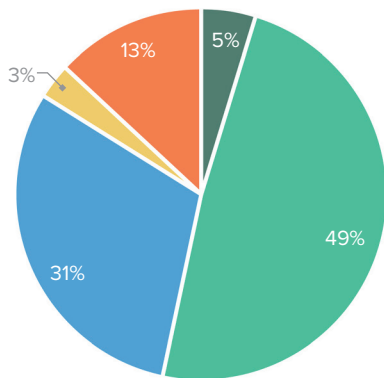
### LEGEND

- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- Waterbodies
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Existing Public Parks

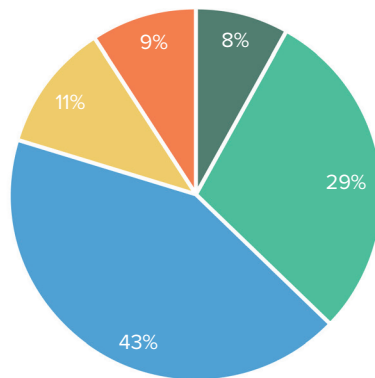
### Condition of City-Owned Parks

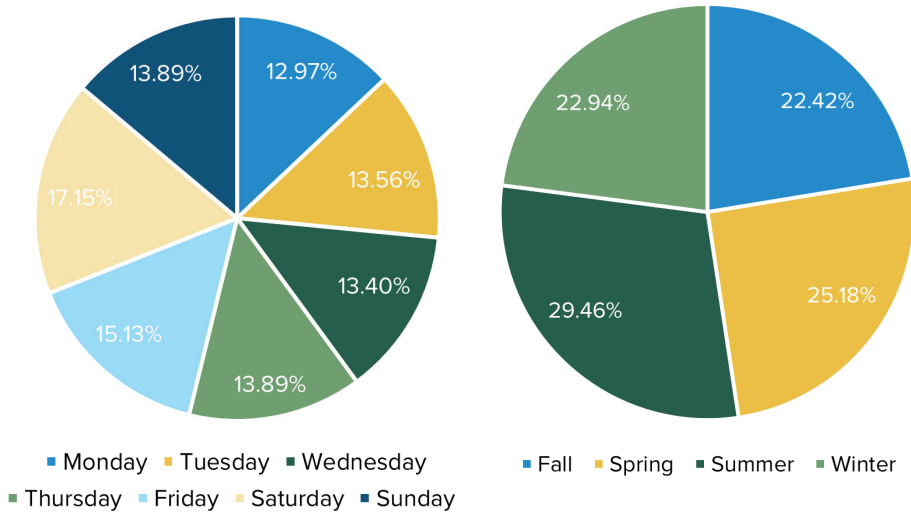
- 1 (Like New)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Functionally Obsolete)

Existing Parks by Condition Rating (Parkland Acreage)



Existing Parks by Condition Rating (Park Count)





**Figure 2:** Share of Park Visitors by Day of Week and Season of Year

this, their data can be extrapolated across actual populations in order to estimate the true number of visitors to various locations as well as their travel behaviors and demographics.

In total, SafeGraph recorded 1.4 million raw visits to parks in Chattanooga from January 2018 to September 2021; because this represents a representative fraction of the true number of park visitors, the data shared here is represented proportionally for the purpose of comparing parks and visitation patterns against one another rather than the sum of raw data.

## PARK VISITATION TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Chattanooga's parks have seen an overall upward trend in visitation, with the exception of a visible dip in April 2020 during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitation has since rebounded and reached all-time highs. (Figure 3)
- 2 However, analyzing visitation across Council Districts reveals that the recovery has been uneven. For example, parks in District 8 have seen all-time highs in visitation, while parks in District 1 have yet to see visitation return to pre-pandemic levels. (Figure 4)
- 3 By hour, current park visitation tends to peak during the early afternoon. By season, park visitation is highest in the summer. Almost one-third of current Chattanooga park visitation happens on the weekend. (Figure 2)
- 4 More than 65% of park visitors spend quality time—21 minutes or more—when they visit a Chattanooga park. Another 20% of park visitors spend only a quick five to 10 minutes. (Figure 6)
- 5 Only 3% of parks in Chattanooga have visitors who travel an average distance of two miles or less to reach them. (Figure 5)

## MOBILITY DATA

Mobility data from January 2018 to September 2021 can shed light on park visitation patterns in Chattanooga—how many people visit each park, how long they stay, the times of day and year that are most popular, and how far they're traveling to get there.

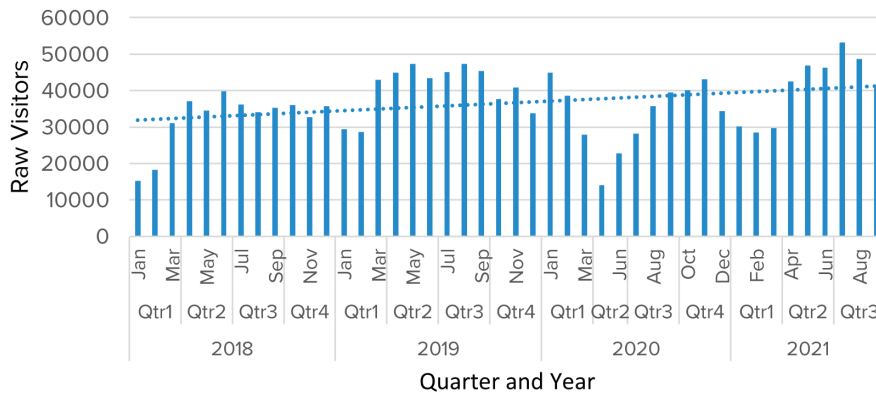


Figure 3: Park Visitors in Chattanooga, January 2018 to September 2021

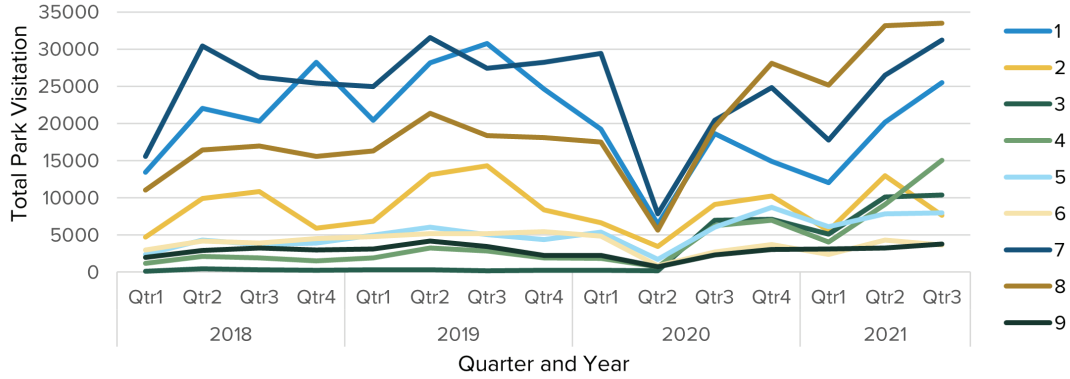


Figure 4: Park Visitation by Council District, January 2018 to September 2021

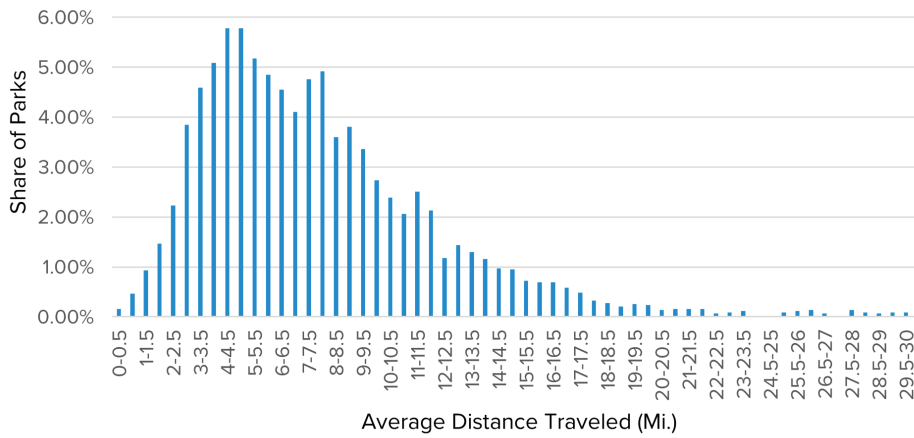


Figure 5: Average Monthly Distance Traveled, by Park, Half-Mile Increments

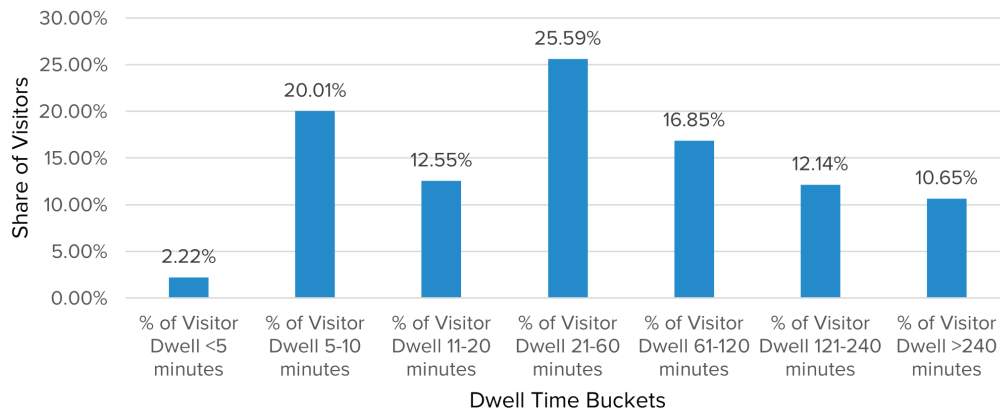


Figure 6: Bucketed Park Dwell Times

4

# PARKS AND OUTDOORS PLAN

- » POP Vision
- » 'Top of the POP'
- » POP Building Blocks
- » Parks and Outdoors Vision Plan
- » Prioritization and Phasing

## OUR BIG-PICTURE VISION

During the POP engagement process, the planning team asked Chattanoogaans to imagine their parks and outdoors in 100 years. Putting aside short- and even mid-term limitations of funding, operations and competing public priorities—what do Chattanoogaans want from their parks and outdoors for future generations?

The POP Vision Plan reflects what we heard—that Chattanoogaans envision a ‘city in a park,’ with protected and restored natural environments, interconnected greenways, and neighborhood parks for all.

The Vision Plan is ambitious. It seeks to build on and complete previous City visions; correct for past errors in discrimination and development patterns; anticipate future growth; ensure most residents have a high-quality park or trailhead close to home; and lay the foundation for a park and outdoor system that Chattanoogaans feel proud to leave to future generations.

## BUILDING IT OVER TIME

The Vision Plan is also realistic. POP projects are prioritized using criteria supported by the public, and plan implementation is broken into short-, medium- and long-term phases. Some projects are realistic to complete in the next five years, while others could need decades to come to fruition.

This chapter focuses on the physical plan and project phasing. **Chapters 5 to 9** dive into greater detail on the POP principles—**Access, Equity, Nature, Place** and **Quality**—and associated goals and actions. Finally, **Chapter 10** makes recommendations for operations, funding and financing, partnerships and more—the nuts and bolts of how the POP Vision Statement and Vision Plan introduced in this chapter are realized over time.

# POP VISION

Chattanooga will be a ‘**city in a park**,’ where everyone enjoys:

- » Just and equitable access to breathtaking natural scenery and rich cultural landscapes that are safe, clean and enjoyable for all.
- » Iconic signature parks.
- » Authentic and welcoming neighborhood parks.
- » The urban ecological benefits of beautiful landscapes, climate resilience, wildlife habitat, human comfort and wellness, and citywide air and water quality.
- » A greenway and blueway system that knits the whole city together.



## ‘TOP OF THE POP’

These are the top priorities that emerged during the planning process in conversation with the public, focus groups, stakeholders and public officials.

They reflect the POP’s challenge to strike a balance between lofty goals and on-the-ground realities: There is broad public support and an ambitious vision for Chattanooga’s parks and outdoors; there are also sizable gaps and disparities within the current system. There’s a need to dream big and show progress toward projects that capture the public imagination; and an even bigger need to get existing parks up to a baseline quality standard and to secure funding and staffing needed to maintain our current and future investments.

These priorities capture the healthy tension between the POP’s vision and its short- and mid-term phased priorities and action items—on the one hand reminding the community of what’s possible, and on the other demonstrating incremental but rational and concrete progress toward Chattanooga’s vision of a ‘city in a park.’

- 
- 1** **Initiate a neighborhood park initiative** to upgrade existing parks and add new parks to serve gaps in our community. Set aside land in anticipation of population growth and development.

---

  - 2** Continue to invest in Signature Parks as essential for Chattanooga’s **regional economy and iconic identity.**

---

  - 3** **Build safe greenways and trailheads** to ensure that at least 55% of residents have a high-quality park, close to home.

---

  - 4** Sustain **healthy urban ecological systems** and protect our **shared cultural landscapes and stories.**

---

  - 5** Make rapid targeted improvements and create partnerships that **improve the quality of, and activity in, existing parks** serving our most vulnerable communities and residents.

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  - 6** **Dedicate adequate resources** to care for high-quality public parks that are well-loved, and well-used by residents and guests.

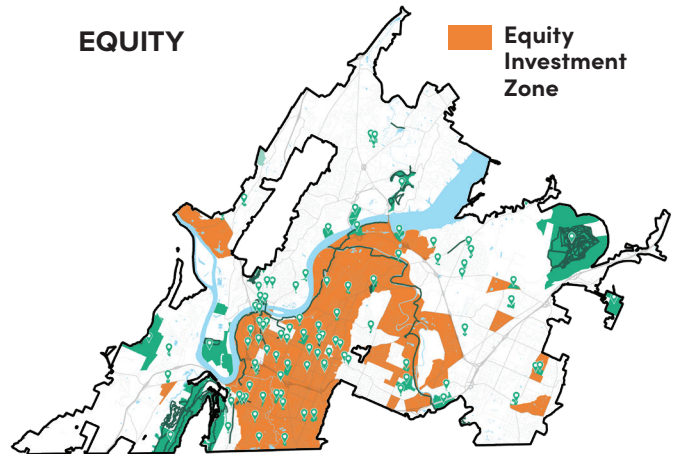
## POP BUILDING BLOCKS

These are the building blocks of the physical plan—the service gaps, opportunity sites and priority investment areas that help give form to mapped recommendations.

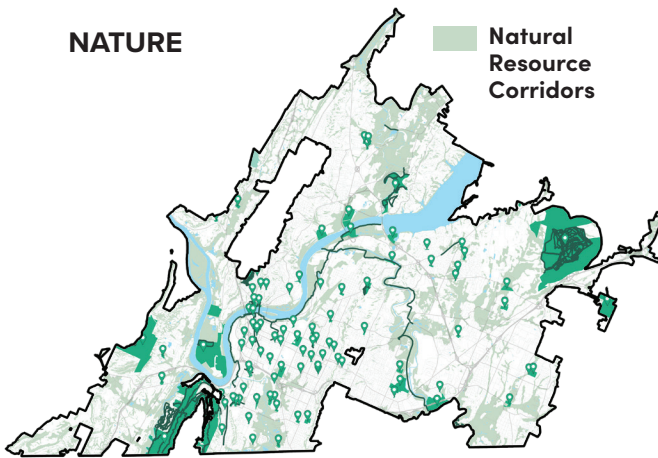
### DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 5: Equity Investment Zones](#)

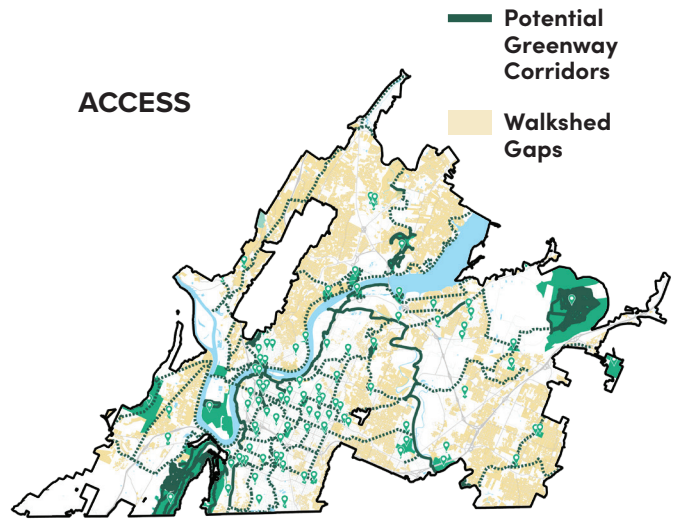
EQUITY



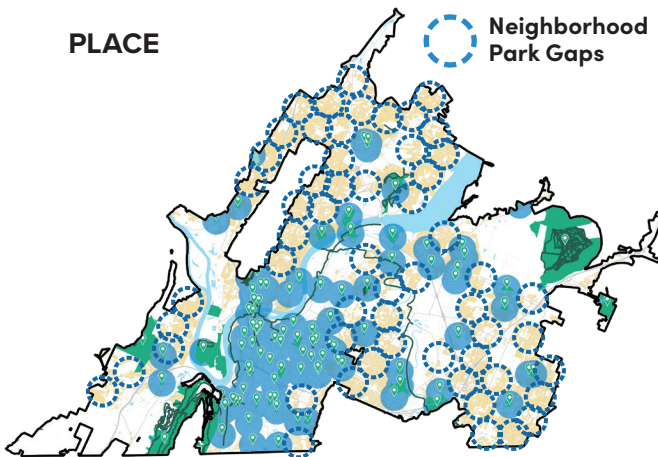
NATURE



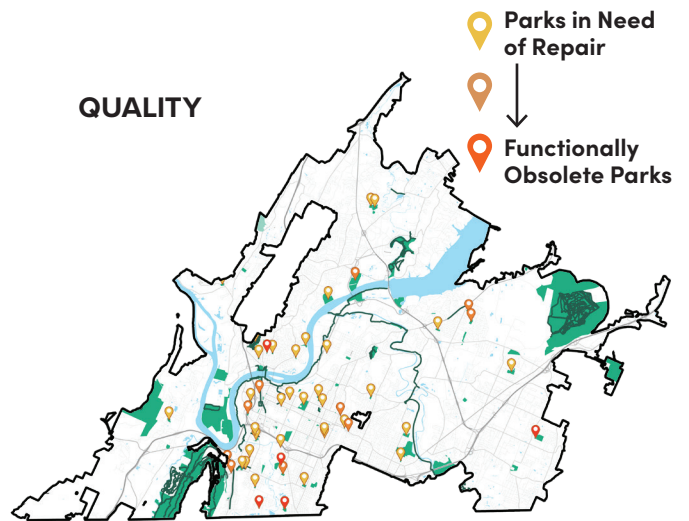
ACCESS



PLACE



QUALITY



## POP PRINCIPLES

POP projects were selected with the plan’s driving principles in mind—for their potential to protect natural environments, build a sense of place and community, broaden citywide access to the parks and outdoors system, bring new life to the City’s neglected park sites, and unravel the impacts of a long history of inequitable park and outdoor investments. These opportunities are illustrated in the series of maps on page 54.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE GOALS

Seventeen projects in the POP Vision Plan are major new facilities that will require new parkland or the retrofitting of existing parkland. These recommendations (Table 9) reflect community input about facility use and shortfalls and keep Chattanooga’s level of service metrics for these facility types competitive with national and peer-city figures (Table 8), for the city’s current and projected future population. Where feasible, the POP proposes a ‘complex’ approach to cluster certain facilities—such as soccer fields—for ease of maintenance and to promote certain sites for tournament use.

As significant pieces of the larger park and outdoor system, all Special Use Facilities should include easily accessible parkland that allows each site to also serve a neighborhood park function. The Phase 1 POP projects include explicit recommendations for the colocation of proposed recreational facilities with new neighborhood parks.

## PARK AND OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES

Trust for Public Land’s ParkServe database calculates conserved parkland as a percentage of a city’s total land area. The POP identifies TPL’s national median figure of 15%—which for Chattanooga would equal 6,200 acres—as our benchmarking goal for how the City, state and federal partners, and other conservation organizations should evaluate our total conserved public land through the life of the plan. The POP also recommends to designate as preserves 560 acres of land the City currently owns, a significant down payment toward the larger goal.

Table 9: **POP Recommended New Facilities Based on Public Input and National Standards**

FACILITY TYPE	NO. OF NEW FACILITIES	2050 LOS GOAL (RESIDENTS PER FACILITY)	RELATIVE TO CURRENT LOS	RELATIVE TO PEER-CITY METRICS
<b>Botanical Garden</b>	<b>1</b>	250,000	<b>+</b>	no data
<b>Swimming Pool</b>	<b>1</b>	50,000	<b>=</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Pickleball Court Complex</b>	<b>1</b> (8-12 courts)	25,000	<b>+</b>	<b>&gt;</b>
<b>Ball Diamond Complex</b>	<b>1</b> (4-8 diamonds)	3,400	<b>-</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Multi-Use Field Complex</b>	<b>2</b> (16-24 fields)	3,500	<b>+</b>	<b>&gt;</b>
<b>Community Centers</b>	<b>2</b>	12,000	<b>=</b>	<b>&gt;</b>
<b>Disc Golf Courses</b>	<b>2</b>	35,000	<b>+</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Outdoor Adventure/Whitewater Park</b>	<b>3</b>	80,000	<b>+</b>	no data
<b>Skate Parks</b>	<b>1</b>	100,000	<b>+</b>	<b>=</b>

Sources: U.S. Census, Regional Planning Association, NRPA, TPL

# POP VISION PLAN

## POP VISION

Chattanooga will be a ‘city in a park,’ where everyone enjoys just and equitable access to breathtaking natural scenery and rich cultural landscapes; iconic signature parks; authentic and welcoming neighborhood parks; the urban ecological benefits of beautiful landscapes, climate resilience, wildlife habitat, human comfort and wellness, and citywide air and water quality; and a greenway and blueway system that knits the whole city together.

## POP VISION PLAN

The POP recommends physical park and outdoor improvements to be constructed in three phases over the next 50 years. These projects are the physical improvements, additions and expansions that will start to bring the POP’s vision statement to life across the city.

### NEW GREENWAYS & BLUEWAYS

Across geographies and demographic groups, **Chattanoogans love their greenways and want more of them.** They also value the park and outdoor system’s role in protecting and restoring the city’s natural environment.

By following streams, rivers and ridges wherever possible, the proposed greenway corridors achieve both goals—**creating new citywide recreation and connectivity while preserving and linking natural resource corridors.**

The POP proposes high-level greenway corridors, not detailed trail alignments. Similarly, the POP proposes blueway corridors but not the locations of specific put-in spots or amenities. Closer study is needed to determine alternate locations and to pinpoint the best opportunities for land conservation and public access.

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PROJECTS

**Chattanoogans also see neighborhood parks as essential in their long-term vision for parks and outdoors.** These parks bring neighbors together and meet the day-to-day social and recreational needs of their communities.

There are big disparities in the quality and condition of Chattanooga’s neighborhood parks, and many Chattanoogaans don’t have a neighborhood park to call their own.

The POP proposes **significant improvements to existing City parks**, to bring all parks to a high standard of quality and ensure they serve as well-loved neighborhood parks.

The POP also proposes **34 new parks in those areas of the city with parkland gaps**, with the goal that every household in Chattanooga has a **park close to home.** To suit the city’s diverse development contexts, the goal is to provide a park within a 10-minute walk of residents in Chattanooga’s Urban Overlay zone, and within a 15-minute walk for all other parts of the city.

### NEW FACILITIES

Nineteen major new facilities are proposed **based on public feedback and national and peer-city metrics** for facilities per population. This list reflects what the planning team heard from the community—what they want and what Chattanooga lacks—and positions the city to **maintain or improve its population-based level of service through at least 2050.**

Other smaller facilities—such as playgrounds, picnic pavilions, basketball courts, restrooms and single playfields—will be added systemwide as part of neighborhood and community park development and based on the needs of specific communities.

### NEW PARKLAND

The **City has dedicated 560 acres of vacant land** identified by the planning team for **new developed parks, natural resource protection and passive recreation.**

More parkland opportunities will become available as part of future development, public-private partnerships and ongoing land conservation efforts. The POP proposes the City immediately launch a **land acquisition strategy** to fulfill the vision of a ‘city in a park.’



## FIX, BUILD, CONNECT AND PRESERVE

A plan of this scale will **Fix, Build, Connect** and **Preserve** our public spaces in the short, medium and long term.

In the **short term**, we commit to:

- 1. Fixing 19 existing parks.** Fixing what we already have is our first priority.
- 2. Building and Connecting** through implementation of **11 new parks** and **16 miles of new greenways.**
- 3. Preserving 560 acres** of existing City land.

These recommendations achieve our goal to ensure more than half of Chattanoogaans have close-to-home access to a well-loved, well-maintained and beautiful park.

In addition, to implement these recommendations we will:

- Increase community engagement through a new **[Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission](#)**.
- Become the **[first designated National Park City](#)** in the western hemisphere, in celebration of our rich outdoor lifestyle, natural beauty and volunteerism in support of our great outdoors.

## DEEPER DIVE

» [Full-Size Map: A 21st-Century Park System](#)

## PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

The POP uses a prioritization model to score and rank the Vision Plan projects and divide them into phases based on priorities expressed during the community engagement process. This helps the City and its partners to focus their resources and first steps on projects that are best positioned to advance the public interest and the goals of the POP.

The planning team researched local and national best practices, engaged local stakeholders in focus groups, and surveyed public values through polls and ‘budget game’ activities. Through this process, the team identified a set of criteria to identify the highest-priority POP projects by project type, as shown in Table 10.

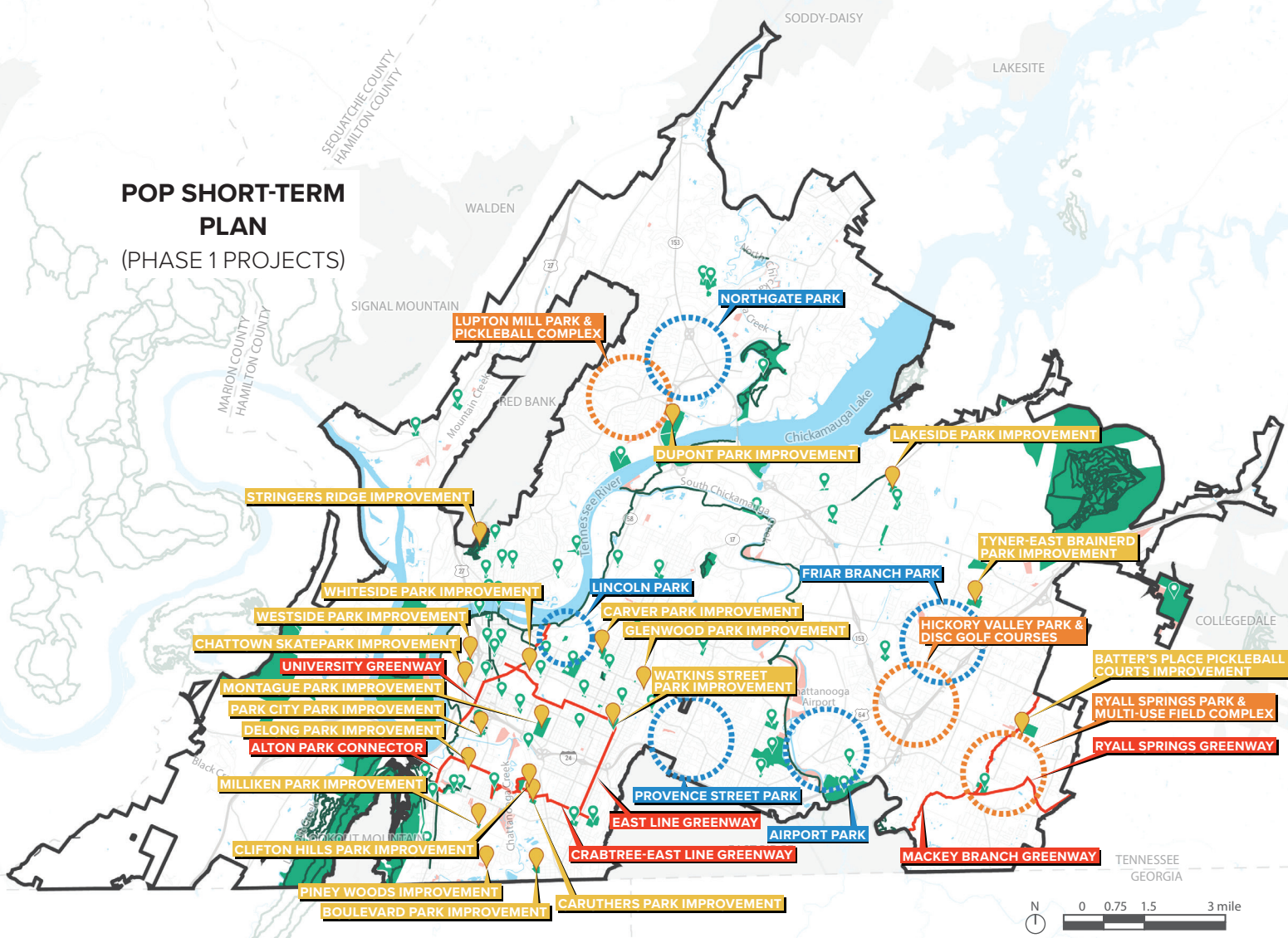
The prioritization criteria are:

- » Equity—The project serves the areas of the city identified as **Equity Investment Zones** based on environmental and demographic data. These areas have a history of public underinvestment and environmental contamination. Equity is the highest weighted criterion.
- » Access—The project helps to fill the city’s 10-minute park **walkshed gap**.
- » Quality—The project improves the quality and utility of an **existing park in poor condition**.
- » Place—The project anticipates **future growth** areas and the need for protected parkland and open space.
- » Nature—The project supports the preservation or restoration of sensitive environments and **natural resources**.
- » Community Development—The project represents a special opportunity to promote economic or community development by creating a new **destination park**, protecting an **iconic cultural resource** or **leveraging other dollars** for community development.
- » Level of Service—The project accomplishes a **LOS goal** established based on public input and national and peer-city comparisons.
- » Feasibility—The project faces **no significant hurdles** to implementation.
- » Number Served—The project would **serve more people**, boosting connectivity and system access for areas of the city with relatively high population density.
- » Public Support—The specific project has received **public support** in a multiple-choice or ranking question in one of the two project surveys.

Table 10: **Prioritization Criteria Used by Project Type**

PROJECT TYPE	PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA									
	EQUITY	ACCESS	QUALITY	PLACE	NATURE	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	LEVEL OF SERVICE	FEASIBILITY	NUMBER SERVED	PUBLIC SUPPORT
Greenway Corridor	●	●						●	●	●
Park Reinvestment Project	●		●	●	●	●				
New Neighborhood Park	●	●		●		●				
New Facilities							●			●
Blueway Amenities	●									●

## POP SHORT-TERM PLAN (PHASE 1 PROJECTS)



## PROJECT PHASING

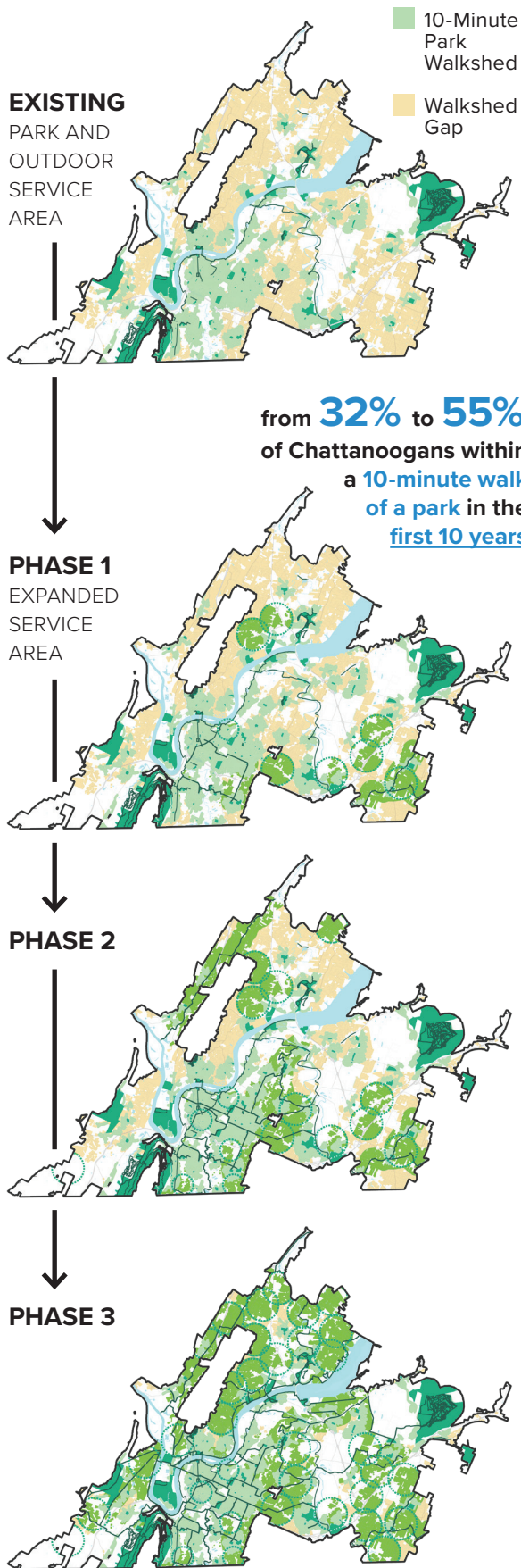
The prioritization model generated project scores that informed the distribution of Vision Plan projects into three phases (Table 11 on page 61), with Phase 1 projects receiving the highest score within their categories. The result is an immediate focus on the projects that are highest-impact for improving park and outdoor access, equity, nature, place and quality.

### PHASE 1 (SHORT TERM)

In Phase 1, the City catches up on long-overdue park and outdoor investments by:

- Reinvesting in existing parks, with funding for deferred maintenance across the system plus new funding for significant makeovers of existing parks in poor condition, with a focus on neighborhood parks in Equity Investment Zones.
- Building six new neighborhood parks to fill the most critical park gaps.
- Building four new facilities—disc golf course, multi-use field complex, pickleball complex and a sports and recreation customer service center—to meet the most pressing recreational needs.
- Building 16 miles of paved greenway trails, with a focus on connectivity and filling trail gaps in the urban tier while laying the groundwork for a new and connected system east of Missionary Ridge.
- Installing access points, amenities and signage for blueway trails along South Chickamauga Creek and the Tennessee River.

These projects serve communities across the city and allow the City to reach its 55% walkshed goal within the first 10 years of POP implementation, all while honoring the priorities identified during the public engagement process.



**Figure 7:** Expanded Park and Outdoor Service Area by Proposed Phase

## PHASE 2 (MEDIUM TERM)

In Phase 2, the City builds on the momentum of the first 10 years by:

- Wrapping up significant reinvestment projects to get existing City parks up to a baseline quality standard, with the goal of improving all parks of moderate condition that weren't renovated in Phase 1.
- Building nine new neighborhood parks to serve future growth and fill the remaining parkland gaps within Equity Investment Zones.
- Building eight new facilities to take Chattanooga's sports and outdoor adventure scene to an elevated level of service and quality.
- Building 31 miles of new paved greenways trails, with a focus on creating new access to nature and recreation in the riparian corridors of Mountain and Chattanooga Creeks and on building connectivity through East Chattanooga and across Missionary Ridge.
- Installing access points, amenities and signage for blueway trails along Chattanooga Creek, North Chickamauga Creek and Maclellan Island.

## PHASE 3 (LONG TERM)

In Phase 3, citywide access to parks and greenways is realized by:

- Building 18 new neighborhood parks in the lowest-density residential communities.
- Building six new facilities to serve the recreational needs of a growing population.
- Building 71 miles of new paved greenway trails, with a significant increase in citywide connectivity as the more challenging alignments are pieced together and public access secured.
- Installing access points, amenities and signage for blueway trails along Chickamauga Lake and Lookout Creek.

## A LIVING FRAMEWORK

The phasing plan offers a rational and community-driven framework to help the City and its partners prioritize their park and outdoor investments; it should be seen as a living framework that can adapt to meet evolving community needs.

For example, Phases 2 and 3 of the POP, and the relative importance of POP projects listed under those timeframes, will likely evolve in future plan updates to reflect new conditions and public values. Some projects listed in those phases might also become bigger priorities within the initial 10-year implementation timeline as new opportunities emerge; the prioritization of projects into phases in the POP should not prevent the City or its partners from taking advantage of such opportunities.

Greenway projects in particular often grow out of unforeseen opportunities, such as new trail-oriented developments or donations of land or easement access. Because citywide and regional connectivity is more beneficial—and more challenging to implement—than any single trail segment, the City and its partners should take advantage of all opportunities as they arise, regardless of phase proposed by the POP.



Table 11: Summary of Proposed Projects by Phase

<b>PHASE 1 (SHORT TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	16 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	7 new neighborhood parks
<b>Park Reinvestment Projects</b>	19 park upgrade or redevelopment projects plus deferred maintenance across the system
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	4 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 28 miles of paddle trail
<b>PHASE 2 (MEDIUM TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	31 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	10 new neighborhood parks
<b>Park Reinvestment Projects</b>	31 park upgrade or redevelopment projects
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	9 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 16 miles of paddle trail
<b>PHASE 3 (LONG TERM)</b>	
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b>	<b>COUNT</b>
<b>Greenway Corridors</b>	71 miles of new greenway trails and connectors
<b>New Neighborhood Parks</b>	17 new neighborhood parks
<b>Special Use Facilities</b>	4 new facilities
<b>Blueway Amenities</b>	new amenities along 8 miles of paddle trail

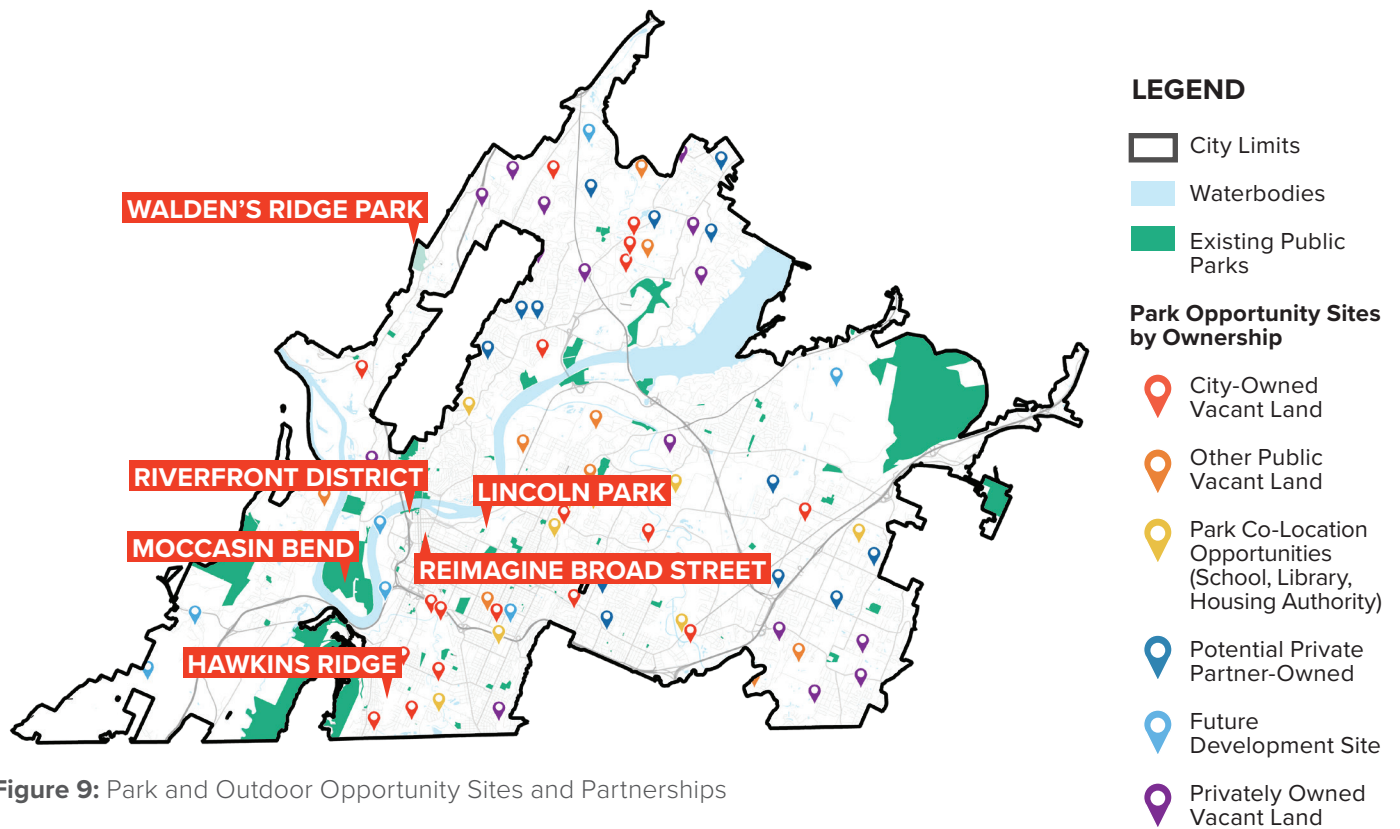


Figure 9: Park and Outdoor Opportunity Sites and Partnerships

## DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 10: Partnerships](#)

## PARK AND OUTDOOR PARTNERSHIPS

The POP Vision Plan proposes City-owned and -driven park and outdoor projects. Right now, City-owned parkland accounts for only 20% of all parkland within the city limits. This demonstrates the extent to which the POP Vision Plan captures only a portion of the exciting park and outdoor possibilities in and around Chattanooga, and the huge promise in City efforts to expand the POP’s impact through meaningful partnerships.

Figure 9 calls out two types of opportunities:

- 1. Park Partnership Opportunities:** The map labels highlight other public and private park projects with transformative potential for the city’s public realm, outdoor recreation system and cultural landscapes. Though not within the City’s system of parks, these projects will add enormous value to the citywide park and outdoor system, and the City can play a leading or supporting role in bringing these projects to life.
- 2. Park Land Opportunities:** The pinpoints on the map call out park opportunity sites for future park development and open space conservation. The planning team identified these sites at first with a review of City-owned vacant lands, to identify those parcels of appropriate size, environmental value and context to support the goals of the POP. Next the team applied similar criteria to vacant land owned by other public entities and potential private partners, and to evaluate and reflect park recommendations from previous RPA Small Area Plans. Last, similar criteria were used to identify potential acquisition properties currently under private ownership. This exercise illustrates how the City can follow a ‘lowest-hanging fruit’ approach to proactively protect parkland and natural resources through public and private partnerships and limit the need to acquire new parkland.

Chapter 10 offers recommendations and models for how the City can create a partnership framework, to guide the development of formal partnership agreements with other public and private park providers and supporting organizations.



**MOCCASIN BEND STUDENT DESIGN STUDIO**  
 Conceptual Designs and images by Leslie Zhang



**REIMAGINE BROAD STREET**



**WALDEN'S RIDGE PARK**



**FOUR** Aspirations    **EIGHT** Strategies    **ONE** Riverfront for all Chattanooga

- Activate the Riverfront
- Create a Place for All Chattanoogaans
- Develop a Greater Sense of Place
- Strengthen Connectivity to the Riverfront
- Humanize the Parks
- Come Together at the River
- Build Inclusively
- Establish the Riverfront Front Door
- Create a Civic Campus
- Boldly Connect Downtown
- Refresh the Riverwalk
- Get Your Feet Wet

**ONE RIVERFRONT DISTRICT MASTER PLAN**

**200** New neighbors!

**19** New shops and restaurants enlivening Broad Street!

**30,000** New overnight guests enjoying the Riverfront District!

5

# EQUITY

- » Big Ideas
- » Equity Investment Zones
- » POP Actions

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘EQUITY’ IN THE POP?

Equity in the POP is **a commitment to justice, fairness and the premise that everyone deserves access to a great public park.**

This means a parks and outdoors system that is tailored to meet the unique needs of Chattanooga’s communities. It means looking beyond parks as a system of ‘green polygons on a map’ and ensuring that:

- Each City park is **equipped and maintained** to be **well-loved and well-used** by its neighbors.
- Sidewalks, bike paths, greenways and transit are provided and designed so **all residents can easily reach parks.**
- There are **no longer disparities** in the quantity or condition of parks **depending on where you live** in the city.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, as proposed POP projects and actions seek to create a parks and outdoors system with facilities and programming that are accessible, inclusive, just and welcoming for all.

This understanding of equity for Chattanooga’s parks and outdoors was developed and supported by the POP public process—through online survey questions and conversations with stakeholders, focus groups and workshop participants.

# BIG IDEAS / EQUITY

- » Prioritize system improvements in areas of the city with a history of underinvestment in parks and other public services.
- » Locate parks and open space to address the city’s brownfield legacy—transforming contaminated sites and eyesores into high-quality, community-serving public parks.
- » Incorporate anti-displacement strategies in park design and engagement processes.
- » Train and support Parks and Outdoors staff in promoting equity within the system and the department.
- » Leverage the power of the community in implementation of the POP and to ensure the system serves and reflects all Chattanoogaans.

# EQUITY INVESTMENT ZONES

The projects and investments recommended in the POP will be **prioritized in areas identified as Equity Investment Zones**. The planning team worked with City staff and stakeholders and built on previous work in Chattanooga to develop a mapping methodology that identifies those parts of the city with a history of environmental degradation, historical underinvestment in parks and other public improvements, and greater need for the life-changing benefits of parks.

The equity mapping methodology, described in more detail in the appendix, considers equity through the lenses of Environmental Justice, Socioeconomics and Demographics, including the following data inputs for each:

## DEEPER DIVE

» [Appendix: Equity Mapping Methodology](#)

- **Environmental Justice**—areas with relatively:

- » High vulnerability to flooding
- » Low tree canopy coverage
- » High proximity to brownfields

- **Socioeconomics**—areas with relatively:

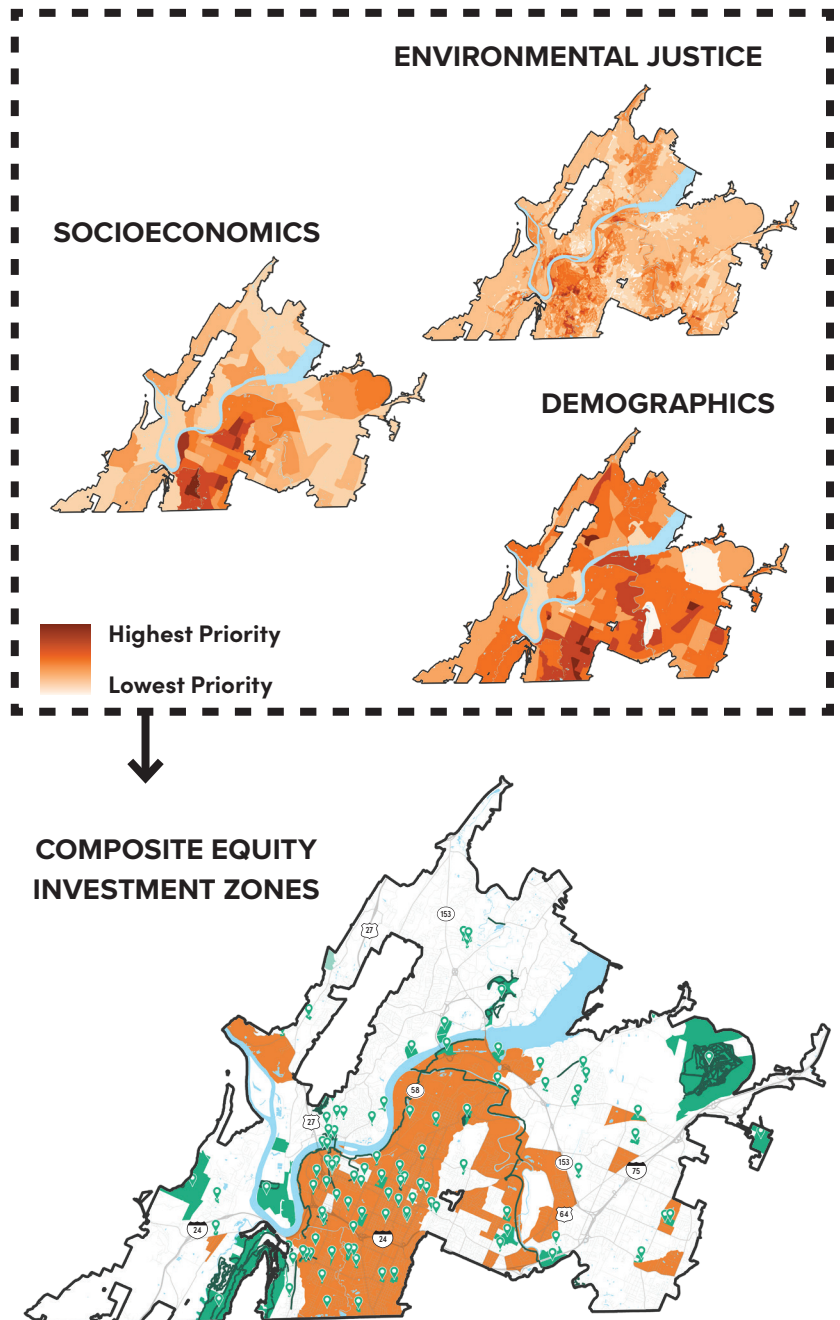
- » Low rates of car ownership
- » Low educational attainment
- » High Crime Index
- » High household poverty
- » High percentage of SNAP recipients
- » High unemployment

- **Demographics**—areas with relatively:

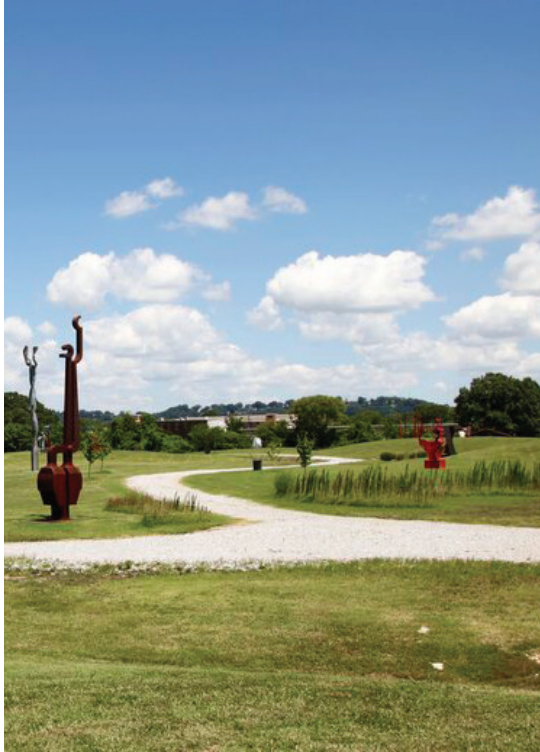
- » High Diversity Index
- » High percentage of linguistically isolated populations
- » High percentage of seniors
- » High percentage of children
- » High percentage of people with disabilities
- » High population density

These data inputs were overlaid using the ArcGIS Weighted Overlay tool to identify areas of greatest overlap, as illustrated in Figure 10. All recommended POP projects identified as serving communities in these Equity Investment Zones were weighted more heavily in the POP Project Prioritization Matrix, resulting in an **immediate focus on projects that serve these communities**.

This methodology reflects the judgment and recommendations of POP stakeholders and the public; rather than being prescriptive or set in stone, it should be revisited regularly to ensure it continues to reflect public values and guide equitable decision-making.



**Figure 10:** Weighted Overlay Mapping for Equity Investment Zones



Local (*Sculpture Fields at Montague Park, left*) and national (*Riverfront Park in Newark, right*) examples of reclaiming brownfields.

## POP ACTIONS / EQUITY

Each of the POP’s Big Ideas is supported by a series of specific Actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the goals of the POP.

Below is additional background information and context for some of the POP’s Big Ideas and Actions for equity. See [page 72](#) for the [Equity Action Matrix](#).

### HEALING THE CITY’S CONTAMINATED LANDS

Chattanooga’s industrial legacy includes thousands of acres of contaminated land, often tucked within or adjacent to the city’s lower-income communities and communities of color. As they stand, these brownfield sites are eyesores, liabilities and public health risks. For people who live near them, they can be daily reminders of past environmental injustice.

Chattanooga is far from the only city in the country with such a legacy, and there are countless success stories of communities cleaning up these lands and converting them to beautiful parks and open spaces. The City’s Brownfield Coordinator oversees coordination and funding opportunities with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other entities to address and prioritize Chattanooga’s brownfield sites. The POP recommends a close working partnership and systematic approach to ensure every opportunity is taken to reclaim and heal at least part of these sites as parkland and open space.

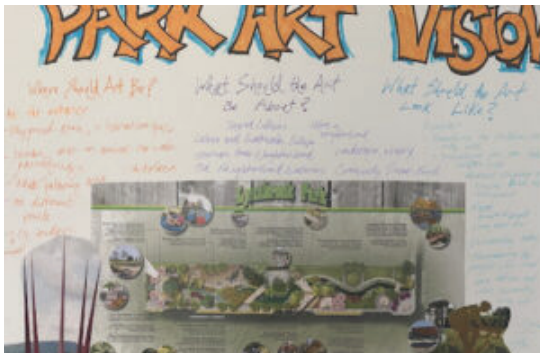
### GETTING AHEAD OF ‘GREEN GENTRIFICATION’

During the POP engagement process, the planning team heard from Chattanoogaans that they are concerned about the threats posed to existing communities by gentrification and

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [Appendix: POP Map Atlas—Existing Brownfield Sites](#)
- » [‘Greening without Gentrification’ \[external URL\]](#)





*The public engagement for design of Lynnbrook Park is a local example of a partner- and community-driven process—a City park, with a design visioning process led by a local artist collective, funded by an NEA Our Town grant secured by Trust for Public Land.*

investment-driven displacement. There is a growing body of research devoted to ‘green gentrification’—the effect of new park and greenway development in driving up rents and home values, forcing out longtime residents who can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood they’ve called home.

Neighborhood change and new investment affect communities in diverse and complicated ways, and persistent disinvestment can just as easily lead to displacement. The POP recommends establishment of a City and partner working group to study this dynamic issue, review research and best practices from other cities, and develop a multidisciplinary strategy that’s suited to Chattanooga.

Other POP actions reflect universal standards for equitable development that the City and its partners can follow in the meantime. At the heart of all these recommendations is the importance of meaningful engagement with existing residents, along with community-led design and planning processes in areas facing new park or housing development. By working hand in hand with existing communities and being proactive with housing and economic development programs, such as those overseen by the Chief Housing Officer and Department of Economic Development, the City can ensure that park and greenway improvements benefit rather than displace longtime residents.

## **LEVERAGING THE POWER OF THE COMMUNITY**

Promoting park equity is not a one-time action. It will require ongoing efforts and diligence to ensure that past patterns of disinvestment are not repeated and that all Chattanooga residents feel connected to their parks and outdoors.

The POP recommends creation of a Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission to build institutional knowledge, reflect public values and ensure equity and accountability in park decision-making. This extends not only to the provision of park acreage and facilities but to



Outdoor Chattanooga park stewardship volunteers.

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [‘Steps to Becoming Partners in Neighborhood Parks’, KaBOOM! Guide to Creating a Friends Group \[external URL\]](#)
- » [Healthy, Connected Chattanooga, Trust for Public Land \[external URL\]](#)

park operations, maintenance, activation, design, planning—all the elements required to secure an equitable system for all Chattanoogaans, now and into the future.

The POP also recommends development of various stewardship and volunteer programs to further leverage community resources and expertise, and to help build meaningful connections between people and their parks and outdoors. These include:

- Exploration of a **Chattanooga Conservation Corps** program that hires and trains young people and veterans in environmental stewardship, environmental education, public engagement, park improvement and data collection. This could include partnerships with the Southeast Conservation Corps, Lookout Mountain Conservancy, Hamilton County Schools and local colleges and universities.
- Revival of the **Outdoor Ambassadors** program to build new avenues for people to use and love their parks and outdoors. Outdoor Ambassadors are community leaders who organize outdoor excursions and programming for new park and outdoor users, with a focus on bringing greater cultural and racial diversity to Chattanooga’s outdoor scene.
- Support for the development of **neighborhood park Friends groups** that are actively engaged in the stewardship of their neighborhood parks. The Department of Parks and Outdoors should provide capacity-building support for the creation and ongoing health of these community-based groups, who can help the City design and maintain neighborhood parks that authentically serve and reflect their communities.

## PROMOTING COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND HEALTH EQUITY

High-quality, programmed and abundant parks and greenspace are critical for community health. The POP’s vision for expanded neighborhood park and greenway access and for walkable, bikeable and rollable communities will promote health and wellness for all Chattanoogaans.

In the interest of health equity, the City should continue to build on the work of the POP and *Healthy, Connected Chattanooga* to ensure park and outdoor investments are focused in areas of the city with the greatest need and lowest (or lowest-quality) access to parks and recreation opportunities.

The Department of Parks and Outdoors should work with the Department of Community Health to explore ways that the park system can support broader public health initiatives—for example, by hosting community gardens and farmer’s markets; integrating food assistance programs into park spaces and events; developing programs for populations at risk of social isolation; investing in equipment, education and representation to remove barriers from participation; and connecting people to local health providers through programs such as ‘Walk with a Doc.’

## MAKING THE CASE

The National Recreation and Park Association compiled these findings from the growing body of evidence demonstrating the health and wellness benefits of community parks and greenspace.

[Access all the fact sheets at the NRPA website \[external URL\].](#)

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF PARKS AND GREENSPACE

- 1** Patients in hospital rooms facing a park had a 10% faster recovery and needed 50% less strong pain medication compared to patients whose rooms faced a building wall.
- 2** For diabetic individuals, 30 minutes of walking in nature resulted in larger drops in blood glucose than three hours of cycling indoors.
- 3** A 20-minute walk in a park or natural area helped children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder focus better.
- 4** Children who live within 2/3-mile of a park with a playground are five times more likely to be a healthy weight.
- 5** Physician-diagnosed depression was 33% higher in residential areas with the fewest greenspaces, compared to neighborhoods with the most.
- 6** The decreased pollution and increased physical activity associated with walking- and biking-oriented development has been shown to significantly reduce premature deaths, heart attacks, asthma attacks, chronic and acute bronchitis cases, respiratory-related emergency room visits and lost work days.
- 7** People who live near trails are 50% more likely to get the amount of physical activity they need to stay healthy. People who live in walkable neighborhoods are twice as likely to get that level of physical activity as people who don't.
- 8** A Lincoln, Nebraska study showed that every \$1 spent on trails saves almost \$3 in direct medical costs over time.

Table 12: **Equity Action Matrix**

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Prioritize system improvements in areas of the city with a history of underinvestment in parks and other public services.</b>										
Update the Equity Investment Zones methodology and geographic boundaries every five years with the latest data, input from City stakeholders and the Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission.			●			Design and Connectivity		●		
With every update of the Equity Investment Zones, revisit the project prioritization matrix and confirm whether park and outdoor investments continue to be prioritized in the intended areas.			●			Design and Connectivity		●		
Analyze public and private spending on an annual basis to evaluate the equity of investments in park and outdoor assets and programming, and adjust the approach as needed.			●			Administration				●
<b>BIG IDEA: Locate parks and open space to address the city's brownfield legacy—transforming contaminated sites and eyesores into high-quality, community-serving public parks.</b>										
Work with the City's Brownfield Coordinator to navigate the funding and regulatory environment and identify opportunities for the City's brownfield redevelopment projects to include significant restored open space and parkland.				●		Design and Connectivity	●			
Coordinate with the Department of Economic Development to recognize parks as one of the highest and best use for brownfields.				●		Administration	●			
<b>BIG IDEA: Incorporate anti-displacement strategies in park design and engagement processes.</b>										
Coordinate with the Chief Housing Officer to create an anti-displacement working group of City, institutional and community-based partners to research best practices from other cities, identify Chattanooga communities at risk of displacement, and develop multidisciplinary anti-displacement and equitable development strategies.	●	●				Design and Connectivity	●			
Work with City and community-based partners to proactively develop anti-displacement strategies in at-risk communities in advance of park and housing development—such as Community Benefits Agreements, targeted affordable housing programs, homeowner and homebuyer financial assistance programs, job development and small business support, and value capture strategies.				●	●	Design and Connectivity				●

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
Deploy culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, inclusive and meaningful public outreach and engagement to existing populations to ensure all park design and improvement projects serve existing communities rather than promote gentrification.			●			Outreach and Engagement				●
Work with other City departments to create park and outdoor workforce development programs and ‘green’ jobs, with the goal that park and greenway construction and maintenance dollars benefit local communities.				●		Administration	●			
<b>BIG IDEA: Support Parks and Outdoors staff in promoting equity within the system and the department.</b>										
Coordinate with the Department of Equity and Community Engagement to develop a common definition of ‘equity’ shared across the City.				●		Administration	●			
Empower Parks and Outdoors staff to nurture specific strategic partnerships and community relationships.			●			Administration				●
Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan for the department and its internal processes.		●				Administration	●			
Provide annual staff training and workshopping to ensure the department and its policies promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.			●			Administration				●
<b>BIG IDEA: Leverage the power of the community in implementation of the POP and to ensure the system serves and reflects all Chattanoogaans.</b>										
Create a Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission to build institutional knowledge, reflect public values and ensure equity in decision-making.	●					Administration	●			
Explore establishment of a Chattanooga Conservation Corps program that hires and trains young people and veterans in environmental stewardship, environmental education, public engagement, park improvement and data collection.				●		Natural Resources		●		
Encourage and support the development of ‘Friends of’ and other volunteer groups to create a sense of ownership and stewardship of local parks.	●					Marketing, Communications and Outreach	●			

6

# ACCESS

- » Big Ideas
- » Safe Routes to Parks
- » Park Design and Programming
- » POP Actions

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘ACCESS’ IN THE POP?

Access in the POP means that **all Chattanoogaans can easily reach the city’s parks and outdoors**, that **they feel welcome and safe when they get there**, and that **they have the equipment and knowledge** needed to overcome barriers to participation.

### DEEPER DIVE

- » [POP Chapter 1: Community Feedback on Park Access and Barriers](#)
- » [POP Chapter 3: Analysis of Citywide Park Access Gaps](#)

### GETTING TO CHATTANOOGA’S PARKS AND OUTDOORS

The POP evaluates connectivity and access to the City’s parks and outdoors through the following lenses:

- **10-Minute Walk:** This is a metric adopted from the Trust for Public Land 10-Minute Walk Campaign. For purposes of the POP, the planning team evaluated which residential parcels in the city are—or are not—within a 10-minute walk of a public park using the ArcGIS Spatial Analyst tool, which takes into account physical barriers such as highways, railroads and stream corridors.
- **Multi-Modal Access:** People of all abilities should be able to easily reach every park by foot, wheelchair, car, bike and transit.
- **Information:** To use the city’s parks and outdoors, people must know where parks are, what they offer and when to visit.

### FEELING WELCOME AND SAFE UPON ARRIVAL

Access to the City’s parks and outdoors is the first step; the POP also considers the following improvements to ensure all visitors are able to enjoy themselves when they get there:

- **Activation and Programming:** The events, classes and informal happenings at parks should be designed to serve all Chattanoogaans, with a special focus on what each park can offer to meet the needs and interests of immediate neighbors.
- **Universal Design:** Every park in the system should be designed or retrofitted to be accessed and enjoyed by people of diverse ages, experiences and ability levels.

# BIG IDEAS / ACCESS

- » Work with community-based partners to expand park and outdoor activation, with the goal of reaching diverse new audiences and eliminating barriers to use.
- » Connect people to information about their parks and outdoors.
- » Launch a ‘Safe Routes to Parks’ program that creates equitable sidewalk, bike lane and transit connections to parks.
- » Design and retrofit for all physical abilities, languages and other accessibility and safety accommodations in all park and outdoor projects.



## SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS

The POP planning and engagement process highlighted the huge public interest in improving walkable, rollable and bikeable connections to Chattanooga’s parks and outdoors. In the POP Survey No. 2, when asked how they would prefer to reach their neighborhood park, 64% of respondents said their first choice would be to walk, and 21% said they would prefer to bike. Only 12% of respondents said driving their own car would be their first choice for reaching their local park. **A Safe Routes to Parks program would focus City efforts on making it easier for more Chattanoogaans to safely and comfortably reach parks without having to drive.**

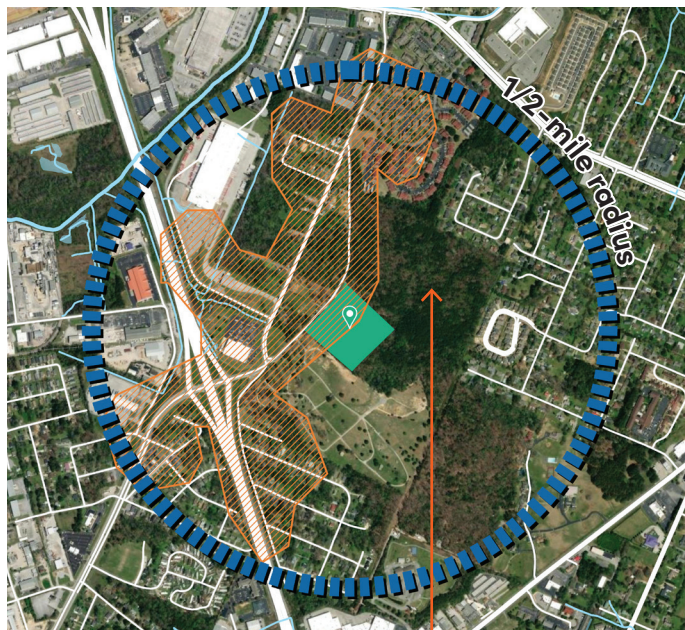
This is a challenge in Chattanooga; like so many cities where significant growth and development occurred in the past 75 years, much of Chattanooga’s road network and residential development was built and designed for cars rather than for pedestrians or cyclists. Even in neighborhoods closer to the city’s older urban core, aging infrastructure and post-World War II road projects and highways have created a patchwork of unsafe and often disconnected pedestrian networks. And then there is the very nature of Chattanooga’s beautiful landscape, with stream corridors and ridges that create additional barriers to connectivity.

Overcoming these challenges will require extensive and coordinated work from public and private partners to retrofit existing rights-of-way, expand the greenway system, and implement Complete Streets design principles in future road projects. These efforts for safe routes to parks should begin within the half-mile radius of existing and future park sites and trailheads—Figure 11 shows two examples of challenging environments for park walkability and access that

### DEEPER DIVE

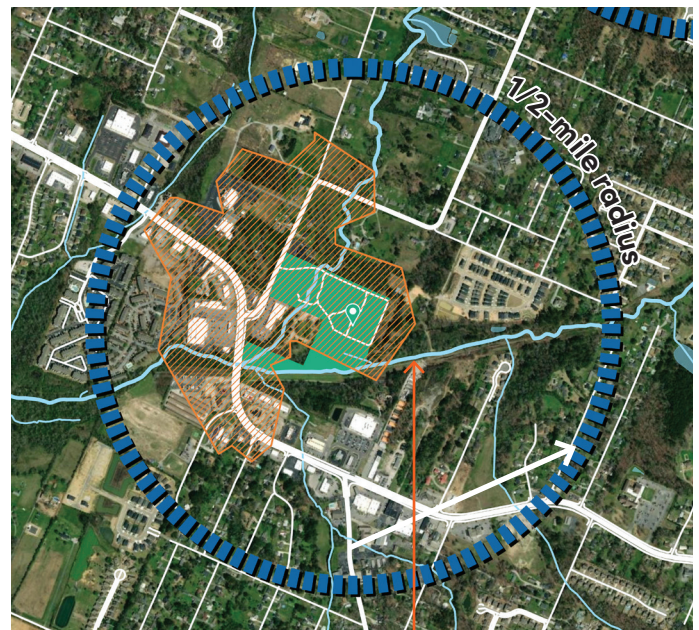
- » [Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework, NRPA](#) [external URL]
- » [Complete Streets, Smart Growth America](#) [external URL]

#### SHEPHERD PARK WALKSHED



PARK WALKABILITY BARRIER CREATED BY **LACK OF PUBLIC APPROACH OR ENTRY ON 3 OF THE 4 PARK EDGES**

#### HERITAGE PARK WALKSHED



PARK WALKABILITY BARRIERS CREATED BY **RYALL SPRINGS BRANCH TO THE SOUTH AND LACK OF PUBLIC APPROACH OR ENTRY TO THE NORTH AND EAST**

**Figure 11:** Examples of Park Walkability Barriers in Existing Parks

## DEEPER DIVE

» [Parks Walk Audit Toolkit, Safe Routes to School National Partnership](#)  
[\[external URL\]](#)

could be addressed by a Safe Routes to Parks program—and improved park site criteria and development, which are addressed in Chapter 7: Quality.

Because that last half-mile to parks and trailheads can be so important for access—and is the metric for cities' 10-Minute Walk Campaign goals—the POP Access Action Matrix (Table 13 on page 84) proposes that the Department of Parks and Outdoors launch a **Parks Walk Audit program**. Community leaders, residents, City staff and elected officials would get together to walk the half-mile radius of existing and future park sites; make note of needed improvements; and develop a strategy of short- and long-term investments to improve safe routes to specific parks. The Walk Audit program could be piloted at parks located in POP Equity Investment Zones, with a focus on parks serving nearby populations of children or seniors.

The half-mile park radius offers a useful focus for potential new connectivity plans and investments, listed in part in the table below. However, the City should take advantage of all opportunities to improve the broader safety, accessibility and comfort of the public realm. **In the POP's big-picture vision, all corridors are linear parks**, with beautiful rain gardens and street trees, comfortable sidewalks and places to rest, shaded and artful transit stops and shelters, and protected and interconnected bike lanes.

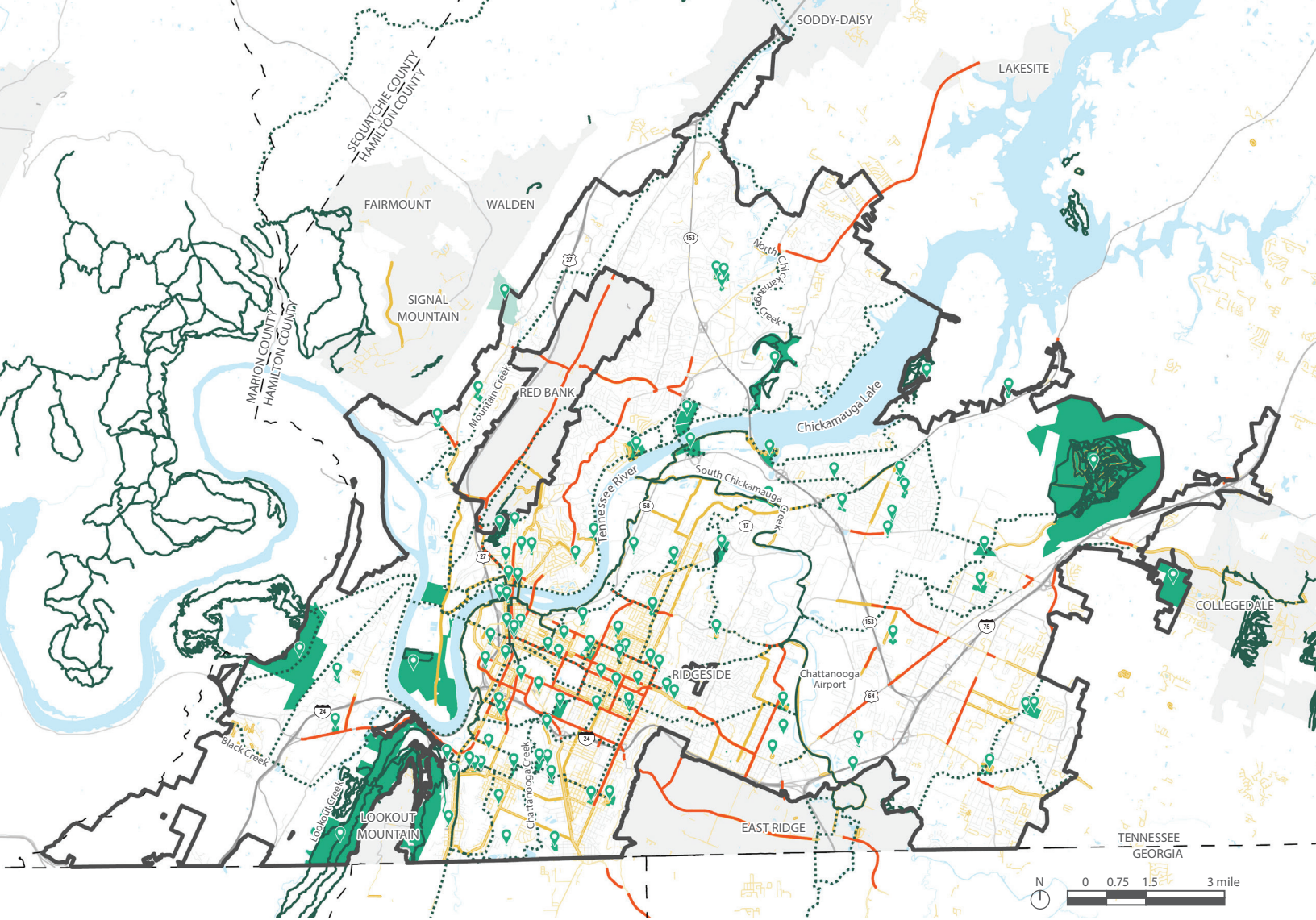
The 2050 Regional Transportation Plan is in development concurrent with the POP and will recommend future pedestrian, bike and transit improvements to make streets safer and more comfortable for everyone. Through these plans and future coordinated working groups, there are exciting possibilities for Chattanooga's public agencies to pool their resources and expertise and coordinate future planning and capital improvement projects toward the vision of a 'city in a park.'

## SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS

- 1 Design and retrofit streets to promote safety and comfort for all users with sidewalks, human-scale lighting, street trees, crosswalks, protected bike lanes, narrow vehicle lanes and reduced speed limits.
- 2 Identify new opportunities to build connections between the park, the neighborhood and other local destinations.
- 3 Explore opportunities to deploy publicly owned utility corridors for greenway activation.
- 4 Place accessible signage and wayfinding that help to guide and attract people to the park.
- 5 With Public Works, develop maintenance and funding to ensure walking, rolling and biking infrastructure is well-maintained over time.

## BEST PRACTICE

These are the foundational design and engineering improvements for getting people to parks, identified by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and National Recreation and Park Association.



## MAP: PARK CONNECTIVITY STUDY

This map shows opportunities for new citywide multi-modal connectivity whereby existing road corridors are retrofit to add more space for protected bike lanes, sidewalks, street trees, bus stops and green infrastructure.

The **road corridors in orange** are those with low enough daily vehicle traffic to meet Tennessee Department of Transportation standards for a road diet study.

### LEGEND

- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- Waterbodies
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Existing Public Parks
- Existing Pedestrian Infrastructure
- Road Corridors Eligible for a 'Road Diet' Study

### EXAMPLES OF EXISTING PARK ACCESS OBSTACLES



## DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 8: Neighborhood Park Design Guidelines](#)

# PARK DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING

At the park level, the POP principle of access is pursued through physical park design and park programming, or the activities and events that bring people out to parks.

## PARK DESIGN

Many of Chattanooga’s existing parks lack basic accessibility features, such as clear entry signage or ADA-accessible entries and paths. The POP Access Action Matrix (Table 13 on page 84) calls for a [Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Feasibility Study](#) of existing parks to capture the scope of the challenge and prioritize improvements.

The table below calls out basic principles for universal park design—or park design that accommodates and welcomes visitors of diverse ages, abilities, backgrounds and experiences. Additional design guidelines for high-quality neighborhood parks are provided in the POP chapter on Place.

## UNIVERSAL PARK DESIGN

- 1 Welcome all park visitors with open park edges, clearly marked and ADA-accessible entries, and safe connections to nearby transit stops, intersections and other community destinations.
- 2 Plant and maintain trees and plants to provide shade, wildlife habitat and beauty while preserving visibility.
- 3 Provide park amenities that are desired by the community and designed for visitors of all physical and cognitive abilities.
- 4 Follow design principles—such as open sight lines, active edges and high-quality lighting—that promote real and perceived safety.
- 5 Offer a variety of spaces—open and enclosed, vibrant and peaceful, programmed and passive—for activity and rest, to serve visitors of diverse ages, interests, abilities and sensory experiences.
- 6 Maintain park spaces and facilities to keep them safe from hazards and address graffiti, trash and overgrown plants.

## BEST PRACTICE

These are foundational universal design principles for parks, compiled from National Recreation and Park Association, American Society of Landscape Architects and AARP.

## PARK PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVATION

The planning team heard in focus groups and stakeholder interviews that even with the variety of programming offered by Outdoor Chattanooga, the Parks and Outdoors Recreation division and other public and private partners, there is great unmet demand for additional park- and outdoor-based programming tailored to specific Chattanooga communities.

*Active Parks, Healthy Cities: Recommendations from the National Study of Neighborhood Parks*—a 2018 report by City Parks Alliance—found that **nothing increases park use and physical activity as much as programming**. The survey found that for each supervised activity added to a neighborhood park, park use increased by 48% and physical activity by 37%.

The POP calls for development of a **Parks and Outdoors Activation Plan and Recreation Assessment** to help the City understand current unmet needs and to lay the groundwork for adequate staffing, amenities and partnership capacity for new and high-quality park programming.

## DEEPER DIVE

» [‘Active Parks, Healthy Cities,’ City Parks Alliance \[external URL\]](#)

## BEST PRACTICE

These are the top ideas offered by City Parks Alliance for offering new park programming, with a focus on populations that are currently underserved nationally. This focus on seniors and children is well-suited to the population trends and programming gaps in Chattanooga; the POP focus groups recommended additional focus for local communities of color and Hispanic/Latino communities.

## PARK PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVATION

- 1 Nationwide, seniors comprise 18% of the population but only 4% of neighborhood park users. This population stands to benefit from the health and social benefits of park programming—such as walking clubs and dance classes—and can offer the system expertise and stewardship in return.
- 2 Park programming and experiences in nature are crucial to child development. Programs for children should promote physical coordination, social interaction and environmental stewardship, and in the summer should offer free lunch programs.
- 3 Park programming for people of diverse physical and cognitive abilities should be designed alongside disability communities and advocates to be meaningful and inclusive.
- 4 Outdoor Ambassadors and private park partners such as Reflection Riding and Lula Lake Land Trust have experience designing park programming for communities that historically have been excluded from parks and recreation. These local experts should be consulted in broadening park programming and outreach to serve new populations.



Examples of entry, interpretive and wayfinding signage from existing Chattanooga parks.

## POP ACTIONS / ACCESS

Each of the POP's Big Ideas is supported by a series of specific Actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the goals of the POP.

Below is background information and context for some of the POP's Big Ideas and Actions for access. See [page 84](#) for the [Access Action Matrix](#).

### CONNECTING PEOPLE TO INFORMATION

In the POP public survey, when asked about the barriers that prevent them from using Chattanooga's parks and outdoors more often, the answer selected by the largest proportion (almost one-third) of survey respondents was 'Information—Not sure where to find good information about parks and activities.' For park access and inclusion, Chattanoogaans must be able to find reliable information about how and where to find parks and programming, and that information should be shared in formats and media that reach and appeal to broad cross-sections of the community. The POP recommends several new efforts on this front:

- A **branding campaign**, to build a clear and coordinated identity for City parks and outdoors and help build public awareness of and support for the system.
- A **physical signage and wayfinding campaign**, to help people find and navigate the City's parks and outdoors; learn about park amenities and rules; and celebrate parks' environmental and cultural features.
- A **digital marketing strategy**, to help people access up-to-date information on City websites, apps and social media about park amenities; the status of specific parks, greenways and blueways; and upcoming events and programs.

Marketing and signage efforts have paid off in other cities. The Active Parks, Healthy Cities study of neighborhood parks by City Parks Alliance found park departments that invested in social media outreach and on-site marketing—such as banners, posters and signs—saw a 62% increase in park users and a 63% increase in physical activity.

### MANAGING PUBLIC SPACES WITH COMPASSION AND DIGNITY

Park systems are grappling with how best to serve the unhoused people who seek refuge in public parks and outdoor spaces, as a national homelessness crisis is exacerbated by issues such as poverty and low wages, mental illness, COVID-19 and a shortage of affordable housing.

The POP recommends that the Department of Parks and Outdoors collaborate with other City departments and local Continuum of Care providers to study the issue and to identify the role of the parks and outdoors system within a broader coordinated effort to combat homelessness in Chattanooga. There are no simple solutions for a complex problem that extends well beyond the borders of our parks, but there are best practices for how park spaces and park staff can promote a feeling of safety for all and serve unhoused park users with care, compassion and dignity.

## DEEPER DIVE

» [‘Addressing Homelessness in Parks: An Inclusive Practices Guide,’ 8 80 Cities \[external URL\]](#)

### DESIGNING PARKS FOR SAFETY AND INCLUSION

In the POP public survey, 17% of respondents said they don’t feel safe in Chattanooga parks or park-based activities. This is a significant barrier to park and outdoor use. The table below lists some of the best practices for design and programming that can promote safety—both real and perceived—to make more people feel welcome and comfortable in our parks and outdoors.

### BEST PRACTICE

These strategies for promoting liveability and safety—both real and perceived—in our parks are largely borrowed from the field of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED has a well-established theoretical and practical history dating to the 1970s; however, CPTED strategies have also been co-opted to impose undue burden or policing on poor communities and communities of color.

### DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING FOR PARK SAFETY

- 1 In park design and retrofits, include elements that communicate a place is cared-for—including landscaping, public art and signage. Also design for open sight lines and visibility—including dark sky-friendly lighting and the ‘6-foot, 2-foot rule’ in high-activity areas, where trees are trimmed to 6’ and higher, and groundcover and shrubs are trimmed to a neat 2’ and lower.
- 2 Maintain parks to preserve open sight lines and neat edges and to remove litter or graffiti.
- 3 Offer a variety of on-site programming and activities that keep the park active and well-used throughout the day and week.
- 4 Work with other City departments to ensure the neighborhood around the park edges is active and vibrant, through public and commercial uses and safe and comfortable streetscapes.
- 5 Cultivate a sense of community ownership over the park through stewardship and conservation corps programs.

Table 13: **Access Action Matrix**

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Work with community-based partners to expand park and outdoor activation, with the goal of reaching diverse new audiences and eliminating barriers to use.</b>										
Develop a Parks and Outdoors Activation Plan and Recreation Assessment to study current park programming, identify gaps, and lay the groundwork for adequate staffing, amenities and partnership capacity for new and high-quality park programming that meets identified community needs.		●				Sports and Recreation	●			
Revive the Outdoor Ambassadors program with new levels of funding support and recruitment and fewer administrative hurdles.			●			Outdoor Chattanooga	●			
Revisit park rules and ordinances and evaluate infrastructure at all parks to ensure they promote activation—for example, by allowing food trucks, local vendors and entertainers in public spaces, and ensuring parks offer appropriate seating, lighting and power to accommodate different types of events across times of day and week.			●			Design and Connectivity	●			
Support community art and performance in public spaces, establishing programs that provide temporary access to park and outdoor facility space, the use of open hours for informal use of performance spaces, and rotating park-based exhibits of work by up-and-coming or school-aged artists.			●		●	Culture, Arts and Creative Economy		●		
Work with City and community-based partners to expand regular offerings of robust, fun and tailored educational and recreational programs, with established content related to natural and cultural history, stewardship, gardening and outdoor skills.			●		●	Marketing, Communications and Outreach; Special Events and Programming; Outdoor Chattanooga		●		
Develop a program to offer rotating small-scale, seasonal pop-up park amenities such as interactive art installations, picnic tables, lounge chairs, swings, games and other colorful, joyful additions to parks.			●		●	Special Events and Programming		●		
<b>BIG IDEA: Connect people to the information and resources they need to enjoy their parks and outdoors.</b>										
Coordinate with the City Department of Technology Services and Mayor’s Office of Communications to overhaul the DPO website, with a focus on user-friendly access to up-to-date information about park sites, programming, events and volunteer opportunities.			●			Marketing, Communications and Outreach	●			



ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
Develop a professionally driven signage and wayfinding strategy for the entire parks and outdoors system that reflects the City's brand and helps people find their way to and around the City's parks and outdoors.		●				Marketing, Communications and Outreach	●			
Invest in multimedia interpretive content creation for the parks and outdoors system, with a focus on supporting local artists, historians and businesses. Find diverse and creative ways to spotlight community and natural histories, park histories, urban ecology, public art, programming opportunities, stewardship opportunities and calls to action.			●		●	Culture, Arts and Creative Economy				●
Develop a public lending library for park and outdoor gear and equipment.			●		●	Outdoor Chattanooga		●		
<b>BIG IDEA: Create a 'Safe Routes to Parks' program that creates equitable sidewalk, bike lane and transit connections to parks.</b>										
Coordinate with CDOT and RPA to conduct a series of 'Walk Audits' where community leaders, residents, City staff and elected officials convene to walk existing routes to parks, make note of needed improvements, and create short- and long-term strategies for improving connectivity and access. Consider launching the program in Equity Investment Zone communities, particularly at neighborhood parks in areas with high rates of children or seniors.			●			Design and Connectivity	●			
Collaborate with CARTA, other City departments and Regional Planning Association to continually identify new opportunities to connect parks and greenways to active and public transportation networks.			●	●		Design and Connectivity				●
Integrate the recommendations of the POP with the Regional Transportation Plan and other mobility plans, including each plan's focus on equitable investment, for ongoing collaboration and future Capital Improvement Project prioritization.			●	●		Design and Connectivity				●
Coordinate with CDOT to identify funding sources and begin collaborative planning and design for projects needed to overcome significant barriers to non-motorized transportation, such as over/ undercrossings of major roads and railroads, rivers and ridges.		●	●			Design and Connectivity	●			
Coordinate with Public Works to invest in 'greening' the public realm through tree plantings, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, stream daylighting and other methods to connect parks with park-like trails and rights-of-way.			●	●	●	Design and Connectivity				●

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
Collaborate with non-profit stakeholders to investigate the viability of community land trust or other creative models to gradually acquire public property or access easements through or adjacent to river corridors (including buried streams) and ridges, to build out interconnected greenway systems over time.		●	●		●	Design and Connectivity		●		
<b>BIG IDEA: Design and retrofit for all physical abilities, languages and other accessibility and safety accommodations in all park and outdoor projects.</b>										
Develop a Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Feasibility Study of existing park and greenway sites—including curb ramps, sidewalk and path conditions, park feature accessibility, amenities and signage—to identify and prioritize improvements.		●				Parks Maintenance, Recreation Division	●			
Work with City and external partners to ensure all online and physical communication materials are accessible and multilingual. Use language-neutral communication (i.e. widely recognizable icons) wherever possible.			●			Marketing, Communications and Outreach	●			
Design spaces in all improved and new parks for different visual and auditory site experiences and to serve the needs of visitors with sensory sensitivity.			●			Design and Connectivity				●
Hire and train Chattanooga Conservation Corps (CCC) members to oversee public education, visitor etiquette and volunteer stewardship at parks. Expand the use of CCC members at parks experiencing crime or misuse, to increase the real and perceived safety of parks and deter abuse of park resources.			●			Natural Resources, Marketing and Outreach		●		



7

# QUALITY

- » Big Ideas
- » Total Asset Management 1.0
- » New Design and Management Standards
- » POP Actions

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘QUALITY’ IN THE POP?

Quality in the POP means **all parks across the city are designed, constructed and maintained according to a well-defined, consistent and high standard of quality.**

There are significant disparities in the quality of existing City parks—many of Chattanooga’s Signature Parks are iconic and meet national standards for their quality of design and materials, while **many Neighborhood Parks have crumbling infrastructure and lack even basic signage.**

The planning team heard in the POP engagement process that Chattanoogaans love their high-quality parks and want greater quality and equity throughout the system. This requires the City and its partners to focus on several things at once:

- **Developing written standards** for the quality and management of all parks, greenways and blueways.
- **Reinvesting in our existing parks** to correct for the significant disparities in current park quality and to bring all existing parks to the minimum standards set above.
- **Developing future parks with care**—ensuring that site selection and park design and programming are driven by the standards set above in addition to a community process.
- **Securing sustainable funding and staff support** and training to ensure all existing and future parks are maintained, well-loved and well-used over time.

### DEEPER DIVE

- » [POP Chapter 3: Condition of Existing Parks](#)

## TOTAL ASSET MANAGEMENT 1.0

Total Asset Management is a strategic way of looking at what an organization owns and how it can most effectively maintain and replace its assets over time. The POP uses ‘Total Asset Management 1.0’—it offers a new high-level understanding of the City’s existing park assets and maintenance needs, while laying the groundwork for a more sophisticated use of this approach in the future that is fully integrated with other City software and systems.

As a starting point, the POP planning team completed an on-the-ground inventory of all the City’s existing park assets. They assigned a condition rating to each asset and each park on a scale of 1 to 5, with ‘1’ being like new and ‘5’ functionally obsolete or unsafe. The goal is to establish a high-level understanding of:

# BIG IDEAS / QUALITY

- » Implement written design and management guidelines to ensure that all parks meet minimum standards for quality, amenities, programming and maintenance.
- » Identify sustainable funding and partnerships to ensure POP projects get built and all parks are adequately maintained and replenished over time.

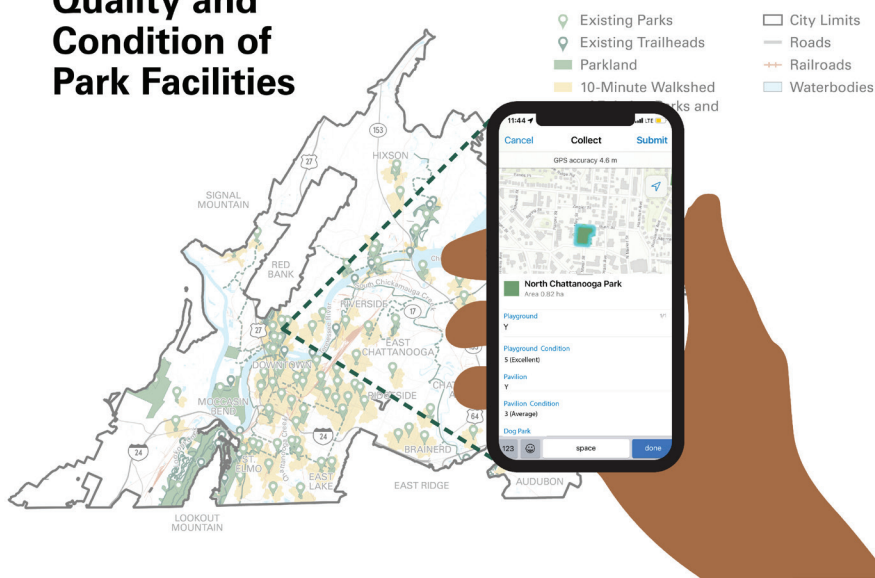


SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY PARK



BOULEVARD PARK

## Quality and Condition of Park Facilities



The planning team completed a field inventory and assigned condition ratings to parks and park assets.

- What park assets does the City have?
- What condition are they in?
- How much investment is required right now to get all the existing park assets to a good and functional condition?
- How might the City plan its investments moving forward to maintain the condition and quality of existing and future park assets?

Below is a description of the process the planning team followed to help the City understand its existing assets and the scope of its ongoing repair, replacement and maintenance costs. Limitations of this process include:

- The POP inventory and condition assessment only considered certain above-ground park amenities (listed in Table 14).
- Because the calculation of deferred maintenance and ongoing repair and replacement costs apply to existing park assets, these figures do not account for broader quality gaps. For example, at Boulevard Park, which is rated 5 overall as being functionally obsolete or unsafe, the deferred maintenance value is calculated at \$280,000 and ongoing repair and replacement costs at \$18,000 per year. These are the costs to repair or replace existing amenities and then take care of those amenities over time; it does not reflect a potential larger need for park reinvestment, redesign and new amenities. (Those calculations are described in Chapter 4 for Park Reinvestment Projects.)
- Annual maintenance hours were calculated based on park landcover data with low, medium and high estimates. These figures are high-level but were vetted with Parks and Outdoors staff. They offer a rationale for capturing the existing shortfall in maintenance hours and accounting for new maintenance needs as the system grows.

## ANNUAL REPAIR COSTS FOR NEW PARK ASSETS

Each park amenity type was given a purchase or construction cost, an anticipated useful life in years, and a depreciation value per year calculated by dividing the item's cost by its useful life. These figures were vetted by staff based on previous park project installation and construction costs.

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [Appendix: Existing City Park Classification and Condition Ratings](#)

Table 14: **Estimated Deferred Maintenance and Annual Replacement Values for Existing City Park Assets by Type**

ASSET TYPE	SYSTEMWIDE COUNT	VALUES FOR <u>INVENTORIED</u> PARK ASSETS		
		TOTAL 'LIKE-NEW' VALUE	CURRENT DEFERRED MAINTENANCE VALUE (BASED ON OBSERVED CONDITION)	ANNUAL REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT VALUE (BASED ON ESTIMATED USEFUL LIFE)
Playground	44	\$4,400,000	\$1,100,000	\$293,000
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	17	\$850,000	\$0	\$56,667
Bench	308	\$616,000	\$29,000	\$61,600
Pavilion	65	\$4,109,000	\$513,500	\$74,200
Picnic Table	292	\$584,000	\$81,500	\$39,500
Light Fixture	875	\$11,438,000	\$0	\$477,600
Waste Receptacle	316	\$316,000	\$39,000	\$25,000
Bike Rack	30	\$30,000	\$2,750	\$1,500
Amphitheater	6	\$3,000,000	\$250,000	\$150,000
Bathroom	20	\$900,000	\$62,500	\$30,000
Community Center	17	\$85,000,000	\$0	\$1,700,000
Grill	53	\$53,000	\$2,750	\$7,571
Drinking Fountain	43	\$344,000	\$212,000	\$49,143
Dog Park	3	\$600,000	\$0	\$30,000
Tennis Court	73	\$7,300,000	\$1,150,000	\$730,000
Diamond Field	55	\$11,000,000	\$1,100,000	\$550,000
Soccer Field	25	\$5,000,000	\$500,000	\$250,000
Basketball Court	19	\$1,900,000	\$575,000	\$9,500
Volleyball Court	2	\$200,000	\$75,000	\$10,000
Disc Golf Field	4	\$80,000	\$0	\$4,000
Rugby Field	2	\$400,000	\$200,000	\$20,000
Football Field	1	\$200,000	\$0	\$10,000
Splash Pad	4	\$3,200,000	\$0	\$160,000
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>\$141,520,000</b>	<b>\$5,893,000</b>	<b>\$4,825,000</b>

Sources: Design Workshop, Department of Parks and Outdoors



These high-level figures can help the City budget for systemwide maintenance, repair and replacements by amenity type moving forward. For example:

1. Each playground was assigned an assumed purchase and installation cost of \$100,000 and an anticipated useful life of 15 years. By dividing the cost by the useful life, the depreciation value per year for each playground was estimated to be \$6,667. This depreciation value can be multiplied by the number of amenities systemwide to calculate a reasonable annual maintenance budget for each amenity type.
2. That means for the 44 playgrounds counted across the City's parks, the City could expect to spend \$295,000 per year on playground repair and replacement costs.

## DEFERRED MAINTENANCE VALUE OF EXISTING ASSETS

Next the planning team counted the number of amenities at each City park and assigned them a condition rating, which formed the basis for calculating each item's deferred maintenance value. For example:

1. The playground at Jefferson Street Park was assigned a condition rating of 2, meaning the playground is not new but has seen only moderate loss of aesthetics or function.
2. Amenities with a condition rating of 2 are considered to have lost 25% of their original value. Based on the assumed like-new cost of \$100,000, the Jefferson Street Park playground is said to have lost \$25,000 in value—in other words, the deferred maintenance value of the playground is \$25,000.

## ANNUAL MAINTENANCE HOURS BY PARK

Last, the planning team used high-resolution (half-meter) landcover data from the UTC Interdisciplinary Geospatial Technology Lab to calculate the acreage of tree canopy, non-forest vegetation (such as lawn and garden beds) and impervious surface (such as paved paths and parking) for each park and assigned high-level estimated maintenance hours per surface type based on national standards.

At Jefferson Street Park, this high-level landcover analysis found 0.25 acres of tree canopy, 2.5 acres of lawn and garden, and 0.75 acres of paved paths and parking.

## ADDING IT ALL UP

At the [Jefferson Street Park](#) example, this process leads to the following figures parkwide:

1. **Deferred Maintenance**—Based on the current condition of Jefferson Street Park's benches, picnic tables, community garden, pavilion, bathroom, bike racks and trash cans, the park's total deferred maintenance value is \$88,500.
2. **Annual Repair or Replacement**—Based on the above amenities, the City should expect to spend \$20,000 per year at Jefferson Street Park on amenity repair and replacement.
3. **Ongoing Maintenance**—Based on the park landcover calculations, the City should expect to commit 277 hours per year for maintenance. This means that maintaining Jefferson Street Park could account for about 15% of the annual maintenance hours of one Full-Time Employee (FTE), or 5% of the annual maintenance hours for a team of three FTEs.

**Chattanoogans have an ambitious vision for their parks and outdoors system.** As the POP makes recommendations toward these goals, and as the parks and outdoors system evolves in the coming years, **this asset management approach will help to ensure that the City dedicates the resources and staff time needed to care for these spaces over time.**

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [POP Chapter 10: Anticipated Park and Outdoor Maintenance Costs by Phase](#)

## NEW DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

The POP recommends the development of written design and management standards to ensure:

- The quality of parks, greenways and blueways,
- The use of park amenities that are tried and true for durability and performance, and
- Clear maintenance standards and performance metrics to guide the care and long-term health of city’s parks and outdoors.

### DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 8: Neighborhood Park Design Kit](#)

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

The POP recommends developing a series of written design guidelines to ensure that future parks are developed and existing parks retrofitted according to a consistent quality standard. These guidelines can [set clear expectations for park designers, City staff, partners and contractors](#) and will help [prevent the continued growth of disparities in quality and service](#) across the parks and outdoors system.

These guidelines should be developed with insight from Parks and Outdoors staff, the Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission, key City partners, other local public and private park providers, and the Chattanooga Design Studio. The effort should be led by a local landscape architect familiar with the diversity of the city’s park types and landscapes.

### MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PERFORMANCE METRICS

The City and its partners seek to simultaneously improve the existing park system, develop new parks to meet current and future needs, restore the city’s contaminated lands and waters, and boost the parks and outdoors system’s regional ecological benefits. The POP recommends

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE PARK PROJECTS

- 1 Spell out site selection standards, design best practices, and minimum amenity and service standards for each type of park classification, including greenways and blueways.
- 2 Provide community engagement strategies tailored to each type of park—for example, a regional process for new Signature Parks and more focused, community-specific outreach for new or retrofitted Neighborhood Parks.
- 3 Include drawings and specifications for certain common park elements to ensure consistency and quality across the system.

### QUALITY CONTROL

Clear design guidelines for new park and park reinvestment projects will guide City and partner efforts and ensure a consistent quality standard as the parks and outdoors system grows over time.

an updated and expanded series of written management plans and best management practices to guide staff and volunteers in the ongoing care and stewardship of these diverse park and outdoor sites and critical landscapes.

The management plans and practices should be developed with leadership from Natural Resources, with insight from other Parks and Outdoors staff, the Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission, key City partners, other local public and private park providers and regional environmental advocates and researchers.

## QUALITY CONTROL

Management plans can help to ensure the long-term care and quality of parks and to make a well-defined case for investing in maintenance staff, training and support.

## PARKS AND OUTDOORS MANAGEMENT PLANS

- 1** Incorporate recommendations, benchmarks and performance metrics from the Parks and Outdoors Natural Resources Plan within all updated management plans, particularly landscape and natural area management plans.
- 2** Develop overarching management plans and practices—including timetables for seasonal tasks and anticipated repair and replacement of park assets—for each type of park classification, including greenways and blueways.
- 3** Develop park-specific management plans and timetables for all existing Signature Parks and Preserves, and as part of all future park projects.
- 4** Support maintenance staff through regular training, professional development and upward mobility.
- 5** Explore organization of maintenance staff by zone and specialty to develop expertise and instill a sense of ownership.
- 6** Strengthen our system for staff to coordinate park stewardship with volunteers.
- 7** Develop a system to monitor the condition and status of parks and outdoor sites, including with public crowdsourcing data.

## POP ACTIONS / QUALITY

Each of the POP’s Big Ideas is supported by a series of specific Actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the goals of the POP.

Chapter 10: Implementation offers more details about partnership and funding recommendations.

Table 15: **Quality Action Matrix**

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Implement design and management guidelines to ensure that all parks meet minimum standards for quality, amenities, programming and maintenance.</b>										
Develop written design guidelines for all park classification types to establish a service standard for new park and park improvement projects.		●				Design and Connectivity	●			
Develop written management plans for all park classification types to establish a baseline standard for maintenance.		●				Parks Maintenance	●			
Develop park-specific management plans for all existing Signature Parks and Preserves, and as part of all new Community and Neighborhood Parks or park improvement projects.		●				Parks Maintenance				●
Train and support field staff to protect and maintain trees, planting areas and naturalized landscapes on City properties.			●			Natural Resources		●		
Establish park visitation baseline metrics.			●			Sports and Recreation	●			
Collaborate with other City departments and outside partners to continually identify new locations and programs to meet demand and level of service standards for sports and recreation.			●			Administration; Sports and Recreation				●
Establish playing field and Outdoor Action and Adventure standards based on park classification and commensurate with funding realities.			●			Administration; Parks Maintenance; Outdoor Chattanooga; Sports and Recreation	●			

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Identify sustainable funding and partnerships to ensure POP projects get built and all parks are adequately maintained and replenished over time.</b>										
Integrate a Total Asset Management approach in department budgeting to accurately reflect the system's current and future capital and operational needs.			●			Administration	●			
Commit maintenance and activation resources to keep pace with park development and improvements.			●			Administration				●
Develop a strategy for sustained public funding mechanisms for parks and open space in Chattanooga.		●				Administration	●			
Evaluate new opportunities for revenue generation at sites where user, parking or event fees might be appropriate.		●				Administration				●
Explore the creation of capital campaigns and Operations and Maintenance endowment funds for the perpetual maintenance and protection of certain Signature Parks and assets.		●				Administration	●			
Work with the Land Development Office and Regional Planning Agency to revise subdivision regulations to include public parkland as part of new growth and development.				●		Design and Connectivity	●			
Study the viability of establishing a Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors Foundation 501(c)(3) to raise private funds, pursue grant opportunities and volunteer on behalf of the City's parks and outdoors.		●				Administration	●			

8

# PLACE

- » Big Ideas
- » Neighborhood Park Design Guidelines
- » POP Actions

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘PLACE’ IN THE POP?

Place in the POP refers to the **ability of a park to authentically amplify the character and identity of its neighborhood.**

It recognizes that **great parks are the anchors of their communities**—spaces where people come together for socializing, respite, civic life and cultural expression as much as for recreation and exercise.

### SENSE OF PLACE

A park with a ‘sense of place’ has a strong identity that is deeply felt by its community and visitors. There are things about the park’s setting, context, design and day-to-day use that render the park special or unique and make it feel grounded in its community.

On the other hand, a park that is ‘placeless’ lacks these special features or a basic relationship to its surroundings—like many strip malls or cookie-cutter developments, a placeless park could be located anywhere.

### PLACEMAKING AND PLACEKEEPING

Placemaking is a term used by designers, planners and advocates to describe efforts to harness the power of place. Placemaking refers to the collective imagining and design of public spaces as the heart of every community. This is a collaborative, community-driven design and programming process that identifies and builds upon the existing assets and identities of a place.

The term placemaking has also been used disingenuously as part of development projects that result in the displacement of long-time residents. In response to this, placekeeping is another term used to describe community-based projects that explicitly seek to reinforce the qualities of an existing place and its social fabric, cultural memories and lifeways.

# BIG IDEAS / PLACE

- » Launch a neighborhood park design initiative to ensure that every community has at its heart a neighborhood park that is authentic to place and serves neighbors’ day-to-day recreational, social and wellness needs.
- » Celebrate and protect Chattanooga’s cultural landscapes—particularly those that have been underrecognized—as a framework of the plan.
- » Comprehensively view as park and recreational space the entire public realm—parks, open space, public streets and rights-of-way, urban plazas, even rooftops.



## PARKS, PLACE AND THE POP

Chattanooga is home to iconic Signature Parks and nature preserves that demonstrate **how sense of place can be cultivated through high-quality design, beautiful materials, local art and the conservation of breathtaking natural features**. The region is blessed with a rich inventory of natural assets. From world-renowned Southern Sandstone forming our canyons and mountains, to the rich biodiversity woven into every crack and creek and filling our skies and landscapes, **our outdoors is the fabric of life for Chattanoogaans**.

The vision of the POP is that every neighborhood park in Chattanooga holds the same power of place—with day-to-day park facilities and activities that reinforce its community’s social and cultural life, and with art, design features and an overall look and feel that resonate with neighbors and set each park apart from the others in the system.

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [City of Chattanooga Public Art Strategic Plan](#) [external URL]
- » [Field Guide for Creative Placemaking in Parks](#), Trust for Public Land and City Parks Alliance [external URL]



Examples from Chattanooga parks of how high-quality art, activities, facilities and design character can create park spaces that bring people together and project an authentic sense of place.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES

Like the POP, the previous Chattanooga parks plan, *Recreate 2008*, called for expansion of the city’s neighborhood park system. That plan was completed in 1999, and City-owned parkland acreage grew in the following years, particularly in residential neighborhoods.

But without standards for site selection or design, or adequate funding for ongoing care and maintenance, many of those new parks lacked the characteristics or amenities to function as true neighborhood parks. In the first POP survey closed in August 2022, **only 21% of respondents said they were satisfied with the quantity and quality of parkland in their neighborhood.**

The POP calls for a **neighborhood park initiative** to:

- **Reinvest in all existing neighborhood parks**, with improvements to ensure these parks are used and loved by their communities.
- **Fill remaining neighborhood park gaps** through the addition of new parkland.
- **Require a community-based engagement and design process** for new parks and park reinvestment projects.
- **Grow the City’s maintenance capacity and support volunteer stewardship** efforts to ensure that neighborhood parks are cared-for over time.

### ENGAGEMENT AND DESIGN TOOLKIT

Great neighborhood park design is not design-driven—it results from a robust community visioning process that captures exactly the kinds of activities, facilities, amenities, and ‘look and feel’ the community wants from its park. Designers translate this vision into site plans and material proposals that get vetted again with neighborhood residents, to work collaboratively toward a final design that captures broad community support.



*The Budget Game (left) invites community members to distribute limited resources to the park features they value most. Visual preference boards (center) allow people to vote on park elements and aesthetics. The Chip Game (right) allows the community to place the park elements they want on the actual park site—when overlaid, the resulting heat map shows the kinds of features that residents want, and where they want them.*

The POP recommends that the City and its partners develop a neighborhood park engagement and design toolkit that can streamline this process while ensuring a baseline quality standard for both community engagement and neighborhood park design and amenities.

Chattanooga has great local examples and resources for park engagement, such as the artist-driven process for Lynnbrook Park, the Park Listeners program established by Trust for Public Land (TPL), and the technical assistance available through TPL's Park Equity Accelerator Program. These are models for robust—and fun—community-based outreach.

The development of reusable survey and activity templates could help to jumpstart these processes, provide basic quality control, and free up resources that otherwise would be spent on process and material planning to be focused elsewhere—community-specific outreach, stipends for artists and community leaders, and community event expenses such as meals, entertainment, childcare and translation services.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | **SAMPLE DESIGN KIT**

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 'BUDGET GAME' OPTIONS

- Picnic pavilion
- Nature play
- Splash pad
- Skatespot features
- Dog run features
- Community garden
- Soccer goals
- Basketball court
- Pickleball court
- Tennis court
- Baseball/softball backstop
- Stage

### BASE AMENITIES AT ALL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- Restrooms
- Water fountains
- Seating
- Picnic tables
- Public art
- Dark Sky Friendly lighting
- Playground
- Fitness equipment
- Walking loop
- Flexible lawn
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Trash and recycling

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [Inclusive Healthy Places, National Recreation and Park Association](#) [external URL]
- » [Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages, AARP](#) [external URL]

## SITE AND DESIGN STANDARDS

Some shortcomings at Chattanooga’s existing neighborhood parks were almost inevitable, a result of fundamentally challenging site conditions or a lack of adequate resources committed for park design and amenities.

When these mistakes are repeated too often, the result is a system with a number of neighborhood parks in need of redesign and reinvestment, and several instances where piecemeal improvements have resulted in a perception of “throwing good money after bad.”

For future neighborhood park projects, the POP emphasizes the importance of:

- **Taking care with site selection**, to be sure the potential-site conditions and context can accommodate the type of park envisioned there. Even stellar design and ongoing maintenance can’t guarantee a great neighborhood park on a site that is too small, flood-prone, or hemmed in by railroads or highways.
- **Making future park design and reinvestment decisions as part of a rational and transparent decision-making framework**, and in response to an **adequately funded design and engagement process**. The type of parks envisioned in the POP and by the Chattanooga community can only be achieved through thoughtful and adequately funded park design, construction and maintenance.

The checklists here—compiled from sources including National Recreation and Park Association, AARP and City Parks Alliance—are a starting point for a standardized quality control system that should become the norm for every future parks and outdoors project.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | SITE SELECTION STANDARDS

### Does the site meet these basic standards?

- Is there a sizeable residential population within a 10-minute walk of the site? Would a park here help to fill a park walkshed or service gap?
- Does the site have opportunities for safe walkable, bikeable and rollable access on multiple edges?
- Is the site big enough (ideally at least two acres) to function as a neighborhood park? Will the site soils, topography and drainage allow for a mix of spaces, from open and flexible to intimate and enclosed?
- Does the site have opportunities for active site edges—such as restaurants and shops—and strong connections to nearby schools, libraries and other community destinations?
- Is the site already owned by the City or a public or private partner?
- Are there opportunities to protect or restore natural resources? To protect or restore a cultural landscape?

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | **DESIGN STANDARDS**

### Does the park design **create a welcoming entry experience**?

- Are there multiple park entries to collect visitors from multiple directions?
- Are the park edges open, welcoming and beautiful, with clear views into the park and site entries?
- Do the park entrances have bike racks and good access by sidewalk and crosswalks?
- Is there an appropriate amount of parking for cars?

### Does the park design **celebrate and protect nature**?

- What percent of the park acreage has tree canopy? Gardens? Naturalized areas?
- Are there big trees (or trees that will grow to be big) where they're needed to provide shade?
- Is stormwater captured and cleaned on-site through green infrastructure?
- Is the park beautiful?

### Does the park design **encourage people to use the space**?

- Are there basic amenities—like playgrounds, flexible seating, shade, concessions, picnic tables and restrooms—that encourage people to linger, rest and socialize?
- Are there basic amenities—like walking paths, flexible fields and multi-generational fitness equipment—that encourage people to be active?

### Does the park design **promote access and inclusion**?

- Are entries, paths and equipment accessible to ADA standards?
- Are park features like signage and fitness equipment intuitive to understand and use?
- Is there adequate space or facilities for the specific activities the neighborhood wants?
- Are the park edges and access routes safe and attractive for multiple types of users?

### Does the park design **promote safety**?

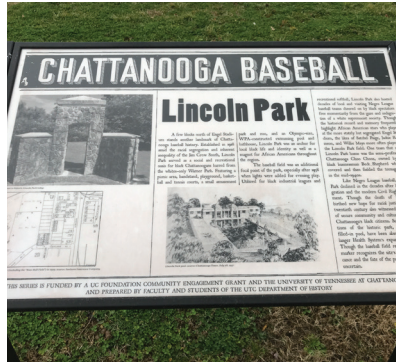
- Is there adequate (and Dark Sky Friendly) lighting?
- Are there open sight lines within the park and beyond its edges?
- Are there facilities and programming to ensure that plenty of people are using the park at different times of the day, week and year?
- Are there active uses around the park edges?

### Does the park design **provide for ongoing care and sustainability**?

- Are there adequate receptacles and signage for trash and recycling?
- Is there a coordinated management plan for City staff and volunteers?
- Is there adequate programming, visibility and stewardship to ensure eyes on the park?
- Are the park materials and equipment durable and sustainable?

## THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION

Cultural landscapes are landscapes that have been affected, influenced, or shaped by human involvement. A cultural landscape can be associated with a person or event. It can be thousands of acres or a tiny homestead. It can be a grand estate, industrial site, park, garden, cemetery, campus, and more. Collectively, cultural landscapes are works of art, narratives of culture, and expressions of regional identity.



Examples of Chattanooga cultural landscapes without current formal designation or protection.

## POP ACTIONS / PLACE

Each of the POP's Big Ideas is supported by a series of specific Actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the goals of the POP.

Below is additional background information and context for some of the recommendations. See [page 108](#) for the [Place Action Matrix](#).

### DEEPER DIVE

- » [The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#) [external URL]
- » [Better Block Project](#) [external URL]

### CELEBRATING OUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Chattanooga is home to hundreds of acres of protected historic and archaeological sites. The POP recommends a community process to catalog those additional 'sacred places' that are captured under a broader definition of cultural landscapes, and that are so integral to a community's sense of place, identity and belonging. The identification and preservation of these sites can be a meaningful way to promote place within the City's parks and outdoors.

This inventory process can also shed light on the types of places that resonate most with Chattanoogaans, informing other POP-recommended efforts to design parks, signage and activities that make people feel welcome and project a recognizable sense of place.

### 'PARKIFYING' THE PUBLIC REALM

The impact of parks and outdoors placemaking can be exponentially greater through partnerships and thinking beyond park borders. The POP recommends in particular that the Department of Parks and Outdoors collaborate with other public agencies to identify new and

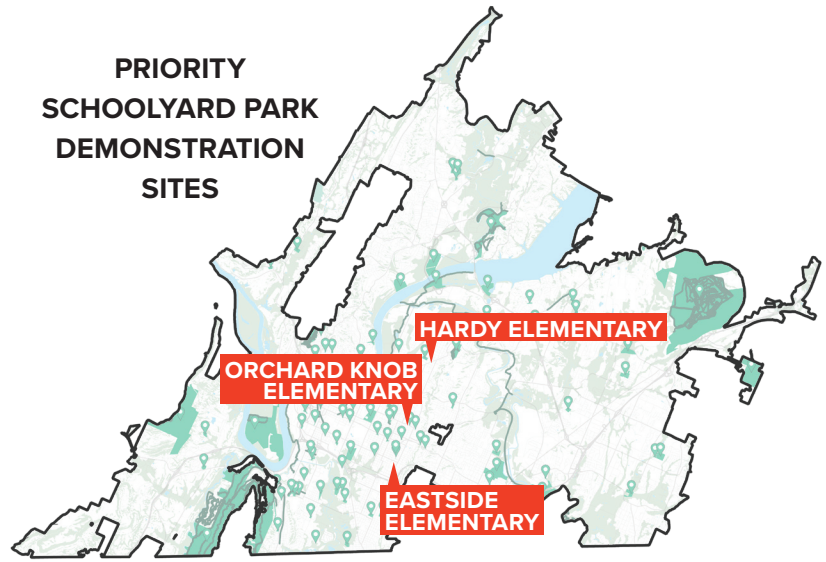
creative opportunities for park access, artful gathering places, natural restoration, green infrastructure and beautification.

As it becomes more difficult to find undeveloped land for parks, cities are finding new opportunities to create parkland alongside existing neighborhoods and infrastructure.

These efforts can range from intensive and high-cost—such as freeway cap parks and underpass parks—to grassroots and low-cost or temporary—such as pop-up parks or community gardens on underused vacant sites, surface parking lots or alleyways.

Another POP strategy is to collocate parks with other public amenities—such as schools, libraries and affordable housing—or to develop Shared Use Agreements that allow public recreation access on private sites—such as churches or non-profits.

### PRIORITY SCHOOLYARD PARK DEMONSTRATION SITES



**Figure 12:** Trust for Public Land is working with Hamilton County Schools to identify potential schoolyard parks, where park and recreation amenities at schools are open to the general public. This approach can provide ‘icing on the cake’ in denser areas of the city, where existing walkshed gaps are low but there is greater population-based need for more parkland.



Examples of creative park placemaking from cities and leftover spaces across North America—clockwise from top left: Toronto, Ontario; Philadelphia, PA; Raleigh, NC

Table 16: **Place Action Matrix**

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Launch a neighborhood park design initiative to ensure that every community has at its heart a neighborhood park that is authentic to place and serves neighbors' day-to-day recreational, social and wellness needs.</b>										
Require that all new park development and existing park improvement projects are driven by a robust and community-based engagement and design process. Build relationships with trusted community partners to reach under-represented groups and young people, beginning with the Trust for Public Land Park Equity Accelerator program, which seeks to build a community engagement model for Chattanooga.			●		●	Design and Connectivity				●
Develop a commemorative naming process for parks.			●		●	Design and Connectivity, Marketing and Outreach				●
Use and regularly update a Neighborhood Park Design Kit to ensure a consistent quality and amenity standard for all neighborhood parks, with specific designs and features tailored to each community.		●				Design and Connectivity	●			
In coordination with the Public Art Strategic Plan, engage local artists, businesses, non-profits, schools and other community-based organizations to develop amenities and public art that project a sense of place and community identity in every park and outdoor project.			●		●	Culture, Arts and Creative Economy				●
<b>BIG IDEA: Celebrate and protect Chattanooga's cultural landscapes—particularly those that have been underrecognized—as a framework of the plan.</b>										
Collaborate with public and private institutional partners, such as Preserve Chattanooga and the National Park Service, to complete a desktop inventory of Chattanooga's cultural landscapes.		●			●	Culture, Arts and Creative Economy	●			
Engage the community and volunteers in a public exercise to map 'sacred places' within the city, broadening the inventory of cultural landscapes and identifying new opportunities for cultural preservation and storytelling.			●			Culture, Arts and Creative Economy, Recreation		●		



ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
Develop written management guidelines as needed to protect and preserve the unique features of culturally significant landscapes.		●				Culture, Arts and Creative Economy, Recreation			●	
<b>BIG IDEA: Comprehensively view as park and recreational space the entire public realm—parks, open space, public streets and rights-of-way, urban plazas, even rooftops.</b>										
Collaborate with Public Works, Transportation, Economic Development, City Planning and other departments to analyze existing public lands and rights-of-way and identify phased opportunities for citywide restoration, beautification and linear parks.		●				Design and Connectivity		●		
Explore development of formal partnerships with Hamilton County Schools, Chattanooga Public Library and Chattanooga Housing Authority to co-locate their facilities with public parks and greenways.					●	Administration	●			
Develop a Shared Use Agreement template to encourage other public and private entities to permit public access to their park and outdoor amenities.			●			Administration	●			
Develop and prioritize a City-led program to support the Trust for Public Land’s Schoolyards program, with clear parameters for site selection, funding, maintenance and public use.			●		●	Administration	●			

9

# NATURE

- » Big Ideas
- » 'City in a Park'
- » POP Actions

## DEEPER DIVE

» [POP Chapter 1: Community Feedback on Natural Resources](#)

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘NATURE’ IN THE POP?

The POP envisions Chattanooga as a **‘city in a park,’ where the life-changing benefits of nature and parks are integrated into every neighborhood and throughout the public realm.**

Chattanooga sits within an **iconic Southern Appalachian landscape that is one of the most biodiverse in the world.** Multiple surveys, including those in the POP engagement process, have shown that Chattanoogaans treasure this landscape and what it affords them in beautiful scenery, quality of life and outdoor recreation. **Eighty-five percent of respondents to the first POP survey said the protection of environmental health and natural resources is a ‘very important’ or ‘essential’ function of the City’s parks and outdoors system.**

The POP considers the importance of the natural environment at two connected scales:

- 1. Regional Natural Resources**—Big-picture, regional open space planning is critical for ensuring we protect large, strategic and contiguous pieces of land and waterbodies. This is how we build out the ecologically significant patches and corridors that are critical for achieving the conservation benefits of habitat health and water quality, while also creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation, education and stewardship.
- 2. People and Neighborhoods**—At park sites and in the public right-of-way, smaller-scale efforts such as tree planting, green stormwater infrastructure, native-plant gardening and meadow restoration can support the regional goals above while elevating the day-to-day experience of the city. These efforts make our neighborhoods more beautiful while helping to protect residents and businesses from the impacts of ever-increasing rainfall and rising temperatures.

## ‘CITY IN A PARK’

The vision of Chattanooga as a ‘city in a park’ is expansive and multi-scaled. From regional land conservation and citywide trail connectivity to beautiful new parkland and comfortable streetscapes, this vision is **win-win-win for people, wildlife and economic development.** The concepts below help to illustrate how the City can get there.

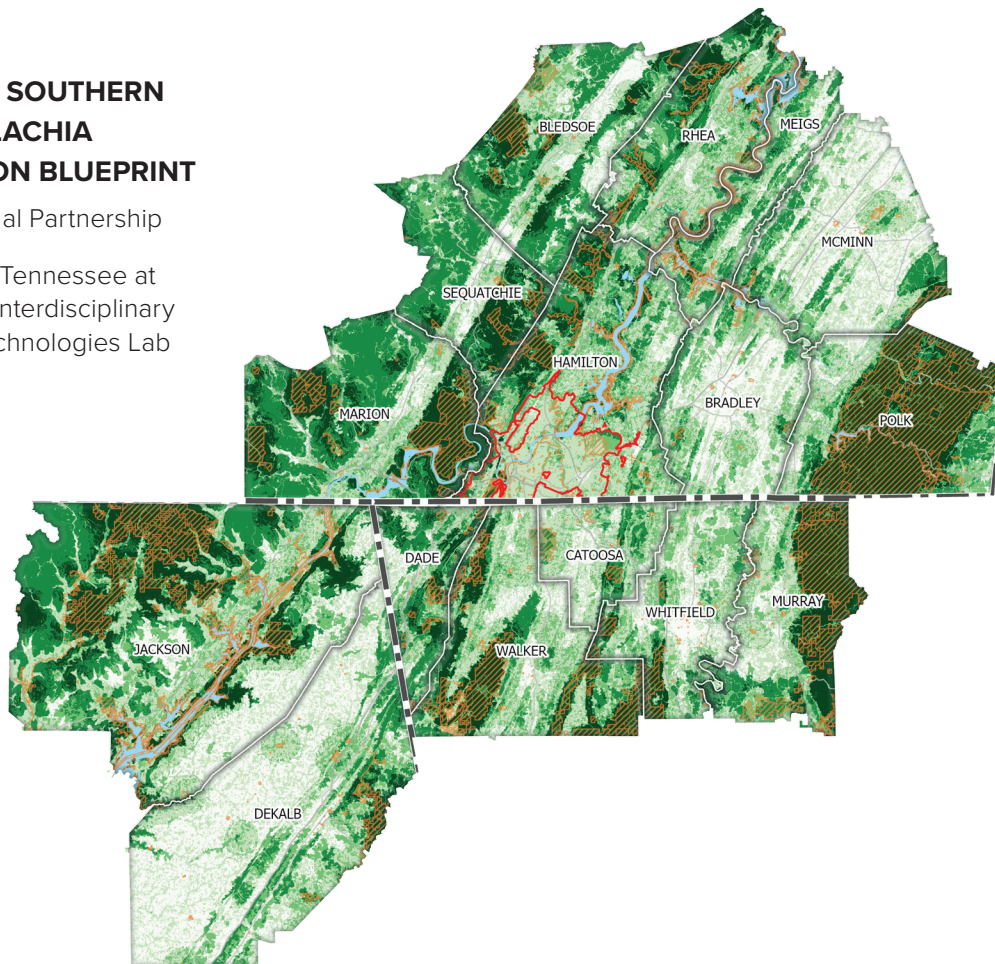
# BIG IDEAS / NATURE

- » Celebrate and protect Chattanooga’s timeless geographic and natural features as a framework of the plan.
- » Act on the imperative for Chattanooga’s parks to promote human comfort and joy, wildlife habitat, and citywide air and water quality.
- » Approach City park projects within the planning and ecological framework of the 16-county Thrive Regional Partnership network.

## CRADLE OF SOUTHERN APPALACHIA CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT

Thrive Regional Partnership

University of Tennessee at  
Chattanooga, Interdisciplinary  
Geospatial Technologies Lab



**Figure 13:** Thrive Regional Partnership ‘Cradle of Southern Appalachia’ conservation blueprint. City of Chattanooga parkland and open space conservation happens within a larger regional context of critical corridors and linkages.

### CORRIDORS AND LINKAGES

By locating proposed greenways along Chattanooga’s stream corridors, the POP creates a [citywide framework for protecting critical habitat, keeping future development out of floodplains, and expanding the city’s greenway network along trails that are shaded and beautiful](#).

The many benefits of this approach have been demonstrated in natural-resource-driven greenway systems across the country. From an ecological standpoint, generally speaking, the larger and better connected the landscape, the better it’s able to protect biodiversity and accommodate species and ecosystem adaptation in the face of threats. From a public access and recreational standpoint, a regional system of protected lands and corridors is the foundation for a spectacular outdoor recreation environment and for new greenways that connect more people to each other, to nature, and to regional destinations.

The POP recommends development of greenway design and corridor management guidelines within the Parks and Outdoors Natural Resources Plan. These guidelines should support future City and partner efforts to maximize the human and environmental benefits of the greenway system—for example, with best practices for safe multi-user trail design and wayfinding; aligning trails outside of waterbody buffers and away from sensitive environments such as wetlands; and protecting water quality, habitat and the free movement of wildlife.



*Grand Junction Plaza and Park (Land Collective, left) is a stream restoration project on the edge of downtown Grand Junction, IN. It creates a new destination park while promoting environmental health and mitigating flood risks. Freshkills Park (Field Operations, right) is a landfill conversion project that will result in 2,200 acres of new parkland and wetland restoration in Staten Island, NY, with stunning views to Manhattan. It's an example of a complex, parks department-led project with multiple phases and partners.*

## DEEPER DIVE

- » [‘From Dumps to Destinations: The Conversion of City Landfills to Parks,’ Places Journal \[external URL\]](#)
- » [‘Resource Guide for Planning, Designing and Implementing Green Infrastructure in Parks,’ NRPA \[external URL\]](#)

## HEALING AND RESTORATION

In addition to protecting and managing the city’s natural landscapes, the POP recognizes the **significant opportunity in restoring the landscapes that have been degraded over time through industrial contamination and development.**

Sites that were contaminated by previous industrial use can be reclaimed, cleaned and restored as beautiful public parks. Streams that were buried in underground pipes—aging infrastructure that will require significant investment to replace or repair—can instead be revealed and restored as part of a citywide system of green infrastructure, trails and linear parks. Landfills can be closed, capped and totally transformed into sites for recreation and nature.

Successful examples abound, and these approaches to park conversion are becoming more common as available urban land grows more sparse and as momentum grows to correct past environmental injustices. The POP recommends partnerships with other City departments, federal agencies and community groups to identify opportunity sites and lay out concrete strategies and timelines for the reclamation of Chattanooga’s brownfields, hidden streams and landfills.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESILIENCE

Climate research nonprofit First Street Foundation projects that in 30 years, Chattanooga will have twice as many days where the “feels like” temperature is above 100 degrees Fahrenheit—from 22 days in 2022 to 40 days in 2052. The nonprofit projects that 11,452 properties in Chattanooga—or 22% of all properties in the city—have a greater than 26% chance of being severely affected by flooding over the next 30 years, due mostly to a significant increase in the number and severity of extreme rainfall events. Relative to other cities across the country, this puts Chattanooga at “major” risk of dangerous heat and “severe” risk of flooding.

The city’s parks and outdoors will be critical in efforts to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate. By expanding the citywide tree canopy, daylighting hidden streams, restoring



Examples of Green Stormwater Infrastructure projects in Chattanooga. Clockwise from top right: pervious pavers on Johnson Street in front of the Flying Squirrel; green roof at Outdoor Chattanooga; wetland restoration at Renaissance Park; and bioretention planting at John A. Patten Recreation Center.

drought-tolerant and absorbent landscapes, and expanding greenspace through new parks and a planted public realm, **Chattanooga’s beautiful parks and streetscapes can promote day-to-day health and wellness while protecting its residents and properties from the long-term impacts of flooding and extreme heat.** Public parks can function as the lungs and immune system for the city.

**NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN**

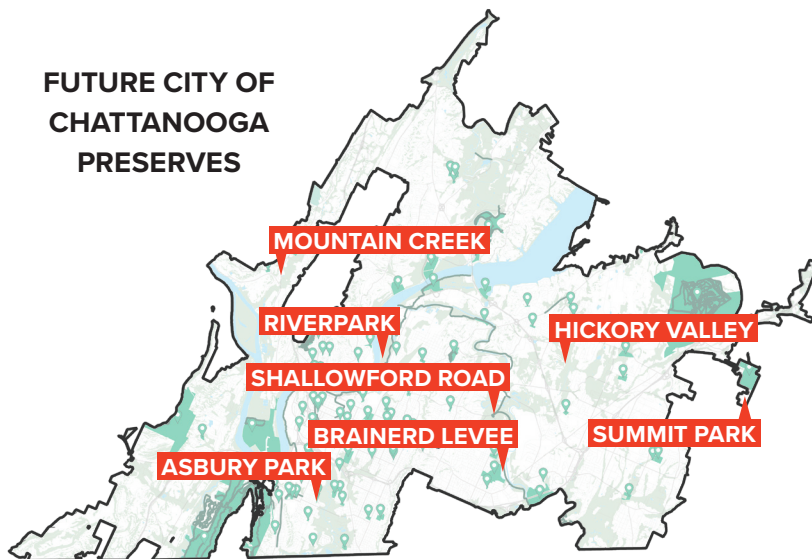
The POP recommends development of a Parks and Outdoors Natural Resources Plan as a reference guide and blueprint for turning the POP’s ‘city in a park’ vision into reality.

The Natural Resources Plan will inform the department’s approach to land preservation, restoration and management at multiple scales and in diverse park and public realm contexts. Plan development should be overseen by the City’s natural resources working group in partnership with other City departments and with insight and review from environmental and park stakeholders.

As the City does more and more to preserve open space, protect waterbody buffers, restore landscapes, and expand beautiful and functional planting and tree canopy at parks and in the public realm, **the Natural Resources Plan will help the City and its partners develop and maintain these projects so that they meet their stated habitat, water quality, cooling, beautification and other goals over time.**

For example, the POP identifies City-owned vacant land (Figure 14) along South Chickamauga, Chattanooga and Mountain Creeks to be set aside as Preserves. To ensure these sites serve the highest and best public use over time, the City and its partners need stewardship policies, passive recreation design guidelines, adequate staffing levels, and site metrics and management best practices. As with other City parks, Preserves must be more than ‘green polygons on a map’—they need the right levels of protection and management to meet the community’s critical environmental and recreational needs.

## FUTURE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA PRESERVES



**Figure 14:** New Preserves to be protected and added to the City’s parks and outdoors system following the identification of City-owned vacant land with open space and passive recreational value.

## STEWARDSHIP CULTURE

This culture of stewardship should extend beyond City parks and operations to include the whole Chattanooga community. In a ‘city in a park,’ all residents cherish their natural resources and are engaged in environmental stewardship. Parks are perfect places to learn about land conservation, green infrastructure and the importance of nature in our daily lives.

There is a particularly strong imperative for this kind of programming to engage:

- Children, as those who will inherit—and whose future wellbeing depends on—the City’s park and outdoor legacy.
- Communities of color and linguistically isolated communities, as those who historically have been excluded from the City’s parks and outdoors.
- Seniors, as a growing population in Chattanooga with experience and expertise to offer younger generations.

## POP ACTIONS / NATURE

Each of the POP’s Big Ideas is supported by a series of specific Actions with associated entities and timelines, intended to offer a roadmap for how and when the City and its partners can achieve the goals of the POP.

The Nature Action Matrix is below, along with additional context for some recommendations.

## DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Real on-the-ground benefits of land conservation, watershed protection and outdoor recreation planning aren’t realized within political borders. In Chattanooga there are exciting opportunities for the City’s parks and outdoors planning to be leveraged through regional collaboration with conservation organizations, foundations, land trusts, universities and other partners.

The POP recommendations for natural resource conservation and management, green infrastructure and resilience should be reviewed and updated regularly as new data, research and plans are developed. In this moment of rapid development and a changing climate, the POP and other plans must be living documents in order to reflect evolving community needs.

## LAND PROTECTION TOOLKIT

Given public demand, projected growth and dwindling natural resources, there is an urgent need for park and trail dedication and open space conservation in Chattanooga. The City must develop a diverse toolkit to help public and private park and conservation partners make up for lost time and protect land for current and future generations.

The POP recommends the Department of Parks and Outdoors work with other City departments and community stakeholders to develop this toolkit, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10: Implementation.



## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND BRANDING

Chattanooga is developing a national and even global reputation as an outdoor recreation destination. To build on this momentum and access new avenues for support, the City should identify environmental campaigns that align with City goals, and explore the commitments needed to become a named partner.

For example, National Park Cities is a movement for cities to restore urban nature and wildlife; give all people access to exploring, playing and learning outdoors; and build a sustainable future with strong local food systems, resilience to a changing climate, and clean air and water. Similar to the City's 10-Minute Walk pledge, these types of campaigns can shed new light on things that are important and elevate Chattanooga's narrative.

### BEST PRACTICE

Stewardship entails a comprehensive, sustainable and adaptable approach to land management that secures a property or project's environmental or conservation values over time.

These are a few examples of stewardship strategies that could be included in the Parks and Outdoors Natural Resources Plan.

## PARK AND PRESERVE STEWARDSHIP

- 1** Build staff expertise and efficiencies by comprehensively addressing management needs—such as invasive species and erosion control—by park land typology—such as grassland, wetland or mesic forest.
- 2** Develop comprehensive guidelines based on industry standards — such as the American Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability, the Sustainable SITES Initiative and restoration practices defined by the U.S. Forest Service and Environmental Protection Agency.
- 3** Develop a system whereby specialized teams of natural area managers are supported by trained volunteers, and identify those less specialized maintenance needs that can be outsourced.
- 4** Use the Parks and Outdoors asset management system to collect and manage data about site conditions over time.
- 5** Place Preserve sites under permanent conservation easements, and develop standards for easements that are site-specific and purpose-based, with baseline data and ongoing monitoring.
- 6** Create visitor, education and volunteer programs that cultivate positive natural experiences and a citywide stewardship ethic.
- 7** Create and deploy an integrated pest management program.

Table 17: **Nature Action Matrix**

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
<b>BIG IDEA: Celebrate and protect Chattanooga’s timeless geographic and natural features as a framework of the plan.</b>										
Work with public and private partners such as University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Thrive Regional Partnership to translate regional environmental analysis and prioritization work to the city scale. For example, identify existing City parks or vacant lands that serve as biodiversity hot spots, and develop local criteria for priority land acquisition from willing sellers, protection and/or restoration based on that data.	●	●				Natural Resources	●			
Collaborate with public and private partners to strategically preserve identified natural resources and habitat corridors through voluntary easements, real property acquisition from willing sellers, zoning and ordinances.					●	Natural Resources				●
Support public and private partners’ efforts to identify or create new opportunities for parkland preservation and outdoor recreation in Chattanooga, such as the National Park Service Land Protection Program and recommendations from the Access Fund.					●	Design and Connectivity				●
Create meaningful opportunities for environmental education and stewardship in all park and outdoor properties and in the public school system.			●			Natural Resources, Marketing, Communications and Outreach, Outdoor Chattanooga				●
For park classification and right-of-way improvement types, develop written planting and management plans that are inspired by the function and aesthetic of local plant communities, with a focus on low-maintenance native plant materials and low-/no-maintenance planting concepts that can adapt to a warmer and wetter climate.		●				Natural Resources	●			
<b>BIG IDEA: Act on the imperative for Chattanooga’s parks to act as green infrastructure and the ‘lungs’ of the city.</b>										
Create a Parks and Outdoors Natural Resources Plan that establishes environmental metrics—and a strategy for robust data collection and monitoring—to guide park and public realm planning and adaptive management and to promote urban ecological health, comfort and resilience.		●				Natural Resources	●			

ACTION	TYPE OF ACTION					RESPONSIBLE DIVISION IN PARKS & OUTDOORS	TIMEFRAME			
	NEW GROUP OR BOARD	NEW PLAN OR STUDY	DPO EFFORT OR POLICY	CITY EFFORT OR POLICY	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP		NEXT 2 YEARS	NEXT 5 YEARS	NEXT 10 YEARS	ONGOING
Identify existing City parks, properties and golf courses to retrofit as green infrastructure demonstration projects in the next 10 years, and develop educational materials and programming to spotlight those efforts.		●				Natural Resources		●		
Collaborate with other City departments to ensure implementation of the POP supports other citywide resilience, stormwater, urban forestry, air quality and water quality initiatives.				●		Natural Resources				●
<b>BIG IDEA: Approach City park projects within the planning and ecological framework of the 16-county Thrive Regional Partnership network.</b>										
Create formal research, programming and oversight partnerships with regional environmental groups, land trusts and universities to ensure park and outdoor efforts are benefiting from regional resources and expertise.					●	Administration				●
Explore the recommendation that a city arboretum and botanical garden facility could be developed through a partnership with Sculpture Fields at Montague Park and/or Reflection Riding.	●					Administration	●			
Explore partnership opportunities to expand native plant production capacity and native plant and restoration research through parks and outdoors sites and projects, with the goal of promoting habitat- and pollinator-friendly planting by public and private individuals and entities across the region, at all scales.					●	Natural Resources		●		

10

# IMPLEMENTATION

- » Funding
- » Development Policies
- » Partnerships
- » Operations and Maintenance
- » Governance

This chapter offers a number of strategies for the City to translate the POP vision into built projects and improvements that serve all Chattanoogaans. These funding mechanisms, policies, partnership agreement frameworks and operational improvements can position the City to reach the POP's Phase 1 and future goals and to maintain a beautiful system over time.

## **FUNDING**

The POP outlines an ambitious phased vision for Chattanooga's parks and outdoors. It calculates the high-level capital costs anticipated for implementing the vision, along with anticipated operating costs and staffing needs for ongoing care of existing and future parks and outdoors. It also sets in motion the City's first Total Asset Management plan to address deferred maintenance and ensure future annual budgets account for the life cycle of park and outdoor assets.

How do we pay for all of this? The City and its partners should pursue a diverse toolkit of funding strategies and sources. Below are some examples.

### **GENERAL FUND REVENUE**

The City should allocate funds from the General Fund for park and outdoor projects, including capital funds to improve the system and ongoing park and greenway maintenance.

### **GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS**

Municipalities can issue general obligation bonds for large-scale projects and initiatives such as new parks and greenways and park improvement campaigns.

### **EARNED INCOME**

Parks can generate earned income through concessions, parking fees, user fees, park rentals and sponsorships or naming rights. Earned income can generate significant revenue for ongoing park improvements and operating expenses.

However, these funding strategies should be pursued with care and sensitivity to ensure fees are appropriate and don't create real or perceived barriers to public park use. Where user fees are implemented, for example, the City should consider issuing free Parks and Outdoor Passes for households that qualify for SNAP benefits.

### **'ADOPT-A' PROGRAM**

The City can generate funds for ongoing maintenance of specific park sites, features or landscape types through 'Adopt-a' programs that identify a base fee for benches, lawn acreage, paved areas, gardens or other park amenities that can be 'adopted' by local entities in exchange for a certificate, plaque or other form of recognition. The sponsor has the opportunity to select where or what they would like to 'adopt,' and funds generated from the program are directed into a dedicated endowment for ongoing maintenance.

### **WATER QUALITY PROGRAM**

The City's Water Quality Program generates funding for the Natural Resources division—among other City efforts—through a stormwater fee that is calculated based on a parcel's impervious surface area. The total annual fee for each property owner equals the number of a property's Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs) multiplied by \$183.54, where one ERU is equivalent to 3,200 square feet of impervious surface area.

This rate has been adjusted in the past to maintain a certain level of service; as the Natural Resources division and its responsibilities expand, the Water Quality Program fee and distribution should be evaluated routinely to ensure the division has sufficient funding. Natural Resources currently receives approximately \$840,000 annually from this program.

## **SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS**

Where future development and increased tax revenue are expected, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) allow for taxes collected above an established baseline to be dedicated to improvements within those districts, including parks. The City should explore whether these tools could help fund new parks and park improvements in areas of future investment.

## **PHILANTHROPY**

Chattanooga has a strong tradition of private philanthropy in support of public projects, including parks. The City should continue to partner with private foundations and donors to identify where support of POP projects would align with their mission and values. The City could also explore creation of a Parks and Outdoors Foundation as a 501(c)(3) that would advocate and fundraise on behalf of the City's Department of Parks and Outdoors.

## **ENDOWMENT**

The interest generated through a parks endowment could support the annual operating expenses of the Department of Parks and Outdoors. A significant amount of money would need to be raised to generate an impactful amount of interest. Assuming a 3 to 5% distribution annually, a minimum \$20 million of endowment funds would be needed to generate \$1 million in interest. Realistically, the distribution percentage would vary depending on actual interest rates and might actually be lower, which would necessitate an even larger endowment to make it a reliable source of income. However, this could be a long-term goal for the City, and a role that a non-profit partner or parks and outdoors conservancy could assume.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE GRANT PROGRAMS**

One-time grants for parks, open space and greenways can fund specific capital projects or programming initiatives. Grants generally have a formal application process with specific submission requirements, along with reporting requirements that seek to quantify the grant's impact. They often require a local funding match. They also can require a certain level of expertise to navigate the application requirements and forms and to understand what projects might be competitive for which grant programs.

The Department of Parks and Outdoors should work with other departments and a City grants coordinator to annually review all relevant private and public grant opportunities and to coordinate efforts to ensure project proposals are submitted that are the best fit for each grant program. These annual reviews can also help to ensure that the City is well-positioned for future funding opportunities; for example, for grant applications that require projects to be shovel- or permit-ready, this review process can identify where investments in a park engagement and design process this year could make a POP project a strong candidate for that particular grant application next year.

Table 18 lists several public grant programs that are considered a strong fit for local park and recreation projects. Generally, the grants administered by state agencies are those with the longest track record of promoting local parks, open space and greenways. The federal opportunities are largely new grant programs created by recent federal climate and

infrastructure legislation. These require a heavier lift for technical capacity and coordination but offer exciting opportunities for transformative projects in the public realm. The City should work with its public and private partners to track new funding opportunities that continue to emerge from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

The table does not include other types of public grants—such as for water quality, brownfield remediation, green infrastructure and hazard mitigation—that aren’t specifically for park, open space or connectivity projects but could fund significant POP projects when pursued in coordination with other City departments and partners.

## DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The POP was developed concurrently with a City effort to update its zoning code. This update is an opportunity for new City ordinances to protect parkland and open space and build out greenway connectivity in pace with future development. Such an approach received support

Table 18: **Public Grant Opportunities for Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors**

GRANT OPPORTUNITY	ENTITY	LOCAL MATCH	WHAT THE GRANT CAN SUPPORT				
			LAND ACQUISITION	PARK CAPITAL PROJECTS	GREENWAY CAPITAL PROJECTS	PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS	PLANNING
Transportation Alternatives Program	TDOT	○			○	○	
Community Development Block Grants	TNECD	○		○	○	○	
Land and Water Conservation Fund	TDEC-RES	○	○	○	○		
LWCF Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership	TDEC-RES	○	○	○	○		
Recreational Trails Program	TDEC-RES	○			○		
Multimodal Access Grant	TDOT	○				○	
Local Parks and Recreation Fund	TDEC-RES	○	○	○	○		
Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program	USDOT	○		○	○	○	○
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Discretionary Grant Program	USDOT	○			○	○	○
Climate and Environmental Justice Block Grants	EPA		○	○	○	○	
Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program	USDOT	○				○	○
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities	FEMA		○	○	○	○	



from members of the local development community in a POP focus group and should be explored as part of a zoning code update that promotes smart growth and quality of life. Following are zoning strategies and fees that the City could pursue to promote the parks and outdoors as part of future development.

## ZONING INCENTIVES AND BONUSES

The City can provide certain incentives or allow developers to bypass certain zoning limitations in exchange for new development to either (1) incorporate a certain amount and quality of parkland, open space, greenways or other amenities within the site plan, or (2) contribute to a park endowment or public improvement fund that supports the parks and outdoors.

## TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs allow property owners in certain areas—such as floodplains or natural areas with conservation value—to sell the development rights from their land (the sending site) for use on another site that is more appropriate for development (the receiving site). The sending site is then protected as open space under a conservation easement that can allow for public access and recreation.

## PARK DEDICATION ORDINANCE AND FEES

The City could require that a certain portion of any new development site be dedicated for public parks, recreation facilities or greenways. Alternatively, developers could pay a cash fee in lieu of a land dedication. This fee would be paid into a special fund used for future park acquisition and development.

## DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES

New residential or commercial growth can be charged a one-time fee to cover the cost of public infrastructure, including parks and greenways. The collected fees should also be considered for long-term maintenance costs of these public services, and maybe directed into a dedicated fund, or endowment.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Chattanoogans are fortunate to have access within the city limits to diverse City, county, federal and private park and outdoor opportunities. There are additional private non-profit entities that don't operate parks but provide invaluable advocacy and support for the city's system of parks, greenways and open spaces.

The City has a strong history of formal and informal partnerships with these entities and should work to strengthen, define and expand those relationships in the interest of better serving the park and outdoor needs of Chattanooga.

There are many models across the country of park and recreation agencies entering into formal agreements with public and private organizational partners that support systemwide park operations, maintenance, fundraising and advocacy. The City should look to these models to develop a partnership framework that spells out clear roles and expectations for specific partner types, such as:

- Other public park providers that share operations and maintenance loads.
- Private non-profits that provide programming at City parks.

### DEEPER DIVE

- » [Partnership Agreement Configurations and Terms, Austin Department of Parks and Recreation, City Parks Alliance \[external URL\]](#)

- Private Friends groups or conservancies that raise funds and provide maintenance and support for specific City parks.
- Public and private utilities that can support greenway development and public access within easement corridors.
- Private conservation non-profits that can help negotiate land donations and easements for protected parkland and open space.
- Homeowners associations that can allow for the construction and maintenance of public trail facilities on private HOA land.
- Private organizations, local schools or arts groups that can provide grants or partnership programs for public art conservation and preservation.
- Private corporations that provide sponsorship of events and programs and receive some form of recognition for their support for a defined period of time.
- Private advocacy groups and corporations that support ongoing operations and maintenance through organized volunteer efforts.

By setting clear expectations and establishing agreement templates for different types of park partners, the City can better meet the park and outdoor needs of all communities, build a feeling of ownership and buy-in of the system, and make the most of limited public and private resources.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

This section of the POP takes a deeper dive into how Chattanooga’s parks and outdoors system should be managed now and into the future. Recommendations are based on planning team analysis, best-practices research and discussions with staff.

### O&M ‘TOP OF THE POP’

These are the five things that Department of Parks and Outdoors (DPO) leadership and staff should focus on first:

1. Prioritize backfilling vacant positions.
2. Add 4 new crews (8-12 staff) as follows:
  - » Add two (2) more crews (or 4-6 staff) to Parks Maintenance to meet existing citywide parks maintenance needs.
  - » Establish a new Trail Crew whose focus is both soft and hard trails citywide. This crew should consist of 3-4 staff (1 supervisor/lead with 2-3 technicians) including new vehicles and tools specific to maintenance of trails.
  - » Establish and assign park-based public art conservation to a skilled in-house crew of 2-3 staff (1 supervisor/lead with 1-2 technicians).
3. Revise job descriptions to more accurately reflect park-related work.

The addition of four (4) crews, or 12 staff, would require an estimated initial budget increase of \$944,000 (including four new trucks) and \$684,000 annually for new personnel costs. Alternatively—especially when there is a need for specialized skills such as trail maintenance or art conservation—these labor and resource needs could be achieved through establishment of contract with outside vendors.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE STAFFING AND MAINTENANCE BUDGETS

To ensure existing and future parks are cared-for over time, the POP recommends the following commitment of annual maintenance dollars and FTEs (Full-Time Equivalents) by project phase (as described in Chapter 4).

These recommendations would help to address existing challenges described by Parks Maintenance staff and would bring Chattanooga’s park staffing levels up to the national median based on its current and projected future populations.

Table 19: **Anticipated High-Level Maintenance Costs (in 2023 Dollars) and FTEs by Phase**

	RECOMMENDED ANNUAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET	RECOMMENDED FULL-TIME MAINTENANCE POSITIONS
<b>Existing</b> (2023)	\$8 million	49
<b>Proposed</b> (2023)	\$9 million	55
<b>Phase 1</b> (Short Term)	\$9 to 10 million	58 to 67
<b>Phase 2</b> (Medium Term)	\$10 to 13 million	70 to 90
<b>Phase 3</b> (Long Term)	\$13 to 15 million	88 to 100

## STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUPPORT

Parks Maintenance is currently divided into three sections:

- 1. River Parks**—These staff care for parks that have high visibility to the public, see high use, and receive more staffing support. The City shares River Parks maintenance and operations responsibilities and funding with Hamilton County, as some of the parks are County properties.
- 2. Citywide**—These staff care for other City-owned parks and are divided into Landscape and Facilities. The Landscape staff are largely responsible for park groundskeeping, landscape maintenance, and some installations and landscape construction. Facilities staff are responsible for infrastructural needs, trades services and repairs.
- 3. Natural Resources**—Natural Resources is a newly established section that provides oversight and management of the natural areas within the city, including all Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Control Measures. The current areas of focus are restoring native habitats, managing invasive species, increasing biodiversity, converting traditionally mowed turf lawns into more sustainable conservation lawns, and improving the overall health of the city’s landscapes. Natural Resources also provides educational programs, guest lectures, workshops and classes.

Outside of Parks Maintenance, Recreation staff are responsible for maintenance of outdoor recreational facilities across the city, such as sports fields at parks adjacent to Community Centers, fields leased by Youth Associations, and competition-grade Special Use Facilities, like Warner Park and Summit of Softball.

The following recommendations and approaches are based on a combination of staff interviews conducted by the planning team as well as research on national standards, benchmarking to other comparable cities, and other research and analysis. The recommendations are intended to streamline operations, identify service gaps, and maximize services with current and proposed levels of staffing.

## ZONE MANAGEMENT

Organizing maintenance by zone and specialty can help develop expertise and instill a sense of ownership among maintenance staff. Zone management typically assigns specific staff to day-to-day maintenance and upkeep of the parks and natural areas in each geographic zone. Specialized maintenance (such as trades, or work requiring special permits or licenses) is completed by a citywide crew.

Zone management allows park staff to become familiar faces within certain parks and create an invaluable rapport with park visitors. Zone management also aims to reduce travel time between sites and allow the crews more time to provide services to their assigned zones.

Zone staff maintenance can be regularly supported by other citywide staff for work such as graffiti removal, turf care and repair of site amenities, benches, fences, etc.

Further discussion and research is needed to understand the full liability and impact of a zone/district-based strategy on DPO resources, staffing, facilities and costs. To a certain extent the current ‘districting’ of River Parks from Citywide Parks is akin to a zoned strategy. A renewed focus on Citywide Parks might yield insight into whether zones/districts could be further developed to improve standards. Currently staffing is insufficient to fully implement a zone management approach.

Under a zone management system, localized maintenance facilities would be essential for efficiency and to ensure crews are properly supported.

## PRIMARY MAINTENANCE FACILITY

A primary maintenance facility typically houses all centralized maintenance support such as vehicles, bulk materials and storage. The primary maintenance facility should be located in a large regional park that can be easily accessed and should have:

- Space for administrative purposes—such as offices, conference rooms and workshops
- Staffing area—with lockers, a breakroom and cleanup area
- Shop spaces—for equipment repair and storage and garage and work space
- Secured yards—with plenty of storage area, including bulk bins, hazardous storage, tool sheds and waste management areas, with some storage climate-controlled; covered and uncovered parking; charging/fuel stations; and possibly a greenhouse or growing facility.

## SECONDARY MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

Secondary and/or tertiary facilities should also be considered in other parks in order to provide staff with frequently used equipment and tools without having to travel back to the primary facility. A secondary facility may only need:

- A small office space
- Restroom/cleanup area
- Some storage for frequently used tools such as rakes and shovels; small equipment such as chainsaws, trimmers and chainsaw blades; and maintenance materials such as trash bags and hoses.

Some secondary facilities may require dedicated uses, such as a repair workshop, paint shop or plant growing facility, depending on the location of the facility and what services it needs to support.

## TERTIARY MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

Tertiary facilities do not need to be dedicated built facilities but rather can be small locked or secured storage boxes or space within a park restroom that allows staff to store frequently used small tools and materials. These storage boxes can be painted and hidden away, and securely bolted to the ground.

## PARKS MAINTENANCE CREWS

Table 20 shows the approximate distribution of staff and management responsibilities by division. Based on this breakdown, Citywide Parks includes more acreage of parkland per staff than any other City team. Additionally, Citywide Parks staff maintain sites throughout the City, meaning that more of their time may be spent travelling between sites than other teams, resulting in less available time for actual maintenance work. Any re-organization efforts should initially focus on Citywide Parks to improve efficiency and impact.

The POP recommends DPO explore the following staff crews based on conversations with staff and national best practices. Some of these crews are also recommended above for short-term focus, under O&M ‘Top of the POP.’

- **Dedicated Zone Landscape Crews**—Including maintenance technicians, landscape technicians and arborists, these staff would be responsible for daily maintenance such as delimiting, trash removal and pickup, general groundskeeping, routine planting bed maintenance, woody species pruning, mowing, lawn care, and ballfield maintenance. The makeup of the crews varies depending on the zones and assets within these zones.
- **Parkwide/Regional Crew**—Including specialized staff such as electricians, plumbers, technicians, irrigation specialists, horticulturists, herbicide/pesticide applicators, mechanics, handymen, equipment operators and those who may have acquired special licenses or permits, these crew members would support citywide park technical services. An in-house mechanic might be the most critical position in its potential impact on improving quality and efficiency of systemwide services.
- **Natural Resources Crew**—This crew currently consists of five staff—a Natural Resources Manager, a Natural Resources Coordinator, a Natural Resources General Supervisor and two Natural Resources Field Team Leads. These staff are responsible for citywide restoration projects, invasive species removal, increasing biodiversity in ecologically sensitive areas, offering educational programs and lectures, and working with the Water Quality Program to implement stormwater and other systems to improve water quality. Current staffing does not allow the Natural Resources crew to take on actual maintenance; all maintenance is currently

Table 20: **Existing Maintenance Staff and Management Responsibilities**

	TOTAL PARKLAND MANAGEMENT AREA (ACRES)	NUMBER OF FTE STAFF	NUMBER OF ACRES PER STAFF
<b>Athletic Fields</b>	190	10	19
<b>River Parks</b>	54	17.5	3
<b>Downtown</b>	112	5.5	20
<b>Citywide</b> (Current, June 2023)	1,108	16	69
<b>Citywide</b> (Anticipated, July 2023)	1,108	19	58

contracted out. It will be important to have skilled in-house field staff. Contracted staff can perform tasks as assigned, but in-house staff will be familiar with the city's dynamic natural assets and able to adapt management accordingly. While Natural Resources is expected to hire three (3) more staff in the future, the team will need to continue to expand as the City's green infrastructure increases and more natural resources are expected to receive much-needed care and restoration.

- **Trail Crew**—This crew would be responsible for all maintenance within the trail system, including greenways and blueways. As the system continues to grow over the life of the plan's recommendations, so will its maintenance needs. Currently there is not sufficient staffing to allow dedicated time for trail maintenance. Staff are dispatched to “bandage” issues as they arise, but they are not providing preventative maintenance that ensures the long-term health of the system. Current staff are not trained to properly maintain soft-surface trails, including erosion control and invasive species removal. Additionally, existing crews do not include dedicated carpenters (for boardwalk repair/replacement) or concrete craftspeople (for concrete greenway maintenance). Consider launching the Crew with four (4) staff (with vehicles and equipment) and adjust over time to meet the needs of the growing system.
- **Art Conservation Crew**—This crew would be responsible for the large collection of outdoor art sculptures in City parks. Maintenance of these works of art requires certain skills, knowledge and training in proper conservation procedures for different materials, methods, cleaning and long-term care and conservation. Currently there is no program to proactively maintain these works of art due to the lack of resources. It would be in the City's interest to develop an Arts Conservation Program to protect these assets, and it presents a great opportunity to work with community art groups and to build new connections between parks, the outdoors and arts programming. Consider launching the Crew with 2-3 skilled in-house staff, or contracting some or all services.
- **Special Events Crew**—This crew would be responsible for assisting with set-up, take-down and overall special event support for parks across the city. Most special events take place in the River Parks, but some are also hosted in other Signature Parks. Existing crews are currently tasked with providing support for special events, most of which happen from April to mid-November. This coincides with the growing season and also the highest overall visitation to parks. The lack of a dedicated events crew means staff are diverted from their work, creating a maintenance backlog. Under the current system, staff often have to work overtime to meet the needs of special events. The Special Events Crew is intended to alleviate these burdens and backlogs and may be composed of seasonal staff. Consider launching the Crew with two to four (2-4) staff and in close coordination with the Special Events staff.

## **HIRING AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

The current organizational structure can promote “siloeing.” Shared resources can be limited, and staff often feel short-handed. One contributing factor may be that each team handles their own area, and the lack of resource-sharing can make it feel they “are on their own.” Another factor is simply being understaffed. Following are observations and recommendations based on conversations with staff.

- Filling vacant positions should be a top priority for DPO to overcome challenges confirmed in multiple interviews with existing staff throughout the Department of Parks and Outdoors. At any given time pending retirements or other temporary leaves for personal or medical reasons can impact the capacity of the department, and lingering unfilled vacancies can exacerbate those challenges.
- Hiring part-time staff is a systemwide issue as DPO struggles to fill those positions. DPO may want to evaluate part-time/seasonal positions' job descriptions, rates, benefits, options etc.

to see if there are changes that can make these positions more competitive and to attract potential candidates.

- Currently, posted job descriptions are generic and include language and/or tasks that are not applicable to DPO’s job responsibilities and can refer to other tasks that fall outside of parks and landscape maintenance. However, in interviews with staff, and supported by knowledge of park systems nationwide, we have noted that many personnel, department-wide but especially in maintenance roles, are specifically motivated for landscape-related and other work that is specific to parks and the outdoors. Job descriptions should be revised and updated to include language that is appropriate to the department’s responsibilities and reflect DPO needs.

## VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

As crews expand, it is imperative that vehicles and equipment are bought to support them. Without adequate vehicles, crews must double-up and may not be able to perform tasks as scheduled.

- Currently, most equipment and vehicle repair is completed by the Department of Public Works or contracted out. The non-park-dedicated mechanics may not prioritize repair of park equipment and vehicles as high as other departments, such as police or streets maintenance. Some minor upkeep is completed by DPO staff but is limited. Dedicated park mechanics could repair equipment quickly and improve efficiency of all staff.
- Through its horizontal structure of department “squads,” DPO has already considered “standardizing” material and equipment choices to allow the department to make larger material purchases and reduce costs associated with a wide diversity of inventory stockpile. Currently, some tools can share batteries to ensure staff can continue work regardless of which tool they have on hand. When replacing or purchasing new tools, ensure the new tools do not require different batteries.

Table 22 shows recommended personnel, vehicle and equipment budgets to ensure proper support for new crews of three to four workers.

## DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

DPO should continue to monitor internal and City practices to identify duplication and opportunities for efficiency or collaboration.

Table 22: **Anticipated Upfront and Ongoing Costs to Support New Crews**

	3-PERSON CREW			4-PERSON CREW			NOTES
	UNIT	RATE	TOTAL	UNIT	RATE	TOTAL	
Crew Workers	3	\$38,000	\$114,000	4	\$38,000	\$152,000	3-4 workers as one crew
Fringe			\$39,900			\$53,200	Assumes 35%
Misc.			\$17,100			\$22,800	Assumes an additional 15% for tools, equipment, materials costs
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$171,000</b>			<b>\$228,200</b>	<b>Estimated ongoing costs</b>
Crew Vehicles	1	\$65,000	\$65,000	1	\$65,000	\$64,000	Assumes F250 model, outfitted
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$236,000</b>			<b>\$293,000</b>	<b>Estimated cost in first year</b>

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Land Managers may not realize that some of their properties are within Natural Resources' management area. Clearly mapping these sites would be the first step in creating a clearer boundary on ownership responsibilities and management protocols. Identification and dedication of new Preserve classifications represents a step in the right direction pertaining to clarity of land management across the City.

Additionally, a memorandum of understanding/agreement (MOU/MOA) should be drafted between Natural Resources and other City departments to ensure proper coordination and division of labor and responsibilities.

## RECREATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

One issue highlighted during staff interviews was whether Recreation Support Services (RSS) should remain separate from Parks Maintenance. Currently, RSS staff handle maintenance of all 720 athletic fields, including some located in parks. Field maintenance includes mowing, trimming, edging, lining, cleaning and prepping the field before a game, cleanup after a game, and field repair. Additionally, RSS provides some program support, such as setting up game tables, program relocation and set-up and logistics. As field use increases, DPO should investigate where these services should be "housed," under Recreation or Parks Maintenance.

Table 23 shows a summary of potential pros and cons of being under either division. These pros and cons are dependent on whether Parks Maintenance has a dedicated mechanic, and whether a Special Events crew is available to fill the program support that Recreation Support Services currently provides.

Table 23: **Pros and Cons of Relocating Recreation Support Services Staff**

	PROS	CONS
<b>Remain in Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows better staff and game coordination</li> <li>• Allows better game schedule coverage</li> <li>• Supervisors have working relationships</li> <li>• Provides support and assist on programs/events support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited shared support from other DPO staff</li> <li>• Limited to only athletic field maintenance</li> <li>• Equipment is sent to dealers for repair and has long lead time until it is returned</li> </ul>
<b>Move to Parks Maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other resources available and may include (when applicable) mechanics and other staff support</li> <li>• Availability for other turf care work in parks, when not engaged with athletic field maintenance</li> <li>• Create unified department-wide turf standards for both athletic and non-athletic turf areas</li> <li>• Inclusion in inspection plan and asset management tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential scheduling issues</li> <li>• Less coordination with recreation programming schedule</li> <li>• More disbursed for other turf care needs</li> <li>• Different scheduling than non-athletic park turf areas</li> <li>• Another crew will need to pick up on the programs/events support, like the Special Events crew</li> </ul>



## PLANNING AND DATA

To better assess the optimal number of staff needed to meet park and outdoor maintenance workloads over time, DPO is developing a process to calculate deferred, ongoing and projected labor and costs. The following recommendations build on efforts already underway.

### ASSET MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

DPO staff should use asset management software to keep track of where they spend their time. This may include time for:

- Mobilization.
- Tool maintenance.
- Equipment maintenance (or delayed repair/servicing of equipment maintenance orders).
- Time lost as a result of out-of-service or inadequate equipment (double staff in a truck, unable to complete a task).
- Time lost to travel.

Tracking this information can help to:

- Evaluate whether DPO is meeting maintenance standards, and track any backlog (if applicable).
- Evaluate if added positions are necessary. For example, if too much time is spent on tool maintenance or lost due to out-of-service vehicles/equipment, it provides strong evidence for an in-house mechanic.
- Identify “problem” areas that require more resources.

### INSPECTIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

Parks Maintenance has launched park inspection and assessment programs with the goal of raising the overall level of services throughout the park system. These programs are relatively new and should be evaluated every year to refine questionnaires or evaluate the program’s overall impact (i.e., are parks better maintained than before).

#### *LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM*

In the past year, the Landscape Maintenance Team started a new Landscape Assessment program. This assessment program supplies a rating from A-F (best to worst) for six major categories: Parking Lot, Sidewalk and Entrance Way Plantings; Trees; Shrubs; Grass (Lawn); Pollinator Gardens; Woodline, Wetlands, Meadows and Trailways. The program has several questions under each category assessing the conditions of the features, with the choice to respond with Yes or No. However, there are no guidelines to help provide an objective rating or differentiate between a park with an A rating and one with a B rating. The staff are also given the opportunity to comment and supply other information that the rating questionnaire may not cover.

The Facilities Assessment Program focuses on the non-organic features of park landscapes. The program shows conditions and associated features for six (6) categories: Parking Lot, Sidewalks, Entry; Athletic Court; General Signage, Park Fencing, and Lighting; Playgrounds; Restroom; Building; and Amenities (pavilions and site furnishings). The “associated features” may include items such as fencing, lighting at an Athletic Court, or the play surface and equipment at a playground. The program includes several criteria for each category for assessing conditions, with typically five (5) options for each response. The options are more defined and measurable; for example, when asked whether the play equipment and surfaces

are free of graffiti, the answers can be ranked from 100% graffiti-free to less than 70% graffiti-free surfaces.

A few considerations to improve the systems:

- Show the time and day of the week the assessment is conducted. The recent weather should also be noted as it may affect the growth of landscapes and their overall condition. Try to avoid assessing the site shortly after an event, permitted use, or even a busy weekend as it may present a skewed representation of the site.
- Consider assessing the site in different weather conditions. An assessment done after a rain event would allow the staff to identify any pooling of water or erosion, which could all point to potential drainage issues.
- Explanation of how the park is scored to remain as objective as possible. For example, each 'Yes' may constitute one (1) point, and if the score falls within a range (0-10, 11-20, etc.), the work orders for the park may be of high or low priority.
- More technical details should be added as the program further develops (this may be incorporated into the maintenance standards). For example, for tree pruning and limbing up: Is there a 14' (height to be determined) clearance from the ground? Do branches extend into the pathway?
- Consider introducing simple but technical in-field tests, such as the soil compaction test (by using a soil probe or a soil compaction tester) to decide whether aeration and further testing will be needed to improve the soil or turf conditions.
- Evaluate the data collected from the assessment program and asset management software to help understand use patterns and whether maintenance services should increase to meet these needs. For example, if dog bag stations are consistently empty, they may need more frequent refills or more stations added.

Additionally, play equipment should be inspected on a twice-a-year schedule by a Certified Playground Inspector (whether in-house staff or contracted services) to ensure the play equipment is safe for use.

## MAINTENANCE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

DPO should develop estimated maintenance/operating costs, or maintenance impact statements, for all new capital projects. These statements should be developed as part of every design and construction process, with Parks Maintenance having multiple opportunities to weigh in on the design and being planning for the resources they will need to maintain the new park over time. Historical data and observations from asset management software and the landscape and facility assessments can help staff develop realistic estimates for new staffing and costs associated with new park projects based on their proposed size, character and amenities.

## GOVERNANCE

The POP recommends that the City and Department of Parks and Outdoors create a permanent Parks and Outdoors Advisory Commission composed of term-limited members from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council. The Commission would be responsible for strategy, policy, financial and regulatory oversight of the Department of Parks and Outdoors and would make formal recommendations to the Mayor and Council for implementation.





# GLOSSARY

### **Activation**

The use of programming—well-planned, supervised activities and events—to bring life and energy to a physical park space by making people feel welcome and comfortable.

### **Activity Pool**

A small, shallow pool with slides and spray features for water play and learning to swim.

### **Adventure play**

An outdoor area that has fixed and movable structures (such as slides and rope ladders) on which children can climb and play and that often also has equipment and loose materials for building projects and modifying preexisting structures.

### **Athletic field**

A general term for ball fields and multi-use fields.

### **Ball field**

A baseball or softball field of any size. Ball fields include a backstop and can include foul line fencing, spectator/player seating, skinned or grass infields, lights, scoreboards and supporting amenities.

### **Bikeway**

A facility intended for bicycle travel that designates space for bicyclists distinct from motor vehicle traffic. A bikeway does not include shared lanes, sidewalks, signed routes, or shared lanes with shared lane markings, but does include bicycle boulevards.

### **Bioremediation**

An engineered technology that modifies environmental conditions (physical, chemical, biochemical, or microbiological) to encourage microorganisms to destroy or detoxify organic and inorganic contaminants in the environment. The process can be categorized into two general terms: ex situ or in situ.

Ex situ processes involve the removal of the contaminated media to a treatment area. In situ processes treat soils and ground water in place, without removal.

### **Bioswale**

A type of green infrastructure that conveys stormwater before directing it to a storm sewer system or other flood control structure.

### **Blueway**

A designated water trail designed with mapped launch points—and occasionally camp sites and other points of

interest along the route—for recreational use with canoes, kayaks and paddle boards.

### **Brownfield**

Real property whose expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant.

### **Brownfield redevelopment**

The three stages of the brownfield redevelopment process are pre-development, development and management. Each stage requires specific actions, funding and/or financing. Integrating cleanup and redevelopment activities as appropriate at each stage is the key to cost-effective, sustainable brownfields redevelopment. (EPA)

### **Capital improvement**

The construction of new park sites and recreation facilities.

### **Climate change**

A long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth's local, regional and global climates. The term refers to both human and naturally produced warming and the effects it has on our planet and is commonly measured as the average increase in Earth's global surface temperature. (NASA)

### **Competitive facilities**

Recreation facilities supporting league, sanctioned or otherwise organized sports and activities. Usually includes formal requirements for the size, condition or type of playing environment.

### **Complete Streets**

An approach to planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

### **Connectivity**

The state of being connected or interconnected and enables movement among otherwise disparate elements, which may refer to transportation, ecology, culture, and community.

### **Conservation**

Planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction or neglect.

### **Ecological restoration**

A process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed.

### **Ecosystem services**

Outputs of natural ecological functions or processes that directly or indirectly contribute to human welfare or have the potential to do so in the future (Boyd and Banzhaf, 2007).

### **Equity**

A commitment to just and fair inclusion within a system in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. (The NRPA's working definition of equitable park and recreation access is: "The just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks and green space, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone. When people have just and fair access, our health and social wellbeing improve, and our communities can protect and better recover from environmental, social and economic challenges.")

### **Equity Investment Zones**

Areas identified as highest-priority for park and outdoor investments due to their history of underinvestment and current level of need.

### **Floodplain**

Any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

### **Flood Zone**

Special Flood Hazard Areas as defined by the most recently adopted FEMA maps. The 100-year flood zone is defined as an area that has a 1% or greater chance of being inundated in any given year.

### **Floodway**

The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land properties that must be reserved to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height. In a flood event, the floodway functions as part of the waterway, and is filled with flowing water.

### **Food desert**

Areas with limited access to healthy and affordable food that may lead to social and spatial inequalities in nutritional and health outcomes.

### **Green Stormwater Infrastructure**

Measures that use plant or soil systems; landscaping; stormwater harvest and reuse; open space preservation; or permeable surfaces to store, infiltrate or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems and surface waters. Green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater at its source, reducing the chance of local flooding, while delivering environmental, social and economic benefits.

### **Greenway**

Corridors of land with trails—often paved—recognized for their ability to connect people and places together. These ribbons of open space are located within linear corridors that are either natural, such as rivers and streams, or manmade, such as abandoned railroad beds and utility corridors with significant vegetation.

### **Hidden streams**

Surface waterways that have been buried, piped or vanished due to development.

### **Historic Place**

Places that are on the list of The National Register of Historic Places, recognized as places worthy of preservation.

### **Hydric soils**

Wet soils that are saturated for periods long enough to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part of the soil. They are poorly or very poorly drained under natural conditions. (NRCS USDA)

### **Homeowner's Association (HOA)**

An organization that makes and enforces rules for properties and common areas within a planned community. Anyone who purchases a property in the community is automatically an HOA member required to pay dues, which typically go toward paying for communal amenities and maintenance.

### **Land rehabilitation**

A process of restoration to bring an area of land back to its natural state after it has been damaged or degraded, making it safe for wildlife and flora as well as humans.

### **Level of Service (LOS)**

A ratio representing the amount of open space, recreational facilities and parkland needed to meet the recreation demands of the community. (NRPA)

### **Landcover**

How much of a region is covered by forests, wetlands, impervious surfaces, agriculture, and other land and water types. Water types include wetlands or open water. Landcover can be determined by analyzing satellite and aerial imagery. Landcover maps provide information to help planners and managers best understand the current landscape. (NOAA)

### **Land use**

Land use shows how people use the landscape – whether for development, conservation, or mixed uses.

### **Local Affordability Index (LAI)**

Housing and transportation costs consume about half of the average household budget, but it can be difficult for people to fully factor transportation costs into decisions about where to live and work. The Location Affordability Index (LAI) works to close this gap by providing estimates of household housing and transportation costs at the neighborhood level along with constituent data on the built environment and demographics. (HUD Exchange)

### **Maintenance**

The regular tasks that keep parks and recreation facilities clean and safe to use. For example, trash collection, safety inspections, or replacement of broken parts on equipment.

### **Multi-use fields**

All 50'x70' or larger flat rectangular fields for soccer, football and other sports and activities. These fields can include goals, spectator/player seating, scoreboards, lights and supporting amenities.

### **Multi-use trail**

Allows bikes, hikers or horses to use the same trail.

### **National Park City**

A place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life. It is a timely cultural choice, a commitment to a sense of place and way of life that sustains people and nature in cities and beyond.

### **Natural Play Area**

A designated, managed place in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.

### **National Priorities List (NPL)**

A list of sites of national priority among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States and its territories.

### **Natural Resources Corridor**

A protected environment limited to low-impact recreational activities. It creates a connected network that not only provides people with access to nature, but also protects wildlife habitat, mitigates flood risk, improves air and water quality, and cools the city's built environment.

### **On Street Bicycle Transportation Routes**

This includes the following classifications from the City's bike map: Bike Lanes, Bike Route, Road with Wide Shoulders, and Wide Sidewalk Connections. The bike map can be referenced for the specific type of route.

### **Operations and Maintenance (costs)**

The day-to-day costs to keep the system open, clean and safe.

### **Operations**

The staffing and services needed to provide recreation opportunities at a recreation facility. This includes management, planning, front desk support, supervision and basic programming.

### **Renewal**

The reinvestment in existing sites as major systems and recreation facilities reach the end of their useful life or are no longer serving public needs.

### **Recreation facilities**

The built features within parks that create opportunities to engage in specific games and activities. These can range from single courts or small play areas up to the Summit Softball Complex.

### **Recreation programming**

The classes, activities, sports and special events that are provided by Outdoor Chattanooga and other providers within and around Chattanooga. There is a close connection between these services and the parks and trails in the system and detailed in this plan.

### **Pollinator Garden**

A garden that includes a variety of flowering, native plants that provide food and nesting space for pollinators.



### **Prime farmland**

Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas.

### **Public Realm**

The publicly owned places and spaces that belong to and are accessible by everyone.

### **Pump track**

A small mountain bike trail that consists of rolling mounds and berms in a loop format designed to be ridden solely by pumping to gain momentum.

### **Rain garden**

Small, shallow, sunken areas of plantings that collect stormwater runoff from roofs, streets and sidewalks. Also known as bioretention cells, they are designed to mimic the natural ways water flows over and absorbs into land to reduce stormwater pollution.

### **Redlining**

A discriminatory practice in which services (financial and otherwise) are withheld from potential customers who reside in neighborhoods classified as ‘hazardous’ to investment; these neighborhoods historically have significant numbers of racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income residents.

### **Remediation waste**

The waste generated from the cleanup of environmental contamination.

### **Resilience**

The ability of a landscape to recover, adapt and thrive in the face of extreme weather events, a changing climate and other disruptions.

### **Ridgeline**

A line connecting the highest points along a ridge and separating drainage basins or small-scale drainage systems from one another.

### **Sidewalk**

A paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road. The area where people interface with one another and with businesses most directly in an urban environment.

### **Skate Park**

Facilities designated for skateboarding, BMXing and rollerblading.

### **Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)**

Social vulnerability is a term describing how resilient a community is when confronted by external stresses on human health. These stresses can range from natural or human-caused disasters to disease outbreaks. By reducing social vulnerability, we can decrease both human suffering and economic losses.

The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) employs U.S. Census Bureau variables to help users identify communities that may need support in preparing for hazards or recovering from disasters. The tool is particularly useful for emergency response planners and public health officials, as it can identify and map the communities that are most likely to need support before, during and after a hazardous event.

The SVI uses U.S. Census Bureau data to determine the social vulnerability of every census tract (census tracts are subdivisions of counties for which the Census Bureau collects statistical data). The SVI ranks each tract on 14 social factors, including poverty, lack of vehicle access, and crowded housing, and groups them into four related themes. Each tract receives a separate ranking for each of the four themes, as well as an overall ranking. (CDC)

### **Steep slopes**

Slopes that are defined by a 33% or greater incline. Slopes that have been cleared and graded with thirty-three (33%) percent or higher slope may have to be compacted and may require a certified engineer design to ensure slope stability which may require analysis of vegetative planting. (City of Chattanooga)

### **Splash pad**

An aquatic feature that provides water play (splashing, spraying, dumping) with no standing water, eliminating the need for supervisory and lifeguard staffing. Splash pads are typically un-programmed and free to access. Also known as a water playground or interactive water feature.

### **Superfund site**

CERCLA designated sites polluted with hazardous materials. These sites are a danger to public health.

### **Sustainability**

The practice of creating and maintaining conditions so as to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the same needs elsewhere or in the future.

### **Tot lot**

A facility with play features to support a range of activities for tots, children and teens.

### **Total Asset Management**

A strategic way of looking at what an organization owns and how it can most effectively maintain and replace its assets over time. A Total Asset Management facility's lifecycle can be viewed in stages, including planning, design, construction, occupation, maintenance, and evaluation that cycles back to planning. For best success, Asset Management Plans are integrated with financial planning and budgeting and updated on the same timescale.

### **Trails**

Pathways within parks, off-street greenways, and on-street connections (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) that provide both a transportation route and opportunities for walking, running, bicycling and other highly desired activities.

### **Trailhead**

A designated public access point to a trail, often—but not always—located at its terminus points. The trailhead is typically a place where users begin or end their journeys and where they get oriented to the trail or trail network.

### **Tree canopy**

The proportion of land area shaded by trees. Typically, as land is developed, the tree canopy is reduced because trees are removed to clear space for development. Tree canopies provide numerous public and private benefits, including reduced air pollution, reduced heating and cooling demands, increased property values, improved physical and mental health, and reduced stormwater runoff. (Sustainable City Code)

### **Transportation gap**

Lands that are not supported by the transportation system due to lack of service, availability or infrastructure.

### **Urban Heat Island**

Urban area that is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas due to human activities, lack of vegetation, low reflective rates of roofing materials and asphalt, and the production of waste heat by vehicles or buildings.

### **Walk Score**

A private company that uses data sources like Google, Factual, Great Schools, Open Street Map, the U.S. Census, Localeze, and places added by the Walk Score user community to generate a measure of walkability between 0 and 100. Walk Score also measures pedestrian

friendliness by analyzing population density and road metrics such as block length and intersection density.

### **Walkshed**

The area around a destination that is reachable on foot for the average person. Walksheds are often defined as the area covered by a 5-minute or 10-minute walk (1/4 to 1/2 mile).

### **Wetlands**

Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency or duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.

### **Zoning**

A planning method whereby governments divide land into areas called zones, each of which has its own set of regulations for new development.





# APPENDICES

# VISION

**FOR CHATTANOOGA'S PARKS AND OUTDOORS**

