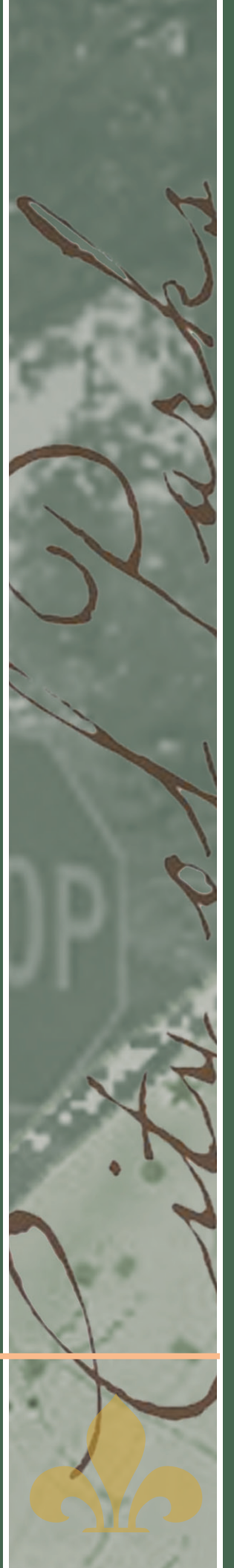
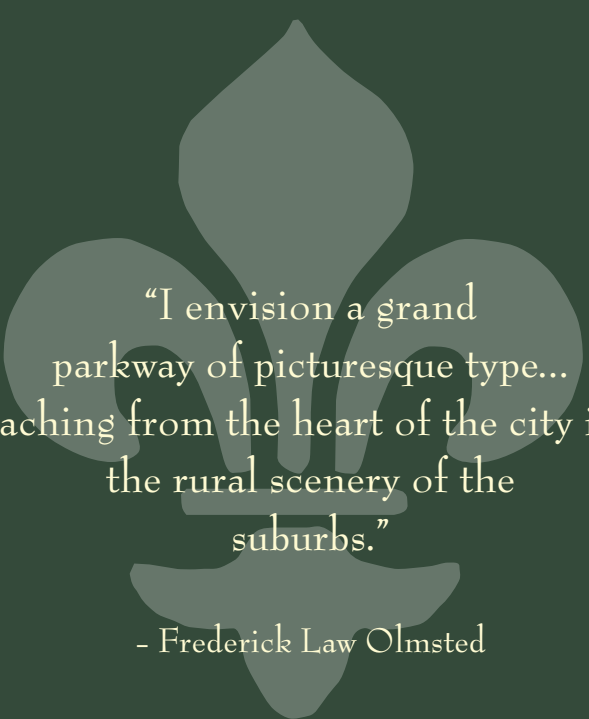


ONE

 *Parkway History*





“I envision a grand  
parkway of picturesque type...  
reaching from the heart of the city into  
the rural scenery of the  
suburbs.”

- Frederick Law Olmsted






**T**he parkways of Louisville were conceived as a system to link the three major parks—Shawnee Park at the river to the west, Cherokee Park inland and to the east, and Iroquois Park at the city edge to the south. In his 1887 speech, Andrew Cowan, then Park Commission President, proposed a system of parks and parkways for Louisville based in part on his knowledge of such systems in other American cities. The parkways system was also recommended in 1891 by the landscape architecture Olmsted firm. Local leaders agreed in concept, but many complications arose and funding was short. Property had to be obtained that ran through open and built-up lands. Lack of local leadership, rivalries, private owner objections, lack of funding and other problems shifted routes and caused delays. Rising land values and prior development in the desired routes added to the complication of the task. Parkway development was an incremental process of securing property, with initial development completed in segments and later refinements or changes made by the Park Commission over a period from 1888 through the 1930s. Only partial oversight from the Olmsted firm was directed to these parkways during their construction over the 50-year period. Completed sections served as models for other areas of parkway as they were constructed.

During the initial 50-year development period, a substantial portion of the parkway system was developed. The actual routes were redirected over time and some important connections were never made. More recent changes have been carried out under the aegis of the various municipal and state departments with jurisdiction within the parkways. In the following brief historical summary, an attempt is made to understand this complex history as a basis for the discussions of historic character, the as-built conditions and current existing conditions. To address their varied developments, the parkways are divided into three groups: Southern Parkway, Eastern Parkway and the western parkways (Northwestern, Southwestern and Algonquin). The existing network functions primarily as three individual segments rather than an integrated system.

**The City of Parks initiative is the largest expansion of the Louisville park system since the expansion of the Jefferson Memorial Forest in the 1970's.**

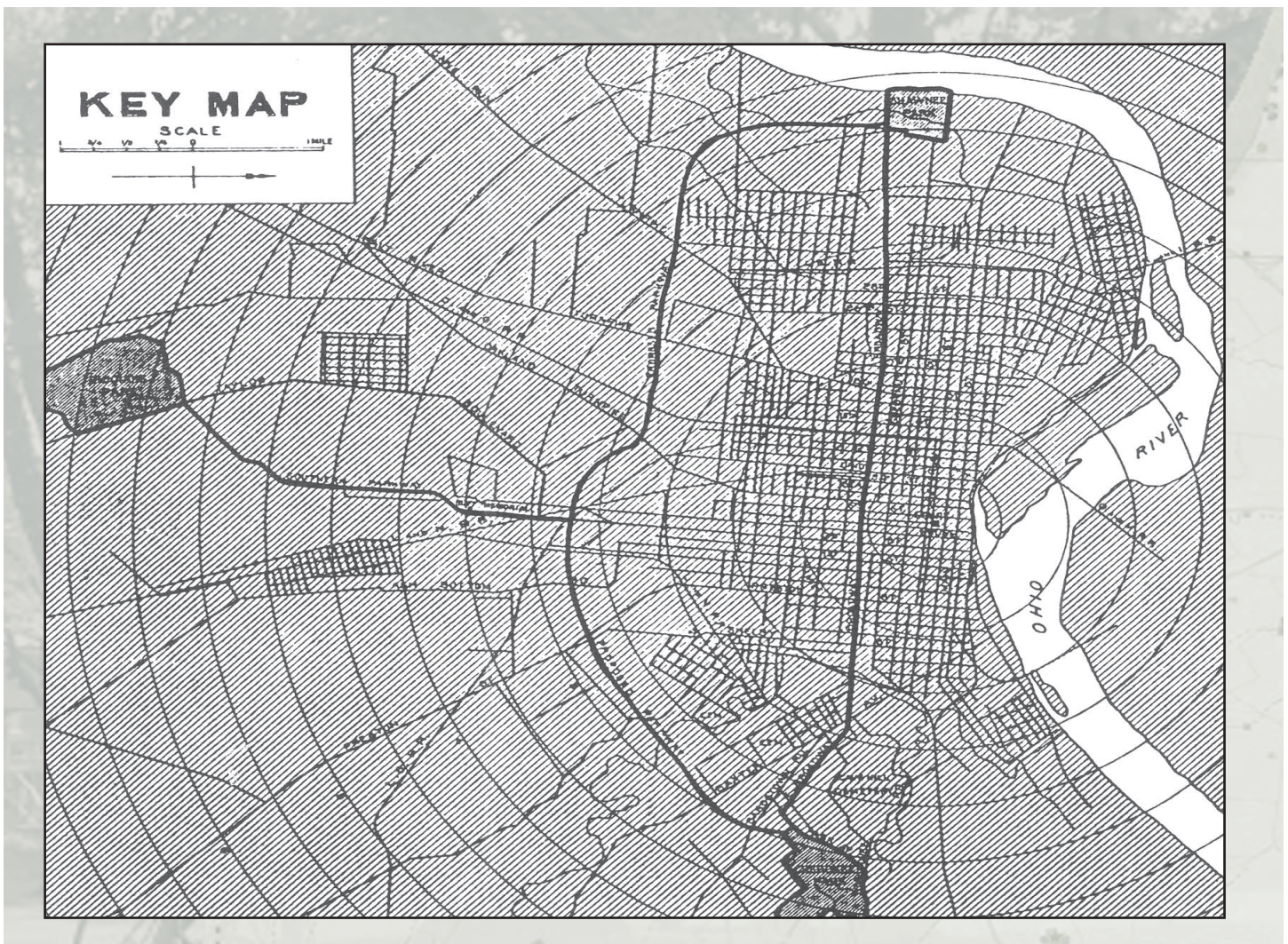


This summary is drawn from the research work and descriptive text developed by Dr. Charles Beveridge and Arleyn Levee for the Louisville Olmsted Park Conservancy. The overall parkway system concept is portrayed on the Key Map from the Iroquois and Cherokee Parks General Plans. The Iroquois Park version, showing parkway routes and parks enhanced with bold lines, is shown in Figure 1-1. The map shows the three segments of the intended system: Southern Parkway (formerly Grand Boulevard) extending from Iroquois Park northward on its current alignment; the proposed western section extending from the intersection with Southern and Eastern Parkways and sweeping to the southwest corner of Shawnee Park; and from the same intersection, the proposed eastern section curving to the southeast corner of Cherokee Park. Broadway was intended to function as a link from the city center to Shawnee and Cherokee Parks. All parkways were intended for pleasure traffic, not commercial uses, with service drives used for necessary deliveries and residence access. Most homes were also solely accessible via rear alleys.

Frederick Law Olmsted had designed plans for parkway systems in several other American cities in connection with the development of parks. Olmsted's ideal width for a parkway included a 200-foot right-of-way. This width allowed for the accommodation of the following:

- A central drive for pleasure travel and two smaller side drives for property access, for a total of three drives.
- Two green medians between the drives containing two or more tree rows each, grass verges, and pedestrian, bicycle and/or bridle paths.
- A pair of grass verges at the outermost edges near the residences, flanking each side with additional trees and additional sidewalks.

This ideal dimension was only partially achieved in Louisville as the rights-of-way widths ranged from 120 feet for Eastern and the Western Parkways to 150 feet for Southern Parkway. These narrowed rights-of-way allowed fewer of the intended elements to be constructed.



**Figure 1-1: 1897 Olmsted Louisville Parks and Parkway key map. The overall parkway system concept is portrayed on the Key Map from the Iroquois and Cherokee Parks General Plans.**

The concept for Southern Parkway was that of a broad avenue leading to a park. In 1888, Jacob Park (later Iroquois Park) was purchased and a route leading to the park was secured. Mayor Charles Jacob negotiated the purchase or donation of a 150-foot right-of-way from Third Street at Shipp Street to the park. Jacob's legal boundaries were unclear in some areas and ownership conflicts later arose. The road was initially called Grand Boulevard. An 1893 view (see Figure 1-2) from within Jacob Park (Iroquois Park) shows this broad, straight route through an open landscape. The parkway is a north-south route starting at Third Street and that trends slightly westward to intersect the northeast corner of Iroquois Park. Frederick Law Olmsted proposed the organization of this 150-foot right-of-way as:

- 150-foot width of park land
- 40-foot central drive for pleasure traffic
- 28-foot median to each side, each containing a 14-foot central path with a row of trees on each side for four tree rows overall
- 20-foot service drives to the outside of each median for residential access
- 7-foot planting strip outside the service drives with another tree row
- Pedestrian sidewalks beyond the 150-foot area, on private property, for residential access

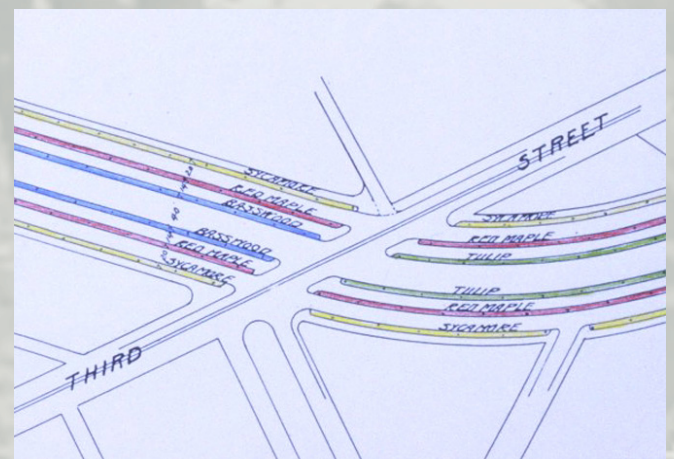
This proposed section was modified slightly in the "Study for a Plan and Cross Section of Grand Boulevard, June 26, 1892." A drawing from that study, shown in Figure 1-3, portrays 18-foot wide residential roadways and 9-foot wide outside planting verges with the other elements remaining the same. The plan shows the intent to stagger the four inner tree rows while the outermost tree rows are aligned. The center drive is crowned with stone gutters at each edge, while the two service drives are cross-pitched to drain away from the abutting private property to a stone gutter at each median. Each drive edge is shown as a vertical line, indicating the use of some built edge, although a specific curb is not shown. While this detailed section was not fully constructed, it portrays the historic design intent for the 150-foot parkway.

Warren Manning of the Olmsted firm recommended the parkway plantings with the broadest trees in the center, where more room was available, and medium-sized trees in the outer two rows. Manning described the parkway as "a purely formal and symmetrical affair and this formality should be carried out in the arrangement and selection of trees."

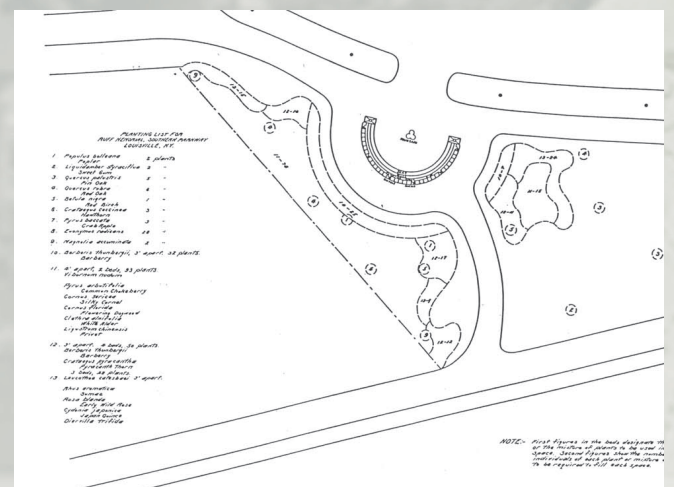
The continuity of the planting was to be secured by using a single tree species for each row, altering the tree type in each row only at six points where the parkway curved. Manning recommended sycamore trees to be continuously planted on both sides along the outer row. The center pair of tree rows was specified in six segments



**Figure 1-2:** View of Southern Parkway (Grand Boulevard) from Iroquois Park.



**Figure 1-3:** Study Plan of Southern Parkway (Grand Boulevard).



**Figure 1-4:** Olmsted Plan for the Ruff Memorial Fountain.

as: tulip tree, basswood, tulip tree, pin oak, American elm and silver maple; and the middle row of each side was to be red maple, red maple, sweet gum, red elm, Kentucky coffee tree and red maple, a different sequence from the center. Manning also suggested that the parkway trees be well formed with strong central leaders and iconic shapes. To accomplish this, Manning recommended that a nursery be developed to grow properly formed parkway trees to meet the City's needs.

The Olmsted firm also worked on the articulation of Southern Parkway (Grand Boulevard) at two intersections that included adjacent public spaces. These two nodes were the subject of designs for the Ruff Memorial Fountain, now Wayside Park at the junction of Third Street, and the House of Refuge public park areas, later known as Triangle Park and the University of Louisville. Plans for these two areas are in the Olmsted archives. A photographic copy of the Ruff Memorial Wayside Park Planting Plan, shown in Figure 1-4, portrays a fountain and large semi-circular seat with bicycle racks on the outside. Overstory trees include oak, birch, poplar, sweet gum, hawthorn and crab trees, with large shrub masses and euonymus ground cover.

While initial development of Southern Parkway (Grand Boulevard) took place from 1891 to 1900, several additional periods of change in the 1910s and the 1930s are recorded in Park Board records. These records indicate that while the central drive and tree rows were constructed, the use and condition of the service drives shifted over time.

The western parkways, originally intended as a sweeping arc, were instead developed in segments starting north of Shawnee Park as Northwestern Parkway, along the park and to the south as Southwestern Parkway, and turning eastward as Algonquin Parkway. This sequence ends at Winkler Avenue and fails to connect with Eastern or Southern Parkway, as shown in Figure 1-5. The design of these segments, under the direction of the Park Commission, was carried out over a period of years by Cecil Fraser, Stonestreet and Ford, and city engineers. Fraser and later Stonestreet & Ford worked with the Olmsted firm on park and private projects as Louisville-based engineers. No assigned job number or record of plans exists for the western parkways in the Olmsted archives today.



**Figure 1-5:** Map portion of Louisville showing parks & parkways.

Like Southern Parkway constructed earlier, the intent of the plan for the western parkways were for a continuous green ribbon from Third Street to Broadway via Shawnee Park that included:

- 120-foot width of park land
- 40-foot central drive with two rows of flanking trees on both sides
- 40-foot medians on both sides of the central drive that included service drives

Some alterations were made to the typical parkway cross section. John Charles Olmsted made additional plantings of vines and shrub beds for areas of steeply sloped banks or more intensive development intruding on the parkway. Proposed improvements were also planned when land was added to the north edge of Shawnee Park. The Olmsted firm developed a plan in 1915 that adjusted the intersection of Northwestern Parkway (Portland) and the electric railway with park drives and paths to blend these elements more effectively. However, these more appropriate connections were not fully executed.

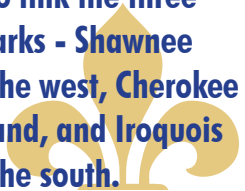
The western parkways each vary in individual history and character. Southwestern Parkway and Algonquin Parkway, running from the southeast corner of Shawnee Park south past Chickasaw Park then east nearly to Third Street, was acquired and developed in stages. A preliminary survey of the right-of-way dated October 1892 shows the multiple property owners that were affected by this parkway development. The intended 120-foot right-of-way was secured and graded for 4.5 miles by 1925. Algonquin Parkway, comprised of the section of parkway from the intersection with Gibson Lane near the former state fair grounds to Winkler Avenue, was named in 1928. The 120-foot wide cross section allowed for a central drive of 40 feet with 40-foot grass plots and trees to each side, though the central drive was initially built nearer to 20 feet in width. The 1934 park report notes that soft maples (likely red maple) and pin oaks were planted along Algonquin Parkway and that the narrow width needed to be widened to accommodate automobile traffic. Northwestern Parkway was 125 feet wide, with a 40-foot wide center drive with flanking grass plots and two rows of trees.

Eastern Parkway was developed last in the overall parkways system. The timing of this development increased acquisition and construction costs substantially. The central drive of this parkway was constructed and red maples and pin oaks were planted in four rows, two to each side, for the majority of the parkway length. Like Southern Parkway, alley access was developed inconsistently and individual residential driveways crossed the tree and grass verges at frequent intervals.

The initial concept for Eastern Parkway was like the western parkways—a broad, gently curving eastward alignment from Third Street to Cherokee Park. This route was not possible and variations developed with parkway planning proceeding under the Park Commission with General John B. Castleman, President. A shift to a mid-park parkway entrance rather than the Willow Street entrance was made around the turn of the century and began to appear on plans at that time. This shift also led to the development of a short parkway segment near Willow Avenue from East Broadway to the north side of Cherokee Park. This segment is Cherokee Parkway and has a circle arrangement with a statue of General Castleman a part of the parkway construction, as shown in Figure 1-6.

The Olmsted firm was consulted on the parkway arrangement and developed designs with planting plans and some detailed area plans. Cecil Fraser, engineer, was also involved in the development of Eastern Parkway. Notes from a 1902 visit by John Charles Olmsted indicate

**The parkways of Louisville were conceived as a system to link the three major parks - Shawnee Park to the west, Cherokee Park inland, and Iroquois Park to the south.**



that “a parkway 120 feet wide is planned to run along the Barringer [property] and lot owners facing Sherwood Avenue, who will each give half.” The overall Olmsted design intent for Eastern Parkway included:

- 120-foot width of park land
- 40-foot center drive
- 40-foot median to either side of the center drive
- 2 tree rows backed by massing of shrubs

The Olmsted archives hold plans for portions of Eastern Parkway.

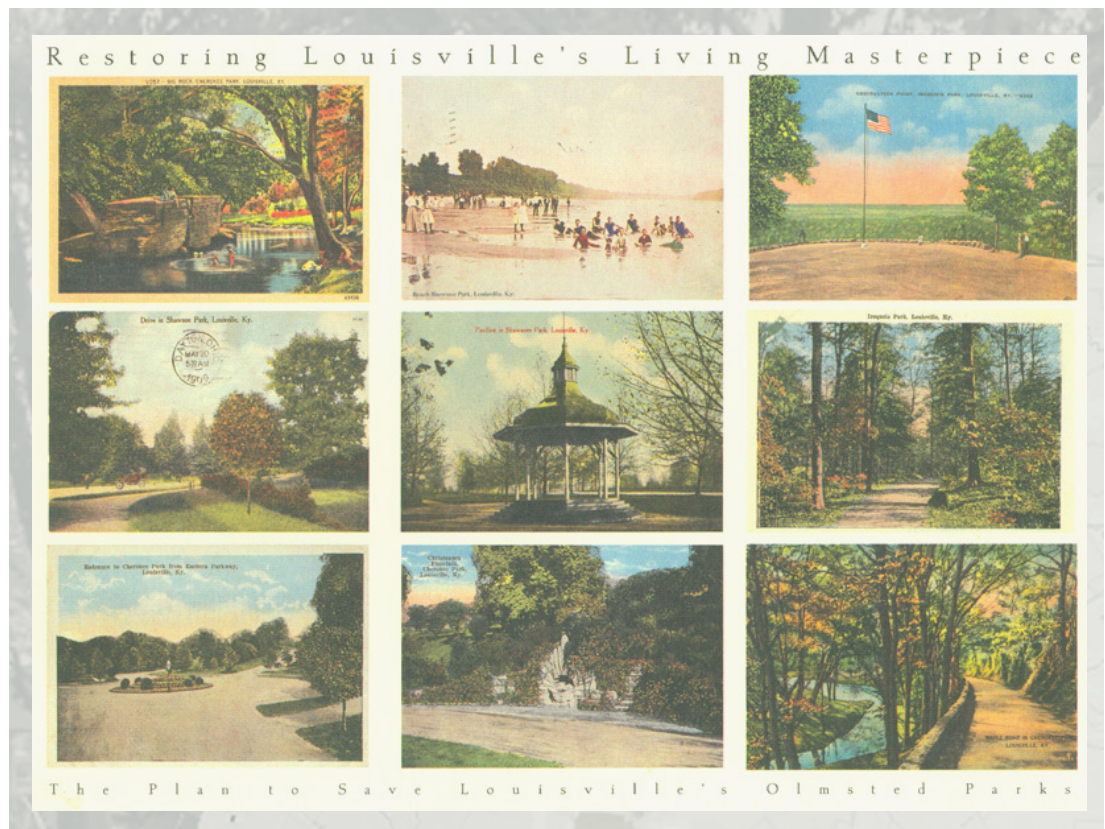
A 1907 plan for Castlewood Avenue to Baxter Avenue shows a 40-foot drive with 40-foot setbacks on each side which included dense plantings of shrubs and trees. The same treatment, a tree row backed by massing of shrubs, is proposed in the sketch, “Study for Portion of Castelwood Avenue”. However, available early views do not record these dense plantings. Other parkway segments were designed solely with four formal tree rows, with two rows of pin oak in the center and two outer rows of sycamores. Interestingly, planting of Norway maples along the parkway took place in 1908; the planting was highly objected to by the Olmsted firm and the trees were replaced in 1910.

In the early twentieth century, property subdivisions in areas south and west of Cherokee Park were constructed and the opportunity to obtain parkway land was timely. This subdivision activity influenced the final parkway route. In addition, the Park Commission requested that the electric railway install lines down Eastern Parkway to provide more public access to Cherokee Park.

The initial development of Eastern Parkway began in 1895, but construction was pushed forward vigorously from 1905 through 1912. A 120-foot right-of-way was developed for the parkway with a 40-foot central drive and flanking double rows of trees in grass plots. Unlike the western parkways and Southern Parkway, no known service drives were constructed. A service drives was, however, built on a portion of the nearby Cherokee Parkway.

Eastern Parkway underwent additional changes in the 1930s, as walks were fully constructed along the parkway. The Eastern Parkway section as constructed in the 1930s consisted of a 120-foot right-of-way with a 40-foot central drive and 40-foot side medians with double tree rows in grass plots. The

**Eastern Parkway was the last of the parkways to be fully developed.**



**Figure 1-6:** Early images from the Olmsted Park and Parkways system.



segment between Baxter and Barret was constructed with a central median, and sidewalks were constructed along the edges.

The Louisville parkways were planned, designed, and built at various times throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with additions and alterations occurring at later dates. Some 2.7 miles of Southern Parkway were developed originally from 1891 to 1908 with various additions and reconstructions during the early twentieth century. Work on the 3.9-mile Eastern Parkway began in 1895 and continued from 1904 to 1912. Reconstruction of the central drive and additions of walks and lighting took place in the 1930s. The 6.4 miles of the western parkways were the least consistently developed, with segments of construction spanning from 1904 to the 1930s. Historic records provide assessments of the overall parkway as-built conditions and major changes at several points in time for the 14.5 miles of Olmsted parkways. In addition to written documentation, postcard and photographic views (including available 1928 aerial photographs) record the development of the parkways system in the early twentieth century. Several selected examples of these records are described in the following paragraphs and sections below. It is important to understand the as-built condition of the parkways within the historical context and as it relates to contemporary issues. Many issues addressed in the historical documentation remain concerns today.

In 1915, John Charles Olmsted indicated that the Louisville parkway system was “inadequate” and commented that the “lack of power and money to do what should have been done” was a lost opportunity. Olmsted also wrote in detail about the need to take lands and restrict development to residential uses in order to achieve the linked parkway system and protect the intended character of the route. Other cities had shown that parkways increased land values as well as made aesthetic improvements. He lamented that after some 25 years of effort, the city lacked a complete system of pleasure drives linked to the city center.

**The original Olmsted design intent for Eastern Parkway included 2 tree rows backed by shrub massings.**



Two years later, a 1917 report of the Park Board Committee on Parkway indicated a need to complete the parkway system and resounded concerns raised earlier by Olmsted. The end of Western Parkway had become impassable due to the development of a network of railways. Concessions had been granted to adjacent owners that were a detriment to the public in managing the parkways. The Committee recommended that private driveway access to the parkways be regulated by the Park Board, and driveways should be separated by 100 feet to 200 feet. This distance of separation, while desirable, was not practical. Properties facing the parkways were generally less than 100 feet wide and service drives had not been fully constructed.

**Figure 1-7:** Early view of Southern Parkway .

A 1920 report indicated that Eastern Parkway and parts of Southern and the western parkways were in need of reconstruction with costs estimated at \$200,000. Regulations governing the cutting of private driveways across parkway grass plots were adopted, calling for concrete driveways 8 feet in width flaring to 18 feet, placed without interfering with trees, catch basins or sewer openings. The rules for Southern Parkway crossings of the bridge paths called for cinder drives. In 1923, a permit was granted to the Louisville Railway Company to run jitney buses on the parkways as a continuation of the acceptance of the electric railway on the parkways as a means of bringing the public to the parks.

In 1942, the Board of Park Commissioners was abolished and the Department of Parks and Recreation was created. The parkway and park roads came under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works, while parkway trees were the responsibility of the forestry division. The process of acquisition, development and improvement for each segment of the parkway system was unique.

Early twentieth century views and postcards of Southern Parkway depict the construction of a broad gravel paved roadway edged with a slanted curb, probably limestone block, flanked by at least two rows of trees on each side, as illustrated in Figure 1-7. Several of these views show a graded, secondary path or drive placed in the center median between two tree rows. This path is referred to as a speedway and a bridle path in historic documents. Later, as bicycle use became popular, a 14-foot path in the median was recommended for bicycle use. Another historic image of Southern Parkway near the entrance to Iroquois Park shows a globe topped light fixture that appears to be about ten feet high with a cast metal pole.

The 1928 aerial photograph (Figure 1-8) shows the entire length of Southern Parkway from Iroquois Park to Third Street planted with five rows of trees. The central drive is apparent as is another paved surface entirely along the west side. This service drive or wide bridle path is flanked by the western pair of tree rows. Along the east side of the parkway, a grass panel extends between the



**Figure 1-8:** 1928 aerial photograph of a portion of Southern Parkway.

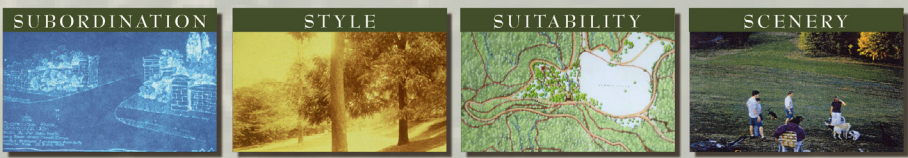
first and second tree rows and is crossed at intervals by private driveways. James Dawson noted in a site visit to Louisville in 1934 that the center drive and one cinder bridle path of the parkway had been constructed. The service road areas were grass or dirt creating a “very unkempt and undignified appearance.” While alley access was possible, residential owners built garages accessed from the parkway rather than the alley, which created the need for these unkempt service drives. Dawson recommended the construction of the service drives and tree replacement be funded with available depression recovery funds.

Early views of the western parkways have not been located to date. A 1928 aerial photograph, however, shows the fully constructed Northwestern Parkway from Shawnee Park north with four tree rows and a central drive. This section appears to be fairly mature with larger trees. Southwestern Parkway south of Shawnee Park is shown for a short distance in the same form with a central drive and double tree rows to each side. Algonquin Parkway is shown only as a somewhat unclear route without edge definition or tree plantings at this date. Nevertheless, records indicate that Algonquin Parkway was developed with the same organization as the other segments with service drives constructed inconsistently at numerous locations. Early views of Eastern Parkway show the entrance to Cherokee Park and a more typical section of the parkway where the central drive is flanked by rows of trees. In another view, the central drive is flanked by double tree rows. Additionally the undeveloped countryside along the parkway is evident in some photographs of the parkway. A 1928 aerial photograph of Louisville shows the entire length of Eastern and Cherokee Parkways. Eastern Parkway is organized in the standard form with a central drive and flanking double rows of trees in lawn, except for one area between Baxter and Barret Avenue, where a central green median is flanked by two smaller drives. Both developed and open areas are seen along this route. In some of the developed areas, each residence has driveway access onto the parkway, which in some cases are very close together.

Just as the design and construction of the three parkway systems took several decades, the process of planning for the incorporation of shared-use pathways along these corridors has also taken several years. With the directive of the City of Parks Initiative, a major focus was placed on connecting Louisville’s neighborhoods and key destinations through a series of pedestrian sidewalks and dedicated bicycle paths. A major emphasis was placed on the historic Olmsted Parkways. Beginning in the early 1990s, studies were performed to evaluate the current condition of the parkway systems as well as a long term master plan for the renewal and management of the historic parkways. Upon completion of the master plan, efforts began to develop and refine a series of contemporary design elements that would be used to further enhance and protect the parkway system. These previous studies, discussed in further detail in Chapter Three, served as the foundation for this shared-use pathway master plan.

**Just as the design and construction of the three parkway systems took several decades, the process of planning for the incorporation of shared-use pathways along these corridors has also taken several years.**





**SUBORDINATION**  
Subordination of all elements, all features and objects, to the overall design and the effect it is intended to achieve. The 'Art to conceal Art.'

**STYLE**  
Designing in specific styles, each for a particular effect. Primarily in the 'Pietrasnik' style (open ground with small bodies of water and scattered trees and groves) for a soothing, restorative atmosphere, or in the 'Pietrasnik' style (open ground, especially with shrubs, creepers and ground cover, on steep and broken terrain), for a sense of the richness and beauty of nature, with chiaroscuro effects of light and shade to produce a sense of mystery.

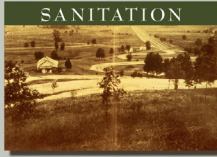
**SUITABILITY**  
Creation of designs that are in keeping with the natural scenery and topography of the site respect for, and full utilization of, the 'genius of the place.'

**SCENERY**  
Design of 'passages of scenery' even in the small spaces and in areas intended for active use. Creation of designs that give an enhanced sense of space: indefinite boundaries, constant opening up of new views. Avoidance of hard-edge or specimen planting, creating instead designs that have either 'considerable complexity of light and shadow near the eye' or 'obscurity of detail further away.'

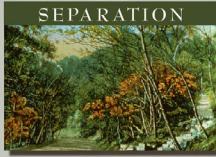
**L**andscapes move us in a manner more nearly analogous to action of music than to anything else... Gradually and silently the charm overcomes us; we know not exactly where or how."  
- Frederick Law Olmsted



**SERVICE**  
Planning of designs so that they will serve a 'purpose of direct utility or service' that is, will meet fundamental social and psychological needs. So long as considerations of utility are neglected or overruled by considerations of ornament, there will be no true Art."



**SANITATION**  
Provision for adequate drainage and other engineering considerations, not simply arranging of surface features. Planning of designs so that they promote both the physical and mental health of users.



**SEPARATION**  
Separation of areas designed in different styles, so that an 'incongruous mixture of styles' will not dilute the intended effect of each; separation of ways, in order to insure safety of use and reduce distractions for those using the space; separation of conflicting or incompatible uses.

One of Olmsted's strongest philosophical cornerstones was to create art — an art of landscape that redefined the city as a place of landscape and open space for scenic and recreational enjoyment. He desired to create spaces that were compelling in their artistic statement, useful in their physical attributes and valued by all citizens and public officials. In the second half of the 19th century, urban, industrial America was polluted and overcrowded. American cities were unhealthy environments. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and his successors, crafted an American public landscape that is our shared legacy today, and in doing so created both a familiar and a unique series of places that weave the city together shaping urban life for the betterment of all.

Olmsted emphasized that a great city "needs a large ground scientifically and artistically prepared to provide a poetic and tranquilizing influence on its people" as well as

places for "parades, for athletic sports, for fireworks, for museums of art and science, such as botanic gardens". He continually advocated a system of public green spaces shaped by visionary landscape architecture on a city scale. The work of the Olmsted firm in Louisville shaped the city for the benefit of all over nearly 50 years. The design of the Louisville Olmsted System provided parkways, linear corridors and ribbons of green, that connected the Cherokee, Shawnee and Iroquois parks and structured city growth. The parkways also offer a unique urban, scenic and recreational experience as routes of choice for driving, walking and bicycling. They provide a greenway between Louisville's neighborhoods reaching out into the greater community. Louisville is one of only five cities across the nation (along with Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicago and Rochester) that created an integrated system of parks and parkways that F.L. Olmsted Sr. shaped.

## OLMSTED PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM OLMSTEDIAN PRINCIPLES



Louisville is one of only five cities across the nation that has created the integrated system of parks and parkways that embodies Olmsted's concepts of city and park integration.



The Olmstedian Principles follow the 7 "S's" of Subordination, Style, Suitability, Scenery, Service, Sanitation and Separation.