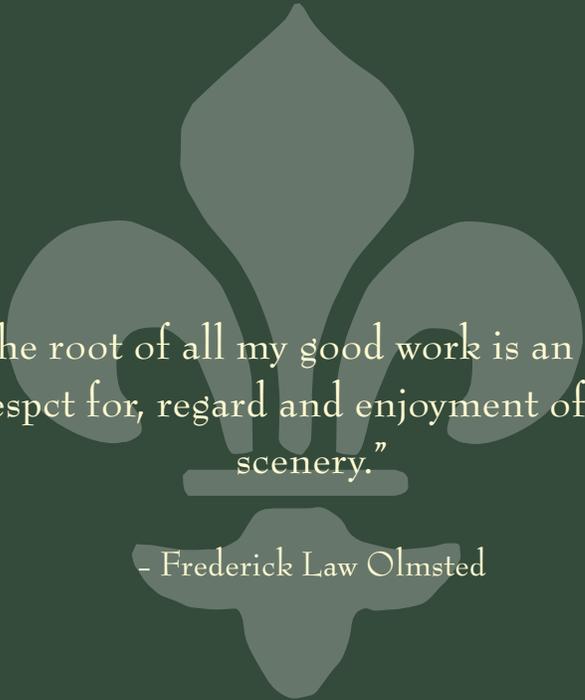


THREE

 *Previous Studies*





“The root of all my good work is an early
respect for, regard and enjoyment of the
scenery.”

- Frederick Law Olmsted





Chapter Three: Previous Studies

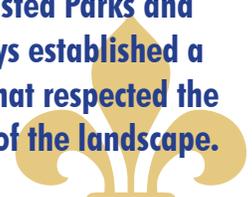
The City of Louisville is one of only five cities with an integrated system of parks and parkways that embody Olmsted's concepts. Residents have preserved and enhanced the nearly 20 miles of parkway that run through the city. The parkways, developed from 1888 to the 1930's, still form rich cultural spines that stitch together neighborhoods, schools, public institutions, community facilities and city parks. The City of Louisville has undertaken several initiatives to address contemporary needs of the community while preserving the historical heritage of these parkways. These efforts focused on long range master planning and the development of design standards for use by the parks department. These studies and their relevance to the current master plan are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Master Plan for Louisville's Olmsted Parks and Parkway: A Guide to Renewal and Management

This Master Plan was prepared in 1994 for the City of Louisville under Mayor Jerry E. Abramson. The plan was prepared by the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Inc. in conjunction with the Louisville and Jefferson County Parks Department¹. The master plan was completed and adopted by the City Council in 1994. It continues to be the primary document guiding the renewal of the Louisville historic Olmsted parks and parkways.

Recognized as masterful landscapes and works of art, the parks and parkways system are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The large public landscapes and linear parkways have played a significant role in shaping the development of the city, creating strong social ties, stabilizing property value, and providing open spaces within an urban context. Nevertheless, at the time of the Master Plan, it was recognized that these public lands had fallen into a decline that began near the end of World War II.

**The Master Plan
completed in 1994 for
the Olmsted Parks and
Parkways established a
vision that respected the
history of the landscape.**



The neglect of such great resources and the “breakdown in the relationship of the community and its great landscapes” was readily apparent in the poor physical conditions of the parkways. To reverse this trend, the project team worked with the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the city, local citizens, key public agencies, and elected officials in developing the master plan. Master Plan activities included analysis of:

- Historic Olmsted research findings
- Louisville research, chronology & graphic documentation
- Historic and existing character of the corridors
- Integrity of the historic landscape

The Master Plan established a vision of the parks and parkways that respected the history of the landscape with an understanding of the initial design and vision. Comprehending landscape contributions to the built environment and social structure of the city in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was also a goal. The plan addressed the realities of the public landscape in the contemporary city as well as issues likely to rise during the foreseeable future.

The planning document examined each of the three major city parks: Shawnee, Iroquois and Cherokee. The parkways (Eastern, Southern, Algonquin, Southwestern, Northwestern and Cherokee) were studied in terms of the overall mission of the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy utilizing five guiding principles as follows:

1. All actions must be guided by respect for the inherent landscape quality of each park and the parkway system. The historic Olmsted design shaped places for public enjoyment, guided by the unique qualities of each park. Current and future efforts must respect and renew this legacy.
2. Natural processes are the foundation of these resources. All decisions must sustain these processes so that natural systems are preserved and enhanced.
3. These parks and parkways are a unique component of the city fabric and a contributing factor to the quality of life for all citizens. Future efforts must understand the parks system’s larger setting, both in terms of community perception and physical environment.
4. People of all ages and abilities should be able to enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities that can be supported by the landscape and facilities.
5. Ultimately, the character and quality of these parks will depend on how they are managed. Skills, training, staffing, volunteer coordination, and a stable funding base are needed to ensure the fulfillment of these principles over time.

The parks and parkways system, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of only five such citywide parks and parkways systems in the country. The large public landscapes and linear parkways have played a significant role in shaping the development of the City.

A series of guidelines highlighting a sustainable landscape as well as guidelines addressing the built elements and infrastructure of these historic places were sought. These issues were discussed at the onset of the Master Plan and were reiterated and tested throughout each of the subsequent detailed discussions for the individual parks and parkways.

Within the Master Plan, the historical overview of the Louisville parks and parkways depicts the system as one of the most mature surviving public works by Frederick Law Olmsted and one of the finest examples of an Olmsted park system. Both the history and a description of the existing conditions of the parkways were detailed in the 1994 Master Plan. Issues identified in the Master Plan included:

- Lost continuity and interconnection between parks and parkways;
- Limited links between city streets and neighborhoods;
- Gaps in tree rows;
- Discontinuous walks/paths;
- Discontinuous service drives and multiple driveways;
- Loss of green space at intersections/ wider pavement sections;
- Inconsistent site furnishings and small-scale features (lighting, benches, etc.);
- Limited wayfinding or signage;
- Private encroachments in the public right-of-way;
- Adjacent development impacts;
- Infrastructure issues (electrical wires conflicting with trees);
- Numerous utilities with multiple management and partial communication.

Each of the issues was addressed to some degree in the Master Plan, and guiding principles were prepared to support future planning efforts. These continue to guide today.

A possible connection of the three parkways was considered during the 1994 master planning process, using 2nd and 3rd Streets, and Winkler and Rodman to gain continuity of the parkway system. The original Olmsted vision for the Louisville parkways included a connection at 3rd Street; however, connection of the parkways in this area is complicated by extensive development and several railroad track crossings.

1995 Parks and Open Space Master Plan

The 1995 Parks and Open Space Master Plan prepared by Wallace Roberts and Todd, LLC and Skees Engineering, Inc. was a major component of the Cornerstone 2020 report for the 350-square mile area of Louisville and Jefferson County. The Plan lays out a policy and spatial plan for development of the county's open space over the next 25 years. In addition to addressing parkland and community recreation facility needs, the plan establishes an open space system which will define the pattern of future urban development. Its implementation is intended to contribute to a civilized and healthy future and to perpetuate the best of the community's heritage.

Throughout the planning process, four goals provide a definition for the future parks and open space systems within Louisville and Jefferson County:

1. A system of well-maintained parks and recreational facilities which meets the needs of the residents of Louisville and Jefferson County;
2. A network of open spaces and greenway corridors which protects significant natural resources;
3. A parks and open space system which preserves and

enhances visual quality, protects historic and archaeological resources, and provides opportunities for education; and

4. An open space network which incorporates land needed to protect public health and safety.

In order to accommodate these goals, the Parks and Open Space Master Plan recommended that nearly 6,000 acres of greenways and regional parkland be acquired and developed. In addition, over 2,000 acres of local parkland should be added and distributed in areas of most need over the next 25 years. It is also recommended that a wide variety of recreational facilities be developed to meet the needs of the existing and future residents of the City and County. When planning for the addition of new parkland and facilities, priority should be given to those neighborhoods and communities in most need of public recreational amenities.

Most importantly, the plan recommends that the parks and open space system be developed as a multi-functional and interconnected system. Each park and open space area should be located, designed, and managed so as to fulfill many functions, such as providing recreation, protecting natural and cultural resources, managing stormwater, safeguarding health and safety in floodplains and on steep slopes, and defining an attractive open space structure for the future urban development in the county.

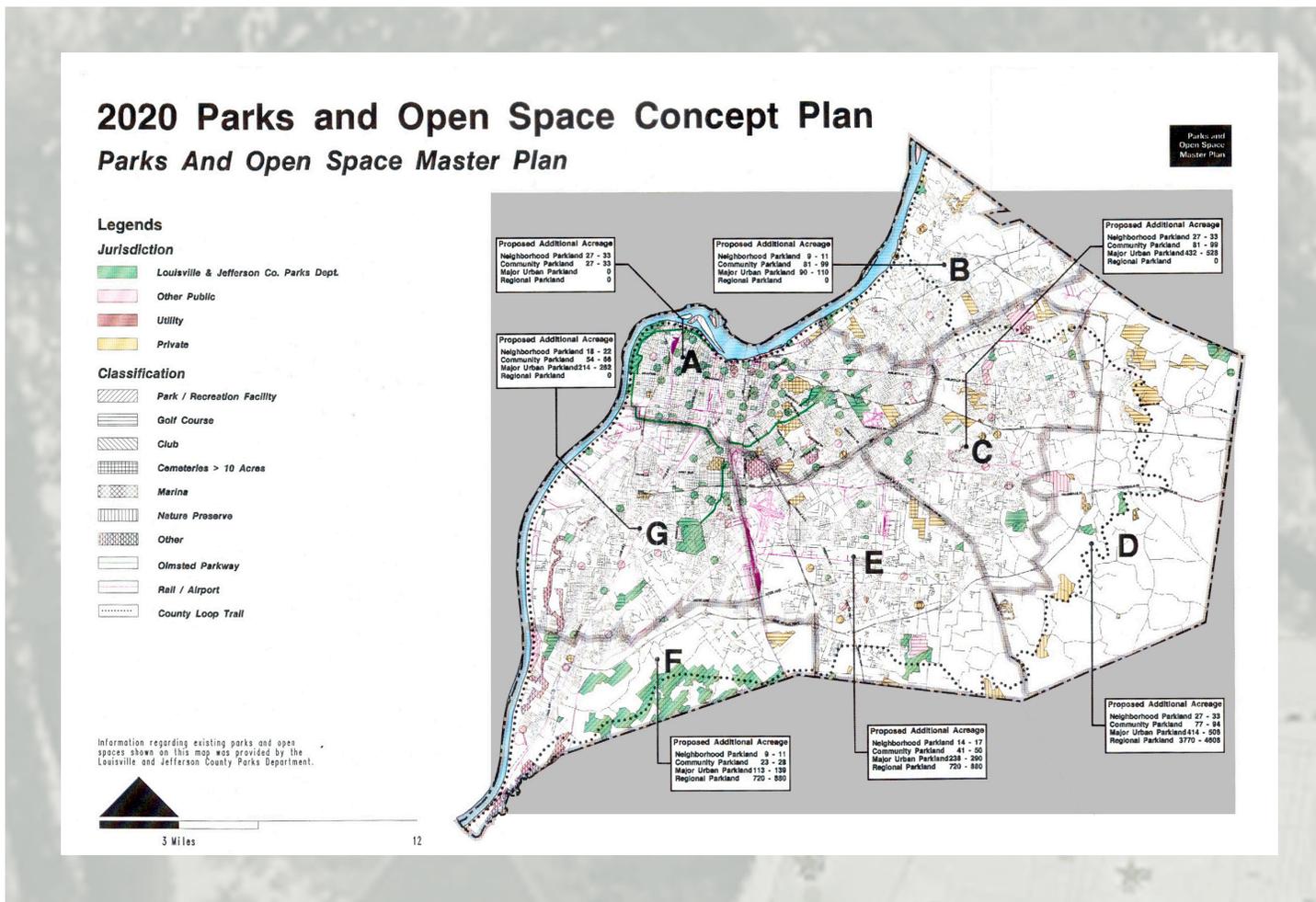


Figure 3-x: Concept plan from the 1995 Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

Louisville Olmsted Parkway Design Standards



August 2, 2005

Prepared for The Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy
by
Gresham, Smith and Partners

Figure 3-x: The Louisville Olmsted Parkway Design Standards, August 2005, Gresham Smith and Partners.

Linear greenways will connect parks and open space areas to each other and to surrounding neighborhoods. Trails will be developed along the greenways, with a “County Loop” trail linking along the Ohio River Corridor, through the Jefferson County Memorial Forest, eastward to Floyds Fork, and then north against the Ohio River. The parks and open space system should help to define future community form, by functioning as an environmental framework within which urban growth occurs as discrete neighborhoods rather than as undifferentiated suburban development. This open space structure will be built primarily around the County’s creeks, thereby conserving the key wildlife and biological resources concentrated along the stream corridors.

The basic direction set by the 1995 Plan is still highly relevant to the future growth and management of the metro parks system. The need to provide a park and recreation system that meets the needs of the community and that is well maintained, the call to develop a network of open spaces that protects natural resources, and the goal of addressing cultural and educational resources as well as public health and safety issues in the open space system are all still valid. Nevertheless, much has changed since 1995 and there is probably a need for the Plan to be updated sometime in the reasonably near future. As described below, the Plan’s most significant new proposal – a 100-mile loop trail and greenway – is the subject of focused implementation efforts at this time and thus clearly remains a highly relevant concept to guide the future development of the park and open space system.

Much has been accomplished in the years since the 1995 Plan was completed. The current “City of Parks” initiative is emblematic of government’s commitment to implement the goals of expanding the park system and addressing deferred maintenance challenges. Perhaps the most exciting success has been the significant commitment to complete the 100-mile loop trail and greenway proposal. Significant progress has been made in assembling land, undertaking detailed planning and design, and completing some of the physical improvements needed to create this 21st Century equivalent of the Olmsted parks and parkway system.

Louisville Olmsted Parkway Design Standards

The Louisville Olmsted Parkways Design Standards, prepared by Gresham Smith & Partners in 2002, provided baseline information concerning the design, function, and management of the Olmsted parkway system. This report included a review of the historical design intent of the parkways, an inventory and analysis of the existing physical characteristics of each parkway, a review of the current administrative oversight, and an inventory of the parkway’s existing design standards. The report also established specific design standards to address landscape, access, parking, roadways, curbs, retaining walls, sidewalks, shared use paths, transit, lighting, street furnishings, public art, signage, utilities, and historic preservation.

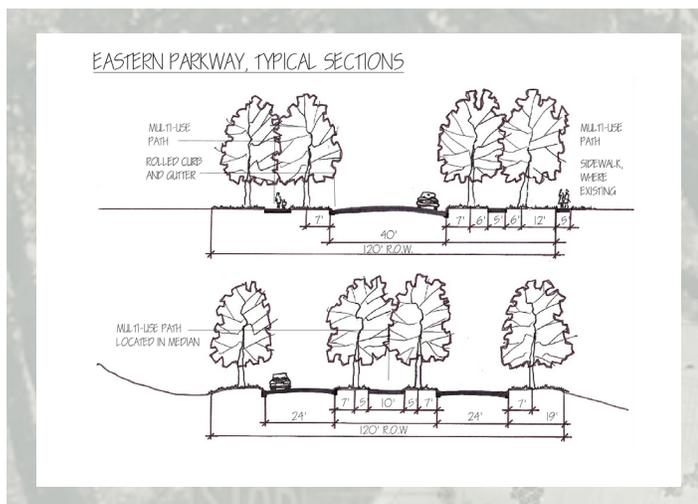


Figure 3-x: Image taken from the Louisville Olmsted Parkway Design Standards project.

An Olmsted Parkway Overlay District Ordinance was developed as a tool for implementing the design standards. The intent was to establish the physical boundaries for applying the design standards to new development and redevelopment projects. The ordinance addressed applicability, established administrative procedures and appeals, and codified the design standards into enforceable language.

Today, two built projects show how applying the design standards has helped to preserve the character of the parkways and establish character where contemporary influences have eroded the original intent. The intersection of Eastern Parkway and Bardstown Road shows that a commercial node can be successfully integrated into the Parkway. Important components of this intersection design included preservation of the double tree row and the extension of outdoor spaces that create successful social spaces while also helping to carry the “green ribbon” intent through the intersection. The 2700 block of Algonquin introduced the idea of a local service road where it was not originally provided (though successfully used elsewhere on the parkways). The access road eliminated drive access to the parkway, increased vehicular safety, restored the continuous verge, reduced drainage problems, and eliminated the encroachment of parked cars onto the parkway.

Both projects used a concrete mix devised for the Olmsted Parks/Parkways to recreate the look of the historic limestone curbing and used site furniture specifically selected for the parkways to help strengthen the unique parkway character.

Conclusion

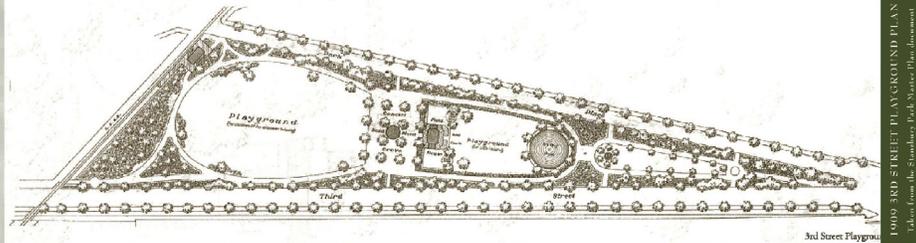
Each previous study played a role in creating a cohesive future vision for the Olmsted Parkway system. The 1994 Master Plan provides the historic context and original intent of the parkways. The 1995 systems plan provides a community vision of parks and open spaces and provides a larger context for plan development. The 2002 Design Standards bring specificity to the understanding of current issues and support initial implementation activities. These studies provide a firm foundation for the current plan.

¹ Contributing efforts were provided by the City of Louisville, Public Works, Louisville Olmsted Parks Stewardship Council and the Louisville Friends of Olmsted Parks. The master planning team was led by Adropogon Associates, Ltd., Architects, Landscape Architects & Ecological Planners, with Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners, providing historic resource material, PDR Engineers, Inc., providing for infrastructure and engineering support, Eco-Tech, Inc., providing for natural resources material and Charles E. Beveridge as assisted by Arleyne Levee providing for historic research.

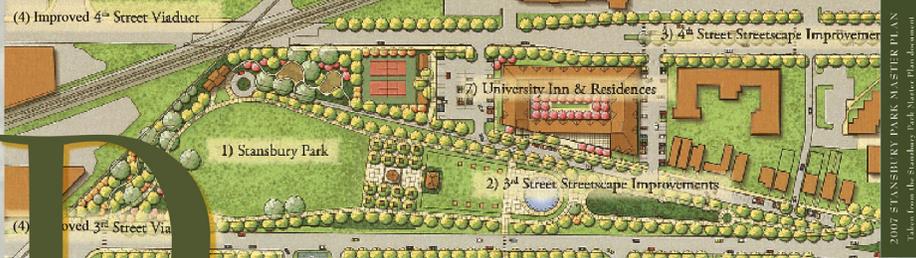
Many previous studies were used as a foundation for the shared-use pathways master plan.



OLMSTED'S VISION FOR STANSBURY PARK



1909 3RD STREET PLAYGROUND PLAN
Taken from the Stansbury Park Master Plan document



2007 STANSBURY PARK MASTER PLAN
Taken from the Stansbury Park Master Plan document

D OLMSTED PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM DESIGN INTERPRETATION



The historical context of Stansbury Park is very important in the consideration of the re-design of the area. The current parkland has faint remnants of the original plan prepared by the Olmsted Brothers in the 1890s. The proposed master plan prepared by Rowland Design Inc. and DLK Civic Design, brings together several programmatic elements into a single, coherent plan. The master plan draws inspiration from the original 1901 Olmsted Plan with updates for the 21st Century.

The new master plan must respond to the contextual framework that has evolved in the intervening 100+ years. This area has seen numerous changes in the fabric of the neighborhoods that surround the area.

The original landscape that was planned by Olmsted for the park area has very few remaining remnants. This master plan is designed to bring back many of the missing elements and reinforce those with strong urban design elements.

*Text taken from the 2007 Stansbury Park Master Plan document



The 2007 Stansbury Park Master Plan identified key linkages for parkway connection opportunities in the hub.