

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

GOAL		POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK			
1	<i>Protection of remaining wetland areas inside and outside the levee system</i>	1.A. Ensure that land use and zoning categories for wetlands and coastal areas promote wetland preservation.	7.13 - 7.14
		1.B. Seek conservation solutions for wetlands through permanent protection or acquisition by conservation organizations.	7.14
2	<i>Restoration and expansion of New Orleans' urban forest to reach 50 percent tree canopy by 2030</i>	2.A. Promote tree planting on both public and private property.	7.14
		2.B. Restore and plant new trees in parks and neutral grounds.	7.16
		2.C. Promote tree preservation on private property.	7.17
		2.D. Establish storm water management planting practices in public green spaces.	7.17
PARK SYSTEM			
3	<i>A commitment to no net loss of public parkland</i>	3.A. Establish systems to ensure that the city does not lose acreage dedicated to parks.	7.17 - 7.18
4	<i>A park within walking distance – approximately 1/3 mile – of every New Orleans resident</i>	4.A. Balance passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.	7.20
5	<i>More public access to waterfronts</i>	5.A. Create parks and public spaces along the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain.	7.21
6	<i>More green connections throughout city</i>	6.A. Create linear parks and green ways for multi-use pathways using the city's neutral grounds and other linear connections, such as levees, canal edges and former rail lines.	7.22
7	<i>Maintenance of existing parks and green spaces to a high level</i>	7.A. Establish expanded maintenance criteria for parks and open spaces in partnership with citizen parks groups.	7.23
		7.B. Establish clear and permanent policies and procedures for accepting, placing and maintaining public art in parks, green spaces and recreation sites.	7.24

GOAL		POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
RECREATION			
8	<i>Multi-use indoor/ outdoor recreation centers within 5 miles of every resident</i>	8.A. Create 10 indoor pools at existing centers.	7.24
		8.B. Coordinate recreation resources with schools and other community and human services.	7.24
9	<i>Year-round recreation opportunities for children, seniors, and adults</i>	9.A. Provide recreational opportunities appropriate to the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood.	7.25
10	<i>Recreation offerings that meet changing needs</i>	10.A. Regularly monitor the recreation needs of all segments of the population.	7.26
FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT			
11	<i>More effective coordination and cost-effective management of park and recreation resources and programs</i>	11.A. Coordinate park and recreation resources and activities throughout the city.	7.26
12	<i>Neighborhood participation in decision making about parks and recreation</i>	12.A. Survey both park and recreation users on a regular basis.	7.27
		12.B. Establish a system for community input in park and recreation design and improvements.	7.27
		12.C. Prepare and update a full parks and recreation master plan regularly.	7.28
13	<i>A consistent and adequate level of maintenance, operations and programming on per capita basis</i>	13.A. Provide a consistent and adequate per capita operating budget and work towards establishing a dedicated funding source for municipal park and recreation resources and programs.	7.28
14	<i>Expanded partnerships to support park and recreation resources and programs</i>	14.A. Continue to support and work with Parkway Partners and support expansion of park and neutral ground “Friends” groups, as well as hire a volunteer coordinator to develop and manage a network of “Friends” groups.	7.29
15	<i>Effective marketing of the park and recreation systems to citizens and visitors</i>	15.A. Provide user-friendly communications, including an interactive web site, annual reports, consistent signage, and similar efforts.	7.29



fact sheet

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

Park and Recreation Resources (as of 2009)

- New Orleans has 26,164 acres of park land, or 22.5% of the city's land area
 - > 22,770 of those acres are in Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge
 - > The total does not include neutral grounds, school and institutional green space, levees, or urban wilds
 - > In 2000, not counting the wildlife refuge, there were about 14 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons
- Almost half the city's park land was acquired by donation or other non-purchase method
- Major parks include:
 - > City Park: 1213 acres
 - > Audubon Park: 400 acres
 - > Lakeshore Park: 400 acres
 - > Pontchartrain Park: 198 acres
 - > Joe Brown Park and Louisiana Nature Center: 193 acres
 - > Brechtel Park: 112 acres
 - > Behrman Park: 60 acres
 - > Louis Armstrong Park: 29 acres
 - > Lincoln Beach: 24 acres (closed before Katrina)
 - > West End Park: 23 acres
 - > Woldenberg Riverfront Park: 16 acres
- 14 multi-neighborhood parks including 9 stadiums pre-Katrina
 - > 5 stadiums currently restored
- 83 neighborhood parks and playgrounds pre-Katrina
 - > 60+ playgrounds currently restored
- 64 pocket parks
- 19 public swimming pools pre-Katrina
 - > 7 currently restored
- 10 recreation centers pre-Katrina
 - > 5 currently restored
- 7 public and 4 private golf courses
- 7 historic urban squares
- 43 park and recreation recovery projects are currently underway by ORDA
- A new downtown riverfront park is being designed

Park and Recreation Management

- Divided among four entities with different funding sources:
 - > New Orleans Department of Parks and Parkways
 - > New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD)
 - > City Park Improvement Association
 - > Audubon Commission
- Maintenance and funding are persistent issues for city-funded parks and recreation.
- Pre-Katrina per-capita funding was better than many southern cities and slightly above the national average, but New Orleans had greater needs as a denser city with more income diversity

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- New Orleans has an enviable network and inventory of park land for an urban center.
- Not counting Bayou Sauvage, in 2000 the city had about 14 acres of park land per 1,000 persons, comparing favorably with many US cities.
- In most neighborhoods, most residents have a park within walking distance.
- Neighborhood park deficits are found especially in some older neighborhoods and parts of New Orleans East.
- Effective maintenance of parks was a challenge pre-Katrina as well as since Katrina.
- Many parks and recreation facilities, and the city's urban forest, were significantly damaged by Katrina and are still in the process of restoration.
- City Park had a master plan completed before the storm that has served as a foundation for post-storm restoration.
- The city's neutral grounds are an exceptional resource.
- The city does not take sufficient advantage of its water resources as an amenity or for recreation.

Additional Green Resources:

- 125 acres in two 19th century forts in state parks: Fort Pike and Fort McComb
- Jean LaFitte National Historic Park
- 22 miles of Mississippi River waterfront
- 16.5 miles of lakefront with four major boat harbors pre-Katrina
- More than 250 miles of neutral grounds ranging from 2 feet to 350 feet wide
- 54 active community gardens pre-Katrina
 - > 25+ currently re-established
- Recreation programs focus on youth; some adult and senior fitness programs
- Nonprofit partners include Parkway Partners and Friends of NORD
 - > Parkway Partners ReLeaf Program has facilitated planting of over 3,000 trees
- Bike and pedestrian paths on levee sections, St. Anthony Street neutral ground
- Plans for Lafitte Greenway and proposal for Woodlands Trail in lower coast Algiers

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FINDINGS

- Parks and open space within the boundaries of New Orleans include extensive wetland natural areas as well as passive and active parks.
- New Orleans has an extensive urban park system with an large inventory of park lands that are generally well-distributed throughout the city. Excluding Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, New Orleans had approximately 3000 acres of park land in 2009, giving it more than many southern cities.
- New Orleans lost approximately 100,000 trees as a result of Hurricane Katrina.
- Management of the city’s park and recreation system is fragmented among several city departments, parish and state agencies, and tax-supported nonprofit organizations.
- Most New Orleans residents are now within one-third mile walking distance of some kind of park.
- The city before Hurricane Katrina had an extensive recreation infrastructure, but many facilities were extremely outdated and in disrepair. Moreover, salaries for recreation department employees are very low, making it difficult to build a more professionalized staff.
- Funding for municipal park and recreation agencies has historically fluctuated considerably from year to year.
- The City does not have a unified park and recreation department, as is common in most cities.
- New Orleans currently has few designated walking or biking trails.
- Recreation facilities are focused on children and youth, team athletics, and—to a lesser extent—senior citizen activities.

CHALLENGES

- Ensuring effective coordination among the various entities and agencies that manage park land and provide recreation facilities in New Orleans.
- Restoring and enhancing the tree canopy and plantings damaged by Hurricane Katrina.
- Offering more recreation and fitness activities for adults of all ages while continuing to focus on recreation for children and youth, particularly those from low-income households.
- Providing a consistent funding mechanism.
- Providing consistent, high quality maintenance.
- Incorporating maintenance planning in capital improvement programs.
- Effectively serving a very diverse population.

Acronyms

To aid in reading this section, below is a list of acronyms used within the text:

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer	GIS	Geographic Information Systems
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant	LUFC	Louisiana Urban Forestry Council
CPC	City Planning Commission	NORA	New Orleans Redevelopment Authority
CPIA	City Park Improvement Association	NORD	New Orleans Recreation Department
NPP	Neighborhood Participation Program	OFICD	Office of Facilities, Infrastructure and Community Development
CZO	Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance	RPC	Regional Planning Commission
D-CDBG	Disaster Community Development Block Grant	RTA	Regional Transit Authority
DPW	Department of Public Works		
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency		
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Administration		

A Introduction

Excellent parks, recreational resources for adults as well as children and youth, and access to water and nature are key ingredients of the quality of life city dwellers desire in the 21st century. New Orleans' system of parks, open spaces, and recreation resources is one of its most important assets. Excluding the 22,000 acres of Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, the city had approximately 3,000 acres of park land in 2009, more than many southern cities, with parks generally well-distributed throughout the city. Today, the traditional elements of park and recreation planning are situated within the broader concept of "green infrastructure." This includes the network of parks, tree-lined streets, bike trails and pedestrian paths, river and stream corridors, waterfronts, and urban wilds of the city. Responsibility for New Orleans' green infrastructure system is divided among a number of public and nonprofit entities, making coordination a challenge.

The Master Plan focuses on maintaining and enhancing the city's green infrastructure through:

- Protecting resources
- Expanding access to parks, recreation and to waterfronts
- Creating open space connections through green ways and blue ways throughout the city
- Ensuring that recreation meets the changing needs of youth and adults
- Strengthening financial and operational support to ensure high levels of maintenance and programming
- Expanding partnerships

B Recommendations

A recommendations **Summary** linking goals, strategies and actions appears below and is followed by one or more early-action items under the heading **Getting Started**. The **Narrative** follows, providing a detailed description of how the strategies and actions further the goals. Background and existing conditions to inform understanding of the goals, policies, strategies and actions are included in Volume 3, Chapter 7.

Summary

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014 **MEDIUM TERM:** 2015–2019 **LONG TERM:** 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
1. Protection of remaining wetland areas inside and outside the levee system	1.A. Ensure that land use and zoning categories for wetlands and coastal areas promote wetland preservation.	1. Prohibit further drainage of wetlands for development both inside and outside the levees.	CPC	First five years	CZO rewrite contract	7.13 - 7.14
		2. Establish regulations and enforcement systems to protect wetlands, such as a city wetlands protection ordinance.	Coastal and Environmental Affairs; City Attorney; City Council	First five years	Staff time	7.14
	1.B. Seek conservation solutions for wetlands.	1. Discuss options with Bayou Sauvage and environmental organizations.	Coastal and Environmental Affairs; Trust for Public Land; US Department of the Interior	Medium term	Staff time; federal or nonprofit funding	7.14
2. Restoration and expansion of the city's urban forest to reach 50 percent tree canopy by 2030	2.A. Promote tree planting on both public and private property.	1. Prepare a tree-canopy GIS layer and analyze it with appropriate tree-cover software to track values.	Parks and Parkways, City GIS unit, Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFCC)	Medium term	Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry, Urban and Community Grants, Alliance for Community Trees Grants, Chevron Grants	7.14 - 7.15
		2. Prepare a street tree master plan to plant street trees throughout the city.	Parks and Parkways, City GIS unit, Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFCC)	Medium term	Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry Urban and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Trees Grants; Chevron Grants	7.15

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014 **MEDIUM TERM:** 2015–2019 **LONG TERM:** 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS					
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:	
2. Restoration and expansion of the city's urban forest to reach 50 percent tree canopy by 2030	2.A. Promote tree planting on both public and private property.	3. Promote tree preservation on private property.	Parks and Parkways, City GIS unit, Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)	Medium term	Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Urban and Community Grants, Alliance for Community Trees Grants, Chevron Grants	7.15	
		4. Improve the city's tree and vegetation protection ordinance (Chapter 106, Article IV).	Parks & Parkways; City Attorney; City Council	Medium term	Staff time	7.15	
		5. Require tree planting as part of commercial or mixed-use development, where appropriate.	CPC	First five years	CZO rewrite	7.16	
		6. Inventory the city's public trees and overall tree canopy.	Parks & Parkways	Medium term	Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Urban and Community Grants. Alliance for Community Tree Grants, Chevron Grants	7.16	
		7. Prepare a GIS layer with street trees and neutral grounds vegetation.	Parks and Parkways, City GIS unit, Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)	Medium term	(See above)	7.16	
		8. Work with utility companies to develop a protocol for conflicts and to develop a public information document.	Parks & Parkways; LUFC	Medium term	Staff time	7.16	
		9. Identify priority areas for planting, species, best practices, etc.	Parks & Parkways	Medium term	Staff time; possible consultant (approx \$200K, depending on scope)	7.16	
		2.B. Restore and plant new trees in parks and neutral grounds	1. Continue to work with non-profits who donate trees to the city and develop a program with attractive markers to indicate the donations.	Parks & Parkways	First five years	Donations	7.16
			2. Create tree nurseries on city-owned vacant land for public plantings and, if feasible, for donation to property owners.	Parks & Parkways; Parkway Partners; NORA	First five years	Staff time; nonprofit partners	7.16

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014 **MEDIUM TERM:** 2015–2019 **LONG TERM:** 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
2. Restoration and expansion of the city’s urban forest to reach 50 percent tree canopy by 2030	2.C. Promote tree preservation and planting on private property.	1. Include trees in landscape standards in the new CZO.	CPC	First five years	CZO rewrite	7.17
		2. Work with non-profits and neighborhood organizations to encourage private tree planting on vacant properties.	Parks & Parkways; Parkway Partners	First five years	Staff time; nonprofit partners; volunteers	7.17
		3. Encourage homeowners and other property owners to plant trees on their property.	Parks & Parkways; Parkway Partners	First five years	Staff time; nonprofit partners; volunteers	7.17
	2.D. Establish storm water management planting practices in public green spaces.	1. Replace most lawn areas in neutral grounds and street swales with shrubs and ground cover.	Parks & Parkways; public education through Levee Board, Parkway Partners	Medium term	Staff education and training; grants for public awareness; grow plants in nursery	7.17
3. A commitment to no net loss of park land	3.A. Establish systems to ensure that the city does not lose acreage dedicated to parks.	1. Require enhanced public review of disposition of public parkland and apply any funds from sales of parkland to acquisition of new parkland.	Parks & Parkways; CPC; City Council	First five years	Staff time	7.18
		2. Create a Parks Trust Fund within the Capital Projects Fund to receive funds for acquisition and improvement of parkland.	Parks & Parkways; CAO’s Office; CPC	First five years	Staff time	7.19
		3. Evaluate any public property identified for sale for suitability as a park or recreation site.	Parks & Parkways; City Attorney; City Council	Medium term	Staff time	7.19
4. A park within walking distance—approximately one-third mile—of every New Orleans resident	4. A. Balance passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.	1. Provide walking paths, seating, and programming (activities such as concerts, festivals, etc.) in parks and neutral grounds that are not managed by NORD in order to ensure that residents can and will use them.	Parks & Parkways; Dept of Public Works	First five years	Variable, according to project, activity or event	7.20

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014 **MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019** **LONG TERM: 2020–2030**

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
4. A park within walking distance—approximately one-third mile—of every New Orleans resident	4. A. Balance passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.	2. Make improvements in safe walking routes to parks.	NORD or successor organization; Parks & Parkways; DPW	Medium term	Seek grants from public health funders, such as Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	7.20
		3. Prioritize creation of new parks or playgrounds for underserved areas where there is no park within walking distance and for access to resources of citywide importance, such as the waterfront.	CPC; NORD or successor organization; Parks & Parkways	Medium term	CDBG; general fund	7.20
5. More public access to waterfronts	5.A. Create parks and public spaces along the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain.	1. Enhance parks and public access along the Mississippi River.	New Orleans Building Corp.	First five years	D-CDBG	7.21
		2. Enhance park land along Lake Pontchartrain, including Lincoln Beach.	Levee Board; OFICD	Medium term	D-CDBG;	7.21
		3. Enhance the amenity value of canals and drainage facilities when possible.	Levee Board; OFICD	First five years	Levee resources	7.21
6. More green connections throughout the city	6.A. Create linear parks and green ways for multi-use pathways using the city's neutral grounds and other linear connections, such as levees, canal edges and rail lines.	1. Connect people to parks and neighborhood destinations by tree-lined "Green Streets" and coordinate the network with transit stops and bike boulevards. (See Chapter 13)	CPC planning with Parks & Parkways; DPW; RTA	Medium term	Variable, according to project	7.22
		2. Work with the Regional Planning Commission and other groups to connect with regional pathways such as the multi-state Mississippi Trail.	DPW; RPC	Medium term	Staff time	7.22
		3. Explore creation of "blueways" as designated water recreation routes and other boating opportunities. Inventory opportunities and work with local boating groups.	Levee Board; Sewerage & Water Board; private groups	Long term	Variable	7.22

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014

MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019

LONG TERM: 2020–2030

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
6. More green connections throughout the city	6.A. Create linear parks and green ways for multi-use pathways using the city's neutral grounds and other linear connections, such as levees, canal edges and rail lines.	4. Explore the feasibility of daylighting canals that have been covered over and creating additional canals for water storage and amenity.	See Volume 2, Chapter 12 and Volume 3, Chapter 12 for more detailed discussion.	Long term	Variable	7.23
		5. Use neutral grounds, levees, canal edges and rail lines as potential greenway connectors	Parks & Parkways; Levee Board; DPW;	Medium term	Variable according to project	7.23
7. Maintenance of existing parks, green spaces, and recreational sites to a high level	7.A. Establish expanded maintenance criteria.	1. Create a committee with staff and citizens to develop goals and criteria and a photo system as in San Francisco.	Parks & Parkways; NORD or successor	First five years	Staff time	7.23
		2. Work with partnership groups to enhance maintenance. Encourage partnership groups to assist in maintenance.	Parks & Parkways; NORD or successor	Medium term	Staff time	7.24
		3. Encourage partnership groups and criteria and a photo system as in San Francisco.	Parks & Parkways; NORD or successor	Medium term	Staff time	7.24
	7.B. Establish clear and permanent policies and procedures for accepting, placing and maintaining public art in parks, green spaces and recreation sites.	1. Adopt an Artwork Donation Policy that sets specific policies and procedures for all aspects of accepting, installing and maintaining public art.	City Planning, Arts Council, Parks and Parkways, Property Management, Capital Projects, Historic Districts & Landmarks Commission	Ongoing	Staff time	7.24
8. Multi-use indoor/outdoor recreation centers within 5 miles of every resident	8.A. Create 10 indoor pools at existing centers.	1. Identify sites and invest in pools.	NORD or successor	First five years	D-CDBG; FEMA; millage for operating costs	7.24
	8.B. Coordinate recreation resources with schools and other community and human services.	1. Meet regularly with non-NORD providers to streamline services.	NORD or successor	Medium term	Staff time	7.24
		2. Explore collaborations with school districts and other organizations to establish joint use of facilities agreements.	School Districts, NORDC	First five years	Staff time, Cooperative agreements	7.25
9. Year-round recreation opportunities for children, seniors, and adults	9.A. Provide recreational opportunities appropriate to the demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods.	1. Focus child and youth-oriented activities in neighborhoods with higher numbers of family households.	NORD or successor	First five years	Staff time	7.25

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014 **MEDIUM TERM: 2015–2019** **LONG TERM: 2020–2030**

GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
9. Year-round recreation opportunities for children, seniors, and adults	9.A. Provide recreational opportunities appropriate to the demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods.	2. Continue to focus on 40 supervised playgrounds to be sports program hubs.	NORD or successor	First five years	D-CDBG	7.25
		3. Work with private programs and the Council on Aging to develop more senior programs.	NORD or successor; Council on Aging	First five years	Fees, where appropriate	7.25
		4. Promote youth and adult fitness through facilities and programs.	NORD or successor	First five years	Fees, where appropriate	7.25
		5. Provide dog parks through a community process where there is high demand.	Parks & Parkways	First five years	In existing park land	7.25
10. Recreation offerings that meet changing citizen needs	10.A. Regularly monitor the recreation needs of all segments of the population.	1. Survey residents through the internet and more rigorous methods on a regular basis to keep up with changing recreation needs and desires.	NORD; Parks & Parkways	Every 5 years	Survey—approx. \$30,000	7.26
		2. Provide for individual activities as well as team sports and classes.	NORD	Medium term	Fees, where appropriate	7.26
11. More effective coordination and cost-effective management of park and recreation resources and programs	11.A. Coordinate park and recreation resources and activities throughout the city.	1. Establish an inter-agency parks and recreation coordinating group for all relevant city, nonprofit, private, and parish agencies.	Convened by CPC; all park management groups; private recreation providers	First five years	Staff time	7.26
12. Neighborhood participation in decision-making about parks and recreation	12.A. Survey both park and recreation users on a regular basis.	1. Require instructors to use evaluation forms in classes.	NORD	First five years	Staff time	7.27
		2. Use the web page for surveys; free web-based survey utilities are available.	NORD; City IT	First five years	Staff time	7.27
		3. Conduct a scientific survey every 10 years.	NORD	Long term	\$30,000	7.27
	12.B. Establish a system for community input in park and recreation design and improvements.	1. Integrate a system with the NPP district council system to be developed.	CPC working through NPP organization to be developed	First five years	Staff time	7.27
	12.C. Prepare and update a full parks and recreation master plan regularly.	2. Update the plan every 10 years, including a full public participation element.	CPC, working with NORD and Parks & Parkways	Long term	General Fund; grants; approx. \$5-600,000	7.28

FIRST FIVE YEARS: 2010–2014

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GOAL	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
		HOW	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES	FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE:
13. Consistent and adequate level of maintenance, operations and programming on a per capita basis.	13.A. Provide a consistent and adequate per capita operating budget and work towards establishing a dedicated funding source for municipal park and recreation resources and programs.	1. Provide a consistent and adequate per capita operating budget.	Voters	First five years	Millage vote	7.28
		2. Continue to work with partnership groups and grant makers to supplement funding.	NORD; Parks & Parkways; non-profits	First five years	Grants; volunteer activities	7.28
		3. Pursue joint use agreements with public and private entities who own land that could add to park and recreation opportunities.	NORD; private groups	Medium term	Variable	7.29
		4. Establish fees appropriate to the program and level of community or individual benefit and reserve fees for park and rec uses.	NORD	Medium term	Variable according to activity	7.29
14. Expanded partnerships to support park and recreation resources and programs	14.A. Continue to support and work with Parkway Partners and support expansion of park and neutral ground Friends groups, as well as existing NORD Booster and Friends groups, and hire a volunteer coordinator to develop and manage a network of "Friends groups for parks.	1. Expand park and neutral ground Friends' groups; Booster groups; and hire a volunteer coordinator.	Parks & Parkways; NORD or successor	Medium term	Staff position	7.29
15. Effective marketing of the municipal park and recreation system to citizens and visitors	15.A. Provide user-friendly communications, including an interactive web site, an annual report, consistent signage and similar efforts.	1. Improve the web pages, provide an annual report, and consistent signage.	Park & Parkways; NORD	Medium term	Staff time	7.29

Getting Started

These items are short-term actions that can be undertaken with relatively little expenditure, and will help lay the groundwork for the longer-term actions that follow.

- Use the Lafitte Greenway, now under design, as a model for future greenway projects.
- Convene an inter-agency parks and recreations coordinating group including all city, nonprofit, private, and parish agencies.
- Develop a local wetlands protection ordinance.

Narrative

Below is a more detailed narrative of the various goals, strategies and actions highlighted in the “Summary” chart.

1. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL OPEN SPACE

GOAL 1

Protection of remaining wetland areas inside and outside the levee system



The state of Louisiana does not define wetlands for regulatory purposes, but does define a coastal zone in which jurisdiction is based on elevation and hydrologic characteristics. The state’s Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan, adopted in 1997, has what is effectively a no net loss policy for wetlands (replacement required for wetlands loss). Although the entire City of New Orleans is part of the regulated coastal zone, all of the city within the levees is designated as “fastland” for which there is no regulation relating to wetlands. Activities that affect wetlands outside the levees are regulated by the city’s Coastal Management Program, which is required to be compatible with the state’s program.

For the purposes of this chapter, and following the Clean Water Act, wetlands will be defined as those areas that are saturated by water (surface water or groundwater) sufficiently to support vegetation that is adapted to living in saturated soils. (EPA Regulations 40 CFR 230.3(t)). This is not the same thing as areas that may be subject to periodic flooding from storms.

1.A Ensure that regulations, land use and zoning categories for wetlands and coastal areas promote wetland preservation.

Establishment of a land use category and zoning categories for natural areas will enhance existing programs aimed at wetland preservation. Any isolated wetlands within the city should be protected for their value for water storage and pollution control.



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- I. *Prohibit further drainage of wetlands for development both inside and outside the levees.*

Who: CPC

When: First five years

Resources: CZO rewrite

Remaining wetland areas should be reserved for storm water storage and protected from further development.

2. *Establish regulations and enforcement systems to protect wetlands, such as a city wetlands protection ordinance.*

Who: Office of Coastal and Environmental Affairs; City Attorney; City Council

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

A city wetlands protection ordinance would allow the City to define wetland areas for protection and regulation and create a system whereby development activity within a specified distance of wetland areas (such as 25 feet) must meet certain requirements. Lafourche Parish has a section in its zoning code (Chapter 19.H) that requires a “Letter of No Objection” for construction of pipelines and canals, that could serve as a partial model. Where there is existing development in close proximity to wetlands or coastal areas, a regulatory system should be established to review petitions for alteration of the wetlands with mitigation requirements should the alteration be allowed.

1.B Seek conservation solutions for wetlands.

Natural areas in private hands can be protected through voluntary conservation servitudes (easements). The property owner agrees to permanently give up the development rights on the land, often in return for a payment through a government program, or simply to benefit from a reduction in taxes on the land, and retains title to the property. Conservation servitudes are part of the Louisiana Coastal Wetland Reserve Program, which works with farmers to restore lands to wetlands, making a payment for the agricultural development rights in return for establishment of a conservation servitude on the land. Although wetland property owners in New Orleans are not farmers, this program could provide a precedent.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Discuss options with Bayou Sauvage and environmental organizations.*

Who: Office of Coastal and Environmental Affairs; Trust for Public Land; U.S. Department of Interior

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time; federal or non-profit funding

A future opportunity may lie in climate change policy because of wetland’s exceptional role as “carbon sinks.” With the establishment of a cap and trade system of carbon credits, New Orleans wetlands will become valuable as sources of carbon credits because they are excellent vehicles for carbon sequestration.

GOAL 2**Restoration and expansion of New Orleans’ urban forest to reach 50 percent tree canopy by 2030**

Tree planting is one of the easiest ways to enhance quality of life. Flooding and winds from Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans’ urban forest, but even before Hurricane Katrina, some neighborhoods had fewer trees, for example, Tremé, the French Quarter, Marigny, Bywater, Central City, Algiers Riverside

and some parts of the 9th Ward. Although American Forests suggests a 40 percent goal for tree canopy, its 2002 report did not include Bayou Sauvage. With the wildlife refuge included, a 50 percent canopy goal for the city is reasonable. Within different parts of the city, different goals should be set, for example: 15 percent for the CBD; 25 percent for higher density areas; 50 percent for lower-density areas.

2.A Promote tree planting on both public and private property.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Prepare a tree-canopy GIS layer and analyze it with appropriate tree-cover software to track values.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; City GIS unit; Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)
When: Medium term
Resources: La. Department of Agriculture and Forestry; Urban and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Trees Grant; Chevron Grants

2. *Prepare a street tree master plan to plant street trees throughout the city.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; City GIS unit; Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)
When: Medium term
Resources: La. Department of Agriculture and Forestry; Urban and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Trees Grant; Chevron Grants

Public streetscape projects and commercial or mixed-use development or redevelopment projects should be required to provide street trees, where feasible. Street tree criteria should be updated for different kinds of streets, appropriate species, planting and maintenance, and so on. The city should also have an updated and complete inventory of all street trees in GIS, which will help in maintenance and replacement of trees.



3. *Promote tree preservation and planting on private property.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; City GIS unit; Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)
When: Medium term
Resources: La. Department of Agriculture and Forestry; Urban and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Trees Grant; Chevron Grants

Standards for new development should include requirements for planting trees, shrubs and ground cover, where appropriate. Large trees should be preferably preserved, but if they must be removed, several new trees should be planted to replace them. Methods to help provide and promote tree preservation and planting can include continuing the ReLeaf program already operated by Parkway Partners and creation of community based or city led tree nurseries in vacant lots, with seedlings distributed in neighborhoods. A small tree nursery was established in City Park after Hurricane Katrina with assistance from the Louisiana Urban Forestry Council and Chevron.

4. *Improve the city's tree and vegetation protection ordinance.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; City Attorney; City Council
When: Medium term
Resources: Staff time

The city has an ordinance for “Protection of vegetation” (Chapter 106, Article IV). This ordinance regulates activities that can affect city-owned trees, particularly street trees. Many

communities also have ordinances that protect trees of special significance because of their species, size or historic character, in both private and public property. These ordinances typically require an administrative review or a public hearing before trees of special significance can be removed.

5. *Require tree planting as part of commercial or mixed-use development where appropriate.*
Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: CZO rewrite
6. *Inventory the city's public trees and overall tree canopy.*
Who: Parks and Parkways
When: Medium term
Resources: La. Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Tree Grants; Chevron Grants
7. *Prepare a GIS layer with street trees and neutral grounds vegetation.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; City GIS unit; Louisiana Urban Forestry Council (LUFC)
When: Medium term
Resources: La. Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry and Community Grants; Alliance for Community Tree Grants; Chevron Grants
8. *Work with utility companies to develop a protocol for conflicts and to develop a public information document.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; LUFC
When: Medium term
Resources: Staff time
9. *Identify priority areas for planting, species, best practices, etc.*
Who: Parks and Parkways
When: Medium term
Resources: Staff time; possible consultant (approx. \$200 K, depending on scope)

2.B Restore and plant new trees in parks and neutral grounds.

Many neutral grounds and parks have very little tree cover. A tree plan should be developed to guide replanting in terms of species and location. Once in place, the tree plan can be used to attract private funding by individuals and others who want to plant trees in memory of family members or for other reasons.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Continue to work with non-profits who donate trees to the city and develop a program with attractive markers to indicate the donations.*
Who: Parks and Parkways
When: First five years
Resources: Donations
2. *Create tree nurseries on city-owned vacant land for public plantings and if feasible, for donation to property owners.*
Who: Parks and Parkways; Parkway Partners; NORA
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time; non-profit partners

2.C Promote tree preservation and planting on private property.**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

1. Include trees in landscape standards in the new CZO.
Who: CPC
When: First five years
Resources: CZO rewrite
2. Work with non-profits and neighborhood organizations to encourage private tree planting on vacant properties.
Who: Parks and Parkways; Parkway Partners
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time; non-profit partners; volunteers
3. Encourage homeowners and other property owners to plant trees on their property.
Who: Parks and Parkways; Parkway Partners
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time; non-profit partners; volunteers

2.D Establish storm water management planting practices in public green spaces.**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

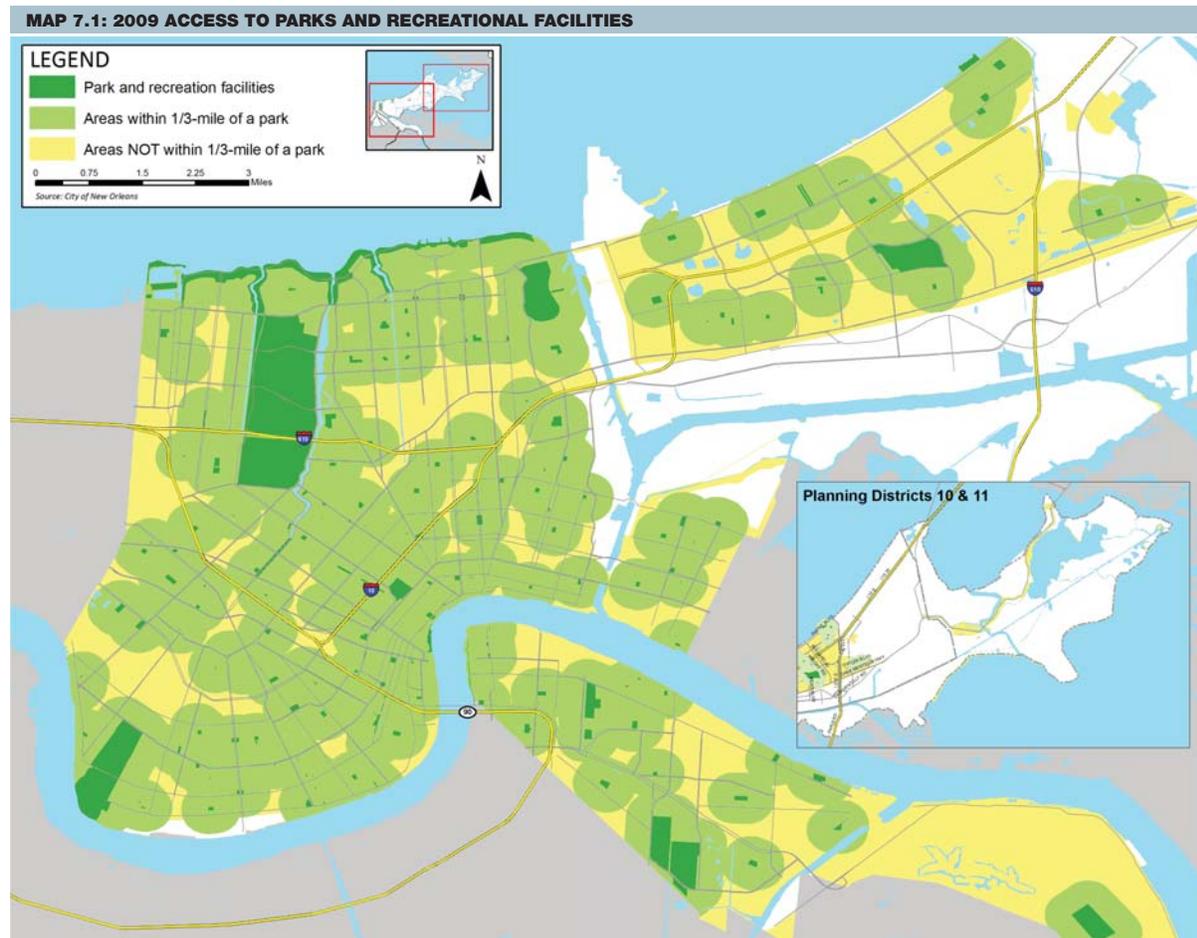
1. Replace most lawn areas in neutral grounds and street swales with shrubs and ground cover.
Who: Parks and Parkways; public education through Levee Board; Parkway Partners
When: Medium term
Resources: Staff education and training; grants for public awareness; grow plants in nursery

2. PARK SYSTEM**GOAL 3****A commitment to no net loss of public parkland**

Cities that give up park land end up regretting it. A robust network of green space and parks is a critical asset for quality of life and urban success. It helps retain existing residents and attracts new ones. When cities looking for “free land” establish other public facilities on park land, they are chipping away at the community’s overall inventory of park land. Often, it is more costly or otherwise more difficult to acquire new park land. For this reason, it is important to make sure that, at a minimum, the city maintain a commitment to keeping the same overall amount of park land that it has at present. In addition, as needed, additional park resources (whether directly owned by the city or by others) should be made available in areas of the city that are currently under served.

In post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, some people have argued that the City cannot support many parks or that it is finding it difficult to maintain the large number of parks, especially smaller parks. There are subdivisions where designated park land was never developed into usable parks, either because the land was unsuitable or better-located spaces are nearby. As long as there is an overall commitment to keeping the overall park acreage and to criteria for the location of parks to serve neighborhoods and the city as a whole, adjustments can be made. A no net loss policy must be the foundation to restore, rebuild, enhance and expand the park system for the whole city.

3.A Establish systems to ensure that the city does not lose acreage dedicated to parks.**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**



Access to excellent parks, recreational facilities, and natural areas are key ingredients of quality of life. Like the “gray infrastructure” of roads and water lines, this “green infrastructure” requires a planned, created, maintained and restored coordinated system.

1. *Require enhanced public review of disposition of public parkland; apply any funds from sales of parkland towards acquisition of new parkland.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; CPC; City Council

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

Because it is often difficult to acquire land to create new parks, the overall amount of city land devoted to parks should, at a minimum, remain the same. That means that no park land should be transferred to another use or sold without provision for the same amount or more land being designated as new park land. State Act 378 provides that designated park land (what constitutes “designation” is not described) cannot be taken out of park uses without the written approval of 70 percent of the property owners within a radius of 300 feet of the park. The CPC’s existing role is to decide whether any public land or building is to be sold or acquired. To enhance this process, the Planning Commission, working with the park and recreation departments, should establish a set of criteria and a deliberative process before any public park land is designated to be taken out of park and recreation use. This process should be included or referenced in the zoning code. The process should include elements such as:

- > *A requirement for a public hearing.* The City Planning Commission should hold a public hearing on the proposed sale or conversion of park land, at a time and place convenient

for public comment. Each agency should make a written recommendation to the Mayor and the City Council.

- > *A requirement for replacement.* Any park land sold or taken for other uses, including other municipal uses, must be replaced by land with similar park, recreation or conservation value in terms of usefulness and location. If the land is not available, funds must be deposited in a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund or similar dedicated account (described below) that would be sufficient to buy replacement land at fair market value. The land taken for other uses must be rezoned and taken out of the Parks category.¹



IMAGE: BOGDAN MIGULSKI.

2. *Create a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund or similar account within the Capital Project Fund to receive funds for acquisition and improvement of parkland.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; CAO's Office; CPC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

The City should create a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund within the Capital Projects Fund to receive funds from sale of any decommissioned parks; developer funds resulting from Community Benefits Agreements; or other donations for the park and recreation system. Creation of such a trust fund, restricting the use of funds to park and recreation purposes, would provide a long term and focused repository for funds dedicated to parks and recreation.

3. *Evaluate any public property identified for sale to identify suitability as a park or recreation site.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; City Attorney; City Council

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

Before public land is put up for sale, it should be reviewed by the CPC, NORD, and Parks and Parkways to see if it is suitable for an identified park or recreation need in that location.

GOAL 4

A park within walking distance—approximately 1/3 mile—of every New Orleans resident

In urban situations, park acreage is less important than park access. Research has repeatedly shown that the most important variable in how much and how often people use a green space is distance—especially walking time—from home.² They will travel from time to time to use large, unique open spaces of regional importance, but for everyday use, parks need to be close by. From the point of view of the park user, it does not matter who manages public open space, as long as it is accessible. In New Orleans, that means that a resident could be within walking distance of a park managed by Parks and Parkways or NORD, by the Levee Board, by the CPIA, by the Audubon Commission, by the School District or by others. The important thing is to have a public green space within walking distance.

¹ Recommended procedures based on the discussion by Robert H. Levin, "When Forever Proves Fleeting: The Condemnation and Conversion of Conservation Land," *NYU Environmental Law Journal*, 9 (2001), 592-637.

² Ann Forsyth, "People and Urban Green Areas: Perception and Use," University of Minnesota *Design Center for American Urban Landscape Design Brief*, 4 (June 2003) pp. 2, 5.

BEFORE



4.A Balance passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Provide walking paths, seating, and programming (activities such as concerts, festivals, etc.) in parks and neutral grounds that are not managed by NORD in order to ensure that residents can and will use them.

Who: Parks and Parkways; Department of Public Works

When: First five years

Resources: Variable, according to project, activity or event

All park systems need to provide a balance of passive and active green spaces.

Finding the proper balance can be difficult as multiple user groups vie for the same spaces. Organized sports leagues and similar groups tend to be more effective in expressing their park and recreation needs on a regular basis than people who are looking for a passive park experience or members of the general public overall. For that reason, it is always important to make room for passive park experiences in park designs. Careful design of parks coupled with efforts to share playing fields and other resources for active sports and new technologies, such as artificial turf that allows for more intensive use of sports fields, can help balance demands for active and passive activity areas. Even small parks can be designed to include quiet, landscaped sections as well as areas for children’s play equipment or a half-basketball court.



2. Make improvements for safe walking routes to parks.

Who: NORD or successor organization; Parks and Parkways; DPW

When: Medium term

Resources: Seek grant from public health funders, such as Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Safe and comfortable walking routes to parks are needed to make “walk-to” parks successful. Planning and creating a set of neighborhood routes to parks, as part of a combined public health and street improvement initiative can focus resources to enhance residents’ access to parks. Neighborhood residents and park user groups can identify appropriate routes to be upgraded with trees, sidewalks, lighting, and intersection safety and beautification improvements at pedestrian crossings. Good lighting that enhances safety while remaining appropriate to a neighborhood context is essential. This program could be coupled with the development of neighborhood walking clubs. Framed as a public health program, the park routes initiative and neighborhood walking clubs could attract funding for community process, design, improvements, maps and signage. This is what happened in a low-income neighborhood of Providence, RI, where a nonprofit alliance received foundation funding to develop signed pedestrian routes, maps, and walking clubs to encourage walking for health.³ There are now eight “Path to Health” walkable corridors in Rhode Island.

3. Prioritize creation of new parks or playgrounds for under served areas where there is no park within walking distance and for access to resources of citywide importance, such as the waterfront.

Who: CPC; NORD or successor organization; Park and Parkways

When: Medium term

Resources: CDBG; general fund

³ See www.spmn.org/about/services/healthpromotion.shtml

Under served areas exist in many areas, including parts of Planning Districts 3, 4, 7, 8, and New Orleans East and Algiers—residential areas that are not within walking distance of a park or where barriers (such as highways) preclude easy access. The existence of so many vacant lots during the recovery period is an opportunity to identify and preserve future neighborhood parks. Non-profit organizations and neighborhood groups could be invited to seek grant funding for play equipment and landscaping and to assist in upkeep until the city allocates regular funding. The future parks could also be offered as community gardens or community orchards, with an annual process to register for plots and with notice that the area might be transformed into a public park in the future.

GOAL 5

More public access to waterfronts

For a city surrounded by water, New Orleans has a limited amount of public open space at its waterfronts. More access to the waterfront has been a goal for almost 20 years.

5.A Create parks and public spaces along the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Enhance parks and public access along the Mississippi River.*

Who: New Orleans Building Corp.

When: First five years

Resources: D-CDBG

The City's Riverfront Vision 2005 Plan called for more parks and public spaces along the Mississippi River: a park in Lower Garden District and one in Bywater/Marigny; a promenade from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal to be matched by a similar linear park along the West Bank; and open space improvements near the levee at Algiers Point. The Reinventing the Crescent Plan developed some of these ideas in more detail and a new "Downriver Park" is currently under design.

2. *Enhance park land along Lake Pontchartrain, including Lincoln Beach.*

Who: Levee Board; OFICD

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

Renovation and reopening of Lincoln Beach has long been a city objective. The 2009 budget allocates \$1M in disaster CDBG funds for this project. West of the Industrial Canal, the park along the lake, Lakeshore/Lakefront Park, is owned and managed by the Orleans Levee Board. Live Lincoln Beach, this area was once a recreational beach front. To reach its potential as a citywide amenity, Lakeshore Park needs to be redesigned to provide more space between the lake and the roadway, as well as pathways and active and passive recreational areas across the road.

3. *Enhance the amenity value of canals and drainage facilities when possible.*

Who: Levee Board; OFICD

When: First five years

Resources: Levee resources

Today, most of the canals and drainage facilities in New Orleans are unattractive, if they are visible at all, and residents experience water more as a threat than as an amenity. As noted earlier, the Levee Board is preparing a study on day lighting (opening underground or covered canals to the surface) and adding to the number of canals. In addition to making sure that any canals function

correctly for water management, it is important that they be designed as an attractive addition to the city's open space. The Sewerage and Water Board must also be involved in any analysis of this potential as the canals can be dangerous places when the pumps are turned on. **(See Volumes 2 and 3, Chapter 14.)**

GOAL 6

More green connections throughout the city

Without connections, parks and open spaces do not really function as a system. The connective tissue of a park system is made up of the streets, paths, trails and waterways that let people reach their parks and other open spaces. People need comfortable connections, protected from traffic, with safe intersection crossings, shady during the heat of the day, and well lit in the evening and at night. New Orleans' neutral grounds are the original connecting tissue of the green infrastructure system but more linkages can be created.

6.A Create linear parks and green ways for multi-use pathways using the city's neutral grounds and other linear connections, such as levees, canal edges and rail lines.

Several multiuse pathways have already been created—the St. Anthony Avenue and Wisner Boulevard paths—and the Lafitte Greenway will be the first of a network of green ways in the city. Several multiuse pathways have already been created—the St. Anthony Avenue and Wisner Boulevard paths, and the planned Lafitte Greenway will form part of a network of greenways and neutral grounds that will connect green spaces throughout the city.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Connect people to parks and neighborhood destinations by “Green Streets” and coordinate the network with transit stops and bike boulevards.*

Who: CPC planning with Parks and Parkways; DPW; RTA

When: Medium term

Resources: Variable, according to project

Tree-lined, “Green Streets” should be prioritized for pedestrian and bicycle routes. In addition to the streets already graced by neutral grounds, other important corridors can be designated for redesign as green boulevards, for example, the Earhart corridor.

2. *Work with the regional Planning Commission and other groups to connect with regional pathways such as the multi-state Mississippi Trail.*

Who: DPW; RPC

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

Support extension of city green ways and trails to connect with regional pathways, such as the multi-state Mississippi Trail. As green ways and trails are designed and constructed, connections with regional greenway projects should be supported.

3. *Explore the creation of “blueways,” designated water routes, to provide water-based recreation connected to parks, open spaces and recreation areas.*

Who: Levee Board; Sewerage and Water Board; private groups

When: Long term

Resources: Variable

There are two marinas on Lake Pontchartrain, the South Shore Harbor Marina and Orleans Marina, both owned by the Orleans Levee District. Tulane University operates a rowing program in the Orleans Canal in City Park. Canoes and kayaks can be seen on Bayou St. John but bridges might have to be raised to make the entire bayou navigable. Expansion of water-based recreation can occur through more recreational boating programs in canals; more boat

launches on Lake Pontchartrain; enhanced marketing of boating excursions in Bayou Sauvage and elsewhere; and support for the boating community and excursion industry to map blueway routes. Because Lake Pontchartrain is at a higher elevation than Bayou St. John and interior canals, and pumping systems affect the waterways, a blueways program needs a feasibility study.

4. Explore the feasibility of “daylighting” canals that have been covered over and creating additional canals.

Who: S&WB; Corps; Levee District; RPC

When: Long term

Resources: Variable

“Daylighting” of below-ground urban streams and canals means removing the cover materials and restoring the water to the surface. Seoul, Korea, Seattle (WA) and Yonkers (NY) are among the communities that have daylighting projects of different types. In New Orleans, canals can serve as neighborhood amenities as well as water management elements. If properly designed, and where groundwater levels are not a problem, more canals can provide additional water storage area during storm events as well as attractive neighborhood amenities with linear parks on each side. The Orleans Levee Board expects to have a completed study of the options by 2011. **(See Chapter 12 - Resilience for more discussion of canals and water storage strategies.)**

5. Use neutral grounds, levees, canal edges and rail lines as potential greenway connectors.

Who: Parks and Parkways; Levee Board; DPW

When: Medium term

Resources: Variable according to project

Explore the possibility of using sufficiently wide neutral grounds as greenways. These could connect to linear, neighborhood, and regional parks to enhance the connection of green spaces throughout the city and facilitate access via walking and cycling. The use of the Basin Street neutral ground to connect the Lafitte Greenway to Canal Street and Duncan Plaza could serve as an ideal project for future study, in addition to other appropriate neutral grounds across the city.

GOAL 7

Maintenance of existing parks and green spaces to a high level

7.A Establish expanded maintenance criteria for parks and open space.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Create a committee with staff and citizens to develop goals and criteria and a photo system as in San Francisco.

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD; or successor

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

Maintenance of a complex system of parks and open spaces has been difficult in the years of reduced funding since Hurricane Katrina and many residents think that green spaces do not receive sufficient maintenance. At present, the Department of Parks and Parkways has some basic maintenance criteria. A number of cities have developed more detailed criteria in collaboration with citizen representatives, so that there is greater understanding of expectations and standards by the public, by management and by staff. San Francisco worked with a citizen committee to produce a manual with photographs showing acceptable and unacceptable situations for each criterion. Shared creation of criteria and understanding of costs helps build the constituency for adequate funding.

2. *Work with partnership groups to enhance maintenance.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD; or successor

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

The large parks in New Orleans have “Friends” groups—membership organizations that raise money and otherwise help City Park, Brechtel Park, and Audubon Park. Many cities have Friends groups for neighborhood parks. Just as recreation programs at specific parks have Booster Clubs, Friends groups drawn from the surrounding neighborhoods could assist the city in taking care of smaller parks.

3. *Encourage partnership groups to assist in maintenance.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD; or successor

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

7.B Establish clear and permanent policies and procedures for accepting, placing and maintaining public art in parks, green spaces and recreation sites.

1. *Adopt an Artwork Donation Policy that sets specific policies and procedures for all aspects of accepting, installing and maintaining public art.*

Who: City Planning, Arts Council, Parks and Parkways, Property Management, Capital Projects, Historic Districts & Landmarks Commission

When: Ongoing

Resources: Staff time

3. RECREATION

GOAL 8

Multi-use indoor/outdoor recreation centers within 5 miles of every resident

8.A Create 10 indoor pools at existing centers.

Many of New Orleans’ pre-Hurricane Katrina public swimming pools were extremely antiquated. Creation of a smaller number of state of the art year-round swimming pools can begin to build aquatics programs for children and adults.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Identify sites and invest in pools.*

Who: NORD; or successor

When: First five years

Resources: D-CDBG; FEMA; millage for operating costs

8.B Coordinate recreation resources with schools and other community and human services.

Recreation centers should be part of neighborhood hubs that offer a variety of fitness, education and human services to neighborhood residents, as discussed in other chapters of this Master Plan.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Meet regularly with non-NORD providers to streamline services.*

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD; or successor

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

2. *Explore collaborations with school districts and other organizations to establish joint use of facilities agreements allowing playing fields, playgrounds and recreation centers used by community residents when schools are closed; if necessary, adopt regulatory and legislative policies to address liability issues that might block implementation.*

Who: School Districts, NORDC

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time, cooperative agreements

GOAL 9

Year-round recreation opportunities for children, seniors and adults

9.A Provide recreational opportunities appropriate to the demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Focus child and youth-oriented activities in neighborhoods with higher numbers of family households.*

Who: NORD; or successor

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time

New Orleans neighborhoods vary significantly in terms of the percentage of family households. While youth-oriented services should be available to some degree in all neighborhoods, they should be focused where the clientele lives, while more adult-oriented recreation programs should be focused in neighborhoods with fewer children.

2. *Continue to focus on 40 supervised playgrounds to be sports program hubs.*

Who: NORD or successor

When: First five years

Resources: D-CDBG

Rather than spread resources thinly throughout a very large number of playgrounds, NORD is focusing on 40 well-distributed playgrounds to be the hubs of athletic activities.

3. *Work with private programs and the Council on Aging.*

Who: NORD or successor; Council on Aging

When: First five years

Resources: Fees, where appropriate

Aging baby boomers are likely to increase demand for senior recreation. Coordination with existing programs and the Council on Aging can help to fill that need in a cost-effective way.

4. *Promote fitness through facilities and programs.*

Who: NORD; or successor

When: First five years

Resources: Fees, where appropriate

Well-run fitness facilities and classes for adults can be a source of fees that enhance departmental revenues while at the same time meeting the needs of a part of the population that today does not participate widely in NORD programs.

5. *Provide dog parks where there is high demand.*

Who: Parks and Parkways

When: First five years

Resources: In existing park land

Neighborhoods with a high percentage of adults and one-and two-person households typically have demand for dog parks. Currently, the city's only dog park is located in City Park.

GOAL 10

Recreation offerings that meet changing citizen needs

10.A Regularly monitor the recreation needs of all segments of the population.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Survey residents through the internet and more rigorous methods in order to keep up with changing recreation needs.*

Who: NORD; Parks and Parkways

When: First five years

Resources: Survey-approximately \$30 K

Recreation needs are not static. For example, surveys show that throughout the country there has been a tremendous increase in the desire for walking paths as compared with previous decades. As populations change, their park and recreation needs and desires change, so it is important to survey them regularly. In addition to surveying people who are already users of park and recreation resources, it is also important to reach those who do not go to the parks or participate in recreation programs and find out what keeps them away or what they would like to do. That is why a scientific survey designed to reach all areas of the city is important at least once every ten years.

2. *Provide for individual activities as well as team sports and classes.*

Who: NORD or successor

When: Medium term

Resources: Fees, where appropriate

Team athletics are important and very organized, and classes can be very popular. However, many people are looking for unscheduled, individual activities, such as arts and crafts, as well as solo physical activity in passive park areas.

4. FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT

GOAL 11

More effective coordination and cost-effective management of park and recreation resources and programs

11.A Coordinate park and recreation resources and activities throughout the city.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Establish an inter-agency parks and recreation coordinating group including all relevant city, nonprofit, private, and parish agencies.*

Who: Convened by CPC; all park management groups; private recreation providers

When: First five years

Resources: Staff time

Because the New Orleans park, open space and recreation system is managed by multiple entities, it is essential that a coordinating group be established to share information and plans to serve the city's residents and visitors. No matter how conscious the different agencies may be of their independent existence and varying funding levels, from the point of view of a person who wants to take advantage of the outdoors, play sports, or enjoy the lakefront or riverfront, it is all part of the public realm and green infrastructure of the city. Efforts to coordinate

programming and activities will stretch the funding for park and recreation programs across the board, providing cost-effective services and resources to the community. As a group, the agencies can also work on building a common constituency for parks and recreation and raising public awareness about their importance for quality of life and economic prosperity. At a minimum the coordinating group should include NORD and Parkways (or any successor organization), City Park Improvement Association, Audubon Institute, the Orleans Levee Board, and the School District, but private recreation providers should ideally also participate. The City Planning Commission could convene the group two to four times a year to exchange information. One of those times should be when departments are preparing their capital budget requests. This meeting should also function as an annual public meeting to review progress and hear from the public on park and recreation issues.

GOAL 12

Community participation in decision making about parks and recreation

12.A Survey park and recreation users on a regular basis.

Information should be collected regularly on park and recreation program users, their current level of satisfaction, and needs for new park resources or programs. Surveys at the end of recreation programs; focus groups; and informal, web-based surveys can provide direction in between more scientific surveys every ten years.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Require instructors to use evaluation forms in classes.*
Who: NORD or successor
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time
2. *Use the web page for surveys; free web-based survey utilities are available.*
Who: NORD; City IT
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time
3. *Conduct a scientific survey every 10 years.*
Who: NORD or successor
When: Long term
Resources: \$30 K

12.B Establish a system for community input in park design and convene public meetings to provide input on major improvements, new park designs, and/or new recreation facilities and programs.

Whenever design starts on improvements to parks, neutral grounds, or new parks, park users and community members should be invited to a series of meetings: the first to gather information on issues and concerns; the second to present a conceptual design for discussion; and the third to present the detailed design for discussion.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Integrate a system with the NPP system to be developed.*
Who: CPC, working through NPP organization to be developed
When: First five years
Resources: Staff time

12.C Prepare and update a full parks and recreation master plan regularly.

A full parks and recreation plan separate from the master plan should be updated every 10 years. Since the last one was completed in 2002, the next one should be readied in 2012. As the city meets some of its goals and as conditions change, the plan will need to be modified to continue to guide decision making about the park and recreation system. The master plan should be sponsored jointly by the Parks and Recreation agency or agencies and by the City Planning Commission.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. *Update the plan every 10 years, including a full public participation element.*

Who: CPC, working with NORD and Parks and Parkways

When: Long term

Resources: General Fund; grants; approx. \$500 - 600 K

GOAL 13**Consistent and adequate level of maintenance, operations and programming on a per capita basis****13.A Provide a consistent and adequate per capita operating budget and work towards establishing a dedicated funding source for municipal park and recreation resources and programs.**

The best-funded parks and recreation departments have dedicated funding sources, generally a portion of property taxes or sales taxes. In Minneapolis, \$1.20 per \$1,000 of tax revenue in 2005 went to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, a semi-autonomous, elected board created in 1883 to maintain and develop the city's extensive park system. In 2005, the Park Board received 9 percent of tax revenue. In Seattle, a 2000 parks levy was approved at \$0.35 per \$1,000 additional property tax to be used mainly for acquisition and development of 18 new neighborhood parks in under served neighborhoods. The Chicago Parks District receives dedicated property tax funds, which account for over 50 percent of the government revenues that go to its parks. In Florida, Pinellas County uses a portion of its sales tax to fund parks and estimates that 40 percent of sales taxes are paid by seasonal residents and tourists. Boulder, Colorado, has both a sales tax-supported Open Space Fund and a property tax-supported Parks and Recreation Fund.

The proposal for a new Playgrounds and Recreation Commission calls for a dedicated 7.5 millage by 2020, creating a budget of \$20 million annually, almost five times NORD's 2009 budget. The Department of Parks and Parkways also requires more funding, so it can provide enhanced landscape design and planting services to improve the City's green spaces.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. *Provide a consistent and adequate per capita operating budget.*

Who: Voters

When: First five years

Resources: Millage vote

2. *Continue to work with partnership groups and grant makers to supplement funding.*

Who: NORD; Parks and Parkways; non-profits

When: First five years

Resources: Grants; volunteer activities

The creation of neighborhood activity hubs were schools, clinics, libraries and other facilities to serve surrounding residents is a centerpiece of this Master Plan. Joint use agreements help codify expectations and criterion for use maintenance contributions and other services.

3. Pursue joint use agreements with public and private entities who own land that could add to park and recreation opportunities.

Who: NORD; private groups

When: Medium term

Resources: Variable

Booster Friends groups and private companies already support some activities, especially youth sports programs. More partner groups should be sought for greens pace projects and passive parks.

4. Establish fees appropriate to the program and level of community or individual benefit and reserve fees for park and recreational uses.

Who: NORD

When: Medium term

Resources: Variable according to activity

Programs with overwhelming social benefit such as youth programs, should remain free or at very low cost. However, by developing fee-based programs for adults, or specialty programs, the city can gain new revenues to support the community-wide programs.

GOAL 14

Expanded partnerships to support park and recreation resources and programs

14.A Continue to support and work with Parkway Partners and support expansion of park and neutral ground Friends groups, as well as existing NORD Booster and Friends groups, and hire a volunteer coordinator to develop and manage a network of “Friends” groups for individual parks.

The cost of a coordinator will be repaid by activities and funding benefitting the parks.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Expand park and neutral ground Friends’ and Booster groups and hire a volunteer coordinator.

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff position

GOAL 15

Effective marketing of the municipal park and recreation system to citizens and visitors

15.A Provide user-friendly communications, including an interactive web site, an annual report, consistent signage, and similar efforts.

Audubon Institute and increasingly, City Park, do a good job of marketing themselves to park users. NORD and Parks and Parkways, with much more constrained funding, have not. However, investment in marketing to the public is a way to increase the constituency for parks and for recreation programs. Start up funding for a public communication program could be sought from corporate partners or foundations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Improve the web pages, provide an annual report, and consistent signage.

Who: Parks and Parkways; NORD

When: Medium term

Resources: Staff time