

Parks, Open Space and Trails

Introduction

Parks have often been referred as the lungs of our cities, cleansing the air of pollutants and particulate matter. Parks are also gathering places for families and community. They offer spaces for both programmed and unprogrammed physical activity. Larger, regional parks along with open natural areas offer an escape from the urban living. They offer unspoiled views and interactions with wild life. The Unified Government of Wyandotte County / Kansas City, Kansas has the framework for a potentially strong parks and open space system. With focused effort, it can be the backbone of the Green Community. More information can be found in the *Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas Parks and Recreation 2012 Vision Plan*.

Guiding Principles

A strong park and open space system will grow as the community grows, but the growth needs to be strategic and respond to the needs of the community and the guidance of a plan. Importance should be placed on preserving natural features.

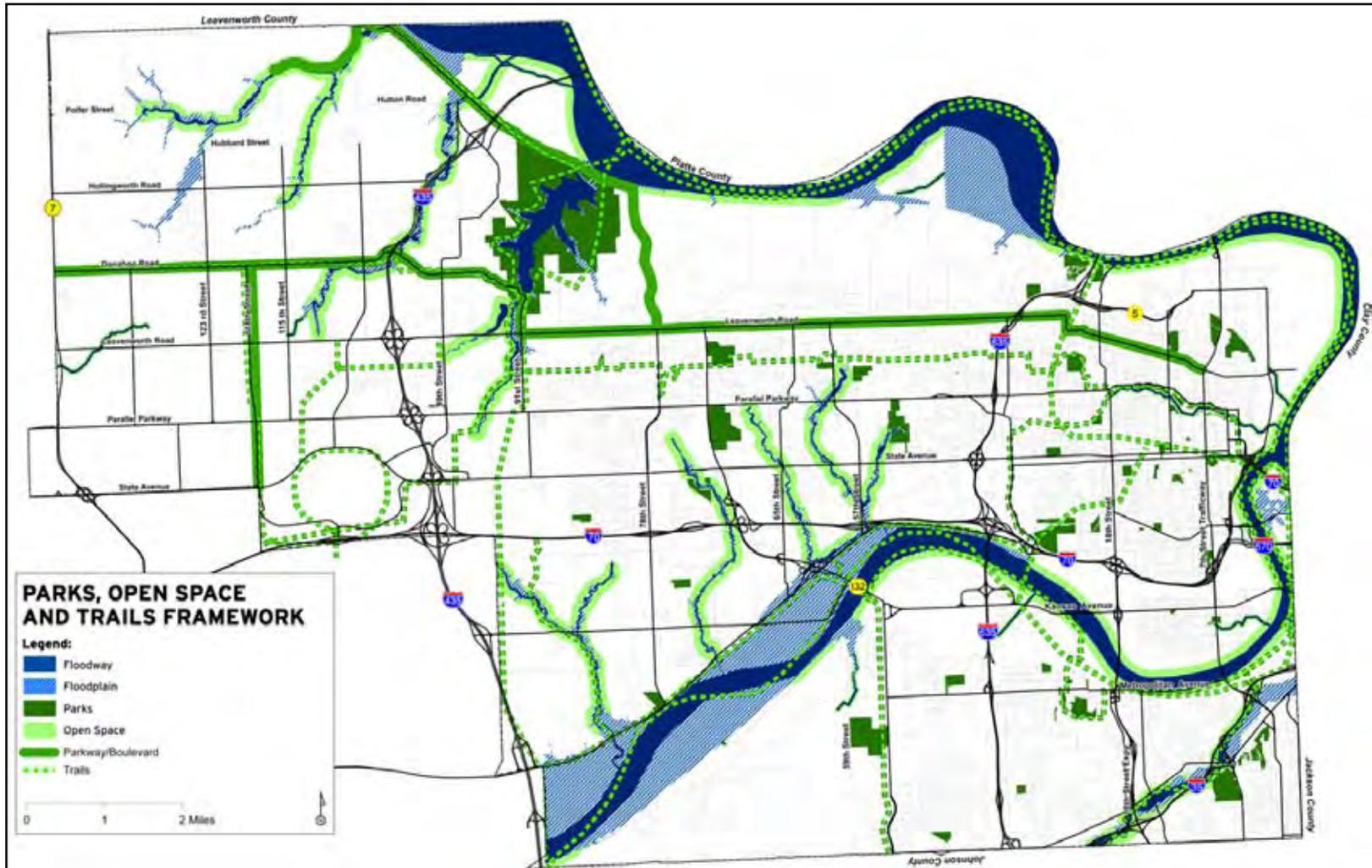
- Protect the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, streams and creeks from encroaching development.
- Promote passive recreational uses and educational opportunities in environmentally sensitive open space areas.
- Develop a comprehensive greenway and trail system to connect all parks, schools, and other community cultural amenities. Use greenways along naturally sensitive areas, such as streams, as part of the overall trail network.
- Revitalize existing neighborhood parks east of Interstate 635.
- Upgrade existing neighborhood and regional parks between Interstates 635 and 435.
- Identify future park and open space opportunities west of Interstate 435.
- Provide quality services and programs at all parks.
- Improve communication to residents of services and programs offered.



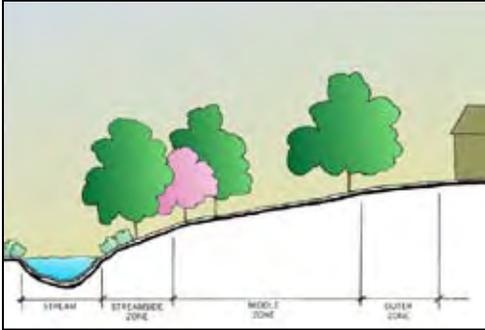
Parks, Open Space and Trails Framework

Exhibit 4: Parks, Open Space and Trails Framework

The Parks, Trails and Open Space Map (see below) and recommendations (described on the following pages) are intended to serve as a guide and strategy for identifying opportunities for preservation of open space, riparian corridors and natural areas and as well as a City-wide trail network.



Recommendations



- Implement the MetroGreen® vision within Wyandotte County by planning an interconnected system of public and private open spaces, greenways and trails.
 - Adopt an ordinance to establish stream-side buffer setbacks.
 - Maintain floodplains as open, undeveloped landscapes.
 - Develop watershed-based strategies for controlling flooding.
 - Utilize greenways as a mitigating landscape feature.
 - Develop a City-wide strategy for protecting undeveloped natural stream corridors.
 - Develop a mitigation program to restore and reclaim stream corridors that have been adversely effected by poor land use practices.
 - Increase public awareness of water quality issues and concerns.
 - Develop and effectively implement proactive efforts to improve water quality involving private citizens through existing and expanded programs.
 - Increase public access to and public ownership of stream corridors.
 - Encourage the establishment of outdoor classrooms to promote environmental education opportunities within greenways.
 - Expand education curriculums of primary and secondary schools to include urban geography, social studies, and sciences related to environmental management.
 - Develop a program of continuing education for elected officials, agency staff, developers and land designers/engineers to define technologies for managing urban and non-urban stream corridors.
 - Establish an “adopt-a-greenway” program to include participation among local business, industry, residential and civic organizations.
 - Establish a greenways publication to keep residents informed of progress. Develop a web site to include updated information on the greenway program.
 - Celebrate the City’s special cultural and historic resources through the development of the greenway system.
 - Protect, restore and create wetlands in riparian corridors to promote aquatic and wildlife breeding grounds, store floodwaters and provide aesthetic value.
 - Assign responsibilities for facility and land management to appropriate public and private sector organizations and agencies.
 - Promote a City management philosophy that encourages natural resource stewardship.
 - Identify partnership opportunities with the private sector (businesses, civic organizations, neighborhood and homes associations and interested residents).
 - Provide information to developers and real estate investors, including homeowners, about the value added from proximity to open space and trails.

- Ensure that greenways and trails are accessible to all persons, regardless of their ability. The City should use the most current national guidelines on outdoor accessibility to define the variety of trail environments and experiences that are available to residents and visitors.
 - Provide environmental education, and nature-based recreation that encourages residents and visitors to explore, protect, understand, and become stewards of natural areas.
 - Integrate corporate health care programs into physical development strategies of the greenway system.
 - Make greenways a destination for health and fitness activities.
 - Enforce leash laws and use of designated trails to protect sensitive ecosystems and wildlife.
 - Acquire greenway connections as development occurs. Ensure that neighborhood-level connections are included as part of the platting process.
- Continue to plan for the City's future park and recreation needs while maintaining and/or upgrading existing facilities.
 - Develop additional facilities to maintain National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards, particularly in the developing areas of western Wyandotte County.
 - Within the park system, protect natural resources recognized as significant city, regional, or national resources due to historical, ecological, or aesthetic value.
 - Enhance natural features in neighborhood and community parks to increase awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment.
 - Educate park visitors of the importance of preserving and properly managing natural resources for health, water, and air quality, and general environmental benefits.
 - Provide opportunities to interpret the City's history and historic features through venues that are engaging and fun.
 - Encourage the use of parks for public art and cultural and history events, giving priority to those that support local artists or foster an understanding of local cultures and history.
 - Develop connections between the neighborhood and community/regional park system.
 - Clean-up vacant city-owned parcels within the urban core. Partner with local residents, faith groups as well as neighborhood and homes associations to adopt and help maintain these areas as open space and potential pocket parks.
 - Provide access and encouragement for children and youth to participate in fundamental-level athletics.
 - Provide team sports for all age groups. Partner with the private sector and consider opportunities to develop shared regional facilities such as a soccer complex with mixed use development including hotels, retail, etc.
 - Provide opportunities for self-directed recreation on land and water throughout the park system.



- Form or encourage groups and clubs that help motivate individuals to reach their health and fitness goals.
- Explore ways to integrate non-traditional recreation opportunities for all ages into the park system including but not limited to “extreme parks.”
- Provide recreation opportunities that support active lifestyles for workers before, after, and/or during their workday.
- Offer a culturally rich selection of programs, expanding cross-cultural programming and interpretive opportunities.
- Tailor programs and services to the demographics and needs of each neighborhood.
- Promote volunteer opportunities in each park.



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