



PADUCAH PARKS & RECREATION

ALWAYS SOMETHING TO DO!

2019 Paducah Parks and Recreation Master Plan

January, 2020



Executive Summary





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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

2019 Paducah Parks and Recreation Master Plan Paducah, Kentucky

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The Need for a Plan

Paducah, located in western Kentucky, has a population of approximately 25,000 as of 2018. This population has decreased since 1980 but is expected to remain steady into the future (see Chapter 2 for demographics). The makeup of the population has changed over time, and these changes have implications to both the current and future needs for parks and recreation in Paducah.

Recognizing that the needs of the population should be assessed, City Commission and Parks and Recreation staff determined that a comprehensive process was needed to determine the future needs of the community, leading to the authorization of this Master Plan. The *2019 Paducah Parks and Recreation Master Plan* represents the culmination of the master planning process and will provide guidance for parks, recreation, open space, and trails in Paducah for the next five to ten years and beyond.

The quality of a community's parks and recreation system is viewed as one of the indicators of the overall quality of life. A recent study, *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation* by John L. Crompton for the Trust for Public Land, investigated the impact of parks and open space on property taxes. This study indicated that property values were higher for properties near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere.

Parks provide numerous benefits to the health and wellness of a community. Parks can be an effective component of a strategy to address issues such as poor nutrition, hunger, obesity, and physical inactivity. Living closer to a park leads to higher activity levels, and adolescents with access to a variety of recreation facilities are more physically active and less likely to be overweight. Studies also indicate that a connection to nature can relieve stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and improve mental health.¹ Finally, parks are important because they can serve as gathering places for the community

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/>, (May 14, 2019)

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and can help cultivate community ties, leading to a sense of connectedness that leads to a more livable and desirable community.²

Existing Conditions Of Parks And Recreation In Paducah

For many residents, parks provide their primary access to the natural environment, and for all residents, parks provide a variety of natural and active outdoor recreational opportunities. Access to these facilities helps to promote the health and wellness of the community.

Paducah offers 640 acres of parkland and 26 parks, including three (3) Mini Parks, four (4) Neighborhood Parks, a Community Park, and a Regional Park, Noble Park, the city's largest park with over 160 acres of land. The city also offers five (5) Special Use Parks, eight (8) Natural Areas/Open Space, and the Greenway Trails. Elementary schools (Paducah Public Schools and McCracken County Schools) offer opportunities that supplement these offerings. McCracken County also offers parks in and near Paducah.

Demographic Analysis

A review of demographic and population trends was important to identify present and anticipate future needs for parks and recreation services and facilities. Trends showed an aging and older population for Paducah, smaller households, and increasing diversity. This analysis also indicated that the makeup of the population in Paducah will likely continue to change into the future. The direction chosen for parks and recreation will determine the availability of opportunities for these residents and will help to enrich the quality of life in Paducah.

Service Area Analysis (Gaps)

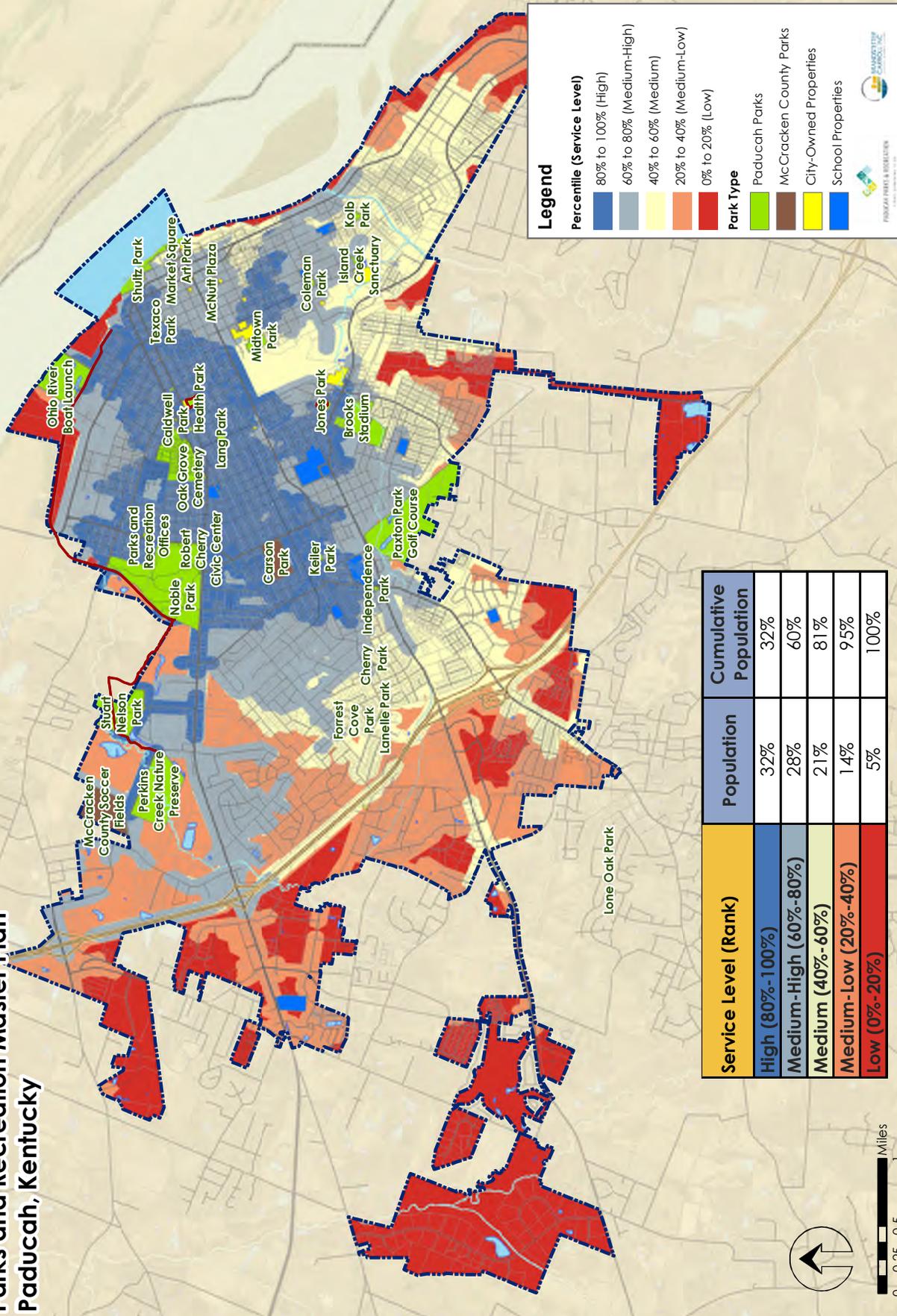
Service areas for types of parks and for individual facilities were mapped to identify the "Service Gaps" or underserved areas. Maps were produced showing access to three (3) park classifications and

² National Recreation and Park Association, "Social Equity," <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/social-equity/>, (May 14, 2019)

Composite Service Areas

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Paducah, Kentucky



Legend

Percentile (Service Level)

- 80% to 100% (High)
- 60% to 80% (Medium-High)
- 40% to 60% (Medium)
- 20% to 40% (Medium-Low)
- 0% to 20% (Low)

Park Type

- Paducah Parks
- McCracken County Parks
- City-Owned Properties
- School Properties

Service Level (Rank)	Population	Cumulative Population
High (80%-100%)	32%	32%
Medium-High (60%-80%)	28%	60%
Medium (40%-60%)	21%	81%
Medium-Low (20%-40%)	14%	95%
Low (0%-20%)	5%	100%



Source: MAP-GIS, USGS

eight (8) facilities. A composite service areas map (see left page) was created showing the overall level of service for parks and facilities. Dark shades of blue indicate a high level of service for parks and facilities at that location within Paducah. Red areas have the lowest level of service to parks and facilities. Approximately 60% of the Paducah population live in the highest two categories. Only 19% live in the lowest two categories combined.

Residents near Noble Park or in the central eastern portion of the city have the highest level of service (High). Much of the western and southern parts of the city have “Medium-Low” or “Low” service levels. The table on the map shows the percentage of the population by service level.

A Citizen Driven Plan

As the purpose of this plan is to address the needs of the community, a primary focus of the master planning process was to identify those needs. A number of methods were utilized to determine the needs and desires of Paducah residents for parks and recreation facilities and programs. The summary below indicates the many ways the public was involved throughout this process.

Engagement Summary

- Public Workshop – Open House
 - Stakeholder Groups (17)
 - Event
 - Dollar Voting
 - Surveys (2)
 - Online Engagement (MindMixer)
1. Open house on January 31, 2019 at the Robert Cherry Civic Center to introduce the project and solicit feedback from the community
 2. Meetings with stakeholder groups representing (March 11-13, 2019):
 - Running
 - Cycling
 - Travel Baseball & Softball
 - Swimming
 - Tennis
 - Pickleball
 - Youth Football
 - Disc Golf
 - Mountain Bike Team
 - Youth Volleyball

- Adult Volleyball
- McCracken County Soccer
- Pumas FC
- Paducah City Schools
- Paxton Park
- Brooks Stadium
- Lanelle Park – West End Neighborhood Association

3. A booth setup at the Easter Eggstravaganza (Egg Hunt) at Noble Park to allow attendees to provide input (April 9, 2019)
4. “Voting with Dollars” at events and public workshop (282 participants)
5. A statistically valid needs assessment survey conducted by the ETC Institute that was completed by 749 surveys (483 from the City of Paducah and 266 from McCracken County)
6. A handout and web survey that was completed by 1,461 residents

What Paducah Residents Said

Information gathered from these public input methods was used to identify the needs of Paducah residents. A brief summary of the findings is described below.

Community Meetings

Most discussed topics included:

1. Athletic Fields
2. Soccer Fields
3. Athletic Complex
4. More/Extend Trails
5. Tournaments
6. More Programs
7. Connectivity
8. Diamond Fields
9. Aquatics
10. Restrooms

Stakeholder Groups

Most discussed topics included:

1. Upgrade all parks
2. Outdoor sports complex
3. Improved baseball/softball fields

4. Improved Stuart Nelson Park
5. Indoor Recreation Center
6. Year-round swimming facility
7. Continue the Greenway Trail
8. Linkages between parks, schools, and neighborhoods
9. Paved loop trails – some with lights
10. Year-round tennis facility
11. Pickleball courts (some lighted)
12. Coordination and cross-promotion
13. Beautification
14. Paxton Golf Course improvements
15. Growth of volleyball, disc golf, tennis, pickleball running, cycling, soccer, baseball, softball

Dollar Voting

Participants at the Egg Hunt event and the public workshop were asked how they would allocate \$1000 among different types of parks and recreation facility improvements in Paducah. The responses ranked as follows:

Action (Box Title)	Total	
Develop an indoor pool	\$51,600	18%
Build new athletic fields	\$49,300	17%
Build new walking and biking trails	\$34,100	12%
Upgrade existing parks and facilities	\$27,700	10%
Develop a recreation center	\$25,700	9%
Upgrade Noble Park Pool	\$24,600	9%
Restore natural areas	\$19,600	7%
Build new parks (including land acquisition)	\$17,300	6%
Expand program offerings	\$10,600	4%
Other	\$21,800	8%
Total	\$282,300	100%

Statistically Valid Mail Survey

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of residents visited a park in Paducah over the past year, and 51% of these residents visited parks more than 10 times. Noble Park was the most visited park (94% reporting visiting), followed by the Greenway Trail (54%).

The top reasons for not using parks more often included:

- Do not know what is offered (35%)
- Facility or program not offered (21%)
- Security or safety concerns (18%)
- Poor condition of facilities (18%)

The improvements households would most like to see to existing parks included:

- Restrooms (57%)
- Trails (46%)
- Picnic shelters (38%)
- Drinking fountains (36%)
- Security cameras and lighting (36%)

The most important parks and recreation facilities for households were (sum of top four choices):

- Walking and hiking trails (37%)
- Large community parks (24%)
- Playgrounds (24%)
- Small neighborhood parks (24%)

The results of the most important facilities were combined with the reported unmet needs to determine high (top 8) priorities for investment:

1. Walking & hiking trails
2. Natural areas/nature parks
3. Small neighborhood parks
4. Indoor swimming pools
5. Paved bike trails
6. Large community parks
7. Playgrounds
8. Picnic shelters/picnic areas

The most important parks and recreation programs for households were:

- Farmers Market (39%)
- Riverfront Concert Series (27%)
- Christmas in the Park (25%)
- Adult fitness and wellness (23%)

The results of the most important programs were combined with the reported unmet needs to determine the high (top 5) priorities for investment:

1. Riverfront Concert Series
2. Adult fitness & wellness programs
3. Farmer's Market
4. Programs for persons ages 50+
5. Nature programs

Seventy-one percent of households agreed that there was a need for a new recreation center, and 54% agreed with the need for a new sports field complex.

Key Findings (all methods)

Results indicate that the community desires:

- Upgrades to existing parks
- An indoor aquatic facility (lap pool, warm water therapy pool, family activity pool)
- Trail improvements
- More/better restrooms
- New Recreation Center (walking track, cardio room, gyms, and more)
- Acquisition and preservation of open space
- More shade, including trees and structures
- New playground equipment
- More picnic shelters
- Pickleball courts
- New athletic fields and a complex for tournaments
- Support features (security, lighting, drinking fountains, seating, Wi-Fi)
- Improved marketing and communication
- Riverfront Park improvements
- Expanded program offerings

Vision, Mission, and Values for Parks and Recreation in Paducah

Mission

Energize community through exceptional parks and experiences!

Vision

Amazing Experiences! Providing dynamic opportunities that promote a vibrant community, shape city character, and are a magnet for growth!

Values

Health & Wellness: We will encourage healthy activities and lifestyles through our parks, facilities, and programs. We will inspire improved fitness and wellbeing for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Community: We are committed to strengthening and celebrating a sense of community unique to Paducah. Our parks and programs will contribute to our community's economic development. We will facilitate connectivity of the community through parks and programs, helping to inspire pride and community identity through shared experiences.

Inclusion: We believe everyone should have convenient access to a diverse range of parks, places and programs. We are committed to removing barriers and ensuring everyone in Paducah is welcomed warmly and can actively engage in a variety of great experiences.

Fun: Paducah will explore a wide variety of opportunities for fun and excitement at parks. Quality parks and recreational facilities will engender pride and enrich the community. We envision being leaders at the community and state levels in terms of how we leverage parks and recreation to generate excitement and enhance quality of life.

Safety: We pledge to provide a safe, clean, and accessible environment at parks and trails through proactive maintenance of exceptional facilities. We aspire to provide ample supervision to assure the safety of users and security of facilities.

Stewardship: We take seriously our role in preserving, conserving and boldly protecting the natural, historical, and cultural resources within parks of Paducah. We will work tirelessly to protect, raise awareness, educate, and celebrate these unique resources for generations to come.

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives will guide the operations, improvements, and services in parks and recreation in Paducah over the next five to ten years.

Goal 1: Great Parks and Enhanced Facilities

Enhance and expand existing parks and develop high quality facilities that serve as destinations for community recreation

Gathering Spaces: Offer attractive and welcoming amenities that promote a sense of community and attract visitors

Sports: Provide modern venues for team and individual sports

Land Management: Focus acquisitions and development to conserve parkland and ensure open space for citizens of today and tomorrow

Goal 2: Improved Accessibility

Expand access to parks and facilities and increase connectivity between parks, nature, and the community

Inclusion: Develop accessible and enticing park features in response to community desires

Connectivity: Develop safe trails to encourage community connectivity, fitness, and recreation

Support: Ensure availability of amenities that ensure equal access needed for extended enjoyment of parks

Goal 3: Diverse Programs and Memorable Experiences

Offer a variety of first-class recreational programs that are diverse and welcoming for users of all ages and abilities

Community Impact: Contribute to health, wellness, and quality of life through parks and programs

Accessibility: Ensure the availability of positive, convenient, and affordable programs and events to meet the evolving needs of the diverse population

Innovation: Provide creative programs and events that respond to trends and reflect community desires

Goal 4: Effective Engagement

Inspire and engage the community to grow parks, inform users, and promote Paducah

Engagement: Engage the community to determine needs and identify barriers to park experiences

Promotion: Raise awareness of parks and programs to increase participation and attract investment in Paducah

Collaboration: Foster partnerships to meet the current and future needs of parks, recreation, and culture

Goal 5: Efficient Operations

Utilize efficient, proactive management of staff and fiscally sound strategies to ensure a safe environment at parks

Structure: Develop an efficient organization of valued staff and volunteers that meets or exceeds national standards

Finances: Implement operational practices and funding strategies to maximize the quality and effectiveness of parks, facilities, and programs

Maintenance: Ensure adequate maintenance and equipment replacement policies and procedures to promote safe parks and facilities

Systemwide Recommendations

The Public Input (Chapter 4) and Needs Assessment (Chapter 5) were used to establish the overall priorities for improvements to parks in Paducah. The following

items are the top priorities for park improvements as determined by the master planning process and consultation with the steering committee.

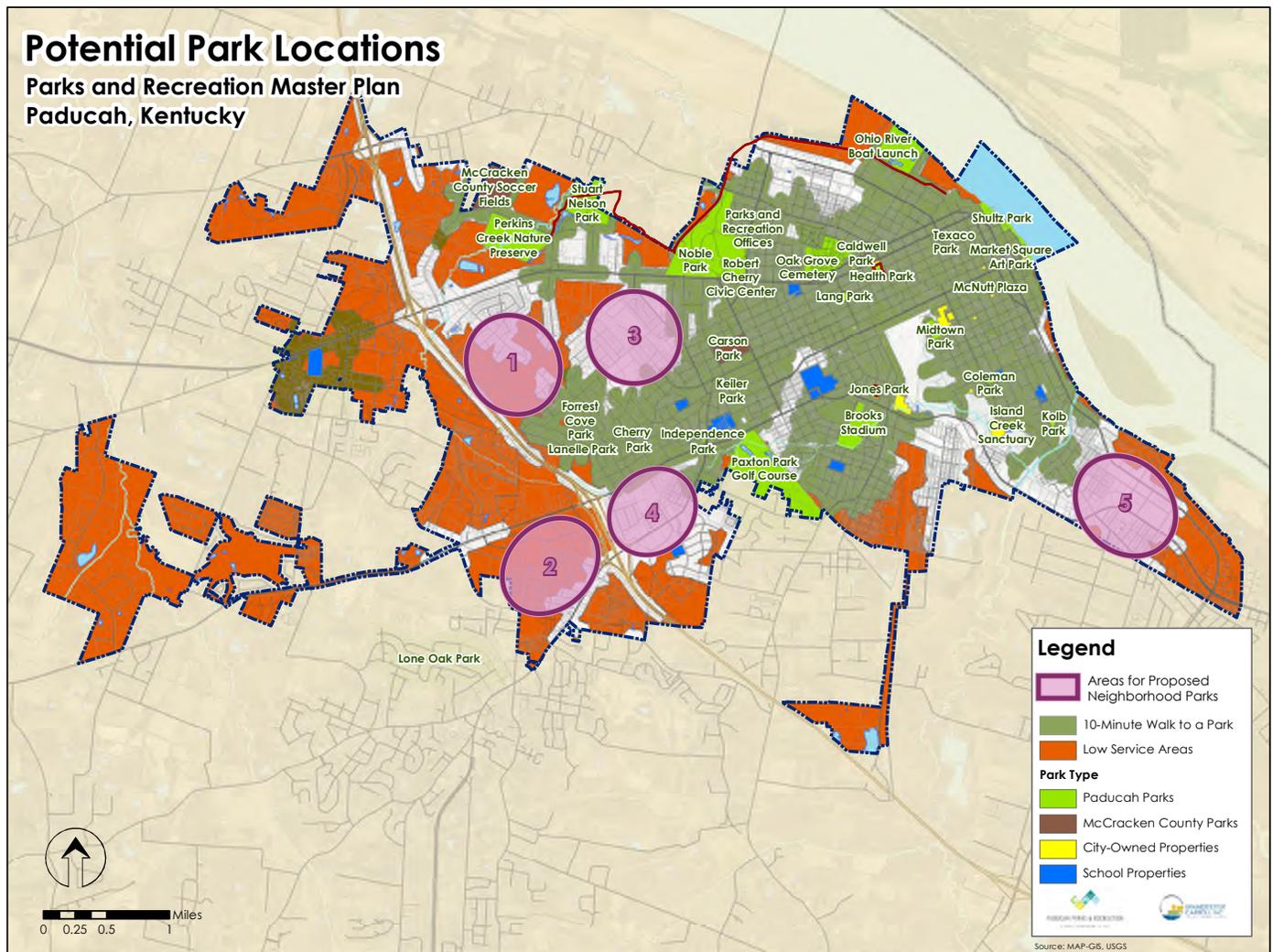
1. Improve maintenance at existing parks
2. Add support features throughout the park system such as shade structures, drinking fountains, security cameras and lighting, and trees/landscaping
3. Replace outdated and deteriorated playgrounds throughout the city and include unique or themed features at each park
4. Add picnic shelters at existing and future parks
5. Perform an ADA Accessibility Assessment of all facilities, programs, and communications (by an outside consultant)
6. Prepare Park Master Plans for Albert Jones Park, Brooks Stadium Park, Lanelle Park, Midtown Golf Course, Stuart Nelson Park, Noble Park (update), Riverfront Plaza (update), and Perkins Creek Nature Preserve (update)
7. Develop a bike and pedestrian connectivity plan
8. Add paved trail loops within parks and improve connectivity between parks and adjacent neighborhoods
9. Continue to develop Riverfront Plaza/Schultz Park as a destination park
10. Redevelop Midtown Golf Course as a Neighborhood Park with soccer fields (multipurpose)
11. Seek opportunities for new Neighborhood Parks in the western and southeastern portions of the city (see map-right)
12. Add outdoor fitness equipment at select parks to expand opportunities for improved community health
13. Develop Perkins Creek Nature Preserve as a Nature Park
14. Develop Lanelle Park as a Passive Neighborhood Park and native species arboretum
15. Continue to partner with McCracken County and McCracken County Sports Commission for the development of a new sports complex
16. Develop a recreation center with an indoor aquatic center
17. Schedule more special events and cultural offerings to bring the community together and encourage unity
18. Expand marketing of programs and facilities to improve awareness of existing and future opportunities

19. Develop a capital maintenance and replacement program
20. Encourage the creation of the Paducah Parks Foundation to raise funds and recruit and organize volunteers
21. Increase cost recovery from the current level (10%) to 25%
22. Seek opportunities to expand partnerships with local organizations to improve access to recreation facilities and programs

This master plan provides capital improvement recommendations for each park in Paducah. These recommendations with cost estimates can be found in Chapter 8.

Action Plan

The 2019 Paducah Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes a detailed Action Plan with 139 strategies. These strategies, which can be found in Chapter 9, represent specific actions for Parks and Recreation and the City of Paducah to take to implement this plan.





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