

MASTER PLAN

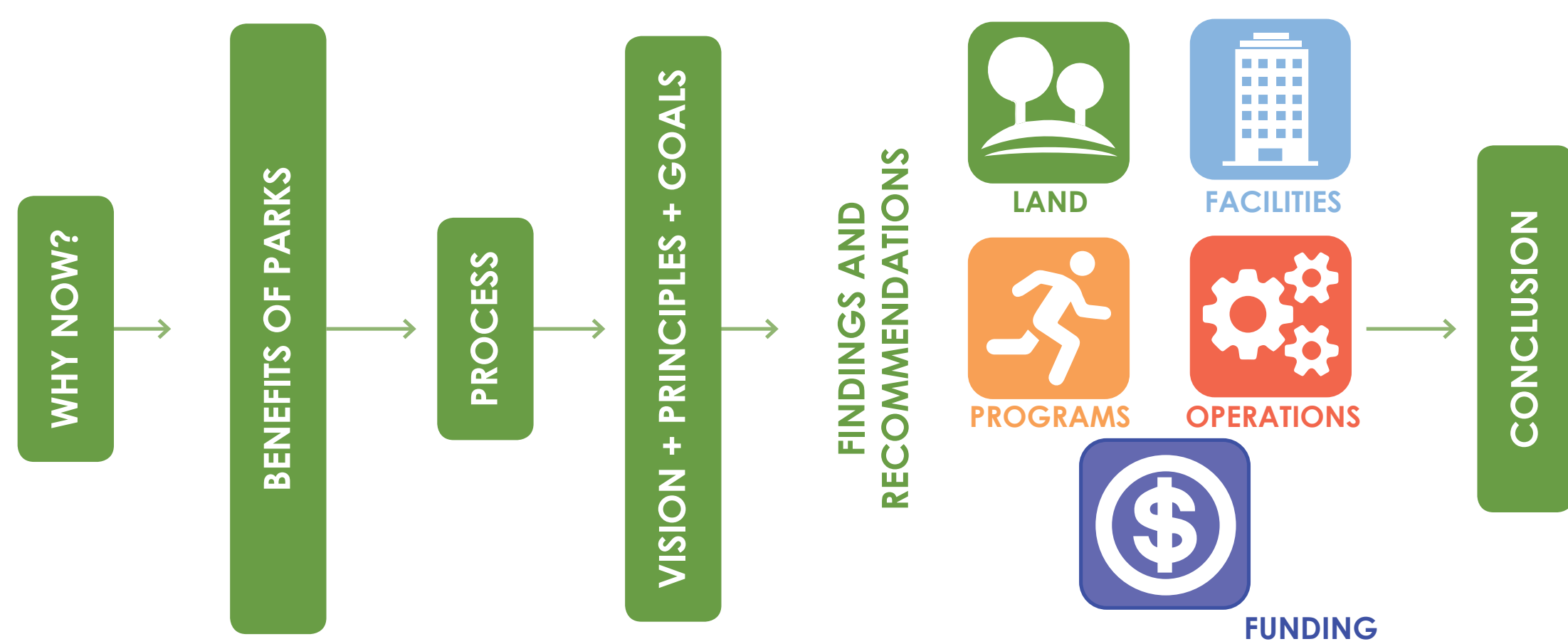
Nashville emerged into the 21st century as a world-class “It” city. Among its many attributes is a valuable parks and greenway system that provides residents and visitors access to great park land, natural environments, greenway trails, and varied recreation facilities and programs. Decisions by the community’s leadership have been deliberate about supporting the system to address growing demand. Those decisions have contributed to a highly prized quality of life in the region surrounding Metro Nashville.

In 2015, the Department of Parks and Recreation of Metropolitan Nashville / Davidson County decided it was time for a new parks and greenways master plan. The original plan, produced in 2002 and updated in 2008, has proved to be a valuable planning roadmap to guide the growth of Metro’s recreation acreage and facilities. However, the area’s continued population growth, land development patterns, and changing demographics demand a fresh perspective.

2002	PARKS: 153	2016	PARKS: 185
	ACRES: 9,483		ACRES: 15,873
	POPULATION: 570,000		POPULATION: 678,413

APPROACH

The 2016 Plan to Play Master Plan is intended to offer a set of tools that will continue to guide deliberate decisions, and provide a 10-year vision to sustainably meet the community’s needs through 2027. It identifies the amazing economic, social and environmental values that a healthy park system returns on the investments made. The plan supports this vision with a series of findings and recommendations divided into the following categories: Land, Facilities, Programs, and Operations. The final section of the recommendations, Funding the Future, projects the recommended levels of investment needed to build and sustain the Metro Parks and Greenways system through 2027.



FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

How large should our park system be by 2027?
Do we need more parks and greenways? Why?

How can Metro Parks be creative about providing recreation opportunities to people everywhere?

Where should new park land be located so that quality of life increases for all residents by 2027?

What do today’s Nashvillians want most from their parks? What kinds of recreation facilities? What kinds of programs?

Where does Nashville’s park system stand in comparison to cities of similar size?

How can Metro Parks provide more parks within the fast-growing dense areas of Nashville?

Can parks and greenways help improve connectivity within and beyond Nashville?

How can Metro Parks anticipate future trends in activities and sports?

How do we know what types of facilities and programs Parks should provide for current and future residents? Where should they be provided?

How can Nashville create sustainable sources of revenue so that parks can last for generations?

How can Metro Parks grow in a way that offers the highest returns on investment and returns for the dollars spent?

What does the Metro Parks department need to successfully manage an expanded parks and greenways system?

THE BENEFITS OF PARKS

Parks and greenways help build on the foundation of NashvilleNext guiding principles:

- Ensure opportunity for all
- Expand accessibility
- Create economic prosperity
- Foster stronger neighborhoods
- Advance education
- Champion the environment
- Be Nashville

Parks offer an array of community benefits that can often be both intangible and priceless. However, there are other metrics that allow a city to gauge the value of parks. These equally important metrics offer a quantifiable bottom line in real financial terms.

Parks and greenways system investments rank extraordinarily high when assessed against the triple bottom line metrics of sustainability. Environmentally sustainable investments should meet the following metrics:

- Create economic value
- Promote environmental benefits
- Improve social well-being

The economic benefits of parks collectively enhance the quality of life in Nashville. **Quality of life is economic development.** Most employees in today’s economy consider more than just salary when choosing places of employment. They choose to live where the quality of life is good for them and their families.



As part of Plan to Play, an economic analysis was completed that addresses six specific areas in which parks and greenways provide economic value to Metro Nashville. Using conservative methodologies, Nashville’s parks and greenways generate on a mostly annual basis:

\$550,410,000 in economic benefits



PROPERTY VALUES AND TAX REVENUE

Parks and greenways raise the value of nearby residential properties in total by **\$200 million**. This translates into an additional **\$2.15 million in annual tax revenues to the city**.



TOURISM

Nashville’s parks are essential to the area’s ability to attract visitors. In 2015, four festivals hosted in parks attracted 378,000 attendees who spent \$96.1 million in the local economy. Each year, tournaments at the Centennial Sportsplex attract 12,700 visitors who spend \$19.6 million. **In total, these 390,000 visitors spend \$116 million annually.**



HUMAN HEALTH

Independent research shows that park use translates into increased physical activity resulting in medical cost savings. The approximately 23,000 adults who use Nashville’s parks and recreation system engage in physical activity at a level sufficient to generate measurable health benefits. **This yields an annual medical cost savings of \$27.5 million.**



RECREATION USE

Residents enjoy Nashville parks, greenways, sports fields, and community centers for a variety of activities with an annual market value of \$69.5 million. This translates into a benefit of approximately \$105 per resident. **Since Metro Parks typically receives \$53 per resident annually in tax dollars, the recreational benefits alone offer an excellent return on investment.**



STORMWATER INFILTRATION

Since the percentage of impervious surfaces (pavement and roofs) in most parks and greenways is very low, they offer more stormwater benefits than most other forms of development. Parks absorb precipitation, slow its runoff and reduce the volume of water that enters the sewer system. **This is valued at \$16.9 million annually.**



AIR POLLUTION REMOVAL

Parks with trees and shrubs remove air pollutants that endanger human health and damage structures. These green spaces **provide health benefits and reduce air pollution control costs in Nashville by \$3.66 million per year.**

PROCESS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is a key component to the success of any public planning process. Successful engagement breathes life into a project and ensures that it reflects the values and priorities of the community it serves. For Plan to Play, the objective was to learn how residents use the park system, understand their needs and concerns, hear what Metro Parks is doing well, and identify areas for improvement. From the onset, the plan embarked on a robust community engagement and promotional strategy to ensure broad public involvement and engagement throughout the process. The goal was simple: Cast a wide net and engage as many people as possible.



Plan to Play recommendations are built upon data and input deliberately gathered from a variety of sources.

- People:** The self-determined opinions and thoughts of residents, visitors, business owners, stakeholders and partners.
- The System:** Metrics on how and how well the current park and greenways system serves the residents of Nashville.
- Peers:** Cities of similar size and population with which Metro Nashville competes or shares aspirational goals.
- Best Practices and Market Research:** A look at who's doing the best work and how recreation is projected to evolve.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Over 9,000 people participated in the planning process to help planners assess how residents use the park system, understand their needs and concerns, hear what Metro Parks is doing well, and identify areas for improvement.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Public meetings were held in regionally diverse locations to offer attendees an opportunity to provide valuable input and stay informed of Plan to Play progress. Over 488 people attended these meetings. Metro Parks, Metro Public Works, and the Metro Transit Authority also teamed up to host an open house where people came to offer input on the three plans related to parks and greenways (Plan to Play), sidewalks and bikeways (WalknBike), and public transit (nMotion).

STAKEHOLDER AND PARTNER AGENCIES

Local not-for-profit "friends" groups, environmental organizations, and sports groups were interviewed.

PEER CITY BENCHMARKING

Five peer cities were identified and contacted to compare Metro Parks system data to those of **Austin, Louisville, Charlotte/Mecklenberg, Denver, and Portland, Oregon**. Some of the benchmark metrics include:

- System Acreage
- Facility Types
- Budgets / Operations Expenditures

NATIONAL TRENDS ASSESSMENT

Trends in recreation were identified to help Metro Parks anticipate future needs in programs and facilities.

SYSTEM LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

The purpose of an existing Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to quantify how well the park and recreation needs of a community are being met with existing resources. It is also used to help determine where Metro Parks resources are deficient. The method used in determining the desired LOS for Nashville and Davidson County is based on community needs, existing facilities and amenities, and park acreage and access.



Sampling of public interactions during master plan process.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Plan to Play process re-evaluated and articulated Metro Parks' purpose and values. This exercise was intended to help ensure that everything the department does aligns with a foundational vision that is relevant to Metro Nashville's contemporary needs and ethos. These statements were crafted by the Plan to Play Steering Committee and Metro Parks staff and resulted in a new mission statement, a first-ever vision statement, and a first-ever set of guiding principles. Together, these statements have guided the development of Plan to Play's recommendations and will be the standards by which departmental decisions are made.

Nashville's parks and greenways offer life-enriching everyday experiences that are central to the city's identity as a green, active, diverse, creative, thriving, and healthy community.

Open to All
We distribute resources throughout Nashville to ensure equitable access and inclusion for everyone.

Relevant and Diverse
We offer places, activities and experiences that are as varied as the Nashville community itself.

Healthy
Our facilities and programs support the integration of health and wellness into everyday life.

Green
The acquisition, development, and management of our park infrastructure reflect best practices in the management of natural resources and the ecological services they provide.

Strategic and Productive
We plan for successful outcomes through efficiency, cost-effectiveness and the balancing of varied interests. We develop effective partnerships in the public interest.

Safe
We design and manage clean and safe parks and facilities.

Uniquely Nashville
Through community spaces, stewardship and education, we promote the natural, cultural and creative character of our community.

Transparent
The community is invited to participate in key decision-making.

A Good Investment
We contribute to the prosperity of Nashville through economic impact, public health, climate resilience and quality of life.

PARKS SHOULD BE ...

1 Land
Increase the livability for Nashville and Davidson County residents by improving access to an excellent regional system of public parks and greenways that provides recreational, educational, ecological, and aesthetic benefits to enhance the quality of life for all.

2 Facilities
Provide a wide variety of park facilities and amenities within the parks and greenways system to offer opportunities for valuable recreation experiences in appropriate settings for the benefit of residents and visitors to the region.

3 Programs
Grow Metro Parks program participation, visibility, and facility use by offering all residents opportunities to participate in cultural, athletic, and environmental education programs to increase health, and build and support social and community cohesion across the region.

4 Operations and Management
Sustainably manage Metro Parks' operations so public tax dollars are being used as responsibly and efficiently as possible, while ensuring residents enjoy first-rate experiences and facilities. Use staff, technology, planning, and best business practices to increase Metro Parks' performance and community impact.

5 Finance
Responsibly balance service delivery and facilities management with multiple sources of sustainable funding. Strategically look for opportunities to maximize Metro Parks' resources, staff, and facilities to best serve Metro Parks' growing and diversifying population. Ensure no one service or set of services places an undue or inappropriate burden on the Metro Parks budget.



The Nashville Parks & Greenways Draft Master Plan

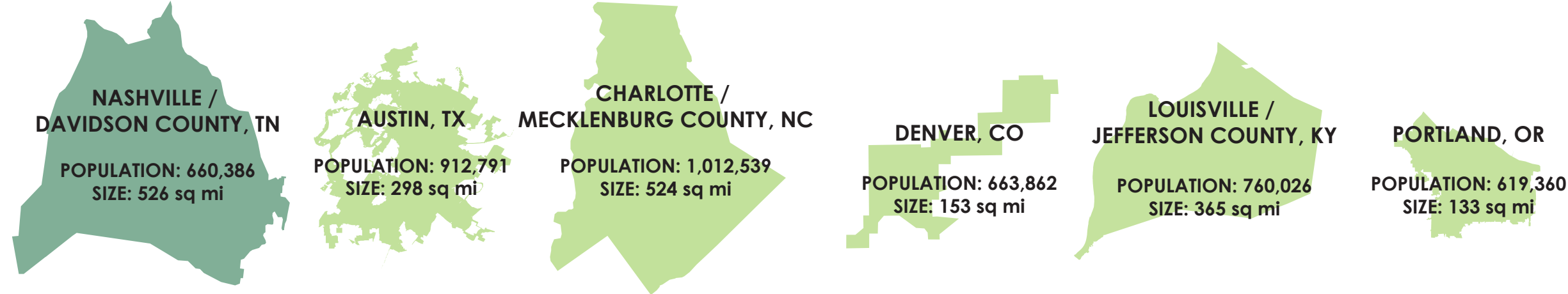
Megan Barry, Mayor
Christy Smith, Chair, Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation
Tommy Lynch, Director

For more information see <http://plantoplay.nashville.gov/>



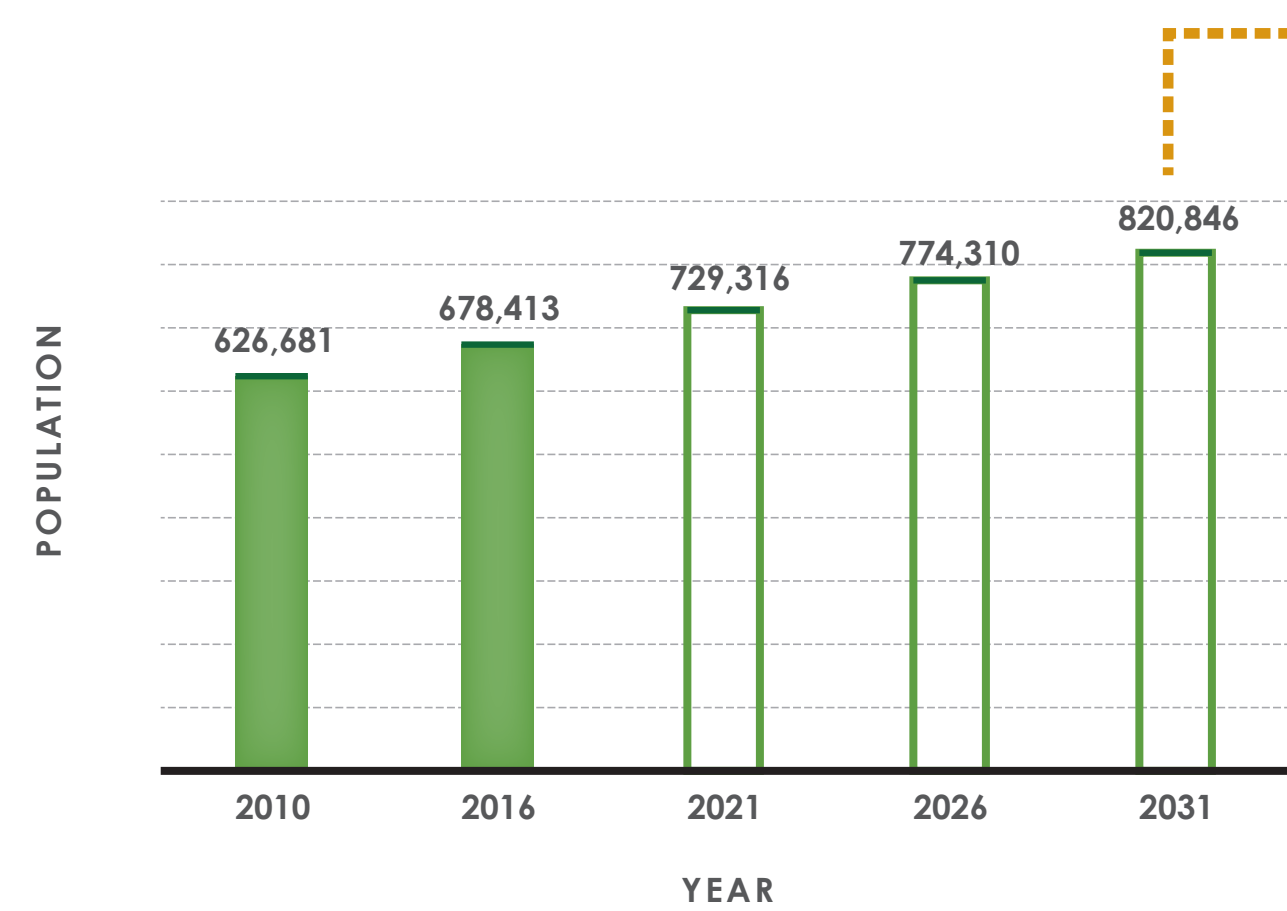
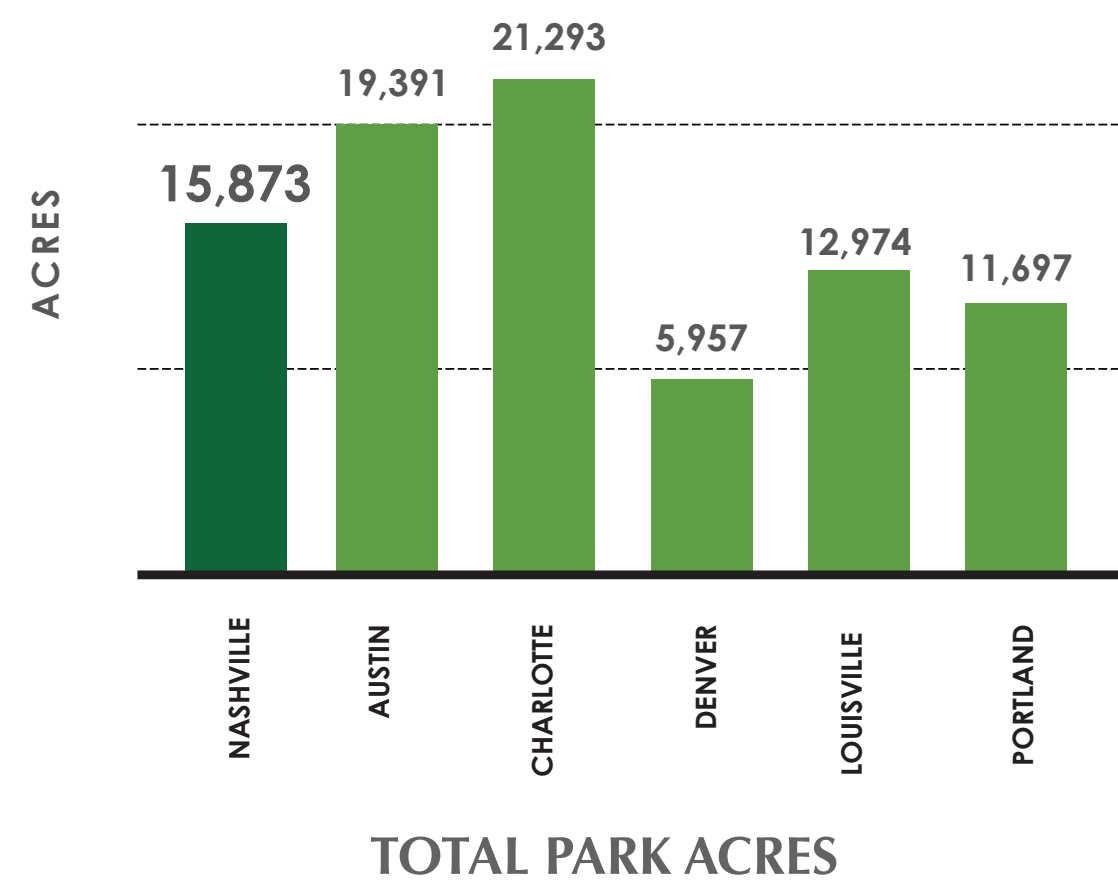
LAND Key Findings

Land is a fundamental element of the park system. It not only includes formal developed parks but also natural areas and greenway corridors used to accommodate trails that provide transportation within and beyond the parks. Of the comparable cities used in this plan's analysis, Metro Nashville has the largest county land area with the second-smallest population. This presents Metro Parks with challenges and opportunities.

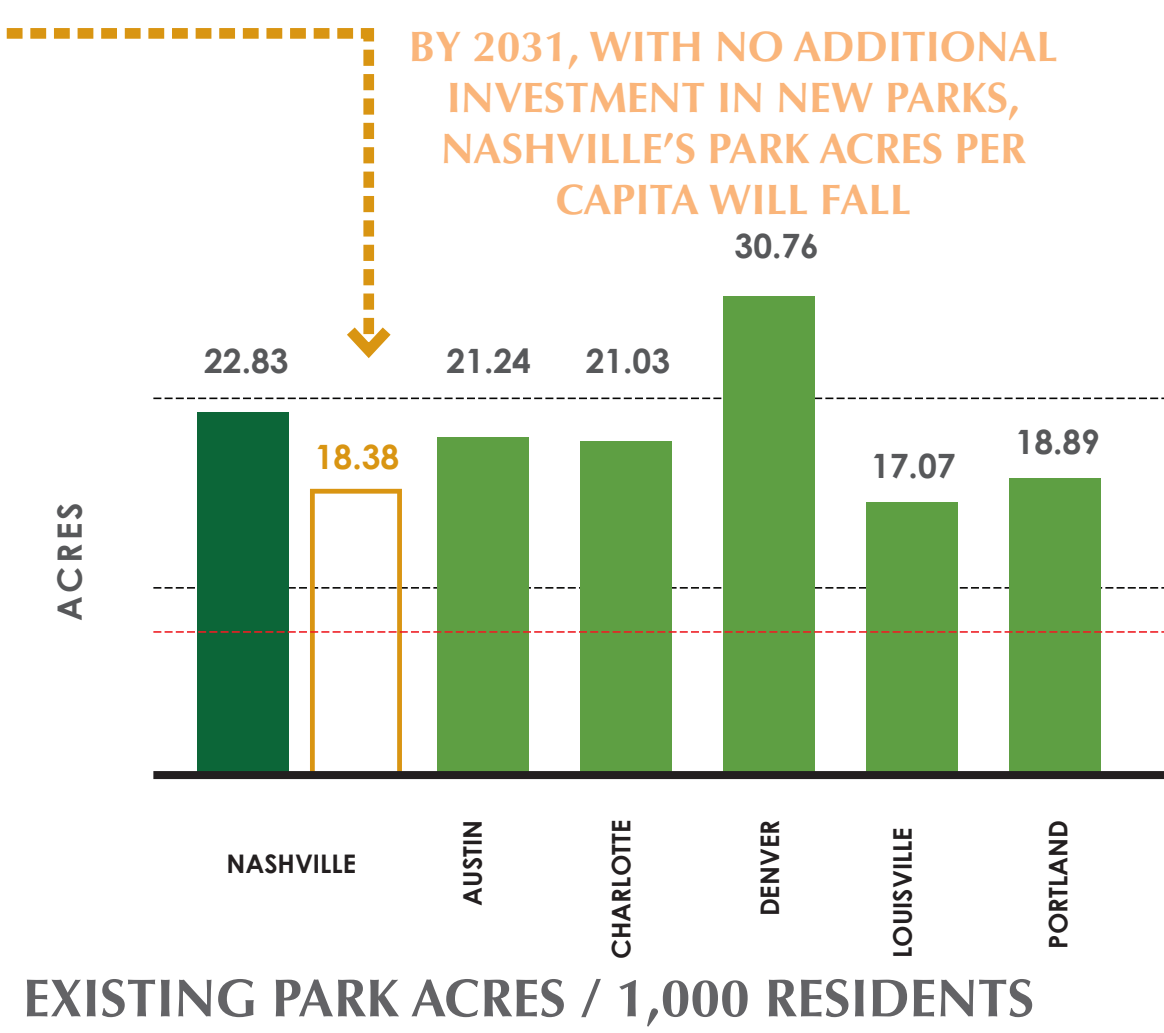


Charlotte is often seen as the best peer comparison for Nashville

- For its size, **15,873 acres**, the Metro system has a unique identity with an unusually high percentage of large regional park acreage compared to peer cities.
- There is a **shortage, however, of more developed park land** with active recreation facilities when compared to peer cities.
- Nashville's projected population growth rates and demographic shifts in the next 10 years **will require park land acquisition to provide an acceptable level of service.**



CURRENT AND PROJECTED POPULATION



EXISTING PARK ACRES / 1,000 RESIDENTS

BY 2031, WITH NO ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN NEW PARKS, NASHVILLE'S PARK ACRES PER CAPITA WILL FALL

- Plan to Play recommendations can be built on NashvilleNext's foundation of consensus that answered:
 - Where development and growth in the community should occur.
 - Where neighborhood character and conservation landscapes should continue.
- Downtown parks** are under intense pressure. With a growing population, these parks are at or **are reaching maximum capacity.**
- Metro Parks needs to update the system of classifying parks and set goals for existing and future park sizes.
- Greenways are a valuable tool for land preservation as well as connecting places. **Over 2,700 acres of floodplain lands are already preserved as corridors.**
- Though Nashville has a significant acreage of park land, its distribution is not even across the county. After analyzing the locations of parks, **gaps in system coverage were identified as opportunities for future expansion.**

WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE PARKS DEPARTMENT PRESERVING MORE GREEN SPACE AND ACQUIRING ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TO DEVELOP NEW PARKS AND GREENWAYS?*

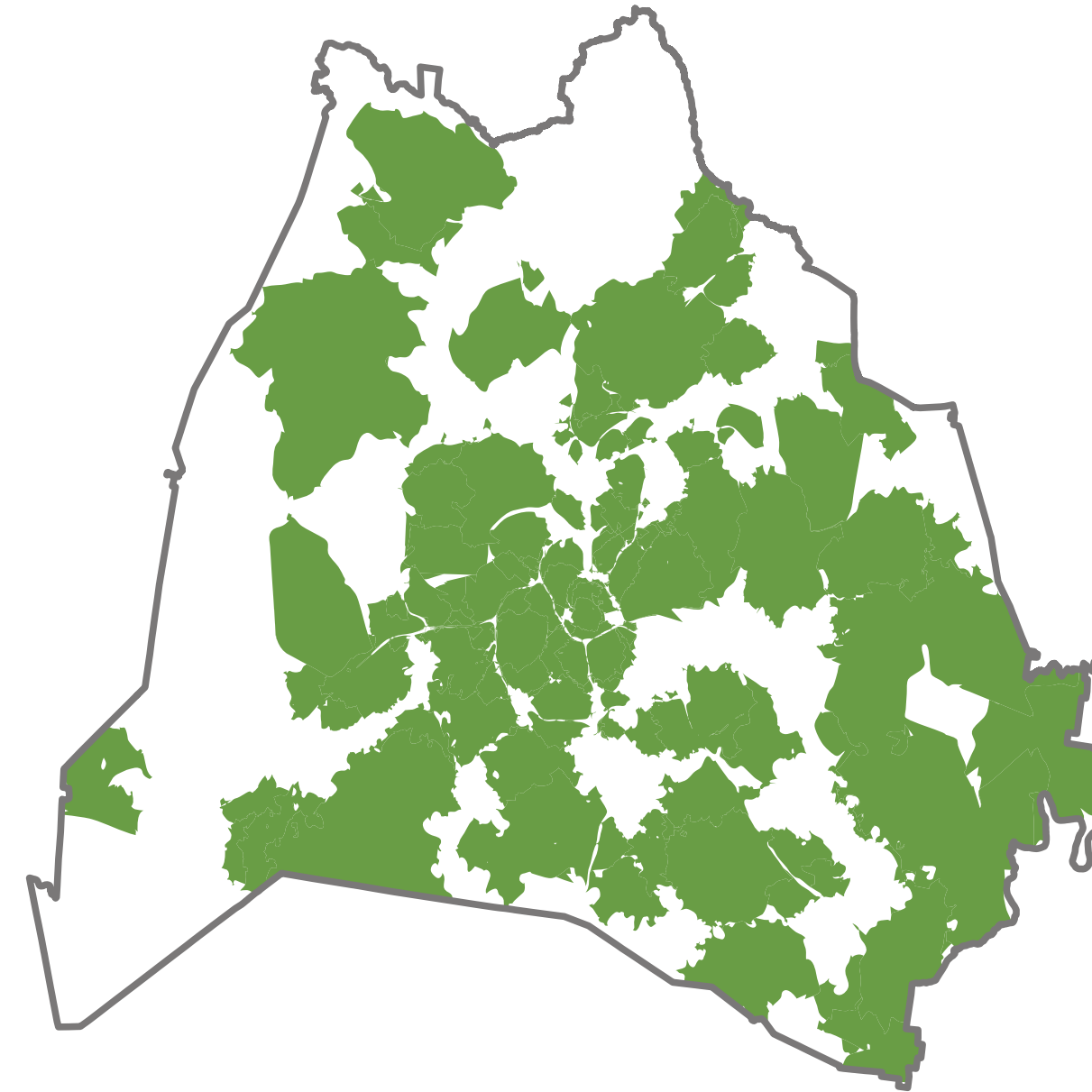
94% SUPPORT
WOULD STRONGLY (61%) OR SOMEWHAT (33%) SUPPORT

HOW DO YOU GET TO THE PARK OR FACILITY?*

92% DRIVE TO THE PARK OR FACILITY

WHY DO YOU DRIVE INSTEAD OF OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORTATION?*

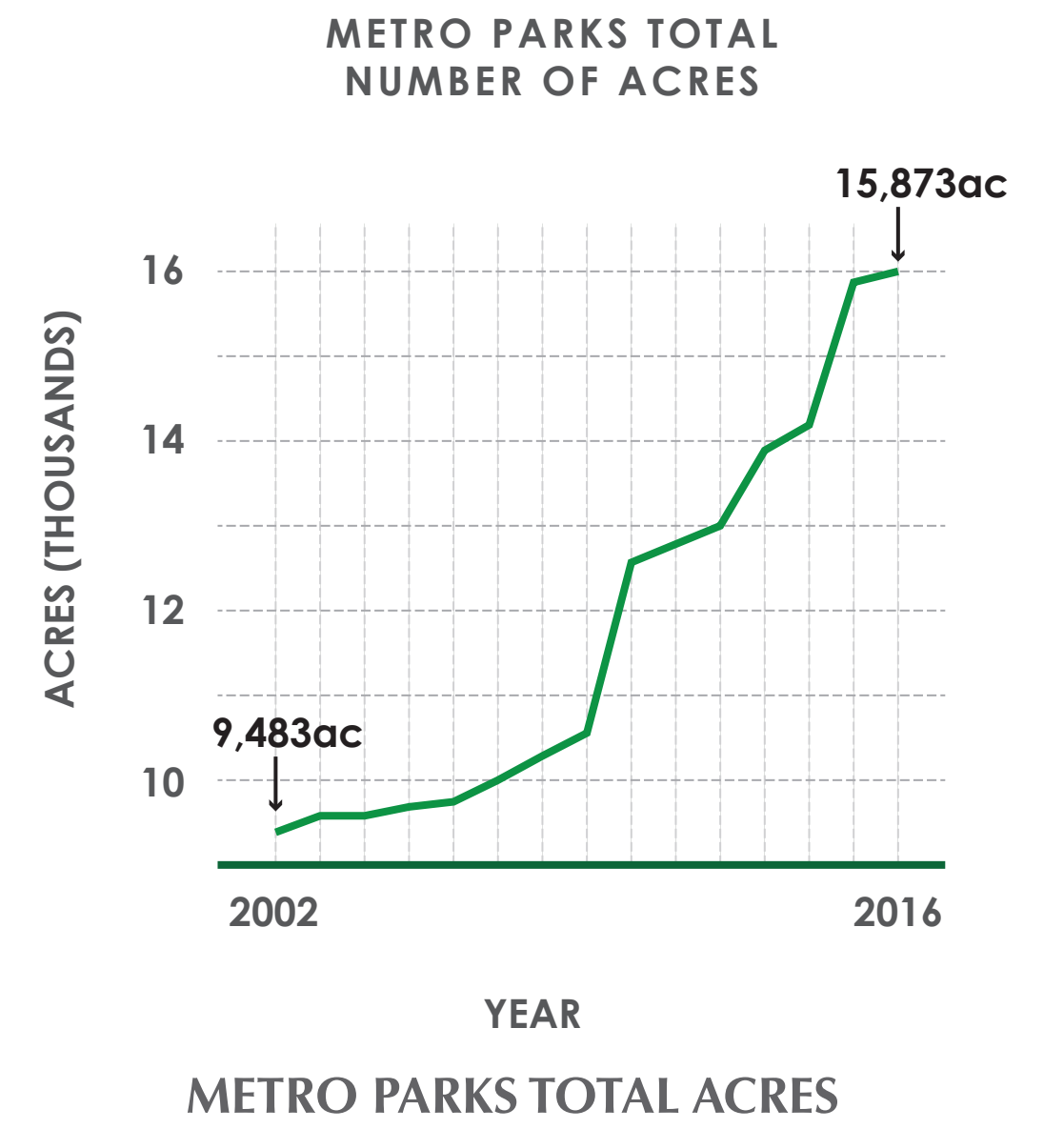
64% LIVE TOO FAR TO WALK OR BIKE



PARK SERVICE GAP MAP

*Data from the Telephone Survey. See section 5.1.1

**Data taken from the Online Community Survey. See section 5.1.1

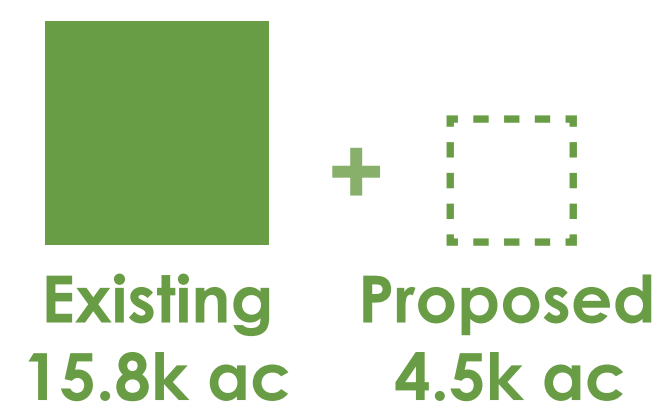


METRO PARKS TOTAL ACRES

LAND Key Recommendations

Metro's projected increase in population alone will require continued significant investment in park land acquisition just to maintain its current levels of service. In order to achieve the even higher standards derived from Plan to Play's needs assessment, park land acquisition must exceed the rate of the projected population growth.

Expand park land by over 4,500 acres



Plan to Play establishes new level of service goals for each park type based on the plan's needs assessment. These park acreage goals were arrived at by taking a comprehensive look at the current system; comparing the current system to peer cities; reviewing public input, needs assessment, and priorities; and looking at the projected growth rate of the population.

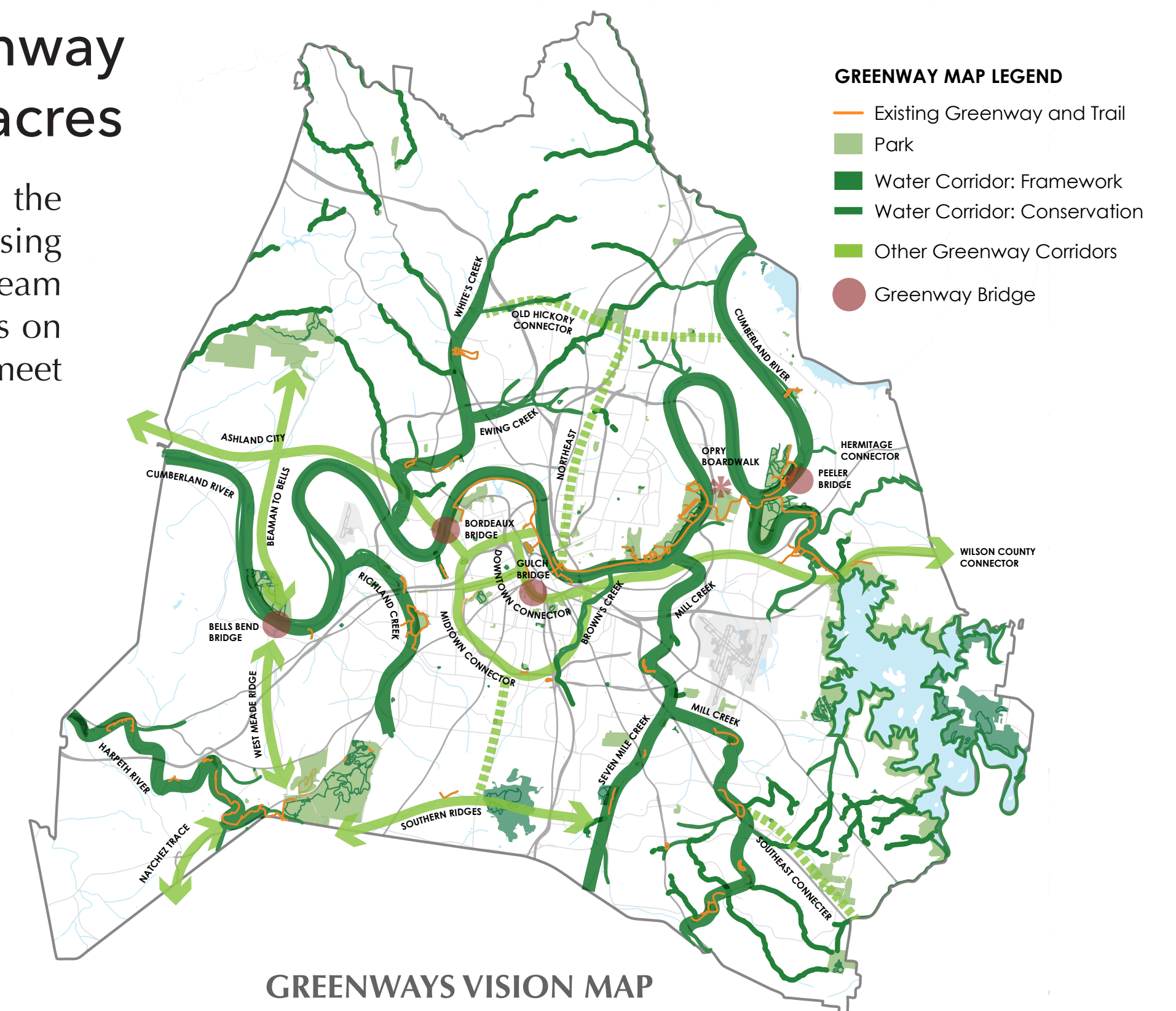
PARK TYPE	SERVICE LEVELS				PARK ACRES	
	EXISTING 2016	2016 RECOMMENDED SERVICE LEVELS			METRO-OWNED EXISTING 2016	ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED FOR 2026
Pocket Parks (incl. school playgrounds): < 3 acres	0.12	0.15	acres per	1,000	54	37
Neighborhood Parks: 3 - 20 acres	0.83	1.00	acres per	1,000	511	226
Community Parks: 20 - 100 acres	1.77	2.00	acres per	1,000	1,169	379
Regional Parks: 100+ acres	28.10	28.10	acres per	1,000	10,176	3,187
Signature Parks	0.26	0.40	acres per	1,000	168	141
Special Use Park (incl. sports facilities)	1.09	1.50	acres per	1,000	721	440
Greenway corridors	0.97	1.00	acres per	1,000	643	130
Total Developed Park Land*	33.14	34.15	acres per	1,000	15,873	4,541

* Includes land bank properties

EXISTING AND RECOMMENDED PARK ACREAGE

Expand greenway land by 130 acres

Continue to build out the greenway system, focusing on river and stream corridors. Expand focus on overland corridors to meet transportation needs.



GREENWAYS VISION MAP

Update park typologies

Identifying the appropriate facilities, amenities, and sizes of parks according to new classifications will allow for better park planning and equitable distribution of services.

Prioritize expanding parks equally across communities where growth is high and service limited

Areas not highlighted on the analysis maps help identify underserved neighborhoods.



PARK SERVICE GAP MAP

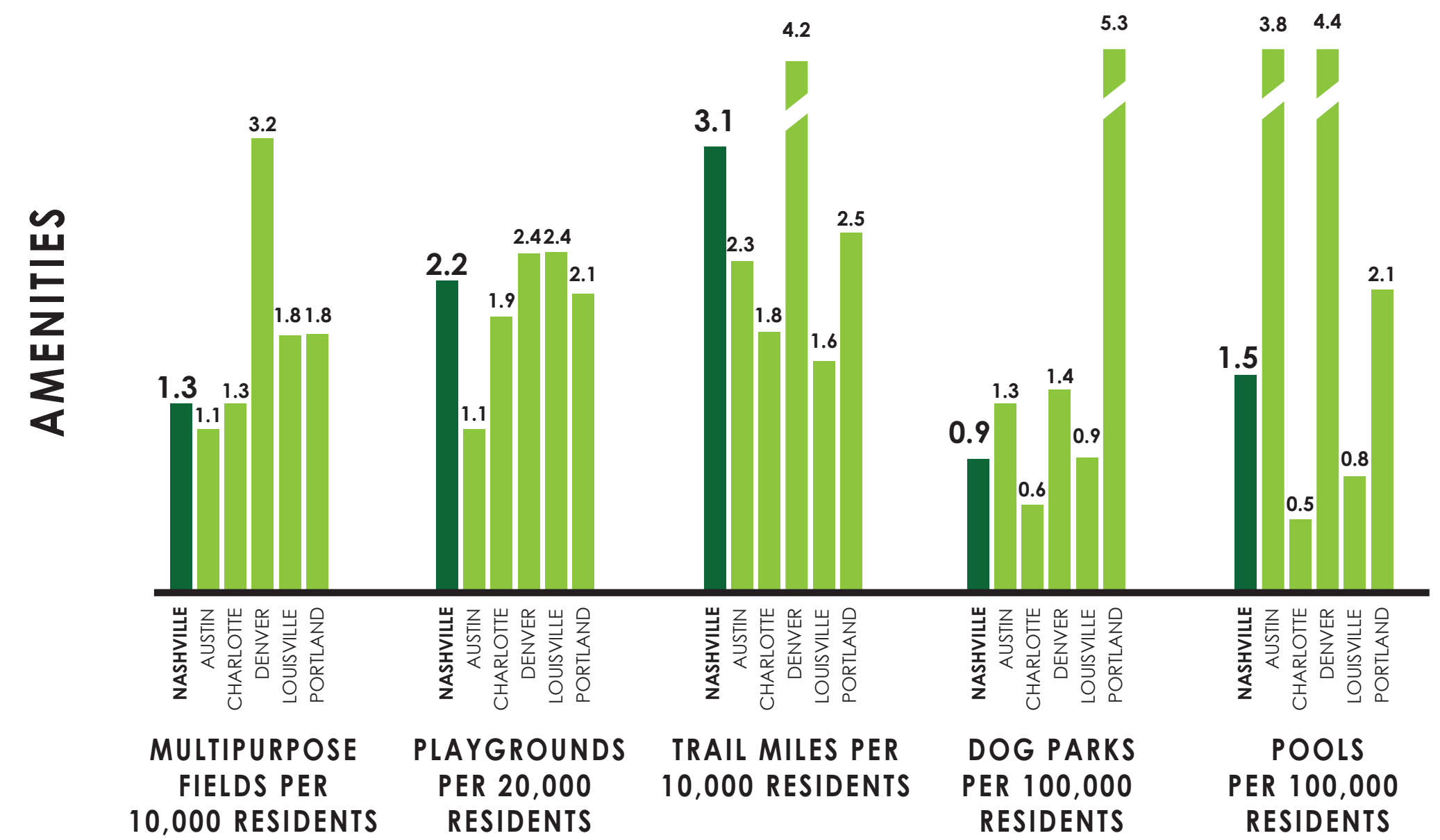
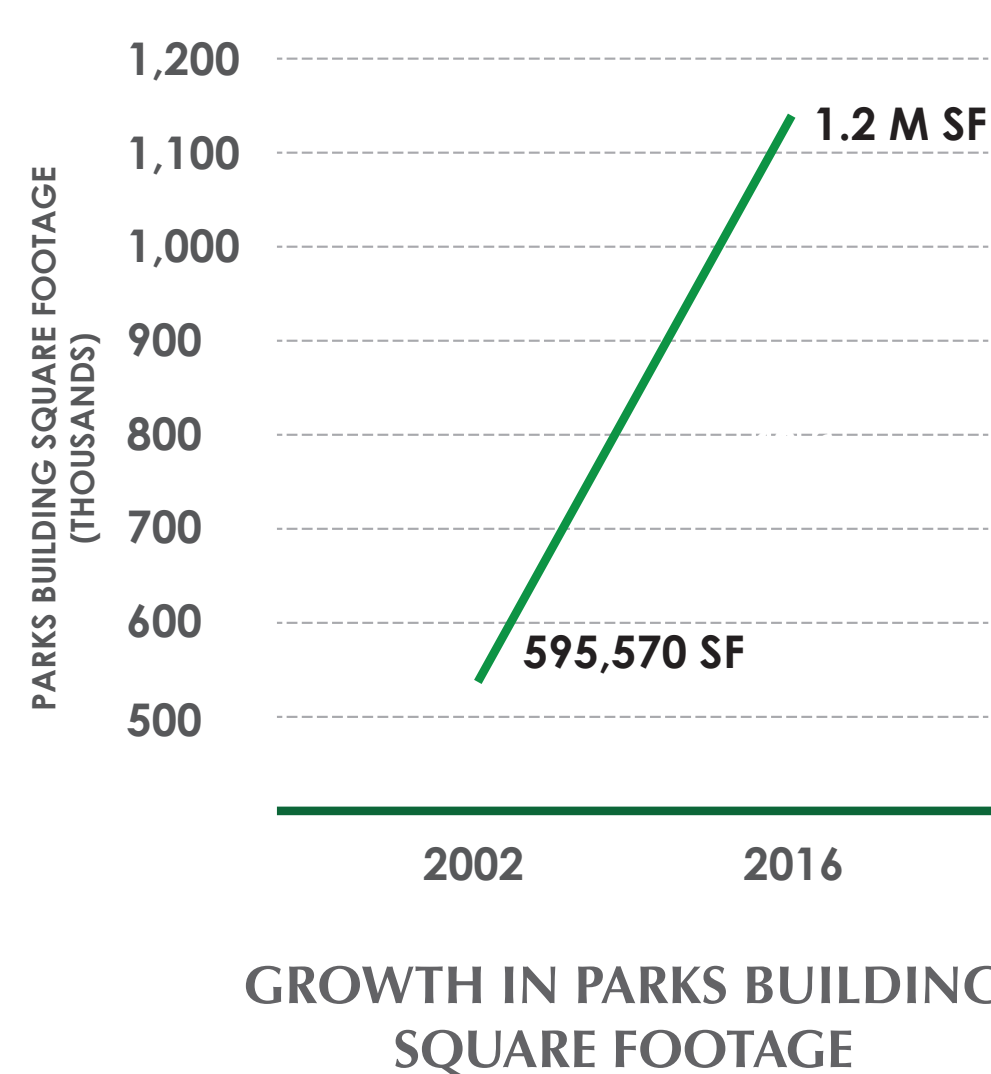
FACILITIES Key Findings

Park facilities are the physical infrastructure within the park system that allow people to utilize the parks in a variety of ways. These facilities need to be accessible and flexible in order to accommodate a wide range of expanding future trends and needs.

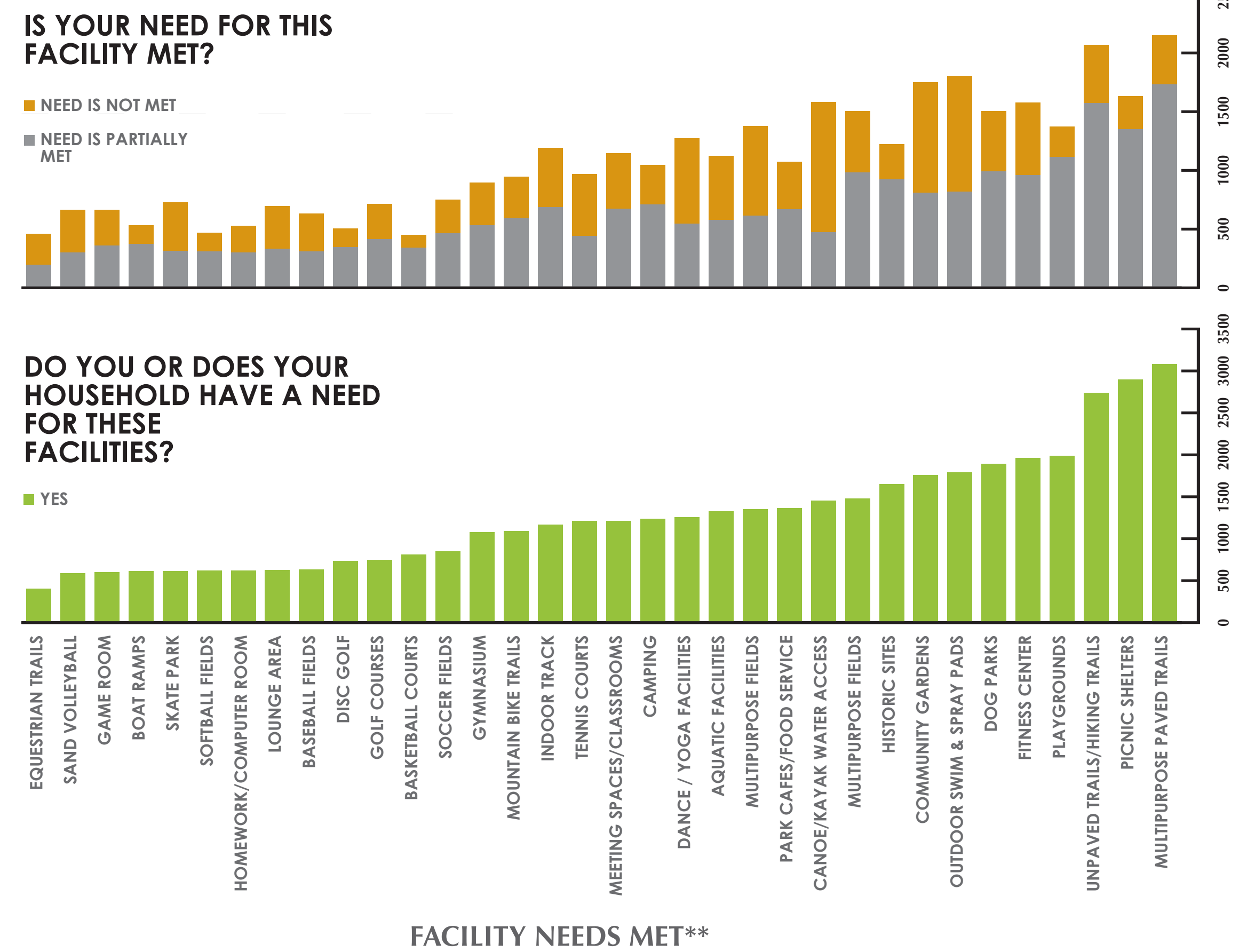
- **Paved and unpaved trails are among the most valued facility types** in the system, and the community wants more of them across the county.
- The smaller existing recreation centers may provide great access in neighborhoods today, **but larger regional mega-centers will provide the best practices model for financial sustainability to satisfy growing demand for indoor recreation and program services.**
- Higher-quality maintenance and more programmatic management of historic park sites is considered an unmet community need.
- Because of population growth and demographic shifts, **Metro must invest in both existing and new recreation facilities** to maintain or conservatively increase the level of service enjoyed today.
- **Needed key facilities and amenities can be added to existing park land** in order to meet some of the growing demands.
- Many neighborhoods of the county are underserved geographically by both park land and facilities, which affects equitable access for all residents.

Existing Park Facilities	
Facility Type	Metro-Owned Existing 2016
Reservable Shelters	60
Multipurpose Fields	83
Ball Fields (Adult and Youth)	86
Basketball Courts	61
Tennis Courts	147
Playgrounds	156
Dog Parks	7
Paved Multiuse Trails	102
Unpaved Trails/ Hiking Trails	66
Mountain Bike Trails	23
Outdoor Pools	4
INDOOR AMENITIES:	
Community Center/Recreation /Gymnasium/Fitness Facility	810,069 SF

EXISTING PARK FACILITIES BY TYPE



COMPARISON OF KEY AMENITIES*



*Data from the Peer City Comparison. See section 5.2
**Data taken from the Online Community Survey. See section 5.1.1

FACILITIES Key Recommendations

Facilities are all of the built assets and amenities in the park system. They range from community centers to trails, from swimming pools to museums and playgrounds, and have a total estimated asset value of approximately \$628 million. These facilities support both general informal use by the public as well as specialized or scheduled use for athletic competitions, recreation programs, or other events.

- **Expand investment in park facilities within existing parks and in new parks**

In order to provide a broader distribution of recreation services, facilities can be added to existing park land as well as in newly acquired park land.

FACILITIES			
TYPE	EXISTING 2016	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed	
Paved Multiuse Trails	102	53	Mile(s)
Unpaved Trails/ Hiking Trails	66	50	Mile(s)
Picnic Shelters	60	17	Sites(s)
Outdoor Pools	4	5	Site(s)
Playgrounds	156	65	Site(s)
Dog Parks	7	8	Site(s)
Multipurpose Fields	83	46	Field(s)
Basketball Courts	61	50	Court(s)
Tennis Courts	147	25	Court(s)
Ball Fields (Adult and Youth)	86	43	Field(s)
Mountain Bike Trails	23	16	Mile(s)
INDOOR AMENITIES:			
Community Center/Recreation /Gymnasium/Fitness Facility (Square Feet)	870,069*	481,000	Square Feet

*Includes 60,000 SF under construction in Madison and Smith Springs parks in 2017

EXISTING AND PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR FACILITIES

- **Expand outdoor aquatic facilities (pools and spraygrounds) by 125,000 square feet**

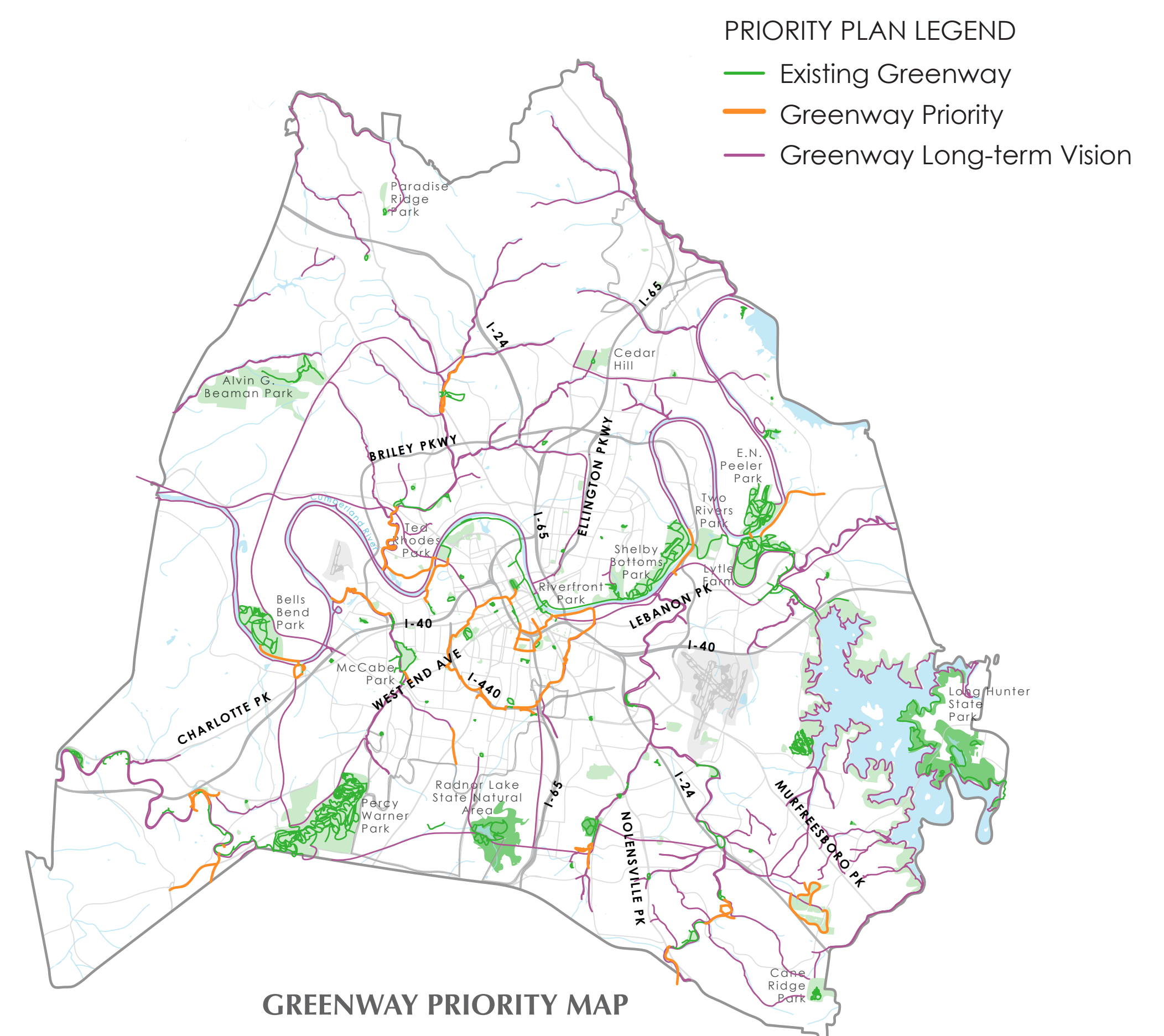
Pools and spraygrounds should have a true regional service radius, and consideration should be given to co-locating them with megacenters and indoor pools for operational and maintenance efficiency.

- **Expand community centers by 481,000 square feet**

Community centers are one of the largest and the most expensive categories of park facilities to build, staff, and maintain, and demand for new centers throughout Metro is high.

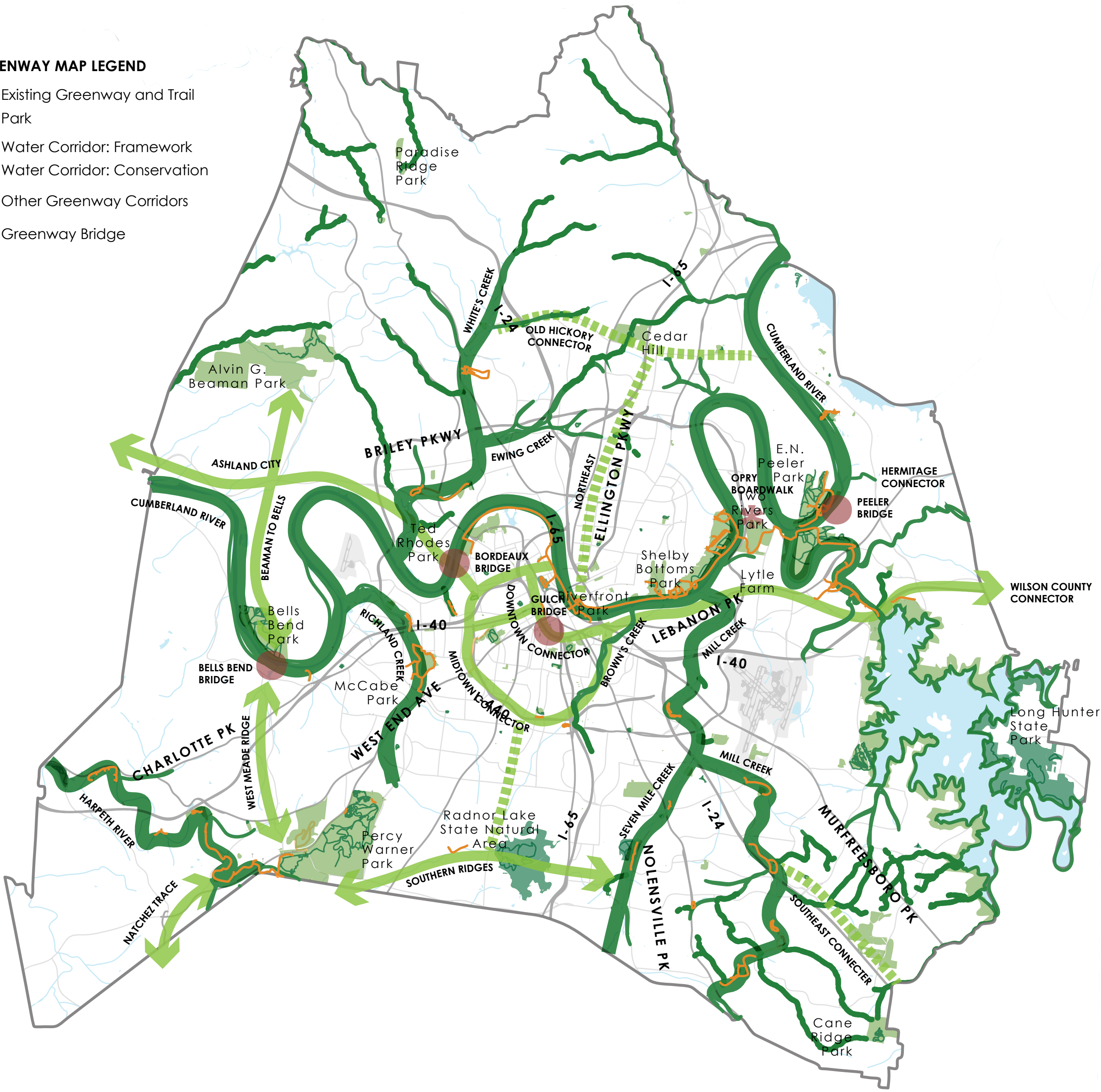


- **Improve other key facilities such as historic sites, community gardens, blueways, park cafes, golf facilities and Wave Country**
- **Expand the greenway trail network by adding 53 miles of paved and 50 miles of unpaved trails**

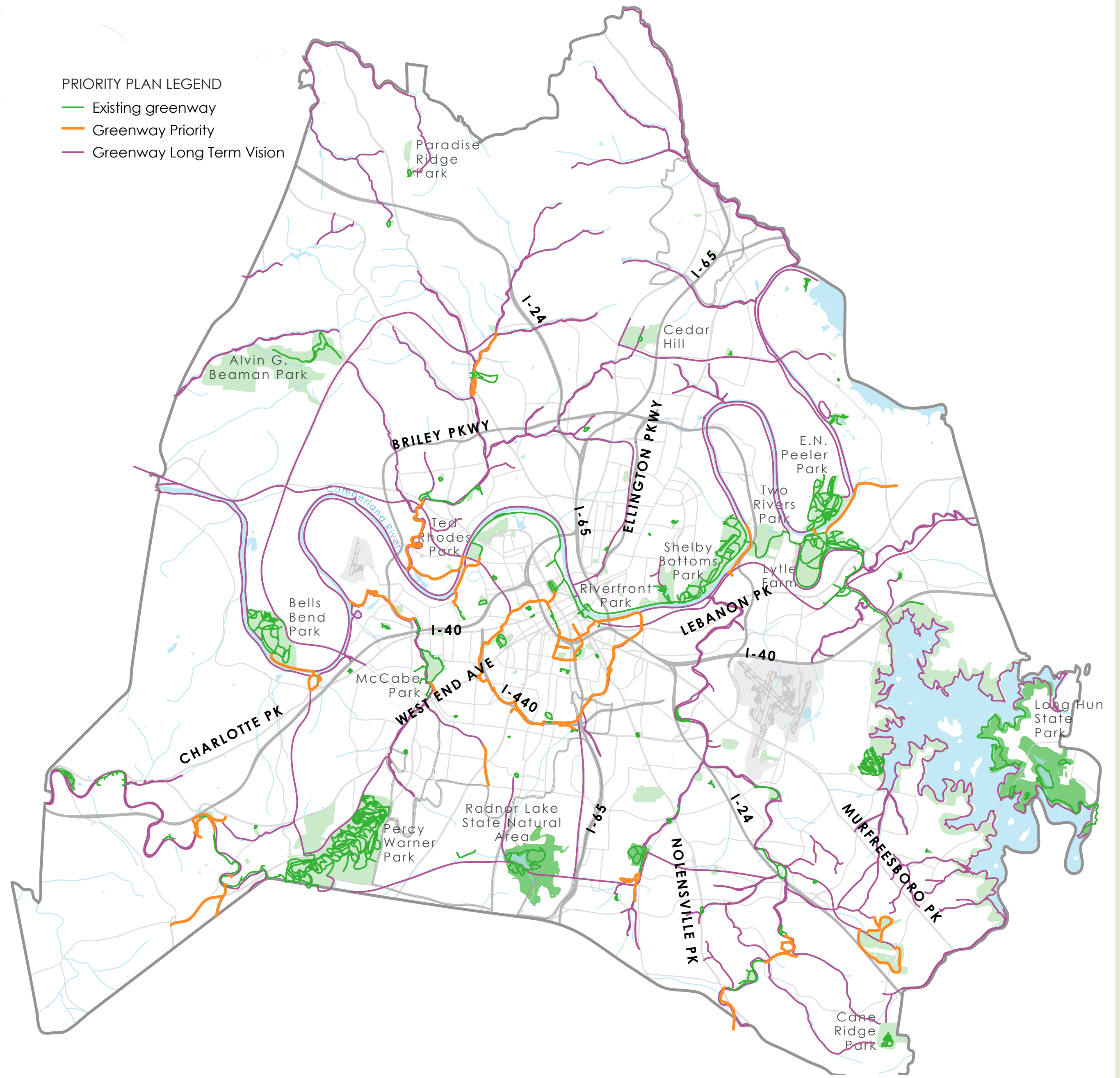


GREENWAY MAP: VISION

- GREENWAY MAP LEGEND**
- Existing Greenway and Trail
 - Park
 - Water Corridor: Framework
 - Water Corridor: Conservation
 - Other Greenway Corridors
 - Greenway Bridge

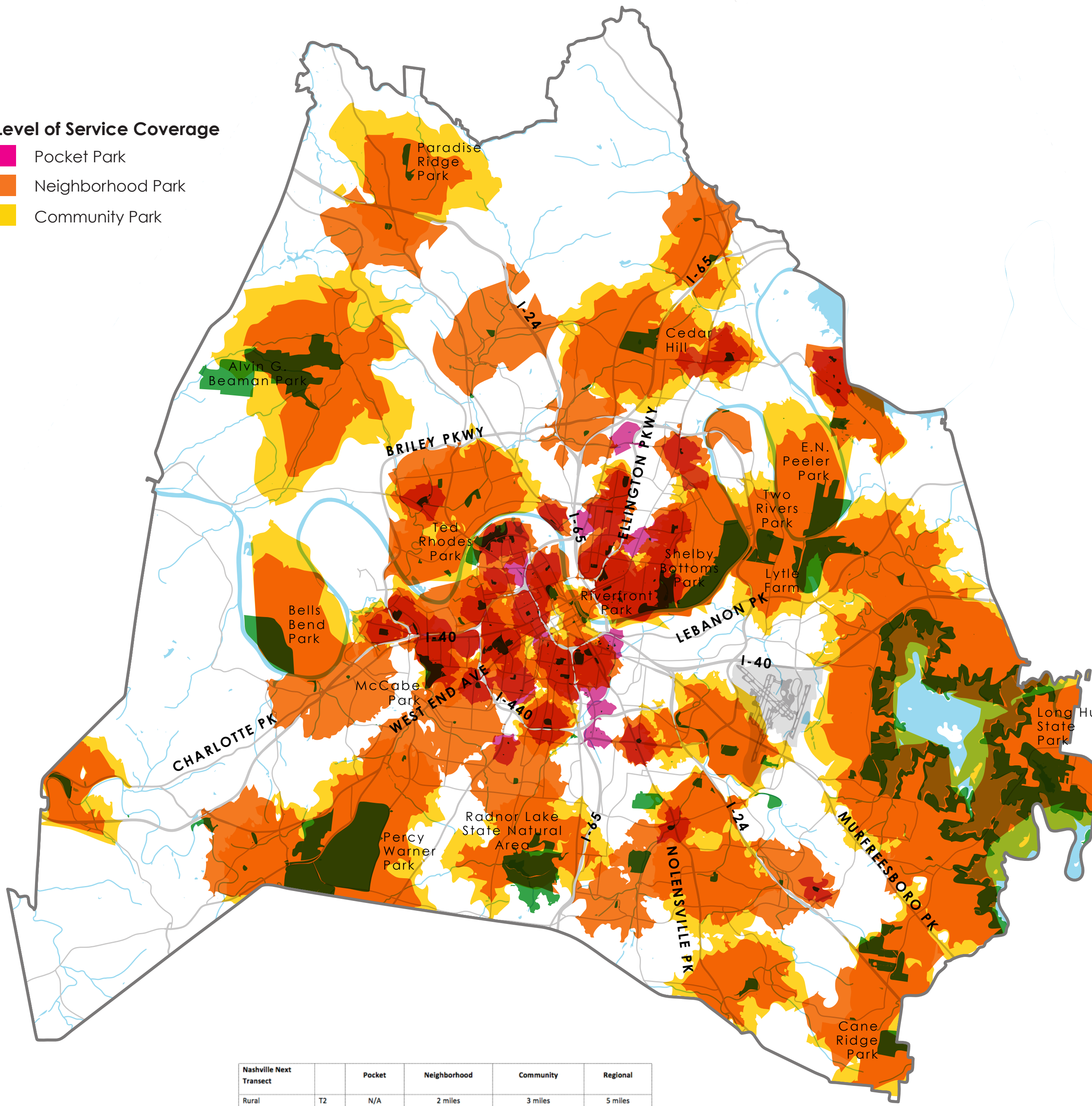


- PRIORITY PLAN LEGEND**
- Existing greenway
 - Greenway Priority
 - Greenway Long Term Vision



LEVEL OF SERVICE: ACCESS RADII

- Level of Service Coverage**
- Pocket Park
 - Neighborhood Park
 - Community Park



Nashville Next Tract	Tract	Pocket	Neighborhood	Community	Regional
Rural	T2	N/A	2 miles	3 miles	5 miles
Suburban	T3	N/A	1.5 mile	2 miles	5 miles
Urban	T4	1/2 mile	3/4 mile	1 mile	3 miles
Centers	T5	1/2 mile	1/2 mile	3/4 mile	5 miles
Downtown	T6	1/4 mile	1/3 mile	1/2 mile	5 miles

Figure 1-1 Park Level of Service Tract Access Radii

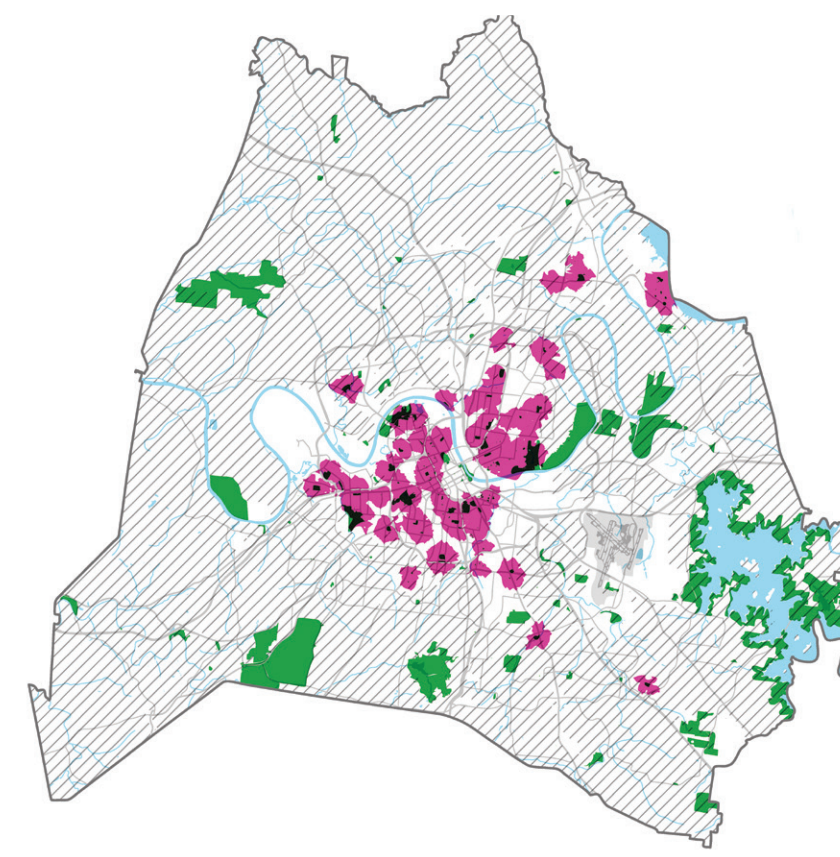


Figure 1-4 Pocket Park Level of Service Areas

TRANSECT LOS RADIUS

Rural T2	n/a
Suburban T3	n/a
Urban T4	0.5 miles
Centers T5	0.25 miles
Downtown T6	0.25 miles

The pocket parks analysis includes pocket, neighborhood, community, regional, and signature parks. The pocket park analysis did not include service for the rural (T2) or suburban (T3) tracts, indicated in the cross hatching, because Metro focuses on providing pocket parks in more densely populated areas of the city.

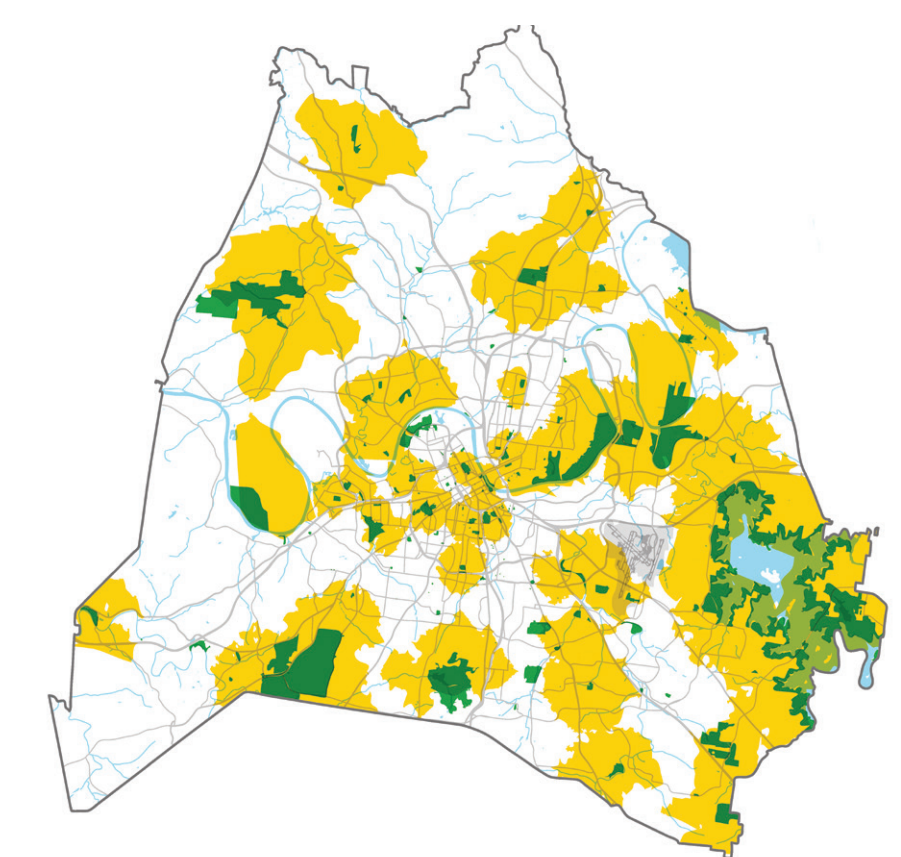


Figure 1-2 Community Park Level of Service Areas

TRANSECT LOS RADIUS

Rural T2	3 miles
Suburban T3	2 miles
Urban T4	1 mile
Centers T5	0.75 miles
Downtown T6	0.5 miles

The community parks analysis includes community, signature, and regional parks.

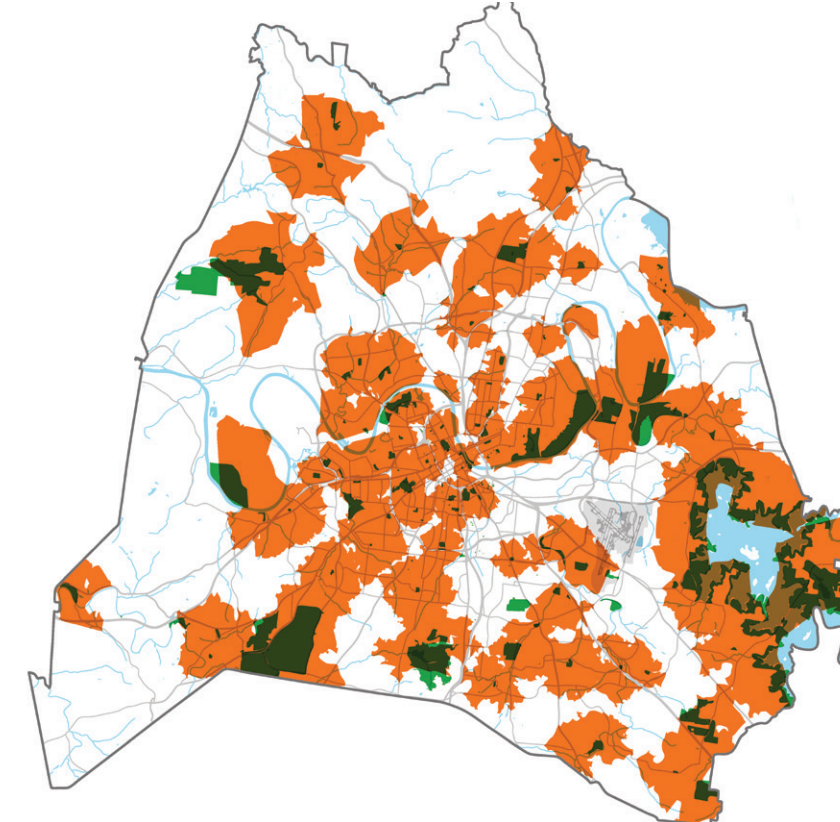


Figure 1-5 Neighborhood Park Level of Service Areas

TRANSECT LOS RADIUS

Rural T2	2 miles
Suburban T3	1.5 miles
Urban T4	0.75 miles
Centers T5	0.5 miles
Downtown T6	0.33 miles

The neighborhood parks analysis includes neighborhood, community, regional, and signature parks.

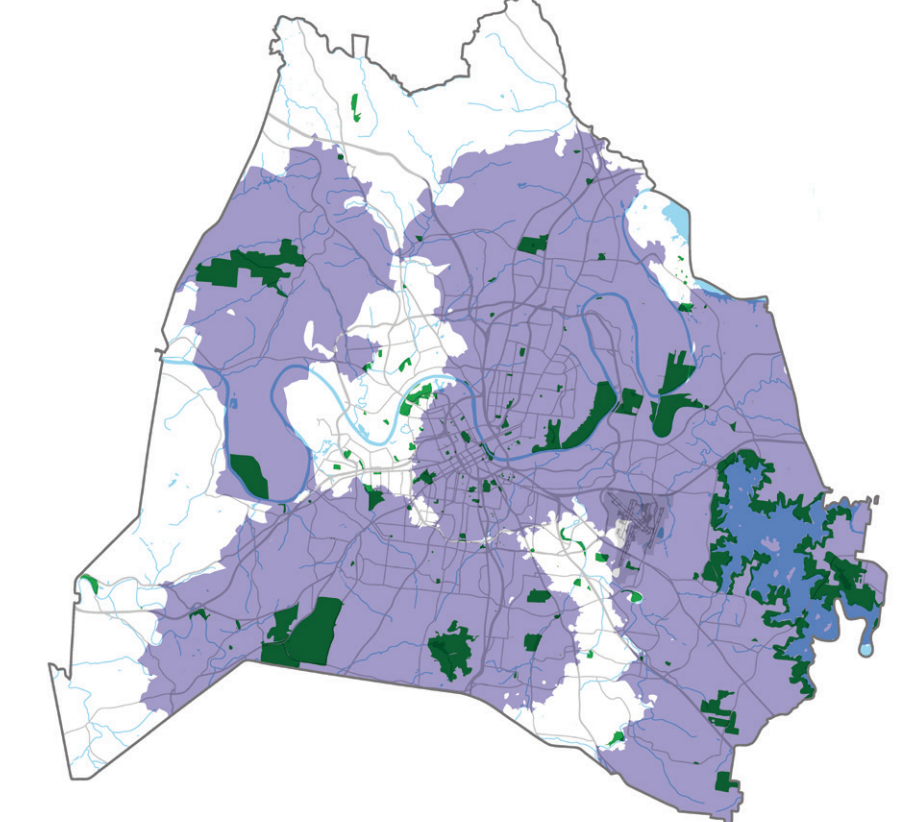


Figure 1-3 Regional Park Level of Service Areas

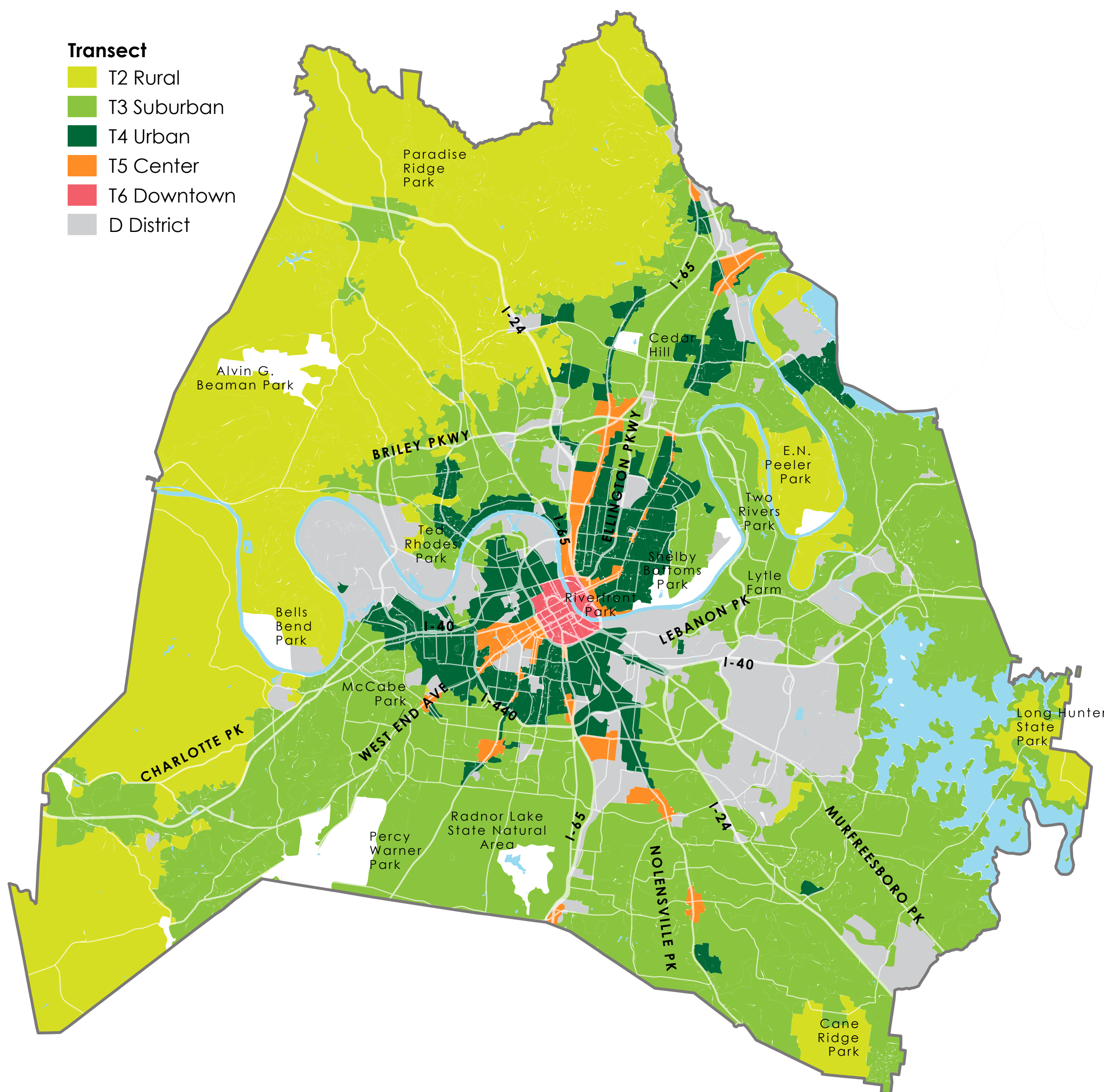
TRANSECT LOS RADIUS

Rural T2	5 miles
Suburban T3	5 miles
Urban T4	5 miles
Centers T5	5 miles
Downtown T6	5 miles

The regional park analysis included all parks classified by Metro Parks as regional parks as well as all state and federal parks inside county boundaries. A 5-mile travel radius was used for regional parks for all tracts. We acknowledge that regional park locations are based on unique landscape features, and therefore cannot be placed "on a grid." Regional parks are each a unique destination and everyone should be able to access them. One regional park, Southeast Property, was included in our analysis that is not yet open to the public.

METRO NASHVILLE TRANSECT MAP

- Transect**
- T2 Rural
 - T3 Suburban
 - T4 Urban
 - T5 Center
 - T6 Downtown
 - D District



TRANSECT

T2 RURAL

DEFINITION

The T2 Rural Transect Category is **sparsely developed with agricultural and low-density residential as the primary uses**, complemented by limited, low intensity commercial uses. The T2 Rural Transect Category provides residents with the choice of seclusion within the natural and rural countryside.

T3 SUBURBAN

The T3 Suburban Transect Category is the bridge between the Rural and Urban Transect areas. Development within the T3 Suburban Transect Category is designed to **thoughtfully transition from the least dense natural and rural environment to the denser urban environment**. The T3 Suburban Transect Category is the Transect Category where nature is strategically incorporated into the site design.

T4 URBAN

The T4 Urban Transect Category includes the inner-ring neighborhoods as well as neighborhoods intended to be developed in a more urban fashion. Communities feature a **carefully integrated mixture of housing within walking distance of commercial and neighborhood-scaled open space**. Communities feature highly connected street systems with sidewalk, bikeways, and facilities for mass transit.

T5 CENTER

T5 Centers are gathering places for residents and visitors within and near Davidson County, where people can live, work, and recreate. Residents meet at centers to engage in **commerce, civic, and recreational activities on a more grand scale than can be found in their individual neighborhoods or communities**.

T6 DOWNTOWN

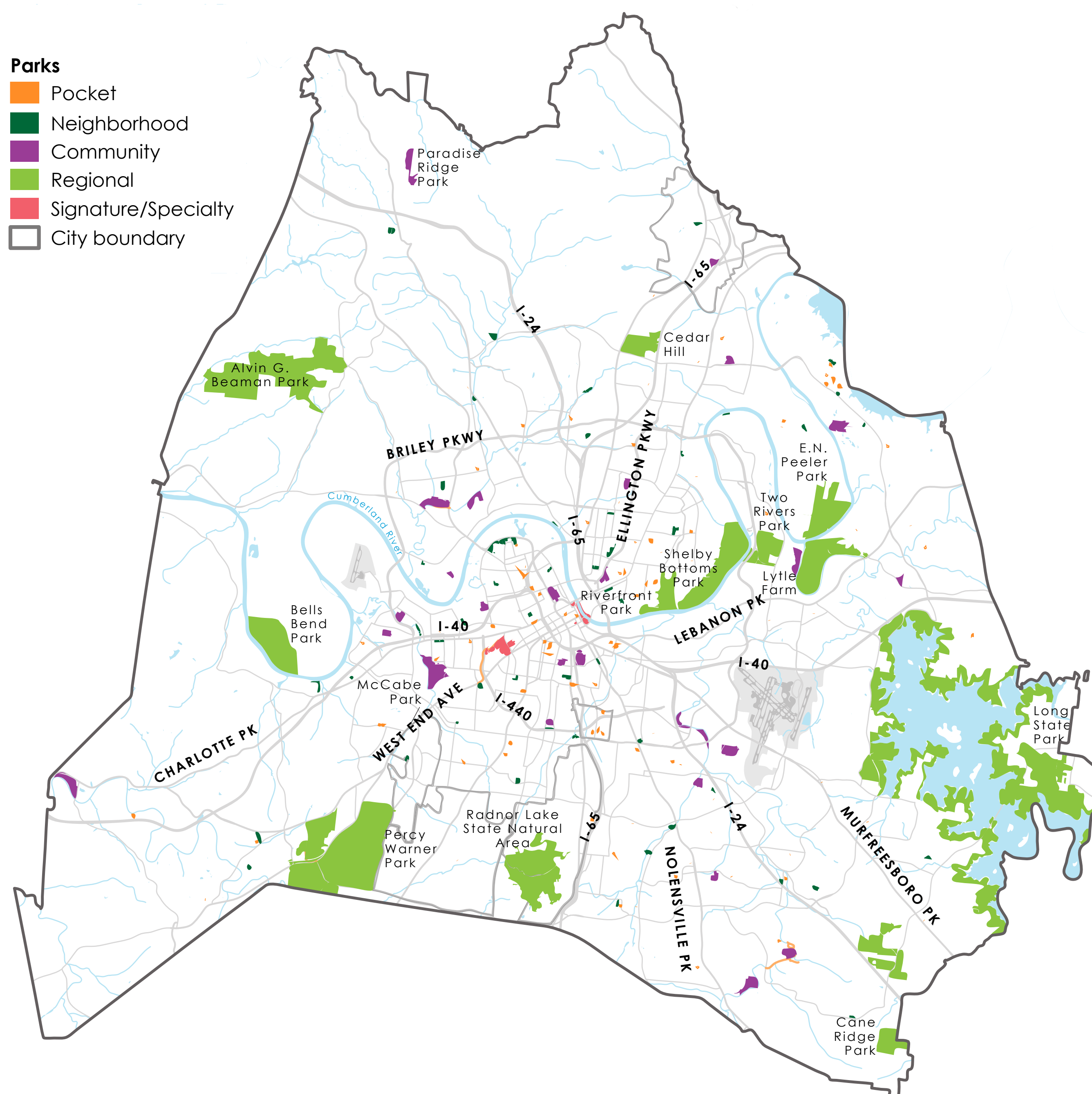
The core is the downtown area, the center of commerce, the arts, and civic and government. Downtown boasts commerce, governance, and artistic uses well known on a national and even international scale, creating a bustling 24-hour center of activity.

D DISTRICT

District Transect Areas are areas within Davidson County that generally serve a special purpose and limited function. Each District has its own built character as well as its own operational and land use needs. Each interacts differently with the surrounding neighborhoods, centers, corridors, and open space.

METRO NASHVILLE PARK TYPES MAP

- Parks**
- Pocket
 - Neighborhood
 - Community
 - Regional
 - Signature/Specialty
 - City boundary



PARK TYPES

POCKET PARK

DEFINITION

Size: 3 acres or less
Principles:

- Walking is primary access
- Primarily in residential neighborhoods
- One main amenity (sport court, playground)
- No parking provided

Examples: Church St Park, Hope Gardens Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Size: 3 - 20 acres
Principles:

- Walking is primary access
- Located on local or collector streets
- Two main amenities (sport court, playground)
- Minimal parking provided

Examples: East Park, Southeast Community Center

COMMUNITY PARK

Size: 20-100 acres
Principles:

- Serves multiple neighborhoods
- Located on collector or arterial streets
- Several main amenities (sport fields, playground). Might include larger amenities or revenue facilities like community centers or sports complex.
- Ample parking provided

Examples: McCabe Park, West Park, Joseph Brown Mullins Park

REGIONAL PARK

Size: 100 acres or more
Principles:

- Serves greater city / metropolitan area.
- Located to preserve large natural resources.
- 10-12 main amenities (sport fields, playground). Might include larger amenities or revenue facilities like community centers or sports complex.
- Ample parking provided

Examples: Shelby Park, Beaman Park, Percy Warner Park

SIGNATURE / SPECIALTY PARK

Size: Varies
Principles:

- Serves greater city / metropolitan area.
- Offers unique cultural or historical opportunities. Tourism opportunities.

Examples: Centennial Park, Riverfront Park

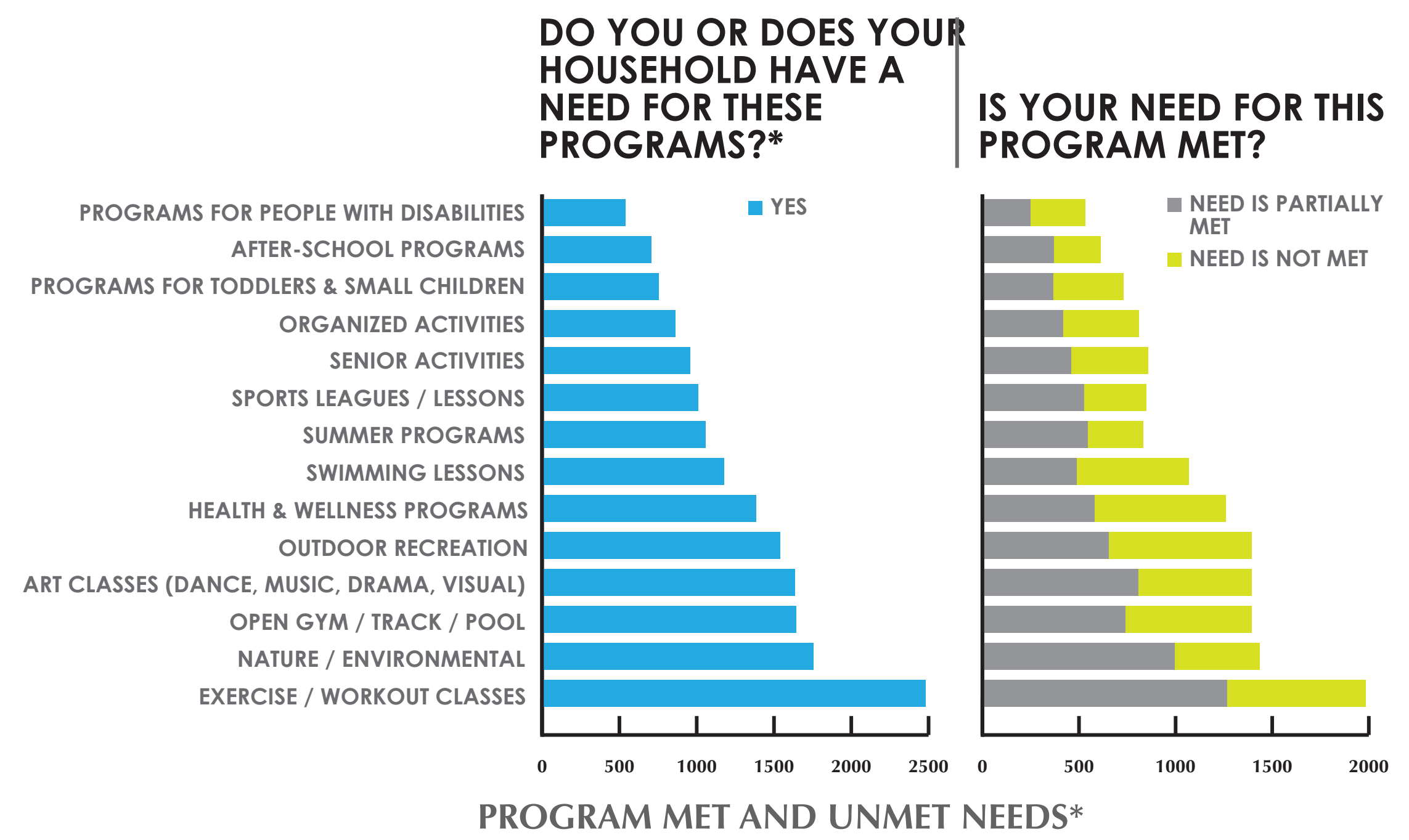
PROGRAMS Key Findings

Metro Parks offers over 1,200 programs a week, covering a wide variety typical for a system of its size. Programs are generally defined as staffed, guided, or facilitated activities, or events and activities provided by the issuing of a reservation or permit. Programs range from ballet classes to canoe trips, boot camps to after-school programs, and farmers' markets to history tours. These programs offer cultural, health and wellness, and nature education opportunities for all ages across the county.

- The strongest message received from public input is that Nashvillians **want more opportunities to participate in programs.**
- Many programs, including summer enrichment, arts programs, and the disabilities program, are oversubscribed and have wait lists. Competition to get into limited programs has in some cases driven people to wait outside the door of a community center at 4 a.m. to be assured a place in a popular program.
- Regional and neighborhood centers offer a diversity of program types, but are short on nature, history and cultural arts programs. Due to staffing and resource limitations, it appears that these programs are mostly confined to their own facilities, which limits their countywide benefit.
- **Productivity of space is low at many community centers and arts facilities** until after-school hours.
- Over 95 percent of programs are offered free of charge. Community centers, nature centers, and arts venues operate at net loss in aggregate. While not entirely unusual in principle, the degree of loss is likely compounded by the very high number of free programs.
- Membership and program fees are considered low compared to those of private competitors.
- In community and user surveys, those who use Parks programs **rate them high, but only a small part of the population participate in programs.**
- Programs are not widely marketed due to staffing capacity and resource limitations.

Core Program Areas:

- Community Enrichment (after-school and summer programs, senior programs)
- Cultural Arts (theater, dance, music, visual arts)
- Fitness and Wellness (boot camp, yoga, Zumba, spin class)
- Nature and History
- Outdoor Recreation (kayak and canoe, hiking, mountain biking)
- Specialized Recreation (golf clinics)
- Sports and Aquatics (swim and sports lessons, leagues)
- Special Events (both Parks-sponsored and community-hosted events including festivals, concerts, walks, runs)



HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY (APPEARANCE & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES) OF PARKS & GREENWAYS?*

82% EXCELLENT / GOOD
RATE THE QUALITY OF PARKS & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO BE EXCELLENT (36%) OR GOOD (46%)

21% HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A PARKS PROGRAM

88% RATE THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMS AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD

HOW DO YOU USE PARKS & GREENWAYS?*

43% WALK, RUN, HIKE, OR BIKE
22% RELAX / ENJOY NATURE
8% FAMILY OUTING
7% SPORTS ACTIVITY
4% DOG PARK
18% OTHER

2% PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM
2% PLAY GOLF
2% CONCERT OR FESTIVAL
2% FITNESS CENTER / WEIGHT TRAINING
1% SWIMMING
1% DON'T KNOW

DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMMING OFFERED?*

54% DO NOT PARTICIPATE DUE TO BEING UNAWARE OF THE PROGRAMS OFFERED

HOW DO YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMS?***

72% RATE THE QUALITY OF ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS TO BE EXCELLENT

SURVEY FINDINGS

*Data taken from the Online Community Survey. See section 5.1.1
** Data taken from Telephone Survey. See section 5.1.1
*** Data taken from Facility User Survey. See section 5.1.1

PROGRAMS Key Recommendations

One primary desire of Nashvillians as expressed in public input is more – more program offerings, at more locations in the county, and more promotion about available program offerings. As a result, many of the recommendations focus primarily on expanding access to existing programs. That said, the list of programs offered should continue to be assessed annually to be dynamically responsive to shifts in the market.

Improve access to programs

- **Expand the operating hours at community centers** with more opportunities throughout the week and over the weekend.
- **Improve efficiency of spaces within existing facilities to expand program availability.** Where utilization rates for rooms appear to be low, identify programs to increase usage.
- Develop an age segment matrix of users for each type of recreation facility to **determine how well each age segment is being served by each program type and identify areas of need.**
- **Create new partnerships with businesses and outfitters to expand recreation program opportunities** as they apply to performing and visual arts, outdoor recreation, wellness and fitness, active senior adults, people with disabilities, and after-school and summer programs.

Prioritize program offerings

- **Expand programs by expanding the hours of operation at facilities, hiring more staff, and exploring partnerships and opportunities to engage contract providers.**
- The public engagement process identified a list of existing programs that were highly regarded but were considered in too short supply:
 - » Outdoor Recreation (kayaking, rock climbing, camping)
 - » Exercise and Fitness (boot camps, yoga, Zumba classes)
 - » Health and Wellness (teaching kitchens, nutrition courses)
 - » Art (dance, painting, theater)
 - » Summer Enrichment (children's summer program)
 - » After School (organized play, tutoring)
 - » Senior Citizens
 - » Visual and Performing Arts
 - » Disabilities Programs

Expand environmental education

- Before building additional nature centers, expand countywide program offerings through existing community centers, especially in areas of the county where residents may not have access to or the ability to visit a nature center.
- Consider new nature centers when master planning new parks with an eye toward the reuse of any available historic buildings.
- Incorporate environmental education into outdoor recreation programs in order to improve the experiential aspect of learning.

Develop innovative and new programming in urban parks

- Activate downtown parks with frequent planned activities and small-scale performances to encourage daily use and neighborhood activities.
- Provide programs for neighborhood parks in low-income areas that are rarely targeted for permitted events by outside groups.

Program historic sites systematically

- Classify all historic properties as a **new management section within Metro Parks.**
- Program historic sites in a systematic approach that utilizes the system collection of historic sites to provide **comprehensive and countywide programming.**

Establish volunteerism as a formal program

- **Develop a volunteer recruitment and training program.**
- Identify targeted volunteer projects that ensure a good return on investment.
- Hire a volunteer coordinator to build the program.
- Train staff on how to effectively work with volunteers in park settings.

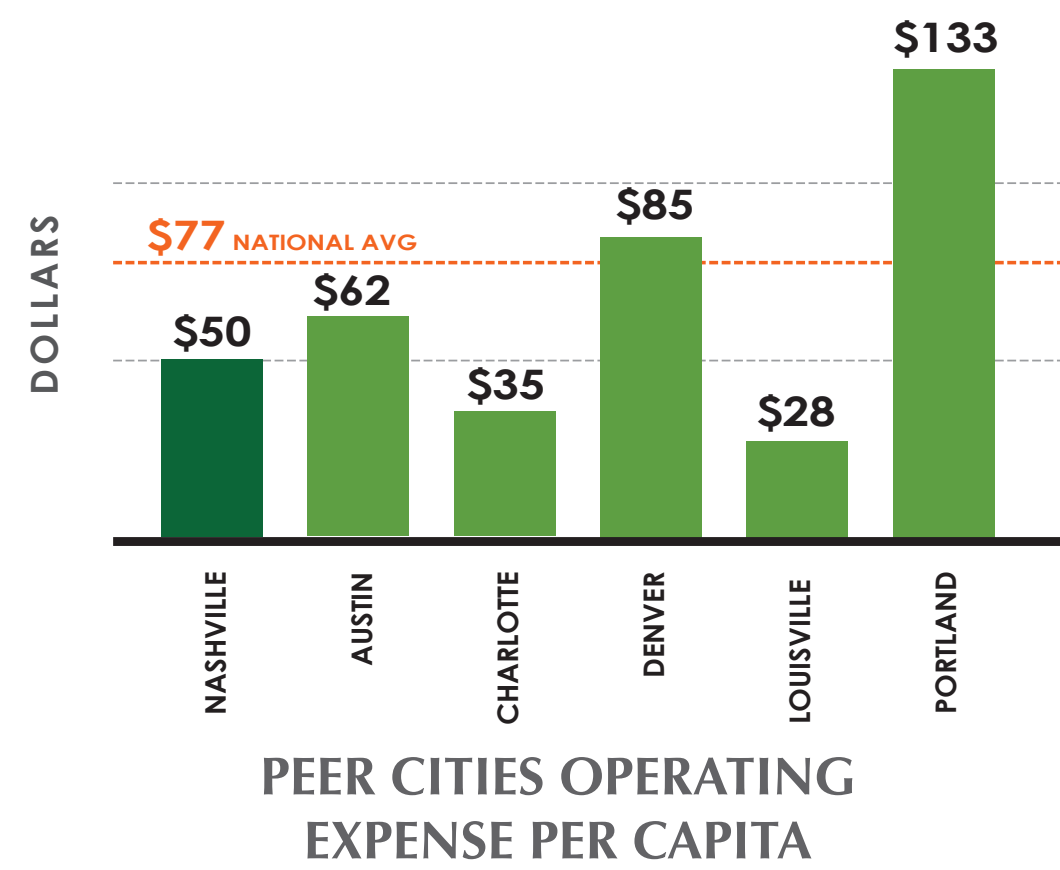
OPERATIONS Key Findings

Over the last 10 years, Metro Nashville has made substantial strides with regard to capital investments by adding new facilities and land to the park system. The department, however, has not seen the same amount of operational growth to support the new additions to the system. This has created a gap between the operational needs of the system and the current operating budget. For a park system to be sustainable, capital and operational investment must be made together because new capital projects require additional operational and maintenance needs.

Operations of the Metro Park system depend on a well-trained and dedicated staff who are responsible for planning and delivering programs, maintaining the land and facilities, and administering and promoting the system on a day-to-day basis. A continued, sustainable level of investment in park operations is the foundation of capital investments in land, facilities, and programs.

- Metro Parks' staff have extremely high loyalty and dedication to the department.
- When comparing operating expenses per capita, Metro Parks' budget of \$50 per person is significantly lower than the national average of \$77 per person.
- Metro Parks' total operating budget in 2015 was just over \$33,400,000, the second-lowest operating budget among peer cities.

* Metro Parks ranks second among peer cities for operating cost recovery. It retains the lowest percentage of revenue at 3% with the next lowest peer city being 54%.

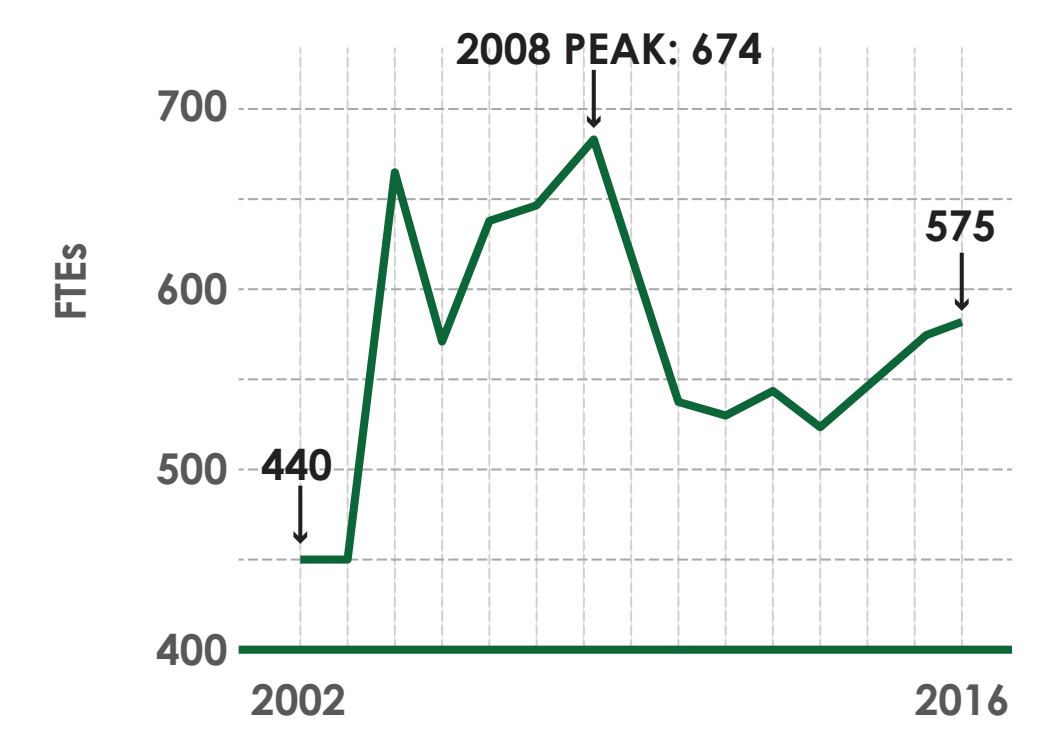


Agency	Fees Kept by Agency	Non-Tax Revenue	Fees Kept as % of Non-Tax Revenue
Portland	\$ 26,768,718	\$ 28,703,839	93%
Charlotte / Mecklenburg County	\$ 1,631,000	\$ 2,442,614	67%
Denver	\$ 11,095,320	\$ 17,561,412	63%
Louisville	\$ 5,722,986	\$ 10,400,471	55%
Austin	\$ 2,166,170	\$ 4,002,170	54%
Nashville*	\$ 360,000	\$ 12,122,960	3%

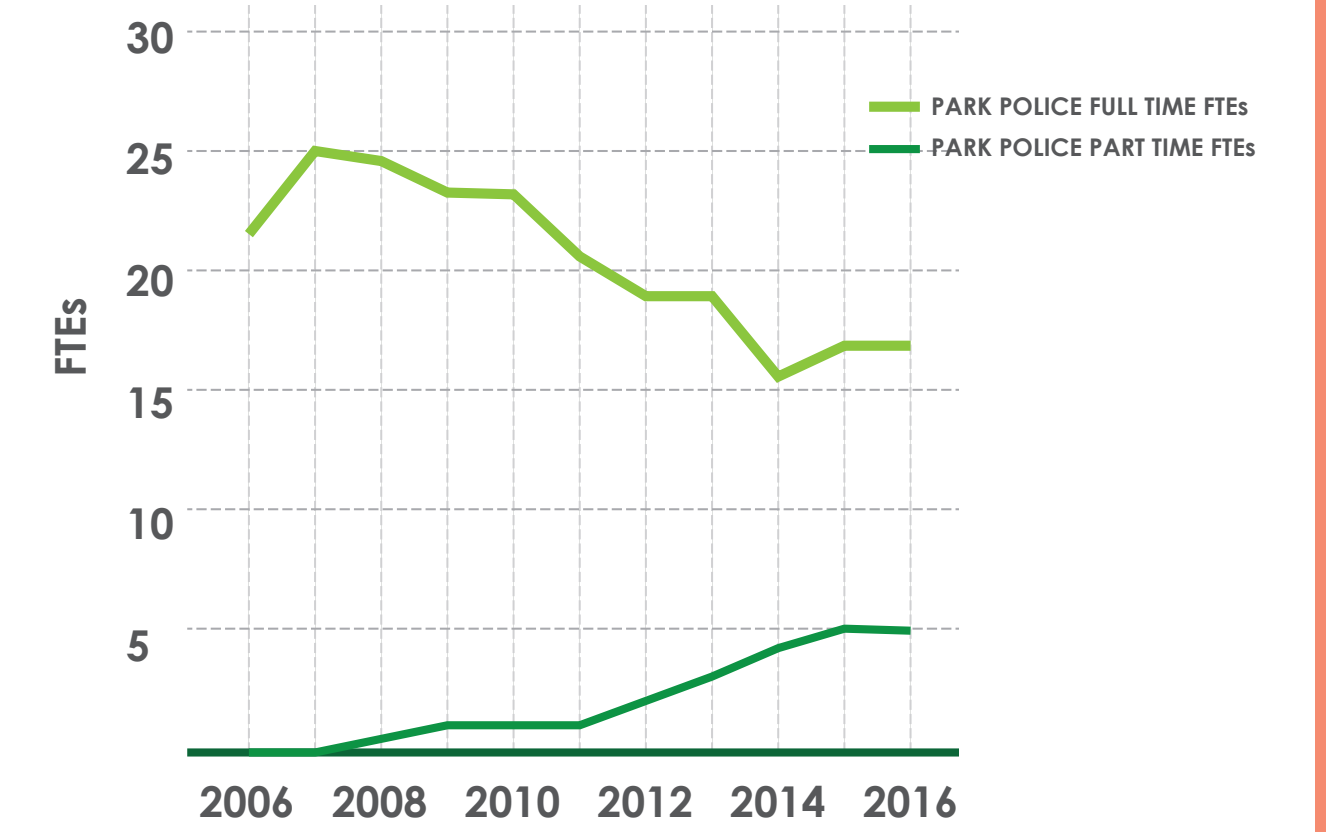
*Figures adjusted from information provided by TPL for Nashville based on internal data. Includes golf surcharge.

PEER CITIES OPERATING REVENUE RETENTION

- In order to manage it, first measure it. Understanding trends, costs of services, the market, and usership allow the department to more efficiently and effectively allocate resources.
- Sustainable funding of operating expenses can:
 - » Increase staffing levels.
 - » Expand high-demand program offerings.
 - » Increase hours of operation.
 - » Allow expanded marketing of services.
 - » Grow revenue stream.
 - » Improve levels of maintenance.
- Program types should be classified to ensure core essential programs remain free and accessible, and value-added programs do not place an operational and financial burden on the park system.
- Individual business plans can identify the operational and funding needs of a facility or program, as well as opportunities to offset costs with revenue and improve customer service.



METRO PARKS TOTAL FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) HOURS



METRO PARKS TOTAL FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) HOURS FOR PARK POLICE

WOULD YOU SUPPORT INCREASING PROGRAM FEES SO THAT SPECIFIC USERS ARE PAYING A BIGGER SHARE OF COSTS?*

49% AGREE
STRONGLY (16%) OR SOMEWHAT (33%) AGREE

HAVE USER FEES PROHIBITED YOU FROM PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAMS?

94% NO
FEEL FEES HAVE NOT PROHIBITED THEM FROM PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAMS

* Data taken from Telephone Survey. See section 5.1.1

OPERATIONS Key Recommendations

This section identifies the operational support necessary to support and implement land, facility and program recommendations. When combined, these recommendations form a strategy by which the growth of the park system and the capacity of the Parks Department to manage the system grow in tandem. Operations recommendations reflect a more entrepreneurial approach to the management of the department, using both performance indicators and outcomes to operate the system in a more efficient and measurable manner. In addition to department-specific recommendations, opportunities exist to scale up existing partnerships and other successful strategies already in place to maximize benefits.

Conduct a staffing level assessment

to determine appropriate levels throughout the department. Given the known maintenance and operating challenges faced by the existing system, as well as the recommendations to add parks, expand programs, and extend the hours at many facilities, this in-depth study will help ensure that system growth and departmental capacity expand in tandem.

Create an office of collaboration

to lead the process of developing and managing many of the operational and financial recommendations in Plan to Play that relate to alternative revenue streams, scaling up partnerships, and otherwise bringing new resources to the department in order to help fulfill its mission.

Invest in communications, public relations, marketing, and branding across the system.

Metro Parks' communications staffing level (one person) is far below those of peer cities and even other Metro departments. Given the many quantifiable economic and quality-of-life benefits of parks, including tourism and public health, and the more entrepreneurial business model recommended in this plan, it is critical for Metro Parks to invest in additional marketing and communications.

Upgrade technology

to improve efficiency and operations, and allow the department to accomplish more with fewer human resources. There are several critical technological needs at Metro Parks, including upgrades to payment systems, online reservations, and an asset management/work order system.

Conduct a program assessment

to understand the goals, priorities, and changing financial realities of a growing and changing park system.

Cultivate and nurture partnerships

as Nashville's population continues to boom and the needs and complexities of the system grow. This is a critical time to examine what public-private partnerships exist in Nashville today and what partnerships can grow, evolve, and be augmented to best serve Metro's properties and the area's residents and visitors into the future.

Track data and performance department wide

to more efficiently and effectively allocate resources by better understanding the market, true costs, usership, life cycles, trends, and other factors. Using measurable outcomes will allow the department to identify the greatest areas of need, track success, and know where and when additional support is needed.

Classify services

using a systematic approach to assess the value and priority of the range of services provided by the department. Understand the distribution and delivery of services as well as opportunities to grow the system to better serve the community, and identify which programs and services should be available to every taxpayer and which justify a fee.

Develop business plans

for community centers, sports complexes/fieldhouses, golf courses, aquatic facilities, Hamilton Creek Marina, and any other facility with yearly revenue of \$100,000 or more. To understand the operational and funding needs of these facilities, business plans should be the first step in the implementation process.

Implement a Natural Area Management Plan

Using standards and policies already developed, implement a proactive natural area management plan to inform maintenance practices and operational standards for the purposes of resource conservation, habitat preservation, biodiversity, and appropriate recreational and programmatic use.



FUNDING THE FUTURE

Key Findings

Funding impacts every park element discussed thus far. A critical decision for Metro government is not only how much money to invest in the future of the park system, but also what funding structure best suits Metro Parks. The system relies heavily on public dollars annually allocated by the Metro Council. Could Metro Parks be allowed the ability to generate some of its own funding and revenue sources? What role can or should private partnerships play in Nashville's park system?

- Today, the total asset value of the park system is approximately **\$683 million**.
- **Metro government continues to provide great financial support** for capital investments to the park system.
 - » **Capital spending is highest per person** compared to peer cities.
 - » **Capital spending is highest per acre** compared to peer cities.

Agency	Jurisdiction Population	Total Capital Spending	Capital Spending per Capita
Nashville*	660,836	\$ 35,488,720	\$ 53.70
Denver*	663,862	\$ 23,370,519	\$ 35.20
Austin	912,791	\$ 22,645,132	\$ 24.81
Portland	619,360	\$ 8,516,570	\$ 13.75
Charlotte / Mecklenburg County*	1,012,539	\$ 7,600,000	\$ 7.51
Louisville	760,026	\$ 4,141,951	\$ 5.45

*Figures adjusted from information provided by TPL for Nashville, Denver, and Charlotte / Mecklenburg County based on internal data.

PEER CITIES CAPITAL SPENDING PER CAPITA

Agency	Fees Kept by Agency	Non-Tax Revenue	Fees Kept as % of Non-Tax Revenue
Portland	\$ 26,768,718	\$ 28,703,839	93%
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Nashville*	\$ 360,000	\$ 12,122,960	3%

*Figures adjusted from information provided by TPL for Nashville based on internal data. Includes golf surcharge.

PEER CITIES OPERATING REVENUE RETENTION

- National and peer city analyses suggest that **it is unusual for a system this size to rely solely on public tax dollars for annual funding**.
- **There are opportunities to grow revenue** generated by Metro Parks with minor adjustments to the cost recovery system.
- Great opportunity exists for **strengthening private partnerships**, like friends groups, to increase the number of revenue streams and leverage public dollars.

WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE PARKS DEPARTMENT PRESERVING MORE GREEN SPACE AND ACQUIRING ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TO DEVELOP NEW PARKS AND GREENWAYS?

94% SUPPORT

WOULD STRONGLY (61%) OR SOMEWHAT (33%) SUPPORT

WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE INCREASING PROGRAM FEES SO THAT SPECIFIC USERS ARE PAYING A BIGGER SHARE OF COSTS?

49% AGREE

STRONGLY (16%) OR SOMEWHAT (33%) AGREE

SHOULD PARKS DEPARTMENT USE ANY ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS & FACILITIES OR NEW DEVELOPMENT?

65% FAVOR NEW INVESTMENT AT EXISTING PARKS & FACILITIES

29% FAVOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

WOULD YOU AGREE THAT METRO SHOULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO THE DEPARTMENT WHEN COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE?

77% AGREE

STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE TO RAISING THE PARKS DEPARTMENT BUDGET

SURVEY FINDINGS

* Data taken from Telephone Survey. See section 5.1.1



FUNDING THE FUTURE

Key Recommendations

Land, facilities, program, and operational recommendations collectively represent a future for Nashville's park system built on equity, sustainability, and best practices. These recommendations are often the "what" part of the plan. There are few recommendations that do not have a cost for their implementation. Funding describes the "how" part of the master plan - how will Nashville fund this bold vision? Achieving the goals of Plan to Play will require an increase in Metro funding while Metro Parks simultaneously diversifies its revenue streams - not to replace Metro funds but to supplement them and increase operational efficiency.

Nashville's parks and greenways generate **\$550,410,000** in economic benefits through:

- property values and tax revenue
- recreation use
- tourism spending
- stormwater infiltration
- human health benefits
- air pollution removal

Recommended investment for improvements by 2027:

Capital Investment

\$ 667 million

Includes community centers, blueway access sites, trails, athletic fields, courts, planning projects, other park amenities and facilities.

New Capital Investments

Capital Investments in Existing Assets

Deferred Maintenance

Operating Investment

\$ 67.6 million (annually)

Operating costs quantify the annual dollar value to fulfill the strategic recommendations set forth in this plan. They include administrative, program, and maintenance staff as well as the upkeep and operational needs of a mix of amenities within park land and community centers.

Maintenance and Operations of:

- Park land
- Facilities
- Programs

Staff Positions

Land Acquisition

\$ 534 million MARKET VALUE

\$534 million, at the current market rate, to acquire the recommended park land acreages needed over the next 10 years.

Park land

Greenway Corridors

Diversify funding strategies.

Metro Nashville's Parks system is unusually dependent on the Metro budget as its single source of funding. Most other parks departments in large cities have between 25 and 30 sources of funds. Metro should diversify its funding and revenue streams. Strategies include:

- Earned Income
- Open Space Ordinance
- Business Improvement Districts
- Sponsorships
- Impact Development Fees
- Enterprise Funds
- Parking Fees
- Tax Increment Financing
- Land and Property Leases
- Service Providers
- Hotel Tax
- Partners and Friends Groups

Land acquisition will need to utilize the funding strategies above to execute acquisitions outside of the General Fund.

Due to the extremely high cost to acquire the needed park land for the next 10 years at the current market rate, land transactions will require alternative funding sources to shift the financial burden off the tax base.

Retain earned income

by transitioning toward a practice of allowing some or all of the revenue produced by Metro Parks to be retained by Metro Parks. Currently, Metro Parks generates approximately \$12,000,000 in revenue from fees each year. Nationally, large cities average \$8,800,000 in revenue and most keep all or a percentage of this revenue without its negatively impacting annual budget allocation.

Friends groups and partners

Friends groups and partners have proved to be an essential part of running a park system. They contribute to the Parks Department mission by raising private funds, donating volunteer hours, helping to deliver programs, and raising public and political awareness of park-related issues. Metro Parks should explore how these partnerships can be augmented to best serve the park system and the department's public mandate.

- Develop memoranda of understanding or equivalent agreements to clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- Create work plans to help ensure both partners are working toward shared and synergistic goals.
- Provide dedicated Parks staffing to coordinate with friends groups and partners.



The Nashville Parks & Greenways Draft Master Plan

Megan Barry, Mayor

Christy Smith, Chair,
Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation

Tommy Lynch, Director

For more information see <http://plantoplay.nashville.gov/>

