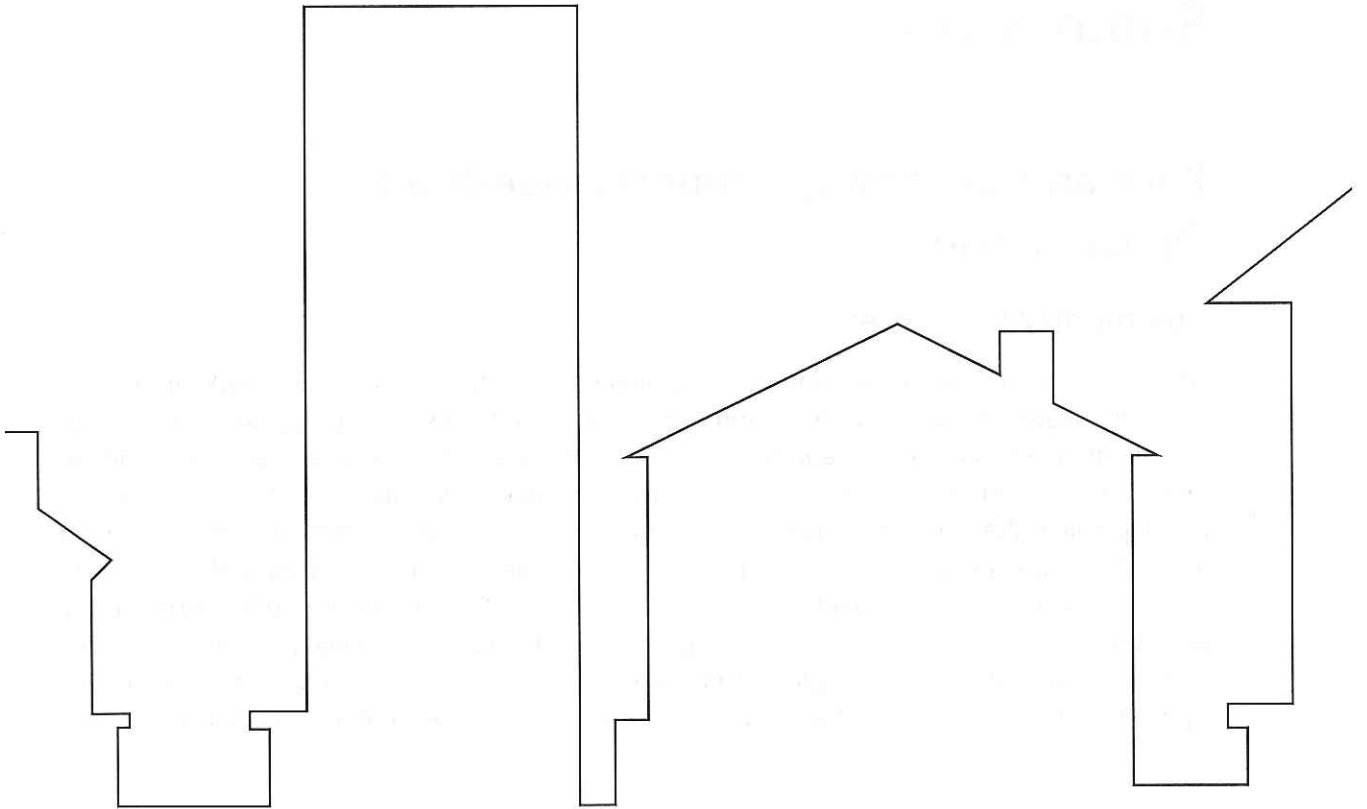


# 07

## Park and Greenway Development & Opinions of Probable Cost



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Redeveloping existing parks and facilities, acquiring land and developing parks and greenways, and protecting both cultural and natural resources are common objectives of a public park and recreation agency. It is clear that the City of Brookhaven wants to formulate a strategy for improving the quality of existing parks, as noted in Section 6: Facility Assessments, and add new parks and greenways in areas where deficiencies were identified in the Facilities Gap Analysis. The needs for additional park land are discussed below.

## Parks and Greenway Development Summaries

### Park and Greenway Property Needs and Opportunities

#### Community Park Sites

As noted in the Facility Gap Analysis in Section 6, the only two community parks in the city are both located in the northern section of the city. In fact, these two parks are very close to one another resulting in a great deal of overlap between their service areas. In addition, these parks are in an area of the city with lower population densities, which further reduces the population they conveniently serve. Another issue that was a common comment during the public input process was the city's lack of a large park for festivals and community events. These factors coupled with the need for area for additional sports fields clearly points to the need for a new community park in Brookhaven. In Planning Areas 2 & 3, only four properties owned by a single owner are over 20 acres. One of these parcels is owned by DeKalb County and has two schools on the property. Two others are developed with



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commercial and office developments. Only one parcel is undeveloped and it is a 30 acre parcel located adjacent to the airport.

The limited availability of large tracks of land may make it more difficult to develop a large park in Planning Areas 2 or 3 without assembling multiple properties from different owners. Assembling multiple properties can be more challenging, but it is a viable approach to consider. It can also be more expensive if you have to purchase commercial properties which have a higher value than residential properties or undeveloped properties.

Another approach is to examine existing parks and determine if additional properties were acquired adjacent to the park, could an existing park be redesigned to function as a totally different kind of park and better meet the needs of the entire community. One park stands out with have the best potential for this type of redevelopment and that is Briarwood Park.

Briarwood Park is surrounded by a number of older apartment complexes. As these apartments age they will reach a point where major renovation or total replacement will be required. If the city were able to purchase an approximately 17 acres of apartment complexes adjacent to the park and combine the acreage with the existing 18 acres at the park, a new park could be developed that would total approximately 35 acres. The new park would also have frontage on Buford Highway allowing for improved access into the park and favorable visibility for motorist passing by the park. At 35 acres, the park could be developed with multi-use spaces for open play and special events, walking trails, playground and picnic facilities, a community garden and other features similar to Blackburn Park. The existing community center and pool may be able to stay or they could be replaced with new facilities. If this park were to be enlarged, it would become a destination park for residents on the south end of the city. If the city were to purchase additional apartment complexes, the park could be even larger.

There may be other parks where adjacent properties could be added to provide additional space for parking, new park features or simply natural areas to provide larger park buffers. Park staff should evaluate areas around all parks for potential expansion of existing parks.

As previously mentioned, the one large undeveloped tract located in the city is a 30 acre parcel located to the west of the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport. This parcel is mostly wooded with a small area of open space on the front of the property. The property is surrounded on three sides with single family residential properties. This property is large enough to be a community park.



If this property were to be developed as a community park, the site would not be as desirable for sports field development due to the adjacent residential properties and the impact sports lighting could have on the airport. Making this more of a urban park with a combinations of community festival spaces, open play lawns, passive wooded trails, pavilions and a playground would be a more desirable mix of facilities. Another positive feature of this property is its accessibility to Clairmont Road NE.

## **Neighborhood Park Sites**

Neighborhood parks, as previously discussed in this report, range from 5 to 20 acres in size. Finding additional properties in the lower end of this acreage range should not be as difficult to locate and acquire. Properties for neighborhood parks should be sought out in all underserved areas, as shown on the gap analysis, starting on the south end of the city. A good starting point for property acquisition would be the properties purchased by FEMA that were flooded during the 2012 flood. Several of these parcels are contiguous and could be developed as a small neighborhood park.

## **Mini Park Sites**

As part of the Buford Highway improvement project, small parcels could be obtained along the corridor to provide mini parks near existing apartment complexes and commercial developments. These parks could be developed with plazas and greenspace and function as neighborhood gathering spaces.

## **Greenways**

As illustrated on Figure 6.9 in Section 6 of the master plan, proposed greenways are needed to improve connectivity within the city, and as a whole, will promote healthy lifestyles and expand recreation opportunities. Survey responses revealed a high desire to add more greenways to the trail system throughout the city.

A minimum 50' greenway corridor is recommended and 100' is preferred where it can be obtained. The topographic relief found along the proposed greenway corridors will require the trail to have switch backs to comply with ADA grade requirements, as well as make it more bicycle friendly for the average rider. The wider easement will allow for fewer longer switch backs as the trail climbs the steep terrain. The wider easement will also allow the trail to meander within the easement, adding interest along the greenway corridor.



There are many good opportunities to develop greenways throughout the city. The planning team believes the one that will have the most initial impact is a greenway to connect Murphey Candler and Blackburn Parks along Nancy Creek. This greenway would run along the western boundary of Murphey Candler Park and cross over Nancy Creek onto an undeveloped portion of the park. The greenway would then run west on the south side of the creek to Ashford Dunwoody Road. This initial section of trail should be a 12' wide asphalt path. At Ashford Dunwoody Road, the greenway would cross under the road at an existing bridge and connect to the Marist School Property. A bridge at this point should be constructed across the creek to connect to the YMCA soccer complex. Along both sides of Ashford Dunwoody Road, 8' wide sidewalks should be provided to the northern most entry drive to Blackburn Park. At this location, a signalized yield to pedestrian crossing should be installed to connect the YMCA to the park. This greenway crosses a few properties along the creek, and the sidewalk section should be able to be developed within the existing right of way.

While the development of the Nancy Creek Greenway is underway, a master plan should be developed for the North Fork of Peachtree Creek. The master plan should identify where trailheads will be developed to provide access to the greenway. The master plan will allow the city to determine how many parcels of land the greenway crosses and the best method to obtain properties in fee or by easement. The master planning process should be conducted with public input to gain an understanding of the amenities citizens would like to see along the greenway and at trailheads.

Once the master plan is complete, the city should identify the phases for development of the greenway and begin the development of construction documents and property acquisition documents. This process could take up to two years to complete. Once the land is acquired, construction should begin. The city should continue this process for each phase until the entire greenway is constructed.

Other recommended sections of the greenway should be developed over the next ten years as funding becomes available.

### **Brownfields and Conversions**

The limited amount of remaining undeveloped property for park development in Brookhaven will be difficult to find. To overcome this issue, the city should not rule out the conversion of developed sites into parks. The Department of the Interior has a grant program to provide funds to assess properties that have potential contaminants that prevent redevelopment of the property. A summary taken from their website on this program is provided below:



*The Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act ("Brownfields Law", P.L. 107-118) requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to publish guidance to assist applicants in preparing proposals for grants to assess and clean up brownfield sites. EPA's Brownfields Program provides funds to empower states, communities, tribes, and nonprofits to prevent, inventory, assess, clean up, and reuse brownfield sites. EPA provides brownfields funding for three types of grants. 1. Brownfields Assessment Grants – provides funds to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct planning (including cleanup planning) and community involvement related to brownfield sites. 2. Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants – provides funding for a grant recipient to capitalize a revolving fund and to make loans and provide subgrants to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. 3. Brownfields Cleanup Grants – provides funds to carry out cleanup activities at a specific brownfield site owned by the applicant.*

A common brownfield site is an abandoned industrial property, service station or truck stop. Because these properties typically have underground fuel storage sites and other petrochemicals on site, they often sit abandoned for years due to fears that purchasing the property would mean inheriting a contaminated site, thus requiring large cleanup efforts as a condition for redevelopment. This grant program allows for the assessment to be done by the city, using grant funds to determine if contaminants exist and what would be required to clean up the sites. A grant of this type would put the city in a position to maximize negotiating power when purchasing the property. Because these are grant funds, the city would not incur the cost for the evaluations or possibly even the cleanup cost.

## Parks and Greenway Development Summary

### Opinions of Probable Cost and Phasing Plan

In order to develop a long term capital plan for improving and expanding the park system, opinions of probable cost for suggested park improvements are needed. Opinions of cost have been developed for each park based on a master plan level of plan development for known cost. These opinions total just over \$47,000,000 million in capital improvement needs for the next ten years. The recommended facilities discussed in Section 6 of this plan are needed to provide expanded recreation opportunities and improved service to the citizens of



Brookhaven and to reduce overuse and overcrowding at existing parks. Survey respondents clearly indicated a desire for more communitywide special events, which bring the community together. To address this need, open lawn spaces in existing parks need to be renovated and additional parks need to be developed. Other items that received high mark in the survey included greenways, developing additional parks, playgrounds, community gardens and aquatic facilities. At workshops and public meetings, citizens expressed a desire for the existing facilities to be upgraded and more restrooms to be provided in the parks. The need for additional indoor programming space was also a common topic.

The city is faced with a challenge in meeting the needs and desires of the community as it continues the process of transforming facilities that were once part of a county system into a city park system that is operated and maintained at a much higher level. While comments were heard about not raising taxes to improve the park system, survey findings indicated strong support to fund park improvements. Those who completed the survey funding question supported funding park improvements at a level of 77%, compared to only 23% who did not support any type of funding. This is a clear indicator from the community that new, or current funding sources, should be directed to improving the parks.

A ten-year phasing plan has been developed. Implementation is broken into three tiers: Tier One projects are to be completed in the next 24 months, Tier Two projects are to be completed within the next 60 months and Tier Three projects are to be completed within 120 months.

As part of this master plan, concept level redevelopment park plans were developed for Blackburn, Lynwood, Brookhaven and Murphey Candler Parks.

### Phasing Plan

A phasing plan has been developed to help guide the development of the Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department. This plan covers the next 10 years and will be subject to change based on the funding ability of the city. See **Table 9.1** in the Appendix for the funding summary/community work program.

