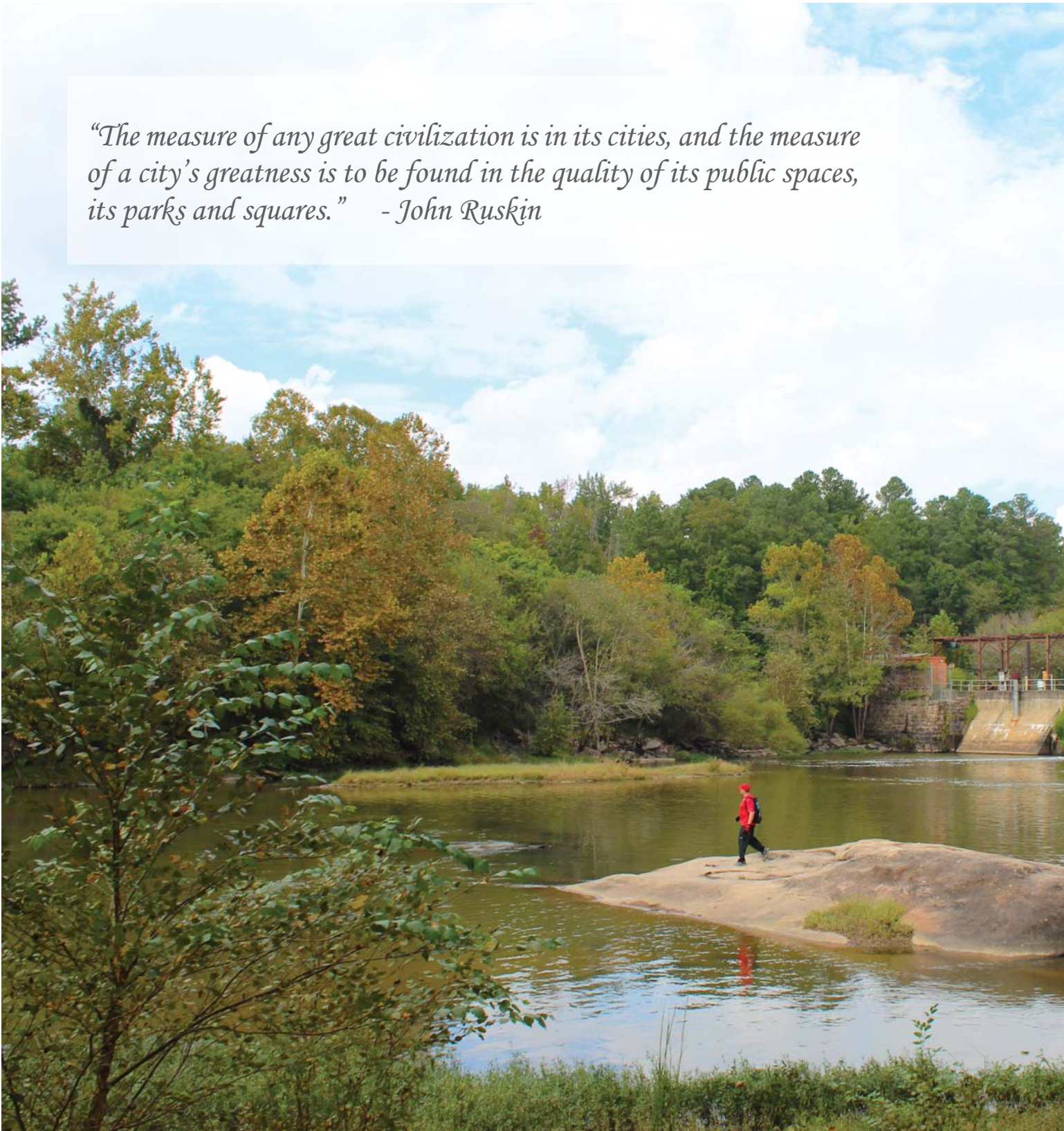


# Chapter Two

*“The measure of any great civilization is in its cities, and the measure of a city’s greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares.” - John Ruskin*



existing system overview

# Existing System Overview



Milburnie Park

## Chapter 2 | Existing Conditions Overview

The purpose of this section is to gain a broad understanding of current conditions of the City of Raleigh's parks, recreation facilities, greenways, programs and services. Currently, the City of Raleigh manages 135 parks, 44 staff and non-staffed centers, 8 public swimming pools, over 2,150 programs, 82 open spaces, 75 miles of greenway trails and approximately 9,500 acres of parks and greenways.



### Chapter II Existing System Overview

#### 2.1 - History of Parks and Recreation in the City of Raleigh

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The Beginning                | 4. The Expansion Era     |
| 2. The Formative Period         | 5. The Open Space Era    |
| 3. Consolidation and Refinement | 6. The Collaborative Era |

#### 2.2 - City-wide Integration

- |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Guiding Documents                  | 3. Area Studies and Plans |
| 2. City & Regional Plans & Ordinances |                           |

#### 2.3 - Population and Demographics Overview

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Overview          | 3. Population Characteristics |
| 2. Population Growth | 4. Housing Characteristics    |

#### 2.4 - Existing Parks and Facilities Overview

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Methodology                    | 4. Successes of Existing System      |
| 2. Rating Scale                   | 5. Opportunities for Existing System |
| 3. Individual Facilities Overview |                                      |

#### 2.5 - Existing Greenway Network Overview

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Methodology                   | 4. Opportunities for Existing Greenway Network |
| 2. Individual Greenway Overview  |  |
| 3. Successes of Greenway Network |  |

#### 2.6 - Existing Programs and Services Overview

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Introduction           | 4. Lifecycle Review     |
| 2. Program Identification | 5. Age Segment Review   |
| 3. Program Mix            | 6. Marketing Approaches |

#### 2.7 - Existing System Overview Findings

existing system overview



# Chapter Two

## Section 2.1 | History of Parks and Recreation in the City of Raleigh

### 2.1.0 Introduction

The history of the City of Raleigh’s parks and recreation system is valuable background information to consider during an update to the City’s Parks and Recreation System Plan. Information included in this section has been documented in the City of Raleigh Parks Plan, published in 2004, and updated for this System Plan.

The principles of park design and planning have been developed over the last several hundred years in response to changing social conditions. The tradition of parks in the United States is rooted in European design, however, by the late nineteenth century, park design and planning

began to take its own distinct path in America. Through these phases, (see **Diagram 2**), there were guiding principles, influenced by changes in society, which shaped our parks.

Today, we stand at the beginning of a new era in park design and planning. One of new social, economic and environmental concerns. Today’s parks and greenways must be justified based on the perceived benefits to the public and must contribute to alleviating problems that constitute the prevailing political concerns of policymakers, John Crompton (Texas A&M University, 2007).

**Diagram 2.** Goals and functions of parks eras of the last 150 years in the United States, (Galen Cranz)

	Pleasure Ground (1850 - 1900)	Reform Park (1900 - 1930)	Recreation Facility (1930 - 1965)	Open Space System (1965 - 1990)	Sustainable Park (1990 - present)
Goals of Parks	public	social reform assimilation	public	revitalization psychological relief participation public	place-making ecological health revitalization psychological relief participation public
Functions of Parks	health	public health	health active recreation	health active recreation passive recreation arts and culture	health active recreation passive recreation arts and culture resource conservation community building

existing system overview



# Existing System Overview

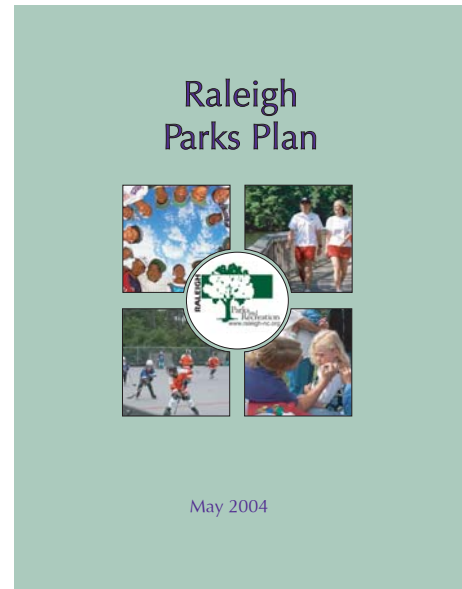
## 2.1.1 The Beginning

The City's original planners envisioned an "ideal" that, though modified through the years, has served as a guiding vision. The Raleigh of today may not bear an immediate resemblance to the City of 1792, but the City of Raleigh's core mission and commitment to its citizen's well-being and quality of life remains the same.

Unique to the history of Raleigh, parks in the City of Oaks may be organized into five periods: **The Formative Period** (1792-1941); **Consolidation and Refinement** (1942-1970); the **Expansion Era** (1971-1981); the **Open Space Era** (1982 – 2004); and the new **Collaborative Era** (2004 to present).

During the Formative Period the philosophy and direction of the young parks program emerged, influenced by local visionaries and national trends. In the second period, the City became fully committed to a centrally organized municipal park system with definite goals. The Expansion Era was a period of refinement and adjustment to population pressure, city expansion, Federal mandates, and a subsequent increase both in parkland and park programs. The mission of the Parks Department also became more clear and its commitment to open space preservation was broadened and strengthened by the development of the Capital Area Greenway Network. The Open Space Era was marked with relative growth in the parks and recreation system but high population growth, in terms of absolute number of new residents, through annexation and greenfield development. The Open Space Era ended with the publication of the City's last Parks and Recreation System Plan Update in 2004, which established new goals for the Park and Recreation Department.

The Collaborative Era finds Raleigh faced with limited funding for its burgeoning and successful programs and facilities. Competition for limited fiscal resources tempers a renewed awareness of the urgent need for parks and open space, and new approaches in providing these services. A heightened awareness of environmental conservation, water quality protection and the effects of intensive urbanization influence park development and uses. Most important to



*City of Raleigh's Parks Plan, published in 2004*

residents is a seamless park and recreation system which offers multiple benefits from public facilities. Quality and stewardship of natural resources within parks are seen by residents as a barometer of the commitment of the City to the quality of life of its citizens. In addition, the awareness of the benefits of meaningful public involvement has greatly expanded and become an integral part of park planning and design.

The following text provides a sketch of the influential trends and decisions which have brought Raleigh to its current philosophy and direction of parks and open space.

## 2.1.2 The Formative Period (1792 - 1941)

Raleigh has never been without parks. The original 400 acre city plan, laid out through 1,000 acres of woodland in 1792, included five public squares centered in a grid of streets. The General Assembly selected fellow Senator William Christmas, a surveyor, to lay out the lots and city streets of the Capital-to-be. William Christmas's visionary gift to the city was a modification of the plan

# Chapter Two

of Philadelphia: A central site (Union Square) for the State Capitol and four axial streets, following the compass points, which divided the city into four quadrants or wards. The heart of each ward was a public square (Moore, Nash, Caswell, and Burke). Four lots were left open at the corners of the rectangular plan for “future parks, for children, flowers, trees and fountains.” Of the original City plan, only one-half of the original 400 acres included was allocated for development and nearly 40 acres or 20% of the this developed land was reserved as open space.

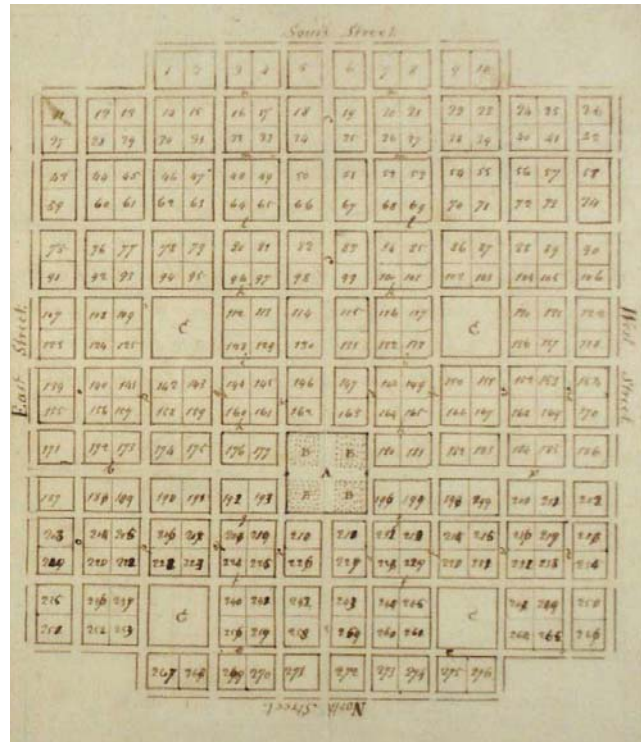
The existing trees were spared on the original five squares, perhaps a decision of necessity, nevertheless, it made a powerful statement which was to become the foundation of Raleigh’s heritage of sensitivity to open space preservation.

The Christmas Plan, parks and all, served Raleigh well for nearly fifty years before the city began to grapple with new growth brought by railway service in 1840. The city pushed beyond the original boundaries during this decade and development, and convenience, claimed two of the original squares: Caswell Square became the site for a school for the deaf and Burke Square became the grounds of a new Governor’s mansion.

The vision for parkland never vanished, however, in the 1860’s it resurfaced. Oakwood was designed as a Park Cemetery, having a dual function of a memorial park for the deceased and strolling and carriage grounds for the living. This cemetery became Raleigh’s first experiment with a multi-use, privately funded recreational and open space facility.

The Victorian Era touched Raleigh in both mood and fashion. The theory of “green relief” from urban chaos (hardly applicable by comparison to northeastern cities), promulgated by Frederick Law Olmstead, designer of Central Park in New York and the Boston parks system, encouraged citizens to donate land and finance the development of pleasure grounds or natural retreats.

Richard Stanhope Pullen responded with a gift of 69 acres in 1887 for an accessible pastoral retreat – a major public park. At the time the land was on the outskirts of the City and meant to be used as a get-away from bustling Victorian life in the downtown.



Christmas’s 1792 plan for Raleigh which included five public squares centered in a grid of streets.

At the turn-of-the-century nationwide influences stamped Raleigh’s budding park enthusiasm, and its urban form, with visionary ideas. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 inspired the nation with the crusade that cities can be “beautiful and noble manifestations of civilization.” The aesthetic renaissance found specific expression in the landscaped boulevards of Glenwood and New Bern Avenues. Subtly, a shift in park philosophy simultaneously gained popularity. “Reform Parks” beckoned the entire citizenry to recreational opportunities, not solely pastoral retreats, and the notion of a system of parks, rather than individual parks, began to gain favor.

Parks also became an amenity of fine residential neighborhoods developed for an emerging middle class whose homes were linked to downtown by trolley service. The transportation service carried citizens to “Street railway” owned parks at the edge of town. Bloomsbury Park, near Lassiter Mill, Brookside Park north of Oakwood, and Pullen Park fit this category of open space. The new residential subdivision called Cameron Park set a model tone by arranging streets around natural drainage ways, leaving the creeks as neighborhood open space.

# Existing System Overview



Residents picnikng near the Neuse River, 1902 (image courtesy of Remember Raleigh - North Carolina State Archives)

The evolution of the parks system's direction roared in the twenties. In short order, the City obtained an annual appropriation for a playground supervisor, and the Mayor and City Board appointed a City Parks Commission. This at-large group of prominent citizens surged forward with plans for the development of a parks system and the maintenance and beautification of the current landholdings. The decade closed with the General Assembly granting the new commission the responsibility for Union, Nash and Moore Squares and the donation of land for Edna Metz Wells Nature Park by eminent North Carolina State College botanist, Dr. B. W. Wells.

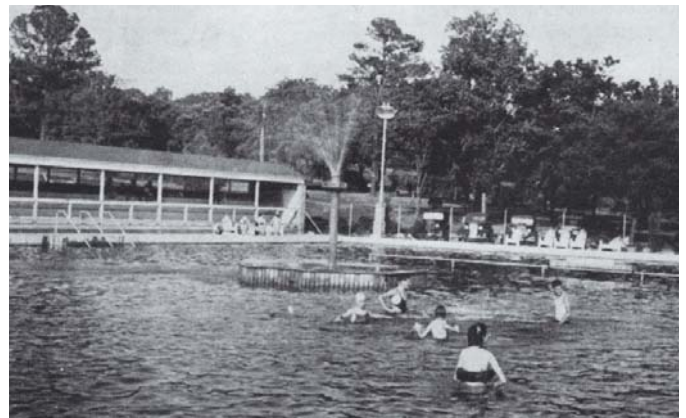
The following depression decade brought increased recreation time to all citizens. In response to this demand, the General Assembly established the Raleigh Recreation Commission to oversee supervised recreation. In turn, a Raleigh Recreation Department was created and placed under the Division of Public Works. The ambition of this original organization is outlined in their 1938 annual report which contained some prescient goals. Among them were:

1. that leadership was as important as facilities,
2. schools should be used as community centers,
3. public tennis and badminton courts were important,
4. careful consideration of new leisure activities and the design of the required facilities,
5. increased funding,
6. recreation areas to be set aside in new public housing projects, and,
7. that Raleigh's School Board, the Raleigh Recreation

Commission, the Raleigh Park Commission, City officials, the Housing Board and other organizations should work together to survey and plan for the future long term growth in public recreation

The immediate result of the 1938 report was the development of more facilities in existing parks. This would not have been possible without the financial assistance of the Federal Works Progress Administration which provided salaries and funding for capital recreation components.

The thirties concluded the formative years of Raleigh's Park system. A philosophy of service and need was firmly established, and, more importantly, recreation and parks were officially institutionalized as an accepted province of local government (albeit with Federal assistance).



Public Swimming Pool at Pullen Park, 1940 (image courtesy of Remember Raleigh - North Carolina State Archives)

## 2.1.3 Consolidation and Refinement (1942 - 1970)

The mission of Parks and Recreation was spread through several agencies in 1940. In 1941, Raleigh began a program of centralization. The City Commissioners combined the Parks Commission and the Recreation Commission into the Recreation and Park Commission. The following year Fallon Park was dedicated to the city. By 1950, and with the redesignation of the Commission to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the system included 189 acres in the form of 16 parks, 12 playgrounds and two recreation centers.

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City of Raleigh's Fallon Park, founded 1942

With its institutional structure intact, Raleigh embarked upon a mission of refinement and redefinition of its goals by hiring a recreational consultant in 1950. The Master Plan that was prepared provided an exhaustive methodology using citizen surveys and growth trends to mold the goals of both parks and recreation elements into an ideal acquisition and development program. This plan, though not executed completely, solidified the thinking and planning efforts which have since become a standard approach. Though quickly outpaced by growth, the Master Plan completed the refinement of the City's mission. In addition to increased parkland and improved facilities in existing park property, the plan's legacy includes defined standards for determining park needs and a methodology of planning.

## 2.1.4 Expansion Era (1971 - 1980)

In 1960, a new study was completed with a 20-year projection of parks needs based on nationally accepted standards. This study launched the footrace of the Expansion Era, where the need for parks would be constantly refined in an urgent effort to adapt to rapid urbanization which claimed desirable park sites more rapidly than the city could mobilize to secure them. In spite of this competition, Raleigh was on the brink of its greatest park growth in 1969, spurred by citizen demand and the realization that quick action must be taken in tandem with growth pressure. In this year the city published "Raleigh, The Park With a City In It," an open space plan for the pending decade.

Cover of "Raleigh, The Park with a City In It"

Old concepts of drainage systems and natural areas as preservation were dusted off and re-worked in the form of the "Greenway concept." The early visions of a parkway along Crabtree Creek leap-frogged to the Neuse River; roadway beautification, historic preservation, regional facilities and even a municipal golf course became valid and valued objectives to meet recreation and park goals. New concepts of land acquisition through subdivision control tied land preservation to development. Conservation easements, planned unit developments, joint school/park programs, and private/public ventures, gained credibility as methods of trying to stay even with the development boom. Federal funds supplemented these programs substantially, with more than one million dollars in matching funds. More than 20 parks, targeted in areas of anticipated growth, entered the system during this decade. The Greenway concept, borne of a 1972 study entitled Capital Areas Greenway, linked floodway development and flood control issues brought about by development to a system of open space preserves and recreational trails. In 1973 the City Council created a fifteen member Raleigh Greenway Commission to oversee the fledgling program.

These concepts and strategies crystallized in a final refinement of the parks system in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Raleigh. An element of that plan refined goals and specified standards, which were further

# Existing System Overview

used to target future park acquisition. The policies of this plan were used in planning and development of park programs up to the withdrawal of Federal funds in 1981.

## 2.1.5 Open Space Era (1981 - 2004)

During the Open Space Era, the City of Raleigh more than doubled in land mass and population, taxing the Parks and Recreation Department infrastructure with responding to the rapid growth. The focus of the department was to retain the level of services throughout the city while expanding in geography. This required the additional of numerous parks and acreage to the system, primarily in the northwest, northeast and eastern areas of Raleigh. Standards were adopted to ensure services were offered equitably throughout the City with utilization of a park classification system; mini park, neighborhood park, community park, metro park, nature preserve and special.

Since 1982 Raleigh has been solely responsible for the acquisition, funding, and development of its Parks Program. Intense competition for valuable Federal funds has become the norm and the City must continually look for creative ways in which to obtain funding. Due to accelerated growth, the continued exploration of creative means to finance future park acquisition and development still persists. As a result, the City's Facility Fee Program was designed to collect fees from developers to directly assist with the purchase of new parklands and to bolster park development in pace with the City's expansion.

Another vital element of parks and recreation funding in recent decades has been the use of publicly-supported and funded bond referendums. In 1984, the City committed itself to its future parks program with the passage of an \$8 million bond program. In 1987, a \$10 million bond was approved and used to develop a year-round aquatics facility, softball complex and three new major parks. Since then, through bond referendums, citizens have encouraged continued growth of a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities. Citizen desires continue to be represented through the City Council appointed Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board. In 1995, citizens of Raleigh passed a \$28 million bond referendum, in 2000, a \$16 million bond for parks system improvements, investments and land acquisition was passed, and in 2003 a \$47 million bond was approved for park system development.

## 2.1.6 Collaborative Era (2005 - present)

The last ten years has been marked with further expansion of services and responsibilities for the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department. Several collaborative efforts have been undertaken by the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department in an attempt to keep pace with growth, provide a broad spectrum of parks and recreation opportunities at a reasonable cost to the City. Through partnerships with the Wake County Public School System two major community centers were built, Brier Creek and Barwell Road, both of which serve as models for leveraging public services and investments.



*Brier Creek Community Center*

# Chapter Two

The City continues to lead the major efforts in greenway trail system development by partnering with other municipal jurisdictions including Wake Forest and Knightdale on the creation of the Neuse River Greenway Trail, a \$28 million regional recreational destination. Volunteerism, nonprofit and private corporate opportunities have continued to grow over the last several years. A long list of projects have been completed in the park system with assistance from Kaboom, AT&T, Target, Methodist Home for Children's Alumni Association and the Fred and Margie Fletcher Volunteer Award Fund of the Triangle Community Foundation. These are just a few examples of various organizations continued commitments to parks and recreation services in Raleigh.



*Neuse River Greenway Trail at Milburnie Park*

In 2009 the City of Raleigh adopted the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The visionary plan provides the overall guidance for the City's services and development over the next two decades. More specifically the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element of the plan provides framework for the direction the department should move in. Additionally the parks and recreation services and amenities are reference in both policy statement and action items throughout several other elements including Environmental Protection, Arts and Culture and more. A primary recommendation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan was to update the Parks and Recreation System Plan.

The long history of parks and recreation services and facilities in the City of Raleigh is the result of overwhelming public support. In return the City Council adopted a comprehensive Public Participation Program. The program provides the department with guidelines and

best practices for involving the citizens of Raleigh in park and recreation planning and design process.

Two recent programming areas that have grown in the Parks and Recreation Department are the Arts and Historical resources. In 2011 the City Arts Commission was moved from under the overview of the City Manager's Office to under the Direction and oversight of the Parks and Recreation Department. Additionally, in 2012 the City of Raleigh assumed responsibility of the Raleigh City Museum and acquired a new historic City downtown called the Pope House. These two changes now provide the Parks and Recreation Department with improved opportunities to deliver a more diverse set of cultural experiences for the citizens of Raleigh.

Another recent change in the parks and recreation department is the creation the Nature Preserve park classification. Specific criteria were created by an ad hoc committee of local experts, Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board Members and staff. These criteria help determine if a park should be classified as a Nature Preserve. In 2011 the Raleigh City Council approved 4 parks to be classified as Nature Preserve.



*Annie Louise Wilkerson, MD Nature Preserve*

Today the department manages approximately 135 parks, 82 open spaces, 75 miles of greenway trails, 44 staffed and non-staff centers, over 2,150 annual programs, and a combined 9,493 acres of parks and greenways. This constitutes a diverse system that includes historic sites and buildings, cemeteries, nature preserves, and public arts programming for the City of Raleigh. A map of this system can be found on the next page (Map A - Public Realm).

# Existing System Overview



*Buffalo Road Park Aquatic Center*



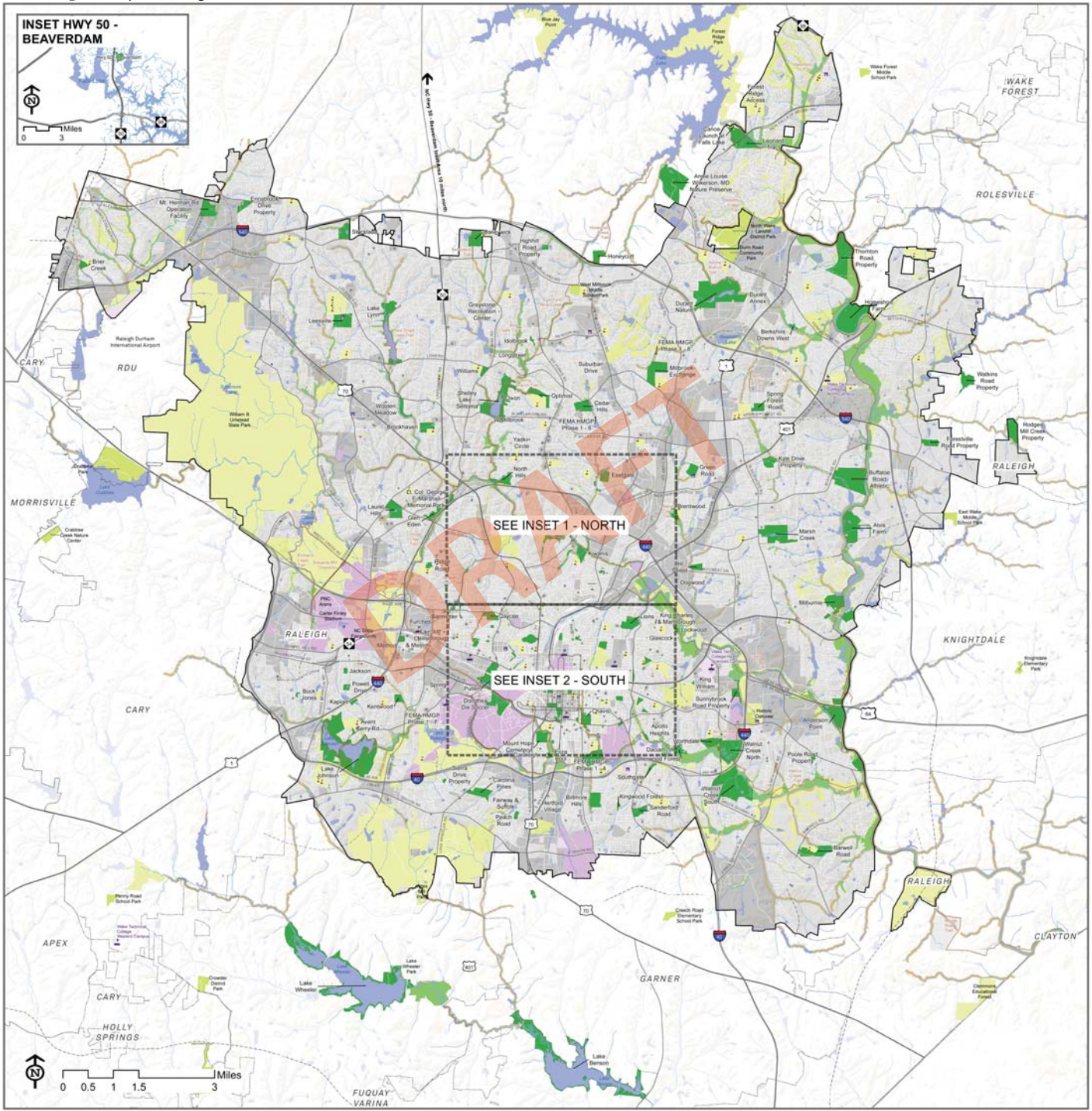
*North Hills Park*

existing system overview



# Chapter Two

Map A. City of Raleigh Public Realm, 2012



**LEGEND**

- |  |                     |                 |                   |                           |                     |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| City of Raleigh Park                   | COR CAG Corridors   | Jurisdiction    | State Site        | Universities and Colleges | Major Road          |
| City of Raleigh Greenway               | Greenway Trail      | Raleigh ETJ     | Wake County Site  | Public School             | Proposed Major Road |
| Wake County Park                       | Lake/Pond/Reservoir | Residential     | Historic Landmark | Private School            | Street              |
| Non-City of Raleigh Parks & Open Space | Rivers and Streams  | Non-Residential | Library           | Place of Worship          | Proposed Street     |

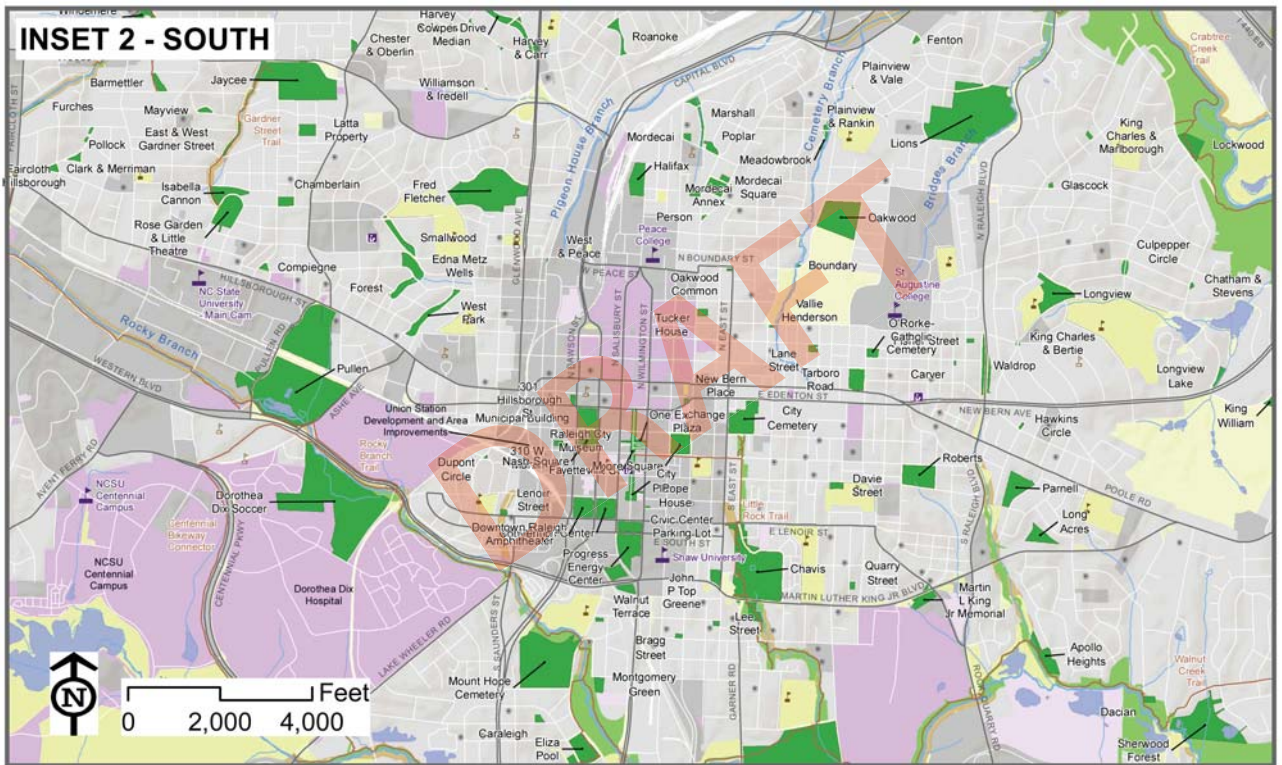
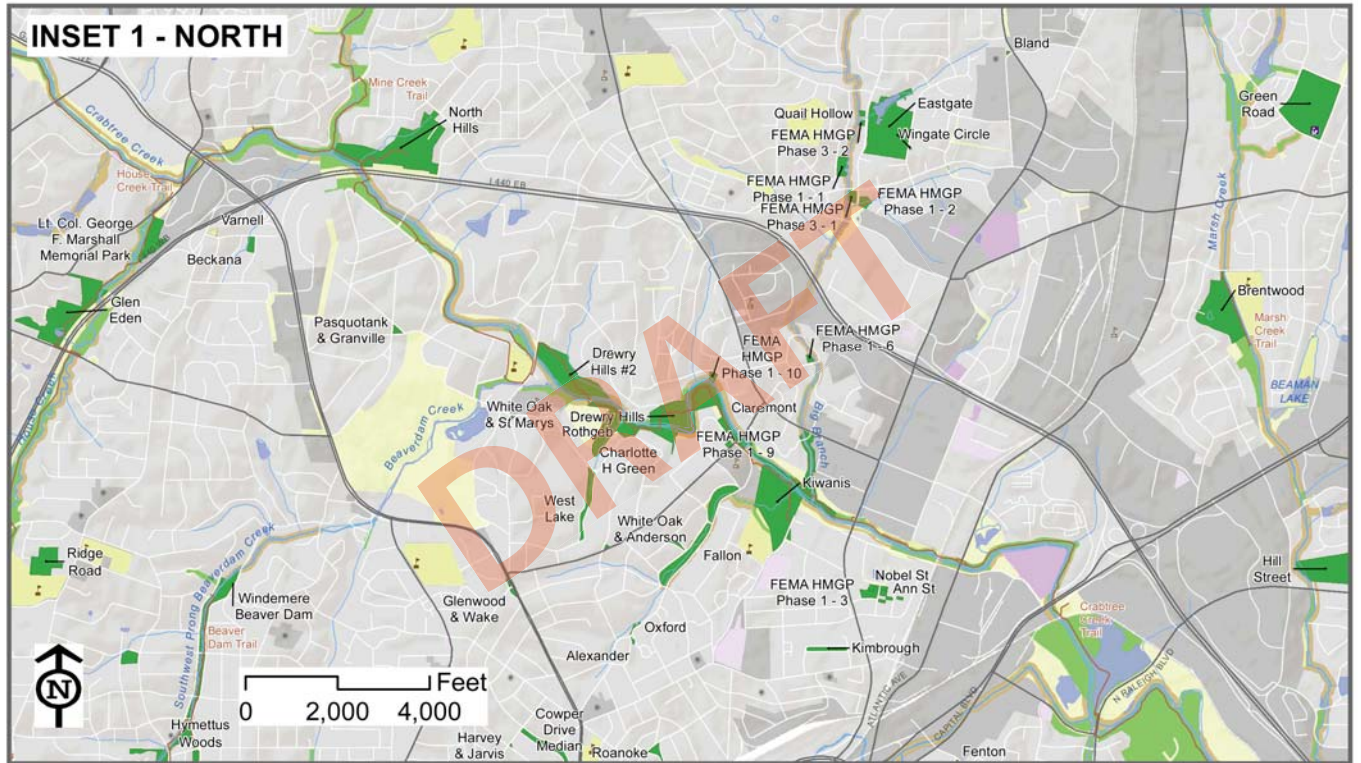
Esri is the source of the Terrain Base Map. Other data sources include the City of Raleigh and Wake County.

existing system overview



# Existing System Overview

Map A Insets. City of Raleigh Public Realm, 2012



existing system overview