



BLUE RIVER PARKWAY MASTER PLAN

December 2022

JACKSON COUNTY PARKS + REC

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JACKSON COUNTY

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“...Every county - and particularly those counties around large centers of population - is obligated to provide the best it can for the recreation and health of its citizens, a system of parks and lakes...”

Harry S. Truman, 33rd President of the United States & Jackson County Presiding Judge



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MISSION STATEMENT

This citizen-driven master planning project will prioritize the highest community needs and focus future efforts to ensure that the Blue River Parkway remains a vital regional asset that will be protected in perpetuity.

1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PARKWAY

The **Blue River Parkway (Parkway)**, approximately **2,200 acres**, is owned and maintained by Jackson County Parks + Rec. The Parkway runs along the Blue River as far north as **Swope Park**, and as far south as **Kenneth Road**. Featured amenities are walking and mountain biking trails, equestrian trails, picnic areas, multi-purpose athletic fields, a boat ramp, and many natural and scenic areas such as the **Alex George Wetland** and the **Blue River Glade**.

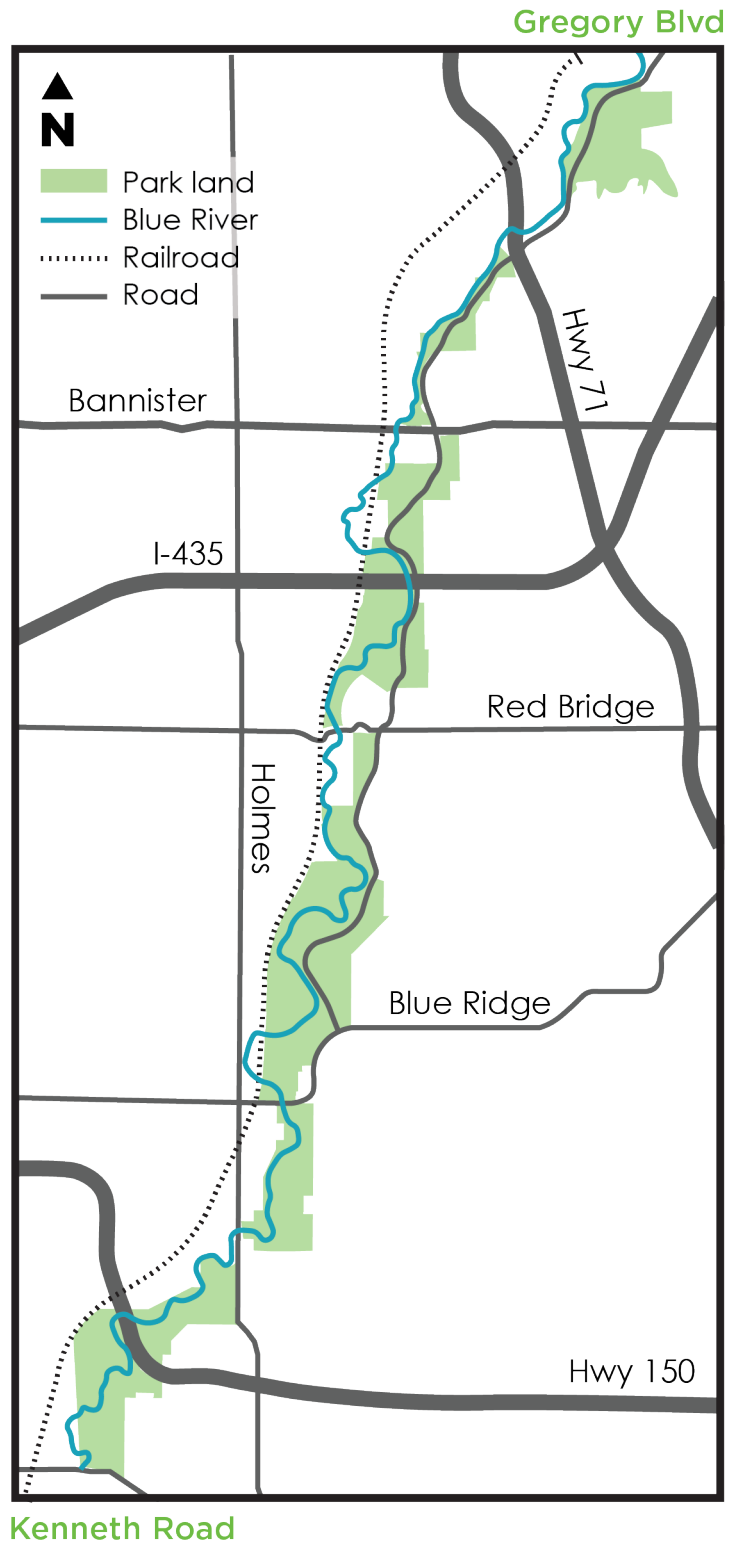
ABOUT THE PROJECT

As part of Jackson County's commitment to enhance the quality of life for all residents and build a better, more equitable community, the County is creating a new *Master Plan* for the Parkway. This plan explores and documents the Parkway's value to the community as a place for recreation, enjoyment, and wellness, while recognizing the incredible natural resources that are protected within the Parkway's boundaries.

PROJECT GOAL

"TO CREATE A NEW MASTER PLAN FOR THE BLUE RIVER PARKWAY, TO GUIDE FUTURE USE, IMPROVEMENT, AND PROTECTION OF THE PARK AS A VALUABLE ASSET IN THE JACKSON COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM MEETING THE NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS."

Public feedback has been the top priority in guiding this Master Plan. The online citizen survey received more than 800 responses and the in-person meetings at public libraries and community centers were well-attended. All of the information received provides the basis for this master planning process, and the development of our goals and objectives.



OVERVIEW

Over the last few years, outdoor recreation has seen increased participation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Outdoor recreation has been shown to have social, mental, and physical benefits like reducing stress, relief from anxiety and/or depression, lower blood pressure and can even help people develop new relationships. The Outdoor Foundation published a study of the 5 most popular outdoor activities from 2020-2021 as listed here:

1. Running, Jogging, and Trail Running
2. Hiking
3. Freshwater, Saltwater, and Fly Fishing
4. Road Biking, Mountain Biking, and BMX
5. Car, Backyard, Backpacking, and RV Camping

Source: [2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report](#)

Many of these activities can be found and enjoyed within the Blue River Parkway.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

1 Phase One - Data Collection & Needs Assessment

This initial step included a comprehensive collection and review of existing plans, reports, and technical data surrounding the Parkway. Information collected included a review and inventory of physical and natural infrastructure, utilities, watershed studies, the regional MetroGreen Trails Plan, and past Parkway planning studies. This data was useful in fully understanding current conditions and infrastructure, as well as future plans for projects and programs surrounding the park.

2 Phase Two - Stakeholder & Partner Input

This step launched the comprehensive public input process, which guided the plan's development. Feedback came through numerous meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, partners and groups interested in the Parkway, to include:

- **Neighborhood Residents and Business Owners** including homeowners and community leaders from areas surrounding the park, such as Calumet, Red Bridge Terrace, Santa Fe, and Loch Lloyd, as well as various business organizations like Saddle and Sirloin.

- **Public Stakeholders**, including Kansas City Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Planning, and Water Services, the Missouri Department of Conservation, and others.
- **Recreation Focused Stakeholders** including volunteers from the Urban Trail Co., who manage trails within the Parkway, and soccer and other sports groups who host practices, games and tournaments at the Parkway, as well as leaders from area schools and equestrian groups.
- **Natural Resource Stakeholders** and Partners, including staff and volunteers from the Heartland Conservation Alliance, Conservation Fund, Bridging the Gap and the Blue River Watershed Association.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Stakeholders**, including community advocates and experts from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the Jackson County Board of Services, and the YMCA.
- **Park Operations Stakeholders (Maintenance)** including associates and volunteers who keep the Parkway well maintained and safe.
- **Park Safety Stakeholders** including Park Rangers and other state and local law enforcement agencies who have responsibilities for public safety in and around the Parkway.

3 Phase Three - Public Engagement and Needs Assessment

This critical step included the launch of the Public Survey and full roll out of the dedicated webpage for the project. The survey, which was available both online and in-person, included informative questions on perceptions of the Parkway, usage, and priorities for future improvements and programming. The County offered four opportunities at local centers, such as Mid-Continent Public Library locations near the Parkway, for citizens to complete the survey, ask questions, and learn more about the Parkway and planning efforts. A full report on the feedback from each stakeholder group can be found in the Appendix of this report.

4 Phase Four - Data Synthesis and Conceptual Plan/Program Development

This phase involved synthesizing and prioritizing opportunities and alternatives into conceptual plans in the following areas:

Goals & Priorities

1. Land Management & Natural Resources, Priorities, & Standards:

- Establish protections guaranteeing all park property will be preserved for green space and recreation in perpetuity.
- Prioritization of Parkway safety and maintenance.
- Best practice standards for management of the entire Parkway.

2. Enterprise Recreation & Programs, Priorities, & Standards:

- Strengthen relationships with existing program providers (soccer, football, etc).
- Explore new recreational opportunities for further study and evaluation.
- Development of a dedicated inclusion and equity program to increase use and diversity in the park. Look for partners who are interested in collaborating to offer new programs and activities.
- Further explore partnerships with arts organizations for performance and/or temporary or permanent installation opportunities.

3. Park Development & Improvements, Priorities, & Standards:

- Improve existing recreational facilities.
- Extend the Blue River Greenway Trail System, from Swope Park to Kenneth Road.
- Support the Urban Trail Co.'s (UTC) efforts to extend and connect the mountain bike trail network.
- Increase access to the river for boating and fishing, including exploring grants for a new boat ramp and improvements to the existing boat ramp.

5 Phase Five - Plan Refinement & Final Document

This final step in the master planning process included the refinement of the highest priority Goals, Standards, and Implementation/Funding Opportunities. As the draft goals and priorities were developed, feedback and input was sought from citizens, stakeholders, and partners to ensure that the project team was on the right track, and developing the best actionable recommendations to meet the needs of the community. Two additional public meetings were held, one on the south side of the Parkway, and one on the east side, to get additional citizen input.

Master Plan Document Components Include:

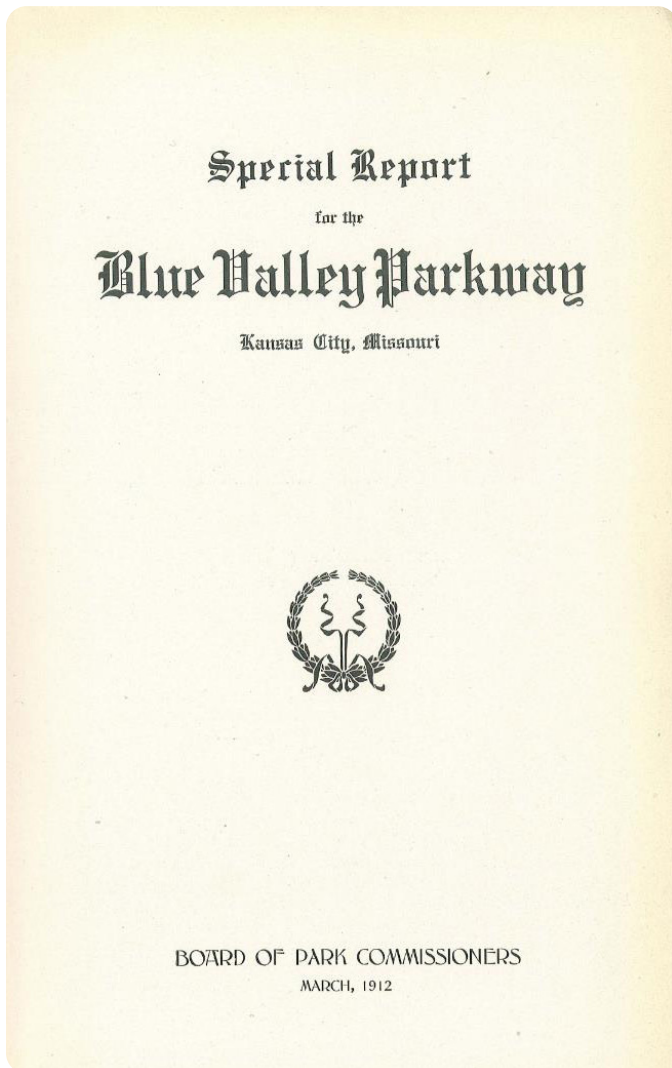
- Planning Process and Base Data
- Public Engagement, Stakeholder, and Program Participant Input
- Partnerships & Funding Opportunities
- Goals, Priorities, Standards, and Potential Projects/Initiatives
- Implementation Plan



HISTORY OF THE BLUE RIVER PARKWAY

1912

In 1912, landscape architect George Kessler wrote a report titled, "Special Report for the Blue Valley Parkway," which explored future developments near rivers in other cities and how those ideas could be suggested for the Parkway. George Kessler believed that the Blue River had great natural beauty and wrote that the River could be "one of the most useful and beautiful waterways in the country." While not technically this master plan's exact study area, this 1912 plan set a great precedent for the future County park. See map of the Parkway on Page 6 and 7.



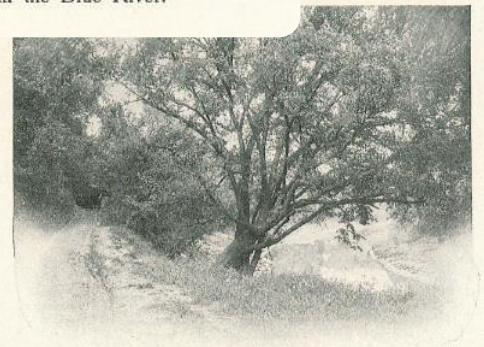
Source: Blue Valley Parkway Report

1932

The Parkway was first envisioned in a book published in 1932, at the direction of the Jackson County Circuit court, entitled "Results of County Planning, Jackson County, Missouri". The Parkway was the vision of then Jackson County presiding judge Harry S. Truman. He had a grand idea of a system of improved roads throughout the county and with it a goal "of recreational parks and lakes within a few minutes by motor car of every resident of the county." Noted for its scenic qualities, land along the Blue River was proposed to be acquired as a park beginning at the southwest corner of the county and running north to Swope Park. The road system was built, but the Parkway system did not materialize at that time. See map of the proposed Parkway on Page 6 & 7.



A Bend in the Blue River.



A Wagon Road Along the Blue River.

1953

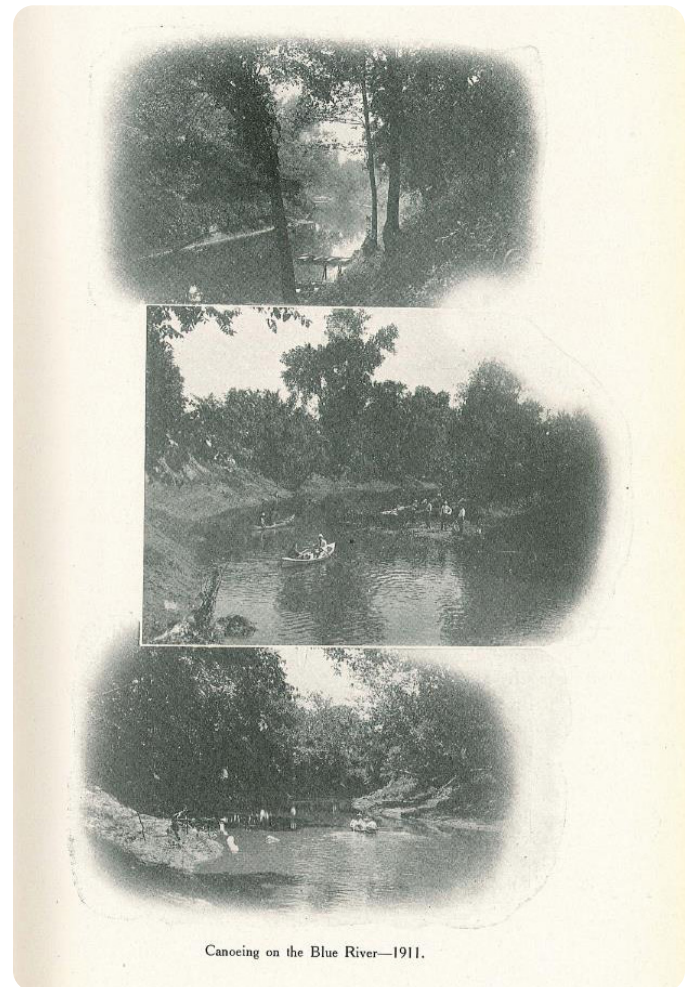
In **1953**, a plan entitled “A system of Parks and Scenic Parkways” was done by Hare and Hare, a prominent landscape architectural and park planning firm in Kansas City, to develop a Parkway system along the Blue River. The new plan drew from and built upon the concepts envisioned in the 1932 Truman Plan.

1964

In **1964**, Hare & Hare completed an update to the plan for Jackson County for the development of the Parkway. In **1966**, that vision started to become a reality when acquisition of property for the park began. A \$2.2 million dollar grant, through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, provided matching funds that were used to obtain properties between Swope Park and Blue Ridge Boulevard. Protecting green space for future generations was a major component of the funding application. A “Park Bond Construction Fund” was established in **1967**, after passage of Proposition No. 4 in a county wide vote. This fund was established for the express purpose of providing funding for acquisition and development of park land for many years. In **1971**, another \$1.1 million HUD grant provided funding for acquisition of property from Blue Ridge Boulevard south to Kenneth Road. In **1978**, a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant was secured for development of football, soccer and softball fields, as well as picnic areas within the park. See page 8 & 9 for a map of the Hare & Hare plan.

1991

In **1991**, the Prairie Gateway Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects proposed a “MetroGreen” plan for a system of trails and bikeways across the Kansas City area, including trails along the Blue River. In the **late 1990’s**, these trails began to be developed. Today, a network of over 25 miles of mountain bike and equestrian trails, and 4 miles of walking trails complement the sports and picnic areas in the Parkway. These trails have been built and are maintained through partnerships with the City of Kansas City, the non-profit UTC, and others, leveraging the resources of Jackson County Parks + Rec to continue to offer recreation and outdoor enjoyment for the citizens of the county. See maps on pages 8 & 9.



1912

MAP OF
BLUE VALLEY PARKWAY
from Fifteenth Street to Swope Park

its connection with North Terrace Park
Scale in feet

Board of Park Commissioners, Kansas City, Missouri.

DELBERT G. PATTY, Engineer.

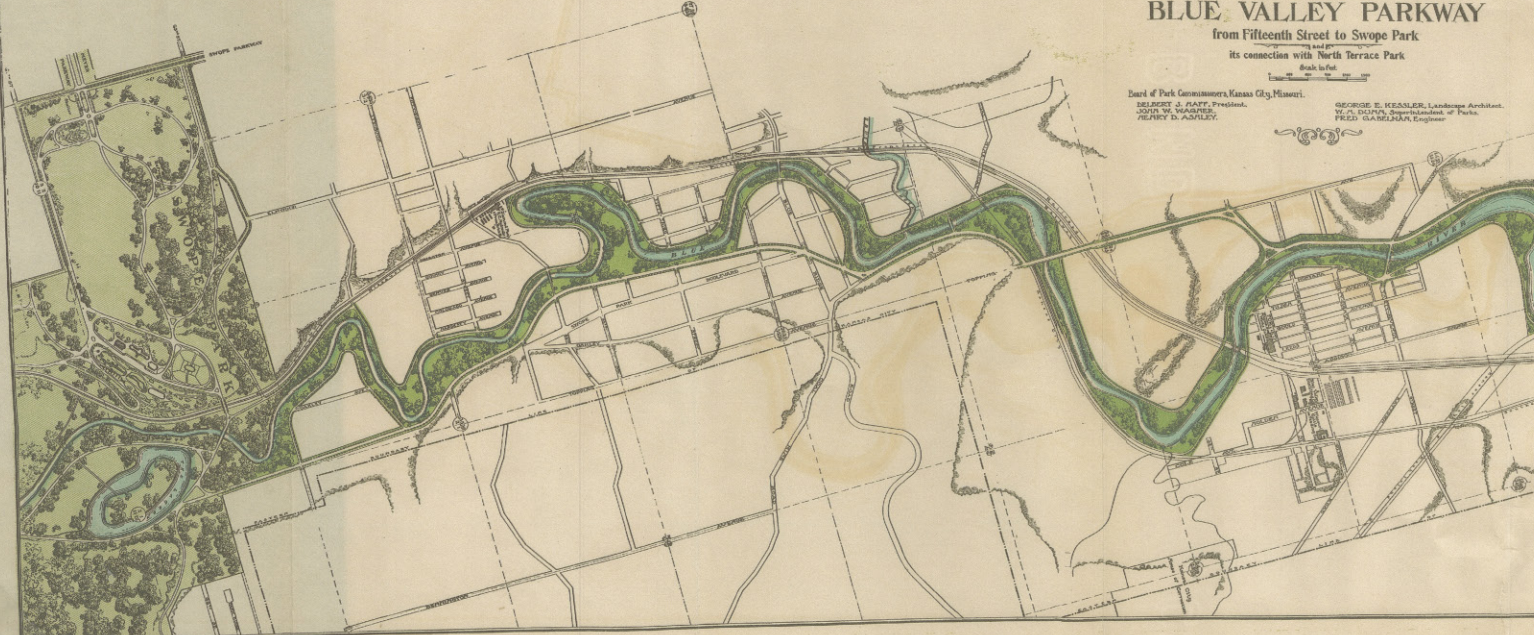
JOHN W. VANDERBILT, Engineer.

FRANK D. ADLEY, Engineer.

GEORGE E. KEASLER, Landscape Architect.

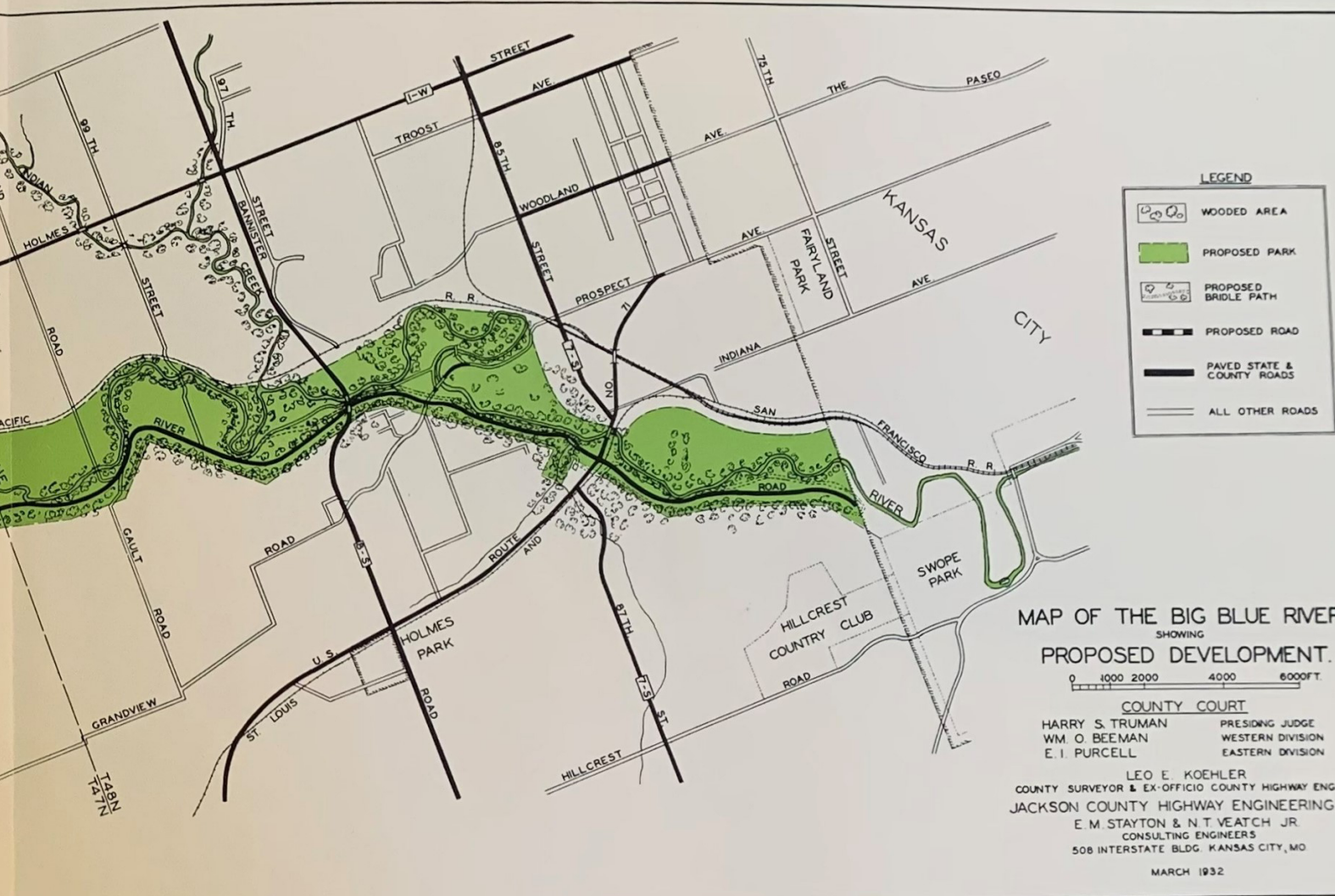
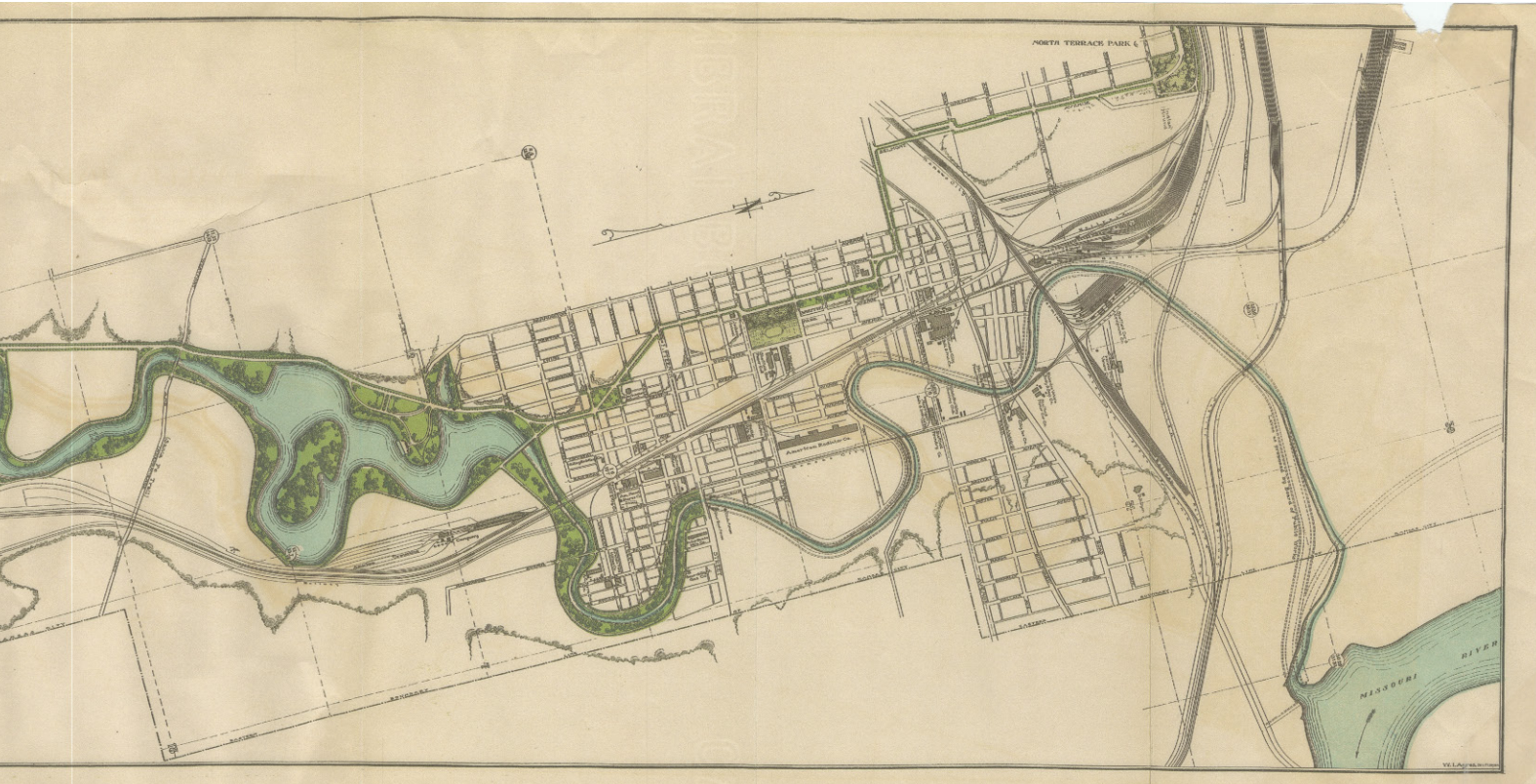
W. C. DUNN, Superintendent of Parks.

FRED G. BELMANN, Engineer.

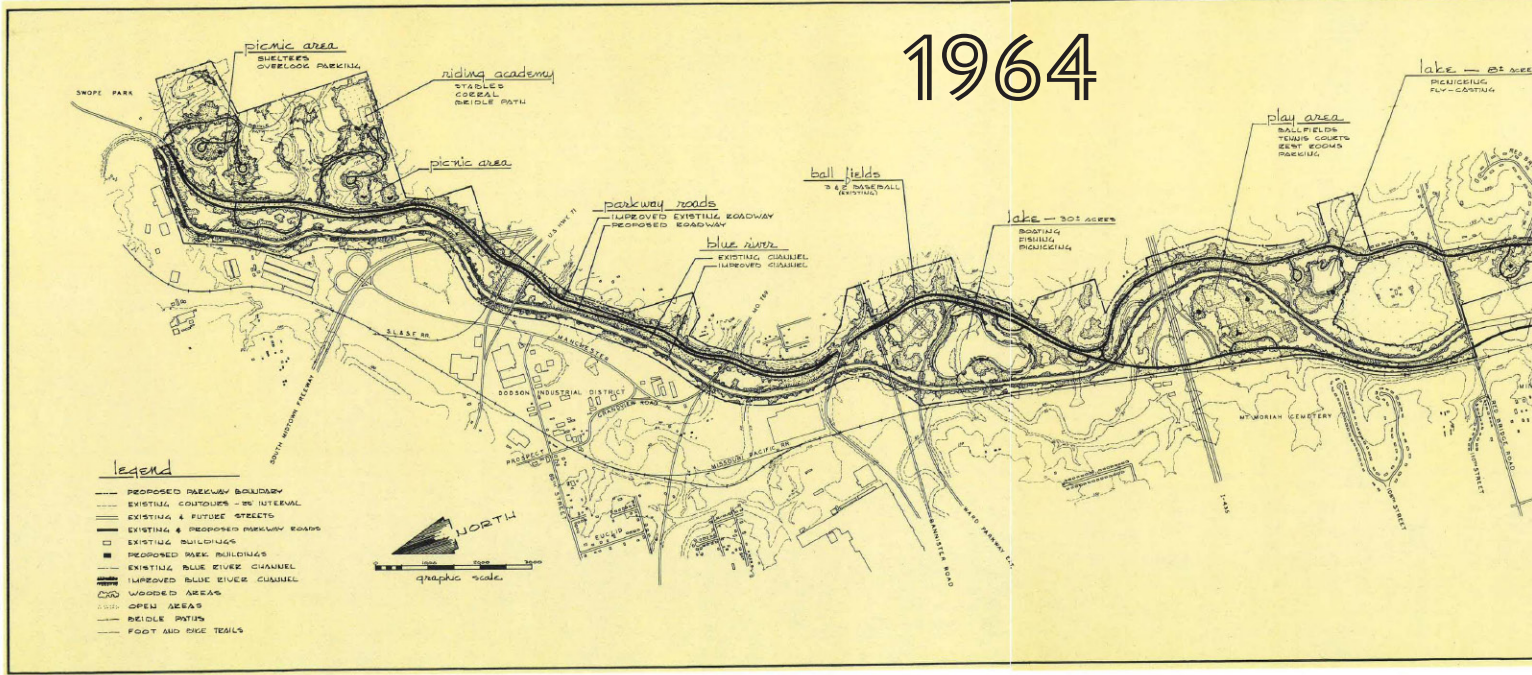


1932

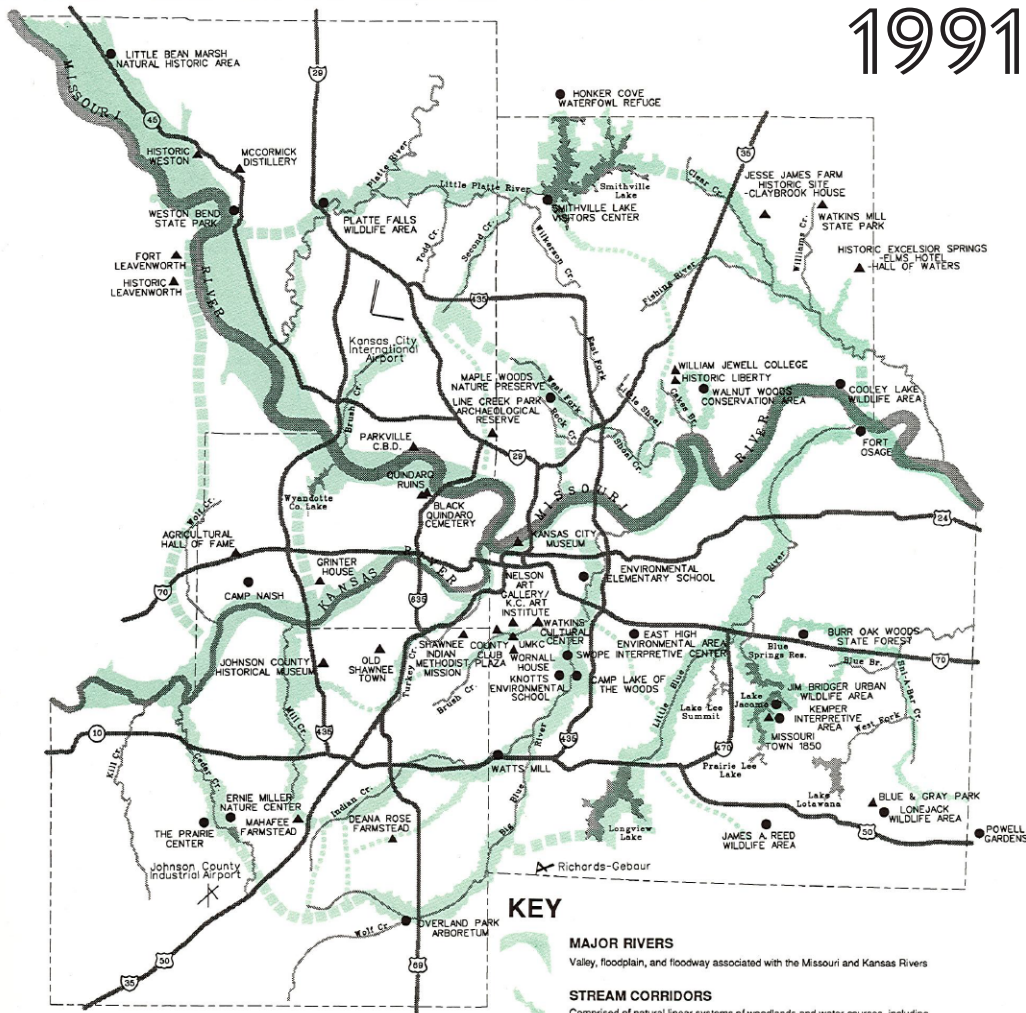




1964



1991



 metrogreen

KEY

MAJOR RIVERS

Valley, floodplain, and floodway associated with the Missouri and Kansas Rivers

STREAM CORRIDORS

Comprised of natural linear systems of woodlands and water courses, including existing greenways

UPLAND CONNECTIONS

Linkages comprised of boulevards, abandoned rail rights-of-way, and high points between water courses

▲ CULTURAL DISCOVERY CENTER

Educational opportunity for understanding cultural diversity

● NATURAL DISCOVERY CENTER

Educational opportunity for understanding natural diversity



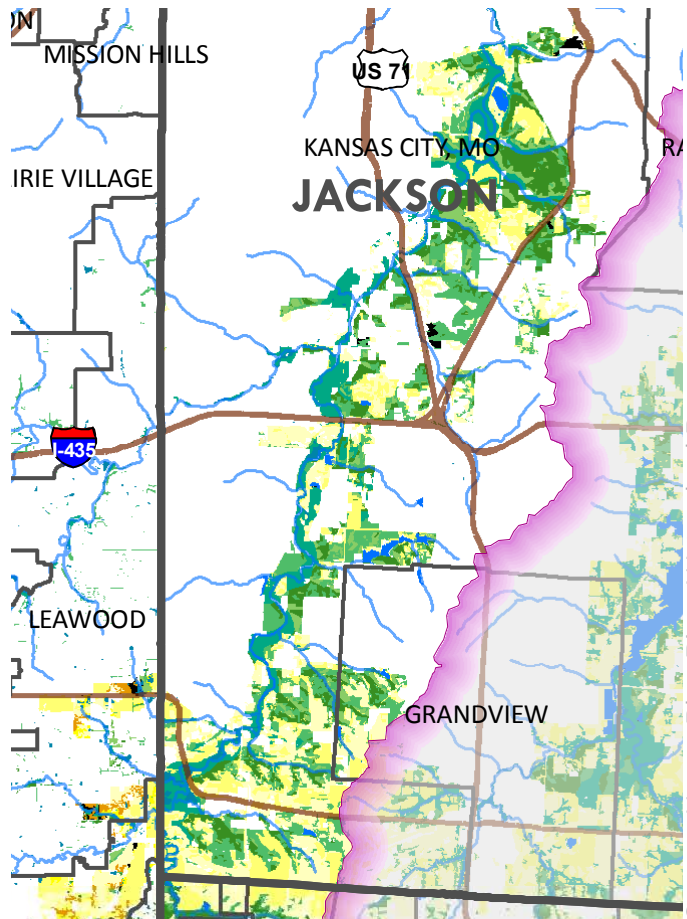
THE BLUE RIVER PARKWAY IN CONTEXT

DESCRIPTION OF THE BLUE RIVER WATERSHED

The Blue River watershed covers 270 square miles (120,000 acres) of land within the greater Kansas City metropolitan region. Encompassing 25 cities, three counties and two states, it is home to half a million people. The 42 mile long Blue River starts with its headwaters in Johnson County, Kansas and ends at its confluence with the Missouri River in Jackson County, Missouri. Land cover within the watershed (See map on right) is a quilted pattern of natural grasslands, woodlands, parklands, and highly urbanized residential and industrial developments. The watershed is a significant feature within the region, which has resulted in numerous efforts to protect and manage its valuable resources, both natural and human.

The Parkway is a Jackson County Parks + Rec Park located on approximately 2,200 acres that borders the Big Blue River from Swope Park south to the southern end of Jackson County. The Parkway offers many amenities and affords views and access to the Blue River. Amenities, both natural and man-made, include but are not limited to several miles of multi-use trails, Alex George Wetland, soccer complexes, the Blue River Glade, equestrian areas, picnic areas, and shelter houses.

LAND COVER



Source: Upper Blue River Watershed Report

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Agriculture | Lowland Hardwood Forest and Woodland |
| Cultivated Land | Marsh and Wet Herbaceous Vegetation |
| Cultural Grassland | Grassland |
| Deciduous Forest | Unclassified |
| Deciduous Woodland and Immature Forest | Developed Land |
| Mixed Evergreen Deciduous Forest | |



The Blue River Greenway Action Plan - a parallel planning effort

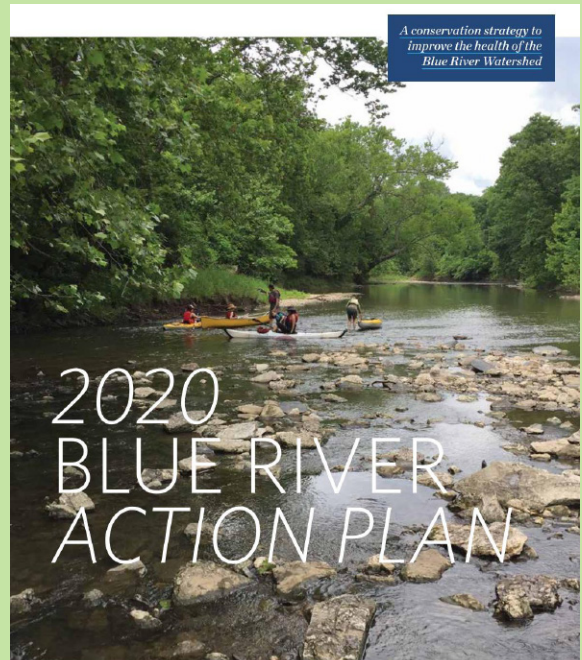
In 2021, long-time County partner, the Heartland Conservation Alliance initiated their own study of the Blue River corridor. HCA's big goals include a vision for a connected corridor, natural restoration, resilience, and equitable connections for all Kansas Citians to nature and outdoor recreation.

The 43-mile Blue River Greenway extends from the Overland Park Arboretum in suburban Johnson County, Kansas to Corrington Park in urban Kansas City, Missouri, and the confluence of the Blue and Missouri Rivers. The Parkway lies roughly in the middle of the greenway corridor. The greenway planning project builds upon considerable public lands and trails, identifying gaps and opportunities to complete land assembly, protecting and enhancing habitat, and fully connecting trails.

A goal for the study is that communities within the watershed will become more resilient by reducing flooding, improving water quality, protecting and planting floodplain forests to reduce urban heat island impacts and draw down carbon dioxide, all goals of the regional Climate Action Plan and Climate Vulnerability and Resilience Plan. Completing bicycle and pedestrian trail connections between these diverse communities will provide equitable access to nature for underserved populations and benefit the whole region.

The Blue River Greenway will be the backbone of a healthy, prosperous, connected, and resilient region. The greenway will:

- Equitably connect Kansas Citians to natural recreation
- Create regional connections to economic opportunities
- Provide essential ecosystem services through restored greenways and corridors that are critical to climate resilience
- Establish the Blue River as a marquee community asset
- Catalyze the protection, connection, and restoration of our region's major river systems



FOCAL SPECIES: PawPaws (*asimina triloba*) grow in dense shade on moist slopes along streams and have edible fruit. They have a slender trunk and broad crown and grow in colonies. Pawpaws play an irreplaceable role in the Missouri ecosystems, feeding insects and larger animals that are adapted to eating them. In 2019, the Pawpaw became Missouri's official state fruit.



FOCAL SPECIES: American Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*) rely on bottomland forests to survive. They live in and along streams, rivers, marshes, and small lakes. Beaver restoration efforts have brought their numbers to levels allowing an annual harvest.

For more information on studies and plans along the Blue River visit their online partner sites and search "Blue River":

www.marc.org

www.nature.org

www.heartlandconservationalliance.org

EXISTING COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVE IN THE PARKWAY

- **Heartland Conservation Alliance (HCA):** Founded in 2012 by a group of citizens who care deeply for the beautiful places in our city, HCA protects natural areas for the enjoyment and benefit of all. HCA is an alliance of conservation groups and entities intentionally collaborating toward common goals. They are a 501(c)3 organization, who together with their Board, Steering Council, Work Groups and Alliance members, convene interested stakeholders, pool resources, and conserve natural resources for people, wildlife and ecosystems. They educate landowners, neighborhood residents, youth, adults and policy makers, and connect people to nature. While their service area is generally the greater Kansas City Metropolitan area, their current geographic focus is the Blue River Watershed.



- **Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC):** MDC was created in 1937, to restore, conserve and regulate Missouri's over-stressed fisheries, forests and wildlife populations. Consistent funding, plus a strong, non-political structure and very supportive public has helped make Missouri a national leader in conservation. Today, MDC continues its legacy of protecting the state's wild resources and helping Missourians connect with their natural heritage. Their goal is to sustain diverse, healthy plant and animal communities well into the future.



- **Urban Trail Co. (UTC):** A memberless non-profit organization with a 7-member board and an advisory board of knowledgeable trail builders and trail user community representatives. UTC helps build and maintain single track biking, hiking, and running trails in the Kansas City region. Trail-building resources are allocated through five volunteer, regional trail directors, who are among Kansas City's most experienced trail builders.



- **Bridging The Gap (BTG):** Works to make the Kansas City region sustainable by “connecting environment, economy and community,” and is the premier organization in the area providing environmental education and volunteer action through more than 1,800 volunteers annually. Heartland Tree Alliance and Kansas City WildLands are two of many programs within BTG.



- » **Heartland Tree Alliance** is a program under BTG, that educates people about all the critically important benefits created by urban trees, why these trees need extra care, and the proper ways to give them that care. They also organize planting events, pruning events and tree care workdays to get people involved.



- » **Kansas City WildLands** is a coalition of resource professionals, private conservation organizations and conservation-minded citizens established to restore and conserve the remnants of Kansas City's original landscape by involving people in the stewardship of the land.





- **Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department (KC Parks):** Provides facilities, programs and recreational opportunities for the community that contribute to an aesthetically pleasing environment and enhanced quality of life. The Department maintains 221 parks, 12,242 acres of parkland, 158 miles of trails and bikeways, 29 lakes, hundreds of athletic fields and tennis courts, 106 playgrounds, and five public golf courses. Miles of scenic boulevards and parkways crisscross the city, where 48 fountains and 122 monuments and sculptures surprise and delight. Ten community centers, along with eight museums, provide the setting for socially equitable and community-driven programming.



Let us be guardians, not gardeners.

- Adolph Murie



2

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

This is a citizen-driven master planning effort. Public input, feedback, and engagement are crucial in guiding the future of the Parkway. Therefore, the public was involved throughout the entirety of this project. Stakeholders, the general public, and Parkway users were critical in the development of this master plan. Input and survey results are shown through pie and bar charts and word clouds. Word clouds are a visual representation of open-ended responses, with quantity of responses shown through larger font sizes.

1 Starting in **October 2021**, Jackson County Parks + Rec hosted **7 stakeholder meetings** with:

- City of Kansas City Partners
- Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Partners
- Natural Resource Partners
- Neighborhood Partners
- Park Safety Partners
- Park Operations & Maintenance Staff
- Recreation Partners

Over **50 participants** attended these stakeholder meetings either in-person or virtually through Zoom.

2 In **April 2022**, a **public input survey** was released and **835 responses** were collected online and in-person. The survey asked a total of **20 questions**. Eight questions focused on specific information about the Parkway, six questions revolved around Jackson County's facilities in general, and six optional and confidential questions asked about the survey participant's household and demographics.

3 In **May 2022**, Jackson County Parks + Rec held **four in-person "open house" format meetings** on the southside and eastside of Kansas City to collect additional public feedback. These events gave citizens a chance to learn more about the Parkway and ask questions of County staff.

4 In **October 2022**, Jackson County Parks + Rec held **two additional in-person Open House** meetings, one at the Kansas City Police Department South Patrol Station and one at the Linwood YMCA, to gauge public buy-in for the presented goals and priorities for the Parkway.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS: KEY FINDINGS

Overall, most stakeholders consider the Parkway a regional asset of natural significance. Most challenges include a lack of access or visibility to the Parkway. The majority of the priority opportunities support and extend recreational activities like paved trails, disc golf, and mountain biking trails and aim to protect the natural environment of the Parkway.

Strengths:

- Regional significance
- Sustainable approach opportunity
- Historical jewel
- Location
- Proximity to neighborhoods
- Natural areas
- Trail networks (biking, hiking, walking, and horseback riding)
- Abundance of multi-use recreational areas able to host a wide-variety of different programs

Challenges:

- Safety, security, and infrastructure
- Public awareness and appreciation
- Crime, illegal dumping, theft, and vandalism
- Ecological health - invasive species
- Access to some areas
- Lack of accessible parking
- Limited river access points; only one boat ramp

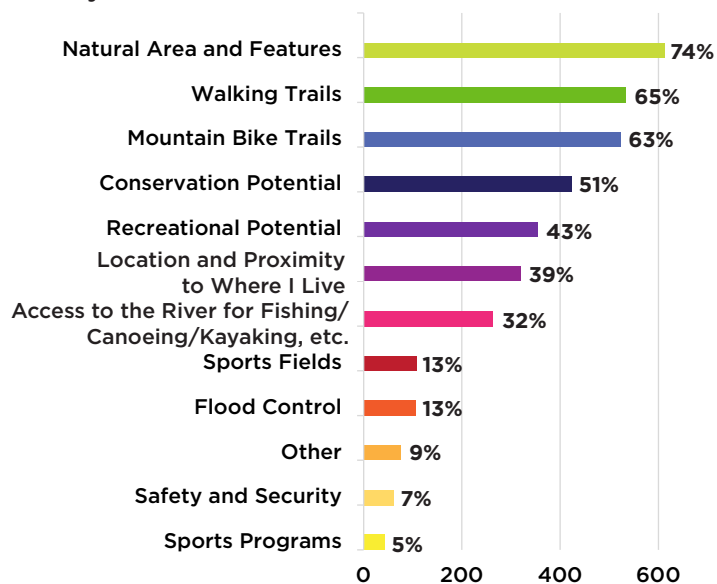
Priority Opportunities:

- Balanced approach - Recreation + Natural resources
- Extend trails
- Support existing and new programs
- Engagement & education - dedicated accessibility and equity opportunities
- Support UTC and other current non-profit partners
- Disc golf opportunities
- Community park development at Kenneth Road
- Better parking
- Lighting near parking lots

SURVEY RESULTS

The public survey was live through the month of April 2022 and the beginning of May and received a total of 835 responses. All survey responses can be found in the Appendices.

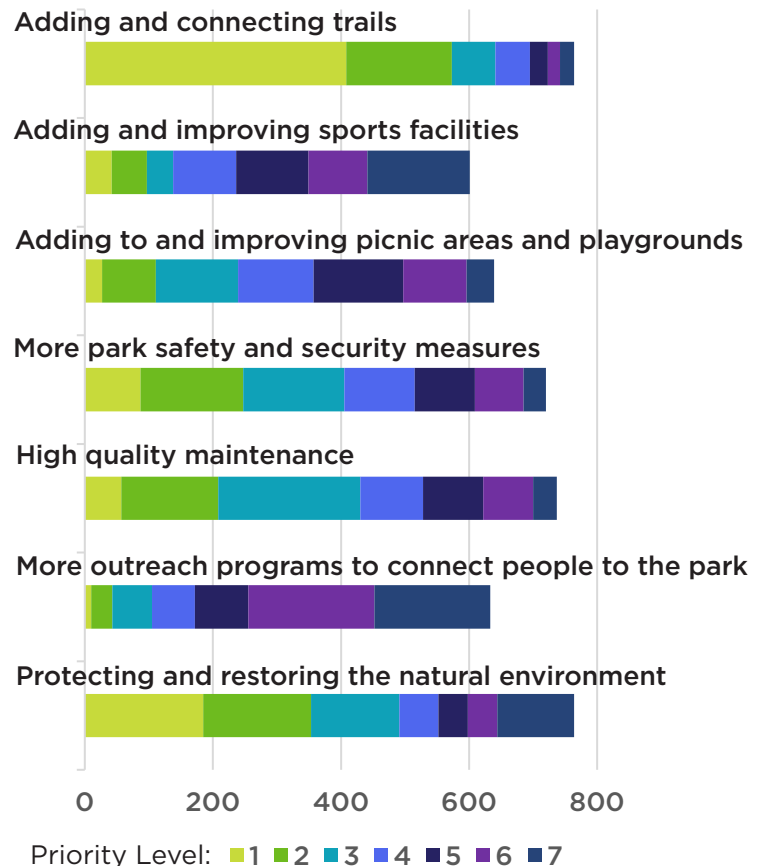
The survey asked Jackson County residents “What do you think are the best aspects or strengths of the park?”. From those survey results, the top 5 strengths of the Parkway were mainly more passive activities, features, or uses, with mountain biking being one of the more active uses within the Parkway. Other best aspects mentioned were the equestrian trails, Blue River Road, and the possibility of adding disc golf course. Survey respondents, tracked by their zip codes, came from all over Jackson County, but primarily the areas around the Parkway, in southern and eastern Kansas City.



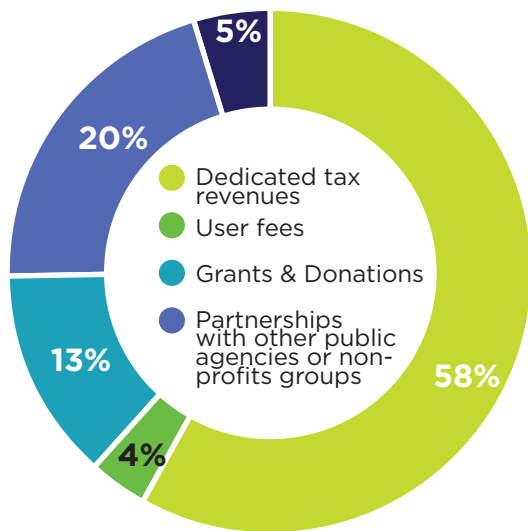
Other BEST ASPECTS:



In order to help Jackson County Parks + Rec prioritize, future needs, and amenities, respondents were asked the question, “What should be the focus for the future?” Similar to other results, participants chose more passive priorities for the County to focus on in the future with “adding and connecting trails;” followed by “protecting and restoring the natural environment” and smaller improvement-focused priorities along with a desire to see more outreach programs to connect people to the Parkway.

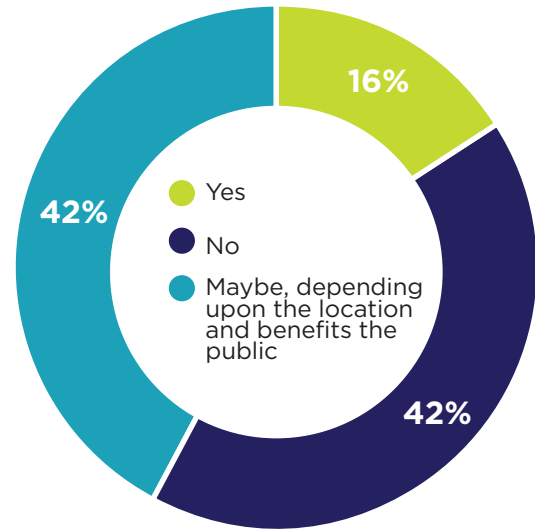


Another question asked of respondents was, "How should park improvements be funded, generally?" This question was asked to gauge citizen interest in dedicated tax revenues to Parks, user fees, or through other donation or partnership channels. More than half of participants (58%) agreed that they would support a dedicated tax; the least favorable funding source coming from park and facility user fees at 4%. Participants who chose "other" commented that they would be willing to pay or utilize a combination of all the above.

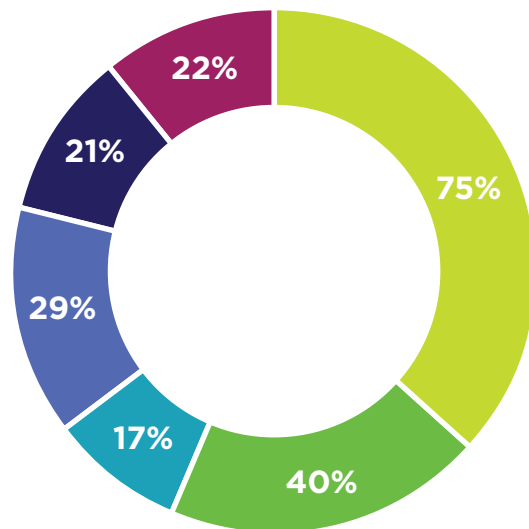


Other:
tax the rich
federal money
hybrid
event funding
all of the above
combination of some
taxes already paying

For future possible developments, the County asked residents if public-private partnerships for park improvements, where a third party provides funding for park amenities in exchange for specific development rights, should be pursued. This kind of partnership could greatly impact the look, feel, and environment of the Parkway in its entirety. From the responses received, the public appears hesitant about public-private partnerships and how development might impact the Parkway, but may be open to this as a funding opportunity. There would need to be clear goals and benefits to the Parkway and general public.



One of the general questions the survey asked dealt with "What would make you more interested in visiting or engaging in more outdoor activities?" This was a general question for all Jackson County Parks + Rec programs. Participants commented on amenities, programs, and opportunities that they would like to see throughout the JC P+R system.



- More amenities
- Elimination of barriers
- Recreation programs
- Outreach programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Other:

More amenities, such as:

signage/wayfinding
disc golf
 more/safe parking
 restrooms/drinking fountains
 mountain biking trails
 pickleball
 archery range
 camping (RV & primitive)
 activity hub
 trails (paved/unpaved)
 leave it as is
 security/maintenance
connecting trails
 picnic areas playgrounds
 kayaking/water sports/rental
 equestrian trails

Elimination of barriers, such as:

limited parking
 maintenance/upkeep
 lack of pedestrian-friendly corridors
lack of connections
 no restrooms
blue river road/closed roads
 lack of security/safety
trash/dumping
 illegal activity & crime
 overgrown vegetation & invasives
lack of accessibility
 limited/no signage
 erosion/wash out

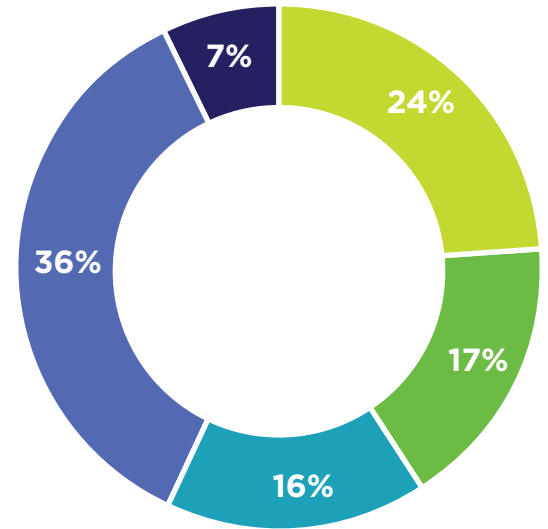
Outreach programs, such as guided hikes or nature programs

guided hikes
 kayaking & fishing
 youth nature education & programs
 mountain biking clubs
 disc golf
 birding
 zipline
 activities for all ages
 summer camps

Other:

overgrown vegetation
 more trail signage
 conserve nature and wildlife
 more parking
more safety/security
 dirt bikes/ATV tracks
 improve cleanliness & stop dumping
 avoid development
more trail connections
 re-use blue river road
 equestrian trails
 safer parking areas
 disc golf

Of the six demographic questions asked, household makeup is particularly important as it shows who the potential users and supporters of the Parkway are. Participants were asked to generally “Describe your household makeup.”



- Single
- Married no children
- Married with no children living in the home
- Married with children living in the home
- Prefer not to say



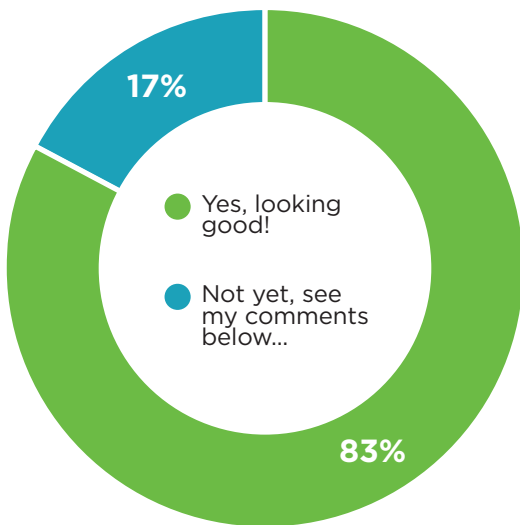
DRAFT PLAN PRESENTATION AT OPEN HOUSES & KEY FINDINGS

Jackson County Parks + Rec held two final open house meetings for citizens and Parkway users to review and comment on draft goals and priorities for the Parkway Master Plan.

Over 70 citizens came and gave comments on the draft goals and priorities. They were asked three questions to comment on:

1. Overall, are you supportive of the draft goals and priorities presented for the protection and improvement of the Blue River Parkway?
2. What new park priorities or development initiatives are you most enthused or excited about?
3. Is there anything else about the Blue River Parkway Master Plan you would like us to consider?

A majority of respondents thought the draft master plan was on the right track. Those that responded “not yet,” wrote comments addressing other considerations like parking, lighting, agricultural-focused approaches and programs, and diversity and inclusion initiatives.



Of the priorities and/or development initiatives presented at the open house, visitors were most excited to see passive uses of the land, like trails, boat ramps, and protection of the Parkway in perpetuity. A few more active uses like multi-use fields, and improvements to Alex George Wetland and the Kenneth Road Sports Complex were also well received.



For the last open-ended question of this short survey, participants were allowed to voice any other ideas, initiatives, improvements, or programs they would like to see included in the final master plan document. In response, participants would like Kansas City to consider what to do with Blue River Road. Some respondents would like to see it re-opened and others would like to see it converted to a mixed-use path. Other considerations included rugby fields at 99th and Bannister, trail connections and expansions, and partnerships with dedicated organizations and volunteer groups.



HILLCREST CC

ROUND 1



ROUND 2



OPEN HOUSE #1

OPEN HOUSE TABULATIONS

Below is the tabulation of the responses received on questions two and three from the second round of open house surveys. Responses were aggregated by type (i.e. all types of trails comments were placed into one category such as biking, hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, etc.)

2. What new park priorities or development initiatives are you most enthused or excited about?



65

Sport Facilities
Improvements & Additions



41

Trails
Extensions & Improvements
(all trail types)



28

Natural Resource
Protection & Restoration



15

River Access for
Canoes & Kayaks
More boat ramps



10

Park Safety & Maintenance
Priority



4

Closing or Reopening Blue River Road
(Kansas City)



4

School or Recreation Programs



6

Other

3. Is there anything else about the Blue River Parkway Master Plan you would like us to consider?



19

Sport Facilities
Improvements & Additions



11

Park Safety & Maintenance
Priority



10

Trails
Extensions & Improvements
(all trail types)



8

Natural Resource
Protection & Restoration



7

Closing or Reopening Blue River Road
(Kansas City)



3

Diversity Initiatives



2

River Access for
Canoes & Kayaks
More boat ramps

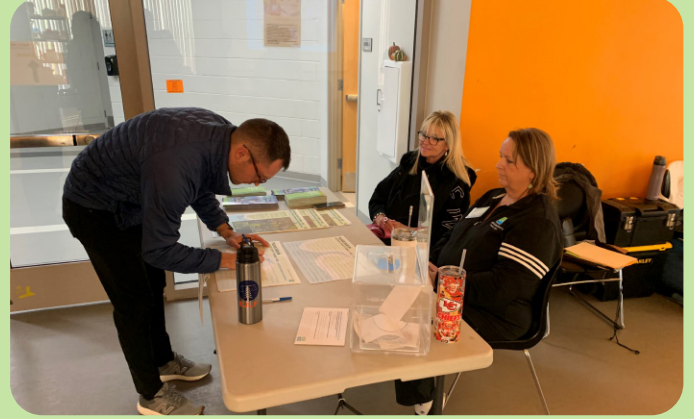


5

Other

OPEN HOUSES

ROUND 2



3

GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STANDARDS

The location, size, and variable resources both natural and human, within the Parkway, make it an ideal regional destination. It is surrounded by diverse neighborhoods that include some of our region's most vulnerable residents. The focus of management and programming within the Parkway should be to help protect these valuable resources, while providing diverse and equitable access to nature and recreational opportunities. Amenities and improvements should consider the needs of a variety of groups and individuals, ensuring an environment that is inclusive where people feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to participate fully.



LAND MANAGEMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Management of land, water, and human resources is critical to the long-term protection and enjoyment of the Parkway. Resources within the Parkway can be used for a variety of purposes, such as: recreation, reforestation, water resource management, enterprise, ecotourism, and a multitude of other uses. Approaches taken to management of the Parkway are dependent upon creating a balance between the type of resources present and desires and demands for public use. See map pages 26-27.

Jackson County's land management and natural resources plan for the Blue River Parkway includes three major goals:

- 1. Establishing protections guaranteeing all park property will be reserved for green space and recreation in perpetuity.**
- 2. Prioritization of park safety and maintenance.**
- 3. Best practice standards for management of the entire Blue River Parkway.**

1. Establishing protections guaranteeing all park property will be reserved for green space and recreation in perpetuity.

- Per the Jackson County Code, transfers of any lands owned by the County must follow the requirements of Chapter 11 of the Code of Ordinances, including: "... to the highest and best bidder by open and public competition unless made to the United States or any of its agencies or to the State of Missouri or any of its political subdivisions or municipalities and authorize county officers to dispose of personal property upon terms advantageous to the county."
- Land Acquisition: As a matter of practice, Jackson County Parks + Rec does not seek out or advocate for selling park land. The Department maintains over 21,000 acres, supporting their core mission of providing recreational and fun-filled opportunities for Jackson County residents, while preserving precious green space, rivers, streams, and unique natural areas for future generations to enjoy.
- The County should further pursue and evaluate the use of conservation easements for protection of the Parkway. A conservation easement provides permanent protection for land in an undeveloped state. Its purpose is to prevent activities from occurring on the property that would impair the land's scenic, ecological, and other natural resource or recreational values. An easement does not change property ownership. Both public and private lands can be protected by conservation easements.
- Land and Water Conservation Funding (LWCF): Jackson County has used this program in the past to acquire park land. The County will continue to evaluate opportunities to use this program to improve park land as appropriate. Below is a brief description of the LWCF program.

» “The LWCF is America’s most important program to conserve irreplaceable lands and improve outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the nation. The program works in partnership with federal, state, and local efforts to protect land in our national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, national trails, and other public lands; to preserve working forests and ranchlands; to support state and local parks and playgrounds; to preserve battlefields and other historic and cultural sites; and to provide the tools that communities need to meet their diverse conservation and recreation needs.”

Source:<https://lwcfcoalition.org/>

» In the past, Jackson County Parks + Rec used LWCF to: develop +/- 800 acres of land along the Blue River located in the southern part of the county to include horse trails, restrooms, 2 picnic shelters, ballfield, parking, and roads.

- Explore public and private partnership opportunities to assist with long-term protection and management of resources within and adjacent to the Park.

» Establish partnership standards, including specific guidelines and requirements for new improvements or program opportunities at the Park, that may involve one or more public or private entity partners.

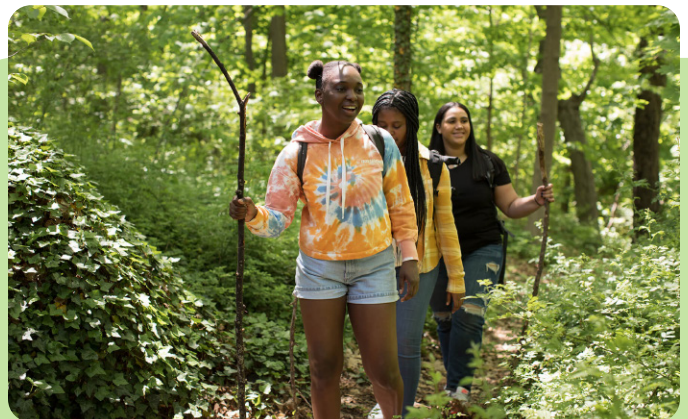
» For any proposal submitted to Jackson County for a public/private partnership (PPP), specific conditions and criteria shall be applied. See insert on pages 34-35 for partnership guidelines and benefits.

2. Prioritization of park safety and maintenance.

- Review all signage for accessibility and inclusion.
- Safety study of activity centers (i.e. sports facilities, trailheads, etc.) using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) model.

» “CrimePreventionThroughEnvironmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments. CPTED strategies aim to reduce victimization, deter offender decisions that precede criminal acts, and build a sense of community among inhabitants so they can gain territorial control of areas, reduce crime, and minimize fear of crime. CPTED is pronounced ‘sep-ted’ and it is also known around the world as “Designing Out Crime, defensible space, and other similar terms.” Source: <https://www.cpted.net/>

- Set design criteria for new improvements per industry standards (i.e. concrete trails vs. gravel trails).
- Seek additional funding for safety and maintenance operations when possible.
- Lighting at parking areas should be studied further.
- Dumping will be closely monitored, including at each closed section of the Blue River Road with activities coordinated with Kansas City. The Parkway is close to the Kansas City Police Department South Patrol Station, which could be critical as a collaborating partner helping to monitor and patrol, along with other jurisdictions.



3. Best practice standards for Management of the entire Blue River Parkway.

- Develop/update Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for maintenance of facilities and management of resources.
 - » SOPs will help staff and volunteers carry out routine operations, which will achieve efficiency, quality output and uniformity of performance, while reducing miscommunication and failure to comply with industry regulations. These SOPs can be shared with other partner organizations.
- Utilize recognized local, state, and federal standards for land management and recreation. The following is a sample list of organizations and guidance documents that could be used to supplement management of resources within the Parkway.
 - » [Kansas City Missouri Trails KC Plan Trail Design Guidelines and Standards](#)
 - » [HCA 2020 Blue River Action Plan](#)

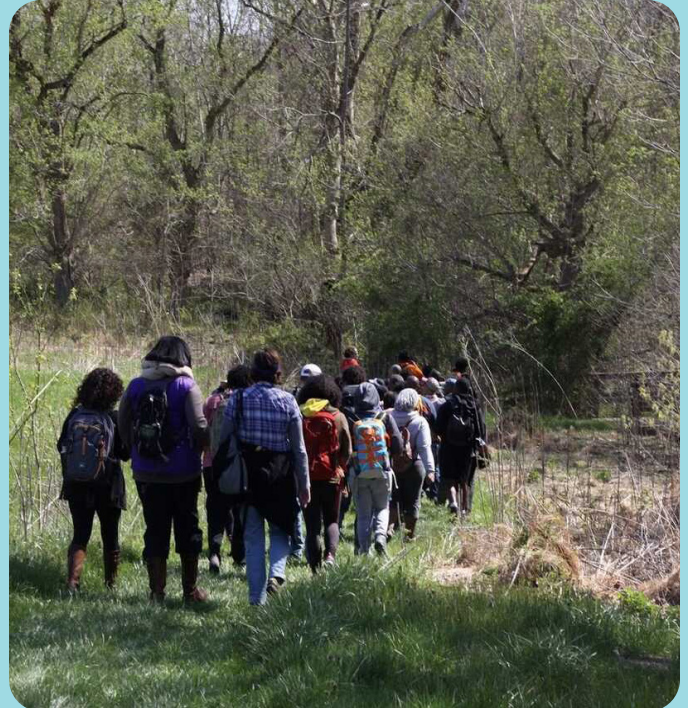
The goal of management within the HCA's Blue River Action Area, is to provide a healthy corridor for wildlife habitat and migrating birds, reduce flooding, and improve climate resiliency with large native climax canopy trees that naturally grow along the river. Proper management will also provide ample ways for people to connect and enjoy the river for recreation. See Land Management and Natural Resources map on pages 30-31. Management goals for this Action Area include providing public outreach and education, in addition to protecting riparian corridors that are relatively intact but experiencing threats from development and invasive species. Conservation priorities include:

- Maintaining and establishing quality wildlife habitat by managing invasive species and expanding native riparian tree and shrub cover
- Engaging surrounding community members in workdays and outdoor events to increase awareness
- Collaborating with partners to adopt



management plans, manage natural resources, and protect land from development

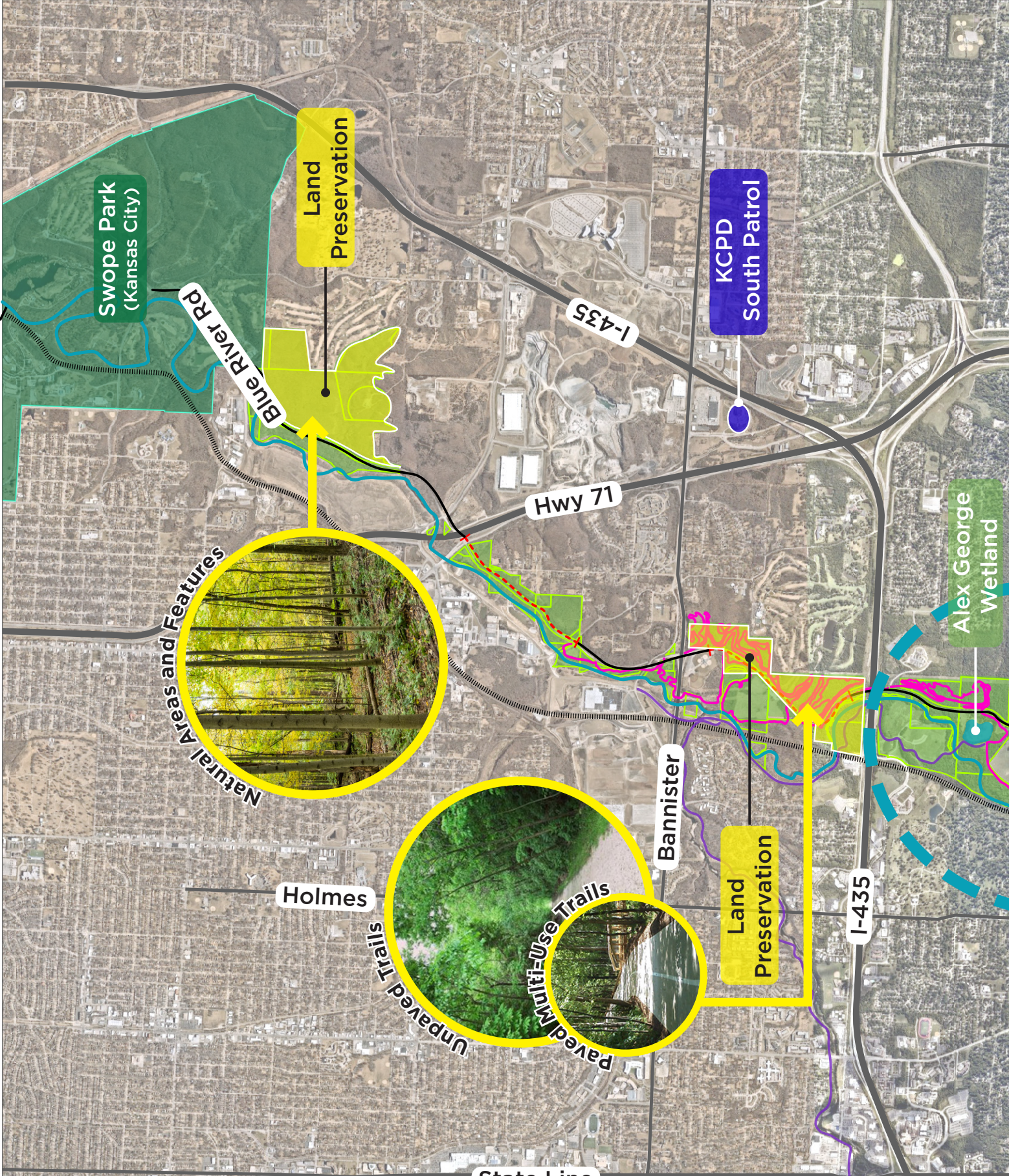
- Supporting trail building and trail maintenance
- » Alex George Wetland: the goal of management for the wetland is to have a healthy ecosystem that provides habitat for wildlife, has a diversity of native trees, and is free of invasive species. Increased use within the Park will help deter illegal dumping of trash. Key strategies include implementing wetland restoration plans, funding and hosting volunteer workdays, and engaging communities around the Parkway in long-term stewardship.
- Restoring eroded streambanks
 - Removing honeysuckle and other invasive species
 - Expanding the riparian corridor by planting native bottomland species
 - Increasing the diversity of tree and native species that adapt well to climate change
 - Advocating for retrofitting stormwater management practices in the surrounding residential neighborhoods
- » Resources:
- Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) land and water management, and habitat restoration guides.
 - [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Forest Service Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds](#)



When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

- John Muir





Swope Park
(Kansas City)

Land
Preservation

KCPD
South Patrol

I-435

Blue River Rd

Hwy 71

Alex George
Wetland

Natural Areas and Features

Bannister

Land
Preservation

I-435

Holmes

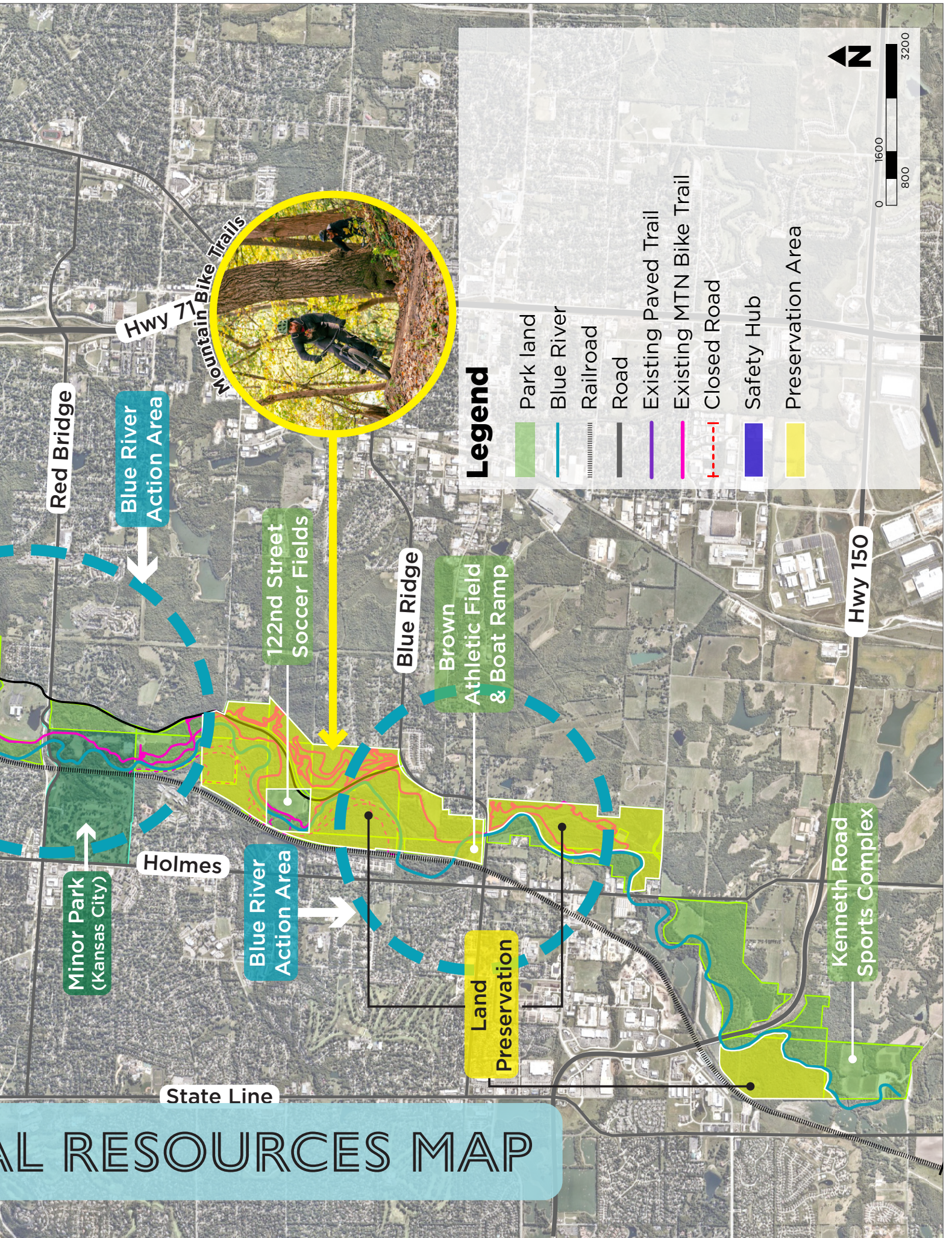
Unpaved Trails

Paved Multi-Use Trails

State Line

LAND MANAGEMENT & NATURAL

AL RESOURCES MAP





ENTERPRISE RECREATION & PROGRAMS

Enterprise Recreation & Programs make up the “Rec” in Jackson County Parks + Rec. Currently, the Parkway hosts a variety of recreation and program services, like soccer, football, and disc sports. See map pages 30-31.

Jackson County’s enterprise recreation and program’s plan for the Blue River Parkway includes four major goals:

1. **Strengthen relationships with existing program providers (soccer, football, etc.).**
2. **Explore new recreational opportunities for further study and evaluation.**
3. **Development of a dedicated inclusion and equity program to increase use and diversity in the park. Look for partners who are interested in collaborating to offer new programs and activities.**
4. **Further explore existing and future partnerships and outline partnership standards and responsibilities.**

1. Strengthen relationships with existing program providers (soccer, football, etc.).

- Create Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) specifically addressing group use, showing the County’s commitment to enter long-term agreements for usage of the park with strong partners.
- Assist in the marketing of leagues and tournaments being played on multi-purpose fields to enhance participation.

2. Explore new recreational opportunities for further study and evaluation.

- The opportunities listed below were commonly expressed through public engagement activities. The Enterprise and Recreation map on the following pages (30-31) calls out areas that are “possible recreation areas” and can include the following recreational uses:

- » Rugby (i.e. KC Blues Rugby Club)
- » Pickleball Leagues and Tournaments
- » Canoe & Kayak Clubs and interest groups
- » Disc golf (i.e. KC Flying Disc Club and KC Disc Dogs and similar enthusiast organizations)

3. Development of a dedicated inclusion and equity program to increase use and diversity in the park. Look for partners who are interested in collaborating to offer new programs and activities. Program offerings could include:

- Educational programs (nature & wildlife)
- Guided nature hikes
- Guided float trips
- Park improvement initiatives
- Other volunteer opportunities
- Health & wellness programs, including mental health programs

See insert on pages 32-33 for more on the Outdoor Recreation Engagement Program.

4. Further explore existing and future partnerships and outline partnership standards and responsibilities.

- Explore partnerships with arts organizations for performance and/or temporary or permanent installation opportunities.
- Adoption of partnership standards, including specific guidelines and requirements for new improvements or program opportunities in the Parkway that may involve one or more public or private partners.
 - » The map on pages 30-31 illustrates existing and potential future recreational opportunities. Location of active recreational facilities should not negatively impact natural or preservation areas.

See insert on pages 34-35 for new partnership standards.



The Park is intended to furnish healthful recreation, for the poor and the rich, the young and the old...

- Frederick Law Olmstead



LET'S PARTNER!

- Existing and new partnership opportunities will be explored and/or expanded upon in the future of the Blue River Parkway. From this project's engagement process, new partners have emerged, showing great interest in working with Jackson County to further develop and use the Blue River Parkway.

Existing partners:

- Urban Trail Company - Mountain bike trail expansions
 - » Currently, UTC is authorized to build and maintain the mountain bike network in the Blue River Parkway.
- Missouri Department of Conservation
 - » Assists with management of the Blue River Glade, including efforts for controlled burns. MDC also supports the boat ramp at the Brown Athletic Field.
- Heartland Conservation Alliance
 - » Authorized to initiate and promote nature-based programs, recruit volunteers, and carry out improvement projects such as invasive species removal.
- Soccer Leagues & Clubs
 - » Annual use of fields for practice, games, and tournaments.

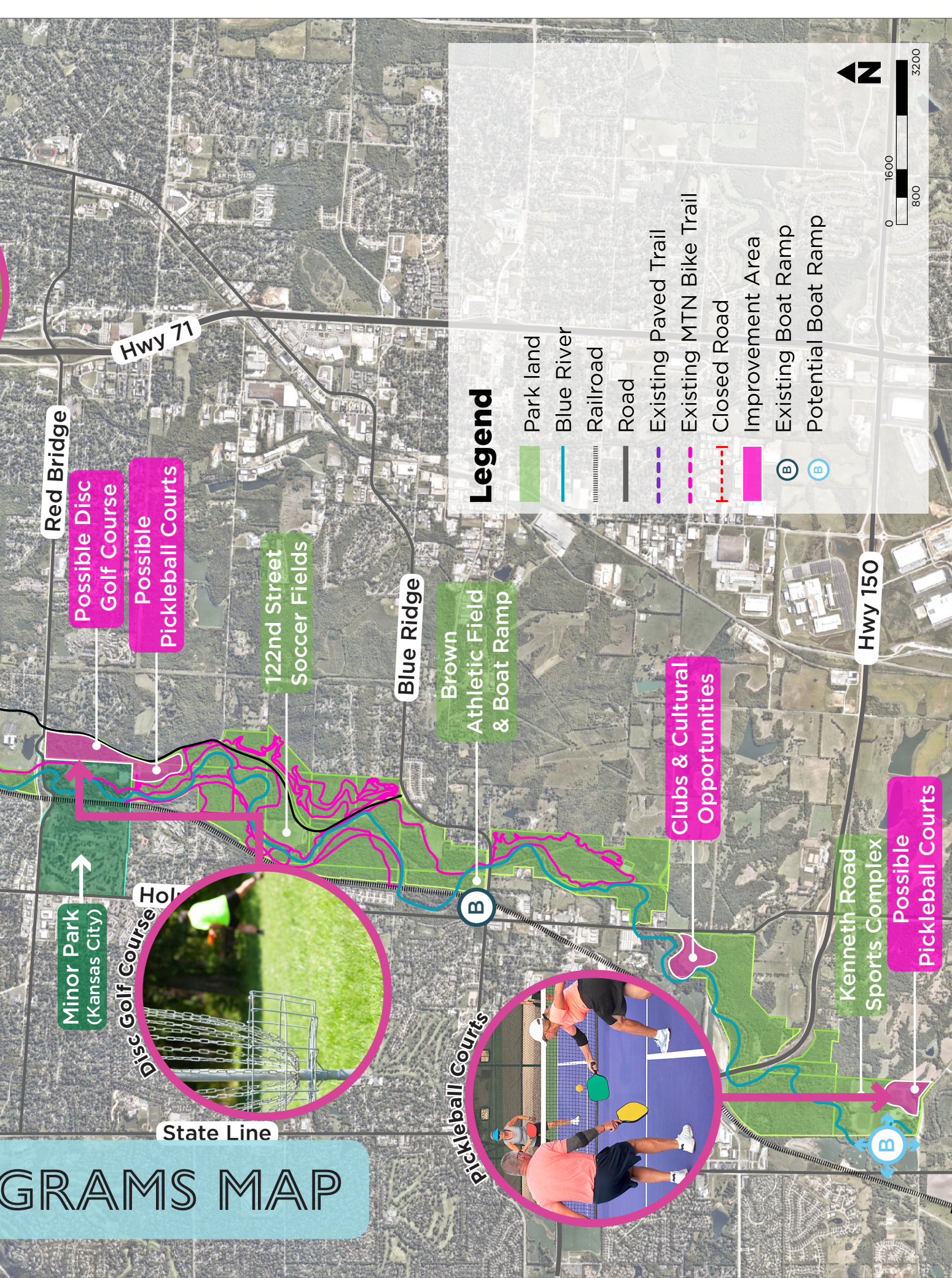
Potential new partners:

- KC Blues Rugby Club - study 99th & Blue River fields
 - » Group has shown great interest in the open fields near 99th and Blue River to build rugby fields and facilities.
- KC Ultimate Frisbee league - Blue River Commons fields
 - » Group has shown great interest in the Blue River Commons area concept for future Ultimate Frisbee league games and tournaments.



ENTERPRISE RECREATION & PRO

GRAMS MAP



Red Bridge

Hwy 71

Possible Disc Golf Course
Possible Pickleball Courts

122nd Street Soccer Fields

Blue Ridge

Brown Athletic Field & Boat Ramp

Clubs & Cultural Opportunities

Hwy 150

Minor Park (Kansas City)

Disc Golf Course



State Line

Pickleball Courts



Kenneth Sports Complex

Possible Pickleball Courts

Legend

- Park land
- Blue River
- Railroad
- Road
- Existing Paved Trail
- Existing MTN Bike Trail
- Closed Road
- Improvement Area
- Existing Boat Ramp
- Potential Boat Ramp



OUTDOOR RECREATION ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

VISION & PURPOSE:

From early on in the master planning process, a great deal of input was received for the County to consider developing a program to encourage more visitation and connection with the Parkway. Particular emphasis was given to outreach and historically underserved populations making the Parkway more equitable and inclusive. This program would include an intentional effort to engage people in the many benefits of the outdoors, and to give them a chance to take more ownership in the Parkway through volunteerism and the advocacy that comes from connections.

The opportunity may exist for the County to partner with like-minded community organizations, such as the Heartland Conservation Alliance (HCA). They share the same goals of increasing access to open spaces and natural areas for the entire community, through a diverse variety of programs and initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION CONCEPT:

Creation of a dedicated program, with staff support, to help lead the effort and funding from grants and other sources. The position and work would be scalable from full-time to part-time, dependent on funding. Primary work would be conducted in the field, in the Parkway and in the community, with virtual and in-person office time planned as needed to organize the program and track outcomes. The position could be a direct associate of the County, HCA, or other organization, or a contract position.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Develop and coordinate intentional outreach and marketing program to the community, with special emphasis on underserved populations such as environmental justice communities, seniors, and patrons with development, mobility or accessibility challenges
 - » Create annual marketing and outreach programs and budgets
 - » Engage through in-person contacts, with local organizations such as schools, health care organizations, community non-profit organizations, churches, recreational providers, and more.
- » Coordinate program, educational and outreach messaging with the Park's Department Special Events Coordinator, HCA's Education and Outreach Program Manager, and other partners.
- » Inclusive festivals celebrating many cultures.
- » Develop new health and wellness offerings with community partners, including opportunities to take advantage of the natural environment to promote mental health.
- Establish regular weekly/monthly public engagement opportunities on or near the Blue River, such as hiking, biking, or kayaking trips (as weather permits), nature-based educational programs, and community wellness programs.
- Establish regular volunteer events and opportunities for individuals, families, small groups, and organizations to engage in improvements along the Blue River. Activities can be wide-ranging dependent on size and capabilities of the group, from trash and invasive species removal to native tree and wildflower plantings and small capital improvement projects (i.e. Eagle Scout or Gold Award projects).
- Establish self-guided programs for recreation and wellness (hiking, biking, or kayaking) and nature-based education (tree identification, wildlife habitat awareness) on or near the Blue River. Develop marketing for such programs.
- Spend intentional time in the Parkway, setting up "pop-up" engagements or walking the trails and connecting with the public and providing them information about the Parkway, programs, and upcoming events.
- Support County, HCA and other partner events that promote equity, recreational and educational programs along the Blue River corridor.
- Coordinate appropriate staffing and volunteers for all programs and activities, including County staff, HCA staff,

subcontractors and/or partners.

- Manage budget for this program and seek alternative sources of funding for program sustainability.

SAMPLE 40 HOURS/WEEK ENGAGEMENT:

- 16 hours: outreach activities and community engagement; supporting existing County, HCA, and other program opportunities
 - 16 hours: leading hike, bike, and kayak programs, events, programs and other on-site engagement opportunities
 - 8 hours: coordinating subcontractors and partners for additional events; administrative duties
- First Year Deliverables and Outcomes:
- » Survey of demographics and increase diverse use of the Parkway.
 - » Lead 250 visitors on Blue River hikes, bikes or kayak trips
 - » Educate 200 people about the Blue River at on-site events and programs
 - » Host five new volunteer project opportunities
 - » Connect with 25 new community organizations who have not traditionally engaged with the Blue River, with the majority of them from the watershed and its environmental justice neighborhoods





POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

For any public/private partnership (PPP) proposal submitted to Jackson County, the following conditions and guidelines shall be applied.

Must be clearly outlined, verified and documented for consideration:

New Revenue Streams for Department (potentially through earned income or value capture mechanisms) that could further the Department's Mission, and implementation of the Park Master Plan, including:

1. Revenues to enhance programs or events.
2. Revenues to offset maintenance and operational costs.
3. Revenues to fund capital improvement projects.
4. Revenues to fund restoration of existing natural areas.

New Facilities or Programs to be offered, which the County may not be able to provide independently, that diversify the Department's offerings, and increase the number of people served.

1. Expertise and experience of new partners to enhance new facilities and programs.
2. Shared or Deferred Risk for financial obligations of new endeavors.
3. Opportunity to offer new community park amenities in western Jackson County - i.e., playgrounds, shelter houses, connected walking and bike trails, etc.
4. Full maintenance and operational support from private partners for specialized facilities.

Private Capital Investment that can benefit economic development opportunities and create jobs.

Infrastructure development - water, sewer, electricity, and parking lots that can create more future opportunities.

New opportunities to market and raise awareness of the Parkway and recreational areas, and reduction in theft and vandalism due to increased use of areas.

New opportunities to diversify programs and make them more inclusive.

PARTNERSHIP STANDARDS

Foundational considerations that *must* be met prior to any Request For Proposal, proposed project, conceptual development or public solicitation, following the County Code, being issued for a new Partnership:

1. Provide clear and attainable benefits to Jackson County, the Parks Department, and the general public (no private, 100% exclusive arrangements).
2. Align with the Mission and Vision of the Department.
3. Be complementary to, and supported by, the Department's own short- and long-range plans for the Park (i.e. consistent with the new Master Plan).
4. Comply with all County and Department policies and procedures, including LWCF grant requirements.
5. Require no permanent sale or transfer of Parkway property.
6. Require partners have expertise and can demonstrate financial ability to deliver project goals and standards.
7. Provide a clear net benefit to the Parkway's natural environment.



CASE STUDY

The Parklands of Floyds Fork, Louisville, Kentucky

The Parklands of Floyds Fork is a significant community asset and foundational influence in the greater Louisville, KY area. The 4,000 acre Parklands includes four major parks linked by the Floyds Fork waterway, a park drive, the Louisville Loop (a proposed 100-mile multi-use, non-motorized trail system that will encircle Louisville), and an extensive trail system. The Parklands help define how communities can interact with the natural assets of the area.

Ownership within the Parklands is diverse and includes a range of public, private, and non-profit entities including 21st Century Parks, Louisville Metro and other agencies, Future Fund and other land trusts, and private landowners. Investment in the Parklands has and will continue to spur development in the area.

For more information, go to: <https://theparklands.org/>





PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENT

The future of the Blue River Parkway will include improving existing facilities, extending trails, and targeted areas for further design and development like the Alex George Wetland and the current Kenneth Road Sports Complex. See map on pages 38-39.

Jackson County's park development and improvement plan for the Blue River Parkway includes four major goals:

- 1. Improve existing recreational facilities.**
- 2. Extend the Blue River Greenway Trail System from Swope Park to Kenneth Road.**
- 3. Support UTC's efforts to extend and connect the mountain bike trail network.**
- 4. Increase access to the river for boating and fishing, including exploring grants for a new boat ramp, with partners such as MDC, and improvements to the existing ramp area and parking off Blue Ridge Boulevard.**

1. Improve existing recreational facilities.

- Develop design standards for new improvements per industry standards for architects, landscape architects, and civil engineers, etc. (i.e. concrete trails vs. gravel trails).
- Kenneth Road Sports Complex: parking area improvements, new shelter, and flush restroom on "polo" side of the complex, new park amenities on Kenneth Road side. Creating a small, new community park with such possible features as a playground and walking trails; (possible partnership for funding with grants and/or Loch Lloyd). See concept plan in chapter 4.
- 122nd Street Soccer Fields - install modern restrooms, improve parking, and add football goals for football practices.
- Alex George Wetland: amenities such as a wetland boardwalk and nature-based playground. Project should also include restoration of the spillway and stream channel to the confluence with the Blue River. See concept plan in chapter 4.

2. Extend the Blue River Greenway Trail system from Swope Park to Kenneth Road.

- Further explore partnerships with the city of Kansas City, Missouri, including redevelopment of closed sections of the Blue River Road.
- Land Acquisition: in order to have a complete trail system, JCP+R may need to acquire properties or easements to fill gaps.

3. Support UTC's efforts to extend and connect the mountain bike trail network.

- UTC has already developed an extensive single-track mountain bike trail network with JCP+R, and plans to extend the trails at the following locations:
 1. South of Swope Park extending to the start of the Eddy-Ballentine trail, east of the Blue River and west of the Blue River Road.
 2. South of Highway 71, stopping short of the HCA-owned property starting at the intersection of Blue River Road and Prospect Avenue.
 3. The southern-most UTC expansion would start west of Holmes Road to the edge of Highway 150. This expansion would be completely south of the Blue River.
 4. Further study a new trailhead location at the 140th and Holmes location.

See the map on pages 38-39 for locations.





4. Increase access to the river for boating and fishing, including exploring grants for a new boat ramp, with partners such as MDC, and improvements to the existing ramp area and parking off Blue Ridge Boulevard.

- Two locations have been identified for future boat ramps (kayak and canoes only). There are two existing boat ramps on and/or near the Parkway-one at the Brown Athletic Complex and one in Swope Park (owned and maintained by KCMO Parks and Recreation). The two proposed boat ramp locations are:
 1. North of Bannister Road, east of the Indian Creek Trail and north of the start of the Blue River Greenway trailhead.
 2. Within the Kenneth Road Sports Complex, near Kenneth Road and the future southern-most trailhead for the Blue River Greenway Trail.
- These locations were chosen to compliment the two existing boat ramps and to create more take-out and put-in locations equal distances from existing and future boat ramps along the Blue River. See the map on page 38-39 for locations.

Make no little plans. Make the biggest plan you can think of and spend the rest of your life carrying it out.

- Harry S. Truman





PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENT

MENT MAP



4

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this master plan was to develop a community-driven comprehensive plan that provides guidance on the Parkway and park concept areas into the future. This plan sets out to outline and prioritize demands and opportunities, generate a strategic action plan, and guide policy development. The concept plans will create a clear set of goals and objectives providing direction to JCP+R for these park areas.

PHASES

Phases for implementation of the goals, particularly the capital improvement projects, will be based on available funding, grants, and new partnership opportunities. There are no formal schedules or timelines for any goals and priorities at this time. All steps moving forward will involve following up with existing and potential partners, who will assist in finding grants and funding for any and all projects and improvements found in this master plan.

PARKWAY CONCEPTS

Two study areas for detailed concepts came forward from the master plan process: Alex George Wetland and the Kenneth Road Sports Complex. Alex George Wetland is one of the most used and well-loved areas in the Parkway. It shows great potential for educational opportunities and a small community park.

The Kenneth Road Sports Complex concept designates the southeast corner of the Parkway as the Blue River Commons, and will act as a community park for surrounding users and neighborhoods. This concept includes a playground area, open play fields, multi-use sport courts, family games, a small-medium picnic shelter, connecting trails, and a small parking lot. These improvements would incorporate the existing picnic shelter and restroom as part of the whole park. This park is also directly adjacent to one of the proposed future boat ramps.

Each concept will be further designed, developed, with emphasis on partnerships and collaboration.

INITIAL ACTION ITEMS:

1. *Formal designation of the Parkway as a protected Jackson County park.*
2. *Development and refinement of maintenance, safety, and accessibility standards.*
3. *Partnership development for diverse and welcoming engagement programs that will promote equity and inclusion.*
4. *Fundraising, grants development, and collaboration exploration for park improvements, including trail extensions and new recreational facilities.*



BLUE RIVER COMMONS

This park concept functions as a true community park with all the amenities of one: a playground, picnic shelters, a restroom, multi-sport courts, room for family games like bocce balls, and corn hole, and an area designated as open play fields. With this concept, the existing gate entrance would need to be pushed farther into the park to allow users to access the park for normal park hours (typ. dawn to dusk) and would also require the construction of a small parking lot. With this park's proximity to the Loch Lloyd neighborhood, a connecting pathway could increase visitor use, access, and visibility. As this is so close to the Loch Lloyd development and they do not currently have a community park, a partnership could increase awareness and possible funding for this park concept.

Blue River Commons Improvements:

- Shelter x2 (16'x24')
- Playground
- Parking lot
- Pickleball courts (4)
- Family games area
- Open play fields
- Connecting pathways
- New gate entry location

OPEN PLAY FIELDS...



MULTI-SPORT COURTS...



FAMILY GAMES...

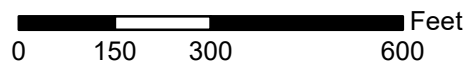


PASSIVE RECREATION...





BLUE RIVER COMMONS CONCEPT



ALEX GEORGE WETLAND

Wetland restoration efforts with the 20-acre Park are a collaborative effort between Jackson County Parks + Rec, Heartland Conservation Alliance, Missouri Department of Conservation, Bridging the Gap and others. The restoration project represents a transition from a deep pond that has been filling in with sediment from surrounding areas to a shallow water wetland. In order for the wetland to reach its full potential, focus should be placed on the following areas:

- Improve water quality and reduce algae - conduct ongoing water quality monitoring as parts of the restoration project are implemented. Data will be useful for evaluating future nutrient and sediment loading in the wetland and surface waters within the region.
- Improve shoreline conditions by planting natives and managing invasive species. Establishment of native plants will reduce erosion, increase diversity, and improve infiltration of pollutants entering the wetland. Management of invasive species, like shrub honeysuckle, is also critical to this effort.
- Pollinator gardens - vegetation management of these areas is necessary for successful establishment and long-term management of native plant species that will in turn benefit native pollinator species like bees, butterflies, and even birds.
- Park amenities - the trail system along with shelters, picnic tables, restrooms, and boardwalks represent amenities that are essential to encouraging people to recreate within the park. Placement and maintenance of these amenities will be instrumental to achieving the goal of providing educational opportunities at the park.

The park concept presented here was heavily influenced by a previous capstone study from a Professional Science Masters student at the University of Kansas. The Alex George Wetland serves as a perfect place for educational opportunities to teach people about natural processes, native plants, pollination, wetlands, and fauna who may live in these types of habitats. This park concept adds several small

shelters, a nature playground, pollinator gardens, a small boardwalk and observation deck, a completed loop trail, and an outdoor classroom. Educational interpretive signs placed around the area could enhance the experience and opportunities for enrichment for students and visitors alike. Expanding the parking lot, especially with the increased number of shelters and activities, would allow for greater use and visibility of the park.

Alex George Wetland Improvements:

- Shelter (16'x24')
- Nature playground
- Pollinator garden seed
- Boardwalk
- Outdoor classroom
- Loop trail connections

Outdoor Classroom

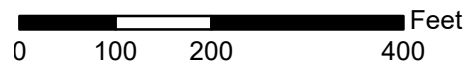


Nature Playground





ALEX GEORGE WETLAND CONCEPT



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS & GENERAL COSTS

The following table is included to provide planning level costs for common amenities included in the plan concept areas.

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	COST
General Improvements:				
a. Blue River Greenway Trail Extension	31,680 (6 mi)	LF	\$100	\$3,168,000
b. New boat access	2	EA	\$150,000	\$300,000
Alex George Wetland:				
a. Shelter (16'x24')	1	EA	\$120,000	\$120,000
b. Nature playground	1	EA	\$200,000	\$200,000
c. Pollinator garden seed	1.7	AC	\$1.50	\$110,295
d. Boardwalk	240	LF	\$300	\$72,000
e. Outdoor classroom	1	LS	\$80,000	\$80,000
f. Loop trail	1,700	LF	\$100	\$171,300
Blue River Commons:				
a. Shelter (16'x24')	2	EA	\$120,000	\$240,000
b. Playground	1	EA	\$600,000	\$600,000
c. Parking lot	1,600	SY	\$48	\$76,800
d. Multi-sport court	4	EA	\$100,00	\$400,000
e. Family games	3	EA	\$25,000	\$75,000
f. Connecting path	1,890	LF	\$100	\$18,900
g. Entry Gate	1	EA	\$15,000	\$15,000

Note: Costs are based on current market data as of the writing of this report, and subject to further refinement as specific plans and specifications are developed for specific projects, when funding is identified.



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APPENDICES

- a. Stakeholder Meeting Notes
- b. Blue River Parkway Citizen Survey Results
- c. Blue River Parkway Draft Master Plan Open House Survey Results
- d. UTC Mountain Bike Master Plan
- e. Existing Conditions Survey of the Blue River Parkway