

# I. Introduction of the Planning Context

## A. Purpose of this Plan

In June of 2010, the City of Dunwoody celebrated the transfer of six park properties from DeKalb County to the City of Dunwoody. Dunwoody's Mayor and Council moved forward on development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that helped guide management and improvement of these parks and identified other park and green space opportunities.

Over the past five years, the City Parks Department has worked diligently to bring many of the concepts identified in the Parks Master Plan to fruition, and with the purchase of additional properties and modifications to the original Plan, an update is needed.

Dunwoody benefits from well-established organizations, stakeholder groups, and citizens dedicated to meeting the community's recreational needs. The success of this planning process will depend on involving these organizations, groups, and citizens at large.



### Project Vision

This Master Plan Update will determine the direction for parks and recreation improvements and functions based on the evolving needs and priorities identified by the community and will serve as a guide to help the City make decisions regarding current and future parks, recreation, and trails provision. This process will include the engagement of the community while identifying opportunities for improvement in an easy-to-read format that is implementable.

### Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors were identified by the project team:

- Develop a Master Plan Update with useful qualitative and quantitative information that depicts the true needs of the community.
- Develop the plan in a usable format that the City can build upon over time, and engage community stakeholders throughout the process.
- Identify strengths, opportunities, and gaps for parks, recreation, open space, and trails in Dunwoody.
- Provide and present findings, recommendations, and implementation strategies that are usable and reader-friendly.

To track these factors, the project team identified actions steps including:

- Gain broad public input from the public meetings, statistically-valid survey, and the Project Team, and utilize existing data from the City to ensure consistency with existing City planning efforts.
- Improved and increased collaboration among community stakeholders and agencies, utilization of a digital format for all mapping for future use, and a plan that can be built upon over time.
- Identify opportunities for prioritizing parks and recreational assets and programs from the community input gathered and survey analysis.
- All documents synthesize all data and information gathered during the public input process and surveys, and clearly articulates the needs for parks, recreation, open space, and trails in a simple yet precise format.

## **B. History of Parks and Recreation Department**

In June of 2010, the City of Dunwoody celebrated the transfer of six park properties from DeKalb County to the City of Dunwoody. Dunwoody’s Mayor and Council moved forward on development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that helped guide management and improvement of these parks, and identified other park and green space opportunities.

Over the past seven years, the City Parks Department has worked diligently to bring many of the concepts identified in the Parks Master Plan to fruition, and with the purchase of additional properties and modifications to the original Plan, an update is needed.

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## **C. Parks and Recreation Department Overview**

The Parks and Recreation Department strives to provide the residents of Dunwoody with the highest quality parks, recreational services, and green space to enhance the quality of life to our community. The Parks & Recreation Department is responsible for the management, development, safety, and maintenance of the City’s parks and for right of way maintenance.

The Department is also responsible for emergency response as it relates to public works and parks functions. Currently, the Department manages ten parks with combined land space of over 180 acres, containing multi-use trails, playgrounds, tennis courts, baseball fields, multiple multi-use fields, and facilities. Facilities include water fountains, bathrooms, pavilions, an arts center, nature center, greenhouse, a community garden, and a dog park. These parks are home to several major events each year and offer a variety of activities including skateboarding, tennis, bocce ball, and more. These facilities include:

- Donaldson Bannister Farm
- Windwood Hollow Park
- Vernon Oaks Park
- Georgetown Park
- North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center
- Perimeter Center East Park Property
- Pernoshal Park
- Brook Run Park
- Dunwoody Park and Nature Center
- Austin ES Park Property

Due to its size, the Department utilizes strong community partnerships and contracts to provide services such as recreational programming and parks maintenance.

## **D. Related Planning Efforts and Integration**

The project team reviewed several existing planning documents to ensure that this master plan moved the Department forward, while remaining consistent with the overall goals of other planning efforts within Dunwoody.

The following sections include specific language from each resource. Selected information was incorporated into the analysis and recommendations of this plan.

### **Dunwoody Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan – 2011**

#### **Parks**

- Establish multiple small parks and one slightly larger park to serve as a community gathering area to implement the Dunwoody Village Master Plan.
- Establish a neighborhood park (6-8 acres) in the Georgetown/North Shallowford area and multiple small parks to implement the Georgetown/North Shallowford Master Plan.
- Set a target to obtain 5.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents over the next 10 years.
- Develop a network of small neighborhood parks throughout the city.
- Further study and possible creation of a community greenway system to connect the park system to other community assets.
- Complete the development of Brook Run Park.
- Complete the conversion of the Donaldson-Chesnut Home site into a city park.
- Complete major renovations throughout the park system to improve safety and ADA compliance and to create a unified appearance for park architecture, signage, and site furnishings.
- Look at leasing open space on short term basis to provide additional recreation opportunities on development property that is vacant due to current economic conditions.

#### **Recreation Facilities**

- Develop multipurpose fields for soccer, lacrosse, and football; an indoor/outdoor tennis facility; and at least three baseball fields in a new community park to expand recreation opportunities for youth and adult teams.
- Explore joint-use agreement and partnership opportunities with Peachtree Charter Middle School for possible community use of the football field, baseball field, a competition level track, and soccer field.
- Expand Dunwoody Nature Center with the relocation of Dunwoody Senior Baseball to include redevelopment of the sports field area and to offer programs for citizens of all ages – not just children. This would include developing a new education center building in the park.
- Develop a community center with multiple programming rooms.
- Expand community gardening programs beyond Brook Run Park.
- Expand community arts programs beyond the North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center.
- Develop a new community theater as a component of the Dunwoody Village redevelopment outlined in the Dunwoody Village Master Plan.
- Redevelop the Brook Run dog park to include areas of well-developed turf and shade to provide a more environmentally sound approach for dog parks.

- Create multiple community event spaces throughout the city in a variety of sizes to decentralize community events and balance the inconvenience of large community events on surrounding property owners.
- Develop a variety of small water play features throughout the city.
- Create more walking trails in existing parks.
- Develop picnic facilities and rental pavilions throughout the park system.
- Improve access to public tennis courts by increasing number and distribution.
- Provide outdoor basketball and volleyball courts.

### Greenways

- Building upon the greenway corridors identified in this Master Plan, further study and investigate different greenway corridors.
- Further study creating north-south greenway corridors connecting community parks and neighborhoods to the proposed regional greenway.
- Further study and investigate the possibility of creating an east-west greenway corridor.
- Improve sidewalk and bicycle lanes throughout the city to provide access to greenways, parks, and public transportation.
- Greenways should complement complete street initiatives in the city and street crossings should be at controlled intersections or through grade separation (when possible) to improve safety for the greenway user.
- Greenways should be a minimum of 10' paved surface where space allows to better accommodate different user groups.
- Good directional signage and rules should be provided at all trailhead access points.
- Greenways should be built in areas where there is strong neighborhood and community support.



### Conservation

- Investigate the creation of a non-profit land trust to solicit and hold conservation easements for land in and near the city.
- Remove underutilized buildings in Brook Run Park and convert to public open space and urban forest.
- Create green density bonuses within the land use code to encourage the development of public open space and the elimination of large surface parking lots.
- Create more non-vehicular access routes to MARTA Station to promote healthier lifestyles for community residents.
- Parks and greenways should be developed with best practices for sustainability and green design.
- Minimize impervious surfaces in parks where possible and use porous pavements where possible.

- Implement a recycling program throughout the parks system.
- Undervalued and underutilized property that is currently developed should be considered as possible targets for park development to reduce urban runoff and improve air quality through reforestation programs.
- Irrigate parks with reclaimed water or captured rain water where feasible.

## **City of Dunwoody Comp Plan 2015-2035**

### **Chapter 2.2 GOALS**

#### *INCREASE CONNECTIVITY AND ENHANCE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR ALL FORMS OF TRAVEL.*

- Promote walk- and bike-“ability” to homes, schools, shopping, employment centers, civic uses, and open space.
- Implement the multi-modal transportation options in the City’s Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
- Create a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Provide safe and secure parking to support multi-modal transit services.
- Increase network connectivity to accommodate demand between adjacent neighborhoods and developments without accessing the major thoroughfare system.
- Promote the use of zero-emission Low Speed Vehicles (LSV) and Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) and consider other emerging and innovative transportation technologies.
- Promote travel demand management (TDM) strategies to reduce trips.
- Preserve current transportation investment through effective maintenance of transportation system.

#### *EXPAND THE CITY’S PARKS AND GREENSPACE AND IMPROVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.*

- Preserve strategically located, existing undeveloped land that could be a viable option for functional greenspace.
- Create and maintain programs to support historic preservation and/or campaign for grant dollars that award historic preservation dollars.
- Encourage the acquisition of greenspace as a part of larger redevelopment areas.

### **Chapter 3.2 PRIORITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### *3.2.13 PROVIDE ACTIVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGES.*

“The City operates seven parks offering approximately 170 acres of green space for the enjoyment of Dunwoody residents and visitors. The City does not own or operate recreational programs in its parks, but rather facilitates the use of the parks by organized groups who do the programming. Local churches and religious based organizations also play an active role in providing recreational services. Dunwoody United Methodist Church, North Atlanta Church of Christ, Dunwoody Baptist Church, Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA), and North Peachtree Baptist Church all operate some athletic programs and offer a variety of athletic facilities.

“Despite these opportunities, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan adopted in 2011 found that many of the existing parks needed improvements to adequately meet the recreational needs of the community, along with additional parkland and greenway development. A survey from that planning effort indicated that 60% of residents go outside the City for park activities. The Plan found that according to National Recreation and Park Association standards and community input that the City should consider adding a variety of facilities including, tennis, baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, multi-use fields, aquatics, trails, community centers, and playgrounds. In particular, there is a lack of indoor programming space, such as a community center or an indoor aquatics facility. Based on these recommendations, the City has in recent years made improvements to Brook Run Park, built new trails, and acquired new park lands in the Georgetown area. Participants in the Shape Dunwoody community engagement process pointed out the continuing need for further improvements particularly with regard to Brook Run Park, Donaldson-Chesnut House, and further development of the City’s trail network. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan will be updated in 2016, and the need for these improvements should be analyzed as part of that effort.”

#### *3.2.14 ADD NEW PARKLAND AND PRESERVE GREEN SPACE.*

“The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan pointed out that the City has a stated goal of having a park within one-half mile of all residents, but currently falls short of meeting that goal. In particular the City’s most densely populated area, Perimeter Center, lacks a City park, though plans are underway to address that need with the development of Perimeter Park, and additional parkland close to the MARTA station. Due to the lack of vacant undeveloped land, the assemblage of linear parks and greenways is also being explored by the City to connect nearby activity centers. These potential greenways would run along major stream corridors where, due to flooding and development restrictions, good urban forest still remains.”

#### **Other Plans to be Considered in this Plan**

While the planning efforts listed above have the most direct impact and influence on this master planning effort, the team also reviewed other plans to ensure the alignment and consistency of recommendations and action steps. Those plans include:

- City Budgets (past and current years)
- City of Dunwoody Employee Handbook
- Convention and Visitors Bureau of Dunwoody Gap Analysis and Tourism Research (August 2015)
- Spruill Center for the Arts Strategic Plan
- Dunwoody Nature Center Strategic Plan
- Dunwoody Preservation Trust Strategic Plan for the Donaldson-Bannister Farm

## E. Methodology of this Planning Process

The project team, including staff, guided this project throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The following 2015 – 2017 timeline of tasks was determined following a strategic kick-off meeting:

<b>Strategic Kick-off and Determination of Critical Success Factors</b>
<b>Community Engagement and Information Gathering</b>
Initial Information Gathering
Focus Groups/Staff and Stakeholder Interviews
Statistically-valid Survey
Demographics Trends and Community Profile
<b>Base-level Inventory</b>
<b>Level of Service Analysis</b>
Asset Gaps Analysis
Evaluation of Asset Conditions
<b>Brook Run Park Master Plan and Conceptual</b>
Other Park Site Conceptual Plan Updates
<b>Findings, Visioning &amp; Financial Analysis</b>
Operations and Maintenance Analysis
Programs and Services Analysis
Organizational Analysis
Financial Analysis
Findings Matrix
Findings and Visioning Workshop
<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
<b>Draft and Final Plans, Presentations, and Deliverables</b>
Recommendations
Action Plan
Draft Plan
Final Plan and Presentation

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