



SECTION



CAPITAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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Capital Recommendations



This Parks and Recreation System Improvement Plan is a long-range, 10-year plan for the City of Mobile Parks and Recreation Department. It assesses and provides recommendations regarding parks, facilities, operations, programming and budgeting. The plan also benchmarks the City's delivery of parks and recreation with other communities. The strategic implementation of the plan's recommendations will guide the City in achieving the community's desires for the parks and recreation system, and address deficiencies and goals for the delivery of parks and recreation services to the residents of Mobile.

As described in **Section 6 – Parks and Facilities**, recommendations have been based on guiding principles that include parks as a quality of life amenity, fewer but better parks, enhanced waterfront access, safe and accessible parks, a connected community, community buy-in through partnerships, prominence of historic squares and activating the parks and facilities to bring the community together. With these ideas in mind, a 10-year Funding Plan has been developed that tries to incorporate these principles and direct capital spending to specific areas. The plan includes allocations for the following:



Existing Park Renovations

As described in Section 6, general facility issues range from proliferation of trash in the parks to drainage issues and lack of consistent signage and wayfinding. Existing park assessments and recommendations have been included in Appendix A and address the specific needs for each park. **The Funding Plan has recommended \$3 million annually to address general park needs and improvements systemwide.** Many improvements can be accomplished through modifications and improved maintenance as suggested in **Section 5 - Staffing and Operations**. Others will require capital spending to upgrade dated and worn out amenities.

General Sport Facility Improvements

The review of existing park distribution coupled with NRPA Community Levels of Service (**See Section 6 – Parks and Facilities**) finds that the City of Mobile has done a good job of distributing parks throughout the community. The level of service indicates an extreme surplus of sports fields with a total of 65 baseball and softball fields inventoried throughout the system. An appropriate level of service based on NRPA would indicate a need of only 29 fields. It has been noted that the wet weather conditions for Mobile present challenges for sports field play and could be an indication of the extreme surplus of fields that have been developed over the years. Many of the sports fields found in the system are in need of renovation with poor turf conditions, broken fencing, antiquated restroom and concession buildings and outdated lighting utilizing wood poles. Lighting on wood poles while economical is not recommended in new sports lighting design and in areas prone to high winds and severe weather events do not meet the wind load requirements. The high number of sports fields found in the City of Mobile park system would be cost prohibitive to bring up to current standards and therefore the Funding Plan has recommended the renovation of the six (6) existing sports parks along with those sports fields found in the two (2) regional parks. The distribution of these fields in the community will provide adequate access to athletic fields with a total of 31 fields found in these locations. Furthermore, strategically converting some of these fields to synthetic turf will increase the amount of days that fields can accommodate play. Other parks with sports fields should be evaluated and where possible converted to multi-purpose fields that can be utilized for practice and pick-up play. Outdated fencing and lighting should be removed. The sports parks described above are in need of varying degrees of renovation with Boykin Park requiring the most in upgrades. The capital plan has allocated

six (6) existing sports parks

sports fields in the two (2) regional parks

\$14.5 million for these renovations. In each case a master plan should be completed to identify specific facility upgrades.

Greenways and Blueways

Approximately **\$9 million** dollars has been earmarked through the RESTORE Act for the development of the greenway system in Mobile. Facilities of this type were a high priority item in the public engagement process and should be aggressively pursued for development. NRPA community service levels indicate that Mobile is over 37 miles behind in developed trails but with allocated funding for the future this number should be decreased significantly.



New Amenity Development

New amenity development is tied to funds for elements not currently found in the park system. These include the development of splash pads, court sports and multi-purpose fields as indicated in the community engagement process. A total of 8 wading pools are currently found throughout the park system and in most instances are closed or underutilized due to lack of staff to oversee operations. The 5 existing swimming pools also appear to be underutilized. The desire by the community for modern aquatic facilities has driven

the recommendation for **\$5 million** in the CIP for **the addition of splash pads and improvements to the visitor experience at existing pools.** This could include expanded deck space and shade structures, interactive play features and other amenities. Master plans should be completed for the pools to determine what is desired. Splash pads should be located in parks in place of wading pools. Other new amenity development could include court sports (specifically basketball), dog parks, multi-purpose fields, disc golf and other amenities as determined in park specific master plans.

Regional Park Renovations

Langan and **Medal of Honor Parks** are two of Mobile's largest parks offering a wide variety of activities and amenities. Langan Park is the largest at over 525 acres. While Medal of Honor has been given recent upgrades, Langan Park is dated and in need of renovation. A park master plan should be completed for Langan to determine specific amenity upgrades and additions. This park with the Azalea City Golf Course, Copeland Cox Tennis Center, Langan Baseball Complex, Mobile Museum of Art and Playhouse in the Park makes Langan ideally suited to be a premier destination park for the City of Mobile. A total

of **\$9.5 million** has been allocated for the future renovations for these two parks. Depending on the master plan and vision that is created for this park in the process, the actual renovation cost could far exceed this number. A friends group specific to Langan Park should be developed to oversee future fundraising and programming of special events in this facility.

Waterfront Park Development

Access to the water was a high priority item in the public engagement process. There are currently 14 parks offering access to Mobile Bay and the various rivers and creeks found in the City. The Funding Plan

includes **\$4 million** for the development of **better water access and amenities.** These may include fishing piers, canoe and boat launches, defined parking and areas for picnicking in these waterfront parks.

Community Center Upgrades

The distribution of existing community centers as well as a review of the overall level of service when compared to national averages revealed overlap and surplus for existing community centers in Mobile. A total of 18 centers were inventoried suggesting a surplus of 11 centers based on national standards. The existing centers vary in size and amenities. Section 6 has identified criteria for determining the future viability of operating all 18 centers. Should the City decide to decrease the number of active centers, they should invest in upgrades to centers that are to remain operational. Improvements should include additions where necessary to accommodate expanded programming and the provision of state of the art health and wellness workout areas. The Funding Plan has appropriated **\$18 million** to fund renovations and additions to those centers which have the greatest potential to serve the public at large.

Ten -Year Capital Funding Plan

A ten-year Funding Plan (shown in Figure 8.1) has been developed to include approximately \$8 to \$8.5 million in spending annually for the next 10 years. This does not include the additional \$9 million which has been earmarked for greenway development through the RESTORE Act.

Figure 8.1 - 10-Year Capital Funding Plan

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Existing Park Renovations										
Buildings, Pavilions, Playgrounds, Parking, ADA	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
General Sport Facility Improvements										
Sports Park Facility Upgrades (lighting, fencing, turf, support infrastructure)		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Greenways/Blueways										
New Amenity Development										
Splash Pads	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	
Court Sports	\$500,000					\$500,000				
Multi-Purpose Practice Fields	\$1,500,000									
Regional Park Renovations										
Langan Park		\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000						
Medal of Honor Park								\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000
Waterfront Park Development										
Improve undeveloped parks with access, fishing piers, parking, amenities	\$2,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000						
Community Center Upgrades										
Renovate/upgrade to expand programming					\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
Subtotal	\$8,000,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,500,000	\$8,500,000

Figure 8.2 provides general cost guidelines for replacement facilities to be used for budgeting purposes. It is anticipated that the annual \$3 million allocation would be used for park amenity replacements and upgrades, erosion and drainage repairs, new buildings and structures, signage and repaving.



Figure 8.2 - General Cost Guidelines

FACILITY	APPROXIMATE COST
BUILDINGS	
SMALL PAVILION	\$90,000 - \$110,000
LARGE PAVILION	\$150,000 - \$250,000
SMALL RESTROOM	\$300,000 - \$400,000
LARGE RESTROOM	\$500,000 - \$750,000
RESTROOM/ PAVILION	\$375,000 - \$750,000
SCORER STAND	\$30,000 - \$50,000
GRANDSTAND (1,500 Capacity)	\$250,000 - \$350,000
CONCESSION/RESTROOM BUILDING	\$650,000 - \$800,000
ATHLETICS	
DOUBLE TENNIS COURT	\$75,000 - \$100,000
DOUBLE TENNIS COURT WITH LIGHTS	\$150,000 - \$175,000
BASEBALL FIELD	\$500,000 - \$700,000
BASEBALL FIELD WITH LIGHTS	\$700,000 - \$1,000,000
BASKETBALL COURT	\$75,000 - \$100,000
BASKETBALL COURT WITH LIGHTS	\$150,000 - \$175,000
MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD	\$400,000 - \$500,000
MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD WITH LIGHTS	\$700,000 - \$800,000
SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD (CONVERSION)	\$675,000 - \$750,000
SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD (NEW)	\$900,000 - \$1,000,000
DISC GOLF COURSE 9-HOLE	\$30,000 - \$60,000
DISC GOLF COURSE 18-HOLE	\$70,000 - \$120,000
VOLLEYBALL COURT (SAND)	\$50,000 - \$100,000
RUNNING TRACK 400M WITH LIGHTS	\$950,000 - 1,250,000
OTHER PARK AMENITIES	
SMALL SPLASH PAD	\$300,000 - \$500,000
LARGE SPLASH PAD	\$500,000 - \$1,000,000
SMALL PLAYGROUND W/ RUBBER SURFACE	\$125,000 - \$250,000
LARGE PLAYGROUND W/ RUBBER SURFACE	\$750,000 - \$2,000,000
GREENWAY (1 MILE)	\$750,000 - \$1,000,000
DOG PARK	\$100,000 - \$300,000
SMALL SKATE PARK	\$450,000 - \$750,000
LARGE SKATE PARK	\$750,000 - \$2,000,000



Current Funding

As discussed in the Budget Assessment, Mobile has funded more than \$25 million in park improvements since 2012. A 1 cent sales tax is currently funding \$3 million per year per council district for improvements to parks, sidewalks, roadways and other items in the City's Funding Plan. If the City were to allocate \$1.25 million in dedicated funding from each of the 7 council districts specifically for park improvements, this funding source would generate \$8,750,000 per year. The public engagement process showed strong support for a dedicated funding source for parks. Should the City move forward with this program, it is highly recommended that the funds be allocated citywide to achieve the recommended funding expenditures as opposed to allocating the funds evenly among 7 districts. The impact of \$1.5 million spread out over an entire council district in many cases can go unnoticed to the general public at large while large capital expenditures are much more likely to have a lasting impact and impression for the future user base.

The typical sources of capital funding for parks and recreation agencies include:

- General Obligation Bond
- Program User Fees
- Local Option Sales Tax (LOS)
- Impact or Other Development Fees
- General Fund Tax Dollars
- State and Federal Grants

A combination of these sources may be necessary to realize the recommended annual funding for improvements over the next 10 years. Other funding sources are listed below.

Alternative Funding Sources

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs – Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership – Land and Water Conservation Fund



This program is a 50/50 matching program funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. The grant ceiling is \$350,000 and can be used to acquire land and water interests for park purposes, develop new outdoor recreation facilities, and in certain instances, renovate existing recreation facilities.

Website: <http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/ced/Recreation/Pages/Programs.aspx>

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)



This program was initiated through the TEA-21 legislation. Funds are awarded for the construction of trails and support facilities. Emphasis is on the construction of multi-use trails, such as biking, hiking, equestrian, motorized, etc. In Alabama, administration of this program is handled by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

Like the Transportation Enhancements program, the RTP is a matching grant with 80



percent federal funding and 20 percent local funding. Funds may be used for:

- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment
- Construction of new trails (with restrictions for new trails on Federal lands)
- Acquisition of easements or property for trails
- Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance
- Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection, (as those objectives relate to one or more of the use of recreational trails, supporting non-law enforcement trail safety and trail use monitoring patrol programs, and providing trail-related training), (limited to 5 percent of a State's funds)
- State administrative costs for the RTP (limited to 7 percent of a State's funds)

Website: <http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/ced/Recreation/Pages/Programs.aspx>

Community Development Block Grants

Although this program funds housing, public facilities, economic development and community projects, recreation could be a minor component of the project. For example, a mini park could be constructed on land purchased through the housing project that services primarily low- to moderate-income individuals. The program is administered through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

Website: <http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/ced/Recreation/Pages/Programs.aspx>

Environmental Education Grants

This program is sponsored by the EPA's Environmental Education Division (EED), Office of Children's Health Protection and Environmental Education. It supports environmental education projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to help people make informed decisions that affect environmental quality. The EPA awards grants each year based on funding appropriated by Congress. Annual funding for the program ranges between \$2 and \$3 million. Most grants will be in the \$15,000 to \$25,000 range.

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