



City of Smithville
Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2030

GUIDING PRINCIPLES and PHILOSOPHY

WHITE PAPER

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1. Introduction

The City of Smithville has initiated a process to update their Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This follows the recent completion of a community visioning and strategic planning effort, and an update of the Comprehensive Plan. Both these documents outline the community aspirations and desires. The comprehensive planning work also included task force sessions that explored parks and trails, downtown development and neighborhoods.

2. Background

The context that frames the scope of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2030 includes:

- **Smithville's population is growing** – the forecasts in the Comprehensive Plan are for steady growth of between 2.2% and 3.3% per years, adding between 2,700 and 4,200 residents by 2030 (for a total of 13,500 to 15,000 by 2030). However, local task force sessions suggest there is a reasonable expectation the growth could be faster.
- **Smithville's population is changing** – the current population is dominated by school-aged families. However, over the next 10 years this is expected to evolve with significant new cohorts emerging, including active retirees and younger generational cohorts.
- **Value proposition** – the trail and recreation amenities (both current and potential) are seen as a key part of the community value proposition.

In addition, the Smithville community, city staff and city leaders have expressed an appetite for innovative approaches and 'out of the box' thinking. There is a desire for a forward looking and ambitious plan, that takes account of emerging trends and anticipated community needs.

3. High Level Concepts

The previous visioning and comprehensive planning work, and initial scoping for the Park and Recreation Master Plan, have reaffirmed a number of key high-level concepts supported by the City and community. These concepts help create the direction and focus of the Master Plan, and future investments in recreation and park facilities. They should also provide guidance to potential developments within the community.

These include:

- **Enhancing the community oasis experience** – the concept of intentionally creating ‘community oasis’ experiences has been highlighted in visioning and comprehensive planning. While this is a conceptual experience, it provides an important context. This concept should be used in thinking about park and asset design, including elements such as shade, noise, views and concentration of people.
- **Focus on broad multi-dimensional outcomes** – the Master Plan, and future parks and recreation infrastructure, should seek innovative ways to deliver multi-dimensional outcomes for the community. These could include:
 - **Community and societal benefit** – through creating quality assets that enhance health benefits, social cohesion and educational outcomes. Examples could include interactive public art spaces, multi-generational recreational assets, public food gardens, social and senior services etc.
 - **Environmental and ecological benefit** – the parks assets are in many cases important parts of the landscape, including waterways and woodlands. The management and design of these areas seek to minimize negative impact and maximize environmental gains. Example could include zero waste and net zero emissions approach, planting , preserving and managing important ecological species, interactive educational aspects, protection of stream and waterways through the development of buffers and setbacks etc.
 - **Economic benefit** – recreation has been identified as a potential key economic driver in the community, especially leveraging the lake and downtown connections. Examples could be the development of strong connections between recreation assets and events, to the downtown economy, the offering of fee-based recreational experiences, rentals, the sale of concessions, supplies or equipment etc. or relationships with private vendors.

- **Distributed recreation** – the community is not yet large or affluent enough to afford to build and maintain monumental recreation assets. The concept developed during the comprehensive planning was of distributed recreation, where there would be a nodes and modes type approach, with smaller scale specific use areas distributed across the community and connected by easy to access trails networks. This approach could help:
 - Create a network of unique parks offering a wide variety of outdoor experiences relevant to their size, location, community interest and site context/neighborhood each to be an asset to the community.
 - Foster community connectivity – by encouraging people to visit multiple park locations distributed throughout the city, accessible to all with a multi-use trails system to access all the city’s assets, both public and private.
 - Identify areas in the city lacking outdoor recreational assets, with connectivity to the overall system, appropriate for future programming elements that complete the city’s overall system.

- **Future oriented and innovative thinking** – the community is seeking forward looking thinking, that is anticipating emerging community needs and larger trends in urban and community living. This includes thinking about how technology will shape connectivity and recreation, and how this can be deployed across the parks and trails amenities to maximize the multi-dimensional outcomes. Additionally, this includes the future of parks and recreation programming and the development of a park system that provides the community and visitors sought-after assets and programming now and into the future.

- **Embracing a collaborative approach** – the city and community are open to collaborative approaches and novel partnerships. Funds collected from the parks and stormwater sales tax will be used to identify priorities to address park and recreation amenities and stormwater control concerns. The City seeks to leverage these funds for greater outcomes. Overall, the City is also focused on actively shaping the type of investments and developments that occur in the community and seek collaborative open approaches.

4. Specific High-Level Priorities

With the high-level concepts in mind, a series of high-level priorities emerge. These include:

- **Develop a Parks and Recreation Branding Strategy** – development of a strong and identifiable brand for parks and recreation is valuable in marketing new and existing programs both locally and regionally. A strong brand used in digital and print formats,

as well as park signage, identifies ownership, promotes community pride and is a beacon for tourists.

- **Complement and Distinguish the City's Park System** – current County resources bring outdoor enthusiasts to the community. By offering complimentary but unique programming, the City can leverage the County's assets to further advance the city's system.
- **Building North-South trail connectivity** – Smithville has a unique geographic layout, that lends itself well to trail connectivity north to south on the east side of Hwy 169. This has the potential to create a 'backbone' for a trails system that connects Smithville, but also plugs into regional trail networks.
- **Enhance Park Infrastructure with Valued Recreational Programming** – recreation programming supports and enhances the distributed recreational facilities within the City of Smithville. By developing and offering programs that take advantage of park infrastructure, residents are brought into the park system for various activities throughout the year. A successful recreational program offers something for every resident in the community and may even draw residents from outside the community.
- **Enhance Social Infrastructure with Valued Community Programming** – social and community programming supports and enhances the quality of life and overall social connection and health within the City of Smithville. Smithville already supports a successful community event program and calendar. Expanded relevant programming might include additional health and social services, including seniors and underserved community groups.
- **Comprehensive Multimodal Connections** – this could create intentional links between neighborhoods with recreation assets, social infrastructure hubs (school, library) and the downtown area. Such a system could offer a viable alternative 'transportation' network to the roads and should be designed to offer 'on-ramp' locations in pocket parks, at trail heads, in new developments, and at recreation parks.
- **Downtown / River Walk / Lake connection** – this connection is underway and is a vital arterial connection which will deliver multi-dimensional benefits. There is the potential to also create similar connection on the north side of the river and could create a loop around the core of the downtown community oasis area. The River Walk concept has gained attention and support through the planning efforts. This is seen as deepening the downtown experience and creating a unique nature-based trail that links the downtown to the other trails.
- **Develop a 'Sidewalk Culture'** – this could expand the creation and use of public / private concepts spaces for outdoor dining and entertainment.

5. Anticipated Policy Implications

The high-level concepts and priorities will cascade down into new policy implications, as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is developed. Policy areas that are likely to be addressed include:

- Riparian Buffers
- Trail Easements
- Landscape Ordinance
- Zoning Code Amendments
- Overlay Districts
- Public Art Program/Policy
- Emissions and waste
- Light and visual impacts

The policy areas will be developed in greater detail during the Master Planning process, and in subsequent policy updates.

The White Paper has been prepared by the Smithville Parks and Recreation Master Plan Consultant Team, in collaboration with City Staff, and the Parks and Recreation Committee.

