

## **PARKS FRAMEWORK PLAN**

October 5, 2021

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

The Engage New Albany Strategic Plan, which reached over 1,300 members of the New Albany community, revealed various challenges and opportunities related to parks, recreation, and open space in the city. Primarily, the community input daylighted the need for the existing city-owned parks to be examined and studied for potential improvements. Additionally, current agreements with subdivision homeowners' associations (HOAs) mandate maintenance obligations for neighborhood playgrounds in city subdivisions be reassigned to the city twenty to twenty-five years after their construction — a timeline which has approached or is approaching for many of the parks.

Using resident-sourced input from Engage New Albany, an assessment of existing parks, a focus group, a community survey, and benchmarks and best practices, this plan documents and recommends a framework for future New Albany park planning initiatives. This New Albany Park Framework Plan creates a parks typology system, parks improvement strategy, and subsequent order of magnitude costs to guide the development of city-owned parks and ensure residents have comfortable access to green space as New Albany continues to grow. The city intends to use the New Albany Park Framework Plan as a tool to evaluate and prioritize future park improvements and each unique park location.

\*This plan uses the park name at the time it was published and will be updated once the park is renamed. In 2021 the IDEA Committee and staff reviewed the historical significance of the street names in New Albany and their possible ties to slave plantations, and what actions the city could take that would be meaningful and impactful. The IDEA Committee recommended to change the name of Planters Grove Subdivision and create a historical marker for Planters Grove to explain the origination of the subdivision name and







## **PROCESS**

This plan supplements the Engage New Albany Strategic Plan by using community input from that planning process as the basis for this plan, building on common themes heard from the community. The 6-month process to complete the New Albany Parks Framework Plan was led by a planning team in close coordination with city staff and the working group comprised of city staff and key stakeholders. The plan was also shaped by community outreach, which took the form of focus groups and a community survey. Analysis included examination of existing conditions, a detailed walkshed analysis, existing parks assessment, and best practice research. This plan compiles the community input with these layers of analysis to develop strategic recommendations and design applications for all existing and future city parks to best meet the parks and recreation needs of the community.



## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

This plan process occurred during the global coronavirus pandemic and due to public health orders and recommendations, all community outreach took place digitally. The following pages summarize the community outreach that was conducted and the results from that outreach.

## **Engage New Albany Input**

This plan is closely entwined with the Engage New Albany Strategic Plan and further elaborates on some of the parks and recreation strategies from the strategic plan. Additionally, community input from the Engage New Albany process was a valuable starting point for the New Albany Parks Framework Plan community outreach.

## **Working Group**

A working group was established for this plan to oversee the planning process and provide valuable insight for the development of the plan recommendations. The working group was comprised of select city of New Albany staff members as well as three key community stakeholders: Dave Wharton, Executive Director at the New Albany-Plain Local Joint Parks District; Abbey Brooks, Program Manager at Healthy New Albany and member of the New Albany Parks & Trails Advisory Board; and Tom Rubey, Development Director at The New Albany Company. Three working group meetings were held throughout the process. Those meetings and the content presented at the meetings is summarized to the right.

#### Working Group Meeting #1 | 5.26.20

- Project Purpose
- Project Schedule
- Initial Analysis
- Existing Parks Photo Survey
- Strategic Plan Findings
- Initial Park Benchmarking
- Community Outreach Process
- Walkshed Analysis Process
- Deliverables & Next Steps

#### Working Group Meeting #2 | 7.13.20

- Community Input Summary
- Walkshed Analysis Summary
- Draft Park Hierarchy & Improvements
- Next Steps

#### Working Group Meeting #3 | 8.21.20

- Draft Park Recommendations
- Park Design Approach
- Next Steps

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

## **Focus Groups**

Focus groups were held via Zoom Meetings on June 8 and June 22, 2020 to gather specific and focused feedback from residents about the park system. Eleven residents in total took part across these two focus groups.

## **Community Survey**

An online community survey was live between June 11 and June 30, 2020. The survey was promoted through the city's social media and marketing communications as well as through signs placed in all of the city park locations. The signs briefly described the project and directed people to a web link where they could take the survey. In total, 443 people responded to the survey. The summary of the responses can be found on the following pages.

Based on feedback from the working group, focus group participants, and community survey responses, the following issues and opportunities were identified to guide the development of the draft plan recommendations.

#### **Issues:**

- Lack of creature comforts (shade, seating, picnic tables)
- Play equipment is aging, lacks variety, is not accessible for people with disabilities, and serves a limited age range (about 3-5 years old)
- Parks do not feel welcoming for all people, they feel exclusive to neighborhoods where they are located
- Lack of active recreation options (skatepark, basketball courts)
- Desire for special amenities in parks, but limited due to park sizes and lack of vehicle parking (pavilions, specialty playgrounds)
- Residents are traveling to nearby communities to enjoy destination playgrounds and parks that offer more variety and experiences for a wider age range

#### **Opportunities:**

- Enhance and upgrade neighborhood parks
  - » Play equipment for broader age range
  - » Accessibility and inclusive play
  - » Seating and gathering spaces for all
  - » More shade
- Build a destination park so residents don't have to leave the community
- Add basketball courts and skatepark to provide active recreation for teens
- Complete leisure trail connections to parks
- Enhance mid-size parks with more amenities

## **City Council Retreat**

On September 11, 2020, the planning team gave a brief presentation to New Albany City Council members and staff with draft recommendations for the parks framework plan. Council members overwhelmingly supported the draft recommendations and expressed interest in prioritizing some of the recommendations for 2021.





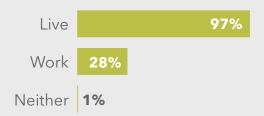




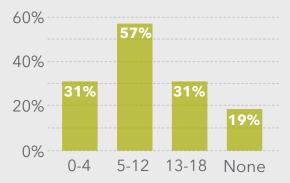


## **Community Survey Results**

## Do you live or work in New Albany? (n=352)



## Age of children in your household? (n=335)



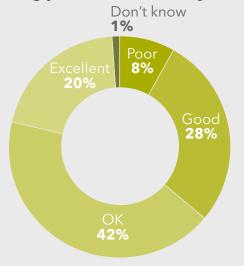
## In what neighborhood do you live? (n=328)



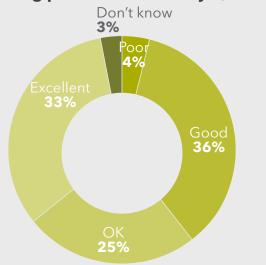
## Which three city of New Albany parks do you and your family visit most often? (n=443)

Rose Run Park	70%
Swickard Woods Nature Preserve	31%
Sumption Drive Playground	17%
Lambton Green Playground	14%
Lambton Park	12%
North of Woods Playground	12%
Hampsted Village Playground	9%
Upper Fenway Playground	9%
Planter's Grove Playground and Basketball Court	8%
Scarlocken Green Playground	8%
Windsor Playground	7%
Byington Park	7%
Ratchford Fen's Park	7%
Snider Loop Playground	7%
Millbrook Farm Playground	4%
Planter's Grove Park*	4%
James River Playground*	4%
Tidewater Park	2%
Tiverton Playground	2%
Ebrington Playground	1%

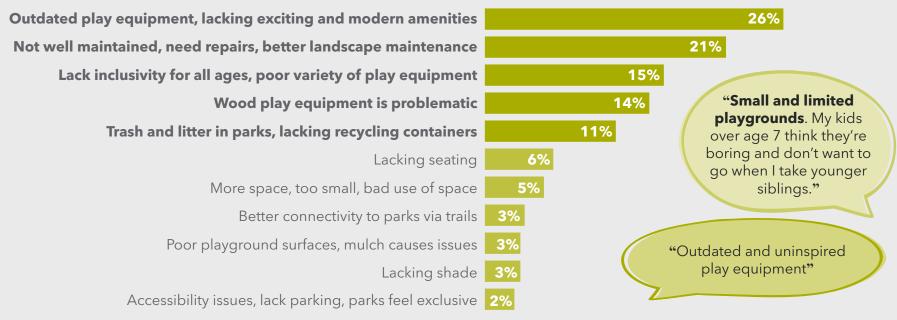
## How would you rate the quality of existing parks in New Albany? (n=397)



## How would you rate the maintenance of existing parks in New Albany? (n=397)



## What are some of the specific issues related to the quality or maintenance of existing parks in New Albany? (n=243)



# What are the primary reasons that you and your family visit city of New Albany parks? Select up to three. (n=397) Enjoy the outdoors or nature 70% Walk, run, or bike for exercise 58% Use play equipment 50% Family activities 32% Meet friends 21%

18%

13%

8%

## **Top 3 Reasons for Visiting a City Park:**

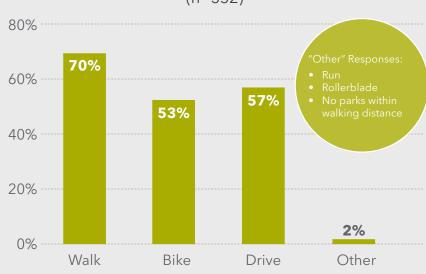
- Enjoy the outdoors or nature
- 2. Walk, run, or bike for exercise
- 3. Use play equipment

## How do you typically get to parks in New Albany? (n=352)

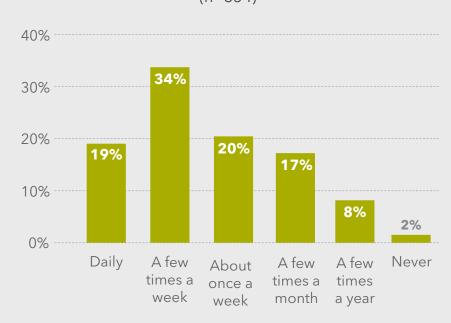
Dog walking

Play sports

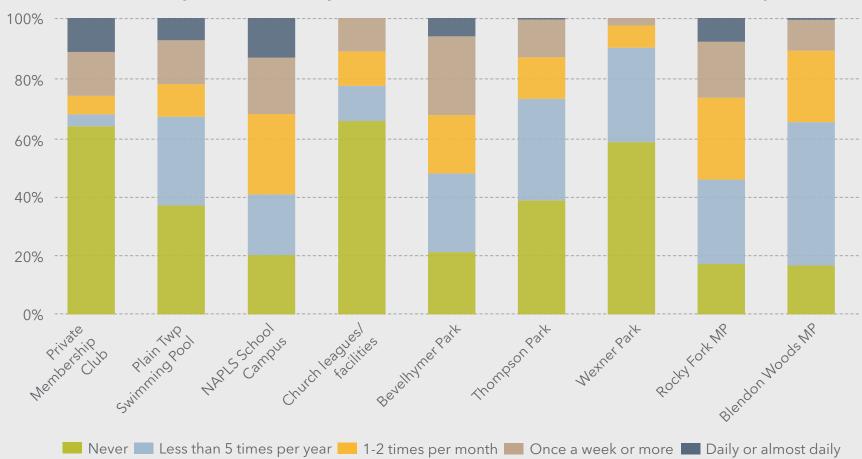
Picnic or general leisure activities



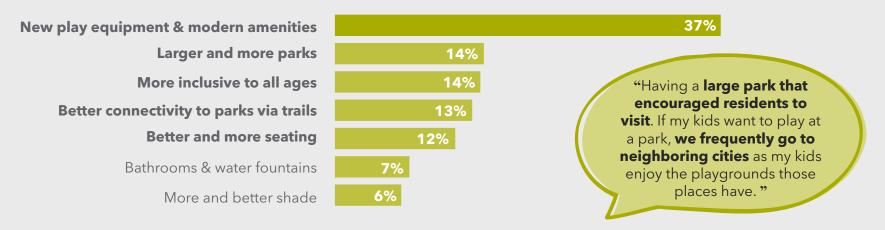
## How often do you visit a city of New Albany park? (n=354)







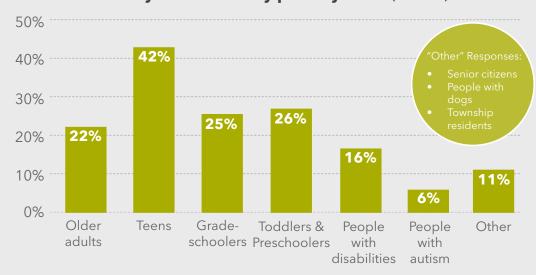
## What improvements to city of New Albany parks and recreation facilities would encourage you to them more often? (n=250)



"A destination park would be my first priority. Also maintenance of neighborhood parks would be great. And structures for older kids in the 5-12 range."

> "Enhance current park offerings with better equipment and add at least one new, large park with lots of playscapes for kids."

## Are there any populations that are currently underserved by the city of New Albany parks system? (n=278)



#### Select five activities you would like to do most in a park in New Albany?\* (n=354)

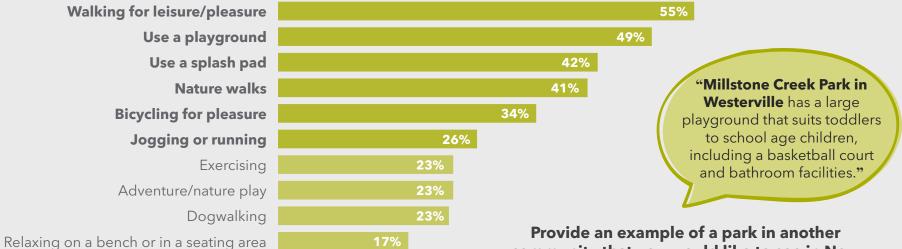
14%

13%

13%

12%

10%



community that you would like to see in New Albany. (n=251)





<sup>\*</sup> Only showing answer options that ≥ 10% of people selected

#### "We go to Hannah Park in Gahanna often.

Sledding

Ice skating

Basketball

Picnicking

They have a trail that wraps around the playground, grassy areas, and sports fields. There are restrooms available, a beautiful facility to rent and multiple fishing ponds.

An entire day of family fun and outdoor

activities are available at Hannah Park."

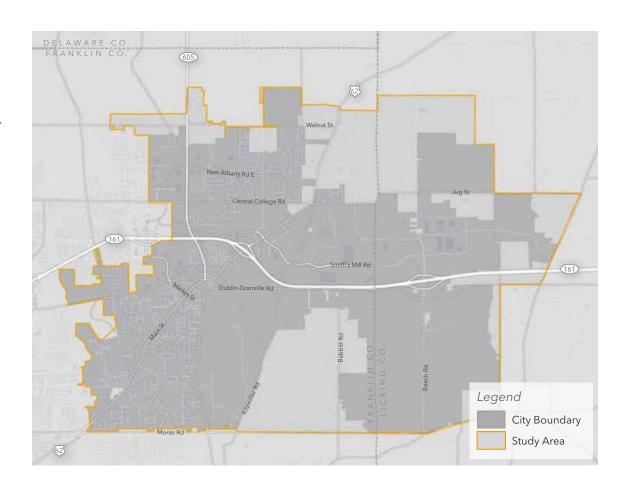


# ANALYSIS

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

## **Study Area**

The planning study area is the same as the Engage New Albany Strategic Plan, which is congruent with potential growth areas for the city based on water and sewer service availability. The city of New Albany and the planning study area span both Franklin and Licking counties. While existing parks are concentrated in the Franklin county portion of the study area, it is important to keep future park opportunities in mind as the city grows so that all residents have access to park space.

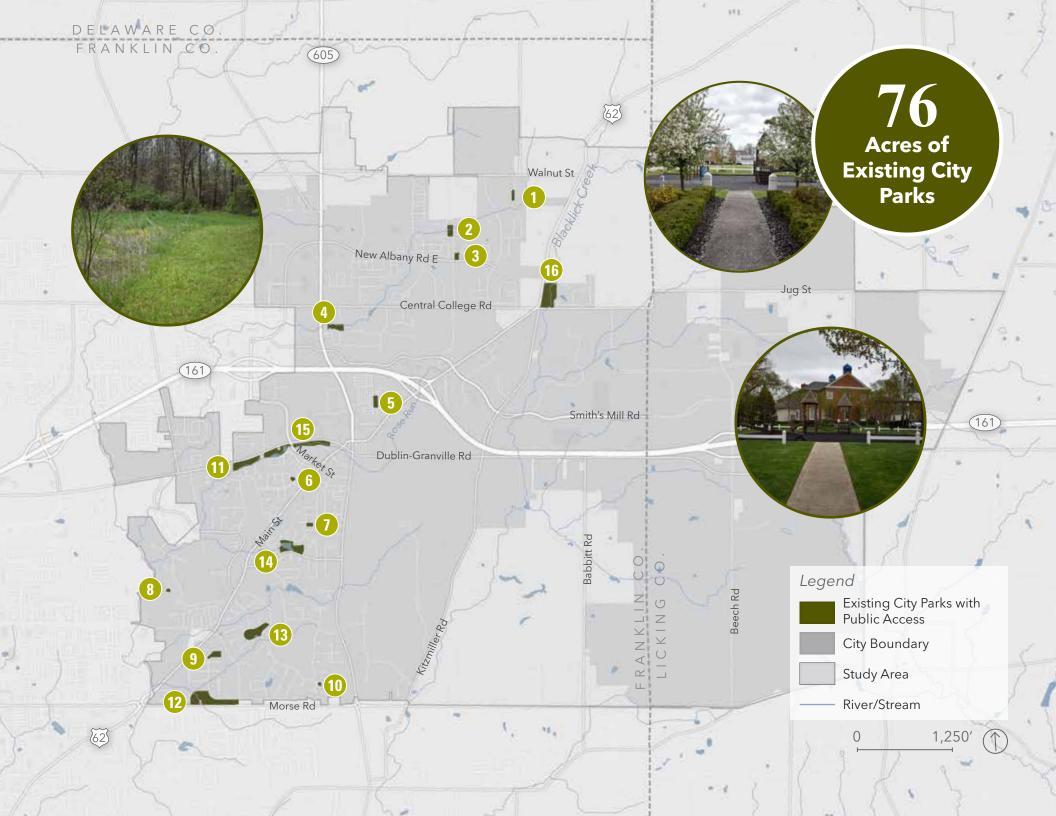


## **Existing City-Owned Parks**

This plan is specifically focused on city-owned parks, strategies for the improvement of existing city-owned parks, and opportunities for the development of new city-owned parks. At the time of this plan's publishing the city of New Albany owns and manages approximately 73 acres of parks. These include parks in subdivisions that have already transferred maintenance obligations to the city from their respective HOAs, parks in neighborhoods that the city has always maintained and/or owned, and the newly developed Rose Run Park. Additionally, the city owns a few properties that are currently preserved green spaces but that have limited public access, including Tidewater Park.

	PARK	ACRES	MAINTENANCE TRANSFER DATE	AMENITIES	OWNERSHIP/ MAINTENANCE
1	Scarlocken Green Playground	0.97	-	play equipment, swing set, pavilion, open green space	City Owned / HOA Maintained
2	Millbrook Farm Playground	2.17	_	play equipment, swing set, open green space	City Owned / HOA Maintained
3	Sumption Drive Playground	1.02	8/8/2020	play equipment, swing set, open green space	City Owned / City Maintained
4	The Enclave Playground	2.90	_	play equipment, swing set	City Owned / HOA Maintained
5	Windsor Playground	1.82	8/3/2024	play equipment, swing set, pavilion	City Owned / City Maintained
6	North of Woods Playground	0.46	12/15/2022	play equipment, swing set	City Owned / City Maintained
7	Upper Fenway Playground	0.74	_	play equipment, swing set, open green space	HOA owned and Maintained
8	Ebrington Playground	0.35	_	play equipment, swing set	City Owned / HOA Maintained
9	James River Playground*	2.27	8/12/2011	play equipment, swing set, open green space	City Owned / City Maintained
10	Tiverton Playground	0.33	_	no traditional play equipment, climbing bars, tire swing, picnic table	HOA owned and Maintained
11	Byington Park	6.08	_	linear open green space, play equipment, Rose Run creek	City Owned / City Maintained
12	Planter's Grove Park*	14.33	11/13/2014	linear open green space, play equipment, swing set, basketball court	City Owned / City Maintained
13	Lambton Park	7.26	7/17/2017 playground - 10/12/2020	large central pond, play equipment, swing set, open green space, leisure trails	City Owned / City Maintained
14	Ratchford Fen's Park	7.93	11/26/2012	large central pond, leisure trails	City Owned / City Maintained
15	Rose Run Park	12.97	_	leisure trails, Rose Run creek, nature play	City Owned / City Maintained
16	Tidewater	11.61	_	open green space, leisure trail	City Owned / City Maintained

<sup>\*</sup>name of park at time of publishing



## **All Parks & Open Space**

Aside from the city of New Albany, multiple other entities own and operate parks and green space in the study area. The New Albany-Plain Local Joint Parks District (JPD) was established in 1999 to provide recreational opportunities for residents of New Albany and Plain Township. They oversee three parks: Bevelhymer Park, Wexner Community Park, and Thompson Park. Thompson Park is located just outside of the study area boundary to the west but is still important for analysis purposes as it is managed by the JPD and many New Albany residents frequent that park. The primary focus of the JPD has been the provision of active recreational facilities, which include thirty-eight (38) baseball, football, soccer, and lacrosse fields as well as seven (7) tennis courts and one (1) basketball court. The JPD coordinates youth and adult sports leagues.

To the north of the city and the study area is Rocky Fork Metro Park, owned and managed by the Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks. This 1,200-acre park is mostly preserved land, but also includes a dog park, multi-use trails, picnic areas, and a playground. Plain Township owns and operates the Plain Township Aquatic Center, located adjacent to Wexner Park on the north side of Swickard Woods Boulevard.

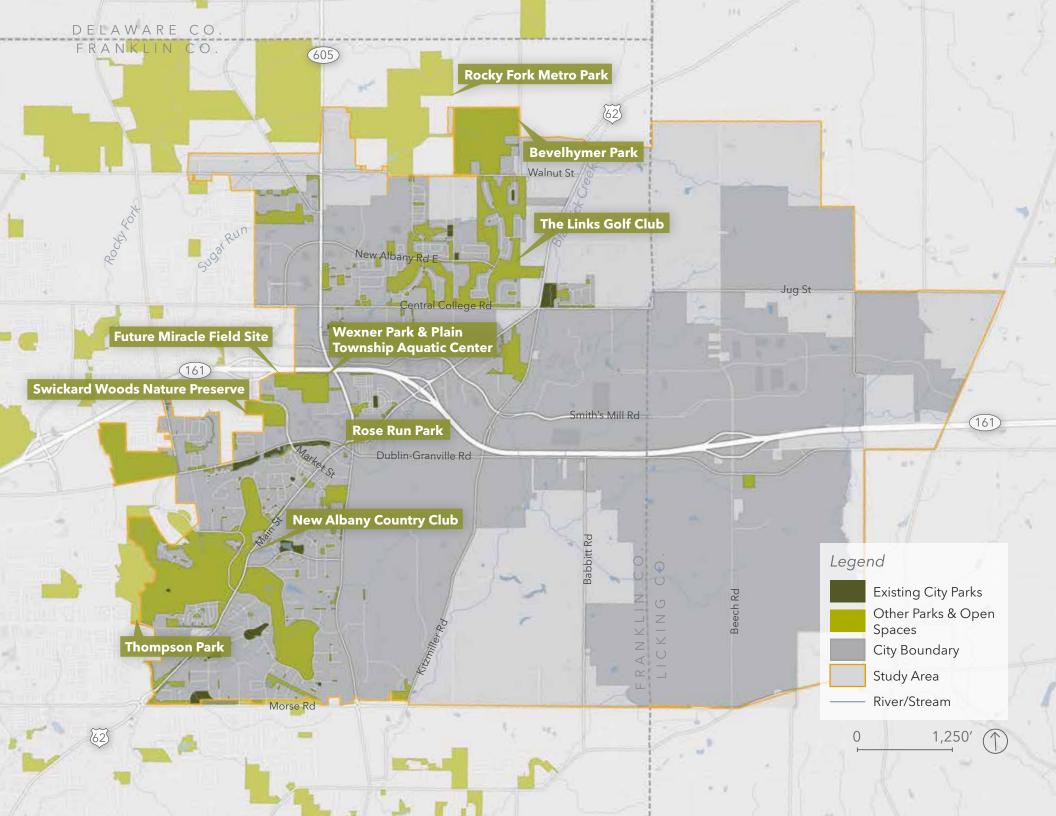
This aquatic recreational facility is available to residents of New Albany and Plain Township who purchase a membership. Just west of the Plain Township Aquatic Center is a site currently owned by the city of New Albany that is slated for development of an accessible ball stadium that will include a rubber turf field and accessible playground. The facility will be operated by the Miracle League of New Albany. Two private golf clubs exist within the city, which provide recreational opportunities for their membership, but as they are not publicly accessible, they are not considered public parks or green space and are not factored into the total acreage.

The remaining parks and green spaces in the study area are either owned by the city of New Albany or homeowner's associations (HOAs). HOA-owned parks are located in residential subdivisions and are smaller in scale than other parks in the study area. Agreements between the city and the subdivision developers mandate that most of the HOA-owned parks transfer maintenance responsibility to the city twenty- to twenty-five years after their construction. Reference table on page 18.









### **Natural Features**

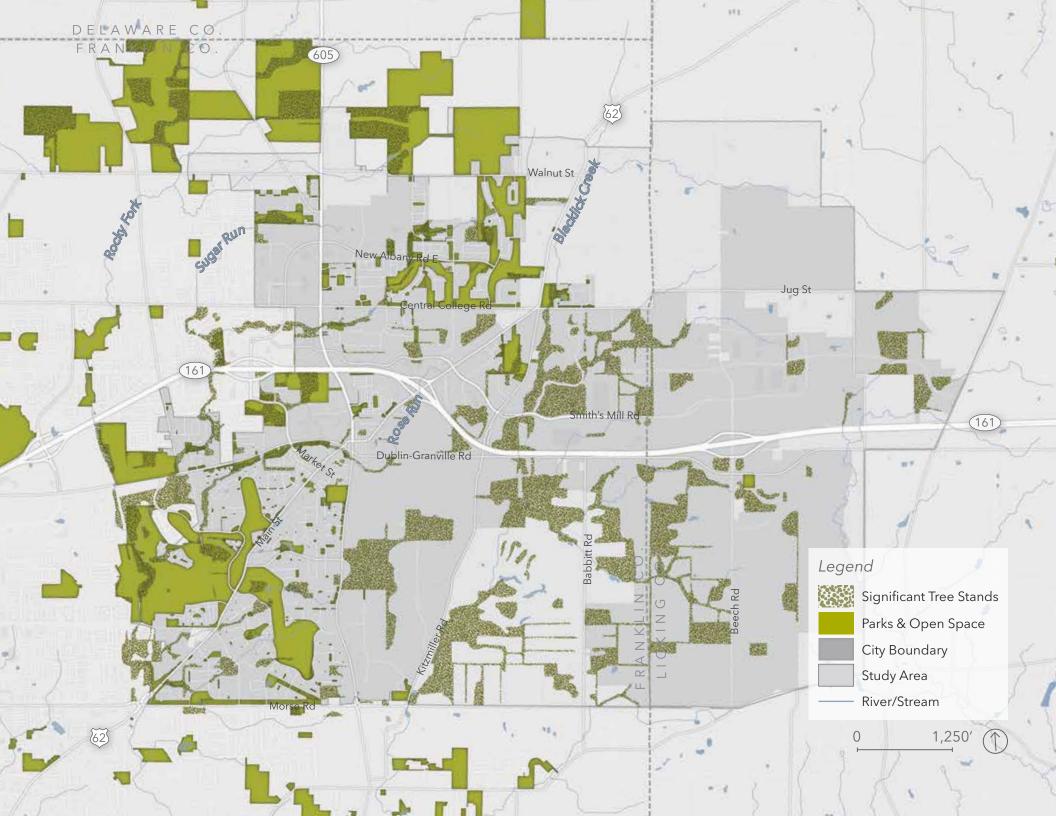
Many of New Albany's significant natural features intersect or are located in parks and open spaces. These natural features include streams, tributaries, wetlands, and significant tree stands or forested areas. These natural features sometimes become defining features of parks and open spaces, like the Rose Run stream corridor is for Rose Run Park or Rocky Fork Creek is for Rocky Fork Metro Park. New Albany is dedicated to preservation efforts of these significant natural features and designating these areas as parks and open spaces helps to ensure their conservation.











#### **Leisure Trails & Sidewalks**

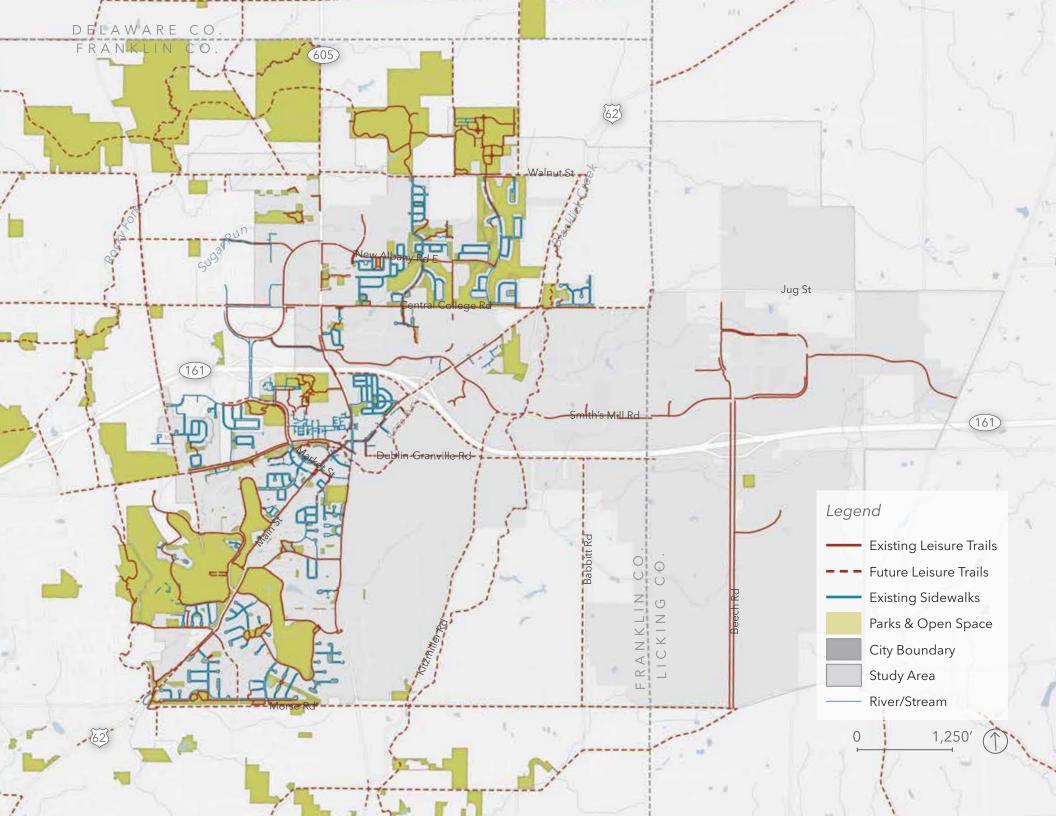
New Albany has intentionally developed a robust leisure trail system over many years to create a community that is walkable and bikeable. At the time of this plan's publishing, there are over 55 miles of leisure trails, with more funded and/or planned. This leisure trail system connects residents and community members with important destinations, like the Village Center, the Learning Campus, employment centers, and parks and open spaces. Additionally, these leisure trails can serve as greenways or linear parks as they are often buffered by ample green space and landscaping. Other city plans, like the Bike New Albany Plan, Leisure Trails Master Plan, and Engage New Albany Strategic Plan highlight the need for the city to continue filling in gaps in the leisure trail system to create a complete system. Sidewalks are present in most residential areas of the city and help to connect pedestrians and bicyclists to the greater leisure trail system, as well as to parks within neighborhoods.











## **PARKS ASSESSMENT**

An assessment of the existing city parks was performed to determine commonalities and deviations in their program and design, evaluate the condition and variety of amenities, and to identify their unique characteristics. The planning team studied current park conditions and ways in which the parks could be improved. The following is a high-level summary of the parks assessment results along with accompanying images.

#### **Park Amenities:**

- Neighborhood parks contain traditional play structures in limited configurations
- Bench types and designs vary; some benches are in poor condition
- Playground edging is typically railroad ties, pavers, or asphalt curb
- Play surface is typically mulch or rubber much
- Across city parks, a singular basketball court is located at Planter's Grove Park\*
- New nature play equipment is located at Rose Run Park











<sup>\*</sup>name of park at time of publishing

## **Landscape Elements:**

- Many parks contain pergolas and decorative fencing
- Most parks contain formal softscape installations
- Park enclosures include single or double horse-rail fencing in multiple interpretations
- Some parks have no enclosure
- A few parks have spaces for quiet reflection
- A few parks have recreational ponds













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## WALKSHED ANALYSIS

A walkshed analysis was conducted to determine the accessibility of city parks and leisure trails for New Albany residents to determine the following:

- The percentage of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park;
- The percentage of residents within a 10-minute walk of a leisure trail:
- The impact that adding future parks and planned trails has on the percentage of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail; and
- The impact that partner parks have on the percentage of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park.

The following pages describe the walkshed analysis methodology and findings.

## Methodology

#### Existing Facilities:

- Identified city of New Albany facilities with public access.
- Geolocated and mapped park access points for publicly accessible parks.
- Geolocated trailheads and created 0.25-mile trail intervals for all existing leisure trails.
- Created 10-minute walksheds from access points for parks and leisure trails.
- Calculated populations within a 10-minute walk of existing parks and leisure trails.

#### Partner Impact:

- Looked at partners also serving city of New Albany residents (Metro Parks and New Albany-Plain Local Joint Parks District), identifying facilities within the city of New Albany boundary and geolocating public access points.
- Created 10-minute walkshed from partner access points, and calculated impact of these facilities on the percentage of population within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail.

#### Potential Facilities:

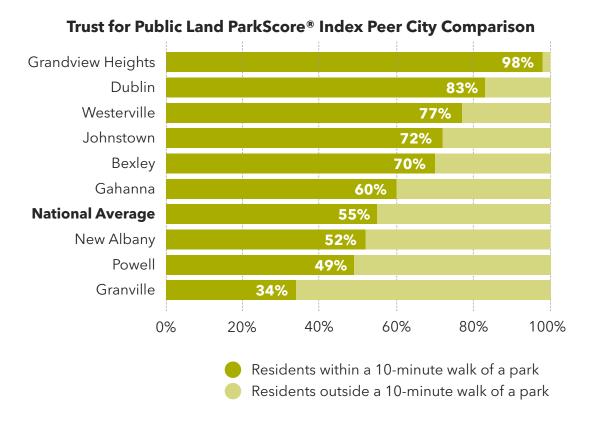
- Identified "properties of interest" for potential acquisition or cityowned properties without public access within the city of New Albany boundary and geolocated potential access points.
- Using regional data, identified planned and potential trail connections, geolocating potential trailheads and access points.
- Created 10-minute walksheds for potential/planned parks and leisure trails.
- Calculated the impact of potential trails and potential/planned parks on population within a 10-minute walk from a park or trail.

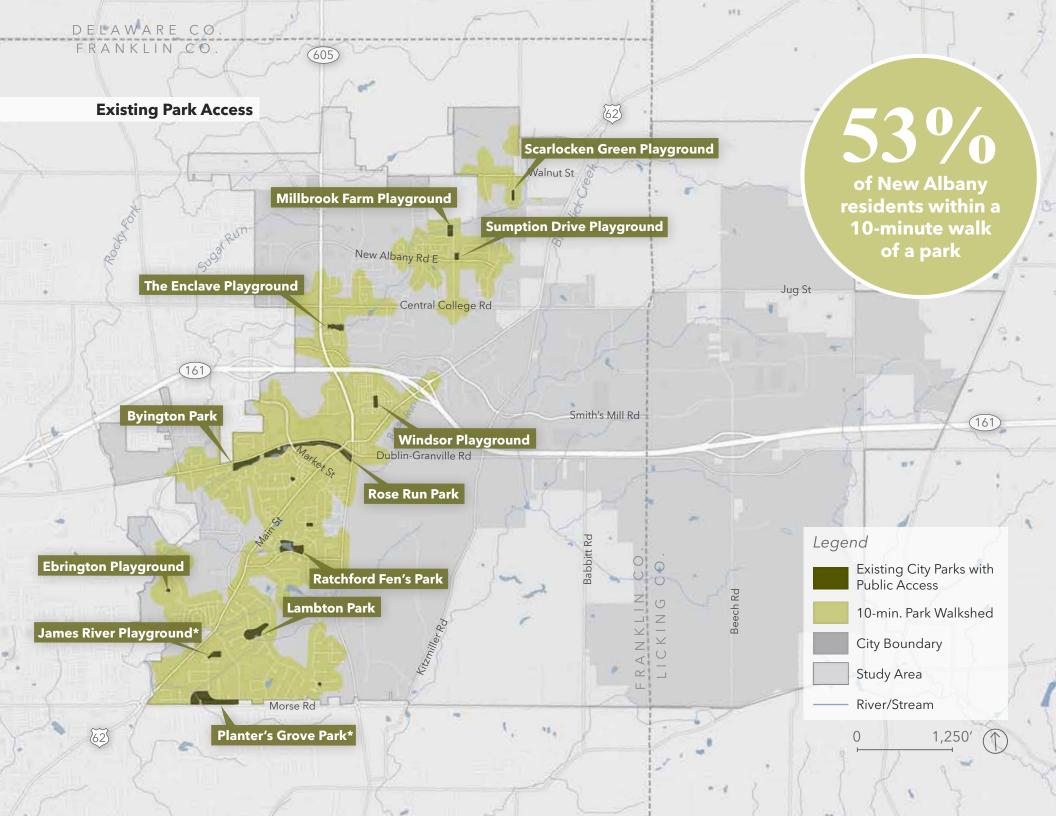
The analysis results are depicted and summarized on the following pages.

## **Existing Park Access**

The methodology for this walkshed analysis is based on a similar model, the ParkScore® Index by the Trust for Public Land, which evaluates park access for most cities in the United States. The 2020 ParkScore® Index indicates that 52% of New Albany residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park. To compare, the national average according to the ParkScore® Index is 55%. A comparison of the ParkScore® for other Central Ohio peer cities shows that New Albany falls towards the lower end of the scale. The full results of this comparison are shown in the chart to the right.

To precisely analyze existing and future park and leisure trail access in New Albany the planning team developed a detailed walkshed analysis model. In running this custom model, the result for the existing park access almost exactly aligns with that of the ParkScore® Index. The planning team's walkshed analysis revealed that 53% or 6,109 New Albany residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park. The parks included this analysis were only those that are city-owned, publicly accessible, and within the defined study area.

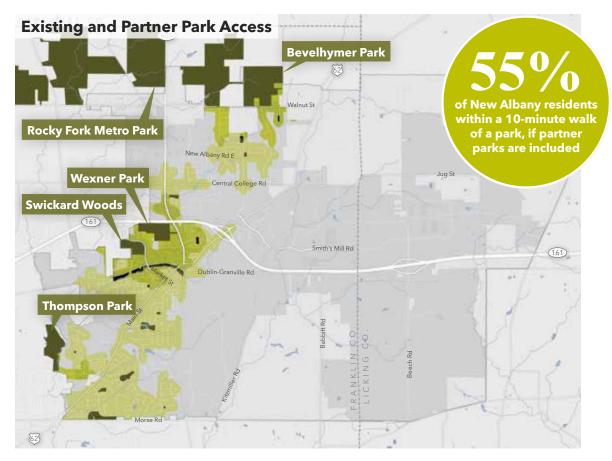




## Partner and Future Park Impact

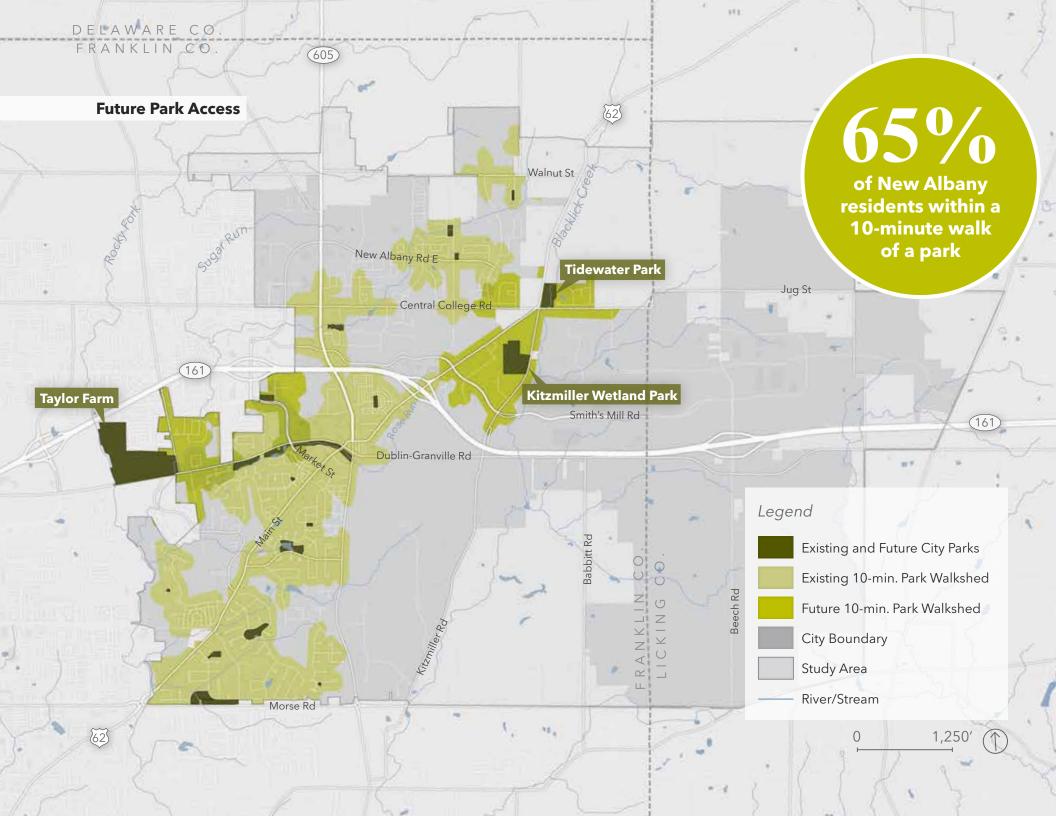
Since the existing park access analysis only includes public parks that are cityowned, the planning team ran another analysis, which included partner parks, or public parks owned by other entities, including Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, New Albany-Plain Local Joint Parks District, or the New Albany-Plain Local School District. The analysis revealed that with the inclusion of partner parks, the percentage of New Albany residents within a 10-minute walk of park increases marginally from 53% to 55%, an addition of 223 residents.

The city owns four parcels that are set aside for parkland, but that are not currently publicly accessible. These are referred to as future parks and they include: Tidewater Park, at the intersection of Central College Road and US 62; Kitzmiller Wetland Park, off Kitzmiller Road between Smith's Mill Road and Central College Road; the Early Learning Park off of Fodor Road by the New Albany Early Learning Center; and Taylor Farm, a former farm property off East Dublin-Granville Road between Hamilton Road and Harlem Road. With the addition of these future parks, the percentage of New Albany residents within a 10-minute walk of a park will increase from 53% to 65%, serving an additional 1,402 residents.



#### Legend





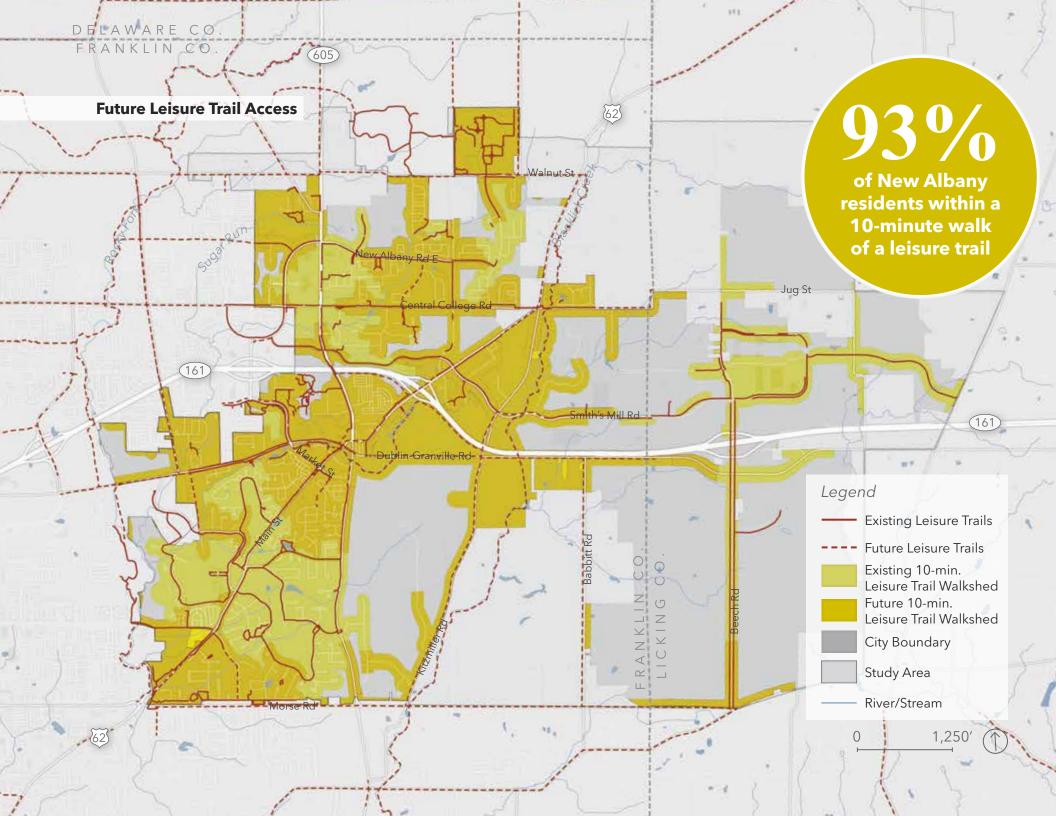
### **Leisure Trail Access**

Leisure trail access was important to measure as leisure trails act as both an active transportation facility to reach parks, but can also be considered greenways or linear parks, themselves. The existing leisure trail network of more than 55 miles of paved trails is within a 10-minute walk for 86% or 9,877 of New Albany residents. While this number is quite high, there are significant gaps in the trail system that might prevent people who are within walking distance of a trail from being able to easily access their desired destination once they are on a trail.

The addition of new trail connections to fill the gaps in the leisure trail system and to connect to the larger region will serve an additional 804 residents, and increase the percentage of New Albany residents within a 10-minute walk of a trail from 86% to 93%.









## PARKS IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

## **INTRODUCTION**

This section provides a framework and specific recommendations for the improvement of the existing and future city-owned parks in New Albany. The future city park system is envisioned to be a 200+ acre diversified collection of parks, large and small, connected by a robust leisure trail network. This parks system should feature high quality recreation facilities and play equipment to meet the needs of adults and children of all age groups. The recommendations and conceptual park designs in this section are aligned with the recommendations in the Engage New Albany Strategic Plan as well as the city's other guiding plans.



## **PARK TYPOLOGIES**

The parks are categorized into the following four typologies to develop appropriately scaled strategies and design recommendations for each:









Each typology contains overarching recommendations to guide the future development of parks. Additionally, each typology section contains applications for the design of parks as they are upgraded or improved. Each pocket playground upgrade will reference a preselected menu of play equipment, site furnishings, and landscape elements for the city, HOAs, and others to use when designing each playground. This will be supplied as a separate document once final amenities and equipment is selected.

The other three park typologies use design concepts and narratives to provide inspiration and direction for improvements to neighborhood parks, parkland preserves, and destination parks. These are not final designs for these parks, only diagrams to help communicate the recommendations.

This plan recommends the following framework be applied to these four typologies when considering future park improvements:

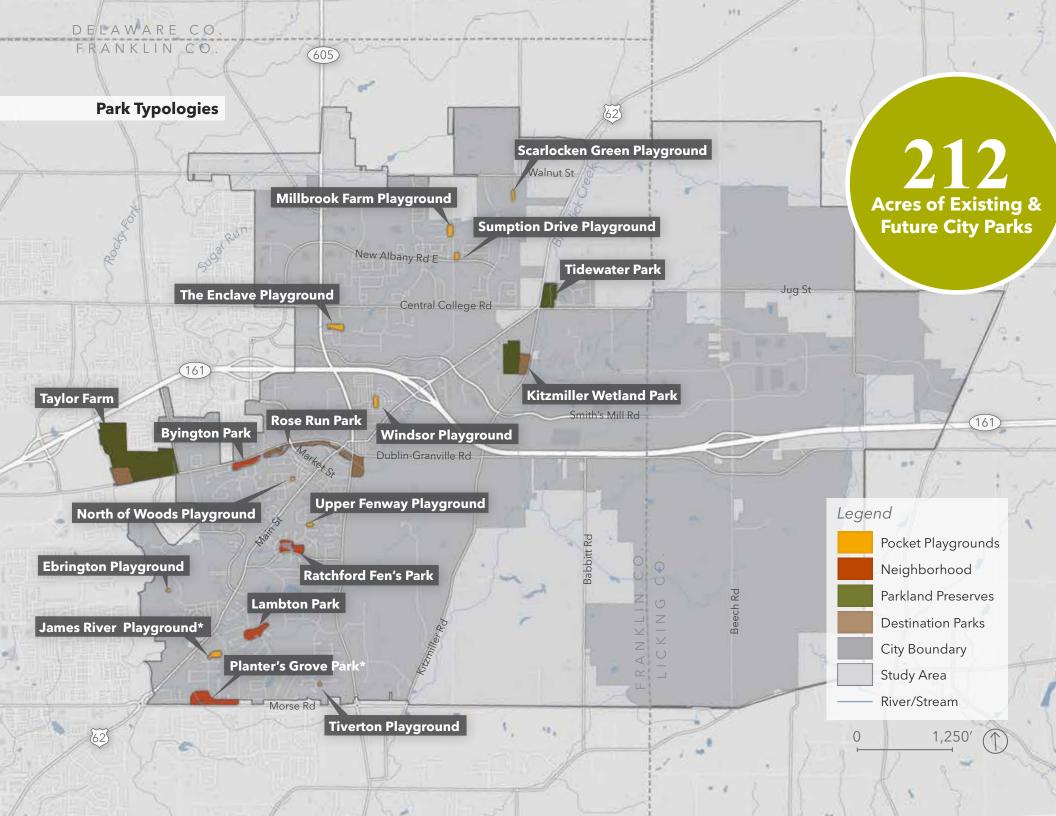
- Upgrade pocket playgrounds;
- Enhance neighborhood parks;
- Improve access to parkland preserves; and
- Create regional, all-day destination parks.











# **POCKET PLAYGROUNDS: UPGRADE EXISTING FACILITIES**



Vision: Hyperlocal parks anchored by playgrounds, but with comfortable amenities for residents of all ages.

There are ten pocket playgrounds, all located in residential subdivisions. These parks were constructed in conjunction with their respective subdivisions and, per city agreement, most parks transfer maintenance responsibilities to the city 20-25 years after their construction. At the time of this plan's publishing, only two of these parks are still managed by HOAs: North of Woods Playground (transfer maintenance to the city on 12/15/2022) and Windsor Playground (transfer maintenance to the city on 8/3/2024). However, some playgrounds will remain under HOA management and any improvements fall within HOA responsibilities. These pocket playgrounds are intended to be convenient, walkable parks embedded within neighborhoods. The city will strive for consistency with HOA and city maintained parks.

During our community outreach, residents expressed some concern for the condition and safety of the play equipment at these aging playgrounds

— citing decaying wood play structures and carpenter bees as common issues. Additionally, New Albany families are choosing to travel to nearby peer communities, like Gahanna and Westerville, to use more modern and varied play equipment regardless of the close proximity of their own neighborhood parks.

Residents also noted, New Albany pocket parks are generally programmed towards 2-5 year olds. Though the main users are and will be preschool-aged children and their caregivers, providing play equipment for ages 2-12, and adding a few amenities like seating, shade, and picnic areas, expand the playgrounds' programs to include all ages.

Without the need to expand beyond the existing playground footprint, the city can simply upgrade play equipment and add a few more amenities for these parks to become the neighborhood residents' go-to places.

- Upgrade the pocket playgrounds with more engaging play equipment that is inclusive for a range of ages and abilities.
- Vary play equipment from site to site to provide residents variety.
- Incorporate amenities in the pocket playgrounds providing necessary comforts for all ages, such as shaded areas, seating, and picnic tables.
- Use the development process to ensure adequate open space and parkland dedication for all new residential development.



## **NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS: ENHANCE UNIQUE PROGRAM**



Vision: Parks nestled in neighborhoods providing benefits and distinctive recreation amenities.

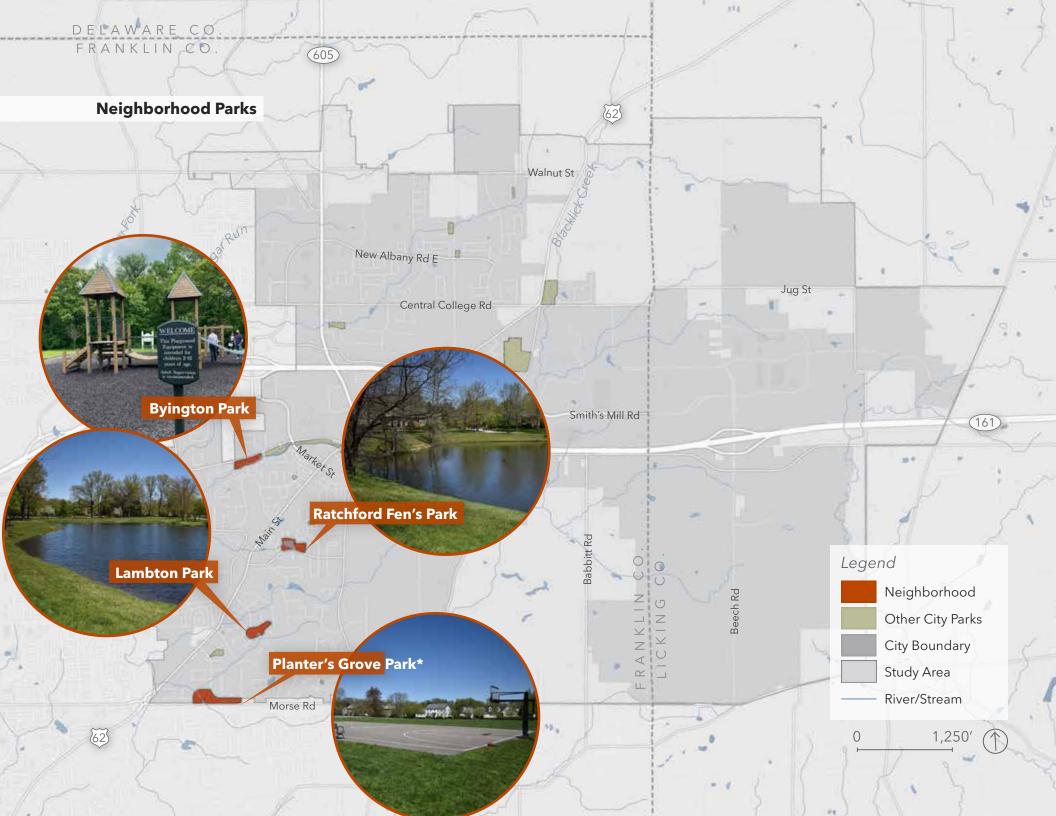
Neighborhood parks are located in or near residential areas and include typical pocket playgrounds within their overall programs. However, neighborhood parks are significantly larger in size and have additional program elements unique to each park. This typology includes four existing parks: Byington Park, Lambton Park, Ratchford Fen's Park, and Planter's Grove Park.

These parks were developed at the same time as the surrounding neighborhoods and were intended to serve residents in the immediate area as evidenced by the lack of service amenities such as parking, restrooms or active management. The parks are well connected to the neighboring homes by sidewalks and/or leisure trails and were intended to be accessed by pedestrians or cyclists. Small and tailored improvements can capitalize on the unique amenities of each park to diversify the available options. Improvements should to be balanced with the physical constraints of each

site, lack of service amenities, and the park's location within a neighborhood. For example, the pond at Lambton Park is the highlight of this park but, there are limited amenities at the water's edge to enjoy it's scenery. Adding an elegant, appropriately-scaled overlook would serve visitors by offering a new way to experience Lambton Park. Furthermore, and in kind with the pocket playgrounds, neighborhood parks are lacking typical park amenities like shaded areas, ample seating, and picnic tables. These touches, though light, will emphasize each parks' individual offerings giving residents differing programming options from park to park.

The following pages depict proposed recommendations of the four neighborhood parks. How and when these recommendations occur is still yet to be determined. A formal design process will be followed for each park when it is tapped for improvement.

- Enhance each neighborhood park by upgrading and emphasizing unique programs to distinguish these parks from one another.
- Incorporate amenities in the neighborhood parks that provide necessary comforts for all ages, such as shaded areas, seating, and picnic tables.



## **Byington Park**

Byington Park is a 6-acre neighborhood park located across the road from the Chabad Center of Columbus. The northern park edge runs along the leisure trail paralleling Dublin Granville Road while the southern boundary abuts a New Albany Country Club neighborhood. Access is only available via foot or bike from either location.

Though the park currently acts like a neighborhood playground, Byington Park's location and larger size expands this park's opportunities for additional program. It is adjacent to a well-used stretch of leisure trail and sits within a small clearing in the woods along Rose Run stream. Using the current site layout as the starting point, the park upgrades can have a big impact on usership.

First and foremost, the playground will not only upgrade its equipment, it should expand its footprint to include the entire leisure-trail-encircled area. This playground will be larger than typical pocket playgrounds making this new playground the defining feature of this neighborhood park.

The city could also invest in a new, appropriately-sized shelter and picnic tables to accommodate multiple families simultaneously and give parents shade while kids climb the new play equipment.

The woods along the stream can be thinned of invasive species followed by installing a new mulch path twisting through the brush along Rose Run stream.

- Expand Upgrade play equipment and expand the existing playground to include the entirety of the encircled area.
- Add wooded trails to the site, connecting them with the existing trails.
- Add a small picnic shelter with seating.
- Add a bike fix-it station easily accessed from the leisure trail network.
- Improve the access points to the park.



#### **Lambton Park**

Lambton Park is 7.3-acres nestled within the Lambton neighborhood. It is bounded on all sides by Lambton Green and Lambton Park Road. It features leisure trails on the exterior and interior of the park, a large pond, a gracious lawn, a wooded area, a playground, and benches around the park.

This park is successful and generally serving resident's needs. However, Lambton Park could differentiate itself from the other neighborhood parks by tweaking its main components' programs.

The largest proposed improvement is the addition of a scenic overlook. This new subdued, tasteful structure will give New Albany residents and visitors a chance to interact with the pond in a new way. People will be encourage to lounge or dip dangled toes from the pier's edge.

The existing playground will be upgraded using standards set by the Playground Playbook, but considering the playgrounds' location, nature play elements will be added as a nod to the existing tree-covered surroundings.

- Add an overlook to the edge of the existing pond.
- Upgrade the existing playground per the recommendations for the Pocket Playgrounds
- Create additional seating areas.



#### **Ratchford Fen's Park**

Ratchford Fen's Park boasts nearly 8 acres in the heart of the Fenway neighborhood and was one of the first subdivison parks to change hands from the HOA to the city. This lovely neighborhood park prominently features a large fishing pond, mature tree stands, and leisure trails — making the cultivated, pastoral beauty the main attraction. The passive program is dotted with picturesque moments showcasing the park's simple palette of native trees, mown turf, and water.

Ratchford Fen's Park has already proved its value to New Albany residents, so the recommendations list is limited, but intentional, to ensure this bucolic gem continued success by adding a few unique follies throughout.

At approximately one quarter of the site, the pond is the established focal point of the park. However, a strategically placed belvedere\* along the water's edge could bolster a 20-minute park visit to an afternoon full of sunshine and a new scenic perspective.

Visitors can experience the dense wooded areas from the new mulch trails punctuated with small, individual moments of nature play like boulders and stump steppers.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Add a belvedere at the pond's edge to take advantage of the scenic views.
- Add a nature play area to the wooded area in the park.
- Add more intentional seating moments throughout the park.
- Enhance plantings to help frame scenic moments.

\*A belvedere is an architectural structure sited specifically to take advantage of scenery — in this case, the mature trees and sweeping views of the water.



#### Planter's Grove Park\*

At approximately 14 acres, Planter's Grove is the largest of the neighborhood parks at nearly double the next closest contender. Beautiful mature trees and long, linear lawns blanket the majority of the acreage and act as a gracious buffer between neighborhood residents and Morse Rose. However, historically the park's hotspot has been the single basketball court at the elbow of Planter's Grove. Up until 2021 it was the only sport court in the community outside of the Learning Campus court. As with most outdoor activities, the court experienced increased usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased activity pushed the physical limits of what the park could accommodate and began to have a negative impact on the neighborhood. One important concern was the number of cars parked on the streets. The narrowness of residential streets make neighborhood access difficult when cars are parked on both sides and does not allow adequate space for emergency response vehicles or access to residences.

Additional courts have recently been added at Bevelhymer Park. The Michael

Lucey Memorial Basketball Courts are an outdoor basketball complex with two regulation size courts that inlcude covered bleachers for spectators and future plans for lighting. The location within an existing regional park that is managed by the New Albany Plain Local Joint Parks District allows for adequate parking, trash removal and restroom facilities. This complex provides an opportunity for Planter's Grove Park to be reimagined with amenities that don't generate the need for parking and restrooms. The new facilities should be designed within the context and character of the neighborhood. City Council plans to engage neighborhood residents in a series of focus group meetings to discuss the uses and activities that would best serve the area and ensure the park remains appropriate scale given the residential neighborhood that surrounds it.

\*This plan uses the park name at the time it was published and will be updated once the park is renamed. In 2021 the IDEA Committee and staff reviewed the historical significance of the street names in New Albany and their possible ties to slave plantations,

and what actions the city could take that would be meaningful and impactful. The IDEA Committee recommended to change the name of Planters Grove Subdivision and create a historical marker for Planters Grove to explain the origination of the subdivision name and the community awareness that caused it to be changed.

- Upgrade the existing playground per the recommendations for the Pocket Playgrounds.
- Re-imagine the sports court in order to keep the area neighborhood scaled.
- Maintain an abundance of open lawns for children's play areas for sports such as kickball or passive family space for picnics.



# PARKLAND PRESERVES: IMPROVE ACCESS



Vision: Preserved areas that prioritize ecological conservation and provide opportunities to connect with nature.

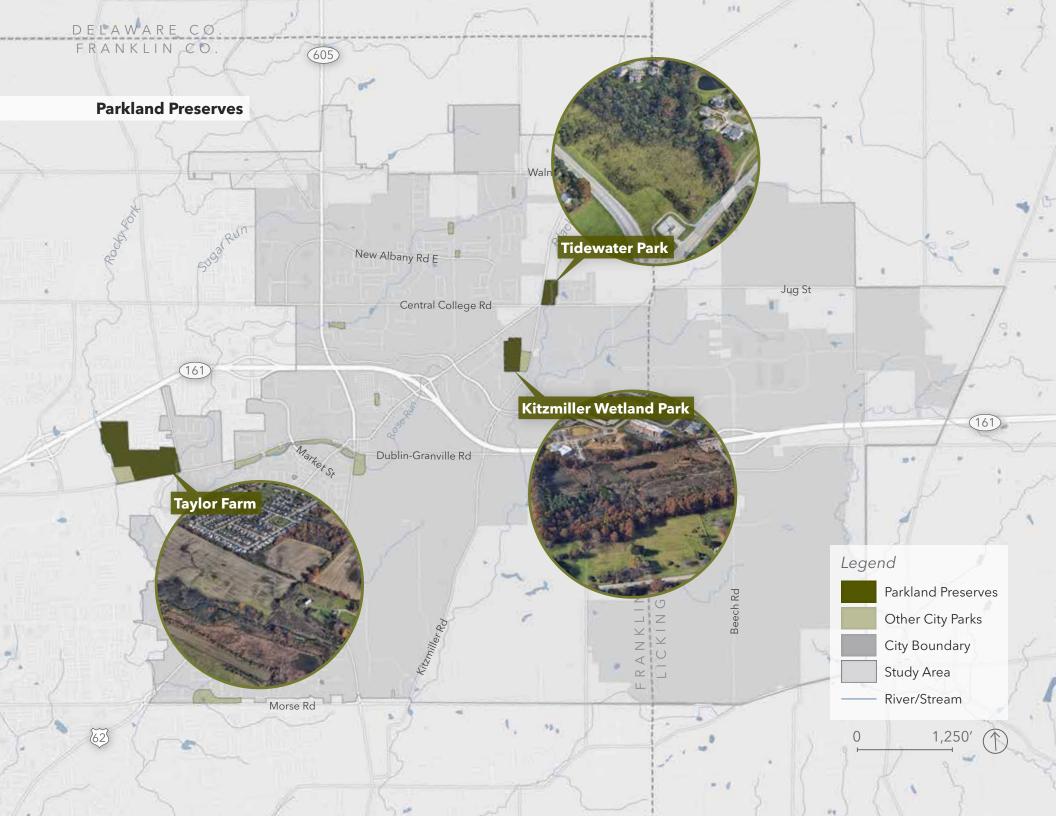
Parkland preserve parks, though beautiful and important ecological sites, suffer from a lack of public access and awareness. Tidewater Park is highly naturalized with preserved open space, but it lacks physical access via trails or pathways as well as signage to signal that it is, in fact, a public park. The other two parks in this typology, Taylor Farm and Kitzmiller Wetland Park, are city-owned land slated for future park development. These two parks are also categorized as destination parks, but a large part of the anticipated program for these sites will include nature preserves and wetlands, which is why they've also been included in this typology. The wetland sections of these two parks are anticipated to follow the parkland preserve typology and are outlined on the map on the following page.

In contrast to most other highly programmed New Albany city parks, parkland preserves, are meant to remain as naturalized and untouched as possible, while still allowing for public use of the sites with minimal disturbance to the area. Each of these parks should prioritize specific ecological conservation strategies to highlight unique site ecologies. Tidewater Park, for example, is transected by Blacklick Creek, a tributary of Big Walnut Creek, and has marsh-like qualities. This mature wooded area, near the Swickard Woods Arboretum, is known for its varied species of trees providing important wildlife habitat for native Ohio fauna.

By mindfully creating access to and within these parks, the community can have the opportunity to connect with nature in a meaningful way.

The following pages depict proposed improvements for Tidewater Park. The conceptual designs for Taylor Farm and Kitzmiller Wetland Park can be found in the destination parks typology section.

- Provide physical access to parkland preserves through the addition of pathways, boardwalks, and observation decks.
- Incorporate educational interpretive signage in parkland preserves that speaks to the natural features or environmental sustainability of the park.
- Manage and maintain city-owned forests, street trees, and natural open spaces by maintaining a tree inventory, developing reforestation plans, and controlling invasive species.
- Improve the quality of city-owned natural resources, especially streams, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive areas.
- Implement a wayfinding strategy to improve visual and physical cues to parkland preserves entrances and boundaries.



#### **Tidewater Park**

Tidewater Park is an 11.6-acre city-owned property located at the northeast corner of US 62 and Central College Road. It is bisected north to south by Black Lick Creek, highly naturalized, and ready for improvement. The existing lack of physical and visible access is the site's biggest hurdle — and biggest asset. Access is inhibited by the large stands of mature vegetation and varied ecologies. Smart improvements will be those solutions that get visitors into the park, but preserve and highlight natural features.

Though the site itself is highly visible from the road, there isn't signage or an entry to identify this park as an actual park. Combining vehicular access with a wayfinding strategy should quickly increase visitors. Directionals will lead motorists to a small parking lot screened from public view by existing and new vegetation at the northwest corner of the site.

New leisure trails, boardwalks, overlooks, and mown turf paths will direct visitors through previously inaccessible ecological areas. The natural grade change will immerse visitors in the sights and sounds of the wetlands. All walkway alignments will be carefully crafted to preserve and highlight existing vegetation and create small ecological learning moments along the trek.

Through a few simple improvements, this currently inaccessible site can become an oasis along two well-traveled roads.

- Incorporate signage to identify the site for those wanting to access it, as well as interpretive educational signage about the natural features and environmentally sustainable elements of the site.
- Add a small parking lot set back from the roadway and buffered with landscaping to provide vehicular access to the site.
- Add leisure trails, boardwalks and mown turf paths throughout the park.
- Add supplemental plantings around the cell tower to help screen from views from the interior of the park.



# **DESTINATION PARKS: REGIONAL, ALL-DAY EXPERIENCE**



Vision: Unique parks with a variety of amenities purposefully designed to draw regional visitors an all-day experience.

This planning process highlighted the need for a destination park in New Albany — as many community members noted they often leave the city in favor of nearby cities, like Westerville, Gahanna, and Dublin, to fulfill their recreation needs.

Rose Run Park, which opened in late 2019 is certainly a destination park, but in a different way. It created a central focal point and civic spine through the heart of New Albany in the Village Center. Rose Run Park is intended to serve as the primary community gathering space in New Albany, but it was not meant to necessarily fill every park and recreation need in the community. There are a few needs still missing from New Albany's park system which can be filled with the development of two new destination parks: Taylor Farm and Kitzmiller Wetland Park, both of which are cityowned parcels slated for parkland.

The addition of these two new destination parks, as well as the continued development of Rose Run Park, provide an opportunity to create places where people and families experience a variety of amenities catering to all ages — and, most importantly, provide amenities allowing visitors to stay all day, IE: restroom facilities, shelters, ample parking, etc.

Programs residents desired but not currently offered within the New Albany Park system are a skatepark, a one-of-a-kind large playground, a splash pad, a rentable facility for events, and necessary comforts like restrooms.

The following pages depict conceptual designs for the improvement of the three destination parks. These designs envision what these parks could be, but are not final designs. A formal design process will be followed for each park when it is tapped for improvement.

- Build a new destination park that brings people together from across the community.
- Incorporate a rentable shelter or event center in one of the destination parks to provide a gathering space for community members.
- Continue to develop Rose Run to serve as a central green space and community gathering place.



#### **Kitzmiller Wetland Park**

Kitzmiller Wetland Park is currently inaccessible and underutilized cityowned land spanning approximately 27 acres. The site is located west of Kitzmiller Road, between Smith's Mill Road and Central College Road. Wetlands, tall tree stands, and prairies currently cover a majority of the site's land. These great natural assets will be preserved and accessed by visitors through leisure trails, boardwalks, and overlooks. However, the request for more active recreation from residents has been noted in the Engage New Albany outreach. The upland, southeastern portion of the site is an excellent location to consolidate active hardscape elements like a destination playground, the city's first skatepark, and, of course, parking.

The destination playground will be the attraction for school-aged kids. A boulder splash pad, large-scale custom play equipment, and a gracious sloped lawn with embankment slide will keep children busy all afternoon.

Tweens and teens will enjoy a skatepark sized and programmed to accommodate regional visitors at all skate levels. Additionally, and in step with New Albany's dedication to sustainability, the skatepark will be designed in harmony with its ecological surroundings and with stormwater mitigation strategies and plantings.

Parents will love the shade structure, pavilion/restrooms, and parking in close proximity to the playground, skatepark, and trailheads. Families can find a convenient place to post up in the morning and stay busy until sundown.

- Preserve the existing wetlands and provide access to the entire site through nature trails, boardwalks, and overlooks.
- Add a destination courts such as pickleball and accessible sport courts that include bankshot basketball.
- Add a large destination playground that deviates in style from the more traditional playgrounds found in the pocket playgrounds and neighborhood parks.
- Build a modern shelter or pavilion with seating and restrooms.
- Build a community skatepark with unique ecological features like bioswales.
- Build an access drive and parking lot to provide vehicular access to the site. Appropriately screen the





## Legend

- Skatepark with stormwater management
- 2 Activity lawn
- **3** Custom playground
- **4** Nature play area
- **5** Overlook
- **6** Climbing play structure area
- **7** Shade structures & seating
- 8 Climbing play area
- **9** Picnic shelter
- 10 Pavilion











#### **Rose Run Park**

Rose Run Park is the central green spine in the Village Center running along the Rose Run stream corridor, connecting residents with community destinations and civic institutions. This preserved green space has been studied multiple times by the city over the course of the Village Center's development. The current park footprint spans nearly 13 acres along the south side of Dublin Granville Road from Morgan Road to just shy of Main Street. The portion from Fodor Road to the eastern boundary created a grand connection between the Learning Campus, Market Square, and the Library. It was open to the public in December 2019 and was an instant success.

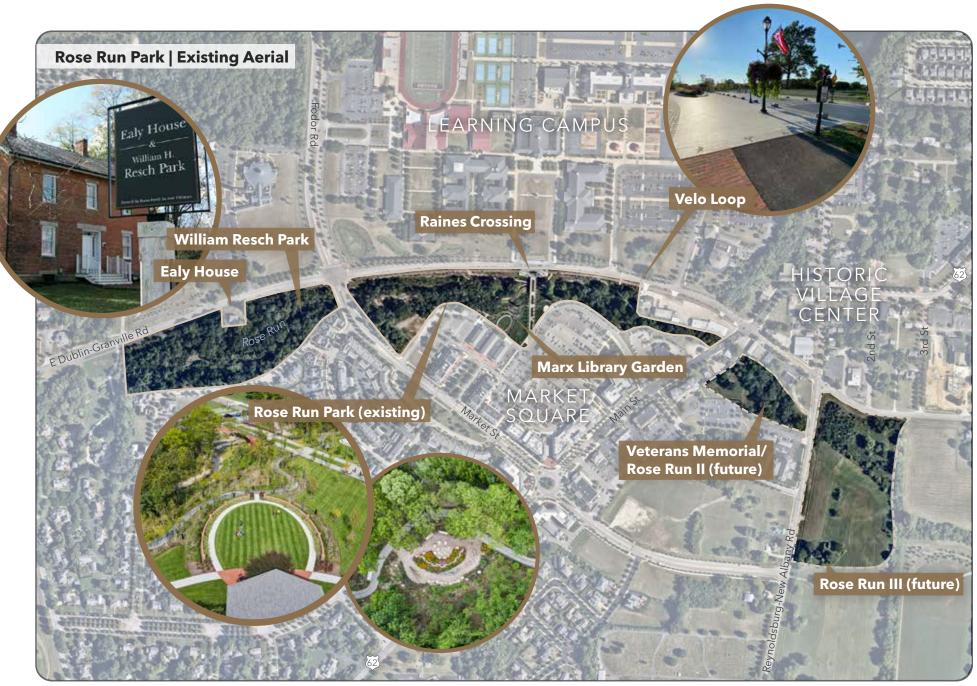
Phase II is in the design process and will continue the green necklace east through the Village Center. The area includes Village Hall and Police Station parking, Founders Field, and the Dublin Granville streetscape between Main Street and High Street. This site will also be the new home to the new Veterans Memorial. A large civic plaza and grand water feature are planned for this complete re-imagining of the site.

Phase III is expected incorporate both new mixed-use development and a regional stormwater detention system. The site has potential for passive recreation opportunities with new leisure trails and new interstitial open spaces within the site development.

As Phases I and II come online, the city should always be focusing on the health of the stream and riparian edge. A broader, more regional contextual study may be necessary to mitigate upland water conditions prior to waters arriving at the Rose Run Park site. These upland mitigation strategies will create new ecological spaces along the Rose Run corridor and, in turn, make new experiences along the planned Rose Run Trail as it travels north.

Lastly, as planned for in the strategic plan and implemented in the latest completed part of Rose Run Park, the Velo Loop should be continued along Dublin Granville Road. This will help to provide safe bike connectivity between many destinations located throughout the Village Center.

- Continue the Velo Loop and pedestrian connectivity along Dublin-Granville Road.
- Connect the existing Rose Run Park across Main Street to the future Veterans Memorial.
- Construct the New Albany Veterans Memorial between Village Hall Road and Dublin-Granville Road see New Albany Veteran's Memorial plan).
- Ensure the future Market Street extension adheres to the New Albany aesthetic standard and developed as a safe street for vehicles and cars..





## Legend

- 1 Rose Run trail connection
- **2** First Responders Pavilion
- (3) Founders Field & Veterans Memorial
- (4) Community Gardens
- **5** Municipal parking lot
- **6** Stormwater preserve













## Legend

- **1** Founders Field
- (2) Veterans Memorial wall
- **3** Sunny clearing
- 4 Hero's walk
- **5** Plaza
- **6** Entry bridge
- 7) Riparian and woodland frame
- 8) Wet meadow
- **9** Founders Field wall
- (10) Woodland frame
- (11) City Hall parking
- **12** Locust Alley plaza













## **Taylor Farm**

Recently, the city acquired the former farm of the Taylor family with the intention to develop it as a park and the green jewel at New Albany's western gateway. The Dublin Granville Road property is 98 acres of which approximately 91 acres of former farm land will be converted and preserved for wetlands. The remaining 7-acre homestead site will be transformed into an event center capitalizing on its original, but renovated, architecture.

Rocky Fork creek acts as the sites' western boundary and provides opportunities for water interaction and moments of simple, elegant nature play. Sugar Run, though physically interacting with much less of the site, has an impact on the eastern toe of the park due to some extreme slopes and thick brush.

The 91 acres of wetland will be accessible from the 7-acre homestead from where all trailheads will begin. The largest trail loop will be approximately 2 miles of ADA accessible paths via leisure trail, boardwalk, and lookouts

with multiple smaller loops planned for the quick visitor. There will also be strategically mown paths and clearings throughout the prairie.

The homestead site will take advantage of the existing structures by renovating and repurposing them. The original Taylor house could serve as a civic organization's offices or as a smaller event venue for intimate parties. The existing barn will be updated and paired with a new structure and both will function as two event indoor spaces. The surrounding grounds will harbor a formal event lawn for outdoor ceremonies, double tree alleé, and native forest, wetland, and prairie plantings.

During non-events, the homestead site will serve the public with vehicular and pedestrian park access, parking, restroom facilities, outdoor eating areas, and other passive recreation activities.

- Build a traditional pavilion/event center to use as a rental facility to accommodate more formal events up to approximately 300 quests.
- Create an event lawn outside the pavilion/event center.
- Accessible adventure playground.
- Specified birding locations with educational signage and environmental graphics.
- Build an access drive and parking lot with capacity for about 150 vehicles.
- Preserve the existing wetlands and provide access to the entire site through nature trails and boardwalks.





## Legend

- 1 Existing Homestead House: Renovated
- **2** Existing Homestead Barn: Renovated
- (3) New Event Structure
- **4** Double Tree Alleé
- **(5)** Event Lawn
- **6** Trail head (TYP 3)
- **7**) Asphalt Leisure Trails (TYP)
- 8 Mown Turf Trails (TYP)
- **9** Boardwalk and/or Overlooks (TYP)
- **10** Dropoff and/or Turnaround
- (11) Parking
- (12) Wetland Cells













## **OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In addition to the park-specific recommendations outlined earlier, there are a few more applicable to all parks. Most of these overall recommendations are derived from the Engage New Albany Strategic Plan to ensure this plan is in alignment with the parks and recreation strategies and objectives.

Developing a parks wayfinding strategy is one of the most important recommendations applicable to all city parks. The current park system suffers from a lack of signage highlighting park access and/or directionals to lead the way to a park. Simple directionals along the leisure trails and park entry signs not only help, with locating parks, wayfinding can also help change the false perception that each park belongs to the neighborhood in which it resides. The city should plan to remove any potentially exclusionary signage from currently city-owned parks as well as when park maintenance transfers to the city. New wayfinding standards will clearly signal parks are open and accessible to the public.

The city could also piggyback on the wayfinding system by developing an accompanying communications strategy to clarify city parks are open to everyone. This could include a dedicated webpage on the city's website listing each park, their amenities, their location, and how they can be accessed. The webpage may also include helpful tidbits such as onand off-street parking opportunities; if the park is accessible via leisure trail; or even real-time reporting like a felled branch blocking a path. These small, but thoughtful details could be the extra information that keep residents coming back.

Finally, the city should work with local and regional partners to continue the formation of the greenbelt and open spaces around the city. The continued development of this greenbelt will help to define the edges of New Albany, enhance the natural environment, and provide accessible green space for New Albany and its neighbors.











# IMPLEMENTATION

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation matrix on the following pages is a catalog of the existing and future city-owned parks for which this plan provides a framework for future improvements. This matrix is meant to serve as a guide for the city, HOAs, and other partners as they consider the implementation of park improvements. The components of the matrix include the park acreage, a summary of the recommendations, the expected timeline for park improvements, and an order of magnitude costs for park improvements.

The expected timeline is labeled as short-term if park improvements will be made in the next one to two years; medium-term if park improvements will be made in the next three to four years; and long-term if park improvements will take five or more years to complete. The order of magnitude costs provide a high-level estimate for the total project costs for the improvement of the city-owned parks.



## **SUMMARY MATRIX**

KEY

### Expected Timeline

- ● Short-term (1-2 yrs)
- ● Medium-term (3-4 yrs)
- ● Long-term (5+ yrs)

## Order of Magnitude Costs

**\$** Low cost

**\$\$** Medium cost

**\$\$\$** High cost

NAME OF PARK	ACRES	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS	EXPECTED TIMELINE	ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COSTS			
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYGROUNDS							
North of Woods Playground *changes to city maintenance 12.15.2022	0.46	Upgrade existing play equipment, replace play surface, add or replace seating, add or replace picnic tables, add nature play element, improve or add plantings	• • •	\$			
James River Playground*	2.27		• • •				
Sumption Drive Playground	1.02		• • •				
Windsor Playground *changes to city maintenance 08.03.2024	1.82		•••				
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS							
Byington Park	6.08	Add wooded trails, add picnic shelter, upgrade existing play equipment, add wayfinding signage	• • •	\$\$			
Planter's Grove Park*	14.33	Upgrade existing playground per recommendations for Pocket Playgrounds, remove sports courts, maintain abundance of open lawns	•••	\$			
Lambton Park	7.26	Add fishing dock to pond, upgrade existing play equipment, add nature play	•••	\$			
Ratchford Fen's Park	7.93	Add a belvedere, gazebo, and nature play area	• • •	\$\$			
PARKLAND PRESERVES							
Tidewater	11.61	Add trails and pathways through the site, add a small parking area, incorporate wayfinding and interpretive signage	• • •	\$\$			

NAME OF PARK	ACRES	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS	EXPECTED TIMELINE	ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COSTS
<b>DESTINATION PARKS</b>				
Rose Run Park	24.78	Continue the Velo Loop, construct New Albany Veteran's Memorial, construct Rose Run III stormwater retention ponds and park space	•••	\$\$\$
Kitzmiller Wetland Park	27.46	Preserve existing wetlands; add trails, boardwalks, and overlooks; add accessible sport courts and playground; build a modern pavilion; build a community skatepark; construct access drive and parking lot	•••	\$\$\$
Taylor Farm	97.94	Construct a traditional pavilion/event center, create an event lawn, build access drive and parking lot, preserve existing wetlands, construct trails and boardwalks, build a small destination playground	•••	\$\$\$



