



To Whom It May Concern,

February 19th, 2024.

which is all of us living in New Orleans, but especially our Council Members, civic leaders, community organizers and park using citizens.

[NOLA Parks for All](#) is a New Orleans parks advocacy organization composed of a diverse group of environmental, legal, financial, entrepreneurial, design, and recreation professionals. Working to secure equitable access, financial support, and best management practices for parks and green spaces in New Orleans, we have advocated for the adoption of a parks and recreation master plan that will govern the City's green spaces, safeguarding them from private encroachment and helping citizens improve their neighborhood parks.

Now that the [Big Green Easy New Orleans Parks Master Plan](#) has been completed and published (as of January 2024), we want to provide a summary of what we as a parks advocacy organization deem critical and outline the issues we intend to advocate for and monitor in the future. We are providing the following bullet points, drawn from the [Master Plan](#) document, for the benefit of City Council members, community organizers, and citizens who would like to advocate for the betterment and benefit of their community parks:

Master Plan Directives

The following bullet points are quoted directly from the [Big Green Easy Master Plan Document](#).
Published January 2024

- **Appoint a Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPPO)**, by the Mayor, charged with immediate coordination and implementation of plan recommendations.
- **Make high-quality neighborhood parks the backbone** of the City's Park and recreation system.
- **Fix the park funding shortfall**, following recommendations the City and its partners can pursue to increase and diversify public and private funding for its park and recreation venues.
- **Secure funding** to complete short-term deferred maintenance projects at parks in Equity Investment Zones rated moderate to poor.
- **Engage Trust for Public Land or Bureau of Governmental Research** to conduct a park finance study.
 - New Orleans currently has 18 different entities with land-management responsibilities.
- **Update the Equity Investment Zone mapping tool** every five years to ensure that data inputs and weights reflect community needs and priorities.
- **Revitalize the NORD Foundation.**

- **Create a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee** of professionals and subject-matter experts, stakeholders, and community members to provide guidance, build institutional knowledge, reflect public values, and ensure equity and accountability in park decision-making and ongoing plan implementation.
- **Identify and explore new and creative opportunities for public-private partnerships** for parks and recreation in New Orleans, including leveraging the catalytic site and corridor projects identified in the Office of Economic Development strategic plan.
- **Conduct an organization chart review** of NORDC and Parks and Parkways; review job descriptions to ensure they reflect current position requirements; conduct a salary review to ensure salary ranges are competitive to recruit and retain staff; continue to build a staff with education and backgrounds in parks and recreation management, landscape architecture and related fields; consider removing NORDC from the Civil Service system and adopting progressive human resources policies similar to Audubon Park, City Park and BREC in Baton Rouge.
- **Implement an asset management system** and Total Asset Management approach to track and adequately budget for existing and future park maintenance needs.
 - The City of New Orleans has budgeted for an asset management system to improve the ability of all departments to understand what the City owns and how it can most effectively maintain and replace its assets over time.
 - Staff should also develop Landscape and Facility Assessment programs, whereby staff regularly visit parks and recreation facilities and use standard assessment forms—ideally on geo-located devices that are integrated with the asset management software—to note condition and maintenance needs.
- **Publish an annual “Park Partners” report** that compiles financial and performance reporting from Park Partners that documents city-wide park conditions, monitors recreation spending, and builds public trust and transparency in how millage dollars are spent; establish transparent accounting practices and a dedicated City fund code for millage dollars.
- **Create a Parks and Natural Resources Plan** as a reference guide and blueprint for management of citywide passive parks, nature preserves, native planting areas, nature-based stormwater solutions, and greenway and blue way corridors; provide planting, soil and management guidelines at multiple scales; and define metrics for habitat, water quality, cooling, recreation and other goals.
- **Convene with the Office of Community Assets and Investment**, City, Orleans Parish School Board, Housing Authority, Sewerage and Water Board and other public and private institutions for a coordinated review of vacant or surplus landholdings to determine highest and best use, including identification of suitable lands for parks, open space and resilience and colocation of public amenities such as parks, housing and schools; repeat this exercise every three to five years.



- **Reimagine, as city-wide park and recreation assets**, the significant state- and authority-owned land along the lakefront and Bayou St. John; consolidate where possible, and situate management of these assets under a local park entity or new lakefront parks conservancy with appropriate funding.
- **Investigate the transfer** (return) of ownership and management of West End Park to the City.
- **Enact a Park Dedication Ordinance** requiring that a certain amount of land—typically defined as a percent of gross development area—be dedicated as open space within all new developments and define “open space” as including various passive and active park and recreation amenities. Such park dedication ordinances are most commonly associated with large developments and subdivisions.

The vision is to establish high-quality neighborhood parks that serve as community anchors, recognizing parks and recreation centers as essential infrastructure for public health, community cohesion, and resilience.

There are three key pillars to the vision:

- **Enhanced Quality:** Upgrading park features and services to meet higher standards.
- **Equitable Access:** Focusing on distributing park resources fairly across all neighborhoods.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Enhancing the ease with which residents can reach and use park facilities.

Parks for All urges action on the above and welcomes participation from all who are interested in open space access, equity, and financial security for our community’s parks and open spaces. **We are requesting the New Orleans City Council formally adopt and endorse [the Big Green Easy New Orleans Parks Master Plan](#)**, so that the strategies outlined in the master plan are not just imagined but implemented.

Sincerely,

NOLA Parks For All Board of Directors,

Scott Howard - Board President
Foster Duncan - Board Treasurer
Editha Amacker
Keith Hardie
Annie LaRock
Robbie Robertson
Jeff Thomas

Lex Kelso - Vice President
Shaun Duncan - Secretary
Lake Douglas
Buck Landry
Adam Mejerson
Sandra Stokes



Below are screenshots of the Master Plan’s “Strategies and Action Item” charts which summarize and highlight critical next steps outlined in [The Big Green Easy Master Plan](#). We consolidated and included below for easy reference.

Table 1: One-Year Action Items

TASK	DUE	OWNER
ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT		
Appoint a Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO) charged with immediate coordination and implementation of plan recommendations and to establish a City point of contact and advocate for citywide parks and recreation. This position should also represent public park and recreation interests in negotiation of development projects.	March 2024	Office of the Mayor
Continue convening the Park Partners working group to coordinate efforts and share best-practice resources.	Quarterly	Park Partners
Conduct a study of NORDC and Parks and Parkways (PKW) organization and staffing to strengthen strategic alignment, improve operational efficiencies, and streamline public branding and park policies.	May 2024	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)
'EARLY WIN' PROJECTS		
Dedicate identified City-owned park opportunity sites as future parkland, in coordination with the Strategic Properties Oversight Working Group.	April 2024	Community Assets and Investment
Develop a marketing strategy for City park and recreation plans, project updates, and available amenities and programs.	May 2024	Consultant
Secure funding to complete short-term deferred maintenance projects at parks in Equity Investment Zones rated moderate to poor.	May 2024	NORDC and Parks and Parkways
Launch and staff a Neighborhood Park Program to formalize the City's emphasis on neighborhood park improvements. Adopt Neighborhood Park Design and Management Guidelines with an emphasis on community-driven design.	May 2024	CPPO
Complete community-driven design processes and Phase 1 implementation of identified ARPA-funded Neighborhood Park projects with OCAI and PKW.	July 2024	CPPO
Investigate the transfer of ownership and management of West End Park to the City.	July 2024	CPPO
Finalize a community-driven master plan to preserve and restore Lincoln Beach.	July 2024	Resilience and Sustainability
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS		
Assign clear operation and management responsibility for all existing and future parks, recreation centers, rights-of-way, and green stormwater infrastructure.	July 2024	City CAO
Implement an asset management system and Total Asset Management approach to track and adequately budget for existing and future park maintenance needs.	July 2024	Public Works
ALIGNMENT AND ADVOCACY		
Identify existing brownfield, public housing, resilience, and economic development projects that can be leveraged in the near term to create new public park and recreation opportunities. Clarify the role of public parks in development projects.	April 2024	Community Assets and Investment, City Planning
Direct the City's lobbyist to develop a state legislative agenda to support city parks.	April 2024	Intergovernmental Relations
Work with the congressional delegation to identify potential avenues for federal support, improvements, and parkland dedication for New Orleans parks.	April 2024	Intergovernmental Relations
FUNDING AND FINANCE		
Engage Trust for Public Land or Bureau of Governmental Research to conduct a park finance study.	April 2024	CPPO
Work with the City's grants officer to identify and coordinate critical next steps for specific state and federal grants.	April 2024	CPPO
Fund a cost recovery study to explore the impact of fees at NORDC facilities.	May 2024	NORDC

Table 8: One-Year Action Items

TASK	DUE	OWNER
ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT		
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Investigate the transfer of ownership and management of West End Park to the City.	July 2024	CPPO
Finalize a community-driven master plan to preserve and restore Lincoln Beach.	July 2024	Resilience and Sustainability
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS		
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Implement an asset management system and Total Asset Management approach to track and adequately budget for existing and future park maintenance needs.	July 2024	Public Works
ALIGNMENT AND ADVOCACY		
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Direct the City's lobbyist to develop a state legislative agenda to support city parks.	April 2024	Intergovernmental Relations
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Engage Trust for Public Land or Bureau of Governmental Research to conduct a park finance study.	April 2024	CPPO
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ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING
1.8 Publish an annual 'Park Partners' report that compiles financial and performance reporting from Park Partners, to paint a picture of citywide parks and recreation and build public trust and transparency in how mill dollars are spent. Establish transparent accounting practices and a dedicated City fund code for mill dollars.	Park Partners				●
1.9 Update the Equity Investment Zone mapping tool every five years to ensure data inputs and weights reflect community needs and priorities.	Office of the Mayor				●
1.10 Use the Project Prioritization Model tool as part of annual budgeting and the development of Capital Improvement Plan requests. Update community-supported scoring criteria as part of the regular plan update process.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #2: Fix the park funding shortfall.					
2.1 Begin implementation of the recommendations of the park finance study proposed in the One-Year Plan to identify new funding sources for citywide parks and recreation.	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)	●			
2.2 Identify new and creative opportunities for public-private partnerships for parks and recreation in New Orleans, including through leveraging the catalytic site and corridor projects identified in the Office of Economic Development strategic plan.	CPPO	●			
2.3 Work with city grant officers to coordinate efforts and identify where master plans, land acquisitions and other steps are needed to position the City to take advantage of current and future federal dollars for parks, recreation and infrastructure.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #3: Follow through on previous plans.					
3.1 Complete the Lafitte Greenway as envisioned in the greenway master plan document adopted by Council.	Office of the Mayor		●		
3.2 Identify and prioritize proposed Bikeway Blueprint and Complete Streets projects that improve safe routes to parks and fill gaps in the existing and proposed greenway trail network.	Office of the Mayor				●
3.3 Strengthen public-private partnerships to support the implementation and ensure the long-term management, quality, and public benefit of public-private projects such as the Six Flags redevelopment and the revitalization of Pontchartrain Beach and Lincoln Beach.	Office of the Mayor				●

Table 9: Action Item Matrix—Building Public Trust

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING
1.8 Publish an annual 'Park Partners' report that compiles financial and performance reporting from Park Partners, to paint a picture of citywide parks and recreation and build public trust and transparency in how mill dollars are spent. Establish transparent accounting practices and a dedicated City fund code for mill dollars.	Park Partners				●
1.9 Update the Equity Investment Zone mapping tool every five years to ensure data inputs and weights reflect community needs and priorities.	Office of the Mayor				●
1.10 Use the Project Prioritization Model tool as part of annual budgeting and the development of Capital Improvement Plan requests. Update community-supported scoring criteria as part of the regular plan update process.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #2: Fix the park funding shortfall.					
2.1 Begin implementation of the recommendations of the park finance study proposed in the One-Year Plan to identify new funding sources for citywide parks and recreation.	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)	●			
2.2 Identify new and creative opportunities for public-private partnerships for parks and recreation in New Orleans, including through leveraging the catalytic site and corridor projects identified in the Office of Economic Development strategic plan.	CPPO	●			
2.3 Work with city grant officers to coordinate efforts and identify where master plans, land acquisitions and other steps are needed to position the City to take advantage of current and future federal dollars for parks, recreation and infrastructure.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #3: Follow through on previous plans.					
3.1 Complete the Lafitte Greenway as envisioned in the greenway master plan document adopted by Council.	Office of the Mayor		●		
3.2 Identify and prioritize proposed Bikeway Blueprint and Complete Streets projects that improve safe routes to parks and fill gaps in the existing and proposed greenway trail network.	Office of the Mayor				●
3.3 Strengthen public-private partnerships to support the implementation and ensure the long-term management, quality, and public benefit of public-private projects such as the Six Flags redevelopment and the revitalization of Pontchartrain Beach and Lincoln Beach.	Office of the Mayor				●



ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING
1.8 Publish an annual 'Park Partners' report that compiles financial and performance reporting from Park Partners, to paint a picture of citywide parks and recreation and build public trust and transparency in how mill dollars are spent. Establish transparent accounting practices and a dedicated City fund code for mill dollars.	Park Partners				●
1.9 Update the Equity Investment Zone mapping tool every five years to ensure data inputs and weights reflect community needs and priorities.	Office of the Mayor				●
1.10 Use the Project Prioritization Model tool as part of annual budgeting and the development of Capital Improvement Plan requests. Update community-supported scoring criteria as part of the regular plan update process.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #2: Fix the park funding shortfall.					
2.1 Begin implementation of the recommendations of the park finance study proposed in the One-Year Plan to identify new funding sources for citywide parks and recreation.	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)	●			
2.2 Identify new and creative opportunities for public-private partnerships for parks and recreation in New Orleans, including through leveraging the catalytic site and corridor projects identified in the Office of Economic Development strategic plan.	CPPO	●			
2.3 Work with city grant officers to coordinate efforts and identify where master plans, land acquisitions and other steps are needed to position the City to take advantage of current and future federal dollars for parks, recreation and infrastructure.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #3: Follow through on previous plans.					
3.1 Complete the Lafitte Greenway as envisioned in the greenway master plan document adopted by Council.	Office of the Mayor		●		
3.2 Identify and prioritize proposed Bikeway Blueprint and Complete Streets projects that improve safe routes to parks and fill gaps in the existing and proposed greenway trail network.	Office of the Mayor				●
3.3 Strengthen public-private partnerships to support the implementation and ensure the long-term management, quality, and public benefit of public-private projects such as the Six Flags redevelopment and the revitalization of Pontchartrain Beach and Lincoln Beach.	Office of the Mayor				●

Table 10: Action Item Matrix—Neighborhood Parks for All

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING
BIG MOVE #4: Invest in distinctive, safe and high-quality neighborhood parks.					
4.1 Continue to support the Neighborhood Park Program proposed in the One-Year Plan to spotlight beloved neighborhood parks; steward, share progress and rally support for neighborhood park reinvestment projects; and find new ways to connect people to their parks.	NORDc Parks and Parkways				●
4.2 Regularly assess and update the Neighborhood Park Design and Management Guidelines proposed in the One-Year Plan, to ensure they serve staff needs and continue to set a citywide quality standard for the planning process, amenities, and ongoing management and upkeep of neighborhood parks.	NORDc Parks and Parkways				●
4.3 Establish a partnership framework and best practices for empowering and supporting Friends of Parks groups and other community-based organizations that can act as stewards and ambassadors for their neighborhood parks, including development of easy-to-use templates and processes for establishing Memoranda of Understanding and Cooperative Endeavor Agreements.	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)	●			
4.4 Convene a City and partner working group to study the issue of park-related displacement and develop a proactive, multidisciplinary strategy.	CPPO	●			
4.5 Launch a Safe Routes to Parks program with Transportation, Public Works and Health Department. At three to five pilot neighborhood parks in Equity Investment Zone priority areas, conduct a 'Walk Audit' with community residents and leaders and document improvements needed—such as traffic calming, sidewalk repairs and crosswalks—to promote safe community access. Implement the improvements and explore expanding the program.	Office of the Mayor		●		
4.6 Work with Housing Authority of New Orleans to ensure that every housing development includes or has walkable/rollable access to a high-quality park.	Office of the Mayor				●
BIG MOVE #5: Improve access to quality and inclusive programming.					
5.1 Begin to rebuild or create new partnerships with programming providers to expand programming access and options citywide. Develop updated Cooperative Endeavor Agreement templates, scheduling systems and other system improvements to lower barriers and allow these providers to easily coordinate offerings across shared facilities.	CPPO	●			

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME			
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING
5.2 Work with public and private partners to develop a strategy to increase park- and recreation center-based programming that is relevant, appealing and easily accessible, with a particular focus on young people, seniors and people with disabilities.	NORDc Parks and Parkways				●
5.3 Revive the Big Green Easy Park Ambassador program, with a focus on hiring community leaders to develop programming, material rentals, or events that connect underrepresented communities to parks and recreation opportunities.	Office of the Mayor		●		
5.4 Explore new grant and donor funding opportunities to support, improve and expand NORDc programming options, hours and quality. Implement the recommendations of the fee structure and cost recovery system study proposed in the One-Year Plan to support these efforts. Implement an access pass program to provide free access for households based on SNAP eligibility; publicize the access pass program widely and in partnership with other entities such as schools, libraries and places of worship.	NORDc		●		
5.5 Complete a Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Feasibility Study of existing City of New Orleans parks to capture the scope of the accessibility challenge and prioritize improvements.	CPPO	●			
5.6 Complete a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy that increases public awareness of NORDc and Parks and Parkways facilities and programming, including a new and improved website, app and bulletin system to make it easier for people to find consolidated, up-to-date information about park sites, facilities, programming, hours of operation, park rules, events and opportunities. Eliminate 'lack of information' as a barrier to use.	CPPO	●			
5.7 Focus NORDc's programming infrastructure at designated district- or community-level parks with the facilities and acreage to accommodate robust programs with extended hours; appropriate equipment and safety measures; and strong staff, coaching and administrative support. Ensure these facilities are distributed citywide for access by walking, biking and transit.	NORDc			●	
5.8 Administer a scientific survey on neighborhood and citywide programming needs every five years.	NORDc				●

Table 11: Action Item Matrix—Parks and Recreation as Essential Infrastructure

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMEFRAME				
		SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM	ONGOING	
BIG MOVE #6: Create a resilient and beautiful park system.						
6.1	Adopt park design standards that enumerate stormwater storage goals per acre by park classification for new park development and reinvestment projects. At a minimum, every park should capture stormwater that falls on-site; more natural sites will have the most ambitious stormwater goals. Incorporate park storage goals into updated citywide resilience plans and flood modeling.	Chief Park Planning Officer (CPPO)	●			
6.2	Based on size and context, identify existing parks that should be dedicated as passive greenspace rather than active recreation. Make this the first step toward a comprehensive urban habitat system that delivers citywide benefits—shade, biodiversity, beauty, and clean air and water—while supporting flood mitigation.	CPPO	●			
6.3	Incorporate the design guidelines and principles of the Resilience Hub model into all park and recreation projects, particularly recreation centers and neighborhood parks.	NORDc Parks and Parkways				●
6.4	Consolidate management of citywide passive greenspaces and stormwater BMPs under trained, expert teams. Develop management standards in coordination with all Park Partners, Sewerage and Water Board, New Orleans Redevelopment Authority and Public Works.	Office of the Mayor		●		
6.5	Work with the Office of Economic Development to expand and improve green infrastructure and resilience workforce development programs with career pipelines for City parks and recreation.	Office of the Mayor		●		
6.6	Create a Parks and Natural Resources Plan as a reference guide and blueprint for management of citywide passive parks, nature preserves, native planting areas, nature-based stormwater solutions, and greenway and blueway corridors. Provide planting, soil and management guidelines at multiple scales, and define metrics for habitat, water quality, cooling, recreation and other goals.	CPPO	●			
6.7	Set a goal of minimum 50% tree canopy coverage for park sites, and leverage programs and partnerships to plant and care for trees.	Office of the Mayor				●
6.8	Identify ways that the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance can be strengthened to protect natural areas, generate funding for parks, and encourage compatible development at park perimeters.	City Planning Commission		●		
6.9	With the Office of Community Assets and Investment, convene City, School Board, Housing Authority, Sewerage and Water and other public and private institutions for a coordinated review of vacant or surplus landholdings to determine highest and best use, including identification of suitable lands for parks, open space and resilience and colocation of public amenities such as parks, housing and schools. Repeat this exercise every three to five years.	Office of the Mayor				●
6.10	Protect and restore the open space along the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, creating significant new habitat and passive park space and bringing Bayou Sauvage into the heart of the city.	Office of the Mayor		●		