Executive Summary
FORT THOMAS PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Brandtstetter Carroll Inc. expresses its sincere appreciation to all of the organizations, committees and individuals who participated in the Master Plan process. We especially thank the City of Ft. Thomas Staff for their cooperation. We also thank the members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee who attended several meetings throughout this process to define the future vision for parks and recreation in Ft. Thomas.

Mayor
Mary H. Brown

Mayor Pro Team
Barbara H. Runge

Board of Council Members
James A. Doepker
Karen B. Lied
Thomas Fernandez
Roger L. Peterman
Eric A. Haas

City Administrative Officer
Jeffrey Earlywine

Assistant Administrative Officer
Jay Treft

Recreation Director
Donald Brindle

Consultant Team
Brandtstetter Carroll, Inc.  Patrick D. Hoagland, ASLA
2363 Chauvin Drive  William A. Shank
Lexington, KY 40517  Mark E. Hornan
Phone (859) 268-1933  Lynda Gates
Michael E. Carroll, AIA
City Wide Vision for Parks and Recreation
Ft. Thomas, Kentucky

The vision for the future of Parks and Recreation in Ft. Thomas, as determined from the surveys, workshops, community input, Master Plan Advisory Committee and the Consultant’s recommendations include the following components:

1. The existing parks are improved to be more functional, upgraded to current standards and aesthetically improved.

2. The Ohio Riverfront is a recreational and park amenity with pedestrian access and overlooks.

3. A system of trails and greenways is developed to link the City to the riverfront and to link the parks to the schools, neighborhoods and commercial activity nodes.

4. The Armory is completely renovated to serve as an enhanced community/recreation center and provides additional indoor recreation, fitness and programming opportunities.

5. Facilities and programs are implemented that attract teens to participate such as a Skatepark and a Teen Center in the Armory.

6. A new game field and practice fields are provided for Junior Football.

7. Additional practice fields are available for soccer and baseball.

8. A dog park is incorporated into the system.

9. The scenic hillsides and open spaces of Ft. Thomas are protected from development.

10. A “sprayground” is developed in one of the parks or at a new park location.
Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan  
Fort Thomas, Kentucky  

Executive Summary

The Need for a Plan

Ft. Thomas is the second largest city in Campbell County. The City is located in the northwest portion of the County with extensive frontage along the Ohio River. The U.S. Census Bureau indicated the population was 16,495 residents in the year 2000 and trends indicate that the population will remain steady because Ft. Thomas is a mature community with very little room for additional development. The City is characterized by rolling hills, winding streets, one of their mottos of “City of Beautiful Homes” and steep wooded hillsides facing the Ohio River.

The City of Ft. Thomas currently manages 201 acres of land designated for parks and recreation purposes at eight sites. Facilities at the schools are also used for recreation purposes. The largest parks are Tower Park at almost 87 acres, followed by Highland Hills Park with 77 acres and Rossford Park with 14.5 acres. Ft. Thomas’ elected officials and staff have had many requests from residents for additional recreation facilities and for the preservation of the hillsides and open spaces in the community. One limitation to the development of new facilities, especially athletic fields, is the lack of relatively flat, open space. The City is planning a new soccer complex adjacent to Campbell County’s Pendery Park that is six miles outside of the City.

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance and direction to the City Administration and Staff, Recreation Department and others in managing for the improvement and growth of parks, recreation, open space and leisure opportunities for all of Ft. Thomas’ residents.

The City currently offers a very wide variety of programs and attracts participants from all ages. The budget is approximately $475,000, which results in a per capita expense of $28.81. The statewide average of Parks and Recreation Departments in Kentucky is approximately $41.00. The Parks and Recreation Department has four full time employees and a range of 10-15 part time employees in the winter and 25-30 part time employees in the summer.

A Citizen Driven Plan

The plan is truly based on community needs. The public was involved in the process in the following methods:

- Public workshops
- Statistically valid telephone survey of 300 residents
- An active Citizens Advisory Committee
- Meetings and/or discussions with representatives of soccer, baseball, softball, football, senior citizens and a youth forum.

What Fort Thomas Citizens Told Us

Through the many opportunities for community input, the citizens’ needs were determined. The following is a brief summary of the needs as communicated in the various methods:

- Overall, Ft. Thomas residents are generally satisfied with the quality and maintenance of the current recreation facilities and programs.
- The majority of residents use parks within five miles of their homes.
- The parks that are most used are Tower Park and Highland Hills Park.
- Approximately two-thirds of residents stated that they use outdoor parks at least once a week during the warmer months. Whereas only 42.7% stated that their household uses an indoor recreation facility at least once a week.
- The most used indoor facilities are the Armory and the Campbell County YMCA.
- The outdoor facilities that are most needed in the community as indicated in the surveys include:
  - Open space for the future
  - Bike trails
  - Jogging, walking, hiking or fitness trails
  - An outdoor environmental education center
  - An outdoor aquatic center
A view of all of the needs indicated preference towards additional unstructured rather than organized sports facilities.

Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
- The most needed indoor recreation facilities according to the surveys included:
  - A youth center
  - Exercise equipment
  - Senior citizens center
  - An indoor swimming pool.
- Approximately 60% of residents stated they were willing to pay additional taxes for parks and recreation improvements.
- The preferences for new facilities among seniors include concerts, exercise programs, senior programs and the general preservation of greenspace.
- The preferences of youth in the community indicate a desire for a teen dance club, skate park, and an indoor and outdoor youth center where they can congregate.
- The outdoor youth sports of soccer, baseball and football all need additional facilities, especially for practice. Youth football needs a game facility. Parking at many of the existing facilities is a concern.
- Concerns at existing parks include the lack of adequate parking, obsolescence of some facilities, traffic congestion in the area of the parks and the need for some additional facilities.
- There is a strong desire for more open space and preservation of natural areas and the hillside.
- There is a strong desire for all types of trails including jogging, nature and bicycle trails throughout the community.

Future Vision of Fort Thomas’ Parks and Recreation

The following is the vision for the future of parks and recreation opportunities in Ft. Thomas:
- The existing parks are improved to be more functional, upgraded to current standards and aesthetically improved.
- The Ohio Riverfront is a recreational park amenity with pedestrian access and overlooks.
- A system of trails and greenways is developed to link the City to the riverfront and to link the parks to the schools, neighborhoods and commercial activity nodes.
- The Armory is completely renovated to serve as an enhanced community/recreation center and provides additional indoor recreation, fitness and programming opportunities.
- Facilities and programs are implemented that attract teens to participate such as a Skatepark and a Teen Center.
- A new game field and practice fields are provided for Junior Football.
- Additional practice fields are available for soccer and baseball.
- A dog park is incorporated into the system.
- The scenic hillside and open spaces of Ft. Thomas are protected from development.
- A "sprayground" is developed in one of the parks or at a new park location.

Recommendations

New Parks
- A youth football complex for games should be developed.
- Develop a bike/hike trail Master Plan with a detailed alignment study to link the parks, schools, neighborhoods and the River Path project.
- Develop a Riverfront Park along Route 8 and the Ohio River on the 24 acres that are currently owned by the City. Proposed facilities would include picnic areas, overlooks, playgrounds and a boat launch ramp.

Existing Park Improvements
- Tower Park
  - Develop a dog park in the South Park area.
  - Develop a formalized and signed trails system.
  - Improve pedestrian access to the playground and amphitheater with additional walkways, steps and ramps.
  - Develop a bandstand or band shell that is a more functional and architectural feature to replace the existing amphitheater stage.
  - Improve the lighting and fencing at the baseball field area and the tennis court area.
  - Develop a coordinated signage system to direct park users to parking areas, activity areas, and the various portions of the park.
  - Develop a paved walking trail to Route 8.
- Completely renovate the Armory with new paint, floors, ceilings, plumbing fixtures, cardiovascular and strength training equipment, heating and air conditioning systems, etc. to make the facility more desirable and more functional for use by the community. Rooms should be designated for teens and seniors. Renovation of this facility will allow implementation over several years whereas a new facility would require capital improvements all at one time.
- Develop a Skatepark in the park. With a skatepark and a teen center in the Armory to complement the existing sand volleyball and basketball courts and amphitheater, this park will have a strong attraction as a quality, safe place for teen activities.
• Highland Hills Park
  - Formalize the walking trail system with a paved path around the ridge.
  - Install walkways from the parking areas to the picnic shelters, ballfields and playgrounds.
  - Develop trail connections to adjacent neighborhoods.
  - Upgrade the existing tennis courts. Design so that they can be used for alternate uses such as roller hockey.
• Rossford Park
  - Completely renovate the park with the development of a two-field baseball/softball complex with restrooms and a practice soccer/football field on top of the existing hill.
  - Development of additional parking.
  - Develop walking trails from the park to adjacent neighborhoods.
  - Relocate the existing playground to avoid conflicts with the baseball activities.
• Other Parks
  - Improvements at Storz Park, Winkler Playfield, Shawnee Ballfield, River Road Soccer Field and West Southgate Park include the upgrading of playgrounds, lighting, trails, drinking fountains, restrooms, paving, safety and security, improved game courts, improved fencing and landscaping.

Other Recommended Facilities
• The Master Plan Advisory Committee determined that the development of a family aquatic center in the community was not recommended with the hopes that the County or other multi-jurisdictional agency would be able to develop a family aquatic center that would serve all of northern Campbell County. The Committee recommends the development of a sprayground at one of the existing parks or a new park instead. A sprayground provides jets, water sprays and other water play elements without standing water.

What are the Priorities?

Capital Improvement Projects
The recommended improvements in the priority order as determined by the Master Plan Advisory Committee include:
• A new soccer complex on Route 8.
• Rossford Park reconstruction.
• A skate park and teen area in Tower Park.
• A dog park in the South Park area.
• Develop a youth football game complex.
• Renovation of the Armory.
• Upgrade Tower Park playground area, walkways and restrooms.
• Improve Highland Hills Park.
• Develop a sprayground.
• Winkler Playfield improvements.
• Tower Park baseball improvements.
• Upgrade the Tower Park Amphitheater.
• Develop trails within the urban core.
• River Road Soccer Field improvements.
• Trails within the city to connect parks, neighborhoods and schools.
• Shawnee Field improvements.
• Storz Park improvements.
• Development of a Riverfront Park with trails, overlooks and picnic areas.
• Develop trail linkages to the riverfront.
• Riverfront boat ramp.
• West Southgate Park improvements.

The total estimated capital cost of all of the improvement projects, including improvements to the existing parks, is approximately $8.2 million with the largest portion of this being the renovation of the existing Armory facility.

Where To Get More Information
The Master Plan includes a great deal of additional detail regarding the following topics:
• Population and land use trends,
• Existing budget and staff,
• Inventory of existing programs,
• Inventory of existing parks and facilities,
• Summaries of the public workshops and focus groups,
• Discussion of the survey results,
• Parks and facility needs,
• Individual park recommendations and budgets,
• Implementation strategies,
• Potential funding sources.

This information is intended to provide the direction needed by the Ft. Thomas Board of Council, City Administration, Recreation Department and others towards implementing the Master Plan. The Final Master Plan is available for viewing at the Ft. Thomas Municipal Building, Ft. Thomas Recreation Department office and the Public Library.
**Action Plan**

The Action Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that were presented previously along with a time line for implementation and the responsible party. Please refer to Sections V and VI for a more detailed explanation of the recommendations. The terms that are used are defined here for clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>City of Ft. Thomas</th>
<th>Sports Organizations</th>
<th>Separate Board of Athletic Organizations</th>
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<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Campbell County</td>
<td>Park Authority</td>
<td>Potential Multi County Park Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Ft. Thomas School Board</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>0-2 YEARS</th>
<th>3-5 YEARS</th>
<th>5-10 YEARS</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Search and obtain land for a youth football complex.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Search and purchase land or easements for trail linkages.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Acquire land or easements on hillsides to protect them from</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Facilities</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop new soccer complex adjacent to Pendery Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rossford Park improvements.</td>
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<td>✔</td>
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<td>City/Sports Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Develop a Skate Park and Teen Park.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop a Dog Park.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop youth football game complex.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Renovate the Armory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Upgrade access to Tower Park Playground and a new restroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Highland Hills improvements.</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Develop an outdoor sprayground.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Improve Tower Park Amphitheater.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Improve Tower Park baseball area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>South Park/Sports Complex parking expansion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Walking trail to the river from Tower Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Stoors Park improvements.</td>
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<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

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9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>5-10 YEARS</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Winkler Play Field improvements.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Shawnee ballfield improvements.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>River Road Soccer Field improvements.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>West Southgate Park improvements.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Develop trails along drainage corridors to the river.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Develop Riverfront Park.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>City/County/Park Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Develop trails within the City.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Develop bike/hike shared paths in the City.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Implement a coordinated signage program at all parks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Develop a Family Aquatic Center in the Northern Campbell County area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>County/Park Authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administration**

1. Increase maintenance and programming staff and funding as land, facilities and programs grow.  
   ✓ ✓ ✓  City
2. Assess the progress of implementation of the Master Plan.  
   ✓  City
3. Increase communication and publicity of programs and facilities.  
   ✓ ✓ ✓  City
4. Establish a Parks and Recreation web page to promote programs.  
   ✓  City
5. Establish a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.  
   ✓ ✓ ✓  City
6. Implement policies to protect open space and hillsides.  
   ✓ ✓ ✓  City