A Parks and Public Spaces System for Tomorrow

THE PUBLIC REALM: SYSTEMS THINKING FOR PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Parks and plazas are part of the system of shared spaces within the city that we call the “public realm.” The other major components of the public realm are streets and sidewalks. It is the public realm that gives a city its sense of place and creates the arena for people to experience the world around them. If the public spaces of a city are isolated, uncomfortable, and dominated by traffic and vehicles, it will provide a very different experience from one where the public realm is a linked series of safe, comfortable and appealing areas where people can orient themselves; gather with friends, family and strangers; participate in activities, or relax.

The public realm reflects the infrastructure of a city. Some of that is “gray infrastructure,” the roads, utility lines, communications installations, water and wastewater facilities, and buildings for schools, libraries, hospitals and so on. This infrastructure is planned and built in systems, not in isolated pieces. Today, we also talk about “green infrastructure.” These are the parks, tree-lined streets, bike trails and pedestrian paths, river and stream corridors, waterfronts, and urban wilds of the city. They too must be planned, created, maintained and restored as a system. A green public realm network can become the identifiable framework of city life, framing the built environment, helping to define the city’s visual character, and enhancing the daily experience of residents and visitors.

In Miami, the multiple benefits of planning for a system of parks—connected by greenways and green streets and continuous with the public realm shaped by buildings and plazas—are already evident in efforts like the Miami Baywalk and Riverwalk. Networks provide recreational value, for example, when areas where activity was formerly limited to sitting at the river’s edge are connected into continuous trails for walking and biking. These connections encourage people to walk to local shops and restaurants and enhance the quality of life for residents in adjoining neighborhoods. The result is direct economic value, both in generating opportunities for businesses to service greenway users and neighborhood residents, and in overall increases in property values. The eco-
logical value of a systemic approach is equally important. Many native species, from manatees to butterflies, cannot thrive without a certain amount of habitat. While large wild areas will never return to Miami, greenways can link existing natural areas into networks that are more likely to support successful populations of native plants and animals. Finally, a linked park system, rather than a set of independent park sites, has conceptual value for understanding the city experience. As people move around the city and come upon a park, greenway or boulevard, they are able to orient themselves not just to a single landmark, but to the city-wide system of which it is a part.

By focusing on linking parks, other open spaces, and public spaces into a connected system, parks that are close to one another but not contiguous can function like a single large park. This is the vision for the downtown waterfront “park of parks” or “total park” linked by the Baywalk from Margaret Pace Park to the Riverwalk. Similarly, Miami can have its own “Central Park” focused on the South Fork of the Miami River by connecting Curtis, Fern Isle, and Sewell parks, a blueway and a greenway. Acquisition of the Police Benevolent Association land on the South Fork to enlarge Fern Isle Park could make the quiet South Fork into a center for kayaking and canoeing, connecting the new Fern Isle/South Fork Park by the Miami River with nearby Sewell Park, a passive park, and with Curtis Park, an active recreation park with fields and a swimming pool. With completion of the Miami Riverwalk and provision of safe and comfortable pedestrian crossing of the 22nd Avenue Bridge, there would also be a land link. These connected parks, greenway, and blueway would form complementary elements of Miami’s Central Park. Similarly, all the parks on the Coconut Grove waterfront, combined with a new signature open space on the site of the obsolete convention center, would be linked by parks, bike routes, and bay boat routes to form the Coconut Grove Waterfront Greenway.

This chapter sets out recommendations for Miami’s parks and open space as a system. Recommendations for specific parks can be found in the discussion of neighborhood visions in Chapter 5. The system-wide recommendations here revolve around eight principles:

- Balance acreage and access for level of service.
- Preserve and enhance existing parks and open spaces.
- Expand resources without acquiring more land.
- Acquire land for new parks and open spaces in underserved areas.
- Make Miami’s park system the greenest and most sustainable in the U.S.
- Make access real through strong connections.
- Enhance community participation and partnerships.
- Improve management and operations.
- Diversify funding for capital and operations improvements.
MIA MI’S P ARK S YSTEM TOMORROW: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In the second half of the twentieth century, when cities were losing population and struggling with declining funds, urban park systems faced the challenge of doing more with less and less. Today, Miami, like many other cities, is experiencing a resurgence of investment and population. City leaders understand
that parks are critical to a high quality of life and bring economic benefits, and that signature parks contribute to the identity and visibility of the city. Miami residents agree: the majority of respondents to the public opinion survey for this master plan think that parks and recreation improvements are very important in relation to other city needs and that parks provide economic as well as quality of life benefits to the City.

A. BALANCING ACREAGE AND ACCESS: LEVEL OF SERVICE IN A CITY PARK SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pursue a medium-term goal of a park within one-half mile of every resident and a long-term goal of a park within one-quarter mile of every resident by acquiring land in underserved areas.
- Seek a balance among passive and active uses of parks and public spaces.
- Establish a new hierarchy for the park system that reflects Miami conditions.
- Survey city residents regularly to monitor preferences, needs, and satisfaction with the park and recreation system.
- Ensure that public spaces provided on private property remain open to the public.

Level of Service for Urban Parks

As the 21st-century revival in city living has returned attention to urban park systems, park planners are recognizing that the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards for park hierarchies and park level of service are not suitable for park systems in established urban centers. Peter Harnik, Director of the Center of City Park Excellence at the Trust for Public Land and the author of the 2003 study that highlighted Miami’s small number of park acres per 1,000 people, in 2006 told the NRPA Urban Park and Recreation Summit that “I used to think that acreage and facilities were most important, but it appears that city park excellence is more tied to spending.... How much greenspace should cities have and what form should it take? What is the proper level of service for recreation in the city? In years past the National Recreation and Park Association gave a great deal of thought to this topic and came up with some good guidelines for suburban areas, but no one has yet done it for cities.”1 Harnik further described the evolution in his thinking:

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“Parks need to be located where the people are, and housing should [be] clustered near parks.... I believe our cities are not rich enough to provide large areas of green space that only serve very low densities of residents who live around them in single-family houses on large lots. If a neighborhood already looks and feels like a park, the real park has much less purpose, need and value.... If you don't have a critical population mass to support transit and you don't have enough people within walking and bicycling distance to fill the park, you become reliant on cars.... Either you end up devoting a large amount of parkland to parking, or you create a parking problem in the neighborhood around the park.”

As Harnik emphasized, in urban situations, park acreage is less important than park access. Research repeatedly has shown that the most important variable in how much and how often people use a green space is distance—especially walking time—from home. They will travel from time to time to use large, unique open spaces of regional importance, but for everyday use, parks need to be close by.

As a densely-populated city where the 2000 census found that over 35,000 people had no access to a private vehicle and where new high-rise neighborhoods are under construction, Miami needs to focus on access—particularly “walk-to” access—more than total acreage in creating new parks. People will easily walk about a quarter mile to get to a destination, and if the walk is reasonably pleasant and the destination sufficiently compelling, they are often willing to walk half a mile. This is the standard used in some of the country’s best park systems. Minneapolis has already attained the half-mile goal.

### Balance Passive and Active Uses Of Parks and Public Spaces

All park systems need to provide a balance of passive and active green spaces. The master plan survey found that although the majority of current Miami residents are most interested in using parks for unprogrammed activities, such as fitness walking and enjoying green spaces, there are many households with a strong interest in sports and other recreation programs for children, youth and adults. Finding the proper balance can be difficult as multiple user groups vie for the same spaces. This is an ever-present dilemma in cities and suburbs throughout the country.

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Of course, the master plan survey did not reflect the preferences of the future residents who will occupy the new housing now under development in Miami, which highlights the importance of regularly surveying residents for changes in their preferences and needs for parks and recreation. Organized sports leagues and similar groups tend to be more effective in expressing their park and recreation needs on a regular basis than people who are looking for a passive park experience or members of the general public overall. For that reason, it is always important to make room for passive park experiences in park designs. Careful design of parks coupled with efforts to share playing fields and other resources for active sports and new technologies, such as artificial turf that allows for more intensive use of sports fields, can help balance demands for active and passive activity areas. Even small parks can be designed to include quiet, landscaped sections as well as areas for children's play equipment or a half-basketball court.

**A New Hierarchy of Parks**

Miami needs a new park hierarchy that reflects its specific conditions. The proposed new park hierarchy emphasizes the importance of different levels of access, as well as resources, in the city park system. This hierarchy also reflects the analysis underlying the city's new impact fee system which distinguishes between two categories: *Citywide Parks* that serve the city as a whole or many neighborhoods because they contain unique or scarce resources or programs and attract users who live too far to walk to the park, and *Neighborhood Parks* that are designed to serve local neighborhoods. The proposed new parks hierarchy preserves this basic distinction:

- **Citywide Parks** include destination parks, community parks, and linear parks. The destination parks have unique resources or specialties:
  - **Destination Parks**
    - *Conservation Parks*: Simpson Park and Nature Center, Wainwright Park conservation area, Virginia Key nature trail and conservation area, Picnic and Spoil Islands
    - *Waterfront Parks*: All the parks over 3 acres in size on Biscayne Bay, the Miami River, the South Fork of the Miami River, and the Little River
    - *Sports Complex and Aquatic Parks*: All parks with swimming pools and sports parks with unique resources such as Moore Park’s tennis center
    - *Specialty Parks*: Parks with unique programs, such as Kinloch Park’s program for people with disabilities; with historic resources, such as Fort Dallas; or for special activities, such as domino parks.
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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PARK</th>
<th>NAME OF PARK</th>
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<th>RESOURCES/SPECIALTY</th>
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<td>North/East Coconut Grove</td>
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* Park is now closed
† Leased facility
> **Community parks** are parks over 3 acres in size that have active recreation facilities. Because demand for these facilities is greater than supply and they serve programs and leagues that operate citywide, these parks attract users beyond the neighborhood in which they are located and need to accommodate parking.

> **Linear Parks** are the greenways and trails that link different parts of the city together. Not all of these will be under the ownership and management of the Parks and Recreation Department. However, even in those cases, the Department should be involved in monitoring the use and value of these resources for linking parks and for promoting healthy lifestyles. For example, private property managers charged with maintaining public spaces like Riverwalk segments sometimes close access in a misguided effort to guarantee more security for their buildings. City departments must collaborate with each other and with the owners to assure both security and public access. The most important of these linear parks are the Baywalk, Riverwalk, M-Path, and the future Flagler Trail/FEC Corridor Greenway. Effective linkages of these linear parks with city park and recreation resources is essential and will require attention from the Parks and Recreation Department.

> **Neighborhood Parks** are the local parks that primarily serve people who live and work in the immediate vicinity. They include all the existing mini-parks and parks under 3 acres in size that do not fit in one of the Citywide Park categories. Many, but not all, have play structures for children or a few picnic tables. Some function as squares and pocket parks, offering visual relief and passive green space, and primarily serve people who arrive on foot.

### New Networks of Pedestrian-Friendly Public Spaces

In addition to parks and green spaces, Miami should have a robust network of pedestrian precincts, such as plazas, as well as the streets and trails discussed earlier. The new form-based zoning framework for the city is expected to formalize requirements for development that enhances the pedestrian environment and to provide guidelines for plazas, arcades, courtyards and other spaces open to the public, whether in public or private development.

Public spaces to be provided by private development should adhere to the principles recently developed by a researcher who reviewed four decades of plazas, pocket parks, atriums and cross-block corridors built and maintained on private property in return for zoning bonuses in New York City. An ex-
amination of all these spaces found that many were either inaccessible to the public, unusable by the public, or privatized. In many spaces, the public was effectively denied access by physical barriers, lack of signage announcing public use, and diminution of required amenities as seating became unusable or was taken out, plantings were not maintained, and so on. Privatization also often occurred in the more attractive and amenity-filled spaces, where adjacent private uses took over the public space (characterized as “café creep”). The public should not be required to make a purchase in order to enjoy a space created as a public benefit in return for development capacity. To ensure that public uses remain public, privately developed spaces should have:

- Signage announcing public use and hours of operation
- Amenities—such as seating, drinking fountains, and bike racks—that invite public activity and use
- Periodic public monitoring and inspection
- A public information campaign so that people know these spaces exist.\(^5\)

Some of the problems found in New York are already evident on parts of the Miami Riverwalk. As Miami sees more of these kinds of public uses on private land, maintenance and access obligations should be spelled out in building permits or other legal agreements and monitoring for barriers to access and for privatization should be undertaken on a regular schedule.

### B. PRESERVING AND ENHANCING EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Define public parks in the zoning ordinance as “Civic Space–Public Park.”
- Define conservation parks in the zoning ordinance in a separate zoning district from other types of open space.
- Define limits on by-right accessory uses and structures.
- Adopt a “no net loss” policy for park land in city zoning and ordinances.
- Provide appropriate staffing, services, equipment, and maintenance at all parks.

Miami needs to make the most of the parks it has. Miami’s park system is not large, acquisition of new park land is challenging, and limited operational budgets over many years reduced the City’s ability to maintain its park land, so that some parks have received little attention over time. At the same time, increasing residential density will intensify demand for parks, both as open space relief from buildings and as recreational resources. Preserving Miami’s existing park and recreation resources means making sure that park land is not used for other uses.

Current Zoning for Parks and Open Spaces

Miami’s current zoning ordinance has two categories that cover parks: CS—Conservation and PR—Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

CS zoning is quite restrictive and intended to protect environmentally sensitive areas kept in “an essentially natural state.” The apparent oddity of allowing single-family residential development on a minimum of five acres as a conditional use presumably derives from the fact that Vizcaya and The Barnacle are zoned CS. The other areas zoned CS are Sewell Park, Simpson Park, and Wainwright Park; the northeastern, eastern and southeastern parts of Virginia Key, where there are extensive mangroves; and the spoil islands in Biscayne Bay off Dinner Key and the Picnic Islands off the shores of the Upper Eastside and Edgewater. Sewell, Simpson and Wainwright parks have designated conservation areas, though only Simpson has educational signs and a nature center to interpret the native hammock vegetation for visitors. Virginia Key is the site of the city’s nature trail and native plant nursery. The CS zone permits accessory uses only by Special Exception and off-street parking only if a Special Exception finding is made that it does not have adverse environmental impacts.

All other parks, as well as the Dinner Key Marina, the open space on the 79th Street Causeway and most of Watson Island, are zoned PR. This is a much more permissive zone that allows for these uses:
- Principal uses
  - Public and private parks
  - Recreational facilities
  - Existing marinas
- Conditional principal uses
  - Educational and cultural facilities
  - Marine and marina facilities
  - Entertainment facilities
  - Social and health-related service facilities
  - Public safety and City of Miami administrative facilities, including authorities and agencies thereof
  - Parkways
  - Scenic corridors
  - Camping facilities

The conditional uses, which require city commission approval, allow for a wide range of uses and structures to be located on park land. The zoning language is somewhat ambiguous about limits on the size of these facilities and requires findings that major structures may be permitted if “the intent of the district is adhered to” or, for a variety of other uses, nominally requires that they “are an
integral part of the park’s design or of the recreational function.” The PR zone also requires one off-street parking space for each employee and one space for each 500 square feet of building space.

Miami 21 Zoning for Parks and Open Spaces

The SmartCode zoning method used in the Miami 21 rezoning of the city (under way while this plan is being written) provides for parks and open space through a zoning category called Civic Space (CS) described predominantly by physical character: parks, greens, squares, plazas and playgrounds. The descriptions of parks, greens and squares emphasize green landscapes and “unstructured recreation,” while plazas are described as predominantly hardscape and “available for civic purposes and commercial activities.” Only the playground type provides for active recreation.

Zoning categories and requirements written with the nuances of Miami’s park and open space issues in mind can help the City protect and enhance its present and future parks. There are four major issues that should be addressed in revising zoning for parks and public spaces:

What constitutes a public park?
Although Miami has not seen much dedication of private land to public park uses in the recent past, this condition may change with the new public-benefits elements of Miami 21 zoning.

Suggested language for such a definition is below:

A Public Park is an area owned or controlled by a public entity that is intended for public use, open to the sky, and designed for environmental, scenic, recreational, or cultural purposes. If the area is not owned by a public entity, it may remain in private ownership but be protected for public use by means of a permanent easement, restriction or other similar legal device acceptable to the city. A Public Park may include, but is not limited to, lawns, trees, active and passive recreation areas, playgrounds, fountains, ornamental plantings, walkways, public performance areas, and plazas. Accessory buildings and structures that support and contribute to the public open and recreational space uses may be included, including, but not limited to, buildings for recreation programs, gymnasiums and exercise centers, locker rooms, ticket booths, amphitheaters, recreation staff offices, restrooms, and food service concession areas. Other uses, such as permanent administrative, public safety, school, social or health facilities are not permitted in Civic Space-Public Park Zones.
Should we distinguish in zoning between open space for conservation and other park open space?

Conservation areas intended to protect areas of natural vegetation are distinct from other kinds of parks and should receive extra protection. The areas currently in CS zoning should be retained as Conservation Parks as a category of Civic Space or the rural T-1 zone of the SmartCode system. In any case, the zoning should continue to be extremely restrictive. It would be beneficial to ensure that the land is permanently protected by conservation easements.

What kinds of uses and structures, and what sizes of structures, should be permitted on public open spaces as accessory to the open space use?

Accessory structures and uses that further the open space and recreational mission should be permitted by right, up to certain limits. Such uses and structures may include, but are not limited to, swimming pools, gymnasiums, recreation program buildings, field houses, restrooms, shade structures, picnic pavilions, equipment rental buildings, concession buildings, service areas, and parking areas. Accessory buildings should be permitted by right as long as the total footprint of all buildings will cover no more than 25 percent of the public park. Recreation-related buildings that will cover a greater area should be subject to review by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Planning Board, both of which should make a recommendation to the City Commission for the Commission’s final decision.

What kinds of limits and criteria should be established for conversion of park and public open space land to other uses (public or private)? What procedures should be put in place to approve changes to park land?

Miami’s limited amount of existing park land combined with the limited availability and high cost of land for new parks means that preserving existing park land and adopting a “no net loss” policy is essential. The previous chapter listed the many parks that have had other municipal uses located on them over the decades. The City should establish criteria and a deliberative process before any existing park land can be taken out of park and recreation use. This process should be included or referenced in the zoning code.

The process for any conversion of park land should include the following requirements:

- A requirement for an “alternatives analysis.” The entity that wishes to take the park land for another use must perform an alternatives analysis (including a no-build alternative). The City Commission must find that there is no feasible alternative to using the park land on the basis of criteria other than cost alone.
- A requirement for a public hearing. The Planning Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board must each hold a public hearing on the proposed

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conversion of park land, at a time and place convenient for public comment. Each board must make a written recommendation to the City Commission.

- **A requirement for replacement.** Any park land taken for other uses, including other municipal uses, must be replaced by land with similar park, recreation or conservation value in terms of usefulness and location. If the land is not available, funds must be deposited in the Parks and Open Space Trust Fund that would be sufficient to buy replacement land at fair market value. The land taken for other uses must be rezoned and taken out of the Public Parks category.
- **A requirement for a supermajority vote of the City Commission.** The City Commission must approve the conversion of land by a supermajority vote.

### Appropriate Support for All Parks

Parks will not be used if they are not maintained and if people do not feel secure in them. Each type of park needs the kind of maintenance, staffing, equipment and programming that is appropriate to its role in the park and recreation system and its size. Parks that are not well-maintained send a message of neglect and insecurity, making people reluctant to use them. In a number of communities, the parks department has worked with other professionals or with citizen groups to develop criteria for park maintenance and create easily understood standards to help park staff recognize and meet the standards. Information on these systems is available in the Technical Appendix.

While small neighborhood parks may need no more than regular maintenance, trash pickup and periodic review for improvements or replacement of play equipment, larger and more specialized parks need on-site staff and programming in addition to the basics of maintenance, upkeep and improvement. Programs attract people to parks and provide healthy and fun activities for children and adults. When parks are full of people, that sends a message that the park is a safe, welcoming place to be.

### C. EXPANDING RESOURCES WITHOUT ACQUIRING MORE LAND

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Develop policies for City use of nonpark land for parks and recreation: criteria and conditions, leases, and contributions of equipment and maintenance.
- Create a School–Park Working Group with City and school district staff to develop a framework for resource-sharing—equipment, maintenance, security—and approach principals of schools with identified potential.
- Designate liaisons with transportation agencies, public works, public housing, cemeteries and so on, to pursue and work out sharing of land, programming, and resources.
The Parks and Recreation Department has the opportunity to be the policy leader for open space development and recreation programming for the entire city—but without having to control all the resources needed to further these policies. There are a number of existing and potential open space and recreation resources in Miami that are not owned or managed by the City. They include public school sites, housing authority land, church and cemetery land, county properties, and lands associated with transportation and drainage infrastructure. In some cases, the City and the Parks and Recreation Department should create long-term agreements with these entities for public use, including agreements over contributions for equipment and maintenance (based on data about maintenance costs). The City could work with owners of cemeteries and churches that have land and resources to promote programs such as walking programs in landscaped cemeteries. In other cases, the City should work with public agencies with responsibility for infrastructure projects, to make sure that, where possible, they include green elements, walkways, or other enhancements.

In order to be effective, programs for shared resources should be developed based on an understanding of the costs and benefits to each party. Once the Park and Recreation Department has established a better understanding of the unit costs of operations and programming, a set of evaluation criteria and policies on practical issues such as lease conditions, contributions and receipts for shared resources, maintenance and operational costs, and so on, can be developed. In addition, criteria to evaluate the potential of agency collaborations should be developed to make sure that partnerships are designed to meet the park system's priorities in terms of geographical and programming equity, potential to provide resources and programming that otherwise would not be available, and similar criteria. Sharing resources can be a cost-effective way to provide pilot programs and test public interest. The department should designate a liaison to work with the Miami-Dade school system, individual school principals, the housing authority, and other public agencies that control lands which could be used for park and recreation purposes.

School-park partnerships already exist to some degree but should become more systematic for mutual benefit. In cases where schools do not have their own open space, the school district is already using city parks for school recreation.
and athletics, making some payment to the City for that use. Elsewhere in the city, school sites are fenced and inaccessible outside of school hours. The playgrounds and athletic fields at schools should be available to the community as a whole when the schools are not using them. Payments or assignment of staff for the use of parks or school lands should be related to the actual additional cost of providing the service. School system payments to the Parks and Recreation Department for use of parks should go to the Parks and Recreation Department budget and not to the general city budget.

In addition to creating school district–parks department partnerships, the Parks and Recreation Department should also open discussions with the public housing authority about potential greenway and mini-park uses at Robert King High Homes along the river and the Smathers Senior Housing site in West Flagler; St. Michael’s Church and the Miami-Dade Auditorium in West Flagler about mini-park uses; and with cemetery owners about walking programs. Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta has many innovative programs and could serve as a model. The Parks Department should also create a liaison to the transportation and public works departments to create regular dialogue on the potential for parks and green spaces associated with infrastructure projects.

D. ACQUIRING LAND FOR NEW PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN UNDERSERVED AREAS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus acquisition efforts on waterfront areas, identified underserved neighborhoods, and potential linear park segments.
- Acquire neighborhood parks in underserved areas by identifying infill lots that may be available through tax title or condemnation.
- Use infrastructure improvements to create new linear parks.
- Encourage redevelopment of surface parking lots to include parks with public access.
Acquisition and Expansion

All observers acknowledge that Miami’s park system is relatively small for its size and population density. While land was relatively inexpensive, the City had very few resources. Now that Miami has begun attracting more investment, the City faces rising land prices, in addition to the always-complex issues of creating new open spaces in a built-up community where new parks could mean dislocation of businesses or residents. As the City makes acquisitions to meet the interim goal of a park within a half-mile of every residence, it should then continue its efforts, advancing towards the goal of a park within one-quarter mile of every Miami home. There are a variety of ways for the City to acquire new park land, including conversion of public land, outright purchase, tax title, infrastructure projects, eminent domain and developer contributions.

Conversion of Public Land to Parks

There are several areas in Miami where land in public ownership could be converted into small park and open space amenities. Every street that ends at Biscayne Bay should have a public space overlooking the bay. On small streets a bench and attractive railing can provide a place to sit and look at the water. On larger streets a bigger area could be designated as a public space, with the potential for a belvedere or platform overhanging the water, or a pocket park. Consolidation of existing public right of way into small parks also may be possible in certain residential areas, such as in Flagami on NW and SW 2nd streets and NW and SW 66th Avenue, where there are small traffic circles. There is more right of way than is being used or is needed, leaving the possibility of creating small parks, possibly with pedestrian cut-throughs, and rerouting traffic around them.

Purchase

Purchase of land for parks should be considered both for citywide parks and for neighborhood parks. High-priority locations or types of park land, based on community preferences, are:
- land with water views or water access;
- new walk-to parks in underserved areas of the city;
- expansion of existing community parks; and
- land for expansion or creation of linear parks.
Land occupied by a trailer park was recently acquired for Little Haiti Park and the Caribbean Cultural Center at a cost of $6.6 million. The 2005 Tischler-Bise impact fee study adjusted that price upward to $8.0 million, or $50 per square foot, to reflect market changes. Although the real estate boom in Miami has moderated somewhat as of this writing, the cost to the City of acquiring large amounts of land for parks may be substantial. Potential sources of acquisition funds include impact fees, developer public benefit payments, bonds, designated fees or taxes, grants, infrastructure projects, and foundations.

Redevelopment, Land Assembly and Land Swaps

Land use transitions in some of the city’s industrial or commercial areas may bring more residential uses. In those cases, the new residents will need access to parks and recreation. The City can assist in assembling land parcels for important development projects. As part of that assistance, it should require open space contributions that include both small passive parks and multi-purpose community parks. The City can also facilitate land swaps in order to make land available for park uses.

Surface Parking Lot Conversions

Many acres in Miami are covered by surface parking lots. As Miami’s land has become more valuable, it becomes possible for new residential and other development projects to carry the costs of underground or structured parking. Using some of the land that is liberated from car storage for parks, plazas and other open spaces will enhance the value of lands around the public spaces while providing opportu-

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*See [www.seattle.gov/util/About_SPU/Drainage&_Sewer_System/Natural_Drainage_Systems/Street_Edge_Alternatives/index.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/util/About_SPU/Drainage&_Sewer_System/Natural_Drainage_Systems/Street_Edge_Alternatives/index.asp)*
nities for residents. An example of the possibilities inherent in large parking lots is the potential redevelopment of the Flagler Dog Track on NW 7th Street.

**Infrastructure Projects**

Infrastructure improvement projects for transportation, stormwater and drainage offer the potential to expand existing parks, create new ones, and provide natural green areas. Street and highway projects should always be scrutinized for their potential to enhance the parks and open space system. Efforts to minimize runoff and treat stormwater close to the source, driven by EPA Phase II Stormwater Regulations, will incorporate green strips and mini-parks in streets, stormwater parks, biofilters, and naturalized infiltration areas. Whether large or small, these areas can help in flood control while making a place for both people and nature. Cities such as Seattle are developing model programs of natural drainage with attractive green plantings on neighborhood streets. The Flagler Dog Track is surrounded by acres of parking. Redevelopment could provide for a public park on NW 7th Street or elsewhere on the site.

**Developer Contributions**

Developer contributions to create new parks and public spaces can come about in a variety of ways. Miami’s new zoning is expected to include provision for bonus floor development in return for payments for parks and other public benefits. Parks and public spaces can also be created through negotiation; for example, when the City facilitates site assembly through closing alleys it should require park or other public space amenities that are comparable to the area being given up. A greenway along the Little River could be created through a combination of public acquisition and redevelopment.
Tax Title, Eminent Domain and Similar Acquisition

Although eminent domain is normally an acquisition method of last resort, it may be appropriate in cases where abandoned property, property with repeated and extreme code violations, or undesirable land uses occupy land that would be suitable for parks. When the City has the opportunity to acquire land in tax title or similar methods, the property should be evaluated for its potential use as park land.

Donations

Land has historically been donated for parks in Miami and other communities. For example, the Ichimura Japanese Garden was a donation to the city. The City should encourage donations, especially to meet the park priorities outlined in this plan. Because every future park comes with ongoing maintenance costs, potential donations should be evaluated for both benefits and costs.

Transfer of Development Rights

As an incentive for park and public space creation, the City should make it possible for private organizations (nonprofit as well as for-profit) that provide park resources open to the public to sell their development rights to developers in zoning districts where bonus floors are available. A valuation system would need to be created to make this work and sale of the development rights would require a deed restriction for permanent protection for public open space access.

E. MAKING ACCESS REAL THROUGH STRONG CONNECTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

> Complete the Riverwalk and the Baywalk and expand the public access setback requirement along the entire river.
> Continue to implement sidewalk and shade tree planting programs along major arterials that connect to parks and other community destinations.
> Create a “ParkWalks Program” of marked and signed safe pedestrian routes through neighborhoods in order to link residents to their local parks and promote healthy lifestyles through walking.
> Encourage residents to create linear parks on residential street swales by providing guidance and collaboration with the Departments of Planning, Parks, Transportation and Public Works.
> Make blueway connections real by expanding recreational boating programs, providing public shuttles to the islands, and exploring ways to make creeks and canals navigable.
Without connections, parks and public spaces cannot function as a system. The connective tissue of a park system is made up of the streets, paths, trails and waterways that let people reach their parks and other open spaces. The master plan survey and workshops made it clear that Miami residents would like more opportunities for safe and appealing walking and biking throughout the city. They want more access to the water—and to the park lands that can only be reached by water. They want more parks they can walk to, but they need comfortable connections, protected from traffic and with safe intersection crossings, shady during the heat of the day, and well lit in the evening and at night.

**Complete the Baywalk and the Riverwalk**

The vision for a connected Miami Riverwalk and Baywalk has been kept alive for decades and, with segments of both in existence and under construction, the vision is approaching reality. Many resources have been expended and committed to both, and the value of these continuous public connections along the waterfront in downtown is well understood.

**The Baywalk**

The vision for the Baywalk is a continuous waterside pathway from Margaret Pace Park to the Riverwalk. Less discussed is the potential for a Baywalk continuation along Brickell to Coconut Grove. Connecting from Margaret Pace south to the future Museum Park is physically viable, but will require access across several private developments, including the Miami Herald site, and negotiation across or beneath the Venetian and MacArthur causeways. Likewise, extension of the Baywalk south along the Brickell waterfront to Coconut Grove
is feasible using a combination of existing waterfront parks, private lands and public sidewalks. For instance, a little-used pedestrian underpass beneath the Rickenbacker Causeway allows access to the waterfront in Wainwright Park.

**The Riverwalk**

The downtown segments of the Riverwalk are taking shape as redevelopment occurs under the City’s requirement for a minimum 50-foot building setback with public access up to the NW 5th Street Bridge. Farther up the river, residential redevelopment is occurring alongside more traditional maritime uses, which remain important to Miami’s economy. The Miami River Greenway Plan proposes a continuous route through the use of on-street routes at many points. Although current maritime and nonresidential uses may be developed in ways that make public access impractical or dangerous, the goal of public access to the water along the length of the river should remain. The City’s 50-foot setback requirement should be expanded to include the entire length of the river, so that, as redevelopment occurs, continuous public access to the river is assured. Examples of industrial and maritime uses that accommodate public access can be found in other waterside locations. The tremendous success of the San Antonio Riverwalk is a testament to the benefits of a continuous river walkway, and Granville Island in Vancouver, British Columbia, shows how an industrial plant can continue to operate next to redeveloped properties with public activity. Property owners should be able to request a waiver for areas on their property where public access is inappropriate, but these waivers should be kept to a minimum and alternate accommodations provided.

**Connecting the Baywalk and Riverwalk to neighborhoods**

Just as a river will dry up if it no longer collects drainage from a significant watershed, so the Baywalk and Riverwalk may fail to thrive if they are not the focus of a large enough collection area—the neighborhoods around them. The Miami Greenway Action Plan recommended points of public entry in existing parks and “neighborhood gateways” at key locations; a primary system of trails, bikeways, and walkways lining the river from Biscayne Bay to Palmer Lake; improvements to existing parks to enhance access to the river; improvements to bridges and roadways to enhance movement of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians; and finally, river dredging and bank stabilization to improve navigation.
and restore native vegetation. It will be up to the Miami Parks and Recreation Department and other city departments to extend the core greenways and create the connecting links to each of Miami’s neighborhoods. Bridging the key gaps in the system and making small but critical connections at neighborhood edges can be difficult and time-consuming but they are critical to the vitality of the whole system.

**Connect People to Parks by Green Streets**

Miami has a tradition of street trees and median plantings, and some of the traditional green streets remain, notably Coral Way, parts of South Miami Avenue, and many streets in Coconut Grove. One of the first park improvements in Miami was the 1929 planting of trees along Coral Way. Aerial photos clearly show the difference between Coconut Grove, where lush plantings and tree cover predominate on both public and private property, and many other neighborhoods, where trees are the exception rather than the rule. In recent years, the City has begun a program to repair its urban tree canopy, planting shade trees as well as decorative palms as part of new streetscape projects. The county also has a street tree master plan. The continued implementation of this tree planting program is essential to creating shady, comfortable and attractive links between neighborhoods and city destinations, including parks. The Miami 21 zoning plan includes a series of streetscape criteria for different street types, including tree planting.
Create a “ParkWalks” program

A park within a five to twenty minute walk of every resident is a major goal of this plan. Success requires creation of safe and comfortable walking routes to the parks. Miami’s grid of arterial routes at first view seems to provide a logical network for pedestrian routes to parks but in fact, a number of these arterials have very narrow sidewalks and carry very large volumes of traffic, especially during rush hours. Making some of these streets into attractive, tree-lined walking environments will be a complex, long-term project. While the greening of Miami’s arterial streets is under way, planning and creating a set of neighborhood routes to parks, called ParkWalks, as part of a combined public health and street improvement initiative is a more rapid way to focus resources to enhance residents’ access to parks.

The ParkWalks Program should be developed with the collaboration of neighborhood residents and park user groups to identify appropriate routes that can be upgraded with trees, sidewalks, lighting, and intersection safety and beautification improvements at pedestrian crossings of major arterials where the routes require those crossings. Routes near schools and senior centers are especially desirable. Alley and mid-block pedestrian connections may be part of these routes where opportunities exist. However, in all cases, safety and comfort must be paramount. Good lighting that enhances safety while remaining appropriate to a neighborhood context is essential because so much use of the parks occurs in the evenings and at night. The ParkWalks program should also be conceived as a public health program that encourages walking. As a public health program, ParkWalks could attract funding for community process, design, improvements, maps and signage. This is what happened in a low-income neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island, where a nonprofit alliance received foundation funding to develop signed pedestrian routes, maps, and walking clubs to encourage walking for health.7

Encourage neighborhood-based linear parks in swales

In neighborhoods where wide green swales, rather than curb-and-gutter combinations, process stormwater, the swales have the potential to function as small linear parks. There are some streets now where residents plant and care for gardens in the swales. In interviews and at a few NET Area meetings, residents expressed a willingness to plant and care for trees in the swales of their own streets, but said that they were unsure about what trees to plant, city

7 See www.spnm.org
regulations, or where they could find guidance on these matters. In other neighborhoods, parking constraints result in regular parking on grass swales or paving over the swales. The city’s Planning, Parks, Transportation and Public Works departments could collaborate in encouraging residents to value the unpaved swales as linear parks and provide guidance on planting and care of plants in the swales. This program could be integrated with the ParkWalks Program, encouraging residents to see planted swales along ParkWalks routes as an extension of the park system.

**Expand Existing and Create New Greenways and Trails**

*The M-Path and the regional transit system*

The M-Path Trail should be enhanced and, where necessary, redesigned to ease road crossings and tie into surrounding neighborhood sidewalks and trails. In the short term, the focus should be on connecting the M-Path to the Miami River Greenway. Over the long term, coordination of the park system and the pedestrian connections recommended in this plan with the regional public transit system is an important opportunity to benefit park users as well as potentially increase transit ridership. Existing Metrorail stations are important nodes in the future system of greenways and pedestrian routes and can be linked relatively easily with the system of green-ways, green streets, and ParkWalks pedestrian routes. Miami’s new Intermodal Center, designed to promote many alternatives to automobile travel by making public transit and non-motorized travel easier, will connect the airport with regional rail and bus lines, and ease vehicular congestion at the airport with a centralized rental car facility. Finally, future extensions of the rail system to the south, and more complete transit within the city provided by the proposed street rail system, will make pedestrian and bicycle routes through the neighborhoods to the transit stops even more important. The value of these major investments in public transit will be increas-
ingly apparent if, as projected, Miami-Dade’s population grows from 2.3 million to over 3 million over the next twenty years. How much more valuable would this transit system be if each station is fully integrated with the public realm?

**Commodore Trail**
The City should make implementation of the 2004 improvement plan for the Commodore Trail a high priority in its work with the regional transportation planning organization (the MPO—Metropolitan Planning Organization). The next stage is to identify a way to provide a safe, convenient crossing of the Miami River to link the Commodore Trail to the Baywalk. It may be possible to coordinate this linkage with Riverwalk improvements.

**The Flagler Trail (FEC Corridor Greenway)**
A pedestrian and bicycle greenway along the FEC Corridor is another long-term vision that has been kept alive over the decades. Planning for commuter rail use of this corridor is ongoing, but it is important that the opportunity to make this a multi-modal corridor not be lost. The great advantage of a trail along the FEC is that it would provide a safe and continuous route through the entire Northeast quadrant of the city, connecting Downtown, Overtown, Wynwood, Edgewater, Little Haiti and the Upper Eastside. Because of its location at the seam between different neighborhoods, the Flagler Trail would be a true shared city-wide resource for thousands of residents. In some locations, the corridor may be wide enough to incorporate small parks and fields for active recreation, as well as a multi-use trail and the commuter rail line. All the neighborhoods in the east side of the city should be linked to the Flagler Trail by a series of east-west connections that would gradually evolve in response to development projects and neighborhood street-greening improvements.

**Overtown Greenway**
The Overtown Greenway plan that emerged from the Trust for Public Land’s Overtown Greenprint should be implemented to link the Miami River through Overtown to Downtown.

**Potential Tamiami Greenway**
The Tamiami Canal is an overlooked resource that could expand connections within the city. Possible routes for a Tamiami Greenway to follow the Tamiami Canal from the Miami River to the Blue Lagoon should be explored.

**Make “Blueways” a Reality With More Public Boating Opportunities**

Miami has many parks and open spaces that are accessible by water, but today there are few opportunities for those who do not have access to private boats to get on the water and visit public areas. “Blueways” are designated water routes that can connect park lands. However, a blueway trail following the entire Biscayne Bay shore-
line and extending up the Miami River is easy to draw on the map, but harder to make into an active public amenity. Public boat launches are already available at several key locations, including Coconut Grove, Morningside Park, and Antonio Maceo Park, and one is planned for Sewell Park. The Parks and Recreation Department also offers a sailing program in Coconut Grove. This is just the beginning for a real blueway system.

The islands off the Biscayne Bay shoreline known as the Picnic Islands and the Dinner Key Islands make up a significant part of the Miami park system and can provide important opportunities for access to water, yet very few Miami residents visit them. The Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Restoration and Management (DERM) has completed improvements to many of the picnic islands, including boat docks or reinforced shoreline areas suitable for beaching a kayak or canoe. This work will soon be finished with the completion of improvements to the islands off Dinner Key Marina, which are currently in planning and construction.

**Expand recreational boating programs**

Recreational boating programs at the parks with frontage on the bay and the river, including the South Fork of the Miami River, should be expanded. Bayfront Park, Morningside Park, Sewell Park and an expanded Fern Isle/South Fork Park should all have organized boating education and adventure programs, with kayak and canoe rentals. With the existing sailing program in Coconut Grove, this would provide public water access in each of the four principal areas of the waterfront. Shake-a-Leg works with the City and County to offer programs that serve over 5,000 people annually, with a focus on teaching sailing and kayaking to disabled people, at-risk youth, students and families. Shake-a-Leg’s vision for an expanded City of Miami Water Sports Park and Recreation Center on the Coconut Grove waterfront will allow programs to serve an even wider audience.

The County-sponsored Eco-Adventures Program offers guided canoeing and kayaking trips from Matheson Hammock to the Gables Waterway, at Crandon Park on Key Bis-

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The Picnic Islands lie tantalizingly out of reach for Miami residents who lack access to a private boat.

Fern Isle Park (top photo), Sewell Park (middle), and Curtis Park (bottom) can be connected by canoe and kayak blueway routes on the South Fork and the Miami River to create a linked “Central Park.”
cayne, and at Greynolds Park on the Oleta River, among others. Canoe rentals are available at Biscayne National Park, Everglades National Park and the Oleta River State Recreation Area, and all three have mapped touring routes. Overnight camping is available in the national parks. Similar designated routes and guided trips could be created within the city.

**Create a weekend shuttle to the islands**
Public access to the Picnic Islands and Dinner Key Islands on weekends could be provided by contracting for a small boat shuttle from Bayfront or Museum Parks and Dinner Key Marina. A small shuttle program would assure that the islands would not be overwhelmed by too many visitors, yet still allow public access. A tour of the bay and the islands would be attractive to Miami visitors as well as residents who want to visit the islands. As the City develops a water taxi program, the waterfront parks and the islands should be incorporated into water taxi routes.

**Explore new blueways routes**
Miami’s water resources are not limited to the bay and the river. The Little River, Wagner Creek, and the canals are all potentially navigable to boats of different sizes. As the already identified blueways become better understood and more usable, the City should work with partners, including the South Florida Water District, to explore ways to bring recreational boaters to these waterways. In the case of the canals, this will mean identifying and providing portage sites at locations along the route.

**Promote blueways routes to the public and the boating industry**
To make the blueways concept a reality, boat tour routes need to be mapped in detail and promoted to the public and the recreational boating industry. Non-profit groups, the County and the City can all work together on planning and mapping of tour routes, outreach to potential partners, and coordination with the recreational boating industry.

**Plan Connections to Proposed Regional Trails**

Both the City and Miami-Dade County have long discussed opportunities for connecting the Miami greenway system to trails in neighboring communities. These trails are close to forming a regional greenway network throughout South Florida that could link Biscayne Bay to the Everglades in multiple locations, while providing north-south connections on former railroad beds. The City should make sure that it is part of that network by understanding how these regional connections can be linked to the city’s green streets, paths and trails, and to parks and public spaces.

- **The Venetian Connector** is conceived as a bike path across the Venetian Causeway, providing a safe link from downtown Miami to Miami Beach's
extensive network of bike routes, greenways and pedestrian systems.

- **The Unity Trail** will follow an east-west section of the FEC rail corridor, parallel to NW 72nd street. It would provide an important link across the northern tip of the city to Hialeah.

- **The Perimeter Trail** was conceived as a greenway on little-used perimeter roads and/or rail corridors at Miami International Airport. It will link connecting trails from the south and west to the Miami Intermodal Center and the Miami River Greenway.

- **The Ludlum Trail** will follow former rail corridors south from the west end of Flagami at Robert King High Park, providing a connection to several county parks and ultimately the South Dade Trail all the way to the Everglades.

- **The East-West Trail** would extend from the Airport Perimeter Trail west to Florida International University and Tamiami County Park.

As part of its 2030 plan, the Miami-Dade MPO designated many proposed greenways, or portions of them, as “cost-feasible plan projects.” These include the Miami River Greenway, Baywalk and Commodore Trail, as well as the M-Path Trail, the Flagler/FEC Trail, the Ludlum Trail and the Unity Trail. The City should continue to advocate for funding to move these trails forward.

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**F. MAKE MIAMI’S PARK SYSTEM THE COUNTRY’S GREENEST AND MOST SUSTAINABLE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continue native plant restoration and elimination of exotic plants as well as nature education programs at Simpson Park and the Virginia Key nature area and expand to the conservation area at Wainwright Park.

- Restore native vegetation in woodland, shoreline and streamfront edges and other areas of parks where possible.

- Create satellite nature education programs in the larger city parks, potentially with coastal hammock exhibits.

- Establish native plantings in public road, rail, drainage, and utility corridors that are unsuitable for pedestrian and recreation access.

- Create an urban forestry program that incorporates the concept of the tree canopy as habitat.

- Promote public awareness of the benefits of plantings in private as well as public property.

- Introduce sustainable methods in park maintenance and operations.

- Incorporate green building methods and green roofs in new park structures and employ life-cycle costing to evaluate costs.
A central role of city parks has always been to allow urban dwellers to enjoy nature close to their homes or places of work. Most large city park systems incorporate nature in two kinds of parks: traditional parks, where nature is managed in designed landscapes or shaped around recreational activities, and conservation areas where nature exists on its own terms. While both kinds of parks exist in Miami, in most the native natural environment is barely present. Many residents lack the opportunity to experience nature first hand and learn about the native environment of South Florida. At the same time, anyone who spends time on foot in Miami will find that nature can be found in the midst of the city—plants burst from the seams of paving and bird song fills isolated groups of trees surrounded by asphalt. Moreover, as our society increasingly understands the importance of conserving energy, reducing greenhouse gases to slow down climate change, and eliminating toxic materials, cities are finding that parks and public spaces represent one of the most important arenas for showing leadership in exemplifying and promoting sustainable and energy-efficient management practices.

These two issues—bringing more nature into the city and implementing sustainable practices—are linked in the park and public space system, combining planning, management, and public education efforts. Parks and trees are the lungs of the city, bringing myriad benefits, from improving air quality to reducing the urban “heat island” effect exacerbated by reflective, hard surfaces. Environmentally-sensitive best practices can be modeled in city facilities and in the park system so that residents and property owners can see how they work. Environmental education about South Florida’s climate and ecosystem can become part of the recreation programs in city parks.

**Enhance and Extend Natural Areas Within the Park System And the City**

Because of the multiple purposes served by the city park system, complex issues must be resolved and diverse interests must be balanced in any program to enhance and extend natural areas in the parks. Park management and maintenance decisions, driven by the need to work within limited budgets, often make it difficult to maintain natural areas. Mowing to allow recreational use, and clearing and pruning of trees to simplify maintenance tend to eliminate the ground covers and understory vegetation that would be present in a natural ecosystem. Hurricane damage and the threat of future storms understandably encourage aggressive clearing and pruning. Similarly, public safety concerns also often conflict with native species restoration. The need to provide security has driven the decision to limb up trees and cut down understory shrubs to eliminate hiding places and allow easier surveillance by a limited staff. An example is the recent clearing at Sewell Park to open up views from the parking lot to other areas of the park.
Conversely, a walk through some of the more remote areas of Wainwright Park demonstrates how difficult it is to secure areas that are heavily vegetated.

Finally, decisions about what to plant and what to cut down over the long history of many parks in Miami have eliminated some native species, such as mangroves, while introducing outsiders like the banyan tree, which, while more useful perhaps in a park context, do not fit in very well with the native ecosystem. The introduction of exotic species, both accidentally and on purpose, can drive out native species and encourage the growth of a monoculture. For example, Australian Pines, which were introduced in 1898 for use as windbreaks, now dominate many areas to the exclusion of native plants.

The city’s current restoration work should continue to focus on conservation areas at Virginia Key and at Simpson Park and expand to other parks that include natural areas, such as Wainwright Park. The priority for these efforts should be those parks that retain the largest natural areas and which are linked by open space corridors like the rivers, canals, and possibly even highway rights-of-way. In each case, these projects should follow several parallel tracks: first, to restore natural ecosystems by removing exotic species and replanting with natives; and second, to celebrate nature through educational programs and public participation.

At Simpson Park and the Virginia Key nature area, interpretive trails, programs and signs help explain the importance of the natural landscape. Similarly, there are signs at the city’s boat launches about the state’s manatee protection program. Interpretive signage should also be installed in other parks where there are remnants of natural vegetation. The restored Picnic Islands are a natural candidate for this kind of treatment, but the remaining mangrove areas in parks along Biscayne Bay are just as important locations. Many people use the bay parks, and in public meetings users sometimes complained about the mangroves and expressed a preference for palms instead. Signs can help raise public awareness about the value and importance of mangroves for the environmental quality of the bay. In community parks, the park naturalist and his staff could create small educational coastal hammock gardens with native species from the Virginia Key native plant nursery.

The current efforts at Virginia Key and Simpson Park are proof that degraded areas can successfully be reclaimed, and should be the model for an expanded program of restoration. With trained core staff and excellent leadership in place, this program can easily be expanded to other parks in the city:

- The **Wainwright Park conservation area** should be restored like Simpson Park. Elimination of exotics and restoration with native species could
increase visibility for security purposes and fit well with the quiet neighborhood that surrounds the park.

- **Morningside Park**, though dominated by introduced species like the banyan, includes a significant wetland area that could be linked to its extensive shoreline. The wetland and shore areas should be restored with native species.

- Coconut Grove’s **Kennedy Park** is being redesigned to be more efficient and usable. Part of that redesign should focus on replanting areas not needed or suitable for human use.

- As the jewel of the Miami River parks, **Sewell Park** should be the focus of restoration designed to bring back native species while incorporating spaces for recreation and maintaining visual corridors for security.

- The proposed **Fern Isle/South Fork Park** can bring back the ecological health of the South Fork through restoration of native vegetation and habitat areas and sensitive siting and design of a bridge and boating areas.

- **Restoration of the South Fork should extend up the Tamiami Canal** to the Melreese Golf Course and the Blue Lagoon lakes. Each of these is now largely edged with mowed lawns, which could easily be replanted with native species. Where visibility or flood flows are required, grasses and perennial plants could provide natural habitat.

- **Robert King High Park** and the adjacent **Carlos Arboleya Campground** include extensive natural areas suitable for restoration with native species. Already an important recreational space, this area would be a good location for nature education programs.

- **Juan Pablo Duarte Park** is one of the few community parks with active recreation that has room for nature. The drainage swale that traverses the park could be restored with native plants and used as the focus of a nature education program.

**Reintroducing nature while improving infrastructure**

As discussed earlier, public rights-of-way and infrastructure corridors represent an opportunity to expand the park system throughout the city without additional acquisition costs. Since many of these linear connectors are not suitable for pedestrian access, they are ideal places to reintroduce native plantings. Because native communities are better adapted to local conditions, in the long term they require less maintenance than the typical lawns and shrub borders. Birds and insects adapted to these areas will soon rediscover them. By replanting public road, rail, drainage and utility corridors with native species, the city can reconnect the remaining fragmented natural areas and provide habitat for the movement of animals that are now isolated from each other.

**Green streets as natural habitat**

While the Green Street concept described elsewhere is primarily intended to create shaded pedestrian routes, it will also create a continuous canopy of trees that will be of great benefit to a variety of native birds and insect species.
Whether for people or wildlife, concern for protection of the street tree canopy has become an important topic in recent years, and resulted in the adoption of a street tree ordinance. The City should incorporate this effort into a larger urban forestry program that would be responsible for maintaining and enhancing the tree canopy throughout the public realm. The public program could become a model for private landowners as they manage trees and other vegetation on their own properties.

A nature park along the highways
Just as the city streets dominate Miami residents’ daily experience, so the regional highway system is the visual focus for those visiting Miami by way of the interstates or airport. With limited public access, the highway verges and medians are also some of the largest “natural” areas left in many of the city’s neighborhoods. With careful planning, landscaping could be improved on the entire highway system in Miami, providing benefits to wildlife and enhancing the beauty of the city. Limited human disturbance guaranteed by restrictions on pedestrian access, combined with selection of native species and management of grassland areas for rare butterflies and other insects could create a unique kind of nature park. Support for such projects is growing at the Florida Department of Transportation, which spends nearly $30 million every year on highway landscape improvements. A group of researchers associated with the University of Florida is surveying and mapping rare plants along FDOT rights of way in Miami-Dade County. Meanwhile, the Florida Highway Beautification Council provides $3 million in annual grants for highway beautification projects.

The potential for stormwater parks
At the scale of the city’s larger districts, stormwater management will continue to include major street drainage systems and outfalls into the canal system. However, opportunities for stormwater parks should be explored. For example, if an outfall needs to be reworked to eliminate direct discharge into the Miami River, it may be more cost-effective to design the area as a naturalized stormwater park than to bury the system under tons of concrete. Partnerships at this scale will require collaboration between the city, Miami-Dade County, and the South Florida Water Management District, but hold great promise for creating more green space while improving water quality and flood control.

Implement Sustainable Management Practices
Parks are among the city’s long-term assets. Increasingly, cities are pursuing more sustainable ways of managing all their assets, and parks should be no exception. By focusing sustainable management in the park system, the City will also provide an educational example to private property owners of how to manage their landscapes. The City should include green and sustainable features among the design objectives of new recreation and park structures. Over time, as the Parks and Rec-
reation Department increases the efficiency of its management systems, it should institute sustainable and nontoxic practices in the following areas:

- **Water use and irrigation**: Install irrigation so that water use can be monitored for efficiency. Consideration should also be given to irrigation systems that can recycle stormwater and graywater. As South Florida faces water constraints, it is important to conserve potable water for drinking purposes.

- **Natural turf**: Choose turf varieties that require lesser amounts of fertilization, irrigation and mowing.

- **Use of artificial turf for intensively used athletic fields**: Artificial turf cuts down wear and tear on natural areas and allows for more efficient use of fields. This means that fewer fields can be used for more games because fields do not have to be rested frequently between uses.

- **Use of herbicides and pesticides**: Employ integrated pest management and natural alternatives for management of golf courses and other areas.

- **Natural lighting and ventilation of structures**: In Miami’s climate, air conditioning is a necessity for use of recreation buildings during the hottest months. There are many months of the year, however, when air conditioning would be less needed if the design of recreation buildings incorporated natural ventilation. Similarly, although many of Miami’s parks and recreation buildings are heavily used in the evening and at night, the need for interior lighting during the day can be reduced if natural lighting becomes a design objective for new and renovated structures.

- **Sustainable materials for walls, paving, and recreational equipment**: Calculation of life-cycle costs at the time of design and specification of materials can make the long-term benefits of sustainable materials clearer. This would include the use of recycled and recyclable materials.

- **Solar power**: Miami’s tropical location makes it an obvious place to implement solar power, and park and recreation sites offer many opportunities to innovate and save money. Solar panels could be incorporated in shade structures,
picnic shelters, in parking areas and for night lighting on paths and sports fields. The intense use of many Miami parks after dark could make use of solar panels an important way to reduce electricity costs. Solar panels could also be attached to highway overpass structures where recreation areas or parking lots exist below, for example Athalie Range Park #1 and José Marti Park.

- **Green roofs**: Green roofs are planted roofs that absorb stormwater and reduce the heat effect of hard surfaces. Many municipalities are installing green roofs on their public buildings; Chicago offers the best-known example. Using green roofs on recreation buildings is another way to enhance the beneficial effects of green spaces.

The initial cost of transition to more sustainable energy and design may be somewhat more than simply continuing with existing methods. However, on a life-cycle basis, green systems can bring significant savings. If the park system makes a commitment to becoming the most sustainably managed park system in the country, it may be able to obtain grants and other assistance to plan and begin implementing the program.

G. EVERY PARK SYSTEM NEEDS MANY FRIENDS: ENHANCE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

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<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Create a new Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to replace the current Parks Advisory Board.</td>
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<td>&gt; Hire a volunteer coordinator for the Parks and Recreation Department to develop and manage a network of “friends” groups for individual parks.</td>
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<td>&gt; Create a citywide parks foundation.</td>
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<td>&gt; Keep records of recreation program users.</td>
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<td>&gt; Survey park users regularly to monitor needs and interests, including a scientific survey once every ten years.</td>
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<td>&gt; Designate a liaison from the Parks and Recreation Department to work with government agencies and nonprofit groups to expand park and recreation opportunities.</td>
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<td>&gt; Establish a system of community consultation for the redesign of existing parks and design of new parks.</td>
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Successful urban park systems—such as those in Chicago, New York, and Seattle—have developed strong constituencies and successful nonprofit partnerships. Their constituencies are based on making sure that the park system communicates with residents and park users and includes them in planning for park and program improvements. The partnerships mobilize additional resources to enhance the system, drawing on philanthropic and corporate understanding of the value to city life of an excellent park and recreation system.
This master plan was developed with the benefit of the systematic program of public participation described in Chapter 2. Meaningful community participation benefits the park system by creating a strong parks and recreation constituency. It is important at several different levels:

- Systemwide policy and priority-setting
- Systemwide surveys of changing user needs
- Location-specific input into improvements and design by user groups and neighborhoods
- Regular updates of the system master plan.

**Systemwide Policy: Create a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

As noted earlier, the Parks Advisory Board as currently organized has an overbroad set of responsibilities coupled with a lack of any systematic, defined role in the development and management of city parks and recreation programs. The board should be reorganized as the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, with new membership criteria and clear responsibilities. Adding “Recreation” to the name and the responsibilities of the board makes it clear that park issues include the balancing of recreational and other uses of park lands. The membership should be geographically representative and also include people with expertise in park and recreation issues. Board responsibilities should be focused on citywide parks and recreation policy matters.

**Board membership**

All Park and Recreation Advisory Board members should be residents of Miami. Although Miami ordinances currently allow people who do not live in the city but who work or own property in the city to serve on boards, it is important that the members of this board have a direct interest in the city’s parks. An effective board made up of residents will help expand and strengthen the city’s constituency for parks. A board of 13 resident members with the Director of Parks and Recreation or his designee as an ex officio member could effectively represent both residents at large and residents with park and recreation expertise. Suggested membership in the organization is as follows:

- The mayor appoints two members who are residents at large.
- Each commissioner appoints one member resident in his or her commission district.
- The city manager appoints the remainder, including people with the following expertise or experience:
  - landscape architect;
  - team sports representative;
  - park “friends” group representative;
  - if there is a Miami Parks Foundation, a resident member of the foundation; and
  - park recreation program user.
• Director of Parks and Recreation or designee (not to be the same person who staffs the board)

The board would be staffed by the Department of Parks and Recreation, and liaisons from the Planning Department, Department of Public Works, Capital Improvements and Transportation Department would be appointed by those department directors and be made available to inform the board, as needed, about opportunities for collaboration.

**Board responsibilities**

The board would be responsible for advising the mayor and the commission, as well as the rest of city government, on citywide parks and recreation policy matters, park and recreation needs and priorities, and the board's members would serve as the stewards of the master plan. The board should meet at least four times a year. Board meetings should be held at night so that members of the public can attend.

Every year the board should review progress on implementing the master plan, based on staff reports; hold a meeting devoted to hearing from the public on parks issues; review capital plans and designs in relation to the master plan and the needs expressed in public meetings and provide written advice to the commission; and submit a report to the commission on implementation of the plan and any change in conditions that warrant changes in the plan. In addition, the board should hold a public hearing and advise the commission in writing on proposals to cover more than 25% of park space with building footprints, convert park land to other uses, accept donated land for parks, or sell city land that may be suitable for parks. The board also should submit an advisory recommendation to the commission on expenditures greater than $50,000 for park land acquisition before the commission takes action.

**Systemwide community surveys**

The Parks and Recreation Department should more systematically collect information on park and recreation program users, their current level of satisfaction, and needs for new park resources or programs. Surveys at the end of recreation programs; focus groups; and informal, Web-based surveys can provide direction between scientific surveys, which should be repeated every ten years.

**Community input in park design**

Whenever design starts on park improvements or new parks, park users and community members should be invited to a series of meetings: the first to gather information on issues and concerns; the second to present a conceptual design for discussion; and the third to present the detailed design for discussion.
Regular updates for the master plan
The parks and public spaces master plan should be updated every ten years. As the City meets some of its goals and as conditions change, the plan will need to be modified to continue to guide decision making about the parks system. The master plan update should be coordinated with the survey.

Partnerships

Create a Miami Parks Foundation
Miami’s park system needs a nonprofit partner to focus attention, raise money, attract volunteers, and enhance the constituency for the city’s parks. All the successful park systems in the United States have strong partnerships with other government agencies, with community groups, and with a parks foundation or other nonprofit focused on helping the city’s parks be successful. Examples include the Seattle Parks Foundation, the San Diego Friends of Parks and Recreation Foundation, the Boulder Parks and Recreation Foundation, Philadelphia Green, and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy in Boston. In these and other cities, the philanthropic community and the business community have recognized that a thriving and successful park system benefits the whole city. Some of these organizations are actively involved in management and maintenance of parks. Others raise funds for capital improvements and programs. Many coordinate the activities of volunteers and neighborhood parks groups.

New York has a number of parks organizations that exemplify different approaches to park partnerships:

> The Central Park Conservancy may be the best-known nonprofit park organization in the country. With a large endowment ($90 million in 2005) and fund-raising capacity, the Conservancy has a management contract with the City of New York and provides more than 85% of Central Park’s operating budget. The Conservancy is responsible for maintenance, public programming and capital improvements in the park and the City pays an annual fee for these services according to formulas related to the Conservancy’s fund raising and expenditures for the park. The City’s main role is to set policy for the park, and it has final approval on the Conservancy’s capital improvements recommendations. The Conservancy has a staff of 250 and over 1,200 volunteers.

> The Prospect Park Alliance focuses on fund raising and advocacy for Prospect Park in Brooklyn. In 2005, the Alliance received $4.5 million in donations and $2.2 million in fees for services and events; it spent $6.3 million on programs, services and capital improvements. The president of the Alliance is also the administrator of the park, a city employee.

> The City Parks Foundation is an umbrella group that facilitates partner-
ships between the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation and some 250 parks groups and 1,800 neighborhood/civic groups. One of its programs, Partnerships for Parks, provides small grants and technical assistance to community-initiated projects in neighborhood parks. The foundation coordinates volunteer activities and offers free arts, sports, and education programs. The majority of the staff are city employees.

> Modeled on the Central Park Conservancy, the New York Restoration Project was founded by the entertainer Bette Midler with a mission to “reclaim, restore, and redevelop underserved park spaces throughout New York City.” The organization has collaborated with the Americorps program and has environmental education programs, community activities and fund raising events.

Miami already has several public authorities that focus on specific park properties or public spaces: the Bayfront Trust, the Virginia Key Beach Trust, and the Miami River Commission. What the City and the Parks and Recreation Department need is a non-profit partner that will look at all the parks and recreation resources in Miami as a whole, working with the City to strengthen the parks as a system, rather than contributing only to specific signature parks. Chicago’s partnership organizations may be a good model. Chicago Friends of the Parks gives technical assistance to parks advisory councils, raises funds for park projects, develops pilot programs, holds public workshops and events, organizes a volunteer program and coordinates with universities for environmental education programs.

Hire an ombudsman and volunteer coordinator to organize a network of “friends” groups for individual parks
A few parks in Miami already have “friends” groups that support particular parks and organize events, but residents often do not know where to go for information and assistance. The Parks and Recreation Department needs to have a staff member who will serve as the parks ombudsman and coordinate volunteer activities with department activities.
Develop partnerships with other government agencies and nonprofit groups

In order to take advantage of the opportunities for development of parks and open space through infrastructure improvements, discussed earlier, there must be a mechanism for regular communication and collaboration between the Parks and Recreation Department and the policy makers, planners, engineers, architects, landscape architects and maintenance staff of multiple City departments. The Parks and Recreation Department should invite appropriate staff from the Public Works, Capital Improvements and Transportation, General Services, and other departments to join a working group on park and open space opportunities. This group should be made familiar with the priorities and recommendations of this master plan so that, as they do their work, they are aware of opportunities to enhance the city’s park system. As mentioned earlier, the Parks and Recreation Department should also assign liaisons to work with County departments, the Miami-Dade County School District, and the housing authority to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships that can expand park and recreation resources for Miami residents.

Another important ally for the Parks and Recreation Department is the public health community. Residents’ priorities as expressed in the survey are very much focused on fitness. By creating relationships with the public health community, the Parks and Recreation Department can gain support for and access to funding and programming for fitness resources and programs in Miami.

H. IMPROVING MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review and expand the Department of Parks and Recreation vision and mission statement to include the public realm role of the parks system in addition to the role of recreation provider.
- Establish core services, programs, and fees/charges policy according to level of benefit to the community.
- Improve management and employee accountability.
- Establish preventive maintenance and permanent programs.
- Improve management and establish policies and systems for program partner and sponsor groups.
- Strengthen support services.
- Enhance the image of the department and city parks.

As part of this master plan, a detailed management assessment report was prepared by Greenplay LLC that focused on operations, facilities and programs; service delivery and communications; support services; and fees, charges and revenues. This section summarizes the recommendations of their report.
During the last few years, while the Parks and Recreation Department has been recovering from years of reduced and restricted budgets, many improvements have begun. There remain several areas, however, that need more focused attention.

**Review and Expand the Department’s Vision and Mission Statement**

The long-term vision of the department states that the “goal of the Department of Parks and Recreation is to serve all of the residents of the City of Miami by providing safe, clean, and wholesome recreational, educational and cultural activities in order to promote a sense of community.” The more recently-created mission statement is “to provide state of the art park facilities and offer leisure, educational, cultural and physical activities to the residents and visitors of our community while enhancing their quality of life and inspiring personal growth, self esteem, pride and respect for the urban environment.”

Much of the focus of this master plan has been on how Miami can provide sufficient park and green space for a growing population in a built-up city. The vision and mission of the Parks and Recreation Department currently does not include any emphasis on parks as part of the city’s public realm or protection of greenspace and natural areas. Rather, the department goals and mission emphasize the provision of recreational services. The vision and mission should be reviewed with department staff and modified to incorporate the concept of the importance of parks as part of the city’s overall public realm system.

**Establish core services according to level of benefit to the community**

The department should establish the core services it will offer, using a system that identifies where programs lie on a continuum from providing benefits to the community as a whole to providing benefits that mostly accrue to the individual. This framework can also aid in creating a consistent policy on charging fees for programs and activities. The department must fully identify its costs and use that information to decide which services and programs should be free and how fees should be set for others. When this framework is communicated to the public and city decision makers, it will help develop consensus around how services should be provided and priced in the city park and recreation system.

- **Community benefit:** Services and programs that create benefits for the community as a whole include those that provide safety, address social needs, enhance quality of life and increase property values. These are the basic services that the department should offer free or for minimal fees.
- **Community/individual benefit:** These services benefit both the community and the individual and are typically the traditional recreation programs
at beginner levels. Fees are partially subsidized because of the community benefits and partially paid by the program participant. These services typically might include special needs programs and clubs, leagues and camps for youth.

- **Individual/community benefit.** At this level the services promote more individual than community benefit, typically providing intermediate levels of recreation skills, with fees to reflect less community subsidy. Examples of this level of service might include rentals of facilities and equipment for youth programs and nonprofits, and fitness and wellness programs for adults and seniors.

- **Mostly individual benefit.** Services at this level are for specific groups and benefit their participants more than the community as a whole. Examples include adult team athletics and sports, facility and equipment rentals for adults and nonprofits, and special events organized by private promoters. Fees for these services can be set to recover all direct and indirect costs.

- **Highly individual benefit.** Services at this level—such as facility and equipment rental to for-profit or private groups—have the potential to produce revenue and should be priced accordingly.

When the cost to provide a program is consistently and fairly applied based on who benefits from the program, the value of the program and commitment to the program by participants tends to increase. Of course, some groups and individual participants may not be able to afford fees. Currently, there is no consistent policy for fee waivers and the case-by-case process for sponsorship groups now in place tends to leave the impression that exceptions are the norm. Policies and criteria should be established to clarify who is eligible for reduced or waived fees. Similarly, policies and criteria for individual fee reduction should be established based on ability to pay, rather than a blanket approach based on assumptions about entire communities.

**Improve Management Accountability**

Systems that both empower employees and make them more accountable should be established. The department’s annual work plan and performance measures should be clearly tied to its vision, while decision-making responsibilities should be expanded to encourage and support empowerment, trust, risk taking, improved judgment and professional growth in department staff. The department should create a “no excuse” task force of employees to provide rapid resolution of relevant issues; this group can hold retreats and regular gatherings of employee groups to discuss topic-specific goals, concerns and issues.

**Establish Preventive Maintenance and Replacement Programs**

In order to sustain operations, the department needs to develop maintenance level of service standards, identify associated costs, and address funding those costs prior to taking on new assignments. Replacement programs for facilities,
equipment and vehicles also need to be established and funded. A clear understanding of costs and their relationship to meeting the standards expected by the public will help the department gain support for appropriate funding levels.

**Improve Management and Establish Policies and Systems for Program Partner and Sponsor Groups**

Many organizations and groups sponsor programs that use Miami park and recreation facilities. Formal policies for working with these groups should be established, as well as consistent systems that track participation, expenditures, revenues and in-kind support to establish target goals for cost recovery.

**Strengthen Support-Services Assistance**

A variety of administrative and support services need improvement, including purchasing decisions and better use of information technology to support programs, services and efficiency.

**Enhance the Department’s Image**

In the last few years, the Parks and Recreation Department has begun marketing and branding its programs and image, and these efforts should continue to bolster the credibility and awareness of the City’s parks and recreation effort among the public. In the survey, many residents expressed lack of knowledge about what the park system has to offer, and in public meetings, some residents assumed that all programs were provided by partner organizations. Statistical information and narratives that tell the story of the department, as well as accreditation and professional certification for park staff, should be part of that effort. In addition, development of strong relationships with a new Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and a Miami Parks Foundation will assist the department in upgrading its image.

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**I. DIVERSIFYING FUNDING FOR CAPITAL OPERATIONS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Seek grants and other funding for new resources and activities.
- Identify costs of maintenance and support functions and apply to requests for services.
- Allow the Department of Parks and Recreation to recapture costs from fees and event revenues.
Provide general fund support for the parks system with the standards and levels of service expected by the public for resources and programs that benefit the community.

Work toward creating a dedicated funding source for the park system.

Compared to other Florida cities, for many years Miami has served a larger and denser urban population on much smaller budgets and has received much less revenue because of very limited fees and charges. As noted in the previous chapter, Miami’s annual parks budget should be more than twice its current size to meet per capita expenditure standards of similar cities. At a minimum, the budget should be at least $100 per capita.

In recent years, the City has increased the Parks and Recreation Department budget and bond-funded capital improvement programs are bringing many upgrades to the park system. In November 2004, the City Commission approved creation of the Heart of Our Parks Fund, managed by the Dade Community Foundation, with an initial endowment of $929,919 to fund park programming. The Department of Parks and Recreation has also received $1 million to $2 million in recent years in grants and donations. The Bayfront Trust manages and funds operations and improvements for that park, and the Virginia Key Beach Management Trust is charged with revival of Virginia Key Beach. The City also makes contributions to several specific park programs.

There are two fundamental budget categories for parks: 1) capital improvements and 2) maintenance, operations and programming. It is often easier to obtain dollars for acquisition and design of new parks than it is to obtain additional funding for maintenance, operations and programming. Creating new parks is exciting and attracts attention, but the more prosaic work of maintaining, operating and programming parks is essential. Every new park, like every old park, implies a commitment to maintain and operate it as a safe and attractive public space forever. Parks that are poorly maintained, seem unsafe, and lack activities will not be used.

Funding sources for acquisition and design include general fund tax revenues; impact fees; public bond issues; transportation and other infrastructure funding; public and private grant funds; developer contributions; and other donations. In recent years Miami has used general fund and bond funding more than other sources. The City’s impact fees were dramatically revised upward in 2005 and made much more flexible and applicable to more parks. The City Commission
is expected to revisit the fees annually for adjustment. The Miami 21 rezoning is expected to include developer payments for bonus floors as another source of funding. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the City also needs to pursue opportunities for new park and open space acquisition through infrastructure projects (funded primarily with state and federal dollars), and promote the formation of a Miami Parks Foundation that can tap private donators for funding.

Potential funding sources for maintenance, operations and programming include annual tax revenue general fund allocations; fees for use and programs; in-kind and money donations (stewardship groups, volunteers, etc.); special events fees; concessions; special assessment or benefit districts; endowments for special parks; and grant funds. Miami today depends mostly on annual allocations for its parks operations budgets, although it is increasing efforts to win grant funding. Any fees generated by parks and recreation programs go to the general fund. As the discussion on management improvements makes clear, some maintenance, operations and programming costs could be recovered through a clear identification of costs and a recalibration of fees to reflect relative benefits to the community and to individuals. To make this fully effective, the department budget should receive the benefits of cost reductions and of increased revenues.

Miami should also work towards creating a dedicated funding source for the park system. Miami’s Parks and Recreation Department received 3.2% of the general fund in FY 2004–2005. In contrast, one of the best-funded parks and recreation departments in the country, in Portland, Oregon, received approximately 10% of that city’s general fund discretionary monies in 2005. The best urban park systems have dedicated funding sources, which are generally a portion of the property tax or the sales tax. In Minneapolis, $1.20 per $1,000 of tax revenue in 2005 went to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, a semi-autonomous, elected board created in 1883 to maintain and develop the city’s extensive park system. In 2005, the Park Board received 9% of tax revenue. In Seattle, a 2000 parks levy was approved at $0.35 per $1,000 additional property tax to be used mainly for acquisition and development of 18 new neighborhood parks in underserved neighborhoods. The Chicago Parks District receives dedicated property tax funds, which account for over 50% of the government revenues that go to its parks. Here in Florida, Pinellas County uses a portion of its sales tax to fund parks and estimates that 40% of sales taxes are paid by seasonal residents and tourists. Boulder, Colorado, has both a sales tax-supported Open Space Fund and a property tax-supported Parks and Recreation Fund.

**The Parks and Open Space Trust Fund**

Miami has a Parks and Open Space Trust Fund whose stated purpose is to acquire new parks and open space, with 80% of the funds targeted towards acquisition. This trust fund would be the appropriate destination of developer
bonus payments and other funds dedicated to parks and open space uses. As currently written, the establishing ordinance contains limitations that could prove to be excessively constraining. There are advantages to making the fund as flexible as possible so that these monies can be used to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities.

- It would be beneficial to explicitly permit expenditures for park and public space-related amenities that are included in the Parks and Public Spaces Master Plan, such as acquisition for trails/paths and plazas, and investment in green streets that serve as pedestrian access routes to parks.
- The ordinance appears to say that the money added to the fund has to be spent within two years. This would make it difficult to accumulate funds for major purchases. This period should be extended, perhaps to the six-year period used for the impact fee funds.
- All expenditures for acquisition of new park land should require written recommendations from the Parks and Recreation and the Planning departments, and these recommendations must indicate how the proposed expenditure relates to the goals and recommendations of the Parks and Public Spaces Master Plan and other relevant City planning documents.
- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board should submit an advisory recommendation on expenditures over $50,000 for acquisition before the commission takes action.

PUBLIC REALM INTO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Miami’s parks, waterfronts, and public spaces must be understood as a system of green infrastructure that is both internally integrated and linked to a wider regional system. This networking of all the existing and potential elements of the public realm into a system of green infrastructure is more than an abstract concept. Miami residents, in the surveys and public meetings, voiced their desire for a greener Miami and better access to and connections among parks. They understood how lack of connections that provide comfortable, secure and attractive environments can result in underused parks. They asked for more walking and bicycling paths and routes.

In a growing city, a strong network of green infrastructure creates a robust framework for growth and a high quality of urban life. The elements of this green infrastructure system are owned and managed by a variety of agencies for the benefit of the whole community. An effective system of green infrastructure requires that all these management entities understand the role that they can play within this connected network and how their piece of the network contributes to the whole. In addition, strong community and nonprofit partners have a critical role to play in keeping the idea of green infrastructure alive and in working with management agencies to make it a reality in Miami.