



OLMSTED
PARKS
CONSERVANCY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

MEMBERS & DONORS

Sustainability for tomorrow.
Equity for good.
Accessibility for everyone.

Thank you –

Our dearest friends and supporters,

2020 was a difficult year for the world, but especially here. We had not only a pandemic and a divisive public election, but we were at the center of a racial reckoning after the killing of Breonna Taylor.

Olmsted's vision held true in the face of it all.

Our parks were places where people could escape from the endless news cycle and the latest COVID-19 numbers. People craved a place and a space to simply exhale and be surrounded by nature. The power of nature to make us feel small, to let us know that life will go on was desperately needed.

Our parks were places where people could come together to protest. People protested for justice. They protested for equal rights and fairness for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or power. The exact same ideals that Olmsted held high when designing our parks.

People came together to enjoy the company of friends and family, socially distanced and in the fresh air. They took their children for rambling walks in the park after a day spent learning online.

I wondered what Olmsted would think if he were able to look forward and see how his parks were used in 2020 – the sites of solitary walks through nature, protests for justice, staging sites for COVID-19 tests and vaccines, picnics and family gatherings. I imagine he'd be quite pleased.

The sanctuary that our parks provide is a testament to the vision of Olmsted and the determination of those who came before us to protect and care for these parks. And because of you and your ongoing support, our parks will continue to be here when we need them.

Layla George, President and CEO



"In a year filled with anxiety and uncertainty, our parks were safe spaces."

- Layla

Our Mission

Enhance, restore and protect Louisville's Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, connecting nature & neighborhood while strengthening our community's well-being.

Over 130 years ago, Frederick Law Olmsted visited Louisville with a mission to design not just a park, but an entire park system connected by parkways.

It was an ambitious plan, but Louisville rose to the challenge and realized Olmsted's vision by 1935 when the final Olmsted Park, Seneca, was opened.

Over 50 years later, Olmsted Parks Conservancy was created to ensure that these historic parks get the special treatment they deserve.

Our Vision

To make all our parks the most vibrant and inclusive parks in our community.

In the face of 2020, we stopped to think about what role our parks play in our community. We strongly believe that all our parks should feel open and inviting to everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income. We want our parks to be bursting with life and activity. We want people to take advantage of everything our parks have to offer.

Parks For All

Increase Accessibility, Equity and Sustainability.

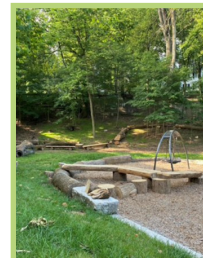
Our strategic goals are to:

- Increase accessibility to make our parks inclusive and welcoming to all.
- Increase equity to make all our parks the best in our community.
- Increase financial, environmental, and operational sustainability for the health of our parks and Olmsted Parks Conservancy.

Eight of our parks saw enhancements in 2020.

Tyler Park was the last project from our Campaign for Extraordinary Parks campaign. The project was completed in April 2020 and enhancements include a new playground and spray pad, a new accessible path under the historic tunnel, natural playground, and new bathrooms.

- Tyler (Nature Play, Accessible Walkway)
- Central (Restroom Security, Sidewalk repair, Lighting)
- Iroquois (Rundill Rd Comfort Stations)
- Willow (Restroom Security)
- Victory (Restroom Security)
- Algonquin Park (Lighting and Security)
- Cherokee Park (Chauffer's Rest, Big Rock)



Central Park



New sidewalks

Iroquois Park



10 new comfort stations

Cherokee Park



Chauffer's Rest

Our Projects

Leveraging donor dollars with public funding to improve our Olmsted Parks

PROJECT:	COST:
Natural Surface Trail Study	\$79,410
Elliott Master Plan	\$50,000
Bingham Master Plan	\$50,000
Tyler Park Natural Playground, Ramp	\$130,000
Central Park Sidewalk Repair & Lighting	\$100,000
Willow Park Restroom Security	\$6,900
Central Park Restroom Security	\$3,000
Victory Park Restroom Security	\$6,400
Central Park Drainage Study	\$3,000
Chauffer's Rest, Cherokee Park	\$5,000
Total	\$433,710

ACCESSIBILITY

We will increase accessibility to make our parks inclusive and welcoming to all.

We want our Olmsted Parks to be more physically accessible and feel safe, welcoming, and inviting.

- Central Park - improved lighting and replaced damaged sidewalks.
- Algonquin Park - improved lighting.
- Iroquois Park - ten new comfort stations with benches and trash cans.
- Willow Park, Tyler Park, Cherokee Park, Victory Park, Shelby Park, Boone Square - restroom security.

EQUITY

We will strive to increase equity in our park system.

We will increase equitable use of human and financial resources by 10%.

- Elliott and Bingham Parks - developed master plans as guides for future improvements.
- Tracked our capital spending to ensure funds are spread out among our park system.

SUSTAINABILITY

We will increase financial, environmental, and operational sustainability.

We will ensure park projects are able to be well maintained; we will work to be good stewards of the land and advocate for environmental sustainability.

- Central Park - drainage improvements.
- Cherokee Park - removing old tennis court and restoring landscape to grassland at Chauffer's Rest.
- Natural Surface Trail Master Plan - guide to prevent erosion and improve trails in Cherokee, Seneca, and Iroquois Parks.



Team for Healthy Parks

Enhance, restore and protect Louisville's Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, connecting nature & neighborhood while strengthening our community's well-being.

OUR CREW

The Team for Healthy Parks was established in 2005 to clear invasive honeysuckle from the woodlands at Cherokee and Seneca Parks for the long-term health of the trees. That work continues to this day.

But they do more than that now. Our crew has installed numerous prairies and monarch waystations in our parks. They have landscaped formal areas at entrances to some of our parks and have planted thousands of trees. All these big jobs must be maintained year-round. That keeps our crew as busy as the bees they attract!



ACCESSIBILITY

We will increase accessibility to make our parks inclusive and welcoming to all.

We want our Olmsted Parks to be more physically accessible and feel safer, welcoming, and inviting.

- Algonquin Park - cleared overgrown park boundaries and improved sightlines.
- Removed overgrowth around the Gaulbert Pavilion and along Park Boundary Road in Cherokee Park.
- Maintained pollinator gardens - Cherokee, Seneca, Iroquois, Algonquin.
- Kept formal beds neat and maintained - Willow, Cherokee, Shelby, Victory, Central, Boone Square.

EQUITY

We will strive to increase equity in our park system.

We will increase equitable use of human and financial resources by 10%.

- Algonquin Park pollinator garden.
- Shawnee Park River Walk.
- Chickasaw Park woodland cleanup.
- Victory Park formal landscaping.

SUSTAINABILITY

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We will ensure park projects are able to be well maintained; we will work to be good stewards of the land and advocate for environmental sustainability.

- Cherokee tree survey.
- Salamander survey.
- Floristic survey.
- GIS mapping to improve tracking, data.
- Iroquois canopy study.

Volunteer and Educational Programming

COVID-19 shut down all our hands-on educational programming and group volunteer activities. In 2019, we had over 1400 volunteers. In 2020, we had 250, mostly in January and February. Once COVID-19 hit, our Park Stewards rose to the challenge. These 55 dedicated volunteers worked independently and tirelessly. These are our Park Stewards, our heroes.

Park Steward Program

OUR COVID-19 SILVER LINING

With many people working from home and enjoying more free time, we saw a major increase in the hours spent in our parks by our wonderful Park Stewards. But no one spent more time volunteering in our parks than Conrad Selle. Conrad spearheaded the effort to clear bush honeysuckle from the Lady Bird Johnson tract in Seneca Park near I-64. Conrad spent over 1000 hours in 2020 restoring this 14-acre area of the park, driven by the transformative nature of this work. Thank you, Conrad!

Volunteer Hours:

4,536 hours

The number of unique volunteers dropped about 80% with the onset of COVID-19. Park Stewards increased their hours to make up for it. Total volunteer hours in 2019 was 6,400.

Park Volunteers:

250 volunteers

With COVID-19, volunteering with Olmsted Parks saw dramatic changes. Volunteers worked in 10 parks, removed 48 acres of exotic species, and planted 230 trees and 242 shrubs.



"This project provided an antidote to COVID-19 isolation for me. I got a lot of exercise doing the work and the positive feedback from trail users kept me going. The site is close to the home of my daughter and grandchildren, so it's especially meaningful to me."

- Conrad Selle

Community Engagement

2020 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

We had big plans for 2020 with Summer Series events scheduled in Shelby, Tyler and Victory Parks. We had a series of free play events planned for many of our parks across town. And like everyone else, we had to pivot and adapt.

We created virtual guides to different areas of interest in our parks and shared across social media. We developed scavenger hunts and wildlife guides for kids and their families.

The biggest challenge we faced, though, was how to move forward with the master plans in Bingham and Elliott Parks.

Creating a master plan is the first step necessary to restore a park. Before making decisions on park amenities, you must know what the park users want and need in their park.

In a typical year, this process of deep community engagement would involve numerous stakeholder and public meetings on site. With COVID-19 restrictions, we had to get creative. We developed large boards detailing the history of the park and how the process worked. We asked people to text feedback to us and to complete online surveys. We held Zoom meetings with stakeholders. We spent time in the park talking to everyday users.

With input and buy-in from the community, we can become powerful advocates for equality across our entire Olmsted Park system.

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Elliott Park

THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS AT WORK

In Elliott, what we heard was a need for better restrooms and upgrades to the Field House. People wanted a new horseshoe pit, grills, and picnic tables. They wanted a new walking path for exercise and a new splash pad for the kids in the neighborhood. They wanted a bike repair station and public wifi. They wanted improved amenities so they could spend more time in the park.

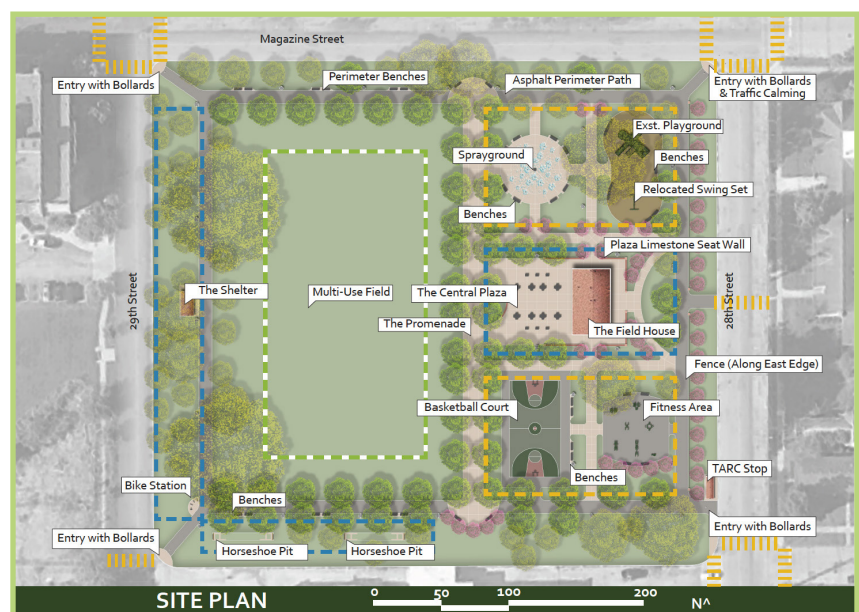
"Louisville Gators was excited to be able to provide input and we're looking forward to seeing the park improvements happen. Our kids and families are in the park all the time and can't wait to enjoy the new and improved play features, fields, courts, and grills. And we really appreciate the shelters for bad weather."

- Coach Keyon Biggers



"The Olmsted Parks Conservancy staff have impressed us with the level of community input they've strived to obtain; they understand the importance of the park serving the needs of the neighbors. Our senior center is located adjacent to the park and we have seen the benefits of having a dedicated, maintained green space in the neighborhood. We look forward to seeing the new plans put into place so even more people can use it. The older adults who attend the senior center will be grateful for the updated walking path and addition of benches."

- Lisa Smith, ElderServe



Community Impact: Defining Moments

JANUARY



Launched our Olmsted Park Partners program for companies wanting to give back to their park.

FEBRUARY



Friends of Iroquois Park got 10 new trash cans and benches installed.

MARCH



Social distancing stations installed in Shawnee, Chickasaw, Central, Iroquois, Cherokee, Seneca, and Tyler Parks.

APRIL



Worked with city to close roads to vehicles in Cherokee and Iroquois to give pedestrians and cyclists more room to socially distance while exercising.

MAY



Tyler Park project completed and pathway under the bridge was opened.

JUNE



Installed new signs on our trails.

JULY



Park at Dark - created a nature exploration kit for families to enjoy together outside.

AUGUST



Launched an anti-litter campaign in Big Rock, scalable to other parks.

SEPTEMBER



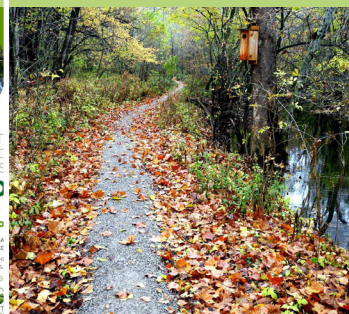
Team for Healthy Parks conducted a tree survey and salamander study in Cherokee Park.

OCTOBER



Created the October Challenge, a new virtual event for our active park users.

NOVEMBER



Completed the Natural Surface Trail Plan, a road map to improving the trails in Iroquois, Seneca, and Cherokee Parks.

DECEMBER



Launched our first membership drive, attracting donor support to finish the year strong.

Community Feedback

With park usage soaring in 2020, people were more grateful than ever to have these incredible Olmsted Parks open to us all.



"I walk the loop area everyday. It has been the sanctuary that has kept my sanity through this difficult year."

- Jill Maurey

Scenic Loop in Cherokee Park and Rundill Road in Iroquois Park, closed to vehicles.

"My family feels so incredibly fortunate to have Cherokee Park available to us during what is rapidly becoming an existential crisis for all of us, everywhere. The woodland slope transected by the Hogan's Fountain drive up from Daniel Boone -- is so sublimely beautiful this time of year, with the May Apples and Bluebells all at their Spring finest, and with the pathways and trails offering those of every ability the opportunity to experience the same Kentucky woodland ecosystem that greeted Frederick Law Olmsted over 135 years ago.

Just as the tornado destroyed what stood there before, so have the seasons and decades of care and park stewardship recreated a place that is perhaps even more beautiful than what stood on that hillside before April 3, 1974. I believe that I was meant to live close to Cherokee Park today so that I might be able to recognize that we, too, will recover from these terrible times and may someday be better for it, through our proper care and stewardship of what is essentially beautiful and good."

- Jack Trawick



Photo by Jackson Harmeyer

Staff

Layla George President and CEO

Mary Jo Davis Finance and Human
Resource Manager

Kathy Ezzell Donor Relations Manager

Stephanie George Director of Marketing

Matt Spalding Volunteer and Education
Program Manager

Major Waltman Park Project Director

Janelle Wilhelm Membership Coordinator

Sarah Wolff Program Director of
Community Engagement

TEAM FOR HEALTHY PARKS:

Nik Eiche Natural Areas Manager

Sarah Benton Biological Technician and
GIS Coordinator

Wilson Ethington Biological Technician

Mary Anne Fox Biological Technician

Lauren Hendrickson Biological Technician



Photo by Jeffrey Mattingly

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Financials

EXPENSES:	COST:
Project Development Costs	\$677,810
Community Awareness	\$111,120
Public Program and Events	\$134,784
Fundraising	\$194,605
General & Administrative	\$360,255
Total Expenses	\$1,478,574

REVENUE:	AMOUNT:
PPP Loan	\$157,300
Corporate Sponsorship	\$64,000
Major Donors	\$517,376
Members	\$144,953
Memorials & Celebrations	\$51,289
Investment Income	\$320,607
Other	\$20,889
Funds Restricted for Projects	\$1,555,943
Total Revenue	\$2,832,357

The Conservancy raises funds over a 3-5 year timeframe for projects that will be initiated and completed in a future year. Therefore, we will have a surplus in years when we are in a fundraising campaign, and a deficit in years when we are spending those funds.



MEMBER BENEFIT

As a way to say thanks to our loyal donors and supporters, we have put together a speaker series featuring local, national, and international experts on a wide-ranging series of topics. We will learn more about what triggered Frederick Law Olmsted's interest in establishing public parks in America, how slavery affected his world view, and how our parks here have evolved since he left his fingerprint upon them. We are certain these conversations will make you think and we all hope to learn a little something new and add to our appreciation of the Olmsted Parks here in Louisville.

**Mario Bernardi***March 18th, 6 -7 p.m.*

From Private Parks to
Public Gardens: A Cultural
and Political
Transformation during the
Grand Tour Age in Europe

**Dr. Sara Zewde***April 14, 6:30 -7:30 p.m.*

The interconnection
between slavery and
landscape architecture,
including Olmsted's
influence

**Jeana Dunlap***May 13, 6 -7 p.m.*

Modern History of
Louisville's Olmsted Parks:
Loitering and Double
Standards

Thanks to our presenting sponsor



*Virtual presentations will be recorded on Zoom for later distribution

Tentative 2021 Event Calendar

March - May, Virtual Spring Speaker Series

June - Virtual panel discussion on founding of OPC

October - October Challenge

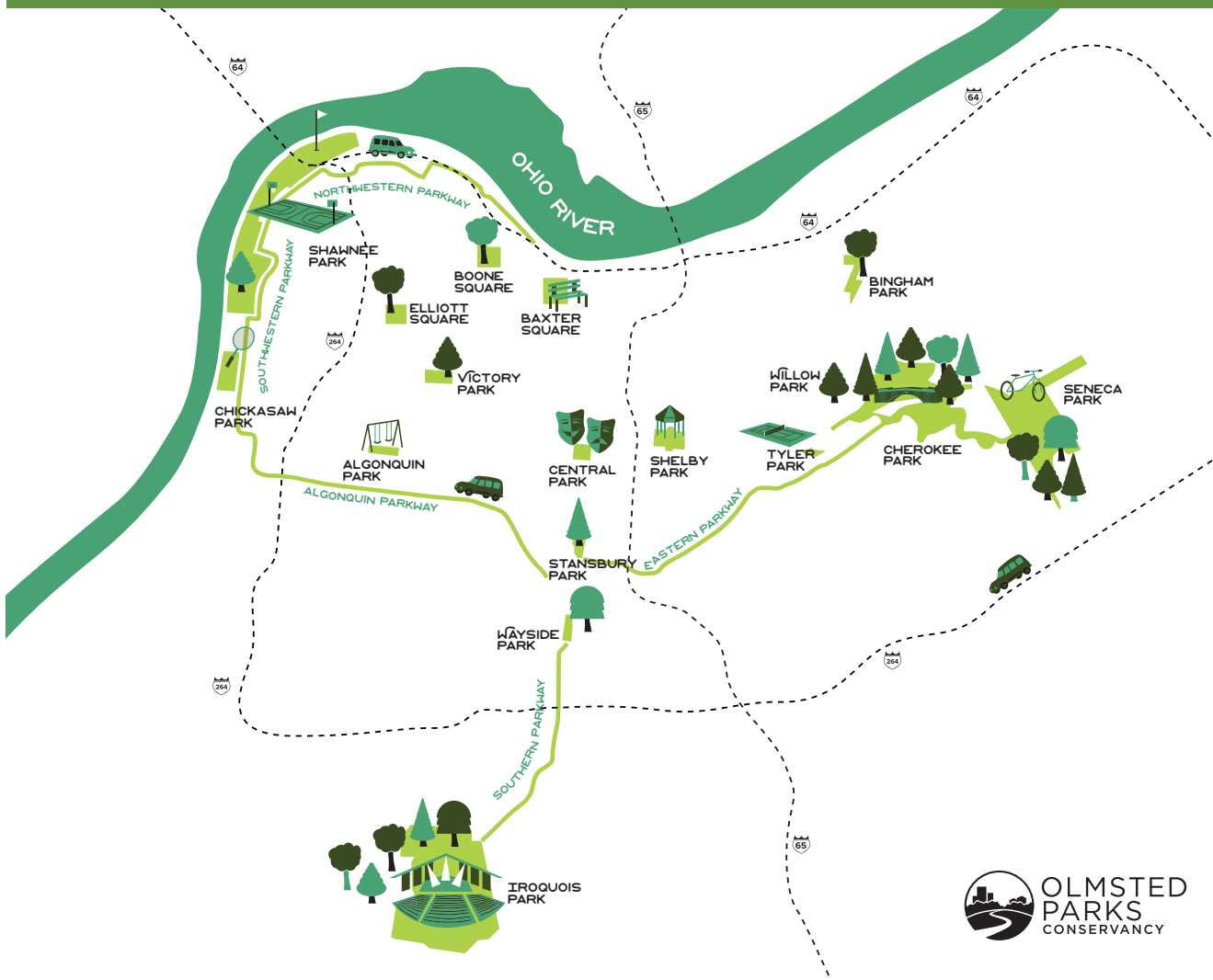
Late October - Hayride on the Hill at Cherokee Park

December - Tyler Park Winter Festival of Hope



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THANK YOU



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