



Appendix C
Green Plan



INTRODUCTION

The citizens of northern Fulton County established the City of Johns Creek for a number of reasons. High on the list were needs for more parks, improved recreation facilities, and conservation of additional open space. The Community Assessment provided documentation of this shortfall. To summarize, in 2007 Johns Creek had 2.86 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents compared to the 1983 National Recreation and Park Association minimum standard of 6.5 to 10.25 acres per 1,000. In comparison, Fulton County, as a whole, has 7.46 acres per 1,000, and the 10-county metropolitan area has 7.40.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following Green Plan recommendations are based upon an extensive program of public participation. This program included three public meetings, one for each of the City's three planning sub-areas, a survey of community preferences for issues and major recreation facilities, a city-wide open house that shared a draft set of Green Plan recommendations, and five meetings of the Green Plan Sub-committee.

The community preference survey was distributed at the three sub-area meetings and the City's Web site. It yielded 94 responses, 63 from the community meetings and 31 from the Internet. (Complete survey results are available in Appendix A.) Earlier, the Green Plan sub-committee had identified a set of 12 potential issues and opportunities. Six of these issues were judged to be "very important" to a majority of the respondents, including the following (with the percentage judging the issue to be "very important" shown in parentheses):

- conservation of environmentally sensitive areas (69%),
- designation of parkland in future commercial developments and redevelopment (65%),
- emphasis on greenway safety, especially the crossing of busy streets (60%),
- focus on the quality of parks and recreation facilities rather than only the quantity (59%),
- availability of additional neighborhood parks (58%),
- better public access to and along the Chattahoochee River (56%).

The survey also addressed major recreation facilities. The most popular recreation facility, by far, was running/walking/jogging trails, with 76% of respondents judging them to be very important. Next in importance were soccer/lacrosse/football fields (47%), baseball/softball fields (45%), and picnic facilities (40%).

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Attendees at the three sub-area public meetings also participated in a mapping exercise that combined issues related to both land use and the Green Plan. Participants gathered around tables with large-format maps and identified areas they believed were important to either change or preserve. Areas to change were marked with orange stickers and areas to preserve with green stickers. A text comment for each sticker was also recorded. Over three meetings and ten tables (170 total comments) were recorded with 77 of those comments being relevant for the Green Plan. Figure 1 is a map showing the Green Plan comments. As noted in the legend, squares are suggestions for future parks, circles are areas recommended for conservation, and diamonds are possible greenway extensions. Appendix B contains images of the results of all 10 of the table exercises.

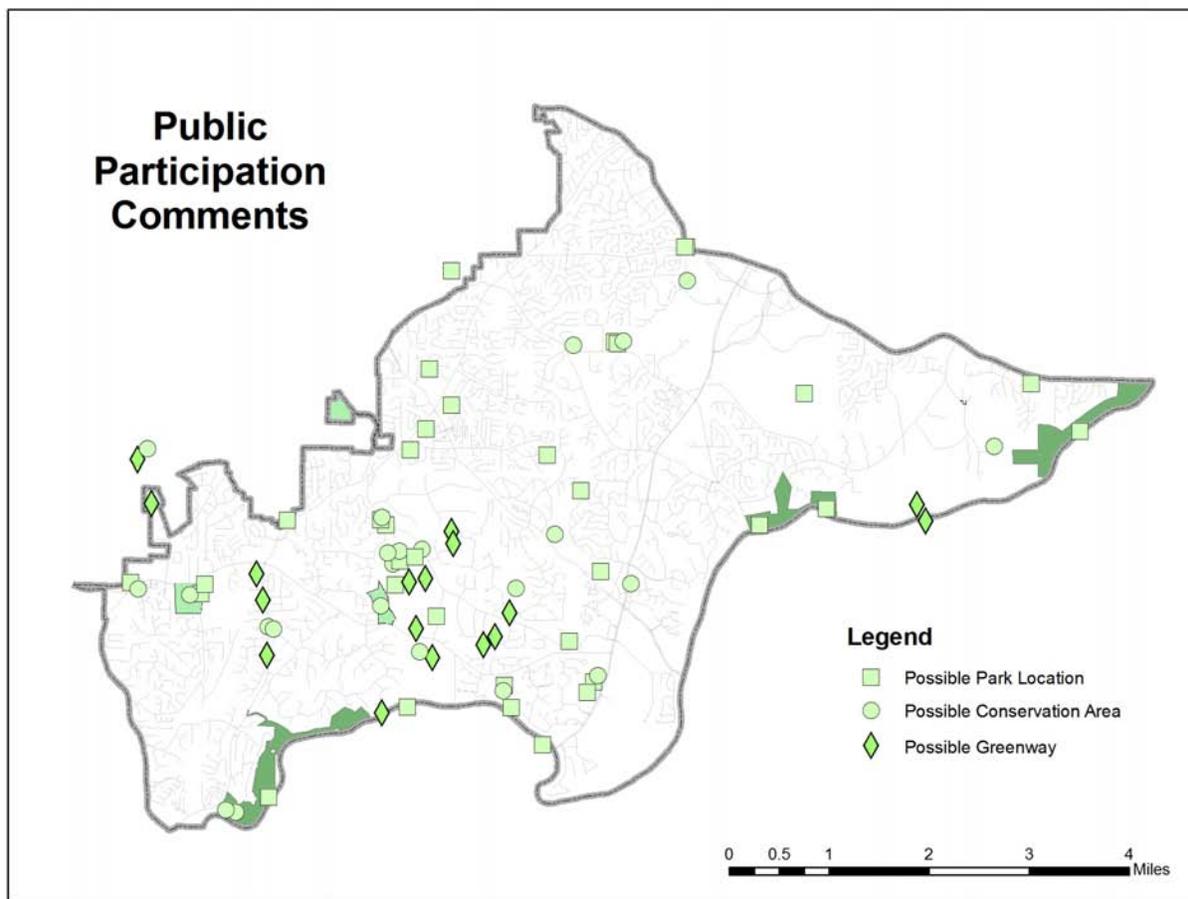


Figure 1: Public Participation Comments

GREEN PLAN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the community survey and the comments from the mapping exercise were then shared with the Sub-committee resulting in a set of 20 policy recommendations. A number of these recommendations overlap with those of the transportation and land use components of the plan. Land conservation is both a land use issue and a Green Plan issue. Greenways are important for both transportation and recreation. Street beautification concerns all three areas: land use, transportation, and the Green Plan.

The recommendations are grouped into four sections: parks, recreation facilities, conservation, and greenways. The Sub-committee did not set priorities among these recommendation; all were deemed important to the future of the city. For convenience of discussion the recommendations are numbered, but, again, neither the numbers nor the order within sections denotes priorities.

Figure 2 shows the three planning subareas, while figures 3, 4, and 5 are generalized maps to depict the recommendations for the parks, conservation, and greenways, respectively. This Plan does not address individual pieces of property. The maps show general areas and they should not be interpreted as designating particular locations.

The greenway recommendations are for greenways that are primarily for recreational purposes. Greenways and trails are also part of an overall transportation system, and should also be integrated with plans for roads, mass-transit, and other modes of travel. The Green Plan, for this reason, does not provide recommendations for trails or greenways when their function is primarily one of transportation, and readers should see the transportation plan for further details.

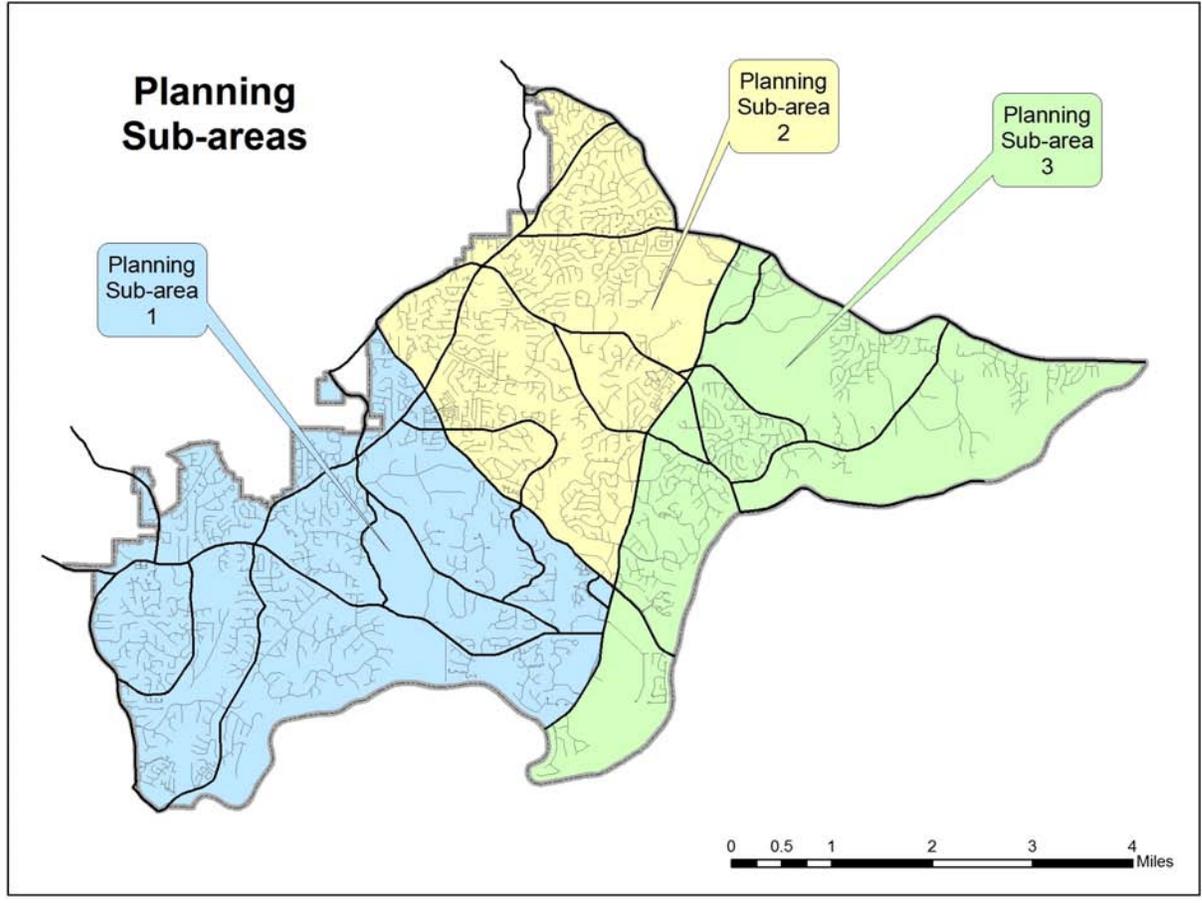


Figure 2: Planning Sub-areas

PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Establish three small, scenic parks with picnic areas on the Chattahoochee River to provide access to the river for people in all Planning Sub-Areas of the City.**

The Chattahoochee River is a wonderful regional and national resource. The citizens of Johns Creek currently have only limited access to the river. Three small riverfront parks with picnic areas will allow citizens of east, central, and west Johns Creek to have direct access to the river. These parks need not be large, but scenic value and accessibility should be major locational criteria. Sites within the 100-year floodplain are highly recommended since the parks can easily be closed during the rare flood, and the cost of land will be significantly lower if the land is not developable.

2. **Create one community park (of 25 acres or more) in Planning Sub-area 2 of the City, which has at present no city parks. Over the longer term, create a second community park located in Planning Sub-Area 2 of the city.**

The NRPA recommends a 2-mile service area for community parks (of 25 acres or more). GIS analysis shows that Planning Sub-Areas 1 and 3 of the city have access to current city parks, but people in the central section do not. Two new community parks will dramatically improve park access in Planning Sub-Area 2 of the city. In addition, the new parks will be at least partially accessible for people in Planning Sub-areas 1 and 3 of the city.

3. **Set a target to double the amount of parkland per 1,000 residents to 6.0 acres per 1,000.**

There was extensive discussing within Green Plan Sub-committee concerning an appropriate target for parkland. The 1983 NRPA guidelines recommend a minimum standard 6.5 to 10.25 acres of parks (per 1,000 residents). Targets higher than 6.0 acres were discussed, but there are at least three reasons for setting the goal at 6.0 acres.

First, over the extensive period before the City was incorporated and its citizens were residents of unincorporated Fulton County, the area compensated for the lack of parks with a combination of private neighborhood facilities, church facilities, and considerable open space in the form of golf courses. Second, because Johns Creek is an attractive place to live and a high percentage of the City is already developed, undeveloped land suitable for parks is uncommon and expensive. Third, a target of doubling per capita parkland (from 2.9 to 6.0 acres per 1,000) is a very ambitious one, and a higher goal would probably not be attainable, at least over the timeframe of this plan.

4. Develop a network of smaller sized (10 to 20 acre) neighborhood parks throughout the City.

At present the City has no neighborhood (10-20 acre) parks. Expansion of the park system beyond the riverfront parks and new community parks should emphasize a network of four to six neighborhood parks of an average size of 15 acres. The service area of community parks is ½ mile, and priority should be given to the areas most distant from community parks.

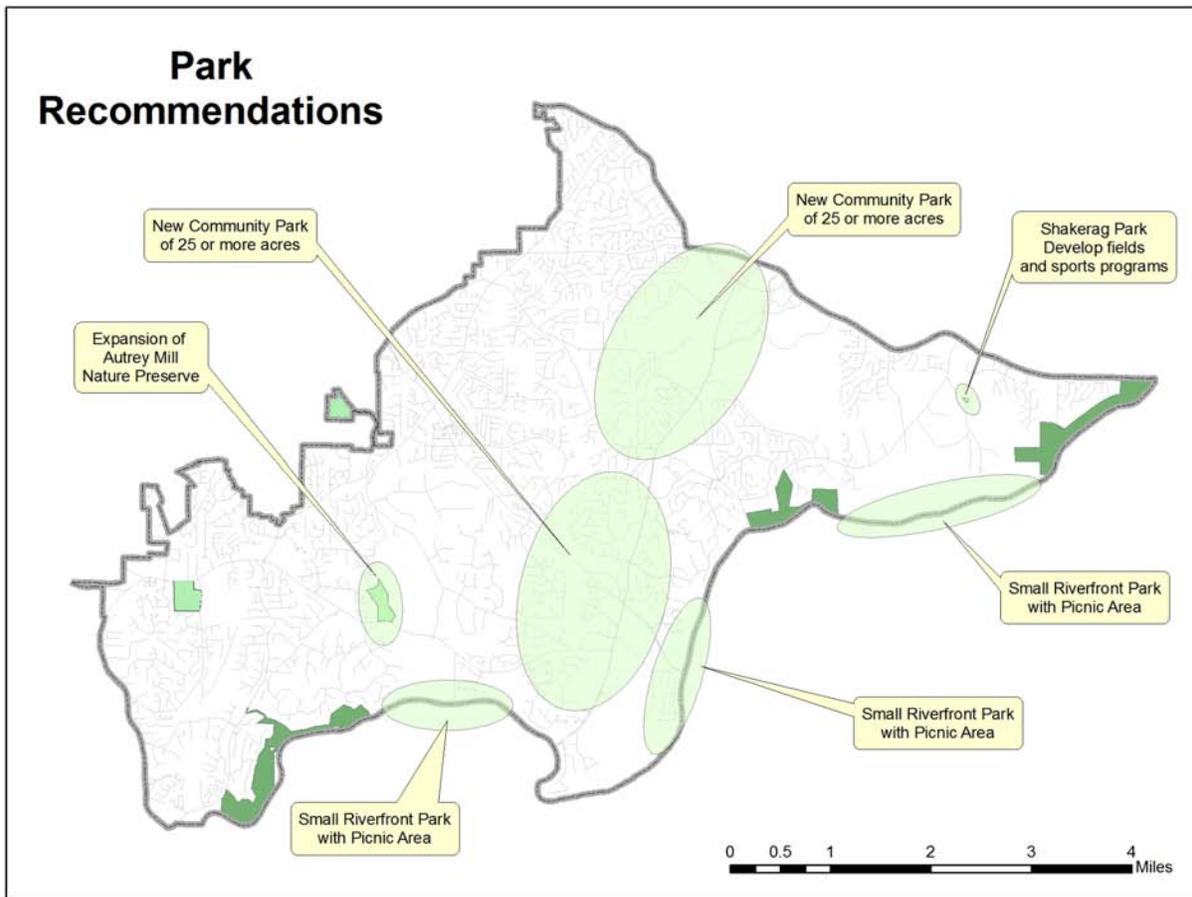


Figure 3: Park Recommendations

RECREATION FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Create three new soccer/lacrosse/football fields at parks to serve all three Planning Sub-areas of the City.

The Green Plan survey results highlighted the need for additional facilities for soccer, lacrosse, and football. At least one new soccer/lacrosse/football field should be constructed for residents at a current or future park in each of the three Planning Sub-Areas of the city.

6. Create three new baseball/softball fields at parks to serve all three Planning Sub-areas of the City.

The Green Plan survey results highlighted the need for additional facilities for baseball and softball. At least one new baseball/softball field should be constructed for residents at a current or future park in each of the three Planning Sub-Areas of the city.

7. Develop Shakerag Park with playing fields and recreation programs.

Although Shakerag Park is to be a city park, it will not have well-developed recreation facilities. To serve citizens in Planning Sub-area 3 of the city, a park master-plan should be created and the park should be developed for active and passive recreation.

8. Construct a combination or free-standing community center and natatorium with a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and facilities.

Adjacent communities with population characteristics very similar to Johns Creek have multiple gymnasiums, recreation centers, and community centers. Johns Creek should establish at least one such center, which can serve multiple purposes, including community meetings.

9. Coordinate with the Fulton County Board of Education to establish joint-use facility agreements.

The City should continue efforts to develop joint-use agreements with the Fulton County Board of Education and private education entities.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Prohibit residential, commercial, and industrial development in the 100-year floodplain.

The current policy of discouraging development in the 100-year floodplain should be continued. The majority of floodplain land is also environmentally sensitive land and includes wetlands, wildlife habitat, and buffer areas to protect water quality.

11. Support and enforce the Metropolitan River Protection Act (MRPA) within the city limits of Johns Creek.

The Chattahoochee River is a vital environmental resource of regional and national significance. The Metropolitan River Protection Act was based upon an ecological study conducted in 1972 and should continued to be supported and enforced.

12. Investigate the creation of a non-profit land trust to solicit and hold conservation easements for land in and near the City.

Such a land trust could raise funds to quickly purchase land and it could solicit and hold conservation easements, scenic easements, and agricultural conservation easements.

13. Expand the Autrey Mill Nature Preserve to available, adjacent land.

The Autrey Mill Nature Preserve could be expanded to nearby undeveloped land, creating a larger, more effective preserve.

14. Create a conservation subdivision ordinance.

A conservation subdivision ordinance would allow the permanent protection of environmentally sensitive lands.

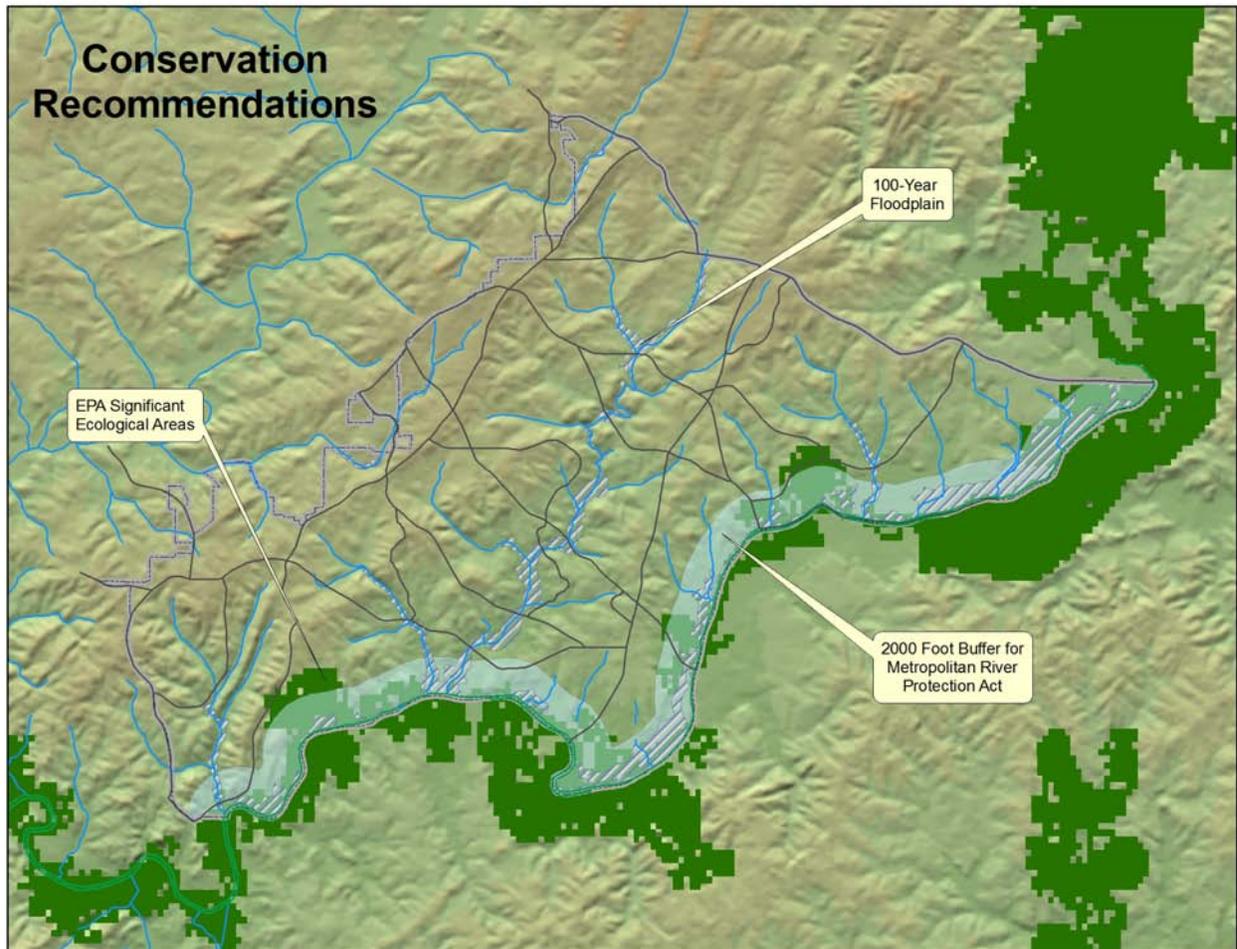


Figure 4: Conservation Recommendations

GREENWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

15. **Connect all current and future parks as well as develop a continuous greenbelt network throughout all new development.**

All parks, present and future, where not precluded by existing development, should be safely connected to the greenway network. New development should preserve areas that can be linked into a citywide greenbelt network.

16. Establish a new greenway along upper Johns Creek where not precluded by existing development.

Investigate the feasibility of establishing a greenway along Johns Creek, north of Abbots Bridge Road, where not precluded by existing development.

17. Extend the greenway system along the Chattahoochee River where not precluded by existing development.

A Riverwalk Greenway has been considered by both the transportation and Green Plan advisory committees. The currently-adopted greenway network includes a trail linking the two easternmost Chattahoochee River National Recreation areas south of the City. An extended Riverwalk Greenway could utilize undeveloped land in the 100-year floodplain. Linkage along the entire length of the river could not be possible due to riverfront development at multiple places. However, an extended, multi-segment Riverwalk would be possible, especially in conjunction with the proposed riverside parks.

18. Collaborate with the National Park Service to maximize greenway connectivity.

City greenways could connect to trails within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation areas where possible. Negotiations with the National Park service should be held to determine the best linkages for Johns Creek citizens to have better access to the Chattahoochee River National Recreation areas.

19. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions for interconnected greenways and parks.

The City's greenway system could be linked to greenways and nearby parks of adjacent jurisdictions, including Forsyth County, Gwinnett County, and the City of Alpharetta.

20. Beautify the greenways and major roads with street trees, landscaped medians, and landscaped entrances to the City.

The City should consider beautification of the current road network including the landscaping of medians, the addition of street trees, and the beautification of major entrances through community standards.

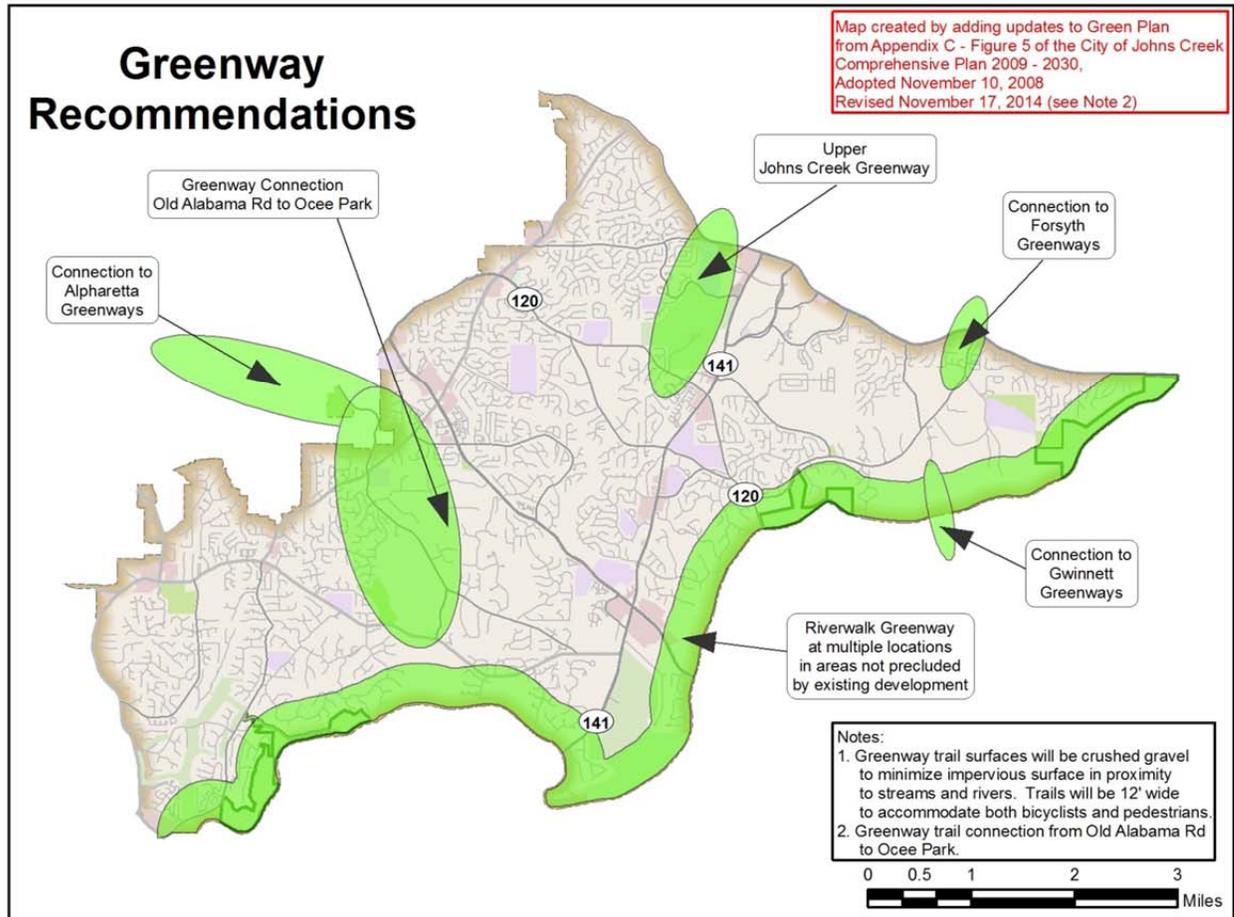


Figure 5: Greenway Recommendations

IMPLEMENTATION

The major recommended financing mechanism for the Green Plan is an issue of general obligation bonds targeted for parks, recreation facilities, greenspace, and greenways. General obligation (GO) bonds are approved by referendum and sold to investors to raise capital. Over the course of 20 to 30 years the city repays the investors with principal and interest payments. These bonds are sold in the municipal bond marketplace and are "rated" based on the city's financial standing.

Table 1 shows the estimated capital costs of the major recommendations in the Green Plan. The costs do not include estimates for smaller items, such as the construction of new playing fields at existing parks, or the community center. The listed capital expenditures total slightly less than \$74 million.

| Greenspace Type | Size in Acres | Land Cost* | Location Cost | Design Cost | Construction Cost | Total Cost |
|--|---------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Community parks (2 @ 25 acres each) | 50.0 | 17,500,000 | 60,000 | 240,000 | 2,700,000 | 20,500,000 |
| Riverfront parks (3 @ 10 acres each) | 30.0 | 10,500,000 | 6,000 | 24,000 | 270,000 | 10,800,000 |
| Neighborhood parks (5 @ 15 acres each) | 75.0 | 26,250,000 | 90,000 | 360,000 | 4,050,000 | 30,750,000 |
| Greenways (5 miles, 50' wide) | 30.3 | 10,606,000 | 15,000 | 60,000 | 925,000 | 11,606,000 |
| Total | 185.3 | 64,856,000 | 171,000 | 684,000 | 7,945,000 | 73,656,000 |

* Assuming \$350,000 per acre (in 2008); actual cost per acre could be more or less, depending on many factors.

Table 1: Estimated costs for major capital expenditures

The plan adds 185 acres of new parks and riverfront or streamfront greenways, coming close to doubling the city’s current park acreage. It must be cautioned, however, that these are generalized estimates. The cost of land, for example, varies widely across the City, and the actual cost of park improvements will require detailed engineering and marketing analysis of individual park and greenway sites. For more detail on the cost estimates, see Appendix C.

The Green Plan proposes a substantial expansion of the Johns Creek park system. This expansion, though, will be placed over the 20 year time-horizon of the plan. Over the next five years it would be reasonable to add (1) one new, large community park, (2) two of the three riverfront parks, and (3) at least two miles of greenway, one mile along upper Johns Creek and one mile along the Chattahoochee, perhaps connecting the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area to the riverfront parks. This would cost approximately \$10.3 million for the community park, \$7.3 million for the riverfront parks, and \$4.7 million for the greenways, for a total five-year expenditure of \$22.4 million and an annual expenditure of \$4.5 million.