

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

~ Margaret Mead



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park

Cultural Legacy

The man-made or **Cultural Legacy** section of the inventory describes the historic and modern features of the built environment as they relate to recreation opportunities in the county.

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service (NPS) has developed guidelines for identifying, categorizing and preserving cultural features (landscapes, archeological sites and historic properties). A complete Cultural Landscape Inventory of the county is beyond the scope of this park comprehensive plan. However, these guidelines will be used to inventory the primary existing cultural features that are associated with recreation opportunities located here. Future actions, which are identified in this Plan, will identify cultural features associated with recreation and leisure activities in the county that are owned by Indy Parks.

PEOPLE

In recognizing the importance of the cultural history of Indianapolis and Marion County as a part of the recreational experience, a brief history of its people is included here.

Historic Communities

According to James J. Divita in the Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, “Indianapolis’ first residents were squatters along the banks of White River, Fall Creek, Pogues Run and Pleasant Run.” Among them were John McCormick and George Pogue. Later early residents of the area included Cheney Lively Briton, Alexander Ralston’s housekeeper and probably the first permanent African-American resident; Calvin Fletcher, and Nicholas McCarty. Appendices in Peopling Indiana show a total population in Marion County of 24,103 in 1850, with 1945 (8.09%) foreign born. The influx of immigrants peaked in 1910, when the census showed a foreign born population of 21,210 but still, 8.04% of the total population. Other appendices show that the primary countries’ of origin in 1869 were Canada, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland, and Wales.

Near its peak, in 1910, the largest numbers of foreign born originated in Austria, Canada, England, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Russia, and Turkey-Europe. In 1869 and 1910 the largest foreign born population originated in Germany with 69% and 42%, respectively, of the

immigrants. The influence of German immigrants is still evident today with the popular annual Oktoberfest held at the privately owned German Park (30 acre, 8600 South Meridian Street), and at the Athenaeum (401 East Michigan Street), the German cultural and social center. The Athenaeum originally housed a gymnasium, restaurant, bowling alleys, concert-hall ballroom and a wall-enclosed beer garden with concert pavilion. Today, the Athenaeum is still a social and cultural center that includes a YMCA location, a theater group and a restaurant.

In a similar time period, the Native-American population rose from 4 people in 1870 to 2,181 people in 2000. There were a reported 650 African-Americans in Marion County in 1850, and 207,964 in 2000. Indianapolis does not have as diverse of an ethnic heritage as other cities, such as Chicago and Detroit, however, its moniker of being the “Crossroads of America” speaks to the growth of contemporary communities here.

PLACES

Recreation places and the types of leisure activities have changed as the social and economic context of the world has evolved. Placing the development of parks in this context is a means to understand the correlation between park type, activities and needs and the growth of the city from a small settlement on the White River to its position as the 12th largest city in the United States. The following history of parks in Indianapolis documents the development of its park and recreation activities.

History of Parks & Recreation

The following text was written by Michelle D. Hale for The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.

A time sequence of specific park development was inserted by the planners to establish a history and context for park acquisition and development. Text located in brackets [] is written by the planners.

During the early planning and development of the city there seemed no need for planned public parks. Alexander Ralston’s original plan (1821) of the Mile Square did not include any designated public spaces. Early residents used pastures, cemeteries, and all undeveloped land about them as recreational areas.

As the Civil War approached and the city experienced congestion for the first time, however, citizen action in favor of public parks began slowly to build. In 1859 Timothy Fletcher donated a plot of land to the city with the provision that it be improved and used as a park. The City Council, believing Fletcher's gesture was a ruse to elevate the value of his adjacent land, refused his offer. Other private donations were also viewed with suspicion, and the council chose not to act upon them.

Using a different tactic, George Merritt was responsible for the first public park in Indianapolis. He repeatedly petitioned state and local authorities for donation of state land for use as a public park. Governor Oliver P. Morton offered the land now known as Military Park for use as a recreation area, and in 1864 the City Council took over protective control of Military Park as well as University Square and the Governor's Circle.

[Although the Civil War slowed the development of new, urban Romantic landscapes like that at Central Park (1857) in New York; the city still followed the trend for large urban parks designed for passive recreation. The example set by Central Park and emulated in park design throughout the United States provided a "variety of rural scenes" (open meadows, canopied areas, ponds, rock formations) and separate pedestrian and vehicular routes. As is typical for the Midwest, efforts for such development lagged behind coastal areas, but still moved forward. Midwestern landscape architects and architects, (e.g. Jens Jensen and Frank Lloyd Wright, etc.) eventually applied a Midwestern "hand" to park and residential design. These designers and their peers, emulated the Midwestern natural landscape, using stratified limestone, winding stream-like water features and native plant species in the planting beds. The following paragraph identifies the first examples in Indianapolis of the larger, strolling parks located around the periphery of the existing city.]

By the 1870s citizens became more vocal in their desire for public parks, and the City Council launched a tentative program for park purchases. In 1870 the city acquired Brookside Park from the heirs of Calvin Fletcher. Three years later a group of northside residents petitioned the council for a park along Fall Creek, with seven citizens donating 91.5 acres. The northside project failed to gain council support,

but similar efforts by a group of southside residents ultimately led to the purchase of Southern Park, later renamed Garfield Park. Again the council did not develop this property, and the city leased it to the Indiana Trotting Association between 1877 and 1880.

By the 1880s residents privately and in combination with the city [another typical Midwestern action] improved all these park lands. Merritt funded Military Park's original improvements and subsequently installed a playground. Neighbors of the University Square property voluntarily landscaped the park, and the Odd Fellows of Indiana erected a statue of Vice-President Schuyler Colfax there. Citizens planted trees in Garfield Park and carried other improvements funded by the council. Additionally, residents in the area of St. Clair Square created their own park, collecting subscriptions, laying walks, and planting trees. These 19th century public parks were intended for use as passive recreation areas where middle class and wealthy citizens could relax and enjoy nature.

[The time period commencing after the Civil War and ending at the turn of the century can best be described as a transitional period in landscape design. The early manipulation of the North American landscape was transformed in the 20th century into an American design entity that was based in social, political, technical, and environmental principles that elevated "design" to a new role. At the same time that social concerns were being strengthened by the revitalization of the country after the war, the increasing numbers of city dwellers were becoming less interested with the passive activities offered at the public parks and demanded more active recreation facilities.

The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia showed the acculturation of the United States as a world class country. Among various exhibits of industrial and commercial affluence; planting beds featured exotic and ornamental specimens planted in various geometric shapes. This departure from the naturalistic landscape approach was inspired by the writings of British horticulturist, J. C. Loudon, who advocated non-native species and "artistic" arrangements of plants. Color, variety of species and the visual impact of individual features were more important than the cohesiveness of a unified design. Planting designs using "bedding" plants were inspired by this exposition and remain popular today.

Cultural Legacy

According to Pregill & Volkman in Landscapes in History, “To Victorians, leisure represented the opportunity for educational and morally uplifting travel, social contacts and physical recreation.” The Romantic landscapes were “improved” with features that were less a part of a unified design statement and more an embellishment on the land. The public expected entertainment, variety and organized activities at the parks. Improvements included formal promenades, bandshells, conservatories, zoos, floral displays and amusement areas. Garfield Park (1873) was “improved “ using these principles.]

[During this same period, the two small parcels of land (Indianola-1896, McCarty Triangle-1897) were acquired for parks.]

[Near the end of the 19th century, the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, significantly changed the way a city was planned. The two cultural ideals of the 19th century—the physical improvement of the environment, and the moral improvement of society—coalesced, and were given an American identity called the City Beautiful Movement. The four components of the movement were (1) Civic Design, (2) Civic Art, (3) Civic Reform, and (4) Civic Improvement. Among the objectives of the movement were to establish hygienic urban conditions, create focal points in the streetscape to visually unify the city, and to treat open spaces as a critical urban need, emphasizing active rather than passive recreation.]

City officials immediately consulted nationally prominent park designers to guide park development. The Commercial Club initially hired Joseph Earnshaw, who recommended that sites be purchased and developed along White River and Fall Creek, connected by a chain of small parks and interconnecting parkways. Once established, the park board conducted a survey of possible park sites and commissioned John C. Olmsted, stepson of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. to develop a plan for future parks. The Olmsted plan, like the Earnshaw plan, recommended that local waterways be the focus of a system that would include small parks, boulevards, several larger local parks, and a large public reservation.

Mayor Thomas Taggart, who assumed office in 1895, was a strong supporter of parks and was instrumental in laying the foundations for the park system. At his

behest the council approved a limited version of the Olmsted Plan and authorized the purchase of over 1,100 acres of land, including much of what now is Riverside Park. [Brookside (1898), Spades (1898) and Highland Park (1898) were acquired at this time.]

Much of the land bought at this time had previously been used as unauthorized dumping grounds. The park department saw its job as ridding the city of unclean and unhealthy areas as well as providing beautiful recreation spaces. Park improvements included landscaping, building water features, and adding walking paths and benches, with the bulk of the work focusing on Riverside and Garfield parks. Parks also began to provide entertainment such as the 18-hole golf course, zoo, and steamboat cruises on White River at Riverside Park.

In 1905 the Board of Park Commissioners learned of George Kessler (1862-1923), who was both a city planner and a landscape architect, and his excellent work on the Kansas City park and boulevard system. Kessler was hired in 1908 as the Consulting Landscape Architect and secretary of the park board. He retained the landscape architect position until 1915. During his employment, Kessler proceeded to update many of the earlier plans and introduced ideas that quickly added to the beauty of Indianapolis. In 1909 he helped pass a new park law that allowed the department to levy taxes for park purchases and improvements. Other laws enacted in 1913 and 1919 increased the department’s self-sufficiency and taxing power. The legislation enabled the department to expand, acquire new property, and begin boulevard construction.

Despite the city’s official sponsorship, citizens continued to actively support park development during the early 1900s by donating property or funding park improvements. The bequests of Alfred Burdsal and George Rhodius in 1911 funded the purchase and development of Willard Park (1907), Burdsal Parkway, and Rhodius Park (1913). [Pleasant Run Parkway was established in 1912, Fall Creek Parkway in 1914, and White River Parkway in 1916. The establishment of Pleasant Run Parkway began the connection of Ellenberger Park (1911) to Garfield Park. South Grove Golf Course (1902), Irvington Circle (1904), Wilbur Shaw Hill (1908) were all a response to the need for variety in recreation activities. The Iron Skillet Restaurant (1908) overlooks the Coffin Golf Course

(1920).] Woolens Gardens (1909) was donated to the city by William Watson Woolens, who asked that the land be preserved as a bird sanctuary and botanical study area. John H. Holliday (1916) deeded his 80-acre estate to the city for use as a public park. Municipal Gardens (1915) was originally called Casino Gardens, a private canoe and yacht club, and then dance hall. It was renamed Municipal Gardens in 1927.]

[Another important topic that was beginning to be addressed in the leisure parks of the late 19th century was that of active recreation. Organized sports were becoming popular as a result of social concerns for the well-being of poorer urban children and the assimilation of non-English speaking immigrants. In other, more well-to-do neighborhoods, active recreational activities were in vogue, perhaps as a result of the national organization of such activities as football (1895) and gymnastics (1881). Hundreds of adults and children participated in sandlot activities. These activities and other active sports, required more space, equipment and constructed features and led to more “improvements” in the already existing parks.

The national trend for active recreational opportunities resulted in the development of playgrounds. With the encouragement of President Theodore Roosevelt, the great outdoorsmen, the Playground Association of America was organized in 1906. Large cities allocated money and land to develop these facilities. The city of Boston authorized the development of 20 playgrounds, and the city of Chicago allocated \$1,000,000 for the construction of small parks and pleasure grounds containing not more than 10 acres.]

[Early playgrounds were little more than a barren lot with play equipment (swings and teeter-totters, etc.) installed. Other small playgrounds were developed on school property if space permitted, offering school children year-round opportunities for supervised activities and exercise. As money and interest developed, later playgrounds were designed by landscape architects and typically displayed a better sense of organization, circulation, function and safety.

The “typical” playground, although officially called a park, offered a variety of activities for all ages of people. Norman T. Newton describes the playgrounds in Design on the Land in the following way: Age groups were given distinctive areas, appropriately furnished: play spaces for children, open-air exercise

areas for men and women, usually divided by sexes, courts for games, wading and swimming pools, and fieldhouses for indoor recreation. In each case the park... included a bit of greenery thought essential to a visual oasis in a neighborhood. Landscape features that were associated with playground design include a central pavilion or fieldhouse set among trees, a large open space for ball games, a perimeter path, space for exercise equipment, and perimeter trees to define the site. The number of park-school complexes located historically in Indianapolis is unclear at this time, but the following neighborhood parks were acquired in this time period. Watkins Park (1913), Lot K (1915) and Fall Creek and 30th Park (1910) were established as a node on the parkway, and other small land acquisitions included Noble Place (1912), Brightwood (1916), and Greer Park (1917).]

During World War I the city suspended most park activities and funding. In the 1920s the department resumed park purchases and expansion. The park system grew to include 24 parks and parkways, with land totaling approximately 1,900 acres.

During the 1920s, a comprehensive plan for park development was prepared by landscape architect Lawrence V. Sheridan. This plan incorporated the early work of Olmsted, Powers and Kessler into an even larger plan that encompassed the entire county. Sheridan’s plan was excellent for its time, however, it was not regularly updated by subsequent planners; with the result that population growth began to out-strip development.

The idea that public parks should provide active, as well as passive recreation originally surfaced before WWII, but recreational programming did not become a high priority until later. As early as 1910 the park board joined with public school and library officials to provide recreational programs, gradually accepting more of this responsibility. In 1919 a new park law transferred the recreation division from the City’s health department to the public parks department, which began constructing a system of playgrounds, pools, and community recreational centers in parks. Parks soon provided a variety of year round athletic programming, classes, clubs, and special events. The centers also provided bathing facilities, day nurseries, dental clinics, and served as a neighborhood headquarters for welfare agencies.

Cultural Legacy

[Recreation and sports centers that were opened at this time included Garfield (1922), Emhardt Stadium (1923), and Brookside (1928). Golf courses included Pleasant Run (1922), Douglass (1926), and Sarah Shank (1928). Specialty parks included Miniature Park (1923), and the Watson Road Bird Preserve (1925).

The influence of the Playground Association and the increased interest in active recreation is evidenced by the number of neighborhood parks that were established in the 1920s. A total of 15 neighborhood parks were built and included the following:

J. T. V. Hill	(1921)	Alice Carter Place	(1922)
Haughville	(1922)	Kelly	(1922)
Frank Young	(1922)	Babe Denny	(1923)
Hawthorne	(1923)	Porter Playfield	(1924)
Bertha Ross	(1925)	Denver	(1925)
John Ed	(1925)		
Centennial & Groff	(1926)		
Broadway & 61 st	(1928)		
Lentz	(1928)		
Arsenal	(1929)		

At the same time that small playgrounds were being developed in neighborhoods to realize the Playground Association's goal of "a playground for every child, within one-half mile of its home," larger parks with a variety of amenities were also being developed. These parks, because of their acreage, offered a variety of recreational opportunities that could not be offered in smaller playgrounds. Larger community parks that were acquired at this time were Christian Park (1921) and Washington Park (1923-The zoo was not built until 1964).]

During the 1930s the system of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, boulevards, and recreation areas in Indianapolis grew despite the Great Depression. The department, however, began to charge fees for some of its operations, such as the golf courses, swimming pools, and community houses, to make them self-sustaining. At the same time volunteers from women's groups, civic organizations, and WPA and CWA workers augmented the parks' work force. Park activities focused on city beautification projects and year-round recreational activities: completing Lake Sullivan, constructing wading pools, staffing summer playgrounds, landscaping the boulevards and public

properties, and sponsoring dances. Park community houses became popular, low-cost centers of activity during the 1930s, housing many clubs and classes as well as providing space for other groups.

[The length of the following list of properties acquired in the 1930s supports evidence that the expansion of the parks was greater in the 1920s, before the Great Depression, and improvements in existing parks were more popular in the 1930s. Christian Park Recreation Center was opened in 1932, and only 4 neighborhood parks were acquired (Acorn (1930), Reverend Mozel Sanders (1931), Bethel Park (1935) and Forest Manor (1937).]

Despite the expansion of park facilities and programs, a Charity Organization Society study in 1937 found only 20 percent of public park acreage was within a two-mile radius of half of the residential population. The park department's major strategies for land acquisition had been to receive donations or purchase cheap land on the outskirts of town, the intended policy of buying small parcels of land within walking distance of all residents throughout the city remained largely unimplemented by the 1940s. [This is evidenced by the addition of only one neighborhood park before the war—Ross-Claypool (1940).]

The World War II years added temporary new responsibilities for the public parks—running canteens and clubs for servicemen and providing land for postwar veteran and emergency housing.

[The end of World War II brought the Baby Boom to the United States. The increased population brought a need for more single-family houses (the American Dream), created suburbs, and demanded the expansion of schools and school playgrounds and parks to satisfy the need of the public. The acquisition of more parkland was not the immediate need, however, as evidenced by the few parks that were acquired in the late 1940s. Broad Ripple Park, the former amusement park, and Marott Park were both donated in 1945. Three neighborhood parks—Barton (1946-gift), Tarkington (1945) and Centennial & 20th (1946-gift)—were acquired. Another donation to the park department was the Sarge Johnson Boxing Center (1945).]

After the war and into the 1950s however, the park

department again turned its attention to recreation and city beautification. The playground system expanded, and parks continued to sponsor a growing number of clubs, classes, and “teen canteens.” Although the parks had long hosted festivals, the 1950s saw the increase of music festivals, carnivals, and dances, many of which were revenue-producing projects.

By the late 1940s the city renewed its efforts to beautify and restore its parks. Much of the park property and existing facilities had not had significant improvements made to them in at least 20 years, and large bond issues in the early 1950s helped pay for much of the renovation.

Athletics became increasingly important after the 1940s and the parks provided sites for many boxing, basketball, and baseball leagues and tournaments, including some of national significance; ...one of

ening and prompted important changes in the county's park management. Prior to 1963, all public parks were under the jurisdiction of one or another of the county's municipalities, the majority being found in Indianapolis. City and county officials recognized the metropolitan character of the county and the need to provide park facilities to those residents living outside of incorporated municipalities, as no suitable areas of sufficient size remained within the corporate boundaries.

This precipitated the creation, in 1963, of the Metropolitan Board of Park Commissioners. It replaced the City Board of Park Commissioners and extended jurisdiction throughout the county with the exception of the towns of Speedway, Lawrence, Beech Grove and Southport.

Rising rates of suburbanization and competition with

In the end, we conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.
– Baba Dioum

which was the 1958 AAU national championship swimming meet at Broad Ripple Park. Golfing also became a high priority during these years, with the parks department hiring golf pros to assist patrons and oversee courses.

[Parks that were acquired during the 1950s were primarily smaller neighborhood and mini-parks. The neighborhood parks were:

Moreland	(1953)	Virginia Lee O'Brien	(1956)
Ridenour	(1956)	Bowman	(1959)
Sandorf	(1959)		

Mini-parks:

DeQuincy	(1953)	Windsor Village	(1953)
Doris Cowherd	(1956)	Beville	(1959)
Canterbury	(1959)		

Northwestway Park, a community park, was acquired in 1957, as a beginning response to the city moving further from downtown.]

The population boom, which occurred following World War II, found the open space situation wors-

private sources of recreation during the 1960s forced park officials to change the focus of public parks. Downtown properties increasingly received less attention as the park department devoted resources to parks nearer the suburbs and purchased park land in suburban townships. Financed by Indianapolis and Marion County taxes, the park department purchased Northeastway (now Sahn Park-1961), Southeastway (1961), [Southwestway (1961)] and Eagle Creek Park (1962).

[The 1960s experienced the acquisition of large tracts of land near the county perimeters. Two community parks were acquired-Gustafson (1961) and Perry (1961). Golf courses were constructed at Sahn (1964), Thatcher (1967), and Southwestway (1968); swimming pools were installed at Sahn (1962), Douglass (1968), and Gustafson (1968); and recreation and special leisure facilities-Post Road (1960), Bush Stadium (1967), and the Woodruff Place Esplanades (1962) were acquired. Neighborhood parks were also important acquisitions-11 parks were acquired during this time period:

Cultural Legacy

Faculty Drive	(1961)	Rhodius	(1971)
Martin Luther King	(1961)	Martin Luther King	(1972)
Bellamy	(1962)	Perry	(1972)
Gardner	(1962)	Thatcher	(1972)
Gateway West	(1963)	Bethel	(1973)
Foxhill Manor	(1964)	Ellenberger	(1973)
Carson	(1965)	Brookside	(1978)
Southside	(1966)	Willard	(1978)
Dubarry	(1967)	Garfield	(1979)
Olin	(1967)		
Roselawn	(1968)		
Pride mini-park	(1968)]		

Not all downtown efforts were forsaken, however, the department began a perennial effort at park promotion by encouraging neighborhoods, clubs, and civic groups to “adopt” and help maintain a park.

Changes continued during the 1970s. A unified government (UNIGOV) expanded the Indianapolis service boundaries to include all of Marion County and reorganized the Department of Parks and Recreation. Citizen interest in parks fell as suburbanization and park vandalism increased. Public parks also competed for space and resources with urban expansion and renewal efforts. The parks department responded by experimenting with new programs and projects. Using millions of dollars from federal grants and local bond issues, it constructed a system of small, special use parks known as “tot lot” and “vest pocket” parks along highways, refurbished deteriorating facilities, built new facilities, expanded recreational programs, and made extensive improvements to Eagle Creek Park, which opened in 1974. The parks department also renamed many central city parks after notable local and national African-Americans, reflecting the changing nature of park visitors.

[The following lists illustrate the expansion of the parks in the 1970s:

Recreation Centers:

Southeastway	(1972)	Thatcher	(1976)
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Golf Courses:

Eagle Creek	(1975)	Smock	(1975)
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Swimming Pools:

Riverside	(1970)		
Wes Montgomery	(1971)		

Community Parks:

Wes Montgomery	(1970)		
Franklin/Edgewood	(1970)		
Paul Ruster	(1970)		
German Church & 30 th	(1971)		
Pedigo Farms	(1971, Raymond Park)		
Krannert	(1972)		
Oxford Terrace	(1972, Oscar Charleston)		
Thatcher	(1973)		
Skiles Test	(1974)		

Neighborhood Parks:

Beckwith	(1970)	Franklin & 16 th	(1971)
Smock	(1970)	Juan Solomon	(1971)
Tibbs & 21 st	(1971)	Robey	(1972)
Stout Field	(1974)		

Tot lots (Mini-parks):

Stringtown	(1970)		
Christina Oaks	(1971)		
Andrew Ramsey	(1971)		
Clayton & LaSalle	(1972)		
Ringgold	(1973)		
Sexson	(1973)		
Talbot & 29 th	(1973)		
Hot Shot Tot Lot	(1975)]		

While these efforts resulted in notable success, such as the institution of the Indianapolis/Scarborough Peace games, a general lack of park usage, inadequate maintenance, and vandalism became serious problems, especially for central city parks. . . . Parks on the outer edges of the city, especially Eagle Creek Park, and the golf courses, however, offered first rate facilities and programs.

A new parks administration began a greater focus on amateur sports during the 1980s, which inspired a resurgence in park usage and image. The department, in an effort to supply a unique recreation need to the

community, began to phase out smaller central city parks in favor of large natural-setting parks and linear parks equipped with fitness and bike paths. Eagle Creek Park became the showcase of the park system during the 1980s, offering a lake, nature trails, and many recreation facilities. Large bond issues funded amateur sports facilities, such as the Lake Sullivan Sports Complex and the Major Taylor Velodrome, which along with the eleven golf courses became venues for special events as well as local and national competitions. The Indianapolis Zoo also relocated from Washington Park in 1986 to the new White River State Park. [The shift in priorities is evidenced by the shortness of the following list of acquisitions:

Special Leisure Facilities:

Indianapolis Soccer & Sports Center (1984)
Little League Regional Center (1989)

Neighborhood Parks:

Kessler & Illinois (1982, Friedman Park)
Eagle Highland (1989)
Linwood & Shelbyville (1989, Tolin-Akeman)

Mini Parks:

Highway Parcel # 15 (1980)
Finch (1988)]

As of the early 1990s, the Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation continued to fight vandalism and public apathy. While the department offered a wide variety of traditional recreational and nature programs, many were underused due to competition

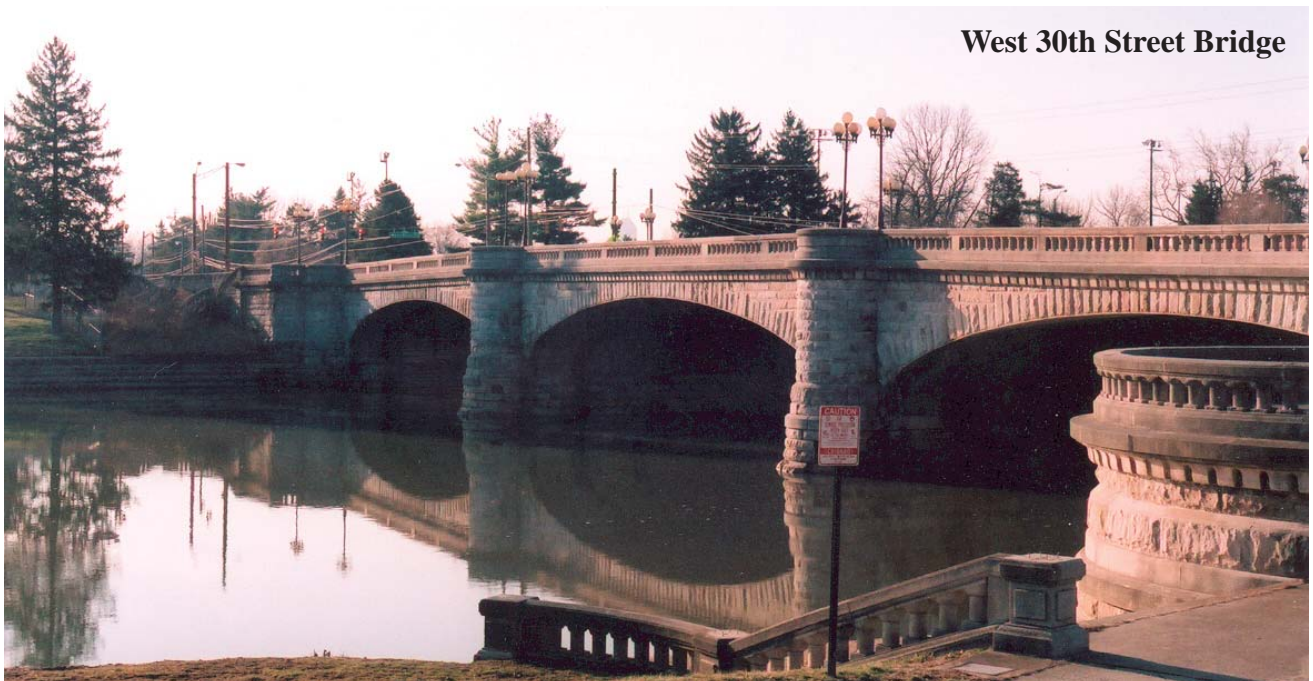
from private and commercial providers of recreational facilities.

The park system of the early 1990s claimed 73 properties, 16 community centers, 13 pools, and 12 golf courses.

[Park acquisitions in the 1990s include:

Whispering Hills Golf Course (1990)
Post Road Community Park (1990)
Glenn's Valley Park (1992)
Juan Solomon Park Addition (1995)
WISH Park (1995)
Thompson Park (1999)
Golc Soccer Fields (1999)

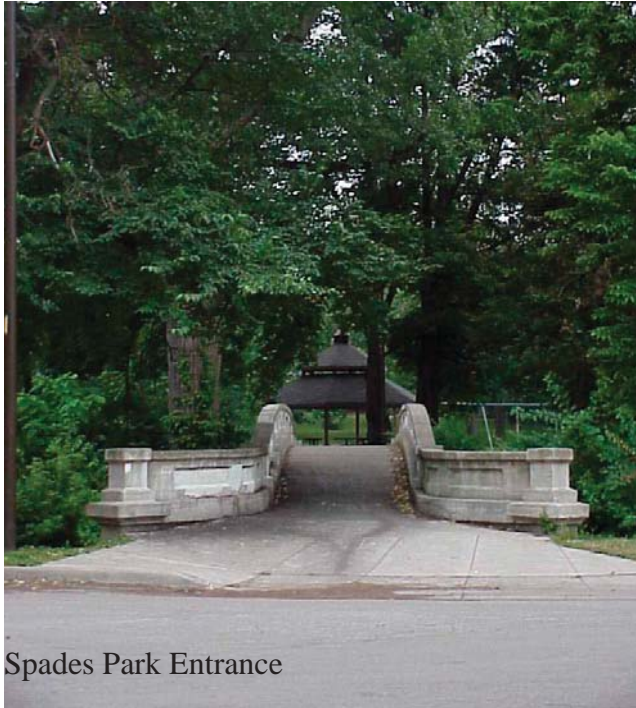
Beginning in the mid 1990's an emphasis has been placed on providing recreation lands to the public through the use of Recreation and Conservation Easements or long term leases. These low cost partnerships have allowed the additions of Town Run Trail Park, The Frank and Judy O'Bannon Soccer Fields and the Golc Soccer Fields. Another avenue for acquiring parkland has been advocacy for donations from land developers. As a part of re-zoning negotiations, acreage has been donated for neighborhood parks as well as floodplain natural areas. Some have included playground and trail improvements or the funds to construct amenities. Examples include Thompson Park, Cloverleaf Conservation Area, the Little Buck Creek Greenway and Retherford Park.



West 30th Street Bridge

Cultural Legacy

In the early 2000's, the Department partnered with the Indianapolis Parks Foundation, local donors and worked to secure grant funds to purchase 187 acres adjacent to Southwestway Park. The Cottonwood Lakes and Mann Property additions make Southwestway Park the second largest park in Marion County at 586 acres including Winding River Golf Course. In 2003 the Department partnered with the Department of Public Works to open 43 acres of the Pogues Run Detention Basin to the public for recreational use.



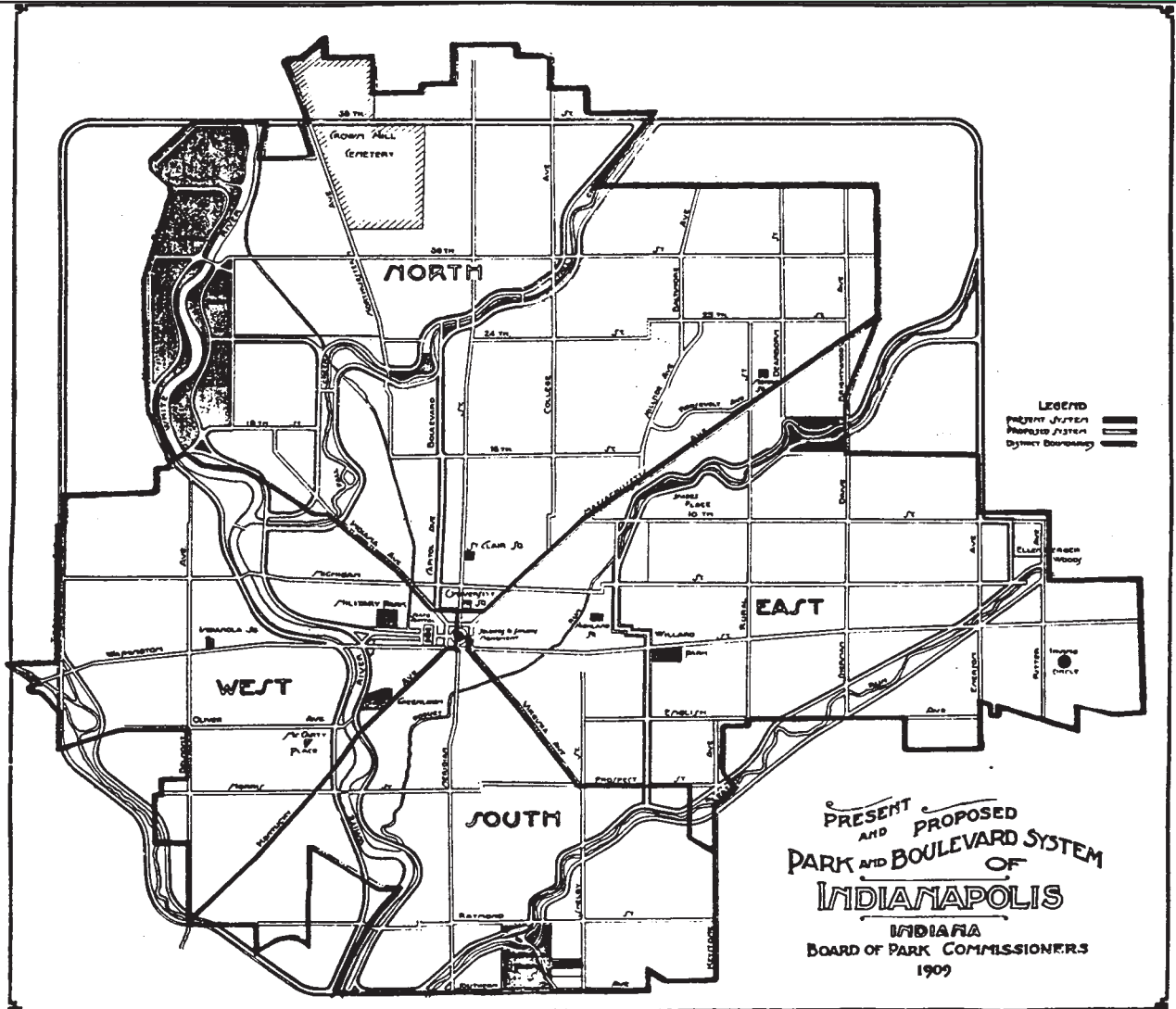
Spades Park Entrance

The 1.5 miles of trail offer an opportunity for exercise and offer a venue for future art installations. Through a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Indy Parks has embarked on a significant expansion of its programmed facilities in recent years. New family recreation centers at Washington Park and Bethel Park, as well as additions at Christian Park, Municipal Gardens and Rhodius Parks will greatly expand the Departments ability to offer low cost recreation programs in additional City neighborhoods. The renovation of the Indy Parks (Garfield) Arts Center will provide a center of focus for County-wide visual, performing and literary arts programs. The new Eagle Creek Park Earth Discovery Center will allow for tremendous expansion of environmental education. The extension of the Monon Trail from Fall Creek south to 10th Street has finally connected much of Indianapolis' north side to downtown.

Grassy Creek Park	(2000)
Town Run Trail Park	(2000)
Little Buck Greenway	(2001)
Mann Property Addition	(2002)
Frank and Judy O'Bannon Soccer Fields	(2003)
Cottonwood Lakes Addition	(2003)
Basswood Park	(2003)
George E. Kessler Park	(2003)
Pogues Run Basin	(2003)

Beginning in 2004, the Department received 185 of the 384 acres acquired during this period via donations from numerous sources. During this time the department installed 1.5 miles of Fall Creek Greenway (Kessler to Skiles Test Nature Park) and added its third Canine Companion Zone at Paul Ruster Park. In 2007, the Department was the primary host for National Recreation and Park Association's National Exposition and Congress that included over 10,000 delegates from park systems all over the world. New Family and Nature Centers were completed or started at Eagle Creek's Earth Discovery Center and Windsor Village Park and new club houses were finished at Smock and Thatcher Golf Courses.

Griffin Woods Park	(2004)
Riverwood Park	(2004)
Retherford Park	(2004)
Stamm Park	(2004)
Franklin & 38th Park	(2004)
Edgewood & 21st Park	(2004)
Peace Park	(2004)
Emhardt Park	(2004)
Acton Park	(2004)
Blickman Trail	(2004)
Wight Fields	(2004)
Grassy Creek Regional Park	(2006)
Broad Ripple Canoe Launch	(2006)
Dollar Hide Creek Park	(2006)
Colorado & 29th Park	(2006)
Hanover Park North Park	(2006)
Copper Grove Park	(2007)
Red Maple Park	(2007)
Kitley & Troy Park	(2007)



George Kessler

THE KESSLER LEGACY

As mentioned in the History of Indianapolis Parks, George E. Kessler was hired in 1909 to assist with planning the continued growth of the City. The following is an excerpt from the 2003 nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the system Kessler designed.

Statement of Significance

The Indianapolis Park and Boulevard Plan is significant under Criterion A because it is associated with broad patterns of national, regional and local history, and because it is a response to the early 20th century trend to regulate growth in cities. It is also significant under Criterion C because it is the work of George Edward Kessler, a master in landscape architecture, and because it embodies the distinctive design characteristics of a master as a response to urban conditions in the early 20th century.

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN of PARK DEVELOPMENT for

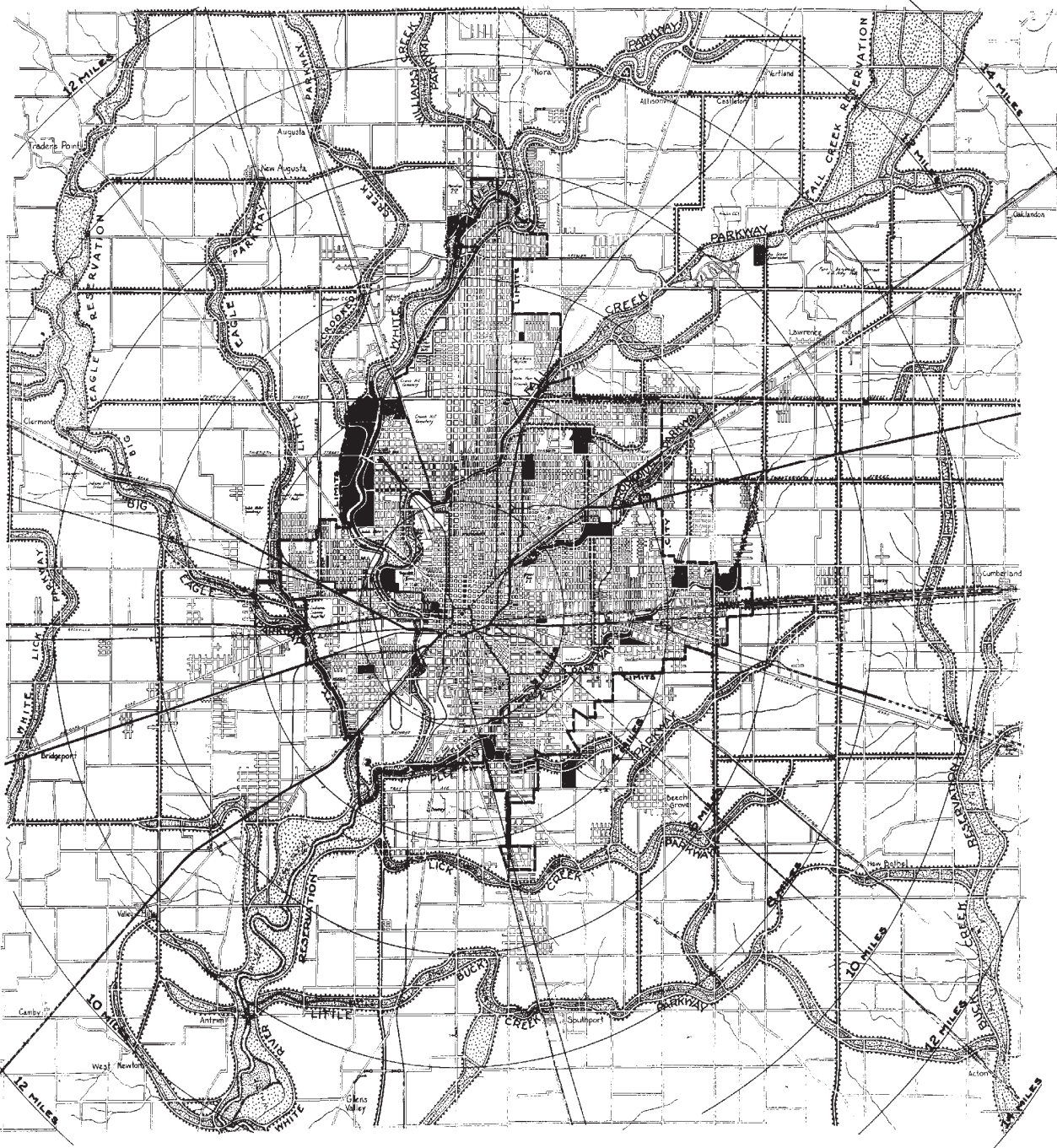
INDIANAPOLIS AND MARION COUNTY

1928

Prepared for
BOARD of PARK COMMISSIONERS
INDIANAPOLIS
CHARLES A. BOCKWALTER, President
ENSLEY W. JOHNSON
ALBERT W. MAGUIRE
FRANK R. HANLY
R. WALTER JARVIS, Supr.
E. C. LINGENFELTER, Engr.
By
LAWRENCE V. SHERIDAN
Landscape Architect

KEY	
EXISTING PARKS and PARKWAYS	
PROPOSED PARKS and PARKWAYS	
EXISTING BOULEVARDS	
PROPOSED BOULEVARDS	
EXISTING EXCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS	
SEMI-PUBLIC OPEN SPACES	

Graphic Scale
0 1 2 Miles



ON ACCOUNT of the SMALL SCALE of the DRAWING
PARKWAY WIDTHS ARE IN MANY CASES EXAGGERATED
ALL PROPOSED PARKS AND PARKWAYS OUTSIDE
OF CITY LIMITS FOR COUNTY ACQUIREMENT

Historical Context

At the turn of the century, the United States was changing from a rural agricultural based country to an industrial world power. This transition brought several challenges, one of which was the articulation of a national identity that would distinguish the United States as a world-class country. Other challenges were the health and welfare of the growing urban populations of unskilled workers and immigrants who moved to the cities for jobs in factories; and the growing concern for the conservation of the country's natural resources, whose limits were beginning to be realized. In this era of transition, the Midwest, Indiana, and Indianapolis were not exempt from these challenges. Indianapolis as the State Capitol, as the largest city in the state, and as a growing urban center located on the east-west and north-south crossroads of America, led the state in addressing these challenges. The nominated Park and Boulevard Plan is the city's response. The Indianapolis Park and Boulevard Plan of the early 20th Century, is significant as a city plan whose foundation was the existing natural features of the area, and whose visionary design, by a nationally known landscape architect, transformed open space, vegetation, water, and roadways into multifunctional resources designed to improve the quality of life of the citizens. The plan merges art and engineering into a comprehensive plan that is still being used today.

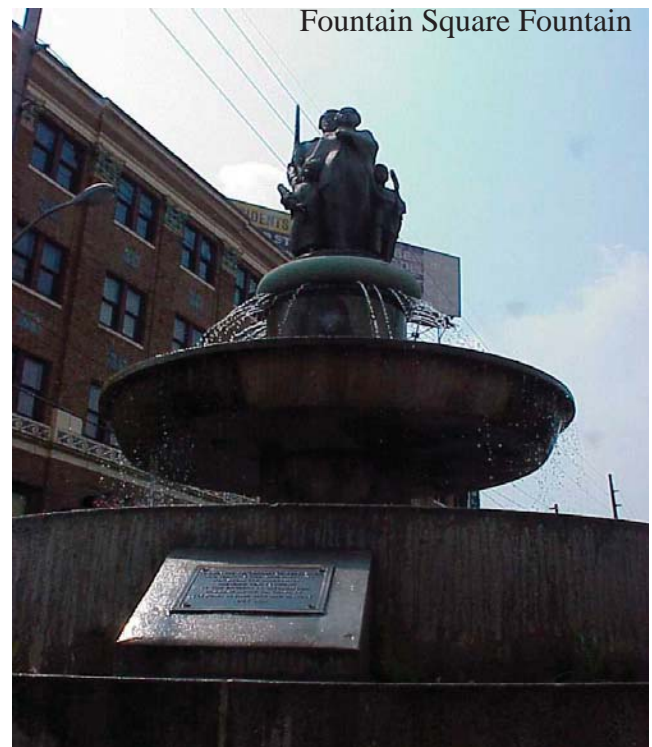
Plan Development

The Indianapolis Park and Boulevard Plan resulted from a combination of early park planning efforts (1873-1907), the visionary system plan of nationally known Landscape Architect George Kessler (1908-1923), and the later improvements that continued his plan or expanded it to the county limits (1924-fifty years ago). It unites individual parks and curvilinear green spaces with an array of east-west and north-south boulevards to link the city in a network of transportation and recreation corridors that also function to guide urban growth, conserve the natural environment, limit water pollution, and provide flood control. Overall, this urban plan improves the quality of life of its residents, fosters economic growth, equates Indianapolis with other world-class cities, and preserves the natural environment for sustained, long-term growth and development of the city and region.

A Master of Landscape Architecture

The visionary system combined components of parks, parkways and boulevards into the first comprehensive urban plan for Indianapolis. Landscape Architect George E. Kessler designed the master plan in 1909, with some alterations in the following years. Kessler unexpectedly died in 1923, and landscape architect, Lawrence Sheridan, expanded the plan to the county limits. The plan is one of eighteen park and boulevard plans that Kessler designed for cities across the United States. It is also one of two-hundred thirty known projects attributed to his one-man office. It is the first Kessler park and boulevard system in Indiana and was subsequently followed by plans for South Bend, Fort Wayne and Terre Haute, Indiana. Kessler was a part of the second generation of landscape architects practicing in the United States, following the early pioneers of the profession; Frederick Law Olmsted, H. W. S. Cleveland and Jacob Weidenman. His design work was not a response to the City Beautiful Movement, but rather his own interpretation of the importance of melding classic design and formality with natural resources to improve the quality of life of his constituents.

The plan is significant as a planned urban system, because it uses the classical German city planning tenets to organize the circulation system to accom-



moderate all forms of transportation, from the central downtown business core of the city to the outlying regions, thus laying the foundation for future growth in the city. The conservation of the natural resources of the city and the health of the constituents were the main priorities and the basis of the system. The plan uses engineered structures, such as bridges, seawalls, dams and levees to control flooding, which in turn contributed to the health of both the residents and the environment. The health of the citizens was also a component of the plan, where open space, natural vegetation, playgrounds, playfields, wading pools, and strolling paths provided recreation and social opportunities.

To Germans, city planning was a “fine art and a technical science,”¹ planned with deliberate and conscious determination. Kessler skillfully manipulated the resources to serve many functions at one time. Open spaces are more than just green; roads are more than automobile thoroughfares; and water is more than a natural feature. In so doing, the engineered function of a resource was always overlain with an artful hand that used quality of life in human context as the key design criteria.

Kessler is often overshadowed by the work of the Olmstedes, however his talent and designed plans are located throughout the country. An example of his talent is the park and boulevard system located in Indianapolis. The parkways, more than any other property type in this nomination, are a complete synthesis of engineering and art. They merged the City Beautiful tenets of design with the City Practical, where function and beauty were equally considered. Intricate Beaux Arts details on built structures, added art to functionality, solidifying the unity between classic design and modern technology within the natural setting of Indianapolis.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

National Park Service Criterion A:

- A: The plan is significant in Community planning and development because it is a physical manifestation of the American ideal.
- A: The plan is significant in Community planning and development because it is the first comprehensive urban plan for Indianapolis.
- A: The plan is significant in Conservation because it is an example of a turn of the century

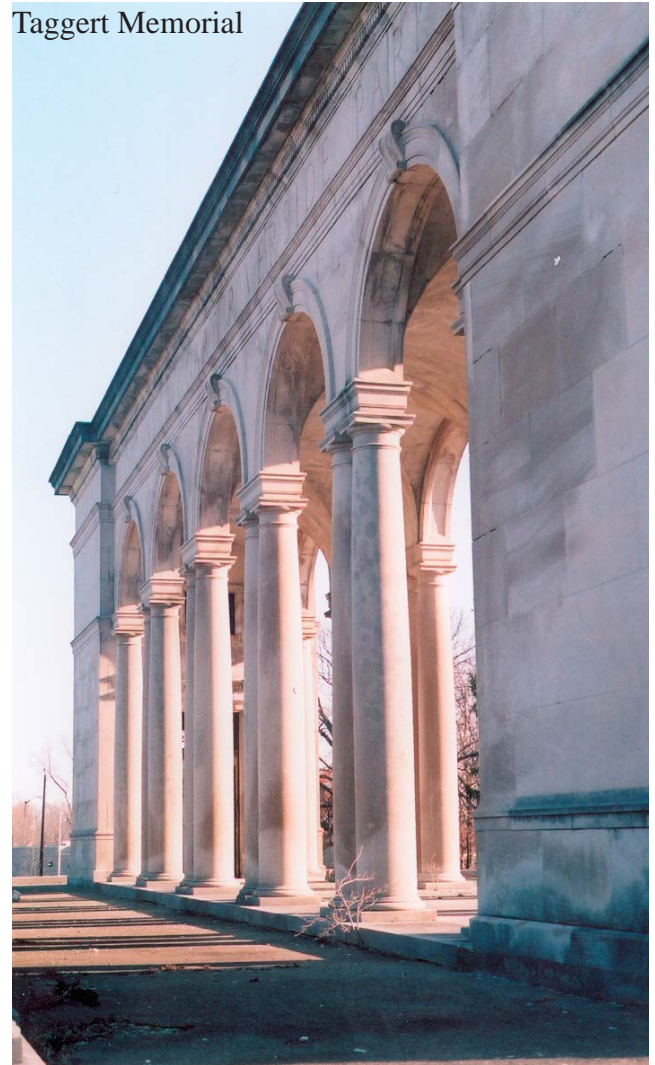
response to a trend to protect the natural environment.

- A: The plan is significant in Health/medicine and Social History because it is an example of a response to a trend for government to provide public recreation facilities, open space, and clean water as a means to improving the health of the citizens.

National Park Service Criterion C:

- C: The plan is significant in Community planning and development because it is an example of comprehensive German town planning.
- C: The plan is significant in Transportation because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of system (German).
- C: The plan is significant in Engineering because it illustrates turn of the century flood control measures, and construction techniques (bridges, road layout).

Taggart Memorial



Cultural Legacy

- C: The plan is significant in Entertainment/recreation because it is an example of recreation planning at the turn of century.
- C: The plan is significant in Landscape Architecture because it is the work of a master.
- C: The plan is significant in Landscape Architecture because it has high artistic value.

(Footnotes)

¹ The German Way of Making Better Cities, Sylvester Baxter, *Atlantic Monthly*, 104, July 1909: 72-95" As can be learned from the above documentation, Indianapolis Department of Parks is the steward of a cultural treasure. Few single nominations in the nation have encompassed so many acres (3400+), arrayed over such a large expanse of a City. The system as defined by the National park Service includes parks, boulevards and parways as well as contributing features such as bridges, landscapes and other built features.

The placement of this system on the National Register in 2003 raised the profile of this resource in the eyes of City, State and National leaders, Department staff and the public. The question leaders face now regards how to celebrate the resource we have; through continuing and improving its maintenance, restoring where appropriate its intended character and design and educating the public about the designed landscape that we live in and benefit from daily.

CONNECTIONS

History of the Connections

The [Encyclopedia of Indianapolis](#) provides a comprehensive overview of transportation in Marion County, including information on the development of the railroad, the Interurban system, riverine and vehicular transportation. The focus of this history is related to the park system and concerns the development of the Parkway and Boulevard System. The following text is taken from the [Encyclopedia of Indianapolis](#) and was written by Glory-June Greif. Text written by the park planners is located in brackets [].

In part a response to the "City Beautiful" ideal popularized by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Indianapolis initiated a number of expansions and improvements in its city parks around the turn of the 20th century. With the idea of reserved

greenspace came the notion of attractive thoroughfares, usually winding alongside streams, connecting various points within the town. The thoroughfares were intended to be largely recreational, providing pleasant drives around the city with occasional benches and suitable picnic spots provided.

The prospect of a boulevard following Fall Creek from Capitol Avenue to the then-new Indiana State Fairgrounds on Maple Road (38th Street) arose as early as 1901 in discussions of the Indianapolis Board of Park Commissioners, itself only in its seventh year. By 1906 Fall Creek Boulevard was completed between Capitol and Central Avenue, as was most of a section of Pleasant Run Boulevard (later Parkway) between Raymond and Beecher streets. Other boulevards in progress were along the levee on the east bank of White River north of Michigan Street, and another northward through Riverside Park from the stone dam (still extant), near where the Emrichsville Bridge had recently been built, to 30th Street. From the beginning Indianapolis planned parks for its boulevards. City engineers did not lose sight of this link in succeeding decades, thereby seeking and ultimately achieving, to a degree, a true system of wide parkways with broader intermittent expanses like green beads on a cord.

The original park-boulevard plan was the work of George Kessler, a landscape architect hired by the park board. . . . The construction of Fort Benjamin Harrison in 1906 brought a proposal from the federal government to build a boulevard connecting the army post with the city. The park board suggested it could easily be an extension of Fall Creek Boulevard. Ultimately, the plan came to fruition in the 1930s, when workers of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Works Progress Administration fulfilled the dreams of the early park planner and completed lengthy stretches of Fall Creek Parkway, Pleasant Run Parkway, Riverside Parkway, and Kessler Boulevard.

[The following map illustrates Kessler's Parkway and Boulevard System. Note that in addition to the Parkways along Pleasant Run, Pogue's Run, Fall Creek, White River, and Eagle Creek; north-south and east-west connections include 38th Street, Emerson, Keystone and Capitol Avenues, Meridian Street, and Kessler Boulevard, North Drive.]

Indianapolis Greenways

[Today's Indianapolis Greenway system is based on a nearly 100-year old plan by renowned landscape architect, George Kessler. Kessler's 1909 Park and Boulevard Plan for Indianapolis made specific plans for a boulevard and trail system along Indianapolis' waterways. Determined by the physical features of the city, Kessler proposed a chain of continuous parks that would extend to every neighborhood of the city. By acquiring open spaces adjacent to boulevards, the city could create a series of small neighborhood parks and playgrounds for the entire community. Another key aspect of Kessler's plan was the preservation of low-lying areas near streams and rivers to protect natural floodways. Kessler argued for reserving land along the city's rivers and streams for parks and using tree-lined boulevards to connect the parks. The result of this plan would be a parkway system that would greatly benefit the city.

In 1928, Lawrence V. Sheridan, a landscape architect for the City of Indianapolis, expanded the Kessler Plan to the county boundary and included tributaries like Little Buck Creek, Little Eagle Creek and Lick Creek into the plan, which were also included in the 1982 Indianapolis Parkway System Plan. Today, Kessler's and Sheridan's legacy of identifying and preserving linear parcels of parkland for pathways and open space is being recognized as enhancing the quality of life in Indianapolis.

Greenway Development Board

In 1990, the Indianapolis City-County Council created the White River Greenway Task Force. The council charged the task force with "the mission of researching governmental jurisdictions affecting the river; considering carefully the river's importance in such areas as recreation, homes, general aesthetics, wildlife, trees, flora, businesses, drainage, agriculture, bridges, the edges of the river and quarries; and concluding with a practical, imaginative, and consensus plan for the future improvement of White River and its banks for the benefit of the people of this city."

A year later, the council established the task force as a permanent committee and made it responsible for "implementing the strategic plan for the White River linear park/greenway corridor and [its] operation and maintenance." In 1991, the Mayor and City-County

Council created the White River Greenway Development Board by special resolution to continue these efforts. The board, in conjunction with the White River Greenway Foundation, Inc. (WRGFI) (a not-for-profit funding source), organized events such as a riverbank clean-up project which removed over 700 tons of trash, involved thousands of volunteers and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the greenway cause. In January 1994, the board recommended it be reconstituted as the Indianapolis Metropolitan Greenways Commission to reflect the regional interest in the greenway movement and to recommend and support the implementation of the 1994 Indianapolis Greenways Plan. In 1995 this commission evolved further when the Indianapolis City-County Council, by general ordinance, established the Indianapolis Greenways Development Committee. The designated purpose of the Committee is to advise the Board of the Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation and to encourage use, preservation and improvement of the Indianapolis Greenways with regard to present and future operations, development, recreation and its natural environment.

Indianapolis Greenways Mission:

- Provide opportunities for recreation and fitness trail activities.
- Protect important wildlife habitat and promote the conservation of open space, forests and wetland areas.
- Link Indianapolis neighborhoods with each other and with parks and other community assets.
- Educate the public about the importance of the natural environment of the Greenways System.
- Become an economic asset to the community by promoting economic development and by making Indianapolis a desirable place where new businesses can locate.
- Redevelop and manage the Marion County Bicycle Routes as part of the Indianapolis Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which will connect the Greenways and Parks System to communities within the Regional Plan

Although the Kessler plan is nearly 100 years old, the first modern bike and pedestrian trail was constructed in 1995 along a portion of Fall Creek and the system has grown to 40.7 miles with over 150 miles planned. The existing 40.7-mile system consists of an old rail

Cultural Legacy

corridor, a historic 170-year-old canal, and numerous trails following some of the rivers and streams throughout the county. The Indianapolis Greenways system is intended to interconnect parks, neighborhoods, schools, libraries, and other areas of interest within Marion County.

This linear park system has the potential to reach more communities acre for acre than the entire neighborhood and community parks system combined. Greenways also provide self-directed recreation, such as hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling and in-line skating. Providing a multitude of activities, greenways also integrate communities, including amenities offered within the Indy Park System.

Greenway Trail construction by year:

1995

Fall Creek Greenway (Keystone to 56th Street)

1996

Monon Rail-Trail (86th Street to Broad Ripple Ave.)

1997

Fall Creek Greenway (Central to Delaware Street)
Central Canal Towpath(52nd Street to College Avenue)
White River Greenway (16th to 38th Street)
Monon Rail-Trail (86th to 98th Street)

1998

Monon Rail-Trail (Broad Ripple Ave to Fall Creek)
Pleasant Run Greenway(Garfield to Ellenberger Park)
Central Canal (52nd to 30th Street)

1999

White River Greenway (16th to 10th Street)

2001

Little Buck Creek (Sonesta and Buck Creek Village)

2002

Fall Creek Greenway(Delaware to Meridian Street)

2003

Fall Creek Greenway(Monon to Keystone Avenue)
Monon Rail-Trail(Fall Creek to 10th Street)
Little Buck Creek (Bayberry Village)
Eagle Creek Greenway (Kentucky Ave. to White River)]

2004

Fall Creek Greenway (Stadium Drive to White River Greenway)
Pogues Run (Sherman Drive to Dequincy Avenue loop trail)

2005

Eagle Creek Greenway (56th Street to 46th Street)
Pike Connectivity Plan (Georgetown Road to Eagle Creek Park---DPW multi-modal path)

2007

Fall Creek Greenway
(56th Street to Skiles Test Park)
Fall Creek Greenway (Geist Dam Trail)

2008

Fall Creek Greenway (Pennsylvania Street to Meridian Street-reconfiguration)

Township Connectivity Plans

[In an effort to continue the successes of the Indy Parks Greenways development, planning staff have undertaken to draft Connectivity Plans for two of Marion County's 9 townships to date (Pike and Franklin). These plans are a continuation of the Greenways system, at a finer scale. While the Greenways Master Plan focuses on 16 corridors, the Connectivity Plans include lesser connections within the community.

Using a combination of Department of Metropolitan Development and Department of Public Works planned roadwork, existing and planned greenways, high tension line corridors, rail corridors and street-side projects, these plans knit communities together. Destinations include residential areas, parks, schools, commercial centers, libraries, post offices and other institutions.

By focusing on one Township at a time, and through a series of public meetings, knowledge is passed from residents to staff to develop the best connections within neighborhoods. These plans are used by city planners, developers, and neighborhood advocates to continue to piece together small connections, each a step toward a more pedestrian friendly city and a healthier and happier lifestyle.]