A Guide for the Development of Greenways, Recreation Trails and Bicycle Transportation in Olathe.
TRAILS AND
GREENWAYS PLAN

for the
City of Olathe, Kansas

An Update to the 1992
OLATHE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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JANUARY 1993
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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* Project Manager

JANUARY 1993
ORDINANCE NO. 93-03

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE OLATHE, KANSAS, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of Olathe has previously adopted and amended the Comprehensive Plan for the City pursuant to the authority granted by Kansas statutes; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to K.S.A. 12-747, the Comprehensive Plan previously adopted by the Planning Commission, and any current amendments, must be adopted by the Governing Body prior to its becoming effective; and

WHEREAS, on October 12, 1992, after giving the required notice, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the previously adopted Comprehensive Plan and the 1992 updates; and

WHEREAS, on October 12, 1992, the Planning Commission adopted the previously adopted Comprehensive Plan and the 1992 updates which include the Demographic and Development Report -- 1992, Trails and Greenways Plan; and

WHEREAS, a certified copy of the Comprehensive Plan, including the 1992 Comprehensive Plan Updates, was forwarded by the Planning Commission, with a recommendation of approval and a written summary of the public hearing held by the Planning Commission, to the Governing Body.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF OLATHE, KANSAS:

SECTION 1: The Comprehensive Plan, and the 1992 updates as listed below, are hereby adopted as the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Olathe:

a. Demographic and Development Report;
b. Trails and Greenways Plan;

SECTION: There is hereby incorporated by reference the City of Olathe, Kansas, Comprehensive Plan, 1992 (which is the 1991 Comprehensive Plan and the 1992 updates), prepared, compiled, published and promulgated by the Department of Planning and adopted by the Planning Commission City of Olathe, in code form as that term is defined in K.S.A. 12-3301(c), such incorporation by reference being authorized by K.S.A. 12-3009, et seq. Not less than three (3) copies of this Ordinance and three (3) copies of the "Comprehensive Plan, 1992, City of Olathe, Kansas," marked as/or stamped "official copy as incorporated by Ordinance No. 93-03," shall be filed with the City Clerk to be open to inspection and available to the public at all reasonable business hours.

SECTION 3: This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the official city newspaper.

JANUARY 1993
PASSED by the governing Body of the City of Olathe, Kansas, this 19th day of January, 1993.

APPROVED by the Mayor this 19th day of January, 1993.

ATTEST:

[Signature]
City Clerk

(Seal)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

[Signature]
Municipal Counsel

JANUARY 1993
INTRODUCTION

The city of Olathe has witnessed significant growth during the past twenty years. Along with this influx of population has come an explosive expansion of new homes, commercial establishments, and industries, along with new values and increased needs of the burgeoning population. Olathe has responded with the construction of new streets, utilities, schools, parks and expanded public services such as police and fire protection and the library. Olatheans, along with millions of Americans have become more health conscious, environmentally aware, and economically astute. Bicycling and walking are proven means of transportation that are consistent with these evolving attitudes. Greenways can provide a conduit for these transportation means while preserving and making accessible some of the most scenic areas of Olathe.

The 1991 Olathe Park Master Plan was compiled to provide a "guide to one of the most important elements of urban life, that of the availability of open space and leisure activities." As a supplement to the park master plan, the Trails and Greenways Plan focuses in greater detail on the recommendations of the park master plan related to the development of a greenway and bicycle/pedestrian trail system.

METHODOLOGY

The Trails and Greenways Plan will review the trends that have evolved related to walking, bicycling, and greenways; evaluate plans that have been developed in response to these trends which may have an affect on Olathe's planning; and make recommendations for a comprehensive system of designated bicycle and pedestrian routes and greenway linkages.

The history of trails and their development will be discussed to determine the reasons such facilities were developed and why their popularity continues to increase. A review of the national and regional trends will underscore the past, current and projected demands for the development of trails and greenway networks. Once the history, trends and justifications for trail and greenway development has been established, current and future opportunities for trail development within Olathe will be analyzed. These opportunities will investigate both natural and man-made opportunities. Following the analysis of opportunities, recommendations for a trails and greenways system will be developed.

Recommendations will focus on coordinating the trail and greenway system with development and other capital improvement projects. Considerations will emphasize the use of the trail system as an alternative means of transportation. Trail planning studies of Mid-America Regional Council, other municipalities and counties within the metropolitan area will be utilized to coordinate recommendations. The Trails and Greenways Plan will provide the planning tool to integrate a comprehensive trail and greenway system into the infrastructure of the city of Olathe.

January 1993
PURPOSE

The Trails and Greenway Plan will expand the recommendations on the greenway system in the 1991 Park Master Plan. The plan is intended to:

- Guide acquisition, dedication, and donation of land.
- Facilitate coordination with new development and growth.
- Provide a framework for preserving and protecting remaining natural streamways and adjacent woodlands.
- Improve coordination between the development of the trail system and other projects in the city's capital improvements program.
- Recommend priorities for implementation and fiscal management of the development of a trail and greenway system.
- Provide a tool to evaluating the impacts of private development and public infrastructure projects on the greenway system.
- Establish a framework for an alternative means of transportation and reduce increasing demands on vehicular transportation and its infrastructure.
- Recommend alternatives for generating public and financial support for implementation.
- Meet requirements for having an adopted trail plan to qualify for various sources of federal and state funding.

DEFINITIONS

Greenways - Local natural areas where recreation and conservation of nature are among the primary values. They are fingers of green in varying shapes that may be in public or private ownership and serve many purposes. A primary goal is to make recreational opportunities available close to home. (President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, 1986).

Bikeway - Any road or path open to bicycle travel, regardless of whether or not it is for exclusive bicycle use. (Federal Highway Administration, 1991).

Linkage - Open space connections between two or more geographic points. They may be greenways, parkways, landscaped boulevards, linear parks, median green strips, trails, or natural drainage courses available for hiking, bicycling, or horse riding. (Mid-American Regional Council, 1972).

Streamways - Publicly accessible open space which is primarily composed of the flood prone area adjacent to creeks, rivers, and other water courses.

Trails - Designated routes for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized modes of transportation.
TRAIL AND LINKAGE CONCEPTS

In 1986 the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended the creation of "greenways" to link various areas of urban, suburban and rural environments. These greenways would provide people with access to open spaces close to where they live and work. Local natural areas where recreation and conservation can compliment one another should comprise a foundation for the greenways. The President’s Commission concluded, "Greenways are a way to provide open recreation for every American, close to home. Greenways are our vision of the future."

The development of a comprehensive trail and greenway master plan should take into consideration the natural features, recreational facilities, demographic character, cultural centers, school system, and transportation network of the area. A primary goal of the plan is to provide a linkage for pedestrians, joggers and bicyclists between various areas of the city. Linkage between existing parks, schools, shopping centers, work destinations, cultural facilities, and residential areas can provide people of all ages with an alternative method of transportation, increased recreational opportunity, and cost-effective exercise.

Many greenway opportunities in Olathe are situated along the various streams and creeks which meander throughout the city. Consequently, they are often associated with flood-prone areas. Through floodplain zoning restrictions many of these areas can be protected from intensive development. By conserving these areas in their natural condition, storm water runoff is slowed, woodland habitat is protected, and urban wildlife diversity is sustained. Public access to these areas is often achievable only through the use of trail systems.

Figure 1: Primary Streams and Creeks in Olathe
USER CATEGORIES

Trail systems are typically designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians will include people of all ages walking or jogging the trail for exercise, recreation, or commuting. Bicyclists are also of all ages and may use the trails for the same purposes as pedestrians. Bicyclists can be categorized into three principle groups:

- The child cyclist, 14 years old or younger, typically does not have the experience, training, and judgement to safely handle on-street traffic conditions. Children will usually limit their riding to lower use residential streets, sidewalks, or other off-street areas. Child cyclists will utilize their bicycles for transportation more than any other group due to their age. The recreational aspects are more in the form of social interaction with peers than for recreation or exercise.

- The adult recreational cyclist generally utilizes residential streets and trails dedicated for bicycle use. Most recreational bicyclist are not comfortable riding in higher traffic streets. Recreational cyclists generally ride for casual exercise and recreation. Bicycling provides a low cost, low physical impact means of recreating outdoors.

- The expert adult cyclist is a serious cyclist having extensive knowledge and skill to handle riding alongside heavily traveled urban streets and rural highways. Bicycle commuters and touring enthusiasts are included in this group. They generally will ride on extended day trips, ride more frequently, commute on bicycle, and make numerous utilitarian trips. Expert cyclists consider riding as a form of physical exercise and conditioning and may be their primary form of recreational activity, although many are involved in other active exercise programs and sports.

A comprehensive trail and linkage system for Olathe must take into consideration the needs of all three types of bicyclists, as well as the pedestrian user. The system should consider methods to accommodate the physical requirements of both types of users to minimize conflicts between them. The physical needs of all populations utilizing the system should be reflected in determining the locations and types of trails proposed and standards for design.

Pedestrians are often more difficult to categorize than the bicyclist. There tends to be a greater overlap of reasons for walking and level of experience with this trail user group. The following will provide general guidelines for consideration in developing design standards of Olathe’s trail system:

- The child pedestrian, 14 years old or younger, shares many of the characteristics of the child cyclist. Supervision is often needed in heavier traffic. Children are limited to walking to areas in their immediate neighborhood whether it be for social interaction or errands for the family.

- The recreational pedestrian may be of all ages. This group tends to utilize pedestrian facilities, such as walks and trails whenever available to minimize potential vehicular conflict and improve the overall experience. A common activity shared by the recreational pedestrian is often the family walk.
The fitness pedestrian can be adults of all ages. This group ranges from joggers and competitive runners to senior citizens walking for health purposes. Fitness pedestrians typically exercise on a frequent basis. Consequently, they are more experienced in handling traffic conditions. Senior citizens also may utilize walks or trails with limited conflict.

The utilitarian pedestrian is of all ages as well. Utilitarian pedestrians walk or jog with a specific destination in mind, such as work, school, or shopping areas. For people without automobiles, walking may be their only source of transportation. Walking may be combined with other forms of public transportation.

BENEFITS OF TRAIL AND GREENWAY SYSTEMS

Trails and greenways can have significant environmental, conservation, economic, social, and health benefits. The benefits related to trails and greenways range from local initiatives at solving global environmental problems to the economic benefits for adjacent properties. Benefits may be applicable to both trail and greenway concepts or to each individually. The following benefits are categorized into those that can be associated with bicycling and walking, reduced dependence of motor vehicles by promoting alternative means of transportation, and the development of integrated greenways and open spaces:

Benefits of Bicycling and Walking

- Improved Fitness And Exercise
- Reduced Health Care Costs
- Increased Environmental Awareness
- Enhanced Sense of Neighborhood Pride and Community Spirit
- Increased Options for Those With or Without Motor Vehicles

Benefits of an Alternative Means of Transportation

- Reduced Traffic Congestion
- Reduced Fuel Consumption
- Reduced Air Pollution
- Reduced Noise Pollution
- Deferred or Reduced Roadway Improvement Costs

Benefits of an Integrated Greenway System

- Beneficial Use Of Flood-Prone Lands
- Preservation of Open Space
- Increased Recreational Usage
- Protection of Natural Diversity
- Enhanced Educational Opportunity
- Cooperative Regional Planning
- Economic Incentives

January 1993
Disadvantages of Trails and Greenways

- Property Displacement and Community Intrusion
- Increased Conflict Between Walkers and Bicyclists
- Increased Travel Delay
- Increase Conflict With Motorized Vehicles
- Cost To Provide and Maintain System

The benefits of trails and greenways should be weighed against the disadvantages. Most disadvantages can be mitigated through careful planning, design and coordination with other infrastructure and private development projects. These disadvantages generally pale in comparison to the benefits of a healthier, safer, more civic minded, and environmentally aware community.
BACKGROUND

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

Across the country, communities, counties, states, and the federal government are promoting and developing trail, linkage and greenway projects. The scope of these projects range from small, single site trails to nationwide trails. Citizens are continually turning out to utilize these facilities wherever they are completed.

In the early 1900's, efforts to begin the first national trail were initiated. Today that trail, known as the Appalachian Trail, links Maine and Georgia with a continuous trail. Two other national trails, the Pacific Rim Trail and the Continental Divide Trail have been developed as interstate hiking trails. More recently, and of local significance, is the planning being undertaken to identify an east-west trail, the American Discovery Trail, from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. This trail has been proposed to pass through Olathe in its quest to follow portions of the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail.

Figure 2: Route of The American Discovery Trail through Olathe
Numerous other trail and linkage systems have developed throughout communities and regions across the country as the result of an increased demand by citizens for facilities closer to home. This demand has been generated from several sources. As traditional family vacations have become more expensive, many families and individuals are looking closer to home for their recreational needs. Many lower income families have never been able to afford an extended or even short vacation. Consequently, people are seeking alternatives for the solitude, relaxation, and relief from everyday urban stresses that traditional vacations provided. Environmental awareness of the last two decades has recognized the value of preserving and making accessible, local areas of natural significance and value. Trail systems can provide a cost efficient and environmentally sensitive alternative to conventional means of transportation.

A nationwide survey conducted by the National Park Service in 1982 and 1983 which determined the participation rate for 28 recreational activities is illustrated in Table 1. The most common activity, pleasure walking and outdoor swimming shared the top of the participation rate tables in popularity with 53% of the respondents. Walking was one of the most consistently popular activities across all the demographic groups of respondents. Bicycling was ninth in popularity with 32% of the respondents. However, a comparison to a similar survey in 1960 indicated bicycling had tripled in popularity in the previous twenty years. Bicycling has continued to increase in popularity for both pleasure and exercise since the survey, and would likely be placed higher on the participation rate tables today. It should be noted the survey did not include the activities of children under the age of 12. Young children have had a long history of bicycling for fun, exercise, socializing and transportation.

Regionally, implementation of the Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Boulevard Plan began in 1892. This world renowned plan emphasized the importance of linking parks, cultural centers, shopping and business districts, and residential areas with with greenways and boulevards. Efforts are currently underway to revitalize older portions of the plan and to extend the plan into newer areas of Kansas City. In 1980 Kansas City, MO adopted the "Kansas City Bikeway" as a guide to their trail development. It recommends the development of over 350 miles of bikeways in Kansas City, MO.

In the last twenty years, numerous political jurisdictions in the metropolitan areas have undertaken large and small trail and greenway projects. The Jackson County Parks & Recreation District has acquired a majority of the Blue River and Little Blue River floodplains as greenways. One of the area's most popular efforts has been the Indian Creek and Tomahawk Greenway passing through Leawood and Overland Park. Johnson County Parks & Recreation District has begun development of the first of nine streamways on Mill Creek in Olathe, Lenexa, Shawnee and Shawnee Mission Park. Five of the nine proposed greenways will start in or pass through Olathe.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Of Respondents Who Participated in Activity During The Prior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking for Pleasure</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Outdoors</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Zoos, Fairs, or Amusement Parks</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnicking</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving for Pleasure</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Outdoor Sporting Events</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running or Jogging</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Outdoor Concerts, Plays, Performances</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Team Sports</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Outdoor Tennis</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Dayhiking</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Outdoor Games or Sports (Non-Team)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird-Watching &amp; Other Nature Study Activities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Road Vehicle Driving</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sledding</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Snow Skiing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseback Riding</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water-skiing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Skating</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Outdoor Winter Activities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Activities (Not on List)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowmobiling</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Summary of National Park Service Recreation Survey
(Activities in Bold could be provided or enhanced with a Trail and Greenway System)
Development of a coordinated greenway system for the entire metropolitan area has been initiated by the local Prairie Gateway Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects and has been adopted by the Mid-America Regional Council. This system, known as the "Metro Green," would serve as a guideline for the many political jurisdictions throughout the metropolitan area to coordinate the development of greenways. Metro Green builds on the groundwork and concepts of the Kansas City parks and boulevards system and upon other linkage and greenway projects throughout a seven county metropolitan area. Olathe, with its five streams and central Johnson County location, will be a vital link in this metropolitan greenway system.

Commuting by bicycle has been growing steadily in popularity in many parts of the country. Bicycle commuting in the Kansas City area is just beginning to emerge as an alternative mode of transportation as the number of expert bicyclists continue to grow. The extensive interstate highway system of the Kansas City metropolitan area and the suburban character of Johnson County with its efficient network of arterial streets has inadvertently discouraged the use of alternative modes of transportation. However, the potential for alternative transportation, including bicycling, was realized in a study by the Suburban Mobility Alternatives to Reduce Traffic (SMART) Task Force for Mid-America Regional Council and the city of Overland Park. A survey conducted by the ETC Institute for the SMART Task Force revealed that an estimated 12% of the College Boulevard corridor work force lives in Olathe. This represents a significant percentage of employees that live within a reasonably short commute, especially for bicyclists. Improved bicycling facilities between Olathe and the College Boulevard corridor would encourage bicycle commuting.

LOCAL HISTORY OF TRAILS AND PROPOSALS IN OLATHE

One of the earliest concepts for a trail and linkage system in Olathe was recommended in 1961 in a "Master Plan For Urban Development" prepared for the Olathe Planning Commission. This early master plan proposed a network of "watercourses, parks and reserves" throughout the city and the surrounding areas planned for development. In 1972, a greenway between Cedar Lake and Lake Olathe was proposed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Nearly twenty years later, this concept is still being recommended for acquisition and development. This greenway would link two of the largest lakes and parks in Johnson County with bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian trails and provide the citizens with a unique recreational opportunity.

The first trail project to be undertaken in Olathe was completed in 1982 as a recommendation of the 1982 Parks & Recreation Master Plan. A 3 1/2 mile long, 8' wide sidewalk was built along 151st street in conjunction with street improvements. The trail provides a linkage between Black Bob Park and the residential areas to the west. It additionally provides an improved sidewalk and bicycle trail for Olathe South High School and Indian Trail Junior High School Students. Overland Park has proposed the extension of the 151st Street Trail east to Antioch Road in their "1991 Greenway Linkage Guidelines."

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Figure 3: The Metro Green: A Vision for the Kansas City Metropolitan Area
In April of 1986, the voters of Johnson County authorized a 1/2 mill levy to fund the development of a county-wide streamway system. The public realized the potential of greenway systems through the successful trails built in the late 1970's and early 1980's in Overland Park and Leawood. In response to the public's desire to fund a streamway system, the Olathe Parks & Recreation Department initiated a study in the summer of 1986 for a trail and linkage system within Olathe. This study is used today as a general guide for the acquisition of desirable floodplain areas and the construction of widened sidewalks along certain arterial streets.

An approximately 1 1/4 mile trail along Mill Creek in north Olathe was built as a joint effort with Johnson County Parks & Recreation District and the city of Olathe in 1988. This project was the first trail to be built using the county-wide streamway mill levy funds. Its success has been illustrated by the continued high usage of the trail. Table 2 illustrates an estimate of the users inventoried by Johnson County Parks & Recreation District on the Mill Creek Streamway in Olathe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MONTHLY AVERAGE</th>
<th>DAILY AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989 (April-December)</td>
<td>51,493</td>
<td>5,721</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 (January-December)</td>
<td>73,742</td>
<td>6,145</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 (January-September)</td>
<td>96,559</td>
<td>10,729</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2:** Number of Users on Mill Creek Streamway in Olathe
(April 1989 to September 1991)

The 1986 Parks & Recreation Department trail plan provided the framework for the linear park and greenway system recommendations included in the 1991 Olathe Park Master Plan. The 1986 plan recommended a system of trails for the existing and short range growth areas of the city. The linear park system of the 1991 park plan built upon the subsequent plans developed by surrounding communities since approval of the county-wide streamway system. Over 30 acres of property along Indian Creek and approximately 40 acres along Mill Creek have either been purchased by or donated to the city for incorporation into the greenway system. Trail improvements in conjunction with other road improvements include underpasses on Indian Creek at Santa Fe and at Blackbob Road, as well as, at Northgate Boulevard on Mill Creek. Eight foot wide sidewalks have been constructed on new sections of Blackbob Road north of Santa Fe. Proposals for the widening of Prairie Center Road west of K-7 have incorporated an 8' wide sidewalk, and an underpass on a Little Cedar Creek tributary.
ANALYSIS OF LOCAL TRAIL AND LINKAGE OPPORTUNITIES

NATURAL LINKAGE SYSTEMS

The use of Olathe's natural drainage network can result in a greenway system which would be equitably distributed throughout the community. Five of the nine streamways proposed by Johnson County Parks & Recreation District are located in Olathe. The headwaters of Indian Creek, Mill Creek, Tomahawk Creek and Coffee Creek fall in the current or future city limits of Olathe. Cedar Creek, in west Olathe, passes through the city. The Kansas City metropolitan greenway, Metro Green, developed by the American Society of Landscape Architects, recommend the linkage of Indian Creek and Mill Creek, and Coffee Creek and Cedar Creek. The linkage of these four creeks in Olathe would be part of the Metro Green concept to developing two concentric greenway rings around the metropolitan area. This presents a unique opportunity for Olathe to be the connecting link for the metropolitan greenways network.

The 1991 Park Master Plan recommends locating neighborhood parks adjacent to the trail and greenway system to provide greater access to the proposed parks. School sites, particularly elementary and junior high sites, should be selected in close proximity to the trail system. The site selection coordination will provide improved access for the children utilizing these public facilities on a regular basis. The preservation of natural open spaces and wooded streams adjacent to the neighborhood parks and schools will enhance the children's environmental awareness through readily accessible outdoor classrooms.

The trails and greenways system must be closely coordinated with other public infrastructure improvements. Storm drainage and detention projects, sanitary sewer projects, and street and bridge improvements have a tremendous impact on the natural integrity of the greenways. Private development of industrial, commercial, and residential projects must be closely monitored to evaluate their impact on the greenways. The dedication of flood prone areas in their existing condition should generally be encouraged.

- INDIAN CREEK

Indian Creek begins just south of 159th street and east of Ridgeview Road and flows northeasterly into Overland Park near 127th Street and Pflumm Road. Its watershed contains a majority of the developed areas in Olathe east of I-35. With the exception of the Main 10 interceptor sewer, the first several miles of creek between Pflumm Road and Santa Fe have been encroached upon by development in a few locations. Development is expected to increase in this area due to proposed road improvements to Blackbob Road, 127th Street, and Pflumm Road. The Olathe East High School, situated along the south side of Indian Creek will also encourage development. From Mur-Len Road to 155th Street at Scarborough Elementary School, development has severely altered the natural condition of Indian Creek with channelization improvements. The undeveloped area south of 155th Street is expected to developed in the near future.

January 1993
The natural areas of Indian Creek are characterized with areas of broad, open floodplain or steep, wooded hillsides. The areas between Santa Fe and Pfumm Road are the steeper and most wooded areas. Generally the adjacent areas become less steep and more open to the south.

The city currently owns approximately 70 acres of parkland along Indian Creek at Frontier Park, Arrowhead Park and Southdowns Park, and in the undeveloped linear park area near Wal-Mart and Briarwood. The remaining portions of Indian Creek between Mur-Len Road and 155th street are owned by the city as drainage right-of-way. Approximately 3 miles of continuous access exists along Indian Creek at this time.

**TOMAHAWK CREEK**

Tomahawk Creek provides drainage for an area in the southeast portion of Olathe. Only the upper reaches of the creek are in Olathe. Development has been limited to the areas closest to Blackbob Road and along 151st Street and Quivira Road. Agricultural uses in the gently rolling watershed have been the dominant influence on its natural character. Black Bob Park is situated on the ridge between Tomahawk, Indian, and Coffee Creeks.

**COFFEE CREEK**

Coffee Creek is located along the southeastern agricultural area of Olathe. Development within the watershed consists of several large lot subdivisions, Johnson County Executive Airport and Heritage Park. Its headwaters are located near 167th Street and Ridgeview Road. Even though the area has been in agricultural use for many years, a significant portion of the floodplain is covered with natural wooded areas. Coffee Creek flows eastward through Overland Park to the Blue River.

**MILL CREEK**

Beginning near 151st Street and I-35 and flowing north to K-10, Mill Creek is the most heavily developed creek in Olathe. Much of Olathe’s early history is centered around Mill Creek. Unfortunately, much of the creek in the older areas of town has been heavily altered and is not publicly accessible. Mill Creek Park, Water Works Lakes, and the Frisco Lakes are located on Mill Creek in the older areas of Olathe. The first segment of the Mill Creek Streamway was developed jointly by the city and Johnson County Parks & Recreation District with approximately 1 1/4 miles of trail in approximately 31 acres of greenway along Northgate Boulevard. Additional city right-of-way north of Harold Street extends along a Mill Creek tributary to the undeveloped Faith Village linear park area, Olathe North High School, Mahaffie Pond and the Mahaffie Farmstead.

North of Harold Street the natural character of the Mill Creek valley has been relatively well preserved. The valley becomes increasingly narrower and steeper closer to K-10. Many large wooded areas exist along both sides of the creek in low areas and on steep, rocky slopes. The most noticeable impacts of development north of Harold Street are the Santa Fe railroad, the city’s Service

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Center, a sewage treatment plant and several small industrial sites within areas of the county.

CEDAR CREEK

The longest creek in Olathe is Cedar Creek which comprises over 40 square miles in its drainage pattern when combined with Little Cedar Creek. The upper portions of Little Cedar Creek have undergone extensive development south of Santa Fe. The natural character of Little Cedar Creek east of K-7 Highway has been completely altered by development. However the creek west of K-7 Highway has significant areas which are still in relatively natural conditions, considering the amount of development in the watershed. Ernie Miller Nature Park and the Olathe landfill stand in stark contrast to one another north of Santa Fe. The greenway system is an opportunity to preserve areas north of Ernie Miller Nature Park as a buffer to the landfill and to improve the visual appearance of the landfill from K-7 Highway. An opportunity also exists to coordinate an underpass linkage with the proposed state improvements of K-7 Highway.

Cedar Creek has only recently begun to experience development. From its headwaters near 183rd and U.S. 169 to K-10, the most significant development along the creek has been the Santa Fe railroad, Cedar Creek quarry, several large lot subdivisions, and the Cedar Creek planned community at K-10. Three domestic water supply projects, Lake Olathe, Cedar Lake, and a small abandoned lake south of Dennis Avenue have had the most visible impact on Cedar Creek. Lake Olathe and Cedar Lake have become Olathe's two largest recreational areas as well. Lake Olathe contains 208 land acres and 170 water acres, while Cedar Lake contains 54 land acres and 75 water acres.

The Little Cedar Creek and Cedar Creek valleys contain the largest natural areas in Olathe with many large mixed hardwood forests. Some of the steepest hillsides in Olathe frame the valley, particularly north of Prairie Center Road. Some rocky bluffs are over 100 feet in height. Extensive wooded areas below Cedar Lake offer some of the best wildlife habitat in Johnson County with thick underbrush, mixed forests, and numerous open meadows. The large Cedar Creek quarry is only visible from a small portion of the creek due to the wooded hillsides which parallel the creek. An 8-10 foot waterfall exists below the spillway of Cedar Lake.

Proposals for creating a recreational and natural open space linkage between Lake Olathe and Cedar Lake have been considered at various times since the early 1970's. The unusual close proximity and the natural and visual quality of the Cedar Creek corridor between these two recreation facilities provides an opportunity for a greenway linkage unique in the Kansas City metropolitan region.

Along the northern portions of Cedar Creek, the planned community of Cedar Creek has proposed approximately 400 acres of land for a "Cedar Creek Valley Recreation Basin." This area along with their proposed neighborhood linkages will create an extensive system of trails and greenways within the Cedar Creek community.
MAN-MADE LINKAGES

Man-made linkages are an integral, cost-effective method to provide connections to many areas of the city which are not in close proximity to natural linkages. They can be used to provide improved access to schools, parks, business and employment centers, and historical and cultural sites. Connections between the valleys of streamways must often be achieved by way of man-made linkages over the gentle ridges separating them.

- SIDEWALKS

In the developing areas of the city, widened sidewalks can be utilized to provide a safer, direct route through the city. An 8 foot minimum width is recommended to reduce the conflict between the bicyclists and the pedestrians and joggers that occurs on the city’s typical 4 foot wide sidewalks. Olathe has incorporated these 8’ wide sidewalks in two areas, along 151st Street in southeast Olathe and along improved segments of Blackbob Road. The 151st Street Trail has proved to be an exceptionally popular walking and jogging route for many adult residents. The arterial level street lighting allows usage to be extended after sunset, particularly into the summer evenings.

These two trails were constructed to provide improved linkages to Frontier Park, Arrowhead Park, Heritage Park, Black Bob Park, Indian Trail Junior High School, Frontier Trail Junior High School, Pioneer Trail Junior High School, Olathe South High School, and Olathe East High School. They pass along numerous subdivisions and several retail and office centers. The 151st Street Trail, if extended to the West, would provide a linkage between Indian Creek Greenway and Cedar Creek Greenways.

- STREETS

Currently, Olathe has not developed any on-street trails. On-street trails are often utilized in developed areas of the city to provide routes were the acquisition of additional property for other types of trails or the construction of widened sidewalks would not be practical. These trails would serve to direct bicyclists to the easiest and safest route through the city. Signage alerts motorists that bicyclists are more likely to be present on the streets designated as trail routes. Sidewalks should be provided along these routes to assist pedestrians in the same manner. Collector streets and minor arterials should be used for these routes. Typically these types of streets are wider two-lane streets with sidewalks on both sides.

- EASEMENTS

Numerous drainage and utility easements exist throughout the city that could have the potential to be developed as part of the greenway system. These areas are often difficult to develop. Thus, the multiple-use of these easements could be very effective for the city and the adjoining developments.

Several large power and pipeline easements crisscross the city. The largest of these would be the pipeline easement extending north to south and paralleling Plumm Road. Numerous cross country power line easements extend from the substations throughout Olathe. Some of the larger power line easements are
located between Pflumm Road and Blackbob Road, south of K-10, north of Harold Street between Woodland Avenue and Ridgeview Road, and south of 159th Street between Pflumm Road and the Burlington Northern Railroad.
RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to develop recommendations for a comprehensive trail system compatible with bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as motorists, an understanding of the user requirements and characteristics must be considered. In many situations, bicyclists and pedestrians should be thought of as separate user groups. Bicyclists must move in the same direction as vehicular traffic when sharing the roadway, while pedestrians must walk in the opposite direction on roadways without sidewalks. An understanding of the differing reactions of pedestrians and bicyclists must also be considered when developing standards for the design of shared facilities.

Greenways may be recommended without the incorporation of a trail and subsequent influx of bicyclists and pedestrians. Environmentally sensitive areas, wildlife habitats, remnants of the native prairie grasslands, or wooded areas which provide buffering between conflicting land uses may be more valuable to the community preserved as they exist. While it is often easier to justify land acquisitions if a perceived, physical human use is applied to its purpose for acquiring the land, adjacent property owners may be more receptive to preserving these areas if public access is minimized.

The current status of development has a tremendous impact on the design of a comprehensive trail and greenway system. Older areas of the city were typically developed and platted with little respect to floodplains and natural corridors. Streets are often narrower and on-street parking is often a necessity due to the lack of garages and adequate space for off-street parking for residents. Designation of trails and development of greenways is often difficult. Respect must be given to the rights of property owners within developed areas when introducing new facilities which may increase public usage.

In contrast, trails and greenways can be readily incorporated in the developing areas of the city through proper planning, zoning, and platting. A majority of the land designated as greenways and recommended for trails can be efficiently acquired during the platting process. These facilities are often considered desirable by most prospective home buyers and businesses. Accordingly, most developers are willing to work with the city to promote the development of trails and greenways within access of their development.

The distribution of trails is affected by the locations of existing facilities such as shopping centers and mass transit park-and-ride lots, which could benefit from improved public access. Conversely, a perceived improvement in the quality of life of a community is realized when facilities such as employment centers, schools, libraries, government centers, parks and cultural institutions are accessible by transportation means other than motorized vehicles.
The Olathe Trails and Greenways Plan recommends a comprehensive network of trails and greenways equitably distributed throughout the city in the most cost effective manner. Primary consideration for determining the locations and types of trails or greenways was given to:

- Linkage opportunities to systems being developed by other jurisdictions adjacent to Olathe and the Metro Green System.
- Preservation of significant natural areas.
- Multiple use of floodplains, easements, and right-of-ways.
- Providing an alternative means of transportation for commuting to employment districts, shopping centers, schools, recreation areas, government facilities, and cultural centers.
- Developing a trail system which can easily be extended into the developing areas of the city.
- Coordination with other capital improvements and infrastructure projects for cost efficiency.
- Public health, safety and welfare.
- Cost efficiency and potential for future coordination with Johnson County Parks & Recreation District.
- Opportunity for funding assistance from the Johnson County Parks and Recreation District, the State of Kansas Departments of Parks and Wildlife and of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the National Parks Service.

TYPES OF TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

Four types of trails are recommended in this plan based on their appropriateness for the given location. The greenway system is represented primarily by the Type 1 Trail/Greenway. The Type 2 Trail/Greenway, if accompanied by a landscape easement on private or public property or a landscaped buffer strip within the right-of-way could become a part of the greenway system.
TYPE 1 TRAILS/GREENWAYS are primarily associated with linear parks, streamways or easements. This trail creates the framework for the remainder of the trail and greenway system. The greenway network is developed to link separate public spaces such as parks, schools, or historic sites. Linkages between residential areas, school sites, and commercial areas of the city are also created. Subsequently, an alternative form of bicycle and pedestrian movement generally separated from vehicular traffic is achieved.

Of equal value to the greenway system is the opportunity to protect the typically wooded conditions of existing creeks, thus mitigating downstream flood damage while providing a multiple use of public lands and preserving wildlife habitat. With careful planning and coordination, detention facilities may be incorporated into open areas of the floodplain in a Type 1 Trail/Greenway with minimal visual impact.

The minimum width of the greenway should be determined by the elevation of the floodplain when the watershed is fully developed. In visually critical areas, heavily wooded hillsides adjacent to the floodplain should be included to protect the natural integrity of the streamway and to minimize the impacts of adjacent development, particularly in industrial and commercial areas. In areas where steep slopes are immediately adjacent to the creek channel, additional land may be required to insure safe public access throughout the greenway system.

Grade separation between trails and roadways are strongly encouraged due to the high volume of users within greenways. At crossings where grade separation is not practical, signalization should be incorporated. Connecting trails to adjacent subdivisions and developments should be provided to improve accessibility. Equestrian trails can be incorporated in greenways with careful consideration given to the behavioral characteristic of horses in proximity to bicyclists and pedestrians. Separate trails should be provided if equestrian trails are proposed.

The 1991 Park Master Plan recommends an average width of 300' in streamway areas. Type 1 Trail/Greenways within easements would not likely meet this width requirement and would need to be negotiated at the time of development.
TYPE 1 - A paved trail built within a linear park, greenway, or streamway that is segregated from vehicular rights-of-way. Equestrian and cross country ski trails may also be designated in certain situations.
TYPE 2 TRAILS/GREENWAYS are intended to provide improved recreational and utilitarian access to areas of the city which may not be near a Type 1 greenway or may need improved access. The primary focus of the Type 2 trail is provide a safer route to junior high and senior high schools that are located along arterial streets. The high concentration of young pedestrians and bicyclists creates a need for sidewalks wider than the city's standard four feet. The increased eight foot minimum width would accommodate the increased school age use and the recreational bicyclist. An organized system of Type 2 trails also provides an excellent facility for adult recreational bicyclists and pedestrians. The arterial streets adjacent to these trails provides a safe well lighted extension of the Type 1 Greenway. Usage of the Type 2 trail is allowed after sunset as it is within the public right-of-way.

The minimum width of a Type 2 Trail should be eight feet to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Minimum distance of ten feet should be provided for buffering and landscaping. This will require a variance to the city's Technical Standards to allow the substitution of an eight foot walk in lieu of the typical four foot walk. The added distance adjacent to the street could be reduced to a minimum width of five feet with the incorporation of a landscape/recreation easement on adjoining private property.
TYPE 2 - A paved trail within the street right-of-way or an adjacent easement paralleling the right-of-way which is physically separated from the street cross section by curbs and preferably a landscaped buffer zone.
- **TYPE 3 TRAILS** are recommended to provide dedicated bicycle lanes to specific destinations and a linkage between the Type 1 Trails/Greenways. As these trails are located within the street section, pavement markings and signage are used to alert motorists that bicyclists are likely to occur on that particular street. Type 3 Trails are generally recommended on two lane streets with a minimum width of 36'. They are designated by a dedicated, signed and striped lane at least six feet wide for bicycle use only. Parking restrictions are recommended on streets containing Type 3 Trails. Regular sidewalks are required to provide pedestrian use of these trails. It is recommended that Type 3 Trails be located on both sides of a street to comply with state traffic laws governing bicycles in roadways.

**TYPE 3** - A signed, designated route within the street cross section with a painted travel lane provide for the preferential use of bicyclists.
**TYPE 4 TRAILS** are bicycle routes located within the street section and are designated by signage only when the physical requirements of a Type 3 Trail are not practical. They are primarily incorporated in established areas and on low traffic streets to minimize the need to alter normal parking patterns. On narrow streets it may be necessary to restrict parking to one side of the street to provide adequate safety for bicyclists. In some instances Type 4 Trails may be designated as one-way routes with an adjacent street being designated as the companion route. Regular sidewalks would be required for pedestrians to use these trails.

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**TYPE 4 -** A signed, designated route within the street cross section which shares the travel lane with motorists.
IMPLEMENTATION

A clear process of implementation is critical to the development of a trails and greenway system. This document represents a segment in a sequence of events which started in 1985 with a citizen’s petition. In that petition, a request was made to the city to evaluate the potential for a trails network throughout Olathe. In 1986 the Parks & Recreation Department developed the bicycle and pedestrian trail system plan. This plan served as an informal guide to the acquisition of land and development of trails in Olathe. In 1991 the Olathe Park Master Plan expanded the trail concept to include a system of connected greenways.

The review and adoption of the Trails and Greenways Plan by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, the Planning Commission, and City Council will incorporate the recommendations of the plan into the 1991 Park Master Plan and Olathe’s Comprehensive Plan. This action will clarify the city’s goals in relation to trails and greenways, simplify the rezoning and platting process, prioritize the implementation of the plan, and serve as a catalyst for increased community support and involvement. As a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan and Master Park Plan, the following issues requiring coordination with development and growth within the city will be improved:

- The location and configuration of proposed land acquisitions and dedications.
- Access to adjacent residential areas, parks, schools and public facilities.
- Identification of environmentally significant land for inclusion in the greenway system.
- Proposed location of future park and school sites.

The acquisition of land for the trails and greenways system can be accomplished in numerous ways. The following summarizes the common alternatives to acquisition:

- Dedication of floodplains, right-of-ways and easements during zoning and platting of property for development.
- Use of temporary recreation easements with property owners through areas slow to develop.
- Encouragement of discounted compensation or tax deductible donations of land, particularly where the existence of the greenway will result in an increase of adjacent land values, when purchase is required.
- Living will or trust arrangements for owner-occupied property in which the owners have no objection to a trail or greenway after they have sold the property or it becomes a part of their estate.
- Bond issues presented to the public for the acquisition of uniquely scenic, critical and environmentally valuable linkages.

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The creation of a non-profit, park and recreation oriented support organization can be utilized to encourage land donations, thus reducing acquisition costs.

The preservation of natural areas, vegetation, and streams is often synonymous with greenways. The Trails and Greenways Plan can provide the tool to:

- Justify the preservation of wooded areas, wildlife habitats, natural scenic areas, native prairie remnants, and streams.
- Discourage floodplain alteration, such as channelization and excavation projects.
- Coordinate all utility and infrastructure improvements, such as storm drainage and sanitary sewer projects, with the Parks & Recreation Department and Planning Department to minimize their impacts to the natural character of the greenways.

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Various criteria can be used to determine the sequence of greenway and trail implementation. Each greenway or trail in itself is unique in its physical character and reasons for inclusion in the plan. Policy priorities provide a consistent means to compare the timeliness and importance of various projects to differing financial, environmental, development, and political influences which affect project priorities. Project priorities are the result of an evaluation of the policy priorities. A periodic evaluation of the project priorities will allow for project selection to be responsive to changes in the factors affecting the policy priorities.

POLICY PRIORITIES

- Protection of the natural character of the greenways, streams and wooded areas.
- Acquisition of greenways and floodplains in undeveloped areas to encourage linkage between existing parks or trails.
- Utilization of currently accessible public parks, open spaces, drainageways, right-of ways, and school properties.
- Completion of improvements on dedicated tracts which may have a stipulation defining the time frame for public improvements to be completed within.
- Projects with an opportunity for additional federal, state, county or private funding assistance.
- Balanced annual expenditure of capital improvement funding.
- Utilization of trail and greenway dedicated CIP funds primarily for Type 1 trails.
Incorporation of improvements into roadway projects, sanitary sewer improvements or other major capital improvement projects and benefit district improvements which have an impact on the trail and greenway systems.

- Provide exposure for systems and improve image of city.
- 10' wide design standard for Type 1 trails.
- Emphasize impacts of developments on trails and greenways system in Planning Commission recommendations.
- Utilization of community organizations to reduce implementation and operation costs.
- Coordinate access to private open space and trail systems.
- Positive response to public input and areas of concern.
- Equitable distribution of improvements throughout the city.
- Density of population with immediate access to trail.

## PROJECT PRIORITIES

- **Immediate Priority** - Indian Creek Greenway from Blackbob Road to Mur-Len Road. This project would link Frontier Park with the Briarwood Park area. The preservation of the Indian Creek Greenway is critical to the trail's integrity. If all property is not available then trail should begin in the Briarwood Park area and extend south along Indian Creek to Southdowns Park.

- Extension of the Mill Creek Streamway to Mahaffie House. This project would extend the existing trail through an existing residential development and provide improved access to Olathe North High School and the park system.

- Linkage between South Frisco/Waterworks Lakes area and Mill Creek Streamway by way of Mill Creek Park. Any opportunity which exists in this developed area should be taken advantage of before development infill lessens the trail and greenway potential which exists today.

- Lake Olathe and Cedar Lake Greenway. The acquisition of this corridor is a unique recreational and preservation opportunity. The mix of natural wooded areas and open meadows is unequalled in Olathe. The linkage of Lake Olathe and Cedar Lake would greatly improve the recreational value of two of Johnson County's largest lake parks.

- Coordination of CIP projects, such as stormwater management projects, Blackbob Road, Prairie Center Road, Dennis Avenue and interchange, interstate and major highway improvements which will improve bicycle and pedestrian access across I-35 and K-7.
FUNDING

Historically, trail and greenway projects have not ranked in priority with other capital improvements and services provided with the city. Recent pressures on local property taxes have had tremendous impacts on all portions of city services and improvements. If local trail and greenway funding remains viewed as a "quality of life" issue rather than that of a "public health, safety and welfare issue", this trend in allocations of funds for trails and greenways will likely continue.

Fortunately, opportunities for technical and financial assistance of trail and greenway initiatives from sources other than the city are improving. Several programs are now or will become available from the county, state and federal levels. In some regions of the country, creative private funding has assisted local agencies with their projects. A prerequisite to most federal and state funding sources is the adoption of an overall plan by each metropolitan planning organization. The following summarizes the high points of these alternative funding sources:

- NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE ASSISTANCE
  - Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides planning, land acquisition and development assistance for "outdoor recreation" projects. It is a 50-50 matching grant received through the state.
  - Urban Parks & Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR) is a grant program for the rehabilitation of recreation facilities in areas defined by the U.S. census as Metropolitan Statistical Area. Kansas City area qualifies under this designation. It is a 70% federal - 30% local matching program.
  - Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) is available for planning assistance and technical advice on projects emphasizing environmental protection, open space accessibility and construction. This program is available to qualified private organizations and local governments. Public involvement is critical in this program. One project must be completed in each state every year.

- FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
  - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 provides funding for transportation-related bicycle and pedestrian facilities, along with numerous other highway projects. There is a Surface Transportation Program (STP) category, which allows cities and counties the option of using their bridge and road funds for providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Within STP is a Transportation Enhancement Program, which provides about $5.5 million to Kansas for 1992, with larger amounts through 1997. Enhancements can include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail corridor preservation, scenic and environmental transportation opportunities and improvements to historic transportation sites. This is an 80% federal share program.

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• Federal Lands Highway Funds provides funds for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities in conjunction with trails, roads, highways and parkways. Its primary intent is to assist in the construction of transportation facilities rather than recreation facilities. This is a 100% federal share program.

• Symms National Recreational Trails Act of 1991 is a coordinated program with the Department of Interior. Funds are distributed through the state for recreational trails and related trail projects. Close coordination with the State-wide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is necessary. This program can provide funds for environmental protection and safety education related to recreational trail usage and for the development of urban trail linkages near the home and work places. Funds for this act must be equitably shared with motorized and non-motorized trails throughout the state.

• STATE OF KANSAS

• Kansas Department of Parks & Wildlife is developing a state-wide Heritage Trails Plan in cooperation with the State Historical Society, Kansas Department of Transportation, and the Kansas Department of Commerce. Its emphasis will be on recreational, historical, cultural, and tourism aspects of a state-wide trail system. This plan will assist the state and local governments in securing various federal funds.

• KANSAS DEPARTMENT of TRANSPORTATION can provide assistance by aiding in the securing of the various funding sources administered by the Federal Highway Department, most notably the ISTEA of 1991.

• JOHNSON COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DISTRICT

• COUNTY-WIDE STREAMWAY SYSTEM FUND is a ½ mill levy accessed in Johnson County for the primary purpose of the acquisition, development operation and maintenance of the county-wide streamway park system. This fund has previously been utilized to develop portions of the Mill Creek Streamway in Olathe. Coordination of priorities and projected with the county park district is critical. The development of Mill Creek is the district’s first priority. However assistance may be available for other critical areas of the city.

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