

A Vision For Miami's Twenty-first Century Parks And Public Spaces

PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES IN MIAMI 21

An urban renaissance is remaking the City of Miami as new residents, new visitors, and new investment transform Miami into America's next great international city. Miami's leaders have recognized that this regenerative growth must be shaped and planned to ensure the highest quality of life for residents and visitors. To further that goal, Mayor Manny Diaz launched "Miami 21" in April 2005, an ambitious citywide planning program that includes revision of the city's zoning code coupled with transportation and economic development planning. The Mayor also understood that in the new Miami—with new residents in downtown high-rises, neighborhoods in renovation, dynamic and changing immigrant communities, and a continuing commitment to serve its residents of modest incomes—excellent parks and public spaces are a critical ingredient of a thriving urban center. This master plan for the city's parks and public spaces is part of the overall Miami 21 initiative.



The new Miami requires new ways of thinking about its public realm—the shared spaces, public and semi-public—that define a cosmopolitan city. The public realm includes everything from parks and plazas to streets, sidewalks, drainage swales, and highway edges. Although this master plan focuses on the city's parks, it is not limited to a traditional Department of Parks and Recreation master plan. The city recognized that the park system must be analyzed, understood and planned within the larger context of the public realm. This plan approaches Miami's park system from multiple perspectives—nature and environment, park and urban design, recreation, community development, culture and cultural identity, and changing demographics.

The plan was developed through an extensive community participation process that resulted in a vision for the city's entire park and public space system as well as a neighborhood vision for each of Miami's thirteen Neighborhood Empowerment Team (NET) Areas. As a citywide master plan, the plan does not focus on the design or redesign of specific park properties, except for illustrative purposes. The plan makes recommendations for system-wide policies, guidelines, procedures and programs, as well as for different categories of parks and public spaces. More detailed design master plans are being developed during 2005–2007 for the city's major waterfront parks—Bicentennial/Museum Park, the Coconut Grove Waterfront, Virginia Key, and Bayfront Park—and the Downtown Development Authority is developing a Downtown master plan. The citywide parks and public spaces master plan was developed in coordination with these planning processes.

MIAMI'S VISION FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

The City of Miami has an unparalleled opportunity to create a great twenty-first century system of parks and public spaces and become a leader in the burgeoning national movement to revive and transform city parks. In May of 2006 the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) issued *A Call to Action: A National Agenda for Urban Parks and Recreation in America* advocating federal, state and local action to create “a national renaissance for America's urban parks,” based on the critical role played by urban parks in promoting health, enhancing community and economic development, protecting the environment and educating, protecting and enriching youth. The NRPA's agenda for local governments and communities focuses on promoting health through physical activity; partnerships with the private sector; providing an equitable distribution of park resources; protecting environmentally sensitive areas and the urban forest; and youth education and development.¹

The Miami vision for a great park and public space system incorporates and expands on these goals. The vision emerged from extensive community participation in the master plan process, an analysis of Miami's needs, and best practices in park, recreation and public space planning. Four themes and four commitments underlie the Miami parks and public spaces vision:

¹ See <http://www.nrpa.org/content/default.aspx?documentId=4232>.

THEMES

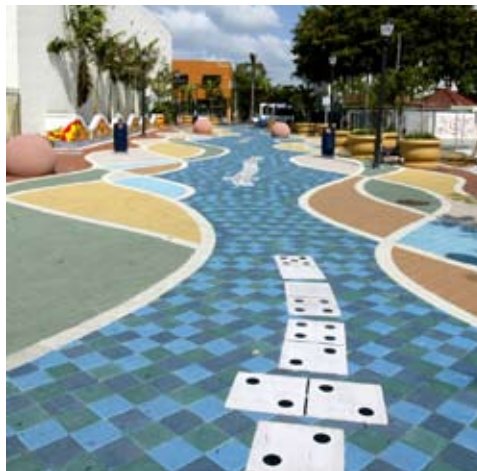


Connection

A connected system of parks and public spaces, rather than a collection of isolated sites, frames the civic life of the city. Greenways and blueways—pedestrian routes and accessible waterways—will connect parks and public places all over the city, extending into every neighborhood and into the region.

Community

Parks and public spaces are the gathering places for community, where Miamians can experience the cosmopolitan diversity of an international city. The city has dynamic immigrant streams that can transform neighborhoods in ebbs and flows. Parks and public spaces will support and celebrate neighborhood cultural identity but also serve as the meeting place for people of all cultures.



Play

Miami's parks will provide recreation for children, teenagers and adults. Sports facilities and programmed recreation will be balanced by opportunities for self-directed activities and enjoyment of landscaped and passive green spaces.



Nature

Miami will be one of the nation's greenest and bluest cities. With tree-lined streets, well-planted parks, conservation areas and environmental education programs, and healthy waterways and shorelines, the city will be a model of sustainable management of parks and natural places.



COMMITMENTS



A COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP

Miami will adopt a no-net-loss policy for city park lands and provide adequate funding to support parks. Park lands will be preserved and maintained as green, open space, recreational and cultural areas, with structures only to further this primary mission. All park properties will be maintained and programmed to excellent standards of function, safety, cleanliness, and environmental health.

A COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

Miami will serve the diversity of community needs with a balance of facilities and programs and monitor community needs and desires through regular reviews and periodic surveys. The city will provide meaningful opportunities for community input on the park and public space system and specific public realm improvements.



A COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

Through enhanced partnerships with schools, public agencies, private developers, and nonprofit institutions, Miami will add park and recreation resources and other public spaces without acquiring land. In addition, like every successful park system in America, Miami will develop strong partnerships with volunteer groups, foundations, nonprofit organizations, resident and business organizations. These partnerships will support the park system with advocacy, programming, funding and visibility.

A COMMITMENT TO DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Miami will foster excellent design for parks, plazas and other public spaces, encompassing beauty, function and durability. Excellent design creates environments that are safe, comfortable, interesting, delightful, and long-lasting, providing an arena for people to enjoy and express themselves. Public art and innovative design that promotes interaction will be encouraged.



Key elements of the Vision

Miami's Vision for 21st-Century Parks and Public Spaces

Twenty-first century Miami will have a connected system of new and renewed parks and public spaces to meet the needs of its diverse citizenry, with more ways to experience water, more places to play, greener and safer routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, and more nature in the city. Every resident will be able to walk safely and comfortably to a park. An array of recreational programs and facilities will serve people of all ages and abilities. Public spaces will incorporate celebration of Miami's tropical and international identity. Design excellence, sustainable management, effective partnerships and a high level of service to the community will be the hallmarks of Miami's parks and public spaces.

Miami's Vision for 21st-Century Parks and Public Spaces



NEW AND RENEWED PARKS

► **Goal: Acquire land so that there is a park within a quarter mile of every resident.**

People are most likely to use the parks that are close to where they live, regardless of park size. In acquiring new park land, the City should work toward making it possible for every resident to walk safely and comfortably to a park. The long-term goal should be no more than a ten-minute walk from every home to a park—about one-quarter of a mile.

► **Goal: Make the most of what we have; preserve and enhance existing park land.**

Miami's existing park land is a precious legacy from the past that belongs to all the citizens of the city. All of Miami's parks should be safe, well-maintained, attractive, and programmed to fulfill their potential within the city's network of public spaces.



MORE WAYS TO EXPERIENCE WATER

► **Goal: Enhance and ensure public access to water.**

Miami's genesis and identity are inextricably linked to its tropical waterfront location. Everyone wants more and better access of all kinds to Biscayne Bay, to the Miami River and the Little River, to canals and lagoons, to the Picnic Islands, and to the cooling effects of water parks, spray play areas, and swimming pools.



MORE NATURE IN THE CITY

► **Goal: Promote environmental sustainability and education in parks and public spaces.**

Miami's development has obscured its connections to the natural environment. More trees and plantings in parks, on streets, in public plazas, and in "lost spaces" like highway embankments should be accompanied by more support for conservation areas and environmental education, as well as sustainable management practices.



GREEN STREETS TO LINK PEOPLE TO PARKS

► **Goal: Create green connections across the city and into the region.**

Greenways and a network of tree-shaded streets safely linking parks and public spaces to one another and to other city and regional destinations invite people to walk and bike, making Miami a healthier and more pleasant city to live in.



MORE PLACES TO PLAY

► **Goal: Refocus on priorities for recreation.**

Recreation needs and desires change as the population changes and as new activities come into prominence. The City should continue strong youth programs while focusing on key priorities to serve residents of all ages and abilities, enhancing partnerships for additional recreation opportunities.