MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SHELBY FARMS PARK

PREPARED FOR:
SHELBY FARMS PARK CONSERVANCY
500 Pine Lake Drive
Memphis, TN 38134

PREPARED BY:

field operations
landscape architecture + urban design

with
HR&A ADVISORS - economics + finance
PICKERING FIRM INC - engineering + hydrology
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER - ecology
JPA INC - landscape architecture
FAITHFUL + GOULD - cost estimating
TERRY ADKINS - public art
THE SITE
Formerly a penal farm and agricultural area, Shelby Farms Park is today a 4,500 acre reserve of scenic fields, meadows, woodlands, lakes, pathways and trails. At more than five-times the size of New York’s Central Park, this enormous site affords a very broad range of uses, appealing to an equally broad range of users and interest groups. Its huge scale offers an extraordinary resource for people who are interested in large-scale recreation activities – strolling, jogging, cycling, rollerblading, picnicking, dog-walking, frisbee, horseback riding, fishing, boating, dog training, gardening and the like. Its agricultural heritage is also a great resource for land husbandry practices, including farming, research, food production, energy creation, education, markets and festivals. The site also offers ample opportunities for arts, music, culture and large-scale outdoor events, such as Earth Day and July 4th celebrations.

A NEW CENTRAL DESTINATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE
With the new Master Plan, Shelby Farms Park will become a major landmark public open space and defining destination for Memphis. While the site is located east of the center of Memphis proper, it is actually quite central to the larger population settlement across the metropolitan area. Extensions along the Wolf River Greenway and the future greeline (former CSX rail line) further embed the Park in the fabric of the Memphis Region and help to connect it to a broad range of constituents and neighborhoods. The development of the Park is an important part of Memphis Fast Forward – the largest and most comprehensively supported economic development program in the region. It is in this context that investment in and transformation of Shelby Farms Park will not only enrich the lives of all who visit and use the Park, but will also enhance the attractiveness of Memphis for business, creative talent, families and individuals.

THE VISION
Continuing both the agricultural and more recent recreational uses of the site, the new Park offers a generous and beautiful large-scale public landscape for cultivation, growth, health and wellbeing (as in a sports farm, a tree farm, a culture farm, an arts farm, an energy farm, as well as the more familiar land husbandry farm) for a broad constituency of public user groups, families and individuals. In this way traditional land practices meet the new urban 21st century culture of health, fitness, leisure, play, education, and ecology, creating a unique place of large-scale interaction with the land. As such, the Park will become a leading-edge, international model for design and sustainable management practices.

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION | ONE PARK, ONE MILLION TREES, TWELVE LANDSCAPES
THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan offers a vision and a guiding framework for how the Park may be improved and developed over time. At the same time, it is intended to be dynamic and flexible, capable of being adapted to changing needs and desires. The Master Plan is also designed to be implemented flexibly in realistic phases, depending upon the availability of funding and priorities set by the Conservancy.

As a guiding vision, the Master Plan provides a bold yet practical framework for future investment in the Park, creating a world-class Park of exceptional distinction, that appeals to the broadest possible constituency and heralds a new era where visionary parks are central to the creation of a wholesome, just and rich quality of urban life.

ONE PARK, ONE MILLION TREES, TWELVE LANDSCAPES

By framing the Master Plan around the threefold concept of “One Park, One Million Trees, Twelve Landscapes,” an otherwise complex series of site design initiatives can be more simply understood:

“One Park” addresses the goals of unity, connectivity, sense-of-place, ecosystem, identity and inclusion. New circulation systems plantings, signage and consistent design elements will shape the Park as one.

“One Million New Trees” addresses the goals of ecological improvement and biodiversity, defining edges and screening out undesirable views while maintaining some of the site’s most spectacular vistas; engaging the community in planting and stewardship; creating more shade for strolling; and reducing Memphis’s overall carbon footprint.

“Twelve Landscapes” addresses the diversity and richness of the different areas of the site; the varied user group needs; and the definition of future management zones, with respective goals and objectives.

Together, these three guiding principles will help to steer and form the basis around which the future Park takes shape. New entrances, pathways, plantings and facilities will shape a more defined and beautiful identity for Shelby Farms Park as a whole. In the center will be a magnificent new lake – nearly three times the size of the current Patriot Lake – able to support a diverse array of non-motorized water sport activities. Twelve distinctive large-scale landscapes surround the expanded Patriot Lake, each supporting certain uses and events while allowing a strong ‘sense-of-place structure’ for the many varied user groups set within the larger park setting. The plan is respectful of current Park users and the unique qualities of the landscape, while at the same time affording enhanced amenities – improved and expanded trails, play areas, water bodies, performance spaces, activity areas and facilities – for an even broader spectrum of users.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION | ONE PARK, ONE MILLION TREES, TWELVE LANDSCAPES

The Master Plan describes a series of bold, yet pragmatic land planning and physical design improvements that will help to create a world-class park for the 21st century. Key strategies are driven by:

a) overcoming the segmentation of the larger site created by Walnut Grove Road and the new north-south Shelby Farms Parkway (Kirby-Whitten Parkway), and creating instead a strong sense of a unified large-scale landscape with improved access and seamless pedestrian connectivity;

b) enhancing and diversifying the natural ecosystems, plantings, water-bodies and landscapes across the site, primarily through the planting of new trees and careful land management practices;

c) creating a unique, beautiful and contemporary sense-of-place where nature, physical health and fitness, agriculture and the production of food and energy, environmental education, arts and culture, and scenic beauty are all equally foregrounded;

d) establishing distinctive landscape character zones where particular uses are accommodated;

e) creating an iconic new center for the Park, in the form of a very large lake that supports a diverse array of non-motorized water sport activities;

f) phasing Park improvements that work with funding capital and operating budget plans over the long-term; and

g) promoting the highest qualities of landscape architecture, land preservation, environmental stewardship and sustainable management practices.
The Shelby Farms Park Conservancy has outlined a unique vision and an ambitious set of goals for the transformation of the existing Shelby Farms territory in order to give rise to a celebrated 21st century park that defines and shapes a great city. The Conservancy has established a set of core principles that guide the stewardship of the design, planning, management and maintenance of Shelby Farms Park. These Guiding Principles are as follows:

• We are leading the reinvention of large urban parks.
• We are creating a constantly improving park that is layered, flexible and adaptive.
• We are creating an exceptional and distinctive park that capitalizes on its unique natural resources and size.
• We insist on both environmental and financial sustainability.
• Shelby Farms Park will capitalize on its size to create options: places grand and expansive and others small and personal.
• Shelby Farms Park will connect and strengthen the fabric of community through its accessibility, inclusiveness and connections to the city.
• We are creating a beloved place where powerful memories are delivered to the people of Shelby County.
• We are known for work that is bold, dedicated, visionary and public-spirited.

In addition, the Conservancy and the design team moved forward through the master plan process while keeping the following questions in mind:

• Does it promote green and open?
• Is it flexible and adaptive?
• Is it accessible and inviting?
• Is it environmentally and financially sustainable?
• Is it exceptional and distinctive?
• Does it capitalize on the size of the park?
• Does it respect the limitations of the easement?
• Does it capitalize on our natural resources?
• Does it reflect the highest possible standards?
• Does it encourage a sense of community?
• Is it safe?
1.2 PROCESS + PURPOSE

PROCESS

While conducting an extensive first round of public input forums in the fall of 2007, the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy issued a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) for the Shelby Farms Park Innovative Design Competition. From the 33 responses to this RFQ, three teams were invited to Memphis to begin a three-month process of developing a proposal for the Schematic Design of Shelby Farms Park. At the end of this process, the three proposals were exhibited during the month of March 2008 at the Shelby Farms Park Visitor Center, the Benjamin Hooks Central Library, and the Cossitt Library. Visitors to the exhibition were asked to complete a questionnaire indicating what they liked and disliked about each design proposal. The three proposals and the questionnaire were also available via the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy’s Web site from March 6 - March 31, 2008. The results from each of these venues were tabulated following the Master Plan competition exhibit. They represent thoughts from a wide cross-section of the Memphis community and include the ideas and opinions of both current Park users and those who do not currently use the Park.

At the end of this process, field operations was chosen by the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy to prepare a Master Plan for Shelby Farms Park. The Conservancy selected field operations based on several factors, including their responsiveness to the public’s views on the future of the Park; design philosophy; big ideas; their approaches to environmental sustainability and project phasing needs; and the Conservancy’s general impression of the firm’s passion for the Park.

Since the awarding of the Master Plan, field operations has made multiple trips to Memphis to meet with stakeholders and related public agencies, as well as the Park Master Plan Committee to calibrate the content of the Master Plan Report to the priorities and vision of the Park users, and the Memphis community.

PURPOSE

The Shelby Farms Park Master Plan provides a vision and a strategic framework for review, discussion and decision-making. Its recommendations are not fixed or final, but offer a flexible framework for implementation. The continued input of many experts, policy makers and most importantly, the public, will be critical to the refinement of the plan as the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy moves forward in the implementation of the recommendations outlined herein. The following four points outline the purpose of this Master Plan Document.

1. Outline the goals, vision and organizational framework for Shelby Farms Park;
2. Demonstrate that the goals, vision and strategic direction are grounded and realistic;
3. Advance discussion at the leadership level regarding implementation, finance and long-term management options; and
4. Build broader understanding, support and leadership for the Park at the community, stakeholder and civic levels.

It should be noted that this is not a conventional Master Plan that organizes information in a manner that clearly responds to every specific existing condition. Rather, it is a bold but concise vision for Shelby Farms Park that describes the key principles, characteristics and opportunities that are enabled by such a vision. It is important to understand that this Master Plan is an integrated document. For any goal, objective or proposition to be fully understood, it must be read as a whole.
CONSULTATION

Once field operations was awarded the contract to prepare the Master Plan Report for Shelby Farms Park, the design team reviewed all of the comments provided by the Conservancy from both the fall 2007 and spring 2008 public input meetings and surveys, and began a series of meetings with Park stakeholders and related public agencies. These consultations included meetings and review sessions with the Conservancy’s Master Plan Committee; a series of meetings with the Conservancy leadership regarding finance and operations of an expanded Shelby Farms Park; working sessions with representatives from Agricenter International; a presentation and feedback forum with the leadership of each of the Park’s user groups; meeting with representatives from the Memphis Community Connector (the group responsible for the acquisition of the former CSX rail line); meeting with representatives from the Wolf River Conservancy; as well as various discussions with the Shelby County Department of Public Works, the Memphis City Engineer, and the director of Germantown Parks and Recreation.

This public input, and the accompanying series of meetings and working sessions, were a critical aspect of the development of this Master Plan document. It is anticipated that these opportunities for public review and input will continue as the Conservancy begins the process of implementing the Master Plan.

OUTREACH

The public and stakeholder process should not end with the completion and approval of the Master Plan document. Continued stakeholder and public participation in, and support for the Shelby Farms Park Master Plan are as crucial for its future success as they were for the development of a Master Plan that reflects the desires and needs of the Memphis Community. In this context, it is important to note that the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy is guided by a strong policy regarding minority and local participation. As the Shelby Farms Park project moves into future stages of design and planning, the public and relevant stakeholder groups - including all user groups - must continue to be consulted to ensure that the future Park achieves the objectives of the Master Plan, the goals of Park users, and abides by the guiding principles of the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy.
MEMPHIS’ ASSETS

For the thousands of people who visit Memphis every week, the wide range of social, cultural and historical assets of the City is quite well known and readily cited. Elvis, the Blues, Rock’n Roll, Gospel Music, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the National Civil Rights Museum, BBQ, the Memphis Zoo and its pandas, several great Museums for adults and kids, and a diverse amateur and professional sports scene all need little introduction.

Memphis is also the business center of the Mid-South and a major player in the global economy. Sited at the geographic center of the United States, overlooking the Mississippi River, Memphis is ideally positioned for industries associated with transportation and shipping related commerce, and has a rich history of agriculture, medicine and entrepreneurism. Fortune 500 companies FedEx, AutoZone, and International Paper, along with world-renowned medical and research companies such as St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital all call Memphis home. Memphis is home to the world’s busiest airport in terms of cargo traffic handled, boasts two major Mississippi River rail crossings, and is the convergence of a number of east-west and north-south rail lines. Memphis is also home to a growing bioscience industry. In 2000, the city was cited as one of the top 50 best places to start a new business in the United States.

This combination of culture and commerce places Memphis in an enviable position moving forward into the 21st century. It is well known that in addition to an available workforce and positive business environment, the real driver for corporate location managers is the potential quality of life available to their employees. With the new design for Shelby Farms Park, Memphis can add to its unique culture and a fertile business environment, as well as offer a one-of-a-kind civic amenity that can position Memphis as a national and international talent magnet through the exceptional quality of life the City can provide.
Shelby Farms Park is envisioned to become a Park for all of those living in the Memphis Metropolitan Region. A top priority of the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy is to improve connectivity and accessibility to the Park, particularly for poorly served parts of the City. The Park’s central geographic location affords the Conservancy a great opportunity to make these connections a reality. It is easy to imagine residents of Downtown, Midtown, Collierville, Germantown, Cordova, Bartlett, Millington, Arlington, Lakeland, Olive Branch, South Haven and West Memphis all coming to Shelby Farms Park, whether it is for a major event like the Fourth of July, or just for a weekend or evening outing. This new connectivity will allow the Park to become a place populated and activated by the diverse cultures and ethnicities of the entire Memphis Region.

In addition, the huge scale of the Park allows for such a wide range of uses and activities that nearly everyone – at every age and from every background – will be able to find something that interests and engages them at Shelby Farms Park. A huge range of amenities, paired with ample opportunities for active and passive recreation in a unique agrarian landscape at the center of a growing metropolitan region, will truly make Shelby Farms Park a place to be enjoyed by all.
Shelby Farms Park is the single largest urban figure in the Memphis landscape after the Mississippi River. This exceptional scale affords the opportunity to grow a Park that is cherished not just by the residents of East Memphis where the Park sits, but by the entire Memphis Metropolitan region including the populations of Downtown, Midtown, Collierville, Germantown, Cordova, Bartlett, West Memphis and beyond. Though it lies just east of the I-240/I-40 loop, Shelby Farms is located at the geographic population center of Shelby County. This combination of size, location, and amenity generates a true destination potential for the Park within the Mid-South Region – a new “green heart.”

A major objective of the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy is to improve connectivity and accessibility to the Park, particularly for poorly served parts of the City. The northern and southern boundaries of the property already offer immediate opportunities to create these first linkages to the broader metropolitan region, and can be instrumental in promoting improved access for all.

To the north, the existing CSX line has the potential in the short term to become a recreational connection to the Fairgrounds and Midtown through the creation of a future pedestrian and bicycle oriented greenline. To the east, this future greenline will connect Shelby Farms Park with a number of other neighborhoods between the Park and Cordova. Over the long-term, it is imagined that this pedestrian corridor could be expanded to include a transit linkage like light rail that would connect Memphis’ existing business centers with its growing population centers.

To the south of the Park is the Wolf River and the proposed Wolf River Greenway. This pedestrian connection is intended to tie Collierville and Germantown all the way to downtown Memphis and the Mississippi River via a paved recreation trail that runs along the Wolf River. A portion of this Greenway is already in place in Collierville and along the Germantown section of the River-Park boundary. It is currently in the planning stages as it moves west along the Park’s southern perimeter and through the City of Memphis to the Mississippi River.

Both of these connections will link a variety of seemingly distant and disparate neighborhoods to Shelby Farms Park, creating a public venue that is directly accessible by a huge portion of the Memphis population. To optimize this potential, these connections need to be tied into a larger bike and pedestrian network that is not yet present within Memphis. It is our hope that the momentum behind Shelby Farms Park will translate into momentum for this broader bike and pedestrian network within the City.

In addition to these recreational and pedestrian linkages, the Master Plan recommends a regional transit link that will tie into the Memphis Area Transit Authority system. This transit link will improve access to Shelby Farms by connecting future bus routes to an internal circulation system (trolley) within the Park so that any place in Memphis will essentially connect to any place within Shelby Farms Park.

The transformation of Shelby Farms Park has the capacity to enhance the continued greening of Greater Memphis; promote a healthy lifestyle for the City’s residents; and provide a resource that contributes to the overall quality of life for all current and future Memphians.
The outcome and eventual social and cultural position of Shelby Farms Park within Western Tennessee and
the Memphis Region has a long and storied history, and until very recently has remained unresolved to some
degree.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Shelby Farms was home to Frances Wright’s Nashoba Experiment. A
Humanist reformer, Ms. Wright set up a commune on the land intended to prepare slaves for their future
freedom by training them in the time’s worthwhile skills and educating them in the liberal arts. Though there
is some discussion as to the various successes and failures of this experiment, there is little doubt as to the
vanguard role Ms. Wright played during period in West Tennessee’s history.

In 1928, Shelby County acquired 1,600 acres of this land for use as a model penal farm. By 1942, the
penal farm lands had been expanded to more than 5,000 acres, and it had become a national model visited
by prison experts from around the country. In the late 1960’s, Shelby County determined the penal farm
was no longer viable and shut it down.

Though this land was initially a great distance from the City center, rapid expansion during the mid-
twentieth century brought the territory within the Memphis City limits. It was following this expansion that
a series of development plans were proposed for the site intending to transform it into the center of a new
town concept. The three most well-known of these plans included the Bartholomew Report (1970); the
American City Corporation Report (1972); and the Rouse-Boyle Proposal (1973). Though each of these
three proposals increased the ratio of open space to development from the one that preceded it, each was
met with strident public opposition and eventually discarded due in large part to the various open spaces
offered being comprised mostly of lowland and flood plain areas of the site rather, than the more valuable
rolling hills and hollows of the upland.

In 1975, Garrett Eckbo submitted a final plan and report outlining “best alternative future land
uses for Shelby Farms.” This plan transitioned from a development-oriented approach to one that treated
the land as an important and impressive resource for the community. Though very little of this report was
implemented, the document did loosely guide the development and transformation of the Shelby Farms
territory over the past thirty years. Related products of the Eckbo Plan include the creation of Plough Park
and the designation of the land near the present day Area 10 for County-related development purposes.

Excluding the 1,000 acres at the Agricenter and the 300 acres comprising Area 10, the majority of
the remaining 3,200 acres at Shelby Farms Park are currently used for recreation or recreation-related
purposes. Of this 3,200 acres, 780 acres a designated and protected within the Lucius Burch State
Natural Area, which runs along the Wolf River. Significant portions of the 3,200 acres not used for
recreation-related purposes include a dormant landfill south of Walnut Grove Road adjacent to the
Agricenter property and an inactive shooting range also in this area of the Park.

Currently, much of Shelby Farms Park remains zoned for industrial use. In response to a variety of
development pressures, a permanent easement was proposed to protect the Park from what were
deemed incongruent uses. In December 2006, the Shelby County Commission approved a Conservation
Easement, which anticipated incorporating recommendations from this Master Plan. Pre-existing master
plans or development proposals for Area 10 and tiers 2+4 of the Agricenter would be maintained within this
easement. In August 2007, the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy assumed management of 3,200 acres of
the Shelby Farms Park territory from Shelby County.
In December 2006, the Shelby County Commission passed a Conservation Easement, which anticipated incorporating recommendations from this Master Plan. This Easement was entered into by the County of Shelby, Tennessee (“County”) and the Shelby County Agricenter Commission (“Agricenter”) as Grantors of the Easement and the Land Trust of Tennessee as the recipient of the Easement. The County has previously granted 1,000 acres of the Shelby Farms land to Agricenter for use as an agri-center pursuant to a state statute. The Agricenter Property is subject to reversion to the County under certain specific circumstances. The grant of the Conservation Easement may be terminated upon the 50th anniversary of its execution.

The Conservation Easement has been executed because the Property has been found to have “significant conservation, natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural, scientific and parkland resources and values in the fields, forests, open spaces, vistas, wetlands, ponds, lakes and streams on the Property, which resources and values are worthy of protection, maintenance, preservation, and enhancement for the benefit of the people of Tennessee.” This Easement was received and is enforced by the non-profit group, The Land Trust for Tennessee, Inc. The County, the Agricenter, and the Land Trust for Tennessee have agreed to protect, maintain, preserve and enhance the various natural resources and values of the Property.

This Master Plan is anticipated to become part of the Conservation Easement once it is approved by the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy, Agricenter and the Shelby County Board of Commissioners as defined under Section II, item 3 of the Conservation Easement- “Grantors and Grantee agree that Grantee shall become a party to the planning process for said Master Plan, which upon completion shall become incorporated into the Easement as though set out fully herein.”

The Conservation Easement includes provisions for permitted and existing uses within the Park including but not limited to, paved and unpaved recreation trails; observation structures; gardens; recreational sports venues; park pavilions; agricultural and horticultural uses; scientific research; boating and water sport activities including fishing; habitat and wildlife enhancement; short term events; way-finding and locational signage; outdoor classrooms; retreat facilities; maintenance and operation facilities; and/or a historic carousel. Standard maintenance; completion of any buildings or facilities under construction; and repair or replacement of existing roads and trails is also permitted within the Easement.

The Conservation Easement prohibits uses such as stadiums or arena facilities; the introduction of new transmission lines unless permitted by an existing leases; the use of motorized equipment on unpaved trails; real estate development; manufacturing or industrial uses; commercial mining; residential or hotel uses; subdivision of the property; zoos; permanent fairsgrounds; billboards; and/or commercial advertising.

The Master Plan described herein is designed to be consistent with the uses and purposes of the Easement to promote “the use of the Property by the public as an urban park.” The full Conservation Easement can be found in Appendix B of this report. It can also be found on the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy website:

http://www.shelbyfarmspark.org/sfpc/park_info/park_mgmt

Conservation Easement Areas:

TIER 1: Shelby Farms Park
TIER 2: Agricenter Campus Area
TIER 3: Agricenter Crop and Recreation Area
TIER 4: Agricenter Showplace Arena Area
AREA 10: County property not restricted by provisions of this Easement
Lucius Burch Natural Area

NOTE: The drawing to the right is a graphic representation only of the subject property. The controlling legal descriptions of metes and bounds of this property shall take precedence over the appearance of this document.
Shelby Farms Park is currently a successful public Park. However, it does possess four significant structural deficiencies which we believe the Master Plan must address in order to guide the long-term transformation and growth of the Park.

**Poor Identity** (Is it an agricultural farm, a penal farm or a park?) – Perhaps the single greatest deficiency of Shelby Farms is an absence of identity. The boundaries of the Park lack a strong physical presence that easily indicates it is a premier public open space venue. In addition, a large percentage of Memphians are unaware of its role within the city (that is, they don't know the Park exists). Driving along Walnut Grove Road is like driving on any other divided highway in Western Tennessee. What signage is present is not immediate and is therefore lost amongst the visual congestion of the road. Further, a public understanding of what the Park is and who it is for (everybody), would substantially help to increase the number of Park users and in turn, support for the Park.

**Segmented by Infrastructure** – Walnut Grove Road already bisects the Park into northern and southern halves, isolating the programs and activities in each. Implementation of the new Shelby Farms Parkway necessitates a strong approach that will physically and perceptually link these areas of the Park into a single, legible whole. The alternative is a further erosion of the Park’s physical presence within the City.

**Fragmented Ecosystem** – Though the Park is often thought of as “natural,” it is in fact a highly constructed and continually modified environment. The existing pockets of upland forest are healthy, but ecologically limited in that they remain unconnected and isolated. Further, habitat in this area is cut off from the more ecologically productive Wolf River corridor which is a critical piece of wildlife movement within the region. Connecting the various ecological components of the Park into an interconnected mosaic would serve to improve the overall health and ecological value of the land.

**Deficient Access / Connectivity / Circulation** – Shelby Farms Park is well positioned for access by vehicular traffic, however its location well east of Midtown and Downtown Memphis make the site difficult to reach by means other than an automobile. No mass transit reaches the interior or the Park, and the few stops at its perimeter are too far from any major Park destination to be of any real utility. Providing connections to recreation and alternative transportation linkages such as public greenways or bike lanes, as well as modifying and expanding existing transit service to the Park will help to truly make Shelby Farms accessible and usable by the entire Memphis Region.

Once inside the Park, taking advantage of the various venues is difficult because of the under-developed existing circulation system. Many of the roadways and circulation routes within the Park are re-appropriated field roads or user-defined trails. In fact, the heavily trafficked Farm Road is actually not a public thoroughfare but an internal “farm” road. Because it provide a direct connection between Walnut Grove and Mullins Station Roads, it is heavily utilized. Definition of a clear hierarchy of circulation types; implementation of way-finding elements; and the creation of redundant connections between Park areas rather than single linkages will help improve movement within and enjoyment of the Park.
1) POOR IDENTITY

2) SEGMENTED BY INFRASTRUCTURE

3) FRAGMENTED ECOSYSTEM

4) DEFICIENT ACCESS / CONNECTIVITY / CIRCULATION
In order to expand the presence of Shelby Farms Park within the culture of Memphis, the Park needs to project a stronger identity – both physically and conceptually. It has been noted above, but is worth repeating that Shelby Farms Park is already home to a healthy mix of uses. These activities should be the basis upon which the Conservancy defines a strategy for attracting those who don’t yet use the Park.

We believe step one in generating an identity for Shelby Farms Park is emphatically demonstrating that it is in fact a totally accessible and welcoming public open space. This means creating a series of opportunities or events that will engage multiple segments of the Memphis population who are not currently using the Park. These could include a series of small group visits organized through Memphis schools, churches and/or community groups. It could also mean organizing and heavily publicizing highly visible activities such as a temporary art installations or public performances, as well as additional events along the lines of the current Earth Day or Fourth of July celebrations that will draw upon populations who wouldn’t readily define themselves as “park users”.

The second and equally important step in generating an identity for Shelby Farms Park is creating memorable, physical markings at the edges of the Park that are legible from the window of a passing automobile. These should include a strong sense of gateway along Walnut Grove Road and the proposed Shelby Farms Parkway (Kirby-Whitten Parkway), as well as clearly defined entrances to the Park – each distinctively marked with iconic signage and plantings. There should also be a clear delineation of the Park’s boundaries through elements such as a visually compelling fence or lighting. Ultimately, the intention is for Shelby Farms Park to be easily legible as a welcoming public open space from both within the Park and at its perimeter.

Once inside Shelby Farms Park, it is critical to clarify movement so that first time visitors know exactly where important venues are and how to reach their particular destination whether by bike, by bus or by car. In order to accomplish this, visually clear way-finding signage and a new vehicular circuit is proposed. This circuit will be tied to a 5.26 mi multi-use loop path that will connect all parts of the Park together and help centralize orientation, circulation, transit and parking. An internal park shuttle will provide connections to various points throughout Shelby Farms Park, departing from centralized activity areas with their associated parking facilities. A second 2 mi “circle” loop allows for pedestrian connectivity across major roads and intersections (via tunnels and bridges), and connects the upper Park to the Wolf River and neighborhoods to the south. An expanded network of paths and trails complements the two central multi-use loops including 12+ miles of equestrian trails; 15+ miles of mountain bike trails; and 20+ miles of wilderness and unpaved trails.

The scale of Shelby Farms Park is its most important attribute. Therefore, the Master Plan promotes a strategy of concentrating programs and facilities at particular locations within the Park to maintain the various landscape characters already present within the site. This approach not only limits the presence of obtrusive architectural elements within the Park landscape, but allows large areas of the Park to remain “natural” and unoccupied by permanent Park activity. The Master Plan proposes less than 10% of the total Shelby Farms Park site area be actively programmed.
One of the most effective moves in generating an identity will be the planting of one-million new trees at Shelby Farms Park. This seemingly simple operation will actually do five very important things for the Park to promote its long-term growth and transformation.

The first, as was noted above, is to help with the creation of identity for Shelby Farms Park by establishing a strong boundary definition and spatial enclosure.

Secondly, the plantings will diversify the ecology and habitat on site by expanding contiguous forest cover and adding new community mixes. These extensive plantings will create many varied woodland settings and ecologies, ranging from Swamp Cypress groves to Oak-Hickory stands, Birch Thickets, Pine Forests and Bottomland Hardwoods.

Third, this new planting will allow for undesirable outside qualities such as major vehicular thoroughfares to be screened from within the Park, creating a true sense of otherness and escape. At the same time, important views and vistas of open landscapes and horizons important to the site will be preserved.

Fourth will be the ability to create a strong sense of community engagement with the planting of these new trees. By partnering with local schools and religious groups to participate in the planting of many of the new trees, the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy can create an immediate momentum building transformation of the Park that will serve to excite and entice the public as other projects are developed and implemented over time. One could easily imagine thousands of local school children coming to Shelby Farms Park to plant these trees and thereby become invested stewards of the long-term health of the Park.

Finally, the planting of a million new trees will also create a potentially large-scale fund-raising intervention. Memphis is home to a number of regional and international corporations who might logically be interested in a contribution of part or all of these trees as a highly desirable “green” public relations opportunity and a way to truly give back to the Memphis Community.

It should be noted that the planting of the one-million new trees is not a singular or monolithic operation. The vast majority of the trees will be planted as small saplings in both unforested areas to expand canopy cover, and in already forested areas to diversify the existing habitat. Some of these saplings will be thinned out in the process of managing the woodland, while others will be allowed to grow to full size. A portion of this new tree planting regime is anticipated to be grown and transplanted to other areas of the City, helping to green Greater Memphis.
A mix of densely planted native tree saplings can be later thinned and transplanted elsewhere across the site to effectively "grow" a complex multi-aged woodland over time. Reforestation is most successful when a mixture of early-successional and later-successional tree species is planted.
Shelby Farms Park is big. At more than 4,500 acres, the scale of the Park makes it difficult to navigate and spatially comprehend. The deployment of one-million new trees will allow for the definition of distinct landscapes or rooms within the Park, each with its own discrete set of physical and programmatic characteristics. Each landscape or room will be characterized by a different set of users and accommodate a unique set of programs. These large-scale public “rooms” will each support a coherent “sense-of-place” structure for the many varied user groups set within the larger Park setting. As such, each landscape room has its own discrete entrance(s) while also connecting openly into the larger Park system.

The definition of the individual rooms also provides a potential fund-raising mechanism and phasing scenario for Park development. The level of physical transformation varies from room to room and thereby lends itself to a strategy of development of Park areas based on the availability of resources and demands for use. Development at the core of the Park is the logical point of departure, but once this has been established, the transformation of other areas of the Park can occur under any number of scenarios.
DEFINE 12 LANDSCAPE ROOMS

1 PATRIOT LAKE
2 PLOUGH PARK
3 THE RANGE + ARBORETUM
4 THE PUBLIC GARDENS *
5 COMMUNITY CENTER + SPORTS FIELDS *
6 THE OUTBACK
7 THE ART MOUND + PARK CIRCLE
8 CATCH 'EM LAKES
9 THE REFUGE
10 THE ORCHARDS + BERRY FIELDS
11 CROP + RESEARCH FIELDS
12 THE AGRICENTER

* pending area 10 approval

LANDSCAPE ROOMS
MAJOR WATER BODIES

SCALE: 1"=2,000'
Shelby Farms Park is more than just a place of recreation. It is Memphis’s green heart – a place that is engaged in a variety of uses and activities related to health, exercise, play, nature, food, energy, ecology, research and education. This combination of programs is exceptional. It positions Shelby Farms Park and Memphis at the forefront of 21st century sustainable growth and civic development.

In the very near future, a visit to Shelby Farms Park might include a brisk five-mile jog through an expansive car free territory within the City, followed by a leisurely swim and afternoon reading on the beach of the region’s largest recreation-only lake. A different day at Shelby Farms Park could start with a visit to an outdoor classroom sited at the edge of a healthy and productive cypress swamp, followed by a snack of locally cultivated fruit and berries purchased from a farmers market powered by on-site renewable energy sources like wind turbines or solar power. A different visitor to the Park might go for an early morning horseback ride before meeting up with a group of friends volunteering to help a church group set up for their summer picnic and choir performance at the Park’s new woodland amphitheatre. Another Park user might spend the day working on cutting-edge agricultural practices at the Agricenter before taking a vigorous afternoon ride on the Region’s premier skate venue and enjoying a picnic dinner watching the sunset over the newly expanded Patriot Lake.

The Shelby Farms Park experience is endless.

With the execution of this Master Plan Shelby Farms Park can become a place characterized by a dynamic environment that combines active recreation and a healthy lifestyle with state of the art green energy production, and local and organic agricultural practices; a place that will comprise diverse natural ecologies and cutting edge agricultural research. The Park has the potential to become a 4,500 acre natural science laboratory and classroom for the Greater Memphis Community that can help educate generations of Memphians on the value of their natural environment.

This “mix” of programs, uses and activities will set a global precedent for a new kind of Urban Park – one that does more than just provide a civic venue for active and passive recreation. Shelby Farms Park will transform Memphis. It will influence the culture of the City and the Region. It will redefine the reputation of the place, and the health and well being of its population. Shelby Farms Park will help Memphis offer a high quality of life that is both desirable and enviable.

Shelby Farms Park will impact the way Memphis and West Tennessee move forward into the 21st century.
SHELBY FARMS PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEALTH + EXERCISE
PLAY
NATURE
FOOD
ENERGY
ECOLOGY
RESEARCH
EDUCATION
6.0 PHASING | GROWTH OF THE PARK OVER TIME

The large scale and complexity of Shelby Farms Park dictates that the implementation of the Master Plan for the Park will take time. It will likely be more than a decade before Shelby Farms Park is fully realized, and the planning processes over this period will need to address the existing challenges outlined above—including the lack of identity; segmented infrastructure; a fragmented ecosystem; deficient circulation; and poor regional access—as well as new challenges such as the environmental and economic sustainability of managing an expanded parkland. Add to this equation the anticipated public and stakeholder consultation processes, and it becomes clear that the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy needs a robust strategy for dealing with the shifting priorities and financial requirements of developing the Park over an extended period of time.

Due to this great complexity, Shelby Farms Park will need to be developed in phases or planned stages of growth that 1) target clear design principles; 2) expand on existing facilities, resources and character; 3) capitalize on the availability of funds, to maximize the exposure and legibility of the Park; and 4) build momentum and support for the Park with each project that is implemented.

It is critical to note however, that incremental, staged growth does not mean that implementation and detailed planning should happen in an ad-hoc or piecemeal fashion. Quite the opposite. To guarantee the long-term success of Shelby Farms Park, it is crucial that early stages of development are founded on clear design objectives while simultaneously building excitement for what is yet to come. The momentum for investing in later stages of the Park’s development will depend on public and stakeholder appraisal of the success of initial phases of implementation of the Master Plan.

The Master Plan sets out a strategic and intelligent framework to guide the growth of the Park, with public and stakeholder consultation supporting all future planning and design efforts. Shelby Farms Park is a unique landscape, both in terms of its features and character, as well as the type of efforts, cooperation and leadership that will be required from the Conservancy and the associated public agencies to move the implementation process forward. What the Master Plan phasing scenario outlined here provides is a structure for:

- creating early enthusiasm to propel the implementation process;
- establishing the principal framework necessary to guide long-term development of the Park;
- enhancing the site through ecology and habitat diversification;
- shaping a more defined and memorable identity for the Park; and
- respecting the highly valued existing places in the Park.

The Phasing diagrams shown below and to the right are not intended to comprehensively describe every project and the order with which they are to be implemented. Rather, the four phases are intended to indicate priorities in terms of the areas of the Park where we believe capital projects should be concentrated for maximum gain. As each phase of the project is developed, the limits of each will be clearly defined prior to any design work or construction taking place. It is expected that some adjustments can and will take place regarding the particular location of elements within the master plan provided these adjustments do not conflict with the Conservation Easement or the Master Plan Implementation Instrument. This flexible strategy will establish a strong spatial and organizational design framework for the Park so that its development over time is assured.
PHASE TWO: Expand Core Public Park Area
1) Trail + Facility Enhancements to Plough Park
2) Walnut Grove Planting Strip
3) Reconfiguration + Expansion of Catch ‘Em Lakes
4) Development of Refuge Area
5) Completion of Multi-Use Loop

PHASE THREE: Enhance Landscape Rooms
1) Trail Enhancements to Outback Area
2) Enhancement + Expansion of Agricenter Campus Area
3) Development of Amenities + Activities along Wolf River
4) Development of Wolf River Greenway - by others

PHASE FOUR: Enhance Landscape Rooms (later phases TBD)
1) Community Center + Sports Fields *
2) Public Gardens *
3) Agricenter Research +Crop Field Area *
   * pending area 10 approval
6.1 **PHASING | PHASE ONE CENTERPIECE**

The centerpiece of Phase One will be the expansion of Patriot Lake at the center of the Shelby Farms Park property. The transformation and expansion of the lake will be a bold, dramatic and exciting step in the process of realizing the Shelby Farms Park project. As the iconic destination of the entire Park, the new Patriot Lake will be a highly visible and defining landmark for Memphis: one that is rich with new public amenities, diverse recreational opportunities, spectacular vistas and remarkably unique events.

The Patriot Lake Project is a complex one, as it involves works on land and in the water and will require the collective participation of a broad range of technical consultants, city agencies and the public. However, the promise of its spectacular presence in the future Park, replete with its great physical beauty and recreational resources, signals the importance of prioritizing this remarkable feature in the early stages of the Park’s life.
SMALL VIEWING TOWER
PERMEABLE SURFACE PARKING LOTS
PICNIC PAVILION
EQUIPMENT RENTAL
REST FACILITY
ICON BALLOON
TREE ALLEE
SWIMMING BEACH
VISITOR CENTER
GREAT LAWN
MARINA
WATER PLAYGROUND
EARTHEN AMPHITHEATER
FLOATING STAGE
M+O FACILITIES (15,000 SF BUILDING AND 2-ACRE YARD)
SAILBOAT COURSE
SWAMP CYTPRESS GROVE
2.5-MILE BOARDWALK
FISHING PIERS
1.250 METER / 1.25 KILOMETER ROWING COURSE
SWAMP CYTPRESS GROVE
MULTI-USE CIRCUIT
PATRIOT LAKE ROAD (PRIMARY VEHICULAR ROAD)
Cypress swamp and boardwalk at the expanded patriot lake
Shelby Farms Park is already an amazing reserve of public parkland, amenity and urban nature. Its huge scale offers an extraordinary resource for people who are interested in large-scale recreation activities — strolling, jogging, cycling, mountain biking, rollerblading, picnicking, dog walking, swimming, kayaking, windsurfing, sailing, fishing and the like. The site’s unique agrarian character and diverse ecological habitat is a great draw to a public interested in escaping the frenetic quality of the city and immersing themselves in a large-scale ‘green’ landscape. Whether for hiking, bird watching, private refuge, reflection, plant and wildlife identification, ecological research or education, Shelby Farms Park offers a “Big Nature” setting that lays the grounds for creating one of the world’s most distinct and distinguished urban parks.

The Shelby Farms Park Master Plan amplifies these qualities to provide for a higher intensity and variety of uses on site. A new legible physical identity highlighted by an expanded Patriot Lake; a revised circulation system replete with multi-use circuits and user-specific paths; concentrated areas of public programs; an expanded educational agenda and accompanying facilities; cutting edge agrarian practices; and a new focus on sustainable development and renewable energy sources will distinguish Shelby Farms as the 21st century example of what great urban public space is capable of contributing to a city and a region.

Through intelligent management and enhancement of Shelby Farms’ distinct natural resources, the development of the Park has the capacity to transform Memphis and the Region. The Park will significantly enrich the culture of the City; it will redefine the reputation of the place, and help to attract new creative talent, business and families to the area; and it will offer a great resource for the improvement of public health, fitness and well-being. Shelby Farms Park will help Memphis offer a wonderful quality of life that is both highly desirable and globally enviable.

Shelby Farms Park will impact the way Memphis and West Tennessee move forward into the 21st century.