

## RoundAbout April 2007

### Park with a purpose

## Bicycling, canoeing among activities on Louisville's recreational pathway

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (April 2007) – In a world full of sedentary jobs, physical fitness is on many people's minds. Realizing this, Metro Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson instigated a "Healthy Hometown Movement" that has spread like wildfire, and will eventually touch parts of Oldham County.

Metro Parks of Louisville has acquired hundreds of acres that will contain bicycle and pedestrian pathways through park-like settings within a 15-year period. More than \$3.5 million will be implemented through the Department of Planning and Design in bicycle related projects. One of the main goals of this project is to improve bicycling safety and awareness in Louisville, city officials say.

One way to do so will be through the upcoming Mayor's Hike & Bike. On Memorial Day, May 28, cyclists and walkers are invited to participate in this event, beginning at 10 a.m. at Waterfront Park.

The 15-mile cyclist route will progress south through Old Louisville, the University of Louisville, Southern Parkway, Iroquois Park and wind back to Waterfront Park. A 2.5-mile "Mayor's Mile" loop will be marked for walkers along Waterfront Park.

Through the City of Parks initiative Louisville's park system will expand to benefit a great many people within the next few decades. Out of 123 parks, Louisville now owns 14,000 acres. "Our goal is to add 3,000 to 4,000 acres of new greenspace," said Jason Cissell, community relation director for Metro Parks.

The proposed Metro Loop is a 100-mile paved bike and pedestrian path that will encircle Louisville, increasing biking opportunities throughout the city for cyclists. This multi-use path is expected to take five years to complete, and will extend into the outlying cities of Jefferson County.

The Metro Loop will include certain segments that are already in place along the Floyds Fork watershed area, which runs through eastern and southeastern parts of Jefferson County and into Oldham County. Metro Parks estimates that \$20 million will be spent in the Floyds Fork corridor alone for this segment of the project.

Some significant Metro Parks holdings already stationed along the proposed bike route will be incorporated into the Metro Loop, such as Miles Park in the Middletown area.



Photo provided

**Bicyclists will soon enjoy expanded pathways throughout Metro Louisville, and eventually reaching Oldham County.**

This 130 acres of former farmland lies across from Valhalla Golf Course and was once the site of a pumping station along Floyds Fork.

Miles Park is one of two canoe launch sites that are part of a \$120,000 canoe-launch project to be included in the City of Parks expansion. The second site is in the Fishersville area, located off of Old Taylorsville Road. Plans even call for a canoeing curriculum to be developed by the Jefferson County Public School system and the American Canoe Association.

Land acquisitions for the City of Parks initiative also includes 94 acres downstream from Miles Park, along South Beckley Station Road. This property, south of I-64, has significant frontage along Floyds Fork.

The addition of land in the Floyds Fork corridor is the single largest addition to the Louisville parks system since the expansion of the Jefferson Memorial Forest in the 1970s, officials say. Cissell said that \$60 million in funding commitments have been made so far to the City of Parks initiative project through public and private sources. It is a complex project, said Cissell, with many different phases and land negotiations to be worked out. "Mayor Abramson allotted \$1 million for land acquisition in 2005," he said.

Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell earmarked another \$38 million in federal funding. Humana Inc. co-founder David A. Jones has established a nonprofit organization, 21st Century Parks, to raise \$20 million.

Kevin Beck of 21st Century Parks said the overall goal is to "create a great park system." It will be a model for other cities to follow. Beck said 21st Century Parks "saw Floyds Fork as one of the last pristine areas in Kentucky," and immediately began acquiring surrounding properties.

Wallace, Roberts & Todd, a national planning and design firm, was hired to develop a master plan for the Floyds Fork corridor. Time was spent to find a firm that employed Frederick Law Olmsted's vision and dedication was sought to make the proposed 100-mile loop a reality, Beck said.

Public input will be key factor in developing the area surrounding the Metro Loop. Many meetings will be held for people who live in the targeted areas to determine the best use of the parkland, said Beck.

Greenways for Oldham County members say they are interested in the Metro Loop project, since the loop will extend beyond the city of Louisville. The Metro Loop project is one that Greenways "could definitely connect with anywhere," said Amy Jackson, a Greenways board member. A possible connection would be in Pewee Valley, she added. She says she is excited about a project that could bring tourism dollars to Oldham County, in addition to helping with fitness levels. Cyclists generally travel far when riding, and this would be a way to encourage Jefferson County residents to visit Oldham County for the day.

"A lot of cyclists already ride along Westport Road," said Jackson.

Jackson has observed that in other towns that have pedestrian-bicycle paths, new restaurants and businesses pop up along the trails. People are already making a connection from Jefferson County to Oldham County, said Jackson.

• *For more information, contact Jason Cissell at (502) 456-3253 or (502) 744-0549. Read more about the Louisville project at: [www.floydsfork.org](http://www.floydsfork.org).*

