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**Introduction**

**The Adams Park Master Plan** is the result of a community visioning and planning process for Adams Park, a park located on the historic Omaha boulevard system in North Omaha. The planning process is joint effort between the City of Omaha Department of Parks, Recreation, and Public Property and the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District, who generously provided funding for the project. The Adams Park Master Plan is an outgrowth of the North Omaha Villages Revitalization Plan for the East Village (located around 24th Street and Lake Street) and West Village (located around 30th Street and Bedford Avenue.) The Villages Revitalization Plan called for a renewed focus on Adams Park and the adjacent Malcolm X Birthsite & International Center as the heart of the West Village community and a catalyst for urban growth and revitalization.

The City of Omaha contracted with H3 Studio, Inc., a planning, urban design, and landscape architecture firm in Saint Louis, Missouri, to lead the planning effort. H3 Studio was involved with the Villages Revitalization Plan. The result has been an 18-month community outreach and public visioning process in which the City has worked closely with community residents, stakeholders, and partners to create a visionary yet implementable Master Plan for Adams Park that represents best practices in sustainable urban landscapes while achieving the needs and desires of the North Omaha Community.
In order to create and help implement this vision, the City of Omaha and H3 Studio (the Project Team) have worked closely with an assembled Advisory Committee for the planning process. The Advisory Committee consists of representatives from community service organizations, neighborhood schools, Metropolitan Community College, the Malcolm X Birthsite & International Center, neighborhood organizations, sports and active living associations & nonprofits, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District, and City Staff. The Project Team met with the Steering Committee on four occasions throughout the process for approval of work completed, guidance, and feedback.

In addition to working with the Steering Committee, the Project Team conducted over a dozen focus group interviews with community residents, service providers, institutional representatives, and other stakeholders. These interviews constitute a major portion of the consensus issues and ideas that underlie the analysis of Adams Park’s existing conditions. Finally, the Project Team conducted two Public Workshops at the Adams Park Community Center in which neighborhood residents were invited to provide their ideas and feedback on the development of the Adams Park Master Plan. This comprehensive public engagement process, summarized in detail to the right, has resulted in a Master Plan developed with absolute transparency and supported by a broad base of community input and consensus.

**Lowland meadows in Adams Park**
Located on a promontory that overlooks the Missouri River, Adams Park was founded by the Omaha Parks Commission in 1948. Originally called Bedford Park, Adams Park was renamed in 1955 in honor of Omaha businessman Frederick J. Adams. The western edge of the site is bounded by Union Pacific Railroad tracks, which have since been abandoned. The property as a whole was simply an undevelopable tract surrounded by residential neighborhoods. The most distinguishing historic feature of the site is the route of John A. Creighton Boulevard, a series of picturesque switchbacks winding around a broad hill that offer striking vistas to the north.

Creighton Boulevard is part of the City of Omaha’s historic park and boulevard system. This system dates back to 1889, when Omaha civic leaders, led by Dr. George L. Miller, forcefully and successfully lobbied the Nebraska State Legislature to pass a law enabling metropolitan-class cities to acquire, develop, and maintain a systems of public “parks, parkways, and boulevards.” Between 1880 and 1890, Omaha’s population more than tripled from thirty thousand to over 100 thousand residents. At the same time, Omaha had only two official publicly owned parks—Jefferson Square and the yet-undeveloped Hanscom Park. As a result of the 1889 legislation, the Omaha Board of Park Commissioners (later the Parks Commission) was appointed and convened by the judges of Omaha’s District Court. George L. Miller was subsequently named President of the Board of Park Commissioners.

One of the first acts undertaken by the Commissioners was to hire landscape architect Horace W. S. Cleveland from Minneapolis. Cleveland conceptualized of a system for Omaha consisting of a series of small parks—“pleasant and easily accessible resorts for pedestrians”—integrated and connected with “broad ornamental avenues, known as boulevards or parkways.” H. W. S. Cleveland worked on the system for only five years. Nevertheless, Cleveland’s writings and design concepts guided the development of new parks and boulevards in Omaha for the next five decades, including Creighton Boulevard.
Named after Omaha land developer John A. Creighton, Creighton Boulevard was platted in 1910. It extends north from Bemis Park through Adams Park, winding around Adams Park’s central hill. Continuing north, Creighton Boulevard replaces 31st Street north to Sprague Street, at which point it heads west and is renamed Paxton Boulevard. Paxton Boulevard continues west to Fontenelle Park, one of the city’s original parks, and intersects Fontenelle Boulevard running north and south. While Adams Park was not part of the original parks and boulevards, today it is one of only twelve of Omaha’s 181 public parks located on the historic boulevard system. It also has what is arguably one of the most striking vistas in Omaha. The location of the park and its signature landscape make Adams Park one of the most remarkable public space amenities in all of Omaha.
Existing Conditions

Adams Park currently suffers from a number of difficulties that negatively impact its potential to function as a significant community amenity. The park covers approximately 68 acres, with a total perimeter length of 7,980 feet. However, only 2,575 feet of this perimeter (32 percent) is publicly accessible; the remainder is located behind private development. This results in several issues. First, the “blind edges” of the park—particularly the western edge and the southeast corner—are perceived as unsafe for local and neighborhood users. Additionally, poor visibility and lack of pedestrian access result in a general lack of identity for Adams Park. Throughout the public engagement process, many community members who lived or worked nearby indicated that they had never visited the park and did not know what facilities are even present in the park.

Adams Park also faces a more fundamental issue of a lack of a daily park user base. Adams Park was built as a walk-able neighborhood park designed to serve an immediately-adjacent population. This was at a time when the population of the surrounding neighborhoods was 40- to 50-percent greater than it is today. Declining populations in North Omaha—as in inner-city neighborhoods throughout the United States—mean that many neighborhood parks no longer have the surrounding daily user base necessary to ensure that a park is well-utilized. This decline in population and city tax revenues means that there are less park users and less funds for park maintenance and operations. This results in parks that feel vacant and look run-down.

Despite these challenges, Adams Park possesses some key strengths and opportunities. The Adams Park Community Center is popular with neighborhood residents and is well-used. Adams Park is the site of a major landscape initiative as part of Omaha’s combined sewer outflow (CSO) update. Finally, Adams Park is the subject of a health impact assessment (HIA) by the Douglas County Health Department to explore ways in which the park can contribute to improving public health in North Omaha. These opportunities can and should be leveraged in order to maximize the potential positive impacts of future investment in Adams Park.
ADAMS PARK CONSENSUS ISSUES

1. With the exception of the Adams Park Community Center, Adams Park appears to be highly under utilized with no identifiable daily user base.

2. Over 60% of Adams Park’s perimeter boundary is located behind private buildings and development and does not front onto public streets.

3. The primary street frontages of Adams Park are located on secondary rather than primary streets, limiting visibility and pedestrian access.

4. Lack of street frontage, particularly on the east and west sides of the park and the southeast corner, result in negative perceptions of safety for local and neighborhood users.

5. The general reputation of the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly to the west of Adams Park, results in negative perceptions of safety for Omaha residents and city-wide users.

6. The types of active recreation facilities currently located in the park are insufficient to make the park a destination for particular programming.

7. The types of active recreation facilities currently located in the park are insufficient to make the park a destination for particular programming.

8. While Adams Park has a striking and picturesque landform and topography, this limits the type of facilities that can accommodated in the park, results in what is perceived as a “lot of unused space,” and makes the park visibly inaccessible from the main entrance at J.A. Creighton Boulevard.

9. Large portions of Adams Park are not accessible by existing pathways, particularly the northeast and eastern sections of the park.

10. There are no parking facilities in the northeast and eastern parts of Adams Park.

11. While it is consistently and heavily used, Adams Park Community Center is outdated in terms of universal accessibility and undersized for desired future use and programming.

12. J.A. Creighton Boulevard is a major vehicular thoroughfare that runs through Adams Park and carries relatively high volumes of high-speed, cut-through traffic through the park; this traffic inhibits pedestrian comfort in the park and does not encourage motorists to stop in the park.

13. It is perceived that there is a general lack of programming and activities to encourage children and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods to utilize Adams Park, particularly in the evenings, after dark, and during the winter season.

14. There is a lack of a significant recreational/deep pool in North Omaha.

15. There are no picnic pavilions or high-quality family gathering spaces in Adams Park.

16. Adams Park has no sense of identity in the neighborhood or in Omaha Parks system as a whole.

17. The neighborhoods surrounding the park are under utilized and characterized by extremely low density; this results in an almost complete lack of immediate surrounding population and a daily user base.

18. There is a lack of both vehicular and pedestrian entrances to Adams Park.

19. Adams Park has a lack of landscape diversity and horticulture.

20. The tree population of Adams Park is aging and approaching a monoculture condition.

21. There is a general lack of tree and landscape maintenance and management in Adams Park.
Building upon its striking landscape and location on Omaha’s historic boulevard system, **ADAMS PARK** will be recreated as a safe, vibrant, and signature part of Omaha’s Park System, serving as a regional destination, a catalyst for continued neighborhood revitalization, and a **heart of community identity and well-being**.
ADAMS PARK VISION & MASTER PLAN

VISION & GOALS

ADAMS PARK FRAMEWORK PLAN

Informal playscapes and park water systems

Savannahs and upland forests
The Adams Park Master Plan intends to fulfill the community Vision for Adams Park and achieve the project’s Goals through a comprehensive and implementable strategy of capital improvement projects, public-private partnerships, and programming initiatives. All components of the Master Plan are coordinated with the recommendation of the Villages Revitalization Plan and the Malcolm X Birthsite & International Center Master Plan. The Adams Park Master Plan achieves the following key objectives for Adams Park:

**INCREASE THE VISIBILITY & ACCESSIBILITY OF ADAMS PARK:** Currently, over 70 percent of the Park’s perimeter is hidden behind private development. The Master Plan expands Adams Park one block east to N. 30th Street—a major arterial, south to Maple Street, and northwest to Bedford Avenue at N. 38th Street. Seven new vehicular/pedestrian entrances and four new pedestrian-only entrances are added.

**EXPAND THE USER-BASE & MAKE ADAMS PARK A CITY-WIDE DESTINATION:** One of the keys to the future success of North Omaha’s parks is specialty programming. This will help ensure that each park expands it user population by offering unique programming and facilities. The Adams Park Community Center will be expanded as an Urban Farming & Community Gardening Educational Center. Seasonal community agriculture programs provided by Metro Community College have proven to be very popular, and this new facility will provide a dedicated home for future programming. These facilities and activities are unique in Omaha and will help make Adams Park a city-wide destination.

**MAKE ADAMS PARK A CATALYST FOR ON-GOING NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION:** Adams Park possesses a significant potential to generate ongoing revitalization of surrounding neighborhoods. In order to realize this potential, the Master Plan must fulfill the two aforementioned objectives as well as provide programming for daily users that supports the needs and desires of the community.

The components of the Adams Park Master Plan are presented in detail on the following pages.
Urban Farming & Gardening Center

The Urban Farming & Gardening Center is the centerpiece of the Adams Park Master Plan and Community Vision. Conceived as a partnership between the City of Omaha and Metropolitan Community College, the Community College is currently adding a Specialist Diploma in Urban Farming as part of its Horticulture department. Metropolitan Community College is also considering either constructing a new horticulture facility on the Fort Omaha campus, or utilizing an off-campus facility as a satellite location. Additionally, the City of Omaha Department of Parks, Recreation, and Public Property is pursuing a strategy of co-located community centers with other facilities and community services to lower operational costs and enhance programming flexibility.

The Urban Farming & Gardening Center consists of a 20,000 square foot indoor facility co-located with the existing Adams Park Community Center. This is proposed as an expansion of the existing Community Center building that preserves the existing Community Center facilities and uses while adding four new classrooms and community rooms, a professional teaching and catering kitchen, two outdoor basketball courts, and outdoor agricultural plots. In addition, the facility will have approximately 17,500 square feet of adjacent greenhouse space with a 9,000 square foot outdoor service yard. This will allow the facility to function as a small-scale production-level agriculture facility for community-supported agriculture (CSA) in addition to providing educational and community outreach programming.

The Urban Farming & Gardening Center provides a needed community amenity in Adams Park that is supported by the surrounding community while also providing a facility that is unique to the City of Omaha park system as a whole. This creates a true city-wide and regional draw in Adams Park with a specific, dedicated daily user base.

**INITIATIVES & STRATEGIES**

- Construct expansion of existing Adams Park Community Center building.
- Construct new urban farming & gardening center greenhouses and service yard.
- Pursue partnerships with the Metropolitan Community College Horticulture & Culinary Arts Departments for facility and program development.
- Support community gardening & community agriculture outreach and education programming in conjunction with existing Metropolitan Community College programs.
- Establish and support production-level volunteer agriculture community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
- Establish and support volunteer horticulture programs.
- Support partnerships with Howard Kennedy Elementary School and Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.
- Support community-based tree planting and landscaping programs.
- Support community-based park and neighborhood clean-up and beautification days.
- Support ongoing reinvestment and revitalization of surrounding North Omaha communities.
**The 30th Street Fields** one of the key initiatives to increasing visibility of Adams Park from surrounding neighborhoods and roads is the Multipurpose Field, located at the corner of 30th Street and Bedford Avenue. Approximately 6 acres in size, the Multipurpose Field can accommodate a single regulation-sized or youth football field, a softball diamond, or a youth soccer field. This field shall not be striped or equipped with other permanent facilities; instead, it is intended for practice or informal neighborhood pick-up games. This provides a desired community amenity that is not present in Adams Park today.

In addition to daily use for informal sports and recreation, the Multipurpose Field is designed to serve as a major special events venue. The field shall be constructed with a reinforced subgrade and subterranean drainage to support tractor-trailers and other temporary facilities. Water and power hookups shall be provided. Special events and programming that can be hosted on this site include concerts, outdoor festivals, vendor festivals, fairs, and travelling performance events like circuses. Located on the 30th Street bus line, Adams Park is a perfectly situated to function as a major special events venue, and should be actively promoted and used for ongoing and annual events and programs.

The site of the Multipurpose Field represents an expansion of the current boundaries of Adams Park onto property that is currently owner by Midwest Box (the former Coca-Cola bottling plant) and other small landowners. Expansion of Adams Park east to N. 30th Street will provide a significant new public face to the park on one of Omaha’s major arterial roads and should be prioritized in the overall Master Plan implementation.
PERIMETER STREETS & PARK EXPANSION: The Master Plan ensures that the entire perimeter of the park fronts on public streets. Adams Park is expanded northeast to the corner of N. 30th Street and Bedford Avenue and south to Maple Street. The western boundary of the park is formalized by extending N. 36th Street north from Maple Street, in coordination with the Villages Revitalization Plan. Finally, Maple Street is extended southeast to N. 30th Street.

PARK ROAD ENHANCEMENTS: New interior park roads ensure accessibility to all areas of the park. Creighton Boulevard is widened with a median and a new park road wraps the Adams Park promontory, following the historic route of Creighton Boulevard. Spencer Street is extended east, N. 31st Street is extended north, and Wirt Street is extended west to Creighton Boulevard. These new roads are sized for one-way traffic with parallel parking on both sides.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS: A two-way, multi-use trail is located along Creighton Boulevard as part of a future, boulevard bike trail system. Walking paths are expanded to include 2.5 miles of primary loop trails (shown) with 4.25 total miles of park walking paths.

PLAYGROUNDS: Two playgrounds are provided. A Toddler Playground (ages 5 and below) is located in the park’s western lowlands. An Adventure Playground, with landscape mounds, climbing walls, tunnels, and equipment (ages 5 and up) is located on the eastern side of the Adams Park promontory, overlooking North Omaha.

BMX PUMP TRACK: The Pump Track takes advantage of the Park’s topography and identified community user groups. The pump track has two loops (1/4 mile and 1/10 mile) and a small support building for bike rental, repair, and community programming.

PICNIC SHELTERS: Picnic shelters are indicated by the community as one of the key needs for daily users. The Master Plan provides nine small shelters (30’ X 40’) and one large shelter (45’ X 63’) with a fireplace and restrooms.

INITIATIVES & STRATEGIES

- Enhance sidewalks, tree lawns, and street trees on all Adams Park perimeter streets.
- Provide parallel parking on all Adams Park perimeter streets and interior park roads.
- Construct ADA curb cuts and crosswalks at all intersections.
- Provide pedestrian entrances to Adams Park at all surrounding streets that intersect perimeter park roads.
- Continue the partnership with Trails Have Our Respect (T.H.O.R.) to construct and maintain single-track mountain bike trails in Adams Park.
- Support partnerships with Howard Kennedy Elementary School and Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.
- Support community-based tree planting and landscaping programs.
- Support community-based park and neighborhood clean-up and beautification days.
- Support ongoing reinvestment and revitalization of surrounding North Omaha communities.

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PERIMETER STREETS & PARK EXPANSION

BICYCLE TRAIL

ADAMS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

PICNIC SHELTERS

PARK ROAD ENHANCEMENTS

PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS

ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

BMX PUMP TRACK
INITIATIVES & STRATEGIES

• Utilize the signature topography and land forms of Adams Park to create specific landscape environments.

• Utilize native plantings and landscape types to reduce maintenance requirements and resource usage.

• Create a park water system that functions both as a landscape amenity as well as high-performance stormwater and water quality infrastructure.

• Make Adams Park a regional showcase for exemplary native landscape installations.

• Support partnerships with Howard Kennedy Elementary School and Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.

• Support partnerships with community service and recreation organizations and programs, including Butler-Gast YMCA and Girls, Inc.

• Support community-based tree planting and landscaping programs.

• Establish and support volunteer horticulture programs.

• Support community-based park and neighborhood clean-up and beautification days.

• Support ongoing reinvestment and revitalization of surrounding North Omaha communities.
LOWLAND MEADOWS & WETLANDS

SAVANNAHS

UPLAND HARDWOOD FORESTS
Implementation

PLANNING

- Complete Adams Park Combined-Sewer Outflow wetlands plan.
- Develop a property acquisition and expansion plan for the N. 30th Street/Bedford Avenue expansion.
- Develop a property acquisition and expansion plan for the Maple Street extension and park expansion.
- Develop a property acquisition and expansion plan for the Adams Park Aquatics Center site.

PROJECTS

- Complete construction of the expanded Adams Park wetlands.
- Facilitate ongoing property acquisition and expansion of Adams Park to N. 30th Street & Bedford Avenue.
- Implement the Urban Farming and Gardening Center.
- Implement the 30th Street Fields.
- Facilitate ongoing fund-raising and construction of new interior park roads and picnic facilities.
- Facilitate ongoing streetscape enhancement and maintenance of Bedford Street and N. 30th Street.
- Facilitate ongoing fund-raising and construction of Walking Paths and Bike Paths.
- Implement Maple Street extension and streetscape enhancements.
- Implement N. 36th Street extension.
- Facilitate ongoing property acquisition and construction of the Adams Park Aquatic Center.

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PROGRAMS

- Pursue partnerships with the Metropolitan Community College Horticulture Department for facility and program development.

- Support community gardening & community agriculture outreach and education programming in conjunction with existing Metropolitan Community College programs.

- Establish and support production-level volunteer agriculture community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.

- Establish and support volunteer horticulture programs.

- Support partnerships with community service and recreation organizations and programs, including Butler-Gast YMCA and Girls, Inc.

- Support community-based tree planting and landscaping programs.

- Support community-based park and neighborhood clean-up and beautification days.

- Support ongoing reinvestment and revitalization of surrounding North Omaha communities.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Develop a program and schedule for endorsement of the Adams Park Master Plan by necessary City of Omaha, state, and non-governmental partners.

- Develop a “Friends of Adams Park” organization to provide ongoing volunteer and other assistance.

- Develop a Technical Partnership Committee that reflects the broad constituent group necessary to implement that plan.

- Develop a Master Plan funding strategy and campaign.