ENVISION MONTGOMERY 2040
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PARKS AND RECREATION

Strategic Analysis Memo | Envision Montgomery 2040 Comprehensive Plan

February 21, 2019 **DRAFT**

The following outlines the key findings, maps and tables for the Parks and Recreation Strategic Analysis. This research integrates initial findings from the Factbook with deeper analysis into key conditions and trends and/or topics proposed by stakeholders. This analysis will serve as the foundation from which plan recommendations are built. This is one in a series of 12 topical memos produced through this phase.

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Introduction

The City of Montgomery currently provides over 1,400 acres of public park land and recreation facilities distributed among parks, community centers, and special facilities. The systems facilities support both specific neighborhoods and larger communities with both passive and active recreation. In addition, the system provides city wide youth baseball and softball, youth summer and after school programs, and senior programs. Because of Montgomery's large foot-print, Montgomery struggles to directly serve all of its residents with physical amenities and services. As Montgomery continues its efforts to retain its youth, support its aging population, and grow economically, a quality parks and recreation system and experience will have to play a substantial role in this reinvigoration

This strategic analysis describes the efforts and services of the City of Montgomery with public open space, recreational facilities, and programs through an inventory of the current park facilities and services. Through an inventory and spatial analysis of these amenities, this memo will highlight the existing areas of service and gaps in Montgomery's parks and recreation efforts as they relate to the population of the plan's service area. This analysis will use two major classifications for parks and recreation amenities: passive and active recreation. Passive recreation is generally defined as actives that can require little to no physical activity and is typically associated with non-structured actives. Examples of passive recreation may include walking, jogging, and picnicking. Passive recreation's definition also typically includes special interest activities. Active recreation is generally defined as organized or team physical activity. Examples of active recreation include baseball, football, soccer, swimming, and racket sports.

MAJOR CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop trails and greenways to connect Montgomery's parks, neighborhoods, and destinations; including the development of rails to trails opportunities

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- Develop park land in the flood prone and contiguous forest that surround Montgomery
- Develop parks on vacant or tax delinquent parcels unserviced neighborhoods
- Expand recreational services to include more youth sports, adult, and senior physical activities
- Update aging park equipment and community centers
- Market parks and pecreation's past to connect with broader Civil Rights efforts
- Update subdivision regulations to include dedication for public open space
- Support grassroot park support and volunteerism
- Develop a city-wide parks and recreation specific plan

HISTORY OF MONTGOMERY'S PARKS AND RECREATION

The Montgomery recreation department began in 1948 as a citizen lead effort. At the time, the city had two recreational facilities: Hamner Hall Park and Bruce Field. These parks included two softball fields, a baseball field, and a pavilion. In the first year of operation the department's focus was square dancing, arts and crafts, puppet shows, and softball. The following year the recreation department merged with the parks department. By 1958, the department's operations expanded with the addition of five community centers and a senior citizen program.

In the mid 1950's Montgomery was staunchly segregated (this de facto segregation included Montgomery's Parks) but, in 1957, the city passed laws specifying the segregation of Montgomery's parks and recreational facilities. That same year, Mark Gilmore was arrested for taking a shortcut through Oak Park. After several failed attempts to have the arrest voided and the case thrown out, Gilmore and his lawyer, Solomon Seay Jr. eventually filed a case challenging the segregation of Montgomery's parks. In 1959 Gilmore won the case and a federal judge ordered Montgomery to integrate its parks and recreational facilities. Instead of abiding with the court's decision to integrate, the City Commission voted to close all of its parks and recreational facilities, including filling all the city pools with dirt and closing the city zoo and selling its animals. For six years, until 1965, the city kept the parks and recreations facilities closed to the public rather than allowing African Americans use of its facilities.

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1. Activities and Services

ACTIVITY SERVICES

Currently, the Montgomery parks and recreation department offers a city-wide youth baseball/softball program, city-wide after school and summer programs, senior activities, arts and gymnastics programing at the Armory Learning Art Center, various programs and actives at the Therapeutic Recreation Center, and ceramics classes.

Programs of other comparable cities include organized athletics and programs that are generally categized by age, which include youth, adult, and senior. Traditionally parks and recreation service has been geared to youth, but as departments evolve to meet changing demographics and expectations, expanded services and amenities are continuing to become a more integral part of parks and recreational services.

Youth programing typically includes baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, arts classes, aquatics classes, day camps, etc.

Adult programs typically include baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, yoga, maternity classes, pickle ball, etc.

Senior programs typically include senior fitness classes, bingo and game gatherings, dances, travel events, arts and crafts classes, etc.

It is important to diversify the parks and recreational services to keep up with other cities in the state and region in order to be competitive of these changing populations. As the aging adult and senior populations continue to grow in Montgomery, and the Nation, it is important to begin to expand senior service's programming and physical locations.

- **Map 1.1 in the Map Gallery:** Study Area Parks

PARK CLASSIFICATION

As municipal parks evolved in the U.S. they would be developed and redeveloped to serve the changing urban needs and landscapes. This evolution of how parks were developed and how they served the citizens can be seen in how we classify parks today. Initially, cities purchased and developed land on the outskirts of cities; these semi-public pastoral grounds were seen as a way for urban workers to leave the city and to relax in nature. These parks would eventually be surrounded by growing development and evolve into community parks. Through the 1900's park development in neighborhoods became more common. These new smaller parks had more programming, like playgrounds, ballfields, and indoor recreation facilities, and, as the price of land continued to climb, newly developed parks continued to decrease in size.

A key component of inventorying the city's existing parks is classification. These park classifications indicate how they might serve the community and at what scale they serve the community. For the purposes of this analysis, the Montgomery parks and recreational facilities are classified into three categories: community parks, neighborhood parks, and urban open space parks.

Total Park Area by Classification

Park Classification	Number of Parks	Acres
Community Parks	23	1216.4
Neighborhood Parks	36	242.5
Urban Open Space	6	6.1
Total	**65**	**1465**

Table 1: Total Park Area by Classification

Community Parks

Community parks serve several neighborhoods or larger sections of the community. Montgomery's Community Parks are typically larger area parks with varied uses and purposes, or the park includes a specialized program or activity that widens its service. Montgomery's parks system includes twenty-three community parks. Montgomery's community park sizes range from 2 acres to over 300 acres. These parks are relatively well balanced in terms of recreational service types. Nine of the Community Parks are oriented toward passive recreation. Seven of the parks are oriented toward active recreation. Active recreation-oriented parks are typically associated with larger service areas due to the large service areas of sports team programming. Seven serve as both passive and active parks. Of these twenty-three parks, three also act as school recreation areas, and six offer a specialized service. Montgomery's Specialized community parks include a large dog park, a boat ramp, an environmental education park, an educational community garden, a planetarium, and an amphitheater.

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Park	Acres	Recreational Service	Identification
AUM/Ron Nunn Complex	27.8	Active	
Bark Park	7.1	Passive	Specialized
Blount Cultural Park	286.0	Passive	
Catoma Park Ball Fields	21.9	Active-Passive	School
Dean Fain Park	23.2	Active	
E.A.T. South Downtown Farm	2.1	Passive	Specialized
Emory Folmar Soccer Complex	52.3	Active	
Fairview Environmental Park	3.1	Passive	Specialized
Forrest B. "Buddy" Watson Park	30.0	Active-Passive	
Gateway Park	191.4	Active-Passive	
Goodwyn Park	25.7	Active	
Ida Belle Young Park	23.9	Passive	
Lagoon Park	304.4	Active-Passive	
Leu Hammonds Park (Southlawn)	16.8	Active-Passive	School
Oak Park	39.9	Passive	Specialized
O'Connor Tennis Center	5.9	Active	
Peter Crump Park	24.9	Active-Passive	School
Powder Magazine Boat Launch and Park	52.7	Passive	Specialized
Riverfront Park	3.9	Passive	Specialized
Seth Johnson Park	7.0	Active	School
Thompson Park	44.1	Active	
Vaughn Road Park	20.0	Active-Passive	
Wright Brothers Park	2.4	Passive	

Community Parks

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Table 2: Community Parks, Services, and Identification

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are small to medium in size and typically have a service area limited to a neighborhood or a small residential area. Neighborhood parks usually have a close spatial relationship with single-family housing land areas. Montgomery's community park sizes range from about half an acre to over twenty-eight acres. Montgomery has thirty-five parks that are considered neighborhood parks. Twenty-five of those parks are oriented toward passive recreation. Six are oriented to both passive and active recreation, and one is oriented to active recreation. Of these, two are used as public-school recreation facilities, and one is a specialized park (small dog park in Downtown Montgomery).

Neighborhood Parks

Park	Acres	Recreational Service	Identification
Audubon Park	1.9	Passive	
Bellinger Hill Park	0.4	Passive	School
Brenda Bonner Park (Forest Hills)	3.5	Passive	
Brewbaker Park & Community Center	24.9	Active	
Cloverdale Park (Church)	3.4	Passive	
College Street Park	0.7	Passive	
Country Club Drive Park	1.4	Passive	
Dannelly Park	5.2	Passive	
Darrington/Ritchie Park (Dorchester)	2.8	Passive	School
Day Street Park	0.5	Passive	
Diffley Park	4.0	Active-Passive	
Dr. Robert B. Adams Park	1.5	Passive	
Exchange Club Park East Montgomery	10.0	Active-Passive	
Fox Hollow Park	5.2	Passive	
Hayneville Road Park	14.8	Passive	
Homeview Park	0.6	Passive	
Hyde Park (Burbank)	5.9	Passive	
Jackson Ferry Road Park	2.4	Passive	
James A. Shannon Park (Mobile Heights)	5.6	Active-Passive	
Kiwanis Park	1.6	Passive	
Louis Armstrong Memorial Park	0.8	Passive	
Myrtlewood Drive Park	2.5	Passive	
Pecan Grove Park	1.9	Passive	
Ridgecrest Park	1.8	Passive	
Rosa L. Parks Park	1.7	Passive	
Rotary Dog Park	0.9	Passive	Specialized
Smiley Court Community Center & Park	28.5	Active-Passive	
Thomas Calhoun Jr. Park (Twin Gates)	7.9	Passive	
Tuscaloosa Park	0.8	Passive	
Vickers Park	0.8	Passive	
Virginia Estates Park	18.0	Passive	
Wares Ferry Park	22.9	Passive	School
Washington Park	4.9	Passive	
Western Hills Park	3.1	Active-Passive	
Woodcrest Park	22.0	Active-Passive	
Woodmere Park	27.5	Passive	

Table 3: Neighborhood Parks, Services, and Identification

Urban Open Space Parks

Urban open spaces are areas owned by the city that primarily act as small scale passive parks. These parks are primarily defined by their function of beautification for surrounding rights-of-ways in residental areas, or by their function of pedestrian respite in urban plaza settings . Montgomery's urban open space parks typically lack traditional recreational elements, but feature benches and aesthetic features like water fountains. Montgomery has six urban open space parks ranging from .2 acres to 2.5 acres. Included in this park category is Downtown Montgomery's Court Square, which is home to Montgomery's iconic fountain.

Urban Open Space Parks

Parks	Acres	Recreational Service
Cloverdale Road Park	1.9	Passive
Court Square	0.8	Passive
Fitzgerald Park	0.3	Passive
LeGrande Park	2.4	Passive
Lister Hill Plaza	0.7	Passive
Milo Howard Park	0.1	Passive

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Active Parks

Of Montgomery's active recreational services, baseball and softball are the highest level of service of outdoor sports programs. Montgomery's outdoor active recreation includes two golf courses, a soccer complex, football fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. Active parks are represented more in Montgomery's suburban and fringe development. Parks that primarily support active recreation make up more than 210 acres of the City.

Passive Parks

Passive parks in Montgomery have a greater service area than active parks due to the passive nature of neighborhood parks along with the high number of neighborhood parks. Montgomery's post World War II historic development areas have the highest level of service from passive parks. Parks that primarily support passive recreation make up more than 571 acres of the City.

Active/Passive Hybrid Parks

Passive/active hybrid parks are parks that offer a variety of programming, including both a number of active programming and passive recreation services. Lagoon Park and Gateway Park are two of Montgomery's anchor active/passive parks. Parks that solely support passive recreation make up more than 571 acres of the city. Parks that support both active and passive recreation make up more than 682 acres of the city.

- **Map 1.2 in the Map Gallery:** Park Type Map

2. Opportunity Analysis

To begin to transition an understanding of existing parks and recreation efforts to an overall review of those services and amenities it is first important to look back at previous plans to see what recommendations have been made pertaining to parks and recreation around the city. Also, taking a broad look at what areas of the city are currently and reasonably served by parks and what areas are not is important. Using these

approaches the analysis can then begin to refine opportunities for improvements of the Montgomery parks and recreation system.

PREVIOUS PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of a continued investment into the parks and recreation of Montgomery is evident in the all of the city's long-range neighborhood plans. Although the city does not have a plan specific to the parks and recreation effort these plans document the city's vision and ambitions for specific downtown adjacent neighborhoods goals that include parks and recreation improvements. This section highlights those plan's themes and recommendations over the years to provide a context and history of the city's vision for itself as it relates to Parks and Recreation.

Bell Street Neighborhood Plan

- Develop a marina complex on the Alabama River at the existing Powder Magazine Park

Bellingrath-Cleveland Neighborhood Plan

- Revitalize existing parks

Capital Heights Neighborhood Plan

- Redevelop an unused railroad right of way into a greenway

Centennial Hill Neighborhood Plan

- Develop pocket parks and greenspace along High Street to buffer residential from State administrative buildings
- Increase connectivity from Oak Park it is surround neighborhoods

Cypress Creek

- Develop Cypress Pond and Cypress Creek into a nature preserve and park

Forrest to Zelda Neighborhood Plan

- Develop neighborhood parks along the proposed greenway in an abandon railroad right of way

Maxwell Boulevard Neighborhood Plan

- Develop civic and green space strategically throughout the neighborhood

Rosa Parks and Five Points Neighborhood Plan

- Redevelop vacant tracts with strategic park infill

South Montgomery Community Plan

- Develop greenways along Baldwin and white creek spurs
- Pursue a regional preservation and park land along Catoma Creek

SERVICE AREAS AND GAPS

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Using a one-half mile buffer around all parks to define an overall park service area for this analysis, 22,903 acres of the developed land in the planning area (66,213 acres) is served by a public park, making the park's service area 35% of the developed land in the planning area. Map 1.3 illustrates levels of spatial park service to highlight quality of service and areas that currently lack public park service. The largest areas of existing gaps in park service include areas in Montgomery's urban core, large residential areas within Montgomery's Bypasses, new development on Montgomery's fringe, and large sections of Montgomery's growing eastern areas.

Montgomery can begin to address coverage gaps (especially in its areas of growth) by including open space conservation requirements in its subdivision regulations. This would ensure that new developments include parks or open space in their design to support the new residents. This development regulation is not widely used in the State but in cities like Tuscaloosa the regulation has been very successful and netted many new parks for the community.

Gaps in services are also represented in parks and recreation programming. City wide youth baseball and softball is offered, but there are no other organized youth sports offered on a large scale. The city does not offer any city-wide sports or programming for adults or seniors.

- **Map 1.3 in the Map Gallery:** Parks Service Areas
- **Map 1.4 in the Map Gallery:** Parks and Population Change by Tract

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KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Key parks and recreation opportunities in Montgomery identify specific opportunities that will be critical in an effort to reduce gaps in the city's overall parks and recreation service area. One key recreation element that is underrepresented in Montgomery is trail connectivity between parks. A network of linear parks or greenways would provide greater recreational access and opportunity by connecting existing parks. Greenways serve both as a more accessible recreation opportunity and as a transportation alternative that connects and engages neighborhoods, districts, and destinations throughout the city. Potential key opportunities for trails or greenways in Montgomery include two unused/abandoned railroad corridors.

One opportunity greenway corridor spans about three miles from downtown and its riverfront to an opportunity area consisting of a Highland Avenue commercial area, Oak Park, and Jackson Hospital. The potential greenway would also support the Capitol Heights Neighborhood, Highland Park, O'Connor Tennis Center, Lamp High School, Oakwood Cemetery, the Montgomery Multiplex, Cramton Bowl, Patterson Field, business districts, Houston Hill Community Center, and Biscuit Stadium.

The other opportunity greenway corridor spans about 13.5 miles from downtown to the rapid development of Chantilly Parkway in east Montgomery. This potential greenway would connect countless neighborhoods across the city to key destinations including: East Chase Shopping Center, Auburn University at Montgomery, Eastdale Mall, Lagoon Park, Maxwell Air Force Base Gunter Annex, the state farmer's market and fairgrounds, and the Zoo.

Cypress Pond and Cypress Creek are another key parks and recreation opportunity area. The opportunity includes developing the 260-acre wetlands and adjoining city land into a natural preserve and park. The potential park and preserve would help address the limited green and open space downtown. The opportunity of Cypress Pond and Cypress Creek includes a potential greenway along Cypress Creek that connects to the Alabama River and the Riverfront Park.

The City is not served by a public regional nature preserve or park, but there is ample contiguous forest land (including wetlands and floodplains that have limited development potential) that surrounds and weaves into the development of the city. These undeveloped, contiguous forests could be a large asset to the region as a potential natural preserve park. These key opportunities include the flood plains around Catoma Creek in South Montgomery, and the floodplains and wetlands in Northeast Montgomery.

- **Map 1.5 in the Map Gallery:** Park Development Opportunity Areas

3. Map Gallery and Supplemental Information

The following map(s) and information are referred to throughout the narrative and have been organized into the following sections.

1.1 –Study Area Parks p. 10
1.2 –Park Types p. 11
1.3 –Park Service Area p. 12
1.4 –Parks and Population Change by Tract p. 13
1.5 –Park Development Opportunity Areas p. 14

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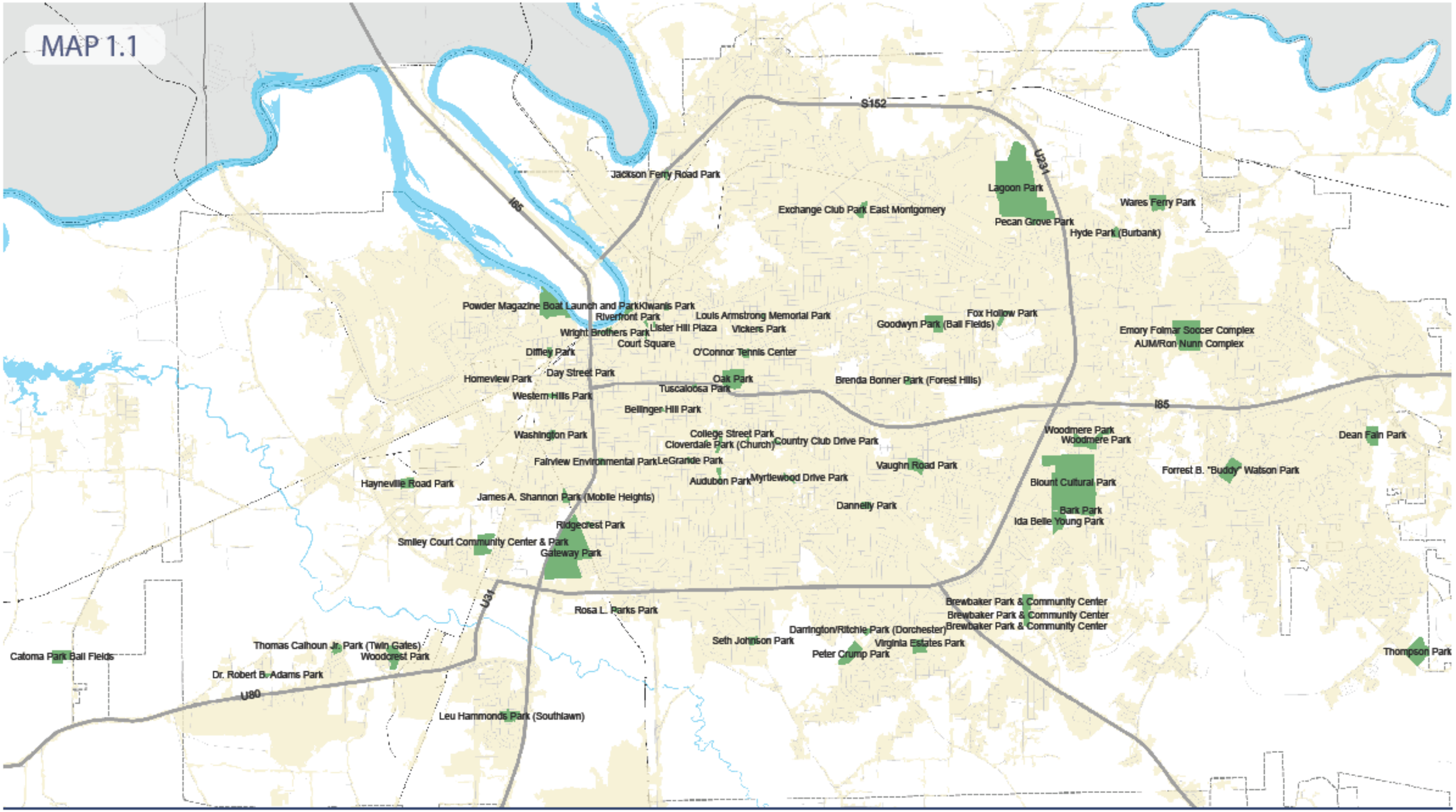
MAP 1.1



STUDY AREA PARKS

PARKS AND RECREATION | MAP 1.1

Legend

- Parks
- Developed Land
- City Limits
- Rivers and Water
- Interstate/Highway
- Roads / Streets
- Railroad

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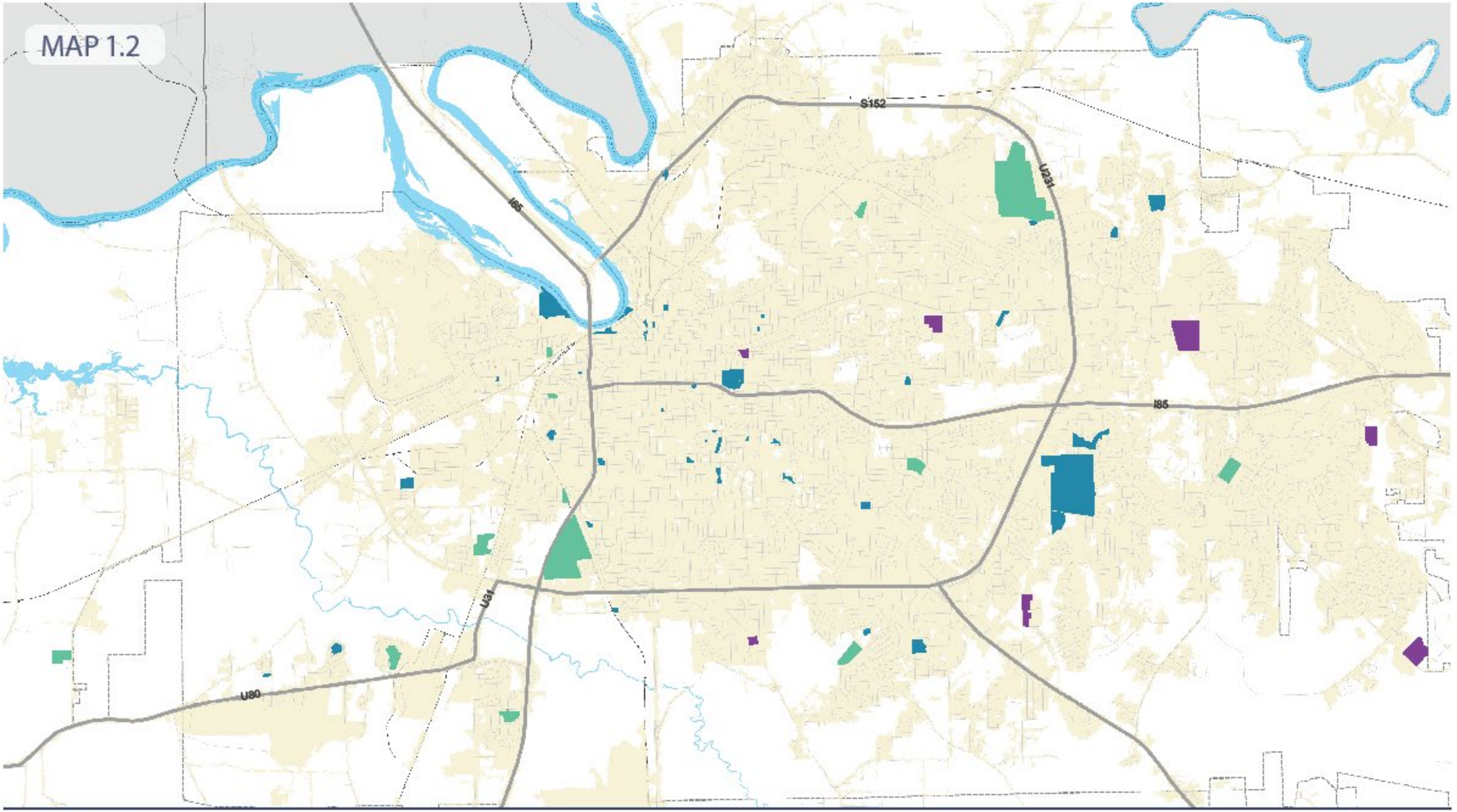
MAP 1.2



PARK TYPE

PARKS AND RECREATION | MAP 1.2

Legend

- Passive Park
- Active Park
- Passive/Active Hybrid
- Developed Land
- City Limits
- Rivers and Water
- Interstate/Highway
- Roads / Streets
- Railroad

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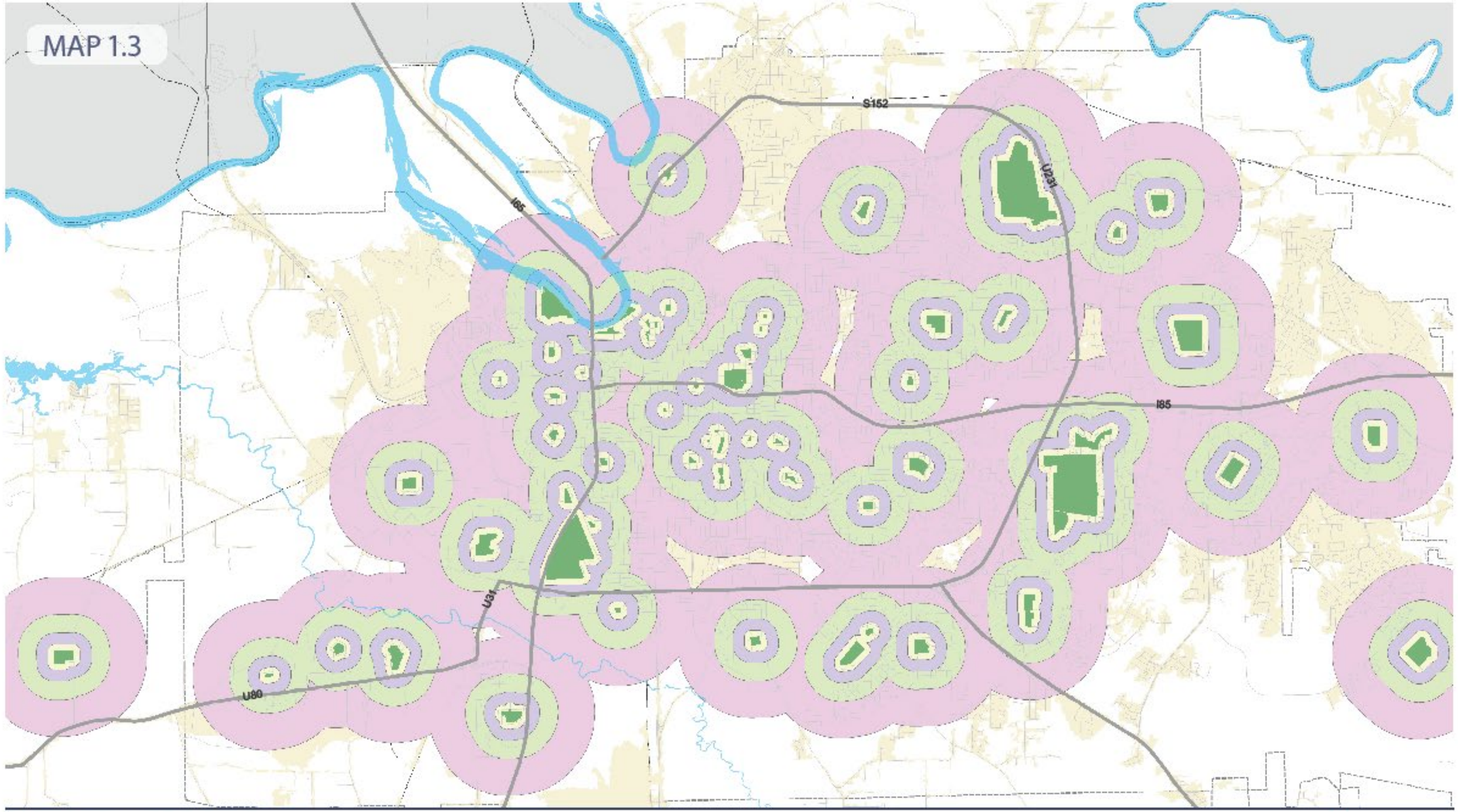

PARK SERVICE AREA

PARKS AND RECREATION | MAP 1.3

Legend

- Park
- 500 Feet Buffer
- 1/4 Mile Buffer
- 1/2 Mile Buffer
- 1 Mile Buffer
- Developed Land
- City Limits
- Rivers and Water
- Interstate/Highway
- Roads / Streets
- Railroad

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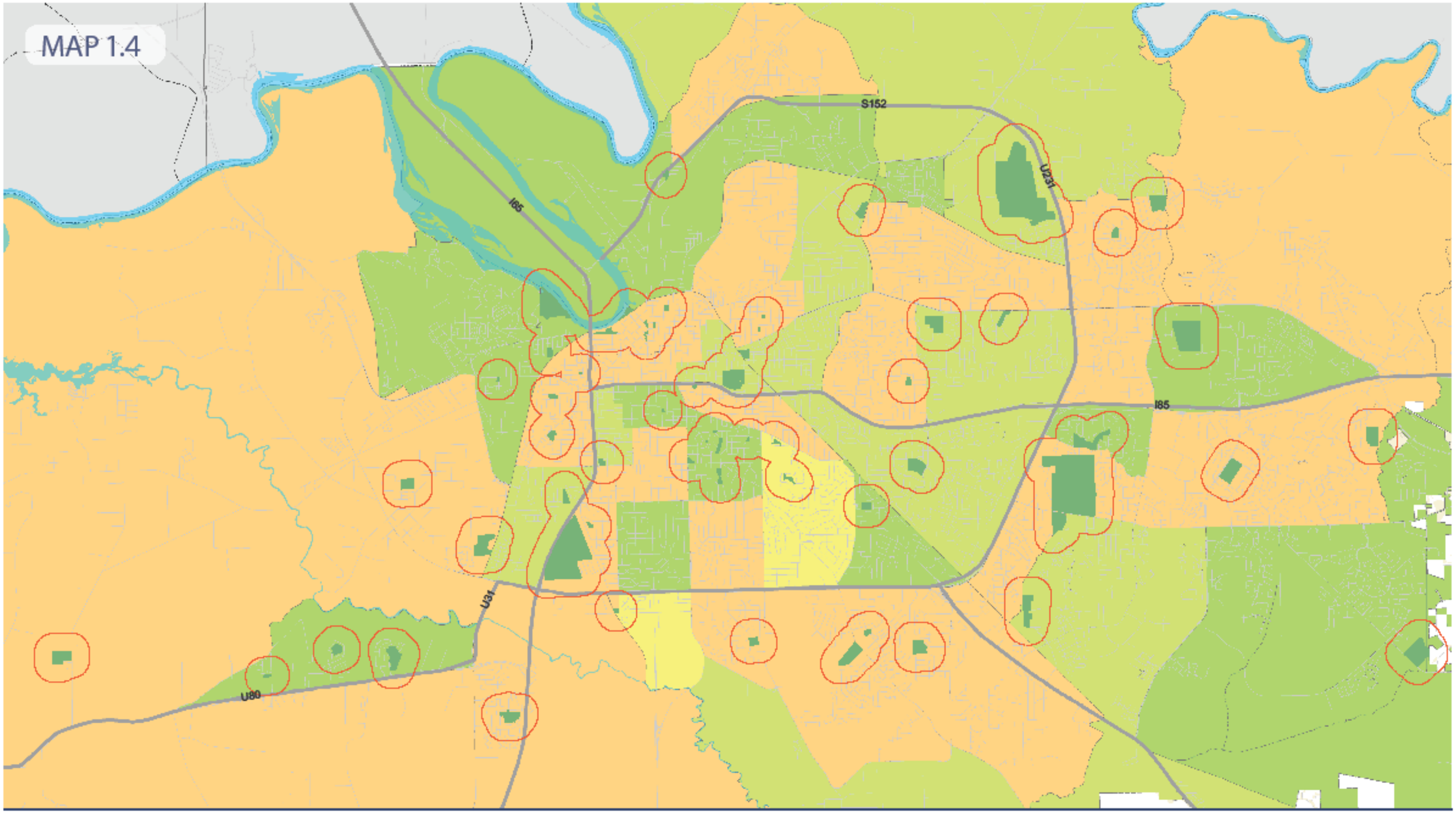
MAP 1.4



PARK AND POPULATION CHANGE BY TRACT 2012-2016

PARKS AND RECREATION | MAP 1.4

Legend

- Park
- 1/4 Mile Buffer
- -6.7% to -1% Change
- 0% to 1% Change
- 1% to 5% Change
- 5.7% to 11% Change
- Rivers and Water
- Interstate/Highway
- Roads / Streets
- Railroad

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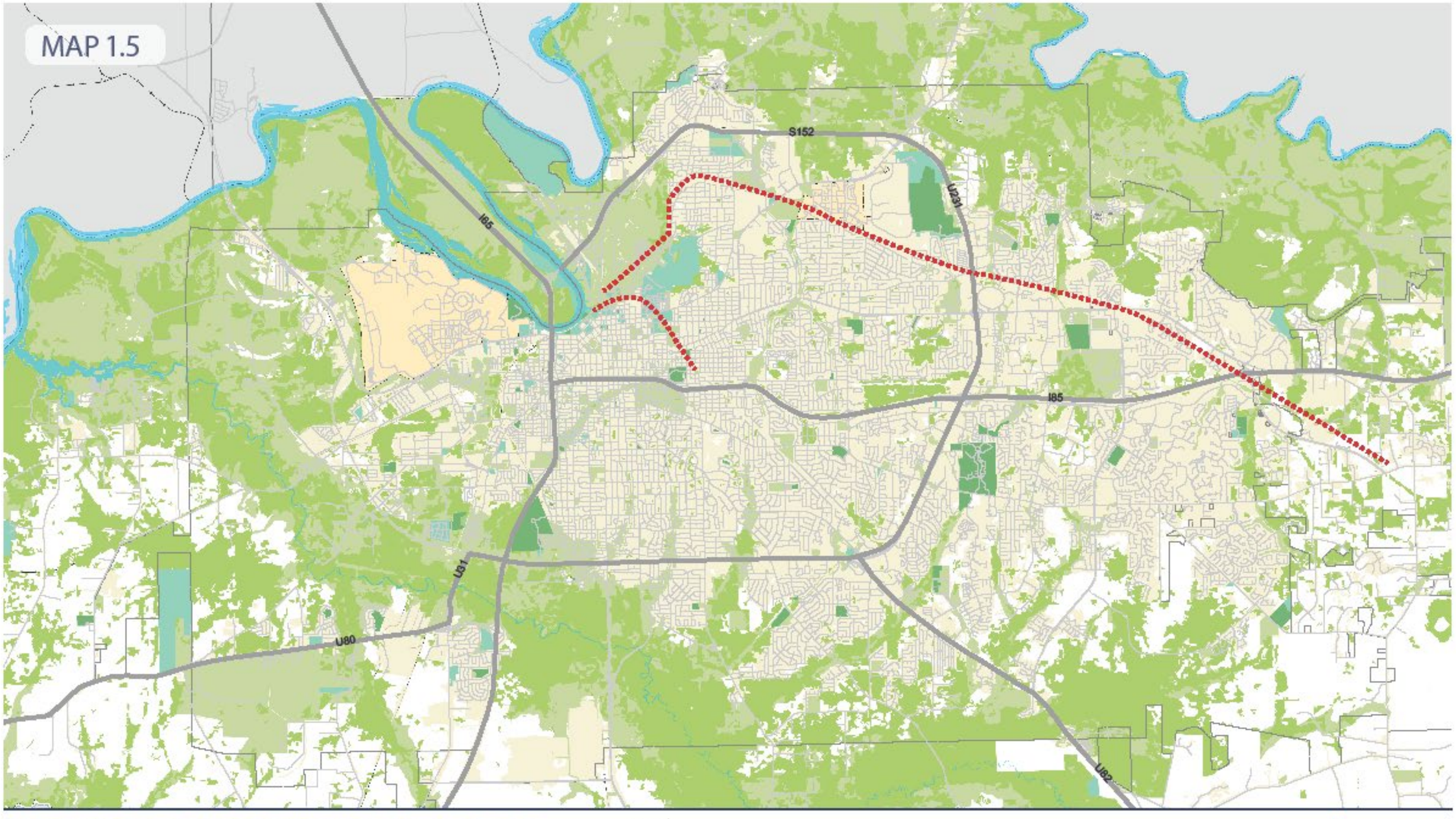
MAP 1.5



PARK DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREAS

PARKS AND RECREATION | MAP 1.5

Legend

- Existing Park
- Contiguous Forest
- Flood Prone Areas
- City/County Owned Land
- Potential Trail Projects
- Developed Land
- Military Base
- City Limits
- Rivers and Water
- Interstate/Highway
- Roads / Streets

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