

Tennessee Riverpark

C.H.A.T.T.A.N.O.O.G.A

The Tennessee Riverpark will build on three of Chattanooga's greatest assets: her natural beauty, her fascinating history, and her productive power. The city's landscape, with its mountains, wooded ridges and winding creeks, lying along the graceful Tennessee, creates a unique urban setting. This setting has been a center of trade and transportation for 10,000 years, illustrating the history of human development on this continent.

The Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan proposes to preserve and enhance these natural and historical riches, carefully blending them with high quality private developments at suitable sites along the twenty-five mile river corridor. New parks, trails, living history attractions, housing and industry will benefit residents, strengthen the local economy, and attract millions to spread the word of Chattanooga's beauty, quality of life, and economic opportunities.

The Riverpark begins at the Chickamauga Dam, extends along the river banks through downtown Chattanooga, passes scenic Moccasin Bend and Lookout Mountain and culminates at the Tennessee River Gorge, the "Grand Canyon" of the Tennessee.

The Riverpark plan, which provides a twenty-year vision of the riverfront, was prepared with the support of the city and county governments and the private sector. It is the result of a three-year public participation process, which must continue over the many years of implementation to assure that the Riverpark belongs to Chattanoogans.

Cultural Heritage

For at least 10,000 years the Tennessee River at Chattanooga has been a regional crossroads for trade, transportation and human settlement. The Tennessee Riverpark will display this history and bring it to life – with the Indians whose villages lined the banks – with De Soto and his Spanish expedition – with Confederate and Union soldiers who fought and died here – with early Southern industrialists who built mills and factories, now replaced by the latest in modern manufacturing facilities. Interpretive exhibits will highlight this legacy throughout the Riverpark, and the whole panorama will be revealed in Moccasin Bend Heritage Park, which will include ongoing archaeological research, museums, reconstructions and dramatic re-enactment of past ways of life.

The Riverway and Parks

The many special sites of the Riverpark will be linked by the “Riverway,” a continuous trail system along both banks. The Riverway will be built over many years and will help conserve the area’s natural beauty and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. In some places it will be no wider than thirty feet, providing scenic paths for jogging and biking. Some sections will include horse trails and others will widen into park areas with picnic tables, fishing piers and an occasional riverfront restaurant or inn.

Economic Opportunities

The Tennessee Riverpark plan provides significant economic opportunities for new housing, commercial recreation, shops, restaurants, museums and new industry. The Riverway, park areas and interpretive exhibits will provide attractive, high quality settings for these developments. The plan places special emphasis on River’s Bend, which will be the gateway to the entire system because of its direct connection to downtown. New mixed-use development here will include offices, a hotel, housing, specialty shops, eating places, museums, an aquarium and plazas overlooking the river. A visitor’s center will provide orientation to the entire Riverpark, and a trolley will link the area to downtown and to Moccasin Bend. Historic paddlewheel boats and small, faster water taxis will also connect River’s Bend with other new centers along the riverfront.

The Tennessee Riverpark promises to increase Chattanooga’s livability and its competitive position for attracting new investment. In the next twenty years it is projected to result in 300-400 acres of new industry, 350,000 square feet of new offices, nearly 3,500 new housing units, 10,000 permanent jobs, and on an annual basis over one million new visitors and \$12.8 million in new revenues by the year 2005.

Implementation and Financing

To successfully implement this development, a new organization will be needed. A public/private corporation is envisioned which would oversee designing, funding, building and managing the entire system. The plan also recommends a special overlay zone and detailed design guidelines, which will provide consistent standards and help maintain the integrity of the plan as new development occurs.

Financing the overall development will require a creative combination of public and private funding sources, where public dollars help spur major investments. As an example, Baltimore’s twenty-year public investment of \$264 million in the downtown and Inner Harbor triggered some \$1.2 billion in private investment.

Local resources for the Tennessee Riverpark could include private capital, contributions, local bonds, federal programs, land leasing and revenues from parking or similar uses. The public-private corporation will also seek donated easements, a low cost land acquisition technique with tax or estate advantages to land owners.

Timetable

The Tennessee Riverpark is an ambitious plan that will take three phases and twenty or more years to fully accomplish. Phase I, the first five years, focuses on the south side of the river between the Chickamauga Dam and Ross's Landing. It includes the Riverway and some park areas, most of the mixed-use development and River's Bend. The Riverway is already becoming a part of public plans, with Tennessee Homecoming '86 a target date for beginning construction on the south bank. The cultural heritage park on Moccasin bend will be well underway within the next five years, together with the new marina, housing and parks on the north bank of River's Bend. The remainder of Moccasin Bend and the Riverway can be completed in Phase III, years ten to twenty.

The Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan was developed by Carr, Lynch Associates, Environmental Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts, working together with the Moccasin Bend Task Force and the people of Chattanooga. This summary was produced concurrent with the Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan in March 1985.