

# I. INTRODUCTION

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Located just northeast of Memphis, Tennessee, the City of Lakeland is one of the fastest growing cities in Shelby County. With a comparatively low level of development and high level of natural terrain, the City boasts a natural atmosphere that many surrounding communities have lost due to population growth and suburban sprawl. Lakeland places high importance on its natural resources, and has taken measures



to ensure the preservation of the community's character for generations to come. The City has placed an emphasis on city and civic planning and recognizes the ability of parks, lakes, forests, and other natural features to improve the quality of life of its citizens. Included in the efforts taken to enrich the quality

of life is the four-time designation of the City as a Tree City USA, and the consequential national recognition with the Tree City USA Growth Award, given by The Arbor Day Foundation to recognize environmental improvement and encourage higher levels of tree care. The City also promotes preservation by requiring developers to set aside parkland and greenways.

The City of Lakeland's Recreation Master Plan, which focuses on citywide parks and greenways, discusses the findings and recommendations for meeting existing and future park and recreation service needs for the City. The Master Plan identifies and evaluates existing park and recreation areas; assesses the need for additional parkland, open space and specialized facilities; establishes a vision and goals for the Lakeland Parks & Recreation System; and recommends an approach to implementation of these goals to meet the recreational needs of the community.

Citizens of Lakeland have repeatedly ranked natural resource preservation as a top priority in public forums, and the desired result of this Master Plan is to help the City of Lakeland maintain a balance between increased development and the preservation of these natural elements, which define the City for its residents. The Master Plan includes a 10-year facility projection and land need projection, and will serve as a guide and tool for making decisions regarding parklands and open space.

