

FOREWORD

Introduction

Established in 1996, Lakeshore Park is a 185-acre park in Knoxville. The park offers views to the Smoky Mountains as it slopes to the Tennessee River. In partnership with the City of Knoxville and private donors, Lakeshore Park Conservancy is leveraging the park's location, history, and natural assets to create a model public park for the community of Knoxville, the region, and the state. Today the park is the most visited in the city and is accessible to the greater public thanks in part to the vision of the City of Knoxville to establish a conservation easement in 1994. Late in 2017 Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects (NBW) in partnership with the Conservancy began the process of creating a landscape master plan that would provide a vision reflecting the needs of the community today while celebrating its past. The following plan manifests the park's roots in physical and mental wellness with ecological and cultural stewardship to create a functional and vibrant public landscape.

A Healing Landscape

Through intimate connection with productive soils and engagement with riparian ecologies, access to fresh air and awe at the sweeping vistas, people have found nourishment in this landscape for centuries.

The river appears on French maps from the late 17th century with the names *Caquinampo* or *Kasqui*. Maps from the early 18th century call it *Cussate*, *Hogohegee*, *Callamaco*, and *Acanseapi*. A 1755 British map showed the Tennessee River as the "River

of the Cherakees." By the late 18th century, it had come to be called *Tennessee*, a name derived from the Cherokee village named Tanasi. This evolution of nomenclature reveals changes in population shifts and relationship of human inhabitants to the land and water of this region. As Cherokee territory, settler-colonial farmland, a state institution, and eventually a public park, the site has been modified in ways both beneficial and detrimental to the community, culture, and ecosystem.

Downtown Knoxville's position between First and Second Creek provided water power for iron works and textile mills, and the Tennessee river brought cotton and grain to the city's port from the south. Nineteenth Century urbanization and industrialization changed the way in which society approached mental illness in the United States. The establishment of psychiatric asylums outside of cities represented larger civic responsibility for the mentally ill as well as a belief in the therapeutic qualities of rural landscapes.

As the city's population and industry grew, William Lyon's property on Fourth Creek became a popular 19th century destination to "take the view" of this picturesque setting. Today, such a practice may be referred to as ecotherapy or nature therapy, escaping the industrial city to breathe fresh air and connect with agriculture, mountains, and river at Lyons View. The healing properties of this landscape were recognized by Lyon's daughters who inherited the property and granted it to the state of Tennessee for use as a mental health institute. The site served

as a state mental health institute beginning in 1884. Over the institute's subsequent one-hundred-year history, an array of psychiatric therapies were practiced on this site as its name changed from the East Tennessee Hospital for the Insane, the Eastern State Psychiatric Hospital, and the Lakeshore Mental Health Institute. In the early 1900's patients engaged in handiwork and agriculture to keep their minds and bodies active and to contribute to the economic activities of the institution.

With the privatization of mental health care, the facility began to downsize in the 1990s. In this time Knox Youth Sports petitioned for the land to be used as a public park. Beginning with a walking trail and youth baseball facilities. The park quickly became a community treasure. Lakeshore Park Inc. was established in 1996 and has ensured the transition from state institute to public landscape with dedicated maintenance and continued planning.

It is essential to recognize the stories of indigenous and enslaved people who cared for this landscape prior to and during European colonization and the America's plantation era.

The land of Lakeshore Park was in the territorial range of the Cherokee people. Indigenous people participating in westernized medicinal practices have shared their understanding of mental wellness as a holistic practice. For the Cherokee this includes herbal medicines and community ceremonies. Doctor Alvord, the first Navajo female surgeon describes, "body, mind, and spirit...as connected to other

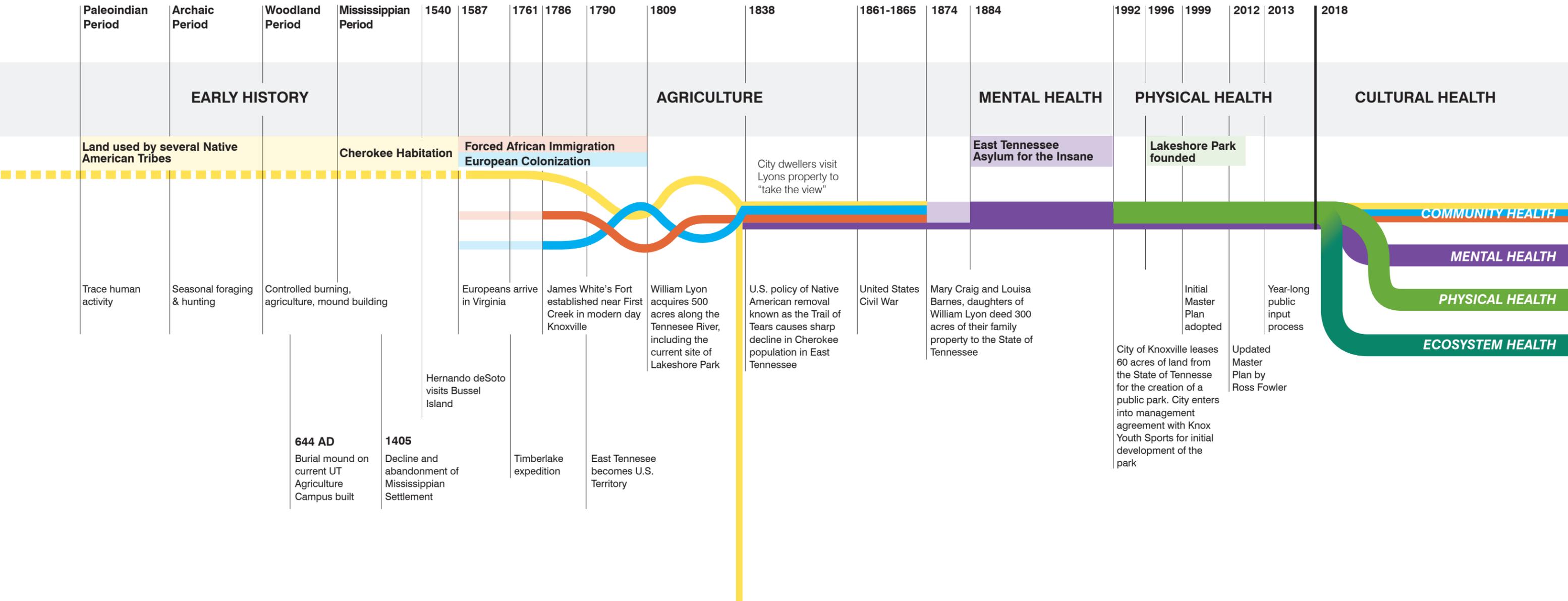
people, to families, to communities, and even to the planet and universe."

African descendants' healing traditions are similarly integrated in community and culture. Medicinal and healing practices from African cultures were maintained and adapted to local plants and slavery conditions. Comparing healing practices to textile and craft traditions, Sharla Fett describes African American medicinal practices as "doctoring arts belong[ing] equally to the list of complex and compelling cultural work produced by African descendants under slavery."

The Tennessee state mental health facility began serving the black community in 1897 after the construction of a building that would provide mental health services for African Americans in a segregated setting. Both black and indigenous communities have had difficult relationships with Western mental health paradigms due to racial discrimination against cultural practices and discrimination within health care systems.

In order to build a park that serves the well-being of all Knoxville residents, it is the intention of the following master plan to provide sites of remembrance and representation to serve as a balm for all visitors. Furthermore, the plan seeks to create a holistic model of well-being by providing access to activities that foster physical and mental health and connecting visitors to healthy ecological and social communities.

Historic/Cultural Timeline



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Public Park

Opening Lakeshore to the public in the 1990s began the process of breaking down the barrier between the mentally “well” and “unwell,” destigmatizing the asylum landscape. The move to bring public walking trails and ballfields to the Lakeshore property was symbolic of a change in public perceptions of mental health. As Lakeshore Park’s popularity grew the site became a popular destination for community gatherings. Group fitness activities, the farmer’s market, and park pavilions created space for Knoxville residents to socialize. Parking in front of the Administration Building became a modern version of “taking the view.” Recent park improvements have increased site accessibility with new paths, parking, and an inclusive playground for children of all physical abilities. The boardwalk along the Tennessee River allows visitors to experience the riparian ecologies on either side of the TVA fore dike, highlighting the role of human infrastructure in urban ecosystems. Creating water access along Fourth Creek has also made Lakeshore a jumping off point for greater connection with Knoxville’s riparian ecologies. These type of connections to community and nature through public green spaces have been recognized as essential to physical and mental health.

Designing for Cultural Health

Lakeshore Park already hosts regular community gatherings and special events. The proposed landscape design pays tribute to Knoxville’s tradition of youth athletics, the rich cultural history of the site and city, the regional ecosystems present on the site, and Lakeshore’s on-going role as a landscape devoted to mental wellness. The Lakeshore Park Landscape Master Plan aims to support a healthy

Knoxville by providing improved youth athletics facilities, a cultural core that highlights views of the Smoky Mountains and Tennessee River, and an array of regional landscape typologies that will both beautify the park and promote ecological diversity and health. Uniting the wellness benefits of public parks, this plan emphasizes physical, mental, ecological, and community well-being, fostering a new concept of cultural health that combines these values.

Physical Health

Honoring the incredible community service Knox Youth sports provides, this plan proposes a state-of-the-art youth athletics facility. Along with providing necessary facilities updates for the soccer fields and replacing the aging little league baseball fields, this plan proposed the introduction of an artificial turf challenger field to increase accessibility to physical wellness and community engagement through baseball. A new field house will serve as a hub between soccer and little league fields. The field house will provide restrooms, concessions, space for groups to gather, and amenities for children and families. New parking lots allow for greater access to the athletics areas without competing with other park programming. The existing exercise trail and proposed additional park paths will continue to serve visitors of all ages for walking, running, and group exercise while connecting the athletics zone with the broader park.

Mental Health

The loop trail that circumnavigates the park was the first project implemented on this site as a public park. It provided park users with the opportunity to experience benefits of the site that were previously

off limits to the broader community. This trail will now lead visitors through the mental health narrative of the site. Guiding visitors to sites of former buildings and infrastructure of the mental health institute, up the slopes to Lyons view, and through the park’s dense woodlands and open prairies, this narrative tour will provide spaces for quiet reflection, active healing, and gathering spaces for community events.

Ecological Health

Taking care of the human community requires that we take care of the ecosystems we participate in. In Knoxville’s early industrial period, Lyons view provided respite to urban residents because of the seemingly undisturbed environment and bucolic views. However, prior to settler-colonial inhabitation of this area, the Cherokee used and tended the ecological resources of present-day East Tennessee. Urban growth continues to fragment ecological communities. The landscape plan for Lakeshore focuses on four regional ecotypes, woodland/oak-hickory forest, oak savanna, prairie, and riparian zone. Maintaining and extending forest cover, fostering oak savanna and prairie grasslands, and tending the riparian buffers along the Tennessee River and Fourth Creek promote a diversity of habitat, ecosystem services, and planting design aesthetics derived from regional ecotypes.

Community Health

The central axis of the site creates a spine of civic spaces that acknowledge the cultural history of the site in an effort to begin new cultural traditions within view of the mountains and waterways. The Overlook Plaza and Esplanade will initiate this era of fostering a culturally impactful landscape at Lakeshore Park. Anchoring the central spine of the park that runs

from the Administration Building to the view of the Tennessee River and Smoky Mountains beyond, the Overlook Terrace provides an event space with prospect over the park and room for reflection on the prior uses of the site as indigenous territory, farm, and mental health institute.

Continuing down the spine, the Agricultural Gardens allude to the crop fields that covered these slopes from the early 1800s through the 1950s while providing a rotational display of botanical color and interest in all seasons. The Central Gardens, situated between the Marble Hall and Arch Pavilion, provide the community with an evolving display of botanical beauty that will showcase native plantings referencing cultural traditions of cultivation and medicine. Finally, the Sculptural Mound counter-balances the Overlook, orienting visitors’ views beyond the park to the mountains from each of the spaces along the spine. Accessible paths circumnavigate this landform and a bring users to a platform nestled into the high point. The lookout provides a space to observe the lowland meadow, riparian ecology along the TVA fore dike, and the fluctuating depths of the Tennessee River.

Cultural Health

By promoting physical, mental, ecological and community health, this master plan aims to foster a new concept of cultural health for the park in which care for the individual, society, and ecosystem are treated holistically. The following master plan design uses these priorities to designate thematic zones across the site and encourages thoughtful integration of physical, mental, ecological and community care in each of the proposed park elements.

