

Celebrating Chattanooga's

Renaissance Park

Renaissance Park is situated on a 23-acre site on the north shore of the Tennessee River across the Market Street Bridge from Chattanooga's downtown business and tourism district. The park is built on land that is rich with Chattanooga history. The design of the park reflects this history while providing unique opportunities for recreation and relaxation.

With deep roots in the city's past, Renaissance Park is also part of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan that sets the stage for Chattanooga's future. As a result of its history of strategic partnerships and public investments, downtown Chattanooga is in the midst of over \$200 million of dollars of private residential and commercial development.

Historical Features

- **Trail of Tears** – In 1838, the United States government forcibly removed more than 16,000 Cherokee and other Indian people from their homelands in Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia, and sent them to the territory known today as Oklahoma. The overland route crossed the lower portion of the North Shore Wetland Park. Today, meandering bands of paths commemorate Native American heritage and honor their contributions to this community.
- **Meigs Allee** – The first bridge crossing of the Tennessee River at Chattanooga was erected in 1864 under the order of Montgomery Meigs, Quartermaster General of the Union armies. This clearing highlights the alignment where the wooden bridge, with its trestled northern approach, crossed the southern portions of the park. The bridge was destroyed in a flood in 1867.
- **Bridge Blockhouse** – These gabion walls represent the base of the blockhouse which served as a military post for the defense of the first bridge across the Tennessee River during the Civil War.
- **Camp Contraband** – “Camp Contraband” was the name given to an encampment that existed on this site during the Civil War. The camp was a haven for a large number of refugees, most of whom were liberated slaves seeking safety within the Union lines. The former slaves were hired to do most of the manual labor for building the military buildings, stockades, stables, etc. in Chattanooga during the war but were not allowed to live on the south side of the river. It was, also where the colored troops (and there were many of them) were quartered. Many residents of Camp Contraband gradually moved to higher ground away from the river, creating Hill City, one of the city's largest post civil war African American neighborhoods.
- **Underwater Wrecks** – The steamboat *Chattanooga* sank off the shore of Renaissance Park in 1921, ending the era of the steamboat. Serving passengers and freight moving across and up and down the river, the *Chattanooga* was one of the largest and best known in a long series of ferries and steamships which plied this section of the Tennessee River.
- **Industrial Past** - Samuel Stamping and Enameling was founded on the northern portions of Renaissance Park in 1926 where they manufactured a variety of porcelain enamel products such as appliances, space heaters and furnaces. Roper Corporation purchased the site in 1968 and continued operations until 2002 when parent company General Electric closed the 110,000 square foot manufacturing facility. Combined, these companies operated for over 75 years, providing manufacturing jobs to generations of Chattanoogaans.

Recreational Features

- **Hill Overlooks** – This area is comprised of grassy landforms for climbing and for views across the flooded forest, Tennessee River, downtown Chattanooga and to Lookout Mountain. These pyramids also serve the function of safely encapsulating, under 2 feet of clay, some of the waste byproducts left behind by industries formerly located on this site.
- **Canoe and Kayak Launch** – A launch site with parking will allow locals and visitors easy access to Tennessee's first designated Blueway where they can explore over 50 miles of the scenic Tennessee River and its tributaries by canoe and kayak. The launch will not be open to the public until completion of the Market Street Bridge renovation in late 2007.
- **Riverwalk** – Stretching 11 miles from Chickamauga Dam, the Riverwalk formerly ended at Coolidge Park. Renaissance Park both extends the Riverwalk and expands the recreational opportunities of Coolidge Park. Direct pedestrian and vehicular connections will open between the two parks when Market St Bridge renovations are completed in late 2007. The Riverwalk will eventually connect through the park to the newly designated Moccasin Bend National Park to complete a 22-mile urban greenway on the banks of the Tennessee River.
- **Forest & Wetland Boardwalks** – Suspended over the created wetland and slicing through the flooded forest, boardwalks both on-grade and in the air allow for unique vantage points for viewing river activities and scenic views of the waterfront.
- **Picnic Areas** – At the southern edge of the park, along the Tennessee River and the Riverwalk, open areas in the flooded forest provide light and space for picnics and play. These small “encampments” are aligned with the historic grid of Camp Contraband.

Ecological Features

- **Renaissance Wetland** – This 1.5-acre constructed wetland collects, improves, and releases water from two sources of urban pollution: controlled releases of built up water from the contaminated soils encapsulated beneath the park (byproducts of former industrial processes on site), and urban runoff from the 475-acre urban watershed of North Chattanooga - a great example of an alternative method to deal with challenges of urban ecology. The wetland is a working model of cutting edge use of design, materials, and natural systems. Its natural filtration system uses native plants and natural systems to improve water quality both within the park and downstream in the Tennessee River. Various vantage points provide relaxing places to observe an active wetland ecosystem. Please do not play in the wetland!
- **Flooded Forest** – The lower 13 acres of the Park sit within the Tennessee River's 10- and 100-year flood plains, and are regularly inundated. Through education and restoration efforts, the park will return native flooded woodland ecologies to this area- providing habitat for native flora and fauna, and acting as an important link in the ribbon of green that continues to expand along the Tennessee River.

Educational Features

- **Outdoor Pavilion** – The Outdoor Pavilion will be constructed on the northern edge of the site near Manufacturer's Road, and will act as a gateway to the park. The open-air pavilion will provide a unique gathering space and educational venue to explore park features and themes.
- **Interpretive Signage** will be located throughout the park providing educational narratives about the special features of the park and history of this site.