

Recreational Development of the Valley

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The recreation and metropolitan park developments in northeast Ohio are a result of national trends in park design and recreation. The concept of actively recreating in a thoughtfully conserved naturalistic environment, (rather than taming or subduing a wilderness), represents the culmination of societal concern over the effects of increasing urbanization and industrialization on the landscape and the human condition.

Cleveland's parkways system first made the rural areas more accessible and provided corridors of green in the urban environment. The Olmsted firm had been contacted in 1915 by Cleveland Metropolitan Parks Director, W.A. Stinchcomb, to act in an advisory capacity by assisting with a county wide park plan for Cuyahoga County. The influence the Olmsted firm had on the development of Akron's part system had a profound effect on the system's development. Their 1925 county-wide report states that the dominating feature of the Summit County area is the Cuyahoga Valley. The Olmsted firm's legacy to northeast Ohio is more park space per person than any other similarly sized statistical area within the United States.

The Civilian Conservation Corps design philosophy stressed buildings and structures that were subservient to, or at least in harmony with, the natural surroundings. These buildings and structures encouraged active recreation as an appropriate form of enjoying the natural beauty of the numerous ravines, valleys and ledges found in the metropolitan parks. The federal relief park development projects in northeast Ohio, like many similar projects throughout the country, helped realize the recreation potential of the Western Reserve's scenic areas in such a manner that stressed good conservation.