

Issue: NASORLO Members concerns about interpretations of 6 (f) conversions

Conversion Summary:

The Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965, when enacted into law, contained an important provision that assures permanent protection of lands and waters acquired and/or developed with Land and Water Conservation grant assistance. This important legacy of protection was created in Section 6(f)(3) of the Act which states:

(3) No property acquired or developed with assistance under this section shall, without the approval of the Secretary, be converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses. *The Secretary shall approve such conversion only if he finds it to be in accord with the then existing comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan and only upon such conditions as he deems necessary to assure the substitution of other recreation properties of at least equal fair market value and or reasonably equivalent usefulness and location:* Provided, That wetland areas and interests therein as identified in the wetlands provisions of the comprehensive plan and proposed to be acquired as suitable replacement property within that same State that is otherwise acceptable to the Secretary, acting through the Director of the National Park Service, shall be considered to be of reasonably equivalent usefulness with the property proposed for conversion.

NASORLO is in agreement this provision as administered by the National Park Service is essential to the legacy created by these federal funds. The current administrative Manual for the LWCF State Assistance Program, created by NPS states the following on the administration of Section 6(f)(3) of the Act states the following treated to the creation and protection of fund assisted project areas:

Section 6(f) boundary map. *One copy, hand-signed and dated.* The Section 6(f) map shall clearly delineate the area to be included under the conversion provisions of Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act. An acceptable Section 6(f) map is required for all development and combination projects prior to NPS approval, and for acquisition projects, prior to reimbursement. NPS will contact the State about any needed changes to the map.

*Prior to the date of final reimbursement for development and combination projects, the State and NPS may mutually agree to alter the Section 6(f) boundary to provide for the most satisfactory unit intended to be administered under the provisions of Section 6(f)(3).* For acquisition projects, Section 6(f) protection is afforded at the time LWCF reimbursement is provided.

No changes may be made to the 6(f) boundary after final reimbursement unless the project is amended as a result of an NPS approved conversion.

At a minimum, the Section 6(f) boundary must encompass a *viable* public outdoor recreation area that is capable of being self-sustaining without reliance upon adjoining or additional areas not identified in the scope of the project.

*Except in unusual cases where it can be shown a lesser unit is clearly a self-sustaining outdoor recreation resource, the area subject to Section 6(f) protection will be the park, open space, or recreation area being developed or expanded. Exceptions will be made only in the case of larger parks where logical management units exist therein resulting in smaller viable public outdoor recreation areas.* In no case will the areas covered by Section 6(f)(3) of the Act be less than that acquired with LWCF assistance.

For the post completion administration of projects the Manual says this:

Property acquired or developed with LWCF assistance shall be retained and used for public outdoor recreation. Any property so acquired and/or developed shall not be wholly or partly converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses without the approval of NPS pursuant to Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act and these regulations. The conversion provisions of Section 6(f)(3), 36 CFR Part 59, and these guidelines apply to each area or facility for which LWCF assistance is obtained, regardless of the extent of participation of the program in the assisted area or facility and consistent with the contractual agreement between NPS and the State.

Responsibility for compliance and enforcement of these provisions rests with the State for both state and locally sponsored projects. The responsibilities cited herein are applicable to the area depicted or otherwise described on the 6(f)(3) boundary map and/or as described in other project documentation approved by the Department of the Interior. This mutually agreed to area normally exceeds that actually receiving LWCF assistance so as to assure the protection of a viable recreation entity.

The Problem in General:

In recent years some States have reported issues and inconsistencies in the way NPS allows creation and administers 6(f)(3) provisions, especially when previously approved 6(f) boundaries are expanded after an agreement had been signed and approved. This has been exacerbated by what appears to be a one size fits all approach from NPS when considering park boundary issues.

The Problem in Specific: What is a park?

In the guidance as referenced above, the area to be protected by 6(f)(3) is referred to in a number of ways. Over the course of the LWCF program, this has resulted in a number of project boundaries that do not encompass the entirety of the public park, or all of the public land associated with the funded amenity at the time of assistance. Further, the specific guidance around defining project boundaries did not come into play until 1978, twelve years after the program was initiated.

Consequently, there is a wide range of project boundaries associated with fund assisted sites, from clearly identified full park boundaries, to portions of larger park or public properties to projects that have indistinct or worse, no project boundaries. This status comes into play in a number of ways, each with its own potential for confusion, consternation, and conflict.

There seems to be a benefit to be gained by all parties from defining the basic elements of a park, open space or recreation area, all different names for the same thing, a place that is designed and managed for public outdoor recreation. If we could define what a park is, we could perhaps come to terms with how to identify the boundary to a park.

Let's explore these types of boundary issues **around a "park"** that impact us all.

- 1) Boundary issues on newly assisted project sites when all of the public land is **not, or should not be considered a "park"**: Development, not Acquisition
  - a) There are many cases when a municipality is creating new parkland out of existing publicly owned land where the municipality desires to protect only a portion of that public open space for recreation, for a park.
    - i) Doug B can speak to the current Waterville Maine project. Others may have similar examples to share.
  - b) With an eye toward perpetual stewardship obligations, do we not want to respect the assessment of a local project sponsor regarding their capacity to manage and maintain a park forever?
  - c) What is the benefit to the public of protecting greater areas of open space if the managing agency may not have the will or the capacity to maintain it for the long term?
    - i) More importantly, what is the benefit to the State as guarantor of future recreation access for all projects to promote unsustainable expansion of parks / protected outdoor recreation areas?
- 2) Boundary issues on existing fund assisted sites receiving new funding
  - a) Current intentions of NPS appear to be to take the opportunity, any time new **assistance touches previously funded sites, to review and "correct" boundary** issues if they are perceived to be incorrect related to programmatic intent.
    - i) The problem here is when the revision of a project boundary results in an expansion of the originally defined site.
  - b) Standing assumptions should be that at the time of the original award, all parties, local, state and federal, agreed to the project boundaries as reflected in the project files.
    - i) When project files include maps or site plans that either have inconsistent or incomplete boundaries, or worse, when no boundaries exist, what is a reasonable approach toward resolution?
      - (1) Assigning a 6(f) boundary to all of the public land at the site at the time of the award is problematic for two reasons:
        - (a) It frequently results in a significant expansion of the protected area well beyond what was most likely considered the original project site.

(b) It potentially greatly expands the acreage of land that the State is ultimately responsible for.

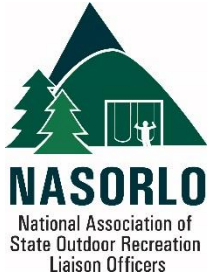
- 3) Boundary issues during conversions
  - a) As with Item #2 above, frequently properties that become conversions are ones that were created before clear boundary maps were the norm, and therefore vague, incomplete or nonexistent boundaries exist.
  - b) Given the costs associated with conversions we are all aware that the project boundary is critical as it establishes the base line for the process to follow. Frequently, these old projects were for relatively small amounts of funding assistance – (we are aware that it is not the amount of the grant but the land that is affected by it that is protected), but is it reasonable to insist that all of the public land associated with that project at the time of the award was the intended public recreation area, absent any evidence to the contrary. As previously mentioned, at the time of the award, local, state and federal agencies all agreed that the project was viable as reflected in the file.
- 4) Boundary issues for clear cut full on parcels
  - a) **Wouldn't that be nice if that's all we ever saw.**

In considering this issue NASORLO feels there is benefit in reviewing how State and Local project sponsors frequently make decisions about a fund assisted site boundary.

Perpetuity is a long time –general discussion and examples of personal experiences related to being a project applicant, working for municipalities interested in fund assistance and how decisions are made related to long term stewardship obligations. Also, a discussion about the probable negative implications for project sponsors moving **forward if the “all or nothing” of 6f protection is to be pursued for all future projects.**

#### Options to Consider as Viable Solutions

- 1) Establish a working group NASORLO / NPS to draft policy
- 2) Negotiated boundaries based on formulaic and consistent guidelines
  - a) Such as?
- 3) State empowered to do more of this in order to expedite action, if Federal willing to trust outcomes
- 4) ??



# Modernization Committee

## Issue Statement and Proposed Resolution

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### *Project Boundaries & Park Definitions*

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**Issue:** Throughout the history of the LWCF program the project boundary issue has been addressed with a degree of inconsistency. This has resulted in a legacy of projects across the country that have indistinct project boundaries. When new light is shed upon these projects in the context of a compliance issue, satisfying the first and foremost step in resolving the compliance issue, that being the question of the size of the protected parcel, becomes difficult if not impossible.

This question of project boundaries is also visited when a previously funded project site receives new funding and the opportunity then is upon us to determine appropriate project boundaries. While the indistinct boundary from the original project does not want to be perpetuated, neither do we necessarily want to protect more land than is truly needed to protect a viable park area.

Guidance in this context is also needed when new projects are being proposed where the area benefiting from LWCF assistance is a portion of a larger land area in public ownership. The Parks Service currently is inclined to compel project sponsors to capture the entirety of the land in public ownership, even if only a portion of the parcel is being developed as a park and could exist as a viable park if a project boundary was more conservatively drawn.

Consequently, the resolution of these questions has been on a case by case basis centered often around an attempt to discern the intentions of project sponsors decades ago or to debate the central question of what constitutes a park, and therefore how much public land is needed to establish that park. There is a need for the program to develop a standardized approach to interpreting these troublesome project parcel questions to promote consistent and equitable resolution now and into the future.

Previously discussed outline of this issue is attached.

**Proposal:** The NASORLO Modernization Committee proposes the following to address the issues above:

1. Research and Agree upon a basic guidance document to establish minimum size and or amenity attribute that combined make up a viable park. Attached is a proposed starting place, NRPA's previous guidance surrounding minimal size and attributes for various parks.
  - a. While NRPA has veered from establishing and managing park development standards, it seems logical to believe that minimum standards still exist and should be sought out.
2. Establish a Boundary Review Committee; membership made up of designated NPS staff and NASORLO members, also to include a landscape architect with demonstrated public park design experience.
  - a. This committee would meet quarterly throughout the year to review current parcel compliance and or proposal issues. The committee would be charged with coming to consensus around appropriate interpretations of the issue and responses to the project sponsor, state agency and regional NPS office.
3. Decisions of the review committee would be final.

Park, Recreation, Open  
Space and Greenway  
Guidelines

- James D. Mentes, Ph.D., CLP
- James R. Hall, CLP

1996, National Recreation  
and Park Association

# Classifications for Parks, Open Space, and Greenways



The following classifications are intended to be used as guidelines at the local level. The revised classifications for parks, recreation areas, and open spaces expand upon past classifications to take into consideration local community needs. The key area of change in this regard is the inclusion of park-school sites, athletic fields, private park/recreation facility, natural resource area/preserve, and greenways classifications.

The classification system recommended for pathway facilities is completely new and reflects the need to plan for these facilities in a comprehensive fashion. Pathways accommodate lightweight, slower moving, and non-motorized forms of transportation.

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## **Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Facilities Classification**

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The intent of the pathway classifications is to encourage communities to plan for light traffic facilities in the same comprehensive fashion that is recommended for parks, open spaces, community land uses, and motorized transportation systems. From this system-wide planning perspective, a comprehensive light traffic system will emerge that is intrinsically tied to the park, open space, and general land use/transportation system within a city, as well as adjacent communities and regions. Figure 4.1 - Range of Need for Pathways identifies the broad range of uses and skill levels that the pathways seek to accommodate.

### **Figure 4.1 Range of Need for Greenway Facilities**

**Potential Range of Need: Recreation • Commuting / Alternative Transportation  
Health and Fitness • Nature Study • Social Interaction**

#### **Potential Skill Level (Bicyclists)**

**Group A - Advanced Bicyclists:** Experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions. They comprise the majority of current users of collector and arterial streets and are best served by directness, minimal delays, and sufficient operating space.

**Group B - Basic Bicyclists:** Casual or new adult and teenage bicyclists who are less confident of their ability to operate without special provisions for bicycles. Some will develop greater skills and progress to the advanced level. They are best served by comfortable access to destinations (preferably a direct route), low-speed or low-traffic volume streets, or designated bicycle facilities.

**Group C - Children:** Pre-teen bicyclists whose roadway use is initially monitored by parents. They are best served by access to key destinations surrounding neighborhood areas (schools, recreation facilities, shopping), residential streets with low traffic speeds and volumes, well-defined separation from motor vehicles on arterial and collector streets and separate bike paths.

*Sources: Manual: Selecting Roadway Design Treatments to Accommodate Bicyclists (FHWA-RD-92-073), Federal Highway Administration and Brauer & Associates, Ltd.*

The following table provides an overview of the classifications for parks, recreation areas open space, and pathways.

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classifications Table				
Parks and Open Space Classifications				
Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Application of LOS
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Less than a 1/4 mile distance in residential setting.	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size	Yes
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.	Yes
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable—depends on function	Yes — but should not count school only uses.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.	Yes
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.	Yes
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.	No
Greenways	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.	No
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Determined by projected demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.	Yes
Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.	Variable—dependent on specific use.	Variable.	Depends on type of use.
Private Park / Recreation Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable—dependent on specific use.	Variable.	Depends on type of use.

Parks, Open Space, and Pathway Classifications Table (cont.)

Pathway Classifications			
Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type	Application of LOS
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists / in-line skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/ in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard- or soft-surfaced.	Not Applicable.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent r.o.w. (e.g., old railroad r.o.w.) Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road r.o.w.	Not Applicable.
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.  Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.	Not Applicable.
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	Not Applicable.
Cross-Country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	Not Applicable.
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.	Not Applicable.

**Mini-Park**

*Used to address limited or isolated recreational needs.*

General Description: Mini-park is the smallest park classification and is used to address limited or isolate recreational needs. Examples include:

- Concentrated or limited populations.
- Isolated development areas.
- Unique recreational opportunities.

In a residential setting, vest-pocket parks serve the same general purpose as mini-parks and totlots of the past. They are also intended to address unique recreational needs, such as:

- Landscaped public use area in an industrial/commercial area.
- Scenic overlooks.
- A play area adjacent to the downtown shopping district.

Although the past classification mini-park was often oriented toward active recreation, the new classification vest-pocket park has a broader application that includes both active and passive uses. Examples of passive uses includes picnic areas, arbors, and sitting areas.

**Location Criteria:** Although demographics and population density play a role in location, the justification for a Vest-Pocket Park lies more in servicing a specific recreational need or taking advantage of a unique opportunity. Given the potential variety of vest-pocket park activities and locations, service area will vary. In a residential setting, however, the service area is usually less than a 1/4 mile in radius. Accessibility by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets increases use opportunities and therefore is an important consideration.

**Size Criteria:** Typically, vest-pocket parks are between 2500 square feet and one acres in size. However, park areas less that 5 acres would technically be considered a mini-park. Anything larger would be considered a neighborhood park.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Servicing a specific recreation need, ease of access from the surrounding area, and linkage to the community pathway system are key concerns when selecting a site.

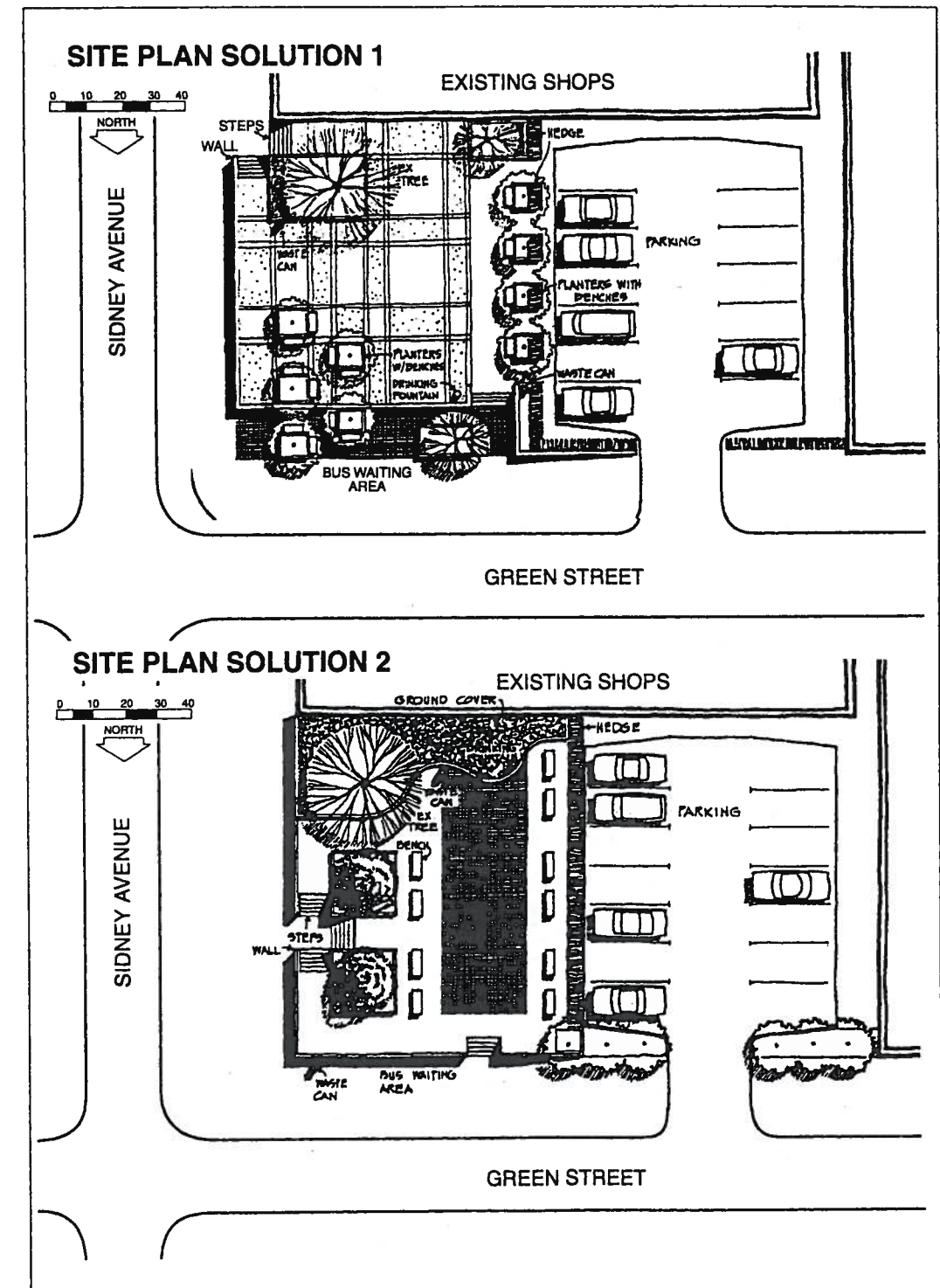
The site itself should exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for its intended uses. It should have well-drained and suitable soils with positive drainage. The desirable amount of topographical change and vegetation is dependent upon intended uses. Usually, these sites are fairly level. Vegetation (natural or planted) should be used to enhance its aesthetic qualities rather than impede development. Ideally, it should also have adjacency to other park system components, most notably greenways and the trail system.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menus:** Customer input through the customer input process should be the primary determinant of the development program for a vest-pocket park. Although these parks often included elements similar to that of a neighborhood park, there are no specific criteria to guide development of facilities. Given their size, they are typically not intended to be used for programmed activities.

Parking is typically not required. Site lighting should be used for security and safety.

Figure 4.2

Mini-Park



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## Neighborhood Park

*Neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.*

children, adults, the elderly, and special populations, is important. Creating a sense of place by bringing together the unique character of the site with that of the neighborhood is vital to successful design.

**Location Criteria:** A neighborhood park should be centrally located within its service area, which encompasses a 1/4 to 1/2 mile distance uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. These distances might vary depending on development diversity. The site should be accessible from throughout its service area by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets. Ease of access and walking distance are critical factors in locating a neighborhood park. A person's propensity to use a neighborhood park is greatly reduced if they perceive it to be difficult to access or not within a reasonable walking distance. Frequently neighborhood parks are developed adjacent to the elementary school.

**Size Criteria:** Demographic profiles and population density within the park's service area are the primary determinants of a neighborhood park's size. Generally, 5 acres is generally accepted as the minimum size necessary to provide space for a menu of recreation activities. 7 to 10 acres is considered optimal.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Ease of access from the surrounding neighborhood, central location, and linkage to greenways are the key concerns when selecting a site. The site itself should exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreational uses. Since one of the primary reasons people go to a park is to experience a pleasant outdoor environment, the site should exhibit some innate aesthetic qualities. "Left-over" parcels of land that are undesirable for development are generally undesirable for neighborhood parks as well and should be avoided. Additionally, it is more cost effective to select a site with inherent aesthetic qualities, rather than trying to create them through extensive site development. Given the importance of location, neighborhood parks should be selected before a subdivision is platted and acquired as part of the development process.

The site should have well-drained and suitable soils and level topography. Ideally, it should be connected to other park system components such as natural resource areas, lakes, ponds, and greenways. Land within a flood plain should only be considered if the facilities are constructed above the 100 year flood elevation. Although a minimum park size of 5 acres is recommended, the actual size should be based on the land area needed to accommodate desired uses.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menus:** Since each neighborhood in a community is unique, neighborhood input should be used to determine the development

**General Description:** Neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. They should be developed for both active and passive recreation activities geared specifically for those living within the service area. Accommodating a wide variety of age and user groups, including

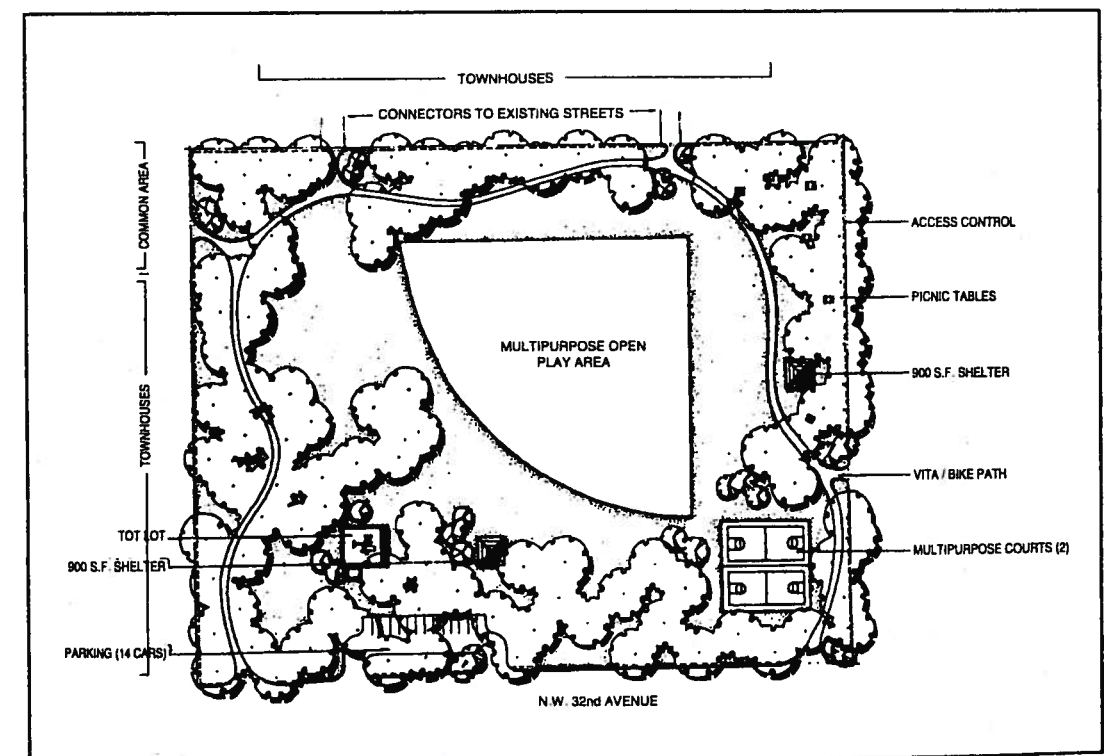
program for the park. The guidelines presented here should be used as a framework to guide program development and ensure consistency with other park system components. They should not be used as an impediment to creative design outcomes.

Development of a neighborhood park should seek to achieve a balance between active and passive park uses. Active recreational facilities are intended to be used in an informal and unstructured manner. With the exception of limited use by youth teams, neighborhood parks are not intended to be used for programmed activities that result in overuse, noise, parking problems, and congestion.

A menu of potential active recreation facilities includes play structures, court games, "informal" (i.e. non-programmed) playfield or open space, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe area, ice skating area, wading pool, and activity room. Facilities for passive activities include internal trails (that could connect to the greenway system), picnic/sitting areas, general open space, and "people watching" areas. As a general rule, active recreational facilities should consume roughly 50% of the park's acreage. The remaining 50% should be used for passive activities, reserve, ornamentation, and conservation as appropriate. Developing an appealing park atmosphere should be considered an important design element.

The site should accommodate 7 to 10 off street parking spaces, for use by those who choose or need to drive to the park. Park lighting should be used for security and safety, with very limited lighting on facilities, preferably lighted tennis courts only.

**Figure 4.3**  
**Neighborhood Park**



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## School-Park

Allows for expanding the recreational, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost effective manner.

serve as a neighborhood park. Likewise, a middle or high school could serve as a community park or as youth athletic fields. Depending on its size, one school-park site may serve in a number of capacities, such as a neighborhood park, youth athletic fields, and a school. Given the inherent variability of type, size, and location, determining how a school-park site is integrated into the park system will depend on an particular circumstances. The important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and the park system benefit for shared use of facilities and land area.

**Location Criteria:** For the most part, the location of a school-park site will be determined by the school district based on local policy for the distribution of schools. Given this, the location of a school will often dictate how it is best integrated into the park and recreation system. Where planning efforts coincide, attempts should be made to coordinate the needs of the school district with that of the park and recreation system. This allows for siting, acquisition, and facility development to be responsive to community needs in a most effective and efficient manner. Service areas for school-park sites depend on the type of use. They should be surrounded by neighborhood streets.

**Site Criteria:** The optimum size of a school-park site is dependent upon its intended use. The size criteria established for Neighborhood Park and Community Park classifications should be used as appropriate. The school lands, including the building or special use facilities, should not be considered in LOS.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guideline:** The criteria established for Neighborhood Park and Community Park classifications should be used to determine how a school-park site should function. The key factor is to ensure that the site exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for intended uses.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menus:** The criteria established for Neighborhood Park and Community Park should be used to determine how a school-park site is developed. Where feasible, if athletic fields are developed at a school-park sites, they should be oriented toward youth rather than adult programs.

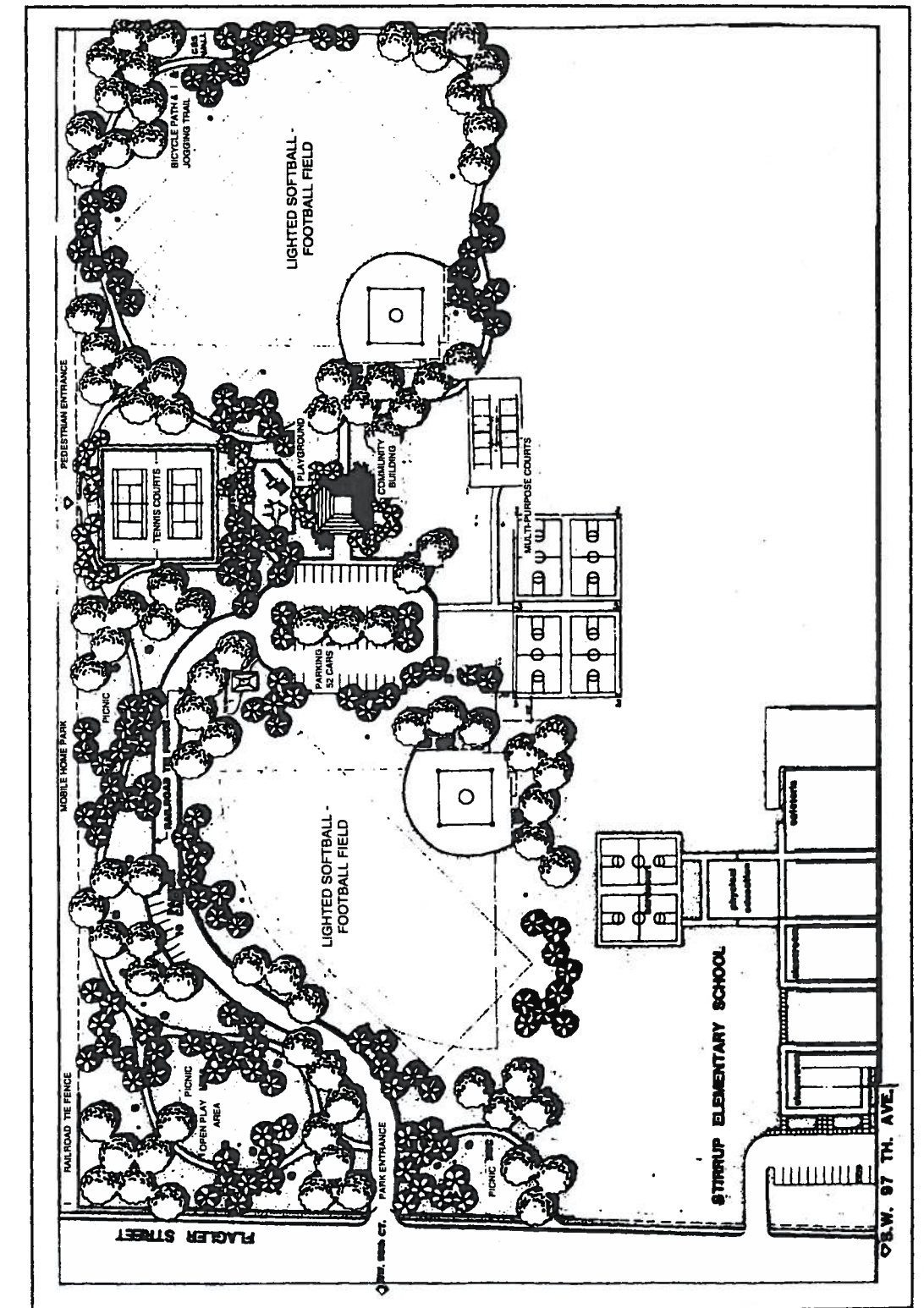
Establishing a clearly defined joint-use agreement between involved agencies is critical to making school-park relationships workable. This is particularly important with respect to acquisition development, maintenance, liability, use, and programming of facilities issues.

**General Description:** By combining the resources of two public agencies, the School-Park classification allows for expanding the recreation, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Depending on the circumstances, school-park sites often complement other community open lands. As an example, an elementary/middle school site could

Different populations in a larger service area challenge planners to fashion the proper recreation activity menu to meet local needs.

Figure 4.4  
School Park



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## Community Park

*Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.*

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**General Description:** Community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or large sections of the community, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible —

nor perhaps desirable — at the neighborhood level. As with neighborhood parks, they should be developed for both active and passive recreation activities.

**Location Criteria:** A community park should serve two or more neighborhoods. Although its service area should be 0.5 to 3.0 miles in radius, the quality of the natural resource base should play a significant role in site selection. The site should be serviced by arterial and collector streets and be easily accessible from throughout its service area by way of interconnecting trails. While community parks should be strategically sited throughout the community, their locations can be significantly impacted by other types of parks. Most notable among these are school-parks, natural resource areas, and regional parks—each of which may provide some of the same recreational opportunities provided in community parks. The level of service these other parks provide should be used, in part, as justification for or against a community park in a specific area.

**Size Criteria:** Demographic profiles, population density, resource availability, and recreation demand within its service area are the primary determinants of a community park's size. Although an optimal size for a community park is between 20 and 50 acres, its actual size should be based on the land area needed to accommodate desired uses.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** The site's natural character should play a very significant role in site selection, with emphasis on sites that preserve unique landscapes within the community and/or provide recreational opportunities not otherwise available. Ease of access from throughout the service area, geographically centered, and relationship to other park areas are also key concerns in site selection.

The site should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreation use. It should have suitable soils, positive drainage, varying topography, and a variety of vegetation. Where feasible, it should be adjacent to natural resource areas and greenways. These linkages tend to expand the recreational opportunities within the community and enhance one's perception of surrounding open space.

Depending upon their individual character and use, lakes, ponds, and rivers may be associated with either community parks or natural resource areas. Although largely a matter of semantics, Community Park and Natural Resource Area classifications differ in that the former is generally more developed for recreational use than the latter. Land within a flood plain should only be considered if the facilities are above the 100 year flood elevation. Land below that elevation would typically fall within the Natural Resource Area classification.

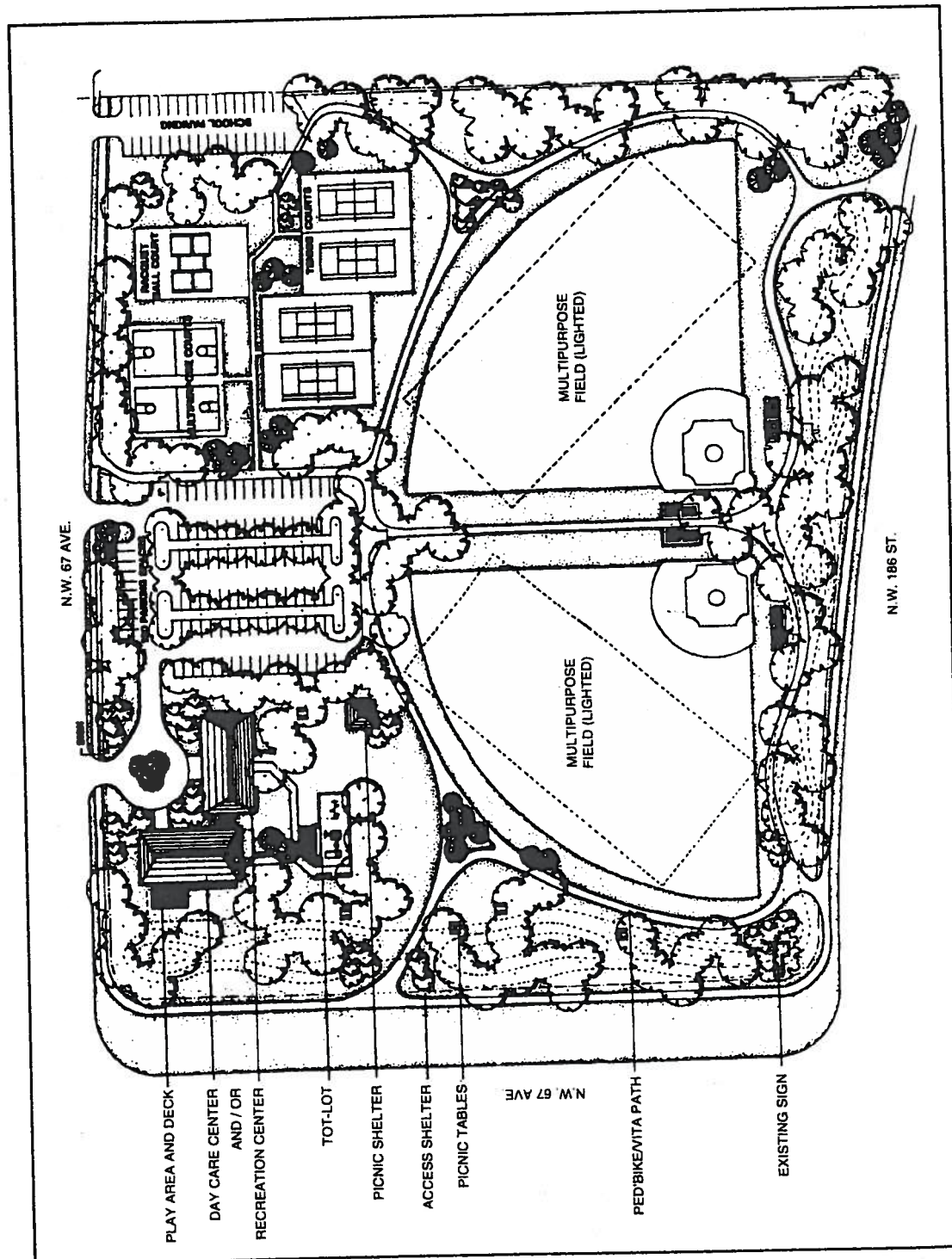
**Development Parameters Recreation Activities Menu:** Neighborhood and community input through the customer input process should be the primary determinant of development program for a community park. As with a neighborhood park, the guidelines presented in this document should be used as a framework to guide program development and ensure consistency with other park system components. They should not be used as an impediment to creative and unique design outcomes.

As stated, community parks are typically developed for both active and passive uses. Although active recreation facilities are intended to be used in an informal and unstructured manner, reserved and programmed use is compatible and acceptable. However, community parks are not intended to be used extensively for programmed adult athletic use and tournaments.

A menu of potential active recreation facilities includes large play structures and/or creative play attractions, game courts, informal ballfields for youth play, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe areas, ice skating areas, swimming pools, swimming beaches, archery ranges, and disc golf areas. Passive activity facilities include extensive internal trails (that connect to the community trail system), individual and group picnic/sitting areas, general open space and unique landscapes/features, nature study areas, and ornamental gardens. Facilities for cultural activities, such as plays and concerts in the park, are also appropriate. The distribution of land area between active and passive recreation, reserve, ornamentation, conservation, and cultural areas is determined on a site by site basis.

Parking lots should be provided as necessary to accommodate user access. Park lighting should be used for security, safety, and lighting facilities as appropriate.

Figure 4.5  
Community Park



Metropolitan Dade County Park and Recreation Department

## Sports Complex

Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities at larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.

**General Description:** The Sports Complex classification consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities at larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community. This allows for:

- Economies of scale and higher quality facilities.
- Improved management/scheduling.

- Improved control of facility use.
- Greater control of negative impacts to neighborhood and community parks, such as overuse, noise, traffic congestion, parking, and domination of facilities by those outside the neighborhood.

Sports complexes should be developed to accommodate the specific needs of user groups and athletic associations based on demands and program offerings. Where possible, school-park sites should be used for youth athletics such as T-ball, soccer, and flag football, to minimize duplication of facilities. Athletic fields are a good example of the multiple use concept in park facility grouping. The fields can be used for a variety of sports so as to accommodate more participants. Also, the facility can be scheduled more heavily than a single use facility. Sports Complexes include fields and courts for softball, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, and racket ball.

**Location Criteria:** Sport complexes should be viewed as strategically located community-wide facilities rather than serving well-defined neighborhoods or areas. They should be located within reasonable and equal driving distance from populations served. Locating them adjacent to non-residential land uses is preferred. Buffering (topographic breaks, vegetation, etc.) should be used where facilities are located adjacent to residential areas. Identifying athletic field sites prior to residential development is critical to avoiding long term conflicts. Sites should be accessible from major thoroughfares. Direct access through residential areas should be avoided. Given that athletic facilities will likely be used for league play and tournaments, access routes from outside the community should also be considered. The site should be easily accessible by way of interconnecting trails, as well.

Projected facility needs based on demographic profiles, age-group population forecasts, and participation rates should be used to determine the facilities menu for a sports complex. The space requirements should be facility driven to meet projected need. Space for adequate spectator seating should be provided. Consideration should be given to acquiring an additional 20 to 25% of the total acreage for reserve against unforeseen space needs. To minimize the number of sites required, each site should be a minimum of 40 acres, with 80 to 150 acres being optimal.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** The site should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for developing athletic facilities. Topography and soils are of the utmost concern in

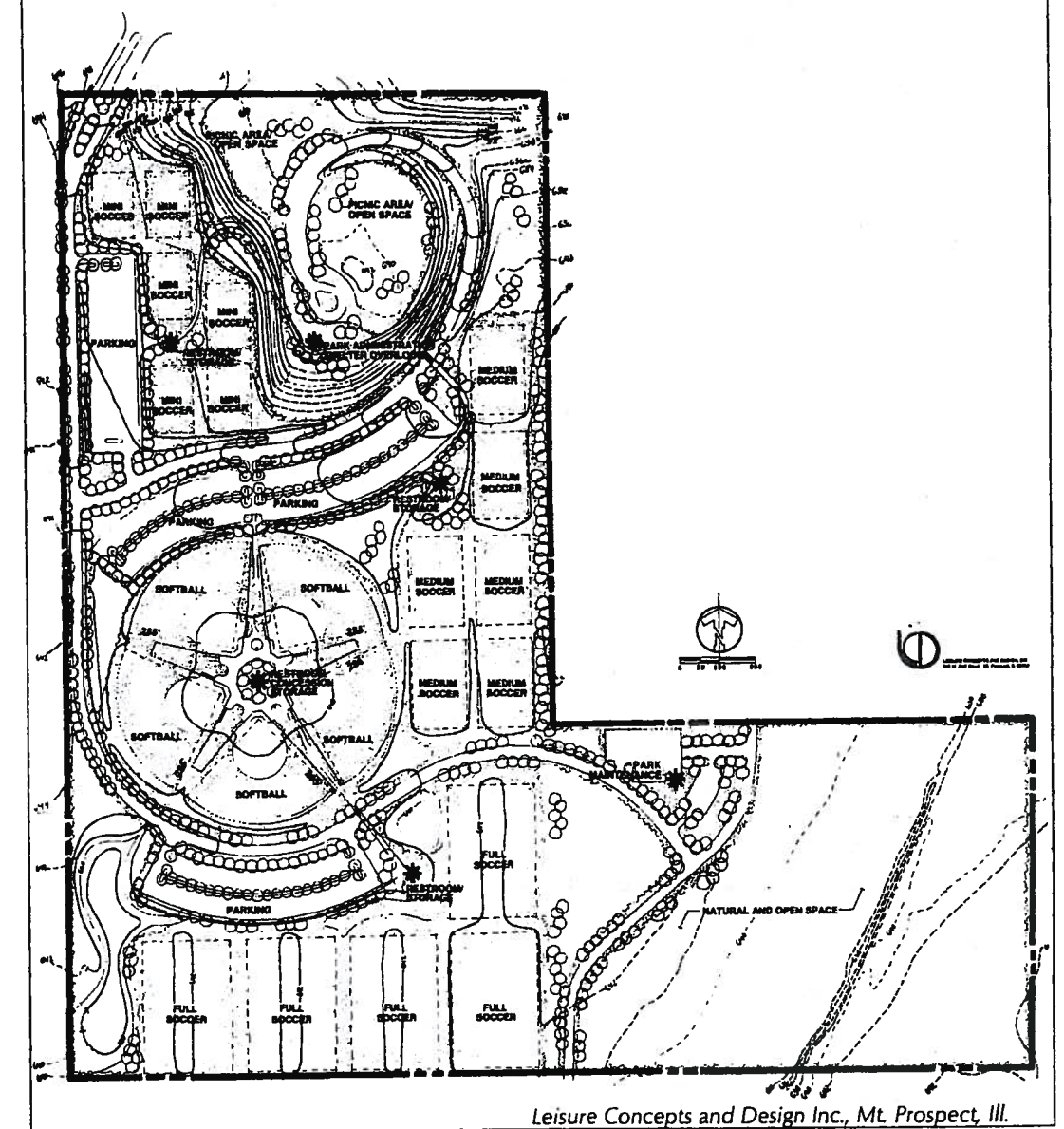
this instance. Although extreme topographical change should be avoided, some elevation change is desirable to allow for drainage and to give the site some character. Well-drained and suitable soils are also important. Natural vegetation along the perimeter of the site and in non-field areas is desirable in that it adds to the overall visual appeal of the site. Locating sports complexes adjacent to other park system components, especially natural resource areas and greenways, is also desirable to buffer their impact on surrounding land uses. Access to public utilities must also be considered.

**Development Parameters:** Projected demand for specific types of facilities should be the primary determinant of a sports complexes development program.

Sports complexes are intended for programmed athletic use, such as adult organized softball, etc. and tournaments. Sports complexes increase tourism, drawing both tournament participants and spectators. A menu of potential facilities includes ballfields, soccer fields, football fields, outdoor and indoor skating rinks, tennis courts, play structures, hardcourts, and volleyball courts. Internal trails should provide access to all facilities as well as connection to the pathway system. Group picnic areas and shelters should also be considered. Support facilities include multipurpose buildings, restrooms, and common space.

Parking lots should be provided as necessary to accommodate participants and spectators. Lights should be used for security, safety, and lighting facilities as appropriate. Field lighting should not be located so as to create a nuisance to nearby residents. Also, note that each sports governing body provides specific facility development standards.

**Figure 4.6**  
**SPORTS COMPLEX**



Leisure Concepts and Design Inc., Mt. Prospect, Ill.

**Special Use Park**

*Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.*

**General Description:** The Special Use classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use. Special uses generally fall into three categories:

- Historic/Cultural/Social Sites—unique local resources offering historical, educational, and cultural opportunities. Examples include historic downtown areas, performing arts parks, arboretums, ornamental gardens, performing arts facilities, indoor theaters, churches, public buildings, and amphitheaters.

- Recreation Facilities—specialized or single purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers, community theaters, hockey arenas, marinas, golf courses, and aquatic parks. Frequently community buildings are located in neighborhood and community parks.
- Outdoor Recreation Facilities—Examples include tennis centers, softball complexes, sports stadiums.

**Location Criteria:** Recreation need, community interests, the type of facility, and land availability are the primary factors influencing location. Special use facilities should be viewed as strategically located community-wide facilities rather than as serving well-defined neighborhoods or areas. The site should be easily accessible from arterial and collector streets, where feasible. It should also be accessible from the light traffic system, as well.

**Size Criteria:** Facility space requirements are the primary determinants of site size. As an example, a golf course may require 150 acres, whereas a community center with parking may fit on 10 or 15 acres.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Where feasible, a geographically central site is optimal. Given the variety of potential special uses, no specific standards are defined for site selection. As with all park types, the site itself should exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for its use.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activities Menu:** Since each special use facility is unique, community input through surveys and focus meetings should be the primary determinant of its development program. There are numerous technical books, manuals, and planning guidelines in the literature addressing the preservation, restoration, operation, maintenance, and interpretation of historic and cultural sites, buildings, and artifacts.

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### **Private Park/ Recreation Facility**

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**General Description:** The Private Park/Recreation Facility is a new classification that recognizes the contribution of private providers to the community park and recreation system. It also encourages greater

cooperation between the private and public sector toward meeting growing park and recreation needs. The characteristics of Private Parks and Private Recreation Facilities are as follows:

- Private Parks such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and party houses are generally within a residential area developed for the exclusive use of residents and are maintained through a neighborhood association. They are not, however, a complete substitute for public recreation space.
- Private Recreation Facilities are for-profit enterprises, such as health and fitness clubs, golf courses, water parks, amusement parks, and sports facilities.

In either case, they can be an entirely private (i.e. for the exclusive use of residents or members) or a public-private venture (i.e. local residents receive special rates and privileges). In many instances, private facilities can fill certain voids which the public sector cannot. This frees up limited public funds to meet high priority needs for land and facilities.

The contribution that Private Parks/Recreation Facilities make in meeting community park and recreation needs must be determined on a case by case basis. Specific policy guidelines should be prepared for use in the subdivision exaction ordinance.

**Location Criteria:** For the most part, the location of private parks/recreation facilities will be determined by a developer or private enterprise—with the city often negotiating the final location at the time of development. Where planning efforts coincide, attempts should be made to coordinate the needs of the private party with that of the city. This allows for the greatest degree of service to the community in the most cost effective manner. Service areas for private parks depend on the type of use.

**Size Criteria:** The optimal size of a Private Park/Recreation Facility site is dependent upon its intended use. The size criteria established for other park classifications should be used as appropriate for private parks in a residential setting. Given the inherent variability, there are no established site size standards for private recreation facilities.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Again, intended use will determine site selection. The criteria established for other park classifications should be used to determine how a private park should function. The key factor is that the site exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for intended uses.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activities Menu:** For private parks and recreation areas, the criteria established for other park classifications should be used to determine how a site is developed. Establishing clearly defined joint-use agreements between the city and private party is critical to making a public-private relationship workable. This is particularly important with respect to development fees, user charges, and programming policies.

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### **Natural Resources Areas/ Preserve/Open Lands**

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*Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space.*

**General Description:** Natural resource areas are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering. These lands consist of:

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources.
- Lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential.

Examples include parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainageways and ravines, surface water management areas (man-made ponding areas), and utility easements.

- Protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes, and ponds.

In *Section 2 - Framework for Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Planning*, reference was made to defining the natural resource base of a city to determine its potential for preservation and conservation. It is through the Natural Resource Area/Preserve classification that these areas are actually incorporated into the system plan.

As was pointed out in Section 2, the objective with all these lands is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

- Setting aside specific natural resource areas for preservation purposes through the Natural Resource Area/Preserve classification.
- Carefully and insightfully regulating development to preserve natural resources and open space.
- Working with other natural resource agencies, such as the Corps of Engineers, local watershed districts, forest preserve districts, floodplain and wetland districts, etc. to protect natural resources and ecosystems.

Examples of these types of resources include:

- Geologic features.
- Functioning ecosystem.
- Maintain biodiversity.
- Aquifer recharge.
- Watershed.
- Protection of rare, threatened or endangered species.
- Forests/woodlands.
- Wildlife habitat.

The intertwining of parks, greenways, trails, and natural resource areas is what legitimizes the concept of the city-park, the integration of the human element with that of the natural environment that surrounds them.

**Location Criteria:** Resource availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining location.

**Size Criteria:** As with location, resource availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining size. The practical limit of acreage set aside under this classification lies in resource quality, availability, community development considerations, and acquisition costs. Through an array of creative real estate strategies, many acres can be preserved as community open lands. Often blighted lands such as abandoned waterfront sites, industrial sites, quarries, and abandoned landfills, have potential to be converted from community liabilities to community open land resources. Reclaimed wetlands and wetland banks fall into this category.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Resource quality is the primary determinant when it comes to selecting a site for preservation. Sites that exhibit unique natural resources or remnant landscapes of the region should be of the highest priority. How they can be integrated into the park system is an important challenge and requires creative policy and design. Many of these areas serve as recreation connectors and habitat corridors.

Outlots and undevelopable/protected lands should be selected on the basis of enhancing the character of the community, buffering, and providing linkages with other park components protecting natural systems and processes.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menu:** Although natural resource areas are resource rather than user based, they can provide some passive recreational opportunities. Most notable are nature viewing and study. They can also function as greenways. Development should be kept to a level that preserves the integrity of the resource.

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## Greenways

*Tie park systems components together to form a cohesive park environment.*

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**General Description:** Greenways serve a number of important functions:

- They tie park components together to form a cohesive park, recreation, and open space system.
- They emphasize harmony with the natural environment.
- They allow for uninterrupted and safe pedestrian movement between parks throughout the community.
- They provide people with a resource based outdoor recreational opportunity and experience.
- They can enhance property values.

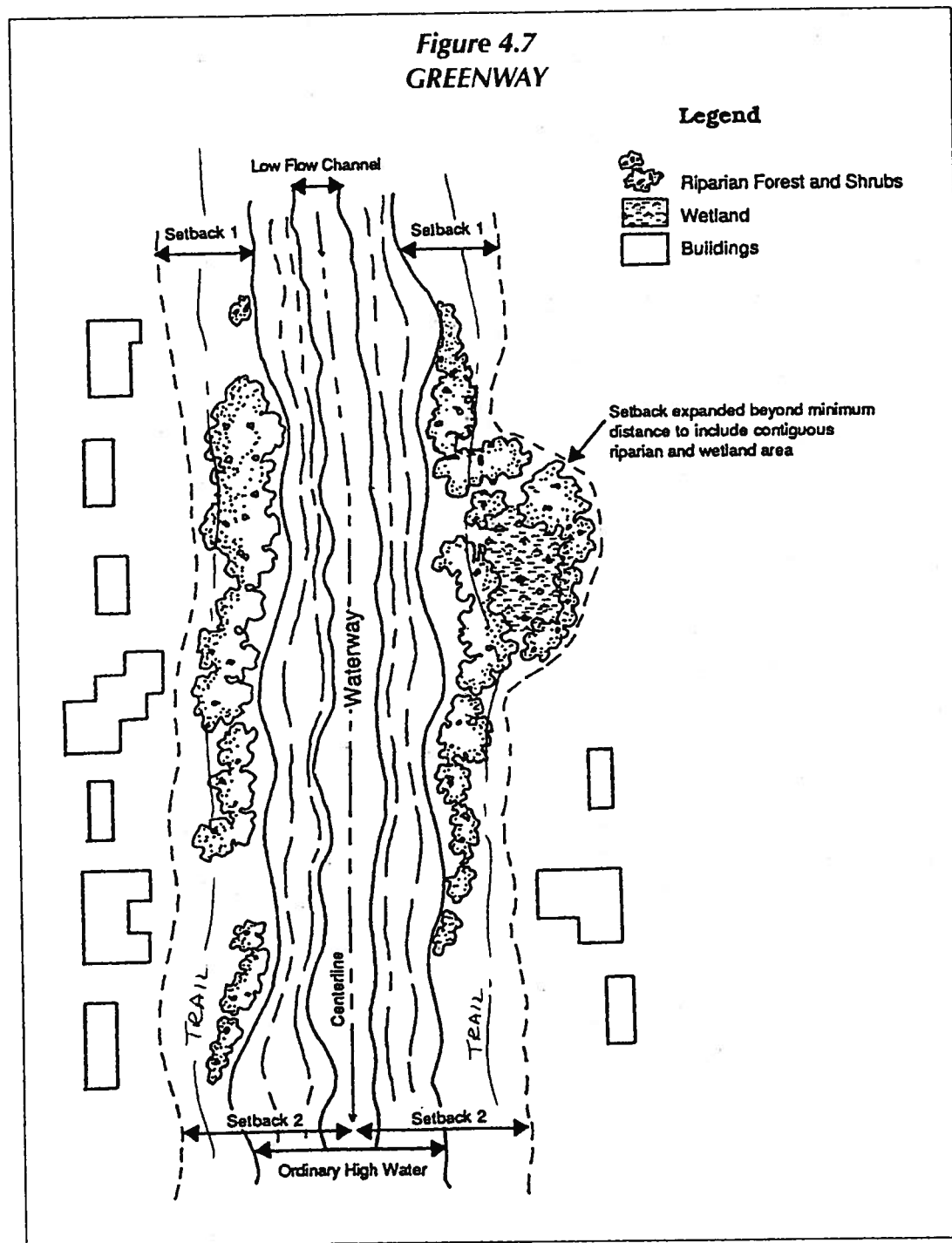
In many respects, greenways and natural resource areas have much in common. Both preserve natural resources and mediate between larger habitat areas, open space, and corridors for wildlife. The primary distinction between the two is that greenways emphasize use (i.e. park trails) to a greater extent than natural resource areas.

**Location Criteria:** Land availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining location. "Natural" greenways generally follow suitable natural resource areas (as defined under the Natural Resource Area classification). "Man-made" greenways are corridors that are built as part of development projects or during renovation of old development areas. Man-made greenways include residential subdivisions, revitalized river fronts, abandoned railroad beds, old industrial sites, safe powerline rights-of-way, pipeline easements, collector parkway rights-of-way, etc. Some boulevards and many parkways can also be considered man-made greenways if they exhibit a park-like quality and provide off-street trail opportunities. Since greenways are the preferred way to get people from their homes and into the parks, adjacency to development areas and parks is important. The location of greenways is integral to the trail system plan and, in some cases, they can also be considered light traffic facilities.

**Corridor Width Criteria:** As with location, resource availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining the width of the greenway corridor. Although corridor width can be as little as 25 feet in a subdivision, 50 feet is usually considered the minimum. Widths over 200 feet are considered optimal.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guideline:** Resource availability in conjunction with the trail system plan are the primary determinants when it comes to selecting land for greenways. Natural corridors are most desirable, but man-made corridors can also be very appealing if designed properly.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activities Menu:** Greenways can be developed for a number of different modes of recreational travel. Most notable are hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating. They can also be developed for cross-country skiing and horseback riding. Canoeing is another possibility, where the greenway includes a navigable creek or stream. In a boulevard or parkway setting, automobiles can be accommodated.



**Park Trails  
(Types I, II, and III)**

**General Description:** Park trails are multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. They are the most desirable type of trail because they:

*Park trails are multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas.*

- Emphasize harmony with the natural environment.
- Allow for relatively uninterrupted pedestrian movement to and through the city's park system

and development areas, including, where possible, through commercial and industrial parks.

- Effectively tie the various parks and recreation areas together to form a comprehensive park and trail system.
- Protect users from urban development and associated vehicular traffic.

The three types of park trails illustrated are intended to accommodate walkers, bicyclists, and in-line skaters.

Given their attributes, park trails are at the top of the trail classification hierarchy. They should be considered the preferred trail type and used to the greatest extent possible.

**Development Parameters:** Important steps in developing park trails are:

- Preparing a comprehensive park and trail system plan that clearly defines the routing of park trails, especially those within greenways.
- Acquiring the desired land or establishing trail easements at an early stage of community development.
- Establishing appropriate development policies (backed by city ordinance) requiring land developers to incorporate greenways and park trail corridors into their development plans in accordance with the trail system plan.
- Establishing design standards that define how park trails are to be built. Trail design should coincide with standards adopted by local and state departments of transportation and AASHTO (American Association of State Highway Transportation Organizations), as appropriate. All trails should comply with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) design criteria.

In previously developed cities, abandoned railroad beds, run-down waterfronts, utility rights-of-way, and scenic/historic routes provide the greatest opportunity for park trails.

**Types of Trails:** There are three types of trail under the park trail classification:

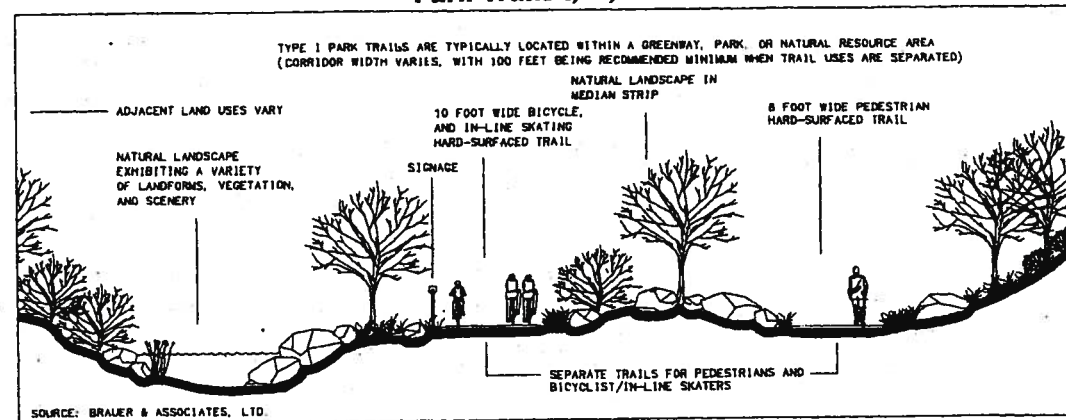
- Type I trails are used in situations where use patterns dictate separate paths for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skates. An example would be a trail around an inter-city lake or along a riverfront.
- Type II trails are more suited to lighter use patterns, such as from a housing subdivision to a natural resource area.
- Type III trails are suited for areas requiring minimum impact, such as nature preserves.



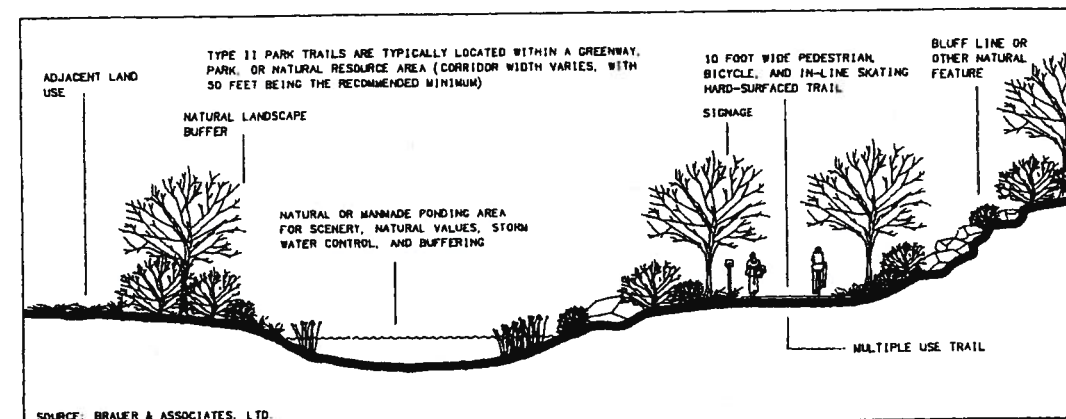
The type used depends on application. *Figure 4.8 - Park Trail Types* illustrates a typical cross-section of each type.

**Commuter Linkages:** Park trails can certainly be used for bicycle commuting purposes. The type of trail used and its design should reflect the anticipated magnitude of commuter use. On the high end, Type I trails as shown may not be adequate to safely accommodate a "bicycle freeway" type of use. In such a case, wider or directional trails may be appropriate.

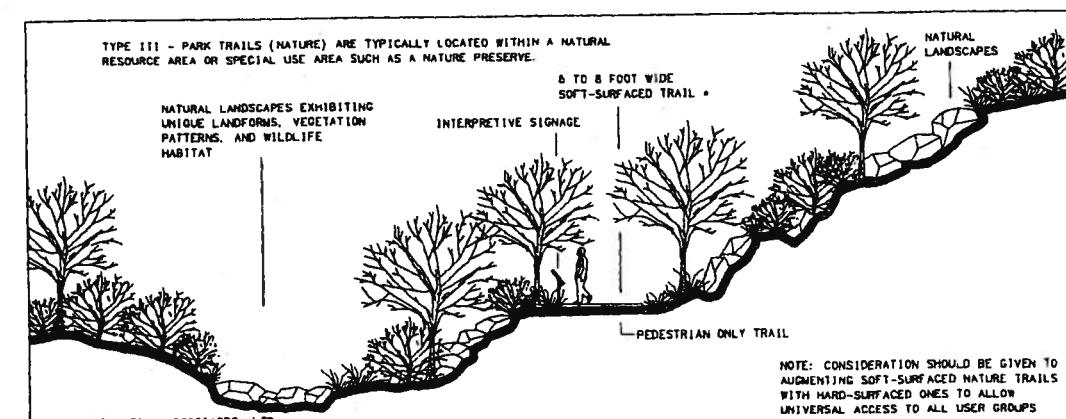
**Figure 4.8**  
**Park Trails I, II, III**



TYPE I PARK TRAIL



TYPE II PARK TRAIL



TYPE III PARK TRAIL (NATURE TRAIL)

### Connector Trails (Types I, and II)

**General Description:** The significant difference between connector and park trails lies largely in their location. Park trails emphasize a strong relationship with the natural environment within a park-like setting, while connector trails or recreation connectors emphasize safe travel for pedestrians and bicyclists to and from parks and around the community. In general, connector trails are located within existing road rights-of-way and utility

*Connector trails are multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community.*

easements or along artificial drainageways. The two classes of connector trails illustrated are intended to accommodate walkers, horseback riders, bicyclists, and in-line skaters.

**Development Parameters:** Important steps in developing connector trails are:

- Preparing a comprehensive park and trail system plan that clearly defines the routing of connector trails.
- Establishing trail rights-of-way and easements at an early stage of community development.
- Establishing design standards that define how connector trails are to be built. Trail design should coincide with standards adopted by local and state departments of transportation and AASHTO, as appropriate.

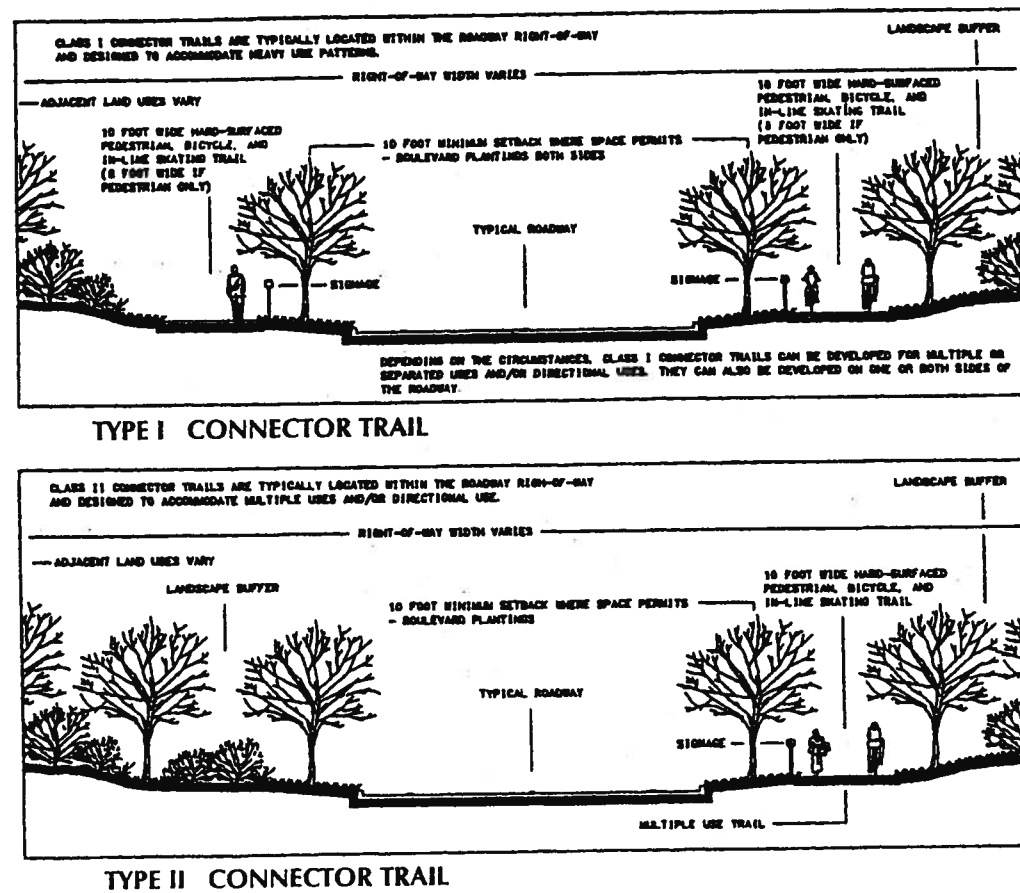
**Types of Trails:** There are two types of trail under the connector trail classification:

- Type I trails are used in situations where use patterns dictate separate paths for pedestrians, bicyclists and, if necessary, in-line skaters. An example would be a trail within the shoulder of right of way of a collector street or parkway.
- Type II trails are suited to lighter use patterns, such as a link between a parkway or thoroughfare and a nearby housing development.

The type used depends on application. *Figure 4.9 - Connector Trail Types* illustrates a typical cross-section of each type.

**Commuter Linkages:** Connector trails can be used for bicycle commuting purposes. The type of trail used and its design should reflect the anticipated magnitude of commuter use. As was with Type I Park Trails, Type I Connector Trails may not be adequate to safely accommodate a "bicycle freeway" type of use. In such a case, wider or directional trails may be appropriate.

**Figure 4.9**  
**Connector Trail Types**  
**Type I, II**



**Bikeways**  
**(Bike Routes and Lanes)**

*Bikeways are paved segments of roadways that serve to safely separate bicyclists from traffic.*

**General Description:** Bikeways are paved segments of roadways that serve to safely separate bicyclists from traffic. They come in the form of bike routes and bike lanes. The distinction between the two is a matter of exclusivity. While bike routes are essentially paved shoulders or segments of the roadway that serve to separate bicyclists from traffic, bike lanes are designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

It is important to recognize that bikeways serve distinct user groups, including:

- Commuters—those who use their bicycle as a means to get from point A to B as expeditiously as possible. Their trips can be viewed as substitutes for vehicle trips when planning light transportation ways.
- Fitness enthusiasts—those who cycle for fitness as well as recreation.
- Competitive athletes—those who bicycle competitively.

The needs of these user groups are distinctly different from those using park or connector trails for recreational purposes. The distinction is that of speed. At speeds in excess of 10 to 15 mph, the safety of a typical trail user (and bicyclist) becomes important. Although some commuter-type trails are specifically designed to accommodate higher speeds, the vast majority of recreation-type trails are not. Given this, it is important that the inherent differences in user groups be recognized and that trails not used as direct substitutes for bikeways (or vice-versa). Bikeways should be planned as stand-alone systems that connect to the off-street trail system.

**Development Parameters:** Important steps in developing bikeways are:

- Preparing a comprehensive park and trail system plan that clearly defines the routing of bikeways.
- Establishing design standards that define how bikeways are to be built. Design should coincide with standards adopted by local and state departments of transportation and AASHTO, as appropriate.

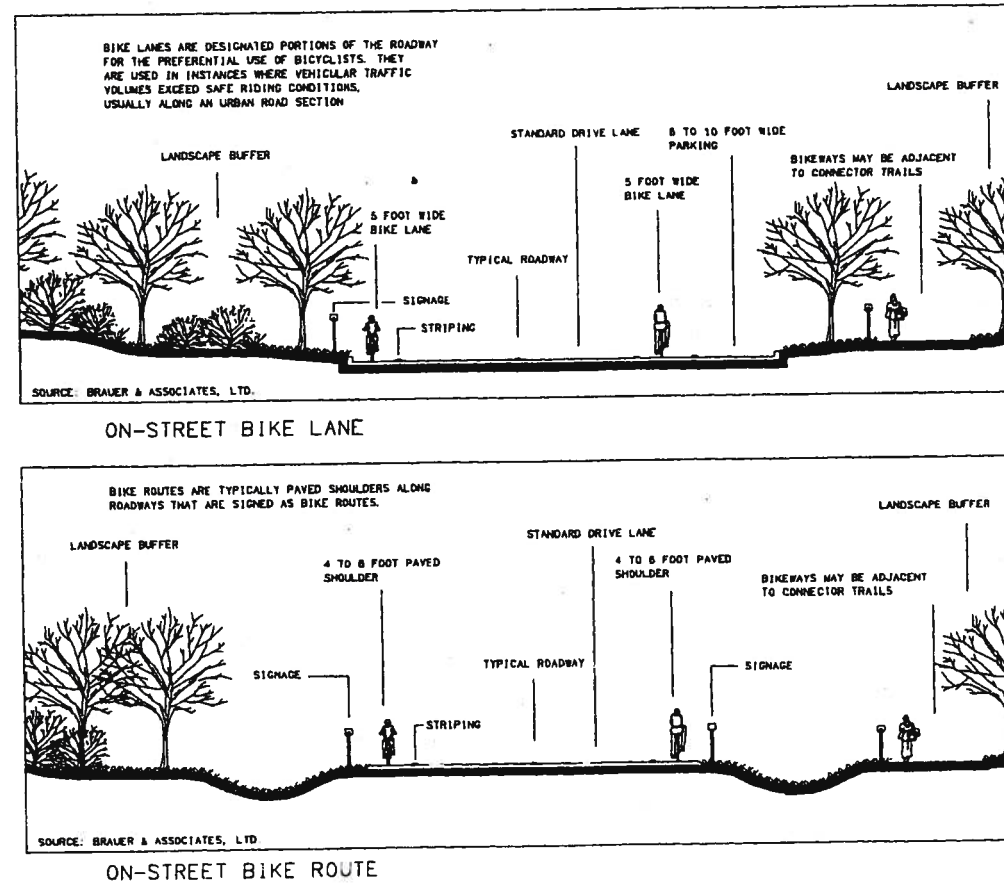
**Types of Bikeways:** As stated, there are two types of bikeways: bike routes and bike lanes. Whether a bike route or bike lane is used depends on application and opportunity. Bike lanes should be used in situations where traffic volumes are heavy enough to warrant clear separation between bicycles and vehicles. Although an adequate right-of-way may not always be available in existing transportation systems, proper planning in evolving systems will preclude this from happening in the future.

Bike routes (paved shoulders) should be used in all other situations.

**Figure 4.10 - Bikeway Types** illustrates a typical cross-section of each type.

**Commuter Linkages:** Bikeways play a large role in bicycle commuter networks and should be designed with this type of use in mind. The bikeway system should be extensive enough to allow for reasonable movement within the city and connection to routes outside the city. Bikeways should be considered along all collector, minor arterial, and (on a limited basis) major arterial roads. Naturally, their development should coincide with new road construction and upgrading. Signage is also important.

**Figure 4.10**  
**Bikeway Types**



### **All-Terrain Bike, Cross-Country Ski, and Equestrian Trails**

*Emphasis is on building a strong relationship with the natural environment.*

**General Description:** All-terrain bike, cross-country ski, and equestrian trails are similar to park trails in that they emphasize a strong relationship with the natural environment, although for somewhat different reasons. They are most often located within natural resource areas, greenways, community parks and special use facilities, such as golf courses. Since regional and state parks often develop and maintain these types of trails, the need for them at the local level

is often limited. The following defines some of the considerations with respect to each trail type.

**All-Terrain (Mountain) Bike Trails:** Although relatively new on the recreation scene, off-road mountain biking has become a very popular activity that appeals to a wide range of age groups with varying levels of skill. Given its relative infancy, trail standards to meet these needs continue to evolve. This evolution, unfortunately, has not been without conflict—most of which

centers around the potentially negative impacts of mountain biking on the environment. Uncontrolled and undisciplined use of established trails poses the biggest impediment to mountain biking's acceptance. There can be serious conflicts and safety problems if equestrian riders, hikers, and bicyclists use these trails. It is through trial and error and sharing of information between agencies that standards will emerge. In the interim, trail design should coincide with the standards being developed by regional park agencies and state resource agencies, which seem to be leading the way in addressing this issue.

**Cross-Country Skiing Trails:** These types of trails come in a variety of types and widths to accommodate two different styles: diagonal or traditional and skate-ski. Diagonal style requires a set track, while skate-ski style requires a wider packed and groomed surface. Trail lengths vary considerably, with loops ranging from a few to 10 or more kilometers. Since quality and safety are important to all skiers, a few well groomed trails are preferable to extensive but poorly maintained ones. Trail design should coincide with the standards developed by regional park agencies and state resource agencies.

**Equestrian Trails:** Equestrian trails are usually grass or woodchip surfaced. Trail length varies considerably, with loops extending out 10 miles or more. In some instances, cross-country ski trails are used for horseback riding during the summer. There is no specific standard for how many miles of trail should be developed within a given community. Trail design should coincide with standards adopted by regional park agencies and state resource agencies.

## Facility Space Standards



A facility space guideline is an expression of the amount of space required for a specific recreation facility, such as a children's playground, a picnic area, or a softball diamond.

Very little has changed with recreation facility standards in the past decade. Because of the substantial changes suggested for computing the LOS, this publication takes a more deferential approach than its predecessor to community judgment with respect to sizing the different types of parks.

Recent research on the use of Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines (NRPA, 1983) suggests that few jurisdictions feel that nationally prescribed minimums by park type are feasible.

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### **Facility Space Guideline**

*An expression of the amount of space required for a specific recreation facility.*

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This section presents the activity/facility standards for a menu of facilities needed for basic recreation activities. Keep in mind that when a park size is being considered, the planner must consider not only the LOS but also the amount of space needed to safely develop and use facilities such as playgrounds and volleyball courts. Today, planners are providing more off street parking, more spectator space, more space to separate facilities, and more space for amenities.

A community can select a facility menu which best satisfies the needs of the citizens. The following table is adopted from the 1983 publication, with the qualification that planners use these as guidelines rather than axioms. Since citizens are taking a more active role in deciding what kind of parks and facilities they want in their community, this seems to be the most sensible approach. As has been stated and restated, the primary concern of park and recreation administrators is to see that there is enough park land, located in the right places, at the time people are there to use it. Park facilities can be cycled as needs, tastes and types of equipment and leisure choices change. But, if a community comes up short of land, this may be a difficult and expensive deficiency to overcome.

Recent research found considerable difference in facility development among the 38 national gold medal award winning park and recreation departments from 1985 through 1992. This was the decade when *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* was in

widespread use across the United States. A general consensus was that the facility standards are useful as guidelines, but that a community should determine what mix of facilities best meets its specific needs. Many believe that the cost of strict adherence to those standards is not realistic in the 1990s market place (Martin, 1993).

The trend in park and recreation planning is to utilize market research to determine relevant recreation needs. This is based on the facility capacity/demand to participate concept. This seems more credible than relying on the strength of popular fads. Specialized facilities in the 1990s, which in many cases can be provided by the private sector, should be developed only with strong market data to support a need (demand) for the facility.

If it is the intent of a park and recreation department to generate interest in a particular recreation activity or park facility, a reasonably priced pilot program makes economic and political sense. While many optimists may feel imbued with "Field of Dreams" fervor, it makes no sense to rush into a massive commitment of scarce public funds, only to find out later that "they did not come". Given the increasing number of business people getting involved in local government, there will be more empiricism demanded of public officials wishing to develop major facilities with a hefty maintenance cost.

In deference to the direction of local government planning and budgeting in the 1990s, the number of units per population for a facility development has been deleted from the *Suggested Facility Development Standards*. This reflects a conviction that each community must shape basic facility standards and park classifications or definitions to fit individual circumstances.

In order to keep up with the space requirements for new kinds of facilities, recreation and activities, park and recreation planners and others can consult with NRPA, professional associations, and equipment manufacturers for technical assistance.

<i>Suggested Outdoor Facility Development Standards</i>				
Activity Format	Recommended Size and Dimensions	Recommended Space Requirements	Recommended Orientation	Service Radius and Location Notes
<b>Badminton</b>	Singles—17' x 44' Doubles—20' x 44' with 5' unobstructed area on both sides.	1622 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	1/4 - 1/2 mile. Usually in school recreation center or church facility. Safe walking or biking or biking access.
<b>Basketball</b> 1. Youth 2. High school 3. Collegiate	46' - 50' x 84' 50' x 84' 50' x 94' with 5' unobstructed space all sides.	2400-3036 sq. ft. 5040-7280 sq. ft. 5600-7980 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	1/4 - 1/2 mile. Same as badminton. Outdoor courts in neighborhood/community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings.
<b>Handball (3-4 wall)</b>	20' x 40' with a minimum of 10' to rear of 3-wall court. Minimum 20' overhead clearance.	800 sq. ft. for 4-wall, 1000 sq. ft. for 3-wall.	Long axis is north - south. Front wall at north end.	15 - 30 min. travel time, 4-wall usually indoor as part of multi-purpose building. 3-2 all usually in park or school setting.
<b>Ice hockey</b>	Rink 85' x 200' (Min. 85' x 185') Additional 5000 22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	Long axis is north - south if outdoors.	1/2 - 1 hour travel time. Climate important consideration affecting no. of units. Best as part of multi-purpose facility.
<b>Tennis</b>	36' x 78'. 12 ft. clearance on both ends.	Min. of 7,200 sq. ft. single court area (2 acres per complex).	Long axis north - south.	1/4 - 1/2 mile. best in batteries of 2 - 4. Located in neighborhood/community park or near school site.
<b>Volleyball</b>	30' x 60'. Minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 4,000 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south.	1/2 - 1 mile.
<b>Baseball</b> 1. Official 2. Little League	Baselines - 90' Pitching dist.- 60.5' Foul lines - min. 320' Center field - 400'+ Baselines - 60' Pitching distance-46' Foul lines - 200' Center field - 200'-250'	3.0 -3.85 A min. 1.2 A min.	Locate home plate so pitcher is not throwing across sun, and batter not facing it. Line from home plate through pitchers mound to run east-northeast.	1/4-1/2 mile. Part of neighborhood complex. Lighted fields part of community complex.
<b>Field Hockey</b>	180' x 300' with a minimum of 10' clearance on all sides	Minimum 1.5 A	Fall season - Long axis northwest or southeast. For longer periods, north/south	15-30 minute travel time. Usually part of baseball, football, soccer complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
<b>Football</b>	160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 A	Same as field hockey.	15 - 30 min. travel time. Same as field hockey.
<b>Soccer</b>	195' to 225' x 330' to 360' with 10' minimum clearance on all sides.	1.7 - 2.1 A.	Same as field hockey.	1 - 2 miles. Number of units depends on popularity. Youth popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to fields or neighborhood parks.

<b>Golf - driving range</b>	900' x 690' wide. Add 12' width each additional tee.	13.5 A for min. of 25 tees.	Long axis is southwest-northeast with golfer driving northeast.	30 minute travel time. Park of golf course complex. As separate unit may be privately operated.
<b>1/4 mile running track</b>	Over-all width - 276' length -600'. Track width for 8 - 4 lanes is 32'.	4.3 A	Long axis in sector from north to south to northwest - southeast, with finish line at north end.	15-30 minute travel time. Usually part of a high school or community park complex in combination with football, soccer, etc.
<b>Softball</b>	Baselines - 60' pitching dist. - 45' men. 40' women Fast pitch field radius from plate - 225' Slow pitch - 275' (men) 250' (women).	1.5 - 2.0 A	Same as baseball. indimensions for 16".	1/4 - 1/2 mile. Slight difference May also be used for youth baseball.
<b>Multiple use court (basketball, tennis, etc.)</b>	120' x 80'	9,840 sq. ft.	Long axis of court with primary use north and south.	1 - 2 miles, in neighborhood or community parks.
<b>Archery range</b>	300' length x minimum 10' between targets. Roped, clear area on side of range minimum 30', clear space behind targets minimum of 90' x 45' with bunker.	Minimum 0.65 A	Archer facing north + or - 45 degrees.	30 minutes travel time. Part of a regional/metro complex.
<b>Golf</b>				
<b>1. Par 3 (18 hole)</b>	Average length varies -600 - 2700 yards.	50 - 60 A	Majority of holes on north/south axis	1/2 - 1 hour travel time
<b>2. 9-hole standard</b>	Average length 2250 yards.	Minimum of 50 A		9-hole course can accomodate 350 people/day.
<b>3. 18-hole standard</b>	Average length 6500 yards.	Minimum 110 yds		500 - 550 people/day.  Course may be located in community, district or regional/metro park.
<b>Swimming pools</b>	Teaching - min. 25 yds x 45' even depth of 3-4 ft.  Competitive - min. 25 m x 16 m. Min. of 25 sq. ft. water surface per swimmer. Ration of 2 to 1 deck to water.	Varies on size of pool and amenities. Usually 1 - 2 A sites.	None, but care must be taken in siting life stations in relation to afternoon sun	15 to 30 minute travel time. Pools for general community use should planned for teaching competitive and recreational purposes with enough to accomodate 1m and 3m diving boards. Located in community park or school site.
<b>Beach areas</b>	Beach area should have 50 sq. ft. of land and 50 sa. ft. of water per user. Turnover rate is 3. There should be a 3 -4 A supporting area per A of beach.	N/A	N/A	1/2 to 1 hour travel time. Should have a sand bottom with a maximum slope of 5%. Boating areas completely segregated from swimming areas. In regional/metro parks.

## **Impact of The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) on Facilities Design**

An equally important aspect of developing a quality park system lies in how well it serves the needs of the disable. More now than ever before, municipalities have a responsibility (morally as well as legally) to provide a reasonable level of accessibility (to parks and programs) for individuals with varying levels of ability.

To help ensure that this in fact happens, Congress enacted The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992 - that provide for equal access to all users of public (and private) facilities and programs. Although still largely untested, the basic intent of the act is clear; reasonable equal access opportunities must be provided to those with disabilities.

There are no requirements within the ADA which mandate any spatial requirements relative to the size of any particular type of park and recreation facility. The act does, however, mandate that park areas and facilities be reasonably accessible and usable to all populations. The extent to which compliance with the act will impact the size or configuration of a particular facility is likely to be inconsequential in terms of a particular facilities size. It may, however, dictate some changes to specific design guidelines in response to the act. In July 1994 the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, Recreation Access Advisory Committee published the *Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas*, which provide detailed guidelines for all types of park and recreation facilities. It is recommended that each park planning agency incorporate these and subsequent guidelines and legal standards in the final determination of spatial and facility design guidelines for all units of the park, recreation and open space system. These accessibility guidelines are further complimented by the materials available on the concept of universal access.

## **Historical Perspective**

On July 26, 1990, President bush signed one of the most important and far-reaching laws passed in recent years, the American With Disabilities Act (ADA). The law requires that state and local government

entities, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities be readily accessible to persons with disabilities.

These new accessibility requirements have led to many questions on how efforts to make recreational facilities accessible can be balanced with the natural landscape of parks, greenways, and nature areas. The ADA accessibility requirements apply to public accommodations, commercial facilities, and state and local government entities. If you own, operate or lease a recreational facility, it is important to determine how your facility and programs must meet the requirements.

This broad sweeping law has enormous implications for the park and recreation field. For example, consider that there are over 50 million individuals with disabilities that are covered by this law. According to the American Planning Association, all programs, services, activities, and public meetings must be accessible to them to comply with the ADA.

The ADA gives individuals with disabilities civil rights protection parallel to that provided on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and religion. The law consists of five titles: Title I covers employment discrimination; Title II relates to discrimination in the provision of services, programs, and activities of state and local governments; Title III prohibits discrimination in business and other public accommodation; Title IV covers telecommunications; and, Title V contains implementing provisions. Although all titles are critical, the parks and recreation community are most effected by Titles II and III.

Although enforcement of the ADA comes under the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, matters relating to outdoors such as parks and recreation facilities will be directed under the Department of Justice.

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### **Required Actions**

For state and local governments and any public accommodation which would include park district facilities and programs, the ADA requires that all:

- Newly constructed buildings and facilities must be readily accessible.
- Renovations or alteration of existing buildings and facilities must be readily accessible.
- Barriers to accessibility in existing buildings and facilities must be removed when it is "readily achievable."

A structure is readily accessible if it meets the *ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*. These guidelines are published by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board whose address is listed in the resources section of this document.

**New Construction:** The ADA requires that new facilities which are built for first occupancy after January 26, 1993, must be readily accessible to persons with disabilities. Design and construction is considered to occur after January 26, 1993, if a completed application for a building permit is filed after January 26, 1992.

To comply with the ADA, park and recreation agencies will need to adopt a consistent and thoroughly documented approach to the planning, design and management of areas and facilities within their system.

**Alterations to Existing Buildings:** The ADA requires that if a building or facility is altered after January 26, 1992, the renovations must be readily accessible to individuals with disabilities. An "alteration" means a change to a building or facility that affects the usability of the building. Alterations include remodeling, renovation, rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction, and changes or arrangements in structural elements or in any reconfiguration of walls or partitions.

In addition to making the alteration accessible, access to a primary function in the building such as a telephone, restroom or drinking fountains serving the area must be made accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Prior to the ADA, only the federal government and federally funded programs were required to make all facilities and services accessible to persons with disabilities under the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Currently, all government entities including park agencies are required to comply regardless of their funding sources.

Some minimum requirements include but are not limited to:

- One accessible route from site access point, such as a parking lot, to the primary accessible entrance must be provided. A ramp with a slope of no greater than 1:6 for a length of no greater than two feet may be used as part of this route. Otherwise a slope of maximum 1:12 is allowed.
- One accessible public entrance must be provided.
- If toilets are provided, then one accessible unisex toilet facility must be provided along an accessible route.
- Only the publicly used spaces on the level of the accessible entrance must be made accessible.
- Any displays and written information should be located where they can be seen by a seated individual and should provide information accessible to the blind.

**Removal of Barriers:** The ADA requires all public accommodations, programs, and facilities of state and local governments must remove architectural and communication barriers. An architectural barrier is a physical barrier to access, including steps, narrow doors, sidewalks, texture changes in the floor, and placement of signs and furniture. A communication barrier is one that is an integral part of the physical structure of the facility such as telephones mounted too high, the absence of Braille markings on elevators and signage, and alarms that only give audio signal.

In many cases, the removal of architectural and communication barriers is not that difficult. The park district should create an overall policy plan for the removal of barriers in a prioritized schedule. Persons with disabilities within the park district should be invited to register their comments and preferences as part of the prioritization.

Making curb cuts in the sidewalks, installing grab bars in restrooms, widening entrances, creating accessible parking spaces, installing a paper cup dispenser at an existing drinking fountain, and removing high pile carpet are some of the simple ways access can be achieved.

**Outdoor Recreational Facilities:** The special Programs and Populations Branch of the National Park Service working in conjunction with the United States Forest Service has published a very clear, concise document outlining the methods that local park districts can use to comply to the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 in outdoor recreational facilities. An excellent resource, "Design Guide for Accessible Outdoor Recreation" prepared by the USPS with SPPB, contains specific guidelines for creating accessible campgrounds, restroom facilities, picnic areas, trails, equestrian centers, docks, piers, and other outdoor recreational areas. The underlining concept of the National Park Service is that any outdoor recreational facility should be accessible consistently with the level of development existing at the facility.

The guide states, "this guide establishes a framework of direction for new and retrofitted recreation sites and facilities requiring that all recreation visitors should have the opportunity to participate in programs and services to the highest level of access feasible for persons with disabilities when compared to that offered other visitors."

Highly developed sites with parking lots, restrooms, structures for public gatherings, and recreational facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and basketball courts should have highly developed routes for accessibility. On the other end of the spectrum, fragile natural areas with limited development and limited recreational facilities should have the minimum of accessible routes to the site.

The accessibility level should be consistent with the development level of any facility owned, operated, leased or managed by the park district. It deals with the main components that should be accessible in all areas such as travel to and from selected activities. This document is listed in the resource section and can provide clear guidance to park district officials struggling with methods to make their recreational trail system, recreational facilities, and public programs accessible for people with disabilities.

**Services and Programs:** The ADA requires that all public entities must operate each service, program, or activity so it is accessible to persons with disabilities. If the park district offers a program or an activity that is in a building that is not accessible, the district must:

- Remove the barrier to access in the facility.
- Shift the location to an accessible site.
- Provide the service in some alternative method like outreach program in different facilities.
- Construct a new facility for park district programs.

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### **Timeframe for Compliance**

Section of the ADA become effective at different times. New construction completed after January 26, 1993, must comply with accessibility standards; alterations made after January 26, 1992, must meet the accessibility standards; and barriers must be removed by January 26, 1995.

Since the development of guidelines pertaining to park and recreation access and use are in process as of the time of this requirement relative to the size of any particular type of park or recreation facility. The act does, however, mandate that all areas and facilities be accessible and usable.

## GLOSSARY

**Amenity Infrastructure** - The system of amenity resources, including both landscape and other design elements, and built facilities such as museums, libraries, sports facilities, stadiums, and performing and visual arts centers, which individually and collectively contribute to a livable community.

**Benefits-Based Approach** - An approach to evaluating the delivery of park and recreation resources, facilities and services which focuses on identifying the economic, environmental and social benefits specifically and directly attributable to the cost of providing the opportunities from which the benefits are derived.

**Biofiltration** - The filtration of storm water runoff through biodegradable materials which are themselves returned to the ecosystem in an environmentally safe manner.

**Customer** - The user, consumer, patron, guest, stakeholder or visitor who consumes a product, resource or service provided "free," at some level of fee or user charge below the true cost, or at full cost from a park and recreation agency or private concessionaire operating under the control of the park and recreation agency.

**Eco-recreation** - Outdoor recreation opportunities dependent upon a diverse and undisturbed landscape setting. Eco-recreation is sometimes referred to as eco-tourism.

**Environmental Scan** - A situational analysis involving identification of agency strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats, for the purpose of developing a strategic approach to planning.

**Exaction** - The process of shifting forward to new development the cost of infrastructure, the need for which is generated by new residents. Park land and the development of recreation facilities can be exacted from a developer as land, cash-in-lieu of land and/or an impact fee as a condition of subdivision plat approval.

**First wins** - Successful accomplishments early in the implementation phase of the comprehensive plan, usually outlined in the Action Program within the plan.

**Gentrification** - The process of aging and the study and response to the aging process.

**Greenway** - A linear area maintained as open space in order to conserve natural and cultural resources, and to provide recreational opportunities, aesthetic and design benefits, and linkages between open space and recreational facilities and between these facilities and their users.

**Impact fees** - A one-time fee levied against new development to cover the development's proportionate share of the cost of providing the infrastructure (including parks and recreation) needed to fill the demand created by residents of the development. (Also referred to as development exactions or proffers.)



**In-fill Development** - Development of vacant parcels of land within the inner city, or in established neighborhoods, which for some reason were passed over when the initial development occurred, or were cleared of substandard structures and are ready for new development. In-fill development has the potential to overtax the capacity of the existing infrastructure if the development density exceeds the density for which the infrastructure was designed.

**Infrastructure** - The public and private utilities and services provided to developable property. Items of infrastructure include streets, water, sewer, storm drainage, electricity, telephone, cable, natural gas, solid waste collection, schools, parks and recreation, and public libraries.

**Interlocking** - The use of corridors of land and/or water which connect larger parcels, providing an interconnected system within a community or region.

**Latent Demand** - That demand for goods or services which cannot be met because of a lack of market capacity to respond to the demand. In the context of the park and recreation LOS calculation, latent demand is the demand for recreation facilities and activities which cannot be satisfied with the existing facility capacity.

**Leadership Plan** - An element of the comprehensive park, recreation and open space plan which sets forth the mission, management philosophy, and values of the organization, including the organizational structure and leadership positions needed to implement each action item of the plan.

**Level of Service (LOS)** - An expression of the minimum recreation and park infrastructure capacity required to satisfy the park and recreation needs of residents of a community. The LOS is expressed as acres/1000 population.

**Level-one Environmental Assessment** - An early reconnaissance study to determine if environmental contamination and liability is present on a site proposed for acquisition.

**Light Traffic** - Lightweight, slower moving, non-motorized forms of transportation, such as bicycles, feet, in-line skates, horses, wheelchairs, etc.

**Mandatory Dedication** - An ordinance which requires a developer to dedicate park land (and/or cash in lieu of land) as a prerequisite for plat approval.

**Park Trail** - A trail designed for activities within a park, recreation, open space area or greenway.

**Rational Nexus Test** - A court-fashioned test, first used by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in *Jordan v. Menomonee Falls* [28 Wis. 2d 608, 137 N.W. 2d 442 (1965), appeal dismissed 385 U.S. 4, 87 S. Ct. 36, 17 L.Ed. 2d 3 (1966)], in which the court held that the exaction of land and/or money for recreational purposes from a subdivision plat was a valid exercise of the police power if there was a "reasonable connection [nexus] between the need for the additional recreational facilities and the growth generated by the new development."

**Roughly Proportional Test** - A term created by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dolan v. City of Tigard* [No. 93-518, U.S. S.Ct. (1994)] to best encapsulate the court's interpretation of the Fifth Amendment. The court stated "No precise calculation is required, but the city must make some sort of individualized determination that the required dedication is related both in nature and extent to the impact of the proposed development."

**Stakeholder** - Group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization's mission; examples include managers, employees, policy makers, suppliers, vendors, citizens, and community groups.

**Strategic Plan** - Sometimes referred to as a comprehensive plan or business plan. The purpose of the strategic plan is to establish a preferred course of action and to position the agency in the environment in which it operates.

**Sustainable Landscape** - A landscape enhanced and maintained to the highest degree of ecological harmony.

**Systems Planning** - The process of assessing the park, recreation, open space and greenway facility needs of a community and translating that information into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy those needs.

**Transportation Enhancements** - Facilities and amenities such as bicycle paths, walking paths, rights-of-way landscaping, lighting, and motorist information signs which are funded from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

**Urban Growth Management** - A package of public strategies, policies, codes and ordinances which are designed to keep the pace of urban growth in line with the fiscal capability of a jurisdiction to finance the required infrastructure, plan to protect natural resources and the environment, and maintain the desired quality of life in the community.