

Park System Objectives

Parks and Pathways Role in Community Development. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan laid out a generalized Parks element which introduced the need for park development and more specific planning. Among the several recommendations made in the Comprehensive Plan, one of the key elements was a notation made with regard to the Bertram Chain of Lakes park development. In that section, the Plan observes that the amenities programmed into the park will play a major role in attracting new development to Monticello.

This sentiment was reflected in the survey results as well, with a large majority of respondents citing park development as an integral component of quality of life in the community. In the past, this policy was implemented through the City's efforts to provide parks in close proximity to all residential areas, as shown on the park coverage map in the previous chapter.

The City's policies for park system proximity will transition under this plan from what was a heavy emphasis on neighborhood park and lot access to more reliance on fewer, but larger park facilities, with the focus of the system on the Bertram Chain of Lakes facility and a more extensive pathway system. The overall objective is not lost, however, only the plan for realizing the objective is changing.

In the following material, a set of common objectives for parks and pathway development is laid out that is designed to integrate past park development with future park planning, acquisition, and growth. The fundamental goal from the Comprehensive Plan is reinforced with the policies in this document – providing amenities that promote the growth of high quality, move-up housing and high value jobs.

Changing Park Proximity. The change from several smaller parks to fewer larger facilities reflects a number of factors, not the least of which is the extensive investment necessary to acquire and develop the Bertram Chain of Lakes. However, other prominent factors support this policy, including the following:

- **Park Variety.** In larger facilities, the City is able to provide a broader range of amenities and elements, helping each park to appeal to a wider range of age groups and users.
- **Maintenance and Efficiencies.** By focusing system growth on fewer, but larger, distinct facilities, the City's maintenance costs can be reduced by minimizing travel time and other similar efficiencies.
- **Acquisition Timing.** Park acquisition can be phased in over time when future park locations are sited to accommodate dedication by several development interests, rather than relying on each development to provide its own separate park location.
- **Pathway Development.** Fewer, larger parks creates a greater reliance on effective pathway connections, a design preference strongly supported by respondents to the parks survey.

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As such, the City's park and pathway acquisition efforts will focus on supporting the development of a pathway system that provides access to primary pathway corridors less than one-half mile to most residences. Access to the primary system will be via a sub-system of sidewalks, some minor pathway development, and including some on-street pathway marking where low-volume roadways can safely support this design.

As an implementation technique, the City may negotiate waivers from the sidewalk requirements (when appropriate) in exchange for pathway corridor dedications or other related improvements consistent with the parks system plans.

As a final comment, although the Plan reorients the City toward more widely spaced, larger parks, proximity will still be a factor to consider as land develops. The provision of some smaller park locations may be considered appropriate where higher densities, limited access to pathway corridors, barriers to access, or other factors intervene. Thus, some small park development may still be seen as conditions warrant – the City will need to evaluate each growth area individually to ensure that park and pathway access continues to support high quality development.

Seven Policies for Park Development. Reflecting these ideas, seven policies are identified as a part of this Plan that guide the City's park and recreation planning and development. These policies are intended to serve as guiding concepts for the more specific decisions the City makes as it determines park dedication requirements for development, allocates resources for park development, and evaluates its ongoing provision of park facilities and programming for the foreseeable future.

It is important to remember that policies are not strategies or plans. Strategies and Plans must be tested against these policies to evaluate their effectiveness and consistency with the goals laid out in the Comprehensive Plan. As such, the comments in this section can sometimes feel overly general standing by themselves. Of course, they do not stand alone – these statements are merely the underpinnings for the more specific development choices made by City officials as the Parks and Pathways system is developed.

It is also true that there are likely to be different strategies the City may follow to realize these policies. Each decision will depend on available resources, the options presenting themselves at the time, and the nature of the community. Therefore, while specific plans and strategies may change over time – and almost certainly will – the policies stated below are more likely to remain constant. If the City finds itself disagreeing with the policies, it is past time for a update to the Plan.

Accompanying each general policy below are additional explanatory statements that add depth and dimension to the policies.

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Monticello Parks and Pathways Plan Vision and Policy

- **Providing continuity and linkages between public parks, open spaces, residences, and businesses.**
 - The City is expecting that the entirety of the community be interconnected through the park system and pathway plan.
 - The park and pathway system must continually be examined to ensure continuity as the community grows.
 - The pathways in the community serve as both transportation system and recreation system.
 - Pathways must connect to desired destinations.
 - Pathways must provide alternative routing options.
 - Pathways must provide safe design alternatives for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Parks must be accessible by all types of transportation.

- **Improving and increasing views to, access to, and utilization of the Mississippi River.**
 - The City will seek more and easier connections to areas where views of the river are available to the public.
 - Direct access to river use will be sought wherever public spaces permit, including those in use now, as well as those (such as existing, undeveloped right of way) that have been overlooked.
 - Extended frontage along the river will be protected wherever it may be available, while respecting the rights of private landowners.

- **Providing for facilities that will serve the community in both short and long terms.**
 - The City expects to prioritize recreational needs of the community in concert with all providers of recreation users, facilities, and programs, including other recreation providers, such as the school district and private facilities.
 - Coordination among recreation providers will be critical to maximize efficiency and level of service.

- **Allowing reasonable flexibility on final pathway routes, park locations, and plan implementation strategies.**
 - Options change over time, and plan implementation will require regular monitoring as new options present themselves.
 - This plan is specific in terms of policies, but conceptual in terms of design – design should change to reflect new alternatives that achieve the same objective.
 - Consideration of alternatives should begin with the specific policy and the most important components.

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- **Providing a range of choices for system users.**
 - The Plan is intended to serve all *potential* system users.
 - Advancement of healthier lifestyles implies the need to appeal to underserved users through convenience, innovation, or other methods that will increase use of the parks and pathways in Monticello.
 - The City will strive to provide superior recreational opportunities for all residents.

- **Utilizing the system to assist in preserving the natural and historic nature of the community.**
 - In creating the system, priority will be on including areas that are found to be of significance to the community.
 - Preferences cite interest in natural open space experiences and improved pathway continuity, choice, and alternatives.
 - Expand the scope of the park and pathway system to include a wider variety of recreation experience.

- **Prioritizing the acquisition and development of Bertram Lakes Regional Park.**
 - The unique opportunities provided by the Bertram Lakes facility will dominate Monticello's park and pathway planning for the foreseeable future.
 - Focus on Bertram Lakes for many of the community park facilities that might have otherwise been originally planned throughout the community.
 - Identify and supplement community park facilities with opportunities for neighborhood park experiences.
 - Ensure extensive pathway connections to both Bertram Lakes and the community parks to mitigate for the lack of true neighborhood park proximity.
 - Adapt community park facilities over time to ensure a variety of park and recreation experiences for the users of the facilities as they evolve over time due to access, growth, and demographic change.

Park Development and Design Policies

In this material, a series of models are set forth to help guide specific decisions of the City with regard to the location, acquisition, design, and development of parks and pathways. These models are generalized since the conditions encountered as a part of any particular development proposal will vary from these models. However, it is important to consider the policies presented by the models to help ensure that long-term objectives of the Parks and Pathways system are realized.

Park Acquisition. As an underlying assumption, it is understood that the City will focus its acquisition efforts on the Bertram Chain of Lakes property, in concert with Wright County, and as funds become available. Acquisition of Bertram Lakes is accomplished only by the application of cash, rather than park dedication which is used when development interests are subdividing property.

Future parks and primary pathways in other parts of the community will be obtained most commonly through direct land dedication as a part of the development/subdivision process, or through purchase utilizing cash collected from park dedication fees. In this regard, it is critical that park dedication (or cash acquisitions) are accomplished to accommodate the long-range plan. It is also nearly certain that these facilities will be acquired from multiple property owners to create a single facility. Acquisition, then, will require case-by-case

decision making, in keeping with the plans adopted as part of this document, and consistent with the long-term open space and recreation needs of the property.

**Figure 3-1
Park Acquisition Model**



In the accompanying illustration, a series of dedications is made to create a single larger park facility that serves a broad area of development, rather than a series of individual smaller park installations. The key to this approach will be:

- (1) Siting park dedication areas to accommodate future expansions by dedication or acquisition from neighboring development, and
- (2) Preserving corridors of adequate width for access to the City's pathway system so residents from the general community can utilize the park through safe and attractive pedestrian and/or bicycle access.

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Community Park. This drawing illustrates a common community park configuration, based on active recreation and programming. Where the City has existing community parks with active recreation, it is important to examine the facilities needs and balance those with the assets of the park in question.

There are many models for parks that serve as community-wide facilities. Some of these can be smaller but because of location or special elements will end up serving a wider audience than their size might normally suggest. Many community parks will also serve the neighborhood as its primary local park.

In addition, a common community park model would be an area of unique natural environmental features that cannot be replicated in other locations. As noted in the existing systems discussion previously, a strong interest in access to such areas was expressed in the responses to the survey. For such parks, the types of elements and activities can vary widely, depending on the location and assets of the property. It would be common to seek a community park that includes natural spaces, as well as more active recreation in appropriate locations. An essential component of any Community Park is its provision for Primary or Secondary Pathway access.



**Figure 3-2
Community Park Model**

Use:	Area of diverse environmental quality which may include areas suited to intense recreational facilities such as athletic complexes as well as passive type areas, depends largely upon the site location, suitability, and community need
Service Area:	Several neighborhoods, 1 to 4 mile radius
Population Served:	All ages, toddler to retiree, entire community for cities up to 25,000
Desirable Size:	20 to 35+ acres
Site Characteristics:	Provides for a combination of intensive and non-intensive development ranging from play equipment to pathways. May include natural features, such as waterbodies or forested land, must include support elements such as restrooms, drinking water, parking, lighting. Uses should complement those found in a community playfield and should provide diversity in facilities or use areas.
Typical Elements:	Ballfields, tennis courts, skating rinks, pedestrian and bicycle pathways, picnic areas, off-street parking

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Neighborhood Park. This graphic illustrates a common layout for a neighborhood park embedded within a residential neighborhood, and with the role of providing open space and informal recreation. In some cases, the informal recreation space provides practice field locations for organized sports that would use competition fields elsewhere in the community.



Neighborhood parks are most often located in such a way that Primary or Secondary Pathways do not provide direct access, and as such, rely on local sidewalks or minor neighborhood pathways for residents to utilize them. Parking space for vehicles is, as a result, not a common element in these parks.

As has been discussed previously, this Plan around the expectation that few neighborhood parks will be created as the community grows. Rather, new park development, and the facilities traditionally provided by new neighborhood parks, will occur primarily within Bertram Chain of Lakes, or at larger community park locations – either existing or future. Critical to the success of this approach is proper community park location, and most importantly, extensive pathway development that will serve as park and open space of itself.

**Figure 3-3
Neighborhood Park Model**

Use:	Area for designated active and passive recreation areas
Service Area:	½ to 1 mile radius to serve a population of up to 5,000 persons (a large neighborhood)
Population Served:	Focus upon ages 5 through 39 with emphasis upon ages 5 through 18
Desirable Size:	5 to 10 acres
Site Characteristics:	Suited for multi-use development, easily accessible to neighborhood population, geographically centered with safe walking and bike access, may include school facilities
Typical Elements:	Play equipment, walking paths, picnic areas, limited fields

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Pathways

As has been mentioned previously, the City has developed a wide variety of pathway models. It is the intention of this Plan to categorize Pathway planning and development according to three styles of Pathway – Primary Pathways, Secondary Pathways, and Sidewalks/Minor Pathways. Primary Pathways are characterized by a greenway style of design with an exceptionally wide corridor in which the pathway is the primary mode of transportation. Secondary Pathways are also commonly found in wide corridors, but will typically share that corridor with a major roadway. Sidewalks and Minor Pathways almost always follow a local or collector street, providing access to local properties.

Each category has its exceptions to design and routing, but these three models can help distinguish between future design and construction, as well as near term maintenance responsibilities and role in the system. In the following sections, each model is described as to its standard application, as well as the most common exceptions.

Sidewalks and Minor Pathways. In developing Monticello’s pathway system, there are three essential types of pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities to be considered. The first is serving neighborhood access as a purely local route, whether that is for a short walk, or providing a transportation route to a specific location. Locations might include a neighborhood park, a nearby business, school, or other land use, or a route to the larger “trunk” pathway route.

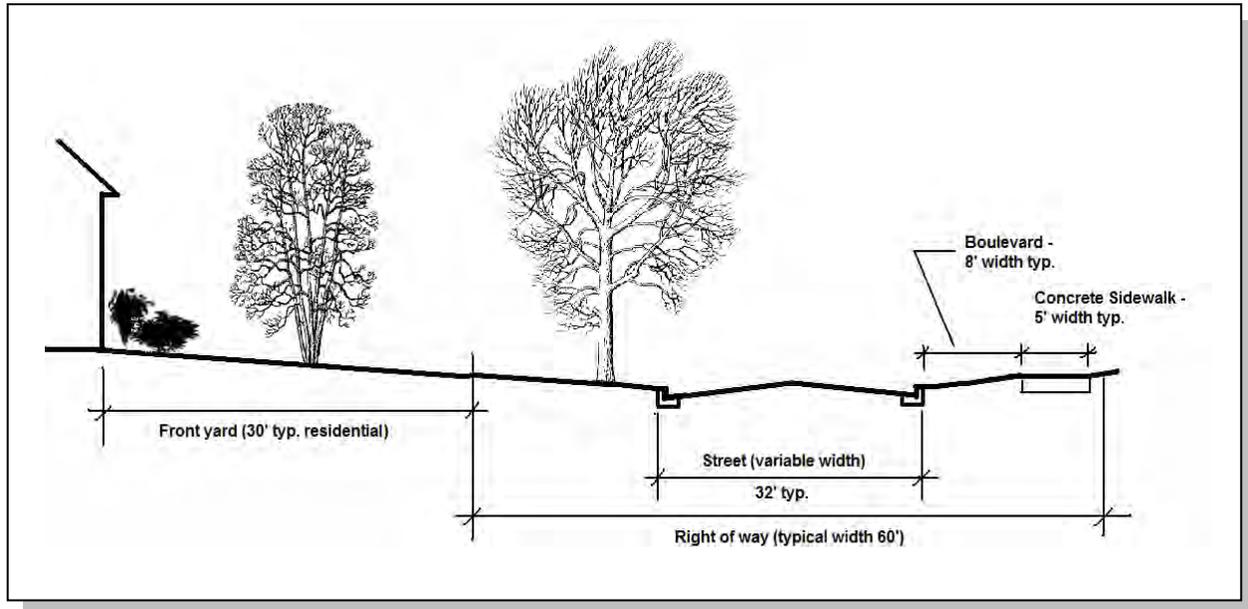
Neighborhood pedestrian improvements may take many forms, the most dominant of which would be a local sidewalk. Such improvements are commonly of concrete construction, five to six feet in width, and set within the public street right of way at or near the boundary line between the private property and the area of public use. The City’s Engineering Design Standards and Specifications should be consulted for the most current design requirements.

In some cases, these improvements (again, serving local neighborhood needs specifically) have been constructed as asphalt surfaces of usually eight feet in width. These minor pathways serve essentially the same purpose as sidewalks, and should be considered the same for maintenance purposes, differing only in design and materials, but not in function.

Occasionally, neighborhoods will rely on on-street pedestrian/bicycle routes where sidewalk construction is not practical for some reason, or where traffic volumes are so low as to make grade-separation clearly unneeded. Short cul-de-sac streets would be one example of these conditions. An alternative in this vein would be striping of on-street ped/bike lanes where justified, but where street vehicular traffic levels suggest a safer design. Where these options are permitted, a developer should expect to provide compensatory contribution to park dedication (land or cash as directed by the City) in lieu of normal sidewalk.

Figure 3-4 below illustrates a typical cross-section of a local street with an accompanying sidewalk providing local pedestrian and (sometimes) bicycle use.

Figure 3-4
Sidewalk/Minor Pathway Cross Section View



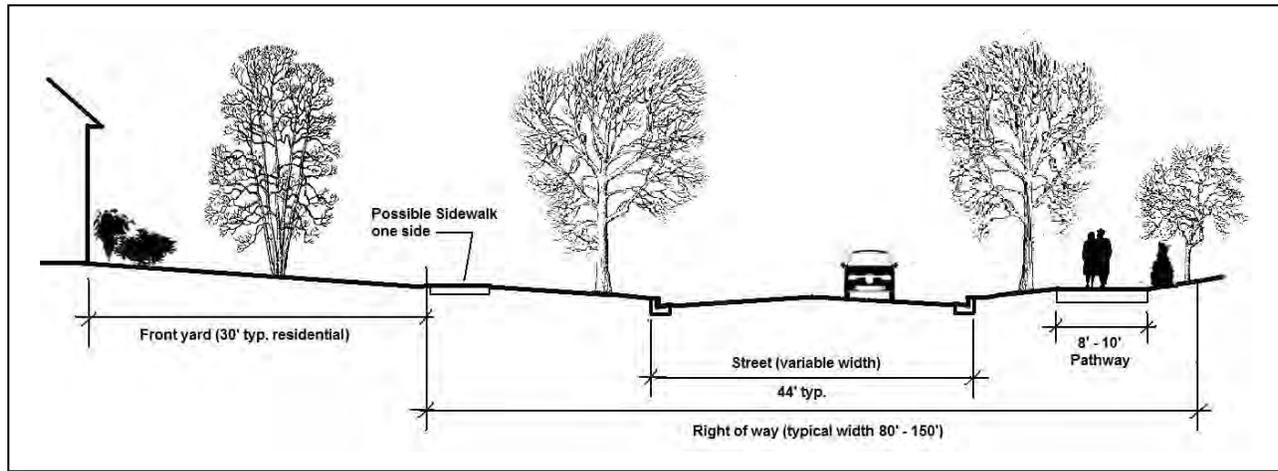
Secondary Pathways. Whereas sidewalks serve local neighborhoods, pathways serve the broader community as both transportation routes and as linear park and recreation resources. This Plan recognizes two tiers of pathway development. In urbanized areas where the pathway follows or adjoins a major roadway, most pathways will serve as “secondary” pathways for their entire length. The main condition separating most secondary pathways from primary pathway routes would be the potential for barrier interruption, particularly due to the need for freeway or railroad crossings. Secondary pathways may have these issues – Primary routes should be designed to avoid them.

These routes will primarily consist of eight to ten foot wide asphalt paths constructed within the right of way, but in most cases, separated from the traffic by a boulevard strip of varying width. Within the boulevard, there should be room set aside for tree planting, street and pathway lighting, and other amenities.

There are a few significant existing exceptions to this standard, found where Trunk Highway 25 and County Highway 39 cross Interstate 94. Due to the width and construction of these bridges, this Secondary Pathway is a raised concrete sidewalk immediately adjacent to the traffic lanes.

The cross section view below in Figure 3-5 illustrates a common Secondary Pathway arrangement.

Figure 3-5
Secondary Pathway Cross Section View



Where adequate right of way exists, the pathway itself should be separated from the travelled roadway a distance of ten feet or more to permit minimum interference from plowed snow. In some cases, a sidewalk on the side opposite the pathway will also be considered appropriate, depending on the land uses in the area and the opportunities for crossing the roadway.

As a design element for urban pathways, planting on the “outside” of the pathway, creating a landscaped buffer between the path and private property is also a positive element. This buffer is not intended to be opaque, but rather, a intermittent line of small trees and shrubs that enhance the visual impact of the pathway and help to provide shade from that direction of sun.

Primary Pathway. Where the pathway route will be located on undeveloped or newly developing property, or in otherwise rural locations, the recommendation is for primary pathway construction as a natural greenway. In urban locations where the pathway route has been designated as primary, a design similar to that of the secondary pathway is more practical.

Where greenway is being developed, a corridor width of between 100 and 200 feet is recommended. This corridor should be adequate to accomplish several objectives of the greenway concept, including:

- Preservation of valuable natural landscape features.
- Protection of existing water resources.
- Provision of new water resources, such as pond locations (that can serve to facilitate area storm water management needs, as well as off-set park dedication credits).
- Creation of natural environment that buffers pathway users from developing urban neighborhoods.

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- Provides adequate width for park facilities improvements within the corridor, avoiding further park acquisition.
- Provides adequate width for multiple use pathway development, including pedestrian, bicycle, cross-country ski, and similar use.

The primary pathway system would be comprised of routes that are least likely to have barrier interruptions so they can be assured of continuity. As noted above, freeway and railroad crossings should be minimized, and connections between the most visible and heavily used recreation facilities should be expected along primary routes. The city is not obligated to accept wetlands, but may do so if it fits the overall Greenway plan.

Figure 3-6
Primary Pathway Cross Section View

