

# City of Topeka Parks & Open Space Plan

## An Element of the Topeka Comprehensive Plan, 2025



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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
Previous Plans.....	10
Major Themes.....	11
The Importance of Design.....	12
Model for Neighborhood and Community Parks.....	15
<b>Vision</b> .....	16
<b>Goals</b> .....	16
Goal I. Expand the Park System as Warranted by Urban Expansion.....	16
Goal II. Establish Partnerships.....	17
Goal III. Preserve Our Local Heritage.....	18
Goal IV. Preserve Scenic Views and Corridors .....	19
Goal V. Reconnect with the Kansas River and Other Waterways .....	20
Goal VI. Ensure Responsible Stewardship for Public Lands.....	21
<b>Current Levels of Service</b> .....	23
<b>Planning Area Health Assessment</b> .....	26
Health Categories.....	26
Assessment Criteria.....	27
Community Parks .....	27
Neighborhood Parks.....	28
Percent of Planning Area Dedicated to Public Greenspace.....	29
Percent of Planning Area Within ¼ Mile of Park, Trail, Playground, or Open Space.....	30
Composite Health Rating .....	31
<b>Planning Area Analyses</b> .....	33
1. North US Highway 75.....	34
2. North Rochester Road.....	35
3. N.E. Meridan Road.....	36
4. Menoken Road.....	37
5. North Topeka.....	38
6. Oakland.....	39
7. East Topeka.....	40
8. Highland Park.....	41
9. Downtown.....	42
10. Central Topeka.....	43
11. West Topeka.....	44
12. South Topeka.....	45
13. Southeast Topeka.....	46
14. Croco Road.....	47
15. West I-70.....	48
16. Sherwood.....	49
17. Southwest Topeka.....	50
18. South US Highway 75.....	51
<b>Regional Summary Analysis</b> .....	52

<b>New Park Proposals – Immediate Opportunities</b> .....	54
I. Menninger State Park.....	54
II. Landonunga Park.....	55
III. Downtown River Front.....	56
IV. Freedom Valley Lake.....	57
V. Welton Grove Park Expansion.....	58
VI. Shawnee County Fairgrounds.....	59
VII. Van Buren Pedestrian Plaza.....	59
VIII. Westridge Community Center Park.....	59
<b>Classification and Standards</b> .....	60
Mini-Parks.....	61
Neighborhood Parks.....	62
Linear Parks, Trails, and Greenways.....	63
Community Parks.....	64
Regional Parks.....	65
Conservation Parks.....	66
Special Use Parks.....	67
Private Park/Recreation Facility.....	68
<b>Amendment #1 - Parkland Fee Districts (October 20, 2009)</b> .....	69
Health Ratings Map.....	70
Health Ratings Table.....	71

# CITY OF TOPEKA

## PARKS AND OPEN-SPACE PLAN

*“The really great cities of the world are remembered for their public realm: their parks, plazas, squares, and pedestrian streets. It isn’t about buildings alone—it’s the public realm, the public environment, the connective fabric that sets the tone for private investment and creates the environment for human activity and habitation.”*

**Cy Paumier, Principle to LDR International, to the Ninth Annual Urban Land Institute Mayor’s Forum in Seattle, Washington, 1999.**

### INTRODUCTION

Parks and open spaces are becoming increasingly important for people of all generations to exercise, spend time with family and friends, to play, enjoy nature and simply to relax from the stresses of modern day society. Indeed, residents of Topeka today benefit from the planning and forethought of city leaders of more than a century ago as we enjoy a first class system of parks, trails, and other recreational facilities within our community. Topekans today enjoy a wide variety of both active and passive recreational opportunities located in a comprehensive system of City, County, and State parks.

The system of parks and recreational facilities currently available to residents of Topeka has served us well for over a century. However, as growth within and around our community increases, the need for new recreational opportunities also increases. It thus becomes increasingly important to ensure that existing and planned parks and recreational amenities can meet the needs of an expanding population.

Everyone feels the impact of growth. More and more people are forced to share and support limited park space and recreational facilities. Perhaps more importantly, as the physical boundaries of our urban area continue to grow, convenient access to these facilities often becomes unattainable to many segments of our community. Therefore, it is essential that we, as a community, plan for and implement a comprehensive park and open space plan that ensures that our opportunities for leisure and play are not diminished.

This Parks and Open Space Plan is only one element of the greater Topeka Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide the acquisition, planning and development of parkland in Topeka and its surrounding jurisdiction. A second function of the plan is to ensure the continued eligibility of Topeka to participate in state and federal funding programs for parks and recreation facilities.

This Plan does not attempt to guide the development of facilities or recreational programs that ultimately occur within our city’s parks. Decisions regarding recreational programming should be left to the citizens and users of each park space, in conjunction with the Topeka parks and recreation Department. Rather, this document only provides a guide for the acquisition of parkland that will ultimately make other programming decisions possible.

In the past, the primary responsibility of the Topeka Parks and Recreation Department has been to manage a network of existing park facilities while working within a limited budget. Due to

perimeter growth around the City of Topeka, we must consider the need to expand the number of parks and types of services available to handle increasing demands. At the same time, it must be understood by the governing body of Topeka that adequate resources must be allocated to our Parks and Recreation Department in order to continue the level of services that we have come to expect.

The development of parks and recreational facilities should be an integral part of a larger open space framework where the protection of unique environments and natural resources are balanced with recreational enjoyment and interpretation. Therefore, this element of the Comprehensive Plan is closely linked to the Topeka-Shawnee County Regional Trails and Greenways Plan, and will lay the framework for a future comprehensive natural resources conservation plan, as well.

### **Why Do We Need Parks, and Open Spaces?**

Aside from the obvious need for places to walk, play and unwind from daily stresses, there are a myriad other reasons to invest in a comprehensive and integrated system of public parks and open spaces. These open spaces enhance our **quality of life** and the **image** of our community. Regional parks are destination points for residents and visitors to our community. Often, perceptions of our community are based, in large part, on our experiences within our public open spaces. Regional parks, such as Gage Park or Lake Shawnee, can be sources of great pride and are, by themselves, generators of tourism.

Open spaces differ from parks in that they are not intended for active recreational use, but rather as calming vistas along our streets and boulevards. They are the collective space in our city that together, comprises the “public realm.” Open spaces can function as landscaped traffic calming devices, such as the Potwin traffic circles, or the median between opposing lanes of traffic. They can be the spaces between buildings on a campus, such as Washburn University, or the V.A. Hospital. Or, they can simply be the right-of-way of a tree-lined residential street.



Victorian Garden and mini-train bridge - Gage Park

But, like parks, open spaces generate valuable **aesthetic and land use benefits**.

Topekans have come to expect and rely upon the presence of large and small tracts of undeveloped areas. Many of our primary boulevards and trafficways are scattered with scenic vistas of both public and private open spaces. Often, these open spaces are located in floodways or otherwise unbuildable areas that have been dedicated as public parks or are otherwise left fallow by the property owner. In addition to providing valuable open space within our neighborhoods, the presence of these places offers motorists and passersby with a pleasing environment and experience while journeying through our city.

Parks and open spaces can also be used as **buffers** between incompatible land uses. For example, parks can be extremely valuable around the perimeter of residential districts, where aesthetic concerns are more important than in an adjacent industrial area where the function of the property is a greater concern than appearance.

The ability of parks and open spaces to provide various **environmental benefits** is well documented. Greenspaces filter our air and replenish our groundwater. They reduce erosion, which in turn cleans our rivers and streams providing healthy habitats for plants and animals.

Greenspaces reduce air temperatures by providing shade and absorbing heat from the summer sun.

Recent studies have also suggested parks provide various **social benefits**, such as reduced crime and delinquency rates. Parks are prime social gathering places for people of all ages. When these spaces are available, especially to youth, they often provide positive alternatives for spending leisure time, especially during summer months when school is not in session.

## Why We Must Plan Ahead

**Cost** - Parks and open spaces are best provided in advance of, or commensurate with development. Once an area is developed, the provision of open space and parks becomes extremely problematic. The retro-acquisition of developed land, and the associated costs of demolition and relocation makes the feasibility of parks much more costly.

**Sprawl** - Current development patterns are more land consumptive than of previous decades. Prior to 1950, a population of 1,000 people required approximately 30 acres of land. Today, that same population consumes in excess of 100 acres, and in some areas of Shawnee County, as much as 200 acres. Once this land is developed, its ability to contribute to the public as park or open space land is greatly diminished and the distance between these spaces increases. This pattern results in less land available for public use and benefit.



Autumn in Oakland-Billard Park

**Access** - Another factor requiring advanced planning for parks and open space is the changing patterns of public mobility. In many areas of Topeka, especially those areas built after 1960, accommodations for pedestrian access are largely missing. Sidewalks can have a huge impact on the ability of residents, particularly children, to walk within a neighborhood to a public park.

The absence of these sidewalks greatly reduces the independence and ability of children to access a nearby neighborhood park. This further reduces the options available to children in how they spend their leisure time, a factor that has a profound impact in the intellectual and physical development of children.

**Planned Growth** – This Parks and Open Space Plan incorporates the intent of the Topeka Growth Management and Land Use Plan to designate limited areas around the perimeter of the City of Topeka as population growth areas. The Growth Management and Land Use Plan estimates a population growth rate

of approximately 1.5 percent over the next 30 years, which will result in a population increase of approximately 95,000 persons in Shawnee County. New parks and open spaces within these designated growth areas must accompany this increase in population.

**Coordination** – Parks in Topeka and Shawnee County are governed by two separate parks and recreation agencies – The Topeka Parks and Recreation Department, and the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department. As growth occurs within the planned growth areas, parks will be dedicated beyond the corporate limits of the City of Topeka, and which will be the responsibility of Shawnee County for maintenance and development. As these areas become developed and annexation occurs, the transfer of maintenance responsibilities from County to City must be seamless so as not to disrupt the services provided by these parks, and so as not to unnecessarily burden either service provider.

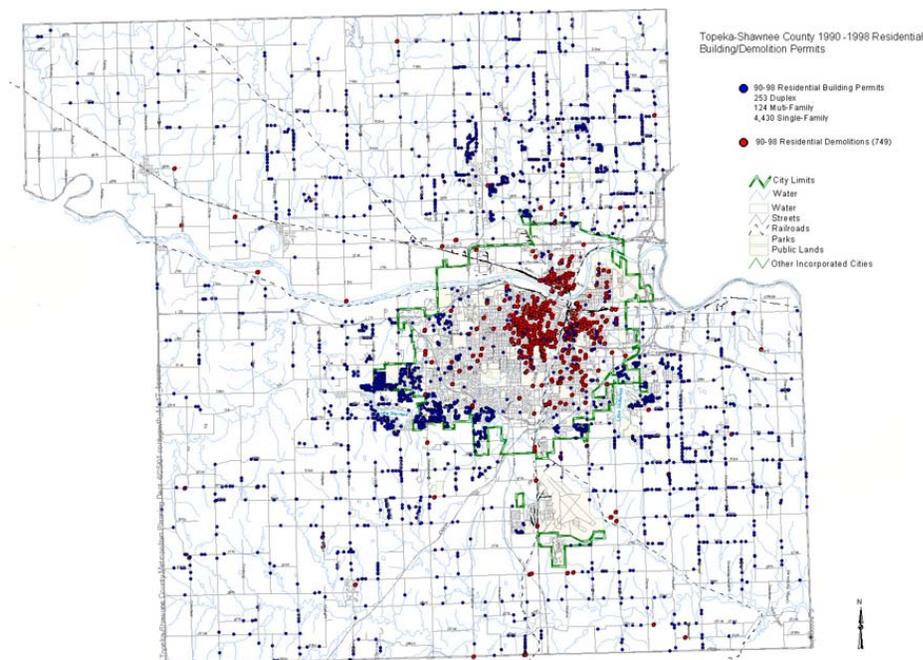
## Keeping Pace With Growth

The vast majority of neighborhood parks and open spaces that we currently enjoy were dedicated to the City of Topeka prior to 1950. Since that time, our community has grown, both in terms of population, and in terms of geographic boundaries.

Recent development trends in Shawnee County have resulted in the decentralization of both population and commerce. As population densities within the City of Topeka continue to decline, the population densities of the urban fringes increases. In most cases, this population expansion has occurred within the unincorporated areas of Shawnee County.

Although the City of Topeka has recently annexed several areas contiguous to the corporate boundaries on the City's north and southeast sides, the dedication of park and open space has not kept pace with demand for these public recreational places. Figure 1 illustrates the pattern of growth within and around the City of Topeka and Shawnee County over the past decade. As can be seen from the illustration, high concentrations of building permits (blue dots) have been issued for new residential construction at the southwestern edge of Topeka near Lake Sherwood. Significant concentrations of new residential building permits have also been issued in areas southeast of Topeka near Lake Shawnee, and also north of US Highway 24. In contrast, the numbers of demolitions (red dots) that have occurred are almost exclusively within central, north and east Topeka.

**Figure 1**



Under this pattern of growth (inner city demolition and perimeter sprawl), existing parks within the City of Topeka are being used and supported by a declining number of residents. Meanwhile, the lack of dedication of new parks and open spaces in the newer fringe subdivisions has left most residents of these areas without convenient access to neighborhood parks.

**Obstacles to Dedication of New Parks** – A principle cause for the slow-down in the dedication of new parks results from the method used to finance the construction of new roads within newly platted subdivisions. An ordinance passed by the Topeka City Council in 1981 states that ***“The half of such street which adjoins public park property within the city shall be paid for by the city at large, provided, however, the amount to be paid by the city under this subsection shall be determined by***

*three appraisers appointed by the council, and the amount which they find to be the city's one-half shall be conclusive upon the city and the owner of the subdivision."* (Sec. 134-169. Streets (d)(2)). In essence, this requires the City's participation in road improvement districts when new subdivisions include public park space.

It was the intent of this ordinance for the City at large to accept ½ of the burden of the cost of constructing a public street when adjacent to a dedicated public park. However, city funding to pay for special assessments levied by road improvement districts have been paid directly from the Parks and Recreation Department budget for the past several years. The result has been a decreasing ability by the Parks & Recreation Department to accept the dedications of new parks due to their inability to shoulder the financial burden imposed by the ordinance cited above.

A secondary negative effect of the ordinance has been poor park design. Fees imposed by road improvement districts are based, in part, on the amount of road frontage bordering a lot. In the few instances where public or private park space has been recently dedicated with a plat, developers have attempted to minimize public road frontage in order to reduce the financial obligation imposed upon the City or a homeowners association by the road improvement district. This practice has resulted in the dedication of several parks that are practically hidden from public view, thus greatly reducing the visibility, safety, and usefulness of the park-space.

A second, but no less substantial obstacle to the dedication of new parks is the issue of an unpredictable budget. A portion of the City's overall tax mill levy is dedicated exclusively for parks and recreation. This portion is controlled by the City Council, which can raise or lower this balance during each budget year. The total dedicated mill levy for parks and recreation for 2004 is 6.105 mills. The recommended mill levy for 2005 is a reduction to 5.92 mills, or a loss of approximately \$169,275 from the Parks Department budget.

The periodic rise and fall of this dedicated mill levy has made the Parks Department reluctant to accept new park dedications for fear that they will not be able to afford development and maintenance of additional acres to the city's inventory of parks and open spaces. In order to accept, improve, and maintain parks within newly developed areas of the city, and its immediate perimeter, a stable and adequate source of funding is essential.

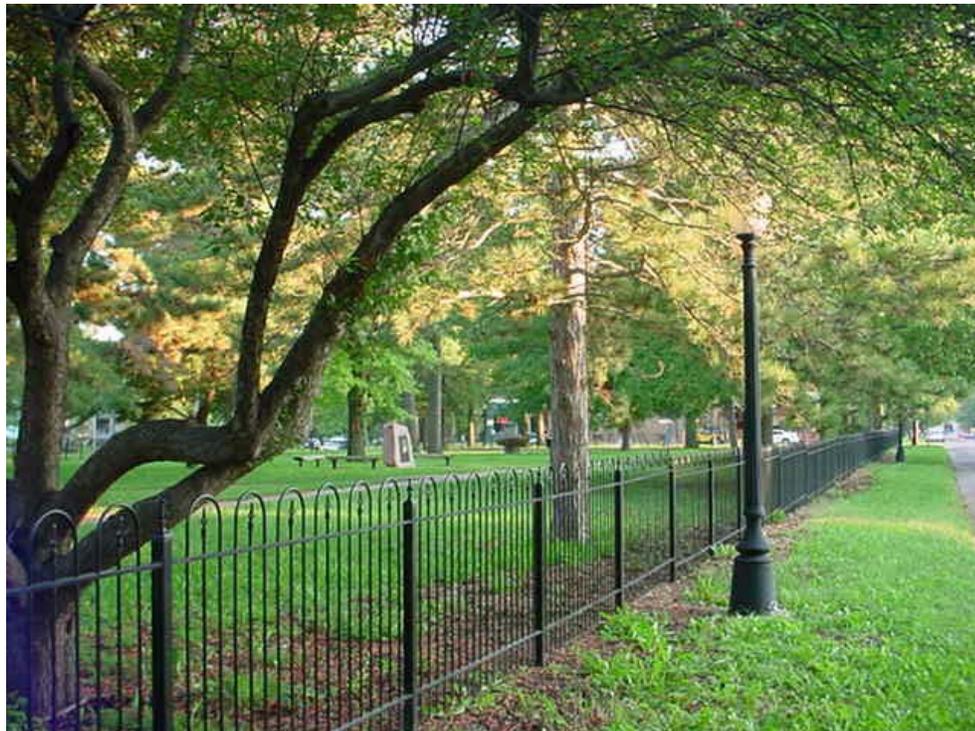
### **Maintaining and Expanding our Current Parks System**

The attention that this document directs toward expansion of our parks and open space system in newly developed areas should not exclude or supersede the continued viability of our existing parks system. Indeed, most of our urban core and existing urbanized areas are presently underserved in terms of neighborhood and community-level parks. All efforts should be pursued to achieve adopted standards for the provision of parks at all levels, in all areas of our community.

These efforts can be achieved in several ways. Since much of the existing urbanized area is platted and built with neighborhoods, shopping areas, office parks, and other infrastructure, the acquisition of sizeable portions of land for parks (5-10 acres) will, undoubtedly, be difficult. Therefore, alternatives to parks of this size should be considered. In these existing urbanized areas, it should be recognized that smaller parks can successfully fill the needs of their surrounding neighborhoods.

For example, Holiday Park in the Central Topeka planning area is just slightly greater than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre in size, yet is an ideal neighborhood park for its immediate surrounding area. However, due to its limited size, its capacity to serve the full extent of the neighborhood is also limited. To compensate, additional similar-sized parks of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 acres should be considered in other portions of the neighborhood, where, collectively, all such neighborhood parks can meet desired acres-to-population ratios.

It is also possible to expand existing neighborhood parks or open spaces in small increments. Throughout the urbanized area, many parks and open spaces are dedicated where limited street frontage exists or where lots are not desired for housing or commercial development. To aid in the revitalization of these areas and meet the demand of area residents, these parks and open spaces can be expanded by eliminating adjoining deteriorated housing, and beautifying additional street frontages and corridors.



**Holiday Park in the summer.**

## PREVIOUS PLANS

The City of Topeka has an established history of advocacy for parks. However, the most recent long-range plan adopted exclusively for parks and open spaces was written in 1960. This document, entitled “Master Plan Report: Parks Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces,” laid the framework for our current system of neighborhood, community, and regional parks.

Most of the City’s current system of Community Centers (Rice, Hillcrest, Crestview, Oakland, Central) were established as recommendations within this report. This plan also established standards for the types and quantities of parks and open spaces that were to be built as our population grew.

While this plan was very successful in suggesting, and ultimately causing our current parks and open space system to be implemented, hindsight has proven that this plan was somewhat optimistic in its predictions for population growth. Estimates for population in Shawnee County, according to this plan, were expected to reach 227,000 by 1980. However, the authors of this report had no way of predicting the closure of Forbes Airbase only a short time after the adoption of this plan.

Subsequent plans for parks and open space have been included within updates to the city and county’s Comprehensive Plan. However, no real analysis has been performed in terms of service levels of the existing parks and open space system. Rather, recent plans have continued to suggest parks and open space dedication standards based on population growth and expansion. In most cases, these plans have suggested use of the parks and open space dedication guidelines established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and the National Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (NAPRA).

Although such standards have been included and adopted within previous parks and open space plans and comprehensive plans, no mechanism for implementing these standards has ever been adopted. Because of this, our parks and open space system grew very little during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and has left large urbanized areas of Topeka and Shawnee County without adequate parks service.

In 2001, The City of Topeka and Shawnee County adopted a comprehensive **Topeka-Shawnee County Regional Trails and Greenways Plan**. This plan was adopted as an element of the greater Comprehensive Metropolitan Plan, and is intended to serve as a companion this document. The Regional Trails Plan proposes routes for approximately 188 miles of public trails throughout the City of Topeka and Shawnee County.

This Parks and Open Space Plan strives for the utmost compatibility with the Regional Trails Plan in terms of the location and connection of existing and future parks along designated trail systems. Both documents should be consulted when determining suitable locations for future parks.



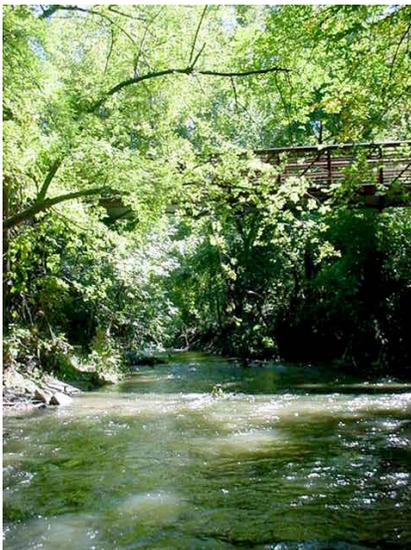
A mountain biker tests his metal on the trails at Dornwood Park.

## MAJOR THEMES

This document introduces several new ideas, or themes, into the management and maintenance of our parks and open space system. Perhaps most significant of all these themes is the manner in which we consider “**open space**.” This plan merges the concept of “open space” with “public realm.” As such, it encompasses a wide variety of types of public spaces, such as landscaped traffic calming devices, traffic medians, sidewalks, roadside gardens and gateways, fountains and public art, plazas and squares.

Open spaces can be unimproved fields, or can be a courtyard outside a public building. They can be geared toward passive or active recreational activities. They can be parks, or can be a scenic view shed of a natural or man-made vista.

The consideration of “open spaces” in this manner greatly expands their importance within the overall parks and open space system. Indeed, this document is entitled the **Topeka Parks and Open Space Plan**. As we strive to enhance our quality of life in Topeka, open spaces must be emphasized for their ability to improve the aesthetics and livability of our community.



Foot bridge over Shunganunga Creek – Crestview Park

Another major theme of this plan is the concept of **environmental stewardship**, especially with regard to water. As everyone knows, water falls as rain or emerges from the ground in the form of a natural spring; some soaks into the ground, and some will find its way into our streams and rivers. Water is a very dynamic element, and as such it is not limited solely as an issue for parks and open spaces, but more as an environmental issue that affects the health and livability of the entire community. This plan suggests that we begin to think of water differently – not as a nuisance that we should divert to our streams and rivers as quickly as possible, but to use the water more as a resource to replenish our ground, to nurture our wildlife, and to provide us with recreational opportunities. This plan also suggests that we use parks, open spaces, and the public realm to demonstrate how Best Management Practices can help reduce storm water runoff, resulting in healthier lakes, streams, and rivers.

This plan also espouses **partnerships**. Partnerships can be multi-faceted, and can combine various interests in working toward similar goals. It is possible, for example, for civic groups and private organizations to utilize parks and open spaces as a means to commemorate a particular person or event. In this way, parks and open spaces combine **historic preservation** and **heritage recognition** to further both public and private goals.

Schools, cemeteries, and corporate campuses can also be integrated with the surrounding neighborhoods to provide pleasing vistas, trails, and open spaces, not only to local workers and students, but to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, as well.

Arguably, the most important theme to be introduced by this



Historic Ritchie House

plan is a **commitment to implementation** of the goals, strategies, and standards established by this plan. This document does not suggest altering the previously adopted standards for the dedications of parks and open spaces, or changes to their classifications. Rather, this document recommends adopting these recommendations as public policy coupled with the legislative framework to enact these recommendations.

**Park and Open Space Acquisition** – According to the Growth Management element of the Topeka Comprehensive Plan, Shawnee County is projected to grow at a rate of 1.5 percent per year over the next 30 years. Growth at this rate will mean 95,000 additional residents to Shawnee County, for a total population of 265,000 in the year 2030. As the population of Topeka grows, it will become increasingly important that new park and open space lands be reserved and developed for use by area residents.

In some cases, areas of open space and recreational facilities can be provided by private entities. Such cases can include golf courses, marinas, health clubs, and small neighborhood parks owned and maintained by common ownership associations.

In most cases, however, it is incumbent upon cities, the County, or other government entities to provide for such dedications of park and open space lands. Therefore, it should be recognized that **the establishment and maintenance of parks and open spaces is an essential function of government at all levels.**

In order to ensure adequate public lands for parks and open space uses, **acquisition of these properties should occur before the development of residential, commercial, or other land uses.** This can be accomplished in a variety of ways including dedication of land concurrent with the platting process for residential or commercial subdivisions. Alternatively, funds can be dedicated to the City by a developer in lieu of lands. These funds, commonly called **development impact fees**, can then be used to develop parks and open spaces in other areas where they are most needed.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

Really good parks, those that impart a defining character on a neighborhood and are used and cherished by the families who live around them, all have one thing in common: *great design!* Thoughtful and appropriate design of our neighborhood and community-level parks can have a profound impact in the long-term success on the quality of our neighborhoods.

There are three basic factors that contribute to great design for neighborhood and community level parks. The following section discusses each of these factors in greater detail.

- **Size** – Great neighborhood parks reflect the human scale of their surrounding areas. Neighborhood parks must be large enough to accommodate the needs of families who use the park, yet not so large that it overwhelms or dominates the character of the neighborhood. Most neighborhood parks range from 3 to 5 acres. This acreage easily accommodates a variety of uses, yet contains these uses within a focused, concise area.
- **Accessibility/Visibility** – Great neighborhood parks must be completely accessible to the surrounding area. Users of a neighborhood park should be able to access the park within an easy five-minute walk, or within ¼ mile from their home, without crossing major thoroughfares or difficult natural barriers. Ideally, neighborhood parks should be surrounded by local residential streets near the center of the neighborhood, with uninhibited access via sidewalks or local trails. Parks should not be designed with limited street frontage, or surrounded with rear yards that force an extended journey through the neighborhood to access that frontage.

It is equally important that parks be designed to achieve the greatest degree of visibility from the surrounding neighborhood. Unfettered access to a park leads to greater visibility from all surrounding properties and streets. Being in a visible and open park increases the users sense of security and enjoyment of the park. An open design, not limited by reduced street frontage or hidden by privacy fences, creates a self-policing environment as neighbors and passersby can easily see within the park.

- **Location** - Neighborhood parks should be conveniently located for all residents of the neighborhood. Usually, this means the park should be located near the center of the neighborhood, as opposed to its periphery. A prime benefit for those homes fronting a quality neighborhood park is an increase in property value over other homes in the neighborhood. Proper selection of the site should balance protection of the site's natural features with the recreational needs of the parks intended users. For example, baseball or soccer fields should not be located on land with severe slopes. However, such slopes can provide wonderful views of surrounding areas, thus accommodating passive recreational needs of area residents, provided that sloped land, water detention areas, or thick wooded areas, etc. do not comprise a majority of the site.

Topeka is blessed with many wonderful examples of neighborhood parks that incorporate these design principles. One of these parks, **Collins Park**, is considered by many to be a quintessential neighborhood park in the City of Topeka. Developed in the early 1920s, the Collins Park neighborhood was a distant suburb to the City of Topeka, yet central to its design was a linear park at its core. The neighborhood itself is 80 acres. Dedicated concurrent with the plat for the Collins Park neighborhood, the park at its center is approximately 4 acres and is no more than a 2-block walk from any residence in the neighborhood. The park enjoys great visibility with all homes facing the park, thus increasing the number of "eyes" on the park and creating a self-policing environment for its users. The park is designed with both passive green-spaces, as well as active recreational areas, including playgrounds, picnic areas, and a basketball court.

The location of the park within the neighborhood was dictated by the areas topography. The selected site is the lowest elevation of the neighborhood, and serves a dual purpose as a natural drainage basin for the neighborhood, although no part of the site actually lies within the 100 year flood-zone.

Collins Parks serves as an anchor to the surrounding neighborhood, providing opportunities for many neighborhood events, such as an annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, neighborhood picnics, and small carnivals. The interaction between neighbors created by the park has fostered a unique identity for this neighborhood, and has increased the values of surrounding properties over time.



Topeka also maintains several neighborhood parks that were developed under less than ideal conditions. Similar to the previous example of Collins Park, **Kingsrow Park** was also developed within a suburban neighborhood near the western edge of the City of Topeka. Kingsrow Park is located within the Brookfield neighborhood, a subdivision of 416 acres of residential land. There are approximately 1200 households within this neighborhood, for an approximate population of 2,700 persons. Kingsrow Park, itself, is slightly over 5 acres in size.

Contrary to Collins Parks discussed earlier, Kingsrow Parks was not dedicated with the original plat for Brookfield Subdivision, but acquired by the City of Topeka after most of the surrounding neighborhood was substantially developed. The difference between park dedication and park acquisition, in this instance, means that the City was forced to “make do” with a left-over parcel of land that was not suitable for development. The resulting park has limited street frontage, and is bordered on three sides by back yards, rather than public street frontage. When parks are designed to abut the rear yards of residential property, this usually forces an extended route for someone to reach the park, even though they may live within a few hundred feet of the park itself. This design also tends to encroach upon the privacy of the families who live adjacent to the park since the public has access to their rear yards. When this becomes problematic, the solution is often to erect privacy fences, which results in decreased surveillance of the park. This decrease in public surveillance, then, can lead to vandalism, illegal dumping, and other behavior within the park itself that reduces its overall appeal and use.

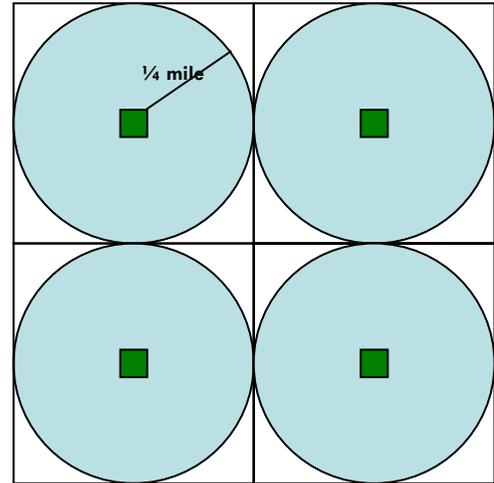
## Kingsrow Park



## MODEL FOR NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMUNITY PARKS

This document presents a broad set of nationally recognized standards for park dedications. These standards indicate the density and acreage of parks that are required to serve a given population. This section will detail the standards for the foundation of our parks system, which is the neighborhood park.

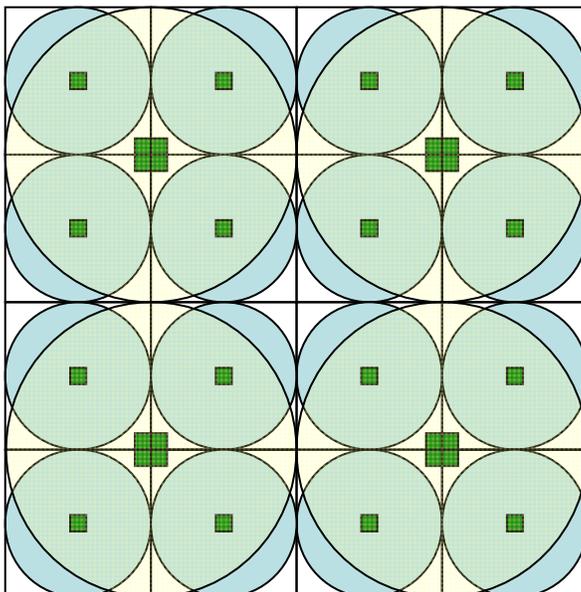
The graphic at right illustrates a generic square-mile section of land (640 acres), divided into quarters, each quarter representing a single neighborhood. At urban densities of 3 dwelling units per acre, each neighborhood, or quarter section of land, would be expected to be populated by roughly 1,000 persons. According to the recommended standard for neighborhood parks, each neighborhood should contain approximately 5 acres of neighborhood park space. In the graphic, this park space is placed near the center of each neighborhood.



The circles within each quarter section represent a quarter-mile, or 5-minute walking radius to the neighborhood park. Approximately 78% of the area within each quarter section lies within this quarter-mile radius. Therefore, as development occurs within the City

**of Topeka and its surrounding areas, roughly 78% of homes should be built no more than 1/4 mile, or a 5 minute walk, from a public neighborhood park.**

By combining multiple sections of land, such as illustrated in the example below, this concept can be expanded to incorporate community-level parks. Community parks share the same ratio of acreage to persons served as neighborhood parks (5 acres per 1,000 persons). However, community parks are designed to meet the recreational needs of several neighborhoods. Their purpose differs from neighborhood parks because they offer facilities and services that are not feasible, and perhaps not desirable, at the neighborhood level.



In this second illustration, neighborhood parks remain at or near the center of each neighborhood, while larger community level parks are placed at the intersections of 4 separate neighborhoods. In this example, the resulting radius for each community-level park is approximately 1/2 mile, again encompassing approximately 78% of all land area within each section of land. However, recommended standards for the service area of community parks can vary from 1/2 mile to as much as 3 miles, depending on other types of parks and recreational facilities, including schools, available within the greater community.

**Vision** – To better promote the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all our citizens and visitors to our community, and in order to enhance to quality of experiences we share as residents of this city, the following vision is established to guide the further development and enhancement of our parks and open spaces system:

- All residents enjoy safe and convenient access within a 5-minute walk to a world-class system of parks, trails and open spaces.
- Sufficient parks and open space areas are provided throughout every neighborhood that meet national standards.
- Topeka’s parks and open space system is based on partnerships that ensures the responsible stewardship of all public lands.

**Goals** – Goals encompass the overall vision and desired outcome of the Parks and Open Space planning effort. By adopting a range of defined goals through this plan, a set of benchmarks is also established to measure our progress toward achieving our overall vision. The Goals offered through this plan describe the kind of system we hope to develop in the future. These goals both implement the overall vision for the provision of parks and open spaces within Topeka, and focus community resources on identified issues and opportunities. These goals are further supported by a framework of strategies and actions to achieve what we, as a community, want in our parks and open space system.

**GOAL I. Expand and Maintain the Park System**

**GOAL II. Establish Partnerships**

**GOAL III. Preserve Our Local Heritage**

**GOAL IV. Preserve Scenic Views and Corridors**

**GOAL V. Reconnect with the Kansas River and other Waterways**

**GOAL VI. Ensure Responsible Stewardship of Public Lands**

The following section details specific strategies and actions to achieve these goals. How each strategy is achieved is then explained in terms of specific actions and programs.

**GOAL I. Expand and Maintain the Park System –**

The dedication of new parks and open spaces should accompany urban expansion to ensure a geographically equitable distribution of, and convenient access to regional, community, and neighborhood parks. In order to guarantee that future generations have access to quality, safe parks and open spaces, it is imperative that we begin, today, the process of acquiring these lands and reserving them for future use.

It is equally imperative that we strive to fulfill the need for parks and open spaces in those areas of our community that are already urbanized. All areas of our community are presently lacking at some level of park, be it a community park, neighborhood park, or smaller mini-park or open space. The City of Topeka should seek the opportunities to expand our existing park system in existing urbanized areas whenever possible.

**Strategy 1. Acquire and dedicate parks and open spaces commensurate with new development.**

**Actions:**

1. Conduct a Natural Resources Survey to determine the most appropriate land within the City of Topeka and surrounding areas for the dedication of neighborhood, community and regional parks.
2. Adopt specific standards for the dedication of parks and open spaces commensurate with new development within the 3-mile extraterritorial boundary of the City of Topeka.
3. Require Development Impact Fees to fund the improvement and maintenance of new parks.
4. Explore incentives to encourage the dedication of parks and open spaces.
5. Adopt subdivision regulations that require the dedication of parks and open spaces as specified in the adopted standards for neighborhood, community, and regional parks through the platting process.
6. Eliminate the City's liability for participation in road improvement districts when parks or open spaces are dedicated with a final plat.

**Strategy 2. Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Design concepts in new subdivisions to secure accessible, pedestrian-friendly parks and open spaces.**

**Actions:**

1. Adopt policies requiring adequate pedestrian access to all newly dedicated parks.
2. Encourage the placement of newly dedicated parks and open spaces adjacent to schools, fire stations, trails, or other public facility to maximize exposure of the park to the general public, and to enhance public surveillance.
3. Establish parkland dedication standards within the subdivision regulations to ensure adequate, safe, and functional park-space dedications within new developments.

**Strategy 3. Expand the existing park system within existing urbanized areas where appropriate.**

**Actions:**

1. Identify park deficiencies and opportunities within adopted neighborhood and area plans and implement their recommendations.
2. Identify available funding sources to acquire all appropriate and available properties to enhance and maximize the current park system.

**GOAL II. Establish Partnerships** – The establishment of partnerships with other government and non-government agencies can greatly improve the parks and open space system. As people increasingly desire diversity in recreational choices, local governments often find that their resources may not stretch far enough to meet current or future needs. Partnerships between public, private and non-profit organizations can help offset these deficiencies by combining resources.

For example, private trails, such as the Menninger Health and Fitness Trail, could be granted public access, thus expanding the communities trail resources.

Advocacy organizations, such as the Rails to Trails Conservancy can lead efforts to acquire and dedicate new parks and trails for public use.

In addition, the City can partner with various civic organizations to “adopt” a Park, trail or stream. Such programs are extremely beneficial to park maintenance in a variety of ways. A sense of “ownership” reduces litter and vandalism and builds an awareness of those actions on our parks system. Volunteer labor can also help defray expenses by increasing the quality and frequency of maintenance given to those adopted facilities.

Specific partnerships should be considered between public and private entities, including Federal, State and local governments, school districts, and community organizations.

**Strategy 1. Partner with the public to foster community “ownership” of public parks, trails, and open spaces.**

**Actions:**

1. Develop cooperative relationships with civic and community organizations to identify deficiencies and needed improvements to our existing inventory of neighborhood parks and open spaces.
2. Expand the Adopt-a-Park program to encourage community “ownership” of parks and open spaces.
3. Establish “Adopt-a-Stream” and “Adopt-a-Trail” programs to encourage civic involvement in the maintenance and restoration of our waterways and trails.
4. Partner with corporations and civic organizations to accomplish project specific improvements, such as bridge replacement projects on trails and construction of new playground equipment.
5. Partner with advocacy groups to encourage the acquisition and maintenance of public lands and natural habitat areas.

**Strategy 2. Maximize the use of private open spaces and recreational facilities within the greater parks and open space “system.”**

**Actions:**

1. Explore public access rights to identified private open spaces for public recreational benefit. Examples may include the Kanza Business & Technology Park, Menninger Campus fitness trail.....
2. Encourage the dedication of private open spaces within new developments.

**GOAL III. Preserve our Local Heritage –** The dedication of parks and open spaces is an ideal mechanism for recognizing and preserving significant aspects of our past. Heritage parks can be as elaborate as the Ward Meade Park, which has developed a theme of 19<sup>th</sup> Century life in the Midwest, or as simple as a garden that calls attention to a significant person or event in our past.

Topeka has a variety of heritage parks already and stands poised to gain even more in the future. Many of these parks, such as the Kansas State Historical Society and Museum and the Monroe National Historic Monument are not owned or operated by the City, but by state and federal agencies. However, local agencies can capitalize on these resources to establish local and regional themes that can both educate and be used to generate tourism opportunities.

**Strategy 1. Identify and protect our areas cultural and historic resources.**

**Actions:**

1. Conduct a historic and cultural resources survey to identify possible locations for commemorative parks and public spaces.
2. Expand local landmarks eligibility to include identified non-residential properties.
3. Encourage National Register Designation for identified historic properties.
4. Establish design guidelines for recognized historic districts and their surrounding areas to protect the authenticity of these historical and cultural resources.

**Strategy 2. Utilize the areas cultural and historic resources to maximize educational and tourism opportunities.**

**Actions:**

1. Initiate a “way finding” sign campaign to direct the public to identified cultural and historic resources.
2. Establish volunteer “Friends” groups to educate the public and offer tours of cultural and historic resources.
3. Capitalize on state and federal resources to establish local and regional themes for cultural and historical education and tourism opportunities.

**GOAL IV. Preserve Scenic Views and Corridors** – Scenic views and corridors can range from thousands of acres of rural lands to a single small homestead with a front yard of ¼ acre. Scenic views and corridors, or view-sheds, are similar to historic buildings and districts in that they reveal aspects of our community’s origins and values. View-sheds can preserve both man-made and natural vistas, ranging from parks and playgrounds, to battlefields, cemeteries, agricultural preserves, or views of the State Capital Building. All these man-made vistas can be preserved by ensuring appropriate development within certain identified areas, particularly along major roadways with prominent views of these resources. Other view-sheds, such as natural, pristine views of the Kansas River or native prairies, should also be protected to remind us of our region’s natural history. Preservation of these view-sheds can provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational, and educational opportunities that help us understand ourselves, both as individuals, and as a community. This goal strives to capitalize on our region’s natural and man made scenic vistas by ensuring their prominence within the overall parks and open space system.

**Strategy 1. Reserve natural and man-made scenic views and corridors for view-shed protection.**

**Actions:**

1. Conduct natural and historical resource surveys to identify possible view-sheds for protection.
2. Discourage the placement of buildings, signs, utilities, towers, or other man-made features within designated scenic or historic view-sheds.
3. Adopt a sign ordinance that prohibits the placement of billboards and other signs within protected view-sheds.

4. As feasible, encourage all utility lines to be buried, both in new developments and in older neighborhoods.
5. Establish appropriate standards for signage for buried utilities and public information signs.

**Strategy 2. Preserve public green-space along public roadways, waterways, and trails.**

**Actions:**

1. Adopt a Street-Tree Ordinance to re-establish an urban forest within the expanding urbanized area.
2. Adopt a Historic Tree Ordinance to protect large species and historic or significant trees within public rights-of-way and other public properties.
3. Adopt design standards for public works projects that incorporate public green-spaces as prominent design elements.
4. Identify the region's waterways by placing identification markers on bridges and viaducts.
5. Adopt a Stream-Buffers ordinance that restricts development adjacent to streams and waterways.
6. Establish overlay zones with specific design standards and design review procedures within 75' of all public parks, trails and green-ways to protect and enhance the character of these public areas.

**GOAL V. Reconnect with the Kansas River and other Waterways** – Area streams and creeks played a very crucial role in the development of Topeka's earliest parks and open spaces. In most cases, ground that lay within a flood-plain and could not be developed was set aside and reserved for park space. This practice has led to the dedication of dozens of parks in the City of Topeka ranging in size from little more than an acre (Shimer Park), to several hundred acres (Shunga Trail). Recently, however, it has become more economical for developers to fill low-lying areas prone to flooding, redirect the flows of water and make use of land that, earlier, had been considered impractical for development.

Contributing to this practice was the aftermath of the flood of 1951. After this event, many of our natural streams and waterways were channelized. The flood, although devastating in its effects on many areas of Topeka, caused us to regard our streams and waterways more as nuisances than assets. Streams became the means by which water was sent to the Kansas River, and the resulting engineering of our streams sent this water to the river as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Recent findings in storm-water management practices have led us to rethink this policy of over-engineering our streams as nothing more than conduits for storm-water drainage. It is now viewed as possible, and even advantageous, to utilize our streams and waterways more in their natural state, and to naturalize those streams that have already been converted. This new practice utilizes our waterways and wetlands as filters to reduce or eliminate pollutants that enter our streams in the form of storm-water run-off. This practice also allows our ground-water resources to replenish, thus reducing the effects of periodic droughts. The end results of this practice are cleaner streams and rivers, cleaner drinking water, sustainable habitat for wildlife, and useable recreational resources for people.

**Strategy 1. Increase opportunities for public recreation along the Kansas River and other waterways.**

**Actions:**

1. Implement the Topeka-Shawnee County Regional Trails Plan, which calls for the construction of trails along the Kansas River, Soldier Creek, Shunganunga Creek, and Deer Creek.
2. Establish additional points of access to the Kansas River for boating and fishing opportunities.
3. Construct a Downtown Riverfront Park to showcase the regions primary natural attributes to both area residents and visitors.
4. Develop a network of lagoons, lakes and ponds at strategic locations along our creeks and streams that serve to provide recreational opportunities for area residents, provide habitat for natural wildlife, and serve as filters to improve the water quality.
5. Establish an “Adopt-a-Stream” program to encourage civic involvement in the maintenance and restoration of our waterways.

**Strategy 2. Improve the environmental quality of all waterways in Topeka for habitat and recreational purposes.**

**Actions:**

1. Adopt a Stream-Buffers ordinance that limits development adjacent to streams and waterways.
2. Encourage the use of Best Management Practices to control storm-water runoff to reduce pollutants entering our streams and waterways.
3. Continue to support the Shawnee County Conservation District’s efforts to educate the public regarding storm-water drainage and pollutant’s entering streams and rivers.
4. Develop a network of lagoons, lakes and ponds at strategic locations along our creeks and streams that serve to provide recreational opportunities for area residents, provide habitat for natural wildlife, and serve as filters to improve water quality.

**GOAL VI. Ensure Responsible Stewardship of Public Lands – Topeka’s quality of life is greatly influenced by the region’s natural and cultural resources and the scenic settings they create. Outdoor recreation brings people in contact with our natural surroundings, and gives us an opportunity to enjoy our natural environment. Environmental, historical, and cultural features in parks can therefore serve as important educational resources.**

Environmental quality is necessary to ensure the quality of outdoor recreation. Damage to our natural resources results in a reduction in our quality of life and in costly solutions to the public. Utilizing our parks and open spaces in a manner that safeguards natural ecosystems systems creates utilitarian benefits, and recreational and aesthetic benefits, as well.

**Strategy 1. Establish a framework for the preservation, enhancement, and restoration of park landscapes and ecological habitats.**

**Actions:**

1. Conduct a countywide biological survey to identify prime habitats for both fauna and flora.

2. Adopt use specific development standards for public lands and open spaces that protect the character and integrity of public lands while balancing the needs of human and natural habitats.
3. Establish a review process for all public and private development projects in order to protect and enhance historic and natural resources within Topeka.
4. Establish parkland dedication standards within the subdivision regulations to ensure adequate, safe, and functional park-space dedications within new developments.
5. Adopt a stream-buffers ordinance that protects our community's waterways from development and degradation.
6. Zone all publicly owned parks and open spaces to the "OS-1" Open Spaces District, to ensure their continued availability and use as parks and recreational amenities.
7. Adopt urban design standards that encourage street-scaping with all new road improvement, and other public and private infrastructure projects. Such standards should include landscaped medians, traffic calming devices, and street trees.

**Strategy 2. Ensure adequate funding to support ongoing acquisition, maintenance, and improvements to our parks, trails, and open space systems.**

**Actions:**

1. Explore alternative funding sources to support capital improvements within parks, trails, and open spaces. Such alternatives may include the establishment of parks districts, development impact fees, corporate or community sponsorship, grants, or private contributions, among others.
2. Initiate a "Quality First" approach to parks and open space management to include initial investment in quality materials, design, preventative maintenance programs, and energy/materials conservation.
3. Explore private maintenance contracts for public parks and open spaces.
4. Explore the possibility of consolidation of the Topeka and Shawnee County Parks and Recreations Departments as a means of cost savings and joint funding.
5. Develop guidelines for the allocation of parkland development fees.

## CURRENT LEVELS OF SERVICE

As a part of this parks and open space plan, staff has conducted a comprehensive analysis of current levels of service of parks and open space. To do this, a total of 21 distinct “planning areas” were identified within the City of Topeka and the immediate surrounding area. Those areas located outside the corporate limits of the city of Topeka mirror those areas planned for future population and employment growth as identified within the proposed Future Land Use and Growth Management Plan.

To the greatest extent possible, each planning area was determined based on natural barriers, such as creeks and rivers, and man-made barriers such as major arterials roads and highways. Each area represents a reasonable expectation of “community boundaries” and largely reflects the service areas of existing recreation “Community Centers,” such as Shawnee County North Community Center, Rice Park, Garfield Park, and Hillcrest Park.

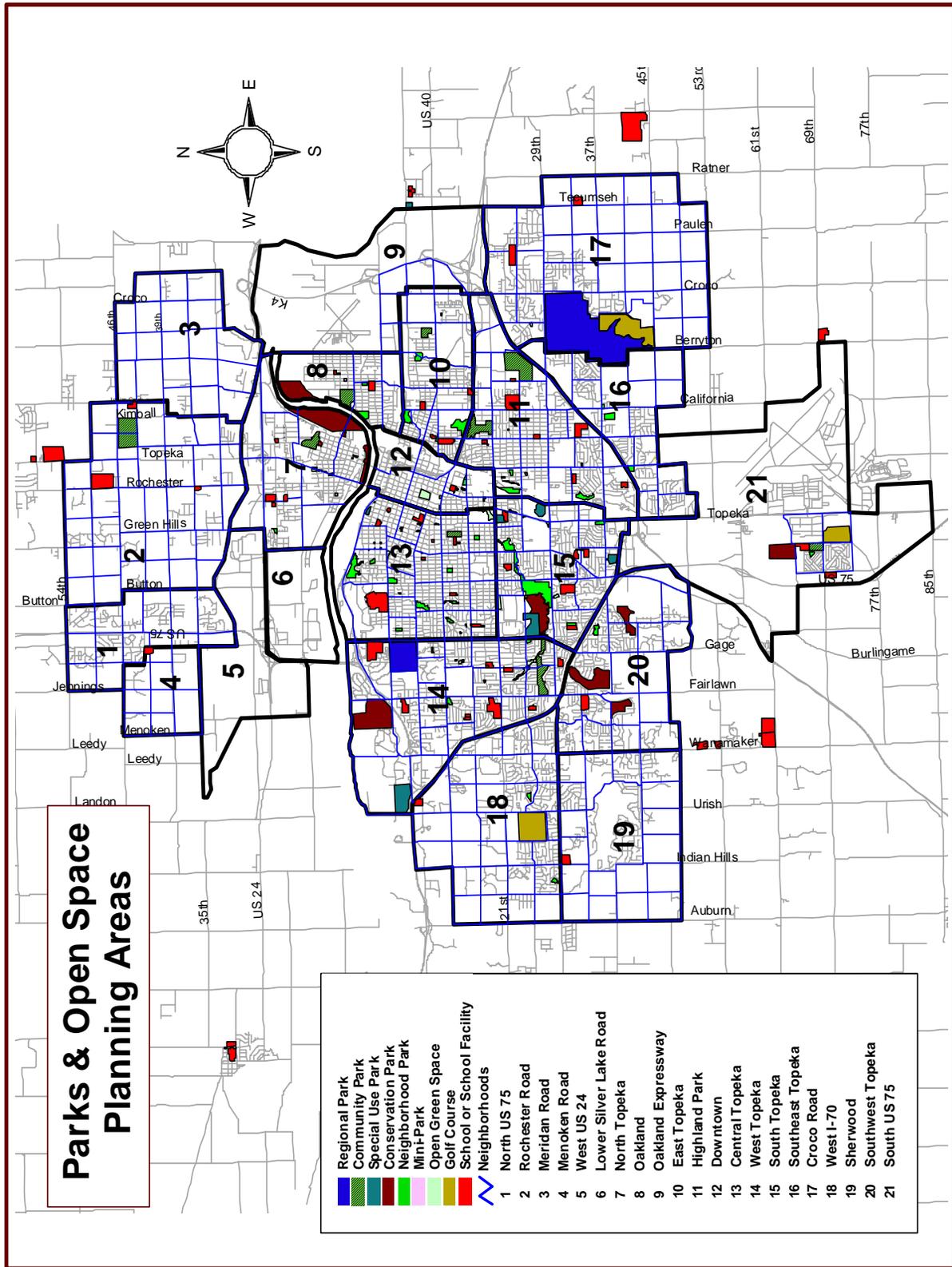
In addition to identifying individual communities, or planning areas, the analysis of service levels further identified individual neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is based on a reasonable 5-minute walking distance to a neighborhood park. As is plainly visible on the following map, each neighborhood largely follows Section and Quarter-Section lines or other physical boundaries.

To perform the analysis, each park and identified open space within each planning area was assigned a specific classification. A total of eight (8) classifications were determined based on the intended use and function of each park or open space. The classifications are as follows:

- 1) Regional Park
- 2) Community Park
- 3) Special Use Park
- 4) Conservation Park
- 5) Neighborhood Park
- 6) Mini-Park
- 7) Open Space/Greenway
- 8) Golf Course

**Figure 2** outlines each planning area and neighborhood boundary. **Table 1** provides a detailed breakdown of each planning area, its population, and acreage of parks by major category. This table is followed by a detailed description of the levels of service for parks and open space for each planning area.

Figure 2



**Table 1**

**Parks & Open Space Summary Table - Acres**

Planning Area	Population	Regional		Community		Special Use		Conservation		Neighborhood	
		Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000
1 North US 75	2,240	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2 Rochester Road	4,082	0.00	0.00	115.00	28.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Meridan Road	1,578	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4 Menoken Road	435	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
*5 West US 24	262	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
*6 Lower Silver Lake Road	216	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
7 North Topeka	6,237	0.00	0.00	23.70	3.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.20	0.51
8 Oakland	6,243	0.00	0.00	51.30	8.22	0.00	0.00	100.40	16.08	18.70	3.00
*9 Oakland Expressway	360	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.14	22.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
10 East Topeka	7,252	0.00	0.00	16.53	2.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	68.43	9.44
11 Highland Park	14,990	0.00	0.00	137.90	9.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.05	1.60
12 Downtown	2,988	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.80	1.61
13 Central Topeka	26,926	0.00	0.00	16.30	0.61	5.30	0.20	0.00	0.00	67.60	2.51
14 West Topeka	16,838	160.00	9.50	65.00	3.86	81.43	4.84	176.60	10.49	9.20	0.55
15 South Topeka	15,468	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.6.50	7.53	102.66	6.64	131.80	8.52
16 Southeast Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23.10	4.15
17 Croco Road	6,073	766.86	126.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
18 West I-70	10,599	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.15	0.86
19 Sherwood	5,595	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
20 Southwest Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	190.63	34.27	8.70	1.56
*21 South US-75	6,073	0.00	0.00	64.50	10.62	0.00	0.00	75.03	12.35	2.65	0.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>145,581</b>	<b>926.86</b>	<b>6.37</b>	<b>490.23</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>211.37</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>645.32</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>371.38</b>	<b>2.55</b>
<b>NRPA Recommendation</b>		<b>2183.72</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>727.91</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>727.91</b>	<b>5.00</b>

Planning Area	Population	Mini		Open Space		Public Golf Course		Total		Percent Parks
		Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	
1 North US 75	2,240	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
2 Rochester Road	4,082	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	115.00	28.17	1.9%
3 Meridan Road	1,578	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
4 Menoken Road	435	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
*5 West US 24	262	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
*6 Lower Silver Lake Road	216	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
7 North Topeka	6,237	0.80	0.13	9.87	1.58	0.00	0.00	37.57	6.02	1.1%
8 Oakland	6,243	1.90	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	172.30	27.60	11.8%
*9 Oakland Expressway	360	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.14	22.61	0.0%
10 East Topeka	7,252	1.80	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	86.76	11.96	3.8%
11 Highland Park	14,990	4.30	0.29	2.97	0.20	0.00	0.00	169.22	11.29	4.2%
12 Downtown	2,988	1.90	0.64	18.35	6.14	0.00	0.00	25.05	8.38	1.8%
13 Central Topeka	26,926	1.35	0.05	19.60	0.73	0.00	0.00	110.15	4.09	2.5%
14 West Topeka	16,838	0.65	0.04	18.90	1.12	0.00	0.00	511.78	30.39	9.7%
15 South Topeka	15,468	0.00	0.00	10.25	0.66	0.00	0.00	361.21	23.35	11.4%
16 Southeast Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23.10	4.15	0.3%
17 Croco Road	6,073	0.30	0.05	0.00	0.00	244.00	40.18	1,011.16	166.50	20.5%
18 West I-70	10,599	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	160.41	15.13	169.56	16.00	4.1%
19 Sherwood	5,595	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.0%
20 Southwest Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	199.33	35.83	7.2%
*21 South US-75	6,073	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	76.07	12.53	218.25	35.94	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>145,581</b>	<b>13.00</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>79.94</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>480.48</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3,218.58</b>	<b>22.11</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>NRPA Recommendation</b>		<b>291.16</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable</b>	

\*These planning areas are projected for future employment growth, as opposed to additional residential growth. Therefore, additional park space is not forecast for these areas.

**Planning Area Health Assessment** – In order to gauge the overall need for parks and open spaces within the City of Topeka and its surrounding areas must be determined relative to all other areas so that priority areas can be recognized and planned for. This plan borrows a system by which the overall health of specified areas is judged according to a common set of criteria. Once this “health assessment” is completed, then those areas with the greatest need can be easily identified, and policies and remedies can be planned for and budgeted. This health assessment can also be used as a benchmark to track progress toward alleviating those measures of ill-health that have been identified.

This health assessment **DOES NOT** make any judgments regarding the quality of existing parks, and is **NOT** meant to serve as a tool to guide budget expenditures.

For the purposes of this plan, the health assessment has been determined based on a set of four separate categories of information listed below.

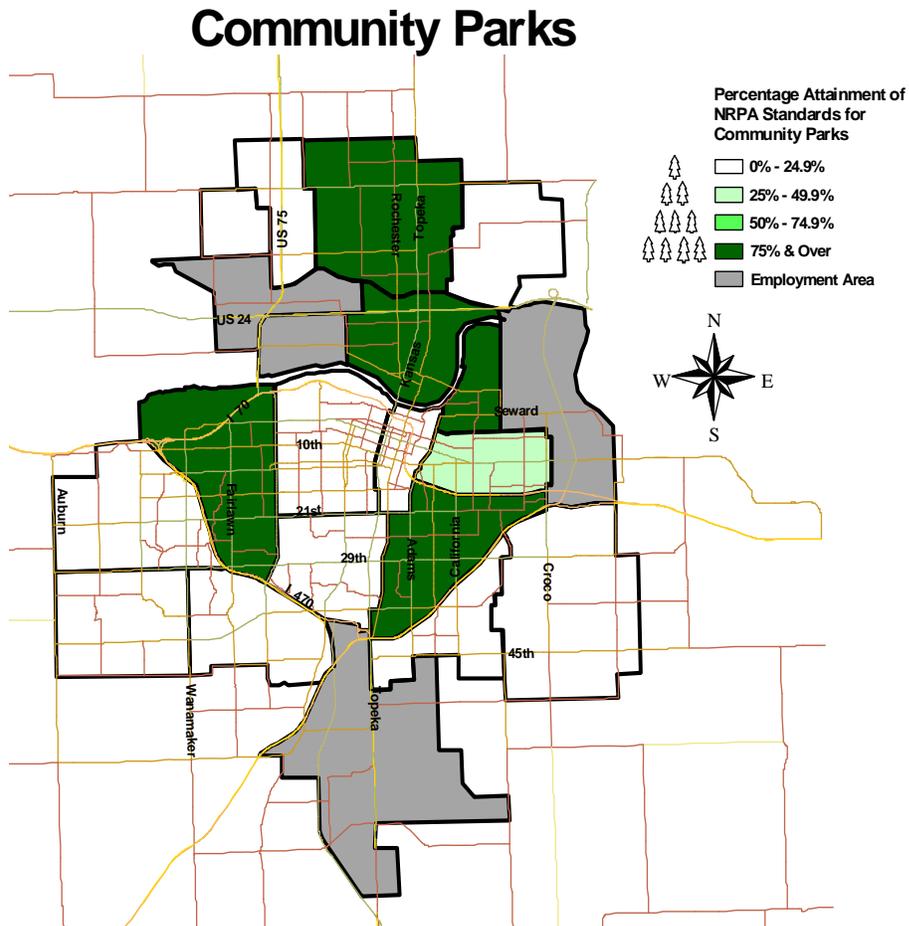
**Health Categories –**

- 1)  **Four Trees (Healthy)** – This category is intended to denote those planning areas that exhibit most or all of the characteristics that make a neighborhood “park friendly.” Healthy neighborhoods meet the minimum recommendation of the National Recreation and Parks Administrators (NRPA) for community and neighborhood parks per 1,000 persons; offer a neighborhood or community-level park within ¼ mile of 78% of all homes within the planning area; and have a minimum of 10% of all land within the planning area devoted to parks or open space.
- 2)  **Three Trees (Out-Patient)** – This category is reserved for those planning areas with significant resources in terms of parks and open spaces, but could use some improvement. These planning areas meet between 67% and 99% of NRPA recommendations for community and neighborhood-level parks per 1,000 persons; provide a neighborhood or community-level park within ¼ mile of 52% to 77% of all homes within the planning area; and have between 7% and 9.9% of all land within each planning area devoted to parks and open space.
- 3)  **Two Trees (At Risk)** – At-risk planning areas need improvement in all aspects of the provision of parks and open space. These planning areas meet between 34 and 66% of NRPA recommendations for the provision of neighborhood and community-level parks per 1,000 persons. These planning areas also provide community or neighborhood level park space within a ¼ mile radius to fewer than 51% of all homes. Lastly, these planning areas contain between 4.5% and 6.9% of all land within their boundaries dedicated as parks or open space.
- 4)  **One Tree (Intensive Care)** – This category denotes those planning areas that offer little, if any, resources for public parks and open spaces. These planning areas meet less than 33% of NRPA recommendations for the provision of neighborhood and community-level parks per 1,000 persons. These planning areas also provide community or neighborhood level park space within a ¼ mile radius to fewer than 25% of all homes, and contain less than 4.4% of all land area dedicated as park or open space.

**Assessment Criteria:**

1) **Community Parks** – The first measure of health for parks and open spaces is the percentage attainment of NRPA recommendation for community parks. The NRPA recommendation for community-level parks is 5 acres per 1,000 persons. Only four planning areas meet this standard (Rochester Road at 563% of NRPA recommendation, Highland Park at 184%, Oakland at 164%, and South US-75 at 212%). Rochester Road contains the Shawnee County North Community Center, a 115-acre complex offering multiple recreational opportunities. Highland Park boasts nearly 138 acres of community-level parks divided between Hillcrest and Dornwood Parks, while Oakland offers the Oakland-Billard Park at 51.3 acres. Although the South US-75 planning area is regarded by this document as a future employment zone, it none-the-less contains the Montara neighborhood and the Velma K. Paris Community Center at 64.5 acres. All of these planning areas have sizeable community-level parks coupled with relatively small populations, making the ratio of park-space to persons served higher than minimum recommended standards.

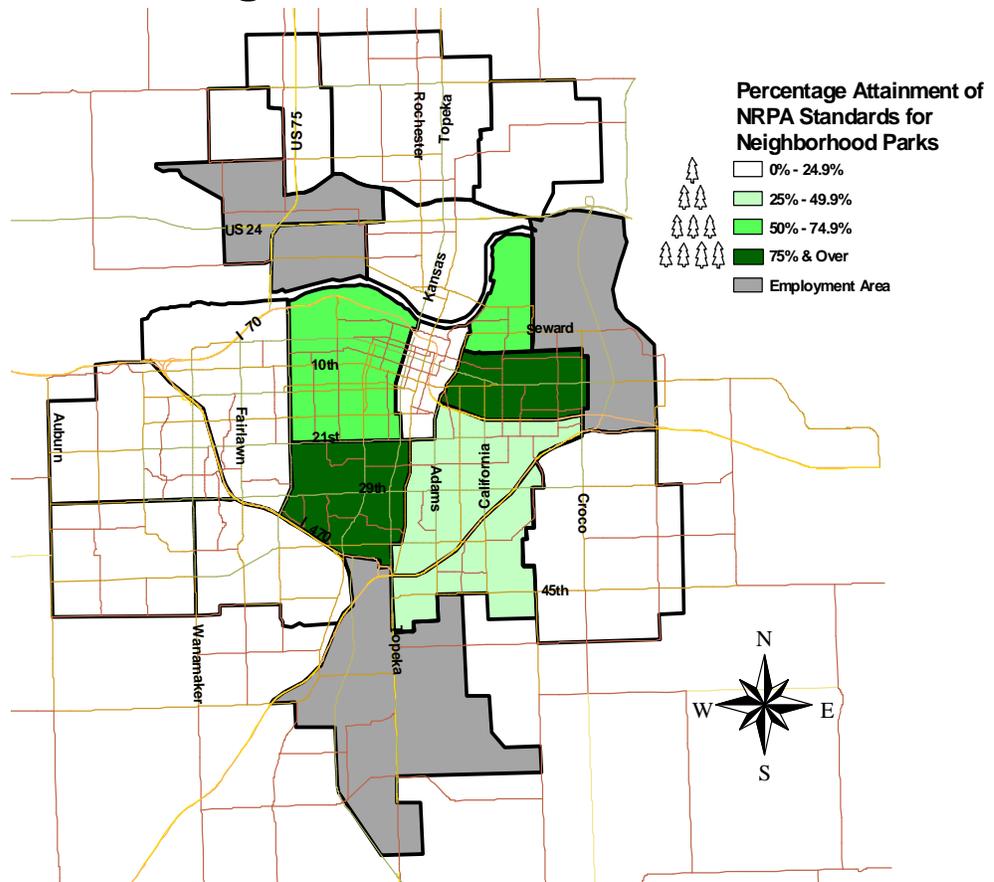
Three additional planning areas offer some community-level park space, but do not meet minimum NRPA standards. These three are North Topeka (76%), Central Topeka (12%), East Topeka (46%) and West Topeka (77%). Most (14) of the studied planning areas, however, have no community-level parks. Full details for community parks and NRPA standards are listed in the composite rankings table on page 30.



2) **Neighborhood Parks** – The second measure of health is the percentage attainment of NRPA recommendation for neighborhood parks. Like the preceding criteria, the NRPA recommendation for neighborhood-level parks is 5 acres per 1,000 persons. Only two of the planning areas studied meet this standard. East Topeka contains approximately 52 acres of neighborhood parks for a ratio of 9.44 ac/1,000 persons, or 189% of NRPA recommendations. Most of this park space is contained within either Freedom Valley Park (31.8 ac) or Ripley Park (13 ac). South Topeka offers nearly 132 acres of neighborhood park space, for a total of 8.52 ac/1,000 persons, or 170% of NRPA recommendations. This planning area contains a substantial portion of the Shunganunga Trail system and the series of neighborhood parks that lie along the trail.

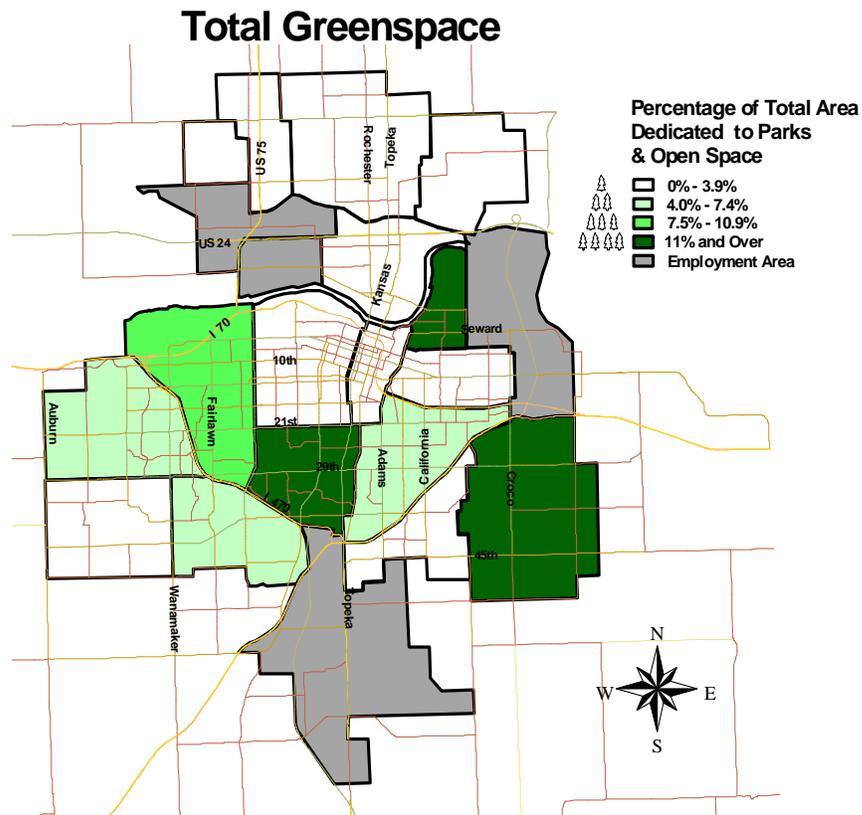
There are 11 additional planning areas that offer limited neighborhood park space. A credit of five acres of neighborhood park space has been added to those planning areas with community-level parks in order to recognize the potential neighborhood-park function of community parks to the immediate surrounding neighborhood. Five planning areas, predominately suburban in nature and outside the current Topeka corporate limits, have no neighborhood park space. Full details for neighborhood parks and NRPA standards are listed in the composite rankings table on page 30.

## Neighborhood Parks



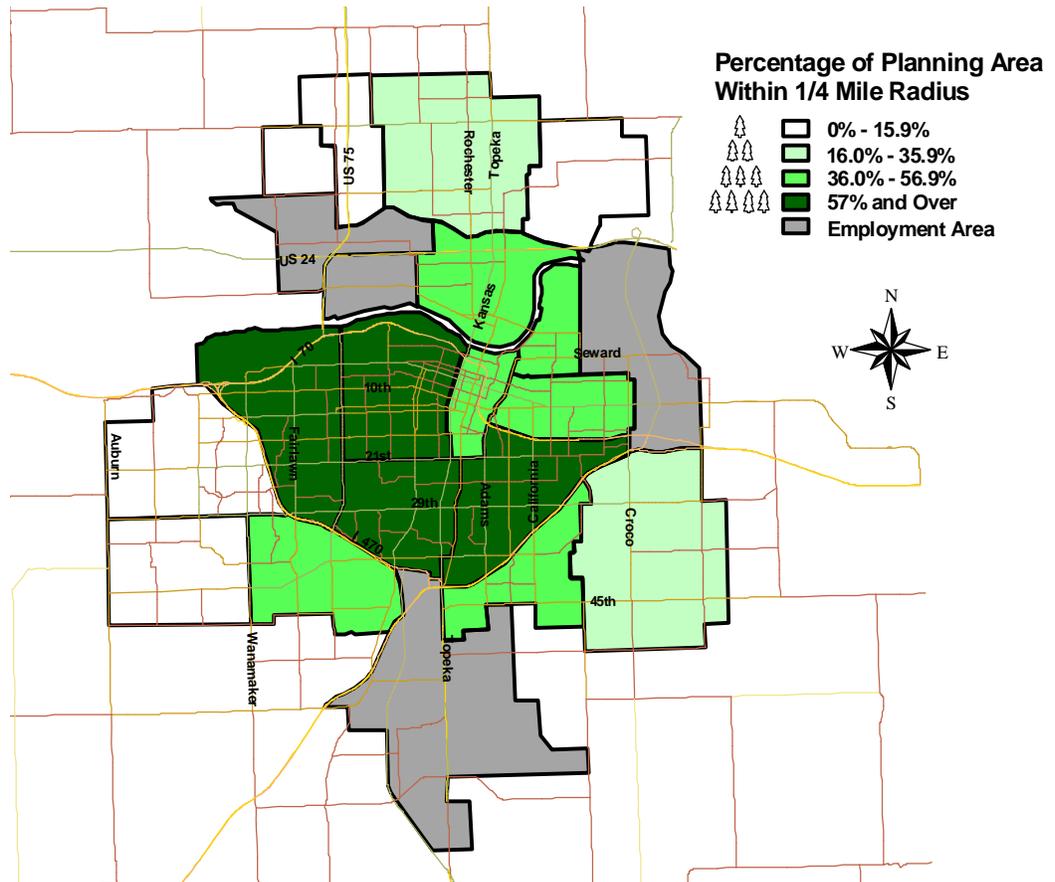
3) **Percent of Planning Areas Dedicated to Public Greenspace** – Approximately two-thirds (2/3<sup>rd</sup>s) of a quarter-section of land (160 acres) is typically devoted to actual building space. The remaining acreage is reserved for all necessary roads, easements, utilities, and park space. The typical quarter-section of land, developed at urban densities of 3 units per acre contains approximately 1,000 persons, meaning that a minimum of 12 acres should be reserved for park space, including 5-acres for community parks, 5-acres for neighborhood parks, and 2-acres for mini-parks. At a minimum, these types of parks should equate to 7.5% of the entire acreage of the section at large. Where available and appropriate, additional acreage should be reserved for trails, regional and conservation parks, special use parks, and historical or heritage sites. For the purposes of this study, those planning areas with less than 7.5% dedicated parks and open space are deemed either **at-risk** or **intensive care**, while those planning areas meeting this threshold were deemed **out-patient** or **healthy**.

Most planning areas offer at least some park space, but only three meet this 7.5% threshold. The Berryton planning area offers the greatest percentage of total acreage in the form of dedicated park or open space, at 20.5%. This planning area contains Lake Shawnee and the Lake Shawnee Public Golf Course. While the total acreage of these facilities is sizeable, they are the only publicly dedicated parks within this planning area. The second greatest percentage of dedicated park and open space lies in the South Topeka planning area at 11.4%. This area contains an extensive linear park and trail system along the Shunganunga Creek. Thirdly is the West Topeka planning area. Approximately 9.7% of the total acreage of this planning area is dedicated in parks and open space. This planning area contains both Gage Park and McClellan State Park adjacent to the Cedar Crest Governor’s Mansion. Full details for the percentage of dedicated park space within each planning area are listed in the composite rankings table on page 30.



- 4) **Percent of planning areas within 1/4 mile of parks, trails, school playgrounds, or open space** - Several of the planning areas in and around the greater Topeka area meet minimum acreage guidelines suggested by the NRPA for the provision of community and neighborhood-level parks. However, acreage alone does not indicate whether or not the park space is accessible or convenient to neighborhood residents. In order for park space to be useable, it must be near-by, preferably within a 5-minute walk of any residence within the planning area. A quarter-mile distance is generally reflective of a 5-minute walk. Planning areas that offer a park, trail, or school within a 1/4 mile radius of 57% or more of all homes are deemed **healthy**.

### 1/4 Mile Radius to Public Park, School, or Trail

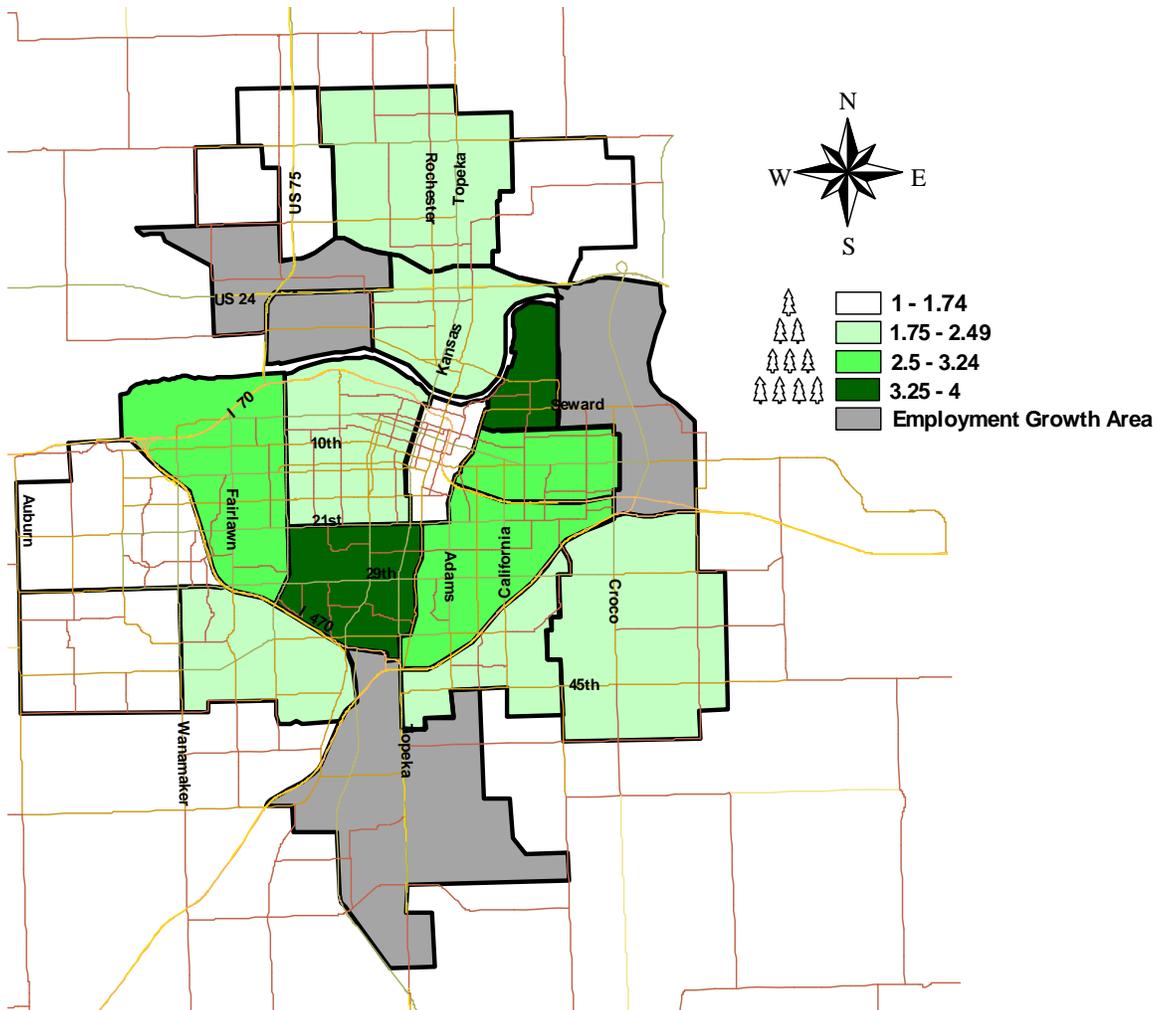


5) **Composite Health Rating** – The following map depicts a composite rating of each of the planning areas identified and studied in this document. Each of the preceding criteria has been assigned four rating levels with a corresponding point value for each level (1. intensive care; 2. outpatient; 3. at risk; and 4. healthy). The individual ratings for each planning area were then averaged to produce an overall health rating. These ratings are classified as follows:

- Healthy** (3.25 – 4.0) – optimal condition
- Out-patient** (2.5 – 3.24) - favorable condition
- At Risk** (1.75 – 2.49) – emerging negative conditions
- Intensive Care** (1.0-1.74) – seriously underserved

Two planning areas emerged from this assessment with a “healthy” rating (Oakland and South Topeka). Not surprisingly, those planning areas around the perimeter of the study area produced overall health assessments with the lowest scores, indicating that community and neighborhood parks are in short supply, are generally not accessible to area residents, and very little of the total acreage of the planning area is dedicated or reserved for parks and open spaces.

### Composite Parks & Open Spaces Health Assessment



## Composite Health Ratings

Planning Area	Community Parks - % of NRPA		N'hood Parks - % of NRPA		Percent of Planning Area in Parks & Open Space		Percent w/in 1/4 Mile of Park or School		Comp. Rating
	Recom.	Health Rating	Recom.*	Health Rating	Health Rating	Health Rating	Health Rating	Health Rating	
1 North US 75	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	5.67%	1	1.00
2 Rochester Road	563.45%	4	4.17%	1	1.89%	1	17.39%	2	2.00
3 Meridan Road	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	2.35%	1	1.00
4 Menoken Road	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	6.77%	1	1.00
5 West US 24	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	1.00
6 Lower Silver Lake Road	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	1.00
7 North Topeka	76.00%	4	22.66%	1	1.14%	1	43.67%	3	2.25
8 Oakland	164.34%	4	72.92%	3	11.80%	4	48.90%	3	3.50
9 Oakland Expressway	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	1.70%	1	1.00
10 East Topeka	45.60%	2	183.58%	4	3.83%	1	56.13%	3	2.50
11 Highland Park	183.99%	4	36.31%	2	4.24%	2	70.08%	4	3.00
12 Downtown	0.00%	1	16.00%	1	1.81%	1	54.09%	3	1.50
13 Central Topeka	12.11%	1	51.86%	3	2.55%	1	83.10%	4	2.25
14 West Topeka	77.21%	4	14.20%	1	9.70%	3	69.90%	4	3.00
15 South Topeka	0.00%	1	155.06%	4	11.36%	4	75.68%	4	3.25
16 Southeast Topeka	0.00%	1	30.80%	2	0.27%	1	45.49%	3	1.75
17 Croco Road	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	20.52%	4	31.16%	2	2.00
18 West I-70	0.00%	1	9.15%	1	4.07%	2	8.67%	1	1.25
19 Sherwood	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	1	3.94%	1	1.00
20 Southwest Topeka	0.00%	1	19.33%	1	7.23%	2	41.54%	3	1.75
21 South US-75	212.42%	4	21.86%	1	3.00%	1	11.96%	1	1.75
Total	42.39%		35.57%		4.15%		32.02%		

Shaded rows indicate future employment areas.

\* 5 acres of neighborhood-level park space has been credited for those areas with a community-level park.

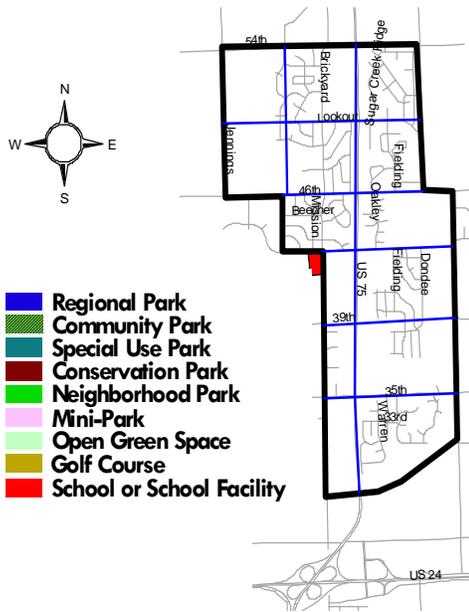
## Planning Area Analyses –

The following section details each planning area identified in Figure 2, and identifies the total acreage and classifications of parks and open space that can be found within each planning area. In this analysis, it is understood that each park can serve more than one purpose, and can be accessed by more than one planning area. For example, Gage Park is classified as a regional park within the West Topeka planning area. Gage Park is equipped with a multitude of services and features that make it a destination for recreation and enjoyment across the Shawnee County area. This park, however, also fulfills a neighborhood function because of its easy walking distance from many neighborhoods within the Central Topeka and West Topeka planning areas. For this reason, 5 acres of neighborhood park space has been added to those planning areas where community or regional parks are also present.

The identification of planning areas and parks classifications should only serve as a guide to help understand the current levels of service provided within various areas of the city and county. It should be anticipated that some degree of overlap in terms of service areas and classifications will occur in this discussion.

It should also be noted that this discussion considers mainly those areas planned for future population growth, as opposed to employment growth. Areas 5, 6, 9, and 21 are anticipated to accommodate the majority of future employment growth in Shawnee County, and as such, will not be centers for added population growth. Given this assumption, this discussion does not propose new community, neighborhood, or mini-park space for these areas, but does recommend the provision of open green-spaces to serve as buffers, and quality-of-life enhancements.

**Planning Area 1: North US Highway 75 –**

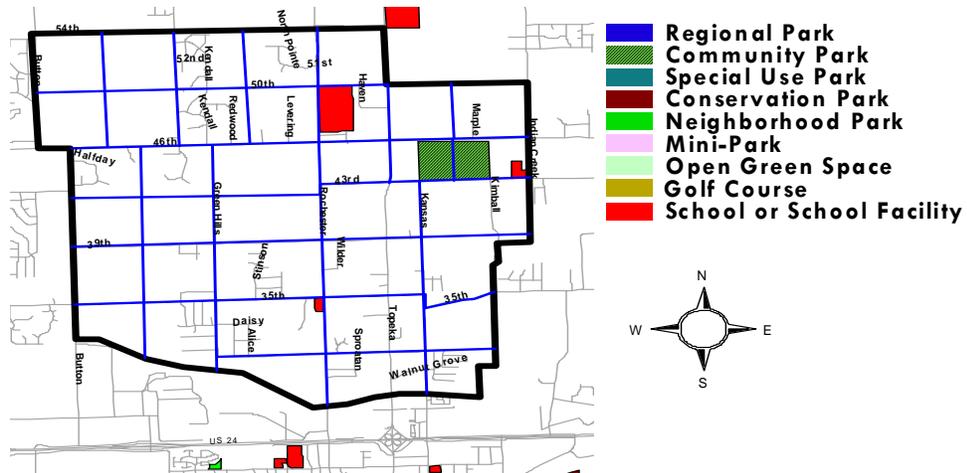


Planning Area 1 lies within Unincorporated Shawnee County, and is generally bounded by N. 54<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, NW Jennings Road and NW Brickyard Road on the west, NW Button Road on the east, and Soldier Creek on the south. This area is generally urbanized with a population of 2,240 according to the 2000 Census. However, if growth continues at similar densities in the future, the population could be expected to triple within the next 20 to 30 years. Although this area currently lacks any community or neighborhood park, mini-park, or general open space approximately 5.7% of the total land area lies within ¼ mile of an elementary school with a useable playground.

<b>Planning Area: N US 75</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	2,300		-	-
Population	2,240		10,719	8,479
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.63		3.00	-
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	0	-11	53.60	53.60
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-11	53.60	53.60
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-4	21.44	21.44

**Planning Area 2: N. Rochester Road** – Planning Area 2 also lies within Unincorporated Shawnee County, and is recognized within the draft Future Land Use and Growth Management Plan as a future population growth area. The area is bounded generally by N. 54<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Soldier Creek to the South, Button Road on the West, and NE Indian Creek Road on the East. Development of the area is occurring at urban densities, although most of the area remains, as yet, undeveloped. This area contains the Shawnee County North Community Center, which is a 115 acre community park. The park also serves a neighborhood function for those areas immediately surrounding the park. In addition, the park contains several softball diamonds which host league play, thus accommodating a special use purpose. Approximately 10% of the total acreage of the planning area lies within ¼ mile of a park or school.

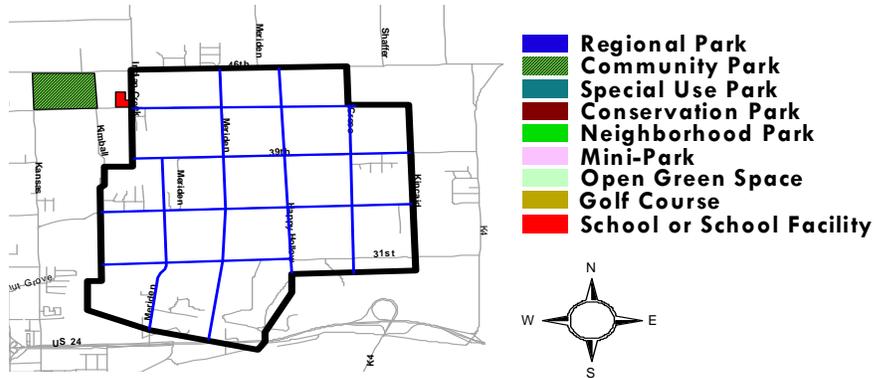
The population of this area stood at 4,082 according to the 2000 Census. Continued growth at urban densities, however, would raise this population figure to slightly more than 24,000 persons over the next 30 years.



<b>Planning Area: Rochester Road</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	6,103		6,103	-
Population	4,082		28,443	24,361
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.45		3.00	-
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	0	-20	142.22	142.22
Community Parks (Acres)	115	95	142.22	27.22
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-8	56.89	56.89

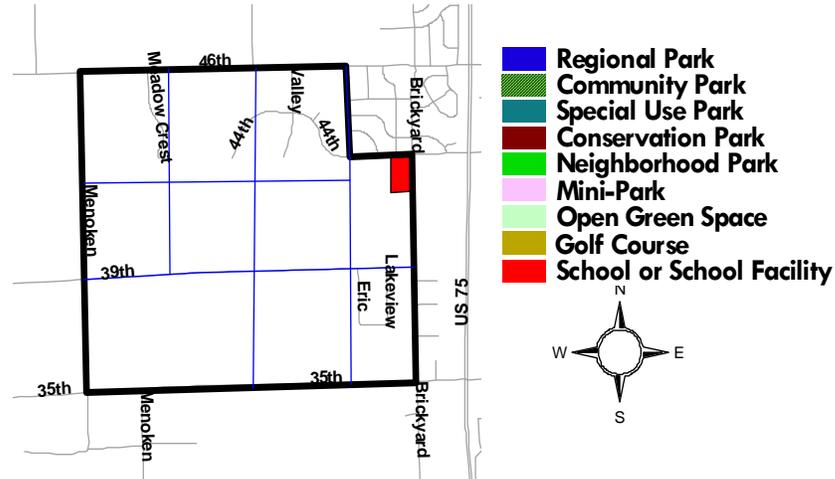
**Planning Area 3: N.E. Meriden Road** – Planning Area 3 lies to the northeast of the City of Topeka in Unincorporated Shawnee County. This area is approximately 5.4 square miles in size and is largely undeveloped. The population of this area according to the 2000 Census was 1,578. Expected population growth in this area could reach as high as 4,822 over the next 30 years.

This area is not currently served by any public park or open space, although the Shawnee County North Community Center lies just west of the area boundaries along NW 54<sup>th</sup> Street. Since this area is not expected to reach high population densities, it is doubtful that this area would require community level park space in the near future. Only 2.4% of the total acreage of this planning area lies within ¼ mile of a park or school.



Planning Area: Meriden Road	Existing Conditions	Existing Surplus/ Deficiency	Projected 2030	Balance Need
Area (Acres)	3,434		-	-
Population	1,578		5,335	3,757
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.30		1.00	-
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	0	-8	26.67	26.67
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-8	26.67	26.67
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-3	10.67	10.67

**Planning Area 4: Menoken Road** – This Planning Area lies just northwest of the corporate limits of the City of Topeka. The area is bounded by NW 46<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, NW 35<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, NW Menoken Road on the west, and NW Brickyard on the east. The area had a population in 2000 of 435 persons, although it is forecast to increase to nearly 8,000 persons over the next 30 years. Although this planning area does not contain any dedicated parks or open space, approximately 6.8% of the total planning area lies within ¼ mile of a school with useable playground.



<b>Planning Area: Menoken Road</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/ Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	1,296		-	-
Population	435		6,040	5,605
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.22		3.00	-
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	0	-2	30.20	30.20
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-2	30.20	30.20
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-1	12.08	12.08

**(Planning Areas 5 and 6 omitted due to their planned nature as employment growth areas vs. residential growth areas.)**

**Planning Area 7: North Topeka** – The North Topeka planning area covers a wide variety of residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed use neighborhoods. The area is bounded generally by Soldier Creek on the north, the Kansas River on the south and east, and NW Vail Road on the west. The population of the area was reported at 6,237 according to the 2000 Census. It is estimated that the area could absorb an additional 1,000 new residents over the next two to three decades.

Residents of this planning area are served primarily by Garfield Park, which is a community-level park, consisting of 23.7 acres. This park also doubles as a neighborhood park for those neighborhoods lying east of N. Topeka Boulevard. Meadowood Park is a secondary neighborhood park associated with the Meadowood Mobile Home Park on NW Lyman Road. An additional mini-park (McKinley Park) is located on NW Gordon Street, west of N. Topeka Boulevard.

North Topeka also boasts the Charles Curtis Greenway, named after the Topeka native and US Vice President. The greenway is approximately 10 acres and lies along either side of N. Topeka Boulevard from Gordon Street to the south branch of Soldier Creek. Additional open space (Veteran’s Park) lies at the base of the Kansas Avenue Bridge.

As a community-level park, Garfield Park, at 23.7 acres, is nearly adequate to serve the existing population of approximately 6,200 residents within the planning area. However, this area is significantly short of other neighborhood, and mini-park space. Nearly ½ (49.3%) of this planning area lies within ¼ mile of a public park or school.



Much attention has been given in recent years to the possibility of creating a river-front park on the north bank of the Kansas River. The city of Topeka currently owns 206 acres of land within the Kansas River levee that could

be developed as regional, community, or neighborhood park space. Since this land is currently undeveloped, it is counted as Conservation Park space for the purposes of this plan.

<b>Planning Area: North Topeka</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	3,310		3,310	-
Population	6,237		7,326	1,089
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.28		1.50	0.22
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	3.2	-28	36.63	33.43
Community Parks (Acres)	23.7	-7	36.63	12.93
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	10.67	-2	14.65	3.98

**Planning Area 8: Oakland** – The Oakland planning area is one of the most geographically isolated areas within the city of Topeka. The area is bounded on three sides (north, east, and west) by the Kansas River, and on the south by the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe railroad yards.



Oakland is served with a 51-acre community-level park, which is more than adequate to serve an estimated population of 6,243. However, neighborhood park space is lacking, with only 3 acres per 1,000 people (18.7 acres total). NRPA standards recommend of 5 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 people. Approximately 28% of the total acreage of this planning area lies within ¼ mile of a park or school. This percentage is substantially greater if Phillip-Billard Airport is excluded from the acreage for this planning area.

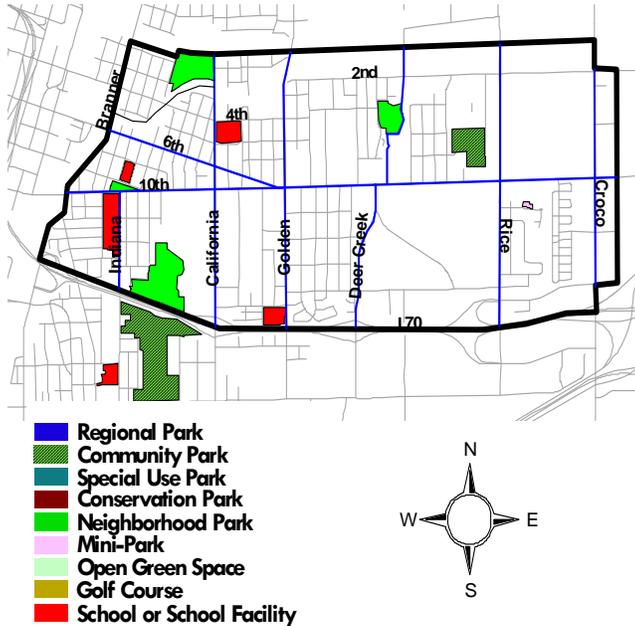
Neighborhood parks are fairly evenly distributed geographically, with only the neighborhood lying in the extreme southwest corner of the planning area absent any park space. The other neighborhoods lying to the south of Seward Avenue (delineated by the blue lines in the map at left) are industrial areas with low population densities.

There are approximately 100 acres of additional park space area owned by the City of Topeka, lying along the Kansas River at the north end of the Planning Area, and accessible at the north end of NE Chester Avenue. This area is open to the public for off-road and all-terrain vehicles. It is, is undeveloped and is listed as Conservation Park Space in this plan.

Planning Area: Oakland	Existing Conditions	Existing	Projected 2030	Balance Need
		Surplus/Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	1,460		1,460	-
Population	6,243		6,247	4
Housing Density (units per acre)	2.90		2.90	0.00
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	18.7	-13	31.2	12.5
Community Parks (Acres)	51.3	20	31.2	-20.1
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	1.9	-11	12.5	10.6

**(Planning Area 9 is omitted due to its planned nature as an employment growth area vs. residential growth area.)**

**Planning Area 10: East Topeka** – East Topeka is arguably the most isolated area in the City of Topeka. The area is bordered on the west and north by the Shunganunga Creek, on the South by I-70, and on the west by Croco Road. The physical barriers created by the Creek and I-70 greatly limit the access, particularly pedestrian access, into and out of the area. The area also possesses the lowest income levels of any portion of the City, a factor that further limits the mobility of area residents. Because of this limited mobility, particularly among children who are dependent on walking or bicycling for transportation, the provision of parks within the planning area is of heightened importance.

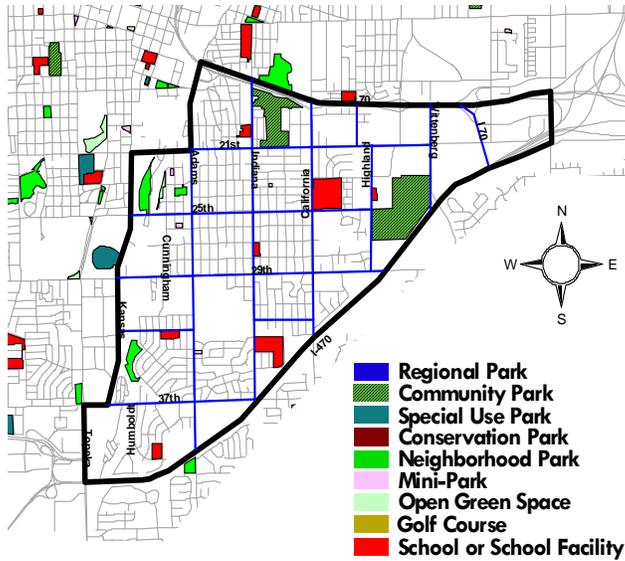


The area boasts two separate Community Centers to serve the area’s 7,252 residents. The Abbott Community Center is located adjacent to Samuel C. Jackson Park, a 3.6 acre neighborhood park, located at the convergence of SE 8<sup>th</sup> and SE 10<sup>th</sup> Streets. Rice Community Center is located in Rice Park, which is approximately 16 acres and located one block north and west of SE 6<sup>th</sup> Street and SE Rice Road. For the purposes of this Plan, Rice Park is considered to be a Community-level park. Although Jackson Park also contains a community center, it is difficult to classify this park as true “community” park because of its limited size. Rather, this plan considers it to be a neighborhood-level park with a community recreation center.

There are three additional neighborhood parks in East Topeka (Ripley, Eastboro, and Freedom Valley), each serving individual neighborhoods within the planning area. The Eastgate community, which is at the southeast corner of SE 6<sup>th</sup> Street and SE Rice Road, is also provided with a 1.8 acre mini-park (Eastgate Park). Slightly more than ½ of this planning area (56.1%) lies within ¼ mile of a public park or school.

Planning Area: East Topeka	Existing		Projected 2030	Balance Need
	Existing Conditions	Surplus/ Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	2,269		2,269	-
Population	7,252		8,370	1,118
Housing Density (units per acre)	2.17		2.50	0.33
Neighborhood Parks(Acres)	52.43	16	41.85	(10.58)
Community Parks (Acres)	16	-20	41.85	25.85
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	1.8	-13	16.74	14.94

**Planning Area 11: Highland Park** – The Highland Park planning area is equipped with a wide variety of parks and open space opportunities for area residents. The area is bounded generally by Kansas Avenue on the west, I-470 on the south and east, and I-70 on the north. The population according to the 2000 Census is approximately 14,990.



Total parks and open space acreage in Highland Park amounts to approximately 295 acres, although 126 acres is consumed by the Shawnee Country Club and is not accessible for public use. Minus this acreage, however, there is approximately 169.22 acres of public parks and open space remaining. The vast majority of this space (138 acres) can be found within two principle parks – Hillcrest and Dornwood. Both of these parks are considered to be Community-level parks, although they both additionally serve neighborhood and conservation park functions.

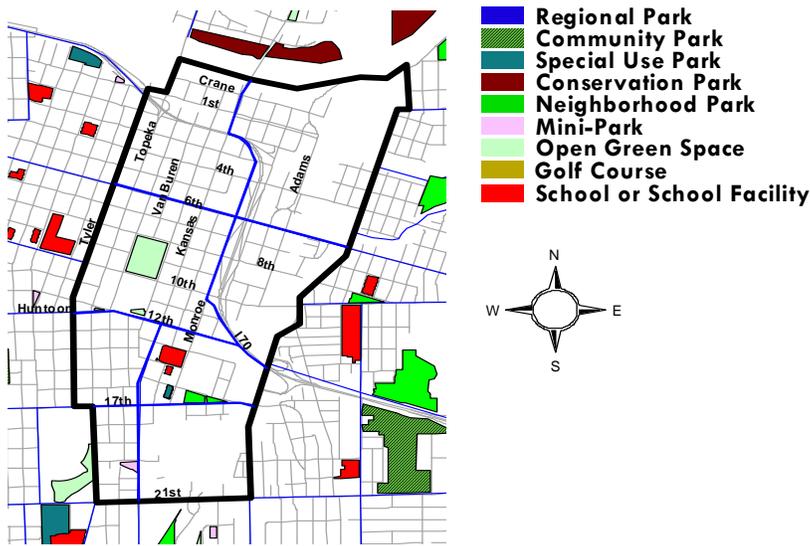
There are three neighborhood parks within the Highland Park planning area that, combined, provide approximately 24 acres of park space (Highland Crest, Lakewood, and Austin Parks). There are also three mini-parks (Jayhawk, Bently, and Adams Parks) which collectively comprise 4.3 acres of neighborhood playground park space.

Lakewood, and Austin Parks). There are also three mini-parks (Jayhawk, Bently, and Adams Parks) which collectively comprise 4.3 acres of neighborhood playground park space.

<b>Planning Area: Highland Park</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/ Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	3,997		3,997	-
Population	14,990		16,218	1,228
Housing Density (units per acre)	2.54		2.75	0.21
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	24	-51	81.09	57.09
Community Parks (Acres)	138	63	81.09	(56.91)
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	7.27	-23	32.44	25.17

**Planning Area 12: Downtown** – This planning area encompasses the central business district (CBD), several residential neighborhoods, and several industrial areas that lie to the north and east of the CBD. Although the permanent resident population of the area is fairly low (2,988), the daytime working population is substantial at over 30,000 people. This is by far the densest population area in the City of Topeka during daytime hours.

Downtown is served by only a few areas of open green-space for the benefit of the permanent and daytime populations. Included in this inventory is the State Capitol Building, which provides 15 acres of passive green-space. There are only a few other alternatives for people to enjoy open space. Sertoma Park (1 acre) is located on the southern edge of the State Judicial Building, while Huntoon Park offers only ¼ acre of green space at the intersection of SW Topeka Blvd., SW 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and SW Huntoon Street.

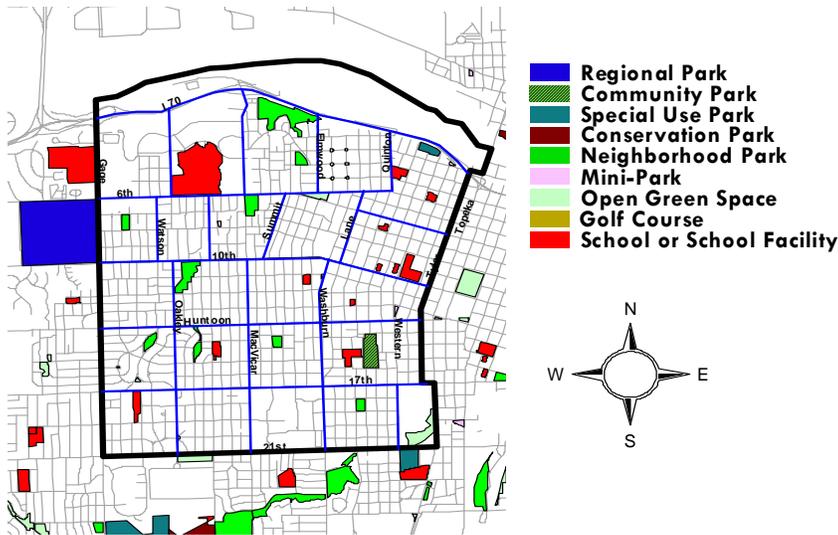


Recently completed is a special use park at the site of the former Monroe Elementary School. This site is owned and operated by the National Parks Service as a National Historic Site, commemorating the Brown V. Board of Education desegregation decision. Lying just to the east of this site is Cushinberry Park (4.8 acres), which is classified as a neighborhood park.

<b>Planning Area: Downtown</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	1,382		1,382	-
Population	2,988		4,588	1,600
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.47		2.25	0.78
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	4.8	-10	22.94	18.14
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-15	22.94	22.94
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	20.25	14	9.18	(11.07)

**Planning Area 13: Central Topeka** – The Central Topeka planning area offers a number of neighborhood and community parks, mini-parks, and green spaces that are unique assets to the area. Collectively, Central Topeka offers a total of 110 acres of all types of parks and open spaces. These parks serve a population of 26,926, which is the densest population of all planning areas considered in this plan.

Central Topeka is served by the 16.3 acre Central Park Community Center. This park functions very well at the neighborhood level, providing playgrounds, open fields and picnic areas, as well as scenic passive recreational areas within easy walking distance of the surrounding neighborhood. If, however, Central Park is considered a community-level park, it would be considered undersized (0.61 acres per 1,000 persons).



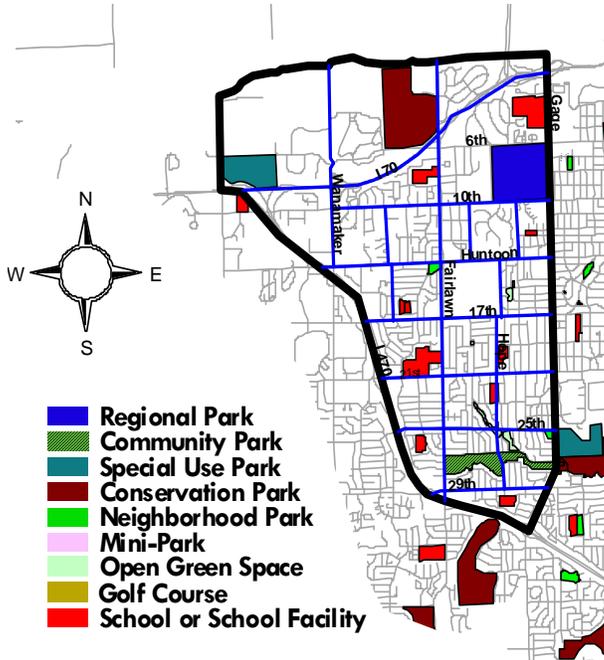
There are several other true neighborhood-level parks scattered throughout Central Topeka that collectively comprise approximately 67.6 acres. A cursory glance at a map of these parks indicates that there is a series of parks that follow, or contribute to Martin Creek. These parks include Westboro, Collins, Washburn, Children's, Willow,

Edgeood, and Auburndale parks. This series of parks underscores the importance of water in establishing our parks and open space system. All of these parks are, or at one time were under the 100-year or 500-year flood plains. Since these parks were dedicated in sizes that are meaningful and useable as parks, they greatly enhance the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Central Topeka also offers several scenic open-spaces that are unique to this area of Topeka. The Potwin traffic circles are examples of types of open space that greatly contribute to the ambience and character of a neighborhood. The Westboro neighborhood also has similar open spaces that guide and control traffic. Not only do these features serve as calming devices to ensure that traffic proceeds at a reasonable speed through the neighborhood, the mature gardens and trees planted provide an aesthetic enhancement to the experience of driving or walking through these neighborhoods. These open spaces should serve as models for future development.

Planning Area: Central Topeka	Existing		Projected 2030	Balance Need
	Existing Conditions	Surplus/Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	4,322		4,322	-
Population	26,926		27,103	177
Housing Density (units per acre)	4.22		4.25	0.03
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	67.6	-67	135.51	67.91
Community Parks (Acres)	16.3	-118	135.51	119.21
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	21	-33	54.21	33.21

**Planning Area 14: West Topeka** – West Topeka has one of the highest concentrations of parks and open spaces (428.5 acres) among all planning areas in Topeka and Shawnee County. Combined with a relatively low population (16,838) for an area of this size, residents of West Topeka enjoy a very high ratio of parks per 1,000 persons (25.45/1,000). However, the vast majority of these parks are consumed within a small number of dedicated recreation areas.



Foremost among the parks in West Topeka is Gage Park. Classified as a regional park, Gage Park is 160 acres that once stood a good distance west of the Topeka city limits. Gage Park is a multi-purpose park, offering specialized uses, such as the World Famous Topeka Zoo, active recreational facilities, such as the Blaisdell Family Aquatic Center, and passive recreational areas such as the Reinisch Rose Garden.

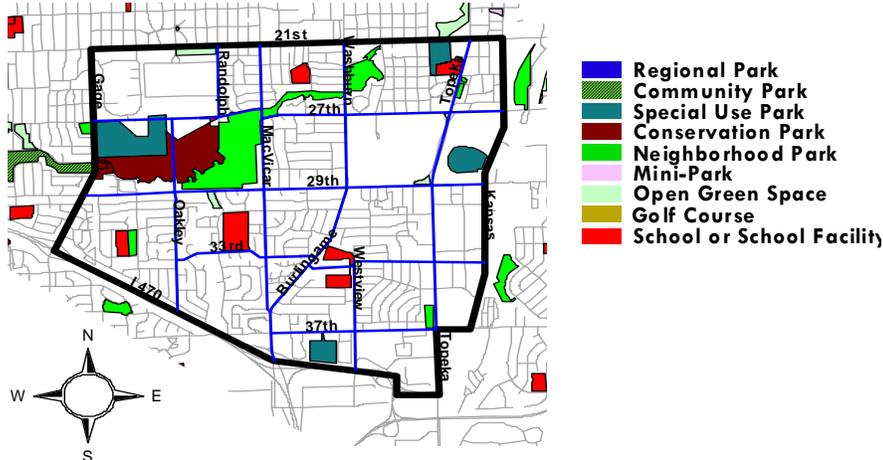
Crestview Park also lies within the southern portion of this planning area. At 65 acres, Crestview Park is the western starting point for the Shunga Trail system, and again, emphasizes the significance of water and streams in the development of our parks and open space system in Topeka.

Lying at the northern end of the planning area are two conservation and special use parks. The Kansas History Museum offers several acres of natural areas with trails and outdoor historical exhibits that attracts users from across the region. Further to the east lies Cedar Crest and McClellan State Park, which together make up the Governor’s Mansion and surrounding grounds. McClellan State Park offers approximately 175 acres of diverse natural habitat areas, ranging from prairie to wetlands to woodlands. The trail system within this park draws walkers, joggers and mountain bikers from across the region.

Hillsdale and Seabrook Parks are the only true neighborhood-level parks in West Topeka. While these parks are adequate to serve their immediate surrounding neighborhoods, they are not sufficient to serve the entire planning area. In addition to these neighborhood-level parks, West Topeka does have a few mini-parks and open green spaces. Edgewater Park is a tributary to the Shunganunga Creek, and as such has very little useable park space. The park does have a playground, but is classified as open green space for this plan. Ward Parkway is also established along a creek, and offers an open field for useable park space. However, since this park is largely undeveloped, it, too, is classified as general open green space for this plan.

Planning Area: West Topeka	Existing		Projected 2030	Balance Need
	Existing Conditions	Surplus/Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	5,275		5,275	-
Population	16,838		17,512	674
Housing Density (units per acre)	2.16		2.25	0.09
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	9.2	-75	87.56	78.36
Community Parks (Acres)	65	-19	87.56	22.56
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	19.55	-14	35.02	15.47

**Planning Area 15: South Topeka** – This planning area boasts a very high ratio of park acreage per person. With an area-wide population of 15,468 and a total of 484.45 acres of parks and open space, South Topeka provides a total of 31.32 acres per 1,000 persons. Approximately 123.25 acres of this total, however, is the Topeka Country Club Golf Course, and is not open to the public. Even with the removal of this acreage from the inventory for this area, however, South Topeka still boasts a total of 23.35 acres per 1,000 persons.



South Topeka offers a wide variety of special use and neighborhood-parks, as well as several open green spaces that provide meaningful aesthetic enhancements to major traffic corridors. The Shunganunga Creek is the foundation of the largest park system in the area. Felker Park, is a 62

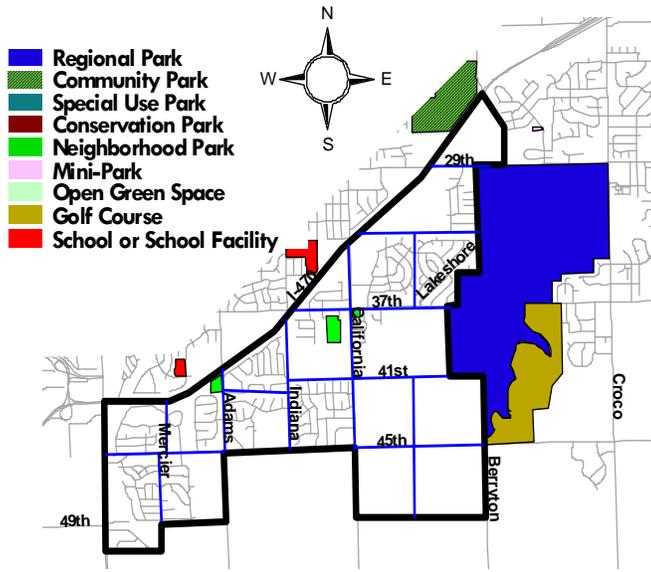
acre special use park featuring a major softball, soccer and tennis complex. Wells Park and the Frank J. Warren natural areas, both conservation parks, are adjacent to Felker, and offer several woodland, grassland, and wetland habitats. Further to the east is the Big Shunga Park and MacDonald Field, a regional baseball facility. These four parks (Felker, Wells, Warren, and Big Shunga) together offer nearly 300 acres of parkland. Additionally, the Shunganunga Trail system travels through these parks and extends eastward through Crestwood Park, and Shunga Glenn Park. Also included in the inventory is Quinton Heights Hill. Although owned by USD 501, it is a favorite spot for sledding during the winter months, and is widely considered to be a public park area.

Lacking in South Topeka is a community-level park and community center that offers diverse recreational resources to area residents. Although Felker Park, Reuger Softball Complex, and Major Palm Park are all special use parks that attract users on a community-wide, or even regional basis, their use is singular in nature and does not offer the diversity of programs typical of a true community-level park.

The total acreage for parks in this area is substantial and exceeds the recommendations of the NRPA for park space per 1,000 residents. However, most park space in this area is concentrated, and is not readily accessible to all residents of South Topeka. Greater attention and efforts should be paid toward developing additional neighborhood park space, particularly south of SW 29<sup>th</sup> Street, and east of SW Oakley.

Planning Area: South Topeka	Existing Conditions	Existing Surplus/ Deficiency	Projected 2030	Balance Need
Area (Acres)	3,185		3,185	-
Population	15,468		16,448	980
Housing Density (units per acre)	3.29		3.50	0.21
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	131.8	54	82.24	(49.56)
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-77	82.24	82.24
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	10.25	-21	32.90	22.65

**Planning Area 16: Southeast Topeka** – Southeast Topeka offers three neighborhood parks, totaling 23.1 acres. While the total acreage is considered adequate to serve the existing population of 3,803 (6 acres/1,000 persons), this acreage is concentrated into only three parks that are not completely accessible to all area residents. The majority of total park space is occupied by Mathews Park at 14.4 acres. Mathews Parks is located near the intersection of SE 37<sup>th</sup> and SE California Streets. Although some playground equipment has been placed on the property, it does not possess any street frontage and is therefore largely hidden from public view, making its use and enjoyment problematic.

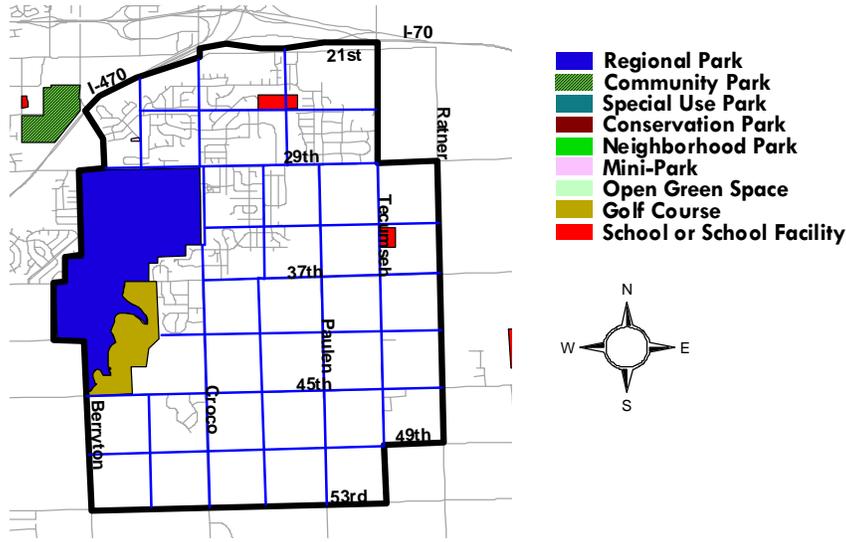


Additionally, the population of this planning area is growing. The existing park space serving this area is not readily accessible to the majority of developed areas or those areas likely to be developed in the near future. New park space will be required as new residential subdivisions are developed.

However, the proximity of Lake Shawnee to this planning area presents a unique opportunity to combine future community recreational facilities with the Berryton planning area adjacent to the east. Other than Lake Shawnee itself, there are no other physical barriers that separate the two planning areas. It is therefore conceivable that the two areas could share a common community park facility, perhaps located at Lake Shawnee.

Planning Area: Southeast Topeka	Existing Conditions	Existing Surplus/ Deficiency	Projected 2030	Balance Need
Area (Acres)	2,760		2,760	-
Population	5,563		8,145	2,582
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.37		2.00	0.63
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	23.1	-5	40.72	17.62
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-28	40.72	40.72
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-11	16.29	16.29

**Planning Area 17: Croco Road** – The Croco Road Planning Area is bordered generally by I-70 on the north, SE Ratner Road on the east, Berryton Road and the west shore of Lake Shownee on the west, and SE 53<sup>rd</sup> Street on the south. Located within this planning area is Lake Shownee, a 766 acre regional park facility. Lake Shownee offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for both active and passive activities. Some facilities available within the park include baseball and softball complexes, disc golf, boathouse for rowing, marina, paddle-boating, heated fishing dock, camping, several shelter houses and picnic areas, swimming area, as well as ramps for a variety of water sports such as water-skiing, sailing, and windsurfing.



Adjacent to Lake Shownee is the Lake Shownee golf course, a 244 acre 18 hole course that draws players from all of northeast Kansas.

However, lacking from the planning area is a network of smaller neighborhood parks. Only one park exists outside the Lake Shownee regional park facility, this being two tennis courts located within the Aquarian Acres Subdivision.

Although Lake Shownee is available to residents of this planning area and all residents of Shawnee County, it is not always accessible for children or those who do not utilize motorized means of transportation. For those neighborhoods east of Lake Shownee, approximately 133 acres of neighborhood park space will be essential in the coming years.

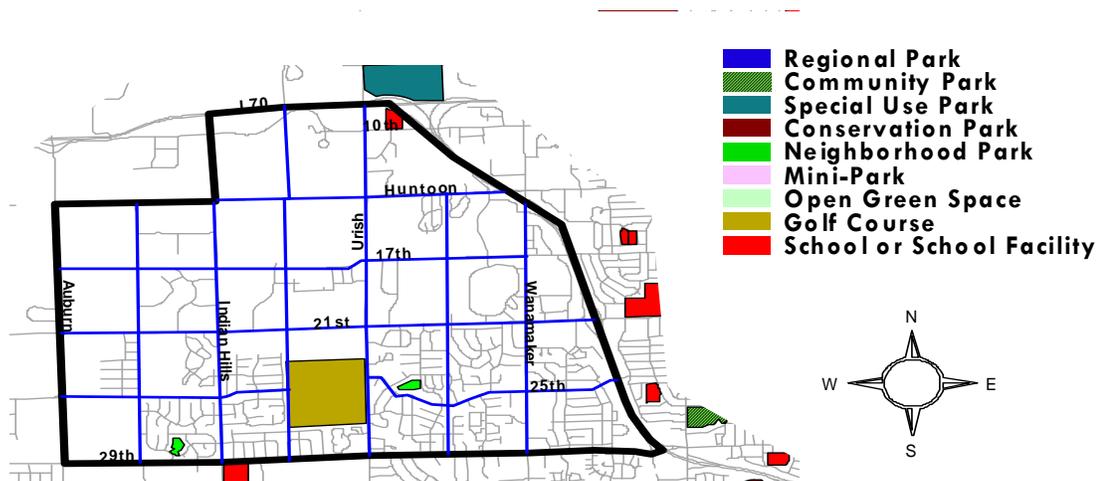
<b>Planning Area: Croco Road</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/ Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	7,267		7,267	-
Population	6,073		26,806	20,733
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.54		2.50	1.96
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	1.41	-29	134.03	132.62
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-30	134.03	134.03
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0.3	-12	53.61	53.31

**Planning Area 18: West I-70** – This planning area is one of the most rapidly growing areas of Shawnee County, yet is severely lacking in all types of public park space. The area is bounded generally by I-70 on the north, SW 29<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, SW Auburn Road on the west, and I-470 on the east.

Only two neighborhood-level parks are provided within the boundaries of this planning area. The population of this planning area now stands at over 10,600 meaning there is a ratio of public park space per 1,000 residents of less than ½ acre. There is also capacity and potential for an additional 10,000 residents within this planning area.

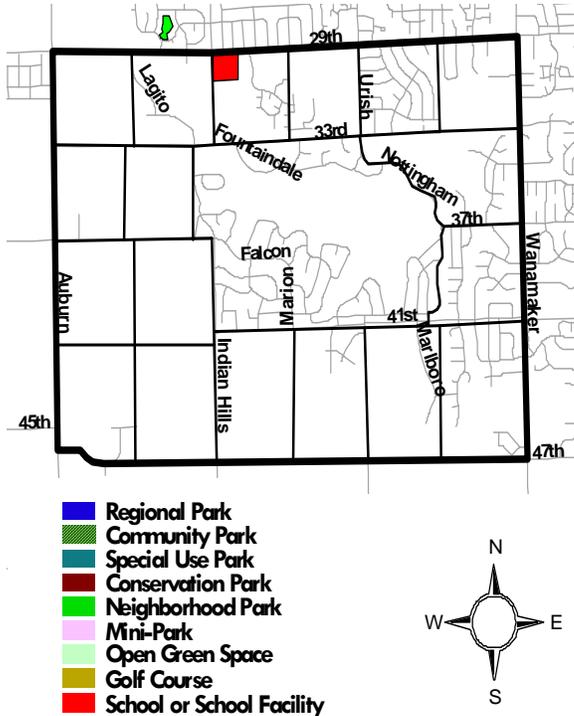
One potential location for a neighborhood or community-level park is the southwest corner of the intersection of SW 21<sup>st</sup> Street and SW Urish Road. This 93-acre parcel is already owned by the City of Topeka. Located at the northeast corner of this property is a fire station, while the Topeka Public Golf Course lies adjacent to the south.

This site offers several unique advantages for the location of a community-level park. It is of adequate size to serve the existing population of the area and offers extremely good visibility and accessibility for the surrounding public. Additionally, the presence of a fire station on the property would provide 24-hour surveillance for the property, thus reducing potential vandalism.



Planning Area: West I-70	Existing		Projected 2030	Balance Need
	Existing Conditions	Surplus/ Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	4,929		4,929	-
Population	10,599		18,182	7,583
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.46		2.50	1.04
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	9.15	-44	90.91	81.76
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-53	90.91	90.91
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-21	36.36	36.36

**Planning Area 19: Sherwood** – The neighborhoods surrounding Lake Sherwood are entirely without the benefit of public park space. Within this planning area, there is a homeowners association that does provide private recreational space in the form of a swimming beach on Lake Sherwood. However, in terms of open space for a casual game of softball or frisbee, no public space exists within this planning area.



The population of this planning area is approximately 5,600 and is the most rapidly developing area within Shawnee County and is expected to reach a population of 15,000 within the next 10-20 years. Consideration should also be given to the development of a community-level park to provide year-round organized recreational opportunities for area residents.

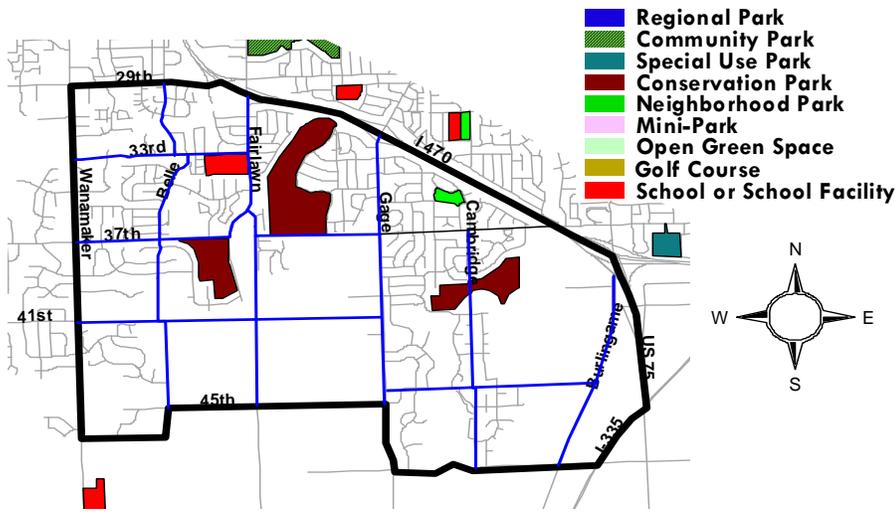
One location to consider for the placement of either neighborhood or community park space is a series of parcels of land directly below the Lake Sherwood Dam. This is a very scenic area that incorporates the headwaters of the Shunganunga Creek flowing from Lake Sherwood. The largest of these parcels is currently owned by Shawnee County and is used for the Lake Sherwood sewage treatment plant. However, if added to additional adjoining properties, enough acreage exists to develop a park 30-40 acres in size.

Planning Area: Sherwood	Existing Conditions	Existing Surplus/ Deficiency	Projected 2030	Balance Need
Area (Acres)	4,168		4,168	-
Population	5,595		15,375	9,780
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.86		2.50	1.64
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	0	-28	76.87	76.87
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-28	76.87	76.87
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-11	30.75	30.75

**Planning Area 20: Southwest Topeka** – Southwest Topeka possesses a variety of parks for area residents. In all, the area boasts 200 acres of total park space, plus approximately 54 acres in the Colley Creek Golf Course. Most public park space is consumed by two separate conservation parks. Burnetts Mound, or Skyline Park, is a 104-acre park that contains the County’s highest elevation and offers spectacular views of the entire city.

An additional conservation park is the Welton Grove natural area. The south branch of the Shunganunga Creek flows through this area and offers a wide variety of forest, wetland, and grassland habitats, as well as an extensive trail system for public enjoyment and education. Opportunities to expand this park exist to the south and east of the park, extending to the intersection of SW 44<sup>th</sup> Street and SW Burlingame Road.

Only one neighborhood park exists within this planning area. Horne Park is an 8.7-acre facility that offers playground and open field space for residents primarily north and east of SW 37<sup>th</sup> Street and SW Gage Boulevard.

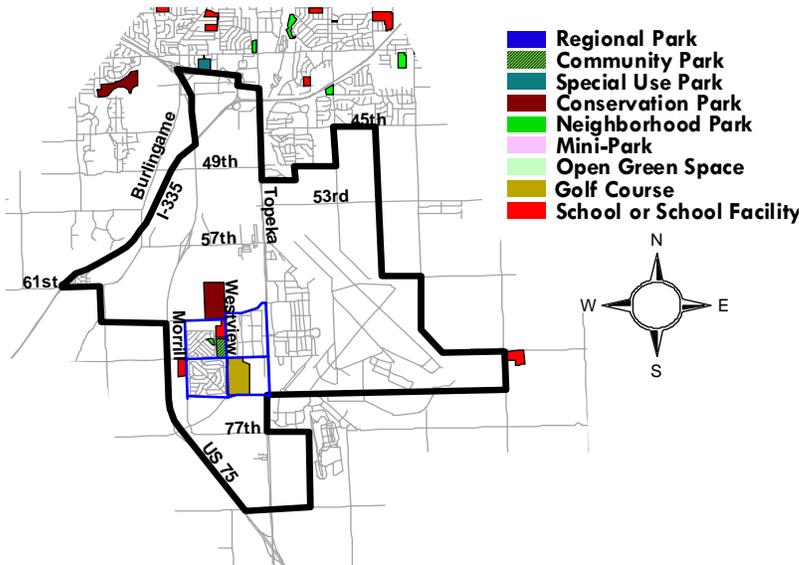


The population of this area is approximately 5,563 according to the 2000 census. An additional 2,700 people could be expected within the next 10-20 years.

Planning Area: Southwest Topeka	Existing Conditions	Existing Surplus/ Deficiency	Projected 2030	Balance Need
Area (Acres)	3,761		3,761	-
Population	5,563		8,324	2,761
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.00		1.50	0.50
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	5	-23	41.62	36.62
Community Parks (Acres)	0	-28	41.62	41.62
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-11	16.65	16.65

**Planning Area 21: South US 75** – This planning area is considered a future employment growth area by the Land Use and Growth Management element of the comprehensive plan. The Montara neighborhood with a population of approximately 6,100, lies within this area.

Shawnee County operates the Paris Community Center within this planning area. This park is approximately 64.5 acres in size and offers a variety of field activities such as baseball, softball, football, and soccer. Although this facility is listed as a community-level park by this plan, its acreage could also be considered useable as neighborhood park space as well.



Grant Bradbury Park is another large acreage in the planning area that is owned by the City of Topeka. The park is largely undeveloped and is therefore listed as a conservation park by this plan. No specific plans are underway to improve this area.

The Montara Homeowners Association owns and operates a small neighborhood park within the Montara neighborhood. This park is approximately 2.65 acres in size, and provides useable playground space for the immediate surrounding neighborhoods.

Shawnee County also owns and operates the Forbes Golf Course, a nine-hole course that is approximately 76 acres in size.

Because this area is considered a future employment growth area by the economic development plan as well as the future land use and growth management plan, no additional park space should be required to service the existing population. However, as employment in the area increases, some areas of open space should be considered as buffers between existing residential areas, and other incompatible land uses.

Planning Area: South US 75	Existing		Projected 2030	Balance Need
	Existing Conditions	Surplus/Deficiency		
Area (Acres)	8,548		3,761	(4,787.00)
Population	6,073		6,500	427
Housing Density (units per acre)	0.48		0.50	0.02
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	2.65	-28	32.50	29.85
Community Parks (Acres)	64.5	34	32.50	(32.00)
Mini-Parks/Open Space (Acres)	0	-12	13.00	13.00

## Regional Summary Analysis:

**Neighborhood Parks** - There is a shortage of all types of park-space across all planning areas identified for this study. With respect to neighborhood park space, approximately 371 acres are presently scattered throughout the areas studied. Combined, however, this total falls approximately 357 acres short of NRPA recommendations. If increases in population during the next 30 years rise to expected levels, an additional 785 acres of neighborhood-level park space will be required.

In general, existing urbanized areas fare better than presently or recently developed suburban areas. Recent trends in park-land dedication have focused on large acreages of park-space, intended for use primarily as community-park or conservation park space. While these types of parks are necessary and beneficial to the public, they are not a substitute for the basic building block of a comprehensive park and open space system, which is the neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks must continue to be dedicated throughout all areas of the city and its immediate surrounding areas to afford all residents easy and unfettered access to public recreational space.

**Community Park Space** – Topeka’s current system of community parks was largely framed by a 1960 report entitled “**Master Plan Report: Parks Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces.**” This document identified the future needs for community park space and recommended the creation of a series of parks and community centers scattered throughout the city of Topeka. Hillcrest, Crestview, Rice, Abbott, Garfield, and Central Park Community Centers are all direct results of this planning document.

As a result, Topeka and its surrounding urbanizing areas possess more total acreage in community parks space (490 acres), as opposed to neighborhood park space (371 acres), though this total still falls short compared of NRPA standards. The combined acreage of community-level parks among all planning areas comprises approximately 35% of NRPA recommendations. Furthermore, should populations rise to expected levels over the next 30 years, an additional 666 acres of community park space will be necessary. These parks are primarily needed in the still-developing portions of the county, just outside the Topeka city boundary. However, some additional acreage is also needed to supplement existing parks within this boundary.

**Mini-Park/Open Space** – As with community and neighborhood park space, mini-parks and open space areas are short of NRPA recommended levels. Currently, among all planning areas, there is a deficiency of 278 acres below NRPA standards. Because of their limited size and specialized purpose within residential neighborhoods, mini-parks should be the most prevalent type of park within the greater parks and open space system. However, there are currently only 13 acres divided among 12 separate mini-parks throughout all identified planning areas. If population increases as expected over the next 30 years, an additional 450 acres of mini-park space will be necessary.

**Regional Parks** – The Topeka metro area boasts two regional parks totaling just over 925 acres. The vast majority of this space (767 acres) lies within the Lake Shawnee recreational area, owned and managed by the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department. The remaining acreage (160) lies within Gage Park, which is owned by the City of Topeka. While these facilities are excellent assets to the greater Topeka area and all of Northeast Kansas, together they are over 1,250 acres short of the NRPA standard of 15 acres per 1,000 persons. Moreover, if population increases as expected over the next 30 years, an additional 2,542 acres of regional park space will be necessary.

<b>All Areas</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Existing Surplus/ Deficiency</b>	<b>Projected 2030</b>	<b>Balance Need</b>
Area (Acres)	78,480		3,761	(74,719.00)
Population	145,581		231,279	85,698
Housing Density (units per acre)	1.26		2.00	0.74
Neighborhood Parks/Acres	371.38	-357	1156.40	785.02
Community Parks/Acres	490.23	-238	1156.40	666.17
Mini-Parks/Open Space/Acres	92	-199	462.56	370.56
Regional Parks	926.86	-1,257	3469.19	2,542.33

## New Parks Proposals – Immediate Opportunities

This section of the Parks and Open Space Plan is intended to provide some ideas and direction toward the dedication of new parks and recreation areas. The recommendations listed in this section should not be interpreted as a conclusive list of all possibilities for new parks. This is not a complete, exhaustive list and does not completely reflect the immediate needs for all park space of the surrounding community. Rather, the proposals identified in this section reflect immediate opportunities for new park development, and are based on current, albeit limited, knowledge about the parcels themselves in terms of the geographical and geological characteristics of the properties, their potential for park development, and the peripheral growth and development in the immediate vicinity of these areas.

There will be, of course, a multitude of additional opportunities and needs for future dedication and development of parks in Topeka and Shawnee County. In some cases, the consideration of these parks will be driven by the demand of a growing population in a given geographical area. In other cases, the need will be driven by the desire for additional or improved facilities.

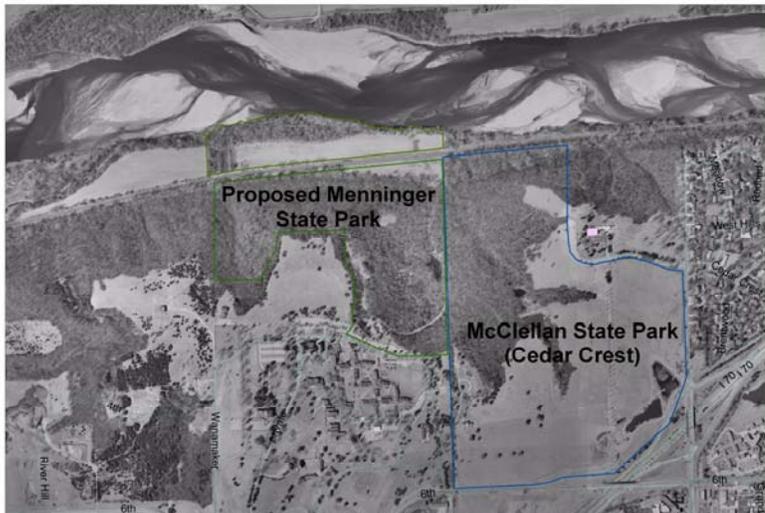
Further discussion and analysis should occur before action is taken to acquire and dedicate any of the following areas as public park land.

- I. **Menninger State Park** – The area considered by this plan for dedication is located north of and adjacent to the former Menninger campus. The area consists of approximately 80 acres and connects to McClellan State Park and Cedar Crest.

The area consists entirely of undeveloped forest lands among rolling hills overlooking the Kansas River. Since the area is undeveloped, it is prime habitat for populations of deer, bobcat, and other woodland mammals.

The property has recently been obtained by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for the purpose of conversion to a state park. Proposed in conjunction with this park is the improvement of an existing road that will provide access to the Kansas River, and the construction of a boat ramp that will enable greater access to the river for fishing and boating. Also proposed is the improvement of several nature trails that currently meander through the property.

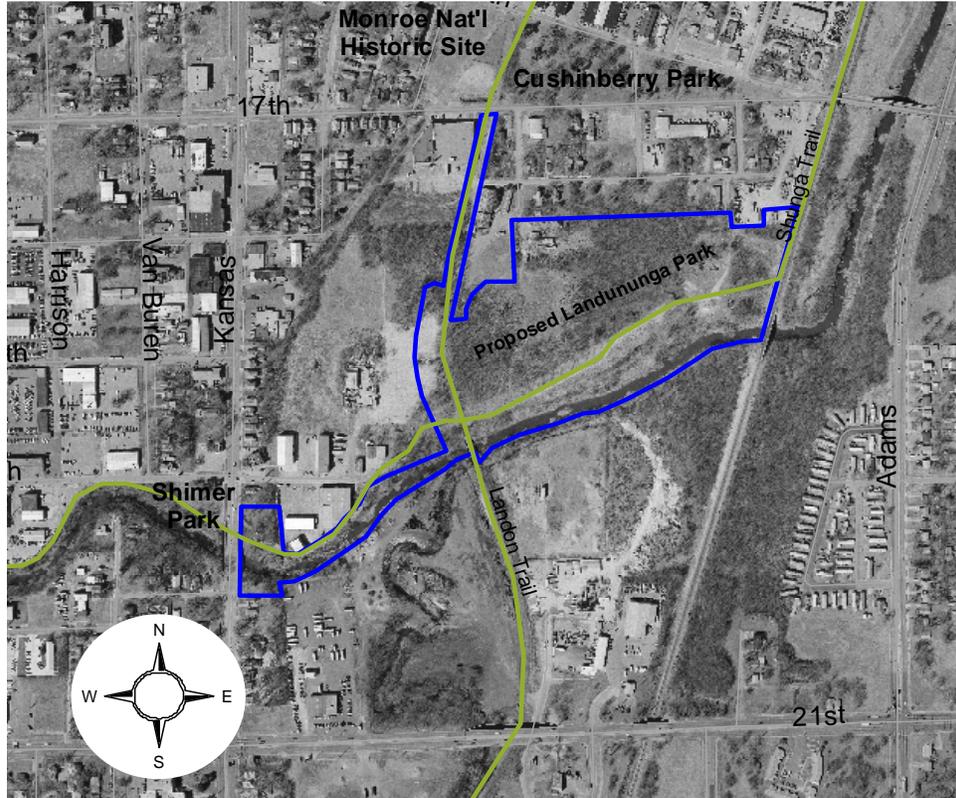
Proposed Menninger State Park



Although this park will be owned and operated by the State of Kansas, it will be immediately available to all residents of Topeka, and should be considered as conservation park space for the purposes of this Plan. It is conceivable that additional properties extending west along the Kansas River may become available that could provide a connection between McClellan State Park and the State Historical Museum.

- II. **Landununga Park** – Cross Roads Park is the name dubbed for that area surrounding the intersection of the Landon, Freedom, and Shunga Trails. The property consists of several parcels totaling approximately 30 acres and extends from roughly SE 18<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, the Landon Trail on the west, the north bank of the Shunganunga Creek on the south., and the BNSF Railroad lines on the east.

## Proposed Landununga Park



While the majority of this site is undeveloped, there are a few former industrial sites that may be eligible for federal brownfields clean-up grants to help restore these parcels to a useable state.

This sites proximity to the Monroe National Historic Monument lends additional value to the concept of a park at this location. Although Cushmanberry Park lies directly east of the Monument, its size is limited, and functions more as scenic open space than useable park space.

The intersection of the Landon, Freedom, and Shunga Trails is also a critical junction in the overall trails plan for Topeka and Shawnee County.

- III. **Downtown Riverfront** – The Kansas River offers many significant opportunities for the development of parks and open space on both sides of the river as it winds through downtown Topeka. Studies are currently underway, involving the Army Corps of Engineers and local civic leaders, to create a riverfront park to compliment and continue the efforts of the Great Overland Station Railroad Museum and Veteran’s Park. The proposed riverfront park is envisioned to occupy a stretch of land between the Kansas Avenue and Topeka Blvd. bridges, south of NW Curtis Street to the water’s edge of the Kansas River. A significant portion of this land is within the Kansas River levee. A number of uses and design proposals are being studied by the Corps of Engineers for feasibility and cost, including breaks in the levee system, to be replaced with floodgates, to allow at-grade access to the water’s edge and other park improvements within the levee system. A weir is also being considered that could allow construction of a baseball stadium or other permanent improvements within the current river levee.

**Proposed Riverfront Park with Conceptual Baseball Stadium**



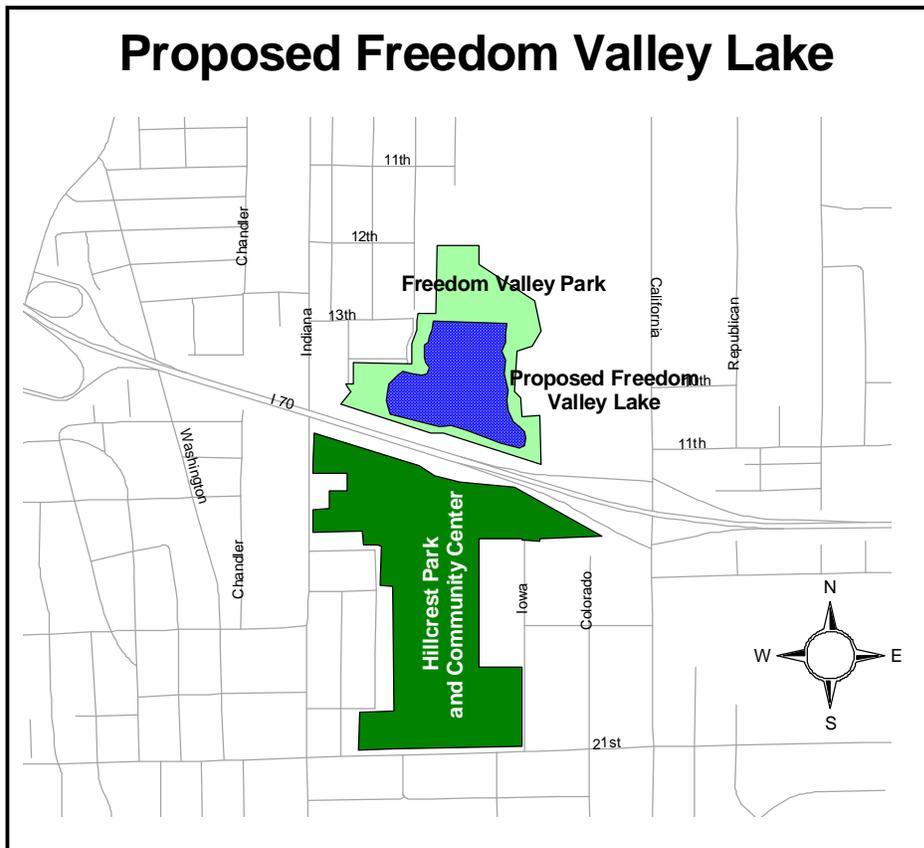
The idea of utilizing the Kansas River and its banks for recreational purposes has been well documented in previous and current planning documents. Suggestions for utilization of these areas as parks has most recently been proposed within the North Topeka Redevelopment Plan, the Downtown Topeka Revitalization Plan, and the Topeka-Shawnee County Historic Preservation Plan.

In addition to the area between the Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard bridges, additional park and open space opportunities exist north of the Sardou Bridge on both sides of the river. All of this land is currently owned by the City of Topeka, and could be developed for myriad uses, including nature areas, soccer fields, and other low impact uses that would not be significantly damaged by periodic flooding within the Kansas River levee system.

- IV. **Freedom Valley Lake** – Freedom Valley Park is located just east of SE Indiana Street on the north side of I-70. The Park is approximately 32 acres in size, and is northern half of a large undeveloped open space that is bisected by I-70. Located to the south of I-70 is Hillcrest Park.

Freedom Valley Park is improved with a circuit trail system, a play-ground and several picnic tables and grills. The most prominent feature in the park, however, is a water retention dam at the park's northern end. Because this park is subject to flooding during periods of heavy rains, much of this park is not dependable for useable open and recreational space.

Therefore, the concept of converting the park into a fishing lake is proposed by this plan. Although complete engineering and hydrology studies must be completed, it appears conceivable that the water *retention* dam could be converted to a water *detention* dam to permanently hold water and form a lake. The lake could then be stocked with fish to provide recreational fishing opportunities to area residents.



- V. **Welton Grove Park Expansion** – Welton Grove Park is an existing natural area located in southwest Topeka. The park provides a variety of woodland, wetland, and grassland habitats for a variety of wildlife, and is also improved with a primitive trail that meanders through the woods.

The park is almost entirely located within the 100 year flood-plain of the South Branch of the Shunganunga Creek. However, there is substantially more acreage to the south and east of the park that also lies within this flood plain. Much of this acreage has been jeopardized in recent years by excavation and removal of top soil from nearby fields.

Since the entirety of the creek basin lies within the 100 year flood-plain, it is suggested by this plan that Welton grove Park be expanded to include an additional 144 acres lying west of the South Branch of the Shunganunga Creek, south to SW 45<sup>th</sup> Street. Expansion of the park in this area will protect the watershed from encroaching development and misuse of adjacent lands, as well as assure continued habitat for the areas wildlife populations.

In addition, the Topeka-Shawnee County Regional Trails Plan has planned a trail extension through this area adjacent to the South Branch of the Shunganunga Creek. The proposed park expansion would serve the double purpose of securing the needed right-of-way for this trail.



- VI. **Shawnee County Fairgrounds** – In 1980, faced with the desire to construct an arena and convention center, Shawnee County voters elected to convert the Mid-America Fairgrounds into the Kansas Expocentre. This property is bounded by SW Western Avenue, SW Topeka Boulevard, SW 21<sup>st</sup> Street and SW 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

As the Mid-America Fairgrounds, this site hosted the Kansas State Fair, the Shawnee County Fair, several exhibition halls, grandstands with stock-car racing, and livestock facilities. However, Topeka and Shawnee County lacked an arena to host large civic and athletic events. Voters decided to convert the fairgrounds in favor of a multi-purpose arena, exposition center, and conference facility. Arrangements were made, however, to keep a livestock arena on the property.

As events within each facility at the Kansas Expocentre continue to grow, the close proximity of each facility has become problematic. Parking is a primary concern, especially when multiple events on the Expocentre grounds are scheduled. Therefore, it is proposed that a traditional “fairgrounds” type park be developed to accommodate the specific needs of livestock judging and equestrian events. Such a facility could be dedicated anywhere within Shawnee County, but for reasons of convenience and space requirements, the facility would likely be located outside the corporate limits of the City of Topeka.

One possible location for such a facility is the northwest corner of SW 21<sup>st</sup> Street and SW Hodges Road. This site is 120 acres in size and is currently owned by Shawnee County. This property was previously the site of a sanitary landfill, but has been closed and completely re-claimed to a natural state. The sites former use as a landfill greatly limits its future use and development, although limited development, particularly for recreational uses, is possible. A new facility at this site would offer its users substantially more room than is currently available on Expocentre grounds. In addition, the site enjoys excellent access from Interstate-70, SW Auburn Road, and K-4 Highway.

- VII. **Van Buren Pedestrian Plaza** – An outdoor pedestrian mall along SW Van Buren Street, between SW 6<sup>th</sup> and SW 8<sup>th</sup> Streets is proposed for construction in early 2006. The design for the mall will incorporate useable street right-of-way with pedestrian-oriented landscaping and accoutrements along either side of Van Buren Street for the two-block length of the mall. The mall will have the ability to be closed to street traffic for major events and festivals. A small off-street park will also be constructed at the southeast corner of SW 7<sup>th</sup> and Van Buren Streets to incorporate more permanent passive greenspace to the mall design. This park is tentatively designed to incorporate a decorative fountain and small amphitheatre.

- VIII. **Westridge Community Park** – The city of Topeka presently owns an 80-acre parcel of land located at the southwest corner of SW 21<sup>st</sup> Street and SW Urish Road. This parcel is adjacent to, and directly north of the Topeka Public Golf Course, and is presently unimproved. The property lies within the **West I-70** planning area which is currently lacking in publicly dedicated park space at all levels. At 80 acres, this site is appropriately sized for a community-level park, would provide residents of this planning area a total of 7.5-acres per 1,000 persons, a figure above NRPA recommendations for community-level parks. As a community-level park, the site would enjoy appropriate access along both a major and minor arterial roadway, creating excellent visibility within the park. At the extreme northwest corner of this property is a City of Topeka operated fire station. The presence of this station within the park would provide 24-hour surveillance, further enhancing the safety of park users.

**Classification and Standards** – The following table establishes a framework for the development and utilization of new and existing parks in Topeka and Shawnee County. This set of standards is nationally recognized and has been adopted by the National Recreation and Park Association and the National Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, as published in **Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines**, 1996.

**Parks and Open Space Classifications**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>General Description</b>	<b>Location Criteria</b>	<b>Size Criteria</b>	<b>Area/1000 Persons</b>
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than ¼ mile distance in a residential setting.	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.	2 acres
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	¼ to ½ mile distance and uninterrupted by major road-ways or other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.	5 acres
Greenways/ Linear Parks	Greenways serve as connectors between recreational destinations or other points of interest. They are usually designed for both active and passive recreational purposes.	Most often located along streams or major road-ways and usually contain walking or bicycling trails as alternative means of transportation.	Unlimited length, but should be wide enough to safely contain a multi-use trail and buffered green-space.	N/A
Community Parks	Serves broader purposes than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, and preserving unique landscapes and open-spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and ½ to 1/3 mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.	5 acres
Regional Parks	Regional 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 being optimal.	15 acres
Conservation Parks	These are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open-spaces and aesthetic buffering. Focus should be given toward preserving habitat systems.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.	N/A
Special Use Parks	Covers a broad range of parks and recreational facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.	Variable, dependent on specific use.	Variable	N/A
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	N/A

**Mini-Parks – General Description:** Mini-Parks is the smallest park classification and is used to address limited or isolated 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 tot-lots of the past. They are 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.
- Gateways into specific neighborhoods or special districts.

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 include picnic areas, arbors, and sitting areas.

**Location Criteria:** Although demographics and population density play a role in location, the justification for a mini-park lies more in servicing a specific recreational need or taking advantages of a unique opportunity. Given the potential variety of mini-park activities and locations, service area will vary. In a residential setting, however, the service area is usually less than ¼ mile in radius. Accessibility by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low volume residential streets increases opportunities and therefore is an important consideration.

**Size Criteria:** Typically, mini-parks are between 2,500 square feet and one (1) acre in size. However, park areas that are less than five (5) acres would technically be considered a mini-park. Anything larger would be considered a neighborhood park.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Servicing a specific recreational need, ease of access from the surrounding area, and linkages to the community 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. 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 be adjacent to other park system components, such as greenways or trails.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menus:** Mini-parks should be developed according to the needs of its intended users. Usually, the intended users of a mini-park are surrounding residents within a neighborhood, or visitors to a specific area or district. Although these parks often include elements similar to neighborhood parks, there are no specific criteria to guide development of facilities within mini-parks. Given their limited size, they are typically not intended for programmed activities.

Parking for mini-parks is not typically required. Site lighting should be limited for safety and security purposes only.

**Neighborhood Parks – 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 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 ¼ to ½ mile radius uninterrupted by major roadways or other physical barriers. These distances might vary depending on development diversity. The site should be accessible from throughout the 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.

**Size Criteria:** Demographic profiles and population density within the park’s service area are the primary determinants of a neighborhood park’s size. Generally, five acres is accepted as the minimum size necessary to provide space for a menu of recreational activities. Seven to ten acres is considered optimal.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Ease of access from the surrounding neighborhood, central location, and linkages to greenways and trails 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 unsuitable for development are generally undesirable for neighborhood parks and should be avoided. Additionally, it is more cost effective to select a site with inherent aesthetic qualities 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 trails. 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 five acres is recommended, the actual size should be based on the land needed to accommodate desired uses.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Menus:** Since each neighborhood in the community is unique, neighborhood input should be used to determine the development programs for the park. The guidelines presented here should be used as a framework to guide the 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 as practice fields, 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” play-field or open-space, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe area, ice-skating rinks or ponds, and swimming pools. Facilities for passive recreation activities include internal trails, picnic 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 appealing park atmosphere should be considered an important design element.

The site should accommodate should accommodate 7 to 10 parking spaces for 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.

**Linear Parks, Trails and Greenways – General Description:** Linear Parks and Greenways serve a number of important functions:

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

In many respects, linear parks and conservation 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 linear parks and greenways emphasize use (trails) to a greater extent than conservation areas.

**Location Criteria:** Land availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining location for linear parks and greenways. “Natural” greenways generally follow suitable natural resource areas such as streams, valleys, or undisturbed forest or grasslands. “Man- made” greenways are corridors that are built as part of development projects or during renovation of old development areas. Man-made greenways include riverfronts, abandoned railroad beds, old industrial sites, safe utility 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 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 greenway corridors. Although corridor width can be as little as 25 feet, within a residential area, 50 feet is considered minimum. Widths of 200 or more are considered optimal.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Resource availability in conjunction with the trail system plan is 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 variety of different modes of recreational travel. Most notably are hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating. They can also be developed for cross-country skiing and horseback riding. Canoeing/kayaking is another possibility where the greenway includes a navigable creek or stream. In some areas, where topography and space allow, picnic areas and small playgrounds can also be accommodated.

**Community Parks - 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 passive and active recreational 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 the service area by means 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 schools, natural resource areas, and larger 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 a service area are the prime 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, geographic centrality, 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 Parks and Conservation Parks differ in that the former is generally more developed for recreational uses 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 Conservation Park classification.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activities Menu:** Neighborhood and community input should be a primary focus on the development of community parks. As with a neighborhood 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 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 ball fields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe areas, ice skating rinks or ponds, swimming pools or beaches, archery ranges, and disc golf courses. Passive activity facilities include extensive internal trails, individual and group picnic/sitting areas, general open space and unique landscape features, nature trails, 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 should be provided as necessary to accommodate user access. Park lighting should be used for security, safety, and lighting facilities as appropriate.

**Regional Parks – General Description:** Regional parks serve a broader purpose than community and neighborhood parks and are intended to serve the entire community plus the surrounding region. These parks draw visitors from a radius of up to 50 miles and are viewed as recreational destinations. Focus is on meeting recreational needs that, due to volume of users or specific demands on individual facilities, cannot be accommodated through the use of community parks. Additional focus is given to the preservation of unique landscapes and open spaces.

**Location Criteria:** A Regional Park should serve the entire community plus the surrounding region. Although its service area is considered to be up to 50 miles, the quality of the natural resource base and the ability of the site to adequately support the intended uses should be the primary focus when determining site selection. Because the site is intended to be major regional draw for recreational uses, the site should be accessible from arterial streets or other significant roadways. An easy connection to a major highway system is preferred. The site should also be easily accessible by means of the city’s interconnecting trail system.

**Size Criteria:** Resource availability, geographic centrality, and recreation demand within the service area are primary determinants for a regional park’s size. Minimum size considerations for a regional park should be 50 acres. In most cases, however, regional parks will be in excess of 100 acres, with some parks being several hundred acres in size.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** The site’s natural character should play the major role in determining specific site selection. Because a regional park will most likely be used for multiple purposes and have a number of facilities developed for various uses, careful consideration should be given to the specific site requirements for each individual use planned within the park.

Ease of access to the park is considered an important factor in determining the location of the park, but does not necessarily need to be geographically centered within the community.

The site should exhibit the physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreation use. Where feasibly, the park should be located adjacent to, or should include natural resource areas and greenways that connect to other components of the park system.

Land within a flood plain should only be considered when facilities are built above the 100-year flood elevation. Land below that elevation would typically fall within the Conservation park classification.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activities Menu:** Facilities and activities developed within a regional park should be reflective of the use and demand for these facilities, both within the community, and also the surrounding region. Because a regional park is intended as a “recreation destination” drawing visitors to the community, aesthetic appeal of the park is of heightened importance. As with neighborhood and community parks, the guidelines presented within this plan should be used as a framework to guide the program development and ensure consistency with other park system components. They should not be used as an impediment to creative and unique design outcomes.

Regional parks are typically developed for both active and passive recreation uses. Active recreation facilities, such as playing fields and game courts, should be built to standards suitable for programmed use and tournament play.

A menu of potential active recreation facilities includes play structures and/or creative play attractions, game courts, informal ball fields for youth play, tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe areas, ice-skating rinks or ponds, swimming pools or beaches, archery ranges, golf or disc golf courses, boating facilities, baseball and softball fields, and playing fields for soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, rugby, cricket, polo, or equestrian events.

Passive activity facilities include extensive internal trails (that connect to the community trail system), individual and group picnic sites, general open-space and landscaped features, ornamental and botanical gardens, arboretums, fishing areas, and nature study areas. Facilities for cultural activities, such as amphitheatres for plays and concerts, are also appropriate. The distribution of land between active and passive recreation activities is determined on a site-by-site basis.

Parking should be adequate to accommodate users of all facilities. Park lighting should be used for security and safety, and lighting of facilities as appropriate.

**Conservation Parks – General Description:** Conservation Parks are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open-space, and visual/aesthetic buffering. These lands consist of:

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources.
- Lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential. (examples include land with steep slopes and natural vegetation, floodways and ravines, surface water management areas such as man-made lakes and ponds), and utility easements.)
- Protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes, and ponds.

**Location Criteria:** Resource availability and opportunity are the primary factors determining location of conservation parks. However, due to the fragile nature of many of our natural resources, acquisition of these areas should be planned in anticipation of future development threats to these lands.

**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-space land resources. Reclaimed wetlands and wetland banks fall into this category.

**Site Selection Criteria/Guidelines:** Resource quality is the primary determinant when selecting a site for a conservation park. 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 or 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 ecosystems and processes.

**Development Parameters/Recreation Activity Menu:** Although conservation areas are resource based rather than user based, they can provide some active and passive recreational opportunities. Active recreational opportunities would include trails for mountain biking, off-road

running, and cross-country skiing. Orienteering is also an acceptable active recreational opportunity. Passive recreational uses would include nature trails for viewing and studying. Conservation parks can also function as greenways. Development should be kept to a level that preserves the integrity of the resource.

**Special Use Park - 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 centers, arboretums, ornamental gardens, fine-arts facilities and museums, public buildings, and amphitheaters.
- Recreation Facilities – specialized or single-purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers, community theaters, hockey and basketball arenas, marinas, golf courses, and aquatic parks. Frequently, community buildings are located in neighborhood of community parks.
- Outdoor recreation Facilities – examples include tennis centers, softball complexes and sports stadiums.

**Location Criteria:** Recreation needs, 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 or collector streets where feasible. Whenever possible, the site should also be accessible via a community trail system.

**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 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 for each program. However, since special use parks may include cultural, historical or archaeological sites, special care must be given to preserve the physical integrity of the resource. In some cases, community demands should defer to the technical expertise of professionals trained in preservation of such unique resources.

**Private Park/Recreation Facility – General Description:** The Private Park/Recreation Facility is a 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 Recreation Facilities are as follows:

- Private Parks such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and club houses are generally within a residential area developed for the exclusive use of residents and are maintained through

a neighborhood association or membership dues. 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 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 resources to meet high priority needs for land and facilities.

The contribution that Private parks and Recreation Facilities make in meeting community park and recreation needs must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Location Criteria:** For the most part, the location of private parks and 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 greater community. 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 or recreational facility is dependent upon its intended use. The size criteria established for other park classifications should be used as appropriate. 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 should exhibit the physical characteristics necessary for the intended uses.

**Development Parameters/Recreation 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 a private party is critical to making a public-private partnership workable. This is particularly important with respect to development fees, user charges, and programming policies.

## Amendment #1 (CPA09/1)

### Parkland Fee Districts

The City's parkland development fee, established in 2003 (Ordinance #18065), helps to implement the City of Topeka Parks and Open Space Plan by charging a fee when new housing units are built within the city or at the time new subdivisions are approved outside the city limits within the 3-mile ETJ. The fee is used to help acquire and improve future parkland or improve existing parkland that will serve the added population as a result of new housing or subdivisions.

To create a geographic nexus between the fee and providing adequate parkland facilities, **parkland fee districts** are set forth in this plan so that the fees shall be invested in the same district as they are collected. The parkland fee districts were created by consolidating 17 residential "planning areas" already established in the City of Topeka Parks and Open Space Plan into 7 larger planning areas:

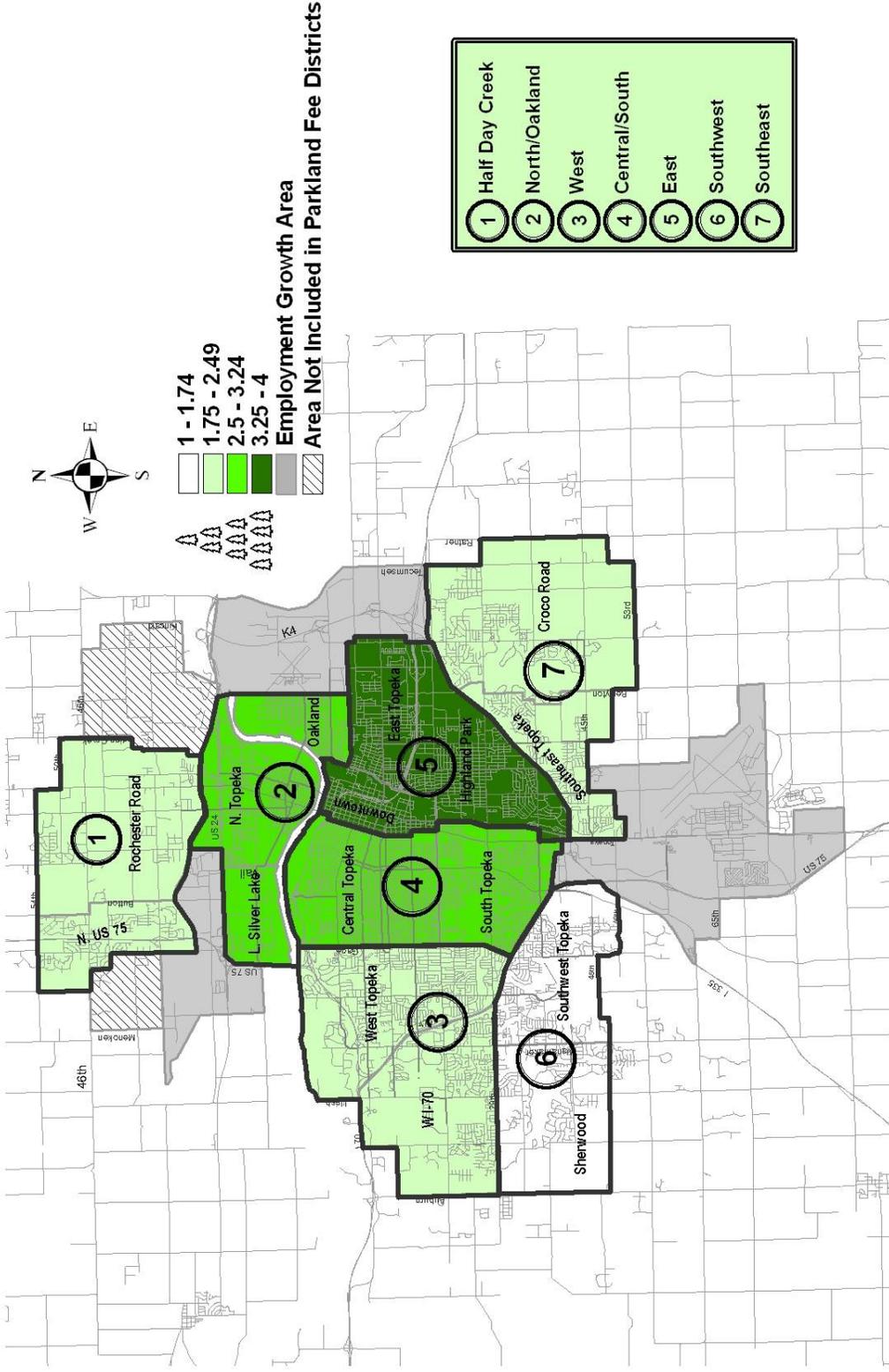
1. **Half Day Creek** (North US 75/Rochster Road)
2. **North/Oakland** (North Topeka/Oakland/Lower Silver Lake Road)
3. **West** (West Topeka/West I-70)
4. **Central South** (Central Topeka/South Topeka)
5. **East** (East Topeka/Highland Park/Downtown)
6. **Southwest** (Sherwood/Southwest Topeka)
7. **Southeast** (Southeast Topeka/Croco Road)

The reason for creating larger "fee" districts was so that the actual acquisition or improvement of parkland could be realized in a more timely manner and thereby, strengthen the nexus between when the fees were collected and when they were used. Since the fee is required to be spent in the same district as it was collected, fewer districts equate to a larger pot of money for each district and therefore a shorter waiting period for putting an improvement project together.

A parks and open space "health" rating was also applied to the 7 new districts in the same manner as it was applied to the 17 smaller planning areas found in the plan. The health ratings should be used to determine the level of fee charged within the district so that those "greener" areas pay less than those areas that are less "green" (i.e., fewer parkland facilities). This provides a stronger proportionality between the need for parks and the amount being collected in each district.

The corresponding map and table illustrate the health ratings of the parkland fee districts.

# Parkland Fee Districts (Composite Parks & Open Spaces Health Assessment)



**Parkland Fee District Health Ratings**

Parkland Fee District	Community Parks				Neighborhood Parks				Total Parks				Distance to Parks, Trails, etc.			
	Existing Population	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	% of NRPA	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	% of NRPA	Rating	Total Acres	Acres Per 1000	% Total Area	Rating	District Acres	Acres w/in 1/4 Mile	% w/in 1/4 mile	Rating
7 North Topeka	6,237	23.70	3.80	76.00%	8.20	1.13	22.66%	1	37.57	6.02	1.14%	1	3309.75	1445.37	43.67%	3
8 Oakland	6,243	51.30	8.22	164.34%	23.70	3.65	72.92%	3	172.3	27.60	11.80%	4	1460.00	713.94	48.90%	3
6 Lower Silver Lake Road	216	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00%	1	0	0	0.00%	1	1424.37	0.00	0.00%	1
<b>North/Oakland</b>	<b>12,696</b>	<b>75.00</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>118.15%</b>	<b>31.90</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>50.25%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>209.87</b>	<b>16.53</b>	<b>3.39%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6194.12</b>	<b>2159.31</b>	<b>34.86%</b>	<b>2</b>
13 Central Topeka	26,926	16.30	0.61	12.11%	72.60	2.59	51.86%	3	111.05	4.12	2.57%	1	4322.49	3591.99	83.10%	4
15 South Topeka	15,468	0.00	0.00	0.00%	131.80	7.75	155.06%	4	361.21	23.35	11.34%	4	3185.24	2410.59	75.68%	4
<b>Central/South</b>	<b>42,394</b>	<b>16.30</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>7.69%</b>	<b>204.40</b>	<b>4.82</b>	<b>96.43%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>472.26</b>	<b>11.14</b>	<b>6.29%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7507.73</b>	<b>6002.58</b>	<b>79.95%</b>	<b>4</b>
10 East Topeka	7,252	16.53	2.28	45.60%	73.43	9.18	183.58%	4	86.76	11.96	3.82%	1	2268.62	1273.38	56.13%	3
11 Highland Park	14,990	137.90	9.20	183.99%	29.05	1.82	36.31%	2	169.22	11.29	4.23%	2	3997.14	2801.20	70.08%	4
12 Downtown	2,988	0.00	0.00	0.00%	4.80	0.80	16.00%	1	25.05	8.38	1.81%	1	1382.36	747.72	54.09%	3
<b>East</b>	<b>25,230</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>6.12</b>	<b>122.42%</b>	<b>107.28</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>85.04%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>281.03</b>	<b>11.14</b>	<b>3.67%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7648.12</b>	<b>4822.29</b>	<b>63.05%</b>	<b>4</b>
19 Sherwood	5,595	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00%	1	0	0	0.00%	1	4167.69	164.21	3.94%	1
20 Southwest Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00%	8.70	0.97	19.33%	1	199.33	35.83	5.30%	2	3760.75	1524.61	40.54%	4
<b>Southwest</b>	<b>11,158</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>8.70</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>15.59%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>199.33</b>	<b>17.86</b>	<b>2.51%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7928.44</b>	<b>1688.82</b>	<b>21.30%</b>	<b>2</b>
16 Southeast Topeka	5,563	0.00	0.00	0.00%	28.90	1.93	38.53%	2	28.9	5.20	1.05%	1	2760.83	1255.90	45.49%	3
17 Berryton	6,073	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00%	1	1011.2	166.50	13.91%	4	7266.79	2264.33	31.16%	2
<b>Southeast</b>	<b>11,636</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>28.90</b>	<b>2.48</b>	<b>49.67%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1040.1</b>	<b>89.38</b>	<b>10.37%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10027.62</b>	<b>3520.23</b>	<b>35.11%</b>	<b>2</b>
1 North US 75	2,240	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00%	1	0	0	0.00%	1	2299.21	130.37	5.67%	1
2 Rochester Road	4,082	115.00	28.17	563.45%	5.00	0.21	4.17%	1	115	28.17	1.88%	1	6102.88	1061.29	17.39%	2
<b>Half Day Creek</b>	<b>6,322</b>	<b>115.00</b>	<b>18.19</b>	<b>363.81%</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>15.82%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>18.19</b>	<b>1.37%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8402.09</b>	<b>1191.66</b>	<b>14.18%</b>	<b>1</b>
14 West Topeka	16,838	65.00	3.86	77.21%	14.20	0.71	14.20%	1	511.78	30.39	9.70%	3	5275.51	3687.58	69.90%	4
18 West I-70	10,599	0.00	0.00	0.00%	9.15	0.46	9.15%	1	169.56	16.00	3.44%	1	4929.43	427.38	8.67%	1
<b>West</b>	<b>27,437</b>	<b>65.00</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>47.38%</b>	<b>23.35</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>17.02%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>681.34</b>	<b>24.83</b>	<b>6.68%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10204.94</b>	<b>4114.96</b>	<b>40.35%</b>	<b>3</b>

NRPA Standard = 5 acres/1000 people

Community Park	Rating	N'hood Park Rating	Total Park Rating	Total Park	1/4 mile Distance	Average Rating
<b>North/Oakland</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.50</b>
<b>Central/South</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.75</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.50</b>
<b>Southwest</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.25</b>
<b>Southeast</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<b>Half Day Creek</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.75</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.00</b>

Scale:  
 1 - 1.74 Intensive Care  
 1.75 - 2.49 At Risk  
 2.5 - 3.24 Out Patient  
 3.25 - 4 Healthy