

# OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Vandalia Open Space & Recreation Plan reflects a number of policies aimed at maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in Vandalia. The plan reflects the central role that recreation, open space, and leisure activities play within the community. It is important to note that a successful “open space” element builds upon a public-private partnership. Some elements will be publicly owned, such as parks and recreation lands and facilities, and other protected lands; others like the floodplains, streams, steep topography and cultural sites may be in private ownership. All contribute to the special character of Vandalia and must be maintained, preserved, and enhanced for the future.

There are three basic functions which open space serves: (1) It can meet positive human needs - both physically and psychologically - in recreation amenities; (2) It can enhance and protect the natural resources of the community; and, (3) It can affect economic development elements like tourism, the cultural base of the community, development patterns, employment, and real estate values.

The Open Space & Recreation Plan builds upon and augments what is the land base of the City and what has been built in the past. The City of Vandalia has a very solid base of park and recreation lands. The land reflects a variety of physiographic features such as topography, rivers, and streams. Together these general outdoor recreation and natural environmental areas constitute the ingredients of the Open Space Plan.

## OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

### OPEN SPACE

#### **A. Objectives:**

The City of Vandalia’s remaining natural features and other areas gained by annexation should be provided for and protected in keeping with the community vision.

#### **B. Principles:**

1. Provide an interconnected open space system to permanently maintain visual and functional linkages between parks and other open spaces.
2. Explore the use of the conservation concept through the acquisition of development rights and easements as development occurs and preserve open space, scenic views, woodlands, wetlands, and flood plains.
3. Preserve natural features such as woodland and ravines through strict enforcement of well-defined flood plain, wetland, and storm water management regulations.

4. Avoid erosion and sedimentation by encouraging preventative measures during the development process.
5. Recognize that the streams, ravines, and wooded areas are very important environmental elements within the community and should be preserved, where appropriate.
6. Develop an open space system that protects environmentally critical areas such as floodways and drainage corridors against encroachment; preserves significant vistas and views; provides relief from expanses of development and pavement; and offers opportunities for development of systems of greenways and sites for outdoor recreation.

## **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

### **A. Objectives:**

The park system, aimed at serving the City, shall be planned, located, designed, and constructed to provide: recreational opportunities for the City, each neighborhood and sub-neighborhood with park grounds and playgrounds, and recreational facilities for use by all age groups.

### **B. Park Development Principles:**

1. Provide neighborhood parks for basic recreational opportunities that are easily accessible to local residents.
2. Provide specialty parks for meeting community-wide needs, and protecting unique landmarks and environmentally significant areas.
3. Locate parks to enhance unique landmarks and environmentally significant areas.
4. Maintain cooperative provision and use of school-park sites and facilities to provide maximum recreational opportunities.
5. Carefully review park sites accepted for use by the City to ensure suitability for the projected needs of a given area. Such review will include review of the topography, nature of the soils, vegetation, and surrounding land uses.
6. Promote and encourage the dedication and development of bicycle and pedestrian linkages between parks.
7. Maintain current levels of recreational amenities to ensure maximum usage and enjoyment by the residents.

## **GENERAL STANDARDS**

Ideally, an area such as Vandalia should have a combination of several types of parks including community parks, neighborhood parks, and passive open space. Community parks are lands that provide for recreational facilities, both active and passive, to the entire community and generally should be minimum of 25 acres in size. In an urban environment, such a park should serve an area of approximately two square miles. Community parks should be easily accessible by foot or bicycle.

Passive recreation areas have no designated service area or ideal size. Rather, they are generally designated in recognized environmentally sensitive locations or areas with unique potential for contributing to special activities such as hiking, bird watching, or picnicking.

The City must keep in mind that with any increase in population, care must be taken to continue to provide additional parklands to meet the demands of the new residents. Acquisition of parklands, active or passive, traditionally has been done through donations or dedication of land. A number of parks within some areas of the City have been acquired through purchase.

Following are general standards addressing the amount of parkland that should be acquired to achieve a high quality park system that meets the needs of the City.

- ❑ 10 acres of community park land per 1,000 residents;
- ❑ 6 acres of passive open space per 1,000 residents; and
- ❑ 3 acres of neighborhood park land per 1,000 residents.

Standards do not mean a lot unless the location of such parkland meets the needs of the residents being served. Therefore, location is key. Ideally, as development occurs, locations should be selected as subdivision review takes place by the various planning bodies. Compact growth rather than stripping out township roads provides an opportunity to locate parks within easy access to the residents.

## **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

The City has ten parks (three under construction as a part of the subdivisions), a sports complex, a golf course, and a swimming pool. An inventory of the existing park and recreation facilities can be found in Table 9.1 below.

**Table 9.1**

<b>Park / Facility</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Type</b>
Robinette Park	12 acres	Neighborhood park
Lichtenfels Park	8.5 acres	Passive open space
Victory Park	1 acre	Neighborhood park
Jeffers Park	9.5 acres	Neighborhood park
Warner Park	0.34 acre	Neighborhood park
Ashbury Park	Not yet built	Neighborhood park
Foxfire Park	Not yet built	Neighborhood park
Brown School Woods Park	Not yet built	Neighborhood park
Helke Park	32 acres	Passive open space
Seger Park	1 acre	Passive open space
Sports Complex	100 acres	Community facility
Cassel Hills Swimming Pool	25 acres	Community facility

Cassel Hills Golf Course		Community facility
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Many of the newer developments in the City have private parkland. Private parkland exists in The Falls, Village Brooke, Guillmen Estates, Cedarbrook and Cassel Hills. This further enhances the open space amenities that exist for residents of those developments.

Based on general standards and not considering privately held open space, the inventory of parkland reveal that the City is currently deficient in the amount of city-owned parkland that should have been set-aside. Only 23 acres of neighborhood parks exist. This number will change when the three new neighborhood parks are completed. However, it is estimated that these parks will be under one acre. For a population of 14,000 residents, 42 acres of neighborhood parkland should be available.

The majority of the new subdivisions being constructed currently have only a half to one-acre parcel of land that has been dedicated as open space. Typically these parcels contain play units for children. These pocket parks should be linked to increase the open space network found in the City.

Only 41.5 acres of passive open space exist. The City should have 84 acres. Only when the sports complex and swimming pool are added to the equation does the City meet the general standards. However, these facilities as well as the golf course are not considered passive open space. The golf course and swimming pool are active recreational facilities that charge a fee for use.

A map illustrating the 1994 non-urban land use / land cover can be found in the Appendix. Since 1994, much of the non-urban land along Brown School Road has been developed into subdivisions. However, a large amount of this non-urban land still exists today and can provide a starting point for the development of a parks and recreation master plan. Also, the City of Vandalia has the opportunity to use the floodplain of the Miami River to create a greenway. Such a set-a-side does not need to be publicly acquired land. Rather, these strips create a greenway that will enhance the beauty of these natural resources and preserve the character of the landscape.

The City should work toward the development of additional resources that could provide money for the purchase of land and the maintenance of the parks. It is important that the City obtain land prior to the increasing costs resulting from continued development pressure. Park Districts as well as community land trusts have proven to be sound investments, especially for the preservation of open space as growth occurs. The City should explore creating a Community Land Trust to work with the Parks and Recreation Department on acquiring open space and recreation land.

Even though not owned by the City of Vandalia, the Taylorsville Reserve provides an excellent open space buffer along the eastern boundary of the City. The Taylorsville Reserve provides passive recreational opportunities to residents of the City and surrounding communities. The City can build upon this open space network and enhance

it by creating community greenways that link the Taylorsville Reserve to the other park and recreational facilities found throughout the City.

In addition to the open space amenities, the City of Vandalia has a tremendous recreational base. Active recreational facilities such as tennis courts, basketball courts and play equipment are located in a number of parks in the City. The largest concentrations of active recreational facilities are in Helke Park, right, and the Sports Complex. Seger Park has a gazebo that is used for weddings, gatherings, summer movies and concerts. The City of Vandalia also has Cassel Hills Swimming Pool and Cassel Hills Golf Course. A clubhouse is located at the Golf Course.



In July 1999, the City began construction of a new 58,000 square foot community recreation center. The recreation center will be the central focus of the Sports Complex and will contain state of the art exercise equipment as well as provide an indoor jogging track, indoor lap pool, and a climbing wall. The recreation center will be open to all Vandalia citizens. Persons who work in the City of Vandalia will also be able to use the facility.

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for coordinating a number of various sports leagues and programs throughout the year. Township residents are able to participate in many of these programs. The School District allows the Parks and Recreation Department to use many of its facilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Undertake the creation of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that identifies future park sites.
2. Work with surrounding political jurisdictions and the Metroparks District to promote the construction of interconnected hike / bike trails surrounded by open space that connects neighborhoods within residential areas, interconnects opens space, scenic roads and greenways resulting in a linear park system connecting the entire county.
3. Encourage the preservation of open space along the Miami River. Minimum preservation should include all floodways as determined by the City Engineer or 100 feet from centerlines whichever is greater.
4. Provide aggressive leadership in encouraging collaborative partnerships between the county, townships, municipalities, and the private sector in the creation and / or designation of new open space.
5. Move toward the creation of neighborhoods rather than subdivisions by providing for interconnected bike / walking paths between areas.
6. Consider creating a Community Land Trust.

