City of Stoughton

Park Design Guidelines

Updated ~~8-17~~10-13-22

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Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide direction to staff, landscape architects, contractors and developers in the design, construction, and maintenance of public parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities in the City of Stoughton. The guidelines will be used as a tool in evaluating submittals for all new parks and any significant changes to parks.

Only improvements where Stoughton Parks and Recreation and/or Stoughton Public Works will assume operations and maintenance activities are subject to these guidelines.

Mission Statement

The City of Stoughton seeks to provide a park and recreation system that will: meet the needs of our current residents and future generations; preserve and protect the City's open space, water, historical and natural resources; and provide a park and recreation program that is designed to enhance our quality of life.

Goals

- Provide guidance to developers for park site selection and development
- Create a standard for parks, park equipment, and amenities

General Planning and Design Policies

The following policies are intended to provide guidance on the planning and design of all parks and recreation facilities in Stoughton:

- Incorporate public input into park master planning and design to ensure that community needs and issues are addressed. Public outreach should include nearby neighbors, likely park users, community members, and partner agencies in the park design process.
- Involve maintenance and recreation program staff in the design process so that maintenance and programming requirements are considered during site selection, design, and development.
- Consider the layout of the surrounding neighborhood when placing park amenities. Situate lighting and noise-producing amenities away from the neighboring homes to minimize conflicts.
- Locate amenities such as playground equipment, picnic shelters, and basketball courts to provide visibility from adjoining streets which will promote safety, minimize vandalism, and encourage use.
- Incorporate American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines into all new parks to facilitate site access, circulation, and facility use for people of all ages and abilities.
- Incorporate new technologies, sustainable design, and conservation-smart elements into all park and recreation facility designs to facilitate operational efficiency. This commitment may be demonstrated through the use of green building technologies, alternative power, low water-use fixtures, automated sport field lighting, and storm water treatment techniques.
- Incorporate public art and interpretive elements into parks to contribute to park identity and character. Interpretative elements can be incorporated into parks of all types to raise community awareness about the local environment and history. Art elements are well-suited for community parks, citywide parks, urban open space, or other community-serving areas.

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- Conduct a cost impact analysis prior to design and development of all new major recreation facilities.

Site Selection and Planning Principles

Consistency

Choose park and trail locations that are consistent with the spirit and intent of the Department's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, with the City's Comprehensive Plan, and with other policies and plans adopted by City Council.

Environmental Protection

Locate parks and open spaces in coordination with surrounding new developments, where reasonable, to preserve and protect the water quality and wildlife habitat of riparian corridors, wetlands, and flood plains and to integrate preserved open space and natural areas into developed areas for both visual diversity and the definition of neighborhood character. Protect and enhance natural resources that have outstanding recreation, conservation and educational value to the public.

Accessibility and Connectivity

Connections are the key to creating an open space system that integrates all parts of the city into a cohesive whole. Benefits of trail development range from the preservation of linear open spaces to the promotion of active, healthy lifestyles to the creation of an alternative corridor for transportation. Ideally, parks and open space should be physically connected to provide continuous ribbons of green space woven throughout the city, maximizing value to wildlife and, where appropriate, to commuters and recreational users.

1. Residents should be able to leave their homes and readily access the parks and open space system in their neighborhoods
2. Design bicycle and pedestrian transportation systems for efficiency and connectivity around all parks and open spaces.

Park Design and Development Guidelines

Park design and development guidelines are provided for each park classification. These guidelines include the following for each classification:

Description

A definition is presented to describe each park type. This section also describes the typical length of use and means of travel to each type of park.

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

Include recommendations for site size, site access, street frontage, parking, etc.

Features & Amenities to Consider

These elements should be considered during the master planning and design process for inclusion in all new parks of this classification.

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Features and Amenities to Consider and Avoid

These elements are not compatible with the park classification and should not be included in the design and development of these types of parks.

Community Parks

Description

Community parks are areas of diverse recreational activity and serve several neighborhoods. Community parks are typically 10 acres or larger but may vary depending on facilities offered.

Typical community park users:

- Come from within 1 to 2 miles of the park;
- Arrive by auto, bicycle, or foot; and
- Visit the park for 1 to 3 hours

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- At least two-thirds of the site should be available for active recreation use. Adequate buffers or natural open space areas should separate active recreation use from homes.
- The site should be visible from adjoining streets and have a minimum of 50% of street frontage.
- Parking requirements should be based upon the facilities provided at the site. Generally, 50 off-street spaces per ballfield are required, plus an additional 5 spaces per acre of active use areas.
- Access to the site should be provided via a collector or arterial street with sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and trail corridor or greenway system when possible.

Features & Amenities to Consider

- Playgrounds
- Open turf area for unstructured play
- Designated sports fields for baseball, softball, and soccer. Fields may be in a complex within the park.
- Looped pathway system
- Large picnic shelters
- Permanent restrooms
- Tennis and Pickleball courts. Courts may be in a complex within the park.
- Basketball courts
- Field lighting
- Skate park
- Splash pad
- Off-leash dog area
- Community gardens
- Concessions or vendor space
- Interpretive signage
- Public art
- Indoor recreation center

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- Landscape improvements including tree planting
- Storage or maintenance buildings; if visible, these should be architecturally compatible with other park elements. Any exterior work areas should be screened from view.
- Off-Street Parking

Features & Amenities to Avoid

- N/A

Neighborhood Parks

Description

Neighborhood parks serve a variety of age groups within a limited area or neighborhood. Neighborhood parks typically include areas for active recreational use such as field or court games and playgrounds. Typical size is between 3 to 10 acres.

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- At least 50% of site should be relatively level and usable providing space for both active and passive uses.
- The site should be visible from adjoining streets and have a minimum of 50% of street frontage.
- Access to the site should be provided via local street with sidewalks and trail corridor/greenway system when possible. Neighborhood parks fronting on arterial streets should be discouraged.
- On-street parking should be provided. Larger sites may include off-street parking with the amount depending on the facilities provided at the site.
- Active and noise producing facilities, such as basketball courts, should be located at least 100 feet from nearby homes or property zoned for residential use.
- Each neighborhood is different and some consideration to making neighborhood parks different is important.

Features & Amenities to Consider

- Playgrounds
- Open turf area for unstructured play
- Basketball (full or half) court
- Volleyball court
- Multi-use fields for practice
- Picnic tables
- Small picnic shelter
- Pathway connecting park elements
- Interpretive signage
- Natural area (if present at site)
- Portable or permanent restrooms
- Landscape improvements including tree planting
- On-street parking

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Features & Amenities to Avoid

- Horticulture or annual plantings unless sponsored and maintained by a neighborhood or community group
- Indoor recreation center
- Wading pools and similar types of amenities that require staff supervision or highly specialized maintenance
- Sports fields for league play
- Off-street parking

Mini Parks

Description

Mini parks are used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreation needs of concentrated populations such as tots or senior citizens. Typical size is 1 acre or less but parks may be categorized as mini parks simply based on the type and quantity of facilities they offer.

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- All or most of site should be relatively level providing space for both active and passive uses.
- The site should have at least 25% of park boundary on street frontage.
- Access to the site should be provided via local street with sidewalks.

Features & Amenities to Consider

- Open air shelter or small event space
- Children's playground including specialized play equipment such as tot lots
- Half basketball court
- Community garden
- Landscape improvements including tree planting

Features & Amenities to Avoid

- Off-street parking
- Permanent restrooms

Special-Use Parks

Description

Special use parks are areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as golf courses, campgrounds, nature centers, and skate parks. They may also be used to designate areas that are primarily used as event space, general gathering areas, expanded trail corridors, or plaza space. There are no set standards for size.

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- Site size depends on intended use, but should be sufficient to accommodate the special use and necessary support facilities.
- Access to the site should generally be provided by means of a collector arterial street.

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- The site should connect to trail corridors if possible

Features & Amenities to Consider

- Special use facility or facilities
- Portable or permanent restrooms (depending on facilities and anticipated amount of site use)
- Landscape improvements including tree planting
- On-street or off-street parking
- Pathway system
- Seating

Features & Amenities to Avoid

- Uses that conflict or detract from the special use

Trail Corridors & Greenways

Description

Trail corridors and greenways include developed, landscaped corridors and more natural, less-developed greenways that follow linear features such as abandoned railroad rights-of-way, canals, power lines, creeks and streams, and other elongated features.

Typical trail and greenway users:

- May come from throughout the city;
- Arrive by auto, bicycle, or foot;
- May use the trail and greenway to travel to a park or other community site; and
- May visit the trail for one or more hours

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- Trail corridors should generally follow continuous special feature strips, with a minimum corridor width of 50 feet.
- Trail corridors should link to and be incorporated to neighborhood and community parks to provide a linear park system.
- Trail corridors should link to regional trail systems.
- Due to the shape, configuration, and potential for user noise in these parks, user impacts on adjoining neighbors should be considered. Fences or landscaping may be used to provide some privacy for neighbors, but the provision of these features also should consider user safety.
- Paved pathways should be designed to accommodate maintenance and patrol vehicles.
- The amount and type (on-street or off-street) of parking provided at trailheads will depend on facilities at the site and anticipated trail use.

Features & Amenities to Consider

- Paved pathways
- Viewpoints
- Seating areas
- Picnic tables

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- Wayfinding signage
- Trailhead or entry kiosk
- Landscaped areas, ornamental plantings, turf areas
- Maintained natural vegetation
- Fences, landscaping, or other features to control access near adjoining residential areas
- Parking at major trailheads

Features & Amenities to Avoid

- Active use facilities such as sport fields and paved courts (only in trail corridor areas)

Natural Areas

Description

Natural areas may preserve or protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as wildlife habitats, stream and creek corridors, or unique and/or endangered plant species. Public access may be limited as these sites, which~~te~~ often include wetlands, steep hillsides, or other similar spaces. Some natural areas may be managed secondarily to provide passive recreation opportunities.

Typical recreation user of natural areas:

- Comes from throughout the city;
- Arrives by auto, bicycle, or foot;
- Uses a trail within the natural area; and
- Visits the area for an extended time

Site Selection & Development Guidelines

- Site size should be based on natural resource needs. Acreage should be sufficient to preserve or protect the resource.
- Emphasis for acquisition should be on lands offering unique features that have the potential to be lost to development.
- An analysis should be made to determine if unique qualities and conditions exist to warrant acquisition.
- Development and site improvements should be kept to a minimum, keeping the park's emphasis on the natural environment, interpretive features, and educational facilities.
- Natural open space areas should be managed and maintained for a sense of solitude, separation, or environmental protection.
- Site use should be limited to the numbers and types of visitors the area can accommodate while still retaining its natural character and the intended level of solitude.
- Where feasible, public access and use of these areas should be encouraged, but environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from overuse.
- Off-street parking should be considered for larger natural areas if a trail is located within the site. The amount will depend upon the anticipated trail use. Otherwise, on-street parking should be provided.

Features and Amenities to Consider

- Interpretive signage

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- Small picnic shelter
- Limited picnic areas
- Trail and pathway system
- Trailhead or entry kiosk
- Viewpoints
- Interpretive or education facilities
- Portable or permanent restrooms (depending on facilities and anticipated amount of site use)
- On-street or off-street parking (depending on anticipated amount of site use)

Features and Amenities to Avoid

- Depends on site

Guidance for Developers

Sustainable communities include parks and open spaces where residents and visitors can enjoy recreation, connect with nature, and gather with neighbors. Thanks to the foresight of and vision of community leaders, citizens, and land developers, Stoughton boasts an extensive park system. To continue with this standard, a parkland dedication is required for developments.

The City depends on neighborhood and community parks to meet the recreational needs of its citizens. Land development should meet the needs of the residents. These classes of parks are dedicated when land is developed and are the basis of the sections below.

Design and Review Process for City Parks

The process described below is the typical sequence of reviews conducted with the City of Stoughton's Director of Parks & Recreation and the consultant. This process encompasses the majority of projects and will serve as a general framework for providing direction regarding the specifics of the design and construction documents. The outline below is the basic format and can be adapted as needed for special case scenarios. Private sector development, renovation, or special use areas should follow this process to the closest extent possible. Other services and procedures may be required depending on the scope of the project.

Nothing in this document shall be construed as a requirement or endorsement for the consultant to provide services for which~~ite~~ they are not qualified or appropriately licensed. The consultant shall exercise their professional judgement regarding design specifics. All projects shall conform to local, state, and federal codes, laws, and ordinances.

1. **Scoping/Programming Meeting**

   This meeting will occur during the scoping phase, and prior to the execution of a consultant's conceptual plan for the development is completed. The Parks and Recreation Director will convey the needs outlined in the city's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, city's Comprehensive Plan, county's Park and Open Space Plan, and other relevant plans. The City will also provide any available information regarding site selection criteria and the Site Evaluation Report.

2. **Site Selection Review**

The consultant will prepare the Site Evaluation Report for this meeting with the Parks and Recreation Director. The intent at this time will be to review possible site selections for the parkland within the development. These conceptual plans will be sketch quality, fairly abstract diagrams that demonstrate the location, arrangement, size and spacing of the park. The intention is to identify the opportunities and constraints of various layouts. Once a site is selected, it will need to be approved by the Parks & Recreation Committee.

3. Park Master Plan Review

Commented [DG1]: The planning process for new parks has not had approved Master Plan reports in the past. They have been conceptual plans without City Council approval.

The consultant will prepare schematic design drawings which will setup the preliminary arrangement of programmatic and physical components, including hardscape elements, accessibility, circulation, drainage, grades and slopes, planting scheme, furnishings, and play equipment. This is intended to be a collaborative process and based on the complexity of the project, there may be several iterations of schematic design solutions. The reviews may include sketch quality drawings or hardline drawings.

Once a schematic design is resolved, the consultant shall prepare a final line drawing. If the project scope includes a public meeting, the consultant will prepare rendered presentation graphics. A budget work sheet with realistic cost estimates for any site improvements must be included with the plan. All Park Master Plans must be adopted by City Council.

Commented [DG2]: This is needed and was not done when Nordic Ridge Park was developed.

4. Design Development/30% & 60% Construction Documents

The consultant will prepare a set of drawings that will create the framework for the final drawings and that start filling in the specifics of the design. A meeting will be held to review the progress of the 30% and 60% construction drawings, and will ascertain that the schedule and budget of the project is on track, the intent of the design is being followed, and any issues are being remedied.

5. 90% Construction Documents

The consultant will prepare and submit a set of construction drawings to the 90% complete stage. The drawings shall be prepared to a level that is considered biddable and buildable. A meeting will be held to review the submittal to ascertain that all details and specifications required are included in the drawings. This will allow the City to identify any particulars that need clarification or correction.

A preliminary cost estimate shall also be prepared by the consultant at this stage.

If the project will be publicly bid, the consultant shall prepare and submit a contract manual and associated bidding documents to the Parks and Recreation Director.

6. Final Documents for Construction Documents and Pricing/Bidding

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After approval of the 90% plans, specifications and estimate, the consultant will prepare and submit final construction documents.

The consultant will coordinate the distribution of plan sets, participate in the pre-bid meeting, review the bids, prepare a bid tabulation, and a recommendation of award, and verify the contract and agreement documents.

7. **Pre-Construction Meeting**

   Prior to the start of construction, all parties will meet to review the specifics of the construction process including the schedule for construction.

Site Evaluation Report

Once a site within a development is selected by the developer for the parkland dedication, the developer should prepare a site evaluation report. The report shall include and follow the following format:

1. **Title Page**

2. **Executive Summary**

   The executive summary summarizes the type and size of the planned park; briefly describes the sites; ~~i~~Indicates~~d~~ which site was selected and the rationale for choosing the selected site.

3. **Site Selection Process**

   Explains the site selection criteria and the criteria rating and weighting schemes. Include the following graphics in this section:

   - Context map showing site(s) and its immediate surroundings
   - Location map showing all of the sites that were considered and key landmarks or reference points such as major streets
   - Aerial photography of each site
   - Photographic panoramas
   - Site topographic map

4. **Comparative Evaluation of Candidate Sites**

   Describe the strengths and weaknesses of each individual site. Include the following graphics:

   - Site evaluation matrix
   - Tabulated data summarizing the individual site evaluations allowing for comparison among the alternative sites

5. **Conclusion**

Briefly summarize the site selected, process used, and determination. If minimum -base criteria is not met, then it should be explained why they are not attainable in this section.

6. **References**

Site Selection Criteria Rating and Weighting

This site selection process is used for the continuing acquisition of open space for new parks and public recreation areas. The Minimum Criteria must be met to be considered for further evaluation. Additionally, it is strongly recommended that the minimums in each category for the Base Criteria in the weighting system be met for an approvable site. The Parks & Recreation Committee will use the weighting system to assist in determining if the site is appropriate for a park.

Minimum Criteria

All sites must meet all of the minimum ~~"base"~~ or threshold criteria listed below to be considered for further evaluation. This step ensures the sites meet at least the minimum standards for:

Site Size

The minimum land dedication must provide 90% of the land required per the parkland dedication requirement. Trail corridors are counted towards the parkland dedication requirement. Storm water retention ponds located within a park do not count towards the land dedication.

Slopes

Land dedicated for parkland shall have areas with slopes of 5% or less in 10% of the parkland for a neighborhood park and/or community park. Land can be graded by the developer to provide less slope. The area with slopes less than 5% must be adjacent to a public roadway.

Contiguous Land

Land shall be dedicated in a contiguous parcel. An exception to this is if the development is fragmented by an arterial street, highway, or railroad.

Frontage

Should be fronted on 50% of border by streets, public areas, and/or undeveloped land with no rear residential lots adjacent to the park.

Existing Conditions

The site shall not be encumbered by overhead utility lines, easements of any type, unstable soils, floodplains, wetlands, or toxic conditions which may limit the opportunity for park and recreation development.

Pedestrian and Bikeway Connectivity

Parks and other major points of interests such as schools should be connected by an off-road trail corridor. The City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan conceptually outlines trail routes and should be taken into consideration when planning routes. Regional trail connections shall be protected and be incorporated into the park layout when necessary. The regional trail map can be found in Dane County's Parks & Open Space Plan.

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Commented [DG8]: Slopes of 5% or less allow for ADA accessibility which is needed for programmed features of the park such as restrooms, playgrounds, and sport courts.

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Dedication Percent

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Base Criteria

Dedication Percent (30 Points)

~~90 percent of parkland dedication is fulfilled = 5 point~~

~~91-99 percent of parkland dedication is fulfilled = 15 points~~

100 percent of parkland dedication is fulfilled = 30 points

91-99 percent of parkland dedication is fulfilled = 15 points

90 percent of parkland dedication is fulfilled = 5 point

Slopes (15 points)

Slopes of 5% or less in 50% or more of the parkland for a neighborhood park and/or a community park are met = 15 points

Slopes of 5% or less in 25-49% of the parkland for a neighborhood park and/or a community park are met = 10 points

Slopes of 5% or less in 10-24% of the parkland for a neighborhood and/or a community park are met = 5 points

Frontages (25 points)

80-100% of frontage border are public streets, public areas, and/or undeveloped land with no rear residential lots adjacent to the park = 25 points

60-79% of frontage border are public streets, public areas, and/or undeveloped land with no rear residential lots adjacent to the park = 15 points

50-59% of frontage border are public streets, public areas, and/or undeveloped land with no rear residential lots adjacent to the park = 5 points

Connectivity (30 points)

~~Park is connected to other parks with off-road trail = 5 point~~

~~Park is connected with 50-75-foot-wide off-road trail corridor with vegetation = 15 points~~

Park is connected with a 75+ foot wide off-road trail corridor with vegetation = 30 points

Park is connected with 50-75-foot-wide off-road trail corridor with vegetation = 15 points

Park is connected to other parks with off-road trail = 5 point

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Bonus Criteria

Historical or cultural resources on-site = 10 points

Relatively undisturbed sites supporting significant and diverse plant and wildlife habitat = 10 points

Park size is over 10 acres = 5 points

Park can be expanded with future development = 5 points

~~Historical or cultural resources on-site = 10 points~~

~~Relatively undisturbed sites supporting significant and diverse plant and wildlife habitat = 10 points~~

Waterfront access = 5 points

Healthy, established, mature, and non-invasive trees = 5 points

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Land dedication is over the parkland dedication requirement by 10% = 5 points

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