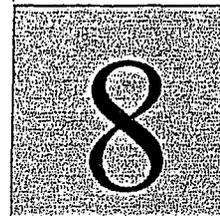




Parks and Recreation Study

Parks and Recreation



INTRODUCTION

There is a growing recognition of the fact that open spaces and parks are essential parts of community life. Parks are not just a luxury, but they provide visual and emotional relief from every day stressful life.

Although establishing the monetary value of parks and recreational facilities is difficult, it is well known that they tend to influence the quality of development in a city. Critical functions of open spaces are as follows (Listoken, 1989):

- Preserving ecologically important natural environments
- Providing attractive views and visual relief from developed areas
- Providing access to sunlight and air
- Buffering other land uses
- Separating areas and controlling densities
- Functioning as drainage detention areas
- Serving as wildlife preserves
- Providing opportunities for recreational activities
- Helping create quality development with lasting value

Open spaces can be classified in two broad categories: passive spaces and active spaces. Passive space is a park or garden that is landscaped and intended for peaceful relaxation, meditation and reflection, quiet conversation, and strolling. Monuments, fountains, and sculptures often are placed among the trees, shrubs, and lawns to engender a contemplative spirit. Play grounds, on the other hand, are designed for more active recreation and include playing fields, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, and other play areas (Whittick, 1974).

EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

Analysis of St. Marys' land-use map reveals that approximately 25 acres are devoted to programmed parks and open spaces. In addition, the city operates a golf course and owns an undeveloped park site. Standards established by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) suggest a core system of parklands with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population. Given the existing population of approximately 2,500 persons, NRPA

Chapter Sections:

- Introduction
- Existing Parks and Recreational Areas
- Recommendations

There is a growing recognition of the fact that open spaces and parks are essential parts of community life.

Passive open spaces are designed for relaxation and strolling, while active spaces are designed for things such as baseball and tennis.

St. Marys has nearly 25 acres devoted to parks and open spaces, well within the NRPA suggested range of 15.63 to 26.25 acres.

While St. Marys has adequate space devoted to parks, the distribution of the parks appears to be uneven.

Riverside Park, the largest in the city at approximately 21 acres, serves as a community park with a number of recreational facilities.

The location of Riverside Park near the city's southern edge may restrict its use by residents who live near the northern edge of the city.

standards call for up to 26.25 acres of land in the city to be utilized for programmed parks and recreation. While St. Marys is well within the desired range of available parklands, the distribution of the parks throughout the community appears to be uneven.

In regard to sizes and service areas, NRPA defines three types of parks:

- Mini-park -- an approximately 1-acre site that serves an area within a quarter-mile radius
- Neighborhood Park/Playground -- a site consisting of 15 or more acres and serving an area within a half-mile radius
- Community Park -- a park of 25 or more acres with a service area of up to two miles

Existing parks and open spaces in St. Marys are discussed below.

Riverside Park

Riverside Park is the largest park in the city, covering an area of 21 acres. It functions as both active and passive recreational space, and it offers several recreational facilities to citizens:

- Tennis court
- Sand volleyball court
- T-ball field
- Youth league baseball field
- Official baseball field
- One large swimming pool and two smaller pools
- Bandstand
- Large play area
- Play area for toddlers
- Horseshoe pits
- Nine-hole miniature golf course

Because of its location near the southern edge of the city, the park is not easily accessible for many residents, as they must cross U.S. Highway 24 and possibly Kansas Highway 63. This park can be compared with a community park, as described by NRPA. Most of its facilities meet NRPA standards, but the size of the park is slightly less than the suggested 25 acres. However, the city has acquired additional land south of the park for expansion and for the provision of a soccer field.

THE STUDIES

Railroad Park

Railroad Park consists of a small strip of park space located near the intersection of U.S. 24 and K-63, and it measures 400 feet by 150 feet (approximately 1.38 acres). The park contains a memorial to Vietnam veterans, a water fountain, a picnic shelter, a swing, a statue, and a merry-go-round.

Due to its location between the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and U.S. 24, the park is not well-placed for children, particularly those who are unattended. The park can be used for outdoor exhibitions, botanical gardens, landmarks, and other miscellaneous uses.

The Flats

This area is located near the intersection of Alma and Sixth streets and consists of approximately one-half block of open space. It measures 150 feet by 250 feet (0.86 acres). Although it is slightly smaller than NRPA standards suggest for a "mini-park," it is conveniently located in a residential area. Facilities include a football field, a baseball field, a basketball court, and a shelter house. This park is suitable for small children, but its location adjacent to K-63 (Sixth Street) is potentially hazardous.

Area Behind the Library

The informal open space behind the library measures approximately 220 feet by 320 feet (1.6 acres) and is part of the library's grounds. The area is hilly with some steep slopes. Its relatively high elevation provides scenic views of the city and surrounding areas, and the slopes make it a popular place for children who enjoy wintertime sledding.

Golf Course

The nine-hole, 40-acre golf course is maintained by the city. It is used by residents of St. Marys as well as people from surrounding areas. The land dedicated to the golf course falls 10 acres short of meeting NRPA standards.

Area Adjacent to the Auto Salvage

The city owns a parcel of vacant land measuring 800 feet by 800 feet (14.69 acres) on the south side of the auto salvage lot, and city authorities intend to develop this site as a park. Because Riverside Park is somewhat difficult to approach from the north side of the city,

Railroad Park's location at the intersection of U.S. 24 and K-63, in addition to its proximity to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, limits its use as a park.

"The Flats" is a play area of approximately 0.86 acres, but its location adjacent to K-63 makes it potentially hazardous, particularly for children.

The area on the grounds of the library provides a scenic overlook and a location for winter sledding.

The City of St. Marys maintains a nine-hole, 40-acre golf course.

City officials plan to transform a parcel of land near the auto salvage into a neighborhood park.

development of this land as a neighborhood park will provide an additional recreational area for citizens, particularly those who live north of U.S. 24.

RECOMMENDATION

- Consider the addition of parks and open spaces in areas of town that are not adequately served by existing parks.

SOURCES

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