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# chapter seven: acquisition



## t a r g e t   a r e a s

### **Definition and Purpose of Target Areas**

To create a citywide linkage of parks, open space, and greenways, two strategies were developed to provide the framework in which lands should be prioritized and acquired: the Three-Trail Loop and Eight Block concepts. Each area of town has been placed into a target area in order to define what lands need to be acquired in specific areas to meet the goals of the overall system. See Figure 2.1 for location of target areas.

#### **TARGET AREA: Downtown**

*Objective:* Acquire lands, easements, or access along the Arkansas River to connect the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Park to Rebsamen and Murray parks. Acquire lands that support development of urban plazas and parks linked by cultural trails.

#### **TARGET AREA: East**

*Objective:* Acquire access along the Missouri Pacific Railroad R.O.W. or lands along the Fourche Creek floodplain as it meets the Arkansas River to provide connections of the “Take it to the Earth” system to the “Take it to the Edge” system. Acquire lands or easements along the Arkansas River to provide public access and link-

ages of the “Edge” system to the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Park and the downtown beyond.

#### **TARGET AREA: East Central**

*Objective:* Obtain lands for one community park and lands along the Fourche Creek floodplain to provide trails and connections along the “Take it to the Earth” system.

#### **TARGET AREA: North Central**

*Objective:* Acquire land along or near the Arkansas River to provide public access and connections along the “Take it to the Edge” system. To the extent possible, acquire lands for neighborhood parks as necessary. Secondary trail connections along Rock Creek and other stream corridors linking to major trails should be obtained.

#### **TARGET AREA: West**

*Objective:* Obtain lands for neighborhood and community parks. Acquire lands along Rock Creek and beyond western reaches of the city to implement the city wide trail system and form the “Take it to the Extreme” system. Acquire land or access along or near the Arkansas River to connect the “Take it to the Edge” system to the “Extreme” system. Secondary trail connections along Rock Creek and other stream corridors linking to major trails should be obtained, if possible.

#### **TARGET AREA: West Central**

*Objective:* Obtain lands or access to lands along McHenry Creek and other stream corridors to provide linkages which form the “Take it to the Extreme” system. Acquire lands or obtain access to provide linkages south to the “Take it to the Earth” system along Fourche Creek. Acquire lands as necessary to implement the six-block coverage concept.

#### **TARGET AREA: Southwest**

*Objective:* Acquire lands along the Fourche Creek floodplain to provide trails and linkages for the “Take it to the Earth” system from Otter Creek Park toward downtown. Strategically acquire lands for neighborhood parks as opportunities arise to complete the six-block concept.

### ***Location with Respect to Target Areas***

The first step in evaluating a potential property for acquisition is to determine whether or not it is located within a target area and meets the objective established for that area. Normally, a property located within and meeting the objectives of a target area would receive highest priority.

As unforeseen acquisition opportunities arise, their relationship to the target areas and associated objectives should be reviewed. Acquisition of land that does not pass this first test (i.e. is either located outside the target area, or is within a target area but does not meet the objective established for that zone) may be considered appropriate if it contributes to achievement of the goals and objectives of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In this respect, the specific criteria listed below neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, and open space will assist in assessing the value for parkland acquisition of land not conforming to the target area objectives.

# relationship to the four-point strategy

## *Acquisition for Neighborhood Service*

As generally described in the above target areas, neighborhood parks should be provided as necessary to complete the eight-block concept coverage in *residential* areas not already served by existing parks, schools, greenways, or private parks. These areas primarily occur in southwest and west Little Rock, see Figure 5.6. Joint use agreements should be utilized with as many Little Rock schools as necessary to provide recreation service. Approximately 80 acres of additional lands for neighborhood parks and 120 acres for community parks citywide will be necessary to provide adequate neighborhood service levels to residents. One way that lands and/or in-lieu fees may be acquired for such park service is by the implementation of a parkland dedication ordinance. Potential lands for acquisition should meet the criteria described in Neighborhood and Community Parks: Criteria for Acquisition, see page 175.

## *Parkland Dedication*

Parkland dedication ordinances are commonly established to ensure that new developments are provided with adequate park service. Just as developments must provide for their impact on public utilities and streets, they are also many times required to provide for their impact on the public park system. Establishing a parkland dedication ordinance ensures that parks will be provided at the same level of service as growth expands outward and the demand for parks and facilities are being created.

Such ordinances define the specific amount of parkland to be dedicated for new residential units, based on the community's adopted level of service standards for local parks. If there is no suitable land that can be dedicated within a new development, or if the development is less than a minimum number of residential (or dwelling) units, a provision is usually included for the collection by the municipality of a fee "in-lieu" of that amount of land.

Parkland dedication ordinances should also address the type and location of proposed parks. To ensure that suitable parcels are dedicated which support active park uses and have appropriate access, many municipalities also define the type of land that is acceptable for dedication as well as accessibility requirements.

Typically, a jurisdiction reserves the right to accept or reject the parkland proposed for dedication by the developer, and can choose from or combine the methods by which the ordinance's requirements may be met:

- Dedication of a portion of the subdivision for parkland use
- Dedication of a parcel outside the subdivision for use as parkland, and/or
- Payment of a cash fee in-lieu of dedicating parkland

Dedication of suitable land for parks as part of large subdivision development is generally an easy task. However, smaller subdivisions may not include a large enough number of dwelling units to yield an acceptable contiguous parkland acreage. In these cases, a jurisdiction many times opts to collect the fee in-lieu of parkland and provides park service in reasonable proximity to the development.

The dollar amount of in-lieu fees is calculated at the cost of the land that would have otherwise been dedicated for park use. In some municipalities, cost for improving the land is also calculated as part of the in-lieu fee. Any in-lieu fee must be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the current cost of land based on changes in the real estate market and if applicable, rising costs of construction for park improvements.

### **Application to Little Rock**

If such an ordinance were to be approved by the Board of Directors, it may include the following guidelines for providing adequate park service to new developments.

The master plan recommends a standard level of service of 7 acres per 1000 people (2 acres of neighborhood parks and 5 acres of community parks). Since regional parks do not serve at a neighborhood level, their acreage should not be provided at the expense of residential developments, and are therefore not included in this number.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 1999 population estimates, the average household size in Little Rock is 2.33 persons. According to this number, the calculations for parkland dedication are as follows:

2.33 people per dwelling unit (DU) =  
429 DUs per 1000 people  
(since 429 people x 2.33 people per  
household = 1000 people)

The standard of 7 acres of park for every 1000 people is the same as 7 acres of park for every **429 DUs, which equals 1.63 acres** of park land per 100 DUs

**1.63 acres per 100 dwelling units** could be provided to ensure that new developments offer park service at the same level as is recommended in the master plan.

In-lieu fees may also be calculated as a per-acre cost to acquire land for parks. For example, if the cost of one acre is \$60,000, and a new development is to provide 1.63 acres of land per 100 dwelling units, then the appropriate in-lieu fee is calculated as follows:

$$1.63 \text{ acres} \times \$60,000 \text{ per acre} = \$97,800$$

\$97,800 of in-lieu fees for every 100 dwelling units, OR

**\$978 per dwelling unit**

This fee only covers the cost to purchase land and does not cover general improvements. An in-lieu fee must be sufficient to acquire land for neighborhood parks and is subject to change by Board of Directors ordinance.

*Therefore, a parkland dedication ordinance may require developments to provide either 1.63 acres of land for every 100 dwelling units proposed, or an in-lieu fee of \$978 per dwelling unit.*

Land suitable for the development of a neighborhood or community park may be accepted under the parkland dedication ordinance.

Floodplain areas may be accepted as part of a park only if found to contribute to the improvement of the park system (i.e. for linkage purposes) and only if access to the park is adequate.

If fewer than 500 dwelling units are proposed or if adequate neighborhood parks are located within one-half mile of the proposed development or if the recreation potential for that area would be better served by expanding or improving existing parks, the developer may be required to pay cash in-lieu of the land.

Cash payments for in-lieu fees are used only for the acquisition or improvement of a neighborhood or community park located within the same park planning area (refer to figure F1, Progress Paper One) as the proposed development. Such parks or improvements should be provided after adequate fees have been obtained for the construction or improvement of a neighborhood or community park and after adequate time for public input has passed.

Another issue that should be addressed in developing a parkland dedication ordinance is whether or not to grant credit for private recreational facilities developed within the subdivision. Many private facilities provide significant recreational amenities for the enjoyment of the residents. However, they may not be publicly-accessible and may not contribute to the citywide

parks and open space system. Therefore, partial credit towards dedication requirements may be granted at the discretion of the approving authority. A sliding scale may be established that provides a larger credit (up to 50 percent) for the development of private facilities that meet identified recreational facility needs (i.e. playgrounds, soccer fields, baseball fields, etc.)

### ***Acquisition for the Three-Trail Loop Network***

Access to the three-trail loop network should approximately follow the following routes. See Figure C3.

#### ***Take it to the Edge***

This system should generally follow the Arkansas River and connect east Little Rock to Two Rivers Park. Beginning at the connection in the east with the Take it to the Earth Trail, there are two possible points of origin. The first, and ideal connection, can be found on USGS 7.5' Quadrangle map 7553 II NW (Sweet Home, AR Quad), section 9, where Fourche Creek converges with the Arkansas River. With this point of origin, the Edge system would pass the Little Rock Airport. If lands fronting the Arkansas River are not available at this point, then the connection of the Earth and Edge systems should follow the Missouri-Pacific rail line through east Little Rock to the Arkansas River, at which

point the Edge trail network begins.

The Edge system should continue along the Arkansas River, joining the East Little Rock, William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Park, Riverfront, Rebsamen, Murray, and Two Rivers park sites. The convergence of the Little Maumelle and Arkansas Rivers marks the divergence of the Edge system away from the Arkansas River. Following the Little Maumelle River, the Edge system should connect to the Take it to the Extreme trail in the general area of Pinnacle Mountain, see USGS Quad 7553 IV SW (Pinnacle Mountain, AR) section 3.

#### ***Take it to the Extreme***

The Extreme system runs west of the current city limits, from the point of connection with the Take it to the Edge system as described above generally near Pinnacle Mountain and follows the Little Maumelle River past the new Regional Park 2000 parcel. The system continues to the divergence of Fletcher Creek at approximately USGS Quad 7553 IV SW (Pinnacle Mountain, AR) section 30. Follow then Fletcher Creek's west fork past Walnut Grove Church (USGS Quad 7453 II SE, Ferndale, AR section 33) and its fork to the east prior to Nixon Lake, to its headwaters at USGS Quad 7453 II NE (Congo, AR) section 4. From this point, access would be necessary to McHenry Creek's headwaters at approximately USGS Quad 7453 II NE (Congo, AR) section 9. The system then follows McHenry Creek around

Ellis Mountain (USGS Quad 7553 III NW Alexander, AR) to Lawson Road and ultimately converges with Fourche Creek at USGS Quad 7553 III NW (Alexander, AR) section 33, at which point meeting the Take it to the Earth system.

#### ***Take it to the Earth***

The third leg of the system originates at the point described above at which meeting the Extreme system with a connection to Otter Creek Park and follows Fourche Creek east until meeting the point of connection with the Edge system where Fourche Creek meets the Arkansas River, also described above. Connections to Granite Mountain and Gillam Park areas may be achieved through the acquisition of easements or floodplain south of Fourche Creek.

## ***Acquisition for Internal Trails***

Five types of internal trails were identified as part of the larger concept that addressed Goal 1:

- **Internal loop trails** within existing parks,
- **Greenway connectors** linking neighborhoods to the larger three loop network,
- **Equestrian trails** located as offshoots from the “Extreme” trail,
- **Cultural trails** located in downtown and surrounding areas to link civic landmarks, cultural centers, tourist destinations, and historic districts to the larger network, and
- **Parkways** with enhanced landscape treatments and pedestrian access.

***Internal loop trails*** are loop systems contained within the boundaries of a single park parcel. These trails are usually walking or cycling paths. A system of internal loop trails within existing parks is largely in place, and additional internal loop trails should be provided as necessary based on a park-by-park evaluation and the six-block strategy.

***Greenway connectors*** link parks to neighborhoods, civic or cultural sites, and other land uses. They allow for uninterrupted pedestrian movement to and through the park system and development areas. These are generally constructed of concrete, but may be earthen trails

if passing through ecologically sensitive areas. Greenway connectors have been proposed along Rock Creek from Fourche Creek north through Boyle Park, Kanis Park, Henderson Jr. High School, and across I-430 where the trail should continue northwest to Highway 10. Another greenway connection is proposed along Coleman Creek from Fourche Creek north through War Memorial and then Capitol Street east to the Union Pacific railroad line and links to downtown cultural trails and the “Edge” trail.

Other connectors include those on Little Fourche Creek along the southwest city limit line; and one along a drainage course which runs from Little Fourche Creek to McClellan High School, along Geyer Springs to Southwest Complex and connects to Ottenheimer and the Fourche Creek floodplain along a second drainage course. Other greenways may be utilized to support parks and the six-block strategy.

***Equestrian trails*** are generally grass or woodchip surfaced and are utilized for horseback riding. These types of trails have been proposed along the “Extreme” trail where drainage courses and land easements or acquisition is possible. Two trails have been proposed: the first near the convergence of the “Extreme” and “Earth” trails, and the second forming a secondary loop at the northwest corner of the “Extreme” trail; see Figure 5.2.

***Cultural trails*** are largely formed by the assemblage of city sidewalks into a designated route. A cultural trail loop has been proposed in Downtown, generally following existing streets and linking MacArthur Park, the Decorative Arts Museum, Trapnall Hall, the Historic Arkansas Museum, the River Market, the Old State House, the Curran Hall Visitors Center, the Arkansas State Capitol, Central High School, the Governor’s Mansion, Philander Smith Historic District, and Marshall Square Historic District, completing the loop at MacArthur Park. This loop may also provide links to Fletcher, Centennial, and Dunbar parks. Currently, there are three walking tours outlined in brochures provided by the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau. These walks are aimed at tourist expeditions, whereas the cultural trail proposed herein is aimed at connecting significant historic and cultural districts to the overall park system. Additionally, the Little Rock Campaign Tour driving trail is also located in and around Little Rock.

***Parkway treatments*** with appropriate sidewalk connectors for pedestrians and cyclists are proposed along University Avenue from Fourche Creek to Cantrell Road, Cantrell Road from downtown to Chenal Parkway, and Chenal Parkway from Cantrell Road to I-430.

The opportunity exists to create tertiary trails, and should be pursued to develop the “city in a park” concept.

## acquisition criteria

### *Purpose of Acquisition*

The Master Plan defines five types of park land: mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, and open space. Each type of park land should meet certain criteria.

A checklist of factors to be considered by LRPR in assessing the suitability of properties for acquisition has been developed for four of the five types of parkland. Since mini parks should not be acquired unless meeting a specialized recreational demand, acquisition criteria have not been specified. The prospective function of the property would be determined by the reviewer prior to the detailed evaluation.

Although many of the same factors are listed for all four types, the relative importance of the factors varies from type to type. Suitability for active recreational facility development, for example, is a major criterion for neighborhood and community parkland acquisition, particularly for smaller properties that lack significant natural areas. Relationship to existing regional parkland, suitability for passive recreation and natural resource value are major criteria for regional parkland, while connectivity, suitability for linear trail development, and location on a riparian corridor are important criteria for greenways.

The reviewer will need to use his or her judgment in determining the most important factors on a case-by-case basis.

### *Neighborhood and Community Parks: Criteria for Acquisition*

1. Suitability for active recreational facility development
  - Topography – moderately flat and suitable for construction of sports fields and courts
  - Soils – well-drained and suitable for construction
  - Parcel configuration – shaped in a way to accommodate the construction of multiple recreation facilities without diminishing relationships and visitor experiences
  - Infrastructure availability to the site – roads, utilities, etc.
  - Effects on sensitive environmental resources – limited natural resources which may be impacted by the construction of active-use facilities
  - Effects on adjacent land uses – high-impact community parks with numerous lighted fields should not be located among solely residential areas
2. Recreational demand and level of service currently and in the future – does the park meet a specific recreational objective?
3. Accessibility to the surrounding neighborhoods – can the parcel be accessed by foot or bicycle (esp. if locating a neighborhood park)?
4. Linking opportunities to overall park system and greenways – are the parcels located along current or greenways supporting linkages, or have reasonable access to one?
5. Overall maintenance issues – will the park pose unrealistic maintenance demands?
6. Cost
7. Availability
  - On the market
  - Not listed but with willing seller
8. Cultural resource value
  - Interesting architecture or landscape
  - Historical significance
  - Archaeological significance
  - Agricultural significance
9. Suitability for passive recreation and natural environment
  - Along a stream corridor
  - Along a floodplain
  - Constitutes a representative landscape of central Arkansas
  - Interesting geology and soils
  - Interesting topography
  - Wetlands
  - Groundwater recharge area
  - Wildlife habitat area
  - Presence of unique plant material
  - Trail opportunities
  - Interpretive opportunities
  - Access to water

### ***Regional Parks: Criteria for Acquisition***

1. Threat of development – would the parcel be better suited to remain natural or developed at low-impact?
2. Linking opportunities to overall park system and greenways – is the site located along or reasonably near current greenways or greenways supporting linkages?
3. Suitability for active recreational facility development
  - Topography
  - Soils
  - Parcel configuration
  - Infrastructure availability to the site
  - Effects on sensitive environmental resources
  - Effects on adjacent land uses
4. Suitability for passive recreation and natural environment
  - Constitutes a representative landscape of central Arkansas
  - Along a stream corridor
  - Along a floodplain
  - Interesting geology and soils
  - Interesting topography
  - Wetlands
  - Groundwater recharge area
  - Wildlife habitat area
  - Presence of unique plant material
  - Trail opportunities
  - Interpretive opportunities

- Access to water
5. Cultural resource value
    - Interesting architecture or landscape
    - Historical significance
    - Archaeological significance
    - Agricultural significance
    - Cultural opportunities
  6. Recreational demand and level of service currently and in the future
  7. Accessibility to the surrounding neighborhoods
  8. Overall maintenance issues
  9. Cost
  10. Availability
    - On the market
    - Not listed but with willing seller

### ***Open Space and Greenways: Criteria for Acquisition***

1. Threat of development
2. Relationship to sensitive environmental resources – are significant natural resources present on the parcel?
3. Linking opportunities to overall park system and greenways
4. Suitability for linear trail development
5. Contribution to the green infrastructure – will the parcel help create or maintain the green infrastructure of the city?
6. Suitability for passive recreation and natural environment
  - Along a stream corridor

- Along a floodplain
  - Constitutes a representative landscape of central Arkansas
  - Trail opportunities
  - Interesting geology and soils
  - Interesting topography
  - Wetlands
  - Groundwater recharge area
  - Wildlife habitat area
  - Presence of unique plant material
  - Interpretive opportunities
  - Access to water
7. Cultural resource value
    - Interesting architecture or landscape
    - Historical significance
    - Archaeological significance
    - Agricultural significance
    - Cultural opportunities
  8. Accessibility to the surrounding neighborhoods
  9. Relationship to adjacent land uses
  10. Overall maintenance issues
  11. Cost
  12. Availability
    - On the market
    - Not listed but with willing seller