

## Park Classifications and Design Principles

### Introduction

In developing design principles for parks, it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall park and recreation system. Every park, regardless of type, needs to have an established set of outcomes. Park planners/designers design to those outcomes, including operational and maintenance costs associated with the design outcomes.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose, and the features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. Recreation needs and services require different design standards based on the age segments that make up the community that will be using the park. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program depending on the classification of the park. The age segments used for this purpose are broken into the following sets and subsets:

- Ages 0-17
  - Ages 0-5
  - Ages 6-12
  - Ages 13-17
- Ages 18-34
  - Ages 18-24
  - Ages 25-34
- Ages 35-54
  - Ages 35-44
  - Ages 45-54
- Ages 55-74
  - Ages 55-64
  - Ages 65-74
- Ages 76+

### Definitions

**Land Usage:** The percentage of space identified for active or passive use within a park. A park master plan should follow land usage guidelines.

- **Active Use:** An area that requires more intensive development to support the desired recreation activities. Spaces are designed specifically to encourage people to congregate and interact with each other. Active areas include built amenities, such as playgrounds, splash pads, sports courts or fields, community centers, program pavilions, swimming pools, rentable shelters, and similar amenities. Active may also be used in reference to a program or activity that requires a more vigorous physical effort to participate, such as playing sports, swimming, working out, skating, etc.
- **Passive Use:** An area that has minimal to no development, usually for the purpose of providing non-programmed open space and/or preserving or restoring natural habitat. Areas that are developed are designed to promote casual and frequently self-directed activities, such as hiking, fishing, bird watching, wildlife viewing, picnicking, kite-flying, Frisbee, or similar generally unstructured activities. Built amenities may include trails, boardwalks, fishing piers, benches, picnic tables, grass meadows, etc. Passive may also be used in reference to a program or activity that

requires minimal physical exertion to participate, such as attending an arts and crafts class, continuing education program, etc.

**Park/Facility Classifications:** Includes Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park (Currently, Whitestown does not have any parks under this classification), Special Use Park/Facility, Trails, and Undeveloped/Open Space.

**Signature Facility/Amenity:** This is an enhanced facility or amenity which is viewed by community as deserving of special recognition due to its design, location, function, natural resources, etc. A signature facility/amenity is frequently synonymous with the park from the general public's perspective. A signature facility/amenity may also be a revenue facility. Examples include a community center, waterpark, destination playground, or similar facilities, amenities or natural features.

**Site Features:** The specific types of facilities and amenities included within a park. Site features include such elements as a community center, playground, splashpads, picnic shelters, restrooms, game courts, trails, open meadows, nature preserves, etc. These types of amenities are categorized as lead or support amenities. Community demographics and needs should be considered when identifying site features for a park.

**Revenue Facilities:** These include facilities that charge a fee to use in the form of an admission fee, player fee, team fee, or permit fee. These could include pools, golf courses, tennis courts, recreation centers, sport field complexes, concession facilities, hospitality centers, reservable shelters, outdoor or indoor theatre space, and special event spaces.

**User Experiences:** The type of intentional recreation experiences a user has available to them when visiting a park. A park master plan should incorporate user experience recommendations based on the following types of experiences:

- **Leader-Directed Experiences:** An experience received from a facility, amenity or service where participant involvement is directed by a leader and supervision is required for participation. These experiences, usually provided through an organized class, often promote skill development or learning, but may be for recreational purposes only. Leader-directed experiences typically require advance registration and include a user fee to participate. Examples include day camps, learn-to-swim programs, environmental education classes, sports leagues, etc. Certain types of special events, such as concerts, 5K fun runs/walks, or similar events that rely on the performance or significant coordination of someone to occur are also considered leader-directed experiences.
- **Self-Directed Experience:** An experience received from a facility, amenity or service that provides opportunities for individuals or groups to participate independently and at their own pace. Supervision, when provided, is primarily to promote safety or regulate attendance. A user fee may or may not be charged, depending on the setting. Advance registration is often not required. Examples include playground or splashpad usage, picnicking, disc golf, nature walks, walking a dog, etc. General use of a community center, such as using fitness equipment, using the gym or indoor aquatic during open times or walking the track, are also considered self-directed experiences.

## Park Classifications

### Neighborhood Park

A neighborhood park should be 3-10 acres; however, some neighborhood parks are determined by use and facilities offered and not by size alone. The service radius for a neighborhood park is one half mile or six blocks. Neighborhood parks should have safe pedestrian access for surrounding residents; parking may or may not be included but if included accounts for less than ten cars and provides for ADA access. Neighborhood parks serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity. Currently, Panther Park and Anson Acres are classified as neighborhood park within Whitestown's inventory.

- Size of park: 2 to 10 acres (usable area measured). Preferred size is eight acres.
- Service radius: 0.5-mile radius.
- Site selection: On a local or collector street. If near an arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Where possible, next to a school. Encourage location to link subdivisions and linked by trails to other parks.
- Length of stay: One-hour experience or less.
- Site features: One signature amenity (e.g., playground, splashpad, sport court, gazebo); no restrooms unless necessary for a signature amenity; may include one non-programmed sports field; playgrounds for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements; no reservable shelters; loop trails; one type of sport court; no non-producing/unused amenities; benches, small picnic shelter(s) next to play areas. Amenities are ADA compliant. Wifi and security cameras are installed.
- Landscape design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Customized to demographics of neighborhood; safety design meets established Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards; integrated color scheme throughout. Also, must meet Town of Whitestown's Planning and Zoning Standards.
- Revenue facilities: None.
- Land usage: 85% active/15% passive.
- User experiences: Typically, self-directed, but a signature amenity may be included which provides opportunities for leader-directed programs.
- Maintenance standards: Dependent on site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- Signage: Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- Parking: Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park, when feasible. Goal is to maximize usable park space. As necessary, provide 5-10 spaces within park including accessible parking spaces. Traffic calming devices encouraged next to park.
- Lighting: Security only. Lighting on all night for security.
- Naming: Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.

## **Community Park**

Community parks provide diverse recreation opportunities to serve the residents of Whitestown. These include active and passive recreation, as well as self-directed and organized recreation opportunities for individuals, families and small groups. Community Parks often include facilities that promote outdoor recreation and activities such as walking and biking, picnicking, playing sports, playing on playgrounds, and fishing. These sites also include natural areas, emphasizing public access to important natural features. Since community parks may attract people from a wide geographic area, support facilities are required, such as parking and restrooms. Self-directed recreation activities such as meditation, quiet reflection, and wildlife watching also take place at community parks.

Community parks generally range from 10 to 100 acres depending on the surrounding community. Community parks serve a larger area – radius of one to three miles – and contain more recreation amenities than a neighborhood park. Currently, Whitestown Community Parks include Main Street Park and Gateway Park.

- Size of park: 10 to 100 acres, but ideally 20 to 40 acres.
- Service radius: One-to-three-mile radius.
- Site selection: On two collector streets minimum and preferably one arterial street. If near arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Minimal number of residences abutting site. Preference for adjacent or nearby proximity with school or other municipal use. Encourage trail linkage to other parks.
- Length of stay: Two to three hours experience.
- Site features: Four signature amenities at a minimum: (e.g., trails, sports fields, large shelters/pavilions, community playground for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements, recreation center, pool or family aquatic center, sports courts, water feature); public restrooms with drinking fountains, ample parking, and security lighting. Amenities are ADA compliant. Multi-purpose fields are appropriate in this type of park. Wifi and security cameras are installed.
- Landscape design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park. Also, must meet Town of Whitestown's Planning and Zoning Standards.
- Revenue facilities: One or more (e.g. picnic shelters, program pavilion, dog park).
- Land usage: 65% active and 35% passive.
- User experiences: Mostly self-directed experiences, but may have opportunities for leader-directed programs based on available site features and community demand.
- Maintenance standards: Dependent on site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- Signage: Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience. May include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility.
- Parking: Sufficient to support the amenities; occupies no more than 10% of the park. Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. Goal is to maximize usable park space. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to the park.
- Lighting: Security lighting and lighting appropriate for signature amenities.

- Naming: Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- Other: Strong appeal to surrounding neighborhoods; integrated color scheme throughout the park; partnerships developed with support groups, schools and other organizations; loop trail connectivity; linked to trail or recreation facility; safety design meets established CPTED standards.

## Regional Park

Regional parks provide access to unique recreation features, natural areas, and facilities that attract visitors from the entire community and beyond. Regional parks often accommodate small and large group activities and have infrastructure to support group picnics. As community attractions, Regional Parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. These parks may include significant natural areas and wetlands, trails and pathways, gardens and arboretums, ponds, and other water features. They add unique facilities, such as destination or thematic playgrounds, community centers, aquatic centers, sledding hills, mazes, viewing knolls, skateparks, and other interesting elements.

Regional parks can and should promote tourism and economic development. Regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. Regional parks are typically 100 or more acres in size. Currently, Whitestown does not have any parks designated as a Regional Park.

- Size of park: 100+ acres.
- Service radius: Three miles or greater radius.
- Site selection: Prefer location which can preserve natural resources on-site such as wetlands, streams, and other geographic features or sites with significant cultural or historic features. Significantly large parcel of land. Access from public roads capable of handling anticipated traffic.
- Length of stay: All day experience.
- Site features: 10 to 12 amenities to create a signature facility (e.g., community center, waterpark, lake, destination playground, 3+ reservable picnic shelters, outdoor adventure amenities, gardens, trails, and specialty facilities); public restrooms with drinking fountains, concessions, restaurant, ample parking, special event site. Wifi and security cameras are installed.
- Landscape design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park. Also, must meet Town of Whitestown's Planning and Zoning Standards.
- Revenue facilities: More than two; park designed to produce revenue to help offset operational costs.
- Land usage: Up to 50% active/50% passive.
- User experiences: Significant mix of leader-directed and self-directed experiences. More than four recreation experiences per age segment with at least four core programs provided.
- Maintenance standards: Dependent on site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- Signage: Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience, may include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility.
- Parking: Sufficient for all amenities. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to park.
- Lighting: Security lighting and lighting appropriate for signature amenities.

- Naming: Consistent with the agency’s naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- Other: Safety design may meet CPTED safety standards; integrated color scheme throughout the park; linked to major trails systems, public transportation available, concessions, food and retail sales available, dedicated site managers on duty.

## Special Use Park

Special use parks are those spaces that do not fall within a typical park classification. A major difference between a special use park and other parks is that they usually serve a single purpose whereas other park classifications are designed to offer multiple recreation opportunities. It is possible for a special use facility to be located inside another park.

Special use parks generally contain one facility or amenity that falls into the following categories:

**Historic/Cultural/Social Sites** – Unique local resources offering historical, educational, and cultural opportunities. Examples include memorials, historic downtown areas, commercial zones, arboretums, display gardens, and amphitheaters. Frequently these are located in community or regional parks.

**Golf Courses** – 9- and 18-hole complexes with ancillary facilities such as club houses, driving ranges, program space and learning centers. These facilities are highly maintained and support a wide age level of males and females. Programs are targeted for daily use play, tournaments, leagues, clinics and special events. Operational costs come from daily play, season pass holders, concessions, driving range fees, earned income opportunities, and sale of pro shop items.

**Indoor Recreation Facilities** – specialized or single purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers, performing arts facilities, and community theaters. Frequently these are located in community or regional parks.

**Outdoor Recreation Facilities** – Examples include aquatic parks, disk golf, skateboard, BMX, and dog parks, which may be located in a park.

Currently, Whitestown has the Big 4 Linear Trail trailhead that fall under the Special Use Park designation.

- Size of park: Depends upon facilities and activities included. The diverse character of these parks makes it difficult to apply acreage standards.
- Service radius: Depends upon facilities and activities included. Typically serves special user groups while a few serve the entire population.
- Site selection: Given the variety of potential uses, no specific standards are defined for site selection. As with all park types, the site itself should be located where it is appropriate for its use.
- Length of stay: Varies by facility.
- Site Features: Varies by facility. Wifi and security cameras are installed.
- Revenue facilities: Due to nature of certain facilities, revenue may be required for construction and/or annual maintenance. This should be determined at a policy level before the facility is planned and constructed.
- Land usage: Varies by facility.
- User experiences: Varies by facility.

- Maintenance standards: Dependent on site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- Signage: Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- Parking: On-street or off-street parking is provided as appropriate for facility.
- Lighting: Security lighting and lighting appropriate for facility.
- Landscape design: Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Also, must meet Town of Whitestown's Planning and Zoning Standards.
- Naming: Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- Other: Integrated color scheme throughout the park; safety design meets established CPTED standards.

### **Undeveloped Parks/Open Space**

Undeveloped parks/open space are undeveloped but may include natural or paved trails. Grasslands under power line corridors are one example and creek areas are another. Undeveloped parks/open space contain natural resources that can be managed for recreation and natural resource conservation values such as a desire to protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and endangered species. Nature preserves/open space also can provide opportunities for nature-based, self-directed, low-impact recreational opportunities such as walking and nature viewing. These lands consist of:

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

The intent of nature preserves/open space is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible. Integration of the human element with that of the natural environment that surrounds them enhances the overall experience. Whitestown has two undeveloped park properties that include Giles Park and Jackson Run. Amenities: May include paved or natural trails, wildlife viewing areas, mountain biking, disc golf, nature interpretation, and education facilities.

- Maintenance standards: Demand-based maintenance with available funding. Biological management practices observed.
- Lighting: None.
- Signage: Interpretive kiosks as deemed appropriate.
- Landscape design: Generally, none. Some areas may include landscaping, such as entryways or around buildings. In these situations, sustainable design is appropriate.

### **Greenways/Trails**

Greenways/trails include natural and built corridors that typically support trail-oriented activities, such as walking, jogging, biking, skating, etc. Greenways/trails function as linear parks by linking features together and providing green buffers. Greenways/trails may be located along abandoned railroad lines,



transportation or utility rights-of-way, riparian corridors, or elongated natural areas. Greenways/trails and linear parks may be of various lengths and widths, and these corridors typically support facilities such as viewing areas, benches, and trailheads. Greenways/trails between key destinations can help create more tightly-knit communities, provide opportunities for non-motorized transportation, and link to the regional trail system. The Big 4 Linear Trail is an example of greenways/trails. All standards must meet the current Town of Whitestown Thoroughfare Plan 2020.

- Size: Typically, unencumbered land at least 30-feet wide. It may include a trail to support walk, bike, run, and sometimes equestrian type activities. Usually, an urban trail is at minimum 10-feet wide to support pedestrian and bicycle uses. Trails incorporate signage to designate where a user is located and where the trails connect in the community.
- Site selection: Located consistent with approved Town Comprehensive Plan and/or Thoroughfare Plan 2020.
- Amenities: Parking and restrooms at major trailheads. May include pocket parks/public plazas along the trail.
- Maintenance standards: Dependent on site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- Lighting: Security lighting at trailheads is preferred. Lighting in urbanized areas or entertainment districts as appropriate.
- Signage: Mileage markers at half mile intervals. Interpretive kiosks as deemed appropriate.
- Landscape design: Coordinated planting scheme in urban areas. Limited or no landscape planting in open space areas with a preference for maintaining natural areas as a buffer to neighbors. Also, must meet Town of Whitestown's Planning and Zoning Standards.
- Other: Connectivity to parks or other community attractions and facilities is desirable.