

# *Parks & Natural Resources Inventory*

The City of Dublin has 34 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This parkland significantly contributes to quality of life by providing aesthetically pleasing environments, designated areas for recreation, rights of way for pedestrian links, wildlife corridors and protection of natural resources.

As the city's development footprint expands with the predicted increases in population until Dublin's eventual build-out, the need to maintain this high availability of parkland must be met. The park inventory and environmental assessment undertaken as part of this plan are two components that can guide the land acquisitions and associated connections necessary to maintain the current quantity and quality of parkland.

## Parks Inventory

Parks and recreation facilities are defined by characteristics such as size, extent of development, recreation amenities, cultural and historical elements, locations within the community and the portion of the community they serve. It is paramount in any park system to establish which park(s) will fulfill which needs of the community. Certain parks are more regional in scale and draw from the entire service area, while others service a very small neighborhood unit with only select facilities.

At the outset of this planning process, a comprehensive park inventory was undertaken to provide a compilation of park statistics and photos as well as a digital database to be used by Parks and Recreation, Planning and GIS (Geographical Information Services) staffs to catalogue park amenities, service requests and needs.





The inventory process yielded two direct products: The first of these products is the park inventory booklet. This booklet contains a two-page visual and tabular summary for each of Dublin’s parks, consisting of a regional location map, address, aerial photo of the park with boundaries, park amenities, photo inventory and site recommendations. (The Coffman Park inventory is shown at the end of this chapter for reference.) This booklet will be maintained by the Parks and Recreation staff. It will be updated as park amenities and features change and as additional parks are added to inventory.

The second direct product derived from this inventory is a spreadsheet that has been linked to the updated GIS park-related data. This data provides a comprehensive listing and definition of various attributes for each of Dublin's parks.

This addition to the Dublin GIS enables a more elaborate representation of park amenities, resources and characteristics to citizens and staff. It also can be used for policy planning purposes. This product must remain dynamic and current as Dublin staff continues to work with the database to track projects, work orders, asset management, capital improvement budgetary funding, the addition or reduction of amenities, maintenance requests and more.

Characteristics catalogued during the parks inventory include – but are not limited to – park

type, park size, parking counts and relative location, pedestrian connectivity, water features, land cover, riparian corridors, development mix, universal accessibility and sports activities.

## Parkland designations

The intent of the various parks contained within the City of Dublin was discussed at length during this process and specific definitions for park designations were developed. These park definitions provide logical, defensible positions as the City moves forward with its development plans, the acquisition of new parklands and the approval or disapproval of recreation activities in the various parks.

The following parkland designations apply to Dublin’s parks.

**Greenway:** a linear open space or natural area typically adjacent to a watercourse. Bike paths, open space and park developments may punctuate the corridor. Greenways serve important roles in raising and maintaining water quality, acting as storm water storage facilities, providing wildlife migratory corridors, and linking neighborhoods and destinations together, thus providing residents and visitors opportunities to socialize and strengthen community bonds. Protection of



greenways through ownership and/or easements is a priority of the Parks and Recreation Department.

**Open Space:** public land masses serving as aesthetic enhancements to the community at large or significant natural resources that are set aside for preservation. Open space is often a linear space that acts as a visual and physical buffer area and links neighborhoods, thus allowing residents and visitors to socialize and strengthen community bonds. These areas are not typically conducive to organized activities but may provide space for recreational programming.

**Regional Parks:** metropolitan park systems operate independently from both state and local governmental agencies. They provide natural resource conservation and the natural area parks. The Franklin County Metro Parks is this area's regional park system.

**Community Parks:** larger parks that serve the entire community by supporting organized community activities that would not be conducive to neighborhood settings and/or that preserve and protect natural areas. Typical development components may (but are not required to) include parking lots, sport fields, courts, skate parks, amphitheaters, boardwalks, stocked ponds, nature paths, grasslands, historically significant sites, specialty facilities

such as the Miracle League Field, recreation centers and community pools. Often the facilities have lighting to extend public use hours. These parks also could be undeveloped, such as larger tracts of woods and prairies.

**Neighborhood Park:** the most basic kind of park, housing both active and passive recreational activities and planned with surrounding neighborhood needs in mind. Typical development components may (but are not required to) include shelters, gazebos, site furnishings, playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, specialty gardens, nature paths, stocked ponds, bike paths and open/informal play spaces. Parking is generally limited and lighting is restricted in the neighborhood developments.

#### *A note on pedestrian paths*

In coordination with its park system, Dublin provides its residents more than 88 miles of paths suitable for a variety of pedestrian-oriented activities, including biking, jogging and walking. These paths integrate the parks, City facilities, surrounding communities and open spaces while supporting healthy lifestyles and encouraging residents to engage in recreational pursuits.

As part of this master plan development, meetings were held with employees of the Mid-



Ohio Regional Planning Commission to discuss their knowledge and preferences for regional bike trails and bike route connections to the City of Dublin. In addition, City of Dublin staff met numerous times to discuss the various trail designations, current routes and future path routes throughout the city. The pedestrian linkages are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

## Natural Resource Inventory

In its continuing endeavors to provide excellence in recreation opportunities for its residents, Dublin emphasizes the protection of natural resources both within areas of current development and in areas slated for future development. It is considered critical to protect Dublin's rural landscape and the associated natural resources, including riparian corridors, greenways, forested land tracts, protected species and wetlands. The ever-present struggle between the protection of these natural resources and the development pressures of a growing community was addressed during this study by means of a natural resource inventory and corresponding suitability model.

The Natural Resource Inventory for this plan was performed as a complementary component of the Dublin Community Plan (Chapter 2,

Section 2) and to provide a continuous ranking of environmental importance of Dublin's currently undeveloped land. The analysis identified several landscape attributes that are independently important or critical considerations when development is being considered. When combined with several similar attributes, this helps the City prioritize lands with natural environments that need greater protection and careful attention during development.

Landscape features included in the Natural Resource Analysis include:

- Agricultural land cover
- Endangered species protection zones
- Flood zones
- Forest land cover
- Ground water pollution potential
- Scenic road buffers
- Soil summaries (includes ratings for woodland and wetland wildlife, wetland plants, forests etc.)
- Stream buffers
- Wetlands

Each of these categories and their importance in the suitability model are described in detail in the Natural Resource Assessment.



During the environmental inventory, it was noted that Dublin exhibits a characteristic known as habitat fragmentation in its woodland habitats. The exceptions to this are the riparian areas along the Scioto River.

The identified fragmentation highlights the importance of protecting the remaining areas of forested lands and making every reasonable attempt to enlarge these areas and link them with other fragmented habitats. This complements the recognized benefits of greenways and habitat corridors. If contiguous links cannot be made between the disparate areas, the ability to secure intermediary lands that serve as “stepping stones” is recognized as beneficially serving as an intermediate phase in establishing comprehensive greenway networks.

The Natural Resource Inventory resulted in a suitability model developed in a GIS modeling environment. The suitability model allowed for the recognition of the following:

- Identification of areas of environmental importance
- Identification of resource preservation areas
- Identification of potential pedestrian connection routes

- Identification of land areas more suitable to park lands and/or limited use as opposed to development
- Identification of potential lands for acquisition

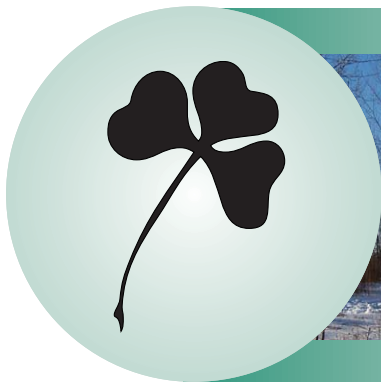
This suitability model helps guide land use decisions defined in the Community Plan. This model highlights areas of the greatest environmental importance and identifies areas in which development is least likely to have adverse ecological impacts.

This model should be used during the development review process in conjunction with the criteria defined in the Community Plan’s Development Suitability (Chapter 2) and Stream Corridor Protection (Chapter 9).

This suitability model is a guide to establish corridors, as indicated by the higher value areas, which may prove beneficial for wildlife movement and create additional pedestrian connections.

Larger, continuous tracts of land that should be investigated as potential sites for larger parks or recreation areas are identified by the high-to-mid values.

These areas, especially when compared to the locations of existing parks and forested land cover areas, form a collection of natural areas



that can establish wildlife corridors and increase diversity.

It also identifies a collection of protected natural features throughout the city of Dublin

that should be considered for environmental conservation and for recreational pursuits of Dublin citizens.

## Policies, Issues and Strategies

**Policy 1: The increasing city development footprint and associated growth in population will further the need to maintain the high availability of future parkland. It is important to establish which types of park(s) will fulfill the specific needs of the community.**

### Issues

- Potential land acquisitions need to be assessed in order to maintain the current quantity and quality of parkland.
- Certain parks are more regional in scale and draw from the entire service area, while others service a very small neighborhood unit with select facilities. An understanding needs to be developed about how each park contributes individually and collectively to the overall needs of the community.

### Strategy

- A comprehensive park inventory was undertaken by the City to provide a compilation of park statistics and photos, as well as a digital database to be used by Parks and Open Space, Recreation Services, Land Use and Long Range Planning and GIS (Geographical Information Services) staffs to catalog park amenities, service requests and budget allocations. Continue conducting community assessments to identify the specific needs of the community and fully understand how the current inventory of parks is accommodating those needs.