



City of Ann Arbor

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — PLANNING DIVISION

301 East Huron Street | P.O. Box 8647 | Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647
p. 734.794.6265 | f. 734.994.8312 | planning@a2gov.org

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the background and review process and provide guidance for the Parks and Recreation developer contribution program.

Background

Parks and Recreation Services requests all developers submitting site plans for residential developments of seven units or greater, to contribute parkland, recreational amenities and/or a cash contribution. The goal for this contribution is to provide future residents of a neighborhood the same parkland and recreational opportunities as current residents, without current residents having to bear the full cost of providing this additional land or amenity.

In order to establish guidelines for funding requests, existing neighborhood parkland was inventoried and a standard was developed that the park system could set as a goal for acres per resident. The ratio derived is then projected forward for new developments.

Contribution Formula

Derivation of formula for land dedication through development:

- 18.3 acres of parkland exist per 1,000 residents (based upon 2,088.37 total park acres divided by a population of 114,024 from the 2000 US Census)
- 639 acres is considered neighborhood parkland
- Divide 639 acres by 114,024 residents to equal 5.60 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Based on a household size of 2.2 people per dwelling unit, 450 households generate 1,000 residents
- Total neighborhood park acreage per 1,000 population, or 450 households, is 5.60
- The current total acreage of neighborhood parkland per dwelling unit is .0124 (5.60 acres divided by 450 dwelling units)

Therefore, to maintain the existing amount of neighborhood parkland, .0124 acres of neighborhood park/dwelling unit is desired to keep pace with the existing amount of land available. An example of how this calculation is applied based on a hypothetical development of 120 new dwelling units would look like this:

$$120 \text{ dwelling units} \times .0124 \text{ acres} = 1.49 \text{ acres}$$

of neighborhood parkland to maintain ratio

The parkland calculation for group quarters such as fraternities, sororities, cooperatives, and senior citizen housing is calculated similarly: The total number of new beds is divided by the 2.2 persons per household to figure an equivalent number of dwelling units. Day care centers and

private schools may be asked to contribute cash in lieu of land if on-site facilities and open space are not sufficient for the recreational needs of the students. Because each of these proposals is unique, they need to be evaluated case-by-case with on-site facilities and special needs of the residents considered.

Priorities for Land Dedication

The recent trend in land development is tending more towards urban density both as a living preference, and as vacant land in Ann Arbor is becoming less available. However, if acquisition of land is an option, the following criteria are used to prioritize properties.

- *City-wide System Balance/Geographic Distribution as well as Open Space Convenient to Each Neighborhood:* Demand for activities such as basketball, soccer, swimming, etc. are considered as well as convenience to each neighborhood. The park system goal is to provide a neighborhood park within ¼ mile of each resident.
- *Natural Resource Protection:* Properties are considered for their ecological significance, including such measures as biological diversity, presence of rare or unusual species, presence of invasive exotic species, and other factors.
- *Open Space and Green Space Imagery/Aesthetics:* Consideration of vistas of trees, the river, and parks to provide visual relief from urban infrastructure.
- *Enhance Access and Linkage:* Land that facilitates non-motorized transportation from urban areas and neighborhoods to other parks, connectivity along the Huron River and creeks, including wildlife corridors, and land that links other community destinations is considered.
- *Protection of the Huron River, Watersheds, and Water Quality:* Acquisitions along the Huron River and its tributaries that protect or enable better public use of this asset are a high priority.

Process for conveyance of Dedicated Land

Proposed park dedication sites are conveyed to the City either by warranty or trustee's deed. The subdivider or developer is responsible for conveying the title to the sites, along with a complete legal description and payment of all real estate taxes including any agricultural roll back taxes. The developer is also responsible for furnishing title insurance.

Contributions in Lieu of Land

If land is unavailable or unsuitable for park use, a cash contribution is requested to be used for a proximate park or public recreational amenity. In order to calculate how a cash contribution would equate to a park land contribution, a number based on recent parkland acquisition costs was used that averages land costs both in the center city and those in outlying areas. The average over the past five years has been approximately \$12,000 per acre for greenbelt purchases, and for in-City parkland has been \$200,000 per acre. If combined, the average cost for parkland purchase is \$50,000. This number is used to calculate contributions in lieu of land. The formula then would be as follows using the example above:

$$\begin{aligned} 120 \text{ dwelling units} \times .0124 \text{ acres} &= 1.49 \text{ acres} \\ \text{of neighborhood parkland needed to maintain ratio} \\ 1.49 \text{ acres} \times \$50,000/\text{acre} &= \$74,500 \end{aligned}$$

Criteria for Requesting Dedication and a Cash Contribution

In certain situations, a combination of land dedication and a cash contribution in lieu of land may be desirable. This may be when only a portion of the land desired as parkland is proposed by the developer for a park or a major part of the local park or recreation site has already been acquired and only a small portion of land is desired from the development to complete the site.

The amount of land and cash contribution would be derived by applying the formula above to the amount of land that is available for donation, with the balance being paid through a cash contribution.

Development Contributions within the Urban Core

Development contributions have traditionally funded improvements to existing downtown parks such as Liberty Plaza and Sculpture Plaza that serve visitors and provide outdoor eating and resting spots. However, there are few existing parks to which contributions may be directed. Consequently, streetscape and plaza projects that will benefit both new and existing residents are being considered as an alternative way to provide passive recreational amenities for downtown residents and visitors.

Credit for Provision of Public Amenities

Developers may reference items from a list assembled by city staff of potential projects related to recreation or open space. These projects will be selected based on existing need and proximity to the development. Developers are also welcome to suggest amenities as part or all of their contribution, but must be approved by City staff.

Amenities*

Additional pedestrian walkways that would enhance the streetscape and make additional connections or fill in sidewalk gaps in the neighborhood of the development
Additional trees and landscaping on public property, such as a park or plaza, or as part of a streetscape
Streetscape improvements, such as benches, picnic tables, planters, waste receptacles, decorative pavers and pavement
Public art, such as sculptures, murals, or other permanent art installations
Enhancements to existing parks, such as playgrounds, game courts, pathways, landscaping, park furniture
Creation of new downtown public parks and or open spaces, such as plazas, parklets and mews
Contribution to a fund for park maintenance activities in the downtown, such as flower plantings, landscape maintenance, and irrigation systems

***Any public amenity shall be over and above what is required by code.**

Proposed amenities must be located within ¼ mile of the development, or be located in a community wide park in the region of the development. Examples could include parks such as Fuller Park, Buhr Park, Gallup Park or Veterans Memorial Park.

The developer is responsible to show how the proposed amenity is commensurate with the contribution requested. The Parks and Recreation Services Manager will make the final determination as to the donation equivalence.

Credit for Private Open Space and Recreation Amenities

When subdivisions or developers provide their own open space for recreation areas and facilities, it effectively reduces the demand for local public recreational services. Depending on the size of the development, a portion of the contribution may be provided in the form of "private" open space in lieu of dedicated "public" open space.

Open space which may be required due to zoning setback and building separation regulations are not "counted" as fulfilling parkland needs, but parkland dedicated to the City may be included in the required open space for a development.

Detailed plans of such areas, including specifications for facilities to be installed must be approved by the City, and before credit is given for private recreation areas, the subdivider or developer must guarantee that these private recreation areas will be permanently maintained for such use.

Examples of amenities that may be considered include outdoor patio/deck with seating and plantings, playground, game courts open to the entire resident population of the building or development.