Chapter 10
RECREATION

Recreation in its various forms is recognized as necessary to full social and individual development. Opportunity for recreation is an essential for all, regardless of neighborhoods, race, age, or sex. There is therefore a community responsibility to provide, partly through public authorities, the necessary facilities.

In the Master Plan provision is made for the land areas needed not only for large parks and playfields, but for smaller local playgrounds and neighborhood recreation facilities ultimately to be located throughout the Area where required.

Recreation areas to fit the needs of the Area must be of varied types, distribution and sizes. Three general types of areas and facilities within reach of Metropolitan Cincinnati are recognized: regional, metropolitan, and community or neighborhood areas.

Regional Recreation Areas

Regional recreation areas, as defined in the Master Plan, are those located beyond the metropolitan limits but within reasonable driving distance from the Metropolitan population. About 50 miles each way, or 1½ to 2 hours driving time, is a convenient distance for a day’s outing. Depending on the attractiveness of an area, the length of the intended visit and scenic interest along the route, even 100 miles or more is a practicable distance.

Within or near this distance from Cincinnati nature has provided a wealth of potential sites. Only within recent years, however, have the three States involved taken steps to develop them.

In the Master Plan report on Recreation Areas, Table D lists recreation areas and features (except National Forests) now existing or officially proposed in the region around Cincinnati. The table gives pertinent information concerning parks, forests, historic monuments and commercial and quasi-public areas.

Parks and Reservations—Analysis of the various prospective park areas indicates that their number, size and proposed facilities are adequate to serve the Area. All appear to be satisfactorily accessible by existing highways. Construction of the expressways will, in effect, bring some of the areas much closer by increasing the speed and ease of reaching them.

Forests—State and National forests, both found within a reasonable driving distance from Cincinnati, recognize recreation as a proper subsidiary use of the land primarily placed in public ownership for reforestation and soil conservation. Over a period of years selective cutting produces forest stands attractive for recreation purposes. It is also the policy of the agencies to develop lakes and other scenic features, cabin sites, picnic grounds and the like.

Conservancy Areas—Although intended fundamentally for flood control these areas, too, recognize other uses of the land. As it is the policy of the Corps of Engineers to give full consideration to recreational potentialities in connection with flood-control reservoirs, these may provide large lakes and developed shore lines which will become important recreational assets for the people of Metropolitan Cincinnati.

Historic and Prehistoric Sites—With the exception of Ft. Ancient and Ft. Hill the significance of the historic and prehistoric sites shown in Fig. 42 lies primarily in their preservation of small areas containing features of noteworthy scientific or historical value.

Commercial and Quasi-Public Areas—These are shown in order to give a complete inventory of the regional recreational picture.

Fig. 42 shows graphically the location of the areas and features.

Suggestions

Effective legislation toward the establishment of a unified Ohio State Department of Conservation which would correlate recreation activities at the state level should be encouraged. The State should continue the appropriation of adequate funds for completion of the various parks and recreational reservations now scheduled for development within 100 miles or so from Cincinnati.

The creation of a state park in connection with the proposed Falmouth Dam project on the Licking River should be urged by Campbell and Kenton Counties.
Metropolitan Recreation Areas

It is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the functions of metropolitan recreation areas and those of regional character just discussed. Metropolitan areas include widely varying types such as parks, playfields, golf courses, camps and amusement parks.

The distinction between metropolitan recreation areas and community neighborhood facilities also becomes difficult when an area with metropolitan drawing power functions at the same time as a neighborhood facility for those living in its immediate vicinity.

Parks—Existing metropolitan parks are located on upland sites, overlooking adjacent valleys. Some are much more extensively developed with facilities than are others.

The Hamilton County Park District is committed to the development of a system of large outlying parks in the county. These county parks, of which Sharon Woods is an example, will provide additional facilities for unorganized sports such as golf, archery, boating, fishing, picknicking, and games and sports usually played by picnic groups. In October, 1948, plans for the creation of a new county park of 2,000 acres in the western part of Hamilton County, to be known as Miami Whitewater Forest, were announced by the Park District. It would provide many family picnic areas, sites for organized camps for children, an artificial lake or series of lakes, a golf course, drives, parking areas, hiking and riding trails, shelters, and recreation fields.

For Campbell County, Master Plan studies indicate the desirability of acquisition as a park of the undeveloped and generally rather rugged upland tract lying between Ft. Thomas and the three cities on the lower level along the river—Newport, Bellevue and Dayton.

For the Cincinnati central riverfront a separate Redevelopment Plan has been made. (See chapter on Riverfront). Although much of the area in the riverfront plan will have park-like settings, the area specifically allocated to park purposes consists of a strip of 35 acres composed of the riverbank and a narrow strip along its top.

Playfields—Playfields in general should be located as close as possible to the people they serve. A metropolitan playfield therefore must be one that provides very exceptional facilities not normally found in a community playfield. Where conditions make playfields to serve individual communities difficult, if not impossible, there may be justification for an exceptionally large playfield providing facilities for two or more communities. For example, Walnut Hills and Western Hills playfields are proposed by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission for such expansion. On somewhat the same basis a play-

field of exceptional size and character of facilities is proposed in Campbell County and another in Kenton County by authorities there.

Deer Creek Common is included in the Metropolitan list because it provides several baseball diamonds which serve amateur leagues from all parts of the Area. Unfortunately there appears to be no way to avoid location of the proposed Northeast Expressway along the eastern margin of the Common, probably reducing it by at least one-half. To replace the facilities that will be lost and because of the desirability of adding additional ballfields to supplant some of the numerous isolated fields now existing on an impermanent basis, it will be well to be on the lookout for sites in connection with right-of-way acquisition for both the Millcreek and Northeast Expressways.

Because of the character of the terrain through which the lower portion of the Northeast Expressway will run there does not appear to be much hope of finding reasonably level areas of more than limited size in conjunction with it. Farther out there may be better sites.

In traversing the nearly level land of the West End and the lower Millcreek Valley the Millcreek Expressway may provide, in conjunction with necessary development of the areas it will traverse, usable tracts where the kind of facilities exemplified by Deer Creek Common may be duplicated more than once. Acquisition of sites for incidental recreation areas in connection with acquiring expressway right-of-ways appears to be permitted under the program for construction of interregional highways such as these two expressways.

As indicated in Fig. 43 there are three general localities on the Ohio side along the margin of the Ohio River which hold important potentialities toward providing a number of baseball diamonds with possible addition of certain other special types of facilities of widespread interest.

Two of these localities are downriver. One area extends westward from the present industrial development south of the New York Central R. R. yards to the Riverside Playground. The other consists of several large tracts extending eastward from Anderson Ferry Road and lying between several recently constructed gasoline tank farms. From the standpoint of public safety open development for recreation uses would be preferable to further tank development in view of the susceptibility of these areas to flooding and consequent incendiary risk. Flooding is no handicap to their recreational use. The scattered dwellings on portions of these two general sites are for the most part poorly maintained frame structures.
The latter statement applies also to the upstream area which extends from the Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company gas tanks at Corbin Street to Turkey Ridge Playground.

Golf Courses—Two additional public golf courses west of Millcreek are proposed, one by the Recreation Commission to be located in the vicinity of Western Hills High School, the other by the County Park District as a feature of Western Reservation. There does not appear to be justification for any new public golf courses in addition to those proposed.

Camps—The present degree of pollution of the major streams in this vicinity greatly reduces their desirability for boating, fishing or other uses in connection with summer camps. Prospects now appear brighter than ever, however, for action leading to elimination of pollution from all the rivers and streams in the Area.

Amusement Parks—Although Coney Island and the Zoo, the latter classified as a park, are recreational attractions of regional rather than metropolitan character, they are included in the metropolitan classification.

Plan of Metropolitan Recreation Areas

The names, locations and features of those facilities which the Master Plan places in the metropolitan category are given in Table B in the Recreation Areas report. The Plan of Metropolitan Recreation Areas is shown in Fig. 43. Metropolitan recreation facilities are also shown on the Master Plan Map.

Recommendations

1. That development of Winton Woods be completed.

2. That Western Reservation be acquired and developed over a reasonable period as a county park.

3. That acquisition and development of other tracts proposed by the Hamilton County Park District be deferred pending evidence of their need.

4. That in accordance with the Central Riverfront Redevelopment Plan the immediate waterfront be developed as a park, with emphasis on the provision of boating facilities and a waterside promenade. The development should include a historical memorial section in the vicinity of Lytle Park to mark the original site of Ft. Washington and commemorate the early history of the Cincinnati Area. The project might be undertaken jointly with State and Federal government agencies interested in the preservation of historical sites.

5. That Western Hills and Western Hills playfields be enlarged, as proposed by the Recreation Commission, to the status of metropolitan playfields and that a public golf course be developed in conjunction with Western Hills.

6. That consideration be given by the Hamilton County Park District to provision of group camp facilities in its areas, and by the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners of additional day camps.

7. That an adequate system of public swimming pools be developed throughout the Metropolitan Area.

8. That serious consideration be given by the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners to turning over Columbia Park either to the Ohio Archeological and Historical Society, or to the Hamilton County Park District.

9. That in connection with development of the expressway system attention be given to acquisition of incidental areas for baseball fields, tennis courts, and other special recreation facilities.

10. That consideration be given to the formation of a Campbell County Park Board, whose principal functions would be to acquire and develop (a) a proposed large park area between Ft. Thomas and Newport, Bellevue and Dayton; and (b) the Tacoma Beach section of the Kentucky riverfront as a metropolitan public beach and playfield, assuming the elimination of pollution from the Ohio River.

11. That the City of Covington take steps to acquire Twin Oaks Country Club and develop it as a metropolitan public park and playfield, retaining the present 9-hole golf course.

Community and Neighborhood Recreation Areas

Community and neighborhood recreation facilities consist of those within or close to residential communities and neighborhoods which serve the daily needs of the population. These facilities are roughly divisible into (a) those requiring no direction or leadership, and (b) those effectively usuable only when there is an organized program of group activities.

From the viewpoint of master planning, the former classification connotes parks but may also include special facilities such as swimming pools, baseball diamonds, midget golf courses, and other features sometimes found separately rather than as component items in a larger area. The latter includes playlots for very small children, playgrounds for younger boys and girls, and large playfields for youths and adults.

Any or all of these types may be combined in a single area. A large playfield, for example, may contain
a playground, playlots, swimming pool, tennis courts, and a park section.

The following definitions of the various types of areas were adopted for the Recreation Areas Plan:

The play lot is a small area intended for the use of children of pre-school age. It is essentially a substitute for individual backyards. It is found primarily in apartment or tenement districts or as a part of large scale housing developments.

The playground is an area, at or adjoining the elementary school site, which serves the primary needs of children from 5 to 15 years of age. It has also become a center where the people of the neighborhood can find recreation and relaxation with their families, relatives and friends.

The playfield is an area that provides a variety of facilities primarily for the use of young people and adults. A section is usually developed as a playground for the children of the surrounding neighborhood. The playfield is a multi-purpose area providing facilities and activities for all ages and serving as a recreation center for several neighborhoods. A portion of the playfield is sometimes developed as an athletic field for highly-organized sports such as baseball, football and track.

The neighborhood park is a relatively small area primarily intended to provide an attractive neighborhood setting and a place for quiet passive recreation for people of all ages living in the neighborhood.

Recreation Area Standards

Among park, school, recreation and city planning authorities it is customary to appraise recreation facilities by what are regarded as desirable minimum standards of size in relation to territory and population to be served. Such standards, of course, cannot be applied arbitrarily to a metropolitan area nor to all localities in the same area. Varying conditions such as topography, population density and other factors influence the amount and types of recreation space required or possible of attainment in a particular neighborhood. Nevertheless the basic recreation needs of most people in most neighborhoods are similar.

After careful consideration of standards recommended in various other cities and by the National Recreation Association, the following are suggested and were used in the Master Plan, as minimum standards for application in Metropolitan Cincinnati:

Playlots: 40 sq. ft. per child; basis of 2400 sq. ft. per block in areas of intensive development; maximum service radius one-fourth mile; in high density areas one-eighth mile.

Playgrounds: One acre per 1,000 population; minimum desirable size five to seven acres; service radius one-fourth to three-eighths mile; in low density areas one-half mile.

Playfields: One acre per 1,000 population; 1 playfield to 15,000 to 25,000 population; desirable size 10 to 30 acres; service radius one mile; in low density areas one and one-half miles.

Parks: One acre per 1,000 population; desirable minimum size 2 acres or more; service radius one mile.

The Master Plan has made no effort to indicate locations for future playlots because of their highly localized character. It is the function of the various planning commissions in approving future large-scale projects, whether on vacant land or as redevelopments of blighted areas, to require provision of such facilities.

It is the recognized policy of the Cincinnati Board of Education and most other school boards in the Area to provide a playground adjacent to each elementary school. Non-school and supplementary playfields are necessary in many locations.

While in many cities playfields are identified with senior high schools, in this Area junior high schools tend to coincide with the principal communities. Some additional playfields must be provided where school playfields are too remote to serve residential areas of considerable size and to care for the needs of youth and of active adults.

In conjunction with a playground, a neighborhood park provides for children who do not relish, or who cannot indulge in, strenuous exercise. Here provision is made for activities of a quiet nature. Neighborhood parks also provide attractive outdoor spots for use by older people. The extent to which persons in the older age groups are increasing in proportion to the population gives special urgency to recognition of their needs. In areas of rather high density, small neighborhood parks are located by the Master Plan within a few blocks' walk of all residential sections.

In connection with community civic centers in the Master Plan, a neighborhood park may be made to provide a central open space, contributing a setting for the buildings involved.

Present Deficiencies

The following tabulation which appears as Table 3 in the Master Plan report on Communities gives some indication of present deficiencies in respect to recreation areas in each of the communities in the Ohio portion of the Area. The table also looks ahead to 1970 with estimates of the future total recreation acreage needed in each community:
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<tr>
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<td>Uptown</td>
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<td>120</td>
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The figures under "Existing Play Areas" include 1) Community Plan Areas which now or potentially are attractions of community calibre but not necessarily complete playfields; 2) neighborhood play areas which comprise those of more local character and include some school grounds of which no recreational use is now made, but are potentially usable; and 3) Board of Education proposals. Similar data for Kentucky are not available.

A mere table cannot, of course, bring out all the aspects of sufficiency or inadequacy of recreation areas. Appendix D in the Master Plan report on Recreation Areas points out in more detail current deficiencies in individual communities and, to some extent, in neighborhoods. The widely varying character of the communities and neighborhoods introduces several factors that bear significantly on the provision of additional facilities where current deficiencies are indicated. These factors are discussed on pages 77 to 81 in that report.

The problem of provision for recreation areas faces nearly all communities from the oldest and most deteriorated to those in early stages of development.

In areas so blighted as to require complete redevelopment there is the worst deficiency of neighborhood parks and play areas. The West End is the most obvious example. In connection with redevelopment plans adequate provision must be made here for recreation areas of various kinds.

There are localities in which residential development is essentially completed but which are deficient in recreation areas. Even if heavy cost is involved it is important that needed areas be provided. Provision of appropriate recreation and park areas is frequently the attractive element required to assist in arresting the deterioration in a neighborhood. Avondale, Clifton Hills, Walnut Hills and the older portion of Price Hill are especially deficient in playgrounds or playfields.

In the newly developing areas around the city's perimeter there is a different situation. As long as such territory remains partially developed, vacant lots are at hand for improvised recreation. But eventually an entire neighborhood builds up without provision for necessary open spaces and by that time the cost of making such
provision may appear prohibitive. A new residential section thus finds itself as deficient in recreation areas as are the oldest sections.

Facilities Along Expressway Right-of-Ways

In addition to the possibility of placing facilities of metropolitan type along the expressway right-of-ways (see discussion under Metropolitan Recreation Areas earlier in this chapter) opportunities may also be presented for providing facilities for more localized use, either in conjunction with a complete large playfield or smaller playgrounds, or in the form of special facilities such as tennis courts, a baseball field or a playground ball field, etc. Exact locations of such facilities can be determined only in connection with detailed right-of-way study and acquisition, but should be considered during the early stages of each expressway project.

Acquisition of Open Spaces

In the case of larger tracts such as parks, aviation fields, parkways, large playfields and the like, there can be no doubt that the only feasible method of acquisition is purchase (or condemnation). The planning should, of course, precede the acquisition in order to give the process moral and political justification. Early planning also indicates to the public where the future large parks and open spaces should be located. These tracts should be acquired early while the land values are low.

In built-up sections land for recreational purposes is usually acquired by the governmental unit by purchase from the owner or through the power of eminent domain.

Perhaps the best method of acquiring small neighborhood recreation areas in undeveloped sections is through the exercise by planning commissions of their control over the subdivision and platting of land. The first step is that the open space to be acquired be located by means of a plan. This does not necessarily mean that the plan shall locate the tract exactly but the plan should indicate the approximate location of the open space. No arbitrary rule, such as that each subdivision must contribute one-tenth of its area, can be justified in the courts. In the planning of open spaces there should be some standard such as one acre for each 300 of the population. To be reasonable, as required by the courts, the contribution by any specific subdivision should correspond to the plan and should not be based on any arbitrary rule.

A plan also furnishes proof of reasonableness of the community’s desires and a basis for negotiation between the planning commission and the subdivider. The planning commission can and should develop standards for aggregate open spaces, that is, aggregates of spaces for streets, building setbacks and small parks or playgrounds. Within these general standards there can be considerable elasticity in the allocation of these open spaces among the various types.

Plan of Local Recreation Areas

Fig. 44 indicates graphically: 1) existing playfields, playgrounds and parks of the community and neighborhood type; 2) existing parks and playfields of the metropolitan type so located as to function partly as local facilities; 3) proposed play areas that will be adjuncts of definitely proposed expansion programs of the various boards of education; and 4) proposed play areas and neighborhood parks to round out the pattern of local recreation facilities. They are also shown on the Master Plan Map.

Some of the proposed areas shown are based on definitely suitable sites; others on general locations. These appear also in the plans presented in the chapter on Community Plans. While they are properly sized to the future population neither those plans nor Fig. 44 are to be regarded as the last word in recommendations for such facilities. This is particularly true in relation to areas recommended for early or eventual redevelopment and the outer portions of peripheral communities not yet developed.

The Kentucky facilities also call for more detailed study.

Recommendations

1. That one acre each of playground, playfield, and neighborhood park, or a total of three acres for each 1,000 of population served, be regarded as a minimum standard for communities and neighborhoods in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area.

2. That if at all possible a neighborhood playground comprising from 5 to 7 acres be provided in conjunction with every existing and future elementary school, and a larger community playfield containing from 10 to 30 acres in conjunction with every junior and senior high school.

3. That where present and proposed school playgrounds and playfields will be too remote to serve residential areas of considerable size, additional play areas be provided by the proper local agency.

4. That if possible neighborhood parks be provided as integral parts of playgrounds and playfields, and
that where these give incomplete coverage of need additional park areas be added.

5. That in connection with large-scale housing developments, planning commissions require provision to be made for playgrounds and/or playlots for very young children, in accordance with the standards set up herein.

6. That no unneeded school sites or other public property be offered for sale in areas earmarked for future redevelopment and that pending redevelopment consideration be given to use of such properties or others which may be obtainable for interim recreational use with a minimum of expenditure for improvement.

7. That planning commissions require the provision of adequate recreational areas, in consonance with the standards used in the Master Plan, as additional sections of the Metropolitan Area are subdivided.

(The standards set forth in Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4 were used in the Master Plan.)