

Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation, Pathways & Open Space

Introduction

Parks in the City of Hamilton consist of Neighborhood, Community and Regional Parks. Neighborhood Parks are those that are designed to serve primarily the neighborhoods in which they are located, while Community Parks serve a larger area and are typically larger themselves. Claudia Driscoll Park is classified as a Community Park.

Regional Parks are typically larger and serve persons who may reside outside the city limits. Hieronymus Park is considered a regional park, having facilities that are used by other residents in the Bitterroot Valley.

Open Space provides for passive recreation uses that are compatible with the natural amenities of these lands.

The large parcels of open space and agriculture land that once characterized Hamilton have primarily been urbanized into a mix of residential, commercial and light industrial development interspersed with park land, green belts, play grounds and open space areas.

As a city expands, it typically places more pressure on the open space element than on any other component of Growth Policy.

The open space resources are defined as any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use. It may be:

Open space for the preservation of natural resources

Open space used for the managed production of resources

Open space for outdoor recreation

definition

Parks and Open Space are those areas designated for recreational purposes, both active and passive, and/or areas that will preserve or enhance the natural environment.

Community Parks

Community Parks are typically larger and serve a larger area, located to serve several neighborhoods. Community Parks consist of major open space, playground equipment and picnic facilities.

Regional Parks

Hieronymus Park is located at the north end of Hamilton with the entrance off Highway 93, with a total of 65 acres of public land dedicated for recreational use. The Master Plan for Hieronymus Park proposes a low level of development in keeping with the nature of the land, its relationship with the Bitterroot River and the native flora and fauna.

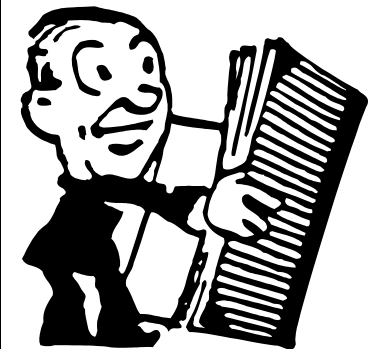
In April of 2002, the City of Hamilton conducted a written local recreation survey as part of a grant application to the State of Montana for funds to develop a paved trail in Hieronymus Park. The result of the local recreation survey revealed that the commonly desired outdoor recreation uses included both passive and active year-round recreation: walking/jogging, and picnicking/nature study.

Changing Demographics and Parks

Changing demographics, work and commute patterns, technology, and public values are accompanied by changes in lifestyle, recreational interests, and community issues. These changes can figure significantly when estimating the community's park and recreation needs in the future. There are several specific ways demographic shifts and changing lifestyles, at both the national and local level, can impact park needs and demands, including:

The most significant trend affecting park planning is the aging of the baby boomers. Within the next decade, the leading edge of the baby boomers will begin to turn 65. This group will be in their retirement years with time and financial resources at a peak. By 2030, the over-65 age group will represent 22 percent of the country's population compared to 12 percent in 1988. Although they are aging, the baby boomers may be healthier and will remain active longer than past generations

Inventory of Existing Parks	
<i>Neighborhood Parks</i>	
Legion Park Second Street	1/2 acre
<i>Community Parks</i>	
Claudia Driscoll Park Tenth Street	2 acres
Vester Wilson Athletic Fields Marcus	11 acres
<i>Regional Parks</i>	
Hieronymus Park Highway 93 North	65 acres
River Park Ninth Street	50 acres
Total	128.5 acres



Take a closer look...
Map 6 shows the City-maintained Parks and Recreation Facilities.

of elderly. The pre-retired and the actively retired are likely to increase the demand on recreational facilities and services.

At the same time, the baby boom “echo” – the growing number of children of the baby boomers – will have its effect. While the number of elementary school age children is declining, the percentage of teenagers is on the increase. As a result, middle- and high-school recreational facilities will have less surplus space.

The number of people living alone or in non-family situations is increasing. Only half of the new households now being formed are families. In other words, single people will head more households. An accompanying trend will be an increased number and percentage of people housed in multi-family dwellings. More people living in higher density housing, and a smaller percentage of traditional families, may also have implications for future park needs. Perhaps, special park requirements and standards will be needed for multi-family housing.

Hamilton’s Parkland Requirements

Most cities have a goal to achieve a ratio of three (3) to five (5) acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents. This standard is based on the typical use by city residents of parks and recreation facilities as well as the ability of the City to construct and maintain the facilities.

Based on the 2000 Census, Hamilton’s population is 3705 and has a public parks acreage totaling 128.5 acres, the park acreage per 1,000 persons ratio is approximately 34.7 acres per 1,000 residents.

One of the City’s long-term goals would be to partner with the Hamilton School District to create a school/park program. This type of program provides for joint use of school grounds for the purpose of parkland and recreation facilities. This program has proven to be advantageous to the City, the school district and the community's citizens for the following reasons:

- Land is available at no cost to the City.
- Site locations are convenient since parks are located in areas familiar to children.
- Useful facilities not provided on school grounds are made available on park grounds.
- A more thorough land use is achieved.
- Overall physical appearance is enhanced.
- Recreation equipment at the school is expanded as is park usefulness.
- Existing school parking areas may be further utilized for park patrons.

Master Plan for the Development of Recreational Facilities

The City of Hamilton first developed a Master Plan for Hieronymus and Claudia Driscoll Parks in June of 1998. The purpose of the planning process was to inventory the status of these two parks, assess their needs, and plan for a stronger, more vital community in the future. It was revised in September 2001 by Kent Watson & Associates and further revised in January 2003 by Don Carey & Associates, in collaboration with representatives of the City of Hamilton.

The Master Plan addresses improvements to Hieronymus Park and Claudia Driscoll Park, recommends acquiring more land to increase the City's land base dedicated to open space, creates several miles of trails accessible to mobility-impaired citizens, and provides and encourages wildlife habitat present in the open space areas as well as enhances educational opportunities, tourism and new business interests.

The Master Plan concludes that the number one priority for development is the completion of the Hieronymus Park project and land acquisition to create more open space and connect the Bridge-to-Bridge Trail system. The Master Plan also proposes a number of improvements to Claudia Driscoll Park, including a Skateboard Park, Basketball Court/Ice Rink, and a seating area for the band shell.



The information contained in this section on Parks and Open Space is excerpted from the "MASTER PLAN Draft for the City of Hamilton for the Development of Recreational Facilities, 3/22/03".

For a more detailed look, or to obtain a copy of this document, contact the City of Hamilton at 363-2101.

Master Plan Goals and Policies for Parks & Open Space

Goal 1:

Provide recreational facilities to meet the needs of the community and enhance the quality of life.

Policies

Develop Hieronymus Park to provide the opportunity for enjoyment of the natural beauty of the wildlife, terrain, vegetation and educational activities.

Develop a trail system that will connect River Park to the proposed Bridge-to-Bridge Trail.

Acquire land to be put into the City's open space inventory.

Maintain existing recreational facilities to meet the needs and desires of all local citizens, including necessary modification to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements.

Expand and diversify additional support facilities (parking, picnic areas and shelters, playground equipment, additional sports fields and skate park) at existing recreational areas for all residents.

Encourage participation by community organizations, citizen volunteers and private enterprise in the development and maintenance of public recreation facilities including the Hieronymus Park.



The City-appointed Parks & Recreation Board developed the *Goals and Objectives* for the Parks and Open Space chapter of this Growth Policy as part of its *MASTER PLAN for the Development of Recreational Facilities*.

The Parks & Recreation Board represents a cross-section of residents; members conducted an extensive public involvement process, which included City residents and professional park planners.

Goal 2:

Provide and encourage development of recreational opportunities that will serve and involve the local community, attract visitors and enhance the City's economic development.

Policies

Complete the development of Hieronymus Park.

Complete the land acquisition to connect the Bridge-to-Bridge Trail and increase the Open Space land inventory.

Work with local governments and community organizations to develop Hieronymus Park.

Expand indoor and outdoor art and heritage displays and develop walking tours at Hieronymus Park to include public art, the natural ecosystem, vegetation and wildlife.

Provide recreational facilities to meet the needs of the community and enhance the quality of life.

Goal 3:

Develop recreational, cultural and public education programs that will address the interest of local citizens and visitors.

Policies

Establish partnerships with organizations such as the local service clubs, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, local and regional school districts, regional communities in order to develop and promote joint recreational and cultural activities.

Develop community education and cultural programs at the Hieronymus Park information and cultural center.

Encourage interpretive displays and lectures with information on Bitterroot Valley history, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Promote the involvement of community volunteers.

Goal 4:

Acquire, preserve and interpret natural areas, open spaces, historical sites and areas of ecological significance.

Policy

Acquire the historic dairy farm at the southeast section of Hieronymus Park to establish a headquarters for the Parks and Recreation Department; provide parking, bicycle and foot access; and to develop a historical museum for farming, mining and timber on the farm site.

Acquire property to provide an additional fish pond for youth and property that will be a major link for the Bridge-to-Bridge Trail.

Preserve and restore ecologically significant area in River Park, Hieronymus Park and the Fox property.

Develop interpretive displays along the trail systems.

Goal 5:

Coordinate regional recreational goals and objectives with other agencies or groups.

Policy

Coordinate parks and recreational development with a broad spectrum of federal, state, county, local, and school district agencies and non-profit groups.

Seek funding for needed development and improvements from a variety of funding sources.

Promote partnerships with a broad spectrum of federal, state, county, local, and school district agencies and non-profit groups.

Review and update the Master Plan as required to meet the changing needs of the community.