

Orchard Park – Community Impact Analysis – Parks and Recreation

To: City of Walker Planning Commission
From: Frank Wash
Date: 8/15/2006
Re: Parks and Recreation Impacts & Recommendations



The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations regarding the inclusion of parks and recreational features within the proposed Orchard Park development.

The primary reference used when creating this report was the 2004 City of Walker Park and Recreation Plan. However, the recommendations that follow do not automatically require that new park and recreational facilities be publicly owned and operated.

Categories of Parks

This report will deal with three general categories of public parks:

1. Neighborhood Parks and School Lots
2. Community-Wide Parks
3. Regional Parks.

Neighborhood Parks and School Lots serve the smallest geographical area. They are easily accessible to local users, suited to active recreation pursuits and are pedestrian friendly. Examples include Harmon Field, Orchard Ridge Park and West Chesterfield Park plus several local school playgrounds.

Community-Wide Parks are intermediate in size and the geographical area they serve. They tend to create significant vehicular traffic due to the range of facility types and recreational services they are designed to provide. These types of parks are generally best placed away from neighborhoods or set back and buffered to reduce impacts on adjacent properties. Examples include Alpine Estates Park and City Central Park behind City Hall.

Regional Parks are designed as attractions and destinations that serve a wide geographical area. They offer a wide variety of active and passive recreational facilities. Entrance fees are often charged. Examples include Johnson Park and Millennium Park.

Orchard Park Area Needs Assessment

The following deficiencies are referenced from the 2004 City of Walker Park and Recreation Plan and are based on current and projected populations.

The City of Walker is currently deficient in area dedicated to Neighborhood Parks and School Lots. (This is not to say the City needs more schools. This is simply a measurement of small, local park areas and associated shortcomings.) The current deficiency is 9 acres. The 2015 projected deficiency is 24 acres. The attached Parks Service Areas map recommends the construction of new Neighborhood Parks and School facilities within the Orchard Park site.

The City of Walker is currently deficient in area dedicated to Community-Wide Parks. The current deficiency is 81 acres. The 2015 projected deficiency is 143 acres.

The City of Walker is currently well served by two Regional Parks. These are Johnson Park and Millennium Park. These two Kent County Parks will eventually cover over 1,200 acres of land along the Grand River.

Recommendations for Improvements

The following recommendations should be compared to the attached Orchard Park District Master Plan Map.

Based on the projected resident and visitor activity within the Orchard Park development, we recommend the following:

1. New Neighborhood Parks and School Lot facilities should be planned within Districts A, B and D.
 - These parks should be primarily active recreation areas, consisting of sport courts and playgrounds with non-motorized links to the proposed regional trail system along 4 Mile Road.
 - If senior housing is developed within the aforementioned districts, then a proportionate percentage of the park space should be designed for active and passive recreation use by older residents.
 - The southeastern corner of District D contains a large ravine that could serve as a natural area and passive recreation facility for Orchard Park residents or office workers.
 - An outdoor ice rink should be considered within District B.
2. New Community-Wide Parks facilities should be added either along the power line greenway that bisects the site or within District E.
 - A trailhead with parking / restrooms should be considered within the power line greenway. This would fit very well with plans to establish the Musketawa Trail link to the White Pine Trail along 4 Mile Road, as is currently proposed by the Kent County Parks Department.
 - District E contains a large ravine that could be enhanced and designed to serve as a Community-Wide Park. Such a park could serve as a natural area, open space and complement to the potential Cabela's facility. Active outdoor recreation/entertainment adjacent to the ravine could also complement the Orchard Park development.
3. Acreages for the aforementioned parks and recreational facilities should be compared to the deficiencies list and proportionate to the scale and intensity of the Orchard Park development.

Thank you for the opportunity to research this issue and prepare this report.

Sincerely,

Frank Wash, AICP, PCP
City of Walker Planning Director