

January 24, 2006

To: John Szerlag, City Manager
From: Brian Murphy, Assistant City Manager/Services
Carol K. Anderson, Parks and Recreation Director
Subject: Agenda Item – Pocket Park Parcels

At the January 19, 2006 meeting of the parks and Recreation Advisory Board the following action was taken:

Resolution #PR-2006-01-003

Moved by: Hauff

Seconded by: Kaltsounis

RESOLVED, that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board acknowledges some value and desirability of pocket parks and recommend parcels be considered on an individual basis, based on the development potential and limitations.

Yes: All

No: None

MOTION CARRIED

January 3, 2006

To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

From; Carol K. Anderson, Parks and Recreation Director
Jeffery J. Biegler, Superintendent of Parks

Subject: Pocket Parks

As previously discussed, there are several parcels of vacant lots that the City may choose to sell or keep and develop as pocket parks. The Park Board is being asked to make a recommendation on these sites.

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

A “pocket Park” is best defined as a small area accessible to the general public that is often of primarily environmental, rather than recreational, importance. When located in an urban location, downtown, or business area, they can offer an open space for office workers or shoppers to relax.

Pocket parks can also be located within residential neighborhoods and serve to provide residents a location to walk or bicycle a short distance from their home. The typical size of a pocket park is from ¼ to 1 acre, with amenities ranging from undeveloped natural area to small play structure, picnic tables, trash receptacles, benches, landscaping, art sculptures, and drinking fountains these sites are in close proximity to resident’s homes, restrooms are not usually included.

Their service area is approximately ¼ mile radius, serving a population of 500 – 1000 persons. The main means of access to a pocket park is by foot or bicycle with no parking required, or desired at the site.

PARK/OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

Troy’s city park inventory contains 14 existing and 5 future park sites ranging in size from 3 acres (Redwood Park) to 96 acres (Firefighters Park). The city also operates and maintains two eighteen-hole golf courses, Civic Center and Community Center grounds, and the 100-acre Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center/Troy Farm. None of the existing, or proposed city parks would be considered “pocket parks.”

The Troy School District operates 12 elementary, 5 middle, and two high schools offering open space, athletic fields, and playgrounds to residents when classes are not in session. In addition, Birmingham and Warren Consolidated School Districts each have an elementary school in Troy serving as neighborhood recreation sites.

Finally, many subdivision private open space areas scattered throughout the city serve the function of pocket parks providing neighborhood residents with mostly passive use. Some of the subdivision private parks, which range in size from 1.5 acres to 42 acres, contain play equipment, pathways, picnic tables, and athletic fields. The subdivision homeowners associations maintain all of the subdivision open space/private parks.

MAINTENANCE COSTS

The cost of maintaining a pocket park is high relative to other parks due to the inability to take advantage of economies of scale. Actual maintenance costs will vary depending on the level of development of the site, but for purpose of discussion, the estimated annual maintenance cost per acre if performed by City personnel is around \$2500, based on an average level of maintenance at the site and the National Recreation and Park Association maintenance labor standard of 118 staff hours per acre per year.

MAINTENANCE RESOURCES

Resources will be needed to maintain additional sites with respect to manpower and money. Parks Department workloads have recently increased with the additional maintenance of Troy Community Center grounds, Skate Park, and Civic Center pathways. If new pocket parks are to be maintained by the City without additional funds or manpower, the level of service in other areas of responsibility will likely decrease.

Other options for maintenance of pocket parks might include homeowner associations, civic and business groups, service organizations, and volunteers.

Currently, financial resources are such that budgeted funds are being held until there are significant dollars to develop the new park parcels acquired through the successful bond issue. The estimated cost for these parcels to be developed is \$8 million. Annual allocation for park development has been \$500,000 for the past two years. If allocations remain the same in the future, it will be some time before funds are such that development will be possible. Attached please find a memo that addresses the Ad Hoc committee review of the Cutting St. parcel.

CONCLUSION

Pocket parks can be a highly-desirous use of remnant city parcels, provided they are located in an area that will attract use by residents, office workers, or others and can be accessed by foot, bicycle, or other non-motorized means.

From an economic development/opportunity point of view, the benefits of establishing pocket parks must also be carefully weighed against the revenue generated through the sale of those remnant parcels.