

PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

CITY OF WADSWORTH

October 31, 2006



planning and development consultants

The Crittenden Building
1382 West Ninth St. • Suite 420
Cleveland, Ohio 44113-1231
216.696.0400 • Fax 216.696.3464
www.DBHartt.com



Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	4
II. Existing Conditions.....	6
A. Community Characteristics.....	6
B. Existing Park and Recreation Facilities.....	6
C. League Sports.....	10
D. Condition of Existing Parks.....	10
E. Park and Recreation Administration.....	11
F. Out of Town Parks.....	11
III. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS.....	13
A. Interviews.....	13
B. Focus Groups	13
C. Site Visits to Parks.....	13
IV. PARK AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES	14
V. PARK AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.....	15
A. Modernize existing facilities.....	15
B. Expansion North of I-76.....	17
C. Long-term growth.....	18
D. New and Existing Parks.....	20
E. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Connections.....	21
F. Utilization of Existing Facilities.....	26
G. Organization of Parks and Recreation departments.....	26
H. Implementation Measures.....	27
APPENDIX	29
A-1. Summary of Park and Recreation Needs.....	30
A-2. Summary of Park and Recreation Implementation Measures.....	32
A-3. Summary of Needs and Implementation Measures.....	33
B-1. Typical Community Recreation Centers.....	34
B-2. Layout for Improvements to Memorial Park.....	35
B-3. Layout for Improvements to Bird Park.....	36
B-4. Layout for Improvements to Weatherstone Park.....	37
B-5. Layout for Improvements to Northwoods Park.....	38
B-6. Layout for New Dog Park	39
B-7. Layout for Improvements to Miller Park	40
B-8. Cost sheet for Recommended Improvements.....	41
C-1. Current Park Inventory.....	42

TABLES AND MAPS

Table 1—Estimated Population and Housing Growth, 1990-2010.....	6
Table 2—Comparison of Park Acreage, 1992-2006.....	6
Map 1—Existing Parks and Recreation Sites.....	7
Table 3—Designation of Parks in Wadsworth.....	8
Table 4—Adequacy of Wadsworth Athletic Facilities.....	9
Map 2—Parks Development Plan.....	19
Map 3—Possible Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail System.....	25
Table 5—Income and Residential Tax Rates.....	27

I. Introduction

In October of 2005, D.B. Hartt, Inc., in association with Cawrse & Associates Inc., was retained by the City of Wadsworth to update the 1992 Comprehensive Plan for Parks and Recreation. Numerous City officials and residents actively participated in the formulation of this Plan.

This report is a compilation of the assessed background data, the City's objectives, park and recreation needs that residents and city officials determined were most important, as well as specific recommendations to achieve the objectives set forth in this plan.

There are two major objectives of the Wadsworth Parks and Recreation Plan:

The first objective is to develop a long-range parks and recreation plan for the City that includes the following elements:

- The types of park land or recreational facilities needed;
- Locations for new parks or open space which may be needed;
- Appropriate improvements to existing parks to maintain an acceptable standard for increased utilization.

The second objective is to develop measures and strategies to implement the plan's recommendations. Among items the Consultants considered were; the City's current recreation land dedication fee ordinance; the current thinking used by the City when accepting land from developers for parkland; and the feasibility of all funding options.

In developing the plan the Consultants, working in conjunction with City officials and residents, completed the following tasks:

- Reviewed recent development trends in the City.
- Evaluated existing land use patterns.
- Interviewed elected officials and City staff
- Evaluated existing park and open space land with respect to its purpose and the area of the City it was currently serving or intended to serve.
- Identified areas where the overall park utilization could be improved.
- Developed a comprehensive improvement program for certain park sites.
- Identified potential sites for new recreation or open space within the existing City limits and the outlying areas.

- Conducted two (2) "focus" group sessions to understand the community's needs; evaluated the results of these meetings and presented the findings to the citizens at a subsequent session.
- Developed a comprehensive recreation plan.
- Developed a comprehensive strategy for implementing the plan.

The plan will serve as a guide for the City as it makes future parks and recreation decisions--both capital and operational. The plan's objectives and strategies are purposely intended to be flexible so the City can respond to changing conditions and needs as they arise and take actions consistent with available resources. However, the adoption of this Plan should not be viewed as a binding commitment on current or future City Councils to implement all the specific elements of the Plan in the order laid out herein.

II. Existing Conditions

A. Community Characteristics

Wadsworth has experienced sustained growth since the 2000 census. As Table 1 indicates, the City's population has grown by 16.4%, growing from 15,718 residents in 1990 to 18,437 in 2000. The 2005 estimated population is 20,160 and is projected to grow to more than 22,000 by 2010. The number of dwelling units increased 18.3% to a total of 7,613. The estimated count of dwelling units in 2005 is 8,032 and is projected to grow to over 9,000 by 2010.

TABLE 1
Estimated Population and Housing Growth
1990-2010

	Population	Dwelling Units
1990	15,718	6,218
2000	18,437	7,613
Rate of Growth from 1990-2000	16.4%	18.3%
2005 (est.)	20,160	8,032
2010 (est.)	22,688	9,039
Rate of Growth from 2000-2010	18.7%	16.7%

Based on projections reviewed from several sources, it is expected that Wadsworth will continue to attract new development in the foreseeable future at a rate equal to or greater than the 1990-2000 period.

B. Existing Park and Recreation Facilities

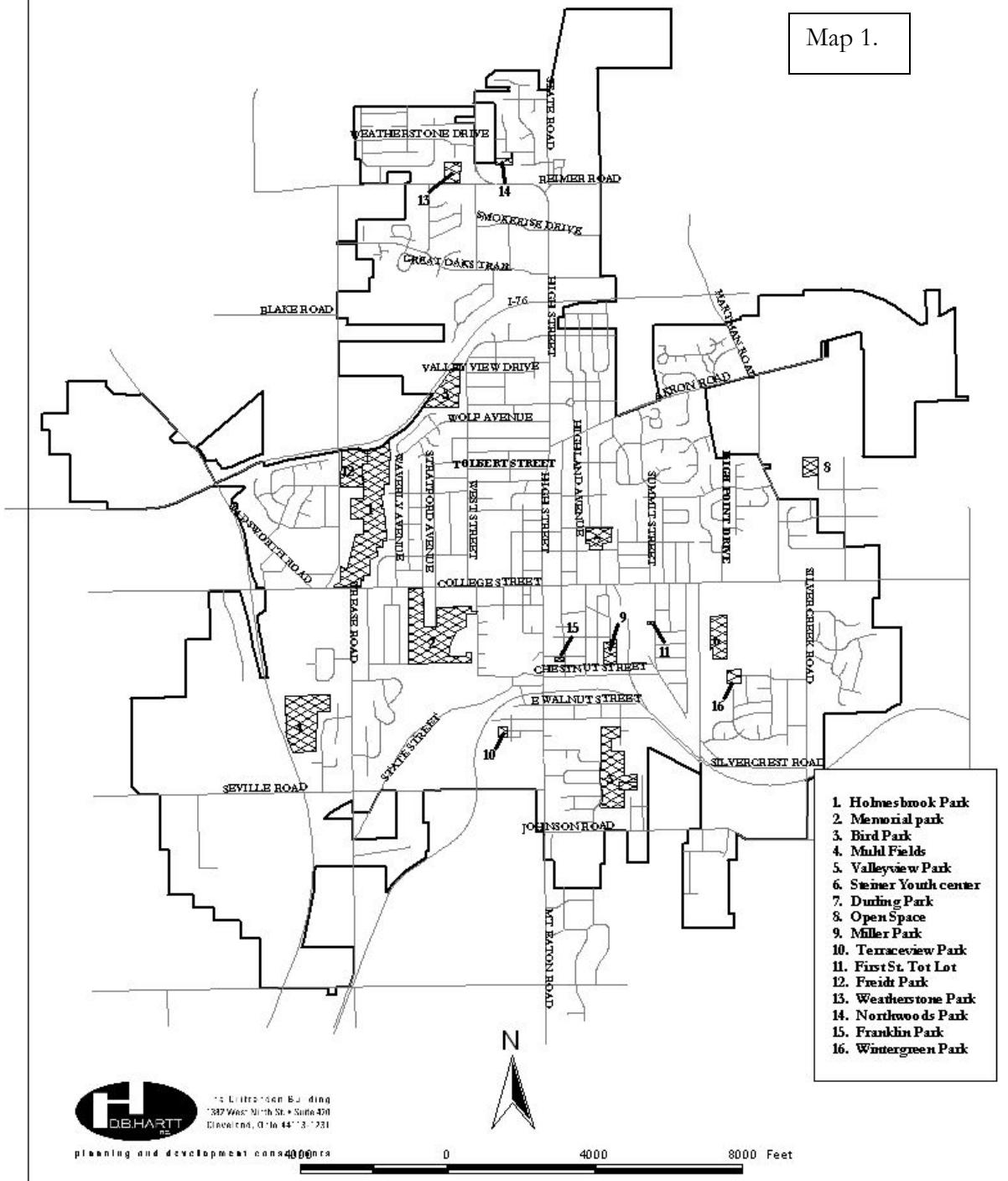
Currently Wadsworth has 16 park facilities and a total of about 235 acres. Comparatively, in 1992 the City had 11 parks and approximately 212 acres. Map 1, page 6, shows the locations of existing parks and recreational areas. Please see Table C-1 in the appendix for a listing of amenities by park. The benchmark when planning parks for a locality has been to have at least 10 acres per 1,000 citizens. Table 2, shows how Wadsworth in 2005 compares with the City of 1992.

Table 2
Comparison of Park Acreage
1992-2006

	Park Acreage	Acres per 1000 Population
1992	212	13.49
2005	237	11.61
Change	25	-1.88
Percentage Change	11.8%	-7.18%

Existing Parks and Recreation Areas City of Wadsworth

Map 1.



10 University Building
347 West Ninth Street, Suite 400
Cleveland, OH 44113-2231

planning and development consultants

Table 2, page 5, illustrates, even though Wadsworth added new parkland, the rate of growth in the population outstripped the growth in new parkland. Also, the population growth is taking place in the northern areas of the City where there have not traditionally been any parks. Even though Wadsworth is still above the 10 acres per 1,000 citizens benchmark, a greater portion of those citizens do not have easy access to City park land.

TABLE 3
Designation of Wadsworth Parks as described by the
National Recreation and Park Association

Park Name	Designation	Acreage	Standard Size (acres)*
1. Holmesbrook	Natural Resource Area	58.3	None
2. Memorial	Community Park	51.0	30-50
3. Bird	Community Park	29.2	30-50
4. Muhl Fields	Sports Complex	26.0	25-80
5. Valleyview	Neighborhood	14.9	5-10
6. Steiner Youth Center	Special Use	10.4	None
7. Durling	Neighborhood Park	6.6	5-10
8. Open Space	not designated	5.8	
9. Miller	Neighborhood Park	5.2	5-10
10. Terraceview	Neighborhood Park	3.9	5-10
11. First Street Tot Lot	Mini-Park	0.5	2,500 sq. ft.- 1 acre
12. Freidt	Neighborhood Park	11.5	5-10
13. Franklin	Mini-Park	0.65	2,500 sq. ft.- 1 acre
14. Northwoods	Neighborhood Park	2.1	5-10
15. Wintergreen	Neighborhood Park	3.0	5-10
16. Weatherstone	Neighborhood Park	5.5	5-10
17** Fieldcrest	Specialty Park	3.0	None
TOTAL		237	

**Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. Mertes, James D and James R. Hall.* National Recreation and Park Association, 1996.

**Fieldcrest Park is a football field being added to Bird Park along with extra parking.

Table 3 illustrates the designations that Wadsworth's parks would receive based on definitions given in the latest edition of the *Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1995. Wadsworth has seven neighborhood parks, two community parks, two mini-parks, a natural resource area, and a sports complex as well as the Steiner Youth Center which would be listed as a special use area.

On Map 1, Page 6, only two parks (Northwoods and Weatherstone) are north of the I-76/Main Street intersection. This is in contrast to the 1992 plan when there were no parks above that intersection. This is a rapidly growing area of the City and even though some of the development incorporates open space into the design of the neighborhood, there is still a need for more park land and recreational opportunities.

TABLE 4
Adequacy of Wadsworth Athletic Facilities
Compared to National Standards

Facility	No. of Existing Facilities	NRPA Recommended No. of Units Per Population ^(a)	Total Current Need ^(b)	Surplus or Deficit	Additional Facilities Provided at School Sites
Basketball	9	1 per 5,000	4	+6	Yes
Tennis	8	1 per 2,000	10	-2	
Volleyball	1	1 per 5,000	4	-4	
Baseball	10	1 per 5,000	4	+6	Yes
Softball	5	1 per 5,000	4	+1	Yes
Football	1	1 per 20,000	1	0	Yes
Soccer	10	1 per 10,000	2	+8	Yes
Swimming Pool	2	1 per 20,000	2	0	
Running Track	0	1 per 20,000	1	-1	Yes
Trails	4	1 system per region	1	+3	
Fishing	1	none given			

Notes:

(a) National Recreation and Park Association, "Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines," 1983, p. 60.

(b) Based on the 2005 estimated population of 20,160.

The National Park and Recreation Association has determined instead of having one set national standard for recreational facilities, it is more important that communities create their own set of standards. In order to be able to better gauge the growth of the parks in Wadsworth, the standards that were used in the 1992 plan will also be applied to this plan. Table 4 considers the total amount of recreation facilities available in Wadsworth, regardless

of their location. As Table 4 indicates, most of the facilities in Wadsworth equal or exceed these national standards. However, when taking into account the locations of the facilities, it is obvious that the northern section of the city is lacking in recreational facilities. All aspects of the evaluation indicate that the current recreational needs and demands in Wadsworth are above average and that future recreational programming in Wadsworth should seek to maintain or improve its current level and not rely solely on the national standards as the City's bench mark for future development. Section V will explore these areas further.

C. League Sports

Wadsworth has a very active league sports component offering many different levels of baseball, football, soccer and basketball. The sports leagues are operated by independent league administrators but make full use of facilities offered by the City and the Wadsworth Local School District. The leagues contribute financially to the maintenance and repair of the facilities. As the population of the City continues to grow, it is expected that the leagues will grow accordingly. Growth of these leagues will have an impact on the existing facilities.

D. Condition of the Existing Parks

On-site inspections of the parks were conducted several times over the course of the research for this plan in order to gauge the physical condition of the parks as well as to assess the on-going maintenance of the facilities. Generally our inspections showed the parks are all in good repair. There are a few items we observed that should be addressed:

1. Based on the age of the facility, the Steiner Youth Center is at the end of its expected lifespan.
2. Some of the parks are in need of more parking.
3. Addition of lighting might allow for better utilization for some of the parks.
4. Although overall surface drainage appears to be adequate, some improvements could be made to help alleviate wet areas in playfields.
5. Drinking fountains, trash containers, and picnic tables are not as prevalent in some areas of the parks as perhaps they should be.
6. Improved vehicular access is needed into some of the underutilized parks.
7. The parks need to be more handicapped accessible.

Specific recommendations for improving these observations as well as other specific issues will be made in Section V.

E. Park and Recreation Administration

The City's administration of the parks is divided into two functions. The Recreation Department under the Recreation Commission focuses on programming. The Parks Department, contained within the City's Service Department, is in charge of the maintenance.

The overall park land expansion is essentially accomplished in either of two ways. Park land is secured by land dedication when subdivisions are developed, or land is purchased by the City on an ad hoc basis, when available, using funds received "in lieu" of the land dedication. There is no other systematic or planned program for park land acquisition.

Likewise, capital expansion, or major repairs are also undertaken on an "ad hoc" basis. Funding requests are added to the City budget in response to requests by the Recreation Commission, League Administration, or Council. There is no comprehensive approach for implementing park planning and development.

Specific recommendations for improving the functioning of the system will be made in Section V.

F. Out-of-Town Parks

There are several County-wide parks, both from Medina County and near-by Summit County, that are visited frequently by residents of the City of Wadsworth. Among these include, Greenleaf Park in Sharon Township, the Alderfer/Oenslager Wildlife Sanctuary Wolf Creek Environmental Center and River Styx Park, part of the Medina County Park District system and Silver Creek Metropark near the City of Norton in Summit County.

The **River Styx Park** is the nearest Medina County Park to Wadsworth. It is of the few remaining sites in Medina County where migrating neo-tropical songbirds nest each year. This park includes a nature trail, a paved loop trail around a 3-acre stocked pond. There are also picnic shelters for group activities. This park is located approximately three miles west of the City near the corner of Blake Road and River Styx Road in Sharon Township.

The **Alderfer/Oenslager Wildlife Sanctuary and Wolf Creek Environmental Center** is also located in Sharon Township. This is a 248-acre park that is home to the Park District's environmental programs. Specially designed paths make this site accessible to everyone. There is no picnicking, or fishing allowed at this site. The **Center** is on this site and includes a classroom, a lab room and a central meeting area as well as offices.

Greenleaf Park is a 62 acre facility and is the first land developed as a county park in Medina. It includes a football/soccer field and small softball field as well as being a favorite spot for sledding in the winter. There is also an herb garden and a small pond is available for those who enjoy fishing, as well as three reservable picnic shelters and

plenty of individual picnic tables. It is located at the corner of Medina Line Road and State Route 162 in Sharon Township.

Silver Creek Metropark is part of the Metroparks, Serving Summit County, and is located east of Wadsworth in the City of Norton. This 624-acre park has nearly six miles of hiking trails as well as a 2.6 mile Bridle trail—the nearest one to Wadsworth. This park also offers swimming and fishing in a 50-acre lake as well as a children's play structure, and a shelter that has room for up to 48 people.

III. Assessment of Current and Future Needs

This section summarizes the park and recreation needs identified in the formulation of this plan. These needs have been expressed three ways: ideas generated by the focus groups and public forums; needs expressed by city officials, elected leaders, and citizens outside of the public arena; and an evaluation of the existing parks.

Early in the planning process it became apparent that several principles were guiding the plan's development: that residents and officials of Wadsworth take pride in their parks; that the City parks are above average in comparison to parks in other similarly-sized communities; that the recreation programs have a high participation rate; and that the City has shown a strong desire as the City grows to maintain and to improve the park and recreation for both current and future residents. The City embraces the principle that a high-quality parks system is essential to maintain residential property values, provide a similar level of services and recreational opportunities to new residents that are currently available to existing residents, and to avoid future overcrowding and overuse, which leads to deterioration of existing facilities. A strong park and recreation system is also a powerful economic development tool that can be used to market the City to companies that show an interest in relocation.

A. Interviews

The consultants conducted interviews with many City staff members and public officials to gather their concerns and visions of the park and recreation system of the City. Each participant was encouraged to express their frank opinions of what the biggest needs of the system were and to spell out what types of parks and recreational activities they would like to see in the City of Wadsworth. Out of these interviews came the beginning basis for this report. A list of those ideas and needs is included in the appendix.

B. Focus Groups

To formally involve residents of Wadsworth in creating the Parks and Recreation Plan, two focus groups were established. Each group was composed of individuals representing a variety of views on the park and recreation system. At each meeting, the participants were encouraged to express their views as to the City's parks/recreation and open space needs and to identify the means to implement the suggestions.

During the meetings a wide range of needs and implementation measures were identified. All of these suggestions are included in the Appendix.

C. Site Visits to Park Sites

The consultants visited the parks several times over the course of this project in order to verify how the parks were being managed, how they were being utilized, and what seasonal changes were occurring in the parks. The conditions of the parks and some of our observations are noted on Page 9.

IV. Park and Recreation Development Plan Objectives

From the evaluation of existing conditions and the assessment of needs for future park land and improvements, the following objectives have been set forth as a guide for formulating the Development Plan strategies in Section V.

- A. Wadsworth should modernize or build anew existing facilities deemed obsolete such as Steiner Youth Center. The City should also create or continue completion of individualized development plans for the community parks within the system (Memorial, Holmesbrook, and Bird Street).
- B. Emphasis should be placed on expanding park, open space, and recreational opportunities for the growing population north of the I-76/High Street interchange.
- C. The City should look at the long-term growth of the City and project now where parks will most likely be needed in the future.
- D. Wadsworth should develop new parks or expand existing ones to accommodate; specialty parks (a dog park and a skate park), a baseball/softball facility, and several multi-purpose fields in order to satisfy the needs of the growing population.
- E. The City should develop pedestrian connections between parks and neighborhoods as well as to the Medina County Park District system, the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail system and the Silver Creek Metro Park in Summit County.
- F. The City should maximize utilization of existing facilities by providing adequate maintenance during critical use periods; adding lights where appropriate to extend playing time; and maximizing shared use of school facilities
- G. The City should improve the organization of the Parks and Recreation departments.
- H. The City should develop a financial plan which ensures that these objectives can be achieved.

V. Park and Recreation Development Plan Strategies

A. **Wadsworth should modernize or build anew existing facilities deemed obsolete such as Steiner Youth Center. The City should also create or continue completion of individualized development plans for the community parks within the system (Memorial, Holmesbrook, and Bird Street). Map 2, Page 19, shows the locations of all existing parks as well as locations discussed in Section V.**

- 1 Steiner Youth Center has served the needs of the Wadsworth community for almost 34 years. However, changes in recreation center design and availability of amenities has rendered this facility out-dated. The city should replace the Center with a more modern facility that better serves the needs of the community. The need for a new community/recreation was the most agreed upon item from the community forums and the interviews the consultants completed with City officials. At more than 30 years old, the facility has reached the end of its useful life as a community recreation center for the following reasons:
 - a. The indoor pool is too small to accommodate the number of citizens wanting to use it.
 - b. It lacks shallow water, slides, sprayers, and a therapy pool; all amenities that are available in modern facilities.
 - c. The pool infrastructure is out-dated and cannot be easily repaired or replaced should it malfunction. There is the potential for long-term closure from equipment failure.
 - d. The lack of continuity and visibility inside the building makes the building hard to supervise and may be a security issue.
 - e. A Kent State University study showed that an indoor walking/running track is the greatest missing amenity. That could not easily be added to the existing building.
 - f. The meetings rooms are too small and ill-placed for maximum usage.
 - g. The gymnasium is too small for a city the size of Wadsworth. It cannot accommodate the leagues and the rest of the citizens that want to make use of it.
 - h. The weight and fitness rooms are inadequately-sized and are in need modern equipment.
 - i. The locker rooms are out-dated and inconvenient.

In order to build a new recreation center elsewhere in the City, about 15 acres would be required. There are several sites in the City where this center could be built. Locating it near downtown would make it accessible to a large number of citizens as well as possibly acting as a catalyst for investment. There is also a vacant parcel of land of about 15 acres directly across Broad Street from the current center which would be convenient for the High School as well as alleviating parking problems. Another site is the one the City has been considering in a partnership with Salvation Army—the old Barefoot Sole manufacturing plant at the end of First Street. It may be possible this partnership can be awarded grant money from the Ray Kroc Foundation to help pay for the cost of the new Recreation Center. Please see Appendix B-1 for a list of amenities generally included in community recreation centers.

- 2 The City should work towards fully implementing the Holmesbrook Park Development Plan first proposed in 1994 and subsequently updated in 2001.
 - a. Secure the access points the development plan proposes to ensure that there are multiple access points to the park.
 - b. Complete the hiking trail loops as proposed in the development plan.
 - c. Complete the connection between Freidt Park and Holmesbrook Park.
- 3 The City should create a detailed park development plan for Memorial Park. Please see appendix B-2 for one possible scenario for the further development of Memorial Park.
 - a. A passive recreational area should be established around the pond the City Engineers are creating to help with storm water run-off between AC Field and Memorial Park Pond.
 - b. Vacant land south of Memorial Park which previously was used as the City landfill should be incorporated into Memorial Park. Vacant land extends from the northern edge of Memorial Park to State Street. As much of this land as possible should be incorporated into Memorial Park. Given the topography of this land, an off-road bicycle course as well as a more challenging hiking trail could be developed. This land also includes a second lake that could add to the recreational offerings of the City of Wadsworth.
 - c. The city should monitor real estate sales activity along South Avon Avenue and Ault Street for possible inclusion of any properties into Memorial Park.
- 4 The City should create a detailed development plan for Bird Street Park. Please see appendix B-3 for one possible scenario for the further development of Bird Park.

- a. The southern end of this park has approximately 11 acres of woods that could accommodate a walking trail that can traverse nearly the entire park and connect to the adjoining school.
 - b. There are four residential properties that separate Bird Park I (the old section) from Bird Park II (the newer section). The city should monitor those properties for real estate sales activity for possible inclusion of those properties into Bird Park.
 - c. The City and the Wadsworth School system should work together to create a walking/fitness trail between Bird Park and the school along Takacs Drive. A fitness trail would have stations that would show various exercises that could be done at that station. This could not only be incorporated into the physical education curriculum and be used for the children attending that school, but would also be good for the citizens who frequent Bird Park.
- B.** **Emphasis should be placed on expanding park, open space, and recreational opportunities for the growing population north of the I-76/Main Street interchange. Map 2, Page 19, shows areas where land may be acquired north of I-76 to increase park land in that section of the City.**
- North of Interstate 76 there are only two public parks; Weatherstone and Northwoods—approximately seven acres. While there are several developments that either have, or will have their own open space, there is a definite dearth of public parkland within this growing region of the City. In addition, there are only two baseball fields, one basketball court, and one children's play area within these parks.
- 1 Developers of Planned Units Developments should be encouraged to provide more than just passive recreational opportunities through the preservation of open space. Those set-aside lands could have other recreational facilities such as children's play areas, basketball courts, or tennis courts. Agreements between the City and the Homeowners Associations should be explored with regards to maintenance and access.
 - 2 Land acquisition for Community Parks (between 30-50 acres in size) will probably have to take place outside current City boundaries. There is ample land on the outskirts of the northern section of Wadsworth, however, that land is also considered prime development land. It is essential that the City work quickly to secure land close to the City in order to help satisfy the recreational needs of its citizens.
 - a. Since the northern section of the City is experiencing a rapid expansion of population, there is a need not only for a community park (between 30-50 acres in size) but also for smaller neighborhood parks (between 5-10 acres in size).
 - b. In addition to acquiring land, the City needs to ensure that enough active recreational sites are included within this area. There are

currently no tennis courts and only one basketball court above Interstate 76. There is a need for approximately three more full-court outdoor basketball courts and two outdoor tennis courts. These courts—both tennis and basketball—should be placed in association with either existing parks or with neighborhood parks that are created in the future. In addition, it is possible to create combination tennis/basketball courts and have specific times allotted for each sport. There is vacant land adjacent to the western edge of Weatherstone Park. Acquisition of this land would enable the placement of two courts as well as a children's play area and a shelter. Please see appendix B-4 for one possible scenario for development of this park.

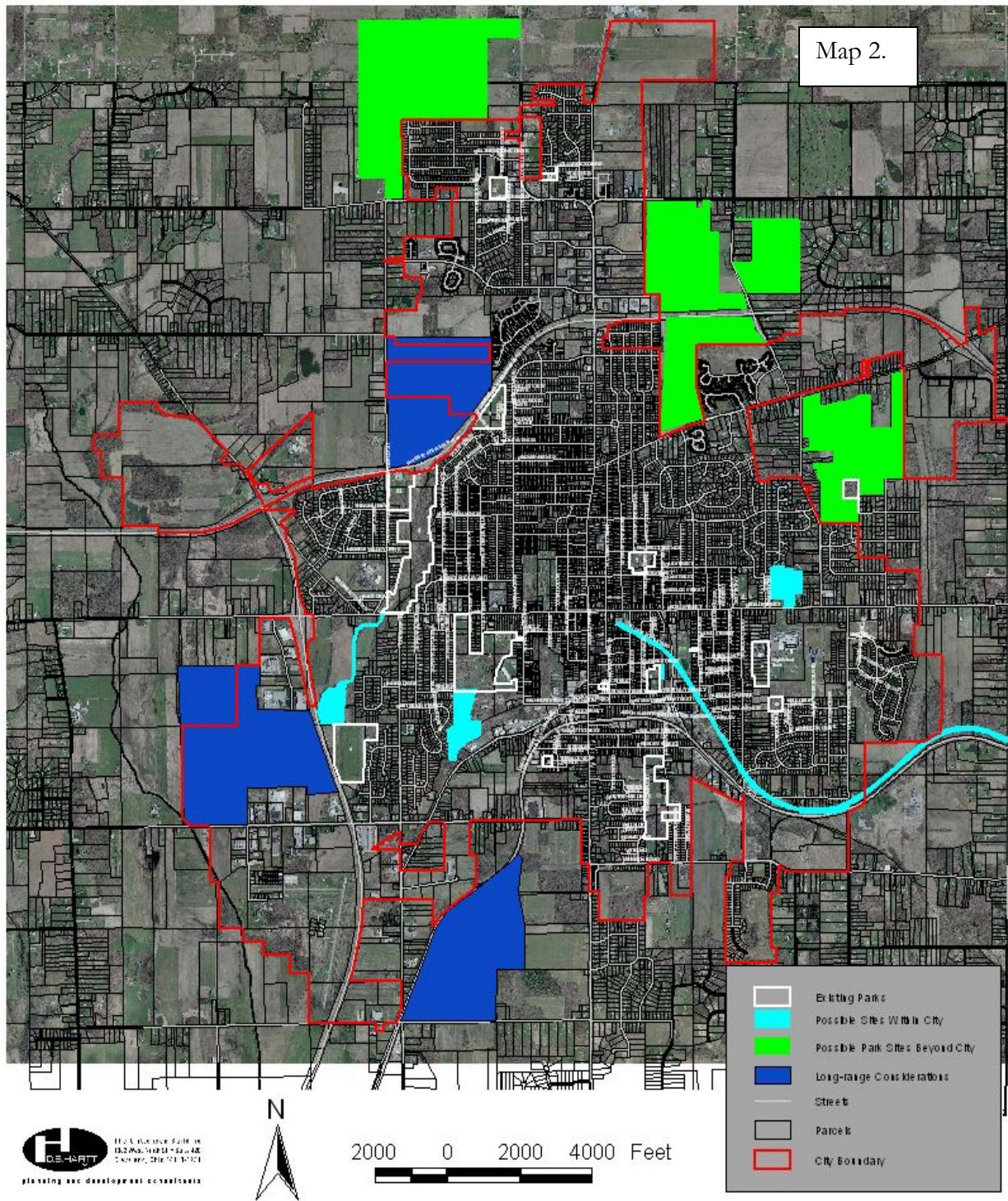
- 3 Access to Northwoods Park should be improved. Currently this park is accessible only through a walk between two residences off of Holly Briar Drive. There is no sight-line or road access for emergency personnel. There are two properties that abut this Park and front onto major roads. These properties are both developed. Should one of these properties become available, the City is encouraged to explore the possibility of acquisition so that access and expansion of this park can occur. Please see B-5 in the Appendix for one possible solution.

C. The City should look at the long-term growth of the City and project now where parks will most likely be needed in the future. Map 2, Page 19, shows areas where land may be acquired for long-term considerations.

As the City continues to grow, long range plans need to be made to ensure access to parkland for new citizens. The City also has an opportunity to protect unique natural areas from development that could play a key role in future years with regards to water and air quality. As these areas are considered, a long range connection plan should also be considered so that routes can be determined and rights-of-way can be mapped out. Map 2 shows areas that should be considered for new long-range parkland purchases.

- 1 The City should act to preserve the North End Leatherman Road Natural Resource Area. It has previously been identified as a natural resource area by both the City and the Medina County Park District and is one of the most unique natural resource areas in close proximity to the City. The area comprises approximately 200 acres. The City currently owns 15 acres of this area. As a minimum, the City should consider securing control of 75 to 100 acres of this site. Preservation of this area should be a priority consideration before development pressure in the area makes such preservation more costly, difficult, or impossible. It is not necessary for the City to acquire this land as owner. The City could purchase the development rights to the property, they could allow the owners to donate a permanent development easement that would reduce the tax burden of the property, or they could partner with environmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund to protect this natural area.

Wadsworth Park and Recreation Plan Development Plan



- 2 The City should carefully consider any developments that happen within the boundaries of “the brickyard” south of the City. Given the layout of that site and the potential that site offers, this is definitely an area where the City could partner with a developer to provide park land and recreational opportunities to the citizens.
 - 3 The City should consider securing control of land near the Airport, north of Seville Road. That area is prime wetlands and has great potential for watershed protection and passive recreational opportunities.
 - 4 The City should work with the County to encourage their continued acquisition of River Styx Valley North. Next to the Leatherman Road site, this is the most unique resource area in proximity to the City.
- D. Wadsworth should develop new parks and expand existing ones to accommodate; specialty parks (a dog park and a skate park), a baseball/softball facility, and several multi-purpose fields in order to satisfy the needs of the growing population. Map 2, Page 19, shows areas where land may be acquired to ease short-term considerations.**

In addition to the needs of the City for more parkland north of I-76, there is a need for more parkland in the rest of the City as well. However, this land is for specific types of specialty parks such as a dog park, a skate park and more ball fields.

- 1 The City owns five acres of land in Wadsworth Township off of Mills Road. There is land immediately adjacent to this site on the west side that is available and has been offered to the City. If access for this land can be improved to make this site accessible from Hartman Road, this would make an ideal site for a dog park. The site may be large enough to also allow for other recreational opportunities such as a children’s play area, a walking/bicycling trail, basketball courts, etc. Please see the appendix B-6 for one possible layout for use of this site as a dog park. To the northeast of this site, an apartment complex is being constructed with the City boundary. It may be possible to have this site be pedestrian accessible from the apartment complex.
- 2 A skate park has been proposed for a small area immediately adjacent to Steiner Youth Center. However, if Steiner is to be replaced with another facility, that may not be the best location for a skate park, especially if Steiner were to pass from the hands of the City to another entity, such as the Wadsworth City Schools. It is recommended that a skate park be incorporated into the planning for the new recreational center.
- 3 One of the key points that came out in discussions with both City officials and citizens was the need for more baseball fields. Further discussion and clarification shows that a complex of four baseball fields would be the most

efficient set-up, both in land use and in use of the fields. This would require about 15 acres. There are few large parcels of land left within the City of that size so it is likely that this complex would need to be built on land outside the current City limits.

- 4 There are also some existing parks within the City that have room for expansion.

- a. Miller Park. To the east side of Miller Park is a vacant area that could be incorporated into Miller Park. This would allow for the expansion of parking and the possibility of adding other active recreational facilities. One addition to this park, if it is expanded, could be a sand volleyball court. Please see the appendix B-6 for one possible layout of the expansion of this facility. The following picture is a typical example of a sand volleyball court.



- b. Durling Park. Records show this park has a walking/hiking trail. If it does, it is poorly marked. About one-third of the park is open space leading to a ravine with a stream. If this ravine and stream could be incorporated into the park, a hiking/nature trail would be a good benefit for the City. This stream corridor could also be incorporated into a watershed protection system.

- E. The City should develop pedestrian connections between parks and neighborhoods as well as to the Medina County Park District system, the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail system and to Silver Creek Metropark in Summit County. Map 3, page 20, shows a possible series of connections between parks, proposed parks, and neighborhoods. Please see Appendix B-6 for approximate costs associated with this project.

In 2001, the Medina County Park District prepared the Medina County Bike/Hike Plan with support from the City of Brunswick, the City of Medina, the City of Wadsworth and the Village of Seville. That plan advocated completing a bike path/trail through Wadsworth following the Akron-Barberton Railroad with an ultimate connection through the City of Norton in Summit County to the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail in Barberton. That plan also called for connecting the River Styx Valley Park by a trail from the Park down Leatherman Road and connecting into the trail at the Akron-Barberton Railroad.

Summit County has created a trail and greenways plan that calls for the creation of a trail along Medina Line Road to connect Medina County and Wadsworth to Silver Creek Park.

Currently the City has few designated bike trails or walking trails—two of the newest parks, Northwoods and Wintergreen have walking trails and Holmesbrook Park has a multi-purpose trail. There are no other trails within the City limits. The City does have an extensive sidewalk system. However, a system of dedicated pathways through the City connecting parks, neighborhoods, and business districts could provide an important linkage for those who choose not to, or cannot, travel by automobile.

- 1 One way for the City to improve the connections between parks, neighborhoods, commercials as well as to the towpath trail is to use the old trolley line that goes from near City Hall east to Summit County and connects to the City of Norton. Medina County has cleared the tracks from this site and at one time was using it as a trail. However, the County found the trail surface too difficult to maintain and closed it. A new trail surface, designed to withstand heavy use, would make this a viable linear park. The City could also add benches and other amenities to it in order to make it more attractive to the casual user. Where the Park intersects with City Streets, stop signs can be erected to help prevent accidents. Once in—or on—the Trolley Linear Park, one can quickly access other parks and neighborhoods.
- 2 Valleyview Park off Valleyview Drive near West Street can be connected to Holmesbrook Park and Freidt Park by following the right of way beside Interstate 76. The trail could be fenced off to prevent intrusion into private backyards or onto the highway. This would allow someone to travel from Valleyview Park to College Drive without having to go onto a street. The following picture was taken in a local community that has done exactly what is proposed. This particular trail runs along Route 480 for about 1.5 miles.



Example of a trail along interstate right-of-way

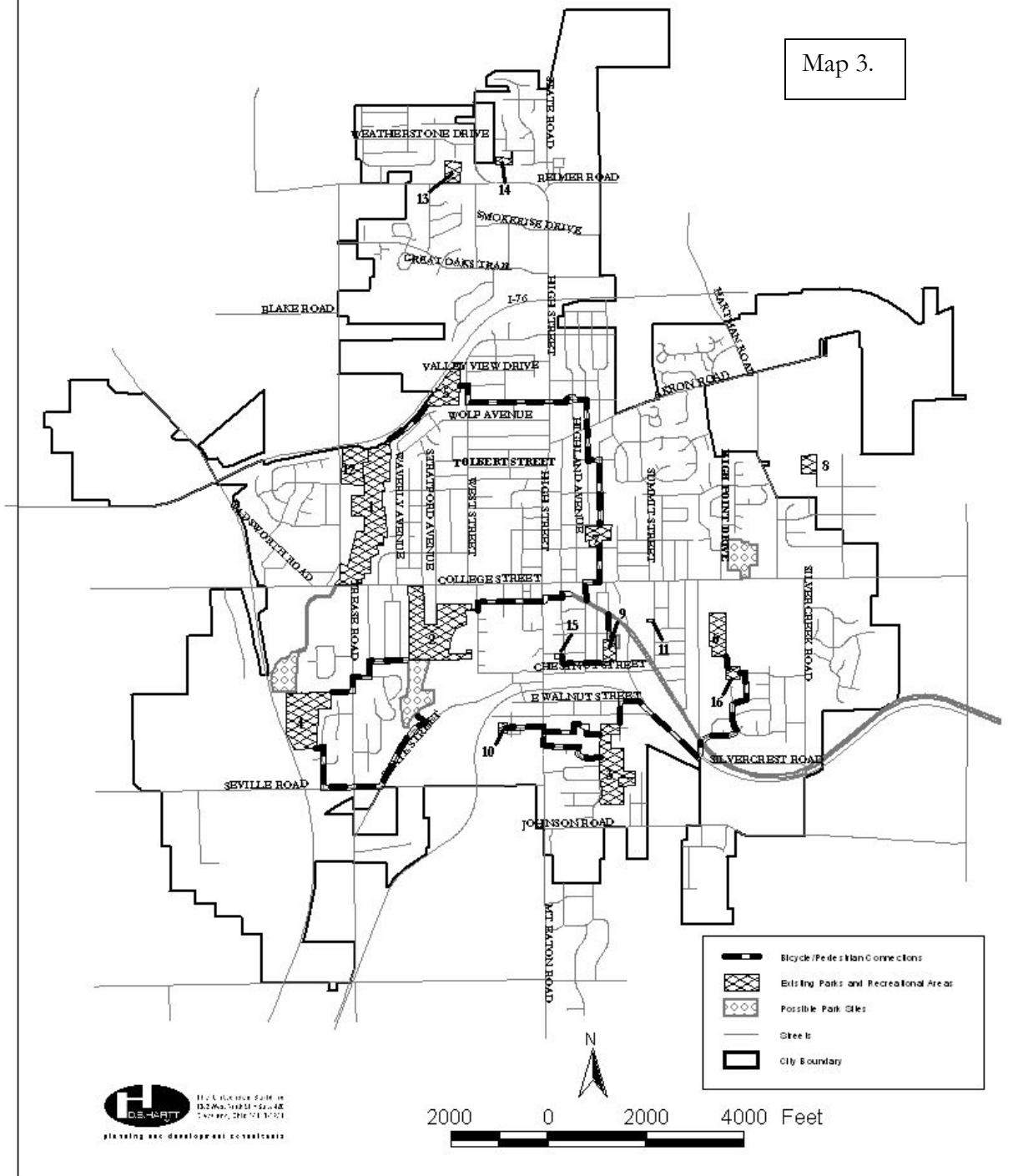
- 3 Holmesbrook/Freidt Parks can be connected to Muhl Fields by using a right of way between College Drive and Muhl Fields. The City is currently in negotiations to acquire much of the land necessary to accomplish this section. The final route of the trail will need to be determined by the actual parcels acquired. Much of this land is wetlands and this could be used as an interpretative trail.
- 4 Wintergreen Park to the Steiner Youth Center and Wadsworth High School. There is an open field between the Park and the Youth Center. Local citizens already have created an impromptu path. One that would better stand up to the elements and accommodate all more forms of transportation would better serve the needs of the citizens.
- 5 One of the easiest ways to provide bicycle/pedestrian linkages is through the use of existing streets. Routes for connections should be sited along minor roads and roads that do not handle a maximum volume of traffic. The routes should be identified with a stripe painted along the side of the road with cautionary signs for motorists to share the road. Pedestrians should follow sidewalks where possible but joggers may also wish to use these street connections. The following picture is from a local community that has installed bike lanes on some roads.



Typical example of bike lane

- a. Muhl Fields to Memorial Park—North on Trease Road, right onto Westwood Street, left onto Westview Avenue and then right onto Ringer Street. (A connection would need to be provided at the entrance to Memorial park off Ringer Street.)
- b. Memorial Park to the Trolley Linear Park—Left on Grandview Avenue, right on Mills Street, cross over Main Street, go down the alley behind the school, cross South Lyman Street and through the parking lot nearest the Trolley Park.
- c. Durling Park to the Trolley Linear Park—South down Humboldt Avenue, left on Broad Street, right on E Street to the Trolley Park.
- d. Miller Park to the Trolley Linear Park—North up Ohio Avenue to the Trolley Park.
- e. Miller Park to Franklin Park—West down Chestnut Street then left on South Lyman.
- f. Bird Park to Terraceview Park—West from Bird Park down Takacs Drive, right on South Main Street, then left on Terraceview Drive.
- g. Bird Park to the Trolley Linear Park—North on Bird Street, right on East Bergey Street, left over the Akron-Barberton Railroad tracks and onto Durling Drive, then north to the Trolley Park.

City of Wadsworth Possible Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail System



- h. Steiner Youth Center/Wintergreen Park to the Trolley Linear Park—South on Treeview Drive, right on Ashbrook Drive, left on Woodcrest Drive, then right on Royal Woods Drive to the Trolley Park.
 - 6 Another possibility for a pedestrian/trail connection is the water and sewer right-of-way that traverses the City. This right-of-way can be used to connect the City to Silver Creek Metropark in Summit County

Trails and connections have not been mapped out for the land the City owns in the Township nor for the two parks north of I-76. However, as new parkland is secured in close proximity to these areas, the city should also map out trails and connections to connect these parks to the greater system.

F. The City should maximize utilization of existing facilities by providing adequate maintenance during critical use periods; adding lights where appropriate to extend playing time; and maximizing shared use of school facilities

- 1 Spring grass growing season coincides with the beginning of the spring outdoor leagues. In site visits, as well as in speaking with league organizers, it was noted that grass cutting was not as expedient in the spring as it may need to be. It is common for localities to hire extra help during the summer for grass cutting and other maintenance work. However, it is suggested that the extra help be hired in April rather than in late May, in order to prepare the fields for the spring league season. It is also suggested that the leagues could help cover that extra expense.
- 2 As the park system continues to grow more money will need to be added to the maintenance budget in order that the parks can be maintained at a high level.
- 3 Lights can be added to existing facilities, but all residential concerns should be taken into consideration before lights are added in primarily residential areas.

G. The City should improve the organization of the Parks and Recreation departments.

Currently, planning for the parks and recreation facilities is shared by the City Council and the Service Director. This has not changed since the 1992 plan. The Recreation Director is in charge of the recreation programs and the Parks Maintenance Superintendent is in charge of park maintenance. Plans and drawings for park improvements are created, or approved, by the Engineering Department. It is not apparent that any one person has the overall administrative responsibility or the available time to focus on and adequately address long range priorities, funding and implementation. One person should be designated as having the overall administrative authority and responsibility to implement the plan. An overall director would assure that this Plan is implemented in a coordinated fashion. Such director does not necessarily need to be a new City employee.

H. The City should develop a plan which ensures that these objectives can be achieved.

This Park and Recreation Plan has many facets and has identified a wide range of actions. If it is to be implemented in a timely manner, the City cannot rely on its general fund. A high quality park system requires the City to consider a wider range of funding sources than are currently being utilized or not being utilized to their fullest reasonable extent. Financing measures to be considered include the following:

- 1 One method of funding could be a dedicated line of funding for parks and recreation from a levy. The funds generated by this levy could be used for all the needs of the park system, including maintenance and operating expenses. Since this levy would go to improve the quality of life for all citizens within the City, it could be termed a “Quality of Life” levy. A levy, much like a library levy or a school levy, would provide “guaranteed” funding for many park and recreation initiatives. The focus groups and interviews that were completed showed this type of levy should be considered as the main source of additional funding.

The income tax rate and the effective property tax rates in Wadsworth are among the lowest in the area. The following table shows the tax rates for Cities within the greater Wadsworth region.

Table 5.
Income and Residential Tax Rates

Locality	Income Tax Rate		Effective Residential Property Tax Rate
Wadsworth	1.30		45.23
Norton	2.00		45.71
Medina	1.25		59.15
Brunswick	1.35		48.71
Barberton	2.00		46.43
Akron	2.25		54.03

A slight increase in the income tax rate from the current 1.3% to 1.5% would generate nearly \$1,000,000 a year which could go directly towards parks and recreation. With a guaranteed source of income, the City could issue bonds for development of a new recreation center. The 1.5% rate would still be below the average rate for the surrounding cities. To raise that much yearly revenue from a property tax increase would require an additional 6 mills. And that revenue would never rise without an additional millage increase.

- 2 The City could consider the feasibility of partnering with Wadsworth Township and Sharon Township to offset some of the cost of a new recreation center and expand the reach of the recreation department.
- 3 Once final costs are in place for the improvements to the park and recreation system, the City should consider revamping the fee structure not only for use of the recreation center, but also for the entire range of recreational opportunities it offers.
- 4 The City should work with developers of regular subdivisions to acquire prime land for park development even if that means having to offer incentives that would allow the developer a density bonus so there is no net loss of revenue. This could halt further “hidden” parks such as Northwoods and still satisfy the needs of the community.
- 5 The City should increase their efforts to acquire grants and other money from private institutions. As noted previously, the City is currently trying to secure money from the Kroc Foundation to help replace the Steiner Youth Center. More work needs to be attempted in this area. A full-time Parks and Recreation Director could be useful in assuring that these resources are used to their fullest extent.
- 6 In addition, the City should attempt to develop partnerships with local and regional businesses and organizations in order to fully develop this Plan.

Appendix

A-1. Summary of Park and Recreation Needs

Compiled from

Citizen Participation Sessions, February 23, and May 25, 2006

Public Forum, April 20, 2006

New Recreation Center—This was seen as a near unanimous need. Most participants favored building a new center on another site and finding other uses for this building. Some participants said that they would favor rebuilding this structure if it was feasible.

Possible uses for this building if it were to be abandoned include turning it over to the school system or keeping it within the park system as an auxiliary building.

Multi-purpose fields—There was much discussion about this. How many? Where? How big? There was a consensus on need for more open areas that could be used for multiple purposes.

Bicycle/Multi-Purpose/Running Trails—This was another big area of consensus. Many people would like to see more all-purpose trails and biking trails. They also wanted to see trails capable of being used by the handicapped. There were also calls for a BMX or off-road bike trail. Participants liked the idea of trails both on-street as well as off-road. A running and walking oval track was also listed as a need. A facility of this type could be used by different people and groups.

4-plex for baseball—This need is a hold over from the 1992 plan and it is an even bigger need now than then. Some participants called for adding six or eight fields instead of just four so some of the older fields which are barely adequate could be abandoned.

Skate Park—The City has offered to match funding for a group that can raise funds for a skate park. A site immediately adjacent to the Steiner youth has been chosen. However, if Steiner is abandoned or rebuilt, a skate park at that location may not be feasible.

Bird Street Park for football only—The people who run the youth football program in Wadsworth said that they would like to see Bird park given over entirely for football. Given the existing infrastructure, that is impractical. However, with the building of Fieldcrest Park at Bird Street Park, this park should be the home of youth football. There is undeveloped land within Bird Street Park that could be developed for Youth football.

Maintenance—Several comments were made by league administrators about maintenance for the fields in the Spring. Spring sports begin in April at roughly the same time that prime grass growing season begins. Unfortunately, Park maintenance does not seem to gear up for grass-cutting until late May. While the fields do get cut in April and May, they do not get cut with the frequency that is needed considering the use the fields receive during this time.

Dog Park—There were not many people who spoke in favor of a Dog Park, but they were passionate about it. There were no participants who spoke against a Dog Park. This is a definite need because it may eliminate a perceived dog problem in other city parks.

New Fieldhouse—This is a need item raised by those affiliated with the Wadsworth City Schools. While not a pressing need for the City Parks and Recreation departments, it is a facility that could be used by both the school system and the City. It may be possible to combine this need with other needs and create a partnership between the City and the school system that can service several needs at once.

A-2. Summary of Park and Recreation Implementation Measures

Compiled from

Citizen Participation Sessions, February 23, and May 25, 2006

Public Forum, April 20, 2006

Self-Taxing – Quality of Life Levy—This emerged as the main implementation measure for this plan. Participants in the three public meetings as well as many people that were interviewed believed that a “Quality of Life Levy”, if presented right, would pass the voters. This levy, which the City would have to determine whether it would be an income tax levy or some other form of levy, would provide money for many of the projects set forth in this plan.

Land bank—This was a proposal to accept land from developers to use for parkland. But rather than developing parks, the City would “bank” the land until it had enough accumulated to sell and then use that revenue to acquire larger tracts of land more suitable for parks. However, since land is being given by the developers specifically for parkland, it is not possible then to put that land back on the market. Land banks are used by cities more often to hold onto land that is currently not desirable for a future time when it becomes more desirable.

Partnerships—This was a proposal to partner with outside companies or organizations to provide parks and recreational opportunities for residents. It would also be possible for the City to partner with neighboring townships or the County to accomplish the same purpose.

Density Bonuses for developers—This was similar to the land bank proposal but is more feasible. This would allow the city flexibility to receive land from developers that was either larger than required or in a more suitable location for a park within the proposed development. The City could then offer the developer a density bonus which would allow the developer to develop as many lots as if the parkland had not been acquired and would allow the City to develop more prime space for parks.

User Fees—Once the City determines the operating cost for the new recreation center, they will have to adjust the user fees for the new location. While user fees will not pay the entire cost of upkeep and day-to-day operations, they can provide some relief. Updated user fees for leagues should also be considered to help with maintenance and upkeep.

Sponsorships—This proposal was similar to the partnerships but would work more for private businesses and organizations. The City can also seek out sponsorships for specific events.

Donations—The City should set up a specific mechanism for accepting donations of money, land and services.

TABLE A-3	
Summary of Needs and Implementation Measures	
Compiled from Citizen Participation Sessions on February 23, and May 25, 2006	
NEEDS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. New Recreation Center2 Multi-purpose fields3. Bicycle/Multi-Purpose/Running Trails4. 4-plex for baseball5. Skate park6. Bird Street for football7. Maintenance8. Dog Park9. New Fieldhouse	
IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Self-Taxing – Quality of Life Levy2. Land bank3. Partnerships4 Density Bonuses for developers as incentive to provide facilities/land.5. User Fees6. Sponsorships from groups such as volunteer organizations, local and regional businesses, local and regional medical centers and universities, etc.7. Donations	

B-1 Typical Community Recreation Centers

A community recreation center programming study would need to be done to accurately determine all the components/amenities needed and the ultimate size of the facility. It may be possible to use the facility study that was completed several years ago at least as a starting point for the community conservation about what the community needs and wants with a recreation center. Listed below are some of the typical amenities included in community recreation centers.

A. Possible Amenities

1. Indoor Pool (6 lanes, 25 meters)
2. Therapy Pool
3. 18-seat Spa
4. Indoor leisure pool with tub slide
5. Rock Climbing wall
6. Two Gyms
7. Fitness room and equipment (9,000-12,000 S.F.)
8. Elevated 1/8-mile track
9. Group Fitness/Exercise rooms
10. Child-care Area
11. Racquetball Courts
12. Community/Crafts Room
13. Café/Kitchen
14. Banquet Room for 250 people (optional)
15. Senior Room
16. General Offices (Staff, Director)

The cities below have all completed recreation centers recently. This is merely a sampling of some cities across the United States. These do not necessarily reflect the cost of a new Center in Wadsworth.

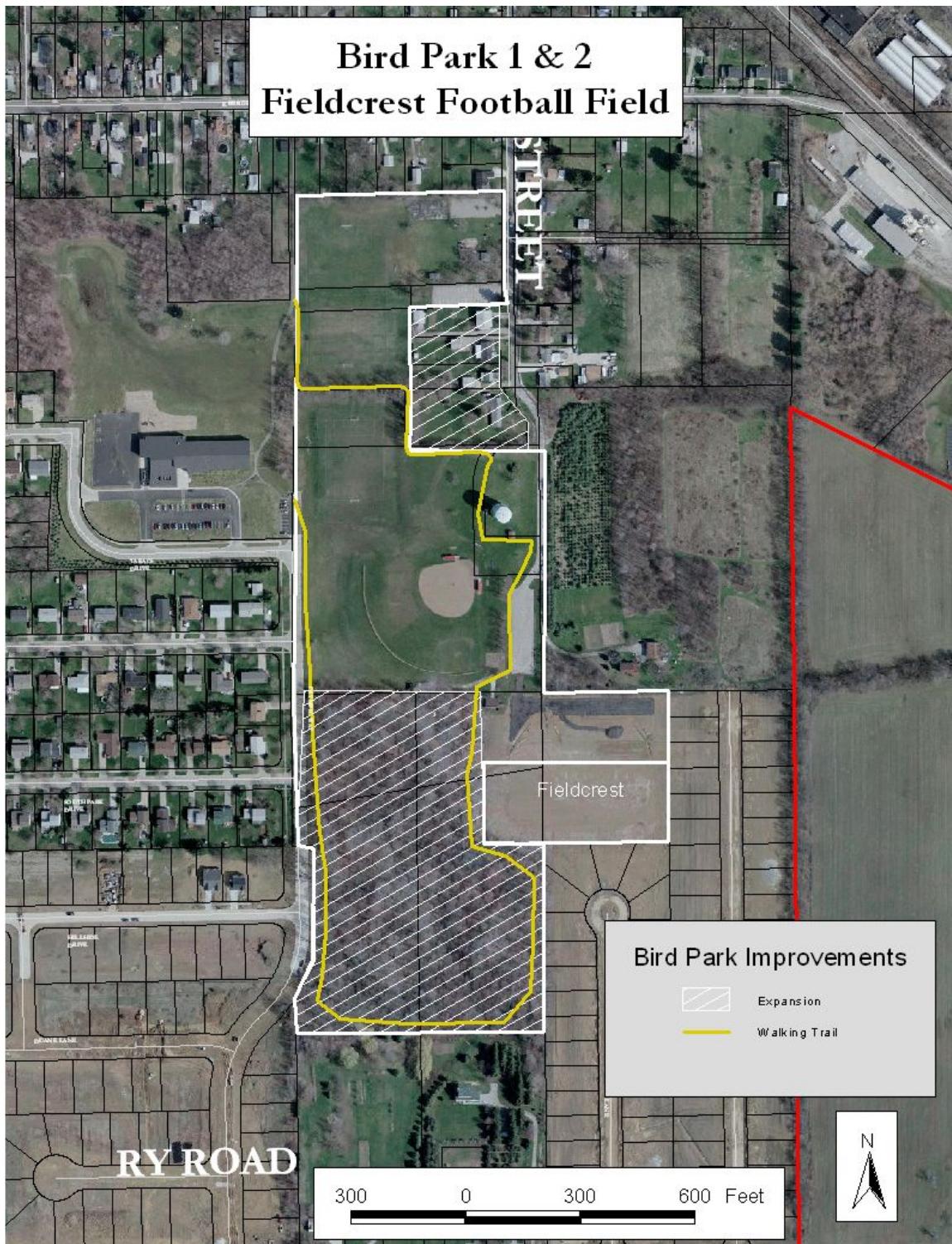
B. Typical Sizes and Construction Costs

1. Cuyahoga Falls, OH	116,000 S.F.	Cost: \$22,000,000.	\$190/S.F.
2. Centennial, CO	75,000 S.F.	Cost: \$12,000,000.	\$160/S.F.
3. Grandview, MO	60,000 S.F.	Cost: \$8,820,000	\$147/S.F.
4. Dickinson, ND	80,542 S.F.	Cost: \$11,400,000	\$141/S.F.

B-2. Map showing layout for suggested improvements to Memorial Park



B-3. Map showing layout for improvements to Bird Park



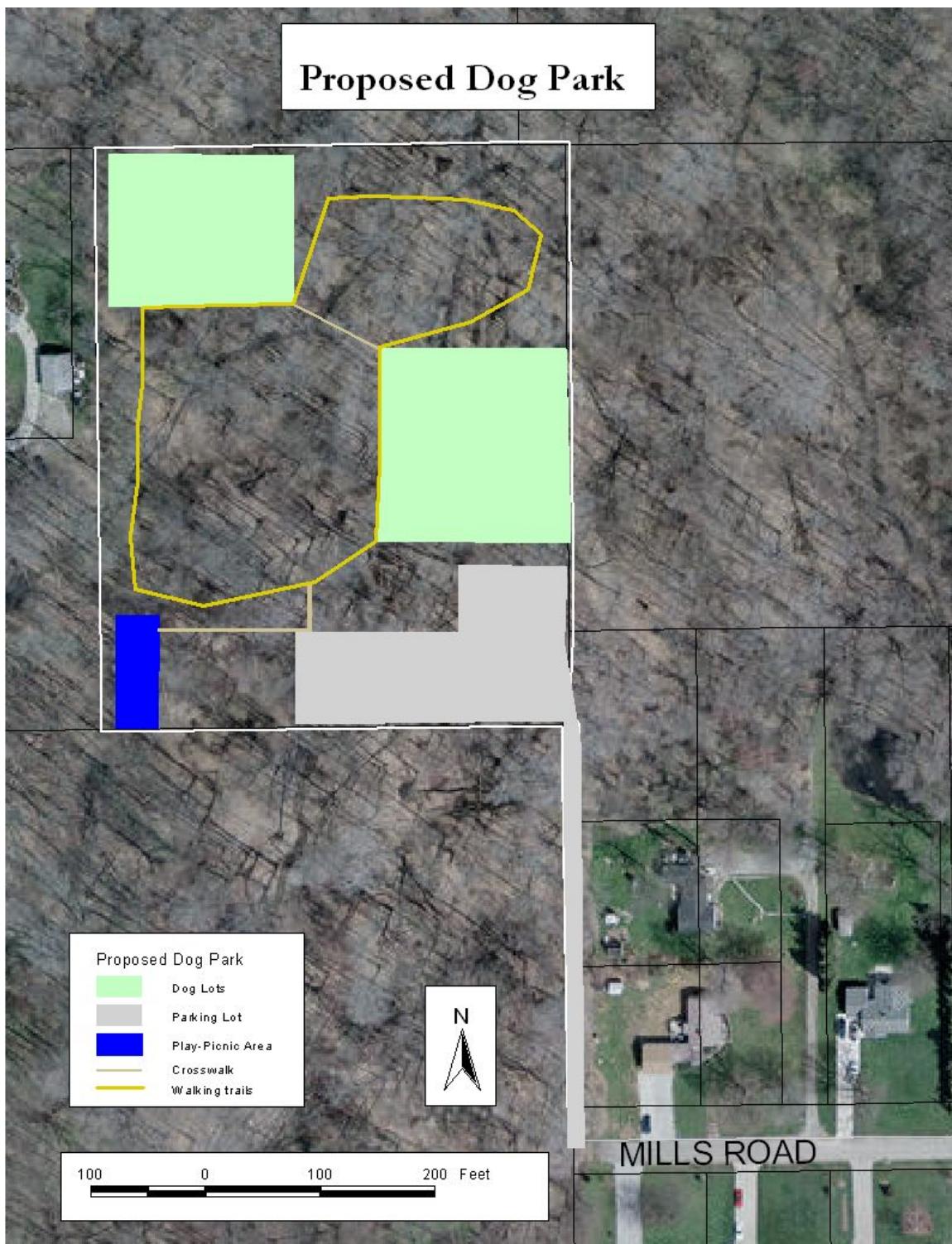
B-4. Map showing layout for improvements to Weatherstone Park



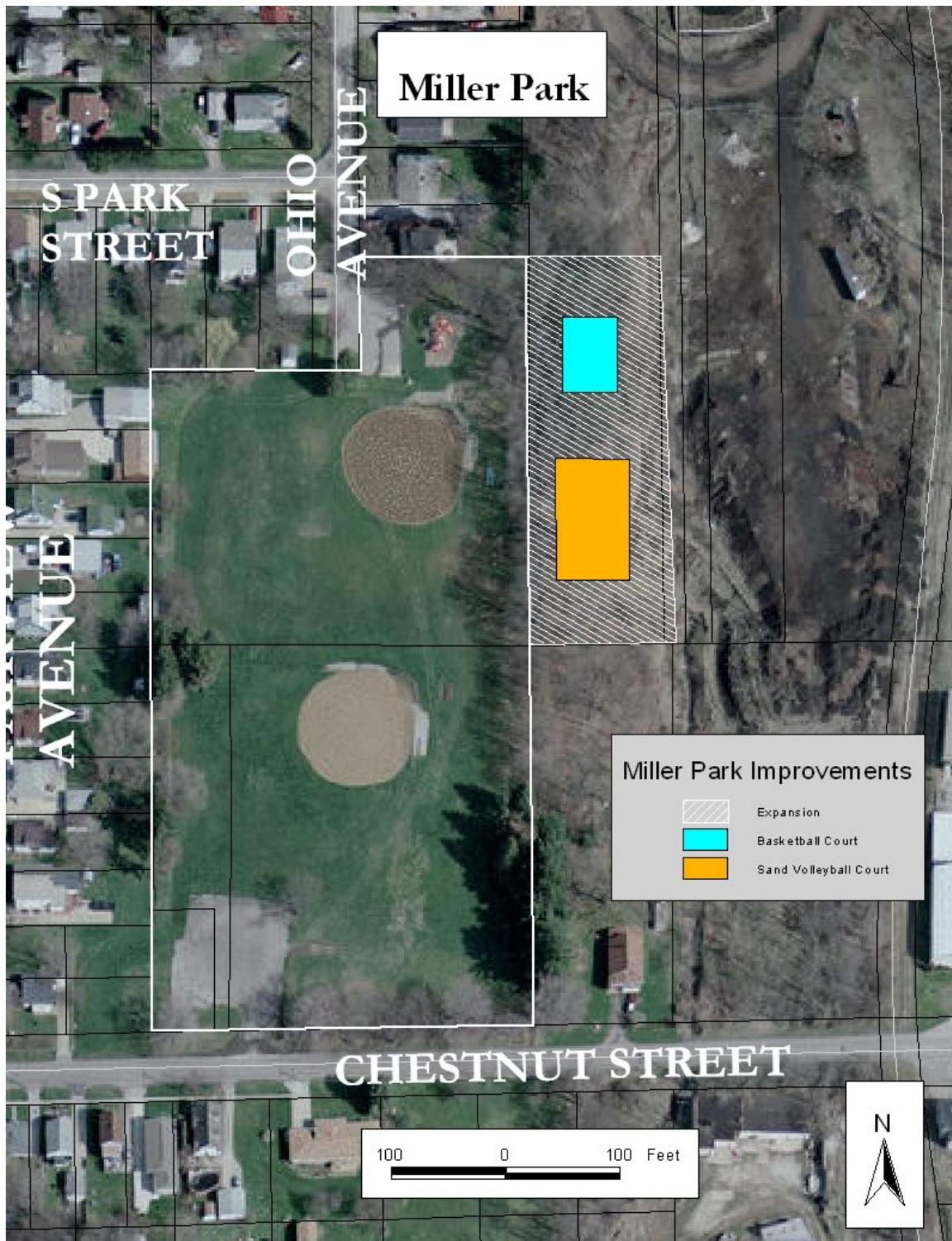
B-5. Map showing layout for improvements to Northwoods Park



B-6 Map showing layout for new Dog Park



B-7. Map showing layout for improvements to Miller Park



B-8. Cost sheet for improvements to Wadsworth City parks
(All costs approximate)

1. **Memorial Park.** Walking trails, BMX trail, expansion (21 acres including landscaping but not environmental clean-up costs) **\$150,000**
2. **Bird Park.** Walking trail, landscaping etc. **\$50,000**
3. **Weatherstone.** Shelter, basketball courts, play area, restrooms/concession stand, landscaping, expansion, etc. **\$250,000**
4. **Northwoods Park.** Tennis court. **\$45,000**
5. **Proposed Dog Park.** Dog areas, children's play area, shelter, picnic tables, parking lot, access road, walking trail, basic site improvements, etc. **\$250,000.**
6. **Miller Park.** Acquisition (one acre), site improvements, basketball court, sand volleyball court, etc. **\$100,000**
7. **Bike Lanes/Pedestrian Access.** 5.4 miles of street markings, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of asphalt trails, 2.77 miles of composition trail for the Trolley Park, benches, bike racks, etc. **\$375,000.**
8. **Typical Neighborhood Park—20 acres (for north of I-76).** 2 baseball fields, paved parking lot, 4 basketball courts, access road, children's play area, restrooms, picnic tables and accessories, landscaping, drinking fountain, 2 multi-purpose fields, walking trail, etc. **\$580,000.**
9. **4-Plex Baseball fields.** Acquisition, 4 baseball fields, parking lot, restrooms, concession stand, accessories, etc. **\$600,000.**

C-1. City of Wadsworth

Current Parks Inventory