

Mini Parks

Mini-parks, tot lots and children's playgrounds are all small, single purpose play lots designed primarily for small children usage. Due to their size, the facilities are usually limited to a small open grass area, a children's playground and a small picnic area.

Assessment:

1. **Existing Conditions:** Currently, there are 10 mini-parks in the Merced planning area. These are located in South Merced and most offer limited recreation opportunities.
2. **Service Areas:** The service area for a typical mini-park is considered to be a 1/4-mile radius.
3. **Needs Assessment:** Due to their size, maintenance costs, and limited recreational value, additional parks of this type are not recommended. In addition, the City should consider reducing its current inventory of this park type by donating or selling some sites.

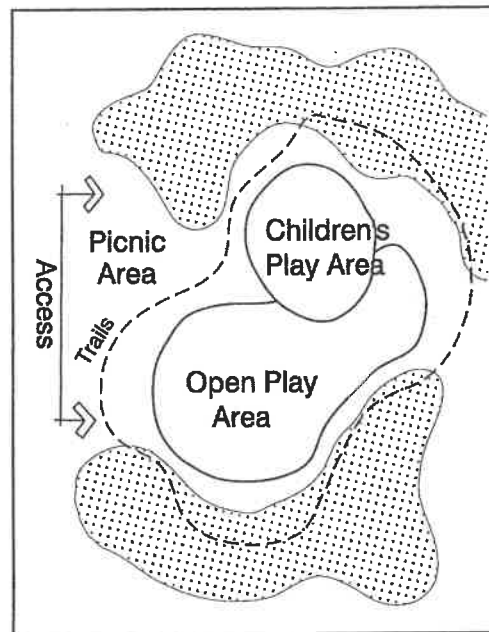
Design and Development Policies:

1. **General Land Use Guidelines:**
 - a. Due to their size and limited recreational value, public parks of this type should be **discouraged**. Mini-parks should only be considered when there is not a sufficient population base to support a neighborhood park or no other option is available to provide park service.
 - b. The development of this park type should be encouraged as part of large private multi-family developments under private ownership. Within single-family subdivisions, if these parks are provided, they should be owned and maintained by a homeowners association.
2. **Site Selection Criteria:**
 - a. While there is no size requirement for mini-parks, the minimum size should be at least 20,000 square feet in size.
 - b. The site should be central to the area it serves.
 - c. The site should be flat and usable and have the ability to support active uses.
 - d. If possible, walking distance should not exceed one-quarter mile, and not require crossing of busy streets or other barriers.
3. **Design and Development Standards:**
 - a. Appropriate facilities include:
 - Children's playground facilities
 - Open grass play area
 - Picnic areas

- Pathways, preferably looping
- Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)

- b. The site should be visible from adjoining streets and have at least 100-150 feet of street frontage.

4. Schematic Diagram



Recommendations

1. Summary of Recommendations:

Table 6.3
Summary of Mini-Park Recommendations
Merced Planning Area

Park Number	Site	Existing Acres/ Proposed Acres	Action
MP-1	8 th and V Mini-Park	0.89	Consider disposal
MP-2	11 th and H Mini-Park	0.17	Consider disposal
MP-3	12 th and G Mini-Park	0.19	Consider disposal
MP-4	Dennis Chavez Park	0.28	Consider disposal
MP-5	William Lloyd Garrison Park	1.02	Upgrade
MP-6	Diego Rivera Park	0.25	Consider disposal
MP-7	Love Veasley Family Park	0.17	Consider disposal
MP-8	Harriet Tubman Park	0.45	Consider disposal
MP-9	Charles Richard Drew Park	0.52	Upgrade
MP-10	Circle Drive Park	0.26	Upgrade
Total		4.20	

2. Specific Improvements:

8th and V Mini-Park

MP-1

The 8th & V mini-park is fairly large compared to the other mini-parks in Merced, but it is located very near Stephen Leonard Park. The service area for this park overlaps the service area for Stephen Leonard Park. It has very few facilities, and does not appear to get much use.

Since it has limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the City should consider disposing of this mini-park. Prior to making a final decision, the City should consult the immediate neighbors. At this meeting, City representatives should share a cost-benefit analysis, including the maintenance cost of this park; the projected cost for upgrades; the availability of funding for upgrades; options for disposal (donation of park or donation/sale of the land); the estimated proceeds if the park were sold; and the service areas of nearby parks. The four options that should be explored with neighbors are: 1. Disposing of the park by selling it or donating the land (such as to Habitat for Humanity) and dedicating any funds generated to park improvements at nearby parks; 2. Keeping the park as is and continuing to maintain it at its current level (not recommended); 3. Upgrading it and continuing to maintain it as a City park; or 4. Forming a local maintenance district to pay for upgrades and maintenance. Turning the park over to neighborhood volunteers is not usually a workable solution, because the City remains ultimately responsible for the park and often has to resume maintenance once the initial volunteers have phased out. Due to the limited City funds currently available for upgrades, it will be important to discuss the realistic potential of various funding sources (City, neighbors, other groups). Option 2 is not recommended because of the current limited recreation value of the park. Option 3 is also not recommended, unless neighbors can provide a strong argument in favor, a private group steps in to take over ownership, or neighbors propose a realistic financing plan for upgrades.

11th and H Mini-Park

MP-2

This is one of the smaller sites (about 7,500 s.f.), and does not appear to get much use. It does contain some trees and a small play area. Since it is across the street from the flea market grounds, there are very few eyes on this site, which make it less welcoming for users. Gilbert Macias Park, which has much nicer play equipment, is located on the south side of the flea market grounds.

Due to its limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the City should consider disposing of this mini-park. It is the size of a residential lot, and is located among single family residences. Prior to making a final decision about the park's future, the City

should consult the immediate neighbors. See the discussion under 8th and V mini-park, site MP-2, for additional details.

12th and G Mini-Park**MP-3**

This park is the size of a single family lot. The play structure is very small, and there are no trees or landscaping on the site. The site does not appear to get much use, although it is in the midst of a residential neighborhood with many multi-family developments.

Although this park is fairly close to both McNamara Park and Gilbert Macias Park and is quite small, it has some potential to provide recreation value to surrounding neighbors, who are mainly residing in apartments with limited outdoor space. However, in its current state, this park is providing very limited recreation value and requires significant upgrades.

Prior to making a final decision about the future of this park, the City should hold a meeting with surrounding neighbors (those within a quarter mile of the park) to determine the recreational value of this site to neighbors and gain input on its future. There are four general options for this site:

- If the site is providing recreational value to surrounding neighbors, the City could upgrade and maintain it.
- If the site is providing recreational value to surrounding neighbors, the City could upgrade it and a neighboring property owner or a private group could pay for maintenance.
- If there is marginal recreational value, neighbors or other groups could pay for upgrades and maintenance. If there isn't interest, the City should sell or donate the site.
- The site could be sold or donated and any proceeds used to upgrade a nearby park.

This site may be a good candidate to turn over to a neighboring property owner (if they are willing), who would then be responsible for maintenance and possibly for upgrades. If it is determined that the City should retain this park and upgrade it, the park should be designed using a process that involves the surrounding neighbors. This will ensure that the resulting park reflects the needs and desires of neighbors, and that there is a sense of "ownership" of the park among neighbors which can increase use of the park and help reduce vandalism.

Dennis Chavez Park**MP-4**

This is one of the larger of the mini-park sites and has good visibility because it is located on a corner. It has a nicer character than many of the other mini-parks because of the path system and shade trees. Other than the play area and the pathway, there is very little in terms of amenities. It does not appear to get much use by the surrounding neighborhood. However, this

park does offer potential service to a small area outside the ½ mile service area of Stephen Leonard Park.

Because of its limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the City should consider disposing of this mini-park. It is about the size of a residential lot, and is located among single family residences. Prior to making a final decision about the future of this park, the City should consult the immediate neighbors. See the discussion under 8th and V mini-park, site MP-2, for additional details.

William Lloyd Garrison Park

MP-5

William Lloyd Garrison Park is the largest of the mini-parks, and has some potential for expansion. Currently, it barely qualifies as a developed park because it is essentially an uneven grass area, with the exception of a small play area and a bench located in one corner. If upgraded, this park would provide service to an area not served by other neighborhood parks.

It is recommended that this mini-park be upgraded so that it meets local recreation needs. Recommended upgrades include:

- Prepare a master plan for the site, taking into account in the design any potential land acquisitions to expand the park.
- Provide a larger play area with more interesting equipment; including installation of safety surfacing and curbing.
- Provide a path system within the park.
- Install paved court for basketball, etc.
- Upgrade irrigation system.
- Provide additional trees.
- Provide site amenities: signage, bike racks, waste receptacles, benches and picnic tables.
- If the park size is increased to at least 2 acres, reclassify as a neighborhood park.

Diego Rivera Park

MP-6

This is one of the smaller sites (about 10,800 s.f.), and does not appear to get much use. It contains very few amenities, and the play equipment is quite small. There does appear to be undeveloped land at the rear of the park. The site is located midway between McNamara and Stephen Leonard Parks, and a few blocks from Charles Richard Drew Park (MP-9).

Because of its limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the City should consider disposing of this mini-park. It is the size of a residential lot, and is located among single family residences. Prior to making a final decision about the future of this park, the City should consult the immediate neighbors. See the discussion under 8th and V mini-park, site MP-2, for additional details.

Loye Veasley Family Park**MP-7**

This park is the size of a single family home site (about 7,500 s.f.). The play structure is very small, and there are no other facilities or landscaping at the park. This site is within walking distance of Gilbert Macias Park, McNamara Park, and Harriet Tubman Park, all of which have nicer and more interesting play equipment.

Because of its limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the City should consider disposing of this mini-park. It is the size of a residential lot, and is located among single family residences. Prior to making a final decision about the future of this park, the City should consult the immediate neighbors. See the discussion under 8th and V mini-park, site MP-2, for additional details.

Harriet Tubman Park**MP-8**

This park is located adjacent to the Golden Valley Health Center and appears to get some use, unlike many of the other mini-parks. The main users are children who are visiting the Health Center. Tenaya Middle School and Charles Richard Drew Park are a few blocks away. The park is almost a half acre in size, and has a basketball backboard in addition to play equipment. Although it isn't a full half-court, the backboard seems to attract use.

Prior to making a final decision about the future of this park, the City should hold a meeting with surrounding neighbors (those within a ¼ mile of the park), and specifically with Golden Valley Health Center, to determine the recreational value of this site to neighbors and gain input on its future. There are four general options for this site:

- If the site is providing recreational value to surrounding neighbors, the City could upgrade and maintain it.
- If the site is providing recreational value to surrounding neighbors, the City could upgrade it and a neighboring property owner (such as the Health Center) or a private group could take over or pay for maintenance.
- If there is marginal recreational value, neighbors or other groups could pay for upgrades and maintenance. If there isn't interest, the City should sell the site.
- The site could be donated or sold and any proceeds used to upgrade a nearby park.

As an additional alternative, this site may be a good candidate to turn over to Golden Valley Health Center, if they are willing, since the park is essentially part of the Health Center site and appears to be mostly used by Health Center clients. The Health Center would then be responsible for maintenance and possibly for upgrades.

Charles Richard Drew Park**MP-9**

Charles Richard Drew Park is one of the larger mini-parks, and contains just over a half acre. The park contains few amenities, but the play structure is larger than in most other mini-parks. This park is located diagonally across the street from Tenaya Middle School, which does not have a play area, and has good visibility because of its corner location.

It is recommended that this mini-park be upgraded so that it meets local recreation needs. Recommended upgrades include:

- Prepare a master plan for the site.
- Upgrade the play equipment, including installation of safety surfacing and curbing. If possible, provide two play areas for different age groups, including tots.
- Provide a path system within the park.
- Upgrade irrigation system.
- Provide additional trees and landscaping.
- Provide site amenities: signage, bike racks, waste receptacles, benches and picnic tables.

Circle Drive Park**MP-10**

Circle Drive Park is one of the most attractive and welcoming mini-parks. It is very visible from E. 23rd Street, and is surrounded by Circle Drive. Shade trees provide a canopy over the park. There are no other parks nearby.

It is recommended that this mini-park be upgraded so that it better meets local recreation needs. Recommended upgrades include:

- Prepare a master plan for the site.
- Upgrade the play equipment, including installation of safety surfacing and curbing. If possible, provide two play areas for different age groups, including tots.
- Provide a path system within the park.
- If space permits, provide a paved court area for basketball.
- Upgrade irrigation system.
- Provide additional trees and landscaping.
- Provide site amenities: signage, bike racks, waste receptacles, benches and picnic tables.

Neighborhood Parks/ School Parks

Neighborhood parks are a combination playground and park, designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreation activities. They are generally small in size (about 5 acres) and serve an area of approximately one-half mile radius. Typically, facilities found in a neighborhood park include a children's playground, picnic areas, trails, open grass areas for passive use, outdoor basketball courts and multi-use sport fields for soccer, and Little League baseball. Optimum size is between 3 and 7 acres.

School parks are parks provided adjacent to school sites. These parks provide the same function as neighborhood parks. In Merced, the school park model is one that the City and the Merced City School District intend to pursue in the future.

Assessment:

1. **Existing Conditions:** Currently, there are five neighborhood parks and one school park consisting of 26.88 acres in the Merced city limits. Merced owns all five neighborhood parks, and 5 acres of the school park site. The remainder of the school park site is owned by MCSD, and a portion of MCSD's acreage contains the school buildings.
2. **Service Areas:** The service radius for a neighborhood park is considered to be a 1/2-mile radius. Please refer to the Neighborhood Park Service Area Map in Appendix E to see the underserved areas.
3. **Needs Assessment:** Based on the service area analysis, 8 additional neighborhood park sites are needed to serve the current city limits, and an additional 13 are needed to serve the planning area at build-out. However, 9 sites are already available or dedicated to park use.

Design and Development Policies:

1. **General Land Use Guidelines:**
 - a. The acquisition of neighborhood parkland should occur far in advance of its need.
 - b. The construction of a neighborhood park should occur when the area it will serve reaches about 75% developed (measured by either acreage developed, or population accommodated).
 - c. Wherever feasible, neighborhood park acquisition should occur adjacent to elementary schools sites.
2. **Site Selection Criteria:**
 - a. Under most conditions, neighborhood parks should be no smaller than about three acres in size, with optimum size being 5 acres. If located next to a school site, optimum park size may be reduced to 2 - 3 acres, depending upon the school facilities provided. If flood control basin facilities are included in a neighborhood park site, at least 2 contiguous