

Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045



Acknowledgments

This *Park System Master Plan* was prepared under the supervision and with the aid of the Abilene Recreation Commission, the Abilene City Planning Commission, and City staff, with technical assistance by planning consultants Foster Design Associates LLC of Wichita, and with the invaluable help of community volunteers on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

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CHAPTER 1. Park System Overview

Why Parks?

Parks matter. They improve our quality of life and enhance community livability, making them an important factor in attracting new business and contributing to economic growth. They serve people of all ages, all abilities, and all ethnic and economic backgrounds, strengthening our sense of community. They protect open space that preserves wildlife habitat, improves air and water quality, helps mitigate flooding, and supports trees that sequester carbon.

Abilene's existing park system is extraordinary in many ways, but will need to adapt over time to meet evolving expectations for park services. For that task, a park system master plan is an indispensable tool. A master plan consolidates information on resources, constraints, and opportunities. It provides an outline of where the park system is, where it is going, and how it will get there. Having a park system master plan on hand also enhances funding opportunities, since many grant providers require a master plan as a prerequisite in any proposal.

This *Abilene Park System Master Plan* provides an **overview** of existing park and recreational resources in the Abilene area. It lists community **goals** for the park system, determined through recommendations from the Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, City staff, public meetings, and a Community Questionnaire. It provides background information on **park and recreation concepts and options for new facilities**, and proposes development ideas for each park. It defines **implementation strategies** for the City to develop a balanced **park system** that cost-effectively achieves the community's highest priority goals over the next twenty-two years.

The Planning Process

In 2023 the City of Abilene engaged *Foster Design Associates LLC* (FDA), a landscape architecture and planning firm based in Wichita, to produce a new *Abilene Park System Master Plan* for the community. FDA was simultaneously contracted to produce a new *Comprehensive Plan* for Abilene, allowing cost-effective synergy in developing much of the necessary background research.

The new *Abilene Park System Master Plan* will replace the City's previous 1999 *Parks Plan*. Like the new *Comprehensive Plan*, the new *Park System Master Plan* will cover a Planning Period of about 22 years, from 2024 through 2045.

If adopted as an element of the *Comprehensive Plan*, any revisions to the *Park System Master Plan* would require a lengthy public hearing process—so instead, it will simply be adopted as a policy document for the City. This process will offer increased flexibility to those responsible for implementing the *Park System Master Plan*, as the Park system's needs and circumstances change over time.

FDA worked with elected leaders and City staff, the Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, the *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee*, and community volunteers, to develop a *Park System Master Plan* that would *fit* Abilene's unique needs, expectations, and resources.

Plan to keep the *Park System Master Plan* up-to-date & vital. Schedule an annual review by the Recreation Commission, with a presentation by City Parks staff to provide an update on implementation progress.

Public Input

A **Steering Committee** of community stakeholders was formed, to provide input throughout the planning process. **Public meetings** were held, so community members could propose ideas, and comment on the concepts expressed in this Plan. **Recreation Commission members, Planning Commission members, and City Commissioners** held discussions of park planning goals.

Also, a **Community Questionnaire** was conducted in June and July of 2023. Distributed both inside and outside the city limits, a total of **108 responses** were received from Abilene community members. Part of the Questionnaire covered topics related to the the City's Comprehensive Plan, but a major portion was focused on Parks planning issues in Abilene.

Periodically in this document, references will be made to the results of the Community Questionnaire. The tabulated results of the Questionnaire are available to the public on the City website, and from the office of the City Clerk at Abilene City Hall.

Community Questionnaire Respondents		
Male	48	40%
Female	71	60%
Under 19 years old	0	0%
19 to 29 years old	8	7%
30 to 45 years old	43	35%
46 to 65 years old	49	40%
66 to 75 years old	21	17%
Over 75 years old	2	2%
Inside City	88	69%
Live outside City & own property inside	8	6%
Outside City	32	25%
Less than 5 years	12	9%
5 to 10 years	21	16%
More than 10 years	95	74%

The table on this page shows some of the characteristics of the people who completed the Community Questionnaire.

The table shows a fairly typical response profile for such surveys—more women than men completed the Questionnaire, and few young people expressed an opinion. Responses from those inside the city limits and those outside are well balanced to provide both perspectives on community issues.

Note, every person did not necessarily answer every single question, so sometimes the total answers to a particular question don't add up to the total number of Questionnaires returned.

From Plan to Reality

Producing a master plan document is just the beginning of the process, however, not its end. Recreation Commission members, Planning Commission members, City Commission members, and City staff are responsible for determining the best methods to implement policies and procedures to achieve the community goals expressed in this *Plan*.

While this *Park System Master Plan* is an essential tool, it will take dedicated people to turn concepts into detailed site designs, and designs into reality. With imagination and perseverance, Abilene's park system will continue to be an asset that benefits the community for generations to come.

*If you plan cities for cars and traffic,
you get cars and traffic.*

*If you plan for people and places,
you get people and places.*

— Fred Kent, *Project for Public Spaces* —

Abilene's Park System

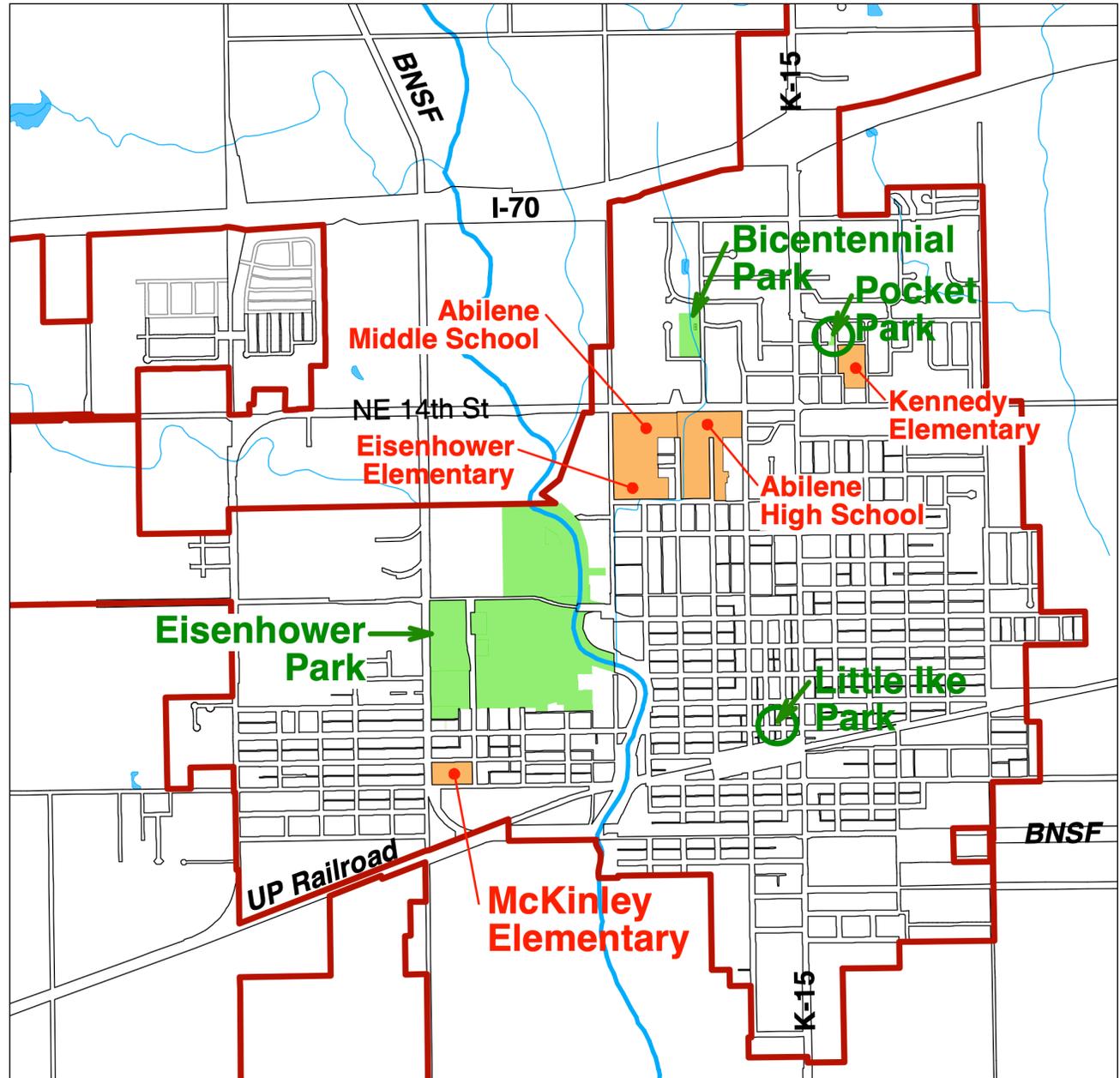
Abilene's park system consists of two very small parks, one small park, and one extremely large park.

- Unnamed Pocket Park
- Little Ike Park
- Bicentennial Park
- Eisenhower Park, which also serves as the Fairgrounds for the Central Kansas Free Fair

There are also three USD 435 school sites in Abilene, which host playgrounds, gymnasiums, and other recreational facilities that serve the entire school district, including residents of Abilene.

- Kennedy Elementary School
- McKinley Elementary School
- Main school campus which hosts:
 - Eisenhower Elementary School
 - Abilene Middle School
 - Abilene High School

The City of Abilene Parks and Recreation Department manages the park system, in close cooperation and with the advice of the Abilene Recreation Commission. Management of the Fairgrounds also involves close cooperation with Dickinson County, the Central Kansas Free Fair Association, and the Kansas Military Board.



Abilene Parks

Abilene's park system incorporates a total of 119 acres of parkland at four different sites.

A **Pocket Park**, a quarter-acre in size and never named, is in a residential neighborhood on the northwest corner of Kuney and 16th Streets. It contains some basic playground equipment, utilized almost entirely by children living in the immediate area.

Little Ike Park is downtown, providing a much-needed haven of greenspace in the urban core of Abilene. This small but mighty Park incorporates ornamental landscaping, seating, tables, shade, and public art, while celebrating the city's history as the childhood home of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Along with an adjacent public parking lot, the site serves as a venue for many community events and celebrations.

Bicentennial Park functions as a neighborhood park, primarily serving the northeastern residential areas of the city. Located north of the High School, this 4-acre Park has a Park sign, an 18-space parking lot, a restroom building, two picnic shelters, a basketball court, a variety of playground equipment in half a dozen locations, and a footbridge over the drainage channel which roughly bisects the Park from north to south.

Eisenhower Park is the colossus of Abilene's park system. Mud Creek borders much of the Park's eastern edge.

Eisenhower Park incorporates a number of special facilities, including the Abilene Community Center, the Abilene Municipal Pool, the Rose Garden, Royer Bandshell, and the Abilene Stadium. Fair facilities include livestock barns and show rings, as well as a collection of concessions buildings.

Sports facilities in Eisenhower Park include seven baseball diamonds, basketball courts, tennis/pickleball courts, a sand volleyball court, a Skatepark, and Cornhole Courts. In addition, there are Community Gardens, restrooms, picnic shelters, playground equipment, grills, and some decommissioned mid-20th century tanks and artillery pieces.

Paths in Abilene's Parks

While Eisenhower Park and Little Ike Park have sidewalks or paths that people use to walk for exercise, the existing pathways are typically not connected to destinations outside of each park, and do not form an interconnected network. Most of the routes that pedestrians use to traverse the Parks are not suitable for bicycling, and are not ADA accessible.

While such sidewalks and paths are a recreational asset of sorts for the community, they do not work together to provide the synergy of a true bicycle and pedestrian network—which is more than the sum of its parts, and which can serve as an alternative transportation system throughout the city.



Concrete sidewalk in Rose Garden



Brick path in Little Ike Park



Gravel walking path in Eisenhower Park



Concrete sidewalk at Municipal Pool entrance

Parks In Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) produces maps which identify floodplains, and classify them based on degree of risk. The three broadest categories of floodplain designation are floodway, 1% annual chance floodplain, and moderate flood hazard areas.

- **Floodway:** The channel of a river or stream.
- **1% Annual Chance Floodplain:** Areas that will be inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the base flood area or *100-year floodplain*.
- **Moderate Flood Hazard Area:** Areas between the limits of the 1% annual chance floodplain and the area that will be inundated by a flood event having a 0.2-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the *500-year floodplain*.

Located as Abilene is, adjacent to both Mud Creek and the meandering Smoky Hill River, much of the land in and around the City is floodplain. Downtown and many of its adjacent historic neighborhoods were built in floodplain; more recent development has taken place on higher ground.

Land in floodplains, while generally not suitable for most development, *can* be utilized for purposes tolerant of occasional flooding, and is often used for public parks.

All of **Little Ike Park** is located in the 500-year floodplain. Almost 82% of **Eisenhower Park** (93.6 acres) is in the 500 year floodplain; 19.7 acres are within the Mud Creek floodway. Only about 1.2 acres along the north end of the west edge of Eisenhower Park are **not** in floodplain.

Bicentennial Park and the **Pocket Park** are *not* in floodplain.

ABILENE CITY PARKS	Location	Size (acres)	Percentage of Abilene's parkland	Floodplain Status	Notes
Unnamed Pocket Park	Northwest corner of N Kuney Street & NE 16th Street	0.24	0.20%	NOT in floodplain	A residential-sized lot in a residential neighborhood, with some playground equipment on it
Little Ike Park	Northwest corner of N Spruce Street & NW 3rd Street	0.09	0.08%	Entirely in 500-year floodplain	A downtown urban Park
Bicentennial Park	Northwest corner of Mulberry Street & Parkplace Court	4.19	3.52%	NOT in floodplain	A drainage channel runs through Bicentennial Park
Eisenhower Park	Between Washington Street on the west and Vine Street on the east, extending more than a half mile north to south on either side of NW 8th Street	114.47	96.20%	Mostly in 500-year floodplain	Mud Creek borders the eastern boundary of Eisenhower Park
Total acres:		119.0	100%	—	—

USD 435 Recreational Resources

The Abilene Parks and Recreation department works in close cooperation with the Abilene Unified School District (USD 435) to contribute significantly to local recreational opportunities.

The Abilene Unified School District operates three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The playgrounds, gymnasiums, and other athletic facilities and programs at the schools provide a wealth of recreational opportunities for the children of the District.

Access to School Playgrounds

The Eisenhower Elementary site, on the same campus as Abilene's Middle School and High School, is not fenced at all.

At McKinley Elementary, located south of Eisenhower Park, the play fields and play grounds are entirely fenced in, with no access available by the community at large.

Eisenhower Elementary School – site aerial (not fenced)



McKinley Elementary School – playground (fenced, with no public access)

McKinley Elementary School – site aerial

Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045

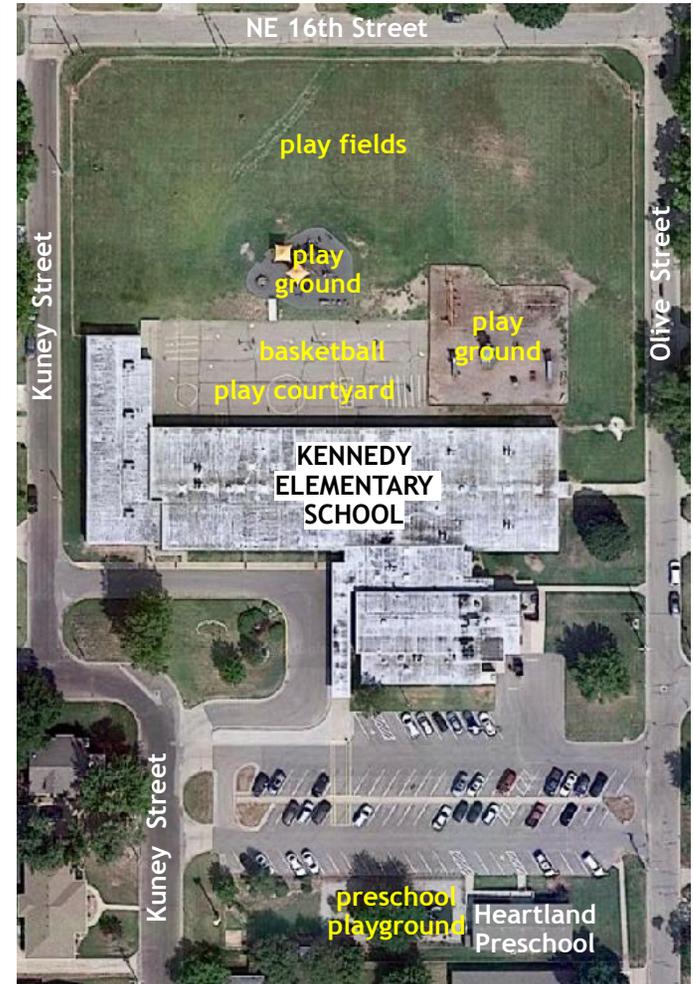
The play fields and playgrounds at **Kennedy Elementary** are fenced, but the fencing was clearly originally designed to allow public pedestrian access, with offset fence panels at the northeast and northwest corners of the site. It appears that those openings in the fencing had been recently retrofitted to block access. However, chainlink used to block the opening was apparently cut to allow public access again.

In addition to the Elementary School playgrounds, there are also six **tennis courts**, on the east side of Mulberry Street just south of the High School, which are available for public use when not being used by students.

Another School District facility important to the community is the **Cowboys Stadium**. It was completely renovated in 2021 and 2022, including adding new bleachers and locker rooms to the Paul Dennis football field, and resurfacing the Ken Russell Track. The facility is completely fenced, but when not in use by students, the north main gate is left open to **allow public use**.



Pedestrian access through offset fencing at Kennedy Elementary School



USD 435 Cowboys Stadium

Kennedy Elementary School – site aerial

Kennedy Elementary School – playground (fenced, designed with public access, which was blocked, then unblocked)

Tennis Courts— aerial



Abilene Recreation Commission

Kansas state statutes allow communities to choose to support recreational programs through a mill levy based on School District boundaries, by creation of a Recreation Commission. This system allows the population of an entire School District to support school-based recreational facilities and programs—which, after all, benefit the citizens of the entire School District.

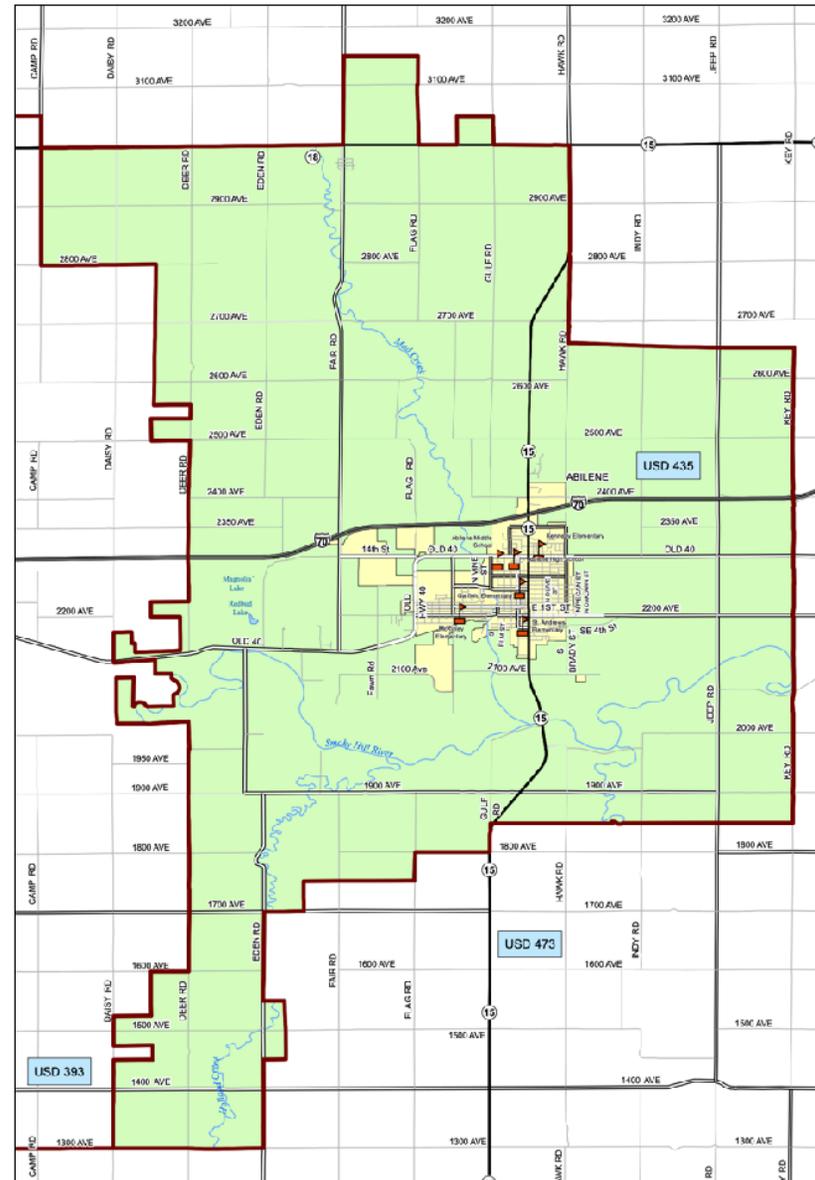
Mill levies for Recreation Commission activities are subject to voter approval by residents of the School District. The tax dedicated to the Recreation Commission is typically collected by the County Clerk, distributed to the School District, and then passed on to the Recreation Commission. State statutes require that funds dedicated to Recreation Commissions may not in any way reduce the dollars provided to the School District for educational purposes.

Established in 1972, the Abilene Recreation Commission is financially supported by property owners in USD 435. As shown on the adjacent map, USD 435 includes the City of Abilene and surrounding rural areas.

The Recreation Commission Board is composed of five members, who are appointed for four year terms—two from the City of Abilene, two from the USD 435 School Board, and one at-large member who is selected by the four appointed members.

The Abilene Recreation Commission provides funding support to the recreational programs and facilities managed by the City of Abilene Parks and Recreation Department staff.

The Parks and Recreation Department publishes two program guides each year—a Spring and Summer Guide available in March, and a Fall and Winter Guide available in August. Available to all USD 435 residents, the Guides provide information on the wide variety of programs, sports leagues, special events, and fitness programs available for Abilene community members of all ages. Some of these activities utilize USD 435 recreational facilities.



Kansas Department of Transportation map of Abilene USD 435 School District, as of June 2, 2015. (USD maps are available on the [KDOT School District Maps](#) website.)

Other Local Recreational Resources

Three privately-owned facilities near Abilene contribute to recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors.

Abilene Golf and Fitness is a 9-hole golf course and fitness center, with a clubhouse, a swimming pool, a driving range, and a skeet and trap range. Located just northwest of Washington and 14th Streets, the privately-owned, 78-acre facility reopened in July of 2023 with a new owner and under new management.



Abilene Golf & Fitness Clubhouse

Brown Memorial Park is a 253.4 acre park which is privately owned by the Brown Memorial Foundation, but open to the public. The Park is located just east of K-15, and just south of the Smoky Hill River. It includes land along the south bank of the River; Turkey Creek runs through the Park.

Brown Memorial Park has **nature trails**, and **cabins that are available for reservation**. It is well known for a **waterfall** on Turkey Creek, created by the remains of an old mill dam. The Brown Memorial Home for independent seniors is also located in the Park.

Brown Memorial Park also includes an **18 hole Disc Golf Course**, with concrete tees. First established in 2004, the course was redesigned and renovated in the spring of 2021, and expanded from 9 to 18 holes.



Turkey Creek waterfall

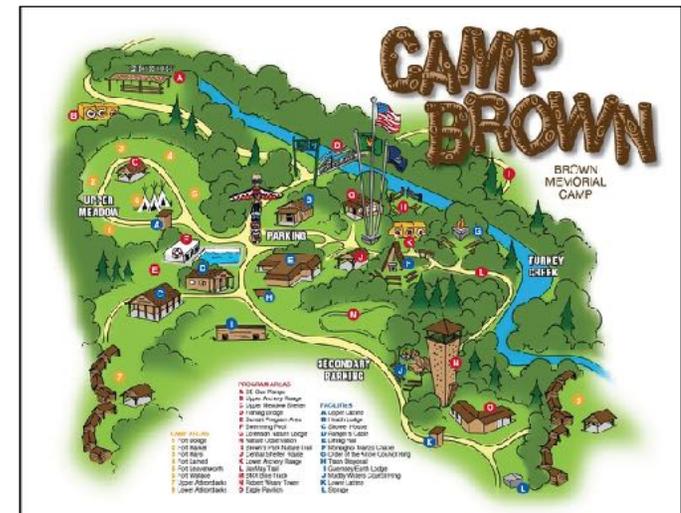


Brown Disc Golf course

Camp Brown / Coronado Scout Camp is a 46.8-acre camping area just south of Brown Memorial Park. The land was donated by Cleyson Brown to the Boy Scouts of America in 1919, and first developed as a Scout Camp in 1927. The property is now owned by the Coronado Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Since 2014, more than \$1.5 million has been invested in new facilities and improvements to Camp Brown, including an improved parking area, five heated and cooled cabins, a ranger's residence, a technology center, a shower house, ball fields, a BMX course, a shooting sports complex, and a fishing area.

Camp Brown is open year round, and its facilities are **available for rent to organizations or groups**.



Community Perceptions of Abilene's Parks

The **Community Questionnaire** that was conducted in the summer of 2023 asked for information on how often people visited parks, then asked people to rate various parks facilities and programs.

Park Visits

This table shows the responses received on the Questionnaire, when Abilene area residents were asked which of the community's parks and recreation facilities they had visited in the previous two years, and how often they had visited.

PARK VISITS	Never visited	Visited in the last 2 years			
		0 times	1 to 3 times	4 to 10 times	more than 10 times
Eisenhower Park/ Fairgrounds	2	0	16	26	72
Abilene Community Center	6	16	29	16	48
Abilene Municipal Pool	8	38	21	18	30
Bicentennial Park	7	39	38	16	15
Little Ike Park	4	16	56	25	14
Total Responses	27	109	160	101	179

Eisenhower Park and the Fairgrounds were the most visited, reasonably enough given the extent of the attractions there. The Community Center is open all year, so it outpaced the Municipal Pool, but both are clearly highly utilized by the community. Bicentennial Park and Little Ike Park were fairly evenly matched in visits, but both are quite well used.

Central Kansas Free Fair Visits

The first table shows the responses received when Abilene area residents were asked whether they had attended the Central Kansas Free Fair anytime in the last ten years, and how often they had visited. The second table shows how often a survey respondent or anyone in their immediate family attended specific Free Fair activities.

FREE FAIR Never attended	Attended CKFF in the last 10 years			
	0 times	1 to 3 times	4 to 10 times	more than once per year
0	5	17	43	50

Have you or anyone in your immediate family attended any of the following Central Kansas Free Fair activities? If yes, which ones?		
No, I have not attended	5	1%
CKFF Parade	100	20%
Wild Bill Hickok PRCA Rodeo	92	19%
Carnival	84	17%
Demo Derby	74	15%
Bulls, Broncs, Barrels & Breakaway	57	12%
Abilene City Band Performances	50	10%
Truck & Tractor Pull	33	7%
Total Responses	495	100%

The various events are listed in order of their popularity. Only 1% of respondents had never attended the Fair.

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Little Ike Park	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Landscaping	92	80%	14	12%	2	2%	7	6%
Statue of Ike as a Boy	78	68%	26	23%	0	0%	11	10%
Picnic Tables / Benches	54	47%	36	31%	2	2%	23	20%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	49	43%	39	34%	2	2%	24	21%
Vehicle Access & Parking	45	39%	50	44%	5	4%	14	12%
Totals	318	55%	165	29%	11	2%	79	14%

Bicentennial Park	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Landscaping	35	31%	43	38%	0	0%	35	31%
Vehicle Access & Parking	28	25%	45	40%	1	1%	39	35%
Playground	22	19%	47	42%	1	1%	43	38%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	22	19%	42	37%	1	1%	48	42%
Picnic Shelters / Tables	19	17%	56	50%	0	0%	38	34%
Restrooms	7	6%	40	35%	8	7%	58	51%
Basketball Court	6	5%	39	35%	1	1%	67	59%
Totals	139	18%	312	39%	12	2%	328	41%

Eisenhower Park	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Rose Garden	102	90%	7	6%	0	0%	4	4%
Landscaping	69	37%	37	33%	2	2%	5	4%
Tennis Courts	32	28%	29	26%	9	8%	43	38%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	31	27%	42	37%	6	5%	34	30%
Vehicle Access & Parking	29	26%	64	58%	8	7%	10	9%
5/8-mile Walking Trail	28	25%	55	49%	2	2%	28	25%
Picnic Shelter	25	22%	67	60%	2	2%	18	16%
Skatepark	14	12%	44	39%	4	4%	51	45%
Basketball Courts	13	12%	50	44%	12	11%	38	34%
Sand Volleyball Courts	12	11%	41	36%	13	12%	47	42%
North Ball Diamonds (1 & 2)	10	9%	27	24%	34	30%	42	37%
South Ball Diamonds (3 thru 7)	9	8%	30	27%	35	31%	39	35%
Restrooms	5	4%	43	38%	41	36%	24	21%
Totals	379	26%	536	37%	168	11%	383	26%

Park Facilities Ratings

These tables show the responses received on the Questionnaire, when Abilene area residents were asked to rate the facilities in each of the community's parks.

Facilities are listed in order of the percentage of "Very Good" ratings they received.

Park landscaping in general was much appreciated, with the Rose Garden claiming particular honors.

Little Ike Park's sculpture, and its simple amenities—tables and seating—were highly valued.

Lowest ratings went to the basketball court and restrooms in Bicentennial Park, and the restrooms and ball diamonds in Eisenhower Park.

Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045

Fairgrounds	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Sterl Hall	43	38%	66	58%	0	0%	4	4%
Landscaping	28	25%	67	59%	9	8%	9	8%
Rodeo Arena	24	21%	71	63%	1	1%	17	15%
Grandstand / Bleachers	18	16%	79	70%	3	3%	13	12%
Midway	17	15%	72	64%	8	7%	16	14%
Vehicle Access & Parking	16	14%	69	61%	14	12%	14	12%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	16	14%	53	47%	5	4%	39	35%
RV Camper electrical hookups	15	13%	29	26%	3	3%	66	58%
Cattle Show Arena	10	9%	48	42%	3	3%	52	46%
Swine Show Barn (1990)	10	9%	46	41%	6	5%	51	45%
Press Stand	9	8%	46	41%	6	5%	52	46%
Horse Barn (1998)	8	7%	50	44%	3	3%	52	46%
Cattle Stalls/Barns	8	7%	44	39%	8	7%	53	47%
Showers and Restrooms	8	7%	42	37%	8	7%	55	49%
Poultry Coops (2001)	5	4%	48	43%	7	6%	52	46%
Concession Stands	4	4%	64	57%	13	12%	32	28%
<i>Totals</i>	239	13%	894	49%	97	5%	577	32%

This table shows the responses received on the Questionnaire, when Abilene area residents were asked to specifically rate the various **Fairgrounds facilities** within Eisenhower Park.

Sterl Hall received the highest ratings, while the livestock facilities and concessions stands got the lowest ratings.

Abilene Community Center	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Landscaping	64	56%	37	32%	2	2%	12	10%
Vehicle Access & Parking	54	47%	42	37%	6	5%	13	11%
Restrooms	47	41%	42	37%	4	3%	22	19%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	41	36%	37	32%	4	3%	33	29%
Multi-purpose Rooms	39	34%	45	39%	4	3%	27	23%
Indoor Basketball Courts	37	32%	34	30%	3	3%	41	36%
Indoor Volleyball Courts	32	28%	28	24%	3	3%	52	45%
Indoor Walking Area	21	18%	34	30%	14	12%	46	40%
<i>Totals</i>	335	36%	299	33%	40	4%	246	27%

This table shows the responses received on the Questionnaire, when Abilene area residents were asked to rate the facilities at the **Abilene Community Center**.

All the facilities in the Community Center were highly rated, though the Indoor Walking Area was less approved than any of the others.

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Abilene Municipal Pool	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Landscaping	41	36%	46	41%	2	2%	24	21%
Concessions	34	31%	37	33%	1	1%	39	35%
Play Pool with Mushroom Sprays	27	24%	38	34%	14	12%	34	30%
Slide	26	23%	44	39%	3	3%	39	35%
Vehicle Access & Parking	24	21%	55	49%	8	7%	26	23%
Pool House / Restrooms	22	20%	48	43%	6	5%	36	32%
Toddler Pool	21	19%	42	37%	4	4%	46	41%
Pedestrian & Handicapped Access	20	18%	49	43%	1	1%	43	38%
Lap Pool	18	16%	41	36%	4	4%	50	44%
Diving Boards	16	14%	51	45%	4	4%	42	37%
Shaded Seating	14	12%	41	36%	24	21%	34	30%
<i>Totals</i>	263	21%	492	40%	71	6%	413	33%

This table shows the responses received on the Questionnaire, when Abilene area residents were asked to rate the facilities at the **Abilene Municipal Pool**.

In general, the Pool's facilities seem to be considered adequate, rather than excellent. The availability of shaded seating was judged most inadequate.

CHAPTER 2. Park Planning Principles

Planners seek ways to correct the mistakes of the past, preserve the best of the present, and deal with the challenges of the future. Effective planning should be farsighted, realistic in terms of existing resources and potential capabilities, and adaptable to changing community needs and opportunities.

This chapter contains information on several fundamental planning principles which may influence decisions regarding park facilities and priorities—including environmental sustainability, community health, accessibility, and community identity.

Environmental Sustainability

Parks contribute to a healthy environment. They protect open space that preserves wildlife habitat, supporting native plants and birds, mammals, butterflies and other animals. Trees in parks sequester carbon, improve air quality, and reduce urban heat island effects. Park waterways can protect riparian plants that filter runoff and improve water quality, and park greenspace helps recharge aquifers and mitigate flooding.

As each park in Abilene is developed or renovated, strive to incorporate elements that contribute to environmental sustainability.

Native landscaping, particularly along waterways, provides ecological advantages for water, soil, and wildlife, and can also reduce the costs of watering, mowing, and disposal of grass clippings. Already adapted to the Kansas climate, native trees, shrubs, grasses, and perennials are also less vulnerable to local insects and diseases.

Information on Kansas native plants is available from [Kansas Wildflowers & Grasses](#), [Dyck Arboretum of the Plains](#), and the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), among others.

Green infrastructure uses landscaping to slow and absorb stormwater runoff as close to its source as possible, rather than using conventional drainage structures and storm sewers to relocate runoff away from buildings and other structures.

The first inch or so of rain that falls washes pollutants off of road and parking lot surfaces, creating a concentrated pollutant load. It is especially important to keep this "first flush" out of creeks and rivers. Parks can be used for green infrastructure installations, while continuing to support recreational uses.

- **Bioswales** are shallow open channels intended to convey runoff, but slow it down. Lined on the sides and bottom with dense vegetation, ideally of native species, the plants in a bioswale slow flow velocity, filter impurities, and promote infiltration. Bioswales require more space than curb and gutter systems, but manage runoff better.
- A **raingarden** is a shallow depression in the landscape, planted with a variety of native wetland and prairie vegetation. A raingarden should never hold standing water for more than 48 hours before it soaks into the ground. Compared to conventional turfgrass, a **raingarden** reduces runoff by about 30%.
- **Permeable pavement** is made of materials which have enough air space to allow water to drain right through into a stone aggregate layer below. The aggregate acts as a reservoir, reducing runoff and allowing the water to slowly infiltrate into the ground. Asphalt, concrete and concrete paver units are all available in permeable versions. Typical uses include sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, and low-traffic roads.



Bioswale, raingarden & permeable concrete

Land that hosts a **rainwater retention pond** can not only manage runoff from a large developed area, it can simultaneously serve as a community park. Walking trails and fishing docks are popular amenities in such facilities.



Rainwater retention area with native plants & interpretive sign

GOALS – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Reduce the use of non-native trees, shrubs, and turf in parks, utilizing **native plants** instead where it is possible to do so while maintaining compatibility with the characteristics of surrounding neighborhoods. Dedicate some areas to native grasses and wildflowers for **butterfly gardens**.
- Where appropriate, consider incorporating **permeable pavements, raingardens, bioswales or retention ponds** into the park system, both to aid in handling stormwater runoff, and to act as demonstration projects to inform residents about green infrastructure solutions.

Community Health

Parks contribute to people's physical, mental, and emotional health, in a variety of ways. They offer opportunities for exercise, relaxation, family bonding, and connecting with friends both old and new. Studies have shown that the length of stay in visits to parks significantly correlates with reductions in stress, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health.

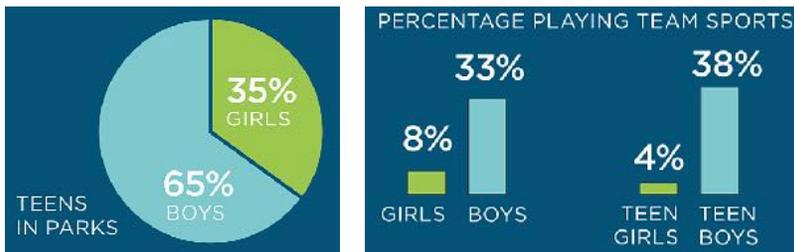
Obesity Epidemic General levels of fitness for both adults and children have been declining for decades in America, resulting in a well-documented obesity epidemic with profound effects on public health, including increasing rates of heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. Reliable information on the obesity epidemic is available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the [National Institutes of Health](#), and the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), among other sources.

More than a third of U.S. adults are obese, and another third are overweight. The same percentages hold for American children and teens, who are becoming overweight and obese at earlier ages. Early obesity increases both the likelihood of adult obesity, and the risk of future heart disease.

Typically, only about a third of the population will maintain a personal exercise regimen simply because they enjoy exercising. To stay fit, **most people need the incentives of convenience and fun in order to build exercise into their daily routines.** Attractive parks and pathways encourage participation in physical activity, and support healthier lifestyles for Abilene's residents.

Active Parks, Healthy Cities In 2018, after two years of research to identify to what degree neighborhood parks encourage people to be physically active, the nonprofit *City Parks Alliance* produced a national study of neighborhood parks called *Active Parks, Healthy Cities*. Results included:

- Simple proximity to a park does not necessarily make people more inclined to use it. Instead, **amenities, signage, and programming have more impact on use.**
- **Marketing** Banners, posters and signs are proven effective at increasing park use, and social media can connect people with park programs. Such marketing can increase the number of a park's users by **62%**.
- **Girls are significantly less likely to use parks than boys.**



- 25% of children's park use is at **playgrounds**. Every play element added to a playground increases its use by 50%.
- **Adults** are 49% of park visitors.
- **Seniors** are 18% of the population, but only 4% of park users.
- **Walking loops increase park use by 80%**, and double the number of seniors using the park.

Multigenerational Play Traditionally, playgrounds have been designed strictly for children, with perhaps a seating area nearby where the accompanying adults can sit and wait for the kids to get done playing. What a wasted opportunity!

Playgrounds offer more physical, social, and emotional benefits when they *don't* focus solely on children. Research shows that children who play with adults are more creative and have better language and problem-solving skills—and that adults who play with children have less stress, improved cognitive skills, and better mood and relationships.

- A British study showed that **75% of children preferred outdoor play with parents or grandparents over video games.**

Multigenerational playgrounds often include children's play equipment, and outdoor fitness equipment for both adults and children. Recently, manufacturers have started to offer playground equipment designed for adults and kids to play on together, such as wide slides and tandem swings.



For maximum synergy, multigenerational playgrounds should be near a loop walking path, and close to shaded seating and game tables.



Contact with Nature Though people are spending more and more of their time focused on a digital interface of one kind or another, natural landscapes still appeal to human beings in a very fundamental way.

For children, playing outside in nature is critically important for healthy development, improving their hand-eye coordination, ability to learn, and emotional stability. Being in nature can help train a child's developing brain to focus better, reducing the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The results of insufficient contact with nature, especially for children, have been described by author Richard Louv as "Nature Deficit Disorder", beginning in his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods*. More information on the physical and psychological impacts of too little interaction with nature is available on the [Children & Nature Network](#) website.

Incorporate **natural areas and nature trails** into the park system, giving them at least as much thought as sports fields and playgrounds.

Nature playgrounds are another option, incorporating natural elements like rocks, water, and tree trunks. For more information, see the National Wildlife Federation [Nature Play](#) website, and a case study from the American Society of Landscape Architects on [Making Nature Play Areas That Work](#).



Examples: Nature Playgrounds

GOALS – COMMUNITY HEALTH

- Add **walking path loops** to every park where they are feasible.
- Offer other **on-demand opportunities for exercise**. Encourage special-use parks such as dog parks or outdoor fitness zones, that encourage frequent use and enhance social connections.
- Add **multigenerational playgrounds** to every park possible.
- Add **game tables** to parks, wherever appropriate.
- Include **shade** and **drinking fountains** near all active park facilities.
- **Market** park and recreation programs with banners, posters and signs, and via social media.
- Design park programs specifically to **encourage more girls to participate**.
- **Help people to notice and understand nature** in parks. This could be something as simple as a patch of milkweed along a path and some information on Monarch butterflies, or a sign alerting people to listen for woodpeckers in an area where they can often be heard.

Accessibility

The *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* is a civil rights law intended to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. It took effect originally in 1990, and was updated in 2009. The ADA prohibits discrimination against disabled individuals in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public—such as parks and pathways.



To meet ADA requirements, park system facilities should comply with the standards described in the [ADA Accessibility Guidelines \(ADAAG\)](#). The guidelines are complex, and do contain exceptions for extraordinary circumstances, but in general they can be expected to come into effect once a facility or space is altered beyond the requirements of routine maintenance.

Meeting ADAAG standards typically involves providing at least one **ADA parking** space, a sidewalk that qualifies as an **accessible route** connecting the ADA parking to **accessible facilities**, and some accessible versions of each category of park equipment available. So for example, if picnic tables are provided, at least some of them should be accessible; if playground equipment is provided, at least some of it should work for handicapped as well as non-handicapped kids.

Currently, Abilene's parks are in transition. Some elements of accessibility have been added in some locations, but many park facilities do not meet ADAAG standards. As new facilities are added or existing equipment is updated, each should be brought into compliance.

In the area of Eisenhower Park which is part of a listed **Historic District**, making changes that meet both historic requirements and ADA requirements may be challenging. Ideally, imaginative design solutions can be found to meet the goals of both sets of regulations. If it comes down to a choice, however, most historic regulators recognize that some compromise must be found which meets the legitimate public demand for ADA access.

Consider developing an overall **Park System Accessibility Plan** for the park system as a whole, to make sure that improvements built at individual parks over the course of years will eventually fit into a comprehensive and coordinated solution for ADA accessibility throughout Abilene's park system.

- [ADA Access Guides on Recreation Facilities](#) include information on play areas, play surfaces, sports facilities, swimming pools, fishing docks and golf facilities.
- New [Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines](#) were published in 2023. Among other things, they address sidewalks, shared-use paths, and on-street parking.

GOALS – ACCESSIBILITY

- Every park should, at minimum, have ADA parking and an accessible path to an accessible picnic table.
- Develop and implement a **Park System Accessibility Plan**.



*Pilot Rock
Universal Access
Picnic Table*

Community Identity

Good parks are a major factor in a community's perception of its own quality of life. Parks are a source of public pride and cohesion, helping to strengthen our sense of community. Parks host events from ball games to concerts, from family picnics to holiday lighting spectaculars, providing a setting for moments that turn into cherished memories.

Parks serve people of all ages, all abilities, and all economic backgrounds. They provide a destination where residents can interact with each other and meet new people. They are great places to teach children—about everything from trees and birds, to winning with grace and losing with dignity, to getting along with other kids without adults enforcing the rules.

Abilene's park system should have an identity of its own—one that is a reflection and a reinforcement of the community's character. This can best be achieved with a **coherent palette of colors and materials used in all the parks, a consistent parks signage system, and a system-wide landscaping theme**—all selected to showcase Abilene's own style.

This does *not* mean that all the parks should look the same. On the contrary, it is critical that each park maintain its own individual personality.

This apparent contradiction can be resolved by **selecting certain design elements to be consistent throughout the park system, while designing other aspects to be unique to each park**. For example, all picnic tables or trash receptacles might be of one design, but each specific park might have its own signature color. Or, all park signs might be constructed of similar materials, but in different designs and sizes, each appropriate to the particular park.

Furnishings & Lighting

Consider selecting furnishings and lighting designs that incorporate traditional design elements updated with today's clean lines, achieving a contemporary look that is still compatible with existing historic structures. Basic furnishings that will be in every park, such as trash receptacles, benches, picnic tables and bike racks, should be selected to reflect a **signature style**.

Select furnishing manufacturers that offer enough **options** to allow for both functional and design flexibility. For example, a single style of park bench might be offered in models with backs and without, with arms and without, in several sizes, and in a variety of colors. Such diversity allows varying practical needs to be met, while maintaining a coherent design scheme.

Long-term replacement and maintenance costs should also be figured into the selection criteria for furnishings. Typical materials options include powder-coated steel, plastic-coated steel, aluminum, wood, plastics, and composites. Consider life-cycle costs, since less expensive materials tend to need replacement more often, and in the long run may not be as economical as they seem. Park furnishings that look old and worn do nothing positive for a community's perception of its identity.

Lightpoles and luminaires should also be selected for both design flexibility, maintenance efficiency, and low life-cycle costs. Ideally, luminaires should be a **full-cutoff design**, which reduces the environmental impacts of light pollution, and avoids the cost of wasted light.

LED luminaires are energy efficient, typically designed for ease of maintenance, and have very low operating costs compared to other light sources. They are available in colors of the light itself that range from pure white "daylight" bulbs to ones that mimic the golden glow of incandescent lighting—and the color of night lighting strongly influences the character of the space.

When selecting a **color palette** for park system furnishings, remember to consider the effects of hot summer sun on items like metal benches. Lighter colors tend to absorb less heat than dark colors. Selecting from a manufacturer's available standard colors is more cost-effective for most items, since custom colors can add significantly to the cost of park furnishings.

Bicycle Racks Every park should be equipped with bicycle racks. Locate racks so they are convenient to destinations within the park, clear of pedestrian traffic patterns, and clearly visible for security. Ideally, they should be placed on a paved surface, adjacent to a sidewalk or pathway.

Select a **bike rack design** that meets functional requirements for proper two-point bicycle support, is lockable, and is constructed of low maintenance materials. Racks located in a pedestrian pathway usually need a crossbar to comply with ADA vertical-element requirements; those located in a bicycle parking area that is clear of the adjacent pathway often do not need a crossbar.

The simplest rack design which meets these functional criteria is the inverted "U" type, which can be designed with or without a crossbar. There are endless variations on the theme. This style of bike rack can easily be customized to be unique to Abilene's parks, helping in one more small way to reinforce an identity for the park system.

Consider specifying bike racks with a specific color, or with a crossbar or panel insert of water-jet or laser-cut metal. Such metal work can be cut with just about any design imaginable—the City's name, a donor's name, an Abilene Parks logo, or even a unique piece of art.



Avoid ribbon racks, spiral racks and schoolyard racks. These styles do not provide effective two-point support or proper lockability.

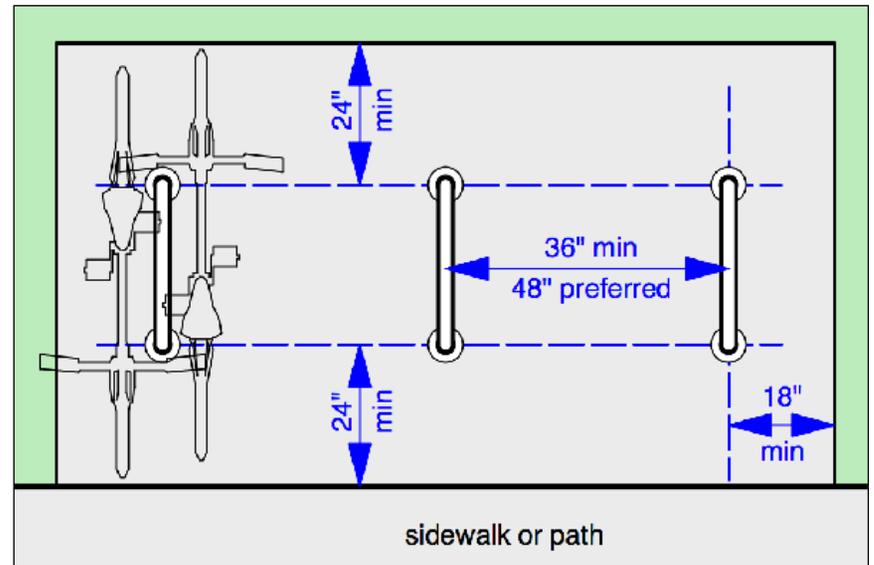


Ribbon Rack

Spiral Rack

Schoolyard Rack

Multiple racks can be installed in a row, in numbers appropriate to need. Racks should be at least 3 feet, preferably 4 feet apart. To make sure bicycles don't block the adjacent path when racks are in use, the back of each rack should be at least 2 feet, preferably 3 feet clear of the sidewalk's edge.



Visit the [Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals](https://www.apbp.org/) website to find more information about bicycle rack design and installation.

GOALS – FURNISHINGS & LIGHTING

- Develop an identity for the park system as a whole, with a consistent colors and materials palette, signage system, and landscaping theme that reflect and reinforce Abilene's character.
- Select **LED full-cutoff luminaires** for future use in the parks.
- Select a **park system bike rack design**, and install racks at destinations in every park.

Signage

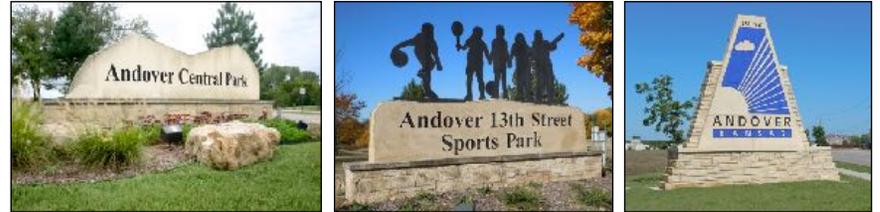
One of the most effective ways to create an identity for the park system as a whole is with a *sign system*. A system of coordinated signs can have a distinctive style, utilizing the same basic palette of colors and materials, yet be varied in shape, scale, and details in order to fit the needs of each individual park—providing both continuity and individuality.



Example: Sign System diagram

Most signs fall into one of four functional categories: Identification signs, wayfinding signs, regulatory signs, and interpretive signs.

Identification signs confirm location for new visitors. Placed at arrival points or main entries, they should be oriented to be seen by people looking for the park from nearby traffic ways. They should be clearly visible, standing out against their background, and have a font that is readable by approaching drivers traveling at the speed limit. Most of all, identification signs provide the **best opportunity to establish a first impression** of Abilene's park system. They should be designed to create an image of quality and welcome.



Examples of identification signs, each individual, yet with a similar materials palette.

Wayfinding signs identify location, and indicate directions to selected destinations. They sometimes incorporate maps or site plans. Especially in large parks, such as Eisenhower Park and the Fairgrounds, a good wayfinding system is essential to make visitors feel comfortable and welcome.



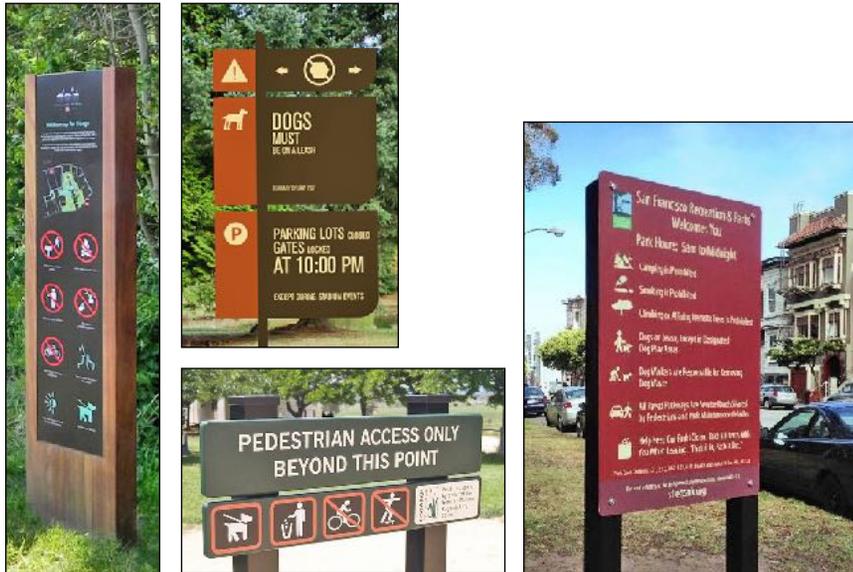
Examples of wayfinding signs—in wood, metal, stone, and combinations of materials

Regulatory signs communicate basic rules of behavior for visitors to a park. Such signs should be easily recognizable, of the same design, material, and color in every park—even if the regulations themselves may vary. Try to avoid a long list of "do nots", which is not very welcoming. Instead, provide a concise list of expectations for good behavior:

- What hours is the park open?
- Are dogs allowed, and do they have to be leashed?
- Please don't litter!

...and whatever other *essential* points need to be made.

To be effective, the regulations shown on such signs must be *very* clear and *very* simple. Icons are more likely to be noticed and remembered than text. Almost no one will stop to read a long list of rules. Incorporating both courtesy and humor into regulatory signs helps to encourage compliance.



Examples of park regulatory signs—using icons, and a combination of both icons & text.

Interpretive signs offer information that helps to educate and engage visitors. Such signs may offer tidbits about local history, describe the environmental impact of a local stream, identify birds to look for, explain art on display, or any number of other possibilities. Modern graphics production methods allow durable outdoor interpretive signs to incorporate text, images, and color at a reasonable price.



Interpretive sign—graphic panel



Interpretive signs in decorative metal frame & in rustic wooden frame

GOAL – SIGNAGE

- Establish a **balanced signage system** that uses all four categories of signs, as appropriate, in designs that coordinate with each other.

Locate each sign precisely where appropriate and necessary. **Avoid unnecessary signs**, both to prevent clutter, and to enhance the impact of the signs that *are* needed.

Park Landscaping

A City's park and other public landscapes can be instrumental in creating the kind of ambience that gives a community unique character. It is not necessary to landscape every inch of every park according to a specific theme, but **repeating certain landscape elements in key locations** can create an impression of **continuity**. Landscaping is one more component in the strategy of **creating an identity for the park system as a whole**.

Landscaping can also be used to reinforce the **individuality** of each park. As with furnishings and signage, it's a matter of keeping some elements consistent, while varying others. For instance, redbud trees might be used as a backdrop for every park's identification sign, but at one park the sign might be underplanted with ornamental grasses, at another with evergreen shrubs, and at a third with native wildflowers.

Parks are a community's primary provider of public greenspace, and well-maintained landscapes are an essential feature of a good park system. Note that **"well-maintained" does not necessarily mean manicured mowed turf**. While mowed turf has its place, it is *not* a low-maintenance groundcover solution, and it should not be the default landscape for every part of every park.

Natural landscapes appeal to people in a very fundamental way, are essential to support wildlife, and are generally less costly to maintain than turfgrass.

A **defined edge** is essential, between natural areas and mowed turf, to **help park visitors perceive the natural landscape as intentional**, and not as neglect.

Plants that are either **native or adapted to the Kansas climate** need less water and require less maintenance, and are therefore more cost-effective for public landscapes. When selecting plant species for a park landscape, give preference to native species, unless they simply cannot fulfill the specific functional needs at that location.

Currently, most of Abilene's park landscapes are mown turf or formal gardens. Little Ike Park is definitively urban, and should be, but other parks in the system have areas within them that could be appropriate for the informal character of a natural landscape.

Native plants are entirely capable of creating a memorable statement, particularly if massed at entries and other photo-worthy locations. Select a few suitable places, and begin to create some native plant landscaping in Abilene's parks. As a beginning, consider landscapes that use ornamental grasses and native wildflowers as settings for **park identification signs**.

Weed Control "Weeds" are simply plants growing where people don't want them to be, but they are not necessarily bad in and of themselves. Particularly in parks, the chemicals necessary to control weeds are potentially a worse problem than the weeds themselves would be.

However, a policy of tolerance toward wild plants has a few notable exceptions. Even though all three species are native, **poison ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*), **sandbur** (*Cenchrus longispinus*), and **stickyweed** (*Galium aparine*) cause enough real harm to make them unacceptable in a public park setting. Maintain an ongoing weed control program in the park system, aimed specifically at these three species, particularly near pathways and picnic areas.

Trees

Some of the trees in Abilene's parks are over-mature, and will need to be replaced during the 22-year span of this Plan. Develop a **tree-selection strategy** now, to make sure that replacement trees are **chosen with long-term, system-wide goals in mind**. Generate a list of park tree options, selecting species and varieties that are **hardy and long-lived** in our harsh Kansas climate. Include options for **shade trees, ornamental trees, and evergreen trees** in the list.

Also make sure that all replacement trees are **planted in locations where they fill a specific functional need** according to the plan for each park—whether shade, screening, or ornamental impact.

This sort of landscaping objective for the parks does not need to be implemented as a single major project. By their nature, landscapes are best accomplished slowly, over the course of years. It simply requires a **recognized long-term landscaping goal**, and a change in perspective so that any work done to a park would be regarded as an opportunity to take one more step toward creating a unique system-wide landscape for Abilene's parks.

Tree Maintenance A series of natural setbacks in recent years, from drought to disease to insect invasions, have put enormous stress on Kansas trees. The City's ongoing maintenance program does a very good job of caring for the park system's trees. But even so, the parks have trees in need of removal, or damaged trees in need of significant restorative pruning. And every park has areas where new trees would be welcome, for shade, as screening, to define spaces, or as a landscape accent.

Tree Farm Many of Abilene's existing trees will reach senescence over the course of this Plan, and the City will need an ample supply of young trees to replace them. Consider the possibility of establishing a municipal tree farm as a cost-effective way of acquiring those trees—not just for the parks, but for street trees as well.

A tree farm allows saplings to be purchased when they are young and inexpensive, then planted and field grown to a size where they can be safely installed in public landscapes. Such a facility would require some City-owned land with reasonably good soil, mulch to keep the weeds down, a convenient water source for a drip irrigation system, and fencing for deer protection.

Once saplings are planted, required maintenance time is quite low. Typically, staff will need to check up on the trees and irrigation system once a week or so during the growing season, to make sure everything is all right. Once a year, when the trees are dormant, the saplings will need to be pruned to shape.

When it is time to dig the trees for planting in a permanent location, a **tree spade** will be needed.



Tree Farm

Turf

In our Kansas climate, **fescue** grass must be irrigated, and requires a great deal of care to thrive.

Bermudagrass is the turf of choice for sports fields in our region. Very tough and drought-tolerant, it can also be very invasive, and is not considered acceptable in neighborhoods trying to maintain fescue lawns. While it will usually survive without irrigation, it is more attractive and can withstand much heavier use when watered; it does not need as much water as fescue.

Buffalograss is a native warm-season grass which, once established, can thrive without irrigation. It generally needs to be overseeded with annual ryegrass for the first few years, to keep weeds down until it is thoroughly established. It is naturally short, and seldom needs mowing. It is not invasive, so it is compatible with neighboring residential fescue yards. It will not withstand the punishment sustained by heavily utilized sports fields, but it can be used successfully in less busy areas.



Buffalograss—mowed & unmowed:
Buffalograss can be mowed for a more formal look, or left unmowed for a more natural appearance.

Defining a mowed edge along unmowed areas helps make it clear to the public that the lack of mowing is a deliberate choice, and not neglect.

In the Abilene park system, consider reducing turfgrass areas in general, replacing bermudagrass with buffalograss where appropriate, and opting for natural landscapes wherever fitting.

GOALS – PARK LANDSCAPING

- Use **ornamental grasses and native wildflowers in landscapes** as settings for park identification signs.
- Continue to promptly remove and properly dispose of **pine trees** as they succumb to pine wilt and/or pine tip moth, and **ash trees** infested with emerald ash borer.
- Develop a **list of acceptable tree species and varieties** to be planted in the parks. Begin with varieties recommended by the [Kansas Forest Service](#).
- Consider instituting a **municipal tree farm**. A **tree spade** will be needed when trees are ready to transplant.
- Purchase a **Stump Grinder** for City use.
- **Plant replacement trees** in the parks *before* old trees have to be removed.
- When an appropriate opportunity presents, especially in lower-traffic turf areas, **replace bermudagrass with buffalograss**.
- Institute an **ongoing weed control program** near paths and picnic areas in the parks, especially for **poison ivy, sandburs, and stickyweed**.

CHAPTER 3. Facilities Design Criteria

In order to provide a common baseline of information for decision-makers, this chapter contains an overview of basic design criteria for some of the facilities and equipment discussed in this Plan.

Parking

If people park outside designated parking areas, they compact soil and damage root zones, eventually killing turf and trees.

In a park, parking lots or parking areas should be **close to destinations**. They should be large enough to serve the number of vehicles likely to be at that destination simultaneously, but no larger. Parking facilities must provide an appropriate number of **ADA accessible spaces** in each park, including van-accessible spaces as necessary.

For facilities that draw crowds, one or two large parking lots make sense. However, in parks where green open space is a primary attraction, it is usually less intrusive to instead have a larger number of smaller on-street parking areas, each in a precisely selected location.

All park system parking areas should be **well screened** with trees and sometimes shrubs. Ideally, provide **shade** for cars as well.



Small on-street diagonal parking areas located close to park facilities for convenience, but screened with trees to make parked cars less intrusive

Gravel parking areas may be appropriate in more lightly-used locations. They actually require more maintenance than paved lots, but they cause less runoff and are less expensive to install. They should be **clearly defined, with wheel stops and edging**.

Restrooms

Restrooms in parks are a high-maintenance and expensive amenity. They should be provided only where they are truly needed, but be built to a high standard of quality.

Abilene has public restrooms available at Bicentennial Park, and at multiple locations in Eisenhower Park. There are none at Little Ike Park, but given the typically short stay time there, restrooms would be redundant.

Public expectations are higher than they used to be, and **upgrading the quality of existing restrooms** was one of the most frequent requests in the public's response to the Community Questionnaire. Restrooms at the Community Center were quite highly rated, and those at the Municipal Pool were considered adequate. However, the restrooms at Bicentennial and Eisenhower Parks garnered extremely low ratings.

Many of the freestanding restroom buildings in the City's parks are fundamentally sound, and already supplied with plumbing and electrical services. Upgrading them typically involves:

- Renovating interior **finishes**.
- Replacing interior **fixtures**.
- Improving the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system.
- Improving **lighting**.
- Making sure that **ADA requirements** are met.

Family Restrooms Especially near playgrounds, consider providing two or three **family restrooms** in each restroom building, as opposed to the traditional split between men's and women's rooms. Even in restroom buildings near sports venues, where gender-specific restrooms are likely necessary to handle crowds, provide at least one family restroom in each building.



Interior colors should be generally light and neutral, perhaps with an accent color to give the space a less institutional feel.

All interior **surface treatments** should be selected to allow fast, thorough and effective cleaning, keeping maintenance costs down and visitors comfortable enough to actually use the facilities. **Floors** should have a seamless and waterproof epoxy coating with a continuous cove extending at least six inches up the walls. Options for **walls** include high-gloss epoxy paint on masonry, glazed masonry, and tile. **Stall partitions** are typically made of high-quality plastics designed for such use, and are also available in stainless steel.



Select heavy duty **sinks, toilets, and urinals**, which are available in vandal-resistant and ADA accessible models, including stainless steel options. A single **trough sink** with multiple faucets, as opposed to multiple individual sinks, can simplify cleaning.

Motion activated faucets save water, and **motion activated soap dispensers** and **self-flushing toilets** help keep the facility clean. **Hand dryers** are lower-maintenance than paper towels. **Stainless steel mirrors** are available; at least one mirror should be installed to be ADA compliant. If a family restroom is not available, provide **diaper changing stations** in both men's and women's restrooms.

Amenities Simple and inexpensive amenities can make a world of difference to the level of visitor satisfaction. Near the door, provide a **trash receptacle, coat hooks** and a **shelf**, and enough **space to park a stroller**. Make sure the inside of partition doors have **hooks** for purses or backpacks. The exit door should be equipped with a **toe pull**, to allow visitors to open it with a foot.



Lighting Dim lighting can make any restroom feel dingy and unsafe. Provide ample motion-activated bright-white LED lights when updating park restrooms. If possible, also provide natural daylight, with glass block clerestory windows or skylights.

Better lighting in the Restroom building at Bicentennial Park was particularly mentioned during this planning process, as an important and needed improvement.

HVAC Kansas winters are not so severe that park use ceases for the season, and modern park restroom buildings are expected to be temperature controlled to allow use all year long. A **ductless mini-split heat pump** system is often the most cost effective solution to maintain these small isolated buildings at reasonably comfortable temperatures in every season.

Lingering unpleasant smells are one of the fastest ways to make anyone detest a public restroom, so **positive airflow** is essential, and can be provided by a properly selected heat pump operating in low-power mode.

Pre-fabricated Restrooms If a restroom building should prove structurally unsound for some reason, and need to be replaced, consider the option of replacing it with a prefabricated turnkey park restroom building. There are a wide variety of styles and sizes available, and they can be a very cost-effective solution.



Playgrounds

Abilene's parks host a wide variety of playground equipment, from vintage climbers to modern multi-component play units. It has all been consistently well cared for, and has delighted generations of Abilene's children.

However, community expectations and safety requirements both change over time, and there are elements of park play equipment that need to be updated to meet today's standards. In particular, most of Abilene's playgrounds are not currently **ADA accessible**, and the various materials beneath playground equipment should be upgraded to poured-in-place safety surfacing.

Poured in place safety surfacing is the alternative of choice for playgrounds today. It is more expensive than other surfacing options to purchase and install, but less expensive to maintain. It is also extremely resilient and therefore much safer, and meets ADA guidelines for accessibility. There are often grants available to help communities pay for it.

The greater the potential **fall height** from a piece of play equipment, the thicker the safety surface beneath it needs to be. Modern playground design generally seeks to **cluster play equipment** with similar fall heights as close together as safety margins allow, in order to **keep costs down** by reducing the total square footage of safety surfacing needed.

Typically, **play areas for pre-school children are at least slightly separated from those for elementary school-age kids**, largely for safety reasons. In between the two zones, a **shade structure with tables and seating** can provide a comfortable place for caregivers to wait, and perhaps enjoy a conversation with other grownups.

Alternatively, engage the adult caregivers in play by providing some **intergenerational play** elements, or offer some **outdoor exercise equipment** so the adults can get in a workout while watching the kids play. Also consider incorporating **nature play** elements in at least one playground.

When selecting playground elements, make sure to include **accessible equipment** that can be used by all children, including those who are handicapped. An ADA compliant playground has to be connected by an ADA compliant sidewalk to ADA parking, and has to have at least some accessible play equipment. ADA compliant play equipment, that can be used by both handicapped and non-handicapped kids, is available in a wide variety of options from many manufacturers.

Shade should also be provided for all play equipment, either from nearby trees, or from overhead shade structures which these days are typically made of fabric. Multi-component play units are available that include integrated shade elements.



Safety Surfacing

Falls are the leading cause of playground injuries. To minimize the risk, modern playgrounds have equipment that is clustered in age-appropriate groupings of similar heights, with surfacing beneath that is designed with a shock absorption capacity to suit the maximum fall height of the associated equipment. These surfaces are expensive, often 10% to 20% of the total budget, so playgrounds are compact in order to minimize their cost.

A number of options are available for such safety surfacing, which vary in life-cycle cost, maintenance requirements, and effectiveness. They fall into two basic categories: bound surfaces (poured-in-place rubber, synthetic turf and rubber tiles), and loose-fill surfaces (shredded rubber, wood chips, pea gravel, sand, and similar materials).

Solid rubber surfacing is expensive compared to other choices, but it is the most resilient option. It is installed over a base, either as a monolithic poured-in-place surface, or as interlocking prefabricated rubber tiles. **Poured-in-place rubber surfaces** are installed over a base layer of concrete, asphalt or crushed stone, which is then covered by a mixture of about 80% recycled rubber with a urethane binder. They are offered in a variety of colors, are slip resistant, allow easy access for wheelchairs and strollers, and require the least amount of maintenance. Poured-in-place surfaces may be as much as 5½ inches thick, and can support fall heights of up to 12 feet. **Rubber tile surfaces** are also installed over a base layer of concrete, asphalt or crushed stone; they come in different thickness and colors.



Synthetic turf which is designed for playground use can be installed over a sufficiently resilient substrate to comply with safety recommendations. It is typically somewhat less expensive than solid rubber surfacing, is ADA accessible, and is low-maintenance compared to loose-fill options.

Synthetic turf that is **not** designed for playground use should **not** be misused in a playground setting.



Loose-fill options are less expensive to install, but are more expensive to maintain. Loose fill options include rubber mulch, sand and pea gravel, and engineered wood fiber. They are easily displaced, particularly in high-traffic areas such as beneath swings or at the bottom of slides, which can create a safety hazard. Even with edging all around, loose materials can end up tossed or tracked into adjacent turf, which can be a mowing hazard. Keeping weeds out of these materials is also a continuous maintenance headache, and use of chemical herbicides is particularly problematic around children. Loose fill surfaces are not usually ADA accessible.

More information on playground safety surfaces is available in the Consumer Product Safety Commission's [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#). Information on [ADA accessible play surfaces](#) is available from the U.S. Access-Board.

Shade Structures

Parks are heavily used in summer, and in our climate that means intense heat and intense sun. Shade has long been a welcome amenity in parks, but more recently has been recognized as a significant health and safety issue as well.

Every year, over one million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States. The best way to prevent skin cancer is to provide lifelong protection of the skin against the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

Currently, there are three typical methods of furnishing shade over broad outdoor areas: trees, overhead structures such as picnic shelters or pergolas, and fabric shade structures. Because fabric shade structures may be less familiar, some additional information on them is provided here.

Fabric shade structures are initially less expensive than solid-roof shelters, but the fabric portions need to be replaced more often. While the poles and foundations of fabric shade structures are permanent, the fabric itself will typically need to be replaced every 5 to 10 years, depending on the quality of the fabric and connections, and the conditions in which the shade fabric is deployed.

Some facility managers bring the fabric sails inside for the winter each year, to extend their lifespans, but this procedure comes at a cost in staff time. However, fabric-to-pole connectors are now available with built-in quick-release mechanisms and fabric tensioning adjustments, which make the process of removal and reinstallation much more efficient.

Fabric materials may be waterproof (canvas, vinyl, or coated fabrics), or breathable (knitted polypropylene). While the waterproof fabrics offer protection from rain, the **breathable fabrics** let hot air escape through their porous weave, **reducing temperatures beneath them by as much as twenty degrees.**

Fabric structures can be designed in an endless variety of shapes, but two types are typically used in park applications: shade sails and hypars.

- A **shade sail** is a triangular piece of fabric, tension mounted on three poles, typically with one corner higher to encourage precipitation to slide off.
- A **hypar** (short for hyperbolic paraboloid) is a rectangular piece of fabric, mounted under tension on four poles, with two diagonally-opposite corners high, and the other two corners low. This results in a continuously curved surface that sheds water very effectively, is more wind-resistant than an equivalently sized shade sail, and can be oriented so the low corners help protect users from low-angle eastern and western sunlight.



Triangular Shade Sail



Tensioned Hypar

Fabric shade structures are so visually striking that they tend to become landmarks. **Shade structures with uniform design elements** could be one more factor in establishing a park system identity for Abilene.

The American Academy of Dermatology offers a [Shade Structure Grant Program](#) to public schools and nonprofit organizations, for up to \$8,000 to install permanent shade structures, particularly at playgrounds. The City may be able to associate with a nonprofit organization to pursue such a grant.

Outdoor Fitness Centers

When first available, outdoor fitness equipment for adults was often dispersed along a jogging path to provide a sequence of individual exercise stations for runners. Now such fitness equipment is typically grouped in a single outdoor fitness area, often located adjacent to a playground, to encourage multigenerational social interaction.

Like indoor fitness equipment, outdoor units are designed to help improve cardiovascular fitness, increase flexibility, and tone muscles. They are often made of similar materials as children's playground equipment, in order to be robust enough to withstand outdoor conditions.

Outdoor fitness units tend to be simpler in design than indoor units, which makes them less intimidating to many people. Some units accommodate two to four users simultaneously, to promote the social interaction which makes them fun, therefore encouraging people to continue using them. Units designed according to ADA guidelines, which are accessible for the handicapped, are available and should be incorporated.

Outdoor fitness equipment tends to appeal to those who do not typically go to indoor fitness centers. It helps to engage that population and introduce them to healthy exercise habits. It allows people of all ages and all fitness levels to have free access to non-intimidating but effective fitness equipment, which they can use as an individual or a family, on their own schedule and at their own pace.

The fresh air and changing scenery of an outdoor exercise session reduce the tedium of an indoor workout. Health studies have shown that simply being outside helps decrease tension and depression levels, and improves people's mood and sense of well-being.



Pickleball Courts

Invented in Seattle in 1965, pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis. Players use paddles to hit a perforated polymer ball over a 36-inch high net. Designed to be a game for the whole family, it is now an international sport. Rapidly growing in popularity, particularly with seniors, it can be played indoors or outdoors, all year round.

Indoors Until recently, indoor pickleball was most often played on indoor tennis or basketball courts, which were temporarily taped off into pickleball courts and equipped with portable nets. But as the sport has grown, the demand for customized courts has increased, and more and more communities are developing dedicated indoor pickleball facilities, often complete with spectator seating, scoreboards, and associated lounge areas.



Fabric Structures Open-span tensile fabric structures can provide a solution halfway between indoor and outdoor courts. Made of specialized fabric stretched over an extruded aluminum frame, such structures can provide shade, shelter from wind and rain, and a climate-controlled interior, but are far less expensive than a conventional building.



Outdoors In Kansas, outdoor pickleball can be a challenge because of the affect our windy conditions have on the game's light-weight polymer ball. Outdoor courts should be screened with trees and shrubs, particularly on the west side, to help block the wind.

Outdoor pickleball court surfaces can be made of concrete, interlocking rubber tiles, or a monolithic acrylic surfacing on a concrete or asphalt base. They also require striping, nets, and fencing between courts. A single court is 20x44 feet in size, and with perimeter margins takes up an area of 34x64 feet—roughly a third the size of a tennis court.

For more information on developing outdoor pickleball courts, see the [USA Pickleball](#) website, which includes a Court Construction manual and Court Lighting Guidelines.



Splashpads, Spray Parks & Water Parks

The terminology for these sorts of water-oriented facilities has long been confused and confusing, but is finally beginning to sort itself out. The following definitions provide general guidance for distinguishing the three categories, although there is often overlap from one type to another.

- **Splashpads:** Typically for use by children 12 years old or younger, they are smaller than spray parks, with equipment that is all safe for pre-schoolers, though still fun for older kids. Splashpads may have features that spray or pour water on users, but are designed to have *no standing water* on the pad—so they can be, and typically are, unsupervised by lifeguards.
- **Spray Parks:** Also for use by children 12 years old or younger; also designed with no standing water, and generally unsupervised. However, spray parks are big enough to have separate areas for pre-schoolers and school-age children. Some of the equipment in a spray park, such as dumping buckets or big water cannons, may be more than a pre-schooler can handle.
- **Water Parks:** Designed for use by people of all ages, including teens and adults. Have multiple attractions ranging from toddler pools with spray elements, to huge water slides, wave pools, and lazy rivers. Requires the same sort of lifeguard staffing as a swimming pool.



Plaza or Playground Style While splashpads may contain the same sort of vertical playground-style elements as spray parks, they also have the option to be designed in a plaza style. Such a plaza may be paved in concrete, brick, or pavers in patterns, but also incorporates ground-level water jets. The jets, which can be programmed to dance in patterns, make the plaza into a splashpad in the summer. When the jets are turned off in cold weather, the paved area still functions as a public plaza.



Playground style



Plaza style

Timers The water elements at splashpads and spray parks are generally on a timer, to prevent their use when the park is closed. They are usually also motion-activated or user-activated, so they only function when someone is there to enjoy them. When in use, different water elements can be programmed to activate in varying sequences, to keep the experience fresh and full of surprises for users.

Recirculation or Flow-through Splashpads and spray parks can be designed to have a recirculation and filtering system, which requires the same daily water quality checks as a swimming pool system, as well as regular maintenance for pumps and filters. Alternatively, they can use fresh water in a flow-through system, with some means to recycle the used water—often as irrigation water at a nearby park or golf course. There are advantages and disadvantages to each option, based on a number of variables including local water costs and potential nearby uses for the flow-through water.

For more information, see [Key Considerations When Building a Splash Pad](#).

Dog Parks

Dog parks are an extremely popular community amenity, and one of the most in-demand facilities in American park systems. Well over a third of American households have dogs, and dog parks offer dog owners a place to let their dogs play and exercise off-leash in a safe environment, socializing with other dogs while their owners socialize with other people.



Dog Parks help people socialize, too...

A dog park requires about 2 to 5 acres of park land, near a good access road, and far enough from residential development to avoid noise conflicts. An ideal site would have established turf, and enough sun to keep the grass healthy, but with a scattering of mature trees to offer shade on hot summer days.

Good dog parks have separate enclosures for small dogs and large dogs, each with a double-gated entry vestibule. A section for small dogs is ordinarily about half an acre to 1 acre in size, and a section for large dogs from 1 to 3 acres. Fences are commonly 4 feet high for small dogs, and 5 or 6 feet high for large dogs. Fencing material should be selected to suit the character of the neighborhood, but is typically chainlink.

Larger dog parks actually require less maintenance than undersized ones, since the turf is more likely to remain in good condition if a dog park is not overcrowded. A dog park with a substrate that has turned into dirt or mud becomes a nightmare for everyone. Larger enclosures also reduce the potential for aggression among the dogs.

Well-drained turf is the most cost-effective substrate for a dog park, and generally requires the same maintenance regimen as a sports field. Some dog parks avoid the need for a turf irrigation system by fencing three areas, closing each section in sequence to allow time for the off-duty turf to recover.

A basic dog park can be one of the least capital-intensive recreational facilities to develop, consisting entirely of a parking lot, chainlink fencing, and some dog waste disposal stations. Additional **amenities** to enhance the user experience can be added over time—including shaded seating, lighting, and even options like a drinking fountain designed for both people and dogs, or dog agility equipment.

Most dog parks have an associated **volunteer support group** that helps maintain the park, sponsors programs and special events, and raises funds for additional amenities.

Rules of behavior for dog parks are well established, and in general are effectively enforced with peer pressure. Dispensers for plastic bags and lidded trash receptacles encourage park patrons to pick up after their own dogs.

A dog park must have reliable **parking** available. They do not coexist well with sports fields, or other facilities where periodic events are likely to take up all the parking spaces—so Eisenhower Park is not a good potential location. Abilene's other existing parks are too small.

It is likely that the City of Abilene will need to acquire additional parkland in order to have appropriate space and conditions for a potential dog park. For a city the size of Abilene, a dog park with about 4 to 5 fenced acres plus adjacent parking is suggested.



CHAPTER 4. Abilene Parks & Goals

This chapter contains a short overview of **existing conditions** at each of Abilene's parks. An aerial view shows the extent of each park, labeled with the locations of existing facilities. Photos that document existing equipment were taken mostly in August of 2023.

Such an assessment of existing facilities provides a baseline data set against which to measure future progress. It is also a tool for City staff and government leaders to use as they create a park and recreation system that will fit Abilene's current and future needs.

Problems or issues related to each Park are clarified, **goals** for each park are specified, and **potential revisions** to each park are proposed.

Goals noted in this chapter are intended to help solve any existing specific problems, and to support the overarching purposes of the park system.

GOALS – PARK SYSTEM

- Enhance Abilene's **quality of life**.
- Support **health and wellness** for people of all ages and all abilities, providing opportunities for both social connections and physical exercise.
- Strengthen **community pride** and Abilene's **sense of identity**, by being a place for both small daily pleasures, and major community-wide celebrations.
- Improve **walkability and connectivity** in the city.
- Provide spaces where native plants and animals can thrive, and where people can appreciate **nature**.
- Make Abilene's park system **accessible**, and ADA compliant.

Some issues transcend individual parks, and should be addressed on a system-wide basis. The most consequential such issue is **accessibility**, because it affects everything from parking to equipment selection, from sidewalks to playground surfacing.

It is not required that every element in every park be accessible, simply that at least some of each type of facility be inclusive. So, if picnic tables are available, *some* of them should be accessible. If play equipment is available, *some* of it should be inclusive.

However, implementing partial solutions accomplishes nothing—there is no point in putting an accessible picnic table in a shelter building that a person in a wheelchair can't get to. When an accessible park element is developed, make sure that it is complete—including a place to park, an accessible route leading to the destination, and ADA compliant equipment at the destination.

Much of the park system's lack of accessibility could be corrected with some fairly straightforward changes to parking, some additional sidewalks, and a few pieces of new equipment.

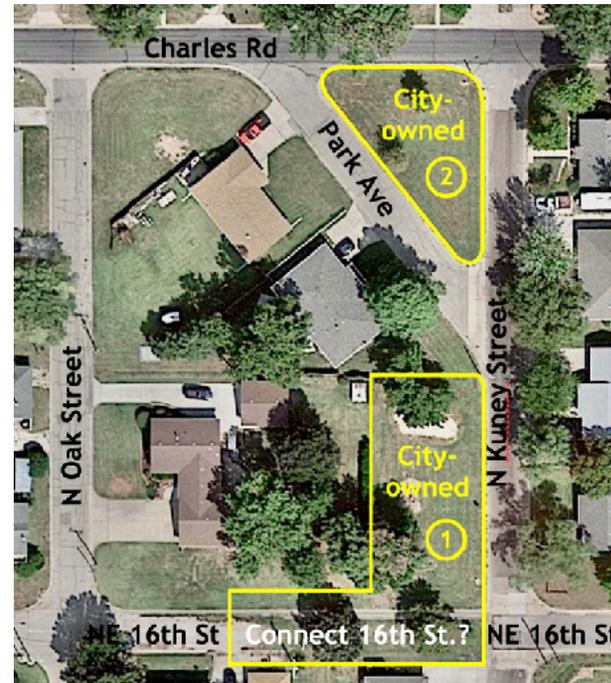
Physical changes to any Park will be incremental over time, but each change should contribute to a coordinated overall vision for the Park's long-term future. Improvements made a step at a time must eventually fit into a comprehensive and coordinated solution for ADA accessibility.



Pocket Park

Less than a quarter acre in size, on the northwest corner of Kuney and 16th Streets, the unnamed Pocket Park has a climber, a spring rider, and a 2-seat set of swings in it, rarely used by anyone living outside the immediate neighborhood. The much more extensive playground of Kennedy Elementary School is on the southeast corner of the same intersection, less than 250 feet away, and has generally been accessible for public use.

The Pocket Park site is in a residential neighborhood, and is essentially a residential lot combined with about half a block of the adjacent 16th Street right-of-way. A drainage channel that runs through the south end of the Park is simply a continuation of the street gutter along the north edge of 16th Street.



A City-owned triangular median island is just north of this property, on the southwest corner of Charles Road and Kuney Street, between the intersection and Park Avenue. During the discussions that took place as part of this planning process, options for this property were considered along with options for the future of the Pocket Park.

The conclusion reached was that the triangle median should continue as is, but that the Pocket Park property would be better used in other ways. The Pocket Park site is too small to meet any unmet park system needs. As a play area, it is more of a liability to the City than it is of value as a park.

PROPOSED Consider doing a lot split. Then the south end of the Pocket Park property could be restored to 16th Street right-of-way, allowing 16th Street to be connected between Kuney and Oak Streets. The balance of the parcel (about 6,550 square feet in area) could be sold as a residential lot.

Little Ike Park

Located in the heart of downtown Abilene, at the northwest corner of 3rd and Spruce Streets, Little Ike Park is an island of green in the city's urban landscape. This tiny Park is only 4,041 square feet in size (about nine hundredths of an acre), and like most of downtown, is in the 500-year floodplain.



Little Ike Park celebrates Abilene's history as the childhood home of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. A sculpture of Eisenhower as a boy is the focal point of the Park. A brick and metal arch defines the Park's entrance. Brick paths separate ornamental plant beds from the central lawn, providing access to two small seating areas, where colorful umbrellas shade each table.

Little Ike Park and a public parking lot located immediately to its north work in combination as a venue for many community events and celebrations. Four electric drops have recently been installed in the parking lot, to support food trucks. One of the buildings that backs up to the lot hosts the "ABILENE" mural.



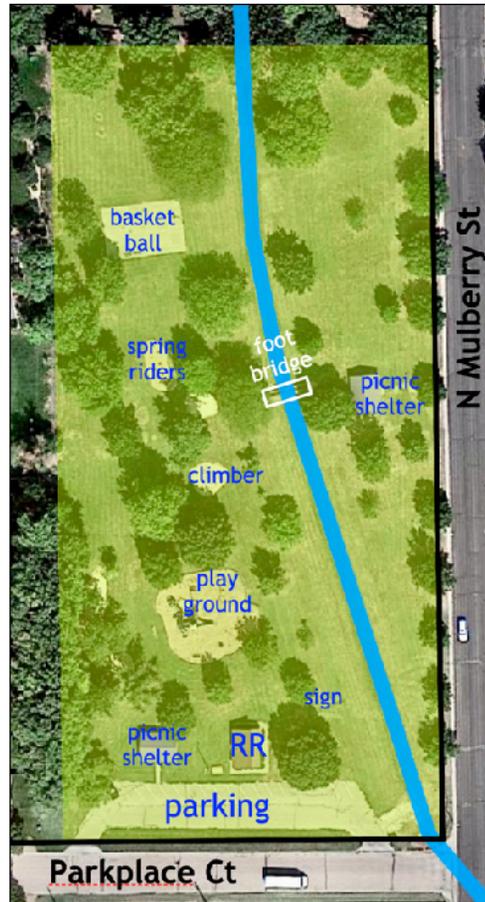
The City has plans to continue improving this parking lot, so it can function better as an extension of the Park during events, yet continue to serve as public parking during typical work weeks. Plans include the addition of the World's Biggest "I Like Ike" Campaign Button, and a small Stage to host performances during events. Improvements that are made will use the same materials palette as the Park, expanding the Park's character farther up the block.



Bicentennial Park

Bicentennial Park is located on the west side of Mulberry Street, just north of Parkplace Court. It is in a residential neighborhood in the northeast part of the city, a block or so north of the High School campus.

This 4.2-acre Park has an 18-space parking lot adjacent to Parkplace Court, with a Restroom Building and a Picnic Shelter close by. There is a basketball court in the northwest corner of the Park. Various types of playground equipment are dispersed in half a dozen places between the Restroom building and the basketball court.



A drainage channel runs roughly north to south through the middle of the Park. Access across it is provided by a pedestrian footbridge, which allows visitors to reach the second Picnic Shelter. This Shelter is the only Park amenity currently located on the east side of the channel.



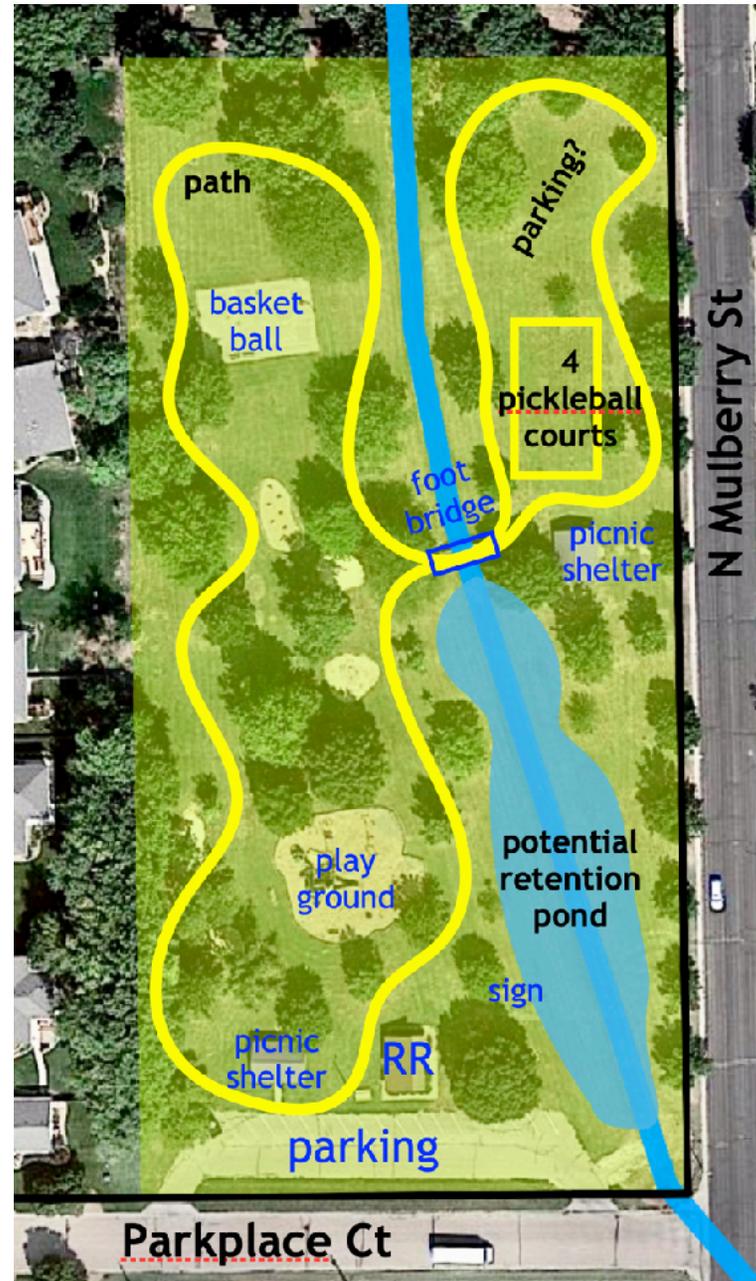
As with other parks, play equipment in Bicentennial Park should be consolidated into just one or two areas, which are then fitted with **ADA accessible poured in place safety surfacing**. The most reasonable procedure would likely be to start with the area around the existing multi-component play structure, which currently uses bark mulch as safety surfacing.

This Park would be an ideal location to add some outdoor **Pickleball Courts** to the park system. There is ample space in the northeast part of the Park to add from four to eight Courts. (The rectangle shown on the adjacent diagram indicates the amount of space needed to accommodate four courts.)

Additional parking off Mulberry Street—either diagonal parking along the street, or a small on-site lot— could serve the north Picnic Shelter, the Basketball court, and any new Pickleball courts. Depending on the scale of the venues developed, about 10 to 12 additional parking spaces would likely be enough for a Park this size, in combination with the existing south lot.

The most important addition to Bicentennial Park would be a concrete **looped walking path**, preferably six to eight feet wide. It would also function as an **accessible route** linking all accessible park venues to handicap parking stalls in both parking lots. (In the adjacent concept diagram, the path shown is about 4/10 of a mile long.)

If drainage patterns and stormwater management calculations indicate that it would be useful to construct a retention pond somewhere along this channel, this Park could be considered as a suitable location for it. There is available space, and adding a water element could add interest to the Park's landscape.



GOALS – POCKET PARK

- Pursue a **lot split** to restore the south end of the Pocket Park property to 16th Street right-of-way.
- Connect **16th Street** between Kunev and Oak Streets.
- **Sell** the balance of the parcel as a residential lot.

GOALS – LITTLE IKE PARK

- Continue to **maintain** Little Ike Park at its current level of excellence.
- Maintain a regular annual spray program to treat the Spruce tree for **bagworms**.
- Continue to **improve the adjacent parking lot** north of the Park, so it can work as an extension of the Park during events, and continue to serve as public parking during work weeks.
Use the **same materials palette as in the Park**, keeping the parking lot improvements in character with the Park.
- Add the **World's Biggest "I Like Ike" Campaign Button** at the northeast corner of the parking lot, as a visitor attraction.
- Add a small **Stage** to the northwest corner of the parking lot, to host performances during events.

GOALS – BICENTENNIAL PARK

- Improve the **lighting** in the **Restroom**.
- Improve the **Restroom**.
- **Consolidate play equipment** into just one or two areas, and fit them with ADA accessible **poured in place safety surfacing**. Start with the area around the existing multi-component play structure.
- Add four to eight **outdoor Pickleball Courts** in the northeast part of the Park, depending on demand.
- Add **parking off Mulberry Street** to serve venues in the north end of the Park—either diagonal parking along the street, or a small on-site lot.
- Add a **concrete looped walking path**, preferably six to eight feet wide, that also functions as an **accessible route** linking all accessible park venues to handicap parking stalls in both parking lots.
- If drainage patterns and stormwater management calculations indicate that a **retention pond** would be useful to construct somewhere along this channel, examine the possibility of adding it to this Park.

Eisenhower Park

Eisenhower Park incorporates 114.5 acres of land, extending from Mud Creek on the east to Washington Street on the west, and from about 4th Street on the south to the line of 11th Street on the north.

The majority of Eisenhower Park is in the 500-year floodplain. Land to the north beyond the Park's northernmost boundary is in the 100-year floodplain, and is currently in agricultural use. There are residential neighborhoods to the south and east of the Park. To the west, land on the far side of Washington is a mosaic of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The Land Pride industrial facility is northwest of the Park.

Management of Eisenhower Park is complicated by the need for cooperation among **multiple landowners** of the site, by regulatory restrictions resulting from the designation of much of the Park as a national- and state-registered **Historic District**, and by its **use as both the City's major municipal park and as Fairgrounds** for the annual Central Kansas Free Fair.

The City of Abilene has a long and successful history of juggling all these factors, and nevertheless making Eisenhower Park a beloved community destination that serves multiple purposes for a wide variety of people. However, any potential changes to the Park inevitably require negotiations among numerous parties, including various nonprofit user groups who depend on the Park's facilities.

Eisenhower Park Ownership

Eisenhower Park incorporates land owned by the City of Abilene, Dickinson County, the Central Kansas Free Fair Association (CKFFA), and the Kansas Military Board.

- Sterl Hall and the one-acre parcel it occupies are owned by **Dickinson County**.
- The Kansas National Guard building and the 1.6-acre parcel it occupies are owned by the **Kansas Military Board**.
- The **CKFFA** owns a 12-acre open field on the northwest corner of the Park, used during the Fair primarily as a site for carnival rides, and another 1.6-acre parcel on the southwest corner of the Park, on which the City of Abilene's Park Shop is located.



The balance of the land in Eisenhower Park (98 acres or 85.7% of the Park) is owned by the City of Abilene.

Abilene City Park Historic District

Since 2002, a portion of Eisenhower Park has been listed as a Historic District, on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The Park Historic District extends from 4th Street on the south to approximately 7th Street on the north, and from Mud Creek on the east to Sterl Lane on the west.

Though noted in the National Register of Historic Places Registrattion Form as being 39 acres in area, the District is in fact a little less than 20 acres in size.

Within the Historic District, there are 35 resources that contribute to its historic listing, all constructed by the Works Progress Administration during the 1930s Great Depression:

- Six sites – the Fairgrounds Stadium, the Bandshell, the Formal (Rose) Garden, the Picnic/Play Area, the Swimming Complex, and the Fountain Lobe.
- Three buildings – the Bathhouse, the Fair Stadium, and a Restroom Building (now used for storage).
- Six structures – the Park Roadway System, the Bandshell Landscaping, the Pergola, the Formal Garden Paths, the Pool Deck with Swimming Pools, and the Swimming Complex Paths.
- Twenty objects – 17 stone picnic table/benches and 3 picnic ovens.

Kansas statute K.S.A. 75-2724 provides protection for properties listed on either the National or State Historic Register, and their environs. In a city, environs are defined as anything within 500 feet of the boundary of a registered site.

If the State Historic Preservation Officer finds that a development project would encroach upon, damage or destroy any State or National historic site or its environs, the project may not proceed, unless the local governing body determines "that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the proposal and that the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm" to the historic site.

Abilene's Heritage Commission administers the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and makes many decisions about local historic structures.



Eisenhower Park Functional Sectors

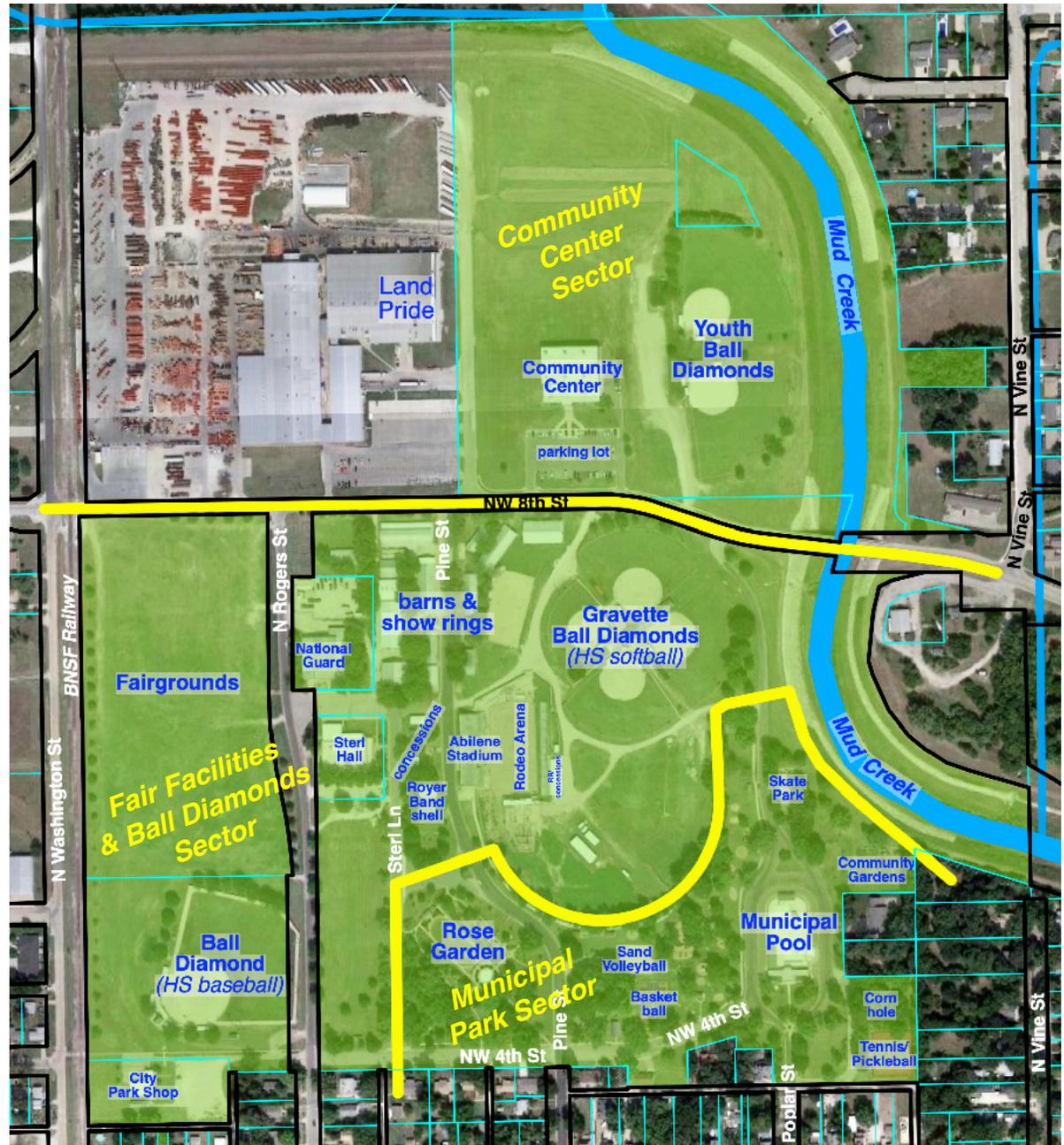
Eisenhower Park tends to fall into three different functional sectors.

- North of 8th Street is the **Community Center** sector, which has the Community Center, a parking lot, two baseball diamonds, and room for expansion. This area is the focus of recreational programs in Abilene.
- Anchored by the Rose Garden and the Municipal Pool, the southeastern sector of Eisenhower Park functions as a **municipal park**, and includes picnic shelters and playgrounds; basketball, tennis/pickleball, and volleyball courts; a Skatepark, Cornhole Courts, and the Community Gardens.

The curving line of trees that defines the northern boundary of this sector once outlined the edge of an oval racetrack for horse races, which was part of the Fairgrounds in the early 20th century.

- South of 8th Street, the northern and western part of the Park is dedicated to **Fair facilities and ball diamonds**. Anchored by Sterl Hall, Abilene Stadium, and Royer Bandshell, this sector also includes the Kansas National Guard building, various barns, show rings and concession stands, and five ball diamonds.

Each of these sectors will be addressed separately in the following sections.



Community Center Sector

The 37.1-acre section of Eisenhower Park that is north of 8th Street is a relatively recent addition to the Park, and has not been as intensively developed as parts of the Park that are south of 8th Street. This sector is not in the City Park Historic District.

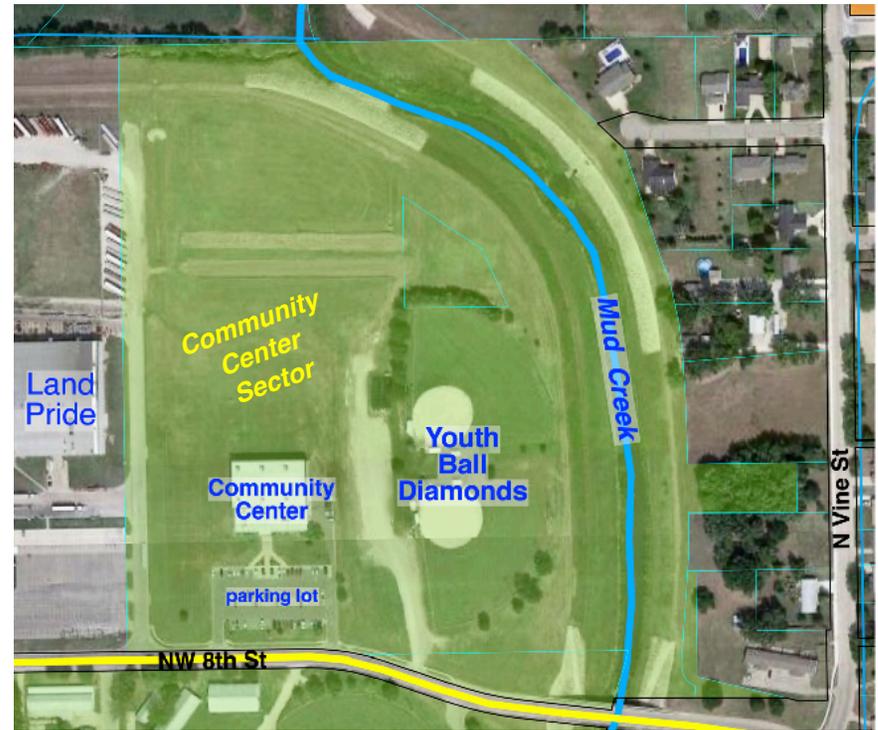
Most of this sector of the Park is in the 500-year floodplain, except for those parts which are actually in the Mud Creek floodway. There are about 25 acres of parkland west of the Creek, and available for development of park facilities.

Currently, the site hosts the Community Center and its asphalt parking lot, which were completed in 2006. There are also two Youth Baseball Diamonds, with an adjacent gravel parking area.

The Community Center has a gymnasium with volleyball and basketball courts and an indoor walking area, a multi-purpose room, a lobby with two pool tables, restrooms and locker rooms with showers, a kitchen, and administrative offices for Park and Recreation Department staff.

The restrooms and locker rooms are designed to be able to serve a future expansion of the Community Center toward the west, which would house an indoor swimming pool.

The Community Center hosts many of the recreational programs available from the Park and Recreation Department. The building's facilities can also be rented for private use.



Lobby



Kitchen



Multi-purpose Room



Gymnasium

From the beginning, it has been the City's intent to **expand the Community Center**. **Phase 1** would be an addition on the north side of the main building, which would be designed to meet the increasing demand for indoor recreation facilities, including:

- An **improved Indoor Walking Path**
- Additional **exercise rooms**, especially for gymnastics and tumbling
- Possibly an additional **gymnasium**, with more space for indoor Pickleball courts

Phase 2 would be an addition on the west side of the existing building, which would house an **indoor swimming pool**.

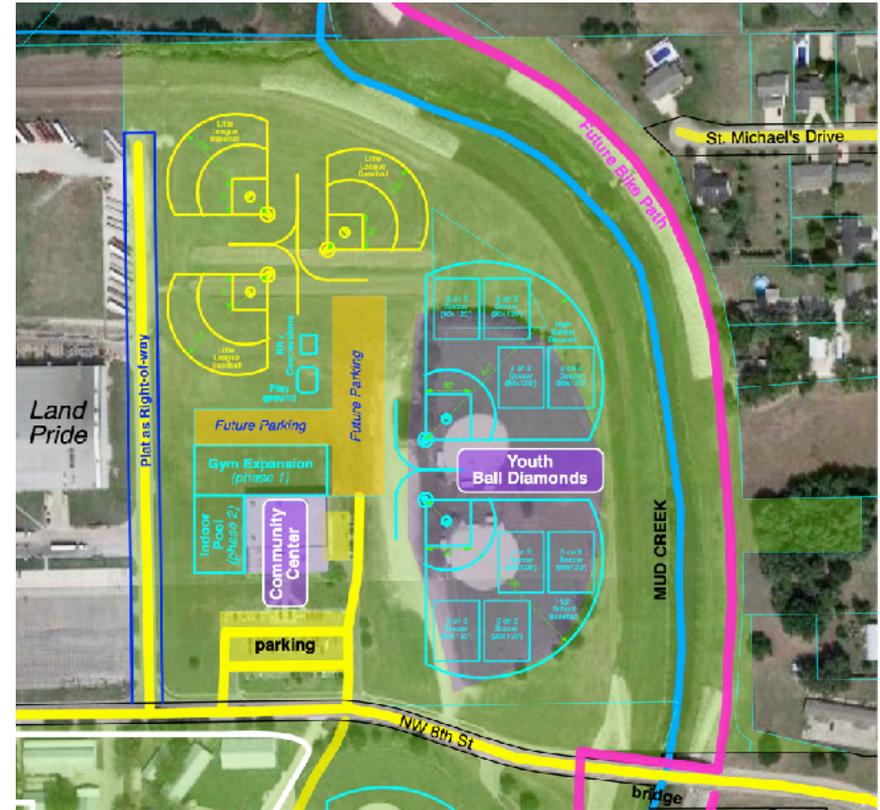
On the Community Center grounds, the two existing Youth Ball Diamonds are intended to be expanded and improved in order to be suitable for **High School baseball**, and to include **Soccer Practice Fields** in the outfields. There is also room on the north end of the site for two or perhaps three new **Little League Diamonds**.

Additional **parking lots**, north of the building, would be necessary to serve people using these new facilities. Ideally, the ball diamond complex would also merit a small freestanding **Restroom/Concessions building**, and perhaps a **Playground** to entertain small children while their older siblings play ball.

Other improvements to the Community Center over the course of the Planning Period might include:

- Add a **Donations Map** in the Community Center lobby, showing the locations of facilities and furnishings that people have donated to Abilene's Parks over the years.
- Improve the existing gravel path along the east bank of Mud Creek, creating a concrete **Bike & Pedestrian Path**.
- Install a **backup generator** to serve the Community Center.
- Near the end of the Planning Period, the Community Center's **heating and air conditioning units** will be old enough that replacements will likely be needed.

Consider platting the access drive along the west edge of the Park as official **right-of-way**, since it appears to be an essential access road for the adjacent Land Pride industrial facility.



Abilene Community Center

GOALS – COMMUNITY CENTER SECTOR

- Build a **Phase 1 addition** on the north side of the Community Center building, including an improved Indoor Walking Path, additional exercise rooms (especially for gymnastics and tumbling), and possibly an additional gymnasium with more space for indoor Pickleball courts.
- Build a **Phase 2 addition** on the west side of the Community Center building, with an indoor swimming pool.
- Expand and improve the two existing Youth **Ball Diamonds** to accommodate High School baseball, and include Soccer Practice Fields in the outfields.
- Construct two or perhaps three new **Little League Diamonds** on the north end of the site.
- Add **parking lots** farther north on the site, to serve the new facilities.
- Construct a small freestanding **Restroom/Concessions building** to serve the ball diamond complex.
- Consider adding a small **Playground** with nearby shaded seating, near the ball diamond complex.
- Add a **Donations Map** in the Community Center lobby, showing locations of donated facilities and furnishings in Abilene's Parks.
- Improve the existing gravel path along the east bank of Mud Creek, creating a concrete **Bike & Pedestrian Path**.
- Install a **backup generator** to serve the Community Center.
- Later in the Planning Period, prepare for replacement of the Community Center's **heating and air conditioning units**.

Municipal Park Sector

This 20-acre section of Eisenhower Park was developed primarily in the 1930s as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The WPA was a government-funded effort to provide people with paying jobs during the vast unemployment of the Great Depression. Nearly all of this sector is in the City Park Historic District.

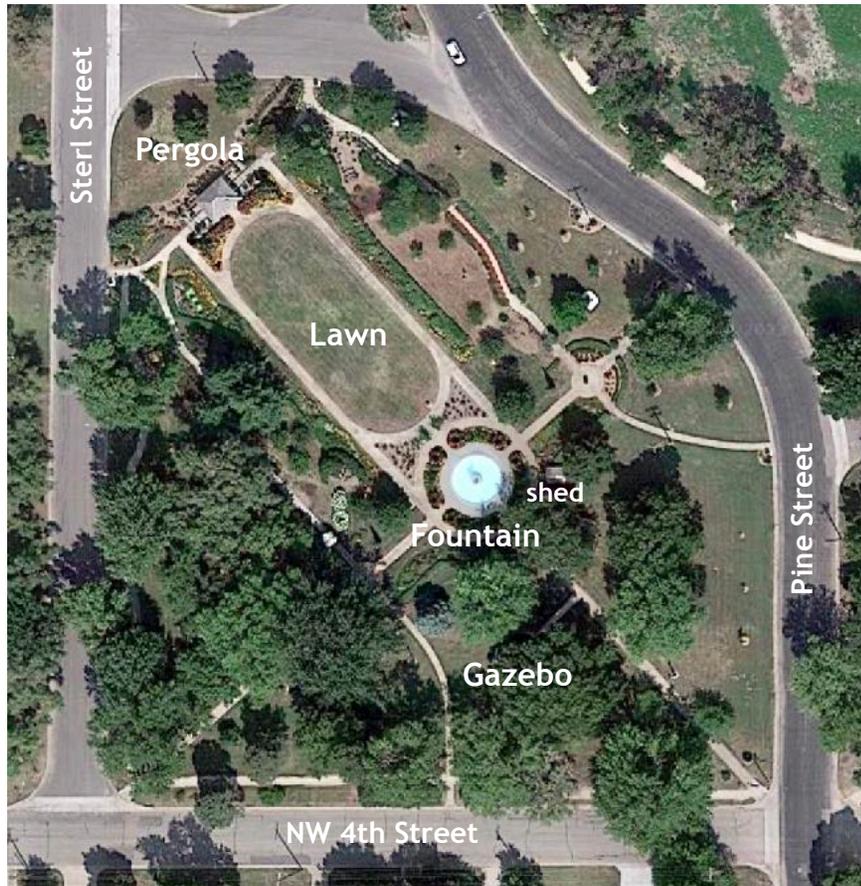
All of this sector of the Park is in the 500-year floodplain. The area is bordered on its northeastern edge by Mud Creek floodway. Historic residential neighborhoods are adjacent on the east and south.



Rose Garden The Municipal Park sector is anchored on the west by about 5 acres of land devoted to spectacular gardens. The site is bordered by Pine Street to the east, Sterl Street to the west, 4th Street to the south, and the Royer Bandshell to the north.

What was originally called the Formal Garden is now known as the Rose Garden. A historic stone Pergola, paths and landscaping all contribute to the Garden's listing as part of the City Park Historic District.

The Rose Garden is much appreciated in the community, and is heavily used for weddings, proms, and other special events.



Landscaping



Drinking Ft



Storage Shed



Sign



Pergola



Fountain



Gazebo

The success of the Rose Garden is highly dependent on the horticultural skills of the facility's Head Gardener. The staff member who has kept the Gardens in pristine condition for many years is nearing retirement age. The City will need to plan ahead to make sure she has at least a year or two to train her successor before she leaves.

Municipal Pool The other major anchor of the Municipal Park sector is the Municipal Pool. Poplar Street separates into two one-way portions to define the space for the pool complex. Diagonal on-street parking is squeezed in between the street and the pool complex fence. There is a small plaza with benches, in the lawn outside the Pool House entrance.

Besides the pool itself, the complex includes the pool deck, a giant water slide, a Pump House, a Concessions building, and the Pool House, which houses the entrance lobby and office, as well as locker rooms, restrooms, and showers.

The swimming pool has three sections— on the north, a diving pool with two diving boards; in the middle, a seven-lane lap pool; and on the south end, a play pool with three 'mushroom' spray elements. The main pool has a zero-entry sloping shelf on the south end. There is also a separate fenced toddler pool.



View across pool toward Pool House



Mushroom sprays



Zero-entry shelf

The pool, the pool deck, the sidewalks south of the Pool House entrance, and both arms of Poplar Road are considered contributing elements to the City Park Historic District. Making any changes to the design of any of these elements, especially if those changes compromise their historic integrity, would need approval by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Permission for any changes would take negotiation, but it is not an impossible goal to achieve, especially if there is a safety or conflicting regulatory need at issue.

The most immediate improvement needed at the Municipal Pool is the provision of more **shade structures**. The pool deck is concrete, and is entirely surrounded by asphalt parking areas and roads. As summers get hotter, shade is not merely a matter of comfort, it is a matter of safety.

Another desired improvement is a safe **drop-off zone**, where vehicles can get clear of traffic to drop kids at the Pool. While the Poplar Road layout and curbs are considered to be historic, the road width of the one-way portions of Poplar seems excessive to need. There may be ways to stripe the road to narrow the traffic way, and allow for a safe drop-off zone.



Pool House



Benches at entrance



Pump House



Pumps & filters



Concessions building



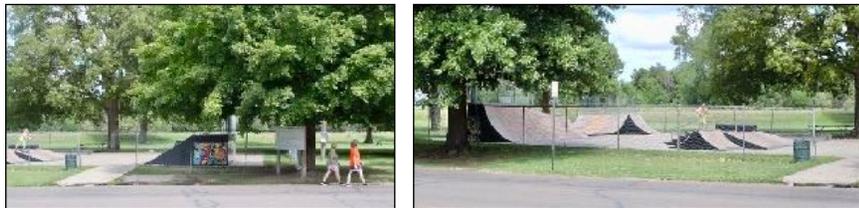
Concessions interior



East of Poplar Street and north of the Pool complex, are the **Community Gardens** and the **Skatepark**.

Community gardens allow people to enjoy gardening, who may not own land—or who may want to garden in a social and collaborative environment, learning from their fellow gardeners.

The **Skatepark** is composed of a number of prefabricated ramps, which can theoretically be relocated occasionally, in order to present new challenges for users to enjoy.



East of Poplar Street and south of the Pool complex, are the **Cornhole Courts** and the **Tennis/Pickleball Courts**. Vehicle access to both facilities is provided by a paved loop drive connecting to Poplar Street.

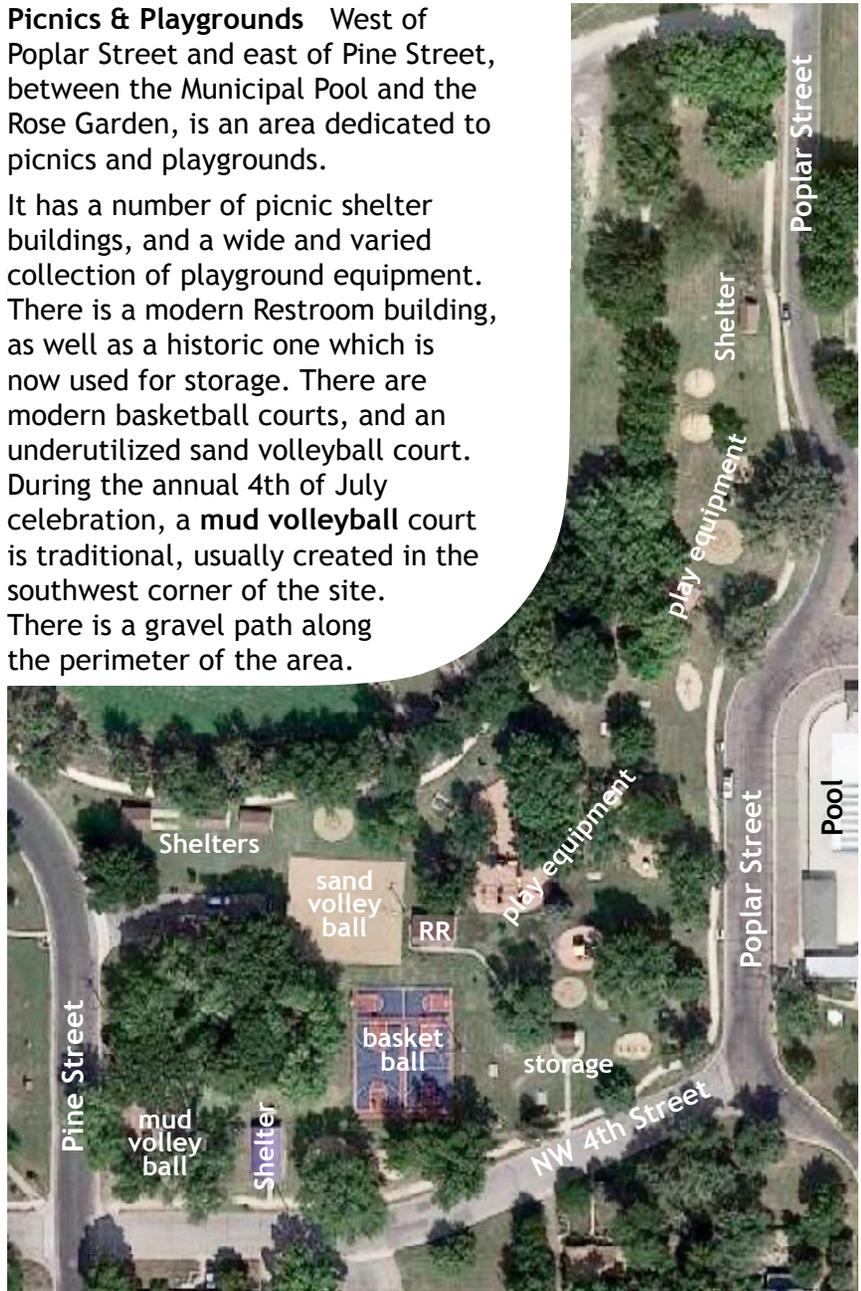
The lawn area enclosed by the loop drive is described in the City Park Historic District nomination form as the "**Fountain Court**". A faint impression of the circular fountain that was once in the middle of the lawn can still be seen in the aerial photo.

The **Tennis Courts** have been in this location since the 1980s, but in recent years have been repainted to allow for pickleball play as well as tennis. The **Cornhole Courts** were installed in 2022, and are becoming more and more popular.

In between the Community Gardens and the Cornhole Courts, there are two privately owned residential lots, each with a house on it. Their only access to the public road system is via Poplar Street.

Picnics & Playgrounds West of Poplar Street and east of Pine Street, between the Municipal Pool and the Rose Garden, is an area dedicated to picnics and playgrounds.

It has a number of picnic shelter buildings, and a wide and varied collection of playground equipment. There is a modern Restroom building, as well as a historic one which is now used for storage. There are modern basketball courts, and an underutilized sand volleyball court. During the annual 4th of July celebration, a **mud volleyball** court is traditional, usually created in the southwest corner of the site. There is a gravel path along the perimeter of the area.



Swings



Riders



Climbers & Slides



Multi-component Play Units



Historic Picnic Table



Historic Grill



Gravel Walking Path



Picnic Shelters



Sand Volleyball Courts



Basketball Courts

Contributing & Non-contributing Elements

In the nomination documents for the City Park Historic District, the **contributing elements** in this section of Eisenhower Park are noted as the WPA Restroom building (which is now used for storage), the 17 WPA stone picnic tables and the three WPA picnic ovens. Maintaining the historic integrity of these elements is required.

Even though they are within the Historic District, changes to **non-contributing elements** are more likely to be permitted by the State Historic Preservation Officer—especially if the proposed changes maintain the historic character of the Park.

Non-contributing elements noted in the Nomination form include a modern Restroom building, three modern picnic shelters, and the basketball courts. The sand volleyball courts are not mentioned.

The nominating form's discussion of non-contributing elements then goes on to say, *"Playground equipment that post-dates the original construction of the park is also found in this area. Due to its small size and scale, lack of artistic design and impermanent construction, the playground equipment was included in the resource count."*

In fact, the playground equipment is *not* included in the resource count found elsewhere in the document, and given the reasons listed for not including it, and the fact that the entire discussion is about non-contributing items, it appears that the last phrase *should* have read *"...the playground equipment was not included in the resource count."*

If the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Abilene Heritage Commission agree with this assessment, then changes to the play equipment become much more feasible.

Proposed Improvements

A number of improvements are proposed for the picnic and play area.

Sand Volleyball There are no active Sand Volleyball leagues in Abilene any more, and the courts have seen little use in recent years. Eliminating the existing Volleyball courts would free up space in the Park that could be better used.

Splashpad Consider replacing the Volleyball courts with a new Splashpad. The site would be nearly ideal. It is adjacent to a Restroom building on one side and a parking area on the other, and close to picnic shelters. Utilities access is readily available.

The site is not within the Municipal Pool fence, so it would be available to the public even when the Pool is closed. However, the Pool is just a short walk away, so trained Pool staff could conveniently provide basic water quality and equipment checks for the Splashpad, too.

A **plaza-style Splashpad** in this location could serve other purposes, during the seasons when the spray elements are closed down. A concrete plaza in the middle of the Park could host anything from pop-up vendors at a craft fair, to holiday celebrations centered around a giant Christmas tree—or any number of other possibilities.

A **playground-style Splashpad** is also an option, and would certainly fit in with the character of other play equipment in the area. Depending on the scale of the entire Splashpad project, there is space enough to allow a little of both styles, if that was desired.

Restrooms The freestanding restroom buildings in the Parks appear to be structurally sound, and can be upgraded by renovating interior **fixtures and finishes**, and improving **lighting**, and the **heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems**.

When renovating restrooms, make sure they are **accessible** to all. Provide at least one **family restroom** in each building, which can provide sufficient floor space to meet ADA turning circle requirements.

Provide simple amenities that can help keep restroom facilities clean, and make the visitor experience so much better—motion activated soap dispensers, faucets and hand dryers; self-flushing toilets; hooks for purses or backpacks; and diaper changing stations and enough floor space to park a stroller.

Play Equipment As was common in earlier years, pieces of play equipment are currently widely dispersed in the Park, and scattered around the site. These days, play equipment is generally **clustered in age appropriate groupings**—either for 5-years and younger preschoolers, or for 6-to-12-year-old school age children. Often, the paired playgrounds are on either side of a shade structure that offers comfortable seating for caregivers.

Poured in place (PIP) safety surfacing is the preferred choice for playground substrates, and it is expensive. Clustering play equipment reduces the total square footage of safety surfacing needed, and therefore its cost.

Investing in PIP safety surfacing at all the locations where play equipment is currently located in the Park would be a costly waste of resources. It makes far more economic sense to select a few prime locations for a playground within the Park site, then relocate the equipment to those locations. Units can be relocated in closer proximity to each other, and share overlapped safety zones, which are required around each piece of play equipment. This significantly reduces the overall area of PIP surfacing needed.

Eisenhower Park currently has two modern **multi-component play units**, each of which could become the core of such a playground. (PIP safety surfacing is generally installed *after* playground equipment is in place, so the play units would not have to be disturbed in order to add new substrate.)

The Park hosts play equipment from many different eras. Some units may be nearing the end of their lifespans, or may not meet current safety standards, and should be retired. Other units may be cherished by the community, and are worth restoring and preserving. Consider the possibility of relocating some of the older play equipment into a consolidated **Vintage Playground**, which could then be furnished with PIP safety surfacing.

When play equipment is relocated to a new consolidated playground, make sure to **incorporate some new play elements** that are **accessible**, and meet ADA requirements. Other new equipment might include **intergenerational play** elements. Consider adding **outdoor exercise equipment for adults** at some playgrounds. Consider the option of creating a playground dedicated to **nature play**.

Shade Consolidating play equipment in more compact areas also makes it easier to provide shade, which can be done with overhead fabric shade structures, with trees, or with both. As new playgrounds are designed, be sure to integrate shade into their design.

Picnic Shelters Some of the Park's picnic shelters are nearing the end of their useful lifespans. As some need to be replaced, carefully consider all location options, rather than automatically rebuilding in the same place. Provide a balance of large Shelters that can host big groups, and smaller Shelters for family groups. Try to locate Shelters where they will work in synergy with other Park venues, offering nearby shade and seating.

Interpretive Signage Celebrate the Park's history, and add modern interpretive signs that explain the historic WPA origins of the Park. If feasible, renovate the historic Restroom building as an **Interpretive Center**, explaining the origins of the Works Progress Administration, and telling the stories of the people who built so much of Eisenhower Park.

Sidewalks Sidewalks built by the WPA in the 1930s extended from the perimeter of the Park to a specific destination—but, following the design standards of the time, did not provide any internal pedestrian circulation. People who wanted to walk around within the Park were expected to walk on the grass.

Now there is a perimeter Path within the picnic and playground sector of the Park, but it could do with improvements, to make it a destination in itself. Start by converting it to a concrete sidewalk that serves as an **ADA accessible route** connecting ADA parking spaces to locations of accessible park equipment, especially accessible picnic tables, and playgrounds with accessible play elements.

Consider adding small adjacent concrete **seating areas** here and there along the path, in places where there is shade or a pleasant view. Each seating area should be just large enough for a small bistro table and two or three chairs. Some should have space to allow for wheelchair access.

In appropriate locations along the path, provide **trash receptacles**, including **dog waste stations**.

GOALS – MUNICIPAL PARK SECTOR

- **Rose Garden:** Create a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition when the current head gardener eventually retires, and a new head gardener must be found.
- **Pool:** The tree immediately southwest of the Pool House has become a hazard, and should be removed as soon as possible.
- **Pool:** Add at least one **shade structure** on the pool deck. Consider **fabric structures** as an option, since they can actually reduce the temperature beneath them.
- **Pool:** Add a safe **drop-off zone** near the Pool House entrance.
- **Skatepark:** Consider rearranging the prefabricated Skatepark ramps every few years, in order to present new challenges for users.
- **Cornhole Courts:** Expand the number of Cornhole Courts as necessary to meet demand.
- **Pickleball:** If demand continues to expand, consider adding dedicated outdoor Pickleball Courts to Eisenhower Park, perhaps in some of the space opened up when scattered Play Equipment is relocated to more compact playgrounds.
- **Eliminate the Sand Volleyball Courts.**
- Consider replacing the Volleyball Courts with a **Splashpad**.
- Improve the **Restrooms**.
- Consolidate scattered play equipment into more **compact play areas** that have **poured-in-place safety surfacing** and **shade structures**.
- Consider relocating some of the older play equipment into a consolidated **Vintage Playground**.
- Incorporate some new play elements that are **accessible**, and meet ADA requirements.
- Incorporate some new **intergenerational play elements**.
- Add some **outdoor exercise equipment** for adults at some playgrounds.
- Create a **nature play** playground.
- Upgrade or replace some of the older **Picnic Shelters**.
- Add **interpretive signage** explaining the historic WPA origins of the Park.
- Renovate the historic Restroom as an **Interpretive Center**.
- Improve the **perimeter Path**, making it an **ADA accessible route**. Add **bistro table seating areas** along the path. In appropriate locations along the path, provide **trash receptacles**, including **dog waste stations**.

Fair Facilities & Ball Diamonds Sector

The remainder of Eisenhower Park—land south of 8th Street and north and west of the Municipal Park area—has historically served as the City’s Fairgrounds. Ball Diamonds were a relatively recent addition to the sector.

In 1906, as the city began to expand west of Mud Creek, the Dickinson County Free Fair Association bought 30 acres of land for a permanent Fairgrounds. The site extended from about 4th Street to 7th Street, and from about Pine Street to just west of Poplar Street. By 1909, the Fairgrounds had stables, an Agricultural Hall, and a half-mile race track. By 1912, a wooden grandstand had been added at the track. In 1916, the City of Abilene purchased the property from the Fair Association.

The Park was completely redesigned and rebuilt by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the 1930s Great Depression. Starting in 1935, roads and sidewalks were built, utilities were added, and new buildings were constructed. The Swimming Pool and Pool House, the Stadium, the Bandshell, the Pergola and pathways of the Formal Garden, a Restroom building, and stone picnic tables and picnic ovens were all built by the WPA.

A 1946 aerial photo shows that the Stadium then provided seating for a lighted baseball diamond. At some point after that, the diamond was relocated and replaced with rodeo facilities.

The Park continued to expand, and now includes land owned by the Kansas Military Board, where the National Guard building is located; land owned by Dickinson County, where the 1951 Sterl Hall building is located; and land owned by the Central Kansas Free Fair Association (CKFFA).

Today, the portion of Eisenhower Park in the Fair Facilities sector comprises 57.4 acres; six of those acres are within the Mud Creek floodway. Only about 1.2 acres on the north part of the western edge of the Park are not in floodplain; the rest of the land in this sector is in the 500-year floodplain.



Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045

The Fair Facilities & Ball Diamonds sector of Eisenhower Park extends from about 4th Street north to 8th Street. It is bordered on the east by Mud Creek, and on the west by the BNSF Railway tracks and Washington Street.

Facilities used for the Fair include the open field of the Fairgrounds, Royer Bandshell, Sterl Hall, concessions buildings, various barns and show rings for different kinds of domestic animals, and the Rodeo complex— which includes the Abilene Stadium, the Rodeo Arena, and a Restroom/Concessions building.

Ball diamonds include the four diamonds of the Gravette complex, which are currently used for High School softball play, and the single Ball Diamond in the southwest corner of the Park, currently used for High School baseball play.

In addition, the National Guard building is in the north end of the Park, just east of Rogers Street. There are decommissioned tanks and artillery pieces displayed on the lawn west of the Rose Garden, the World's Largest Belt Buckle is on display just south of the Stadium building, and the City Park Shop is located in the southwest corner of the Park.



Abilene Stadium



Royer Bandshell



Concessions buildings



World's Largest Belt Buckle



Sterl Hall



Barns & Show Rings



Kansas National Guard building (owned by Kansas Military Board)

Many of the **Livestock Barns and Show Rings** urgently need to be updated. Instead of rebuilding one structure at a time to replace an existing building, make a **plan for the entire complex**, with a **vehicle and pedestrian circulation network** that serves all the buildings well. Even if construction takes place in phases, the end result should be a coherent complex of facilities that serve the needs of both visitors, and all the Fair's animal exhibitors.

The Rodeo Association continues to update and improve the **Stadium Rodeo facilities**. Updates to the **Press Stand** and improvements to the **restrooms and showers** are currently high on the list of needed improvements.

One of the major problems for the Rodeo Arena is the lack of nearby **parking**—not just for the vehicles of event attendees, but for the trucks and trailers that are used to bring livestock in, and for the recreational vehicles which many of the competitors live in during the multi-day course of Rodeos, Horse Shows, and other major events.

The problem began when the Gravette Ball Diamonds were constructed in what used to be the parking area for the Stadium. The Rodeo Association continues to believe that the best use of that land would be as parking to support major events at the Stadium, which have a big impact on Abilene's economy.

The **ball diamonds could be elsewhere**, but parking for the Stadium needs to be close to the Stadium. Restoring the area for use as parking could also help during the Fair, since the agreement the City once had with Land Pride to allow auxiliary Fair parking on their site is no longer in operation.

If the Ball Diamonds are removed, and the site is being regraded anyway, consider adding some **rain gardens or other green infrastructure elements** to help solve the chronic drainage problems that occur in this area. Consider the possibility of including **interpretive signs** to teach visitors about green infrastructure.

The **Concessions buildings** at the Fairgrounds are on City-owned land, tucked into the space between Sterl Hall and the Stadium, just north of the Bandshell. The buildings themselves are owned by various private owners and nonprofit organizations. Built at different times over the years, the Concessions buildings are operated only during the one week out of each year that the Fair is open. Many of the buildings are in need of updating.

Before investing in improvements to any single building, make a **plan for the entire concessions complex**, that allows for better pedestrian access, and **ample shaded tables and seating nearby**. Consider the possibility that a **different location** on the site may be a better place for concessions to operate, and that **food trucks** may be a big part of future concessions operations. Explore the possibility that it may be time to bring concessions at the Fair under a single professional management—either the CKFFA, or the City.

The **Royer Band Shell** is in urgent need of repairs to bring it into compliance with both ADA and simple safety requirements. Some of the concrete sidewalks and ramps that provide access to the stage have settled, leaving trip-hazard lips of concrete an inch or two high in the walkways. The Band Shell is on the National Register of Historic Places, so repairs will have to be done carefully and in a manner sensitive to the structure's historic integrity.

Sterl Hall was last renovated in 1996, and is likely due for updating, but that decision will be largely up to Dickinson County. The City can certainly make suggestions for desirable improvements.

There are three decommissioned pieces of mid-20th-century military equipment—**two tanks and an artillery piece**—displayed on the lawn west of the Rose Garden. They are used by children as play structures, which makes them a liability risk for the City. Give some considered thought to their value versus their risk. Make a deliberate and balanced decision about whether they should continue to be maintained, or whether they should be removed from the Park. Consider the possibility of relocating them to the National Guard building site, if the Guard would accept them.



Tanks & Artillery

Ball Diamonds

Currently, Abilene's baseball facilities consist of the two Youth Diamonds at the Community Center, and the five diamonds in Eisenhower Park. The four Gravette Diamonds are used for High School softball, and the diamond at the southwest corner of the Park is used for High School baseball.

The four Gravette Complex Ball Diamonds are plagued with drainage problems, and the space they occupy would better serve as Rodeo Arena parking. The southwest Diamond also has problems, and is not in an ideal location. All of Eisenhower Park's ball diamond facilities are dated, and the restrooms and lighting in both places are in poor condition.

If the five existing ball diamonds in the south half of Eisenhower Park remain where they are, they will need major renovations within the time period of this Plan. However, it is simply not cost effective to invest in renovations to these ball diamonds in their current locations.

The Community Center site has space north of the building for two or possibly three new Little League diamonds. The Center's two existing diamonds are intended to be renovated to support High School play. While these improvements may serve the community for a while, it is unlikely that the Center's facilities will be able to meet growing demand over the next twenty-two years.

Abilene has a powerful interest in baseball, and really needs a new and better Ball Diamond complex, with diamonds scaled for High School play and adult leagues, and the accompanying amenities that are expected in today's sports facilities. These include ample parking, modern Restrooms and Concessions, a well equipped Press Box, and comfortable seating for fans.

Various constraints in Eisenhower Park make it unsuitable for such a facility, and no other existing park in Abilene has remotely enough space to support such a complex. It is time to consider investing in **new diamonds at a new location, on parkland purchased specifically for this purpose.**

When searching for a property to hold the new baseball facility, try to find a site that would allow local kids to bike to the ball fields for practice.

Before land is purchased, the community will need to do some serious research on whether a **tournament facility** would be a cost-effective option for Abilene, or not. If the decision is made to build a tournament facility in Abilene, consider land near one of the I-70 interchanges as a potential location.

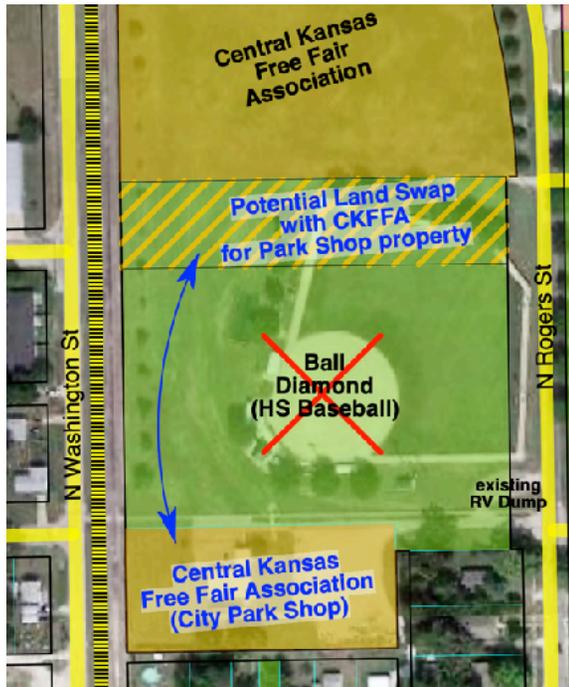
A new baseball tournament facility would make Abilene a destination for baseball events. Relocating the Gravette Diamonds would enhance the City's ability to host Rodeo Arena events. The impact of both on Abilene's economy may well provide a good return on investment for the cost of additional parkland for a baseball complex.

Land Swap?

The Central Kansas Free Fair Association (CKFFA) is a nonprofit organization that owns two parcels of land on the west side of Eisenhower Park. A 12.1-acre parcel to the north is an open field used for Fair events. A 1.6-acre parcel just south of 4th Street is the site of the Abilene City Park Shop. In between is a 6.6-acre parcel owned by the City of Abilene, which currently has a Baseball Diamond on it, that is proposed to be removed.

The cooperation Agreement between the City of Abilene and the CKFFA Board is due for review and updating. As part of the discussions, consider the possibility of doing a land swap, transferring title of the Park Shop site to the City, while transferring title to the CKFFA of an equivalent amount of land that is immediately adjacent to the CKFFA's northern parcel.

This trade would put the land and building that houses the City Park Shop under City ownership, and would usefully expand the CKFFA's Fairgrounds site.



Potential Land Swap

New Parkland

The purchase of land for a new **Baseball Park**, possibly on the west side of town, may well take place somewhat later in the 22-year span of this *Plan*. Since land prices in Abilene are likely to rise over time, it would be wise for the City to purchase property sooner rather than later, even if development of the baseball facilities themselves has to wait a while for funding.

The demand for a **new Dog Park** is more pressing, and the City will need to acquire about five acres of land for that use **as soon as possible**. Ideally, a Dog Park should have good road access, well-drained turf, mature shade trees, space for sufficient parking, and be far enough from residential development to avoid noise conflicts.

During this planning process, the community also expressed a strong interest in a **new Neighborhood Park on the east side** of town. A neighborhood park is typically similar in scale and services to the 4-acre Bicentennial Park. Consider land along a stream for the east side Park, which would allow for a **linear park with a pathway**.

Dog Parks are not compatible with sports facilities, so no attempt should be made to combine the new Dog Park with the new Baseball Park. However, it is **feasible to combine a Dog Park with a Neighborhood Park**, assuming an appropriate amount of land is acquired.

As a long-term strategy, consider the possibility of combining land acquisition for parks with the City's need to acquire additional **water rights**. Floodplain property with water rights can serve very well as a **nature park**, with hiking trails, birdwatching, and perhaps fishing docks as attractions.

GOALS – FAIRGROUNDS FACILITIES

- **Make a plan to update the entire complex of Livestock Barns and Show Rings**, including a vehicle and pedestrian circulation network.
- Update the **Stadium Press Stand**.
- Update the **Stadium restrooms and showers**.
- **Make a plan to update the entire Concessions complex**, with better pedestrian access, and **ample shaded tables and seating nearby**. Consider the possibility that a **different location** may be better, and that **food trucks** may be a big part of future concessions operations. Explore the possibility of bringing concessions at the Fair under the **management** of either the CKFFA or the City.
- Repair sunken concrete sidewalks and ramps at the **Royer Bandshell**.
- Make a deliberated decision about whether the **tanks and artillery piece** should continue to be maintained, or should be removed from the Park as a liability risk for the City. Consider the possibility of relocating them to the National Guard building site, if they want them.
- **Remove the Gravette Ball Diamonds**, and return that land to use as **parking** for Stadium events. When regrading after demolition, add **rain gardens or other green infrastructure elements** to address chronic drainage problems. Add **interpretive signs** to teach people about green infrastructure.
- **Remove the Baseball Diamond** in the southwest corner of Eisenhower Park.
- Discuss potential renovations of **Sterl Hall** with Dickinson County.
- **Update the cooperation Agreement** between the City of Abilene and the CKFFA Board.

GOALS – PARKLAND

- Pursue the possibility of a **land swap**, transferring title of the Park Shop site to the City, while transferring title to the CKFFA of an equivalent amount of land that is immediately adjacent to the CKFFA's northern parcel.
- Determine whether a new **baseball** facility should be designed to host **tournaments or not**.
- Search for an appropriate site and **purchase land for a new Baseball Park**, possibly on the west side. Try to find a site that would allow local kids to bike to the ball fields for practice. If the decision is made to build a tournament facility, consider land near one of the I-70 interchanges as a potential location.
- Design and **construct a new baseball facility** in the new Park. Include diamonds designed for High School and adult play, ample parking, modern Restrooms and Concessions, a well equipped Press Box, and comfortable seating for fans.
- **Acquire a minimum 5 acres of new parkland** which meets the criteria for a **Dog Park**.
- Design & construct a **new Dog Park** in Abilene.
- Establish a **volunteer Dog Park support organization** to sponsor programs and special events, and raise funds for additional amenities.
- Acquire about **four to five acres of land for a Neighborhood Park on the east side of town**, possibly along a stream for a linear park with a pathway. Alternatively, acquire about nine or ten acres of land for a **Dog Park and a Neighborhood Park combined**.
- When seeking property with additional **water rights** for the City, seek land that could also serve as a **nature park**.

CHAPTER 5. Pathway Network & Goals

Transportation systems involve more than just streets and highways. They work best when different modes of travel—by car, bus, bicycle, foot, airplane, or train—are interconnected.

A **pathway network** is that part of a balanced municipal transportation system which is focused on serving pedestrians and bicyclists. Such a network may include **sidewalks, bike lanes and routes, mixed-use paths**, and a variety of support accessories ranging from benches to bike racks to signs.

- **Bike lanes** are located on a street or its shoulder, and dedicated to bicycle use only. They are typically five feet wide, and defined with pavement markings.
- **Bike routes** are streets specifically intended for use by both cars and bicycles, designated with pavement markings and "Share the Road" signs.
- **Mixed-use paths** are separate from vehicle traffic lanes, and used by both pedestrians and bicyclists.



Sidewalk



Bike Lane



Bike Route



Mixed-use Path

Bicycle and pedestrian pathway systems are most successful when they **interconnect residential neighborhoods to community destinations**, including schools, parks, churches, and downtown businesses.

Bike Racks If a pathway network is to serve as an alternative transportation option for cyclists, it must include parking facilities for bicycles. The design and placement of bike racks is covered in the **Furnishings & Lighting** section of the *Park Planning Principles* chapter of this Plan.

Streets are Part of the Pathway Network

The **right-of-way** for a typical street holds far more than just the street itself. In addition to traffic lanes, a right-of-way generally hosts drainage structures or ditches, underground and overhead utilities, street trees, and sidewalks.

Sidewalks, bike lanes, and bike routes almost always share a right-of-way with a public street. Mixed-use paths may be located in street rights-of-way, or in abandoned railroad rights-of-way, drainage ways, on levees, or on public property such as parkland.

Sidewalks are intended primarily for pedestrians, though as a safety measure, young children riding bikes usually ride on sidewalks rather than streets. **Adult bicyclists are expected to ride on streets**, following the same rules of the road as those using motorized vehicles. **Mixed use paths** typically accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Achieving a successful pathway network in Abilene will necessarily involve **redesigning some of the City's streets** to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, along with cars. Drivers may be inconvenienced in this process, as their needs will no longer take sole priority; for instance, some on-street parking may need to be eliminated in order to make room for a bike lane.

Drivers can and will adapt to multi-modal transportation infrastructure, but **public engagement** in the process of developing the pathway system will be essential, in order to keep the community informed of what changes are coming, and why.

Every single street does not need to provide for every type of user, but a community's street **system** should serve the needs of all its citizens—including those who don't or can't drive cars.

Historic Overview

Community transportation systems were once built to support pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit systems (trolleys, buses, and local trains), as well as cars and trucks. But from the 1950s through the 1980s, when the interstate highway system was being built, almost all U.S. transportation funding went to new infrastructure for personal motorized vehicles. Most state and local funding followed suit.

Streets were designed with the central goal of maximizing speed and traffic volume for cars and trucks. They became more and more dangerous for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Interstate highways enabled suburban sprawl. Residential subdivision design favored large lots that increased the cost of sidewalks per household, compared to the smaller lots in traditional neighborhoods. Subdivision street layouts were designed to maximize cul-de-sacs, and to minimize connections to the outside world, making walking routes to any possible destination dauntingly long. As a result, suburban developments were frequently built with no sidewalks at all.

During the same era, as schools consolidated, after-school activities surged, and media sensationalized the risk of "stranger danger", parents began to chauffeur their children to and from school. As fewer and fewer children walked to school, the incentive to maintain and improve sidewalk systems diminished, and existing sidewalks were allowed to deteriorate.

By the 1990s, recognition finally began to dawn that we were losing something of great value, and that other modes of transportation, such as walking and biking, mattered. Since then, American communities have been slowly trying to chip away at that 40-year backlog of neglect, working to retrofit pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure back into rights-of-way that were designed with cars as their overriding focus.

Complete Streets

Street design philosophy is now based on the idea of **complete streets**, which recognizes that while rights-of-way are intended to serve drivers of motorized vehicles, they are also meant to serve other members of the public as well.

The complete streets planning concept calls for street design that utilizes the public right of way to support safe and comfortable travel by *all* users, of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, and motorists.

Complete streets include sidewalks with curb ramps, and good crosswalks. Some streets, especially in downtown areas or near schools, may also have curb extensions, crosswalk medians for pedestrian refuge, bike lanes or bike routes, or countdown signals. Amenities might include shade and benches for pedestrians, and bike racks. Complete streets may also include on-street parking, and bus stops or bus lanes.

What constitutes a complete street varies widely because they are always designed to fit a community's specific local needs.

For more information on complete streets, see:

- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#).
- [USDOT's Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#), for links to more resources on complete streets, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, e-scooters, e-bikes, and bike share programs.

*"The role of streets
is to build communities,
not the other way around."*

Gary Toth – Project for Public Spaces

Walkability & Bikeability

Cultural changes in America are making walkable neighborhoods highly desirable again. Property values in such places are rising, particularly where residential areas are within walking distance of shopping, restaurants, service businesses and entertainment.

Walkability and bikeability are now recognized as primary assets for enhancing quality of life and improving community health. In this highly mobile era, an excellent quality of life is essential, both for retaining young professionals, and for attracting new residents and new businesses to a community.

Quality of life describes the overall happiness and well-being of a person or a community. Factors that play a role include everything from housing, schools, and culture, to business and job opportunities, to recreational options. One of the most important factors in quality of life is physical and mental **health**.

Since the 1950s, planning decisions across the United States have produced unintended consequences for our physical health. Suburban sprawl and its associated car-dependence are now considered a major contributing factor to the current obesity epidemic in America.

In 1950, approximately 10% of American adults were obese, as measured by body mass index. By 2023, that number was 42%. Currently, about 1 in 5 American children are obese.

Obesity is a significant public and personal health problem, related to a number of serious chronic diseases—including diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, and a variety of cancers.

As the American obesity epidemic becomes more severe, more communities are realizing the value of offering residents safe venues for **biking and walking, which are some of the very best and most widely accessible forms of exercise.**

Social connections, especially those with depth and continuity, are important to mental health. Sidewalks and pathways help **reduce social isolation and enhance a sense of community**, as people get to know their neighbors and their neighborhoods in a way not possible from the seat of a car.

Sidewalks and paths that support walking and biking for exercise and recreation also provide an **alternative transportation option**. For children who are too young to drive, for people unable to drive, and for those who simply prefer not to drive when they can avoid it—a sidewalk and pathway network offers an alternative way to safely get to where they want to go.

However, most people will not choose to walk or cycle unless they can do so safely and conveniently. To be well used, sidewalks and bike paths must be **well-designed and well-maintained**.

A community-wide **network** of well-maintained sidewalks, bicycle lanes and routes, and mixed-use paths, helps to encourage physical activity, promote good health, and nurture social connections. It also serves as an alternative, and more environmentally sustainable, transportation option.

Investment in a pathway network is an investment in Abilene's walkability, its bikeability, its quality of life, and its future.

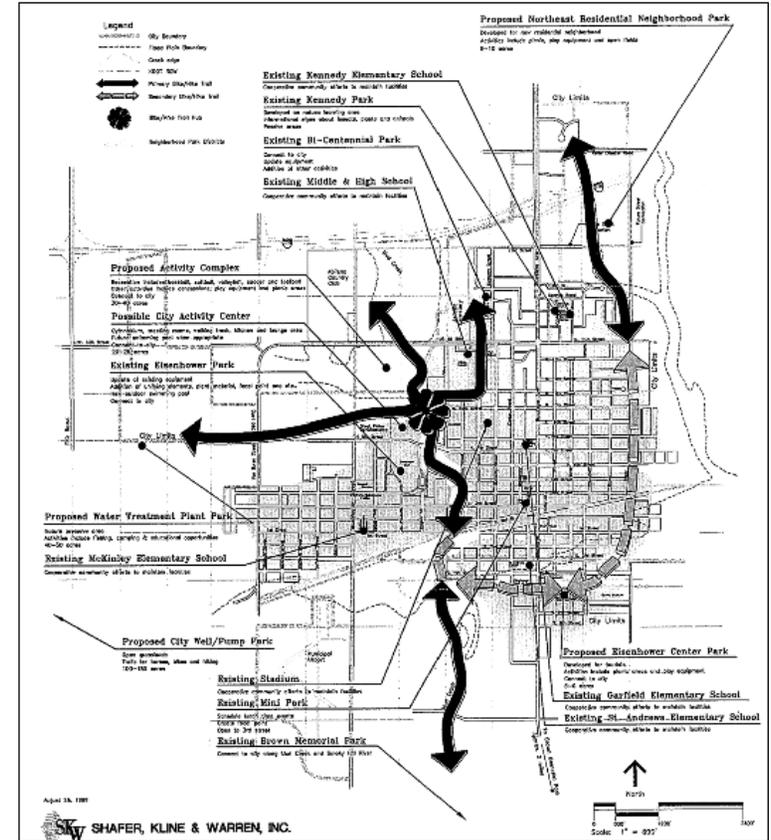
Walkability & Bikeability in Abilene

Abilene has the size, compactness, and grid-type street layout that give it the potential to be a very walkable community. The City also has an extensive network of existing sidewalks, many of them in good repair.

Currently, paths in Abilene are recreational. They are not effectively connected to other community destinations, and so do not function as a transportation option.

- The Memorial Health System Walking Trail is a concrete looped path located just south of the Hospital. It is highly utilized by the community, but there are not yet any sidewalks along adjacent streets, so people have to drive to the Trail in order to walk on it.
- The Iron Horse Trail is an 8-foot wide path next to the train tracks in the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad right of way. The Trail begins at the Dickinson County Heritage Center in Abilene, and is intended to eventually extend about six miles to Enterprise, Kansas. Construction of the Trail began in the summer of 2022, and it is not yet complete.
- There is a looped path around the perimeter of the southern portion of Eisenhower Park, partly gravel and partly concrete sidewalks.
- There is a grass path along the east bank of Mud Creek, extending roughly from 5th Street to 14th Street.

Abilene has long had a goal of making the community safer and more inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists, as shown in this diagram excerpted from the City's 1999 *Parks Master Plan*.



From Abilene's 1999 Parks Master Plan



MHS Walking Trail



Iron Horse Trail



Eisenhower Park path



Sidewalks

Based on comments submitted in response to the 2023 **Community Questionnaire** conducted as part of this planning process, public support for an excellent sidewalk system is apparently very strong in Abilene.

Yet one of the questions on the survey asked how often people actually walked to work or school. Perhaps the question should have been phrased more broadly. The results may indicate a viewpoint that sidewalks in Abilene are considered to be primarily a recreational facility, and not regarded as a serious transportation option.

Does anyone in your household walk to work or school?					
Regularly (4 times/week or more)		Occasionally		Never	
5	5%	25	24%	75	71%

Alternatively, the poor condition of some of Abilene's existing sidewalks may discourage people from walking on them.

Paying for Sidewalks

Since the 1950s, American states and cities have regularly subsidized car usage, while regarding sidewalks as an unnecessary frill. Now that the importance of walkability is being reevaluated, many communities are beginning to treat sidewalks as essential infrastructure, to the same degree as streets.

Currently, there is no national standard for how sidewalk repair and installation projects are paid for, and sidewalk policies show no pattern based on region or party-politics. While public streets and parking areas are regularly funded with tax dollars, sidewalk funding is a patchwork of solutions that varies from city to city.

Some cities maintain the entire public right-of-way, including sidewalks, as a municipal responsibility. Some cities require adjacent homeowners to foot the entire bill for sidewalk repair or installation, under a deadline and the threat of substantial daily fines for non-compliance. Other cities split the difference, with the city at large and the adjacent homeowner each paying a percentage of the cost; the percentages vary from city to city.

Cities that have **adjacent homeowners pay the full cost** for sidewalks are typically trying to keep property taxes down. But when homeowners pay directly for pedestrian infrastructure, there are no economies of scale in the construction or repair of the sidewalk system, significantly increasing its overall cost. This method also costs heavily in staff time for implementation and enforcement, it makes quality control challenging, and it can expose residents to legal liabilities. Also, it inevitably generates ongoing public resentment, often making elected leaders reluctant to have sidewalks installed at all.

Full city funding and **cost-split** programs can both be successful. Deciding which method will work best in Abilene is a matter of both philosophy and financial analysis. If a sidewalk system is a transportation network that benefits the entire community, shouldn't the entire community help pay for it? And, taking staff time into account, which method will be the most cost-effective?

According to responses to the 2023 Community Questionnaire, there is reasonably strong public support in Abilene for a city-wide property tax dedicated to expanding and improving the sidewalk system.

Would you support a special tax paid by property owners to the City, in order to pay for additional sidewalks in Abilene?					
Yes		No		I Don't Know	
51	49%	36	35%	17	16%

Sidewalk Policies

Municipal sidewalk policies should stipulate an ongoing program to properly **maintain existing sidewalks**, provide a means to **retrofit new sidewalks into existing neighborhoods** where they were never built, and address sidewalk construction in **new development and remodeling projects**.

Every sidewalk policy document should incorporate the need for community-wide **ADA compliance**. Accessibility makes the system function better for everybody, and reduces potential liability for the City.

Incorporating **high standards of construction** in a sidewalk policy's design standards will help keep life-cycle costs down, reducing the system's future maintenance load.

Abilene could require that all **municipal street construction projects include new or repaired sidewalks** in their scope. While this will marginally raise the cost of each street project, it generally results in a lower cost-per linear-foot for sidewalks, since the construction crew and equipment are already mobilized and on site. Over the long term, it would save tax dollars.

The City might choose to establish a policy requiring **sidewalks in new residential or commercial developments**. Such a policy may require that sidewalks be paid for as a **developer-funded improvement**, which would not be a competitive disadvantage for the developer, so long as the policy applies to *all* developers. Sidewalks would increase the value of the completed development, an advantage to both the developer and the community.

Sidewalk policies should also establish the **priorities** that will be used to determine which areas of the City get their existing sidewalks repaired first, or new sidewalks installed where there are none. Though some flexibility is essential, strive in general to prioritize urban centers first, then school neighborhoods second, and areas around social service providers third.

Sidewalk Design

Well-designed sidewalks encourage more people to walk—and more pedestrians mean that streets are activated both socially and economically.

Sidewalk design is concerned with elements beyond the dimensions of the concrete strip that people walk on—it deals with the entire area between the street curb and the edge of the right-of-way, and even beyond. For design purposes, this area is generally divided into several zones, each serving a different purpose.

The **pedestrian zone** is the actual pedestrian path—it is what people generally think of, when they think of "sidewalk". The **furnishing zone** is the area between the sidewalk and the street curb. The **frontage zone** is what lies between the sidewalk and adjacent buildings.

The **pedestrian zone** is the sidewalk itself, the route on which people walk. Sidewalks must be clear of all obstacles, from the ground plane up to at least seven feet in height. They should incorporate curb ramps with tactile surfaces, and have slopes and cross-slopes that provide good drainage, yet meet ADA requirements. As a rule, sidewalks should be installed on both sides of a street.

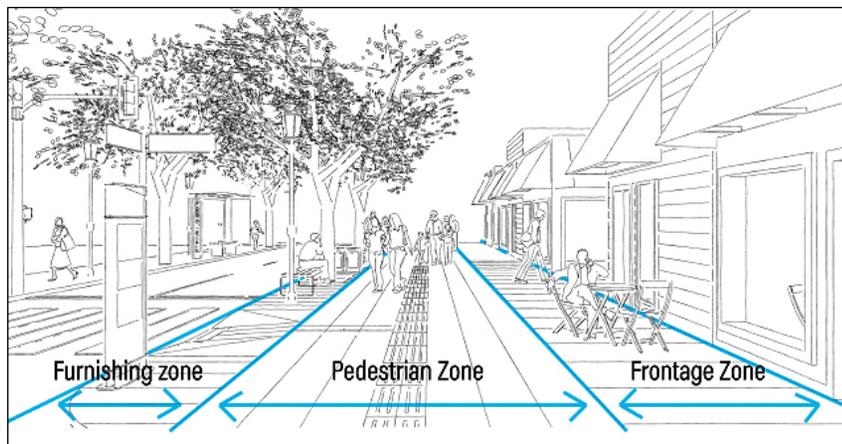
- In residential neighborhoods, the sidewalk is typically a concrete strip, 4 inches thick and at least 5 or 6 feet wide, parallel to the street, and with its outer edge adjacent to the right-of-way boundary.
- In urban areas, the pedestrian zone is typically 8 to 12 feet wide, to accommodate higher volumes of pedestrian traffic. The paving material may extend into adjacent zones, so the pedestrian zone may incorporate joint patterns or ornamental paving to help define its edges.

The **furnishing zone** is the part of the right-of-way between the sidewalk itself and the street curb. It goes by various names, including planting strip and tree lawn.

- In residential neighborhoods, it may contain mostly driveway entries, turf and street trees, along with utility poles, lightpoles, and an occasional traffic sign or fire hydrant.
- In urban areas, it is the place where all the untidy essentials of urban streets are located—including utility poles, traffic signal poles, lightpoles, manholes, street signs, fire hydrants, drainage structures, and so on. It also accommodates driveway entries, trash receptacles, bike racks, landscaping and street trees.

The **frontage zone** is that portion of the sidewalk in urban areas which serves as the transition between the public pedestrian zone and privately-owned building facades. It provides space for people to negotiate building entrances, to socialize without disrupting the flow of those walking, and to window shop.

The frontage zone is intended to accommodate those elements of a streetscape that enliven urban street life—like colorful awnings, benches, planters, sidewalk dining tables, newspaper kiosks, and even sandwich-board signs.



More information on the principles of sidewalk design is widely available, including on the following websites:

- [Designing for Pedestrian Safety / Sidewalk Design](#), a presentation from the Federal Highway Administration's Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.
- [Sidewalk Design Guide](#), from the National Association of City Transportation Officials.
- An overview of [8 Principles to Better Sidewalks](#) on the CityFix website.

GOALS FOR SIDEWALKS

- Incorporate **complete streets** principles in Abilene's rights-of-way, particularly downtown, and in the neighborhoods around schools and the Hospital.
- Determine whether sidewalks in Abilene can be most cost-effectively paid for with **full city funding** or a **cost-split** program.
- Establish **sidewalk policies** for the City of Abilene that will work to improve and expand Abilene's sidewalk system.
- Dedicate an **annual City budget allocation** for sidewalk improvement and expansion projects.
- Begin a program of **repairing existing sidewalks**, as needed, in targeted locations that connect neighborhoods to community destinations, including downtown, schools, parks, and the Hospital.

Bike Lanes & Bike Routes

While sidewalks in Abilene easily have the potential to provide pedestrians with access to neighborhoods and destinations throughout the city, the community's bicycle facilities are currently very limited. Abilene's existing mixed-use paths are in two disconnected segments, and its streets are not currently designed with bicycle use or safety in mind.

In order to create a bikeable network in Abilene, on-street bike lanes and perhaps some bike routes will be essential.

Many city streets have the capacity to safely support bicycle facilities, with minimal redesign. In many cases, new pavement markings and signage may be enough to achieve the transition. Using a careful selection of such existing streets, a bikeable pathway network can be developed that connects neighborhoods to community destinations, and to Abilene's existing mixed-use paths.

Bike Lanes Installed on a street or its shoulder, a bike lane is typically 5 feet wide, and located between a motor vehicle traffic lane and the gutter or road edge. Ideally, bicycle traffic should flow in the same direction as adjacent vehicle traffic, with one bike lane on each side of a two-way street, or one bike lane on the right side of a one-way-street.

Two-way bike lanes may work in some situations, where they can be protected from vehicle traffic by a lane of on-street parallel parking, or by bollards or other physical barriers. When unavoidable, contra-flow bike lanes are occasionally used.



Bike lanes that are defined solely with pavement markings work best on streets with a speed limit lower than 35 miles per hour, low traffic volume, limited truck traffic, and little parking turnover. On streets where such conditions do not apply, more substantial separation is needed between the bike lane and vehicle traffic.

Several strategies are commonly used to **make room for bike lanes on existing streets**. Sometimes a four-lane street is reduced to three lanes (two traffic lanes and a continuous turn lane in the middle). Sometimes an on-street parallel parking lane can be eliminated. In particularly tight rights of way, conversion to a one-way street may allow a traffic lane to be eliminated. With any of these strategies, additional space can be gained simply by narrowing traffic lanes, which is a helpful traffic calming measure in its own right, especially on streets with bicycle lanes.

Bike Routes Designated with "Bike Route" and "Share the Road" signs, and often with pavement markings called sharrows, bike routes are streets specifically intended for simultaneous use by both motor vehicles and bicycles.



Bike route designations are meant to help bicyclists find safer streets, and to remind drivers to give cyclists a little more space when passing. However, bike routes do not increase bicycle use or improve bike safety to the same degree as bike lanes.

While bike lanes identify road space that is reserved for cyclists, bike routes require bicyclists and drivers to *share* the same lane. They only work if drivers are educated to understand what bike route signs mean, and are willing to recognize that bicyclists also have a right to the road.

Because the success of bike routes depends on changing driver attitudes and behavior, they **should never be used in places where it is possible to install bike lanes instead**. Nevertheless, bike routes can still serve an important role, particularly when they are the only available solution to provide a crucial link in a pathway network.

GOALS FOR BIKE LANES & BIKE ROUTES

- Prioritize **ADA accessibility in the vicinity of the Hospital**, with improvements to sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks.
- Prioritize streets with proposed bike lanes, **establishing short-term, mid-term, and long term goals for constructing the bike lane system**.
- Select a pilot project, develop a budget, identify funding, implement a public engagement process, and begin construction of one or two **demonstration bike lanes** in Abilene. Evaluate the process before implementing additional projects.

Mixed-use Paths

Pathways intended for pedestrians and bicyclists that are completely separated from street traffic lanes are called **mixed-use paths**. They may be constructed on public land, in street rights-of-way, on levees, along drainage routes, in abandoned or special-use railroad-right-of-way, or on parkland.

Because they are separated from motor traffic, mixed-use paths are more comfortable for users, and are therefore often used for recreation as much as transportation.

When lightly used, a single paved mixed-use path can safely serve both pedestrians and bicyclists. As use increases, it may become necessary to install pavement markings to separate walkers from cyclists. In places where such paths are very heavily used, they are sometimes doubled, with a dedicated pedestrian path and a dedicated bike path running parallel along the same right-of-way, separated by a landscaped median.



Abilene's primary existing mixed-use path is the Iron Horse Trail. The loop path in Eisenhower Park functions to some degree as a mixed-use path. The Memorial Health System Walking Trail specifically excludes cyclists.

GOAL FOR MIXED-USE PATH

- Improve and extend the mixed-use path along Mud Creek.

Proposed Bike Lane System Diagram

Today, active transportation options have become a much higher priority for many communities—because quality of life is now recognized as a crucial economic driver, walkability is known as a key factor in community health, and the need to reduce our carbon footprint has become critical.

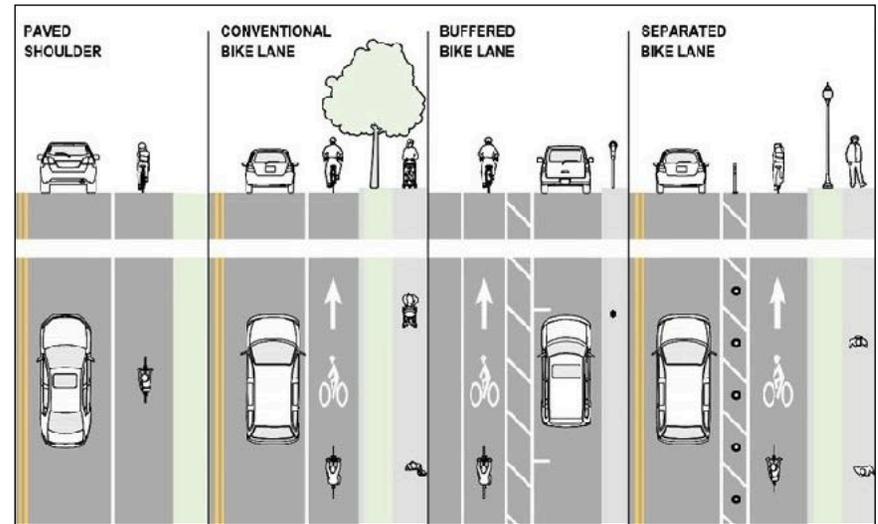
Abilene's streets typically have rights-of-way that are not as wide as is often the case with more recently platted streets, and the city's existing rights-of-way are generally heavily built up. This makes the addition of **bike paths** somewhat problematic.

However, many of Abilene's streets have sufficient paved width to allow for the addition of **bike lanes**, with no significant compromise to vehicular traffic flow. This includes Buckeye Avenue in much of the City. Given that Buckeye is also state highway K-15, such changes would, of course, require KDOT's support and cooperation.

Reducing Buckeye to three lanes—one through lane each way, a continuous turn lane, and a one-way bike lane on each side—would help slow traffic down closer to the actual speed limit, and would allow safer pedestrian connections between the east and west sides of K-15 by shortening crosswalks.

The diagram on the following page shows a proposed bike lane network which could be pursued during the 22-year span of this Plan. Proposed routes are intended to connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, community destinations such as the Library and the Post Office, tourist destinations, and the Hospital.

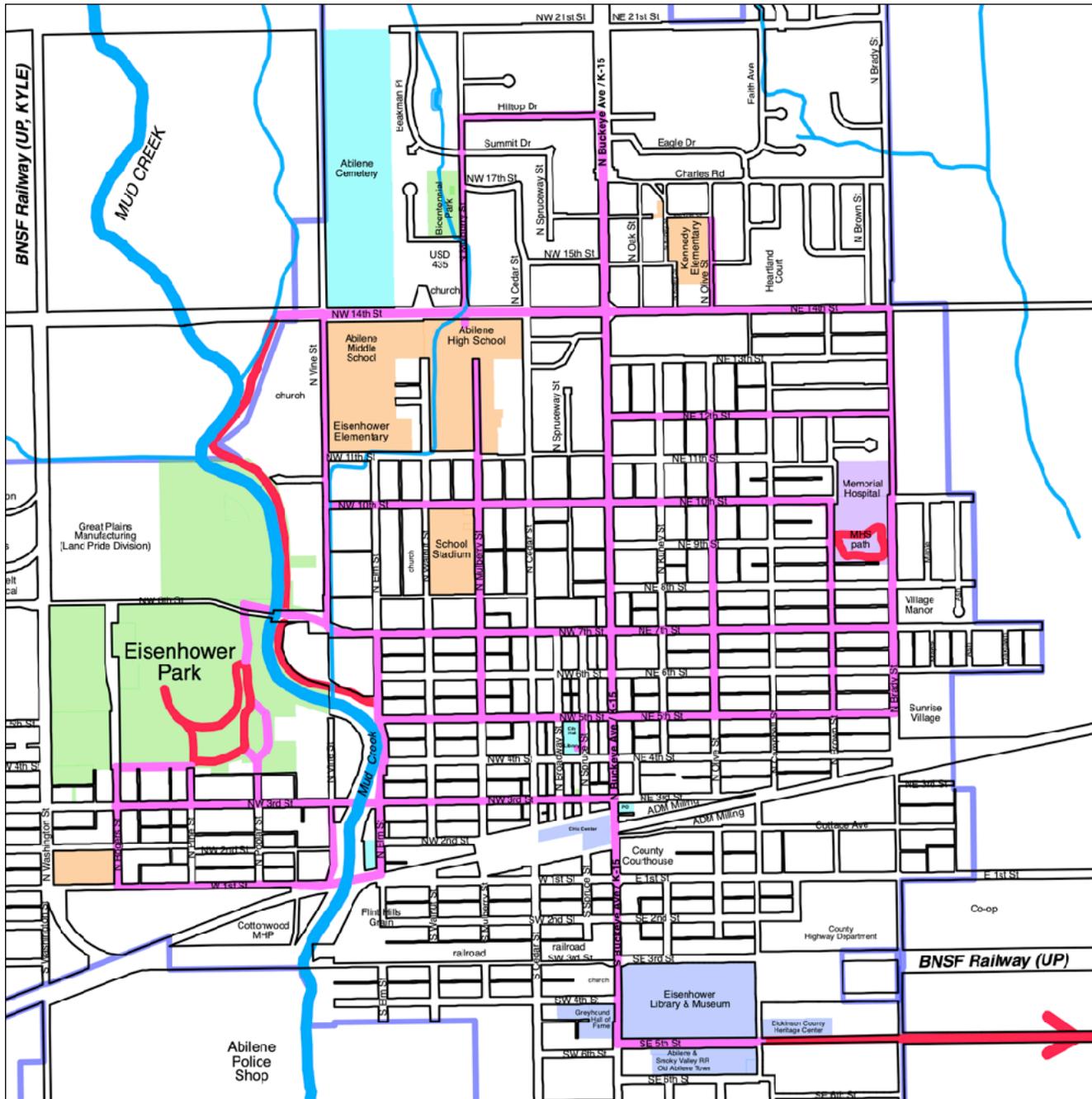
It will take some time—and resources, and patience, and persistence—for the City to complete the bike lane network described in this diagram. In the meantime, **every planning decision should be made with an eye toward supporting the future development of such a bicycling network.**



Potential lane configuration for Buckeye Avenue

Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045

Overview of Proposed Bike Lane Network in Abilene



KEY

- █ Existing Path
- █ Proposed Bike Lanes
- Parks
- Schools
- Hospital
- Destinations
- Tourist Attraction

CHAPTER 6. Plan Implementation

This *Abilene Park System Master Plan* is a tool for use by Abilene's community leaders. It can:

- Provide baseline data on existing parks facilities.
- Offer direction for City officials and staff as they develop future parks facilities.
- Communicate Abilene's parks development plans to the community.
- Expand funding opportunities, since many grants require a master plan as a prerequisite.
- Help meet Abilene's community planning goals.

At the heart of this Plan are its goals – goals which express the needs and wishes of this community for the future of Abilene's park system. But goals are just dreams on paper until they are actually implemented. Goals will become reality only with **organization and leadership** from City staff and civic leaders.

As each goal is addressed, an action program will need to be developed for its implementation. An **action program** is a way to make sure that goals turn into reality, by describing specific tasks that must be achieved in order to reach each goal. To be effective, an action program must include clear-cut implementation information for each goal:

- **Define the tasks** necessary to achieve the goal.
- **Determine who is responsible** for making sure each task is achieved.
- Set a **schedule** and a **deadline**.
- **Assign resources** (funding, staff, equipment, etc.) sufficient to achieve each task.
- **Establish communication hierarchies** (Who needs to know what, when?).

Adoption & Amendments

The first step in implementation of this *Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045* is for the City Commission to approve and adopt it. Proposals to update or revise the Plan may originate from City staff, the Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, or the Governing Body. Proposed revisions must be reviewed by the Recreation Commission, which then makes a recommendation to the City Commission, which makes the final decision on approval.

The *Park System Master Plan* was developed simultaneously with an update to Abilene's Comprehensive Plan, but it is **not intended to be adopted as an element of the *Comprehensive Plan***. Instead, it should be adopted by the Governing Body as an independent City policy document. This will allow more flexibility in the implementation of the Parks Plan, since updates and revisions will not need to follow the detailed and statutorily-regulated process that is required for any change at all to a Comprehensive Plan or its elements.

Annual Review

The *Abilene Park System Master Plan* should be reviewed annually—first by City staff, then by the Recreation Commission. Schedule the annual review for the same month each year, ideally in early winter, if Recreation Commission agendas allow.

An annual review can identify which projects have been completed, which are underway, and which are next up for implementation—a yearly reminder of progress that helps to keep the whole process of plan implementation on track.

Each yearly review should reassess project priorities. Factors such as funding availability, site constraints, or phasing considerations will affect the details of implementation over the course of the next 22 years – yet so long as the fundamental intent is achieved, this *Master Plan* will have served its primary purpose.

Priorities

In this Master Plan, concept plans for each park provide an overview of projects which might be developed in Abilene's park system. When a number of major projects are proposed, prioritizing them over time helps to spread out the costs, and maintain a sustainable rate of investment in the park system.

City leaders, utilizing their knowledge and understanding of the public interest in the community, will decide the order in which these projects are developed.

Priorities will be determined by fulfilling highest community needs first, as well as on budget availability and practical sequencing requirements. Priorities may be applied both to development within each park, and to each park in relation to the others.

Priorities for a 22-year plan are typically categorized as:

- **Short-term** – within 5 years
- **Mid-term** – 5 to 10 years
- **Long-term** – 10 to 22 years

Priorities will undoubtedly be revised and adapted over the course of this Master Plan's implementation, reflecting changing community expectations, and changes in opportunities and constraints that will occur over the next two decades. Such revisions are normal and expected, and should cause no problems so long as they are based on a solid understanding of how the various parks and park facilities balance each other within the system as a whole.

Staffing & Operations

Selecting parks facilities that require less staff time, in management or in maintenance, contributes to the economic viability of the park system. Investing in good design and high quality materials results in long-term maintenance savings.

As each project approaches implementation, staff time will have to be dedicated to **project design**, as staff members help to make decisions on scope and materials—a necessary precursor for development of accurate budget projections. Later, when a project is built, staff will have to be involved in **construction supervision**.

Many of the goals listed in this Plan will not notably increase ongoing operational responsibilities. However, some proposed facilities will likely require additional staff and operational funding, a factor which must be taken into account when budgeting for new development.

Funding

Funding the development and operation of a park system is a challenge for every community, for parks must compete for City dollars with other public needs. But parks are worthy of support, and will return value on investment for the community.

The Abilene park and recreation system has many demands on its resources. Existing facilities must be well maintained, and new facilities should be periodically developed to continue fulfilling patrons' highest priority interests. The cost of the park system must remain within a budget that respects not only capital costs and program expenditures, but also ongoing maintenance and staffing requirements. The park system should have enough land to meet current open space requirements, as well as the financial ability to make property acquisitions to answer future needs.

Public funding sources may include local capital improvement funds, bond referendums, or state and federal grant programs. Federal and state grants are often matching grant programs, and require partial local funding of each project. Park systems may also be able to generate income through facilities rental, naming programs, or other entrepreneurial activities.

Private Funding Sources

Parks have an advantage over most other public services—they can and do compete successfully for private funding. While most people are not inclined to donate to a government, many will happily support public parks through a nonprofit organization.

Private funding sources may include grants from foundations, land acquisition with the help of land trusts, or corporate sponsorships for projects or special events.

- [KABOOM!](#) is a national nonprofit that can help fund community-build multigenerational playgrounds in neighborhoods facing disinvestment.

Dedicating some staff time or hiring a professional grant writer to produce grant proposals can produce significant financial benefits for the parks system. While some grants are available only to governmental entities, others are available exclusively to private nonprofits—so having a strong and active partnership between the City and a local parks support nonprofit organization offers access to the greatest range of potential funding opportunities.

Other partnerships—with the County, the School District, the Recreation Commission, the Community Foundation, the corporate community, developers, nonprofit organizations, and community volunteers—may enable other funding options.

Volunteers

Dedicating some staff time to providing support and liaison with a parks volunteer nonprofit organization can result in donated work-hours, positive financial benefits for parks projects and programs, expanded grant opportunities, and increased community involvement and public support for the park system.

For information on developing volunteer organizations, see:

- [The Nature of Cities / Opportunities and Challenges in Working with Volunteers in Local Parks.](#)
- [The National Association of Park Foundations.](#)
- [National Recreation and Park Association / Park Advocate Handbook.](#)
- [Arbor Day Foundation –Alliance for Community Trees](#)

Information Resources

As each park development project in Abilene is implemented, more detailed and current information on the value of parks may be needed to encourage public support for the project. A variety of information resources, particularly from the Trust for Public Land, offer helpful background information and parks data.

- [City Parks Alliance / Active Parks, Healthy Cities](#)
- [Trust for Public Land](#)
- [Project for Public Spaces / Parks](#)

CHAPTER 7. Abilene's Parks Planning Goals

This chapter provides an overview of Abilene's **parks planning goals**. It is a compilation of the detailed goals incorporated throughout this *Park System Master Plan*, intended to serve as an aid to the City leaders and municipal staff who will be primarily responsible for seeing that these goals are implemented.

Abilene's park system should be both environmentally and economically sustainable, enhance residents' health and social connections, be accessible to all, reflect Abilene's character and identity, and contribute to the community's quality of life. When choices must be made among the many goals mentioned in this Plan, the available options should each be assessed based on how well they contribute to these overarching goals.

Goals are categorized under the following headings:

- Park System
- Environmental Sustainability
- Community Health
- Accessibility
- Furnishings & Lighting
- Signage
- Park Landscaping
- Pocket Park
- Little Ike Park
- Bicentennial Park
- Eisenhower Park / Community Center Sector
- Eisenhower Park / Municipal Park Sector
- Eisenhower Park / Fairgrounds Facilities
- Parkland
- Sidewalks
- Bike Lanes, Bike Routes & Paths

GOALS – PARK SYSTEM

- Enhance Abilene's **quality of life**.
- Support **health and wellness** for people of all ages and all abilities, providing opportunities for both social connections and physical exercise.
- Strengthen **community pride** and Abilene's **sense of identity**, by being a place for both small daily pleasures, and major community-wide celebrations.
- Improve **walkability and connectivity** in the city.
- Provide spaces where native plants and animals can thrive, and where people can appreciate **nature**.
- Make Abilene's park system **accessible**, and ADA compliant.

GOALS – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Reduce the use of non-native trees, shrubs, and turf in parks, utilizing **native plants** instead where it is possible to do so while maintaining compatibility with the characteristics of surrounding neighborhoods. Dedicate some areas to native grasses and wildflowers for **butterfly gardens**.
- Where appropriate, consider incorporating **permeable pavements, raingardens, bioswales or retention ponds** into the park system, both to aid in handling stormwater runoff, and to act as demonstration projects to inform residents about green infrastructure solutions.

GOALS – COMMUNITY HEALTH

- Add **walking path loops** to every park where they are feasible.
- Offer other **on-demand opportunities for exercise**. Encourage special-use parks such as dog parks or outdoor fitness zones, that encourage frequent use and enhance social connections.
- Add **multigenerational playgrounds** to every park possible.
- Add **game tables** to parks, wherever appropriate.
- Include **shade** and **drinking fountains** near all active park facilities.
- **Market** park and recreation programs with banners, posters and signs, and via social media.
- Design park programs specifically to **encourage more girls to participate**.
- **Help people to notice and understand nature** in parks. This could be something as simple as a patch of milkweed along a path and some information on Monarch butterflies, or a sign alerting people to listen for woodpeckers in an area where they can often be heard.

GOALS – ACCESSIBILITY

- Every park should, at minimum, have ADA parking and an accessible path to an accessible picnic table.
- Develop and implement a **Park System Accessibility Plan**.

GOALS – FURNISHINGS & LIGHTING

- Develop an identity for the park system as a whole, with a consistent colors and materials palette, signage system, and landscaping theme that reflect and reinforce Abilene's character.
- Select **LED full-cutoff luminaires** for future use in the parks.
- Select a **park system bike rack design**, and install racks at destinations in every park.

GOAL – SIGNAGE

- Establish a **balanced signage system** that uses all four categories of signs, as appropriate, in designs that coordinate with each other.
Locate each sign precisely where appropriate and necessary. **Avoid unnecessary signs**, both to prevent clutter, and to enhance the impact of the signs that *are* needed.

GOALS – PARK LANDSCAPING

- Use **ornamental grasses and native wildflowers in landscapes** as settings for park identification signs.
- Continue to promptly remove and properly dispose of **pine trees** as they succumb to pine wilt and/or pine tip moth, and **ash trees** infested with emerald ash borer.
- Develop a **list of acceptable tree species and varieties** to be planted in the parks. Begin with varieties recommended by the [Kansas Forest Service](#).
- Consider instituting a **municipal tree farm**. A **tree spade** will be needed when trees are ready to transplant.
- Purchase a **Stump Grinder** for City use.
- **Plant replacement trees** in the parks *before* old trees have to be removed.
- When an appropriate opportunity presents, especially in lower-traffic turf areas, **replace bermudagrass with buffalograss**.
- Institute an **ongoing weed control program**, especially for **poison ivy, sandburs, and stickyweed** near paths and picnic areas in the parks.

GOALS – POCKET PARK

- Pursue a **lot split** to restore the south end of the Pocket Park property to 16th Street right-of-way.
- Connect **16th Street** between Kuney and Oak Streets.
- Remove existing playground equipment, and **sell** the balance of the parcel as a residential lot.

GOALS – LITTLE IKE PARK

- Continue to **maintain** Little Ike Park at its current level of excellence.
- Maintain a regular annual spray program to treat the Spruce tree for **bagworms**.
- Continue to **improve the adjacent parking lot** north of the Park, so it can work as an extension of the Park during events, and continue to serve as public parking during work weeks.
Use the **same materials palette as in the Park**, keeping the parking lot improvements in character with the Park.
- Add the **World's Biggest "I Like Ike" Campaign Button** at the northeast corner of the parking lot, as a visitor attraction.
- Add a small **Stage** to the northwest corner of the parking lot, to host performances during events.

GOALS – BICENTENNIAL PARK

- Improve the **lighting** in the **Restroom**.
- Update the **Restroom**.
- **Consolidate play equipment** into just one or two areas, and fit them with ADA accessible **poured in place safety surfacing**. Start with the area around the existing multi-component play structure.
- Add four to eight **outdoor Pickleball Courts** in the northeast part of the Park, depending on demand.
- Add **parking off Mulberry Street** to serve venues in the north end of the Park—either diagonal parking along the street, or a small on-site lot.
- Add a **concrete looped walking path**, preferably six to eight feet wide, that also functions as an **accessible route** linking all accessible park venues to handicap parking stalls in both parking lots.
- If drainage patterns and stormwater management calculations indicate that a **retention pond** would be useful to construct somewhere along this channel, examine the possibility of adding it to this Park.

GOALS – EISENHOWER PARK / COMMUNITY CENTER SECTOR

- Build a **Phase 1 addition** on the north side of the Community Center building, including an improved Indoor Walking Path, additional exercise rooms (especially for gymnastics and tumbling), and possibly an additional gymnasium with more space for indoor Pickleball courts.
- Build a **Phase 2 addition** on the west side of the Community Center building, with an indoor swimming pool.
- Expand and improve the two existing Youth **Ball Diamonds** to accommodate High School baseball, and include Soccer Practice Fields in the outfields.
- Construct two or perhaps three new **Little League Diamonds** on the north end of the site.
- Add **parking lots** farther north on the site, to serve the new facilities.
- Construct a small freestanding **Restroom/Concessions building** to serve the ball diamond complex.
- Consider adding a small **Playground** with nearby shaded seating, near the ball diamond complex.
- Add a **Donations Map** in the Community Center lobby, showing locations of donated facilities and furnishings in Abilene's Parks.
- Improve the existing gravel path along the east bank of Mud Creek, creating a concrete **Bike & Pedestrian Path**.
- Install a **backup generator** to serve the Community Center.
- Later in the Planning Period, prepare for replacement of the Community Center's **heating and air conditioning units**.

GOALS – EISENHOWER PARK / MUNICIPAL PARK SECTOR

- **Rose Garden:** Create a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition when the current head gardener eventually retires, and a new head gardener must be found.
- **Pool:** The tree immediately southwest of the Pool House has become a hazard, and should be removed as soon as possible.
- **Pool:** Add at least one **shade structure** on the pool deck. Consider **fabric structures** as an option, since they can actually reduce the temperature beneath them.
- **Pool:** Add a safe **drop-off zone** near the Pool House entrance.
- **Skatepark:** Consider rearranging the prefabricated Skatepark ramps every few years, in order to present new challenges for users.
- **Cornhole Courts:** Expand the number of Cornhole Courts as necessary to meet demand.
- **Pickleball:** If demand continues to expand, consider adding dedicated outdoor Pickleball Courts to Eisenhower Park, perhaps in some of the space opened up when scattered Play Equipment is relocated to more compact playgrounds.
- **Eliminate the Sand Volleyball Courts.**
- Consider replacing the Volleyball Courts with a **Splashpad**.
- Update the **Restrooms**.
- Consolidate scattered play equipment into more **compact play areas** that have **poured-in-place safety surfacing** and **shade structures**.
- Consider relocating some of the older play equipment into a consolidated **Vintage Playground**.
- Incorporate some new play elements that are **accessible**, and meet ADA requirements.
- Incorporate some new **intergenerational play elements**.
- Add some **outdoor exercise equipment** for adults at some playgrounds.
- Create a **nature play** playground.
- Upgrade or replace some of the older **Picnic Shelters**.
- Add **interpretive signage** explaining the historic WPA origins of the Park.
- Renovate the historic Restroom as an **Interpretive Center**.
- Improve the **perimeter Path**, making it an **ADA accessible route**. Add **bistro table seating areas** along the path. In appropriate locations along the path, provide **trash receptacles**, including **dog waste stations**.

GOALS – EISENHOWER PARK / FAIRGROUNDS FACILITIES

- **Make a plan to update the entire complex of Livestock Barns and Show Rings**, including a vehicle and pedestrian circulation network.
- Update the **Stadium Press Stand**.
- Update the **Stadium restrooms and showers**.
- **Make a plan to update the entire Concessions complex**, with better pedestrian access, and **ample shaded tables and seating nearby**. Consider the possibility that a **different location** may be better, and that **food trucks** may be a big part of future concessions operations. Explore the possibility of bringing concessions at the Fair under the **management** of either the CKFFA or the City.
- Repair sunken concrete sidewalks and ramps at the **Royer Bandshell**.
- Make a deliberated decision about whether the **tanks and artillery piece** should continue to be maintained, or should be removed from the Park as a liability risk for the City. Consider the possibility of relocating them to the National Guard building site, if they want them.
- **Remove the Gravette Ball Diamonds**, and return that land to use as **parking** for Stadium events. When regrading after demolition, add **rain gardens or other green infrastructure elements** to address chronic drainage problems. Add **interpretive signs** to teach people about green infrastructure.
- **Remove the Baseball Diamond** in the southwest corner of Eisenhower Park.
- Discuss potential renovations of **Sterl Hall** with Dickinson County.
- **Update the cooperation Agreement** between the City of Abilene and the CKFFA Board.

GOALS – PARKLAND

- Pursue the possibility of a **land swap**, transferring title of the Park Shop site to the City, while transferring title to the CKFFA of an equivalent amount of land that is immediately adjacent to the CKFFA's northern parcel.
- Determine whether a new **baseball** facility should be designed to host **tournaments or not**.
- Search for an appropriate site and **purchase land for a new Baseball Park**, possibly on the west side. Try to find a site that would allow local kids to bike to the ball fields for practice. If the decision is made to build a tournament facility, consider land near one of the I-70 interchanges as a potential location.
- Design and **construct a new baseball facility** in the new Park. Include diamonds designed for High School and adult play, ample parking, modern Restrooms and Concessions, a well equipped Press Box, and comfortable seating for fans.
- **Acquire a minimum 5 acres of new parkland** which meets the criteria for a **Dog Park**.
- Design & construct a **new Dog Park** in Abilene.
- Establish a **volunteer Dog Park support organization** to sponsor programs and special events, and raise funds for additional amenities.
- Acquire about **four to five acres of land for a Neighborhood Park on the east side of town**, possibly along a stream for a linear park with a pathway. Alternatively, acquire about nine or ten acres of land for a **Dog Park and a Neighborhood Park combined**.
- When seeking property with additional **water rights** for the City, seek land that could also serve as a **nature park**.

GOALS FOR SIDEWALKS

- Incorporate **complete streets** principles in Abilene's rights-of-way, particularly downtown, and in the neighborhoods around schools and the Hospital.
- Determine whether sidewalks in Abilene can be most cost-effectively paid for with **full city funding** or a **cost-split** program.
- Establish **sidewalk policies** for the City of Abilene that will work to improve and expand Abilene's sidewalk system.
- Dedicate an **annual City budget allocation** for sidewalk improvement and expansion projects.
- Begin a program of **repairing existing sidewalks**, as needed, in targeted locations that connect neighborhoods to community destinations, including downtown, schools, parks, and the Hospital.

GOALS FOR BIKE LANES, BIKE ROUTES & PATHS

- Prioritize **ADA accessibility in the vicinity of the Hospital**, with improvements to sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks.
- Prioritize streets with proposed bike lanes, **establishing short-term, mid-term, and long term goals for constructing the bike lane system.**
- Select a pilot project, develop a budget, identify funding, implement a public engagement process, and begin construction of one or two **demonstration bike lanes** in Abilene. Evaluate the process before implementing additional projects.
- Improve and extend the **mixed-use path** along Mud Creek.