

Acacia Ridge Park Development Plan

9251 Watts Road

City of Madison Parks Division

Madison, WI



play
**MADISON
PARKS**

Board of Park Commissioners
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Prepared by the City of Madison Parks Division

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INTRODUCTION

Acacia Ridge Park is a 10.21-acre park located on the far west side of Madison, located at 9251 Watts Road, and was acquired by the City of Madison Parks Division in 2019. Following the National Recreation and Parks Association recommendations, Acacia Ridge Park is classified as a neighborhood park and has a service area of 1/2 mile. The nearest developed parks to this location are Cardinal Glenn, Sugar Maple, and Thousand Oaks. Sunshine Ridge and Old Timber Parks are also near Acacia Ridge Park, but at this time are undeveloped. See Adjacent Parks Map (Exhibit 1).

It is the intention of the Parks Division that this area's parks and amenities act as a cohesive system in order to maximize recreational potential. Therefore, in an effort to address the greater far west planning area as a whole, three undeveloped parks were included in this development planning process, including: Acacia Ridge, Sunshine Ridge, and Old Timber Parks. These parks underwent the site inventory and analysis and public input process as a group; however each has a separate development plan document and corresponding report.

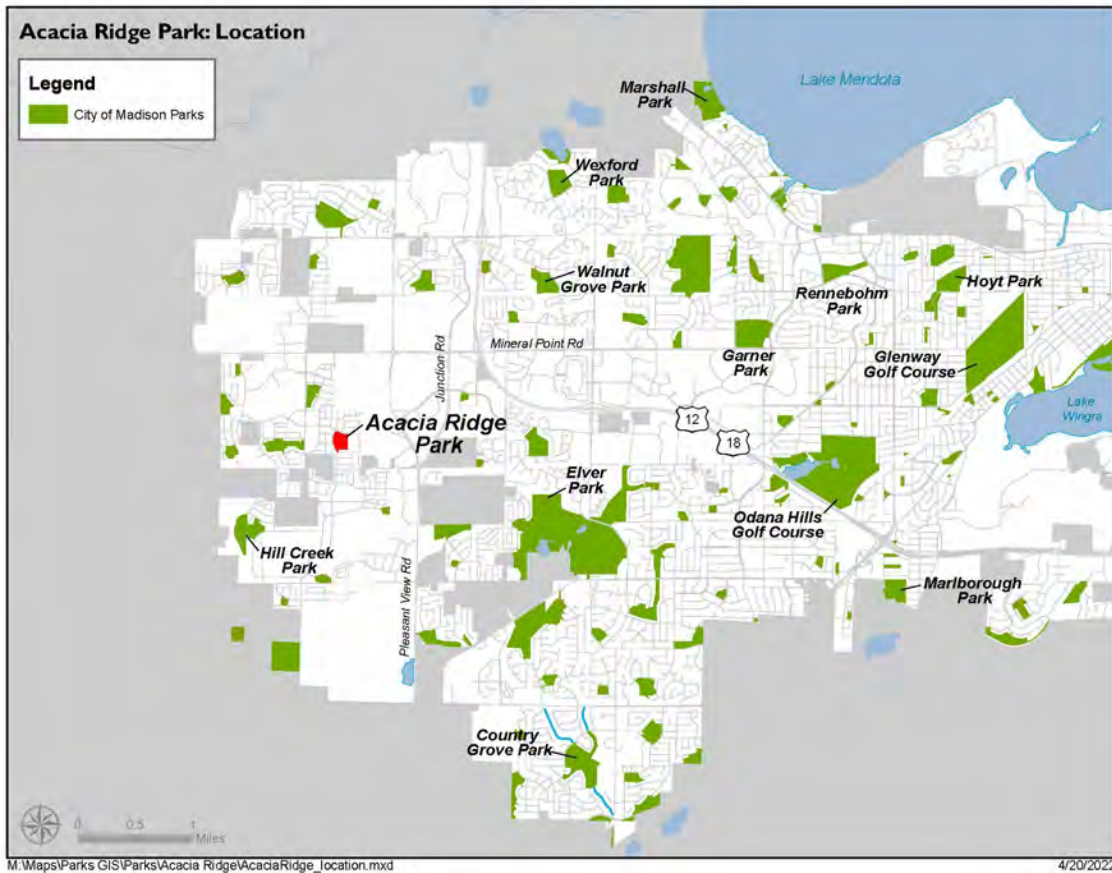


Photo: Location of Acacia Ridge Park

HISTORY

The parcel for Acacia Ridge Park has extensive history as agricultural property. In the year 2019, this parcel was dedicated as public parkland in Outlot 20 as part of the Acacia Ridge development (see Exhibit 2). Acacia Ridge Park and the surrounding neighborhood are part of the Pioneer Neighborhood Development Plan (see Exhibit 3).

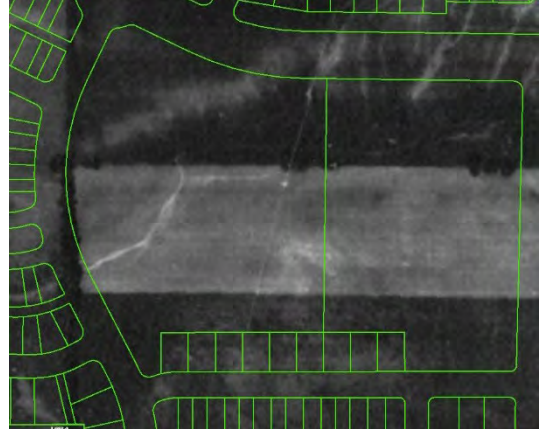


Photo: Aerial view of Acacia Ridge Park, circa 1937



Photo: Aerial view of Acacia Ridge Park, circa 2020.

EXISTING PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Pioneer Neighborhood Development Plan contains general recommendations for park acreage and location for this area, including for Acacia Ridge, Sunshine Ridge, and Old Timber Park. However, as an undeveloped park, and a relatively new acquisition, Acacia Ridge Park has not previously undergone any planning processes by the Parks Division.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Acacia Ridge Park consists of 10.21 acres of abandoned agricultural crop field. The parcel slopes downwards from the east to the west, with steeper slopes along the western boundary, which can be seen on the Topography Map (see Exhibit 4). A majority of the park area features slopes between 1-5% as shown in the Slope Analysis Map (see Exhibit 5).

The dominant soils on site are Troxel and Plano Silt Loams; typical characteristics of these soils include 0-6% slopes and a well-drained profile.

A vegetation survey was not undertaken, as the few existing deciduous trees were removed during mass grading of the parcel.

CURRENT USES AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

As an undeveloped park, Acacia Ridge Park offers no formal amenities. The parcel is open to the public for unprogrammed activities.

There are no current maintenance practices at the time of the writing of this report.

PARK NAMING PROCESS

Park parcels receive “working names” when the City of Madison becomes the owner of the land. The names for the three parks involved in this development planning process, Acacia Ridge, Acer (now Sunshine Ridge), and Birchwood South (now Old Timber), are examples of working names. The Parks Division presented the official park naming policy and process to the public during both public meetings, and invited suggestions for new park names to be submitted through the community survey. At the second public input meeting, Parks staff polled participants on which new, official name they preferred. The Long Range Planning Committee then reviewed these names, which were adopted at the December 2022 Board of Park Commissioners meeting.

Acacia Ridge Park received no suggestions for a new name, and so the official name shall remain the same.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCESS AND PUBLIC INPUT

The development plan process included public input meetings (PIM), a community survey, and review by the Board of Park Commissioners, which is consistent with the adopted [Park Master Plan Policy](#).

Public Input Meeting #1

The first public input meeting (PIM) was held on June 23, 2022 and was advertised with signs placed in the park, postcards sent to residents within a 1/2 mile radius of the park, email notifications sent to the alder and Cardinal Glenn and Birchwood Oaks neighborhood associations, social media posts, and on the Parks Project webpage. The public input meeting provided history, background, and context for the sites and elicited neighborhood input on the park and potential amenities. This meeting was recorded and, along with a PDF version of the presentation, made available on the Park Project webpage.

Online Community Survey

To gather additional feedback, a community survey was created to gauge the desire for specific amenities that are typically offered within neighborhood parks while also identifying seasonal usage patterns and demographic information. A additional section was designed to elicit feedback and ideas regarding the names of the parks involved in this development planning effort. This survey was made available online and garnered 146 individual responses. The results of the survey were then compiled; these results can be seen in Exhibit 6.

Neighborhood Association Meeting

Representatives from the Cardinal Glenn and Birchwood Oaks neighborhood associations also independently gathered feedback, and met with Parks staff on August 1, 2022 to discuss their findings in relation to the draft development plans.

Public Input Meeting #2

After analyzing the input received at the first public information meeting, through the community survey, and from the neighborhood associations, two development design concepts were created. These development plans were provided for the community to review at a second public input meeting which was held on August 11, 2022. The second meeting was advertised with signs placed in the park, email notifications sent to the alder and Cardinal Glenn and Birchwood Oaks neighborhood associations, email notifications to those who attended the previous PIM, social media posts, and on the Parks Project webpage. The majority of attendees expressed a preference for the final proposed development plan for Acacia Ridge Park. This meeting was also recorded and made available on the Project webpage. The presentations provided at both public input meetings can be seen in Exhibit 7.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

For all three parks the top desired amenities identified through the development planning process were hiking/walking paths, sun/picnic shelters, off-leash dog areas, and preservation of the existing natural areas. Overall, there was strong representation and support for the broader themes of socializing, nature, shade, connectivity (in particular for pedestrians and bicyclists), variety (in terms of recreational opportunities), and canine access. The proposed park development plan for Acacia Ridge Park (see Exhibit 8) took into consideration the topography, existing vegetation, and public input received by Parks staff.

Native Vegetation

The development plan includes the addition of “no-mow” vegetation areas along the south and west boundaries of the park. Parks staff received several comments supporting the reintroduction of native vegetation in the park, as neighbors were in support of providing resources for wildlife and minimizing mowing. Additionally, over 82% of survey responses indicated natural areas as fairly or very important. The native vegetation also provides a buffer between residential lots and park users, and provides additional interest for the proposed off-road recreational biking.

Off-Road Recreational Biking (Single Track Bike Facility)

With a narrow traffic corridor and minimal impact on the surrounding landscape, single track offers unpaved, one-way trails for non-motorized bicycles to traverse. Often, single tracks will take advantage of topography changes and add obstacles to introduce differing levels of challenges. The conceptual single track shown on the development plan will travel around the edges of Acacia Ridge Park, meandering through the native vegetation and steeper topography in the south west corner. The exact alignment of the single track path will be determined at a later date.

Sun Shelter

An open-sided sun shelter with picnic tables is included in the proposed development plan. The new shelter will be located near the Community Recreation Area in the north-west corner of the park, affording neighbors a shaded seating area from which to supervise children and a space to hold informal gatherings (a feature currently lacking in the neighborhood per public input responses). In the community survey, over 80% of the respondents thought a sun shelter was fairly or very important to include in the development plan.

Community Recreation Area

The overarching goal of the Community Recreation Area is to provide the neighborhood with a space which supports gathering and socialization. The Parks Division intends to achieve this goal at Acacia Ridge Park by providing amenities such as lawn games (bag toss, ladder golf, etc.) and a bicycle play feature for younger children. These amenities would complement the proposed single track and

sun shelter, and provide neighbors with a more comprehensive recreation experience which is appealing to a wide range of ages.

Adult Soccer Field

In response to a lack of field sport amenities on the far west side, as well as the anticipated construction of a Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) facility immediately adjacent to Acacia Ridge Park, a proposed adult soccer field was included in the development plan. Several other existing City of Madison parks are located adjacent to school facilities, for example Elvehjem Elementary and Monona High School, and due to the limited size of the MMSD parcels these schools have come to rely, at least in part, on park property to meet their recreation needs. This adult soccer field area may be left unstriped or is large enough to be striped in a variety of formats, providing a flexible response to the needs of the school and of the neighborhood.

Baseball/Softball Backstop

Similar to the adult soccer field, a backstop is proposed in order to provide the neighborhood with a space for pickup games and to help meet the recreation needs of the anticipated MMSD facility. Approximately 16% of survey responses indicated a backstop as a fairly or very important amenity to provide at Acacia Ridge Park. However, due to the potential recreational benefits of a backstop, combined with the reasonable initial investment, limited need for ongoing maintenance, and lack of conflict with other park uses, Parks staff have included a backstop in this development plan.