



SECTION 8

PARKS & RECREATION

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PARKS & RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

Providing well-maintained parks and public green spaces and a broad variety of programmed recreational opportunities for residents contributes to a high quality of life in the City of Gretna. Parks and recreational offerings provide economic, environmental, health, safety, and aesthetic benefits. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, “benefits include attracting and retaining residents, promoting community engagement and positive youth development, encouraging physical fitness and active living, increasing nearby property values, creating spaces for biodiversity and important natural functions, and providing safe, natural buffer areas.” Gretna provides a number of recreational options for its residents, including playgrounds, public green spaces, sports fields, and community centers. Gretna’s public open spaces are managed and maintained by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department.

The Parks and Recreation Element documents existing parks and open space, as well as programmed recreational options for Gretna’s residents. It evaluates existing facilities in regards to the community’s recreational needs, and explores possible options for improvement of the City’s recreational offerings.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY

The City of Gretna provides and maintains approximately 150 acres of public open space, serving 17,800 residents. This accounts for a level of service of 8.4 acres per 1,000 residents. Gretna’s public green spaces are distributed throughout the City and include active and passive open spaces in a variety of sizes. Most residential neighborhoods feature a neighborhood or pocket park, with a children’s playground or play fields, within walking distance for residents. In addition, City Park, Mel Ott Park, and Huey P. Long Park are the City’s community parks, which serve the entire population of Gretna. These parks offer a greater variety of active and passive recreation options. [Table 8.1](#) lists the public open spaces with total acreage and categorizes them by open space type.

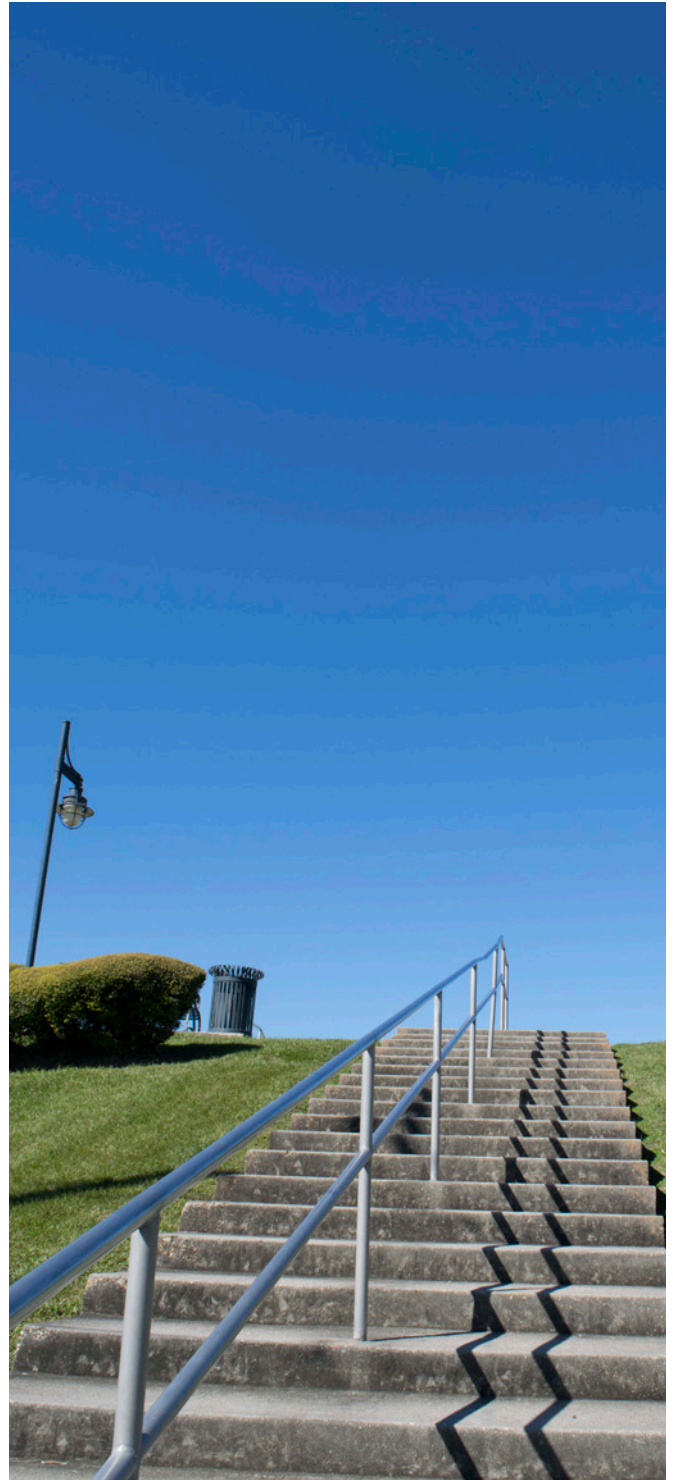




Figure 8.1: City of Gretna, Parks, Open Space, & Bike Infrastructure

Table 8.1: Gretna Open Space			
Name	Open Space Type	Area Acres	% of Total
15th Street Cemetery	Cemetery	0.2	0.07%
23rd Street Park	Pocket Park: Playground	0.2	0.05%
Bellevue Park	Neighborhood Park: Recreational	3.3	1.07%
Centennial Park	Pocket Park: Recreational	1.5	0.49%
Gretna City Park	Community Park	94.1	30.58%
Hamilton Street Park	Pocket Park: Recreational	0.3	0.09%
Hook and Ladder Cemetery	Cemetery	2.8	0.91%
Huey P. Long Neutral Ground	Pocket Park: Recreational	2.7	0.87%
Huey P. Long Park	Neighborhood Park	4.2	1.36%
J.B. Spencer Park	Neighborhood Park/Baseball	1.5	0.50%
Levee	Trail	15.4	5.00%
McDonogh Park	Neighborhood Park: Baseball	2.3	0.76%
McDonoghville Cemetery	Cemetery	9.4	3.05%
McDonoghville Dog Park	Dog Park	2.4	0.76%
Mel Ott Park	Community Park	21.7	7.05%
Memorial Square Park	Pocket Park: Recreational	0.7	0.22%
New Hope Baptist Church Cemetery	Cemetery	2.0	0.65%
O'Connor Playground	Pocket Park: Playground	0.1	0.04%
Porter Street Park	Pocket Park: Basketball	0.3	0.09%
Richard Street Playground	Pocket Park: Playground	0.7	0.22%
Timberlane Country Club	Country Club	135.9	44.18%
Virgil Street Park	Neighborhood Park	5.9	1.92%
Weyer Street Cemetery	Cemetery	0.1	0.05%
Total Park Area		307.6	
Source: Dana Brown & Associates, Survey 2017			

COMMUNITY PARKS

South of Gretna Boulevard, located between Claire Avenue and Mason Avenue, Gretna City Park and adjacent Bellevue Park combine into a sizeable recreational green space, providing opportunity for both active and passive recreation for the entire community. Mel Ott Park is located south of the Westbank Expressway and includes both active and passive recreation as well as a recreation center. North of the Expressway is Huey P. Long Park, which provides needed open space to Downtown Gretna.

1. BELLEVUE PARK

Bellevue Park is located northeast of City Park, and consists of 3.3 acres of open space.

A. Passive Recreation

Bellevue Park serves as a predominantly passive recreational space, featuring five picnic shelters, two children's play structures, a restroom facility, and a walking trail. The play structures are in good condition and placed on a durable rubber safety surface. All facilities are connected through a winding walking path.

B. Tree Cover

Bellevue Park features mature cypress trees, which are essential to the character of the Park and additionally support the ecological function of it as an urban green space.

C. Access

Bellevue Park is easily accessible for motorized visitors arriving via Gretna Boulevard. Sufficient off-street parking for the Park is provided along Lafayette Street. The parking lot, however, has plantings only on the northern end and for the most part is not shaded.

Pedestrian and bicycle access is not a focus of the Park, although Bellevue Park does have one bicycle rack. There are no marked pedestrian or bicycle crossings from Jonestown, except for the Huey P. Long intersection, which is located within a school zone. A stop sign at Gretna Boulevard at Lafayette Street makes this crossing somewhat safer, however safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists should be improved and promoted. There is opportunity to connect Bellevue Park to the west side of the Bellevue neighborhood to Claire Avenue and Hero Drive. Due to the proximity of Bellevue Park to City Park, there is opportunity to connect them with a multi-modal path for pedestrians and bicyclist.



Figure 8.2: Bellevue Park Playground



Figure 8.3: City Park Basketball Courts

2. GRETNA CITY PARK

Gretna City Park is 94 acres in size and offers active and passive recreation, as well as ecological functions and habitat for urban wildlife.

A. Active Recreation

Active recreational offerings in City Park are located in the northern quadrant of the Park, conveniently accessible from Gretna Boulevard. They include two multi-purpose play fields accommodating football, rugby, and soccer, two basketball courts, and a BMX Track. This cluster of active recreational facilities also provides restrooms and a concession stand. Further, two tennis courts are located in the southern quadrant of the Park along Claire Avenue. The tennis courts, however, need resurfacing and are currently not used.

Both multipurpose play fields are well maintained and in good condition. The basketball courts have minor cracks in the surface and after rainfalls, water collects on the courts and creates birdbaths, making them

unusable after weather events. The City should consider resurfacing this facility, as well as the tennis courts, in the near future.

The BMX track, which is run by volunteers and sanctioned through USA BMX, was opened in 2008 and is the only facility of its kind in the New Orleans Metro Area. The Gretna BMX facility offers free one-day trials. For Gretna residents, the City of Gretna provides funding for the yearly membership fee which is currently \$60. After becoming a member, cost to use the facility is \$5 per practice and \$10 per race day.

B. Passive Recreation

Passive recreational opportunities include two picnic shelters, walking trails, a dog park, and the Gretna Observatory.

The Gretna Bark Park is Gretna's first dog park and the only one on the Westbank. It is located in the southwestern portion of City Park, along Claire Avenue, adjacent to the tennis courts. The facility was built in 2012 and furniture, as well as other updates, were added in 2016. The park is fenced and features a variety of dog play equipment, multiple trees, seating for humans, and a water fountain. Bark Park is open for the public free of charge and has become a popular meeting spot among Gretna's dogs and their owners.

The Gretna Observatory was opened in 2004 and is one of very few public observatories in the region and the largest of its kind in the Greater New Orleans region. It was designed to serve educational needs of school children. It is open to the public free of charge every Monday and Wednesday night, except on major holidays. Group appointments at alternative times are available. The City of Gretna would like to promote this facility to astronomer groups and organizations of the region to utilize this unique facility more.

C. Natural Features

The Park has two decently sized water features and about 35 acres of natural forest, which and provide habitat for urban wildlife. A nature trail leads through the forested area. The City of Gretna sees not only the recreational, but also the ecological and educational value of the natural forest area. Thus, the City and the Parks and Recreation Department are aiming to secure funding for eliminating invasive species in the forest, specifically Chinese Tallow trees, which are currently the most prevalent invasive species there. Further, the City would like to restore the riparian zones of the



Figure 8.4: City Bark



Figure 8.5: City Park Lake

Park's water features in order to strengthen their role as urban wildlife habitat and improve their aesthetic value. More on the improvements to the riparian zones can be found in [Element 9: Environmental](#). To improve the fishing experience in City Park, the Parks and Recreation Department is undertaking a water quality survey with the aim to be added to the "Get Out and Fish" program of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The program was designed to make fishing accessible in community parks with suitable water bodies. Besides a sufficient water quality for the development of a quality fishery, the location must provide good bank access, adequate parking, and restroom facilities. The City of Gretna is currently working with the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center to investigate design options for the Lake's edge, making it more functional and usable to the City's residents by activating the edges with trails, boardwalks, a pavilion, and seating.

D. Tree Cover

Gretna is one of 14 cities in Louisiana taking part in the Arbor Day Foundation Tree City Program, which supports

the maintenance and increase of a healthy tree canopy in the City. City Park accommodates a large share of Gretna's total tree inventory with an approximate tree cover of 37%, or roughly 35 acres, consisting of mostly native species like Bald and Pond Cypress trees, Southern Live Oaks, Hackberries, and Red Maples. The Park management plants new trees every year to maintain and expand on the existing tree coverage. New trees were recently added along the play field adjacent to Huey P. Long Avenue. The Park's parking lots should be a focus area for future tree plantings. These parking lot plantings could be implemented as part of green infrastructure facilities, managing the runoff of the lot's impermeable surfaces.

E. Access

City Park is easily accessible for motorized visitors, arriving via Gretna Boulevard. Off-street parking for City Park is located between Gretna Boulevard and the play fields. Additional off-street parking is available off Claire Avenue, between Shirley Johnson Elementary School and the Park's forest area, and next to Bark Park and the tennis courts. A small lot next to the Observatory provides a few parking spaces for visitors. None of City Park's parking lots have tree plantings, and all lot surfaces are made of impervious materials.

Pedestrian and bicycle access is not facilitated and no bike racks or paths are provided to or within City Park. While there is a sidewalk along Gretna Boulevard, and seven paved paths across the median suggest pedestrian routes to the Parks, there are no marked pedestrian or bicycle crossings, except for the Huey P. Long intersection, which is located within a school zone. A stop sign at Gretna Boulevard at Lafayette Street makes this crossover somewhat safer, but safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists should be improved. To ensure safe bicycle access to Gretna City Park, a bike lane should be added on Gretna Boulevard.

The Tulane Regional Urban Design Center is also working with the City of Gretna to identify entry points into the Park from the surrounding Bellevue neighborhood. This includes new access from both Claire and Mason Avenues that connect through the Park to the Lakes. Additional entries at these locations should focus on multi-modal transportation options.

As City Park is Gretna's community park, connecting it through safe and attractive bicycle routes with all City neighborhoods should be a top goal of a bicycle and pedestrian strategy for the City.



Figure 8.6: Proposed Entrance from Claire Avenue.
Rendering courtesy of Tulane Regional Urban Design Center

3. MEL OTT PARK AND MULTIPURPOSE CENTER

The 21.7-acre Mel Ott Park is Gretna's second largest community park. Like City Park, the Mel Ott Park is located south of the Westbank Expressway. The elongated green space is bound by residential development along Marie Drive to the east, and a railroad track and Belle Chasse Highway to the west. The Park provides active and passive recreational options for visitors, as well as the Mel Ott Multipurpose Center for indoor activities.

A. Active Recreation

Mel Ott park has four baseball fields, two of which are little league fields, and two are sized for high school leagues. All fields are in immaculate condition, featuring high mast lights (HMLs), scoreboards, covered bleachers, and access to restroom facilities.



Figure 8.7: Baseball Field at Mel Ott

B. Passive Recreation

Located mostly in the central part of the park, Mel Ott Park has a passive recreational area, providing a walking trail, seven picnic shelters, two play structures for children, and convenient access to public restroom facilities. In the northern part of the Park, two additional picnic shelters are provided. All passive park facilities are in excellent condition.



Figure 8.8: Playground at Mel Ott

C. Tree Cover

As most of Mel Ott Park accommodates play fields, the percentage of tree cover is relatively low, at about 7 percent. Trees are limited to a few clusters within the central passive recreation area and the fringe of the Park. Even though no play fields are located there, the northern part of the Park lacks any tree cover. As this part of the Park is currently not highly utilized, the City should consider tree plantings there, not only to make the area more attractive for park visitors, but also to improve the ecological value of Mel Ott Park and create potential habitat for urban wildlife.

While Mel Ott Park's central parking lot has a few trees along the perimeter and one in a planting bed, it would be beneficial to increase the number of trees in the parking lot to provide shade and reduce the effects of an urban heat island. The parking lots located in the northern and southern part of the Park both lack any tree coverage. Tree plantings should be strongly considered there as well. On all three lots, plantings should be implemented as part of green infrastructure facilities to manage runoff from the lot's impermeable paving.

D. Mel Ott Multipurpose Center

Mel Ott Multipurpose Center was built in 2013 and is one of Gretna's main community centers. The facility features three meeting rooms and one indoor gym. All facilities are available for rent, and the City utilizes them for public meetings and events. Further, some of the recreational indoor programs organized by the City's Parks and Recreation Department are held in the Multipurpose Center. See [Section 4](#) of this Element for more details on recreational programs. The building is in very good condition.



Figure 8.9: Mel Ott Multipurpose Center

E. Access

Due to the physical barrier of the railroad tracks to the west and residential development to the east, access into Mel Ott Park is limited. Access is provided only from the heavily trafficked Belle Chasse Highway, between 23rd Street, a stretch of Gretna Boulevard, and a pedestrian entrance at Smithway Drive. Like City Park, Mel Ott Park's access primarily caters to motor vehicles. About 10% of the Park's total area is devoted to parking. Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access is not sufficiently provided. To improve access for bicycles and pedestrians, access points on Belle Chasse Highway should be equipped with pedestrian and bicycle crossings. On-demand pedestrian traffic lights and additional pedestrian and bicycle access points should be planned and implemented. See [Section 5](#) of this Element for more on bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between parks.

4. HUEY P. LONG PARK (HERITAGE PARK)

Huey P. Long Park provides the Old Gretna-Mechanickham neighborhood with open green space within walking distance. The 4.2 acre Huey P. Long Park is located between 10th and 11th Streets, covering the two blocks adjacent to Huey P. Long Avenue. The wide neutral ground of Huey P. Long Avenue, stretching from 6th Street to the Park, features numerous mature Live Oak and Sycamore trees and provides an additional 2.7 acres of public green space. Huey P. Long Park is very popular with Gretna's residents and visitors alike, who frequently utilize the attractive greenspace for passive recreational uses. The Park is lined with mostly Southern Live Oak trees, some of which were recently planted, while others are mature. Landscaping is kept manicured and the appearance of the Park is neat. The Park provides a fairly new children's play area with a swing set, a play structure, and benches. The City's Welcome Center is located on the corner of Huey P. Long Avenue and 11th Street. After rain events, water tends to pond on the lawn of Huey P. Long Park. To address this issue, the City installed a bioretention cell to temporarily detain stormwater before it enters the City's drainage system.



Figure 8.10: Bioretention Cell at Huey P. Long Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Almost all of Gretna's residential neighborhoods have access to public open space within walking distance. Neighborhoods which are not adjacent to one of the three community parks can access pocket parks (single to multiple lot size) and neighborhood parks (one block and larger). The following neighborhood parks are organized by neighborhood.

1. OLD GRETNA & OLD GARDEN PARK NEIGHBORHOODS

A. Memorial Square

Memorial Square is a small green space in downtown Gretna, located in the boulevard neutral ground between Gretna City Hall and the Mississippi River levee. The greenspace, which accommodates the Jefferson Memorial Arch, is neatly landscaped and invites downtown employees to enjoy a lunch outside on one of the park's benches. It features a long lawn area with a pathway through the center that passes under the arch. There are benches near the arch, as well as trees at both ends of the linear space.

The City is working on a redesign for Memorial Square as part of a larger effort to introduce sustainable stormwater management into Downtown Gretna. This is part of the Downtown 2020 Plan that was completed in 2015. The redesign of Memorial Square will not only address existing issues, such as localized flooding and lack of greenspace Downtown, but also maximize the potential for the space as a vital riverfront gateway to this historic district of Gretna. While the space currently functions primarily as open space for residents, the multi-faceted new design aims to introduce seating areas, historical interpretation, interactive water features, and plenty



Figure 8.11: Proposed Redesign for Memorial Square

of shade, all while bringing awareness to cutting edge stormwater management strategies to the citizens of Gretna.

B. Mississippi River Levee and Batture

While the Levee's primary function is flood control, it also serves as an attractive public green space for Gretna residents and a bicycle and pedestrian link to adjacent river communities via the Mississippi River Trail. The main access point of the Gretna Levee is in Downtown Gretna on the northern end of Huey P. Long Avenue, where Gretna's Ferry Terminal is located. This access point is equipped with stairs and a ramp, thus providing ADA compliant access to the River Trail and the Ferry Terminal. Another access point is located between Newton and Lavoisier Streets, where stairs lead up to the River Trail. Fried Street leads all the way up to the Trail as well, although access could be improved. All other areas of the levee are accessed by climbing up its grassed side. In order to improve access, especially for bicycle riders, the construction of more ramps at strategically important locations should be considered. As bicycle paths are planned on Lafayette and Hamilton Streets, access ramps to the River Trail should be added there. Further, the worn levee grass at Ocean Street suggests that is where many users enter, therefore adding an access point at this location should also be considered. Improved access from the McDonoghville neighborhood would also provide additional access to open space that is needed for that neighborhood.

Every autumn the City of Gretna hosts the Gretna Heritage Festival, a popular three day music and cultural festival. The festival grounds encompass several blocks of Downtown Gretna as well as parts of the Mississippi River batture, an exposed river bed during low tide. On six stages, local, regional, and national artists perform. Gretna Festival is a recreational highlight every



Figure 8.12: Riverfront Amphitheater

year, and an economic driver for the City's Downtown businesses. This highly unique batture landscape grants an opportunity for the City to consider expanding the recreational use of this space beyond Gretna's Heritage Festival, just as other cities have done, to a low-river event series. Programming for this space could include volleyball, movie screenings, or concerts. However, any infrastructure to support the programming on the batture must be removable or able to withstand seasonal flooding with high tides. These, and other ideas, were explored in the Gretna Downtown 2020 Plan. Other ideas from this plan included a shade structure near the Ferry Terminal to provide a resting place for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Gretna can also provide a temporary beach setting on the batture, which would create a very unique setting unlike any other in the Greater New Orleans Region. Using HTO Park in Toronto as a precedent, the City could provide umbrellas and sand boxes that are set in place during appropriate low-tide seasons, encouraging visitors to bring their own seating.



Figure 8.13: HTO Park in Toronto. Image edited to show umbrellas in green.

C. J.B. Spencer Park

The Park, named after the African-American baseball player Joseph B. Spencer, is located in Old Garden Park, bound by 7th and 8th Streets, Fried Street, and Governor Hall Street. The facility provides a high school league sized baseball field, which is also used for soccer training when it is not baseball season. The facility is kept in very good condition and features high mast lighting, covered seating, a concession stand, and restrooms. Further, there is a small area with seating, tables, and a public barbecue grill, which is shaded by mature Live Oak trees. This area is used frequently, therefore additional seating and a shelter would provide an enhanced atmosphere for the community.

The entire facility is fenced in with a chain link fence. Parts of the fence could be removed for better accessibility and to soften the edges of the Park, making it more inviting for users.

J. B. Spencer Park is located in the middle of a residential neighborhood, providing easy bike and pedestrian access for residents of the area. To accommodate bicycle use, bike racks should be added. Park visitors arriving via motor vehicles must find parking along the street, which appears to be sufficient for this neighborhood greenspace.



Figure 8.14: J.B. Spencer Park Field Seating

D. Richard Street Playground

This pocket park covers half of a block on Richard Street, between 7th and 8th Streets, and provides a children's play structure, seating, and two basketball courts. Both facilities are secured with a chain link fence. The basketball courts' surfaces are made of concrete and are in good condition. No lighting or restrooms are provided on site. The only plantings in Richard Street Park consist of lawn areas. To make this park more attractive and pleasant for its users, trees should be planted for shade and to provide habitat. The basketball courts could be improved with an acrylic surface material. In the long term, the installation of high mast lights at the courts for nighttime use and the replacement of the chain link fence around the playground with a more attractive fencing material should be considered. Refer to [Figure 8.15](#) for visualization of enhanced park edges.

The Park is located in a residential neighborhood and thus in walking distance for area residents. Pedestrian infrastructure around the Park is lacking. Sidewalks are needed along the Richard Street edge of the Park. Bicycle racks are also needed to accommodate children and adults riding to and from the Park.

2. MCDONOGHVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD

A. McDonoghville Park

McDonogh Park is 2.3 acres in size and provides a well-maintained baseball field, as well as a large children's play area. The Park is bound by Weidman Street to the north, Madison Street to the west, Virgil Street to the south, and Monroe Street to the east. Due to the Park's central location within the neighborhood, it is in walking distance for many of McDonoghville's residents. The baseball field is equipped with covered bleachers, a batting cage, high mast lights, and a restroom facility. The children's play area is secured with a chain link fence and features multiple new play structures and a swing set. Parts of the fence could be removed for better accessibility and a more welcoming atmosphere. The play equipment, except for the swing set, are attached directly on the lawn without any additional safety flooring, and is geared towards children older than 5 years. Even though Louisiana has not adopted playground safety regulations, according to the US Consumer Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook, "grass and dirt are not considered protective surfacing because wear and environmental factors can reduce their shock absorbing effectiveness," (*US Consumer Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook, 2015, pp. 9*). Thus the Park play structures should be improved with new safety surfacing. McDonoghville Park also has more than enough open space to provide playground equipment for younger children, ages 2 to 5. This would expand the use and provide amenities for an underrepresented age group. The play area is partially shaded by a mature Live Oak tree growing along Monroe Street. To provide a more pleasant playground experience during the summer, the planting of additional trees should be considered.

B. Virgil Street Park

Located along Virgil Street, south of the Entergy premises, between Lebeuf and Pratt Streets, and adjacent to Kate Middleton Elementary School, the 5.9 acre park includes a stretch of greenspace that includes a basketball court, a play structure, a swing set, a picnic shelter, and a detention pond. The detention pond is lined with cypress trees along Anson Street. Additional trees and benches could improve this area for passive recreational use.



Figure 8.15A: Existing Conditions along the Richard Street Playground



Figure 8.15B: Proposed Enhancements along the Richard Street Playground



Figure 8.16: Virgil Street Park Playground Equipment

The children's playground is fenced in with a black aluminum fence, and play structures are mounted on a safety surfacing. Seating is also provided. The basketball court has concrete flooring and is not fenced in. Resurfacing the court with acrylic flooring material and the construction of a fence around the court are recommended, as it is directly adjacent to the right-of-way and not buffered from the Entergy storage yard. The Park is vegetated with a few palm trees. The addition of native tree species would not only contribute to the Park's aesthetic value, but also provide shade, particularly during summer months.

Virgil Street Park is located on the fringe of a residential neighborhood, which limits pedestrian access to those arriving from the south. Further, no sidewalk is provided along the Park's edge. The Jefferson Parish Bicycle Master Plan recommends Virgil Street as a bicycle boulevard, which would provide safe bicycle access to and from the Park and the elementary school.

C. O'Connor Playground

Located on the corner lot of O'Connor and Solon Streets, this pocket park provides a new children's play structure which is placed on a rubber mulch surface. The site is fenced in with an attractive metal fence. Mature cypress trees provide shade. The play structure is in good condition, however the plastic ramp on site is broken and should be replaced with a more durable ramp.

D. Porter Street Park

Two basketball courts are located on the corner of Porter and Palfrey Streets. The courts have a concrete surface and one of the baskets is broken. As there is no high mast lighting provided in this Park, the facility closes at dusk. The courts are fenced in with a chain link fence, which is additionally secured on the top with barbed wire.



Figure 8.17: O'Connor Playground

The courts should be resurfaced with acrylic surface and the broken basket should be repaired. Additionally, the City should consider installing high mast lighting, so the neighborhood residents can play after dark. The barbed wire needs to be removed, as it not only presents a risk of injury, but also places a negative stigma on the park and neighborhood.

Adjacent to Porter Street Park is a vacant lot, which could, if the City can gain ownership, potentially be an extension of the park that neighborhood residents could use for passive recreation and social interaction. An attractive passive park in this area could improve the neighborhood and help revitalize the area. See [Figure 8.18](#).

E. Hamilton Street Park

This new pocket park is located on the triangular lot on the intersection of Hamilton and Washington Streets and provides the neighborhood with greenspace for passive recreation. The fenced in park can be entered from Weidman Street and is equipped with two benches. There are two medium sized trees and eight Red Maple trees have recently been planted.

F. Senior Wellness Center

The Gretna Senior Wellness Center is managed by Peoples Health in partnership with the Jefferson Council of Aging and the City of Gretna. It is open to all senior residents of the City and offers a wide range of recreational, educational, and social programs. The Center is very popular among Gretna's senior population.

The Center is located on Franklin Avenue and McDonough Street and has a large, fenced in, off-street parking lot. The perimeter is planted with shrubs. Line W-6 of Jefferson Transit has a station directly in front of the building, connecting the Center with downtown Gretna



Figure 8.18: Porter Street Park Basketball Courts



Figure 8.19: Senior Wellness Center Community Garden



Figure 8.20: 23rd at Huey P. Long Park Playground Equipment



Figure 8.21: Centennial Park

via Franklin Avenue and 4th and 5th Streets. Additionally, the Center offers free rides to senior residents to and from special events.

G. McDonoghville Dog Park

Gretna's most recent public open space addition is McDonoghville Dog Park, located adjacent to the Mississippi River Levee, between Washington, Anson, and Adams Streets. The park covers the entire block, 2.35 acres. Currently no dog equipment is provided, but the City will secure funding to develop this parcel to become an attractive and fun place to play for Gretna's dog-residents.

3. SOUTH GRETNA

A. 23rd Street at Huey P. Long Street Park

This pocket park has a play structure mounted on rubber safety tiles. It is fenced in with a chain link fence, is planted with Crepe Myrtle trees, and includes a few benches on site. Three lots adjacent to the facility currently lie vacant. As the Jonestown neighborhood has the highest percentage of vacant lots within Gretna, the City should consider the option of purchasing this land and extending the park, possibly providing basketball or volleyball courts, as this neighborhood is currently underserved with play fields. A larger park facility with more recreational options could fill this void and generally contribute to the revitalization of this area.

B. Centennial Park

The 1.52 acres park is Gretna's newest park addition. The pocket park was planned in Gretna's centennial year, 2013, and opened in January 2017. It is located in the northern portion of the Garden Park neighborhood on Willow Drive across from the Gretna Library, for which the property served as parking lot before. To the north and west of the property are commercial uses. It thus serves as an attractive and functional buffer between this area and residential uses to the south. The Park is of passive recreational character and features a walking trail and a picnic shelter, and lighting. The perimeter fence is wrought iron. The site has a parking lot, accommodating 14 vehicles, which are intended to serve as overflow parking for the library.

C. Timberlane Country Club

The Timberlane Country Club is a private recreational facility. The 135-acre site features an 18-hole golf course, disk golf, a swimming pool, a fitness center, sand volleyball courts, and tennis courts. The use of the facilities is limited to club members. Membership

ranges from \$60 to \$250 per month. The green space is currently zoned as R-1A, which is a residential zoning designation. See [Element 2: Land Use](#) for details on Gretna's current zoning districts. In order to preserve this large greenspace for future generations, the City should start a conversation with the Timberlane Country Club about a possible open space designation of this piece of land. The designation would additionally contribute to open space credits for the Community Rating System (CRS) of the National Flood Insurance Program long term. See [Element 1: Resiliency](#) for more details on CRS.

PROGRAMMING

The City of Gretna Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of sports and recreation programs to Gretna Residents. The City offers the following:

- *Baseball, softball, and tee ball*
- *Yoga*
- *Football*
- *Cheerleading*
- *Volleyball*
- *Kickball*
- *Soccer*
- *Basketball*
- *Track & field*

Information on programs can be found on the City of Gretna website (www.gretnala.com). However, the information on the website should be kept up to date and complete. To improve this service for residents, the Parks and Recreation Department should, in the future, provide an easy to maintain website or web page for management by the Department, keeping information on programs and events up-to-date. This site could also be used to document activities regarding park restoration, and invite residents to volunteer. Additionally, social media websites could be utilized to create more awareness of the recreational offerings of Gretna's Parks and Recreation Department, and the City's multiple park facilities.

CONNECTION OF PUBLIC GREEN SPACES: GREENWAYS, TRAILS, AND BIKE LANE NETWORK

As discussed previously, Gretna's community parks are currently not well integrated in the City's bicycle and pedestrian network. The bicycle infrastructure as

proposed in the Jefferson Parish Bicycle Master Plan of 2014, if implemented, would improve this condition significantly. The proposed routes would connect the existing levee trail with both community parks and provide safe access to a number of Gretna's smaller parks as well. A greenway along the Hero Canal buffer would connect Downtown, Old Gretna, Jonestown, and Bellevue to Gretna's City Park and would be a great addition to the City's public greenspace. See [Figure 8.21](#) for a visualization of the Hero Canal Improvements.

Another option for a greenway project would be to implement a trail on the buffer land adjacent to the Governor Hall Canal, connecting Gretna Boulevard at Pike Street north into Old Gretna at J.B. Spencer Park. A comprehensive trail network in Gretna would improve the City's overall connectivity and benefit all residents. Greenways not only provide safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, they also connect habitats and thus support the functionality of the urban ecosystem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the existing park facilities in Gretna are in good condition and are thoroughly programmed. Improvements can be implemented to create a more inviting and comfortable atmosphere, therefore making the parks and open spaces more frequently used by residents and visitors of the City.

Softening of park edges can be accomplished quickly and cost efficiently, making it a relatively simple process the City should undertake. While fences are often needed around the perimeter of parks for safety purposes, chain link can be replaced with a more attractive material, such as iron. Trees and shrubs can also be planted along the boundaries of parks to give the spaces a unique identity in the neighborhoods they are located within. In addition to softening the edge, vegetation also provides shade and wildlife habitat.

In conjunction with softening the edges of parks, the edges and rights-of-way of canals could also be improved to create a more aesthetically pleasing environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as a alternative transportation route, as previously discussed in the section regarding connectivity. Canal edges can be improved by removing concrete lining, which tends to crack and have weed growth, and replacing the concrete with native vegetation, which would also provide enhanced water quality benefits.



Figure 8.21A: Existing Conditions along the Hero Canal



Figure 8.21B: Proposed Enhancements along the Hero Canal

GOALS

Goal 1: Maintain and improve Gretna's public open spaces and improve open space provisions for currently underserved neighborhoods.

Objective 1.1:

Repair and improve public sports facilities where needed. Resurface all concrete basketball courts with acrylic surfacing and add seating, fencing, and high mast lights where currently not provided. Improve drainage of the basketball courts in City Park. Add safety floor to all play structures in J.B. Spencer Park.

Objective 1.2:

Improve Gretna's pocket parks by planting native trees, providing seating, and softening the park edges.

Objective 1.3:

In the currently underserved neighborhoods of Jonestown and McDonoghville, where vacant land lies adjacent to existing park facilities, consider an expansion of public open space to improve the level of service for the residents and support the revitalization of the neighborhoods.

Goal 2: Improve bicycle and pedestrian accessibility for all of Gretna's public parks by connecting them with a state-of-the-art bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure network.

Objective 2.1:

Implement the bicycle network proposed in the Jefferson Parish Bicycle Master Plan 2014.

Objective 2.2:

Build capacity to implement one strategic canal section retrofit.

Objective 2.3:

Ensure pedestrian safety around public park facilities by adding crosswalks, stop signs, and pedestrian crossing signals where needed.

Objective 2.4:

Provide bicycle parking facilities at all public parks.

Goal 3: Improve ecological functionality of Gretna's open spaces.

Objective 3.1:

Restore all riparian zones approaching the water features of Gretna City Park and improve water quality to meet the standards of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries "Go Out and Fish" program.

Objective 3.2:

Eliminate invasive species from City Park's forested area.

Objective 3.3:

Connect urban green spaces with green corridors where possible to strengthen their ecological functionality and support for urban wildlife.

Objective 3.4:

Increase the urban tree canopy and improve park micro-climates by planting additional trees

Goal 4: Connect with the community to increase public awareness of Gretna's recreational offerings and to learn about the community's recreational needs.

Objective 4.1:

Create an easy to maintain Parks and Recreation website that provides up-to-date information on programs, park facilities, and special events. Utilize social media channels to connect with the community.

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