

# PARKS & RECREATION



## **Parks & Recreation Overview**

**P**arks and recreation amenities are a critical component to providing a community's balanced quality of life for its' citizens. Therefore, Silverton must be prepared to act to insure that the two existing public parks are utilized to their fullest potential. The city must also strive to add additional park space where appropriate.

Creating new park space in a built-out urban environment can be challenging. Developing smaller neighborhood pocket parks may be an effective strategy in adding to Silverton's parks and recreation site inventory. Silverton must also recognize that a large percentage of Silverton's targeted resident demographic representing younger individuals and families will be more inclined to lead an active lifestyle. Adding new active recreational amenities should be an on-going effort the city focuses upon in order to provide relevant and interesting recreational choices to Silverton residents.

### **Park Type Criteria**

#### **Municipal Parks**

Municipal parks are designed primarily to serve residents within the boundaries of the municipality. Generally, there are four specific municipal park types.

#### **Mini-parks**

Mini-parks, or "pocket parks" provide open space for passive and some active recreation opportunities within a limited walking distance of primary users. The average mini-park serves between 250-1,250 persons. Average area size ranges from 1,000 sq. ft. to one acre.

#### **Neighborhood Parks**

Neighborhood parks are designed to provide both active and passive short-term recreation activities. The primary user ranges from five to fifteen years of age. However, informal recreation opportunities cater to groups of all ages. The average neighborhood park serves between 500 to 2,500 people, basically one park for every elementary school. Neighborhood parks commonly range from five to ten acres in size and may have features that provide activities for the entire community.

#### **Community Parks**

This type of park is designed to serve several neighborhoods while minimizing park travel distance. Though community parks are designed to accommodate all age groups, most activities cater to the active recreation needs of junior/senior high school students and adults. Although size is not always a sound criterion for classifying parks, it is generally recognized that community parks are larger than neighborhood parks or playgrounds. Community parks can serve from 2,500 to 20,000 people. Most community parks have an average size of between 20-35 acres and may also serve to provide activities associated with neighborhood parks.

#### **Urban Greenspace (Conservancy)**

In addition to providing passive recreational opportunities, these types of parks can protect environmental quality and act as land-use buffers. They also help break up development congestion and provide aesthetic quality. Most urban greenspace parks contain natural areas such as environmental corridors, woodlands, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat areas, and scenic views. These areas will typically provide benefits to the entire community or an entire region. Though no set standard exists, several communities use a ratio of one to two acres per 1,000 population as a basis to project local community demand.



## Existing Silverton Parks

### Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park

Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park is Silverton's largest park and recreation venue. The Ralph Ficke Memorial Park is located on approximately 12 acres at the northeast corner of the City. Prior to its acquisition by the City, it was part of the Ficke family's dairy farm. The park was purchased from Mrs. Elizabeth Ficke in 1948 and is named in honor of her son, Ralph Ficke, who served the community as a volunteer firefighter.

Existing park amenities include baseball fields, a regulation sized soccer field, batting cage, tennis court, full-court basketball, two shelters, a playground and a looped walking trail. Ficke Park plays host to the City's Annual Easter Egg Hunt and the Summer Concerts in the Park Series.



### Silverton Park

Silverton Park is located in the quadrangle bounded by Montgomery Road, Parkview Lane, St. James Avenue and Highland Avenue. The Silverton Park site is situated at the western gateway into the planned Silverton City Central district, and thus presents several opportunities for future gateway and city identification efforts.



The village green style park was the site of the original Silverton Train Station. A replica of the station was constructed in 1976 and serves as a museum. It houses historic photographs and artifacts from the City's past, including the Olympic uniform of Barry Larkin, a retired Reds player and Silverton native son. In 2001 the station was rededicated as the John M. Kuhnell Memorial Museum in honor of the man who served Silverton as Chief of Police from 1946 to 1969. Chief Kuhnell was instrumental in the reconstruction of the Silverton Station.

## Planning for Future Park Development

As the demand for leisure and recreational activities continues to grow throughout the country it is becoming more important for communities to engage in proper planning to accommodate such activities. The City of Silverton has taken proper steps to not only create a solid recreational base, but also to maintain and improve recreational opportunities in the community. By the development of this element of the comprehensive plan, Silverton has recognized the importance of providing quality recreational opportunities to its residents and visitors. Recreational needs can only be met by properly located sites that provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities and are convenient to potential users.



These sites should possess natural characteristics appropriate to their intended functions. Providing these facilities has become an accepted responsibility of all governmental levels – local, county, state, and federal. The increasing demand for outdoor recreation has produced three issues of concern for local government decision makers:

- The need to improve existing facilities and provide additional facilities to satisfy current and future demand for recreational activities.
- The need to provide recreation opportunities and facilities in a manner compatible with limited natural resources and available land for park development.
- The need to provide recreation opportunities and facilities in a manner compatible with limited fiscal resources.

Planning is an integral element in identifying community needs and providing facilities efficiently, effectively, and economically.



## Recreation Acreage Requirements

One method of evaluating a community's recreational acreage needs is to determine the number of people the existing system serves or has the capacity to serve and then compare it to National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards. This is accomplished by assigning an acreage requirement for recreation areas per 1,000 persons in the city. For this plan, the standard of 12 acres active use land per 1,000 people is used as a basis for determining acreage needs. This city park acreage should be distributed throughout the community, so that all residential areas, age groups, and activity needs are served in the best and most cost-efficient manner. Only city parks are included in the recreation acreage requirements analysis. In general, county parks, school recreation areas, and private recreation area acreages are not included in the city-wide recreation requirements analysis for the following reasons:

- County park facilities do not provide typical municipal recreation opportunities.
- School recreation areas provide some municipal recreation opportunities, but their public use is limited due to school use (physical education classes, intramural activities, interscholastic athletic use, etc.) and they are not under municipal control.
- Private recreation areas are not under municipal control and have a different mission (i.e., profit) than public recreation areas.
- Private, not-for-profit recreation areas can provide some municipal recreation opportunities, but they are not under municipal control.

To calculate active park capacity, we will solely use the Ralph W. Ficke park, as it is Silverton's only active recreational park facility. The city's other park, Silverton Park, is mostly passive in usage and therefore is not factored into this formula. Using the park standards above and the acreage total for Ralph W. Ficke Park (12 acres total), current park land deficiencies were calculated.

Silverton's current estimated population is 5,180. The target active park acreage need for Silverton would be 62.16 acres based on NRPA standards. Silverton currently provides about 2.31 total acres of parkland per 1,000 population, or about 9.7 total acres per thousand less than the recommended standard. This means that the City would need to acquire about 50.2 acres of additional active use parkland to meet current recreational needs within the City. Silverton is a densely populated community containing only 1.1 square miles, so in reality, obtaining an additional 50.2 acres may prove challenging. However, based on the NRPA standards, the current active park acreage is substantially below the target acreage figures signifying that additional active recreation space should be considered in the future.

Ralph W. Ficke Park	<b>12 acres</b>
Silverton Population	<b>5,180</b>
Active Parkland per 1,000 people	<b>2.31 acres/1,000 people</b>
NRPA Target Acreage per 1,000 people	<b>12 acres/1,000 people</b>
Silverton Net Active Park Land Deficiency	<b>50.19 acres</b>



## Parkland Acquisition / Future Park Locations

City residents should be served by either a mini-park or neighborhood park in close proximity or a community park. To address the parkland acreage, service area, and facility deficiencies of the City, several future park locations have been recommended. The Park Facility map on the following page shows the optimal locations to target for proposed parks. The criteria used to select specific park locations are:

- Suitability of the land to accommodate both active and passive park facility development.
- Ability to secure the land through dedication, purchase, or easement.
- Ability to serve the neighborhood or community.

In general, future park land should be suitable for development, and should exclude wetlands, stormwater detention areas, or other lands that will not support the development of recreation facilities. Wetlands, stormwater detention areas or other lands may be accepted into the park system, but they should be accepted or acquired in addition to park lands that will provide active and passive recreation facilities. Such lands would not satisfy the Silverton park land dedication requirements for new residential developments if such a regulatory requirement were implemented into the zoning code.

Neighborhood pocket parks should also be targeted as realistic opportunities to add new active park and recreational space in Silverton. These less intensive park facilities are substantially smaller than city-wide parks and can be obtained easier and typically at a smaller capital cost.

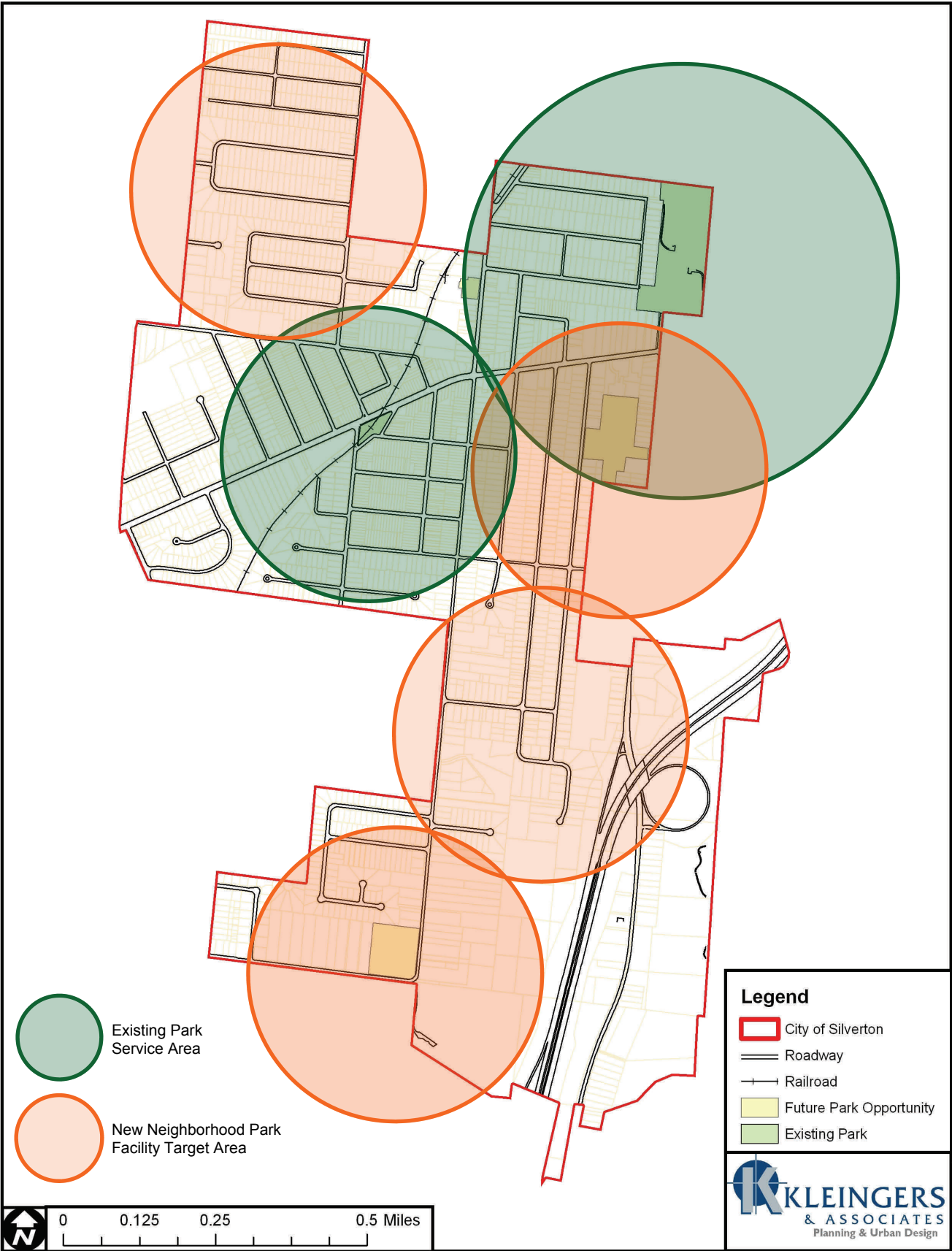


Meier's site along Plainfield Road



Woodford Road site at Stewart & Plainfield Road

# City Park Facility Map





## Special Area Plan: Plainfield Road Gateway Park



### Existing Conditions:

This site is located on the west side of Plainfield Road near the northern gateway into the City. Currently the large grassy area located in the front yard of the winery facility is underutilized. This area offers excellent visibility from Plainfield Road and is located near the northern entrance into the Silverton City Central district.

The site could be incorporated into future streetscape and other public infrastructure enhancement plans along Plainfield Road to provide for an attractive community gathering space.

### Site Recommendations:

- ❶ Develop site as a gateway park for the Silverton City Central district.
- ❷ Consider taking advantage of site visibility by constructing prominent and unique feature such as a fountain or art sculpture that would also incorporate elements of the Silverton City Central development theme.
- ❸ Site may be utilized as a community gathering space for open air summer concerts and other arts related activities during appropriate hours.
- ❹ Install appropriate signage features identifying the City of Silverton or "The Silverton City Central District".



## Special Area Plan: Woodford Road Site



### Existing Conditions:

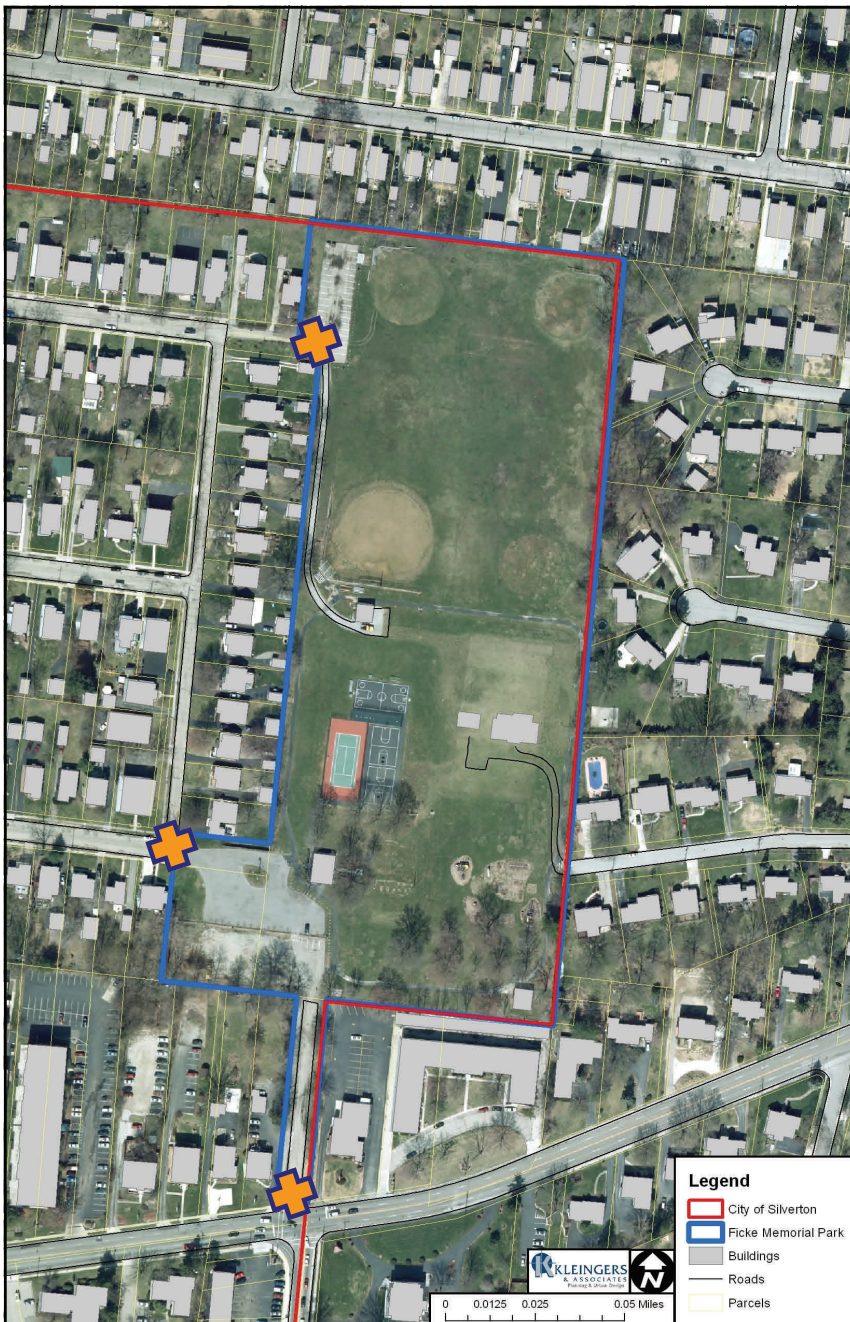
This land site is located at the northwest corner of the Woodford Road and Plainfield Road intersection. It features an existing residential dwelling structure, an accessory structure and partially wooded areas.

### Site Recommendations:

- ❶ Develop this site into a public park space featuring a combination of active and passive recreational amenities.
- ❷ Establish the City's southern gateway location in the southeastern corner of this site using a combination of signage and landscaping features.
- ❸ Future sidewalk improvements projects along Plainfield Road and Woodford Road may be required to create a safe linkage to surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- ❹ Consider establishing a nature preserve on a portion of this site and explore partnership opportunities with the Cincinnati Public School District to utilize this area for a future nature lab study area.



# Special Area Plan: Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park



 Future Park Gateway Upgrade Sites

## Existing Conditions:

The Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park site is the city's largest park facility. Providing several athletic fields and courts as well as open passive space. The City and Cincinnati Public Schools are discussing a possible joint venture to relocate the existing Silverton Paideia Elementary School to this park site. If approved, the southern half of the site would contain a newly constructed Cincinnati Public Schools museum-based curriculum school facility.

## Site Recommendations:

- ❶ A walking path should be constructed to connect the adjacent residential neighborhood sidewalk system.
- ❷ Two multi-use park shelters should be considered for the portion of the site retained by the City.
- ❸ This site should be utilized for city-wide celebrations and annual events given the ease of access, central location and relatively flat topography.
- ❹ Future park gateway entrance features featuring a combination of signage and landscaping should be considered for the three points of access into the park site located along Montgomery Road, South Avenue and Sibley Avenue.
- ❺ The City should consider drafting a Park Master Plan for this site to address the existing infrastructure upgrade needs in addition to identifying future infrastructure projects and programming elements for this facility.



## **Park & Recreation Policy Recommendations**

### **PR 1.0      Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park Improvements**

The City should consider park capital improvements on this site to upgrade the recreation options provided by this public facility. Improvements that would help maximize the utilization of this facility include the addition of two picnic shelter structures and constructing a walking / biking trail throughout the site. Additional redesign of the athletic fields and courts may be necessary if a new school facility is constructed on the southern half of this site. Adopting a Park Master Plan for this site is suggested to adequately address and identify both the current and future infrastructure and programming needs of the facility.

### **PR 1.1      Silverton Park Gateway**

Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park maintains a public access near the eastern entrance to the City along Montgomery Road. The opportunity exists to create a gateway entrance feature that identifies both the entrance into the city in addition to the entrance into the park itself. A combined gateway feature may be pursued to reduce the cost of identifying both important city gateway points.

### **PR 1.2      Silverton City Central Greenspace Initiative**

Silverton should seek out opportunities to create a greenspace park site within the Silverton City Central district. As a part of the City Central Plan, providing green space within this district is important to perpetuating the planning concepts of creating both a livable and walkable City Central. Also, great opportunities exist for providing a greenspace that can serve as a community gathering place for City Central events such as a summer concert series and creating branding and image identification opportunities for this district. The Plainfield Road Gateway Park Special Area Plan is one option for achieving this goal. In the alternative, future parcels within the City Central district that currently contain underutilized buildings and land uses may be acquired and converted to passive green space in the future.

### **PR 1.3      Woodford Road Park Development**

Explore the feasibility of the acquisition through donation of the identified Woodford Road park site. This site would serve the residential neighborhoods located in the southern portion of the City and help achieve the desired neighborhood park coverage requirements for the southern portion of the city. This site could also provide an opportunity to create a City of Silverton identification gateway for the southern access point into the city.

### **PR 1.4      Annual Festival & Activities Programming**

Efforts should be taken to maximize the utilization of the Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park site by seeking out groups to partner with for annual events. These profit or non-profit groups may be based within Silverton or outside of Silverton. Providing large scale annual festivals and activities supports the destination based planning principles set forth for the Silverton City Central and for the entire city as a whole. Examples of the types of festivals and activities that may be successful at the Ficke Memorial Park site include: The annual "Taste of Silverton", The Silverton Arts Festival, Silverton Days (annual one day celebration), and The Silverton Jazz Festival, etc.

## **Park & Recreation Policy Recommendations (continued)**

### **PR 1.5      Park & Recreation Funding Strategies**

Most communities that have successful park and recreation systems utilize a balanced combination of general fund revenue, land dedication, payment in lieu of dedication, park impact fees, and grant-in-aid programs. Many communities with successful park systems have adopted a general system for funding park acquisition, development and operations. Silverton should continue to pursue alternative funding opportunities for acquisition of future park space and for park capital improvements. Available financial resources should be prioritized and targeted relative to both existing park space and acquiring future park land. Below is a list of suggested funding strategies for park and recreation improvements.

- General Fund Revenue (local taxes) - may be used for park system administration, park operations and maintenance, and some park acquisition and development. It is suggested that Silverton's long term Park Capital Improvement Plan not be wholly reliant upon general fund revenue sources.
- Land Dedication (or payment in-lieu-of dedication) - used for general parkland acquisition and development typically required as part of a planned unit development or special overlay district regulations.
- Park Impact Fees - used for parkland acquisition and development within the City and designated to meet recreation needs created by new development and redevelopment projects. The City should explore the implementation of a park impact fee levied upon certain building and development activities to provide revenue for future park capital improvements.
- Grant-in-Aid Programs - used for park acquisition and development by providing matching funds for park and recreation improvements. Silverton should continue to explore programs available through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as program funding is made available on a yearly basis. Programs that may benefit the city's park and recreation improvement strategy include: Ohio Natureworks Grant, Land and Water Conservations Funds, and the Ohio Recreational Trails Program.
- Volunteer participation - used for park development, operations, and management.

### **PR 1.6      Establish Park Partnerships with Cincinnati Public School District**

Silverton should work towards establishing partnerships with the Cincinnati Public School District for the joint use and maintenance of the Ralph W. Ficke Memorial Park site. In the event a new school facility is built on this site, partnering with the school district can leverage both organization's resources and create a park venue that can be jointly utilized by the Silverton community and the school children while providing for shared parking, maintenance and future capital improvement costs.

### **PR 1.7      Acquire Additional Land Sites for Future Neighborhood Park Facilities**

The Silverton Park Facility Map identifies four areas targeted for creation of new neighborhood park facilities. These targeted areas are located beyond the primary service area of the existing Silverton park facilities. Long-term plans should include land acquisition strategies in these targeted areas as the opportunities may arise. Ultimately, the goal is to provide coverage to all areas of the city with a short walking / biking distance of a neighborhood park, or "pocket park".

### **PR 1.8      Collaboration on Drake Park Recreation Improvements**

Silverton should explore future collaborations with the City of Cincinnati for park and recreation infrastructure upgrades to Drake Park. This city-owned park site is located adjacent to Silverton and is likely utilized by Silverton residents living in that immediate area. Joint projects may include construction of trailheads, biking trails and paths and other active recreational improvements.