Des Moines should be at the forefront of American cities in the development of parks and recreation facilities. Few other cities have its advantages and opportunities. Few can admit arguments as powerful as those which urge Des Moines to have a superior system of pleasure grounds.

There is much of the area of Des Moines that is still in an unspoiled, natural state. The territory under control of the municipality is extremely large. The greater portion of this is waiting to be brought into use according to a carefully prepared plan, with parks and other recreation areas emerging systematically as growth takes place.

Des Moines has never fully appreciated the value of a systematic program of park development. It has made some progress, to be sure, in the purchase of park lands, but the Des Moines parks are not a system and are scarcely as well known as others in smaller cities of the State. Des Moines certainly has not received the wide recognition of Kansas City and Minneapolis for its parks, yet these two cities began their notable park activities in the early 90's, about the time when the first Des Moines park board was organized and purchased those few areas which today are the chief public features of the city. This Board functioned for a few years and was abolished in 1908.
In the period between 1906 and 1925 many precious years passed without any further progress being made in the acquisition of recreation areas to keep pace with city growth. Today, in fact, the city owns but 913 acres of park property, over 100 acres of which were acquired in 1925. By commonly accepted standards, Des Moines should have about 1,000 acres of parks, or one acre per 100 people. This standard was reached in 1894 but since then the acquisition of park lands has not kept pace with the growth of the city.

Leadership is required if the cause of public recreation is to be advanced. Cities that have made notable progress in park and playground work reveal a widespread and encouraging public interest in such municipal activities. This popular support is not generally spontaneous but is stimulated and kept alive, either by enlightened individuals in public office or by an official but unpaid commission composed of men devoted to the welfare of the city.

In Des Moines official leadership has been weak. There has been no one representing the entire community to speak with genuine conviction in behalf of parks.

There has been no plan to follow however in spending municipal funds, no consistent policy based upon a broad-visioned recreation program. Park purchases have been spasmodic, haphazard, antimply. Improvements have been un.systematic.
Recreational interests largely depend upon age. It is possible to classify the population of Des Moines into four broad age groups for the study of their leisure-time play activities and the determination of the city's obligations in the matter or providing the facilities needed.

**Small Children, below school age, ordinarily are closely attached to the home.** The provision of fresh air, contacts with nature, and space for free protected play is considered a parental obligation. Yet it is a well-known fact that homes in the city are becoming less suitable as play places for small children. Apartment dwelling is increasing, yards are becoming smaller, the streets are more hazardous. It is clearly reasonable to expect that the city itself will be called upon more and more to correct such tendencies and to supply the protected playgrounds and other areas needed by this group. These little folks will get the most good out of adequate home grounds, small protected play spaces in each block, nearby supervised play grounds to which they can go with parents or older brothers and sisters, drives and promenades which they can enjoy with their elders.

**Children of School Age are under the guidance and control of educational authorities a considerable portion of the time.**

The school probably has superseded the home as a creative influence in the life of the child. The recreation activities of school children manifestly should be centered in a supervised playground, preferably one adjacent to and operated in connection with the school. School and playground should function together.

In addition to the established play center referred to above the school child will still need and use home grounds and protected rear lot play areas. Other facilities attractive to this group are:
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In addition to the established play center referred to above the school child will still need and use home grounds and protected rear lot play areas. Other facilities attractive to this group are:
swimming pools
skating ponds
casting hills
camps
park play areas
community centers
play fields
outlying reservations and large parks.

The Youth of the city may be divided into two broad classes: those still in school, those out of it. In the former group are boys and girls who require playfields as distinguished from playgrounds.

School playfields should have separate areas for boys and girls. They are generally larger than playgrounds and often lack features attractive for small children. They would have baseball diamonds, football fields, tennis courts and perhaps a swimming pool. The young men and women who would find the playfield attractive would generally have no desire to invade the children's playground.

The larger portion of the youth of the city which no longer enjoys school contacts, must depend upon the municipality for recreation facilities. There are thousands of boys and girls in Des Moines who work in their leisure time they desire outdoor pleasures, games and sports. The tennis courts and baseball diamonds of the schools, however, are not always available. These young folks must look to the city for the recreation equipment which they need.

For them there must be built larger, more fully equipped athletic centers in parks or elsewhere.

Adults are generally more interested in quiet, passive recreation than in boisterous competitive sports. For them there should be:

neighborhood parks
large outlying parks
pleasure drives
small rest areas
community centers.
127.

The small section of the adult population that does enjoy tennis, baseball and similar activities will use nearby available athletic centers.

If the city has provided the above facilities systematically throughout its structure, its obligations in the matter of furnishing recreation opportunities will have been well discharged.
Principles and Standards for the Development of a Recreation System

A consideration of the dominant recreational interests of the various age groups reveals the need of certain types of grounds and facilities. These have already been listed. It is pertinent here to define and to illustrate their characteristics, to propose standards and to clarify the particular range of service of each.

Interior Block Playgrounds.

Realtors should be urged to consider the value of this useful device for keeping children off the streets and to plan their property so that more interior block playgrounds may be opened. Prospective apartment districts especially need such facilities. The chief requirement is to make lots 130 feet or more in depth, dedicating an easement for play purposes over the rear 20-40 feet of each tier of lots. This easement could be for the benefit of either the general public or for owners of property in the block.

Playgrounds.

Playground location in the city is amenable to the same formula recommended by qualified educational authorities for the location of public elementary schools. Each elementary school should serve a homogeneous residential district approximately a mile square and should be as near as possible the center of this district. Under such conditions a population of 3,000-12,000 would be found in the district when finally built up, and enrollment at the elementary school, grades 1 to 6 would be between.

A modern elementary school of this size is incomplete without an adequate playground, serving all the recreational needs of the children of the district. The school playground site should comprise at least five (5) acres and no other interests should occupy space in the same block. The returns from any investment in land for school or playground purposes will be reduced if it is located alongside railroads, in industrial districts, on major streets, on car lines or in districts that are losing residential character.
Playfields or Athletic Fields.

These recreation areas generally draw from districts approximately a mile and a half in diameter. A playfield should be found at every high school. Every high school site, in order to provide for an adequate playfield should comprise from 15 to 25 acres. Certain neighborhood parks and large parks should contain playfields and even parkway areas may be widened to permit development of such facilities. The factors which seriously affect the usefulness of playgrounds, such as railroad yards, industrial districts, car lines and major thoroughfares, do not interfere as much with the use of playfields, which attract older boys and girls.

Community Centers.

Every populous community should have a building for its indoor social and recreational activities. The public school is the logical neighborhood center. The public schools should be designed for such out-of-school uses. They need a gymnasium, auditorium, branch library, art gallery, and similar features. A first-class community center will attract attendance from an area a mile or mile and a half in radius.

Neighborhood Parks.

Being for general neighborhood use, these parks should be within walking distance. Use of the automobile to reach such parks should be unnecessary. A neighborhood park should center in approximately each square mile of residential territory; a determination of residential areas is a prerequisite to effective neighborhood park, school and playground location. Acquisition of neighborhood park areas should be well in advance of city growth. The appropriate size for a neighborhood park is from 30 to 60 acres. The minimum size should be 20 acres.

A thirty acre neighborhood park will have within a one-half mile zone about it some 960 acres of land. This land when subdivided will produce about 3200 lots of ordinary size, the owners of which should share in the cost of acquiring and developing such a park for neighborhood use.
The placement of a neighborhood park should be determined primarily by the boundaries of the district which it is to serve; considerations of terrain, tree growth and the like should not be permitted to weigh too heavily against centrality of location.

Large Parks or Reservations.

Topography should be the predominant factor in locating large parks. Rugged areas, forests, river and lakeside lands—all are suitable for large parks.

A system of such parks should afford opportunity for the city to develop each one with some distinctive feature: one might be a golf park, another a natural park through which no motor roads would run, another would offer floral displays and serve the city as an arboretum, still another would specialize in an animal collection.

Pleasure Drives.

Side, restricted traffic ways, designed to afford the motorist genuine pleasure in driving over them should connect all large parks. Such routes should take the form of boulevards where topography and existing land platting suggest straight formal lines, and parkways where streams may be followed and lines may wander over irregular terrain. (See Plate No. 1.)

In order to permit regulation of traffic pleasure routes should be selected preferably through unplatted territory and be so planned that heavy utilitarian traffic will find no necessity for using either boulevard or parkway as a thoroughfare. A major street should parallel every pleasure route. Existing streets or highways should not be considered as possible boulevards. It is practically impossible to restrict traffic on such routes to pleasure vehicles only. Courts are reluctant to sustain rules classifying traffic that are made to apply to a street that was originally dedicated to the public for ordinary street purposes. Fee titles should be secured to land acquired by purchase or gift for pleasure drive routes; the city should be in a position to determine the appropriate use of its property.
Specialized Facilities

Swimming pools, skating ponds, skating hills and the like are seasonal recreation features which may or may not be located in parks; considerations of service determine their location.

In conclusion it may be said that the city should aim to provide at least one (1) acre of park land for every 100 citizens and the total area devoted to public recreation including parks, playgrounds, community centers, boulevards, etc., should approximate ten (10) per cent of the gross area of the city.
Existing Recreation Facilities.

(Inset Plate No. 3 included in printed Recreation report, page 16.)
Existing Recreation Facilities.

The first public park was established in Des Moines when the city was founded. The earliest available maps of the city, then known as Fort Des Moines, show a public square where the present court house now stands. Park appropriations were not easily secured and actual purchases of park lands were often made only after courageous fights for them by small groups of far-seeing, public-spirited citizens.

Playgrounds are even of more recent origin. The first public play space for the children of this city was set aside only a few years ago. Prior to the beginning of the present century, land could not be condemned for playground purposes. The laws of the state did not recognize these institutions among the public necessities. The late development of interest in the play needs of children is shown further in the inadequate grounds of older public schools and also in the fact that the greater part of the central portion of the city is now built up solidly and few opportunities exist to secure satisfactory, unimproved property for public playgrounds.

It is obvious from an examination of Plate Number that Des Moines has not held many old prejudices against parks and playgrounds. There is widespread distribution of public areas suitable for recreation uses. These areas
are capable of rendering a health-building, nerve-
restoring, ameliorating service to city dwellers
that is no less deserving of appreciation than the
service rendered by pavements, street lights, water
supply and similar urban necessities which are accepted
without question.

The significant fact is, however, that Des Moines
does not have a complete system of recreation facilities
as such a system has been outlined on preceding pages.
Protected rear lot play areas for small children have
received little attention. There is only in the city
Supervised playgrounds numbered 13 in 1928, eight being
maintained in parks or on municipal property and seven
on school grounds. No playground is improved in a
really modern, finished manner.

In districts where children are concentrated,
school grounds are generally inadequate or poorly adapted
to playground uses and no suitable public areas are avail-
able. The city has been negligent in reserving park space
in the densely settled sections. is/Bs neum/ Plate Number
— only a small fraction of the population of the city is
reached by genuine neighborhood park areas. And these
lack the facilities which such parks should have.
The number of baseball diamonds, tennis courts, football fields and similar recreation facilities is scarcely a third of what a city of Des Moines' size should have.

The city, moreover, has no first-class swimming pool, does not use the river as it should for water activities, lacks a public stadium or athletic field, needs more golf courses, bridle paths, pleasure drives and several new large parks or forest reservations. The recreation equipment shown on Plate Number—one seems impressive but the map conveys no hint of the character of the various facilities indicated and affords no comparison with the sort of a recreation plan that the city ought to have. On following pages existing facilities will be more closely surveyed as a means of determining the specific needs of the city.
Interior Block Playground.

Play lots for babies and children up to five years of age should be provided more often throughout the city. Such lots are needed to replace the lost street play areas and the disappearing backyards.

The inability of small children to travel very far to reach a play lot means that there must be many of them. The responsibility for providing recreation areas of this type consequently has fallen upon individuals.

One of the most reliable and satisfactory means of providing play lots for small children comes through the planning of subdivisions.

One interior block playground has already been laid out in Des Moines. This play lot as it has been devised is not altogether suitable as an example, but is evidence of the fact that at least one subdivider in Des Moines has been awake to this new movement.

The developers of the property introduced the playground for the purpose of stimulating sales. The fact that the playground did help sales is merely further evidence of the fact that the people are constantly seeking new and better play opportunities for children. The idea of a protected play space in the center of the block has an appeal, for if such an area is not available, children will be playing in the street or out of sight.
Establishment of Future Protected Playgrounds.

There is no particular reason why a protected rear-lot play area should not be incorporated in each residential block, and accepted as a necessity on equal terms with alleys, easements, even the streets. The methods by which such play areas may be reserved and the policies which would be required for their management are the principal matters which stand in the way of a common acceptance of this idea.

The realtor or original promoter of the subdivision, therefore, must assume the initial responsibility for the creation of these community, back-lot play areas. The idea must be introduced at the time the land is platted. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recover such an area at a later date.

The principal requirement is that blocks be designed so that the interior may be used for children's play without lessening to any considerable extent the normal usefulness of individual lots. It is advisable, though not entirely necessary, that blocks be made somewhat deeper than they might otherwise be made. An interior block playground can be developed in a block in which lots only 125 feet deep have been platted. The rear yard requirement of the zoning ordinance will aid the plating
of lots of sufficient depth. Twenty-five feet off the rear of each lot would still leave 100 feet for building purposes, an amount that is entirely adequate for an ordinary residence. A lot 150 feet in depth or over, and real estate developers frequently plat lots exceeding this figure, will provide a splendid rear playground.

It would not be expected that the city would provide supervision for these playgrounds. Their management would be a responsibility of parents who should act through a committee or board selected for each block. In the deed setting the play area aside the right to devise rules and regulations for its use should be expressly given to such a group. In many modern subdivisions such a board of trustees has the management of all public and semi-public areas in the district. They may employ play supervisors if necessary but generally speaking it will be found that these spaces require no more attention than the vacant lots that children enjoy.
Diagram showing where children live who attended Des Moines Playgrounds 1925

(Insert Plate No. 7 included in printed Recreation Report, page 24)
Playground Service and Attendance 1925.

Plate Number... indicates graphically where children come from to attend the fifteen playgrounds maintained in Des Moines during the season of 1925.

This map reveals two very interesting facts. First, that the majority of children who attend playgrounds live within one-half mile actual walking distance and second, that playgrounds in parks generally have better attendance and draw from greater distances than playgrounds at schools or elsewhere. Recreational and educational authorities have long maintained that it was not unreasonable to expect children of elementary school or playground age to travel distances up to one-half mile. This principle is well confirmed by the experience of Des Moines. Out of the fifteen playgrounds, two show more than half the attendance coming from distances greater than one-half mile. In most cases, however, especially the playgrounds at public schools, practically all the children come from within one-half mile.

Perhaps the most significant fact revealed by this study concerns the attractiveness of playgrounds. Those which have been located in parks seem to have much greater drawing power, as shown by the number of children attending from long distances.
It must be noted however, that the personality and ability of playground directors is a factor in determining the attractiveness of a playground from the children's standpoint. This matter cannot be considered here. The assumption is that all directors were of equal ability. It is impossible by maps or diagrams to show precisely the character of a playground. The drawing power of each area, however, is as good a test as any of its effectiveness in the recreation system. Union Park has the largest attendance of any of the playgrounds and it is admitted to be perhaps the best of all in the city. The Riverfront playground has the poorest attendance, which is partly due to the uninviting character of the playground itself and also the fact that the district immediately surrounding is no longer dominantly residential in character. In the case of the Bird School playground and the Given School Playground, the comparatively low attendance may also be charged directly to the character of the grounds. The Scott school playground is large enough and can be made quite attractive. The Greenwood Park playground has good equipment but is too crowded. The croquet court is satisfactory but the play area for active games and sports is too small. Picnics frequently interfere with playground activities. The natural grades in this park do not lend themselves well to first-class playground
development. The R.S. Walker playground lacks a fence, planting, proper arrangement of apparatus and other attributes of a well-organized playground. The Benton and Logan School playgrounds are both of poor design and need to be enlarged. Good Park has two satisfactory tennis courts and baseball diamond. The play area is in a poor location for baseball however and needs regrading. The Drake Park playground needs a wading pool, croquet grounds and horseshoe courts. The baseball diamond also requires improvement. The rest of the park equipment is satisfactory. McHenry Park playground is comparable to Union Park although it lacks a baseball diamond, horseshoe and croquet courts. Meade Park playground is not satisfactory in its present location. The terrain of this park makes it practically impossible to build satisfactory tennis courts, volley ball courts, croquet grounds and the like. The playground on Southeast Sixth Street and Allen is level and barren. The area is too small. This playground stands in a district which appreciates these facilities and in which they do much good. Undoubtedly if a better playing area were provided the attendance would be materially increased.
Community Centers.

There are several semi-public agencies in Des Moines that offer recreation service such as one would find in a public community center. Among these may be mentioned the Y.M and Y.W.C.A.'s, Hoyt Sherman Place, the Jewish Community Center, and Roadside Settlement House. The latter together with the South Side Community Center, are maintained out of the Community Fund.

Community Centers similar in some respects to those noted above are now considered necessary elements in a well-rounded system of public recreation facilities. The playground and recreation commission of Des Moines should have certain centers in which it could carry on the varied activities of a complete all-year recreation program.

It should be possible in Des Moines to develop a system of community centers at public schools. The high school buildings are practically all arranged so as to permit such outside uses. An auditorium and a gymnasium are the chief requirements, aside from the permission of the Board of Education to use the buildings and an agreement for the division of expense. The statutes of Iowa fortunately grant authority to Boards of Education to enlarge the uses of the school plant for recreation purposes.
162.

Newer school buildings are frequently designed for out-of-school use and in many cities the school board expects to take the lead in making its buildings the natural centers for community, social and recreation activities.

A city of Des Moines' size, however, should not only have schools serving community needs, but there should be several such centers maintained and operated under municipal auspices. As has previously been suggested, recreation houses at the following locations would render valuable service in connection with other facilities developed there.

1. Swimming pool of natatorium and social center at First and Grand.

2. Athletic field house and recreation building at proposed new athletic center, north of University Avenue along west bank of river.

3. Field house and recreation center on Sixth Avenue north in connection with athletic field proposed near gun club grounds.

Each of the centers proposed would be located for service to a large population. Incidental uses of the buildings would practically guarantee proper returns from the investments. As social and recreation centers they would soon prove their worth to their respective communities.
Neighborhood Parks.

The neighborhood parks of Des Moines may be listed as follows:

(1) Neighborhood Parks.

Drake Park, 24th & Cottage, 5 acres.
Good Park - 17th and University, 15 acres.
Pioneer Park - S. 16th and Davis, 40 acres.
Mac Rae Park - S.W. 9th and Davis, 63 acres.
Moline Park - Oak Park Avenue, and 8th, 16 acres.
Philpott Tract - 30th and Urbandale, 15 acres.
Ashby Park - W. 35th Street near Amink Avenue - 10 acres.

Parks less than five acres are classed as small parks. Those less than 100 acres become neighborhood parks. The reason for this designation is not altogether arbitrary. A small park as defined above has a distinctly limited usefulness in the recreation system. These areas contribute to the amenities of the city all admit, but their recreational value is fixed by their size. Being small in area they render small service in the recreation scheme.

(2) Small Parks.

Bates Park - 3rd and Clark, 2 acres.
Carpenter Square - 24th and Cottage Grove, 1/3 acre.
Backman Park - Penn and Cleveland, 1/10 acre.
Franklin Square - East 14th and Grand 3 acres.
Lewis Park - 11th and St. Joseph, 4 acres.
Fort Des Moines Park, Elm and W. 1st, 3 acres.
Redwood Park, S. 17th and Dean, 1 acre.
Arlington Park - Arlington and 6th, 1/3 acre.
Prospect Park - 9th and Prospect, 1/2 acre.
Nash Park - 9th and University, 1 acre.
Jack Burke Park, both sides of University Avenue just east of River, 4 1/2 acres.
Kossauqua, Kossauqua Way and Park St., 1/2 acre.

The basic service of a comprehensive park system, however, is rendered by neighborhood parks, areas large enough to carry all the attractions which appeal to close-in city dwellers. Parks to some properly under this classification should contain at least 20 acres. Areas smaller than this are likely to lack many serviceable features.

Des Moines has seven parks which may properly be classed as neighborhood parks, but there is scarcely one which may be cited as a model. One of these, McHenry Park, in some respects deserves note. It lacks finish, due to its being improved without a good design plan, the size is small but the terrain is interesting and its location for service almost ideal. This park contains one of the most popular playgrounds, 318 children being regularly enrolled there during the 1928 season.
Within its range of service live approximately 5000 people. The district served by this park is unbalanced because of its proximity to the river but the territory for a distance of half a mile from it is almost wholly residential. Twenty or twenty-five percent of the property in this park neighborhood is still unimproved. When the district is fully built up at least 8000 persons will be tributary to McHenry Park and should look upon this area as the center of recreational activities. If this park were larger, less rugged and more attractively developed, it would establish itself more firmly as a center for the recreation activities of the neighborhood. All parks of this type should be thus esteemed and Des Moines should have three times the number it now has.
Plate Number Thirty-six

Children's Playgrounds 1925
Existing and Proposed.

(Insert Plate No. 10 included in printed Recreation Report, page 31.)
Large Parks and Pleasure Drives.

Plate Number shows the present status of the Des Moines park and boulevard system. It will be seen at once that only a start has been made toward the development of a system such as one would expect to find in a capital city. There are two boulevards and a fragment of parkway. Kingman Boulevard is only 35 feet wide. Folk Boulevard is 120 feet wide but like Kingman has a narrow center park strip that fails to give a proper impression of the character of the streets. Neither street is well-planted or satisfactorily lighted. Both, because of their relationship to each other and to the general street plan of the city serve as traffic ways or major streets instead of pleasure drives. Traffic restrictions are not enforced upon them. Kingman Boulevard starts at Cottage Grove Avenue and terminates at Swoeland Park. Folk Boulevard starts at University Avenue and runs to Greenwood Park. The fact that these boulevards are not continuous reduces their attractiveness as pleasure drives.

There is one short bit of a future parkway system that deserves note. In Windsor Park, west of Swoeland Park a ravine has been platted in accordance with early plans for an encircling parkway. The remainder of the parkway scheme was never carried out and this short
Windsor Place section remains. It is in a proper
location to be connected up and is so planned as to fit
well into a new parkway system through this section.

The larger parks of Des Moines are among the most
highly prized features of the city. Their general ex-
cellence as to location and character is evidence today
of the good judgment of the early park board which se-
lected and acquired these areas. If it were possible in
this study to score these large parks according to their
relative merits, their standing would perhaps be as
follows:

1. Waveland
2. Grandview
3. Greenwood – Ashworth
4. Union

The complete list of large parks is as follows:

(a) Greenwood, Grant Ave., 45th to 49th,
81 acres.

(b) Ashworth, South of Greenwood, 65 acres
Waveland Park, University, 49th to 56th,
190 acres

Grandview Park, Easton Blvd., and 29th to
33rd, 156 acres

Union Park and Birdland, N. 9th, Jefferson
to Guthrie, 175 acres.

When the parks noted above are examined with a
definite basis of criticism it will be found that all have
common faults. They lack design, organization, finish, the
character of permanence. Nature has done her share in
every case but the effort has not been matched by those
who laid out the parks or introduced improvements.
The chief fault seems to be the lack of general plans by which park betterment work may be systematically directed. It is impossible to determine the proper landscape treatment of a public park, especially if the work is carried over from year to year, merely by guessing at the beginning of each season what would be the most popular improvements. Every park regardless of size ought to be planned by a park specialist, a landscape architect trained to study the best methods of fitting the land to its appointed uses.

Waveland Park is a beautiful natural park, now used principally as a golf course. This use is appropriate for the terrain is too rugged for recreation of other forms. The park needs design, however. The roads are not permanent and in some cases should be relocated. There is no satisfactory entrance. Planting along the borders is also needed.

Union Park is a hodge-podge. The play area is poorly located. The gardens are bizarre and related to nothing else in the park. One road after another has been built until there is no circulation system. A well-studied general plan of revisions for this area
would increase its attractiveness and cut down upkeep expense.

Grandview Park is an area of great possibilities. It is practically unspoiled. Its use as a golf course is a large factor in creating its attractiveness. The natural character of the area should be preserved.

Greenwood and Ishworth Parks really become one. The latter is a delightful natural park which need not be civilized and trimmed up for many years. Greenwood has already had too much haphazard improvement work. Crude roads spoil its beauty. The play area and picnic grounds are in conflict. The use to which this park is subjected requires a more careful attention to its general plan. Permanent buildings should be built and placed where they will fit into a completed scheme.

These observations are more or less indicative of the impression created by the larger Des Moines parks. The areas are well planned for service. Their natural beauties are noteworthy. The improvements however, have not added to their attractiveness as they should. The planning of individual park areas is as much a problem as that of planning a system of such parks and cannot be overlooked if Des Moines wishes to acquire a metropolitan note.
Proposed Recreation Facilities.

A System of Playgrounds for Supervised Play.

Preceding discussion has dealt primarily with existing playgrounds and their effectiveness. It is appropriate here to consider ways and means of giving the city a better system of these important recreation areas.

The children who use playgrounds are substantially those who attend elementary schools, as was shown in Plate Number. If recreation continues to hold a place in the school curriculum, playgrounds will be necessary adjuncts of all elementary schools. They should be adequate in size. They should have proper supervision. They should constitute the playground system of the city, supplementing, if need be, the summertime, haphazardly placed inadequate play lots in parks and elsewhere. The scientific principles which govern the placement of elementary schools in the city will operate to insure the opening of a first-class, all year playground in every district.

The aim of the city plan, as regards the development of a system of playgrounds is to urge the reservation of space for them in advance of need. The Board of Education in Des Moines has recently shown a commendable willingness to provide generous school sites.
This policy may be accepted therefore as sufficient justification for the following recommendations:

1. The recreation activities of children of playground age should be directed through the public school system.

2. Every permanent elementary school should have a recreation director and the school building and its play area should function together throughout the entire year as the center for all children's activities. Supervision should be concentrated primarily in these school-playgrounds, the park playgrounds and others remote from schools being equipped for use without supervision. The economy of this plan is that children's playgrounds will be easily reached, will be in use all year, will serve as an educational medium and park areas will be left for older boys and girls who should not expect to play with children on elementary school grounds.

3. Efforts should be made constantly to enlarge older school grounds and bring them up to modern standards. In this matter the municipality can be of assistance through the condemnation and purchase of property adjacent to schools. If the Park Department feels a desire to invest public funds in land for a children's playground let it buy property adjacent to a school, not blocks away.

4. The specific system of playgrounds which it is recommended for Atlanta should develop at this time is shown on the map. Each play center serves a specific district. The principal centers are at schools although their spacing is such that additional grounds are needed in certain districts.

5. A study of juvenile delinquency and the conditions under which children live in various parts of the city leads to the recommendation that the following play centers should be developed at once.
1 - Crocker School. The ground of this school should be increased to include the entire block. The city could well aid the Board of Education in acquiring property to give this district a suitable play center for children.

2 - Longfellow School. The building is poorly placed for development of a satisfactory playground but the entire block should be acquired for this purpose. This school like the others of this list, has been designated as a permanent elementary school in the school survey now being followed. An enlarged playground will never be any less urgently needed here nor more easily secured.

3 - Lucas School. The entire block is needed here for a large population will be served.

4 - Brooks School, is in a position to serve a district needing a playground. The grounds of this school are fairly large but the block immediately west is needed.

5 - Logan School should have a playground covering the entire block.

6 - Cabin School. The entire block across the street should be a playground. The school board has already started purchases here.

7 - S.S. Laker playground should be made one of the finest in the city. At least two acres additional area is needed.

8 - Chamberlain playground should be improved and put to use. It will serve the Bird School district.

9 - Curtis School, should have a playground covering an entire block to take the place of the playground on I.e. 8th.

10 - Benton School should have an enlarged play area. The block north should be acquired and 13th Street closed.

The entire system of play centers recommended is presented in the following table with essential data as to probable future population and space requirements.
<table>
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<th>Street</th>
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<th>Row 3</th>
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*Note: Values are approximate and subject to change.*
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</table>

Legend:
- Steel: Used for roof beams
- Reinforced concrete: Used for large spans
- Wood: Used for small spans

Notes:
- Age refers to the age of the structure.
- Reason for removal indicates the reason for replacing the existing beams.
- Increase in height indicates an increase in the height of the roof.
Playfields and Special Athletic Facilities.

The recreational interests of boys and girls above the elementary school age cannot be satisfied on a playground. An athletic or playfield is needed. There must be opportunities for games and sports. Tennis courts, baseball diamonds, football fields and the like are in demand rather than sand piles, wading pools and merry-go-rounds.

Des Moines has a serious shortage of the recreation facilities which appeal to youth. The Board of Education is building two new junior high schools which badly need adjacent playfields. The splendid Roosevelt High School is the only one in the city that has an athletic field of adequate size near enough to be used efficiently. The public parks have less than half the proper number of tennis courts, and usable athletic facilities. The youth of Des Moines, as a consequence lack the general interest in games and sports which one should find.

The specific program to be followed in building up a satisfactory city-wide system of playfields is as follows.

For the future, let every new junior high school site be from 10 to 15 acres in extent and senior high school sites be from 15 to 25 acres. In addition to these school playfields there should be a system of municipal recreation centers in parks, neighborhood parks especially, so that certain recreation equipment is convenient to every youth.
in the city.

For the present, to serve better the boys and girls who are in high schools it is suggested that a playfield be created for the Washington Irving Junior High in the block bounded by Dilworth, 13th, Carpenter and 14th Sts, extending this area to include the half block south of Carpenter if necessary.

Additional purchases of property for a playfield to serve the Harding Junior High are now being made in the block east of the school across Cornell Street. This is a major thoroughfare of the city and cannot well be closed. The playfield for this school could have been better located in the block east.

The area Addition playfield could be increased by completing the purchase of the few remaining lots one Garfield and the east half block on 14th Street.

The Woodrow Wilson Junior High has a site of proper size. The new junior high site on Center Street is a very satisfactory area and can be used as both playfield and playground. The existing Junior High block is too small as it stands and should be consolidated with other holdings of the Board of Education by closing 44th Street.
Plate Number Thirty-seven

Athletic areas and playfields - existing and proposed - 1925.

(Insert Plate No. 12 included in printed Recreation report, page 34)
The problem of senior high school playfields is difficult to solve. Roosevelt is a model. The rest are in varying degrees unsatisfactory. Regardless of the need of a stadium for inter-school athletic contests, each senior high school should have a commodious recreation area adjacent to the school building. An area of approximately ten acres is needed and such areas cannot be obtained now for reasonable sums near West, North and East High. Lincoln High School playfield is near enough to be used for some recreation purposes. The North High stadium is more distant and therefore unsatisfactory. The best means of meeting this situation is for the Board of Education to develop to the best advantage stadium or athletic property already owned, making them attractive enough to offset the disadvantage of distance, adding to their areas if necessary to provide space for tennis courts, volley ball, outdoor basket ball, track and field sports and other games.

If the city will provide certain athletic centers as designated on Plate Number... for general public use, the high school boys and girls can find play and recreation opportunities even if their school authorities do find it impossible to provide the necessary close-at-hand facilities. There should be a model athletic field, for instance, in the west section of Union Park, off 6th Street. This athletic center, number 4 on the map, should have six additional tennis courts, two baseball diamonds, one foot-
ball field, an outdoor gymnasium and a community recreation building. The river area, and lagoons should be made more useful and water sports in summer should be a feature of this athletic center.

Another center of similar character, perhaps the most completely developed of any, should be built on University Avenue on property just north of the bridge approach. The geographical location of this unit of the system would make it the logical site for a Des Moines municipal stadium and athletic field. Its facilities should be -

1. Football field
2. Running track
3. Baseball diamonds
4. Tennis courts
5. Water sports
6. Community house
7. Outdoor gymnasium.

The western section of the city needs an athletic field and an area exists now adjacent to the new junior high school site on Center Street which could be acquired and improved jointly by city and Board of Education. This really should be an athletic park for a park is also needed here and the site lends itself well to such treatment. The facilities here should be -

1. Tennis courts
2. Community building
3. Skating pond
4. Outdoor gymnasium.

An athletic center on the east side is also needed.
A portion of the fairgrounds should be devoted throughout the year to recreation. Another site is suggested, as shown on the map, Number____. The facilities which should be available here may be listed as follows:

2 - Baseball diamonds
4 - Tennis courts
1 - Football field
1 - Running track
1 - Outdoor gymnasium.

On the south side the Black Diamond tract is most suitable for athletic field purposes. It is not large but probably can be designed to include:

2 - Tennis courts
2 - Baseball diamonds
horseshoe courts
volley ball courts
outdoor gymnasium.

In considering the recreation needs of youth, mention should be made of those facilities which may be developed apart from parks and athletic centers. Swimming pools and other special recreation features such as skating ponds, coasting hills, outdoor theatres, and the like cannot as easily be located by formula. They are best placed where they will be most intensively used, for that is the only authentic way by which the city may secure appropriate returns from its investment in such facilities.

It is doubtful if Des Moines would properly support more than one or two first-class swimming pools at this time.
The city has a site for a natatorium opposite the city hall. Funds should be provided at once to carry out the idea of building a well-equipped swimming pool on this plot. The building should be virtually a community center, arranged in such a way that the pool could either be used in winter or covered for dances and public meetings.

Other swimming pools of inexpensive types may well be built in certain parks. Union Park has a depression which would be appropriately used for such a purpose. Macdonald Park could accommodate a pool easily and one here would be easily reached. The matter of accessibility has a great deal to do with the success of a swimming pool. It is easy for a city to make a large investment in such a feature only to find that some adverse factor makes it a bad investment. It would be more advantageous for the city to build several small, well-constructed and accessible swimming pools than one large one. The latter often prove to be quite expensive and difficult to manage after they are built.
Plate Number Thirty-eight.

Distribution of Population and Proposed New Neighborhood Park Districts.

(Insert Plate Number 15 included in printed Recreation report, page 48.)
Neighborhood Parks and Proposed New Park Districts.

Des Moines has not heretofore differentiated neighborhood parks from others and has not calculated the service rendered by such parks in terms of districts. This is done in Plate Number . It shows that certain districts of the central portion of the city, where a fairly dense population is now found, are without park service of any sort. Other districts on the outskirts where the need for such parks will some day be equally acute, likewise lack neighborhood park areas.

The final solution of the neighborhood park problem in Des Moines is to be found in the adoption of a policy which will insure the reservation of land for a neighborhood park in approximately every square mile of residential territory. On the plate under discussion are shown numerous districts in which neighborhood parks are needed. In most of these districts suitable park areas are now available. It is too much to expect the city as a whole to purchase all the tracts required to give each district a suitable neighborhood park. The city of Des Moines has been attempting for many years to meet the demands of various neighborhoods which feel the need of parks. When funds which really belong to the city at large are spent on
parks that confer a distinct and tangible local benefit, there is occasion for valid protest on the part of neighborhoods which have been neglected.

The only sound policy for the city to follow in the acquisition and improvement of these local park areas is to make each benefitted district responsible for them. By placing the burden of acquiring neighborhood parks upon the people who will use them, the city frees itself of a difficult financial and administrative problem and releases certain funds which can be used for large parks and pleasure drives and other recreation facilities having city-wide significance.

Des Moines very much needs to have a neighborhood park development program such as has been described above. The districts needing parks of this type can well afford to pay for them. The general funds of the city will have to be apportioned in every way possible to enable Des Moines to secure the larger parks and connecting drives which should be a feature of the capital city.

It is difficult to set down the neighborhood park needs of the community in order of urgency. The central portion of the city which is now built up without such parks obviously need them most. But here the needs
are equal. One can see, looking at the map that if the three most central districts on the west side, the two on the east side and one on the south were given suitable park areas approximately in the center of the areas indicated, the present city would be well supplied with parks of this type.

Certain areas suitable for neighborhood parks are available in the districts referred to. The land will be costly, however. It may not be easily obtained. Before cost figures are at hand the only recommendation that can be made is that the possibilities of securing from 10 to 20 acres in each of the following districts be investigated further.

a - The district bounded by University Avenue on the north; by Twenty-fourth Street on the east; by Iversall on the south to Thirty-ninth Street; Thirty-ninth and Forty-second on the west following Thirty-ninth Street from Iversall Avenue to Center Street and Forty-second Street from Center to University Avenue.

b - The district bounded by Hickman Avenue on the north, Twenty-third on the east, University on the south and Forty-first Street and Beaver Avenue on the west.

c - The district bounded by Main Avenue on the north East Twenty-fifth Street on the east, University Avenue and Easton Boulevard on the south, East Fourteenth Street on the west as far as C. & N.W. Railroad, following C. & N.W. to Washington Avenue, then Washington Avenue on the north as far as the eastern branch of the C. & N.W. Railroad; then by the C. & N.W. Railroad on the west.
d - The district bounded by Easton Boulevard and Washington Avenue on the north as far as Twenty-ninth Street; Twenty-ninth Street as far as Garfield Avenue on the east; Garfield Avenue as far as E. Thirtieth Street on the north; E. 30th Street as far as the C.H.R. & P. R.R.; C.H.R. & F. R.R. as far as E. 30th Street on the south and E. 30th Street on the west.

e - The district bounded by the Des Moines River from southeast First Street to southeast Ninth Street on the north; southeast Ninth Street on the east as far as Broad Avenue; Broad Avenue on the south; South Union Street and southeast First Street on the west.

f - The district bounded by Ingersoll Avenue on the north to property line east of Terrace Road, then property line east of Terrace Road on the east to C.H. & St. P. R.R.; C.H. & St. P. on the south to a point in line with 39th Street Place. On the west along a line of 29th Street Place projected and 39th Street to Ingersoll Avenue.

The most pressing need at this time, however, is not for the acquisition of park areas but for the passage of a district law similar to the Elwell Law of Minnesota which will enable local communities to inaugurate their own machinery for the purchase of park lands needed. No amount of specific recommendations as to areas will accomplish as much as passage of such an act. The park department and city officials generally should be urged to support demands for legislation of this character.
Plate Number Thirty-nine

Typical Neighborhood Park Plan and Benefit District.

(Insert Plate No. 16, included in printed Recreation Report page 44.)
Typical Neighborhood Park Plan and Benefit District.

There is frequently a question as to the proper definition of a neighborhood park. There is also considerable doubt as to the method of determining the district which should benefit from the establishment of such a park and bear an assessment to pay for it. Plate Number may serve to clear up questions of this sort.

This is a typical neighborhood park area of about thirty acres designed arbitrarily to show the dominant features of a park of this type. The proposed benefit district is approximately a mile square. Certain major streets traverse the district and a boulevard approaches the park from two directions, running through one corner of it.

The following features of the park design will be noted.

1. Minimum amount of automobile road through park.

2. Dignified entrance.

3. Opportunities for formal planting of flowers along walks and drives where they will be appreciated.

4. Shelter house and concert pavilion.

5. Concert court.

6. Children's play areas.

7. Water features, lakes, pools, fountains, etc.

8. Natural grove for picnics.

9. Athletic facilities on meadow.
16 - Playfield with tennis courts, baseball diamonds, etc.

11 - Field house for showers and dressing quarters and community center activities.

A district in which such a park as this is situated will be glad to pay for it. The park will be bordered by a street on all sides and residences will face the open space. The greatest measure of benefit from the park will undoubtedly come to those who live across the street from it. The first assessment zone, therefore, includes all lots which face the park. The second zone takes the lots having next greatest benefit, the district being ordinarily two lots in depth or 250 feet. The third, fourth, fifth, to the eighth zone are fixed in similar manner upon the basis of proximity. Beyond the eighth zone, which would be approximately 2250 feet from the park there would be so little difference in advantage that this last or ninth zone would cover the remainder of the district.

This theoretical assessment problem has been based upon studies made by Reavis, A.C. Godward and S.A. Dowell of Minneapolis to determine the proper application of the Kneal Law under which Minnesota cities acquire neighborhood parks.
Plate Number Forty.

Proposed Large Parks and Pleasure Drives.

(Insert Plate No. 19, included in printed Recreation report, page 51.)
Large Parks and Pleasure Drives.

Plate Number ___ represents the basic structure of a complete system of large parks and connecting drives. The scheme fits Des Moines conditions and the program of development is not too ambitious for this prosperous, growing city to undertake.

The general plan presented herewith is not to be taken as a final recommendation, however, in preparing for action. The scope of this study did not permit the detailed surveys required to formulate a definite development program. These will have to follow. The plan shown will be found sufficiently complete however to be used as a basis of discussion. Space will not permit a complete description of all routes, the plan being practically self-explanatory.

New large parks are needed to give a proper balance to the Des Moines recreation system. Desirable park lands are still available near the city and in such locations as to fit properly into a general scheme of large parks and reservations. It would be financially and socially a sound investment for the city to secure tracts such as the following:

(a) One comprising from one to two hundred acres immediately east of and adjoining the State Fair Grounds. This would include beautiful hillside property merging into fairground lands and lower areas for active recreation in the Four-mile Creek valley.

(b) A wooded tract adjoining Pioneer Park on the east, about 60 acres. This would give Pioneer Park approximately 100 acres and
make it a first class recreation area.

(c) Three hundred acres on Indiana Avenue, south of the city limits, this to be for a period of years an airport for mail planes and others visiting Des Moines. The site is ideal for such a purpose from every standpoint and when this area becomes hazardous as a landing field and is abandoned, it will be found one of the most highly-priced park sites.

(d) A remarkable natural grove, exists west of 62nd Street on the south side of the Des Moines River. This area if preserved as a municipal forest would be practically an extension of the water works property. A mile or so farther down the river the state and the city have already joined to create a state park on land similarly needed.

(e) West of the city is a valley through which a meandering parkway is proposed. A section of this valley should be set aside as a large park. The area suggested is south of Hickman Avenue as may be seen on the map.

(f) Beyond the northwest corner of the city is a rugged section which contains many desirable park sites. A large park of two hundred acres or more should be reserved here.

(g) A large riverside park is needed north of the city limits. Some splendid groves exist here along the river.

(h) On Fourteenth Street north of Douglas Avenue is a muskrat swamp that could be dredged and made into a valuable water park of at least 50 acres. This area in its present state merely retards the development of the neighborhood. As a park it would add value to the entire surrounding district. Because of the cost of acquiring the land and developing this park could well be shared by benefit district and city at large.

(i) Another large park area will someday be needed immediately north of Grandview park. From two to four hundred acres would well be reserved here.
180.

It will be noted that practically all the park sites suggested recommend themselves because of superior topographic characteristics. Large parks are primarily retreats or spots where the city dweller may seek relief from disagreeable city conditions. They must be large and they should have dominant natural attractions in order to render service of a sort which neighborhood parks cannot be expected to render. In proposing these specific areas the principal thought was to distribute them evenly around the city.

Finally, there is a problem before Des Moines now to determine what its larger parks are to be used for and how they shall be permanently improved. Designs are needed for all the parks but before satisfactory plans can be made for such parks as Grandview or Greenwood or Union or any of those new parks proposed above, a decision should be made as to the most logical uses of each area. It is recommended accordingly that the system of large park areas be diversified as follows:

Grandview Park to be a recreation park, with the golf course its dominant attraction.

The proposed park east of the Fairgrounds to be the zoological gardens of Des Moines. Here a permanent, easily accessible zoo can be created. The animals can have plenty of space and be well kept. The proximity to the Fairgrounds will add to the popularity of the zoo.
Pioneer Park to be a natural scenic park with roads and improvements kept to a minimum.

Casey’s Lake proposed park to be a water park.

The grove on 63rd Street south to be a forest reserve.

The large park on Hickman west of the city to be a recreation park with modern tourist camp similar to one in Union Park.

The proposed park northeast to be an arboretum and botanic garden.

The proposed park on Des Moines River to be a water park.

Union Park to be a water park with neighborhood park characteristics and a modern tourist camp. The latter is now had.

Greenwood Park to merge with Ashworth and become a natural park with certain portions devoted to neighborhood park uses.

Waveland Park to be dominantly a recreation area, featuring golf, tennis, etc.

If Des Moines can create such a diversified system of parks it will find a remarkable increase in the number taking part in games and sports and indulging in healthful out-of-door exercise. The ultimate benefit to the city at large cannot be calculated.
Treatment of Des Moines River.

Des Moines needs to give greater attention to its rivers. The property acquisitions of the water company will perhaps make possible a wider use of the Raccoon but the Des Moines, especially above the dam, has possibilities that have not been touched. Just above the dam general use of the river for recreation is too hazardous. Above the University Avenue bridge, however, there should be a succession of lagoons with bordering park areas, all skillfully planned and developed as water parks. On the west bank a drive may be opened as shown from the Sixth Avenue bridge to University Avenue. The bank opposite should be under control of the municipality in all cases so that the views from the drive may be preserved. Similar riverside park areas and drives are proposed north of the Euclid Avenue bridge. South of the city a drive system originating in a proposed large water park around Casey's Lake is carried along the south bank from a point opposite Pioneer Park to the proposed major street bridge on the line of Park Avenue. The opening of these river drives will stimulate a much more active interest in the river and enable the city to reclaim sections of it that are fast becoming mere rubbish heaps and eyesores.
There is need especially for a more suitable treatment and use of the river through the civic center. Low dams should be constructed as shown on Plate Number  to give the water a lake-like effect. This water center would be useful for carnivals and festivals of civic nature. The setting would be appropriate except for the power plant and other industries along the river. It is especially urged that an effort be made to get the power company to dress its property up in keeping with that owned by the city. Only a few more steps are needed to complete the river picture in this section and make the Des Moines a feature of the recreation plan.
Plate Number Forty-one.

Parkways and Boulevards and Methods of Development.

(Insert Plate No. 20 included in printed Recreation report, page 53.)
Parkways and Boulevards and Methods of Development.

The boulevard plan presented previously under Plate Number____ was a clear statement of the needs of the city. It is pertinent now to show how this far-flung system of pleasure drives may be secured.

The first requirement is to acquire rights-of-way. The second is to devise plans for the appropriate improvement of these properties.

Before discussing these problems there should be an understanding of the nature of this whole undertaking. The primary object of any movement toward the execution of such plans as are shown on Plate Number____ is to secure a system of pleasure drives that will be worth its ultimate cost. Pleasure drives are for pleasure. If one cannot find pleasure driving or riding or walking over them and this dissatisfaction is likely to be general, the investment may reasonably be questioned.

To give real satisfaction pleasure drives should be:

1 - continuous
2 - diversified
3 - of proper width
4 - free from bad grades, dangerous, intersections, sharp curves
5 - smooth-surfaced
6 - well-lighted
7 - planted
8 - restricted as to traffic
9 - protected by building regulations, building lines, etc.
10 - laid through terrain which lends itself to scenic effects.
11 - similar in character to the parks which they should serve.
The plate referred to shows recommended methods of developing the various lengths of this drive system. Where the line runs through territory already built up or on hillside the width should be 30 feet and the roadway should be in the center. On fairly level terrain where considerable length of straight drive can be laid out, the width should be increased. Such sections may have single or double roadways and should have widths not less than 120 feet.

The chief problem before the city in carrying out a comprehensive plan of boulevards and parkways is to secure the necessary rights of way. There are two principal methods by which this may be done, (1) by gift or dedication and (2) by purchase or condemnation. In the first instance, the publication of the plan is of great importance. Owners of property through which the lines pass should be informed of the contemplated improvement. In many cases they will be willing to give the city the required strip, outright or in connection with the subdivision of their property. The proposed Des Moines pleasure drive system has a total length of 70.39 miles. Of this length 50.9 miles are laid out through unimproved property where an opportunity exists to secure sections of the route as new subdivisions are platted. This is a
very economical and generally satisfactory, but exceedingly slow, method of acquiring routes for pleasure drives. The economy of the method is an advantage, but the delays and uncertainties involved place a serious handicap upon the city. It may be generations before a certain portion of the route can be completed if the subdivision of property above the line must be awaited.

Generally speaking it is more satisfactory to undertake the complete execution of the entire plan or generous sections of it at one time. Two methods are available to acquire and develop routes: (1) by general bond issue, the obligation being assumed by the city at large and (2) by designation of benefit districts and special assessment.

It is believed that a special assessment principle will be more suitable for acquisition of pleasure drive routes than bond issues. The Des Moines system proposed would lend itself well to division into districts. The fact that so much of the designated route is in unplatted territory would make possible a dedication of rights-of-way without cost, leaving the chief item of expense that of acquiring the relatively few parcels of improved property. The improvement expense could be deferred if advisable until settlement of the districts had reached a certain point.
This whole problem of finance is so complicated by law, politics, local precedent and other factors that no flat statement may be made that this method is better than that or that such and such a plan should be followed. If the city of Des Moines has any interest at this time in developing a comprehensive boulevard system it may easily be discovered by a Park Department that is progressive. It is recommended that this department inaugurate surveys immediately along the lines shown and make investigations to determine the most suitable assessment districts for carrying out the comprehensive pleasure drive plan.