

## DES PERES PARK

### INTRODUCTION



Existing Multipurpose Court



Des Peres Playground and Sprayground



Two-acre Fishing Lake

Des Peres Park, a 42.5 acre metropolitan park, is located west of Interstate 270 on Manchester Road at Ballas Road. The park is located on property that was previously the Lutheran Orphanage, the first orphanage west of the Mississippi River, and contains several buildings and historical markers from the orphanage. The park is bordered by residential development to the north and east, Ballas Road to the west and a mix of retail and institutional land uses, as well as access to Manchester Road to the south. The park size and location in the heart of Des Peres have made this park the city's most visible and heavily used park. The park provides a wide variety of amenities including active recreation, natural passive spaces, city buildings, and an historical site. This variety attracts city residents of all ages to the park. Parking for approximately 100 vehicles is provided within the park and is shared with the City Hall and Parks Maintenance buildings. During events where additional parking is required, the city has agreements to share parking with adjacent institutional and commercial developments.

The active recreation opportunities provided in Des Peres Park begins with athletic fields. The three ball diamonds and two soccer fields located in the center of the park are used for sports camps, leagues, and practice facilities. Along with the athletic fields, the tennis center is the other dominant active recreation amenity located in Des Peres Park. The tennis center consists of six lighted courts and a small storage shed on the south side of the park. The park also provides a multi-purpose court, fitness trail, sprayground, and three playground areas.

The passive recreation and natural characteristics within the park provide alternative recreation opportunities for park users. The paved trail system within the park provides users with an over one-mile loop that covers the perimeter of the park. The two acre fishing lake is a signature amenity in the northern section of the park. There is one large pavilion, a gazebo, and restroom building within the park. These facilities along with several picnic sites throughout the park make Des Peres Park an ideal location for large gatherings and small picnics.

The trail passes along the natural wooded edges of the park and combined with the topography create quiet, natural settings within the park. A drainage swale along the south edge of the park is left natural with a mowed lawn edge along the trail, then channels into a concrete culvert as it passes through the eastern parcel of the park.



Lake overlook with seating



Boardwalk



Sand Volleyball Court

## DESIGN INTENT

Recommendations for Des Peres Park are intended to create an organized and updated park that will better serve the community and increase revenue potential for the City. This can be achieved by reorganizing existing park elements and by adding amenities identified with the community and staff. There are four main focus areas for the recommendations. These are the lake, amphitheater, tennis center and east section.

The lake is a destination amenity within the park. Users visit the park to walk around, picnic near, and fish in the lake. Recommendations are intended to improve the aesthetics of the lake, as well as its relationship to the surrounding park. Reshaping the lake and creating a series of falls at the west end will give the lake a more natural look. Softening the edges with aquatic plantings and natural rock outcrops will improve water quality and still provide access to the water edge for fishing. Realignment and replacement of the bridge along with the addition of a boardwalk at the lake edge will allow continued interaction with the water while enhancing the approaches to the lake. Finally, the addition of a small pavilion and overlook will create a terminus at the east end of the lake. All of these improvements will be linked by a lighted loop path around the lake.

Developing a community gathering location to meet existing needs became a priority during the planning process. An amphitheater located on the hillside south of the lake is the major addition to a reorganized community gathering area within the park. Due to space constraints and inadequate facilities in the existing building, the parks maintenance offices and yard should be relocated to Public Works. The existing building and yard will be removed along with the existing pavilion to open the visual and physical connection from the parking lot and City Hall to the interior of the park and the lake. A new pavilion adjacent to the lake with paved plaza and an informal amphitheater compliment the existing playgrounds and restroom to create a central gathering space for community events and concerts. The informal design of the area allows for everyday use of the space for picnics, day camps, and open play.

The tennis and sports court area is located north of the existing tennis courts. The reorganization of this area begins with the removal of the old Cremer School. Removing this structure will create space to develop a tennis center building and additional courts. The building will serve the tennis courts and could provide additional storage or pavilion space. The existing multi-purpose court will remain, and a small shelter with drinking fountain just east of the court will overlook the ball fields, and



Shelter with Rock Outcrop Overlook



Exsting Drainage Swale

create a place for people to congregate while waiting for the courts. Between the multi-purpose court and the existing tennis courts is flexible open space where additional amenities can be added. This space could be developed as additional tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, multi-purpose courts, or a combination of these as decided by the City of Des Peres and its residents.

An additional parking lot is proposed just south of the existing tennis courts. This parking lot would provide an additional 50 parking spaces for a facility where parking is at a premium. This location would provide access to the main loop trail as well as serve the tennis center and other courts. This parking lot would be accessible off the main entry drive from Manchester Road. The design of the lot should be sensitive to existing trees and views into the park.

The final focus area is the eastern parcel of the park. This three-acre parcel links the park to Bansbach Drive and the surrounding residential neighborhood to the east. Recommendations for this parcel are intended to enhance the natural setting of the area and improve the pedestrian experience. Removing the concrete swale and creating a more natural drainage swale with rock and plant material will make this area more attractive and enhance the wildlife habitat in the park. Additional canopy and flowering trees along with evergreen buffers will make the space more inviting to park users and enhance the views into the park from neighboring residences. Pedestrian improvements include removing the straight line sidewalk and providing a small loop with bridge crossing the drainage swale. A small overlook picnic shelter along the swale at the west end of the parcel will provide park users views into the space and a more private picnic location.

An aerial photo of the existing park conditions and the park recommendations follow.

## Des Peres Park Existing Conditions





Proposed Lake Improvements



Lake Edge with Boulders



Natural Spring with Waterfalls



Lake with Aquatic Edge Planting

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### GENERAL:

All facilities including pavilions, playgrounds, and walking paths to meet ADA standards.

### ENTRIES:

- The park has two vehicular and pedestrian entries along high-traffic roads. These entries are located along Ballas Road and Manchester Road, and need to be easily identifiable to park users.
- The park has a third pedestrian entrance along Bansbach Drive on the east side of the park. This entrance should be more identifiable to park users.
- Park standard signage with landscaping would provide subtle but identifiable entries to the park.

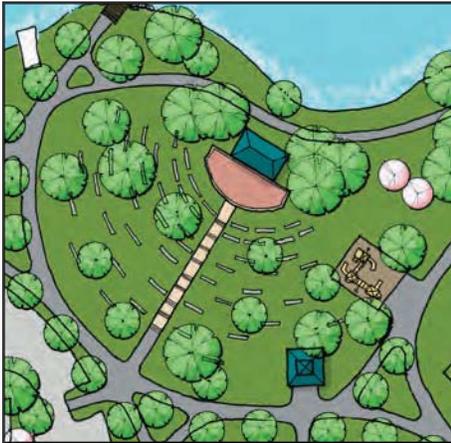
### LAKE IMPROVEMENTS

- Dredge the lake to alleviate siltation.
- Modify lake edge and shape to create a more unified and natural appearance.
- Use boulders and aquatic planting at water edge in place of mowed lawn and rip-rap. This will create a more natural appearance to the lake and provide a clean edge. The boulders will allow access to the water's edge while the plantings will reduce lake maintenance and also filter runoff helping to maintain the water quality.
- Create a natural spring with rock outcrop and waterfalls at the west end of the lake along Ballas Road. Use landscape to enhance the area.
- Provide a six feet wide boardwalk along the lake edge to give park users safe access to the water edge and provide an additional fishing location.



Bridge

- Construct a new bridge across the lake. The bridge should be designed in the boardwalk style, and should be six to eight feet wide to allow for parks maintenance vehicles to drive across.
- Create a terminus with a small pavilion or shelter and an overlook at the east end of the lake. The pavilion would provide park users another opportunity to enjoy the lake and a small playground along with the existing swings would make this a destination shelter within the park.



Proposed Amphitheater

AMPHITHEATER:

- Create a flexible space that will serve park users on a daily basis while providing a location for community events throughout the year.
- Provide a large shelter or pavilion located at the base of the slope along the lake edge. This shelter would provide daily park users a picnic location or gathering space, and would serve as a band stand or stage for special events. The shelter should have a barbecue area and electrical service, and if desired it could have water, rest rooms and storage.
- A concrete plaza located in front of the pavilion would provide additional space for special events, and could be designed as a sprayground for daily use in the summer.
- A central concrete walk and steps lead from the pavilion and plaza up the hillside to the main loop path. The steps could be concrete or stone slabs.
- On either side of the central walk is a lawn hillside interrupted with irregularly spaced 18 -24 inch high stone slab seating benches. The spacing and layout of this seating is more regular and defined near the pavilion, but further out into the hillside their numbers decrease and become more spread out. This provides more open green space within the park while providing an ideal area for seating at concerts or other events.
- The design of the amphitheater space is reinforced with landscape. Foundation planting and trees at the pavilion provide a seasonal color for events while framing views to the lake beyond. Large canopy trees on the hillside break up the large lawn area and provide areas of shade for those sitting on the lawn and stone seating.



Naturalistic Amphitheater with Boulder Slabs for Seating



Amphitheater with Spray Area



Swings



Proposed Layout of Tennis Center and Courts



Tennis Court Example



Park Pavilion Example

PLAYGROUNDS:

- The existing playgrounds are to remain because they are newly installed and are still in good condition; however, a swing area has been added near the main playgrounds. The existing playgrounds and new swings are centrally located near restrooms and the amphitheater.
- The new swing area should have engineered wood fiber safety surfacing.

TENNIS CENTER AND SPORTS COURTS:

- The addition of a tennis center building near the existing courts will provide needed space for the tennis program, and could include rest rooms, concessions, and additional storage space for park equipment. This building will also serve as a gathering space for park users and those waiting for the courts to become available.
- A retaining wall will be needed to transition from the existing tennis courts and maintain the usable open space to the north.
- The open space can be programmed for a variety of uses based on the needs and desires of the community. There is space for four additional tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, additional multi-purpose courts or a combination of these amenities.
- An evergreen screen may be needed to buffer the upper courts from the lower tennis courts if the upper area is programmed with a use other than tennis.
- The existing multi-purpose court is to remain. A ten foot tall fence should be added around the court with a gate at each end to keep balls and other equipment on the court.
- A small pavilion with drinking fountain is located just east of the existing multi-purpose court. This pavilion would serve the courts and provide an overlook to the ball fields.



Walking/Jogging Trails



Fitness Circuit Equipment



New Parking at South End of Park.



Proposed dry stream with native plants.

TRAILS AND WALKS:

- All trails within the park should be minimum 6 feet wide paved asphalt.
- A small loop has been added around the lake. This loop and the connector trails to Ballas Road and the parking lot should have low level security lighting for night walkers.
- A central north/south walk connects the lake and amphitheater with the tennis center and sports courts.
- The connection to Bansbach Drive should be less linear and branch off to create a small loop as it connects into the main loop path.
- A small overlook pavilion at the intersection of the east parcel and main park land provides park users a quiet picnic location and views of the natural character of the parcel.
- A one-stop exercise/fitness center is proposed along the trail.

PARKING:

- To provide more parking, spaces should be added along the north and east edges of the existing parking lot. Modification of the north landscape island would also increase parking.
- A new parking lot is proposed south of the existing tennis courts. By creating a loop off of the entry drive, approximately 50 new parking spaces could be added. The design of the lot should work closely with the existing grades to minimize disturbance.

LANDSCAPE:

- To beautify the park and to provide shade and seasonal interest, additional canopy and flowering trees are proposed along walks and at structures. In addition more canopy, flowering, and evergreen trees are proposed in the east parcel to buffer neighboring residences and to add seasonal interest.
- The existing concrete swale at east parcel of park would be replaced with native plants and a dry stream. This naturalization would create wildlife habitat, enhance the



Small Park Pavilion with Picnic Table



Public Art

east parcel's character, naturally filter the runoff, and would reduce the amount of mowed lawn in the park. However, these modifications to the storm drainage would require engineering review.

**SITE FURNISHINGS:**

- To unify the park, standard site furnishings should be chosen and implemented throughout the park. This includes benches, trash receptacles, and light fixtures which would be placed conveniently throughout the park.
- Public art could be a good opportunity to increase the appeal of the park and could also be an opportunity for partnerships and donations to help offset the cost of the artwork and installation.
- Responding to resident input by providing more picnic opportunities along the trails within the park.
- Standard park signage should be implemented to identify all City of Des Peres Parks. This signage could vary in detail from park to park depending on the character of each park.





View of Des Peres Park Proposed Master Plan