George Washington Park Master Plan

DEPARTMENT OF METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT/DIVISION OF PLANNING
For: Department of Parks and Recreation
GEORGE WASHINGTON PARK MASTER PLAN
CONTENTS

Introduction .......................... 1
Address & Classification ................. 2

History of Park Development ............... 2
Location .................................. 3
Park Service Area ........................ 3
Current Recreational Facilities .......... 5
Planning Data ............................... 8
Neighborhood Land Use .................... 10
Site Inventory and Analysis ............. 10
Public Meetings ............................ 14
The Master Plan ........................... 15
Conclusion .................................. 18

List of Tables
Table 1 Public Park Facility Inventory
for Service Area ....................... 5
Table 2 School Recreation Facility Inventory
for Service Area ....................... 6

List of Figures
Figure 1 George Washington Park Service Area .... 4
Figure 2 Park Service District .............. 7
Figure 3 Comprehensive Plan ................ 11
Figure 4 Washington Park Existing Conditions ... 13
Figure 5 George Washington Park Master Plan .... 16

Appendix
Table 3 Demographic Data .................. 19
Soil Types in Washington Park .......... 20
WASHINGTON PARK

ADDRESS: 2801 East 30th
          Center Township

CLASSIFICATION: Community Park

SIZE: 128.7 acres

Park Classification: Washington park is designated in the
1981 UPARR Action plan as a community park.

Community Parks offer a wide range of leisure activities and
are designed to serve several neighborhoods of the city.
These parks provide recreational facilities and organized
programs centered around family use. They are designed to
withstand intensive use, yet still contain open space.

HISTORY OF WASHINGTON PARK DEVELOPMENT

Washington Park was initially acquired by the Department of
Parks and Recreation in 1923. Landscape Architect A. W. Brayton
conducted the first master plan in 1929. Featured amenities of
Brayton's master plan included tennis courts, a golf course,
bridges and a water system with both wading and swimming pools.
The plan proved to be more of a "wish list" than anything else,
since most of the facilities were never constructed.

The park was named Dearborn Park during this time. The year
1932 saw the two hundredth anniversary of George Washington's
birthday. In observance of this historic event, the park was
renamed Washington Park to commemorate our nation's first
president.

Limited improvements were added to the park during the thirties;
basketball diamonds, croquet courts, and brick ovens for parties.

The park maintained its limited recreational facilities during
the forty's but was being used by the Boy Scouts as a day camp.
Site improvements began again in the fifty's with drainage
projects and new lighting. Talk began about the possibility of
locating a zoo within the park.

In 1960 a lease was signed with the city and the Indianapolis
Zooological Society to locate a zoo in George Washington Park.
The City set aside 89 acres for the development of the zoo and
in 1964, a one million dollar zoo opened. Throughout the years,
improvements and developments have continued at the zoo.
Introduction

Washington Park is presently the home of the Indianapolis Zoological Society. The Society is proposing it be allowed to relocate its facilities in White River State Park in 1988, thus permanently vacating Washington Park. At that time, the Department of Parks and Recreation will acquire the relinquished zoo grounds and buildings.

Both the neighborhood and the Department of Parks and Recreation recognize the significant opportunity to renovate and refurbish the park in an effort to maximize the utility of the park to area residents. In order to accomplish this refurbishing task, this Park Master Plan has been developed. The components of this Master Plan include:

1. The history of the socio-demographic characteristics of the Park Service District.

2. The physical assets of the park itself.

3. The development policy of the DPR.

The Park Master Plan is a distillation and refinement of information concerning the Washington Park Service District. It is intended to serve as a guide for future development efforts.
Location

Washington Park is located at 2801 East 30th Street in Center Township, see Map 1. It is adjacent to the Oxford Neighborhood Association on the north and Martindale-Brightwood Neighborhood Association on the south. The park lies approximately four miles northeast from downtown. The park boundaries are 30th Street on the south, 34th Street on the north, Temple Avenue and Eastern Avenue to the west and LaSalle Street to the east.

Access to the park by automobile from the north or south might use Keystone Avenue, a primary arterial located three blocks west of the park, east or west travelers could use 30th Street, a primary street, or 34th Street, a secondary street. Access from downtown would be from Interstate 70 to Keystone Avenue.

Park Service Area

Washington Park is located in Park Service District Seven. Each of the fifteen Park Service Districts in Marion County were established around a "community park", however, this service area contains two community parks which are Washington Park and Douglass Park. District Seven's Service Area lies almost entirely within the northern half of Center Township. See Figure 1.

The boundaries for the service area are: the Monon Railroad tracks on the west, Emerson Avenue to the east, I-70 to the south and Fall Creek to the north. See Figure 1.

The service area for Washington park includes several surrounding neighborhoods. The boundary for the service area was established by the physical barriers that separates neighborhoods; such as railroad tracks or the interstate. Those outside this service area tend to find recreational facilities within their own neighborhoods. People who wish to utilize Washington Park that live outside the service area will probably have a specific reason to do so such as a family reunion, an office picnic, or the visit to the zoo. Currently, Washington Park does not fully serve the park service area due to its limited recreational facilities. As more facilities are constructed, more recreational needs of this service area will be addressed and will draw users from all parts of the service area.
G. WASHINGTON PARK SERVICE AREA

PARK LOCATION
CURRENT RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The first step in measuring the need for additional recreational facilities in an area is establishing a complete inventory of already existing facilities. See Figure 2. The two dominant recreation sources are the facilities at public parks and public schools. Another significant resource which should be recognized is privately owned recreational facilities. Figure 2 locates the public parks and schools within the district. Tables 1 and 2 list the existing recreational facilities respectively within the area.

Washington Park service district contains ten parks (See Table 1) providing both active and passive recreational areas. All of these parks are developed, giving a total of 253.6 acres in terms of park land supply. The service area has 5.7 acres of park land per 1000 population, while the county has 8.0 acres per 1000 population. This implies the service district is in need of more park land. Washington Park will need to be carefully developed to its potential to help alleviate this need.

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<th>PARK</th>
<th>CLASSIFICATION</th>
<th>SIZE(ACRES)</th>
<th>Basketball Courts</th>
<th>Ball Diamonds</th>
<th>Tennis Courts</th>
<th>Playgrounds</th>
<th>Sport Fields</th>
<th>Swimming Pools</th>
<th>Parking (Spaces)</th>
<th>Picnicking Areas</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
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*TABLE 1 - Public Park Facility Inventory for Service Area*

*X - denotes at least one*
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<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>CLASSIFICATION</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>Basketball Court</th>
<th>Ball Diamonds</th>
<th>Tennis Courts</th>
<th>Playgrounds</th>
<th>Playfields</th>
<th>Swimming Pools</th>
<th>Soccer Fields</th>
<th>Gymnasium</th>
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<td>FOREST MANOR</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIAN COLEMAN</td>
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<td>1740 E. 30th</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOYCE KILMER</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>3421 N. Keystone</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>FLORO TORRENCE</td>
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<td>5050 E. 42nd</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2 - School Recreation Facility for Service Area**

*X - Denotes at least one*

The service district does contain three subneighborhood parks and four neighborhood parks providing facilities typically found in these parks' classifications; allowing Washington Park to be designed as a community park. However, also within and just outside this service district are two community parks, Douglas and Wes Montgomery, so the development of Washington Park should not duplicate existing recreational facilities if it cannot be utilized to its full potential. Douglass Golf Course is also located within the park's service area.

Few recreational facilities are available through school owned properties, as shown in Table 2. Four of the five schools are elementary and contain recreational facilities only geared for young children. The junior high does contain some facilities for all age groups, but it should be noted that there may be potential conflicts (e.g., school hours) that may limit public usage. As such, school facilities should not be considered a recreational facility substitute to the park system.

Privately owned recreational facilities that have a significant implication for the development of George Washington Park are those facilities that would commonly be found within a community park. These facilities would primarily include swimming pools, a community center building, tennis courts and basketball courts. Within the service district is located the Wheeler Boy's Club, 2310 East 30th Street, (1/4 mile to the west) which contains two basketball courts and a swimming pool (Wheeler Boy's Club is open to everyone); and Forest Manor Multi-Service Center, 2957 East 38th Street, (1/2 mile to the north) which offers recreational programs during the summer months for youth and adults but does not own active recreational facilities for basketball or tennis courts (they cancelled their summer programs for 1986). St. Peter Claver Center, 3110
PARK SERVICE DISTRICT

PARKS
1. G. WASHINGTON
2. DOUGLAS
3. BECKWITH MEMORIAL
4. ROSE LAWN
5. ACORN
6. J.T.V. HILL
7. OAK HILL
8. R-70

SCHOOLS
1. JULIAN COLEMAN
2. FOREST MANOR
3. JOYCE KILMER
4. EDGAR EVANS
5. FLORO TORRENCE

Figure 2
Sutherland Avenue, has a community building for meetings and events but no active recreational facilities. There are five apartment complexes within the service district, all which do contain some club houses or outdoor active recreation areas (baseball diamonds, tennis courts, etc.).

It should also be mentioned that the housing density (lot size) or available open space influences the demand for recreational opportunities. This area has smaller lot sizes providing little open space for play.

PLANNING DATA

Table 3, located in the Appendix, represents a compilation of demographic data for the park's service area and similar data for Marion County, to facilitate an assessment of the character of the park's service population. This data has been collected for both 1970 and 1980 in order to illustrate changing trends. Following is a summary of the major demographic characteristics and trends.

Population

As is typical of an inner-city area, the population decreased significantly between 1970 and 1980. The service district population declines almost three times as much as the county as a whole. Generally, a decrease in population means less pressure on the use of parks and recreation facilities. However, this declining population may be evolving its own characteristics that require recreation opportunities different than what is offered by existing parks and facilities.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic relating to recreation demand is age groups. Different age groups have different recreational needs. This service district exhibits aging trends similar to those of the county. The population is steadily growing older. The number of school age people ages 5-19 declined 3% in the district, and 5% throughout the county. This indicates that a smaller demand for tot-lots, playgrounds, etc. exists. These young people should be considered as being somewhat immobile, and should have most of their recreation needs addressed at the neighborhood-subneighborhood park level. Excursions outside of the neighborhood would most likely be with parents to facilities such as Washington Park with family-oriented opportunities. The 20-59 age group exhibits a moderate increase. And since this group is responsible for most child rearing, this increase may eventually be accompanied by an increase in the 5-19 year age group. At any rate, this 20-59 group is quite physically active, and thus have need for a wide variety of recreation opportunities. Further, because they are also a fairly mobile set, they have access to recreation opportunities on a much wider geographic range.
The final group is the 60+ years group. This group is slightly decreasing in the park service district. While this group may not be as active as younger groups, it still represents a significant portion of the population requiring some form of recreational opportunity.

**Housing**

Of the 14,093 households in the service district, 68.6% are families with two or more persons. This large segment indicates a potential demand for recreation opportunities that are oriented toward the "family unit". This is further enhanced by the fact that almost 43% of the households have one or more persons under age 19. The number of married-couple families is fewer in the service district than in the county, and more than 10% of the households are single parent households. These single parent households are faced with the difficulty of raising children without the benefit of both parents. Consequently, even though this is a characteristic that will hopefully decline, the provision of adequate recreation opportunities should help to alleviate some of the difficulties of single parenting.

The number of households with one or more persons over 65 years (22.4%) is just slightly above that of the county-wide level of (20.3%). These households simply reflect the overall trend of an aging population. The implication of older households is the possible lack of transportation, and thus the need for neighborhood-subneighborhood recreation opportunities.

**Income**

The median family income for the service area is 12% less than the county median. This generally indicates that there is less money to be spent on recreational opportunities, and that those opportunities provided by the parks should allow for an optimal recreational experience.

**Education**

Through high school, the park service district is better educated than the county as a whole. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of high school graduates (25 years old and older) increased from 19% of the population to 22% of the population. Although the figure for college graduates drops to 2.4% of the population, the fact that an increase was noted is a good sign. What does this mean for recreation? Basically, that a more well-informed (educated) populace will improve its chances of being gainfully employed; this higher employment rate will alter not only park usage, but also the attitudes toward leisure time. Employed people spend less idle time, and therefore use their idle or leisure time more efficiently or creatively. Consequently, a well-developed park system will provide the opportunities for this leisure expression.
NEIGHBORHOOD LAND USE

The land surrounding Washington Park is comprised mostly of residential use. The residential areas are comprised of median density homes of six units per acre. Some apartment complexes are located to the north of the park. The Oxford Neighborhood Association's boundaries borders the park on the north and the Martindale-Brightwood Neighborhood Association boundaries borders the park on the south. Within the Park Service district other neighborhood organizations also reside, which are: Willing Workers Civic Neighborhood Association, Meadows-Fall Creek Civic Association, and Forest Manor South/Gladstone Area.

There are no large commercial areas directly around the park; however, residential units along Keystone Avenue are being converted into commercial establishments forming a "strip development". This comes into view north of 37th Street. South of 37th Street commercial areas are located at the intersections on Keystone Avenue.

Within the Park service area, there are also eight parks ranging in size from Douglass Community Park, 30 acres down to Acorn Park, a sub-neighborhood park of 3.5 acres. The recreational facilities proposed for Washington Park will complement the existing facilities found within these other parks.

Light industry is located on the west and south periphery of the Park's service area. Conrail and Southerland have railroad lines which delineate the edges of this Park's service district. Figure 3 on Page 11 shows the land use surrounding George Washington Park.

SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

A summary of the major site factors to be considered in the design of the master plan is listed below. A map of existing conditions which depicts many of the factors is illustrated in Figure 4.

- The entire park is 128.7 acres.

- Existing recreational facilities within the park are:
  - 5 tennis courts - poor condition
  - 2 basketball courts - good condition
  - 3 ball diamonds - fair condition
  - 3 parking lots - needs striping

- The park topography is undulating with two areas of level open grass fields. Slopes within the park will need to be addressed responsively in order to control possible erosion problems.
Park land consists of urban soils. There are five dominant kinds of soils within the park. They are shown on Table 8 as to their recreational development. A complete description of these soils are described in the appendix along with a map showing their locations.

Native hardwood trees exist on much of the site, however most of the understory has been removed.

Two roads, Rural and Dearborn bisect the park, running north and south. Two inner private roads, which now are blocked off, did connect Rural and Dearborn.

The zoo grounds contain several buildings, especially designed for their animal inhabitants. Re-use of these buildings may be difficult for recreational purposes.

Entrances into the park are not well defined, the periphery of the park needs improved landscaping to give a "park-like" atmosphere.

The west and east property line abuts residential, so proposed developments need to be sensitive to its neighbors.

60 acres of the park is in open space which contain both wooded areas and open areas.

The existing parking lot located adjacent to the tennis courts is in need of upgrading. No curbing is existing with vehicles driving across the center islands.

The parking lot located on the east side of the park is unstripped and seldom used as few recreational facilities are located around it.

Many of the existing trees are mature and are dying. Reforestation should be implemented.

Rural Street and Dearborn Street are asphalt streets with no curbs. As cars pull off its edges to park, the street edges are beginning to deteriorate.

Dirt paths do exist within the park leading to the surrounding neighborhoods. A hard surface walk could be provided.

Roads and parking lots have bollards surrounding them, which have prevented access onto the park grounds by automobiles. However, these bollards were old railroad ties with some of them deteriorating and are in need of replacing.

Basketball players and spectators often park along the street edges and not in the parking lot adjacent to the courts. This often creates a bottleneck in the area.

Few picnic tables exist throughout this park.
THE MASTER PLAN

Figure five on the following page represents the proposed development for Washington Park, based on the information presented in this report. The master plan addresses the recreational needs of the area and the citizen's concerns expressed through public meetings. New recreational facilities for this park are listed below with a description of each.

Adaptive and creative reuse of the existing zoo grounds and structures will be needed if they are to serve as recreational facilities for the community. Some of the structures in the zoo were specifically designed to meet the needs of its inhabitant and presents a challenge for any reuse. The Department of Parks and Recreation has completed a structural analysis of all existing facilities in this zoo area to indicate which buildings hold potential for sound economic reinvestment and re-adaptation. However until the Indianapolis Zoological Society has vacated the grounds and a final inventory is completed only general recommendations for reuse of the existing structures are appropriate at this time. Some of the intended re-use proposed for the zoo structures are listed below.

- The education building is to be expanded and utilized as a recreation center.

- The office building is to remain structurally unaltered. It will house park staff who will engage programming for the area. Some of the office space could also house other community related programs. However, more research will be needed before a decision can be made.

- The aviary building is proposed to become a nature center. Nature study classes will be conducted by Parks Department staff.

- No final decision has been given if the train will remain. The Parks Department hopes to continue the operation of the train if it does stay at this site. The adjoining barn can house an arts and crafts program on a short-term basis. The structural analysis of the barn shows it should be phased out over the long term, due to its deteriorating condition.

The maintenance, concession and restroom building will continue the same use.

New facilities within the zoo grounds will include:

- A water feature that may take the shape of a water slide or a creative spray pool. (DPR analysis of swimming pools in the area reveals two nearby parks already contain swimming pools, which are Douglass Park, 1 1/4 miles southwest and Wes Montgomery Park, 2 miles northeast. Constructing another pool would be seen as a less than efficient use of resources.)
- A running track and fitness station is proposed for inside the zoo area. This is in response to a popular movement toward exercise and fitness.

- The area around the existing pond will be programmed for festivals or art and crafts shows and exhibits. The pond will be utilized in the winter months for ice skating.

- A botanical garden and sitting area is proposed within the zoo grounds for all to enjoy.

- A picnic area and shelter, surrounded with a playground area, horseshoes, volley ball courts and other recreational facilities close by will highlight the north end of the zoo grounds.

These proposed recreational facilities within the zoo grounds proper cannot be constructed until the Indianapolis Zoological Society has vacated the premises. However, recreational facilities proposed for the remainder of the park are independent of the zoo's schedule and may be constructed as funding becomes available. Listed below are the proposed facilities outside the zoo grounds.

- Three areas have been designated as public picnic sites. These sites will receive shelters of varying size, picnic tables and grills. They will also be available for private use through advance registration.

- Three areas have been delineated for playground sites. These sites will feature colorful metal structured adventure-type play equipment. These playground sites will be located adjacent to the picnic areas.

- Two small parking areas have been proposed to serve the new picnic and playground areas. The two existing parking areas on the north side of the park are to be redesigned for easier maneuvering and lower maintenance.

- A 24 hour manned police roll call site will be located in the center of the park. Adjacent to it will be a horse stable and an area for the horses to graze. (The horses are used by the Indianapolis Police force and are not for public recreation.)

- Presently two small-size adjoining basketball courts exist with a new full-size regulation court striped over the smaller courts, giving a total of six goals. Bleachers have been added to allow spectators to watch. At the present time the recreational demand for basketball courts is being satisfied with the current facilities throughout the service area (total of 14 courts). Should the demand increase for more basketball courts, it is proposed to construct a new court to the north utilizing the paved area of an existing tennis court.
- A ravine in the northeast area of the park drops approximately forty feet. A sledding area is proposed when snow is present.

- Two large level grass areas are being designated for field games. They are shown on the plan as soccer fields. Soccer has proven to be a family-oriented sport, which was expressed in public meetings as a high priority. These proposed soccer fields will be individually developed as needed.

Soccer is one of today's fastest growing sports among Indianapolis area school-aged children. The noteworthy rapid growth of soccer leagues in outlying townships witnessed by DPR officials underscores this assertion. Center Township school-aged children are becoming exposed to the sport through school busing to other townships that have an active soccer program.

In response to this new community recreational need, the Department of Parks and Recreation secured funding through a grant to establish an inner-city soccer league for the summer of 1986. Creation of a soccer league has provided inner-city children with the opportunity to practice their new-found soccer skills during the summer months, rather than just during the school term.

- Five existing tennis courts will remain for public use.

- The removal of the two interior east-west roads is proposed. Currently they are closed off so removal will cause no hardships. This will help unify the park land.

- The land east of Dearborn Road will be left for passive recreation. The soil and topography cannot support heavy usage. See soil types in Appendix.

Conclusion

The proposed master plan represents the overall development of Washington Park. This design will require years for its complete implementation and will be contingent upon available funding.

The process undertaken to develop this Master Plan has involved a wide variety of people with varied interest and concerns. Their involvement in this process has helped to ensure that the recreational needs of the citizens of Indianapolis and Marion County were satisfied.

This Master Plan should be continuously monitored and should be updated at regular intervals. Phasing of implementing this park master plan should be consistent with the recreational demand of the Service Area.
APPENDIX I

TABLE 3 - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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<th>MARION COUNTY</th>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 +</td>
<td>152,529</td>
<td>152,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Washington Park Service District is part of Park Planning District #7.
SOIL TYPES IN WASHINGTON PARK

UC - URBAN LAND-CROSBY COMPLEX

This nearly level mapping unit is on smooth upland flats. Slopes are 0 to 2 percent. Areas range from 10 to 1,000 acres and are irregularly shaped.

This mapping unit is about 50 percent Urban land and 30 percent somewhat poorly drained Crosby soils. They have a profile similar to the one described as representative of the series, but alteration is evident where small, low lying ridges have been cut or smoothed.

Erosion is a problem if disturbed areas are left bare for a considerable period. Bare areas are subject to gullying, sheet erosion, and water erosion, all of which remove much of the surface soil and subsoil.

UFA - URBAN LAND-FOX COMPLEX, 0 to 3 PERCENT SLOPES

This is a dominantly nearly level mapping unit on smooth terrace flats. In a few areas it is gently sloping. Areas range from 5 to 1,700 acres and are irregularly shaped.

This mapping unit is about 50 percent Urban land and 35 percent well drained Fox soils. They have a profile similar to the one described as representative of the series, but alteration is evident where small low knolls and ridges have been cut and the soil has been used as fill in lower lying areas.

Runoff is generally rapid on the Urban land and slow on the Fox soils. Erosion is a problem if disturbed areas where the slopes are 2 or 3 percent are left bare.

UmB - URBAN LAND-MIAMI COMPLEX, 0 to 6 PERCENT SLOPES

This nearly level and gently sloping mapping unit is on gently undulating uplands. Areas range from 5 to 1,260 acres and are irregularly shaped or long.

This mapping unit is about 50 percent Urban land and 30 percent well drained Miami soils.

Runoff is generally rapid on the Urban land and slow or medium on the Miami soils.

UmC - URBAN LAND-MIAMI COMPLEX, 6 to 12 PERCENT SLOPES

This moderately sloping mapping unit is along drainageways and on knolls and ridges. Areas range from 10 to 80 acres and are long or irregularly shaped.
GENERAL RESOLUTION NO. 78, 1956

BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

CONSOLIDATED CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION OF THE CONSOLIDATED
CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS THAT:

The agreement by and between the Department of Parks and Recreation of the
City of Indianapolis, Department of Parks and Recreation and the City of
Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development

in the amount of N/A

calling for the approval of the Washington Park Master Plan

the form of which is to be approved by the Department Attorney, be and is
APPROVED.

FURTHER, RESOLVED, that the Director of the Department of Parks and
Recreation is hereby authorized and directed to execute such agreement for
and in behalf of the Department.

By:

[Signatures]

LETRA WILLIAMSON
Assistant Corporation Counsel

BARBARA L. MORSE
Barbara L. Morse Board Secretary

RICHARD LAHR

BARBARA O’LEAUGHLIN

ARCHIE NATION

BENJAMIN SINGLETEARY

[Date: October 30, 1956]
This mapping unit is about 50 percent Urban land and 30 percent well drained Miami soils. Miami soils are identifiable in lawns, gardens, parks, and other open areas. They have a profile similar to the one described as representative of the series, but the surface layer is thinner, depth to the underlying material averages about 30 inches.

Runoff is generally very rapid on the Urban land and medium on the Miami soils.

UW - URBAN LAND–WESTLAND COMPLEX

This nearly level mapping unit is in smooth, narrow to broad drainageways on outwash plains and terraces. Slopes are 0 to 2 percent. Areas range from 10 to 200 acres in size and are irregularly shaped or long.

This mapping unit is about 50 percent Urban land and 30 percent very poorly drained Westland soils.

Runoff is generally rapid on the Urban land and very slow on the Westland soils.
WASHINGTON PARK

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