

## **CHAPTER 7:** **PARKS, LEISURE FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Fairfield has a diverse park system that provides an opportunity for all citizens to have equal access to parkland, open space and recreational facilities. It provides an economic value to the City by attracting tourism and recreation and improving the quality of life for residents.

The park and open space network serves as a functional system that people will travel to various destinations, recreate and enjoy nature. This system also fills the aesthetic and environmental needs of the City to off-set the highly developed nature of privately owned land in our suburban setting.

Parks, open space, and recreational facilities are important to the health and quality of life within any community. Parks provide space and a pleasant atmosphere in which citizens can enjoy leisure and recreational activities of all types. Open space can refer to many types of land, such as active or passive parkland, or just small areas of land that are not occupied by structures. In Fairfield, parks and open space complement the urbanization that characterizes the City. Trail and greenway features can provide connectivity within the City to reduce the need for vehicular travel. Open spaces also provide environmental benefits by producing less runoff than similarly sized developed parcels, lowering ambient temperatures, improving air quality and providing natural habitat for flora and fauna.

Park and open space planning in Fairfield requires consideration of other concerns besides outdoor recreation. These include designation of environmental areas, access to open space and general enhancement of the overall environment. Satisfaction of these listed concerns can continue to protect the ground water, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands and natural beauty in Fairfield.

The City's inventory of parkland is vital to the character of the community. There is little vacant land remaining to designate for parkland, so preservation of existing parks is extremely important. In addition, the City must devise methods of acquiring additional land to convert to parkland as those parcels become available.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the City's existing parkland and open space system, to provide areas where the system can still grow in order to meet the needs of the residents, and to promote the protection, conservation and use of natural resources in and around Fairfield.

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## II. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The City maintains 20 parks that consist of natural open space areas, community parks, neighborhood parks and mini-parks that encompass both active and passive recreation. In addition, the City operates an outdoor aquatic center, two golf courses (18 holes and 9 holes) and holds regular events at the Community Arts Center. The City's parks include play facilities, picnic facilities, natural areas, hiking trails and ball fields. Table 7.1, which is located at the end of this chapter, includes a comprehensive list of all of the facilities located within the parks. Figure 7.1 is a map of park facilities and open space located within the City. In addition, there are many privately operated parks and recreational facilities as well as school and church sites that serve the community.

Over 100 acres of land has been dedicated to the City for open space, most of which, is located on the hillside known as the Bluffs along the rear of Village Green, Muskopf Reserve and Indian Meadows subdivisions. In addition, a 42 acre wetland known as Gilmore Ponds Interpretative Preserve is located in the City, but is part of a larger park system maintained by Metro Parks of Butler County.

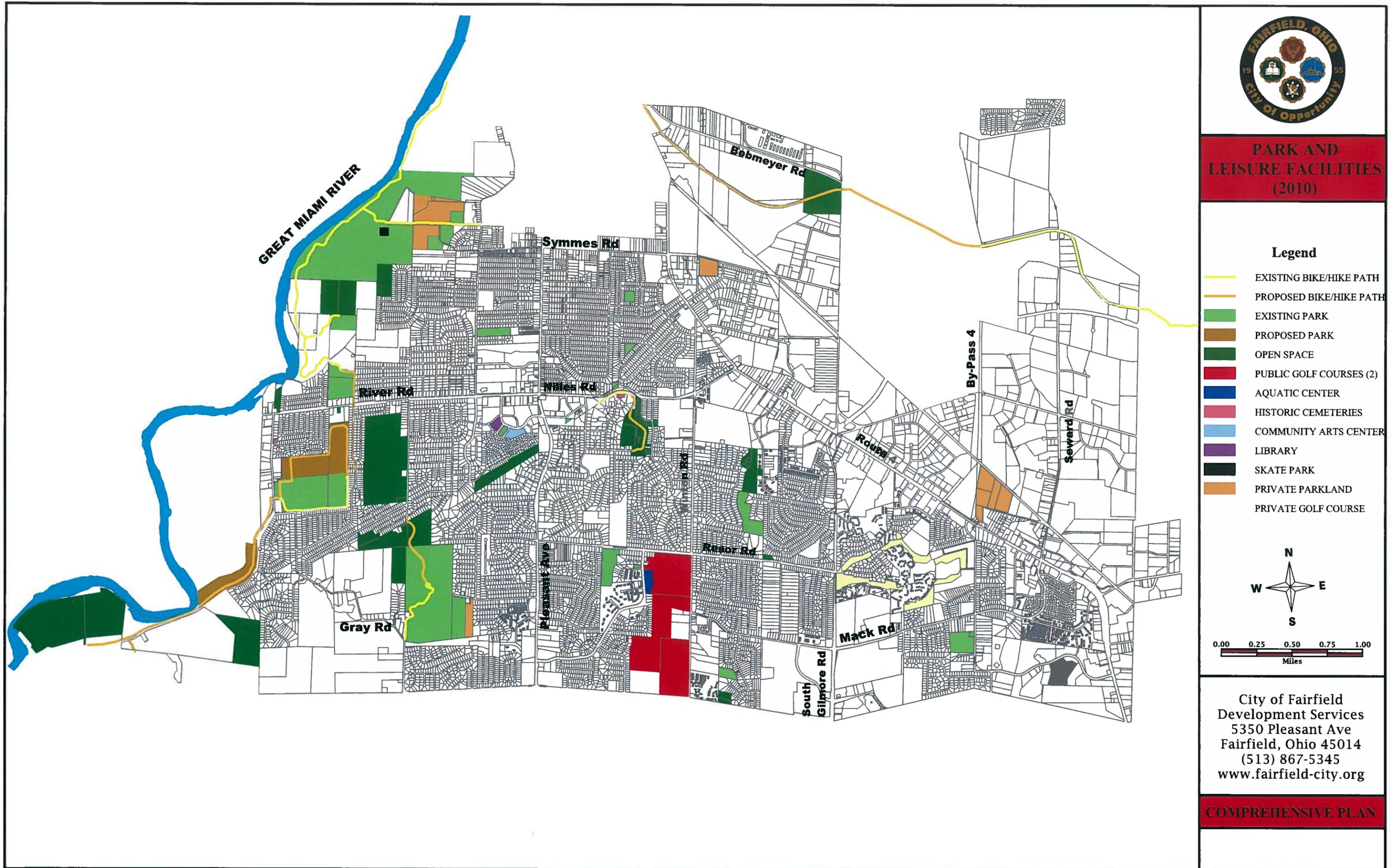
Two multi-jurisdictional bike trails run through the City. One that travels the Great Miami River north to the City of Hamilton and even farther north to the City of Dayton. The other is part of the Miami to Miami Connection that when completed will connect the Great Miami River Trail with the Little Miami Scenic Trail. In addition, local bike trails are scattered throughout the community.

The City of Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department offers year-round recreational and leisure-time programs for all age groups and interest levels at the Community Arts Center. These programs include a variety of cultural, arts and hobby classes and special events. The Community Arts Center, which is located in Village Green, features a 237 seat theater, art gallery, arts studio, dance studio, meeting rooms and a senior citizen lounge.

The City also owns the historic Elisha Morgan Mansion, that is on the National Register of Historic Places and sits within Gilbert Farms Park, plus two historic cemeteries: Symmes Burial Grounds and Miami Chapel.

## III. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

Classifications have been established for all parks with each park in a class providing similar recreational opportunities. The parks referred to in this chapter, rank from smallest to largest in size and service area, are: mini-park, neighborhood park, community park and regional park. Generally, the largest park has all the recreation facilities and opportunities that are found in the smaller classes, as well as additional facilities. Park and recreation facilities in the largest park class serve larger areas and a greater population than smaller class facilities.



**1.0 Mini-Parks**

Mini-parks are the smallest park classification. They serve limited needs and contain one acre or less. Service area is typically a quarter of a mile or less. In Fairfield these include Veterans Park, Founders Park and Woodcreek Park encompassing a total of 2.3 acres within the City.

**2.0 Neighborhood Parks**

Neighborhood parks primarily serve the surrounding neighborhood and are easily accessible by pedestrian ways. They are intended to serve the recreational needs of people living or working within a one-half mile radius of the park and range in size from eight to 25 acres, but can fall below the minimum. They can be a combination of active recreational areas for family use such as ball fields or playground apparatus and passive recreation areas such as picnic shelters. In Fairfield, these include Gilbert Farms Park, Good Neighbors Park, Lions Park, Oakwood Park, Village Green Park, Point Pleasant Park and Winton Hills Park. Together, these sites contain approximately 67 acres of neighborhood recreation.

**3.0 Community Parks**

Community parks are destination-type parks that require transportation to access. They are designed to serve groups of neighborhoods and generally contain a minimum size of 30 acres with a service area of one mile. Such parks usually contain lit outdoor recreational facilities that serve sports such as baseball, soccer, basketball and tennis with on-site parking. The City has five community parks that total approximately 270 acres. They are Water Works Park, Harbin Park, Marsh Lake, Fairfield Youth Football Fields and Fairfield Youth Playfields.

**4.0 Regional Parks**

Regional parks are intended to serve residents in a multi-jurisdictional area. These parks are generally designed for activities that are centered around natural features or recreational opportunities. These types of parks are typically over 100 acres. Fairfield has a 20 acre park, Grange Park, that is part of a regional park system that is comprised of public and private recreational facilities both within the City and in adjacent City of Hamilton. The park system is referred to as Joyce Park. Recreational uses in this area are soccer fields, baseball diamonds, bike paths, skate park, golf driving range, wake boarding and playground facilities.

**IV. OTHER CLASSIFICATIONS**

**1.0 Natural Resource Areas**

Natural resource areas are vital to the maintenance of natural functions. They provide areas for public enjoyment and preserve open space in its natural form. Common examples of natural resources in Fairfield are floodplains, wetlands, rivers and streams. Since these areas are intended for the study and enjoyment of nature, any future development within them should be prohibited. The City's park and open space system has several large

areas preserved as open space such as the Bluffs, the Great Miami River Corridor and Gilmore Ponds Preserve.

**2.0. *Bike Trails***

In addition to the many parks located in Fairfield, there is almost six miles of existing bike trails that are paved and separate from the roadway. See Figure 7.1 for trail locations.

**V. PARK PLANNING**

**1.0 *Great Miami River Recreational Trail***

The existing five mile bike trail that begins in Waterworks Park and extends north to downtown Hamilton is part of the Great Miami River Recreational Trail. The entire trail is proposed to extend from Fairfield to just north of Dayton. Some segments have yet to be constructed, but funding is being sought. Once completed, it will be 90 miles of recreational travel that follows the scenic Great Miami River. In Fairfield there are three ways to access the trail: Waterworks Park, Youth Football Fields and Joyce Park. The total segment in Fairfield is two miles.

In order to provide a future connection south into Hamilton County, Fairfield will extend its portion of the trail to Marsh Lake and Black Bottom Park, which are adjacent to the Great Miami River. From there it will follow the river and end at the corporation line. Currently there is no existing trail in this portion of Hamilton County, but the Hamilton County Parks District owns many acres that will allow for this connection. Cooperation and coordination between the two agencies is vital to the development of this connection.

**2.0 *Miami to Miami Connection***

The Miami to Miami Connection (M2MC) is a proposed 84 mile trail system that connects the Great Miami River Recreational Trail with the Little Miami Scenic Trail. The 1.5 mile portion in Fairfield will go from West Chester to Route 4 in Hamilton and it will follow the Miami-Erie Canal, which is located north of Union Centre Boulevard and south of the Butler County Regional Airport. Because the trail will be located in an industrial section of the City, concern will have to be given to safety and accessibility. A 0.6 mile segment exists in Fairfield between West Chester Township and By-Pass 4. Additional funding is being sought to complete the entire portion in Fairfield and Hamilton. Once the trail is completed at Route 4, it will be the responsibility of the City of Hamilton to extend it west to the Great Miami River Trail.

**3.0 *Other Bike Trails***

There is an existing 1,300 foot bike path that goes along Pleasant Run Creek. It begins at the YMCA on Bibury Road and goes past Symmes Burial Grounds. The path is proposed to continue southward to Broadview Drive. This will provide a scenic access for residents to use to access the town center.

3.1 There is an existing bike trail located in Harbin Park, which is proposed to continue down the Bluffs to Muskopf Road. By way of this trail residents can travel from the south section of the City north to Waterworks Park where they can access the Great Miami River Trail.

**4.0 Marsh Lake, Phase II**

Marsh Lake is a 55 acre fishing lake located on the western edge of the City near the Great Miami River. The lake was originally a gravel quarry that was mined for thirty years. When the mining was complete in the early 1980s, the City acquired the rights to operate the lake for public recreational activities. It is used primarily for fishing, but also has a one-half mile walking trail around the south and east sides of the lake.

Envisioned as a community park, Phase II is proposed immediately to the north and will be available to the City in the next ten years when the current owner has completed mining. The lake is proposed to be enlarged to 138 acres and will provide additional water activities such as non-motorized boating, camping, swimming and walking trails.

The existing walking path is proposed to be extended to form a complete loop (2.8 miles) around the lake. Public access ways will connect the site to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and a shared bike lane is proposed to connect it to the southern terminus of the Great Miami River Trail in Water Works Park.

**5.0 Black Bottom**

Black Bottom is a proposed park on the west side of River Road contiguous to the Great Miami River. It will comprise 31 acres of land located in both Fairfield and Ross Townships. The City of Fairfield purchased the land with the assistance of the Cities of Hamilton and Cincinnati in order to protect existing and future well sites. While the park is planned for a nature preserve and other passive uses, it will also have a canoe livery that will be a part of a water trail that connects to other liveries downstream in Colerain Township.

The surrounding area in which Black Bottom is located has been mined for over fifty years for sand and gravel and will continue for the next twenty plus years. Future possibilities of the area include reusing the mining areas for a regional water recreational park. These opportunities should be explored by Fairfield, when appropriate.

Black Bottom is located approximately one-half mile south of Marsh Lake. A bike trail is proposed along River Road to connect the two parks. The trail is then proposed to extend south on River Road to Burns Road to access future park land in Hamilton County. The total length of the proposed bike trail from Marsh Lake to Burns Road is 1.6 miles.

**6.0 Memorial Grove**

Memorial Grove is a passive park proposed at the southwest corner of Nilles Road and Banker Drive. In 2004 and 2006 the City was awarded grants from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) to purchase houses along the east side of Pleasant Run Creek. The grants were used to purchase flood prone properties that received repetitive loss from flooding. One of the conditions of the grant was to demolish the houses and leave the area in a permanent natural environment. The size of the area is roughly seven acres and sits along the creek. The main purpose of the open space will be for flood control, but its secondary use will be a nature preserve.

**VI. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

The following goal, objectives and policies provide a basic framework for all parks and open space decisions.

**1.0 Goal: Preserve, maintain and enhance a quality system of parks, open space and recreational facilities, which provides for the highest degree of enjoyment, health, safety, efficiency and well being of the entire community.**

*Objectives and Policies for Park, Recreation and Open Space Facilities*

**Objective 1:** Provide adequate and accessible park, recreation and open space facilities for the enjoyment and use of all segments of the City's population.

**Policy 1:** Apply smart growth principles to parks, natural areas and scenic landscapes so as to provide economic value to the City. Protected open space increases property values of nearby homes and attracts tourism and recreation.

**Policy 2:** Cooperate with other units of government and agencies to provide joint park, recreation and open space facilities when possible.

**Policy 3:** Work with the Fairfield City School District to provide joint school-park sites and programs wherever possible.

**Policy 4:** Expand the trail system to provide connectivity both within the City of Fairfield and to adjacent jurisdictions.

**Policy 5:** Continue to maintain and expand the golf course in order to make it a destination location.

**Policy 6:** Continue to acquire land for open space via private donations and subdivision dedications.

**Policy 7:** Explore methods for obtaining additional recreation and park facilities.

**Objective 2:** Conserve and protect natural resources for the benefit of the community that have scenic and environmental value by keeping land in its natural state.

**Policy 1:** Preserve and prohibit development in natural resource areas such as floodplains, hillsides, woodlands, wetlands and wildlife habitats.

**Objective 3:** This element shall be used to assist in determining the funding priority for parks, recreation and open space improvements/ acquisition that are necessary to meet existing deficiencies, accommodate future growth and to replace obsolete or worn-out facilities.

**Policy 1:** Improvements based on their priority shall be included in the five year Capital Improvement Plan.

**TABLE 7.1:  
EXISTING PARKS INVENTORY**

1. William Harbin Park
  - Community park
  - 212 acres
  - Active recreation: tennis, soccer, play ground, basketball, disc golf course
  - Passive: walking/ hiking trails, wood hillside
2. Thomas O. Marsh Park
  - Community park
  - 55 acre fishing lake with a one-half mile walking path around it
  - Former gravel mine quarry
3. Youth Playfields
  - Community park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: soccer
4. Youth Football Fields
  - Community park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: football
  - Connection to Great Miami River Bike Path
5. Grange Park
  - Community park
  - 20 acres
  - Active recreation: soccer and playground
  - Passive: reception hall
6. Waterworks Park
  - Community park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: baseball, soccer, tennis
  - Southernmost point of the Great Miami River Bike Path
7. Village Green Park
  - Community park
  - 3 acres; downtown park
  - Passive: city gathering place for concerts at amphitheater and festivals
8. Good Neighbors Park
  - Neighborhood park
  - 5 acres
  - Active recreation: tennis, soccer, basketball, baseball, playground
9. Oakwood Park
  - Neighborhood park
  - 23 acres
  - Active recreation: tennis, basketball, baseball, playground
  - Passive recreation: large wooded areas

10. Lions Park
  - Neighborhood park
  - 5 acres
  - Active recreation: baseball, soccer, tennis, playground
11. Point Pleasant Park
  - Neighborhood park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: soccer and basketball
12. Gilbert Farms
  - Neighborhood park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: tennis, soccer, basketball, baseball, play area
  - Passive recreation: Elisha Morgan Mansion
13. Winton Hills Park
  - Neighborhood park
  - 10 acres
  - Active recreation: basketball, playground
14. Veterans Memorial Park
  - Mini park
  - 0.5 acre
  - Passive recreation: picnic area
15. Founders Park
  - Mini park
  - 0.5 acres
  - Passive recreation: gazebo
16. Woodcreek Park
  - Mini park
  - 0.5 acre
  - Passive recreation: gazebo
17. Gateway Park
  - Mini park
  - 0.25 acre
  - Passive recreation
18. Village Valley Park
  - Mini park
  - 0.25 acre
  - Active: playground
19. Hamilton-Fairfield Skate Park
  - Part of Joyce Park
  - 8,000 square foot cement structure for skating and extreme biking
  - Jointly built by the Cities of Fairfield and Hamilton
20. Muskopf Preserve
  - Open space
  - 30 acres

- 21. Village Green Hillside Preserve
  - Open space
  - 17 acres
- 22. Historic Cemeteries
  - Symmes Burial Grounds
    - burial location of founders of pre-incorporated Fairfield; 125 graves
    - access via Pleasant Run Creek Bike/Hike Path
  - Miami Chapel Cemetery
- 23. Other
  - Aquatic Center
  - North Trace Golf Course
    - 9 hole executive course; storm water retention basin
  - South Trace Golf Course
    - 18 hole golf course
  - Community Arts Center
    - Indoor recreational and cultural activities
- 24. Bike Paths
  - Pleasant Run Creek Bike Path
  - Great Miami River Bike Path
  - Miami-Erie Canal Bike Path
  - Marsh Park Bike Path
  - Harbin Park Bike Path