

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Urban Park Networks in Small Cities

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Urban parks have existed for hundreds of years, providing people in cities with a means of escape from their busy lives. Urban parks bring economic, ecological, and social benefits to the city, and can act as a catalyst for rejuvenating a neighborhood. When coupled with other parks in close proximity, urban parks begin to create a network that brings these benefits to the entire city; however, most urban parks are often isolated, limiting the impact of their benefits. The question becomes how to place urban parks in a city to bring the benefits they provide to the population that needs them most.

This research examines the components of urban park networks, factoring economic, ecological, and social benefits; through a spatial lens using the *spatial logic* approach to park planning in a city, a methodology presented in Dr. Emily Talen's paper "The Spatial Logic of Parks." While this methodology uses descriptive methods of evaluating a city for park placement and planning based on *social need*, it does not take into consideration *social desire* – society's desire for urban parks in their community. The intention of this research was to discover if the use of a public opinion survey on the

existing parks in South Bend, Indiana can be harnessed as a next step to the *spatial logic* approach, and provide a means of prioritizing the results based on *social desire*.

Using Talen's methodology, survey data, and the GIS analysis technique of multi-criteria evaluation on South Bend, Indiana, the conclusion of this thesis defines a set of guidelines using *greatest need* and *social desire* to make parks and their benefits available to the maximum number of residents in a city.