

Town of Erie Park & Open Space Land Acquisition & Protection Strategy (LAPS)

STEP	ACTION
Step 1	<p style="text-align: center;">Acquisition/Protection Identification <i>Staff: Parks & Recreation, Planning</i> <i>OSTAB Designees, Council Liaison</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas will use current adopted documents such as Erie Comprehensive Plan, Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, (PROST) Strategic Plan and Transportation and Mobility Plan • Identify areas of interest for land acquisition and potential park development. • Current document outlining acquisition opportunities will be public, but not list any specific land parcels, will just represent areas of interest. • Town staff will prepare the Acquisition Strategy with input from the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) to ensure alignment with available funding, community values and system priorities.
Step 2	<p style="text-align: center;">Acquisition/Protection Approach <i>Staff: Parks & Recreation, Finance</i> <i>OSTAB</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies may include outreach, relationship building, annual letters, and periodic check-ins. • The strategy does not contemplate the use of eminent domain, which would follow a separate and distinct process. • Staff will explore partnership, grant funding, and collaboration opportunities to support acquisition. • Once a parcel is identified within an area of interest, staff will develop a specific parcel acquisition strategy. • The completed strategy guides the parcel forward through the remainder of the acquisition process. • Strategy discussions and direction occur in executive session.
Step 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Acquisition/Protection Approval <i>Staff: Parks & Recreation, Finance, Legal, Town Management,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the Town Council and on the outcome of appraisal and negotiations. • Present options for purchase along with the proposed funding strategy for the specific parcel. • Direction from the Town Council will be required before proceeding. These discussions will occur in executive session. • Evaluating whether a conservation easement is appropriate. • Establishing a funding plan, which may include grants, donations, or Town funds.
Step 4	<p style="text-align: center;">Acquisition/Protection Actions <i>Staff: Parks & Recreation, Finance, Legal, Town Management, landacquisition@erieco.gov</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and Sale Agreement • Ordinance to purchase • Appropriate funds • Complete required due diligence including survey, legal description, title review, and environmental assessment. • Satisfy grants, acknowledge partnerships • Complete Conservation Easements as applicable • The conveyance of the land will be completed, and the Town of Erie will retain title.
Step 5	<p style="text-align: center;">Announce and Implement <i>Staff: Parks & Recreation, C&CE, Planning & Development</i></p> <p>The Town announces the acquisition publicly any time after closing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release: why the property is valuable and how it will serve our community. • Memorializing the acquisition • Implement adaptive land management strategy • Rezone as needed

Town of Erie Land Acquisition & Protection Criteria

The land acquisition criteria will guide and direct staff in making recommendations to the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) (when TNACC funds are used) and Town Council about selecting properties within identified management districts for acquisition.

Introduction

These criteria will provide:

- Guidance and assistance to Town staff in ranking the attributes of individual parcels based on the acquisition priorities identified in the Erie Parks & Recreation PROST Strategic Plan
- These ranking criteria will be the basis for making recommendations to OSTAB and Town Council about the identified areas that should be acquired.

Land Acquisition Significance

Land acquisition significance describes why an area has been identified as a priority for Parks & Recreation interest. The characteristics of the area, such as its location within the community, its ecological or cultural features, or its role in the broader park and open space system are what establish its value as a potential acquisition.

- **Developed Parks**

Developed parks provide varied opportunities as neighborhood parks, community parks regional parks, and as a recreation facility. These serve residents and visitors with active and passive recreation experiences in a developed park environment. All these park types will provide targeted amenities designed to engage users to be active as well as provide opportunities for relaxed passive experiences to enjoy the parks green space and an open landscaped environment. These types of parks are less focused on natural landscape features but more on the proximity to the residents it serves.

- **Open Space and Natural Areas**

These are areas that have been selected to preserve a historical, natural, agricultural, or cultural characteristic for the community. This type of land offers both active and passive recreation that benefits residents as well as the natural landscape and wildlife. These areas could be associated with a conservation easement as part of their land acquisition strategy. These areas should provide regional significance to the community for the preservation of undeveloped areas. The spaces with diverse geography and environments will provide a natural and historical framework to our community. These open spaces and natural areas will also provide a haven for wildlife and native flora in the community.

- **Trail Corridors**

These are areas that are required to provide the space to establish a trail route or provide access and or showcase geographic characteristics of a specific area or park. Trail opportunities can be active or passive recreation or transportation. Trails offerings can be paved or soft surface.

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Acquisition Criteria Framework

The framework of ranking criteria is central to the LAPS. A framework tailored to Erie ensures that acquisitions reflect the community's values, character, and long-term priorities. In most cases, an area will be recommended for acquisition only when it holds significant environmental or land use value for the community. Exceptions may occur when a parcel meets important operational or land management needs, such as creating a more manageable boundary, linking existing managed properties, or providing essential public access.

The criteria will be rated on a five-point scale: 1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, 5 = Very High:

1 = Very Low

The property provides minimal contribution to the criterion. It does not meaningfully advance Erie's strategic objectives, and any related benefits are negligible. The parcel may still hold operational value, but its strategic relevance is limited.

2 = Low

The property provides a minor contribution. It has some characteristics related to the criterion, but the benefit is small in scale or applicability. It offers incremental improvement without materially advancing system goals.

3 = Moderate

The property provides a clear and meaningful contribution. It aligns with the criterion in a noticeable way and presents value that supports Erie's plans or system design. Its impact is positive but not transformative.

4 = High

The property strongly advances the criterion. It contributes significant, desirable features that fill system gaps, preserve important resources, or address priority needs. Parcels scoring at this level merit serious acquisition consideration.

5 = Very High

The property provides an exceptional contribution. It offers unique, irreplaceable, or high-impact opportunities that directly advance major strategic priorities. Parcels scoring at this level often emerge as top-tier acquisition candidates across multiple criteria.

Ranking criteria will be weighted based on community needs and categories will be given a multiplier between 1 and 3 based on significance:

3: Criteria that directly advance system connectivity, access, and long-term strategic form

2: Criteria that add meaningful value but are secondary drivers

1: Criteria that inform feasibility rather than strategic justification

The allocation of scores will be subjective but will be based on the best available information derived from an acquisitions team guided by community management plans. A composite score will be produced for each property considered for acquisition derived from the following criteria:

Criteria Attributes

1. Adjacency & Contiguity

Does the property play an important role in connecting natural environments or conserved lands? Is the area adjacent to existing protected lands and reduce fragmentation of resources? Does the property support the functions in the broader system? (e.g., migration corridors, critical habitat, connectivity to protected lands)?

2. Trail System Connectivity

Does the land offer an opportunity to fill an existing trail gap. Is the land located in the vicinity of a future planned trail? Could the land accommodate a trail and contribute to the overall trail system?

3. Climate Influence and Resiliency

What role could the property have in addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation? Does the property provide watershed management through flood control, and ground water recharge? Does the property provide relief to flooding through flood plain connectivity? Do lands possess the ability to act as carbon sinks and resiliency to wildfire?

4. Community Identity

Are there regionally significant cultural and historic features or structures present on the property (mines, archeological sites, homesteads, cultural or natural heritage landmarks, ranch properties unique to the community)?

5. Recreational Opportunity

Does the property provide for active recreation and sport, or does the opportunity support development of neighborhood-scale recreation consistent with PROST? (athletic fields, indoor recreational facility complex, mountain biking trail, sport courts, river rafting, skiing, ice hockey)?

6. Ecological Value *See Appendix A for desirable qualities*

Does the property contain functional natural features such as wetlands, upland grasslands, or prairie habitat that support native plants and wildlife? Does it function as a wildlife corridor, provide connectivity to nearby open space, or support migratory birds or raptor nesting? What is the overall ecological condition of the site, including plant diversity, presence of bare ground, and extent of noxious weed pressure? To what degree would ecological restoration be required, and can the property be reasonably managed over time to maintain or improve ecosystem processes given its land use history and current conditions? Are there encumbrances, such as oil & gas setbacks, overhead or underground utility lines, mines, subsidence areas, etc.?

7. Unique Landscape Features

Does the property represent defining features of Erie's landscape, such as shortgrass prairie, riparian corridors, long-range mountain views, community separators, historic agricultural lands, mining-era elements, or other natural and cultural resources valued by the community? Does it support habitat, protect waterways, contribute to ecological connectivity, offer opportunities for restoration, or preserve open land that reinforces Erie's identity within the region?

8. Developability

What are the applicable designations for the area under the Town of Erie's Comprehensive Plan, Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan, and Transportation and Mobility Plan? Is any development proposed for the area, and how would it interact with these planning frameworks? How does the property relate to Erie's long-term growth strategies, including priorities for parks, recreation, open space, trails, mobility, and community form? How accessible is the property in terms of distance from where people are living or are planned to reside? What is the access or opportunities related to underserved populations and people with low income or disabilities? Does the property fill a gap in the service area and provide equitable outcomes?

Appendix A

	Highly desirable	Desirable	Undesirable
Very Low (1/5)	0	0	2 or more
Low (2/5)	0	1 or more	1 or more
Moderate (3/5)	0	2 or more	1 or less
High (4/5)	1 or more	1 or more	1 or less
Very High (5/5)	2 or more	Any amount	0

Highly desirable property qualities	Desirable property qualities	Undesirable property qualities
Functional year-round wetlands	Property has past history of agricultural production or grazing	Prairie dog colony on property
Wildlife corridor	Property is an upland grass habitat	Past use as a home site
Migratory bird stopover and/or has raptor nesting sites	Property is adjacent to a functioning wetland	Past use as an industrial area
Low noxious weed pressure (<20% cover)	Moderate noxious weed pressure (20%-50% cover)	High noxious weed pressure (>50% cover) or list A species present
Less than 20% of the site needs ecological restoration	Less than 50% of the site needs ecological restoration	50-100% of site needs ecological restoration
High plant diversity	Moderate plant diversity	Low plant diversity/monoculture
Less than 20% of the site is bare ground	20-40% of the site is bare ground	40% of the site is bare ground