

Land Is Acquired and the Park Named

The city's first Board of Park Commissioners was appointed by the mayor in May 1905. By 1907 plans and initial actions were afoot for securing land in the area of the future West Park:

“The question of the purchase of the property for Westside Park [future West Park] was discussed. President Allmendinger was authorized by motion to endeavor to negotiate with the McIntyre heirs, to purchase their property for \$2,000 and to report back to the Board.” – Park Board minutes, October 2, 1907

Apparently, however, negotiations for the McIntyre property (a sizable parcel of land fronting on Huron Street) were unsuccessful; no deed was forthcoming.

The Park Board then turned to other properties:

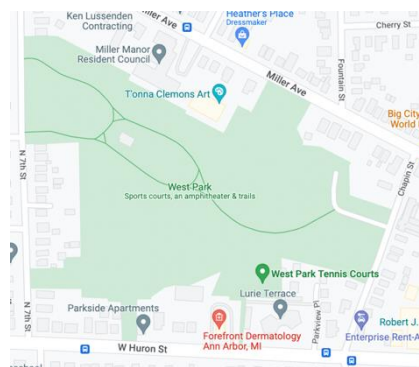
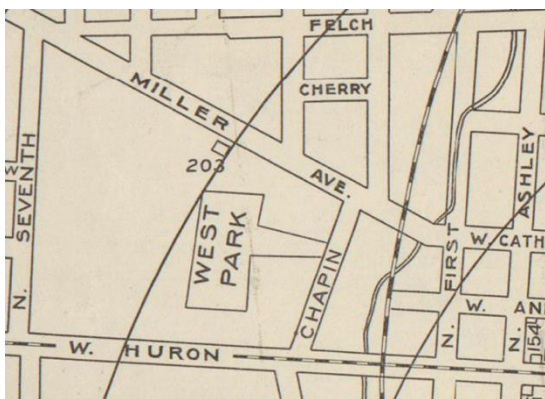
“Commissioner Burns reported regarding West Side Park and Athletic Field [future West Park] indicating that about six acres can be purchased as follows: 4 ½ acres from W. A. Boland for \$2500, about 1 acre from Bischoff for \$300.00, and 2 lots from Rhode [Rohde] for \$600 and expense of moving house. Total about \$3400. Moved that this property be purchased at these figures provided it meets approval of Common Council.” – Park Board minutes, June 1, 1908

The Common Council agreed to these “purchases of property for an athletic field”, provided the Boland property could be obtained for \$2,000. On June 15, 1908 the Park Board reported to the Council that W. A. Boland agreed to split the difference. (\$2,250), to which the Council agreed. However, in July 1908 W. A. Boland and his wife sold the parcel to Madgelene Rohde, and it would be from Madgelene Rohde that the city would obtain the ‘Boland property’.

In August 1908 land was purchased and the official name ‘West Park’ was chosen:

“Committee on West Park reported that they had purchased with the consent of the council, lots 1-2 Rohde Bros., subdivision of Mrs. Magdalena Rohde for \$600; the Boland property for \$2244.75 and a strip of land west of lots 1 & 2 for \$300 from Geo. Bischoff. This was bought on land contracts.... The first payments have been made. Moved by Com. Douglas, that the land south of the Third Ward School described above be called West Park.” – Park Board minutes, August 3, 1908

The land amounted to about 6 acres and provided Chapin Street frontage. The land would soon be cleared of a house located on one parcel.



A [1914 map](#) (far left) provides a crude idea of the size and shape of West Park when first created (in 1908 by the purchase of the first approximately 6 acres of land. The map's rendition of the park may be a little larger than West Park was in 1908 since the map maker might have included property

purchased in 1913. The map omits the narrow access from Huron Street that was a right of way included in the first property purchased for West Park. The map beside the 1914 one shows West Park as it appears in GoogleMaps.com in 2022, occupying the bulk of the area encompassed by Huron Street, Seventh Street, Miller Avenue, and Chapin Street. Though West Park appears as a seamless expanse of open space, it is actually a

patchwork quilt of parcels of land sewn together over time – in total [28 separate purchases](#). This must be a record for city parks!

The journey of developing West Park into the expansive roughly 27 acres it is today (2022) was not entirely smooth, as was suggested by the initial setback in acquiring the McIntyre property. Parcels have been acquired by many means – direct purchases, land contracts, exchanges of land, and via a Park Commissioner purchasing land and holding it until the city was in a position to buy it from him. Access to the park (and even access within it) has been acquired in different ways – purchasing lots fronting on a street, purchasing land with a right of way, or obtaining permission to use a right of way. Swaps of land have been made with private citizens, companies, and Ann Arbor Public Schools. West Park land has been deeded to Public Schools and later deeded back to the city for West Park. [The Park Board and the city confronted a variety of obstacles, but they found creative ways around them.](#)