ON THE ARCHIMEDEAN CHARACTERIZATION OF PARABOLAS

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ABSTRACT. Archimedes knew that the area between a parabola and any chord AB on the parabola is four thirds of the area of triangle $\triangle ABP$ where P is the point on the parabola at which the tangent is parallel to AB . We consider whether this property (and similar ones) characterizes parabolas. We present five conditions which are necessary and sufficient for a strictly convex curve in the plane to be a parabola.

1. Introduction

A parabola is the set of points in the plane which are equidistant from a point F called the focus and a line l called the directrix. Archimedes found some interesting area properties of parabolas.

Consider the region bounded by a parabola and a chord AB . Let P be the point on the parabola where the tangent is parallel to the chord AB . The line through P parallel to the axis of the parabola meets chord AB at a point V . Then, he showed that the area of the parabolic region is $a|PV|^{3/2}$ for some constant a , which depends only on the parabola.

Furthermore, he proved that the area of the parabolic region is $4/3$ times the area of triangle $\triangle ABP$ whose base is the chord and whose third vertex is P . For the proofs of Archimedes, see Chapter 7 of [8].

In this paper, we consider whether this property (and similar ones) characterizes parabolas. As a result, we present five conditions which are necessary and sufficient for a strictly convex curve in the plane to be a parabola.

Usually, a curve X in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ is called *convex* if it bounds a convex domain in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$.

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Hereafter, we will say that a convex curve X in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ is *strictly convex* if the curve is smooth (that is, C^2) and is of positive curvature κ with respect to the unit normal N pointing to the convex side. Hence, in this case we have $\kappa(s) = \langle X''(s), N(X(s)) \rangle > 0$, where $X(s)$ is an arclength parametrization of X .

For a smooth function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ defined on an open interval, we will also say that f is *strictly convex* if the graph of f has positive curvature κ with respect to the upward unit normal N . This condition is equivalent to the positivity of $f''(x)$ on I .

First of all, we prove the following characterization of parabolas:

Theorem 1. *Let X be the graph of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then f is a quadratic polynomial if and only if X satisfies Condition:*

(A) *For a point P on X and a chord AB of X parallel to the tangent of X at P , let V denote the point where the line through P parallel to the y -axis meets AB . Then the area of the region bounded by the curve and AB is $a|PV|^{3/2}$, where a is a positive constant which depends only on the curve X .*

Second, we prove:

Theorem 2. *Let X be the graph of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then f is a quadratic polynomial if and only if X satisfies Condition:*

(B) *For a sufficiently small $k > 0$, let X_k denote the graph of $y = f(x) + k$. For any point V on X_k , let the tangent at V meet the curve X at A and B . Then the region S bounded by X and the chord AB has constant area (say, $\phi(k)$) independent of the choice of V .*

Since $|PV| = k$, Theorem 1 is a special case of Theorem 2 for $\phi(k) = ak^{3/2}$, where a is a constant.

Now, for an arbitrary strictly convex curve X in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ which is not necessarily the graph of a function, we consider the following condition:

(C) *For a point P on X and a chord AB of X parallel to the tangent of X at P , the area of the region bounded by the curve and AB is $4/3$ times the area of triangle $\triangle ABP$.*

Then, we prove the following characterization of parabolas, which is the main theorem of this article.

Theorem 3. *Let X be a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then X is a parabola if and only if it satisfies Condition (C).*

In order to prove Theorems 1, 2 and 3, first of all, in Section 2 we establish a new geometric meaning of curvature κ of a plane convex curve X at a point $P \in M$ with $\kappa(P) > 0$ (Lemma 6). For the curvature function κ of a plane curve, we refer to [3].

As applications of Theorem 3, we may prove some generalizations of Theorems 1 and 3 as follows.

Corollary 4. *Let X be a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then X is a parabola if and only if it satisfies Condition:*

(D) *For a point P on X and a chord AB of X parallel to the tangent of X at P , the area of the region bounded by the curve and AB is $a(P)|\triangle ABP|^{b(P)}$, where $a(P)$ and $b(P)$ are some functions of P and $|\triangle ABP|$ denotes the area of the triangle $\triangle ABP$.*

Finally, for the graph X of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$, we consider the following Condition:

(E) *For a point P on X and a chord AB of X parallel to the tangent of X at P , let V denote the point where the line through P parallel to the y -axis meets AB . Then the area of the region bounded by the curve and AB is $a(P)|PV|^{b(P)}$, where $a(P)$ and $b(P)$ are some functions of P .*

Then we prove:

Corollary 5. *Let X be the graph of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then X satisfies Condition (E) if and only if X is a parabola, which is given by either a quadratic polynomial f or a function f in (3.26) according as the function $a(P)$ is constant or not.*

It follows from Corollary 5 that Theorem 1 is a corollary of Theorem 3.

To prove Corollaries 4 and 5, first of all, we show that $b(P)$ must be 1 in Corollary 4 (respectively, $3/2$ in Corollary 5). Then we can show that X satisfies Condition (C). Hence, it follows from Theorem 3 that Corollaries 4 and 5 hold.

Among the graphs of functions, Á. Bényi et al. proved some characterizations of parabolas ([1, 2]) and B. Richmond and T. Richmond established a dozen characterizations of parabolas using elementary techniques ([7]). In their papers, parabola means the graph of a quadratic polynomial in one variable.

For an example, consider a function $f(x) = b\{(1 - cx) - \sqrt{1 - 2cx}\}$ in (3.26) with $b, c > 0$ defined on $I = (-\infty, \frac{1}{2c})$. Then, the function f is strictly convex and its graph X satisfies Condition (C) (but neither (A) nor (B)). Note that X is not the graph of a quadratic polynomial, but an open part of the parabola given in (3.27).

Throughout this article, all curves are smooth (that is, C^3) and connected, unless otherwise mentioned.

2. Preliminaries and Theorems 1 and 2

Suppose that X is a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ with the unit normal N pointing to the convex side. For a fixed point $P \in X$, and for a sufficiently small $h > 0$, consider the line l passing through $P + hN(P)$ which is parallel to the tangent of X at P . Let's denote by A and B the points where the line l intersects the curve X .

We denote by $S_P(h)$ (respectively, $R_P(h)$) the area of the region bounded by the curve X and chord AB (respectively, of the rectangle with a side AB and another one on the tangent of X at P with height $h > 0$). We also denote by $L_P(h)$ the length $|AB|$ of the chord AB . Then we have $R_P(h) = hL_P(h) = 2|\triangle ABP|$, where $|\triangle ABP|$ denotes the area of the triangle $\triangle ABP$.

We may adopt a coordinate system (x, y) of $\mathbb{R}^2$ in such a way that P is taken to be the origin $(0, 0)$ and the x -axis is the tangent line of X at P . Furthermore, we may assume that X is locally the graph of a non-negative strictly convex function $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$.

For a sufficiently small $h > 0$, we have

$$(2.1) \quad \begin{aligned} S_P(h) &= \int_{f(x) < h} \{h - f(x)\} dx, \\ R_P(h) &= hL_P(h) = h \int_{f(x) < h} 1 dx. \end{aligned}$$

The integration is taken on the interval $I_P(h) = \{x \in \mathbb{R} \mid f(x) < h\}$.

On the other hand, we also have

$$S_P(h) = \int_{y=0}^h L_P(y) dy.$$

This shows that

$$(2.2) \quad S'_P(h) = L_P(h), \quad \text{and thus} \quad R_P(h) = hS'_P(h).$$

First of all, we prove the following lemma, which acts a key role in this article.

Lemma 6. *Suppose that X is a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ with the unit normal N pointing to the convex side. Then we have*

$$(2.3) \quad \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\sqrt{h}} L_P(h) = \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{\kappa(P)}},$$

where $\kappa(P)$ is the curvature of X at P with respect to the unit normal N .

Proof. As above, we may adopt a coordinate system (x, y) of $\mathbb{R}^2$ in such a way that P is taken to be the origin $(0, 0)$ and X is locally the graph of a non-negative strictly convex function $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with $f(0) = f'(0) = 0$. Then N is the upward unit normal.

The Taylor's formula of $f(x)$ is given by

$$(2.4) \quad f(x) = ax^2 + f_3(x),$$

where $a = f''(0)/2$, and $f_3(x)$ is an $O(|x|^3)$ function. Since $\kappa(P) = f''(0) > 0$, we see that a is positive.

Now, we let $x = \sqrt{h}\xi$. Then, together with (2.1), (2.4) gives

$$(2.5) \quad \begin{aligned} \frac{1}{\sqrt{h}}L_P(h) &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{h}} \int_{f(x) < h} 1dx \\ &= \int_{a\xi^2 + g_3(\sqrt{h}\xi) < 1} 1d\xi, \end{aligned}$$

where $g_3(\sqrt{h}\xi) = f_3(\sqrt{h}\xi)/h$. Since f_3 is an $O(|x|^3)$ function, we have

$$(2.6) \quad |g_3(\sqrt{h}\xi)| \leq C\sqrt{h}|\xi|^3,$$

where C is a constant. As $h \rightarrow 0$, it follows from (2.5) and (2.6) that

$$(2.7) \quad \begin{aligned} \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\sqrt{h}}L_P(h) &= \int_{a\xi^2 < 1} 1d\xi \\ &= \frac{2}{\sqrt{a}}. \end{aligned}$$

Since $\kappa(P) = 2a$, this completes the proof of Lemma 6. $\square$

Remark. From Lemma 6, we get a new geometric meaning of curvature $\kappa(P)$ of a plane convex curve X at a point $P \in X$ with $\kappa(P) > 0$. That is, we obtain

$$\kappa(P) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{8h}{L_P(h)^2}.$$

Now, we give a proof of Theorem 1.

Let X be the graph of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, where I is an open interval. Then N is given by the upward unit normal. For a fixed point $P = (x, f(x))$ on X and a small number $h > 0$, consider the line l passing through the point $P + hN(P)$ which is parallel to the tangent to X at P .

Then the hypothesis shows that $S_P(h) = a|PV|^{3/2}$ for small $h > 0$, where a is a constant depending only on X . Note that $|PV| = h \sec \theta$, where $f'(x) = \tan \theta$ is the slope of the tangent line at P . Hence we have:

$$(2.8) \quad \begin{aligned} S_P(h) &= a(\sec \theta)^{3/2}h^{3/2} \\ &= aW(x)^{3/2}h^{3/2}, \end{aligned}$$

where $W(x) = \sqrt{1 + f'(x)^2}$. Thus (2.2) yields

$$(2.9) \quad L_P(h) = \frac{3}{2}aW(x)^{3/2}h^{1/2}.$$

Therefore it follows from Lemma 6 that

$$(2.10) \quad \kappa(P) = \frac{32}{9a^2W(x)^3}.$$

Since the curvature $\kappa(P)$ of X at $P = (x, f(x))$ is given by

$$(2.11) \quad \kappa(P) = \frac{f''(x)}{W(x)^3},$$

we see that $f''(x)$ is a constant. Hence $f(x)$ is a quadratic polynomial. This completes the proof of the if part of Theorem 1.

By a straightforward calculation, it is trivial to prove the only if part of Theorem 1. This completes the proof of Theorem 1.

Second, we give a proof of Theorem 2.

Let X be the graph of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, where I is an open interval. Then N is given by the upward unit normal. We fix a point $P(x, f(x))$ on X . For a sufficiently small $h > 0$, consider the line l passing through $P + hN(P)$ which is parallel to the tangent of X at P . Let's denote by A and B the points where the line l intersects the curve X .

Then the chord AB is tangent to X_k at $V(x, f(x) + k)$, where $k = hW$ and $W(x) = \sqrt{1 + f'(x)^2}$. The hypothesis shows that $S_P(h) = \phi(k)$. It follows from (2.2) that

$$(2.12) \quad \begin{aligned} L_P(h) &= S'_P(h) = W(x)\phi'(hW), \\ R_P(h) &= hL_P(h) = hW(x)\phi'(hW). \end{aligned}$$

Hence we have

$$(2.13) \quad \frac{L_P(h)}{\sqrt{h}} = \frac{\phi'(k)}{\sqrt{k}} W(x)^{3/2}.$$

For a fixed point $P(x, f(x))$ on X , it follows from $k = hW(x)$ that $h \rightarrow 0$ is equivalent to $k \rightarrow 0$. Thus, Lemma 6 implies that

$$(2.14) \quad \lim_{k \rightarrow 0} \frac{\phi'(k)}{\sqrt{k}} = W(x)^{-3/2} \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\sqrt{h}} L_P(h) = \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{\kappa(P)}} W(x)^{-3/2}.$$

If we denote by α the limit of the left hand side of (2.14), which is independent of P , then we have

$$(2.15) \quad \kappa(P) = \frac{8}{\alpha^2 W(x)^3}.$$

Similarly to the proof of Theorem 1, we see that $f(x)$ is a quadratic polynomial. This completes the proof of the if part of Theorem 2.

For a proof of the only if part of Theorem 2, see Example 1.2 in [6, p. 6]. This completes the proof of Theorem 2.

3. Main theorem

In this section, we prove Theorem 3, which is the main theorem of this article.

Let X denote a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ with the unit normal N pointing to the convex side. Suppose that X satisfies Condition (C). Then, for $P \in X$ and a sufficiently small $h > 0$ we have

$$(3.1) \quad S_P(h) = \frac{2}{3} R_P(h).$$

By differentiating (3.1) with respect to h , it follows from (2.2) that

$$(3.2) \quad L_P(h) = 2hL'_P(h).$$

Therefore, we get

$$(3.3) \quad L_P(h) = c(P)\sqrt{h},$$

where $c = c(P)$ is a constant depending on P . Furthermore, Lemma 6 implies that

$$(3.4) \quad c(P) = \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{\kappa(P)}}.$$

In order to prove Theorem 3, first, we fix an arbitrary point A on X .

As before, we take a coordinate system (x, y) of $\mathbb{R}^2$: A is taken to be the origin $(0, 0)$ and x -axis is the tangent line of X at A . Furthermore, we may regard X to be locally the graph of a non-negative strictly convex function $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with $f(0) = f'(0) = 0$ and $f''(0) > 0$.

For any point $B(x, f(x))$ with $x \neq 0$, we denote by P the point on X such that the chord AB is parallel to the tangent of X at P . Then we have $P = (g(x), f(g(x)))$, for a function $g : \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ which satisfies $|g(x)| < |x|$ and

$$(3.5) \quad xf'(g(x)) = f(x).$$

Since $g(x)$ tends to 0 as $x \rightarrow 0$, we may assume that $g(0) = 0$.

We prove the following lemma, which plays a crucial role in the proof of Theorem 3.

Lemma 7. $f(x)$ and $g(x)$ satisfy

$$(3.6) \quad x^3 f''(g(x)) = 8\{f(x)g(x) - xf(g(x))\},$$

$$(3.7) \quad xf(x) = \frac{4}{3}\{f(x)g(x) - xf(g(x))\} + 2 \int_0^x f(t)dt.$$

Proof. Consider the triangle $\triangle ABC$, where C denotes the point $(x, 0)$. Then we have $|AC|^2 + |BC|^2 = |AB|^2$. Note that by definition, $|AB|^2 = L_P(h)^2$, where h denotes the distance from P to the chord AB . This shows that

$$(3.8) \quad x^2 + f(x)^2 = L_P(h)^2.$$

The distance h from P to the chord AB is given by

$$(3.9) \quad h = \frac{\epsilon\{f(x)g(x) - xf(g(x))\}}{\sqrt{x^2 + f(x)^2}},$$

where $\epsilon = 1$ for $x > 0$ and $\epsilon = -1$ for $x < 0$.

Since the curvature $\kappa(P)$ of X at P is given by

$$(3.10) \quad \kappa(P) = \frac{f''(g(x))}{(\sqrt{1 + f'(g(x))^2})^3},$$

it follows from (3.3), (3.4) and (3.5) that

$$(3.11) \quad L_P(h)^2 = \frac{8h}{\kappa(P)} = \frac{8(x^2 + f(x)^2)}{f''(g(x))x^3} \{f(x)g(x) - xf(g(x))\}.$$

Together with (3.8), this implies that (3.6) holds.

In order to prove (3.7), we consider the area of triangle $\triangle ABC$. Then we have

$$(3.12) \quad \frac{\epsilon}{2}xf(x) = S_P(h) + \epsilon \int_0^x f(t)dt,$$

where $\epsilon = 1$ for $x > 0$ and $\epsilon = -1$ for $x < 0$. By assumption, we have $S_P(h) = (4/3)|\triangle ABP|$. Hence we get

$$(3.13) \quad S_P(h) = \frac{2\epsilon}{3}\{f(x)g(x) - xf(g(x))\}.$$

Together with (3.12), this implies that (3.7) holds. $\square$

Next, with the help of Lemma 7, we show that in a neighborhood of an arbitrary point $A \in X$, the curve X is a parabola.

By differentiating (3.7) with respect to x , it follows from (3.5) that

$$(3.14) \quad f(g(x)) = g(x)f'(x) - \frac{3}{4}\{xf'(x) - f(x)\}.$$

Differentiating (3.5) with respect to x , and using again (3.5), we get

$$(3.15) \quad f''(g(x)) = \frac{xf'(x) - f(x)}{x^2g'(x)}.$$

On the other hand, together with (3.14), (3.6) shows that

$$(3.16) \quad f''(g(x)) = \frac{xf'(x) - f(x)}{x^3}\{6x - 8g(x)\}.$$

It follows from (3.15) and (3.16) that

$$(3.17) \quad \{xf'(x) - f(x)\}\{8g(x)g'(x) - 6xg'(x) + x\} = 0.$$

Since $f(x)$ is strictly convex, we obtain

$$(3.18) \quad 8g(x)g'(x) - 6xg'(x) + x = 0.$$

If we let $y = g(x)$, then (3.18) becomes $x dx + (8y - 6x)dy = 0$. By putting $y = vx$, we get a separable differential equation, and hence we can solve (3.18). Since $g(0) = 0$, we see that $g(x) = x/2, x/4$ or

$$(3.19) \quad g(x) = \frac{1}{4c}(cx + 1 - \sqrt{1 - 2cx}),$$

where c is a nonzero constant.

By differentiating (3.14) with respect to x , it follows from (3.5) that

$$(3.20) \quad \{xg(x) - \frac{3}{4}x^2\}f''(x) + xg'(x)f'(x) - g'(x)f(x) = 0.$$

If $g(x) = x/2$, then (3.20) shows that

$$(3.21) \quad x^2 f''(x) - 2x f'(x) + 2f(x) = 0,$$

of which general solutions are given by $ax^2 + bx$ for some $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$. Since $f(0) = f'(0) = 0$, it follows from (3.21) that $f(x) = ax^2$ for some positive constant a . Thus, in a neighborhood of A , the curve X is a parabola.

If $g(x) = x/4$, then (3.20) yields that

$$(3.22) \quad 2x^2 f''(x) - x f'(x) + f(x) = 0.$$

For some $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, the general solutions of (3.22) are given by

$$(3.23) \quad f(x) = ax + b\sqrt{|x|}.$$

This contradicts to $f'(0) = 0$.

If $g(x) = \frac{1}{4c}(cx + 1 - \sqrt{1 - 2cx})$, it follows from (3.20) that

$$(3.24) \quad (1 - 2cx)\{\sqrt{1 - 2cx} - (1 - cx)\}f''(x) + c^2 x f'(x) - c^2 f(x) = 0.$$

The general solutions of (3.24) are given by

$$(3.25) \quad f(x) = ax + b(1 - \sqrt{1 - 2cx}),$$

where $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$. Since $f(x)$ satisfies $f(0) = f'(0) = 0$ and $f''(0) > 0$, (3.25) shows that

$$(3.26) \quad f(x) = b\{(1 - cx) - \sqrt{1 - 2cx}\},$$

where b is a positive constant. Hence, in a neighborhood of A , the curve X is given by

$$(3.27) \quad b^2 c^2 x^2 + 2bcxy + y^2 - 2by = 0.$$

It follows from the classification theorem of quadratic polynomials in x and y that the curve defined by (3.27) is a parabola.

Summarizing the above discussions, we see that the curve X is locally a parabola.

Finally, we show that the curve X is a parabola as follows.

First, consider two parabolas Φ_1 and Φ_2 in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. For each $i = 1, 2$, let's denote by ϕ_i a connected open arc of the parabola Φ_i .

Suppose that the two arcs ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 share a common subarc ϕ . We fix a point A on the subarc ϕ . As before, we take a coordinate system (x, y) of $\mathbb{R}^2$: A is taken to be the origin $(0, 0)$, x -axis is the tangent line of ϕ at A and ϕ lies in the upper half plane. Then for each $i = 1, 2$, the parabolic arc ϕ_i is locally the graph of f_i which is either of the form $f_i(x) = a_i x^2$ with $a_i > 0$ or of the form in (3.26) with $b = b_i > 0, c = c_i \neq 0$. That is, the parabola Φ_i is of the form $y = a_i x^2$ with $a_i > 0$ or of the form in (3.27) with $b = b_i > 0, c = c_i \neq 0$.

Since f_1 is equal to f_2 around $x = 0$, f_1 and f_2 have the same derivatives at the origin. Hence, we immediately see that $\Phi_1 = \Phi_2$ because $f_i''(0) = 2a_i, f_i'''(0) = 0$ or $f_i''(0) = b_i c_i^2, f_i'''(0) = 3b_i c_i^3$ in each case for $i = 1, 2$.

Next, let's fix a point A on the curve X . Then an open arc of X containing A is a parabolic arc ϕ_0 of a parabola Φ_0 . For an arbitrary point B on the curve X , the compactness of the closed arc AB of X shows that there exist consecutive points $A = P_0, P_1, \dots, P_n = B$ on X and open arcs $\phi_0, \phi_1, \dots, \phi_n$ of X such that 1) for each $i = 0, 1, \dots, n$, P_i lies on ϕ_i , 2) each ϕ_i is a parabolic arc, 3) $\{\phi_i\}$ covers the closed arc AB of X .

Since ϕ_i and ϕ_{i+1} share a common subarc for each $i = 0, 1, \dots, n-1$, a successive use of the above argument shows that every ϕ_i is an arc of the parabola Φ_0 , and hence $B \in \Phi_0$. Therefore we see that X is the parabola Φ_0 .

This completes the proof of the if part of Theorem 3.

For a proof of the only if part of Theorem 3, see Chapter 7 of [8], which is originally due to Archimedes. This completes the proof of Theorem 3.

4. Corollaries and remarks

In this section, first of all, we prove Corollaries 4 and 5.

First, suppose that a strictly convex curve X in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ satisfies Condition (D) with $b(P) = 1$. Then we have

$$(4.1) \quad S_P(h) = \frac{a(P)}{2} h L_P(h).$$

By differentiating (4.1) with respect to h , it follows from (2.2) that

$$(4.2) \quad (2 - a(P)) L_P(h) = a(P) h L'_P(h).$$

Solving (4.2), we get

$$(4.3) \quad L_P(h) = c(P) h^{d(P)},$$

where $c = c(P)$ is a constant depending on P and $d(P) = (2 - a(P))/a(P)$.

It follows from (4.3) and Lemma 6 that $d(P) = 1/2$, and hence, $a(P) = 4/3$. Thus, the curve X satisfies Condition (C).

Now, suppose that X satisfies Condition (D) with $b(P) \neq 1$. Then we have

$$(4.4) \quad S_P(h) = a(P) 2^{-b(P)} \{h L_P(h)\}^{b(P)},$$

which shows that $b(P) > 0$. By differentiating (4.4) with respect to h , it follows from (2.2) that

$$(4.5) \quad L'_P(h) + h^{-1} L_P(h) = c(P) h^{-b(P)} L_P(h)^{2-b(P)},$$

where $c(P) = 2^{b(P)} a(P)^{-1} b(P)^{-1}$. Solving the Bernoulli equation (4.5), we get

$$(4.6) \quad \{h L_P(h)\}^{b(P)-1} = c(P) (b(P) - 1) \ln h + d(P),$$

where $d(P)$ is a constant depending on P .

In case $b(P) > 1$, by letting $h \rightarrow 0$, (4.6) leads to a contradiction. In case $b(P) \in (0, 1)$, multiplying the both sides of (4.6) by $h^{\alpha(P)}$ with $\alpha(P) = (1 - b(P))/2 > 0$, and then by letting $h \rightarrow 0$, we get a contradiction. This shows that $b(P)$ must be 1.

Together with the above discussion on the case $b(P) = 1$, Theorem 3 completes the proof of Corollary 4.

Next, we prove Corollary 5.

Suppose that the graph X of a strictly convex function $f : I \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ satisfies Condition (E). Then for a fixed point $P(x, f(x))$ on X and for $h > 0$, we have

$$(4.7) \quad S_P(h) = a(P)|PV|^{b(P)}.$$

Since $|PV| = hW(x)$ with $W(x) = \sqrt{1 + f'(x)^2}$, by differentiating (4.7) with respect to h , we get

$$(4.8) \quad L_P(h) = a(P)b(P)W(x)^{b(P)}h^{b(P)-1}.$$

Hence, it follows from Lemma 6 that $b(P) = 3/2$. This shows that

$$(4.9) \quad S_P(h) = a(P)W(x)^{3/2}h^{3/2} \quad \text{and} \quad L_P(h) = \frac{3}{2}a(P)W(x)^{3/2}\sqrt{h}.$$

Thus we get

$$(4.10) \quad \Delta ABP = \frac{1}{2}hL_P(h) = \frac{3}{4}a(P)W(x)^{3/2}h^{3/2} = \frac{3}{4}S_P(h),$$

which shows that X satisfies Condition (C). Therefore, it follows from the proof of Theorem 3 that X is a parabola, which is given by either a quadratic polynomial f or a function f in (3.26).

Conversely, if f is a quadratic polynomial, Theorem 1 shows that the graph X of f satisfies Condition (E) with a constant $a(P)$ and $b(P) = 3/2$. If f is a function in (3.26), it is straightforward to show that the graph X of f satisfies Condition (E) with a nonconstant function $a(P)$ and $b(P) = 3/2$.

This completes the proof of Corollary 5.

Together with (3.1)-(3.4) and Theorem 3, the same argument as in the proof of Corollary 5 shows:

Corollary 8. *Let X denote a strictly convex curve in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$. Then, the following are equivalent.*

- 1) X satisfies Condition (C).
- 2) $S_P(h) = a(P)h^{3/2}$, where $a(P)$ is a function of $P \in X$.
- 3) $S_P(h) = a(P)h^{b(P)}$, where $a(P)$ and $b(P)$ are some functions of $P \in X$.
- 4) X is a parabola.

Remark 9. It follows from our proofs that Theorem 3 holds even if a strictly convex (hence, C^3) curve X satisfies Condition (C) for sufficiently small $h > 0$ at every point $P \in X$.

Finally, we give an example of a convex curve which satisfies Condition (C) for sufficiently small $h > 0$ at every point $P \in X$, but it is not a parabola. Note that the example is not C^2 , and hence it is not strictly convex either.

Example 10. Consider the graph X of a function $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ which is given by

$$(4.11) \quad f(x) = \begin{cases} 9x^2, & \text{if } x < 0, \\ \frac{9}{4}x^2, & \text{if } x \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

Then, the function f is not C^2 at the origin, and hence the curve X is not strictly convex. It is straightforward to show that if P is the origin, then for all $h > 0$ we have

$$(4.12) \quad L_P(h) = \sqrt{h}, \quad \text{and} \quad S_P(h) = \frac{2}{3}R_P(h).$$

Hence X satisfies Condition (C) at the origin for all $h > 0$. If $P \in X$ is not the origin, then there exists a positive number $\varepsilon(P)$ such that for every positive number h with $h < \varepsilon(P)$, X satisfies Condition (C).

Thus, X satisfies Condition (C) for sufficiently small $h > 0$ at every point $P \in X$. But it is not a parabola.

Remark 11. In [4] and [5], the authors proved the higher dimensional versions of Theorems 1 and 2, respectively.

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