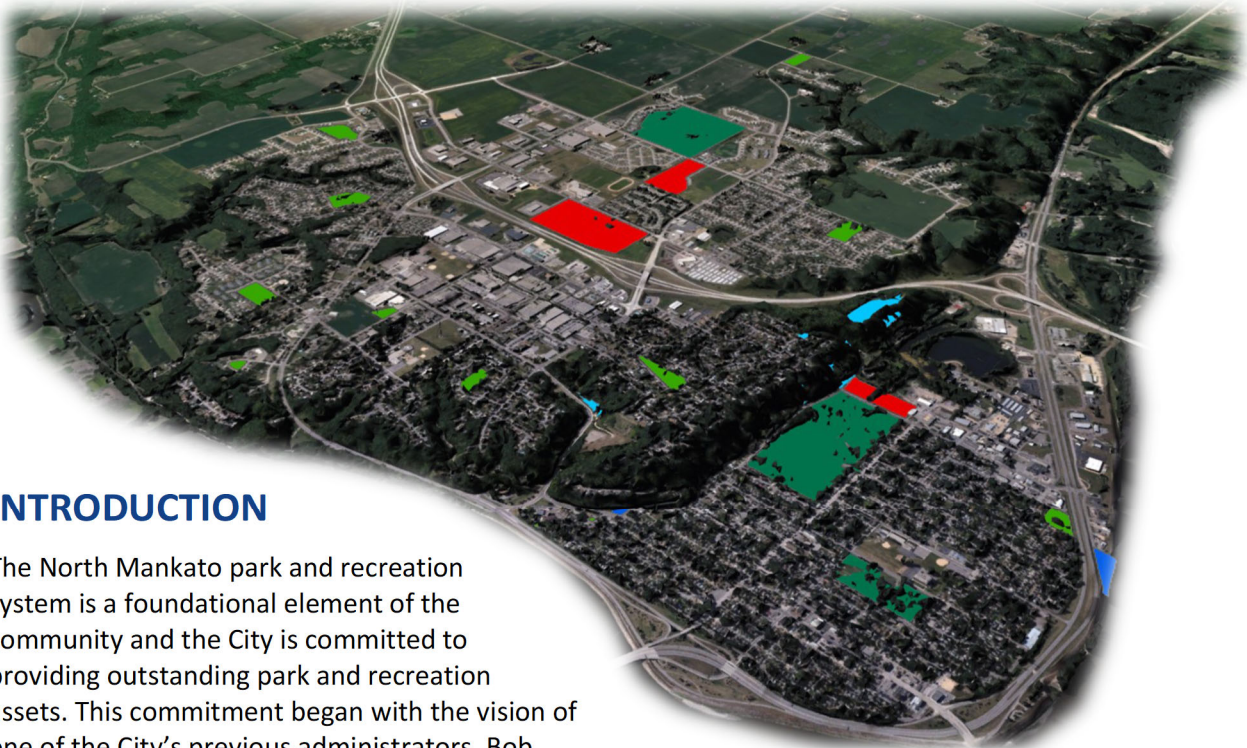


Chapter 8: Parks, Trails, and Recreation



INTRODUCTION

The North Mankato park and recreation system is a foundational element of the community and the City is committed to providing outstanding park and recreation assets. This commitment began with the vision of one of the City's previous administrators, Bob Ringhoffer. His leadership and enthusiasm for the outdoors led to the establishment and enhancement of some of the finest recreational features in the region including the Spring Lake Park Swim Facility, the Caswell Park Sports Complex, North Links Golf Course and several neighborhood and community parks. Referring to them as the "crown jewels" of the community, Mr. Ringhoffer ensured as the community grew in population every neighborhood was served by a park or greenspace. This resulted in North Mankato having nearly 20 acres of park per 1,000 residents which is above the national average of 9.5 acres per 1,000 residents. It also resulted in some of the best neighborhoods in Southern Minnesota and a fine quality of life for residents. Lastly, his work cemented North Mankato's continued support of parks and recreational amenities for continued generations of residents. In honor of his legacy and commitment to parks and recreation for the benefit of all, the parks and recreation chapter of the Comprehensive Land Use plan outlines the communities vision, guidelines, criteria, and standards for future development and enhancement of these amenities in the City of North Mankato.

The existing park system was initially developed with a strong emphasis and need placed on youth recreation opportunities. Most parks have children play structures and ball fields for youth sports. However, park amenities have increasingly included accommodations for adult and/or family focused recreation uses as well. Many parks have added volleyball courts, pavilions, scenic overlooks and high-quality trails that can be used by the whole family, not just youth.

A robust sidewalk network is provided throughout community neighborhoods and the City has placed high priority on the conversion of sidewalk to multi-use trails in key locations throughout the community (i.e. approaching schools, commercial areas, etc.) The current sidewalk and trails system needs a stronger north and south connection over Highway 14 and another east and west connection over the Minnesota River to enhance system continuity and regional connectivity. Alternative transportation

through the use of trails should continue to be expanded and enhanced. Recreation programming opportunities are currently offered through city programming, the local YMCA, the Taylor Library, the Parks Department, and the Community Education Department of the Mankato Area Public Schools.



GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

- The City's population is projected to increase. Interest in trails, passive parks, cultural and fine arts programs, and indoor year-round recreation and programming has been, and is anticipated to, continue to increase.
- Exercise and health will continue to be an integral part of the lives of the people of North Mankato. A comprehensive trail system would help meet these demands. A trail loop network with connections to key local destinations and to regional and state trails is needed to meet recreation, active living and non-vehicular transportation needs. A City and regional trail system would attract both residents and visitors alike.
- Parks, trails, and open space play an important role in attracting tourism, and for neighborhood and community quality of life.
- Maintenance, cleanliness and safety of parks and recreation facilities are a key factor in satisfaction with the park system.
- Partnerships for park and recreation facility development and operation will continue to increase in importance. Enhancement of those partnerships and expansion of other partnerships will help provide the best and most efficient system.

The purpose of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation section of the Comprehensive Plan is to:

- Address the community's desire to create year-round recreation programming and facilities.
- Guide development of new bike routes, grade-separated crossings, and off-street trails.
- Guide the City in acquiring land for new parks and trail corridors.
- Assist with leveraging grant funding for system improvements.
- Guide continued maintenance and enhancement of existing park, trail, and recreational assets
- Commit to opening greenspace access and trail system expansion in tandem with ravine and bluff improvement projects.

VISION FOR PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

To provide a comprehensive and balanced system of parks, greenways, trails, and support for providers of recreation-orientated activities and programs for City residents in a cost-effective manner that continues North Mankato's commitment to outstanding recreational assets.

PREVIOUS PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION PLANNING EFFORTS

Several planning efforts and studies focused on parks, trails, and recreation in North Mankato have been reviewed as part of developing this chapter. Some of these efforts remain more relevant than others and all have contributed to planning efforts in the City. Previous studies, initiatives, and materials that focus on parks, trails, and recreation in the area guide the recommendations in this chapter including:

Benson Park Plan (2009)

The purpose of this plan was to create a concept for future development of the park. Founded in 1997, the 69-acre park began as a mostly undeveloped space with a few trails, benches, and a drinking fountain. The preferred concept for development includes an additional entry drive and parking lot/drop-off area from Timm Road, a main shelter and a water feature, and areas with restored habitats consisting of native species. Much of this has been constructed since 2015.

Parks Plan (2015)

The purpose of this plan is to advance a commitment to parks and outdoor recreation in North Mankato to enhance the quality of life for residents. The plan serves as an organizing document for current park inventory and future park development, makes the costs of maintaining and improving the park system easily accessible to the public, and advances a shared vision for the future of the park system within North Mankato.

Public Art Ideas Plan (2017)

The goal of this plan is to highlight the importance of public art and how it can be used by the city as a guide to integrate public art into existing and future planning initiatives and identify those areas that could be enhanced by public art. It lays out what public art is, why it should be invested in, and creates a reference guide/idea bank of public art ideas for specific locations.

North Mankato Swim Facility Assessment (2017)

This assessment examined the physical state of the swim pond infrastructure of Spring Lake Park and recommended upgrades to improve the efficiency and attractiveness of the swim pond. These recommendations included replacing piping, pumps, and valves with larger equipment designed for longer lifespans, replacement of the liner and pond bottom as both had exceeded their lifespans, improve accessibility for those in need of assistance, and the addition of play features and amenities. The facility was reconstructed in 2019 incorporating recommended improvements from that assessment.

Parks & Amenities Update (2018)

This report begins with North Mankato parks of the past, outlines an inventory of existing parks by decade of construction, and proposed renovations to existing parks.

Walter S. Farm Conceptual Master Plan (2018)

A map of possible amenity upgrades that could be incorporated into Walter S. Farm Park. These include the addition of north-south trails through the park connecting Countryside Drive on the north to La Mar Drive on the south, picnic shelter pavilions, baseball field and hockey rink, and a small parking lot in the northwest corner.

Bluff Park Master Plan (2018)

A map of possible amenity upgrades to be incorporated into Bluff Park. These include the addition of an educational overlook built around existing mature trees, an enlarged gazebo/picnic area, ornamental tree/orchard/arboretum, park entrance landscaping, and additional paved trails. Many of these improvements, as well as a major prairie restoration project have been constructed since 2015.

Caswell Report (2020)

This report outlines the number of spectators, participants, tournaments, and events that took place at Caswell Park in 2020. The 2020 season began later than normal due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the number of tournaments and visitors decreased due to this along with the overall economic impact when compared to previous years. Still, there were 14 tournaments over 30 days with 573 teams participating, with 64 of the teams coming from beyond the 75-mile radius of the City where those within the radius are considered “day visitors”. This equates to 13,867 day visitors and 6,472 overnight visitors accounting for an estimated 5,994 hotel room nights. This resulted in an estimated economic impact of \$4,346,476. This is compared to 2019 where the park hosted 22 events with 716 total teams, 325 of those being teams staying overnight, and 34,498 total visitors accounting for \$8,165,621 of economic impact to the region.

Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study (2022)

North Mankato has identified the need for better north/south trail connections in Upper North Mankato in several planning documents. The Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study examined the feasibility of installing a grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Highway 14 spanning from properties on the north side of Commerce Drive to the Caswell Park Sports Complex. A bridge addition at this location would enhance that connection, providing a safe alternative to using the interchanges at Lookout Drive and Lor Ray Drive to cross the highway. This planning initiative was recommended through the Mankato/North Mankato 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan (MAPO 2045 LRTP) process.

North Mankato Splash Pad (2022)

The construction of a splashpad in the Caswell Park Sports Complex was completed in 2022 on the property north of Fallenstein Park and Miracle Field.

North Mankato Indoor Recreation Facility (2022)

In 2021-2022, the City of North Mankato submitted a state bonding request for \$8.5 million to help fund the design and construction of the North Mankato Indoor Recreational Facility on the Caswell Park Sports Complex. The facility is planned to be 115,000 square feet at a cost of nearly \$20 million. Bonding was not obtained at the time this Plan was adopted. The City plans to continue its pursuit of funding opportunities to make this a reality. The facility will include eight basketball courts that convert to pickleball and six tennis courts.

NORTH MANKATO PARK SYSTEM

Park and Greenway Classifications

The system plan consists of a variety of parks and open spaces defined under various classifications. Each classification serves a particular purpose in meeting local park and recreation needs. Although some flexibility is warranted, classifying parks is necessary to ensure a well-balanced system and that all recreational needs are effectively and efficiently met.

The classifications applied to North Mankato are based on guidelines recommended in the National Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Guidelines (National Recreation and Parks Association, 1996) and Planning and Urban Design Standards (American Planning Association, 2006), albeit expanded or modified to address circumstances unique to the city. The following table provides an overview of each classification used in North Mankato. (Each of the classifications is further expanded upon later in this section.)

Table 8-A. North Mankato Park Types

| Classification | Common Guidelines | Application to North Mankato |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Park (and MiniNeighborhood/ Pocket Park) | Neighborhood parks are the basic units of the park system and serve a recreational and social purpose. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks are typically 5 acres or more, with 8 to 10 acres preferred for new parks. Mini-neighborhood parks, which are used only on a limited basis when securing more land is impractical, are 1 to 3 acres of developable land. Service area is ¼-mile radius for mini parks and up to a ½-mile for a typical neighborhood park, uninterrupted by major roads and other physical barriers. | Neighborhood parks remain a basic unit of the park system in North Mankato. In areas with urban densities, a service area of ¼- to ½-mile radius remains appropriate. When new parks are connected with greenway-based trails, service areas can be expanded to ½-mile radius or slightly more since trails and open space become part of the park experience. 5 acres* is typically adequate for new parks if the park is integrated into larger greenway system. |
| Community/ Regional Park | Community parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting communitybased recreational needs, that may also provide amenities that have a regional draw, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Size varies, depending on function. 20 acres minimum preferred, with 40 or more acres optimal. Service area can be community-wide, several neighborhoods in a given area of the city, or a larger regional area. | The community has a long tradition of setting aside land for Community and Regional Parks like Spring Lake, Wheeler, and Benson. As additional land develops this tradition should be continued. |

Table 8-A. North Mankato Park Types Continued

| Classification | Common Guidelines | Application to North Mankato |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Regional Athletic Complex/Facility | Consolidates programmed adult and youth athletic fields and associated facilities to a limited number of sites. Tournament level facilities are appropriate. Size varies, with 20 acres or more desirable, but not absolute. 40 to 80 acres is optimal. These complexes serve both the community as well as a regional area. | This classification has application to North Mankato to meet local and regional needs for athletic facilities (in concert with school sites.) As a growing community with families, facility demand will continue to grow in sync with age-group population growth. |
| Greenway/ Natural Open Space/ Conservation Areas | Lands set aside for preserving natural resources, remnant landscapes, and open space, and providing visual aesthetics/buffering. Also provides passive use opportunities. Ecological resource stewardship and wildlife protection are high priorities. Suitable for trail corridors. Overall land area varies depending on opportunity and general character of natural systems within a city. | Within the city proper, the potential for establishing greenways and preserving open space is limited. This reinforces the importance of working closely with landowners and developers in growth areas to set aside land for greenways and interconnected trails systems. |
| Special Use | Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose uses – such as a nature center, historic sites, plazas, urban squares, aquatic centers, campgrounds, golf courses, etc. Overall size varies, depending on need. | The use of this classification will be limited in North Mankato, primarily the open space and plaza areas in the downtown area. |
| School Site | Covers school sites that are used in concert with, or in lieu of, city parks to meet community recreation needs. School sites often provide the majority of indoor recreational facilities within a community. Size varies, depending on specific site opportunities. | Continuing the established relationship between the School District and the City is vital to successfully meeting the longterm demand for athletic facilities in a cost-effective manner. |

* Neighborhood park size note: The recommended minimum 5 acre size for new neighborhood parks may be modified at the City's discretion if the park is part of an overall public amenity package associated with a given development area. This might include, for example, providing enhanced streetscapes and public squares that add value to the public realm and complement neighborhood park features. Note, however, that the essential value of a neighborhood park should be retained to ensure that 1) the recreational needs of local residents are adequately met, and 2) the City does not accept a series of smaller mini-parks in lieu of a neighborhood park, which is inefficient and inconsistent with the system plan as defined in this section.

Cumulative Park System Acreage Standards

The current national guidelines are for each community to evaluate and determine its own park and open space needs and desired level of service through local public process, then, if necessary, compare that evaluation against similar situations within the region. North Mankato's system plan falls within standard practices and compares favorably to other communities in terms of public land area and park distribution to service community needs. General guidelines for parks and open spaces suggest there are at least 7 acres of municipal park land per 1,000 residents and that 90% or more of residents are within one-half mile of a park or protected green space.

Nuances with North Mankato's system include the opportunity for an extensive natural greenway/open

space system surrounding the city and along the riverfront. This is a unique opportunity that sets North Mankato apart from many communities of similar size. However, due to the floodwalls along the river it is recognized that challenges do exist when attempting to create recreational opportunities along the river.

Park Inventory & Analysis

Although the greenway and park system functions as a cohesive whole, individual parks will continue to have a significant and defined purpose consistent with their classifications. **Figure 8-1** illustrates the location and name of each park within the system, and the general proposed areas where new parks will be needed as development occurs. The following table provides an overview of the total number of parks under each classification (existing and proposed future), along with the approximate number of total acres.

Note: Park acreage and designations remain unchanged since the development of the 2015 North Mankato Comprehensive Plan.

Table 8-B. Park Inventory

| Park Classification | Existing Parks | | Proposed Parks | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| | # | Acres | # | Acres |
| Neighborhood Parks | 12 | 42.5 | 1 | 2.7* |
| Community Regional Parks | 3 | 138.5 | 1 | 2.7 |
| Athletic Complex / Facility | 2 | 47.8 | 1 | 7 |
| Special-Use Parks | 2 | 8.6 | 0 | 0 |
| Open Space Parks | 2 | 40.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 21 | 277.7 | 3 | 12.4 |

Contingent on extent of future residential development and annexation; based on 5 acres per site and a ½-mile service area radius. **Note: Greenways are not included in the table.*

A. Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve a recreation and social purpose. Development focuses on informal recreation. Programmed activities are typically limited to youth sports practices and very occasionally, games. There are 12 existing parks within the North Mankato system that serve neighborhood uses, including:

- Forest Heights Park
- King Arthur Park
- Langness Playground
- North Ridge Park
- Pleasant View Park
- Reserve Park
- Roe Crest Park
- South Avenue Playlot
- Storybook Park
- Tower Park
- Walter S. Farm Park
- Wallyn Park

In general, the existing parks are capable of meeting the primary needs of the neighborhoods they serve and, collectively, meet acceptable standards for neighborhood parks. Placement of the parks and the areas they serve are also well-distributed throughout the city.

B. Community/Regional Parks

Community/Regional parks typically serve a broader and more specialized purpose than neighborhood parks and are sometimes referred to as community and/or regional parks. Their

focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, regional-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. The general palette of amenities typically found within this class of park includes:

- Amenities common to a neighborhood park, albeit at a larger scale
- Larger group picnic facilities
- More extensive looped trail systems
- Open maintained green space for passive and active use
- Winter activities, such as ice skating, sledding, and skiing
- Event space
- Special use facilities having a community appeal

In addition to specific amenities, community/regional parks also often serve an important aesthetic role by providing green space and buffering, along with creating an appealing sense of place that helps define the essential character of the community.

As illustrated on **Figure 8-1**, there are three parks that fall under the community/regional park classification.

- Benson Park
- Spring Lake Park
- Wheeler Park



C. Regional Athletic Complexes/Facilities

The Parks Plan includes athletic facilities in a number of parks for varying levels of programmed uses. City-provided facilities are also complemented by the local schools, colleges, and neighboring communities' athletic facilities. There are currently three defined parks for regional programmed athletics, which include:

- Caswell Park Softball Complex
- Caswell North Soccer Complex
- Webster Ball Diamonds

Extension of the local sales and use tax in 2016 by voters and 2018 by the Minnesota State Legislature included language allowing the use of funding for indoor recreational amenities. The City of North Mankato has approved a facility assessment and operating documents for a future 115,000 square foot indoor sports facility that will provide a recreational asset to the community that will host tennis, pickleball, basketball, and volleyball tournaments. Continued work on design and eventual construction of this amenity will continue throughout the life of this plan. As mentioned, state bonding was received to assist with constructing the new facility.

D. Special-Use Parks

In addition to the parks and athletic facilities previously defined, a number of special-use facilities and amenities are also part of the system plan, including the following parks:

- Centennial Park
- Riverview Park

E. Open Space

- Bluff Park
- Lee Boulevard Park

F. Schools/Colleges

- South Central College
- Dakota Meadows Middle School
- Hoover Elementary
- Monroe Elementary
- Bridges Community Elementary

Recently Constructed, Planned, And Proposed Improvements To North Mankato Parks And Recreation

- Caswell Park: Fallenstein Playground – The Fallenstein Playground is an inclusive playground built in 2018 to accommodate users of all abilities. Fallenstein Playground is located adjacent to Miracle Field in Caswell Park.
- Benson Park – In line with the Benson Park Master Plan, recent improvements have included a new parking lot on the north side of the park along Timm Road and restroom facilities. This was completed in 2020.
- Bluff Park – In line with the Bluff Park Master Plan, recent improvements include a new educational overlook with views of the valley and Hiniker Pond. Completed in 2020.
- Caswell Park Indoor Recreation Facility – North Mankato citizens have expressed interest in continued development and expansion of the Caswell Sports Complex to include an indoor recreation facility for year-round athletic use. The City continues to pursue funding to construct this.
- Splash Pad - This amenity has been desired by residents for some time and locating it next to the Fallenstein Playground and future indoor recreational facility would provide a fine recreational asset to the community.
- Walking trails accompanying ravine improvement projects will enhance the trail system and livability of neighborhoods.
- Potential for a new neighborhood park in the Waters North Subdivision.
- Improvements to the trail connecting Spring Lake Park and Mary Circle.
- Potential expansion of the Taylor library.
- Continued use of public art in parks for beautification.
- Any enhancements referred to in the Parks and Greenways Enhancement Plan.

Table 8-C. North Mankato Park Facilities

| X - Included P - Proposed O - Open Skating H - Hockey S - Shelters L - Lighted | Picnic Area | Restrooms | Water Fountains | Basketball Court | Tennis Court | Sand Volleyball | Horseshoe Court | Ball Fields | Playground Area | Trails* Distance | Soccer Fields | Swimming | Ice Skating | Warming House | Sliding | X Country Skiing | Wildlife/Nature | Dump Station | Fishing | Lake Depth | ADA Inclusive Play Equipment | Scenic Overview | Park Size (Acres) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|---------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Benson Park 2000 Carlson Drive | X2 | X | X | | | | | | X | 1+ | | | | | P | X | P | | Blue Gills | 8 ft | | | 69.12 |
| Bluff Park 194 Mary Circle | | X | X | | | | | | | 1.2 | | | | | | X | X | | | | | X | 30.01 |
| Caswell Park 625-3621 1875 Howard Drive | X | X | X | | | 4 | | L6 | X | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | 25.00 |
| Caswell North Soccer 1875 Carlson Drive | | X | X | | | | | | | X7+ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 17.00 |
| Centennial Park 840 Belgrade Ave | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.00 |
| Forest Heights Park 401 Marie Lane | X | | X | X | L2 | | | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 5.00 |
| King Arthur Park 1580 Sharon Drive | X | | X | X | L2 | | | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 5.10 |
| Langness Playground 355 Carol Court | X | | | X | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | 1.10 |
| Lee Boulevard Rest Area 1500 Lee Blvd | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.20 |
| North Ridge Park 1720 Quail Roost Drive | X | | X | X | | | | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 6.50 |
| Pleasant View Park 2215 Pleasant View Drive | X | | X | X | | | | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 7.79 |
| Reserve Park 1902 Lexington Lane | S1 | | X | X | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | 5.39 |
| Riverview Park 900 North River Drive | | X | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | | | | 6.20 |
| Roe Crest Park 2214 Clare Drive | X | | X | | | | | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 3.80 |
| South Avenue Playlot 937 South Avenue | X | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.75 |
| Spring Lake Park 641 Webster Avenue | S5 | X | X | X | | 4 | | 3 | X | 0.8 | | X | H | X | | X | X | | Crappies | 12 ft | | | 52.00 |
| Tower Park 1525 Tower Boulevard | | | X | | L2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3.00 |
| Walter S. Farm Park 1601 Countryside Drive | X | | X | X | | | 1 | 1 | X | | | | O | | | X | | | | | | | 6.10 |
| Wallyn Park 201 Pierce Avenue | X | | | | | | | 1 | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | 2.30 |
| Webster Ball Diamonds 640 Webster Avenue | | | | | | | | 2 | | 0.3 | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | 6.50 |
| Wheeler Park 387-5187 402 Page Avenue | S2 | X | X | X | 2 | | 12 | 1 | X | | | | O | X | | X | | | | | | | 12.50 |
| South Central College (Leased April-August) | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Trails Distance in Miles

NEW PARK FACILITIES

As the City grows and more families begin to call North Mankato their home, the need to expand the parks system will grow as well. **Figure 8-2** identifies new park target zones identifying potential locations for new parks in the future serving areas where residential areas are anticipated. To identify potential new park target zones, park service areas (**Figure 8-1**) were examined from the 2015 Parks Plan to identify gaps in the system where residential uses exist or are anticipated to exist in the future. Park service areas include the area within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of existing Neighborhood Parks, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of existing Neighborhood Mini-Parks, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Athletic Complexes, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Community Parks. An area extending $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile from the edge of existing park service areas was identified to ensure the $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile service area is maintained for new parks⁵. This area was then reduced to only those areas with potential to be future residential uses and those served by existing or planned sanitary sewer services areas within $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile of the existing park service areas. Exact locations of new parks will be determined as needed during residential development site design.

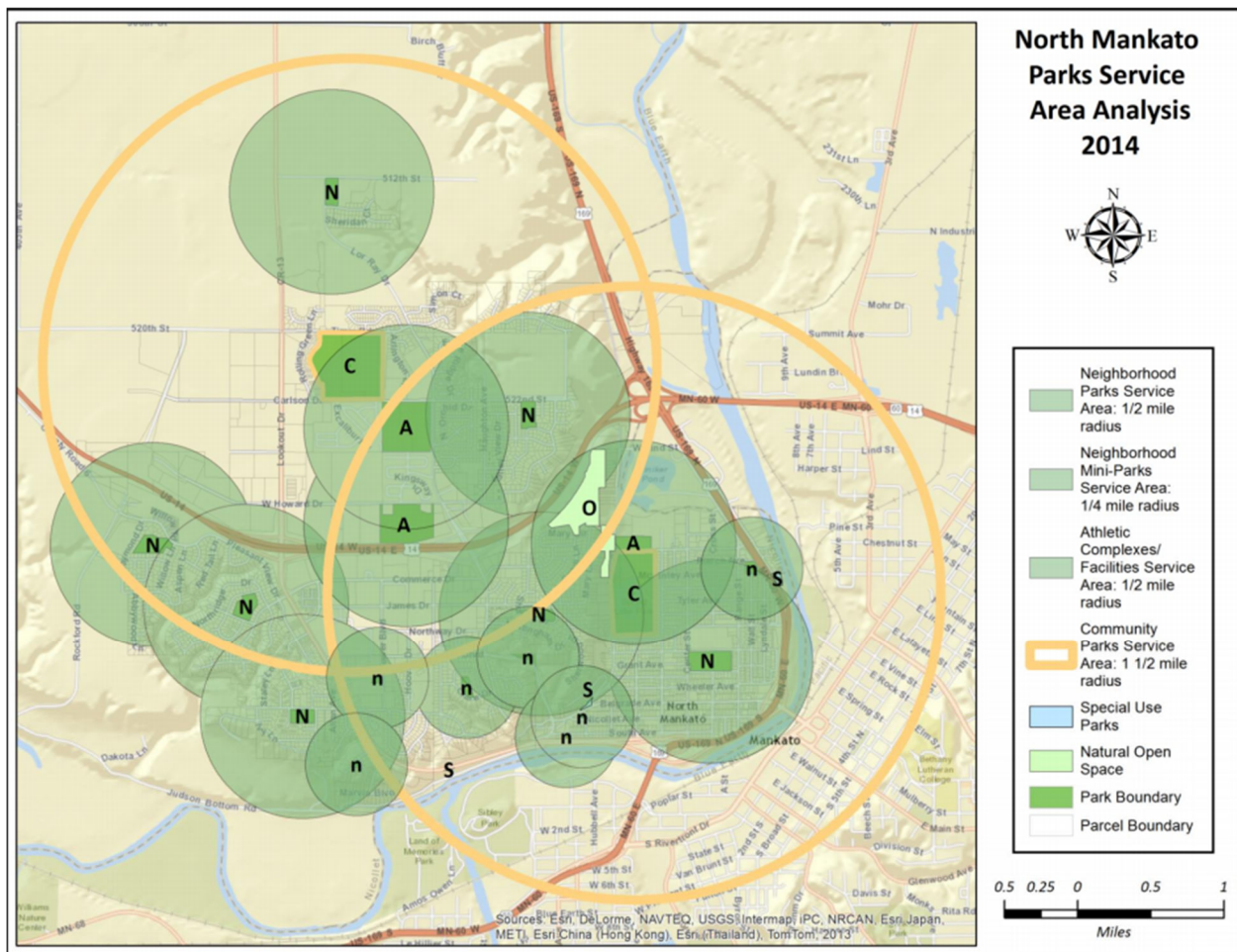


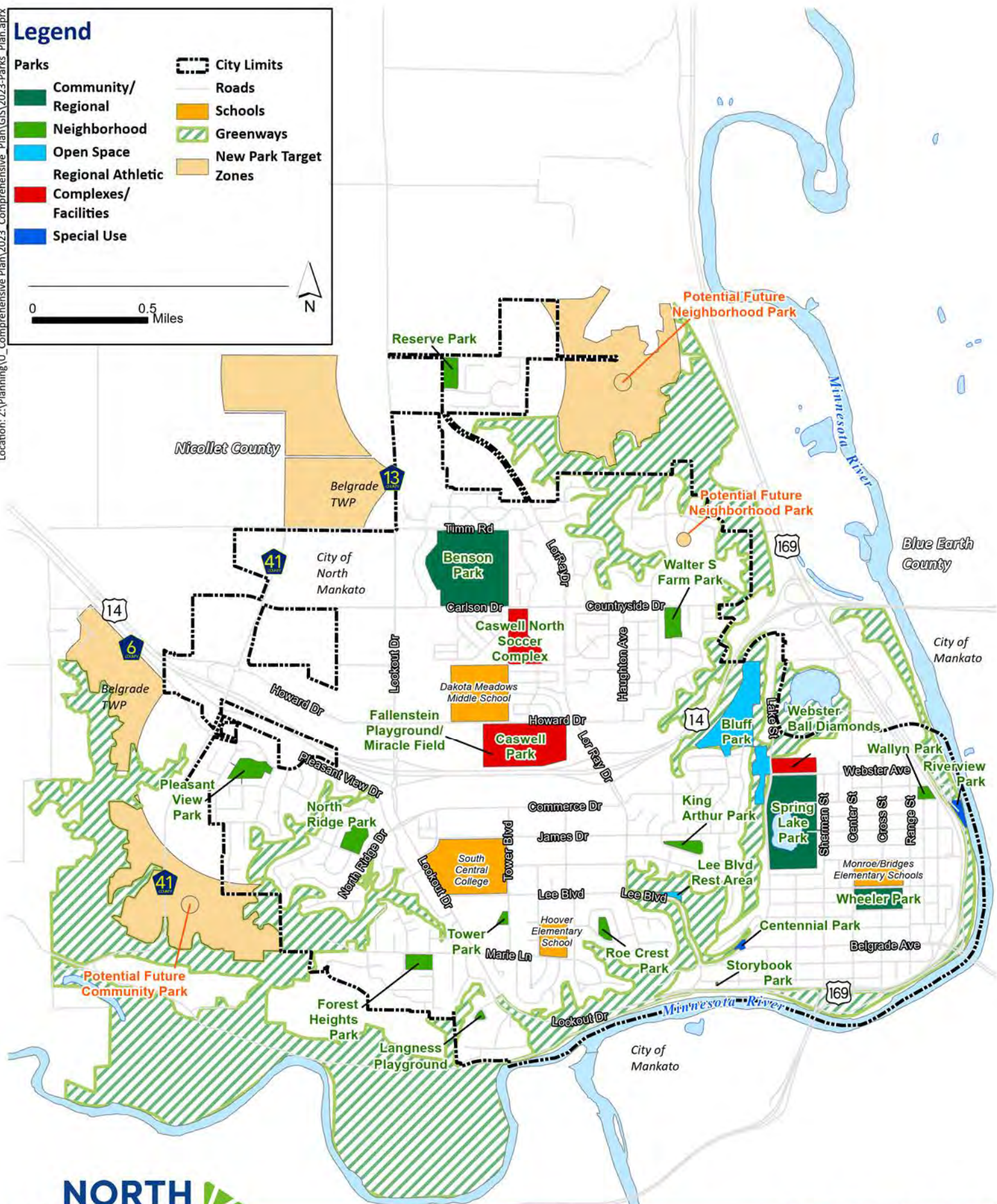
Figure 8-1. Park Service Areas referenced from the 2015 North Mankato Parks Plan.

⁵ For the purposes of locating new park areas for new residential neighborhoods, existing “Community Parks” were given a service area of $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile despite having an identified service area of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in the 2015 Parks Plan. This is necessary to ensure new neighborhoods are within a $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile of neighborhood style park amenities, which are included in both Community Parks in the system.

Legend

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Parks | City Limits |
| Community/Regional | Roads |
| Neighborhood | Schools |
| Open Space | Greenways |
| Regional Athletic Complexes/Facilities | New Park Target Zones |
| Special Use | |

0 0.5 Miles



PARK GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section outlines the primary goals for parks followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future development efforts that align with the community visions in this plan.

GOAL 1: Plan for a sustainable park system.

Objective 1.1: Plan and design parks in a way that ensures their long-term viability.

Policy 1.1.1: All park properties that are set aside (and/or are proposed in the future) must take into account the long-term commitments required to develop, operate, and maintain across their lifecycles.

Policy 1.1.2: Balance maintained turf areas with natural areas to add aesthetic appeal, control maintenance costs, infiltrate stormwater, provide wildlife habitat, and reduce carbon emissions.

Policy 1.1.3: Update the parks plan every 5-10 years depending on the amount of change and development within the city.

Policy 1.1.4: Explore alternative methods for parkland dedication that will assure sufficient park facilities well into the future.

Objective 1.2: Understand current trends and community issues, opportunities, and needs related to parks within the city.

Policy 1.2.2: Master plans should be prepared for each park prior to their development to ensure that the right mix of amenities are provided, and the park's design is cohesive and complementary to the design for other parks and public spaces.

Policy 1.2.3: Ensure public participation in the master planning process is included for each park development project.

Policy 1.2.4: Analyze the placement and use of "nature play" equipment in existing and proposed parks.

Policy 1.2.5: Provide all users an opportunity to participate in park activities by ensuring trails, buildings, fountains, etc. are ADA compliant and playgrounds include inclusive play equipment where feasible.

GOAL 2: Provide additional park and recreation opportunities in areas of new development throughout the city.

Objective 2.1: Service local park and recreation needs by providing neighborhood and community parks as residential growth occurs.

Policy 2.1.1: Consider constructing neighborhood parks where as is necessary to maintain a half-mile park service area for all new and existing residential development.

Policy 2.1.2: Explore the possibility of including a community park in appropriate areas of the City.

Policy 2.1.3: Locate new parks based on how they can be best integrated with the new development that the park will serve.

GOAL 3: Adhere to Park Master Planning and Facility Design Quality / Development Standards.

Objective 3.1: Ensure the quality standard for built features within the park system is consistent with industry standards for safety, durability, and accessibility.

Policy 3.1.1: Periodically inspect and repair all parks, trails, and recreation facilities for hazardous conditions, including unsafe play equipment, fallen vegetation, etc.

Policy 3.1.2: The design of individual parks should be of a consistent quality.

GOAL 4: Ensure North Mankato's parks meet the diverse interests and recreation needs of the community.

Objective 4.1: Partner with the relevant organizations and others that cannot be met exclusively by the city.

Policy 4.1.1: Coordinate with relevant local organizations to address park and recreation issues during the creation of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space System Plan.

Objective 4.2: Consider the desire of the community to construct a multi-use, indoor athletic facility for residents and to attract regional tournaments and events.

Policy 4.2.1: Explore the impacts of developing such facilities, including impacts to adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy 4.2.2: New facilities should provide year-round activities and programs for all age groups, abilities, and all income levels.

GOAL 5: Create a comprehensive signage program for park facilities.

Objective 5.1: Provide a consistent message and information to park visitors through the use of a uniform sign style and program throughout the city.

Policy 5.1.1: Identify the information to be included on the signage. Typically, this includes: park names, direction to features, general information and rules, and ecological stewardship program and interpretive information.

Policy 5.1.2: Ensure the program remains an ongoing priority by providing an annual investment in a signage program.



NORTH MANKATO TRAIL SYSTEM

Trail System Inventory & Analysis

North Mankato's trail system primarily parallels major vehicular routes throughout the City with some internal trail loops within the community parks, and a section of trail that follows the river. There are many gaps within the City and opportunities to cross major barriers such as Highway 14, Highway 169, and the Minnesota River are limited as indicated in the existing trail system plan. There is a great trail system surrounding North Mankato and it was verified in the community process that safer and easier connections are desired. **Figure 8-2** shows the plan for trails within the City of North Mankato.



Recently Constructed, Planned, And Proposed North Mankato Trails

Many of the following trail connections have been constructed since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Trail additions have been spurred by recommendations from the North Mankato Trails Plan and the City's ability to obtain federal funding through roadway improvements and safe routes to school sources.

A. Commerce Drive

South side multi-use trail from Lookout Drive to Lor Ray Drive Completed in 2019.

B. Dakota Meadows Middle School Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

North side trail addition along Howard Drive from Lookout Drive to Lor Ray Drive and an off-street trail from Howard Drive to Carlson Drive Completed in 2020.

C. Hoover Elementary School SRTS

Trail upgrade on east side of Lookout Drive from Commerce Drive to Marie Ln. as well as on Marie Ln. from Lookout Drive to Roe Crest Drive Planned for construction in 2024.

D. Potential TH 14 Pedestrian Bridge Crossing

This pedestrian crossing over Highway 14 would provide a connection from Tower Boulevard on the south side of the highway to Caswell Park on the north side of the highway near Fallenstein Miracle Field and Playground. The pedestrian bridge is identified in the Commerce Drive Area Development Plan, the Lookout Drive Area Plan, and other city documents. The proposed bridge would facilitate recreational trail expansion and provide safer routes to area schools. The city aims to pursue funding opportunities to construct the overpass in the coming years.

E. Potential Belgrade Avenue/Roe Crest Drive Connector Trail

The city aims to improve the trail connection extending from the western end of Belgrade Avenue to Roe Crest Drive through a wooded ravine setting where city utilities have been put in place and a wood chip trail has been installed. Improvements would include applying asphalt

pavement.

F. Mary Lane to Spring Lake Park (Lake Street)

Through development of the City Trail System Plan, some expressed interest in revitalizing the trail connection from Lake Street in Lower North Mankato to Mary Lane. The trail was paved in its entirety in 2022.

G. Planned On-Street Facilities

Several on-street facilities are planned throughout the system that will occur in the short term. These include Howard Drive east of Lor Ray Drive, Range Street, Tower Boulevard, and Countryside Drive.



Redefining the Trail System

A. Trail Loop System

The trail system in North Mankato has grown to the point where a new type of trail identification seems appropriate to guide users through the system. In 2021, the North Mankato Bicycle Commission was reconvened to provide input on the status of the North Mankato trail system. A series of trail loops were identified to redefine the system and provide guidance on trail locations, potential future facilities, and existing trail amenities. Figure 8-3 illustrates these loops along with key trails, identified for their connections to destinations throughout the City and/or expected use. The following loops and key trails have been identified in the City of North Mankato:

Gran Fondo (12.5 miles)

A Grand Fondo is a type of long-distance road cycling ride originating in Italy in 1970, and roughly translates into English as “Big Ride” (Source: Wikipedia). While this trail loop doesn’t provide the typical 75 miles considered the norm for a Gran Fondo in Italy, it does traverse the entire periphery of the City of North Mankato. It utilizes on- and off-road trails taking users from the top of the bluff in Upper North to the valley in Lower North.



Prairie Loop (6.4 miles)

This loop provides connections to parks, schools, and area commercial businesses and amenities.

Brickyard Trail Loop (4.4 miles)

This trail passes the original brickyard locations in and around Wheeler Park in Lower North Mankato. This loop utilizes on-street trails providing connections between Lower North parks, lakes, schools, and commercial areas including the Central Business District.

North Ridge Loop (1.4 miles)

This trail provides a short, family-friendly loop through the quiet North Ridge neighborhood with access to North Ridge Park.

Dakota Chaku Trail (0.5 Miles)

This translates to “Dakota Road”. This trail’s proximity to Dakota Meadows Middle School makes this name quite appropriate and provides perhaps an inspirational opportunity for education on Dakota heritage. This trail has potential for future expansion to the south as the City pursues funding for a pedestrian bridge crossing Highway 14.

Commerce Trail (1 mile)

The Commerce Trail was constructed in 2019 and provides a connection between Lor Ray Drive and Lookout Drive. Users can access the Commerce Drive Commercial District on the eastern portion of the trail.

B. Agency Coordination: Greater Mankato Trails Systems

In 2021-2022, the Greater Mankato Bicycle Task Force consisting of representatives from North Mankato, Mankato, Blue Earth County, Nicollet County, Visit Mankato, Greater Mankato Bike & Walk Advocates (GMBWA), Mankato Area Mountain Bikers (MAMB), and the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) began a process to establish the Greater Mankato Trail Systems branding. Efforts included establishing a cohesive brand to be included on wayfinding signage and information kiosks throughout trails in the systems. Agencies anticipate a boost in “cyclo-tourism” in the area as branding will create awareness of the Greater Mankato area as a cycling destination for tourists. Signage for North Mankato was developed during the same period and kiosks were produced that include the Greater Mankato Trail Systems Map showing how North Mankato’s trail system integrates into the regional system.



Figure 8-3. Greater Mankato Trail Systems logo developed through the branding effort.

Regional & State Trails

These regional and state trails provide commuting and recreational value to the area. Providing connections to these trails from North Mankato should be a high priority for the City.

Table 8-D. Regional & State Trails

| Trail Name | Length (miles) | Termini | Surface Type |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| North Minnesota River Trail | 4.8 | US 14 and North Riverfront Drive to Sibley Parkway | Asphalt |
| Red Jacket Trail | 13 | North Minnesota River Trail under Highway 169 to Huffly Lane in Rapidan, MN | Asphalt |
| Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail | 39 | North Riverfront Drive and Highway 14 to State Route 21 in Faribault, MN | Asphalt |
| South Route Trail | 8.3 | County Road 69 to State Route 22 and County Road 90 | Asphalt |

Trail User Group Guidelines

The proposed trail system plan is consistent with MN DNR's Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines (2007) for designing and developing sustainable trails. The DNR guidelines are recognized as the most comprehensive standards for trails and address trail planning, design, and development. All trail development should be consistent with these guidelines as applicable to the classifications used in North Mankato.

A key concept of the trail guidelines is maximizing the value of trails to local residents. The values ascribed to trails are important because they are at the core of why a person uses a particular trail on a repeat basis. Studies clearly indicate that trail users make a distinction between trails based on their perception of value, as the figure below illustrates.

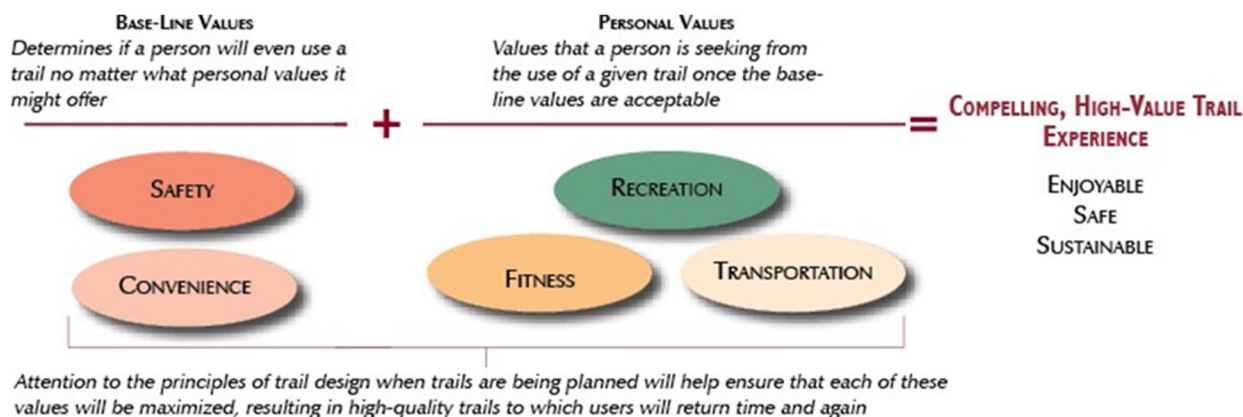


Figure 8-4. User perceptions of Trail Value.

As the graphic illustrates, safety and convenience are base-line determinants for whether a person will even use a trail irrespective of its quality. Once these two values are perceived as being acceptable, then the personal values will be given more consideration by a trail user. The following considers each of these values in greater detail.

A. Safety

A sense of physical and personal safety is the most important trail value in that without it people are disinclined to use a trail irrespective of how many other values it might provide. Physical safety can be relatively assured through good trail design. Personal safety, which relates to a sense of well-being while using a trail, is a less tangible yet still important factor that cannot be taken lightly.

B. Convenience

Convenience is important to day-to-day use of a trail. Studies have shown that the vast majority of shared-use paved trails are used by those living within a few miles of the trail they use most frequently.

Although convenience is important, its influence is still tempered by recreational value. No matter how convenient, a poorly designed trail in an uninteresting setting will have limited recreational value. Alternatively, a well-designed trail in an interesting setting might draw users from some distance. The point is that trails should be located where they are both convenient and offer the recreational amenities that users are seeking.

C. Recreation

Of all the values ascribed to a trail, its recreational value is the most important in terms of predicting its level of use, assuming that safety and convenience are not issues. In general, trails offering a high-quality recreational experience are those that:

- Are scenic and located in a pleasant park-like setting, natural open space, or linear corridor away from traffic and the built environment
- Provide a continuous and varying experience that takes visitors to a variety of destinations and is a destination unto itself
- Offer continuity with limited interruptions and impediments to travel

This underscores that trail planning must be based on criteria that go beyond simply providing miles of trail – with considerable emphasis on the quality of the trail experience as much or more than quantity.

In North Mankato, creating trails with high recreational value inherently affects community planning and development. Planning for trails that follow greenways that seamlessly traverse public open spaces and private developments alike is considerably different than planning for trails that follow road rights-of-way. While greenway-based trails often pose more challenges to plan and implement, the

value of these trails to the community has proven to be very high and worth the investment. Cities that have successfully integrated these types of trails often highlight them as key aspects of the community's quality of life.

D. Fitness

Fitness is a growing value that cannot be overlooked. Fortunately, this value is generally achieved if safety, convenience, recreational, and transportation values are met. Most critical to accommodating this value is developing an interlinking trail system that provides numerous route options with trail lengths necessary for the types of uses envisioned.

E. Transportation (Commuting)

The transportation (commuting) aspect of trails is valuable to a growing subset of the user population. This is especially the case with shared-use paved trails, where bicycling, in-line skating, and walking are viable means of transportation, especially for people in urban and suburban settings.

On-road bikeway facilities are also viable and important means of transportation if developed to acceptable standards. Importantly, promoting the use of trails and on-road bikeways for

transportation will only be successful if the system is perceived as safe and convenient relative to a user's skill level. Without such a system, residents would simply use their vehicle.

F. Trail Classifications

The proposed trail connections indicated in the comprehensive plan are a baseline to continue to add to. It is recommended the city complete a multi-modal system plan study to identify additional key connections throughout the city.

Understanding the different classifications of trails appeal to different users is critical to the success over the overall system. Each classification serves a particular purpose in meeting local trail needs. The distinction between trail types is important due to the variability in their recreational value, which greatly affects the value of the system to residents and the degree to which a trail or system of trails will be used.

Table 8-E provides an overview of the classifications for trails North Mankato should consider.

Table 8-E. North Mankato Trail Classifications & Guidelines

| Classifications | Common Guidelines | Applications to North Mankato |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Destination Trails | Destination trails are paved trails for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating located within a greenway, open space, park, parkway, or designated trail corridor. | Destination trails will be the backbone of the greenway-based trail system that loops the city and connects to adjoining communities and college campuses. |
| Linking Trails | Linking trails emphasize safe travel for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating to/from parks and around the community. Linking trails are most often located within road rights-of-way or utility easements. | Linking trails will be primarily used as a means to connect neighborhoods and developed areas to the destination trail system and provide safe routes to schools. |
| Sidewalks | Sidewalks emphasize safe travel for walking and jogging within residential areas and business districts and to/ from parks and around the community. Although biking and in-line skating are allowed on sidewalks, the narrower width and concrete surface limit their use for this purpose. Sidewalks are most often located within road rights-of-way of a | Sidewalks work in concert with linking trails and are primarily used as a means to connect neighborhoods and developed areas together and to the destination trail system, as well as provide safe routes to schools. |
| Nature Trails | Nature trails are commonly used in areas where natural tread is desired and harmony with the natural environment is emphasized. Use is limited to hikers and joggers in North Mankato. | Natural trails will be primarily used in nature areas and as secondary connections to the destination trail system, especially within a preserved natural area or conservation easement. |
| On-Road Bikeways | Bike routes and lanes are on-road facilities that primarily serve fitness and transportation bicyclists and in-line skaters, as well as recreationalists with a higher skill and comfort level being around automobiles. | Bikeways augment, but do not take the place of, the trail and sidewalk system. |

G. Character and Value Comparison between Trail Classifications

Each of the trail classifications defined above:

- Accommodate specific types of trail users
- Provide a certain type of recreational experience and value to pedestrians, bicyclists, in-line skaters, and wheelchair users
- Are located in a specific type of setting appropriate for the activity
- Follow design guidelines that allow for a safe and enjoyable use of the facility

Table 8-F considers the expectations of the most common types of trail users in North Mankato, and the values and preferences that are likely to be of most importance.

| User Group | Value and Preferences |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family Group – Various Modes | Safety and convenience are top priorities, followed by a pleasant recreational experience. Controlled, traffic-free access to sidewalks and trails is preferred. Length of trail is less important than quality of experience. Will typically only use low-volume residential streets when biking or skating, and rarely busy streets even with bike lanes or routes. |
| Recreational Walker, Bicyclists, and In- Line Skater | Same as family user group, with trail continuity and length also being important for repeated use. 20 miles of connected trails are needed for bicyclists, at a minimum. This user group is also more comfortable with street crossings. Bicyclists and in-line skaters will use roads that are not too busy. Loops are preferred over out-and-back routes for variety. |
| Fitness Walker/ Jogger, Bicyclists, and In-Line Skater | Length of trail and continuity are most important, although an appealing setting is also desired. Bikers are reasonably comfortable on busier roads, but prefer bike lanes/routes to provide separation from vehicles. Bikers will often use a combination of roads and trails to create a desirable loop, which is much preferred over out-and-back routes. |
| Transportation Walker, Bicyclists, and In-Line Skater | Directness of route is important. Will use a combination of sidewalks, trails, residential streets, and roads that are relatively safe, convenient, and direct. Bike lanes/routes are preferred on busy roads to improve safety. Bicyclists are not overly dependent on trails, but will use them if convenient and not too heavily used by families and recreational users, who tend to slow them down. Walkers need a trail or sidewalk. |

Location: Z:\Planning\U. Comprehensive Plan\Chapter 8 Parks, Trails, and Recreation\GIS\2023-Trails.aprx

Legend

Existing & Proposed Trails

- Existing On-Street Bike Route
- Existing Multi-Use Trail
- - - Sidewalk Only
- ||||| Limited Use Trails
- - - Proposed On-Road Bike Route
- - - Proposed Trail

Key Trails & Loops

- Gran Fondo Loop
- Prairie Loop
- Brickyard Trail Loop
- North Ridge Loop
- Dakota Chaku Trail
- Commerce Trail

- Trail Wayfinding Information
- Restroom
- Drinking Fountain
- Bicycle Repair Station

- City Limit
- Water Feature
- Park
- School
- Belgrade Avenue Central Business District
- Commerce Drive Commercial

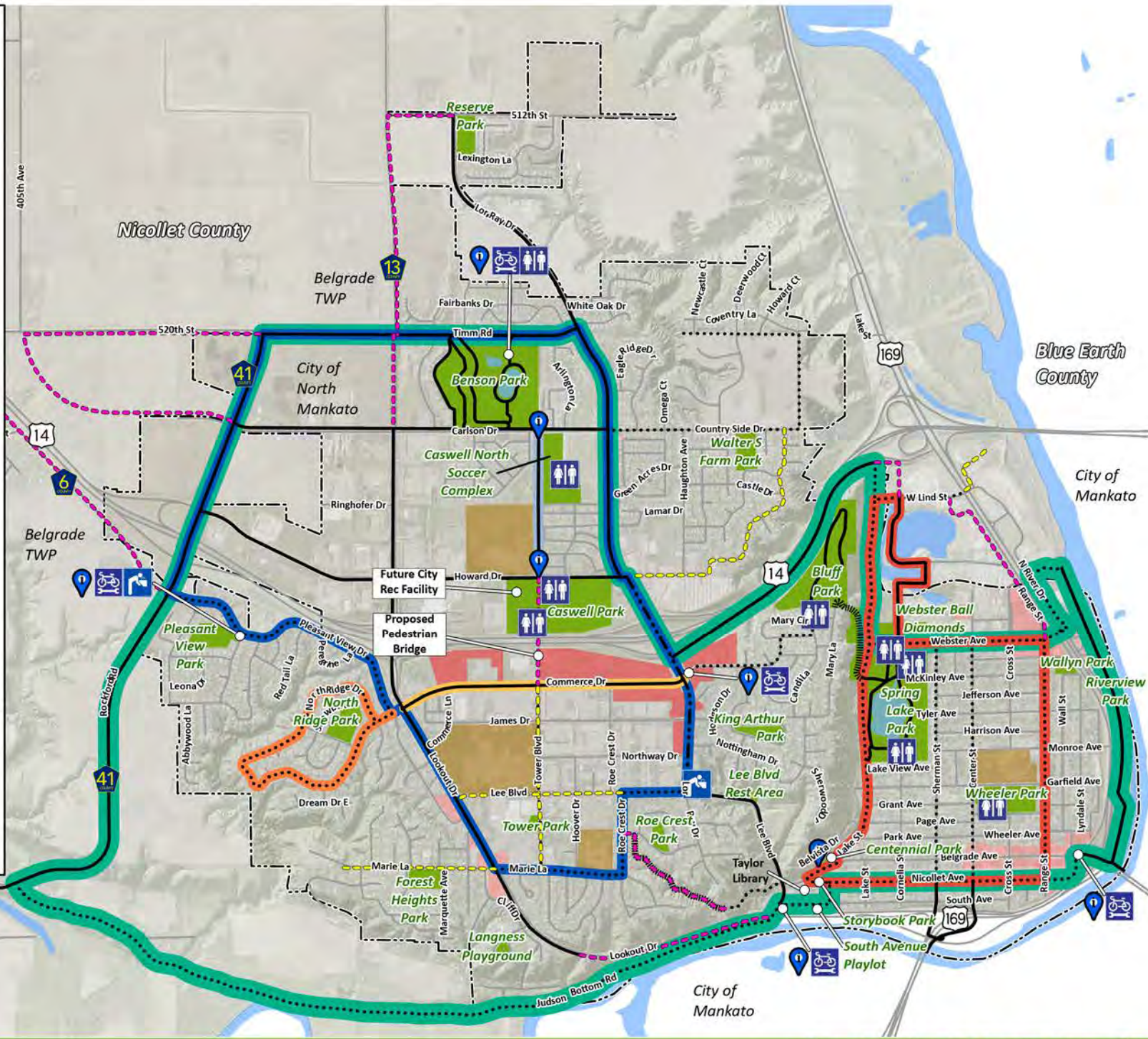
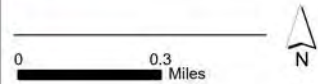


Figure 8-3. City Trail System Master Plan
April 2023

TRAIL SYSTEM GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section outlines the primary goals for trails followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future development efforts that align with the community visions in this plan.

GOAL 1: Expand on the existing interlinking system of trails throughout the City that connect with adjoining communities, regional, and state trails.

Objective 1.1: Continue to maintain the trail system plan for the City to better understand community needs and desires.

Policy 1.1.1: Ensure the quality standard for trails within the system is consistent with industry standards for safety, durability, and access.

Policy 1.1.2: Continue to create a comprehensive signage program for trail facilities.

Policy 1.1.3: Integrate new residential, commercial, and industrial development into the existing and expanding trail system when possible.

Policy 1.1.4: Include the development of trails in North Mankato's Capital Improvements Plan.

Policy 1.1.5: During the planning process for major street and utility improvements, evaluate the appropriateness of developing community and neighborhood trails with the proposed improvements, even if the Trail System Master Plan does not show proposed trails associated with the areas to be improved.

Policy 1.1.6: Incorporate trails into ravine restoration or improvement when practical and feasible.

Objective 1.2: Strengthen east and west connections over the Minnesota River to enhance system continuity and regional connectivity.

Policy 1.2.1: Explore the feasibility of, and options for, the construction of a dedicated pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Minnesota River from North Mankato to Mankato and the regional trail system.

GOAL 2: Strengthen trail connectivity within City limits

Objective 2.1: Create a stronger north and south connection over Highway 14 in Upper North Mankato

Policy 2.1.1: Construct proposed on-street and multi-use trails as identified in the City Trail System Master Plan.

Policy 2.1.2: Pursue grant funding opportunities identified in the Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study to construct a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Highway 14 that will connect the Commerce Drive Trail and planned on-street trail facilities on Tower Boulevard to the Caswell Sports Complex and trails north.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

Current Programming Opportunities

Currently, many of the recreation opportunities are administered by the City of North Mankato. Other opportunities are offered by the Mankato Area Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Program, YMCA, YWCA, and MSU-Mankato.

There are also many organized sports groups for soccer, baseball, softball, hockey, figure skating, basketball, lacrosse, swimming etc. that offer their own programming opportunities for league play.

Regarding the arts, most programs and events are run by Twin Rivers Council for the Arts (TRCA), which is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting arts and culture in Greater Mankato. TRCA serves as a great resource for information related to the arts and cultural events. The City of North Mankato recognizes the importance of arts and culture and its contribution to quality of life. The City will support the use of parks and other public spaces for cultural and art related events and activities.



NORTH MANKATO GREENWAY SYSTEM

Greenway System Definition & Characteristics

The Greenway Corridor System protects, preserves, and enhances natural areas and open spaces, and maintains connections among these areas. The Greenway System is designed to grow with local communities and provide connections to neighboring communities and nearby natural and cultural resources.

The City's Northwest Growth Study identifies western expansion of City limits which includes additions to the greenway system. **Figure 8-6** identifies the Greenway System and indicates that the system includes broad "green" loops. A long-term vision for a Greenway System should include a system that protects natural resource areas as the community grows and provides recreation opportunities for area residents.

Wildlife Management in the Greenway System

The Greenway System in North Mankato not only provides opportunities for recreation, but also significant wildlife habitat. Many in the community welcome wildlife, such as deer, rabbits, and geese. However, wildlife in an urban environment where there are no natural predators and ample food can become problematic if left unchecked.

While there are many that welcome wildlife, there are also many that have experienced significant damage to landscaping and other vegetation on private properties. This has resulted in City staff working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) to identify appropriate steps the City should take to effectively manage wildlife. That process was in progress during the development of this Plan.

GREENWAY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section outlines the primary goals for greenways followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future development efforts that align with the community visions in this plan.

GOAL 1: Create a greenway system that provides recreational opportunities, protects and enhances natural resources, is valued by the community, and can be maintained long-term by the City.

Objective 1.1: Complete an action plan that further defines the limits and opportunities of the greenway corridors and includes strategies, timelines, and costs for implementing the system.

Policy 1.1.1: Develop an operations and maintenance strategy for each greenway to assure the public that the City has the capacity to meet these responsibilities.

Policy 1.1.2: Clearly define how improvements will be funded, and the potential costs to the average homeowner in the City, to avoid any uncertainties in this regard.

Policy 1.1.3: Make strategic prioritized investments toward the greenway system that will continue to expand their role as defining elements in the City's infrastructure and enhance the region's economic prospects by attracting new residents and supporting robust levels of tourism.

Policy 1.1.4: During platting of development, ravines and greenways will be either dedicated to the City or covered by conservation easement allowing continued

protection against erosion and other degrading activities (i.e. sump pumps, dumping brush and grass, clear cutting, and other personal property).

Objective 1.2: Effectively manage wildlife within City limits to minimize impacts to personal and publicly owned property.

Policy 1.2.1: Investigate the scale of wildlife impacts on the Greenway System and private properties.

Policy 1.2.2: Seek guidance from the MNDNR and other MN State agencies on wildlife management best management practices (BMPs).



POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR PARKS, TRAILS, AND GREENWAYS

The availability of funding for implementing the park, open space and trail system initiatives will have direct impacts on the timing of implementing the plan. The following table provides a brief overview of the funding sources typically available to local governments. It also provides an overview of a strategic approach to implementing the System Plan.

Important underpinnings to consider for further developing the implementation strategy in the Parks, Trails, and Open Space System Plan include:

Understanding that the opportunities to enhance the park and trail system are substantial and diverse

Recognizing that the magnitude of investments needed to achieve full plan implementation presents a major challenge and will require the community to set priorities that respond to public will and realistic limitations of resources

With this in mind, the underlying strategy for implementing this plan is to undertake initiatives that best respond to the prioritization criteria set forth in this section. By making strategic, prioritized investments, the city's parks and trails will continue to expand their role as defining elements in the city's infrastructure and enhance the region's economic prospects by attracting new residents and supporting robust levels of tourism.

Note that each of the non-local funding sources requires an application process that includes an action plan and description of funding requirements. All of these funding sources are competitive and/or require political action, local funding commitments.

Table 8-G. Trail Funding Sources

| Funding Source | Description / Overview | Probability |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| State Outdoor Recreation, LCCMR, Legacy Fund, and Similar Grants | The State of Minnesota annually allocates funds for park acquisition and development projects which meet recreational needs identified by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. In recent years, Legacy Amendment Fund has emerged as a legitimate potential funding source for projects of regional or state-wide significance. Whatever the program, the grants are competitive and awarded according to project merits. | Very competitive, especially with very tight public funding available at all levels. Most promising might be Legacy Amendment Funds, especially for parks or trails of regional significance. |
| Land and Water Conservation Fund | The federal government allocates monies each year to states for public acquisition and development projects. The State of Minnesota Administers these grants through the Department of Natural Resources. | Funding availability through this program has been limited in recent years. |
| Federal Transportation Funds (T-21, RTP, etc.) | The federal government allocates monies each year for alternative forms of transportation, which includes bicycle trails that focus on transportation. | Funding availability through this program has been significant in past years. The potential for receiving funding for local trails is relatively good. |

Table 8-G Cont'd. Trail Funding Sources

| Funding Source | Description / Overview | Probability |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fees/ Enterprise Funds | Minnesota statute allows cities to prescribe and provide for the collection of fees for the use of any city park or other unit of the city park system or any facilities, accommodations, or services provided for public use therein. | Becoming a much more relied upon funding source, especially for singular use facilities ranging from ballfields to hockey arenas. |
| Partnerships | Relates to partnerships formed with adjacent cities, the county, and school districts to develop, maintain, and operate parks and recreational facilities on a joint-use basis. | Although limited public funding availability is an issue at all levels, forming partnerships to spread the cost of providing a specific type of service or facility still has merit whenever there is an opportunity. |
| Park Dedication Fees | The park dedication fund provides funding for parks as long as community development continues to occur. Any controls imposed on the extent (i.e., total number of units) or rate of development (i.e., number of units per year) allowed within the city will limit the revenue generated under this fund. The City will need to ensure the fees imposed are consistent with current state statutes. | Even with periodic adjustments, park dedication fees alone will not be adequate to fund the system plan to an optimal level. |
| Donations | Donations related to cash donations, gifts, volunteerism, and professional services donated to the park for planning, acquisition, or development purposes. | Limited potential from a cash perspective, but important with respect to the use of volunteers to offset some program costs. |