

## CHAPTER 6: PARKS, TRAILS & OPEN SPACE

*Encourage active lifestyles by creating an interconnected and well coordinated network of open spaces, parks, and trails that are integrated into neighborhoods, and connected to community facilities.*

### Introduction

In recent years, the City of Isanti has been proactive in respect to the development of parks and trails. Due to unprecedented growth there are increasing demands for parks, trails and public access to natural areas. The City is not only committed to the preservation, conservation and enhancement of those natural areas and wetlands located in and around the community, but to the creation of a trail system providing an interconnected network of open spaces, natural areas and parks. The City has made a commitment to the existing and future residents of the community to provide the opportunity for all generations to enjoy and appreciate the natural environment found within the City of Isanti.

The City of Isanti believes that there is great value in the creation of a trail and park network. This interconnected system would not only be utilized for recreational purposes but would also provide for a pedestrian transportation system to and from other areas within the community. Encouraging the use of such a network would help to increase the activity level of residents and promote a healthier lifestyle.



The Parks, Trails and Open Space chapter provides an inventory of existing parks and recreational facilities. In addition, the Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan assists the community in establishment of goals and aspirations for future trail connections and parks throughout the community. The Plan illustrates the location of existing natural resource areas which the City of Isanti aspires to preserve in some capacity for the existing and future residents of the community.



### Existing Conditions

The City of Isanti's primary focus has been on active parks. The areas chosen for active parkland were primarily due to their accessibility to residents in existing neighborhoods. Each of these facilities has been provided with a variety of playground equipment and recreational opportunities. The parks operate at the neighborhood, City and regional levels. The following table provides an inventory of all parks in the community and describes the type of park, the facilities and amenities provided, and the size of the

**Table 8-1** -City of Isanti Parks and Open Space in Isanti

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Type</u></b>	<b><u>Major Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Acres</u></b>
Bluebird Park	Regional	Soccer, BMX, Red Birds, Hockey, Trails, Skate Park, and Playground	72.83
Eagle Park	Neighborhood (DT)	Open Space, Passive	0.07
Isanti Hills Tot Lot	Neighborhood	Picnic Shelter, Playground	0.70
Mattson Park	Community	Basketball Court, Benches, Green Space, Horseshoes, Picnic Facilities, Playground, Tennis Court, Volleyball Court, Sidewalks, Trail	6.76
Riverside Park	Neighborhood	Trails, Playground, Open Space	3.89
Rum River Meadows Park	Neighborhood	Playground, Open Space	0.52
Unity Park	Community	Green Space, Picnic Facilities, softball field, sidewalks.	9.2
VFW Park	Neighborhood	Playground, Horseshoes, Open Space	0.07
Whisper Ridge Park	Neighborhood	Tennis Court, Basketball Court, Open Space	11.17
Indoor Ice Arena	Ice Rink	Skating, hockey, community space	
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>			<b>105.21</b>

Source: City of Isanti, 2005



Additional park and recreational facilities not listed in the Table 8-1, but are significant amenities to the City include the Sanbrook Golf Course, Martin's Landing (a DNR canoe area) and the proposed future Cambridge-Isanti regional trail. Although these facilities may not be located within the City limits, these facilities provide important access for recreation and sports to Isanti's residents and surrounding communities.



Each type of park is designed to serve specific purposes. Community parks and neighborhood parks are similar in that they serve the immediate area and just beyond, through the provision of open space, activities and trails. These parks are dispersed around the City to serve the variety of residential areas. Regional parks are larger and usually accommodate uses such as full size playfields, open spaces and more amenities. These parks are designed to serve a wider population beyond the immediate neighborhood and the City limits.

## Park Dedication Ordinance

The City has implemented a park dedication ordinance in an effort to set aside land for future trails and open spaces throughout neighborhoods and to ensure connectivity to the larger system. The park dedication ordinance requires developers to dedicate one acre of land for every 75 people the platted land could house or pay, in lieu of dedication, an established fee based on the average undeveloped land value of the City. The City will then utilize the lands or fees for new park development. The Park Dedication Ordinance will utilize both this Plan and the Natural Resources Plan to ensure that land acquired through the dedication process (or funds acquired) completes and contributes to the overall system. The Park Dedication Ordinance will include the Trail and Natural Resource Plan to ensure land in high priority areas is set aside when possible.

### Analysis

The City of Isanti is focused on the preservation and enhancement of open spaces and significant natural areas as a way to promote a desirable place for people to live, work, and play. A significant amount of time has been spent reviewing the natural resources inventory prepared as a part of this plan, to ensure an interconnected approach to parks, open spaces, and trails. The Natural Resource Inventory provided the foundation for the development of the Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails Plan represented in Figure 6-4A. The City acknowledges that encouraging active and healthy lifestyles will require an integrated and well planned trails and recreational system. The City has prepared a Walking Trails Map for residents which provide information regarding the length of their walking trip, and the best and safest way to travel. The Walking Trails Map will continue to be distributed to City residents and will be updated in a timely manner so as to keep residents abreast of future connections that have been identified within the Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan.

The Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails plan defines the existing trail system and identifies future linkages. A key component of the plan are pedestrian 'loops', which have

been created to encourage walking and biking throughout the community for recreation and transportation purposes as well as offers residents the opportunity to enjoy the exceptional natural resources found in the community.

The City has a significant percentage of land dedicated to active park space, which includes neighborhood, community, and regional parks. As the City continues to grow, it will constantly need to re-evaluate the park system to ensure that dedicated parkland is provided within future neighborhoods which are accessible to all residents. In conjunction with active park space, the City is looking to create a natural areas corridor. The natural areas corridor will be integrated into the existing and proposed trail system. The corridor will provide the City with the opportunity to work with adjacent jurisdictions, including the townships, the school district, and the County to create a more expansive and integrated trail system. Cross-jurisdictional planning will open even more opportunities for residents to experience all of the natural areas found throughout the region.

A priority of the City of Isanti is to continue to enforce the park dedication requirements in an effort to plan open spaces more thoughtfully. It is careful thought which will ultimately create a connected system of multi-purpose greenways throughout the community. The development and preservation of such key areas will not only offer the community additional green spaces and passive recreational areas, but will also contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly development pattern.

Another priority of the Park & Recreation Board and the City Council is the continued work for a pedestrian bridge over TH 65. The Park & Recreation Board began work on this project in 2006 and the City Council directed funds towards the preliminary work for the bridge including – the footprint of the bridge, grant writing, and images. The City applied for federal transportation funds in 2007 for the bridge and is also working on the acquisition of property for the bridge.

### **Parks, Trails, & Open Space Objectives**

The following objectives support the goals and strategies defined in Chapter Two and specifically address the issues as they relate to the park and trail system in the City of Isanti.

- Use the Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails plan as a guide when determining the location of future parkland and open space as required by the Park Dedication Ordinance.
- Create an incentive based program to encourage developers and land owners to complete the network of trails and open space.
- Work with residents of existing neighborhoods in an effort to connect neighborhood parks with the larger parks, trails, and open space system.
- Provide passive parkland and open space areas to enhance the quality of life in existing and future neighborhoods.
- Plan green spaces accordingly so they may become a part of a larger multi-purpose greenway system.
- Review and update the current Park Dedication Ordinance to ensure that the fees and land requirements support the Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails Plan as well as the Natural Resources Plan.