

## Chapter 6: Parks, Trails and Open Space

### Introduction:

Historically the City has been proactive in the development of parks and trails. Due to continuing 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 to assist with park and recreation facility access. The City has moved forward to develop parks as opportunities to own land for both neighborhood and community parks, to preserve natural features, and give the community access to native natural areas and new amenities. The City is continuing 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.

As referenced in Chapter 5, Natural Resources, there is great value in both preserving and gaining access to an interconnected system of parks and natural areas. 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 healthy 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.



### Existing Conditions:

The City of Isanti has developed both active and passive parks. The areas chosen for active parkland were primarily due to their accessibility to residents in existing neighborhoods and location of parklands with natural amenities. The active recreation facilities have been provided with a variety of playground equipment and recreational opportunities. The parks operate at the neighborhood, city and regional levels. Table 6.1 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 park.

**Table 6.1 - City of Isanti – Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Major Activity</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Academy Park	Neighborhood	Tennis court, Playground, Open Space, Soccer Field	1.56
Bike/Walk Trail	Regional	Bike/walk/hike trail	1.15 miles
Bluebird Park	Regional	Isanti Indoor Arena (BMX), Baseball Field (Redbirds), Soccer, Trails, Skate Park, Dog Park, Pleasure Rink, Open Space and Playground	65
Eagle Park	Neighborhood	Open Space, Passive	0.46
Fir Lane Property	Neighborhood (undeveloped)	Undetermined	0.60
Isanti Hills Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood	Open Space, Picnic Shelter, Playground	0.67
Legacy Park	Community	Walking/hiking trails	20.67
Mattson Park	Community	Basketball Court, Benches, Horseshoes, Open Space, Picnic Facilities, Playground, Tennis Court, Sidewalks	6.76
River Bluff Preserve	Community	Walking/hiking trails, Fishing Access, Community Garden, Open Space	46.67
Riverside Park	Neighborhood	Trails, Playground, Open Space	31.18
Rum River Meadows Park	Neighborhood	Playground, Volley court, Open Space	1.33
Unity Park	Community	Open Space, Picnic Facilities, Softball Field	9.8
VFW Park	Neighborhood	Playground, Open Space	1.28
Whisper Ridge Park	Neighborhood	Tennis Court, Basketball Court, Open Space	6.58
		<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>193.71</b>

Source: City of Isanti, 2019



Additional park and recreational facilities not listed in the table above but are significant amenities to the City include: Sanbrook Golf Course, David C Johnson Indoor Civic Arena-a hockey arena, Isanti Firefighters Association Rodeo Grounds and Martin's Landing-a MN DNR area. While some of these may not be City owned these facilities provide important access for recreation and sports to the community.



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, by providing open space, activities and trails. These parks are dispersed throughout 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:

The City has continued use of the park dedication process as a part of the city's development in an effort to set aside land for future parks and open spaces throughout the city. Trails have also been developed in conjunction with new subdivisions. The City will utilize land or fees for new or improved park development. The City Park, Recreation and Culture Board, and Planning Commission will ensure that land acquired through the dedication process (or funds acquired) completes and contributes to the overall system.

#### 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. The Natural Resource Chapter provides the foundation for the development of the integrated Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails Plan represented in Figure 6.2. The City acknowledges that encouraging healthy lifestyle activities will require an integrated and well planned trails and recreational system. The City has prepared and continues to provide Parks/Trails maps for residents.

The Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails plan, Figure 6.2, 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. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Board have a comprehensive Parks, Trails and Open Space plan to guide these efforts. 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.

### Open House – Parks:

On January 21, 2020, the City of Isanti held an Open House on the draft 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. Feedback on park plans and objectives are as follows:

- Continue to integrate neighborhood parks in residential developments. Focus on community seasonal activities/events, larger facilities and active park amenities in community parks.
- Look at the potential for an Amphitheater, Lighting for community/seasonal events and a ballfield in Bluebird Park.
- Consider the potential for cross country ski trails in Legacy and River Bluff Preserve Parks.
- Look into the possibility of a bridge and trail to connect River Bluff Park to Martin's landing. Look into the potential for expanding trails north along the Rum River. This would be part of the "Grand Rounds" trail/park connection concept.
- Further consider connection of Whisper Ridge Park to the Downtown Area, via 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW.

### Goals/Strategies:

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

- Use the Comprehensive Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan prepared by the Park, Recreation and Culture Board and this Chapter 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 landowners to complete the network of trails and open space. Look at investments by the City to complete trail segments and connections.
- 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 in accordance with Chapter Five, Natural Areas.