

Chapter 6: Parks, Trails and Open Space Chapter

Introduction

The city of Maplewood has an extensive park, open space and trail system that requires extensive management, maintenance and planning. The City's park system provides a high quality of life for all residents and contributes to the overall appeal of the City as a desirable place for people to live and recreate. The system includes approximately 860 acres of City owned and managed parks and open space land, and residents also have access to an additional 1,175 acres of county, state, and agency owned park land. The recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) prepared by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stated that, "About two-thirds of all recreation use in the state occurs within a half hour of home." Maplewood provides recreational opportunities throughout the entire City, thereby providing residents with opportunities well within a half an hour of their homes, and in most cases within a half-mile of their homes.

The following plan provides an update to the existing Parks, Open Space and Trail System component of the Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in December 1999. The previous plan provided an extensive inventory of the entire parks system, and while some changes or additions have been made to the system, the overall plan remains valid for purposes of this plan.

The summary includes a set of new goals, objectives and future plans for the parks, trails and open space systems. A change from the previous plan is the separation of the natural resources section into an independent chapter. This change was made due to the rising significance of the natural resources system in the community. Maplewood also wanted natural resources to be a building block for all other sections of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Background

The Parks, Trails and Open Space chapter is an important component of the City's overall comprehensive Plan. This chapter is included in the City's Comprehensive Plan to ensure good planning of Maplewood's parks system, as well as to meet the requirements of the Metropolitan Council. The City used the existing Parks, Trails and Open Space plan as a baseline for updating this plan component.

Since the last comprehensive plan update some significant changes have been made and are reflected in this plan. From a document structural perspective, the City placed increased significance and focus on the City's natural resources. As a result, that component has been placed in its own chapter to ensure the appropriate attention and significance is placed on that component of the plan. The Plan also includes additional focus on clear and concise action oriented goals to help guide future planning efforts. Finally, a shift in focus from active parks to trail development and connections is presented in this plan. Because the City is almost fully developed, further park acquisition in most neighborhoods is not necessary, but the trail system will require acquisition and development to adequately support the parks system already in place.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space Advisory Panel

The Parks, Trails and Open Space update included the participation of an Advisory Panel that was assembled with participants from the City's various commissions and a few members of the public at large. The purpose of the Advisory Panel was to review the parks, trails and open space system considering all of the other components of the

Comprehensive Plan. The Advisory Panel reviewed the system and made recommendations on this plan, and subsequently passed the recommendations along to the responsible commissions.

The meetings held by the Advisory Panel included the following topic areas:

- Goals and objective setting, development, and refinement
- Natural Resources and Natural Area Greenways
- Trails
- Land Use
- South Maplewood – Special Area Discussion

The meetings covered general topic areas of the Comprehensive Plan to give the Panel context for making recommendations. At the time of this document, the South Maplewood Area (described as area south of Carver Avenue) was one of the few relatively undeveloped areas in the community. Additionally, in the previous plan a parks, trails and open space plan had not been prepared for this area. As a result the Advisory Panel spent a great deal of time discussing this area and understanding its unique attributes.

The Advisory Panel concluded their efforts by reviewing this document and making recommendations to the Parks Commission and Planning Commission.

Community Demographics

As mentioned in previous chapters, the demographics in the community are changing. (See Chapter 2 for more detailed information). Understanding who lives in the community, and how many people are projected to live in the community helps the City understand potential park and trail needs. According to the Metropolitan Council, the Twin Cities and greater metropolitan area is projected to grow by over a million people by 2030, and the vast majority of those people will move into the 7-county area. Although the area will grow, because Maplewood is largely developed, only an additional 2,500 people are projected to move to Maplewood. Even with a small growth rate, the demands on the system are likely to increase, particularly for parks or trails that serve the region. Special attention to commuting trails and regional parks should be considered and monitored as growth occurs.

Another consideration is the changing demographics in the community. The baby-boomer generation is the fastest and largest growing population throughout the region. This demographic is an active population that enjoys walking, nature hiking, fishing and other passive recreational activities.

New residents are also changing and different cultures can be seen throughout the community. Although a full survey was not completed for this plan document, understanding the population in the community will continue to be important to ensure that residents' needs are being met.

Regional Studies

Over the past 15 years several studies have been completed with respect to regional planning for parks, trails, and open space. The following discussion highlights some of those studies to provide additional perspective on planning for the City's system.

University of Minnesota – Leisure Trends in the Twin Cities

In 1996, the University of Minnesota's Survey Research Center published a study of leisure trends entitled, "Leisure Trends in the Twin Cities". The study looked at resident's desires for a variety of recreational opportunities and their perceptions on current facilities and future needs. In the previous Parks Comprehensive Plan dated December 1999 a thorough study was completed for the City. Although an extensive survey was not completed for this update, many of the trends highlighted in the survey will carry over into the current planning effort. In many respects, study findings parallel those of the Maplewood survey, with natural area preservation and walking areas being high on the list of priorities. This plan builds on those principles to help create a strong park, trails and open space system. The Regional study identified the following trends and generalizations:

- Walking around the neighborhood and in large, natural parks.
- Individual sports over organized sports, at least at the adult level.
- People valuing parks even if they didn't use them.
- Especially strong desire to set aside land for nature areas/open space, bike paths, and general use trails.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources prepares the Statewide Comprehensive Plan every five years to keep apprised of recreation trends across the state. Because the City of Maplewood does not have the resources to prepare a survey every time it prepares a comprehensive plan update, the SCORP plan and associated surveys can serve as a good interim survey of needs in the community. The DNR administered a survey in 2004 entitled; Outdoor Recreation Survey 2004 which revealed similar trends to those identified in Maplewood's 1998 survey. Respondents identified walking, boating, swimming, picnicking and biking as their top outdoor recreation activities. Additionally, the survey identified changes in demographics, an increasing metro area population (additional one million residents in the area by 2030), and rising obesity rates as contributors to the state's mission of increasing overall activity in the outdoor recreation system.

Ramsey County – Active Living Ramsey County (ALRC)

The Active Living program is administered at a county level through the Active Living Ramsey County program. The program has actively solicited participation by local governments to introduce Active Living and Healthy Living infrastructure into their city and subsequent planning efforts.

Studies have been performed at a state and national level to help support the need for Active Living characteristics throughout a community. Such principles include well connected walking paths and bike trails, clearly delineated and signed trails, and pedestrian friendly environments, to name a few. Several programs and grants are available throughout the County and State. These studies were used directly to help support the parks and trails plan identified in this plan.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space Goals and Objectives

General Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan Goals

The following goal and objective statements apply to the parks, trails, and open space plan holistically. These topics cover many issues that are important to the community including the function of the system, the protection of natural resources, and city staff. More detailed goals are identified by topic in subsequent sections.

General Goal 1: To prepare and implement a comprehensive park, open space, and trail system plan.

Objectives:

- Inventory and evaluate the existing park and trail system, recreational needs of the community, park and trail classifications and standards, and acquisition/development guidelines to ensure adequate active and passive parks and trails are provided in the City.
- Prioritize and preserve high quality natural resources that support a diverse system plan.
- Prioritize and preserve areas of historic value.
- Implement the plan for the purpose of guiding active and passive parks, trails, open space and recreational facility development in the forthcoming years.
- Develop a means for ongoing and systematic evaluation of park and trail system components, thus allowing for actual and perceived changes in community needs to be reflected in the system plan.
- Enhance the community's and public agencies' understanding of the park, trail and natural resources system and development objectives.
- Create and establish a strong vision and marketing plan that encourages residents to use the parks system and participate in associated programming.
- Develop and create clear, concise information about the parks and natural areas system within the community that is accessible to all residents, policy makers and staff.

General Goal 2: To maintain and support the natural resources system as an integral part of the parks system.

Objectives:

- Enhance the community's understanding of biodiversity and natural systems as a part of the overall parks system.
- Prioritize natural areas within the community that should be preserved and maintained as a part of the parks system.
- Support the Natural Area Greenways as a part of the parks and natural resource system.
- Explore opportunities to support the natural resource system as a part of the parks system.

General Goal 3: To maintain and support a professionally trained, highly motivated, staff to carry out the City of Maplewood's mission of developing a quality park, natural resource and recreation system.

Objectives:

- Support and provide professional staffing to manage and direct the park system and programs in a professional, effective, and efficient manner.
- Promote and support a parks department staff that through successful communication and coordination can maintain and manage the diverse parks, open space and trails system.
- Support staff and policy makers through effective long-range planning initiatives.
- Effectively and efficiently coordinate efforts between staff, City and adjacent jurisdictions.
- Create and establish a strong vision and marketing plan that attracts high quality staff and commission members.

Community and Partnerships

Relationship building and commitment to working with our neighbors and residents will help ensure successful implementation of this plan. The following goals and objectives identify ways in which we should conduct business internally and how we should work with other regulatory agencies.

Community Goal 1: To establish effective communication and interactions with residents about parks, open space and trails.

Objectives:

- Update and distribute park system map and information.
- Create signage to educate park users.
- Promote active and ongoing interaction between the City and residents.
- Actively engage with under-represented members of the community.
- Promote ongoing communication between the Park and Recreation Commission and city residents.
- Develop and support volunteer programs and other organizations that encourage residents and community organizations to assist in park and natural resources improvements, maintenance, recreation programs, and educational programs.
- Explore and develop new methods and technologies that promote more effective communication and accessible information.

Community Goal 2: To maximize the recreational opportunities available to city residents through the development of fair and equitable working partnerships between the City and the local school district, adjacent cities, county, churches and civic organizations.

Objectives:

- Communicate and promote the City of Maplewood facilities internally and externally to potential users.
- Fairly and equitably integrate the City of Maplewood programs with those of the other members of the partnership.
- Effectively communicate programming and facilities available to residents and the region through these partnerships.
- Work with adjacent jurisdictions and regulatory agencies to provide an efficient and accessible parks and recreational system that encourages activity throughout the community and region.

Ecological Resources, Restoration and Management

Some key components of the parks, trails and open space plan are the preservation, acquisition and management of important natural areas in the community. These goals and objectives support the creation of environmental corridors and providing natural areas for the enjoyment of city residents. More detailed natural resource goals can be found in the Natural Resources Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ecological Goal 1: To preserve and protect ecological systems and natural resources within the City.

Objectives:

- Preserve and protect significant natural resources within the City.
- Identify, prioritize, and protect sites of high ecological value or sites within Natural Area Greenways that increase habitat value of the greenway.
- Engage in a comprehensive approach to natural resources planning that includes parks, neighborhood preserves, Natural Area Greenways, city open space, and other public and private lands.
- Enhance the character and appeal of the community by connecting natural resource areas.

- Increase the value of public natural areas by encouraging adjacent landowners and others in the neighborhood to maintain natural vegetation on private lands.
- Identify and protect natural areas within active parks.
- Identify opportunities to convert turf grass in active parks to natural vegetation.
- Identify, prioritize and restore elements of the natural systems of Maplewood that have been degraded or lost through development.

Ecological Goal 2: To maintain and enhance ecological systems and natural resources within the City.

Objectives:

- Inventory and evaluate natural areas.
- Prioritize, manage and restore natural areas including neighborhood preserves, natural areas at active parks, wetland systems, and other city open space sites.
- Develop restoration and management plans for city natural areas including neighborhood preserves, natural areas at active parks, wetland systems, and other city open space sites.
- Ensure restoration and management plans are economically and ecologically feasible, are sustainable long-term, and are based on science and up-to-date restoration methods.
- Adjust natural resource plans as new information on climate change becomes available.
- Increase diversity of plant communities and diversity of species in Maplewood.
- Enhance enjoyment of the natural world and understanding of biodiversity and natural systems within the community.
- Promote environmental stewardship of public and private lands.
- Educate and engage residents in restoration and management activities on public and private lands.
- Promote environmentally sensitive stewardship of active parklands and other city land that reduces amount of turf grass and minimizes use of pesticide, fertilizer, and irrigation.

Park Land Management, Acquisition and Development

The City has a strong parks system that includes various types and sizes serving neighborhoods throughout the community. The City is largely developed, with some exceptions, and therefore the following goals and objectives are focused on maintenance, management and development or redevelopment activities for the future of the system.

Park Land Goal 1: To maintain and enhance existing active parks and passive parks to provide a high quality of life for all residents.

Objectives:

- Promote the parks system (including open space, and natural areas) as the foundation of the character, ambience, appearance, and history of the community.
- Create and follow an implementation program that provides for the adequate maintenance and enhancement of the park and natural system throughout the community.
- Enhance and improve the quality of life within the city by providing adequate parkland and natural resource areas to fulfill the present and future physical and psychological needs of residents.

Park Land Goal 2: To adequately provide and maintain open spaces and natural areas to ensure each resident has access to green spaces and nature.

Objectives

- Use the parks and natural resource areas and interconnecting trail corridors as significant factors in shaping the future of Maplewood.

- Maintain and connect active and passive parks with neighborhoods, community facilities and schools to ensure accessibility.
- Enhance and maintain environmental corridors, natural areas and open spaces to provide access and educational opportunities to all residents.
- Create and implement plans for the neighborhood preserves.

Park Land Goal 3: To acquire land for parks, natural areas and open spaces, that can be maintained and used by the community and the City.

Objectives

- Maintain and enhance the character and aesthetic appeal of the community through the provision of parks.
- Provide access and space to all residents to escape the hard surfacing of the urban environment and to provide the opportunity to enjoy nature and the City's park system.
- Maintain and enhance areas in the community that support the character, ambience, appearance, history and archaeological history of the community.
- Plan for the system holistically and in conjunction with adjacent jurisdictions to provide opportunities to complete a regional open space and natural resources network.
- Prioritize acquisition of land that supports the overall natural greenway corridors, natural resources, recreation, park, education and trail objectives.
- Promote and support design standards for the development of the parks system focusing on green design.

Trail Corridors/Right-of-Way Acquisition and Development

The City is committed to providing trail connections that encourage residents to bike, walk and stay active. The following goals and objectives support the development of a trail system for recreational and transportation purposes and are intended to support the overall system.

Trails Goal 1: Acquire, develop and maintain an interconnected trail system for transportation, recreation and educational purposes.

Objectives:

- Provide a trail system that emphasizes harmony with the built and natural environment.
- Create a network of relatively uninterrupted hiking, walking and biking trails.
- Effectively tie parks together into a comprehensive park and trail system – with an emphasis on enhancing the recreational experience of the user.
- Create trails with an awareness of safety.
- Work with other local, state and federal entities to effectively tie the City trail system with those of adjacent cities and the county.
- Work with private landowners to identify potential easements where land acquisition is not possible.
- Delineate trail use categories to improve accessibility and efficiency of the system. (For example clearly identify bikeways, hiking trails, walkways, etc.)

Trails Goal 2: Promote and encourage residents to be active through the development of an efficient and accessible trail system.

Objectives:

- Create signage to provide directions and educate users.
- Encourage residents to commute and access natural, commercial and cultural resources using non-motorized modes of transportation.
- Create user-friendly trail and transit connections to promote transit and trail use in Maplewood and adjoining communities.
- Promote use of the trail system through creative and innovative tools such as GPS or other technologies that improve efficiency of the system.

Recreation and Education Programs

A critical component of the parks system is the ability to provide recreational, educational, and fine arts programs to the residents. These facilities and programs help improve the quality of life for all residents and provide opportunities to residents to participate in a more active lifestyle.

Goal Statement: Provide the opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation, education, and arts activities through the implementation of well-designed, cost effective and interesting programs.

Objectives:

- Develop and provide recreational programs that adequately address the recreational desires of all segments of the community including children, teens, adults, elderly, and the disabled.
- Develop and provide recreation and outdoor education programs that teach people about nature and environmental issues and empower citizens to be good stewards of the environment.
- Promote and encourage programs that take place out of doors in nature.
- Provide opportunities for artistic and cultural activities throughout the City.
- Find and execute programming and facilities to support a broad diversity of cultures.
- Administer programs on a fair and equitable basis to ensure all individuals and groups receive adequate representation and opportunity.
- Create and provide programming for up and coming activities and opportunities.
- Continue to support and provide options for all residents to participate in organized programming through efforts such as the city's Scholarship Program.

Funding

The City acknowledges that a robust parks, trails, and open space system requires significant funding and planning to be sustainable. The following goal and objectives identifies broadly how the City intends to continue managing, enhancing and supporting the system.

Goal Statement: To secure the funding necessary to carry out the mission of the Maplewood Parks, Open Space and Trail System.

Objectives:

- Identify and define the funding options that are available for parks land acquisition and development.
- Identify and establish a sustainable funding source to adequately support the parks, trails and open space system.
- Research and evaluate available grants that could support the goals and objectives identified for parks, trails and open space.

- Maintain and improve the existing parks, trails and natural systems.
- Prepare a parkland acquisition and development implementation plan for South Maplewood that depicts the relative timing and extent of future parkland acquisition and development.
- Create and refine a parks and trails programming plan that responds to current recreation trends and the changing community demographic.
- Create and prioritize parks, trails and open space initiatives to ensure adequate and available funding.
- Develop and maintain a systematic, proactive approach to management of the park system to ensure a balanced and cost-effective system.

Existing Conditions

A critical component of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space planning effort is to understand the existing system and to establish a baseline. Understanding the system as it exists today helps to identify areas where we have improved since the last comprehensive plan update, areas that continue to need improvement and emerging issues and opportunities. The following table provides some definitions of Park Classifications to aide in the future plan and analysis:

Table 6.1 Park and Open Space Classifications

Classification	Function	General Description	Size Criteria
Mini Park	Active	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs, typically at the neighborhood level.	Less than an acre
Neighborhood Park	Active with Passive Areas	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the social recreational focus of the neighborhood. The focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	Typically 5 acres or more, with 3 acres as a minimum size
Community Park	Active	The Community Parks serve a broader purpose and function than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Varies, depending on function
Youth Athletic Park	Active	Consolidates programmed youth athletic fields and associated facilities to fewer strategically located sites within the community. Also provides neighborhood-use functions.	Varies, with 20 acres or more most desirable
Community Athletic Complex	Active	Consolidates programmed adult and youth athletic fields and associated facilities to one or a limited number of sites. Tournament level facilities, also provides neighborhood-use functions.	Varies, with 20 acres or more most desirable
Park-School	Active	Combines parks with school sites to be used in conjunction with or in lieu of other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, athletic complex and special use	Varies
Special Use	Active/Passive	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities. The facilities may be oriented toward single-purpose use, such as a nature center, historic sites, plazas or may have a portion of a park or open space area dedicated to a special use.	Varies
Neighborhood Preserve	Passive	Lands set aside for preservation of natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering. Also provides passive use opportunities (i.e., nature type trails, overlooks, interpretive program, etc.)	Varies, depends on resource opportunities and qualities

Classification	Function	General Description	Size Criteria
Natural Area Greenway	Passive	A full description and analysis of the Natural Area Greenway system can be found in the Natural Resources Chapter	Large patches of habitat over 200 acres
City Open Space	Passive	Natural areas owned by the City that are not part of the Neighborhood Preserve system. These may be lowlands or uplands. Some are appropriate for uses such as hiking or picnicking. Some are used for storm ponding or other functions.	Varies
County Open Space	Passive	Natural areas owned and managed by Ramsey County. Some are appropriate for uses such as hiking and picnicking. Some are used for storm ponding or other functions.	Varies
Agency Open Space	Passive	Natural areas or open space owned by agencies.	Varies
County/Regional Park	Active/Passive	Parks and recreational facilities owned by Ramsey County. (Includes Golf Courses, regional facilities, etc.)	Varies

Table 6.2 Trail Classification

Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails or sidewalks located within parks and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment	Separate/single-purpose hard surfaced trails: for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Multipurpose hard surfaced trails: for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard surfaced or soft surfaced.
Connector Trail/ Independent Bikeways	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is placed equally on transportation and recreation.	Separate/ single-purpose hard surfaced: trails for pedestrians and bicyclist/in-line skaters. Typically located within road ROW
On-Street Bikeway	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Lane: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Route: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.

The existing parks, open space, and trails were evaluated to determine their existing condition and establish a baseline for system planning. Parks and trails are classified based on their dominant use, unless otherwise notated. While it was found that some parks function very well, others clearly showed the wear of time and no longer effectively served the intended purpose. In a number of cases, existing park features were simply worn out and needed replacement. As with many park systems within a maturing city, it was evident that the design for individual

park needs to be reevaluated in light of current community and regional needs. Table 6.3 describes a summary assessment for the overall system.

Table 6.3 Summary Assessment of Park System

Issue	Summary Assessment
Overall Park Land Area	The general land area set aside for parks, and open space is adequate and well positioned to serve the present and future needs of the City. The neighborhood preserve sites coupled with the City's active park areas greatly strengthen the City's capacity to meet emerging recreational needs and trends. With the park land largely in place, most of the future development initiatives will be focused on redevelopment of existing properties to service community needs.
Overall Design	Design quality varies widely throughout the system. In general, parks developed or redeveloped in recent years are often well designed and go beyond simple function to create a pleasant park setting. Pleasantview is a good example of a neighborhood-level park that serves the neighborhood needs well. On the other hand, many of the older parks lack a strong design theme and often only offer a collection of amenities that may or may not serve neighborhood or community needs. Many of these parks followed the same general blueprint and offer little in the way of an individual sense of place or overall park-like appeal.
Aesthetic Quality	A visually appealing setting is lacking in many parks, resulting in a feel that is functional rather than inviting. This lack of design character does not entice people to use the park nor develop a level of comfort when they do visit. Since the last Comprehensive Plan update the City has begun to identify parks in need of upgrades and is slowly improving parks for aesthetic quality. These initiatives will continue into the future.
Outdoor Recreation Facility Mix	Current facilities need to be evaluated against definable community needs. The extensive use of neighborhood parks for programmed activities in an example of where short-term solutions for servicing new demands for athletic fields has turned into a long-term expectation that is hard to change. The challenge is in determining how and if this may be affecting the overall quality and accessibility of the neighborhood facilities.
Natural Resource Quality	Signs of degradation can be found within the natural resource areas spread throughout the City. Examples include: invasive non-native plants (European Buckthorn) out-competing native plant species (oaks, maples, etc.); surface erosion in areas lacking native ground cover, and siltation of wetlands and pond/lake edges resulting in changes in water quality and vegetation diversity. Restoration and management of these resources is critical to the overall success of the system. In response to growing demand for protection, and management the City is initiating a full MLCCS study of the natural areas in the community. A full analysis and discussion can be found in the newly created Natural Resources Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.
Trail System Development	The State and Regional trails are highlights of the trail system and are vital to the system plan when considering demand and regional connections. At the local level, the trail system is slowly being developed and better improvements and connections are being made as development and redevelopment occurs in the community. A primary initiative of this Plan will be to improve the existing trail system for increased accessibility, interconnectedness, and efficiency.

The general assessment in Table 6.3 describes the general existing conditions of facilities in the City. While performing the plan update, an assessment and review of the parks system was completed based on the city's neighborhood structure to determine existing conditions as well as identify deficiencies or excess areas in the system. The neighborhood structure became an important element for evaluation because the overall system was originally developed on principles related to the neighborhood boundaries. To evaluate park needs, both passive and active, the following goals were followed:

- All residents should be within a ½ mile of a park, which could be active or passive and is independent of ownership (city, county, state, etc.)
- For every 1,000 people approximately 5 acres of park land should be provided to serve the residents.

These parameters were the standards used to evaluate the existing park system, and were the standards applied to future planning efforts. Table 6.4 Existing and Future Parks/Open Space (table found in Proposed Plan section) identifies the existing parks and open spaces by neighborhood, a more detailed inventory of equipment can be found in Section V of the overall park system plan.

Changes and Improvements Since the Last Plan

Several changes and improvements to the system have occurred over the past ten years. The following information highlights some of the major improvements and projects that have been completed. These improvements directly support the goals and objectives that were identified in the previous comprehensive plan.

Development and redevelopment has occurred in the past ten years ensuring that the appropriate amount of park land was available and functional was essential to the overall success of the neighborhoods. Legacy Park was developed as a part of the Legacy Village master planned development. Applewood Park, Afton Heights Park, Sterling Oaks Park and Edgerton Park were all updated to more adequately serve residents of each neighborhood. Finally planning efforts for the Joy Park Master Plan were completed and the redevelopment of the park is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2008.

Several trail improvements have been completed including several segments of the Lake Links Trail, a full sidewalk and trail along Century Avenue as well as trail along Lower Afton Road. In addition to the trails along major road corridors and the regional system, nature trails in the Priory Neighborhood Preserve have been developed to offer another trail option to residents.

Significant progress in the Neighborhood Preserves has also occurred. Site analyses has been completed for 12 preserves in the community and Master Plans have been completed for four of the preserves. Restoration and replanting has also begun in the Preserves including a 20-acre prairie planting project at the Prairie Farm Preserve. Management and restoration efforts of invasive species are underway at several preserves throughout the community.

Natural Resources

A significant change from the last comprehensive plan is the inclusion of a Natural Resources Chapter independent of the Parks, Trails and Open Space chapter. The City took a proactive and innovative approach to natural

resources in this plan update and felt that providing an independent chapter with a specific natural resources plan gave it more significance and focus for this planning effort.

The natural resources plan becomes an important building block for all components of the comprehensive plan including this chapter. Throughout this document references to the chapter are made, particularly reference to the Natural Area Greenways. It is the intent of this plan to support and contribute to building the greenway system, and to plan the parks, trails and open spaces in a way that is ecologically sensitive and supports the natural resources plan directly.

Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan

This section of the chapter describes the various components of the Maplewood parks, open space, and trail system plan. The plan is based on the findings of previous sections and the framework presented in the existing conditions, background and goals sections. In line with the goals and objective statements provided, the system plan seeks balance between servicing the social, individual, environmental, and economic needs of the community. The plan provides a guide to parks, open space and trail development based on the current needs of the community and the opportunities and constraints facing the city. It builds upon a solid park and open space infrastructure already in place in the city. The guiding themes throughout this plan include:

- Continue to develop a comprehensive and interconnected parks, open space, and trail system.
- Manage and maintain only the amount of park and open space land that the city can maintain for its highest and best use.
- Recognize the limitation of resources (fiscal and physical).
- Organize and prioritize the system based on the neighborhood structure but also on a city wide scale to ensure the needs of all residents are met.
- Develop a plan that allows for incremental and orderly improvements – be visionary but realistic.

Based on the detailed goals and objectives, the following statements can be made:

- Create and maintain an accessible and high quality system that serves all residents
- Prioritize the development of a comprehensive trail plan to help connect residents to parks, schools, community facilities and the region;
- Support an extensive network of open spaces that contribute to the natural resource system and natural area greenways;
- Evaluate the park system to ensure that parks and open spaces are high-quality, safe, and well-maintained and a benefit community;
- Service neighborhood and community park and recreation needs;
- Service youth and adult athletics by providing high quality facilities strategically located throughout the city.

Neighborhood Service Areas

As a maturing community, Maplewood has thirteen well-established neighborhoods that are identifiable to residents and public officials. The park system plan developed in the 1970s was largely built upon this neighborhood structure, with land selection for parks based on reasonable local service areas, especially as it related to neighborhood park units. As stated in the Existing Conditions Analysis, the following goals were used to develop Maplewood's park system:

- All residents should be within a ½ mile of a park, which could be active or passive and is independent of ownership (city, county, state, etc.)
- For every 1,000 people approximately 5 acres of park land should be provided to serve the residents.

Since most of the land area for parks has already been acquired, the neighborhood service area structure best serves as a means to:

- Identify the park and recreation needs and desires unique to a given geographic area of the community.
- Understand the potential demands in a developing or redevelopment area of a neighborhood.

- Organize the park system geographically.
- Ensure that the neighborhood park needs of all residents can be met within a reasonable distance from their home.
- Determine where efficiencies could be implemented to make the system of higher quality and affordable.

Of these points, the most important theme is the assessment of needs, demands, and services that can be provided in a high-quality and effective manner. As stated in the existing conditions section, the parks and open space system was evaluated by neighborhood based on proximity of residents to recreation type, and acreage per population. Table 6.4 inventories the existing system and outlines proposed parks. Further discussion on specific neighborhoods with potentially significant changes follows the table.

Table 6.4 Existing and Future Parks/Open Space

Neighborhood/Park	Classification	Ownership	Acreage	Other - Notes
Western Hills				
<i>Western Hills</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	5.7	
<i>Trout Brook</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	School District	7.0	Located on map as a part of Trout Brook – school site
<i>Sandy Lake Area</i>	Open Space	St. Paul Board of Water	59.1	No public park/open space opportunities at this time
<i>Trout Brook</i>	School Site	School District	20.3	
<i>Open Space @ Adolphus</i>	Open Space	City	3.6	
Parkside				
<i>Maplecrest</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	2.0	
<i>Edgerton</i>	Youth Athletic	City	18.3	
<i>Roselawn</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	5.2	Consider reclassification - Opportunity to better serve area
<i>Kenwood Park</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	0.2	
<i>Phalen-Keller Regional Park (Keller Lake)</i>	Regional Park	County	121.6	Within multiple neighborhoods
<i>Open Space @ Miss</i>	Open Space	City	0.9	
Kohlman Lake				
<i>Sunset Ridge</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	6.1	
<i>Lower Sunset Ridge</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	0.6	
<i>Kohlman</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.8	
<i>Hidden Marsh</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	6.3	
<i>Fisher's Corner</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	17.4	

Neighborhood/Park	Classification	Ownership	Acreage	Other - Notes
<i>Spoon Lake</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	27.6	
<i>Kohlman Marsh Open Space</i>	Open Space	County	24.5	
<i>Keller Lake</i>	County Open Space	County	-	Within multiple neighborhoods
Hazlewood				
<i>Four Seasons</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	9.5	
<i>Hazlewood</i>	Youth Athletic	City	48.1	
<i>Harvest</i>	Community Athletic Complex	City	30.1	
<i>Legacy Village</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	10.0	
<i>Kohlman Creek</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	10.9	
<i>Open Spaces – East of Hazlewood</i>	Open Space	City/County	70.9	
<i>Open Space – West of Harvest</i>	Open Space	City	37.7	
<i>Open Space East of 61 @ City border</i>	Open Space	City/County	27.9	
Maplewood Heights				
<i>Maplewood Heights</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	25.3	
<i>Joy Park</i>	Community Park	City	14.6	
<i>Joy Park</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	35.9	
<i>Playcrest</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	13.7	
<i>Prairie Farm</i>	Neighborhood Preserve/ Special Use Park	City	23.0	2.0 Acres leased to Maplewood Historical Society
Sherwood Glen				
<i>Timber</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	0.5	
<i>Gladstone</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	3.0	
<i>Sherwood</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	12.0	Better Development opportunities
<i>Robinhood</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.1	
<i>John Glen</i>	School Site	School District	15.7	Public school with access to recreational facilities
<i>Weaver</i>	School Site	School District	11.3	Public school with access to recreational facilities

Neighborhood/Park	Classification	Ownership	Acreage	Other - Notes
<i>Phalen-Keller Regional Park (Golf Course)</i>	Regional Park	County	150.0	
Gladstone				
<i>Gloster</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	3.3	Gladstone Master Planning Effort
<i>Gladstone Savanna</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	23.4	
<i>Wakefield</i>	Community Park	City	34.5	
<i>Flicek</i>	Youth Athletic	City	6.3	
<i>Look Out Park</i>	Mini Park	City	0.3	
<i>Park South of Robinhood</i>	School Site	School District	1.7	Public School with access to recreational facilities
<i>Phalen-Keller Regional Park (North of Phalen)*</i>	Regional Park	County		Within multiple neighborhoods
<i>Historical Marker</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	0.5-2.0	Opportunity for Historical Marker/Context
Hillside				
<i>Nebraska</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.4	
<i>Hillside</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	9.8	
<i>Goodrich</i>	Community Athletic Complex	City	20.5	
<i>Priory</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	45.8	
<i>Sterling Oaks</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	11.5	Mostly Open Space and Wetlands with a tot lot
<i>Goodrich Golf Course</i>	County Park	County	92.7	
<i>Wetlands Complex @RR</i>	Open Space	State of Minnesota Trust	19.1	
<i>Wetlands Complex @RR</i>	Open Space	City	7.0	
<i>Holloway Marsh</i>	Open Space	County	37.8	
<i>Maplewood Middle School</i>	School Site	School District	17.3	Public School with access to recreational facilities
Beaver Lake				
<i>Geranium</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	9.0	

Neighborhood/Park	Classification	Ownership	Acreage	Other - Notes
<i>Gethsemane</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	9.4	Will be replaced
<i>Lions</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	3.4	
<i>Jim's Prairie</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	11.5 (4.6)	Total site area is 11.5 acres, of which 4.6 is the neighborhood preserve. Remaining area is city dump and open space.
<i>Beaver Creek</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	9.1	
<i>Nature Center</i>	Special Use Park/ Neighborhood Preserve	City	37.2	
<i>Beaver Lake School</i>	School Site	School District	10.2	Public School with access to recreational facilities
<i>Beaver Lake County Park</i>	Open Space	County	23.5	
<i>Wetland Area @Maryland</i>	Open Space	City	34.4	
<i>Search Area (Pipeline Properties)</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.0-6.0	To Replace Gethsemane if necessary
Battle Creek				
<i>Afton Heights</i>	Youth Athletic	City	17.9	
<i>Carver School</i>	School Site	School District	9.6	Public School with access to recreational facilities
<i>Battle Creek</i>	Regional Park	County	292.2	
Vista Hills				
<i>Crestview</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	3.8	
<i>Mailand</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	2.2	
<i>Vista Hills</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	13.2	
<i>The Ponds Golf Course</i>	Active Park	County	181.5	Within multiple neighborhoods, includes county work house
Highwood				
<i>Applewood</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.0	
<i>Pleasant View</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	14.4	
<i>Applewood</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	25.3	
<i>Carver</i>	Neighborhood Preserve	City	22.4	
<i>Fish Creek Open Space</i>	County Open Space	Ramsey County	24.7	
<i>Open Space at Lakewood</i>	Open Space	City	10.5	

Neighborhood/Park	Classification	Ownership	Acreage	Other - Notes
<i>Open Space at Timber</i>	Open Space	City	2.4	
Carver Ridge				
<i>Fish Creek Open Space</i>	County Open Space	Ramsey County	52.2	
<i>Active Park Search Area</i>	Mini/Neighborhood Park	City	4.0-6.0 +	New Active Park to be located in Mixed-Use Area and determined as part of a master plan.

The following table summarizes the information in Table 6.4. The table demonstrates that each neighborhood has several acres of open space and parks that are accessible to the residents. It should be noted that the park acreages do include some park facilities that may include user fees such as the County golf courses that are located in the Sherwood Glen and Vista Hills neighborhood and occupy a significant amount of acreage.

Table 6.5 Parks and Open Space Summary Table

Neighborhood	Neighborhood Area (Acres)	Park Acreage
1. Western Hills	845.6	95.7
2. Parkside	514.0	148.2
3. Kohlman Lake	573.3	90.0
4. Hazlewood	1782.0	248.1
5. Maplewood Heights	724.7	125.5
6. Sherwood Glen	961.1	199.6 (166.8)
7. Gladstone	782.6	78.5*
8. Hillside	1039.1	265.9 (92.7)
9. Beaver Lake	1058.9	157.7*
10. Battle Creek	416.3	319.7
11. Vista Hills	1564.2	205.7 (181.5)
12. Highwood	775.4	108.7
13. Carver Ridge	525.8	62.7*
TOTAL	11,563	2,106

* Does not include proposed acreage, not currently existing in the system. (Golf Courses)

Community Centers, School Sites, and Regional Park Facilities

In addition to the facilities identified in Table 6.4, the city's park system is enhanced by the Community Centers (indoor facilities), school sites, and regional park facilities (of which several are included in the previous table).

Community Centers include:

- The Maplewood Community Center – offers extensive indoor facilities including two pools, large gymnasium, racquetball courts, aerobics room, exercise room, walking/jogging track, massage room, child care, banquet room, performing arts theater, and other features.
- Edgerton school Community Center – offers gym space for open play.
- Carver School Community Center – offers gym space for open play.

At the school district level, the city has joint use of outdoor athletic facilities at the following schools:

- Weaver School
- John Glen School
- Maplewood Middle School
- Beaver lake School
- Carver School
- Edgerton School

The city and local school districts have long-term relationships for jointly using these school sites within Maplewood. In each case, the school district uses the outdoor facilities for their programs during the school day and for after-school programs. The city has access to the sites in the evenings for city programs and programs offered by local athletic associations. The system plan calls for the continued joint use of these facilities to maximize the efficient use of land resources within the city. This partnership will be of considerable importance to the city as it focuses on reducing the extent to which its neighborhood parks are used for programmed athletic uses. The continued use of the athletic fields provided at the various school sites is vital to the overall success of the system.

Regional parks also play an important role in the local park system. The regional and county-based park areas and facilities that directly affect Maplewood are administered by the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department.

Key regional and county-based park areas include:

- Battle Creek Regional park
- Keller Regional park – 248 acres which is contiguous with Phalen Regional Park
- Beaver Lake County Park – offering picnic sites and trails
- Kohlman Marsh Pond Protection Open Space Site
- Kohlman Creek Protection Open Space Site
- Fish Creek Protection Open Spaces
- Holloway Marsh Protection Open Space Site
- Aldrich Arena Special-Use Facility
- Goodrich Golf Course Special Use Facility
- Ponds at Battle Creek Golf Course

Parks and Open Space Plan Analysis

With the assistance of the Parks Commission and Advisory Panel the Parks and Open Space Plan was updated and established for the City of Maplewood. Each neighborhood was evaluated for general park and open space needs, where parks refers to active park areas and open spaces that included neighborhood preserves and any formally protected and accessible open spaces. The preceding table identified all of the park and open space land by neighborhood with general notes referring to the future plans and development. The following information categorizes the future park and open space plan according to park classification and key development or use considerations identified through this planning process. Following this section, a short discussion and list of specific parks and open space topics identified throughout this planning process are identified to ensure the thoughts and recommendations of the Advisory Panel and Parks Commission are documented for future planning efforts. The city understands that a thorough evaluation of each park and open space property will be necessary to develop detailed future plans, and this effort will be identified as an implementation step in subsequent sections.

Parks (Active)

Mini and Neighborhood Park

Description:

Neighborhood parks continue to serve as the backbone of the park system in Maplewood. The park system plan includes a total of 30 existing and future mini and neighborhood parks to serve the thirteen neighborhoods. Individually and collectively, the primary focus of these park units is:

- Providing neighborhood recreational facilities focused on non-structured individual and family activities.
- Creating a social center for the neighborhood.
- Providing open space for informal group play and limited use for organized/programmed activities.

In general, the mini and neighborhood parks in one neighborhood function together to service the localized needs of that neighborhood. As such, the development of one park in a neighborhood should take into consideration the facilities and amenities provided in other parks within the same neighborhood to ensure a full palette of recreational opportunities is available to residents.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

In general, there are a number of key developmental and use considerations that can be applied to all of the mini and neighborhood parks, including:

- General reduction in the extent to which neighborhood parks are used for organized and programmed uses. The focus of these parks should be on servicing neighborhood needs for recreation and providing informal open play areas. Programmed activities should be secondary.
- General upgrading of facilities in response to neighborhood input on the type of facilities most desired. Particular attention needs to be given to ornamentation and beautification, which is lacking in many of the parks.
- More attention needs to be given to providing a broader spectrum of active and passive recreational opportunities. Given current trends, much more attention needs to be given to passive park uses and the concept of having "nature in the back yard."
- The use of both manicured turf and naturalized vegetation should be considered within mini and neighborhood parks to add interest and aesthetic appeal and to reduce the cost of maintenance. The balance between turf and natural vegetation should be determined on a site by site basis.

Community Parks

Description

With a strong neighborhood park focus, along with the contribution of neighborhood preserves and the regional parks, the use of community parks within the park system is limited to the special opportunities provided by Joy and Wakefield parks because they offer:

- Unique feature that have city-wide appeal.
- Opportunities to accommodate group facilities, such as larger picnic shelters.
- A setting that is too costly to duplicate in more than one or two parks throughout the city. Examples include group picnicking at Joy Park and winter facilities at Wakefield.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

There are a number of key developmental and use considerations that can be applied to the community parks, including:

- General upgrading of facilities in response to community input on the type of facilities most desired. Particular attention needs to be given to beautification in Wakefield Park. Natural resource restoration and management is a key issue at Joy Park.
- Developing trail linkages to these two parks should be a key priority.
- A mix of manicured turf and naturalized vegetation should be considered within community parks to add interest and aesthetic appeal and to reduce the cost of maintenance. The balance between turf and natural vegetation should be determined on a site by site basis.

Youth Athletic Park

Description

The concept of the youth athletic park was spawned from the desire of the user groups to consolidate athletic facilities to fewer and more strategically located sites to:

- Gain program efficiency.
- Create closer associations between players, parents, and coaches.
- Provide greater conveniences, like parking, restrooms, and concessions.

This concept also works well from an operations and maintenance perspective. The fact is, having fewer and larger facilities is the most efficient and effective way to meet community needs. This approach also ensures neighborhood parks are not dominated by athletic associations and noise and congestion in neighborhoods is reduced.

Since youth are usually less mobile than adults, youth athletic parks are strategically located throughout the city. The park system plan defines four sites specifically for servicing youth sports, although some adult cross-over can occur to service the broader needs of the city. (Note that the community athletic complexes will also serve youth athletic programs. Additionally, note that each of the youth athletic parks also function as neighborhood parks to varying degrees.)

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

There are a number of key developmental and use considerations that can be applied to the youth athletic parks, including:

- General upgrading of facilities to better service the needs of the user groups and to increase general facility safety. Many of the existing facilities are old and in need of replacement.

- Developing trail linkages to these parks should be a key priority to encourage alternative forms of transportation.
- Continuing the involvement of the user groups in the design of these facilities to ensure that what is developed is in line with actual needs.
- Giving more attention to beautification, this is lacking in many of the parks.
- Consideration of neighborhood park needs as defined under Mini and Neighborhood Parks previously listed in the table.

Community Athletic Complex

Description

The concept of the community athletic complex was again spawned from the desire of the user groups to consolidate athletic facilities to fewer and more strategically located sites to:

- Gain program efficiency.
- Create closer associations between players, parents, and coaches.
- Provide greater conveniences, like parking, restrooms, and concessions.

As with Youth Athletic Parks, this concept also works well from an operations and maintenance perspective, whereby fewer and larger facilities are the most efficient and effective way to meet community needs. And again, this approach ensures neighborhood parks are not dominated by athletic associations and noise and congestion in neighborhoods is reduced.

The primary difference in community athletic complexes and youth athletic parks is that the former services adult athletic needs in addition to youth. The park system plan defines two sites for community athletic complexes. Note here too that the community athletic complexes also function as neighborhood parks to varying degrees.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

There are a number of key developmental and use considerations that can be applied to the community athletic complexes, including:

- General upgrading of facilities to better service the needs of the user groups and to increase general facility safety. Many of the existing facilities are old and in need of replacement. Some are poorly designed and do not function very well.
- Developing trail linkages to these parks should be a key priority to encourage alternative forms of transportation.
- Continuing the involvement of the user groups in the design of these facilities to ensure that what is developed is in line with actual needs.
- Giving more attention to and beautification, which is lacking in many of the parks.
- Consideration of neighborhood park needs as defined under Mini and Neighborhood Parks previously listed in the table.

School Site

Description

Park-School Sites are joint-use sites between the city and school district for shared use of facilities. There are a total of six school sites that fall under this classification. Of those, Edgerton and Carver are also community center sites, whereby the city also uses the indoor facilities.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

Clearly defining development, use, and maintenance of these facilities is important to ensure that all parties understand their role and responsibility.

Special Use Park

Description

The Special Use Park classification refers to parks that are unique and do not readily fall under any other classification. The existing system identifies two such parks:

- Maplewood Nature Center offers protection of a unique natural resource, has a visitor center, and provides extensive programming.
- Bruentrup Historical Farm at Prairie Farm Neighborhood Preserve is a special use park. The city leases approximately 2 acres to the Maplewood Historical Society which maintains the farmstead buildings and yard. The city has a lease agreement that identifies specific activities and opportunities available through the joint agreement and should be referenced to ensure the city recognizes the benefit of the relationship.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

- The Maplewood Nature Center is a well established community hallmark that continues to serve an important function. Continuing its educational programs and maintaining its natural resource qualities and infrastructure are key priorities in forthcoming years.
- Parks Commission members have identified an interest in developing a city-owned dog park.
- Maplewood would like to have a permanent site for a Community Garden.

Open Space (Passive Parks)

Neighborhood Preserve

Description

The Neighborhood Preserve park classification was created to integrate the open space parcels into the larger park system, thereby more clearly defining their role in servicing community needs and protecting open space. The neighborhood preserves have two important functions:

- Preserve and protect natural areas and open space within the city.
- Create additional opportunities for human use and appreciation of the community's natural areas.

The preserve sites are defined in a neighborhood context to:

- Address trends toward greater demand for natural areas and passive recreational opportunities close to home.
- Foster a local sense of stewardship in the protection, restoration and management, and human use of these parcels.

In the neighborhood context, the preserve sites coupled with neighborhood parks will provide a full palette of both active and passive recreational opportunities for local residents.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

There are a number of key developmental and use considerations that can be applied to the neighborhood preserve sites, including:

- Completing ecological plans for all sites, including analysis of existing conditions, refinement of ecological prototypes, and ecological restoration and management plans.
- Integrating human use of the sites within the context of their ecological underpinnings. (The community should be involved in this process.)
- Developing trail linkages to these parks.
- Looking for opportunities to support, build, and complete the Natural Area Greenways proposed in the Natural Resources chapter.

There are currently 14 Neighborhood Preserve sites in the system totaling 295 acres. The City shall retain a minimum of 295 acres in the system, resulting in a no-net loss policy. The following statements and implementation tools support this policy and shall be further developed to ensure the Neighborhood Preserve acreages are upheld:

- Maintain a minimum of 295 acres of Neighborhood Preserve lands. If a parcel is to be sold, another parcel of equal or higher ecological quality shall be added to the Neighborhood Preserve system.
- If new property is brought into the system, it should enhance or maintain contiguous lands and shall not contribute to fragmentation of the system.
- Maintain city or public ownership of all/any neighborhood preserves in the system.
- Further develop and enhance ordinances that support the preservation, maintenance and management of the Neighborhood Preserves. This shall include the creation of a zoning designation that specifically relates to the activities allowed in Neighborhood Preserves.
- All neighborhood preserves are designated as Open Space on the Land Use Plan. As required by state statute, any and all changes to the land use shall require a 4/5th vote at the Council level and will result in a Comprehensive Plan Amendment.
- The use of conservation easements and other conservation tools shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and shall be evaluated for how the easements would contribute to and support the neighborhood preserve system.

Regional Park/County Open Space

Description

Regional parks and open spaces serve a regional population. However, the location of several regional parks in the city makes them important factors in the overall park system.

Key Developmental/Use Considerations

The most important consideration here is maintaining a strong working partnership with the County to foster development in these parks that serve the needs of Maplewood Residents.

Specific Neighborhood Plans

During this planning period, the South Maplewood neighborhood including Highwood and Carver Ridge were discussed heavily due to the relatively undeveloped nature of the area. Currently both neighborhoods have several parcels that are a part of the County's Fish Creek Open Space system. It is imperative that these open spaces be monitored by the City because the proposed park plan is based on the assumption that the county open spaces remain undeveloped natural areas. If these parcels are ever up for sale, or a use change is proposed, the City should reevaluate the park needs in these two neighborhoods to ensure the City's park standards are upheld.

Advisory Panel and Parks Commission Specific Discussion Items

The Advisory Panel and Parks Commission reviewed the existing parks plan in conjunction with the future land use plan that has been developed as a part of this planning process. During those discussions recommendations and ideas were generated with respect to how the existing park system functions and how the system could better serve specific neighborhoods. The following items were identified as suggestions to the parks commission for consideration during implementation of this summary document. This list is not meant to be all inclusive in terms of all needs affecting the system, but inclusion of this information provides documentation of key data and discussions taking place in the city. The following discussion items are categorized by classification type and neighborhoods where applicable.

Neighborhood/Mini Parks

During the Comprehensive Plan update process the following neighborhoods were specifically identified as having additional neighborhood/mini park demands in this planning period:

- In the *Sherwood Glen Neighborhood*, Sherwood Park could be better developed to meet the active park needs of the neighborhood. During this planning period a feasibility and use study should be completed to fully evaluate the needs of the neighborhood.
- In the *Gladstone Neighborhood*, as the Gladstone master plan progresses the Gloster Park and Gladstone Savanna area will need to be evaluated to ensure the active park needs of the neighborhood, including future residents is met.
- The *Hillside Neighborhood* is light on active park facilities. Hillside Park is predominantly used for passive uses and could be transitioned to provide some active park facilities for the neighborhood. In addition, there may be opportunities for providing active park facilities with Mounds Park Academy, or Hill Murray School and the Marshlands project.
- In the *Beaver Lake Neighborhood*, discussions regarding the future of Gethsemane Park were underway at the time of developing this document. If agreement is not met for preservation of this park, an active park replacement should be identified to adequately provide active park facilities to this neighborhood. If Gethsemane is reduced or eliminated in the future, a suggested search for a replacement park is identified on the future parks and open space planning map (Figure 6.2).
- In the *Carver Ridge Neighborhood* a minimum of a 4.0-6.0 acre active park should be located within the Bailey Farm property to serve the active park needs of future residents. The search area is identified on Figure 6.2, and the exact size and location should be identified at the time of development in this area. Development of this park will be a priority at the time of residential development in the Carver Ridge and Highwood neighborhoods south of Carver Avenue.

School Sites

The school sites are unique because they are predominantly controlled by the school district, but coordination and further collaboration could be explored. An overall assessment of uses and facilities should be made to determine the extent to which school sites are integrated into the recreational programming of the city. For example, the ball fields at Beaver Lake School were being used in current recreation programming but the current status and availability of the facilities is not known. The availability and use of these facilities should be verified to determine if there are any deficiencies in the system. At the same time, the city should actively collaborate with the schools and school districts to extend and improve the curricular opportunities for their students where there are good options.

Special Use Parks

During this planning period, the Parks Commission and Advisory Panel identified some opportunity areas for special uses throughout the community, the areas specifically discussed include:

- In the *Highwood Neighborhood*, the ski jump site may have opportunities for special programming and uses in the community. This site should remain on the city's radar as an opportunity site.
- In the *Sherwood Glen Neighborhood*, at the John Glen site there may be opportunities to collaborate with the school on special programming needs related to archery and similar activities.

Passive Park Areas

The following neighborhoods were identified as having opportunities for additional neighborhood preserves based on the quantity of active park land or open space that might be better used for a neighborhood preserve:

- *Maplewood Heights Neighborhood* may have some opportunities to revert some active park land for a more natural or passive use that could serve as a neighborhood preserve, further study of this would be required prior to any recommendations or plans should be made.
- In the *Highwood and Carver Ridge neighborhoods* a large amount of land is in the County's open space system. If any of this land were ever to be sold, the City should evaluate and review the feasibility of acquiring that land for a neighborhood preserve or open space use to help maintain the more rural quality in these neighborhoods.

Trails Plan

In this Comprehensive Plan Update more emphasis was placed on the need for a comprehensive trail system throughout the community. The City has always been blessed with the State and Regional trails that pass through the City, but connecting to those trails as well as creating a network that is not only for recreational purposes but as a transportation alternative has never been realized.

This plan identifies an integrated, easy to use and friendly trail system as a key priority and component of this plan. Since the last planning effort, the city has been dedicated to integrating trail and sidewalk development as part of redevelopment and road reconstruction projects. Those efforts are recognized, and this plan seeks to build on the existing system to make a more comprehensive and accessible system.

In spite of the obstacles and difficulties, the idea of creating a city trail system is well worth while when considered in context of current demands for recreational and utilitarian demands. As fuel costs rise residents will look for alternative transportation options and the city can provide an accessible trail system to help provide additional options. Additionally, as the aging baby-boomers reach retirement demands for recreational opportunities and well connected facilities will be critical to keeping this population in the community. The trail system will provide those opportunities and add to the overall quality of life for residents.

The trail system plan presented here is more comprehensive and plans for a significant amount of trail development throughout the community to create emphasis on interconnected trails that provide essential linkages throughout the system so that residents can move through the system safely regardless of their purpose for using the trails. The plan is based on the following principles:

- Focus and priority is placed on primary north-south and east-west corridors that will provide the greatest access and accessibility to all residents;
- Connections between schools, community facilities, parks, and the region are emphasized to help support alternative transportation options for all residents;
- Trail construction and specific location (for example north or south side of a street, concrete or bituminous) is not emphasized in this plan because the City will create a plan for detail at time of development or redevelopment to ensure the appropriate needs are being met for the area;
- The proposed system is ambitious, and is focused on creating the ideal plan for the future of Maplewood.

As demonstrated in Figure 6.2 Proposed Parks, Trails, and Open Space, the City has prioritized the creation of an interconnected trail system as a part of this comprehensive plan update. The table that follows, Table 6.6 Existing and Future Trails, provides an inventory of the existing and future trails, the classification and general developmental or use considerations. Following the table, a short analysis and key points identified by the Advisory Panel and Parks Commission are provided for consideration as the plan is implemented.

Table 6.6 Existing and Future Trails

Trail	Classification	Length (mi)	Key Developmental/Use Consideration
Gateway Trail Segment of the Willard Munger State Trail	State Trail	3.5	The trail is a state trail corridor with extensive connections to the metro area and greater Minnesota. Connecting residents to this system is a priority of the overall trail plan.
Bruce Vento Regional Trail	Regional Trail	3.0	Regional trail corridor of over 13 miles in length with extensive connections to other systems, including state trail systems
Highline Trail	Park Trail	2.7	Follows existing power line easement east to west through northern end of the city. Provides important linkages between key park sites and linkage to the regional and state trail system. Developmental Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Obtaining trail easement rights ▪ Varying topography, with some areas exhibiting steep slopes ▪ Traversing through developed areas
County Road C Trail	Connector Trail	2.5	The County Road C Trail is partially completed, and the proposed plan connects this corridor through the northern half of the city to create an east-west connection. This trail will connect to other major trail corridors to provide efficiency.
County Road D	Connector Trail	3.5	
County Road B Trail	Connector Trail	3.5	The intent of the County Road B Trail is to provide an additional east-west linkage in the City.
Roselawn	Connector Trail	2.0	
Gervais Trail	Connector Trail	1.0	
Beam Ave Trail	Connector Trail	2.8	
Frost Trail	Connector Trail	1.5	The Frost Avenue Trail is proposed to create a connection between the regional trails and the White Bear Avenue Trail.
Century Avenue Trail	Connector Trail	5.6	The Century Avenue Trail is projected to be completed as a part of an overall street improvement project. This corridor will be a primary north-south corridor through the city and will be constructed to connect to other key trail corridors in the City.
Arcade Trail	Connector Trail	1.0	
White Bear Trail	Connector Trail	3.2	The White Bear Avenue Trail is completed and provides a key north-south corridor through the northern part of the city connecting residents to the region.
Larpenteur Trail	Connector Trail	5.2	The Larpenteur Avenue Trail is undeveloped and is proposed as an east-west corridor through the City. This trail will be the primary corridor to link residents between the east and west sections of the city. The corridor also links residents to key natural resources and the existing regional trails that run through the city.
McKnight Trail	Connector Trail	7.0	The McKnight Trail is completed and connects the south leg of the city with the northern area of Maplewood. This trail connects residents to the high quality natural resource areas in the south leg.
Stillwater Trail	Connector Trail	1.2	

Minnehaha Trail	Connector Trail	1.0	
Upper Afton Road Trail	Connector Trail	1.0	The Upper Afton Road Trail is completed and provides connections to adjacent communities in the south leg.
Afton Bluffs Regional Trail	Regional Trail	1.1	The Lower Afton Road Trail is completed and provides connections to adjacent communities in the south leg.
Carver Trail	Connector Trail	1.0	This trail connection would be made when Carver Road is reconstructed.
Sterling Trail	Connector Trail	3.0	Sterling Trail in south Maplewood would connect residents with adjacent communities.
Henry Lane Trail	Connector Trail	0.35	The Henry Lane Trail would connect residents in the Highwood neighborhood to County Open Spaces.
Linwood Avenue	Connector Trail	1.0	
Joy Trail	Park Trail	1.0 (+)	
South Maplewood (Area South of Carver Ave.)	Park Trail	1.0 (+)	This trail is proposed as a soft-surface, sustainably-designed, hiking trail to provide residents access to the natural areas in South Maplewood and is focused on preservation of the creek and other high quality natural areas.

Analysis

The City has prioritized development of a comprehensive trail system in this plan update. With a priority toward improving the overall extent of the trail system within the city, providing on-street bikeways was extensively discussed, and although not formally proposed as a part of this plan, the bikeability of the system was prioritized in discussions. On-street bike lanes should be considered in neighborhoods without trails or sidewalks, and should be considered along major corridors to help encourage and support biking as a means of transportation.

The overall success of the system will rely on the prioritization of creating and maintaining the system. Historically the parks have been prioritized above the trail system because new development and neighborhoods were developing. However, now that the City is largely developed acquisition for park land is no longer the priority it was in previous planning periods. As a result a shift towards trail right of way acquisition can occur to help complete the park and open space system in the city. The focus on trails does not eliminate the need to maintain and manage the parks to ensure a high quality system, but it shifts acquisition to help complete a comprehensive trail system.

The following table identifies the amount of existing and proposed trails and sidewalks identified on Figure 6.2. All trails in table 6.6 are not identified, and therefore the following table reflects the comprehensive trail system.

Table 6.7 Trails Lengths

	Trails	Road Trails	Sidewalks	Total
Existing	49.5	3.6	28.0	81.1
Proposed	3.8	32.4	7.7	43.9
Total	53.3	36.0	35.7	125.0

Advisory Panel and Parks Commission Specific Trails Discussion Items

The future Trail Plan in the City was discussed at length with the Advisory Panel and Parks Commission. The focus of the discussions was on development of a more comprehensive approach to the trail system in the City. That discussion included reference to some specific trail types as well as trail locations. The following items were discussed specifically by the Advisory Panel and Parks Commission. The following topics are not exhaustive, but should be considered as the City moves towards creating a detailed implementation plan.

General Trail Discussion Recommendations

The Advisory Panel and Parks Commission reviewed the existing trails plan as a starting point for making their recommendations about future trail planning in the city. Specific attention was paid to the desire to enhance and create strong east-west and north-south connections that would provide an interconnected network throughout the region. The following specific items were discussed; this list is purposely general and highlights some of the most discussed topics:

- The trails should provide opportunities for biking as an alternative mode of transportation, and major road trails should consider a dedicated bike lane for commuters. Based on Figure 6.2, nearly 35 miles of Road Trails is proposed as a part of this plan. Strong consideration of these trails should be paid for commuting purposes rather than solely recreational uses.
- The trail system should be developed in a manner that considers making connections between parkland, open space, community facilities, and schools. Roadways or other areas that may be easily retrofitted and provide key connections should be prioritized during planning and development of the system.
- Signage of the overall trail system, both existing and future, should be a priority to make navigating through the system easier and more accessible to residents.
- At time of any major road construction project the trail plan should be referenced and the Parks Commission should review opportunities to complete or enhance the trail system.
- Nature trails, particularly in natural areas, should be carefully planned for and review and consideration by the Parks Commission required ensuring the development of a trail system that protects the environment but considers access to high quality natural areas without being a detriment to the area.

Specific Trail Corridors

The following specific trail corridors were identified during the trail discussions:

Frost Trail

This trail is proposed for development at the time of redevelopment in the Gladstone Master Plan and when/if road improvements are made in the area. The Gladstone Master Plan area continues to evolve and was heavily discussed during the land use and parks discussions. Trail opportunities should be capitalized at time of redevelopment in the area.

Carver Trail

This connection would be critical at time of development in Highwood and Carver Ridge neighborhoods. This plan is the first parks, trail and open space plan for the areas south of Carver Avenue and it is therefore critical to look at opportunities to serve new residents in these neighborhoods. At the time of this plan, Carver Trail is proposed as the only connection under 494 in the south leg of the community.

Sterling Trail

This trail will require a feasibility study as there are significant topographic challenges in the area. The opportunity to connect residents with existing and future parks in this area, as well as to the regional system exists but should be explored further at time of development in the south Maplewood area.

Henry Lane Trail

The trail would provide connections between existing neighborhoods and residents with County Open Spaces. This connection would help complete the existing systems and provide greater access to residents.

South Maplewood (Nature Trails)

This trail is proposed as a sustainably-designed trail to provide residents access to the natural areas in South Maplewood and is focused on preservation of the creek and other high quality natural areas.

Implementation

This section of the report focuses on establishing a framework and priorities for implementing the park, open space and trail system plan. This includes:

- Partnership approach to implementation
- Cost analysis
- Evaluation criteria for prioritizing park and trail development
- Prioritization of park and trail initiatives
- Implementation strategies by goal topic area

Partnership Approach to Implementation

Success in implementing the park and trail system plan will be based on the strength of the relationships that includes the Park and Recreation Commission and Environmental and Natural Resources Commission, city staff, residents, user groups, and adjacent cities, school districts, the county, churches and other civic or business organizations. These relationships, and partnerships where appropriate, will help ensure the needs and demands of the system are met, as well as ensure that efforts are not duplicated within the system.

Cost Analysis

The Cost Analysis Table in the report defines the potential costs associated with each major component of the system plan. The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, implementation planning, comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another, and developing funding scenarios.

The City understands that the CIP budgeted amount for the parks, open space and trail system is not adequate to support the projected cost to implement the entire system outlined in this document. Identification of the shortfall allows the City to look for additional funding sources and opportunities to partner with other agencies to accomplish the goals and objectives identified in this plan. For example, this plan identifies a more comprehensive trail system in the community. The plan identifies the largest quantity of those trails to be road trails where there may be opportunities to develop the system at time of road reconstruction or through the help of other agencies. A summary of the cost analysis table is as follows:

Table 6.8 Cost Summary for Park and Trail Development/Redevelopment (2008-2013)

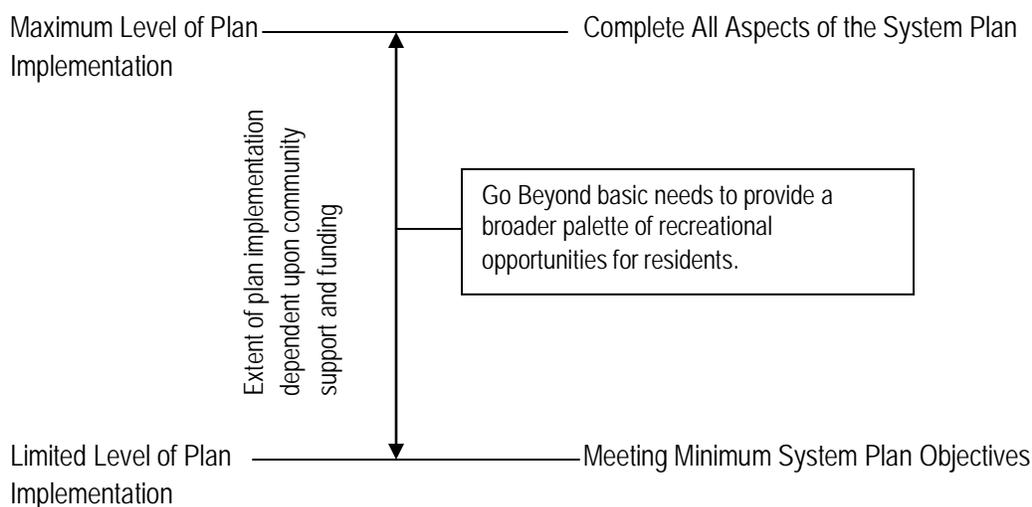
Item	Cost Summary (Dollars)	Contingency (15%)	Total
Parks	Mini/Neighborhood Community Youth Athletic Complexes Community Athletic Community Centers Neighborhood Preserves		
	Total		\$1,460,000*
Trails	Regional Connector Nature		\$1,300,000*
Neighborhood Preserves	Management and Restoration		\$2,250,000*
		Total	\$5,010,000

*Figures were rounded up to reflect an estimated projected fee.

The range of development and redevelopment scenarios is broad with respect to implementing the system plan which has the potential to significantly impact the costs associated with the project. These figures provide a general budget framework from which to plan, and makes the following assumptions:

- The park estimate assumes management and maintenance for the next ten years and does not plan for large-scale master planned changes for any individual park. An area study and feasibility study would be required to determine the cost associated with such a project.
- The parks figure assumes only the acquisition of one additional park into the system, to be located in the Carver Ridge neighborhood.
- The figures are based on a no-net loss policy. This means that parks and open space could change uses, but could never be taken out of the system entirely, unless comprehensive plan amendment was adopted. This policy would suggest that acquisition, as well as gain from sales would not affect the system.
- The trails figure was estimated based on a single shoulder off-road, bituminous, multi-use trail. If alternative materials, or trails along both sides of a road, or shoulders, etc., are proposed that will change the overall cost of the system.

The following figure illustrates how changes in the system will affect the preliminary budget estimate:



Evaluation Criteria for Prioritizing Park and Trail Development Projects

With limited resources, ranking the development of one park, trail, or development initiative against that of another will be necessary. Certainly, all development issues identified in the plan are pressing concerns needing attention. Realistically, the City is going to have to pick and choose those that are the most pressing and those that improve the services to the residents and user groups most in need. Making this as objective as possible is a key concern.

Through the use of ranking criteria, reasonable objectivity can be infused into the decision making process. This criteria is based on and evaluated against factors that influence the demand for parks and trails. It must be broad based enough to consider the important and predominant factors, yet limited enough to be manageable and practical for decision makers to gain consensus and take action. Evaluation criteria included:

- Development pattern and population density
- Community demand

- Recreation program demand
- Redevelopment/upgrading of facility or adjacent uses
- Funding availability/partnership opportunity
- Preservation of significant natural resource

Prioritization of Parks, Open Space, and Trail Development Initiatives

As an implementation step of this plan, the City will inventory and evaluate the parks, trails and open space system in detail. During that process, priorities will be set to ensure that the City's park needs are met. Additionally, the City acknowledges that the priorities may change depending on circumstances. For example a road reconstruction project may yield opportunities to construct a trail, and the efficiencies of completing the trail as a part of that process may increase its priority. Future prioritization should support and reference the goals and objective statements identified in this Plan.

Implementation Strategies in Goal Topics (New Section as Recommended by Parks Commission)

The following information identifies preliminary implementation strategies for each of the goal topic areas. The section is not all inclusive but highlights specific areas of discussion by the Parks Commission and Advisory Panel. The following implementation steps will help support the goals and objectives identified through this planning process.

General Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan Goals

The general parks, open space and trail system plan goals highlighted three topic areas including implementation of the comprehensive plan, focus on the natural resource system and internal staffing. The following implementation strategies support these areas:

- Update, modify and create appropriate ordinances to support the goals and objectives identified in this plan. The first step will be to ensure that the zoning ordinance is updated to reflect the appropriate land use and classifications in this plan.
- Create policy and ordinances to support the creation of the natural area greenways plan that also ensures review by the Parks Commission for any development within the greenways. This will help ensure the appropriate attention is paid to identifying park land or open space opportunities.
- Evaluate the needs, benefit and advantages to reinstating a parks director level position to help lead the parks, open space and trail planning and development efforts within the City.
- Review the by-laws established for the Parks Commission to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the commission support the goals and objectives identified in this document.

Community and Partnerships

The community and partnerships goals and objectives focus on maintaining open communication and collaboration with other agencies and communities to ensure the most efficient services and system are available. The following implementation strategies are identified to support this goal:

- Staff and Commissioners should explore opportunities to work with adjacent cities, agencies, school districts and other community groups. This will help identify potential opportunities for collaboration and efficiencies.
- Work with regional organizations to help monitor regional systems and their potential affect on the City's parks, trails and open space system.

Ecological Resources, Restoration and Management

The ecological resources, restoration and management goals and objectives are focused on the relationship between the natural resource system and the park system. The following implementation strategies will help reinforce the relationship between the systems and future planning efforts.

- Develop a review process for the Parks Commission for any property located within the natural area greenway corridors identified in the natural resource chapter.
- Inventory and analyze the existing active and passive park system to identify opportunities for restoration, storm water management or other environmental benefits to the overall system.

Park Land Management, Acquisition and Development

The park land management, acquisition and development goals and objectives focus on the management or improvement of the existing system as well as the need for future active and passive parks. The following implementation strategies support the goals and objectives.

- Perform a full analysis and inventory of the existing parks system to better assess future park needs with respect to acquisition, redevelopment or improvements.
- Perform a full feasibility analysis for developing areas in the community, specifically in south Maplewood where development has not yet occurred. Accurate determination of size and type of park land in this area should be assessed when unit type and number of residents are identified for this area.

Trail Corridors/Right-of-Way Acquisition and Development

The trail goals and objectives relate to a much more diverse and comprehensive trail system. The following implementation strategies support the identified goals and objectives.

- Create a review process that supports the Parks Commission review of all road improvement projects to identify potential trail connections and opportunities to complete the system.
- Prioritize all trail corridors and focus planning efforts and studies on key corridors.
- Identify key areas where opportunities exist to add lining for bike and non-motorized traffic on roadways to complete the system in a most efficient and cost-effective way.

Recreation and Education Programs

The recreation and education program goals are focused on maintaining the existing programs and supporting the diversification and availability of programming in the City. The following implementation steps support the identified goals and objectives.

- Discuss and inventory the programming offered through the City to determine areas for improvement within the City.
- Work with program and education directors to identify areas for improvement within the system and create a plan to improve programming availability and diversity within the City.
- Encourage and provide education to support best practices and stewardship along park and open space (neighborhood preserves) borders.

Funding

The funding goals and objectives identify ways to support the system financially. The following implementation strategies are identified for support.

- Perform a detailed inventory to prioritize projects that will require immediate funding.
- Monitor the parks, trails and open space plan on a yearly basis to identify upcoming financial gap areas, and to determine additional prioritization and planning needs.
- Identify grant money available to support the development of the trail system. The trail budget is significantly higher than the allocated CIP money, and identification of potential grant money will help fund the gap.

CITY OF MAPLEWOOD
2030
 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

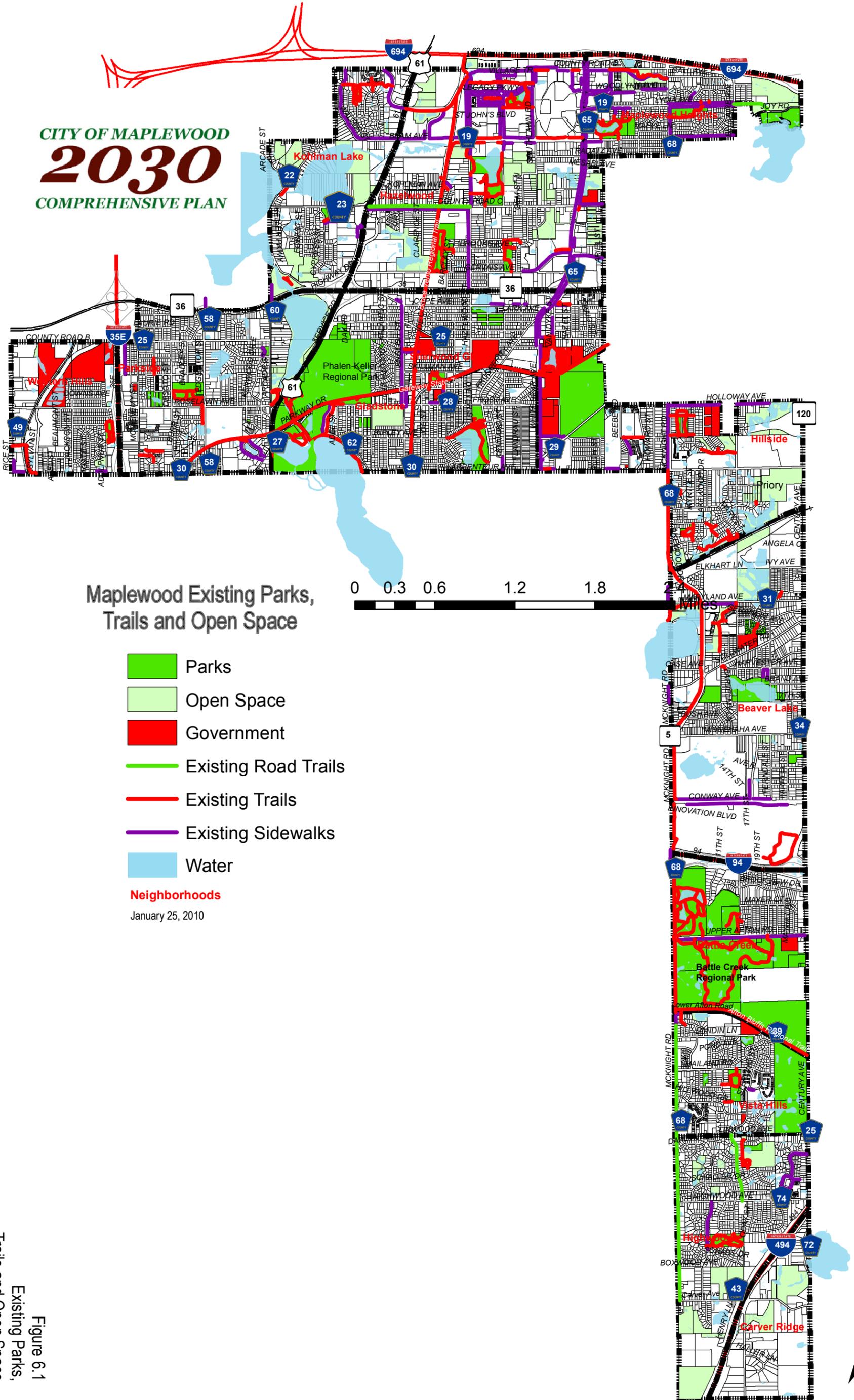
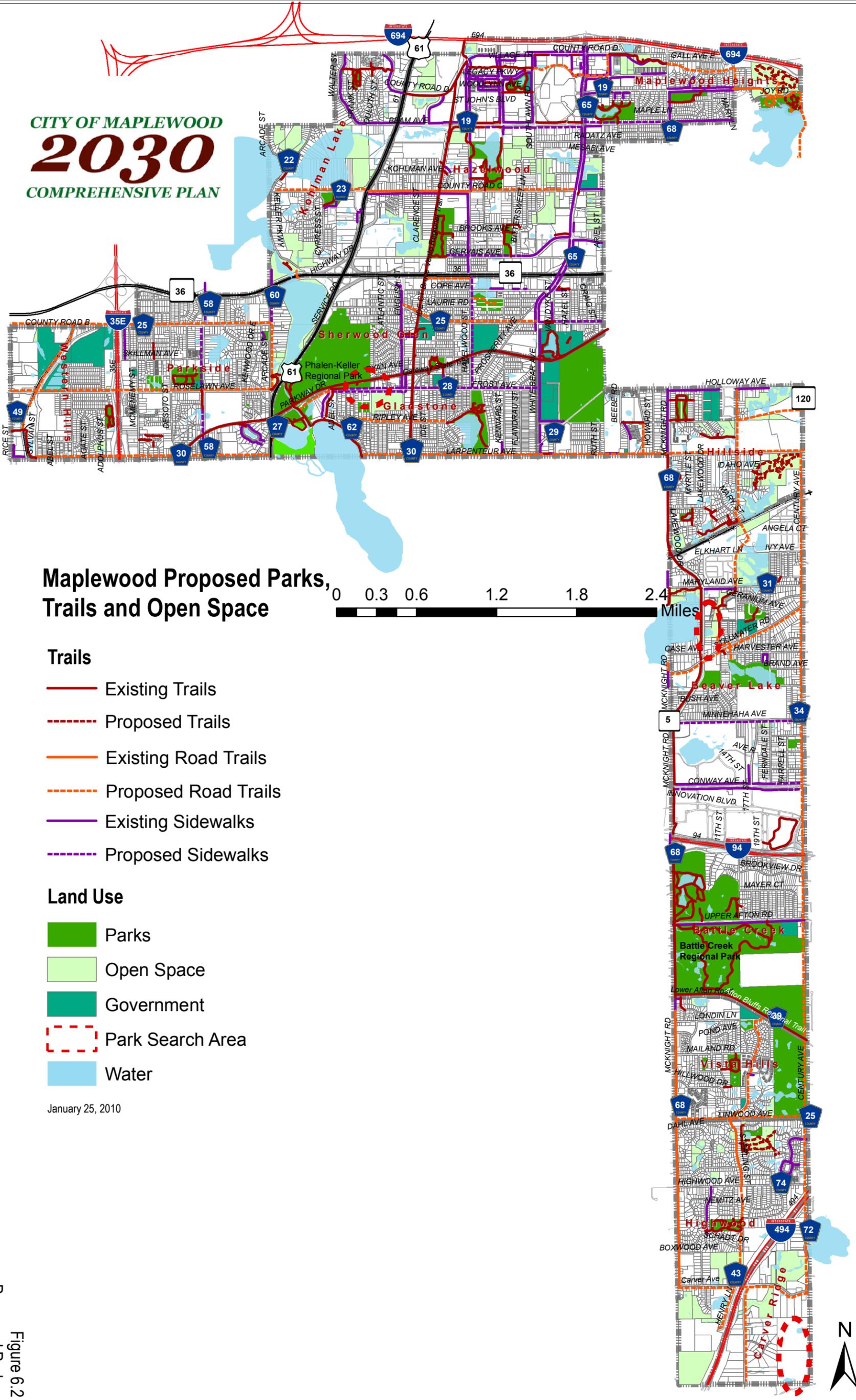
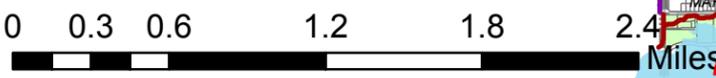


Figure 6.1
 Existing Parks,
 Trails and Open Space

CITY OF MAPLEWOOD
2030
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Maplewood Proposed Parks, Trails and Open Space



Trails

- Existing Trails
- - - Proposed Trails
- Existing Road Trails
- - - Proposed Road Trails
- Existing Sidewalks
- - - Proposed Sidewalks

Land Use

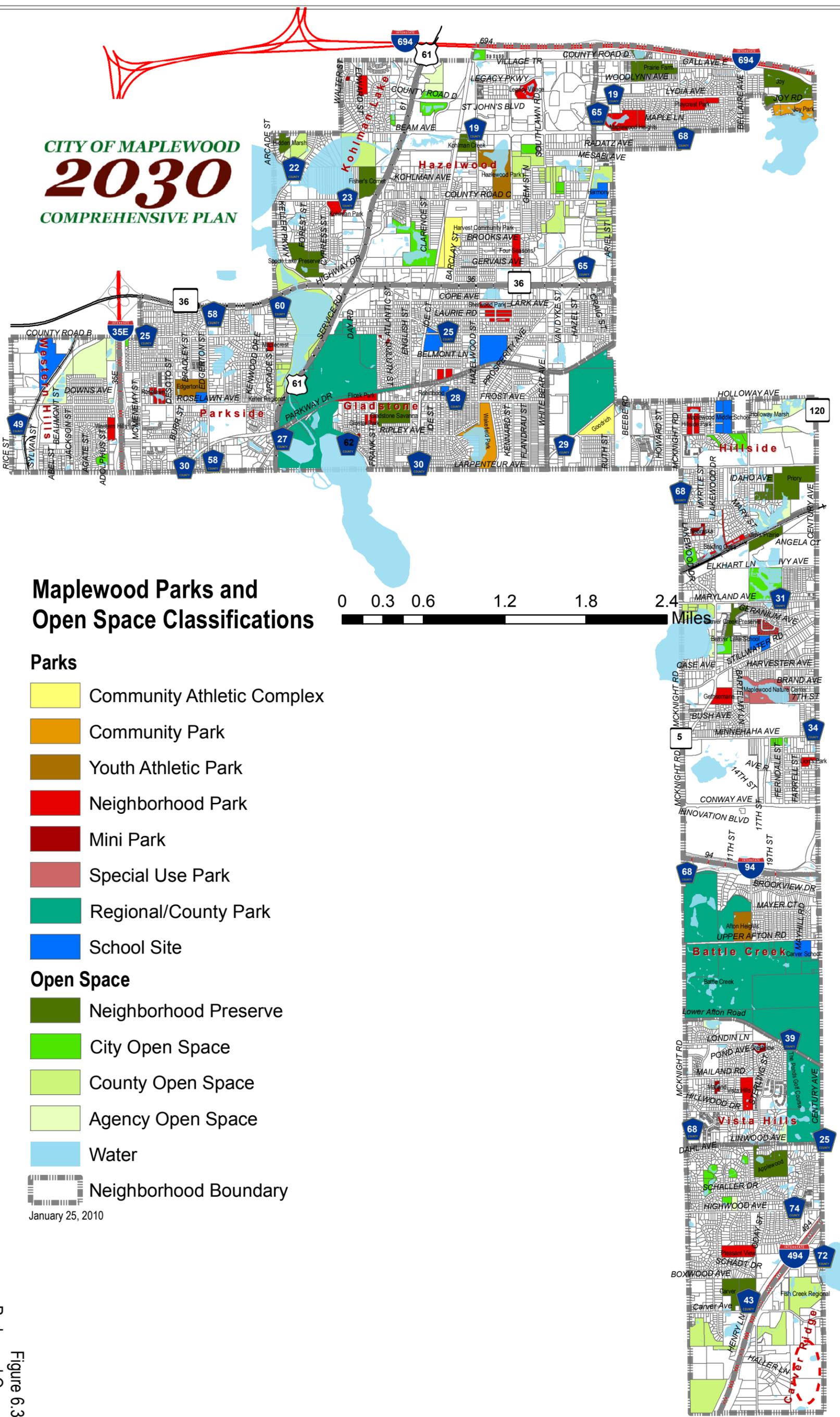
- Parks
- Open Space
- Government
- Park Search Area
- Water

January 25, 2010

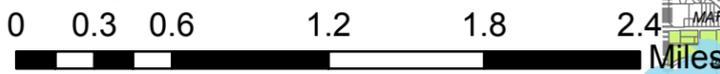
Figure 6.2
 Proposed Parks,
 Trails, and Open Space



CITY OF MAPLEWOOD 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Maplewood Parks and Open Space Classifications



Parks

- Community Athletic Complex
- Community Park
- Youth Athletic Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Mini Park
- Special Use Park
- Regional/County Park
- School Site

Open Space

- Neighborhood Preserve
- City Open Space
- County Open Space
- Agency Open Space
- Water
- Neighborhood Boundary

January 25, 2010

Figure 6.3
Parks and Open
Space Classifications

