

Chapter 6: PARKS, TRAILS, and OPEN SPACE

Introduction

This chapter assesses existing and future recreational needs of the City and recommends measures to accommodate those needs.

The methods used in preparation of this section include: a review of the Park Plan in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan; an inventory and inspection of existing park sites; and a review of existing facilities, including trail and park planning standards, proposed policies, proposed expansion, and the trail system implementation procedures.

Objectives

The following objectives support the goals and strategies identified in Chapter 2.

1. Park land will be identified and acquired pursuant to the City's Parks, Trails, and Open-Spaces Plan:
 - a) Park size should conform to Metropolitan Council definitions in Table 6-A, except mini-parks and pocket parks that may vary in size depending on the residential population they serve; and
 - b) Park sites should be of suitable size for their proposed recreational uses.
2. Park, trails, and open-space management, administration, financing, and maintenance will be the responsibility of the City Council with the recommendation and assistance of the Park Commission.
3. Financing for administration, maintenance and acquisition of the City's parks will be incorporated into the regular City budget. Other sources of park funding may include subdivision development park fees, grants, support from local organizations, private donations, and consideration of a referendum.
4. In order for the City to provide a balance of services for its residents it is important that the City's park development plans be implemented. Calling for coordinated efforts and a close working relationship between the City and its:
 - a) Residents;
 - b) City Commissions;
 - c) Outside governmental units;
 - d) Local organizations, including local school districts, riding clubs, snowmobiling clubs, athletic associations, service organizations, and outdoor recreational organizations; and
 - e) City and privately operated recreational facilities, including golf courses, playfields, and trails.
5. Where possible, recreational facilities will be designed to be barrier-free so that handicapped citizens have reasonable access to facilities.

Metropolitan Council's Parks, Trails, and Open Space System

The Metropolitan Council components of a parks, trails, and open-space system will be the basis for analyzing existing park facilities and for determining proposed park development within Medina.

TABLE 6-A
Classification for Local and Regional Open-Space ¹

Component	Use	Service Area	Site	Site Attributes	Site Location
Local Facilities					
Mini-Park	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens; may be in locations such as apartment complexes, townhouse developments or commercial centers.	Less than ¼ mile radius	Less than 1 acre		
Pocket Park ²	Area for recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, apparatus area, skating, neighborhood centers.	1/8 to ¼ mile radius to serve a population of 200 to 1,000 (neighborhoods).	1-5 acres	Physiography suited for moderate development.	Proximity to smaller neighborhoods
Neighborhood Park/ Playground	Area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, apparatus area, skating, neighborhood centers.	¼ to ½ mile radius to serve a population of 4,000 to 5,000 (neighborhood).	5-25 acres ³	Physiography suited for intense development.	Proximity to Elementary schools.
Community Playfield	Area for intense recreational facilities such as athletic fields and swimming pools; could include neighborhood use.	3-5 neighborhoods (community ⁴).	25-50 acres	Physiography suited for intense development.	Proximity to secondary schools and other public facilities.
Community Park	Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking viewing, sitting, picnicking; could have some field and court games.	3-5 neighborhoods (community ⁴)	25-50 acres	Affords natural features with varied physiographic interest.	Proximity to community facilities and resources.
Conservancy Lands	Area of natural quality such as watercourses and wetlands that are preserved for environmental or aesthetic benefits to the community and/or because of the negative environmental or economic affects of development in them.	Municipality, township, county.	Variable, based on extent of resources.	Natural resources that merit preservation and would be negatively affected by development.	Where resource occurs.
Regional Facilities					
Regional Park	Area of natural or ornamental quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses.	3-5 communities.	200-500 acres (100 acre minimum).	Complete natural setting contiguous to water bodies or water courses where possible.	Where natural resource occurs--particularly water.
Regional Park Reserve	Area of natural quality for nature oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, boating, camping, and trail uses.	County, multi-county area.	100+ acres; Sufficient area to encompass the resource envisioned for preservation.	Diversity of unique resources, such as topography, lakes streams, marshes, flora, fauna.	Where resource occurs.
Local or Regional					
Linear Park (trails, corridors, parkways)	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational Travel such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross country skiing, canoeing and driving.	Local (municipalities, townships) or regional (county multi-county area).	Sufficient width to provide protection of resource and maximum use.	Utilize human-made and/or natural linear resources such as utility corridors, rights-of way, drainage ways, bluff lines, vegetation patterns and roads.	Where linear resource occurs. Link components of recreation system. Link other community facilities such as schools, library and commercial areas.
Special Feature	Area that preserves, maintains and provides specialized or single-purpose recreational activities such as golf course, nature center, zoo, arboretum, arena, downhill ski area, and sites of historic or archaeological significance.	Metropolitan Area	Specific standard application to desired feature.	Appropriate to particular special feature.	Where most advantageous for the special feature and the overall park system.

¹ Metropolitan Council's Recreation Standards

² Designation and definition added by the City.

³ Minimum acreage modified by the City.

⁴ A grouping of neighborhoods, not a unit of government.

As discussed in the land use chapter, Medina presently has three areas (identified locally as the Hamel area, Independence Beach and Medina Morningside) with a higher population density, and has proposed higher density along the TH 55 corridor in the future. The remainder of the City consists of a relatively small population spread over a large area requiring more flexibility when determining the type and placement of parks, trails and open space. This factor is particularly relevant when considering the criteria for mini-parks and neighborhood park/playgrounds, trails and connecting trails.

The Metropolitan Council Classification System for local facilities indicates a site size of less than one acre as a mini-park and 10 to 25 acres as a neighborhood park/playground. Since Medina's population is spread over an area four and one-half miles by six miles, a more flexible size criteria is needed in these categories. Medina has added an additional category to the Metropolitan Council's classification for local and regional open-space called Pocket Parks (formerly known as Sub-Neighborhood Parks). The uses for this category are essentially the same as a neighborhood park/playground, but with less variety and some size limitations. Pocket Parks range in size from one to five acres. Because of the City's smaller neighborhood populations, the City has modified the Metropolitan Council's minimum size for neighborhood park/playgrounds to 5 acres from 10 acres.

Medina's Existing System

Additional parks, trails, and open spaces, have been added to Medina's Park System Inventory since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan including the Lake Medina Preserve, Rainwater Nature Area, Bridgewater at Lake Medina Neighborhood Park, and a Wild Meadows Neighborhood Park. Map 6-1 shows the locations of all parks, trails, and open space making up the City's existing system, and Table 6-B lists the City's parks and facilities.

A. Regional Parks

Medina's park system includes one county facility, Baker Park Reserve and one state facility, Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). These facilities play a significant role in the City's and Metropolitan's park system. Providing both active and passive recreational opportunities and fulfilling some of the local need for community parks and conservancy lands.

B. Local Parks

The City's park system presently includes the following sites. The facilities offered by each park can be seen in Table 6-B below.

1. **Hamel Legion Park** is almost 40 acres in size, is the largest park in the City's system and is located south of Uptown Hamel on the east boundary of the City. Although the playfield is not centrally located in the community, it serves the portion of the City with the highest current and proposed population density. This park continues to be developed.

**TABLE 6-B
Medina Park System Inventory**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Special Note</u>	Picnic Facilities	Playground	Pavilion	Softball	Baseball	Football	Playfield	Horse riding	Tennis Courts	Basketball	Ice Skating	Swimming	Fishing	Boat Landing	Warming House	Lake Access	Trails	Restrooms	Sliding	Nature Area	Undeveloped	Parking	Volleyball	Camping	Golf/ski	
Mini-Parks																												
Lakeshore Park - Independence Beach	0.9		X	X										X	X	X		X		X				X				
Holy Name Lake Park	2		X												X			X		X				X				
Tuckborough Park	0.8	Private									X																	
Northridge Farms Park	2.6	Private									X																	
Pocket-Parks																												
Medina Morningside Park	2.4		X	X	X		X					X	X							X				X				
Maple Park	2.5					X		X													X			X				
Foxberry Farms Park	1.5	Private	X	X																								
Wild Meadows Park	193	Private																										
Bridgewater at Lake Medina	1.2	Private																										
Neighborhood																												
Rainwater Nature Area	5.8																						X	X				
Medina Lake Preserve	69.9																	X					X					
Hunter Lions Park	6.8		X	X	X					X	X									X		X	X	X	X			
Community Playfield																												
Hamel Legion Park	36.9		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Loretto Ball Fields	20.1	City of Loretto					X													X								
Regional Park Reserve																												
Baker Park Reserve	2,108		X	X						X				X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
State Natural Area																												
Wolsfeld Woods Scientific & Natural Area	180	Acres in Medina								X								X			X						X	
Special Feature Parks																												
Lake Ardmore Nature Area	18.3	Open Space Undeveloped																				X	X					
Cherry Hill Nature Area	1.5	Open Space Drainage																					X					
Walnut Park - Independence Beach	0.5	Drainage		X									X												X			
Baker National Golf Course	336	Golf Course Public																		X	X			X			X	
Spring Hill Golf Club	48.3	Golf Course Private			X															X				X			X	
Medina Golf and Country Club	225.5	Golf Course Private			X									X						X				X			X	
City Hall Site	9.2	Undeveloped Civic/Historic	X	X																X			X	X				

2. **Medina Morningside Park** is 2.4 acres in size and serves the Medina Morningside area. This park includes a small area of open space for informal games and activities, a small picnic shelter, two small baseball diamonds, and a basketball hoop.
3. **Hunter Lions Park** is 6.8 acres in size and serves the area south of Uptown Hamel. This park is large enough to function as a neighborhood park and provides a number of facilities normally associated with neighborhood parks. In 1998, a prairie restoration area was included on the west side of the park with trails in the natural area.
4. **Holy Name Lake Park** is a 2-acre mini-park located on a major county road (County Road 24) and abuts Holy Name Lake. This park was not created to service any concentrated urban development area but serves several functions: a wayside rest and picnic area; and a public access to Holy Name Lake. Holy Name Lake will be used as a lakeshore restoration demonstration area.
5. **The City Hall Site** is 9.2 acres in size and is centrally located in the City, serving the entire City as the site for Medina's City Hall and public works facilities. A portion of the property commemorates the memory of the early settlers of Medina. In addition, portions of the original Wolsfeld log cabin built in 1856 were reconstructed on the City Hall site in 1999 and it serves as a museum owned and operated by the Western Hennepin County Pioneer's Association.
6. **Lakeshore Park - Independence Beach (2975 Lakeshore Ave.)** is less than 1 acre in size and serves the Independence Beach area of the City. Situated on Lake Independence, its functions include boat access by city permit and a fishing dock. It also has playground equipment and a picnic facility.
7. **Walnut Park - Independence Beach (4653 Walnut St.)** is a half-acre drainage area also used seasonally as a park, with a basketball hoop in the summer and an ice rink in the winter. This park could be a potential demonstration area for rain garden or shoreline planting.
8. **Maple Park** is 2.5 acres in size and serves the Independence Beach area of the City in conjunction with the two other parks in the area. A ball diamond and field exists for various recreational activities.
9. **Lake Ardmore Nature Area** is 18.3 acre undeveloped nature area in the Independence Beach neighborhood consisting of several parcels of land surrounding Lake Ardmore.
10. **Cherry Hill Nature Area** is a 1.5 acre area, primarily wetlands, used for drainage of storm water from the Cherry Hill development.
11. **Medina Lake Preserve** is an 69.9 acre nature area that includes a portion of Lake Medina and several surrounding acres. Trails are in place in the wooded regions surrounding the lake.

12. **Rainwater Nature Area** is an 5.8 acre undeveloped area in the Uptown Hamel Neighborhood providing a nature preserve in an urban area. Furthermore, it will be a showcase area for native plantings.
13. **Private Mini-Parks and Pocket Parks** Foxberry Farms, Tuckborough Farms, and Northridge Farms all have parks that are owned and maintained by the respective homeowners associations and augment the City's park system.

C. Quasi Public Facilities

An excerpt of the 1980 Comprehensive Plan set forth below exemplifies Medina's continuing desire to facilitate the recreation needs of the community without directly providing organized recreational programs:

"Of the total recreational services currently being provided to Medina residents, a strong role is played by quasi-public groups and individuals. Even though these quasi-public facilities and activities are not the responsibility of local government, a good share of the local residents participate in them. These recreational opportunities include, but are not limited to, horseback riding and snowmobile trails, summer camps, private school playgrounds, golf courses, baseball and softball fields. This Plan recognizes the significant contribution provided by these local Medina groups and citizens and strongly encourages their continued practice. No direct planning from the City of Medina Parks program will take place in relationship to the many quasi-public recreational services. The Parks Plan will concentrate on lands and developments owned and maintained by the City, existing as well as planned."

Even though this planning exercise will not include "direct planning" of quasi-public facilities and will concentrate on lands and developments owned and maintained by the City, quasi-public facilities will be taken into account with respect to serving the recreational needs of the City, including the following:

1. **Baker National Golf Course** is approximately 336 acres in size and is included in the Baker Park Reserve. Many residents use this course which is regarded as one of the best public courses in the Metro Area. It also has winter recreational activities including, skiing, snowshoeing and a sliding hill. The property is a National Audubon certified golf course because of its wildlife-friendly management.
2. **Medina Golf and Country Club** is a 225-acre private golf course in the north eastern section of the City. A number of City residents and businesses are members of this club.
3. **Spring Hill Golf Club** is a 48.3 acre private golf course of which a portion is located in the south central part of the city. The club house and most of the golf course are located in the City of Orono.

D. Trails

The City's trail system consists of a combination of city, county, regional, and private trails. Most of the City's proposed trails have yet to be developed. The City is acquiring trail dedications and easements as development occurs.

County trails are located along CR 24 and CR 19 and also include an extensive multi-use trail system within the Baker Park Reserve (see Map 6-2), including the Baker-Crow Hassan Regional Trail under construction during 2009.

The Northwest Trails Association operates an extensive snowmobile trail system, part of which is located in Medina. Private horse trails, not shown on the map, are available through parts of the City and involve many private landowners. It is operated and maintained by volunteers and "gentlemen's" agreements. Medina's horse trails are an important part of its rural culture.

Several of Medina's current or proposed trails connect with surrounding cities. The City of Medina will strive to connect with these surrounding trails.

E. Other

1. **The Loretto Playfield** serves a number of organized teams in the region and has a playground area.
2. **The Orono Schools Playfields** are located on the south side of County Road 6 and provide recreational space for the City's southside residents through Orono's community education and recreation programs.
3. **Elm Creek Community Playfields (Wayzata High School)** is owned by the City of Plymouth and is located just east of Medina, north of TH 55.
4. **Plymouth Park & Recreation** is used by many residents through programs offered by the Plymouth Park and Recreation Department.
5. **Orono Park and Recreation** is used by several residents who take part in programs offered by the Orono Park and Recreation Department.
6. **Corcoran Athletic Association** provides a number of recreational opportunities for children and adults.
7. **Hamel Athletic Association** provides a number of recreational opportunities to Medina residents as well as to residents of surrounding cities.

These active park areas, playfields and programs should serve the City's residents adequately for the foreseeable future.

Medina's Future Needs for Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Medina's future needs will be affected by the City's population, demands of its residents, and residential density. In the permanent rural area of the City, there will not be as great a demand for active parks with organized recreational activities. However, demand for passive parks that preserve open space and compliment the City's rural environment and character will be essential. Table 6-C summarizes the City's existing parks using the Metropolitan Council functional classification. Parks listed in Table 6-C make up over seventeen percent of Medina's total acreage.

TABLE 6-C
Existing Functional Classification of
Medina Park Acreages

Functional Classification	2007 Acreage
Community parks/playfields	36.9
Neighborhood parks/playgrounds	6.8
Sub-neighborhood parks (Public & Private)	6.4
Mini-parks (Public & Private)	6.3
Regional park reserve/refuge	1,684.8
Special Feature Parks (Public & Private)	639.3
State "Scientific and Natural Area"	180.5
Total Park Acreage	2561

Table 6-D below illustrates the City's potential future park and recreational needs using the National Standard for Recreational Activities. Based on Table 6-D, the City has more than adequate acreage, in most categories, dedicated to parks. Community play areas, as defined in Table 6-A will be added as residential development occurs in the sewered areas of the City.

TABLE 6-D
Projected Park Needs
Acres Per Population

	2006	2010		2020		2030	
Population	4,811	5,211		9,104		11,211	
Households	1,653	1,765		3,270		4,362	
Classification	Park Acres In Medina	Park ¹ Acres Standard	Park Acres In Medina +/-	Park ¹ Acres Standard	Park Acres In Medina +/-	Park ¹ Acres Standard	Park Acres In Medina +/-
Neighborhood ²	21.7	5.7	+16.0	9.9	+11.8	12.3	+9.4
Community play ³	0.0	4.2	-4.2	7.3	-7.3	9.0	-9.0
Community park	36.9	9.9	+27.0	17.3	+19.6	21.4	+15.5
Regional park	2,108.0	41.7	+2,066.3	72.8	+2,035.2	89.7	+2,018.3

¹ Source: Urban Planning and Design Criteria, 2nd edition

² Based on a 2006 population of 4,811.

³ Includes mini and sub-neighborhood and neighborhood

Note: Special Feature Parks and state park reserves are not included in the above acreages.

Medina's Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan

The goals, policies, and analysis in this chapter provide the basis for the Medina's Parks, Trails, and Open Space Report. The plan addresses the following five specific areas of need:

1. Completion and maintenance of Hamel Legion Park.
2. Acquisition, upgrading, and development of neighborhood facilities to provide open spaces for active and passive recreational activities and fields for organized sports.
3. Improvements to existing parks.
4. Development of a coordinated trail system.
5. Developing sites for future community parks.

Playfields

1. **Hamel Legion Park** continues to be developed through donations of cash, materials, and services from community individuals and businesses as well as City park dedication proceeds.

Completed current plan elements include:

- Four softball fields
- Sliding hill
- Basketball court
- Small play area
- Picnic Shelter Area
- Warming house
- Soccer field
- Volleyball court
- Ice skating rink
- Family skating area
- Community building
- Fire Pit
- Open play area
- Two tennis courts
- Paved trails
- Entrance Plaza
- Memorial Plaza
- Playground Equipment

Elements to be completed include a concession stand, ball field lights, parking lot by north field, and additional trees and landscaping.

The City must plan to provide for adequate security and maintenance, including regular mowing in the summer and snow removal in the winter.

Neighborhood or Pocket Parks

As development occurs in the urbanized areas of the City, additional neighborhood and sub-neighborhood parks may be needed. An important criterion in planning such parks is the ability of residents and children to access a neighborhood or sub-neighborhood park without having to cross a major or minor arterial.

1. **Hunter Lions Park** - Maintain the recent improvements in the Park, which included: upgrading of the basketball court, adding additional picnic tables, and creating a paved trail to make the park more accessible. The City will provide a woodchip or turf path to the prairie restoration area and perimeter trail.
2. **Medina Morningside Park** - No significant changes are planned for this park. The ball field needs to be improved and maintained.

3. **Lakeshore Park - Independence Beach** - Maintain the new playground equipment and fishing dock and address the erosion and run-off to the lake.
4. **Maple Park** - Because of this park's limited size, improvements that require limited space should be considered, such as adding a picnic area.

Special Use Parks

As noted previously, Holy Name Lake Park, the City Hall site, Lake Ardmore Nature Area, Rain Water Nature Area, and Lake Medina Preserve do not fulfill the requirements for either community or neighborhood facilities. However, these parks are important to the City's park system.

1. **The City Hall Site** is necessary to accommodate the City Hall and the functions related to City activities. Consideration is being given to relocating the public works functions to another location, which would leave the existing site with ample space for future administrative and public safety needs. No permanent recreational facilities will be added to this site. Improvements will be devoted to beautification and historic preservation and commemoration.
2. **Holy Name Lake Park** is one of the most frequently used City parks. Improvements should include an upgrade of the access drive and parking area, removal of the boat ramp, construction of a small fishing dock, and mitigation of erosion to the lake. This area will also be used as a shore land restoration demonstration area.
3. **Lake Ardmore Nature Area** is located in the Independence Beach area and is currently undeveloped and unnamed. Because a large portion of the property is made up of wetlands, it can never be developed, but the City may formalize the area as a nature preserve, create trails through it with access to the lake and create a permanent buffer area.
4. **Rainwater Nature Area** will be used as a demonstration area for native plantings.
5. **Medina Lake Preserve** is mostly wetlands. Trails exist in the wooded regions surrounding the lake.

Trails

The trail plan, as shown on Map 6-2, proposes a network of multi-purpose trails. These trails will be located within road rights-of-way and will be separated from the vehicular surface by either a barrier, boulevard, or with a different or striped textured surface. Where possible, trails will be placed cross-country or near natural resource areas and connecting points of interest throughout the City. The plan also includes a proposal to create a pedestrian bridge over TH 55 at CR 101 which, while not in present city funding plans, could become an important link in the trail system as the City develops.

The City's network of trails will tie into the proposed trails in neighboring communities, including Corcoran, Independence, Maple Plain, Orono and Plymouth .

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Recreational Open Space Development Guide identifies a regional trail corridor extending west of Baker Park Reserve towards Lake Sarah Regional Park north of Lake Independence. The Trails Map (6-2) shows this regional search area.

Open Space

Medina's 2007 Open Space Report

Medina's Open Space Task Force created an Open Space Report, which is not made part of this Plan and is available for review at the City of Medina City Hall. A summary of the report follows.

Goals are to:

1. preserve the ecological integrity of Medina's natural infrastructure that filters and cleanses run-off, prevents soil erosion and aides in maintaining healthy lakes and water resources;
2. preserve the City's rural character, in which natural resources are the main feature of the landscape; and
3. provide an option to landowners to preserve natural infrastructure, without adverse economic consequences.

Principles to guide implementation of an Open Space Report are to:

1. educate and to promote stewardship and preservation of natural resources to the public, land-owners and developers and raise awareness of the economic and environmental benefit of preserving natural resources;
2. co-ordinate conservation efforts with other agencies, such as watersheds, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park and non-governmental bodies, like the Minnesota Land Trust, Embrace Open Space and Pheasants Forever.
3. require permanently conserved land to be held in an easement by an outside agency, such as the Minnesota Land Trust, a watershed district or similar entities;
4. maintain land values and cause no economic harm to landowners or developers;
5. use incentives to encourage open space developments;
6. make Open Space Design an option across all zoning districts where natural features exist;

Definition of Open Space Design :

Open Space Design is, in effect, golf course development without a golf course where development occurs around natural features, such as wetlands, woodlands, or farmland. The ecological integrity of natural areas is permanently conserved by a conservation easement, held and overseen by an outside agency. Buildings are clustered in a central location on smaller lots, and the dedicated open space is typically held under common ownership.

Recommended Tools to Implement Open Space Design:

1. **Incentives** – develop a system, including a scale of points for best management practice and conservation design that can earn bonus building units. Such systems have been developed by other communities.
2. **Regulation** – natural resource performance standards;
3. **Public ownership** – purchase of development rights (a PDR program); and
4. **Park & trail dedication** – draft flexibility into park and trail dedication ordinance.