

Chapter 6: PARKS, TRAILS, and OPEN SPACE

Introduction

A high quality system of parks and trails support the physical and psychological health of the community, provide opportunities for the community to gather, and contribute significantly to the quality of life and the well-being of residents. The amount and quality of open spaces in Medina is consistently identified as one of the most important characteristics of the City and the protection of these spaces is paramount within the City's Vision and Community Goals.

Objectives

The City of Medina Vision seeks to "sustain and enhance the quality of life of its residents," "protect...significant natural resources and open spaces throughout the City," "foster...places of recreation and destinations for citizens to gather."

In addition, Community Goals include:

- "Preserve rural vistas, open spaces, and wetlands in all parts of the community to promote the rural character of Medina."
- "Protect and enhance the environmental and natural resources throughout the community."
- "Promote public and private gathering places and civic events that serve the entire community."
- "Preserve and expand trails and parks to provide community recreational facilities, connect neighborhoods and encourage healthy lifestyles of its residents."

The following objectives support the Vision and Goals and guide the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan.

- Improve and expand existing facilities, improve accessibility, correct problems or conflicts if they occur, and provide expanded recreational opportunities, all in a manner which can be fiscally sustained within the community in the long term.
- Establish parks within approximately ½ mile of new urban residential development to provide residents convenient access to recreational activities. In furtherance of this objective, preference will be given to land acquisition when determining park dedication and in some cases such land may need to be reserved even if existing funds are not immediately available for development of the park.
- Provide a system of trails which serve not only recreational purposes, but also connect residents with community destinations in order to support healthy lifestyle and opportunities for non-motorized transportation.
- Make a variety of recreational opportunities available for residents.
- Explore options for securing private funding of parks and trails such as providing naming rights, soliciting individual donations, establishing a charitable trust, or through other means recommended by the Park Commission and approved by the City Council.
- Partner with recreational organizations within and adjacent to the City in order to provide recreational activities in a cost-effective manner.

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 6-1
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.	Less than ¼ mile radius	Less than 1 acre		May be publicly or privately owned and/or incorporated into a development site, such as apartment.
Neighborhood Park/ Playground ²	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 200 to 1,000 (neighborhood).	5-25 acres	Physical geography suited for intense development.	Proximity to Elementary schools or residential neighborhoods.
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	Physical geography 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)	25-100 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 effects 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.	1000+ 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 Definition adjusted by the City.

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

The Metropolitan Council Classification System describes a Neighborhood Park/Playground being designed to serve a population of 4,000-5,000 within approximately one-half mile. Because of the comparatively lower-density development pattern purposefully planned within the City, this definition has been adjusted for the sake of designing the local park system. Neighborhood parks in Medina are designed to serve a smaller population of 200-1,000 from a wider geographical area.

Medina's Existing System

Map 6-1 shows the locations of all parks, trails, and open space making up the City's existing system, and Table 6-2 lists the City's parks and facilities. These active park areas, playfields and programs should serve the City's residents adequately for the foreseeable future.

A. Regional Parks

Medina's park system includes Baker Park Reserve, operated by Three Rivers Park District, and Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area (SNA), operated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 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 6-2.

1. **Hamel Legion Park** is the City's primary community park and the largest in the City's system at almost 40 acres in size. The park is located south of Uptown Hamel on the east boundary of the City. The park was developed through invaluable partnerships with local organizations and includes many amenities which serve the entire community.
2. **The Park at Fields of Medina** is approximately 10.5 acres in size and is intended to primarily serve the area including Fields of Medina, Bridgewater, Foxberry Farms, and the Villas at Medina Country Club.
3. **Medina Morningside Park** is 2.4 acres in size and primarily serves the Medina Morningside, Keller Estates, and Deer Hill Preserve area.
4. **Hunter Lions Park** is 6.8 acres in size and primarily serves the area south and west of Uptown Hamel, including the Enclave, Tuckborough Farms, Hunter Farms and Elm Creek Addition.
5. **Lakeshore Park - Independence Beach (2975 Lakeshore Ave.)** is less than 1 acre in size and primarily serves the Independence Beach area of the City.
6. **Walnut Park - Independence Beach (4653 Walnut St.)** is a half-acre drainage area also used seasonally as a park primarily to serve the Independence Beach area of the City.
7. **Maple Park** is 2.5 acres in size and primarily serves the Independence Beach area of the City.

8. **Tomann Preserve** is a 16 acre nature area comprised of wetlands and uplands which were historically located in what is called the “Big Woods” ecosystem as part of the deciduous forest biome.
9. **Lake Ardmore Nature Area** is an 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 open space and drainage of storm water from the Cherry Hill development.
11. **Medina Lake Preserve** is a 69.9 acre nature area that includes a portion of Lake Medina and several surrounding acres.
12. **Rainwater Nature Area** is a 5.8 acre area in the Uptown Hamel Neighborhood providing a nature preserve in an urban area. Furthermore, it is a showcase area for native plantings.
13. **Holy Name Lake Park** is a 2-acre mini-park located on a major county road (County Road 24) and abuts Holy Name Lake.
14. **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. A portion of the property commemorates the memory of the early settlers of Medina, including a reconstruction of the original Wolsfeld log cabin built in 1856 as a museum owned and operated by the Western Hennepin County Pioneer Association.
15. **Private Mini-Parks and Pocket Parks** Foxberry Farms, Tuckborough Farms, Northridge Farms, The Enclave, The Reserve, and Medina Townhomes all have parks that are owned and maintained by the respective homeowners associations and augment the City's park system.

C. Quasi-Public Facilities

Quasi-public facilities serve the recreational needs of the City and are important to take into account, including the following:

1. **Baker National Golf Course** is approximately 210 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 private golf course of which a 48.3 acre 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. The City is acquiring trail dedications and easements as development occurs.

County trails are located along CR 24 and Three Rivers Park District operates an extensive multi-use trail system within the Baker Park Reserve and the Lake Independence Regional Trail along CR 19 (see Map 6-1).

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

The organizations and playfields listed below provide additional recreational opportunities to Medina residents and help supplement the City of Medina's park system.

1. **Hamel Athletic Club** provides youth baseball recreational opportunities to Medina residents as well as to residents of surrounding cities.
2. **Hamel Hawks** provides an adult baseball program to Medina residents as well as to residents of surrounding cities.
3. **The Loretto Playfield** serves a number of organized teams in the region and has a playground area.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **Plymouth Park & Recreation** is used by many residents through programs offered by the Plymouth Park and Recreation Department.
7. **Orono Park and Recreation** is used by several residents who take part in programs offered by the Orono Park and Recreation Department.
8. **Corcoran Athletic Association** provides a number of recreational opportunities for children and adults.
9. **Other Public and Private schools** provide a number of recreational opportunities and community education programs to Medina residents, as well as to residents of surrounding cities.

Table 6-2

Medina Park System Inventory																							
Parks - City of Medina	Acres	Picnic Facilities	Playground	Softball & Baseball Fields	Soccer Fields or Nets	Basketball	Tennis Court	Volleyball	Playfield	Ice Skating	Warming House	Swimming	Fishing	Boat Landing	Lake Access	Trails	Equestrian Trails	Restrooms	Sliding Hill	Nature Area	Parking	Camping	Golf
Hamel Legion Park 3200 Mill Drive	36.9	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x		x	x	x	x	x		
Holy Name Park 400 County Road 24	2	x											x				x		x	x			
Hunter Lions Park 3195 Hunter Drive	6.8	x	x	x		x	x	x							x		x		x	x			
Lakeshore Park 2975 Lakeshore Avenue	0.9	x	x									x	x	x			x			x			
Maple Park 4400 Maple Street	2.5			x	x				x								x	x		x			
Medina Lake Preserve East of Bridgewater Development	70														x				x				
Medina Morningside Park 2522 Bobolink Road	2.4	x	x	x	x	x				x							x			x			
Rainwater Nature Area 400 Hamel Road	5.8														x				x	x			
The Park at Fields of Medina 1200 Meador Road	8.2	x	x		x	x	x	x	x						x		x			x			
Tomann Preserve 3112 Pioneer Trail	16	x													x				x				
Walnut Park 4653 Walnut Street	0.5					x				x													
Regional Park Reserve																							
Baker Park Reserve 2301 County Road 19	2,700	x	x									x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
State Natural Area																							
Wolsfeld Woods Scientific & Natural Area - Parking at 2060 6th Avenue N.	180														x	x	x			x			

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 three specific areas of need:

1. Completion, improvement, and maintenance of existing park and trail facilities.
2. Acquisition, upgrading, and development of neighborhood facilities to provide open spaces for active and passive recreational activities and fields for organized sports.
3. Development of a coordinated trail system.

Completion and Improvement of Existing Facilities

The City has identified improvements for existing facilities within its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and also maintains a Parks and Trails Master Plan to monitor and address needs.

Future Parks

The park plan, as shown on Map 6-1, proposes three additional neighborhood parks in order to support planned future residential development. Land for these parks will predominantly be obtained through park dedication during the development process. These parks will be sized and improvements planned according to the population likely to be served by each.

The plan also identifies two potential expansions of existing parks in the city which will be considered as opportunities arise.

Future Trails

The trail plan, as shown on Map 6-1, proposes a network of multi-purpose trails. Although many of the trails are identified along road corridors, the City's objective is to separate the trails from the roadway where possible. Trails will connect points of interest throughout the City and provide access to natural areas. The plan also includes a proposal to create a pedestrian bridge over TH 55 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 Parks Policy Plan identifies two regional trail corridors within the City of Medina. The Trails Map (6-1) displays these search areas. Existing City trails in the vicinity of these corridors provide opportunities to complete these regional connections by transferring ownership of the segments to Three Rivers Park District.

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-coordinate 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; and
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.