



Chapter 6

Parks & Open Space

This chapter provides direction and policies to preserve open space, maintain existing parks, and augment the City's park and open space system.

Introduction

Coon Rapids has an abundance of parks, open spaces, and trails. The City, Anoka County, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Anoka Ramsey Community College, and Epiphany School own various parts of the overall parks and open space system.

The system has been built over a period of about 60 years. In recent decades, the City has periodically undertaken comprehensive reviews of the aging system order to identify the replacement needs in the system and any remaining gaps in facilities. The last major study, the *Parks, Trails & Open Space System Plan Update* was completed in 2012 and adopted by the City Council in early 2013. The major findings and recommendations of the *Parks, Trails & Open Space System Plan* are the foundation of this chapter of the *2040 Plan*. That plan recommended significant upgrades to facilities, many of which were implemented between 2013 and 2018. It is expected that the *Parks, Trails & Open Space System Plan* will be updated again before the next Comprehensive Plan update. That plan will refine the general policies established by this Chapter.

Recreation and open space is a vital component of the City's environment, which serves several important functions:

Provision of Recreational Resources. Opportunities for recreation and leisure time activities are integral to the overall quality of life. A growing emphasis on physical fitness and a desire for recreational diversity increases the responsibility of recreational providers.

Protection of Natural Resources. Natural resources possess more than just recreational and aesthetic value. They are essential to the enrichment of human life, health and welfare. Protection of these resources responds to community-held values about the importance of wetlands, forests, grasslands and other natural features in the natural ecology of the suburban environment.

Structuring of Urban Development. The nature and variety of parks and other recreational facilities heighten a community's identity and sense of pride. Development and maintenance of a quality park and open space system is a proven way to attract high-quality residential and commercial development, enhance property values and revitalize otherwise declining areas.

Functional Classification of Parks and Open Space

The City's various park facilities serve different functions. Table 6-1 describes those functions.

TABLE 6-1: Park Descriptions by Type

Classification	Description
Mini and Neighborhood Park	These parks are intended to – Provide neighborhood recreational facilities focused on unstructured individual and family activities. Create a social center for the neighborhood. Provide open space for informal group play and limited use for organized/programmed activities.
Cornerstone Park	These kinds of parks will, once developed, offer – Unique features that have City-wide appeal. Opportunities to accommodate group facilities, such as larger picnic shelters. A setting appropriate for facilities that are too costly to duplicate in more than one or two parks throughout the City.
Athletic Complex	These facilities are used for organized adult recreational activities and/or youth activities. They include larger parking areas, restrooms, and concessions.
Community Preserve	These facilities have two primary functions – Preservation and protection of key natural areas and open spaces within the City. Creation of opportunities for human use and appreciation of the community's natural areas to a level that is appropriate for the site.
Protected Open Space	These areas consist largely of protected lands such as wetlands, and floodplains, and water bodies. The primary difference between protected open space areas and community preserves lies in their level of ecological diversity and their level of development for human use (i.e., trails, overlooks, etc.). In general, the protected open space areas are less diverse and of lower ecological quality than community preserve sites and thus fall to a lower priority for restoration and management.
Special Use Park	These are unique facilities such as splash pads, beaches, and the indoor hockey rink.
Regional Park	These parks serve a regional population. They also provide facilities that might otherwise be located in cornerstone parks.
School Site	These sites, except for Anoka Ramsey Community College and Epiphany School, are owned and controlled by Anoka-Hennepin School District # 11. However, they provide opportunities for joint use potential between the City and the schools.

Inventory

Parks

Table 6-2 contains a list of the various park and open space facilities, approximate natural and developed park acreage in each park, and the functional classification.

TABLE 6-2: Park Acreage and Functional Classification

MP=Mini Park, NP=Neighborhood Park, CP=Cornerstone Park, AC= Athletic Complex, SUP=Special Use Park, CPR=Community Preserve, RP=Regional Park, S/P=School/college grounds including buildings



Approximate Park Acreage

	Name	Natural	Developed	Total	Classification	Last Major Improvement
1	Acorn	0	1.5	1.5	MP	
2	Al Flynn	16	18.3	34.3	AC	
3	Alder	0	2.6	2.6	NP	2014
4	Aspen	10.5	8	18.5	AC/CPR	
5	Bison Creek	8.8	4	12.8	NP/CPR	2014
6	Boulevard Plaza	0	NEED	NEED	CP/SUP	
7	Bunker Hills Dog Park	NA	NA	NA	SUP	2014
8	Burl Oaks	2	3.4	5.4	NP	
9	Cardinal Woods	5	3.3	8.3	NP	
10	Coon Rapids Ice Center	NEED	NEED	NEED	SUP	
11	Creekside	6.8	0	6.8	CPR	
12	Crooked Lake Beach	0	8	8	CP/SUP	2018
13	Dahlia	0	8.1	8.1	NP	2008
14	Delta	0	3	3	NP	2016
15	Epiphany Pond	16	6	22	NP	
16	Erlandson Nature Center	64	3	67	CPR	2017
17	Kennedy	.5	5	5.5	NP	2013
18	Lions Coon Creek	25.3	10	35.3	NP/CP	2019 (scheduled)
19	Mallery	.1	3	3.1	NP	
20	Marshland	20	10.7	30.7	NP/CPR	
21	Mason	0	6.4	6.4	NP	2016
22	Mercy	.5	3.5	4	NP	
23	Moor	6	21.1	27.1	NP/AC	2015
24	Nelson	0	3.9	3.9	NP	2012
25	Parkside	8.6	4	12.6	NP/CPR	
26	Peppermint Stick	0	4	4	NP	2015
27	Pheasant Ridge	23.3	8	31.3	NP/CP	2016
28	Prairie Oaks	0	29	29	NP	2003

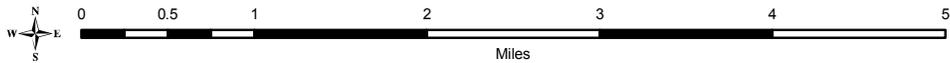
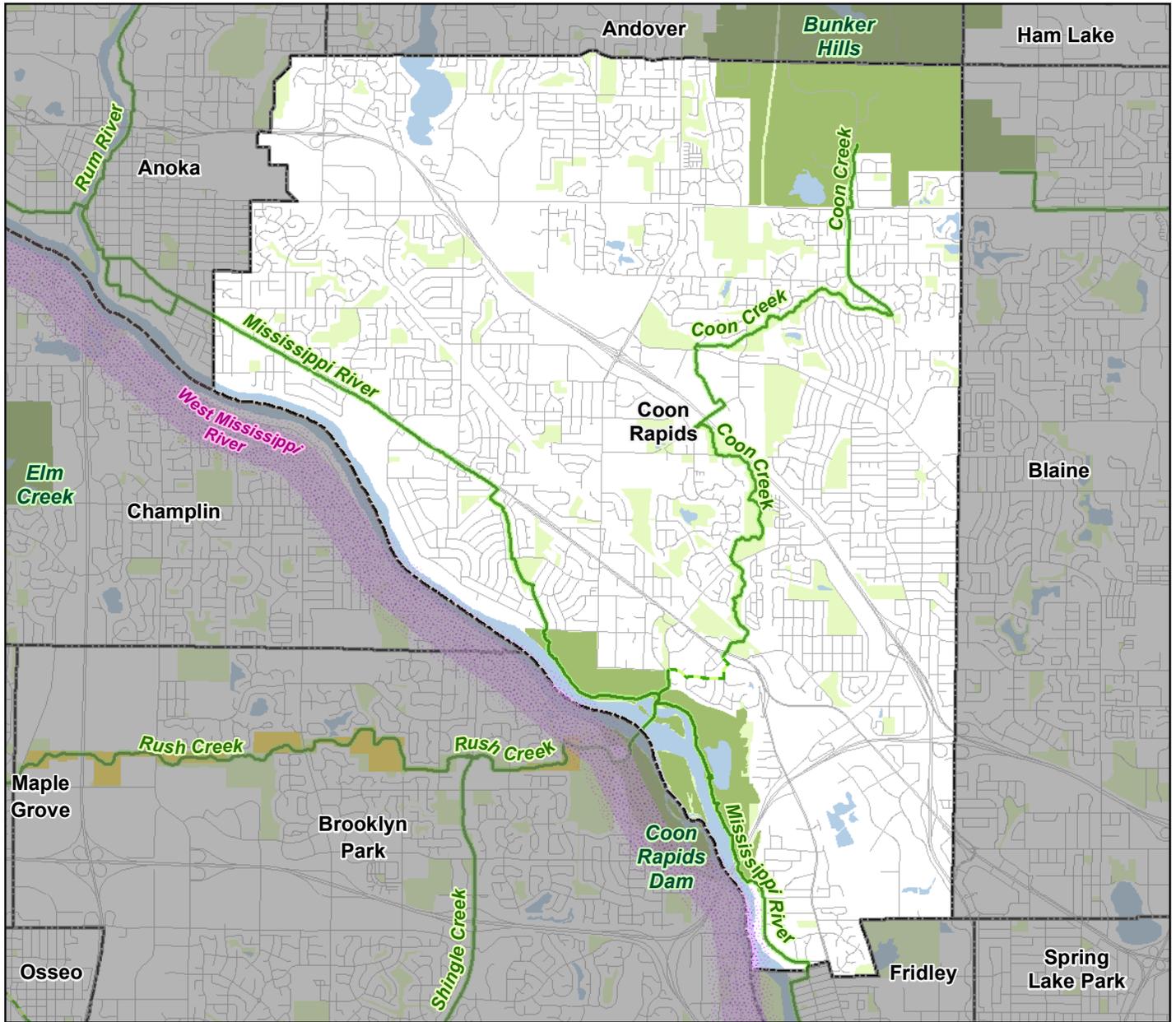
Name		Natural	Developed	Total	Classification	Last Major Improvement
29	Prospect	0	7.2	7.2	NP	2006
30	Reservoir East	0	3	3	NP	
31	Riverdale	0.0	5.0	5.0	NP	
32	Riverview	0	20.5	20.5	CP	2015
33	Riverview Reservoir	0	18.5	18.5	NP	
34	Riverwind	3	6.8	9.8	NP/SUP	2018
35	Robinson	12	0	12	CPR	2018
36	Rockslide	0	12	12	NP	2003
37	Sand Creek	15	58.5	73.5	AC	2017
38	Soccer Complex	5	35	40	AC	2017
39	Sunrise Ponds	0	2.7	2.7	NP	2015
40	Thorpe	.5	8	8.5	NP	2002
41	Thrush	2	2	4	NP	2004
42	Towerview	0	5	5	NP	
43	Trackside	0	4.3	4.3	NP	2018
44	Twin Field	3.5	3.5	7	NP	2001
45	Vineyard	4	3.5	7.5	NP	2017
46	Wilderness	73	0	73	CPR	
47	Wildwood	15.7	3	18.7	NP/CPR	
48	Wintercrest	0	16	16	AC	2017
49	Woodcrest	32	8	40	NP/CPR	2016
50	Woodland Oaks and Heights	158	3	18.8	NP/CPR	
51	Woodview	0	10	10	NP	2016
52	Bunker Hills Golf Course			350	SUP	
Bunker Hills Regional Park – Anoka County				1500	RP	
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park – Anoka County				450	RP	
Anoka-Ramsey Community College				≈100	S/P	
Coon Rapids High School/Middle School				57*	S/P	
Northdale Middle School/Eisenhower Elementary				57*	S/P	
Sand Creek Elementary				10*	S/P	
Mississippi Elementary				12*	S/P	
Morris Bye Elementary				9*	S/P	
Sorteberg Elementary				12*	S/P	
Hoover Elementary				24*	S/P	
Adams Elementary				10*	S/P	
L.O. Jacob Elementary				15*	S/P	
Hamilton Elementary				8*	S/P	
Epiphany School (Private ball fields)				4*	S/P	

* Open space portion of the site only.

These facilities are shown on the Existing Parks and Trails Map. Designated regional parks and trails are highlighted on the Regional Parks System Map.

MAP 6-1: Regional Parks System

City of Coon Rapids, Anoka County



Regional Parks

- Existing
- In Master Plan
- Planned Parks and Reserves

Regional Trails

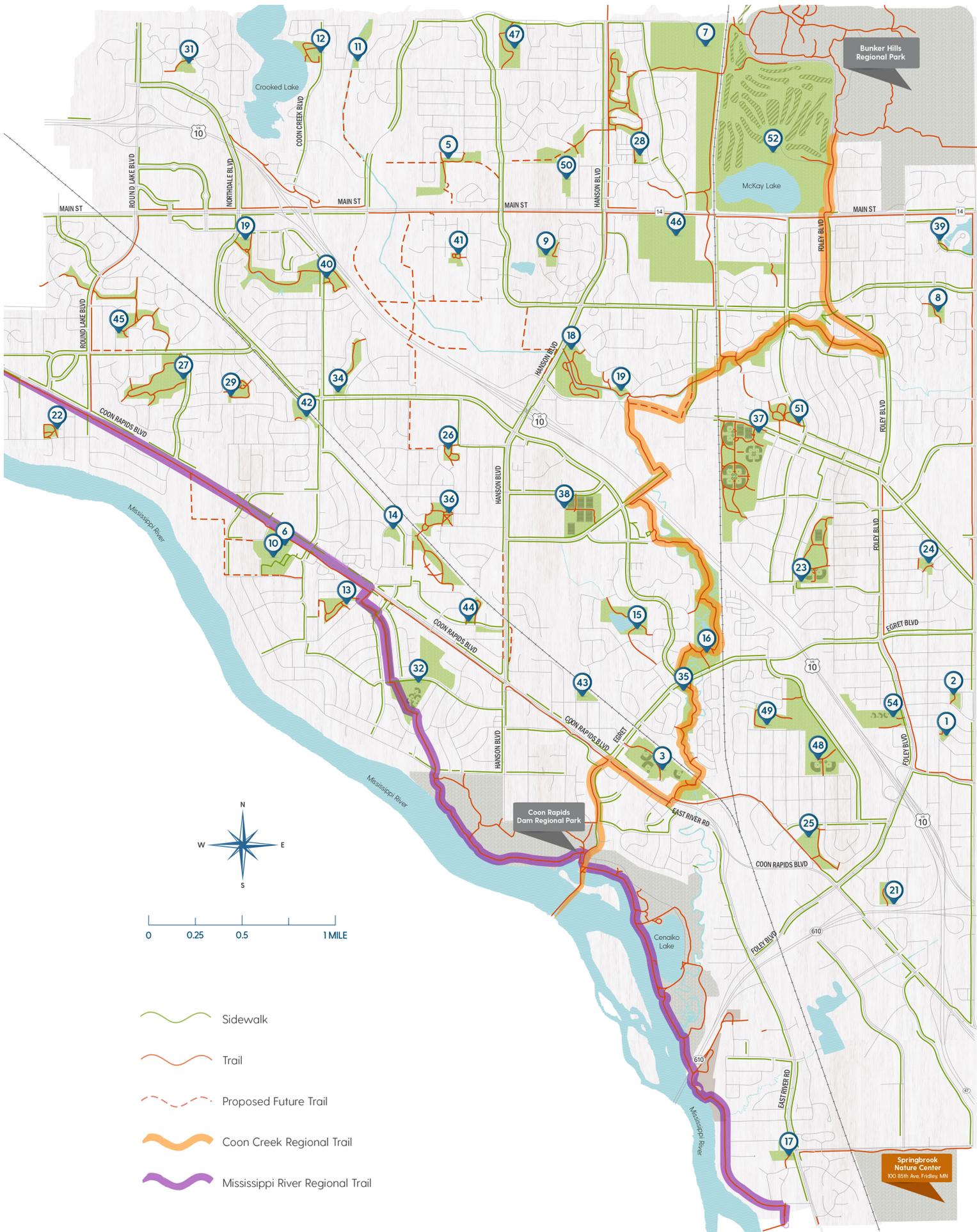
- Existing Regional Trails
- Planned Regional Trails
- Regional Trail Corridor Land

Regional Park Search Areas and Regional Trail Search Corridors

- Boundary Adjustments
- Search Areas
- Regional Trail Search Corridors
- Regional Trails - 2040 System Additions

- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- State Parks
- State Wildlife Management Areas (Publicly Accessible)
- Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA)
- Other Parks and Preserves
- Existing State Trails
- Street Centerlines (NCompass)
- Lakes and Major Rivers

MAP 6-2: Existing Parks and Trails



Natural Areas

Many of the natural areas in the City have been purchased by the City or some other governmental agency for parks or open space preservation. Several other natural areas have been developed. The Privately Owned Open Spaces Map (Map 6-3) shows the location of remaining privately owned open spaces in the City that have natural resource and ecological value.

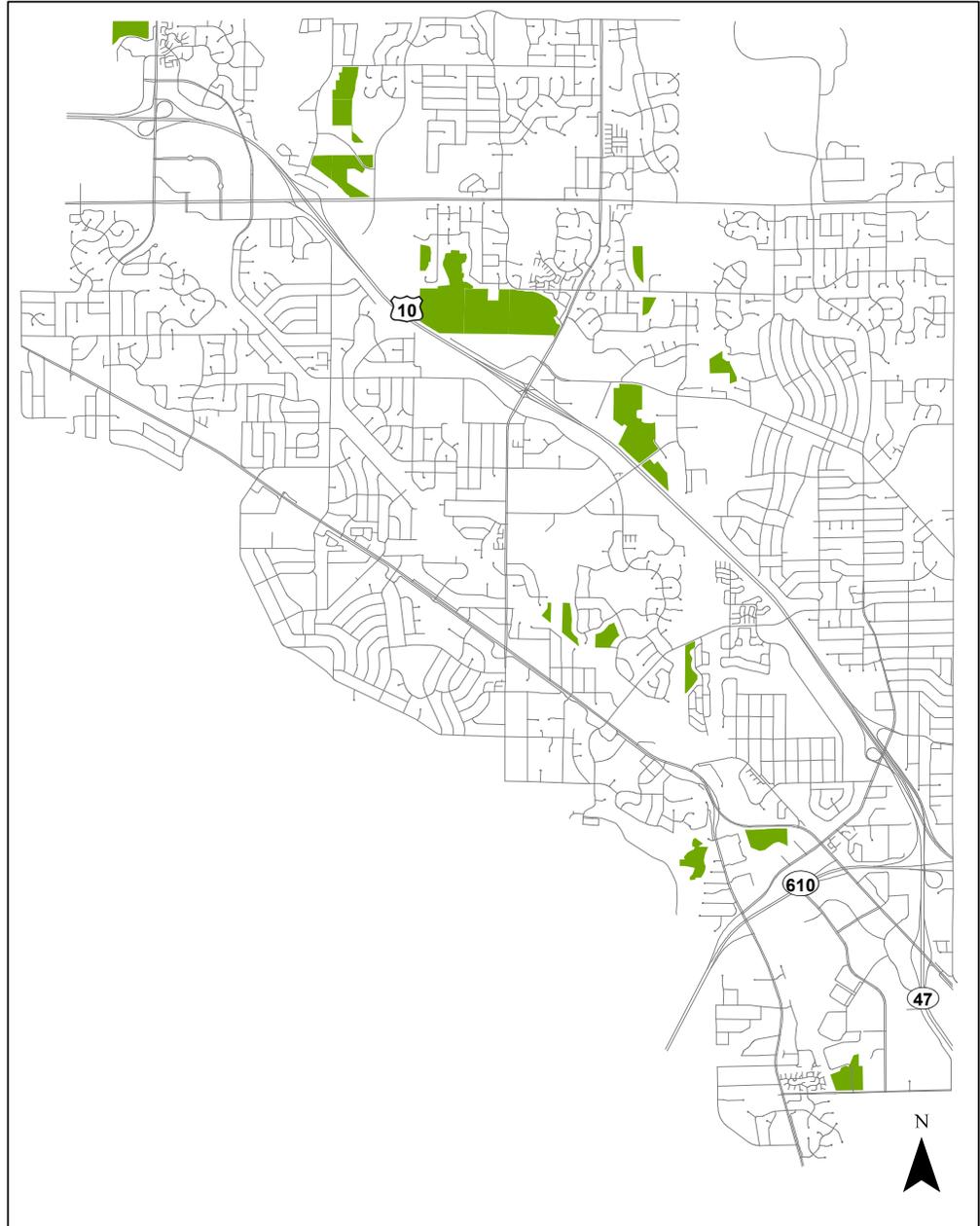
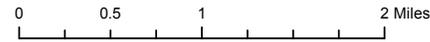
Protected Areas

Some of the natural areas shown on the Privately Owned Open Spaces Map (Map 6-3) are protected by federal, state, or Coon Rapids regulations. These include those areas of the City that are floodplains, shorelands, or wetlands. The Mississippi River Critical Area policies detailed in Chapter 8 of the 2040 Plan protect the Mississippi River and adjacent shorelands by requiring the review of new or additional development on land several blocks away from the river.



MAP 6-3: Privately-Owned Open Spaces

CITY OF COON RAPIDS



Trails

The *Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan Update* contains an extensive discussion of trails and their design standards. Table 6-3 summarizes the major trail segments in Coon Rapids and their current development status.

TABLE 6-3: Development Status

Segment	Status
Coon Creek Regional Trail	Largely complete; remaining segment to be constructed involves signalized crossing of Northdale Blvd. at Xeon St.
Coon Creek West Municipal Trail	upcoming priorities include improving the trail crossing at Northdale Blvd., sections through Lions Park and across Hanson Blvd., and sections along Coon Creek Blvd. and 128 th Ave.
Sand Creek Trail	Complete
Mississippi River Regional Trail	Significant progress has been made in recent years. Sections through Kennedy Park, near Adams School, and along 109 th Lane are priorities for completion.
Coon Rapids Boulevard Trail	Complete
Main Street (Northern Municipal Trail)	Continuous trail is complete; construct additional linkages through Woodland Heights/Bison Creek Parks.
Middle Municipal Trail	Complete south of Peppermint Stick Park; improve Hwy. 10 crossing and link to Coon Creek Trail.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

In order to address system needs, the City has adopted the following goals, objectives, and policies.

Goal #1: Park Functions

Establish, maintain, and promote parks and preserved natural areas for recreational uses that provide visual and physical diversions from the developed residential, commercial, and industrial environment, and as a means to maintain the character, ambiance, appearance, and history of the community.

Objectives:

- 1-1 Fulfill the present and future physical and psychological needs of residents and enhance the quality of life within the City with park land and natural resource areas.
- 1-2 Develop parks and natural resource areas and interconnected trail corridors that are significant factors in shaping future growth in Coon Rapids.
- 1-3 Emphasize orderly and sequential growth in a compact urban form that is in harmony with the natural environment.

Policies:

- 1-1 Use park land dedication policies and ordinances to require developers (of all land use categories) to contribute to park and trail acquisition and park redevelopment through land dedication and/or fees.
- 1-2 Acquire and develop parks, trails, natural resource areas, and related recreation facilities in accordance with the Parks and Trails Master Plan for the purpose of shaping the built form of the community and establishing a balance between urbanization parks, trail corridors, and natural areas.

- 1-3 Engage a diverse range of stakeholders in the decision-making process for developing, updating and maintaining quality parks and facilities.
- 1-4 Make a reasonable effort to eliminate all physical barriers that deter individuals from using existing or future parks and recreation facilities. Barrier-free design principles shall be implemented in accordance with accepted guidelines and laws.
- 1-5 Ensure consistency in design and maintenance procedures with accepted industry standards. Design and maintenance of all parks and recreation facilities shall emphasize high quality, user safety, and cost accountability.
- 1-6 The Parks and Recreation Commission and staff shall review and comment on all planned development matters that affect park land and trail corridor dedication, acquisition, and development.
- 1-7 Improve the overall park design quality throughout the system without all parks having identical elements. Efforts will be made to design parks so they entice individuals of all ages, races, and ability levels to use them.
- 1-8 Examine the concept of a community center facility that balances recreation and community needs and involves the appropriate community partners.
- 1-9 Continually evaluate budgets to align with ongoing maintenance and replacement needs and identify creative ways to fund projects.
- 1-10 Build partnerships with Anoka County, local schools, and neighborhoods on projects.
- 1-11 Identify partners to provide ADA accessibility and inclusion in parks.
- 1-12 Consider sustainability when making capital improvements and in operation and maintenance of park facilities, including energy efficient lighting and plumbing fixtures, rain gardens, recycling containers, and pollinator-friendly landscaping.



Efforts will be made to design parks so they entice individuals of all ages, races, and ability levels to use them.

Goal #2: Natural resources

Preservation and conservation of ecological systems and natural resources within the City.

Objectives:

- 2-1 Identify and preserve significant natural resources as open space and important components of the overall park system.
- 2-2 Enhance the character or appeal of the community through interconnected natural resource areas.
- 2-3 Emphasize the orderly and sequential growth within the community in a compact form in harmony with the natural environment.
- 2-4 Provide sustainable and desirable natural resource areas and ecological systems.

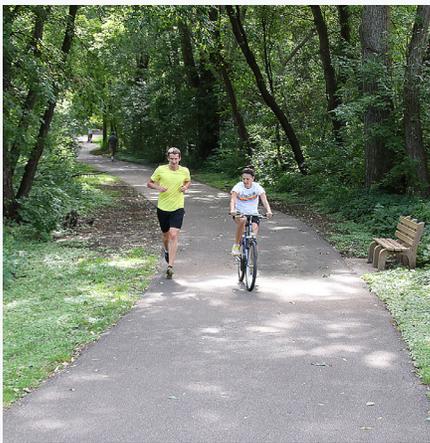
Policies:

- 2-1 Restore or manage natural resource areas identified in the Parks and Trails Master Plan to enhance and protect them.
- 2-2 Provide educational materials to residents so they can be informed about ecological issues and the importance of restoration and management programs and their role in protecting the City's natural resources and the natural character of their properties.
- 2-3 Consider setting aside natural resource areas through direct purchase, developer's agreements, conservation easements, or other means to preserve the natural character of the community. These areas shall be considered as additions to, rather than substitutes for, other types of park land.

- 2-4 Ensure that the City's wetland and shoreland management policies and practices will be consistent with accepted statewide standards.
- 2-5 Consider certification of the Bunker Hills golf course in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.
- 2-6 Promote water-wise and native landscaping.
- 2-7 Consider including community gardens, orchards, and pollinator plantings on City land, particularly in areas accessible to disadvantaged communities.
- 2-8 Consider adopting pollinator/monarch-safe policies in natural areas of City parks.

Goal #3: Trails

An interconnected trail and sidewalk system for transportation and recreation purposes and as a means to tie divergent parks and open space with the broader community.



The trail system shall accommodate a range of activities (e.g. walking, hiking, bicycling, in-line skating and cross country skiing).

Objectives:

- 3-1 Develop a trail system that emphasizes harmony with the built and natural environment.
- 3-2 Provide relatively uninterrupted pleasure hiking, biking, and other uses to and through the City's park system and developed areas.
- 3-3 Provide a well connected, comprehensive park and trail system with an emphasis on enhancing the recreational experience of the use. Also, a trail system connected to trails in adjacent cities and the county.
- 3-4 Maintain safe trail system where users are protected from urban developmental encroachment and associated vehicular traffic.

Policies:

- 3-1 Require developers to dedicate land for trails when the developed land contains an identified trail corridor. The developers will also be required to provide access from new subdivisions to those trails.
- 3-2 Develop trails in conjunction with future developments, parks, natural resource areas, greenways, and roadway projects to provide transportation throughout the City and for recreation purposes.
- 3-3 Develop the trail system, including tunnels under railroad tracks and overhead bridges over major transportation corridors, to minimize the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.
- 3-4 Require trail types, development standards, and general location to be in accordance with the Parks and Trails Master Plan. The trail system shall accommodate a range of activities (e.g. walking, hiking, bicycling, in-line skating and cross country skiing).
- 3-5 Provide trail support facilities as warranted (including trail signage and striping, benches, picnic tables, bridges, restrooms, parking, shelters, etc.).
- 3-6 Ensure trail design sensitive to the natural environment and character of the area it traverses.
- 3-7 Design trails to be accessible to all populations with varying abilities wherever feasible, practical, and appropriate given the specific setting.
- 3-8 Construct trails to require minimal maintenance and limit the opportunity for vandalism.
- 3-9 Provide adequate screening and buffering, where possible, along trail corridors to provide a physical and psychological separation between the trail and adjacent land uses.

- 3-10 Prohibit motorized vehicles on all trails unless required for maintenance and safety.
- 3-11 Promote the trail system through events and publications.
- 3-12 Develop plans for major trail connections and crossings.

Goal #4: Programs

Opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation activities and programs through effective, accessible, and inclusive recreation programs.

Objectives:

- 4-1 Support and compliment the efforts of local recreational providers in addressing the recreation and leisure needs of the diverse community including all races, ages, abilities, and underserved populations.
- 4-2 Support and encourage a wide range of recreation and leisure interests within the community.
- 4-3 Provide and maximize adequate facilities for programmed use on a fair and equitable basis to ensure that all individuals and groups receive equal access to facilities.

Policy:

- 4-1 Continually evaluate recreation programming to ensure it meets community needs and provide new programs based on gaps in service.
- 4-2 Develop strategic partnerships that are mutually beneficial to optimize opportunities and creatively use resources.
- 4-3 Invest recreation resources in people, programs, facilities and infrastructure to support a healthy community.
- 4-4 Reflect our community's diversity and changing demographics in our provision of services and programs.
- 4-5 Provide effective, timely and open communication channels for residents and business owners/ representatives to build awareness and promote programs and services.
- 4-6 Provide adequate staffing and organizational structure to align with community needs and desires.
- 4-7 Maintain strong communications with volunteer and athletic associations to support programming needs.
- 4-8 Integrate environmental education into outdoor space and programs where appropriate.
- 4-9 Use future recreation trends and forecasts to anticipate programming or facility needs.



