

# **PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Park and recreational land uses include nearly 25 city owned parks, open space and recreational areas. These land uses account for approximately 80 acres or 2.4 percent of the City's total acreage. The City's residents and businesses identify parks, trails and recreational facilities as valuable community resources that contribute positively to the quality of life offered in Belle Plaine. Recreation is viewed as an integral part of life, providing a necessary and satisfying change from the things we usually do and the places where we spend most of our time.

A community survey, comments from City staff, the Park Board and a "Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan" completed in April, 2005 as well as comments at public meetings underscore the importance of creating and sustaining parks, trails and recreational facilities. These comments are included within this chapter.

Providing quality recreational opportunities begins with proper planning. To assure adequacy and maximum usability, recreation areas and facilities shall be developed with regard for the needs of the people and the area they serve. Proper planning must take into consideration a number of factors, including but not limited to, location of existing recreational areas (i.e. proximity to the area served, separation from incompatible land uses), adequacy of existing facilities, site planning for the location of future facilities, access to current and future facilities, provisions for recreation programs, and financing, maintenance and management of existing and proposed parks, trails and recreational facilities.

This section shall:

1. Provide Park Classification;
2. Inventory Existing Park Facilities;
3. Discuss Trails and Pedestrian Ways;
4. Discuss Recreational Opportunities in the City;
5. Examine Existing and Future Park Facility Needs;
6. Review Community Input; and,
7. Establish tangible recommended goals and policies for future park, trail and recreation facilities and programs.

## **II. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS**

The City of Belle Plaine features a number of existing park and recreational facilities. Recreational facilities within the City can typically be described according to their type, population served and location.

The following terms and descriptions shall be used to classify existing and future recreational facilities:

'Neighborhood Parks' provide open space for passive recreation for all ages within a neighborhood, particularly for the elderly and families with young children. An ideal neighborhood park site is scenic or wooded and located a maximum of one-quarter mile, which is normal walking distance, from primary users. Suggested minimum size for this type of park is one acre. Site development should include sidewalk, benches, landscaping, and play features for preschoolers. Neighborhood parks should connect with trails, which connect to other parks and neighborhoods.

'Neighborhood Playgrounds' are usually provided in conjunction with education and institutional facilities and primarily serve the recreation needs of children ages 5 to 12. Individual neighborhood playground size is dependent on the types of activities it supports and the facilities it provides. Play features, ball fields, basketball and tennis courts, and open play fields are common components. The service area is highly variable, but it usually has a radius of one-quarter mile.

'Community Parks' typically serve several neighborhoods and are under municipal administration. Although size may vary, community parks are usually more spacious than neighborhood parks or playgrounds. In addition to the kinds of facilities provided at neighborhood parks, these parks may provide swimming pools, picnic areas, more elaborate play fields, restroom facilities and tennis courts. Community parks serve people of all ages and have an effective service area radius of one-half mile.

'City-wide Parks' may serve some or all types of a community's recreation needs. They can provide a wide range of activities for all age groups or may be very specific. In addition to some of the facilities provided by other types of parks, city-wide parks may contain an area for nature study, hiking and riding trails, pond fishing, spectator sports and numerous other activities. However, in many small communities, a city-wide park is sometimes designated as such not because of its size and/or variety of recreation facilities, but because it is the only park available to the community.

'Specialized Recreation Areas' may include, but are not limited to; golf courses, historic sites, conservancy area, linear trail, and floodplains. Most specialized recreation areas have limited active recreation value, are not developed as multi-purpose recreation areas, or are not always available for use by the public. Specialized areas are an important adjunct to a community and its park and open space program.

'Regional Parks' may include, but are not limited to, conservancy areas, trails, floodplains, hiking and riding trails, recreational fields, spectator sports, and fishing. Regional parks serve people of all ages and serve a regional population.

### **III. EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION INVENTORY**

There are over twenty (20) park and open space recreation areas in the City of Belle Plaine. Most of the parks are identified with signage which carries a unified theme, which assists in identifying the areas as municipal parks. Following is a listing of the park and recreational facilities existing in the City of Belle Plaine. Map 8-1 illustrates the location of said facilities and Table 8-1 includes an inventory within each:

- A. **Bird Sanctuary (South of Forest Street between Grove and South Willow St).** This specialized recreation area is approximately two blocks in area. The wooded area includes a steep ravine. This is a nature area not intended to provide active sporting or playground activities.
- B. **Century Park (West of CR 3 and along Century Street)** – Century Park was developed in conjunction with Chatfield on the Green development in 2005. This is a neighborhood park with the purpose of serving the area's residents. The park contains a gazebo/picnic area, benches, two sand volleyball courts and playground equipment. Off-street parking is available to patrons or they may walk to the park.
- C. **Chatfield Square (North of State Street between Elm Street and Linden Street)** –This is a one-acre neighborhood park which includes a half-court basketball area and playground equipment. There is no off-street parking or sidewalk or trail around the park.
- D. **Court Square (North of Court Street and west of Walnut Street)** – This community park includes a picnic shelter, playground equipment, benches and restroom facilities. The park is adjacent to the Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House, which was constructed in 1871 by S.A. Hooper, an early resident. Court Square is very visible from Highway 25, and is one of the first attractions to be noted when entering the city from the north. Additional landscaping could add the aesthetics of this park.
- E. **Creekside Park (North of Deer Creek Subdivision)** –Located in the north east side of the community, Creekside park is a neighborhood park for the area within Deer Creek Subdivision. This park includes playground equipment and a ½ court basketball court. The park could include a trail to provide a link with Deer Park.

- F. **Deer Park (Northwest of Deer Creek Subdivision)** – Located on the northeast side of the community, Deer Park is a large, unimproved specialized recreation area with a major focus on the natural resources of the area.
- G. **Fountain Park (North of Court Street and west of Cherry Street)** –This neighborhood park is adjacent to a manufactured home park and is just south of the Railroad and MN River Restoration Project of 1999. The park includes a softball field, playground equipment, a picnic shelter, restroom facility and off-street parking on the north side of the park. Sidewalks and/or trails are not in or adjacent to the park, but could enhance access to and within the recreational area.
- H. **Heritage Square (North of Orchard Street and west of Ash Street)** –This community park is located south of Highway 169. A number of amenities are included in the park such as a skate park, two picnic shelters, swing set and play equipment, baseball field, open area for soccer, etc. a basketball court, benches and a restroom facility. Off-street parking is available on both the north and south sides of the park, with a sidewalk around the perimeter and within the park. This is one of the community's newer parks.
- I. **Hickory Park (South of Orchard Street and east of CR 5/Laredo Avenue)** –This neighborhood park is located along Orchard Street, which currently serves as an east-west collector street in the community, and along the east side of CR 5, which is also a collector street. The park is relatively flat and at this time undeveloped. The Park Board is in the planning process to add amenities such as an ice rink and warming house.
- J. **Ice Rink (South of Prairie Street and east of Market Street)** – The ice and hockey rinks are located to the east of the high school, and adjacent to the tennis courts and municipal swimming pool. A warming house is available during winter months for residents using the facilities.
- K. **Meadow Park (East of CR 5/Laredo Ave and north of Meadow Circle)** – This neighborhood park connects with the South Creek Trail. Amenities in the park include a football field, soccer fields, basketball court and off-street parking.
- L. **Municipal Swimming Pool (South of Prairie Street and west of Willow Street)** – The municipal swimming pool is adjacent to other recreational facilities including the tennis courts and ice/hockey rinks. It is located south of the Junior High School and east of the High School. The pool has been maintained and updated to include spiral slides, lounge chairs and a sitting area. A large grassy area is outside of the fenced-in pool area. Swimming lessons and open swimming are provided during summer months.
- M. **Prairie Park ( North of Park Street and west of Ash Street)** –Is a neighborhood park which includes limited play equipment, a softball field, picnic shelter and restroom facilities. The park is accessible through a gravel drive and parking area.
- N. **Prairie Restoration- School (along South Street)** – This specialized recreation area was a joint venture between the Park Board and School District. The preservation of Hills Thistle and prairie grasses in this area is the primary goal, along with educational opportunities for students.
- O. **Settlers Park (North of Church Street and east of Highway 15)** –This neighborhood park includes the Episcopal Church of Transformation which was constructed in 1869 and cemetery. The church is on the National Register of Historic Places. The park does not include off-street parking. A sidewalk is located along Highway 25, but is not on the other three sides of the park or within the area.

- P. **South Creek Trail** – This eight-foot wide paved trail system runs along the south side of South Street, connects to Veterans Park, provides pedestrian and non-motorized access under Highway 169, through Emma Krumbes Apple Orchard, extends through O'Brien Subdivisions east across Kittson Boulevard. It is proposed that this trail will connect to a trail system along Kittson Boulevard, extend north to connect to a trail or walkway across the Highway 169/CR 64 interchange and connect to Creekside Park and future MN River Regional Trail.
- Q. **Tennis Courts (North of Park Street and east of Market Street)** – Four tennis courts are located to the east of the current high school, adjacent to the municipal swimming pool and ice/hockey rinks. On-street parking is utilized for the tennis courts which are used by the school district's tennis team, physical education classes and the general public.
- R. **Townsend Park (downtown west of Meridian Street and south of Main Street)** – This downtown green space includes a fountain, benches and a number of plantings. Townsend Park, provides an area for community gatherings, arts in the park, etc.
- S. **Union Square (South of Prairie Street and north of Park Street)** – This community park is located west of the high school. The park includes four horseshoe pits, playground equipment, baseball diamond, picnic areas, restroom facilities and off-street parking. This park has served as the location for the annual Belle Plaine Bar-B-Que Days as well as been the site for amateur state baseball tournaments.
- T. **Veterans Park (South of South Street and east of Meridian Street)** – This neighborhood park is located adjacent to Highway 169 and CR 3. A helicopter and number of American Flags pay tribute to the number of Veterans which have served our country. The park is adjacent to the trail system and underpass under Highway 169.
- U. **School Facilities** - In addition to the City owned parks, there is also a number of school facilities and playgrounds that are utilized for recreational activities. The City and the School District have entered into a joint powers agreement that assures dual use of facilities whenever feasible. Although these are not "municipal parks", the amenities are available to serve the public at times in which school or extra curricular activities are not underway. The facilities, especially the athletic fields, serve a much larger population than the corporate limits. Following is a brief description of other school recreational facilities:

**Our Lady of the Prairie Catholic School (South of State Street and west of W. Cedar)**- A neighborhood playground area includes swings, climbing apparatus, slides and two basketball hoops. The restroom facilities are located inside the school.

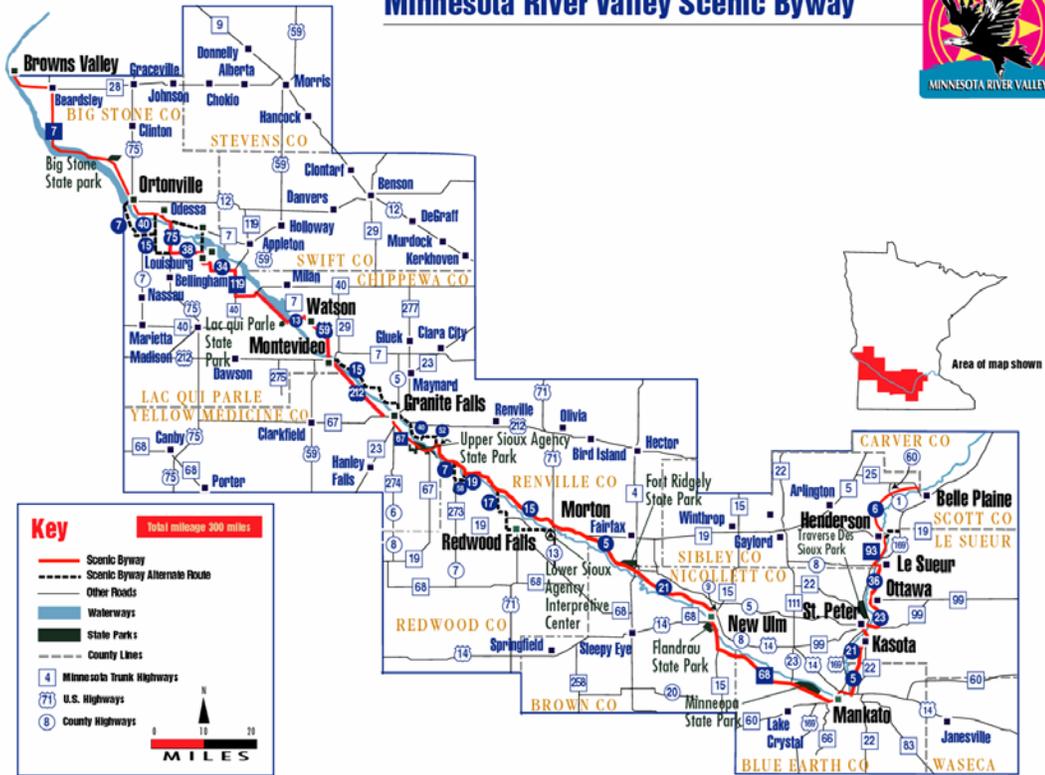
**Elementary School (Market Street)** – The Elementary School includes a neighborhood playground area, basketball hoops and an open area for soccer. Restroom facilities are located inside the school.

**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran School (N. Eagle Street and Church Street)** – This neighborhood playground includes playground equipment, two basketball hoops in the parking lot and indoor restroom facilities.

- V. **Regional/County Parks.** There are a number of regional park and recreational areas near and adjacent to the City of Belle Plaine.

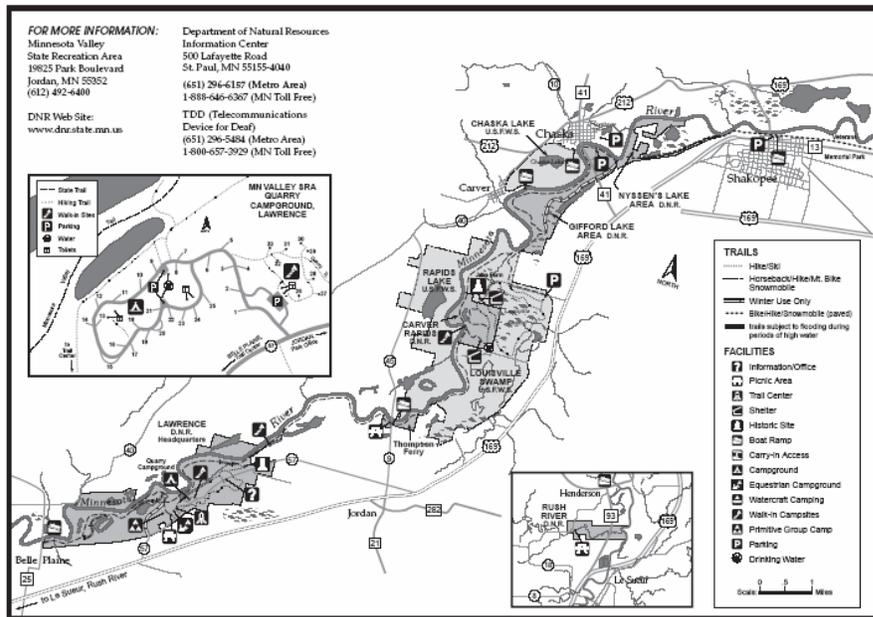
**The Minnesota River Scenic Byway** was designated in 1996. The east section of this route features a scenic route along the Minnesota River, beginning at the junction of State Highway 25 and Sibley County Road 6, just north of the Minnesota River north of Belle Plaine. The route continues south through the cities of Henderson, Le Sueur and Mankato, and then extends northwest through the cities of New Ulm, Morton and Redwood Falls.

# Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway



Source: The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway, <http://www.byways.org>

**The Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area** is located near Shakopee and extends south to Belle Plaine. This includes 35 miles of trail along the Minnesota River. The state park features oak forests, savannah and sand dunes. Campgrounds are located along the Minnesota River, just north of the City of Belle Plaine. A map, provided through the MN Department of Natural Resources follows:



**Future Regional Parks and Trails.** Scott County is planning two regional facilities which impact the City of Belle Plaine, both of which are identified in the Metropolitan Council's Regional Open Space Policy Plan. Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve is a proposed 1900-2000 acre park along the bluffs of the Minnesota River. The Southern Scott Regional Trail is proposed to extend from Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve north along the Minnesota River through Belle Plaine, north to Jordan and southeast to Cedar Lake Regional Park, north of New Prague.

Map 8-5 illustrates the Blakeley Regional Park Search Area. The County's adopted *Interim Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan* suggests this Search Area in Blakeley Township, along the Minnesota River for a potential regional park.

**TABLE 8-1 PARK INVENTORY**

<b>Belle Plaine Park Inventory</b>	<b>Park Classification</b>	<b>Trail Areas</b>	<b>Baseball/Softball</b>	<b>Nature Areas</b>	<b>Horseshoe Pits</b>	<b>Tennis Courts</b>	<b>Soccer Fields</b>	<b>Basketball Courts</b>	<b>Football Field(s)</b>	<b>Volleyball Courts</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Swimming</b>	<b>Pleasure Skating Rink</b>	<b>Hockey Rink</b>	<b>Warming House</b>	<b>Archery Range</b>	<b>Skateboarding</b>	<b>Restroom facilities</b>	<b>Handicap Access</b>	<b>Picnic Area</b>	<b>Parking (off-Street)</b>
Bird Sanctuary	SRA	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Century Park	NP	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes 2	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chatfield Square	NP	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes 1/2	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes -PT	No
Court Square	CP	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Creekside Park	NP	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1/2	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Deer Park	SRA	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Fountain Park	NP	No	SB	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Heritage Square	CP	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hickory Park	NP	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ice Rink	SRA	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes IND	No	No	No
Meadow Park	NP	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Municipal Swimming Pool	SRA	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
South Creek Trail	SRA	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Prairie Park	NP	No	SB	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Prairie Restoration-School	SRA		No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Settlers Park	NP	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Tennis Courts	SRA	No	No	No	No	Yes 4	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Townsend Park	NP	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Union Square	CP	No	BB	No	Yes 4	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Veterans Park	NP	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Some	No	No

<b>Belle Plaine Park Inventory</b>	Park Classification	Trail Areas	Baseball/Softball	Nature Areas	Horseshoe Disc	Tennis Courts	Soccer Fields	Basketball Courts	Football Field(s)	Volleyball Courts	Playground	Swimming	Pleasure Skating Rink	Hockey Rink	Warming House	Archery Range	Skateboardin	Restroom facilities	Handicap Access	Picnic Area	Parking (off-Street)
Elementary School	NPL	SW	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes IND	Some	nO	Yes
Our Lady of the Prairie School	NPL	SW	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes IND	Some	No	Yes
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran School	NPL	SW	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes IND	Some	No	Yes

CP= Community Park IND= Indoor  
PR=Portable Restroom  
SW=Sidewalk

NP= Neighborhood Park  
NPL=Neighborhood Playgrounds  
CWP= City Wide Park

SRA = Specialized Recreation Area  
RP= Regional Park

SB= Softball Field  
BB= Baseball Field

LL = Little League Field  
PT=Picnic Tables only

#### IV. PATHWAYS

Pathways within communities and connecting to larger regional pathways are often classified by their purpose, type of improvement and location. The following table includes a description of six types of pathways and identification of the pathways within Belle Plaine which are included in each category.

Classification	General Description	Description of each type	Existing Facilities
Park Trail	Multi-purpose trails located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas. Focus in on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single purpose hard –surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters.  Type II: Multi-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters.  Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard or soft surfaced.	Century Park, Heritage Square Park, Hickory Park, Meadow Park, Provence on the River park, Veterans Park
Connector Trails	Multi-purpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent R.O.W (e.g. old railroad R.O.W).  Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrian or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road R.O.W.	South Creek Trail
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.  Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.	None
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	DNR Trails along the MN River in the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area
Cross Country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	DNR Trails along the MN River in the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multi-purpose with hiking and all-terrain biking. These trails are developed so conflict can be controlled.	DNR Trails along the MN River in the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area

## **B. Pathway Design**

Trails or pathways should be designed with the following goals in mind (1) Safety – protect non-motorized and motorized users (depending on the type of trail) from adjacent or crossing vehicular traffic, (2) Linkages - provide links between local parks and recreational areas and regional trail systems, (3) Natural Environment – when designing the trail system protect the natural environment and natural features, and (4) Continuity – provide continuous trail systems with as few interruptions in user movement as possible.

Following are design guidelines suggested by the National Recreation and Park Association for the various types of pathways:

### **1. Park Trails**

Type I: These separate or single purpose trails are typically ten (10) feet wide and hard surfaced for pedestrians, bicyclists and/or in-line skaters.

Type II: These multi-purpose trails typically include a natural buffer; such as shrubs, trees or changes in topography, from adjacent uses on either side of the trail. A 50-foot right-of-way to accommodate the buffers is common with a ten foot paved surface.

Type III: Nature trails are generally six to eight feet wide and are soft surfaced. Trail grades vary depending on the topography of the area in which they are located. Interpretive signage is common along nature trails.

### **2. Connector Trails**

Type I and II: These separate or single/purpose hard surfaced trails are designed for pedestrians or bicyclists/in line skaters. If designed for pedestrians only, a six to eight foot width is common. If designed for bicyclists/in-line skaters, a ten (10) foot paved surface is recommended. The trails may be developed on one or both sides of the roadway and may include one or two-way traffic. The trail is typically separated from the roadway with a boulevard, grass and/or plantings.

### **3. On-Street Bikeways**

On-Street Bike Lane: Bike Lanes are typically designed as a five-foot lane adjacent to the driving lane. On-street parking may occur between the on-street bike lane and the curb or edge of the road. In essence each side of the roadway is divided into three sections (1) driving lane, (2) on-street bikeway and (3) on-street parking.

On-Street Bike Route: This bicycle route is typically designated so with signage. On-Street Bike Routes are typically paved shoulders along roadways.

### **4. All Terrain Bike Trails:** Design and length vary depending on the topography in the area. These trails are generally a part of a larger regional park or natural resource area.

### **5. Cross Country Ski Trails:** The design of the cross-country ski trail is dependent upon its intended use. The traditional diagonal skiing typically includes a packed groomed trail with set tracks. Skate-skiing designs include a wider packed and groomed surface. The length of the trails may vary. Cross-country ski trails may be designed to be used as equestrian trails during summer months.

### **6. Equestrian Trails:** These trails, designed for horseback riding, typically are designed with woodchips or grass as a surface. They are located in larger parks and natural resource areas where conflict with other trail users may be avoided. The length of an equestrian trail varies but is generally looped.

### **C. Trails and Pedestrian Ways.**

The City currently has a sidewalk policy in place. It requires sidewalks of at least five feet in width on both sides of a arterial street, unless a trail is designated by the Comprehensive Plan. Adjacent to collector streets sidewalks are required on one side of the street. Specifically sidewalks are required on both sides of TH 169, TH 25, CSAH 3 and CSAH 6. Sidewalk is also required on both sides of the following collector streets: Main, Meridian, State, Laredo, Century and Orchard. Sidewalks and/or trails on local streets are determined based upon the location of attraction centers such as schools, churches and playgrounds.

As a part of the Comprehensive Planning process a survey was mailed to all utility bill customers. Included was a question relating to the need for additional sidewalks and trails. Based on 352 surveys, 231 respondents or 65% noted they felt the City should require developers to install sidewalks and/or trails in all new subdivisions while 122 or 35% noted they felt the City should require developers to install sidewalks and/or trails only along collector streets or major transportation routes.

The South Creek Trail is currently an 8-foot wide bituminous trail which starts at O'Brien Parkway and extends approximately 2.7 miles. This greenway connects to a trail to the west which traverses through the Emma Krumbrees Apple Orchard and connects to an underpass under Highway 169, continues north past Veterans Park and connects to a trail along South Street. The trail is signed for non-motorized use. The trail is plowed in the winter which allows for year around use. If intended to be used for in-line skating and/or bicycle traffic the City should consider increasing the width to ten feet to meet recommended standards for these uses.

Future connections of municipal parks and trails along collector streets are also recommended. A Current and Future Greenway Trail plan is attached as Map 8-4. The City should consider trails that create a circle or loop around the outer growth area of the City, link city parks and take advantage of scenic areas such as the Minnesota River, creeks and ravines. Proposed trails are intended to be development driven and the design of the trail shall take into consideration the protection and preservation of natural environment. The Trail Plan allows for the future connection to the regional park in Blakeley Township to the south and Jordan to the north. The City should coordinate future trails to connect with county trails and greenways.

### **V. RECREATION AND FITNESS.**

There are a number of coordinated and uncoordinated recreational opportunities in and around Belle Plaine.

**Community Education and Recreation Programs** are coordinated by Belle Plaine School District's Community Education Program. Examples of youth and adult recreation programs include; but are not limited, to ice skating, drivers education, dance team, softball and baseball, soccer, basketball, aerobics, volleyball, computer courses, horticulture classes, extended campus continuing education programs through Minnesota University- Mankato, firearm safety classes, star watching, piano classes, quilting, etc.

**Health Clubs/Fitness Centers.** Open to the public through memberships, three health and fitness centers were available in Belle Plaine at the time of this Comprehensive Plan update. The fitness centers/clubs offers a variety of exercise machines, free weights and various health and wellness classes.

**Golf Course.** Valley View Golf Course is a 6,300 yard, par 71, 18-hole championship golf course. It was constructed in 1991 and is available for open golfing, memberships, lessons and league and clubs.

**Boat Landing/Access to the Minnesota River.** Along with the reconstruction of the Highway 25 bridge, located just north of Belle Plaine, a new boat landing is being constructed, which will provide boat access to the Minnesota River.

**Dance Studio.** At the time of this Comprehensive Plan update, a dance studio announced its plans to open a facility in Belle Plaine.

## VI. EXAMINATION OF EXISTING AND FUTURE PARK FACILITIES

The City's combination of recreational activities, near by golf course and existing parkland and open space provide residents and visitors with a variety of recreational opportunities. Map 8-2 indicates areas served by existing recreational facilities. As indicated parks are located so as to serve the needs of most residential areas of the City, however additional facilities would benefit residents in the southwest portion of the City. Additional park and recreational facilities and athletic fields are planned at this time in conjunction with the proposed new school site, south of South Street.

**A. Search Areas.** Map 8-3 indicates park search areas. As noted in the park classifications, depending on the type of park, the service area will vary. The attached map illustrates a need for a park in the southeast section of the City, near Kittson Boulevard. The City has a concept plan for this area and has plans for a new park "Bluff Ridge Park", as the city develops to the southeast. Two parks are recommended within Planning District 3, one on the west side of Highway 169, and one on the east side. A park is suggested in the southwest section of the city, or District 4, as this area develops. The Golf Course is located in District 7, but is a specialized recreation area. The Park Board should consider a neighborhood park in this district as development continues as well as in residential areas in District 8.

**B. Accessibility.** <sup>1</sup>The American With Disability Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. The law requires local and state governments, places of public accommodation and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA statutes affect the City of Belle Plaine and other local and state park and recreation facilities in the following ways:

- Newly constructed buildings (after January 26, 1993) must be constructed to be readily accessible.
- Renovations or alterations occurring after January 26, 1992 to existing facilities must be readily accessible.
- Barriers to accessibility in existing buildings and facilities must be removed when it is "readily accessible". This includes the location and accessibility to restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones.

Other requirements include, but are not limited to:

- One accessible route from site access point, such as a parking lot to the primary accessible entrance must be provided. A ramp with a slope of no greater than 1:6 for a length of no greater than two feet may be used as a part of the route. Otherwise a slope of maximum 1:12 is allowed.
- One accessible public entrance must be provided.
- If restrooms are provided, then one accessible unisex toilet facility must be provided along an accessible route.
- Only the publicly used spaces on the level of the accessible entrance must be made accessible.
- Any display and written information should be located where it can be seen by a seated individual and should provide information accessible to the blind.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, James D. Meres, Ph.D., CLP and James R. Hall, CLP. © 1996, National Recreation and Park Association

Parks which are developed with items such as parking lots, swimming pools, tennis courts and basketball courts should have routes which are accessible. Nature parks or areas with limited development should have the minimum of accessible routes to the site. The National Park Service provides design guidelines for accessible outdoor recreation.<sup>1</sup>

As the City redevelops parks it will be important to include ADA standards in the design. Installation of curb cuts and pathways within the parks, designation of handicap parking in the parking lots, remodeling of restroom facilities to provide a handicap accessible stall in each of the men's and women's facilities and pathways to shelters and recreational amenities has been recommended as a method to achieve accessibility goals.

## VII. RECREATIONAL FACILITY STANDARDS

As parkland is acquired either through dedications or purchase, it is important to plan space according to the desired recreational contents. In existing parks, it is important for the Planning Commission and City Council to be aware of space requirements and orientation recommendations to determine if it is feasible to include the item(s) within the park. Following are facility standards for a number of recreational activities:

Unit	Land Required	Recommended Size & Dimensions	Recommended Orientation	No. Units Per Population (National standards)	Service Area	Existing Facilities	Surplus/ Deficit / Standard (Local Standards)
Baseball Diamond	3 to 3.85 acres	1. Official: Baselines-90' Pitching dist-60.5' Foul lines-min 320' Center field-400'+ 2. Little League: Baselines-60' Pitching Dist.-46' Foul lines-200' Center field-200'-250'	Locate home plate so the pitcher is not throwing across the sun, and batter is not facing sun. Line from home plate through pitchers mound to run east-northeast.	1/6,000	Approximately ¼ to ½ mile radius  Part of neighborhood complex. Lighted fields part of a community complex	Heritage Square, Union Square, Prairie Park.	Ok per standard  Plans include an additional 2 baseball fields with a future high school construction project.
Softball/ Youth Diamond	1.5 to 2 acres	Baselines 60' Pitching dist- 45' men, women- 40',  Fast pitch field radius from plate – 225'  Slow pitch 275' men, 250' women	Locate home plate so the pitcher is not throwing across the sun, and the batter is not facing sun. Line from home plate through pitchers mound to run E/NE	1/ 1,500	Approximately ¼ to ½ mile radius	Fountain Park (1) and Prairie Park (1)	With the elementary school, under construction at this time, four new softball fields are being constructed.  OK
Tennis Court	7,200 sq. ft. / court. 2 acres/ complex	36' x 78' with 12' clearance on both ends	Long axis north-south	1/2000	¼ to ½ mile radius. Best in batteries of 2 to 4. Located in neighborhood/c community parks or near a school	Battery of four east of high school	Sufficient until 8,000 in population. Plans include an additional 8 tennis courts with a future high school construction project.
Basketball	0.25 to 0.59 acre  Youth: 2400 to 3036 sq. ft  High School: 5040 to 7280 sq. ft	Youth: 46' to 50' x 84'  High School 50' x 84'	Long axis north-south	1/2000	¼ to ½ mile radius  Outdoor courts in neighborhood/ Community parks. Indoor as part of schools	½ court Chatfield Square, ½ court Creekside Park, Heritage Square and Meadow Park. Plus three school areas	Ok per standard.

Unit	Land Required	Recommended Size & Dimensions	Recommended Orientation	No. Units Per Population	Service Area	Existing Facilities	Surplus/ Deficit per Standard
Volleyball	4,000 sq. ft	30' x 60' with a minimum clearance of 6' on all sides	Long axis north-south (outdoor)	1/2000	½ to 1 mile	2 courts at Century Park	Deficit per standard. Immediate need for one more
Football Field	1.5 acres	160' x 300' with a minimum of 10' clearance on all sides.	Long axis northwest or southeast	1/3000	Approx. 2 mile radius	Union Square and Meadow Park	Ok per standard to 6,000 population. Plans include an additional football field with a future high school construction project.
Soccer Field	1.7 to 2.1 acres	195 to 225' x 330' to 360' with 10' clearance on all sides	Long axis northwest or southeast	1/3000	Approx. 1 to 2 mile radius	Heritage Square and Meadow Park, unofficial at elementary school	Ok per standard to 6,000 population.
Ice Arena	2 acres	Rink 85' x 200' (min. 85' 185') Addt. 5000. 22,000 sq. ft to include support area	Long axis is north-south (outdoors)	1/20,000	15 to 30 minute travel	Outdoor ice and hockey rinks	Based on standard – ok The community feels this will be a need/desire in the near future.
Warming House	Variable	Variable	Variable	1/rink area	1 hocking rink/skating indoor 2 outdoor rinks & house outdoor	One warming house for the ice rink and hockey rink	If additional rink is added to Hickory Park- need for warming house too.
Picnic Area	Variable	Variable	Variable	1/5000	2 mile radius	Century Park, Chatfield Square, Court Square, Fountain Park, Heritage Park, Prairie Park, Union Square.	Ok

Unit	Land Required	Recommended Size & Dimensions	Recommended Orientation	No. Units Per Population	Service Area	Existing Facilities	Surplus/ Deficit per Standard
Play Equipment	0.5 acre	Variable	Variable	1 acre/park	2 to 3 mile radius	Century Park, Chatfield Square, Court Square, Creekside Park, Fountain Park, Heritage Sq., Prairie Park and Union Square	Some updating recommended, development of Hickory, Creekside Parks needed.
Sliding Hill	2-4 acres	Variable	Variable	1/7,500	1 mile radius	None	Future need
Archery Range	0.65 acre	300' length x min. 10' between targets. Roped, clear area on side of range min. 30' . Clear space behind targets min. 90' x 45' with bunker	Archer facing north + or - 45 degrees	1/7,500	30 minute travel time. Part of a regional complex	None	Possible future need
Community Center	15-25 acres	Varies	Varies	1/20,000	--	None	The community feels this will be a need/desire in the near future.
Horseshoe courts	0.1 acre			1/2000	--	Four at Union Square	Upgrades needed to existing
Swimming Pool	1 to 2 acres	Teaching- min. 25 yards x 45' even depth of 3-4 ft. Competitive- min. 25 m x 16m. Min. of 25 sq. ft water surface per swimmer. Ratio of 2 to 1 deck to water	No recommended pool orientation but care must be taken in locating life stations in relation to afternoon sun	1/10,000	150 person capacity 15 minute travel	One Along Prairie Street and Willow Street	Meets standards to population of 10,000
Off-Street Parking	300 S.F Per Car	Typically 9' x 20 with a 20' driving lane	Variable	NP: 8-12 cars CWR: 25-100 cars SR: 25-100 cars	NA	CWPs and CPs provide parking. None at NPs.	May need off street parking at new parks and some NPs
Toilet Facilities	Varies	Per building code	Variable	1 double unit per park	1 park	Union Square, Fountain Park, Heritage Square,	Deficit per standard

\* Derived from the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration Standards with local standards applied.

## VIII. COMMUNITY INPUT IN PARKS AND RECREATION

- A. Park Land Dedication Ordinance.** The City has adopted parkland dedication requirements within the Subdivision Ordinance. The Ordinance currently requires 10% of the gross area of all property being subdivided shall be dedicated for parks, playgrounds, greenway trail, recreational areas, or public open space. This should be updated to address “buildable land.” The park dedication is in addition to the property dedicated for streets, alleys, drainage ways, pedestrian ways or other public ways. Storm water ponding areas may be incorporated into a park but is not considered as part of the park dedication requirement. The City has the option of collecting fees in lieu of land.
- B. Park Board.** The City has appointed a five member Park Board with, if desired, two Council persons acting as ex-officio and up to two alternates. The Park Board meets monthly to plan for the development and redevelopment of Belle Plaine’s park and greenway system. The Park Board is a recommending body to the City Council that provides on-going public input on the system. Specific duties of the Park Board are outlined in Chapter 2 of the City Code and consistent with Minnesota Statutes, 471.15 to 471.19.
- C. Public Input.** In conjunction with the updating of this Plan, a survey was distributed with utility bills to 1,932 customers. 356 were returned for an 18.4% response rate. Results indicate residents and businesses place an equal emphasis on the importance of small neighborhood parks and larger regional parks as well as on the acceptance of land versus fees-in-lieu of land with new subdivisions. A majority, over two-thirds, feel the city should obtain a broad range of park and open space areas with less than one-third supporting the acceptance of land only for active recreational uses.
- 84 (24%) Develop more, smaller parks used by neighborhood and community residents **OR**  
91 (26%) Develop a few larger parks that are used by all City and area residents/tourists.  
180 (50%) Both
  - 68 (19%) Accept money from developers and fix up and/or enhance existing parks and recreational areas **OR**  
47 (13%) Accept the donation of additional parkland in developing areas.  
241 (68%) Both
  - 247 (73%) Obtain a broad range of different types of open space (e.g. park land for active recreational uses, wooded areas, wetlands, natural areas...) **OR**  
91 (27%) Accept only open park land for active recreational use and encourage conservation easements for other natural areas.

Other comments received on survey forms included suggestions for additional bike trails, upgrading or maintenance of existing parks versus focusing on new developments, removal of weeds, consideration of an indoor pool/recreation center, an additional park in Farmer’s Ridge and use of sidewalks versus trails.

## IX. MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The proper care and management of park and trail facilities will encourage park/pathway use, improve the quality of life in Belle Plaine and enhance the visual quality of neighborhoods and the City as a whole. Maintenance of the park system is currently coordinated through the City’s Public Works Department with additional temporary full-time and part-time summer help. The department also assists with park duties and street functions.

Park maintenance tasks may occur on a daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and/or weather related basis. These jobs include, but are not limited to:

Litter and Garbage Clean-up	Mowing and Trimming	Fertilizing Turf
Preventative Equipment Maintenance	Moving Tables and Benches	Special Event Preparation
Equipment Repair	Trail Maintenance	Snow Removal
Chemical Application	Facility Repair and Maintenance	

## **X. FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Several resources are available to assist the City of Belle Plaine in providing adequate parks, trails and facilities for residents. Following is a list of typical sources.

1. Park Dedication/Fee In-Lieu of Parkland Dedication Requirements for land acquisition
2. User Fees (rental of shelters, etc)
3. Volunteer hours/labor, such as Boy Scouts
4. Donations by private individuals, civic organizations, organized groups, etc.
5. Grants available through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
6. Property taxes

The City budgets for operational expenses through its annual budget process. The City currently utilizes user fees, donations from organizations and individuals, grant programs, park dedication land and fees and the general tax levy to cover expenses relating to parks. The City has established a Park Memorial Program which accepts gifts and memorials for park benches, trees, flag poles and picnic tables. The City does not have a specific capital improvement plan for long-range capital improvements to the park system. Maintenance of parks is included in the general fund budget, while park dedication fees are tracked in the 205, park dedication fund. The City should consider developing a capital improvement plan for future park development/updates and trail extensions.

## **XI. RECOMMENDED GOALS AND POLICIES FOR PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION**

### **Parks and Open Space Plan**

The City adopted a "Park and Open Space Plan" in 2005, with the following vision statement resulting,

"The Belle Plaine "Beautiful Prairie" Park and Open Space Plan create a green infrastructure system that enhances the quality of life for current and future generations. Parks incorporate a diversity of design to meet neighborhood and community-wide recreational needs, celebrate historic sites and landscapes endowed with the community's character, and serve youth, families and older residents. Natural open space is protected, restored and managed. Open space areas from the Minnesota River into the bluff land and prairie areas are linked by greenways, habitat areas, natural open space, parks, trails and the regional park and trail system." To accomplish this vision, the following policy statements were developed:

#### **Park and Recreation Policy Statements.**

1. The City of Belle Plaine will enhance its green infrastructure through natural resource protection and management.
2. The City of Belle Plaine will enhance its green infrastructure by cooperating with the other governments, agencies, and communities with land use interest or authority around Belle Plaine.
3. The City of Belle Plaine will carefully and efficiently expand its park and open space system to meet the needs of its growing population base.
4. The City of Belle Plaine will sustain its parks, trails, open space areas, and other green infrastructure well into the future.

5. The City of Belle Plaine will provide its residents and visitors with a range of recreational and sports facilities.
6. The City of Belle Plaine recognizes the importance of private property rights and synergy between green infrastructure and property values.

**Recommendations.** In addition to the Park and Recreation Policy Statements, the following recommendations have been developed, through this Comprehensive Planning process:

**1. Maintain and Improve Existing Park Systems**

The City of Belle Plaine contains approximately 80 acres of property in parkland and the Greenway/trail category of land use. This figure does not include the Golf Course in the growth boundary. It is important to note that the City has ample park space to meet the immediate needs of the community, and for the next few years. The City should consider renovations/updates to Court Square, Hickory Park, Fountain Park, Deer Park along with new parks to service growing areas. The City should also continue to expand the Greenway to provide the linkages necessary to the existing park systems.

**2. Maintain Quality Park Dedication Standards through the Subdivision Ordinance**

The City of Belle Plaine currently has park dedication standards as part of the subdivision ordinance and should continue to evaluate these standards to assure that they are adequately addressing the needs of the park system through developer dedication.

**3. Develop a Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan for the Park System**

The City of Belle Plaine through its Park Board should develop a five year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the existing and future park system. The Capital Improvement Program would outline the types of equipment and other amenities necessary to the Park System, the cost of such items, and the year in which the City is projecting to fund such improvements. This CIP should then be included in the overall Capital Improvement Program for the City.

**4. Acquire Park and Open Space in the following areas of the City**

The following areas have been identified as future growth areas for Municipal Parks (see attached map 8-3):

1. Planning District #4, east side of the city.
2. Planning District #4, southwest side of the city.
3. Planning District #7, south of the golf course
4. Planning District #8, on the east side of the city both north and south of CR 64

**5. Continue to add segments to the Greenway Trail System**

Efforts should be made to continue to add segments to the Greenway either directly or via a secondary sidewalk system so that City parks are linked together. The attached map, 8-4, shows the concept for projected Greenway areas. A trail or sidewalk along the south side of Court Street should be investigated to connect Fountain Park, the Bird Sanctuary and Court Square. The City should consider increasing the width to a 10-foot wide bituminous trail if it is intended to be used for bicycle and/or in-line skating. Proposed trails are intended to be development driven and the design of the trail shall take into consideration the protection and preservation of natural environment. Coordination with Scott County should occur to ensure linkages are planned.

**6. Plan for future management and maintenance of Park System**

Along with capital planning, the Park Board and City should plan for the on-going maintenance and management of the Park and Recreation System. Currently the Public Works Department manages the system. As new parks are added, additional employees may be required. The City may also wish to investigate creating a Park and Recreation Department to coordinate park and community activities.