

# Chapter 6

## PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

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# PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

*Utopia would mean a park - some large, some small - every four or five blocks. – THOMAS HOVING*

## What This Element Will Do

This plan element guides the development of parks, trails, and recreation opportunities in Belle Plaine consistent with regional plans and Thrive 2040. The foundation of this element is a belief that parks, trails, and recreation opportunities are not luxuries but, rather essential to the health of our City.

This element will: examine existing infrastructure, evaluate existing conditions, and establish policies and goals Belle Plaine will commit to considering, analyzing, and implementing.

## What Drives This Element

We believe and ample evidence confirms access to parks, open spaces, and amenities generate direct and indirect benefits for the public. Park, recreation, open space, and trail systems grow the local economy and attract businesses, workers, and investment. Parks increase property values, positively impact community physical and social health, provide environmental benefits, and retain wildlife habitat. Parks, trails, and recreational opportunities improve quality of life, livability, and sense of place.

We are devoted to creating and sustaining beautiful, inspiring, and accessible spaces on our beautiful prairie. We will plan, provide, and care for resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, suitable for all ages and abilities. We will nurture, care for, define, and build systems to enrich present and future generations. We will strive to be good stewardship of our natural resources, to connect the community through trails, to work with community partners to provide meaningful programming, and to maintain sustainable funding sources.

## Existing Resources

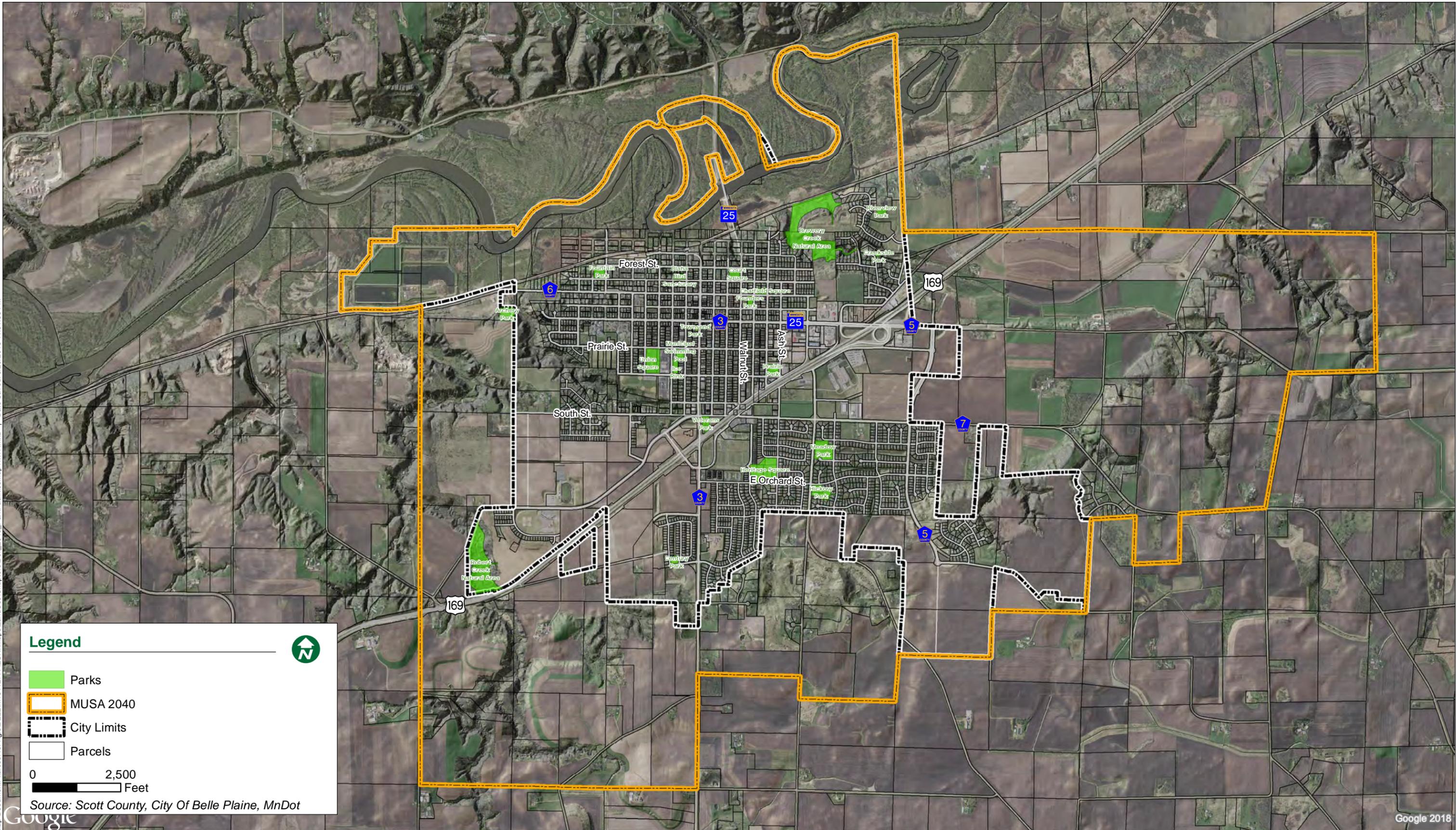
Belle Plaine has over 100 acres of dedicated parkland including 13 active parks, three historic/passive parks, five natural parks/open spaces, and one platted park to be developed in the future. Belle Plaine has created more than 18 miles of trail and just under 18 miles of sidewalk. Following are a park/amenity inventory and maps of existing park locations, existing and planned trails, and existing and planned sidewalks.

## Existing City Parks

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) have developed park and trail system standards-based guidelines to serve as spatial and functional guidelines for communities to use as they develop their park systems. The following is a list of proposed park classifications including Level of Service (LOS) most relevant to Belle Plaine's needs. It is important to note that these standards are general guidelines. In addition, it is noted more than one classification may occur within the same site, for example a playground within a community park.

Figure 6.1 summarizes park classifications and general attributes of each classification. Table 6-1 inventories existing facilities by class and amenity. Map 6-1 illustrates facility locations.

Map 6-1



**Legend**

- Parks
- MUSA 2040
- City Limits
- Parcels



0 2,500  
Feet

Source: Scott County, City Of Belle Plaine, MnDot

Map Document: \\arcserver1\gis\BELL\M15112777\ESRI\MapServer\Chapter6\Belle\_2040\_ParkFacilitiesMap11x17.mxd | Date Saved: 3/29/2018 11:31:58 PM

Figure 6.1

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table			
Parks and Open Space Classification			
Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>	Provides open spaces for passive recreation for all ages within a neighborhood, particularly for the elderly and families with young children. Should include sidewalk, benches, landscaping, and play features for preschoolers. Should have connectivity to trails and to other parks and neighborhoods.	Ideally 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 is one acre.
<b>Community Park</b>	Typically serves several neighborhoods and are under municipal administration. In addition to the kinds of facilities, 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.	Although size may vary, community parks are usually more spacious than neighborhood parks or playgrounds.
<b>Specialized Recreation Area</b>	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.	Variable.
<b>Natural Resource Area</b>	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
<b>Special Use</b>	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable.

## Existing Park Inventory

Table 6-1

NAME OF PARK	Park Class	Park Acreage	Trail Areas	Parking (off street)	Access-able	Archery Range	Baseball/ Softball	B-ball Courts	Football Fields	Hockey Rink
Archery Park	SRA	3.4	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Blahe Bird Sanctuary	NRA	2	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Brewery Creek Natural Area	NRA	29	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Century Park	NP	1	SW	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Chatfield Square	NP	1	No	No	No	No	No	1/2	No	No
Court Square	CP	2	No	Yes	Partial	No	No	No	No	No
Creekside Park	NP	5	No	No	No	No	No	1/2	No	No
Founders Park	SU	2	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Fountain Park	NP	2	No	Yes	Partial	No	SB	No	No	No
Heritage Square	CP	11.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Hickory Park	NP	3.4	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ice Rink	SRA	.40	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Meadow Park	NP	5.6	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Municipal Swimming Pool	SRA	1.3	SW	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Prairie Park	NP	2.1	No	Yes	No	No	SB	No	No	No
Robert Creek Natural Area	NRA	21	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
South Creek Trail	SRA	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Townsend Park & Festival Plaza	SU	.40	SW	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Riverview Park	NP	1	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Union Square	CP	4.7	No	Yes	Partial	No	BB	No	No	No
Veterans Park	SU	1.8	Yes	No	Partial	No	No	No	No	No

## Existing Park Inventory - Continued

Table 6-1

NAME OF PARK	H-shoe Pits	Nature Areas	Play-ground	Picnic Area	Restroom Facilities	Skate-boarding	Soccer Fields	Swim-ming	Tennis Courts	V-ball Courts	Warming house
Archery Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Blaha Bird Sanctuary	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Brewery Creek Natural Area	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Century Park	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (2)	No
Chatfield Square	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Court Square	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Creekside Park	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Founders Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Fountain Park	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Heritage Square	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Hickory Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ice Rink	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Meadow Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Municipal Swimming Pool	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Prairie Park	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Robert Creek Natural Area	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
South Creek Trail	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Townsend Park & Festival Plaza	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Riverview Park	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Union Square	Yes (4)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Veterans Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

## Existing School Facilities

In addition to the City owned parks, there are a number of school facilities and playgrounds available to the Belle Plaine community.

- Belle Plaine Public Schools:
  - Chatfield Elementary: neighborhood playground with slides, swings, and activity stations.
  - Oak Crest Elementary: neighborhood playground with slides, swings, and activity stations.
  - Other: skating (figure skating and hockey; Market Street), football/track/tennis (Oakcrest), softball complex (Oakcrest), and ballfields/track/open space (Park Street).
- Our Lady of the Prairie Catholic School: neighborhood playground area includes swings, climbing apparatus, and slides.
- Trinity Evangelical Lutheran School: neighborhood playground includes playground equipment and two basketball hoops in the parking lot.

## Existing Trails and Sidewalks

Connectivity can be described as how people link to their destinations. As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase allowing more direct movements between destinations. Good connectivity provides convenient access to key destinations; but excellent connectivity actually discourages dependence on automobiles by making local trips more convenient and pleasant on foot/bike versus car. Destination 2040 prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist linkages as a means of positively impacting sense of community, personal health, and alternative forms of transportation furthering sustainability goals.

Excellent pedestrian/cyclist connectivity begins with understanding the purpose of various facilities, understanding the existing system, and future connections. To those ends, Figure 6.2 summarizes trail classifications and general attributes of each classification. Map 6-2 illustrates the locations of existing and proposed sidewalks and trails.

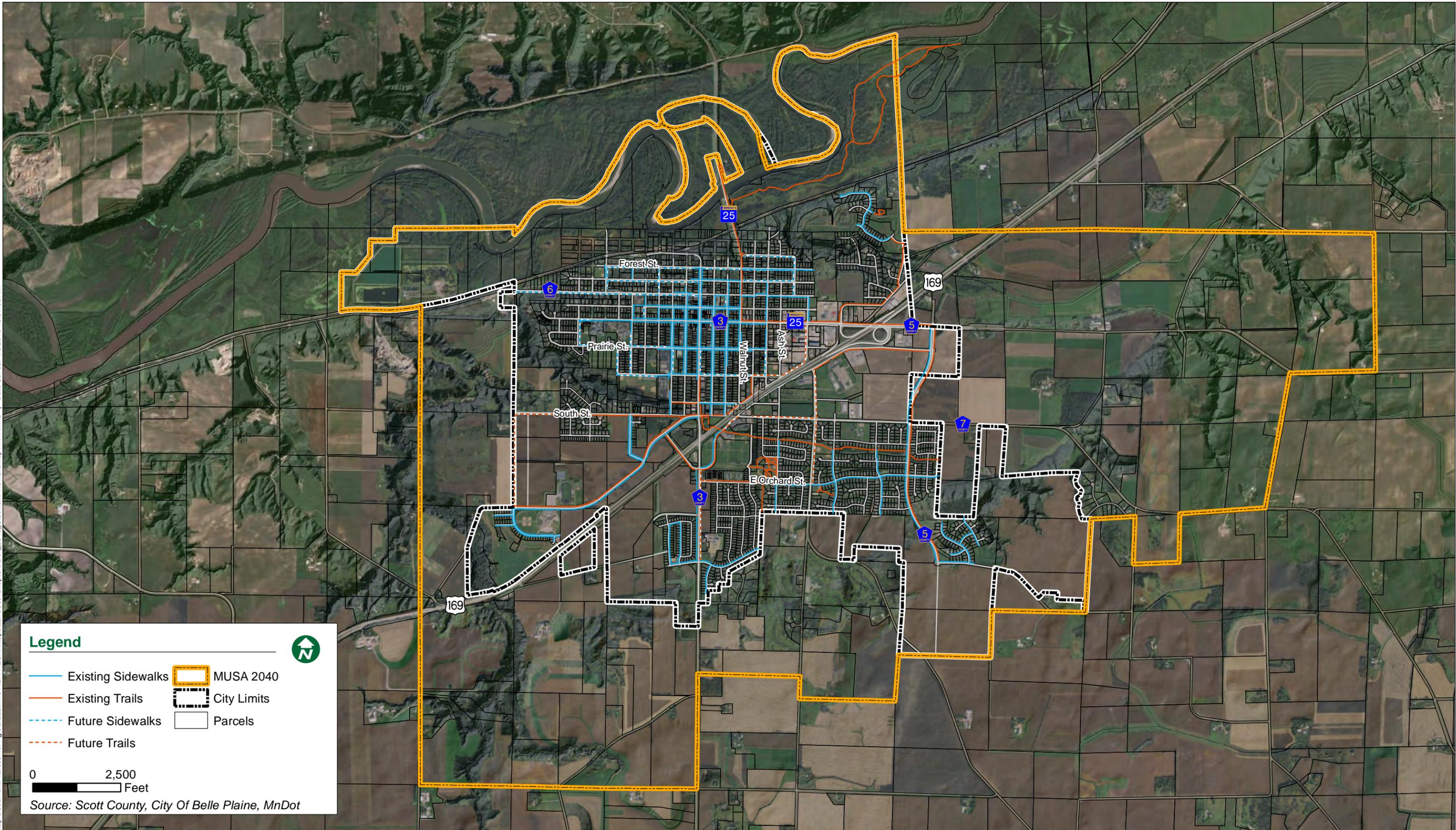
Map 6-2

## Recreation Opportunities/Facilities

Organized recreational opportunities are provided locally primarily by the City and Belle Plaine Public Schools. Belle Plaine Community Services is a collaborative effort between the city and school district and provides recreation and sports programs for youth, adults, and seniors.

Belle Plaine Community Education is a primary source for recreational programming and operated by Belle Plaine Schools. Belle Plaine Schools provide robust community education and enrichment programming. Sample offerings include:

- Preschool Pals uses the State Early Learning Standards as a base curriculum. In addition, students are supported by Reading Corps and other curricular tools. Daily activities include large and small group time, music, and motor movement, art, technology integration, snack, and story time.
- Kids Company provides before and after school care for children aged Pre-K – 6th grades in an environment that is safe, enjoyable, and caring while supporting children’s individual educational and social development needs.
- Early Childhood Family Education.
- Coordination of various associations including, but not limited to, fast pitch, traveling baseball, pond hockey, and junior volleyball.



**Legend**

- Existing Sidewalks
- Existing Trails
- Future Sidewalks
- Future Trails
- MUSA 2040
- City Limits
- Parcels



0 2,500  
Feet

Source: Scott County, City Of Belle Plaine, MnDot

- Family enrichment programming which varies by season and is coordinated with regional partners including adjacent public school districts, Scott County, and Three Rivers Park District. Winter examples include a Nordic Ski Club, maple syrup tours, and family snowshoeing.
- Youth enrichment programming which varies by season. Sample activities include pop-up art classes, craft making, story-telling, and special events/shows.
- Youth recreation including open gym, athletic/skill development (football, soccer, hockey, softball, baseball), and special event programming.
- Adult enrichment including arts (mosaics, painting), cooking, special interest (flower arrangement, gardening, quilting, and senior driving classes).
- Adult health and fitness including pickleball, adult sports leagues, yoga, palates, dance, weight-lifting, strength and conditioning, and indoor walking.
- Driver education for youth seeking driver’s licenses.
- Special events, day-trips, and excursions.

In addition to programming offered by public entities, private schools and for-profit health clubs/fitness/wellness centers offer a variety of recreational programming, access to health/fitness/wellness activities, and social interaction.

Figure 6-2

<b>Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table</b>	
<b>Pathways Classification</b>	
<b>Classification</b>	<b>General Description</b>
<b>Park Trails</b>	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.
<b>Connector Trails</b>	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.
<b>On-Street Bike-ways</b>	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 bike-way 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.
<b>All Terrain Bike Trails</b>	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.
<b>Cross Country Ski Trails</b>	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.
<b>Equestrian Trails</b>	These trails, designed for horseback riding, typically are designed with wood chips 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.

## Regional/County Facilities

### *Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area & Minnesota Valley State Trail*

The Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area (SRA) preserves part of the Minnesota River Valley. The MVSRA extends from near Shakopee south to Belle Plaine.

The multi-use Minnesota Valley State Trail parallels the Minnesota River within the SRA. The section of trail nearest to Belle Plaine is natural surface and extends from Belle Plaine to Chaska.

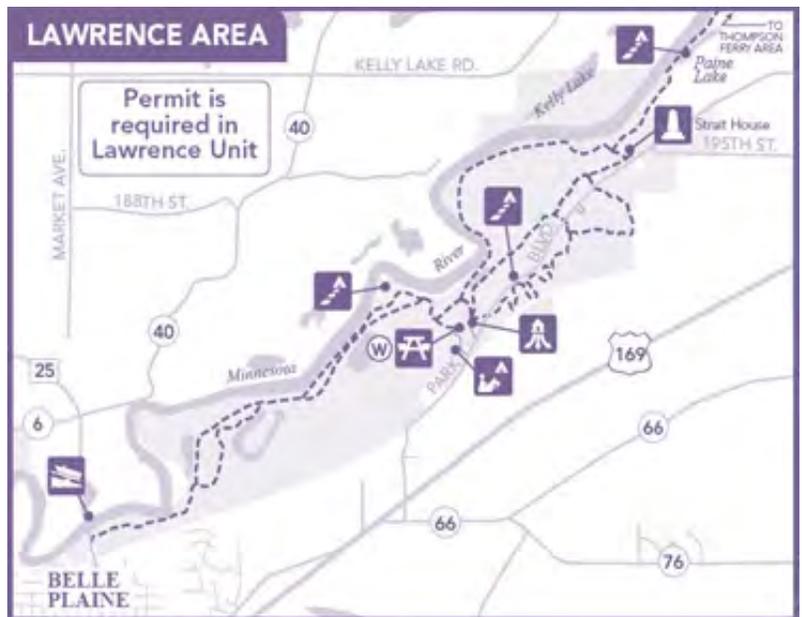
The SRA includes wetlands, floodplain forest, and blufftop oak savanna. The area is used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and snowmobiling. Campgrounds are located along the Minnesota River, just north of Belle Plaine. A boat launch is located at the Highway 25 river crossing in Belle Plaine.

### *Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge*

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1976 to provide habitat for a large number of migratory waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species threatened by commercial and industrial development, and to provide environmental education, wildlife recreational opportunities, and interpretive programming for Twin Cities residents.

The refuge is part of a corridor of land and water stretching nearly 70 miles along the Minnesota River, from Bloomington to Henderson, Minnesota. Comprised of more than 14,000 acres, the refuge has multiple units, offering a variety of free outdoor recreational experiences for individuals and families.

Segments of the refuge bookend the Minnesota Valley SRA in close proximity to Belle Plaine. Segments of the refuge under agreement are located just west of the City.



## *Southern Scott Regional Trail Search Corridor*

Scott County future plans include a regional trail traversing the City. At this time, the regional trail search corridor travels through Spring Lake Township, Cedar Lake Township, Helena Township, Sand Creek Township, Jordan, St. Lawrence Township, Belle Plaine, and Blakeley Township.

The future trail is intended to connect Cleary Lake Regional Park, Doyle-Kennefick (Future) Regional Park, Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park, Spring Lake Regional Trail, and Blakeley Bluffs (Future) Park Reserve.

Development of a master plan for the Southern Scott Regional Trail is reportedly six to ten years in the future.



## *Blakeley Bluffs (Future) Park Reserve*

Scott County approved a park acquisition master plan for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve in 2012. The plan includes approximately 2,400 acres east of Blakeley. The plan calls for:

- Preservation of the scenic, natural and cultural qualities of the Blakeley Bluffs and Minnesota River Valley area
- Future opportunities for regional outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, canoeing/kayaking, cross country skiing, and camping
- Wildlife habitat enhancement and water quality improvement projects
- Developing partnerships to offer environmental and cultural resource education programs and activities
- Creating economic growth opportunities through outdoor recreation and tourism that could mirror a “Little Lanesboro” in Blakeley

An acquisition master plan including a potential boundary and high level vision for the park has been placed into effect. The acquisition master plan differs from a development master plan in that it does not guide or define specific development or activities. Scott County staff indicate a development plan specifying amenities and infrastructure may be considered in six to ten years. At this time, the future park reserve is considered to be in an ‘acquisition and stewardship’ phase, meaning it is not yet open for public use. The County’s approach to park land acquisition is to purchase from willing sellers and to consider acquisition of lands that may be lost forever if not purchased now rather than to actively pursue the purchase of any lands within the park boundaries.



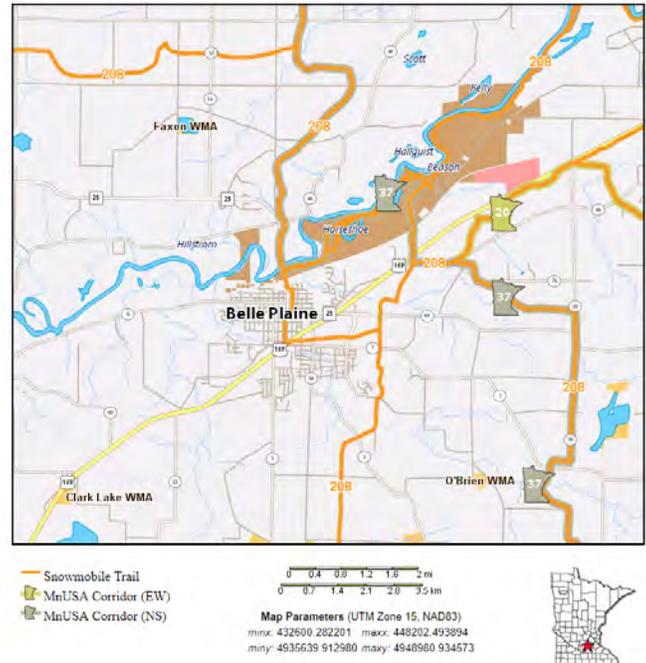
## Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway was designated in 1996. The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program is a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities.

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway highlights a wide variety of landscapes, history, agriculture, and culture. Scenic vistas include hardwood forests, 3.8-billion-year-old granite outcrops, and lush prairie grass open spaces. State and local parks, museums, and historic sites offer recreational opportunities and vivid stories of prairie life.

### Snowmobile Trails

Belle Plaine is connected to an extensive network of trails through state-supported grant-in-aid trails. Abundant opportunities are provided for snowmobile enthusiasts.



## Resource Evaluation

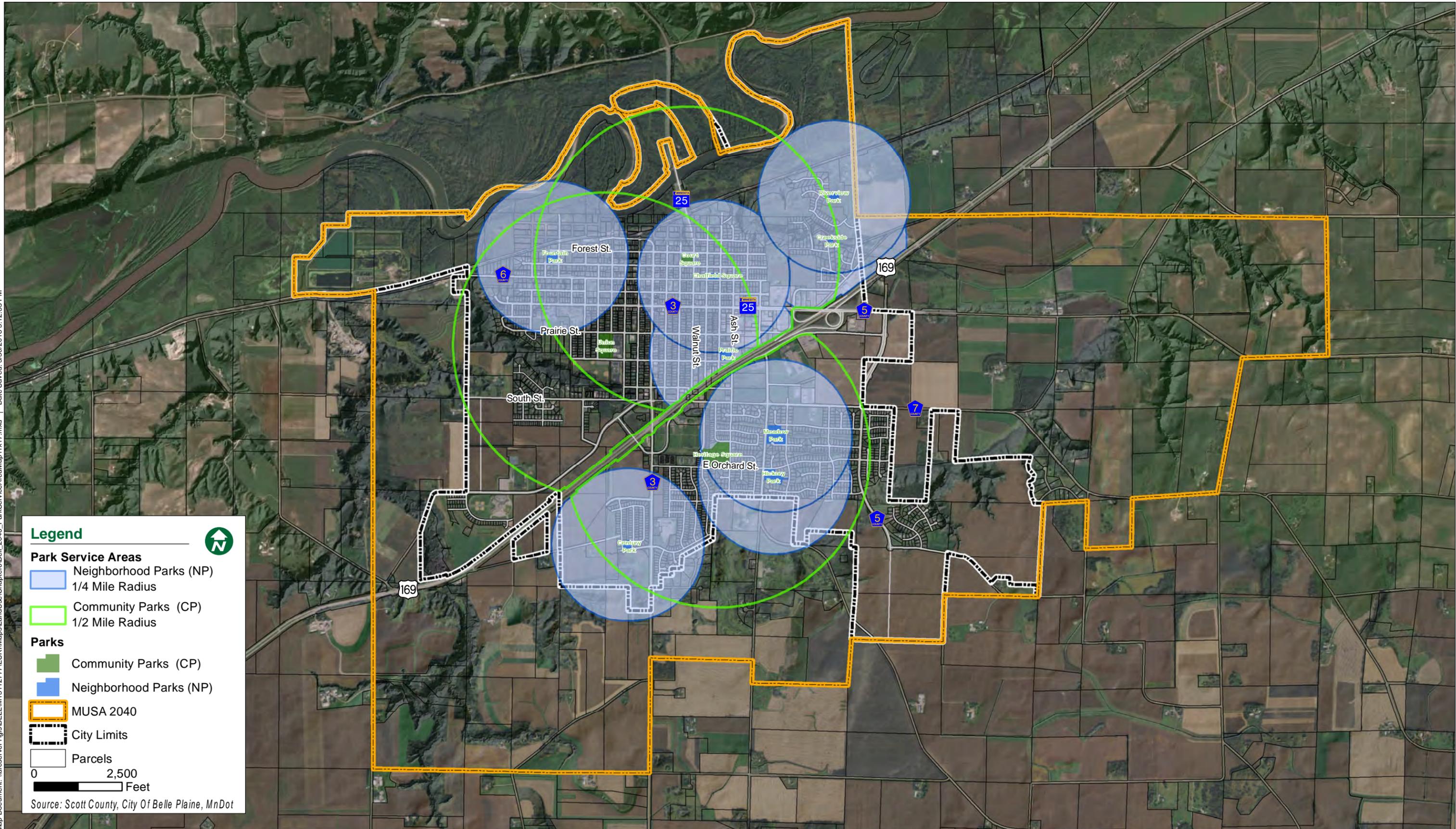
Various metrics can be employed to generally ascertain adequacy of existing park and trail system components. Metrics from statistical standards to outcome-based standards may be employed. For simplicity, most pertinent metrics are employed in *Destination 2040*. In most cases, outcome based standards such as quality of life, economic development, and sustainability are not included in this analysis as they are extremely important aspirations, but difficult to quantify in a small jurisdiction. Therefore, outcome-based standards are addressed in goal and policy statements.

## Volume and Distribution of Parks

### Geographic Distribution of Parks

Existing park and trail facilities were previously classified by park type and geographical location. The following maps illustrate service areas of traditional neighborhood and community parks so as to illustrate gaps and/or future service needs. Map 6-3 illustrates service areas of existing traditional neighborhood and community parks. Mini-parks, specialized recreation areas, specialized sports facilities, and nature areas adjacent to Brewery and Robert Creek are not included in the map. In addition, service areas that traverse Highway 169 have been restricted to the park-side of the highway only.

Map 6-3



Map Document: \\arcserver1\gis\BELL\M15112777\ESRI\Maps\LandUse\Chapter6\Belle\_2040\_ParkServiceAreaMap11x17.mxd | Date Saved: 3/30/2018 5:12:53 PM

**Legend**

**Park Service Areas**

- Neighborhood Parks (NP)  
1/4 Mile Radius
- Community Parks (CP)  
1/2 Mile Radius

**Parks**

- Community Parks (CP)
- Neighborhood Parks (NP)
- MUSA 2040
- City Limits
- Parcels

0 2,500  
Feet

Source: Scott County, City Of Belle Plaine, MnDot

## Parkland/Population

It's important to note recommended park volume adequacy standards are rule of thumb guidelines and not definitive standards. With caveats that communities are as diverse as the populations they serve and what works well for one community may not be the best for Belle Plaine, we can compare existing parkland to population ratios in Belle Plaine with two common metrics. The first common metric for determining adequate parkland is a simple 10 acres per 1,000 residents. A second metric was established by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) which recommended space standards for playgrounds in neighborhoods of different populations. The NRPA recommends 10 acres of park and open space per 1,000 in population, plus an equal area in parkways, large parks, natural areas, and the like, either within or adjacent to the City. Belle Plaine has a current population of just under 7,000 with forecast population of 12,600 in 2040. Park forecast demand and current supplies are represented in the following tables.

A simple calculation of total park area divided by residents indicates an adequate volume of parkland under a common metric (i.e. 10 acres per 1,000 residents). However, under the NRPA standard, Belle Plaine's parkland acres within the system do not meet recommended national guidelines. Neither metric should imply that our community is not providing an adequate range of park types or classifications and recreation facilities. Meeting NRPA recommended standards is typically problematic in urban areas. Furthermore, park acreage calculations above do not include public/private school playgrounds, athletic complexes, or natural areas.

Table 6-2

Year	Population Estimate or Forecast	Metric A; 10 acres/1,000 residents	Metric B: Dual Approach	
			Recommended Neighborhood Park Acreage	Recommended Additional Park Areas
2017	7,000	70 acres	70 acres	70 acres
2020	7,800	80 acres	80 acres	80 acres
2030	10,100	100 acres	100 acres	100 acres
2040	12,600	125 acres	125 acres	125 acres

Table 6-3

Park Classification Type	Number of Acres Existing
Neighborhood Park/Playground	21 acres
Community Park	18 acres
Special Use Park	4.2 acres
Specialized Recreation Area	5.1 acres
Natural Park or Recreation Area	52 acres
Subtotal Neighborhood & Community Parks	39 acres
Subtotal All Other	61 acres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 Acres</b>

## Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities

Planners over time have developed multiple metrics for evaluating a community's connectivity. Said metrics each provide a slightly different perspective on available data. Some are easily applicable to small jurisdictions while others are not easily scalable. For the purposes of this review, we will examine: miles of facilities, block lengths, and mean walking distance to principal destinations such as schools, open spaces/parks/recreation, and employment/shopping areas.

### *Miles of Sidewalks and Trails*

Cities often measure sidewalk and trail performance by the number of miles of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities existing and added over a given period of time. This metric often accurately presumes people will walk/bike more if more infrastructure exists. A potential drawback to this metric is investing in infrastructure projects absent specific connectivity goals. Belle Plaine has created more than 18 miles of trail and just under 18 miles of sidewalk. The most recent segment created is a half mile segment in the Meridian Street corridor south of Enterprise Drive to Century Street.

### *Block Length*

Shorter block lengths create more intersections, shorter travel distances, and an increase in available route alternatives. Cities commonly regulate block length in subdivision ordinances. Typical maximum block length standards range from 300 to 600 feet. Shorter maximums are recommended for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, most often less than 400 feet.

Belle Plaine's standard is: "Where no existing plats control, the blocks in residential subdivisions should not exceed twelve hundred (1200) feet in length nor be less than four hundred (400) feet in length, except where topography or other conditions may justify a departure from this maximum. In blocks longer than eight hundred (800) feet, pedestrian ways and/or easements through the block may be required near the center of the block".

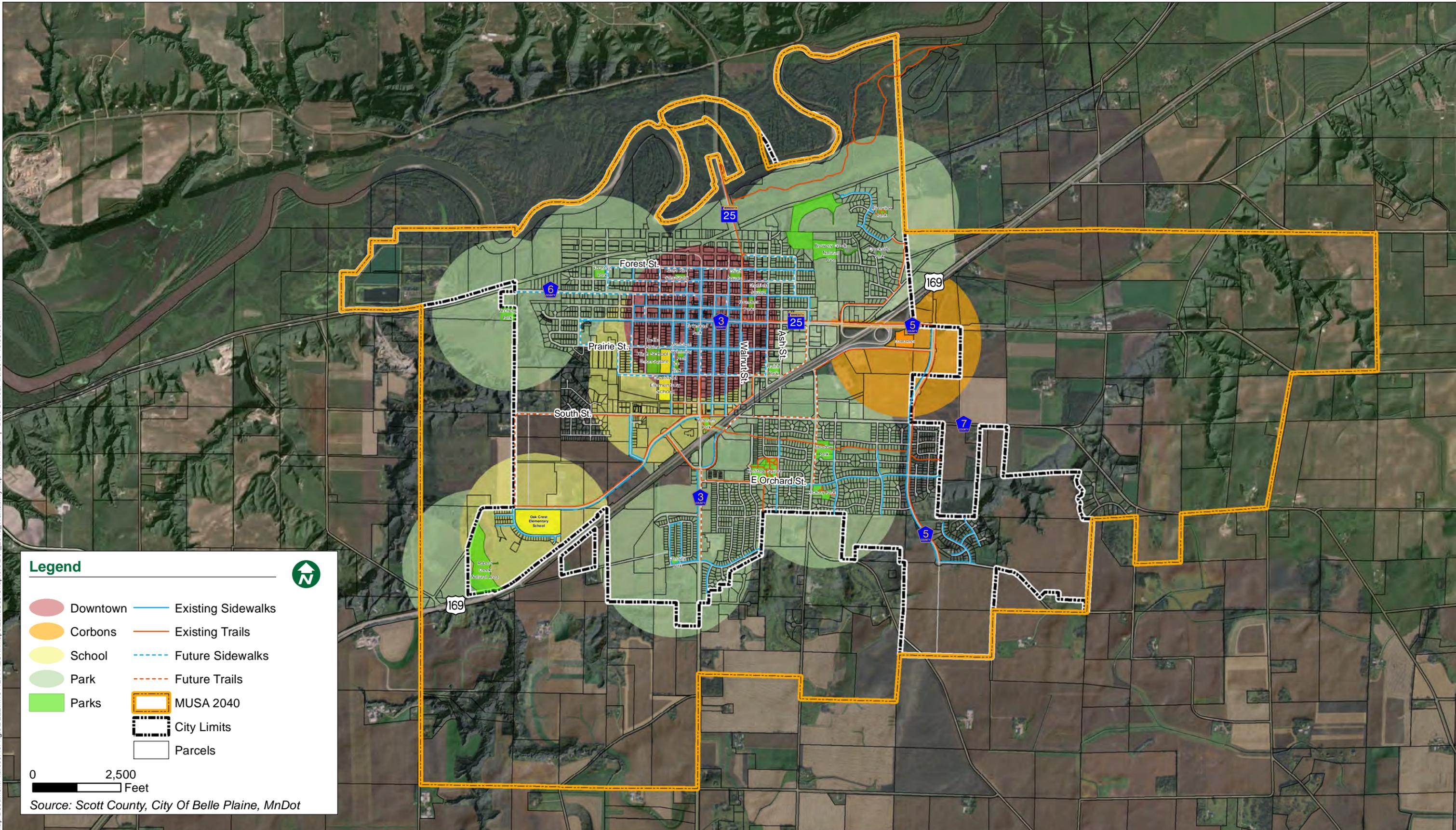
### *Walking Distance*

A common measure of connectivity is walking distance to principal destinations such as parks/open space, schools, retail centers, and employment destinations. Studies have shown under typical weather conditions residents often opt for walking to destinations that are less than one-fourth of a mile (1,320 lineal feet) as opposed to driving. Map 6-4 illustrates areas within a quarter mile of parks, public schools, the intersection of Main and Meridian Streets, and Coborns grocery store.

Map 6-4

### *Accessibility*

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requires local and state governments, places of public accommodation and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to persons with disabilities. The majority of parks are currently non-accessible or partially accessible.



**Legend**

- Downtown
- Corbons
- School
- Park
- Parks
- Existing Sidewalks
- Existing Trails
- Future Sidewalks
- Future Trails
- MUSA 2040
- City Limits
- Parcels

0 2,500  
Feet

Source: Scott County, City Of Belle Plaine, MnDot

## Goals and Policies

We believe parks, trails, and recreation are essential components of a healthy city. Parks, trails, and recreational opportunities provide beauty, access to nature, fitness options, economic advantages, conservation prospects, and a sense of place. Public input repeatedly indicates residents place tremendous value on parks, open spaces, trails, and recreation options. We are dedicated to creating and sustaining beautiful, inspiring, and accessible spaces on our beautiful prairie.

The City of Belle Plaine commits to planning, providing, and caring for resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, suitable for all ages and abilities. We pledge to nurture, care for, define, and build systems to enrich present and future generations. We will strive to be good stewardship of our natural resources, to connect the community through trails, to work with community partners to provide meaningful programming, and to maintain sustainable funding sources.

To achieve our vision, we are committed to the following goals and policies.

- PTR 1. A high quality, diversified park, recreation, and open space system suitable for all ages, incomes, and interests and accessible to all.
- 1.1. Continue prioritizing the creation of a system of neighborhood and community parks within walking distance (e.g. six blocks) of all residents.
  - 1.2. Use NRPA suggested guideline of ten-acres of neighborhood/community parks and ten additional acres of active/passive parks/openspace as a benchmark for level of service understanding the standard is not prescriptive.
  - 1.3. Work with developers to identify additional park opportunities in developing and redeveloping areas, especially near the Chatfield on the Green and Farmer's Ridge developments.
  - 1.4. Develop meaningful access and physical connections to the Minnesota River through partnerships with other jurisdictions and acquisition of shoreland area.
  - 1.5. Identify and budget for park access improvements to neighborhood park classifications, including accessibility within parks and pedestrian routes leading to parks.
  - 1.6. Provide a variety of active and passive recreational options.
    - 1.4.1. Develop athletic facilities that meet the highest quality competitive playing standards and requirements for all age groups, skill levels, and recreational interests.
    - 1.4.2. Provide a mix of court and field activities such as basketball, softball, tennis, volleyball, soccer, and baseball that provide for the largest number of participants.
    - 1.4.3. Develop, where appropriate, a select number of facilities that provide the highest competitive playing standard.
    - 1.4.4. Develop new or improved multi-use facilities that accommodate small and simple recreational opportunities such as pickleball, kickball, community gardening, recreational walking, personal fitness, and outdoor programming.
    - 1.4.5. Define opportunities for watercraft access (boat, canoe, kayak, other non-power boating activities) to the Minnesota River.
    - 1.4.6. Purposefully offer recreation and community enrichment activities in shoreland areas near the Minnesota River.
  - 1.7. Where appropriate and economically feasible, develop and operate and/or partner with other entities to provide special interest recreational facilities such as a community center, aquatic center, hockey facilities, etc.
  - 1.8. Where appropriate and economically feasible, develop and operate, and/or partner with other entities to provide indoor community spaces for arts/crafts, general recreation, indoor walking, classroom/meeting space, etc. on a year-round basis for all ages and abilities.
  - 1.9. Proactively investigate, define, and pursue opportunities to partner with Belle Plaine Schools, Three Rivers Park District in partnership with Scott County, state agencies (TCMC,

MnDNR), private entities, and other identified partners to provide for a variety of park, recreation, trail, and open space amenities.

- 1.10. When considering park design, potential amenities, trail/sidewalk placement, and recreational programming, commit to meaningful, active strategies to solicit input from creative thinkers and artists as a means of re-imagining what is possible and challenging traditional thought processes.

PTR 2. Pristine quality open space that preserves and enhances significant environmental resources and features to protect scenic vistas, preserve habitat, retain migration corridors, and protect water resources.

- 2.1. Purposefully create a linked open space system that provides identify, form, and a visual framework for the City.
- 2.2. Define and preserve a system of open space corridors and buffers to provide separation between natural areas and urban land uses within developing areas, particularly those within the Chatfield on the Green and Farmer's Ridge subdivisions.
- 2.3. Identify and provide natural area and open space linkages within the developed area as redevelopment opportunities arise.
- 2.4. Preserve and protect significant environmental features including bluffs, ravines, woodlands, watercourses, and wetlands while increasing and supporting natural resilience to a changing climate.
- 2.5. Define management and outdoor recreation opportunities that are compatible with the natural environment for Brewery Creek (29 acres) and Robert Creek (21) natural areas.
- 2.6. Consider protecting riparian areas adjacent to protected waterways, including South Creek in the vicinity of Hickory Boulevard, as platting and/or (re)development occurs by requiring parkland or open space preservation areas secured by easement.

PRT 3. An interconnected system of high quality, accessible multi-use trails and greenway corridors that offer diverse, healthy outdoor experiences within a rich variety of landscapes and natural habitats, accessing significant environmental features, public facilities, and developed local neighborhoods and business districts.

- 3.1. Continue to assemble non-motorized links between residential neighborhoods, community facilities (including parks), special use areas, schools, Downtown, the river, other communities, and other unique or special destinations as a means of connecting and unifying the City.
- 3.2. Provide adequate funding to maintain existing and new trails.
- 3.3. Develop standards for trails, including: criteria facilitating trail safety and security; furnishing of trail systems with appropriate supporting trailhead improvements including interpretive, directory, mileage signage and rules/regulations for trail use; and location of benches, bike racks, dog waste stations, trash containers, lighting, and the like.
  - 3.3.1. Incorporate criteria which facilitate trail safety and security.
  - 3.3.2. Furnishing of trail systems with appropriate supporting trailhead improvements, including: interpretive, directory, mileage signage, and rules/regulations for use.
  - 3.3.3. Furnishing of benches, bike racks, dog waste stations, trash containers, trail lighting, etc.
  - 3.3.4. Utilize native vegetation in planted areas where possible.
- 3.4. Facilitate community involvement and stewardship, including:
  - 3.4.1. An adopt-a-trail program.
  - 3.4.2. Encourage participation in community trail events.
  - 3.4.3. Expand existing relationships with schools, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

- PRT 4. Provide high quality recreational programs and services throughout the community that provide fun, educational, accessible, and safe environments for people of all ages and abilities.
- 4.1. Support a variety of affordable and accessible spectator and participatory events and experiences for people of all ages and abilities.
    - 4.1.1. Identify needs and interests of community members and the types of programs they desire/need.
    - 4.1.2. Establish an inventory of organizations and groups identifying what programs they offer within the community.
    - 4.1.3. Assess the need for a community center and potential offerings as a means of meeting recreational needs of residents.
    - 4.1.4. Support efforts to provide softball, baseball, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, and other instruction and participatory programs for all age, skill level, and income groups.
    - 4.1.5. Support programming and events for the arts, music, physical conditioning, and health improvement for all cultures, ages, abilities, and income levels.
    - 4.1.6. Support the development of programs, tournaments, and leagues for families, kids, adults, and seniors.
    - 4.1.7. Offer a variety of affordable and accessible spectator and participatory events and experiences for people of all ages. Identify potential users and promoters to provide sporting events, concerts, and family shows at various public venues.
  - 4.2. View the Minnesota River as an overlooked recreational, entertainment, cultural, and educational amenity. Capture some of the myriad of opportunities afforded by the river through careful planning, collaboration with other public entities, and acquisition of access points.
  - 4.3. Promote the health benefits of proper use of leisure time and healthy/fit City efforts.
  - 4.4. Contemplate the adequacy of recreational opportunities for all ages.
    - 4.4.1. Continue to identify the needs and interests of young people as to what sports and/or activities in which they would like to participate.
    - 4.4.2. Consider surveying tweens and teens about their recreational interests.
    - 4.4.3. Assess the needs of persons with disabilities, including programming in which they would like to participate.
    - 4.4.4. Engage with elderly residents to determine their interests and needs, including programming in which they would like to participate.
    - 4.4.5. Engage community members in meaningful discussion pertaining to what is needed to further physical, social, spiritual, and mental health.
- PRT 5. Design and develop facilities that are accessible, safe, sustainable, and easy to maintain in consideration of long-term costs and benefits.
- 5.1. Design facilities, parking lots, trails, restrooms, shelters, picnic areas, and other recreational spaces to be accessible to individuals and organized groups of all physical capabilities, skill levels, age groups, income, and activity interests.
  - 5.2. Implement Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other design and development standards that will improve park facility safety and security.
  - 5.3. Define and enforce rules and regulations concerning park activities and operations that will protect user groups, city employees, and the general public.
  - 5.4. Where appropriate, use good facility design, lighting, adopt-a-park programs, neighborhood park watches, police patrols, and other programs to increase safety and security awareness and visibility.
  - 5.5. Design and develop facilities that reduce overall facility maintenance and operation requirements and costs.
  - 5.6. Where appropriate, use low-maintenance materials, settings, or other value engineering

- considerations that reduce care and security requirements, and retain natural conditions and experiences.
- 5.7. Continue to plan and budget for life cycle maintenance and replacement costs.
  - 5.8. Meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Make decisions today that sustain activity options in the future.
    - 5.5.1. Promote sustainable practices to increase the ecological function of natural areas including bluffs, shoreland, steep slopes, ravines, and wetlands.
    - 5.5.2. Foster environmental stewardship through education programs and activities; consider nurturing an affinity for nature through creative volunteerism.
    - 5.5.3. Choose durable products to promote human health in a safe environment and consider life-cycle analysis of material options.
    - 5.5.4. Incorporate green building technology and select local products where possible.
  - 5.9. Create effective and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, operating, and maintaining facilities and programs that accurately distribute costs and benefits to public and private interests. Consider joint efforts with public and private agencies including the school district, Three Rivers Park District in partnership with Scott County, MnDNR, local non-profits, and civic organizations.