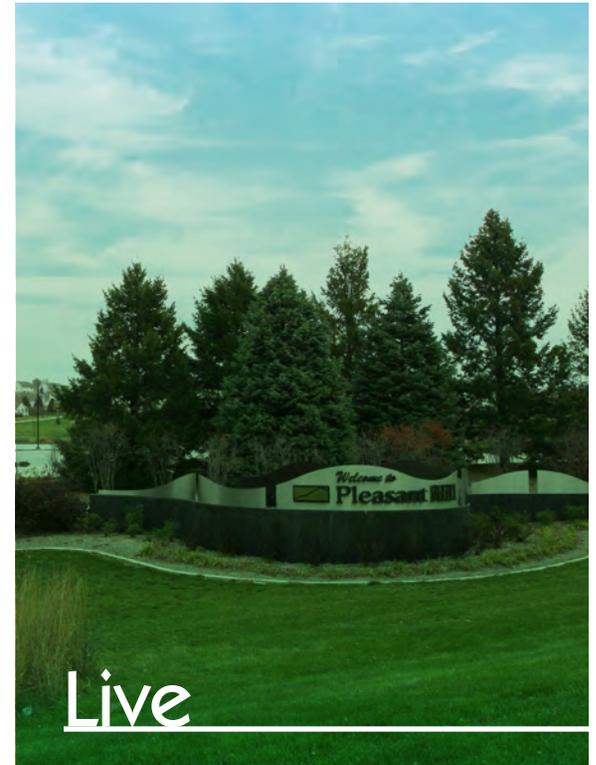
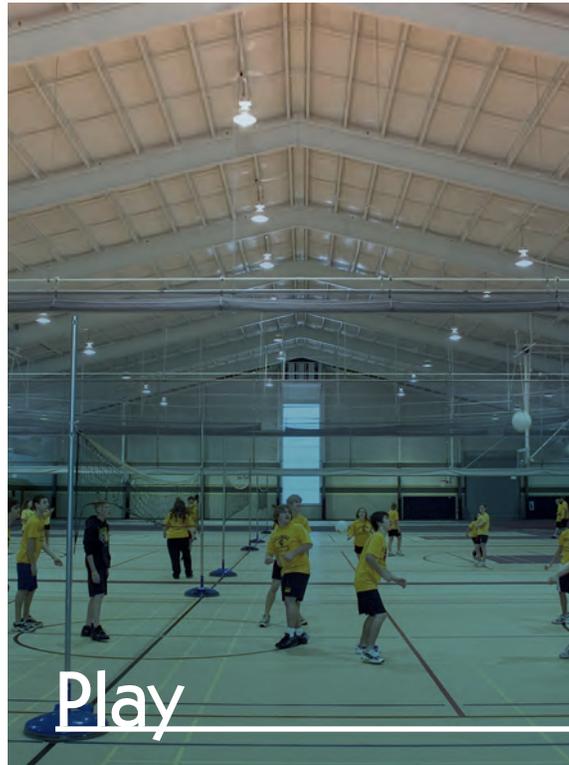


City of Pleasant Hill

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

Adopted November 24, 2015



RESOLUTION #112415-03

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

WHEREAS, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan is a visioning and guiding document to assist decision makers on future park development and infrastructure investments; and

WHEREAS, this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan serves as an update to previous planning efforts and regular updates and revisions to the document should be anticipated in order to reflect recreation trends and environmental needs over time; and

WHEREAS, the City has considered all public input through a variety of input forums and also followed all state and local requirements; and

WHEREAS, the City Council held a public hearing on November 24, 2015 regarding the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission has reviewed the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and recommended approval;

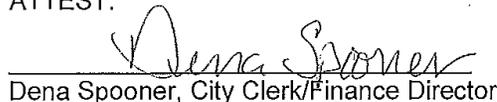
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of Pleasant Hill, Iowa, in Polk County, Iowa, has published notice and held a public hearing regarding the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City Council has considered all public input along with state and local and hereby approves the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

ADOPTED November 24, 2015.


Sara Kurovski, Mayor

ATTEST:


Dena Spooner, City Clerk/Finance Director

Acknowledgments

The Pleasant Hill Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan represents the collaboration of many individuals, agencies, or groups who share a commitment to the community's vision. In addition to those who participated on behalf of the general public, the City would like to recognize the following individuals who played an important role in the drafting and adoption of the plan.

Elected Officials:

- ◆ Mayor Sara Kurovski
- ◆ Jeff Mullen
- ◆ Barb Malone
- ◆ Dean Cooper
- ◆ Mark Konrad
- ◆ Leonard Murray

Planning & Zoning Commission

- ◆ Mark Ackelson, Chair
- ◆ Beth Cooper
- ◆ Curt Gause
- ◆ Jan Higgins
- ◆ Tim Mallicoat
- ◆ Martha Miller
- ◆ Keith Williamson

Parks & Recreation Commission:

- ◆ Loren Lown, Chair
- ◆ Anne Johns
- ◆ Gary Denning, Jr.
- ◆ David Dunfee
- ◆ Olivia Smith
- ◆ Dan Schmitz
- ◆ Penny Thomsen
- ◆ Peg Haag

Steering Committee

- ◆ Sara Kurovski, Mayor
- ◆ Mark Konrad
- ◆ Mark Ackelson
- ◆ Loren Lown
- ◆ J Elder
- ◆ Katherine Harrington
- ◆ Chad Johnson
- ◆ Dave Gildenzopf
- ◆ Aimee Staudt
- ◆ Bob Eisenlauer
- ◆ Darlene Carlson
- ◆ Mike Waterman

City Staff

- ◆ Donald Sandor, City Manager
- ◆ J. Benjamin Champ, Assistant City Manager / Community Development Director
- ◆ Madeline Sturms, Senior Planner
- ◆ Heath Ellis, Parks and Recreation Supervisor
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Pleasant Hill is a community in transition. An intact core and new subdivisions are contrasted by a rural landscape and large natural features. As the community manages potential growth, the integration of parks, trails, and open spaces will be an important factor in its overall health and attractiveness.

Introduction



Pleasant Hill has embraced a vision of being a progressive community with the growing reputation as “the choice for healthy living in Iowa”. Pleasant Hill focuses on “health in all policies” and promotes healthy individuals and families, healthy social and cultural systems, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy. Parks, trails and open spaces are vital elements in a growing, thriving and healthy community. Parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities and places for community events. Trails connect residents to destinations throughout the community and beyond and provide healthy activities for families. Open spaces help to preserve the environment, manage storm water and connect us to nature. Together these elements support a quality of life that attracts residents and businesses and supports a growing local economy. So as Pleasant Hill strides forward into a vibrant and healthy future, it is appropriate to plan for the next generation of parks, trails and open spaces to lead the way

The Parks and Trails Master Plan provides detailed guidance for the growth and evolution for the parks, trails and open space systems within Pleasant Hill. It serves to provide city leaders, staff and the citizens of Pleasant Hill with the tools necessary to implement a vibrant and comprehensive parks system throughout the community. The Plan should be used in conjunction with the City’s Comprehensive Plan to inform future development decisions related to land use and zoning. It serves as a guide to address current and future demands for parks, trails and open space within Pleasant Hill.



The plan is based on inventories of existing facilities combined with input from residents and stakeholders and reflects goals identified by the community, and is informed by current trends in parks and recreation and by current user preferences. The plan seeks to maximize public value by promoting the sharing of resources and partnerships with other governmental and private entities in order to provide first class recreation facilities for the citizens of Pleasant Hill.



Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are important elements of a healthy community. They afford residents access to both active and passive recreational opportunities within walking distance to their homes and can be a source of community pride and identity. A more complete network of neighborhood parks is needed in Pleasant Hill. Currently there are three neighborhood parks and one mini park which primarily serve the older neighborhoods in the City. As the population of the City continues to increase and new areas are developed, more neighborhood parks should be acquired and developed to meet the recreational and social needs of area residents.



Dar-Mar Park

5287 East Oakwood

Dar-Mar Park occupies 0.2 acres and has no off-street parking. The park is long and narrow, which limits its current and potential uses. It currently has a very outdated swing set and green space.

Recommendations

The park is not adequate for a neighborhood park. The City should study its potential reuse including as a future road right-of-way or trail corridor. If the City does not have an identified need for the property, it is recommended that it be offered for sale to adjacent property owners. The City could choose to retain a 20 foot wide trail easement through the property which could provide trail access to future development west of Sherrylynn Blvd.



Sunrise Park

5414 East Oakwood Drive

Sunrise Park is a 7.5 acre park that features limited off street parking, a basketball court, soccer fields, an open air shelter, a restroom an informal ball field, and playground equipment. The park is constrained by the presence of overhead transmission lines and underground utilities along the west border. The long triangular shape of the park as well as the slope of the ground impose additional limitations.

Additionally, the City owns a 2 acre parcel located south across East Oakwood Drive. This is technically not part of the park but is associated with the park. This parcel is undeveloped and is limited by its size and the presence of overhead transmission lines and underground utilities.

Recommendations

For the near term, the park should remain as is with minor upgrades including some playground improvements. In the long term, the park is not an ideal location for club soccer use. The limited parking area is problematic and, as noted before, the shape of the parcel and slope make it less than ideal for soccer fields. As other soccer facilities become available, soccer should be relocated from Sunrise Park. Once this occurs, the park can be developed with new neighborhood park amenities such as walking paths connecting to the public sidewalks, additional landscaping and an expanded playground. The park entrance drive should be widened and additional parking could be developed along the driveway

The south parcel is an excellent opportunity to develop a community garden for this neighborhood. The garden could include a small seating area with a pergola and invite use by non-gardeners. Rain gardens could be installed to demonstrate techniques neighbors can use in their own yards to address urban runoff issues. This kind of low impact use could be served by on-street parking. A driveway entrance could be constructed which would allow for vehicular access to the parcel for loading and unloading activities associated with the garden.



Sunset Park

4490 East Oakwood Drive

Sunset Park is an underutilized 7.5 acre park that features off street parking, open space and practice soccer fields. The park is an irregular shape wrapping around the former City Hall building. Currently there is an informal agreement with the occupant of that building to allow overflow soccer parking. Soccer usage dominates the park leaving little space for traditional neighborhood park development. The park has issues with drainage as well. These issues should be addressed when a master plan is prepared for the park.



Recommendations

Neighborhood park amenities such as a playground, restroom and small shelter should be added to the park. The City should explore possible arrangements with the current owner of the former City Hall building to look at efficiencies in shared parking resources which may allow some conversion of parking use to park or open space. This would provide space for the neighborhood park components while accommodating the current soccer use.

Given the proximity of the park to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail, there is an opportunity to develop a connection to the trail and utilize the park as a trail head. The trail connection will require negotiations with adjacent property owners to acquire easements. There is a possibility that the restroom facility in the park could be constructed as a “FEMA Public Safe Room” in conjunction with the trail head use. This would provide a potential source of funding.

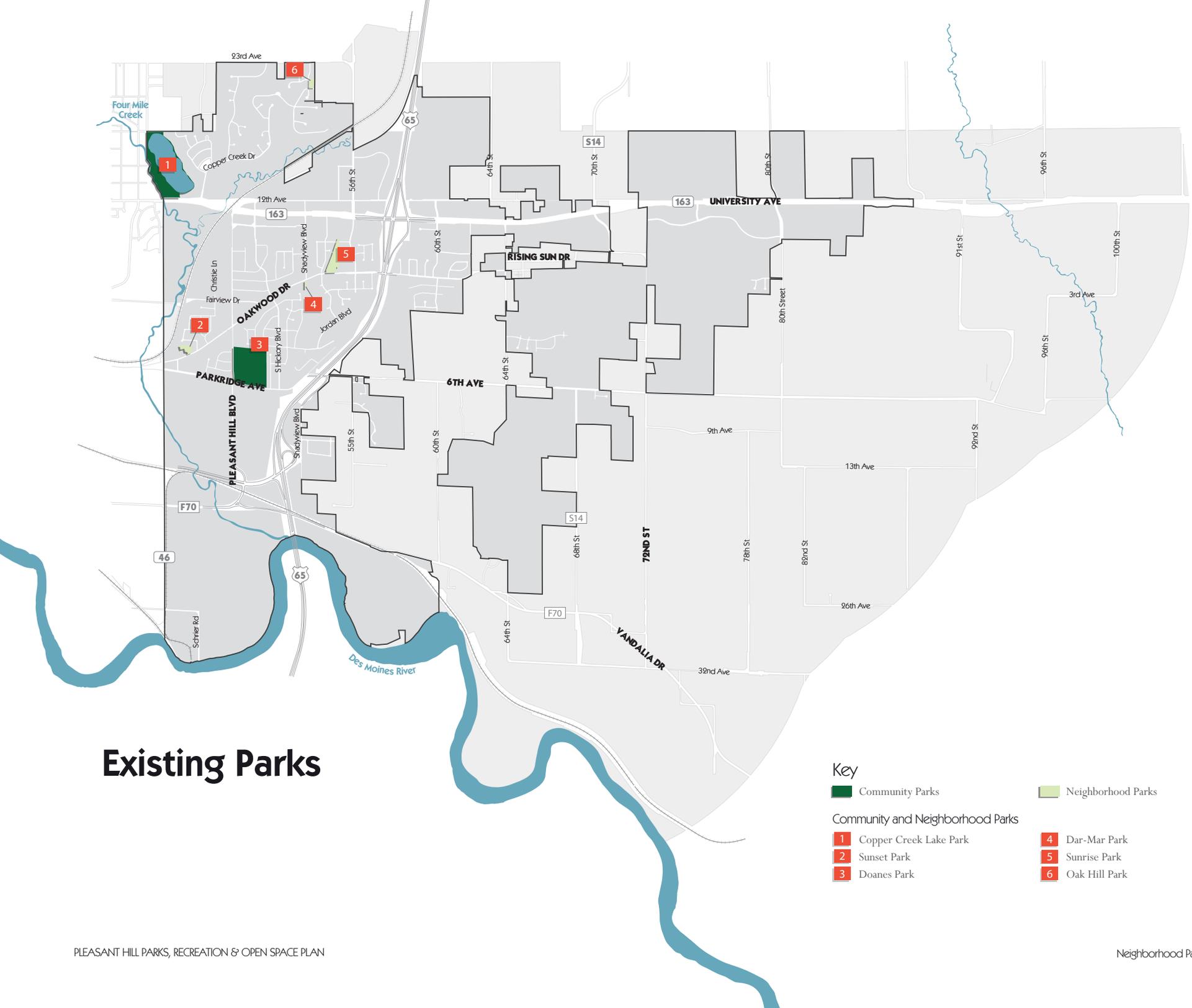
Oak Hill Park

2115 Copper Wynd

Oak Hill Park is a 2-acre neighborhood park that features a small open air shelter, limited walking paths, a basketball court and playground equipment.

Recommendations

There is undeveloped land to the east of the park. It is the City’s intent to expand the park through parkland dedication when the adjacent parcel(s) are developed. An expanded park should include additional landscaping, a permanent restroom facility, a longer looped walking path, and a larger open play area. Depending on the ultimate size of the park and the level of interest from the neighborhood, this could be a potential site for community gardens. The City should look for opportunities to connect Oak Hill Park to the community trail system.



Existing Parks

- Key**
- Community Parks
 - Neighborhood Parks
- Community and Neighborhood Parks**
- 1 Copper Creek Lake Park
 - 2 Sunset Park
 - 3 Doanes Park
 - 4 Dar-Mar Park
 - 5 Sunrise Park
 - 6 Oak Hill Park



Community Parks & Facilities

Community parks are designed to help meet the recreation needs of the entire community by offering amenities that appeal to and serve a large segment of the population. Pleasant Hill currently has two community parks; Copper Creek Lake Park and Doanes Park.

Enhancements can be made to these parks to make them better meet the recreational needs of the Pleasant Hill community. Additionally, land for a new 76-acre community park located immediately adjacent to Four Mile Elementary School has recently been acquired. Development of this park provides the City with the opportunity to enhance the recreational offerings in a growing part of the community and demonstrates the importance of sustainable practices to a healthy environment.



Copper Creek Lake Park

4390 E. University Avenue

This 65.5 acre park was acquired in 2000 as part of the implementation of the 1998 Parks & Recreation Plan. It is currently the City's largest park and only public lake. According to NRPA standards, Copper Creek Lake Park is classified as a Community Park, Natural Resource Area and a Greenway. Amenities in the park include the 40-acre lake, a small boat access, a trail around the lake which includes portions of the Gay LeaWilson Trail, a trail head, parking, a restroom, a shelter, and a playground.

The Copper Creek Lake Park Master Plan was completed in 2005 and discusses a variety of proposed improvements to the park. Some of these enhancements have been completed and continued implementation of these improvements is recommended. Some of the highest priorities items are shoreline and stream bank stabilization, widening portions of the trail around the lake, and development of a dock or boardwalk on the south end of the lake. Additional recommendations for this park include public art, trail enhancements and improvements to woodland and prairie areas of



the park. There are also opportunities to partner with businesses located on the south end of the lake to look at improvements that will benefit the businesses as well as the park. The City should work to promote commercial uses such as restaurants and retail that take advantage of the lake frontage and support expanded use of the park.

Additionally, there is a large parcel of undeveloped land to the north of the park within the corporate limits of Des Moines. The development potential of this land is limited due to flooding considerations. This land could be used for an expansion of Copper Creek Lake or for a natural resource area that could be connected to the park. The City should investigate the possibilities of partnering with the City of Des Moines to coordinate the use of this parcel.

Historically, Copper Creek Lake Park has hosted several community events such as Chill on the Hill, Jazz in July, Family Fest, the Copper Creek Triathlon, and a number of charity walks/runs. This poses some challenges as the access to the park, parking capacity, and the amount of ground area available are limited. As other community event spaces are developed, some of these events could be relocated. Certainly

events that are directly related to the lake or adjacent businesses, such as the Triathlon, should continue to be hosted here. The City can look for ways to improve access and parking for events at the park.

Coincident with this master planning effort, a private group led by Riley Resource Group (RRG), has been conducting a visioning project involving Copper Creek Lake Park and the surrounding neighborhood. RRG's corporate headquarters is located on the south side of the lake. They have an interest in demonstrating sustainable approaches to community development coordinated closely with regional planning efforts. Their visioning effort focuses on creating a "sustainable village" concept for the Copper Creek neighborhood and includes proposed improvements to the park. The City should continue to work with this group to find opportunities to improve the park and surrounding area and demonstrate sustainable development practices. Participation in any of these efforts on private properties in the neighborhood will be solely at the discretion of the property owners. The role of the City is to foster communication, promote best practices, and participate in improvements on public property.



Doanes Park

4900 Doanes Park Road

This 40-acre park serves as a hub of community based youth sports in Pleasant Hill. The park includes 4 high quality baseball fields and four to six small soccer fields. The City has made significant investments in the park over the last several years with upgraded roads and parking, a new playground, new basketball court and three new tennis courts. The park also includes two shelters, two restrooms, and walking trails. The southeast portion of the park contains an oak savanna remnant and informal walking trails. Additionally, the park is home to the Doanes Park Youth Center which will be discussed in the following section.



Doanes Park is well developed and heavily used, resulting in the need for only minor new improvements. In the long term, the City should consider relocating soccer fields to reduce use pressure once alternative soccer facilities are developed. Proposed improvements include: reconstruction of baseball field 3 to accommodate a wider age range from little league to adult, the addition of lighting to baseball field 2 to increase playing time, a new splash pad, and additional walking trails on the north side of the park connecting to the school. Previous plans to develop a disc golf course in the southwest portion of the park should be abandoned in favor of the continued management of that area as a high quality oak savanna.

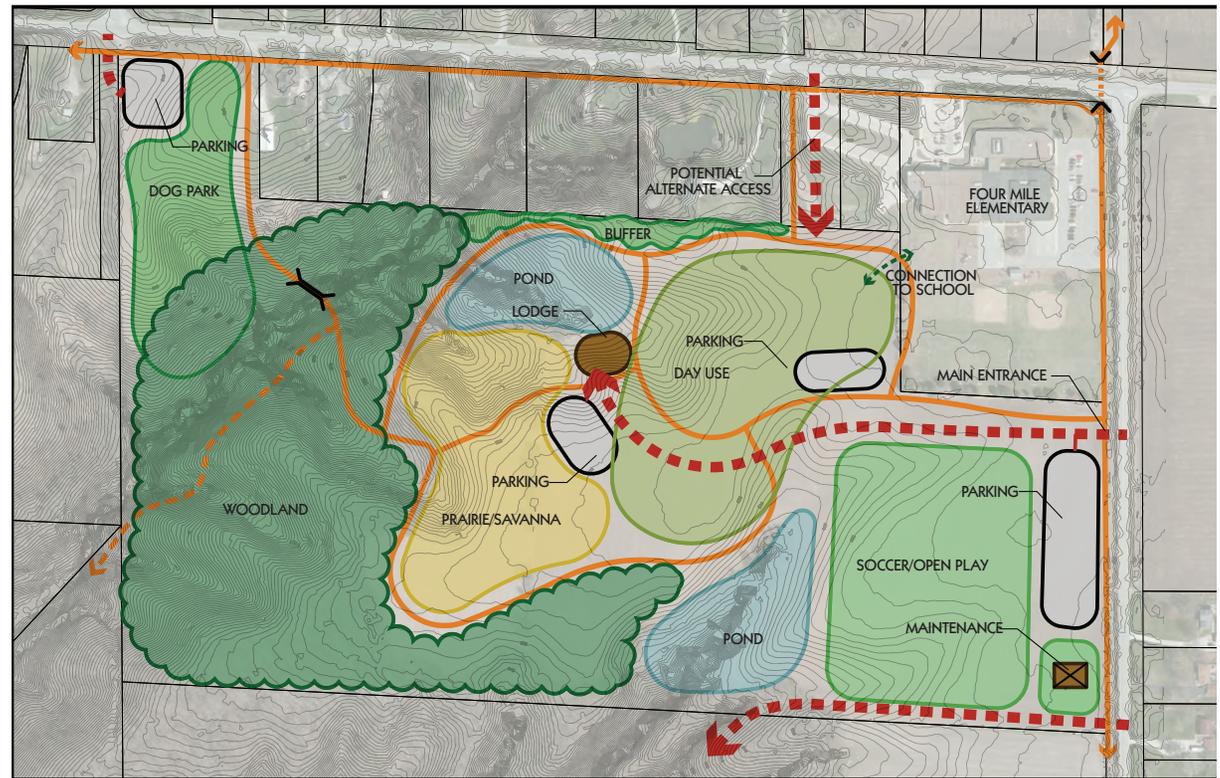
New 76 acre park

In 2014, the City acquired 76 acres of undeveloped land located immediately south and west of Four Mile Elementary School for the purposes of creating a new community park. The parcel contains approximately 44 acres of cultivated uplands and 32 acres of woodlands and drainage ways. The site was selected for the potential to develop traditional community park elements such as sports fields, day use areas and event space, and the preservation of important natural resource areas.

Pleasant Hill has many unmet park and recreation needs and there will be pressure from different groups to accommodate all those elements in the park. While the park is large enough to host a variety of uses, it cannot handle all the demands. Certainly the park can accommodate some athletic fields, but that use should not dominate the park.

The majority of the developed area of the park should include more traditional uses such as shelters, playgrounds, restrooms, and a splash pad along with parking. Open play fields and community event space should also be included. The day use areas can work in synergy with the school and include education opportunities and outdoor learning environments. There is a desire for a rental lodge or large shelter in the park. The park can be a hub for trail activity in this part of the community, including a trail head, connections to major trail linkages and an internal looped trail system. The northwest corner of the park may be an ideal location for a dog park. The park will also need its own remote maintenance facility.

As mentioned before, preservation and enhancement of natural resources as a means of demonstrating the development of healthy communities should be a major theme of the park. One major issue the City will need to address is the stabilization of eroding streams and drainage ways. Another challenge is the establishment and management of high quality woodlands along with the re-establishment of portions of the site in prairie and savanna. The City is working with IDNR to complete an assessment and management plan for invasive woodland species. The park represents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate sustainable restoration and development practices. Alternative storm water management can be interwoven throughout the park. There is also an opportunity to create a regional storm water management resource with the development of a large detention pond or ponds.



Key

-  Trail
-  Future Trail Connections
-  Vehicular Access
-  Pedestrian Access

Development of New Parks

As mentioned earlier, a complete and well-developed system of neighborhood and community parks are vital to a healthy, growing community. They provide ample opportunities for exercise, recreation and neighborhood events. They are important to providing quality of life and connection to nature. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has created a classification system for communities to utilize for parks and recreation planning (Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, NRPA, 1995). The system defines several categories of parks, recreation areas and open spaces that together make up a municipal park system. While the existing parks in Pleasant Hill don't necessarily meet all of these criteria, the development of future parks should be guided by these standards.

Neighborhood Park

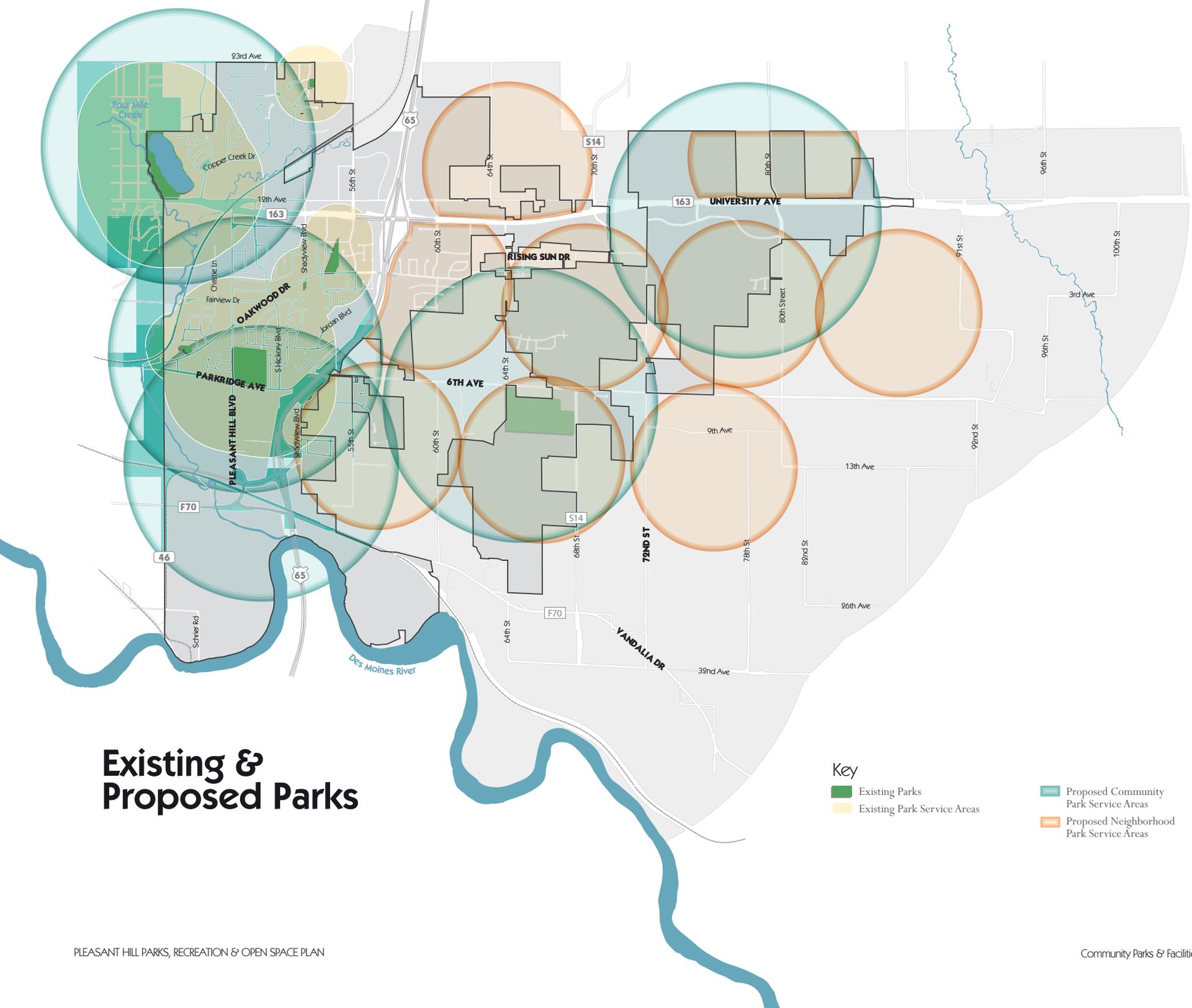
Neighborhood parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood with emphasis on informal and passive recreation.

- ◆ Size: 5 to 10 acres
- ◆ Service area: 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile radius
- ◆ Amenities to include: restroom, playground, small shelter, multi-use play court, open play area approximately 200' x 300', parking, drinking fountain, bike racks, and a connection to the community trail network

Community Park

Community parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. They are focused on meeting community-based recreation needs and preserving unique landscapes/open space. Typical examples include sports facilities, aquatic facilities, dog parks and event parks.

- ◆ Size: 30 to 50+ acres
- ◆ Service area: 1/2 mile to 3 mile radius
- ◆ Amenities may include: restroom, playground, large shelter or lodge, multi-use play court, open play areas, parking, drinking fountain, bike racks, and a connection to the community trail network



Existing & Proposed Parks

Key

- Existing Parks
- Existing Park Service Areas
- Proposed Community Park Service Areas
- Proposed Neighborhood Park Service Areas

Proposed Future Park Locations

Several areas that are currently underserved by neighborhood parks or which will require neighborhood parks in the future are identified on the Existing & Proposed Parks Map. Specific park sites have not been identified, but instead general areas relating to the defined service areas are shown. Identifying and targeting individual sites is a limiting strategy since the provision of a park for that area of the community becomes totally dependent on the plans of a single property owner. That being said, the City may look at certain sites as opportunity acquisitions where they meet necessary criteria or help achieve other community objectives. In general, as the areas are built out or as land becomes available, the City should work with developers and owners of future development ground to find appropriate park locations. This may require combining dedications from several developments and possibly purchase of certain parcels by the City.

As the community continues to grow additional locations for community parks will need to be acquired as well. The Existing & Proposed Parks Map illustrates two such locations. One is in the northeast quadrant of the City. This may be an appropriate location for further sports field development along with additional natural resource areas and possibly regional storm water detention.

Another location is identified in the southwest quadrant of the community. This is an area that has been subject to past aggregate mining operations and some portions are likely to be mined in the future. The resulting ponds can be used as the centerpiece of a community park and reclaimed land can be used for a future outdoor recreational activities and green space. Once the Southeast Connector is constructed, a major community park with pond feature in this location would serve as an beautiful community gateway in the same way Copper Creek Lake marks the entrance to Pleasant Hill on University Avenue.

Effective Park Land Dedication

Provision of neighborhood parks should occur primarily through the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, although the City may choose to purchase parcels to create parks of adequate size. Creating effective neighborhood parks when typical subdivisions within the community are small is challenging since this can result in the City acquiring several small parcels that increase the cost of maintenance and may lower the overall effectiveness of the open space. The City should do a thorough review of the existing Park Land Dedication Ordinance and the administrative rules used to administer the Ordinance. The ordinance should provide the City with mechanisms to work collaboratively with developers and allow other forms of participation in lieu of dedication which can be applied to the development of a neighborhood park or trails in a given service area. These arrangements for participation in lieu of dedication involve complex legal issues and should be developed under the consultation of the City Attorney.

It should also be the policy of the City to not allow required dedications under Chapter 104 Stream Buffer Protection and Management ordinance to be substituted for required Parkland dedications unless the flood plain area includes developable ground equal to the required park land dedication where an effective and accessible neighborhood park can be created.



Youth Sports Facilities

Youth sports are an important part of the recreational offers of the community. This is increasingly true as the trend away from informal sports activities continues. Our children rely on organized sports for much of their physical activity and social systems. Pleasant Hill actively supports three youth sports programs – Pleasant Hill Little League, East Des Moines Girls’ Softball and the Pleasant Hill Soccer Club. Other organized youth sports are provided by private organizations such as the Little Rams, which is associated with the Southeast Polk Community Schools. The City provides facilities, maintenance, and/or monetary support for these three organizations. Facilities are provided in neighborhood and community parks throughout the City. This fairly efficient model has evolved over time, although the organizations would like new facilities in centralized locations to support growth. For the near term, Pleasant Hill should continue to utilize existing facilities while periodically reassessing the need for additional sports facilities and public attitudes about a sport complex. In the meantime, the City should continue to look for opportunities to develop additional facilities throughout the parks system as it evolves, including partnership opportunities with surrounding communities. With regard to demand, traditional standards of 1 ball field or 1 soccer field per 10,000 residents really do not apply in that the demand is almost exclu-

sively driven by organized leagues. Current and projected league participation is a much better indicator of facility needs rather than population.

Baseball

In the near term Pleasant Hill Little League should continue to use the facilities in Doanes Park. The community has invested in 4 high quality fields in Doanes Park. The City should continue to provide for maintenance and periodic improvements to the facilities in the park. Additionally, Field 3 should be evaluated on the current use and different alternatives should be considered to allow more age groups to use the field while still having the ability to be used as an adult field. The club and City should work together to optimize scheduling of the existing fields. The addition of lighting to Field 2, should help to maximize the playing capacity of existing fields and best utilize the investment in current facilities. Given its proximity to the surrounding neighborhood, tournament use for Doanes Park should be limited and managed by the City.

In the long term, the City should continue to assess the needs and opportunities for a sports complex that could house new baseball facilities. Another opportunity for continued growth of youth baseball in Pleasant Hill is for the City to encourage sharing of facilities, resources and



programming between the various little league organizations operating in Pleasant Hill and the surrounding communities.

Softball

The City makes an annual contribution to support the East Des Moines Girls’ Softball Association which provides softball programming for the residents of Pleasant Hill. By supporting that organization, the City does not need to build duplicate facilities which would be costly and ultimately weaken that league by creating a competitor. The City should continue to partner with and support South Des Moines Girls’ Softball.

Soccer

The Pleasant Hill Soccer Club operates in multiple locations throughout the community, including several city parks, two elementary schools and two churches. The upper divisions play games at Southeast Polk High School. Generally, that model works for the club with the exception of fields for the older age groups. This issue can be addressed by the creation of new fields at the new 76 acre park. In the longer term, there may be additional opportunities for soccer field development in the southwest part of Pleasant Hill on reclaimed quarry ground off of south Pleasant Hill Boulevard near the Southeast Connector.

Aquatics

Aquatics facilities are important recreation resources in a community and are often identified as one of the quality of life amenities that attracts new residents. But they are increasingly expensive to develop and operate. The construction cost of even a modest outdoor pool facility exceeds \$10M. Pools are also increasingly difficult to staff and the swimming season continues to get shorter. Traditionally the swimming season extended from Memorial Day to Labor Day but school calendars frequently extend into June and many schools begin the fall semester in mid-August, essentially creating a two month swimming season. The cost of aquatics facilities continue to rise and operating them continues to get more challenging.

NRPA guidelines suggest 1 pool facility per 20,000 residents, so Pleasant Hill is approaching that threshold. But given the factors listed above, it is recommended to continue to partner with other communities or providers and support their facilities. This helps to offset their costs and not further divide a shrinking labor pool. Currently Pleasant Hill residents use aquatic facilities in Altoona and Des Moines. Residents of the Southeast Polk School District are given “resident” prices at Altoona Campus and Altoona Aquatic Center. This approach is great example of the emphasis of local governments to efficiently share resources and programs. As Pleasant Hill’s population continues to increase, however, the City should periodically re-evaluate the need for aquatic facilities in the community and possibly consider conducting a community-wide aquatics study.



Outdoor Pools/Aquatics Facilities

As mentioned earlier, Pleasant Hill residents use a variety of existing outdoor pools or aquatics facilities in other communities including the Altoona Aquatics Center and Teachout Aquatic Center in Des Moines. Additionally, many residents use the privately developed water park at Adventureland and purchase season passes to the facility. Rather than developing facilities of their own, the City could make these existing facilities more accessible and affordable for residents by negotiating reduced or “resident” rates.



Splash Pads

Splash pads are areas for water play that have little to no standing water and generally do not require the presence of a lifeguard. They include a slip proof deck and a variety of spray features. They can even be interactive with users controlling sprays through valves or sequences of movements. Splash pads can be developed in a variety of sizes and complexity. They require far less capital investment than traditional pools and entail far less operating expense. All these factors make splash pads a great option for providing neighborhood scaled aquatics facilities throughout the community. Potential locations for the development of splash pads include:

- ◆ Doanes Park
- ◆ The new 76 acre park
- ◆ A future park in the northeast side of the community
- ◆ Central community gathering area in the Maple Street corridor

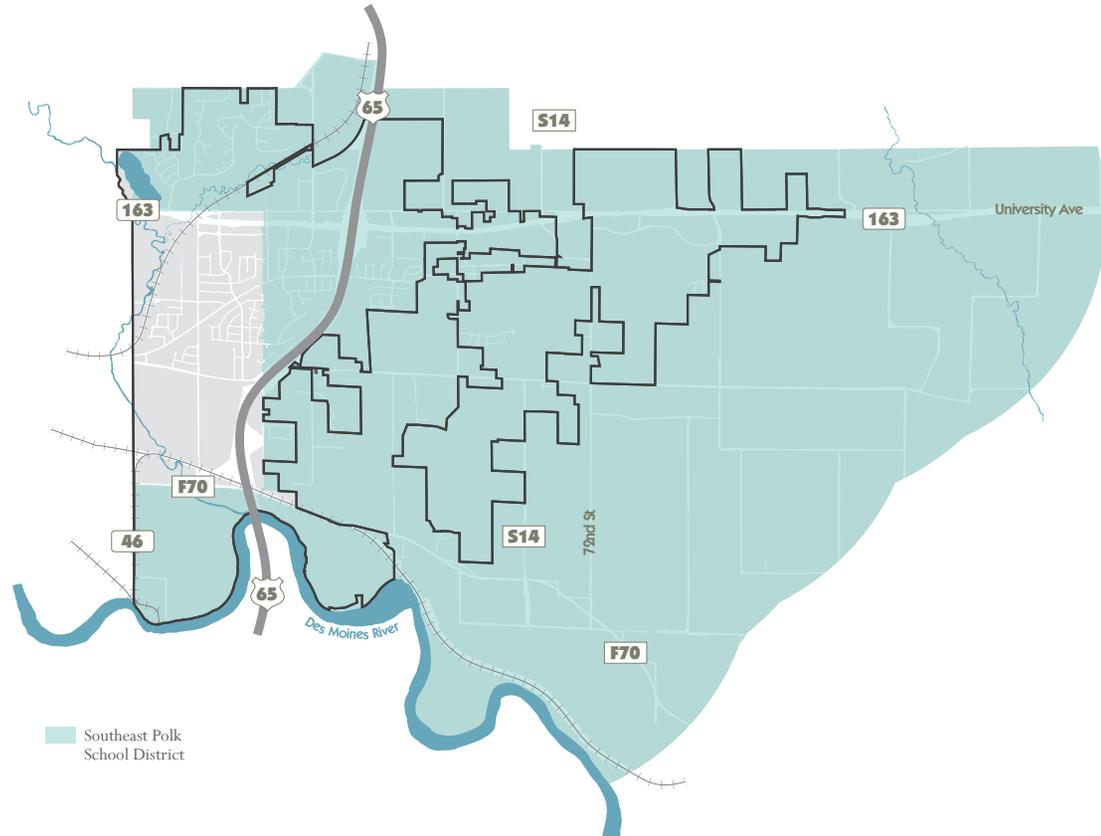


Indoor Pools/Aquatics Facilities

Residents of Pleasant Hill who reside in the Southeast Polk School District are given access to the Altoona Campus. The City should negotiate a formal agreement with the Altoona Campus to provide access to the facility for residents of Pleasant Hill in the Des Moines School District at a similar rate.

The City should also investigate the possibility of negotiating an agreement with the Southeast Polk School District to allow Pleasant Hill residents use of their indoor pools for lap swimming, fitness classes and other organized aquatics programming.

Finally, as other potential opportunities arise, the City should consider partnering with other public and private entities to provide additional aquatic opportunities to the residents of Pleasant Hill.



Residents within the Southeast Polk School District boundary have access to the Altoona Campus at a resident rate.



Other Community Facilities Recreation Center/Gymnasium

Doanes Park Youth Center serves as the primary recreation center for the community. The facility is fairly small and does not include the amenities expected of a contemporary recreation center. Access to a modern style recreation center is provided through The Campus in Altoona but, as noted before, only residents within the SEP School District are given resident rates. Gymnasium space is provided to residents of Pleasant Hill by Southeast Polk and Des Moines Schools but the City does no programming of those facilities. Those gyms are typically programmed by private groups through the schools. Other fitness and recreation facilities are operated by private providers within the community. So, while recreation and gymnasium facilities are available to the residents of Pleasant Hill, the programming is not coordinated and residents have to go through several different entities to receive services.

In the short term, the City should explore expansions of existing partnerships with these providers. The City can serve as a central location to connect their residents to these facilities and coordinate programming. To support this, the City could even create its own programming within these facilities. There also may be coming opportunities for Pleasant Hill residents to be served by proposed major private recreation/sports facilities within the community. Here again, the City could develop a partnership with these entities to provide services to Pleasant Hill residents at a reduced cost. Long term, the City may consider building its own modern recreation center.



Dog Park

The development of a dog park in Pleasant Hill has been identified by the community as a priority. Generally, dog parks should be several acres in size surrounded by a 4' to 6' fence. The park should include shaded areas and a suitable water source. A double gated entry is recommended to help ensure safety. Adequate parking and restroom facilities are necessary, as the park will draw visitors from throughout the community. Benches, waste receptacles and pick up bags are also necessary for the enjoyment and comfort of all guests. The park should also include separate areas for large and small dogs, as well as a training area. A dog park could potentially be located in the northwest portion of the new 76 acre park. A dog park could be located on a buildable portion of a natural resource area somewhere in the community. As the community continues to grow, the City should continue to explore options for additional dog parks in other parts of the community.



Disc Golf Course

Disc Golf has been identified as missing recreational component in the community. Disc golf courses vary in size, number of holes (9 vs 18) and complexity; although as the sport matures, larger, more complex courses are being demanded. A modern course may require 10+ acres and should be separated from other park uses due to safety issues. A course could be a component of the new 76 acre park. It could also be developed in a natural resource area or could be developed in partnership with Polk County Conservation Board at Yellow Banks Park.



Community Gathering/Event Space

Like many suburban cities, Pleasant Hill is in need of a recognizable center of community – an area that provides identity for the City and can play host to community events and festivals. Copper Creek Lake Park serves in that capacity now but has some shortcomings. Parking and access are difficult and the park should not be considered the center of the community. A new community event space should be developed in conjunction with the proposal to create an identifiable City Center in the Maple Drive corridor. Copper Creek Lake Park will continue to host certain events. As the community grows it may be appropriate to develop additional community gathering and event spaces on the east side – possibly at the new 76 acre park.



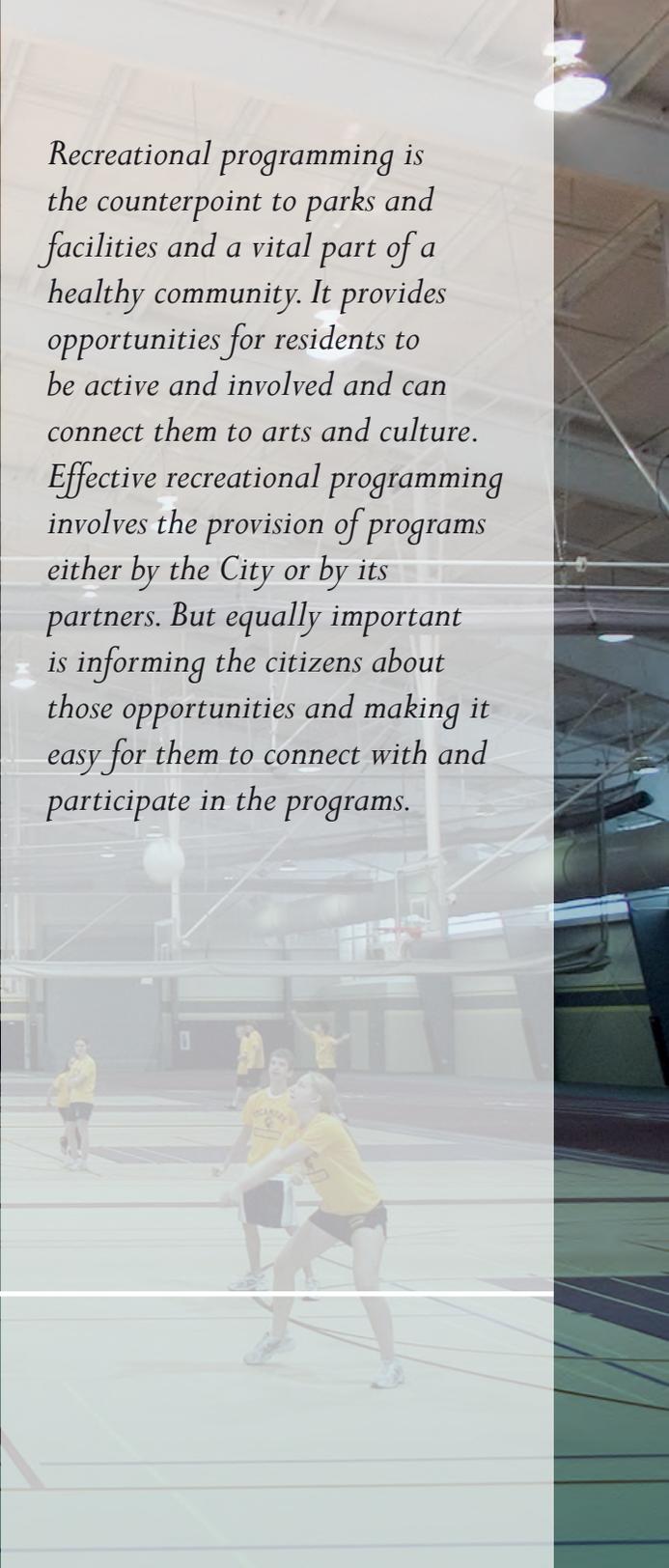
Community Gardens

A distributed network of community gardens throughout the City can promote sustainability, local food production, and civic interaction. They can also be important sources of food for families in need of assistance. The existing community garden on Maple Drive should continue to be supported. Locations for other gardens throughout the City should be selected carefully based on neighborhood interest and need. Ideally, local gardens would be sponsored and monitored by neighborhood organizations. The contribution of the City is typically to provide infrastructure – the land, defined plots, and a water source. The City may also provide annual tilling and make compost available.



Recreational programming is the counterpoint to parks and facilities and a vital part of a healthy community. It provides opportunities for residents to be active and involved and can connect them to arts and culture. Effective recreational programming involves the provision of programs either by the City or by its partners. But equally important is informing the citizens about those opportunities and making it easy for them to connect with and participate in the programs.

Recreation Programming



Benchmarking

Several Iowa communities were identified as “benchmarking” communities in terms of recreational programming. These communities include Altoona, Norwalk, Grimes, North Liberty and Waukee. Altoona is Pleasant Hill’s neighbor immediately to the north and provides a good point of comparison relative to the local market area. Norwalk and Grimes are similar in size to Pleasant Hill and are within the Des Moines Metro area. North Liberty and Waukee are both fast growing communities that were picked as models for how Pleasant Hill would like to grow its recreational facilities programs and services. A brief review of the programming and staffing structure of these communities was completed. With the exception of Altoona, all the communities’ Parks and Recreation Departments have a significantly larger web presence than Pleasant Hill and have online program registration. In order to remain competitive, both of these elements are critical for Pleasant Hill.

Grimes, Waukee, North Liberty, and Norwalk each have Parks and Recreation Department Directors that report directly to the City Manager/Administrator.

Norwalk (population 9,700) has a staff of 3 employees (not including summer/aquatic center staff) and offers a wide variety of programming for children, families and adults. The programming is mostly offered at school facilities. Norwalk also has a major sports complex that is used for tournaments, leagues, scrimmages and practices for youth and adult softball, youth baseball and soccer (23 fields). Norwalk publishes a bi-annual directory of programming.

Grimes (population 10,500) has a staff of full-time employees and several others that are employed to specifically supervise event at the Grimes Community Center. The Grimes Community Center is the former Dallas Center Grimes Middle School that has been converted to a community center and is used for a wide variety of community recreation programming. It also houses the NorthwestYMCA program center. Grimes also has 2 sports complexes that have playing facilities for tennis, soccer, sand volleyball, softball, baseball, basketball, skateboarding. Grimes offers an email subscription service to notify residents of upcoming programs and offerings.

North Liberty (population 17,000) has a parks staff of 5 full time employees and 12 full time seasonal employees. They have a full time recreation supervisor and numerous part time and full time seasonal employees for their Recreation Center and aquatics facilities. North Liberty offers a wide variety of recreational programming for children, families and adults. North Liberty has a Community Recreation Center with indoor pool and an exterior family aquatics facility. North Liberty does not have a dedicated sports complex. Youth baseball and softball and youth soccer are provided in community parks and at a variety of smaller facilities throughout the community. North Liberty publishes a quarterly directory of recreational programming. Their website allows online registration for all programs and allows users to reserve community facilities.

Waukee (population 16,500) has a staff of 5 full-time employees, including 2 recreation supervisors. They offer a variety of programs for children through senior citizens. Adult programming is primarily focused on sports leagues. Additional adult recreational programming is offered through Waukee Community School District’s Community Education. The Waukee Parks and Recreation Department issues a bi-annual directory of programming.

The Parks and Recreation Department in Altoona (population 16,500) operates within the Public Works Department. The Department’s primary goals are to maintain and improve the City’s parks, trails and facilities and to monitor and maintain the health of the City’s urban forest, prairie and waterways. They operate the Altoona Aquatic Center and the Sam Wise Youth Sports Complex. Recreation programming is primarily offered by other community entities such as the Altoona Library and Altoona Campus. The Altoona Campus is a YMCA style recreation facility offering gym space, fitness facilities and an indoor pool. The Campus facility is available for use by the majority of Pleasant Hill residents.

Analysis of Benchmarking

This analysis of comparable communities primarily serves to confirm many of the issues and recommendations outlined in the remainder of the Master Plan and provides the City with insight into best practices and future growth models.

- ◆ In general, the benchmarking communities provide more recreation program offerings, have more recreation facilities and more staff.
- ◆ As the benchmarking communities increase in size, they are more likely to provide major community recreation facilities such as a community recreation center and community aquatics facilities.
- ◆ The benchmarking communities tend to do a better job of educating the public about and promoting program offerings through improved web presence and published “guides”.
- ◆ The benchmarking communities generally provide online registration and facility rental through their websites, making programming offerings easier to access for the public.
- ◆ The benchmarking communities have effective partnerships in providing recreation facilities and programming.

Connecting Residents to Recreation Opportunities

Pleasant Hill has a long history of offering basic recreation programming and partnering with other community agencies and service providers to offer expanded recreational opportunities for residents.

Private and non-profit partners include:

- ◆ Toad Valley Golf Course
- ◆ Copper Creek Golf Course
- ◆ The Orange Planet
- ◆ Altoona Campus
- ◆ Lakeside Fitness
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Library
- ◆ Sleepy Hollow Sports Park
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Little League
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Soccer League
- ◆ Oakwood Methodist Church (Gym Rental)
- ◆ Elder Corporation – J. Elder (Special Event)
- ◆ Berean Assembly of God – Kevin Umphress (5K & 10K Run)
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Elementary
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Elementary – PTO
- ◆ Central Campus – Volunteer
- ◆ Southeast Polk High School – Senior Cleanup Day
- ◆ Boy Scout Troop 98
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Lions Club
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Girl Scout Troop
- ◆ Iowa DNR
- ◆ US Coast Guard Auxiliary
- ◆ City of Des Moines
- ◆ Polk County Conservation
- ◆ Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce



While this model was borne out of necessity because of limited staffing for recreation programming, it continues to be an appropriate model given modern preferences for recreation and the increasing fragmentation of recreation activities. It is very difficult to keep up with changing preferences and trends that come and go – hot yoga, geocaching, etc. – and some activities are simply best provided by the private sector – BMX tracks, paintball, etc. Staff has been very willing to offer programs when requested by citizens, but most are not continued because of lack of participation. Additional staff focused on community outreach could help remedy this problem, as well as working with the City’s Development and Communications Specialist to publicize classes and events.

The City can also support recreation opportunities by continuing to provide facilities to outside groups such as sports or events organizations. This effort will need to be supported by the development of formalized use agreements including fee structure.

An effective model is for the City to continue to offer basic recreation programming focused primarily on children and seniors. The City should also play an expanded role in connecting residents to the wide variety of recreation opportunities offered throughout other partner organizations and private providers. The City could become a one-stop clearinghouse of information that makes it easy for Pleasant Hill residents to learn about and connect to a multitude of recreation opportunities.



Recreation Programming Recommendations

- ◆ Continue to support and offer youth programming that is inclusive for children of all abilities and basic senior programming. Where possible, develop basic adult programming as well.
- ◆ Continue to partner and contract with other agencies and service providers to offer a wide variety of recreational programming for all segments of the community. The City will need to maintain active partnerships with a variety of providers. Create an online database including registration information where possible.
- ◆ Continue to partner with the Pleasant Hill Library to offer joint programming.
- ◆ Hire an additional staff person (at least part-time) to work on community outreach, volunteer coordination, facility reservation and program registration.
- ◆ Coordinate with City's Development and Communications Specialist and Library to publish a bi-annual program directory. Consider distribution through the Herald-Index section of the Des Moines Register and other local publications, as well through schools and other agencies.
- ◆ Create an online program registration and facility reservation system.
- ◆ Periodically reassess the staffing needs of the Parks and Recreation Division both in terms of recreation programming and facility support and maintenance.



Trails

An effective and interconnected network of community trails is an important component of a healthy, progressive city. Trails play an important role not only as recreation resources but in multimodal transportation as well. Connections to the Central Iowa Trails system link Pleasant Hill to important destinations and employment centers throughout the metro area. Another role of the trails network is to provide interconnection throughout the community itself. This has historically been very difficult given the physical barriers of topography and transportation corridors that divide the Pleasant Hill community. To be successful, the trails system must overcome these barriers and connect the entire community. The existing trail network is relatively small. This presents both challenges and opportunities – challenges to retrofit trails in existing neighborhoods and opportunities to bring the majority of the community up to modern trail design standards.



Importance of Community Trails

A robust and connected system of trails is vital to the community. Trails not only address recreation needs and improve quality of life for residents and can be an important component of economic development. Trails promote health and walkability and are consistent with a “Health in All Policies” approach. They are also important components of a multi-modal transportation system.

Minimum Design Standards

Pleasant Hill has a variety of different existing trail widths and design standards, from 6 feet wide sidewalks to 12 feet wide regional trails. For all future trails, the standard width should be 10 feet. In special cases 8 feet wide trails may be allowable. All regional level 1 trails should be 12 feet wide. All future trails should meet AASHTO trail design standards.

Complete Streets

When most people think of trails, they visualize wide paths meandering through wooded areas or along creeks. Certainly these dedicated off-street alignments in greenways are preferable from a trail user experience standpoint, but in reality, it is very difficult to create a fully interconnected trail system throughout a community utilizing only these kinds of trails. This is especially true of Pleasant Hill where the existing development patterns in unincorporated areas will limit the ability to create continuous trails in greenways and major roadway corridors allow only limited crossings.

This is not to say that the City should not plan for and prioritize off street trail routes, but real community connectivity is likely to only be achieved through a network of complete streets.

Complete streets are roadways that are designed to accommodate multiple modes of transportation including not only cars and trucks, but also mass transit, bicyclists and pedestrians. Typically roadways designed to complete streets standards include an off-road trail on one or both sides. Where limited ROW precludes the inclusion of an off-road multi-use trail, dedicated bicycle lanes or shared lanes may be used. Complete streets offer opportunities to extend the trail network much more efficiently in that they are integrated with roadway development that is an essential function of cities. The City should develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy.

Once again, the City should continue to look for opportunities to develop planned off-street trails in greenways and natural areas and should acquire property and easements as opportunities present themselves.

Trail Development Priorities

While a great deal of trail development is based on opportunity (coincident with property development), the City should have guidelines for planning and completing other trail projects throughout the community. High priority projects include:

- ◆ Completing/extending existing routes. This leverages the investment in current trails.
- ◆ Main connectors to existing population centers and major community destinations
- ◆ Connections to regional trail systems
- ◆ Grade separations/safety improvements
- ◆ Complete streets developed as part of any major transportation project – the Southeast Connector is a good example

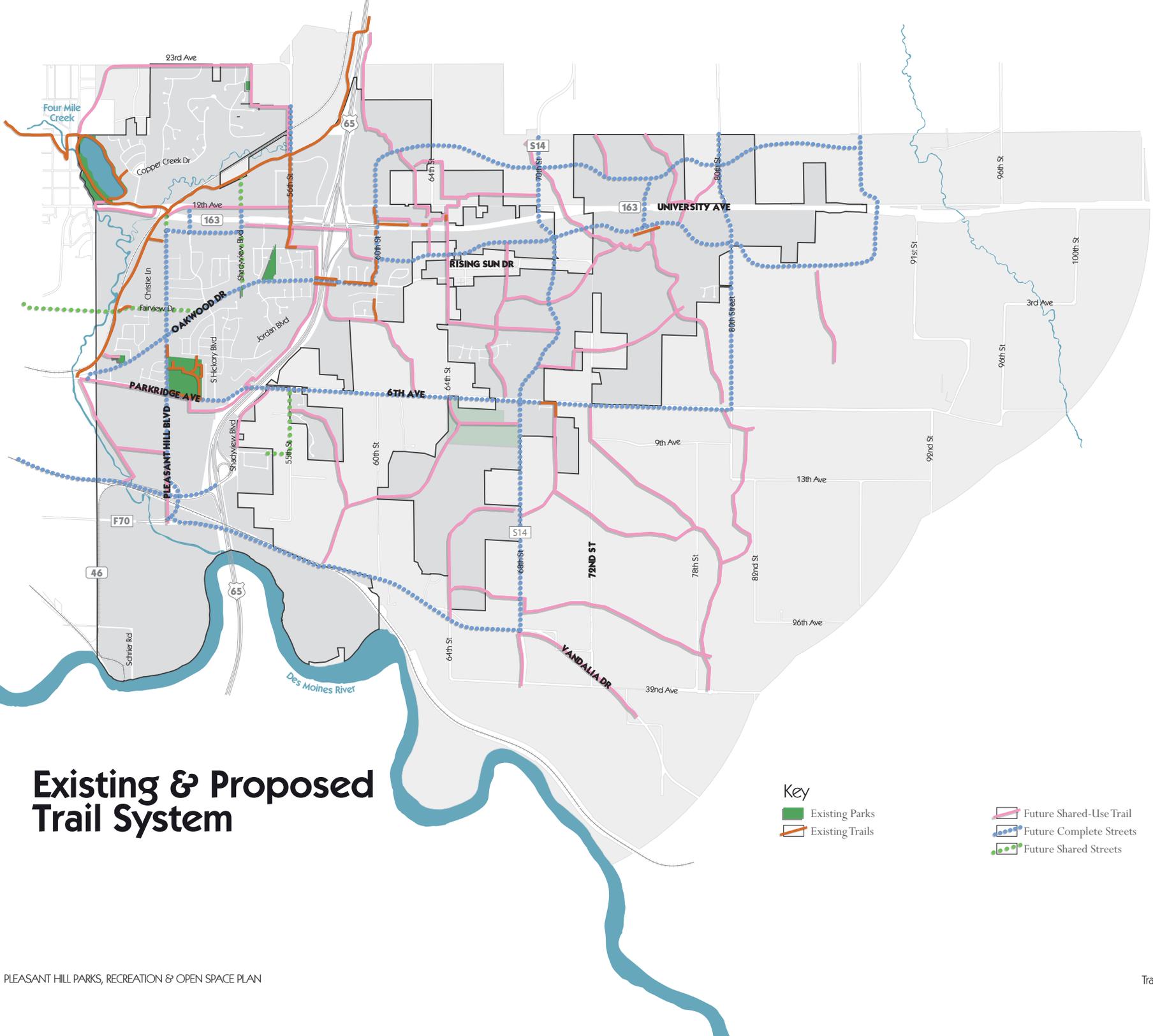
Grade-Separated Crossings

University Avenue/Highway 163 and Highway 65 present significant barriers to community trail connectivity. Highway 65 is access controlled, so crossings can only happen at underpasses, and Highway 163 is very dangerous for pedestrians and bikes. Grade separated crossings of these two roadways are vital to community connectivity.

Potential locations for grade-separated crossings on University Ave/Highway 163 include all major intersections along with a new crossing under the Four Mile Creek Bridge near Copper Creek. The future locations of these crossings will continue to be a significant unknown in the day to day planning activities of the City. They will affect roadway and trail projects along with development agreements for major projects. To eliminate some of this uncertainty, the City should complete an engineering study of pedestrian/multi-use trail crossings of University Ave/Hwy 163 to assess possible locations with the intent of identifying priority locations and configurations (grade separated vs at grade crossings).

Crossings exist at the underpasses along Highway 65 but many are built to lesser standards. All crossings should be upgraded to a minimum of one 10 feet wide trail on either side of the local road. A crossing of SE 6th Ave near Four Mile Elementary is recommended as well.





Existing & Proposed Trail System



Trail Heads

Trail heads are an important component of a complete trails network. They provide access to the trail system as well as services for trail users. Minimum design standards for trail heads include parking, bike racks, restroom facilities, a drinking fountain and seating areas. They should also include wayfinding signage that orients users to where they are in the system and important destinations. Other amenities may include a small shelter or picnic tables. One fully developed trail head exists at Copper Creek Lake Park. There are other locations that offer parking only and could be upgraded to fully developed trail heads. Those locations include NE 56th Street, Scott Street, and Christie Lane.

Possible locations for others include:

- ◆ Near SE connector
- ◆ Sunset park
- ◆ Yellow Banks (in association with Polk County Conservation Board)
- ◆ New 76 acre park
- ◆ Southeast Polk High School
- ◆ Future community park in the NE quadrant of the community

Navigation & Wayfinding

The Trails Roundtable has adopted the Central Iowa Trails system to provide consistent branding and wayfinding throughout the entire region. This was done with the idea of benefiting all communities by establishing Central Iowa as a premier trail destination throughout the country. This system includes mapping, wayfinding, and community information and provides opportunities for Pleasant Hill to create a unique identity within the system. Pleasant Hill has begun the implementation of the CIT system in locations such as Copper Creek Lake Park. It is recommended that Pleasant Hill continue to implement the CIT system as trail development continues throughout the community.



Trail Development & Maintenance

In newly developing areas, it is the responsibility of the developer to build planned trails or provide for future construction of the trails if there is a compelling reason to delay construction. In existing developments, typically cities require that individual property owners contribute the cost of a standard 5' walk and other funding is used to cover the remaining costs. In a complete streets model, either of these mechanisms can be used or the cost of the trails may be included in the roadway development funding.

With regard to maintenance, most cities adopt a model that the City maintains any designated trail that is wider than a standard sidewalk. This is done to provide consistent maintenance and snow removal practices throughout the trail system and with the understanding that placing these responsibilities on a property owner may create an undue hardship. It is recommended Pleasant Hill adopt this same model.



Open Space & Natural Resources

Open space has historically been an important part of parks systems although traditionally that open space has been acquired and managed as a recreation resource. The idea of cities acquiring and managing open space for natural resource protection is a fairly new concept but one that is growing in importance. Traditionally these kinds of natural resource management activities have been the province of County Conservation Boards, but increasingly cities are recognizing the importance of natural resource management. This is evidenced by the focus placed on cities as natural resource managers, by regional planning initiatives such as the Tomorrow Plan and Capital Crossroads, and by the involvement of cities in Regional Watershed Management Authorities.

City's Role as a Conservation Organization

Pleasant Hill is a place of great beauty with significant natural resources—the Des Moines River, streams, woodlands, dramatic topography, and even the agricultural character of large lot rural subdivisions. The residents of Pleasant Hill recognize this and have clearly expressed the desire for the City to preserve its distinctive natural resources. The City should identify and protect unique and critical natural resource areas within the community. This can be done through a combination of acquisition, partnerships, advocacy, and appropriate development regulations. It is important to note that acquisition and management of natural resource areas will require appropriate commitments of budget and staff. These impacts can be moderated by forging partnerships with organizations such as the Polk County Conservation Board where collaborative arrangements for ownership and management can be created. It is also important to connect the citizens of Pleasant Hill to these natural areas and maximize the associated learning and recreational opportunities.

The next evolution of the City's role in natural resource issues could be an exploration of the Healthy Communities movement. A healthy communities approach employs community development strategies and involves a wide range of local institutions, community groups and private citizens, as well as health professionals, in efforts to improve the conditions that encourage and support healthy living. The process re-engages citizens in helping realize their visions for a healthier community and makes a positive change in its overall quality of life. The outcome is a physical and civic environment that promotes healthy individuals in healthy communities. Ideas like urban agriculture could be explored.



Natural Resource Areas

Natural Resource Areas are land set aside to preserve unique natural resources, remnant landscapes and open space and/or to provide visual/aesthetics buffering. Natural resource areas include woodlands, prairies and water resources. The size is based on the resource and the service area is the entire community. Natural resource areas can be critical in preserving natural systems that provide important functions such as storm water treatment and flood control. Preservation of these natural systems can offset the cost of built infrastructure and provide sustainable alternatives to traditional approaches. The City should identify critical natural resource areas and protect them through acquisition or appropriate development regulations. In addition to the Polk County Conservation Board, the City should look to other partners to help in achieving this goal. Organizations such as Iowa Natural Heritage, other conservation organizations and private foundations can be significant players in natural resource area acquisition and protection.

Greenways

Greenways are a special subset of natural resource areas that typically follow waterways throughout the community and tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment. The size of greenways is variable with a 25 foot minimum width and a preferred width of 200 feet plus.

The City should maintain and enhance a system of fully functional greenways throughout the City. This can be done through property acquisition via the Stream Buffer Protection and Management ordinance and other development restrictions. The City should also look to partner with and educate private property owners regarding the benefits of preserving functioning greenways throughout the community. Watershed Management Authorities and the Polk County Conservation Board may provide resources and support for this activity.

City Ownership of Natural Resource Areas

The City should strategically assess the benefits and impacts of all natural resource area acquisitions. It may not be in the City's best interest to own a large number of small non-contiguous parcels. The City should seek to own and manage larger areas (over 5 acres) and contiguous parcels that can provide significant public access and uninterrupted greenways. Related to this, it is recommended the City reconsider Chapter 104 Stream Buffer Protection and Management ordinance and look at the ownership provisions contained therein. The City may want to consider modifications to the ordinance that make City ownership optional to avoid receiving a multitude of small non-contiguous parcels which cannot be linked to a larger system of open space and trails.

Acquisition & Protection Priorities

Priority areas for natural resource acquisition and protection include:

- ◆ Des Moines River corridor
- ◆ Four Mile Creek corridor
- ◆ Other creeks and waterways
- ◆ High quality natural resources including woodlands, savannas, and prairies
- ◆ Interconnected flood plains and wetlands



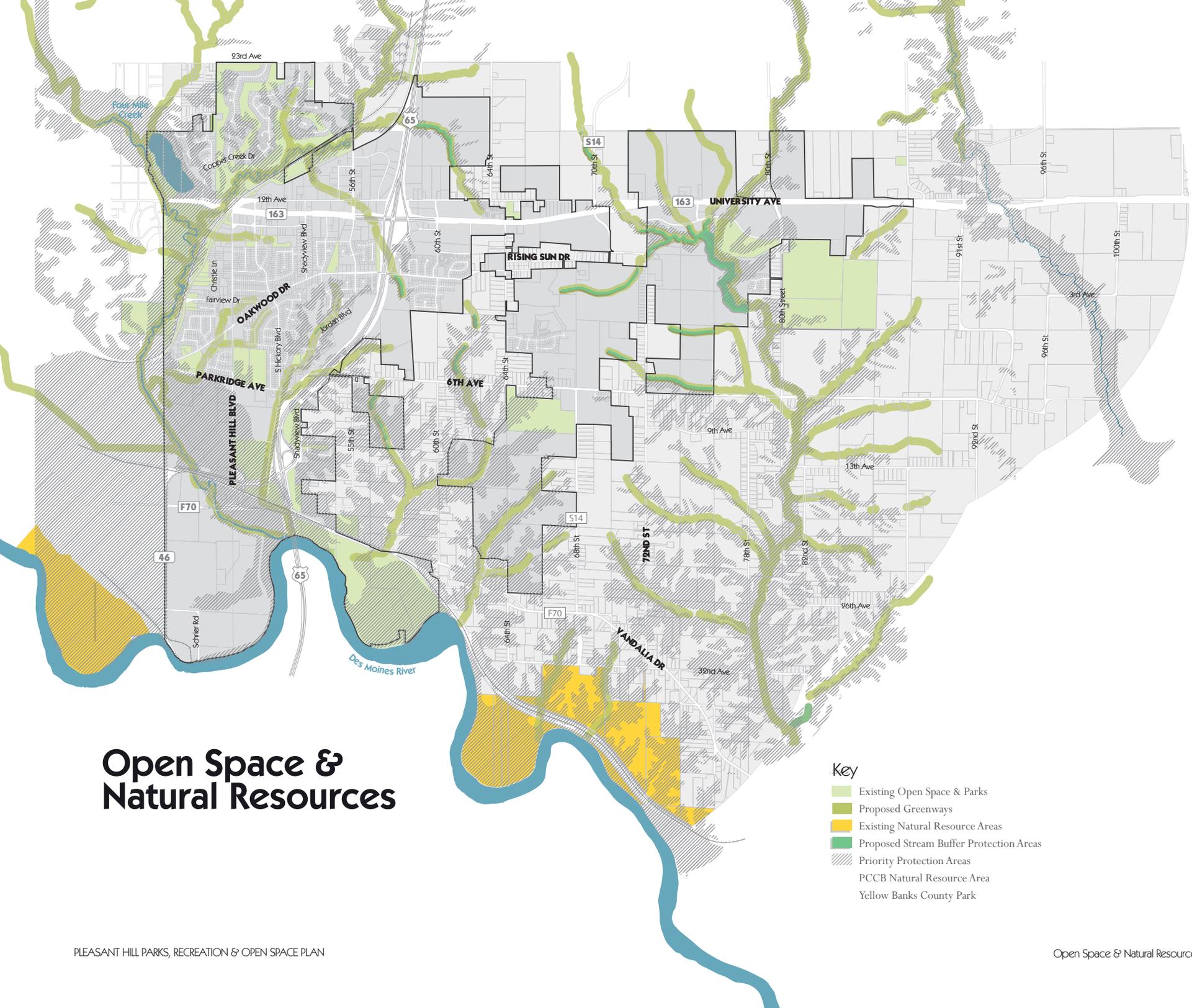
Connection to the Des Moines River

The Des Moines River could and should be a great community asset. Historically the community has turned its back on the river. Topography and transportation corridors make it difficult to access. Adjacent industrial land use further separates it from the community. There are only two public accesses to the river within the community: the Pleasant Hill Boat Ramp and the Yellow Banks Boat Ramp (a County facility). Another access may be possible in the near future thanks to the recent acquisition of a new natural resource area by Polk County to the west of the existing Pleasant Hill Boat Ramp. Other than these discrete locations, there is little connection to or interaction with the river. The City should look for ways to positively engage the river. This can begin with appropriate land use, limiting development in flood prone areas and demonstrating best practices in floodplain management. The City should prioritize acquisition and protection of natural resource areas associated with the river. This includes habitat restoration and cleanup activities. Finally the City should focus on re-connecting the citizens of Pleasant Hill to the river by the development of additional river access points and trails that engage the river. In 2010

the “Des Moines River Water Trail – South Section (Harriet Street to Yellow Banks)” was designated as a National Recreation Trail in the National Trails System. The City should look for ways to capitalize on this designation with ideas related to engaging water trail users in the community.

Regional Detention

Regional detention is an idea promoted by many of the watershed management authorities. It is more effective in dealing with water quality issues than small individual detention basins and it can be used as an economic development tool. Regional detention is frequently included as an amenity in community scale parks. The biggest negative of regional detention is that the cost for initial construction must often be fronted by the City and ultimately allocated to all the affected properties. It can be difficult to get all the involved parties to agree. There also need to be agreements for the affected properties to pay for long term maintenance of the facility. The City should work with the appropriate Watershed Management Authorities and property owners to explore possibilities and develop policies related to regional detention. The best opportunities for regional detention exist in the large undeveloped areas in the east and northeast portions of the community.



Open Space & Natural Resources

Key

- Existing Open Space & Parks
- Proposed Greenways
- Existing Natural Resource Areas
- Proposed Stream Buffer Protection Areas
- Priority Protection Areas
- PCCB Natural Resource Area
- Yellow Banks County Park

A vibrant system of parks, trails and open space requires appropriate administrative and operational support to function efficiently.



Other Recommendations

Administrative Needs

There is a need for new Parks and Recreation Division administrative offices. The current office space is inadequate for existing staff. There is no meeting space and there is no room for any additional staff. Current offices are also isolated from other City staff, which makes collaboration difficult. Additionally the current set up is not customer friendly. There is no street address for the office, which makes it difficult for residents to find and the offices are not set up to receive the public. Ideally, the Parks and Recreation Division office will be relocated to a new City Hall facility when it is developed.

There is a need for an online registration system for parks and recreation offerings. Currently, there is no online registration system, which puts Pleasant Hill at a competitive disadvantage and also is not friendly from a customer service standpoint.

Long term as the Parks and Recreation Division continues to grow, it should be structured as an independent city department, with its own department head that reports to the City Manager.

There is a need to create a new staff position within the division that focuses on community outreach, volunteer coordination and program registration. Other staffing needs include administrative support for registrations, facility reservations and general customer service. The City should periodically reassess the staffing needs of the Parks and Recreation Division both in terms of recreation programming and facility support and maintenance. This will be especially important as new facilities are developed or new programs are instituted.

There is an opportunity to create a “Friends of the Pleasant Hill Parks” organization. This would be a volunteer organization to help in fundraising, promotion and coordinating volunteer projects. It can be associated with a qualifying Community Foundation to offer tax advantages to donors and allow funding of park related improvements as gifts to the community. An initial step may be to create a better database of existing volunteers.

The City should complete a review and update of current Park policies and regulations.

Support Facility Needs

Currently parks maintenance is located in a single metal building adjacent to the Public Works facility off of S. Pleasant Hill Blvd. In the long term as the parks system grows, additional facility space will be needed. One option would be to invest in expanding the current location. This may not be the best option, however. Once the Southeast Connector is constructed, this area will be one of the major entrances to Pleasant Hill and the current Public Works/Parks Maintenance site may be better redeveloped as another use taking advantage of the visibility of the site. This could warrant relocation to an upgraded joint facility with public works in the future. Additionally, when the new 76 acre park is developed, it will need to include a remote maintenance facility to house mowers and other equipment required to support a park of that size.

This Master Plan serves to provide general guidance for the future development of Pleasant Hill's Parks, Trails and Open Space system. The plan addresses both current issues and anticipated future needs of the community. The Plan should be a resource to the City for all Parks, Trails and Open Space development and programming.

Implementation



Implementation Considerations

This Master Plan creates an agreed-upon road map for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, trails and open space within the community. Completion of the Master Plan is only the first step, however. The Master Plan should serve as a resource to the Council, Staff, partners and the public to guide the actions that will ultimately achieve the vision for the future of Pleasant Hill. This section lays out several to the next steps that must be undertaken to begin the process of implementation.

Annual Implementation Actions:

There are ongoing implementation actions that should be taken each year. These steps include:

- ◆ Prepare Annual Goals. Reassess the Master Plan on an annual basis. Which recommendations have been completed? Which haven't? Engage Staff, elected officials, partners, and citizens in discussions of priorities and financial considerations.
- ◆ Budget for identified priorities through the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) along with the full range of other funding strategies and partnerships.

Long Term Implementation Actions

- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive Master Plan update in 10-15 years. It is important to understand that the Master Plan is not a static document. As Pleasant Hill continues to change, community attitudes change, new trends in recreation develop, or new issues arise, the Master Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Priority Implementation Actions

There are many recommendations contained in the Master Plan. This section contains some critical first steps that will set the stage for successful implementation of the Master Plan. These actions include such things as policy and ordinance changes, communication and building partnerships. Immediate priorities are presented in **bold**.

1. *Communication & Public Support*

- ◆ Identify potential partners. Begin creating coalitions of agencies, organizations, community groups, private organizations, non-profits, and individuals who may have a mutually-beneficial interest in the parks, trails, and open space or have a complimentary mission that can help move the Master Plan forward.
- ◆ Create a communication plan to clearly communicate the overarching needs and issues to citizens, elected officials and potential public and private partners. It is critical that all of the various constituent groups be educated on the important natural resource conservation, quality of life and economic development issues touched upon in the Master Plan.

- ◆ Conduct a financial feasibility study to test implementation priorities and refine the range of likely funding alternatives. The Trust for Public Land is a potential partner in providing this type of study. In conjunction with that study, look at the entire revenue stream including traditional and non-traditional funding sources and identify strategies to match those sources to the priorities identified.
- ◆ Conduct polling to test support of likely voters for implementation priorities and funding alternatives identified in the financial feasibility study.
- ◆ Engage the public and partners in a discussion of implementation priorities and strategies for funding and develop a broadly supported plan for moving forward.

2. Parks and Facilities

- ◆ Budget annually for improvements to existing neighborhood parks in order to bring them up to a consistent standard. Complete master plans for neighborhood parks to guide development and guide capital improvement planning .
- ◆ **Complete a master plan and implementation strategy for the 76 acre park.**
- ◆ **Review and update subdivision and parkland dedication ordinances and supporting administrative practices to effectively provide neighborhood parks and trails in association with new residential development.**

3. Community Recreation Facilities

- ◆ The City should explore expansions of existing partnerships with recreation facilities and programming providers. The City can serve as a central location to connect their residents to these facilities and coordinate programming. To support this, the City could even create its own programming within these facilities.
- ◆ The City should negotiate a formal agreement with the Altoona Campus to provide access to the facility for residents of Pleasant Hill in the Des Moines School District at a “resident” rate.
- ◆ The City should investigate the possibility of negotiating an agreement with the Southeast Polk School District to allow Pleasant Hill residents use of their indoor pools for lap swimming, fitness classes and other organized aquatics programming.

4. Trails

- ◆ **Adopt uniform minimum trail development standards including minimum design standards and consistent policies for cost allocation and maintenance responsibilities.**
- ◆ **Develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy which clearly communicates the City’s commitment to multimodal connectivity throughout the City.**
- ◆ **Complete an engineering study of pedestrian/multi-use trail crossings of University Ave/Hwy 163 to assess possible locations with the intent of identifying priority locations and configurations (grade separated vs at grade crossings).**
- ◆ Identify priority trail projects within the community and include them in the Capital Improvement Plan. Look for alternate funding strategies including grants.

5. Open Space / Natural Resources

- ◆ **Reconsider Chapter 104 Stream Buffer Protection and Management ordinance and look at the ownership provisions contained therein. The City may want to consider modifications to the ordinance that make City ownership optional to avoid receiving a number of small non-contiguous parcels which cannot be linked to a larger system of open space and trails.**
- ◆ Work with Watershed Management Authorities and property owners to explore possibilities and develop policies related to regional detention.
- ◆ Work with Watershed Management Authorities to educate private property owners regarding the benefits of implementing “best practices” and preserving functioning greenways throughout the community.
- ◆ Create a list of the highest priority preservation parcels throughout the community and begin a dialog with property owners and other potential partners or stakeholders regarding the future of those parcels.

6. Recreation Programming

- ◆ Continue to support and offer youth programming that is inclusive for children of all abilities and basic senior programming. Where possible, develop basic adult programming as well.
- ◆ Continue to partner and contract with other agencies and service providers to offer a wide variety of recreational programming for all segments of the community. The City will need to maintain active partnerships with a variety of providers. Create an online database including registration information where possible.
- ◆ Continue to partner with the Pleasant Hill Library to offer joint programming.
- ◆ Coordinate with City’s Development and Communications Specialist and Library to publish a bi-annual program directory. Consider distribution through the Herald-Index Section of the Des Moines Register and other local publications, as well through schools and other agencies.
- ◆ **Create an online program registration and facility reservation system.**

7. Administrative

- ◆ Create a new staff position within the department that focuses on community outreach, volunteer coordination and program registration.
- ◆ Create a “Friends of the Pleasant Hill Parks” organization. This would be a volunteer organization to help in fundraising, promotion and coordinating volunteer projects. It can be associated with a qualifying Community Foundation to offer tax advantages to donors and allow funding of park related improvements as gifts to the community.
- ◆ The City should complete a review and update of current Park policies and regulations.

Funding & Revenue Sources

The recommendations of the Master Plan vary greatly in financial considerations necessary to implement and support them. While many of the recommendations can be implemented through the annual budgeting process, several others will require additional funding sources such as bonding, grants, or special financial assistance. These discussions of funding typically focus on a few main tools used by City governments – general fund, general obligation bonds, and a well-known group of grants such as REAP and STP funds. But as grant sources continue to dry up and municipal budgets get stretched ever more thin, it is important to take a creative and comprehensive approach to funding and revenue creation. Following is a listing of many sources of development and operating funds Pleasant Hill can consider. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, but instead is intended to generate thought and discussion.

User Supported Sources & Impact Fees

Fees/Charges

The City relies on fees and charges for major revenue generation to offset program expenses. Fees should be market-driven with reasonable, affordable fees and is consistent with national trends relating to public park and recreation agencies.

Reservations

This revenue source comes from the right to reserve specific public property for a set amount of time. The reservation rates are usually set and apply to group picnic shelters, meeting rooms for weddings, reunions and outings or other type of facilities for a special activity.

Equipment Rental

The revenue source is available on the rental of equipment such as tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, canoes, etc. that are used for recreation purposes.

Parking Fee

This fee applies to parking at selected destination facilities, events and other attractions to help offset capital and operational cost.

Ticket Sales/Admissions

This revenue source is on accessing facilities for self-directed activities such as pools, ice-skating rinks, ballparks and entertainment activities. These user fees help offset operational costs.

Security & Clean-Up Fees

Charge groups and individuals security and clean-up fees for special events other type of events held in parks.

Capital Improvement Fees

These fees are on top of the set user rate for accessing facilities such as campgrounds, lodges and rental facilities to support capital improvements that benefit the user of the facility.

Local Voluntary Surcharges

This is similar to a Capital Improvement Fee but is a voluntary surcharge that is presented to users as part of their rate or fee for using selected facilities. This is typically \$1 and goes to support ongoing operation and improvement of that facility. Users can opt out of paying the fee if they so choose.

Patron Cards

This allows patrons of a specific recreational facility to purchase patron cards for a month or a year that allows them special privileges above the general public. The patron cards can range in price from \$15.00 a month to \$150.00 a year.

Local Taxpayer Supported Sources

General Fund

Tax revenues provided by the City Council from the City General Fund.

General Obligation Bonds

Bonded indebtedness issued for capital improvements and general public improvements. Depending on the size and nature of the project, public approval may be required through an election.

Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Tax

Tax based on gross receipts from charges and meals services, which may be used to build and operate park and recreation facilities.

Revenue Bonds

Bonds used for capital projects that will generate revenue for debt service where fees can be set aside to support repayment of the bond.

Sales Tax

The revenue source is very popular for funding park and recreation agencies either partially or fully. The normal sales tax rate is one cent for operations and one half cent for capital. This tax is very popular in high traffic tourism type and state parks. This requires a referendum.

Credit Card Surcharge Fees on Sports & Entertainment Tickets, Classes, etc.

This fee is a surcharge on top of the regular convenience fee for use of MasterCard and Visa. The fee usually is no more than \$5.00 and usually is \$3.00 on all exchanges. The money earned is used to help pay off the costs of improvement or for operational purposes.

Grants

It is important to note that local funding is vital to unlocking State and Federal grant funding. Local matching funds are usually a requirement of most grants and demonstrate to the granting agency that the City is invested in and supports the proposed project.

STP Funds

Federal funds are distributed through the state. There are several million dollars in enhancement revenues available for transportation related projects, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, rail depot rehabilitation, landscaping, and beautification projects.

TAP Funds

Transportation Alternative Program funds are distributed through the state. TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

State Rec Trails Program

These funds are awarded to refurbish trail bridges through the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Land & Water Conservation Fund

These funds are awarded for acquisition and development of parks, outdoor recreation, and supporting facilities through the National Park Service from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

REAP Grants

Resource Enhancement and Protection grants for acquisition and development of parks and open space from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Iowa Great Places Program

These funds are awarded for cultural initiatives and major projects that make an area unique from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

CAT Grant & RECAT Grant

Community Attraction and Tourism Grant and River Enhancement Community Attraction and Tourism Grant from the Iowa Department of Economic Development to assist projects that provide recreational, cultural, entertainment and educational attractions.

National Recreation & Park Association Grant

Several smaller grants are awarded through programs offered by the National Recreation and Park Association.

Water Recreation Access Grant

Funds for improving boat access facilities to Iowa's lakes, rivers and streams through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Philanthropic Sources

Volunteerism

The revenue source is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the City. This reduces the cost in providing the service and it builds advocacy into the system.

Foundation/Gifts

These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.

Friends Associations

These groups are formed to raise money typically for a single focus purpose that could include a park facility or program that will better the community as a whole and their special interest.

Naming Rights

Selling the naming rights for new or renovated buildings or park features to offset the development cost associated with the improvement.

Special Fundraisers

Many cities have special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects.

Land Trust

Many cities have developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost for acquiring land that needs to be preserved and protected for natural resource purposes. This could be a good source to look to for acquisition of future lands. The Conservation Board can work with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for this purpose.

Life Estates

This source of money is available when someone wants to leave their property to the City in exchange for them to live on their property until their death. The City usually can use a portion of the property for park purposes and then all of it after the person's death. This revenue source is very popular for individuals who have a lot of wealth and their estate will be highly taxed at their death and their children have to sell of their property because of probate costs. This allows the person to receive a good tax deduction yearly on their property while leaving a life estate.

Maintenance Endowments

Maintenance Endowments are set up for organizations and individuals to invest in ongoing maintenance improvements and infrastructure needs.

Family Tree Program

Many cities provide opportunities for families to buy a memorial tree to be planted in a park in honor of a loved one.

Irrevocable Remainder Trusts

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to the City in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then is available for the City to use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

Private Partnerships

Program Contractor Fees

The City receives a percentage of gross contractor fees for contractor programs held on county facilities. The percentages range from 25% to 40% depending on space, volume, and the amount of marketing the City does for the contractor. Recreation programming provided by private entities is a good example.

Booth Lease Space

Involves selling booth space to vendors in parks or at special events.

Advertising Sales

This revenue source is for the sale of tasteful and appropriate advertising on city related items such as program guides and newsletters or physical locations such as outfield fences or scoreboards.

Corporate Sponsorships

This revenue-funding source allows corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park systems in exchange for acknowledgment and possibly preferred access to certain facilities or events.

Utility Roundup Programs

Some agencies have worked with their local utilities on a round up program whereby a consumer can voluntarily pay the difference between their bill up to the even dollar amount and they then pay the agency the difference. Ideally, these monies are used to support utility improvements such as water and sewer systems.

Catering Permits & Services

This is a license to allow caterers to work in the park system on a permit basis with a set fee or a percentage of food sales returning to the City.

Hospitality Centers

These types of recreation facilities are developed for use by the public for wedding, reunions, and special gatherings. These facilities are not subsidized but operate at a profit. Some facilities are managed by outside caterers.

Private Concessionaires

Contract with a private business to provide and operate desirable recreational activities financed, constructed, and operated by the private sector with additional compensation paid to the City.

Permits (Special Use Permits)

These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. The City either receives a set amount of money or a percentage of the gross service that is being provided.

Private Developers

These developers lease space from City-owned land through a subordinate lease that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These could include large rental lodges or specialty recreation facilities such as marinas, restaurants, equestrian facilities, and recreation centers and ice arenas.

Leaseback Arrangements on Capital Facilities

Many cities do not have capital dollars to build revenue-producing facilities but they will hire a private investor to build the facility according to the specifications they want and the investment company will finance the project and the City will lease it back from them over 20 years.

Public Partnerships

Partnerships

Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a public agency, or a private business and a public agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.

Inter-local Agreements

Contractual relationships entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of facilities.

Operational Sources

Cost Avoidance

The City has the latitude to decide what kinds of facilities and services it provides to the public. Those facilities and services should be responsive to public needs but stay with the City's core mission. The City may determine that certain facilities or services are better provided through partnering, outsourcing, or deferring to another provider in the provision of a service and/or facility. In doing so, the City will experience savings. This is cost avoidance.

Surplus Sale of Property or Equipment by Auction

Includes sale of surplus property and equipment that can generate income.

Sale of Franchise/Development Rights

Land Swaps

The City trades property to improve their access or protection of resources.

Cell Towers

Cell towers could be allowed in strategic locations on City property. The City would receive revenue in the form of a one-time payment or annual lease.

Subordinate Easements

This revenue source is available when the City allows utility companies, businesses or individuals to develop some type of an improvement above ground or below ground on their property for a set period of time and a set dollar amount to be received by the City on an annual basis.

Agricultural Leases

Leasing undeveloped property along rivers or excess land to farmers for crops.

Sale of Mineral Rights

Selling mineral rights under parks for revenue purposes to include water, oil, natural gas and other by products for revenue purposes.