



# CITY OF STAPLES, MN

## Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan

ADOPTED  
MAY 2019



# Acknowledgements

This plan was made possible through the volunteer efforts of the steering committee, Park and Recreation Advisory Board, residents, and visitors of the City of Staples. From their volunteerism the Trails Plan was amended to become the city's first Park, Trail, and Open Space Plan.

Your ideas, input, energy, and passion for the environment and walkability enriched this plan and helped forge a course for the future of Staples parks, trails, and open spaces.

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**Vision Statement |** Individually and collectively, we will strengthen and encourage community support for creating a network of multiuse trails throughout the community, update our existing park system, and continue to explore collaboration opportunities with our neighboring local units of government.

We will do so through continuous and active participation with government agencies, local organizations, counties, townships, and neighboring communities.



# 01: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of the plan, work completed to date and the process as to how this document was created.



## Introduction

The City of Staples adopted a Trail Plan in 2006. That plan laid the foundation for the development of several new trails and walking connections throughout the city, including the Legacy Trail. In 2017 the city began updating its Comprehensive Plan. Within that update it was only fitting to update the Trail Plan. It became clear to the committee after the first meeting that the plan should be expanded to discuss parks, trails, and open space as these areas are so heavily dependent on each other.

The City of Staples owns and operates seven municipal parks including the Dower Lake Recreation Area with Minnesota’s longest fishing pier at 612 feet. In addition to these seven municipal parks, there are several privately held parks in and around Staples, including the Living Legacy Gardens. The recently constructed Legacy Trail provides bicyclists and pedestrians a paved route extending from south of the Airport Road overpass to Legacy Gardens.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages and maintains seven municipal parks and recreation areas, including the Staples Community Center and Dower Lake Recreation Area. This department is also responsible for the parks' shelter rentals, camping facilities, programs, and activities at the Community Center.

### GENERAL DEFINITIONS:

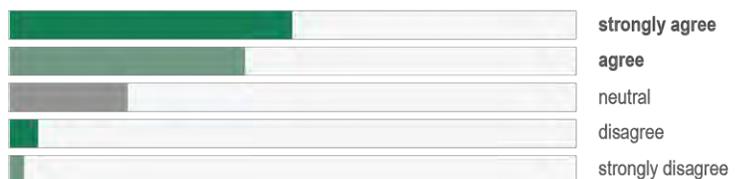
**Active park:** Provide residents with places for active recreation opportunities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, basketball courts, and connections to trail systems.

**Passive park:** Designed to preserve significant natural features, such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, and wooded areas. These spaces are not typically used for recreational purposes but provide aesthetic beauty and protect important natural systems.

**Trail:** The term “trail” may have different meanings depending on the context. There are many types of trails and each type provides different experiences for different users.

### PLEASE STATE YOUR OPINION AS TO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Staples Park and Recreation should improve trail connectivity and construct new trails.



# “More parks and updated parks are needed, especially to draw and retain families with children so Staples has a future.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants

## PURPOSE

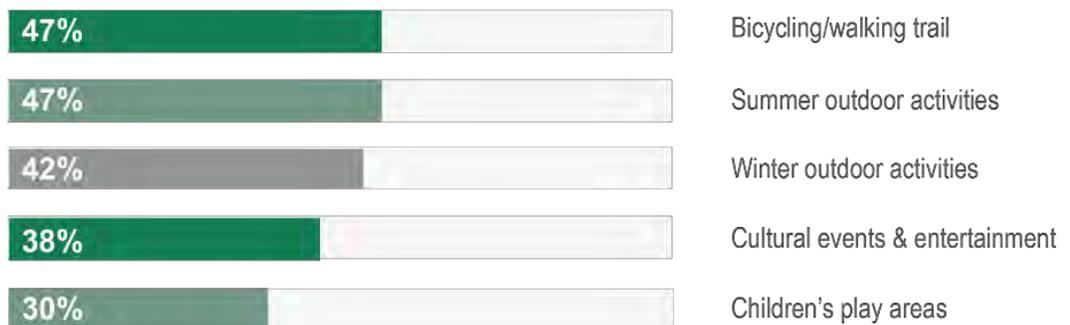
The *Park, Trail, and Open Space Plan* is developed to provide general guidance for the City Council, Park and Recreation Advisory Board, and city staff as they make long-range decisions regarding the park, trail, and open space network. This plan will address the impact, maintenance, and expansion of the park, trail, and open system within the City of Staples over the next 10 years.

This plan will provide guidance to elected and appointed officials and city staff in allocating resources, park maintenance, trail expansion, and land preservation. Community engagement forms the foundation of this plan. Feedback gathered from the community helped develop themes and form the basis for goals, policies, and strategies.

**The plan provides guidelines for decisions on a variety of recreational and open spaces, including:**

- › Identifying future trail corridors and connections.
- › Investing in active and passive recreation.
- › Preserving natural and sensitive environmental areas.
- › Cooperating with public and private entities to expand and maintain the existing park, trails, and open space network.
- › Prioritizing investments.
- › Identifying considerations for future connections to county and regional trails as well as recreational facilities.

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SUPPORT ENHANCING:





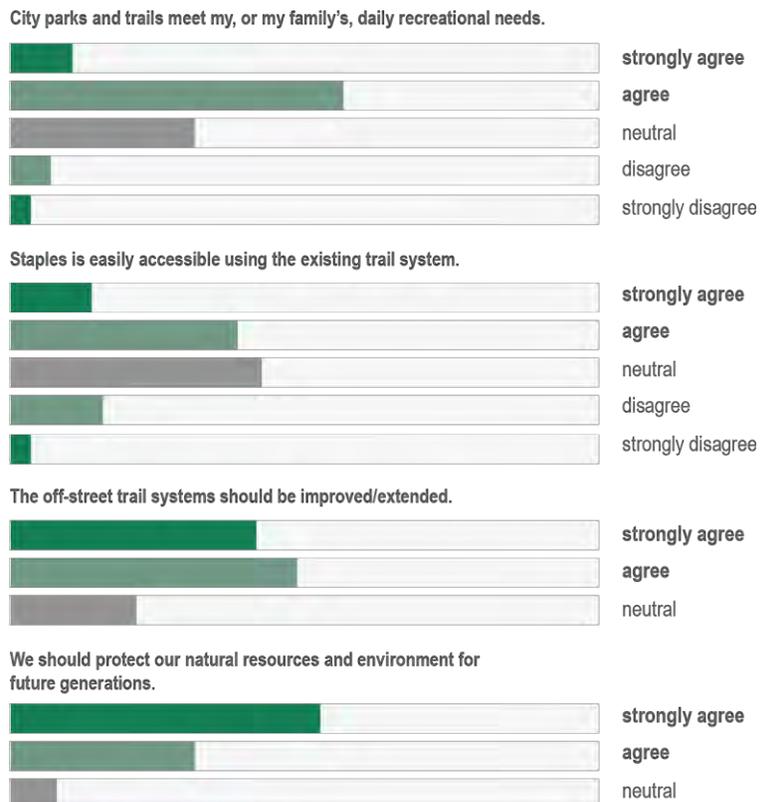
## Community Engagement

A community survey was deployed to gain further insight into the opinions and aspiration of community members. A total of 79 people completed the survey. Below is a graphic containing the survey responses on a variety of questions. Participants were asked to indicate if they agree or disagree with general statements around the existing park and trail network. The majority of survey respondents agreed that parks generally meet their daily recreational needs. Participants did not respond as clearly or positively about trails, stating they are “unsure” but also agree that Staples is easily accessible via the existing trail route. Overwhelmingly, however, participants agree that the off-street trail network needs to be enhanced.

A series of leading themes was identified based on the feedback from participants:

- Improve Existing Parks**  
 Several of the comments suggested updating current park amenities. Updating equipment, along with adding more grilling and picnic areas, were discussed.
- Improve Trails or Trail Connections**  
 Survey respondents strongly stated a need for a trail to Dower Lake Recreation Area and Lakewood Health System Hospital & Clinic Campus and finishing the Legacy trail section by the airport. There was also discussion on making a larger system connecting the larger parks.
- Park Amenities are Sought**  
 The idea of updating playground equipment, picnic areas, bathrooms, outdoor pool, and a splash pad were brought up in several responses. Respondents noted their wish for outdoor water activities in the community.

PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT STAPLES PARKS AND TRAILS:



The survey addressed the three areas outlined in this plan: parks, trails, and open spaces. The survey revealed a common set of initiatives around these plan elements. The survey summary and responses can be found in *Report A*.

**Based on the survey results the steering committee found three overarching goals:**

- 1. Connect the area parks with a trail system linking to the Legacy Trail and the Dower Lake Recreation Area.**
- 2. Establish a trailhead for the community.**
- 3. Maintain, improve, and expand the existing park, trail, and open space network.**

This plan also begins a conversation around the improvement of Staples' pedestrian and bicycle network. A complete network creates safe, comfortable, and accessible multimodal routes for people walking and bicycling.<sup>1</sup>

## PROCESS

In 2017, a steering committee began collaborating to facilitate the development of the city's first *Park, Trail, and Open Space Plan*. This is the first effort to address the city's park and open space network as an entire system. The trail network was the main focus in past planning efforts. One goal of this plan was to develop and build an inventory of the existing network, goals, policies, and implementation strategies for the expansion and maintenance of the existing system over the next 10 years and build upon the work completed with the 2006 Trail Plan.

Five steering committee meetings were held during the course of six months and a community survey was completed. The feedback from the survey formed the base of the goals and policies. The following chapters provide policy and strategy guidance to aid in the implementation of priorities and initiatives developed by survey respondents and priorities in the Comprehensive Plan.

“

**In addition to physical safety, user comfort is an important aspect of a multimodal network. Typically, additional separation between motor vehicles and those walking or bicycling or slowing motor vehicles to walking- and bicycling-compatible speeds, is desired to create a more comfortable network.”**

*Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks*

**“Not enough trails for a real health benefit, (they) are way too short. You should address trails.”**

**Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants

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<sup>1</sup> *Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.



## PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

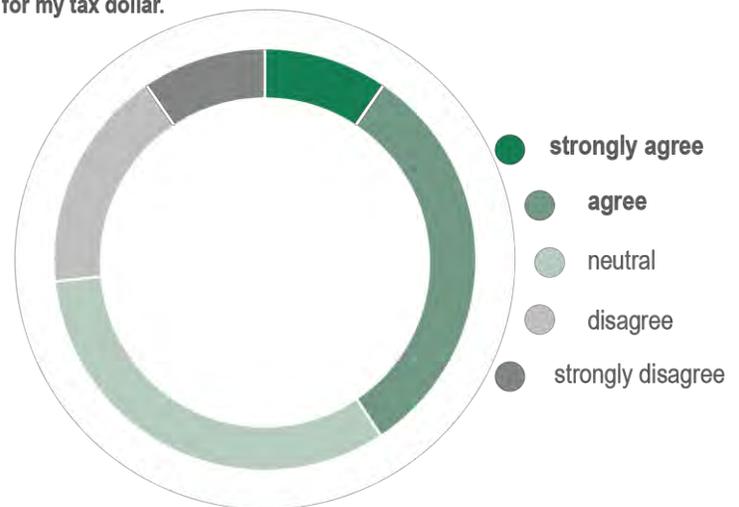
With the adoption of the Staples Comprehensive Plan in 2012, update in 2018, and The Staples Trail Plan in 2006, the City of Staples has committed to developing a Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan. Past efforts have been specifically focused on trail development, but with the 2018 Comprehensive Plan update, the city is looking to enhance all components of the trail network and expand the focus to the city's parks and open spaces.

### The 2006 Trail Plan identified the following key elements:

- The trail system is intended to connect residential areas with local and regional amenities.
- The existing trail system in Staples consists of short, disconnected, nonpublic segments. These segments are continued nor intentionally linked.
- Many of these trails are not well known by the public, usually benefitting adjacent property owners.
- Trails are an essential component to a vibrant and healthy community

### PLEASE STATE YOUR OPINION AS TO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

I am satisfied with the recreation services and facilities that I receive for my tax dollar.



## EXISTING POLICY LANGUAGE

### Concepts from the 2018 Staples Comprehensive Plan

- Sidewalks and trails are important transportation components for children and adults alike in any community. The city should prepare an inventory of all existing sidewalks and trails in the community. The inventory should include an assessment of the condition and be mapped on the digital system.
- Standards for the construction of the pedestrian facilities in terms of grading and base construction, slopes, width, surface treatment, etc., should be established for the city. These standards should be adhered to by the state, counties, and the city, as well as subdividers of land who are installing public improvements.

- The city should develop a sidewalk plan that is integrated into the trail plan concepts proposed in the Park Plan element. The plan should establish priorities for what streets should be required to have sidewalks constructed and who will maintain them. The plan should also include a 10-year schedule for construction/reconstruction of sidewalks. Sidewalk improvements along major roadways should be coordinated with the state or the counties responsible for the project.
- The city should consider adding some additional small-scale parks in areas that are more removed from the existing parks. The parkland could either be purchased by the city or accepted as a dedication through the subdivision platting process.

In addition to local and county plans, the state of Minnesota provides priorities for parks and trails of state and regional significance as well as policies around outdoor recreation.

- > Parks and Trail Legacy Plan
- > State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- > Statewide Bicycle System Plan

### **Past Comprehensive Plan Goals**

The City of Staples has a history of long-range planning efforts. With repetitious Comprehensive Plan updates, the city has also placed emphasis on park and trail planning. This support for park and trail development is located within the 2012 Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Goal 1: City Parks - Improve and enhance the city parks system.**

- Policy 1: Park Planning, Design, and Implementation - Work with the Park and Recreation Advisory Board, citizens, recreation organizations, civic groups, and public agencies to implement the park and recreation recommendations.
- Policy 2: Use and Maintenance - Continue to maintain the parks system in a safe and attractive manner. Encourage the safe and reasonable use of city parks.

#### **Goal 2: Community Center - Promote the use of the Community Center.**

- Policy 1: Management - Promote and coordinate services available at the Community Center to maximize their use and benefit to the citizens in the community.

#### **Goal 3: Trails - Promote the development and maintenance of a citywide trail system.**

- Policy 1: Trail Planning, Design and Implementation: Work with the Community Services Board, citizens, recreation organizations, civic groups, and public agencies to implement the City's Trail Plan.

**“Long bike trails and paved walking trails.”**

**| Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants

## TODD COUNTY

Todd County adopted a Parks, Trails, and Open Space plan in May 2006. Its vision statement states, “We envision the recreation and open space system that maintains and enhances the quality of life in Todd County. Citizens and visitors alike enjoy the rural and small-town character that has shaped our County’s history. We wisely managed, use, and improve the wealth of natural resource throughout the County.”

Through a network of public and private partnerships, we are working together to plan, design, build, maintain, and sustain a range of recreational opportunities and amenities, including:

- Open spaces that protect private land ownership, conserve natural resource, and promote private recreational opportunities.
- A variety of public parks and facilities designed to meet the needs of all ages of people from our youth to senior citizens.
- Trails and waterways that provide recreational connection for people as well and critical connections for fish and wildlife.
- Safe and cost-effective public recreational services facilities.

## WADENA COUNTY

Wadena County’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan has a set of goals and policies in its parks and trails. It states: Several thousands of acres are also available to the public. Wadena County is home to the Huntersville and Lyons State Forests, 10 county campgrounds with adjoining lands for hiking, and a number of state-administered wildlife management areas and parks. There are also several hundred acres associated with the public-school systems in Wadena County, churches, and townships.

GOAL: Provide park and recreation amenities for all age groups in convenient locations.

- Adequate funding should be appropriated for development and maintenance of public parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities.
- Promote recreation opportunities that are already available in the county and promotion of wintertime recreation opportunities in the county, such as cross-country skiing, ice skating, snow shoeing, and sledding.
- Public/private partnerships should be encouraged and developed to enhance recreation opportunities and services.
- Continue trail development that follows river courses, utility easements, and abandoned railways to create and enhance a trail system linking recreation areas and commercial areas.
- Preserve the wilderness setting of the Crow Wing River corridor recreation area for future generations.

# “Trail connections to larger trails.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants



## CONCEPTS AND TRENDS

New technologies, cultures, activities, and trends all play a role in recreation programming and facility needs. The following trends should be considered when building flexibility into recreation and park facilities. This way the city will be able to adapt quickly and efficiently to new needs. The following trends outline key national and local trends that are influencing recreation and mobility in Staples.

### AGING AND AGING ACTIVELY

Many aging individuals are seeking changes in lifestyle to reflect their lack of child care responsibilities. They are more physically active with vigorous participation in social, economic, cultural, recreational, and civic affairs. Staples will need to provide opportunities, civic participation, social interaction, and a broad range of active recreational choices.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION FOR FAMILIES

Parks and recreation opportunities are important for families who look for activities and open space close to home. In an effort to attract young families to the area, park and recreational facilities offer sport opportunities, enrichment, child care options, and simply a place to enjoy the outdoors and move. A strong parks and recreation system, in partnership with a good school district and employment opportunities, is an essential component to attracting and retaining families.

### ACCESSIBILITY

More than ever, people with limitations are searching for and finding ways to live active and independent lives. Many parts of parks and recreation are legally mandated to meet accessibility standards, and those that are not legally mandated to do so are also moving toward greater accessibility, with playgrounds, trails, and athletic facilities being adapted to meet the needs of all citizens.

**“We need a greenway running around and through the city.”**

**Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants



### **ACTIVE LIVING**

All age groups are seeing an increase in obesity rates, along with associated health risks, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. As a result, people are paying increased attention to active living, which centers on the idea that physical activity can and should be integrated into daily routines. This trend's demands for parks and recreation include more walking, running, and biking trails, additional senior fitness opportunities, and more ways to integrate the health of the body and mind into everyday lifestyles.

### **TOURISM**

Recreational amenities should be viewed as a driver for economic development and local tourism, as well as a quality of life enhancement. Visitors to Staples help support the local economy by spending money on food, lodging, services, attractions, and entertainment. Providing visitors with quality hospitality, retail services, wayfinding, cultural attractions,

and amenities will enhance the experience of visitors and tourists.

### **TRAIL TOWNS**

Communities are realizing the economic potential of trails as highly desirable destinations that bring dollars to the places they serve. In addition to preserving vital open space and providing multimodal transportation options, trails and greenways attract visitors from near and far. These visitors directly facilitate job growth in tourism-related opportunities, such as local stores, lodging, and restaurants.

The “Trail Town” model of economic revitalization places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small-town revitalization. Trail Towns contain trails that are well connected to downtown businesses. Based on the National Main Streets economic model, Trail Towns are inviting trail users to spend time and dollars in their communities.

# “Connections to more trails to create long distance rides.”

**Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants



**CASE STUDIES**

Green space and trail network are important community assets that can help spur economic activity. This section provides an overview of four communities and a national bikeway that the City of Staples could study further to glean successful elements of their trail town model.

**North Country Trail – Frazee, Minnesota**

The North Country National Scenic Trail offers a diverse contrast of hiking experiences and passes through downtown Frazee, Minnesota, offering resupply opportunities for long-distance hikers. Frazee also offers hikers the opportunity to take their picture by “Big Tom,” the world’s largest turkey statue in Lion’s Park. The City of Frazee became the first designated NCTA Trail Town in Minnesota in November 2013. Additional trail options, such as the Heartland State Trail and the Otter Tail River state water trail, offer additional opportunities for tourists.



^^North Country Trail offers hikers views of lakes, abundant wetlands and flat rolling topography.

**Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area**

Located in the heart of Minnesota, the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trails are 28 miles long and twist their way through the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, the towns of Crosby, Ironton, Cuyuna and Riverton. With over 30 purpose-built trails to choose from, everyone from beginner to professional can enjoy the breath-taking rides and overlooks. According to a study, nearly 25,000 cyclists a year ride the trails, adding an estimated \$2 million to the local economy. Crosby was recognized as “Best Place to Live” in Outside Magazine.



^^Cuyuna State Recreation Area offers mountain biking and has transformed the surrounding communities.

### **The Root River Trail – Lanesboro, Minnesota**

For a town like Lanesboro, a trail can mean an annual economic impact of more than \$5 million. Lanesboro, on the Root River Trail in southeastern Minnesota, is an often-cited example of the economic impact a trail can have. Pre- and post-trail Lanesboro, a town of about 800 residents, differ dramatically. Post-trail Lanesboro boasts 12 bed and breakfasts (with year-long waiting lists), eight restaurants, an art gallery, a museum, and a thriving community theater well off enough to offer housing to its actors. Economically speaking, the Root River Trail has been very, very good for Lanesboro.

A specific example from Lanesboro can provide further insight. The bike shop in Lanesboro, a small outfit, sold 60 tandem bicycles in a single year, which is more than the Twin Cities largest multi-store bike retailer that same year. Now, people would not go to Lanesboro to specifically purchase a not-inexpensive tandem bicycle. Rather, this is an indication of people who are having a good time, want it to continue, and are willing to spend the money to spend quality time on the trail. This kind of impulse purchase bodes well for retailers along our trails.

### **Mississippi River Trail**

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is a 10-state bikeway and provides bicycling opportunities tailored to all types and ages to follow America's great river. Minnesota's Mississippi River Trail winds roughly 620 miles from Itasca State Park to the Iowa Border. The MRT is largely located on the shoulders of low-traffic, paved roads. The route also includes long segments of scenic state and regional trails.

### **The Heartland Trail – Dorset, Minnesota**

The community of Dorset, Minnesota, is another community that leverages its location along a trail corridor. This small community in lakes country is situated right on the Heartland Trail, one of the first rail-to-trail project in the country. This 49-mile trail is a multi-use trail located between Park Rapids and Cass Lake. In Dorset, restaurants outnumber its houses, but the town offers trail and bicycle enthusiasts a variety of eateries and a unique destination along the trail.



^^The Root River Trail offers 42 miles of paved trails and Downtown Lanesboro caters to bikers in so many ways.



^^The MRT is a ten-state bikeway offering spectacular views of the river and largely located on the shoulders of low-traffic, paved roads.



^^The Heartland Trail traverses through Dorset, MN, offering bicyclists a variety of restaurants and eateries as they travel to (or through).



## 02: Existing Conditions

This chapter analyzes the existing park, trail, and open space network throughout the City of Staples. This chapter contains a variety of maps, percentages and information on the existing network

# Existing Conditions

Staples residents have many park and recreational opportunities available to them. The Staples park and trail network provides numerous neighborhood and community parks, and partners such as the school district provide a larger option for recreational opportunities.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The existing trail network serves mainly as recreation routes. The primary trail route is the Legacy Trail that connects the north-central boundary of city limits to the south-central side of the city.

The city has 101 acres of parkland with the majority located at Dower Lake Recreation Area and Pine Grove Park. The city’s park system includes a variety of park types and facilities. The parks and playground areas are well distributed throughout the city, except that access to Dower Lake Recreation Area is limited by the railroad and Highway 10. Pine Grove Park is located outside of the city limits and is some distance from the more populated areas of the city.

Residents and visitors have the opportunity to engage with both hardwood forests and prairie grasslands within and around the city. A variety of wildlife management areas can provide a variety of passive recreation opportunities. The Crow Wing River can offer routes for canoeists and is noted as one of the state’s best wilderness routes.

## NETWORK EVALUATION

As part of the trail planning the steering committee conducted a *strength, weakness, opportunity, obstacle (SWOO)* analysis to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the trail system. The results of the discussion are included in the table below.

TRAIL SWOO EXERCISE		
	Built	Natural
STRENGTHS	3.7 miles of built trail	Existing culture (pedestrians/bicyclists have the right-of-way)
	Road routes	Community gardens
	Less traffic	Bird houses
	Downtown connection	Wooded snowmobile trail by city street department
	Partnership with CLC	CLC/ISD 2170 land to west
	Lakewood Health System support	Trailhead location (pine tree area with shade)
	Pipeline easement	Natural beauty
	County Road 83 reconstruction	
	Bass Loop (one-mile)	
	Benches	

OPPORTUNITIES	Built	Natural
	Trailhead development	CLC nature trails
	New pavement (Michigan Avenue)	Gravel roads
	6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> street paving of sidewalk	Pond area (ISD 2170)
	Business opportunities	Hayden Lake
	Naming rights of trails	Lady Slipper Trail
	Pipeline easement	
	Utility easement	
	McGivern to Old Wadena	
	Red Oak Road to County 24	
	McGivern to Golf Course	
	Connections to Pine Grove, Dower Lake, Old Wadena, Orv's Landing/McGivern, Lakewood Health System	
	Bike racks	
	Regional trail planning efforts	

WEAKNESSES	Built	Natural
	Unpaved gap in trail	Community buy-in
	Communication/signage	No connection to the river
	Trailhead	Swamps/wetlands everywhere
	Restrooms	Trees and shade
	Connectivity to parks or schools	Insects/bugs
	Second trail to elementary school	
	Bypass – unsafe intersection to trailhead	
	Signage for in-town routes	
	More in-town loops	
	Water station	
	Sidewalks and trail connections	

OBSTACLES	Built	Natural
	Sidewalks (lack of or in rough shape)	Wetlands
	Accessibility	Private land
	Communication/signage	
	Lack of a formal trailhead	
	Connection to the region	
	Capacity/time	
	Age diversity	
	Policies	
Funding		

# Park, Trail, and Open Space Amenities

PARKS																					
PARK CLASSIFICATION	Picnic areas	Soccer field	Tennis courts	Play equipment	Basketball courts	Parking lot	Baseball field	Spectator seating	Bike Repair	Restroom Facilities	Disc Golf	Sand Volleyball	Softball field	Pavilion/Picnic Shelters	Walking paths	Shooting Range	Benches	Skating	Camping	Swimming/beach	Horseshoe pits
<b>Community Park</b>	<b>Active Spaces</b>																				
<i>Pine Grove Park</i>	X			X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X		X				X
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>																					
<i>Northern Pacific Park</i>	X			X													X				
<i>Lakewood Park</i>	X			X		X				X				X			X				
<i>Odden Park</i>	X																				
<i>Lincoln Park</i>	X			X	X																
<i>Wilson Park</i>	X			X	X							X									
<b>Special Use</b>																					
<i>Veteran's Park</i>						X		X		X					X		X				
<i>Southside Fire Hall Area</i>		X																X			
<i>Legacy Gardens</i>	X					X								X	X		X				
<i>School District Field Area</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X		X				
<b>Mini-Park</b>																					
<i>None</i>																					
<b>Regional Parks</b>																					
<i>McGivern Park</i>	X					X				X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Old Wadena</i>	X					X				X				X	X		X		X	X	
<i>Dower Lake Recreation Area</i>	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	<b>Passive Spaces</b>																				
<i>*Staples WMA</i>															X						
<i>*Lawrence State WMA</i>															X						
<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>Active Trails</b>																				
<b>Local Trail</b>																					
<i>Legacy Trail</i>	X								X						X		X				
<b>Local Route</b>																					
<i>Backbone Routes</i>									X						X		X				
<i>Staples BASS trail</i>															X		X				

(\* Denotes only selected Wildlife Management Areas. See "Open Space" Chapter for further WMA's in the Staples area and for an overview of the amenities they each offer.



## Demographics

**Understanding the characteristics and trends that affect Staples is important when crafting a plan or vision for the future.** The following is an overview of population data, age, and family data that should be considered when planning for the city's park and trail network.

### Population Growth

As of 2016, the City of Staples has a population of 3,004 residents (ESRI). This total is a slight increase of 23 residents (less than one percent) from 2010. The city has remained essentially still since 2000. A slight population decrease was experienced between the years 2000 and 2010 with a change of nearly four percent. A slight increase was experienced between the years of 2010 and 2016 with a small rise in population of less than one percent. A housing study was completed in 2016 and estimates the population is expected to grow by 2020.

### Age

The median age of Staples residents is 39.5 (2015), while this may seem like a young median age, this figure closely resembles the state average. In 2016, nearly 16 percent of the population was between the years of five and fourteen. In contrast, 19

percent of the population was over the age of 62. Between the ages of 15 and 44 make up 34 percent of the Staples population.

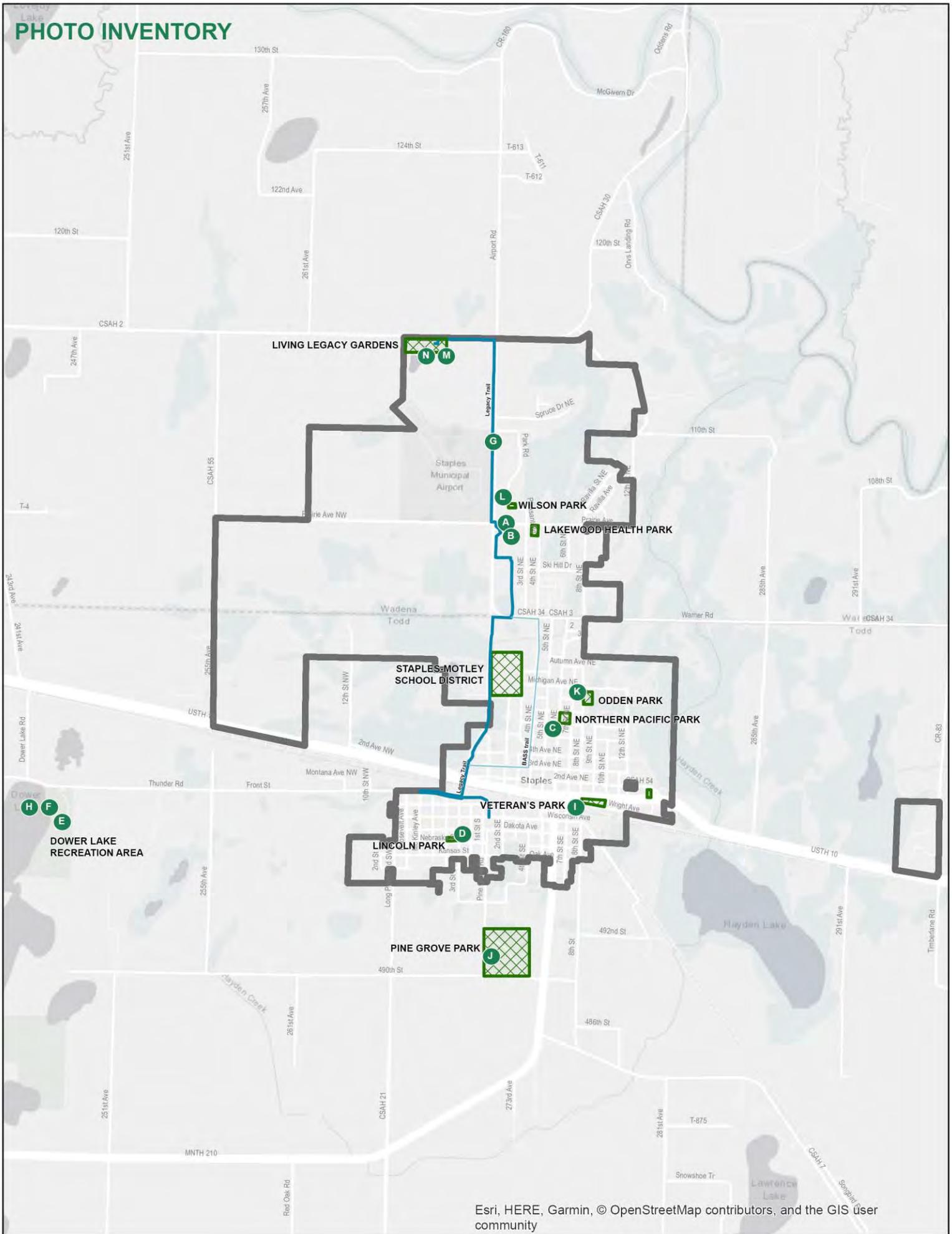
### Household Growth

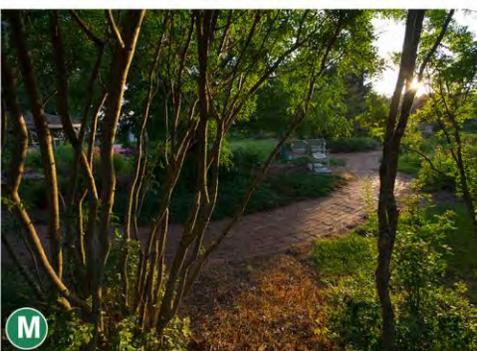
A "household" refers to all persons who occupy a housing unit. ESRI reports that there were 1,234 households in 2016. The city experienced relatively no change in the amount of housing units since 2010; a change of less than one percent. There were 1,502 housing units in 2016 with 53 percent owner-occupied and 29 percent renter occupied. A total of 268 units were vacant.

### Family Households

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), in 2016 nearly 57 percent of the households were family households. Of these households, nearly 32 percent of these households had children.

# PHOTO INVENTORY







## 03: Trails

The trails chapter provides an overview of the existing network, introduces trends, includes existing trails loops and provides alignments and corridors for future trail expansion.

# Trails

This chapter provides examples and recommendations as to how the city can create a safer, more inviting, and more practical place for people to recreate. The overriding goal is to facilitate and encourage walking and bicycling as a convenient, safe, and practical form of transportation and recreation throughout the community.

Trails serve multiple purposes, providing recreation, safe routes for travel, and places for active recreation. Whether they are lengthy, linear trails or walking or hiking loops, trails are in high demand.

The trail network in the City of Staples currently serves as a recreational route including the Legacy Trail and the Building a Stronger Staples (BASS) network. The BASS network provides a walking route near downtown. In general trails are used for walking, biking, for recreation/exercise, hiking, and nature appreciation. Many of these trails are not typically well known to the public and are often used by those residents who live near them. **The trail network in Staples could become an essential component to a vibrant and healthy community.**

**A focus of this chapter is to identify linkages and provide connections among the city’s various park facilities, natural resource areas, employment centers, and residential areas. To achieve this, desired trail locations should be identified prior to new development so that when redevelopment or development opportunities arise, various trail segments can be established or reserved.**

**As a part of the visioning process, the steering committee identified the following three goals:**

1. Connect the area parks with a trail system linking the Legacy Trail.
2. Establish a trailhead for the community.
3. Connect Dower Lake Recreation Area with a trail network to the city.

A walkable and bikeable community is one in which active transportation trips are safe and comfortable for **people of all ages and abilities.**

**All ages** mean that children as young as 8 can walk and bike independently from their parents. It means that older adults can get around comfortably without a car. Facility needs vary by age, and there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution.

**All abilities** mean that people using mobility devices or people with limited vision are not faced with barriers.”

*Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks*



## **Nonmotorized Trail Networks**

There are excellent opportunities for creating a trail network within the City of Staples. Some examples could include:

- › The use of existing trails, streets, and sidewalks to connect the park system.
- › Planning new connections or trails.
- › Exploring creating nature trails in undeveloped areas of Pine Grove Park and Dower Lake Recreation Area.
- › Corridors along county and state highways as well as undeveloped land around the railroad rights of way.
- › Exploring connections with neighboring counties, townships, and communities.
- › Exploring road right of ways and city and county ditches.

A safe, direct, and complete network will provide convenient access to key destinations while minimizing exposure to motor vehicle traffic.<sup>2</sup> Communities with strong ties to publicly managed land should prioritize connections to these natural areas.

**“Long bike trails and paved walking trails.”**

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<sup>2</sup> *Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration

Trails function as both recreation and transportation systems of a city. Trails provide sustainable and active modes of transportation for residents, tourists, commuters, and outdoor enthusiasts. The nonmotorized trail network accommodates a number of user types including, but not limited to:

- > Pedestrians
- > Bicyclist
- > Skiers
- > In-line skaters
- > Hikers
- > Canoe/kayakers

“We need at least a 10-mile trail.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants

Trail networks should be designed with specific user groups in mind, as well as shared multiuse capacities.

**Nonmotorized unpaved trails:** These trails are dedicated for biking, walking, skiing, snowshoeing, etc. The use of motorized vehicles is prohibited on these trails. Trail surfaces may include compacted soil, gravel, and mowed grass. These trails may be utilized for cross-country skiing or snowshoes during the winter months. Trails for walkers and hikers do not need to be paved.

**Multi-use trails:** These trails are wider, off-street paved paths that are designed to be shared by pedestrians and bicyclists. These trails can be utilized as cross-country skiing and snowshoe trails during the winter months. Trails for cyclists need to have a hard surface.

**Water Trails:** These trails are typically a river or series of rivers that are traveled by nonmotorized boat, canoe, tubing, or kayak.

## GENERAL TRENDS

### Bicycling

Bicycling continues to be one of the most popular outdoor pursuits nationally and in the Staples area. Improvements in, and the variety of bicycles now on the market, have undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of bicycling. Aside from the initial investment, bicycling is a relatively low-cost activity that can be enjoyed solo or in a group. It is an activity enjoyed by people of all demographics.

“Connections to more trails to create long distance rides.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials reports the majority of bicycling takes place on ordinary roads with no dedicated space for bicycles.

Nevertheless, designated bicycle paths are becoming extremely popular as facilities like rail-trails offer enhanced opportunities for recreational bicyclists. Central Minnesota is a host to many organized group bicycle activities and rides and has an extensive network of bicycle clubs and organizations that increase awareness of the activity and work to improve opportunities throughout the state.

Mountain biking, or off-road and single-track biking, is a relatively new activity that has grown significantly in recent years. Mountain biking likely began to appear in the 1970s, when individuals put fat tires on their bikes and began to compete in various downhill and cross-country types of events.

**“It would be great to see a trail from town to Dower Lake. That road is pretty narrow for biking or walking safely.”**

**| Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants

#### **Cross-Country Skiing**

Cross-country skiing is a winter activity that is increasing in popularity. While skiing is a compatible wintertime use for multi-purpose trails, many skiers do not necessarily need a marked, signed trail. The activity can take place in local parks, on golf courses, or along snow-covered road rights-of-way.

#### **Hiking Trails**

Hiking trails offer opportunities to view wildlife and beautiful scenery, often time secluded from busy city centers and highways. Hiking trails offer a suite of varying difficulty. Trail seekers enjoy spending time in nature and getting exercise while exploring the area scenery.

#### **Snow Shoeing**

Snow shoeing is a winter activity that many people partake in during the winter months. This is a compatible wintertime use for

multi-purpose trails, and many people do not necessarily need a marked, signed trail. The activity can take place in local parks, on golf courses, or even frozen lakes and wetlands.

#### **Greenways**

Greenways are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places. Greenways are linear corridors that are either natural, such as rivers and streams, or manmade, such as an abandoned railroad bed or utility corridor. Greenways trails can be paved or unpaved and can be designed to accommodate a variety of trail users, including bicyclists, walkers, hikers, joggers, horseback riders, and designed to be ADA compliant. Cities are seeing the benefits of a greenway and understand that they create value and generate economic activity.



## Design Solutions

Proposed bicycle facilities can be accommodated in a multitude of different ways:

**Bicycle Lanes:** Dedicated, on-street, marked lanes for one-way travel going in the same direction as vehicles in the adjacent traffic lane, must be a minimum of four feet (4'0") wide within a lane that is at least 14 feet (14'0") wide to the curb. Ideal bike lanes are 5 feet wide.

**Bicycle Routes:** Where bicycle lanes are not feasible due to right-of-way constraints, alternative bicycle facilities should be considered. Bicycle routes are road segments that are identified by directional and informational markers. These routes do not include delineated lanes for bikes only. Shared marking, or "sharrow," or wide shoulders to accommodate bicyclists are common solutions.

Solutions for Bicycle Facilities:

**Bike Lane:** A dedicated, marked, on-street lane for bicyclists.

**Bike Route:** On-street routes where cyclists share the road with cars. Routes may be marked by pavement paint or other signage.

**Multiuse Trail:** Wider, off-street paved pathways that are designed to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists.

The selection of the bikeway suite for a travel corridor depends on many factors: bicyclists' abilities, corridor conditions, current and future land use, topography, population growth, roadway characteristics, and the cost to build and maintain the bikeway.<sup>3</sup>

Bikeways include both on- and off-road facilities. These include bike lanes, paved shoulders, shared lanes, wide outside lanes, and shared-use paths.

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<sup>3</sup> Mn/DOT *Bikeway Facility Design Manual*, Chapter 2: Bikeway Network Planning and Project Coordination, p. 56.

**Bike lanes, paved shoulders, and wide outside lanes** allow bicyclists and motorists to operate parallel to each other in the roadway, maintaining separation, without requiring motorists to change lanes to pass bicyclists.

**Shared-use paths and greenways** offer opportunities not provided by the road system and can serve as direct commute routes. This solution can help close gaps in the bicycle network and navigate around natural barriers.

### State Law and Policy

By state law, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motorized drivers. Bicyclists are allowed to use public streets and highways in the state. Generally, bicycling is allowed on all roads unless the road is signed indicating bicycling is prohibited. Bicycling is not allowed on sidewalks in business districts unless authorized by the local unit of government. Local government may prohibit bicycling on any sidewalks under its jurisdiction.

*Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual* states, “Adding or improving paved shoulders can be the best way to accommodate bicyclists in rural areas and can extend the service life of a road surface.”

### General Design Factors

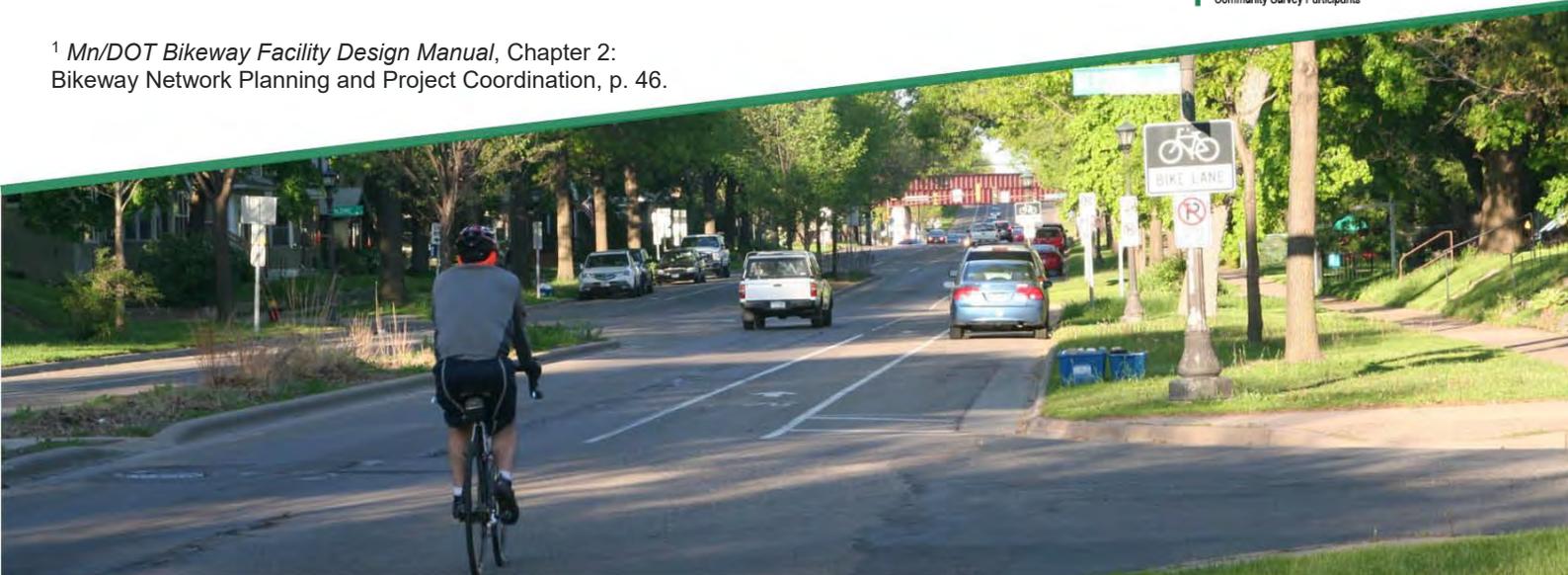
The *Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual* states, “There are two ways for serving bicycling needs in an identified corridor or route, by integrating bicyclists on the arterial or collector road or using a facility parallel to the corridor. Separated paths and trails may be an option only in some cases.”<sup>4</sup> Corridor treatments that involve the integration of the bicyclist with the road network would include bike lanes, paved shoulders, bicycle boulevards, or wide outside lanes.

MnDOT’s Bikeway Facility Design Manual outlines the bicycle facility network classification system. This classification system is a way to classify bicycle routes according to their purpose and intended use, whether it’s a primary, local, access, or tour route.

“Connecting our bicycling and walking trail to other trails in the area.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants

<sup>1</sup> *Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual*, Chapter 2: Bikeway Network Planning and Project Coordination, p. 46.



**Table 2-1: MnDOT Bicycle Facility Network Classification System**

CLASSIFICATION (SIGNIFICANCE)	FUNCTION	ATTRIBUTES	STAPLES TRAIL NETWORK
<b>Primary route (regional)</b>	This is typically a regional route that connects major employment centers, retail, commercial, industrial, residential, and entertainment destinations. This route is typically multi-jurisdictional, providing service within and between cities, counties, and may even cross state borders. Primary routes serve the largest area and connect suburbs to downtown or small town to small town.	This route provides connections by the most direct route.  Limited number of stops per mile to maintain momentum. Enables bicycles speeds of 20 mph or more. Relatively flat grade. Incorporate destination signing and lighting.	<b>No trails of this classification exist in the city.</b>
<b>Local route (local)</b>	This route type connects local routes to primary routes and neighborhood to neighborhood. Small to medium retailers are major destinations. Provide connections among home and school and parks. Public transit services should be in close proximity to local routes.	Access to key destinations, such as libraries, schools, employment centers. Relatively flat grade signing and lighting important.	Staples Legacy Trail
<b>Access route (intra-neighborhood or neighborhood)</b>	This route type provides connections within a neighborhood or between neighborhoods.	Access to key destinations, such as libraries, schools, employment centers. Relatively flat grade. They are often low motor vehicle traffic local streets with lower motor vehicle speeds. Signing and lighting important.	A series of “backbone routes” exist utilizing existing road and sidewalk networks. Staples BASS trail
<b>Tour route (regional, local or neighborhood)</b>	This route type is to serve and connect to recreational destinations such as paths that circulate lakes or parks, but these routes may also serve as a primary, local, or access route.	Attributes may be any of the above.	Staples Legacy Trail

**Trail Service Level:** Service level of a trail refers to capacity of the trail or system to meet the needs and expectations of the population or user group within the geographical area. The following describes the trail system in the city or directly adjacent to city limits:

**State Trails** are typically destination trails and serve a statewide population. Travel time to a trailhead is often one to four hours. State trails are a minimum of 20 miles long and weave users through high-quality natural resources and scenic landscape.

**Regional Trails** serve multiple cities and/or counties in greater Minnesota. Average commute to a trailhead is 30 minutes. Typically, a trail must be long enough for at least an hour of nonmotorized recreational travel, equivalent to about five miles of walking or 20 minutes of cycling.

**Local Trails** provide close proximity opportunities within a five-minute drive or 10-

minute walk. These trails often have direct access from neighborhoods. Popular trail locations are usually adjacent to lakes, natural resources, and local scenery. There are presently no designated bike lanes in the city.

**Private Trails** are those that traverse private land as part of the larger trail system. The most common trails are grant-in-aid snowmobile trails.

**Winter-Use Trails** are maintained for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking, and snowmobiling to offer residents and visitors the ability to get outdoors for exercise and enjoyment during winter months.

**“The trail needs to go somewhere. Whether it goes to Motley, Wadena, the Golf Course, Old Wadena, or make a big loop....”**

**Anonymous**  
Community Survey Participants



For the purposes of this chapter, a series of design solutions will be explained to further begin conversations about improving the pedestrian and bicycle network in Staples in an effort to form a complete network. The information provided in this section is from the Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual, Chapter 4: On-Road Bikeways.

### Bicycle Lane (Bike Lane)

A bike lane is a portion of the roadway or shoulder designated for exclusive or preferential use by people using bicycles. Bicycle lanes are distinguished from the portion of the roadway or shoulder used for motor vehicle traffic by striping, marking, or other similar technique.

### Paved Shoulder

The shoulder is the edge or border of a roadway that is contiguous with, and on the same level as, the regularly traveled lanes. Bicyclists require a paved surface for operation. Any unpaved shoulder width does not accommodate bicycles. The width of a shoulder bikeway and separation from the travel lane depend primarily on roadway motor vehicle speed and traffic volume.

### Shared Lane

On any roadway where a bicycle may legally be operated, bicycles may need to share a travel lane with motor vehicles if the road does not have a bike lane, a paved shoulder, or a separate shared-use path. A shared travel lane may be an appropriate bikeway on some low-speed, low-volume streets or roads. Where a shared lane is intended to be part of a bike route, it should be designed as a bikeway to direct bicyclists and inform motorists. Travel lanes are typically 12 feet wide or less.

“A complete loop and destination like Lakewood Health System or Dower Lake.”

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants



**Bike Lane:** a dedicated, marked, on-street lane for bicycles.



**Paved Shoulder:** a dedicated lane that is contiguous with the adjacent lane.



**Shared Lane:** Bicycles share the travel lane with motor vehicles.

## Wide Outside Lane

A wide outside lane (the right-most through traffic lane) is shared by bicyclists and motorists but designed with extra width to accommodate bicycles. A wide outside lane should be no less than 14 feet and no more than 16 feet wide.

For the purposes of this section, guidelines for off-street paths will be explored. In most cases, a separated path from the roadway can serve multiple users such as bicyclists, pedestrians, rollerskaters, and well as other users. The information provided in this section is from the Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual, Chapter 5: Shared-Use Paths.

## Shared-Use Path

A shared-use path is typically located on exclusive right-of-way, with no fixed objects in the pathway and minimal cross flow by motor vehicles. Portions of a shared-use path may be within the road right-of-way but physically separated from the roadway by a barrier or landscaping. Users typically include bicyclists, in-line skaters, wheelchair users (both nonmotorized and motorized) and pedestrians, including walkers, runners, people with baby strollers, or dogs with people. Shared-use paths are a valuable element of bicycle networks and serve both transportation and recreation functions, providing route continuity for commuting and recreation trips, access to destinations not otherwise available to bicyclists on the street and road system, and access between buildings and other discontinuities in the street network. Shared-use paths are usually designed for two-way travel except under special conditions.

## Trail

The term “trail” may have different meanings depending on the context, but generally does not have the same meaning as the term “shared-use path.” There are many types of trails, and each type provides different experiences for different users. Trails may be used for a variety of reasons, including exercise, transportation, recreation, or education. Trail users may include hikers, cyclists, skaters, equestrians, snowmobilers, pedestrians, and others. Trails that are designed to provide a bicycle transportation function while supporting multiple users are called shared-use paths.

## Greenway

A greenway is a linear space established along a corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or other natural or landscaped system. Greenways may connect open spaces, parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with populated areas and with one another. Greenways may or may not include a bikeway, shared-use path or multiuse trail.



**Shared-Use Path:** A physically separated pathway from the roadway.



**Trail:** A generic phrase used for a variety of reasons; hikers, skaters, equestrians, pedestrians, and bicyclists.



**Greenway:** A linear space along a riparian or natural corridor. Greenways are meant to connect places of significance.

## Sidewalks

Sidewalks typically have the following characteristics that make them not suitable for bicycling:

- › Designed primarily for walking pedestrians.
- › Bicycle use on sidewalks may be prohibited by local ordinance in some areas.
- › Sidewalk geometrics are not intended to safely accommodate bicycles.
- › Typically contain sign posts, hydrants, benches, trees, and other fixed objects.
- › Direct access from doorways, gates, and parked cars causes conflicts with bicycling.
- › May have frequent intersections with driveways, alleys, roadways, and other sidewalks.

***Designating a sidewalk as a shared facility for bicycle travel is not typically recommended.***

## Complete Streets

Complete streets are streets that are designed to accommodate people of all ages and abilities. Complete streets include all modes of transportation: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

The complete street approach helps maximize the use of public roadways and right-of-way to provide comprehensive and connected multimodal transportation systems.

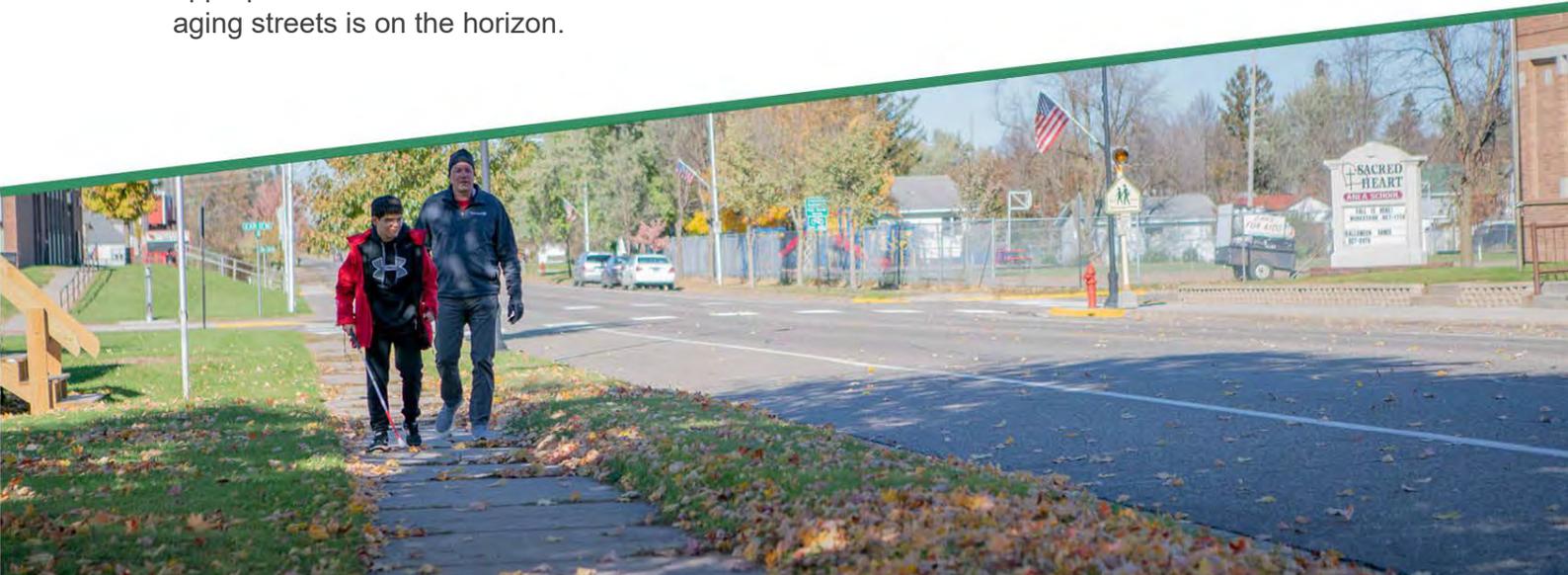
Complete streets aim to:

- › Provide easy crossing and travel routes.
- › Increase opportunities for physical activity.
- › Safely accommodate multiple modes of transportation: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.
- › Increase walkability.

Complete streets offer significant benefits for residents and provide a higher quality of life. This solution will provide safe access for children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Recognizing that not all streets must be “complete” in nature, the City of Staples, where feasible, should evaluate appropriate routes and corridors as reconstruction of aging streets is on the horizon.

**“Complete Streets mean that our streets are planned to be safe and accessible for pedestrians, transit riders, bicyclists, and drivers--all users, regardless of age or ability.”**

*Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition*



## Motorized

Staples does have a snowmobile trail going through the city. These areas provide riders with amenities as they make their way through town. Several places throughout town are restricted to snowmobile riding, which provides for a good balance between the motorized and winter nonmotorized trail users' opportunities.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has established snowmobile and ATV regulations for the operation of motorized vehicles on public rights-of-way.

Not all trail uses are compatible and can pose safety hazards when multiple uses are combined. In an effort to reduce conflicts among user groups and in an effort to maximize safety, **it is recommended that motorized and nonmotorized trails be separate within city limits.**

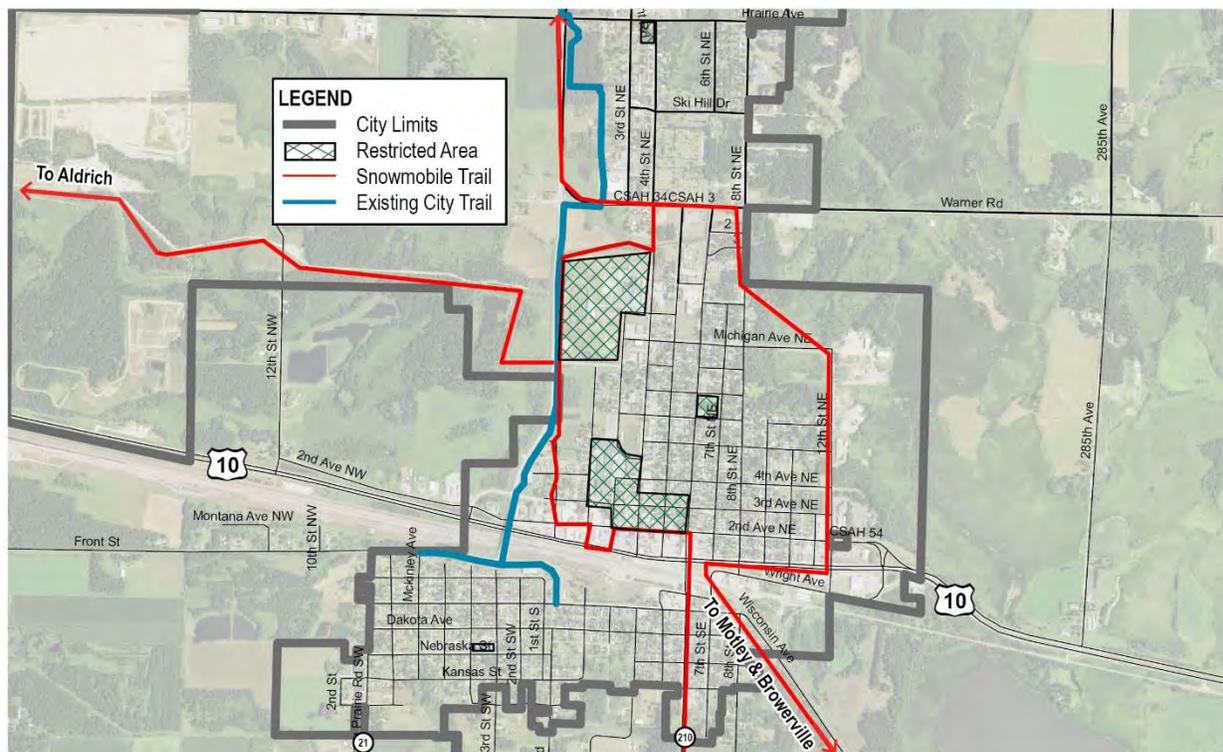
## ATV Trails

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding is one of the fastest growing forms of motorized recreation. Although few trails in Staples are specifically designed for ATV use, the ownership of ATVs for other uses is common. **ATV's are allowed to travel through some areas of town to utilize services and then proceed to trails.**

## Snowmobiling

Riding snowmobiles is a winter activity with high levels of participation in Minnesota and the Staples area. Minnesota has a system of over 20,000 miles of snowmobile trails that depends on the cooperation of landowners, nonmotorized trail users, other recreationalists, and local units of government.

Although commonly thought of as a recreational activity, snowmobiles can also be used to provide many other useful functions. Snowmobiles are used by law enforcement agencies for search, rescue, and emergency missions as well as farmers, surveyors, and others as part of their jobs.





## Future Trail Development

### Possible Trail Alignments

As a part of the parks, trails, and open space plan creation, a survey was completed to gather feedback from residents on their preferences, ideas, and vision for an expanded bicycle network with the city. Residents identified the following routes:

- › Regional linkages
- › Route to Dower Lake Recreation Area
- › Trail to Pine Grove Park
- › Advance the Legacy trail and expand connections
- › Linkage to Lakewood Health System and Business District

A proposed trail map was developed to illustrate the conceptual alignments. While these trail routes have been informed by community input, their locations and the identified search corridors are conceptual. Further analysis and feasibility study will be needed to determine the final trail alignments and connections.

MNDOT has identified a series of criteria for trail alignments for legislatively mandated trail alignments. The following criteria have been adjusted for local trail connection needs and could be considered during trail planning efforts.

### Criteria for Trail Alignment:

- › Utilize publicly owned land wherever possible
- › Evaluate the needs of trail users and identify appropriate user types
- › Work with willing landowners to acquire right-of-way that showcases features of the landscape
- › Minimize wetland impacts
- › Avoid negative impacts on rare, endangered, or threatened species and avoid fragmentation or disturbance of significant native plant communities.



### Regional Linkages

Residents seek to expand the trail network toward the cities of Motley and Pillager. Significant trail expansion with the Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail will open up hundreds of miles of continuous trail network only miles from the City of Staples. Significant collaboration among local units of government will be imperative to advance this goal.



### **Route to Dower Lake Recreation Area**

As a high priority of this study, a route to Dower Lake Recreation Area is desired. Dower Lake Recreation Area serves as a regional destination and, by providing bicycle accommodations, Staples will expand the bicycling opportunities and provide a route for visitors back into the City of Staples. Bicycle solutions could include a separated, shared-use trail or a paved shoulder to accommodate a variety of rider experience.



### **Trail to Pine Grove**

Offering beautiful red and white pines, this route to Pine Grove will become a known asset within the city. This trail would serve as a local route, providing exercise opportunities for Staples residents. Lane widths should be evaluated, and a variety of solutions should be studied to accommodate the diverse user of Pine Grove Park. A paved shoulder or bicycle lane should be studied further.



### **Advance the Legacy Trail**

The Legacy Trail is the only trail within the City of Staples. The majority of the trail is a separated, shared-use trail. Completing the Legacy Trail was important to respondents. This trail has small segments that need to be infilled and paved. This trail serves as the backbone of the existing Staples trail network. Public input also noted the importance of connecting the area parks and trail system by linking it to the Legacy Trail. Expanding opportunities to connect users to the Legacy Trail could include shared lanes and thoughtfully located bicycle lanes. Staff should evaluate sidewalk networks to provide walkers with the ability to easily navigate to the Legacy Trail, also leading Legacy Trail users to neighborhood parks.



### **Linkage to Lakewood Health System and the Business District**

This route will provide a linkage to Lakewood Health System, located on the east side of the city near Highway 10. Various alignments have been identified. First, riders would experience an open, tranquil environment as they're surrounded by farmland and wetlands, immersed in nature. Second, riders would cycle along the Highway 10 corridor as this route wouldn't impede private lands and wetlands. The connection from the Legacy Trail to the downtown business district will provide the amenities to the patrons. A conceptual search corridor is noted on the proposed trail map; however, further analysis and study will be needed to identify the final alignment. Staff should evaluate shared-use trails and greenway opportunities.



## Backbone Routes

It is the intention of the backbone routes of this plan to follow the recommendations of the 2006 Trails Plan. The plan suggests that trail networks be designed to connect the area city parks, residential areas with schools and business areas, as well as make considerations for connecting with neighboring townships, counties, and neighboring communities.

**North-south backbone routes** connect the community from the intersection of Wadena County roads 30 and 2, south to Pine Grove Park at the southern edge.

**East-west backbone routes** connect the community from Todd County Road 83 on the east to the Dower Lake Recreation Area on the west.

The various routes offer many opportunities to connect and work in conjunction with neighboring townships, counties, and communities. This plan also offers a network of trail loops that connect city parks, residential, schools, business, and industrial areas of our community with alternatives to conventional motorized travel. A full description and layout of each of these “backbone routes” and loops are listed in the descriptions and maps by clicking the link.

### LOOKING FOR MORE?

Click [here](#) to view the various “backbone routes” that exist within the city.

A set of guiding principles has been developed for ecologically sustainable trails that seek to provide underlying rationale for any and all actions related to protecting, restoring, and managing natural environments associated with trail development. The following core principles were developed by MnDOT for trail-planning purposes. These principles have been slightly altered to meet local trail planning needs and could be considered as a part of upcoming trail feasibility studies:

- › Avoid sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.
- › Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity.
- › Provide buffers to protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems.
- › Use natural infiltration and best practices for stormwater management.
- › Provide ongoing stewardship of the trails and adjoining natural systems.
- › Ensure that trails remain sustainable.

## Development of a Trailhead

Whether you live in the Staples area or are visiting and would like to use the Staples community trail system, you need a place to begin.

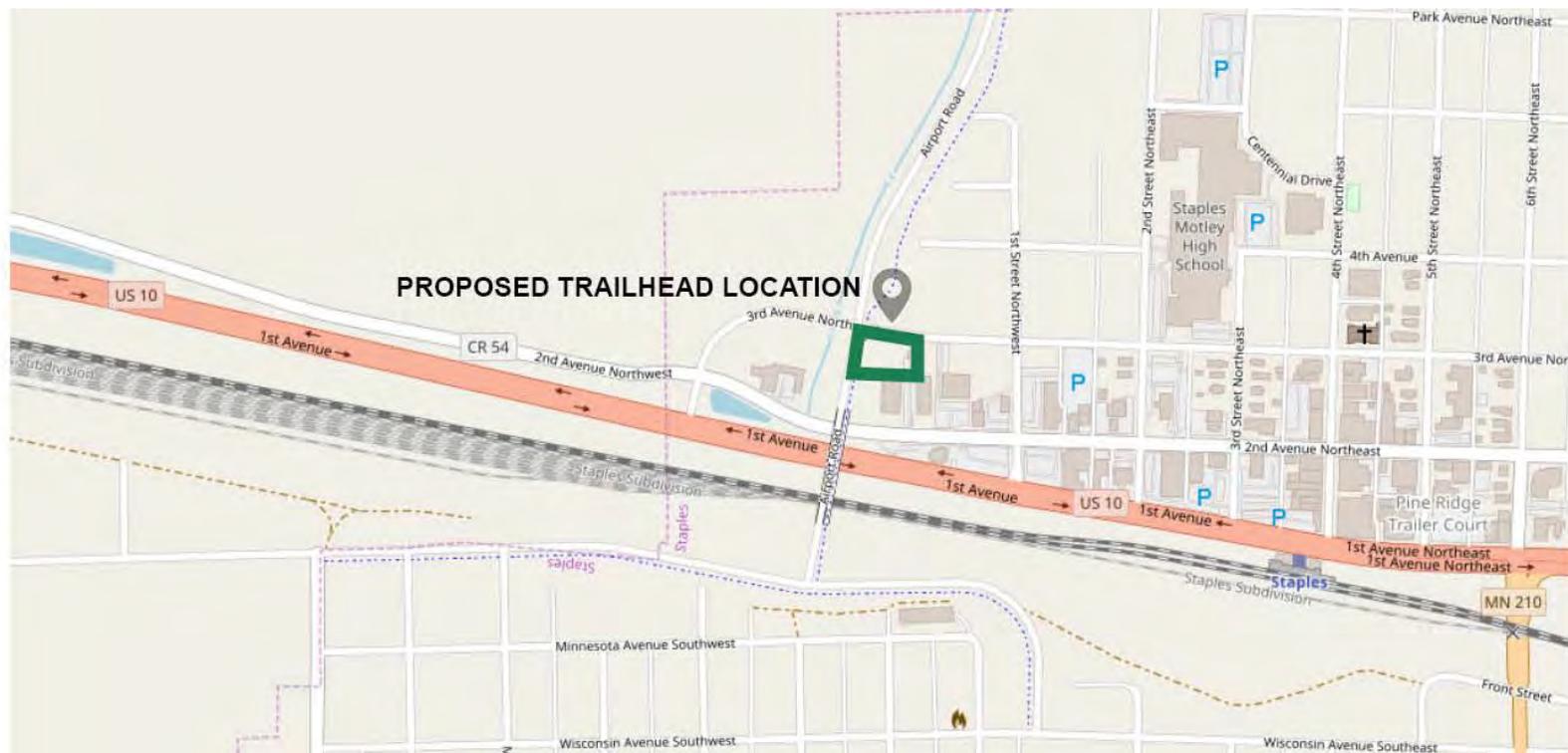
Considerations and criteria have been made for defining a facility such as this. The criteria considered are: a map(s) of the trail system, restrooms, drinking water, parking, bike tool stations, and shelter.

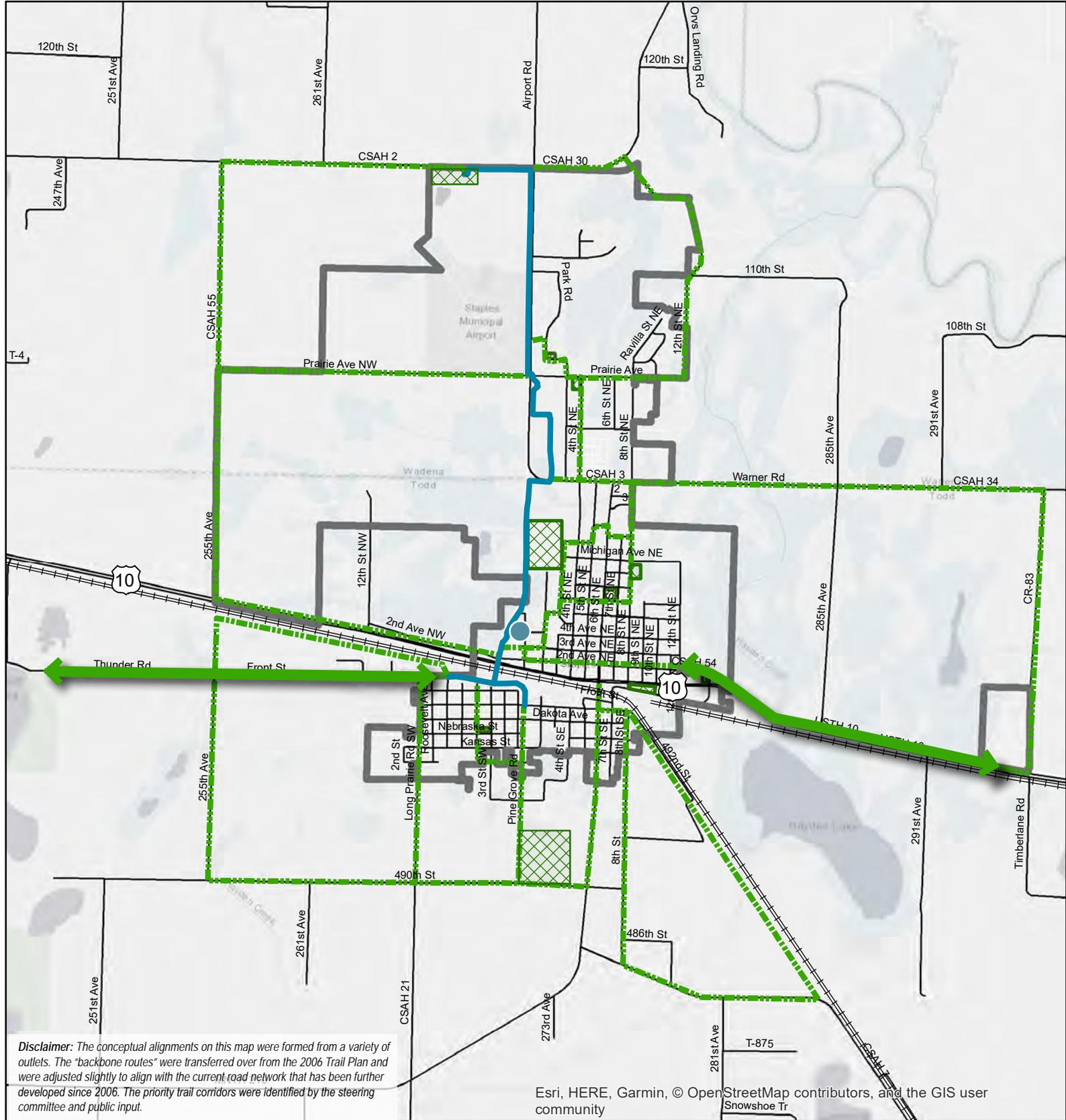
One location that was consistently discussed was city-owned property near the overpass. This property has been selected because of its central location to the legacy trail. As development of this trailhead facility progresses, it should provide the amenities necessary for making it a primary trailhead.

Other locations for a trailhead within the Staples area that meet the general criteria are: Pine Grove Park on the southern edge of the backbone route, the Dower Lake Recreation Area on the western edge of the backbone route, and the Legacy Gardens. These facilities would be considered alternate locations, since they are convenient to the other recreational uses these facilities offer.

Opportunity also exists to make connections with neighboring townships, counties, and communities with additional trail connections and trailhead facilities. Cooperative planning could be made with Wadena County and Thomastown Township for connecting trails to the facilities at Old Wadena Historical Site and McGivern Park. Other cooperative considerations could be made with the cities of Motley and Aldrich and Todd County for trails and trailheads.

**“A trailhead by definition is: a place to begin your adventure.”**





*Disclaimer: The conceptual alignments on this map were formed from a variety of outlets. The "backbone routes" were transferred over from the 2006 Trail Plan and were adjusted slightly to align with the current road network that has been further developed since 2006. The priority trail corridors were identified by the steering committee and public input.*

Esri, HERE, Garmin, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

# POTENTIAL TRAIL ALIGNMENTS

## LEGEND

-  Rail
-  Backbone Trail Routes
-  Street Network
-  Priority Trail Corridors
-  Existing Legacy Trails
-  Wetlands
-  Existing Parks
-  City Limits
-  Proposed Trailhead Location



0.5 miles  



Acer 'Autumn Blaze' (PP 4864)

**AUTUMN BLAZE MAPLE**

rapid growing rounded deciduous broadle  
height 50 to 60 feet - spacing 40 to 50  
dazzling in the fall - likes sun

## 04: Parks

The parks chapter includes an inventory of existing park acreages, park classifications, introduces new trends, and provides areas of the community where future park development can occur.



# Parks

The City of Staples owns and operates seven municipal parks, including the Dower Lake Recreation Area, which includes the longest fishing pier in Minnesota. In addition to these seven municipal parks, there are five privately held parks/playgrounds in and around Staples. The existing parks are fairly well distributed throughout the city and lead to one of the plan’s main goals of connectivity.

As a part of the planning process, the city conducted a survey to find out how residents use the park network today and to help gauge priorities for the future.

### Benefits of Parks and Recreation

#### Health

Parks and trails encourage a healthy, active lifestyle by providing an outlet for various physical activities. Whether residents are biking, walking, or playing baseball, parks provide essential places for people to exercise. When people have access to park facilities and programming, they are more likely to be active, which improves their physical health. These facilities also provide opportunities to be connected with nature.

#### Community Health

Recreational programs offer lifelong learning opportunities. Such programs offer activities for youth and help keep seniors active.

#### Scenic Beauty

Parks are seen as the “front yard” of the community. Visitors remember places by their natural areas, parks, parkways, beaches, public art, and athletic fields. These elements provide a high quality of life and a tranquil, beautiful place to live.

#### Environmental Benefits

Parks, natural resources, and environmental areas offer air quality benefits, as well as serve as a first defense in water quality and green infrastructure.

**“A park needs to be added near the hospital. I believe this would be utilized by many and would help encourage active living.”**

**“Additional types of parks including splash pads or other water options.”**



## Park and Trail Classifications

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), in partnership, have developed park and trail system standards to serve as guidelines for communities as they develop their park and trail systems. The following outlines park classifications based on the Level of Service (LOS). For the purpose of this plan, the following classifications will serve only as general guidelines and a tool to plan for future park needs.

The categories of this hierarchy include mini parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks. Park service adequacy is evaluated in three ways:

- **Facilities by classification:** Parks are classified into different categories to determine the levels and areas they serve.
- **Facilities by Geographic Distribution:** The service radius of each facility is analyzed to identify geographical gaps in service.
- **Facilities in Relation to Population Service Standards:** National standards for the provision of park and recreation facilities are applied to the present system.

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### Mini Park

Description: Smallest park classification that is used to address limited or unique recreational needs (example: the downtown pocket park).

Location Criteria: Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting.

Size Criteria: 1,500 square feet to one acre in size, can exceed up to five acres.

Site Selection Guidelines: Site should be easily accessible from surrounding area and link to community trail systems.

Development Guidelines: Park facilities similar to those found in a neighborhood park; however, there are generally no programmed activities and no specific design guidelines. Park design can be a function of needed use, e.g., picnic area, shaded seating area, etc.

### Neighborhood Park

Description: Basic unit of park system that serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreational opportunities for residents of all age

groups living in the surrounding neighborhoods. Traditional NRPA standards call for about two acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents.

Location Criteria: ¼-mile to ½-mile service area radius.

Site Selection Guidelines: Site should be easily accessible from surrounding neighborhood, be centrally located, and link to a community greenway system. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreational opportunities. The landscape of the site should possess predevelopment aesthetic value and not be outlots.

Development Guidelines: Park development should be a balance of 50 percent active space and 50 percent passive space for recreational uses on the site and typically not be programmed. Appropriate park **elements would include: play equipment, court games, open “non-programmed” play field or open space,** tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating areas, wading pool, or splash pad. Other park facilities should include picnic areas, internal trail system, and general open space for enjoying the park scenery. Neighborhood parks should provide at least 7-10 parking spaces, and limited lighting should be provided for facility illumination, security, and safety.

### **Community Park**

Description: Larger in size and serves a broader purpose than the neighborhood park with the purpose of providing recreational opportunities for several neighborhoods or larger sections of the community. Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for larger groups while preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.

Location Criteria: Should serve two or more neighborhoods with a ½- to 3-mile service area radius.

Size Criteria: 30 – 50 acres, size may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses.

Site Selection Guidelines: Site should be easily accessible from entire service area, should be centrally located, and should have strong connection to other park areas. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreation opportunities. The site, when possible, should be adjacent to natural resource areas and greenways.

### **Regional Park Criteria from the MN DNR**

Natural Resource Based Settings and Range of Activities Offered: The park should provide a natural setting and offer outdoor recreation facilities and activities that are primarily natural resource based. Examples include camping, picnicking, hiking, swimming, boating, canoeing, fishing, and nature study. A related measure is the range of these activities accommodated within the park.

Use: Evidence that the park serves at least a regional clientele (multiple communities). Other related factors may include evidence that the facility currently or potentially may draw tourists and generate economic impact from outside the local area.

Size: The park should be significant in size. In southern Minnesota, a park of 100 acres is significant. In northern Minnesota, the acreage is generally larger. There are exceptions to this criteria based on use characteristics, special features, and other variables.

Special Features & Scarcity of Recreational Resources: Unique or unusual landscape features, historically significant sites, or parks containing characteristics of regional or statewide significance. The park provides public natural resource based recreational opportunities that are not otherwise available within a reasonable distance. Examples include water-based activities, such as swimming, fishing and boating; interpretive nature trails; public campgrounds; etc.

Development Guidelines: While the community park should be designed to accommodate both active and passive recreational opportunities, programming should remain, for the most part, limited. Appropriate active park elements would include: larger play areas with creative play equipment for a range of ages, court games, informal ball fields for youth play, tennis, volleyball and shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating, swimming pools and beaches, archery ranges, and disc golf.

### **Greenways**

Greenways link park system components to create a cohesive park, recreation, and open space system that emphasizes the natural environment. Greenways allow for safe, uninterrupted pedestrian movement among parks throughout a community and can enhance property values.

### **Open Space**

Open space, broadly defined, includes woodlands, fields, wetlands, streambanks, floodplains, steep slopes, and unique geological formations — unbuilt areas. Open space provides protection for scenic areas and endangered habitats. It also continues to provide land for local food production and can help shape the form of urban growth by providing protected lands.

### **Water Trail**

Water trails are the local rivers and streams that provide opportunities for water activities such as canoeing or kayaking. These spaces can provide opportunities for scenic views and wildlife sightings.



## Existing Conditions

The following chart outlines the percentage of residents who use each park facility per the community survey results. The chart shows that Dower Lake Recreation Area is utilized the most out of the list of community parks. Pine Grove, Dower Lake Recreation Area, and the Living Legacy Gardens are three park facilities that community members value the most from the survey

**The city has 101 acres of parkland** with the majority located at Dower Lake Recreation Area and Pine Grove. The above analysis does not take into account the public and private school playground facility and the community center. These facilities provide additional recreational opportunities to the communities but have some limitations. The school facilities and community center are open to the public, but the use of these facilities is more limited to scheduled events. The city's park system includes a variety of park types and facilities. The parks and playground areas are well distributed throughout the city, except that access to Dower Lake Recreation Area is limited by the railroad and Highway 10 and Pine Grove Park is located outside of the city limits and is some distance from the more populated areas of the city. The following chart outlines the percentage of residents who use each park facility. Pine Grove, Dower Lake Recreation Area (DLRA), and Lakewood are three park facilities that community members value.

>> When participants were asked, "Which of the following parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities do members of your household use," the top four parks include Dower Lake Recreation Area (DLRA), Pine Grove Park, the Community Center, and Lakewood Park.

PLEASE STATE YOUR OPINION AS TO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

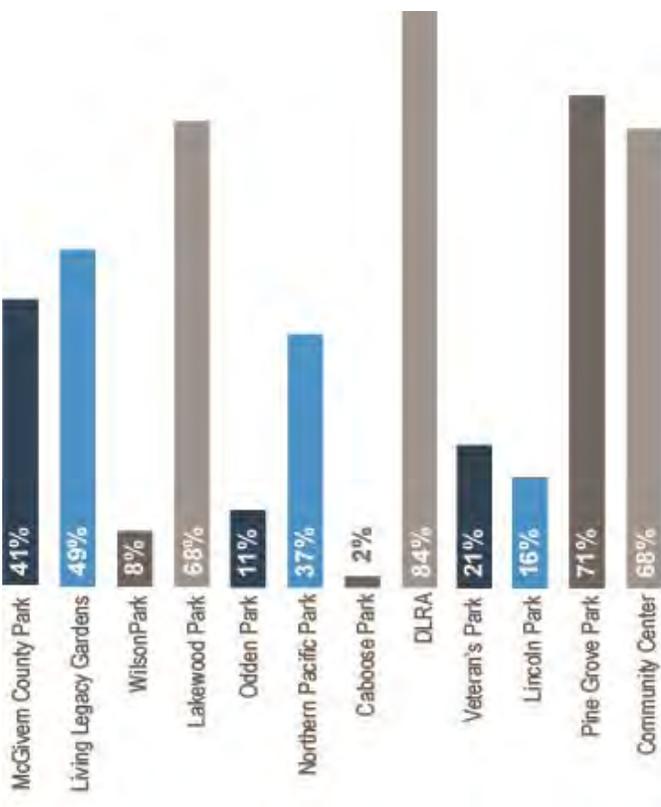
Staples Park and Recreation should concentrate on improving existing facilities.



Staples should continue to acquire key lands for future park, recreation, and natural resource needs.



Staples should require new developments to dedicate parks, open space and trails for public use.



## Existing Parks

### Municipal Parks

#### Lincoln Park

Is located on the south side of the city. Serving as a neighborhood park, this space offers playground equipment, a basketball court, and picnic area. The park is one acre in size.

#### Northern Pacific Park

Is centrally located in the city. Northern Pacific Park offers playground equipment and has a creek and a bridge, picnic areas, band shell, and open spaces. The park is two acres in size and serves as a neighborhood park.

#### Odden Park

Located in a quiet part of the city on the east side, Odden Park offers picnic tables and open space for residents. The park serves as a neighborhood park and is two and one-third acres in size.

#### Pine Grove Park

Located just south of the city, nestled in a white and red pine forest, Pine Grove Park offers picnic shelters, disc golf, playground equipment, baseball field, horseshoe pits, picnic areas, ponds, and nature walking.

This park serves as a community park and is 40 acres in size.

#### Veteran's Park

Veteran's Park is located along Highway 10. This park is a memorial featuring seating opportunities, 80-foot flagpole, and branch of service flags. This is a special-use park and is 0.67 acres in size.

#### Wilson Park

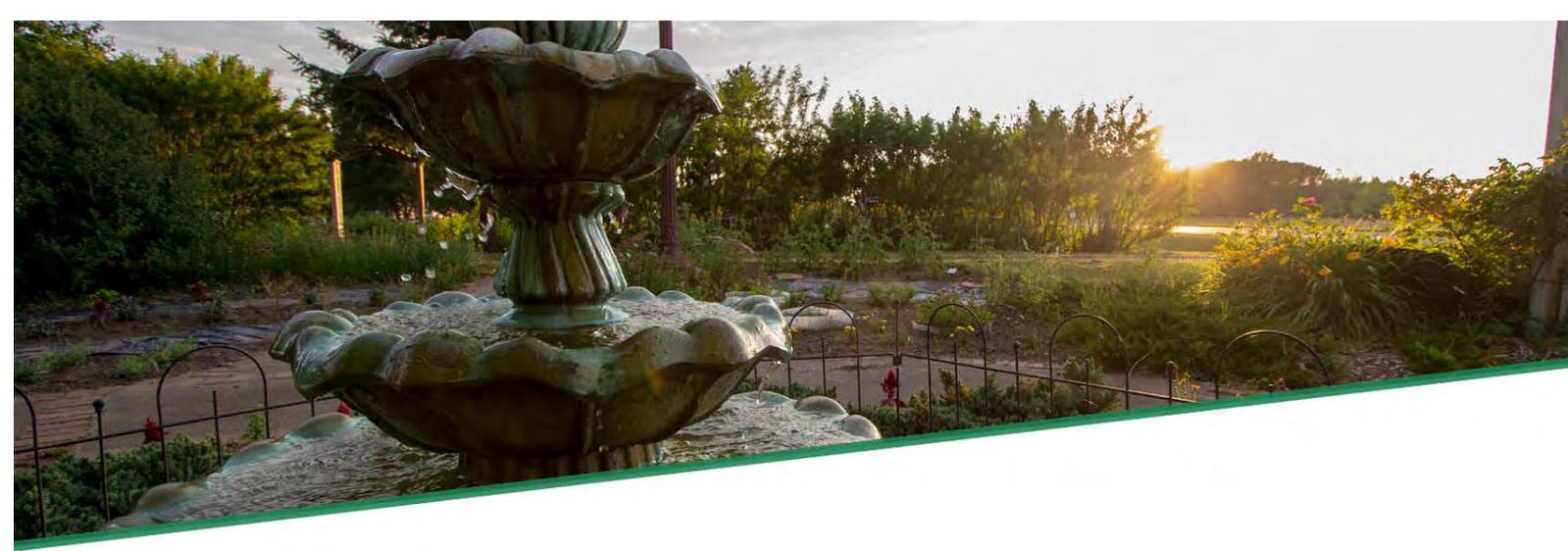
Located on the very north side of the city, Wilson Park offers a sand volleyball court, basketball court, picnic areas, and playground equipment. Wilson Park is considered a mini-park and is a half-acre in size.

#### Dower Lake Recreation Area

Located two miles west of Staples, this regional park offers a softball complex, disk golf course, basketball court, swimming beach, volleyball court, horseshoe pits, picnic shelter and picnic areas, lake access, rustic, electric, and seasonal camping, and open spaces. The park includes Minnesota's longest fishing pier. Dower Lake Recreation Area, considered a regional park, is 55 acres in size.

### CITY OF STAPLES PARK INVENTORY

Park Name	Park Classification	Existing Acres
Wilson Park	Neighborhood Park	.5
Veteran's Park	Special Use Park	.67
Odden Park	Neighborhood Park	2.3
Northern Pacific Park	Neighborhood Park	2.0
Lincoln Park	Neighborhood Park	1.0
Pine Grove Park	Community Park	40
Dower Lake Rec. Area	Regional Park	55
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>		<b>101.5</b>



## Other Area Parks, Open Space and Recreation Amenities

### Lakewood Park

This neighborhood park is maintained by Lakewood Health Systems. This park offers a picnic pavilion, restrooms, and sand play area.

### Living Legacy Gardens

The gardens are located in the northwestern part of town. The gardens are maintained by master gardeners and Central Lakes College agricultural students. The gardens showcase landscaped areas of native flowers and plants, along with children's gardening plots.

### Staples-Motley School District Fields

The school district field area offers baseball, softball, and football fields as well as tennis courts, a running track, and playground.

### Sacred Heart Area School

Sacred Heart Elementary offers play areas and opportunities for area residents.

### McGivern Park

This county park includes the Sportsman's Club and shooting range, picnic areas, a boat launch, and is often the starting point for tubing and canoeing the Crow Wing River.

### Old Wadena Park Campground

Between the mouths of the Leaf and the Partridge rivers, you will find this history-filled campsite. It boasts a large, open area with plenty of shade for family reunions and weddings, a small shelter, and electricity that can be accessed by request. There are numerous trails for walking to enjoy and a foot bridge that crosses over the Leaf River to access the little round hill site.

### Staples Community Center

The center houses a competition-length indoor swimming pool, fitness center, indoor basketball court, senior citizen center, and community meeting rooms.

### The Vintage Golf Club

The Vintage, north of Staples, is an 18-hole public golf course for all skill levels.

**“Lincoln, Northern Pacific, Pine Grove, and Dower all need updated and more playground equipment.”**

Anonymous  
Community Survey Participants



## Future Development

The current park system of 101 total acres exceeds the standard of 10 acres of park land and open space per 1,000 people. This ratio is a “rule of thumb,” and further park development and maintenance efforts were noted in the plan’s outreach effort. It’s important to serve all residents and neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities. As development occurs, it will be critical to identify if new areas and the same level of service will be provided.

The natural environment remains an important asset to the city and its residents. The city has a variety of active parks and seeking passive opportunities, such as bird watching, that will provide residents with access to open space, natural features, and nature-based recreation.

### Improve Existing Parks and Facilities

As the city continues to grow, maintaining and developing a diverse park network that meets the needs of Staples residents will be a continuous challenge. The large, existing park network has a strong foundation of park classifications on which the city can continue to build. Neighborhood parks should continue to provide residents with their desired uses to address future investment. Community parks provide an excellent opportunity for future development and trail connection needs, attracting people from outside the Staples area and increasing active living efforts through bicycling and walking. Community facilities should continue to be evaluated and updated in order to meet the needs of the growing and changing demographic profile of Staples residents.



^^Consider opportunities to integrate age-friendly components into existing parks, offering all ages and abilities to become involved.



^^Identify locations in the downtown for pocket parks. These small parks are normally located on small parcels or irregular pieces of land.



### Maintaining our Existing Parks

Survey respondents noted the importance of maintaining and improving the existing parks within the network. It will be extremely important for the city to continue to dedicate appropriate resources to park maintenance. Building off trail expansion recommendations within the “trail chapter,” park user counts will be expected to rise as the existing park network will be more accessible through a variety of trail networks.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines a series of community design principles that should be a part of future park and trail planning efforts:

- › Be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly
- › Accessible and social equitable community
- › Green spaces and parks that are easy to walk to
- › Safe public spaces for social interaction

In addition to these principles, the plan prioritizes maintaining and improving existing parks and recreation facilities within the community.



^^Consider all-inclusive parks to address all physical abilities of children in the Staples area. Coined the “Healthcare Hub,” integrating various park types is important for the City of Staples.



^^Identify locations in the city for community gardens. These plots can be pilot locations or education sites to teach residents about the ease of growing their own produce.

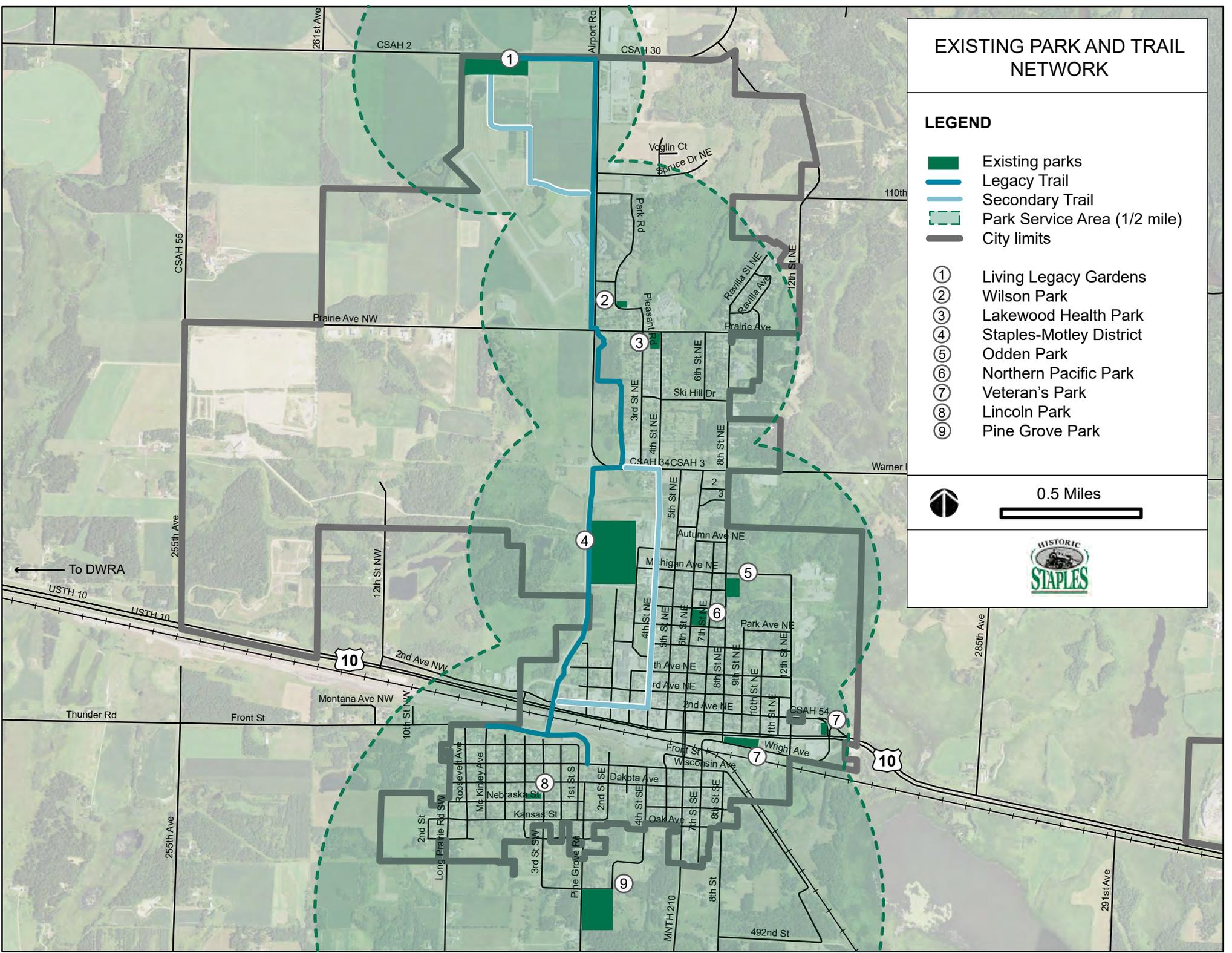
# EXISTING PARK AND TRAIL NETWORK

## LEGEND

-  Existing parks
-  Legacy Trail
-  Secondary Trail
-  Park Service Area (1/2 mile)
-  City limits

- ① Living Legacy Gardens
- ② Wilson Park
- ③ Lakewood Health Park
- ④ Staples-Motley District
- ⑤ Odden Park
- ⑥ Northern Pacific Park
- ⑦ Veteran's Park
- ⑧ Lincoln Park
- ⑨ Pine Grove Park

 0.5 Miles





## 05: Open Space

This chapter evaluates the passive spaces located within the city and adjacent to city limits. This plan provides an overview of the existing open space network and a plan to protect and preserve the natural environment.

# Open Space

Open space can come in vast forms and management practices based on the goals of the land. Lakes, rivers, state and forest management areas, parks, and playgrounds are your typical publicly owned open spaces. Other areas, such as forestland, cropland, pastures, wetlands, and golf courses, are examples of privately owned open space.

It is important that the goals and policies outlined in this document note the importance of open space and natural areas throughout the park and trail sections. Open space and natural areas are vital to maintaining the community’s character and providing for recreational amenities.

Defining open space is a challenge. Open space is a place-based term, varying from community to community. A number of communities in our region have adopted land-use policies that encourage the protection of such amenities.

## Existing Conditions

Vegetative and geographic variety gives Staples residents the opportunity to benefit from the enjoyment of both hardwood forests and prairie grasslands, but it also creates a unique feel and natural environment for the Staples area.

## Wildlife Management Areas

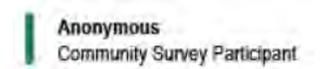
Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota’s outdoor recreation systems and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. These lands range from prairies and wetlands to forests and brushlands. The following WMAs are in proximity to the city, and these lands fall under the management of the DNR.

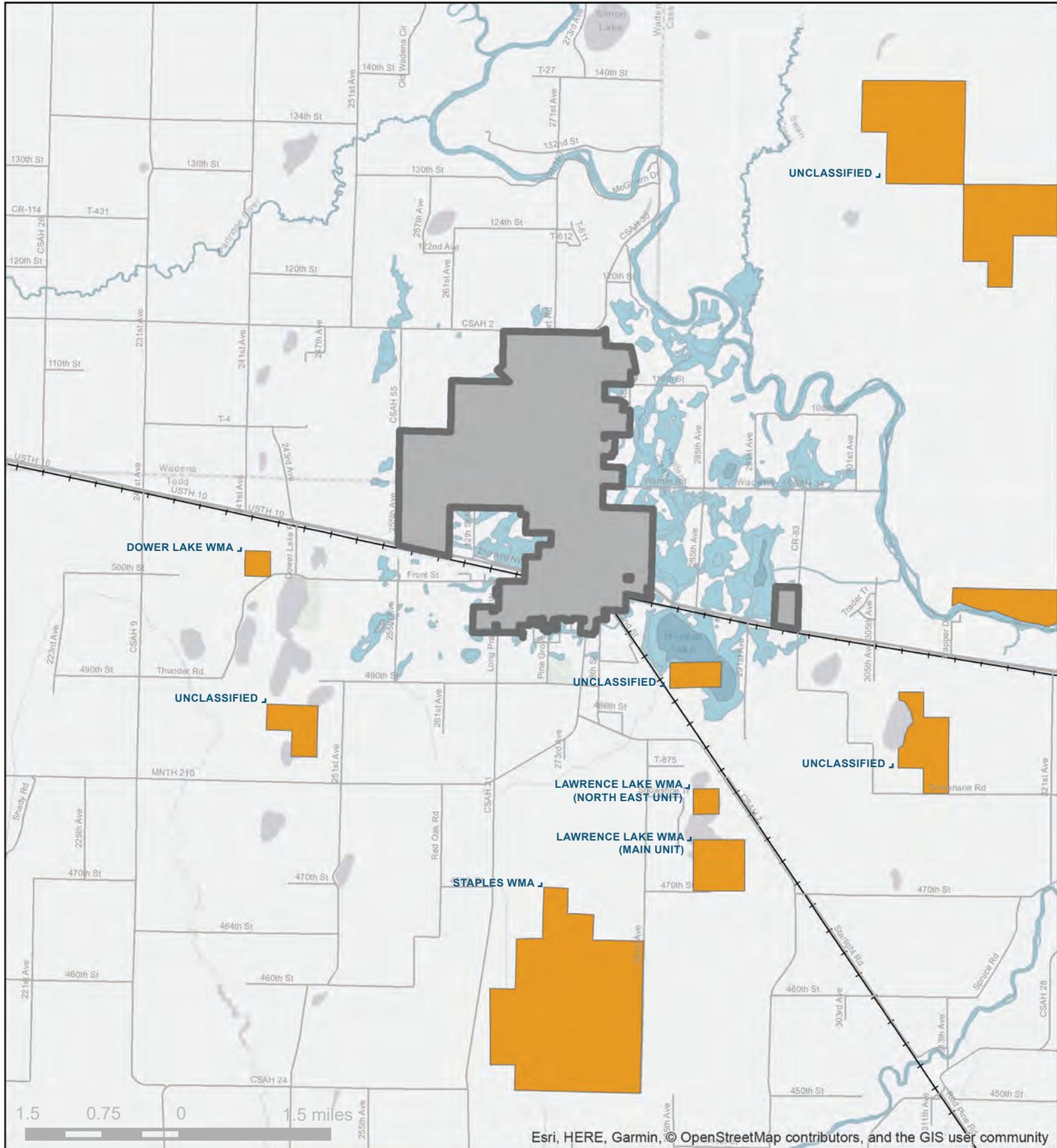
- › **Crow Wing River State Water Trail:** Noted as one of the state’s best wilderness routes for canoeists, many campsites are available along the route and contain undeveloped shorelines. Popular canoe and tubing launch sites are located at McGivern Park, Cottingham Park, and Bullard’s Bluff, all parks operated by Wadena County.
  
- › **Dower Lake Wildlife Management Area:** The Dower Lake WMA is 40 acres in size and is an open water wetland with surrounding cattails, low-land grass, and brush areas. Management of this unit focuses on maintaining and improving the habitat for diversity for native plants and wildlife that use wetland habitats. Recreational opportunities are allowed, including hiking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing.

**Open space is a general, all-encompassing term to describe the following: green space, wetlands, woodlands, waterways, riparian corridors, wildlife habitat, critical environmental areas, public and private conservation lands (including nature preserves, conservation easements, green corridors, landscape linkages, wildlife corridors and wilderness areas), private working lands of conservation value (including forests, farms and agricultural greenbelts), scenic vistas, and other protected lands that include greenways, utility corridors, trails and parks.**

- › **Lawrence Lake Wildlife Management Area (Main Unit):** The Lawrence Lake WMA is nearly 162 acres in size and offers public water access to Lawrence Lake. This WMA is a mixture of oak, aspen, and pine forests. Management of this unit focuses on maintaining and improving the habitat for a diversity of native plants and wildlife. Recreational opportunities include hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and wildlife watching/photography.
- › **Lawrence Lake Wildlife Management Area (North East Unit):** Comprising 40 acres, this WMA is on the northeast side of Lawrence Lake. This WMA has restricted access and public access is available by water only. All motorized vehicles are prohibited anywhere on the WMA. The land contains a mixture of lowland brush and grass areas. The management of the unit focuses on maintaining and improving habitat for a diversity of native plants and wildlife. Recreational opportunities exist, such as hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and wildlife watching/photography.
- › **Staples Wildlife Management Area:** The Staples WMA is 1,428 acres in size and is located 1.5 miles south of the city. This WMA is comprised of a large, restored wetland basin, with some tame and native grassland to the east of the wetland, as well as mesic hardwoods and fire-dependent mixed conifer-hardwood stands on the north and east side of the wetland. There are also some mesic hardwood stands, sedge and shrub wetlands in the southeast quadrant of the unit. Management of this unit focuses on maintaining and improving the habitat for a diversity of native plants and wildlife, with priority given to open wetland and grassland habitats. The Staples WMA is one of the largest wetland mitigation projects in the country. Recreational opportunities include hunting, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and wildlife watching/photography.

**“Trail to Lakewood and around the wetlands and back. The wetlands would be something with a great view and attract visitors. We could have benches and informational signage around the trail. People could watch the cranes and learn about nature.”**

 Anonymous  
Community Survey Participant



# STAPLES WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



## LEGEND

- Staples City Limits
- Wadena Roads
- Todd Roads
- DNR Management Units
- Railroad
- Wetlands

**DRAFT**

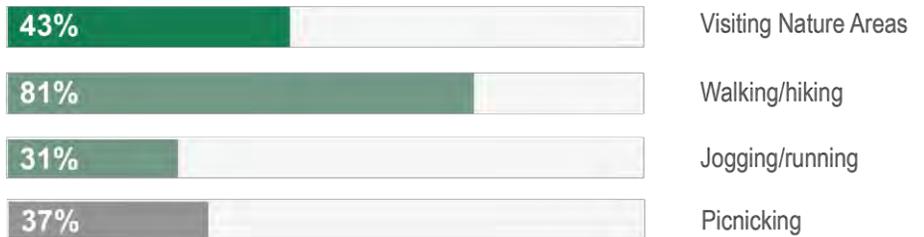


## Survey Results

As a part of the park, trail, and open space survey, the committee studied passive and open space responses. Respondents noted the following:

With the abundance of wildlife management areas surrounding the city, partnership should be made to encourage the use of these facilities and, in part, the city could address the increasing interest in passive recreation.

WHICH ACTIVITY HAVE YOU OR MEMBERS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATED IN DURING THE PAST THREE (3) YEARS?



### Open Space as Natural Infrastructure

Natural infrastructure is a term that refers to the proper functioning of natural systems to manage stormwater, sustain native animal and plant communities, sustain harvests of forest products, and protect soils, groundwater, and other natural amenities. Considering natural systems as infrastructure recognizes both that such systems require periodic maintenance and investment similar to “gray infrastructure” (roads, wastewater systems, energy utilities, etc.), and that natural systems contribute to our quality of life similar to gray infrastructure.

### Open Space as a Recreational Asset

Open space can serve a variety of passive or dispersed recreational activities, such as hiking, bird watching, bird and animal photography, orienteering, and berry gathering, as well as hunting and related activities that do not require infrastructure other than open space.

Survey respondents provided input to identify the following key themes to improve over the course of this long-range planning effort:

- › Protection and conservation
- › Birding and nature trail development
- › Observation and viewing areas of habitat
- › Improve the connection to the Crow Wing River



## 06: Goals & Policies

This chapter provides goals and policies to advance and sustain the existing park, trail, and open space network within the city. City staff and officials will use these goals as a tool to help advance the community's aspirations for the network they envision.

# Parks, Trails & Open Space Goals and Policies

The goals and policies in this section are meant to guide and inform future decision making and actions regarding the park network. Goals are broad statements that describe a desired outcome and are long-range in scope. Policies describe the general action in which programs and activities are to be conducted to achieve the greater goals. Policies speak to the underlying context and values that are often place-based and specific. Community feedback forms the basis and foundation of the goal and policy work.

*The plan's emphasis is to facilitate and encourage walking and bicycling as convenient, safe, and practical forms of transportation throughout the community. The Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan includes connections to City Parks, recreational facilities, schools, neighborhoods, businesses, industrial areas, and special considerations for future connections to county and regional trails as well as recreational facilities.*

## SHORT TERM

### **Goal 1: Study the changing recreational needs and respond to the desires of the residents.**

Policies:

- P1. Conduct a community survey periodically or in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan.
- P2. Analyze and respond to the desires of residents when developing park and trail facilities.
- P3. Design parks and trails to serve residents of all ages and abilities.
- P4. Work with local partners on recreational programming to serve residents of all ages and abilities.
- P5. Understand and balance the needs of park and trail users.

### **Goal 2: Provide recreation opportunities that appeal to all generations and abilities.**

Policies:

- P1. Work to provide hiking and nonmotorized access to parks and open spaces.
- P2. Work toward safe, accessible trail networks within the parks, connecting to the entire trail network.
- P3. Promote activities that can be done with friends and family.
- P4. Design for accessibility.

### **Goal 3: Develop and prioritize maintenance for the existing facilities.**

Policies:

- P1. Prioritize funds to address identified maintenance needs within the park and trail systems.
- P2. Incorporate maintenance and replacement costs into investment decisions for parks and trails.
- P3. Create revenue-generating sources within the parks and trails.

**Goal 4: Provide natural experiences within the existing park and trail system.**

Policy:

- P1. Improve wayfinding, informational areas and access to existing natural features such as wooded areas and sensitive environmental areas.
- P2. Utilize practices that minimize the impact to habitats when developing parks and trails.
- P3. Connect people to natural areas in and adjacent to the community. Connection can mean hiking, asphalt, boardwalk, viewing areas, etc.

**Goal 5: Support and expand the educational campaign to educate residents on bicycle safety.**

Policy:

- P1. Post and market safety tips for bicycles and motorists.
- P2. Clearly post and identify appropriate, designated routes for bicyclists.
- P3. Utilize the abundance of information from state and national groups, such as Bicycle Alliance for Minnesota, League of American Bicyclists, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.
- P4. Explore educational opportunities with schools and other local partners.
- P5. Promote and participate in active living events.

**LONG TERM**

**Goal 1: Maintain and develop a comprehensive park and trail system to serve the recreational needs of the community.**

Policy:

- P1. Include wayfinding and signage.
- P2. Increase usability by improving existing amenities which will improve the user experience.
- P3. Provide safe road crossings.
- P4. Extend fall, winter, and spring uses of trail networks.
- P5. Develop trail loops in neighborhoods and community parks.
- P6. Establish additional bike racks and repair stations throughout the park and trail network.
- P7. Encourage the development of a “trailhead(s)” that can provide services to trail users.

**Goal 2: Explore opportunities to connect existing parks through walking and biking networks.**

Policy:

- P1. Continue to expand the community's sidewalk network on collector and arterial streets.
- P2. Develop on- and off-street trail loops within the community.
- P3. Coordinate and collaborate with new trails with the city, county, and state road construction and reconstruction projects.
- P4. Explore platted streets and alleys that were never developed to provide new trail opportunities.
- P5. Where feasible, provide paved trails that create community connections in greenway corridors, away from roads.
- P6. Set aside land for trail development within new subdivisions.

**Goal 3: Construct pathways along designated routes to support pedestrian safety and comfort.**

Policy:

- P1. Continue to expand the sidewalk network.
- P2. Retain and develop trails within existing parks and open spaces.
- P3. Where possible, separate motorized and nonmotorized trail users.
- P4. Consider adopting a complete streets policy.
- P5. Support the safe route to school program.

**Goal 4: Encourage community events that facilitate community interaction, community pride, and identity.**

Policy:

- P1. Encourage volunteer or community groups to be involved and provide input to policy makers.
- P2. Develop programming for the parks and trail networks.
- P3. Encourage groups to promote and develop activities for all seasons (e.g., foot races, triathlons, cross-country ski races).

**Goal 5: Promote natural surface hiking, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking on trail networks.**

Policy:

- P1. Continue to maintain the fall, winter, and spring use of trails by plowing designated winter routes.
- P2. Promote the city's and local partners' trail and pathway networks for all seasons.
- P3. Develop programming to invite people to the trail systems, such as cross-country skiing races.
- P4. Provide adequate space on the road for bicyclists and on-street facilities.

**Goal 6: Work with state, county, and township officials to expand on-street and off-street path networks.**

Policy:

- P1. Collaborate with Todd and Wadena counties, townships, and MnDOT on improvements to pedestrian networks.
- P2. Work to improve signage and wayfinding along key corridors in the city.
- P3. Where possible, collaborate in seeking funding from grants, organizations, and other sources.
- P4. Collaborate with local governments to get trail connections to Dower Lake Recreation Area, Pine Grove, and McGivern Parks.
- P5. Explore/coordinate opportunities to connect to regional trails that lie outside of the City of Staples limit boundaries.

**Goal 7: Support Todd and Wadena counties' park, trail, and open space planning efforts to maintain or enhance new and existing facilities.**

Policy:

- P1. Work with state and county officials to provide adequate open spaces for residents.
- P2. Elected and appointed officials should work with county officials on public land improvements.
- P3. Coordinate with county officials on highway reconstruction projects in an effort to connect the open space network.

**Goal 8: Partner with local hospitality and tourism sectors to support the needs of visitors and travelers.**

Policy:

- P1. Work with businesses to coordinate business hours during peak tourism seasons.
- P2. Continue to promote events that bring people to the city.
- P3. Support the promotion of regional destinations and events.
- P4. Develop hiking, walking, biking, etc., mapping kiosks for visitors.
- P5. Communicate and coordinate with Staples Motley Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Board to promote tourism.



## 07: Implementation

This chapter outlines action items to move the goals and policies forward.

# Implementation

The chart is to be reviewed annually at the first meeting of the year at the parks and recreation advisory board.

<b>Park Connections</b>		
<b>Short-term (1-5 years)</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Sub-strategy</b>	<b>City Role</b>
Develop detailed park and open space network plan	Develop a proposed Recreation Trail Plan	Lead
Educate residents and tourists on the existing park network		Partnership
Prepare a natural resources inventory	Identify sensitive and priority open space areas	Lead
Assess and install signage along main thoroughfares directing the public and travelers to our parks and picnic areas		Lead
<b>Ongoing</b>		
Understand the needs of the park and trail users	Conduct a survey periodically	Partnership
Program the parks and trails	Support sporting and recreational events that utilize the park network	Support
Develop an assessment of the park and trail network amenities		Lead
Develop more web content for the park and trail system, along with brochures and maps to enhance communication		Lead
Develop a future project list for each park and trail network		Lead
Evaluate parks for ADA compliance		Lead

<b>Trail Connections</b>		
<b>Short-term (1-5 years)</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Sub-strategy</b>	<b>City Role</b>
Identify priority trail improvements & expansions	Map specific routes	Lead
Develop programming around “Bike Staples” that educates riders on bicycle facilities, routes, and bicycle safety		Lead
Educate residents on Active Living		Partner
Explore and consider piloting Complete Street routes throughout the community		Lead
Identify and market seasonal recreational opportunities	Conduct a survey to understand the needs of park and trail users, specifically focusing on cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking	Partner
Complete paving of existing Legacy Trail		Lead

<b>Ongoing</b>		
Identify priority areas for proposed bicycle network expansion	Identify existing and proposed bicycle lanes and routes	Lead
	Identify existing and proposed multiuse trails	
	Identify recreational trails throughout the community	
Map the motorized trail network	Work with the snowmobile club to map private trails	Partner
Find funding opportunities and support a trailhead in the city.		Lead
Work with the state, townships, and county to expand a trail network to Dower Lake Rec Area, Pine Grove and McGivern parks.		Partner
Identify priority improvements to the pedestrian network and participate in safe route to schools		Partner
Prepare a wayfinding signage master plan		Partner
Identify a trail corridor to the business district		Lead
Evaluate possible trail corridors to connect people to surrounding communities		Lead
Promote the waterway trails around the community	Ensure that maps are available to residents and visitors.	Partner
Establish bike racks and repair stations throughout the park and trail network		Lead
Prioritize the implementation of the backbone routes by identifying feasible trails and determine a plan for construction.	Identify trail projects and integrate into Capital Improvement Plan	Lead

<b>Open Space Connections</b>		
<b>Short-term (1-5 years)</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Sub-strategy</b>	<b>City Role</b>
Develop wayfinding and signage to these destinations throughout the community	Develop a wayfinding master plan	Partner
Promote natural-surface hiking, cross-country skiing and biking		Partner
Identify corridors to connect public lands and open spaces		Lead
<b>Ongoing</b>		
Invest in parking and camping facilities in an effort to connect people to nature and the trail network		Lead
Identify greenways		Lead
Collaborate with the county, townships, school, and CLC on expansion and maintenance of existing of public lands		Partner

<b>Facilities</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Sub-strategy</b>	<b>City Role</b>
Develop a facility wish list for each of the community parks, trails, and open space areas		Lead
Install hiking, walking, biking, etc., mapping kiosks for visitors throughout high-visibility areas in town.		Partner
Explore the installation of an amphitheater at Northern Pacific Park		Partner
Explore the installation of a pavilion by Vet's Park for events and Farmer's Market		Partner
Evaluation other park opportunities at Odden Park		Lead
Install new playground at Lincoln Park and explore other uses to increase usage.		Lead
Install new playground equipment at Dower Lake Recreation Area		Lead
Explore the construction of a storm shelter at Dower Lake Recreation Area		
<b>Ongoing</b>		
Develop a historic walking tour downtown (sculptures, statues, art pieces)		Lead

## Funding Sources

Substantial investment is made by cities to acquire parkland, develop park amenities, and build facilities. After the substantial investment, ongoing revenue streams are required to maintain the parks, trails, and open space, and to provide for future replacement.

Funding streams are classified as sustainable, or a consistent, long-term source of funds; or intermittent, where funding sources are difficult to schedule and may require matching dollars, but are typically one-time revenues.

### Park Dedication

Park dedication via the development or subdivision process is an important tool. A park dedication ordinance would set the parameters for receiving land, collecting cash payment in lieu of land, and using these resources. Funds received from payments in lieu of dedication should be used to acquire park sites, trail corridor, and greenway components.

### General Tax Levy

General fund is classically used to maintain the parks and recreation system. The general fund is the primary funding source for ongoing maintenance, natural resource management, operations, and slight amenity additions. Most grants also have a matching requirement that is often matched with general funds.

### Bonding

Bonding provides a large, one-time infusion of capital for acquisition, replacement, repair, expansion, or new construction. Bonding allows for current and future residents to pay for park improvements over time, which typically corresponds to useful life of the asset improvements.

### Other Common Funding Sources

These include local option sales tax, franchise fees, and user fees. Intermittent funding sources are often irregular or periodic in occurrence. The following is a list of practical and typical funding streams:

- Local, county and state funds
- Park and trail dedication
- School districts
- Partnerships
- Donations

Grants are a strategic way to make city dollars stretch farther. The following is a list of possible granting agencies:

- **Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR):** The DNR is the most comprehensive resource for securing funding for park and trail programs from the state. The DNR offers a variety of grant programs as well as technical assistance.
- **Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT):** Trail and bikeway improvement projects can be funded through this source.
- **Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment:** In 2008, Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution, which increased the general sales and use tax rate by three-eighths of 1 percent (0.375%) and dedicated the proceeds for the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the Outdoor Heritage Fund, Clean Water Fund, and Parks and Trails Fund.
- **Foundations and Nonprofits**

