
1 Introduction & Background

What is a park, trail, and open space system plan?

This plan is a community plan for a connected system of parks, trails, and open spaces. It is a vision for the system as a whole and provides a framework for system development in an environment of increasing population, development, and park and trail use over the next 25 years. The Dayton Park, Trail, and Open Space Plan includes:

Section 1 - Introduction & Background states the plan's purpose, summarizes the planning process, and reviews relevant related planning efforts.

Section 2 - Inventory and Identification of Future Needs describes the existing system and identifies community needs and desires for the future system.

Section 3 - Vision and Guiding Principles outlines the vision and guiding principles that form the foundation of this plan.

Section 4 - Classification & Standards defines park and trail classifications and presents standards for new parks and trails in Dayton.

Section 5 -Park, Trail, and Open Space System describes the system as a whole and outlines objectives and policies to guide the future design and development of the park, trail and open space system, including recommendations for new parks, conceptual trail alignments and open space system goals.

Section 6 -Implementation outlines objectives and policies to guide implementation of the park, trail, and open space plan and describes the City's current and potential implementation tools.

The Appendices contain detailed fact sheets for each existing park, existing local ordinances and state statutes related to park dedication, the public involvement in this plan's creation, a glossary of implementation tools, recreation facility standards, a reference list of related planning documents, and a current list of grant resources.

Why is Dayton preparing a system plan?

Over the next 25 years, Dayton's population is projected to increase significantly; this growth will result in pressure to develop many of the agricultural lands and natural areas residents treasure today as well as increase demand for parks and trails. Since Dayton is on the threshold of significant changes, this is a critical time to be planning its park, trails, and open space

system. Investments made over the life of this plan will be the foundation of a system that will be used and enjoyed by future generations. The City of Dayton recognizes that it has a one-time opportunity to plan development around its park, trail, and open space system and, as a result, has chosen to undertake this plan as the first step in its comprehensive plan update. This system is intended to be the framework for guiding the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, such as land use, environment/natural resource protection, and transportation.

This Plan is an update to the Parks and Open Space chapter of the current 2020 Dayton Comprehensive Plan adopted in February of 2001. Since that time, Dayton has experienced growth and, along with that growth, acquired new park land. Recently, the City has taken significant steps to identify and prioritize the City's highest quality natural resources that warrant protection. In June of 2005, a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) was completed by Hennepin County Environmental Services and Bonestroo Natural Resources, an environmental consulting firm. As part of the NRI project, conceptual greenways were identified as a means to connect, protect, and enhance the City's natural resources system. The City Council also formed an Open Space Advisory Committee with the charge to "develop advisory recommendations to the Dayton City Council related to the appropriate protection and development of parks, trails and open spaces within the context of anticipated future growth." One of the committee's recommendations to the City Council in May of 2006 was that the City adopt a parks, trails, and open space plan that incorporates the conceptual greenway, which is an open space system linking Dayton's high quality natural resources, as an integral part of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. Figure 1.1 summarizes park, trail, and open space planning efforts in Dayton.

An updated park, trail and open space plan is needed to reflect changes that have occurred since the last plan, to better address open space priorities based on the NRI and recent efforts by the City and the Open Spaces Advisory Committee, as well as to guide the update of the remaining chapters of the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

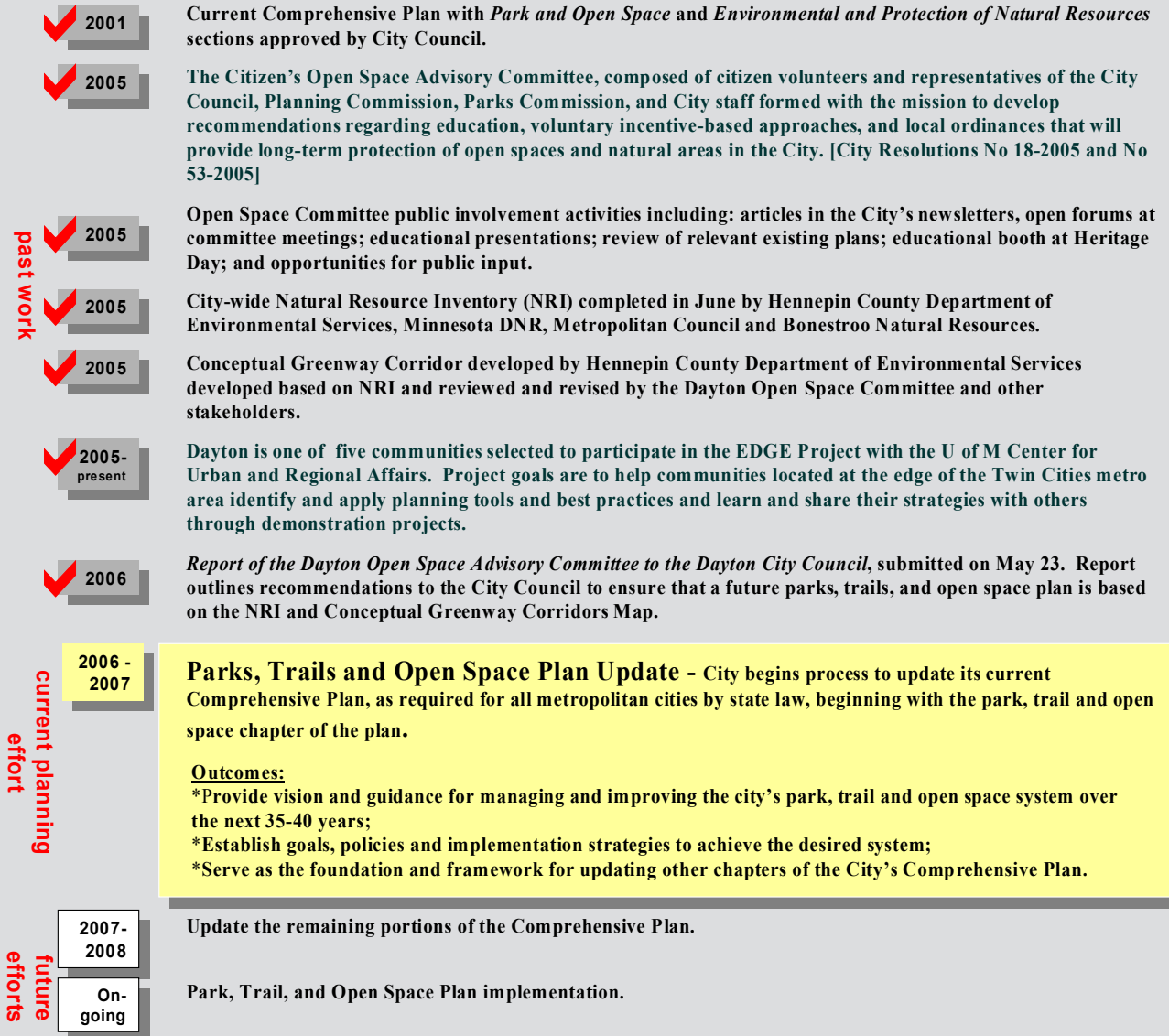
This system plan focuses on future park, trail, and open space system needs. It is intended to be a user-friendly guide for decision-making affecting the City through 2030. The City recognizes that demographic, recreation, and environmental trends will change over the next 25 years and that those changes will affect park, trail and open space needs. This Plan will set the framework for obtaining new park land, obtaining or protecting open space, and developing trails, as well as funding and improvements by establishing priorities within a long-term vision. Keep in mind that this Plan can be amended as deemed necessary and is required to be reviewed and updated every ten years by State law.

Planning Process

In 2006, the City of Dayton hired Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. as planning consultants to work with City Staff and the Open Space Advisory Committee to prepare this plan. The six-month process began in August 2006 with an

Figure 1.1 Timeline

Timeline of Dayton's Parks, Trails and Open Space Planning Efforts



inventory and analysis of the existing system, a review of the *Open Space Advisory Committee's Report to the City Council*, and the establishment of a community vision and guiding principles. September and October were spent exploring alternative concepts for parks, trails, and open space systems, followed by establishing the preferred approach outlined in this plan.

Open Space Advisory Committee

Throughout the planning process the Open Space Advisory Committee has been integral to the planning process. The committee was kept informed of the consultant team's progress at monthly meetings during the planning process and provided a valuable sounding board for ideas and concepts.

Project Partners

Project Partners for this plan include: the EDGE project with the University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; 1000 Friends of Minnesota; Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services; and Hennepin County Extension / University of Minnesota Services. The project partners offered valuable assistance related to natural resources, data collection, public outreach and community participation.

Community Involvement

The public was invited to participate in the planning process at two public meetings. The first was a public workshop held on October 17, 2006. At this workshop, the public was invited to evaluate alternate city-wide system approaches to parks, trails, and open space. Results helped to identify a preferred approach that responds to needs and desires specific to Dayton residents. The second public meeting was a Community Open House, held December 5, 2006, to present the Draft Park, Trail, and Open Space Plan. Feedback from the public at this meeting has been incorporated into the final plan. A summary of community feedback and the alternate system approaches can be found in Appendix D.



Rush creek in Elm Creek Park Reserve.

Related Planning Efforts

This plan exists within the context of other regional and local park, trail, open space and natural resource planning efforts. These efforts have had influence in defining the direction and recommendations of this plan and may provide opportunities for partnerships when implementing the plan's elements. The following is a brief summary of related planning efforts.

Elm Creek Park Reserve Master Plan

Elm Creek Park Reserve is 5,279 acre park encompassing land in Dayton, Champlin and Maple Grove. The park is part of the Metropolitan Regional Park System and is owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District. The park is the dominant feature in the southeast portion of Dayton is an important recreation and open space amenity for residents. As a park reserve, only 20% of the park's upland may be developed for recreation. The remaining land must be restored or retained in a natural state, which means the park will continue to be a significant open space resource.

Three Rivers Park District is currently at the end of its process for updating Elm Creek Park Reserve's master plan. The draft plan suggests new facilities

and the rehabilitation of some existing facilities to meet expected increases in visitation and changing demographic and recreation trends. As planned, the park would meet its 20% maximum area for development. Some high quality areas of the park are designated as sanctuaries with very limited public access.

Dayton's park, trail and, open space system is intended to complement the resources in Elm Creek Park Reserve and increase connectivity between the regional park and the City's system.

Blandings Turtle Monitoring

Three Rivers Park District has been studying the Blanding's Turtle, a state threatened species, in Elm Creek Park Reserve for almost a decade. Monitoring has revealed that significant numbers of turtles live north of the park on private residential and agricultural land. The turtles reside in wetlands most of the year, but use upland areas for nesting in June. Any significant changes to land use in this area would lead to the demise of the turtles. This plan suggests a community park on the agricultural land south of City Hall and near the turtle's habitat. If a park were to be created in this area, care in specific site selection, uses and site design, as well as coordination with Three Rivers Park District, should be taken so turtle habitat is not disturbed.

Regional Trail Planning

Three Rivers Park District is in the process of master planning for two regional trails that will likely travel through Dayton: the Crow Hassan-Elm Creek Regional Trail connecting Elm Creek Park Reserve to the Crow Hassan Park Reserve; and the Crow River Regional Trail which conceptually will follow the Crow River to Carver County and connect to the proposed Twin Cities and Western Regional Trail in Norwood-Young America (see Figure 1.3). This plan suggests several possible trail alignments that could serve as the Dayton portion of the Crow Hassan-Elm Creek Regional Trail (see Section 5). This plan also suggests a conceptual trail alignment along the Crow River that could serve as the Dayton portion of the Crow River Regional Trail.

French Lake - Diamond Lake Area Study

French and Diamond Lakes have been identified by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Nongame Wildlife Section as important wildlife habitat, particularly for waterfowl, shore birds and Blandings Turtles. In 2001 Hennepin Conservation District conducted a study to identify land cover around the lakes and assessed potential development impacts. Today the lakes are very nutrient rich and there are concerns about water quality. The study points out that future development, both adjacent to the lakes and in their watersheds, could have a negative impact on water quality and wildlife habitat. Diamond Lake's water quality also negatively affected by recreational boating. Restoration of wetland in the area, establishment of a park on the



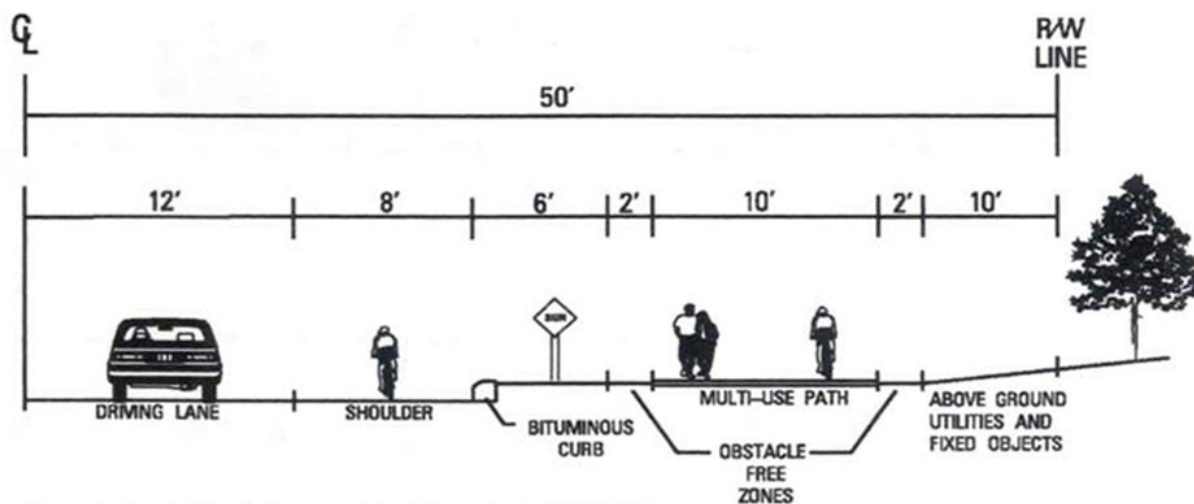
The Mississippi River in Dayton

south side of Diamond Lake, and creation of a greenway along Diamond Creek, which connects the lakes to Elm Creek Park Reserve, are all suggested as measures that could improve lake water quality and wildlife habitat. In addition, a Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) study should be undertaken.

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) / Mississippi River Critical Area

The City of Dayton’s Mississippi River corridor is officially designated by the State as part of the Mississippi River Critical Area and MNRRA. The purpose of these programs is to protect and preserve the river as unique and valuable state and regional resource. The City’s Mississippi River Corridor Plan contains information, goals, and guidelines for the river corridor within Dayton and is, as required by law, compliant with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Critical Area minimum standards and MNRRA policies. Goals in Dayton’s Mississippi River Corridor Plan that relate to parks, trails, and open space include: protecting the river corridor for the benefit of the citizens of Dayton and the greater region; providing recreational opportunities allowing interaction between people and the river including a non-motorized trail and preserving and enhancing the visual, cultural, historic and ecological resources and natural character within the corridor. This plan supports the Mississippi River Corridor Plan goals by suggesting one more park along the river, a continuous trail between Dayton River Road and the Mississippi, and incorporating high quality natural resources along the river in the conceptual greenway.

Figure 1.2 Full Bicycle Accommodation on County Roads



Source: Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan, adopted 12/10/1996

accommodation on County Roads may consist of a combination on-road bike lanes within the right-of-way or multiuse paths separated from the roadway but within the right-of-way. To move towards better accommodating trails, the County typically reviews plans for new development along County Roads to ensure that adequate right-of-way for trails is dedicated at the time of development and undertakes trail projects along with road reconstruction or upgrades. If the City wishes to build a trail in advance of road improvements, the County will consider cost-sharing. Dayton's plan shows conceptual trails along all County Roads (see Figure 5.2) and the City should continue to coordinate efforts with Hennepin County.

Park, Trail and Open Space Planning in Adjacent Communities

People do not restrict themselves to parks, trails and open space within their community. Therefore, this plan coordinates efforts with those in adjacent communities. Conceptual trail connections to existing and planned trails in Hassan, Corcoran, Maple Grove, and Champlin are made to create a regional trail network. In addition, Dayton's open space system, the conceptual greenway, connects to greenways or other open space plans in adjacent communities to preserve habitat connectivity and allow for wildlife movement (see Figure 1.3).