



Introduction

Natural resources, access to the Minnesota River and a thriving parks and trails system rank high as quality of life contributors for residents in Carver. As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, Carver is tasked with both planning for both future parks and trails while maintaining the robust system that is currently constructed.

Goals

The following goals have been developed to help guide development of the park and trail system:

1. Provide a balance of both active and passive recreational opportunities in a high-quality, multi-jurisdictional and private park system that responds to needs of both the community and visitors.
2. Construct and maintain a robust trail system that provides recreational opportunities and allows for a connected community with multi-modal transportation. Partnerships with neighboring communities and surrounding jurisdictions will allow residents and visitors to enjoy both the City of Carver and Carver County collectively.
3. Promote existing and future parks with wayfinding and signage to encourage use of parks and trails system.
4. Create a diverse parks and trails system that is accessible for all stages of life, abilities and provide space for all community members to feel comfortable in public spaces.
5. Explore and identify a destination park concept that will both benefit residents of Carver as well as visitors to the community.

Strategies

1. Maintenance of existing parks with planned renovation or improvements allows Carver to leverage existing land and programming
2. Active living principles will be applied to future development
3. Acquire area that has been identified as unique, high-quality resources that will allow for development of new parks and trails at the community park level or destination park level
4. Revisit and revise the City's adopted Parks Master Plan biennially to ensure work is consistent with broad, big picture goals
5. Apply National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) findings and literature to development of the parks and trails system

Park Inventory

The City of Carver has extensive park facilities available for the enjoyment of its residents and visitors. Figure P-1 shows the existing park facilities. City park facilities currently available within the City include the following:

Ironwood Park | Ironwood Park is adjacent to Carver Elementary and contains two lighted multi-use fields and one practice field. Playground facilities are at the adjacent school. A network of trails provides opportunities to enjoy wetland features.

Community Park | Centrally located within the community at the crossroads of CSAH 11 and Sixth Street, Community Park provides a full range of active recreational facilities, and is home to the Carver Black Sox. Baseball and softball fields, playgrounds, picnic shelter, skate park, ice rink with warming house, and rock climbing apparatus are the signature items at this park.

Carver Bluffs Park | Located at the bottom of the bluff adjacent to the Carver Bluffs neighborhood, a gateway into the Rapids Lake Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Carver Bluff Park includes Soccer fields and playground equipment.

Riverside Park | Riverside Park includes the riverfront which both provides unique recreation opportunities through the boat ramp but also has significant challenges due to annual flooding. The park includes an archery range and primitive camp-sites. The Fish and Wildlife Service has the ability to construct and maintain an information kiosk, access trail and vehicular gate through an agreement with the City.

Depot Park | Depot Park surrounds the historic water tower, which serves as an important entry landmark for the City. The water tower was restored in 1997-1998. Depot Park is a trailhead for the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail and provides entry into Carver's Historic Downtown.

Gazebo Park | A public square at the corner of Third Street and Broadway that provides a central gathering focus for the downtown area.

Lions Park | Four (4) acre park on Mount Hope Road is primarily used for active recreation and the park contains ballfields, tennis courts, and playground equipment. The site consists of two level "terraces" on a sloping hillside overlooking downtown.

Overlook Park | The small scenic overlook park in the Carver Creek neighborhood provides some of the city's most impressive views and a picnic area for the public.

Olsen Park | Olson Park near the Copper Hills neighborhood provides playground equipment and open multi-purpose play space.

Regional and Federal Park and public land facilities are also located in Carver. These include:

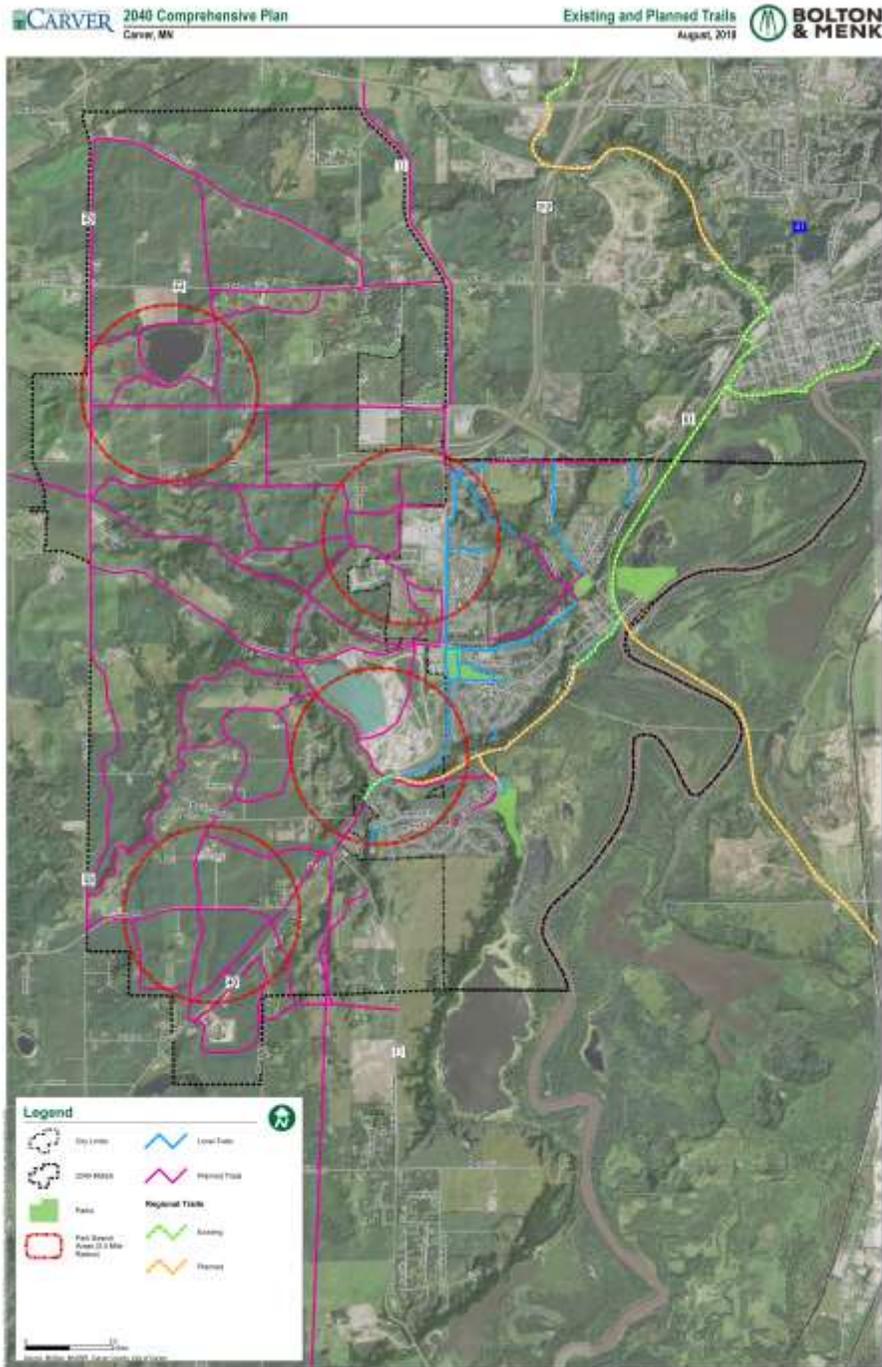
Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail | A section of this trail has been constructed between Chaska and downtown Carver along the former Union Pacific railroad corridor. Depot Park is adjacent to the trail, and serves as a trailhead location. An additional small section of this trail has been constructed adjacent to CSAH 11 near the Carver Bluffs neighborhood.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge | The MVNWR is gradually being expanded along a 34-mile stretch of the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling to Jordan. The refuge consists of seven management units.

Much of Carver's floodplain north of Riverside Park is located in the Chaska Unit of the refuge. This 589-acre unit is undeveloped except for trails providing access within the unit.

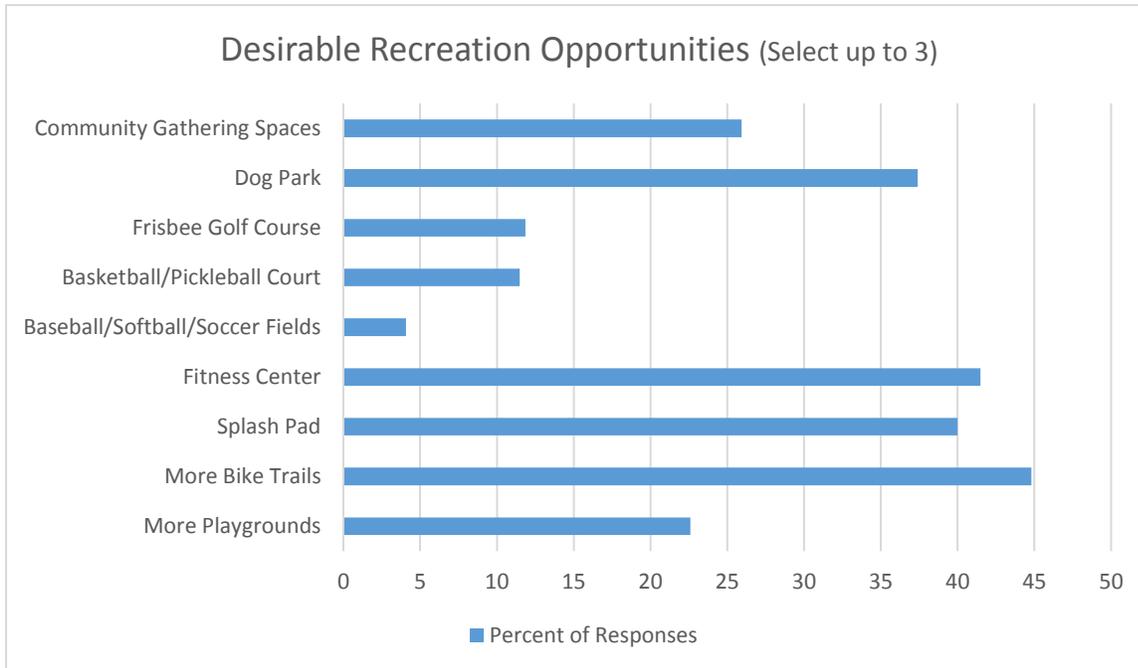
The floodplain south of downtown has recently been acquired for inclusion in the Rapids Lake Unit. A new interpretive center was constructed in 2007, and a large wetland and habitat restoration and trail development project was completed in 2008. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has an on-going efforts to improve the habitat within this unit as much of the land was farmed prior to acquisition.

Figure P-1 - Existing and Planned Trails Map | Park Search Areas



Survey Results

The Design Carver survey had several questions and responses related to existing and future parks and trails throughout the City of Carver.



Parks and trails additionally scored as the second highest priority for future growth throughout the City after commercial/retail use with 136 of 270 responses. Several responses in the open ended question of what people value most about living in the City of Carver included the trail system, natural resources and access to the outdoors.

Table P-1 | City of Carver Park Classifications – Existing and Future

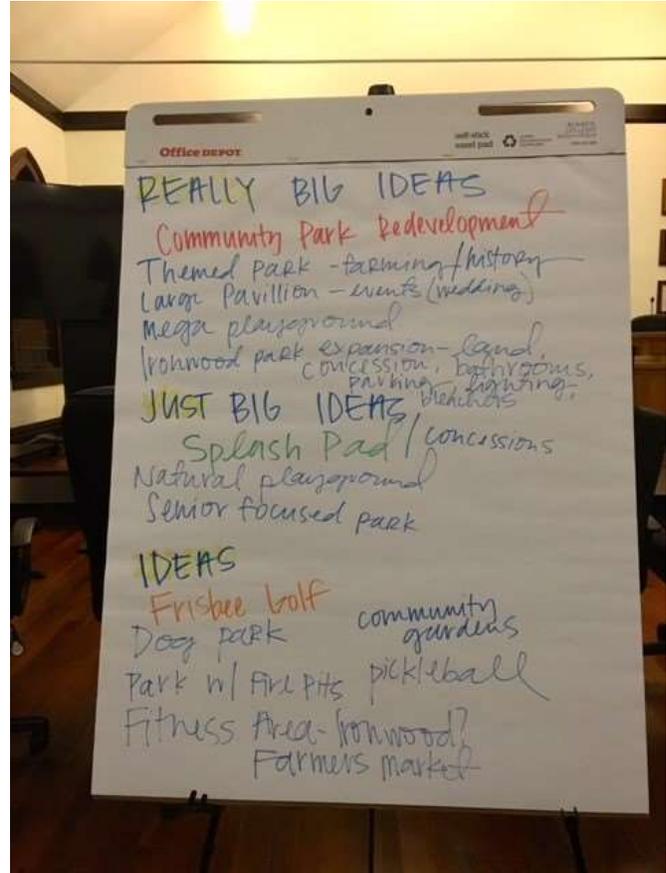
Type of Park	Criteria	Service Area	Size	Existing Acres	Notes
Neighborhood Park	Connectivity to the park is important through trail connections and crosswalks to ensure safe transportation to the park	½ mile to 1 mile service area, cannot be separated from neighborhood by nonresidential road.	.75-10 acres		Neighborhood parks can publically or privately owned.
Community Scale Park	Large service area, easily accessible both for residents and visitors to the community	1-3 mile service area	15-50 acres		
Destination Park	Unique park use for both existing residents and visitors to the community	Citywide	50-100 acres	0	
Conservation Area	Can vary based on resources, location	Citywide/Regional			May be publically or privately owned.
Local and Regional Trails	Development and construction of new trails as well as identifying and constructing trail gaps	Citywide/Regional			Trails should focus on connections for community users and amenities as well as development of a looped system to provide for recreational opportunities

Neighborhood Park

Carver has a relatively young population. The largest age groups for the population for females is ages 5-9 years old at 6.82% of the population. The largest age group for males is 10-14 years old at 6.03% of the population. As of the 2010 Census, 36.5% of Carver's population was under the age of 20. A goal of the City is to provide a broad offering of park services for different age groups. Most developing neighborhoods in Carver currently are within commutable distance to a community park. It is a goal of the City to provide larger, more inclusive parks for residents of all ages and abilities. Development of neighborhood parks may be included in land development but will shift to private ownership of the neighborhood parks. The City is not obligated to accept ownership of proposed neighborhood park if a need or special amenity is not fulfilled in development of the park.

Community Scale Park

Development of community scale parks create recreational opportunity for people of all ages from several neighborhoods with a broad range of facilities and programming. Community parks can accommodate organized sports for larger groups of people. Connection to community parks should be available both through the system of trails as well as via a collector road.



Destination Park

A destination park should be a unique park that hits a niche typical neighborhood and community parks do not meet. Destination parks often have creative programming including but not limited to park features at a greater scale. Examples of destination park programming includes boardwalks over naturally sensitive areas, play equipment on a grand scale to allow for accessibility for all ages, community spaces including but not limited to amphitheatres, gathering spaces or a splash pad. Destination parks may include creative lighting, programming and use for both residents and visitors to the park. Programming of a destination park often requires several years of planning and development. At the time of plan development, the Parks Commission recognized the regional need for a park that allows for play at all levels of ability. An inclusive park would fill a need both in Carver and throughout Carver County.

Conservation Area

Carver has several conservation areas that create a diverse and unique opportunity for both residents and visitors of the community. In many cases, the size and location of conservation areas are dictated

by the natural landscape. Conservation areas are typically used as a passive park use to include a minimum level of development although interpretive facilities or formal access points may be developed. Design of facilities should be determined by natural features, terrain, and the resources of the site. The nature conservation areas should be linked with greenways where possible and appropriate.

The City of Carver has a long history of protecting environmentally sensitive areas. Although these areas may serve some park functions, protection of special and unique areas for conservation is priority. Land identified as a known conservation area has been identified in the 2040 Future Land Use Map and will guide development for areas identified and known as unique terrain and natural features.

Local Trails

A robust trail system creates recreational opportunity for residents, builds community through interaction, decreases dependence on automobiles and can enhance quality of life for residents. Development and construction of trails is a priority for the City of Carver and should be considered with every development project proposed within the City. Trail development and connection should include large looped trail options with signage and wayfinding both related to destinations and solely for recreation opportunity. Gaps within the existing trail system will be priority to ensure future development of trails are connected into a robust system. With extensive area within the future growth area for Carver, development may occur in conjunction of development of roadways when necessary. Trail corridors are identified in the future park and trail map and should be identified and considered when the community is reviewing upcoming development projects.

Trails will be constructed of bituminous unless determined beneficial by the Parks Commission and the City. Development and construction of new trails should meet the standard of ten (10) feet in width. Maintenance level of trails will depend on factors including the type of trail and programming. Carver is open to creative ways to leverage the existing and future trail system that could allow for a more year round approach. This could include trails designation of trails to be used for snow-shoeing throughout winter months.

Regional Trails

Two proposed regional trails are included in Carver's future growth area. The Minnesota River Bluffs Extension and Scott County Regional Trail Plan are incorporated as part of this planning process. Carver is supportive of partnerships across jurisdictions that could lead to opportunity to partner and develop regional trails throughout Carver County and the area.

Parks and Trails Improvement Funding

Carver park system is identified with either the classification of a neighborhood benefit or a community benefit. The two classifications address different target markets and different programming goals. Community benefit improvements are classified as community parks, destination parks and the trail system throughout Carver. The City has a long term capital improvement program and controls to manage the construction and funding portion of the park system through build out of the City. Funding for improvements may be a combination of general fund revenues and park dedication fees collected at the time of subdivision. At the time of subdivision, if a development falls within one of the City's search areas for a future park, park dedication requirement may be met with dedication of land, construction

of improvements or a combination of both. If a development is not within a search area and the City has determined no additional need for park facilities in the area, a cash-in-lieu of dedication is required.

A park or recreation feature that most directly impacts a specific neighborhood will be installed at the time of subdivision by the developer. These parks will typically be privately owned and maintained. If trails are constructed as part of a development, the City will receive an easement over the trails for maintenance once they are constructed and accepted by the City. Trail locations will be determined in partnership between the City and developer and are typically required at the time of development.

Park and trail development related to subdivision will be reviewed by the Parks Commission and City Staff to determine the best use of dedication from the developer.