

## **10. PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

### ***A. Existing Park and Recreation Facilities***

Parks and natural open space are vital to the quality of life in Ramsey and in many ways define the community. Ramsey is fortunate to have retained many natural resources within its boundaries. One such example is Trott Brook with its associated wetlands and uplands, creating a natural greenway spanning the northern 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the city. Another is Elmcrest Park with the future potential of trails along Ditch #66, crossing the center of Ramsey, connecting Central Park, the Lake Itasca Trail, and neighborhoods along the way.

Ramsey by area is more than 17% wetlands of varying types and classes. Of the many wetland complexes, some have valuable oak and other forested areas in association providing residents opportunities to live and recreate in these natural settings. These patches of habitat are valuable vestiges for the wildlife that residents value.

Mississippi River and Rum River are significant water resources, and both part of the State's Wild and Scenic Rivers system and literally define the community. These two rivers are also state designated canoe routes, or recreational water trails. It is Ramsey's bituminous trail and sidewalk system that can be said to be the recreational fabric that knits all of these parks and resources together, while providing a recreational resource unto itself.

The City of Ramsey is also unique in that it has two county parks within its boundaries that are a part of the Metropolitan Council's regional system. Mississippi West Park includes bluffs, wooded areas and two islands on the Mississippi River. The 273 acre park is proposed to be developed within the next several years. The concept plan suggests a sustainable design center in addition to the usual county park facilities. One important feature will be a small boat landing and fishing pier, which will provide additional access to this most prominent river in the nation. The City, in coordination with Anoka County Parks, began construction of a boat landing within this park to provide the community a public access to the Mississippi River.

Rum River Central Park is 434 acres, 304 acres of which are in the City of Ramsey (the remaining is in the City of Oak Grove) and occupies the northeast corner of the city. The park has received over two million dollars in investments in recent years, including miles of bituminous and equestrian trails as well as a large pavilion, and canoe and small boat landing.

In addition the county facilities, Ramsey also benefits from the Mn/DOT Wayside Rest between Highway 10 and the Mississippi River in western Ramsey that has visitor contact building with restrooms, canoe access and picnic facilities. This site may also serve as a trailhead for the future Mississippi River Trail that will traverse from the Headwaters in Minnesota, through 10 states to New Orleans.

Several community and neighborhood parks ranging in size from less than one acre to over 100 acres are to be found throughout the City. These parks were typically deeded to the City as part of the subdivision park dedication requirements. Neighborhood parks include play structures, play fields and trail connections, while many non-urbanized public land remains undeveloped or is recognized as open space. Emerald Pond Park is unique in terms of a pergola and faux stream and like many neighborhood parks, popular for day care providers. Three (3) notable community parks include the 45-acre Central Park (primarily an athletic complex), Elmcrest Park, and also River's Bend Park with a mix athletic facilities, natural resources, and access to fishing.

In terms of significant outdoor recreation available from the private sector, Ramsey has two 18-hole golf courses open to the public; the Links at Northfork located in northwest of Lake Itasca and Rum River Hills Golf Course to the east, adjacent to the river at the 167<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment. An additional outdoor recreation facility that is privately owned and operated but open to the public is the 160 acre Boy Scouts of America site along the Rum River. This is used for recreational camping and outdoor activities for scouts, as well as the city's Safety Camp.

The total amount of acreage devoted to the park and open space system is over 1,800 acres or approximately 10% of the of the City's 28 square miles. Table 10-1 includes a basic park inventory for the City of Ramsey.

**Table 10-1 Park, Recreation and Open Space Inventory**

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
AUTUMN HEIGHTS	56.9	NEIGHBORHOOD				X					1					X					
BEAR		NEIGHBORHOOD									X										
BEAUDRY'S	5.6	OPEN SPACE																			X**
BROOKVIEW PARK NORTH	1.7	SPECIAL USE															X			X	
BROOKVIEW PARK SOUTH	1.5	OPEN SPACE																			
CAROLINE ACRES PARK	2.3	OPEN SPACE																			
CENTRAL PARK	41.3	COMMUNITY	2	X	X	X	X	X	2L		6	1	X	X		X					

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
CLOQUET ISLAND		COUNTY																			
COTTONWOOD		NEIGHBORHOOD																	X		
DEERWOOD	10.9	OPEN SPACE																			
EMERALD POND	11.2	NEIGHBORHOOD			X	X					X		X	X		X	X				
FLINTWOOD TERRACE	15.9	NEIGHBORHOOD									X					X	X		X		X ***
FORD BROOK	3.8	MINI-PARK														X	X				
FOREST HIDEAWAY		OPEN SPACE																			
FOSTER CEMETERY		CEMETERY																			
FOXPARK	22.4	NEIGHBORHOOD								X						X			X		X ***

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
GORHAM SANDY ACRES		OPEN SPACE																			
GREENLAND HILLS EAST	14.9	OPEN SPACE																			X**
GREENLAND HILLS WEST	8.5	OPEN SPACE																			X**
HUNTER'S HILL	3.7	MINI-PARK														X	X				
LAKE ITASCA	28.5	COMMUNITY																			
ITASCA TRAIL		TRAIL																	X		
MISSISSIPPI WEST	204.2	REGIONAL/ COUNTY																			
OAKRIDGE	32.2	OPEN SPACE																			
PELTZER PARK	32.9	NEIGHBORHOOD						X								X	X				

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
RABBIT PARK		NEIGHBORHOOD									X					X					
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	53.3	COMMUNITY				X	X	X	2		2										
REILLEY EAST	3.3	MINI-PARK																			
REILLEY WEST	2	MINI-PARK																			
RIVERDALE	2.7	TRAIL CORRIDOR								X	X			X		X				X	
RIVERS BEND	47.3	COMMUNITY				X				4	X		X			X			X	X	
RIVERWOOD HILLS NORTH	1.4	MINI-PARK																			
RIVERWOOD HILLS SOUTH		NEIGHBORHOOD																			
BOY SCOUT CAMP		PRIVATE PARK																			

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
RUM RIVER CENTRAL	308.8	REGIONAL/ COUNTY		X	X	X													X	X	
SHAWN ACRES	4.4	MINI-PARK														X	X				
SOLSTICE	1.6	MINI-PARK			X											X			X		
SPORTS HAVEN NORTH	23.4	OPEN SPACE SPECIAL USE																			
SPORTS HAVEN SOUTH	1.7	OPEN SPACE SPECIAL USE																			
STANHOPE RIVER HILLS		OPEN SPACE																			
TITTERUD	6.8	NEIGHBORHOOD								2L	X		X			X	X				
TRAPROCK COMMONS	3.8	OPEN SPACE				X															
TROTT BROOK CORRIDOR	6	TRAIL CORRIDOR																			

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>PAVILLION</b>	<b>PARKING</b>	<b>WARMING HOUSE</b>	<b>SKATING</b>	<b>HOCKEY</b>	<b>TENNIS COURT</b>	<b>SOFTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASEBALL FIELD</b>	<b>SOCCER/ FOOTBALL FIELD</b>	<b>BASKETBALL COURT</b>	<b>VOLLEYBALL COURT</b>	<b>PLAY AREA</b>	<b>PICNIC AREA GRILLS</b>	<b>SWIMMING BEACH</b>	<b>TRAILS</b>	<b>FISHING</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	
WAYSIDE REST	18	REGIONAL/STATE	X	X	X	X														X	X *	
WHISPERING PINES NORTH		OPEN SPACE																				
WHISPERING PINES SOUTH		OPEN SPACE																				
WOODLAND GREEN PARK	4.7	MINI-PARK			X											X	X		X			
<p>X * = INTERPRETATION  X ** = WETLAND  X *** = BOARDWALK</p>																						

## ***B. The Parks and Recreation Plan***

In addition to the inventory, the Ramsey Park system is also divided into 17 Recreation Districts. These districts are delineated by major roadways or other barriers and provide a means for more effective planning in determining future park needs at the larger neighborhood level. A broad overview of the existing park system in Ramsey reveals a number of small underutilized neighborhood parks scattered throughout rural areas of the community that have developed at very low densities. This low-density development (or large lot development) does not support high use of a neighborhood park system and thus can lead to inefficiencies. A larger scale community park, which would provide park and recreation opportunities not available within private yards of large lots, would prove a more effective and efficient use of a park and recreation system to serve the rural areas of Ramsey. It is this opportunity, as well as the need for additional spaces for the growing youth athletic program that call for a sixth Community Park in the north central part of the city. The remaining major emphasis in the rural area of Ramsey should be in providing trail connections to get people to larger park facilities such as Central Park, Elmcrest and Rum River Central Regional Park as well as in preserving open space corridors consistent with more rural land use.

This same focus does not apply to the more urban areas of the city. Higher density development demands more parks that are within walking distances and provide a greater variety of activities. It would be wise to start planning for the provisions of neighborhood parks in future urban areas as well as looking to fill gaps in existing urban developed areas. Also as traffic patterns become denser within the urban areas, more neighborhood barriers exist increasing the need for more neighborhood park facilities. Trail development is a significant element of future park planning as a means to connect residents, and place to work, shop and recreate. Therefore, the City should continue installing paved trails or sidewalks along all collector streets concurrent with their construction.

The Mississippi River Regional Trail (Anoka County Segment) is an existing trail east of the Rum River in the city of Anoka. The trail is proposed to be extended to the west to connect to Mississippi West Regional Park and on to Sherburne County. Anoka County will work with the City of Ramsey and others on the completion of a master plan for this part of the trail. The Central Anoka County Regional Trail is an existing trail east of the City of Anoka. This trail is also proposed to be extended to the west to connect to Mississippi West Regional Park and Anoka County will work with the City of Ramsey and others on the completion of this trail in the future. A future segment of the Rum River trail is also being proposed, connecting to Rum River Central Regional Park. General alignment of these three trails are shown on Figure 10-2. In 2011, the City began working with Anoka County Parks to study the current alignment of the Central Anoka County regional trail to better coordinate with existing, constructed trails as well as capitalize on The COR development. This provides an opportunity to interact with the City's multi-modal parking facility, future Northstar Commuter Rail Station, and planned pedestrian overpass to connect to Mississippi West Regional Park. As an implementing agency for Metropolitan Council's Regional parks and Open space system, Anoka County essentially functions as the lead coordinator for regional trails. Planning is often performed in a macro sense with the individual jurisdictions, who are more likely to develop detailed plans and provide for specific routing of trails within these municipalities like Ramsey.

In reviewing future park and recreation needs to serve future and existing Ramsey residents, the following, generalized park type definitions will be used:

### **1. Park Type Definitions:**

**Mini-Parks:** These are very small parks, often less than 1 acre in size, and are used to address limited or isolated recreational needs. These parks typically serve residents less than ¼ mile from the site.

**Neighborhood Parks:** Neighborhood parks are usually centrally located within neighborhoods and are designed primarily for use by neighborhood residents within easy walking and biking distances. The Neighborhood Park should be a positive focal point of pride for the neighborhood. They are intended for both passive and active activities with facilities such as play equipment, court games, and picnicking. They are generally not intended to accommodate organized athletic activities. Neighborhood parks should be a minimum of 5 acres. These parks typically serve residents ¼ to ½ mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads or other physical barriers or have connecting trails with safe street crossings.

**School Parks:** Combining parks with school sites can be an efficient use of facilities. Care should be taken to not over use these facilities beyond what the landscape and scheduled maintenance can keep up with.

**Community Parks and Athletic Complexes:** Community Parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. The focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. A high priority for these parks should be connecting them through a trail system which then serves residents within ½ to a 3 mile distance, for those not traveling by auto.

The sports components of these facilities are often heavily programmed athletic fields. In Ramsey a strategy for Community Parks has been to ensure the park has a diversity of facilities, yet congregate like sports fields together.

**Open Space:** Land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources. Usually lacks any developed facilities.

**Special Use:** These parks consist of recreational facilities that are orientated toward a single-use.

**Greenways:** A greenway is a continuous corridor of natural vegetation that provides for critical habitat and the movement of wildlife and humans. They often follow natural waterways or land features.

## **2. Trail Types:**

**Off Road (Urban):** Paved surface for non-motorized use, and paved or non-paved surface for users, both trails removed from roadway. These facilities should be developed in corridors a minimum of 35' feet in width.

**On Road :** Paved, striped and signed shoulder on roadway.

**On Road Separated:** Paved trail parallel to roadways, separated by a ditch, curb or other buffer.

**Multi-Purpose:** Paved surface and separate non-paved skiing or equestrian trail, both removed from roadways. These facilities should be developed in corridors a minimum of 75' feet in width.

Table 10-2 represents standards for park facilities needed to serve a community like Ramsey with the focus of the park development occurring within existing and future urban areas. These standards provide a basis for determining if the existing park system adequately serves today's population and if it will be able to handle the expected growth to the year 2020. These standards should only be used as a guide or rule of thumb.

**Table 10-2 National Recreation and Park Association Standards**

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>Desirable Size (Acres)</b>	<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Service Radius</b>	<b>Preferred Location</b>	<b>Typical Facilities</b>
Playgrounds	.25 to .5	1 or less	500 to 1000	¼ mile or 5 minute walk	Within urban neighborhoods, close to multi-family residential	Play structure, small court games, turf area, picnic tables
Neighborhood Parks	2.0	6 to 8	1000 to 2000	½ mile or 10 minute walk	Within urban area, centrally located	Court games, field games, playgrounds
Community Parks	5 to 8	20 to 35	Community	1 to 4 miles	Centrally located and easily accessible to entire community	Ball fields, tennis courts, picnic facilities, active recreation facilities
Regional Parks	5 to 10	200 +	Regional Population	1 hour drive	Natural features, usually associated with water	Activities of community park, nature observation areas, cultural and historic learning facilities
Trails	-	-	-	-	Connecting important community features	-
Special Facilities	-	-	-	-	Varies, convenient access, central to community	Ice arena, community center, golf course, gun club

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In terms of Ramsey's park land area per resident, Ramsey may be adequately served by park and recreation opportunities. However, as future residential development occurs and new areas are developed, land must be dedicated and funds must be committed to meet the recreation needs of the community. Through subdivision ordinance, the City currently requires parkland dedication at a rate indexed to residential densities for new development to fulfill the need for park facilities.

Ramsey is fortunate to have many natural resources within its boundaries. Many of these resources are preserved and made accessible through existing large community parks and tracts of protected open space. The Future Mississippi West Regional Park has the great potential of strengthening Ramsey's connection and identity with the Mississippi River. Continued cooperation with regional partners like the National Park Service through the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area on the Regional Trail through Ramsey will be important as Ramsey works to improve its image along Highway 10. Presently, Anoka County provides regional trail organization relative to the MNRRA corridor. Cities like Ramsey are full players with respect to the Trails and Open Space Partnership (TOSP), which is a group that meets quarterly to guide and refine trails within the MNRRA corridor from Ramsey, south 72 miles to Hastings. Pedestrian connections across Highway 10 will likewise be critical in making this new park accessible and contributing to a vibrant Town Center.

With these great recreational facilities existing and planned, an important focus will be on making these larger systems of parks accessible to all Ramsey residents. Acquiring and constructing additional links to the Trail system are critical to the success of the future Parks and Recreation Plan

Smaller neighborhood parks remain appropriate in higher density areas where they serve more residents and are designed to be focal points of gathering for the neighborhood. Every attempt should be made to develop sidewalk and trail connections to these neighborhood resources. Similarly, future underpasses and elevated crossings should be carefully mapped, so as to identify funding and schedules, so as to time them with other infrastructure improvements.

### **3. Parks and Recreation Goals**

The following goals and strategies came from the community meetings held in 2007 and 2008 under the Ramsey3 effort.

**a) A comprehensive, balanced park and trail system consisting of large and small scale parks, active and passive parks, natural preserves, and recreational facilities.**

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Incorporate planned parks and trails into all new development where appropriate
2. Design for connectivity with local and regional parks
3. Improve coordination of park and trail planning within City and adjacent communities
4. Establish a regional trail along the Mississippi River
5. Develop a Trott Brook Trail Corridor
6. Explore providing pedestrian access from the Mississippi River to the north side of Highway 10
7. Design trails with a variety of surfaces appropriate for different uses

8. Seek out alliances and partnerships with non-profit and governmental agencies to assist in securing funding and other resources that will assist in implementing the park and trail plan
9. Improve quality of existing parks, through careful planning, continued maintenance and adequate funding
10. Explore options for an additional community park
11. Where appropriate, consolidate existing parks to improve quality and provide more efficient service
12. Explore options for a revenue source for permanent protections of parks, trails and open space

**b) A system of safe parks and trails**

**STRATEGIES:**

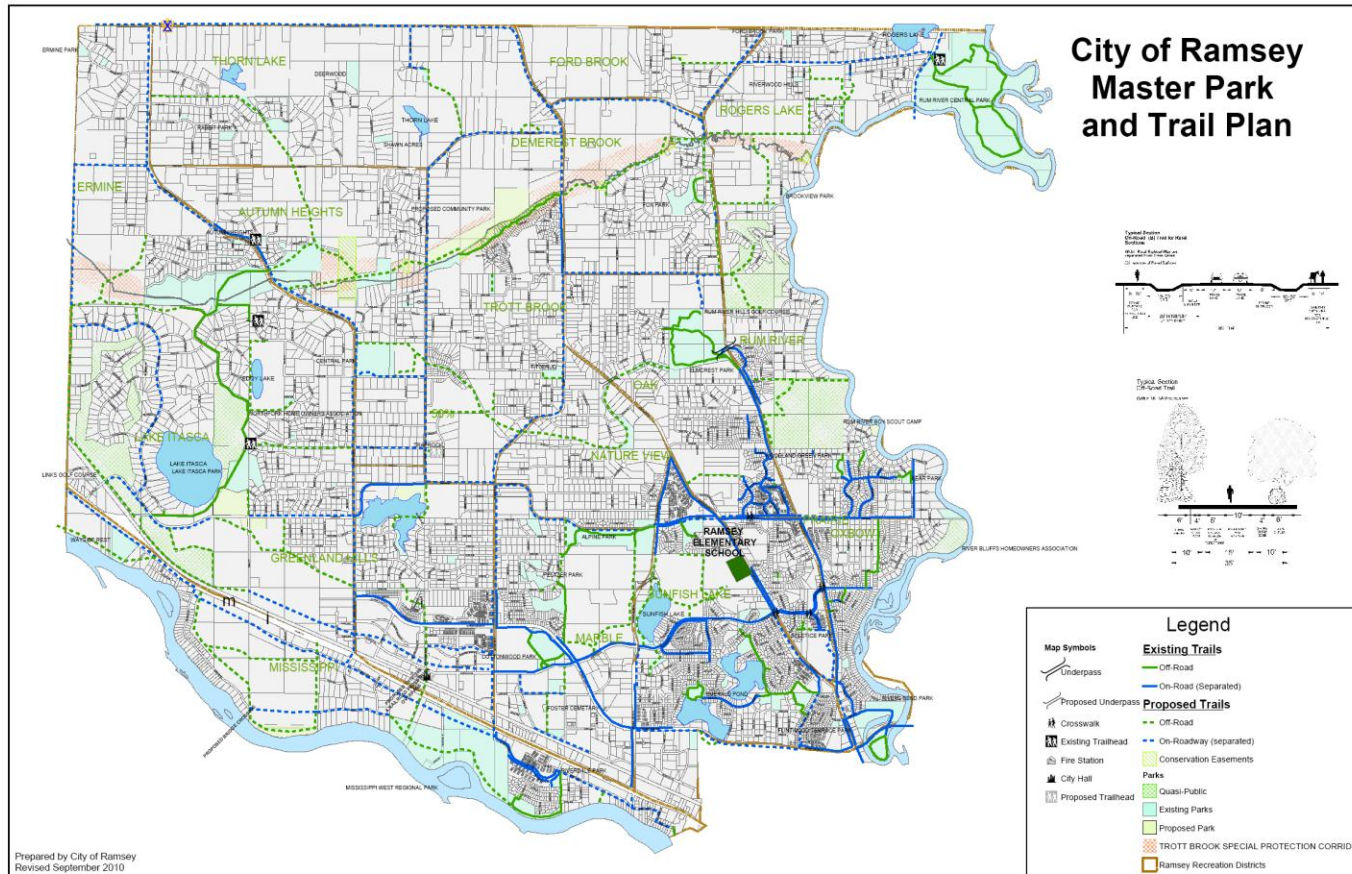
1. Locate trails where appropriate in greenway corridors and natural areas
2. Promote Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design CPTED and other techniques
3. Where appropriate, use existing power/utility easements for the trail system
4. Provide adequate signage and pavement markings to warn automobile traffic of park and trail traffic
5. Explore use of pedestrian-activated signals, continuous flashing signage, and mid-block crossings where safe and appropriate, to further increase park and trail safety
6. Minimize at-grade crossings of trails and roads and other interactions between trail users and automobiles, with underpasses or overpasses

**e) A variety of park facilities and programs that meet the life cycle needs of residents.**

**STRATEGIES:**

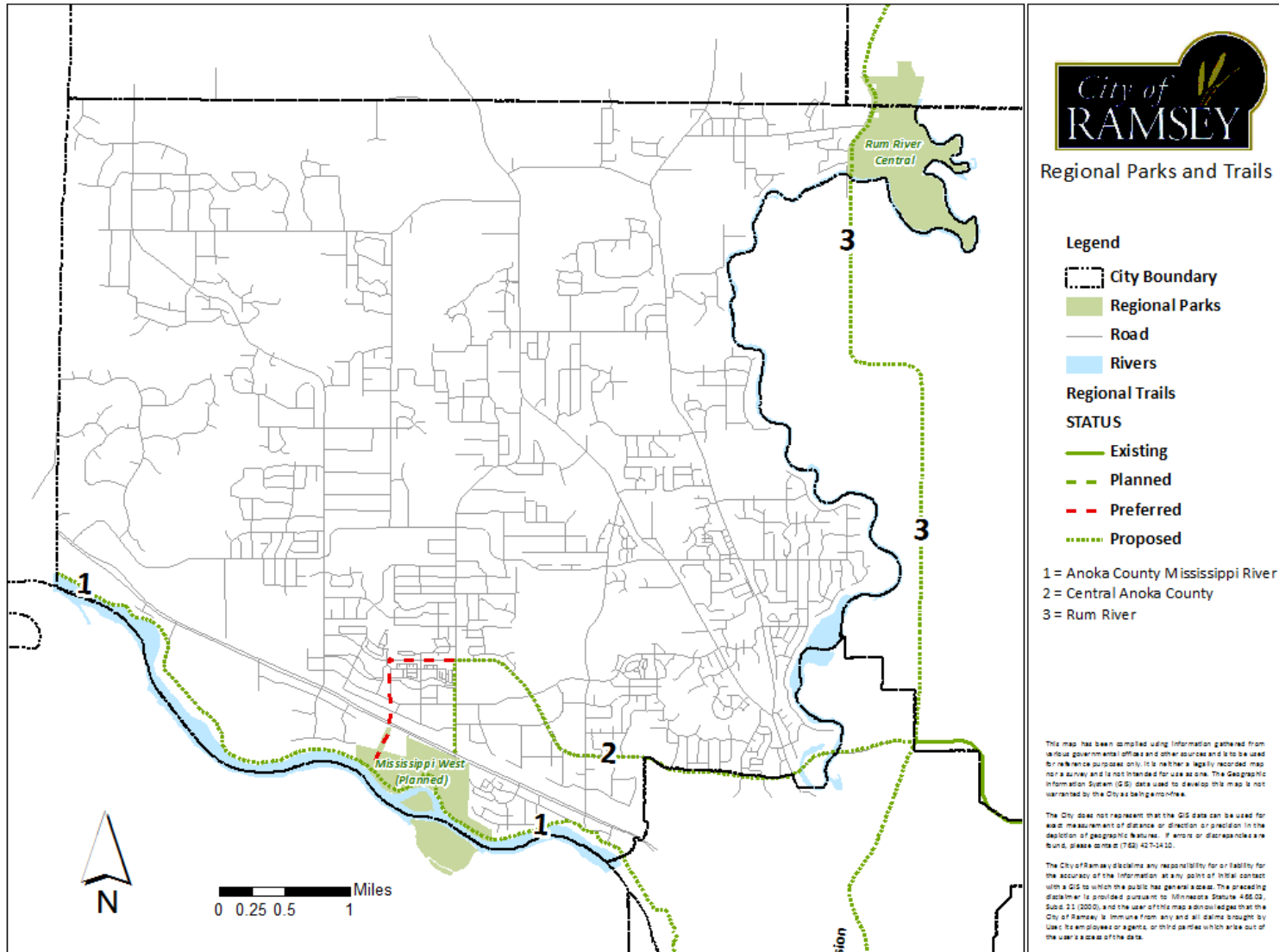
1. Work with the schools and community organizations to plan for athletic fields and facilities that will accommodate the growing community
2. Explore options for a revenue source for recreational facilities and programming
3. Study the need for a Community Center that offers a variety of recreational uses for all age groups

Figure 10-1 Park, Trail and Recreation Plan



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Figure 10.2: Regional Parks and Trails



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