

Ramsey will evolve through citizen-driven, collaborative processes that respect the balance and connectivity between its unique urban, rural, and natural environment for current and future generations.

# City of Ramsey 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update

Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Chapter

*Background on this Document—items in red are notes to the team that will be deleted before draft is completed*

## Our Vision

Ramsey will evolve through citizen-driven, collaborative processes that respect the balance and connectivity between its unique urban, rural, and natural environment for current and future generations.

## Goals and Strategies

The following represents goals and strategies for the management of natural resources. Subsequent chapters will include their own goals and strategies that integrate with the above. Resources above and beyond current budget approvals are indicated in the 'Additional Resources' column.

## Comprehensive Plan Goals

- A Balance of Rural Character and Urban Growth
- An Active Community (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space)
- A Connected Community (Transportation)
- A Positive Learning Environment update...

## Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Initiatives

### A Balance of Rural and Urban Character

- Preserve and enhance continuous open space corridors.
- Balance a variety of smaller neighborhood parks and larger community parks.

### An Active Community

- Expand opportunities for community recreation programming.
- Expand recreation opportunities for aging population.
- Ensure equitable access to recreation programs and facilities.

### A Connected Community

- Ensure connected regional and local parks and open spaces.
- Coordinated planning efforts across multiple jurisdictions.

### A Positive Learning Environment

- Maximize joint use facilities and recreation opportunities.
- Strengthen relationships with local youth organizations.

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## Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Introduction

Today, parks, trails, and natural open spaces are recognized as vital to the quality of life in Ramsey and in many ways define the community. In some ways, Ramsey's park system emerged from the conversion of agricultural land to suburban in the 1970's with small park areas—often just open space, dedicated with these subdivisions. The first prominent park was created in the early 1980's, largely to meet the demand for youth athletics' play fields. Central Park was envisioned as a community park, continues to serve this purpose today and is still viewed as Ramsey's flagship park. In the 1990's trails were added to Ramsey's landscape—and these were embraced every bit as much as parks. City-wide, the *value* of parks, trails and open space continues to grow, mirroring the increasing population, and corresponding with the conversion of open space to residential uses.

Taking advantage of its unique geography, cherished natural resources, and a diversity of recreational venues, while responding to its history and recognized rural character, are both determinants and opportunities for future public realm investments in the community. The Public Realm is what gives cities and neighborhoods their identity—typically including streets, parks, plazas, trails and other amenities. This network of connected spaces supports a host of broader city goals, sets the stage for ongoing *quality* development, and at the same time; promotes Community Parks and Trails, Regional Parks and The COR, to become a vibrant, dynamic, must-experience destinations.

Remaking infrastructure (including public space), as Ramsey develops a stewardship plan for a three decade-old 'built' park system, invites an opportunity to promote innovative design strategies that embrace the challenges of a growing city. Ramsey also has a bounty of natural resources to build upon, as in the instance of one of the most renowned rivers in the world. Indeed, both the Mississippi River and Rum River are significant water resources, and both part of the State's Wild and Scenic Rivers system that literally define the borders of the community. These two rivers are also state designated canoe routes, or recreational water trails—reconnecting residents through parks and trails, connects us to our past—as well as our future.

Another relevant stream is Trott Brook with its associated wetlands and uplands, representing a natural greenway spanning the northern 1/3rd of the city. Ramsey by area is also 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 people opportunities to both live and recreate in these natural settings. These layers of habitat are valuable vestiges for the wildlife that residents embrace and enjoy. The greenway system referred to as the Circle of Ramsey—with Trott Brook the primary element, will inspire people to move within their community and will help restore ecological connectivity at the same time.

Exploring opportunities to reconnect all these valuable resources, to re-establish the continuity, functionality and beauty of these systems through a city-wide greenway will serve as an expression of Ramsey's history, physical character and community identity.

People also want safe and enjoyable places that meet a range of recreational needs, providing both indoor/outdoor venues, supporting programmed or spontaneous activities. However, Ramsey will

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not be 'locked in' to an auto-centric environment as the only means to access parks and destinations, but rather, view the opportunity when thinking about parks and the public realm to creating a community that invites bicycling and pedestrians, to experience the city via greenways that connect neighborhoods, amenities and destinations.

Healthy, thriving cities invariably contain significant civic components that celebrate the "publicness" of place—yielding measurable returns; economic, environmental, and social—this Comprehensive Plan highlights the investments in the Park, Trail, and Recreation and Open Space system that will pay dividends for generations to come.

## 2030 Plan Accomplishments

While the question might be rhetorical in nature, it is asked, ***'Why do a Comprehensive Plan?'*** One answer is, because the Comprehensive Plan is so well vetted by policy makers and the community's engagement and participation—only true priorities make it into the Plan, and so those goals and strategies identified, become the City's work plan and focus for the coming years. The following are a sampling of goals and strategies from the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Chapter of the 2030 Plan that have been realized from the community's plan:

- ***'Establish a regional trail along the Mississippi River'***  
Status: The City of Ramsey has completed construction of the Mississippi River Trail from King's Island in the City of Anoka to city limits at the border with Elk River.
- ***'Improve coordination of park and trail planning within City and adjacent communities'***  
Status: Ramsey's Council meets with neighboring Councils regularly, which has resulted in collaboration on the above trail project with the City of Anoka.
- ***'Design for connectivity with local and regional parks'***  
Status: The concept for the Circle of Ramsey emerged to address this goal with much of the greenway that encircles the community, now in place today.
- ***'Develop a Trott Brook Trail Corridor'***  
Status: A quarter mile long boardwalk that will be constructed in the Spring of 2018, will complete the Trott Brook Trail between Variolite Street and Nowthen Boulevard.
- ***'Explore providing pedestrian access from the Mississippi River to the north side of Highway 10'***  
Status: The skyway over Veteran's Drive was completed with the 2012 construction of the Northstar Rail Station. More recently a private landowner granted the 'touchdown' location (valued at \$100,000) for the proposed pedestrian bridge referred to as the Mississippi

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Skyway. In 2014, the City secured \$490,000 from the National Park Service, and completed the Final Plans and Specifications—for a project that is shovel ready.

- ***‘Minimize at-grade crossings of trails and roads and other interactions between trail users and automobiles, with underpasses or overpasses’***

Status: See above. In addition to the underpass constructed below T.H #47 with the second phase of Elmcrest Park’s development—a realignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail is underway to be routed *from* Ramsey Boulevard, through The COR and *over* both the rail road tracks and Hwy #10.

- ***‘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’***

Status: Ramsey has secured well in excess of \$2 million dollars from governmental agencies for park and trail construction in recent years. In 2017, an alliance with the Mississippi River Park Connection (a non-profit) and Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) funded a new recreational opportunity for Ramsey, canoe campsites on the Mississippi River. This was implemented by a partnership with Anoka County and Ramsey Parks, MN DNR and Conservation Corps Minnesota.

- ***‘Work with the schools and community organizations to plan for athletic fields and facilities that will accommodate the growing community’***

Status: The City is working closely with the School District #11 on the new elementary school (2018-19 construction) which will have several outdoor facilities, as well as trail connections to the adjoining neighborhoods. Additionally, the City and the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association have a strong partnership in both planning for, and renovating and developing fields and facilities to meet increasing demands.

- ***‘Study the need for a Community Center that offers a variety of recreational uses for all age groups’***

Status: Through the Resilient Communities Program partnership with the University of Minnesota, the City is organizing a number of different evaluations on how a Community Center may be structured to meet the future needs of residents. These studies will inform City Council on the way forward, with this discussion expected to occur later in 2018.

## Public Engagement

Since the early 1990’s the City has purposely and consciously engaged residents in their neighborhood park planning with good success—creating ownership in their public spaces. More recently, the City of Ramsey has undertaken a variety of engagement efforts, city-wide that directly and indirectly impact decision making about the park system. The responses to all those efforts have highlighted the importance of parks, recreation, trails, and open space on the quality of life in Ramsey. Access to

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parks and trails, coupled with high-quality open space—even if only visually, evokes a sense of rural character and is a significant reason that people choose to live and invest in the community and thus, parks, trails greenways should remain a priority for on-going municipal investment.

As part of the specific engagement effort for this Comprehensive Plan Update, the City of Ramsey has held several meetings and workshops, along with other engagement tools. The feedback about the park system during this process has been similar to what was provided at other efforts, but more focused on how the park system interfaces with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, such as Land Use and Housing. Specifically, we have heard Ramsey should:

- Prioritize preservation along Trott Brook.
- Begin addressing reconstruction of aging/existing parks.
- Develop a plan for filling in trail gaps in the community—especially in the northern tier of the community, and along arterial roadways.
- Find a balance in investment between larger Community Parks and Neighborhood Parks.
  - A few of our newer subdivisions are asking for parks to be included within their new neighborhood.
  - Many existing neighborhoods desire updating of playstructures—some less than 15 years old, some exceedingly beyond their useful life.
- Preserve open space along the Mississippi River as a priority.
- Focus new park efforts on
  - Future Community Park #6 (north central portions of the city)
  - The COR (at the top of the list is a splash pad/water recreation)
  - Lake Itasca Park (natural resource-based development, lake access and the proposed Lake Itasca Greenway—connecting The COR)

There were related comments with more of a focus on Ramsey’s ecological resources, such as “Protect Mississippi River and Rum River from shoreline erosion,” and those comments are included in Ramsey’s Natural Resources Plan.

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## Existing Parks System

### Regional Parks

There are two (2) Regional Parks and two (2) Regional Trails in Ramsey.

- Central Anoka County Regional Trail
- Mississippi River Regional Trail
- Mississippi West Regional Park
- Rum River Central Regional Park

The City of Ramsey is unique and fortunate in that it has two county parks within its boundaries that are a part of the Metropolitan Council's regional system. 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.

Mississippi West Park includes bluffs, wooded areas and two islands on the Mississippi River. The 273 acre park includes a small boat landing and shore fishing and in the Fall of 2017, canoe campsites were established on the islands—an amenity that is rare in the Metropolitan area— and one that provides additional recreational access to the most renown river in the nation. The camp sites required close coordination between the City, County and the MN DNR, and are an example of the success of inter-jurisdictional cooperation and planning.

In addition the aforementioned 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 serves as a trailhead for the Mississippi River Trail that traverses from the Headwaters in Minnesota, through 10 states to New Orleans.

### Local Parks

#### Other Recreation Opportunities

Rum River Hills Golf Course

Rum River Scout Camp (Boy Scouts of America)

The Links at Northfork Golf Course

Wayside Rest (State of Minnesota)

[Map here](#)

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## Planned Park System

### Recreation Districts

It is both a rewarding and a vexing reality that most residents cherish their park system and, given the choice, would like more parks, especially near their homes. However, city leadership is continually challenged to build and manage a park system that meets those desires, yet can realistically be both funded for construction—and then adequately maintained at a responsible funding level. Currently, the overall amount of acreage devoted to Ramsey’s park and open space system is over 1,800 acres, or approximately 10% of the of the City’s 28 square miles. Given this large available area, the focus is on using these spaces wisely and connecting them effectively.

The gap between the desire for more parks and the stark reality of limited annual maintenance funding, calls for a strategy to plan a system of interconnected parks and trails that are reasonably and equitably distributed within the community. This strategic plan may be achieved by viewing Ramsey’s park system as divided into ten ‘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 scale of larger groups of neighborhoods (see map below).

A broad overview of the existing park system in Ramsey reveals a number of small, underutilized park spaces scattered throughout rural areas of the community. These low-density (or large lot) developments do not support high use of a neighborhood park system and thus can lead to inefficiencies. Larger scale community parks, which would provide park and recreation opportunities not available within private yards or large lots, would prove a more effective and efficient use of a park and recreation system for these areas, and at the same time serve both rural and urban areas of Ramsey—especially if well connected by trails or greenways.

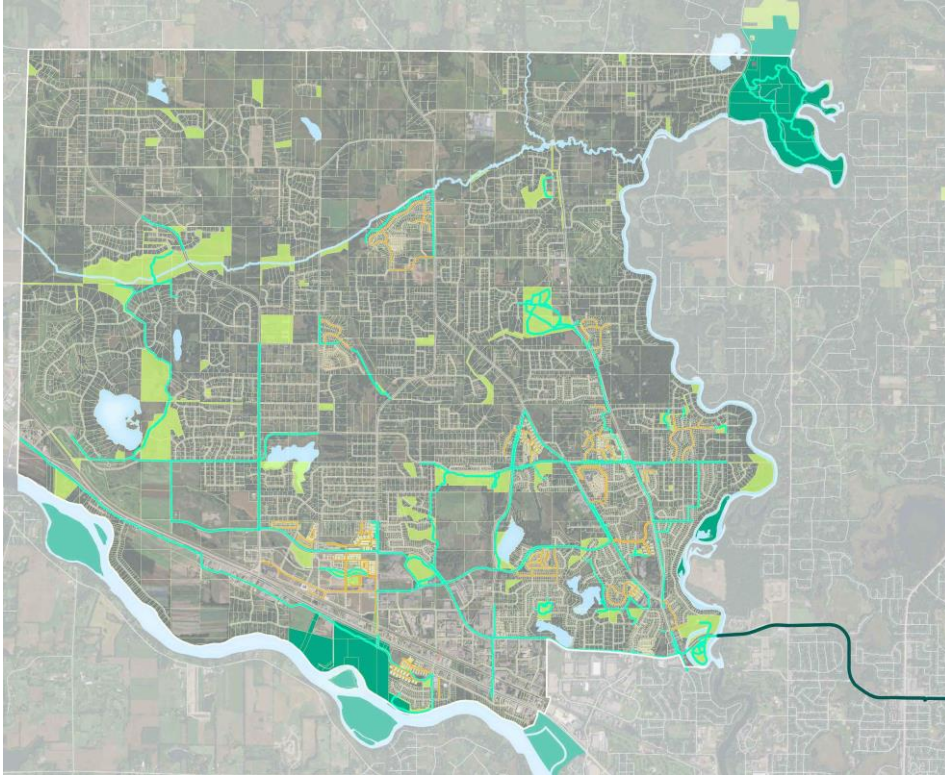
It should be clarified that these Recreation Districts are not only a planning tool, but are an organizing structure of aggregating neighborhoods in order to interconnect them with the ‘Circle of Ramsey’ greenway. This greenway encircles the community, while connecting each Recreation District to each other, as well as to destinations like retail areas, schools, and workplaces.

Using the structure of the Recreation Districts, it is evident that there are relatively few developed neighborhood parks in the northern third of the city. This, coupled with the need for additional spaces for a growing youth athletic program, suggests the need for a sixth community park in the north central part of the city. The remaining major emphases in the rural area of Ramsey should be, first, to provide trail connections to connect people to larger park facilities and destinations such as Central Park, Elmcrest, and Rum River Central Regional Park and, second, to preserve open space corridors consistent with a more rural land use. This approach is also consistent with the refrain heard throughout the public engagement process of the Comprehensive Plan: strive to find the “balance of rural and urban character.”

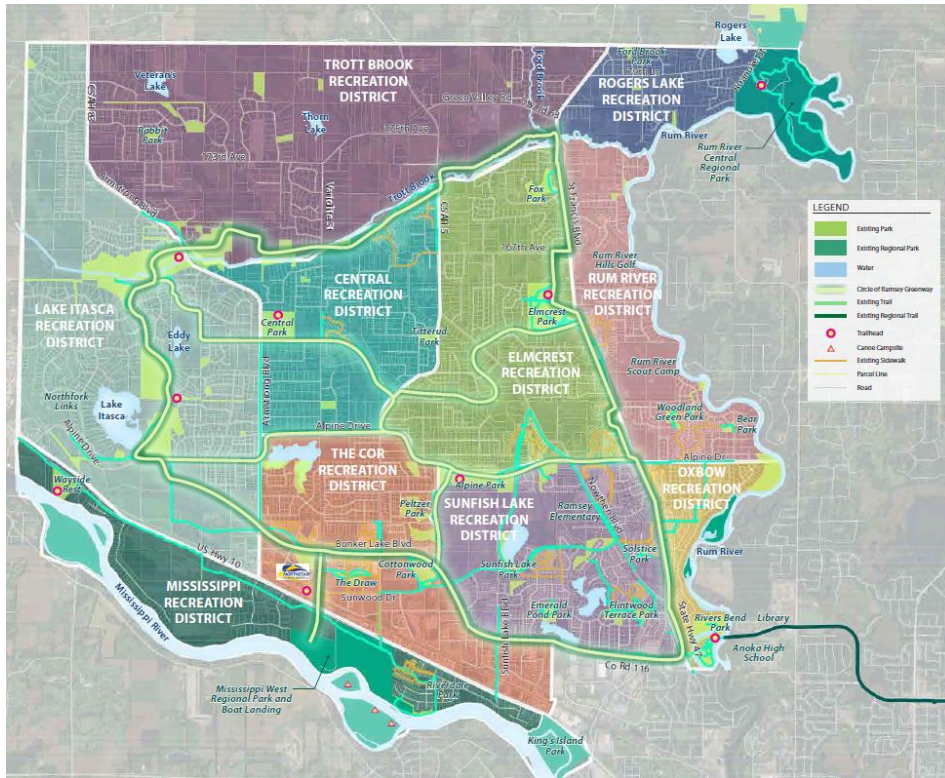
This same approach does not apply to the more urban areas of the city. Higher density development demands more parks that are within walking distance of homes and provide a greater variety of activities. It would be prudent to start more detailed planning for the provision of neighborhood parks in future urban areas as well as looking to fill gaps in existing urban developed areas. As traffic patterns become denser within the urban areas more neighborhood barriers may occur, further accentuating the need for more neighborhood park facilities. Trail, sidewalk, and greenway development is a significant element of future park planning to connect residents to the places they work, shop, and recreate. Therefore, the City must continue installing paved trails or sidewalks along all collector streets concurrent with their construction and also enhance intersections with pedestrian-friendly treatments in the more urban areas.

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Replace this exhibit with one with park names



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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, and serves as an area of important wildlife habitat along the river. A portion of the Scout camp along the Rum River is also proposed to become a municipal park with access to the river, if the camp is ever sold for residential development.

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## Park Types and Classifications

### Community Park

A Community Park is generally defined as a larger park (usually more than 40 acres) serving multiple neighborhoods, enhanced amenities, and with trail connections to the large area. Examples include Alpine Park, Central Park, Rivers' Bend, and Elmcrest Park.

### Neighborhood Park

A Neighborhood Park is generally defined as a smaller park serving mainly an individual neighborhood, or a group of neighborhoods. Neighborhood Parks generally have less amenities.

## Future Improvements

### Existing Park Replacement Plan

Ramsey heard throughout the Comprehensive Plan public engagement process a desire to reinvest in existing park spaces. Through the Parks System Plan, and the associated Capital Improvements Plan, Ramsey will identify and prioritize park, trails, and open spaces in need of reinvestment.

### Circle of Ramsey

Community Center

Community Park #6

Lake Itasca Park

The COR

[Proposed Park and Trail Plan map here](#)

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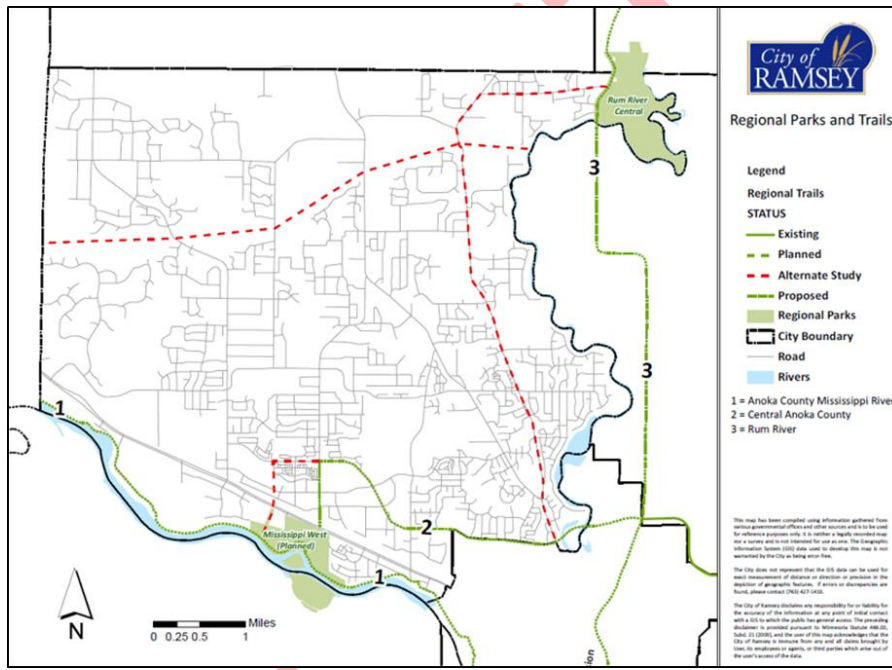
## Rum River Regional Trail

### Existing Planned Alignment

The exhibit below identifies the proposed Rum River Regional Trail as number 3 between the Central Anoka County Trail (at Bunker Lake Boulevard) and Rum River Central Park. None of the trail is in place, and presumably the intention would be for it to be constructed in the ROW of CSAH #7. CSAH #7. **Better maps needed**

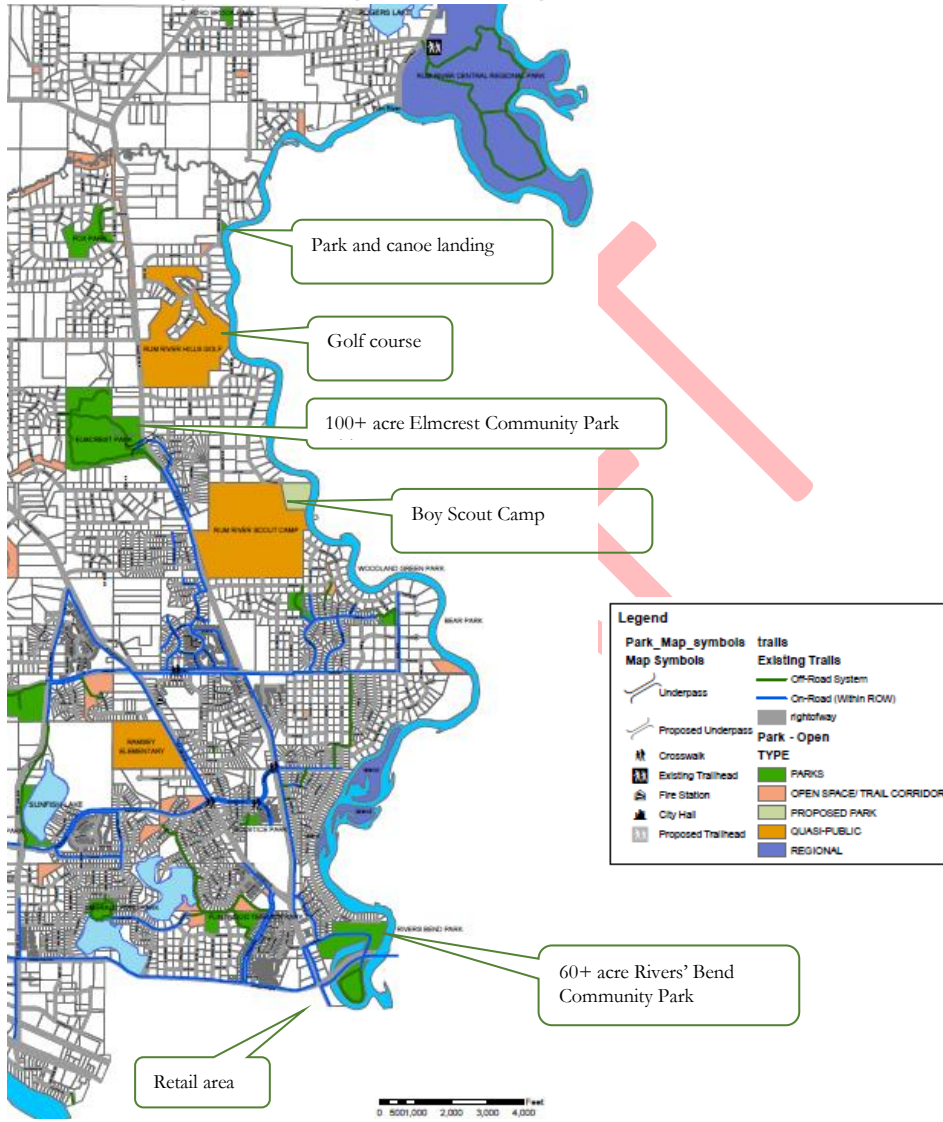
### Potential Alternative Alignment

In that there is significant and continuous trail in place on one half of the west side of the river in Ramsey, this proposal recommends an Alternative Alignment Study to see if it is in all jurisdiction's interest to shift the Rum river Regional Trail alignment to the west.



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Destinations along a Potential Realigned Rum River Regional Trail



Ramsey will evolve through citizen-driven, collaborative processes that respect the balance and connectivity



Illustration of the newly completed one million dollar Elmcrest Park Community Building with public restrooms



In addition to many more parks and recreation facilities on the west side of the Rum River than the east, there is an area of retail services (restaurants etc.) that are presently accessed by trails on both sides of T. H. #47 north of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail at Bunker Lake Boulevard.

Within the **Linking Regional Trails** definitions in the 2040 Policy Plan, indicates that: “*Visitor origin data from the Council’s 2008 Regional Parks and Trails Survey indicate that regional trails in the metropolitan area are used most by people who live nearby or can reach the trail in a short bicycle trip or drive. Therefore, a priority is to develop more trail corridors in the Metropolitan Urban Service Area, where more than 90% of the population lives*”.



Ramsey has many thousands of residents in the Metropolitan Urban Service Area within 1.5 miles of the proposed, realigned Rum River Regional Trail, where in Andover conversely, there are few homes that are in the MUSA, and within 1.5 miles.

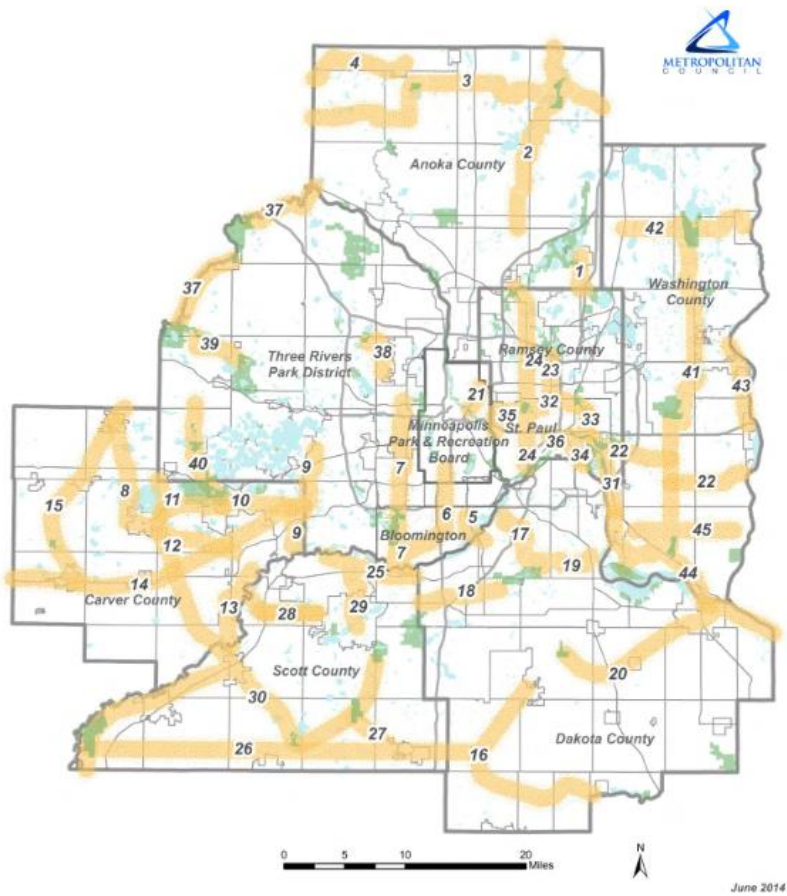
Catch and release Smallmouth in the rain at Ramsey’s canoe landing

In concluding, the Alternate Alignment Study would explore moving this proposed regional trail from the east side of the river to the west, (#3 from green to the red dashed line west of the Rum River above).

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**North Anoka County Regional Trail Search Corridor – Trott Brook Greenway Alternative**  
The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Chapter Three identifies ‘Regional Search Corridors’, including one entitled ‘North Anoka County’ generally designated as number three on Figure 3-9 below.

Figure 3-9. Regional Trail Search Corridor Map



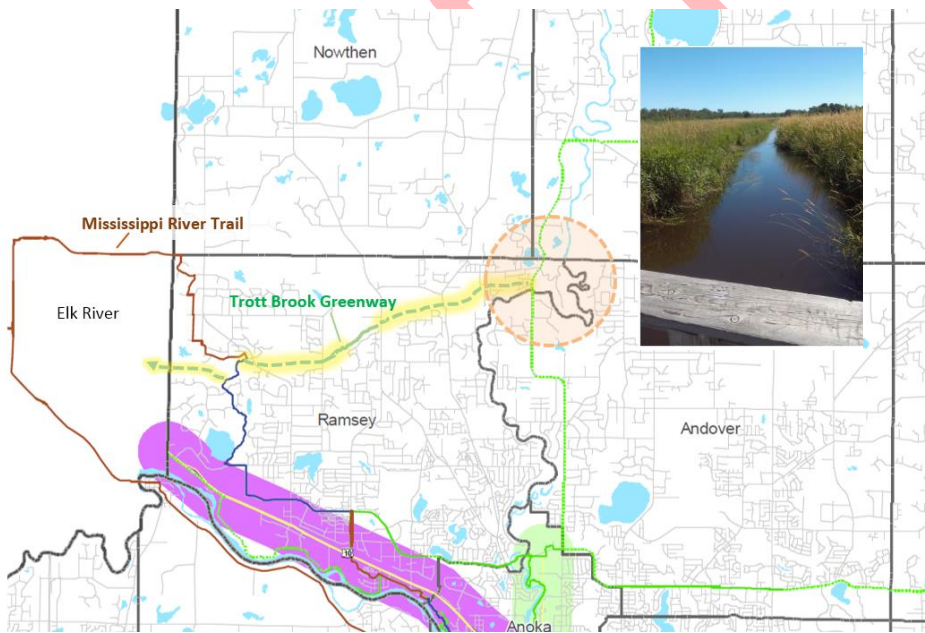
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### Better Connectivity to Regional Parks System

The introduction of Regional Trails within Chapter 3 states: “...regional trails are selected to pass through or provide connections between components in the Regional Parks System. The regional parks and park reserves perform the important function of providing places for parking, comfort facilities and safe water supplies.

*Trails also are selected for their ability to intersect with local trail networks, with the regional trails functioning much like regional highways that interconnect with more local arterials and local streets.”*

In keeping with the above statement and intent; the west portion of Search Corridor 3 should be investigated to ascertain if it is prudent to connect to the only regional park in this area. By aligning the proposed, search area trail south to Rum River Central Regional Park, it also then intersects with the east/west Trott Brook Greenway. Additionally, this connects the Four-corner sub-regional center (depicted by the circle below) of Nowthen, Oak Grove, Andover and Ramsey, thus connecting four communities to; the Mississippi River Trail, a Regional Park, Wild and Scenic Rum River, and proposed Rum River Regional Trail—(without regard to whether the trail is east or west of the Rum).



Significant tracts of land have been acquired along Trott Brook for the greenway and trail, including a \$500,000 investment by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources for conservation and trail easements. Trott Brook runs west to east within the area below.

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*The quarter-mile Lake Itasca Boardwalk provides access to the stream*

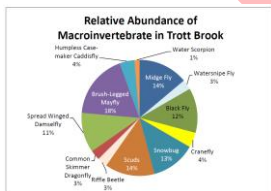


### Fish and Wildlife Benefits

A proposal exists for habitat improvements and the stocking of trout within the brook – if this is found to be feasible, this would provide a rare opportunity in the Metropolitan area, and a unique recreational opportunity with significant tourism and favorable economic impacts. The MN DNR has placed data loggers in Trott Brook to collect the thermo profile of the stream to better understand the streams suitability as a fishery – and a report has identified the brook as potential as a trout fishing stream for the Metro. Trails and public lands along the brook are synergistic with fishing and the deliberate multi-use nature of the greenway.



*DNR electro-fishing at Trott Brook to survey existing fish populations*



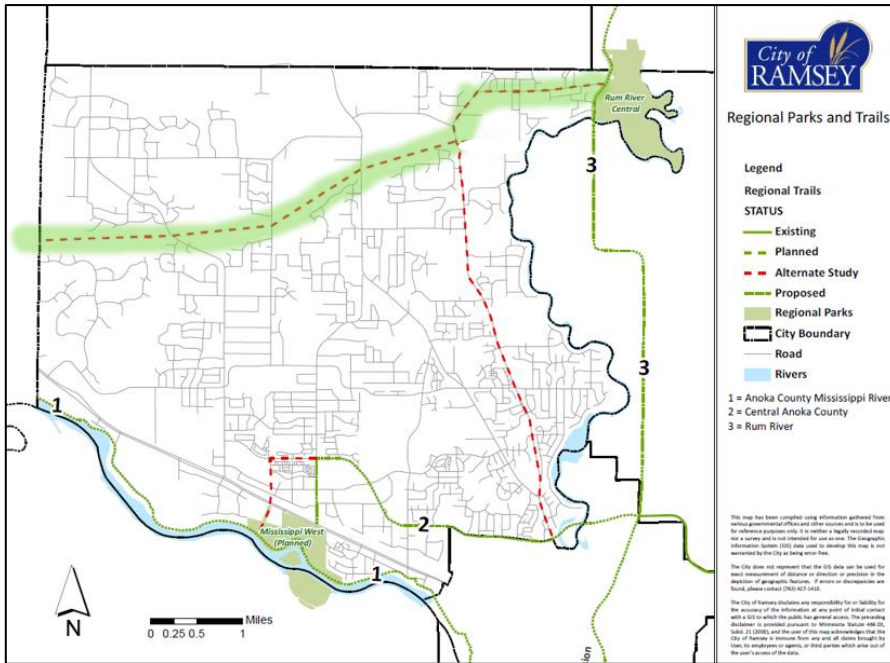
*Excerpt from the 22-page report: **Assessing the Ability to Bring Trout Fishing to the North Metro Area through Stream Quality Assessments and the Summarization of the Economic Impact of Anglers***



*Fish sampling in 2012*

In concluding, this proposal would recommend that the Trott Brook Greenway be considered as a Regional Trail, fulfilling the east/west Regional Search Corridor goals, as aligned generally and depicted below

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The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Chapter Four: Siting and Acquisition – Strategy 3, cites, “New regional trails must serve a regional audience and provide connection between regional parks, park preserves, and regional trails without duplicating an existing trail.” The proposal above meets this objective, by connecting Rum River Central Regional Park to the proposed Rum River Regional Trail (potentially west of the river, as described above) and does not duplicate an existing trail. Moreover, by designating the Trott Brook Greenway as a regional trail, it will function as described by the Council “...two major types of trails to serve the region: 1) destination or greenway trails and 2) linking trails?”. The trail would be destinational, and one significant linkage would be the Mississippi River Trail in Ramsey, with its connection to the west in Elk River and subsequent link to the Great Northern Trail.

Commented [TG1]:



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*Boardwalk and bituminous trail within the Trott Brook Greenway*

DRAFT

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## Existing Regional Trails

### Mississippi River Regional Trail

Coursing along America's most renowned river, the Mississippi River Trail winds its way from the headwaters within Lake Itasca State Park in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. A 3,000 mile system of bicycle-friendly roads and multi-use pathways, the Mississippi River Trail is referred to as a "string of pearls" connecting ten states, the cities of Ramsey, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Memphis, New Orleans, and myriad towns between.

In addition to being a Regional Trail within the Twin Cities metro, this trail is also United States Bikeway #45 within the entirety of Minnesota—connecting 700 miles of existing shouldered highways, low-use roads and off-road paths for bicyclists. While in place in Minnesota, trails to the south are actively being constructed and routes defined. Once complete, USBR 45 will continue south along the Mississippi River to Louisiana—then the U.S. Bicycle Route System will encompass more than 50,000 miles of riding connected to Ramsey.

A key improvement benefitting the utility and safe access to the Mississippi River Regional Trail in Ramsey, will be the completion of the pedestrian bridge over Hwy #10 discussed below.

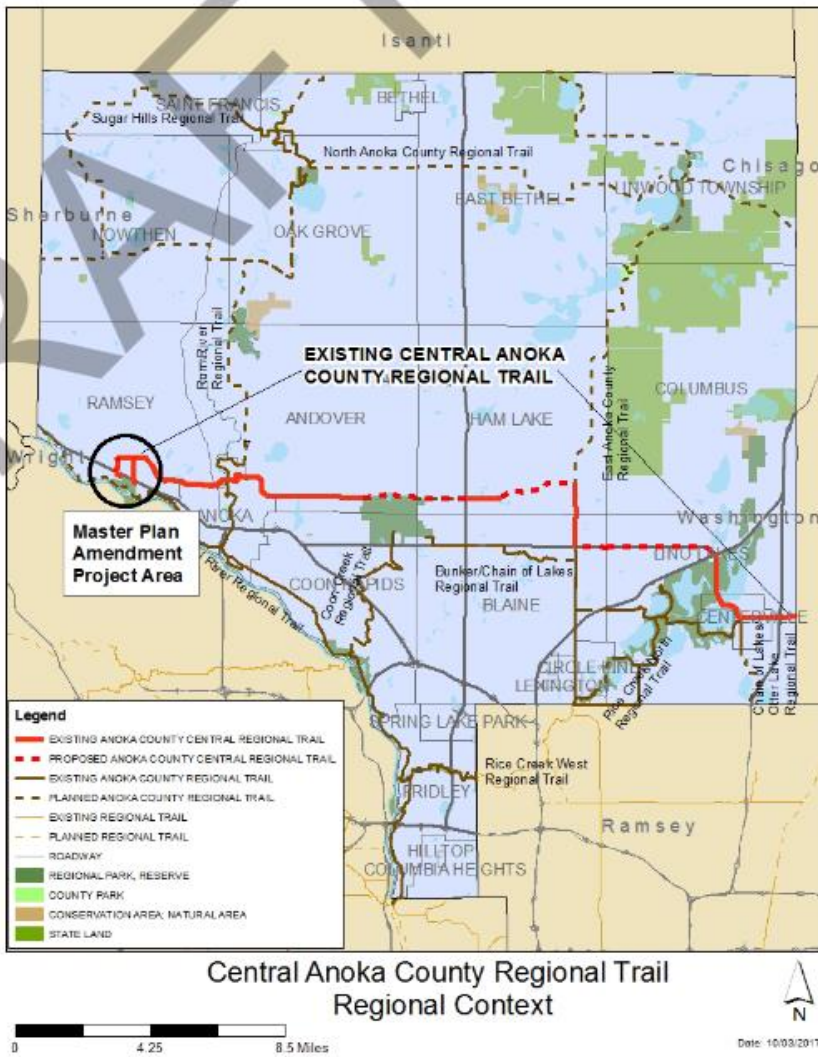
Need Exhibit

### Central Anoka County Regional Trail

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail is an outstanding recreational (and transportation) amenity for Ramsey residents, and connects them via trail to broad swaths of the county. This includes Bunker Hills Regional Park to the east, with sections planned to be completed that will link the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes near Lino Lakes and Centerville, and on to Washington County. Approximately 19 miles of this 26 mile trail are in place today.

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Existing Alignment  
[improved exhibit here](#)

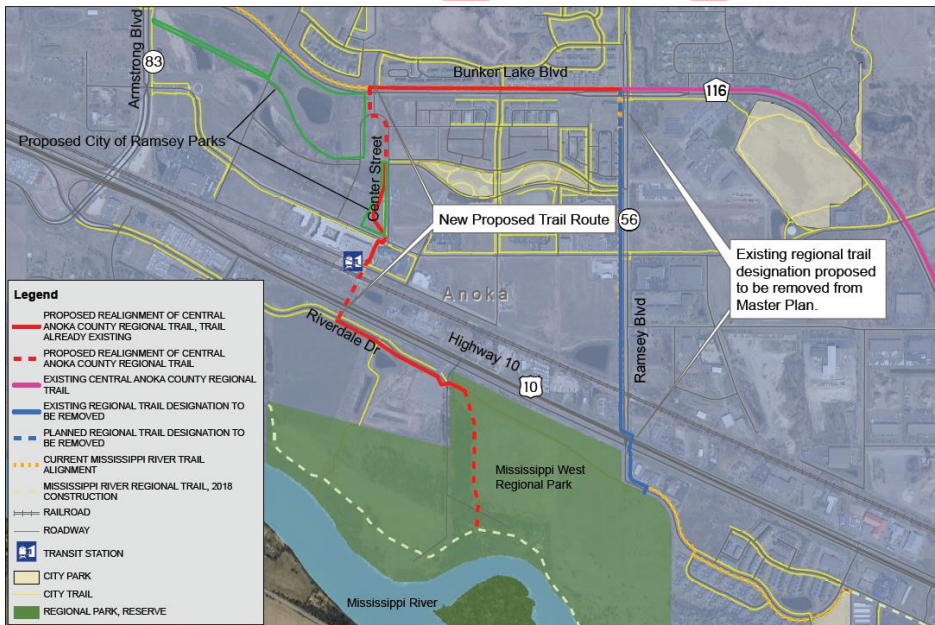


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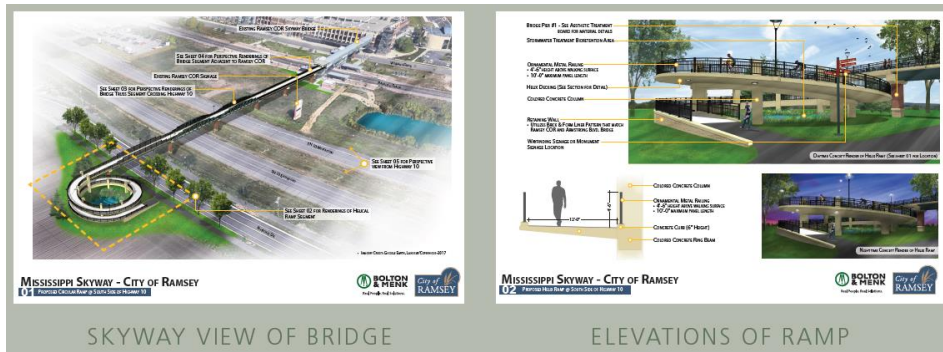
### Pending Alternative Alignment

Anoka County Parks & Recreation, has submitted to Metropolitan Council, a Master Plan Amendment for the realignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail to the west, *from* Ramsey Boulevard, *to* be aligned to Center Street, the Northstar Commuter Rail station and existing skyway, and future grade separated crossing of Hwy 10, for a safe, direct, and multi-modal connection to the Mississippi River Regional Trail, and Mississippi West Regional Park.

The realignment in Ramsey is needed as, presently the City of Ramsey has limited access to the Mississippi River and Mississippi West Regional Park because Highway 10 is a significant barrier for bicycle and pedestrian access. The amendment will change the alignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail within the City of Ramsey to better connect with local parks, trails, restaurants, businesses and transit, while still providing a safe connection to the river and Mississippi West Regional Park.

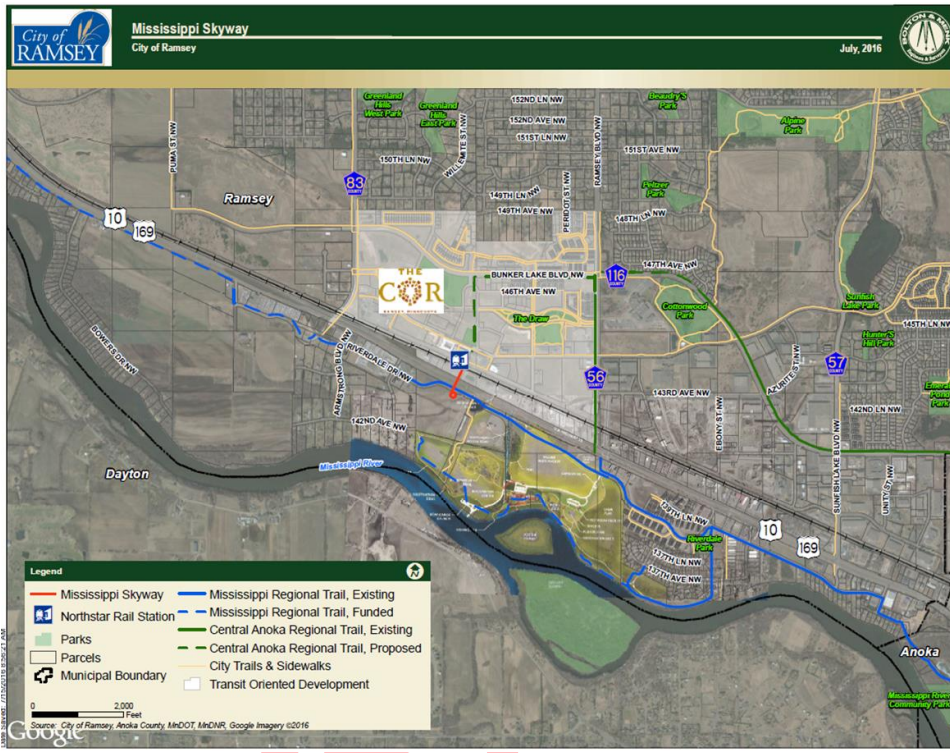


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Considerable investments in regional improvements converge in this location, including the \$13 million dollar Northstar rail station, with \$1.1 million dollar pedestrian skyway over Veteran's Drive, \$8 million dollar covered transit and parking facility, as well as more than one half million in boat landing and river access improvements. Additionally, the Mississippi River Regional Trail has recently been completed from the City of Anoka, through the City of Ramsey to Sherburne County (including within Mississippi West Regional Park). The trail together with two bridges on the 80-acre King's Island represents over one million dollars in bike facilities that are also a key component of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The Final Plans and Specifications for the Mississippi Skyway are complete, and were funded by a \$490,000 grant from the National Park Service—allowing for a shovel-ready project.

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**Different exhibit?**

This Regional Trail with multi-modal connections and host of retail services will make this pedestrian bridge the nexus of regional systems and destinations. Therefore, it is imperative that Anoka County Parks and the City of Ramsey work with Metropolitan Council and other regional partners to develop a cost-share plan for the funding and construction of the remaining portion of the Mississippi Skyway, utilizing grant monies that are uniquely available for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

This next section ↓ may be better located following 'Planned Park System' above

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## Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Implementation

The following represents goals and strategies for future land uses. Subsequent chapters will include their own goals and strategies that integrate with the above. Resources above and beyond current budget approvals are indicated in the 'Additional Resources' column.

Strategic Imperatives (4 key themes from Phase I of update)

1. A Balance of Rural Character and Urban Growth
2. An Active Community (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space)
3. A Connected Community (Transportation)
4. A Positive Learning Environment Update

## Relationship to Park System Plan Process

Concurrently with this Comprehensive Plan Update process, the City of Ramsey is conducting its first-ever Park System Plan (PSP) process. The foundation of that plan is an analysis of the needs and desires of the community, a review of existing features, and an exploration of the context for the system. It will then provide a vision for the overall system and planning and policy direction for parks, trails, recreation, and open space. It is meant to guide the system as it evolves over the next several decades, including how new investments and ongoing maintenance and operations will be conducted.

Those analyses and community engagement efforts, including coordination with the Comprehensive Plan engagement events, began in 2017 and will continue, culminating in an anticipated adoption of the document by City Council later in 2018. Because that plan is underway and will be a formally adopted City policy document, this Chapter refers to the PSP for much of its findings about local planning direction and implementation for the system. Elements that are specific to the Comprehensive Plan, such as relationship to other city-wide planning decisions and regional coordination, will be covered here (but also reflected in the PSP).

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Convert ↓ back to Goals and Strategies???

Goal/Initiative	Tactic	Timeframe	Key Outcomes	Additional Resources
Maintain and Expand the Rural Character of Ramsey	Create a Natural Resources Plan	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect exceptional quality ecological areas through public investment and land use controls.</li> <li>• Create a landscape management plan that is sustainable in terms of long-term maintenance.</li> <li>• Ensure that there are many areas within the park system for quiet contemplation, and that even in urban parks there are naturalized areas.</li> </ul>	\$7,500 in professional services.
	Preserve and enhance continuous open space corridors that protect natural vegetation and water quality, provide wildlife habitat, and conserve the natural character of Ramsey.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to be a local resource for residents seeking information on the parks systems' natural resources, as well as assisting with private land management in association with public resources.</li> <li>• Support programming to educate residents on the value of preserving and maintaining natural resources for the health benefits they provide.</li> <li>• Develop and strengthen relationships with schools, state agencies and colleges in both utilizing Ramsey's parks as educational tools and public resources.</li> <li>• Refer to Ditch 66 as Elmcreek Creek, and continue acquiring land along it as an important trail corridor and Greenway in the center of the city.</li> <li>• Promote use of conservation easements, land trusts, or other unique tools to retain areas of significant natural resources as identified in the city's Natural Resource inventory.</li> <li>• Encourage parkland dedication of areas within the proposed greenway corridors if there is demonstrated public recreational value, or enhances the ecological functioning of public lands.</li> </ul>	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop additional interpretive facilities within parks and trail corridors.</li> </ul>	
Build upon existing values of Park, Trail and Open Space to create a sense of ownership in the community, and to emphasize positive contacts with the city.				
	Develop a comprehensive volunteer program in the city that rewards and recognizes participants and encourages them to be returning volunteers.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased participation in programs and community events.</li> <li>• Volunteers to lead programs and special events.</li> <li>• Positive connection to community.</li> </ul>	
	Promote the benefits of parks more through existing communication venues like the newsletter and web site.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of parks and trails due to increased knowledge of benefits.</li> <li>• Healthier, more active residents.</li> </ul>	MRPA "Did You Know?" program
	Encourage and facilitate the use of parks for children and families through existing opportunities like Youth First Community of Promise or the Community School funding.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of parks and trails by youth and families.</li> </ul>	
	Provide better signage and 'branding' of Ramsey's parks.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community pride in parks and trails.</li> <li>• Easier use of parks and trails.</li> </ul>	
	Respond to citizen requests in a timely manner with detailed and accurate information, and ensure maintenance staff has the training to be good representatives of the city.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive representation of parks and trails staff.</li> <li>• Increased safety and improved appearance of parks and facilities.</li> </ul>	
Create a diverse and robust offering of recreation opportunities	Tactic	Timeframe	Key outcomes	Additional resources
	Offer numerous recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities, which understand local demographic and recreation trends as well as community wants and needs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of formal/informal opportunities for community to enjoy outdoor space and build connections.</li> <li>• Partnerships with schools, nonprofits, businesses, and/or volunteer organizations to expand offerings/facility use.</li> <li>• Activities that promote life-long health and wellness and learning.</li> <li>• Continual improvement through program evaluations.</li> </ul>	
	Expand senior programming as baby-boomers age that meets needs of an aging population in various		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local and regional trends regarding 55+ programming are monitored to become competitive.</li> </ul>	

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	ways and understands the size and location(s) of this population.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-faceted groups and clubs with a social aspect, in areas such as the arts, physical activity, volunteering, hobbies, and education.</li> <li>Activities that promote life-long health and wellness and learning.</li> </ul>	
	Ensure equitable access to recreation programs and facilities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fee-setting policy and formal fee-assistance policy that eliminates economic barriers to participation.</li> <li>Appropriate/source funds for scholarship program.</li> <li>Reasonable accommodations available, as mandated by ADA, for all programs and services.</li> <li>Adaptive sports program for activities where integration would change the fundamental nature of the sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scholarship funds/donations.</li> <li>Inclusion assistants for participants who need additional support during mainstream programs (Reach for Resources, ARLE, etc.)</li> </ul>
	Create a Master Parks Plan	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A well-connected parks and recreation system that respects the balance of community needs and expectations with long-term capital investment and ongoing maintenance obligations.</li> </ul>	No additional resources required. Plan is already in development.
	Create a section on Recreation Programming within the Master Parks Plan	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A diverse and robust offering of recreation opportunities to engage the entire community and satisfy wants and needs, as well as promote community health and wellness.</li> </ul>	No additional resources required. Section is already in development.
	Explore ways to establish a community center that would provide a variety of recreation activities for people of all ages, cultural identities, and ability.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility of community center and various options for management and implementation.</li> </ul>	
	Continue to support the various youth athletic associations by providing field maintenance activities that meet their needs in serving residents.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with sports fields for all users.</li> <li>Increased participation and/or retention in youth athletic associations due to higher quality facilities.</li> </ul>	
	Examining the use and promotion of community gardens to serve the needs of residents without access to land, and to promote healthy life styles and stronger neighborhoods.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to existing community gardens to encourage increased participation.</li> </ul>	
	Continue to examine the 'return on investment' that a recreation coordinator would provide to the community associated		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough documentation and justification for recreation coordinator.</li> </ul>	

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	with developing programming.			
	Collaborate to make physical connections to adjoining communities like trails a high priority; and also build relationships with surrounding community's to cooperatively serve our constituencies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eventual physical connections to neighboring communities.</li> <li>• Partnerships with neighboring cities.</li> </ul>	
	Cooperate with school districts and charter schools to develop and maintain joint-use school-park facilities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher-quality and increased use of such park facilities.</li> <li>• Increased recreation programming at such facilities.</li> </ul>	
Improve the safety and mobility of major corridors				
	<p>Provide sustainable access to all community parks and destinations, through safe trail connections to neighborhoods throughout Ramsey – with urban neighborhoods and commercial areas having a comprehensive sidewalk system to facilitate healthy living.</p> <p>Continue to expand trail systems, by maintaining and updating the Park and Trail Plan map, so as to provide transportation choices, in addition to recreational opportunities.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive Trail Fee on new residential developments to provide revenue for trail system expansion.</li> <li>• “Patrol friendly” public spaces, parks, and trails.</li> <li>• Trail and greenway near Trott Brook.</li> <li>• Snow removal on city sidewalk and trail system.</li> <li>• Trail along Bunker Lake Boulevard and Alpine Drive.</li> <li>• Long-term pedestrian and bicyclist crossing of Mississippi River.</li> <li>• Separated paved trails on higher traffic roads.</li> <li>• Employ standards that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act for all public and private trail facilities, as well as retrofitting non-compliant areas.</li> </ul>	
Ensure the Comprehensive Plan continues to implement the City's Mission and Vision while respecting market forces.				
	<p>Create neighborhood parks within the urban areas which strengthen the neighborhood, unite the community, and provide focal points of identity for the residential areas of Ramsey.</p> <p>Support boulevard trees as a way to enhance property values, improve aesthetics and provide for safer streets.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emphasis on public input when designing new park spaces.</li> <li>• Meet basic neighborhood parks needs yet avoid “cookie-cutter” plans – building diversity and aesthetic into design.</li> <li>• Beautify public spaces and gardens with art.</li> <li>• Encourage neighbors and volunteers to be active in parks, and develop special events at the neighborhood level that are unique.</li> </ul>	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider subtle themes for neighborhood parks and the adjoining public spaces.</li> </ul>	
	Establish a relevant, diverse, and efficient system of parks and trails that meets the needs of Ramsey residents, now and for the future, and of a quality that enhances property values.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to update the Comprehensive Park, Open Space and Trail Plan section to provide direction in future parkland acquisition and development.</li> <li>• Increase the planning efforts for the projected sixth community park.</li> <li>• Maintain the vision for the Town Center park and trail plan to ensure the project is truly walkable and successful in supporting commercial and retail businesses.</li> <li>• Explore new and creative ways of funding parks, and building synergistic relationships with the business community.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are committed for park planning and especially routine maintenance.</li> <li>• Continue to coordinate planning efforts with the National Park Service in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area to establish a regional trail along the Mississippi River that includes rest areas, scenic overlooks, and interpretive stops.</li> <li>• Accelerate the Anoka to Ramsey trail connection timeline at King's Island.</li> <li>• Support the development of a fishing pier and boat landing in the county's Mississippi West Regional Park.</li> <li>• Develop a long-range plan for underutilized park spaces in the city.</li> </ul>	
Plan for future educational needs				
	Support the planned second elementary school in Ramsey	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary school facilities reduce overcrowding, safety, and space needs.</li> <li>• Cooperate with school districts to develop and maintain joint-use school-park facilities.</li> </ul>	No additional resources required.
	Encourage the Anoka Hennepin School District or Elk River School District to create a long-term plan for facilities in Ramsey.	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A third elementary school and a new middle school are planned for the future (2025 or beyond).</li> <li>• Cooperate with school districts to develop and maintain joint-use school-park facilities.</li> </ul>	No additional resources required.

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	Consider Amending District Boundaries to better reflect actual development patterns.	2022 (following 2020 Census)	• School District boundaries follow Neighborhood boundaries.	
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