

Parks and Trails 5

Introduction

New Ulm was fortunate to have founders with a vision and a deep interest in parks when they platted the City in 1858. Their interest in parks was probably rooted in the Turnverein philosophy of promoting a sound mind and a sound body. This vision provided New Ulm with land dedicated for public parks in a uniform pattern across the City. There continues to be a strong interest in outdoor recreation; the population recognizes that recreational interests are changing somewhat and that the system should keep pace.

The New Ulm Master Park Plan was most recently prepared in 1989 and incorporated into the 1996 Comprehensive Plan. The Parks chapter of this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2007 based on the 1996 Comprehensive Plan. It includes an evaluation of the current park and recreation system, more detailed park and facility standards, a trail plan, future park needs, park renovation and facility priorities. Guiding assumptions for mid- and long-term park and recreation system planning are:

- ▷ The City's population will remain stable or slightly increase, and the mean age will increase with the Baby Boomers moving into the 45 to 60 year range. Interest in trails, passive parks, cultural and fine arts programs, and indoor recreation is likely to increase.
- ▷ Exercise and health will continue to be an integral part of the lives of the people of New Ulm. A comprehensive trail system would help meet these demands. A loop trail network with connections to key local destinations (downtown, larger city parks, and Flandrau State Park) and to external trail routes (such as the Minnesota River State Trail) is needed to meet recreation, active living and non-vehicular transportation needs. A city and regional trail system would attract both residents and visitors alike.



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▷ Parks, trails and open space play an important role in attracting tourism, maintaining and increasing property values and for neighborhood and community quality of life.

▷ Maintenance, cleanliness and the safety of parks and recreation facilities are a key factor in satisfaction with the park system.

▷ Interest in the environmental and natural resources will play an increasingly important role in planning, park and community development decisions. Key natural resources such as the Minnesota River, Big Cottonwood River, bluff areas, prairies, trees and woodlands will need greater protection, preservation and management.

▷ Future downtown development will provide the City with a strong and viable downtown area. Historic renovation of buildings for interpretative means, and the on-going maintenance of German, Kiesling and Schonlau Parks will help meet the demands of a more active downtown.

▷ Tourism will continue to grow within the New Ulm area. Future programs, attractions and facilities will need to be developed using the City's German heritage, architectural resources, riverfronts and park system as major attractions.

▷ Partnerships for park and recreation facility development and operation will continue to increase in importance. The Park and Recreation Department has a good working relationship with not only the school systems in the New Ulm area, but also the many organizations and groups which utilize parks and recreation facilities. Enhancement of those partnerships and

expansion of other partnerships will help provide the best and most efficient system.

▷ There will be an increased emphasis on energy efficiency, green infrastructure and sustainability in the future. Increased gasoline costs may cause some to seek close-to-home recreational activities such as walking or biking.

The purpose of the Parks and Trails Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to:

A. Guide the Park and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission and City Council in acquiring land for new parks.

B. Guide development of new bike routes, sidewalks and off-street trails.

C. Help guide decision-making regarding improvements to existing, underdeveloped and undeveloped parks.

D. Provide policy direction regarding natural resource preservation, management and recreation facility development.

Park and Recreation System Inventory

The City of New Ulm is well served by 14 Neighborhood Parks, 4 Mini Parks, 4 Community Parks, 5 Special Use Parks, and 2 Natural Resource Areas. The City has an excellent range of indoor recreation facilities:

▶ The Recreation Center - indoor swimming pool.

▶ Vogel Fieldhouse, fitness center, racquetball courts, meeting rooms.

▶ New Ulm Civic Center – two ice skating and hockey rinks (that become seasonal dry floor arenas) and meeting rooms.

▶ The New Ulm Community Center - senior recreation, cafetorium, arts, crafts, pottery, meeting rooms.

These first class facilities provide excellent indoor recreation for the community.

In addition to the City facilities, schools and Martin Luther College also provide active recreation facilities such as athletic fields, play equipment and gymnasiums; although public access to these facilities can be limited during peak school use times. Flandrau State Park provides outdoor natural resource based recreation for the New Ulm area and beyond. Private parks and recreation areas play an important role in the community. Schell's Brewery, Putting Green Adventure Park, Jr. Pioneer Park, Turner Halle and other facilities supplement the public park and recreation system. See Table 5-1 - Existing Parks Inventory and Figure 5-1 - Existing Parks and Trails Map.

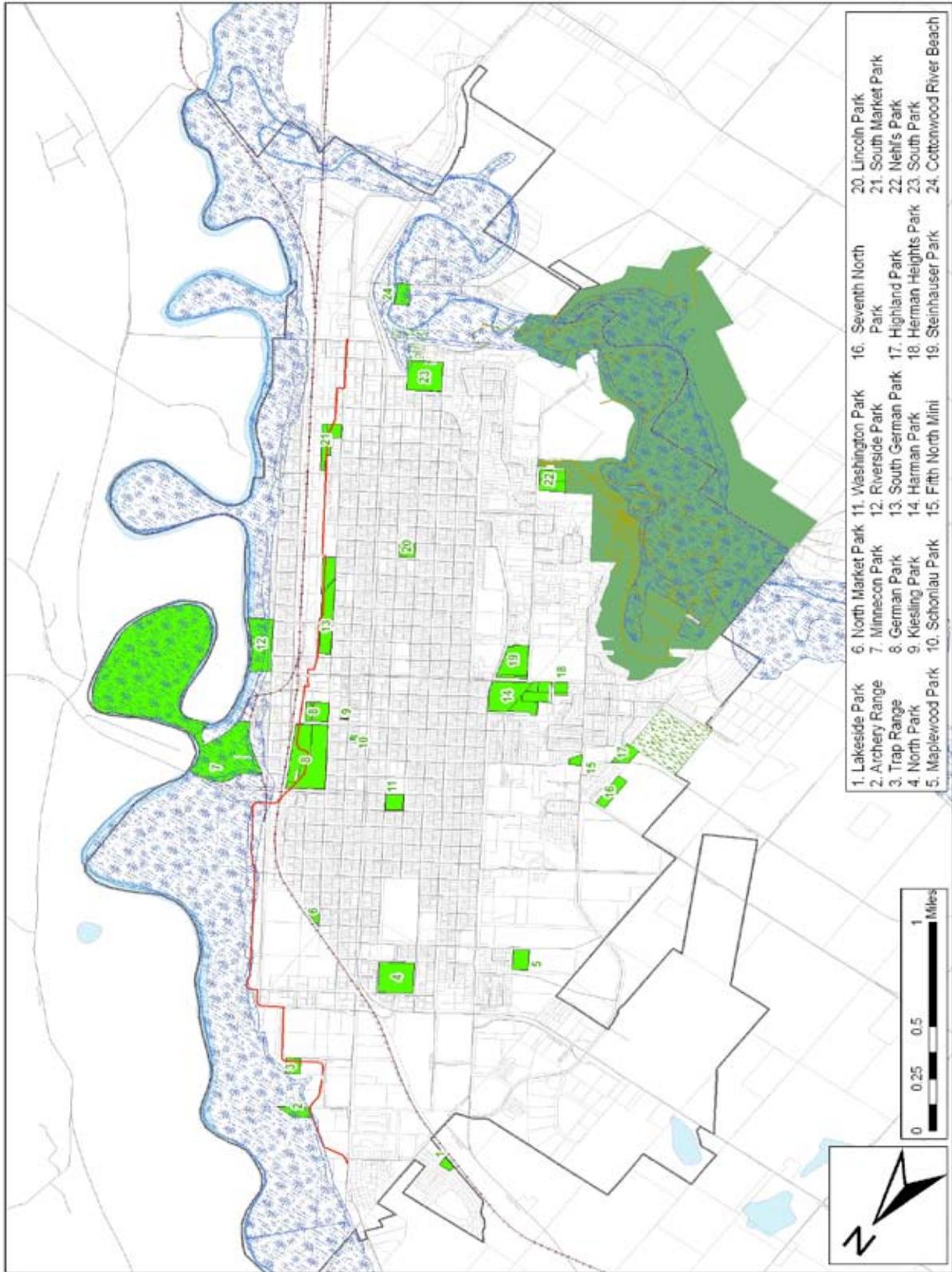
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Table 5-1: Park Inventory

PARKS & FACILITIES		Acres	Shelter, Bandshell (open unless noted)	Picnic Tables	Restrooms	Playground Equipment	Baseball/Soccer Fields	Horseshoe Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Basketball Courts	Football/Soccer Fields	Trail or Walking Track	Ice Rinks	Swimming Pool	Fitness Center	Meeting/Multi-Purpose Rooms	Locker Rooms w/Showers	Arenas - Indoor Dry Floor	Kitchen, Cafeteria, Concession Stand	Theater or Amphitheater	Accessible	Gardens, Fountain, & Pergula	Benches, Bleachers, Grandstands	Interpretive Center	Historical Marker, Monument, Sculpture	Drinking Water	Sliding Hill (Winter)	Open Play Space	Natural Area	Grills	Disc Golf Course (9 holes)	River Access: Minnesota (MN) or Cottonwood (CT)				
	Archevy Range	2.00	X																																		
	BMX Track	4.00																																			
	Civic Center	3.00	X	X																																	
	Community Center/North German Park	2.81	X	X	X																																
	Cottonwood River Beach Park	2.10																																			
	Savannah North Park (Undeveloped)	7.00																																			
	Fifth North Holding Pond (Undeveloped)	8.00																																			
	Fifth North Mini Park	0.82	X																																		
	German Park	6.80	3	X	X																																
	Gruffit Art Wall	3.50																																			
	Harman Park	13.98	E 1	X	X	X	L 4																														
	Heritage Tree Monument	0.05																																			
	Hermann Heights Park & Monument	5.95	E 2	X	S	X																															
	Highland Park	3.00		X	P	X																															
	Johnson Field	8.50			S																																
	Johnson Park	8.49			S		L 1																														
	Kiesling Park, House & Gallery	0.20			1	X																															
	Lakeside Village Park (Undeveloped)	1.50																																			
	Lincoln Park	7.18	1	X	S	X	L 2																														
	Maplewood Park (Undeveloped)	3.00																																			
	Minnecon Park	118.65	1	X	V																																
	Mueller Park	8.50	1	X	S																																
	Nehls Park	12.00		X	P	X																															
	North Park	13.97	2	X	S	X	L 3	X																													
	North End of Trail (Undeveloped)	2.64																																			
	North German Park (see Community Center)																																				
	North Market Park	1.10	1	X	X																																
	Riverside Park	13.23		X	P	X																															
	Schonlau Park/Glockenspiel	0.40		X																																	
	Skateboard/In-line Skate Park	1.09		X	P																																
	South Park	13.97		X																																	
	South German Park	5.56		X																																	
	South German Park	2.81		X																																	
	South Market Park (Undeveloped)	1415		X	X																																
	Steinhaus Park/Recreation Center	122		X																																	
	Trap Range	4.00	E 5	X	S																																
	Washington Park	2.81	1	X	S	X	L 2	1																													
	Total	281.42																																			

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Figure 5-1: Existing Parks and Trails Map



Goals and Policies

The following section describes the goals and policies for the New Ulm park system.

Goal 1: Ensure that residents in each neighborhood have easy access to a park.

1.1 Land Acquisition: The City will acquire land for parks in emerging neighborhoods prior to or concurrent with private land development. The approximate location of proposed new parks is shown on the Land Use Plan and Park and Trail Plan. Land will be acquired by direct purchase and through dedication at the time of platting.

1.2 Sidewalks and Trails: The sidewalk and trail systems will maintain access to and between parks and public facilities. All residents should be within walking distance of a neighborhood park, which is considered to be four blocks (1/3 of a mile).

1.3 Downtown Parks: German, Kiesling, Schonlau and South German Parks should be further developed to strengthen the image of the downtown area.

1.4 Sharing of Facilities: The City will communicate with local school systems to avoid the duplication of programs and facilities. Existing public and quasi-public facilities (such as Turner Halle, the National Guard Armory and Brown County Fairgrounds) will be utilized for recreation programs to minimize capital expenditures.

Goal 2: Provide a range of community-scale and neighborhood-scale activities through the overall park system.

2.1 New Community Athletic Field: A major new site will be established near the Airport to meet future community recreation needs. The Airport Park should be large enough (approximately 50 acres) to accommodate parking and nighttime activities without adversely affecting the nearby neighborhoods. The site will likely need to be acquired by outright purchase, not through piecemeal dedication of land.

2.2 Passive Recreation: Increased emphasis will be given to nature preservation and passive recreation (picnicking, sitting, scenic views and nature study).

2.3 Four Seasons of Activities: With continued emphasis on year round activities, the City will consider adding a greater winter sports complex to Harman Park.

Goal 3: Continue to build a system of interconnected trails and sidewalks through the City and nearby river valleys for pedestrians and bicyclists.

3.1 Trails: A loop trail system will be built around the city according to the New Ulm Park and Trail Plan (see Figure 5-3). Trail connections will be added to key parks and city destinations. Off-street trails will be supplemented with designated bike routes.

3.2 Sidewalks: Sidewalks will be installed along both sides of all residential streets and collector- or arterial-level commercial streets

by either the land developer or the City. Sidewalks along Local and Collector streets shall be built at the expense of the land developer unless the street is built as a municipal project, in which case the City will built them and assess the cost as part of the project.

3.3 County Roads: New Ulm will encourage Nicollet and Brown Counties to build paved shoulders along all of their roads outside the City.

Goal 4: Use public regulation or land ownership to protect special natural features, but not at the expense of the neighborhood park system.

4.1 Floodways and Floodplains: New Ulm will continue to protect, through its zoning powers, a system of open space in river floodplains.

4.2 Cottonwood River: Additional land should be acquired along the Cottonwood River for trails and passive recreation.

4.3 Scenic Vistas: The City should strive to create scenic viewing sites in blufftop areas.

4.4 Bluff Protection: The City should adopt regulations to protect steep bluffs (blufftop, bluff slope and toe of bluff) from the negative effects of grading, vegetation removal and land alteration.

4.5 Tree Preservation: The City will study and adopt regulations to protect significant woodlands.

4.6 Wetlands: The City will explore ways to enhance protection and

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management of wetlands and storm water ponding areas.

Goal 5: Maintain high quality park facilities in an efficient manner.

5.1 Role of the Park System: The City regards parks, trails and sidewalks not merely as amenities but also as necessary elements in its effort to increase and protect the quality of residential development, fiscal health and private economic development. The park and trails systems support the Turner philosophy of a “strong mind and a strong body” as reflected in the 1858 plan for the City.

5.2 Participation: Citizen participation will be encouraged in all stages of the planning and design of parks.

5.3 Other Organizations: The City will continue its cooperative relationship with New Ulm school systems, and local civic organizations in the planning, design and funding of park system improvements and recreation programs.

5.4 Appearance: Parks should be attractive and reflect the German heritage of the community. Emphasis will continue to be placed on having parks that are clean, neat and well maintained. The appearance of the parks will be improved through landscaping and signage.

5.5 Special Needs: The needs of an aging population and the physically handicapped will be considered when designing park facilities. The City will follow the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

5.6 Coordination: The Park and Recreation Commission will be given an opportunity to review and comment on all major subdivisions prior to Planning Commission review.

5.7 Land Use Planning: Parks may be used as a transitional land use between different types of development that are not complementary such as single-family housing and commercial development.

5.8 Master Plan: The Park and Trail Plan standards and recommendations will be used to help guide decision making on park, trail and recreation projects and acquisitions. The City will review and update the Park and Trail chapter of the Comprehensive Plan on a periodic basis. The City will annually prepare and update a five-year plan that lists proposed projects that ought to be completed to address needs and deficiencies anticipated within the subsequent five years. That list should be based upon a review of the system facilities with the plan goals, objectives and policies in conjunction with forecasts of population by service area. Projects should be ranked in priority, based upon need and readiness for construction.

5.9 Duplication: The City will work to avoid duplication recreation facilities offered by others including Flandrau State Park.

Park, Trail and Recreation System Standards

Parks and trails are classified according to their use and function

(see Table 5-2 - Park Classifications). This table is intended to act as a general guide to park planning, acquisition and use. The standards are designed to assure that New Ulm residents have convenient access to neighborhood parks and that the community has a range of active and passive recreation facilities to meet current and future needs. Active recreation refers to sports like baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, tennis, etc. Passive recreation refers to activities such as picnicking, nature study, bird watching, etc.

Park Category Descriptions and Criteria

These classifications should be used when considering new parkland or development. Existing parks may differ in size or in other factors from the criteria. Descriptions of each park classification are as follows:

Mini-Parks

Mini-parks are small parks (approximately 0.5 to 3 acres) which are designed to supplement neighborhood parks in specific settings where a neighborhood park is not available or a new neighborhood park cannot be provided. Mini-parks typically contain children’s play equipment and may also include a small open play area and/or a picnic table or seating area. Mini-parks typically do not include athletic fields or sports courts. In general mini-parks are limited to the following situations:

1. Areas of 75 or more residential dwellings that are not served by

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Table 5-2: Park Classification

Symbol	Park Classification	Use	Service Area	Size (new parks)	Acres/ 1,000 people	Site
MP	Mini-Park	Specialized park that serves a concentrated population (i.e. tots or seniors) or geographic area. Used in areas where geographic barriers prevent access to a neighborhood park.	Less than ¼ mile radius	0.5 to 2 acres	0.25 to 0.5	Typically near higher density housing that does not have access to a neighborhood park or as a supplement to a neighborhood park.
NP	Neighborhood Park	Basic unit of the park system, developed for both active & passive recreation activities. Focus on informal and unstructured activities.	1/3 mile radius	4-10 acres	3.0 to 5.0	Easily accessible to the neighborhood population with safe walking and biking access utilizing trail networks. Parking facilities limited to a minimum. Site should have well-drained soils and not include excessively steep slopes.
NR	Natural Resources Areas	Area possessing natural qualities preserved for environmental, open space or aesthetic purposes. Facilities should be compatible with the preservation of the resource.	Community wide	Depends on resource	Varies	Significant natural areas which merit preservation and would be adversely affected by development, i.e., River flood plain, bluffs, etc.
LP	Linear Park/ Greenway	Liner open spaces that protect a natural resource and/or link the community. Often includes a trail corridor.	Community wide	Varies	Varies	Along major river corridors, sensitive areas and exiting roadways. Incorporate multi-use and multi-modal trails.
CP	Community Park	Area designed for community scale recreation either active (athletic fields, etc.), passive (picnic facilities, nature study, etc.) or a combination of both.	Community wide	20-65 acres	2.5 to 3.5	Site should be suited for community use, be easily accessible to the population it is intended to serve. Active parks to be located near high traffic areas such as schools and major thoroughfares.
SP	School Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements of other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, athletic complex and special use.	Driven by the location of the school property.	Variable - depends on function.	Variable	Land should typically be suited for active recreation use, but may also include natural areas.
SU	Special Use	Specialized use area such as historic parks, public golf courses, water access, arenas, gardens, plazas, and other specialized recreation uses.	Community wide	Variable	Variable	Site Specific

- a neighborhood or community park, or;
2. Barriers such as major streets (four lane roads with 10,000+ vehicle trips per day – North and South Broadway, US Highway 14), steep bluff areas, rivers, railroads, or other similar barrier prevent convenient access to a neighborhood or community park, or;
 3. The presence of high-density residential or senior housing development warrants additional parkland beyond the typical neighborhood park facilities or specialized park facilities. In some cases the development can be expected to provide private recreation facilities for

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their multi-family residents, i.e. such as a children's play area or a swimming pool.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the core element of the New Ulm Park system. Neighborhood parks are designed to provide the day-to-day recreation facilities for a 125 to 250 acre neighborhood 1/4 to 1/3 mile radius). These parks are designed to serve approximately 300 to 650 households. Neighborhood parks are typically between four and ten acres. Neighborhood parks within the older developed portion of the city (area within the grid street layout) are typically smaller and serve slightly larger populations. Neighborhood parks typically contain a children's play area, a picnic area, a basketball court, internal park trails, and ball fields (softball, soccer, etc.). Ball fields are typically used for informal use, but they may also be used for youth athletic leagues. Some neighborhood parks may contain off-street parking, a hockey rink, skating area, tennis courts or other similar recreation facilities. Neighborhood parks may also include natural resources such as wetlands, wooded areas, etc.

The following criteria should apply to new neighborhood parks and additions to existing neighborhood parks:

1. Land shall be a contiguous area of 4 to 10 acres and shall have a length/width ratio of no more than 3/1. The parkland should have a minimum of 300 feet of frontage on an improved public street. At least 240 feet shall

be contiguous frontage. The parkland shall have the general qualities needed to allow development of a quality neighborhood park.

2. Land shall be centrally located within a neighborhood and easily accessed by pedestrian or bike.
3. At least 75% of the total area of land shall have a slope of less than or equal to four percent (4%) and no more than 25% of the park land shall be located within a storm water ponding area, drainage way, or any other water body. At least 75% of the total land area shall be of solid subgrade, excluding areas composed primarily of peat or wetland soils and have well drained subsoils suitable to support the growth of healthy turf and athletic field use.
4. The park area shall contain a minimum of four inches of topsoil depth and a minimum average depth of six inches, and said topsoil shall be of a quality to support establishment of healthy turf and landscaping

Community Parks and Community Playfield/Athletic Complex Criteria

Community parks and playfields provide recreation facilities for community scale recreation. That can vary from multi-field athletic complexes to a natural resource based passive park areas or combinations of both. Community parks serve a two plus square mile area. Users typically drive to the parks and playfields, although some community parks may also function as a neighborhood park for the adjacent

area. Passive community parks are typically located around a natural resource such as a lake, creek, wetland, significant woodland or other resource. Community playfields are based on recreation need and their locations should have good vehicular access and be compatible for active lighted ball fields.

Community parks with active recreation uses (i.e. ball fields, sport courts, etc.) and playfields should meet the following criteria:

1. Land shall be continuous area of at least 25 acres for community parks and a minimum of 40 acres for community athletic areas and shall typically have a length/width ratio of no more than 3/1.
2. The land to be dedicated or acquired shall be suitable to its intended use. This means adequate size, parcel shape, public road frontage, soils, slope, access and relationship to adjacent land uses.
3. Land shall be easily accessed by pedestrian or biker, and provide convenient and safe vehicle access to a collector or arterial street.
4. For athletic complexes at least 90 percent of the total land area shall have a slope of less than or equal to two percent and shall not contain a storm water ponding area, drainage way, or any other water body (maximum 10% water, pond or wetland area). And at least 90 percent of the total land area shall be of solid subgrade and well drained subsoils suitable to support the growth of healthy turf and athletic field use. In

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addition, the same percent of land area shall be covered with no less than six (6) inches of topsoil and shall be clear of overstory vegetation.

5. Where possible a larger area for a combined athletic and passive recreation park shall be dedicated/acquired. This larger site is intended to provide passive amenity based recreation and area for active athletic uses.

Community parks which focus on passive recreation (trails, picnicking, water based recreation, etc.) should meet the following standards:

1. Land shall be continuous area of at least 25 acres with a minimum frontage on a public street of 400 feet.
2. Land shall be easily accessed by pedestrian or biker and also provide adequate car access by roadway.
3. At least 10 percent of the total land area shall have a slope of less than or equal to four percent, have solid upland soils and shall not contain a water detention area, drainage way, or any other water body.
4. Desirable characteristics include varied and rolling terrain, a mix of forest and open grasslands, and scenic features such as: lakeshore, river or stream frontage, and unique environmental, historical or cultural features.

Park / School Recreation Area Criteria

The City and local schools should work cooperatively on recreation facility planning and park use. As new school sites are contemplated, there are opportunities for additional shared facilities. Shared park/schools area (suitable for school and community recreation use) will be jointly selected by the school systems and City and shall have the following characteristics:

1. Land shall be a contiguous area of 15 to 40 acres (school site and park land combined) and shall have a length/width ratio of no more than 4/1. Size will vary by school type.
2. Land shall be located directly adjacent to a school site and shall be easily and safely accessed by pedestrian, bike and automobile.
3. At least 80 percent of the total land area shall have a slope of less than or equal to two percent and the maximum area containing a water body, wetland, storm water ponding area or drainage way, shall not exceed 20% of the total land area. At least 80 percent of the total land area shall be of solid upland soils and well drained subsoils suitable to support the growth of healthy turf and athletic field use. In addition, the same percent of land shall have a depth of topsoil of at least six (6) inches and shall be clear of forest vegetation.
4. Land shall not include any areas of open water that could pose a safety hazard, but may have wetland areas that serve

an aesthetic or environmental learning function.

Natural Resource Parks

Natural resource parks preserve unique natural features such as creeks, rivers, wetlands, woodlands, bluff, prairie, etc. The size, configuration and location of these parks are based on the unique natural features, public access and recreation needs such as parking and trails.

Special Use Parks

The need for special use parks and recreation areas such as community golf courses, arenas, gardens, plazas, historic sites, skate parks, BMX bike areas, disc golf, off leash dog areas, etc. are based on the unique natural, cultural, historic or community features, or recreation demand. The size, configuration and location of these parks will be determined by the city on an individual basis.

Trail Standards

Trails are classified based on their function, design and location. The most popular trails are for pedestrians and bicycles. There are separated trails (parallel sidewalks and bikeways) within the same corridor, combined trails (pedestrians and bikes on the same trail), bike lanes (striped paved shoulder in the street), unpaved nature trails and special use trails (cross country ski and snowmobile). Trail classifications and criteria are summarized in Table 5-3.

Major trails can be used for recreation and transportation purposes.

Table 5-3: Trail and Sidewalk Classifications

Trail Classifications	Location and Use	Surface	Width	Slope	Notes
Separate pedestrian sidewalk and bicycle trails.	Off- street sidewalk and off-street trail	Bituminous or bituminous and concrete	5-6 feet for pedestrians 8-10 feet for bicycles	0-5% pedestrian 0-3% bike	NA
Combined pedestrian and bicycle trail.	Off street -	Bituminous	10 feet	0-3% average 8%-12% maximum	NA
Bikeway lane	On-street – one way per side	Striped lane next to vehicle lane	4-6 feet (one way)	Slope to match road	Space for bike lanes can be achieved through restricting parking on one or both sides of an existing street.
Bikeway route	On street signed route appropriate for bike use.	Street surface shared with vehicles	NA	Same as street	Signed route to supplement trail and bike lane network.
Nature trail.	Within parks and conservation areas	Aggregate, woodchip, turf or boardwalk.	4-6 feet	0-5% desirable 10% maximum	NA

Trails within parks will be determined as part of the specific park design. Bituminous trails and area sidewalks should be connected to create a continuous pedestrian system. The creation of trail loops and connected networks are goals for all trail types. The priority is for trails separated from the road surface. However, designated bike routes are appropriate in key areas where a separated trail is not feasible and where on-street use by bicycles is appropriate and safe.

Recreation Facility Standards

Table 5-4 - Recreation Facility Standards contains a summary of minimum standards by facility type (i.e. basketball court or football field). The New Ulm standards are an updated version of standards prepared by the National Recre-

ation and Park Association (NRPA). The NRPA standards were modified to take into account changing recreation demand (i.e. increased participation in soccer, lacrosse, etc.), and to more accurately reflect local facility needs. The standards and criteria should be used as a guide to minimum facility needs. New Ulm has typically attempted to go beyond meeting the residents’ minimal needs and has strived to provide high quality infrastructure and services. The standards are flexible to account for local demands and specific conditions. The minimum number of facilities per capita will vary depending upon the specific community needs and the use of the field or court. For example, a softball outfield area may also be used for soccer, football and lacrosse, although it will not be available for use by more than one sport at a time.

Park System Needs, Issues and Opportunities

Park Supply and Distribution

Two fundamental considerations used to evaluate the adequacy of a city park system are the overall supply of parks within the city and the appropriate distribution of the parks to meet neighborhood and community needs. The existing system has developed with a basic standard of 10.5 acres of close to home parkland per 1,000 people and an additional 15-20 acres of regional park space per 1,000 people within a one hour drive. The City of New Ulm currently has approximately 12.6 acres of close to home park and recreation space per 1,000 people. Flandrau State Park provides 1,006 acres of nearby regional recreation space (72 acres/1,000 residents).

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Table 5-4: Recreation Facility Standards

Facility	Space Requirements SF = square feet AC = acre	Recommended Size and Dimensions	Recommended Orientation	Minimum Number of Units Per Population	Service Radius	Location Notes
Basketball	3,000 – 6,000 SF	Full court:: 50' x 84'-94' with 5' unobstructed space on all sides Half court: 40' x 40'	Long axis north- south	Full court: 1 per 5,000 Half court: 1 per 2,500	¼ to ½ mile	Safe walking or bike access. Outdoor courts in neighborhood & community parks and school sites.
Ice Hockey	22,000 SF incl. support area plus shelter and parking	Rink 85' x 200' (minimum 85' x 185') additional 5,000 SF support area	Long axis north- south	Outdoor - 1/5,000	2 mile	Lighted facility. Best as part of multipurpose neighborhood or
Free Skating	Minimum 20,000 SF	Varies	None	Outdoor 1/5,000	2 mile	Typically associated with outdoor hockey rink.
Tennis	Minimum of 7,200 SF for single court	36' x 78' with 12' clearance on both sides; 21' clearance on both sides (60'x90' per court)	Long axis north- south	1 court per 2,000	2 mile	Best in batteries of 2 or more. Located in neighborhood / community park or adjacent to school site.
Volleyball	Minimum of 2,000 SF	30' x 60' Minimum 6' clearance on all sides.	Long axis north- south	1 court per 5,000	2 mile	Typically sand surface. Same as basketball
Baseball 1. Official	Minimum 3.0-3.85 AC	Base lines - 90' Pitching distance 60 ½' Foul lines min. 320' Center field 400'+	Locate home plate so pitcher throwing across sun & batter not facing it	1 per 15,000 plus lighted -	1 mile	Informal fields, pony league field size will vary. Full size lighted fields part of community complex.
2. Little League	Minimum 1.2 AC	Base lines - 60' Pitching distance 46' Foul lines 200' Center field 200'-250'	Line from home plate through pitcher's mound run SSW to NNE.	1 per 15,000 1/10,000 or 1/2,500 when developed for dual use as softball field.	½ -1 mile	Little league as part of neighborhood and community parks.
Field Hockey Lacrosse	Minimum 1.5 AC	180'-210' x 300' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides	Long axis north to south.	1 per 20,000	15 minutes travel time	Usually part of athletic complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Football	Minimum 1.5 AC	160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides	Long axis north to south.	1 per 20,000	15 minutes travel time	Usually part of athletic complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Soccer	1.7 to 2.1 AC	Fields vary based on age group from 100' x 200'to195'- 225' x 330'-360' with a 10' min. clearance on all sides	Long axis north to south.	Youth – 1/3,500 or based on participation Full size 1/5,000	1-2 miles	Number of units depends on popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to schools or in neighborhood parks.

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Table 5-4: Recreation Facility Standards (continued)

Softball	1.5 to 2.0 AC	Base lines 60'-65' Pitching distance – 35'-50' Fast pitch field radius from plate 200'-225' Slow pitch - 275' (men) 265' (women)	Same as baseball	1/5,000 or 1/2,500 if also used for youth baseball	¼ - ½ mile	May also be used for youth baseball
Archery Range	Minimum 1.5 AC	300' length x min. 10' between targets. Clear space and buffers to side and rear. Min. of 90' x 45' with buffer.	Archer facing north + or - 45 degrees	1 per 50,000	30 minute travel time	Part of a regional/metro park complex or special use facility
Golf - 18 hole standard	Min. 110 AC	Average length- 6,500 yds.	Majority of holes on north - south axis	1/25,000	30 minute travel time	Mix of public and private facilities.
Golf Driving Range	13.5 AC for minimum of 25 tees	900' x 690' wide, add 12' width for each additional tee.	Long axis south-west-northeast with driving toward northeast.	1 per 50,000	15-30 minute travel time	Part of golf course complex.

▷ Existing New Ulm population (2006 estimate) = 13,850 people.

▷ Minimum park and open space ratio of 10.5 acres city park land/1,000 people = 145 acres.

▷ Existing 175 acres of city park space.

Growth and Park Service Areas Needs

New Ulm classifies its parks by function and facilities and defines their role in the park and recreation system. This classification assures a wide range of recreation opportunities and proper distribution of parks

and recreation facilities to serve the community.

Service areas are the geographic coverage area by park classification. Neighborhood parks are the primary park component and are intended to be within a four block walking distance (1/3 mile) of most

Table 5-5: Existing Park Lands, Areas and Standards

Park Type	Existing Acreage	Minimum area acres/1,000 people	Minimum acres required
Mini-Park	10	0.5	7 acres
Neighborhood	79	4	55 acres
Community	45	3	42 acres
Natural Resource Areas	15	NA	
Special Use	26	NA	
Total City Parks (close to home)	175	10.5 ac./1,000	145 acres
Wellner's Island in Minnecon Park	106		
Flandreau State Park	1,006		
Total Public Park Space	1,287		

residents. Community and special use parks are intended to serve the entire City and are primarily drive-to facilities. Distribution of natural resource parks is dependent upon the location of the specific natural resource area or feature. School parks, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements of other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, athletic complex and special use.

The Neighborhood Park Service Area Coverage Map (see Figure 5.2) shows the service area coverage for existing, undeveloped and proposed neighborhood parks. It shows that approximately 90% of all New Ulm residents are located within 1/3 mile of a park. The largest “gaps” where residents are more than 1/3rd mile from a park are:

- ▷ parts northwestern New Ulm (where future parks are planned);
- ▷ the Cottonwood Street area (future neighborhood park planned);
- ▷ the Bridge Street/New Ulm Mobile Village area; and
- ▷ portions of the neighborhood located between Nehls Park and Hermann Heights Park (east and west of Summit Avenue).

The service area gap near the New Ulm Mobile Village park was evaluated. The mobile home park has a small private recreation area and there is little ability to acquire usable park land near the mobile home development.

The current City park and open space system contains approximately 175 acres. Given an estimated 2006 population of 13,850 people,

the current ratio is 12.6 acres of city parkland per 1,000 residents. An appropriate goal is to maintain a similar ratio (12.6 acres/1,000 people) of parkland in new neighborhoods. New Ulm’s population and household growth is forecast to increase at a modest rate. The number of new households alone will not create a need for new facilities. However, new parks will be needed to meet the goal of providing convenient 1/3 mile walking access to the new neighborhoods. New neighborhood parks will be needed in the south (upper Cottonwood Road area) and north (KC Road and North Highland Avenue areas).

Park System Evaluation

New Ulm has a well-distributed system of parks and excellent indoor recreation facilities. Flandrau State Park provides convenient access to natural resource based outdoor recreation. The City has many unique special use parks and facilities (Hermann Monument, BMX, archery, trap range, disc golf, graffiti wall, skate park and many historic sites). German Park is one of the premier passive recreation and cultural arts parks in Minnesota. School, college and private recreation facilities provide additional recreation opportunities. The parks and recreation facilities enhance community quality of life and attract visitors.

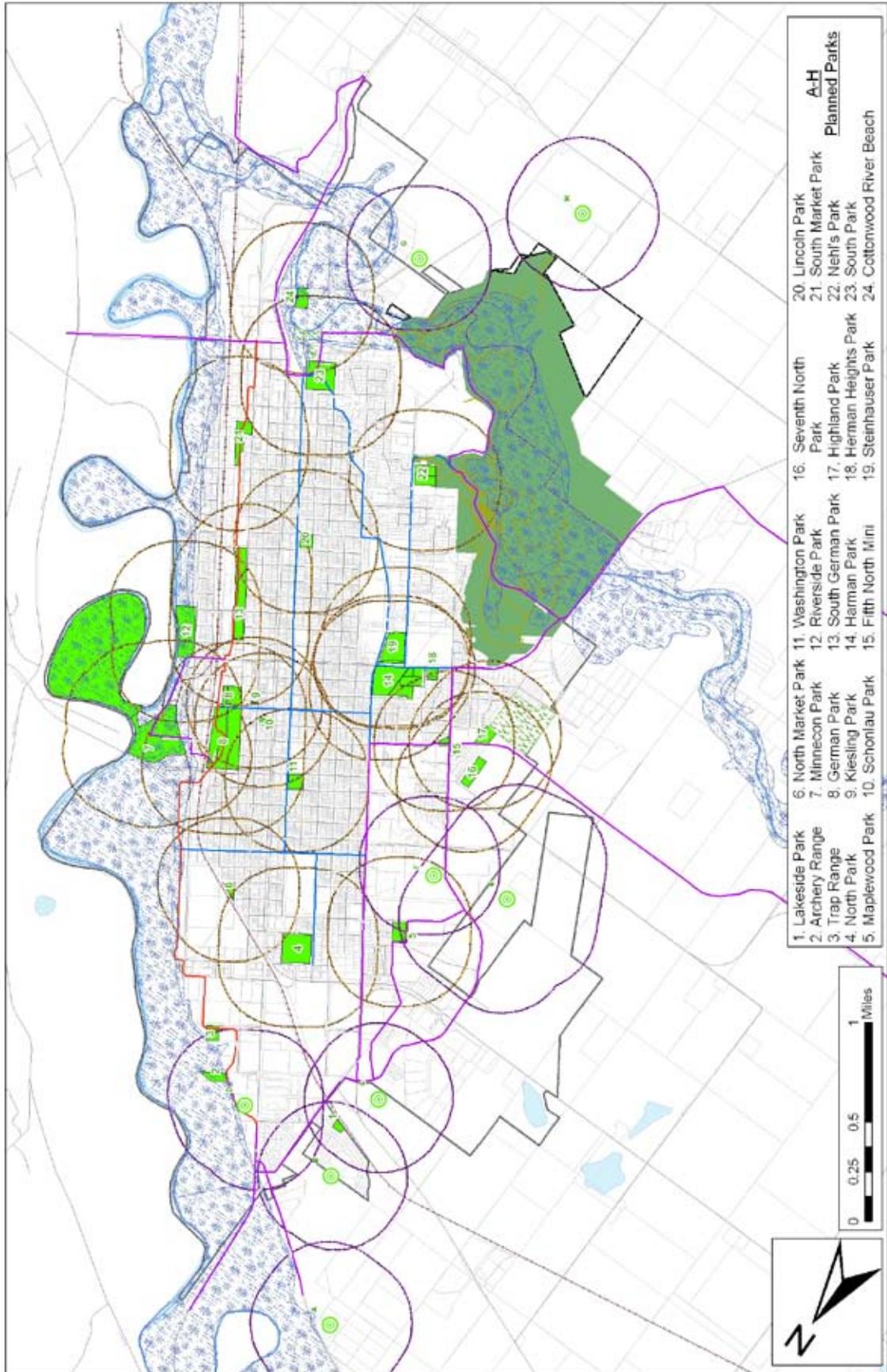
The New Ulm park system is largely developed and the city emphasis should be on maintenance, trail development, development of undeveloped park land and renovation of key parks. Creation of a loop trail

network should be a priority for the future. Trails can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. There is also a need for a community athletic park.

New Ulm is forecast to grow at a modest rate. Growth in areas not currently served by existing parks will create a need for new parkland. In some cases the city has had some issues determining when and where new parkland should be dedicated or acquired. This plan identifies new park search areas in forecast growth areas. The parkland should be acquired through a combination of park dedication funds (aggregated from other new subdivisions) and parkland dedications within subdivisions. Frequently parkland can be dedicated at the edge of one subdivision with the idea that when the surrounding area develops additional land will be dedicated or acquired. Where land is not dedicated, a suitable equivalent cash dedication should be provided to ensure funds for purchase of neighborhood parks.

New Ulm’s river and bluff terrain is an attractive setting for housing development and for parks. Protection of the bluffs and quality woodlands is important for environmental reasons and to preserve community and neighborhood character. Further emphasis by the public and private sector is needed to assure preservation of these key resources.

Figure 5-2: Park Service Areas



Parks and Trails System Recommendations

Park Maintenance

New Ulm's park system is largely developed. Maintenance, cleanliness and safety of the parks and recreation facilities is a key to user satisfaction. The parks should be maintained at a level equal to or better than their current level of upkeep. This will also mean regularly scheduled investment in and renovation of parks when facilities are worn out or no longer meet public needs.

Trails, Lanes, and Routes

New Ulm's five-mile long trail along the river from 20th South St. to Boundary Street/North Broadway is a very popular trail. However, it lacks connections to the community and does not allow a loop ride, walk, run, or in-line skate. The New Ulm Trail Plan calls for expanding the trail network to create a large loop trail around the City and to build on State plans for trail along the Minnesota River.

Existing and proposed trail alignments are shown on Figure 5-3 (Park and Trail Plan). The trail plan is designed to connect neighborhoods, parks, schools and commercial areas. The Trail Plan includes plans for a State trail within the Minnesota River corridor and a loop trail around the city. Trail connections to and within Flandrau State Park are a key element of the trail plan. There are some constrained and concerned areas within the park that would be affected by a new paved trail. MnDNR staff expressed

concerns about the proposed trail alignment. The exact alignment, design and resource protection measures on the section of trail in the State Park needs to be defined in partnership with the MnDNR. The MnDNR should acknowledge the urban relationship and recreational role of Flandrau and welcome non-motorized access to the park in a sustainable and resource friendly manner. It seems logical that a State trail and the city trail system would provide trail access to a major recreation destination like Flandrau State Park.

The New Ulm Park and Trail Plan emphasizes trails separated from the road surface, but includes use of signed on-street bike routes in key areas where a separated trail is not feasible and where a bike route is a good solution for bicycle circulation.

Natural Resources

Wetlands – Wetlands are important to natural water recharge areas and diverse habitats. The edges of wetlands should be buffered by natural vegetation. Boardwalks and sensitively designed trails can bring people into wetland areas to experience wildlife and aquatic plants. Protection and management of wetlands (i.e., to prevent siltation) is important to long-term health.

Floodplain – The Minnesota and Cottonwood Rivers can have large seasonal and storm event floods extend well beyond the normal water level. These floodplain areas should be protected from development and can be pleasing recreation and open space lands. Trails, canoe and boat

launches can provide access and recreation opportunities.

Tree Preservation – New Ulm's urban tree canopy and natural woodlands are great assets to the community. They provide beauty, shade, wind protection and wildlife habitat. Woodlands should be protected from clear cutting through policy or ordinance in order to help preserve the wooded character of the city and the neighborhoods. Tree planting should occur when the character of a development site is materially changed.

Invasive Species Management

– New Ulm like many Minnesota communities is affected by invasive species such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, Canadian thistle, and others. A long-term focused management strategy should be put in place. The first step is to identify threatened high quality natural areas and to address feasible removal on these key areas first. Removal can be time and labor intensive, so a volunteer program can sometimes be an effective tool to fight invasive species.

Bluffs – The New Ulm landscape is largely defined by its rivers and associated river bluffs. The bluffs provide unique views, interesting terrain and natural habitat. They also present challenges to movement, and have sensitive slopes and soils. Steep river bluffs should be protected and buffered from significant intrusion at the bluff top and toe of the bluff. Preserved bluff areas can be valuable open space and wildlife habitat.

Parks and Trails

Green Practices and Sustainability

The New Ulm Park Department can be a leader in sustainable practices in their role as stewards of the city's public lands. This can be achieved through such practices energy conserving and environmentally sensitive park design and the judicious use of pesticides and herbicides. The Parks Department can lead by example and also incorporate green practices, sustainable landscaping, wise water use into it's recreation programming. It can also promote walking and bicycling to encourage active healthy lifestyles and alternative forms of transportation.

Park Development, Expansion and Renovation

Un/Under-Developed Parks

Cottonwood River Beach Park has an informal parking area and water (canoe, kayak and inner tube) carry-in access to the Cottonwood River. The park can be improved (subject to flood plain regulations) through the gravel surfacing of the driveway and parking area, definition of the parking with bollard and the addition of interpretive signage and natural surface trails. Interpretive signage could display best management practices for floodplains, rivers and invasive species. The park name should be revised to remove "Beach" from the title, as there is no beach on the property (i.e. Cottonwood River Park).

Additional park land should be added to **Maplewood Park**. The park is fairly small and much of its land area is consumed by a storm water pond. The additional land will allow it to be developed to

serve a full range of neighborhood recreation activities.

Development of **Seventh North Park** will serve the recreation needs for the neighborhood located north of CR 27 and west of Highland Avenue.

Fifth North Mini-Park should receive consideration for a small playground and mini-shelter.

Lakeside Park is a 1.5 acre undeveloped parcel within the Lakeside Village subdivision. The park land is not located on the lake. Rather than develop this property, a recommendation is to acquire 4-7 acres of new parkland on the north side of the lake and construct a neighborhood park there with lake access. This will mean that land will be needed from the Lakeside subdivision and from the property to the north of the subdivision. The land to the north can be acquired and the new park constructed when that property develops. The existing 1.5 acre Lakeside Park parcel could be sold as residential lots to help pay for new parkland acquisition and development.

South German Park is a sloped open turf area. The park land is used for winter sledding. The north part of the park land could be converted to an off-leash dog area through the addition of fencing and access gates without affecting the sledding hill.

South Market Park is an undeveloped wooded area. Nature trails could be added to the area and the woodlands could be thinned to open up the under story to create

an urban forest park. Additionally, some neighborhood park amenities could be added from the park unit plan.

Park Renovation

One challenge of an extensive park system, like New Ulm's, is maintaining the quality of existing investments and undertaking renovations, as needed. A step to implement this Park and Trail Plan would be the creation and use of a capital improvement plan (CIP) and renovation schedule for every park in the city system.

A particular renovation/conversion need has been identified at **Mueller Park Soccer Field**. This field has been deemed unusable for the soccer programs, primarily due to the distant location from parking. A limited number of new parking spaces could be constructed close to the field just west of the railroad underpass, but it appears that there is only room for approximately 10-15 spaces. An option is to convert the field into an off leash dog area. The conversion would require the addition of fencing and the 10-15 new parking spaces. Off leash dog parks are a very popular recreation facilities and this location would likely get a fair amount of use.

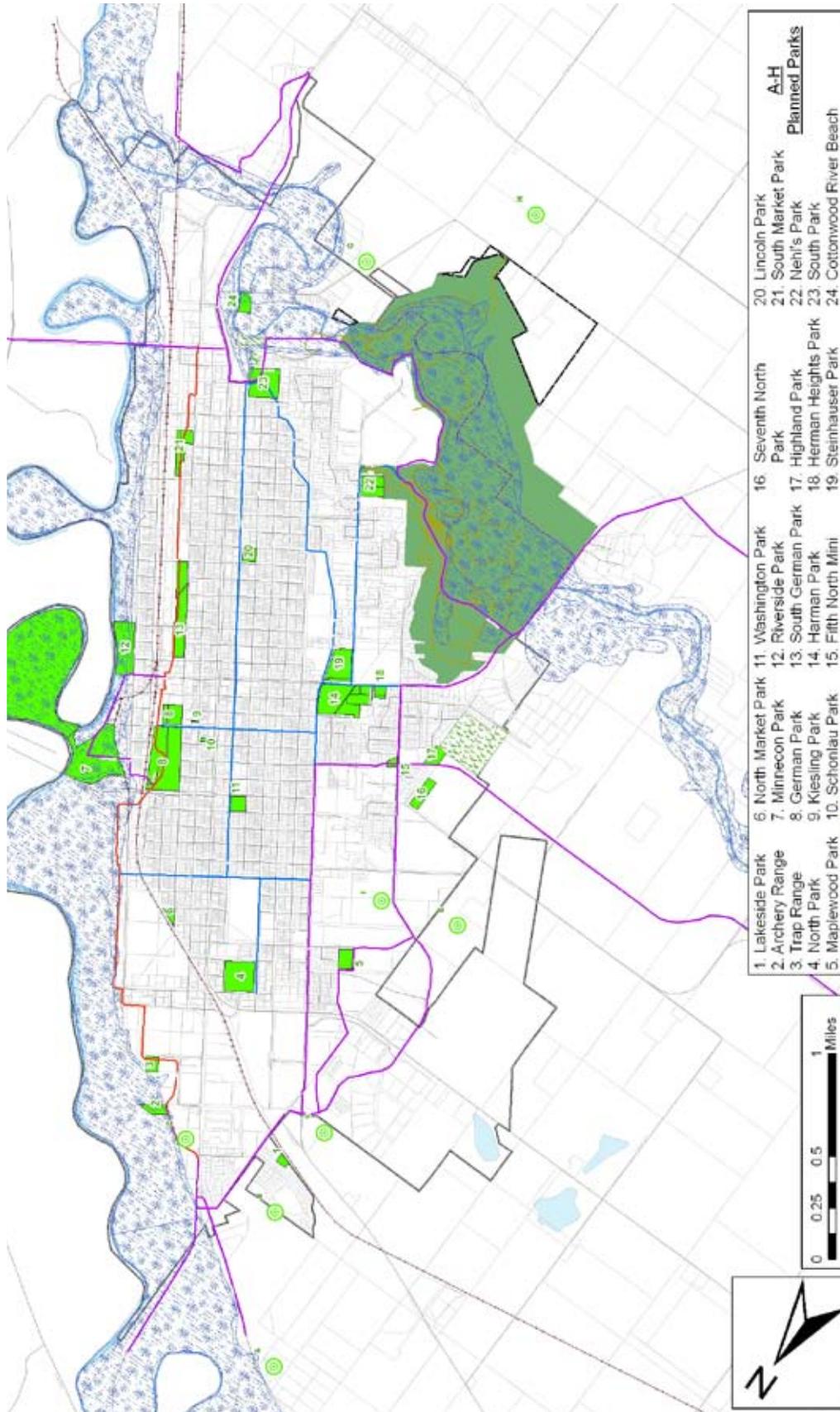
New Parks

The need for new parkland is divided into two categories: community athletic and neighborhood parks.

Airport Community Athletic Park

The City lacks a major athletic park. Most communities have a larger park (25+ acres) with enough ball

Figure 5-3: Park and Trail Plan



Parks and Trails

fields to hold baseball/softball or soccer tournaments. New Ulm's largest active park - Johnson Park is 17 acres, contains a baseball and football field used primarily for High School sports. MLC soccer fields currently provide space for city recreation use. Since these fields are privately owned there is no long-term assurance of continued public access. A new community athletic park – Airport Park is proposed to meet the current and future athletic needs. The scope and facility mix of the park needs to be defined. It should be approximately 50 acres and be planned for lighted athletic field use. Acquiring the land now will assure flexibility for the future. Initially, the park land can be graded and seeded to a level surface for field sports and community gatherings. Further recreation development can occur over time as funding allows and as needs are refined.

Concentration of active athletics at Airport Park will allow certain smaller community parks to focus on serving neighborhood recreation and/or a specialized community role. For example, some ball fields at Harman Park could be eliminated and the park could focus on being a neighborhood park and a community winter sports hub with a sliding hill, rope /conveyor tow, snowmaking to augment the ice skating.

New Neighborhood Parks

The New Ulm Park Plan envisions seven new neighborhood parks to serve existing underserved areas and new residential growth areas. The park search areas and service

areas are shown on Figure 5-2 (Park Service Areas) and Figure 5-3 (Park and Trail Plan). The proposed parks are described below. The letter identifier (A, B, etc.) refers to planned parks shown in Figure 5-3.

A. A new neighborhood park will be needed in the **KC Road area** as residential growth occurs. This is likely to be a long-range need (+20 years).

B. A new park should be acquired in the **Lakeside Village** subdivision along the north edge of the lake. This park would serve this property and the future growth area to the north and provide needed lake front recreation access. The existing 1.5 acre undeveloped park in Lakeside could be sold when this replacement parkland is acquired.

C. A new park will be needed near **North Highland Avenue and North Garden Street/CSAH 29** to serve the merging senior housing neighborhood. This park may not need active ball field space.

D. A new park adjoining the existing bike trail and along the extreme end of **North Broadway** would serve the existing and future neighborhood area. This property is already owned by the City.

E. The concept for the **Airport Athletic Park** was discussed earlier in this section.

F. New park is needed to serve the neighborhood near **Oak Street and North Highland Avenue**.

G. A new neighborhood park in the hilltop area of **Cottonwood Street**

to serve the upper and lower Cottonwood areas.

H. A long-term (+20 year) need is a future park **south of Flandrau State Park and the extension of Cottonwood Street** to serve anticipated residential growth.

Recreation Facilities

New Ulm has an excellent range of indoor recreation facilities and the city functions as a regional recreation hub. There is continued interest in expanded facilities and services.

Improvements to the Recreation Center and Vogel Arena are under consideration as future initiatives. An elevated walking track, a gym addition, a competitive swimming pool, teen center, auditorium, indoor playground and an indoor aquatics water park have all received public interest. Indoor facilities can be costly to build and operate. It is important to consider the amount of potential use, the benefit to the community, the facility construction cost and the life cycle cost when evaluating these improvements and additions. The long winter season and growing participation by seniors and others in indoor recreation heightens interest in additional indoor facilities. A market and project feasibility analysis is warranted for major expansion projects.

Implementation Strategy

The New Ulm Park and Recreation system has an estimated value of approximate \$45 million (2007 dollars). It is important to protect that value through maintenance, replacement and enhancement. The following strategies are proposed in order to assist in the implementation of the park and trail system recommendations contained in this plan. Strategies are listed for each Park and Trail Goal.

Strategy 1. Ensure that residents in each neighborhood have easy access to a park.

High quality neighborhood parks are the backbone of the city park system. Convenient access to their recreation, open space and green space is a vital aspect of life in New Ulm. Parks are often the focal element of neighborhoods and contribute to the development of both community and personal health.

1. Acquire land for parks in emerging neighborhoods by direct purchase and through dedication at the time of platting prior to or concurrent with private development. New park lands should be acquired based on the approximate locations shown on the Land Use Plan and Park and Trail Plan.

2. Continue to build new sidewalk and trail systems to provide access to and between parks and public facilities.

3. Further develop and enhance German, South German, Kiesling and Schonlau Parks to strengthen the image of the downtown area.

4. Continue to share facilities with local school systems to improve efficiency and avoid duplication of programs and facilities by either group.

Strategy 2. Provide a range of community-scale and neighborhood-scale activities through the overall park system.

Larger parks and recreation facilities **build community** by providing places and experiences for all ages and abilities. Sense of community and belonging are important to quality of life. The events, festivals, tournaments, celebrations and gatherings (large and small) that occur in parks can connect people to each other, to the community and to the land.

1. Acquire a major new community park site (approx. 50+ acres) near the Airport for baseball, softball, soccer and other large open space community uses. Park land will likely need to be acquired by outright purchase, not through piecemeal dedication of land. Challenge community groups to participate in the funding of park facilities.

2. Increase emphasis on nature preservation and passive recreation. Add and build more picnicking, sitting, scenic vista, nature study areas and trails.

3. Continue emphasis on year round outdoor activities. Consider portions of Harman Park for creation of a winter sports activity area.

4. Continue to build a system of interconnected trails and sidewalks through the City and nearby river

valleys for pedestrians and bicyclists.

5. Build a loop trail system around the city according to the New Ulm Park and Trail Plan - Figure 5-3.

6. Add trail connections to key parks and city destinations. Supplement the off-street trails with designated signed bike routes.

7. Install sidewalks along both sides of all residential, collector and arterial level commercial streets. Sidewalks along local and collector streets shall be built at the expense of the land developer unless the street is built as a municipal project, in which case the City will build them and assess the cost as part of the overall project.

8. Encourage Nicollet and Brown Counties to build paved shoulders along all of their roads outside the City.

9. Work to improve access to Flandrau State Park. Work in a partnership with all stakeholders in a supportive manner to respect the mission of both Flandrau State Park and the City while balancing recreation, visitor needs and natural resources. Plan and cooperate so recreational facilities are not duplicated between Flandrau State Park and the City.

Strategy 3. Use public regulation or land ownership to protect special natural features, but not at the expense of the neighborhood park system.

Green and sustainable parks, spaces and facilities are a community value. It should also include

increased attention of natural resource protection (bluffs, trees, etc.) and management (particularly invasive species).

1. Continue to protect, through its zoning powers, a system of open space in river floodplains and strengthen wetland, bluff and tree protection regulations.

2. Acquire additional land along both the Minnesota and Cottonwood Rivers for trails and passive recreation.

Strategy 4. Maintain high quality park facilities in an efficient manner.

Clean, safe and attractive parks and recreation facilities are a fundamental element of a successful community. Emphasis should be placed on park and facility maintenance and improvement that should include a systematic replacement plan and budget for maintaining, improving and enhancing parks and recreation facilities.

1. Continue to emphasize the important role of the Park and Recreation System as necessary elements in the quality of residential and commercial development, personal health, community building, public fiscal health and private economic development.

2. Encourage citizen participation in all stages of the planning and design of parks.

3. Continue cooperative relationship with New Ulm School Systems, and local civic organizations in the planning, design and funding

of park system improvements and recreation programs.

4. Parks should be attractive and reflect the German heritage of the community. Emphasis will continue to be placed on having parks that are clean, neat and well maintained. The appearance of the parks will be improved through landscaping and signage.

5. Consider the needs of an aging population and the physically disabled when designing park facilities by following the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

6. The Park and Recreation Commission will be given an opportunity to review and comment on all major subdivisions prior to Planning Commission approval.

7. Parks may be used as transitional land uses between types of development that are not complementary such as single-housing and commercial development.

8. Use the Park and Trail Plan standards and recommendations to help decision making on park, trail and recreation projects and acquisitions.

9. Keep the Park and Trail chapter of the Comprehensive Plan fresh. Review and update the New Ulm Park and Trail chapter of the Comprehensive Plan on a periodic basis. Annually prepare and update a five-year capital improvements plan that lists proposed projects to be completed within the subsequent five years, based upon a review of the system needs in conjunction with the plan goals, objectives and policies.

Funding Options

Funding for parks and recreation can sometimes be viewed as an after thought or a frill. New Ulm has a rich heritage and was founded with parks going back to the original plat for the City in 1858. The vision of those City founders and commitment to recreation and nature continue to today and has served the City well; through quality neighborhoods, an attractive downtown, and strong tourism.

It is vital that the commitment to fund the upkeep, renovation and development of parks and trails continue. Tired or poorly maintained public spaces can have a negative ripple affect upon private property upkeep, livability and crime. New Ulm residents highly value the quality maintenance of their parks and expect continued improvement in this area. They also value trails, recreation and connections a loop trail system will bring.

Park Dedication

The use of park dedication requirements is essential to achieving the City's plans and goals for parks, trails and open space. The experience of New Ulm and other cities clearly demonstrates a nexus between the development of land and the need for the municipal park system. The development of land for residential purposes increases the demands for parks, trails and recreational facilities in New Ulm. The development of land also creates opportunities to preserve open space and natural resources. State Law (Minnesota Statutes, Section 462.358, Subdivision 2b) authorizes

Parks and Trails

the City to require the dedication of land for the purposes of this plan as part of the subdivision and platting of property.

The City has adopted an ordinance that establishes regulations for the use of park dedication. This ordinance should be reviewed from time-to-time to ensure consistency with State Law and the Comprehensive Plan.

Among other things, the ordinance should set the standards for the amount of dedication from each subdivision. As a general rule, the Comprehensive Plan anticipates the need for twelve (12) acres of land for every 1,000 residents in a development. This standard may vary over time with changes in the demands from new development and the needs of the park system.

Given the plan for the park system and the nature of development in New Ulm, not every subdivision will contain the site of a new park or natural features to be preserved. Each proposed plat should be carefully reviewed to determine if the subdivision contains land that should be dedicated to implement the park plan. If the dedication of land does not satisfy the requirements of the park dedication ordinance, then the City should receive a cash payment in lieu of dedication.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes a system of neighborhood and community oriented facilities. Monies received from payments in lieu of dedication shall be used pursuant to the park plan to meet the needs of the park system. The demands on the park system from new development are not tied to physical proximity of a subdivision making dedication. New residents may also be served by the development of parks and trails and the preservation of open space in other parts of New Ulm.

Other Sources

The following funding sources are available for funding improvement of the parks system. There are also other funding sources not listed that may be available to the City.

Method	Description	Positives	Negatives
Special Assessments	Assess the costs to acquire, improve and equip parks, open space areas, playgrounds, and recreational facilities to benefited properties (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 429)	Ability to finance almost any type of park system improvement General obligation bonds can be issued if at least 20% of the costs are assessed. Other revenues, including property tax, can be used to pay costs not assessed	Assessment cannot exceed benefit received as measured by the increase in property value.
Housing Improvement Area	Special taxing district to fund improvements in areas of owned housing (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 428A)	Ability to finance any type of park system improvement Great flexibility in designing district boundaries and allocation of costs Revenues can be pledged to general obligation bonds used to finance the improvements	Untested approach – may be unforeseen legal issues Does not work for rental housing City must be petitioned by property owners to initiate process

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Special Service District	Special taxing district to fund improvements in commercial districts (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 428A)	<p>Ability to finance any type of park system improvement</p> <p>District can also be used to maintain the improvements</p> <p>Great flexibility in designing district boundaries and allocation of costs</p> <p>Revenues can be pledged to general obligation bonds used to finance the improvements</p>	<p>Service charge applies solely to commercial-industrial property (residential property <u>can</u> be in the district)</p> <p>City must be petitioned by property owners to initiate process</p>
Tax Abatement	Use the property valuation as the basis for an abatement (property tax) levy (Minnesota Statutes, sections 469.1812 to 469.1815)	<p>Ability to finance any type of park system improvement</p> <p>Could be used to reimburse for private park improvements</p> <p>Revenues can be pledged to general obligation bonds used to finance the improvements</p>	<p>Total abatement capacity of city is limited.</p> <p>Bond proceeds must be used for “public improvements that benefit the property” used as the basis for the abatement levy</p>
Recreational Facility Bonds	Acquire, lease, equip, or maintain land, buildings, and other rec. facilities, including, but without limitation, outdoor or indoor swimming pools, skating rinks and arenas, athletic fields, golf courses, marinas, concert halls, museums, and facilities for other kinds of athletic or cultural participation, contests, and exhibitions, together with related parking facilities (MN Statutes, section 471.191)	<p>Lease with nonprofit for operations</p> <p>Issue revenue bonds for acquisition and construction</p> <p>Levy a tax for any anticipated deficiency in the revenues available for such operation and maintenance</p>	<p>Bonds may not be general obligations unless approved by voters</p>
Voter Approved Bonds	General obligation bonds for any park related capital improvement Acceptance of bond referendum to be determined by voters in an election	Levy to repay debt not subject to any levy limitations	<p>Issuance must be approved by voters</p> <p>Amount of debt applies to statutory debt limit</p> <p>Tax to debt service based on market value</p>

Parks and Trails

Sales Tax	Special legislation authorizing local sales tax targeted at specific uses	Potential funding for any park, recreation and open space need Potential to pledge to general obligation bonds	Must be authorized by State Legislature Typically requires voter approval Typically time and use limited
Lease Purchase Financing	Lease any form of real or personal property	Use to finance the construction of facilities May be used to secure other obligations (i.e. HRA and EDA revenue bonds) that function as a “G.O. bond like” debt Levy to pay these bonds traditionally outside of debt limit	Applies to statutory debt limit Lease subject to annual appropriation of funds
State Grants - DNR/ LCMRR	State funds for natural resource, historic or recreation projects	Use for projects of regional or state significance	Limited funds and lots of competition for funds. Need legislative “champion” and sponsor. Requires local match.
Federal Grants – T-21, Safe Routes to School, Other	Federal funds for trail projects and enhancement to transportation projects.	Good source for trails, bikeway, pedestrian facilities	Must have transportation role. Requires some local match Limited and competitive funds Little or no funds for parks or recreation

Foundation Grants	Funding from foundations	Funding source for certain types of projects.	Limited and competitive fund availability Project must match foundation goals/role
General Funds – Tax Levy	Local property tax funds. Used to fund most local government operations, services and capital improvements.	Steady source of annual funds.	Funds are spread and allocated across the range of city functions and departments. Little opportunity for significant increases in funding.
Building Permit Surcharge	Fee added to building permit application	Steady revenue fund	Increase development costs No clear relationship to all permit activity

Parks and Trails

User Fee Increases	Fees collected from park and recreation users. Existing fees at pool, golf, ice arena, recreation programs, and adult sports. Associations collect youth fees to cover their expenses.	Users pay for participation/use.	Can discourage participation in recreation. Difficult to collect fees on some uses – trails, neighborhood parks, conservation areas, etc.
Franchise Fee	Fee attached typically to a utility bill.	Steady, on-going revenue source.	Need to prove the benefit of the fee.
Park Utility	An on-going fee placed on all properties for park upkeep and replacement. Similar to a storm water utility fee.	Steady, on-going revenue source.	
Park Endowment	Typically a significant donation from a donor or donors for parks. Interest (and funds) help pay for park improvements and/or programs.		
Park Foundation	Non-profit “friends” group set up to help procure funds and support for the park and recreation system.		
Long-term Lease	Lease of undeveloped park land for development		
Special Events (Fund raising)	Events designed to raise money for parks.		
Charitable Gambling	Proceeds from charitable gambling can flow to non-profit and public uses.		
Public/Private Partnerships	Concessions, sponsorships, naming rights, outsourcing/privatization, gifting, co-development.		
Public/Public Partnerships	Shared funding, use, development of facilities among cities, schools and other jurisdictions. Joint powers arrangement	Shared funding for projects.	Only works for certain types of community or sub-regional projects. “Turf” issues can arise over location and use.
Challenge Grants	Local government funds to match private or non-profit funds in a competitive manner	Leverages public monies.	Relies on initiative and funding from private and non-profit groups

Parks and Trails

Legacy Giving	Donation through wills and estates.	Allows supporters of New Ulm Parks to donate upon their death. Tax break for estate of donor.	Must reach supporters to get them to enable legacy donation.
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Capital Improvement Plan

As part of the implementation of the plan for parks, trails and recreation facilities the City should adopt a capital improvements plan. A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a five-year plan that is prepared annually and lists proposed projects that ought to be completed to address needs and deficiencies anticipated within the subsequent five years. That list should be based upon a review of the system facilities in conjunction with the Plan goals, objectives and policies, and anticipated growth and development. Projects are ranked in priority, based upon need and readiness for construction.