

CHAPTER 6
PARK / RECREATION / OPEN SPACE PLAN

PARK / RECREATION / OPEN SPACE PLAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

A strong park, recreation and open space system is a very important ingredient for providing a high quality of life for Chaska residents. While many socio-economic changes have taken place in recent years, the need for recreation/open space facilities conveniently accessible to Chaska residents has not changed. Indeed, increased leisure time and a greater awareness of maintaining good health has placed even more emphasis on recreation than in earlier years.

Changes in employment patterns are altering patterns of park/recreation use and are creating more demand at new times. Notable trends include a shorter workweek, flexible work hours, home offices, and two-income households. For example, use of parks during day hours by mothers with toddlers has decreased, but park use at day's end by young family groups has increased.

The Park/Recreation/Open Space Plan contained herein establishes standards for various types of parks and open spaces, compares existing facilities against these standards, projects future park needs, and identifies park lands and facilities needed to serve existing and future residents of Chaska.

II. PARK/RECREATION/OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a classification system for specific kinds of parks, recreation, and open space facilities. It addresses function, design, use, size, resource characteristics and preferred location.

The Metropolitan Council has adapted NRPA's classification system and included it in its *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The classification system contains thirteen components for local and regional recreational facilities ranging from the neighborhood level to the regional level, including trails.

In turn, Chaska has adapted the Metro Council's classification system to more closely reflect the City's unique development pattern and needs. **Table 6.1** identifies the thirteen classifications for park, recreation, and open space facilities, and also describes each classification according to its use, service area,

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size, site attributes, and site location. Two of the thirteen classifications are regional trails, which are addressed in Chapter 7 – Pedestrian Movement / Trails Plan. Seven of the eleven park types are located within Chaska, including the following:

- Mini-park
- Neighborhood park/playground
- Community playfield
- Community park
- County park
- Local linear park (open space)
- Special/community feature

No regional parks or park reserves are situated in Chaska.

The park classification system of **Table 6.1** serves as the basis for Chaska's Park/Recreation/Open Space System Plan. The system plan is intended as a guide for planning — not as an absolute requirement. Sometimes more than one component may occur within the same site such as neighborhood play facilities within a community park or playfield.

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TABLE 6.1: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES

Component	Use	Service Area	Site Size	Site Attributes	Site Location
LOCAL FACILITIES					
Mini-Park	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens	Less than ¼ mile radius	Less than one acre		May be in residential neighborhoods or commercial centers that currently lack convenient access to a neighborhood park / playground or as part of a planned residential development
Neighborhood Park / Playground	Area for active recreational facilities such as field games, play court games, crafts area, play apparatus area, skating, shelter, open play area	¼ to ½ mile radius (neighborhood)	3-15 acres	Physical geography suited for intense development	Easily accessible to neighborhood population by foot or bike; centrally located with safe and convenient walking and biking access; may be part of a Community Park or Playfield
Community Playfield	Area for active recreational facilities such as athletic fields for youth and adult league use, and could include neighborhood park uses	3 -5 neighborhood or whole community	25 – 50 acres	Physical geography suited for intense development	Easily accessible by motor vehicle; edge of neighborhood or in non-residential area
Community Park	Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking; could have some field and court games; could include neighborhood park uses	3 -5 neighborhood or whole community	25 – 50 acres	Affords natural features with varied physical landscape interest	Proximity to community facilities and natural resources
County Park	Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking; could have some field and court games	County	25 – 50 acres	Affords natural features with varied physical landscape interest	Proximity to community facilities and natural resources and/or where natural resource occurs
Conservancy Lands	Area of natural quality such as water-courses and wetlands which are preserved for environmental or aesthetic benefits to the community, and/or because of the negative environmental or economic effects of development on them	Community and County	Variable, based on extent of natural resources	Natural resources that merit preservation and would be negatively affected by development	Where natural resource occurs

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TABLE 6.1: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES

REGIONAL FACILITIES	<p>Regional Park</p> <p>Area of natural or ornamental quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses</p>	<p>3 – 5 communities *</p>	<p>200 – 500 acres (100 acre minimum)</p>	<p>Complete natural setting contiguous to water bodies or watercourses where possible</p>	<p>Where natural resource occurs – particularly water</p>
Regional Park Reserve	<p>Area of natural or ornamental quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, boating, camping, and trail uses</p>	<p>County, multi-county area</p>	<p>1000 + acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource envisioned for preservation</p>	<p>Diversity of unique resources, such as topography, lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna</p>	<p>Where natural resource occurs</p>
LOCAL OR REGIONAL FACILITY	<p>Special Feature</p> <p>Area that preserves, maintains and provides specialized or single-purpose recreational activities such as golf course, nature center, marina, zoo, conservatory, arboretum, display gardens, arena, gun club, downhill ski area, and sites of historic or archeological significance</p>		<p>Specific standard applicable to desired feature</p>	<p>Appropriate to particular special feature</p>	<p>Where most advantageous for the special feature and the overall park system</p>

III. EXISTING PARK/RECREATION/OPEN SPACE RESOURCES (DECEMBER 2008)

A. OVERVIEW

The City of Chaska contains a wide variety of parks, recreation and open space resources as summarized below.

- ◆ 32 municipal parks (289 acres)
 - Community parks
 - Community playfields
 - Neighborhood parks/playgrounds
 - Community features
 - Mini-parks
- ◆ Municipal golf courses: Chaska Town Course (278 acres) and Par 30 golf course (31 acres)
- ◆ Municipal ownership of extensive open space system focused on East Chaska Creek ravine, Minnesota River floodplain, and wetlands (1,100 acres)
- ◆ Carver County open space area around Courthouse Lake (7 acres)
- ◆ Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (130 acres in Chaska)
- ◆ Jonathan Association trails, tot lots, beach and tennis court area
- ◆ School District #112 joint City/School recreational use (86 acres)
- ◆ Hazeltine National Golf Course (private — 185 acres)

As noted in the Land Use section, approximately 37 percent of the developed land in the City is in or is committed to open space use. This land totals about 3,000 acres, which is almost five square miles. (See **Figure 6.1.**)

B. COMMUNITY PARKS

Chaska currently has five (5) community parks, which are briefly described below. A community park by definition has natural qualities such as a lake or

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bluff and serves in a passive role. Chaska's community parks are typically located adjacent to major natural features within the community and distributed around the community to provide community park facilities throughout the community.

1. Firemen's I Park
2. Schimelpfenig Park
3. Chaska Community Center
4. McKnight Park
5. Lake Bavaria Park

Firemen's I Park

Firemen's I Park is located in downtown Chaska, northwest of the intersection of Chestnut Street (Highway 41) and Chaska Boulevard (CSAH 61). Firemen's I Park, located on the south side of Firemen's Clayhole Lake, and Schimelpfenig Park, which is on the north side of the lake, together form one park but are described separately herein. The park serves as the primary family "active use" facility in the City. The swimming beach, shelter building, off shore fishing, and generous open space for play make it unique within the City's parks system.

Schimelpfenig Park

Schimelpfenig Park is located on the north side of Firemen's Clayhole Lake and the Minnesota River bluff. Schimelpfenig Park primarily provides a relatively removed park location for family type gatherings. The parking, shelter, open space, and close access to active opportunities at Firemen's I Park make it special within the City system.

The master plan for Schimelpfenig Park indicates the future addition of a trail connection around the north side of Firemen's Clayhole Lake and stabilization of the slope in this area. Acquisition of additional acreage on the bluff top should be considered to provide passive recreation space for residents. This bluff top site should incorporate minimal parking, usable open space, trail connection, and a rest area at the bluff overlook. Two options exist relative to this potential northern expansion:

- 1) Additional two to three acres to serve primarily as a bluff overview and rest area site, or
- 2) An additional five to 15 acres to serve as a Community Park type facility. As McKnight Park provides a primarily passive community park space for the northern portion of Chaska, an expanded Schimelpfenig Park would serve the southern portion of Chaska.

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The Schimelpfenig Park add-on concept offers an opportunity to complement an existing facility, and provides additional rationale for the proposed location of a future neighborhood park to serve existing and future residential areas north and south of Victoria Drive, west of T.H. 41.

Chaska Community Center

The Chaska Community Center has a relatively central geographic location within the community. It is located on the Minnesota River bluff top and is connected to the community's linear park/ravine system and its trails. This significant indoor recreation center, which was initially constructed in 1990, is recognized as a vital component of the City's parks system. It is a state-of-the-art facility within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

McKnight Park

McKnight Park serves as the City's primary passive park site, particularly for the northern portion of Chaska, and is located along Lake Jonathan. Trail access relative to the water and wooded areas makes this a popular park site. The park underwent significant development during the 1980's and 1990's.

Lake Bavaria Park

Lake Bavaria Park is located along the southwest edge of Lake Bavaria in the northwest portion of the community. It is the newest community park and was not yet developed in 2008. A master plan guides development of this park for primarily passive park uses as well as public access to Lake Bavaria.

C. COMMUNITY PLAYFIELDS

Chaska has four (4) City-owned community playfield complexes for organized league use plus three (3) joint use facilities owned by School District #112, which are briefly described below. Neighborhood playground facilities are provided in all of the City playfield complexes except Athletic Park.

1. Athletic Park
2. Community Park
3. Lions Park
4. Veterans Park

Athletic Park

Athletic Park presently serves as a regulation baseball facility for adult, Legion, Chaska High School, Southwest Christian High School, and Babe Ruth age

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baseball. The April 1992 master plan for Athletic Park addresses the expansion of the park with the City's acquisition of property west to the railroad line. The master plan also addresses additional parking for State baseball events, kiosk, and landscaping.

Potential improvements for Athletic Park include:

- ◆ Trailhead location for the City flood control recreation trail northerly to Firemen's II Park and easterly to Courthouse Lake Park; and
- ◆ Trailhead location for the adjacent USFWS Wildlife Refuge trail connecting to the City of Carver.

Community Park

Community Park serves as an important softball and baseball complex for adult and youth. As with all other municipal parks, it is attached to the City linear park system.

Lions Park

Lions Park has generally been considered an active recreation site accommodating softball, tennis, volleyball, baseball, soccer, and ice-skating enthusiasts.

The City also owns another 40 acres of relatively wetland open space directly north of Lions Park, which provides the opportunity for Lions Park to fill a void within the City park system. This acreage will serve as a nature and interpretive area for Chaska residents. This park will serve both community and neighborhood active and passive interests when fully developed.

Acquisition of property should be considered west of Crosstown Boulevard along and north of East Chaska Creek so as to provide a continuous park between Lions Park and the (Klein) Clayhole.

The City owns right-of-way for pedestrian access through natural ravines, which were acquired as part of the subdivision review process. Although difficult to construct and maintain, such park access trails are needed to provide a better connection with the adjacent Scenic/Valley View Additions to the west.

Veterans Park

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Veterans Park is the City's newest community playfield park and serves as a regulation-size youth baseball field to host primarily ages 13 & up. In addition, the community playfield will serve as a trailhead location.

School District #112 Joint Use Facilities

The City of Chaska and School District #112 have an agreement for joint use of baseball, softball, soccer fields, and tennis courts located on the Senior High School, Middle School, and Pioneer Ridge Freshman Center campuses. In effect, the Middle School campus, including its gyms and swimming pool, together with the adjacent Chaska Community Center can be considered a Community Playfield site. Likewise, the Senior High School campus can be considered an extension of Pioneer Park Playfield. Pioneer Park serves primarily as a community playfield site, similar to Community Park. Pioneer Park incorporates both ballfields with youth dimensions and separate ballfields with adult outfield dimensions. The joint use agreement between the City and School District allows large tournaments to be held by each entity in one location.

D. COMMUNITY FEATURES

Chaska has four parks that are considered unique community features, which are described below.

1. City Square
2. Winkel / Riverbend Park
3. Chaska Town Course
4. Par 30 Golf Course

City Square

This unique "town square" park in the center of historic downtown Chaska features a central gazebo/bandstand. It is primarily a passive use park, but is also used for special events such as River City Days and Taste of Chaska. It was renovated in the 1980s including extensive landscaping, pathways, sprinkling and gazebo reconstruction.

Winkel / Riverbend Park

In conjunction with the flood control project, the City of Chaska traded about six acres with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The City added USFWS land to Athletic Park and USFWS obtained the undeveloped west part of Winkel Park for its Chaska Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

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Although Winkel Park is quite small at three acres, it serves a community and regional function as a boat launch access to the Minnesota River outside the new levee. The park includes a small parking lot and the levee trail system, which was rerouted under the T.H. 41 bridge and through Winkel Park as part of the flood control project.

Riverbend Park is a one-acre passive use park that was created in conjunction with the flood control project and the Block 54 redevelopment project. It is located directly west of T.H. 41 on the new levee and a northerly earth fill at the levee elevation. Trail systems link this unique facility to the levee trail, to the downtown commercial area, to Winkel Park via a stairway down the levee, and to the adjacent Riverbend Hotel through its outdoor plaza. Riverbend Park's strongest feature is the panoramic view afforded of the Minnesota River and attendant woodland at a point where the river makes a sharp turn on its way northeasterly to its junction with the Minnesota River at Fort Snelling. A variety of seating/ observation areas are available and a large raised central green area is available for private and public functions.

Chaska Town Course

Designed by renowned golf course architect Arthur Hills, Chaska Town Course sprawls over 285 acres of oak groves, open prairie, and marshlands. Lush bent grass covers the playing area from tee box to green. Chaska Town Course is owned and operated by the City of Chaska and was opened in 1997.

Par 30 Golf Course

The Chaska Par 30 is a small and challenging course designed by Robert Trent Jones. The course opened for play in 1971 and is located on Hazeltine Boulevard near Lake Hazeltine. The bent grass greens of the course are average sized. The bluegrass fairways are wide. Water hazards come into play on 5 holes, and there are 15 sand bunkers on the course. The Par 30 is a great course for beginning golfers or for experienced players looking to challenge their short game.

E. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Chaska currently has 15 neighborhood parks, which are briefly described below. Metropolitan Council bases its planning criteria for neighborhood parks upon the traditional concept of a neighborhood as being approximately one square mile, served by a central park of from ten to 25 acres in size. Due to a variety of reasons, Chaska's neighborhoods vary greatly in size, configuration, and

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character. Because of road patterns and topographic/natural restraints, a large one square mile neighborhood does not exist in Chaska. In recognition of this non-traditional neighborhood development pattern, it appears that a somewhat smaller park to serve smaller neighborhoods, within closer walking distance, would be more in line with Chaska's needs. A park of three to 15 acres is used as a guideline for planning purposes as shown in **Table 6.1**.

At year-end 2008, Chaska contained 15 neighborhood parks, which serve a neighborhood as opposed to a community-wide function. They range in size from 0.5 to 14 acres. In addition, as stated earlier, five community park/playfields also contain a neighborhood facility, which is encouraged. Finally, Jonathan Association owns and maintains Autumn Woods neighborhood park and 14 play lots, which are accessible via neighborhood trail systems. Whereas some of Jonathan's play lots are located within areas not conveniently served by municipal parks, the City recognizes that potential inequity exists regarding location and/or financing of neighborhood parks in relation to some residential areas of Jonathan.

In addition to completing the development of existing neighborhood parks, the 2030 Park & Open Space System Plan map (**Figure 6.1**) designates four new neighborhood park facilities to serve growth areas in southwest Chaska as well as some underserved areas of downtown Chaska.

Chaska's existing neighborhood parks consist of the following:

1. Bavaria Hills Park
2. Bluff Park
3. Chevalle Park
4. Cortina Woods Park
5. Friendship Park
6. Griep Park
7. Highland Park
8. Kelzer Park
9. Meadow Park
10. Moers / Hammers Park
11. Riverview Park
12. Schalow Park
13. Shadow Woods Park
14. Town Course Park
15. Walden Park

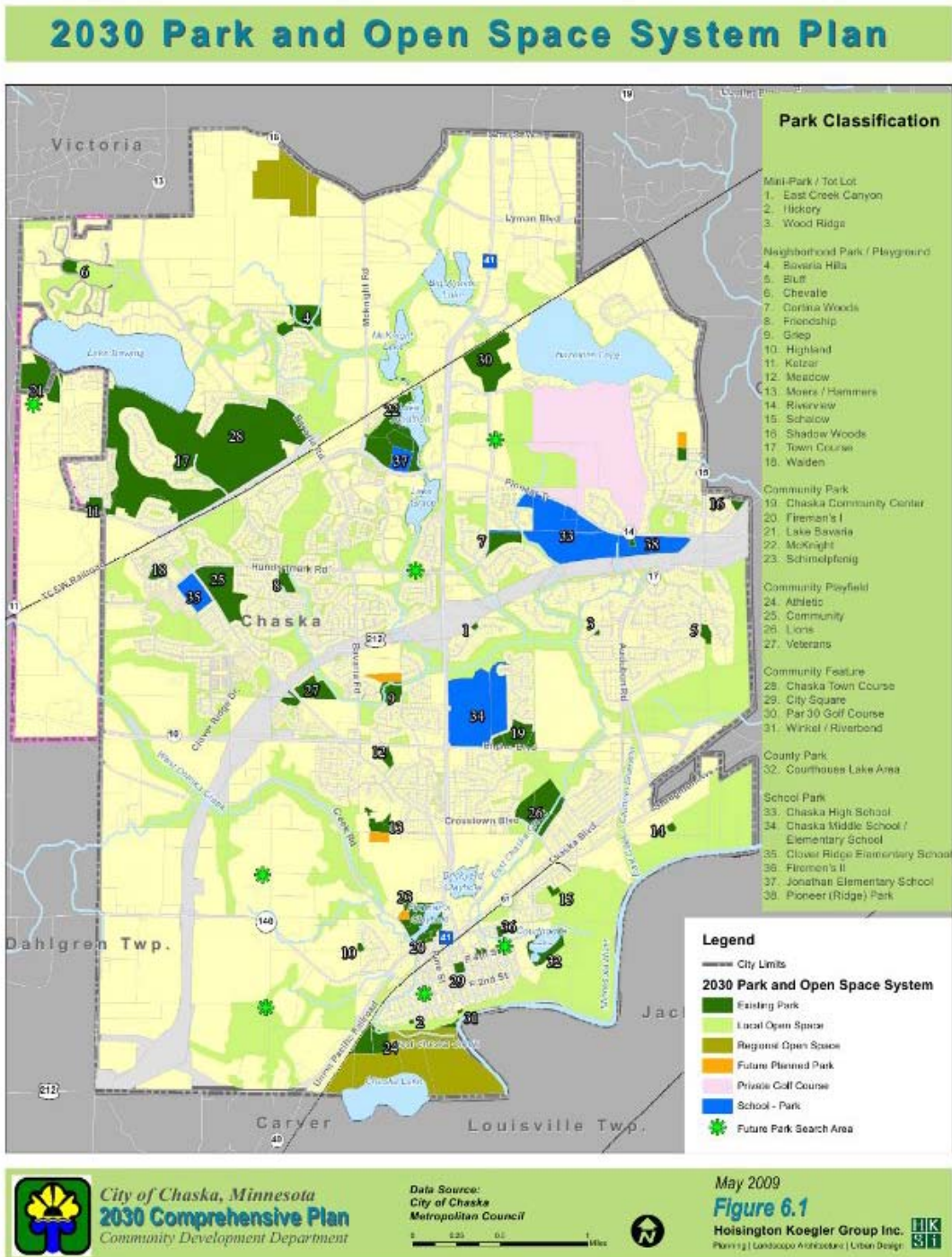
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Planned future neighborhood parks include the following:

1. Downtown East Future Neighborhood Park

Downtown Chaska east of T.H. 41 is underserved by neighborhood parks. City Square is located in the area but is designed as a passive use facility. The original two-acre Firemen's II Neighborhood Park was eliminated by courthouse expansion in the 1990's. It was replaced with a new one acre Firemen's II "mini-park" north of the Carver-Scott Co-op. While it is a valuable facility, its small size and isolated location limit its effective use and service area.

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- Figure 6.1 -
 (Click Here to View Full-Sized PDF)

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2. Downtown West Future Neighborhood Park

The portion of Downtown west of T.H. 41 is within the service area of Firemen's I Park but is separated from the facility by heavily traveled T.H. 212. The other three west side parks (Athletic, Winkel, and Riverbend) do not contain neighborhood park facilities, particularly for younger children. In 1998, the City acquired two vacant lots on Hickory Street, which are adjacent to the dike trail/open space system. The landward side of the levee features a significant linear open space that was acquired by the City as part of the flood control project.

These two lots, together with the levee linear open space, should be developed into a west side play area.

3. SW Chaska Growth Area - Future Neighborhood Parks

Figure 6.1 shows two future neighborhood parks to serve the future residential development in the SW Chaska growth area — one to serve the area north of C.R. 140, and the other to serve the south portion. Various options exist for combining one or both of the parks with other potential facilities:

- ◆ With a future community park;
- ◆ With a future community playfield;
- ◆ With a future elementary school;
- ◆ With existing upland wooded areas; and/or
- ◆ Two or more of the above.

Suffice it to say that careful planning of the SW Chaska annexation area is needed to ensure that this important future residential area is properly served with needed park/recreation school facilities conveniently accessible to the resident population. Efforts to combine facilities to maximize their attraction and minimize costs of development and maintenance should be pursued.

F. MINI-PARKS

Chaska currently has three (3) mini-parks, which are briefly described below. These City-owned mini-parks serve a limited area and typically contain play apparatus and open play space for small children.

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1. East Creek Canyon
2. Wood Ridge
3. Hickory

G. COMMUNITY LINEAR PARK / RAVINE SYSTEM

Chaska's community linear park / ravine system generally consists of the following components:

1. Minnesota River valley and levee
2. East Chaska Creek ravines
3. West Chaska Creek ravines
4. "Chain of Lakes" – Lakes Grace, Jonathan, McKnight, and Big Woods
5. University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
6. USFWS Minnesota River National Wildlife Refuge, Chaska Lake Unit
7. Seminary Fen / Assumption Creek
8. Chaska Greenbelt

IV. 2030 PARK & OPEN SPACE SYSTEM PLAN

Figure 6.1, 2030 Park & Open Space System Plan map, shows the City's planned future park/recreation/open space system, including existing park, recreation, and open space resources as of December 2008.

A. MUNICIPAL LOCAL PARKS

The City of Chaska owns 289 acres of "active" parkland as well as 333 acres of public golf course land. In addition to the "active" parkland, the City also owns another 1,100 acres of "passive" parkland for a grand total of about 1,340 acres (2.1 square miles) of municipal open space land. The "passive" land consists largely of the East Chaska Creek ravine/drainageway system, Minnesota River floodplain, and related wetlands, and contains nearly 20 miles of community "greenway" trails. About half of the 1,340 acres of municipal parkland was acquired with the assistance of state and federal grants during the early and mid-1970s.

The Chaska Park, Recreation, Natural Resource and Arts Commission is a volunteer body acting in an advisory capacity to the City Council. The Commission's jurisdiction includes parkland planning, development, and maintenance; the operation of recreational programs/activities; and the

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preservation and protection of the City's natural resources, i.e., water bodies, wetlands, creek/ravines, steep slopes, and significant woodlands.

The Chaska Park and Recreation Department serves as staff for the Park Commission. The Chaska Public Works Department provides maintenance services for the Park Department. The Park and Recreation Department works with numerous organizations in providing leisure/recreational services for Chaska residents. These groups include The Jonathan Association, Community Education, Youth Athletic Associations, Chamber of Commerce, School District #112, Jaycees, Lions, County Family Services, St. John's Church, League of Women Voters of Eastern Carver County, and Sno-Hawk Snowmobile Club.

Of the existing parkland, there is approximately 45 acres of undeveloped park distributed among Lake Bavaria community park, Griep and Moers/Hammers neighborhood parks.

In addition to the City's existing park land of 289 acres, excluding the two public golf courses, an additional 44 acres of park land are planned as expansions to existing parks, including the following: Lake Bavaria, Griep, Schimelpfenig, Moers/Hammers.

Future park search areas include Downtown East, Downtown West, Hazeltine Lake West, Neighborhood 3, Autumn Woods, and the SW Chaska growth area.

B. NON-MUNICIPAL PARKS

Within the City of Chaska, non-municipal local parks and open space facilities are provided by School District #112 as well as various homeowners' associations, most notably the Jonathan Homeowners' Association, which encompasses approximately 1/3 of Chaska's residential neighborhoods.

School-park facilities are specifically identified on the 2030 Parks & Open Space System Plan map. The numerous parks and open spaces under the jurisdiction of the Jonathan Homeowners' Association are represented on the map as local open space rather than parks since these parks are not public parks.

Private local parks and open spaces, such as private school playgrounds are not reflected as public parks.

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Hazeltine Golf Course is identified specifically as a private golf course use, whereas, the Chaska Town Course and Par 30 Golf Course are designated as parks since they are publicly owned.

C. FEDERAL AND STATE PARKS

Federal and State legislation designates most of the Minnesota River floodplain from Fort Snelling to Belle Plaine as either the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) or the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the State Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) are the primary agencies engaged in planning, acquiring, operating, and maintaining the area.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge consists of eight (8) wildlife refuge units totaling approximately 13,500 acres. The Chaska Lake Unit is located in the extreme southwest part of Chaska, south of the levee and west of T.H. 41, and stretches south into the northeast part of the City of Carver. The unit is approximately 600 acres in size. The primary objective is to preserve and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat and to provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and education. The Chaska Lake Trail is a 1.7-mile trail that is accessed via a trailhead at Athletic Park in Chaska and connects to the riverfront park in Carver. Just to the south of the Chaska Lake Unit are the Louisville Swamp Unit (2,600 acres) and the Rapids Lake Unit (1,500 acres).

MN DNR is also acquiring wildlife refuge as well as park sites along the river lowlands as part of the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. In addition, DNR is developing a comprehensive system of trails from Fort Snelling to LeSueur. The north end of DNR's Carver Rapids Wayside recreation area is located directly south of Chaska across the Minnesota River. DNR has developed a horse, mountain bike and snowmobile trail from Chaska upriver to Belle Plaine. The northerly trailhead is on the east side of T.H. 41 about one half mile south of the Minnesota River/Chaska City limits.

DNR is also acquiring the Raquet wildlife refuge area north of the river and southwest of T.H. 212 and T.H. 169 in Chanhassen. Original DNR plans called for expansion of this refuge westerly into Chaska, but such acquisition has been abandoned due to existing incompatible development and multiple property owners.

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The above described State and Federal efforts to preserve the natural resources within the Minnesota River lowlands, and to provide complementary recreational opportunities therein, have many positive and long-term benefits to area communities and the region as a whole. The City of Chaska has worked closely with agency representatives to achieve mutual goals and will continue to do so in the future.

D. REGIONAL PARKS

There is no existing or proposed metropolitan regional parks located within the City of Chaska; however, two regional parks are located nearby the City.

Carver Regional Park Reserve is located about two miles northwest of Chaska in Victoria City and Laketown Township. The park contains 3,700 acres (5.8 square miles) and features boat launch, camping, picnicking, interpretive center and bike, horse, cross country ski and snowmobile trails. A swimming beach will be added in future. The park is owned and operated by the Three Rivers Park District.

Lake Minnewashta Regional Park is located 1.5 miles north of Chaska in Chanhassen. It contains 350 acres and features boat accesses, picnicking, swimming, a play area and trails. Future additions will include camping, a nature interpretive center and additional trails. The park is owned, operated and maintained by Carver County with facility funding from Metro Council.

A third regional park is proposed on the east side of Lake Waconia, about nine miles west of Chaska, where Carver County now operates a lake oriented eight-acre park. The County is working with Metro Council to expand the facility to at least 100 acres, which is the minimum size for a regional park. Facilities would include swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, play area, and camping. Both T.H. 5 and County Highway 30 need to be relocated to accommodate the expansion.

Although not formally designated a regional park or open space, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum is located directly adjacent to and north of Chaska in Chanhassen. The facility contains over 900 acres with about 50 acres of undeveloped property located in Chaska. It features over 5,000 species of plants as well as six miles of trails. It is open year-round and is operated and maintained by the University of Minnesota.

V. PARK LAND ANALYSIS

A widely used “rule of thumb” park standard suggests that a community should contain as a minimum, a “core” system of park lands with a total of 15 acres of developed park & recreation land for each 1,000 population. The size and amount of “adjunct” park lands will vary from city to city, but should be taken into account when considering a complete well-rounded system of parks, recreation and open space areas. Application of this standard to Chaska’s past, present and future population levels is calculated in **Table 6.2** below:

TABLE 6.2: CHASKA PARKS ACREAGE ANALYSIS

Year	Population	Existing Developed Park Acreage	Required Park Acreage	Excess / Deficient Acreage	2007 - 2030 Additional Acreage Needed
1980	8,300	82	125	-43	—
1991	11,650	161	175	-14	—
1998	15,800	255 *	237	22	—
2007	23,775	375 **	357	18	—
2010	24,749	375 **	371	4	—
2020	33,000	421 **	495	—	74
2030	35,700	421 **	536	—	115

* Includes 40 acres of school ballfields and playgrounds.

** Includes 86 acres of school ballfields and playgrounds.

According to this standard, Chaska exceeded the 15/1,000 standard in 2007 by 18 acres which includes 289 acres of City-owned developed park land together with 86 acres of joint use District #112 facilities, largely ballfields. This “rule of thumb” standard demonstrates only that the City currently slightly exceeds (5%) this general guideline for desirable developed “active” park/recreation land on a city-wide quantitative basis.

Looking out to the future, this quantitative analysis indicates that the City should add park land to the current park system as the community continues to grow in population. The City has identified five (5) specific parks that are planned for expansion in the future which total approximately 86 acres. The five (5) parks, which are also identified on the 2030 Park & Open Space System Plan, are Griep, Autumn Woods, Schimelpfenig, Moers/Hammers, and Lake Bavaria. In addition

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to these 86 acres of future planned park land, the City is projected to have a need for acquiring and developing 74 acres of park land by 2020 and 115 acres by 2030.

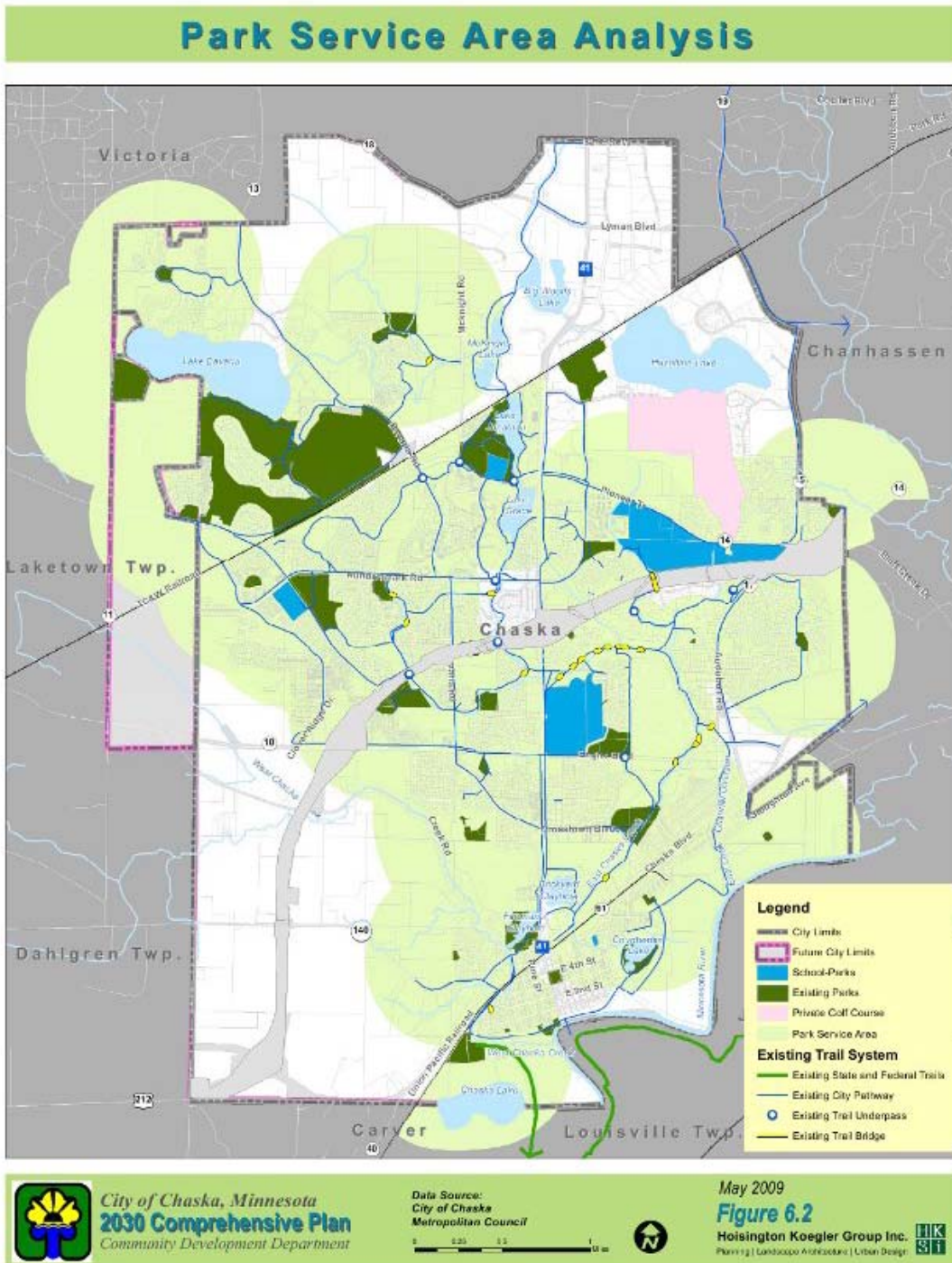
In addition to the above overall quantitative analysis, it is also beneficial to assess the various types of parks provided in the community in order to reveal potential deficiencies in the community's mix of parks. An indication of where deficiencies exist can be obtained by comparing existing parks by type, including the particular facilities at each park, to the park standards listed in **Table 6.1**.

Finally, a distribution analysis was conducted, which analyzes park service areas, to determine whether the community's parks are adequately distributed to provide active recreational facilities within an appropriate distance for all residents. The Park Service Area Analysis map (**Figure 6.2**) shows the service areas for all active city parks, including neighborhood parks/playgrounds, mini-parks, community parks, and community playfields. A desired service area of ½ mile radius was used for neighborhood parks/playgrounds and community parks with a ¼ mile radius used for mini-parks. This analysis reveals the following:

Neighborhood Parks/Playgrounds:

- ◆ Existing neighborhood parks or mini-parks are located within one half mile of the majority of residential areas. Access to neighborhood parks has been improved in recent years with the addition of the Schalow, Riverview, Moers/Hammers neighborhood parks, and the Hickory mini-park (west side of Downtown).
- ◆ Some neighborhoods should be provided with improved access to neighborhood park facilities, including the following areas:
 - Downtown Chaska;
 - Chaska Brickyard area (NE quadrant of Highway 41 & CSAH 61);
 - Neighborhood Three (quadrant northwest of Highway 41 & Highway 212), and possibly the western areas of Neighborhood Nine and Hammers Haven;
 - Hazeltine Lake (west and south sides of lake);
 - Autumn Woods.

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- Figure 6.2 -
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- ◆ Neighborhoods served by mini-parks rather than neighborhood parks/playgrounds should be considered for improved access to neighborhood park facilities when opportunities arise.
- ◆ Four (4) future neighborhood park search areas are identified to serve neighborhood park needs for developing areas to the year 2030 including the southwest growth area (formerly Chaska Township) and new parks to better serve the east and west portions of Downtown Chaska as redevelopment increases the downtown residential population.

Community Parks:

- ◆ All of the community parks, with the exception of the Chaska Community Center, are "natural resource based" parks with locations adjacent to or incorporating significant natural features such as lakes, woodlands, bluffs, wetlands, and the creek/ravine system.
- ◆ Community parks, based on the standards in **Table 6.1**, should be 25-100 acres in size. Additional land should be acquired for the Schimelpfenig (ideally on and above the Minnesota River bluff) and Lake Bavaria community parks to achieve this standard.
- ◆ Based on the access barriers created major highways, an additional community park site should be considered for the area north of new Highway 212 and west of Highway 41, potentially in conjunction with the existing school playfields.
- ◆ A new community park should be considered in the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township), potentially incorporating one of the significant upland wooded areas, which are undisturbed remnants of the former Big Woods region.

Community Playfields:

- ◆ The six (6) existing playfield complexes, including the four (4) community playfields and three (3) school playfields, are well located throughout the community to serve existing residential areas.

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- ◆ A new Community Playfield should be considered in the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township).

Other Facility Needs:

In addition to the traditional park/recreation facilities discussed above, a desire has also been expressed by various user groups for specialized recreational facilities/sites including dog parks, an outdoor swimming pool, and an off-road B.M.X. bike park. Whereas the Park/Open Space Plan map (**Figure 6.2**) does not specify sites for these activities, the Park and Recreation Department is giving serious consideration to accommodating them somewhere in the City.

In summary, Chaska park/recreation land deficiencies/future needs at year-end 2008 are:

- ◆ Overall developed park and recreation land exceeds the standard of 15 acres/1,000 persons by 18 acres.
- ◆ Whereas existing neighborhood parks are generally well located, several neighborhoods are not adequately served by a neighborhood park/playground due to 1) location outside of desired park service areas, 2) neighborhood park needs being met by a mini-park rather than a neighborhood park, and 3) underdevelopment of some existing neighborhood parks.
- ◆ Chaska is served fairly well by four (4) existing Community Playfields and three (3) school joint-use facilities at accessible locations. Some additional improvements to and site expansion of these playfields may be needed in the future.
- ◆ The five (5) existing "natural resource based" Community Parks are fairly well positioned throughout the community. Some parks should be expanded in size to meet community park standards and some need further development or redevelopment.
- ◆ A new Community Park, Community Playfield, and two (2) Neighborhood Parks should be considered within the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township).

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- ◆ Another 74 acres of land will be needed to meet the 15/1,000 standard in the year 2020 and 115 acres in the year 2030.
- ◆ Sites should be explored for more non-traditional recreation activities that have become popular in recent years such as specialized facilities/sites for dog parks, outdoor swimming pool, and off-road B.M.X. bike competition.

Thus, while approximately one third of the 2008 developed area in Chaska is permanent park/recreation/open space land, some of the existing parks need further development and/or expansion and one new park is needed to serve the existing 2008 residential area. Beyond that, new park acquisition and development to meet the year 2030 "active" park needs will be centered within the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township).

VI. PARK / OPEN SPACE POLICIES

The following policies shall apply to the acquisition, development and maintenance of park/recreation facilities within the City of Chaska. The Park & Open Space System Plan map (**Figure 6.1**) graphically reflects the policies listed below.

A. GENERAL

- 1) Utilize the Park/Recreation/Open Space classification system and standards presented in **Table 6.1** as a guide for acquisition, expansion, development and redevelopment of local public park/recreation/open space facilities.
- 2) Develop and maintain park master plans for all city parks and playfields to provide a tool for evaluating, planning, designing, and prioritizing needed improvements to the parks/recreation/open space system.

B. MINI-PARKS

- 1) In general, provide new mini-parks only as a part of Planned Residential Developments to be owned and maintained by home owners' associations or rental housing owners. In rare cases where a residential development lacks safe or convenient access to a neighborhood park, a City-owned mini-park may be considered.

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- 2) Explore opportunities to provide improved access to neighborhood parks/playgrounds for existing neighborhoods that rely on mini-parks for their neighborhood park uses.

C. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS / PLAYGROUNDS

- 1) Acquire and develop neighborhood parks in centralized locations according to standards listed in **Table 6.1** and the locations shown on **Figure 6.1**.
- 2) Where appropriate, develop neighborhood park facilities in conjunction with Community Parks and Community Playfields such as in Community Park and Lions Park.
- 3) Provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to neighborhood parks by means of a neighborhood pedestrian movement system to be designed as a part of each residential development.
- 4) Provide trail access between neighborhood parks and the Community Linear Park/Trails system.
- 5) In Greenbelt areas, an evaluation of potential needs for both active and passive neighborhood parks is required for new residential conservation/cluster development proposals.

D. COMMUNITY PLAYFIELDS

- 1) Plan for another Community Playfield in the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township).

E. COMMUNITY PARKS

- 1) Discuss with Carver County and the MN DNR the possibility of expanding the Courthouse Lake park area beyond the levee to the east and southeast within the floodplain, to create an extensive river-oriented park/conservancy/and nature interpretive area. (See **Figure 6.1**.)

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- 2) Explore opportunities to expand existing community parks that do not meet the desired size standard for community parks as established in **Table 6.1**.
- 3) Consider addition of a new Community Park in the SW Chaska growth area (formerly Chaska Township), potentially in conjunction with preservation of upland wooded remnants of the original Big Woods.

F. COMMUNITY LINEAR PARK / RAVINE SYSTEM

- 1) Preserve and protect the existing and future Community Linear Park/Ravine system in its natural state. It is not essential to own the ravine and attendant wetland system and bluff areas, as shown on the 2030 Parks & Open Space System Plan map, in order to protect them. Conservation/scenic easements and environmental ordinances are effective preservation devices.
- 2) Provide pedestrian accessibility to the Community Linear Park System from proximate residential areas as well as from appropriate commercial/industrial and public areas.
- 3) Continue to plan and install a trail system throughout the Community Linear Park System. Additional right-of-way will need to be acquired outright or by easement. The types of pathways and attendant development, such as rest areas and signs, should be complementary to the desired natural setting.
- 4) In Greenbelt areas, optimize preservation of natural resource corridors with any subdivision of land or change of use, particularly new residential conservation/cluster development proposals.
- 5) Support preservation of and connections to the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area and Trail within the lower Minnesota River Valley.
- 6) Support preservation of and connections to the Chaska Lake Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
- 7) Connect the Community Trail system with Regional, State and Federal trail systems.

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G. JOINT USE FACILITIES

- 1) Encourage the continued use of school district, Jonathan, County and other available recreational facilities by the general public.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the City's park standard of providing 15 acres per 1,000 population, the community is currently exceeding the standard by 18 acres in 2007 and projected to meet the standard in 2010 as well. The park land includes 289 acres of City-owned developed park land together with 86 acres of joint use District #112 facilities, largely ballfields.

As the City is projected to grow to a population of 33,000 in 2020 and 35,700 in 2030, the City is projected to have a need for acquiring and developing 74 acres of park land by 2020 and 115 acres by 2030. This additional park land is addition to the five (5) specific parks that the City has already identified for future expansion which total approximately 86 acres.

Most of the additional parkland can be acquired through the parkland dedication process at the time of subdivision review and approval. In the past, the City has relied heavily on State/Federal grants and park dedication fees to finance park development. In recent years, funding for grants has become quite scarce. In order to provide a desirable level of park facilities in the future, alternate funding sources such as a bond issue may be necessary.