

Chapter 7 - Parks, Open Space and Trails

Introduction

Hopkins is a fully developed community with an established park and open space system. From small parks like the Park Valley Playground to community parks like Central Park, public facilities offer diverse activities for residents of all ages. Since there is very little vacant land left in Hopkins, any existing park expansions or new park sites will result from redevelopment activities. It is not likely that redevelopment activities will result in any significant expansion of the existing park system.

Since park expansion and new park construction is not the focus of Hopkins' future park planning efforts, the emphasis will be placed on maintaining and enhancing the existing system. Part of the enhancement of the existing system will focus on expanding existing trail connections. Hopkins is a regional hub of recreational trails. In the future, it may be possible to expand local trails to provide better links to regional trails as well as to connect local park facilities and local points of interest.



Park, Open Space and Trail Goals

A set of overall goals provides a framework for park and trail initiatives in Hopkins. Pertaining to parks and trails, the City of Hopkins seeks to:

- Continue to provide a park and recreation system that satisfies the needs of a diverse population.
- Provide a park and recreation system that supports community identity and serves as a gathering space for community and neighborhood events.
- Provide local links to the regional trail system.
- Establish a trail system that interconnects the city and offers an alternative means of transportation.
- Emphasize maintenance and enhancement of existing parks.
- Continue to collaborate with the City of Minnetonka, the Hopkins School District, Three Rivers Park District and other agencies to provide recreational opportunities for Hopkins residents.
- Utilize the park system to protect natural resources.
- Promote active living and a healthier community through parks and recreational opportunities.

Classification System

Hopkins has a variety of parks that are components of the overall park system. To examine existing parks and to project future park needs, a uniform classification system is used in this plan. The following categories have been established:

- **Classification: Neighborhood Park**

Description: Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational focus of neighborhoods. Neighborhood parks emphasize informal active and passive recreation.

Location Criteria: ¼ to ½ mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.

Size Criteria: Usually between 5 and 10 acres.

- **Classification: School-Park**

Description: Combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks such as neighborhood, community, sports complex and special use.

Location Criteria: Determined by location of school district property.

Size Criteria: Variable

- **Classification: Community Park**

Description: Serves a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique open space.

Location Criteria: ½ mile to 3-mile distance and typically uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. Determined by the quality and usability of the site.

Size Criteria: Usually between 20 and 50 acres.

- **Classification: Special Use Park and Recreation Facilities**

Description: Special use park and recreation facilities may be privately or publicly owned. Private facilities can offer either indoor or outdoor recreation opportunities, usually on a membership or fee basis.

Location Criteria: Variable, depends on specific use.

Size Criteria: Variable

- **Classification: Natural Resource Areas**

Description: Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics.

Location Criteria: Depends on resource availability and opportunity.

Size Criteria: Variable

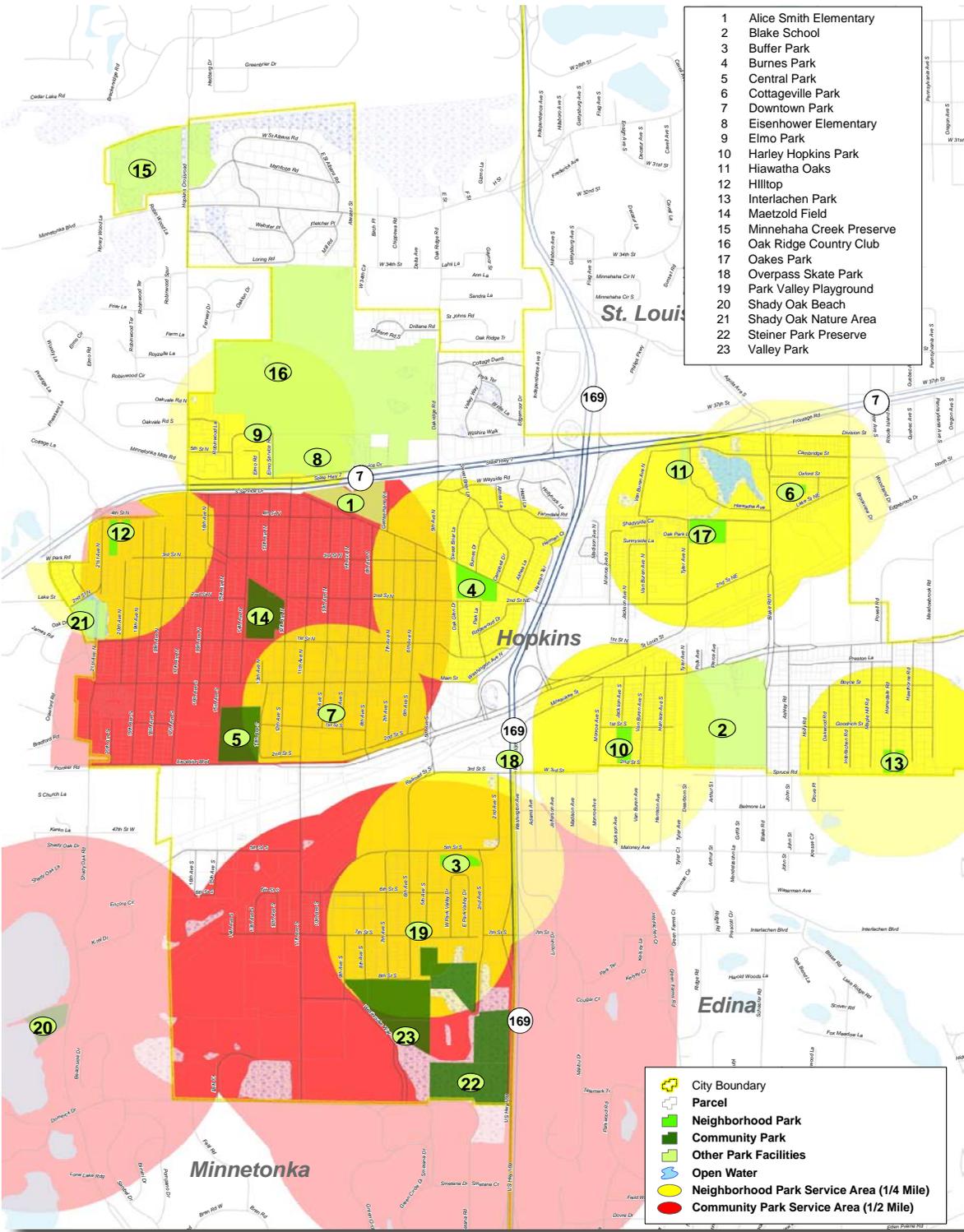
Parks and recreational facilities are typically utilized based on the distance residents are willing to travel to access amenities. The location criteria set above provides general guidelines on the intended service areas a park should serve. Using these guidelines can provide a useful tool when analyzing the existing park system and determining areas that are underserved. Figure 7.1 provides a visual assessment of Hopkins park system and its service areas. Service areas have been mapped for

Table 7.1 - Park System Inventory

Table One: Park System Inventory		Park Name	Size (Acres)	Park Type	Facilities																						
Park Name	Size (Acres)				Park Type	Play Areas	Ball Fields	Open Field	Tennis Area	Outdoor Open Skate	Beach/Shelter	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Soccer Fields	Outdoor Hockey Rink	Sitting Hill	Keatrons	Volleyball	Football Field	Indoor Ice Arena	Golf Course	Canoe Launch	Archery Range	Community Garden	Track & Field	State Board Park	Swimming Beach
Alice Smith Elementary School	9.82	School-Park	•	•																							
Blake School	47.94	School-Park	•	•																		•					
Buffer Park	2.39	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Burnes Park	6.32	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Central Park	12.32	Community Park	•	•																							
Cottageville Park	1.27	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Downtown Park	0.46	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Eisenhower Elementary School/Community Center	24.97	School-Park	•	•																							
Elmo Park	0.94	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Harley Hopkins Park	2.89	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Hiawatha Oaks*	1.83	Natural Resource Area																									
Hilltop Park	2.61	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Interlachen Park	2.16	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Maetzdorf Field	10.10	Community Park	•	•																							
Minnehaha Creek Preserve*	35.14	Special Use Facility																									
Oak Ridge Golf Course	153.02	Special Use Facility																									
Oakes Park	4.91	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Park Valley Playground	1.14	Neighborhood Park	•	•																							
Shady Oak Nature Area	6.03	Special Use Facility																									
Shady Oak Beach	5.44	Community Park	•	•																							
Slate Board Park	0.66	Special Use Facility																									
Steiner Park Preserve	33.34	Natural Resource Area																									
Valley Park	82.98	Community Park	•	•																							
TOTAL:	398.63		13	12	10	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

* Denotes a park that is currently undeveloped

Figure 7.1 - Service Area



neighborhood and community parks. Overall the service area analysis shows the City of Hopkins to be well served by its existing system. There are areas for improvement; however, these areas are not likely to see new park construction, unless they are through redevelopment initiatives.

Facility Inventory

Local recreational facilities are provided by a number of sources. Public parks are perhaps the most obvious of these sources; however, parks and recreational opportunities provided by other entities need to be considered in assessing the total park and recreation system. Other entities providing park and recreational opportunities in the Hopkins area include adjacent communities, schools and private facilities (see Table 7.1 - Park System Inventory).

Park System Needs

A tool for analyzing a local park system is the application of a population ratio standard. This standard is expressed as a number of acres of park land per one thousand people and is used to provide a general guideline for the assessment of existing and future park needs. For the Hopkins Comprehensive Plan, a standard of 7 acres of municipal park land per 1000 people has been used as a benchmark for planning purposes. This standard is consistent with a range of standards offered by the National Park and Recreation Association. Additionally, the overall standard has been broken down into the following components:

Neighborhood Park – 2 acres per 1000 people

Community Park/Sports Complex –5 acres per 1000 people

Standards have not been directly applied to the other classifications used in this plan including school parks, natural resource areas, trails, or private park and recreation facilities. Neighborhood and community park needs can be satisfied in combination with the development of school facilities provided that facilities are available to both groups. Trail corridors are very site specific and are not included in overall acreage calculations because they serve as links between various components

Application of these standards yields the following results:

Assessment of Future Need - 2010 (Population 17,900)					
Component	Existing Acres	Standard Acres	Per Population	Std. Applied to 2010 pop.	Net 2010
Park System	119.22	7	1000	125.3	-6.08
Neighborhood Park	25.09	2	1000	35.8	-10.71
Community Park	94.13	5	1000	89.5	4.63
School Park	-	-	-	-	-
Natural Resource Area	-	-	-	-	-
Private Park	-	-	-	-	-
Assessment of Future Need - 2020 (Population 18,600)					
Component	Existing Acres	Standard Acres	Per Population	Std. Applied to 2020 pop.	Net 2020
Park System	119.22	7	1000	130.2	-10.98
Neighborhood Park	25.09	2	1000	37.2	-12.11
Community Park	94.13	5	1000	93	1.13
School Park	-	-	-	-	-
Natural Resource Area	-	-	-	-	-
Private Park	-	-	-	-	-
Assessment of Future Need - 2030 (Population 18,900)					
Component	Existing Acres	Standard Acres	Per Population	Std. Applied to 2030 pop.	Net 2030
Park System	119.22	7	1000	132.3	-13.08
Neighborhood Park	25.09	2	1000	37.8	-12.71
Community Park	94.13	5	1000	94.5	-0.37
School Park	-	-	-	-	-
Natural Resource Area	-	-	-	-	-
Private Park	-	-	-	-	-

of the park system. Private facilities are also not included in the overall standard because in many cases, they do not have the same longevity enjoyed by public park uses.

Neighborhood Parks

Standard: 2 acres per 1000 people

Comments: Neighborhood parks are recreational facilities that are intended to serve populations residing within a ¼ - ½ mile radius of the site. These facilities typically contain open space areas, which accommodate uses such as field games, court games, play equipment and other uses. Although five acres is generally recognized as a minimum size for neighborhood parks, smaller tracts of land can be used due to natural conditions or in areas where larger land parcels are not available.

Existing Supply/Need: Hopkins currently has ten sites that are categorized as neighborhood parks ranging in size from .5 acres to 6 acres. Application of the recommended standard for neighborhood parks results in a deficiency of 12.11 and 12.71 acres in 2020 and 2030 respectively. The standards indicate the need for additional neighborhood park areas; however, closer examination of Hopkins reveals that the City probably does not need to add park areas to serve existing and future needs. Hopkins contains three public school sites that accommodate neighborhood park needs. These sites along with Alder Park in Edina provide convenient access for all residents. As shown in the service area analysis, almost every home in Hopkins is located within ½ mile of an existing neighborhood park. The only exception is the extreme northern portion of the community lying north of the Oak Ridge Golf Course. This area is completely developed, precluding the potential of adding an additional neighborhood park. If the golf course is ever redeveloped in the future, an additional park site could be acquired at that time. Residents in this area do have the opportunity to access bike routes and local trails via Minnetonka Blvd. that provide access to other local facilities within the City of Minnetonka.

Community Parks

Standard: 5 acres per 1000 people

Comments: Community parks are recreational facilities that serve as

focal points of community recreational systems. As such, they typically provide facilities that appeal to a broad spectrum of users. Activities may include athletic complexes, archery, fishing, nature study, hiking, picnicking and other uses. Community parks commonly contain facilities that are designed to appeal to both active and passive users within one park site. The location of community parks is usually established based on topography and other natural features and on accessibility via the local road network.

Existing Supply/Need: Hopkins currently has five sites that are classified as community parks. They include Central Park, Maetzold Field, Shady Oak Beach, Steiner Park Preserve* and Valley Park. Central Park and Maetzold Field consist predominately of athletic field areas. Both of these sites are used intensively for adult and youth sports programs.

Additionally, Central Park is the home of the Hopkins Pavilion that accommodates indoor ice hockey and indoor soccer. Steiner Park Preserve and Valley Park contain passive and natural areas in addition to active pursuits such as volleyball, basketball and archery. Shady Oak Beach, a facility run jointly with the City of Minnetonka, is an area that accommodates swimming, fishing, water oriented play areas and picnicking.

Application of the standard for community parks shows the city meeting needs through the year 2020. A small increase of 0.37 acres in community park land may be needed by 2030. Because of the developed nature of the community, adding community park land will be difficult; however, two future opportunities exist. The southern portion of Hopkins contains a landfill site that has been closed for a long time. At the present time the site has not been cleared by State agencies for any type of use. As a result, the property is fully fenced and it contains a methane collection system. At some point in the future, the property may become available for public use. When this occurs, the site could be developed as a community park. The second future opportunity involves the Minnehaha Creek Preserve Area that is owned by the City of Hopkins. If it becomes unnecessary to continue to use this property as a public works site, it could be incorporated as a new community park. At this time, the City has no plans to move the public works site. Overall the city is well served by community parks and should continue to meet future needs.



Shady Oak Beach

* *Steiner Park Preserve has not been formally named. The property was donated by the Steiner family to the City of Hopkins.*

Trails and Sidewalks



Bike Trail on Excelsior Boulevard

Hopkins has a traditional pattern of development that many suburban communities across the country today are trying to emulate. Established main street businesses, high quality neighborhoods, and an excellent park system are all linked by an efficient roadway network. The City also has a strong interest in making all of these areas accessible by non-vehicular means. Accordingly, the Parks, Open Space and Trails section of the plan outlines appropriate locations for trails and sidewalks that accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and in-line skating activities. The purpose of the system is to accommodate recreational pursuits but also to allow people to have access to employment and retail centers without having to use motorized vehicles.

Hopkins is a hub for the regional trail network. At the present time, the City is the location of the junction of the Lake Minnetonka LRT, North Cedar Lake, Cedar Lake and MN River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail. These trail segments follow 27 miles of abandoned railroad beds stretching from Hopkins to Victoria and from Hopkins to Chanhassen. A portion of the trail west of 11th Ave is surfaced with compacted crushed limestone. East of 11th Ave the trail is ten feet wide and paved asphalt. Grades along the trail are generally 5 percent or less, which makes them ideal for biking, walking and running. Three Rivers Park District operates the trail for spring, summer and fall usage. Currently, the park and ride lot along Excelsior Boulevard at 8th Avenue and the Depot Coffee House are used as trailheads. In 2006 both trailheads were improved and expanded.

These regional trails forms a spine that passes through Hopkins, affording easy access to adjacent communities and more distant points of interest.

Connectivity Opportunities

The City has identified a trail plan that accommodates movement throughout the community providing numerous links to the regional trail spine. The system includes a network of sidewalks and off-road bike/hike trails (see Figure 7.2: Park and Trail System). The system is shown on the map entitled Trail Plan.

Other local trails will also be added as road reconstruction projects occur in the future or through other trail improvement initiatives. Some of these major corridor initiatives have been currently discussed in plans. The following summary is intended to help frame anticipated connectivity opportunities and serve as a guide to making trail connection decisions.

Blake Road Corridor

Blake Road serves as a major north-south route on the east end of town. In the past decade, traffic volumes have increased and have posed pedestrian safety issues for the high density neighborhoods to the north and The Blake School to the south. At this time there are no scheduled improvements to address safety, access or mobility issues. The City will continue to coordinate with Hennepin County to address these issues.

Connectivity opportunities may present themselves as redevelopment occurs in light of the proposed LRT station and other redevelopment initiatives. These redevelopment initiatives are discussed further in the Land Use Chapter.

As a result of needed transportation improvements and possible redevelopment opportunities, numerous planning studies have been completed along the Blake Road corridor. Each study has taken into account at some level pedestrian and bicycle movement. The following planning documents can be used, in addition to the Comprehensive Plan, to evaluate connectivity opportunities and serve as a guide to planning decisions:

- Blake Road Corridor Community Assessment
- Blake Road Streetscape Concept
- East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study
- Hopkins Station Area Plan

The Blake Road corridor will continue to be evaluated as pedestrian and bicycle connections present themselves. In addition to evaluating the corridor’s needs, the City will continue to explore funding opportunities to assist with pedestrian and bicycle improvements. For instance, in 2008 the City applied for a Hennepin County TOD grant to construct pedestrian-ways along Blake Road north of Excelsior Boulevard.



The Depot Coffee House



Excelsior Boulevard

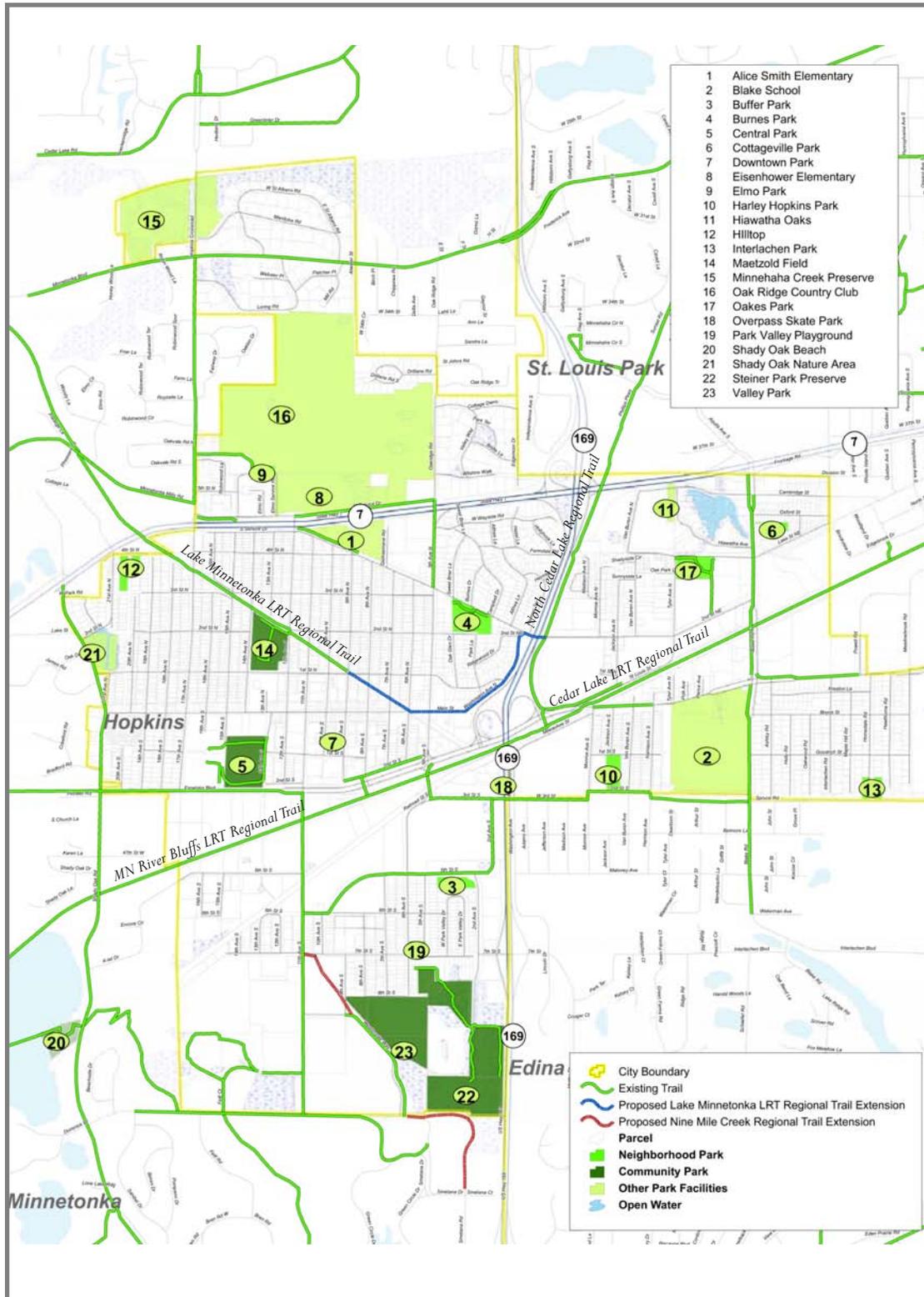


Figure 7.2 - Park and Trail System

Shady Oak Road

Hopkins has been collaborating with the City of Minnetonka and Hennepin County to address safety, mobility and access issues along the corridor. As part of these efforts a preferred roadway alignment has been proposed, along with a pedestrian and bicycle component. Roadway improvements may also provide the opportunity for redevelopment, which is discussed further in the Land Use chapter. Timing for roadway improvements is still being determined at this time. If and when roadway improvements occur and redevelopment opportunities present themselves, the appropriate pedestrian and bicycle components should be integrated.

Excelsior Boulevard

Hopkins has made significant reinvestments to the Excelsior Boulevard corridor. These investments have included boulevards, sidewalks, addressing pedestrian safety issues, city beautification improvements and directional signs. Improvements to the corridor can serve as a model for other pedestrian and bicycle improvements throughout the community.

Hopkins Station Area Plan

The Hopkins Station Area Plan by the IBI Group was completed in October of 2007. The purpose of the study was to develop station area plans for the Shady Oak Road, Downtown and Blake Light Rail Transit (LRT) stations that provide the first elements of a road map to guide future integrated transportation and land use planning initiatives with the city. In addition, this report provides connectivity elements to each station plan. Connectivity improvements to the area will need to continue to coordinate with LRT initiatives.

Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail

The proposed Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail, which would travel east through Edina and Richfield and would connect with the MN River Bluffs Regional Trail and the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail in Hopkins. Although a preferred regional trail alignment has not been master planned at this point, Three Rivers Park District has worked with the city and others to identify potential corridors in Hopkins.

Recently the City has been facilitating improvements to the creeks corridor that will address erosion issues, failing culverts and potential realignment of the creek. Efforts to improve the creek have been jointly discussed with the Three Rivers Park District. Improvements to the creek will also incorporate segments of the proposed regional trail. Infrastructure improvements to the creek are anticipated to occur in the fall of 2008, with trail work to follow in 2009.

Collaboration efforts will continue between the appropriate agencies to incorporate the proposed regional trail and creek corridor improvements.

Lake Minnetonka LRT Extension

The proposed Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail extension is intended to provide better connectivity to the northern portion of the North Cedar Lake Regional Trail. A current connection can be made by using existing sidewalks, but is not conducive to bikers. The proposed alignment would follow Mainstreet, Washington Avenue North and connect with the North Cedar Lake Regional Trail via 2nd Street NE.

Accommodation of bicycle movement along the route would require on-street bike lanes. The City has no plans at this time to integrate bicycle lanes along this route, but will continue to coordinate with Three Rivers Park District to address future regional connections in this part of the community.

Connecting the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail with the MN Regional Bluffs LRT and the Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail may also present itself along 8th Avenue South. Improvements to 8th Avenue South would likely occur in conjunction with redevelopment initiatives associated with the proposed Downtown LRT station. This connection may not be as direct as the proposed extension, but would provide a link between the two regional trails.

Emerging Trends

Hopkins demographics are changing with an aging baby boom population and growing ethnic populations. Regardless of age or ethnicities, there is a stronger desire today to be active; however, with changing demographics, recreational needs and the perception of recreational uses

have changed as well. In light of these changes, recent studies have begun to highlight future desires for recreational needs. One study in particular done by the University of Minnesota's Design Center for American Urban Landscape, titled "People and Urban Green Areas: Perception and Use (June 2003)" begins to highlight some of these emerging trends. These emerging trends are as follows:

Emerging Trends

- Green space that provides activity for teenagers.
- Seniors are more conscious of a healthier lifestyle and are seeking recreational amenities.
- Large gathering areas for cultural celebrations.
- More flexibility with fields to allow for diverse range of games (lacrosse, soccer, rugby, ultimate frisbee, cricket, etc.).
- Community gardens
- The need for ball fields is declining.
- Desire for more corridor-oriented amenities, such as paths and trails.

In addition to these emerging trends, there has been a stronger need to promote active and healthier communities. These initiatives are associated with numerous health concerns and have attracted national attention. One in particular has been the rise in obesity, which has been associated with heart disease and diabetes. Providing recreational opportunities and amenities can help promote a healthier and more active community.

This park plan has identified many of the assets Hopkins has to offer for its residents to live an active lifestyle. In Hopkins' case, the system is well built and residents are well served by its local parks and its trail access to the regional system. As improvements are made and park recommendations are considered, there needs to be an ongoing emphasis on providing for an active and healthier community.

Park and Trail Plan

Based on the analysis information presented previously, input from the public and the Hopkins Park Board and considering the directions provided by the goals that are contained in the plan, the following recommendations are offered:



Overpass Skate Park
(Highway 169 and Excelsior Boulevard)

1. Develop the landfill site and/or the Minnehaha Creek Preserve area as community parks if the opportunity presents itself. Both of these sites have the potential to serve as community park areas. If the landfill becomes available for public use, it could accommodate needed soccer fields and other active facilities. Should the Preserve area become available, it could be used for a combination of both passive and active pursuits. The area adjacent to the creek could be used passively for trails and natural habitat. Other areas of the site could accommodate active facilities such as soccer fields. The City should prepare master plans for both of these potential park sites in order to identify appropriate uses.
2. Work to establish a series of local trails that connect to the regional trails. Incorporate trails as part of all major road improvement projects such as Shady Oak Road, Blake Road and Excelsior Boulevard. Examine higher volume local roadways for potential off-street trail installation.
3. Upgrade and improve all park buildings to ensure ADA accessibility.
4. Coordinate improvements for the Shady Oak Nature Area in conjunction with the pending roadway improvements. Examine the feasibility of installing a trail around all or portions of the pond area.
5. Evaluate the use of open fields, ball fields and outdoor hockey rinks to determine opportunities for flexible uses, such as soccer and lacrosse.
6. Improve lighting and sidewalks to make areas more pedestrian friendly.
7. Continue to coordinate with the Three Rivers Park District to provide regional trail connections via Nine Mile Creek and the Lake Minnetonka LRT Extension.