CHAPTER 4: PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

East Bethel is home to several unique natural resource areas that form the basis of the parks, recreation, and open space plan. The City recognizes that its parks and trails system will be an important part of the community's life as it grows, and because of this, the City contracted with a consultant in 2007 to assist in the development of a Parks, Trails, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan. The plan recognized that the City has an abundance of high quality natural resources and the importance of creating a linked system of trails and greenways to connect the City's existing and future parks and greenways. The Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan is a tool the City will utilize during the planning process of its parks and open spaces.

COON LAKE

Coon Lake is used recreationally with numerous access points available for launching boats and swimming. There are a number of houses on the lake, and it is home to many forms of wildlife including loons, ducks, geese, fish, beavers, and turtles.

The lake totals 1,259.2 acres with a littoral area of 1,098.2 acres. The maximum depth is 27 feet with a water clarity depth of 6.75 feet. The substrates that make up the bottom of the lake include sand, silt, and muck with an abundant aquatic plant population at a growth depth of 14 feet.

Species in the lake include a variety of fish such as: walleye, black bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, bowfin (dogfish), brown bullhead, common carp, hybrid sunfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, pumpkinseed sunfish, white sucker, yellow bullhead, and yellow perch. As of 2003, bluegills made up the most abundant species in the lake and their sizes ranged from 2.6 inches to 7.4 inches in length. The second most populated species in 2003 was the northern pike; their lengths ranged from 12.5 inches to 34.4 inches.

The average water level in Coon Lake is 902.69 feet with the highest recorded level at 905.11 feet and the lowest at 900.27 feet. The last recorded reading was in October 2017, at which time the lakes' Ordinary High Water level was at 904.75 feet.

In a recent study, the lake was found to have an infestation of Eurasian Watermilfoil, an incredibly invasive species of aquatic plant which takes firm hold in lakes without well-established populations of native plants. It is easily transferred from one lake to another by boats and trailers, and once embedded in a lake, it is very difficult to eliminate. Eurasian Watermilfoil negatively impacts recreation on lakes due to the increased difficulty of swimming, boating, and fishing.

Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve

The three great ecosystems of North America meet in the vicinity of Cedar Creek – the western prairies, the northern evergreen forests, and the eastern deciduous forests. This makes Cedar Creek one of the ideal places in North America to preserve and study ecosystems. In addition, within its nine square miles, Cedar Creek contains rare ecosystems of conservational interest including spruce bogs, remnant northern cedar forests, and tracts of never-plowed savannas.

Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve was established in 1942 and ranks among the world's top ecological research sites. The science of modern ecosystem ecology was conceived and developed at a small glacial lake on Cedar Creek grounds in the 1940s. In the 1960s, Cedar Creek scientists started one of the earliest and longest-running experiments on fire and fire suppression in forest ecosystems. Radio tracking of animals was invented at Cedar Creek in the 1970s. Today Cedar Creek's experiments on biological diversity are world known, focusing on understanding natural ecosystems and the services they provide to humanity and to the planet.

Cedar Creek scientists, students, and staff are dedicated to understanding how our planet's ecosystems work and how those ecosystems are changing under human pressures. Through research, education, community involvement, conservation, and preservation, Cedar Creek strives to bridge the gap between science, community, and government.

Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve encompasses more than 3,000 acres and is the most significant open space in East Bethel. Considered to be the largest ecological research site in central Minnesota, it is home to natural habitats that represent the entire state, which is rare given its close proximity (roughly 30 minutes) from the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Owned and operated by the University of Minnesota, in cooperation with the Minnesota Academy of Science, scientists from around the world work at Cedar Creek. Accomplishments include the invention of radio collars used for animal tracking, as well as long-term research on prescribed burning for savannas, which began in the early 1960s. In addition, insects that inhabit Cedar Creek

comprise one of the most intensely studied ecological communities anywhere, beginning in the 1980s, and play a part in establishing modern ecological theory.

Ongoing projects include studies of biodiversity, which is the number of different species living in one particular area, including the tiniest bacteria to the largest animals and most massive trees. Additionally, there are studies of long-term nitrogen deposition, nutrient networks, the effects of burning patterns and frequency on vegetation, and chronosequencing, which is a set of forested sites that share similar attributes but are of different ages that is used to study the time-dependent development of a forest. Also, large-scale experiments at Cedar Creek examine how environmental changes are affecting the globe. Future scientific opportunities include understanding how urbanization will change native plant and animal communities, how bacteria and other microbes in the soil interact with plants we see above ground, how grazers maintain prairies and savannas, and how habitat restoration improves conditions for wildlife.

The City of East Bethel, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, has worked to provide hiking trails and cross-country ski trails through the Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve. The trails are identified in the Proposed Trail Plan map provided later in this chapter.

The County, the City, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) have developed a plan to combine this land and their respective resources to establish the *Sandhill Crane Natural Area.* The vision for this area focuses on low-impact recreation and public educational programs about this natural resource. An additional expanse of government-owned land (State and DNR), approximately 280 acres, is also located on the eastern edge of the City surrounding 224th Avenue.

Sandhill Crane Natural Area

The Sandhill Crane Natural Area is located in East Bethel incorporating Neds, Mud, and Deer Lakes. The property is managed cooperatively between the following agencies: the Minnesota DNR, the Minnesota PCA, the City of East Bethel, and Anoka County. The Sandhill Crane Natural Area contains some of the most unique and unspoiled wild areas in Anoka County, as well as a few rare plant and animal species.

Main features of the area include 533 acres of public land with natural walking paths, 1.75 miles of lake shore, and important environmental elements including wetlands/marsh, oak forest, and rare plant and animal species.

The Sandhill Crane Natural Area exists to enhance, protect, and conserve the natural resources of the area. The planning concept seeks to provide a balance between providing facilities and amenities without compromising its natural character or threatening its wild habitat. Restoration of damaged or faltered ecosystems is a priority for the managing agencies. Providing protection to adjacent private high quality natural resource land is also a priority. This is being accomplished through cooperative agreements, conservation easements, and other land preservation means.

The master plan for Sandhill Crane Natural Area (Figure 4-1) proposes to provide low impact recreational activities. Small trailhead parking areas, soft-surfaced recreational trails, observation areas for wildlife viewing, and low-impact picnic areas are planned as illustrated in Figure 4-2.

Sandhill Crane Natural Area Master Plan

FIGURE 4-1. SANDHILL CRANE NATURAL AREA MASTER PLAN

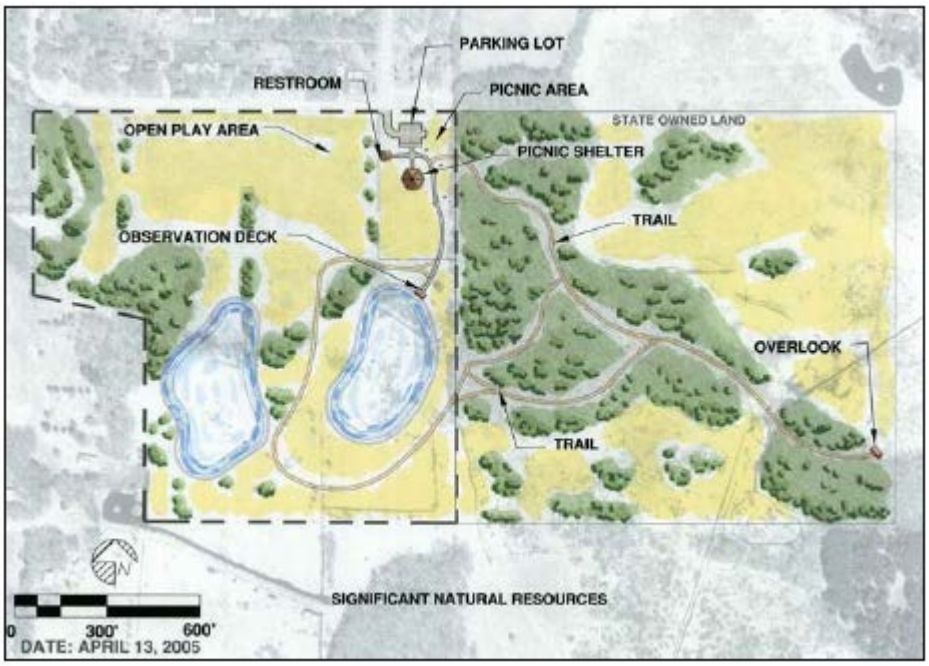

FIGURE 4-2. SANDHILL CRANE NATURAL AREA

Helen Allison Savanna Scientific and Natural Area

The Helen Allision Savanna Preserve is located adjacent to the southern most portion of the Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve in East Bethel. It encompasses approximately 86 acres and was formed more than 16,000 years ago by glacial meltwater, on what is now known as the Anoka Sandplain. In 1960, The Nature Conservancy acquired the land as a result of a substantial donation by Helen Allison Irvine in an effort to protect the dwindling acreage of oak savanna.

Ms. Irvine was known as Minnesota's "Grass Lady," and wrote *The Key to Grasses of Minnesota*, a reference work on 180 species of grasses found in the state. Starting in 1962, about a third of the savanna is burned each year on a rotating basis. University of Minnesota botanist Dr. Donald Lawrence initiated the recovery of the old field area by hand seeding prairie species in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1979, the preserve was designated a Scientific and Natural Area by the State of Minnesota, following a thorough inventory of species.

Considered today to be an excellent example of oak savanna, it was previously a community of conifers (mostly spruce), which covered much of the land after the glaciers retreated approximately 1,000 to 1,500 years ago. With a warmer climate, birch replaced spruce, and later oak supplanted birch. Today, less than 65,000 acres of oak savanna remain in the Midwest – two-tenths of one percent of the pre-settlement savanna.

Oak savanna, which consists of oak trees scattered over prairie vegetation, occupies 54 acres of the preserve. Other areas include dune blowouts, wet meadows, willow and aspen thickets, and old fields. Helen Allison Savanna Preserve also harbors more than 200 species of vascular plants. Dominant trees and shrubs in the preserve include northern pin oak, bur oak, American hazelnut, choke cherry, and quaking aspen. Dominant grasses include big and little bluestem, Indian grass, and porcupine grass. Other common species include lead plant, steeple bush, silky prairie clover, rough blazing star, asters, and goldenrods. Another interesting prairie species is the rhombic-petaled evening primrose, a species of special concern in Minnesota.

A survey of avian life discovered 45 species of birds, including hawks, warblers, and waterfowl. The seldom-seen lark sparrow also nests on the preserve. Amphibians and reptiles making their home at the Savanna include the eastern

tiger salamander, spring peeper, gray tree frog, wood frog, and bullsnake (or gopher snake).

Gordie Mikkelson Wildlife Management Area

Established officially in 1992, the Gordie Mikkelson Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is 816 acres; over 280 acres are located within the City of East Bethel. The WMA is primarily managed for woodland and wooded wetland wildlife like deer and turkey. It consists of 58 percent wetland and wooded wetland, 32 percent upland woodland, and 10 percent grassland/food plot. The Mikkelson WMA is located along the central, eastern border of East Bethel and the western border of Linwood Township.

Mikkelson WMA was acquired from a variety of previous landowners. A large portion was previously operated as a Camp Fire USA children's camp. Acquisition of new land is ongoing and the Mikkelson WMA is expected to continue to grow in size and species.

Hunting options include: deer, bear, small game, forest game birds, and pheasant. Wildlife viewing options include: wetland wildlife, prairie wildlife, and forest wildlife.

The area is comprised of primarily high-quality wetlands and is utilized by hunters, hikers, birdwatchers, and others who enjoy the natural habitat.

In 2004, Metro Wildlife Corridors, a program established in 2003 through a partnership between the DNR and six nonprofit conservation groups, added an additional 145 acres to the Mikkelson WMA. The state program aims at preserving wildlife habitat where it's most at risk, protecting, restoring, and managing a network of natural areas and wildlife habitat in the face of the metro region's rapid growth.

Fish Lake

Fish Lake is encompassed by the Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve. Fish Lake is a scenic lake closed to all motorized activities to allow for recreational activities including canoeing and kayaking. The lake is 332 acres in size and has a maximum depth of 13 feet. Average depth is 6.2 feet. A wildlife

lake survey was conducted on July 15, 2003 and at that time, maximum Secchi depth was 9 feet with an average Secchi depth of 5.4 feet. Aquatic plants were abundant with 98.6 percent of the sample points having vegetation, and 16 different species were found. *Najas flexilis* and *Potamogeton praelongus* were the most common submerged aquatic plants found.

Relative to other shallow lakes in the area and the state, Fish Lake is a high quality shallow lake as it has good water clarity and an abundant and diverse aquatic plant community. Winter fish kills occur frequently because of the natural shallow nature of the basin. These characteristics also make the lake ideal for wildlife utilization. The abundance of aquatic plants provides food and habitat for aquatic birds and waterfowl.

Fish Lake has been stocked with walleyes in the past; however, this lake does not have a sustainable walleye population because the lake does not have habitat characteristics of a walleye lake (water depths greater than 20 feet, gravel substrates, open water habitat). Green sunfish, bluegills, and black bullheads were the most common fish found during the last DNR fisheries assessment in 1998 and are fish typical of shallow lake systems. The lake does not have an official public access; although County Road 24 runs adjacent to the north end of the lake, and legal access is available from the road right-of-way.

The Cedar Creek minor watershed measures about 18,000 acres. Pre-settlement vegetation consists of mostly oak barrens on the uplands and a mix of wetland types in the many basins, including conifer and hardwood swamps, shrub swamps, marshes, and fens. Today the watershed is a mix of developed areas, natural areas, and farmland with some significant tracts of natural vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Fish Lake is largely surrounded by significant native plant communities mapped by the Minnesota County Biological Survey, including oak savanna, oak woodland, hardwood swamp, rich fen, wet meadow, and cattail marsh. These communities provide habitat for rare and uncommon animals, including sandhill cranes and Blanding's turtles. State-listed rare plants occurring in wetland communities adjacent to Fish Lake include the endangered twisted yelloweyed grass *(Xyris torta)* and the threatened lance-leaved violet *(Viola lanceolata).*

Fish Lake is near the top of the Cedar Creek watershed. The lake flows out through a wetland on the northwest side of the basin, through an intermittent stream, and into Cedar Creek. Total distance from the outlet of the lake to Cedar Creek is approximately three-quarters of a mile. Cedar Creek flows into the Rum River in the City of Anoka.

Additional Natural Features

Approximately 607 total acres of land around Neds, Mud, and Deer Lakes is government-owned. According to the Minnesota County Biological Survey of the DNR, this area is one of the few unique, undisturbed natural areas within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It includes tamarack swamp, willow swamp, mixed hardwood swamp, wet meadows, and oak savanna. In addition, a wide variety of native plants and animals inhabit the area, including rare species such as Blanding's turtles, sandhill cranes, and lance-leaf violets.

Recreational Amenities

East Bethel has several diverse community-focused recreational facilities available to its residents. These facilities make it easy for residents to enjoy the community without having to travel long distances.

The City of East Bethel is also home to an ice arena that is owned by the City and used by community schools for recreational activities, including hockey and figure skating. The arena is located on HWY 65 at 207th Avenue NE.

Booster Park is the oldest and most popular park in the City. It is adjacent to City Hall and consists of 77 acres. It serves outdoor enthusiasts with nine baseball diamonds, two tennis courts, picnic facilities, playground equipment, and hiking trails. This park was upgraded in recent years to include additional active recreational opportunities such as a skate park, sliding hill, paved trail system, and a concession stand.

John Anderson Memorial Park is approximately 70 acres in size, much of which surrounds Cooper Lake in the northwest part of the City. John Anderson Park is located approximately one-half mile west of HWY 65 on 233rd Avenue NE. The City owns property that nearly surrounds Cooper Lake. Cooper Lake is approximately 48 acres in size and is classified as an “Environmental Lake” by the DNR. The park is approximately 70 acres in size and includes provisions for

passive recreational uses such as hiking, picnicking, or swimming. In 2007, the City Council authorized improvements in the park that included trails, a beach area, parking spaces, shelter facilities, and restroom facilities. In addition, the playground equipment has been updated and expanded, and a warming house has been constructed.

Bonde Park encompasses 14 acres of open space and includes two baseball and softball fields. Also included in Bonde Park facilities are a shelter, various types of playground equipment, and a picnic area. This park is located on the west side of Jackson Street and north of 229th Lane.

The City of East Bethel has two public golf courses located within its boundaries. Hidden Haven, on the western edge of the City, is an 18-hole course with a residential subdivision located along Jackson Street and Polk Street. The other is Viking Meadows, a 27-hole course located on the southeast corner of HWY 65 and Viking Boulevard. Several small neighborhood parks also exist in the City. Individual neighborhood communities and various volunteer organizations operate these parks. Local volunteers and organizations operate various athletic programs in the City.

The following table provides a list of parks within the City of East Bethel, including their addresses, acreage, and basic amenities.

TABLE 4-1. CITY OF EAST BETHEL PARKS LIST

Park Name	Address	Size-Acres	Current Facilities	Park Type	Potential Improvements – Short and Long-term
Anderson Lake Park	4348 Wild Rice Dr NE	4.15	Swing set – 4 seats Swing set – 2 seats, 1 ring and 1 bar 1 ball field Play set, plus swing and 4-seat bouncer Tennis court	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface New ball field fence and backstop Resurface tennis court Add benches New park sign
Bonde Park	23040 Jackson St NE	13.22	2 ball fields 4 soccer fields Bleachers—2 aluminum with 5 benches each Swing set – 4 seats 1 shelter 1 climber 3 picnic tables Play set Trash cans	Neighborhood	Replace existing playground with expanded play ground and surface 2 new ball fields 1 large soccer field (irrigated) New shelter/pavilion New restrooms New parking lot and entry road Horse arena (by others)
Booster West Park	22266 Palisade St NE	35.00	Ball fields – 4-plex, irrigated 2 soccer fields, irrigated BMX Track Playground Skate park Concession stand w/ restroom Pavilion with picnic tables and trash cans	Community	Replace/update play equipment and surface Update all park fields and facilities New park sign
Booster East Park	22281 Palisade St NE	50.00	4 Ball fields Basketball court Horseshoe pits	Community	Replace/update play equipment and surface

			2 tennis courts 3 pavilions with grills and picnic tables Restroom & warming house Trail		Add regulation/stadium type baseball field (replace 2 fields) Add concession building with restrooms Update all park facilities New park sign
Carlisle Park	23162 Kissel St NE	2.81	Play set 1 small ball field Swing set – 3 seats	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface Add outdoor hockey rink New park sign
Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve	Durant St NE	5,000	15 miles of hiking and cross country ski trails Trailhead	Open Space	Add: 1 mile walking trail 7 miles cross-country ski trails 7 miles horseback trails 800' boardwalk canoe launch 10-space parking lot New park sign
Coon Lake Beach Park	206 Forest Rd NE	.5	Play set Swing set – 4 seats Skate park 2 basketball courts	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface Resurface basketball courts Replace skate park New park sign
Deer Haven Park	22600 Jewell St NE	4.73	Shelter Swing set – 4 seats Basketball hoop and glass backboard	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface Resurface ½ court basketball New park sign
Eagle Ridge Park	22800 7th St NE	40.00	Open space park. Boy scouts use for orienteering Informal trail system	Open Space	Expand parking lot to maximum 10 spaces New park sign

Eveleth Park	21331 Eveleth St NE	2.80	Play set with slide and toy backhoe 1 ball field Swing set – 4 seats 1 trash can	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface New ball field fence and backstop New park sign
Hidden Haven Park	750 203rd Ln NE	4.81	Park sign (brick & cement) Play set Swing set – 4 seats Shelter 2 field hockey goals New walking path—will have exercise stations 1 barbeque grill 2 picnic tables 1 trash can	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface New walking path with fitness stations New park sign
Fish Lake Trail	Durant St NE		Hiking trail Cross Country Ski Trails Pavilion	Trail	
John E. Anderson Memorial Park	1131 233rd Ave. NE	70.00	Beach (new) New play set New pavilion Trail 2 picnic tables 1 grill 2 benches 2 block restrooms Warming house 3 trash cans	Community	Replace/expand play equipment on east side of lake Repave ¼ mile trail West side of lake—add facilities to equal east side: play equipment, pavilion, trail, picnic tables and furnishings, restrooms, warming house, parking lot New signs for each park
Maynard Peterson Memorial Park	Laurel Road NE	2.76	Play set Parking lot Pavilion 1 ball field Bleachers – 1 aluminum with 5 benches	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface Add restrooms New ball field fence and backstop New pavilion

					Add 26-space parking lot
Norseland Manor Community Park	19521 5th St. NE	19.61	Play set and 1 rocking toy 1 ball field Climber (dome) Swing set – 5 seats Slide Sliding hill (new) 2 benches 2 picnic tables 1 trash can	Neighborhood	New ball field fence and backstop New pavilion New 26-space parking lot New warming house New park sign
Northern Boundaries – 7th St Park	22191 7th St. NE	5.11	Play set Swing set – 4 seats 1 sliding hill 1 picnic table 1 trash can	Neighborhood	Replace/update play equipment and surface Add outdoor hockey rink Add 10-space parking lot New park sign
Oak Brook Acres Park	21071 Ghia St NE	10.00	Sliding hill	Community	Expand to 20 acres as surrounding areas develop and develop as community park New park sign
Rod and Norma Smith Park	3241 183rd Ave. NE	4.49	Swing set – 3 seats Play set Ball field Basketball – 1 hoop Shelter	Neighborhood	Resurface tennis court (concrete) Asphalt 10-space parking lot New park sign
Whispering Aspen Park	24225 Pierce Path NE	1.58	Older tennis courts Play set Community center	Neighborhood	Resurface tennis courts Add small parking lot New park sign
Whispering Oaks Park	20911 Okinawa St. NE	2.0	Shelter Play set Swing set – 4 seats 1 tennis court	Neighborhood	Resurface tennis court and replace fence Add half-court basketball

					New park sign
Future Parks					
Booster Park Expansion—"Booster South"	Potentially PIN 09332312 0001	40		Community	Facilities similar to Booster East or West, with soccer fields and hockey rink
Future Parks – City Center Area					
Community Park		30-50		Community	Per concept plan
4 Neighborhood Parks		20		Neighborhood	Per concept plan

TRAILS

Throughout the past several years, many additions, improvements, and recognition of trail corridors have occurred. The Parks and Recreation Department has worked cooperatively with the Anoka County Highway Department and local municipalities in establishing and developing the regional trail system. These coordinated efforts have allowed for creative ways to finance, develop, and construct trails.

The map on the following page, Figure 4-3, illustrates the proposed city trails and whether they are to be bituminous or natural.

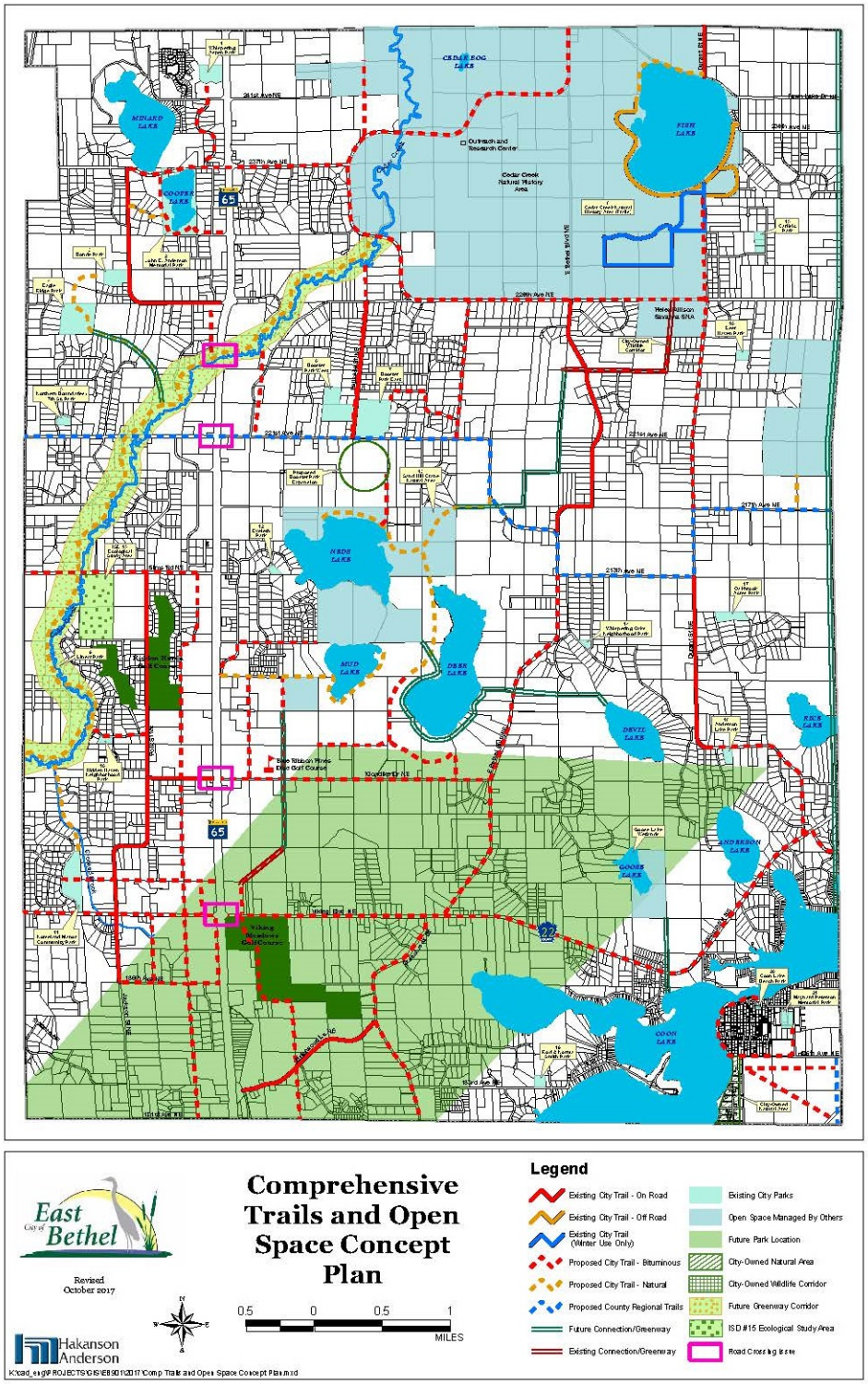

FIGURE 4-3: PROPOSED CITY TRAILS

Anoka County Regional Trails

The North Anoka County Regional Trail is a search corridor that proposes a route that crosses the northern section of the county from Sherburne County east to Washington County. The trail alignment is proposed to pass through Nowthen, Oak Grove, East Bethel, and Linwood Township. The plan is for the North Anoka County Regional Trail to connect to Lake George and Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes Regional Parks. The trail will connect with two north/south routes, those being Rum River and East Anoka County Regional Trails. The estimated cost of this new 17-22 mile long trail would be $1.87 to 2.3 million. To date, only a small segment of the trail is complete – about one mile that runs through Lake George Regional Park. The County will work with the local agencies and the County Highway Department to develop the trail. This regional trail is a search corridor, which means that they do not have Met-Council-approved master plans that identify the trail alignments. Since alignments have not yet been approved they are not eligible for Regional Parks System funding for acquisition and development.

The East Anoka County Regional Trail is located in the northeast corner of the city and another very short segment in the southeast corner. There is a Met-Council approved master plan for the alignment, but there is no timeframe for the section that still needs to be built in East Bethel. The trail will be 27 miles long and will connect the north end of the county to the south end, starting in East Bethel and ending in Blaine. It will be linked to four (4) other regional trails and will have access to many city trails and parks. Figure 4-4 illustrates what is currently constructed on the East Anoka County Regional Trail.

Figures 4-5 and 4-6 illustrates the expansion areas for both the North and East Anoka County Regional Trails on a county and city basis.

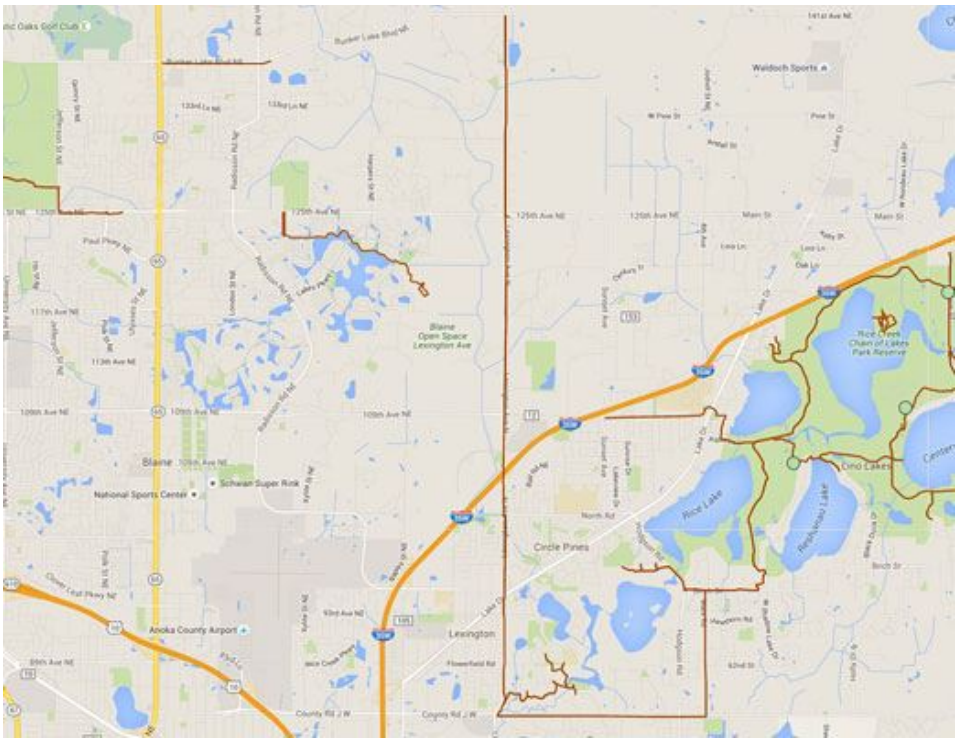

FIGURE 4-4: THE EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CURRENTLY, BEFORE THE EXPANSION NORTH INTO EAST BETHEL

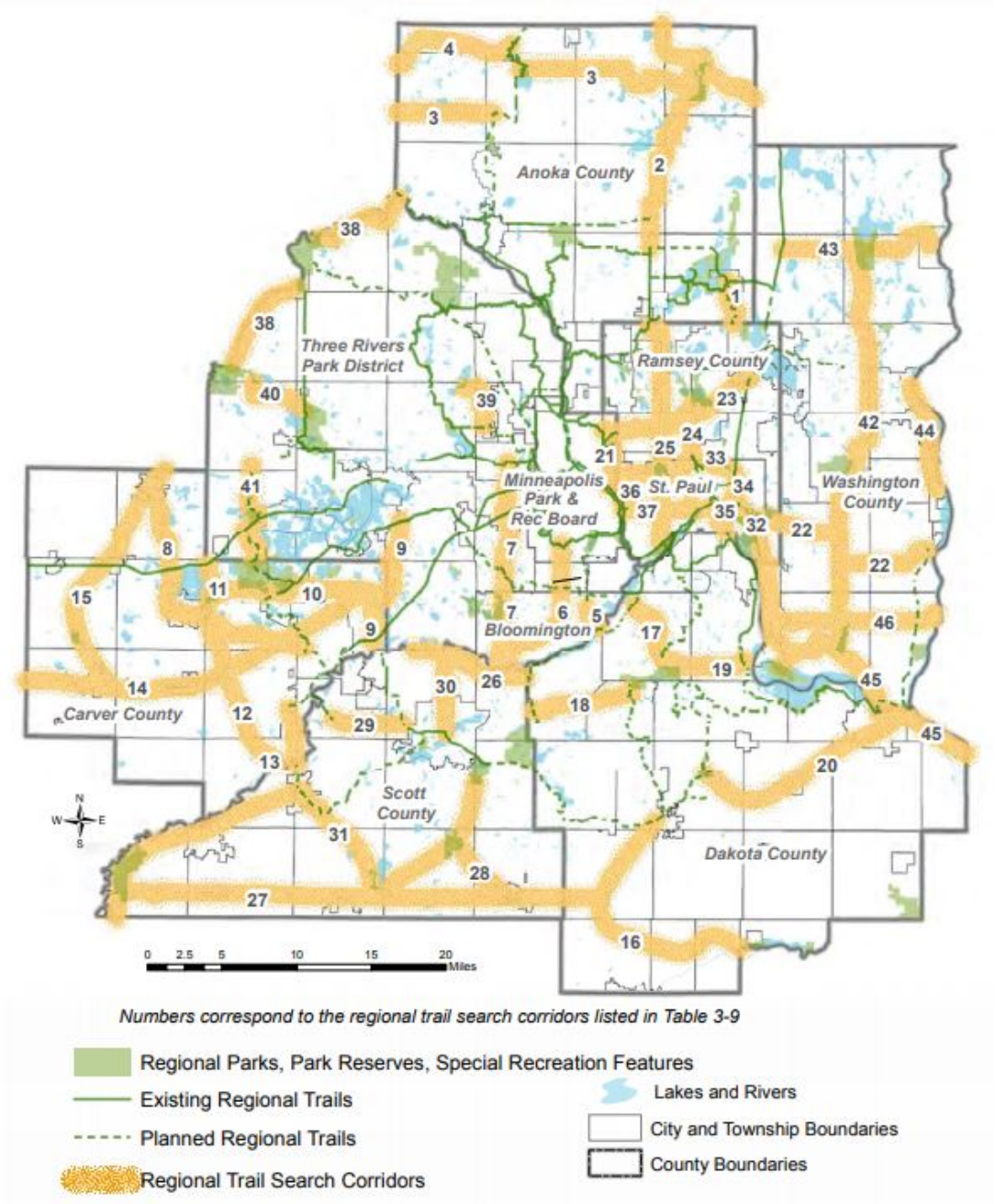

FIGURE 4-5: REGIONAL TRAIL SEARCH CORRIDORS IN ANOKA COUNTY

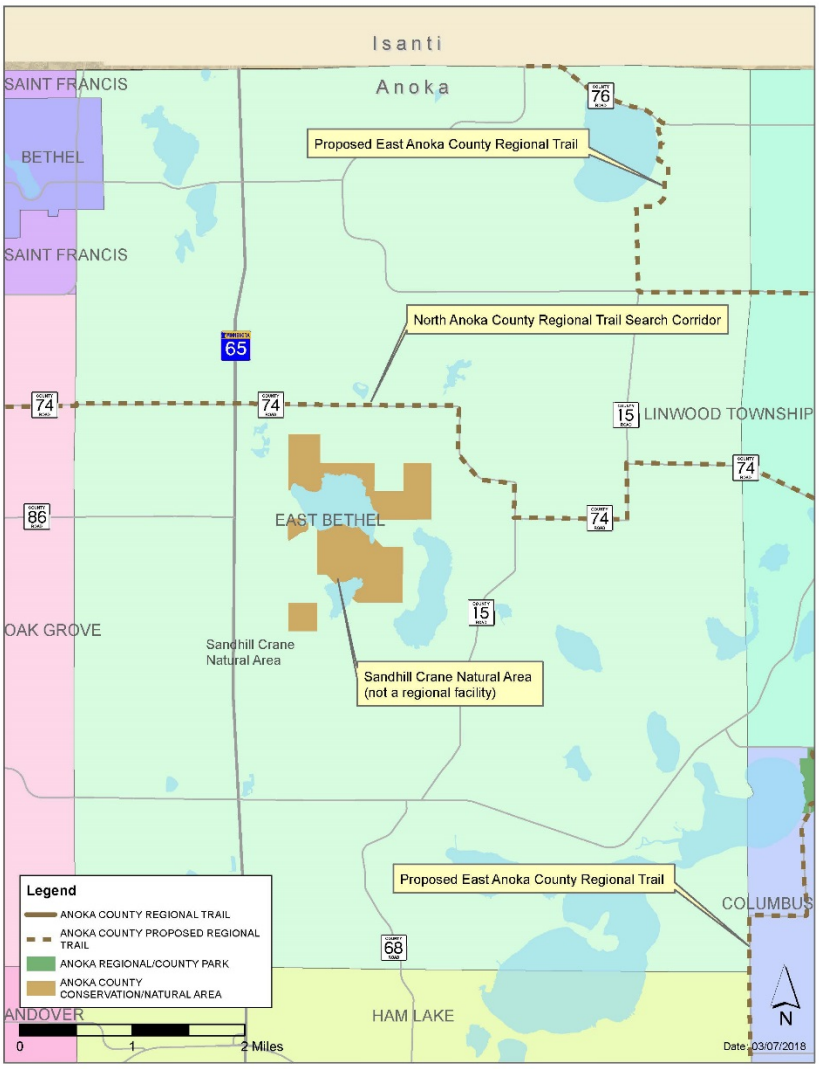

FIGURE 4-6: REGIONAL TRAIL SEARCH CORRIDORS IN EAST BETHEL

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Metropolitan Council's *Thrive MSP 2040* identifies an urban area and a rural area each of which occupies approximately half of the region, which is illustrated in the regional growth map in Figure 4-7.

Conserving and restoring natural resources of regional or local importance contributes to a healthy natural environment and enhances our quality of life. Connecting regional and local features by natural-resource corridors helps sustain wildlife, plant habitats, and shape how development looks on the ground. The urban area is divided into two specific geographic planning areas: the Developing Communities and the Developed Communities. The rural area

is divided into four specific geographic planning areas: Rural Centers/Rural Growth Centers, the Diversified Rural Communities, the Rural Residential Areas, and the Agricultural Areas. Approximately 91-95 percent of new growth is forecast to be located in the urban area – in land-use patterns that make efficient use of regional infrastructure – with the remaining percent in the rural area.

One of the primary differences among these planning areas is the density at which they develop. The Council has established benchmarks indicating the overall densities for planned development patterns in each of the geographic planning areas. The Council negotiates a share of the regional forecasts with each community based on its geographic planning area designation(s), development trends, expected densities, available land, local interests, and Council policies.

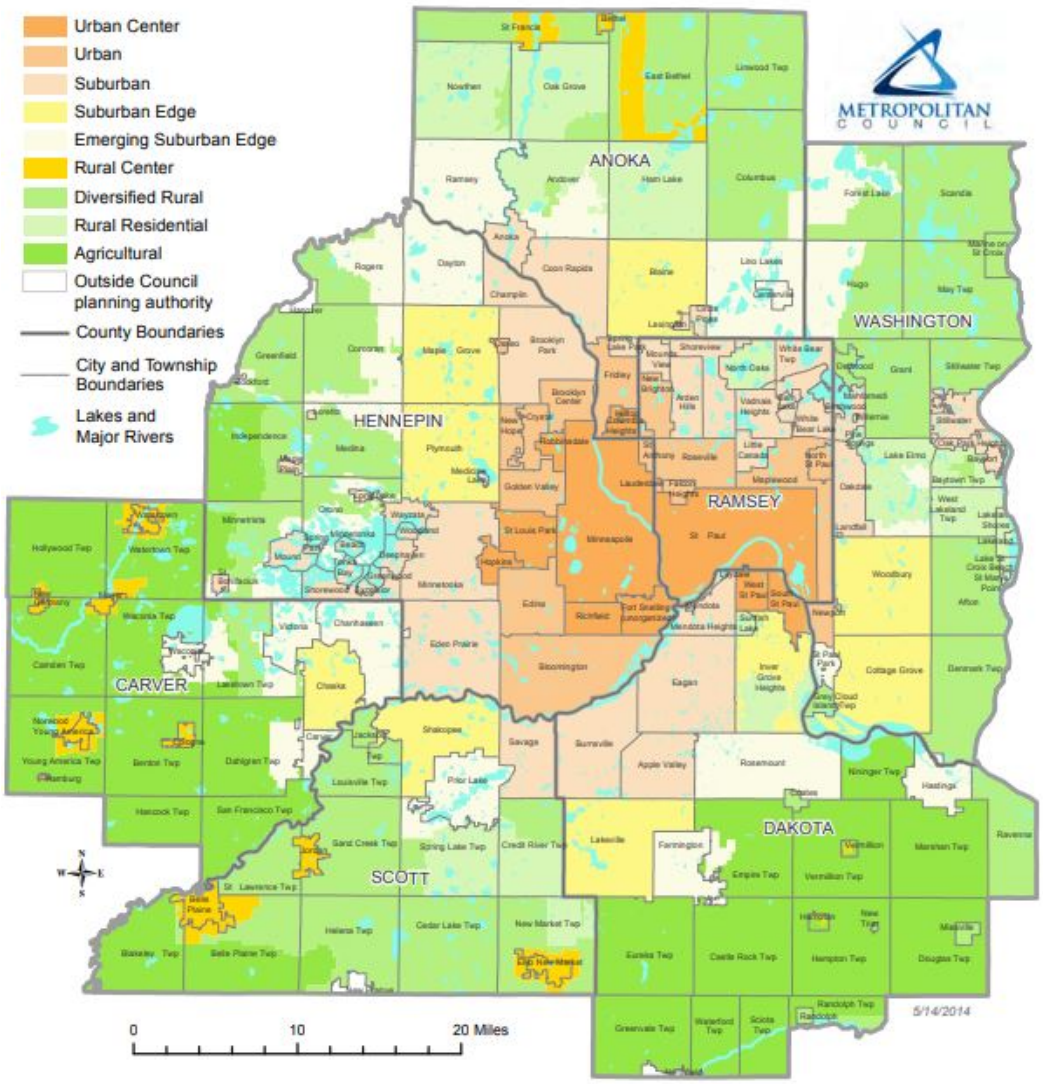

FIGURE 4-7. 2030 FRAMEWORK PLANNING AREAS

The cumulative results of the community-negotiated distribution of the forecasts among planning areas becomes the basis for determining the required land supply and for the Council's plans for investments in regional systems such as highways and wastewater service. Decisions relating to transportation, sewers, housing, natural resources, and other land uses cannot be made in isolation from one another. Regional parks, transportation, and sewers help shape growth patterns; housing location and types affect mobility options and travel patterns. Unplanned growth can put a strain on natural areas – both regionally significant natural areas and locally designated natural areas, groundwater quality, and other resources. The *Thrive 2040* and the metropolitan system plans seek to carefully integrate growth, transportation,

housing, and natural resource policies to achieve regional goals in each area and avoid working at cross-purposes.

Utilizing the surface rights of underground utility corridors such as large sewers for trail purposes protects the utility for access/maintenance and provides a linear corridor for the trail.

The Metropolitan Council has identified the following policies as part of the Thrive 2040, Parks and Open Space Policy Plan, and community System Statements:

Conformance: A local comprehensive plan generally will conform to the metropolitan system plans if the local plan:

1. Accurately incorporates and integrates the components of the metropolitan system plans as required by Minn. Stat. 473.851 to 473.871.

2. Integrates public facilities plan components described in Minn. Stat. 473.859, subd. 3: integrates development policies and compatible land uses to accommodate forecasted growth at appropriate densities and to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional system.

Consistency: A local comprehensive plan generally will be consistent with Council policies and statutory requirements if the local plan:

1. Addresses community role strategies contained in the *Framework*, including conservation strategies to protect regional important natural resource areas and wildlife corridors.

2. Addresses the linkage of local land uses to local and regional park and open space systems.

3. Includes an implementation plan that describes public programs, fiscal devices, and other specific actions for sequencing and staging to implement the comprehensive plan and ensure conformance with regional system plans, described in Minn. Stat. 473.859, subd. 4.

4. Addresses official controls: includes a capital improvement program (sewers, parks, transportation, water supply, and open space) that accommodates planned growth and development.

Compatibility: A local comprehensive plan is compatible with adjacent and affected governmental units, based on comments or concerns or lack thereof, from these entities. In order to be determined compatible, a community must adequately document that it has addressed the concern(s) of all adjacent and affected governmental units.

Park, Recreation, and Open Space Goal and Policies

The development of quality recreational and open space resources is a major effort in East Bethel. The City operates a park land fund which is designated for existing park improvements and for construction of new park facilities. Policies include requiring dedication of land and/or cash in lieu of land in conjunction with all new subdivisions of property. The City is also working with Anoka County and the Minnesota DNR to develop the Sandhill Crane Natural Area.

The City currently has a cooperative agreement with the University of Minnesota to allow East Bethel to offer hiking and cross-country ski trails to its residents inside the Cedar Creek Ecosystem and Scientific Reserve. In fact, there are multiple trail use interests in the community including bicycling, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. The physical size of the City and low density development, however, result in extraordinary costs per capita for trail construction and maintenance.

Anoka County has identified potential regional trail corridors along County Road 74 and CSAH 17. Future trail planning will focus on creating trails within park facilities, such as Booster Park and Sandhill Crane Natural Area, linking local facilities and neighborhoods, and creating linkage to regional trails. The City will also examine the feasibility of designating bicycle routes along improved shoulders of existing and future roadways.

Goal:

Create and protect an interconnected system of athletic areas, parks, trails, and green spaces throughout the City.

Policies:

1. Research amount of existing park area and current uses against future needs based on increasing populations.

2. Incorporate parks and open space into community center planning efforts and all development/redevelopment plans and designs.

3. Promote existing parks and pursue strategies to connect parks through trail systems; identify potential "corridors" for trails.

4. Coordinate planning activities with Anoka County based on park uses; pursue opportunities to incorporate sports-related and other community activities.

5. Protect and promote recreational activities within the community and identify opportunities to enhance infrastructure to support these activities such as snowmobile trails, lake activities, etc.

6. Design and maintain parks with proper lighting, shelter, and landscaping to ensure public and property safety.

7. Provide recreational facilities and programs to serve the varied recreational needs of all age groups within the City.

8. Encourage the acquisition of all forfeited and/or donated land in areas with potential recreational development opportunities.

9. Require dedication of park land or cash in lieu of land in conjunction with the subdivision of all properties.

10. Develop land use regulations compatible with adjacent parks, recreation areas, and natural features.

11. Identify the potential for trail and wildlife corridors in the City, and coordinate regional trail development opportunities with Anoka County and adjacent communities.

12. Provide convenient active and passive recreation opportunities to the residents of East Bethel. Enhance the existing park and recreation areas in the City.

13. Provide alternative forms of transportation that include walking trails, bicycle paths, and other surfaced media where motorized traffic is not permitted.