

CHAPTER 4.

PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

Introduction

Eureka Township provides limited public services that are necessary to support agriculture and limited residential development. In planning for parks, trails, and recreation, the Township expects that investments will be of a scale consistent with other public facilities and services. Today, there is not a strong demand for park and trail facilities because of the rural development pattern and prevalence of private open space to meet recreation needs.

Yet, the Township recognizes that high quality park and trail systems require long-range planning to ensure that facilities are well-sited, include interesting natural features, and are interconnected. The Township does not plan to create a park and trail system within the 2030 planning period. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance as the Township works with other jurisdictions on park and trail issues, and guides how the Township will consider the potential for local facilities in the long-term.

This chapter:

- Describes the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area;
- Addresses the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* as it relates to Eureka Township;
- Identifies opportunities to plan for potential parks and trails in the future; and
- Provides the goals and policies addressing parks, trails, and recreation.

Existing Facilities

Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area

Today there is one property in Eureka Township that provides outdoor recreation opportunities to the general public: the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area.

The Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is approximately 200 acres of marsh, woodland, and fields at the south end of Chub Lake. The property is held by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The northern portion of the WMA contains oak forest and wet meadow native plant communities, as well as a portion of Chub Lake's shoreline. The WMA has a small non-paved access point off Grenada Avenue. There is not an improved parking area and no restroom facilities are provided.

The Chub Lake WMA was established in 2000. When a private property owner put the property on the market, Eureka Township community members formed a committee to seek ways to protect this natural area. The local effort led to public-private partnerships and the purchase of the land as a WMA. The DNR Metro Greenways program, Ducks Unlimited, a special legislative appropriation, Dakota County, RIM, Koch Refinery, Eureka Township, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Chub Lake Greenway Committee collectively contributed the one million dollars needed to purchase the WMA property¹.

The DNR identifies that Wildlife Management Areas are intended to: protect wildlife habitat for future generations; provide citizens with opportunities for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching; and promote important wildlife-based tourism in the state. The Township and DNR share the goal of protecting wildlife habitat, and the Township will seek to work with the DNR to accomplish shared goals.

The Chub Lake WMA is an attractive outdoor recreation destination for Township residents and the general public. The Township works with the DNR to identify existing and future needs of the WMA, such as parking and restroom facilities. The Township supports use of the WMA for habitat protection and for the outdoor recreation activities of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching.

The Township promotes that the WMA be managed in ways that minimize negative impacts to neighboring properties, such as keeping parking off of the public road, removing litter and waste from the property. The WMA should not place a burden on Township roads and other services.

¹ Source information about the Chub Lake WMA includes the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources publications *Fish and Wildlife Today* (September 2000) and *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer* (September 2001).

Future Parks and Trails

Regional Parks and Trails

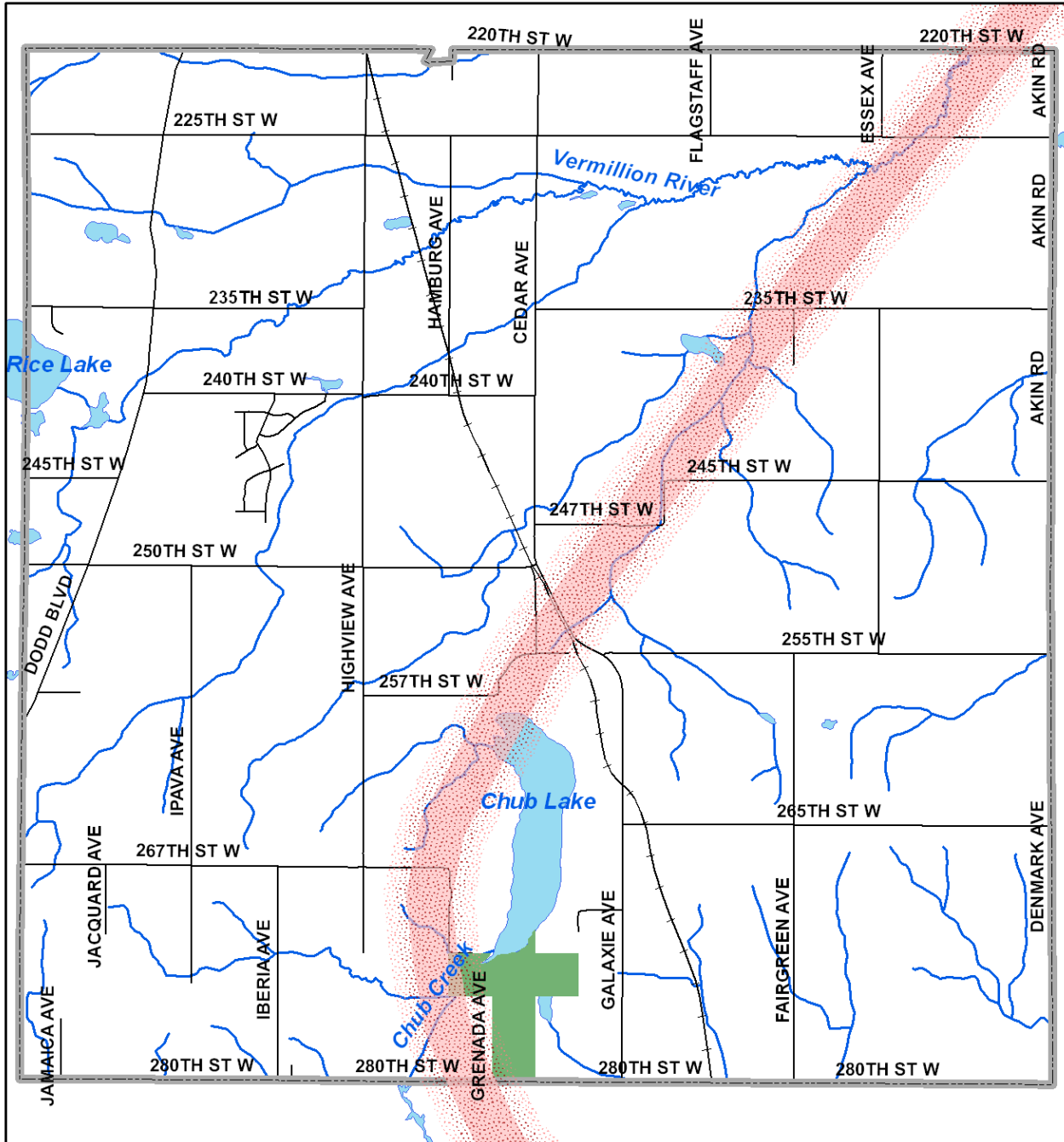
The Metropolitan Council's *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, published in 2005, identified two planned regional park system features within Eureka Township: Chub Lake Regional Park search area and the Dakota County North/South Regional Trail search corridor. The Chub Lake Regional park search area was shown on the System Statement provided to Eureka Township by the Metropolitan Council in 2005.

Dakota County has removed the Chub Lake park search area from its Park System Plan, adopted in April, 2008. Dakota County worked with the Metropolitan Council to remove the Chub Lake park search area from the regional system plan so that local and regional plans are consistent. The County Park System Plan describes how a greenway will serve this general area (Chub Creek Greenway Regional Trail). Because Dakota County is not planning for a Chub Lake park, the Eureka Township Comprehensive Plan does not identify the Chub Lake regional park search area on the Parks and Trails map.

The Dakota County North/South Regional Trail general search corridor is for a proposed regional trail to connect the "Empire Wetlands" Regional Park located to the northeast of Eureka Township, to the proposed Dakota South Cannon River Regional Trail and Lake Byllesby Regional Park to the southeast. The Dakota County Park System Plan names this proposed regional trail corridor The Chub Creek Greenway Regional Trail. The County Plan makes a distinction between trail and greenway, in that greenway includes multiple purposes, such as protecting natural resources or providing scenic views.

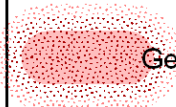
The regional trail, or greenway, is still conceptual at this point. The Parks and Trails map identifies it as a general search corridor, not a specific corridor alignment.

Dakota County proposes in its Park System Plan that an intergovernmental, collaborative process should be used for planning, building, and managing greenways. Eureka Township will take an active role in planning for the regional trail and any other future recreation facilities proposed within the Township. Eureka Township desires to retain local management of facilities located within the community. Through this collaboration, Eureka Township will work with Dakota County to involve local property owners in greenway planning.



Parks, Trails, and Recreation

 Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area

 General Regional Trail Search Corridor

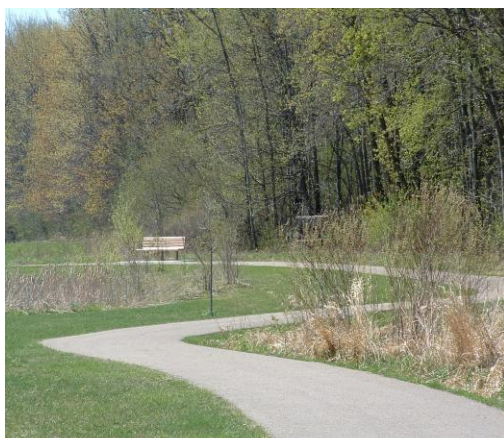
5,000 2,500 0 5,000 Feet



Source: Metropolitan Council
and Dakota County

Local Parks and Trails

Eureka Township Park and Trail Facilities



Examples of trails corridors

The Eureka Township Livability Ordinance provides the Town authority to regulate the use, operation and protection of Township parks and other public recreation areas. Though there are not Township parks or trails today, the Ordinance indicates that there is a potential for future facilities.

The 2003 Eureka Township Comprehensive Plan indicated that while there was not a current demand for local parks, there may be a need in the future. It stated, “Because of the rural atmosphere and largely undeveloped state of Eureka Township, the need to acquire park land has not been felt;” and, “In the years to come, as Eureka becomes more developed, the need for parks may become more evident, and the Township should begin to examine various locations within its borders.”

The approach to park planning expressed in the 2003 Plan remains appropriate for Eureka Township. As a rural and

agricultural community, there is not a strong existing demand for facilities. Yet, planning for future facilities will preserve options if local demand grows. The community opinion survey taken as part of the Strategic Vision process indicated that the majority of respondents were in favor of the Township planning for recreational trails.

Eureka Township will consider acquiring park and trail facilities in the future if there is a local demand for such facilities. The Township will consider creating a park and trail plan and map to identify locations for future Township facilities. If a park and trail plan is created, the Township will consider creating a park dedication ordinance as a mechanism to create future Township-owned park, trail and recreation facilities. The Township will consider accepting land donations for park, trail or recreational purposes, if such opportunity arises.

Privately-Owned Park and Trail Facilities

Eureka Township’s Ordinances do not allow for privately owned, commercial recreation facilities such as golf courses, paint ball facilities, or shooting ranges. Such uses are generally out of character in a rural environment because of the potential for traffic, noise, and environmental harm.

The Township may wish to consider meeting future local demand for parks and trails through non-commercial, privately owned facilities. For example, the Township may choose to allow for a privately owned playground that is located on private property.

Planning Considerations for Future Parks and Trails

Unique cultural and natural features within the Township may provide opportunities for future parks and trails. These locations and strategies are a starting place for parks and trails planning, whether at the local level or in working with Dakota County on the Chub Creek Greenway Regional Trail planning process.

- **Natural Resources Corridor:** In some instances, creation of parks and trails is one method that can be used to achieve Eureka Township’s goals to protect natural resources and preserve open space. As development occurs, there may be opportunities to weave trails through parts of the Natural Resource Corridor identified in the Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources chapter, where compatible with natural resource protection. Parkland can be used to protect natural areas, with proper management for the ecological health of the resource and adequate separation from active recreation areas.
- **Utility and Transportation Corridors** may offer opportunities for future trails. The Township could explore partnerships to create trails within existing and planned pipeline corridors. A trail created in conjunction with a utility corridor could be an amenity that, in a small part, offsets the burden of the utility on the community. Reconstruction of roadways presents opportunities to create trails, whether under the jurisdiction of the County or Town.
- **Town Hall:** Rural communities that have a single, local park facility tend to attach it to Town Hall property. If local demand grows in Eureka Township for active park facilities, such as a ball field or playground, the Township may wish to consider creating a park at or near the Town Hall. This would allow for indoor/outdoor community events or recreation programming, and would make efficient use of restroom facilities, water supply, and parking.



Example of a Town Hall park

- **The property owned by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,** located north of 235th Street and west of Dodd Boulevard,

may have the potential to be reclaimed as a natural and/or recreational area. The Township could consider requesting that the DNR prepare a reclamation plan for the site. The Township could work with the DNR to plan for a future use that is consistent with the Township's natural resource and recreation goals and policies.

- **Future neighborhoods:** Housing clusters may benefit from local park or trail facilities. The Township may wish to consider creating a park and trail plan and a park dedication ordinance. If, in the future, the Township plans for a mixed-use area in the village center that would combine commercial and residential land uses, parkland could be considered for the area.



Example of a neighborhood park

- **Park, trail, and recreation facilities, regardless of their specific location, should be carefully planned.** The Township will be actively involved in the planning and management of facilities located within the community. Facilities should be distanced appropriately from existing homes to limit impacts of park and trail users on private properties. Facilities should be designed in harmony with natural resources, so that priority natural resources are not harmed through construction or use of the facility. Trails should connect to each other and to destinations in the community. Trails should be considered as options for pedestrian and bicycle modes of travel, as well as serving recreational purposes.

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies will guide local decision-making related to parks, trails, and recreation facilities in Eureka Township.

Parks, Trails, and Recreation Goals

1. Continue to support use of the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area for habitat protection and for the outdoor recreation activities of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching.
2. Consider possible locations for future parks and trails, and the preservation of options for their creation.
3. Actively participate and take leadership in planning for regional recreation facilities proposed within Eureka Township.

Policies

To achieve these goals, the Township will:

1. Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to accomplish shared Township-DNR goals for the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area.
2. Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to identify existing and future needs of the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area.
3. Encourage that the Chub Lake Wildlife Management Area be managed in ways that minimize negative impacts to neighboring properties.
4. Actively participate and take leadership in the master plan process for the Chub Creek Greenway Regional Trail.
5. Monitor local demand for parks, trails, and recreation facilities.
6. Consider creating a local park and trail plan and map to identify locations for future facilities, and a park dedication ordinance as a mechanism to create future Township facilities.
7. Discourage commercial park and recreation facilities that degrade natural resources or harm the Township's rural character.