

CHAPTER 8: PARKS AND TRAILS

PARKS AND TRAILS INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Trails Element of the Comprehensive Plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and interrelated network of parks, trails, and natural resource areas for public use. The plan is based on an assessment of need and follows a system-wide park and trail planning approach.

Parks and recreation are one of the key elements that define a person's perception of the quality of life in a Township. As the site of two regional parks, Credit River has numerous parks and trail opportunities for residents of the community.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Credit River has adopted the following goals and strategies to help guide the development of the park and trail system:

- A. Protect and preserve the natural character and resources of Credit River Township.**
 - 1. Work with Scott County to cooperatively protect and monitor the Township's environmental resources.
 - 2. Work with appropriate agencies to mitigate contaminated sites or potential harmful actions upon the environment.

- B. Ensure that land use and development is compatible and harmonious with the natural environment.**
 - 1. As a precursor to development, identify and evaluate all critical and sensitive environmental features in Credit River Township.
 - 2. Encourage the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of shoreland, floodplain and wetland environments in their natural state.
 - 3. Where desirable and practical, promote development which complements existing natural features and that which is in conformance with Federal, State, and local regulations.

4. Encourage subdivision design (in the development review process) that preserves natural features in order to maintain the healthy environment, aesthetics and economic benefits such features provide to the area.
5. Implement erosion control, wetland preservation, open space designation, clustering, and park land dedication as methods that developers may use to protect environmentally sensitive areas that are proposed for development.

C. Acquire land for development of a park and trail system to fulfill the long-term needs of Credit River residents.

1. Acquire park land as identified in the parks and trails section of this plan.
2. Accept land dedication for park, trail and open space facilities (in satisfaction of subdivision requirements) only when the parcel satisfies the needs of the community, as determined by the Township.
3. Do not accept park land that serves no previously defined system purpose as part of subdivision applications but instead accept a comparable cash contribution.
4. Acquire parcels that will provide for both active recreation needs and that contain natural amenities and unique landscape areas such as waterbodies, waterways, wetlands, ponds, streams, significant tree standards, native prairie, and areas of rugged topography. Although the preservation of natural amenities is important, park dedication will only be utilized for the acquisition of buildable land.
5. Dedicate proper right-of-way for sidewalks and trails during the subdivision process or acquired as part of improvement projects.
6. Emphasize park designs with public view, access and exposure to improve safety for users and to maximize public use for the facility.

D. Establish a comprehensive system of safe, aesthetically pleasing and useful parks, natural habitat/greenway corridors and trails that are geographically located throughout the community in a manner compatible with surrounding land uses and that provide a variety of recreation opportunities to all residents of Credit River.

1. Maintain a balance between active, passive and cultural recreational areas and activities tailored to the needs of the entire community.

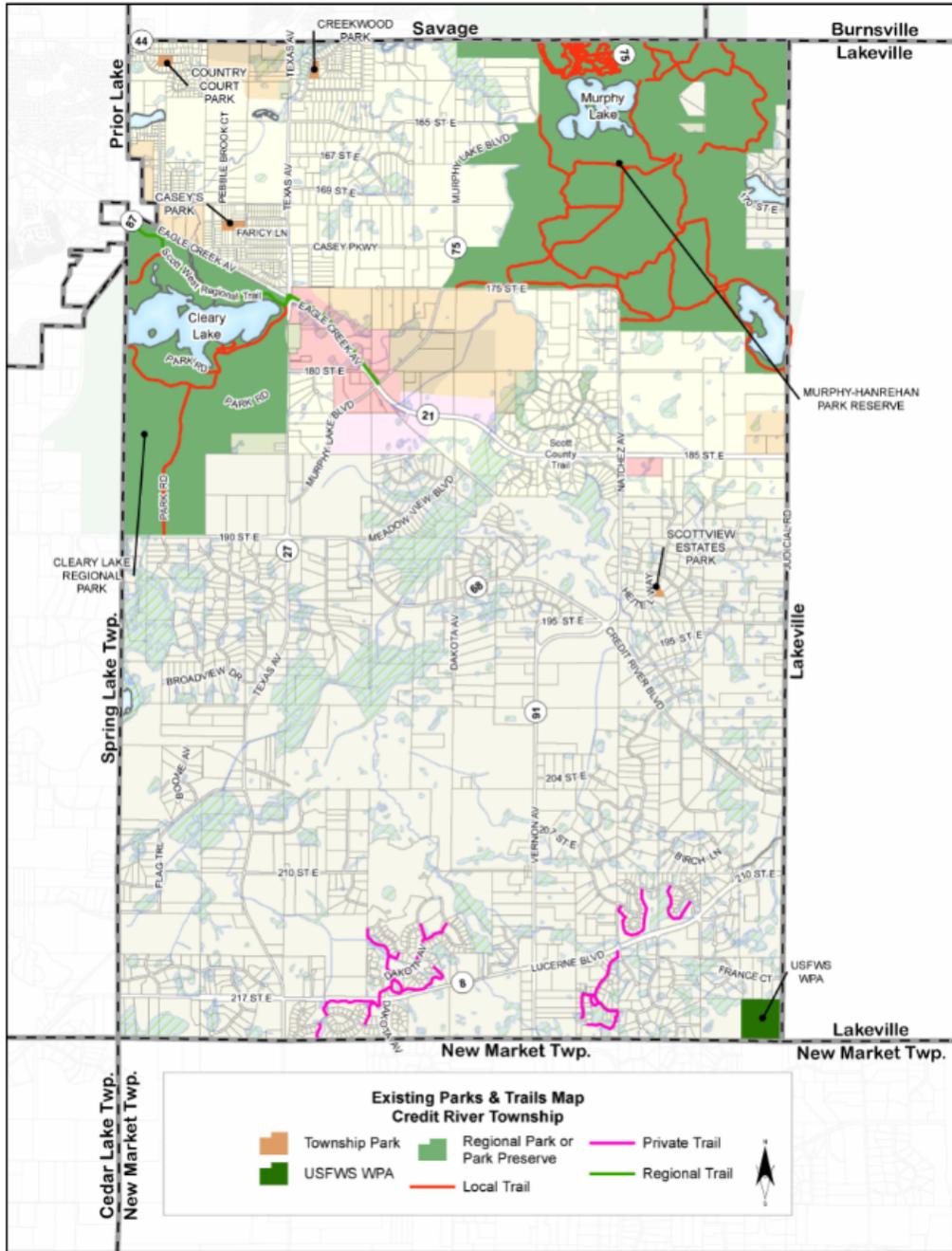
2. Integrate parks, natural habitat/greenway corridors and trails as a comprehensive system for serving the recreation needs of the community through physical connections and planned development of a full variety of facilities and diverse uses during all seasons.
3. Utilize consistent design elements for park and trail facilities (buildings, play equipment, landscape plantings, signage, fixtures, etc.) that promote community identity, recognition of public facilities, and safety.
4. Consider long term costs for maintenance and operation in a facility's design and construction as part of the planning process.
5. Minimize park development impacts upon adjacent land uses through, but not limited to, the following:
 - Appropriate location and orientation of activity areas and buildings.
 - Screening and landscaping site design elements.
 - Structures are to be designed with appropriate scale, design and color and constructed of quality materials.
 - Adequate off-street parking.
6. Give priority to the following trail types:
 - Trails along major roadways that have the most direct access to trail destinations.
 - Trail connections with existing and proposed parks, play fields and school sites.
 - Trails that will link together separate portions of Credit River's trail system with each other and those of adjacent jurisdictions.
 - Trails that are routed to minimize stop signs, cross traffic, and mixing with other modes of transportation.
 - Trails that link natural habitat/greenway corridors such as along the Credit River.
7. Preserve inherent natural amenities or cultural resources when planning the development of specific, park and trail sites.
8. Utilize trails for both transportation and recreational purposes (connections between activity centers, schools or by providing access to natural areas, waterways, waterbodies, or other natural areas).

9. Coordinate the planning and construction of trails in conjunction with State, Scott County, or Township street improvement plans and projects (to minimize costs).
 10. Require trail construction to be in accordance with Township design standards, and to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
 11. Integrate natural resources with the Township's park and trail systems.
- E. Ensure that the Township park, trail and open space systems are related to the needs of community residents and that the dedication requirements are roughly proportionate to the impacts generated by development.**
1. Gauge capital improvements made to individual park facilities on the basis on relative need for developed park facilities.
 2. Program recreational open space improvements in accordance with a Capital Improvement Program which is updated on a periodic basis.
 3. Continue to monitor park dedication fee structure (County or Township) to ensure that implementation of the community-wide park and trail system will be accomplished in a manner that is consistent with the law.
 4. Require park improvements associated with development proposals to be installed at the time of development to ensure that park facilities are available to neighborhood residents.
- F. Develop a partnership with Scott County, Three Rivers Park District, adjacent cities and townships, school districts, churches, and civic organizations to provide recreation facilities and programs.**
1. Pursue grants, joint powers agreements and other alternative funding sources for the acquisition and development of park, trail and open space facilities.
 2. Coordinate local facility development and related services with the needs and facilities of surrounding communities, school districts, athletic associations, civic groups and other organizations.

PARK INVENTORY

Credit River has extensive park facilities available for the enjoyment of its residents and visitors. The map on the following page shows the existing park facilities.

Two regional park units are located in Credit River, both operated by Scott County and Three Rivers.



Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. This park reserve contains 2,482 acres and is primarily located in the northeastern portion of Credit River. It was established in 1975. Regional park reserves are large areas of land that have the primary purpose of protecting and preserving native plant communities, and they are the largest units in the regional park system. They provide diverse outdoor recreation opportunities and under policy are to remain primarily undeveloped.

Existing amenities include an extensive trail network for horseback riding, hiking, and cross-country skiing. There is also a substantial mountain bike trail offering courses with varying degrees of difficulty. Other features include a dog park and a boat launch on Murphy Lake. Birding enthusiasts also utilize the park.

The planned Scott West Regional Trail currently terminates to the west of the park. Dakota County is planning for the connection of the Lake Marion Greenway to the eastern side of the park in two locations.

The Master Plan for Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve includes the acquisition of approximately 129 additional acres, consisting of both in-holdings as well as a larger parcel on the western edge of the current park boundary.

Cleary Lake Regional Park. A portion of this regional park consists of approximately 1,186 acres surrounding Cleary Lake is located in Credit River. Amenities include a 9-hole golf course, dog off-leash area, swimming beach, boat rentals, boat launch, picnic areas, campsites, and trail network. A visitor center provides space for administrative uses as well as serves as the center for golf-course and campground check-in and equipment rentals.

Scott West Regional Trail. The Scott West Regional Trail is connected to Cleary Lake Regional Park and partially completed within Credit River. Planned future completion of the Scott West Regional Trail will connect both regional park units within Credit River and will also eventually provide connectivity to western Scott County.

Local Parks. There are four local park facilities currently available within Credit River.

USFWS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also owns a Waterfowl Production Area in the far southeast portion of Credit River and extending into Lakeville. This area is managed by the Minnesota Valley Wetland Management District, which is a fourteen-county district located in the transition zone between northern tallgrass prairie and eastern deciduous forest. This area is important to migrating, breeding and nesting waterfowl. Waterfowl production areas are purchased using funds from the Federal Duck Stamps. These areas are open to hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

Parkland can be classified into several general categories based on who the potential users are intended to be and the geographical area each type of facility is intended to serve. These standards are not intended to limit park design and development, but rather to serve as a guide for future development of the entire park system. Figure 8-1 provides additional detail on each type of park facility.

Neighborhood Park

The neighborhood park is the basic unit of the park system, providing for the passive and active recreational needs of neighborhood residents. It satisfies the primary play needs of children and provides recreational opportunities for all age groups.

The neighborhood park is generally intensely developed, but some natural areas with significant landscape features are very desirable. Therefore, sites selected should include some level, well-drained areas for intense use. Facilities should include active areas for both organized and unorganized play. A neighborhood should not be separated from the neighborhood park by a non-neighborhood road or other obstacle to pedestrian access. The neighborhood park should be connected by trails or sidewalks to encourage pedestrian access to the site.

This type of park can be owned and maintained by either the Township or by a private entity, such as a Homeowner's Association.

Community Park

Community parks are designed to provide recreational opportunities for people of all ages and several neighborhoods, and to offer a broader range of facilities than a neighborhood park. The community park is oriented toward intense athletic activity, specifically toward highly organized games that can accommodate larger groups of people. Community parks are major destination points within the trail system.

A level site with suitable soils and good drainage should be selected to support the intensive development of a community park. Community park sites should be easily accessible from a collector road.

Figure 8-1. Credit River Park Classifications

Classification	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Level of Service	Ownership and Maintenance
Neighborhood Park	Site should serve no greater than a .5-mile walking distance. Site should be primarily level and well-drained for active uses. A neighborhood shall not be separated from the neighborhood park by a non-neighborhood road or other obstacle to pedestrian access. Some portion of the park site may be left in its natural state.	1 to 10 acres. Varies with the type of neighborhood developed and level of amenities offered.	Serves the needs of the neighborhood it is contained within. Specific improvements depend upon the needs of the population demographic anticipated to live in the neighborhood. Examples of the types of improvements that are included within this category are playgrounds, HOA swim/tennis facilities, and other amenities that serve the residents of the neighborhood.	Local or private.
Community Park	A level site with suitable soils and good drainage should be selected to support the intensive development of a community park. Should be easily accessible from a major transportation route.	15-acre minimum	Serves the needs of a large service area of an approximately 2-mile radius, although residents will drive a larger distance for certain amenities. Specific improvements in each park depend upon which Level of Service standards for those improvements established by the Township can be met within the park.	Local.
Nature Conservation Area	Depends on location of unique, diverse resources.	Dependent on resource.	No level of service established. May not be accessible to the public.	Public or private.
Special Use	Site selected based on the special use involved.	Dependent on special use.	Serves entire community.	Public or partnership.

Nature Conservation Area

Nature conservation areas contain diverse, unique or environmentally sensitive resources. Landscape features such as rivers, lakes, woodlands, or terrain will often determine park size and shape. Recreational uses are secondary to conservation purposes; however, uses such as hiking, picnicking and nature study are compatible.

Conservation areas are typically left in a natural state with a minimum level of development, although interpretive facilities or formal access points may be developed. Design standards are determined by the natural features, terrain, and the resources of the site. The nature conservation areas should be tied together by greenways where possible and appropriate.

Conservation areas may be either publicly or privately owned, and may or may not be accessible to the general public. Although these areas may serve some park like functions, their purpose is to protect special and unique areas for which conservation will be required. Existing regulations at the local, state, and federal area prohibit or severely restrict development on these areas.

Special Use Facilities

Special use facilities are those park and recreation areas that serve a specific purpose for the community as a whole. Examples of these facilities are dog parks, indoor ice facilities, community centers, aquatic facilities, frisbee golf, and dirt bike tracks.

There may be opportunities for either public-public or public-private partnerships in the development, operation and maintenance of any of these types of facilities.

Trails

Trails are intended to be relatively narrow corridors of land developed for both transportation and recreational uses and to make pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the community. Trails link residential neighborhoods with parks, schools, community facilities, conservation areas and commercial areas.

Trails are to be constructed of bituminous, unless other surfaces are either desirable or necessary based on site conditions. Single use trails (for pedestrian movement only) should have a minimum trail width of ten (10) feet, except where circumstances do not allow for a 10-foot width and then a minimum of eight (8) feet would be required. Multi-use trails (for use by various vehicles, pedestrians, equestrians, etc.) should have a minimum trail width depending on the Credit River Engineer's recommendation based on planned use.

Trails will be maintained by Credit River in accordance with the policies and procedures in effect. Some trails will require minimal maintenance, while others will be frequently maintained, including the removal of snow in the winter. The maintenance level of the trail will depend on factors including the trail's type and amount of usage, and connectivity importance on the trail system as a mode of transportation.

PLANNED PARK IMPROVEMENTS

As the Township grows, additional parks will be added to the existing system to maintain or improve upon the existing level of service provided within the Township. The proposed future park improvements are separated into the four functional park classifications.

Neighborhood Parks

It is the goal of the Township to develop a park system to meet the needs of current and future residents. Most neighborhoods in the urbanizing portion of the Township either are or will be within walking distance to a local or regional park. Private neighborhood parks may be incorporated into the community by land developers in order to provide a greater level of service to a neighborhood or to provide a special amenity.

New neighborhood park facilities will typically be privately owned and maintained. For any facilities proposed to be owned and maintained by the Township, the Township maintains the right to determine the specific amenities offered in the park(s). Further, the Township is not obligated to accept any proposed parks for public ownership if there are reasons for not wanting the park in the system, such as excessive operation and maintenance cost of the proposed facility, or a perceived inequity between the facilities offered in the proposed park versus those in the existing Township-owned neighborhood parks.

For approved park facilities that remain privately owned and maintained, they shall be platted within an outlot of the development and an easement shall be recorded that limits the use of the outlot to recreational or conservation uses as appropriate. As these are private amenities, no park dedication credit will be given.

Community Parks

It is the goal of the Township to provide sufficient community parks that serve the needs of the community as a whole. The specific amenities provided at each park at the time of development will be reflective of the needed level of service for specific facilities, adjusted over time to reflect the changing recreational behaviors of the Township's residents.

In order to provide these park facilities for a growing population, additional park land will need to be acquired. The Future Parks Map identifies the approximate search areas for the necessary community parks. It is anticipated that each of these parks will be between 15 and 30 acres in size, with an average size of 20 acres.

Nature Conservation Area

The landscape surrounding Credit River consists primarily of lakes, wetlands, and rolling agricultural land.

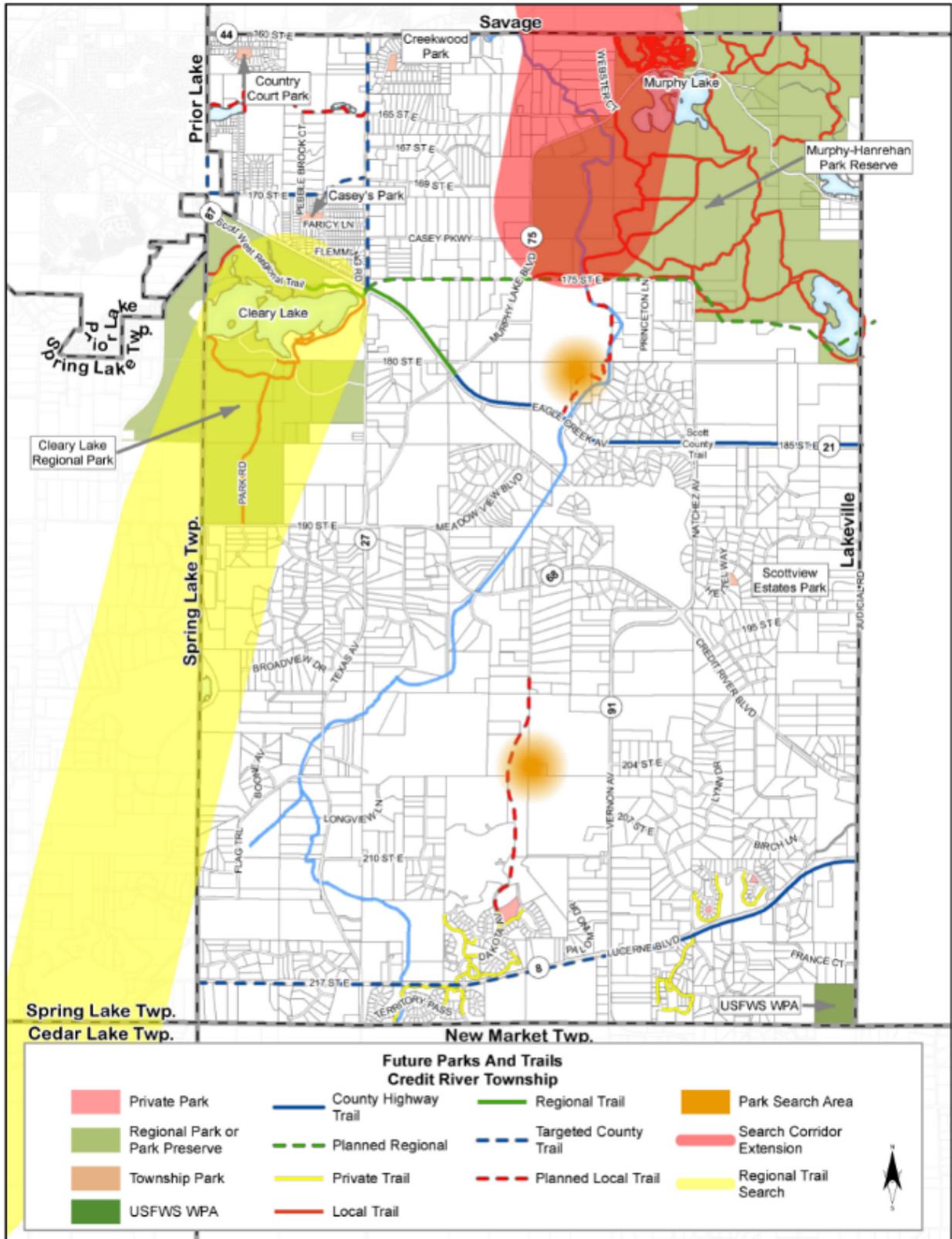
Many of these locations are already under some form of permanent protection as either a regional park unit or by the USFWS. Various Township, state, and federal regulations place restrictions upon or prohibit the development of areas that contain environmentally sensitive resources. As they are undevelopable, the Township will not give park dedication credit for the preservation of these areas.

On a case by case basis and as development occurs on each property that contains these resources in the future, the Township will enter into negotiations with the developer on whether the site should remain as private open space or deeded to the Township. In addition, it will be determined what remediation, if any, is necessary at the site to mitigate past damage that has occurred such as erosion or to provide adequate non-invasive vegetated buffers between new development and sensitive resources. At a minimum, environmentally sensitive resources shall be protected by placing the resource into an outlot with a conservation easement. The Preliminary Plat approval for each development shall define how these resources shall be owned and maintained, and all resources, if privately owned, shall be platted into outlots.

Trails

The planned trail network is also included on the Future Parks Map. The locations are meant to be approximate and demonstrate how various neighborhoods can connect via trails to the Township's trail system. There are two types of trails shown: neighborhood connector trails and destination trails.

The neighborhood trails are meant to provide non-vehicular modes of transportation access between various subdivisions and connecting to the Township system for the benefit of the residents/users of the development. These trails shall be installed at the time of the development of the subdivision and the specific location shall be determined during the preliminary plat approval phase of the development.



Destination trails are those meant to serve primarily a recreation need and that enhance the Township's park and trail system or those trail systems of other entities. They benefit the community or region, rather than benefiting individual neighborhoods.

PARK AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENT FUNDING

The Township's proposed park system sets up two basic types of park and trail improvements – those that provide a benefit to the neighborhood or development they serve, and those that provide a benefit to the community as a whole.

Community benefit improvements

Community benefit improvements are those that serve the whole community or a large segment thereof and are publicly owned and maintained for the enjoyment of all. The types of park facilities that qualify as a community benefit improvement are community parks and destination trails.

The Township has a long-term capital improvement program and appropriate official controls to manage the construction and funding of this portion of the park system through build-out of the Township. Funding for these improvements will be from a combination of general fund revenues as well as park dedication fees.

Developments occurring in a search area for a community benefit improvement will be required to meet their park dedication requirements through the dedication of land, construction of improvements, or both. In the event that the community benefit improvements are greater than the developments pro rata share of park dedication requirements based on the Township's official controls, then the developer shall be given a credit for land or facilities constructed in excess of their requirement.

Developments that do not necessitate the dedication of land or construction of facilities will be required to pay the payment-in-lieu of dedication according to the Township's official controls.

Neighborhood benefit improvements

Those improvements that serve to benefit the specific neighborhood or development of which they are a part, are to be installed at the time of construction of the subdivision by the developer. The Township shall be given an easement for all trails and shall be responsible for maintenance after the improvement has been accepted. Neighborhood parks will typically be privately owned and maintained.

As trail improvements are necessary for the development itself, there will be no park dedication fee-in-lieu payment that can be substituted for these improvements. for

developments that exceed 10 gross acres in size. Developments smaller than 10 acres in size shall pay a dedication fee-in-lieu of park dedication. Through the development review process, it will be determined what the appropriate neighborhood facilities or fee-in-lieu shall be, and they will be memorialized within the approving resolutions and the Developer's Agreement.