

Section 5

Park System Policy Framework

A. The Context for Public Park Resources

Parks and recreation facilities are essential to the quality of life for people in all communities. Normally, the public and private sectors share the responsibility of providing recreation and leisure opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Todd County is no exception to this and has its own unique blend of public and private recreation facilities and related businesses.

On the public sector side, the majority of community park facilities in the County are owned and operated by the cities and school districts. Most of these parks and playgrounds are small in size and have relatively modest or limited recreational facilities. The parks and corresponding facilities or equipment are typically maintained and/or improved largely with volunteer support and donations.

In Todd County, state and federal agencies own and manage a variety of outdoor recreation lands. There are 47 public water access sites (MN DNR Trails and Waterways), 31 wildlife management areas (MN DNR Fish and Wildlife Division) and 6 waterfowl production areas (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Typically, these state and federal facilities provide for fish and hunting recreation and some limited passive outdoor activities (hiking, cross country skiing, bird watching).

Currently, Todd County owns and operates only one park, Battle Point Park. The park is located on the northeast side of Osakis Lake. In 1984, the County received a grant from the MN DNR to provide public access to the lake. A small picnic area and pit toilets were also installed. The total project cost was \$15,000 with the state covering 50 percent of the costs and the County the remaining 50 percent. Over the years, the Osakis Sportsmen Club has helped maintained the park. Based on input from the public during the recreation planning process, the park has not received proper maintenance and revitalizing the park should be one of the County's highest park project priorities.

The private sector provides a variety of recreational goods and services in Todd County. Private recreation enterprises include 5 golf courses, 11 lake resorts, 7 campgrounds, 2 hunting preserves, 3 riding stables, bible and youth camps, and a skiing/tubing resort. These private enterprises along with a number of food establishments and service businesses benefit from the high quality natural resource base in the County. More detailed information on public and private parks and recreation facilities in the County is summarized in Volume 1 of this Plan and on the County's website (www.co.todd.mn.us).

B. Park System Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The following goals, objectives and action items outline the County’s policy framework regarding parks:

Goal 1 – Enhance Existing Park Resources. Protect and enhance the existing parks and recreation facilities that we already have in Todd County.

Objective A – Battle Point Park. Clean up, restore and enhance Battle Point Park.

Actions:

1. Lead Local Organization. Work with groups from the Osakis Lake area to establish a lead local organization to guide the development of the Battle Point Park revitalization project.
2. Partnerships. Support the formation of partnerships with groups such as the Osakis Sportsmen Club, Osakis Lake Association, Lion’s Club, City of Osakis, Sauk River Watershed District, County Highway Department, and the MN DNR (Trails and Waterways, Fisheries, Office of Management & Budget) to assist in the planning, design, funding, construction and maintenance the park projects.
3. Citizen Input Forum. Meet with landowners, sporting and conservation groups, local and state officials and other interested persons to gather input (issues, concerns, assets and opportunities, etc.) on the redevelopment of the park.
4. Park Master Plan Study. Support efforts to develop a master site plan for the park. Develop an overall list (wish list) of projects and an implementation schedule for the phased installation or completion of the priority projects.
5. Maintenance Program. Develop a maintenance program for the park with coordination by the lead local organization, area groups and volunteers, the County Highway Department and the MN DNR.

Objective B – Town Hall Parks. Support the development of recreational facilities at the town hall sites located throughout the County. Work with the townships on a voluntary basis to develop the system of “township parks” using the existing town hall sites for recreational activities and social events.

Actions:

1. Inventory. Support the development of an inventory of the town hall sites and the facilities and amenities currently existing on each site.
2. Existing Site Map. Develop a site map illustrating each town hall site (property lines, adjacent roads, driveways, parking areas, buildings, existing facilities, etc.).
3. Individual Town Hall Site Design. For each interested township, develop a graphic site plan, list of potential recreational projects, and an implementation schedule.

4. **Project Funding.** Work with the participating townships to secure funding for the projects.
5. **Project Coordination.** Support efforts by the participating townships to construct and maintain the recreational facilities and equipment.

Objective C – City Parks and School Playgrounds. Support efforts by cities and school districts to improve and maintain the existing parks and playgrounds.

Actions:

1. **Inventory.** Complete the inventory of public parks and playgrounds in the County. Distribute the inventory to the appropriate jurisdictions and local organizations.
2. **Existing Site Map.** Develop a site map for each park and playground site (property lines, adjacent roads, driveways, parking areas, buildings, existing facilities, etc.).
3. **Master Park Plan Studies.** Support the preparation and approval of master park plans for each participating city or school district. Develop a graphic site plan, list of potential recreational projects, and implementation schedule.
4. **Project Support.** Support efforts by the participating cities and school districts to construct and maintain the recreational facilities and equipment.

Objective D – Public Access Sites and Wildlife Management Sites. Support efforts by state and federal agencies to operate and maintain the existing outdoor recreation sites in the County.

Actions:

1. **Inventory.** Continue to maintain and update the inventory of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities in the County.
2. **Existing Site Map.** Support the preparation of site maps for each site (property lines, adjacent roads, driveways, parking areas, buildings, existing facilities, etc.).
3. **Joint Meetings.** Meet with the appropriate agency personnel to review the use and management of activities on the outdoor recreation sites. Encourage joint meetings with the agencies to review any major site management changes or policy decisions.

Objective E – Park Clean Up Days. Support efforts to promote the annual or periodic clean up of public parks, playgrounds, and outdoor recreation areas in the County.

Actions:

1. **Project Coordination.** Support in the coordination of clean up day events and the securing of volunteers to assist in the events.
2. **Public Relations.** Assist in the preparation of promotional materials to enlist volunteers to help in providing labor for the clean up day events.
3. **Equipment.** Provide and/or coordinate the provision of trucks, trailers, buses and other equipment to assist in the clean up events.

Goal 2 – Private Recreation Opportunities. Promote the development of private parks in the County to enhance greater recreational opportunities. Encourage that the operations and activities run by the camps are compatible with adjacent properties and on the natural resource base.

Objective A – Youth and Education Camps. Support the establishment, development and retention of youth, athletic, and education camps in the County.

Actions:

1. Inventory. Maintain and update the inventory of camps in the County.
2. Good Neighbor Program. Work with management personnel from the camps in the County to review their operations and activities as well as any complaints or concerns raised by area landowners. Help identify ways to minimize impacts.
3. County Zoning Ordinance. Review the provisions in the current County zoning ordinance to see if the requirements are adequate to mitigate impacts on surrounding land uses and natural resources as well as provide enough flexibility for the camp operations.
4. Liability Issues. Research issues regarding liability and appropriate insurance provisions for camp operations and activities.

Objective B – Commercial Recreation and Support Businesses. Support the establishment, development and retention of commercial recreation businesses in the County.

Actions:

1. Inventory. Maintain and update the inventory of commercial recreation businesses in the County.
2. Public Relations. Support the distribution of informational brochures about commercial recreation and support businesses in the County.
3. Good Neighbor Program. Work with existing commercial recreation businesses in the County to review their operations and activities and any complaints or concerns raised by area landowners. Help identify ways to minimize impacts.
4. County Zoning Ordinance. Review the provisions in the current County zoning ordinance to see if the requirements are adequate to mitigate impacts on surrounding land uses and natural resources as well as provide enough flexibility for the commercial recreation business operations.
5. Liability Issues. Research issues regarding liability and appropriate insurance regarding commercial recreation business operations and activities.

Goal 3 – Expansion of Existing Parks. Support the expansion of the existing public parks and recreation facilities in Todd County.

Objective A – City Parks/School Playgrounds. Support efforts by the municipalities and school districts to expand parks and playgrounds in appropriate locations to serve community and neighborhood recreation needs.

Actions:

1. Joint Meeting. Meet with officials from the cities, townships and school districts to explore potential park and recreation expansion projects that they would like to see happen over the next ten to twenty years.
2. Grey Eagle Park Expansion. Support efforts by the school district and/or the City of Grey Eagle to acquire the 10 acres of land located adjacent to the school playfields.
3. City of Staples Parks System Expansion. Work with the City of Staples and local groups to support the expansion of recreation facilities in the community’s parks system.
4. Potential Expansion Properties. Support efforts by city and school district officials to identify and inventory potential sites where existing city park or school playgrounds could be expanded. Provide mapping assistance and coordinate other technical services as appropriate.

Goal 4 – New Parks. Promote the development of new public parks and recreation facilities in the County to accommodate existing and future population needs.

Objective A – Countywide Park Dedication Program. Develop a park dedication program in cooperation with the townships and cities in the County to require new land development to support the acquisition of future public park sites through either parkland dedications or fees in lieu of as provided by Minnesota state law.

Actions:

1. Joint Meeting with Cities and Townships. Coordinate and facilitate a joint meeting(s) to review and discuss the park dedication requirements established in the state statutes. Develop a general approach or understanding as to how to utilize and coordinate the park dedication authorities provided to cities, townships and counties.
2. County Subdivision Regulations. Update the County subdivision regulations so that they require the provision of adequate land and facilities for parks, recreation and open space.

3. Municipal Subdivision Regulations. Support the updating and amending of city and township subdivision regulations so that they require the provision of adequate land and facilities for parks, recreation and open space.

Objective B – Future County Parks System. Develop an organizational framework and local support including the townships and cities from which the County can develop a more detailed parks system plan and policies.

Actions:

1. Willing Buyer – Willing Seller. Develop a policy that guides the future acquisition of land for public parks based on a “willing buyer – willing seller” approach.
2. Public Land Acquisition Guidelines. Develop a set of guidelines to help guide the process of acquiring land for public uses and activities.
3. Potential Future County Park Sites List. Develop and maintain a list of potential sites that could be future county park sites. A list of potential sites identified by members of the CAC was started in this recreational planning process.
4. County Parks Facility Study. Develop a study that provides more detailed planning of the County’s future parks system.

Objective C – Future Municipal Parks. Support efforts by township and city officials to more comprehensively plan their parks and recreation system to better meet their community’s future needs.

Actions:

1. Park Inventories. Distribute copies of the maps prepared and information collected as a part of the County’s recreational planning process to the cities and townships in the County.
2. GIS Mapping. Support efforts by the Todd County GIS Department to provide mapping services to the cities and townships in the County to support the local recreational planning needs.