

ROOT RIVER PARK **MASTER PLAN**

ADOPTED BY OLMSTED COUNTY BOARD
NOVEMBER 2, 2021



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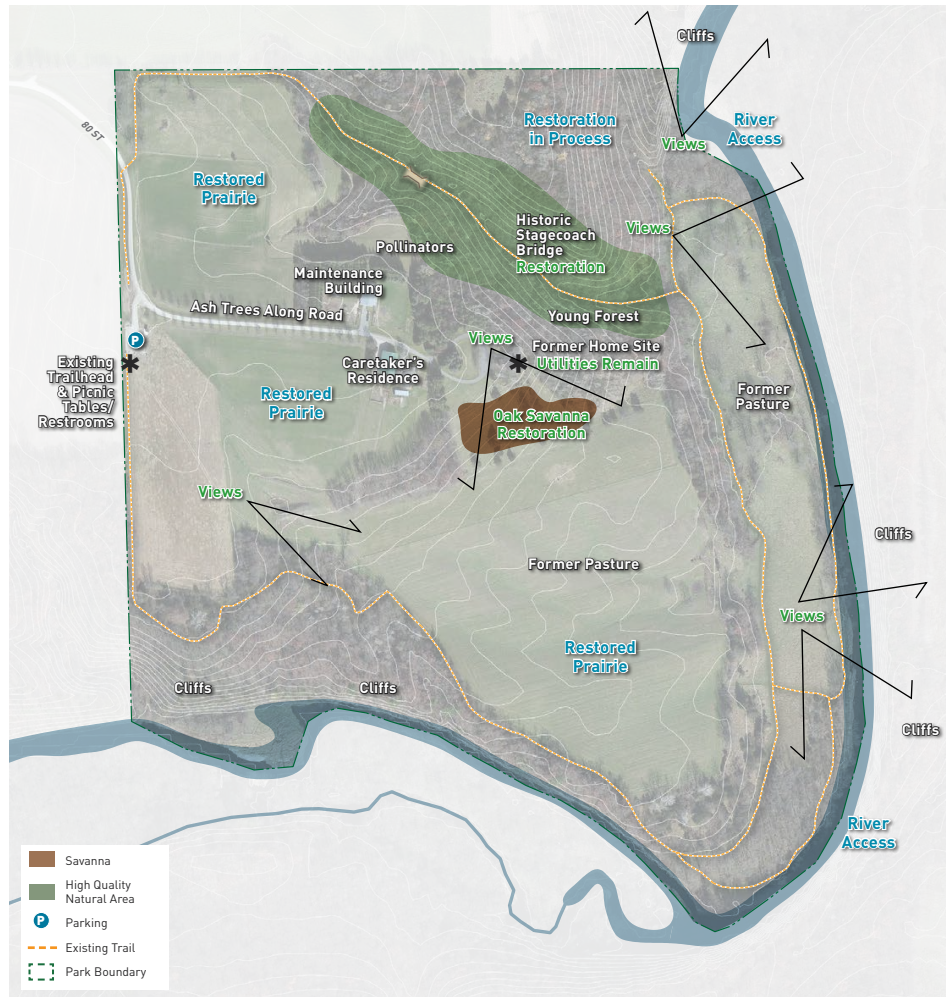
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Executive Summary



ROOT RIVER PARK

Vision

Root River Park is a high quality natural resource based park with beautiful views of the natural landscape, peaceful hiking trails, Root River access, and picnic areas surrounded by nature.

Established

Fully accessible in 2009

Size

126 acres of prairie and woods along the Root River Valley

Amenities

- » Picnic
- » Equestrian trails
- » Natural hiking trails
- » Cross country ski trails
- » Apiary and research
- » Historic Stagecoach bridge

Root River Park is one of the newest additions to the Olmsted County Park system. The park consists of rolling fields, trails along wooded slopes, and the winding Root River. This document is intended to guide future investment and development in this park, making Root River a destination for recreation and natural resources.

The Root River Park Master Plan seeks to plan and prioritize for the next 20 years of park development, operations, maintenance, and programming. The plan will also serve as a guide for natural resource management. The plan was developed to meet the requirements of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) in order to attain regional designation and seek funding for future improvements.

PROJECT PROCESS

This master plan was created as part of a larger project to identify future needs for the Olmsted County Park System as a whole and for each individual park unit within the County. During the spring and summer of 2016, the project staff and consultant team worked to develop plans for Chester Woods Park, Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo, Root River Park, Lake Zumbro Park

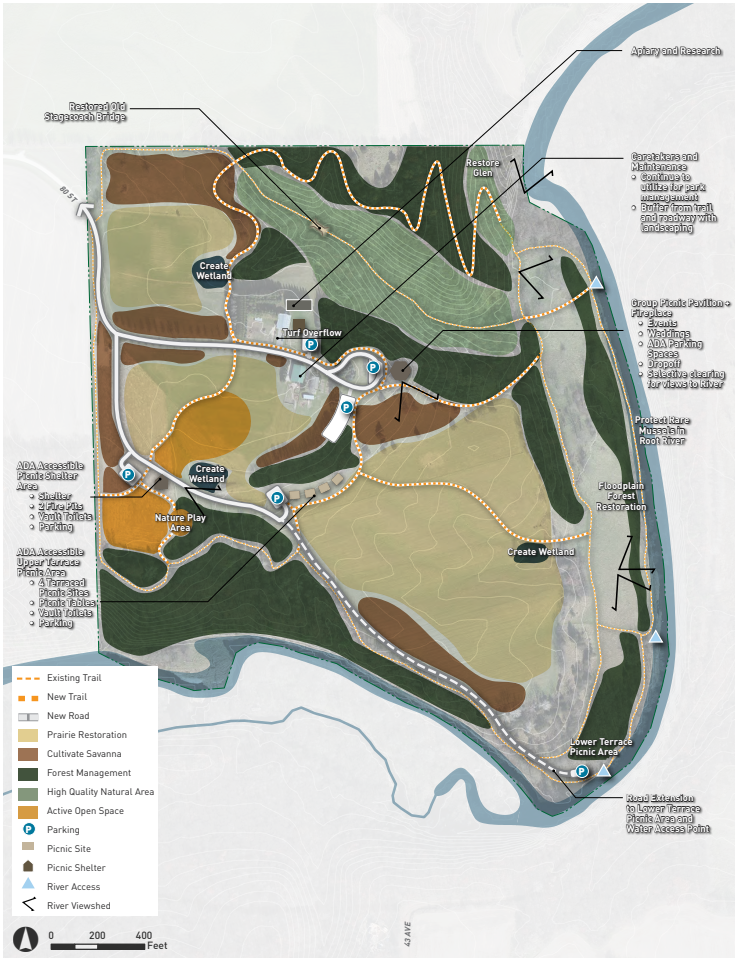
(formerly White Bridge Fishing Pier), and the Olmsted County Park System by analyzing existing conditions, conducting community engagement, and developing concepts.

DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

Future improvements at Root River Park include low impact development in order to allow the natural beauty of the site to be the focus of the park. Activities such as picnicking and hiking will be the primary program of the park.

Planned improvements for Root River Park include:

- » Restoration of Old Stagecoach Bridge (scheduled for rehab in 2021)
- » Event Picnic Pavilion at site of former home
- » 2 ADA accessible picnic areas, one with a shelter and one with picnic sites for a table and fire pit
- » 3 river access points with strategically placed natural features that allow/promote wading (i.e. limestone blocks where users can remove shoes and step into shallow water)
- » Addition of natural surface trails through prairie and glen
- » Long-term extension of road to create new picnic area by river
- » Consolidation of maintenance buildings and yards
- » Plantings to support Apiary
- » Creation of wetlands to facilitate stormwater management and improved animal habitat
- » Oak Savanna restoration
- » Glen restoration in northern pocket of park
- » Floodplain forest restoration in lowlands near river
- » Invasive species management and control program





CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This document presents the master plan for Root River Park in Olmsted County, Minnesota. Root River Park is the newest Olmsted County Park, with the initial land purchase taking place in 2007. The park consists of rolling fields, trails along wooded slopes, and the winding Root River.

The master plan consists of the following sections:

- » The **Introduction** gives an overview of the park and defines the process undertaken to complete the plan.
- » **Existing Conditions** identifies existing conditions, issues, and opportunities.
- » The **Vision** section outlines the system vision and values, summarizes public input, and describes demographics, recreation trends, economic trends, and public health values that support the vision.
- » The **Development Master Plan** describes desired park improvements in the next 10-20 years.
- » The **Natural Resources Plan** defines the ongoing management and future restoration strategies for ecological and land resources.
- » The **Implementation, Management, and Sustainability Plan** establishes programming, operations, maintenance, and implementation strategies, processes, and priorities. This section also contains cost estimates for future improvements.

ROOT RIVER PARK

Established

Original 90 acres purchased in 2007. The park was fully accessible to the public in 2009. The park was expanded in 2013 with the acquisition of 35 acres of additional land.

Size

126 acres of prairie and woods along the Root River Valley

Annual Revenue

None

Amenities

Picnic, natural hiking trails, equestrian trails, backcountry ski trails

Staffing

One volunteer caretaker resides on the property.

Master Plan Purpose

This master plan has the following objectives:

- » Inventory the existing conditions and facilities of each park and analyze issues and opportunities within the parks
- » Meet the requirements of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) in order to attain regional designation and to seek funding for future improvements
- » Engage the community in order to learn about and plan for issues, opportunities, and future improvements
- » Plan and prioritize for the next 20 years of park development, operations, maintenance, and programming
- » Plan for long-term natural resource management within the park land
- » Provide a user-friendly guide for future decision making

Project Process

This master plan was created as part of a larger project to identify future needs for the Olmsted County Park System as a whole and for each individual park unit within the County. During the spring and summer of 2016, the project staff and consultant team worked to develop plans for Chester Woods Park, Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo, Root River Park, Lake Zumbro Park (formerly White Bridge Fishing Pier), and the Olmsted County Park System. The following process was used for all parks:

- » Organization & Inventory (April): background research, site visits, and field inventory
- » Site and Needs Assessment (May): stakeholder engagement, public meeting, and summarization of issues and opportunities
- » Concept Development (May-June): preliminary concepts developed for each park, and reviewed by staff, Park Commission and public
- » Prepare Master Plans and Approvals (July-September): cost estimates and implementation plans are prepared, master plan document is assembled, draft documents reviewed by staff, Park Commission, and public, and approved by County Board.
- » Parks staff will review the master plans on a 5-year cycle to make necessary updates to each of the plans.

PARKS ARE OLMSTED COUNTY'S HIGHEST RATED SERVICE

Parks and recreation was rated as the top county service in the 2008, 2013, and 2016 Olmsted County Resident Surveys

Overview of Olmsted County Park System

Olmsted County first provided park services in 1968 when the State of Minnesota turned Oronoco State Park over to county management (note - Oronoco Park is now owned by the City of Oronoco). From that initial 33 acres, the system has grown to more than 2,200 acres in multiple sites across the county. In addition to Chester Woods, the Olmsted County Park System includes Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo, Root River Park, and Lake

GREATER MINNESOTA REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was established by the Minnesota State Legislature in 2013 in order to approve designation of regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota and to make funding recommendations to the legislature regarding park and trail projects. The funding is provided by the Minnesota Legacy Amendment Parks and Trails Fund. Olmsted County aims to attain regional park designation for Root River Park using this master plan.

Zumbro Park. In addition, Olmsted County owns Mayowood Corridor, an improved trail operated by the City of Rochester. Olmsted County parks offers a variety of natural resource based outdoor recreation and educational opportunities to southeastern Minnesota.

MISSION

The mission of Olmsted County Parks is to foster an appreciation of the natural world through environmental education, natural resource management, and public participation in the stewardship of our park lands.

VISION

Learning life-long lessons in natural places

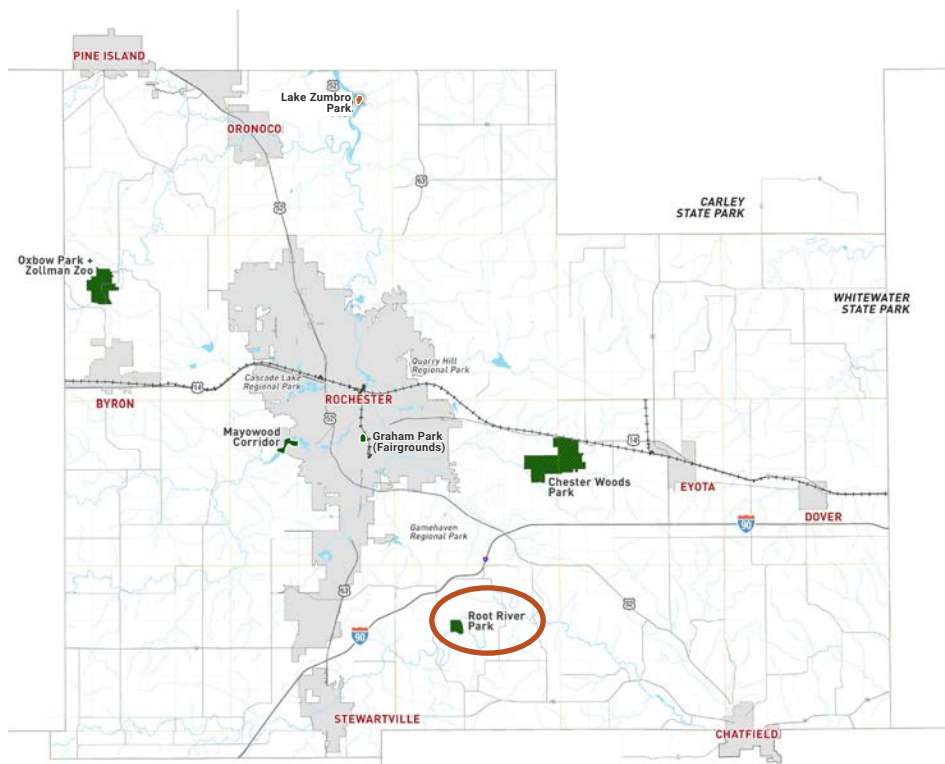


Figure 1. County Facilities

Park Overview & Description

The original purchase of 90 acres for Olmsted County's third natural resource-based park was an example of an effort now articulated in the Legacy Plan related to the collaboration of multiple agencies in the pursuit of natural resource-based park land for public use. The original 90 acres of Root River Park, purchased in 2007, was funded with the support of 4 different entities that included Olmsted County, the Department of Natural Resources, funds from a private endowment, and the Trust For Public Land, a non-government agency dedicated to assisting government agencies in securing land for the greater public good. In the fall of 2013 the People of Olmsted County purchased the final 35 acres of this park parcel that includes a house, two maintenance sheds, the well, and other in- place infrastructure assets.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Root River Park is located on 80th Street, approximately 2 miles South of Simpson, MN and County State Aid Highway 1 in Pleasant Grove Township.

CLASSIFICATION

Natural Resource Based Regional Park

TOTAL ACREAGE

126 acres

Root River Park, which today encompasses 126 acres, is separated from 290 acres of State Forest Land by the Root River. Together, the two public holdings encompass nearly 3 miles of shoreline bracketing the Root River on both sides. Olmsted County and DNR officials are presently in meetings to develop a strategic plan that will allow further collaboration to leverage and combine these acreages into a seamless and cohesive park and recreation area that will broaden the use and access of the combined parcels, with a collective sum of 415 acres.

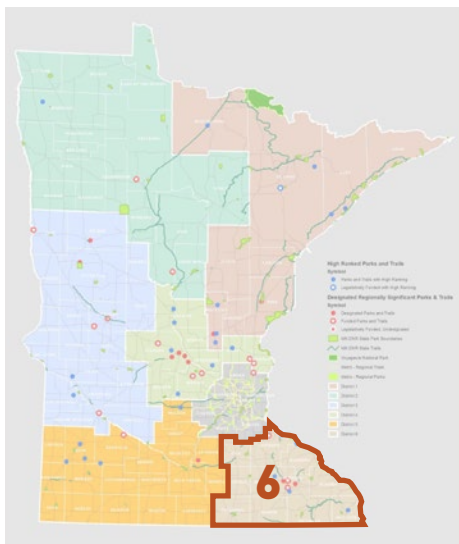
Since its purchase, Root River has fast become a favorite for outdoor enthusiasts from Southeastern Minnesota who seek hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, fishing, bird watching, kite flying, berry collecting, and other passive recreational opportunities within the park's borders. It is anticipated that even more recreational amenities will be added if the two land pieces can be managed in collaboration with one another. Expanded potential might include but will not be limited to mountain biking, equestrian use, semi-primitive camping, and hunting.

The stunning natural features of the landscape at Root River Park include nearly a mile of shoreline on the pristine river, exposed limestone bluffs towering over the lowlands of the park, hardwood forests and restored prairies. Visitor facilities include parking, information kiosk, picnic tables, portable restroom, and a 2 mile trail that includes an important historical section of the Dubuque Stagecoach Trail and Territory Road, constructed circa 1840's and 1850's. A special feature of the Dubuque Trail within the park's boundary is the artisan constructed limestone bridge, still in use to this day by hikers.

Regional Significance

Given Rochester's projected growth in population and tourism related to the Destination Medical Center Development Plan, the stated need for additional parklands and natural areas to serve the next generation of residents in the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails identified District 6 is even more poignant. Root River Park is located just 12 miles away from the City's core and within easy reach of the entire District 6 area due to its proximity to major trunk highways.

With the growing populations also comes an expanding desire from residents for more space, and the opportunity to increase their outdoor use experiences. With the potential collaborative efforts and the joining of our respective strengths, Olmsted County and the Department of Natural Resources, would give users an even broader palate of activities to enjoy on County Park Land, and on the less restrictive recreational activities allowed on State Forest Land. Additionally, there is great potential for our agencies to manage our respective acreages in concert with one another, join together in trail development on land, and create a stronger river recreation program related to canoeing and kayaking.



The diagram above is taken from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission "2016 System Plan and Work Plan." The diagram identifies District 6 in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

Regional Context

The base population served by Root River Park is the region of southeastern Minnesota, western Wisconsin, and Northern Iowa. As of 2019, Olmsted County reported 158,000 citizens. The park is just south of I-94 and U.S. Hwy 52. The projected population growth for Olmsted County indicates that from 2010 to 2040, the County will add over 70,000 residents, which will take it from its 2010 population of 144,248 to 215,870 people in 2040 (U.S. Decennial Census and Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department is the source of the information).

In 2015, 2016, and 2020, traffic counters were placed at the parking lot entrance to begin establishing initial counts and trends for visitors to the park. While data collection is in its early stages, it's important to note that the long-established state land adjoining the park has long been utilized by outdoor enthusiasts. With the addition of the parkland on the opposite side of the River, users comment that they often utilize both parcels in different fashions during their outings to the area. The engaging appeal of the park's natural history and the changing of seasons leads to frequent return visits to the park by many of our park visitors.

Figure 2. City, County, and State Park and Open Space Lands in Olmsted County

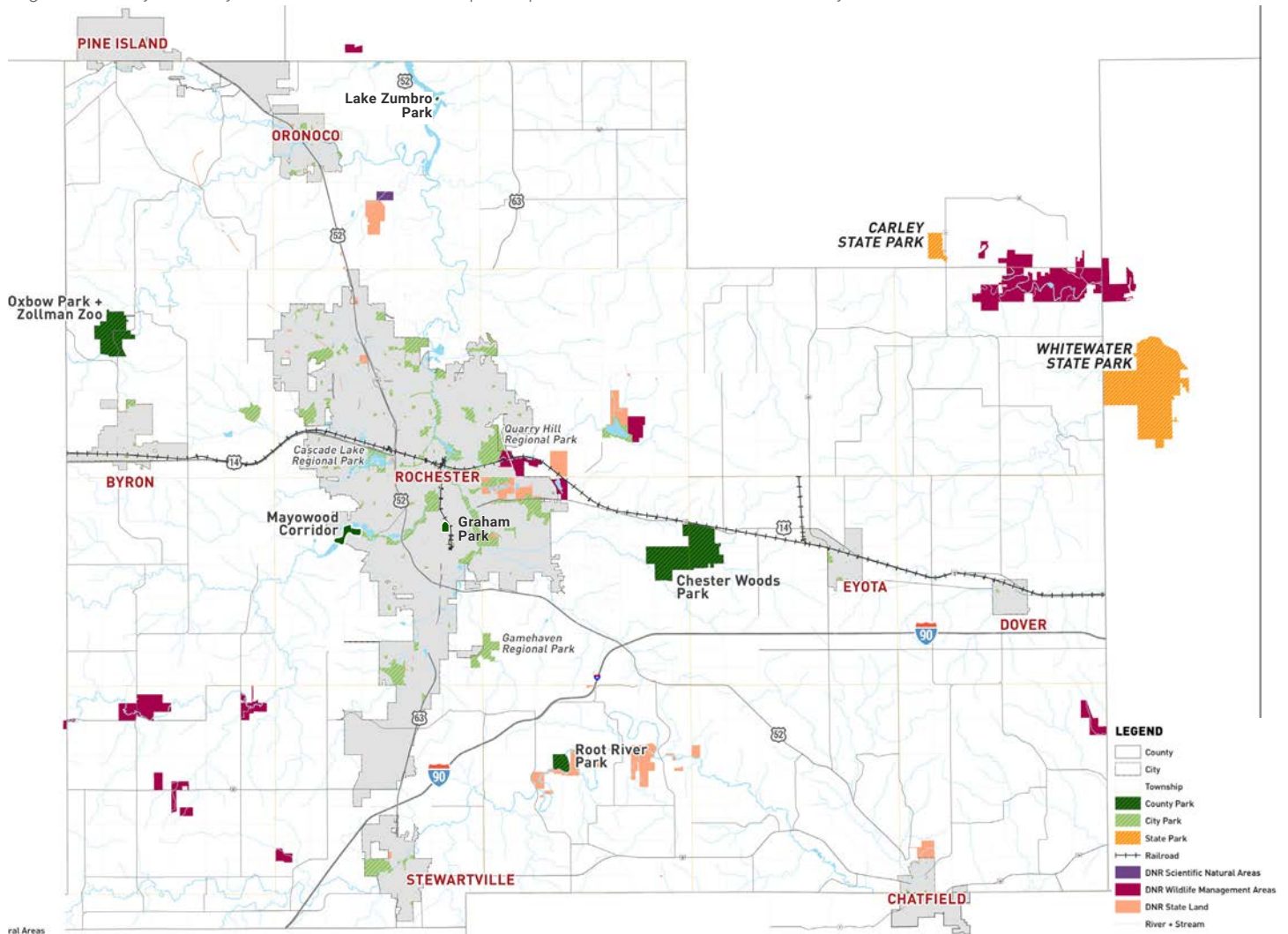


Table 1. City, County, and State Park and Open Space within Olmsted County Lands Inventory

	Activity	City Community/ Athletic/ Neighborhood Parks	Gamehaven (under development)	Quarry Hill	Cascade Lake (under development)	Oxbow	Chester Woods	Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest (public & private lands)	White- water State Park	Carley State Park	Root River	Oronoco Prairie SNA	Multiple WMAs
	Jurisdiction	Multi	Rochester	Rochester	Rochester	OC	OC	DNR	DNR	DNR	OC	DNR	DNR
	Acres	3,602	260	320	246	620	1,333	1,016,204 total (~34,500 Olmsted County)	563	209	126	80	5,897
PASSIVE RECREATION	Nature Observation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Picnicking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
	Canoe/ Kayaking	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		
	Fishing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
	Hunting						X	X					X
TRAILS	Hiking/Walking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	X Country Skiing/ Snowshoeing	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Horseback Riding						X	X			X		
LODGING	Camping					X	X	X	X	X			
NATURE CENTER/ZOO	Nature Center/ Zoo	X		X		X							
ACTIVE RECREATION	Swimming Beach	X			X		X		X				
	Playground	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
	Archery	X	X										
	Mountain Biking	X	X					X					
	Disc Golf	X	X										
	Athletic Fields/ Courts	X		X									

← MORE DEVELOPED LESS DEVELOPED →



CHAPTER 2: **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

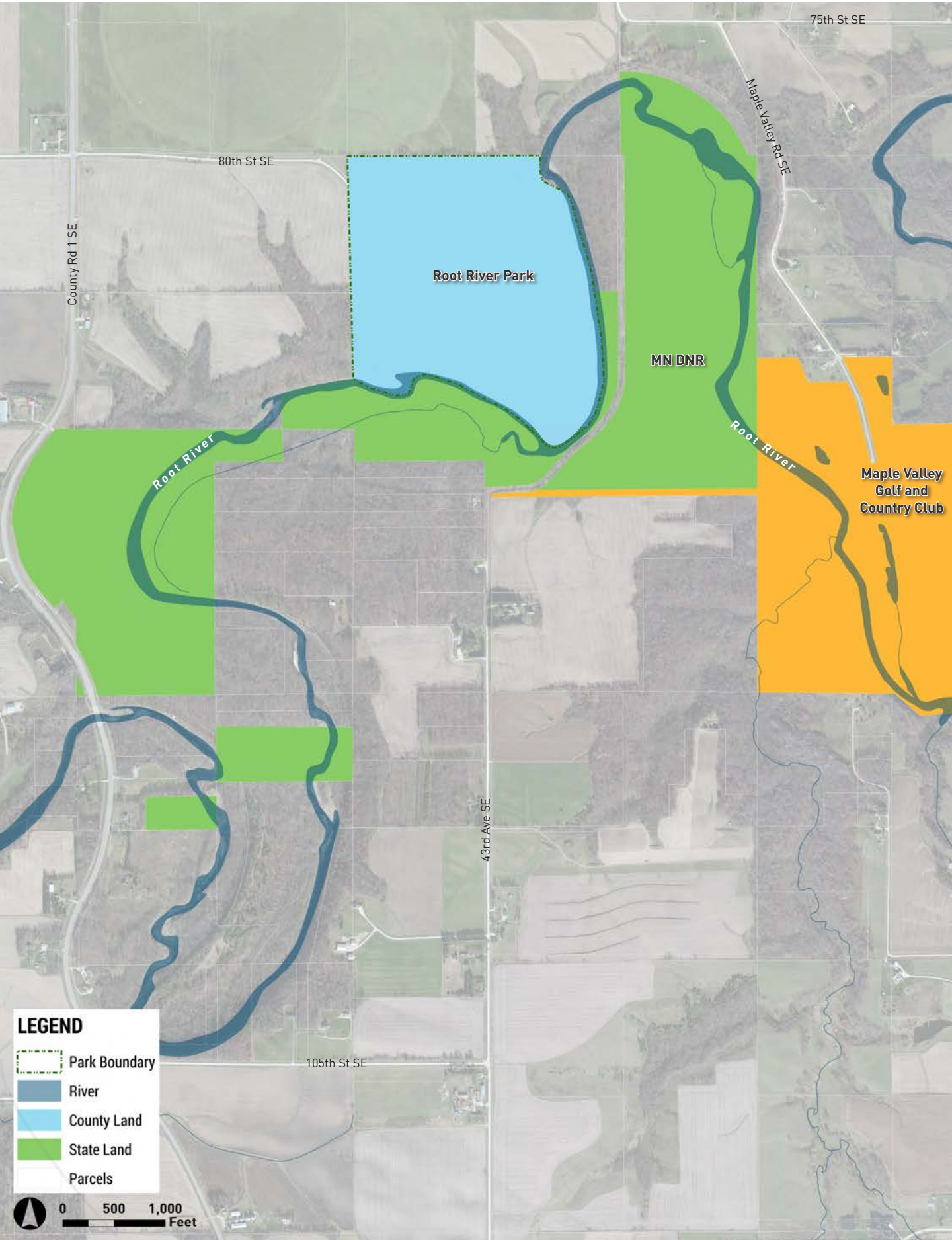
Site Location & Context

Root River Park is a 126-acre county park located in southern Olmsted County. The park is approximately twelve miles southeast of central Rochester, off of County State Aid Highway 1, south of Interstate 90. The county road serves as the main connection between the park and the City of Rochester.

The park is adjacent to State Park land owned by the DNR. Combined, the two park systems cover nearly three miles of shoreland of the Root River on both sides. The DNR has voiced their interest in collaborating on future natural and recreational offerings in and around Root River Park (See Appendix). To the west and north of Root River Park are agricultural and rural residential lands.

Root River Park is one of the newest additions to the Olmsted County Park system. The park was acquired in 2007 but not fully accessible to the public until 2009. Because of its proximity to DNR State Park land, the long-term goal for the site will be to collaborate in facilities, programs, and infrastructure to create one large area for recreational use in southern Olmsted County. Until then, the park will feature more passive recreational uses than some of the other county parks; these uses include natural hiking, picnicking, and cross country skiing.

Figure 3. Root River Park Context



A NATURAL AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

Olmsted County Park's commitment is to Resource Management and Land Stewardship. That commitment will ensure that every effort will be made to protect the natural treasures of this park. An extensive flora and fauna inventory has been completed and the acreage and presence of the park offers further protection to the roughly 900 acres of public and private land around the park which the County Biological Survey for Olmsted County has determined is the most biologically significant area left in Olmsted County.

The Root River provides many opportunities for recreational enjoyment related to its accessibility from the banks of the parkland such as canoeing, kayaking, wading, and birding. The limestone cliffs above the park offer spectacular views of nesting turkey vultures, and other cliff dwelling bird species: bald eagles, osprey, and other birds of prey are reported to be seen regularly. Of particular note is the Root River's popularity as a great resource for small mouth bass, making it an active and favorite area for citizens who specifically enjoy small stream fishing.

RECREATION AMENITIES AND FACILITIES OVERVIEW

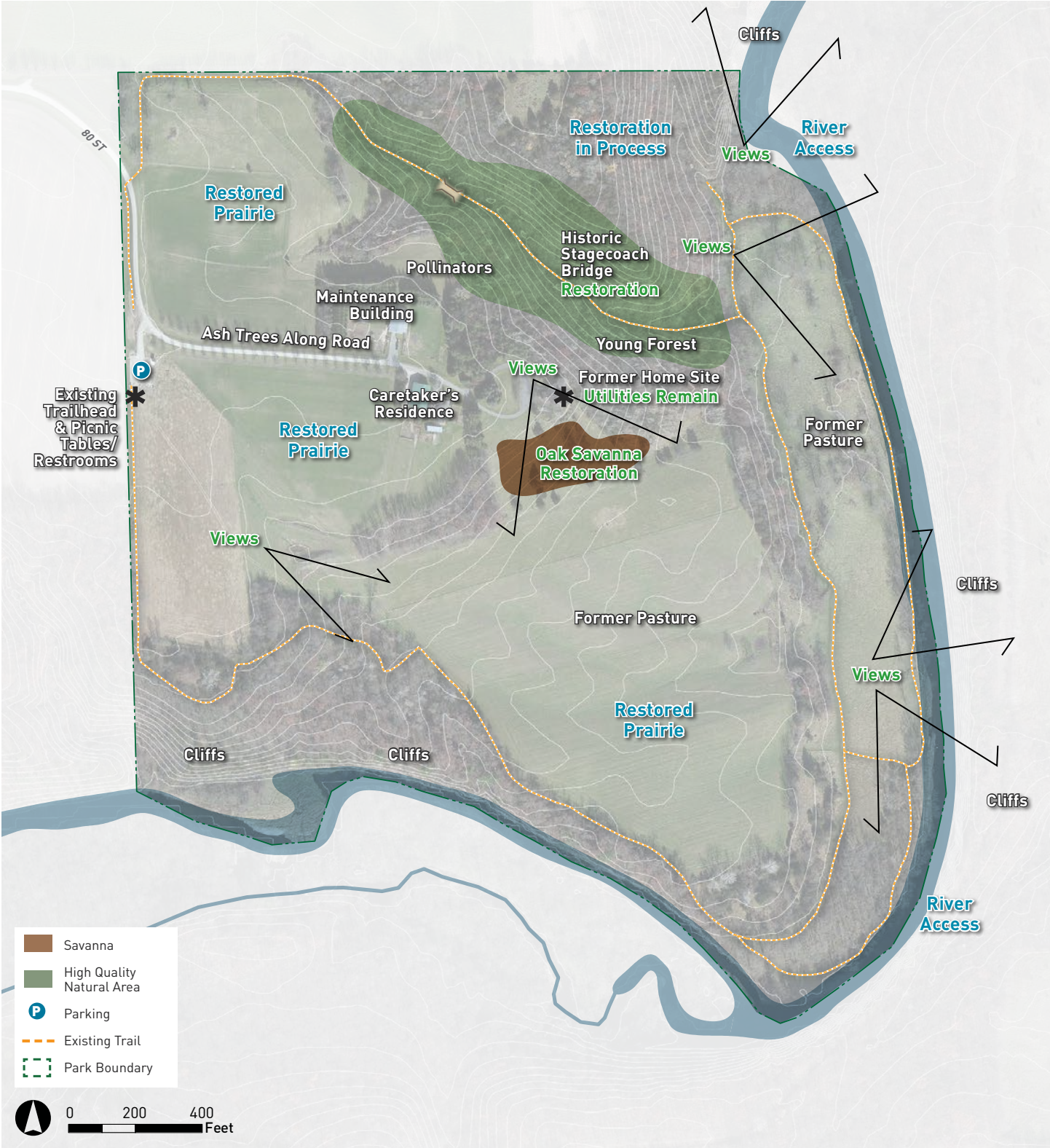
Root River Park, located in Pleasant Grove Township features Olmsted County's most recent efforts in securing public, natural lands for the greater good. Since its purchase, Root River has fast become a favorite for outdoor enthusiast's from southeastern Minnesota who seek hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, fishing, bird watching, kite flying, berry collecting, and other passive recreational opportunities within the park's borders. Future connection of the park to the adjacent DNR State Forest land will present additional opportunities for recreational amenities.

The stunning natural features of the landscape at Root River Park include nearly a mile of shoreline on the pristine river, exposed limestone bluffs towering over the lowlands of the park, hardwood forests, and restored prairies. Visitor facilities include parking, information kiosk, picnic tables, portable restroom, and a 2-mile trail that includes an important historical section of the Dubuque Stagecoach Trail and Territory Road, constructed circa 1840's and 1850's. A special feature of the Dubuque Trail within the park's boundary is the artisan constructed limestone bridge still in use to this day by hikers. In due course, the bridge will be examined by historical architects in the hopes of restoring it to its original condition.

Existing Facility List

Picnicking, 2 miles of hiking and equestrian trails (natural), winter fat-tire biking, and cross-country skiing trails, restrooms/sanitation building, roads and parking areas.

Figure 4. Existing Conditions/Issues & Opportunities



Access

- » There is one entrance to the park, via a gravel road, 80th Street SE, which connects to County State Aid Highway 1. The gravel drive brings visitors to a parking area with the existing trailhead and picnic tables and restrooms.
- » Further down the drive is the existing maintenance buildings and caretaker's residence. The former residence home was removed in 2020, leaving the pristine views of the park for the future event picnic pavilion.
- » The cliffs on the southern edge of the Root River, as well as the river itself, make alternative accesses to the park difficult.

Trails – Equestrian, Hiking

- » There are existing natural hiking trails within the park, including a two-mile loop from the trailhead. These trails are also open to equestrian users with a permit.
- » Currently, on-leash dogs are only allowed along the main road of the park and in the kiosk picnic area.

Management and Operations

The County currently operates Root River Park, but because of its proximity to the DNR State Park Lands, planners hope that the County and the DNR can collaborate on facilities, maintenance, planning, and other features for the whole area in the future.

PROGRAMMING

As a passive recreation center, very little programming has been established at Root River Park. In addition to summer naturalist programs led by staff and volunteers, the park regularly offers ADA accessible wagon rides to allow seniors, disabled, and families with small children greater park access. As visitor numbers increase, staff naturalists from Oxbow and Chester Woods Parks will continue to increase public programs based on the unique features and wildlife of the park. More passive programming will be implemented in the form of signage throughout the park highlighting the stagecoach trail, natural features, and wildlife.

NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Root River Park has ecological and geological features that make it a unique destination in southeast Minnesota. The North Branch of the Root River runs through the area, giving the park its name and creating its most precious resource. Limestone cliffs adorn the southern shore of the river, making it a distinct feature of the park. Former pasture lands provide the opportunity for open prairie restoration. The Root River is prone to flooding, and given the cliffs on the southern side, it floods into the park. Those areas within the 100-year floodplain should be less developed and preserved.

Root River Park contains forest, floodplain, and prairie plant communities that provide critical habitat and refuge for a variety of flora and fauna. The Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) identifies the southwestern

ROOT RIVER PARK NATURAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

- » *Stunning vertical limestone cliffs along the southern shore of the river*
- » *High topographic relief from bluff tops and forested gullies to prairies and floodplain forests support a variety of plant communities*
- » *Several rare plant and animal species occur within the park*
- » *Rare mussel species occur within the river*
- » *Southwestern region of the park rated as an area of high biodiversity significance by the Minnesota County Biological Survey*
- » *Diverse habitats support a variety of resident and migratory birds, pollinator species, and upland and aquatic mammals*
- » *Great fishing opportunities within the river, especially smallmouth bass*

region of the park as an area of high biodiversity significance. Certain areas within the park harbor rare plant and animal species included in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) list of endangered, threatened, and species of special concern, and Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). County staff is currently working on restoring the grassland/prairie plant communities within the park.

Topography

The greatest topographic relief occurs within the northern and southwestern regions of the park, as can be seen in Figure 6. The steep slopes and valleys influence environmental and climatic conditions that support the various plant communities found within the park. Bluff ridges are common along the Root River and two forested gullies occur in the north-central region of the park. The relatively flat areas support large open grasslands, including the low terrace along the river. Occasional lowland depressions along the river floodplain contain isolated wetlands. (see Figure 5 on page 13)

Surficial Geology

Root River Park supports rare plant communities dependent on rare rock formations specific only to the Driftless area of Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Known as algific talus slopes comprised of limestone and dolomite rock types. These algific talus slopes, of limestone and dolomite rock, occur on steep slopes deep in forests where a colder microclimate is created from cool air venting out of the rock caves and crevasses. The extremely dense forest prevents the sun from shining through and warming the earth and rocks. Colder microclimates promote growth of rare plants that need the colder temperatures to survive. Two rare plants found in Root River Park along algific talus slopes are Canada Yew (*Taxus canadensis*) and Leedy's Roseroot (*Sedum rosea* var. *intergrifolium*).

The following surficial geology text is derived from the Minnesota Geological Survey. The surficial geology of the park includes floodplain alluvium, bedrock colluvium, glacial-age alluvium, and bedrock. Floodplain alluvium contains primarily silty sediment over sand with gravel present in places. Bedrock colluvium is comprised of hillslope deposits derived from bedrock and loess. Glacial-age alluvium contains stratified sand, gravelly sand, and gravel and overlies silty slackwater deposits in some areas. Bedrock may occur within 5 feet of the surface and is comprised of carbonate material.

Soils

The primary soils that occur include Mt. Carrol silt loam, Minneiska loam, and Brodale flaggy sandy loam. Small percentages of other soil units also occur within the park and are generally comprised of silt loam, flaggy loam, and silty clay loam.

Figure 5. Topography

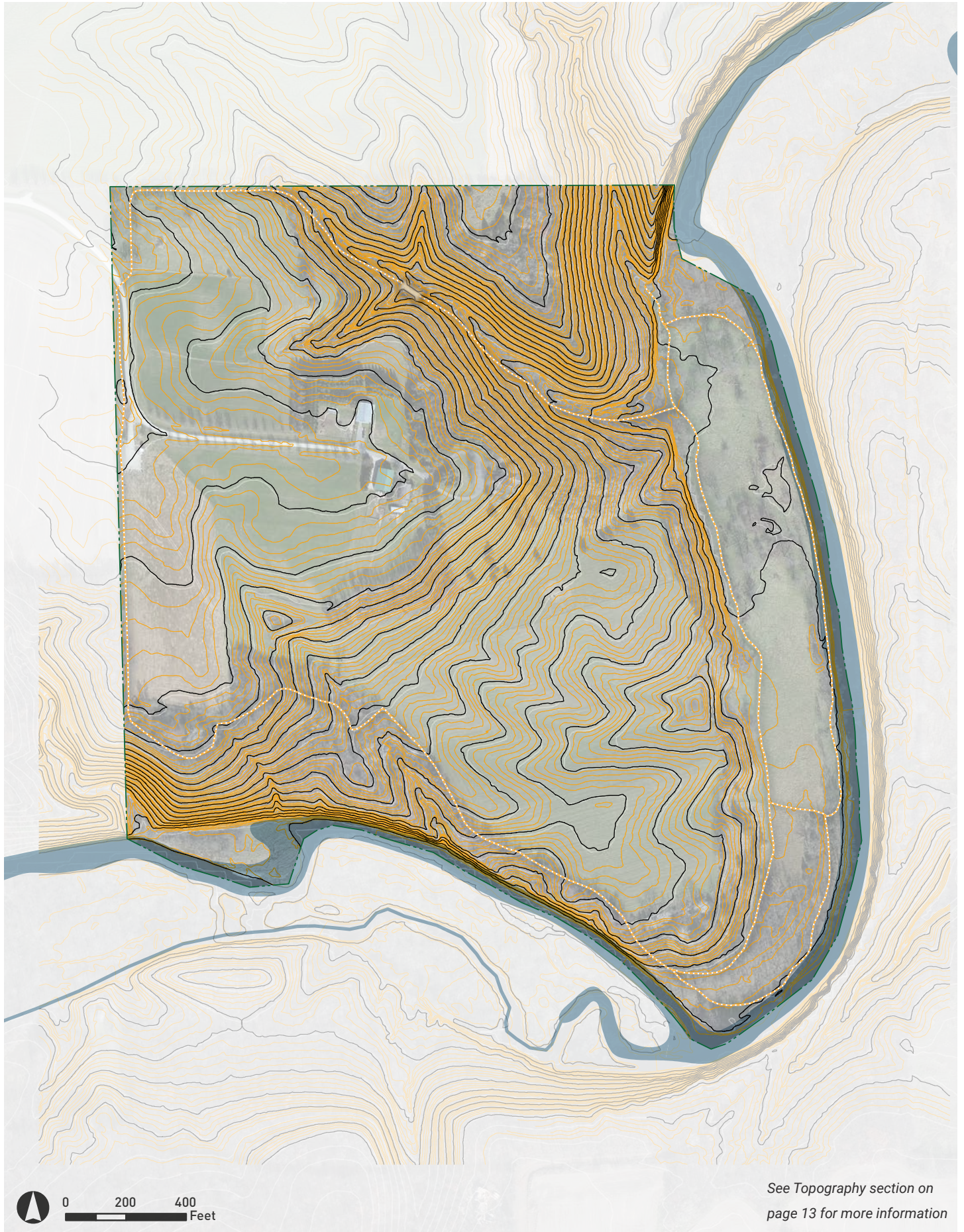
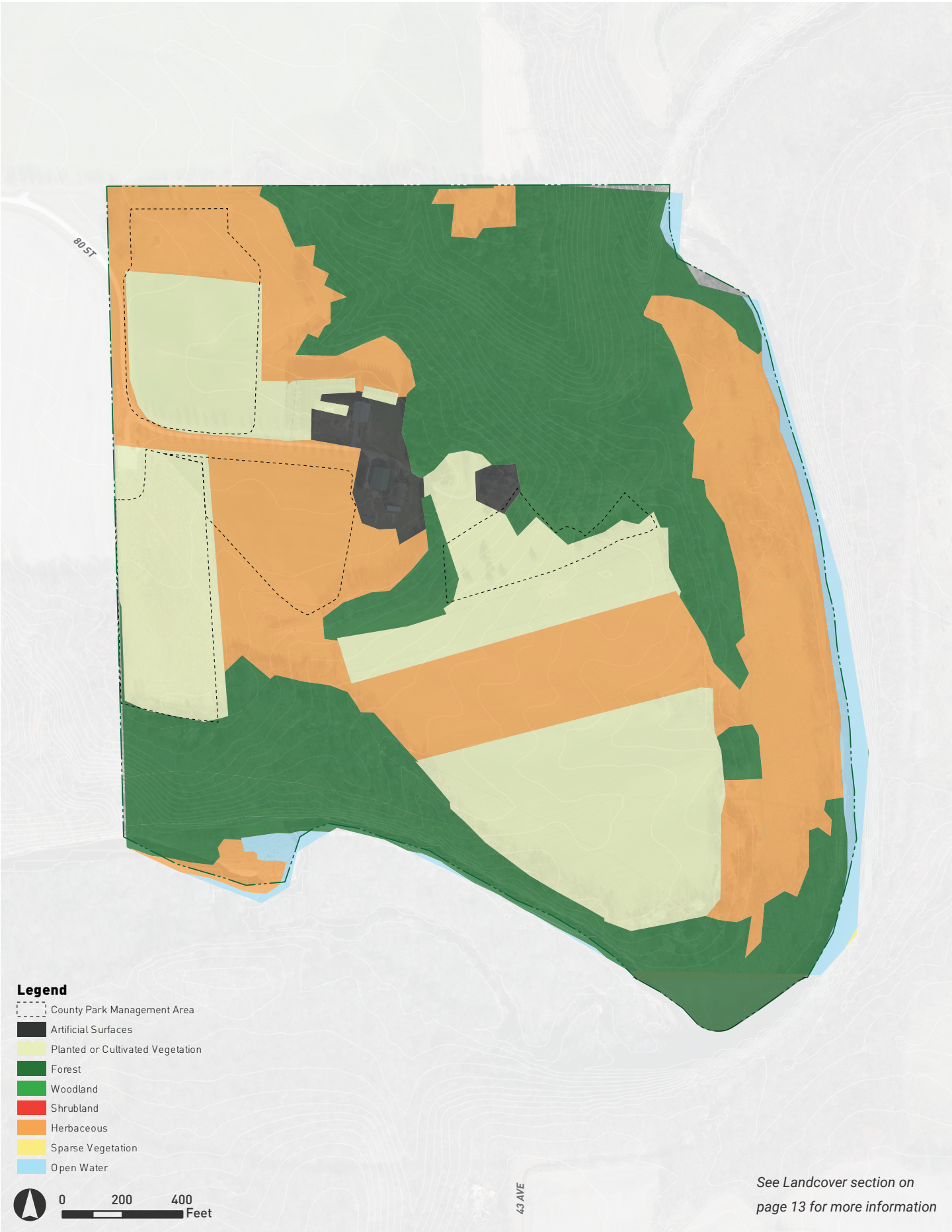


Figure 6. Minnesota Land Cover and Classification System (MLCCS)



Landcover

According to the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS), the park contains a variety of plant communities including cultivated herbaceous vegetation, grassland with sparse deciduous trees, deciduous forest, oak forest mesic subtype, white pine forest, and saturated graminoid vegetation. Adjacent land use around the park includes state forest, agricultural fields, and occasional farmsteads. Figure 6 on page 14 displays the extent of each MLCCS category within the park.

Wildlife and Rare Features

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) identifies several rare plants and animals within the park. The rare plant is Snow Trillium (*Trillium nivale*). Rare animals (mussels) include Fluted-shell (*Lasmigona costata*), Ellipse (*Venustaconcha ellipsiformis*), and Elktoe (*Alasmodonta marginata*).

Root River

The Root River forms the south and east boundaries of the park. This river reach is a warm water stream identified by the State of Minnesota as the North Branch Root River (AUID 0704008-716). According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency this reach of the Root River (much longer than the park itself) does not support a healthy macroinvertebrate community. High turbidity levels and fair in-stream habitat are the main causes that stem from stream bank erosion and sedimentation. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources there are many species of fish inhabiting the river including smallmouth bass, channel catfish, rock bass, sunfish, crappies, and rough fish. Many bird species inhabit the river corridor as well as semi aquatic animals such as beaver and otter. Despite the somewhat degraded conditions reported for the entire river reach, the section of the Root River within the park is in excellent condition. It provides habitat, fishing opportunities and fantastic views of rapidly flowing water against an impressive exposed limestone bluff.

HISTORY

The original 90 acres of Root River Park, purchased in 2007, was funded with the support of 4 different entities that included Olmsted County, the Department of Natural Resources, funds from a private endowment, and the Trust For Public Land, a non-government agency dedicated to assisting government agencies in securing land for the greater public good. In the fall of 2013 the People of Olmsted County purchased the final 35 acres of this park parcel that included a house, two maintenance sheds, the well, and other in-place infrastructure assets. In 2019, a 1-acre parcel at the southern tip of the park was purchased from the DNR. This parcel was contiguous with the Root River land, but across the river from the rest of the DNR land so it made sense to acquire that piece as a part of the county owned land.



Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- » Absence of full-time staff at the park limits programming, development and enforcement within the park.
- » Several areas of the park require resource management activities such as invasive species removal and habitat restoration.

Opportunities

- » Beautiful vistas overlooking the river and the limestone cliffs throughout the park
- » The historic Stagecoach Bridge is a beautiful feature within the park and its restoration could ensure its significance into the future
- » South of the existing home lies an area primed for Oak Savanna restoration
- » River access points for long-term future canoe/kayak launches exist
- » The adjacency of State Park Lands through the DNR provide possible opportunities for collaboration and expansion of the entire area



CHAPTER 3: **VISION & PUBLIC VALUES**

System Mission, Vision, and Values

As part of its mission, the Olmsted County Parks Commission developed a set of Planning Guidelines and Values to guide the development, management, and operations of the system. The mission, vision, and guidelines and value statements provided the foundation for the development of concepts for each park.

MISSION

The mission of Olmsted County Parks is to foster an appreciation of the natural world through environmental education, natural resource management, and public participation in the stewardship of our park lands.

VISION

Learning life-long lessons in natural places

GUIDELINES AND VALUES STATEMENT

- » Prioritize outcome-based planning to improve natural resources, including consideration of those listed by State and/or Federal agencies, when found to be of significant value.

ROOT RIVER PARK ROLE IN OLMSTED COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

Natural resource based park focused on conserving the natural landscape and scenic views, preserving the historic Stagecoach Bridge, providing access to the Root River, and supporting community gathering.

- » Prioritize preservation of viewshed areas surrounding Olmsted County parks when making zoning and land purchase recommendations and decisions.
- » Prioritize acquisition of properties with special natural resources or historically significant structures.
- » Provide opportunities for people of all abilities and ethnicities to get outdoors and interact in sustainable ways with nature.
- » Place high value on preserving historical aspects of buildings and other features.
- » Balance broad community interests and uses with requests for specialized uses.
- » Plan corridors to connect to other natural resources in the area.
- » Maintain adequate staffing levels and quality employment, volunteer, and community service opportunities at Olmsted County parks.
- » Support current revenue sources and strategically consider future revenue sources.
- » Promote and maintain current county park unique features, resources, and dedicated missions.
- » Sustain and develop collaborative relationships with other local and regional agencies.
- » Encourage a strategy of concentrating infrastructure development within an area limited to no more than 20% of Olmsted County park acreage.
- » When acquiring new public land, consider acquisition or properties that would create access to current parks where feasible.
- » Develop collaborative arrangements with local recreation groups to seek, acquire, develop, and maintain appropriate properties for specialize uses.
- » Continue to use project population figures to drive planning for future park needs and purchases.

Local & Regional Demographic Information

Olmsted County is located in southeastern Minnesota, about a one hour drive south of the Twin Cities Metro Area. Rochester is the largest urban area, located in the center of the County. The rest of the County is mainly agricultural land use with some natural river valley areas, state forest land, and karst topography. A few other small cities and towns dot the landscape of the County. Interstate 90 and U.S. Hwy 52 cross through the County bringing national and regional commuters through the area. Western Wisconsin and northeastern Iowa are within 30 miles of the County and have similar land use and landscape patterns.

The population of the county is approximately 158,000, with almost 3/4 living in the city of Rochester. Other communities in the county include Byron, Stewartville, Eyota, Oronoco, Chatfield, Pine Island, and Dover, with the rest of the population being rural residents. Most of the County population is

white, with approximately 15% of the population being minorities, which is proportional with Minnesota as a whole. The median household income is \$76,951 (2019), which is about 8% higher than the Minnesota state median income, and 12% higher than the national average. Approximately 7% of the Olmsted County population is considered to be living in poverty, which is lower than both the state (9%) and national (10.5%) amounts.

Relevant Recreational Trends Information

AGING

As the baby boomer generation ages, there is a greater need for recreation that serves the senior population. Seniors tend to be interested in passive recreation, such as hiking, walking, and low impact active recreation, such as tennis and pickleball.

INCREASED DIVERSITY

The majority of the population in Olmsted County is white. However, immigrant populations are increasing in higher numbers than people who have been here for generations. These immigrant populations tend to be interested in picnicking and large family gatherings at natural, outdoor locations.

SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

With the increased attention paid toward climate change and sustainability, people are generally more concerned with the health of their surrounding environment. There is a high interest in Olmsted County for natural area conservation, preservation, and restoration. People are also interested in saving energy, using resources wisely, and using renewable resources. There has also been an increase in the amount of 100-year storms and natural disasters due to climate change – planning for natural areas and development that can withstand impacts due to these storms is key to resilient parks that will last for generations to come.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Nearly one in three adult Minnesotans are considered obese; heart conditions, anxiety, and stress are on the rise; and costly gym memberships are even less attractive post-pandemic. Covid-19 opened up many people's eyes to the benefits of outdoor recreation, a trend which looks to continue. Root River Park offers miles of hiking trails and programming to get kids and families outside and moving their bodies.

Olmsted County Parks was part of a core group that initiated the development of the SE MN Parks Rx organization. A subgroup of Park Rx



Precedent images representative of relevant recreational trends

America, SE MN Parks Rx equips health providers with the tools they need to give prescriptions to outdoor spaces that improve a patient's health and well-being. In collaboration with Mayo Clinic, Public Health, and other health care providers, the County parks system offers activities and ideas that providers can prescribe to their clients that fit a whole spectrum of abilities and needs.

Public Health Values

Root River Park offers Olmsted County and surrounding area residents many different opportunities to exercise and recreate in the outdoors: walking trails through woodland and prairie environments, picnicking, skiing, and horseback riding.

Olmsted County parks foster and encourage the stewardship of our natural environment. Research has shown that environmental stewardship and regular interaction with natural systems, including trees, water, parks, open space, and other people recreating, creates a sense of well-being among people. (Source: Erika Svendsen, PhD, Cultivating Health and Well-Being through Environmental Stewardship, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3222392/>)

Olmsted County parks supports clean land, water, and air by conserving and managing natural plant and water resources that contribute to a healthy ecological system. Poor air and water quality have been linked to many diseases and other negative health impacts on humans. As Mayo Clinic attracts people to the County who are not well and more sensitive to outside health impacts, the quality of natural areas and opportunities to recreate in clean air is important to the region.

Economic Development & Tourism Opportunities

The City of Rochester is home to the world renowned Mayo Clinic, which serves over 1 million people every year. (Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/about-mayo-clinic/facts-statistics>) Rochester is Minnesota's fastest growing community, with its major employers being Mayo Clinic and IBM. (Source: <http://raedi.com/rochester.html>) The city is also known for having a high quality of life.

Public Engagement

The project team sought input from park staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and the general public in order to incorporate as many perspectives and interests as possible. Following is a summary of input received during the process.

PARK STAKEHOLDERS, PARKS COMMISSION, AND STAFF INPUT

On April 5, 2016, a meeting was held with the Friends of Chester Woods and Friends of Oxbow to gain initial input on the Olmsted County park system and the issues and opportunities regarding Chester Woods, Oxbow, Root River, and White Bridge areas. These groups were also engaged at other points throughout the master planning process in order to gain input on concept ideas, recommendations, and the draft master plans.

- » Parks Commission Meeting on April 19, 2016
- » Staff and Project Team Charrette on May 3, 2016
- » Joint Meeting of the Olmsted County Parks Commission & City of Rochester Park Board on June 9, 2016
- » Parks Commission Meeting on June 21, 2016
- » Parks Commission Meeting on August 16, 2016

April 2016 Friends and Parks Commission Input

As the newest and least developed unit of the system there was not as much discussion about Root River as Chester Woods and Oxbow and Zollman Zoo. Issues and opportunities identified in the discussion included:

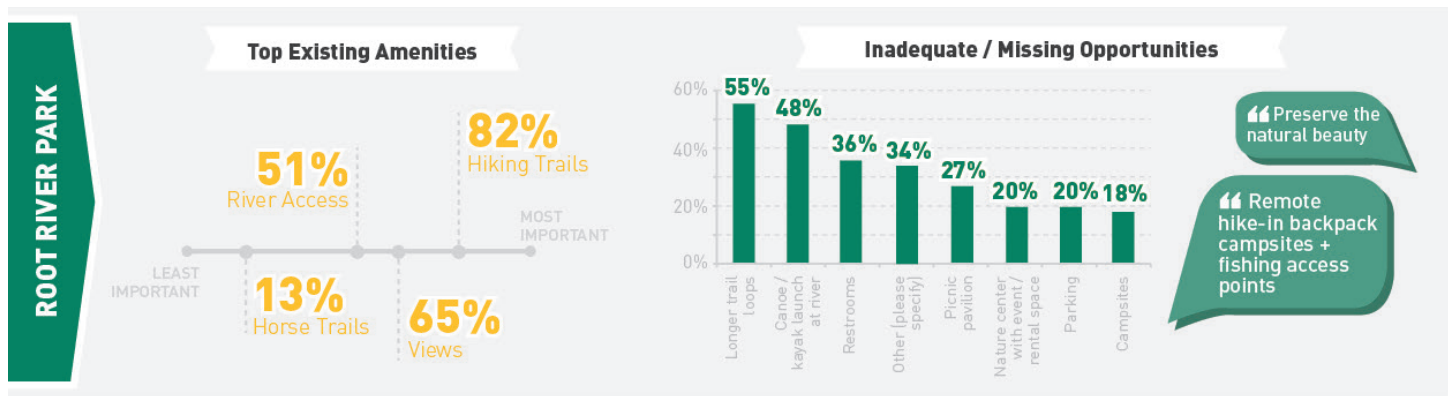
- » Opportunity to coordinate with the DNR
- » Complement don't duplicate facilities in other two parks
- » House in disrepair and likely cannot be economically renovated for public park purposes
- » Lower natural area has a different feel than other areas of the park
- » Wildflowers in spring are worth noting for visitors
- » Equine use would benefit from access to DNR lands

June 2016 Parks Commission Input on Preliminary Concepts

- » Preference for less development than the concept shows -- remove the orchard as it will require maintenance and attract deer, it could be replaced with edible native trees and shrubs scattered throughout the prairie
- » General preference that the road does not lead all the way down to the river -- stop the road midway down the hill to the river
- » Concern about a boat launch at the river -- the river is too shallow here for kayaking and canoeing
- » Concern about a loop road in the park, which would lead visitors to drive through and not stop



Community input was gathered at two public open houses



Summarized community input from April online engagement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Two community meetings, with corresponding online engagement, were held as part of the park master planning process. On April 19, 2016, community members were presented the purpose for the master planning process and existing conditions at the parks. Attendees were asked to provide comments on issues and opportunities.

April 2016 Community Meeting and Online Engagement

On April 19, 2016, community members were presented the purpose for the master planning process and existing conditions at the parks. Attendees were asked to provide comments on issues and opportunities.

- » Hiking trails considered the most important amenity, with views and river access also important
- » Longer hiking trail loops were where those surveyed wanted to see more improvements
- » Many respondents highlighted access for dogs or dog owners to be important to them – others raised concerns that dogs, especially off-leash, disturb the wildlife and other users of the park
- » Priority for a canoe/kayak launch
- » Respondents like the variety of options available at the Park – appreciate that there are more “natural” areas and “natural beauty”

June 2016 Open House and Online Engagement

On June 21, 2016, an open house was held to gain feedback from the public on preliminary concepts for improvements in the park.

- » Adjacent landowners requested no expansion of the park
- » Preference to keep the park development simple
- » Desire for dog access in the park
- » Desire for low impact development - mainly trails, no desire for additional roads
- » Positive feedback for the maintenance of the natural environment



CHAPTER 4: **DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN**

Development Plan

Future improvements at Root River Park include low impact development in order to allow the natural beauty of the site be the focus of the park. Activities such as picnicking and hiking will be the primary program of the park.

PICNIC FACILITIES

- » A major feature of the Root River Park is its access to nature and low-key facilities, allowing visitors to explore an undeveloped and natural area of southeastern Minnesota. Even with this in mind, it is important to invest in facilities that can increase access to these natural features to a broader audience.
- » The Master Plan proposes adding two new ADA accessible picnic areas within the park. One will have a picnic shelter and the other will have prairie picnic pads. Both areas will be completed with parking facilities and restrooms nearby.
- » These picnic areas will allow for more daytime visitors to enjoy a meal or will act as a starting point for an afternoon of hiking the natural trails throughout the park.

Figure 7. Root River Park Development Concept



RIVER ACCESS

Access to the Root River is provided by a natural surface trail on which pedestrians can hike down from the main park entrance to the river's edge. The river's edge will be an informal, natural edge where people can walk on the rocky shore and stick their toes in the water.

EVENT PAVILION

- » In addition to the new informal picnic facilities, the Master Plan proposes a new picnic pavilion/group event space at the site of the former house in the center of the park.
- » Many stones from the hand-crafted fireplace in the original home were saved and are intended to be incorporated in some way in the new event building.
- » This pavilion will be used for large groups and events, such as weddings, allowing the programming potential of the park to expand.

OLD STAGE COACH BRIDGE

- » A hidden gem of the Root River Park is the Old Stagecoach Bridge. This historic limestone bridge once provided early settlers a safe passage route through the hilly riverlands of southeastern Minnesota.
- » Now the Old Stagecoach Bridge provides a crossing of the terrain for hikers exploring the natural trails of Root River Park, and facilitates an equestrian loop through both county and state land.
- » As time goes on, the historic bridge will require maintenance and eventually restoration. These tasks should be a priority as funding becomes available and as development occurs and use of the park grows.
- » Future development should include interpretive elements that guide visitors to the bridge and explain its significance upon arrival

APIARY AND RESEARCH

- » An apiary was added to Root River Park in 2016 through a partnership with the University of Minnesota and its Bee Squad
- » The University teaching colony will be the site of classes for those interested in beekeeping

CARETAKERS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

- » The current facilities for park maintenance should be sufficient for the park's future.
- » These facilities should be maintained and kept up to date to meet the current and future needs of the park. A portion of the annual maintenance and operations budget for the park should be set aside for the upkeep of these facilities to avoid degradation.

ACTIVE SPACE

An open field will provide picnickers and other park visitors space for informal games and activities.

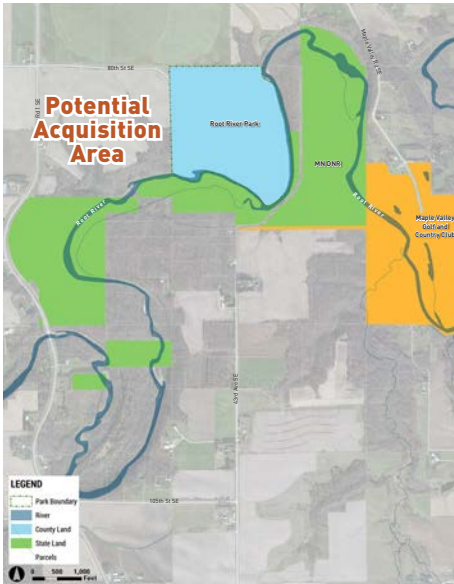


Figure 8. DNR Collaboration and State Lands

NATURAL RESOURCES IMPROVEMENTS

- » Create wetlands in a number of locations to facilitate stormwater storage and filtration and to prevent soil erosion
- » Oak Savanna restoration and cultivation in various locations throughout the park
- » Glen restoration in northern pocket of park
- » Floodplain forest restoration in the lowlands near the river
- » South facing slope near trail on the north side of the park where there are prairie remnants

Acquisition Plan

As Root River Park is in the process of initial development, the County would like to expand the park in the coming years. **County staff will only entertain park land acquisition in the case of willing sellers, and all purchases will need to be approved by the Olmsted County Board.** The primary purpose of park expansion is to increase the length of hiking and equestrian trails, improve the entrance into the site, and provide improved connections to the adjacent DNR land.

DNR COLLABORATION AND STATE LANDS

The Minnesota DNR owns approximately 300 acres of land surrounding Root River Park along the various bends of the Root River, part of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. There is limited active use or programming currently on this property. It is the intent of the DNR and Olmsted County to collaborate to create a cohesive and connected natural area containing Root River Park and the state-owned land. An initial focus would be to expand the existing natural trail system for hiking and equestrian riding throughout Root River Park and the state-owned property. The DNR and Olmsted County would also like to prioritize the conservation of the river valley, with intentions of preserving both sides of the Root River valley within the area. This initiative may include the acquisition of additional land through willing sellers if and when it becomes available.



CHAPTER 5: **NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN**

Land Management

Primary management goals for Root River Park should include the protection, enhancement, and restoration of the native plant communities, protection of rare plants and animals, and the control of invasive species. It is imperative that protection and restoration of the natural plant communities occur to ensure that the ecological integrity of the plant communities remains intact. Preserving and restoring the native plant communities will also benefit the rare species that occur within the park and provide critical habitat to ensure long-term population survival. **Careful planning of infrastructure, trails, or other improvements will be needed to prevent additional loss of biodiversity, habitat fragmentation, and incidental spread of invasive species within the park.**

Olmsted County staff currently manages the prairie plant communities within the park. It is recommended the park be divided into management areas with major vegetation and habitat descriptions written for each management area that include specific lists of native and invasive species that occur in each area. Primary management activities for each area may include prescribed burns, prairie planting and mowing, native seed harvest for use in restoration sites, native tree planting, timber stand improvements, and invasive species control. These management activities should follow the natural disturbance regimes associated with the respective plant communities and follow appropriate management techniques.

The use of prescribed burns is strongly recommended to enhance and restore prairie habitat. Prescribed burning will encourage native plant growth, promote nutrient cycling, and limit the spread of most herbaceous and woody invasive species, particularly in areas vulnerable to buckthorn and honeysuckle. The timing of the burns should be carefully planned to reduce the impact to sensitive native plant, animal, and pollinator species. The MNDNR has recently published a guidance document titled “DNR Pollinator Best Management Practices and Habitat Restoration Guidelines” that outlines methods for enhancing and restoring habitat for insect pollinators. Important considerations outlined in the document pertaining to prescribed burns include the timing and rotation schedule of the burn, patch avoidance for insect and plant refugia, and selective habitat management. Similar to prescribed burns, it is recommended any mowing activities should be planned around sensitive flora and fauna. The timing of mowing, mow height, and patch refugia should be considered to limit the impact to sensitive species. Please refer to the MNDNR guidance document mentioned above for additional mowing techniques and considerations. The use of local native seed is recommended for prairie establishment and restoration activities. Ideally the seed should be sourced within 50 miles of the park.

Invasive species management should be a top priority in the park. The existing hiking trails, watercourses, roads, and maintenance activities all provide potential pathways for invasive species distribution. Early detection and routine surveys should be conducted to monitor and control the spread of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. Proper management techniques should be followed for each target species based on the most recent management guidelines available. Many guidance documents have been produced in recent years that include new management approaches and techniques based on field research. Mowing, cut stump treatments, hand pulling, and prescribed burns are recommended to manage herbaceous and woody invasive species. Biological control techniques should be considered if applicable to the target invasive species. Any herbicide treatment selected should be as target-specific as possible and applied to the smallest area possible to limit incidental impact to native species.

Implementation

Specific recommendations for park management and restoration based on the site visit include:

- » Develop clear vision, goals, and strategies for park management.
- » Expand park to include adjacent areas, particularly state lands.
- » Consider ongoing surveys for rare flora and fauna.
- » Ensure protection of any new discoveries of flora and fauna.
- » Protect rare mussel species within the river; consider excluding river access and fishing/camping near the mussel location.
- » Increase pollinator habitat to support beekeeping, provide signage and fencing around apiary, plant early flowering native forbs and shrubs .
- » Manage woodland and forest edges for invasive species.
- » Refer to Emerald Ash Borer plan and continue to treat healthy trees while monitoring hazard trees needing removal.
- » Manage river terrace to reduce Ribes species (currant) and prickly ash.
- » Enhance wooded habitat along the river to create a wildlife corridor.
- » Create a meandering edge to blend woodland to savannah/prairie.
- » Remove aging stands of planted conifers and replace with tree species native to the area.
- » Patches of woods along river terrace – thin some trees –convert to drier prairie species
- » Use vegetation restoration/establishment to isolate user groups.
- » Glen above spring creek – burn now for recovery- create a prairie opening in woodland (potential for overnight camping location).
- » Cleanup wooded ridge and terrace south of garage buildings.
- » Pond – clean out to create aquatic and amphibian habitat- 3 locations
- » Edge downslope (east) from former house. Clear out some of the heavy timber, including aspen, to create young forest habitat for songbirds, woodcock and ruffed grouse.
- » Inspect gully along Stagecoach trail for erosion- evaluate stabilization or flow moderation activities as needed .
- » Consider planting edibles and mast/fruit bearing trees and shrubs.





CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT, & SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Overview

The Root River Master Plan presents a long-term vision for the park. While phasing of improvements is suggested, Olmsted County Parks should remain flexible to respond to funding and partnership opportunities, as well as changing trends. The investments outlined in the plan have been organized into the following three phases:

- » Short-term indicates that the project should be started in the next 1 to 5 years due to sensitive resources, desire for use, or the improvement needs to happen before another project.
- » Mid-term indicates that the project should be started in the next 6 to 15 years. These projects may be just as important as Short-term projects, but they may be more expensive or more planning needs to be completed before they can be implemented.
- » Long-term or Visionary projects are those that will be completed after 16 years. These are projects that may be difficult to complete due to land ownership, funding, or community support. More planning will need to be done in the next decade in order to determine if these projects will become reality.
- » Natural-resource Related items are often ongoing, don't have specific time frames, can be accomplished as opportunities or issues arise, and should be considered annually in staffing and operations planning

Figure 9. Root River Park Phasing Diagram



Operations & Management

Management and operations will be primarily the responsibility of the Olmsted County Parks Division, in coordination with existing and future volunteers and groups. As infrastructure and amenities continue to develop, permanent staff should be considered as part of the growth.

MANAGEMENT

The Olmsted County Board of Commissioners establishes policies and goals for its park system and through an annual budget, provide capital and operational funds for parks and trails.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

Olmsted County Parks Division staff will be responsible for the operation of Root River Park. Where there are opportunities for operational partnerships, in particular for Root River with the adjacent DNR-owned land, Olmsted County will enter a joint powers agreement with partner agencies. When possible, the County will encourage and advocate for volunteers to assist with improvements, outdoor education programs, patrol, park clean-ups and special events.

OPERATING HOURS

The park hours will be according to Olmsted County park ordinances or policies.

MAINTENANCE

Regular maintenance activities for the park will include:

- » Mowing
- » Trash collection
- » Tree trimming
- » Winter road and trail clearing
- » Trail repair and erosion control
- » Bridge repair
- » Sign maintenance
- » Park facility repair and maintenance

PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT

There are several paved roads and parking areas within the Olmsted County Park system. Pavement deteriorates as it ages. Regular pavement maintenance can prolong the surface's lifespan in a cost effective manner. The Olmsted County Public Works Department will work with the Parks Division to manage the paved areas in the parks.

ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY

Visitors will be informed of park and trail rules and regulations through postings at park facilities and strategically located signs that address specific information about hours, trails, permitted and prohibited activities, and directions. Local law enforcement and public safety agencies will be responsible for emergency and criminal complaints within the trail.

Parks have on site caretakers that manage security during the non-staffed park times.

CONFLICTS

Root River is compatible with surrounding, primarily rural agricultural, land uses. Minor conflicts will occasionally arise from private property owners' or neighboring residents' sensitivity to park recreation or maintenance uses. Olmsted County will work with individual landowners to resolve these issues case by case as the park is developed and expanded.

Programming, Marketing, & Evaluation

PROGRAMMING PLAN

Olmsted County Parks provide many programming opportunities. Most currently are at Chester Woods and Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo. Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo cater to school groups of all ages with environmental and animal related educational classes and tours. Chester Woods Park provides many environmentally and seasonally focused classes aimed at bringing families and people of all ages into the natural area and familiarizing them with activities and resources in the outdoors. The Friends groups assist County Parks staff with programs, and the existing program schedule will likely remain at its current capacity for the near term future.

Ongoing naturalist programming at Root River Park will be primarily passive -- signage, trails, and picnic shelters will direct visitors to create their own adventure and journey through the park. In the future, classes and events may be planned at Root River Park in collaboration with Oxbow and Chester Woods naturalists. Opportunities for programming and events will increase with the construction of facilities like the pavilion, trails, and river access.

MARKETING & PUBLIC AWARENESS

Olmsted County will promote use of the park through their websites, media promotions, Public Service Announcements, brochures, and public events and meetings. Olmsted County Parks Staff regularly participate in radio broadcasts and have stories in the local media frequently throughout the year. Public awareness is also achieved through its partnerships with local institutions including schools, scouting groups, youth organizations, etc.

RESEARCH PLAN

Olmsted County will participate in the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission research initiatives (visitation counts, use profiles, recreation demands, and trends surveys, etc.) as these programs are developed over time. The County may continue to monitor park use and conduct more surveys or questionnaires in line with the physical development of elements within this park master plan.

Funding

Funding for initial capital cost and ongoing operations and maintenance costs is essential for a successful regional park. Funding will be primarily the responsibility of Olmsted County and potentially large donations from local business and landowners. There will be an emphasis on seeking outside funding in the form of grants. Cost share roles will be determined by the strengths of each agency and circumstances of each project. In-kind contributions of land, easement, design, engineering, construction and maintenance and operations are encouraged and will be outlined in joint powers agreements among agencies.

It is anticipated that most future capital projects will be well positioned to secure regional, state and federal funds for recreation, transportation, water and habitat and that these sources will account for a majority of capital construction costs. Examples of outside funding sources include:

- » Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funds
- » Foundations and nonprofits
- » Statewide Health Improvement Program

Funding for operating and maintaining the park and trail facilities will be the County's responsibility. Annual operating costs will be funded through Olmsted County's annual budget.

PARTNERSHIPS

Olmsted County Parks currently partner with Friends groups at Chester Woods and Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo to provide park services and maintenance. As Root River is developed, consideration should be given to a Friends group for that park as well. Other partnerships, where applicable, will be sought with other agencies.

COST ESTIMATES

The cost estimates indicate projected capital costs for various development proposals listed in this plan. The cost estimates are planning level and do not reflect construction level documents, nor do they include design and engineering costs (approximately 15-20% of capital cost).

\$312,250	SHORT SUBTOTAL
\$842,350	MID SUBTOTAL
\$383,650	LONG SUBTOTAL
\$1,538,250	TOTAL

Table 2. Development Concept Capital Cost Estimate

Short Term Action (0-5 years)						
	Number	Unit*	\$ Per Unit	Total Cost	Notes	
ADA PICNIC AREA	Build new Picnic Shelter	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	New ADA picnic shelter with grills and trash receptacles
	Build New 20' Road	625	LF	\$200	\$125,000	To ADA picnic shelter lot
	Build New Gravel Parking Lot	10	Space	\$1,000	\$10,000	At new ADA picnic shelter
	Construct Vault Toilets	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	At new ADA picnic shelter
	Build New Nature Play Area	1	EA	\$50,000	\$50,000	Near new ADA picnic shelter
	Build New 6' Gravel Trails	2,725	LF	\$10	\$27,250	Trails to Nature Play Area (400'), from ADA shelter to north ravine trail (2000'), Trail spur to north water access point (325').
	Add Park Signage	1	LS	\$10,000	\$10,000	
SHORT TERM SUBTOTAL				\$312,250		
Mid Term Action (5-15 years)						
	Number	Unit*	\$ Per Unit	Total Cost	Notes	
UPPER TERRACE PICNIC	Build New 20' Road	700	LF	\$200	\$140,000	Road to Upper Terrace Picnic Area from ADA picnic area
	Build New Gravel Parking Lot	10	Space	\$1,000	\$10,000	At Upper Terrace Picnic Area
	Install New Picnic Table with Fire Pit	4	EA	\$3,000	\$12,000	At Upper Terrace Picnic Area
	Construct Vault Toilets	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	At Upper Terrace Picnic Area
	Build New 6' Gravel Trails	1,785	LF	\$10	\$17,850	From Upper Terrace Picnic Area to Pavilion, along entry road, and down to river
PAVILION	Build a new Event Pavilion	1	LS	\$500,000	\$500,000	Build new pavilion with fireplace, patio, retaining wall, overlooks, electrical, restrooms
	Create ADA Parking Spaces and Dropoff	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000	In front of new pavilion at turnaround
	Build New Paved Parking Lot	25	Space	\$3,500	\$87,500	Adjacent to new pavilion
	Build New 6' Gravel Trail	2,500	LF	\$10	\$25,000	North trail to Glen
MID TERM SUBTOTAL				\$842,350		
Long Term Action (16+ years)						
	Number	Unit*	\$ Per Unit	Total Cost	Notes	
LOWER TERRACE	Build New 6' Gravel Trail	1,065	LF	\$10	\$10,650	From Upper Terrace Picnic Area down to existing river trails
	Build New 20' Road	1,700	LF	\$200	\$340,000	Road from Upper Terrace Picnic Area to Lower Terrace Picnic Area
	Build New Gravel Parking Lot	6	Space	\$1,000	\$21,000	Near River
	Install New Picnic Table with Fire Pit	4	EA	\$3,000	\$12,000	Adjacent to river
LONG TERM SUBTOTAL				\$383,650		
* LS is Lump Sum, LF is Linear Feet, EA is each						

* LS is Lump Sum, LF is Linear Feet, EA is each

Table 3. Natural Resource Recommendations Cost Estimate

<i>Olmsted Parks Natural Resource Recommendations and Costs</i>	<i>Staff Hrs</i>	<i>Staff Costs (\$75/hr)</i>	<i>Consultant Hrs</i>	<i>Consultant Costs (\$130/hr)</i>
Develop clear vision, goals, and strategies for park management	24	\$1,800	8	\$1,040
Expand park to include adjacent areas, particularly state lands	120	\$9,000	80	\$10,400
Consider ongoing surveys for rare flora and fauna	16	\$1,200	40	\$5,200
Ensure protection of any new discoveries of flora and fauna	4	\$300		\$-
Protect rare mussel species within the river; consider excluding river access and fishing/camping near the mussel location	8	\$600		\$-
Increase pollinator habitat to support beekeeping, provide signage and fencing around apiary, plant early flowering native forbs and shrubs	40	\$3,000		\$-
Manage woodland and forest edges for invasive species	40	\$3,000		\$-
Refer to Emerald Ash Borer plan and continue to treat healthy trees while monitoring hazard trees needing removal.	8	\$600		\$-
Manage river terrace to reduce Ribes species (currant) and prickly ash	24	\$1,800		\$-
Enhance wooded corridor along river to create wildlife corridor	40	\$3,000	8	\$1,040
Create a meandering edge to blend woodland to savannah/prairie	40	\$3,000	8	\$1,040
Remove aging stands of planted conifers and replace with tree species native to the area	24	\$1,800		\$-
Improve access to river that allows/promotes wading for example, limestone blocks for users to prepare for entering and accessing river- i.e. place to remove shoes and step into shallow water.	40	\$3,000	4	\$520
Patches of woods along river terrace – thin some trees –convert to drier prairie species	40	\$3,000	8	\$1,040
Use vegetation restoration/establishment to isolate user groups	40	\$3,000	8	\$1,040
Glen above spring creek – burn now for recovery- create a prairie opening in woodland potential for overnight camping location	40	\$3,000	4	\$520
Cleanup wooded ridge and terrace south of garage buildings	30	\$2,250		\$-
Pond – clean out to create aquatic and amphibian habitat- 3 locations	24	\$1,800	30	\$3,900
Edge downslope (east) from house. Clear out some of the heavy timber including aspen to create young forest habitat for songbirds, woodcock and ruffed grouse	40	\$3,000	4	\$520
Inspect gully along Stagecoach trail for erosion- evaluate stabilization or flow moderation activities as needed.	24	\$1,800	24	\$3,120
Consider planting edibles and mast/fruit bearing trees and shrubs.	40	\$3,000	8	\$1,040
SUBTOTALS	706	\$52,950	234	\$30,420

Const./Mat.	One-Time	Periodic	Annual	Notes
		\$2,840		Internal meetings, develop consensus on strategies
		\$19,400		Not including land costs
		\$6,400		Request DNR support as alternate to consultant fees or have staff do it
	\$300			
			\$600	Periodic annual monitoring to ensure mussels are not being disturbed
\$5,000		\$8,000		Fencing should be one time cost
\$3,000		\$6,000		
		\$600		
\$1,000		\$2,800		
\$10,000	\$14,040		\$1,000	Some annual maint required during establishment period
\$10,000	\$14,040		\$1,000	Some annual maint required during establishment period
\$5,000		\$6,800		Implement patchy removal of aged conifers every few years
\$12,000	\$15,520			
\$5,000	\$9,040		\$1,000	Some annual maint required during establishment period
\$4,000	\$8,040		\$500	Some annual maint required during establishment period
\$5,000	\$8,520		\$500	Some annual maint required
\$2,000	\$4,250			
\$50,000	\$55,700		\$1,000	Some annual maint required during establishment period
\$3,000	\$6,520			
\$40,000	\$44,920	\$44,920		Partner with SWCD and pursue grants for implementation
\$5,000	\$9,040			
\$150,000	\$189,930	\$97,760	\$5,600	

ROOT RIVER PARK **MASTER PLAN**



ROOT RIVER PARK **APPENDIX**



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
CENTRAL REGION
1200 WARNER ROAD
SAINT PAUL, MN 55106
651-259-5800

Tom Ryan
Parks Superintendent
Olmsted County Public Works
2122 Campus Dr., SE
Suite 200
Rochester, MN 55904

August 23, 2016

Tom,

This letter is to confirm that the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Divisions of Forestry and Parks & Trails are still very much interested in coordinating and cooperating with Olmsted County to provide high quality recreational opportunities in and around the Root River County Park.

As managers of the state forest land adjacent to the County Park, we believe it is important for our agencies to work cooperatively to ensure a wide variety of recreational opportunities close to the Rochester metropolitan area. Through cooperative efforts we can make the best use of our limited financial resources, as well as our respective areas of expertise in land and recreation management.

We look forward to working with the County to meet the needs of the citizens and our agencies.

Sincerely,

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