



ST. FRANCIS PLANNING COMMISSION

**ISD #15 DISTRICT OFFICE BUILDING
4115 AMBASSADOR BLVD.**

JULY 18, 2012

7:00 PM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
2. Oath of Office – Joel Olson
3. Roll Call
4. Adopt Agenda July 18, 2012
5. Approve Minutes June 20, 2012
6. Public Comment
7. Ordinance Discussion – Keeping of Bees
8. Comprehensive Planning Discussion – Park System Goals
9. General Discussion Items by Planning Commissioners
10. Adjournment

There may be a quorum of St. Francis Council Members present at this meeting.

**CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 20, 2012**

1. **Call to Order:** The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Rich Skordahl.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were Chairman Rich Skordahl, Commission Members, Roni Ronyak, William Murray, Greg Zutz, Todd Gardner, John Hane, Ray Steinke, City Planner Nate Sparks (Northwest Associated Consultants), and Planning Commission Secretary Kathy Lind. Also in attendance was Gina Mitchell from Bolten & Menk, Inc.
3. **Adopt Agenda:** MOTION BY ZUTZ, SECOND BY HANE TO ADOPT THE JUNE 20, 2012 PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA. MOTION CARRIED 7-0
4. **Approve Minutes:** MOTION BY STEINKE, SECOND BY ZUTZ TO APPROVE THE MARCH 21, 2012 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES WITH AMENDMENT TO ITEM 8 ON THE MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED 7-0
5. **Public Comment:** None
6. **Public Hearing – River Crossing**
Gina Mitchell, Study Project Manager, Bolten & Menk, Inc. presented the background and action request for the Northern Anoka County River Crossing Study.

Public Hearing opened at 7:44 p.m., with no public comments the Public Hearing closed at 7:44 p.m.

A MOTION BY STEINKE, SECOND BY ZUTS TO RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL:

- Accept and adopt the northern Anoka county river crossing study
- Include the findings in its next comprehensive plan update
- Continue to collaborate and coordinate with the cities of Nowthen, Oakgrove and Anoka County to implement the recommendations of the study as funding and needs allow.

The Planning Commission members also ask that the City Council consider safety concerns, specifically the area west of the river bridge.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

7. **Public Hearing – Comprehensive Plan Amendment: 23031 Ivywood Street.**
City Planner, Nate Sparks presented the background and proposed ordinance amendment.

BACKGROUND

The City of St. Francis owns a parcel of land at 230131 Ivywood Street. This parcel has been vacant since it was platted. The City acquired it to potentially develop as park land. Since that time, the City has acquired other land in the area more suitable for a neighborhood park. The City would like to explore other options for this parcel. In order to do so, a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to re-guide the parcel for a Single Family Residential use would be appropriate.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The property in question is zoned, R-2 Single Family Residential and has single family uses to the north, south, and west of it, and to the east is the golf course. The property is in an inadequate location for a park as it has no connectivity to the City's trail system and is within the park service area for the Highland Woods Park, which is a short distance (3 blocks) to the north.

The Public Hearing opened at 8:03 p.m., with no public comments the Public Hearing closed at 8:05 p.m.

MOTION BY HANE, SECOND BY ZUTZ TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT CHANGE TO TAKE THE PARCEL LOCATED AT 23031 IVYWOOD OUT OF THE CITY'S PARK SYSTEM AND RECLASSIFY IT AS RESIDENTIAL. MOTION CARRIED 7-0

8. **Public Hearing – Ordinance Amendment: Sandwich Board Signs:**

City Planner, Nate Sparks reviewed the background and the proposed ordinance amendment.

BACKGROUND

Recently, the City revised the regulations regarding temporary signs. In the revisions, sandwich board signs were allowed on a limited basis without a permit. Since this allowance was included in the ordinance, several business owners have expressed that the ordinance language was confusing and unclear. Thus, this ordinance amendment is intended to add a definition to more clearly express what a sandwich board is and to more concisely state the size limitations.

SANDWICH BOARD SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATE

Sign Definitions

Add:

Sandwich Board Sign. A self-supporting, temporary A-frame sign with two faces made of wood or other similar durable materials.

Revise:

2. One sandwich board sign per business may be allowed in the business districts without a permit and without using the time period allotted for temporary, portable signs provided:
 - a. The sign is placed within fifteen (15) feet of the entrance of the business.
 - b. The sign shall be placed on private property and may be placed on a private sidewalk provided there is five (5) feet of clearance for pedestrians.
 - c. The sign ~~may~~ *shall* not obstruct safety, visibility, or traffic.
 - d. The sign shall be freestanding, not attached to any other structure or device, *and shall* not be illuminated, ~~greater than 3 ½ feet in height, greater than 2 feet in width, or greater than 2 feet in depth.~~
 - e. The sign shall be only displayed during business hours.
 - f. *The sign shall not be greater than three and one-half (3½) feet in height, two (2) feet in width, or two (2) feet in depth.*

The Public Hearing opened 8:10 p.m., with no public comments the Public Hearing closed at 8:11 p.m.

A MOTION BY HANE, SECOND BY ZUTZ TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL ON THE ABOVE ORDINANCE AMENDMENT AS PRESENTED BY STAFF. MOTION CARRIED 7-0

9. **Public Hearing – Ordinance Amendment: Required Landscaping.**

City Planner, Nate Sparks reviewed the background and the recommended proposed ordinance amendment.

BACKGROUND

The City of St. Francis has had some long held policies regarding tree plantings that were not accurately reflected in the ordinance. This amendment intends to incorporate these standards, as well as taking care of a few other issues found in the ordinance.

DRAFT AMENDMENTS

10-20-4-A is amended to clarify that landscaping requirements apply to all new development but that a landscaping plan is only required for commercial, industrial, institutional, and multi-family projects.

10-20-4-B-1 is amended to include other required trees rather than just deciduous. The ordinance calls for these other types of trees, as well.

10-20-4-B-3-c is changed to eliminate the use of deciduous trees for primary screening use.

10-20-4-C-5 is added to specify minimum required tree plantings. It has separate sections for single and two-family development and other uses. For single family it specifies the City’s existing two tree requirement and states that one must be planted in the front yard. For other uses it requires one caliper inch of trees planted per every 320 square feet of building, which was the City’s standard previous to the 2010 recodification. The new Section 5 also allows for existing trees to be counted towards minimum requirements.

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS – LANDSCAPING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

~~10-20-4: REQUIRED LANDSCAPING:— All new residential subdivisions with three (3) or more lots, residential structures with four (4) or more dwelling units, commercial uses, industrial uses, and institutional uses shall be subject to minimum landscaping and planting material specification requirements outlined in this Section.~~

A. **Landscape Plan Required.** All new residential subdivisions with three (3) or more lots, residential structures with three (3) or more dwelling units, commercial uses, industrial uses, and institutional uses shall be subject to minimum landscaping and planting material specification requirements outlined in this Section. A landscape plan shall be developed with an emphasis upon the boundary of the subject site, parking lots, and foundation of the principal structure, in accordance with the information requirements outlined in Section 10-9-6 of this Ordinance.

B. **Design Standards and Criteria.** All landscaping incorporated in the landscape plan shall conform to the following standards and criteria:

1. Types of New Trees: Trees suitable for complying with this Chapter shall include those specified below, or similar if deemed acceptable by the Zoning Administrator:

<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
Quercus (varieties)	Oak
Acer platanoides (and Varieties)	Norway Maple (and Schwedler, Emerald Queen, etc.)
Acer saccharum	Sugar Maple
Celtis occidentalis	Hackberry
Betula (varieties)	Birch
Gleditsia triacanthos	Honeylocust (Imperial, Majestic, Skyline, Sunburst & Thornless)
Tilia cordata (and Varieties)	Little Leaf Linden and Redmond, Greenspire, etc.
Tilia Americana	Basswood (American Linden)
Gymnocladus dioicus	Kentucky Coffee Tree

- a. Deciduous Trees. Required plantings of deciduous trees shall be of the following type: White Oak, Northern Red Oak, Eastern Pin Oak, Swamp White Oak, Kentucky Coffee Tree, Basswood, Littleleaf Linden, Redmond Linden, Hybrid Elm, Sugar Maple, Red Maple, Norway Maple, or Black Cherry.
- b. Evergreen Trees. Required plantings of evergreen trees shall be of the following type: Douglas Fir, White Fir, Hemlock, Austrian Pine, White Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Norway Pine, Scotch Pine, Eastern Red Cedar, Black Hills Spruce, Norway Spruce, and White Spruce.
- c. Ornamental Trees. Required plantings of ornamental trees shall be of the following type: River Birch, Chokecherry, Crabapple, Dogwood, Hawthorn, Mountain Ash, Plum, or Serviceberry.

2. Minimum Size: All plants shall at least equal the following minimum sizes: (NOTE: Type and mode are dependent upon time of planting season, availability, and site conditions (soils, climate, ground water, manmade irrigation, grading, etc.)

	<u>Potted/Bare Root or Balled or Burlapped</u>
Shade trees	2 inch diameter
Ornamental trees (flowering crabs, Russian olive, hawthorn, etc.)	2 inch diameter
Evergreen trees 4 feet	
Tall shrubs and hedge material (evergreen or deciduous)	3 to 4 feet
Low Shrubs	
- Deciduous	24 to 30 inches
- Evergreen	24 to 30 inches
	24 to 30 inch
- Spreading evergreens	18 to 24 inches

3. Spacing:

- a. Plant material centers shall not be located closer than three (3) feet from the fence line or property line and shall not be planted to conflict with public plantings, sidewalks, trails, fences, parking areas, and driveways based on the judgment of the Zoning Administrator.
- b. Where plant materials are planted for screening purposes in two (2) or more rows, plantings shall be staggered in rows unless otherwise approved by the Zoning Administrator.
- c. ~~Deciduous trees intended for screening shall be planted not more than forty (40) feet apart.~~ Evergreen trees intended for screening shall be planted not more than fifteen (15) feet apart.

- d. Where massing of plants or screening is intended, large deciduous shrubs shall be planted four (4) feet on center or closer, and/or, evergreen shrubs shall be planted three (3) feet on center or closer.
4. Design (except for pond slopes which shall be subject to the review and approval of the City Engineer):
- a. The landscape plan shall show some form of designed site amenities (i.e., composition of plant materials, and/or creative grading, decorative lighting, exterior sculpture, etc.) which are largely intended for aesthetic purposes.
 - b. All areas within the property lines (or beyond, if site grading extends beyond) shall be treated. All exterior areas not paved or designated as roads, parking, or storage shall be planted into ornamental vegetation (lawns, ground covers, or shrubs) unless otherwise approved by the Zoning Administrator.
 - ~~e. Each single family lot is to be provided a minimum of two (2) shade trees consistent with the size requirements of this Chapter.~~
 - c. Turf slopes in excess of three to one (3:1) are prohibited.
 - d. All ground areas under the building roof overhang shall be treated with a decorative mulch and/or foundation planting.
 - e. All buildings shall have an exterior water spigot or irrigation system to ensure that landscape maintenance can be accomplished.
 - f. Trees and shrubs shall not be planted in the right-of-way except as approved by the City Council.
 - g. All plants required as part of an approved landscaping plan shall be maintained and kept alive. Dead plants shall be replaced in accordance with the approved landscape plan.

5. Minimum Required Plantings.

- a. Single and Two-Family Residential. All new single family residences or duplex units shall follow the sodding and ground cover requirements found in Section 10-20-4-C of this Ordinance and two (2) deciduous trees, of which one shall be placed in the front yard.
- b. Mixed Use, Multi-Family, Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial.
 - (1) In order to achieve landscaping which is appropriate in scale with the size of a building site, the minimum number of caliper inches of trees required shall be determined by dividing the total gross square footage of all floors of a building by 320. A single story building in excess of twenty (20) feet in height shall be considered a two (2) story building for the purposes of determining its total gross footage. A mixture of plant material sizes shall be required.
 - (2) The complement of trees fulfilling the requirement in Section 10-20-4.B.5.b.(1) shall not be less than twenty-five (25) percent deciduous, twenty-five (25) percent evergreen, and ten (10) percent ornamental. For the purposes of this ordinance a four foot tall evergreen tree is equal to two (2) caliper inches.
 - (3) Deciduous and evergreen trees shall be of more than one (1) species each.

- (4) Planting islands may be required where necessary to visually break-up expanses of hard surface parking areas, for safe and efficient traffic movement, and to define rows of parking. Planting islands may occupy up to at least five (5) percent of the required parking area.
- (5) All parking, loading, service, utility, and outdoor storage areas shall be screened from all public roads and adjacent differing land uses. The screening shall consist of any combination of the following: earth mounds, walls, fences, evergreen trees, tall shrubs, or low shrubs. The height and depth of the screening shall be consistent with the height and size of the areas for which screening is required. When natural materials, such as trees and hedges, are used to meet the screening requirements of this section, density and species of planting shall be such to achieve seventy-five (75) percent opacity year round.
- (6) These standards may be waived for properties in the B-1 and I-2 Districts by the Zoning Administrator, provided steps are taken to lessen the impact of the development on adjacent residential properties.

6. Existing Trees. All existing, preserved trees or other vegetation on site that are suitable for the purpose intended by this Ordinance in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator may count towards any required plantings as long as they are in good condition and disease free.

C. **Sodding and Ground Cover:** All open areas of site not occupied by building, parking, or storage shall be either seeded or sodded.

1. The Developer shall assure that the front and side yards of each lot are properly graded, three (3) inches of top soil added, sod laid to complete front yard (including right-of-way), and seeding or sodding has been added to the remainder of the disturbed area of the lot. Seeding will be allowed in the front yard if a sprinkler system is also installed.
2. If a house or project is completed when weather conditions do not allow sodding or seeding, the Developer or Home Builder shall submit to the City the following:
 - a. A temporary certificate of occupancy granted for the building during the non-growing season provided that the owner establishes a cash escrow with the city equal to one and one-half (1½) times the estimated cost of ground cover or a minimum of three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) whichever is more, plus a seventy-five dollar (\$75.00) non-refundable administrative fee. Upon satisfactory installation of the ground cover, the escrow will be returned to the owner and a certificate of occupancy issued.
 - b. If the ground cover is not installed by June 1st of the following year, the owner will forfeit the escrowed funds and be required to vacate the property until the certificate of occupancy can be issued when ground cover has been installed. The cost to install the ground cover shall be at the homeowner's expense.

D. **Landscape Guarantee:** All new plants shall be guaranteed for twelve (12) months from the time planting has been completed. All plants shall be alive, of good quality, and diseases free at the end of the warranty period or be replaced. Any replacements shall be warranted for twelve (12) months from the time of planting. Prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, the City may require a Performance Bond, with a corporation approved by the City as surety thereon, or other guarantee acceptable to the City, in an amount to be determined by the City, but for not less than one and one-half (1½) times and no more than two (2) times the amount estimated by the City as the cost of completing said landscaping and screening.

The Public Hearing opened at 8:21 p.m., with no public comments the Public Hearing closed at 8:22 p.m.

A MOTION BY STEINKE, SECOND BY RONYAK TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL ON THE ABOVE ORDINANCE AMENDMENT AS PRESENTED BY STAFF. MOTION CARRIED 7-0

10. **General Discussion Items by Planning Commissioners:** City Planner, Nate Sparks suggested the commission possibly review "Bee Keeping" at the next Planning Commission meeting.

11. **Adjournment:**
MOTION BY HANE, SECOND BY STEINKE TO ADJOURN MEETING AT 8:26 P.M. MOTION CARRIED 7-0

Kathy Lind, Zoning Secretary

Date

PLANNING REPORT

TO: St. Francis Planning Commission
Matt Hylan, City Administrator

FROM: Nate Sparks, City Planner

DATE: July 11, 2012

MEETING DATE: July 18, 2012

RE: Animal Ordinance – Keeping of Bees

BACKGROUND

In area cities, there have become more frequent reports of people keeping bees on urban lots. This has caused issues between neighbors and complaints to the cities. Currently, the City of St. Francis does not have any direct ordinance relating to the keeping of bees.

BEE KEEPING ORDINANCES

Generally, cities regulate bees as “livestock” as they are common elements of agricultural uses. St. Francis allows livestock on parcels greater than 5 acres in size in animal enclosures greater than 100 feet from any property line but does not specifically mention bees in the list of animals so regulated. Many ordinances restrict non-agricultural uses to one hive per parcel.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE

Based on how the City’s current ordinances are structured related to animals and how other cities approach this issue, the following draft ordinance language is proposed for the Planning Commission’s discussion:

8-3-5: KEEPING OF BEES.

- A. Bees may be kept on parcels five (5) acres in size or greater.
- B. No parcel may have more than one hive unless it is an agricultural use.
- C. All hives must be kept one hundred (100) feet from any property line.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is intended to be a preliminary discussion for the Commissioner’s to provide input and direction on this topic.

CITY OF STILLWATER
BEE KEEPING ORDINANCE

Sec. 27-3. - Keeping of bees.

Subd. 1.

Limited. No person shall keep any bees within the city on property owned or controlled by him within 500 feet of the property line of any other property owners, nor shall any person keep or have at any one location more than one bee hive. Bees kept contrary to this section are declared a public nuisance and may be abated according to law.

Subd. 2.

Penalty for violation of section. Any person who shall violate the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor

PLANNING REPORT

TO: St. Francis Planning Commission
Matt Hysten, City Administrator

FROM: Nate Sparks, City Planner

DATE: July 11, 2012

MEETING DATE: July 18, 2012

RE: Comprehensive Plan – Park System Goals

BACKGROUND

The St. Francis Public Works Department had requested an analysis of the current park system and the future park plan. The goal is to evaluate the current system and plans and make recommendations on how to more efficiently and effectively deliver service to the public. This review included inspections of the parks, review of acquisition records, and a comparison of the existing Park Plan against the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Upon this review the following issues were noted:

- The current park system has several parks with service area overlaps. A few parks have very limited residential service areas. A more targeted approach to acquiring active park land is recommended. This would result in the need for changes to the current Park Plan.
- The current park system and plan both feature numerous smaller parks requiring additional maintenance activity leading to depleted funding for replacement and development. A policy towards fewer, larger parks is recommended to be included into the Park Plan. Consideration of future maintenance costs should be carefully considered before building parks and trails.
- Several parks have limited usable area or visibility from the right-of-way resulting in underdevelopment and vandalism. Minimum park site selection criteria are recommended for incorporation into the Park Plan. Existing parks not fitting the criteria should be improved, reclassified, or divested.

At this time, the Planning Commission is asked to review the recommendations brought forward from this analysis for consideration of making revisions to the existing system and plans.

RECOMMENDED PARK SYSTEM PLAN POLICIES

At the time the City of St. Francis adopted the current Park Plan, the method for determining the amount of parkland necessary was to match population projections to the amount of land acquired throughout the system. This is a valid way to assess parkland needs when tied to actual land use. Since the adoption of the plan, some land use assumptions for the City have changed. Many of the areas targeted for future parks are now going to have significantly fewer future residents. Some areas where parks have already been acquired will also have fewer residents than initially planned.

The current plan also seeks to have established many small, minor parks much like has been the past park development practice in the past. This is an effective practice when supplying recreational needs to targeted areas of population. The Public Works Department has noted a concern that the expense of upkeep and development for the number of existing and future parks may be above likely budgeting thresholds. Thus, the goal would be to keep the same level of recreational planning available while finding ways to more efficiently provide park related services. This will ensure that the City can afford the routine maintenance for existing parks while also having enough resources to take care of future park needs.

Park systems that seek to maximize efficiency need to have a vision and policies to guide the realization of this goal. The following are the key components to maximizing efficiency within a municipal park system and properly choosing sites for land acquisition:

Categorization

Parks should be clearly categorized based on use. This allows the City to focus resources in appropriate manners. It would be recommended that the City focus on just two key active park categories and categorize the existing parks and future parks as such. The two major categories should be simply neighborhood and community level parks. Programming for community level parks would be facilities that draw from the City as a whole such as ball fields and other such facilities that would require parking lots and sanitary facilities. Neighborhood level parks would be for playground equipment and other limited facilities intended to serve residents within the service area.

Accessibility

Parks should be located on higher classification roadways. Parks should not be located on local streets where users will interfere with the residential nature of the area. Parks should have sidewalks or trails leading to the site from the neighborhood residences. Every park should be designed to handle the traffic it generates. Parks should connect to one another and key community facilities via the trail and sidewalk system.

Usability

Neighborhood parks should be of a size that reflects the community values but are recommended to be between 3 and 10 acres in size. This allows for more centralized facilities which lowers maintenance costs and increases the usability of the park. Parks that are intended to serve the community as a whole should be 20+ acres in size unless they serve a special purpose for which a smaller site is sufficient. Parks should be given names and signage that are independent of the subdivision that they are found in to avoid deterring residents from other neighborhoods using the park. Existing parks may not meet these standards and can be considered for expansion, replacement, supplementation, or reassignment.

Visibility

Parks should have good visibility into the site from the right-of-way and the neighborhood. Good visibility increases safety and limits opportunities for vandalism and crime. Vandalism results in premature replacement costs.

Maintenance

In order to limit liability, park equipment should be replaced on a regular schedule. The City should plan on replacing equipment and amenities every 20 to 25 years and begin routine safety inspections. A capital improvement budget should be made to track replacement costs. The City should plan on replacing equipment as a priority before new equipment unless new priorities are developed.

Trails are usually maintained by the City. Sidewalks are usually maintained by the neighboring property owners. As more trails are installed, the more the City is committing resources to maintaining trails. In some situations, a sidewalk or bike lane could serve the same purpose of a trail. Trails that the City does not wish to maintain and are not used year round by the public could become seasonal and closed during winter. Trails should be put on a regular maintenance schedule which should include seal coating and planning for replacement.

Open space should only be acquired in fee title when there is an identifiable public purpose. Ownership of the land comes with responsibilities for maintenance. When the City does come into ownership of property, low maintenance vegetation should be considered. If an open space parcel is remote, contracting of maintenance may also be considered.

Service Areas

The community should establish an appropriate distance for a service area. It is common to utilize a ¼ to ½ mile radius for neighborhood park service areas, as this is a common standard for walking distance. Parks serving neighborhoods should serve more than one development. Parks should be located in areas that are accessible to as many people as possible to maximize use and limit the total amount of parkland needed to service the community.

The City of St. Francis has some rural residential neighborhoods. It has been the City's practice to provide parks in these areas for the residents. This policy should be re-examined. Rural development densities are lower and the service areas would end up with a very limited amount of residences within ½ mile. Larger scale community parks or other types of special destination parks are appropriate for rural areas provided they are not dependent upon a central location.

PARK SERVICE AREA ANALYSIS

In order to establish whether or not the City has acquired adequate or excessive parkland, a service area analysis should be conducted. Parks should have independent service areas serving residential neighborhoods. A map is included showing each park with a service area of ½ mile around it. It should be noted that Highway 47, Rum River, and other such barriers lie within several of the service area circles, so care should be taken when analyzing overlap.

Community

St. Francis Community Park is about 12 acres in size, which is adequate for a community park. The park has a great location and good visibility. There are several overlapping service areas in this area but this is due to the river and Highway 47. Continued improvements to the City's sidewalk and trail system could bolster this park's use. The parking facilities allow for users from throughout the area to use this park.

Deer Creek

The park in the Deer Creek subdivision is located near higher density housing and is attached to a large wetland. This makes the parcel about 11 acres in size but with only about a 3 acre area of it is upland. With some improvements to the trail or sidewalk system this park could be accessed by a great number of users.

Seelye Brook (Deer Creek 3rd)

This park is a little over an acre in size and located on a local road. It is a gateway to the Wickstrom Forest Park in Oak Grove. There is limited visibility that can cause concerns in portions of this park. However, it appears to generally serve the purpose for which it was acquired and is providing a service in an area that would otherwise be difficult.

Degardner

This park has very poor access, visibility, and has outdated equipment. It consists of about 3 parcels, two of which are a half acre in size while the other is a third of an acre for a total of about 1.3 acres. There are ponds located within the park that limits its usability. Outdated equipment can be a hazard and liability issue for the City. Further study should be conducted on improving access prior to upgrading equipment. If there are no solutions, perhaps a status change would be appropriate into a pedestrian corridor.

Durigan Locher

This park serves the area north of Bridge Street and east of Highway 47. The park is only about 1 acre in size and has limited accessibility, visibility, and connectivity. It could never be much more than a parcel housing playground equipment. There are limited areas available for expansion or replacement of this park. Further review of usability in conjunction with future development and possibility of connectivity improvements would be warranted.

Edgewild

The park in the Edgewild subdivision is slightly less than 5 acres in size and is on a local road adjacent to property owned by the DNR. The park is too small for any sort of development as a community-wide asset. The need for neighborhood parks in rural areas is lesser than the need in urban areas, due to the lower density and fewer available users. It may not be financially feasible to develop and maintain a park with this service capacity potential. The DNR may have interest in taking over this property, due to its proximity to the WMA. There is limited development potential in the area making additional users for this park unlikely.

Hidden Ponds

The park on Roanoke in the Hidden Ponds development is about 8 acres in size, has a parking lot, playground, and a ball field. Ideally, parks for ball field purposes would be larger in size. The property across the street has been discussed as a possible sports complex. If that were to be the case, this park could be incorporated into it, if it could be done in a safe manner. It is located near future development areas and could be used independently as a neighborhood park, as well. The park has excellent visibility, usability, and accessibility.

Rum River Woods

The park in the Rum River Woods development appears to be underdeveloped and also has some overlap with the service area for the Community Park. The park has river frontage and is 2 acres in size, which gives it some degree of potential. It is only approximately 75 feet wide in size

which is not ideal for parkland but also limits its other potential uses. This park could use sidewalks or trails to increase its connectivity.

Smith Lake

About 10 acres of land was acquired in the Smith Lake Wildlife Estates Subdivision for a larger park. At the time it was discussed that this park could be a sports field type use. It would need to be a destination park, as the surrounding neighborhood most likely would not have the population to support it. There appears to be some wetland and pond areas within the park. Generally, sports complexes are 20 – 40 acres in size. Thus, if this site were to be developed for this purpose, additional land may be necessary.

GENERAL ACTIVE PARK SYSTEM PROGRAMMING

A park general survey of park facilities for the purpose of this analysis found portable toilets in several smaller neighborhood parks. This practice could be abandoned in certain instances. Parks of a neighborhood service capacity are intended to serve nearby residents. Unless there is a regional draw, there is usually a limited need for portable toilets. Parks with no parking lots will most likely not need these facilities.

Newer equipment appears to be color coordinated throughout the parks with plastic coated metal trash cans, benches, and tables. Several older wood benches and tables are still in service as well as plastic barrel trash receptacles. The City should find a standard park bench and table specification and use it throughout the system. This will allow for equipment to be moved from place to place, if necessary.

PASSIVE PARKS

In the adopted park plan, several natural and open space areas are discussed as parks. These parks are primarily natural areas with limited active recreation potential. These areas are to be separated from active park land as they serve a different purpose. For the purpose of this analysis the following parks are proposed to be removed from the active park system and given lower funding priorities:

Creekview Estates

There are two parcels platted as park in the Creekview Estates Subdivision. These parcels are the location of the channel for Seelye Brook. Since these parcels are platted as park, they cannot be used for any other purpose. There are no known plans for these parcels.

“Deer Creek Park 1”

Located on the southern edge of the City, this land was dedicated to be a future trail area around the wetlands. There is a strip of land between two houses providing access. With very limited access, it is unclear if this property could serve any other purpose.

“Degardener Park 2”

This is a 13 acre site that is mostly wetlands located between the trailer court and the Degardener Addition. It has been discussed as the potential future location of a boardwalk. This was platted as parkland, and could not be used for any other purpose.

Dellwood River

This is a natural area along the river where the City has a trail for public access. Most of the site is wetlands. The two access points where the trail meets a public street in between houses, which is not ideal.

Stone House Ridge

Parkland was dedicated for Stone House Ridge as a small amount of upland adjacent to a large wetland complex. The concept was to have a boardwalk connecting over the wetland.

PARK SYSTEM AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of St. Francis had made a practice of acquiring land for parks and natural areas within most new developments. The Public Works Department has expressed interest in exploring a new direction that maximizes efficiency within the park system in order to limit future budget increases due to maintenance of parkland. If the City chooses to go in this direction, the following actions would be appropriate, as part of a Park Plan Amendment:

Adopt new park categories and definitions

The existing park plan uses “Complex”, “Mid-Size Park”, and “Small Passive” as categories. Instead, it would be recommended for the City to use “Neighborhood Park” and “Community Park” and focus acquisition of parkland on active park facilities. The park category definitions should fit the concept of fewer, larger parks. Acquisition of natural areas and open space should be primarily done through easement agreements.

Consider maintenance responsibilities for park plan components

For every component in the park plan, the maintenance responsibility should be considered. Additional parks mean additional maintenance costs and routine scheduled replacement. Future park areas should be limited to what is necessary and what can serve the public in an efficient and organized manner. Trails should only be used when a trail is necessary to separate bicycle and pedestrian traffic from higher classification roadways. Bicycle lanes and sidewalks could replace trails on the trail plan when feasible.

Set minimum standards for acceptability in new park acquisition

Minimum park standards should be established in order to ensure new parks are a fit within their intended category, accessible, usable for their intended purpose, visible and safe, easy to maintain, and have a specific service area. Such standards should be incorporated into the park plan to ensure the City is communicating its intent to the public and potential subdividers of land.

Re-evaluate the need for rural neighborhood level parks

The City completed a Park & Trail Plan in 2005. This Plan establishes general priorities and policies for the City’s park system. The Plan was completed prior to the City’s 2030 Land Use Plan. At the time the plan was developed, the City was anticipating future rural residential development. The updated 2030 Land Use Plan set a new minimum development density of one unit per 10 acres in the rural portions of the City. A large number of parks are contemplated in the plan for the rural areas. This may not be appropriate any longer due to this change.

Revise park search areas

If the steps above are taken, the City should also review the current park search areas. The current methodology was to tie search areas to places where the City wanted parks in the future. A more efficient method would be to tie parkland to the areas with a higher number of future housing units.

Consider divestment of parks with inadequate or overlapping service areas

Divesting parkland is a serious matter that should only be done in cases where the park was acquired for a purpose that no longer fits within the City's goals and policies. If the above steps are taken, it would stand to reason that the City would have a difficult time justifying the maintenance necessary to keep Royal Oaks and possibly Edgewild.

Prior to divestment, the City would need to process a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and in some cases a rezoning. A small number of parks in the City were platted as parkland but none have been considered for this process, as they are currently open space and wetlands. Otherwise, all parks have been platted as Outlots. To be utilized for a purpose other than park, the City or the buyer would need to replat the property. If the property is in a Planned Unit Development, the PUD may need to be amended. Any money acquired from divestment would need to be placed in the Park Dedication Fund.

Incorporate maintenance schedules into park budgeting

In order to provide the safest parks possible, the City will need to set routine maintenance and replacement schedules. The cost for replacing and maintaining equipment should be put in line ahead of new acquisition to ensure there are enough resources to do so.

Require park concept plans with new dedications

Prior to accepting any parkland, the City should require the developer to show the proposed park can meet the needs for which it has been acquired. This can be done by requiring concept plans showing needed facilities within the public park.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Planning Commission should provide input on the above recommendations regarding the Park System. If you wish to look over the current Park Plan, it is available for review on the City's website. If the Commission finds these concepts to be acceptable, the additional analysis will be conducted and draft revisions to the Plan will be brought to a future meeting.

Park Service Areas

Trails

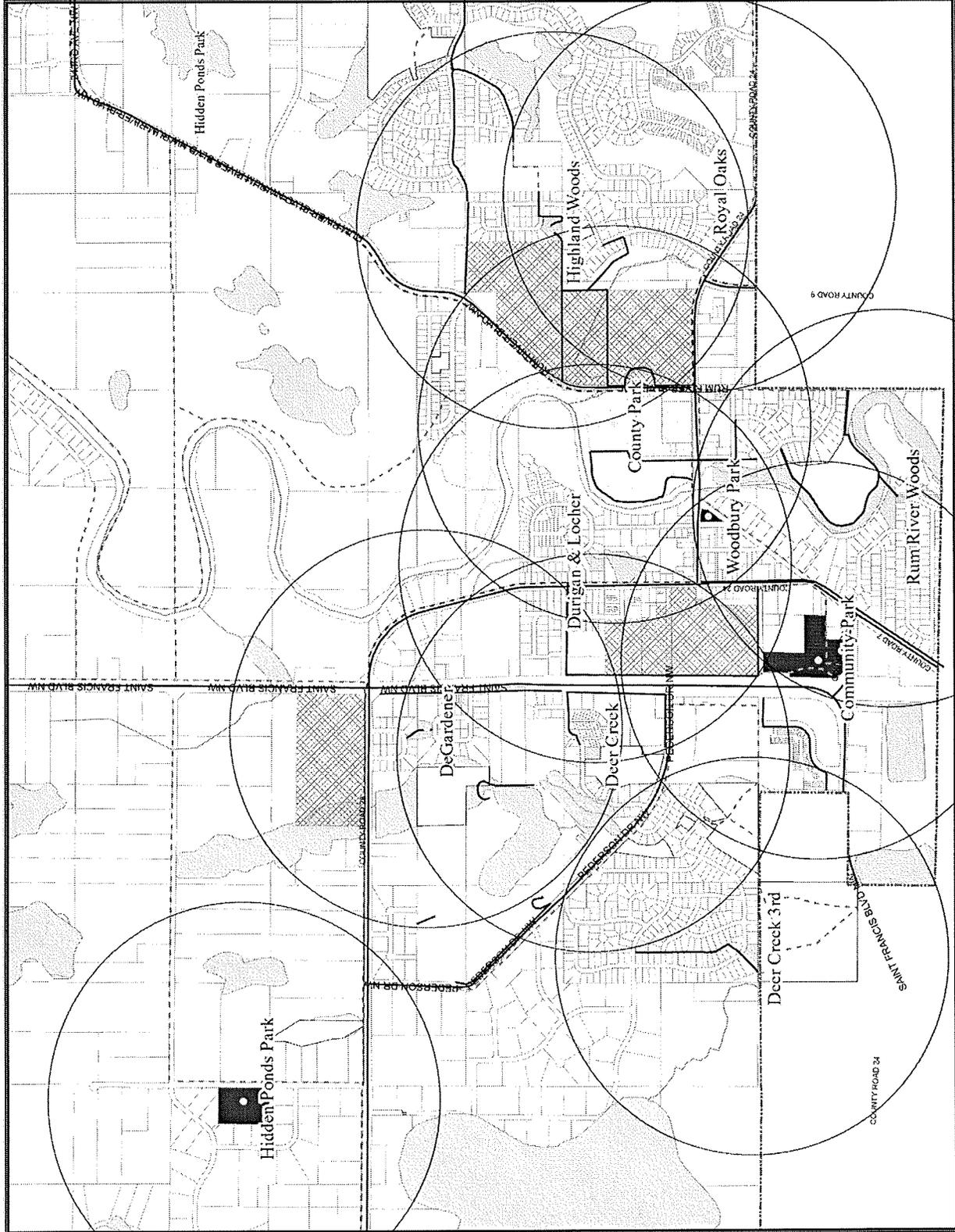
- Existing Bituminous Trail
- - - Existing Concrete Sidewalk
- - - Existing Limestone Trail
- Existing Regional Trail
- - - Future Proposed Trail Seg.
- - - Proposed Regional Trail

Parks

- Community Park
- County Park
- ▨ Neighborhood Park
- ▧ School Land
- ▩ Slate Land
- Open Space

Existing Parks

○ 1/2 Mile Service Area



Park System

Trails

- Existing Bituminous Trail
- - - Existing Concrete Sidewalk
- Existing Limestone Trail
- - - Existing Regional Trail
- - - Future Proposed Trail Seg.
- - - Proposed Regional Trail

Parks

- Community Park
- County Park
- ▨ Neighborhood Park
- ▧ School Land
- ▩ Slate Land
- Open Space
- Existing Parks

