

Mahaska County-Oskaloosa Comprehensive Park System Vision Plan

Prepared by Iowa State University Community Design Lab
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PURPOSE AND VALUE

Parks are vital community spaces that provide environmental, aesthetic, economic, and recreational benefits. They're where we connect, relax, celebrate, and remember. Park investment is therefore critical because it sustains the health and culture of our communities.

This document aims to guide effective park planning and decision-making within Mahaska County by prescribing strategies for park investment. The holistic approach employed to develop the proposed strategies ensures that the city and county have the analysis and data needed to make informed decisions well into the future.

OVERVIEW

The Iowa State University Community Design Lab (CDL) collaborated with Mahaska County Conservation and the City of Oskaloosa to develop a comprehensive park and recreation vision plan. The scope of the vision plan included documenting, assessing, and visualizing existing conditions, concerns, and opportunities for all major parks and trail systems in Mahaska County including all parks in Oskaloosa. These assessments were supplemented with a community engagement open house to better understand the needs and goals of Mahaska County residents. The design team also met with stakeholders and presented draft concepts to encourage support and collaboration among the many groups that support Oskaloosa's park and recreation resources. This document summarizes those findings and outlines a vision for strengthening parks within Mahaska County.





PROJECT GOALS

The goals for the Mahaska County-Oskaloosa Comprehensive Park System Vision Plan are as follows:

- **Analyze and summarize results from the park inventory, site visit, data analysis, and community engagement processes.**
- **Document the existing park systems in Mahaska County and Oskaloosa.**
- **Determine strengths and areas of improvement within the parks system of Mahaska County.**
- **Provide Oskaloosa and Mahaska County with evidence-based proposals for park improvements.**
- **Specify where new recreation investment might be focused.**

METHODOLOGY

The assessment process began with identifying all park and recreation spaces in Mahaska County, including those owned by the state, county, municipalities, townships, and private entities. This comprehensive data collection provided a more complete view of the county's park network. Each park's resources and amenities were cataloged to evaluate their function and use. They were then classified using the Iowa Rural Park Classification System (Klein-Hewett, 2024), simplifying their resources, amenities, and use into a single term or class. This classification allows park professionals to compare and evaluate similar parks to better understand their locations, density, and use.

The Iowa Rural Park Classification System is organized into two categories based on whether the park's function is reliant on the natural environment. A brief description of the classes is shown to the right.



Nature-dependent classes

- **Conservation Reserves** provide space for hunting, trapping, and fishing, though they may also offer water quality management services.
- **Wildlife Preserves** provide space to restore and protect flora and fauna. Hunting and trapping are not allowed in these spaces.
- **Multi-Use Trails** provide linear space and a maintained trail for land-based recreation activities like cycling, running, and walking.
- **Water Trails** provide linear space for water-based recreation activities like floating, paddling, and fishing.
- **Regional Parks** are large spaces, usually over 50 acres, that serve multiple jurisdictions by offering ten or more unique or high-quality recreational resources. They often have at least one regionally significant recreational, scenic, or environmental resource like a lake.
- **Destination Parks** provide for the efficient consumption of a remarkable landscape or built object. They are often small in size and are developed as tourist destinations (e.g., ample parking, overlooks, interpretive signs).
- **Curated Nature Parks** provide numerous, but mostly passive recreational resources in a regulated yet natural setting. They are often located in riparian corridors.

Nature-independent classes

- **Cultural History Parks** provide space for the display or commemoration of community histories and values. They are often the site of community celebrations.
- **Unintentional Parks** provide recreational opportunities in spaces that were not intended for recreational use, such as rural cemeteries.
- **Sports Complexes** provide space to play competition-level organized sports.
- **Special Use Parks** provide space for a single- or limited-use recreation form, such as golfing, skateboarding, and mountain biking.
- **Support Parks** provide space that supports other nearby recreation facilities, like trailheads, boat launches, and water access points.
- **Play Parks** provide space for youth to play
- **Community Parks** provide space for numerous and often large-scale recreational resources in or near a community.

PARK CATEGORIZATION

Following classification, parks were categorized into three groups based on their use: **Primary Parks** are multi-purpose spaces that most people associate with the term “park” (e.g., open lawns, picnic shelters, trails, playgrounds). These parks are typically publicly owned/managed and most are open to the public without a fee. Primary Parks included the following park classes: Regional Parks, Community Parks, Play Parks, Curated Nature Parks, Multi-Use Trails, and Cultural Parks.

Secondary Parks serve a narrower scope of use than primary parks but still offer desirable recreational amenities. They often offer a specific recreational resource (e.g., golf course, skatepark, dog park, sports complex) and are not often conducive to multiple forms of concurrent recreation. These spaces may be owned/managed by private or non-profit groups and may require a fee to enter. Secondary Parks included the following park classes: Sports Complexes, Wildlife Preserves, Support Parks, Special Use Parks, Water Trails, and Destination Parks.)

Tertiary Parks are publicly accessible greenspaces with limited, if any, developed recreational infrastructure. Some may only be used during specific seasons for specific purposes (e.g., hunting in wildlife management areas) while others may be open year-round, but not intended as a recreational space (e.g., cemeteries). Tertiary Parks included the following classes: Conservation Reserves and Unintentional Parks.



PARK DISTRIBUTION

After classifying and categorizing parks, they were mapped and analyzed using GIS software to identify areas where parks aren't meeting residents' needs. The design team used a recent park study (Datta, 2023) that found rural counties with high public health scores have parks within an average distance of 7.5 miles from the primary county community. A 7.5-mile buffer was placed around each park in Mahaska County to identify areas, known as park deserts, that need improved park access.

At the city scale, a half-mile buffer distance, representing a ten-minute walk, was used. Studies show that city residents within a ten-minute walk of a park have higher public health and quality-of-life scores (Harnik & Martin, 2012). Park assessment organizations, like the Trust for Public Land, use this distance as a key measure of city park effectiveness.

PARK ASSESSMENT

The analysis process continued with assessing the quality of park resources. It was unfeasible and unnecessary for the design team to visit all parks in the county because not all parks were owned by the City of Oskaloosa or Mahaska County Conservation, had recreational infrastructure, and needed infrastructural improvements. The design team, along with representatives from the City of Oskaloosa and Mahaska County, identified critical parks for visitation, including all parks within Oskaloosa city limits and all Primary Parks. The list also included a few parks that held improvement potential if appropriate resources could be added.

Site assessments were then performed for the approved parks. The design team, sometimes with park stakeholders, visited each of the parks on the list. The condition and adequacy of eleven recreational elements were tracked in each park, using a 0 to 5 scale.

Condition was evaluated based on the perception of the resource's age and maintenance. Lower condition scores indicate that the resource needs maintenance or replacement, due usually to age and/or inadequate maintenance. A score of 0 indicates that the resource is needed but does not exist. Higher condition scores indicate the resource is well maintained and/or new.

Adequacy was evaluated based on the perception of the resource's ability to meet user needs. Often, adequacy was tied to the size of a park or the quantity of resources available. Lower ability scores indicate that the resource does not meet those needs. For example, if a park had many things to do but had limited parking options, the adequacy score for parking would be low. An adequacy score of 0 indicates that the resource is needed but not provided. High adequacy scores indicate the resource is meeting or even exceeding the needs of its users. If a component of the assessment was not applicable to a park, such as a sports court at a conservation area, the absence of the feature was deemed not applicable and did not count against the overall assessment grade.

To evaluate the overall quality of each park, the condition and adequacy scores for each resource were averaged into a **resource grade**. Then, all eleven resource grades were averaged to create an **overall park grade**. This overall grade summarizes the condition and quality of critical park infrastructure and signifies which parks need attention. (See the appendix for a table listing all visited parks and their assessment scores.)

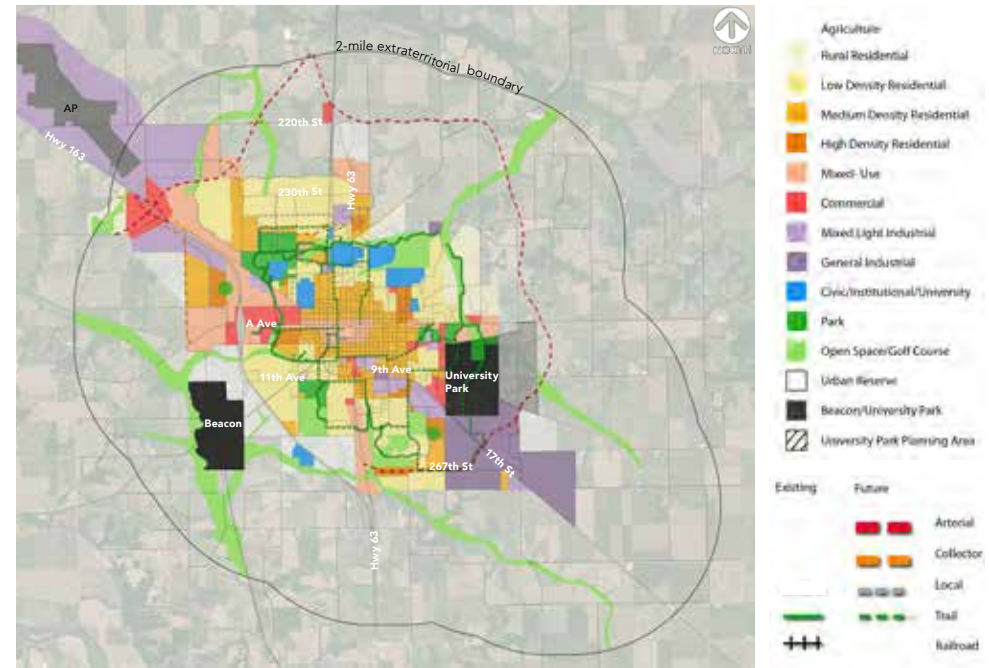
Combining overall park grades with park desert locations allowed for targeted park recommendations. As previously noted, Mahaska County has park deserts in the northern third of the county. In the northeast corner of the county, city parks in New Sharon and Barnes City may provide recreational opportunities, but their low park grades suggest they are not ideal. Wildlife management areas in these regions may also serve recreational needs but aren't county-owned, limiting improvement options. In the northeast corner of the county, additional parks are likely not warranted due to low population densities and existing parks in Pella

PLAN OSKY REVIEW

In 2022 the City of Oskaloosa developed *Plan Osky*, a comprehensive plan that examined the current conditions, needs, goals, and future growth of the community. The *Plan Osky* planning team analyzed the current park system and trail network, its ability to meet the needs of residents, and potential areas for updates and expansion. Those findings as well as other community-level goals and guidance were utilized within this plan.

Key takeaways from Plan Osky:

- Continue investing in and celebrating Oskaloosa's strengths, including parks, the downtown, and the arts community
- Increase community pride through placemaking and beautification efforts
- Create additional places where people can gather, be social, and be active
- Infuse arts and culture throughout Oskaloosa and, specifically, within its parks
- Build upon the already incredible trail network to connect critical destinations
- Better engage and create welcoming places for teens and young adults, including William Penn students
- Avoid duplicating services available in University Park
- Promote positive stormwater management practices and other ecological services, especially within parks and greenspaces
- Expand opportunities for residents to get involved in the arts, including maker spaces and public art displays
- Increase the quantity of park space within the community to meet the 1,000 residents/acre standard
- Add new park spaces on the east and south-central areas of Oskaloosa to fill park deserts



Oskaloosa Future Land Use Map

image credit: Plan Osky, 2022

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The design team and staff from the City of Oskaloosa and Mahaska County hosted a public open house at the Environmental Learning Center in Caldwell Park. The goal of the open house was to collect residents' information about which parks they visit, what improvements they'd like to see, and which parks should receive capital improvements. To gather information from other residents, the open house information collection boards were also set up at the Oskaloosa Library for a week.

The event had a strong turnout with approximately 50 residents. People were very willing to participate in the activities and provided great feedback. The primary activities gathered input on:

- Park funding: Which parks and park amenities residents would prefer to designate park system funding to (County and City) - Voting activity
- Frequented parks (County and City) – Sticker activity
- Park updates and goals (County and City) – Mapping activity
- Other visited destinations
- Trail typology comfort level

The results from the input session were analyzed along with the park assessments and mapping studies to get a clearer picture of the strengths of the existing parks and where the gaps in the system are in terms of park availability, accessibility, condition, and adequacy. This process also helped highlight the key features and/or activities that would encourage continued and greater use of the parks.



STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND SELECTION

Based on the assessment and analysis of the existing park system and community input sessions, the design team developed three strategies to strengthen the parks and park networks within Mahaska County. Each strategy was presented to staff from the City of Oskaloosa and Mahaska County Conservation to vet their strengths and weaknesses. As is true for many park projects, a hybrid of multiple strategies was preferred. Below is a list of strategies presented to the city and county:

COUNTY-WIDE STRATEGIES

Local Needs: Prioritize park funding and enhancements based on community input and concerns, focusing on parks near population centers. The goal: turn popular parks into exceptional parks.

Tourism Focus: Encourage future recreational tourism by developing parks that are easily accessible and visible from major transportation corridors. The goal: turn Mahaska County and Oskaloosa into a recreation-focused destination.

Regional Destinations: Strategically develop three recreation hubs within the county, with one connected to Oskaloosa. The goal: attract out-of-county visitors by creating three distinct and exceptional destinations.

Scenic Byway: Develop a signed bike and vehicle driving route to connect the most popular county parks. The goal: make Mahaska County a destination for recreational driving and access.

Regional Trails: Invest in a series of on- or off-highway bike trails to connect Oskaloosa to Pella or Lake Red Rock. The goal: extend trail networks to Oskaloosa and strengthen the ties between the communities.

OSKALOOSA-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Fill the Gaps: Enhance outdated or underfunded parks and develop new city parks in areas that need them. The goal: provide equitable access to quality parks for all Oskaloosa residents.

Park Hubs: Develop five themed park districts around the city (culture, education, adventure, sports, and historic recreation). The goal: create and market a menu of identifiable municipal destinations.



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MAHASKA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM ANALYSIS

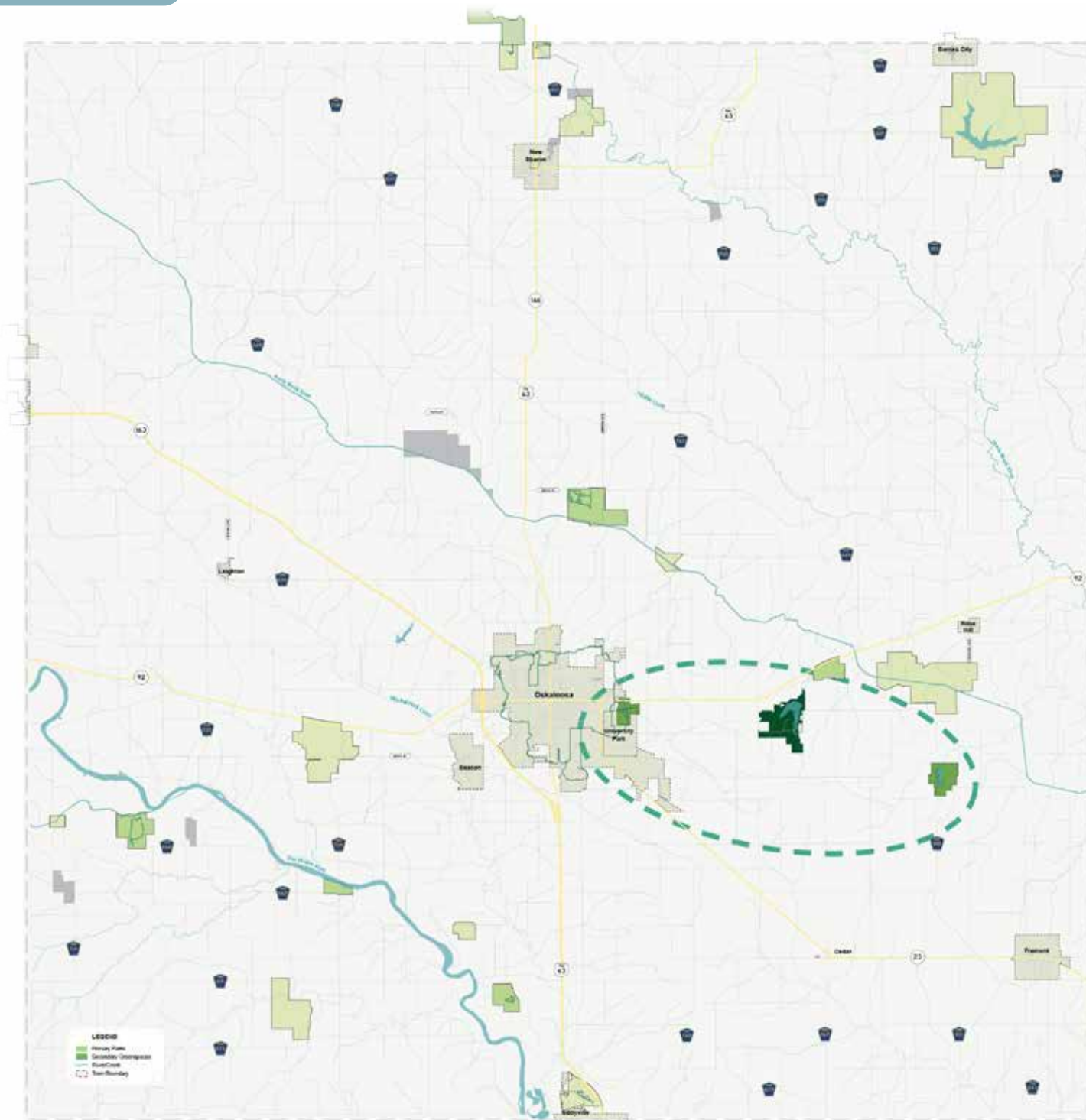
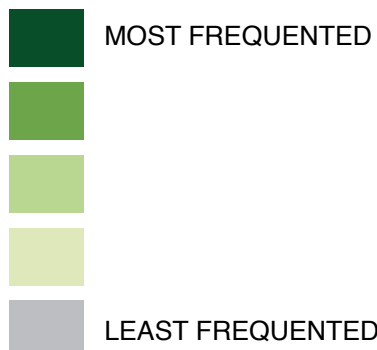
FREQUENTED PARKS

One of the stations at the open house asked attendees to identify which parks in the county (outside of Oskaloosa) they visit most often. Their information has been combined in the map to the right. Those parks closest to Oskaloosa were identified as more frequented, including:

- Lake Keomah State Park
- White Oak Conservation Area
- Caldwell Park

The most visited parks by classification were the curated nature parks. Residents were drawn to parks with exceptional habitat and opportunities for boating, fishing, and camping.

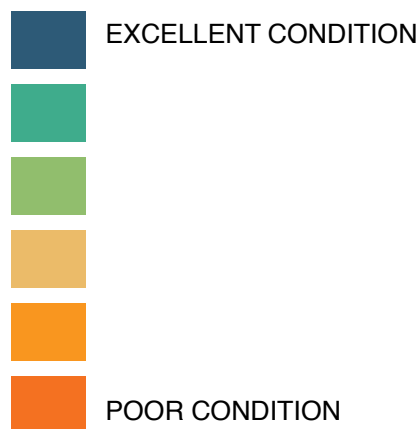
Most parks on the north side of the county and community parks within other Mahaska County towns had minimal to no representation.



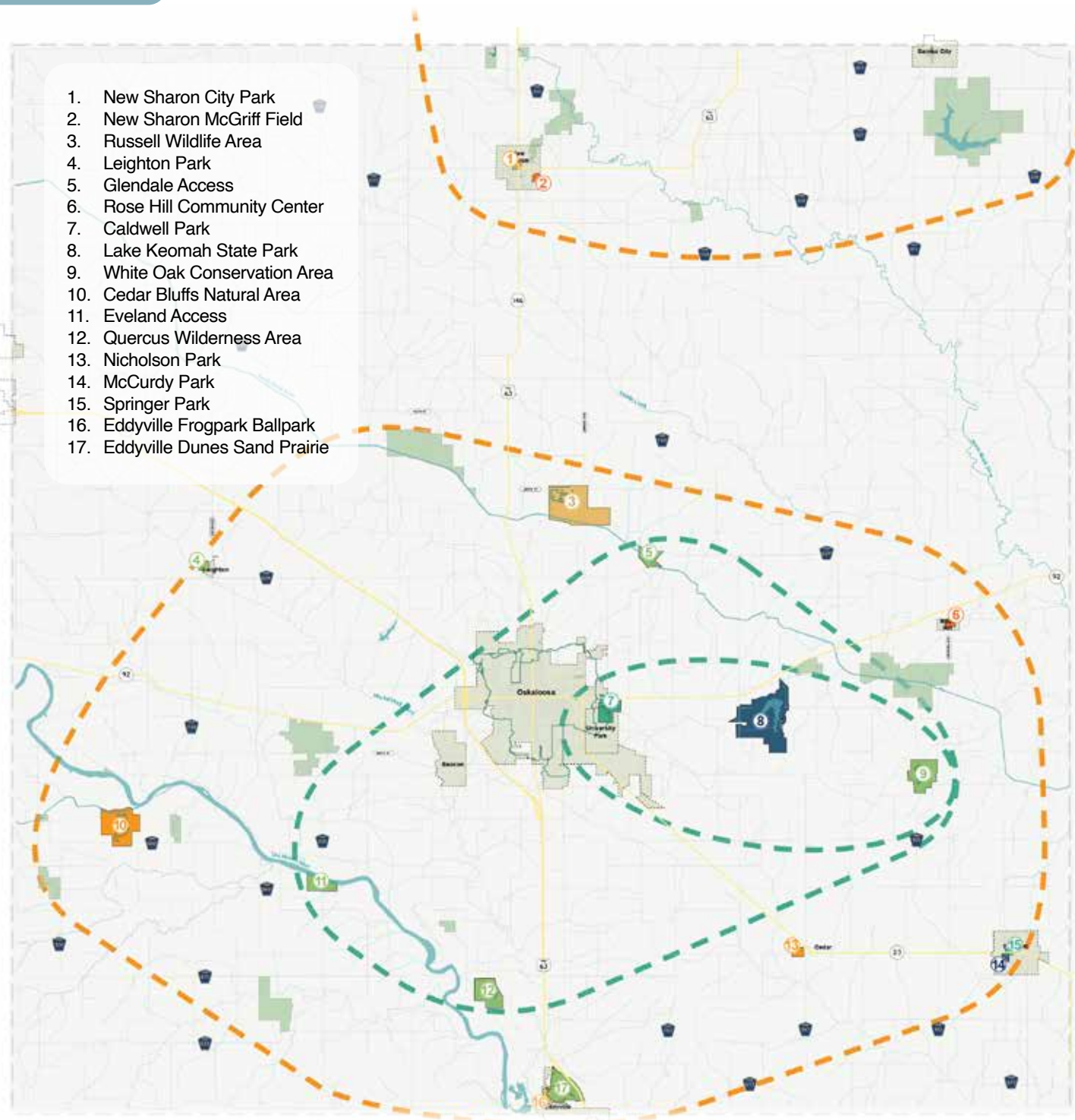
PARK ASSESSMENT COMPARISON

Generally, park usage decreases as the distance from Oskaloosa increases, possibly due to data collection being limited to Oskaloosa. Interestingly, the assessment grades of county- and state-owned parks also decrease with increasing distance from Oskaloosa, suggesting that parks closer to Oskaloosa receive more investment and consequently, higher visitation. Most park in the third ring out from Oskaloosa, highlighted on the right, had below average or poor scores.

The park assessments also revealed gaps in service in the northwest, and somewhat in the northeast and southwest. It is not only lack of parks that creates gaps in park system services, but the condition also plays a factor. If a park does not adequately provide good quality amenities it is not truly providing the needed service.

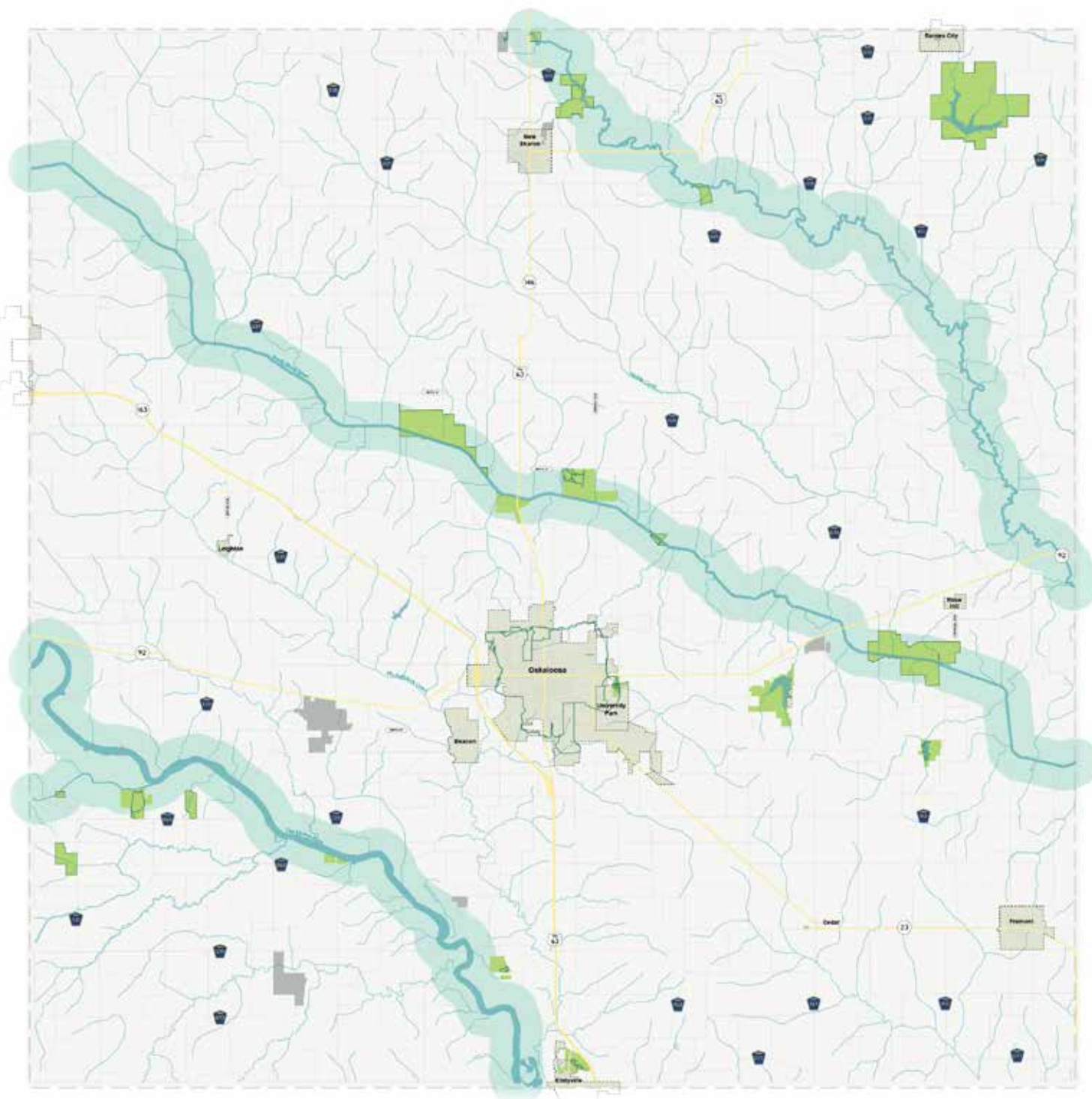
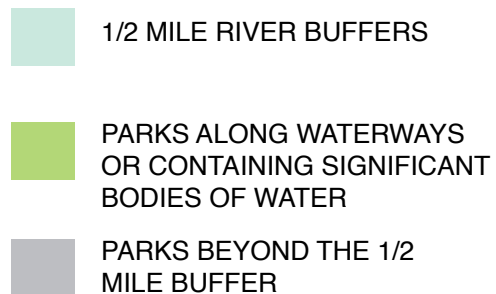


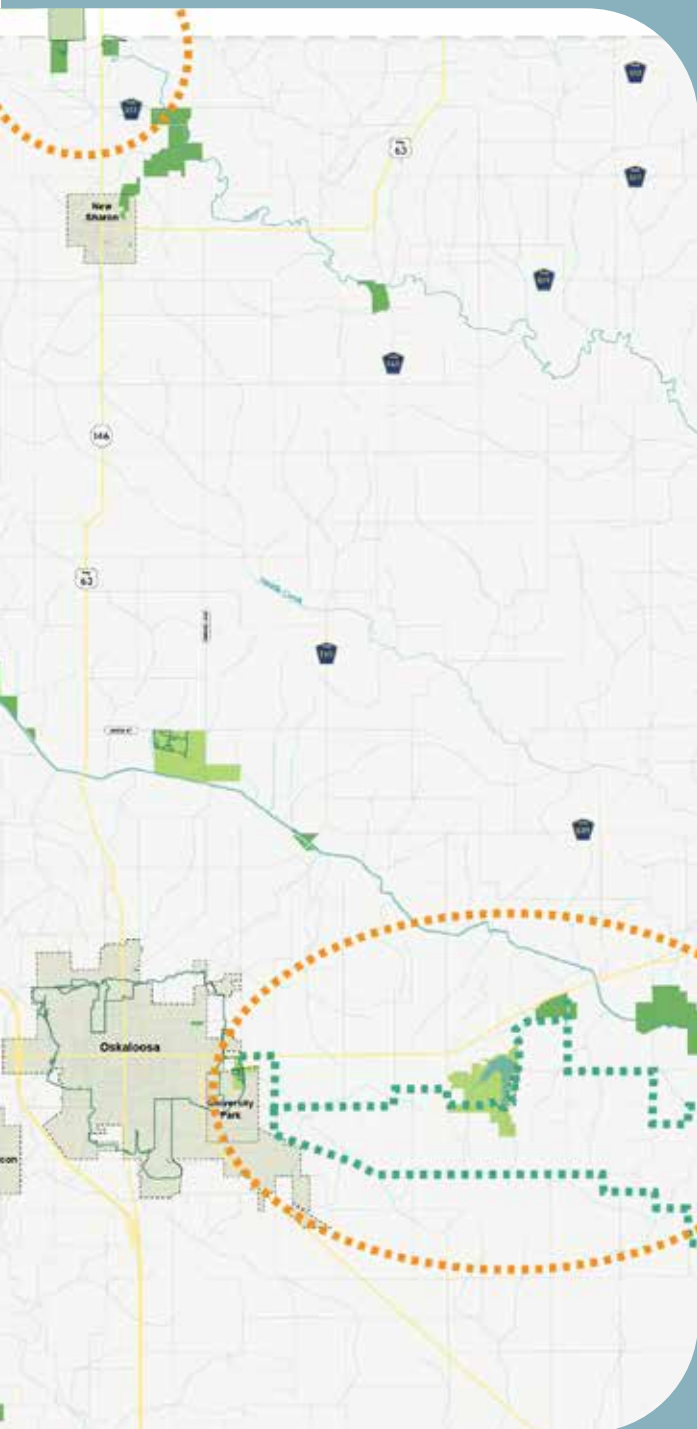
1. New Sharon City Park
2. New Sharon McGriff Field
3. Russell Wildlife Area
4. Leighton Park
5. Glendale Access
6. Rose Hill Community Center
7. Caldwell Park
8. Lake Keomah State Park
9. White Oak Conservation Area
10. Cedar Bluffs Natural Area
11. Eveland Access
12. Quercus Wilderness Area
13. Nicholson Park
14. McCurdy Park
15. Springer Park
16. Eddyville Frogpark Ballpark
17. Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie



COUNTY LAND DISTRIBUTION

Mapping the location of all parks in the county also illuminated important spatial patterns. Over eighty percent of the county- and state-owned/managed recreation spaces (over 4,600 acres) are adjacent to or near river corridors or have significant bodies of water within them. This is likely because the land is hard or expensive to develop into tillable cropland due to its slope, soil type, and accessibility challenges.





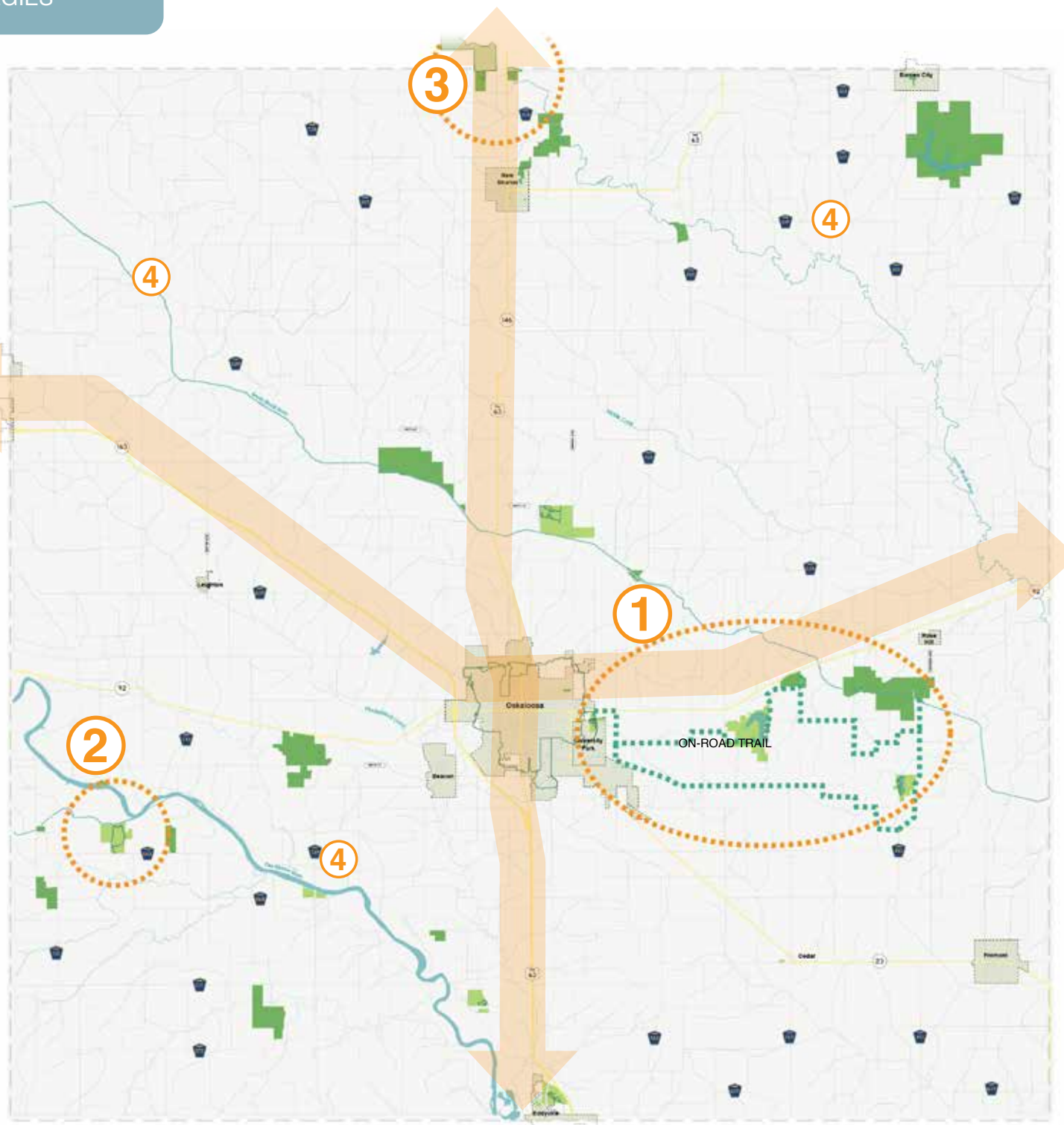
MAHASKA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM STRATEGIES

ESTABLISH REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

The county offers numerous exceptional parks that support residents and attract visitors from the broader region. To build upon existing assets, this strategy prioritizes investment into multi-park recreation areas that will attract more visitors to the county and increase recreational opportunities for residents. It also aims to fill gaps in the current network to make sure parks are equitably accessible. These strategies are based on feedback from the public, who were comfortable traveling for up to an hour to access quality recreation spaces. Therefore, this plan has been customized to draw visitors from an hour outside of Mahaska and beyond.

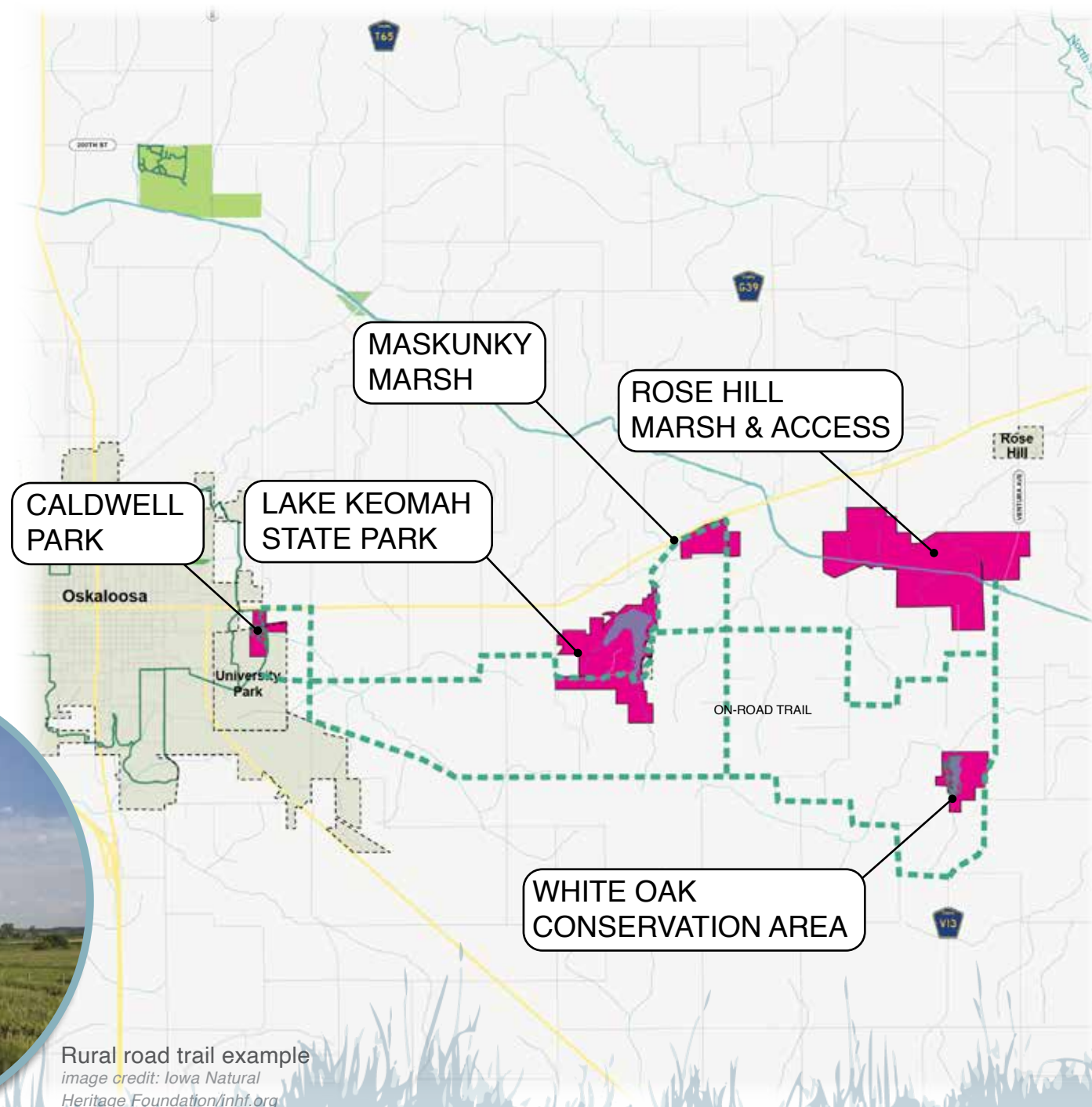
Instead of promoting individual parks in the county, this plan envisions three multi-park destinations, where individual park resources are combined to create a sum greater than its parts. The plan also capitalizes on the interest in paddle routes and water trails by expanding and enhancing access points so water access is part of each of the three park destinations.

- 1. MAHASKA COUNTY LANDSCAPE SERIES**
- 2. CEDAR BLUFF REGION**
- 3. NORTH MAHASKA GATEWAY**
- 4. WATER TRAILS/ PADDLING ROUTES**
 - NORTH SKUNK RIVER
 - SOUTH SKUNK RIVER
 - DES MOINES RIVER
- 5. REGIONAL BIKE TRAILS**



MAHASKA COUNTY LANDSCAPE SERIES

Embark on an unforgettable journey through the diverse landscapes of Mahaska County. Our 35-mile scenic driving and biking route winds its way through a rich tapestry of ecosystems, inviting you to discover the hidden ecologies within Mahaska County's parks. On the ride, you'll visit woodlands, savannas, prairies, and wetlands, and you can even catch a glimpse of the prehistoric past. Spend a day of adventure and learning as you connect with our natural wonderland.



Rural road trail example
image credit: Iowa Natural
Heritage Foundation/inhf.org

MAHASKA COUNTY LANDSCAPE SERIES

Overview

Many of the county's most popular parks and conservation areas are found on the east side of the county. This includes four county-owned parks (Caldwell, Maskunkya Marsh, Rose Hill Marsh and Access, and White Oak) and Lake Keomah State Park. Together, these parks offer a suite of Iowa landscapes, including woodlands, savannas, wetlands, and prairies. Their proximity provides an opportunity for an ecosystem-based activity hub, unlike any other space in Iowa.

In the Mahaska County Landscape Series, visitors can drive or bike between the parks to experience a range of landscapes and activities all in one day. Therefore, providing trail accommodations between and through each park is essential. This plan proposes using existing rural roads as a short-term solution, though off-road shared-use paths should be investigated as a long-term solution, as more users would feel comfortable riding on dedicated pedestrian paths. Though users can access the Landscape Series loop at any point, two primary trailheads are proposed at Caldwell Park and Rose Hill Park. These locations will orient and direct users coming from the west and east and will provide amenities needed to successfully explore the 35-mile loop.

General Mahaska County Landscape Series Recommendations:

- Develop route wayfinding and park signage standards for all parks and routes within the Landscape Series that utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in the identification of parks, destinations, and plant and ecosystem communities
- Update all park entry signage to provide consistent identities
- Develop a website for the Landscape Series that offers information about each park, turn-by-turn directions, and audio descriptions of the landscape that can be played when users are traveling between parks
- Develop visual and aural interpretive elements in each park to provide equitable accessibility
- Construct wayfinding kiosks in each park that identify trail routes and amenities in that park as well as maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County



LAKE KEOMAH STATE PARK

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which owns this property, did not participate in this planning process. Regardless, public feedback was gathered and proposals were offered for the park because it is a crucial park in eastern Mahaska County. Many people said Lake Keomah was their most visited park due to its many amenities and lake access. Lake Keomah's condition and adequacy assessment scores were rated as very good to excellent.

Recommendations:

- Improve trails throughout the park
- Update the boat launches to include facilities for kayak entry
- Construct more restrooms
- Construct more picnic shelters
- Consider the addition of rentable cabins
- Consider options for non-road bike trails, potentially using former railroad rights-of-way



image credit: tripadvisor.com

CALDWELL PARK

Note: in addition to being a starting point in the Mahaska County Landscape Series, Caldwell Park is also a key destination for the proposed Oskaloosa Education Hub. Recommendations for park improvements can be found in both sections of this report, as they cater to different user groups.

As the most-visited park in Mahaska County and acting as a pivoting point between Oskaloosa and Mahaska County parks, Caldwell Park is the perfect place for a gateway to the Mahaska County Landscape Series. The park, which sits at over 60 acres, offers a variety of trails, an environmental learning center, and an 18-hole disc golf course. If the adjacent Vennard College campus becomes a public amenity, the Mahaska County Landscape Series could expand into that space as part of its tour.



Recommendations:

- Build a trailhead, complete with a shelter, bike racks, bike repair station, and water-filling station
- Expand the parking lot on the south side of the Environmental Learning Center to accommodate new long-term users
- Construct a Mahaska County Landscape Series kiosk
- Expand bike trails into Oskaloosa via the proposed rec trail and along High Street to connect users to the downtown
- Add route signage from Caldwell Park to other parks in the Landscape Series

MASKUNKY MARSH

Due to its exceptional habitat, this park is known as an ideal place to observe migratory birds and insects. It accommodates bird watchers by having a small parking lot and a bird blind.

Recommendations:

- Construct restrooms on the site
- Add bike racks near the parking lot
- Add viewing scopes upslope from the marsh to facilitate additional forms of bird-watching
- Build a trail along the perimeter of the site, taking advantage of the old rail bed on the west side, to increase connectivity while maintaining habitat integrity

ROSE HILL MARSH & ACCESS

Sitting at 138 acres, Rose Hill Marsh offers wetlands, forests, and limestone bluffs. Visitors come to observe animals and camp in tents. Hundreds of additional acres of conservation land surround the park, extending the habitat value and potential for wildlife interaction. Rose Hill Access would become a key access point for the proposed South Skunk River water trail.

Recommendations:

- Improve the existing boat ramp by increasing the parking area, adding turnaround space, and building a dedicated canoe/kayak boat launch
- Ensure the existing boat ramps are properly maintained, keeping the ramps free of debris and soil
- Improve park entry signage for both the marsh and river access point
- Add interpretive signs denoting crucial wildlife and plant species
- Improve tent camping facilities by moving them away from the highway
- Construct trails and boardwalks to access the marsh and bluffs
- Construct trails connecting Rose Hill Marsh to Rose Hill Access
- Improve the parking lot at Rose Hill Marsh by improving the pavement and providing parking curbs
- Develop an accessible viewing area near the marsh to provide more equitable access

WHITE OAK CONSERVATION AREA

Cedar Lake is the focal point of this conservation area though its woodlands and prairies are in better condition than the lake. Other resources include nature trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds, though these resources are declining. Still, this park provides a great resource for the residents in the southeast corner of the county. Some picnic areas have overlooks to the lake. White Oak received an average rating for both the condition and adequacy of its amenities.

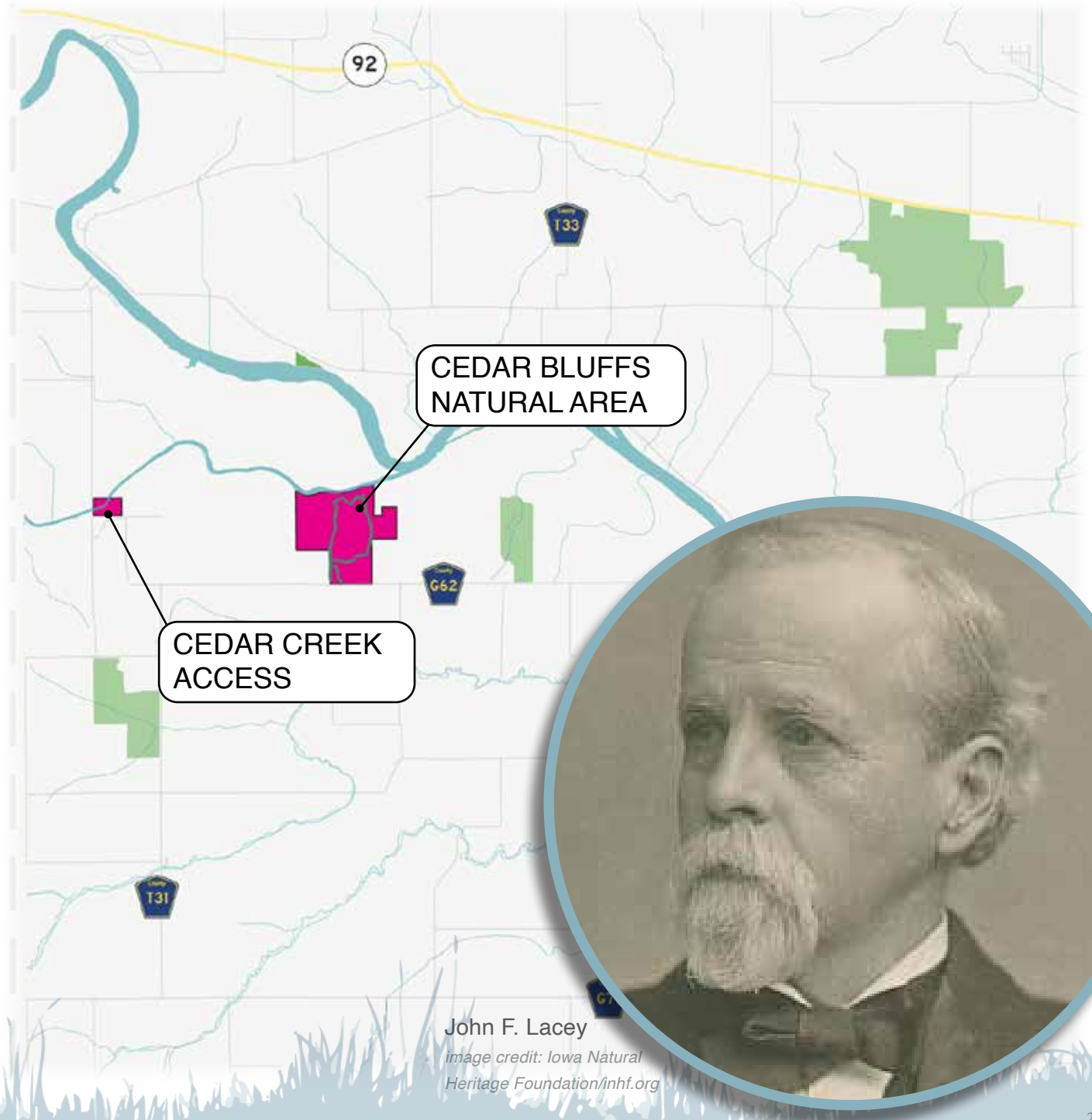
Recommendations:

- Engage with environmental engineers to identify water quality improvement strategies
- Update amenities around the lake, including the bridge, boat access, and docks
- Update the playground
- Improve trails throughout the site
- Further develop the savanna landscape of this site



CEDAR BLUFFS REGION

In this corner of Mahaska County, history, nature, and conservation converge. John F. Lacey, a visionary conservationist, roamed these lands as a boy. His unwavering passion for conservation, nurtured by the hills and bluffs on this site, played a pivotal role in establishing our cherished National Parks. Join us as you step into his footsteps and uncover the enduring legacy of this remarkable landscape.



John F. Lacey

image credit: Iowa Natural
Heritage Foundation/inhf.org

CEDAR BLUFFS REGION

Overview



This landscape centers upon the rolling riparian hills and sandstone bluffs of the Cedar Creek corridor, which feeds into the Des Moines River. However, accessing the bluffs and hills is limited due to the steep topography and the current location of the parking lot. The parks in this area scored lower in both condition and adequacy, due in part to the lack of other parks in the southwest corner of Mahaska County. This plan envisions stronger and more accessible connections to the site's unique physiography, including more convenient access to the water below the bluffs. In the future, it may be beneficial to acquire adjacent lands to expand the park and its experiences.

CEDAR CREEK ACCESS

Currently, this access point is informal and could be easily overlooked. However, the site has the potential to be a unique launch point to see the bluffs from the creek and, later, enjoy the proposed Des Moines River water trail. As part of the Cedar Bluff Region, this site should embody the themes and identities found at the Cedar Bluffs Nature Area.

Recommendations:

- Remove vegetation around the entrance drive
- Add a park entry sign consistent with the Cedar Bluffs Region identity
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies water trail routes, maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County, and information about the Cedar Bluffs Region
- Construct a formalized canoe and kayak launch
- Construct a dedicated parking area with a turnaround
- Construct a shelter with picnic tables and trash receptacles



CEDAR BLUFFS NATURAL AREA

Currently, Cedar Bluffs Natural Area is a 225-acre mixed landscape of woodlands and prairies. A fire-break trail takes users to a lookout over the sandstone bluffs. The park scored below average for its condition and adequacy due to its limited number of recreational opportunities. This plan envisions greater opportunities for exploration of the site through additional trails and overlooks. Interpretive installations throughout the park are proposed to share the story of John F. Lacey and land stewardship.

NOTE: To construct the following recommendations, the natural area would need to be reclassified as a park, not a natural area.



RECOMMENDATIONS (SHORT-TERM):

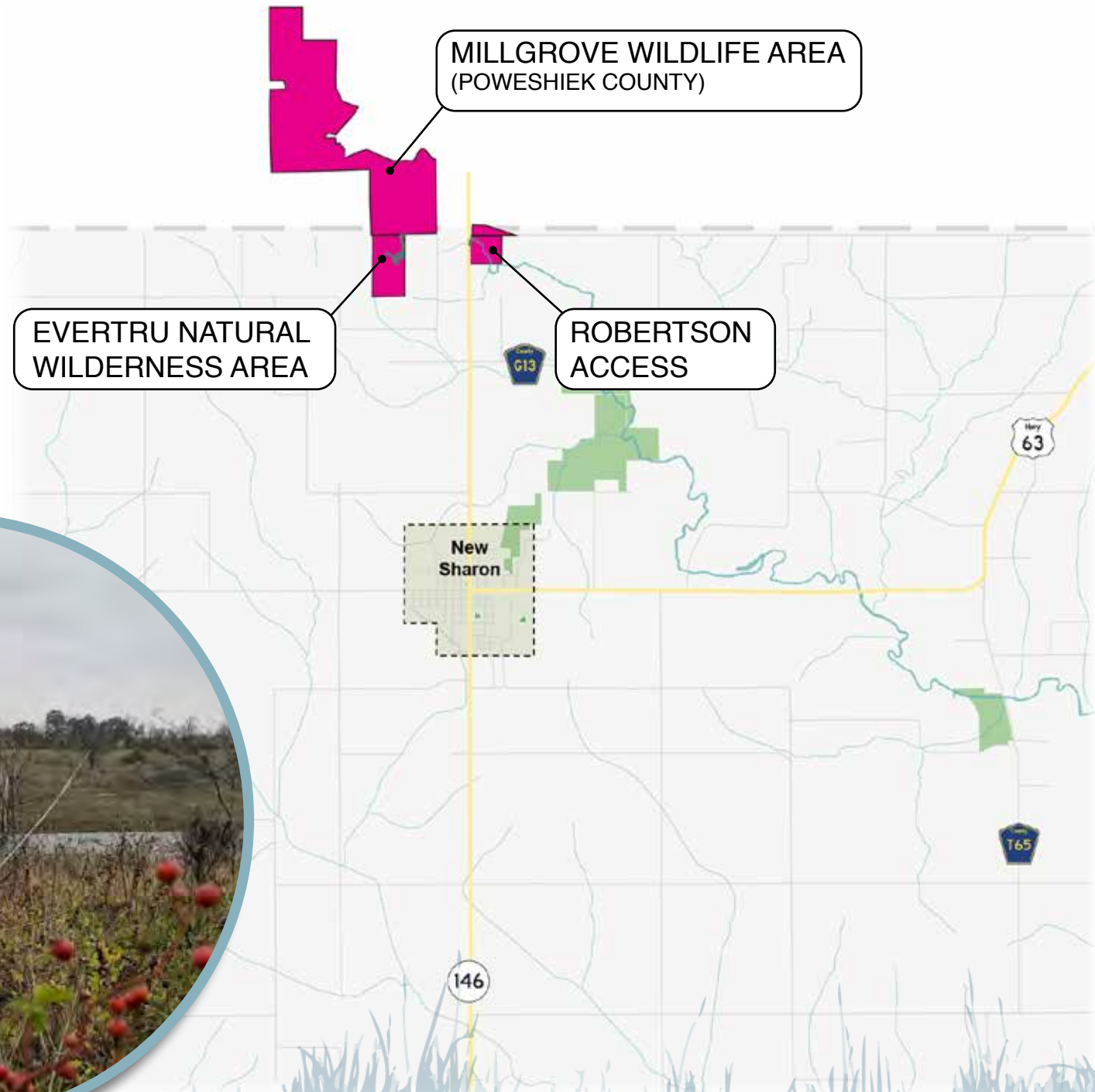
- Ensure existing trails are well-maintained
- Construct a restroom near the parking lot
- Add signage that provides a map and lengths of the trails

RECOMMENDATIONS (LONG-TERM):

- Update all park entry signage to provide a consistent Cedar Bluffs Region identity
- Build a new park road to shorten the distance between the parking lot and the overlook
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies trail routes and amenities in the park as well as maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County
- Construct additional substantial and “landmark-worthy” overlooks
- Add interpretive signs and interactive elements at the Interpretive Center that tell the story of Lacey and the National Parks
- Add shelters with picnic tables and trash receptacles
- Acquire adjacent land to expand the park’s habitats and access
- Add additional accessible trails; consider additional overlook opportunities along those routes based on views, significant features, and suitability of the site
- Construct rentable cabins to accommodate extended stays
- Construct nature playscapes with Lacey-inspired interpretive elements

NORTH MAHASKA GATEWAY

As you enter this captivating region on Hwy 146, the gently rolling hills of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain unfold before you. The North Mahaska Gateway seamlessly links Mahaska and Poweshiek Counties to provide a one-of-a-kind network of hiking trails and diverse habitats. Whether you're an angler, hiker, camper, or paddler, the rivers, woodlands, and grasslands converge here to meet your needs. Welcome to Mahaska County!



NORTH MAHASKA GATEWAY

Overview

The north half of Mahaska County has comparatively few broadly usable parks. The few parks in the area that are not conservation areas had low park assessment scores. Nearby municipal parks in the area also scored low, though they still offer crucial opportunities for play and programmed recreation.

To improve the recreation options, boost local economies, and create a North Mahaska identity, this plan envisions a new regional recreation center called the North Mahaska Gateway. It centers upon EverTru Natural Wilderness Area, though is supported by Robertson Access and Millgrove Access and Wildlife Area in Poweshiek County. Together, these spaces form a new wilderness exploration zone, where forests, streams, wetland, and prairies mix to create a unique and off-grid experience. They also work to define the entry into Mahaska County along Highway 146.

General Gateway Recommendations:

- Manage the vegetation of the highway corridor to reflect the vegetation found in the adjacent parks
- Work closely with Poweshiek County Conservation to envision and install new trailheads, trails, and wayfinding signage to connect Millgrove Wildlife Area to EverTru
- Consider acquiring land between EverTru and Robertson Access to better link the two parks



EVERTRU WILDLIFE AREA

EverTru offers 72 acres of rolling hills that define the Southern Iowa Drift Plain. Oak woodlands are the dominant landscape habitat, though prairies dominate the clearings. Outside of a small parking area, the site offers a few hiking trails and a pond for fishing.

Recommendations:

- Extend the road and formalize the trailhead as a launch site for the North Mahaska Gateway, including an expanded parking lot and restroom
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies trail routes, information about the North Mahaska Gateway region, and maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County
- Add mountain bike trails that take advantage of the rolling terrain without damaging fragile habitats or causing erosion issues
- Increase options for fishing around the pond



ROBERTSON ACCESS

Robertson Access is a relatively small park though it includes RV and tent camping, trails, and restrooms. The site offers access to the North Skunk River, but it does not include a formal entry point or boat ramp.

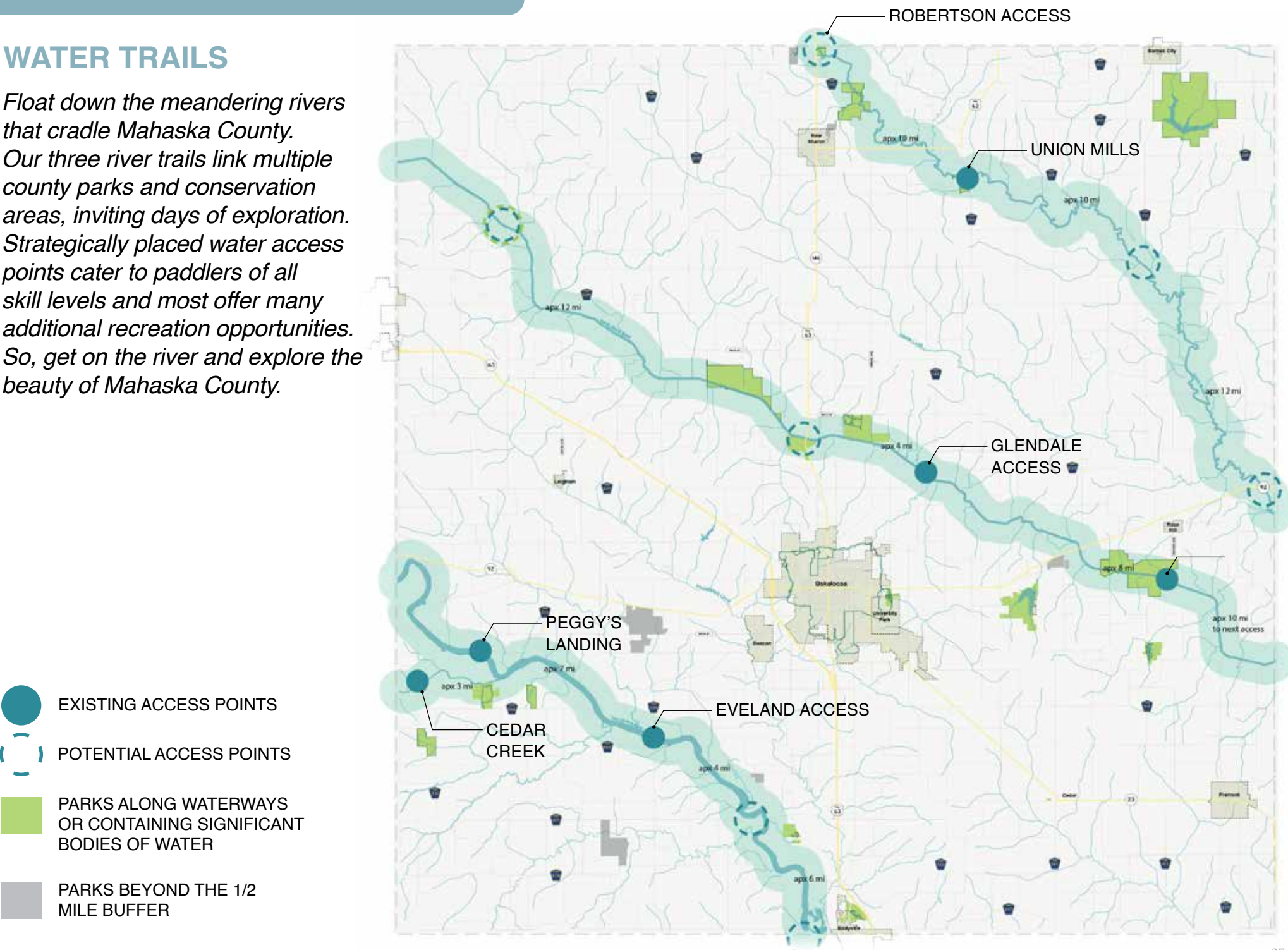
Recommendations:

- Improve the entry signage near the highway
- Construct a formal canoe/kayak access ramp
- Construct a nature playscape for families staying at the campground
- Update and improve the restrooms and showers
- Expand the trails



WATER TRAILS

Float down the meandering rivers that cradle Mahaska County. Our three river trails link multiple county parks and conservation areas, inviting days of exploration. Strategically placed water access points cater to paddlers of all skill levels and most offer many additional recreation opportunities. So, get on the river and explore the beauty of Mahaska County.



WATER TRAILS OVERVIEW

Overview

Improving the Mahaska County Park system is reliant upon increasing access to and through the county's primary waterways. Mahaska County is fortunate to have the North Skunk River, South Skunk River, and Des Moines River all meandering diagonally across the county, allowing for options for paddling and floating through the county's many landscapes. These rivers are currently considered paddling routes, though they are not official water trails due to their lack of infrastructure such as regular access points and signage. The extant access points along these rivers are often informal and lack the necessary infrastructure like boat launches, signed entries, and parking lots with adequate turnaround space.

Importantly, it is not necessary to build all access points to the same level. This plan proposes key locations where formalized access points are needed to support the use and enjoyment of the county's rivers. These parks, which would have restrooms, formalized shore fishing options, and small playgrounds, can also be utilized as key open spaces for nearby rural residents. Other, less formal access points would only need a parking lot, an entry sign, and a stabilized gravel entry to the river.



NORTH SKUNK RIVER (PADDLE ROUTE)

The North Skunk River would remain a paddle route. Its many twists and turns are well-suited for kayaking, canoing, and tubing.

Formal Access Point Recommendations:

Robertson Access

See recommendations in the North Mahaska Gateway section of this report.

Informal Access Point Recommendations:

Union Mills Access

This access point currently includes an overgrown gravel drive which hides its presence from the public. The site offers a riparian woodland with many clearings and other creeks flowing through the site.

- Construct a stabilized gravel access point to the river
- Clear vegetation around the access point for safe access
- Add new signage for the access point
- Expand the parking lot and ensure the surface is in good condition
- Add informal trails throughout the park
- Consider adding another access point at the river's intersection with Highway V13

New Highway 92 Access

This new access point would provide better access to the river on the east side of the county. A large right-of-way exists on the north side of Highway 92 that would accommodate an entrance drive, a small parking lot, and a river landing.

- Construct a stabilized gravel access point to the river
- Clear vegetation around the access point for safe access
- Add new signage for the access point
- Build a new parking lot with a turnaround
- Establish native plantings and provide appropriate management to foster a high-quality habitat and minimize erosion

SOUTH SKUNK RIVER (WATER TRAIL)

The South Skunk is the longest water body within the county, crossing both the west and east county lines. It is wider than the North Skunk River and long stretches of it have been channelized, making paddling less interesting and slightly more dangerous due to the increased flow speeds. Regardless, the South Skunk River can provide excellent options for canoes, kayaks, and small boats. Establishing this route as a water trail would provide additional recreation opportunities for residents and likely draw more people into the county.

Formal Access Point Recommendations:

New Highway 5GT Access

This site, located in western Mahaska County at the intersection of the South Skunk and Highway 5GT, would provide an ideal entry point into the South Skunk River water trail. It would also provide much-needed recreation space in the northwest corner of the county.

- Construct new entry signs into the access point
- Construct a defined parking lot with enough space for a turnaround
- Construct a small boat/kayak ramp and launching point
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies water trail routes and maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County
- Build trails throughout the site to provide options for fishing and nature engagement
- Establish native plantings and provide appropriate management to foster a high-quality habitat and minimize erosion
- Add nature play elements that are minimal cost and low-maintenance to provide further park activities to support nearby residents



Water Works Park Access

This property, owned by the City of Oskaloosa, is on the south side of the river at Highway 63. Its location along the highway and proximity to Oskaloosa make it an ideal river connection point. The site is currently a utility zone and floodplain green space. The site can be updated to be an informal landing to accommodate boat access with minimal changes.

- Construct new entry signs into the access point
- Construct a defined parking lot with enough space for a turnaround
- Construct a stabilized gravel access point to the river
- Build trails throughout the site to provide options for fishing and nature engagement
- Establish native plantings and provide appropriate management to foster a high-quality habitat and minimize erosion

Glendale Access

Glendale offers an existing concrete boat ramp that is in good condition. The site also features both tent and RV camping, picnic areas, and fishing opportunities. The condition of the access was rated as average, and the adequacy is good.

- Improve paved surfaces throughout the park
- Add higher-quality seating options
- Construct a shelter with picnic tables and trash receptacles
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies water trail routes and maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County
- Build trails throughout the site to provide options for fishing and nature engagement
- Ensure the forested areas are free of litter

DES MOINES RIVER (WATER TRAIL)

The Des Moines River is the county's most notable waterway, even though it only crosses its southwest corner. Tributaries of the Des Moines, like Cedar Creek, also have access points that add to the overall network. For its scale, the Des Moines River is a great choice for a Mahaska County water trail because it is situated between Lake Red Rock (twelve miles upstream from the county's west border) and Ottumwa (17 miles downstream from the county's southern border).

Formal Access Point Recommendations:

Cedar Creek Access

See recommendations in the Cedar Creek Region section of this report.

Eveland Access

The primary Des Moines River access point is currently located at Eveland Access, which is also an incredibly popular destination for RV camping. This park was highly frequented by the public. The park offers many existing amenities, but areas of improvement are still needed. Eveland scored average in its site conditions and above average for the adequacy of its amenities.

- Construct a handicap-accessible fishing dock
- Update the playground
- Construct additional trails throughout the property
- Expand camping areas and options, including tent camping and, potentially, cabins
- Add active recreation options such as pickleball and basketball courts
- Improve the entry signage
- Improve the appearance of the boat ramps by stabilizing the slopes and increasing maintenance
- Add additional trash receptacles throughout the site

New Eddyville Area Access Point

If land was acquired, an additional access point would be ideal somewhere around Eddyville. This would be a formal landing as it would bookend the access points in Mahaska County.

- Identify an ideal location for a new access point
- Construct new entry signs into the access point
- Construct a defined parking lot with enough space for a turnaround
- Construct a small boat/kayak ramp and launching point
- Construct a wayfinding kiosk that identifies water trail routes and maps showing locations of other parks within Mahaska County
- Build trails throughout the site to provide options for fishing and nature engagement
- Establish native plantings and provide appropriate management to foster a high-quality habitat and minimize erosion

Informal Access Point Recommendations:

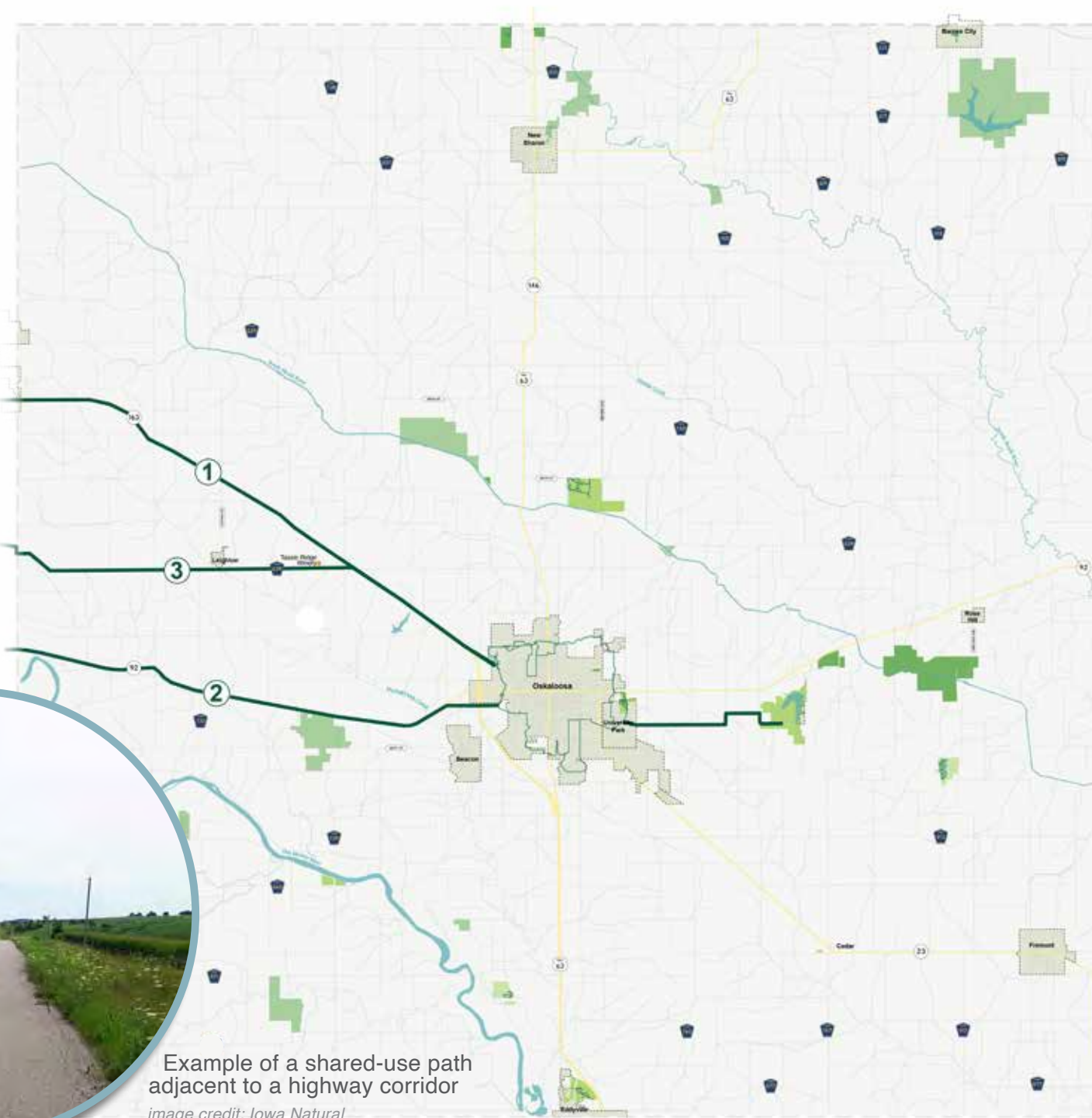
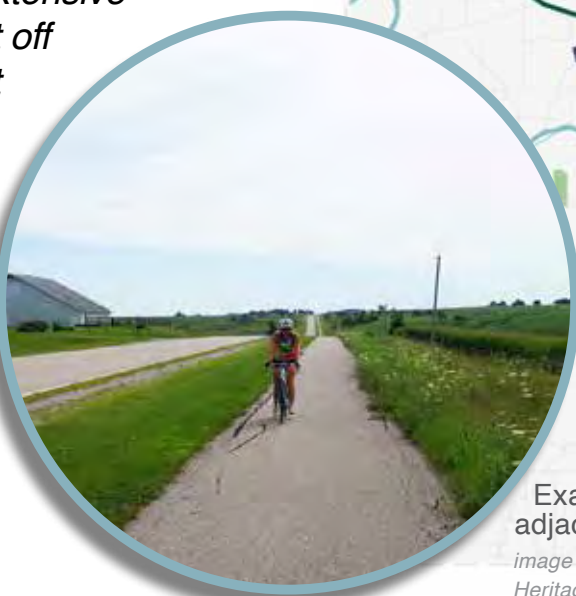
Currently Unnamed Landing (Highway G71)

Though the site is unnamed, it is already being utilized as an access point to the river for fishing and boating. Plenty of space is available for parking and signage. Its proximity to Quercus Wildlife Area provides an opportunity for extended stays in the county.

- Construct new entry signs into the access point
- Construct a defined parking lot with enough space for a turnaround
- Construct a stabilized gravel access point to the river
- Build trails throughout the site to provide options for fishing and nature engagement
- Establish native plantings and provide appropriate management to foster a high-quality habitat and minimize erosion

REGIONAL BIKE TRAILS

Imagine pedaling through a tapestry of landscapes. Lush farmlands unfurl before you, dotted with quaint farmhouses. Gentle hills rise and fall, offering panoramic vistas that will take your breath away. Mahaska County beckons with its rolling hills, charming towns, and a network of trails that will leave you breathless. Buckle up (or rather, clip in!) for an epic cycling adventure as you traverse a network of trails that connect Oskaloosa with Lake Red Rock, eventually leading you to Des Moines' extensive trail system. Dust off your bike and get ready for an unforgettable journey!



Example of a shared-use path adjacent to a highway corridor

image credit: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation/inhf.org

REGIONAL BIKE TRAILS

Overview

There's significant interest in establishing pedestrian links between Oskaloosa and Pella/Lake Red Rock. If plans in Marion County are realized, this trail could connect Oskaloosa to Des Moines, enhancing regional economic development opportunities.

1. The most viable trail routes between Oskaloosa and Pella are along the highway corridors. Highway 163 is the most direct and offers potential connections to amenities like Tassel Ridge Winery, Frisian Farms Cheese House, and Sunnyslope Greenhouse. However, it doesn't pass near other popular park spaces. The main challenge with a Highway 163 trail is the high traffic volume and speed, which can be daunting for cyclists. This was confirmed at a public open house event, where attendees expressed a preference for a sidepath option, completely separated from the highway.
2. An alternative trail route could be along Highway 92. While it has less traffic and would be a longer route, it lacks the existing commercial amenities to attract cyclists. However, it could connect to parks like Hull Wildlife Management Area and Eveland Access, and potentially link to other communities in Marion County.
3. This route is less direct but utilizes lower volume roadways that connect to amenities and other communities. Starting in Oskaloosa this route would be best served by a shared use path adjacent to Highway 163. At County Highway G39, the trail could become a paved shoulder route connecting to the winery and into Leighton allowing for people to have destinations and places to rest. The trail would follow G39 to the border of the county. As seen in the map to the right, in Marion County the trail connects to Keokuk Drive and 216 Place, to connect into Lake Red Rock Dam. A spur trail could connect down to Harvey via a former rail bed.



ADDITIONAL COUNTY PARK SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the Mahaska County's park and open spaces are encompassed in the regional destination hubs and water trail access points. General recommendations for the parks outside of those areas are included here. The primary goals for these spaces are to maintain or improve existing features too good quality and integrate signage that compliments broader park system's the wayfinding and branding.

EDDYVILLE DUNES SAND PRAIRIE

The dunes are noted for their beautiful prairie and existing hiking trails among them. This park scored average for condition and adequacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Build additional trails and enhance existing trails
- Add benches along the trail route
- Construct a restroom near the picnic shelter
- Update and expand signage and wayfinding to be consistent with county park identity

NICHOLSON PARK

This roadside park just outside the town of Cedar features picnic areas and open space for recreation. The vegetation needs more consistent management and the picnic structures and playgrounds are in disrepair. This park scored poorly in both condition and adequacy based on these points.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Clear unwanted trees and replace with native plantings
- Update playground equipment
- Renovate picnic shelter
- Update signage to be consistent with county park identity
- Increase restroom maintenance

QUERCUS WILDERNESS AREA

Quercus features over a hundred acres of oak/hickory woodlands in the south central part of the county. The site offers hiking trails, camping, and picnicking options. In the winter months, it is also used for cross country skiing. This park scored average for condition and above average for adequacy of the existing amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Build additional trails and enhance existing trails
- Clear and maintain hazard trees
- Clear understory of invasive shrubs and unwanted brush
- Construct a picnic shelter that is accessible from the parking lot

RUSSELL WILDLIFE AREA

This former quarry is a popular destination among participants at the community engagement event. The current 400-acre site features woodlands and prairies that surround multiple ponds stocked for fishing and available for boating and kayaking. Restrooms are available and there are picnic areas. Russell scored average for condition and just below average for adequacy of amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Update park entry signs to be consistent with county park identity
- Improve wayfinding and road configuration to avoid confusion
- Construct a stabilized gravel access point at pond five
- Improve trail and road conditions
- Consider changing the park's permitting structure so additional recreational resources can be built (i.e., paved trails)

ADDITIONAL COUNTY PARK SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

HAWTHORN LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Hawthorn is owned and managed by the IDNR and features a large lake for boating and fishing and trails that wind through diverse natural habitats. Though the area was not assessed as part of this study because it is owned by the state, public engagement participants provided park recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

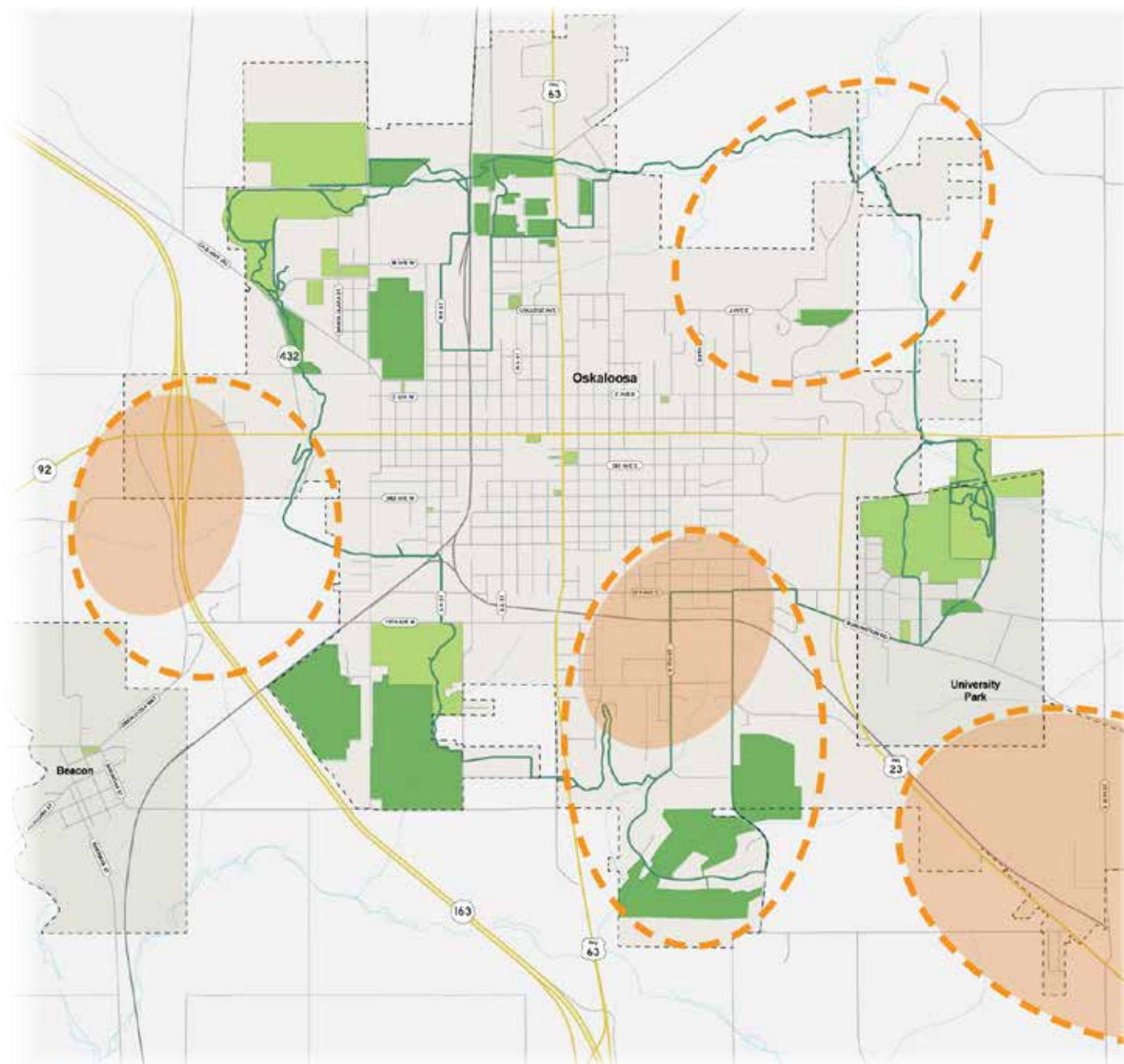
- Improve water quality and invasive vegetation in the lake
- Improve tick management practices
- Employ vegetation management techniques like controlled burns to control volunteer trees sprouting up in the prairie
- Construct a handicap-accessible fishing dock





CITY OF OSKALOOSA PARK SYSTEM ANALYSIS

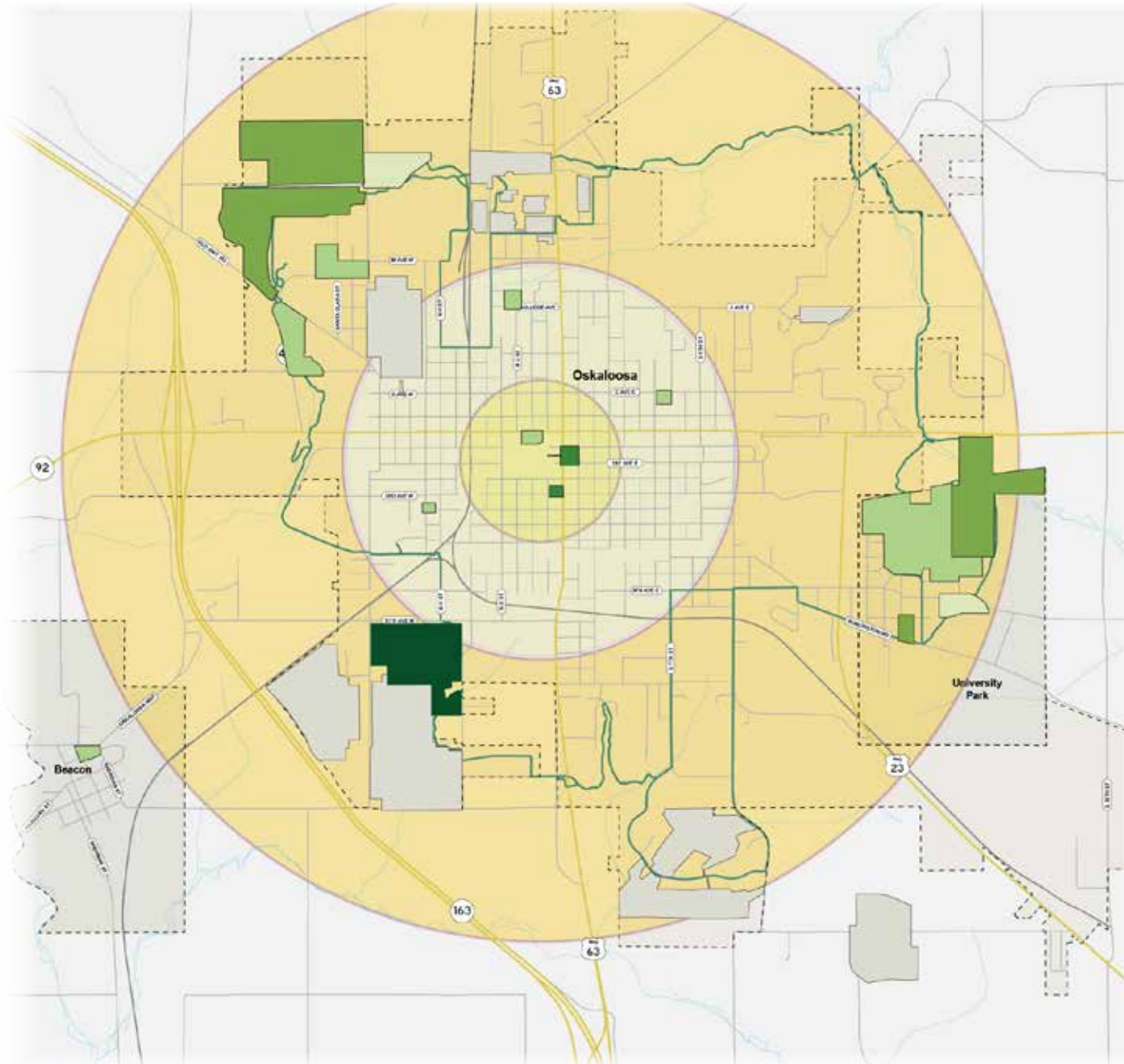
The City of Oskaloosa is Mahaska County's County Seat and largest community. With approximately 11,500 residents, Oskaloosa makes up just over half the population of the county. Attracting and retaining residents and encouraging visitors to stay are on-going goals. Providing a robust and unique park system and cultural offerings is one strategy for meeting the needs of and growing a community. Oskaloosa's current park system, community loop trail, and other supporting green spaces are extremely rare among communities of its size and provide residents and visitors with abundant opportunities for recreation and nature connection. *Plan Osky reflects this reality*, highlighting that residents identified the parks as the community's greatest asset. The following pages provide additional park and recreation suggestions so Oskaloosa's park spaces can best serve future generations.



PARK DISTRIBUTION

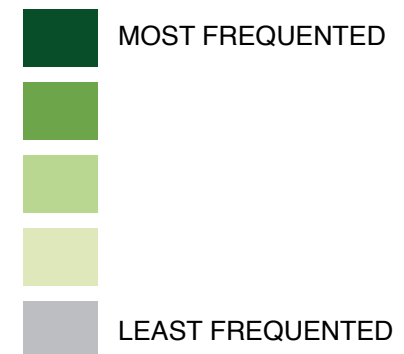
- Portions of Oskaloosa are not served by primary parks, based on a 1/2 mile preferred walking distance
- Participants in the public event seemed content to drive to parks that offer amenities and qualities they enjoy
- Secondary parks fill recreation needs in most park desert areas, but not all are accessible or identified as public amenities
- The areas with the least park coverage are in Oskaloosa's southeast quadrant
- In the northeast corner, Grant Park and North Park could provide green space for the residents, though the quality, adequacy and awareness of those spaces and their amenities is limited
- Ensuring adequate recreation services should be a priority in the west and northwest quadrants of the community, as development infill is projected





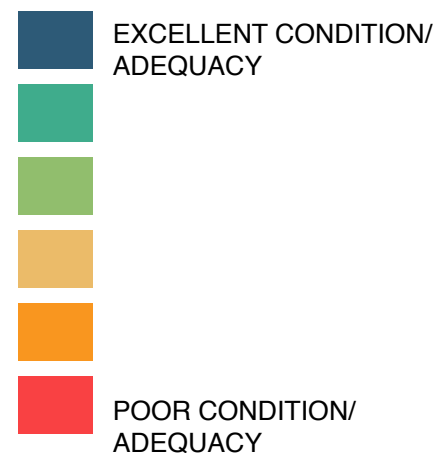
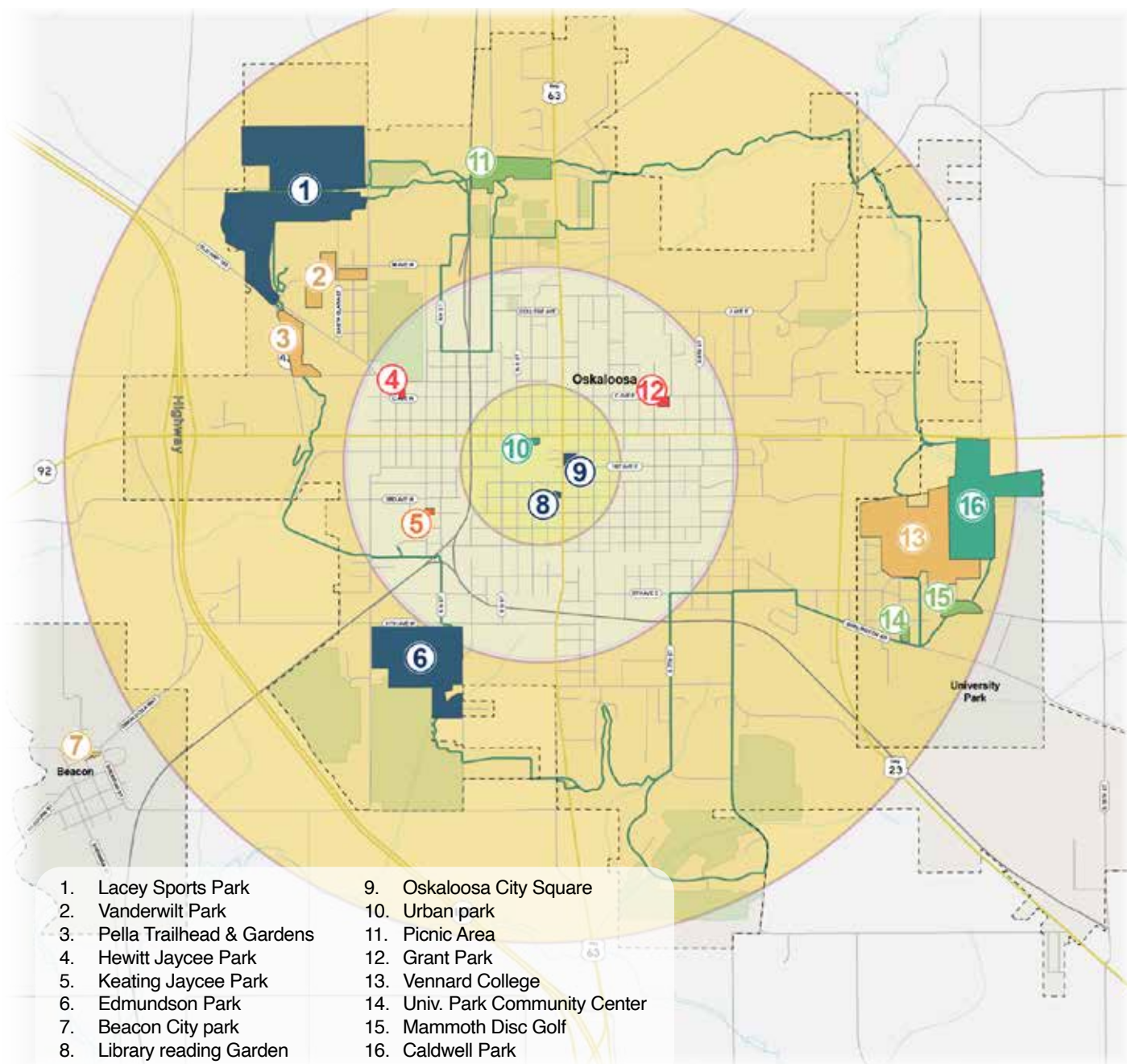
FREQUENTED PARKS

- Based on community input, residents tend to frequent the larger perimeter parks that offer numerous recreational resources
- The downtown core is also heavily visited due to its cultural and historic qualities
- The smaller neighborhood parks that surround the downtown core were not frequented and many people could not identify them



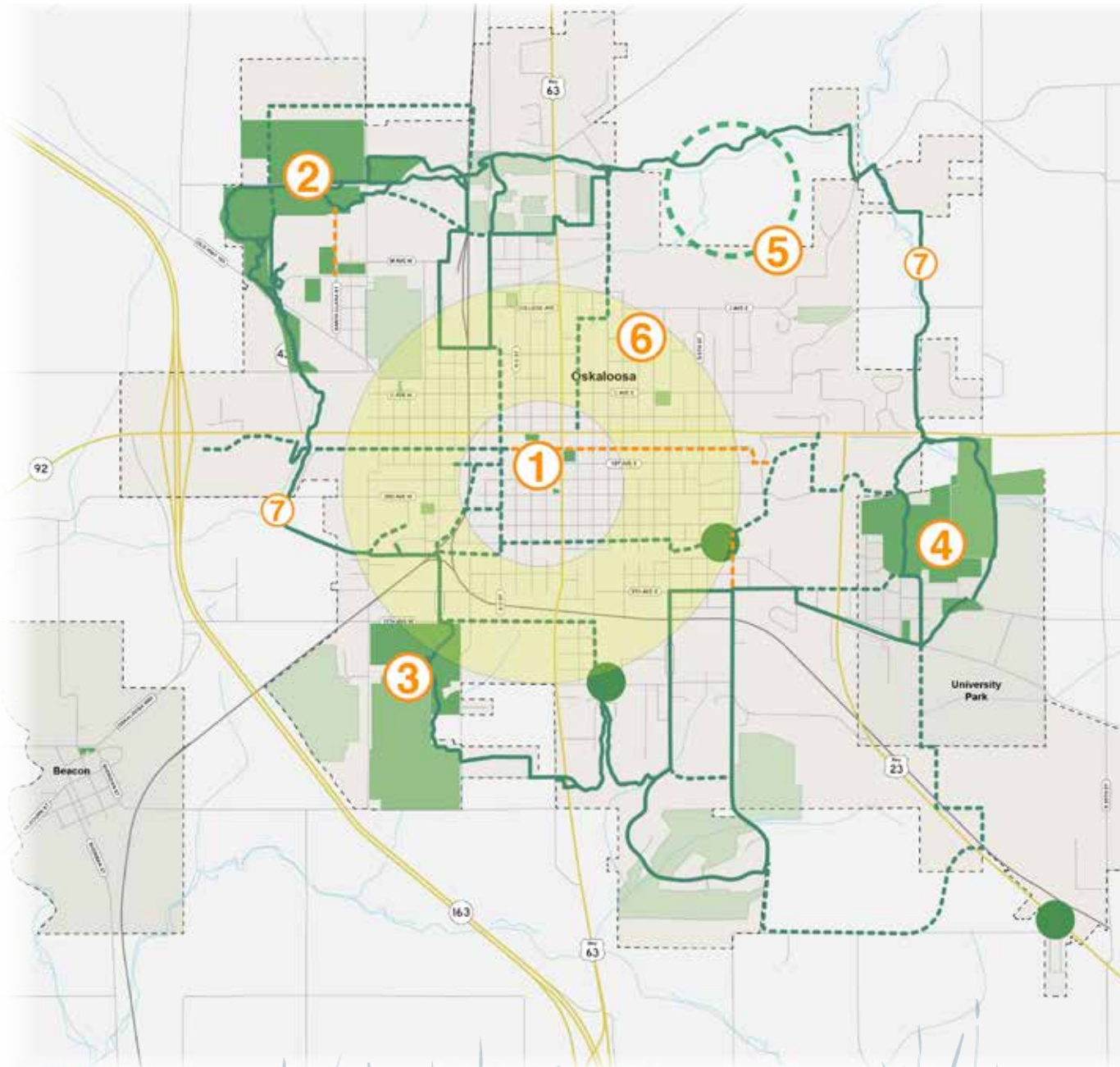
PARK ASSESSMENT COMPARISON

- Parks that noticeably received regular maintenance and updates, specifically in the downtown core and larger perimeter parks were identified as more frequented by residents
- Parks that had lower assessment scores due to condition and adequacy were also not frequented as often
- Areas with medium to high density residential development, as noted in Plan Oskey, were near parks with lower park scores





CITY OF OSKALOOSA PARK SYSTEM STRATEGY



CREATE PARK HUBS & FILL THE GAPS

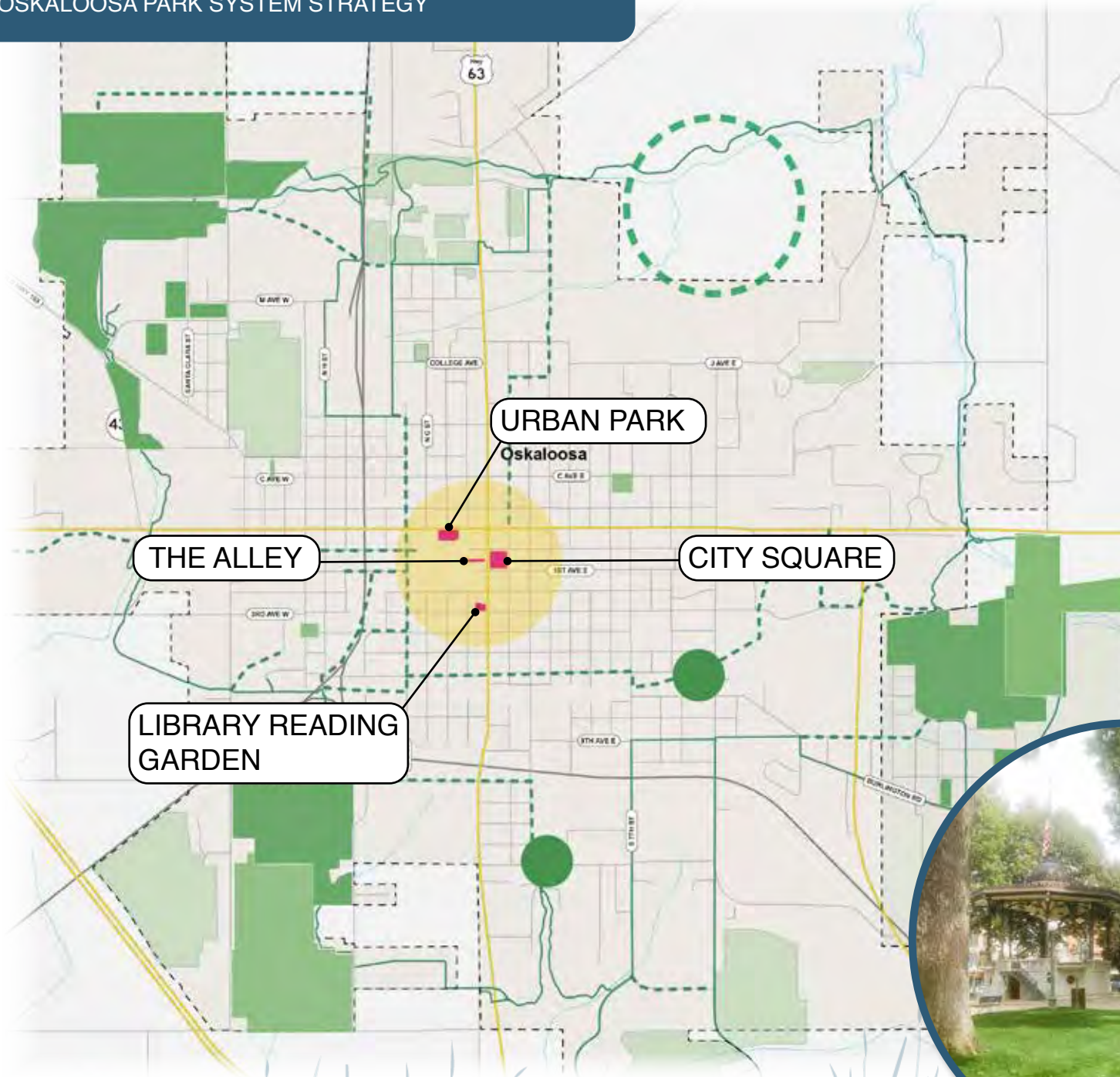
The preferred strategy within the City of Oskaloosa was to invest in park hubs, but also strategically fill gaps in park coverage where required. This would ensure equitable park access for all city residents while creating a unique and defined recreational identity for the future. By defining each park hub around a theme, park resources can be better apportioned within the community. For example, if the community desires a new form of recreation like pickleball, it would make sense for it to go into the Sports Hub, as it is designed to accommodate a wide variety of sports. The vision for each hub is described on the following pages, including a description and recommendations for all parks within each hub.

- 1. CULTURE HUB**
- 2. SPORTS HUB**
- 3. HISTORIC RECREATION HUB**
- 4. EDUCATION HUB**
- 5. ADVENTURE HUB**
- 6. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK RING**
- 7. COMMUNITY RECREATION TRAIL**

CULTURE HUB

At the heart of Oskaloosa lies the Culture Hub, a vibrant outdoor showcase that weaves together greenspaces and activities. Nestled in the downtown area, this hub is seamlessly connected by green streets, creating a dynamic backdrop for Oskaloosa's entertainment, commerce, and cultural experiences. Test your skills and catch some air at our skatepark, unwind with a good book within the serene beauty of the library's garden, and join fellow residents for local celebrations around the historic bandstand.

From adrenaline to tranquility, the Culture Hub offers a little something for everyone.



CULTURE HUB

Overview

The Culture Hub lies in the heart of downtown Oskaloosa and represents the culture, history, and values of the city. Current and future parks in this hub should prioritize storytelling, community events, and art integration to best demonstrate Oskaloosa's past and future.

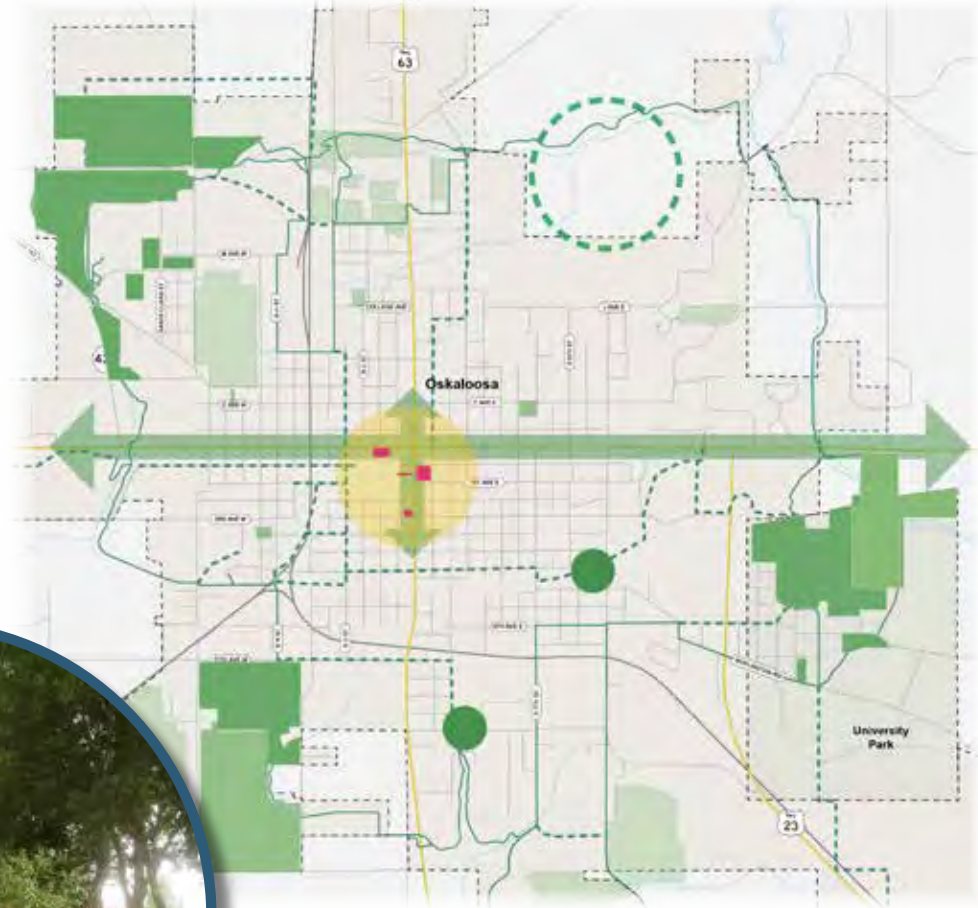
Parks and greenspaces in this area include City Square Park, the skatepark, the Alley, and the public library's reading garden. For the most part, these spaces are well-kept and adequately serve the community, though there are areas for improvement.

GREEN CORRIDORS:

The park spaces within the Culture Hub are adequately spaced but are not well-connected (outside of the strong connection between City Square Park and the Alley). To improve this, two green corridors (pedestrian walking routes with street trees and identifiable signage, site furnishings, and/or pavement markings) are suggested. The first runs north/south on Hwy 63/S Market Street between Hwy 92 and 3rd Avenue and the second runs east/west on High Avenue between D Street and S 2nd Street (through the Penn Central Mall parking lot). These two corridors would connect the skatepark to the downtown core and make a more park-like environment within the mall parking lot.

COHESIVE HUB SIGNAGE:

All park signs within the Culture Hub should utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in park identification, wayfinding, and hub unity.



OSKALOOSA CITY SQUARE PARK

This historic park is a social and cultural hub for the community. It received a very high assessment from the design team due to the condition of the historic bandstand and its grounds. Numerous residents noted pride in the character and upkeep of the site and hoped that the level of attention would be maintained.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add either a public restroom facility in the downtown area or add signs pointing to the location of public restrooms
- Add garden beds near park entrances and surrounding the bandstand
- Continue to introduce public art installations throughout the downtown parks and broader park system
- Consider developing an art and culture walk around the downtown area that uses a mobile app to guide visitors and provide information about each art piece

OSKALOOSA PUBLIC LIBRARY READING GARDEN

The Reading Garden is a quaint oasis that provides a welcome entry and minimizes the visual impact of the parking lot. However, the trees surrounding the space are young and therefore don't yet offer much shade. Regardless, the Reading Garden had very positive adequacy and condition scores.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add a second, larger shade structure to provide options for outdoor reading events
- Add two signs on the outside of the fence, facing Market Street and 3rd Avenue, so the public knows that the Reading Garden is publicly accessible

THE ALLEY

This artful pocket park provides a much-needed public amenity to the downtown core. It is well-maintained and offers an engaging way to tell the many stories of Oskaloosa. Seating areas provide places for social gatherings and to enjoy food from nearby restaurants. Because it is a privately owned and managed park, input on infrastructural updates or changes was not gathered.



image credit: Oskaloosa News/oskynews.org

URBAN PARK

This park, located immediately north of the Penn Central Mall, features a skatepark, basketball court, and soccer mini-pitch. These resources are all fairly new and in good condition. Each area is fenced for safety reasons, but this also makes it appear unwelcoming and, to some, unappealing. While the park has high-quality amenities, some of the surrounding environment was assessed as being in poor condition, likely due to the immediate adjacency of roads and parking lots. Adequacy scores were mostly high for programmed recreational resources but the overall park score was average due to limitations in supporting park amenities. This plan builds on concepts developed in *Plan Osky*, with a few changes to parking layout and green street delineation along the trail route.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Complete a parking study to identify if and where mall parking can be reduced and/or reconfigured
- Add more greenspace on the west side of Urban Park
- Add trees to provide shade and reduce the visual impact of the fences
- Add artful elements to the park that are appropriate for the space and would be valued by the primarily teen audience, to enhance the character of the space and expand arts throughout the parks
- Consider additional maintenance and cleaning of the skatepark



SPORTS HUB

LACEY SPORTS PARK

PICNIC AREA

VANDERWILT PARK

PELLA AVE
TRAILHEAD
& GARDENS

In this vibrant hub, sports take center stage. Picture eight ball fields, a bustling football stadium, and lively basketball courts. Soccer aficionados, we've got you covered too—our meticulously maintained soccer fields await your skills. Don't fret if sports aren't your thing; here you can also explore expansive natural park spaces, stroll through lush gardens, or pause at thought-provoking educational installations.

And the best part? It's all seamlessly connected by our community trail network. Come and be part of the action!



SPORTS HUB

Overview

This hub, located in the northwest corner of Oskaloosa, offers park spaces featuring a variety of activities, though the common theme is organized sports. Lacey Sports Complex is the main attraction, providing five baseball fields and the William Penn University/Oskaloosa Schools football stadium. Vanderwilt Park adds to the sports amenities with three additional baseball fields. Perhaps the most unique park in the area is the Pella Avenue Trailhead and community gardens, located just south of the Lacey Sports Complex. They offer a more relaxed atmosphere and cater to trail users.

COHESIVE HUB SIGNAGE:

All park signs within the Sports Hub should utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in park identification, wayfinding, and hub unity.

LACEY SPORTS PARK

Lacey, as it is known, offers a suite of well-kept amenities and site elements and is owned and maintained by the Community Development Corporation. The core area of the park is over 100 acres in size, though there is plenty of surrounding land in which to expand. While some areas of the park are “park-like” in their planting and detailing, most of the park, due to its focus on competition-level sports, is open and vast. This park attracts visitors from all around the state for baseball tournaments and William Penn University football games. The landowners are also dedicated to education, as evidenced by the scale model of the solar system. In talks with those owners, the site may expand to the west to provide spaces for camping. Lacey Sports Complex scored high for both condition and adequacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct playgrounds of varying challenge levels to entertain families while siblings are playing a game
- Add additional natural plantings in the center of the park to add beauty and provide needed habitat space
- Add trees around the sports complex and parking lots to provide shade
- Construct sidewalks between Lacey and other parks in the vicinity, such as the elementary school playground and Vanderwilt Park



PICNIC AREA

Though this site is remote, it provides a crucial stop along the community trail. Its proximity to the William Penn Football Stadium and parking areas may attract users, either to the trail or to the games. New uses and users may be coming from the new YMCA, which is slated to be built nearby. This site and shelter are in great condition as the park is only a few years old. It is well-maintained and portable restrooms are typically present.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct a playground to encourage families to stop and linger

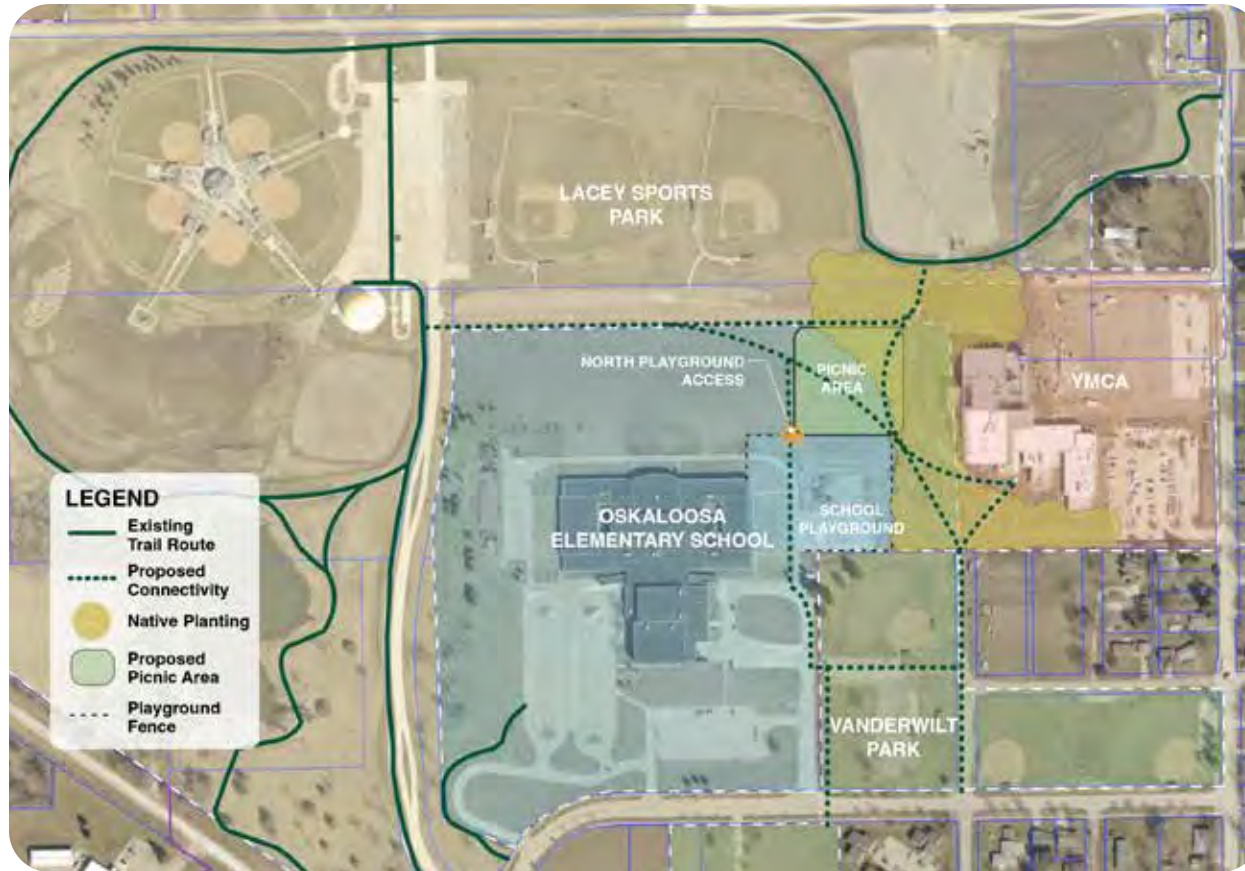
VANDERWILT PARK

This park is located on multiple parcels that straddle Orchard Avenue and, as such, is not fully understood by the public. On the south side of the road is a large open lawn, identified by Google Maps as Vanderwilt Park. This space is unsigned and, due to the lack of any park infrastructure, is likely not recognized as a park. The north side Orchard offers a more definitive park presence, most notably in the form of three ball fields (Sherburne, McCormick, and Hewitt) and what is called City Park on Google Maps, which has a small parking lot and restroom building. The playground in that space has been removed, but the nearby Oskaloosa Elementary School offers an extensive and recently updated playground. The attendees of the community engagement event did not frequent Vanderwilt Park (or its separate pieces) often. It was assessed as average for park conditions, and slightly below average for adequacy of the amenities.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Build park signs on both sides of Orchard Avenue to identify public property
- Add soccer nets, basketball courts, and pickleball courts
- Add a playground and shelter on the north half of the park
- Update the restroom to accommodate more users
- Connect all ballfields and future courts with ADA-accessible sidewalks
- Improve the crosswalks on Orchard Ave with user-activated flashing crosswalk signs
- Add trees around the ballfields to provide shade for spectators
- At a minimum, add a handicap-accessible parking lot on the north side of the park



There are opportunities to connect Lacey, Vanderwilt, the YMCA, and Oskaloosa Elementary School via a trail and picnic area at their nexus. One concern raised by residents through public input was that when attending ball games at Lacey and Vanderwilt there are no playscapes or other activities for kids who are not involved in sports to occupy their attention. However, the elementary school recently updated their playground, which is not far from all of the sports activities. The Oskaloosa school superintendent has expressed interest in this connection and for their to be greater use of the school grounds by the public when school is not in session. An additional access point into the fenced-in playground will be needed from the north to accommodate this plan. Native plantings bridge the four sites and provide ecological habitat and stormwater management enhancements for this vast landscape of lawn and parking.

PELLA AVE. TRAILHEAD & GARDENS

This landscape provides trail users the chance to rest and wander through the gardens. The nearby roundabout features a sculpture, accessed through a trail underpass, that acts as a local landmark. While the red barn on the site once housed a bike repair shop, plans are in the works to transform that building into a brewery. This business would greatly enhance trail ridership and create another needed destination within the Sports Hub. The trailhead received average assessment scores.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

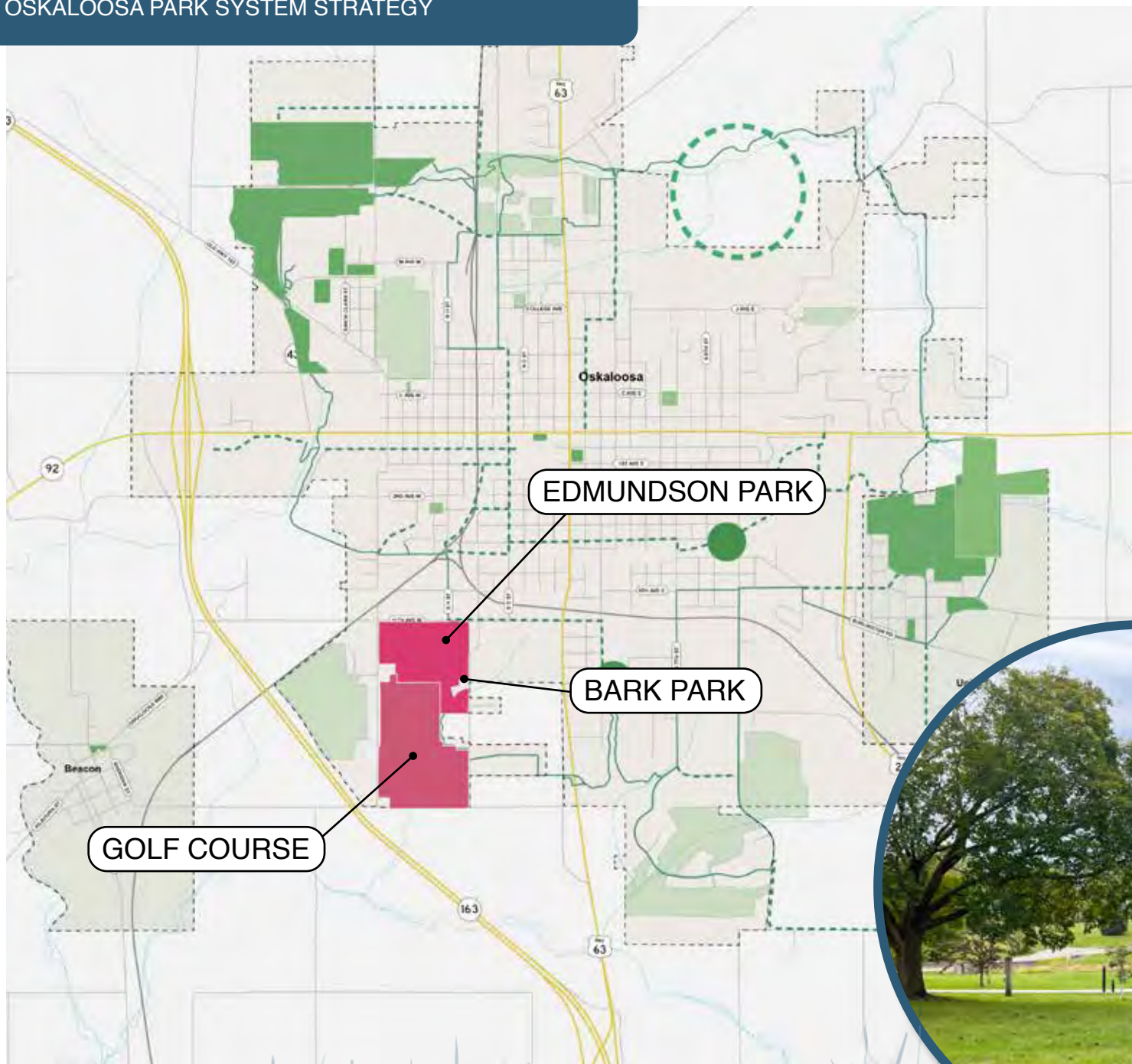
- Add restrooms, water fountains, and bike repair stations
- Ideally, add a small playground to give kids a place to play on family bike rides
- Add native plantings in underused areas to reduce maintenance and increase habitat potential
- Update and expand the gardens



HISTORIC RECREATION HUB

In this timeless hub, Edmundson Park takes center stage. Its rustic architecture and rolling hills stand as a testament to nearly 90 years of community spirit. Spread your blanket under large oak trees, explore our custom play structures, cast your line into tranquil waters, and frolic with your furry friends. Next door, you can tee off against Oskaloosa's scenic landscapes. It all takes place in Edmundson Park, where memories

intertwine across generations.



HISTORIC RECREATION HUB

Overview

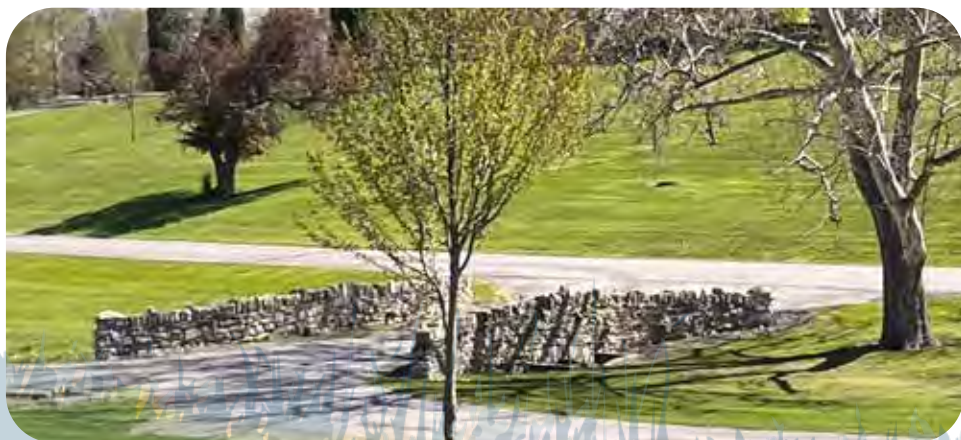
This hub, located in the southwest corner of Oskaloosa, centers around Edmundson Park Historic District. It contains Edmundson Park and Edmundson Golf Course. This hub intends to celebrate and preserve the area's historic character and significant features so visitors can be transported into the past.

COHESIVE HUB SIGNAGE:

All park signs within the Historic Recreation Hub should utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in park identification, wayfinding, and hub unity.

EDMUNDSON PARK

Constructed in the late-1930s, Edmundson Park was designed as a place for community leisure and featured rolling meadows, walking paths, and WPA-era stone structures. New park infrastructure has been added since its creation—most notably the dog park, wooden playground, and disc golf course—but these additions have largely been sited in ways that maintain the park's historic character. Today, the swimming pool and golf course require fees to enter, though the remaining resources are free. Plans for the park include updating and adding new playground equipment and studies on the feasibility of the swimming pool.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Edmundson Park was designed as a primarily passive recreation space; that vision should be continued well into the future. If new park resources or amenities are added to the park, they should be carefully reviewed to ensure the historic intent of the park is maintained.

Historic Structures

- Prioritize maintenance funds towards the restoration and rehabilitation of the historic shelters, signs, chimneys, and bridges
- When necessary, replace the picnic shelters with hipped metal roofs with stone veneer structures that blend better with the historic environment
- Review the design of all structures with a historic preservationist before construction

Playground Area

- Update the restrooms
- Add tables and grills near the playground for families to sit and picnic
- Clarify which parking lots are available to which park users
- Expand the parking lots near the playground or add signs directing users where they can park

Ballfields

- Conduct a study to identify the use and need for ballparks in Edmundson Park
- If both ballparks are not used or needed, demolish them
- If one is needed, demolish the ballfield near the pool and rebuild the north ballfield as it was when the park opened in the 1930s
- Consider developing an interpretive installation for the 1930s ballfield, especially if it is determined that the fields should be removed

Park Landscape

- Identify turfgrass areas in the park that are not frequently used for recreation
- Transform those unused areas into shortgrass prairies to reduce maintenance and increase access to native habitats



EDMUNDSON BARK PARK

The dog park within Edmundson Park is in good condition. Sitting at 1.5 acres, the dog park is adequate for a community the size of Oskaloosa. The site has many shaded areas which provide a welcoming experience and encourage longer stays. Each paddock contains numerous pieces of agility and scenting equipment for dog engagement. The Bark Park is surrounded by a mid-height, black PVC-coated chain link fence which, in general, does not detract from the natural charm of the area. The adjacent parking lot, which is shared with the pool, is large enough to meet most needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add seating in shady areas or spots higher on the slope to maximize human comfort on hot days
- Add pedestrian lights to the entrances of the two dog paddocks
- Construct a restroom in the vicinity of the dog park
- Plant low and dog-friendly shrubs between the parking lot and fence to make the park more visually appealing
- Plant native shortgrass prairie between the dog park and the creek to the south to help slow and infiltrate potentially polluted stormwater



EDMUNDSON PUBLIC POOL

The public pool is dated and needs significant updates to remain viable. With the new pool going in at the YMCA, many are questioning the need for two pools within Oskaloosa. The design team feels that every community at the size of Oskaloosa, must have a publicly accessible pool. Pools cater to a wide age range of guests, and is often a popular location for tweens and teens. If the YMCA is the only pool in town, it may exclude some users because most YMCAs require a monthly or annual membership. Upgrading the existing pool to a larger aquatic center, is likely not the best use of funds because Pella, Ottumwa, and Grinnell all have aquatic centers.

Here are three options for the public pool site:

OPTION A

Maintain and update the existing pool and pool house, to provide local and low-cost options for public swimming.

OPTION B

Replace the existing pool and pool house with a 50-meter pool. This will attract a new level of users who are specifically looking for that experience, as only a few 50-meter pools are available in the state. The next closest 50-meter pool is at Grinnell College. Note: this plan would likely require considerable site grading due to the sloping topography around the existing pool.

OPTION C

Tear down the pool, but work with the YMCA so the public can gain entry to the pool without a membership. In place of the old pool, build a large splash park that takes advantage of the site's history (e.g., rustic forms and stone architecture). The photos to the right give a sense of what the space might look like. Splash pads tend to appeal to younger audiences and families, so this option may remove an activity popular with teens and young adults.

Existing swimming pool



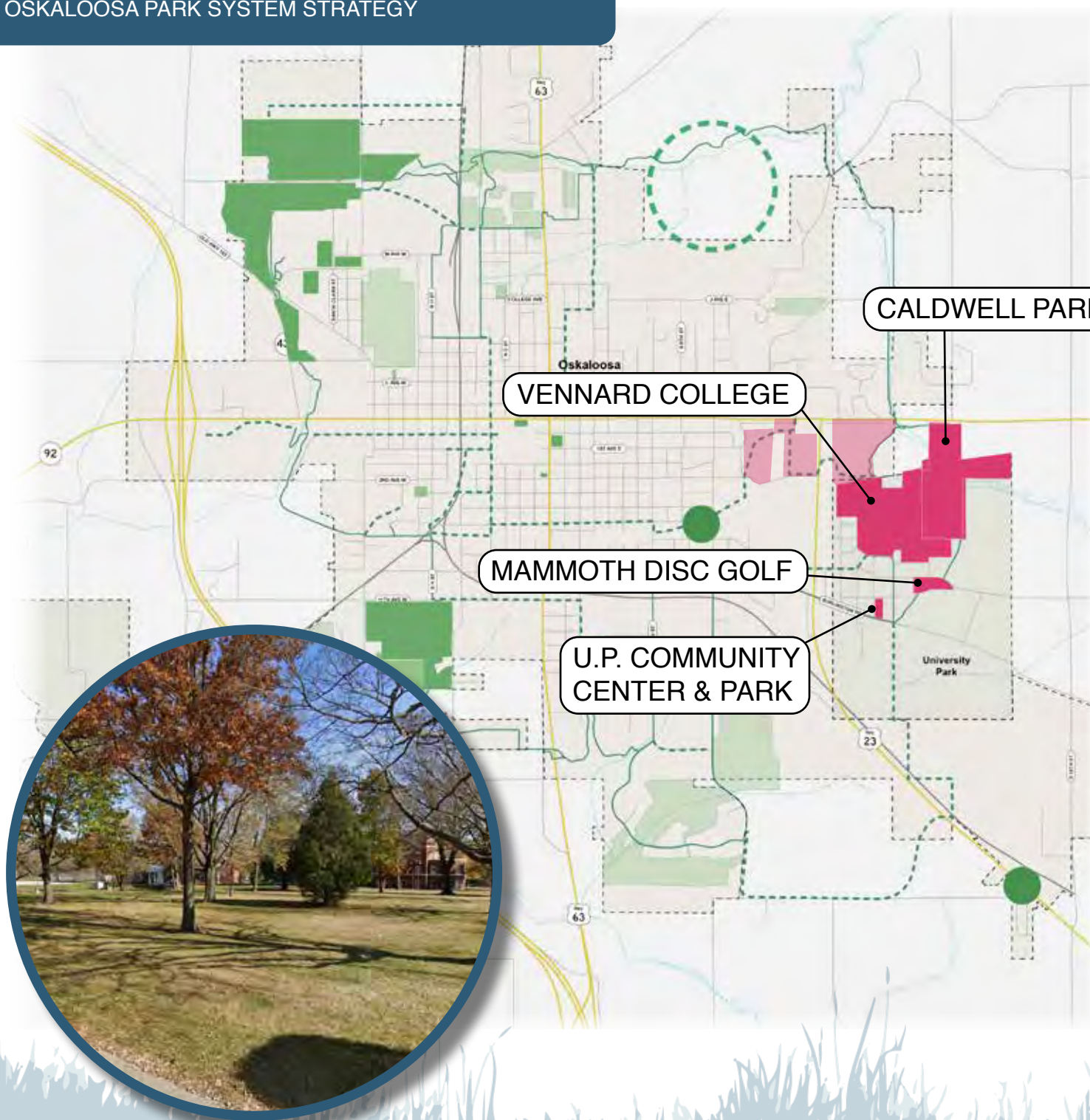
Examples of natural-style splash parks



image credit: themunicipal.org



image credit: themunicipal.org



This hub challenges you to reimagine learning by seamlessly weaving together Caldwell Park's commitment to environmental education and the historical significance of the former Vennard College. From unearthing the secrets of our prehistoric past to learning how to be stewards of our planet, these parks provide rich outdoor learning labs, thoughtful recreation opportunities, and social and cultural services geared toward educating the next generation of leaders.

POTENTIAL PARK
SYSTEM ADDITIONS

EDUCATION HUB

Overview

Building off the success of the Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park and the built and natural infrastructure opportunities located on the former Vennard College campus, this hub aims to educate users of all ages about nature benefits and land stewardship. This vision is supported through satellite parks in both Oskaloosa and University Park that help make the east side of the city into the regional destination for outdoor education.

COHESIVE HUB SIGNAGE:

All park signs within the Education Hub should utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in park identification, wayfinding, and hub unity.

CALDWELL PARK

Caldwell Park is Mahaska County Conservation's highest-visited park. On over 60 acres of conservation land, the park offers a variety of trails, an environmental learning center, and an 18-hole disc golf course. This park is welcoming, well-kept, and offers plenty to explore. Caldwell received a rating of "good" for both amenity condition and adequacy.

Note: in addition to being crucial to the Education Hub, Caldwell Park is also a key destination for the proposed Mahaska County Landscape Series. Recommendations for park improvements can be found in both sections of this report, as they cater to different user groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Build a nature playscape on the south side of the Environmental Learning Center
- Add play and education resources like kid-oriented interpretive signs and animal-themed play equipment along the community trail
- Add a story walk along the trail and partner with the Oskaloosa Library to periodically change stories
- Build primitive camping locations near the former Vennard College campus to minimize the impacts on established habitats
- Establish a trailhead with bike repair station, bike racks and trail map kiosk to connect to the Mahaska County Landscape Series trail and the Community Recreation Trail





Outdoor classroom & discovery/nature play examples



image credit: revelstokereview.com



image credit: Learning Landscapes/
learninglandscapesdesign.com

Caldwell Park boasts stunning natural beauty and an exceptional environmental learning center. However, these elements could be better integrated to create a truly unique learning destination. A new nature-based discovery play zone adjacent to the learning center will engage children and invite trail riders to pause and explore. Newly mowed or mulched trails with permanent bridges will entice visitors to delve deeper into the

park, granting access to a new hike-in campsite. Finally, the addition of two dedicated outdoor classrooms, one focused on prairie habitats and the other on woodlands, will provide exceptional environmental learning opportunities and much-needed group camping facilities.

UNIVERSITY PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

Sitting at two acres, this large neighborhood park offers many resources and amenities including multiple playgrounds, courts, and a ball field. It appears to be well-maintained and has received recent updates. The park scored above average for both condition and adequacy. The exterior of the community center received a good rating. The community center was closed during the assessment, so the interior condition could not be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct new signs on the corners of Crosson and Center and Burlington and Center to help clarify that the park is open to the public
- Remove and replace the dated play equipment
- Consider adding a new permanent restroom so users are not reliant on portable restrooms
- Improve the landscaping in front of the Community Center to provide a more inviting entrance



MAMMOTH PARK DISC GOLF

Mammoth Park is a place that could be quickly overlooked. It is located on the edge of town and has no sign. Even the parking feels uncertain. However, it is brimming with opportunity. The course quality is fair and the site is readily activated by trail users looking for a spot to rest. Regardless, the park is below average for both condition and adequacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Resurface the gravel parking lot and add edging to delineate the edge of the parking area
- Plant many more trees, especially around the parking lot to help shade cars and improve the site's character
- Add an entry sign along 9th Ave to denote the park's location
- Build a course kiosk (or similar introductory sign) to inform users of the course layout and direct them to the first tee box
- Theme all signs around the nearby mammoth discovery (tusks, bones, archaeological tools)
- Consider naming each hole to reflect archaeological or mammoth nomenclature

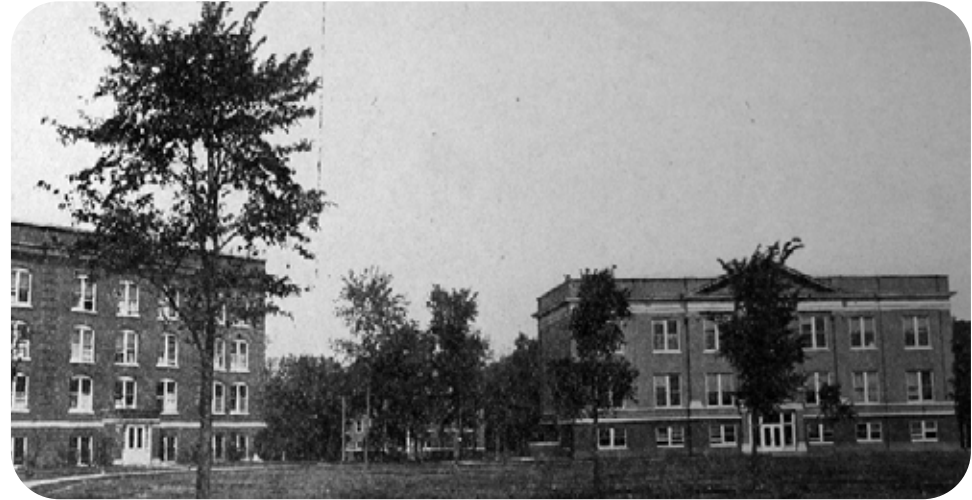
VENNARD COLLEGE

The Vennard College campus has not changed much since it closed in 2008. The mature shade trees and maintained lawns make the site feel collegiate and park-like. Currently, the site offers public basketball courts, tennis courts, a ball field, and a pay-to-play mini-golf course, though most of these resources need upgrades and maintenance. The buildings that remain on the campus have varying condition levels. Two structures on the campus are currently used. The amphitheater is used for community events and has been recently renovated. The old gym is currently used for events, classes, and gatherings. The other buildings are currently unused. As they have been sitting vacant for over fifteen years, they likely need considerable renovation work to be used in the future.

The following pages present three potential scenarios for the reuse of the Vennard College campus. Each scenario meets various needs and goals identified by community members and the current owners of the property but does so through the lens of creating an education-focused hub for the Oskaloosa area. The scenarios are extremely conceptual, intended to initiate conversations about how the campus could play a larger role in the park system and community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Extend the trail that connects to the University Park Cemetery through the Vennard College campus site, connecting back to the Community Recreation Trail near Mammoth Disc Golf Course
- Renovate tennis and basketball courts with new surfaces, fences, nets, and hoops
- Consider transforming the tennis courts into pickleball courts to better meet current recreation trends
- Remove the trees on the east property line (directly east of the Mini Putt) and replant part of the open field as a prairie to better blend in with the landscape of Caldwell Park
- Construct public restrooms north of the main campus area that will meet the needs of the site, including amphitheater users
- Add wayfinding signage between the site's main parking lot (near the existing gym) and the amphitheater
- Add paths between the amphitheater's main paths and the ADA-accessible seats
- Consider adding tent camping on the far north end of the site
- Consider constructing a splash pad if one is not introduced at Edmundson Park



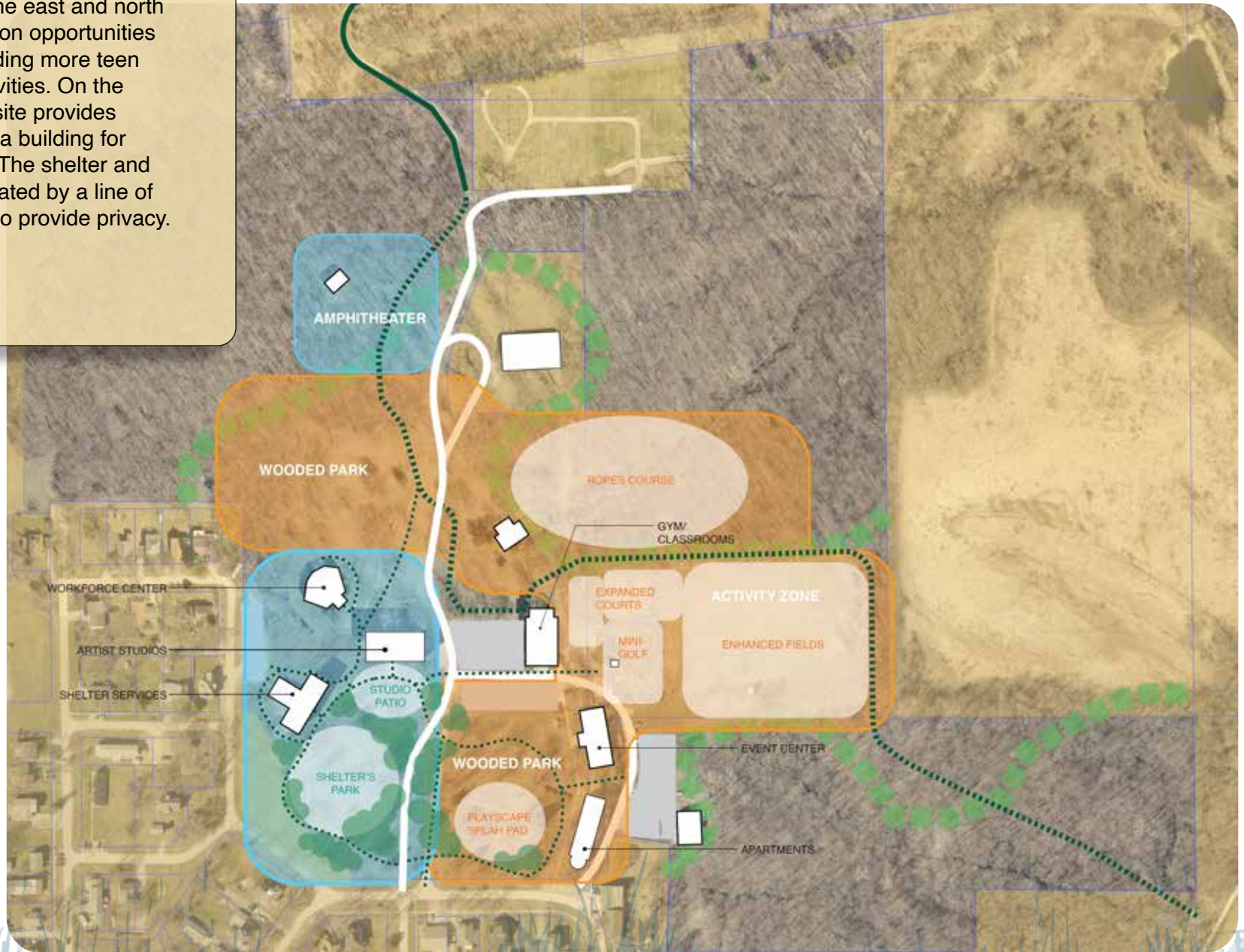
Historic image of Vennard College

image credit: lafavre.us

VENNARD COLLEGE

Scenario A: Active/Service

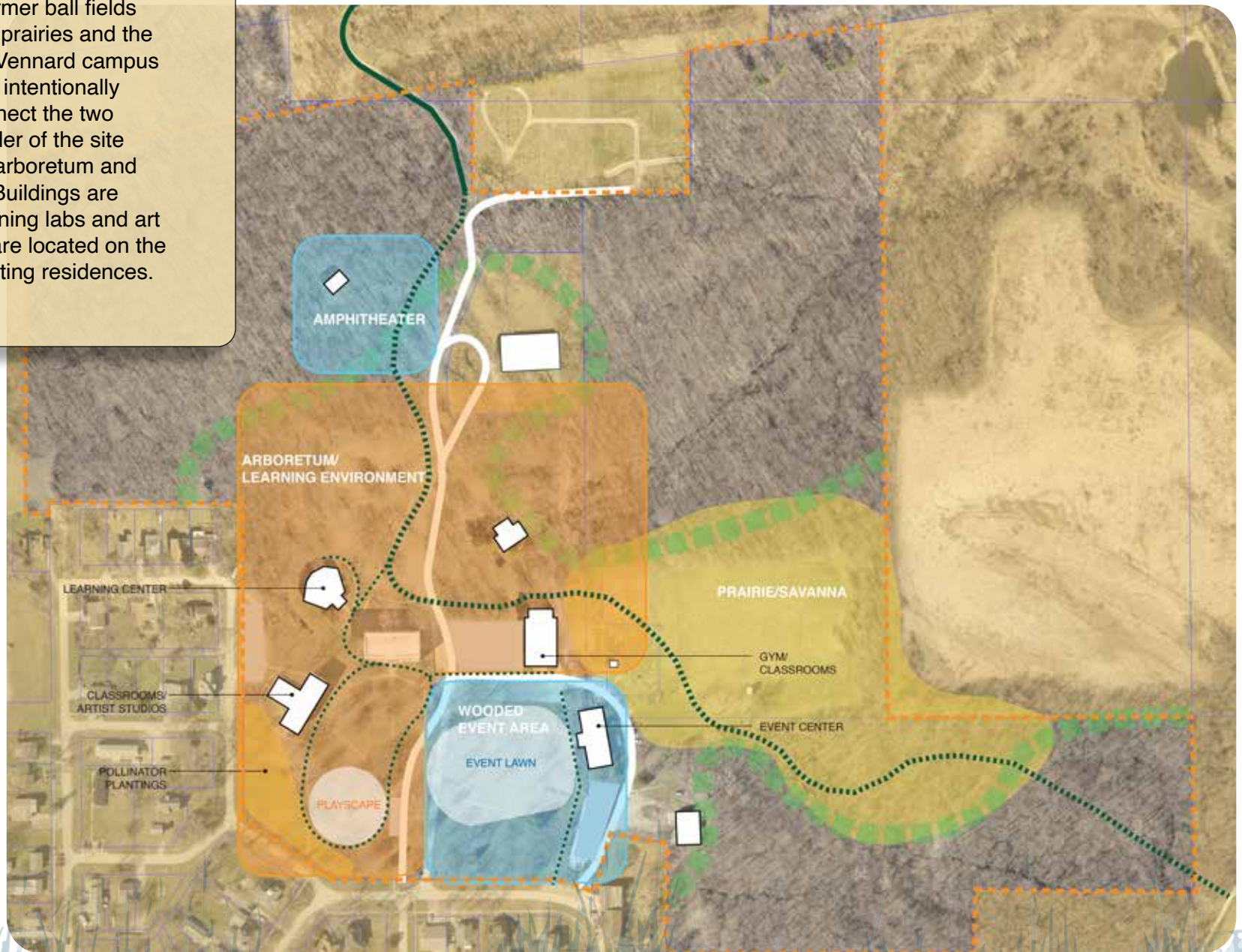
This scenario has two split the campus into two zones. On the east and north sides, active recreation opportunities are expanded, providing more teen and young adult activities. On the southwest side, the site provides shelter services and a building for studios/classrooms. The shelter and park sides are separated by a line of newly planted trees to provide privacy.



VENNARD COLLEGE

Scenario B: Environmental

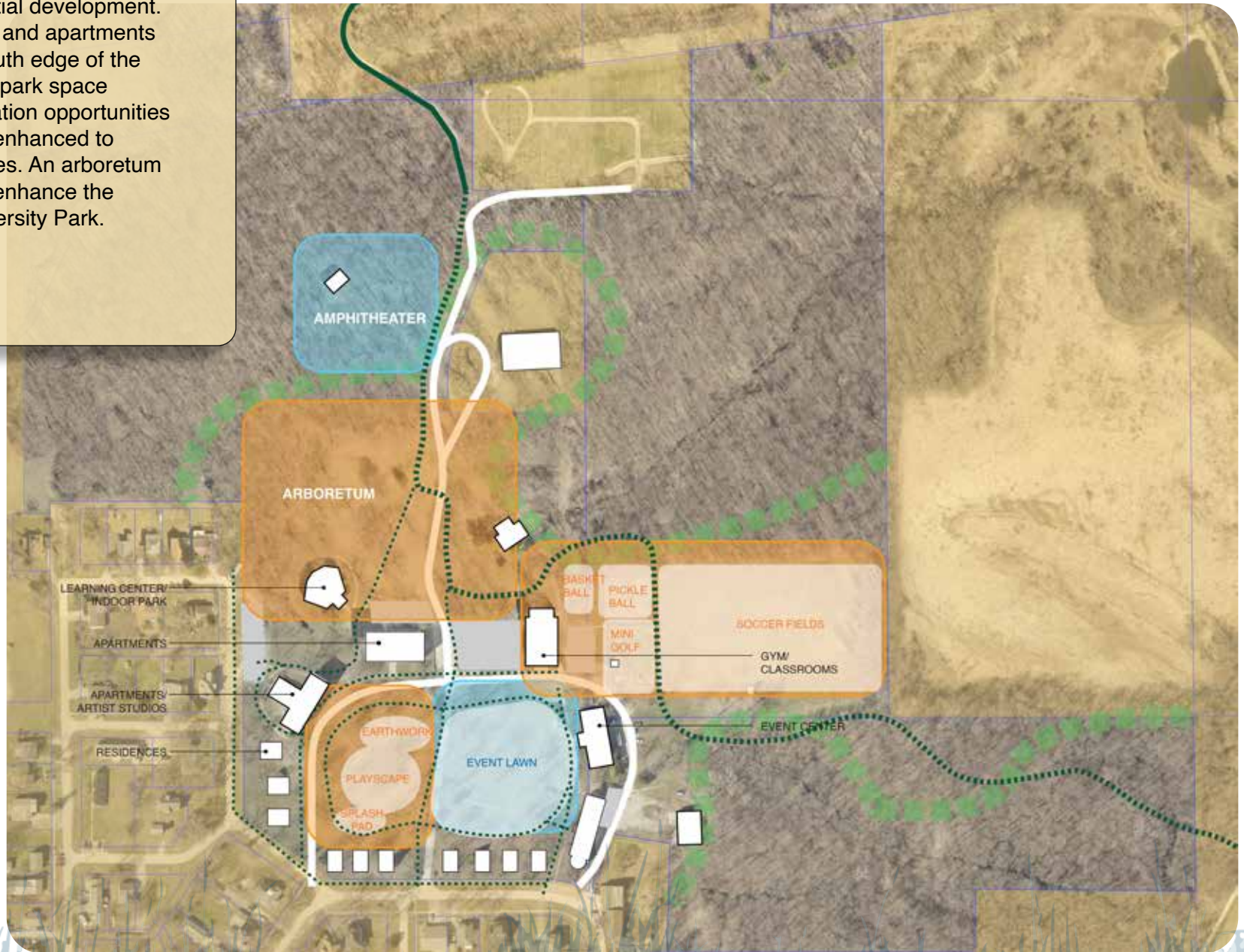
This proposal focuses on the environment. The former ball fields are transformed into prairies and the border between the Vennard campus and Caldwell Park is intentionally blurred to better connect the two spaces. The remainder of the site is designated as an arboretum and outdoor classroom. Buildings are reconsidered as learning labs and art studios. Play areas are located on the south side, near existing residences.



VENNARD COLLEGE

Scenario C: Residential

The final scenario explores the option of additional residential development. Single-family homes and apartments are added on the south edge of the campus with shared park space behind them. Recreation opportunities are maintained and enhanced to accommodate families. An arboretum and learning center enhance the offerings within University Park.



ADVENTURE PARK

NORTH PARK

Explore and challenge your adventuring skills through this rugged woodland park. Located adjacent to the middle school and high school, this hub provides fun for all ages, while focused on providing more opportunities to get teenagers and young adults out and active. Exciting obstacle courses, discovery trails, and adventure playscapes, woven through this natural environment make this hub a unique destination in the region.



ADVENTURE HUB

Overview

The Adventure Hub is intended for those who like a bit of adrenaline with their nature. Though it will provide fun for all ages, but it is intentionally designed to attract tweens, teenagers and young adults. To build this vision, a large new park is proposed in the woodlands directly east of the Oskaloosa High School ballfields and is accessed through a new road that runs north of the Community Trail. A new residential development may also accompany this new park. Adding to the Adventure Hub are the school grounds, Forest Cemetery, and North Park.

COHESIVE HUB SIGNAGE:

All park signs within the Adventure Hub should utilize consistent sizes, fonts, graphics, and colors to aid in park identification, wayfinding, and hub unity.



image credit: viator.com

ADVENTURE PARK

This yet-to-be-named park would be nestled into the existing woodlands and riparian areas near the high school to take advantage of the rolling terrain and existing vegetation. The park would maintain most of these landscapes but would have site-specific and densely-programmed pockets of unique recreation options such as natural playscapes, ropes courses, obstacle courses, zip lines, and climbing walls/nets. A concessionaire is needed to oversee and maintain these facilities due to the liabilities associated with adventure play. Because of its proximity to the school, the park would also include several outdoor education centers so teachers could use the site as an active learning lab.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

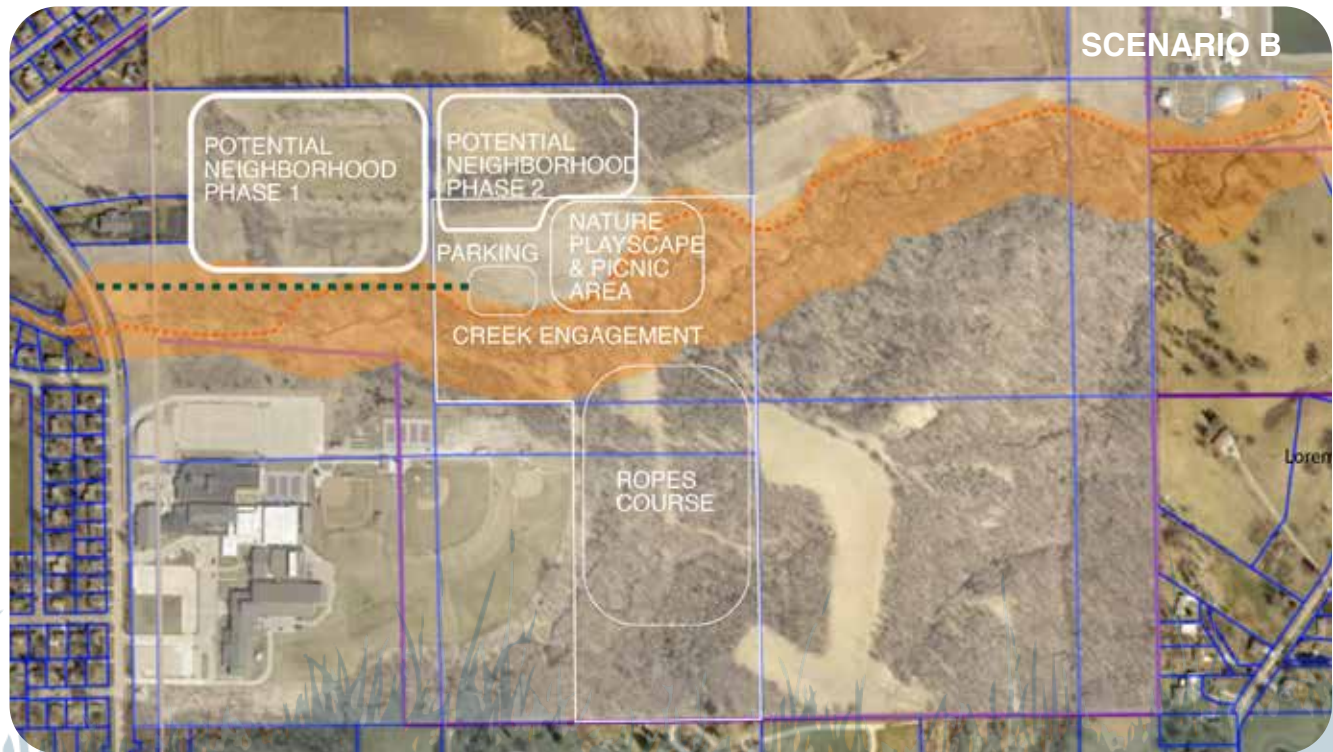
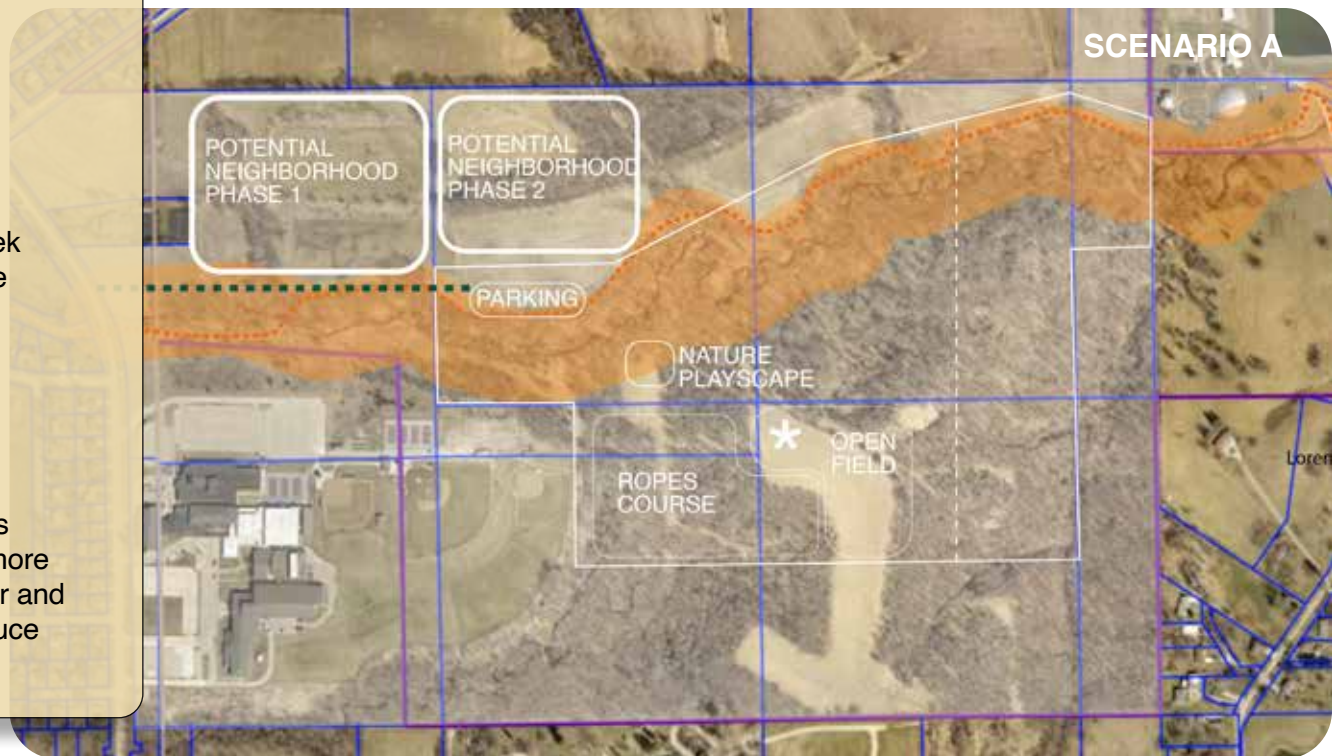
- Conduct a feasibility study to identify the scale of the park and ideal recreational resources
- Consult with administrators and teachers from Oskaloosa Schools to determine what types of outdoor learning environments they need most
- Connect with William Penn students to determine active recreation amenities that would be desired and supported

ADVENTURE PARK

Scenarios

NOTE: All proposed scenarios include a potential residential development north of the school. A creek buffer, highlighted in **ORANGE**, is also shown. The design team strongly recommends preserving this buffer space from all intensive development and infrastructure to protect sensitive ecological areas, minimize erosion, and manage stormwater runoff.

The biggest difference between the two proposed scenarios shown to the right is the proposed park's size. Scenario A is larger and provides space for more park amenities and activities. Scenario B is smaller and seeks to conserve more of the landscape and reduce human impact.



NORTH PARK

This park, owned by Mahaska County, is nestled between two neighborhoods on the east side of Oskaloosa. It is currently a nondescript woodland on a short cul-de-sac. Due to the preponderance of woodlands in the area, it is hard to determine what is publicly accessible.

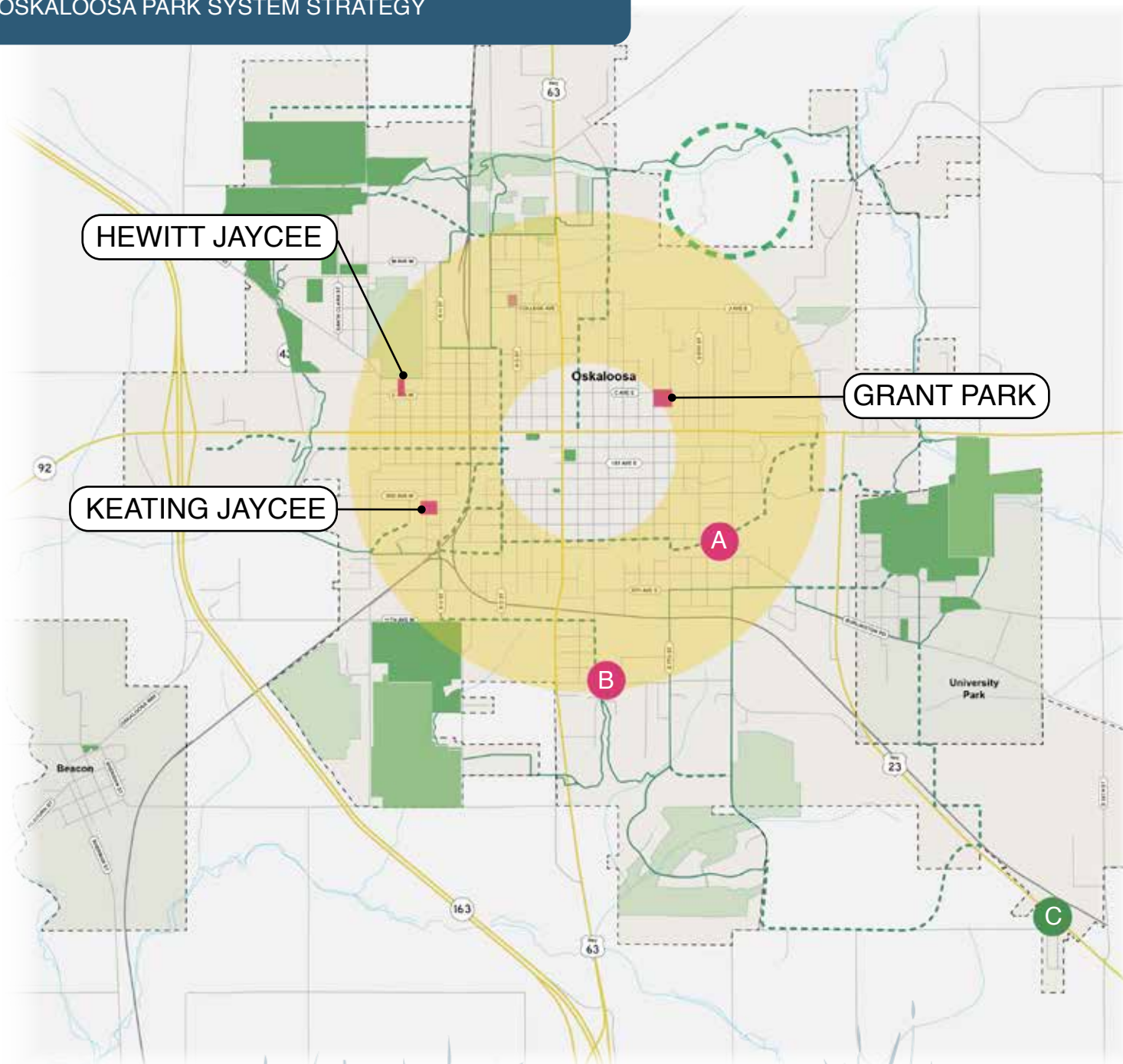
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add a sign to identify the property as a public amenity
- Add a sign with a map to identify the park's resources and trail destinations
- Build a trail that connects to Eastwood Drive and N Park Ave.
- Build a new shelter with picnic tables on the west side (Eastwood Drive) to help identify it as a public park



Nature play example

image credit: pinterest.com



NEIGHBORHOOD PARK RING

In Oskaloosa, adventure awaits around every corner. While our community boasts grand parks on the town's outskirts, smaller parks are sprinkled throughout residential neighborhoods. These hidden gems offer quick and easy access to the great outdoors. No matter which park you choose, you'll find the same thoughtful care and abundant recreation opportunities. Come and discover Oskaloosa's hidden outdoor spaces!

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK RING

General Recommendations

In Oskaloosa, a ring of small parks encircles the Cultural Hub. These are all neighborhood parks: they are often less than an acre in size, feature recreational amenities tailored to younger kids, and serve the recreational needs of the immediate neighborhood. Because they serve fewer users, neighborhood parks are often overlooked and can fall into disrepair. Regardless, they are essential recreation spaces that deserve to be well maintained. This plan proposes modest updates to parks in the Neighborhood Park Ring to ensure constituent needs are met.

Several school and church playgrounds and parks sponsored by organizations such as the IAYM are also found in the Neighborhood Park Ring. In this proposal, two additional neighborhood park locations are identified in the south-central region of Oskaloosa where limited access to parks was identified.

Parks within the Neighborhood Park Ring do not require bold, distinct identities because they often only draw visitors from nearby neighborhoods. Therefore, a standardized suite of neighborhood park amenities can be established to provide cost and maintenance efficiencies. For example, all parks within the Neighborhood Park Ring should have the same shelters, tables, benches, and trash receptacles so they can easily be maintained and replaced when needed. Playgrounds should not all be the same to avoid the appearance of “cookie-cutter” parks, but they should all be sourced from the same company to maximize efficiencies.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop and install consistent signage for all neighborhood parks
- Develop standards for all site furnishings, including shelters, picnic tables, lighting, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ensure all parks have ADA-accessible sidewalks between parking areas and the main recreation features
- Develop standards for playgrounds, including basis-of-design playground provider and unified color scheme(s)
- Ensure each park, if size permits, contains a playground, shelter, picnic table(s), lighting, benches, trash receptacle(s), and accessible pathways
- Ensure each park contains one or two other recreation resources above the above recommendations (i.e., swings, four-square court, tether ball, basketball court, pickleball court)
- Ensure each park has trees to provide shade on the south and west sides of play equipment to minimize surface temperatures

NEW NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Two new parks are proposed on the southeast quadrant of Oskaloosa to fill gaps in the park network. In these areas, there are no parks within a half-mile walk, meaning kids in that area cannot walk to a park. The proposed plans suggest general locations for where these parks should go, but further studies are needed to identify their exact location. Proposed parks A & B are within residential neighborhoods and near either the community trail or its proposed extensions. Proposed Park C exists beyond the Neighborhood Park Ring, but is intended to provide recreation opportunities to the mobile home park on the southeast side of town. Like other parks in the Neighborhood Park Ring, these new parks should follow the general recommendations listed above.

- Location A is near 5th Ave E and S 11th St.
- Location B is situated along Greenbelt Dr
- Location C is at Spring Creek Village

KEATING JAYCEE PARK

Keating Jaycee is a quarter-acre lot with a small playground area and picnic table. Many park resources and amenities are dated and in disrepair. At the time of assessment, 4th Ave W was under construction which limited access to the south side of the park. Regardless, online photos suggest no sidewalk access was available from 4th Ave before construction. Keating scored poorly in both condition and adequacy of amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct sidewalks running east-west along 4th Ave W, then connect that sidewalk to the play equipment
- Replace the sidewalk on S. I St.
- Remove old gateway sign structures
- Add a park sign on S. I St.
- Add lighting around the playground
- Add consistent site furnishings that meet Neighborhood Park Ring standards
- Replace the existing benches
- Add trash receptacles
- Rebuild the wall around the play area
- Plant low shrubs along the north side of the park to better delineate the park boundary
- Plant shade trees along the south and west sides of the play equipment

HEWITT JAYCEE PARK

This nearly half-acre narrow park features a playground, swings, and basketball court. No sidewalks lead to the park, which limits its accessibility. The north side of the park, along D Ave, has a steep incline, so accessing the park from that side requires using the adjacent landowner's driveway. This park scored poorly in its assessment of condition and adequacy because it lacks necessary park amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct sidewalks along C Ave and D Ave, and into the park from those roads and on-street parking
- Add signs on both C Ave and D Ave
- Add lighting in the park, ideally toward the center
- Add consistent site furnishings that meet Neighborhood Park Ring standards
- Update the playground
- Plant low shrubs along the east and west sides of the park to better delineate the park boundary
- Plant shade trees along the south and west sides of each piece of play equipment
- Add trash receptacles and benches



GRANT PARK

Grant Park is a half-acre park located on the northeast side of Oskaloosa. The park was part of a former school, which has since been converted to Grant Terrace, a senior-living apartment complex. The park currently offers only a playground and open lawn, though it is a fixture in the daily life of nearby seniors. As such, future updates should respond to both the needs of Grant Terrace residents and neighborhood kids. Due to its limited amenities, Grant Park was assessed as largely inadequate, but the condition of the existing elements was assessed as above average to good.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct ADA-accessible paths from existing paved sidewalks to all existing and new recreational resources (i.e., playground, shelter)
- Add a park sign on C Ave
- Add a sign facing Grant Terrace denoting that Grant Park is public
- Add consistent site furnishings that meet Neighborhood Park Ring standards
- Construct a pickleball court, and/or other multi-generational recreation amenities on the east side of the park
- Construct a picnic shelter with ADA-accessible picnic tables, grills, and trash receptacles on the east side of the park
- Add benches along either side of the driveway
- Plant shade trees along the west side of the play equipment and on the south and west sides of any future recreation amenities

FORMER HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM

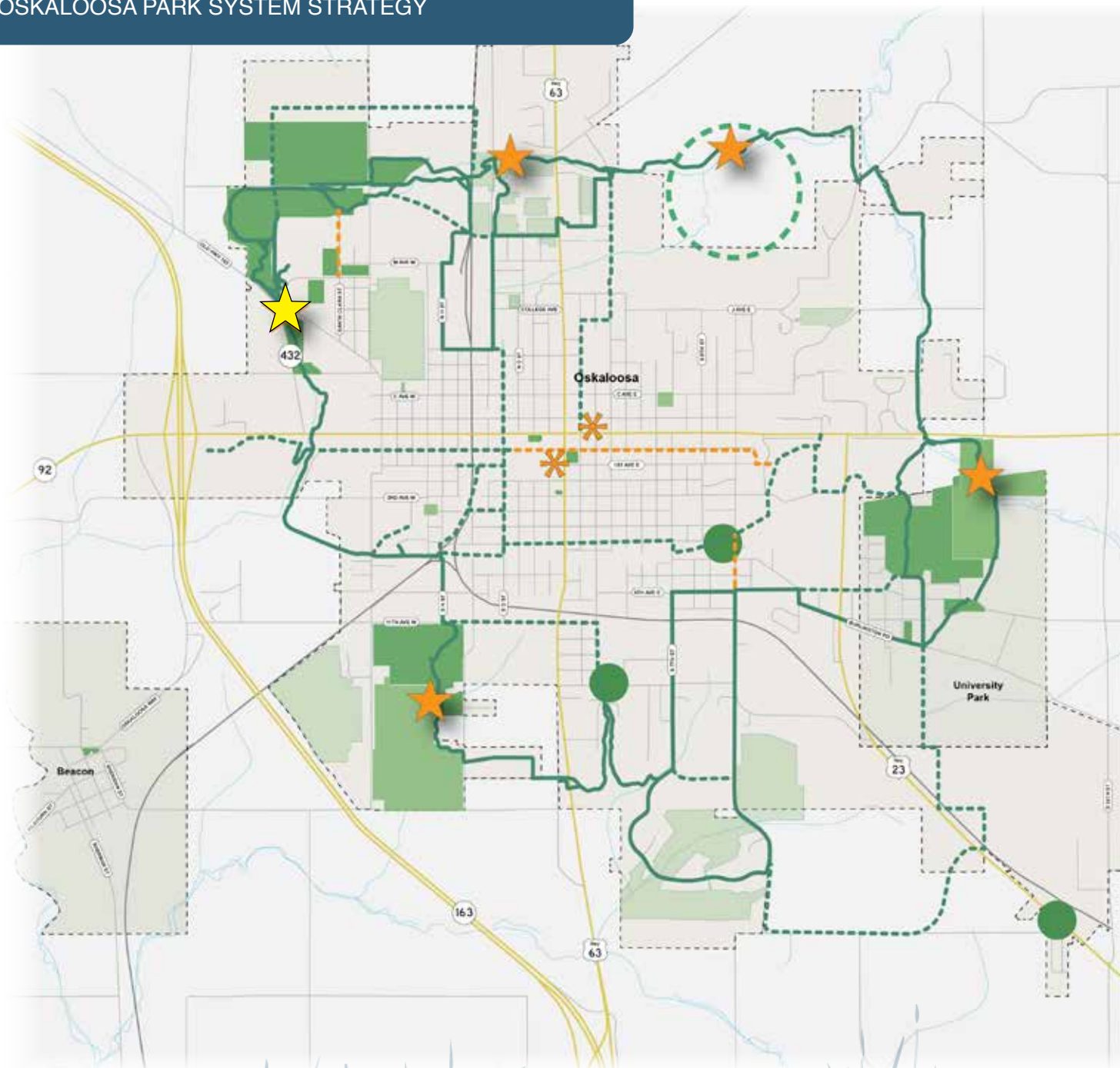
The former Oskaloosa High School football field sits in a tidy valley hidden behind numerous houses. Since high school football games moved to the Lacey Sports Park, it has been unused but is still maintained. It is accessible from four directions, two on the west, one on the south, and one on the east. In addition to the football field, Oskaloosa Schools owns several other parcels on the southwest and north sides of the stadium.

This park was not included in the initial study. Collaboration between the Oskaloosa Public School System and the City of Oskaloosa is encouraged to determine the feasibility and suitability for projects at this site. Its location helps fill a park gap on the northeast side of the community. Because it sits within the Neighborhood Park Ring but also near the Adventure Hub, park programming could be customized to fit either or both zones. A more active-based recreation plan geared at teens and young adults could be a more appropriate use of the space within and around the stadium, while preserving the stadium feature as part of the character and activity of this park.



COMMUNITY TRAIL NETWORK

Craving adventure? Oskaloosa's unparalleled 12-mile recreation trail loop lets you bike, walk, and run safely to parks, schools, and soon, our exciting downtown! Explore scenic landscapes, connect with the community, and experience Oskaloosa's vibrant energy. So get on that bike, lace up those shoes, and start your Oskaloosa adventure!



- EXISTING REC TRAIL
- PLANNED TRAIL EXPANSION (Plan Oskey)
- ADDITIONAL PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTION
- ★ OFFICIAL TRAILHEAD
- ★ PROPOSED TRAILHEAD
- ✱ BIKE PARKING

COMMUNITY TRAIL NETWORK

Overview

Oskaloosa's Community Recreation Trail is a rarity for a town of its size. Not only is it a dedicated shared-use path, it has very few points of conflict due to its numerous underpasses. Importantly, the trail provides and connects safe routes to the community's large parks and schools.

Plan Osky identified several locations for shared-use paths and on-road routes that expands connectivity into residential areas and the downtown. This plan proposes further extensions to connect even more community destinations. The condition of the infrastructure of the existing trail is very positive.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Complete the off-road, shared-use path trail loop as proposed by *Plan Osky*
- Add signs that guide people from destinations to the trail
- Increase wayfinding along the trail, identifying parks and cultural destinations
- Using signage and surface markings, clearly identify locations of and transitions to all new on-road trails
- Provide clear, defined crossings all trail/road intersections
- Provide general vegetation management along the shared-use path
- Enhance underutilized open spaces with native plantings to reduce maintenance and increase ecological and stormwater benefits



TRAILHEAD/BIKE PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish trailheads at all large parks and at William Penn University that utilize existing parking and provide a bike repair station, bike racks, and a trail wayfinding kiosk
- Add bike racks and bike repair stations in the downtown area where trail networks terminate

ADDITIONAL CONNECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Complete the proposed route along High Street through downtown to the east to connect with the recreation trail loop extension near Hope St and 3rd Ave E
- Establish a connection between the proposed trails from 9th Ave E to 5th Ave E along 11th St
- Expand on existing infrastructure to make a connection from the recreation trail near the east end of Lacey Sports Park to Vanderwilt Park behind the YMCA, with a spur into the YMCA and elementary school



APPENDICES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW



- Overall a strong turnout – apx. 50 participants
- People were very willing to participate with the activities and provided great feedback

Primary activities

- Park funding: Designating funds to parks/park amenities (County and City)
- Frequented parks (County and City) – Sticker activity
- Park updates and goals (County and City) – Mapping activity
- Other visited destinations
- Trail typology comfort level

MOST FREQUENTED PARKS

OSKALOOSA PARKS

- The parks identified as most frequented are on the edges of town, with minimal use of the small interior parks other than the downtown parks
- This implies that people seem willing to go beyond the ½ mile walking distance to access desired spaces and recreation opportunities
- Parks that were graded moderate to low in condition and performance also rated low amongst the frequented parks
- The skatepark was graded fairly high for the condition and adequacy for the park facilities but was not identified as frequented likely due to the limited participation in the event

PARK	%
EDMUNDSON PARK	21%
OSKALOOSA CITY SQUARE PARK	16%
LIBRARY READING GARDEN	12%
CALDWELL PARK	9%
LACEY SPORTS COMPLEX	9%
UNIV PARK COMMUNITY CENTER	6%
IAYM FRIENDS PARK	5%
PELLA AVE TRAILHEAD & GARDEN	5%
VENNARD COLLEGE	5%
OSKALOOSA SKATEPARK	4%
GRANT PARK	3%
BEACON CITY PARK	2%
KEATING JAYCEE PARK	2%
VANDERWILT PARK	2%
MAMMOTH PARK DISC GOLF	1%
PICNIC SHELTER (NORTH SIDE NEAR LACEY)	1%
HEWITT JAYCEE PARK	0%
NORTH PARK	0%

PARK FUNDING

OSKALOOSA PARKS

- Most funding directed to the larger parks, the trail, and those parks identified as more desirable and frequented – encouraging what is already successful
 1. Edmundson (24%)
 2. Community Trail (15%)
 3. Lacey (12%)
 4. Vennard (11%)
 5. City Square (11%)
- The most funded parks were also those that received the highest grades during our assessment
- The small neighborhood parks (Grant, Jaycees, Vanderwilt) received less the .5% of the budget each (these all came from one participant who wanted to make sure no park was left behind)
- Trails scored high with the goal of having it completed as a full off-road network, hopes of extending it to other destinations beyond Oskaloosa, and adding some additional amenities such as signage, benches, and picnic tables
- Vennard scored high with people seeing the potential for what it could be



MOST DESIRED UPDATES OSKALOOSA PARKS

This summary includes a combination of the Park funding and Park updates activities combined

Edmundson Park

- Splash park
- Improving existing structures/fixing chimneys at shelters
- Improved restrooms
- Expand natural habitat

Lacey Sports Complex

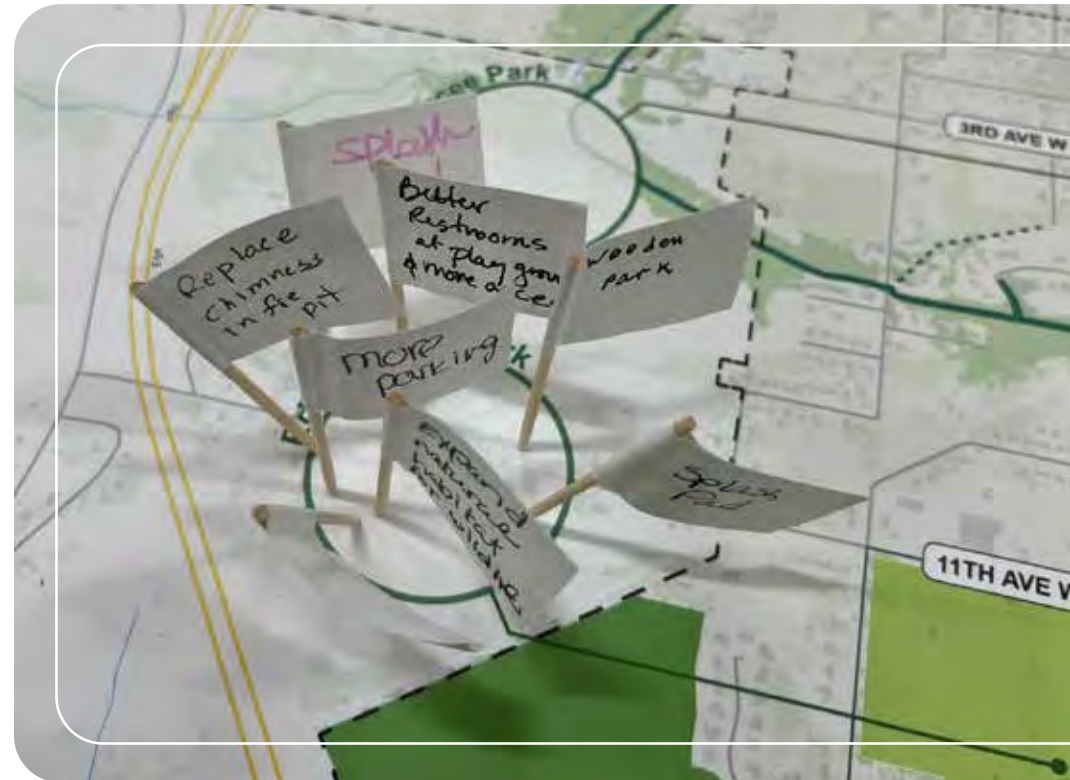
- Natural habitat
- Play areas

Vennard College

- Restrooms
- Building reuse
- Updating existing rec amenities
- Camping

Oskaloosa City Square Park

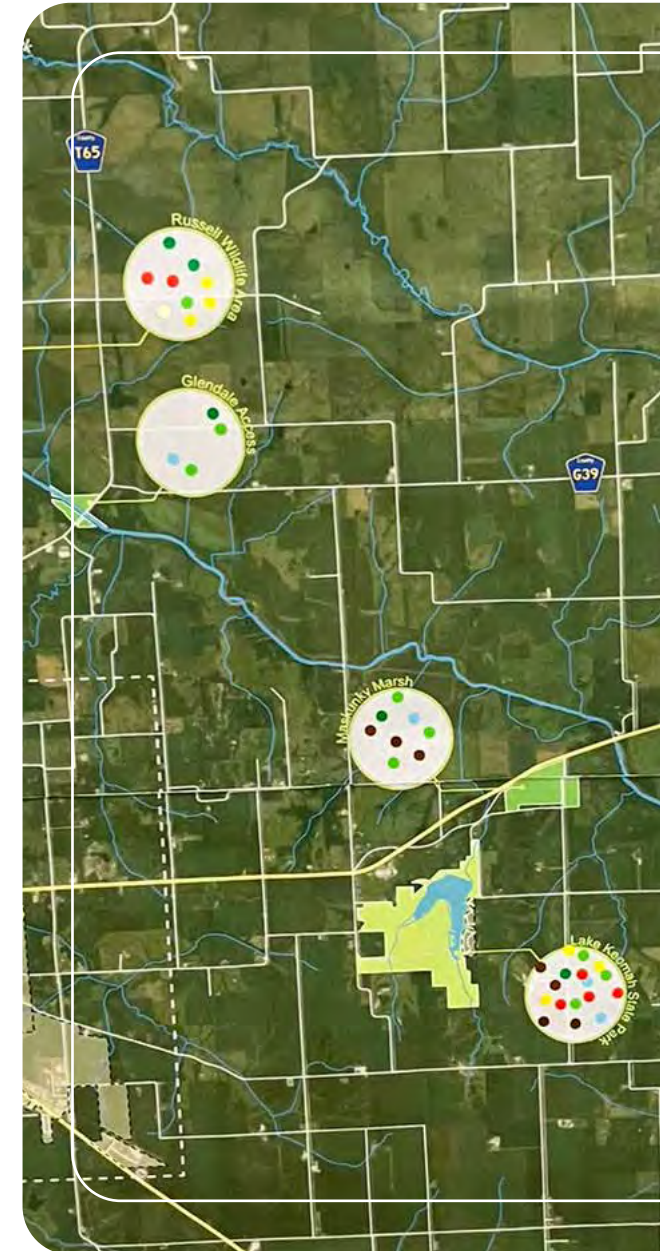
- Restrooms
- Additional landscaping/trees



MOST FREQUENTED PARKS

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

- The most visited park types by classification were *curated nature parks*
- Exceptional habitat is common at the more frequented parks
- Participants identified that they were visiting some of the secondary parks as much or more than some of the primary parks (Maskunky, Hawthorn WMA, Hull WMA)
- The least visited parks were the smaller sites
- Eveland Access was identified by many, with camping being a big draw
- County owned/managed lands were three times more visited than state managed lands
- A cluster of parks on the east side of the county were noted as most frequented (Caldwell, Lake Keomah, Maskunky Marsh, Rose Hill Marsh, White Oak)
- The north side was fairly unrepresented except for Russell Wildlife Area
- Most small town community parks had little representation outside of Eddyville



MOST FREQUENTED PARKS

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

PARK	%
LAKE KEOMAH STATE PARK	14%
WHITE OAK CONSERVATION AREA	10%
CALDWELL PARK	10%
EVELAND ACCESS	8%
RUSSELL WILDLIFE AREA	7%
CEDAR BLUFFS NATURAL AREA	6%
MASKUNKY MARSH	6%
QUERCUS WILDERNESS AREA	5%
BLUFF CREEK OHV PARK	4%
EDDYVILLE DUNES SAND PRAIRIE	4%
HAWTHORN LAKE WMA	4%
HULL WMA	4%
ROSE HILL MARSH & ACCESS	4%
GLENDALE ACCESS	3%
EVERTRU NATURAL AREA	2%

PARK (continued)	%
NEW SHARON CITY PARK	2%
ROBERTSON ACCESS	2%
SWANSON-LOMAX WILDLIFE AREA	2%
WILLIE J SUCHY WILDLIFE AREA	2%
CEDAR CREEK ACCESS	1%
EDDYVILLE BALLPARK	1%
BARNES CITY PARK	0%
LEIGHTON PARK	0%
MCCURDY PARK	0%
NICHOLSON PARK	0%
NORTH SKUNK RIVER WMA	0%
PEGGY'S LANDING	0%
PETERS WILDLIFE AREA	0%
ROSE HILL COMMUNITY CENTER	0%
SPRINGER PARK	0%
UNION MILLS ACCESS	0%

PARK FUNDING

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

- All of the parks received a notable percentage of the funding
- Caldwell was the highest at 15%; with a playscape being a noted feature for funding to be direct to
- Lake Keomah, Whit Oak Conservation Area, and Eddyville Dunes received 8-9% of the funding
- Many features and updates were noted for funding across the county
- Other Park System Improvements included updates for multiple parks not included in the funding activity:
 1. Maskunky Marsh
 2. North Park
 3. Bluff Creek OHV Park



MOST DESIRED UPDATES MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

This summary includes a combination of the Park funding and Park updates activities combined

- Water access/water trails/boat ramp improvements/handicapped fishing access
- Trails within sites
- Regional trail connections
 1. Oskaloosa to Lake Keomah
 2. Oskaloosa to Beacon
 3. To Marion County
- Signage
- Restrooms
- Playgrounds/improvements/playscape at Caldwell
- Camping/cabins at Lake Keomah/larger campsites at Eveland
- White Oak had a larger number of desired improvements; followed by Maskunkya Marsh and Russell Wildlife Area



PARKS VISITED OUTSIDE OF MAHASKA COUNTY

Key qualities and features include:

- Access to water, especially larger lake access
- Geological features
- Forested areas
- Camping opportunities (cabins, RV)
- Water play features
- Nearby in the surrounding counties
- Typically a 30 minute to 3 hour drive away
- Larger regional parks

Because of their large ecological features and close proximity, places like Lake Red Rock, Lake Rathbun, and Neal Smith will continue to be a big draw for Mahaska County residents even if similar amenities are introduced in Mahaska County parks.



TRAIL TYPOLOGY

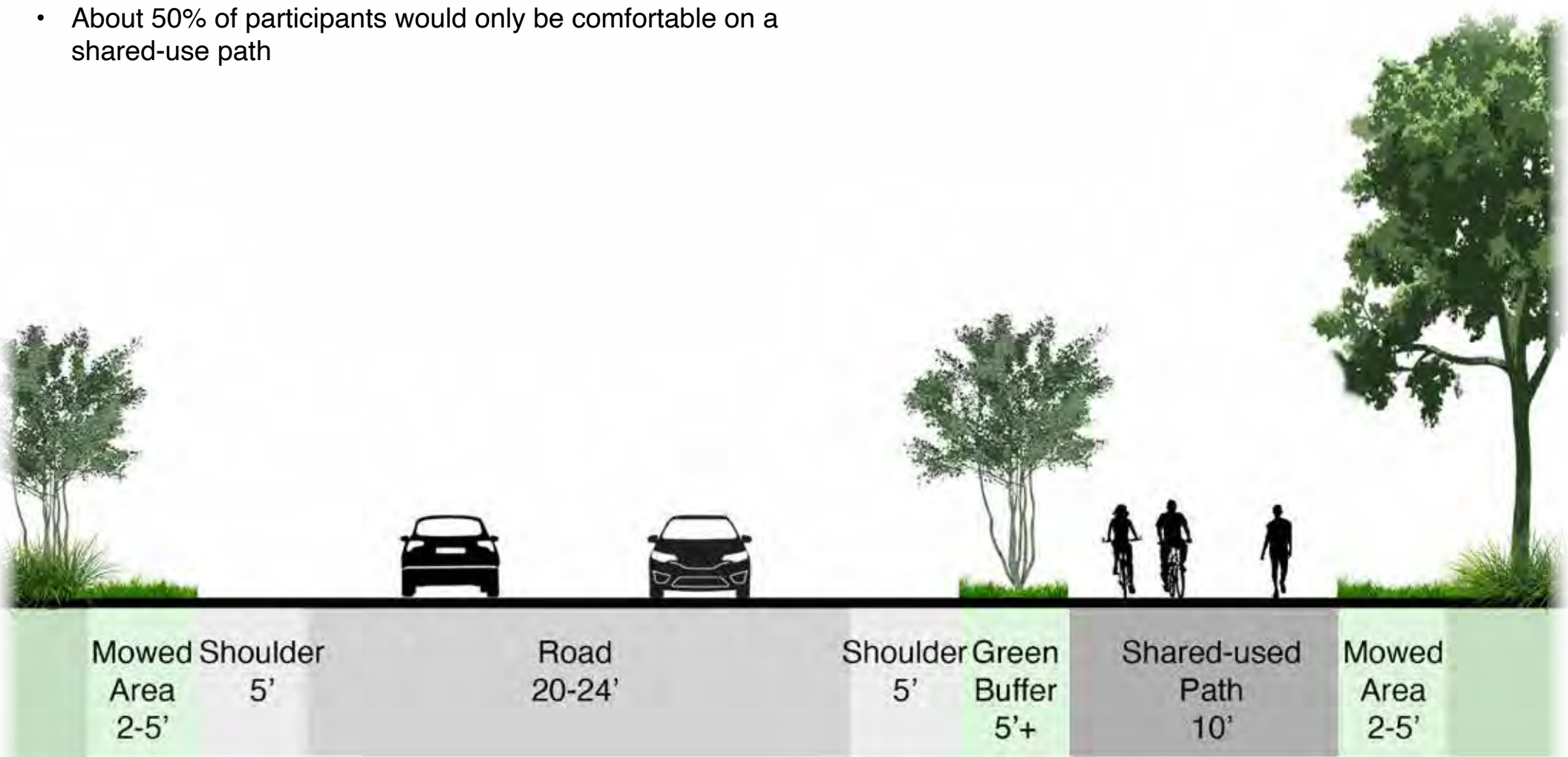
COMFORT LEVEL

Along a Highway Corridor

Other than one person all participants noted they would only be comfortable on a shared-use path removed from the roadway

Along a Rural Route

- Shared rural road: 25%
- Paved shoulder: 50%
- About 50% of participants would only be comfortable on a shared-use path



AMENITY COMPARISON

OSKALOOSA PARKS

Park Name	Lawn	Toilets	Playgrounds	Sports Courts	Sports Fields	Dog Park
Caldwell Park						
City Square Park						
Edmundson Park			1		3	
Grant Park			1			
Hewitt Jaycee Park			1	1		
Keating Jaycee Park			1			
Lacey Sports Complex					11	
Picnic Shelter						
Mammoth Disc Golf Course						
Oskaloosa Skatepark				3		
Pella Ave Trailhead & Garden						
Public Library Reading Garden						
The Alley						
Univ. Park Community Center			2	1	1	
VanderWilt Park		1			3	
Vennard College				2	1	

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

General amenities

AMENITY COMPARISON

OSKALOOSA PARKS

Park Name	Hist Cultural	Shelters	Amphitheater
Caldwell Park			
City Square Park		1	
Edmundson Park		2	
Grant Park			
Hewitt Jaycee Park			
Keating Jaycee Park			
Lacey Sports Complex		4	
Picnic Shelter		1	
Mammoth Disc Golf Course			
Oskaloosa Skatepark		1	
Pella Ave Trailhead & Garden		1	
Public Library Reading Garden		1	
The Alley		1	
Univ. Park Community Center		1	
VanderWilt Park			
Vennard College			

Grade Indicator
High Grade
Mid Grade or Ungraded
Low Grade

Historic and cultural offerings/features

Park Name	Water	Fishing	Paddling	Pool
Caldwell Park	2			
City Square Park				
Edmundson Park	3			1
Grant Park				
Hewitt Jaycee Park				
Keating Jaycee Park				
Lacey Sports Complex				
Picnic Shelter				
Mammoth Disc Golf Course				
Oskaloosa Skatepark				
Pella Ave Trailhead & Garden				
Public Library Reading Garden				
The Alley				
Univ. Park Community Center				
VanderWilt Park				
Vennard College				

Grade Indicator
High Grade
Ungraded
Moderate to Low Grade

Water features

AMENITY COMPARISON

OSKALOOSA PARKS

Park Name	Paved Paths	Hiking	Bike Trail	Special Use Trail
Caldwell Park			1.1 mi	
City Square Park				
Edmundson Park			1 mi	
Grant Park				
Hewitt Jaycee Park				
Keating Jaycee Park				
Lacey Sports Complex			1.4 mi	
Picnic Shelter			1.5 mi	
Mammoth Disc Golf Course			0.3 mi	
Oskaloosa Skatepark				
Pella Ave Trailhead & Garden			0.3 mi	
Public Library Reading Garden				
The Alley				
Univ. Park Community Center				
VanderWilt Park				
Vennard College			0.8 mi	

Grade Indicator
High Grade
Md Grade or Ungraded
Low Grade

Paths and trails

AMENITY COMPARISON

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

Park Name	Lawn	Restrooms	Playgrounds	Sports Fields	Sports Courts	Disc Golf
Caldwell Park						1
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area						
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie						
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark						
Eveland Access		2	1	3	1	
Fremont Plaza						
Lake Keomah State Park		5	1			
Leighton Park			1	1	1	
McCurdy Park			1			
McGriff Field		1		1		
New Sharon City Park			1		1	
Nicholson Park		1	1			
Quercus Wilderness Area		1				
Rose Hill Community Center			1		1	
Rose Hill Marsh						
Russell Wildlife Area		1				
Springer Park						
White Oak Conservation Area		2	2			

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

General amenities

AMENITY COMPARISON MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

Park Name	Hist Cultural	Shelters	Lodge
Caldwell Park			
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area			
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie		1	
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark		1	
Eveland Access		1	
Fremont Plaza		1	
Lake Keomah State Park		2	1
Leighton Park		2	
McCurdy Park		1	
McGriff Field		1	
New Sharon City Park		1	
Nicholson Park		1	
Quercus Wilderness Area			
Rose Hill Community Center		1	
Rose Hill Marsh			
Russell Wildlife Area		1	
Springer Park			
White Oak Conservation Area		2	

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

Historic and cultural offerings/features

Park Name	Water Bodies	Fishing	Paddling	Boat Ramp
Caldwell Park				
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area	2			
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie				
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark				
Eveland Access	1			1
Fremont Plaza				
Lake Keomah State Park	4			2
Leighton Park	1			
McCurdy Park				
McGriff Field				
New Sharon City Park				
Nicholson Park				
Quercus Wilderness Area				
Rose Hill Community Center				
Rose Hill Marsh	3			3
Russell Wildlife Area	5			1
Springer Park				
White Oak Conservation Area	5			1

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

Water features

AMENITY COMPARISON

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

Park Name	Paved Paths	Hiking Trail	Bike Trail	Special Use Trail
Caldwell Park			1.1 mi	
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area		2.6 mi		
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie		1.4 mi		
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark				
Eveland Access				
Fremont Plaza				
Lake Keomah State Park		3 mi		
Leighton Park				
McCurdy Park				
McGriff Field				
New Sharon City Park				
Nicholson Park				
Quercus Wilderness Area		1 mi		
Rose Hill Community Center				
Rose Hill Marsh				
Russell Wildlife Area		3.8 mi		
Springer Park				
White Oak Conservation Area		2 mi		

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

Paths and trails

Park Name	Tent	RV	Cabins
Caldwell Park			
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area			
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie			
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark			
Eveland Access	44	49	2
Fremont Plaza			
Lake Keomah State Park	4	48	
Leighton Park			
McCurdy Park			
McGriff Field		8	
New Sharon City Park			
Nicholson Park			
Quercus Wilderness Area	5		
Rose Hill Community Center			
Rose Hill Marsh			
Russell Wildlife Area			
Springer Park			
White Oak Conservation Area			

Grade Indicator

High Grade

Mid Grade or Ungraded

Low Grade

Camping

AMENITY COMPARISON

MAHASKA COUNTY PARKS

Park Name	Wildlife Habitat	Hunting	Nature Center	Bird Blind	Shooting Range
Caldwell Park					
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area					
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie					
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark					
Eveland Access					
Fremont Plaza					
Lake Keomah State Park					
Leighton Park					
McCurdy Park					
McGriff Field					
New Sharon City Park					
Nicholson Park					
Quercus Wilderness Area					
Rose Hill Community Center					
Rose Hill Marsh					
Russell Wildlife Area					
Springer Park					
White Oak Conservation Area					

Grade Indicator
High Grade
Mid Grade or Ungraded
Low Grade

Wildlife opportunities and education

Parks within Mahaska County (outside of Oskaloosa)

Park Name	Accessibility			Boat Ramps			Camping			Hiking Trails			Lawn			Lighting			Parking			Playground			Restrooms		
	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.
Caldwell Park	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	5	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	0	0	0
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie	3	2	2.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	0	0	0
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark	3	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	4	3.5	2	4	3	3	4	3.5
Eveland Access	4	4	4	2	3	2.5	4	5	4.5	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	3.5	4	5	4.5	2	4	3	4	4	4
Fremont Plaza	4	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	4	4.5	3	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lake Keomah State Park	4	3	3.5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	5	4	4.5	4	2	3	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	5
Leighton Park	5	4	4.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3.5	5	5	5
McCurdy Park	5	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	3	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	4	4.5	—	—	—
McGriff Field	2	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	2.5	—	—	—	3	3	3
New Sharon City Park	5	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—
Nicholson Park	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	5	4.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1.5	5	5	5
Quercus Wilderness Area	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	2	3	2.5	—	—	—	4	4	4	—	—	—	5	5	5
Rose Hill Community Center	1	2	1.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	5	4.5	3	1	2	3	2	2.5	4	5	4.5	—	—	—
Rose Hill Marsh	2	2	2	3	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	2.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Russell Wildlife Area	4	2	3	3	5	4	—	—	—	3	3	3	5	4	4.5	0	0	0	4	2	3	—	—	—	5	5	5
Springer Park	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	2.5	5	4	4.5	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	—	—	—
White Oak Conservation Area	5	3	4	5	5	5	—	—	—	5	4	4.5	5	3	4	0	0	0	4	3	3.5	2	4	3	5	5	5

Parks within Mahaska County (outside of Oskaloosa) [continued]

Park Name	Seating			Shelters			Sidewalks			Signage			Sports Fields			Sports Courts			Trash Receptacles			Vegetation			Overall Grade
	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	
Caldwell Park	4	1	2.5	—	—	—	4	4	4	5	4	4.5	3	5	4	—	—	—	4	1	2.5	5	5	5	3.8
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	3.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	4	4	4	2.4
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie	0	0	0	3	4	3.5	—	—	—	4	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	3	5	5	5	3.2
Eddyville Frogpond Ballpark	3	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	3	5	4	3	4	3.5	5	5	5	4	3	3.5	3.4
Eveland Access	3	5	4	5	4	4.5	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	1	5	3	5	2	3.5	5	5	5	3.6
Fremont Plaza	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	3	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	4	4.5	5	5	5	4.3
Lake Keomah State Park	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	4.3
Leighton Park	3	3	3	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	0	0	0	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	4	5	4.5	3.9
McCurdy Park	5	5	5	4	3	3.5	—	—	—	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	3	2	2.5	3.7
McGriff Field	5	3	4	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	2.5	—	—	—	0	1	0.5	3	2	2.5	2.7
New Sharon City Park	5	5	5	2	2	2	5	4	4.5	0	1	0.5	—	—	—	5	3	4	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	4.0
Nicholson Park	3	4	3.5	1	4	2.5	0	0	0	4	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	2.5	3	3	3	2.2
Quercus Wilderness Area	3	5	4	0	0	0	3	5	4	4	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	3	4	5	4.5	3.7
Rose Hill Community Center	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	4	3	3.5	0	0	0	4	2	3	2.7
Rose Hill Marsh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	4	4	4	2.6
Russell Wildlife Area	5	3	4	5	4	4.5	—	—	—	2	1	1.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	3	5	4	3.4
Springer Park	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	5	4	4.5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	4	4.5	5	4	4.5	4.5
White Oak Conservation Area	4	4	4	2	2	2	—	—	—	5	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	3.5	3	5	4	3.6

Parks within Oskaloosa

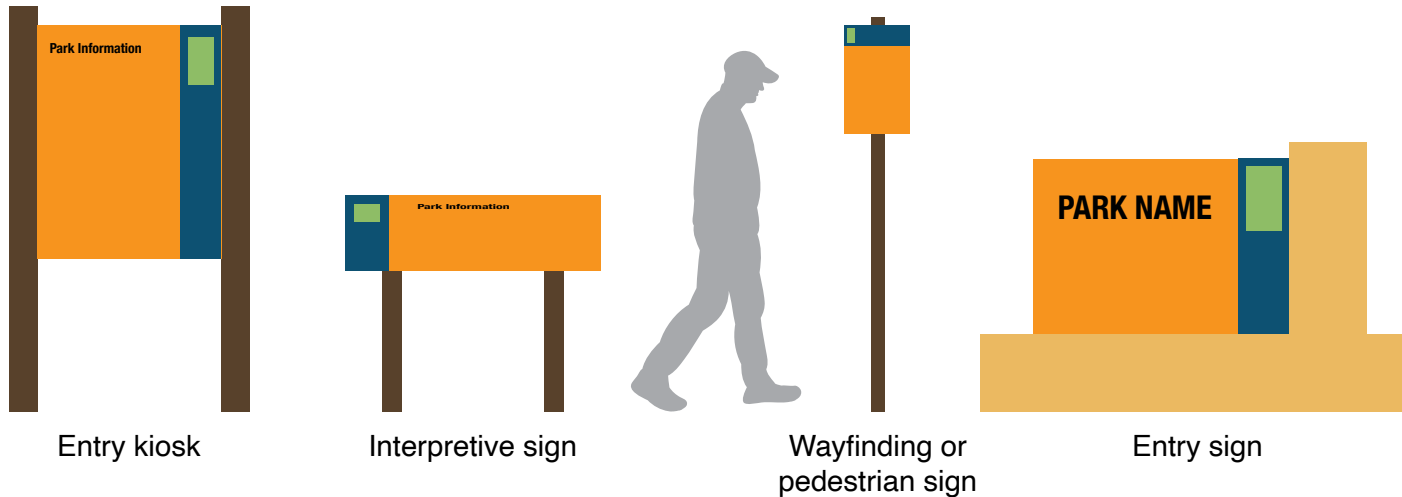
Park Name	Accessibility			Lawn			Lighting			Parking			Playground			Restrooms			Seating			Shelters		
	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.
City Square Park	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5
Edmundson Park	5	4	4.5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	3.5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Grant Park	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	—	—	—	3	4	3.5	—	—	—
Hewitt Jaycee Park	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	3	4	3.5	2	3	2.5	—	—	—	4	2	3	—	—	—
Keating Jaycee Park	0	0	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	3	2	2.5	2	4	3	—	—	—	3	4	3.5	—	—	—
Lacey Park	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.5
The Alley	4	3	3.5	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5
Urban Park	4	4	4	2	2	2	5	5	5	1	5	3	5	5	5	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5
Vennard College Campus	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	2.5	—	—	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	—	—

Parks within Oskaloosa [continued]

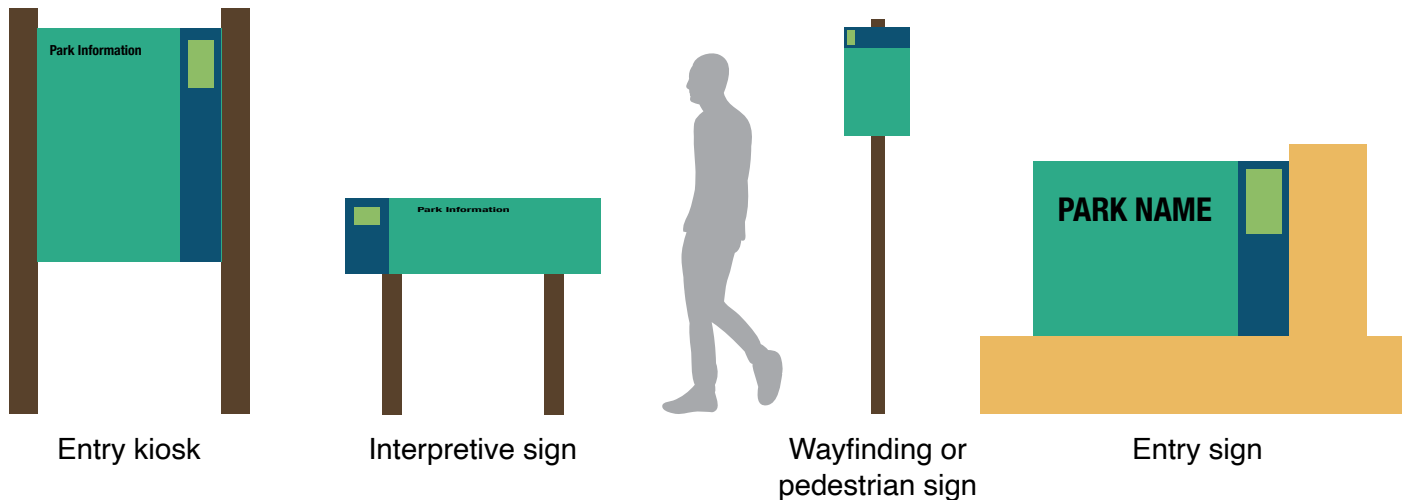
Park Name	Sidewalks			Signage			Sports Fields			Sports Courts			Trash Receptacles			Vegetation			Overall Grade
	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	Cond.	Adeq.	Avg.	
City Square Park	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.9
Edmundson Park	4	4	4	5	5	5	1	5	3	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.6
Grant Park	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	4	2	3	2.2
Hewitt Jaycee Park	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	3	3	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	1.8
Keating Jaycee Park	5	5	5	2	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	2	2	2	2.2
Lacey Park	5	5	5	5	4	4.5	5	5	5	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	3	4	4.8
The Alley	5	5	5	5	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	3	4	0	0	0	4.2
Urban Park	5	5	5	5	2	3.5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	2	1	1.5	4.1
Vennard College Campus	2	5	3.5	—	—	—	3	3	3	2	3	2.5	0	0	0	4	4	4	2.8

Park wayfinding, entrance, and interpretive signs within Oskaloosa and Mahaska County have two goals. First and foremost, they need to signify “parks within Mahaska County” from a distance. They should, therefore, contain unified forms and secondary colors so users can easily identify park-specific spaces and directions. In the sign family examples shown below, these unified factors include the overall form of each sign and the dark blue band. The light green boxes could indicate a logo.

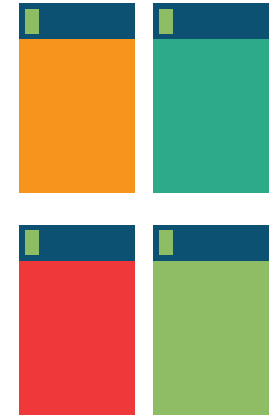
Oskaloosa Adventure Hub:



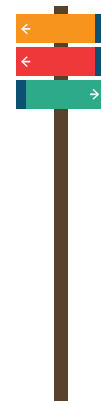
Mahaska Landscape Series:



Secondly, the sign families should have primary and dominant color themes or patterns that differentiate the parks within each hub/destination. The examples use a bold color on all signs to unite each hub/destination.



Examples of how color might be used to unify and differentiate park signs.



Wayfinding signs could use the hub/destination’s primary color to introduce and reinforce each area’s color theme.

