

**Note:** Since the inception of the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan, New Scandia Township has decided to pursue incorporation. Information herein is relevant to the community, regardless of whether it remains New Scandia Township or becomes the City of Scandia. - SWB, Inc., July 2006.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The primary purpose of this Plan is to help New Scandia Township develop and maintain a parks, trails, open space and recreation system that meets the needs and desires of the current and future residents of the Township. The Park and Recreation Committee, Township Staff, elected officials, developers, and private landowners should use this Plan to help address issues such as where park and trail acquisition should occur, what types of additional recreation facilities and programs are needed, how to identify open space that is best left undisturbed, and how parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities will be maintained.

### **RECREATION NEEDS, ISSUES, THE COMMUNITY SURVEY & VISION STATEMENT**

In 2004 the Metropolitan Council estimated the population of New Scandia Township to be approximately 3,970 people; the population is projected to reach 5,000 residents between 2017 and 2020.

New Scandia Township's population growth may affect parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities in several ways:

1. Pressure to develop in rural and natural areas will increase. Consequently, without proper planning the rural character that attracted many residents to New Scandia Township may be lost.

2. The need to provide additional recreation facilities and programs will increase.
3. Park dedication and fees in lieu of dedication will increase as new subdivisions and development occurs.

Based on the projected population of the Township and the response from the 2004 New Scandia Township Community Survey, the Township has a need for additional parks, trails and recreation facilities and programs. New Scandia Township has a strong desire to ensure that future growth will be responsive to the protection of significant open space, sensitive ecological areas and maintaining the Township's rural character.

## **PARK SYSTEM PLAN**

The 2004 Community Survey provided overwhelming support of developing a network of parks and open space throughout New Scandia Township. A primary goal of the Park System Plan is to explore opportunities to preserve open space and provide passive, nature-oriented community parks in areas outside of the Village Center as a green network extending from the central feature of the Scandia Community Center and its facilities.

The Park System Plan divides New Scandia Township into four **park service areas** and illustrates where **park search areas** are desirable. A park search area defines an area of land that is best suited to explore individual parcels for parkland acquisition, due to its location, features and/or ecological significance. Proposed acquisition of land occurs *if and when land becomes available*. The Plan also describes the types of facilities each existing and future park should have.

The Park System Plan identifies five park search areas (see Figure 3-3: Park System Plan):

1. **NSPS-A.** Located near the Falls Creek SNA and Wind in the Pines Park, acquiring parkland in this area would serve as a buffer to protect and preserve these public lands for their scenic and ecological significance.
2. **NSPS-B.** Located east of the Scandia Fire Hall and Township Maintenance Building site, this area may be used for trails, interpretive features and/or new recreation facilities, including disk golf.

3. **NSPS-C.** Parkland acquisition in the area south of the New Scandia Community Center would encourage the preservation of significant open space, which exhibits high ecological value.
4. **NSPS-D.** This park search area includes the northwest, northeast and southeast corners of the intersection of State Highway 97 and Manning Trail.
5. **NSPS-E.** Park search area five is located between Manning Trail and County Road 1 north of German Lake. Parkland acquisition in this area would serve to preserve this open space rich in ecological diversity.

The Park System Plan advocates renovating existing undeveloped Township parcels to their best advantage for integration into the larger parks system to benefit Township residents and visitors. General improvements for the Park System include providing signage, maps and on-going maintenance and upgrading of existing park facilities. Specific recommendations are suggested for each existing park parcel in the Plan document.

## **TRAIL SYSTEM PLAN**

The Trail System Plan promotes development of a diverse and extensive trail system to include bicycle routes and trailhead/ rest stops (see Figure 4-2: Bicycle Routes Plan). The trails will provide recreation opportunities and link the New Scandia Township Village Center to parks, neighborhoods and the Scandia Elementary School. Where feasible, the Plan proposes development of off-road trails. However, the Plan recognizes that many routes will be developed in road right-of-ways. The Township would develop most routes and trails in concert with future development and road improvements. The Trail Plan emphasizes the need for public involvement in the trail planning process.

The need to identify the search area for the Gateway Trail Extension within New Scandia Township is distinguished as high priority. Another goal is to identify a potential trail connection between William O'Brien State Park and Big Marine Park Reserve.

## OPEN SPACE PLAN

Natural areas and open space ranked among the highest importance for Township residents' quality of life in the 2004 New Scandia Township Community Survey. Residents value the Township's lakes, wetlands, woodlands, and agriculture areas. Yet, as New Scandia Township grows, open space diminishes in quantity and quality. The Open Space Plan discusses the importance of open space and how it is threatened. It also guides the Township in protecting and enhancing significant open space.

Figure 5-7: Open Space Plan, shows conceptual open space corridors. These corridors would help link fragmented open space, promote trail and wildlife corridors, and preserve the rural character of the community. *The Plan does not necessarily reflect public acquisition of open space, nor does it necessarily reflect public use of the open space.* There are many land protection tools that allow landowners to protect open space while retaining title to their property (e.g., conservation easements, land retirement programs, and so on). The Township should use the Open Space Plan as a general guide to work with conservation organizations, landowners and developers to promote green corridors and the protection of significant open space.

## RECREATION FACILITIES PLAN

The Recreation Facilities Plan provides inventory and analysis of the Township's existing recreation facilities, identifies issues and opportunities and sets goals and strategies specific to the existing recreation facilities system. The Recreation Facilities Plan serves to guide the Park and Recreation Committee, Township Staff, Town Board, Planning Commission, developers and residents in decisions related to the size and location of future recreation facilities as well as the types of facilities that should be associated with each location.

The Recreation Facilities Plan divides New Scandia Township into the same four **park service areas** as the Park System Plan (see Chapter 3). Recreation search areas are identified as best suited to explore parkland acquisition for its recreation potential, due to its location and/or features. Proposed acquisition of land occurs *if and when land becomes available*. The Plan also describes the types of facilities each existing and future recreation facility should have.

The Recreation Facilities Plan identifies three recreation search areas (see Fig.6.1: Recreation Facilities Plan):

**NSRS-A:** Located directly adjacent to the east side of the Scandia Fire Hall and Township Maintenance Building site north of CSAH 97, this site could include trails, interpretive elements and explore the feasibility of implementing a disc golf course.

**NSRS-B:** Located just west of the Scandia Elementary School, this site is identified as an expansion of the school's current facilities in partnership with the Township.

**NSRS-C:** The intersection of State Highway 97 and County Road 15/Manning Trail could be considered for potential acquisition toward recreation facility improvements.

The Recreation Plan advocates implementing several new recreation facilities for the benefit of the Township. General improvements for the Recreation system include providing trails to all recreation facilities, improving lake access, providing signage, maps and on-going maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities. Specific recommendations are suggested in the Plan document.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS PLAN**

The Recreation Programs Plan provides inventory and analysis of the Township's existing recreation programs, identifies issues and opportunities and sets goals and strategies specific to the existing recreation system. Recreation programs can assist the Township in creating a sense of community and ownership, be a vehicle for citizens to volunteer their time and talent thus saving the Township money, and they can educate people on being good stewards of our environment.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

New Scandia Township will need to be diligent in implementing this Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Township should build consensus toward a list of priorities for implementing the Plan. For example, a high priority goal of this Plan involves identifying the Gateway Trail Extension corridor within the Township. New Scandia needs to build partnerships with local, regional and state entities to pursue funding for these improvements. Indicators should be developed to evaluate progress in implementing the Plan. Finally, the Township should periodically review and update the Plan, including the vision statement, to ensure that it is relevant and meaningful.