

Future Parks and Open Space

This plan encompasses the entire county as the planning area for future parks and open space. This is consistent with the primary role of the county as a provider of regional recreation facilities. Future planning will focus on natural amenity areas as potential sites for county recreation facilities in addition to the expansion of existing park areas. It is unlikely that the county will participate in major property acquisitions but rather depend on land donations to develop additional park sites. A system of open space areas should also be maintained through private land ownership, where such areas are preserved and protected from incompatible uses through sound land use policies and zoning controls. Proposed park and open space areas are shown on Map 6 in the pocket insert.

River greenway system. Segments of the major water courses - Skunk Creek, Big Sioux River, and Split Rock Creek - offer the greatest potential to expand the county's recreation base by building on existing facilities associated with these natural amenities. Sioux Falls has developed an extensive greenway system within the city, encompassing nearly all of the Big Sioux River and a portion of Skunk Creek. The river greenway connects several city parks and provides a hard surfaced path for bicycling, roller blading, jogging and walking.

A 1993 study proposed that the greenway be extended along the Big Sioux River between Sioux Falls and Brandon. The greenway would connect existing facilities at the Big Sioux State Recreation Area on the western edge of Brandon, Brandon's Aspen Park and the county's McHardy Park through a joint effort of the local governments and the state. The study presented alternative routes for a trail system and identified major focal points for expanded recreational development. This is an ambitious undertaking which will take many years to complete, demanding the cooperation of four separate governmental entities and requiring a substantial commitment in financial resources.

A proposed water supply reservoir on Slip Up Creek northeast of Sioux Falls would provide opportunities for development of the adjoining land for park and conservation use. The site is located just north of Interstate 90 and could be easily connected to the Big Sioux greenway.

There is also an opportunity to expand the greenway along Skunk Creek west from Sioux Falls. A three to four mile stretch of the river corridor is currently a major source of sand and gravel. Area landowners, mainly local construction companies, have organized as a study group to identify the most appropriate future use of the property and determine the best alternatives for reclamation. A majority of the Skunk Creek corridor is outside the Sioux Falls year 2015 growth boundary so extensive urban development is not anticipated without adequate services, particularly sanitary sewer. This is a sensitive environmental area due to the underlying Skunk Creek aquifer, a potential water supply area for the city. Development options include recreational lakes created by extraction operations and expanded park and open space areas extending outside the immediate river corridor which could also serve as detention areas during flood events. Property owners should be encouraged to reclaim land consistent with future greenway improvements along Skunk Creek.

East Sioux Falls. In 1887, the community of East Sioux Falls was settled six miles east of downtown Sioux Falls. This thriving city was the site of four separate quarries first owned by the Sioux Falls Granite Company and later by the East Sioux Falls Quarry Company. The following year the Illinois Central Railroad was constructed to serve the community's transportation needs. The pink quartzite known as Sioux Falls Jasper possessed a coloring which was extremely delicate and pleasing to

the eye and superior in quality to other stones. The rock was quarried and cut into building stones and paving blocks, then shipped to construction projects throughout the country. The stone was used in several buildings in Sioux Falls, including the old County Courthouse at Sixth Street and Main Avenue, the post office at Twelfth and Phillips Avenue, the Carnegie public library, and the Pettegrew home which with the old Courthouse comprise part of the museum system.

Numerous structures were built in East Sioux Falls including cottages to house the workers, a post office, town hall, depot, school house, general store, hotel, grain elevator, stable, saloons and a jail. The community felt the impact of the slowing economy in 1891 and the 1893 depression added to the economic problems. By the turn of the century, concrete had taken the place of stone as a building material and East Sioux Falls was forced to give up its charter in 1913. People continued to reside in the community until the last few remaining buildings were demolished in the late 1980's.

This historic and scenic area is slated for preservation through the efforts of the city of Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County. Properties encompassing East Sioux Falls are slated for donation. The county may become the owner of the actual townsite and possibly one of the quarries. Two other quarries south of Highway 42 and the property extending east to the Big Sioux River are to be transferred to the city. The future nature center would encompass approximately 225 acres and preserve the historical significance and natural beauty of the site. A trail system is proposed that would bridge or tunnel beneath the highway and connect to the Big Sioux River. This area could become an important element in the regional river greenway system.

Expansion of Existing County Parks. McHardy Park presents the greatest potential for expansion. The current park was developed on land donated to the county by the McHardy family. Adjacent land owned by the family provides an opportunity to increase the park size. Property to the south along Split Rock Creek could be integrated into the park and also facilitate the completion of a recreation trail connecting McHardy Park with Aspen Park in Brandon and eventually the regional trail system along the Big Sioux River into Sioux Falls. Another parcel to the east along Split Rock Creek could also become part of the park.

Expansion of Wall Lake Park south of the beach should also be considered. The beach is constricted by County Highway 146 (266th Street) which runs along the south side of the lake. Parking is not allowed along the beach due to safety concerns and the existing parking lot is not conveniently situated for beach users. Relocation of the highway to the south would enable expansion of the beach and construction of additional parking facilities. This plan would also open up the existing parking lot to persons who want to use the other park facilities.