

MEMORANDUM

To: Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Communities Planning Project Team

**From: Matthew Gabb, Research Assistant and Ross Daniels, Community Planner,
Public Health Law Center**

**Re: Indicator Analysis: Greenspace Preservation for Metropolitan Communities
Healthy Communities Planning Project**

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Indicator: Greenspace Preservation/Enhancement

The following discussion includes key findings and analysis of the reviewed comprehensive plans regarding the greenspace health indicator. The Project Team defines this indicator as planning for “greenspace/preservation enhancement.” Greenspace preservation can protect environmental features such as wetlands and water bodies, reduce runoff which can lead to flooding, reduce the urban heat island effect and promote opportunities for residents to connect to nature.

Overall Takeaways

In total, all but one of the studied communities include greenspace preservation and enhancement as part of their comprehensive plan. Project researchers identified four takeaways across scores and designations. First, communities dedicate a significant amount of discussion to financial and regulatory tools available to them to acquire open space. Additionally, there is a focus in these plans on withstanding development pressures. In many plans, greenspace preservation is discussed as a necessity to protect water features and wetlands. Finally, communities discuss greenspace in the context of parks and recreational opportunities. Many communities also approached equity in their greenspace discussions through a spatial analysis of access to greenspaces. The project researchers noted a strong uniformity among these plans when it came to greenspace. These overall themes consistently undergird the work that communities in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area are doing to preserve and enhance greenspace.

Equity — Spatial Analysis of Citizen Access to Open Space

Number of plans consider greenspace in relation to equity. Overall, across designations and scores, communities provide a spatial analysis of how many of their residents are within a certain distance of greenspace, and/or develop goals to increase resident access to greenspace. There is a significant overlap here with parks and recreation goals as well. **Shakopee** does both and is one of many communities to include open space or greenspace in their discussion of parks and trails. One of its goals is to maintain an above-average ratio of the acreage of such spaces per 1,000 residents. In support of this goal, it outlines the following policy: “Shakopee currently provides 20 acres per 1,000 residents. The city should strive to maintain a higher-than-average ratio even in times of population growth. Standard recommendations are at least 6 acres per 1,000 residents” (Shakopee, 330). The city of **Bloomington** includes open space as part of its parks and recreation system, and discusses the accessibility of this system to its residents as an asset: “[t]he City of Bloomington park system includes 97 parks, recreation or open spaces that provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation. These facilities are located across the City, resulting in over 99% of the City being within a half mile from a park or conservation area” (Bloomington, 102).

Urban areas’ plans contain additional equity themes and concepts. Suburban equity considerations are discussed in this memo as well, although project researchers did not identify specific themes here. Project researchers did not identify equity considerations in rural areas. Please see each of the community designation sections for an in-depth discussion about how urban and suburban communities address equity.



Land Acquisition and Preservation Tools

Across all scoring levels and community designations, Metro communities discuss various financial or regulatory mechanisms available to acquire or preserve open space. The city of **Chanhassen**, for instance, uses an overlay—which preserves base-level land use permissions but adds additional regulations on top of this base—for this purpose. **Chanhassen**'s "Bluff Creek Overlay District is an important mechanism for preserving open space, and the city continues to use the district to encourage the use of density transfers to preserve woodlands and bluffs adjacent to these areas" (Chanhassen, 36). In **Denmark Township**'s Surface Water Management Plan, the community discusses the need to manage land use in order to protect water resources, and includes a policy to "[c]onsider purchase of development rights [and] transfer of development rights [...] to protect natural resources" (Denmark Township, 89). Such tools provide a monetary incentive to developers to protect open space where development is permitted. **Lauderdale** discusses the use of a "(yet-to-be-developed) park dedication ordinance to create open spaces and park areas in new or redeveloping areas of the community as needed and as supported within this Plan" (Lauderdale, 9-7).

Coexistence with Development Pressures

As these plans are designed to guide land use for twenty years, much of the content within them is dedicated to planning the built environment, including the development of homes, businesses, and streets. Discussions related to preserving open space acknowledge the need to plan for these areas in balance with development pressures. **Brooklyn Center** acknowledges that it "need[s] to establish clear standards and regulations for areas designated or identified for redevelopment," and further stating that "[i]t is important to consider massing, setbacks, relationships with existing homes, open spaces, trails, and natural resources" (Brooklyn Center, 221). **Lake Elmo** outlines its 20-year development plan as one that combines land use intensive development with a rural residential pattern that prioritizes open space:

"Despite recent growth and development pressure, a large percentage of the City's landscape is planned to continue to be dominated by rural residential development patterns interwoven with an extensive network of parks, open spaces and natural resources. Since more than 50% of the City is anticipated to remain in rural residential and protected park lands, this dominant land use pattern will continue to be a defining characteristic of Lake Elmo through 2040. The remaining areas of the City are anticipated to be developed over the next 20 years with a more intense development pattern that will offer greater diversity in choice to current and future residents, stakeholders and business owners" (Lake Elmo, 81).

The city of **Golden Valley**'s plan contains a goal to "[p]rotect And Enhance Open Spaces And Natural Resources," and lists "[p]rotect parks and open space areas from unnecessary encroachment or destruction from neighboring properties" among its stated objectives (Golden Valley, 1194).

Protection of Water Resources and Wetlands

Intense land use development patterns put pressures on water resources and wetlands, which need to be protected for a wide array of reasons including the reduction of flooding, the improvement of biodiversity, and the promotion of public health (e.g., to improve the quality of potable water). As such,



many communities tie greenspace preservation and enhancement into protecting water resources and wetlands. **Woodland** captures this in one of its land use policies:

“To preserve and maintain open space, natural features such as lakes, ponds, wetlands, slopes, woodlands, natural drainage courses, and other environmental features which serve vital functions in the City. Lakes: To protect the natural shoreland from inordinate development and hardcover. Specifically, to protect the shore impact zone from structures and other adverse effects of development. To support the maintenance of natural vegetation along the shorelines of the lakes and encourage the use of native plants” (Woodland, 8).

One of the city of **Minneapolis**’s policies is to preserve and enhance public lakes and waterways, and among the action steps it plans to take in support of this policy is to “[r]egulate development of land adjacent to public waters in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of surface waters while also preserving their economic and natural environmental value” (Minneapolis, 250). **Lauderdale** endeavors to “[e]xplore ways to incorporate the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS), natural resources inventory, national wetland inventory and other available tools,” when considering development and redevelopment (Lauderdale, 32).

Alignment with Parks and Recreation Activities and Goals

Greenspace preservation and enhancement goals and policies are often very closely aligned with those of parks and recreation. **Corcoran**, for example, directs that parks in general, “not be planned outside the 2040 MUSA [Metropolitan Urban Service Area], except for [...] [p]rotection of significant natural areas that have been identified on the Natural Resource Inventory” (Corcoran, pg. 74). The city developed this Natural Resource Inventory for its 2020 and 2030 plans to identify, “all of the significant natural resource areas in the community” (Corcoran, pg. 12). In its discussion of parks classification, **New Brighton** describes its system as one that, “consists of a wide variety of park & facility types including a regional park, community parks, neighborhood parks, recreational centers, open space areas, regional trails, and local Trails” (New Brighton, 45).

Interesting and Innovative Approaches

Some of the most interesting approaches communities take to address greenspace and natural resource preservation include policies of having no net loss in greenspace, addressing impervious surfaces, environmental education, subdivision ordinances, and protecting agricultural land.

No Net Loss in Greenspace

A handful of communities across the Metro have a no net loss policy for their greenspace. **Golden Valley** will, “[m]aintain a no net-loss of acreage for parks, open space, and nature areas owned and operated by the City, using a baseline of 480 acres” (Golden Valley, 1192). **Maplewood**’s no net loss policy is: “[t]he City shall retain a minimum of 295 acres in the system of preserves” (Maplewood, 202-203).



Impervious Surfaces in Urban Communities

Many urban communities' plans include discussing impervious surfaces when it comes to runoff pollution and reducing the heat island effect (see memos for the intense rain and extreme heat indicators), but two also relate impervious surface limits to their greenspace preservation plans. Part of **Golden Valley's** plan for helping preserve natural resources in greenspaces is to "[a]dd impervious surface limits to all Zoning Districts to help manage stormwater runoff" (Golden Valley, 138). In **North St. Paul**, as part of its goal to "[p]rotect and enhance the lakes, wetlands, woods and wildlife and promote actions, practices and developments which will sustain the environment," one of its measures is the "[p]ercentage of total impervious surface in the City" (North St. Paul, 21).

Environmental Education in Suburban Communities

A handful of suburban communities are involving their residents in greenspace preservation through environmental education. In **Arden Hills**, the city will "[s]upport public educational opportunities to foster a better understanding of the natural environment as well as ways to restore and protect the natural environment" (Arden Hills, 105). **Oakdale** plans to create Preservation Parks:

"These parks are set in natural areas of the community where preservation of the natural environment is the primary emphasis. Interpretive signage and educational features are found throughout the park to promote the public awareness of natural systems. Hiking trails, wildlife sanctuaries, and picnic facilities would be among the primary uses of such a park, which, in turn, would benefit natural wildlife, nature enthusiasts, and related educational programs" (Oakdale, 54).

Subdivision Ordinances in Suburban Communities

Some suburban communities are also using their subdivision ordinances to preserve greenspace through cluster development. In **Stillwater**, the city will "[e]ncourage innovative subdivision design including clustering techniques to preserve open space or natural features" (Stillwater, 72). Similarly, **White Bear Township** is committed to "[e]ncourage cluster developments, particularly in those areas that contain significant natural features, especially wetlands, slopes, and trees" (White Bear Township, 28).

Protecting Agricultural Land in Rural Communities

Due to their rural character, a handful of rural communities see protecting agricultural land as a part of preserving greenspace. **Cologne**, for example, "has a zoning classification (A) used to preserve land for agricultural purposes. The City will work with Benton Township, Carver County, and the Metropolitan Council to ensure prime soils and farmlands are preserved as future development is considered" (Cologne, 40). For **Inver Grove Heights**:

"Since agriculture is a character element of the community and a means of preserving 'open space', the comprehensive plan seeks to include agriculture as an interim and permanent land use depending on the desires of property owners. Individuals that choose to maintain their land in agricultural production can continue to do so and will be consistent with both the comprehensive



plan and current zoning practices. Long-term agriculture outside of the area designated as Rural Development Area is not anticipated in this plan” (Inver Grove Heights, 37-38).

Other Approaches

Other interesting approaches from communities include:

- Funding unexpected tree loss: **Golden Valley** also includes financing for its tree canopy as part of its greenspace preservation, with a plan to “[b]udget to maintain present level of urban canopy coverage citywide. Set aside funds for increased tree planting after unexpected disturbances (disease, storm damage, etc) that result in tree loss” (Golden Valley, 1497).
- Parking maximums: **Eden Prairie** is also exploring parking maximums as a method to create open spaces:

“When minimum parking requirements are imposed, the amount of built-out land increases impacting both the natural environment and other potential uses. These impacts can detract from natural and open spaces. This not only affects the building using the parking, but also surrounding buildings. One solution to creating more sustainable building practices, especially in transit-oriented developments, is to impose parking maximums rather than minimums.” (Eden Prairie, 57)

- Noise and light pollution: As part of its natural resources preservation plan, **Nowthen** has a goal to, “[m]inimize noise, air and light pollution” (Nowthen, 30).

Ranking Analysis

Each community received a score of 1-4 on the greenspace preservation and enhancement indicator, which ranks it on how much it incorporates greenspace preservation and enhancement in its comprehensive plan. If a community scored a 1, that means there is no mention of the connection between development and greenspace preservation or enhancement. The greenspace preservation and enhancement sections of plans scoring between 2 and 4 were scored with the following criteria:

- Level 2 communities broadly mention the connection between development and greenspace in the body of the plan but do not include goals and policies to this end.
- Level 3 communities include goals and/or policies for a balance between development and greenspace preservation/enhancement.
- Level 4 communities include goals and policies to balance development and greenspace preservation/enhancement in their plans, and dedicate resources to implementation.

The number of communities to receive each score was:

Level 1	1 community
Level 2	3 communities
Level 3	19 communities



Level 4

26 communities

Differences in themes and focus across the ranking levels show what different communities rely on to improve access to recreation for their residents. As discussed in the “Overall Takeaways” section of this memo, themes are remarkably uniform across each of the levels, with the themes below closely resembling overall themes.

Level 2

Communities that received a score of 2 on this indicator **mention the connection between development and greenspace in the body of the plan but do not include goals and policies to this end**. There is a focus on water quality infrastructure in these communities.

Water Quality Infrastructure

Water quality infrastructure is a component of greenspace discussion in each of the three level 2 communities. **Osseo**’s plan states that, “Healthy Community Planning efforts also identified actions related to surface water quality. To ensure the long-term viability of the region’s groundwater supply, the City should take advantage of opportunities to support groundwater recharge, through green infrastructure investments, water use conservation strategies, and other best practices” (Osseo, 165). **Richfield** notes the importance of retaining permeable surface in park development, by outlining a policy to, “[i]ncorporate best practices for stormwater retention in new park development and in the renovation of existing parks” (Richfield, 44).

Level 3

A ranking of 3 on this indicator means that the **plan includes goals and/or policies for a balance between development and greenspace preservation/enhancement**. These communities’ overall themes align closely with the themes of the indicator overall. They discuss the recreational opportunities that greenspace preservation provides, and the importance of considering nature preservation in development and redevelopment review processes.

Greenspace Preservation and Recreational Opportunities

Level 3 communities identify preserving greenspace as a way to improve local park space. **Burnsville**, for example, plans to “[d]evelop, redevelop, and maintain an organized system of open space, trails for biking and running, greenways, corridors, and active and passive parks to improve community character and protect natural resources” (Burnsville, 233). **Columbia Heights** includes a goal to “[i]nclude natural features and resources in the design of parks by identifying areas to preserve or restore as well as areas where natural resource based activities could occur” (Columbia Heights, 159). **Nowthen** wants to “[p]romote the City’s wetlands, lakes and stream corridors as valuable amenities for residential and recreational development” (Nowthen, 30).



Development and Redevelopment Review

Level 3 communities also detail the need to preserve greenspace in the face of development pressures. More specifically, they outline this need as something to be evaluated in development and redevelopment review processes. **Mahtomedi** lists the following among its open space objectives:

“Encourage the use of incentive based tools to conserve significant open spaces. [...] Closely review all development proposals and building permit requests to ensure that existing natural resources are reasonably protected. Where the loss of natural resources cannot be avoided, require mitigation and replacement plans as necessary. [...] Solicit input from the City Forester, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Watershed Districts, and others when considering the impact of proposed developments on existing natural resources” (Mahtomedi, 112).

Brooklyn Center contains the following discussion related to implementing goals included in its Parks, Trails, & Open Space (PTOS) chapter:

“Redevelopment projects will be required to provide trail connections that align with the surrounding local and regional trail system that are existing or planned within this Plan. Redevelopment projects will be required to plan for parks and open spaces consistent with this Plan, and the City will work with developers to identify and prioritize improvements to the PTOS system” (Brooklyn Center, 232).

Coon Rapids, which values its wooded areas, specifically mentions the need to “[i]ncorporate woodland best management practices addressing protection of wooded areas into development review” (Coon Rapids, 23).

Level 4

To score a 4 for this indicator, communities must **include goals and policies to balance development and greenspace preservation/enhancement in their plans, and dedicate resources to implementation**. Level 4 communities go beyond general discussion of the need to preserve open space and protect it from intense land uses, and discuss specific site design standards, often through zoning. Communities that score a 4 also have a commitment to the preservation of existing greenspace, as opposed to creating and restoring new spaces.

Zoning Standards for Site Design

Level 4 communities discuss specific tools to achieve greenspace preservation through site design, often outlined in zoning regulations. **Woodbury** plans to “utilize [its] planned unit development process to support low impact development. Identify priority acquisition parcels and secure ownership of these parcels through the development process or parcel acquisition” (Woodbury, 196). **Chanhassen** contains a discussion of the utility of overlay districting: “The Bluff Creek Overlay District is an important mechanism for preserving open space, and the city continues to use the district to encourage the use of density transfers to preserve woodlands and bluffs adjacent to these areas.” (Chanhassen, 41). **Marine on St. Croix**, a rural community, does not anticipate full development in the near future, and discusses the utility of clustering homes to preserve greenspace, stating that “it is not anticipated that all residential land



will be developed; cluster developments will be used to help preserve open spaces, natural resources, and agricultural lands. There is enough land zoned for residential to accommodate projected growth while preserving valuable natural resources” (Marine on St. Croix, 41).

Preservation of Existing Greenspace

Another method level 4 communities focus on is preserving existing natural areas, rather than using time and money to create new ones. A goal for **Roseville** is to “[p]reserve parks and school open space areas as part of the City-wide systems plan for structured recreation space and unstructured preserved natural areas” (Roseville, 296). In **Shakopee**, “[p]reservation of open space serves a variety of needs and functions. Open space preserves natural habitats, allows animal movement among a built environment, provides visual relief, connects people to nature and preserves significant natural resources” (Shakopee, 315).

Community Designation Analysis

All 51 plans, representing 54 communities, reviewed in the project were sorted into three main designations: urban, suburban, or rural. Project researchers analyzed these types of communities separately to see if they approach the task of greenspace and natural resource preservation in different ways that are more specific to their community type. These larger categories are combinations of the more narrowly defined categories the Metropolitan Council uses to distinguish communities. The urban category is made up of urban center and urban communities, while the suburban category is made up of towns that Met Council defines as suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge communities. The rural category is a combination of rural center, diversified rural, rural residential, and agricultural communities.

Urban

Urban communities use a variety of methods to preserve greenspace and natural areas, including through events or programming, balancing preservation with development, increasing use of native plant species, and creating habitats for pollinators.

Equity — Access to Parks

Urban communities that address equity in regards to natural areas and resources approach it by working to increase access to parks. The city of **Maplewood** has a policy to “[i]mprove access to nature for people of all abilities by ensuring one ADA neighborhood preserve trail in each of the park service areas” (Maplewood, 203). In **Minneapolis**, the city will “strive to fill gaps where residents do not have equal access to parks and open spaces and to connect residents to natural amenities. And the City will work to ensure that improvements to parks and park programs better serve Minneapolis' changing population” (Minneapolis, 35).

Events & Programming

While cities took multiple approaches, across all urban communities one common approach is using events and programming to restore and preserve natural resources and areas. **Golden Valley’s** plan states



that the city will “[e]ngage community members in restoration of the city's natural areas (replanting shoreland buffers, restoring prairie, buckthorn and garlic mustard removal, etc) by hosting and promoting an annual event open to all community members” (Golden Valley, 7-29). The city of **Maplewood** will “[e]stablish Community Preserves as integrated, multi-purpose areas set aside for preserving natural resources, connecting people to nature, and providing educational programming and historic interpretation” (Maplewood, 11-196). **North St. Paul** plans to leverage its Urban Ecology and Environmental Learning Centers, and will “[p]reserve and enhance these parks as environmental/educational parks and initiate practices which foster native species and their associated habitats” (North St. Paul, pg. 10-8).

Balancing Preservation & Development

Consistent with the overall approach above, urban communities use their comprehensive plan policies to strike a balance between preserving natural areas while still encouraging development. For **West St. Paul**, “[p]lanning for future development should consider native vegetation as a type of infrastructure that is just as important as the other components of a development” (West St. Paul, 177). **Falcon Heights** states that “[s]ubstantial green spaces will be preserved between future development and existing neighborhoods to provide connectivity between neighborhoods (pedestrian, motorized and non-motorized traffic) and to preserve natural resources prized by Falcon Heights residents, including open space, views and access to natural light” (Falcon Heights, 56).

Increasing Use of Native Plant Species

Urban communities are also looking to increase and encourage use of plant species that are native to Minnesota. **Columbia Heights** plans to “[i]ncorporate native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and tree species at City Gateways” (Columbia Heights, 36). The city of **Golden Valley** will “[p]romote landscaping with native plants and managing exotic plant species to foster ecological biodiversity that helps sustain a healthy habitat for urban wildlife” (Golden Valley, 138). In **Brooklyn Center** the city will “[m]ake restoration of removed Native Plant Communities and natural vegetation in riparian areas a high priority during development” (Brooklyn Center, 255).

Habitats for Pollinators

Another focal point in urban plans’ discussion of vegetated natural areas is creating and improving habitats for pollinators such as bees, birds, and butterflies. The city of **North St. Paul** notes that a “focus on creating green spaces with native vegetation plantings will also be important to support local pollinators. Pollinators support biodiversity and the production of foods, fibers, oils, and medicines” (North St. Paul, 210). **Richfield** is planning to “[e]ncourage parks to be naturalized with prairie grasses and pollinator-friendly plants, where suitable, to minimize maintenance costs and to beautify parks” (Richfield, 44). The city of **Minneapolis** has a policy to “[e]liminate use of neonicotinoids, pesticides that are harmful to pollinator populations. [...] Manage soil health and grow plants for healthy pollinator communities on public lands and promote such planting on private lands” (Minneapolis, 214).

Suburban

Suburban communities tackle greenspace and natural resource preservation from four angles: site planning, protecting the tree canopy, increasing use of native plant species, and using open spaces as a site for recreational opportunities.

Equity Approaches

While there was no consistent theme among suburban communities' approaches to equity in greenspaces, some approaches bear mentioning:

- Open Space Proximity & Health: The city of **Eden Prairie** states that “proximity of usable open spaces to residential development is especially important for seniors and minority populations. Providing for physical activity can create healthier residents and a healthier community” (Eden Prairie, 51).
- Affordable Housing & Natural Resources: It is a policy of the city of **Landfall** “to protect its natural resources and environment while maintaining housing affordability” (Landfall, 18).
- Pollinators in Underserved Areas: **Coon Rapids** plans to “[c]onsider including community gardens, orchards, and pollinator plantings on City land, particularly in areas accessible to disadvantaged communities” (Coon Rapids, 125).

Site Planning

The Metro's suburban communities that address greenspace preservation do so by focusing on site planning for specific areas within their cities. The city of **Arden Hills** states that:

“Ramsey County purchased 427 acres of the TCAAP property in April 2013. The City has approved the TCAAP Redevelopment Code to regulate zoning and land uses. Approximately 24.3 acres are planned to be used for City parks and public open space.... Green space will be provided along a pedestrian corridor linking the primary retail area west of the Spine Road to a City park on the eastern edge of the site” (Arden Hills, 9-14).

Lilydale plans to “[w]ork with the National Park Service and MNDRN as redevelopment occurs at the River Bluff Center site” (Lilydale, 53). **Chanhassen** has specific plans for Bluff Creek:

"The Bluff Creek Corridor runs diagonally through the city connecting Lake Minnewashta with the Minnesota River. The entire watershed of Bluff Creek lies within city boundary lines and because of this, the city had the opportunity to shape the development and protection of the creek. The creation of a green way along the creek has presented opportunities for valuable development and recreational activities.... The city should maintain these greenways and natural areas for native plant and animal habitats. The city should also set a goal to limit fragmentation of natural areas and maintain green corridors that connect open space” (Chanhassen, pg. 72).

Tree Protection & Planting

Suburban communities also prioritize protecting their existing tree canopy and planting more trees. **Minnetonka Beach** has a policy to “restore, manage and require the restoration and management of



forests and woodlands on public property. [...] Large trees shall not be removed from any parks, public open space, or public right-of ways unless approved by the City Council” (Minnetonka Beach, 50). The city of **Oakdale** will “[c]onserve, restore, and augment natural resources, including native and indigenous trees and grasses to support wildlife habitat, clean air, and water quality” (Oakdale, 93). **White Bear Township** plans to “[e]ncourage cluster developments, particularly in those areas that contain significant natural features, especially wetlands, slopes, and trees. Particular attention will be given to preserving the combinations of steep slopes with trees. Proposals for removal of trees will to be considered only if accompanied by a proposed planting plan” (White Bear Township, 28).

Increasing Use of Native Plant Species

Suburban communities are also looking to increase and encourage use of plant species that are native to Minnesota. To promote native plants among residents, **Lilydale** will “[w]ork with local volunteer organizations who are interested in native plant restoration, invasive species control, and water management issues” (Lilydale, 54). **Eden Prairie** has a goal to “[e]xpand conversion of turf grass to native landscaping on City property and continue to provide residential incentives for native landscaping to decrease irrigation, mitigate soil erosion, and enhance environmental preservation” (Eden Prairie, 31). A policy of **Shakopee** is to “[e]ncourage native, drought resistant, edible and pollinator friendly landscapes on park properties” (Shakopee, 331).

Open Spaces Provide Recreation Opportunities

Consistent with the Metro-wide theme above, there are specific examples of suburban communities seeing open spaces as a place to provide recreation opportunities. In **Spring Lake Park**, the city “will support programs to maintain and restore the resource value of natural areas and enhance water based recreational opportunities” (Spring Lake Park, 154). **Vadnais Heights** notes that the “existing forested areas and open spaces in Vadnais Heights are an asset to the City, providing shelter and allowing for recreational use” (Vadnais Heights, 35).

Rural

Rural communities focus on two aspects of greenspace preservation: protecting and restoring wildlife habitats, and striking a balance between preservation without discouraging development.

Protecting & Restoring Wildlife Habitats

Those rural communities that include greenspace and natural resource preservation are looking to protect and restore wildlife habitats in their communities. A policy of **Inver Grove Heights** is to “establish, maintain or restore natural conservation areas for wildlife management and educational and scientific purposes” (Inver Grove Heights, 183). The city of **Scandia** will “[e]ncourage connections to high quality natural areas through natural corridors on private land in order to allow for wildlife movement among habitats as part of development” (Scandia, 41).

As part of protecting wildlife habitats, many communities call out specific types of habitats, particularly wetlands. **Cologne’s** plan states that “[w]etlands are essential to healthy ecosystems. [...] These and surrounding areas will be given special consideration in development projects” (Cologne, 31). The city of



Belle Plaine will “[p]reserve and protect significant environmental features including bluffs, ravines, woodlands, watercourses, and wetlands while increasing and supporting natural resilience to a changing climate” (Belle Plaine, 6-14). **Nowthen** has a policy to “[r]estrict development on drainageways, wetlands, shoreland, floodplains, and other natural features that perform important environmental functions in their natural state” (Nowthen, 32).

Balancing Preservation & Development

Consistent with the overall approach above, rural communities are using their comprehensive plan policies to strike a balance between preserving natural areas while still encouraging development. **Nowthen** plans to “[r]egulate new development and the expansion of existing activities to prevent impacts to environmentally sensitive areas” (Nowthen, 31). **Rogers’** plan states that “[w]hether new development, or rebuilding and reinvesting in previously developed areas, the City shall encourage building and site efficiency and sustainable construction goals that protect and restore natural areas, and use them as amenities for the development” (Rogers, 145). **Corcoran** will provide “[s]upport of rural residential development in non-urbanized Corcoran in a manner that preserves efficient, future urbanization and protects natural resources while allowing current economic benefit to landowners” (Corcoran, 11).