

Comprehensive Park and Trail System



INDEPENDENCE, MINNESOTA



COMPREHENSIVE PARK AND TRAIL SYSTEM
INDEPENDENCE, MINNESOTA

CREDITS

The Independence Park and Trail System Plan has developed over a period from October 1991 to November 1992, and represents a coordinated effort between all participants.

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APPROVAL PROCESS

October 14, 1991	Introduction/Public Input
November 7, 1991	Presentation/Workshop with Parks Commission - Demographics, Existing Facilities, Survey/Public Demonstrated Needs Input
January 9, 1992	Presentation/Workshop with Parks Commission - Policy Plan, Park Framework, Trails
February 6, 1992	Presentation/Workshop with Parks Commission/Public - Joint Use Concept, R.O.W./Easements, Park Framework
April 2, 1992	Presented inventory of school district facilities, miscellaneous text corrections and discussion of Park Framework
April 21, 1992	Presentation of plan to Planning Commission
July 9, 1992	Discussion of Park Framework, refocus orientation
August 25, 1992	Present plan & issue analysis to City Council
October 1, 1992	Public hearing, held by Parks Commission
November 24, 1992	Plan approval by City Council

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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION AND PROJECTIONS

According to the 1990 census, the population of Independence in 1990 was 2822. This is a growth of 7% since 1980 (population 2640). There are 925 households with an average of 3.04 persons/household.

There are many methods that could be used to determine future growth projections. All are imperfect. However, using a combination of methods will provide a range of potential growth that may be close to realistic. The chart "Population Projections" shows three projections for the year 2000. The lowest is a straight line projection, i.e., it assumes Independence will grow by exactly the same number of people in the next decade as it did in the last decade, or about 6%. The second and mid-point projection is taken from the Independence Comprehensive Plan. The third and highest projection assumes that the number of residential building permits issued per each year of the next decade will be the same issued the last few years, i.e. about 25/year. This would create a growth of about 29%.

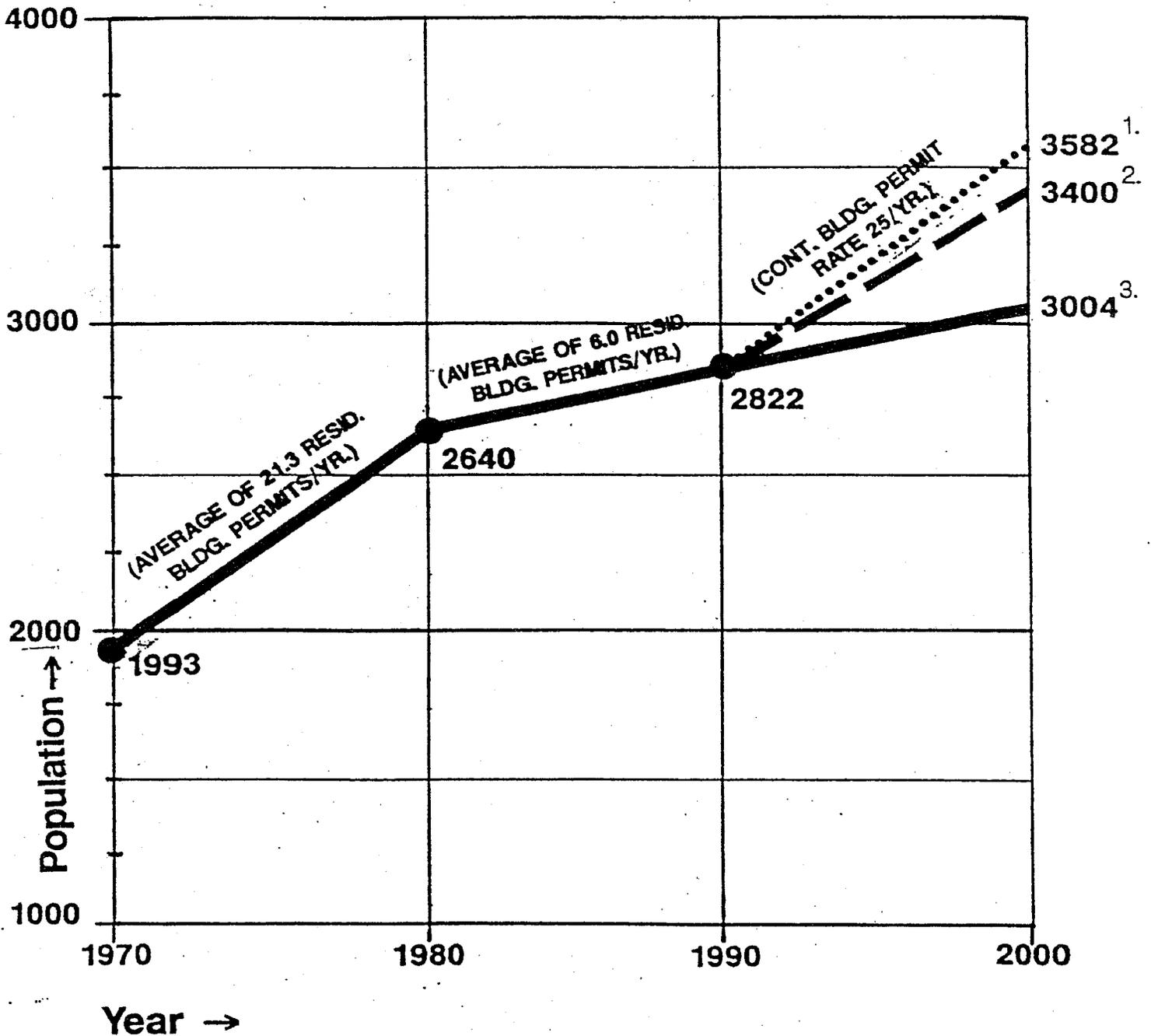
From these three projections, the population of Independence in the year 2000 will probably be in the range of 3000 to 3600. (See Population Projections, Page 7).

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Analysis of addresses/square mile (See 1990 Population Distribution, Page 8, and Population Concentrations, Page 9).

1. Only a slight difference between east and west, with greater density on the east.
2. Fairly random pattern throughout city.
3. 5 population concentrations (77% of total population).
 - a. Lake Sarah 20% (May experience substantial growth due to existing platted, unbuilt lots).
 - b. Central 22%
 - c. South East 14%
 - d. Lyndale/Kuntz Drive 11%
 - e. Nelson/Copeland Road 10%

Sanitary sewer improvements and corresponding residential development in the Lake Sarah area may increase that area to single largest population area.



1. Based on continuous building permit rate of 25/year and average household size of 3.04
2. Based on Independence Comprehensive Plan
3. Based on same growth as 1980-1990



POPULATION PROJECTIONS

COMPREHENSIVE PARK & TRAIL SYSTEM

Westwood

Greenfield

C

Franklin Twp.

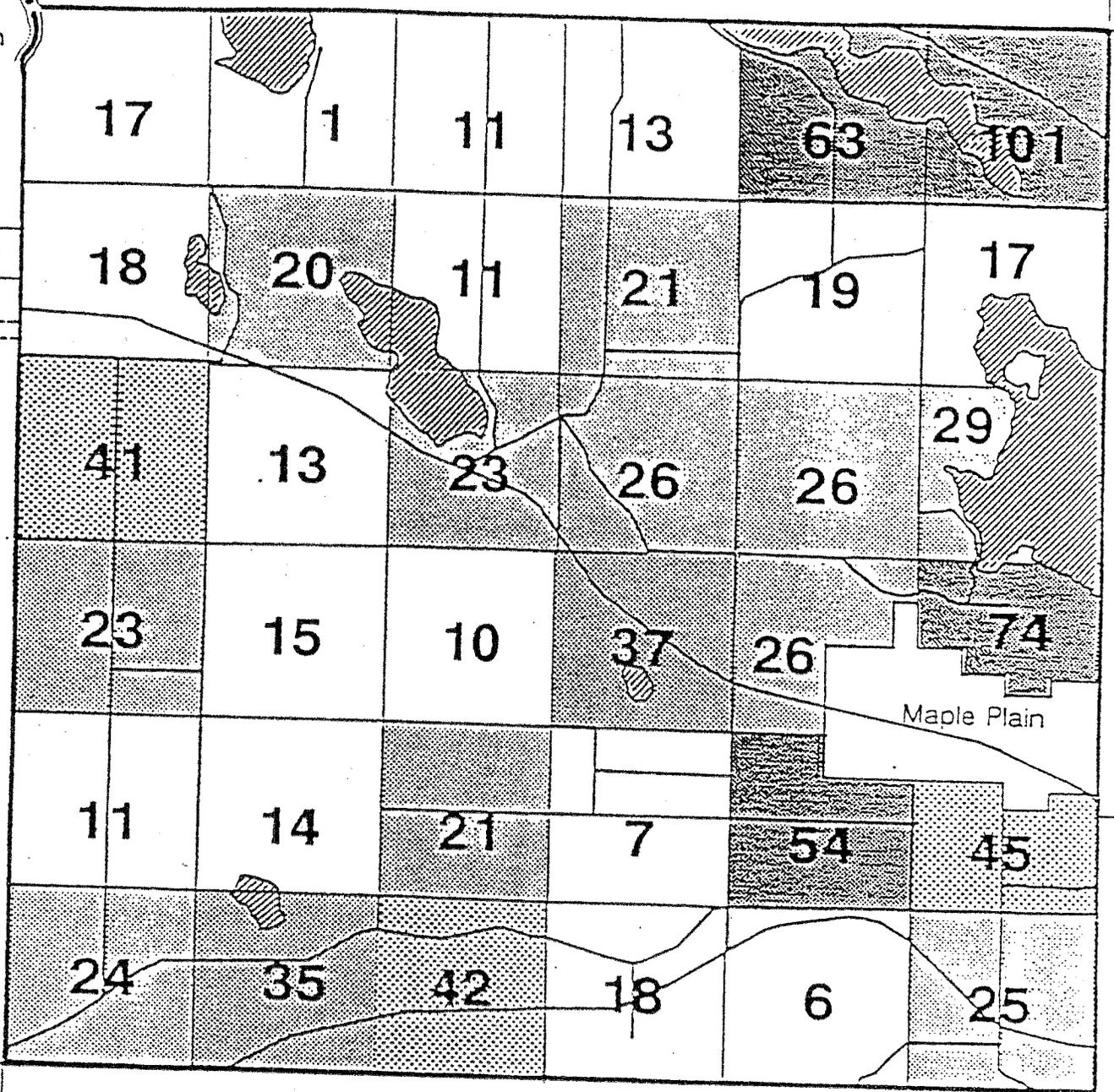
Delano

Franklin Twp.

Maple Plain

Watertown Twp.

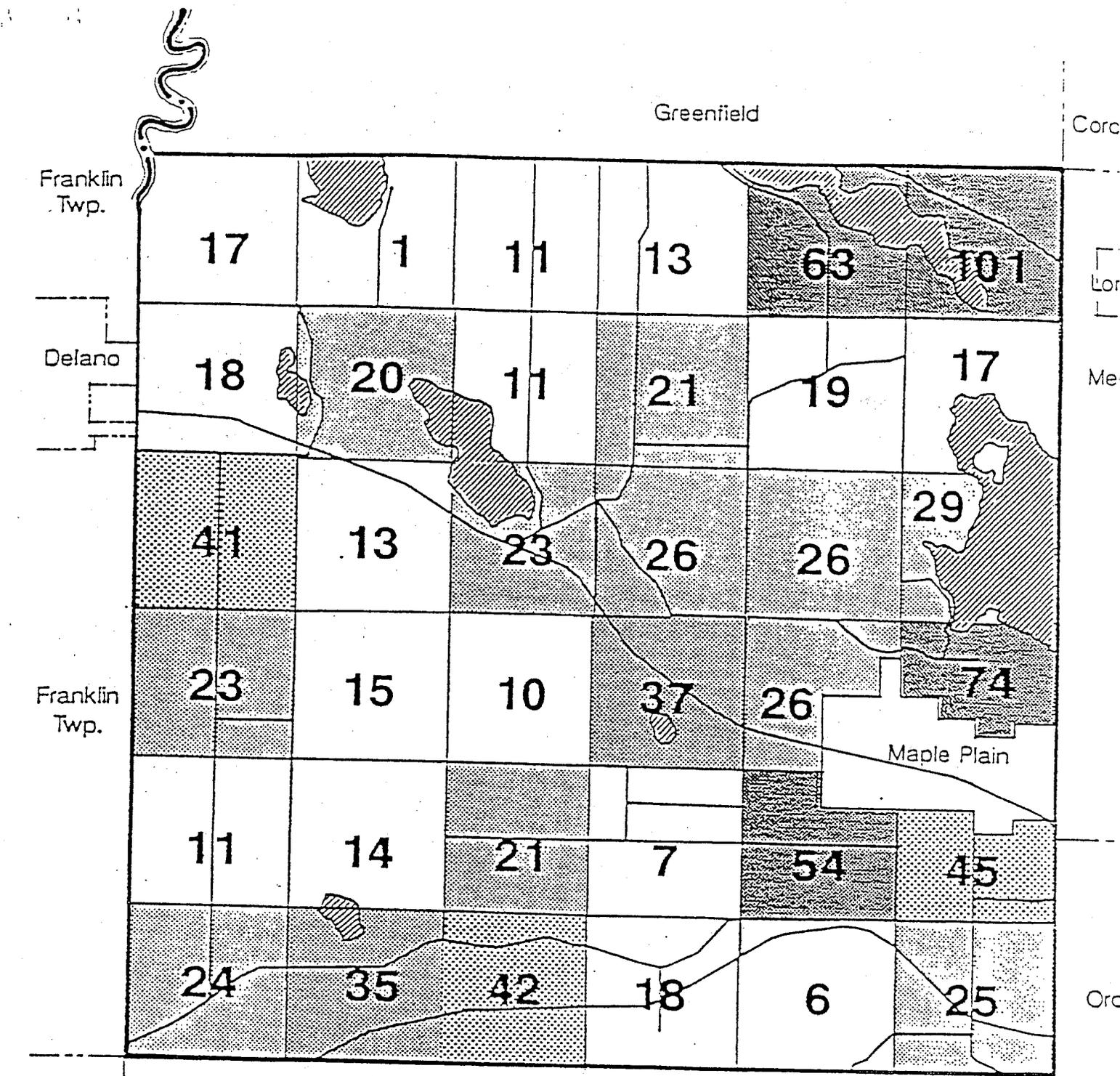
Minnetrista



KEY: Addresses/Sq. Mi.

	50+		20-29
	40-49		0-19
	30-39		





KEY: Addresses/Sq. Mi.

	50+		20-29
	40-49		0-19
	30-39		



1990 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

COMPREHENSIVE PARK & TRAIL SYSTEM

Westwood

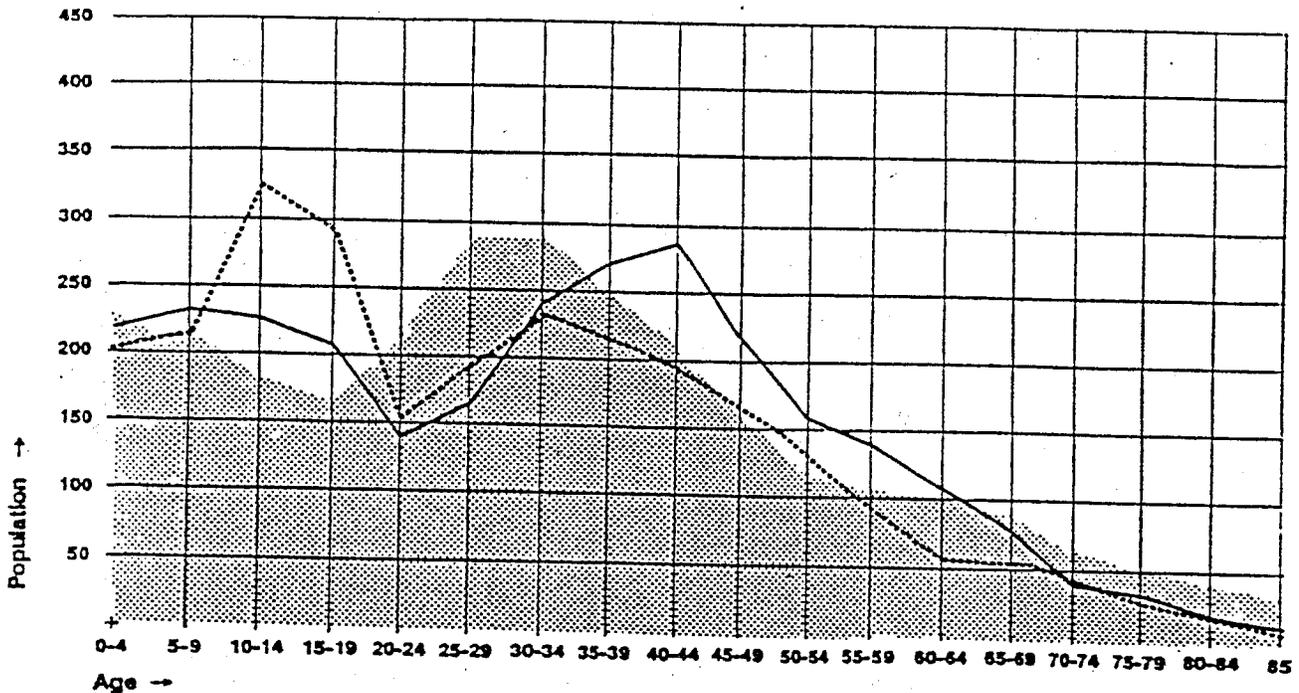
AGE DISTRIBUTION

Analysis of 1980-1990, and Metro area Age Distribution (See Age Distribution, Page 11).

1. Large drop in youth population - (post high school age individuals leaving the area) and smaller families.
2. Large growth in adults between 35-54 (immigration of new home buyer).
3. Little change in over 55 population (modest losses due to mortality or outmigration).

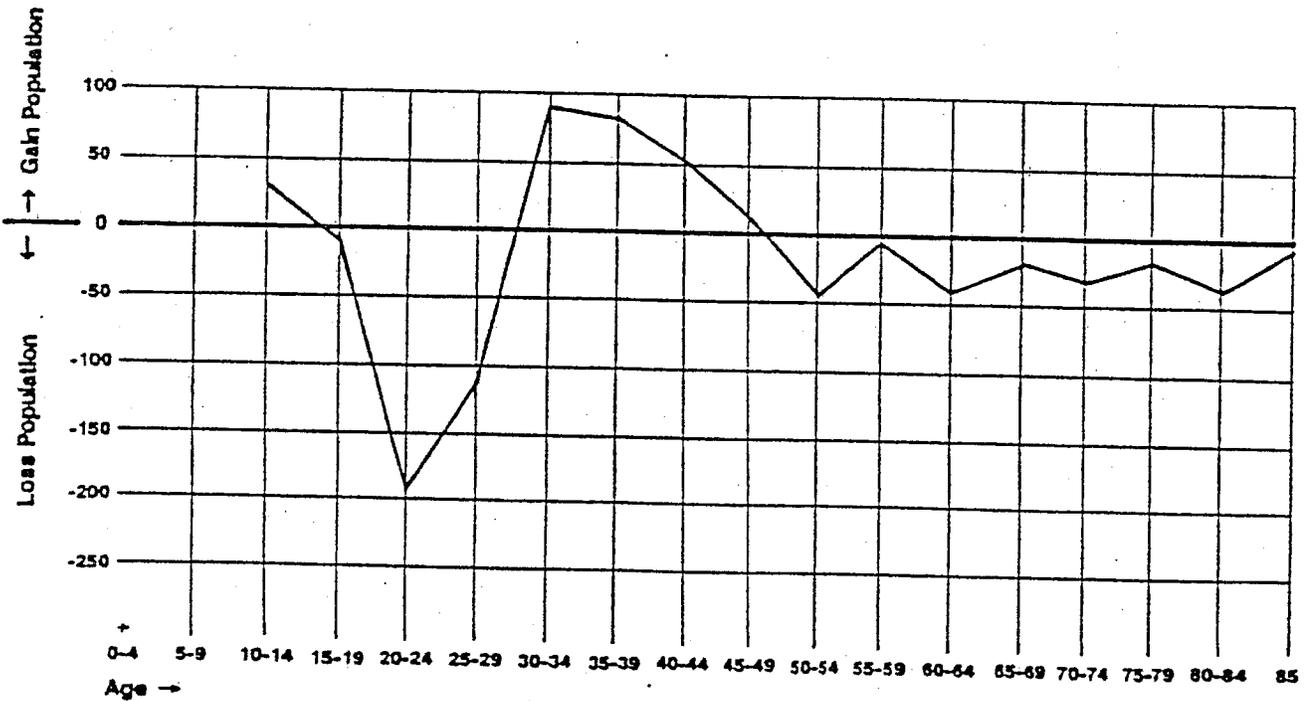
Based on the 1990 census of the Metro area, breaking age groups by percentage, and comparing them to Independence, there are slightly more children in the Independence profile and the mature population has a profile that is older than the metro area in general.

1. There is a larger percentage of children 0-19 in Independence as compared to the metro area.
2. Independence has a larger population of adults peaking at 45, whereas the metro area has a similar peak of adults 10 years younger.



AGE DISTRIBUTION COMPARISON

- Independence 1980 (Actual)
- Independence 1990 (Actual)
- ▨ Metro Area 1990 (Percentage proportional)



1990 INDEPENDENCE POPULATION CHANGE BY AGE GROUP COMPARED TO 1980 POPULATION CORRECTED FOR AGING



AGE DISTRIBUTION

COMPREHENSIVE PARK & TRAIL SYSTEM

INVENTORY

PARKLAND

Existing municipal park land within Independence consists of Lyndale Park, a small park with play equipment and some open space. A portion of Lake Rebecca Regional Park Reserve is within the Independence limits.

Maple Plain, a small city surrounded by Independence on the south, west and east, has four park sites - Rainbow Park (fully developed neighborhood park), Pioneer Park (BMX track), Bryantwood Park (play equipment and open space) and Northside Park (ballfields).

Park sites outside of Independence, but currently used by Independence residents are City Park in Delano, Loretto Playfield and Lions Park in Loretto, and Morris T. Baker Regional Park Reserve. (See existing Park Site and Recreation Facilities graphic, page 13).

SCHOOL SITES

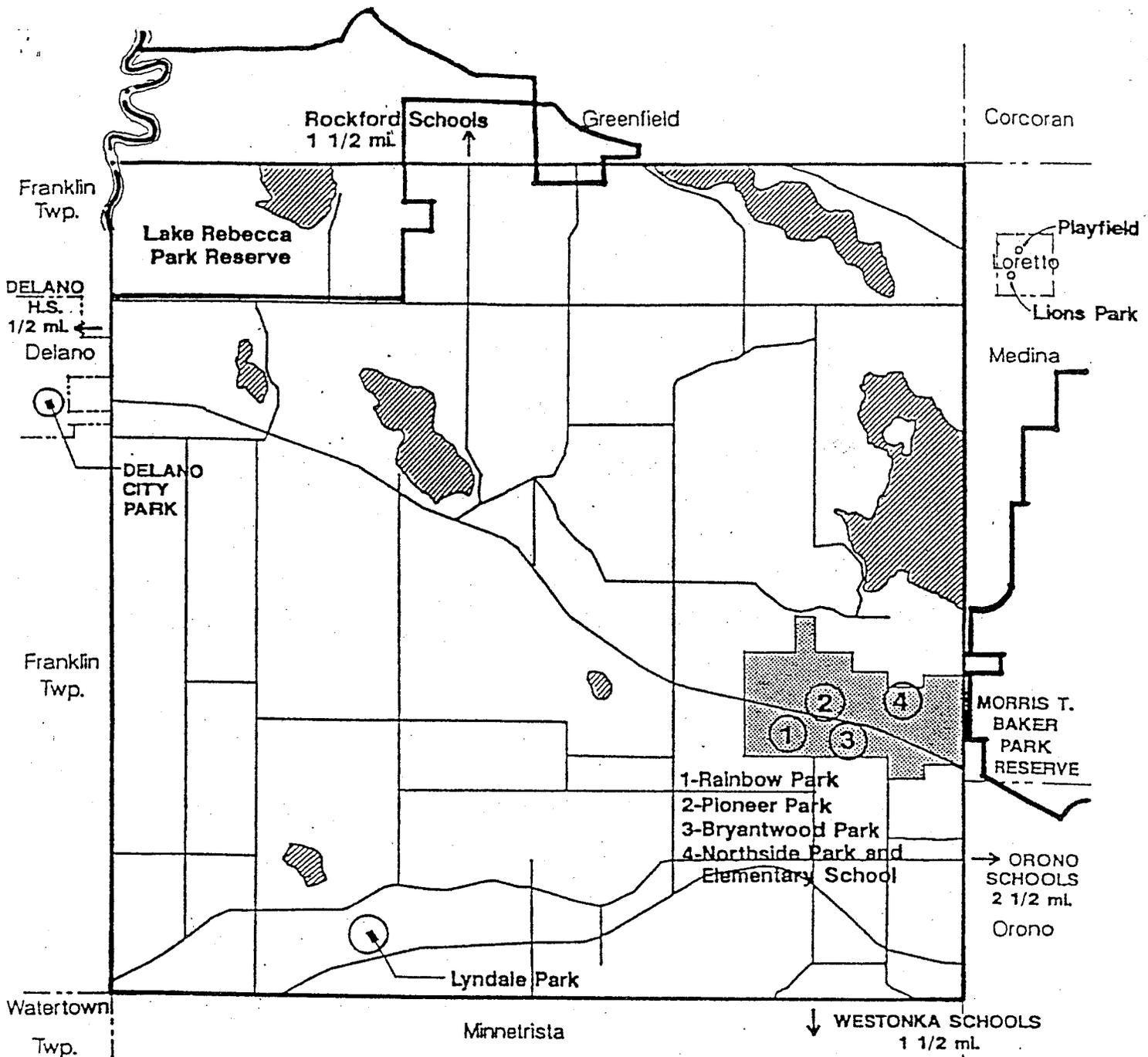
The City of Independence fall within four school districts. There are no school sites in Independence. With the exception of an elementary school in Maple Plan, the schools sites attended by Independence residents are 1/2 to 2-1/2 miles from the Independence City limits in Minnetrista, Orono, Rockford and Delano. (See School District Recreation Facilities graphic, page 14).

BUILT FACILITIES

Developed municipal park facilities within Independence consist of play equipment at Lyndale Park.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

The City of Independence provides no recreation programming. It has contributed to the Orono School District Community Education Program, the City of Delano Summer Recreation Program and the Loretto Athletic Association. Residents of Independence also participate in programs sponsored by the school districts and athletic associations.



Facilities within Independence: play equipment (Lyndale Park), campground and trails (Lake Rebecca Regional Park Reserve)

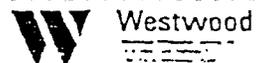
Facilities in Maple Plain: tennis courts, basketball court, volleyball court, picnic shelter, 1-ball field (2), play equipment (2), warming house, ice rink, horseshoe pits, baseball field, picnic area, softball (3), BMX track, walking paths

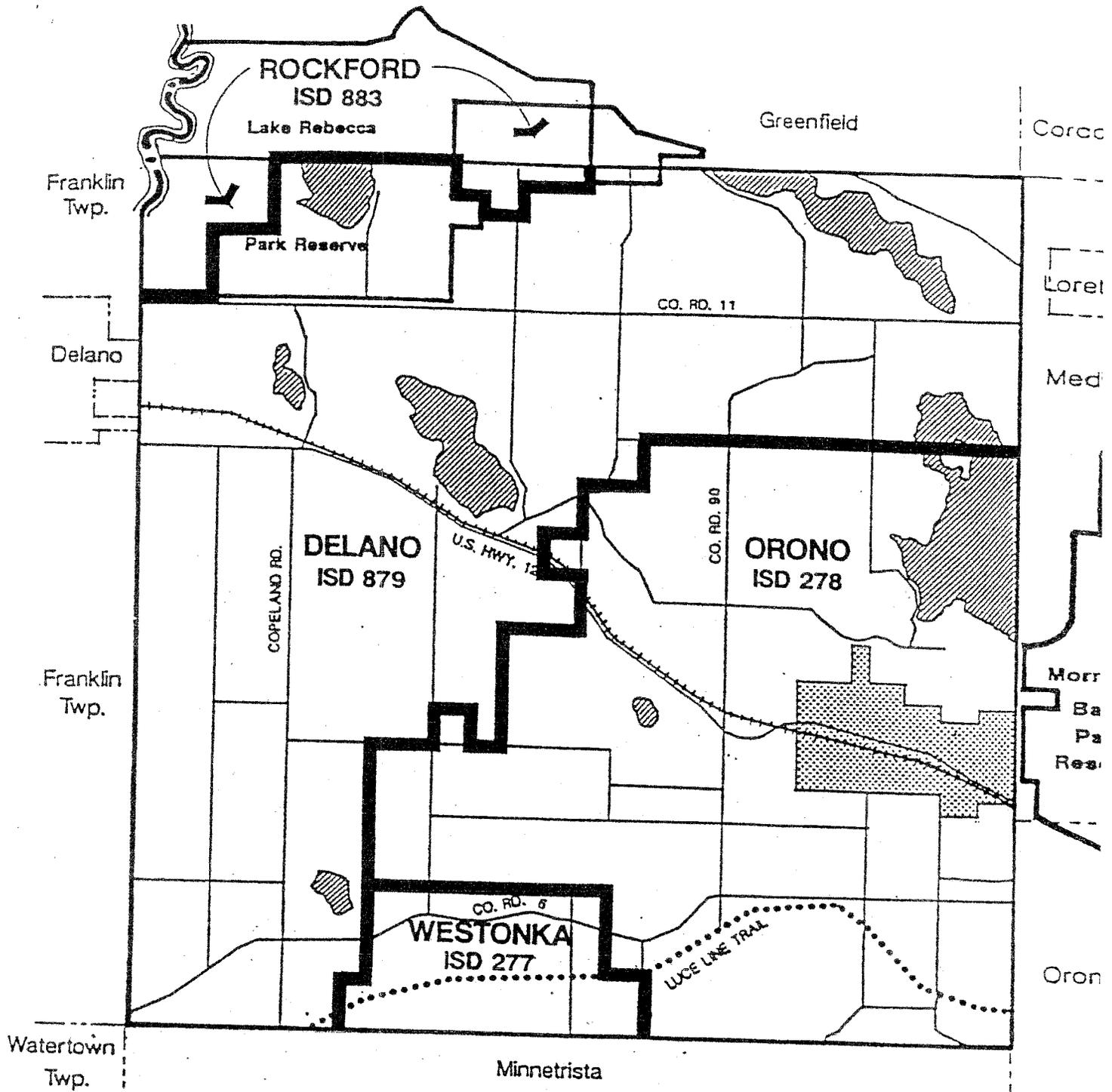
Facilities within 1/2 mile of Independence: Play equipment (4), swimming beach, boat launch, picnic area (2), campground, tennis courts (2), softball (4), baseball



EXISTING PARK SITES & RECREATION FACILITIES

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INDEPENDENCE, MINNESOTA





Delano ISD 879: 6 SOFTBALL FIELDS (4 at School, 2 Delano owned), BASEBALL (City Park), 5 TENNIS COURTS, SOCCER/FOOTBALL, HOCKEY (indoor arena), LORETTO PLAYFIELD (1 Baseball, 4 Softball) is used for tournaments.

Rockford ISD 883: 4 SOFTBALL (One joint owned with City), BASEBALL, 5 TENNIS COURTS (One City owned), 2 SOCCER/FOOTBALL, HOCKEY.

Orono ISD 278: 8 SOFTBALL (4 in Maple Plain, 1 in Long Lake, 3 at Main Campus), 2 BASEBALL, 12 TENNIS COURTS, 5 SOCCER, 4 FOOTBALL, 1 YOUTH HOCKEY, 1 HOCKEY (indoor, shared with Westonka).
Not all facilities meet State standards for official play.

Westonka ISD 277: 4 SOFTBALL, 3 BASEBALL, 9 TENNIS COURTS, 5 SOCCER/FOOTBALL, 4 HOCKEY (1 Indoor, shared with Orono).

SURVEY/PUBLIC INPUT

The citizens of Independence have recently had three opportunities to express opinions on issues relating to park, recreation and trail development in Independence 1.) the Independence Citizen Survey, 2.) Landowners Association Survey and 3.) a public information meeting held on October 14, 1991. While none of these tools can provide an exact reading of the needs of the citizens, some very general kinds of information can be obtained from using all three together.

INDEPENDENCE CITIZEN SURVEY - 1991

The survey conducted by the City of Independence in 1991 had a high return rate of 60%, which is generally considered a basis for valid results. The survey touched on several topics that are related to park, recreation and trail issues, i.e., demographics, land use, city image, recreational need, interests, desires, and personal values.

1. Demographics. Independence has a very stable population with a majority of the residents having lived in Independence for over 10 years and planning to stay in Independence for over 10 years.
2. Land Use. The two types of land use that most residents want to see more of are single family homes and commercial/retail businesses. Most respondents (46%) wanted the amount of parks and recreation areas to remain the same. 31% wanted more and 23% wanted less park and recreation areas.
3. City Image/Identity. Most residents know that they don't want Independence to be a mature, fully developed suburb or a modern, outstate, regional center. The response on the desired image was quite undefined, although 45% felt Independence "should remain rural and agricultural, as it is today."
4. Recreational Need. 50% of the residents do not feel that more recreational opportunities are needed in Independence. 31% do feel the need for more opportunities.
5. Recreational Interests. When asked about participation in recreational activities, the top five activities were walking, wildlife observation, bicycling, picnicking, and cross-country skiing.
6. Recreational Desires. When asked to rank specific activities that they would like to see improved, over 50% of the respondents listed bicycling, wildlife observation, walking, and neighborhood playgrounds.
7. Personal Values. The citizens of Independence place a high value on environmental protection. 77% place a higher priority on environmental protection than on expanded economic development. The top five ranked

values were 1.) clean air, water, soil, 2.) preservation of rural atmosphere, open spaces, 3.) good neighbors, 4.) access to good emergency services, 5.) attractive, neat buildings and structures. Access to parks and recreation areas was ranked sixth.

LANDOWNER SURVEY

The return rate of the Landowner Survey was 9%; however, of the responses that were received, some comments can be made. The survey addressed a broad range of issues (roads, Highway 12, City Hall) beyond parks and recreational facilities. However, within that context a ranking of most desirable recreational facilities would be:

1. Wildlife viewing (45%)
2. Bike-Hike trails (27.5%)
3. Horse trails (26.2%)
4. Picnic & lakeshore areas (23.7% each)
5. Cross-country ski trails (22.5%)
6. Sledding (20%)
7. Ice skating (16.2%)
8. Snowmobile trails (15%)
9. Ballfields (13.7%)

PUBLIC HEARING INPUT

On October 14, 1991, the citizens were asked for their comments on issues relating to park, recreation and trail system planning in Independence. The comments fell mainly into two categories: 1) Recreation needs, and 2) methods of fulfilling recreation need. An interpretation of these comments could be as follows:

In general, the citizens are satisfied with the level (amount) of park, recreation and trail facilities that exist. Improved biking conditions would be desirable along specific roads and to specific destinations. There is a greater need for park sites in areas with small lot development.

The citizens are concerned about the methods of acquisition for park sites and trail corridors but are comfortable with letting growth and development of the City guide park and trail development.

POLICY PLAN

PARK SYSTEM

Goal:

Develop a system of economically feasible park sites and facilities that provides an adequate level and balance of recreation opportunities to the residents of Independence.

Policies:

1. Establish a park site classification system that defines the size, purpose, service area, population and facilities of the various park types, i.e., neighborhood park, community park, community playfield, etc.
2. Establish a level (quantity) of facilities based on population needs that will be provided by the City or to which the residents will have access.
3. Establish a policy plan that will guide any future park system planning decisions.
4. Establish a park and trail system framework, graphically delineating the conceptual location of park sites and trail corridors.
5. Establish a strategy that coordinates the implementation of plan elements with the City's financial resources.
6. Follow the approved park system component directives until it becomes clear that new directives are in order.

TRAIL SYSTEM

Goal:

Develop a trails system that provides safe transportation and access for the residents to parks, schools, or other destinations deemed appropriate by the city.

Policies:

1. Trails shall be created in the public right-of-way to enhance the transportation network for non-vehicular traffic.
2. Trails shall be developed where needed to create safe transportation.
3. Trails may be developed where needed to provide access to specific destinations.

4. Specific criteria for trail development shall be developed with regard to surfacing, width, corridor enhancement, etc.
5. Follow the approved trail system component directives until it becomes clear that new directives are in order.

ACQUISITION

Goal:

Acquire the land necessary to fulfill the demand for existing and anticipated recreational facilities.

Policies:

1. Land acquired for park sites and trail corridors shall be consistent with the intent of the Park and Trail System Plan with regard to location, size and character.
2. The City shall not condemn private property for purposes of park and trail land acquisition.
3. The City shall rely heavily on its park dedication ordinance to acquire land for parks and trail purposes as development occurs.
4. Trails shall be established in land which preferably already is public right of way or is being dedicated or purchased by the City. Temporary trail corridors may be acquired by lease or easement.
5. Land acquisition for park and trail purposes may occur prior to demonstrated need in accordance with the plan.

DEVELOPMENT

Goal:

Develop the facilities necessary to meet the existing recreational demand of the residents of Independence.

Policies:

1. Development of recreational facilities shall be consistent with the Park and Trail System Plan with regard to facility type, location, size, timing, etc.
2. Development of recreational facilities shall not occur prior to demonstrated need.

COOPERATIVE USE

Goal:

Maximize the available recreational opportunities by sharing recreational facilities with neighboring cities and school districts.

Policies:

1. The City shall be open to shared use development and/or maintenance with neighboring cities.
2. The City shall be open to shared use development and/or maintenance with area school districts.
3. Any arrangement of shared facilities shall be to the mutual advantage of the parties involved.
4. Where feasible, park land and new school sites shall be adjacent to allow for greater efficiency of facility layout.

ENVIRONMENT

Goal:

Preserve and enhance the natural environment of Independence.

Policies:

1. Where park sites or trails are located in the vicinity of an environmentally sensitive area, the development shall be designed and constructed to have the minimum physical impact.
2. The City shall not use dedication to acquire land that can be protected or preserved by other methods (outlot, DNR regulations, local ordinance, developer agreements) such as shorelands, wetlands, steep slopes, flood plains, and tree lots.

SAFETY

Goal:

Develop a park and trail system that is safe for Independence residents to utilize and enjoy.

Policies:

1. All park facilities and trails shall be constructed to conform to the accepted level of safety standards.
2. All park facilities and trails shall be maintained in good repair.
3. If the City receives notice of a dangerous condition related to the park facilities or trails, including defects or illegal use of the facilities by others, it shall attempt to remedy the problem within a reasonable time.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Goal:

Develop ongoing communication with and involvement by the community about issues related to parks and trails planning, acquisition and development.

Policies:

1. The City Parks Plan and Comprehensive Plan shall be in alignment.
2. The Park and Trail System Plan shall be readily available to the residents for review and comment.
3. The residents shall be encouraged to attend park commission meetings.
4. Information on upcoming park and trail activities shall appear in the local newspaper and/or other city-wide publications.
5. Plans for new parks or trails shall be publicly reviewed prior to adoption.

MAINTENANCE

Goal:

Develop a park and trail system that is efficient to maintain.

Policies:

1. The planning and design of all park sites and trail corridors shall be reviewed with regard to ease of maintenance.
2. Adequate staff shall be maintained to handle the maintenance of park and trail facilities.
3. Where possible, the City shall encourage maintenance of park sites by volunteers.

ECONOMIC

Goal:

Develop a park and trail system that is economical to acquire, construct, and maintain.

Policies:

1. Cost effective methods of acquisition shall be considered when selecting a park site or trail route.
2. Cost effective methods of construction shall be considered when evaluating the design and location of a park facility and trail.
3. Cost effective methods of maintenance shall be considered when evaluating the design and location of a park facility and trail.
4. All policies (1-3 above) must be balanced against human (non-financial) policies such as accessibility, aesthetics, safety, etc.

PARK SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

A park classification system is a tool used to give definition to various types of parks. It provides a community with a method for applying a variety of park uses in a balanced, equitable fashion. The proposed system for Independence is based on the Metropolitan Council's Park Classification System, but is modified to allow for local attitudes and characteristics. The classification system defines parks in terms of uses, service area, service population, size, site character, and location. The following system is proposed for Independence:

Community Park

Community parks provide passive recreation based on natural site amenities such as a lake or wooded area. The intensity of use varies from nature interpretation to swimming beaches and picnic areas; but in all conditions some use is intended. (This can be compared to outlots or private open space sites where no human uses are encouraged and support services are intentionally omitted.) Associated within a community park may be some local recreational opportunities (play equipment, etc.) or some facilities which are not oriented toward the natural resource but which do support other activities in the park. A typical example would be where a small ballfield is provided in support of large group use of a picnic area.

Community Athletic Field

Community athletic fields provide competition level facilities for programmable recreation on a multi-neighborhood or city-wide basis. Because the users of the facilities may come from beyond a walking range, parking areas and toilets are necessary. These sites should be totally usable and be easily graded into playable gradients. The facilities typically included at a community athletic field could include combinations of the following: softball fields, baseball field, soccer or football fields, multiple tennis courts, and hockey plus skating rinks. These sites should have direct access to a major thoroughfare. The size can be from 10 to many more acres, with the larger sites usually being more desirable because support facilities are most economically added and tournament type competition can be scheduled at a larger site. A Community Athletic Field Concept is illustrated on page 25.

Neighborhood Park

These are park sites designed primarily for local recreational activities on a park service area basis. Neighborhood parks are the basic unit in the park system and will be the most common type of park found. Facilities provided in the basic neighborhood park are a 250' x 250' open field game area, paved hard courts games area and trails, play equipment facilities for preschool and elementary age children, parking, and a passive or natural area. Optional facilities which may be found here are: improved ballfields, soccer fields,

tennis courts, hockey and skating rinks. Because neighborhood parks are not intended to service a whole community but rather individual neighborhoods, the geographic distribution of neighborhood parks is important. There are two approaches used to define service areas. Service areas in individual communities can be based on maximum service area radius or population density.

On the following page, a "model" neighborhood park is illustrated. In actual application, the parcel shape, size, adjacent uses, topography and local input on site planning could change the facilities and layout. Conceptually, the graphic illustrates a good general relationship between activities and the spatial requirements for a neighborhood park.

Minipark

These are park sites for local recreation which are not large enough to be a complete Neighborhood Park. The size varies, but is usually one to four acres. The minipark may either serve a smaller service area or provide only a limited number of facilities. The site must be usable for its intended purpose and is not intended to be a "catch all" classification. The typical minipark provides very limited and basic facilities such as play equipment or an open field games area. Several miniparks within a park service area could collectively be considered as a neighborhood park if each of the miniparks contained one or more of the necessary components of a complete neighborhood park. There is no requirement for miniparks, that is ideally a city would have no miniparks. They are only provided when there is a park need in an area which cannot be fulfilled in any other way. Mini parks are not normally a first choice solution.

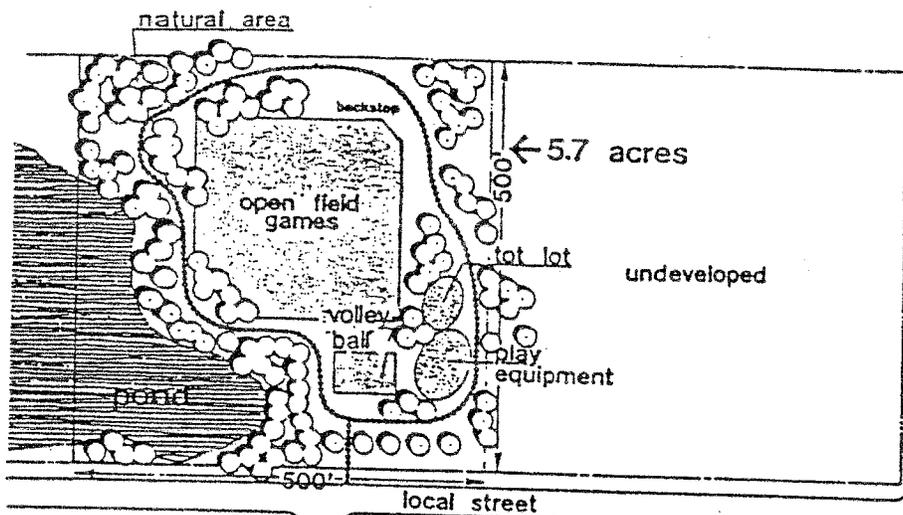
The previous classifications -- minipark, neighborhood park, community athletic field and community park -- are the backbone of a municipal park system. The following categories are optional and are only used for unusual sites that don't fit into one of the above categories.

Linear Park

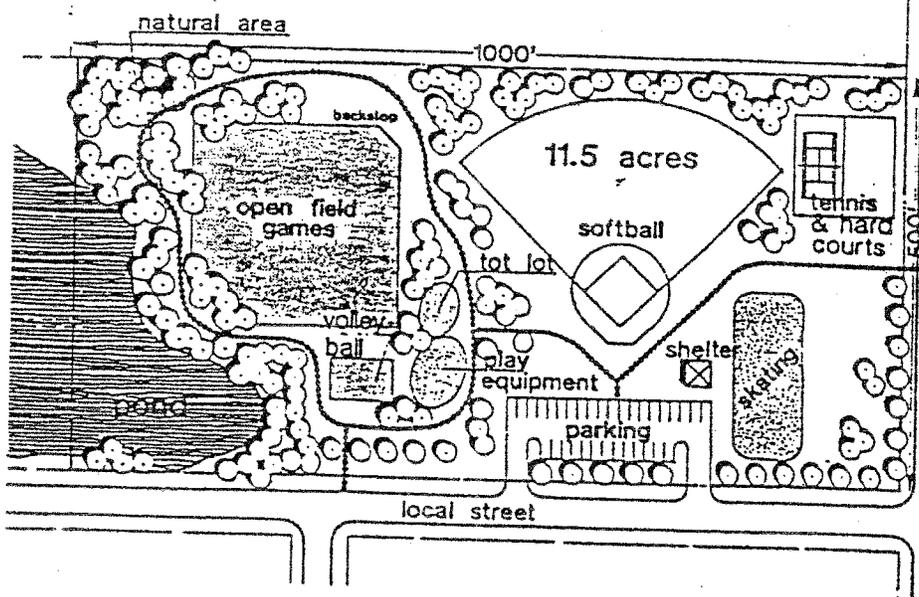
This classification should be utilized where the land parcel is acquired for the specific purpose of accommodating some type of trail experience, especially if the width of the corridor substantially exceeds the immediate needs of the trail function and includes natural amenities.

Special Use Site

Occasionally, as the community develops its park system, an unusual or unique facility will be built at a site which specifically serves only that purpose. These types of park sites can best be termed "special use" sites. There are no standards or requirements on special use sites except that they are a community-wide resource. Possible facilities which might be classified as such are: boat access or fishing on lakeshores, a swimming pool site, ice arena, or any other singular and special facility.

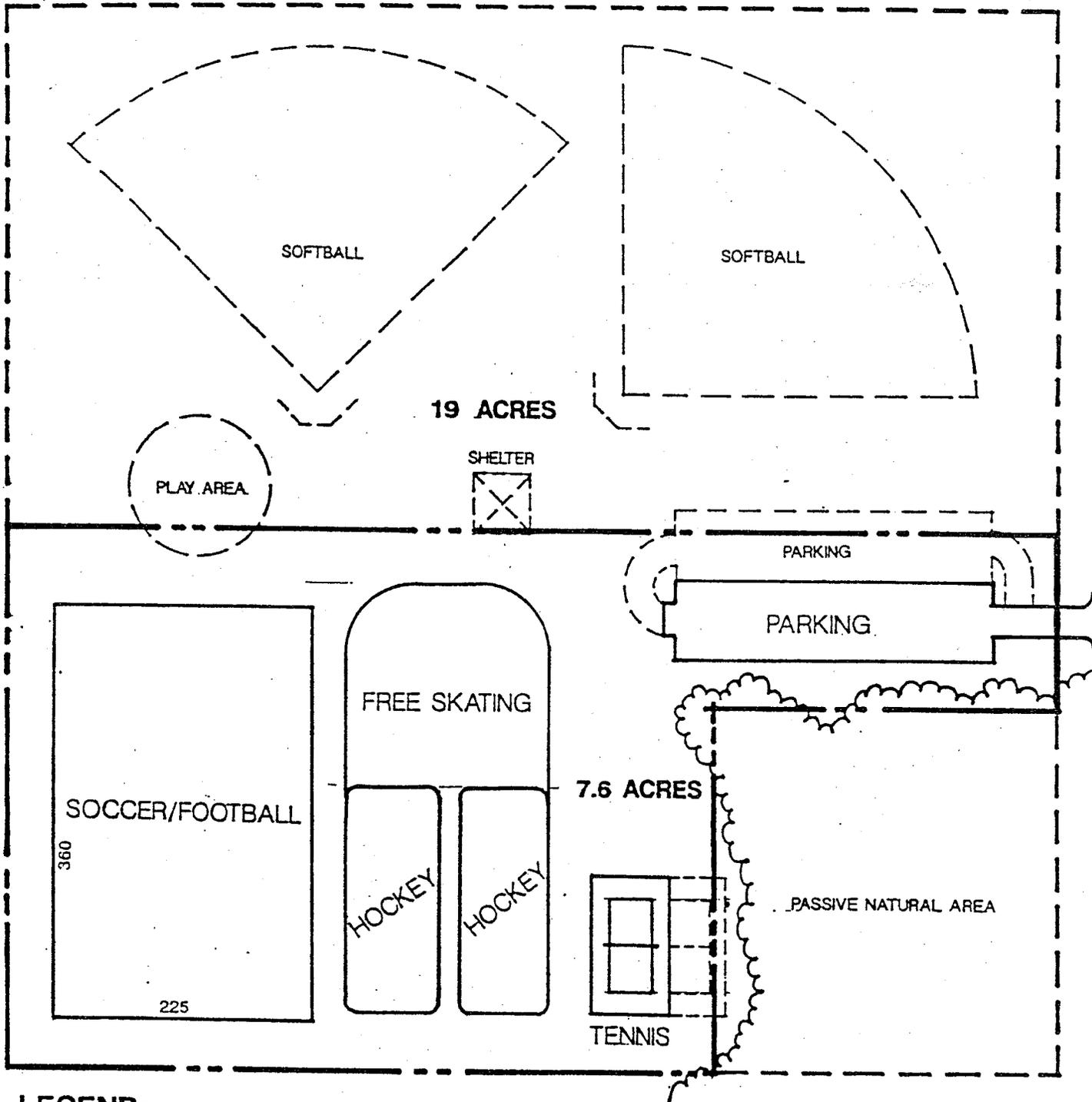


basic
neighborhood
park



basic
neighborhood
park
plus
optional
elements





LEGEND:

- Land needed to fulfill demand for 2000 (8 acres)
- - - - - Land for potential future expansion (19 acres total)



COMMUNITY ATHLETIC FIELD CONCEPT

Historic Park

While the City has not designated any historic sites, the potential certainly is present. A special search might be undertaken to identify the sites of greatest significance and acquisition should be considered to protect the resource if necessary. Possible (nonspecific) sites worthy of preservation would be:

1. Any Indian mound or area of pre-settler activity.
2. The site of old homesites where foundations, hedgerows, wells, windmills, etc., may still be evident.
3. Any intact building (home or business) which represents a restorable example of early Minnesota architecture.
4. Any location of historic significance because of an activity which occurred there.

Historic park designation can be used as a secondary classification when that seems more appropriate. Certain existing park sites, of historic significance and at some future date, could be given a secondary classification as "historic" when special historic monumentation were provided.

RECREATION STANDARDS

Recreation standards mean the development of numerical ratios between facilities and population. Once a standard has been created, it is a helpful planning tool because one can measure the community's need for the various activities based on population characteristics. They are of special value in reviewing the impacts that occur as populations change and as a method to compare and evaluate the delivery of services within several communities. Some standards are not comparable between communities because of basic differences in the level of quality implied. Also, the standards should not be considered as permanent ratios, often they change accidentally or intentionally with time as the communities continue to evolve.

The following standards are typical for communities in the metro area (Maple Grove, Lakeville, Eagan) and are noted only as a point of information. These standards are used by the park planner.

STANDARDS FOR SELECTED RECREATION ACTIVITIES

SCHEDULED SOFTBALL FIELDS: 1 field per 2000 residents

BASEBALL FIELDS: 1 field per 5000 residents

TENNIS COURTS: 1 (single) court per 2000 residents

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3. Any intact building (home of business) which represents a restorable example of early Minnesota architecture.
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Historic park designation can be used as a secondary classification when that seems more appropriate. Certain existing park sites, of historic significance and at some future date, could be given a secondary classification as "historic" when special historic monumentation were provided.

RECREATION STANDARDS

Recreation standards mean the development of numerical ratios between facilities and population. Once a standard has been created, it is a helpful planning tool because one can measure the community's need for the various activities based on population characteristics. They are of special value in reviewing the impacts that occur as populations change and as a method to compare and evaluate the delivery of services within several communities. Some standards are not comparable between communities because of basic differences in the level of quality implied. Also, the standards should not be considered as permanent ratios, often they change accidentally or intentionally with time as the communities continue to evolve.

The following standards are typical for communities in the metro area (Maple Grove, Lakeville, Eagan) and are noted only as a point of information. These standards are used by the park planner.

STANDARDS FOR SELECTED RECREATION ACTIVITIES

SCHEDULED SOFTBALL FIELDS: 1 field per 2000 residents

BASEBALL FIELDS: 1 field per 5000 residents

TENNIS COURTS: 1 (single) court per 2000 residents

S.C.O.R.P.

The Statewide Comprehensive Plan for Outdoor Recreation (SCORP) is another resource used to determine need for park land and recreation facilities. While it is very general in nature, it does provide information regarding current recreation participation and demand, trends influencing future recreation participation and fastest growing activities.

In a very summary fashion, the top four outdoor recreation activities in which Minnesotans currently participate are 1.) walking/hiking, 2.) biking, 3.) fishing, and 4.) driving. The fastest growing activities are those in which older age classes participate, due to the changing age structure. These activities include walking/hiking, golfing and nature study/observation.

The four facilities out of 33 with the highest current demand are 1.) paved shoulders for bikes, 2.) wildlife and nature observation, 3.) walking paths, and 4.) bicycle paths and trails.

TRAILS

LUCE LINE TRAIL

The Luce Line Trail which traverses southern Independence is a state-owned corridor developed for trail use by pedestrians, bicycles, snowmobiles, horses, cross-country skiing, and hunters (subject to local ordinance). It was purchased by the State with 50% matching federal funds. The master plan preparation and all trail development is funded totally by the State (DNR). Approximately 30 miles has been developed with limestone surface running from Plymouth west to Winsted. Another 30 miles is traversable with an unimproved surface. Future plans include paving the trail but the timing is unknown (depending on funding).

The DNR is always open to comments from residents/cities and feel they are responsive to these comments. However they do not have an official approval process, i.e., they do not apply for permits, etc. The contact people at the DNR are Dick Schmidt (475-0371) and Martha Reger (772-7935).

U.S. HIGHWAY 12

The future alignment and form of Highway 12 as it passes through Independence will have an impact on the trail routing system. The State plans to upgrade the highway to four lanes but at this time exact alignment is not known. One alternative is for the alignment to remain the same. A second alternative would route Highway 12 south of Maple Plain through Independence.

With either alignment, some form of traffic control would occur. If the existing alignment is maintained, signalized intersections would likely occur at major county roads. If the Maple Plain bypass occurs, major county roads will likely become overpasses. Trail crossings of Highway 12 are possible with either type of traffic control.

A trail parallel with Hwy. 12, in the R.O.W. corridor, has not officially been addressed at Mn/DOT, but it is "not out of the question."

TRAILS SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the proposed trail system in Independence is to create safer travel for non-motorized transportation modes. The trail system illustrated on the following page provides trails spaced approximately in a two-mile grid, i.e., an east-west trail will intersect with a north-south trail every 2 miles (or less than 3 miles at a maximum). It includes all county rights-of-way mainly due to the additional funding possibilities. The system identifies local rights-of-way necessary to fill in the 2-mile grid system.

The system proposes a trail in the Highway 12 corridor. This trail would likely be

an off-road trail (separated from the traveled road) along the upgraded Highway 12 corridor or an on-road (paved shoulder) trail along any portion of the existing alignment not a part of the new alignment.

In addition to the transportation element of the trails plan, the City of Independence should provide local access trails to special destinations such as public natural amenities, parks or other cultural features. These trails could be off-road trails which would require the acquisition of a land corridor or R.O.W. trails along local roads. The exact alignment of these local access trails will be defined as actual destinations are defined.

SYNTHESIS

Neighborhood Parks

By definition, the distribution of neighborhood parks can occur based on geographic area or population parameters. These approaches are described as follows:

1. In a dense urban community, neighborhood park service areas typically have a maximum 1/2-mile radius (or about 1 square mile area). At this size, residents can easily walk or bike to the park site.
2. The second approach defines a park service area as an area with a minimum population of 1000. Rural development averaging 1 unit/7 acres will achieve a population of 1000 in a 4 square mile area (or a radius of about 1 mile). At this size, residents will often be required to drive to the park site.

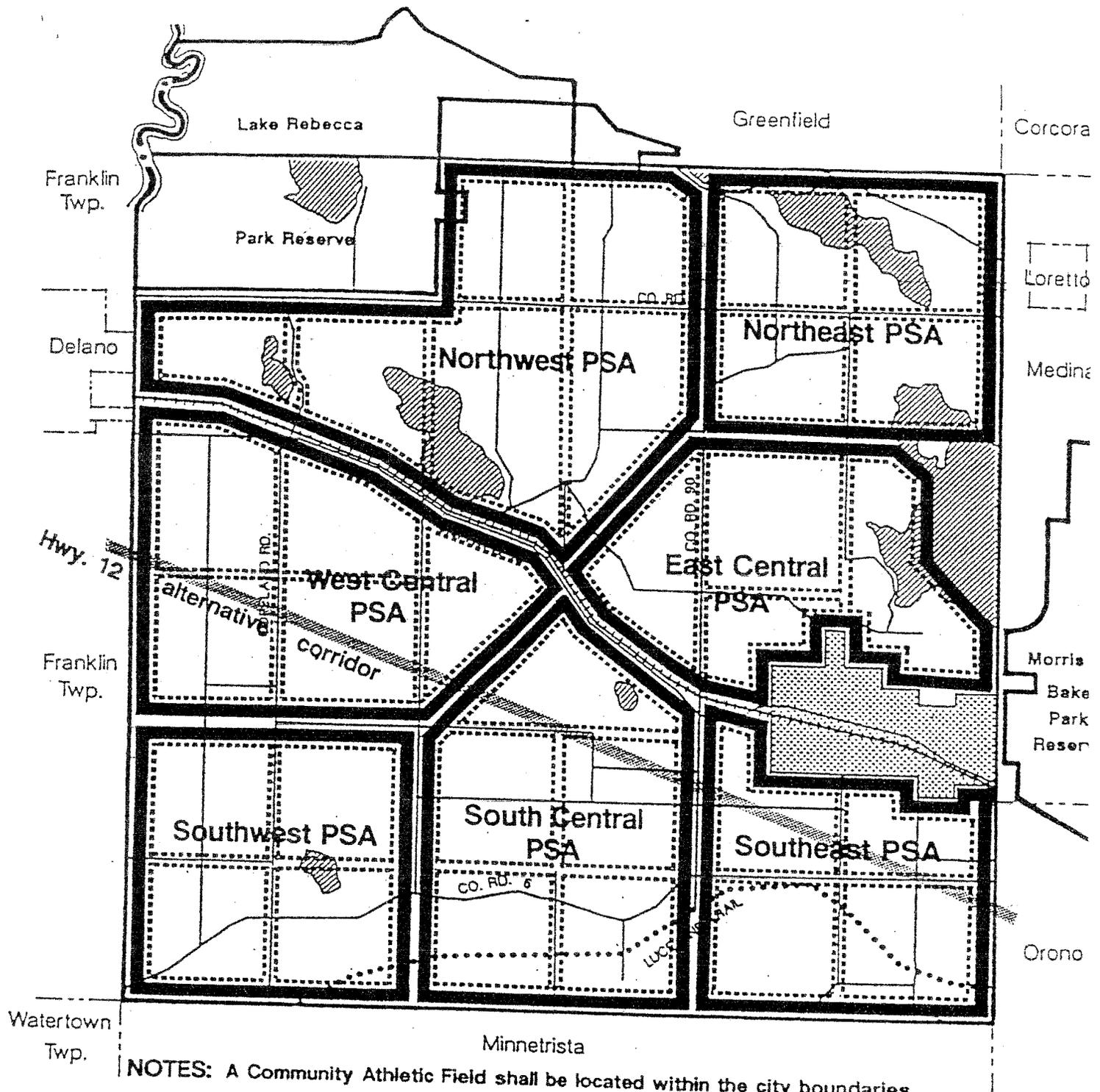
Under either approach, the timing of acquisition and development of a park site can also be tied to population growth. Acquisition of a site may not be justified until the service area has a population of 700 and development should hold off until the minimum population of 1200 is reached.

If Independence remains unsewered, population density will remain very low, so the second approach to neighborhood park service areas would be the most appropriate. Applying a 4 square mile service area system to Independence, while still respecting Highway 12/394 as a major barrier, creates seven park service areas, as illustrated on page 32.

If sewerred, Independence could reach a more urban density and the park service area would appropriately be 1 square mile. This could potentially create 32 park service areas as illustrated on page 32.

Currently no service areas have population justifying acquisition of a site. By 2000, the northeast (Lake Sarah) and east central service areas are projected to reach a population justifying acquisition of a site. No service area has a population justifying the development of a neighborhood park.

In five years (1998-1999), the City should re-examine the general attitude on neighborhood parks based on the growth characteristics of Independence.



NOTES: A Community Athletic Field shall be located within the city boundaries

Service areas reflect Hwy. 12 as a major barrier. If an alternative corridor is selected, service areas will be revised to respect the new alignment.

— 4 square mile neighborhood park service area (PSA)

..... 1 square mile neighborhood park service area



Recreation

Applying the typical standards (from page 26) against the existing population of Independence (2822) would indicate a recreation facility deficit in all categories. Given that softball and tennis have the lowest thresholds, these two activities probably have the greatest current demand in Independence. However, Independence probably can feel safe building any standard type of recreation facility, such as a softball field (300' radius) with a soccer field overlay, picnic shelter and play equipment. The identification of what type of facility to build could be a response to needs voiced by the community. Whatever and wherever a facility is built will become a source of community pride and identification and be used.

Trails

The recommended trail system for Independence consists primarily of right-of-way corridors spaced approximately in a two-mile grid that would provide safe travel for non-motorized forms of transportation (illustrated on page 34).

The improvements necessary to achieve the trail plan include primarily paved and widened shoulders with pavement markings and/or signage. It is expected that these improvements would be incorporated into the general public works roadway maintenance and improvement schedule. This is, when a roadway is scheduled for general maintenance, upkeep or reconstruction, the shoulder area will be included and become a part of the maintained or constructed area.

Immediate Goal

Based on the above analysis, the first goal of the park system is to locate a site for a community athletic field/park. The site could be 10-20 acres in size and used for athletic events as well as community events.

Cost of Immediate Goal

At this point, no resources will be spent on neighborhood parks. The trails system will be implemented as part of street improvement projects, not as a park project. The only plan elements needing park resources will be the 10-20 acre community site and any developed facilities.

Based on recent land values in Independence, the cost of land can vary widely depending upon location, platting status, amount of usable land, etc. Generally, 10 acres of land could be expected to range in cost from \$60,000 to \$100,000. It could be bought using cash from park dedication funds or acquired by the actual dedication of a site in the subdivision process. (See Park Dedication formula on page 36.) The cost of starting to develop some basic facilities can be \$25,000 to \$50,000, depending on volunteer labor, level of sophistication, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION

TOOLS

A. Grants

1. Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 is Federal legislation that will redirect federal highway funds to include facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. At this time, not much is known as to how this act will be implemented. Each state has been directed to appoint a bicycle and pedestrian coordinator in their transportation department.

According to Jonette Kreideweis and Tim Worke of the Intermodal Policy and Planning Section of Minnesota Department of Transportation, they are still studying the act. Mn/DOT is planning to host a North Star Workshop, probably in June or July of 1992, to which all "stakeholders" of the new legislation will be invited. Stakeholders will include state government agencies, counties, municipalities, environmental groups, and private business. At this workshop, the implementation of the new legislation will be discussed, i.e., how the coordination of planning, prioritizing, and funding will occur. However, because of previous commitments to projects, we probably won't experience the effects of the legislation for at least a year.

2. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program that provides matching grants (50/50) to states and localities for recreation planning and public land acquisition and the development of outdoor recreation facilities. It is administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED). The City must remember that the grant program does not provide 100% of the project cost. The local share should be readily available as should an amount equal to the grant which isn't actually paid to the City until project completion. Application for grants area due in the fall and the results are known in late winter. The criteria used to rank the applications change periodically. Proposals should be submitted to Wayne Sams, Administrator, DTED (296-2406).

3. Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR)

The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources is an organization that administers three state funds intended to assist (cost sharing) with "innovative" projects that "preserve and enhance natural resources." Projects are funded on a two-year basis and need to have a distinct

beginning and ending. LCMR will be accepting proposals again in February of 1994. The proposed Open Space System with the innovative biological corridors feature definitely meets the criteria for this type of grant.

4. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant program is a potential funding source for some types of planning and/or development of projects specifically targeted for middle and lower income persons.

Each year, communities in Hennepin County apply to the County and requesting how they would like to utilize its allocated CDBG funding for that year. Applications are typically late winter, early spring.

5. Tree Trust

The Tree Trust is a private, non-profit organization that administers job programs funded by grants from the federal government. The youth employment program which runs through the summer is a resource available to local governments or other non-profit agencies. The Tree Trust provides labor and supervision and the client provides tools and material. Projects can include tree planting, landscape maintenance, construction of retaining walls, pedestrian bridges, etc. The type of project is limited only to those requiring a minimal use of power tools. (Kids under 16 are prohibited from using power tools.) The slate of projects for a given summer are typically determined by March of that year and work requests need to occur well in advance. Requests for Tree Trust labor should be submitted to Kirk Brown, President of Tree Trust, at 920-9326.

B. Park Dedication

Independence currently has a dedication ordinance that allows for the dedication of land for public purpose during the subdivision process in accordance with the following percentages:

<u>Lot size in acres</u>	<u>Percentage of land to be dedicated</u>
0-5	10
over 5-10	8
over 10-15	6
over 15-20	4
over 20	2

The City has the option of requiring a cash distribution, in lieu of dedicated land, equal to the above percentages multiplied by the pre-subdivided value of the land.

C. Trail Development Land Acquisition Issue

Independence has a serious obstacle to municipal road, trail or utility improvements around its lack of dedicated Rights of Way. This problems make any public improvement project which extends beyond the presently "used" portion and additional use requiring landowner agreement to this additional use of land.

Historically, township roads were not on recorded easements or dedicated rights-of-way. State statutes have provisions for towns to convert these to 66' wide rights-of-way, but cities are not allowed to use this process on purely local streets. Cities typically require dedication of streets on new plats and subdivisions. Independence has a large amount of old township roads not on R.O.W. or easements, but could obtain R.O.W. on future platting and subdivision activities.

The way cities (which previously were township) obtain land improvement rights are: easement, fee simple purchase, or dedication. Independence will likely use all three methods. The applicability of these is explained here:

Easement: The verbal or written acceptance of the municipal improvement on affected land without a change of ownership to the municipality is one way of describing an easement. Whether money is or is not involved is not particularly relevant. The prescribed use (purpose for the easement) is identified and the right to make the physical improvement and encroachment established. Expanding the use (such as adding a trail) may require renegotiating the easement with owner.

Purchase/Fee Simple: The purchase process changes the ownership of affected land to the municipality in the dimensions (width) stated. Once acquired, the use of the land within is no longer subject to approvals by the abutting landowner.

Dedication: Municipalities typically require this when land is subdivided and plats approved. It allows the city to get a describable piece of land in which its uses are generally left to the city and no purchase is involved. Many cities have an approved transportation plan, classifying roads as Collectors, Arterials, etc., and the dedication width is established to match (66', 80', or 100' wide).

Independence must use all three methods. It should strive to achieve dedicated R.O.W. on future projects so that infrastructure improvements (street widening, storm drainage improvements, alignment adjustments or trail development can be accommodated without purchase expenses (to landowners or attorney fees).

STRATEGY

A. Background

An implementation strategy has been developed based on the unique characteristics of Independence, as follows:

Demographic - Independence has a population of 2822 and is expected to grow at a rate of 50 (20-70 range) people per year. The profile consists of proportionately more children than the metro average and adults which are typically ten years older than the metro average. Over half of the population lives in the eastern third of the City and, due to zoning density restrictions, the eastern third may continue to grow faster than the western two thirds.

Inventory - Independence has only one park site and no schedulable recreation facilities. Residents have participated in recreation programs coordinated by school districts and used facilities located in neighboring cities. On an area-wide basis, there is a clear demand/need for additional facilities.

B. Recommendations/Priority Ranking

1. Pursue acquisition of a Community Athletic Field/Park of at least 10 acres with potential for expansion up to 30 acres.
2. Develop athletic facilities that are critically needed currently -- probably softball and tennis.
3. In 5 years, reevaluate acquisition and development of neighborhood park sites of at least 6 acres when the populations of the park service areas reach the designated thresholds of 700 and 1200, respectively.
4. Develop trail system in conjunction with road maintenance/reconstruction schedule.

C. Conclusion

The City should now review the plan and its recommendations. After an interim period of evaluating how implementable this plan is, planning should resume to amend or finalize this plan.

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