IX. Parks, Trails, and Open Space

A. PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE

1. Parks

Baytown Township has a small park adjacent to the Community Center located at McDonald Drive and 40th Street developed by a neighborhood association, Baytown Neighbors. The park is a passive park with no active play areas. There are no county park facilities within the Township.

The existing Township park location is shown on Exhibit 22, at the end of this chapter. The Figure also shows permanent open space that was dedicated with cluster subdivisions and local historic sites.

Recognizing that many of its residents use the parks in the City of Bayport, Baytown shares some of its park dedication fees with the City. The Township will continue to provide a portion of park dedication fees to those communities in which the Township’s residents utilize the park system. This practice will continue at the Town’s discretion and as deemed appropriate by the Township.

2. Trails

There are several trails that traverse the Township. Washington County has designated bike routes along the shoulders of County Road 67 and County Road 21. The Township has also constructed a shoulder along Northbrook Avenue for use as a bike trail. Cloverdale Farm also has dedicated tracts that connect to trails in other subdivisions in the area.

The Middle St. Croix Valley Regional Trail Search Corridor travels through the Township and adjacent communities. It will connect to the Browns Creek State Trail. Washington County will lead a planning process in the future to determine the alignment of the trail within the search corridor. A second regional trail corridor, called the Central Greenway, brushes the western edge of the Township.

The proposed trail corridors are shown on the map below, provided by the Metropolitan Council. The map indicates the location of the corridors in relationship to the DNR’s St. Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) and the Bayport WMA.
At this time, there are no proposals for Township parkland acquisition or new local trails. However, the Township will encourage trail development and trail connections through the subdivision process, particularly if potential trails could connect to other local, county, or state trail systems. Further, the Township will support and participate in County or State planning efforts to create trail connections within the Township. The Township supports funding through grants, land or cash donations, or other funding opportunities which will assist in the development of regional, county, and local trail systems.

The Baytown Township Planning Commission and Board support the development of the Middle St.Croix Valley Regional Trail connection.
to the Brown’s Creek State Trail. The Planning Commission and Board noted that existing and future trails should be linked to the regional and state trails system whenever possible.

3. **Open Space and Recreational Open Space**

The Township also has two state park and open space areas that provide outdoor recreation opportunities and natural resource conservation for the public and are considered part of the regional recreation open space system.

a. **Bayport Wildlife Management Area (WMA) - Minnesota DNR**

Bayport WMA is approximately 452 acres in size consisting of two main parcels, shown on the map above. One parcel is located in Baytown Township (198 acres) and the other parcel is located adjacent to the Township’s southern border within West Lakeland Township (south of 30th Street, adjacent to Stagecoach Trail). The major emphasis of this WMA is to manage for a variety of woodland and grassland wildlife. The area consists of 72% grassland/agricultural land, 27% woodland, and a small amount of wetland.

Much of the grassland on this area is planted prairie on previously agricultural land. The area was managed as a farm by the State Department of Corrections and was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources to be managed as a WMA in 1973.

Because Bayport WMA has fine shot restrictions, it offers archery deer hunting opportunities during the firearms deer hunting season. This is a good area to go hiking and observe purple cone flowers and black-eyed susans in the planted prairie. Recreation opportunities include hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing. Hunting options include: deer, small game, forest game birds, pheasant, waterfowl, and doves. Additionally, wildlife viewing options include: wetland wildlife, prairie wildlife, and forest wildlife.

b. **St. Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area - Minnesota DNR**

The St. Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area is 148 acres of land owned by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and located approximately 0.5 mile south of Bayport on Highway 95. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources describes the area as the following:
“The St. Croix Savanna occurs along the top and side of a south-facing bluff, with views of the St. Croix River. Its slopes of loamy sand have eroded extensively, their soils now supporting an alluvial forest along the bottom. Scattered bur oak and pin oak on the open gravel prairie become increasingly dense toward the northeast and northwest, forming first an oak woodland and then an oak forest. Prescribed burning and removal of the exotic black locust has greatly enhanced the savanna. The dry savanna exhibits a significant diversity of grasses: hairy and side oats grama, needle and thread, prairie dropseed, and many others. Several species of goldenrod, sunflower, aster, and blazing star join the pasque flower, prairie gentian, coreopsis, flowering spurge, potentilla, fleabane, coneflowers, and hoary vervain in an ever-changing palette of prairie color. Rare kitten tails grow in the partial shade of bur oaks; other rare species found here include James' polanisia, Illinois tick-trefoil, and a species of pinweed. The St. Croix Savanna is the best hill prairie and oak savanna along the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Portions of the site are gifts of Ann McMannus and the estate of Hattie Miller.”

B. PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND POLICIES

i. Goal

1. Encourage the development of regional parks, trails, open space, recreation and fish and wildlife areas that are consistent with the rural character of the Township.

2. Support the development of the Middle St. Croix Valley Regional Trail and regional and local trail connections to the trail corridor.

3. Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities in the Township for the short- and long-term.

ii. Policy

1. The Township will identify opportunities to connect local trails to the regional trail system.

2. The Township will provide a portion of park dedication fees to those communities in which the Township’s residents utilize the park system, at its discretion and as deemed appropriate by the Township.

3. The Township will encourage preservation of open space and the preservation of ecologically sensitive areas, wildlife habitat, natural
resources, open spaces, and natural and scenic views through subdivision approvals.

4. The Township will support and participate in County or State planning efforts to create trail connections within the Township.

5. The Township supports funding through grants, donations, or other funding opportunities which will assist in the development of regional, county, and local trail systems.