

# Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan 2015

## Parks, Greenways and Trails System Assessment



City of Eau Claire Wisconsin

## **Parks, Greenways and Trails System Assessment**

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## **Parks, Greenways and Trails System Assessment**

This chapter of the comprehensive plan describes the existing system of parks and recreation open space, the guidelines used in evaluating the need for new or improved parks, and the estimated need for additional parks, greenways and trails to serve the growing population.

The City of Eau Claire has established itself as a community dedicated to the ideal that recreation and open space are a vital component to quality of life as evidenced by its existing system of parks illustrated by Figure 7-1. This is a community blessed with an abundance of water in the form of two major rivers and several lakes and streams. (Its name is French for “clear water.”) Although several large park spaces have been created along the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers, the greatest open space opportunity before the City is to link those locations with linear parks and trails.

Eau Claire’s park and open space areas provide outdoor settings that few cities of comparable size can match. Resources such as Half Moon Lake, Dells Pond, the Chippewa River, the Eau Claire River, and the valleys, bluffs and ridgelines provide a strong base for the system. These and other parks or school athletic fields provide the community with a variety of passive and active recreation opportunities.

This chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan* addresses both the long-term needs of the system as well as some of its short-term needs. It is based on the parks chapter of the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan* and tries to maintain some continuity with the basic direction of that plan. A more detailed description of short-term needs is included in the *City of Eau Claire 2013 to 2017 Park and Open Space Plan*.

## Major Park System Issues

The following questions should be discussed and resolved during the planning process.

1. **The Number of Full-Service Playgrounds:** Should the City reduce the number of playgrounds at which it provides a full complement of facilities and programs?
2. **New Neighborhood Parks:** Should the City continue to create a 5- to 10-acre playground in each new neighborhood (about 4,000 residents), or should there be fewer but larger playgrounds?
3. **Riverfront Parks:** How aggressive should the City be in acquiring land and/or easements to extend the park system along the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers? To what extent should the City strive to provide or require public access to the riverfront during property redevelopment? What should be the balance between public access and private control? Should additional riverfront park land be created by acquiring additional properties between the Eau Claire River and East Grand Avenue between Downtown and Boyd Park?
4. **Balance of Park Size and Type in All Areas of the City:** Should newly developed areas have the same number and distribution of small neighborhood parks as older Eau Claire neighborhood? What should the City do, if anything, to ensure that residents of older neighborhoods have the same access to large athletic fields as do the residents of new neighborhoods, and that newer neighborhoods have easy walking access to visually attractive parks?
5. **The Role of Parks in Urban Design:** Should the City make a conscious effort to use parks, greenways and parkways to enhance residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, reflect local cultural heritage and honor civic life? Should there be more gardens in the parks?
6. **Park Land Acquisition:** Is the present system of acquiring land for future parks adequate?
7. **Ecological Stewardship:** Should portions of the park system be managed for water quality, wildlife habitat, protection of sensitive features and/or natural interpretation?
8. **Swimming:** Should the City build an indoor swimming and water play center? Should this facility be built in combination with other indoor recreation desires such as a fitness training center and community meeting rooms? Should the City partner with public schools, the University or a private club to build such a facility?
9. **Skateboard Park:** Should a site devoted to skateboarding be created?
10. **Funding:** What is the best means to fund trail reconstruction, new play equipment, stadium renovations and life guards at Half Moon Beach?

## **Park Classification and Assessment System**

The lands owned by the City and the public agencies in and around Eau Claire for outdoor recreation are designed for differing purposes. Some are aimed at small children in a small geographic area (“Neighborhood Parks”) while others are intended for adult team play (“Community Park”).

Numeric guidelines for system planning have been established by a national park advocacy organization and refined by the City of Eau Claire. These guidelines suggest what would normally be desired in terms of the approximate number of acres of each type of park or the number of a particular type of facility, such as soccer fields. The need is usually expressed in terms of “per thousand residents.” The geographic area of measurement varies by type of park or facility. For example, Neighborhood Playgrounds serve only a walking distance of about ½ mile while Community Parks serve the entire city.

**These system planning guidelines are only that – guidelines.** They are a place to start and need to be adjusted depending on geographic barriers such as major roads or the desires of the groups being served. The standards do not consider factors that may be unique to a particular service area or neighborhood such as age distribution, income, type of housing, density, etc. In addition, standards do not consider the availability and quality of the natural amenities available at individual sites for its physical features. Such resources and features play a key role in determining the facilities developed at the park.

**While the numbers do not provide the answers by themselves, they are a useful comparison if used judiciously. They will be reexamined and possibly modified during the course of this planning process.**

The current classification scheme and the numeric guidelines are presented by Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages.

**Table 7-1  
Eau Claire Guidelines for Park and Recreation Open Space Planning**

|  | <b>Group Served</b>                                    | <b>Acres per 1,000 population</b>                                   | <b>Service Area</b>                | <b>Desirable Size</b>                     | <b>Location</b>   | <b>Facilities and Features</b>  |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Playlot</b>                         | Pre-school children                                    | Special facility for higher-density housing                         | 1 to 4 blocks                      | No standard. Usually less than 1/4 acre.  | High-density neighborhood that lacks private yards. Interior of residential block or housing development or in corner of neighborhood park.     | Sandbox, swings, slides, climbing structures, benches, open shelter, fences, paved and grass areas. Not considered essential in large-lot residential areas.                                    |
| <b>Neighborhood Park or Playground</b> | Neighborhood surrounding the playground (for all ages) | 2 acres per 1,000 persons depending on neighborhood characteristics | 1/2 mile radius from playgrounds   | 5 to 15 acres minimum                     | Near intensely developed areas and areas of high density. Preferably at or adjoining an elementary school. Should be accessible by pedestrians. | Play apparatus area, multi-purpose athletic field, shelter building, skating rinks, organized summer playground program offered. Quiet or passive areas and activities should also be provided. |
| <b>Community Park</b>                  | Entire community (all ages)                            | 5 acres per 1,000 residents   | Area within 20 minutes travel time | 25 acres minimum; 50+ acres desirable.    | Where appropriate sites can be obtained incorporating scenic or other natural features. Should be along collector or arterial streets.          | Active athletic areas similar to playfield but at least 1/2 should be rustic and provide picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, etc. Shelters, swimming pools and quiet passive areas desirable. |
| <b>Community Athletic Fields</b>       | Entire community (all ages)                            |   | No specific service area           | Depands on the types of fields            | A site with good road access  | Major complexes for such sports as soccer, softball, baseball, etc.   |
| <b>Special Area</b>                    | Entire community                                       | Not applicable  | No specific service area           | Depends on type of facility               | Depends on type of facility.  | Hockey rinks, swimming facilities, archery, skiing, sledding, pedestrian and bicycle trails, scenic overlooks or sites.   |
| <b>Urban Park</b>                      | All ages   | Not applicable  | Neighborhood                       | 2 acres                                   | High density neighborhood   | Seating and strolling, benches, trees, views, plaza.  |
| <b>Waterfront Park</b>                 | Entire community                                       | Not applicable  | No specific service area           | Minimum width 25 feet; no minimum length. | Along lake or river shoreline   | Bicycle and pedestrian trails, benches, look-outs, small picnic areas. Physical and visual access to the water.   |

**Table 7-2  
Current Numeric Guidelines for Park Facilities**

| <b>Outdoor Facility</b>                  | <b>Standard per 1,000 Residents</b>           | <b>Comments</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| Baseball diamonds                        | 1 per 6,000                                   | Regulation 90 feet  |
| Softball diamond (and/or youth diamonds) | 1 per 3,000                                   |   |
| Soccer fields                            | No guideline presently adopted by Eau Claire  | Some should be lighted and irrigated for maximum use.<br>Larger groups allow tournament play. |
| Tennis courts                            | 1 per 2,000                                   | Best in groups of four.   |
| Basketball courts                        | 1 per 500                                     |   |
| Hockey rinks                             | No guideline presently adopted by Eau Claire. |   |
| Skating rinks, indoor                    | 1 per 30,000                                  |   |
| Neighborhood centers                     | 1 per 10,000                                  |   |
| Community Centers                        | 1 per 50,000                                  | Could include indoor pool, gym, weights, meeting rooms.                                       |

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association and the City of Eau Claire.

## City Parks and Open Space Inventory

This section describes and itemizes the parks owned by the City of Eau Claire.

Other recreation lands are owned by the Eau Claire School District and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and those are available for public use to one degree or another. Subsequent sections describe those sites.

These facilities are categorized by type and location so that they can be compared with accepted general guidelines and judged according to neighborhood needs.

**Table 7-3  
Acreage of City, School District and University Parks and Athletic Fields**

| <b>City Parks</b>            | <b>Acres</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Neighborhood Parks           | 102          |
| Urban Parks                  | 11           |
| Community Parks              | 623          |
| Special Areas                | 166          |
| Community Athletic Fields    | 76           |
| Waterfront and Parkway Areas | 142          |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>1,120</b> |

| <b>Eau Claire School District</b> | <b>Acres</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Neighborhood School Open Space    | 80           |
| Middle and High School            | 149          |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>229</b>   |

| <b>University of Wisconsin - EC</b> | <b>Acres</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Putnam Park                         | 148          |
| Athletic Field Areas                | 57           |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>264</b>   |

**TOTAL 1,604 Acres**

As of 2014, Eau Claire owned approximately 1,111 acres of park and recreation open space which, when combined with School District and University properties, provides a total of 1,604 acres of park and open space, an increase of approximately 500 acres since 1993. This growth is attributable, in large part, to the acquisition of land for three major community parks, Northwest, Otter Creek and Kyes, the acquisition and development of the Eau Claire Soccer Fields (located on East Hamilton Avenue) and the addition of land for Domer Park and the Eau Claire River Waterfront Open Space.

A list of the City’s facilities by functional classification is provided in Tables 7-4 through 7-9. Figures 7-1 through 7-4 illustrate the location of those sites. Finally, Appendix A identifies the specific types of facilities that are provided at each site.

**Table 7-4  
Neighborhood Parks**

| <b>Name</b>      | <b>Acreage</b> |
|------------------|----------------|
| Boyd             | 7              |
| Buffington       | 12             |
| Cameron          | 3              |
| County Farm      | 10             |
| Demmler          | 4              |
| Grover Heights   | 9              |
| Kessler          | 2              |
| Lakeshore        | 3              |
| McDonough        | 10             |
| Mitscher         | 3              |
| Newell           | 3              |
| North Riverfront | 2              |
| Oakwood Hills    | 5              |
| Pinehurst        | 5              |
| Princeton Valley | 3              |
| Sundet           | 5              |
| Westridge        | 8              |
| Zephyr Hill      | 5              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>102</b>     |

**Table 7-5  
Urban Parks**

| <b>Name</b>              | <b>Acreage</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Jaycette                 | 2              |
| Randall Park             | 3              |
| State Street / MacArthur | 1              |
| University Park          | 1              |
| Wilson Park              | 2              |
| Wold Court               | 2              |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>11</b>      |

**Table 7-6  
Community Parks**

| <b>Name</b>       | <b>Acreage</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Carson Park       | 121            |
| Fairfax Park      | 74             |
| Keyes Park        | 103            |
| Mount Simon       | 72             |
| NW Community Park | 109            |
| Otter Creek       | 61             |
| Owen Park         | 17             |
| Phoenix Park      | 9              |
| Riverview Park    | 28             |
| Rod and Gun Park  | 29             |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>623</b>     |

**Table 7-7  
Special Areas**

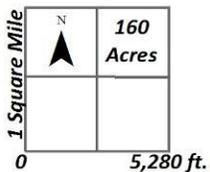
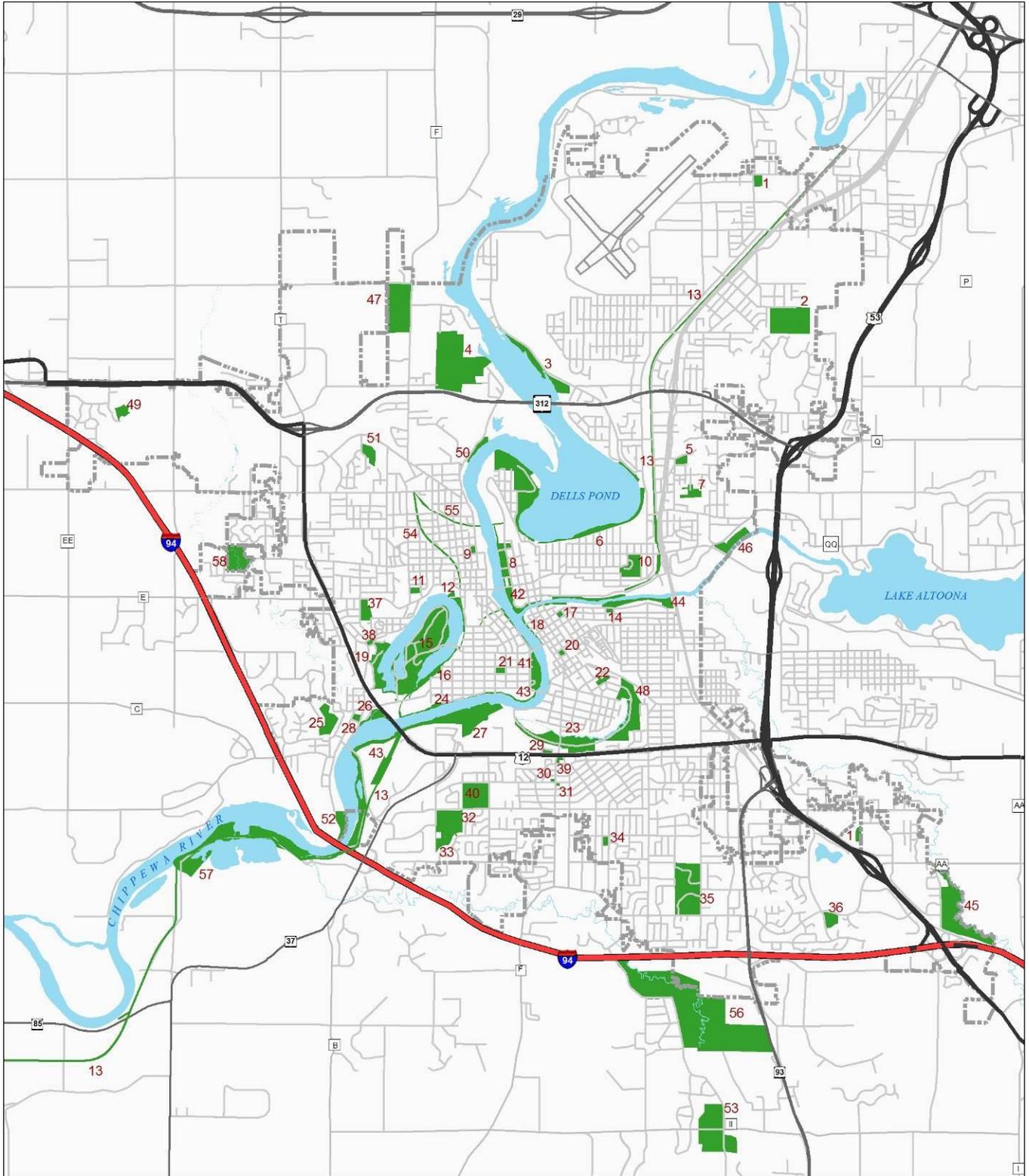
| <b>Name</b>               | <b>Acreage</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Archery Park              | 8              |
| Dog Park                  | 9              |
| Domer Park                | 6              |
| Ferry Street              | 12             |
| Forest Street             | 17             |
| Half Moon Beach & Bayview | 4              |
| Hobb's Landing            | 2              |
| Kappus Park               | 4              |
| Kessler Hockey Bowl       | 2              |
| Mount Tom                 | 20             |
| Pinehurst                 | 54             |
| Putnam Heights Fields     | 5              |
| Shale Pit                 | 11             |
| Veterans Park             | 7              |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>157</b>     |

**Table 7-8  
Community Athletic Fields**

| <b>Name</b>                 | <b>Acreage</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Eau Claire Soccer Park      | 36             |
| Jeffers Road Athletic Field | 40             |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>76</b>      |

**Table 7-9**  
**Waterfront and Parkway Areas**

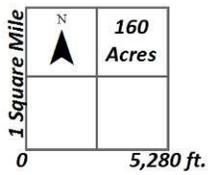
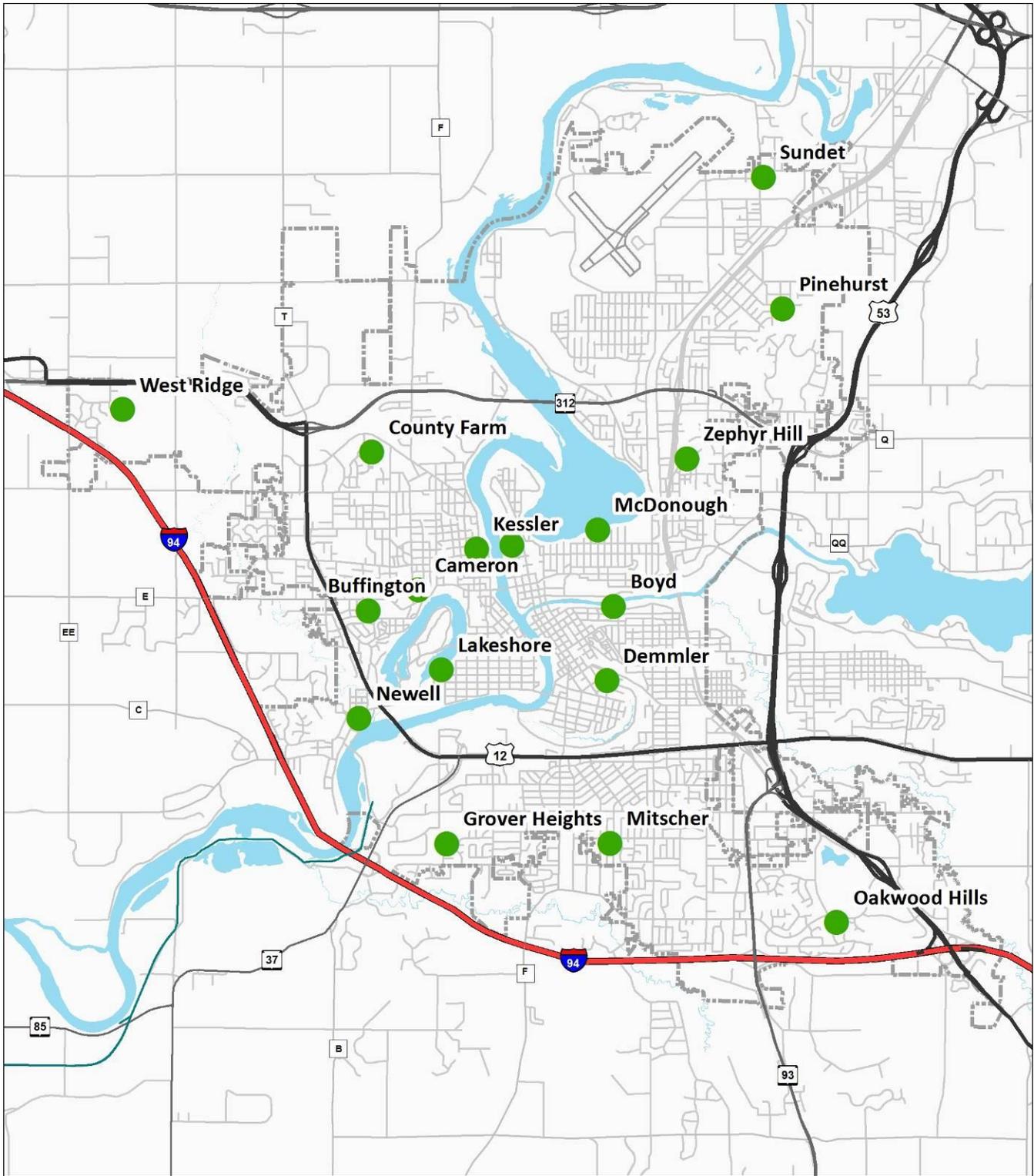
| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Acreage</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Thorpe Drive  | 1              |
| Graham Ave. (E. Lake to E. Grand)                                 | 1              |
| Graham Ave. (E. Grand to Eau Claire Street)                       | 1              |
| Farmers Store Park  | 0.2            |
| Library (Farwell to Dewey)  | 0.2            |
| Chamber Building  | 0.3            |
| NW Corner of Half Moon Lake                                       | 2.1            |
| SE Shoreline of Dells Pond  | 8.0            |
| SW Shoreline of Dells Pond  | 14.1           |
| EC River (Boyd Park to Archery Park)                              | 7.2            |
| EC River / Trail – north side (N. Dewey to Eddy Street)           | 36.9           |
| EC River – south side (S. Dewey to S-Bridge)                      | 2.5            |
| EC River – shoreline upriver of River Prairie Drive               | 5.2            |
| Old Wells Rd. (Folsom to North Crossing)                          | 1.3            |
| West Side RR (Cameron to Folsom)                                  | 11.5           |
| First Avenue (Fulton to W. Grand)                                 | 3.0            |
| First Avenue (W. Grand to W. Lake)                                | 1.2            |
| Trail System – Chippewa River (Water St. to Clairemont Avenue)    | 9.7            |
| Trail System (Clairemont Ave. to S City Limits)                   | 21.8           |
| Trail System – east side Half Moon (Menomonie to Cameron Streets) | 14.0           |
| Trail System (Whipple to 1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue)                  | 1.6            |
| Market St. (7 <sup>th</sup> Ave. to 9 <sup>th</sup> Avenue)       | 2              |
| Trail System (Hobb's Landing to RR Bridge to Dairy Queen)         | 6              |
| Trail System (Clairemont Ave. to S City Limits)                   | 22             |
| Trail System (Menomonie St. to Lake Street)                       | 11             |
| Trail System (Lake St. to Cameron Street)                         | 4              |
| Trail System (Whipple to 1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue)                  | 2              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>143</b>     |



**Figure 7-1**  
**Parks System**  
**2014**

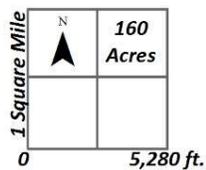
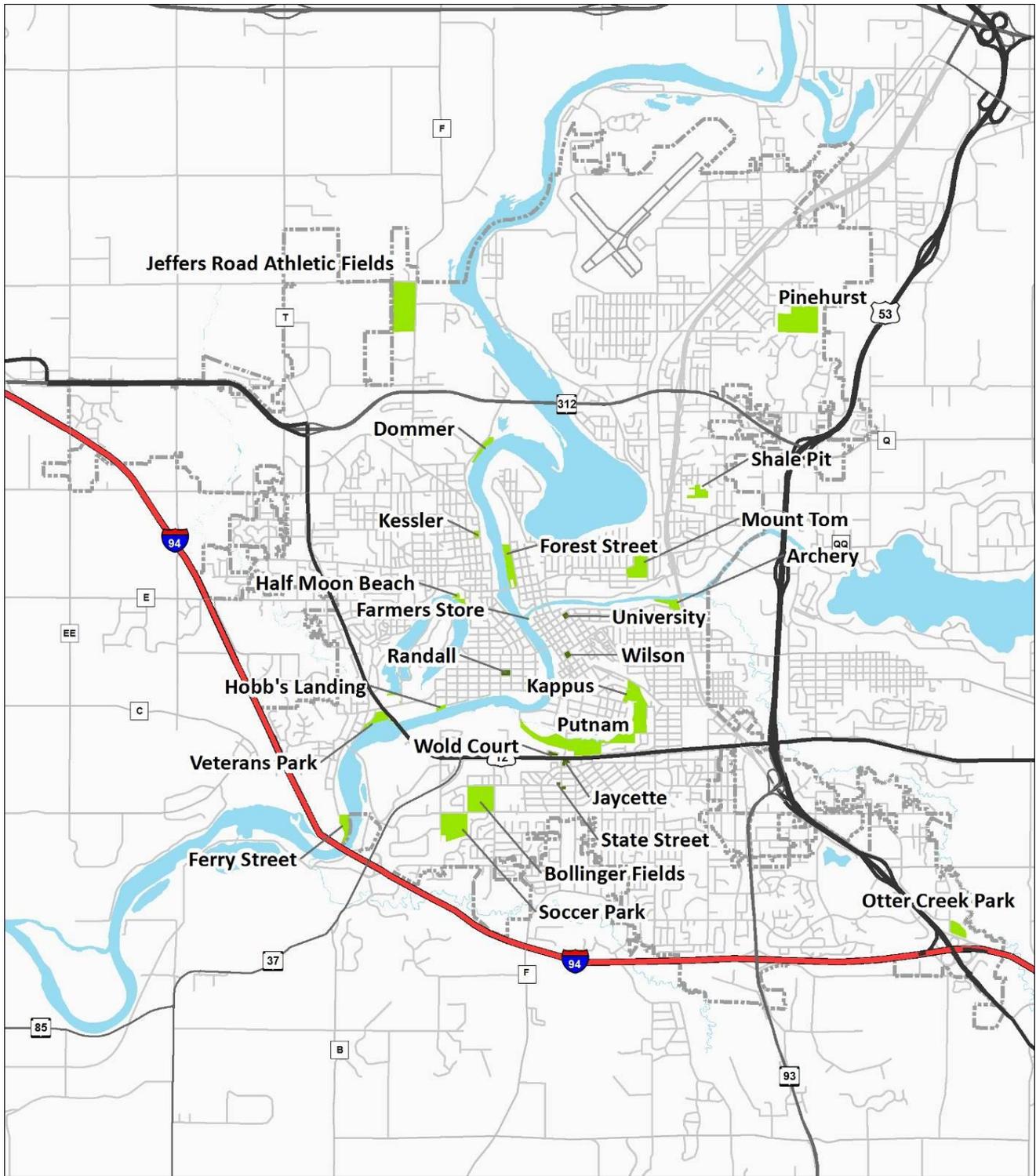
**Table 7-10  
Parks and Trail System, 2014**

|    |                                    |    |  |
|----|------------------------------------|----|--|
| 1  | Sundet Park                        | 30 | State Street Park - NW                   |
| 2  | Pinehurst Park and Recreation Area | 31 | State Street Park – SE                   |
| 3  | Riverview Park                     | 32 | Eau Claire Soccer Park                   |
| 4  | Northwest Community Park           | 33 | Grover Heights Park                      |
| 5  | Zephyr Hill Park                   | 34 | Mitscher Park                            |
| 6  | McDonough Park                     | 35 | Fairfax Community Park                   |
| 7  | Shale Pit Special Area             | 36 | Oakwood Hills Park                       |
| 8  | Forest Street Park                 | 37 | Buffington Park                          |
| 9  | Kessler Park                       | 38 | Buffington Drive Open Space              |
| 10 | Mount Tom Park                     | 39 | Jaycette Park                            |
| 11 | Cameron Park                       | 40 | U-W Bollinger Fields                     |
| 12 | Half Moon Beach                    | 41 | Owen Park                                |
| 13 | Chippewa Valley State Trail        | 42 | Phoenix Park                             |
| 14 | Boyd Park                          | 43 | Chippewa Valley State Trail              |
| 15 | Carson Park                        | 44 | Archery Park                             |
| 16 | Lakeshore Park                     | 45 | Southeast Community Park                 |
| 17 | University Park                    | 46 | Upper Eau Claire River Open Space        |
| 18 | Haymarket Open Space               | 47 | Jeffers Road Fields                      |
| 19 | Rod and Gun Park                   | 48 | Kappus Park                              |
| 20 | Wilson Park                        | 49 | Westridge Playground                     |
| 21 | Randall Park                       | 50 | Domer Park                               |
| 22 | Demmler Park                       | 51 | County Farm Playground                   |
| 23 | Putnam Park                        | 52 | Ferry Street Open Space                  |
| 24 | Hobbs Arena                        | 53 | Kyes Community Park                      |
| 25 | Mt. Washington Ski Jump            | 54 | Half Moon Lake to Roosevelt School Trail |
| 26 | Veterans Park                      | 55 | High Bridge to Roosevelt School Trail    |
| 27 | U-W Arboretum                      | 56 | Lowes Creek County Park                  |
| 28 | Newell Park                        | 57 | DNR Trail Open Space                     |
| 29 | Wold Court                         |    |  |



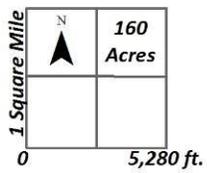
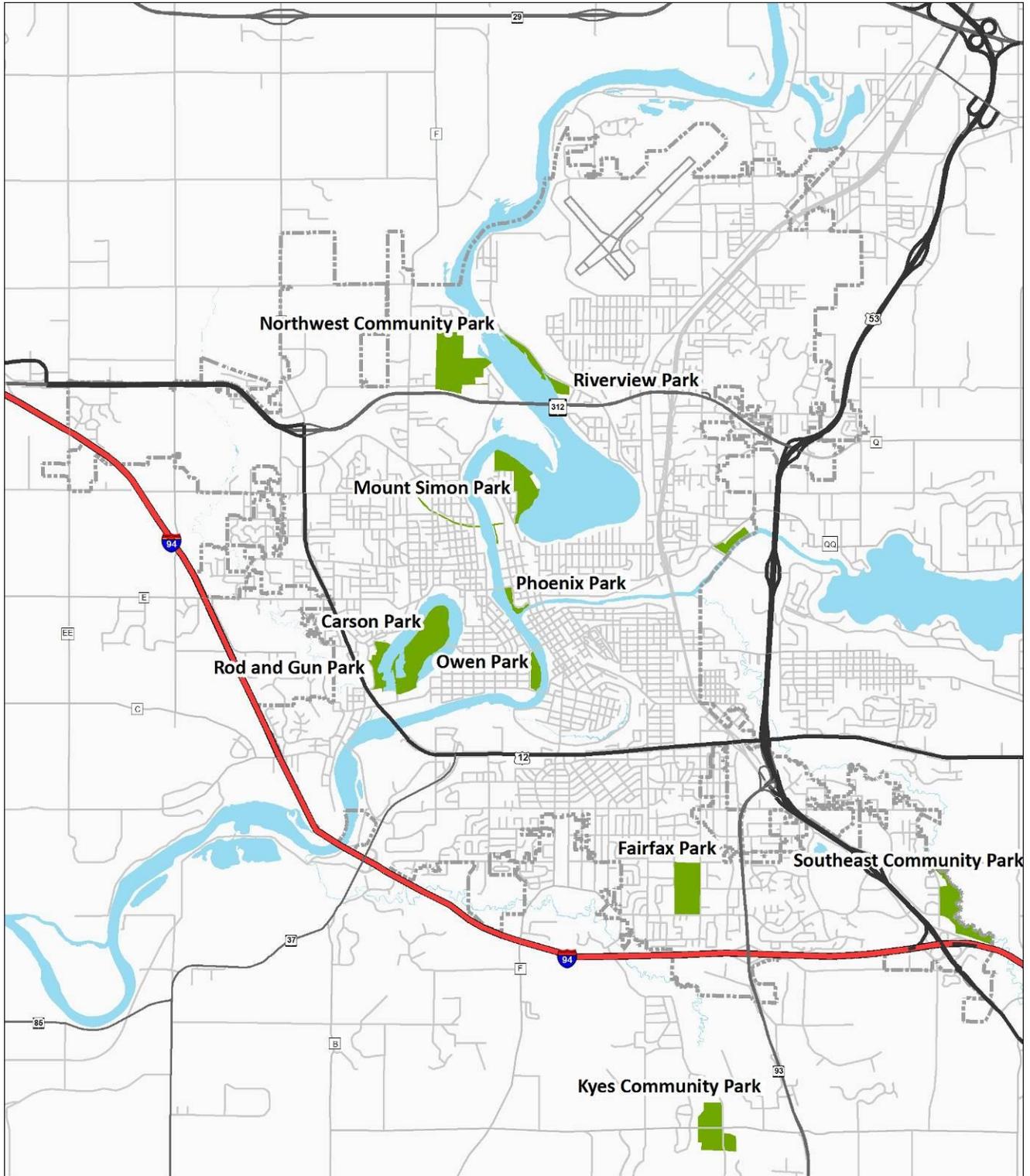
● City Sites

Figure 7-2  
Neighborhood  
Parks, 2014



- Neighborhood Park
- Special Area

*Figure 7-3  
Special Areas  
and Urban Parks*



**Figure 7-4**  
**Community Parks**

## City and State Multi-Use Trails

Closely related to the linear parks along the rivers are the City's off-road paved bicycling and walking paths, which is depicted by Figure 7-5, Existing and Planned Trails. With 31 miles of off-road paths built and more planned, Eau Claire has an impressive trail system for a city of its size.

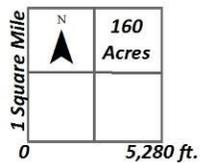
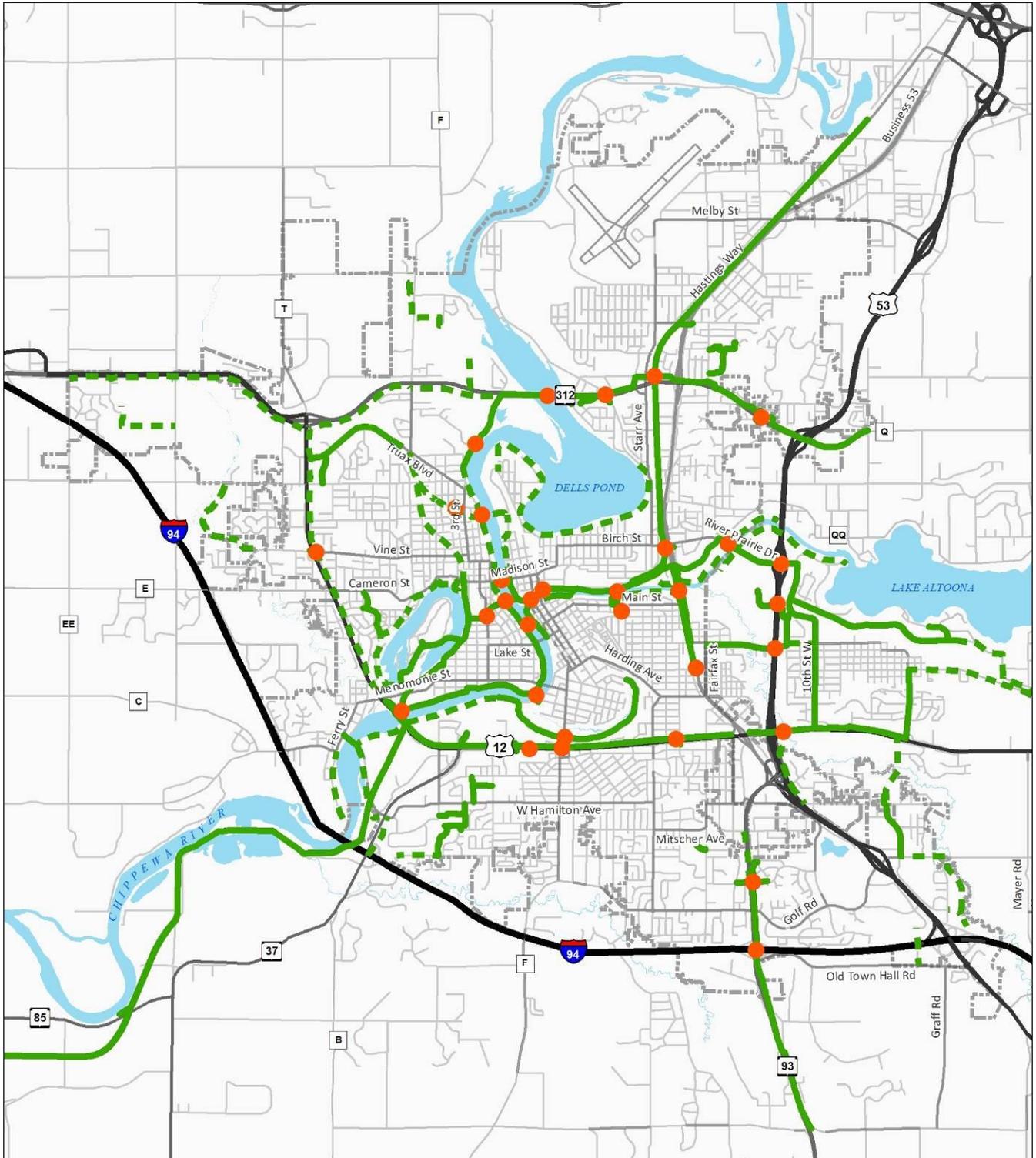
The spine of the system is the Chippewa River State Bicycle Trail, which runs across the city and links Menomonie, Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls and Cornell (Brunet Island State Park). Other off-road paths loop Carson Park and extend through Putnam Park. The off-road paths are beginning to create an interconnected system, and on-street lanes and signed routes are emerging to supplement and link them.

Trails are planned to link the Phoenix Park trailhead and Riverview Park along the Chippewa River, and to be extended east along the Eau Claire River toward Lake Altoona.

Table 7-11, presented below, lists the existing multi-use trails, and Table 7-12 presents the trails that were planned in the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan* but are not yet built.

There are also several bridges or tunnels that help bicyclists and pedestrians cross what would otherwise be major barriers:

- A former railroad bridge over the Chippewa River linking First Avenue to Phoenix Park (part of the Chippewa State Trail)
- The S-Bridge, a former railroad bridge over the Eau Claire River near Banbury Place
- The Memorial High School tunnel under Clairemont Avenue
- Chippewa Valley Technical College bridge over Clairemont Avenue
- The UW Fine Arts Building bridge over the Chippewa River
- The Grand Avenue bridge over the Chippewa River
- The former railroad bridge over the Chippewa River east of the Clairemont Avenue bridge
- The Fifth Avenue tunnel
- The Riverview Drive tunnel under Highway 312 (The North Crossing)
- Damon Street tunnel
- Boyd Park bridge
- The Main Street tunnel
- The Vine Street tunnel under Clairemont Avenue
- A tunnel under Hastings Way at Fenwick Avenue.
- A tunnel under Highway 312 at McKinley Road



- Existing Off-Street Path
- - - Proposed Off-Street Path
- Grade Separated Facility

**Figure 7-5**  
**Existing and**  
**Planned Trails**

**Table 7-11  
Trail Segments**

|   | <b>Length<br/>in Feet</b>    |
|---|------------------------------|
| Bollinger Fields – Eau Claire Soccer Park Connections         | 5,463                        |
| Boyd Bridge and Park Area                                     | 2,062                        |
| Buffington Playground to Rod and Gun Park                     | 2,693                        |
| Carson Park – Menomonie St to Causeway                        | 5,157                        |
| Chippewa River – 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to RR Bridge          | 4,473                        |
| Chippewa River – Phoenix Trailhead to 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue. | 9,113                        |
| Chippewa River – RR Bridge to South City Limits               | 4,512                        |
| Clairemont Ave – Craig Rd to S Hastings Way                   | 14,253                       |
| Clairemont Ave – S Hastings Way to East City Limits           | 651                          |
| Clairemont Ave – RR Bridge to Craig Rd                        | 4,419                        |
| Dewey Street East to East of S Bridge                         | 1,571                        |
| Downtown – East Bank and Grand Ave Bridge                     | 2,464                        |
| Eau Claire River – ` S' Bridge to Crossing of Galloway St     | 2,825                        |
| Eau Claire River – Trailhead East to S Bridge                 | 2,388                        |
| Epiphany Lane   | 1,449                        |
| Galloway St – North to North Crossing                         | 11,321                       |
| Gateway Dr – Golf Rd to E Hamilton Ave                        | 2,745                        |
| Half Moon Lake – Fulton to Cameron St                         | 1,834                        |
| Half Moon Lake – Lake St to 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave               | 3,358                        |
| Half Moon Lake – RR Bridge to Lake St                         | 4,667                        |
| Hastings Way – Eau Claire River to Fenwick Ave                | 9,371                        |
| High Bridge to Roosevelt School Trail                         | 4,300                        |
| Hwy. 93 – Damon St  | 8,492                        |
| North Crossing – N Hastings Way to East City Limits           | 12,632                       |
| North Crossing – Old Wells Rd to N Hastings Way               | 8,151                        |
| North Crossing to North City Limits                           | 17,292                       |
| North Star Middle School Neigh Connections                    | 3,353                        |
| Old Wells Rd – Garden St to North Crossing                    | 4,041                        |
| Phoenix Park – RR Bridge to Madison St                        | 1,185                        |
| Short Street Bridge   | 795                          |
| South Middle School Neigh Connections                         | 1,392                        |
| South Side of Galloway St to River Prairie Crossing           | 5,853                        |
| Truax Blvd – N Clairemont to 14 <sup>th</sup>                 | 4,561                        |
| UWEC Pedestrian Bridge  | 566                          |
| Vine St Underpass   | 374                          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>169,776</b><br>32.4 miles |
| Putnam Park – Garfield Ave to Putnam Drive                    | 9,371                        |
| Altoona Pathways  | 41,592                       |

## Parks and Trails Created Since the 2005 Plan

The parks and trails listed in Table 7-12 were acquired by the City since the 2005 plan.

**Table 7-12**

### Parks or Trail Corridors Acquired Since the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan*

| Park or Trail                        | Classification  | Notes   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Domer Park                           | Special Area    | Access to the Chippewa River  |
| Upper Eau Claire River Open Space    | Special Area    | Steep, wooded slope upriver from River Prairie Drive. Acquired in 2014 based on the <i>Waterways Plan, 2012</i> . |
| Margaret and Sid Kyes Community Park | Community Park  | Located along Lowes Creek in the Town of Washington. Acquired as a generous gift from the Kyes family.            |
| High Bridge Trail                    | Multi-Use Trail | Being created in 2014 from a former railroad bridge over the Chippewa River                                       |
| Roosevelt School Trail               | Multi-Use Trail | A former railroad corridor that runs from the High Bridge to Roosevelt Elementary School                          |
| Clairemont Avenue Trail              | Multi-Use Trail | An east-west in the Clairemont Avenue right-of-way  |
| NW Corner of Half Moon Lake          | Multi-Use Trail | A link from the beach to Rod and Gun Club Park  |
| Hastings Way Trail                   | Multi-Use Trail | An off-road path in the redesigned Hastings Way corridor  |

### Major Park Sites Acquired between the 1993 and 2005 *Comprehensive Plans*

The 1993 through 2005 period was one of remarkable growth for the Eau Claire park system, so those achievements are reiterated here. Four of the park site acquisitions during that time were significant additions to the system – Southwest and Northwest Community Parks and Phoenix Park, located downtown at the river confluence. The two community parks were sizable, which has helped to balance the great number of smaller sites.

Northwest Community Park provides limited physical access to the Chippewa River as well as dramatic river valley overlooks in a growing quadrant of the city. Southeast Community Park is in a scenic creek valley.

Phoenix Park is relatively small but strategically located at the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers and part of the public incentive for the redevelopment of a former heavy industrial site in the downtown. Phoenix Park has been instrumental in attracting new office, residential and retail investment to the North Barstow district of downtown. Phoenix Park is counted as opening after the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan* was adopted.

In addition, Forest Street Park is notable for the fact that it was created when the City acquired houses that were devastated by flooding in 1993. Forest Street has added to the City's network of riverfront linear parks, which is becoming an important part of the park system and a key to neighborhood revitalization and stabilization.

## School District Open Space

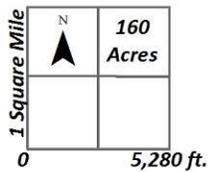
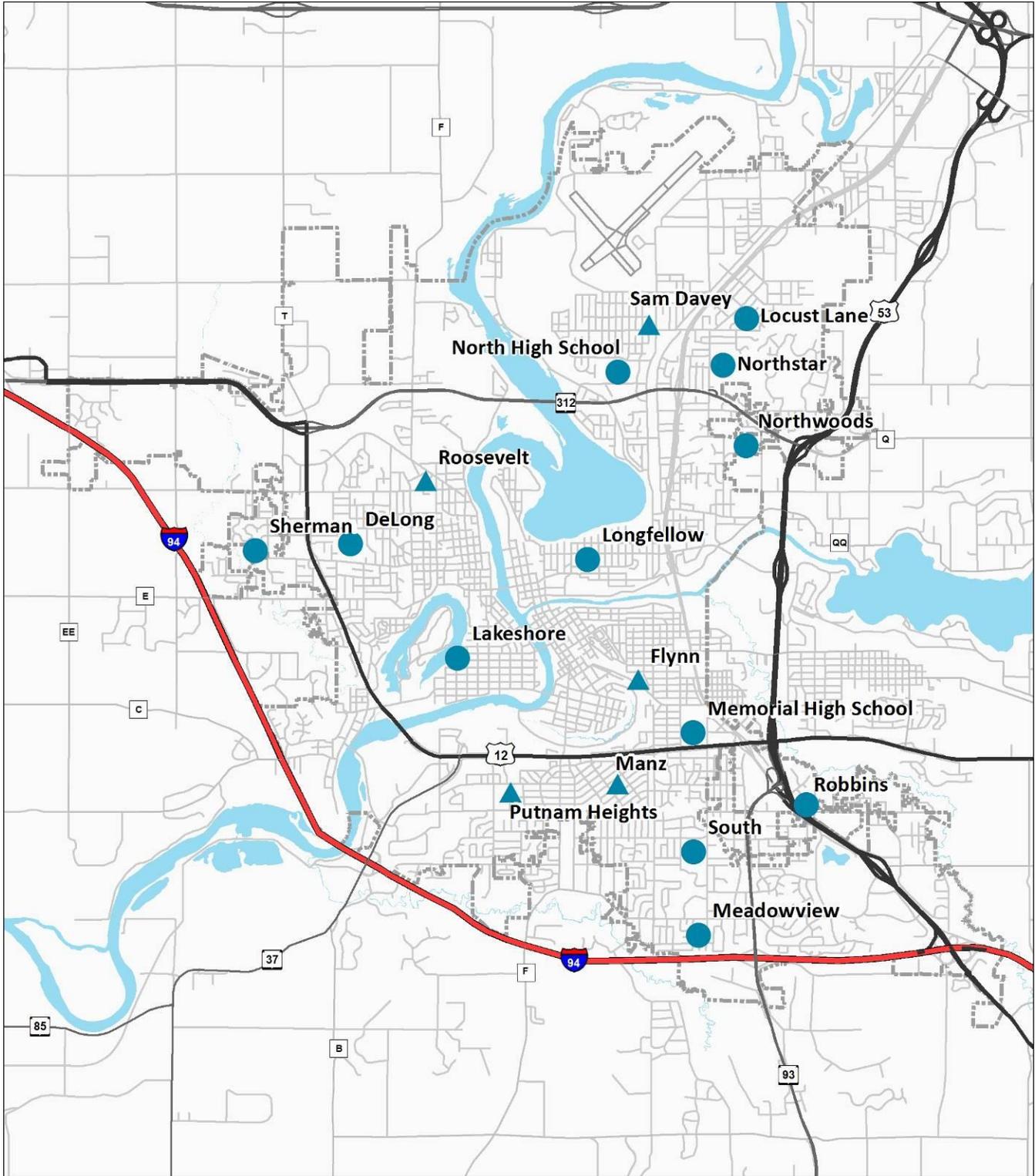
The Eau Claire School District provides approximately 228 acres of recreational open space at 17 locations within the City of Eau Claire (see Figure 7-6). These areas provide a wide range of facilities including: playground equipment at the elementary schools, tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball, football, and soccer fields, running tracks, large open play areas, etc.

In addition, the School District and City have entered into a number of cooperative agreements, which enable the City to utilize various school sites for City-sponsored outdoor recreational activities and events. For example, several of the sites are utilized by the City for their summer playground program and for the winter skating facilities and thus serve as neighborhood parks within the City. They also provide additional open space and play area for the neighborhoods in which they are located.

The size of the school sites in the City is presented below in Table 7-13. These figures include the elementary school sites where the City maintains a playground area and operates a summer playground program or operates a skating facility in the winter.

**Table 7-13:  
School Sites**

| <b>Name</b>                      | <b>Acreage</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Lakeshore Elementary School      | 3              |
| Davey Elementary School          | 3.6            |
| Flynn Elementary School          | 5.2            |
| Locust Lane Elementary School    | 10             |
| Longfellow Elementary School     | 3              |
| Manz Elementary School           | 6              |
| Meadowview Elementary School     | 7              |
| Northwoods Elementary School     | 14             |
| Putnam Heights Elementary School | 13.4           |
| Robbins Elementary School        | 6              |
| Roosevelt Elementary School      | 4.5            |
| Sherman Elementary School        | 8              |
| Delong Middle School             | 30             |
| Northstar Middle School          | 41             |
| South Middle School              | 28             |
| Memorial High School             | 21             |
| North High School                | 28             |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>229</b>     |



- Public School Site
- ▲ School Site with a Supervised Summer or Winter Program

*Figure 7-6*  
**School Sites with Outdoor Recreation Facilities**

## **University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Recreation Fields**

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire owns or leases approximately 264.6 acres of land, which is used for a variety of outdoor recreation activities for its students and the general public.

### **Putnam Park**

The largest of the University's properties is Putnam Park, a 199-acre tract of heavily forested land. It serves as a natural and wildlife and scenic area for the City of Eau Claire and as a natural arboretum for the University's research and study programs.

The park was donated to the City in 1909 with the provision that it is kept in a natural state. In 1957 the City deeded the property to the then State Teachers College, now UW-EC. In order to maintain community ties, a Park Commission composed of City and University representatives, subject to the Chancellor's approval, administers the park. A major portion of the park has been declared a scientific interest area.

A self-guiding trail has been built through part of the park and is a valuable resource for nature lovers. Along the trail and throughout the park, over 400 species of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants may be found. Animals have also discovered this sanctuary in the heart of the City.

### **Athletic Fields**

The University also owns three sites totaling approximately 57.2 acres, which are developed for active recreational activities, such as softball, tennis, and basketball. Two of these sites are located on the upper campus area and include Simpson Field, which is located southeast of McPhee Physical Education Center; and an area south of Governor's Hall and Crestwood Commons. These two facilities provide 12 tennis courts, basketball courts, and softball fields, as well as open areas for activities, such as soccer and football.

The remaining area owned by the University is a 36.8-acre tract of land called Bollinger Fields, which is located north of Hamilton Avenue and west of Stein Boulevard. This athletic field complex has been developed for baseball, softball and soccer. The City of Eau Claire has entered into a cooperative agreement with the University for use of the fields for city-sponsored leagues during the summer.

### Nearby State or County Parks

There are a number of parks and open space areas in the vicinity of Eau Claire that should also be considered in the planning process for the City's park system. These parks are summarized in Table 7-14 along with the facilities developed at each site. Although not included in the acreage summary of parks, these areas are regularly used by residents.

Because of their larger size, these sites offer a variety of amenities and recreational activities while maintaining a natural and wild environment. That environment generally cannot be provided in any of the more urban parks with the possible exception of Carson Park, Northwest Community Park and Mt. Simon Recreation Area. Facilities commonly provided include camping, boating, swimming, fishing, hiking, picnicking and nature trails.

**Table 7-14**  
**State and County Parks near Eau Claire**

| NAME OF PARK              | FACILITIES |               |              |            |                 |          |          |         |              |         |              |            |                |                      |             |             |               |               |           |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|----------|----------|---------|--------------|---------|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
|                           | Camping    | Nature Trails | Snowmobiling | Picnicking | Picnic Shelters | Swimming | Canoeing | Boating | Water Skiing | Fishing | Boat Landing | Playground | Drinking Water | Cross Country Skiing | Concessions | Pit Toilets | Flush Toilets | Fitness Trail | Disc Golf |
| Big Falls Co. Park        |            |               |              | ●          |                 |          | ●        |         |              | ●       |              |            |                |                      |             | ●           |               |               |           |
| Coon Fork Co. Park        | ●          | ●             |              | ●          | ●               | ●        | ●        |         |              | ●       | ●            | ●          | ●              |                      |             | ●           | ●             |               |           |
| Harstad Co. Park          | ●          |               |              | ●          | ●               | ●        | ●        |         |              | ●       |              | ●          | ●              |                      |             | ●           |               |               |           |
| Lake Altoona Co. Park     |            | ●             |              | ●          | ●               | ●        | ●        | ●       | ●            | ●       | ●            | ●          |                | ●                    |             |             | ●             |               |           |
| Lake Eau Claire Co. Park  |            |               | ●            | ●          | ●               |          | ●        | ●       | ●            | ●       |              | ●          |                |                      |             | ●           |               |               |           |
| Phillips Co. Park         |            | ●             |              | ●          | ●               |          |          |         |              | ●       |              |            |                | ●                    |             | ●           |               |               |           |
| Lowes Creek Co. Park      |            |               |              | ●          | ●               |          |          |         |              | ●       |              |            | ●              | ●                    |             | ●           |               | ●             |           |
| Beaver Creek Reserve      | ●          | ●             |              |            |                 |          |          |         |              | ●       |              |            | ●              | ●                    |             |             | ●             | ●             |           |
| Tower Ridge Co. Ski Trail |            | ●             |              |            |                 |          |          |         |              |         |              |            |                | ●                    |             | ●           |               |               | ●         |
| Lake Wissota State Park   | ●          | ●             | ●            | ●          | ●               | ●        | ●        | ●       | ●            | ●       | ●            | ●          | ●              | ●                    | ●           | ●           | ●             | ●             | ●         |

## Planned Parks and Trails

In addition to the existing facilities described above, there are several future park or trail locations that were identified in the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan* and listed in the following table. Of the planned parks, ten are to be Neighborhood Playgrounds, three will be Community Parks and one would be an Urban Park. Currently, the City does not have ownership of all these sites. At least six more trail segments are planned to be built.

**Table 7-15**  
**Previously Planned but Unbuilt Parks, 2014**

| <b>Future Park</b>   | <b>Type</b>       | <b>Sector</b> |
|--|-------------------|---------------|
| Menomonie Street Urban Park  | Urban Park        | SW            |
| Taft-Kay Playground  | Neighborhood Park | SE            |
| East Side Playground site – in Town of Seymour                                     | Neighborhood Park | NE            |
| Sherman Creek Playground   | Neighborhood Park | W             |
| Playground south of County Road E – Town of Union                                  | Neighborhood Park | W             |
| Playground north of County Road E – Town of Union                                  | Neighborhood Park | W             |
| Playground east of County Road TT – Town of Union                                  | Neighborhood Park | W             |
| Playground at Renee Drive  | Neighborhood Park | SW            |
| Little Red Elementary School –in town of Brunswick                                 | Neighborhood Park | SW            |
| Playground at Graff Road   | Neighborhood Park | SE            |
| Addition to Mount Simon Park   | Community Park    | NE            |
| Playground site within Southeast Community Park                                    | Community Park    | SE            |
| Lower Chippewa River County Park<br>(City proposes ownership by Eau Claire County) | Community Park    | SW            |
| Half Moon Lake to Roosevelt School Trail   | Multi-Use Trail   | NW            |
| Trail between Northwest and Jeffers Road Fields                                    | Multi-Use Trail   | NW            |
| Chippewa River Trail at Xcel Substation  | Multi-Use Trail   | NE            |

## Waterways and Greenways

In addition to the many other parks described previously, Eau Claire is fortunate to have the scenic Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers and Half Moon Lake located in the heart of the community. The City has heartily embraced the idea of greening the river edges and providing generous amounts of public access. Several stretches of linear parks have been created along both rivers, particularly the Chippewa, and more are planned. One of the best things that Eau Claire could do would be to acquire additional riverfront lands or easements and extend the system, as greenways increase in value as they grow in length.

Five of the most significant new parks of the system are along the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers:

- **Phoenix Park:** Phoenix Park is located right at the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers and functions as a major public incentive for the redevelopment of the balance of the North Barstow District. It is also a center point trailhead for the 63-mile Chippewa River State Bicycle Trail. Features of this downtown gem include an amphitheater, paths, landscaping, open space and a farmers' market. This park, which opened in 2006, has quickly become a favorite of the community.
- **Northwest Community Park:** This park site is located between Jeffers Road and the river, from the top of the bluff to the water's edge. This general site was identified in the 1993 *Comprehensive Plan* and was acquired by the City. A development plan has been adopted and some of its elements have been built.
- **Forest Street Park:** Just upriver from Phoenix Park is Forest Street Park, which was created when the City acquired houses that were located in the floodplain and were flooded in 1993. In a stroke, the situation was changed from a liability to an asset.
- **First Avenue Park:** This 4 acre linear park and trail now stretches from Fulton to Lake Street on the western bank of the Chippewa River in downtown. It includes part of the Chippewa River State Trail.
- **Eau Claire River Open Space:** The City now owns a continuous stretch of land on both banks of the Eau Claire River from the confluence to Hastings Way and along the northern bank from Hastings Way to the eastern City border near McKinley Street. Refer to Figure 7-1, Park System 2014.
- **Off-Leash Dog Park at Otter Creek Park.**

Although not new, four other riverfront parks of note are:

- **Putnam Park**, the beautiful arboretum at the University of Wisconsin campus, which extends inland along an ancient river gorge
- The scenic **Riverview Park**, which is located along the upper gorge of the Chippewa
- **Owen Park**, located on the Chippewa River in the Randall Park Neighborhood. Buried natural gas storage tanks were removed from this park, soil contamination was remediated and the site was landscaped in 2013.
- The 130-acre **Carson Park**, which wraps around Half Moon Lake.

## Plans for Additional Riverfront Parks and Trails

Since the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan*, the City prepared and adopted three major plans that call for additional riverfront parks and trails.

### ***Waterways Plan, 2013***

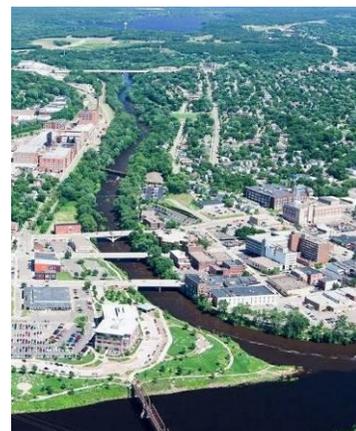
The 2012 *Waterways Plan* built on its 1988 edition, which represented a reawakening of the community's interest in its rivers, creeks and lakes. The first plan included a list of nearly 90 capital improvement projects, of which two-thirds had been completed. The 2012 plan proposed additional riverfront land acquisition, trail extensions and links to the neighborhoods. The full plan is on the City's Website. Some of the major initiatives were:

**The Eau Claire River:** Acquire all the remaining floodplain and steep slope from approximately the eastern end of Banbury Place to the eastern City limit along the northern side of the river, approximately one mile. The Eau Claire River valley is an absolute gem in the middle of the urban area, but access is difficult and somewhat dangerous.



**Figure 7-7: Park and Trail Locations between Hastings Way and Highway 53**

A view of the Eau Claire river corridor looking east from the Chippewa River to the Hastings Way bridge and Lake Altoona.



**West Riverside District:** Extend a linear park and trail from Fulton Street north to the North Bridge and back down the other side of the river to Forest Street Park, approximately 1.5 miles. See below.

**The High Bridge:** Rebuild the former Chicago-Northwestern Railroad bridge to a bicycling and walking bridge.



The High Bridge will receive decking and railings in 2014. The experience of crossing the river from this height will be thrilling.

**Haymarket Square Plaza and Trail:** Create a public plaza on the south bank of the Eau Claire River at the Chippewa River confluence to complement Phoenix Park and extend riverfront linear parks and trails to the south and east. This may become reality with the redevelopment that is being considered in 2014.



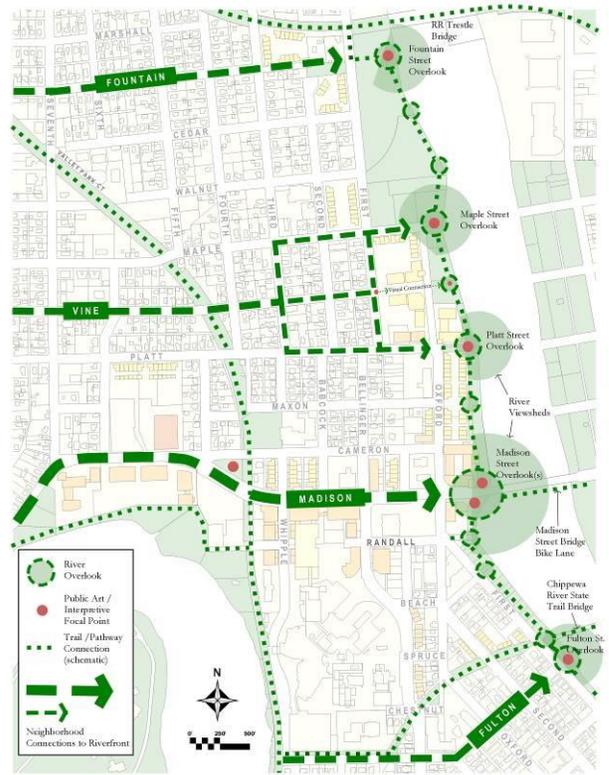
When the vicinity of Haymarket Square is redeveloped, a public park and plaza is expected to be created at the river confluence. This is an early artist's rendering of that idea.

**West Riverside District Plan, 2010**

The West Riverside District Plan focused on neighborhood improvement and economic development. A central piece of the strategy involved redeveloping the old and underutilized industrial strip along the river into housing and businesses with a one-mile linear park and trail behind the bluff and down to the water. This plan was summarized in the Neighborhoods Analysis chapter. A full copy of the document can be found on the City’s Website.

**Clairemont Avenue Educational and Medical District Plan, 2009**

This public and private collaboration focused on unifying several major business and institutional precincts with a better street system, streetscape improvements, parking and infill development. The partners included the University, the Chippewa Valley Technical College, Sacred Heart Hospital, and several medical clinics. One of the proposals was to create new park space above the river bluff and link it with a trail down into the Putnam Park arboretum. This plan was summarized in the Neighborhoods Analysis chapter and can be found on the City’s Website.



**Figure 7-8: Links to the West Riverside Neighborhood.** Scheme for improving walking conditions from the West Riverside Neighborhood to the Chippewa River and extending the Greenway into the neighborhood.

## **Neighborhood versus District Playgrounds**

“Right-sizing” the playground system continues to be a subject of discussion.

Eau Claire has 18 Neighborhood Park-Playgrounds, one-third of which are associated with a school and have play equipment, a supervised summer recreation program and winter skating. The aim at one time was to have a playground within 1/2 mile of any resident’s home. The current standard is to have playgrounds geographically available in the community – north, south, east and west.

In recent years, the City has been building enclosed shelter buildings with restrooms for recreation, warming skaters and other activities.

Not every playground has water (for cooling, either a “sprayground” or a swimming pool). As this is an expensive element to staff and maintain, and budgets have been squeezed, the City may need to rethink this major element of its parks and recreation program.

The number of skating rinks has been reduced to eight.

Rather than upgrade the several playgrounds that do not have water or a new shelter, budget constraints may force the City to choose a subset of all playgrounds to be improved. The number chosen would depend on the budget, geographic location and access by children and families.

Under this “District Playground” scenario, it may be useful to identify playgrounds that presently have water, have a shelter building, are adjacent to a school, jointly use the school’s playground, and are centrally located within a district. Additional playgrounds not meeting those criteria could be added to the list if necessary and feasible. Instead of emphasizing Neighborhood Playgrounds that serve approximately 4,000 residents each, the District Playgrounds could each serve some greater number.

More financial partnerships with neighborhoods and developers will be required to fund these types of facilities.

One of the problems is that the recent shelter buildings were designed for Neighborhood Playgrounds, and shelters for “District Playgrounds” might appropriately be larger and include meeting rooms.

## **Park Land Acquisition**

Presently, the City does not have an ordinance regulating the acquisition of land for parks. Most cities require that land or money, at the City's discretion, be given to the City during the course of creating new residential subdivisions. The dedication requirement is usually about ten percent of the land area of the plat and the cash alternative is usually about ten percent of the assessed value of the land prior to subdivision.

A park land and cash dedication ordinance was reviewed but not adopted by the City Council in the late 1980s, the mid 1990s and in again 2003. The Council had concerns about whether cash could be fairly allocated back to the area from which it was generated.

Consequently, the City acquires each park site by negotiating individually and subjectively on each one. The solution is to either buy the desired site with General Fund monies or require its dedication by forcing the subdivider to seek approval through the Planned Development ordinance, which does have a park dedication requirement. There is no cash-in-lieu option for smaller subdivisions and apartment buildings.

The advantage of buying land with General Fund monies is that it increases the chance of obtaining exactly the right site. This is a very appropriate method when acquiring large sites that will be used by people from across the city or outside a single neighborhood. For Neighborhood Playgrounds and Parks, it puts the cost of land acquisition on all taxpayers rather than just those who would most benefit.

## **Recreation Programs**

The Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Division offers an ambitious variety of activities for youth and adults in all seasons, using the parks and several Middle School gymnasiums.

According to the 2012 Division annual report, enrollment and participation have declined every year since 2008, perhaps because of the economic recession. A statistical recap of these major elements is presented in each annual report from the division.

- Instructional programs for youth or adults
- Athletic programs for youth or adults
- Indoor aquatics program, instructional or recreational
- Neighborhood playground program
- Outdoor ice skating
- Programs for children with special needs

## **Park Facilities Needs**

This section summarizes the estimated need for new or improved park facilities based on observations and analysis by the Parks and Recreation staff. Facility needs would be influenced by any decision about consolidating the number of full-service playgrounds. (Refer to the section titled Neighborhood versus District Playgrounds.)

### **More Indoor Gymnasium Space and a Fitness Center**

The city is currently using three Middle School gymnasiums, which are available only one night per week after 8 PM, and the School District may reduce the availability further. The City would like to have more time available, control of the facility, and weight lifting and other fitness equipment.

### **Indoor Aquatic Center**

An indoor swimming pool with a slide(s), zero-depth edge, and similar attractions would fill an unmet demand. The Eau Claire YMCA has raised money for an indoor aquatic center of its own and in 2014 was negotiating with the City for a possible building site near the southern entrance to Carson Park near Menomonie Street. The City does not wish to compete directly with the YMCA, and it is yet to be determined whether there is sufficient demand for two such facilities.

### **Community Center**

A single building could accommodate the gymnasium space, fitness facilities and indoor aquatic center described above and also include community meeting rooms.

### **Indoor Ice Sheet**

The Hobbs Ice Arena has three ice sheets, which are used by the two high schools and the men's and women's teams from the University plus youth leagues and open skating. This building provides enough hours of ice time relative to the local demand and is adequate for varsity use as it has lockers, office and a lobby.

The four outdoor hockey rinks are adequate.

### **Softball Fields**

All of the softball fields in the City parks are less than 300 feet to the outfield fence, which is considered inadequate for adult play. The City currently uses "full-sized" University fields, but cannot get access to them until mid-May each year.

A new softball complex is being built at Jeffers Park, located along Jeffers Road north of US 124.

The planning and construction of softball fields is expected to be divided between the needs of fast-pitch, youth girls' softball and Little League baseball. .

### **Soccer Fields**

The City has seven soccer fields, which is currently an adequate number: three at the Eau Claire Soccer Park, one at DeLong School, one at Northstar School and two at Bollinger Fields.

### **Baseball**

Eau Claire is adequately served with baseball fields, although the fields at Fairfax Park could use lights and dug-outs.

### **Football**

The football field at Carson Park serves the University, the three high schools and flag football for a total of 150 games per season. That centrally-located field has been resurfaced with a grass-like synthetic turf so that it serves football well and provides quite a few hours each week for other field sports and band practice.

### **Fairfax Pool**

The outdoor pool at Fairfax Park is popular with the community. The City runs a shuttle bus from several neighborhoods to and from the pool. This was the first zero-depth pool in Wisconsin and includes a 50-meter lap pool and a diving pool. However, it could be enhanced with lights and spray equipment. Another nice addition would be a mini-golf course.