



Park System Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The park system in Platte County has grown to 880 acres of protected parks and open space since the initial master plan was adopted in 2000. Although still evolving, the core emphasis of the system's expansion has been to:

- acquire land to develop the trail system
- acquire land to preserve natural resource areas
- assist cities with Partnership Grants and Outreach Grants to develop, and/or, improve local facilities so that close-to-home opportunities are available
- apply resources toward active recreation facilities

As the 2009 Master Plan is implemented, it is clear that *citizens are supportive of past efforts* and ready to build on them. There is strong support for more trails, more protected open space, and more recreation facilities that are geared toward children and family activities.

The *one new point of emphasis* in this plan relates to the maintenance of the parks and facilities that have been built since 2000. The contrast between now and 2000 is that the County did not have many parks and facilities in 2000 that citizens used; however, that has changed dramatically since that time and users expect a high standard of care out of respect for the effort it has taken to generate the revenue to construct and operate the system.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The park system has been evaluated in great detail during the development of this master plan. The details are provided in the Appendix of this report and an overview is detailed below:

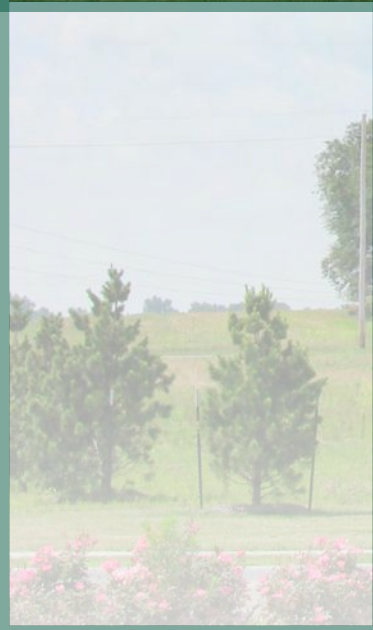
Park Types and Locations – Generally, for a new department, the availability of park types and their locations are good with the understanding that the system will continue to evolve. At this time, the County has directly acquired and developed parks, it has partnered with others to acquire and develop parks through its Outreach Grant Program, and, of course, other providers such as the State of Missouri are actively involved.

Trails – With the development of 15 miles of trails, it is clear from all sources that those efforts have been on target. As shown on the map in this section, there are new high priority trail segments and the development of those segments are the highest priority in this master plan. New to this master plan will be emphasis on waterways.

Waterways – The County is in a unique position of being able to provide a unique park experience through the use of the Platte River and the Missouri River (designated as the Lewis & Clark River Trail) for float trips. People are making use of the rivers but must do so without the benefit of support facilities or personnel. It is possible to improve the use of the rivers and the enjoyment



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of canoeing or kayaking through development of the infrastructure that would make the experience less difficult to organize. People who use the rivers now must provide all their own equipment, transportation to the access point, supplies, and support. Consideration should be given to offering an operator a *concession agreement* to provide those services if the County does not wish to build and operate them.

Recreation Facilities

Facilities include two community centers owned by the County with swimming pools, the Springs Aquatic Center at Tiffany Hills Park and athletic complexes at Platte Ridge Park, Platte Purchase Park (co-ownership) and Tiffany Hills Park (city-owned).

- **Community Centers/Aquatics Facilities** located at Parkville and Platte City have been used by approximately 40% of the citizens in the County according to tracking records that are kept at each Center and backed up by respondents to citizen surveys. Revenue generated from this number of users has resulted in zero operating expense subsidies for both facilities.

As interest in the community centers increases due to their popularity and rapid growth in the County which adds more potential users, there is a need to discuss an expansion of the north center and determine the feasibility of constructing a third center in the central part of the County. Expansion at the south center located in Parkville is not likely because it is considered to be “land locked”.

Both centers have a leisure pool (includes a lazy river, whirlpool, and saunas) and lap lanes. Predictably, the leisure pools are most heavily used on weekends when families are available to use it while lap lanes are busiest during the week when exercise swimmers include a workout before and after work but choose to take weekends off to recuperate.

The level of interest expressed by documented reports in aquatics at the Springs at Tiffany Hills, at the south center at Parkville, and from the citizen involvement process that was made available to citizens during this planning process makes a case for the addition of aquatics at the north center in Platte City, in the discussion for a third center in the central part of the County, and in discussions with partners such as the school district for competitive swimming facilities.

- **The Springs Aquatics Center at Tiffany Hills** – The Springs Aquatic Center is three years old. It is an \$8.0 Million partnership project with the Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Kansas City, Missouri for which capital funding was shared while operations and maintenance are the sole responsibility of Kansas City. The facility features three bodies of water – a 50 meter competitive pool, a leisure pool, and a sprayground which are reasons it is visited by 788 patrons per day for an annual total this past year (2008) of 72,064. This is an increase of 9% from the previous year. Revenue from operations is currently recovering 100% of operating costs.
- The **athletic complex at Platte Ridge Park** includes four lighted baseball/softball fields and four full-size soccer/football fields. The high level of its



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initial design and development, its location in a high growth area, and room for expansion are key indicators of the potential for this facility. As expansion is considered at a future date, the County will need to carefully evaluate the life cycle of the program that is requesting new fields and the level of use at existing fields in the vicinity to ensure that all are being fully utilized before building new ones. Partnership opportunities to leverage County resources should also be evaluated along with the ability of the County and partners to maintain new facilities. Such opportunities may include continued upgrades to the existing facilities such as infield drainage and scoreboards and additional fields for youth football. In addition the adopted master plan for Platte Ridge Park should be consulted and updated as needed.

- The **athletic complex at Platte Purchase Park** includes thirteen baseball/softball fields, one of which is currently lighted. Its location in a high growth area and room for expansion are key indicators of the potential for this facility. If expansion is considered at a future date, the County will need to again carefully evaluate the life cycle of the program that is requesting new fields, the level of use at existing fields in the vicinity, partnerships, and the ability of Kansas City and its partners, in this case the Clay-Platte Baseball Association, to maintain new facilities. Such opportunities may include continued upgrades to the existing facilities such as utilities, lighting, infield drainage and scoreboards and additional fields for youth programs. In addition the adopted master plan for Platte Purchase Park should be consulted and updated as needed in cooperation with Kansas City.
- The **Tiffany Hills Athletic Complex** has been well received. Records from 2007 and 2008 show that there were 620,000 visitors to the complex, making it the third largest destination in the KC Metro Area. Because this project is a partnership with the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners of Kansas City, Missouri and the Southern Platte County Athletic Association (SPCAA), the County will need to continue to advocate for good ongoing maintenance and improvements to the facility by project partners.

Outreach and Partnership Grants

To date, \$1.8 Million has been awarded by the County to recipients of its Outreach Grants and over \$1 Million through the Partnership Grant Program. Most, if not all, of the improvements would not have been completed had it not been for this program. The programs have also proven to be an effective tool for the County to stay in regular contact with community leaders and volunteers and stay abreast of current needs. Representative of the projects that have been funded are the following:

- Veteran's memorials
- Numerous local park improvement upgrades; e.g. shelter houses, lighting, playgrounds, basketball courts
- Athletic fields
- Trails and sidewalks
- Historic park and scenic outlooks
- Festivals and special events



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There are several keys to the long-term success (sustainability) of these collaborative programs as detailed below:

- first, it is the reality that the Park and Recreation Department continue to manage it at a very high level to ensure that sales tax revenues are allocated in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the master plan
- second, recipients should have a master plan for the properties/projects for which they are seeking funding assistance to ensure an orderly development of planned improvements in pursuit of a goal that is comprehensive and well organized as opposed to random improvements that stand alone and not contributing to the whole.
- third, recipients must develop and maintain projects that are within guidelines provided them by the Park and Recreation Department
- lastly, the County should expand the programs, making more funding available and studying the inclusion of a limited amount of maintenance support in the program (e.g. equipment)

Facility Development Sustainability

In general, parks and recreation facilities are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. They provide preservation opportunities for sensitive land and are crucial in implementing connected green systems. They increase positive social interaction opportunities and encourage healthy lifestyles. Quality parks systems are also known to create communities where positive economic growth is attracted and stimulated.

Low-Impact Development – Parks and recreation facilities should be designed with the concept of minimizing infrastructure elements such as buildings and parking facilities by combining activity use areas where feasible. Every effort should be made to implement the most sustainable design that can be managed by those who will care for the facility. County employees will be instructed in the use of sustainable practices. Below are specific practices that will be considered and implemented to decrease the impact of parks and recreation development on the environment. The County will develop a detailed plan of sustainable strategies that can be reasonably implemented.

Turf Management – Sports turf management practices should include amending soil with compost and other natural fertilizers, regular aeration to minimize soil compaction, field rotation, regular soil tests, minimizing the collection of grass clippings, and other best management practices that allow a healthy growing medium for turf. Where possible, the County will use low-emission maintenance equipment and limit the use of high-emitting maintenance equipment to necessary applications. Mowing cycles will be documented to encourage only necessary maintenance. For example, during a dry season mowing may need to occur less frequently.

Although it is often necessary to irrigate athletic fields to maintain a safe playing surface, the County will strive to implement efficient irrigation systems that



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operate only when there has not been sufficient precipitation. The County will also evaluate and implement opportunities to use impounded and gray water for irrigation to decrease cost and environmental impact.

The County has a maintenance hierarchy for open areas within a park. Ball field turf is the most intensely managed followed by family recreation areas. Open space areas not directly impacted by recreation will be maintained as prairie or natural vegetation and infrequently mowed or “hayed” by private contractors. Emphasis for prairie restoration efforts will be placed on ground that has been disturbed, such as through the park development. This hierarchy results in decreased employee time, chemicals, water, and mower pollution for the less intensely managed areas and a small return potential for agricultural areas.

Water Usage – Avoid waste of potable water. This includes evaluating and implementing systems that use impounded and gray water for irrigation, flushing toilets, and other activities that do not require potable water. Options for using low flow fixtures for sinks and showers will also be reviewed and implemented. For swimming pool maintenance, the County will strive to use companies who use green standards.

Alternative Energy Sources – Where possible, parks and recreation facilities should be run by solar, wind, and other types of alternative energy. By disconnecting parks from the electrical grid money can be saved and clean energy will be utilized.

Also, with development of each new facility the location, orientation, and design should be considered and evaluated to provide the most energy efficient solution available that also meets the budgetary requirements.

Lighting - Where possible, for exterior lighting LED should be used. LED lighting is one of the most efficient light systems available now. An effort should also be made to decrease light pollution. Interior lights used should be fluorescent or compact fluorescent. Spent bulbs should be recycled.

For sports facility lighting where LED is currently not an option, the County will strive to use the most efficient lighting systems available. Also, light timers and computer-controlled systems will be used to allow the lights to be on only when needed.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – At special events where refreshments are served, the County is committed to using compostable cups and plates as well as recycling bottles and cans. At all facilities where trash is collected there should be an option for patrons to recycle. At a minimum the recycling facilities should include containers for plastic bottles and aluminum cans. For County operations, every effort will be made to recycle paper, cardboard packaging and other items that will reduce the solid waste added to landfills. Options for implementing a County composting facility or delivering compostable materials, such as grass clippings and leaves, to an appropriate facility should also be considered. In selecting products and materials used at parks and recreation facilities, the



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County will strive to evaluate each material based on its environmental impact. An emphasis will be placed on selecting products that are from previously used materials and/or with recycled content. The County will also strive to use products that can be recycled when they have served their useful life.

Transportation – Where possible, parks should be connected to a pedestrian/ bicycle route. Initially some of the large, regional parks may be isolated and opportunities for pedestrian/bicycle access may be limited. However, as development increases and is connected to existing parks it is important that these types of connections are provided. For community / local parks accessed by local roads it is necessary to provide pedestrian / bicycle accommodations. These connections allow access to parks through non-polluting methods. They also increase opportunities for physical activity and allow parks to be socially sustainable by providing access to all people. Bicycle storage racks will be provided where a recreation facility is accessible by bicycle.

Paving - Most high use areas, including athletic facilities, will require the use of paved surfaces such as asphalt for parking and roads. Green solutions such as porous pavements should be further evaluated and used when practical. During project design, every effort should be made to understand peak use times for parking areas and to provide only the amount of parking necessary to meet these needs. If peak use quantities vary considerably from normal use and are infrequent it may be possible to provide overflow parking on unpaved or less intensively paved surfaces. Where practical, incorporating use of recycled materials will also be included in new pavements and pavement maintenance operations.

Stormwater – The County has a goal of net zero runoff for newly developed park sites. Net zero runoff means that the quantity of water running from the site before development is not increased after development. This goal allows for development to have a minimal impact on the watershed and health of waterways. The County is also committed to minimizing the use of stormwater pipe systems. This includes opportunities for sheet flow and curb cuts to allow stormwater to drain to rain gardens, bioswales, or natural filtration areas. Design of stormwater systems should include opportunities to filter the water before it is allowed to re-enter the natural stream system. Where feasible, graywater collection facilities will be implemented to store water runoff and water generated from building systems other than toilets for irrigation reuse. Erosion control plans meeting the required local and state standards will be used for all construction sites and monitored throughout construction to eliminate erosion of land and sedimentation of water systems. Opportunities to use all types of best management practices from green roofs to bioswales will be evaluated and implemented where practical.

Signage – Where beneficial, educational signage regarding these green practices will be provided for park patrons. This signage should help introduce these



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“green” practices and hopefully encourage patrons to implement some of the practices at their homes and businesses. Additional educational signage to highlight natural and historical features will also be used where appropriate to aid in creating a socially sustainable culture where people are educated about their environment and history.

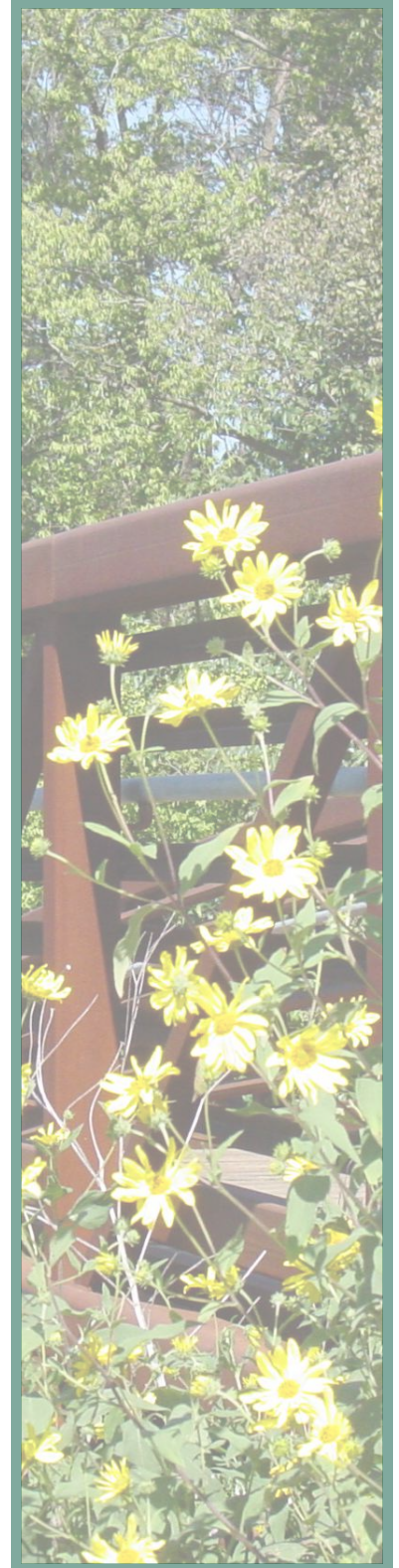
Facility identification signs will always include the County Park’s logo or name. Currently, all park and facility signs provide a consistent message of the name and quality of the facility. This contributes to the message that County parks and recreation facilities will be well-maintained and sustainable.

Asset Management Plan – The County adopted and implemented an asset management plan (Standard Maintenance and Operational Procedures) that includes proper, scheduled maintenance practices for new and existing facilities. This plan includes all furnishings and facilities and their life expectancy. As this plan is followed, emergency repairs that could potentially cost more than routine maintenance should be avoided. Also, knowing the life expectancy of specific elements should allow the County to appropriately budget for times when an existing system will require a significant upgrade.

PARK SYSTEM MAPPING

Ten maps have been developed which graphically portray valuable information about Platte County and its park system. The information is used for two purposes: a) to visually present planning data; and, b) to clarify the data used for the development of action strategies in the master plan that result in the allocation of resources for planned improvements. Following is the series of maps that tell the Platte County story:

- Map 1 – the location of natural resources such as watersheds
- Map 2 – the location of natural resource vegetation
- Map 3 – the location of County parkland
- Map 4 – parks provided by others
- Map 5 – the location by density of the Platte County population
- Map 6 – existing trail segments and published trails plans
- Map 7 – water trails on the Platte River
- Map 8 – water trails on the Missouri River.
- Map 9 – the County’s planned trail segments
- Map 10 – potential river launching locations.



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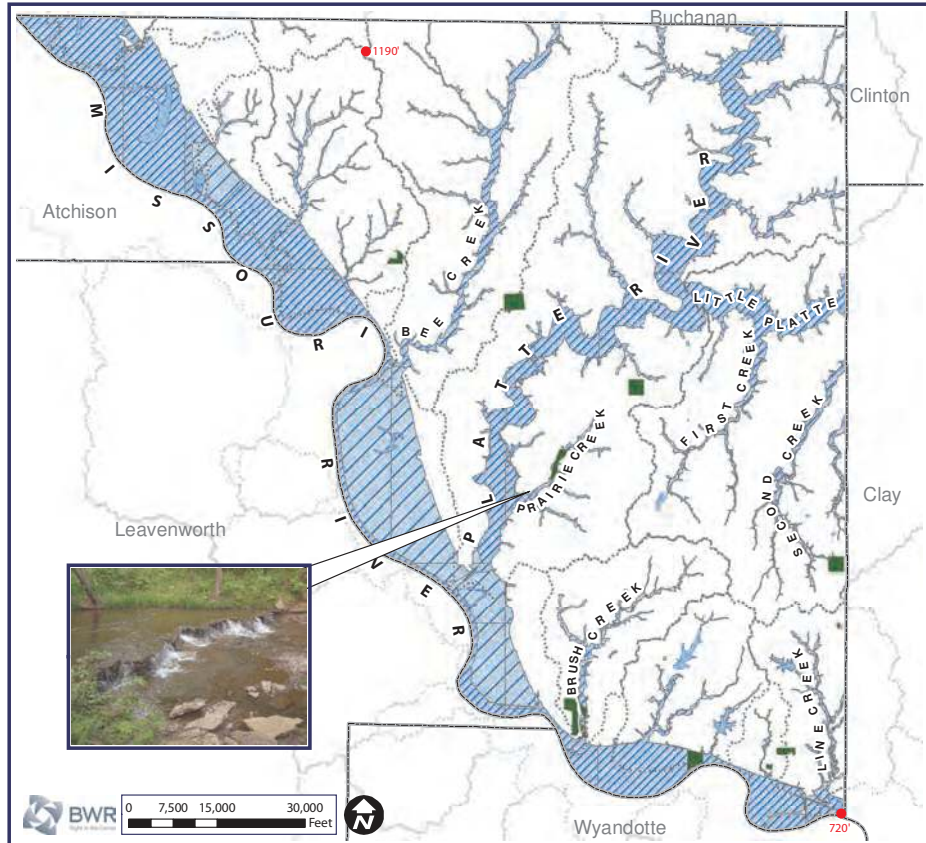
Platte County Parks & Recreation Park System Master Plan

Legend

- High/Low point in County
- County Boundaries
- Lakes, Rivers, and Streams
- Owner**
- County Parks
- Major Watersheds
- Flood Plain**
- ▨ 1% Annual Chance
- ▨ 0.2% Annual Chance



Natural Resources: Watersheds

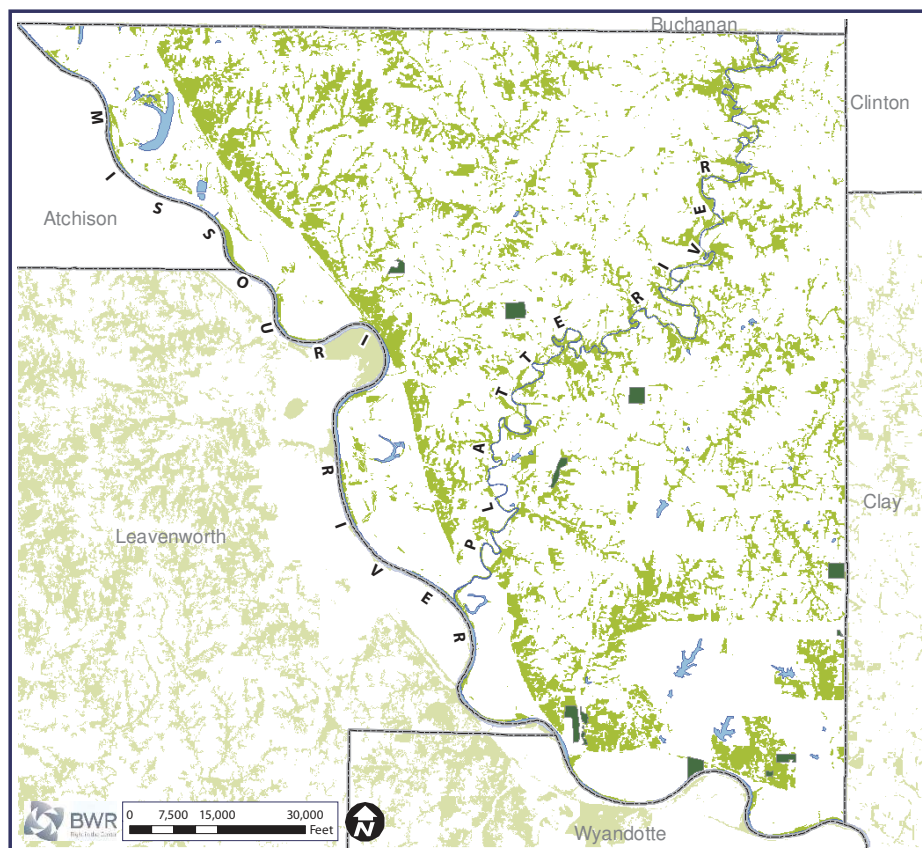


The most prominent natural features in the county are waterways, namely, the Missouri River, Platte River, and Bee Creek. The Parks and Recreation Department has already placed much emphasis on the development of water trails and land trails that parallel these rivers. This plan calls for the continuance of that development to create a more comprehensive system of trails throughout the county.





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Platte County Parks & Recreation Park System Master Plan

Legend

- County Boundaries
- Owner**
- County Parks
- Tree-Covered Areas

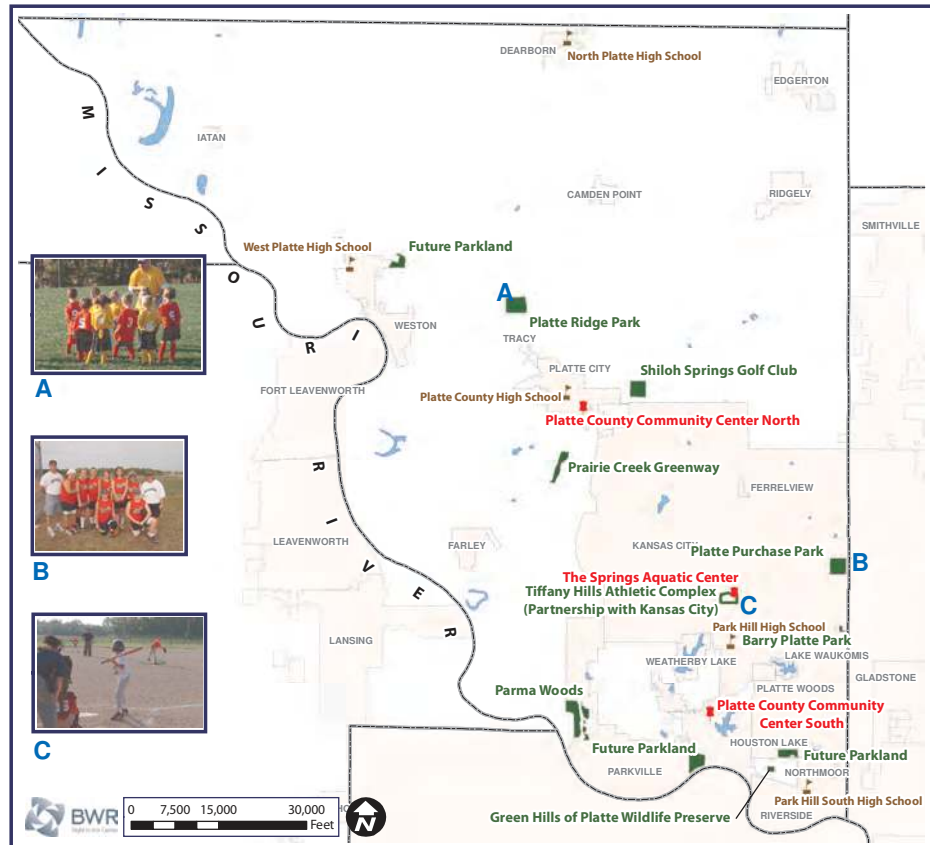
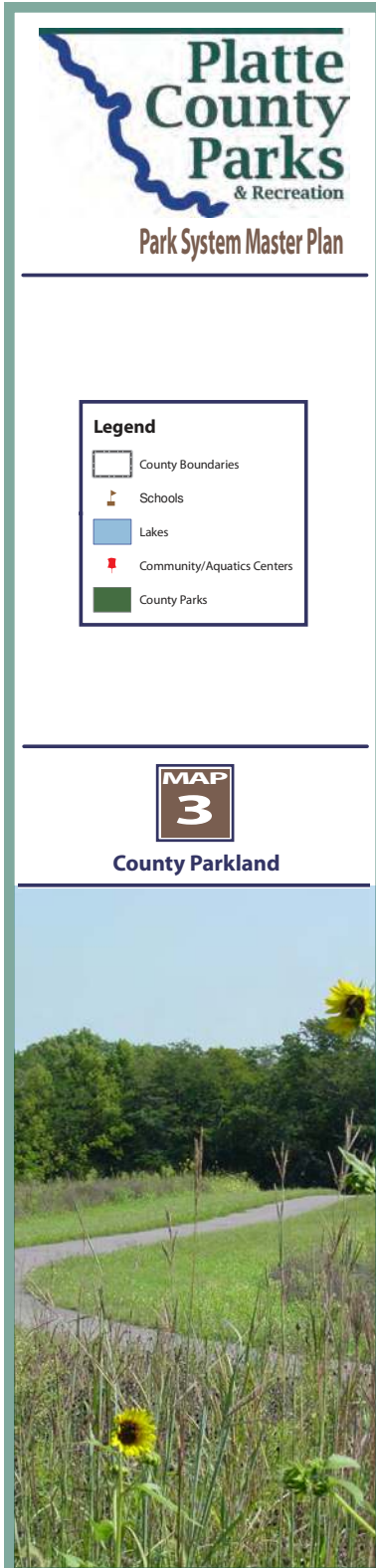
MAP 2

Natural Resources: Vegetation

Many strategic locations in the county, especially along the principal rivers, are tree-covered. This vegetation is primarily deciduous type trees. This creates more opportunities for the Parks and Recreation Department to develop shaded trail routes, such as the one pictured below in the Prairie Creek Greenway.



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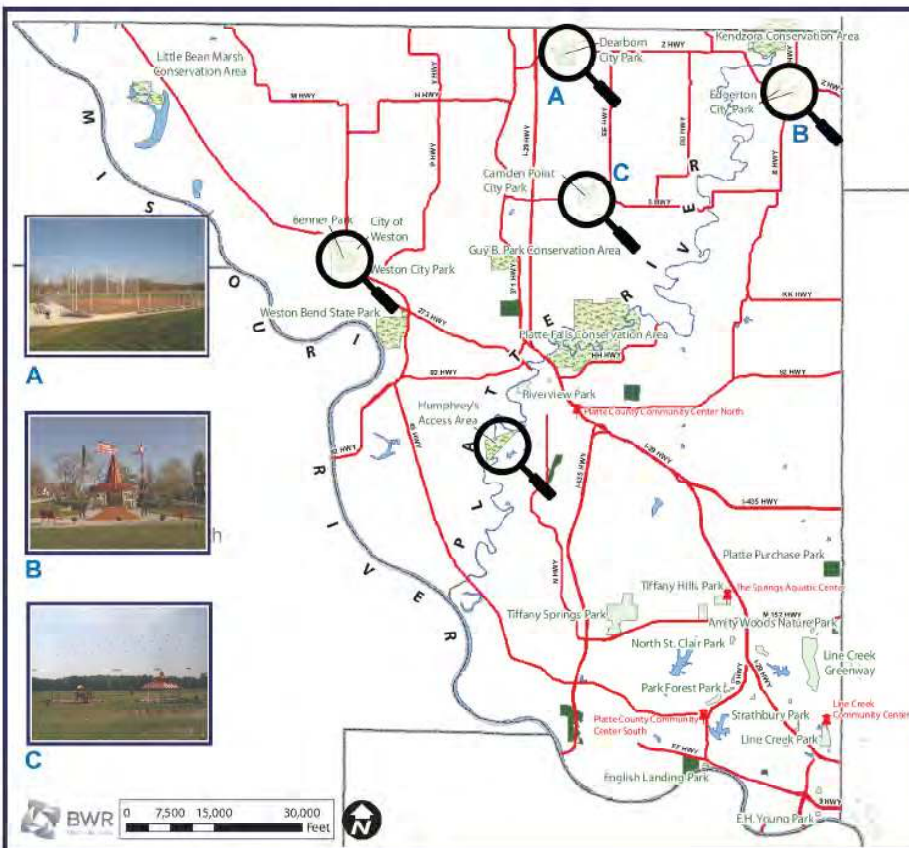


Platte County currently has seven developed and operating parks facilities which offer a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities, including baseball, softball, youth soccer, basketball, tennis, shooting, multi-use trails, picnicking, as well as other activities. With its newly acquired land, the County plans to expand its services in response to citizen needs.





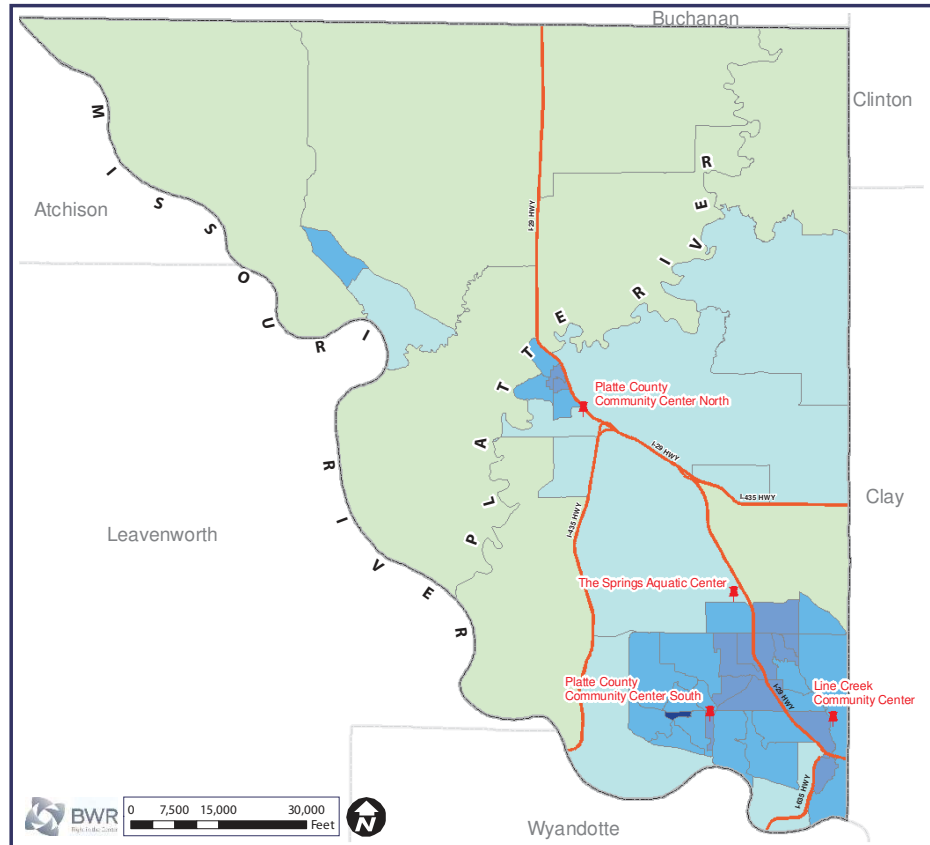
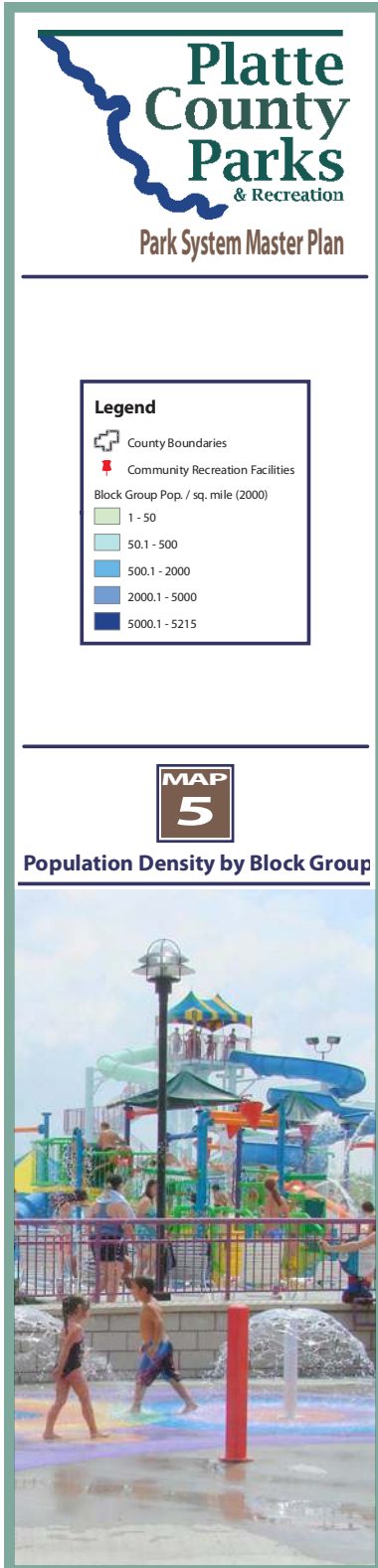
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Additional providers of recreation in Platte County include the City of Kansas City, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri State Parks and other local municipalities. The Parks and Recreation Department is partnering with these agencies to enhance recreation for residents of the county.



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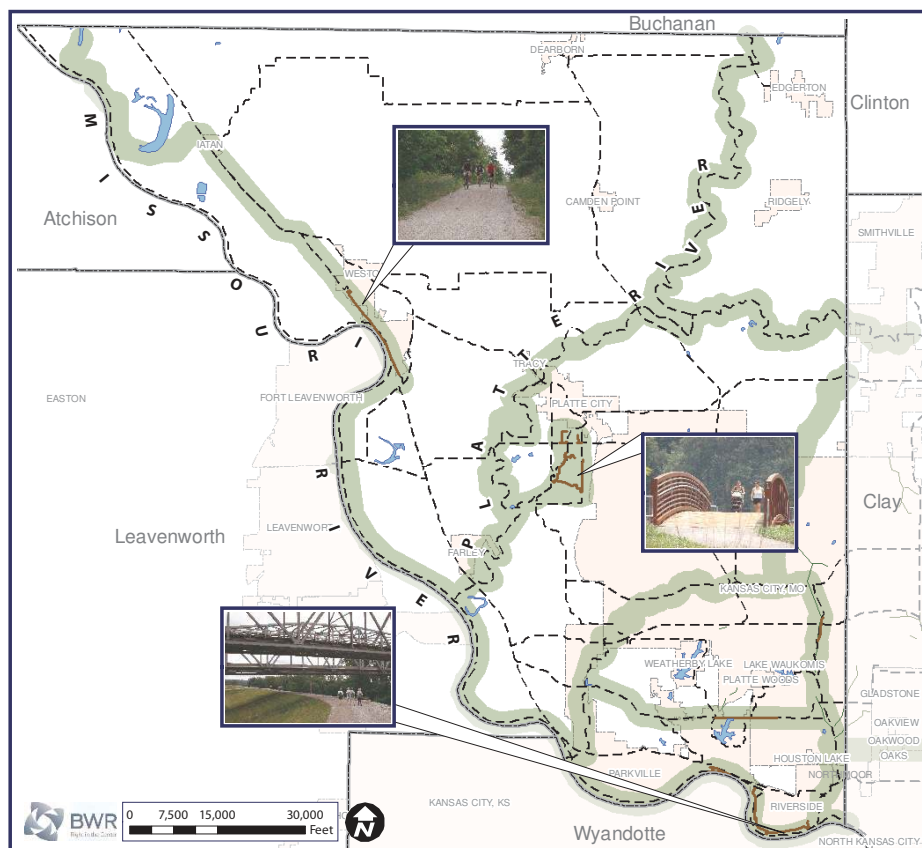


The majority of Platte County's population lives in the southern portion of the county, roughly defined by the MO Hwy 152 corridor.





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The County currently has 15 miles of trails, including the Southern Platte Pass, the Missouri Riverfront Trail, the Prairie Creek Greenway, and the Weston Bluffs Trail. Connecting and adding to these trails is one of the Parks and Recreation Department's highest priorities during the life of this plan.



Platte County Parks & Recreation

Park System Master Plan

Legend

- County Boundaries
- Lakes
- Completed County Trails
- Northland Trails Vision Plan
- Trails Proposed in KCMO 2008
- MetroGreen Corridors
- Cities

MAP 6

Existing Trails & Long Term Trail Plans
(prior to 2009, Northland Trails Vision Plan and MetroGreen Routes)



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Platte County Parks & Recreation
Park System Master Plan

Legend

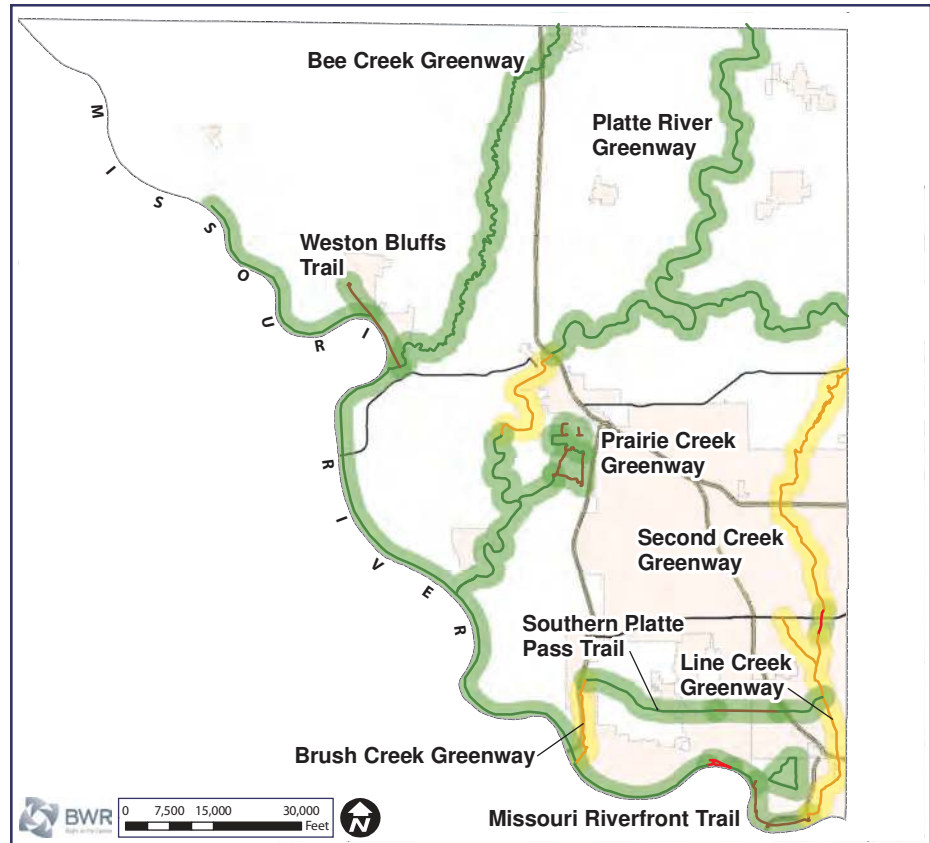
- Proposed County-Led Trails
- Completed County-Led Trails
- Proposed City-Led Trails
- Completed City-Led Trails
- County Boundaries
- Cities



MAP 7

Shared Use Trails: 2010-2030
Priority County/City Routes



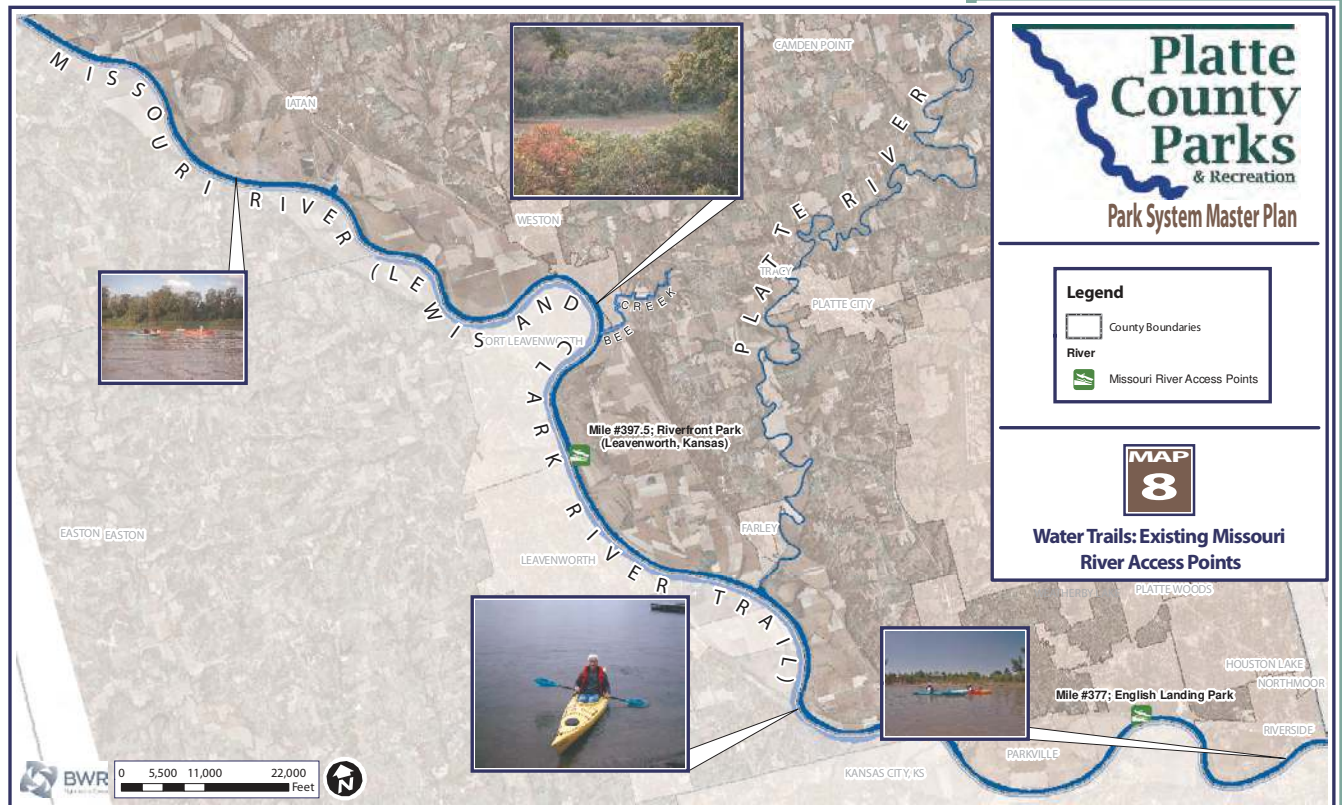


The Parks and Recreation Department is planning to increase the miles of trails in the county by 2030. The map above shows planned segments and their level priority. The highest priorities are connecting the Prairie Creek Greenway to the Platte River and completing the Southern Platte “Loop” by connecting the Missouri Riverfront Trail and Southern Platte Pass.





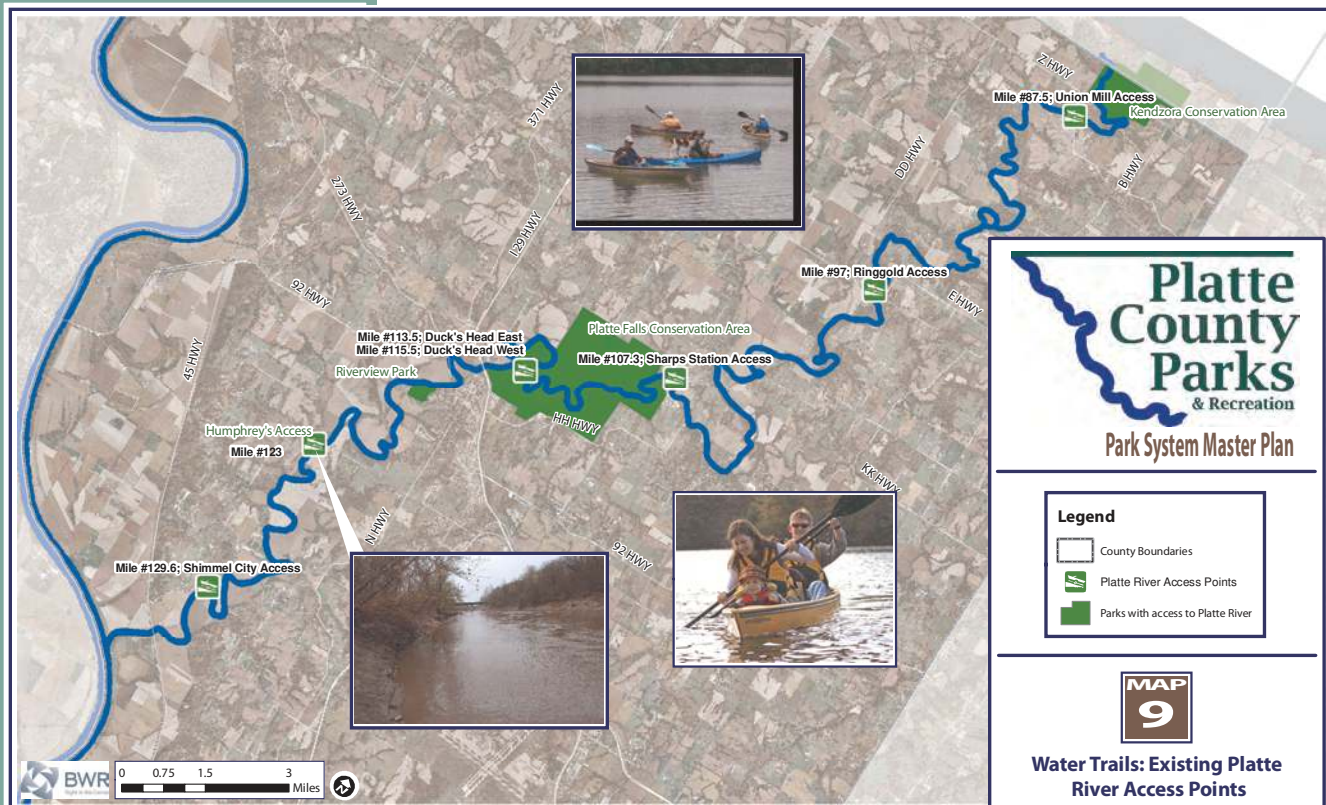
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The Missouri River, designated as the Lewis and Clark River Trail, is an important waterway for recreation. The current access point from the Missouri side is English Landing Park in the City of Parkville. However, the County has acquired property along the river near English Landing Park that will be used for access in the future to replace the existing location. Access is needed in the future along other northern reaches of the river.



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"The 'short term' planning process should focus on dissemination of public information about water trail opportunities. This is the quickest and most cost effective method to increase public awareness and to encourage utilization of water trail resources. Lots can be done now with little money. The 'long term' planning process should evaluate and explore the needs for riverfront access acquisition, restrooms, parking, boat ramps and other site infrastructure requirements."

– Don Breckon
Water Trails Focus Group
December 2, 2008

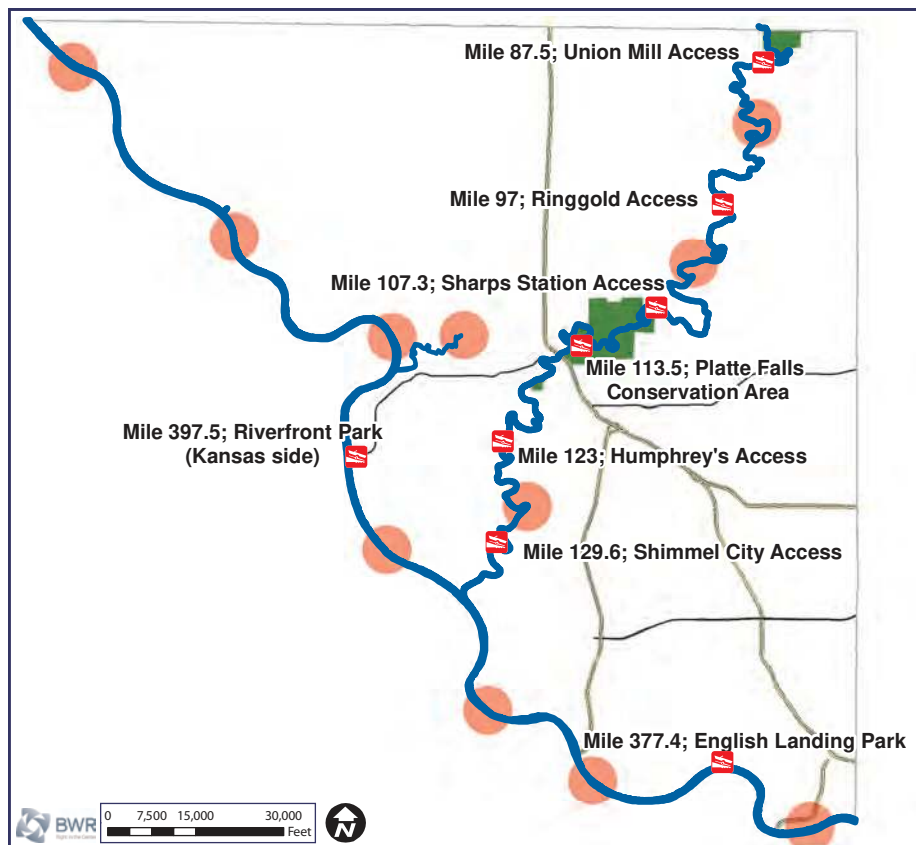
The Platte River is an important waterway in the county. The entire length of the river within the county can be floatable on a seasonal basis and depending upon water stages. It borders three parks that have ramp access, and there are an additional four access points distributed across the length of the river.

existing MDC boat launch at Humphrey's Access near Platte City





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Park System Master Plan

Legend

- Approximate Locations for Future Access Points*
- County Boundaries
- X Existing River Access Points
- Parks with access to River

* Based on approximate five hour float between points



Proposed New Water Trail Access Areas

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