



Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Spring 2016



Mount
Vernon
IOWA

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Chalk the Walk 2015 , AGI - Aerial Gallery Iowa

Mission Statement

The Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation Board is dedicated to maintaining and improving the quality of parkland, natural resources, and recreational programming to enrich the lives of the community and its visitors.

We will:

Provide balanced opportunities for all people to enhance their physical and mental well-being.

Work to be environmentally and fiscally responsible within our parks and recreation system.

Develop effective collaborations and partnerships to enhance our community for current and future generations.



Davis Park Playground with Diamond in Background

INTRODUCTION

The City of Mount Vernon's Parks and Recreation Master Plan is for assessment of the community's needs and available resources in order to develop a clear set of goals, strategies and standards for the City's parks, trails, open space system, current and future recreation facilities, plus program development for the next ten years. Planning processes utilized a comprehensive approach, including: a physical inventory, statistically valid public survey, benchmarking, national standards analysis, demographics, mapping, and trends.

The community-driven master plan is intended to guide the City's Parks and Recreation in establishing sustainable, prioritized recommendations to: facility improvements and development, recreation programming, operations and maintenance, as well as the resources and funding associated with each action.

This is the initial Master Parks and Recreation Plan for the City of Mount Vernon. It is built with the expectation of further review and revision as needs and wants evolve within the Mount Vernon community.

“There are things about living in a small town that you can't necessarily quantify.”

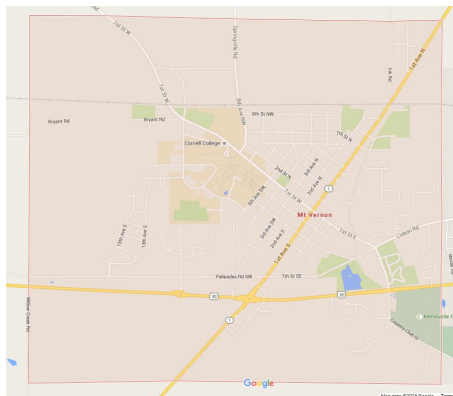
- Brandon Routh

Overview

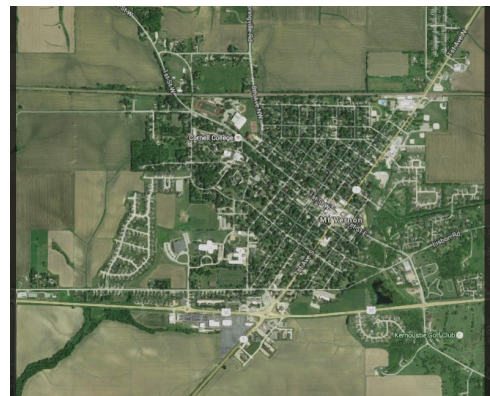
Study Area

The study area for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan encompasses the entire town of Mount Vernon, which is located in eastern Linn County in East Central Iowa. The town of Mount Vernon has an official 2010 Census population of 4,506. The physical character of Mount Vernon's neighborhoods is mostly urban, with a small number of rural areas within city limits taken into consideration. It includes institutional land uses such as Cornell College, a Division III liberal arts college, and the Mount Vernon Community School District. The highest concentration of residents is in and around Town Center/Downtown.

Mount Vernon's neighbor directly to the east is Lisbon. Lisbon's city limits share boundaries with the city of Mount Vernon as well as various dual community events. Its official population in 2010 was 2,152. Lisbon funds its own Parks and Recreation department and programs, including a part-time director.



Mount Vernon, IA Road Map 2016, Google



Mount Vernon, IA 2016 Satellite Image, Google

The Process

I. Community Consultation/Survey

The Parks and Recreation Board initiated a community survey in November 2010 with results compiled in 2011. Sent out to every household (1,353), the survey contained 11 questions and room for additional comments. A total of 297 surveys were returned (21.9%) and compiled with results provided in *Table 1* (attached). It is recommended with future master plan updates the Parks and Recreation Board host discussions with local community recreation groups, the Mount Vernon Community School District, Cornell College, and city staff. The Parks and Recreation Board will host a public hearing before recommending a finalized document to the Mount Vernon City Council.



Quarry Ridge
Disc Golf Course

II. Population and Projections

Per the 2010 census, there were 4,506 people, 1,353 households, and 894 families residing in the City. The population density was 1,291.1 inhabitants per square mile. 1,397 housing units completed an average density of 400.3 per square mile.

The racial makeup of the city was 95.0% White, 0.9% African American, 0.2% Native American, 1.7% Asian, 0.5% from other races and 1.6% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 1.9% of the population. There were 1,353 households out of which 37.3% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 54.2% were married couples living together, 9.2% had a female householder with no husband present, 2.7% had a male householder with no wife present, and 33.9% were non-families. 26.5% of all households were made up of individuals and 8.9% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.54 and the average family size was 3.14.

The median age in the city was 24.4 years. 22.9% of residents were under the age of 18; 27.7% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 19.7% were from 25 to 44; 20.1% were from 45 to 64; and 9.5% were 65 years of age or older. The gender makeup of the city was 48.5% male and 51.5% female.

The 2006 *Fiscal Impact of Residential Development in Mount Vernon* study, located on the City's website conservatively predicted 5,000 residents in 2015. A 2012 Census estimate placed the city's population at 4,583 – a two-year growth rate from 2010 of nearly 2% in two years. According to the *Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan*, a 2013 estimate was established based on the City's building permit data. Using 2.4 people per household and 18 new homes constructed since 2010, the 2013 estimated population was 4,626. The projected populations for 2020 and 2030 are discussed later in the same *Plan*. The population is expected to be over 5,180 residents by 2020 and nearly 6,000 by 2030.

**“Study nature,
love nature,
stay close
to nature.**

**It will never
fail you.”**

- Frank Lloyd Wright



Bike Rack, 1st Street



The Nancy Doreen Huffman Dog Park



Under Hill Skate Park



Bryant Park Playground

III. Trends

The Master Plan process included a thorough examination of local, state, and national trends affecting parks and recreation. *Table 2* (attached) provides a summary of key trends expected to have significant implications in the future of parks and recreation in Mount Vernon.

IV. Parks and Recreation Delivery and Programming

The Plan addresses the methods of parks and recreation service delivery in the City, covering such topics as: relationships among the key providers, the role of the Park and Recreation Board and Recreation Department, and ways to improve coordination and communication with stakeholder groups. Existing programs and future programming needs were assessed. See *Table 3* (attached).

V. Recreation Facilities Inventory

Surveys and interviews with participants during a *2004 Needs and Space Analysis* and 2011 mail survey provided the necessary information which to base the projection of current and future needs for a variety of sports and community recreation facilities. Existing standards of supply and recommended provision levels were also considered in the context of future demand. The standards were then revised accordingly, taking into consideration not only current participation levels and public requests, but also recreation trends. Improvements to existing facilities are also recommended. This can be viewed in *Table 4* (attached).

VI. National Parks and Open Space Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a total of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population. Currently the City of Mount Vernon has 61.30 acres of park/open space dedicated to park land. Approximately 7.3 of those acres are undeveloped leaving the City with about 54 acres of developed open space.

Using the 2010 Census population (4,506), the City meets the national standards for developed open space having about 12 acres per 1,000 population. As development occurs, per *Subdivision Ordinance Chapter 166.16 Letter b Section 2*, 5% of the entire land area being developed will be reserved for City recreational areas and open space. This assists the City in consistently meeting National Standards. An annual review should be conducted by the Parks and Recreation Board to ensure the City is continuing to satisfy current national standards.

An inventory of publicly accessible parks and open space areas (including outdoor recreation facilities and amenities) was compiled and recommendations for park improvements were catalogued. Reviewed in *Table 5* (attached), the City's parks and linked open space network were also evaluated in terms of supply and demand through the application of a modified parkland hierarchy and provision standards.

The Issues / SWOT Analysis

The following are considered to be key issues and concerns from the Parks and Recreation Board and the Parks and Recreation Community Survey. These issues *are not* listed in any order of priority.

Marketing

There is no marketing plan in place. Plan creation would guide efficient consistent promotion, overall accuracy, and program awareness. Some marketing channels considered are: media outreach, placed advertisements, seasonal program guide/brochure, social media campaigns, and community outreach.

Park Maintenance

Parks and Recreation relies on Public Works staff to maintain and improve the City's parks. Tasks and projects are shared and discussed by the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Public Works Director and/or Lead Operator. Priorities and skill sets determine if the task can be performed in-house or contracted out. Without direct staff reporting to the Director of Parks and Recreation it can be difficult to prioritize this list against other tasks throughout the City. Parks and Rec and Public Works must continue to work together for the mutual benefit of maintaining the park system.

Organizational Structure of the Park and Recreation Department

Currently there is *one* full time employee for the department. Additional part-time staff are usually hired to perform simple and small maintenance items or to act as referees for sports programs. At times, part-time staff are hired to teach a highly skilled class. As the program offerings continue to grow, a permanent part-time employee should be considered to handle the participation and program management aspect. The City should also consider hiring additional maintenance staff as the City acquires more park land. This could be part-time or full-time staff depending on the amount of land that is acquired.

“Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction”

- E.O. Wilson



Mount Vernon Municipal Pool, Davis Park

The Issues / SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p>Sports Programs: Number, Variety Pool Trails Parks: Location, Number P&R Director P&R Board (full and active) Communication Online Registration Number of Ball and Soccer fields</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>Lack of indoor facilities Adult Programming No park maintenance budget Getting info to new residents One-Man Show (P&R Director) Age of outdoor pool Park Maintenance does not report to P&R Director Community input/participation in P&R Board</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>Volunteerism Increasing population Supportive Council Cornell Schools Lisbon Future Development Grants</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p>Lisbon Fundraising Travel/Competitive Programs Budget P&R Director position turnover P&R Board Turnover Park Maintenance expectations Wellness Center Indoor facilities not City owned</p>

Age of Outdoor Pool

The City pool is nearly 55 years old. A 2014 pool analysis provided insight on the pool's infrastructure; it identified various outdated mechanical features and a high possibility of failure. Recommendations were made to replace these features and provide upgrades so the pool may provide long term use.

**“Look deep
 into nature,
 and then
 you will
 understand
 everything
 better.”**

- Albert Einstein

Community input/participation with Parks and Recreation Board

Currently there is very little community participation with the Parks and Recreation Board. Board members should make an effort to share with the community what is happening within Parks and Recreation. Members could use various methods to share with the community what is happening, including: social media, networking, community forums, or editorials. Council level participation could be increased by having a Council liaison present at Parks and Recreation Board meetings to update the City Council as needed.

Lack of City-owned Indoor Facilities

The City does not own or operate any indoor facilities for Parks and Recreation programs. Parks and Recreation relies on Community School facilities and/or private facilities for its programs. Owning and operating City facilities would allow: priority scheduling, higher frequency and variation of programs, and a central location. Much discussion about a Community Center built in Mount Vernon has occurred in the last few years. A Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) is currently in effect and is accruing revenue to be put towards such a center.

Young Adult, Adult Programming

Parks and Recreation offers Adult Coed Volleyball (two sessions), Adult Coed Softball, and a few School of Recreation enrichment classes. The Department should continue to offer many diverse opportunities for all ages of adults outside of sports programming.

Action Plan, Timing and Priorities

Action plans (recommendations) were divided into the following sections:



Memorial Park

Section 2: Leisure Delivery System and Programming

Section 3: Existing Parks and Open Space

Section 4: New Recreation Facilities and Parks

Section 5: Implementation

Each action has been assigned a recommended timing and priority. The ranking of action plan is based on high, medium, and low priorities. Rankings are largely weighted on the degree of need and safety concerns. Despite this ranking system, all action plans are deemed extremely important, and when implemented, would greatly benefit the park and recreation services of Mount Vernon.

The proposed timing of the action plans were referenced on short, intermediate, and long term time frames. Some recommendations do not include specific time frames due to shifting priorities, budgeting issues, and other unforeseen circumstances. The time frames are defined as follows:

Short Term (2016-2018)

Intermediate Term (2019-2021)

Long Term (2022-2026)

“In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.”

- Aristotle

Please note that the priorities and timing indicated for the action plans are based on ideal circumstances. Budget pressures, changes in participation, availability of volunteer resources, land acquisition and retraction, and other factors may impact the implementation of the proposed action plans. These action plans are based on needs and not necessarily on what is financially achievable by the City of Mount Vernon and the Mount Vernon community.

The City should compare the action plans with its financial capacity and focus on the highest priority items. It is recommended Mount Vernon regularly monitors and updates the Master Parks and Recreation Plan and its action plans.



Elliott Park Playground

PARKS AND RECREATION DELIVERY AND PROGRAMMING

Overview

The delivery system is how recreation services are provided to the public. The City of Mount Vernon is the primary provider of public recreation facilities and parks. The City also administers a large number of community programs and services for all age groups.

In addition to the City of Mount Vernon, there are other public and private sector organizations that have played a prominent role, or continue to participate in the recreational delivery system: Mount Vernon Community Schools, Cornell College, First Street Community Center, Kernoustie Golf Club, DonMar Lanes, plus others.

There are numerous community organizations and volunteers within the City of Mount Vernon. These organizations, which include competitive sports teams, special interest groups, and individual volunteers, have traditionally played a large role in the delivery of recreation programs and have a strong record of active participation in the provision of leisure activities, fundraising, and sponsorship.

There are a few formal relationships or procedures among community organizations and the City of Mount Vernon.

Recreation programming deficiencies and needs were examined, resulting in recommendations to improve the scope of program opportunities. For the most part, the public indicated that the recreational opportunities in Mount Vernon are quite good. The results of a 2011 Parks and Recreation survey indicated that participation is quite high with 202 out of 297 of the responses having participated in one or more of the programs offered by Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation.



Nature Park Pond/Former Quarry Site

Action Plans



Sauter Park and Trail

One of the major challenges in the area of program delivery is marketing. Without a current marketing plan getting park and recreation program information to new residents has been a challenge. The Parks and Recreation Board should develop a simple marketing plan and review it annually and its effectiveness. Within this marketing plan should be components involving social media, editorials or guest columns in local and regional newspapers, as well as email contact lists. One recommendation is to create a “Welcome Wagon” approach to new residents, by providing them with a packet of information about Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation. This could be done through a similar process used by *Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group* or separately. Not only can Park and Recreation information be shared with new residents using this approach, but opens opportunity for sharing other general community information.

Additionally, a general lack of community input and participation in the Parks and Recreation Board was identified. On average, during each Parks and Recreation Board Meeting (on the third Tuesday of each month) there are few to none open forum participants, and rarely a community member. Adding a consistent and effective marketing plan will give the Board a better chance of reaching the community and making them aware of the issues at hand. Distributing Board minutes to groups of interest will open the awareness of the Parks and Recreation affairs to a day-to-day basis.

The departmental structure of the Park and Recreation Department is extremely challenging. The Parks and Recreation Director currently does not have direct reports. Thus, the department is truly a one-person show. As programs grow and more park land is acquired or developed, there will be a need for additional staffing. The Parks and Recreation Board, mainly an advisory board, could have its members take on some of the small tasks that come up time to time.

One more area where improvement can be made is in the lack of adult programming offered by the Parks and Recreation department. The department currently offers only a few programs for adult and seniors, most of which are sports related. The need to reach out to the adult and senior age groups is important and Parks and Recreation should solicit input and feedback on new programming ideas. Also more subcommittee involvement could lead to more programming ideas. The subcommittee on programming could host forums, networking, research, and other methods for gathering programming ideas for these demographics.

“Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It’s important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It’s the way in which we ourselves grow and develop.”

- Dorothy Height

EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Overview

This section provides an analysis of existing parks and open space in Mount Vernon. Public open space and parks contribute to the quality of life of Mount Vernon residents by not only providing the land base for recreation activities and facilities, but also by contributing to the ecological health of the municipality and enhancing the aesthetic quality of the community.

There are 12 public and quasi-public parks within Mount Vernon totaling 61.3 acres (*Table 4, attached*). Each park was evaluated during the Master Plan process for its ability to meet the current and future needs of Mount Vernon residents. Each park was compared to the National Park Standards per the *National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA)*. Action plans are proposed on a park-specific basis, detailing necessary improvements.

Mount Vernon has an extensive network of paved bicycle and pedestrian paths with plans to upgrade existing trails and develop new paths over the coming years. Trails are a valuable asset to the community; they assist not only in alleviating traffic congestion, but also provide space for a variety of unstructured, low-impact recreational activities. The continued development of both natural and paved trails received a great deal of public support in the household Parks and Recreation survey. A Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) is currently in effect and is accruing revenue to be put towards future trails.

The next pages are the most utilized parks in Mount Vernon's Parks and Recreation program. They are currently developed with specific features, reviews, and recommendations for the City.

***“Nature will bear
the closest
inspection. She
invites us to lay
our eye level with
her smallest leaf,
and take an
insect view
of its plain.***

- Henry David Thoreau



Memorial Park Gazebo

Memorial Park

Summary:

This almost two-acre park in the middle of historic Mount Vernon is the most visible City park, located along the Old Lincoln Highway/Main Street. The park is landlocked with no easy avenues for expansion. Amenities include a gazebo, two separate playground areas, walking paths, picnic benches, seating benches, and beautifully terraced landscaping. Memorial also hosts the City's water tower and Mount Vernon Visitor's Center.

Recommendations:

Memorial Recognition: Even though this park bears the name Memorial Park, visible recognition of veterans or memorials is absent. Some type of memorial theme, sculpture or recognition wall should be considered. The City could work with the local Legion chapter and consider a proper recognition.

Restroom Facilities: The park is used quite a bit, but currently no restroom facility within the park.

Gazebo Renovation: Consideration should be given to replacing and enlarging the gazebo while also re-designing the current seating area in front of the gazebo. This area needs to be more user-friendly while maintaining Mount Vernon's historic character.

Address: 401 1st Street W

Acreage: 1.9 Acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 1933

Playground: Two playground areas: one on the north end, one in the middle

Safety Surface: Pea Gravel

Athletic Field/s: None

Trail: Yes, wide cement trail winds through the middle of the park.

Park Roads and Parking Lots:

No designated lots. Parking available on side streets, the adjacent Visitor's Center, and nearby churches.

Ponds, River & Fountains: None

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification:

Mature and younger trees. Terraced landscaping around south side of gazebo.



Memorial Park Lower Playground

Memorial Park, cont.

Topography:

Land steeply slopes from high (southern side/1st St. West) to low (northern side/2nd St. North)

Site Amenities:

Many benches and picnic tables throughout. One antique-style drinking fountain.

Signs: New identification sign located at the west end of the park

Current Uses: Mostly passive: playground, local preschool use, some community gatherings and trail users.

Picnic Shelter: Gazebo with no tables or chairs; often it is used for municipal band performances.

Restroom: None

Lighting: Good general lighting with antique poles and globe housings.

Opportunities/ Constraints:

Most visible park in Mount Vernon, though it is landlocked (roads to the south and the north, residential to the east and the Visitor's Center on the west end). The current landscaping around the gazebo doesn't add to the enjoyment of the park and needs to be rethought.

Immediate Needs:

Need for a *recognition of veterans* memorial

Playground equipment and swing structure is leaning and needs adjustment

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

North playground's retaining wall needs to be replaced or reset to prevent collapse

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

Consideration of a restroom facility

Reconstruct a new gazebo and replace terraced landscaping



Mary Playground at Memorial Park

Bryant Park

Summary:

This 4.7 acre park is home to a large parcel of open space being utilized as three soccer fields (named after Rittmer Family in 2000) in the spring and fall, then for T-ball and coach pitch baseball/softball in the summer. Within the park there is a comprehensive playground, park shelter, and restrooms. The garage at the restroom building provides adequate storage. The park does house one of the City's many water wells near the west border of the park.

Recommendations:

Parking: The limited number of spaces makes parking for the many events and the narrow roadway makes travel to and from the park extremely difficult. Some undeveloped land does exist to the south of Bryant Road.; the City currently does not own the property, so otherwise the park is landlocked. There is an opportunity to expand parking to the north and west of the current parking lot, as this small section of land is not used for the Parks and Recreation programs.

Trails: This park is tucked away from the majority of Mount Vernon. The Parks and Recreation Board recommends future trails and/or more extensive sidewalks linking Bryant Park to the City's Comprehensive Trail Plan.

Address: Bryant Road **Acreage:** 4.7 Acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 1999

Playground: East side of park, across from Bryant Court intersection.

Safety Surface: Pea Gravel

Athletic Field/s: One, used for Soccer, T-Ball, and Coach Pitch

Trail: Currently no trails to or from this park.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: One asphalt parking lot, diagonal parking allowed on park side of Bryant Road.

Ponds, River & Fountains: None

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: : Nice mature shade trees surrounding park. Lots of new young trees spread throughout. Very nice newer trees line fence next to railroad. Need to landscape and beautify new park sign.

Topography: Gently rolling, ground slopes slightly north to south.

Site Amenities: The storage/restroom building has a brand new water fountain on the outside of the facility. The pavilion has many picnic tables.



Bryant Park

Bryant Park, cont.

Signs: New identification sign located at the east entrance of the park

Picnic Shelter: One with lots of picnic tables

Restroom: One is located at storage building

Lighting: Very low lighting. Could use street lights for parking lot.

Current Uses: Very Active: playground, t-ball, soccer fields, etc.

Opportunities/Constraints:

Landlocked with the railroad to the north, residential to the west and east. Land across Bryant Road to the south could be purchased for more parking or expansion of the park.

Immediate Needs:

- New soccer goals

- Landscaping at new park sign

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

- Portable bleachers should be considered for various fields

- Improved sidewalks along Bryant Road to improve connectivity and safety to park

- Additional parking

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

- Park Expansion

- Additional trail



Bryant Park Playground

Davis Park

Summary:

This 6.0 acre park is home to one comprehensive ball field, a concession stand with two restrooms, an impressive assortment of playground equipment, a park shelter, a batting cage, two outdoor basketball courts, park benches, and the City Community Pool. In the winter, the basketball courts can be utilized as an outdoor ice rink. Cornell College utilized the ball field years ago and the upgrades made are still present, making this ball field much desired by teams and citizens.

In this park there is additional land to the north and west side of the park that is open space. Although it is in close proximity to the railroad, the grassy area can be utilized for sports team practices, an outdoor volleyball court, or other recreational amenities. There is also room in this area for the expansion of the pool.

Recommendations:

Concession/Restroom Renovation: The concession and restroom building are in disrepair. They are long overdue to be replaced in the next 3-5 years. A simple single-story block building would suffice in the same location. The current storage building near the batting cage also needs to be replaced. Future recommendations in the same section of the park include a replacement of outdated field lights.

Trails: It would be beneficial to the City of Mount Vernon to review connections to Davis Park when reviewing the Comprehensive Trails Plan to make accessibility easier and safer for pedestrians.

Major pool renovation or replacement: While the pool is a wonderful asset for the community, the pool is over 55 years old and often needs considerable fixes or additions to keep competitive and cost-effective for the City.

Address: 899 2nd Ave SW **Acreage:** 6 Acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 1964

Playground: Southeast side of park.

Safety Surface: Pea Gravel

Athletic Field/s: Softball/Baseball Field, Two Basketball Courts

Trail: There currently is not a trail in this park.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: Two asphalt parking lots.
One at Baseball/Softball Field and one at Outdoor Swimming Pool.

Ponds, River & Fountains: None



Davis Park Playground

Davis Park, cont.

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: Many nice mature shade trees throughout the park. Large cottonwood tree next to playground will need to come down in next year or two. Trees need trimming. A few more trees could be planted on the southwest end of pool along exterior.

Topography: Fairly flat except the section between basketball court and playground has a low grade. Flooding does occur here.

Site Amenities: Many benches and picnic tables throughout the park. Portable and permanent bleachers are located at the ball field. The concession building has a water fountain on the outside of the facility.

Signs: New identification sign located at the east entrance of the park

Picnic Shelter: One pavilion with lots of picnic tables

Restroom: Located at the concession/storage building at the ball field and the outside of the pool building.

Lighting: Good lighting entire distance. Could use more LED lighting for nighttime security. Ballfield lighting needs to be replaced.

Current Uses: Very Active: the amenities such as pool, playground, ballfield, ice skating, keep it in use year-round.

Opportunities/Constraints: Landlocked with the railroad to the north, residential to the south, west and east. Current pool is roughly 55 years old. Renovations were performed in 1976, 1999, and discussed for 2016.

Immediate Needs:

- LED lighting at exterior of pool
- Replace park bench near basketball court
- Plant trees near pool
- Renovate pool
- Repair roof on storage building near batting cage

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

- Replace Concession stand building (including restrooms)
- Repair permanent bleachers
- Replace storage building near batting cage

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

- Create trail through park from 8th Ave NW
- Replace/update ball field lights



Davis Park Playground

Elliott Park

Summary:

This 14.2 acre park is home to five separate ball fields all sharing a common concession stand and restrooms. To the west of the concession stand is a playground with limited playground equipment. Next to one of the fields is a batting cage. There is land available to the east and northeast of Elliott Park, although the City does not own the land. There is also a park shelter in this park.

The park land is used for sports in addition to baseball/softball. The City's soccer programs utilize the space in the Spring and the City's Fall Flag Football program along with MVYSF's tackle football utilize this space in the Fall. This park is the most utilized within the City's park system.

Recommendations:

Growth: With further residential development the City should consider purchasing land for more park space to the north and east of Elliott Park.

Playground Area Redesign: The City should consider purchasing more playground equipment and expand the playground area. With the amount of use this park experiences, the enlarged playground area and equipment will make this spot even more popular.

Trails: A trail should be extended across the street from Field A trail to playground area.

Address: 201 Seventh Street NE

Acreage: 14.2 acres

Highlights of Park: Ball Fields, Batting Cage, Playground, Pavilion with tables, Storage Garage with Restrooms and

Acquisition and Construction History: 1999-2001 (formerly Mount Vernon Athletic Complex)

Playground: Located near the concession stand and bathrooms, west side of park.

Safety Surface: Pea Gravel

Athletic Field/s: 5 Ball Fields, greenspace of fields is used for youth football and youth soccer

Trail: There currently is a trail that runs north and south in this park along parking lot. Additional trail land is proposed along with a crossing. This trail links with the Sauter Park trail.



One of the Elliott Park Ball Fields

Elliott Park, cont.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: Three asphalt parking lots, all fairly new and in good condition.

Ponds, River & Fountains: None

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: Nice large trees with shade surrounding park. A couple of trees were taken down to the north of the concession stand and will need to be replaced. Lots of new trees spread throughout this park.

Topography: Fairly flat, though the land is in a flood plain. Land slopes downward from railroad track on north towards the south.

Site Amenities: There are many benches and picnic tables throughout the park. There are portable bleachers located at the ball field. The concession building has a water fountain on the outside of the facility. The pavilion has many picnic tables.

Signs: New identification sign located at Cass St. entrance

Picnic Shelter: One pavilion with lots of picnic tables and grill

Restroom: One set is located at the concession/storage building

Lighting: Very low lighting. Could use some street lights for adequate parking lot safety. Field lighting would be a good investment, expanding the usability of the fields.

Current Uses: Very active: playground, ballfields, soccer fields, flag football

Opportunities/Constraints:
Landlocked with the railroad to the north, residential to the south, but there is farmland for sale to the east.

Immediate Needs:
Expand playground amenities
Additional signage at the 7th Street entrance

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):
Purchase more portable bleachers
Trail and crossing should be extended from Cass St. to playground area, including a crosswalk

Long Term Needs (3+ years):
Ball Field lighting for at least one field
Land acquisition to the east



Elliott Park Playground and Multi-use Building

Nature Park

Summary:

This 22.3 acre park is the City's largest open space and most unique. With an abundance of trees and wildlife an old quarry provides a natural water source within the City limits. Surrounding the quarry is a natural trail. Also included within this park is the *Nancy Doreen Huffman Dog Park*. This one acre dog park is fenced in and allows for an off-leash area. Another portion of the park is the *Quarry Ridge Disc Golf Course*. This nine-hole course is short (by national standards) allowing for beginners to achieve success and winds through a forest area creating a challenging course for more advanced players.

Recommendations:

Trail and Bridge Work: There is the need to improve areas along the natural trail, and connect park land with land across creek (ambulance site) with a walking bridge.

Quarry Pond Maintenance: Regular maintenance of the pond needs to be implemented. Dock improvement and entryway to dock need to occur for a safer and more enjoyable park experience.

Address: 699 3rd Street SE **Acreage:** 22.3 Acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 1972

Playground: None

Athletic Field/s: None

Trail: There are two types of trail at this park: an asphalt trail that runs along west end connecting to the driveway then leads to Sauter Park trail. There is also a natural trail running around the quarry lake.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: Two parking lots, one on east side and one on west side of park.

Ponds, River & Fountains: Quarry pond

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: Many nice mature shade trees throughout the park. Younger trees planted a few years ago throughout park especially near disc golf course.

Topography: Gently rolling to flat



The Nancy Doreen Huffman Dog Park

Nature Park, cont.

Site Amenities: One recently installed drinking fountain, picnic tables located at two pavilions, and picnic tables and park benches located at the dog park

Signs: New identification sign located at the east entrance of the park

Picnic Shelter: Two pavilion with picnic tables

Restroom: One restroom facility

Lighting: Street lights are all lighting that is provided in this park. Could use more lighting.

Current Uses: Very passive with active elements of Dog Park and Disc Golf Course. Very relaxing and largest open space park in Mount Vernon.

Opportunities/Constraints:

Landlocked road to the south with DOT land and State Highway 30, St. John's Church owns the farmland to the west, road to the north, and residential/commercial to the east.

The natural and asphalt trail both need repairs. There is a City-owned parcel to the south and east where the Ambulance Service is housed. The City should consider connecting these two parcels with a foot/walking bridge or other form of connection.

The quarry pond creates a couple of necessary concerns and areas of improvement. The current dock is in disrepair along with the driveway that leads to the dock. Another item on concern for improvement would be the maintenance of the water surface of the quarry pond. For years, the pond has been infested with water meal, a very difficult water plant. Chemical products are used to treat the plant.

Immediate Needs:

Chemical treatment of quarry water meal

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

Replace dock at quarry pond
Improve access to dock

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

Creation of a foot/walking bridge to connect Nature Park with land to the southeast
Improve natural trail once Highway 30 becomes a City street



Hole 2, Quarry Ridge Disc Golf Course

Underhill Skate Park

Summary:

This 1.1 acre park is home to the City's skate park housed with metal structures created by a local merchant. This park also contains a small playground. A City trail conveniently runs adjacent to the skate park making access extremely easy.

Recommendations:

Relocate Skate Park: Many neighbors do not like the close proximity of the park to their residences. The noise from the metal structures can be loud and participants occasionally frequent the park after hours. Perhaps an option would be to move the park as land becomes available outside of residential neighborhoods.

Parking Improvements: Parking should be improved across the street next to the old ambulance building with consideration to concrete or asphalt, while a sidewalk on the south side of the park (3rd St NE) would increase park and trail accessibility.

Address: 3rd Street NE

Acreage: 1.1 acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 2003

Playground: One playground on north edge of park.

Constructed: 2003

Safety Surface: Pea Gravel

Athletic Field/s: None

Trail: There currently is a trail that runs on the west edge of this park along parking lot. This trail links with the Sauter Park trail.



Underhill Skate Park, initial opening

Underhill Park, cont.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: Gravel lot across 3rd St. at the old ambulance building, now a City work building.

Ponds, River & Fountains: None

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: Few trees, mostly arborvitae providing little shade.

Topography: Fairly flat, steep hill on northeast corner from trail to playground area.

Site Amenities: Picnic table, park benches, drinking fountain

Signs: New identification sign located at 3rd St NE side (south) of park

Picnic Shelter: None

Restroom: None

Lighting: Trail lighting at Sauter Park to benefit this park, light at corner of 3rd and B

Current Uses: Very Active: skate park, playground, trail users

Opportunities/Constraints: Landlocked with roads to the south and east, residential to the north and west.

Immediate Needs:

New Tree Plantings

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

Consider repainting skate park elements
Sidewalk on south side of park to meet up with residential sidewalk
Paving/asphalt gravel parking lot
Trail lighting to continue from Sauter Park to the north along trail leading to Elliott Park/Parks and Recreation office building

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

Consideration of a restroom facility
Consideration of a pavilion



Underhill Skate Park

Sauter Park

Summary:

This 1.01 acre park is home to the City's best greenway. It is a substantial cement trail that links three of Mount Vernon's parks. It has a pavilion and borders Hahn Creek.

Recommendations:

Trail Building: Continue with comprehensive trail plan connecting Sauter Trail to the network of trails and paths within the City of Mount Vernon

Parking Improvements: Parking should be improved next to the old ambulance building with consideration to concrete or asphalt, while a sidewalk on 3rd St NE would increase park and trail accessibility.

Address: 3rd Street NE

Acreage: 1.1 acres

Acquisition and Construction History: 2010

Playground: None

Athletic Field/s: None

Trail: There is a trail that runs from Nature Park through Underhill Park to Elliott Park.

Park Roads and Parking Lots: Gravel lot across 3rd St. at the old ambulance building, now a City work building.

Ponds, River & Fountains: Hahn Creek

Trees, Landscaping and Beautification: Many trees line the trail, including shade trees and new plantings.

Topography: Gently rolling except near 1st St. intersection.

Site Amenities: Gazebo with picnic table.

Signs: New

Restroom: None

Lighting: Trail lighting

Current Uses: Trail users include bikes, runners, walkers

Opportunities/Constraints: Landlocked with roads to the north and south, residential to the east and west.

Immediate Needs:

New Tree Plantings

Intermediate Needs (1-3 years):

Paving/asphalt gravel parking lot

Long Term Needs (3+ years):

Consideration of a restroom facility



Sauter Park Gazebo

NEW RECREATION FACILITIES AND PARKS

Overview

A combination of market-driven and population standards, as well as public opinion was used to assess and estimate future community demand and need for recreation facilities in Mount Vernon. The use of standards is felt to be the most accurate, rational, and scientific approach to determining facility needs. Other contributing factors, such as demographic trends, public opinions, and survey comments have also been incorporated in order to provide an overall estimation of need.



Memorial Park

Recommended Future Facilities

Recommendations for new recreation facilities to be developed are below. It is important to understand that not all of these projects may be financially feasible for Mount Vernon to undertake during the proposed timeframe.

Short Term (2016-2018): Comprehensive Trail Network

The City of Mount Vernon greatly benefits from the trails which currently exist. With a comprehensive trail network linking our greenspace, not only do citizens have safer routes within Mount Vernon, but an additional way to incorporate healthful habits and a healthier community. The Comprehensive Trail Network is a vital community resource, facilitating easy, safe travel between neighborhoods.



Davis Park Courts

Intermediate (2019-2021): Community Center

The Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation Director and Board has recognized that increased participation in indoor offerings (basketball, classes) is difficult to schedule in a consistent manner. This is due to the whole Mount Vernon Community's overwhelming need for more indoor activity space. The Board sees this shortage as a good problem to have; it is great to have the community actively participating in so many programs.

The establishment of a Community Center would give a number of opportunities for not only the consistency of strong Parks and Recreation programs, but an opportunity to increase quality offerings to a larger demographic. A community center could hold many classes, facilitate large community gatherings, and be an anchor for the growing City of Mount Vernon.

Long Term (2022-2026): Splash Pad

The Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation Director and Board easily admits that the immediate focus on water entertainment is the City's pool and the immediate need to remodel and improve what already exists. In a long-term perspective we have seen an increase in area cities who provide a splash pad feature, including Center Point, Lisbon, Wilton, and Marion/Cedar Rapids.

These specialized park features are great for all ages, as well as for those who do not frequent swimming pools. The Board sees an opportunity in adding this fun and popular water feature by strategically enhancing a future park, especially if development increases to the south of town towards the new bypass.

**Coming together
is a beginning;
keeping together
is progress;
working together
is success.**

- Henry Ford

IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

The Master Parks and Recreation Plan is a long-range, strategic planning document intended to guide decision-making for the City for the next 10 years. With any document that utilizes a long term planning outlook it becomes difficult to ensure accuracy. As a result, there is a need for the action plans to be periodically updated and reviewed to ensure that the Plan remains reflective of the current realities and responsive to the changing needs of the community. It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Board review the Plan on an annual basis and make changes as desired. It is also imperative that the Master Plan be linked to the City's budget process and Capital Improvement Plans and the action plans be reconciled with the City's fiscal capacity.



City of Mount Vernon, looking towards Cornell College, © *Jamie Kelly*

MAPS/TABLES/ETC....

TABLE 2 - Trends

	Description
Trails and Bike Paths	More money being spent and more communities are creating long-range plans
Inclusiveness and Special Needs	Programming, Parks, and Program Delivery
Multigenerational	Making Parks and Facilities inclusive and multigenerational friendly
Technology	Online, Interactive, Upgrades to existing
Key Benefits of P&R Are Getting Recognized	Physical, Mental, Social, Youth Development, Environmental, Economic Impact
Smaller Budgets	As money gets tighter, departments being asked to do more with less

TABLE 3 - City of Mount Vernon Park Program Delivery Matrix

PROGRAM	AGE GROUPS						SCOPE OF OPPORTUNITY				
	Preschool - 0-5 yrs	Elementary Grades K-4	Middle School Grades 5-8	High School Grades 9-12	Adults 18-55	Seniors 55+	Skill Development	Physical Development	Relaxation	Arts and Culture	Tournament/Competition
Fall Soccer	x	x	x				x	x			
Fall Flag Football	x	x					x	x			
NFL Punt Pass Kick		x	x								x
Fall Basketball - Girls		x	x				x	x			
Winter Basketball - Boys		x	x				x	x			
Adult Coed Volleyball					x			x			
Wrestling	x	x					x	x			
NBA Skills		x	x								x
Spring Soccer	x	x	x				x	x			
Blastball	x						x	x			
T-ball	x	x					x	x			
Coach Pitch		x					x	x			
Baseball		X	X				x	x			
Softball		x	x				x	x			
Adult Coed Softball					x			x			
Family Fun Fitness	x							x			
Beginning Spanish		x									x
Lego/Robotics			X								x
Pumpkin Floral Arrangements					x	x			x	x	
Geocaching		x									x
Winter Outdoor Arrangements					x	x			x	x	
Little Princess Tea Time	x	x									x
Plaster Mask Making		x	x								x
Blueberry Basket Weaving					x	x			x	x	
Beginning Bridge					x	x			x		
Bicycle Maintenance			x	x	x	x			x		
Beginning Drama		x	x								x
Aquafina Pitch Hit and Run		x	x								x

TABLE 4 - City of Mount Vernon Park Inventory

PARK	Acreage	Park/Picnic Shelters	Gazebos	Concession Stands	Lighted Ballfields	Unlit Ballfields	Batting Cages	Bleachers	Soccer Fields	Basketball Courts	Playgrounds/Play Sets	Swing Sets	Park Benches	Picnic Tables	Barbeque Grills	Restrooms	Drinking Fountains	Trash Receptacles	Skate Parks	Swimming Pools	Parking Lot Spaces
Davis Park	6.0	1		1	1		1	2		1	2	3	8	10	1	2	2	5		1	46/0H ball and 72/2H pool
Elliott Park	14.2	1		1		5	1	4			1	1	2	3	1	1		7			52/2H lower and 36/0H upper
Bryant Park	4.7	1							3		1	1	2	8	0	1	1	2			60/1H
Memorial Park	1.9		1								2	2	4	1	1		1	2			4/1H
Nature Park	22.3	2											2	2	3	1		1			14/0H
Underhill Skate Park	1.2										1		2	1			1	2	1		unmarked parking
Stoner Park	4.3				U N D E V E L O P E D																undeveloped
Lincoln Way Park	0.5																				none
Prairie Park	1.4																				8/0H
South Park	1.1				U N D E V E L O P E D																undeveloped
Sauter Park	1.9		1											1							none
Lot 32	1.9				U N D E V E L O P E D																undeveloped
Totals:	61.3	5	2	2	2	5	2	6	3	1	7	7	20	26	6	5	5	19	1	1	