

Master Plan for Easter Lake Park

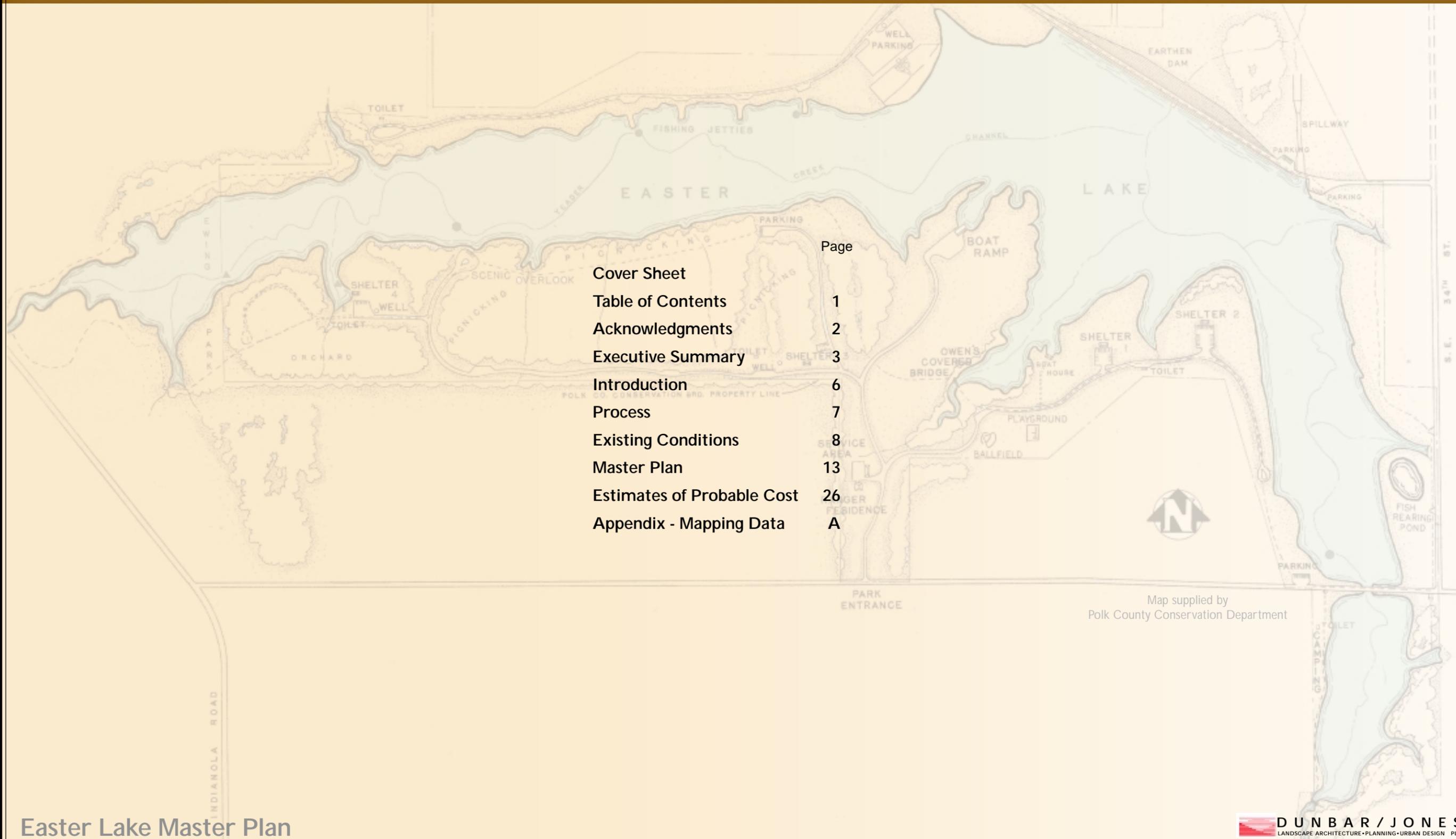
Prepared for the Polk County Conservation Board
January, 2003



Map supplied by
Polk County Conservation Department

INDIANOLA ROAD

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Acknowledgments



The Easter Lake Master Plan was developed with the cooperation and assistance of many individuals and groups. Numerous meetings, conversations, and public forums led to the development of the final plan. Participants in the process included:

Ben VanGundy
Archie Brooks
Dixie Brooks
Dean Brusher
Jane Clark
Rick Cordes
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and the many public volunteers who participated in the planning process.



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Polk County Conservation Department

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Executive Summary



PCCB Vision Statement
It is the vision and the goal of the Polk County Conservation Board and staff to provide a variety of park experiences equitably throughout our county. Parks will be developed and maintained at the highest quality, ensuring a safe environment with exceptional customer service while sustaining our mission for land conservation. Program services will be designed and developed to educate and teach citizens of all ages how to enjoy and preserve the natural environments of Polk County through a series of targeted outdoor recreational experiences. Parks and recreation services will be provided through effective partnerships with cities in Polk County and other conservation agencies, ensuring a high quality of life for all Polk County residents.

Vision Statement copied from PCCB Strategic Master Plan Draft 2002



Executive Summary

Introduction

Following recommendations established in the Strategic Master Plan Draft of 2002 to inventory all county parks, the Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) requested the services of outside consultants to compile and prepare a Master Plan for Easter Lake Park. The directive was to inventory the existing park, its trails, open spaces, and recreational facilities. The data collected would be used to aid the PCCB in assessing current and future needs of the park.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Easter Lake Master Plan* is to aid the PCCB and the staff of Easter Lake Park in their role of decision-making that will guide future development of Easter Lake Park. The Master Plan provides a foundation for development that reflects the vision of the PCCB and, at the same time, accommodates the desires of the community. This report identifies and addresses the issues and concerns resulting from a collaborative team of professionals and volunteers coming together with the same desire, to preserve and protect Easter Lake Park.

Planning Process

Information was collected through a series of planning workshops and a community design charrette that provided all willing stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in the planning process and to share their ideas, concerns, and ambitions with the Steering Committee and consulting team. Through the teamwork of PCCB, citizen volunteer groups, and the consulting team, a set of goals, objectives, and recommendations were identified and determined to be the important criteria in developing and protecting Easter Lake Park for future use. The following document brings together a definitive plan that provides for new recreational opportunities, new and updated facilities throughout the park, and a strong emphasis on the continued management of the park's natural resources.

The Goals established during the early planning process are:

1. Maintain park for public use.
2. Keep park environmentally friendly.

3. Develop partnerships with neighbors.
4. Develop a funding plan.

The main issues and concerns established during the planning process are:

1. Accommodate for new recreational uses.
2. Address environmental uses.
3. Address impacts to the area of neighbors and local landowners.
4. Identify who should be involved in the planning process.
5. Budget issues.

Existing Conditions

A comprehensive assessment of existing conditions was prepared for Easter Lake Park. During visits to the park, photographs and written documentation were used to catalog the current conditions of the park and its infrastructure. Issues and possible opportunities surfaced during this initial inventory phase. After further analysis by the Steering Committee, park staff and the consulting team, additional opportunities and issues were identified and deemed important enough to address in the master plan document.



Executive Summary (continued)

The *Easter Lake Park Master Plan* recommends improvements to existing recreational amenities as well as the addition of several others. The addition of new recreational opportunities for the park and the enhancement of existing features will insure that Easter Lake Park continues to be a significant landmark for the Polk County community.

The Polk County Conservation Board will always continue to provide a height level of accessibility that is practical and consistent with the user's expectations in coordination with the constraints and opportunities presented by the natural environment.

Master Plan

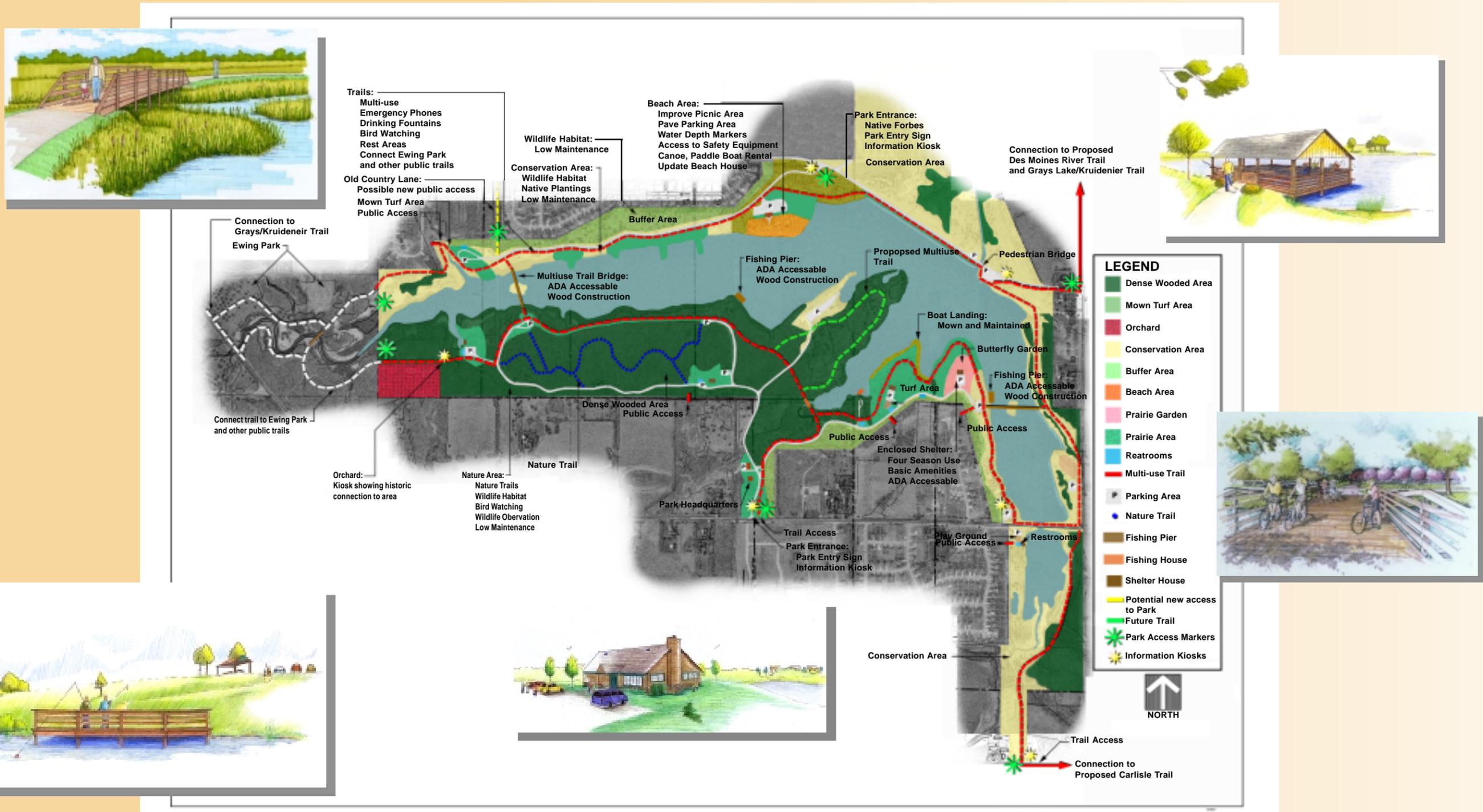
The Easter Lake Master Plan recommends improvements to several areas of the park. Recommendations identified in this report are:

- Improve existing trail system.
- Addition of trails and trailheads, connecting to other trails.
- Pedestrian connecting points to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Addition of recreational amenities.
- Improve water quality.
- Improve beach facilities.
- Provide educational programs.
- Improve wildlife habitat.
- Improve buffer areas.

The Easter Lake Master Plan accomplishes the following objectives:

- Outlines recommendations to improve existing park facilities and recreational amenities.
- Offers recommendations to implement new park facilities and recreational amenities.
- Conducts an inventory and analysis of existing features in the park.
- Involves the steering committee and public volunteers to assist in the planning and development of the report.
- Establishes operations and maintenance guidelines for the park.
- Develops estimates of probable costs.
- Develops strategies to restore and protect water quality of the lake.
- Prioritizes project implementation.

Executive Summary (continued)



Executive Summary (continued)

Understanding the recreational desires of the community, its attitudes about recreation, and the constant changes in recreation are instrumental to a county conservation board and its staff. Park visitors today require a broad range of recreational opportunities, making it difficult for a park board to meet the goals of its mission. These recreational uses fall mainly around passive recreation, with the accommodation of active recreational uses available throughout areas of the park.

The Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) has found itself addressing these same issues with the parks under its direction. Usage of public lands continues to increase every year. According to PCCB, an estimated 1.4 million users visited Polk County parks last year. A 2001 parks and recreation family survey administered by Leisure Vision for the PCCB indicated that 37% of 927 families polled had visited Easter Lake Park within the past year. The poll also identified activities park users enjoyed while visiting Polk County parks. The top four activities were picnicking, number one, followed by hiking, biking, and fishing, all of which are available to users at Easter Lake.

With the increasing number of visitors using Polk County parks and the population growth in Polk County estimated to reach 400,000 by the year 2005, the PCCB has initiated a process of reevaluating its role and direction in providing best management practices for the parks it manages. This report has been prepared to aid the PCCB in establishing a direction that will best serve and protect Easter Lake Park, its resources, and its visitors.

Easter Lake opened in 1969 in the southeast corner of Des Moines, built primarily for flood retention of Yeader Creek and its surrounding watershed. Encompassing 464 acres and a lake area of 172 acres, Easter Lake Park has become a prime recreational site for the residents of Polk County and the surrounding areas. With the popularity of the park and the subsequent land development around it, Easter Lake's infrastructure and natural resources are realizing increased demands. Easter Lake is a unique place for Polk County, with diverse elements for recreation and wildlife habitat. Trying to make these elements coexist in a growing urban environment has brought about new challenges and opportunities for the PCCB and park facilitators.

When the park was built, the land bordering Easter Lake was primarily agricultural, with small urban acreages scattered throughout. Today, tightly grouped subdivisions block or minimize most views outside the park and pedestrian entry points dissect the park's boundary allowing easier accessibility. Originally the park's design had been car-focused for users who commuted miles from the city to picnic and recreate. Amenities and activities were built along the vehicle routes for easy accessibility.

In its new urban context, the park's identity has begun to change. Because users now live adjacent to the park, they can walk or ride a bike at their leisure, changing the demographics of the park to appear more like an urban neighborhood park. Unaccompanied children, walkers, and joggers have become more frequent in the park increasing the importance of navigability, placement of amenities, and security. New amenities and activities need to reflect the changing uses of the park while preserving its natural attributes.



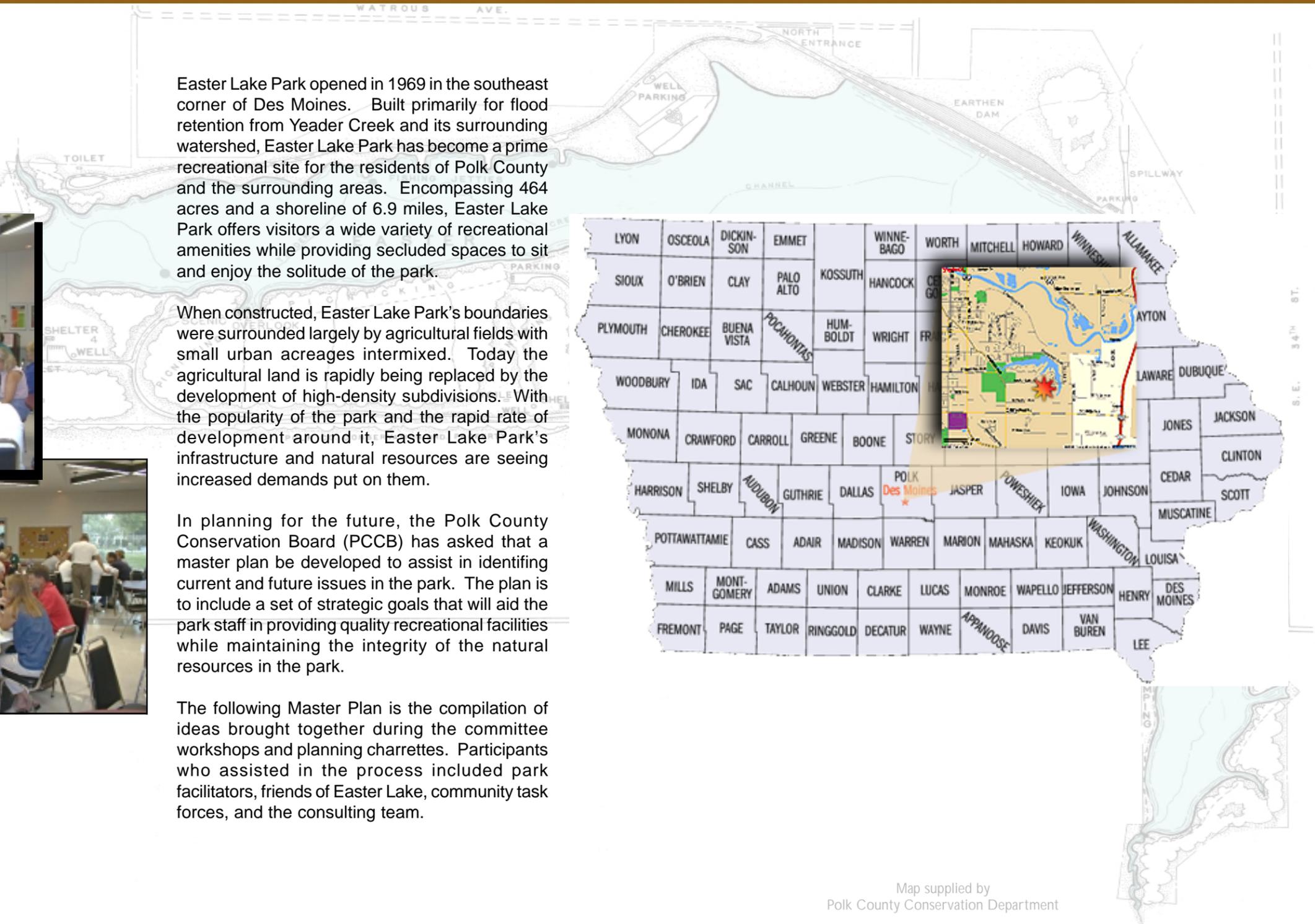
Introduction

Easter Lake Park opened in 1969 in the southeast corner of Des Moines. Built primarily for flood retention from Yeader Creek and its surrounding watershed, Easter Lake Park has become a prime recreational site for the residents of Polk County and the surrounding areas. Encompassing 464 acres and a shoreline of 6.9 miles, Easter Lake Park offers visitors a wide variety of recreational amenities while providing secluded spaces to sit and enjoy the solitude of the park.

When constructed, Easter Lake Park's boundaries were surrounded largely by agricultural fields with small urban acreages intermixed. Today the agricultural land is rapidly being replaced by the development of high-density subdivisions. With the popularity of the park and the rapid rate of development around it, Easter Lake Park's infrastructure and natural resources are seeing increased demands put on them.

In planning for the future, the Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) has asked that a master plan be developed to assist in identifying current and future issues in the park. The plan is to include a set of strategic goals that will aid the park staff in providing quality recreational facilities while maintaining the integrity of the natural resources in the park.

The following Master Plan is the compilation of ideas brought together during the committee workshops and planning charrettes. Participants who assisted in the process included park facilitators, friends of Easter Lake, community task forces, and the consulting team.



Process

The purpose of the plan was to help the PCCB set a directive that would establish a clear vision for future planning and development for Easter Lake Park.

Developing a successful master plan involves a collaborative team approach, one that brings together both professionals and public participants as stakeholders in the project. Public participation played a key role in preparing the Easter Lake Master Plan. Involving the public accomplished two objectives in the planning process. One, it gave the public a sense of empowerment in planning development for the park; and two, it allowed the park board and staff to better understand and address the issues and needs of the public.

Participation Process

To gather the data needed for planning, Dunbar/Jones scheduled a public design charrette and a series of workshops in which the Steering Committee, park staff, and public volunteers participated. The first Steering Committee workshop was held on May 22, 2002. Dunbar/Jones opened the meeting by sharing its directive and what was hoped to be accomplished during the planning process. Data collected from the inventory and analysis of the park and surrounding landscape was presented.

At this time, members of the Steering Committee were given a series of questions and asked to list ideas and issues they believed were challenges or opportunities the park faced. From the data collected, the Steering Committee compiled a preliminary list of goals and issues.

Preliminary Goal

1. Maintain park for public use.
2. Keep park environmentally friendly.
3. Develop partnerships with neighbors.
4. Develop a funding plan.

Preliminary Issues

1. Accommodating uses.
2. Environmental issues.
3. Neighbors and local landowners.
4. Who is involved?
5. Economic issues.

On August 7, 2002, a second workshop was held with the Steering Committee. This meeting was used to review the goals and issues from the prior meeting and to present the committee with the next step in the planning process. The committee members were given a list of questions, icons, and a map of Easter Lake Park and asked to place icons on the map to identify potential uses/activities believed to be important to future development of Easter Lake Park.



The following questions were presented to the Steering Committee:

1. What do we need to accomplish for the Easter Lake Master Plan Project?
2. What are the issues facing the Easter Lake Master Plan Project?
3. List the development criteria for the Easter Lake Master Plan Project.
4. List the context implications for the Easter Lake Master Plan Project.
5. Who are the stakeholders?
6. Who are the current and potential users?
7. What are the local design cues?
8. What are the desired uses?
9. Who are potential constituents/partners?

Using this process, the Steering Committee put together a list of goals, issues, potential users, potential partners, stakeholders, development criteria, potential constituents, opportunities, and concerns. The information gathered was instrumental in determining the direction of the planning process.

Process (continued)

Goals for the Easter Lake Master Plan

1. Maintain User Friendly Environment

- Analyze the need of the park to serve a growing population – destination park.
- Develop plan for the future – what to enhance or repair to serve the public in 10 years and beyond; what development should take place in and around the park.
- Enhance the existing characteristics.
- Make an appealing public park for everyone – all users and abutting property owners.
- Balance all the needs of the people using the urban park.
- Develop recreational opportunities and programs, including meaningful nondestructive opportunities.
- Develop an enclosed year-round shelter.
- Create a system that is user friendly for bike and pedestrian traffic.
- Develop management philosophy.

2. Environmentally Friendly

- Preserve and maintain the wildlife habitat in the park.
- Keep the park as user friendly as possible without harming the wildlife.
- Keep the natural setting of the park; retain the uniqueness amidst the growth.
- Make the quality of the water a priority – include siltation, lawn application, and dredging (eliminate siltation and pollution in the lake).

3. Work with Neighbors and Develop Partnerships

- Protect surrounding homeowners from park users (late night sounds, trespassing, etc.)
- Keep encroachments from impacting the public's enjoyment of the park.
- Preserve views – screen park from surrounding views of houses.
- Gain input from surrounding community – they have a stake in the project.
- Develop and maintain a mutual understanding of roles – public, Conservation Board, Supervisors.

4. Develop a Funding Plan

- Develop a capital plan and budget.
- Develop operations and maintenance budget.
- Determine potential funding sources.

Issues for the Easter Lake Master Plan

1. Accommodating Uses

- Active versus passive uses.
- Accommodations for different user types.
- Public perception of beach safety.
- Do not overcrowd the park.

2. Environmental Issues

- Water quality.
- Environmental stability and sustainability.
- Protecting available greenspace.

3. Neighbors and Local Land Owners

- Homeowner possession versus physiological attachment.
- Large number of abutting owners.
- Park location – rural versus urban.

4. Who is Involved

- Who is the public and what do they want?
- Ownership and management of park.
- Staffing.
- City, County, and State cooperation.

5. Economic Issues

- Money
- Worksheet results

Process (continued)

Development Criteria for the Easter Lake Master Plan

1. Environmental

- Preserve greenspace.
- Develop dredging and pollution control plan.
- Minimize the effects of abutting homeowners on the area.

2. Quality of Life

- Promote “peace of mind” setting.
- Educational opportunities/process in whatever we do.

3. Meeting Public Needs

- Meet different user needs and wants.
- Prioritize park needs.
- Expand walking trails around lake.
- Provide four-season shelter.
- Involve the public as soon as possible.
- Look at what other park areas offer.

4. Development Issues

- Don't overdevelop.
- High quality of development.
- Ensure people want to live around the lake.

Potential Constituencies

1. Government Agencies

- City of Des Moines.
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

2. Local People and Groups

- Artists.
- Churches.
- Family gatherings/reunions.
- Kiwanis.
- Meetings.

- Neighborhood groups.
- Weddings, receptions.
- Youth groups.

3. Environmental Enthusiasts

- Conservation groups.
- Environmental groups.
- Nature programs.
- Outdoor organizations.
- Water monitors.

4. Schools and Businesses

- Area businesses.
- Des Moines area public schools.
- Environmental educators.
- Students.

5. Recreation Enthusiasts

- Biking groups.
- Music concert attendees.
- Rowing groups, canoers and kayakers.

Potential Partners

1. Government Agencies

- City government.
- County government.
- Department of Natural Resources.
- Federal agencies.
- Schools.

2. Local People

- Builders.
- Des Moines citizens.
- Developers.
- Family events.

Process (continued)

- Local companies.
- Neighborhood associations.

3. Gardening and Outdoor Organizations

- Des Moines garden clubs.
- Horticulturist clubs/organizations.
- Outdoor groups.

4. Civic Organizations

- Audubon Society.
- Girl Scouts.
- Boy Scouts.
- Izaak Walton.
- Sierra Club.
- South Des Moines Chamber.
- Volkssport Association.

Potential Users

1. Local Groups and Organizations

- Churches.
- Schools.
- Scouts.

2. Nature Enthusiasts

- Bird watchers.
- Naturalists.
- Nature lovers.

3. Neighbors and Surrounding Communities

- Adjoining property owners.
- Polk County residents.
- Marion County.
- Warren County.
- Jasper County.

4. Recreation Enthusiasts

- Bikers.
- Hikers.
- Fisherman.
- Boaters.
- Joggers.
- Picnickers.
- Families.
- Roller bladers.
- Sightseers.
- Swimmers.
- Walkers.
- Nature enthusiasts.

Stakeholders

1. Environmental Enthusiasts

- Preservation groups.
- Environmental education groups.
- Wildlife groups.

2. Users

- Fishermen.
- Bikers.
- Hikers.
- Picnickers.
- Wildlife observers.

3. Neighbors

- Area homeowners.

4. Public and Governmental Agencies

- Iowa DNR.

Process (continued)

- County government.
- Board of Supervisors.
- City of Des Moines.
- Law enforcement.
- Park rangers.
- Easter Lake Task Force.

Local Design Cues

1. The Lake and Woods

- The park's privacy must be protected from surrounding development.
- Improve quality of lake by dredging and construction of silt traps.
- Woods.
- Protection of natural areas.
- Maintain an inviting atmosphere in public areas.

2. Man-made Features

- Signage.
- Water fountains.
- Covered bridge.
- Walking bridges.
- Dam improvements.
- Playgrounds.
- Park structures.
- Beach.
- Trails.
- Buffer areas on park boundaries.

Desired Uses

1. Environmental Preservation and Enhancement

- Plant diversity.
- Ornamental trees.
- Native grasses and forbs.
- Greenspace buffer.

- Bird habitat improvements.
- Butterfly garden.

2. Recreational Opportunities

- Four-season shelter.
- Bike trail connector to Ewing Park.
- Trail connector to other city trails.
- Nature trail.
- Playground on north side of park.
- Fishing house and piers.
- Quiet water activities.
- Beach and swimming area.
- Bird watching.
- Emergency phones.
- Educational programs.
- Partnerships.

Perceived Results

1. Precious Land

- "Emerald" greenspace surrounding the lake.
- "Crown jewel" of Des Moines.
- Maintain lake integrity – decrease siltation, improve water quality.
- Better land uses for public.
- Residential lots only – no multifamily units near park border.

2. Master Plan

- Develop comprehensive usage plan – tie together environmental and human impacts.
- Present a dynamic plan to the general public.
- Attain the necessary funding from the city and/or county.
- Identify possible revenue sources.

Process (continued)

3. Provide New Public Facilities

- Park should provide recreational, educational, and leisurely amenities.
- Network of trails to connect different areas of the park.
- Additional shelters.
- Water slide feature at beach.
- Fishing house.
- Easter Lake Drive and Indianola Road should be widened.

4. Environmental Opportunities

- Preserve natural resources in the park and surrounding areas.
- Improve aesthetically and protect the park.
- Plant more trees and shrubs for wildlife.
- Don't overcrowd the park.

5. Recreational Opportunities

- Provide a wide range of outdoor entertainment and recreation.
- Provide places of solitude.
- Walking.
- Bird watching.
- Biking.
- Connect Ewing Park and Easter Lake Park.
- Connect Grays Lake to Easter Lake Park.
- Connect Easter Lake to proposed Des Moines River Trail.

On August 21, 2002, a community design charrette was held to present the work completed by the Steering Committee to date and to gain input from the public. The consulting team outlined the scope of work involved and the direction the planning process would follow. The public was presented with the inventory and analysis of the park and the work completed thus far by the Steering Committee. After a question and answer period, the public was split into groups, given the same type of map and icons as the Steering Committee, and asked to place the icons on the map to identify potential uses/activities believed to be important to future development of Easter Lake Park.

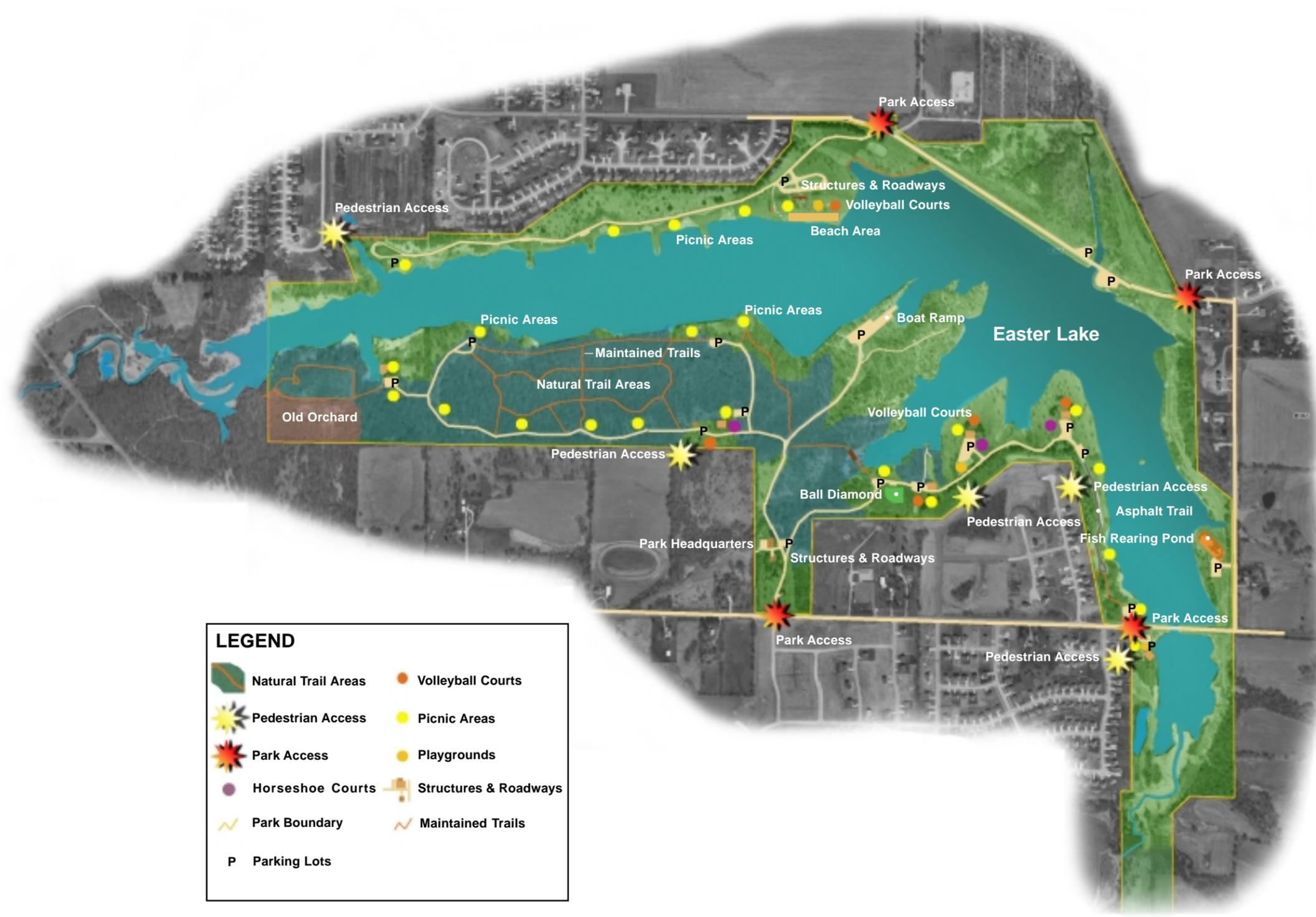
A meeting was held on November 25, 2002 with the Steering Committee and the staff of Easter Lake Park to review work completed to date. Participants were asked to give feedback and address any changes that needed to be made.

At a meeting on January 8, 2003, the Polk County Conservation Board was presented with a preliminary master plan for Easter Lake Park. After some discussion and a few minor changes to the plan, the preliminary work was approved for further development.

On February 6, 2003, the consultants met with the Polk County Conservation Board to revisit the current work that had been done on the preliminary master plan. After some discussion and a few minor changes, the preliminary work was approved for further



Inventory of Existing Conditions



LEGEND	
	Natural Trail Areas
	Pedestrian Access
	Park Access
	Horseshoe Courts
	Park Boundary
	Volleyball Courts
	Picnic Areas
	Playgrounds
	Structures & Roadways
	Maintained Trails
	Parking Lots

Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

Easter Lake Park opened in 1969 on a site in southeast Des Moines that is known to have been the last operating coal mine in Polk County. Remnants of mine tailings remain visible on the south side of the lake near the boat ramp. The coal mine was shut down in 1959 and soon after the land was considered for use as a landfill site. Opposing the idea, neighborhood volunteers joined together to form the South Town Lake and Development Society to lobby for the use of the site as a park.

The current land area of the park measures approximately 464 acres, with the lake area measuring approximately 172 acres. Since the time of its construction, the lake has seen a drastic reduction in its water quality, loss of shoreline, and decrease in water depth due to siltation. In 1995, it was estimated that the lake area measured 220 acres, a loss of 23% of its shoreline due to sediment runoff from the surrounding watershed.

When Easter Lake opened, only approximately 40% of the surrounding watershed had been developed. Today, roughly 70% of the watershed has been developed and continues to grow. Where there were once views of open pastures and crop land, now stand residential homes that have blocked some of the views Easter Lake once offered. Neighborhood connectors and trails now dissect the park's borders allowing pedestrian access throughout the park.

With the changes in recreational activities over the years, some of the original activities of the park have slowly become abandoned, while others remain viable aspects of the park. Although abandoned, these spaces offer opportunities for new incarnations.

Orchard

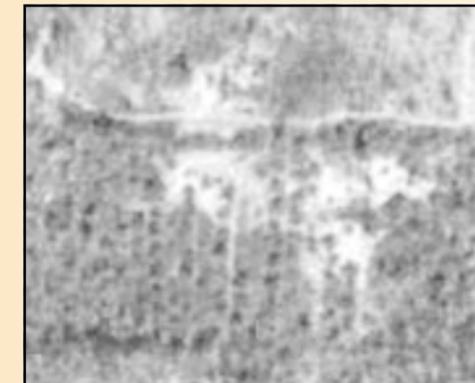
Remnants of an old orchard can be found on the southwest side of the park. Overgrown and barely recognizable, faint footprints of a structure and weeded rows of fruit trees remain visible. Historically, many apple orchards once existed in this area but, as development from Des Moines spread further south, the rows of trees were quickly replaced with rows of high-density residential housing.



Remains of Mine Tailings.



View of Orchard Remnants.



Satellite aerial photo showing remnant pattern of old orchard.

Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

Ball Diamond

The ball diamond was one of the early recreation amenities installed when the park was first built; in recent years it has experienced very minimal use. The only evidence that a diamond existed is the chain link backstop. Pine trees have been planted on the outer perimeter of the outfield. The trees were planted as a buffer to block views of the new homes.



Covered Bridge

The bridge dates the history of Iowa and is a definite landmark for the park. Built in the 1800's, the bridge remains in very good condition, but has been the target of vandalism in recent years. Graffiti and carvings are visible inside the bridge both on the walls and flooring. A nearby interpretive sign gives a brief history of the bridge.



Beach Area

The beach is a popular attraction for the park. Usage has increased dramatically with the development around the park. The building is reasonably old but has been updated over the years. The building has two dressing stalls, three open-air restrooms, and a concession area. In front of the dressing area is an outdoor shower for rinsing off sand. The parking lot is crushed limestone. The beach sand is very coarse and rough to walk on. The grounds around the beach is mown turf grass with a few picnic tables scattered about. A small playground and a sand volleyball area are used regularly during the summer.



Restrooms

The restrooms in the park are readily available and easily accessible to visitors. All restrooms are constructed with waste pits except for the ones adjoining the beach house. The beach house facilities are equipped with more modern amenities. Although the pit-style restrooms are less desirable, they are clean and well maintained.



Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

Picnic Areas

Several picnic areas are scattered throughout the park. Most offer a picnic table and grill box. These picnic sites are generally found in remote areas some distance from the public facilities. The advantages of these sites are that they are somewhat secluded and offer peace and solitude from the more public areas in the park.



Shelters

Five open-air shelters are located in the park, most of which are large enough to hold more than one picnic table. In the area around the beach, two of the shelters were built to cover only one table. Amenities that can be found near a shelter house are tables, grill boxes, parking, and playgrounds. Some shelters also have horseshoe pits alongside for adult recreation.



Playgrounds

Playgrounds have been updated recently with new play equipment and ground surface material. They are all close in proximity to shelters, parking, and restrooms. The play area adjacent to the beach has the least amenities and looks as though it has yet to be enhanced.



Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

Easter Lake

Easter Lake is a popular spot for swimmers and anglers. For many years the lake has offered Polk County residents and surrounding neighbors an escape from everyday routines. However, the popularity of Easter Lake Park and the development around it is taking a toll on the lake. Bank erosion, is evident due to heavy foot traffic, throughout areas of the lake. Siltation from surrounding run off has reduced the depth of the lake as well as depleted oxygen levels.



Boat Ramp

The boat ramp is located on the south side of Easter Lake and is the only boat access available. The ramp has an asphalt surface and is in good condition. At the end of the ramp is a wooden dock for ease of loading and unloading boats and equipment. A small parking lot is available for boaters to park vehicles and trailers while out on the lake.



Buffer Areas

Natural buffers have been developed around a majority of the park's perimeter. Buffers are used to block views of the abutting houses and to provide habitat for wildlife living in the park. The buffers are made of a mixture of tall hedges, deciduous and coniferous trees, and strips of native grasses.



Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

South Park Entrance

The south entrance is well marked with a welcome sign and an information kiosk just inside the gate. The park ranger's home and maintenance facility are also located here.



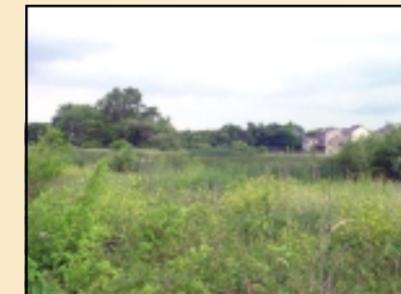
North Park Entrance

The north entrance is marked only by a small wooden sign that sits inside the park gate. The sign describes the park rules and times the park is open. The entrance is bordered by large scotch pines on one side and a reconstructed prairie on the other. The north entrance is the only access to the beach area.



Natural Areas

The natural areas in Easter Lake Park provide suitable habitat for the wildlife that live in the park and cover near half the park's land area. A well-maintained trail along the south side of the lake provides naturalists with a place of solitude and for viewing nature. The natural areas are a mix of dense woods and native grasses. Trails are mown strips to help reduce the impacts on the area. For easy accessibility, small parking lots are located at the trail entrances.



Parking Lots

Parking lots can be found throughout the park. Most have been blacktopped in recent years, allowing easy access to all park amenities. The parking lots that have not yet been blacktopped are covered with crushed limestone.



Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

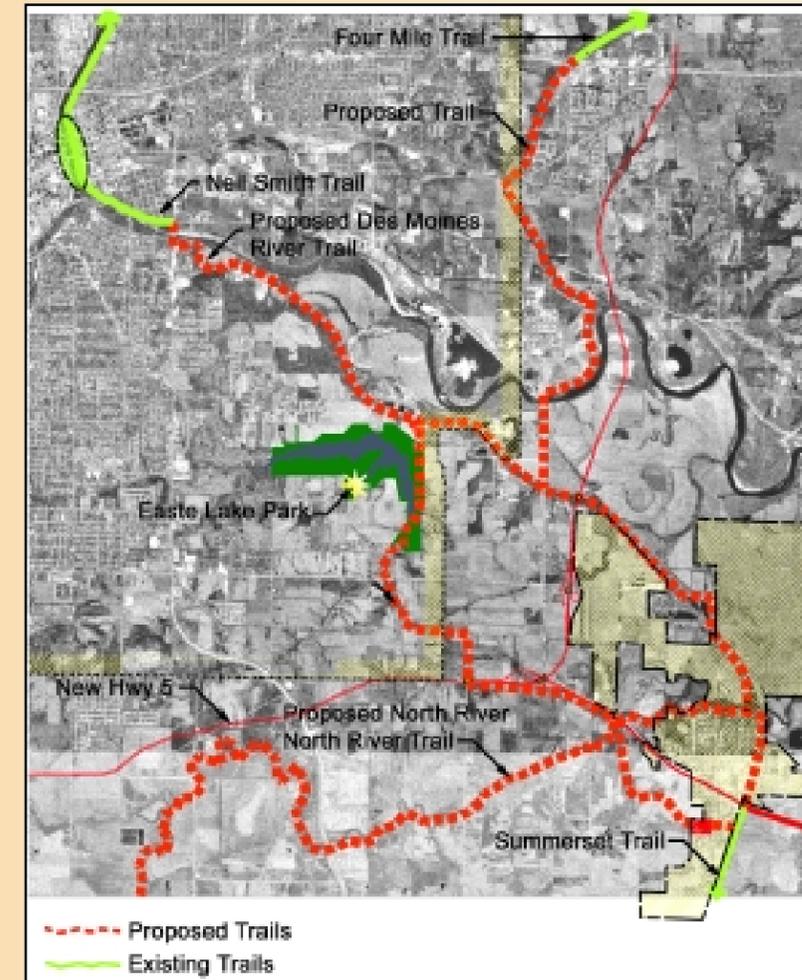
Trails

Numerous trails are found throughout the park. These provide access to most areas, including the new neighborhoods that abut the park. Trails are mainly greenways or mown strips that cut through the tall grasses or wooded areas. The right-of-way along the park's roads provides trail usage as well.



Existing or Proposed Trails surrounding Easter Lake Park

Current proposals to link Easter Lake Park with Carlisle and Downtown Des Moines via two new multi-use trails, the North River Trail and the Des Moines River Trail, are currently in planning stages. If built, these links would further increase usage of the park. How the park staff chooses to welcome these changes and its neighbors will ultimately decide the character of the park. Having a strong vision and a strategic management plan will provide a foundation that will strengthen the viability of the park and make a harmonious connection to its neighbors and the future trails proposed for the area.



Inventory of Existing Conditions (continued)

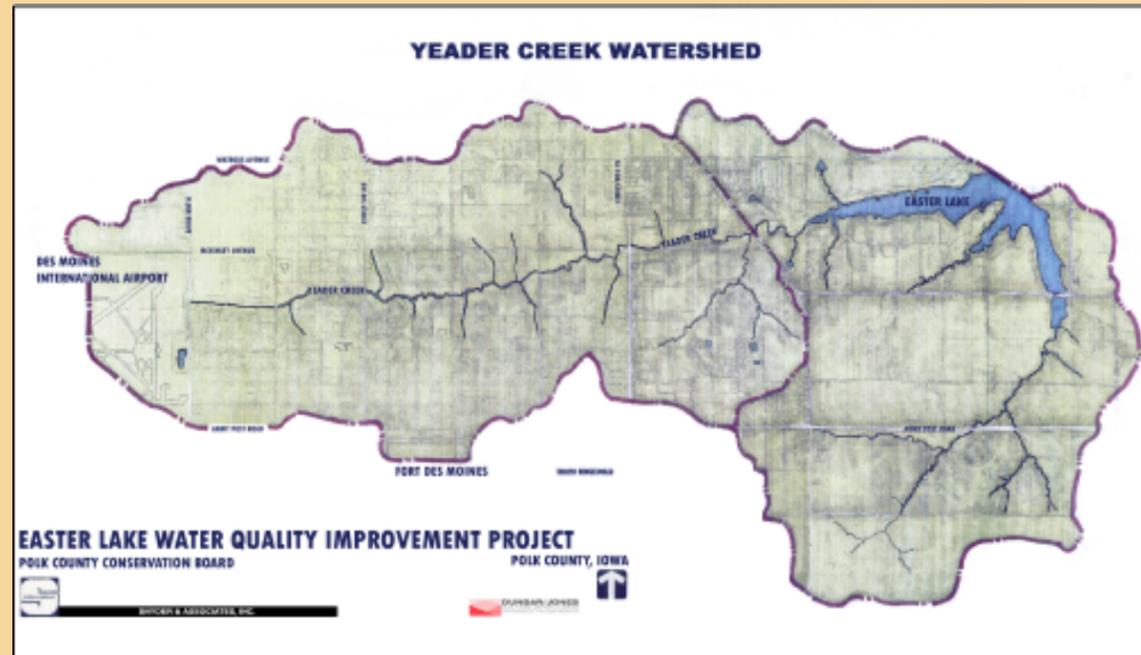
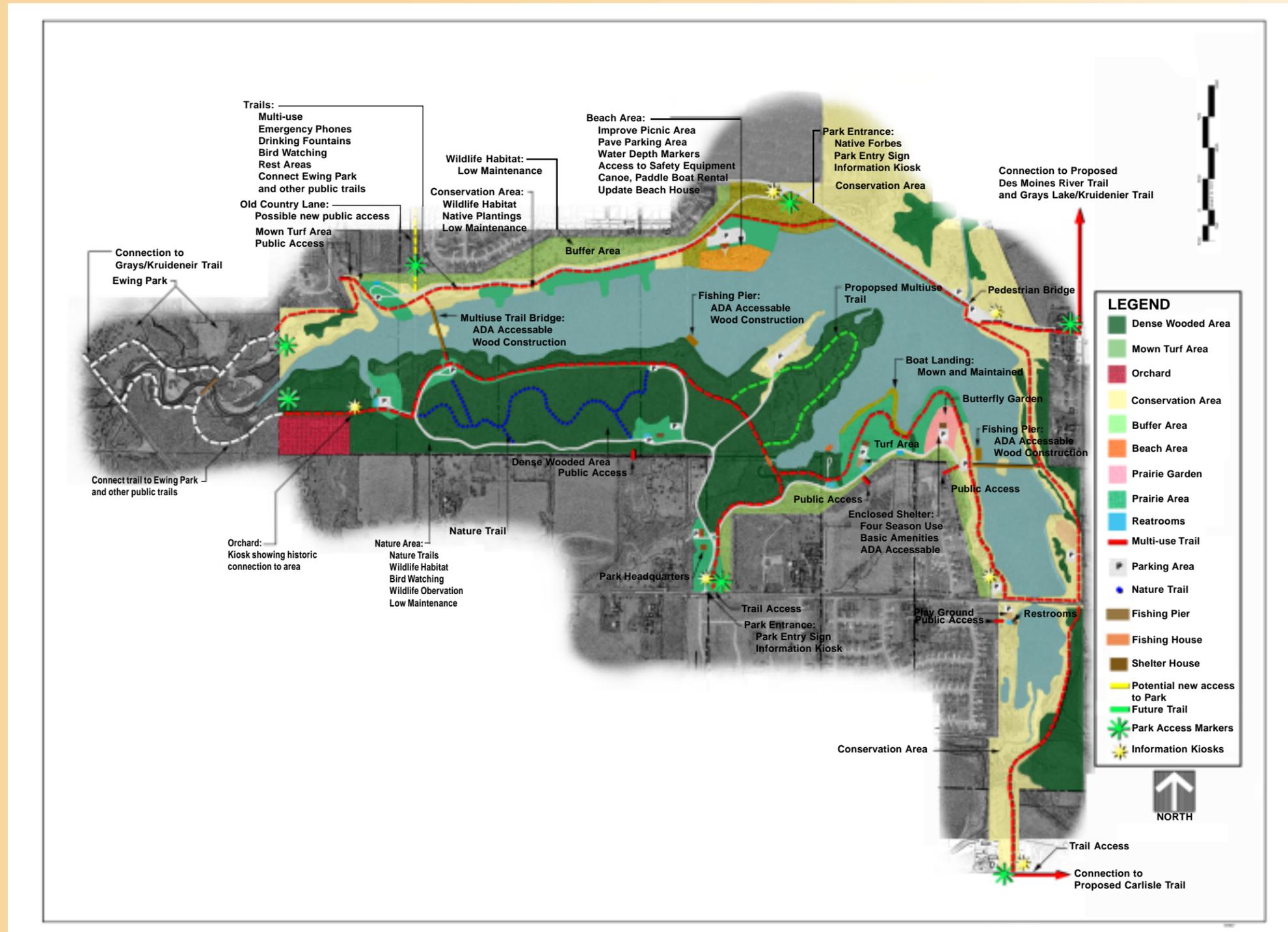


Figure 1: Yeader Creek and its watershed boundary have direct and indirect effects on the quality and condition of Easter Lake. The Yeader Creek Water Shed Map shows how much land area ultimately affects the water quality of Easter Lake from runoff.



Figure 2: Estimates are that, with the rate of development within the Yeader Creek Water Shed, Easter Lake will lose approximately 50 to 60% of its lake area by 2021. Silt traps built in water inlets and a dredging plan can protect and restore Easter Lake to its original size.

Master Plan



Master Plan (continued)

Fishing House

The proposed fish house would be similar in construction to the fishing pier but would have a roof structure and side walls. The proposed site for the fish house will be determined by the park staff and fish biologists. The fish house would be wood construction, built near park amenities, and meet all ADA requirements.



Sketch of proposed fish house

Enclosed Four-Season Shelter House

The proposed four-season shelter house would be located on the south side of the lake just east of the boat ramp. The shelter would be wood construction, ADA accessible, and offer amenities such as electricity, running water, stove, refrigerator, table, and chairs. The shelter could be used for such things as reunions, meetings, and receptions.



Sketch of proposed four season shelter house

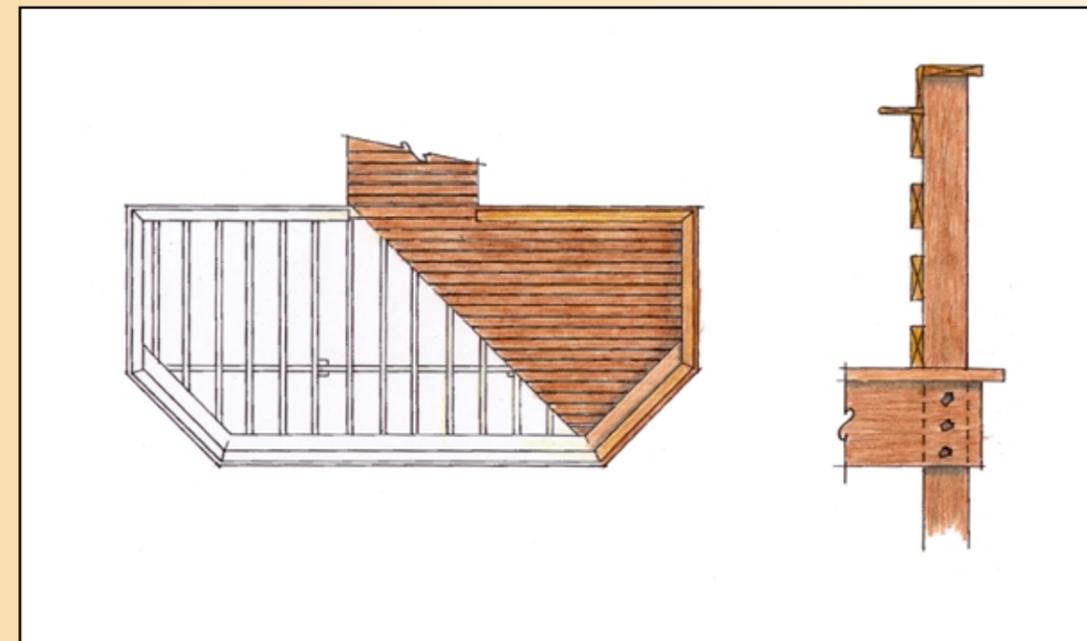
Master Plan (continued)

Fishing Pier

Two wooden fishing piers are being proposed for the south side of the lake. Fishing piers would allow better access to deeper water and aid in slowing bank erosion caused by fishing along the shoreline. The proposed piers would be designed to meet all ADA requirements, constructed of wood, placed in close proximity to shelters, parking, and restrooms.



Sketch of proposed fishing pier



Plan view sketch of proposed fishing pier

Master Plan (continued)

Butterfly Garden

Butterfly gardens are quite popular and provide visitors both a place to recreate and a place of education. The garden should offer a diverse palette of plants that supply food (nectar) as well as serve host to caterpillars laying eggs. A mixture of plant types are needed because many species of butterflies and caterpillars are plant specific. Pesticides are extremely harmful to caterpillars and butterflies and should be avoided. Volunteer groups such as garden clubs and schools could be organized to help maintain the garden.



Multiuse Park Trails

Current trails in Easter Lake Park accommodate a variety of users and should remain as such. Implementation of more trails, trail kiosks, emergency phones, and trail markers are being proposed to better accommodate park users. New trail heads are also being proposed allowing better access to neighboring communities and to Polk County's ever-growing trails system. Recommendations are to leave current management practices as they are. Existing trails are in good condition and seem to have regular maintenance.



Nature Trails

Nature trails should be kept in a natural state and improved with additional trails throughout the park. Nature trails offer wildlife enthusiasts the opportunity to observe wildlife and find solitude away from the more developed areas of the park. These trails would make great educational classrooms for area schools and children organizations. The trails should be well marked, with directional markers and interpretive signage, that identify the wildlife one would see while visiting Easter Lake Park. Recommendations for maintaining trails would be to follow existing management practices.



Master Plan (continued)

Orchard

Orchards were once a staple agriculture in the area prior to the construction of Easter Lake Park. It is being proposed that the remnants of the orchard be maintained with its historic patterns preserved. Recommendations are that a kiosk or interpretive sign be constructed depicting the historical context the orchards once played in this part of Polk County. Minimal maintenance such as mowing, picking up debris, and replanting of trees is needed. Replanting apple trees would not be necessary to the overall theme of the site. What is important is the pattern that remains in the landscape and how that pattern has historically shaped the development of the area.



Buffer Areas

Buffer areas around Easter Lake Park offer both visitors and bordering homeowners protection from one another. For the visitor in the park, buffer areas provide visual screens from the increasing number of houses surrounding the park. For homeowners, the buffer area could serve as to block sounds coming from the park. Buffer areas surrounding the park are well defined and in some cases have recently had new plantings, deepening the depth of the buffer. Recommendations for buffers around the park include the maintenance of current management practices with the exception of the implementation of a low fuel policy in the management plan. Some areas in the older parts of the buffer area have a relatively high volume of ground fuel. With the encroaching development on the park's borders, this could pose a fire threat.



Boat Landing

The proposed boat landing would be located on the south side of the lake and east of the boat ramp. This site is in close proximity to two shelter houses, restrooms, and a play area. The landing would be nothing more than a mown edge for mooring boats. The landing area would require minimal maintenance, with mowing on a regular basis and shore repair only as needed to minimize bank erosion.



Master Plan (continued)

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas throughout the park play an important role in forming the character of Easter Lake Park. These areas offer visitors pastoral views not readily available inside their manicured neighborhoods. Conservation areas also play a vital role in providing food and shelter for a variety of wildlife found inside the park. Recommendations are to keep the conservation and natural areas a top priority in future management practices for Easter Lake Park. Management practices for conservation areas would protect them from invasive plant species and degradation caused by over use by park visitors. Some natural areas in the park have been identified as wildlife areas or reconstructed prairie. Further development of these areas with signage and educational programs is also recommended.



Trail Bridges

Two wooden bridges spanning the lake are being proposed. The plan is to build one bridge using the existing island as a central support for the bridge and possibly a wayside with benches. The second bridge would be constructed at the far northwest end of the lake and would include a island as a center support and wayside. All structures would meet ADA requirements.



Kiosks and Signage

Kiosks and interpretive signage is being proposed to help identify areas of the park. Nature trails, for instance, could become more of an interactive or educational experience for visitors. The north side of the park would benefit with a entry sign similar to what has been installed at the south drive entry. Signage and kiosks would benefit users of the multiuse trails, helping to identify key destinations in and around the park.



Estimates of Probable Costs

Pricing

The following spreadsheet outlines probable costs related to construction and implementation of all proposed park amenities outlined in the preceding management plan.

Contingencies are included in all costs to account for localized increases in material costs, increases in labor costs due to time of year, contractor availability, and other unforeseen cost increases.

For the estimates of probable costs, the following assumptions were made.

Multiuse Trails

The proposed trails will be cost estimated in accordance to section IV of the *Iowa Trails* specification guidelines in relation to width, surface material, and subbase, and should be ADA compliant.

- Grading costs assume moderately flat or partially prepared surfaces. New trails in hilly areas may incur higher grading costs. Grading costs do not take into account adverse soil conditions.
- Granular subbase shall extend one foot beyond the edge of the trail on either side and will be compacted to a depth of four inches. Granular subbase material will be in accordance to DOT specifications.
- Asphalt trail surfaces shall have a compacted depth of four inches.
- Concrete trail surfaces shall have a depth of four inches.
- "Other Costs" refer to typical drainage considerations such as swales, culverts, or waterbars and support services, including signage and pavement markings.

Bridges and Boardwalk

The proposed bridges and boardwalk should be constructed with materials resistant to water damage and meet ADA specifications. Width of structures shall be in accordance to *Iowa Trails* specifications.

Fish House and Piers

The proposed fish house and fishing piers shall be constructed with materials resistant to water damage and meet ADA specifications.

All-Season Shelter House

The architecture of the shelter should have a rustic facade, blending its character into the surrounding landscape. The facility should have all modern amenities, water, heat, cooking appliances, refrigeration, and lavatory. The structure shall meet all building code requirements and shall be ADA compliant.

Installation of Utilities

Utilities in Easter Lake Park are located in only a few places. With the proposed construction of a four-season shelter house and the installation of an emergency phone system along the trail, utilities need to be added throughout the park, resulting in installation costs. The probable costs report will estimate the cost of installation for sewer, electric, water, and phone.

Parking Lots

Most parking lots in the park have been resurfaced with asphalt. However, a few remain that are made of crushed limestone. These parking lots should be resurfaced with an asphalt cap, phased in over a period of time until completed.

Butterfly Garden

Installation of the proposed butterfly garden will incur some initial costs from tilling soil and purchase of the seed.

Estimates of Probable Costs

Kiosk and Signage

When properly designed and placed kiosks and interpretive signs can easily be made to blend in with their surroundings and in fact become a focal point for visitors. The proposed kiosks and signs should be made of rigid non-chemical, fade, and rust resistant material.

Nature Trails

Costs to maintain nature trails will be minimal overall. Initial costs for the trails will be the clearing, grubbing and seeding of the selected trail alignment. Once installed, maintenance to the trails would include occasional mowing and removal of fallen tree debris.

Proposed Island

The proposed trail on the Northwest side of the lake will incur considerable costs to build. Construction costs could be offset if trail construction were planned with future dredging operations and built with the dredging fill. Costs shown are based on a one lump sum and do not include construction of proposed trail bridge. (See boardwalk and bridges for construction costs of bridge.)

Park Projects	Quantity		Unit Cost		Total
Multiuse Asphalt Trail - 10' wide, minimal grading	5.28	mile	\$300,000.00	LF	\$1,584,000.00
(2) Bridges-10' wide - wood constructed	1050	LF	\$200.00	LF	\$210,000.00
(1) Fish House-14'x20' - wood construction	280	SF	\$50.00	SF	\$14,000.00
(1) All Season Shelter House - 40'x50'	2000	SF	\$50.00	SF	\$100,000.00
Installation of Utilities					
• Electric	300	LF	\$5.00	LF	\$1,500.00
• Sanitary	300	LF	\$30.00	LF	\$9,000.00
• Water	300	LF	\$20.00	LF	\$6,000.00
Parking Lot for all season shelter (24 vehicles)	11664	SF	\$4.00	SF	\$46,656.00
Fishing Piers-14'x20'	2	560 SF	\$25.00	SF	\$14,000.00
Butterfly Garden	3500	SF	\$1.00	SF	\$3,500.00
Emergency Phone	2	EACH	\$5,000.00	LP Sum	\$10,000.00
Park Access Signs	7	EACH	\$500.00	LP Sum	\$3,500.00
Kiosks	6	EACH	\$2,000.00		\$12,000.00
Nature Trail- tree clearing, minimal grading and seeding	4050	LF	\$5.00	LF	\$20,250.00
* Proposed Island- native grasses seeding, bank stabilization with geo material and rock rip rap	1500	SF	\$1.00	SF	\$1,500.00
Bike Bridge Extensions	2	EACH	\$30,000.00	ea	\$60,000.00
Bike Trail Dam crossing, seeding & paving	2	LP Sum	\$104,450.00	LP Sum	\$104,450.00
Beach Area-					
•Update beach house		LP Sum	\$84,000.00	LP Sum	\$84,000.00
•Pave parking area	22,500	SF	\$4.00		\$90,000.00
Total					\$2,374,356.00

* Does not include construction of island. Island would be built using dredging sludge when dredging project is planned.

Appendix

- A1. Steering Committee Participants
- A2. Public Participants
- A3. Original Base Map
- A4. Adjacent Land Use Map
- A5. Base Map
- A6. Public Utilities Map
- A7. Slope Range Map
- A8. Soil Types Map
- A9. Soil Sensitivity Map
- A10. Topographic Map
- A11. Topographic Sensitivity Map

EASTER LAKE PARK MASTER PLAN

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Steering Committee Participants

Name	Address
Aimee & Dale Bentlage	Des Moines
Dean Busher	Des Moines
Jane Clark	Des Moines
Larry Edris	Des Moines
Jean Galvin	Des Moines
Ty Hubbell	Des Moines
Gene Philips	Des Moines
Neal Smith	Des Moines
Ron & Cherle Tait	Des Moines
Bertie Walkman	Des Moines

Appendix

EASTER LAKE PARK MASTER PLAN

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Public Participants

Name	City	Name	City	Name	City
1. Elaine Bales	Des Moines	15. Doug Erickson	Des Moines	29. Cheryl Mason	Des Moines
2. Jake Bales	Des Moines	16. Jean Galvin	Des Moines	30. Faith & Rick McGee	Des Moines
3. Zac Bales	Des Moines	17. Walt Galvin	Des Moines	31. Rhonda & Dave Navin	Des Moines
4. Aimee Bentlage	Des Moines	18. Linda Gioffredi	Des Moines	32. Jim Ritz	Des Moines
5. Jim Bollard	Des Moines	19. Terry Gioffredi	Des Moines	33. Sue & Don Shoemaker	Des Moines
6. Brett Bunckes	Des Moines	20. Arlyne Holden	Des Moines	34. Katie & Rudy Simon	Des Moines
7. Bob Buntz	Des Moines	21. Elaine Holden	Des Moines	35. Jenifer & Neal Smith	Des Moines
8. Jewell Chapman	Des Moines	22. Charlie James	Des Moines	36. Chris Tallman	Des Moines
9. Jane Clark	Des Moines	23. Rusty James	Des Moines	37. Tiffany & Stan Thompson	Des Moines
10. Judy Cooper	Des Moines	24. Kris Judge	Des Moines	38. Dan Twelmeyer	Des Moines
11. Dave Diehl	Des Moines	25. Nancy Judge	Des Moines	39. John Walkowaik	Des Moines
12. Nancy Diehl	Des Moines	26. Nan King	Des Moines	40. Bertie Waltman	Des Moines
13. Ruth Dominy	Des Moines	27. Mike Lat	Des Moines	41. Bob Wessel	Des Moines
14. Susan Ekstrom	Des Moines	28. Bobby Mason Jr.	Des Moines		