



*Old Hickory Park*

# CHAPTER 4

## EXISTING SYSTEM

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## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

La Crescent's residents have convenient access to a park and open space system that within the City limits, includes city parks, school district facilities and on a limited basis, private facilities. Every home in La Crescent is within one half mile or less of a local park developed for active recreation. La Crescent parks are shown on Exhibit 4-1. Outside of La Crescent, residents also have access to other facilities in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The focus of this plan is on park and open space facilities that lie within the community with an emphasis on those actually owned and operated by the City. The 1994 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan featured a classification system for existing parks. This plan departs from that approach. In a community the size of La Crescent, parks tend to serve many purposes and many different types of users diminishing the need to categorize facilities.

The following is an overview of each of the major park and open space facilities that currently serve La Crescent residents.

### ABNET FIELD

Abnet Field is an 8 acre recreation area that is located on property owned by the La Crescent-Hokah School District. The park includes the following facilities:

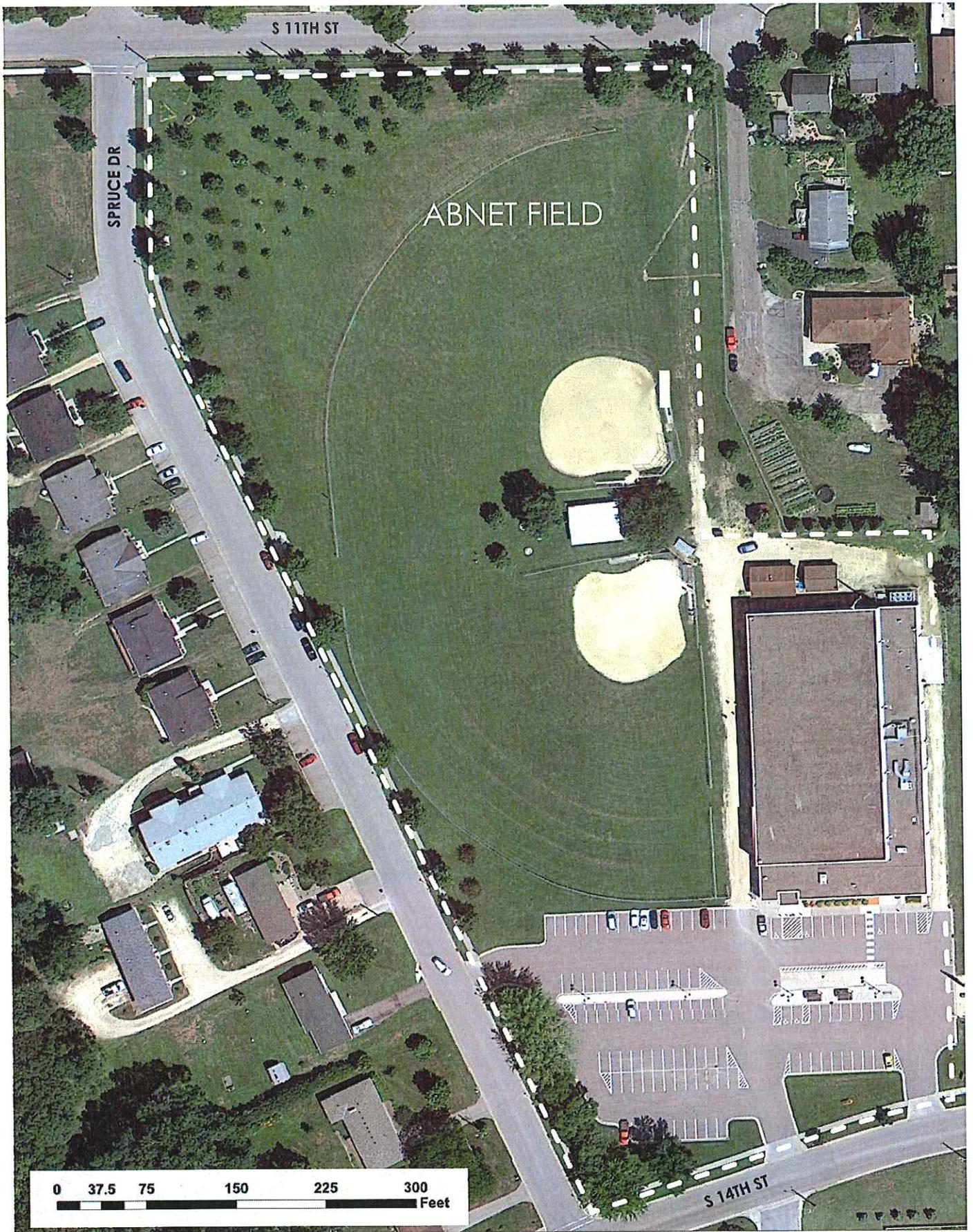
- Indoor hockey rink
- Off street parking
- Transit stop/park and ride
- Ball diamonds (2)
- Picnic shelter
- Play area
- Open field

### OBSERVATIONS

Abnet Field is fully developed and all facilities are in good condition. The park will continue as a joint operation of the City and the school district.

Note: In addition to Abnet Field, other school district facilities provide recreation opportunities for La Crescent residents. Approximately 22 acres of land on two sites, both of which are part of the high school campus contain a football field, ball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball and parking. Additionally, the La Crescent Elementary School site has backstops and a play area. Many of the school facilities are accessible during non-school hours for use by the community.

La Crescent Community Center provides indoor ice and it also serves as the location of the Boys and Girls Club as well as Active Living La Crescent's bike repair facility.



Abnet Field aerial

## FRANK J. KISTLER MEMORIAL PARK

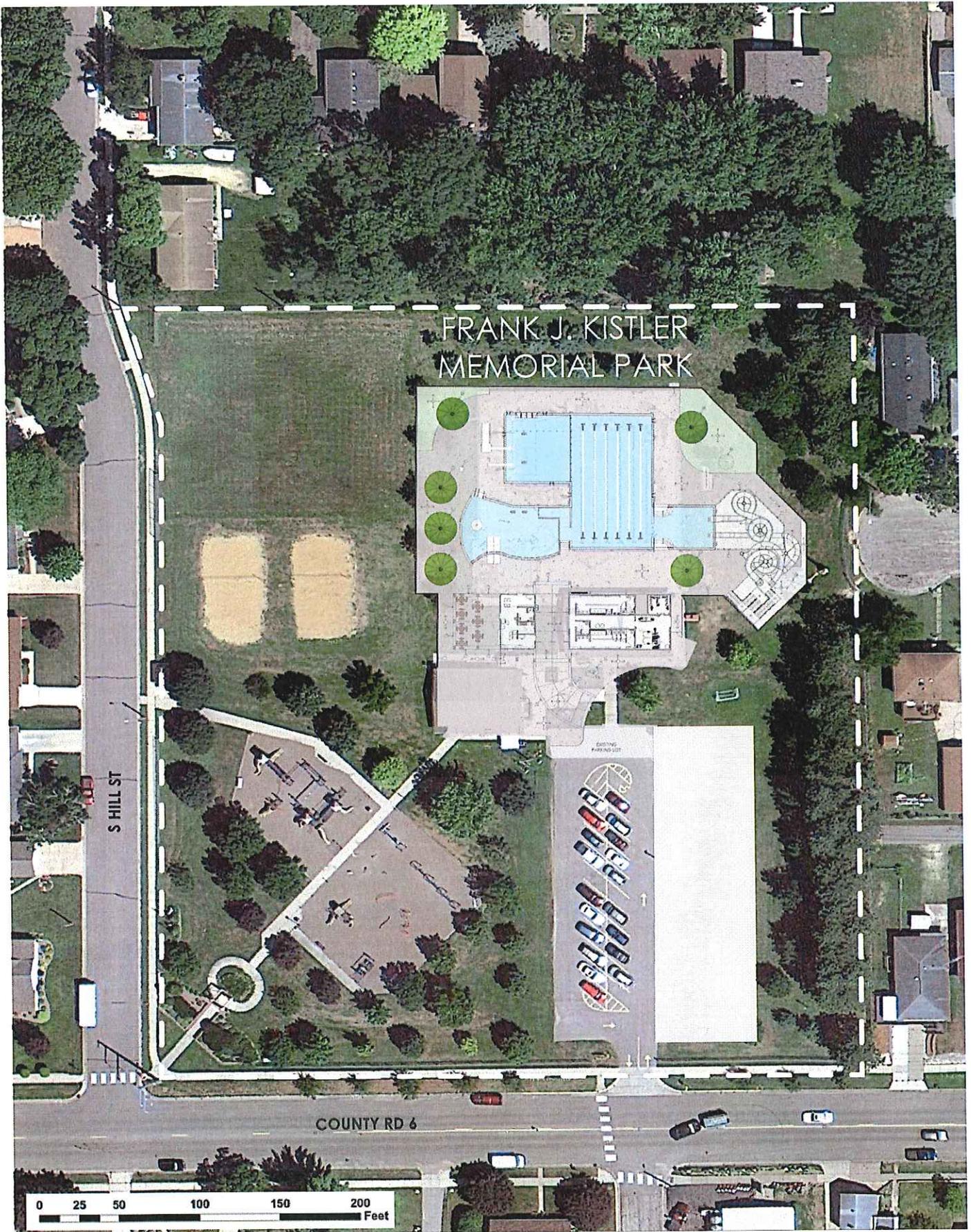
Kistler Park is one of La Crescent's most intensively used parks. The swimming pool has long been a significant attraction and will be even more so when the newly expanded pool opens in the summer of 2012. The park which is only 5 acres in size includes:

- Swimming pool/aquatics park
- Off street parking
- Extensive playground area
- Sand volleyball
- Entrance gardens

### OBSERVATIONS

Most of the Kistler Park site is fully developed. Expansion of the swimming pool and associated parking removed much of the park's available green space. Assuming that the pool will attract a significant number of users, on-site parking may be inadequate to meet demand. Parking is available on surrounding streets and the location of the park is conducive to attracting users who may walk or bike to the park. With the reconstruction of the pool, the facilities in Frank J. Kistler Memorial Park are in excellent condition.

The pedestrian crossing at Spruce Drive and 7th Street South is an ongoing safety concern. Pedestrian traffic crossing 7th Street South is expected to increase given the popularity of the new swimming pool in Frank J. Kistler memorial Park.



Frank J. Kistler Memorial Park aerial

## OLD HICKORY PARK

Old Hickory Park is one of La Crescent's newer parks. The 18 acre site is located in the northern part of the community. The park lies within a ring of local streets, all of which generally have houses that face the park. Since the park is at a lower elevation than most of its surroundings, it is very visible from the street and from the adjacent residences.

Old Hickory Park contains the following facilities:

- Picnic shelter/restrooms
- Off street parking
- Playground area
- Ball field
- Soccer fields
- Basketball court (full court)
- Retention pond

### OBSERVATIONS

Since 2004, La Crescent has been continually developing Old Hickory Park. All of the park's facilities are relatively new and in excellent condition. When viewed on the aerial photo, the large turf areas of the park are readily apparent. Most of the open turf area accommodates organized soccer. Very little space in the park is continually available for casual park use.

Despite the fact that the surrounding residences keep "eyes on the park", after hours use and potential vandalism remain as concerns. The shelter is an attractive place for gatherings even during the nighttime hours. Continued observation of the park by area residents and by the La Crescent Police Department will be needed to ensure that the park is used appropriately.

The drainage pond at the south end of the park is needed as part of the overall drainage system in the area but it is not aesthetically pleasing. The drainage area is used in the winter for sledding activities. The park also features a one-mile loop sidewalk around the park's perimeter and an adjacent trail access to Eagles Bluff Park.



Old Hickory Park aerial

## VALLEY SOUTH PARK

Valley South Park is a small park on La Crescent's south side encompassing only 1.2 acres land. Despite its small size, it is an important part of La Crescent's park system not only because of the surrounding residential neighborhood that it serves but also because it contains a sledding hill used by residents from other parts of the community.

The park contains the following facilities:

- Playground area
- Open field
- Sledding hill

### OBSERVATIONS

The facilities at Valley South Park are in good condition. Given the constrained size of the park, no changes in use are envisioned in the future.



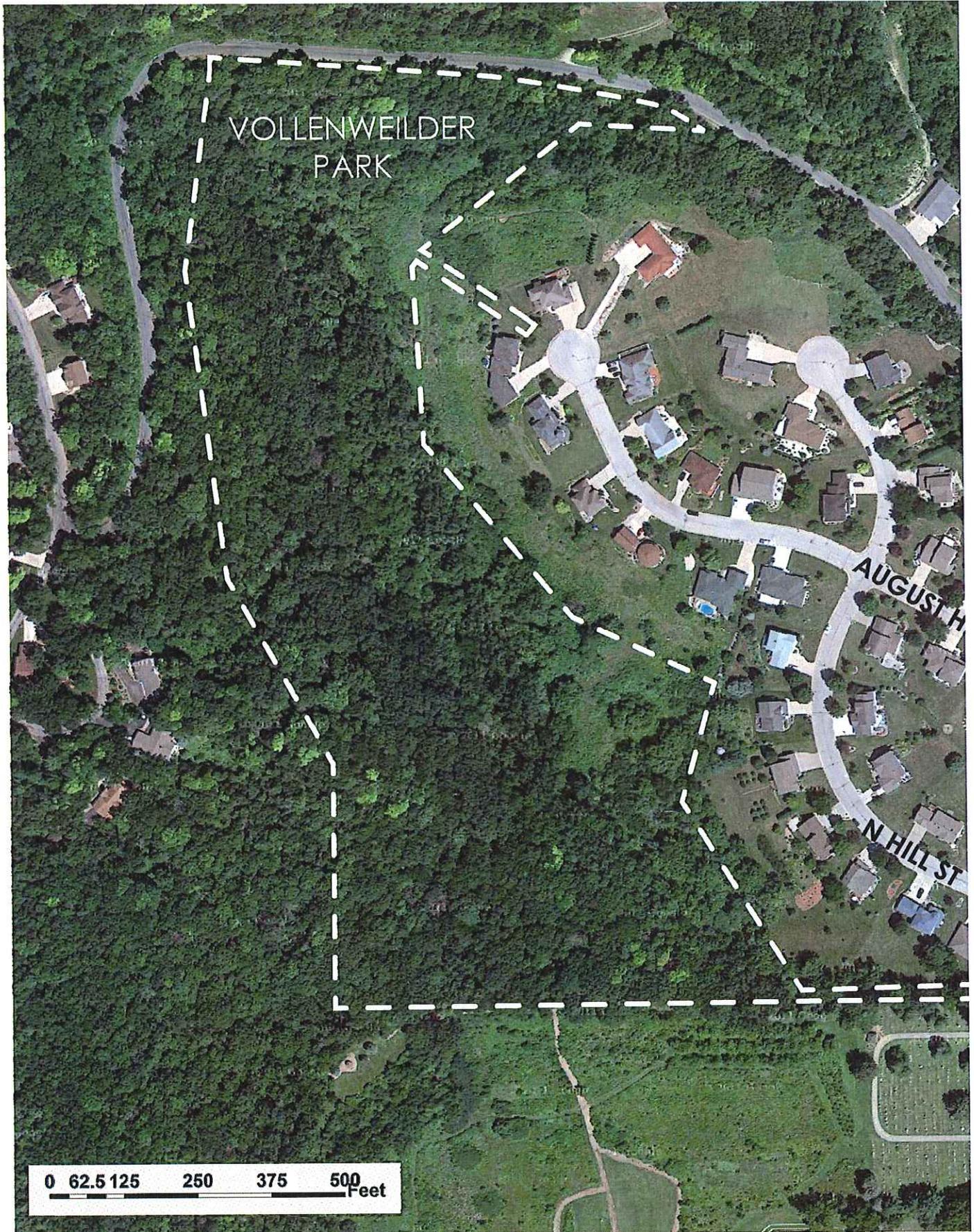
Valley South Park aerial

### VOLLENWEILDER PARK

Vollenweilder Park is in the west-central portion of the City. The park is heavily wooded and the terrain makes it suitable for passive uses including trails but not for active use.

### OBSERVATIONS

Vollenweilder Park lies within two existing residential neighborhoods and is accessible from a trail that begins in Vetch Park, immediately to the south.



Vollenweilder Park Aerial

## VETSCH PARK

Vetsch Park lies immediately south of Vollenweilder Park. An existing parking lot at the La Crescent Water Treatment facility provides off-street parking for park users. The park contains a mix of mulch and mowed trails that meander up to an observation point.

### *OBSERVATIONS*

Because of the terrain, Vetsch Park will continue as a passive element of La Crescent's park system. Deed restrictions and a conservation easement limit the use of Vetsch Park to trails and other passive activities.



Vetsch Park Aerial

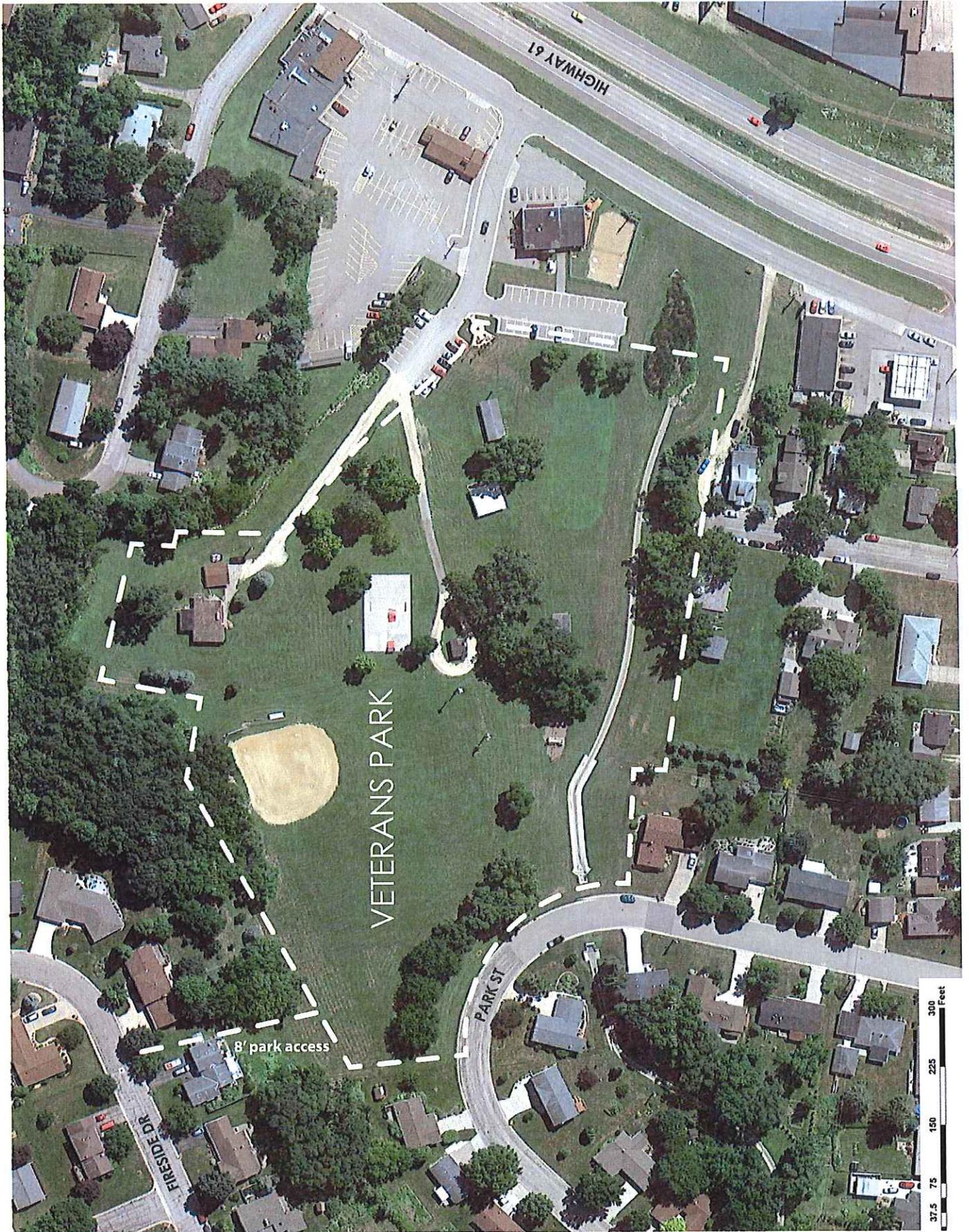
## VETERANS PARK

Veterans Park is an 8 acre facility that has hosted gatherings and sporting events in La Crescent for decades. It includes the following facilities:

- Picnic shelters
- Play area
- Off street parking
- Softball field
- Skate park
- Open field

### OBSERVATIONS

Veterans Park is encumbered by a number of challenges including poor visibility and access, the need to accommodate area storm drainage, and outdated facilities. It is the only park in the La Crescent system that needs to be completely reprogrammed and improved. The park currently contains a city owned single-family residence that has been occupied until recently. Given the condition of the house and the fact that it is currently vacant, it could be demolished or moved off-site to allow more space for the reconfiguration of the park. The well house in the center of the park is actively used and will need to remain along with driveway or other suitable access.



Veterans Park Aerial

## JOHN S. HARRIS PARK

Harris Park is an irregularly shaped parcel directly abutting Elm Street (County Road 26). The linear form of its 2+ acres makes it challenging for any significant active uses. Limited parking is available along Elm Street. Existing facilities include:

- Play area
- Open field occasionally used as a small soccer field.

### *OBSERVATIONS*

Harris Park serves more as a buffer between several residences and Elm Street than it does as an active City park. Its primary users come from the surrounding neighborhood and it is frequently used by area in-home daycare provider's. The existing playground equipment in the park is outdated and in need of replacement.



*John S. Harris Park aerial*

## EAGLES BLUFF PARK

Eagles Bluff Park is La Crescent's largest City park totalling 113 acres. As the name implies, the park sits on top of a prominent bluff providing 360 degree views of the area around La Crescent including the Mississippi River. Access to Eagles Bluff Park is marked by signs but still somewhat obscure. Entry points are at two locations that lie within neighborhoods of single-family homes. Eagles Bluff Park contains a trail network and observation area that has been constructed by volunteer labor.

### *OBSERVATIONS*

Eagles Bluff Park is a very unique facility. Due to steep terrain, the park will never be fully accessible to individuals with mobility challenges. It does, however, provide hiking opportunities that are not commonly found in most community parks. Trails in the park can be used seasonally for both hiking and cross country skiing. Deed restrictions and a conservation easement limit the use of Eagles Bluff Park to trails and passive recreation.



EAGLES BLUFF  
PARK

RED APPLE DR

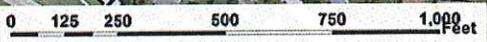
HARALSON LN

BEACON VAL

REGENT DR

MCINTOSH RD E

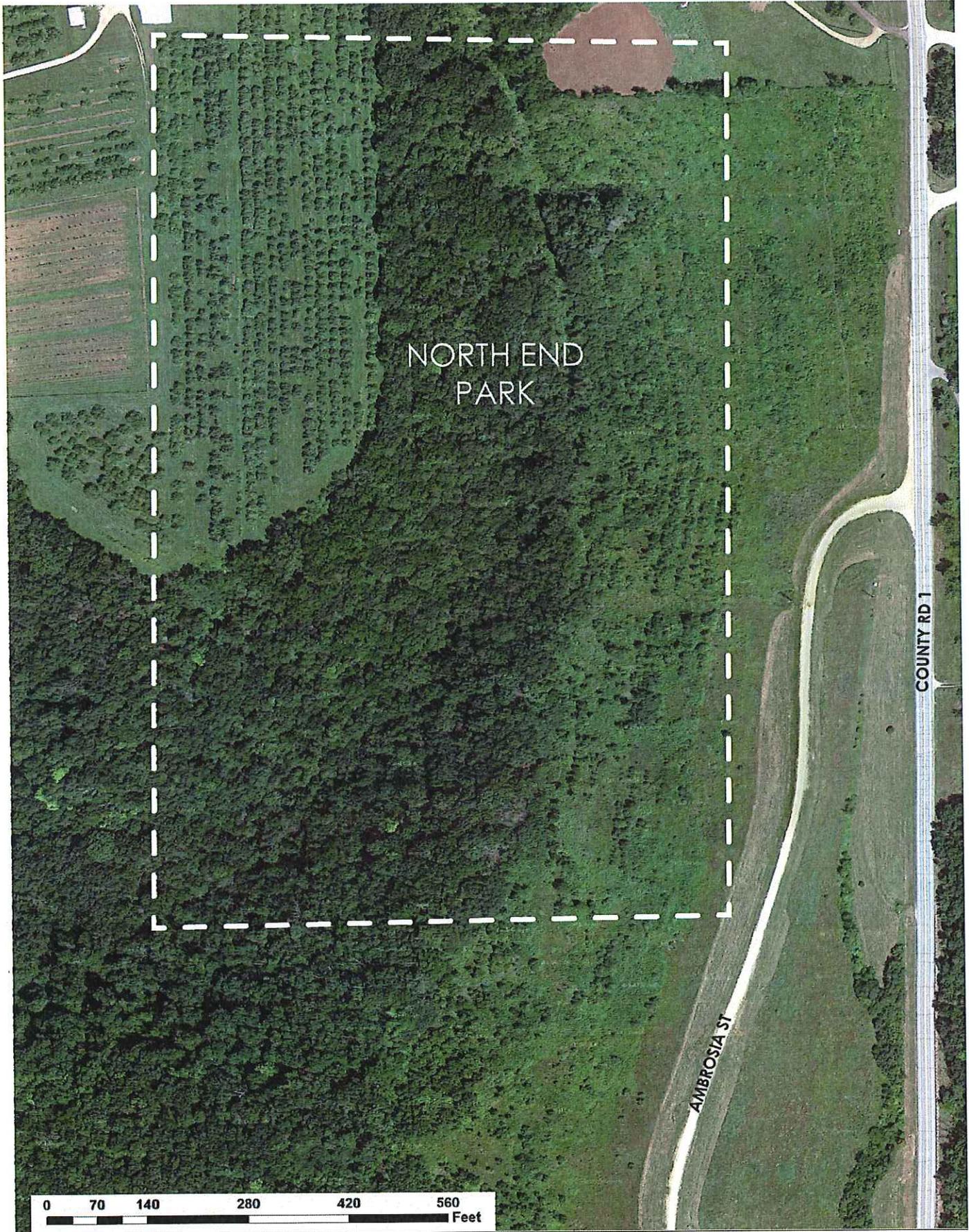
HIGHWAY 61



Eagles Bluff Park aerial

## NORTH END PARK (CURRENTLY UNNAMED)

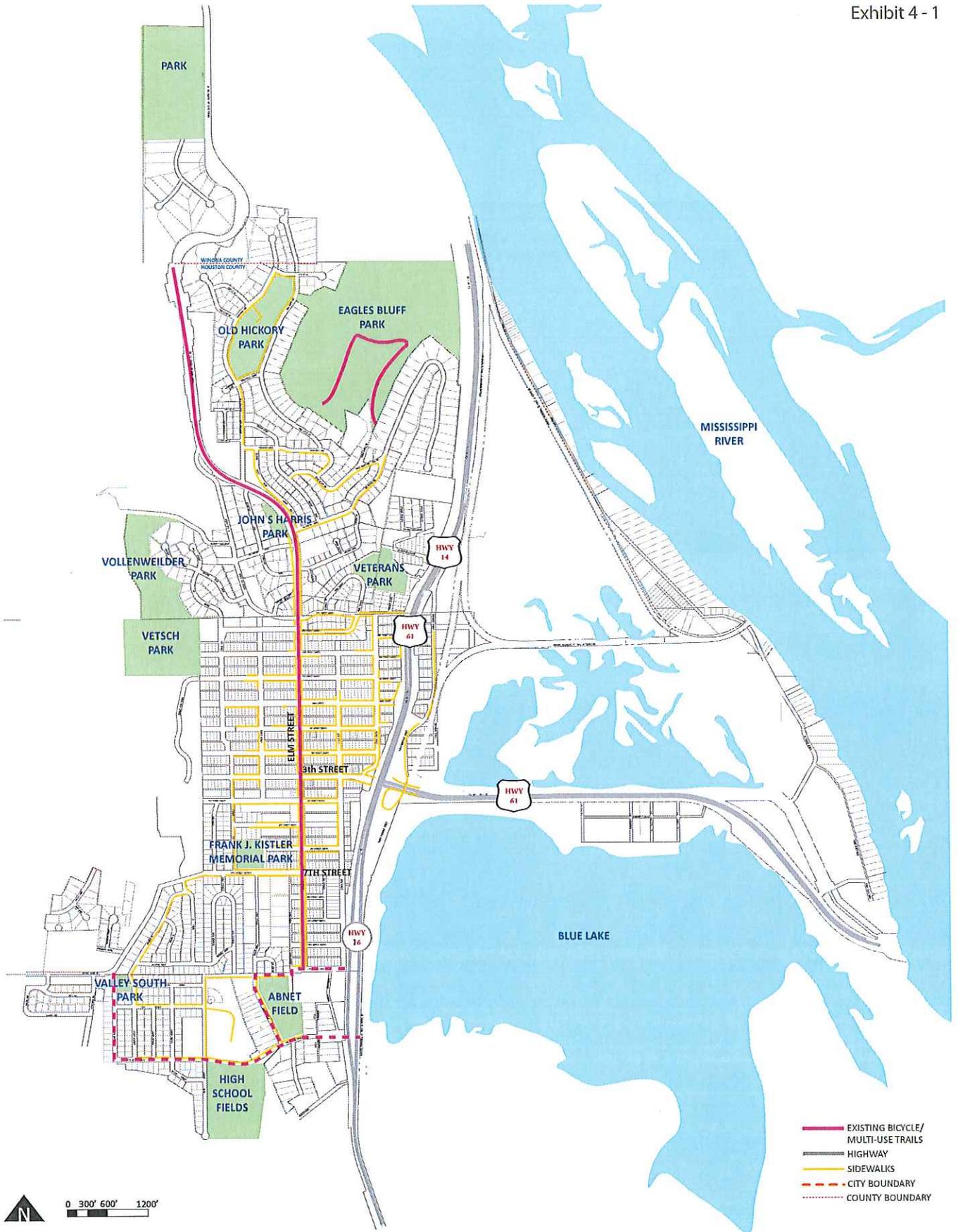
The City received title more than 10 acres of land on the north end as part of a residential subdivision. As part of a former apple orchard, the property consists almost completely of steep slopes. Use of the park for anything other than open space will be challenging.



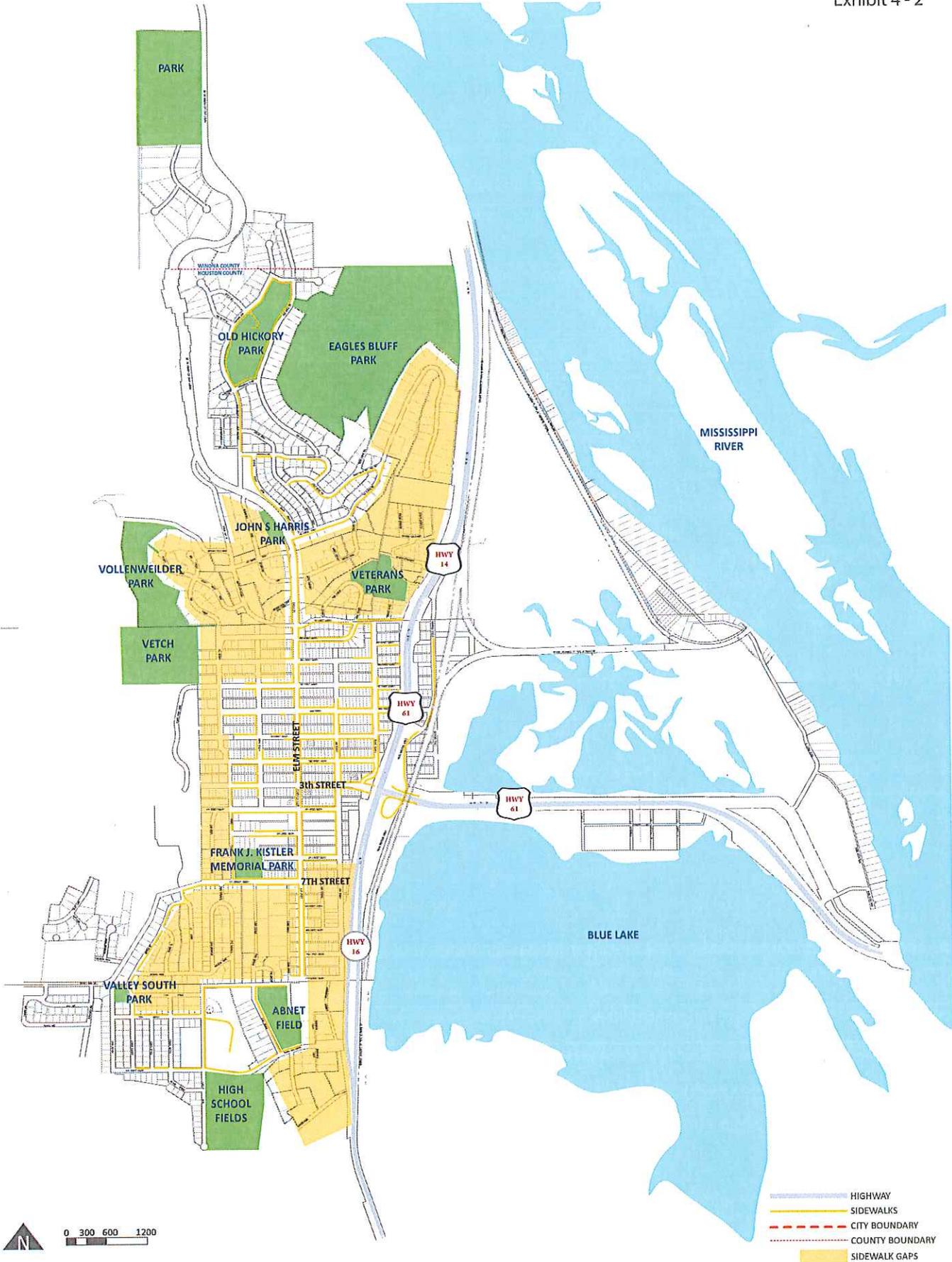
North End Park aerial

## TRAILS AND SIDEWALKS

Exhibit 4-1 shows the locations of existing trails and sidewalks in La Crescent. The only existing multi-use local trail is along Elm Street. Elm Street includes an on-road trail that forms a spine through the center of the community. On the west side of the street, a marked bike lane exists between the parking area and the active roadway lane. On the east side of the road, the bike lane exists between the curb and the active roadway lane. Residents have commented favorably about the bike lane but expressed reservations about the use of the lane on the west side of the road, particularly by children, due to a feeling of being "exposed" to moving traffic.



La Crescent has an extensive network of existing sidewalks but as Exhibit 4-2 shows, significant gaps exist in some neighborhood areas. La Crescent is continually seeking to expand the sidewalk system. A Safe Routes to School grant was used to improve sidewalk connections in the southern part of town.





*Frank J. Kistler Memorial Park*