

---

## Chapter 3

### Open Space Preservation Priorities

Once the resource inventory had been completed, the next step was the development of a priority system for open space preservation. Other cities, counties, and regions around the United States have developed their own priority systems. One county used a point system based on a number of different ecological criteria. For example, a parcel of land would receive an assigned point total based on its habitat size, if rare species are present, if it is agricultural land and other categories. The higher point total the parcel received, the higher it was prioritized for open space protection. Another county used a category system where the more categories a certain area of land met, the higher priority the land received. A final example is a county that used a parcel development threat model. The model used undeveloped parcels of greater than 50 acres in the county. The parcels with a threat of development in the near future were ranked higher for open space preservation opposed to parcels where development might not occur. Every plan used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a visual tool to show priority levels.

The City of Red Wing combined systems together in creating classifications based on these resources. The first portion of the priority system included a list of identified open space areas with high preservation value. These areas were compiled through input between the public, professionals, stakeholders, and City staff. Next, a priority system was composed based on the following resources: development threat, purchase opportunity, management opportunity, size and connectivity, active outdoor recreation, agricultural soils, archaeology, gateways, historic sites and districts, trails and pedestrian connections, urbanized forest, biological, geological, hydrological, and scenic views and vistas.

The goal of the system is to give a priority level to areas in need of open space preservation. The open space might take the form of several different things: agricultural land, overlay districts, permanent conservation through conservation easements and parks, and many other options discussed in the Strategies for Preservation and Action Plan chapter.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and a priority system matrix were used to identify lands with the most open space value. The resources mentioned above were the criteria for the priority system. An area receives an “X” in a box for each resource it contains. The more “X” s an area receives the more open space preservation value the land has and the higher target the area is for open space protection.

There are three categories. If the land received more than eight “X” s or was identified during meetings, the land was placed in the category of *Extremely High Priorities*. Areas with six to seven “X” s are in the category of *Very High Priorities*. Areas with four to five “X” s are in the category of *High Priorities*. **Figure 3.1** provided in this chapter and Appendix K combined the fifteen resources and simplified them into three categories. In addition, parks, state owned lands, conservation easements, and deed restrictions are also shown on the map to indicate properties already in open space preservation. The purpose of this map is intended to show the general locations of properties that have open space values that are preservation priorities. The natural and/or cultural resources are located on part or all of the properties identified and the map is not

intended to mean that no development can occur on any part of these identified properties. Later in the Action Plan (Chapter 5) the proposed recommended strategy for working proactively to preserve areas identified in the green infrastructure system is to work collaboratively with owners of priority properties that contain multiple cultural and/or natural resources to preserve portions or all of those sites.” Appendix L, Priority System Criteria Matrix, is the matrix used to categorize lands in the priority system. The matrix gives examples of lands in each of the three categories.

The chapter lists each target and summarizes the resources of the land and the benefits it brings to the open space preservation system. The plan allows for additions to the targets if land receives a higher level because of possible discoveries of resources on the land or if there is a high threat or opportunity to preserve the land. The next chapter will outline different strategies in obtaining the targets for preservation.

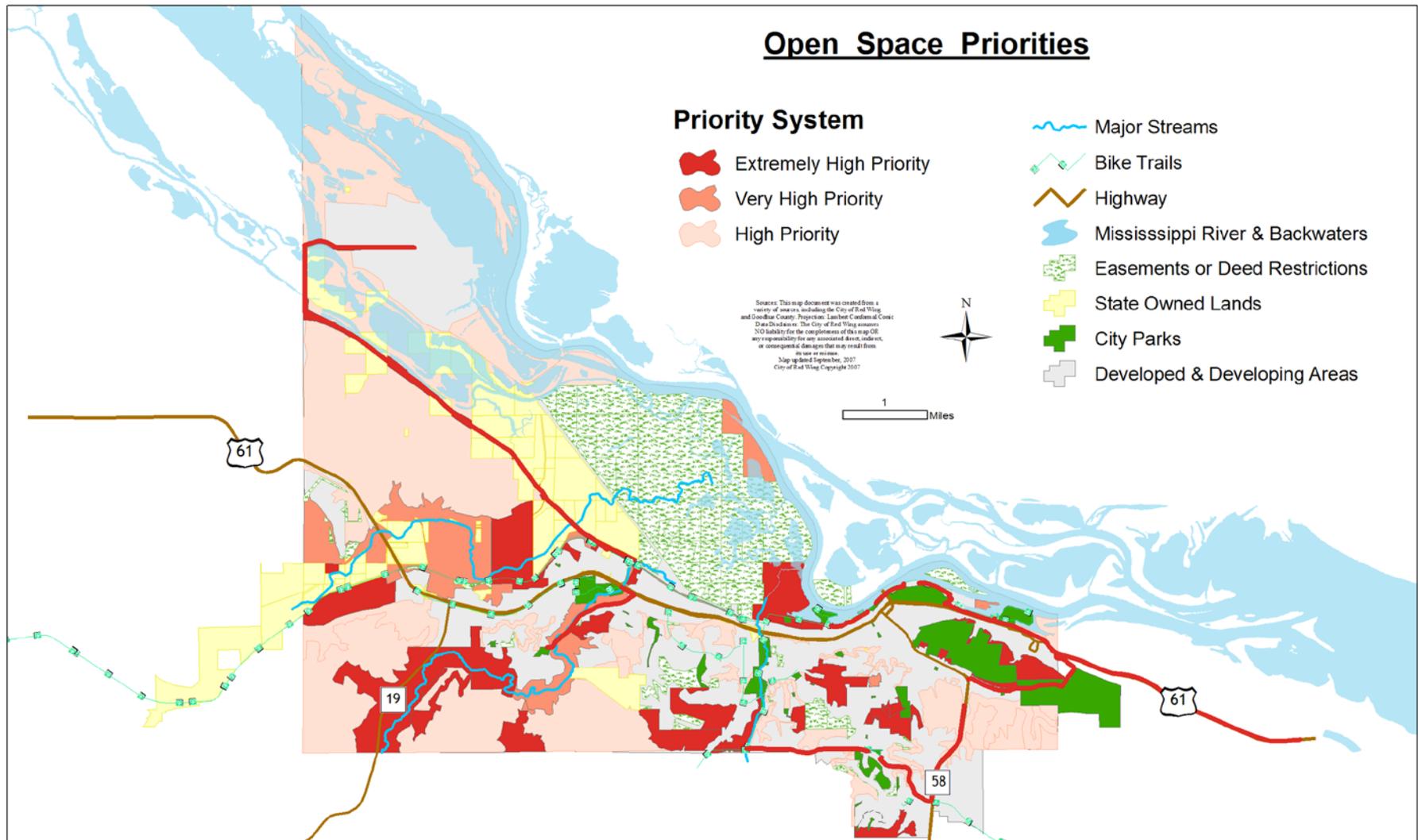


Figure 3.1

*Extremely High Priorities*

All lands in this category hold the highest priority for open space by the city. The City should work collaboratively with property owners to preserve portions or all of these sites.

- Oskey and Siewert Bluff

The bluff resides in the heart of older Red Wing and newer parts of the city, and meets many criteria in the Priority System. The bluff's prime location provides spectacular views in all directions. Red Wing Athletic Field lies directly below the bluff. If this bluff was preserved in addition to the park, it would provide a patch totaling over 80 acres. The bluff contains slopes of over thirty percent, which are important to leave undisturbed. Two natural communities exist along the bluff sides: Dry Prairie- bedrock bluff subtype and Oak Woodland- Brushland. An endangered plant species resides on the bluff, and has great potential for public access to trails as residents made the City staff aware that trails exist there already. The bluff is very similar to Billings-Tomfohr Conservation Area because of the public interest in preserving the land and the topography and size of the land. Moreover, the opportunity to preserve the land is shrinking, since the southeast portion of the land abuts streets with services and residential housing.



Oskey/Siewert Bluff.

Photo taken from Hallstrom Drive looking at southeast at the bluff.

- Cannon Valley Trail and River Corridor

The priority map displays the entire corridor as important in the green infrastructure system. However, some areas along the corridor were identified during meetings as more important because of their resources, the high opportunity to preserve, and the threat of development. The rest of the areas are found in the *Very High* category. One of the resources is archaeology. A high number of archaeological sites exist along the Cannon Valley Trail and both sides of the Cannon River.



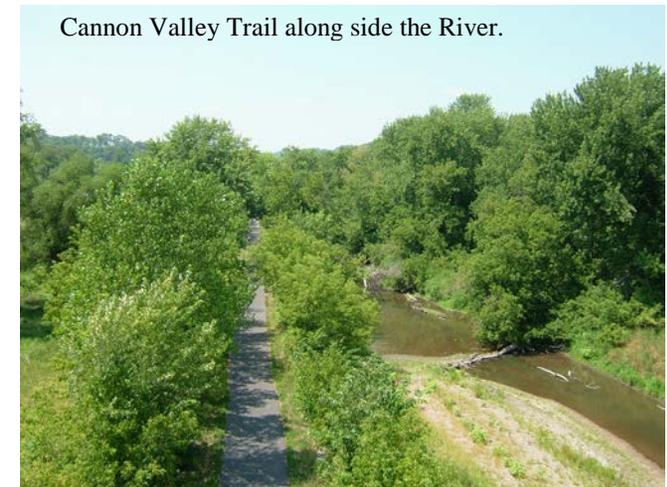
Some archaeology sites have been degraded or destroyed, while some remain preserved. However, land along the river contains intact archaeology. There

are other areas along the trail contain intact site as well. Much of the land along the trail (owned by the State, County, or the Anderson Center) is already preserved. Acquisition of any additional properties for

preservation along the trail provides a management opportunity with the existing owners of land. Some parcels along the trail are in danger of development, including areas with archaeology, while other parcels have been identified by the City for preservation.

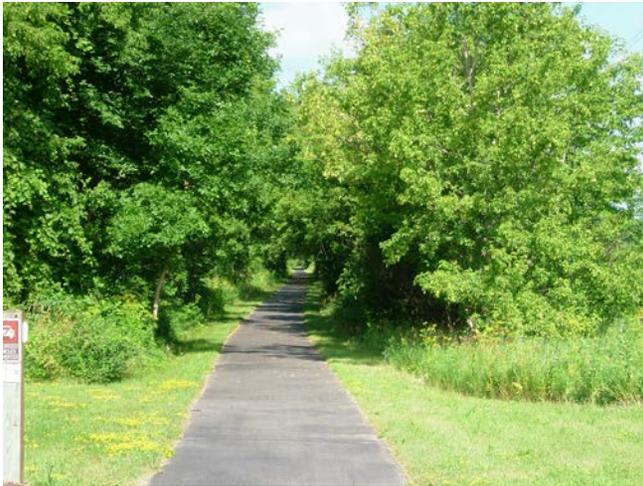
Numerous other resources exist on both sides of the trail. The trail provides views of the slopes and rivers for the entire length of the biking or hiking experience. Other

recreation opportunities exist in the river. Canoeing and fishing are both popular activities. Upstream, walleye, smallmouth bass, and northern pike are present, and channel catfish are the popular catch in and near Red Wing. Seven natural communities containing numerous endangered species exist around the Cannon River. The largest natural community is Floodplain Forest. Other natural communities include Emergent Marsh, Calcareous Seepage Fen, Oak Woodland-Brushland, and both types of



Cannon Valley Trail along side the River.

Dry Prairie and Oak Forest. Several endangered species exist along the corridor. Numerous other wildlife species use the river as its home: white-tailed deer, beavers, otters, raccoons, bobcats, red fox, gray fox, coyotes, and bald eagles. Protection of the land would provide a very large patch and connection for the western part of the city. Finally, the trail corridor provides an escape from the nearby city as you disappear into the forest.



Cannon Valley Trail

- Spring Creek Corridor

The Corridor contains multiple resources in different areas along Spring Creek. Areas along the corridor in this category are the ones identified during meetings, the rest of the land are found in the *Very High* category. When entering the City on Highway 19, Spring Creek is visible on the east side of the road. The Creek and prime agricultural land on both sides of the road provide a beautiful gateway into the City. Further down the creek, Oak Forest and Dry Prairie- bedrock bluff subtype natural communities exist on the east side of the stream. In the Bonestroo inventory, the natural communities received a BC grade or better. In this same area, the land is an urbanized forest for the neighboring Hiawatha Hills development.



Spring Creek disappearing into the forest.

There are some other resources evident along the entire creek corridor. Archaeology is one of the most abundant found along the creek. Petroglyphs, mounds, and habitation sites align both sides of the creek. Archaeological sites 96 and 163 are recommended for inclusion in the National Register for Historic Places. Spectacular views are everywhere as thirty percent slopes and bluffs are along both sides of the creek. The creek has many opportunities for recreation, including hiking trails, a possible bike/walking trail and trout-fishing. Protection along both sides of the creek would provide a great greenway connection with patches already in existence in the Spring Creek SNA and the Red Wing Wildlife League Lands.



Spring Creek winding through farmland.

- Hay Creek Corridor

The Hay Creek Conservation Area has protected a large portion of Hay Creek, but more should be done to protect the waterway. A bike trail exists along the eastern edge of the creek, giving a great opportunity for the City to manage all the land along the creek. In addition, the creek is a designated trout stream providing a rare opportunity to fish trout in an urban setting. Looking east from the creek are steep slopes. Slopes provide scenic views from below and above the stream. The creek and floodplain include urbanized forests, and threats for development exist since many developments are located within a 1/8 of a mile of the creek. Protection of the entire creek would provide a great greenway connection for parkland in the geographic center of the city.



Hay Creek and Trail next to Hay Creek Valley Road.

- East End Recreation Area

Totalling over 600 acres in the eastern gateway into the city, Memorial Park and Mississippi National Golf Links area represent two great treasures. Some of the best views of the entire city are seen within the parks, while providing an urbanized forest for developments located within half a mile. However, some thirty percent slopes on the north and south sides of both parks are privately owned and unprotected. Within these slopes, three natural communities exist: Oak Woodland-Brushland, Oak Forest-mesic subtype, and Dry Prairie-bedrock bluff subtype.

Notice the steep slopes from a view on Memorial Park.



erosion and runoff into the intermittent streams flowing out of the two

Within the Dry Prairie, an endangered species exists. In addition, the plants on the slopes are important for protecting against

parks. Acquiring or holding easements on the lands is a great management opportunity for the City, since the city already manages the parkland.

- Tyler Hills Development and Med Tech Park area

If preserved, the area would combine with the Spring Creek Scientific Natural Area, Med Tech Park, and several conservation easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust and City totaling well over 400 acres in the center of the city.



Looking north at the forested land from Featherstone Road.

There are many reasons this area should be preserved for open space. Abundant thirty percent slopes provide scenic views from the bluffs and the valley floors. The slopes provide habitat for two different natural communities: Oak Woodland-Brushland and Dry Prairie-bedrock bluff

subtype. The Bonestroo Inventory identified several areas in the natural communities with AB or B grades. Within the non-forested portion of the identified area, 23 mounds were identified during an archaeological survey. The city staff spoke with local archaeologist, Dr. Ronald Schirmer, who suspects a habitation site might be located adjacent to the mounds as well. Three developments have entered the area over the last 15 years. The identified area provides an urbanized forest for the residents now, but in the future the forest and ecological importance could be lost if more developments are allowed to occur.

- **Abandoned Railroad Trail**

There are not a lot of connections between Highway 61 in Red Wing and Prairie Island. The City could create a great greenway connection and recreational trail along an abandoned railroad right of way. A policy addressed the proposed trail in the Community Systems section in the Comprehensive Plan and Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. Moreover, a large portion of the proposed trail runs through State owned land, providing a great management and partnership opportunity for the City. Along the proposed trail there is an abundance of cultural and natural resources. Towards the southern end, a few archaeological sites have been identified in the past. Throughout the entire trail several natural communities exist on both sides: Floodplain Forest, Emergent Marsh,

Maple Basswood Forest, Oak Forest-mesic subtype, and Willow Swamp. In both the Maple-Basswood Forest and the Floodplain Forest an endangered species exists.



Start of the Proposed Trail.

The trail would wind at the foot of steep slopes and would provide spectacular views of the slopes, streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands. Hastings is interested in extending the trail further to connect with the city providing an opportunity to act regionally.

- Red Wing Golf Club

The golf course lies in the middle of Red Wing and presents a large area of open space for neighboring development. Future threats of development could come as many golf courses around the country are not profitable anymore and choose to sell off for residential development instead.



The consequences of this situation would be numerous, including the decrease in property values for neighboring residents. The land has numerous slopes of over thirty percent and the presence of Oak Forest-mesic subtaped and Dry Prairie- bedrock bluff subtype natural communities. An endangered species exists here as well. In addition, the course provides scenic views throughout the 18 holes.

- Archaeology

Site 169

The site was suggested for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places during the 1990 Phase II study by archaeologist, Dr.



Clark Dobbs. The site contains a village, campsite, and dwelling. The area also provides a gateway into the city along Spring Creek Road, displaying agricultural land and steep slopes. An intermittent stream flows from Spring Creek along the slope and through the archaeology site. The steep slopes provide habitat for Oak Forest-mesic subtype, which received a BC ranking in the Bonestroo Inventory. The area totals over 100 acres and it would give a patch connection with the Spring Creek corridor.

- Highway 58 Gateway

The highway enters in the southern most portion of the city. Much of the land has been developed, and there will likely be interest in developing all of the land along the western side of the highway. Efforts should be



made to work with the landowners to preserve sections of open space to enhance this gateway into the City. Steep slopes are abundant, providing great views from the bluff and the valley. A stream cuts

through the valley, providing fishing, and canoeing opportunities. Oak Forest natural community inhabits most of the area with a large portion fragmented by development.

- Lands adjacent to Red Wing Wildlife League (RWWL) Lands  
Red Wing Wildlife League owns over 2800 acres in the city. The land provides enormous benefits for plants and wildlife. However, there are a few unprotected parcels of land along the Mississippi River near the RWWL lands. The City owns a few parcels, while private individuals own

several. In the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, the parcels owned by the city were identified as areas for parkland, including an environmental interpretive center. This land is identified in this category because of the opportunity to preserve the land. Property owned by private individuals further north is in the *Very High* category. Emergent Marsh and Floodplain Forest natural communities are present here. The land serves as a filter for runoff before it enters the Mississippi River, and will be left undeveloped because the floodway covers the entire portion so there are existing regulations that protect the property.

*Very High Priorities*

The following is a list of some of the lands identified with 6 to 7 “X” s in the priority system matrix. The majority of these important green infrastructure areas are unthreatened for development. Therefore, they receive fewer “X” s in the priority system. The City should work collaboratively with property owners to preserve these lands.

- Sand Hill

The City owns a portion of Sand Hill and the water tower that sits on top of the bluff. Another portion has a deed restriction on its property held by the Nature Conservancy. However, the portion owned by the city is not in permanent preservation, and private property owners own land on the slopes and within the natural communities of the hill. The small hill contains three natural communities: Dry Cliff, Oak Forest-mesic subtype and Dry Prairie-bedrock bluff subtype. Within the three communities, four endangered species have been identified. The hill provides an urbanized forest for the dense development around it. On top of the bluff are views of the waterfront and downtown. Preservation of the hill should be achieved in this central part of the city.



View from Colvill Park. A popular spot to watch bald eagles.

- Xcel Energy

Many residents visit Colvill Park for the opportunity at catching a glimpse of our nation's symbol, the bald eagle. The eagle often is best viewed westward from Colvill Park across the water on Xcel Energy's land located to the west. The piece of land serves as a scenic gateway into the city between Barn Bluff and Colvill Park. The City should try to work with Xcel to protect this important habitat area.

### High Priorities

The following identifies some of the lands identified with 4 to 5 "X"s in the priority system matrix. The majority of lands in the green infrastructure system map falls into this category and include several of the properties described below. These lands are not necessary for immediate preservation, unless an opportunity arises or threat occurs. Some of the lands are in protection already from development (i.e. slopes

and burial mounds). Many of the lands in this category allow for innovative developments, agricultural uses, large setbacks, or large lot sizes that require some large amounts of open space in permanent preservation.

- Highway 61

The highway is a nationally designated scenic byway. It is important for the City to work with Minnesota Department of Transportation to protect the views along the highway. From the west, slopes, natural communities, and bluffs mark the gateway. From the east, the East End Recreation Area, Colvill Park, and Barn Bluff signify the entrance into the city.

- Lehrback and Langsdorf Valleys

The valleys lies south of Memorial Park and Mississippi National Golf Links and include bluffs on both sides with slopes of over thirty percent. Two intermittent streams flow through the slopes. The valleys' rural character and scenic views of bluffs should be protected.



Looking southwest from Lehrback Road.



*This page left intentionally blank.*