

ITEM #: 41
DATE: 03-24-26
DEPT: P&R

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: EXPANDING AND/OR ESTABLISHING PARK BOUNDARIES

BACKGROUND:

There are several locations where public property is adjacent parks or greenways. Staff has reviewed these areas and determined it makes sense to expand park boundaries or establish greenways to include these areas. The Parks and Recreation Rules and Ordinances would then be used to manage these spaces. Parks and Recreation staff already performs mowing, tree maintenance, snow plowing, and other tasks on these properties. Staff is not considering adding amenities or additional maintenance tasks at this time.

AREAS TO EXPAND OR ESTABLISH PARK BOUNDARIES:

Attachment A contains maps for each of the areas in question and shows the existing park boundaries as well as proposed expansions. Each area is described below:

South River Valley Park – The current park encompasses two softball fields, parking, two shelters, playground equipment, and a portion of the shared use path (SUP) along the Skunk River. There is additional City-owned land to the south that includes the continuation of the SUP from the park and wooded areas. The SUP continues south of the railroad tracks and is on private property. This portion of the path could be part of the Skunk River Greenbelt which is envisioned to eventually extend along the Skunk River to the existing trail at SE 16th Street.

Stuart Smith Park – This parkland is leased from Iowa State University (ISU) and is generally west of Ioway Creek. There is City-owned land to the east of Ioway Creek which is referred to by staff as the "flood buyout area." Federal funds were used to purchase several properties after the 1993 floods, and there is a no development/build restriction on these properties. Parks and Recreation has maintained this area like a park for many years.

Delaware Gardens – This area was once home to a City water tower. Several years ago, Parks and Recreation added community gardens and maintains the rest of the area through mowing and tree care. City of Ames Electric Services maintains the electric substation on the south end of the property and this portion would not be included in the park.

Delaware Avenue and North Dakota Avenue – This area is maintained by Parks and Recreation, and residents occasionally use it as a park. There is public art on the south end of this area. To reduce maintenance commitments, this area was maintained as a no-mow area beginning in 2025.

Ioway Creek Park – This park is home to community gardens and a wooded area. A portion of the park is leased to a company for a cellular tower. To the west, there are several flood buyout lots owned by the City and several privately owned lots.

On the east side of Grand Avenue to South Duff Avenue, there is a large section of land (51

acres) along loway Creek that is City-owned. This area contains a SUP and a retention basin. The basin is currently maintained by Public Works and that arrangement would continue into the future.

loway Creek Greenbelt – With the addition of the shared used path along loway Creek east of South Duff Avenue, Parks and Recreation has been maintaining this area. This is an opportunity to create an loway Creek Greenbelt which at some point will meet up with the future shared used path along the Skunk River.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION:

This information was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at its February 19, 2026 meeting. Commissioners spoke in favor expanding the park boundaries and creating greenways as described. Specific comments included:

- Adding the Delaware gardens has expanded the usage of this area.
- Since Parks and Recreation is maintaining these areas already, it makes sense to designate them as parks or greenways.
- Having the ability to enforce park ordinances and rules in these areas is appropriate.
- Designating the areas as parks and greenways may lead to better care and respect from users.

The Commission recommended that City Council expand park boundaries and establish greenways as described. The motion passed 6-0.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the expansion of park boundaries and establishment of greenways as described.
2. Approve the expansion of park boundaries and establishment of greenways with modifications from Council.
3. Do not approve expanding park boundaries and establishing greenways.
4. Refer back to staff with direction on how to proceed.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

There is public property throughout the City that is not specifically governed by Municipal Code. The areas described in this Council Action Form are adjacent existing parks and already maintained by Parks and Recreation. Expanding park boundaries and establishing greenways as shown will also provide the public with a clear set of expectations as to how to use these spaces because park ordinances and rules will now apply.

Therefore, it is the City Manager's Recommendation that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1 as stated above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment A - Potential Areas for Expanding or Establishing Park Boundaries.pdf](#)