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**White Sulphur Springs, MT
PARKS MASTER PLAN**

The text highlighted in yellow indicates that we need more information from the committee or need a recommendation from the committee.

January 31, 2025 Working Draft

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The White Sulphur Springs Parks Master Plan outlines the strategic vision for the development, enhancement, and maintenance of the City’s park system. This comprehensive plan is meant to address the diverse recreational needs of the City’s residents.

Introduction

Parks play a vital role in enhancing the well-being of White Sulphur Springs by providing green spaces for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction. They promote physical activity through walking, jogging, and sports, contributing to healthier lifestyles. Parks also foster community cohesion by serving as gathering places for events, picnics, and cultural activities, helping to build connections among residents. Additionally, green spaces improve air quality and enhance biodiversity, creating a more pleasant and sustainable environment. Overall, parks enrich the quality of life, making neighborhoods more vibrant and inviting.

The residents of White Sulphur Springs currently enjoy approximately 9 acres of parkland within the City limits. The City currently has six park sites, with several improvements planned to be completed within the next two years. These include the installation of new equipment and ground coverings. The City’s parks see heavy use by both residents and visitors to the community.

Several key opportunities and challenges have led to the development of this Parks Master Plan:

- The City has acquired land with the hopes of developing a nature park with a walking trail network; and
- There is a need for improved strategies for managing and maintaining the parks; and
- There is a rising need for improved programming for all ages and demographics in the City.

Plan Goals

The following are the goals that were identified by the Parks Committee and confirmed by stakeholders which guided the development of this plan:

- Develop a plan that is supported by the City Council, stakeholders, and the public;
- Improvement of public parks;
- Improvement of recreational opportunities;
- Improving competitiveness for grant funding opportunities;
- Establishing future walking trails or paths; and
- Identification of needed projects and their costs.

Preparation of this plan has been funded through a Community Development Block Grant Planning Grant from the Montana Department of Commerce.

Relationship to Other Planning Documents

- Consolidated White Sulphur Springs- Meagher County Growth Policy (2021)
- CORR Report (2021-2022)
- Capital Improvements Plan (September 2024)

When planning for parks and recreation projects, it is important to consider and understand how park development relates to the policies, regulations, and guidance in the City’s other adopted planning documents. This is meant to ensure compatibility and application of consistent design criteria and assumptions between plans.

In February 2021, the City of White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County adopted a Consolidated Growth Policy. This policy serves as a comprehensive guidance document that captures the vision for coordinated development for the City and County. The Growth Policy included objectives and actions for Parks and Recreation Facilities as identified below.

Objectives:

Provide quality, cost-effective, properly designed City facilities, and services, including streets, water, sewer, fire protection, parks and recreation, and law enforcement; and provide adequate ongoing maintenance of those facilities and services.

Utilize cash in lieu of parkland dedications from future subdivisions to help develop and maintain City and County parks and recreational facilities.

Actions:

Develop a County-City Park and Recreation Plan for the development and maintenance of existing and future facilities.

In September of 2024, the City of White Sulphur Springs adopted a Capital Improvements Plan, which serves as a prioritization and budgeting tool to update and maintain the City’s infrastructure. The table below outlines the Parks and Recreation projects identified in the Plan.

Figure 1 - Excerpt from the White Sulphur Springs Capital Improvement Plan

Project Name	Estimated Fiscal Year	Total Estimated Project Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Parks and Recreation Master Plan	2025	\$31,170	CDBG, Local Funds
Vaulted Toilets at Springs and Radar Parks	2025	\$25,000 per each	SLIPA ⁽¹⁾ , LWCF, MT Tourism Grant, Private Foundations, Local Funds
Future Ice-Skating Rink (hockey-sized box type)	2027	\$17,000	LWCF, MT Tourism Grant, Private Foundations, Local Funds
Spike’s Happy Trails Development	2028	\$80,000 to \$100,000	LWCF, MT Tourism Grant, Private Foundations, Local Funds
McStravick Court Surface	2029	\$20,000 to \$35,000	LWCF, MT Tourism Grant, Private Foundations, Local Funds

⁽¹⁾State-Local Infrastructure Partnership Act (HB 355) of 2023

The alignment of the Parks Master Plan, Growth Policy, and CIP is important for the strategic planning efforts of the City, as the infrastructure and public facilities of the City often are

interconnected with the ability of the City to provide a foundation for economic growth, community services, land use development, and housing.

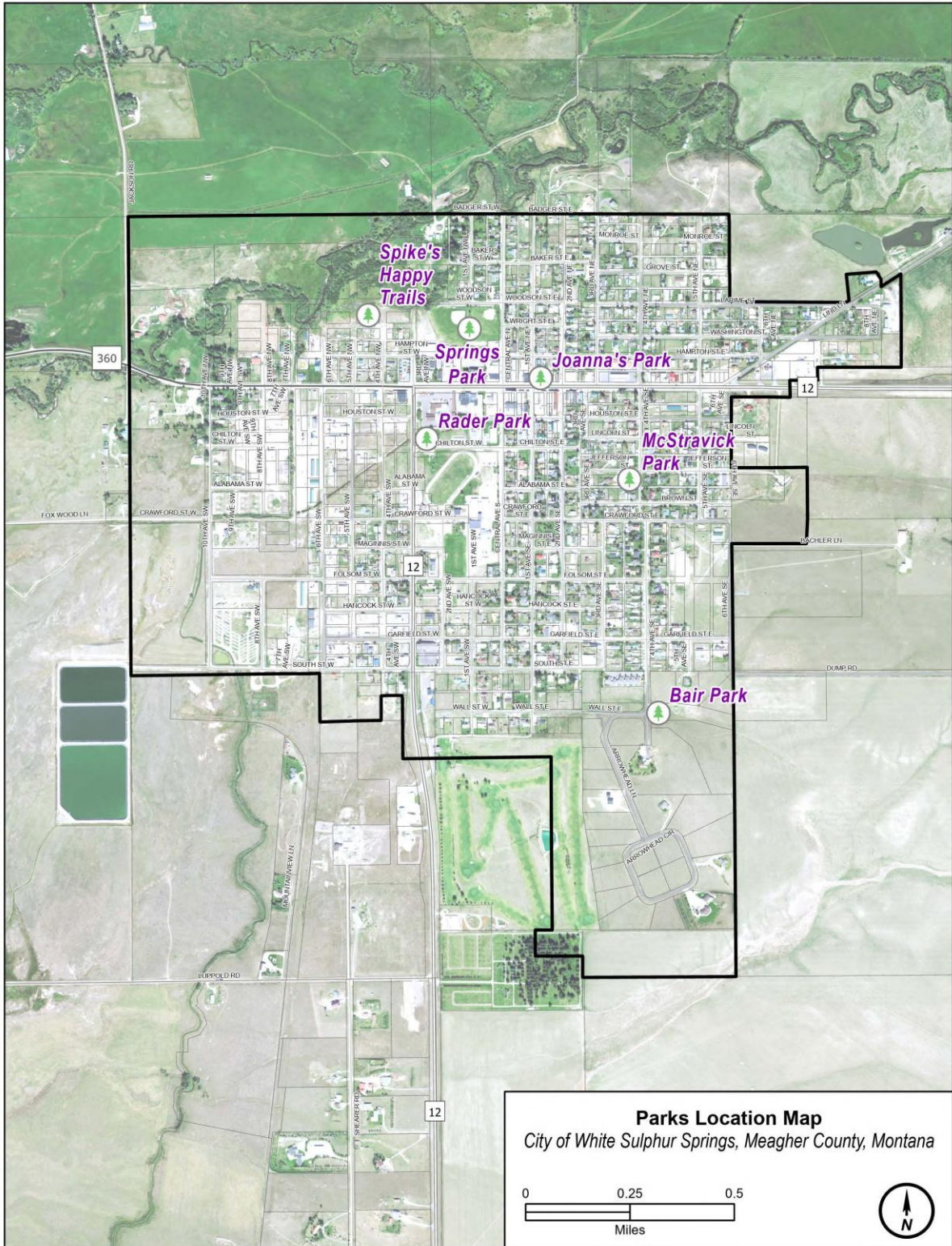
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PROJECT LOCATION & FOCUS

The White Sulphur Springs Master Parks Plan includes the incorporated boundaries of the City of White Sulphur Springs, as shown on Map 1.

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Map 1 - Parks Location Map



Project Priorities and Action Plan

Creating a parks planning project priorities list and action plan starts with identifying the key tasks that need to be accomplished. Once prioritized, the City and various stakeholder groups will have a clear understanding of the issues and opportunities to tackle first based on a variety of aspects such as cost, time, and need.

Decision Matrix

Through the community survey process, the respondents to the survey identified a series of themes or goals that they would like to guide the decision-making for the City when it comes to parks and recreation. The three most commonly identified themes are accessibility and connectivity to parks, community needs (i.e. park amenities improvements and development of recreational programming), and parks maintenance.

This document provides concepts and considerations for future parks, recreation, and open space developments that were outlined during the master planning process. Utilizing the color-coded tables below will aid the City and the residents in developing budgetary and grant funding goals that fit into their planning efforts.

The projects listed in the tables below are organized by the themes identified by the residents as follows:

1. Accessibility and Connectivity
2. Community Needs
3. Maintenance

These considerations are rated as follows, lighter-shaded colors are considered easy wins or short-term projects, while darker shades are long-term projects.

Ongoing
Short Term
Mid-Term
Long-Term

The cost of these projects were also identified with the lighter-shaded colors indicating less expensive projects, while the darker shaded are large capital project improvements.

\$ = No Cost / Inexpensive project
\$\$ = Small Project
\$\$\$ = Large Project
\$\$\$\$ = Very Large Capital Project

OVERALL THEMES AND ACTIONS

The tables below use the decision matrix strategy outlined above to help guide the City in prioritizing projects. This prioritization process will support White Sulphur Springs in establishing budgetary goals and securing grant funding for the maintenance, improvements, and future development of the City's parks and recreation programs.

Bair Park				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

Joanna's Park				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

McStravick Park				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

Rader Park				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

Spikes Happy Trails				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

Springs Park				
Theme	Objective	Term	Cost	Action

POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

White Sulphur Springs Demographics Analysis

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee wants to ensure the current parks, and any facility or recreational program development can be enjoyed by everyone within the community of White Sulphur Springs, the vision statement identified in previous planning efforts is “To create and enhance economically sustainable recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.”

The total population for White Sulphur Springs in 2022 was 1,112 people.

White Sulphur Springs has an older population with the median age in 2022 being 52.8 years, this is quite older than the median age in the United States which is 38.5.

The largest population groups in the City include the 15-19-year age group and three age groups spanning from 60-74 years.

With current plans underway for a proposed copper mine and hospital expansion, it is reasonable to project a population growth of 25% over the next five years in White Sulphur Springs.

Headwaters Economics 2022 data shows that the median household income as of 2022 is \$55,575. Approximately 7% of individuals, and 6% of families, are below the poverty line in White Sulphur Springs.

The future development proposals should take into consideration these demographics of the community and ensure senior citizens, teenagers, and residents of all income levels have access to recreational opportunities.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Inventory and Assessment

Springs Park

Springs Park is a 6.23-acre public space located at 105 Hampton Street, adjacent to residential neighborhoods, wetland/open space, and City Hall. The park is easily accessible, with a sign displaying its name on East Hampton Street near the parking lot. While there is no formal entryway or threshold, access to the park is possible from multiple directions. Visitors can reach the park via East Hampton Street, North Central Avenue, or West Woodson Street, with on-the-street parking and a parking lot available on East Hampton. The roads surrounding the park have stop signs but no sidewalks.

Springs Park Quick Facts

Size: 6.23 acres

Existing amenities:

- » Two Ball fields
- » Slide
- » Swings
- » Play structure
- » Dinosaur
- » Seesaw
- » Merry go round
- » Pavillion
- » Restrooms
- » Tire obstacle course



Figure 2 - Springs Park Drone Photo

Improvements will include the installation of new playground equipment and safe ground covering as well as ADA improvements throughout. The park improvements are planned to start in November 2024.

The park features a pavilion with picnic benches, a small gravel playground area with a variety of play equipment, and two baseball/softball fields with metal bleachers and wooden dugouts. The playground includes a slide, swings, a teeter-totter, a merry-go-round, a play structure, a tire obstacle course, though some equipment is being relocated to another park. The playground area has been noted for ponding during heavy rainfall, but the soil drains relatively quickly. Some playground equipment does not meet safety standards, with unsafe protective

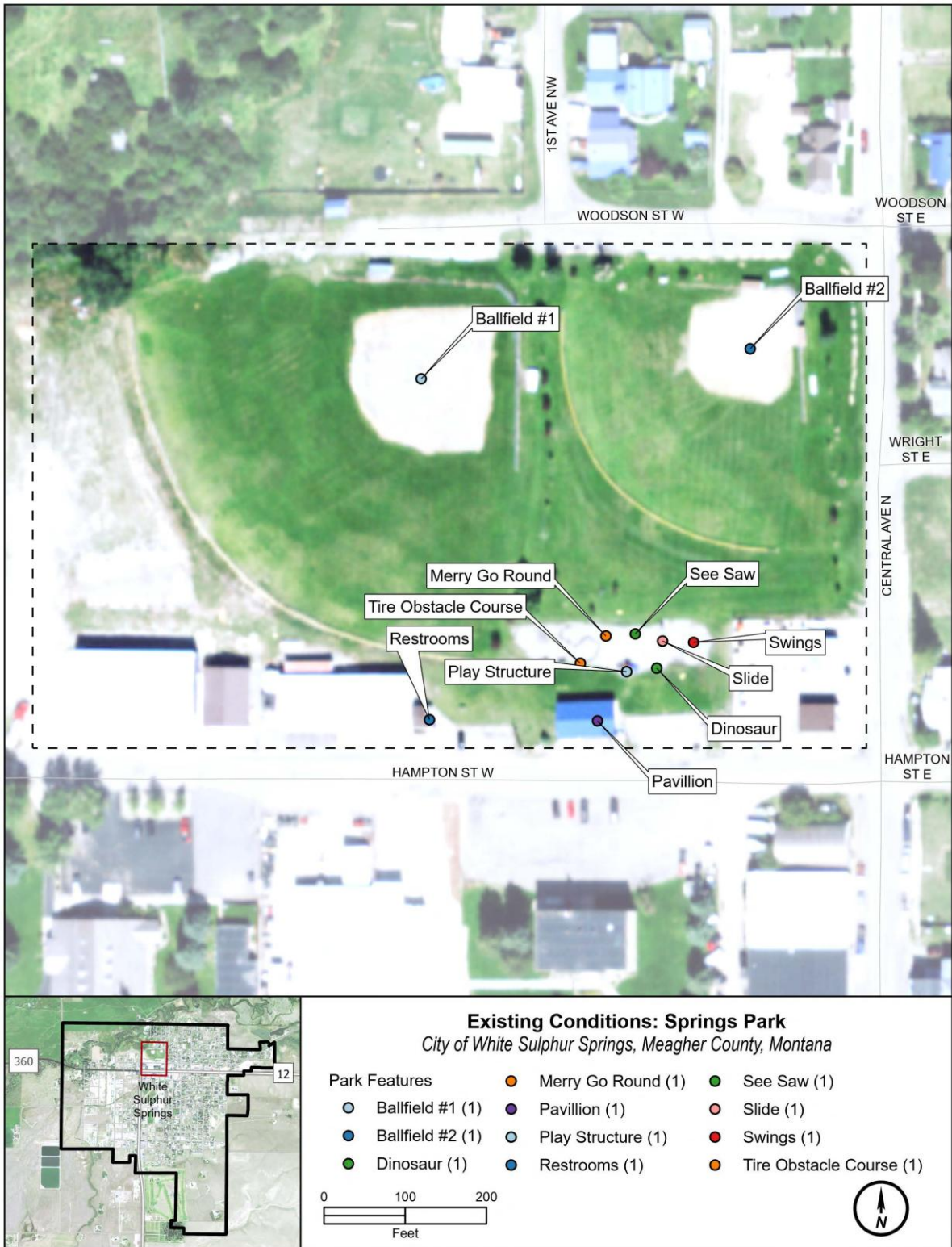
surfacing in parts of the play area. Additionally, there is no fence around the play area, though it is somewhat separated from the roadways by distance.

The baseball fields are functional but in need of maintenance, particularly regarding weed control in the infields. While the dugouts are in decent condition, they may require attention in the near future. The park's green space is in good condition and provides benches, tables, and a picnic shelter for public use. The park also has designated areas for pets, with rules posted and dog waste bags available, although vandalism has been an issue, with some bags and lights being destroyed or stolen. Public restrooms are available but have experienced vandalism as well, and there are no drinking water fountains. Trash cans are placed near the activity areas and are regularly emptied.

North of City Hall, the park includes horseshoe pits that need maintenance. These pits may need to be relocated in the future due to planned expansions of the firehouse or the potential development of a skate park.

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Map 2 - Springs Park Existing Conditions Map



Spike's Happy Trails

Spike's Happy Trails is a piece of land located near the North Fork Smith River, which was donated to the City. Currently, the area is undeveloped and consists of hilly terrain with sections of wetlands. Due to the uneven landscape, navigating the property can be challenging.



Figure 3 - Spike's Happy Trails Drone Photo

The land is adjacent to undeveloped city property near Springs Park and the Fire Department. The only current access is through walking along the City property. While undeveloped platted city streets provide potential access to the area, these would need to be developed before they can be used. Additionally, some of the platted streets on Spike's property may need to be abandoned in the future to accommodate development.

Spike's Happy Trails Quick Facts

Size:

Existing amenities:

»

Map 3 - Spike's Happy Trails Existing Conditions Map



Joanna's Park

Located at 101 E Main St, the park is easy to find and accessible, with multiple points of entry and on-street parking available. Sidewalks and curb cuts border the park, ensuring convenient access. While there are no trails or bike routes nearby, the surrounding roads are equipped with traffic signals. The park is surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial properties. However, nearby commercial areas sometimes contribute to excessive litter and overflowing trash cans within the park.

Joanna's Park Quick Facts

Size: Approximately 4,486 square feet

Existing amenities:

- » Lighting
- » Shade structure with tables
- » Seasonal portable restroom
- » Land scaped artistic elements
- » Bandshell

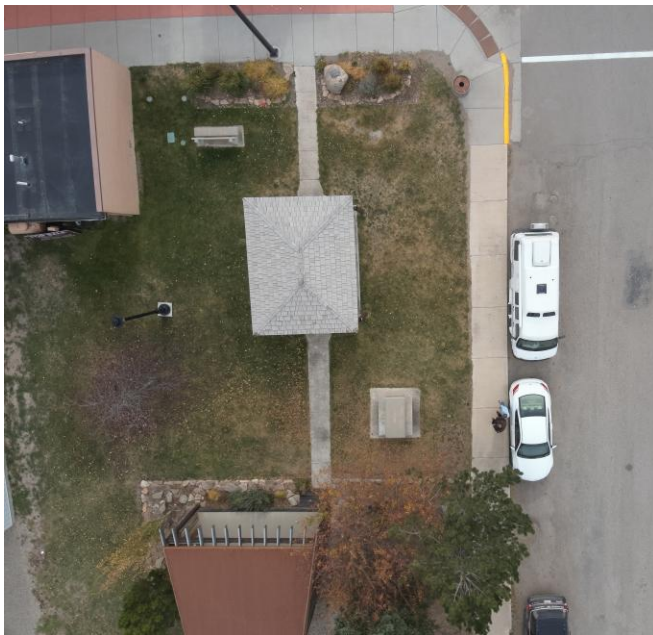
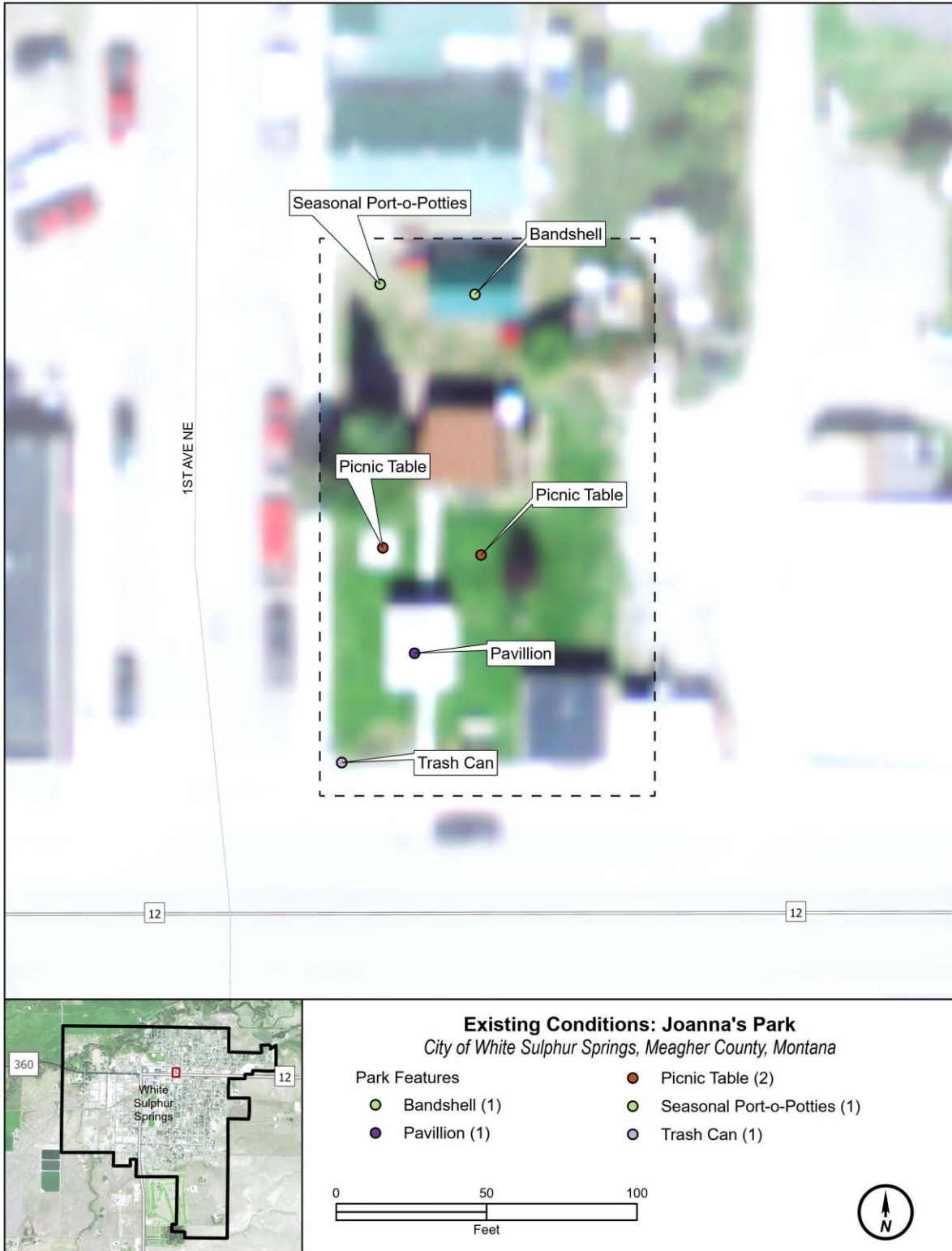


Figure 4 - Joanna's Park Drone Photo

Map 4 - Joanna's Park Existing Conditions Map



McStravick Park

McStravick Park is located at 205 4th Ave SE and is easy to find and access. The park features new tennis and pickleball courts, which are in excellent condition. Both street parking and a parking lot are available, though there are no nearby sidewalks or curb cuts. However, traffic signals are present for safety. The park is surrounded by residential areas, and there are no safety concerns.



Figure 5 - McStravick Park Drone Photo

The park includes signage displaying the park's name, hours, and rules, as well as evidence of landscaping and trees. Benches and tables are in good condition, and portable toilets are available for use.

The court will exceed its useful life in the next five to ten years so the City will need to start saving to plan for its eventual replacement. Replacement options include a panelized surface or a cushioned playing surface. The Parks Committee is also currently planning for ADA parking upgrades.

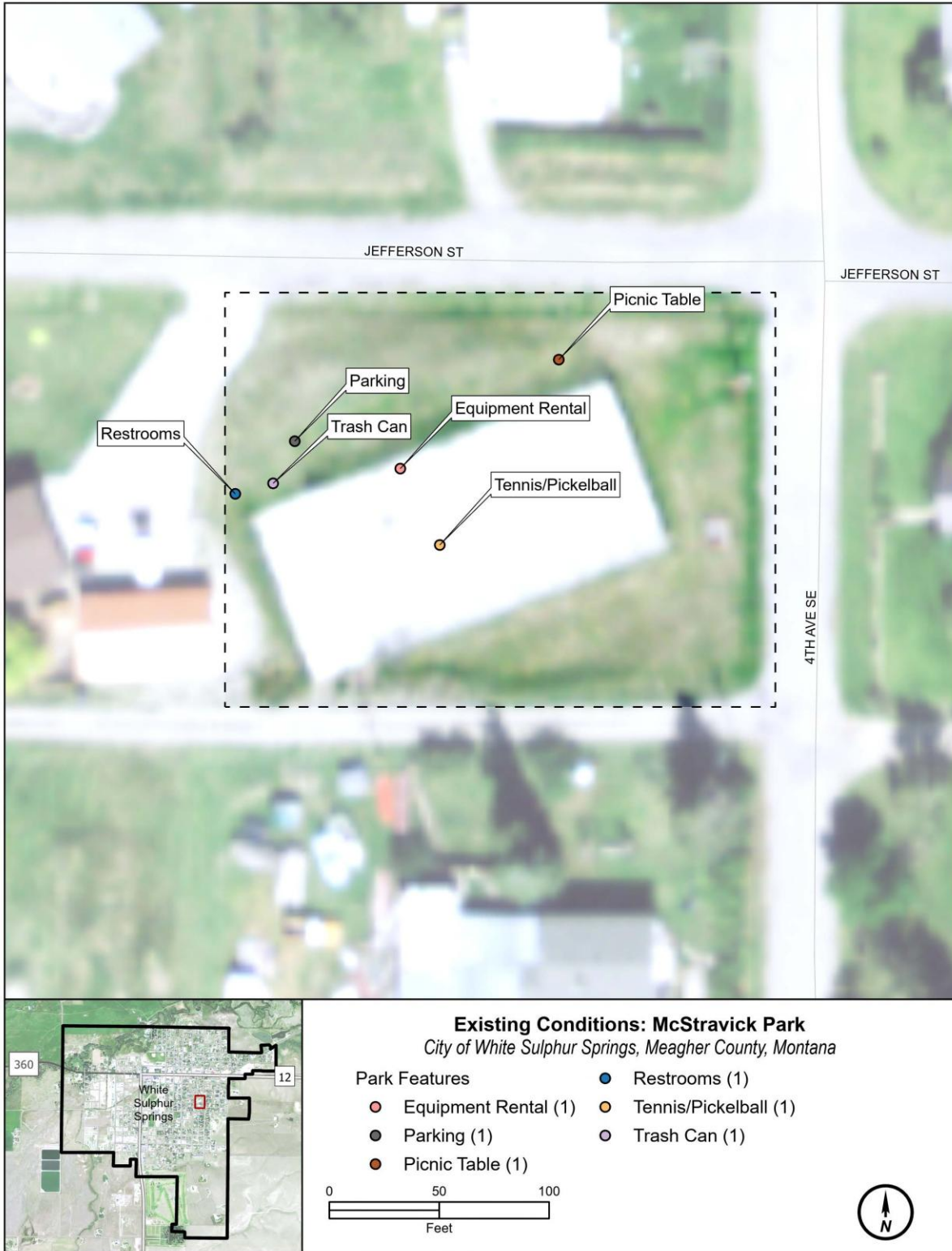
McStravick Park Quick Facts

Size: approximately 0.35 acres

Existing amenities:

- » Signage
- » Landscaping
- » Benches and tables
- » Portable toilets
- » Multi-Use sport court
- » Equipment rentals
- » Trash cans

Map 5 - McStravick Park Existing Conditions Map



Bair Park

Charles M. Bair Family Memorial Park, located at 903 4th Ave SE, is an accessible and usable park. The park is marked with a sign displaying its name, and both on-street parking and a parking lot are available. However, there are no sidewalks, curb cuts, or ramps around the park, and the surrounding roads lack trails and bike routes.



Figure 6 - Bair Park Drone Photo

The park features a playground area with colorful equipment, benches, and shade cover. The grassy open space is well-maintained and usable. Portable restrooms and trash cans are provided for visitors, and about half of the benches and tables are in good condition. The park also includes a grill. The playground equipment is set to be upgraded in the near future. Additionally, the park boasts landscaping with trees and natural grass.

Surrounded by residential areas, the park faces some wildlife and vandalism issues.

Plans are in place to redesign and repair this park in November of 2024 to include playground equipment reconfiguration, safe ground cover, and potential ADA improvements.

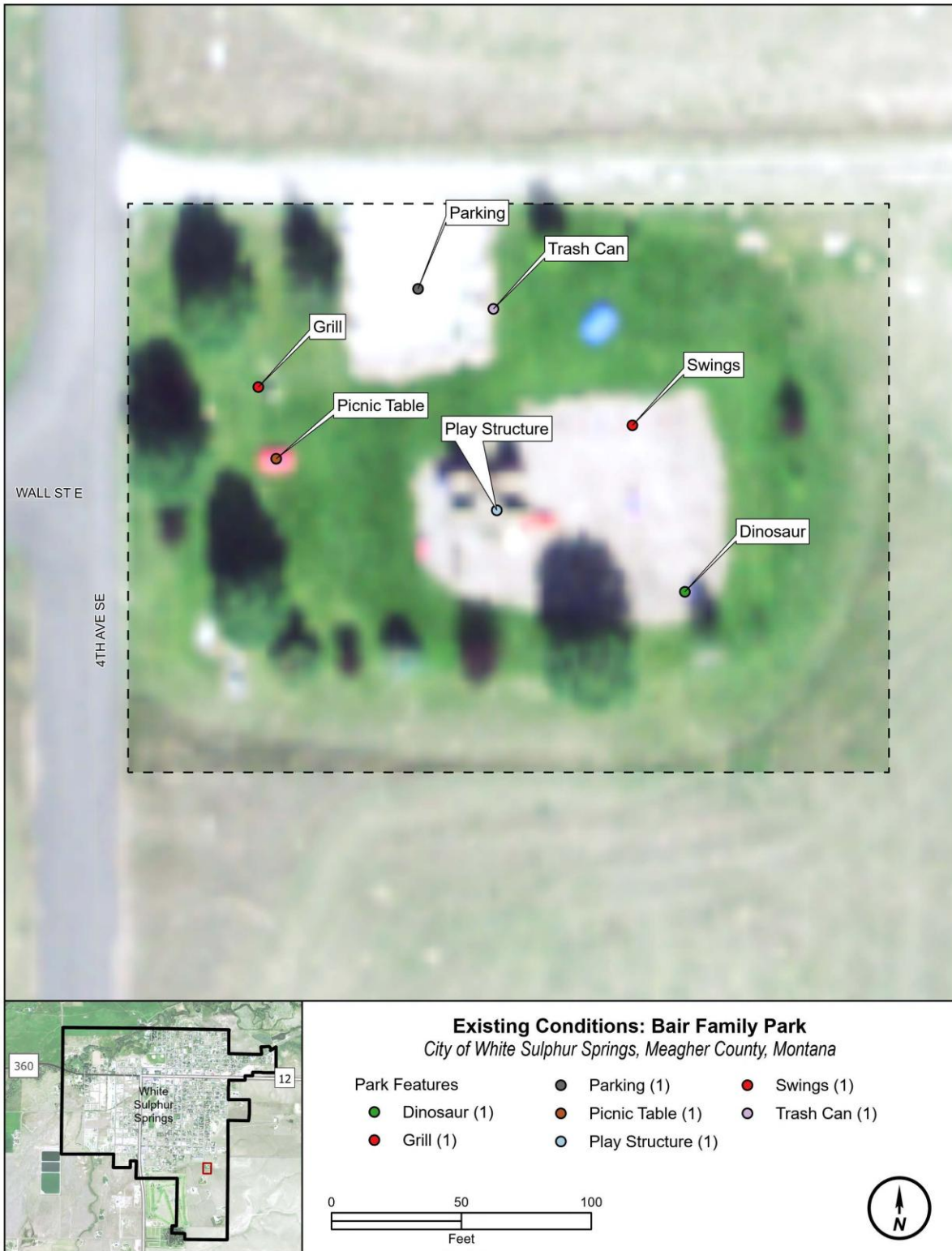
Bair Park Quick Facts

Size: 2.32 Acres

Existing amenities:

- » Playground equipment
- » Benches
- » Shade cover
- » Portable restrooms
- » Trash cans
- » Grill
- » Landscaping

Map 6 - Bair Family Park Existing Conditions Map



Radar Park

Located on Chilton St., the park is easily identifiable with signage displaying the park's name and hours. It offers multiple points of entry, two parking lots, and on-street parking. While a sidewalk and paved path are present along Highway 89, there are no sidewalks, curb cuts, ramps, bike routes, or external trails adjacent to the park. The surrounding roads are equipped with traffic signals, but there is no crosswalk between the two sides of the park. Nearby, you'll find commercial properties and a school.



Figure 7 - Radar Park Drone Photo

Concerns such as litter (especially animal waste) and camping are present. Vandalism and heavy traffic also pose challenges at the park.

At some point, the park may need to be resurveyed to ensure that all development occurs on City property. Additionally, a boundary line adjustment may be necessary to confirm that all parking spaces are located on City-owned land.

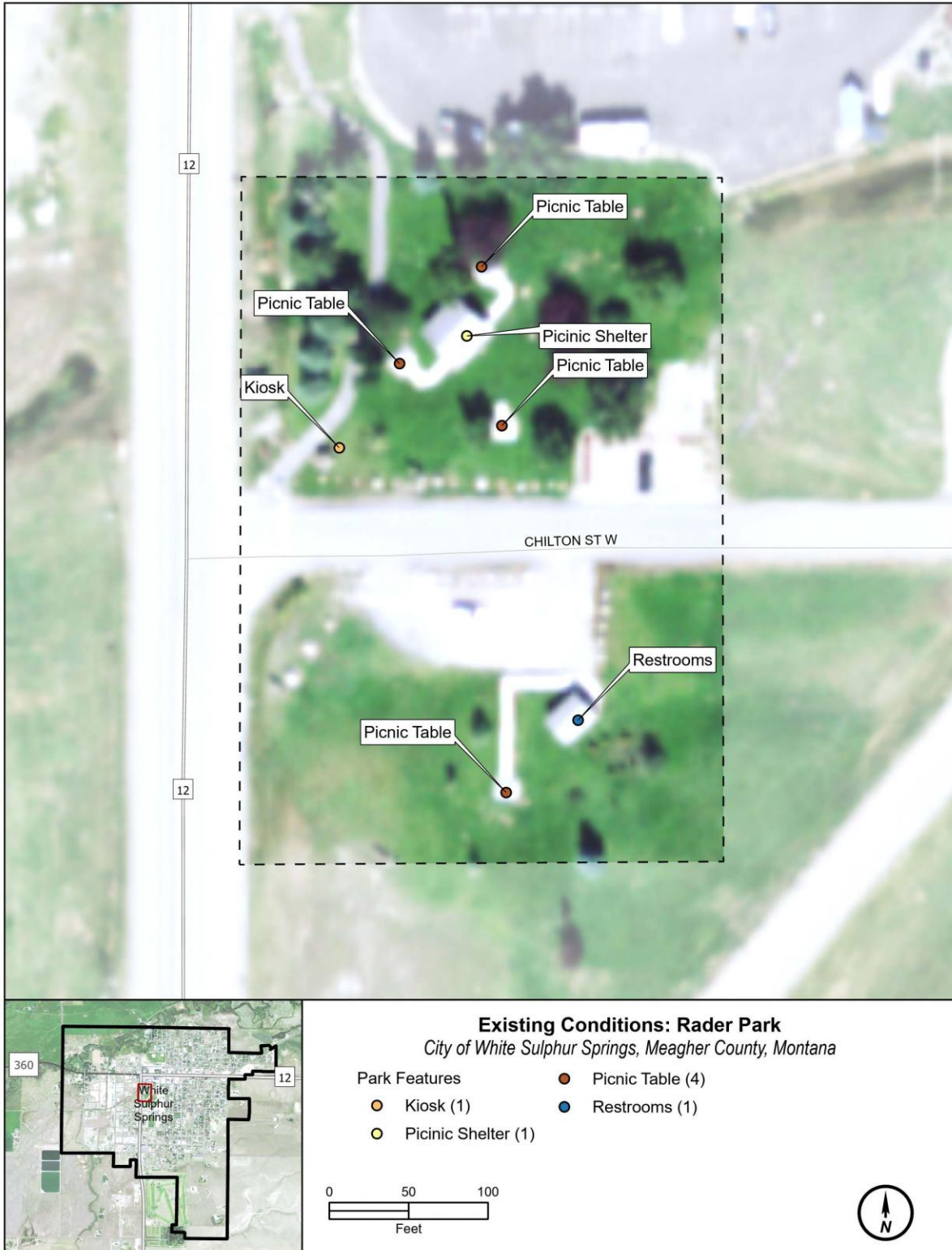
Radar Park Quick Facts

Size: Approximately 0.781 Acres

Existing amenities:

- » Lighting
- » Shade trees
- » Restrooms
- » Grills
- » Benches
- » Tables
- » Trash Cans
- » Landscaping
- » Artistic features

Map 7 - Rader Park Existing Conditions Map



Adopt a Spot Program

The Parks Committee has created a program where residents can pick a spot within a park and maintain that location for two years. Maintenance includes pulling weeds, planting flowers and shrubs, staining buildings, etc. In most cases, the city provides the supplies. Several existing parks are Adopt a Spot sites. In return for their hard work, volunteers are acknowledged with a sign bearing their names at the Adopt a Spot site. This program also applies to other sites within the City including the welcoming signage into the City, and gardens at City Hall, the Senior/Community Center, and the Castle Museum.

Bike and Walk Time

Residents who live longer distances from a park are often deterred from utilizing the park system. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association Park Access Report, users are 47% more likely to walk if they have easy access to parks.

Typically, being within 10 minutes or less to a park is deemed easy access. When the distance to a park doubles, the use of the park by residents decreases by 50%.

This data emphasizes the importance of having parks equitably spread out across a City in order to provide parks and open space to every demographic in the City.



Figure 8 - Crosswalk with Pedestrian Flashers

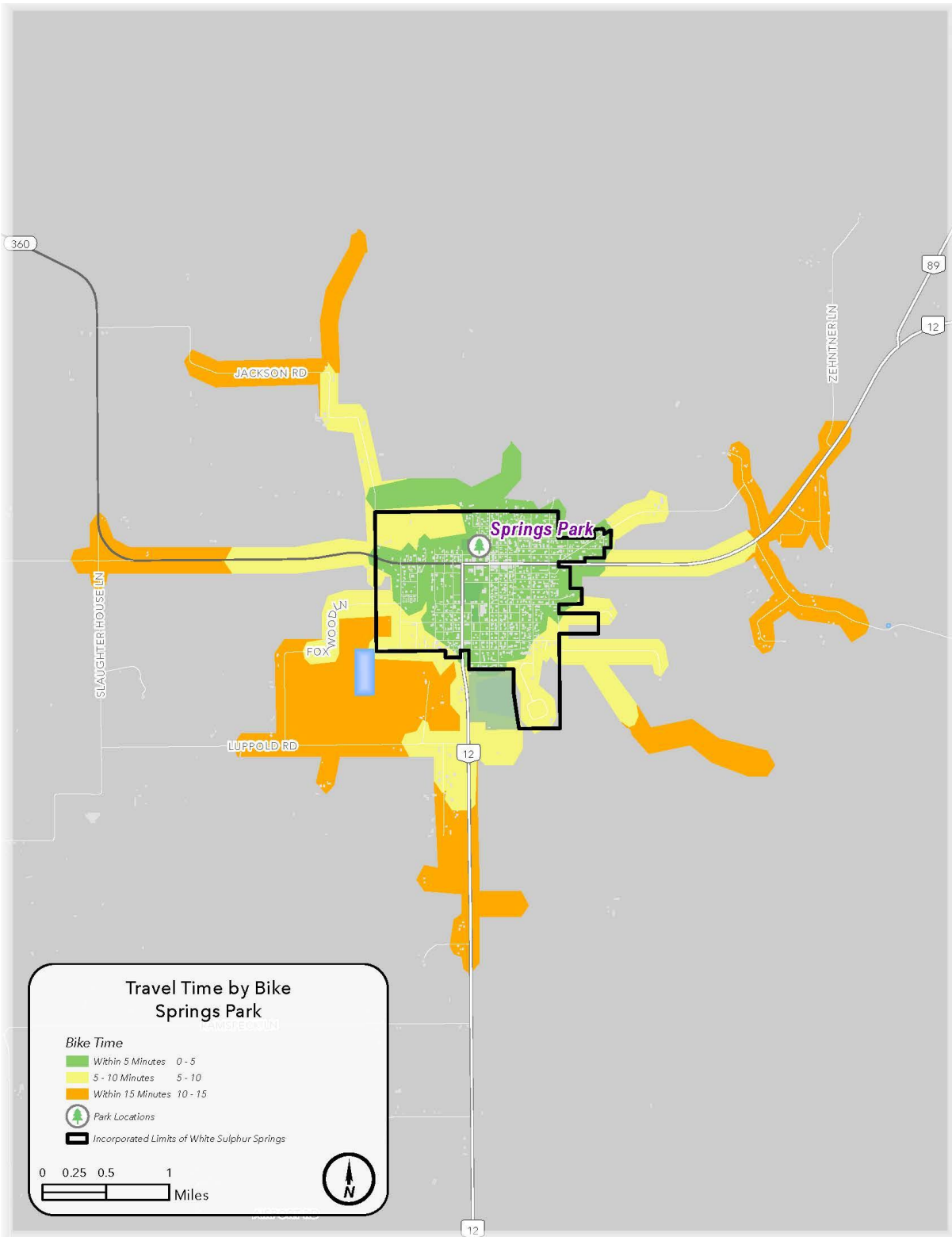


Figure 9 - Sharrows in Ennis, MT. Source: Federal Highway Administration 'Small Town and Rural Design Guide'

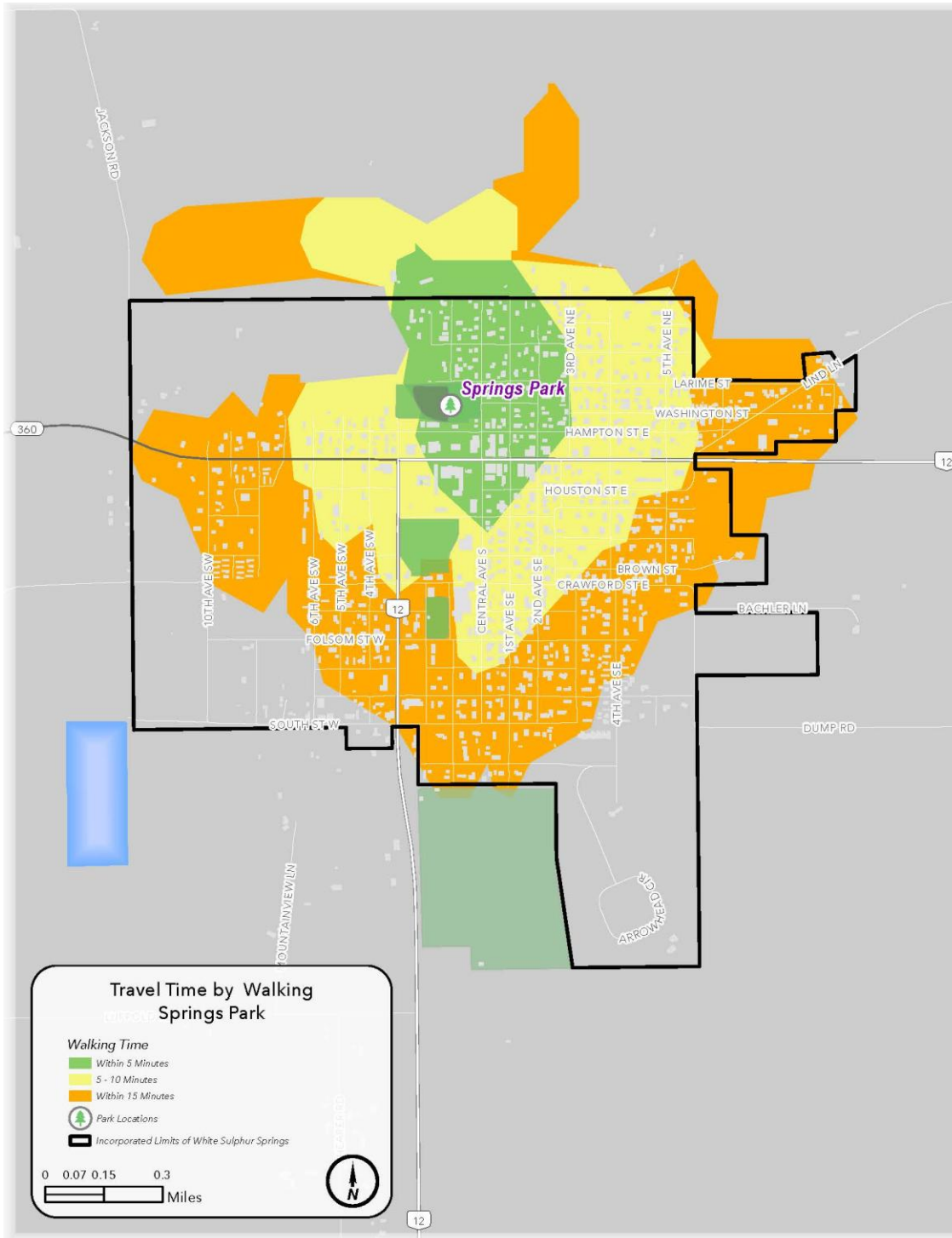
The maps pictured below detail the bike and walk time to each park in White Sulphur Springs. As you can see, all of the park locations are highly accessible to the community by biking. This could put an additional emphasis on upgrading the bike connectivity throughout the City to disperse park users across the City. Out of all the parks within the City, Bair Family Park and Springs Park are the most difficult to get to for the majority of residents in the City. Due to the division of the City by the Highway 89, the walk time to each of these parks is substantially longer on the opposite sides of the City than the more centrally located parks. Therefore Bair and Springs Parks are truly more akin to neighborhood parks.

Springs Park

Map 8 - Springs Park Travel Time by Bike Map

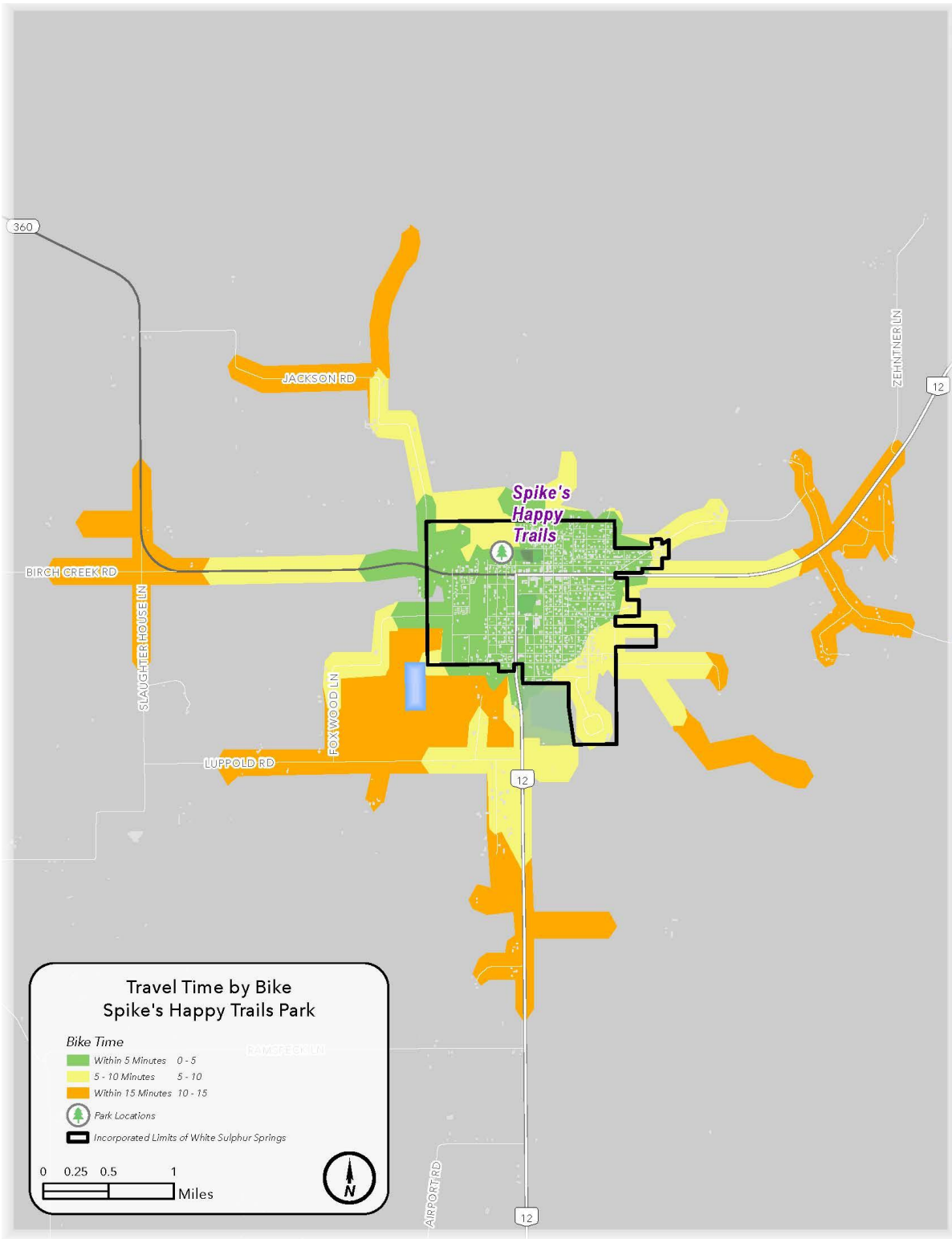


Map 9 - Springs Park Travel Time by Walking Map

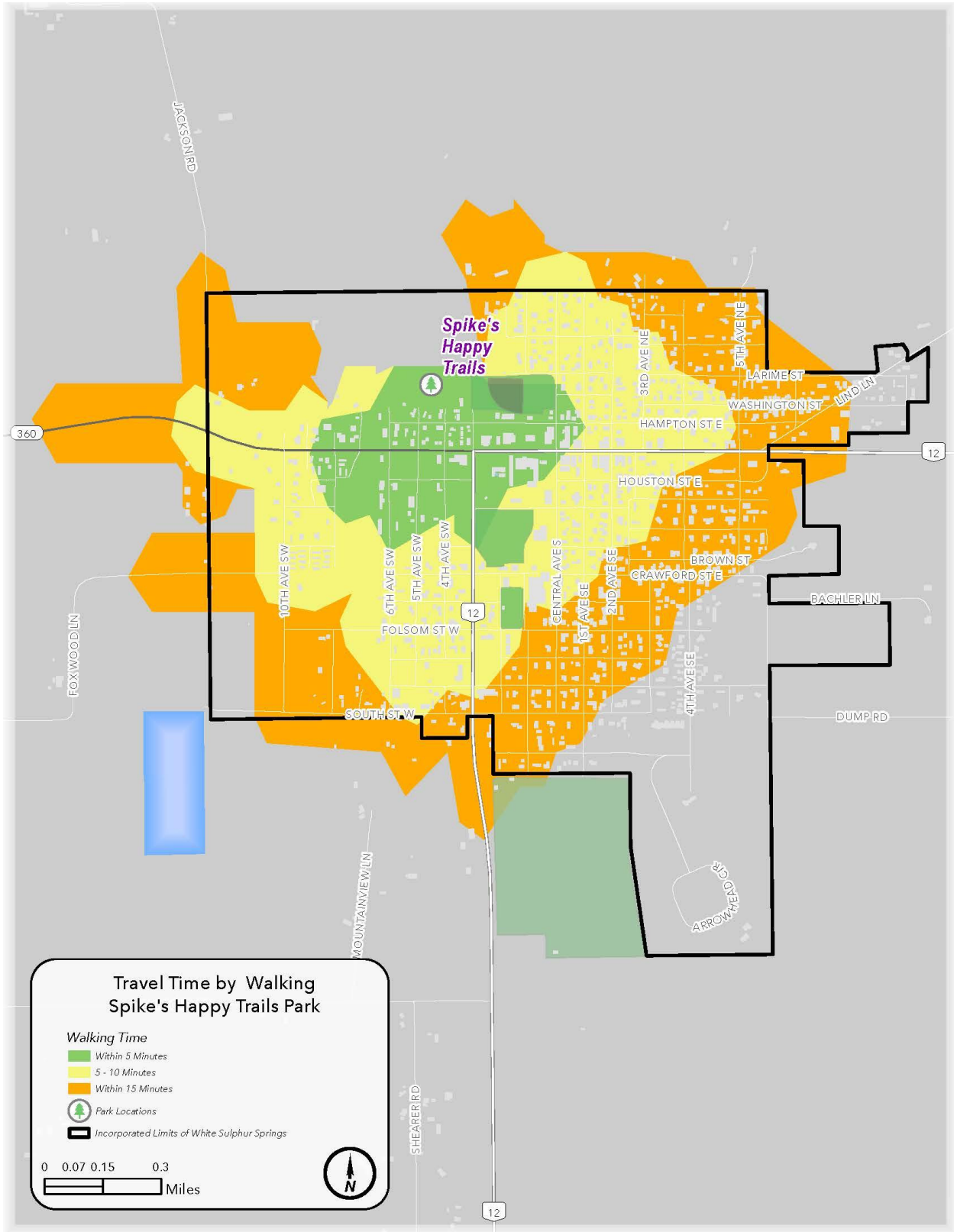


Spike's Happy Trails

Map 10 - Spike's Happy Trails Travel Time by Bike Map

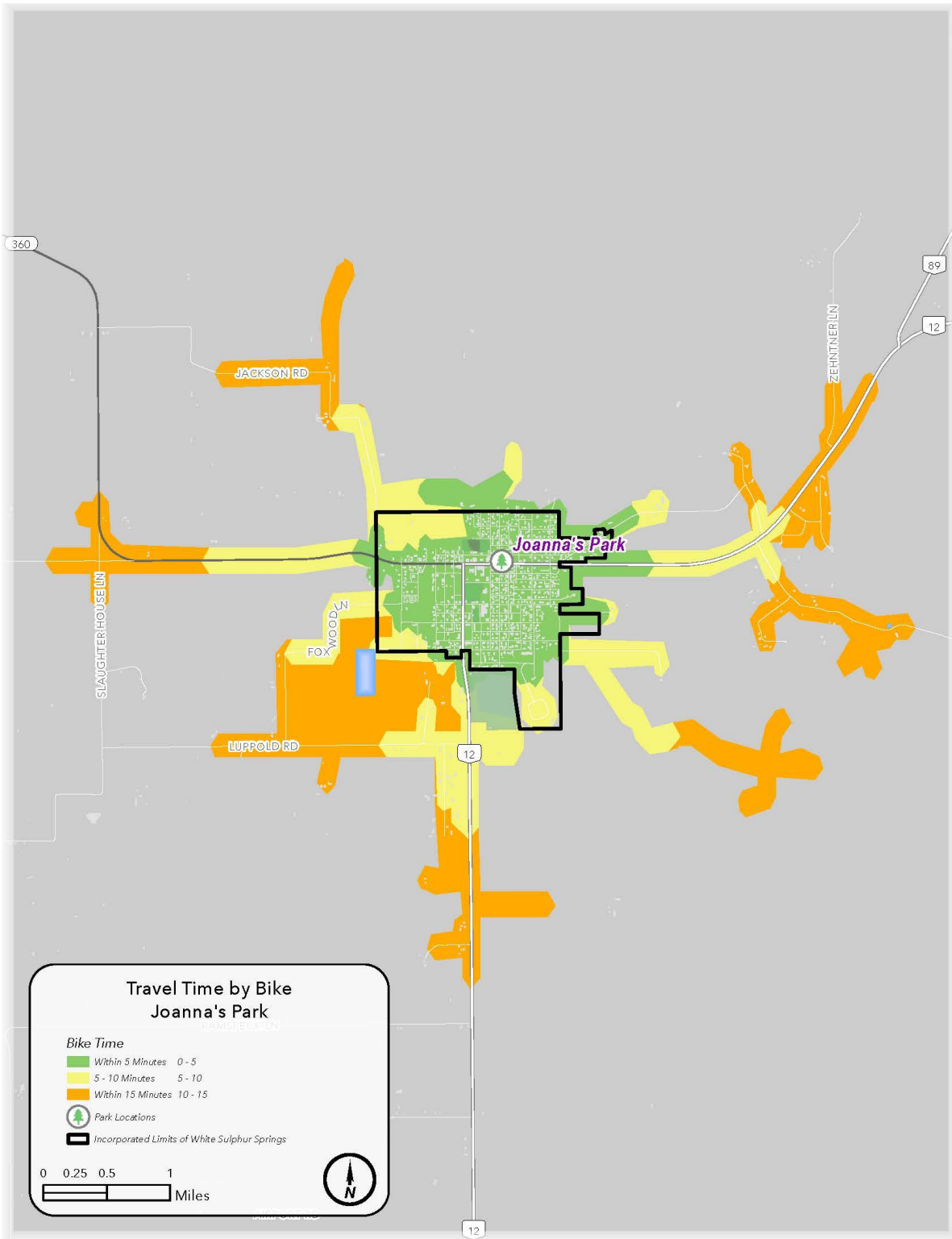


Map 11 - Spike's Happy Trails Travel Time by Walking Map

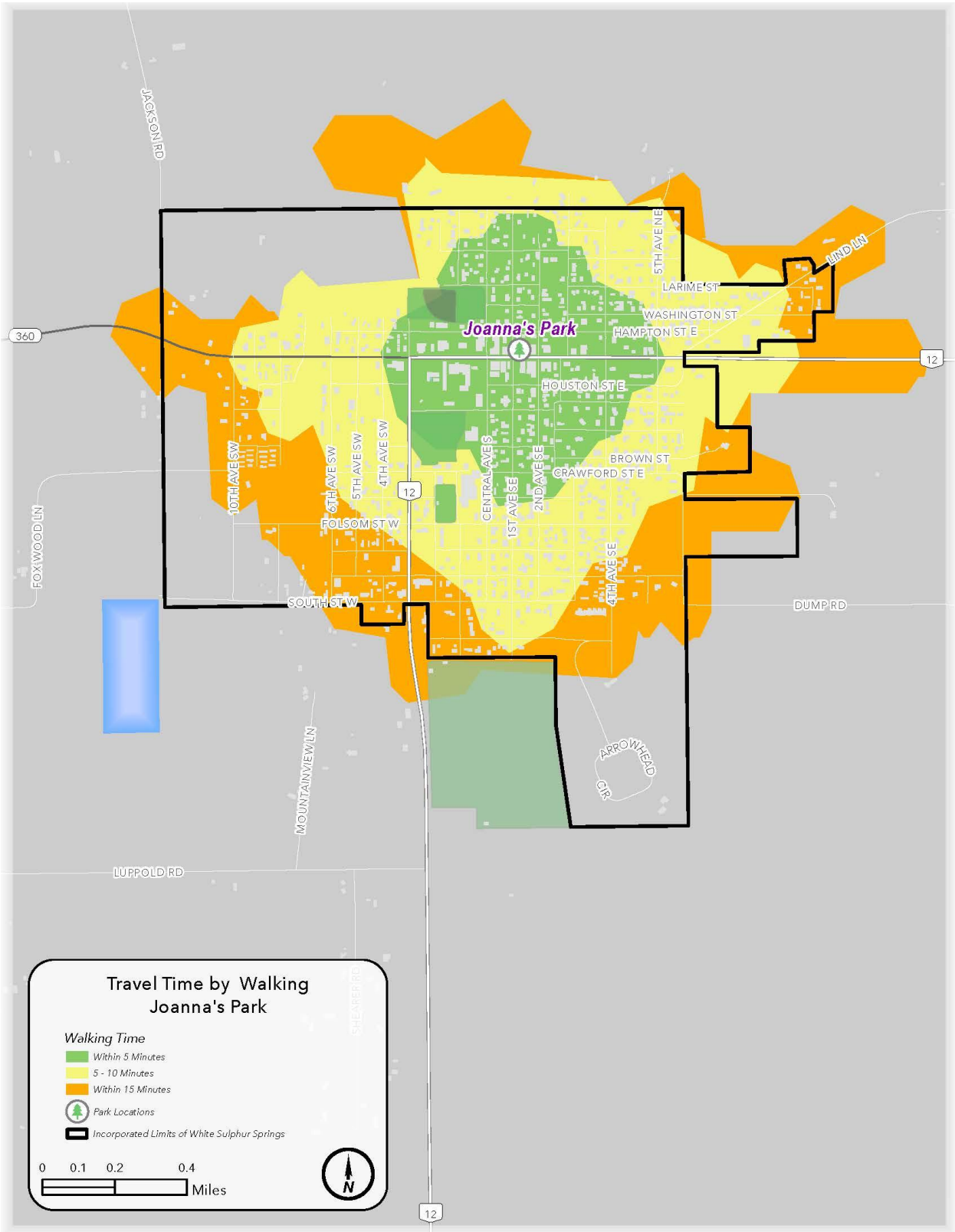


Joanna's Park

Map 12 - Joanna's Park Travel Time by Bike Map

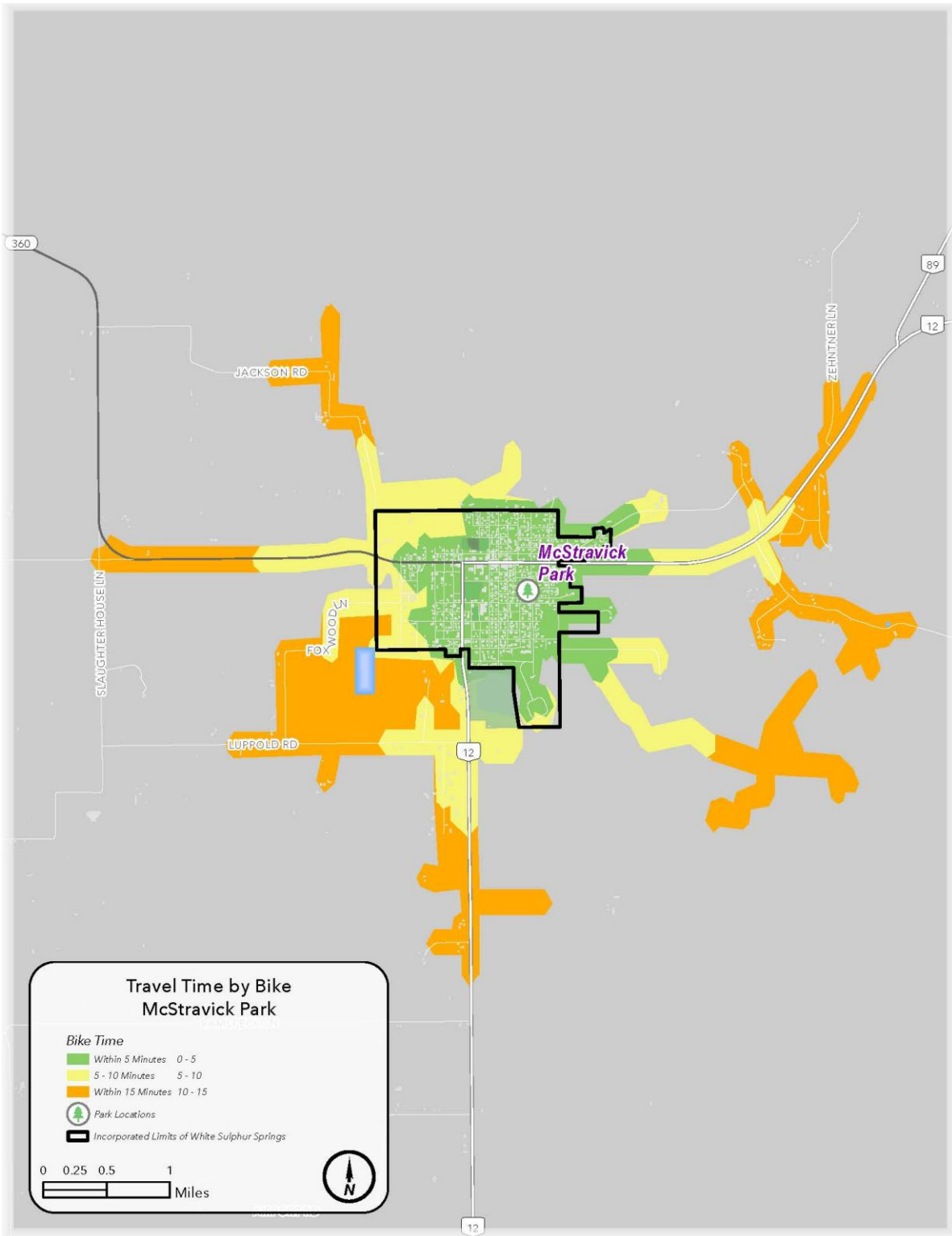


Map 13 - Joanna's Park Travel Time by Walking Map

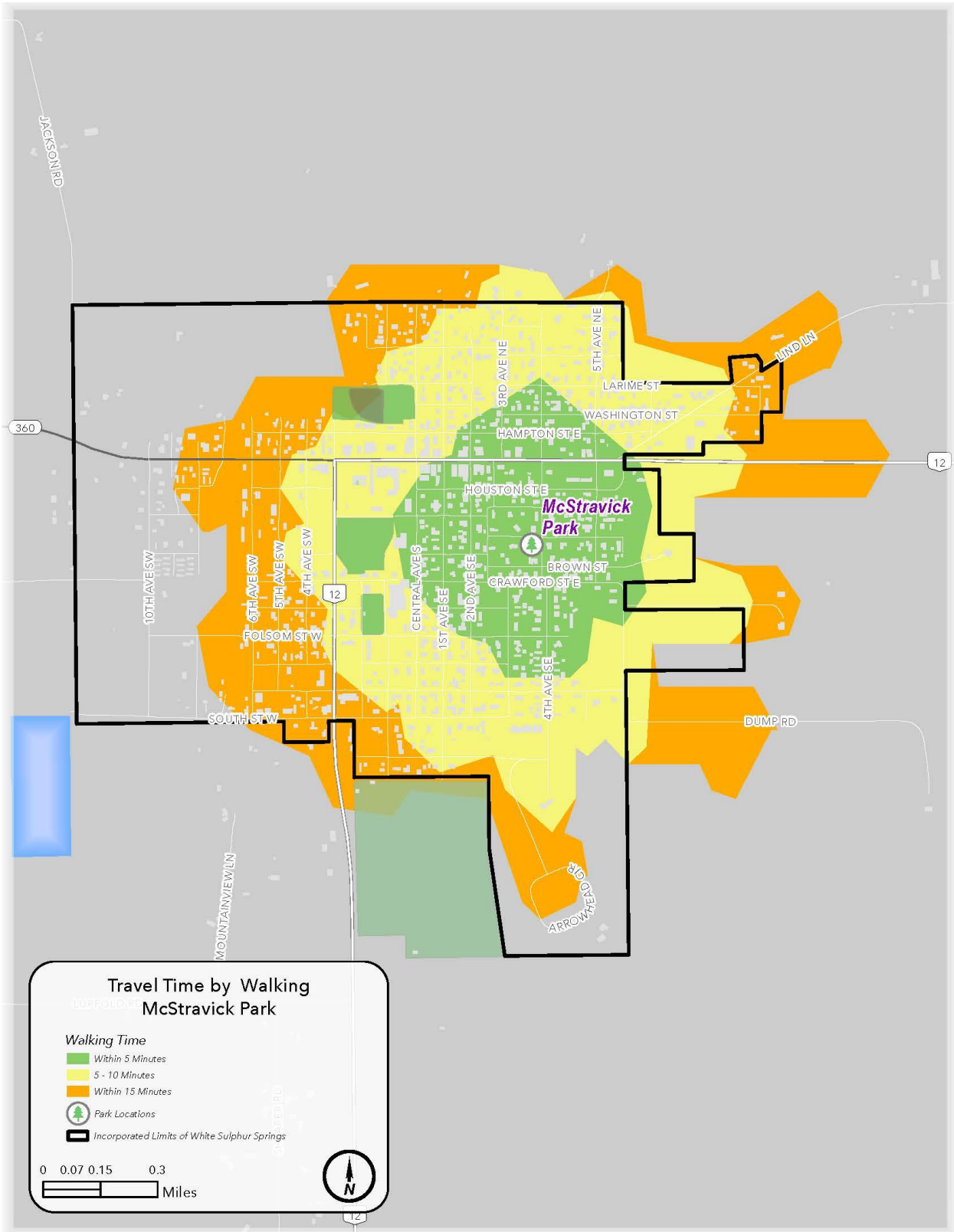


McStravick Park

Map 14 - McStravick Park Travel Time by Bike Map

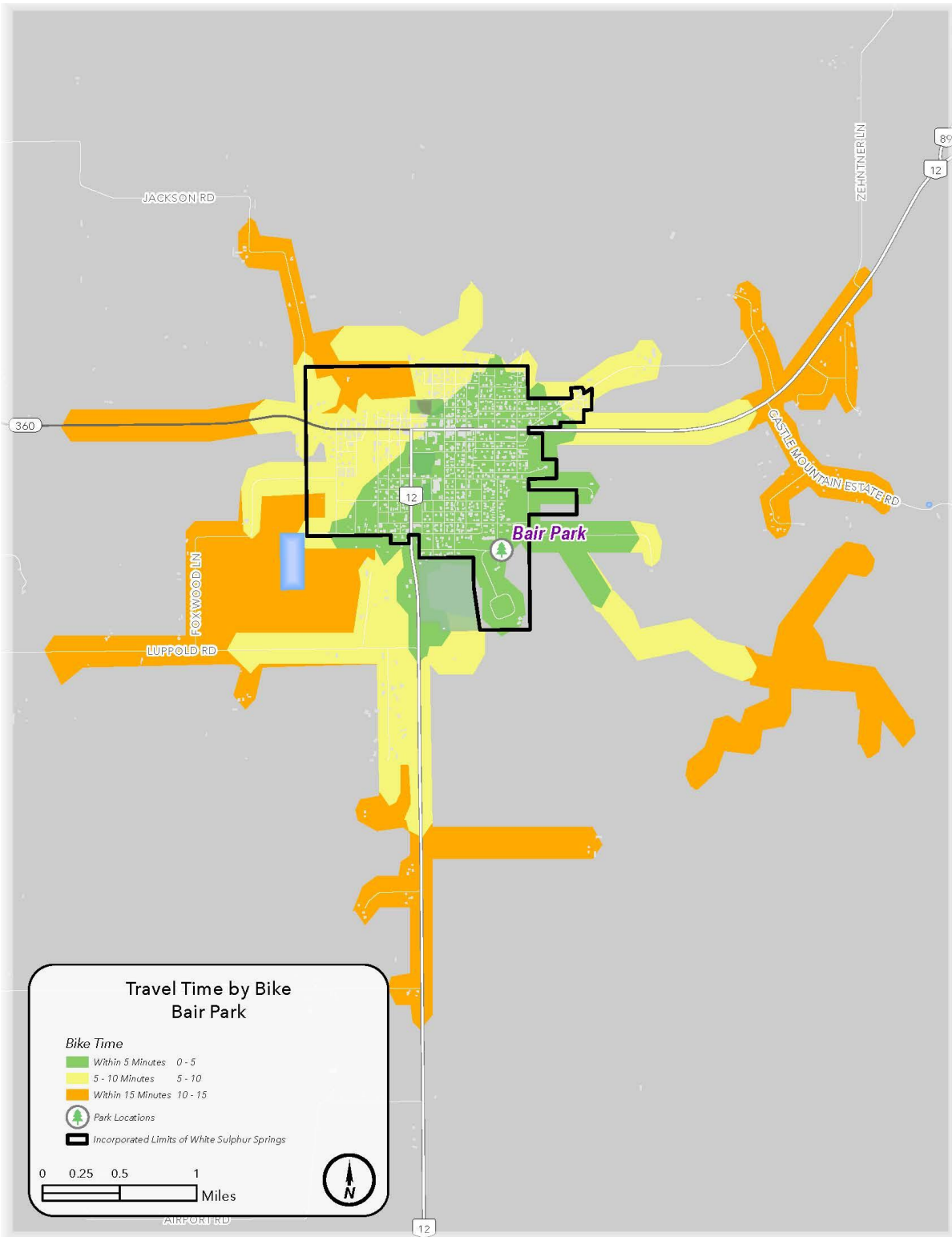


Map 15 - McStravick Park Travel Time by Walking Map

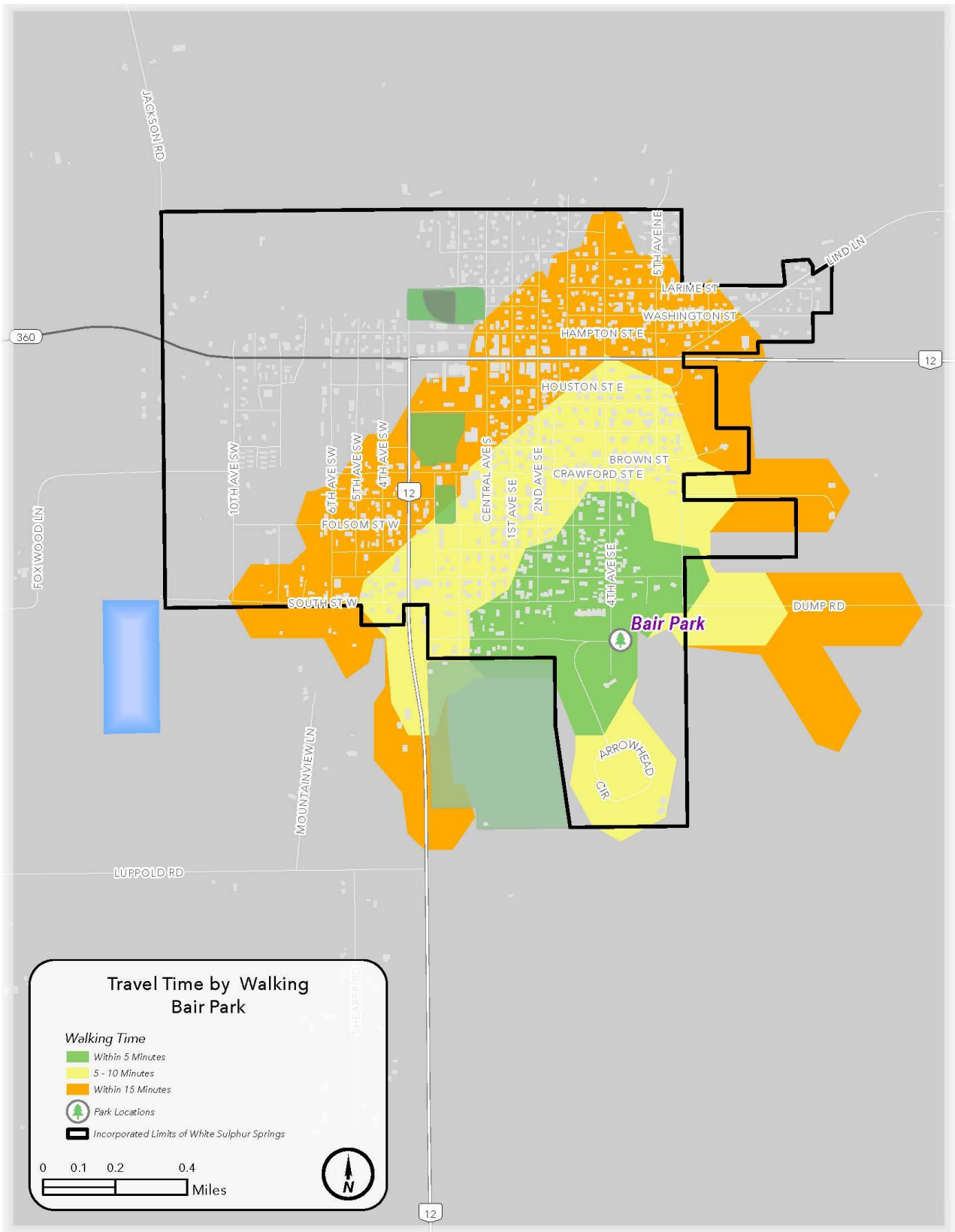


Bair Park

Map 16 - Bair Park Travel Time by Bike Map

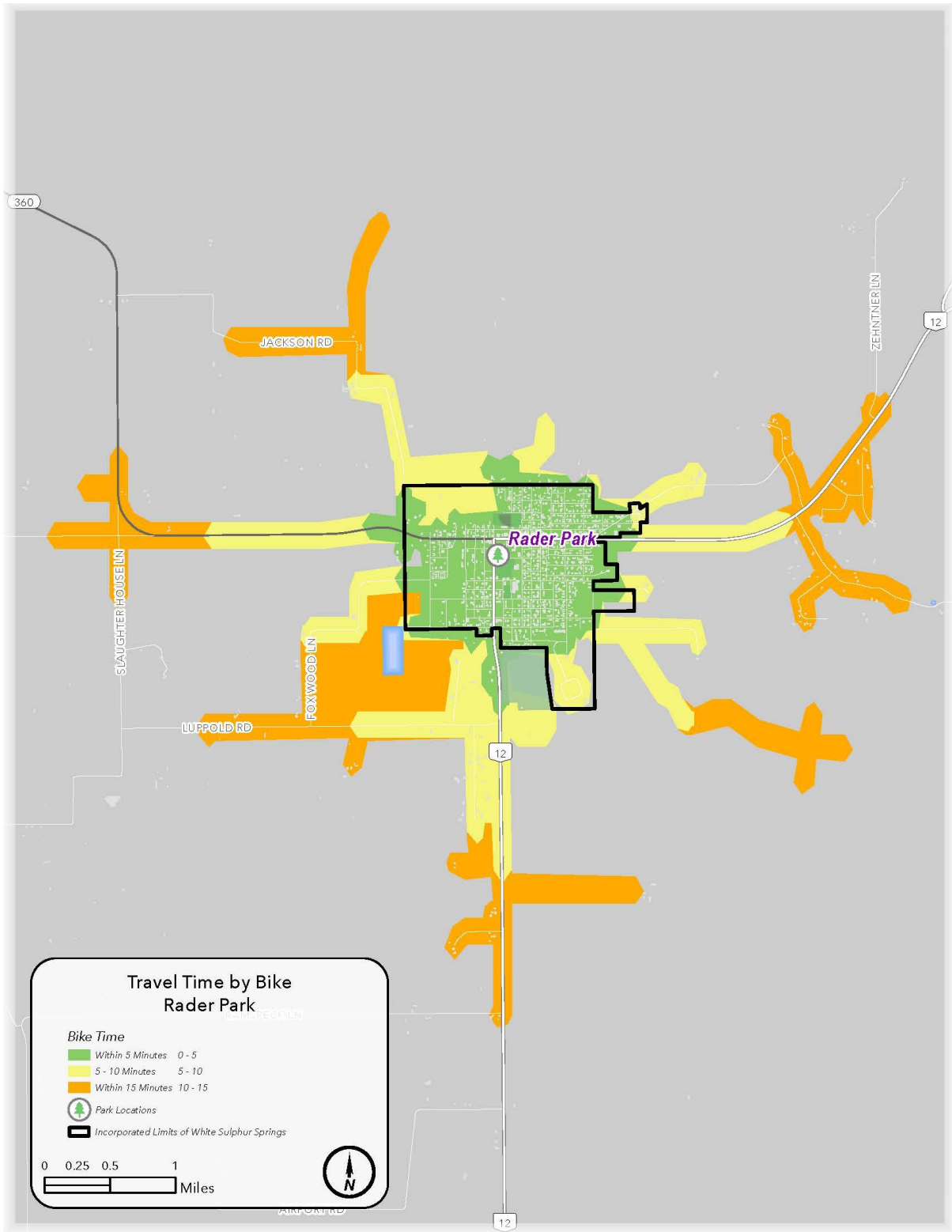


Map 17 - Bair Park Travel Time by Walking Map

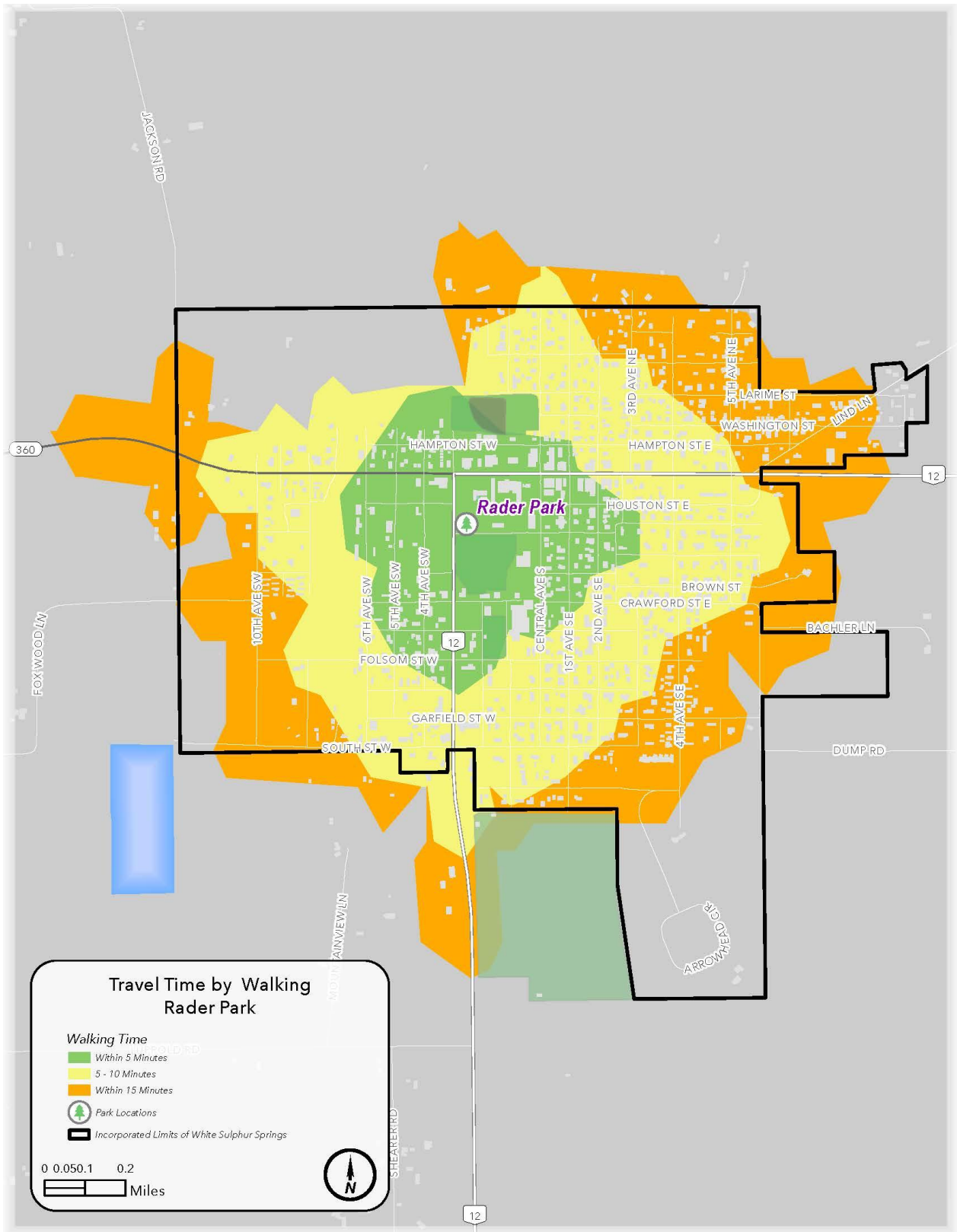


Rader Park

Map 18 - Rader Park Travel Time by Bike Map

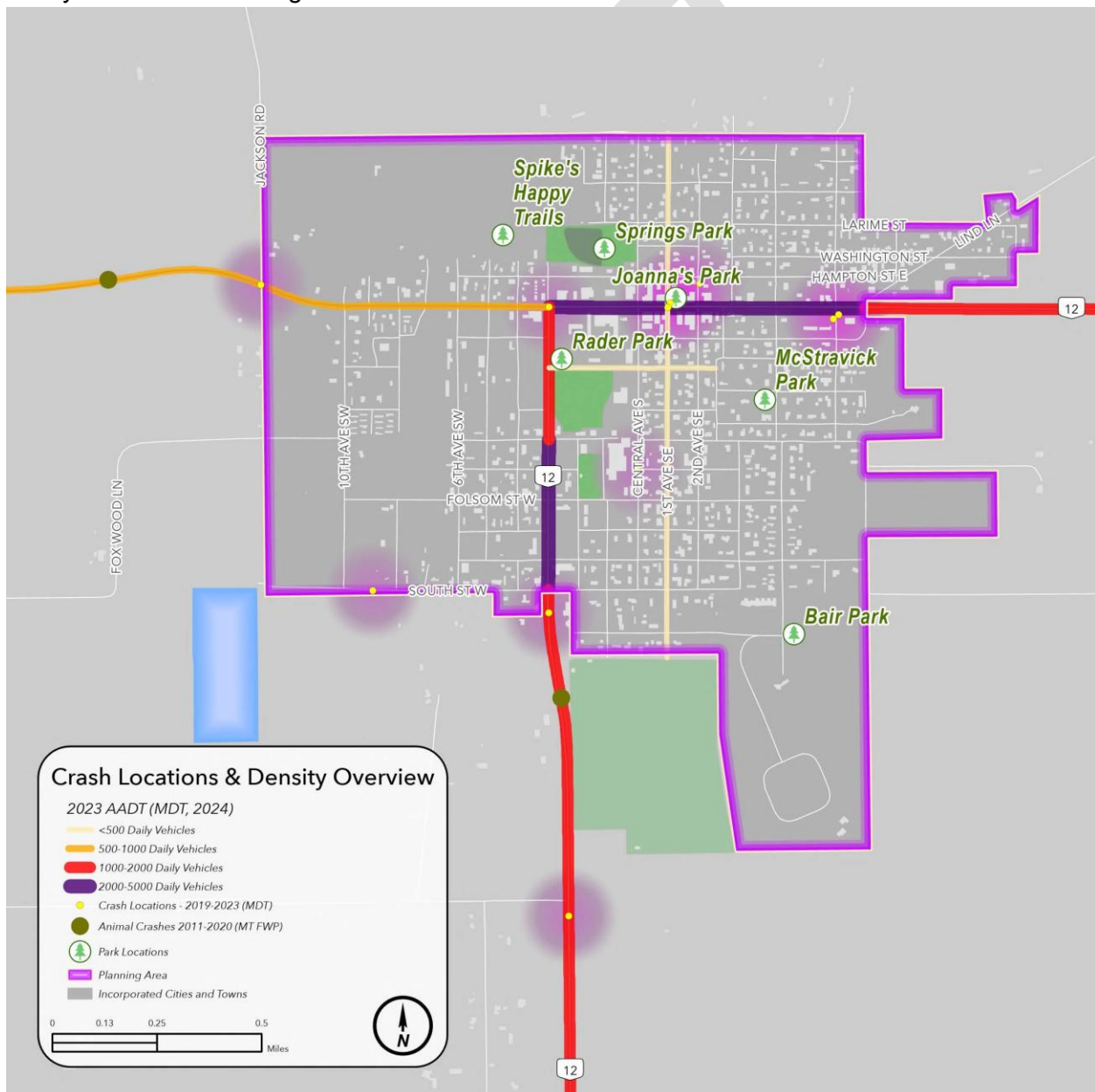


Map 19 - Rader Park Travel Time by Walking Map



CRASH AND SAFETY ANALYSIS

Crash and safety analysis can be a key component of park planning, as it helps identify potential hazards and areas where accidents are more likely to occur and can be used to ensure the safety of park visitors. A significant barrier for residents when traveling to parks in the City is the lack of safe and accessible routes. White Sulphur Springs is divided by Highway 89, which divides the City, separating its northern and southern halves. Map #20 shows Montana Department of Transportation crash data and average daily traffic counts. Between 2019 and 2023, there have been four crashes along Main Street/Highway 89. In addition, traffic volume along Main Street/Highway 89 varies, with average daily trips ranging from 5,000 to 1,000 vehicles. Community members have previously voiced concerns to the Parks Board about the safety of children crossing Main Street.



Recommendations to increase the safety of people crossing Main Street/Highway 89 on the west end of town are the following:

- Work with the Montana Department of Transportation to install bump-outs at intersections and add pedestrian flashers as crosswalks.
- Determine a clear bike route throughout the City, either by using signage or by painting bike lanes, that lead to crosswalk intersections on Main Street.
- Maintain sidewalks so residents feel safe walking to the parks.
- Ensure that the routes to the parks are ADA-compliant so everyone can safely and easily access the parks.
- Evaluate other traffic control methods such as speed bumps, or reduced speed limits adjacent to parks to ensure that vehicles travel at a safe rate of speed near the City's parks.



Figure 10 - Example bike route signage

Implementation of traffic safety control measures would potentially allow an increase in non-motorized travel throughout White Sulphur Springs, which would create a healthier lifestyle for the residents and would promote the usage of more parks by all of the residents, by connecting all of the parks together by walking and biking routes.



Figure 11 - Intersection bump-outs

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

Springs Park

Spike's Happy Trails

Joanna's Park

McStravick Park

Bair Park

Rader Park

DRAFT

FACILITY & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

This section identifies the recommended new parks and recreation projects, upgrades, facilities, programs, and improving existing areas.

Existing Facilities Updates

An attractive and useful park provides both services and amenities to users. This generally includes parking areas, restroom facilities, benches to allow users to rest, trash cans, appropriate crosswalk designs, and other features.

The decision-making process for providing appropriate facilities and facility updates should consider Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a theory on human motivation formulated by Abraham Maslow in 1943. This original five-tiered hierarchy concept explains the human motivation to fulfill basic needs (“Deficiency”) before advancing to a higher level of actualization (“Growth”). A well-planned and designed park facility promotes a sense of safety, comfort, and understanding of where users may fulfill basic needs. This theory, along with the specific goals identified for each park and the decision matrix outlined at the beginning of the plan, should be taken into account when evaluating improvements to existing facilities and the potential for adding new improvements.

Parks and Recreation Maintenance

The City’s park maintenance responsibilities include irrigating, mowing, trimming trees and bushes, spraying weeds and insects, trash and litter removal, and replacing trees and playground equipment as needed.

The responsibility for park maintenance currently falls to two City public works employees, who also oversee the upkeep of the City’s other buildings and infrastructure such as the water and sewer systems and streets. While these employees work year-round, their capacity is limited due to the broad scope of their duties. As such, any new park projects or developments should be designed with consideration for the available maintenance resources, aiming to minimize maintenance needs in the future. This will help ensure that the maintenance workload for the City’s park facilities remains manageable without overwhelming the existing staff.

Playgrounds

Playground equipment upgrades were facilitated by the City with the help of funding from a **T-Mobile grant** awarded in 2024. Monies from the grant will be used to remove unsafe equipment and to move some equipment from Springs Park to Bair Park. Discussions of better equipment layouts, equipment spacing, equipment materials, and protective surfacing were had during the site visits. As City staff and Parks Committee are making updates in the future, data from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) should guide the decisions.

Restroom Facilities

The results of the Community Survey conducted in 2024 show that a lack of restroom facilities was a top reason for many residents not visiting City parks.

Portable restrooms are available at McStravick and Bair Park, and restroom facilities are set to be installed in Radar Park.

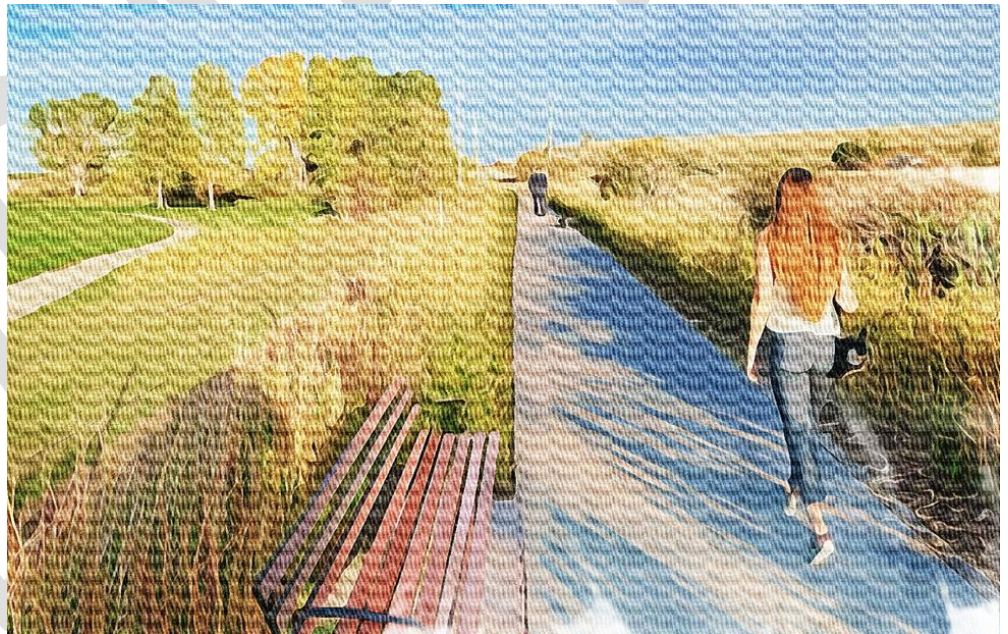
The restrooms at Springs Park are intermittently available, as there are issues with vandalism. This vandalism was not isolated to the restrooms in this park, the lights at the picnic shelter and the dog waste stations also are targets of vandalism.

Restrooms are a basic need for park users and should be prioritized in facility updates, in accordance with Maslov's hierarchy of needs, however, all park updates and facilities need to be considered with the maintenance costs and responsibilities they create. City staff should consider if the maintenance time and upkeep are feasible for the limited employees.

Vault toilets are an option for City-owned properties and provide lower maintenance costs and needs as they are not hooked up to the City's sewer system.

Development of Spike's Happy Trails

The area known as Spike's Happy Trails is currently a vacant piece of land that is located near Springs Park baseball fields. The property is hilly with areas of wetlands. Walking the entirety of the property can be difficult due to its hilly terrain. The land was gifted to the City with the requirement that the land must be used as "a public park/wilderness walk/nature area, with an emphasis on the use, education and enjoyment of children of all ages."



The physical characteristics of the land, including wetland vegetation and being so close to the North Fork of the Smith River, create some constraints for development that will need to be taken into account.

Before any development plans can be created, the clear identification of the legal boundaries of property are needed. A certificate of survey (COS) completed by a licensed land surveyor should be created to show the exact lot lines in relation to the river, City-owned property,

undeveloped city streets, and private property. These legal boundary needs to be established to develop the property with trails and be usable and assessable by residents.

The Community Survey results showed a desire by residents to have some form of walking access to the North Fork Smith River. A certificate of survey for the subdivision that Spike's property is a part of does not show the property has riverfront access. The City may consider the acquisition of additional property at Spikes to make this a reality. The acquisition may take the form of a land donation, bargain sale, the creation of an easement or some other mechanism.

Permit Considerations

Any outdoor recreation development within the floodplain and wetlands area of the North Fork of the Smith River must be properly permitted. Applicants would be required to have their application reviewed by the Conservation District, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (for governmental applicants only), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the local Floodplain Administrator for compliance with local, state, and federal laws. It is recommended to reach out to these agencies during the planning phase of any project.

The development of Spike's Trails will likely require a joint application because of the wetland area on the Spike's property. A joint application is for proposed work in Montana's streams, wetlands, floodplains, and other water bodies.

Joint application applicants will be required to have their application reviewed by the Conservation District, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (for governmental applicants only), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the local Floodplain Administrator for compliance with local, state, and federal laws.

Applicants can learn more about the Joint Application permitting process by contacting the community's Floodplain Administrator. It is recommended to reach out to these agencies during the planning phase of any project, while not all the agency permits are needed, each agency still must review and provide either their permit or waiver before any work can commence.

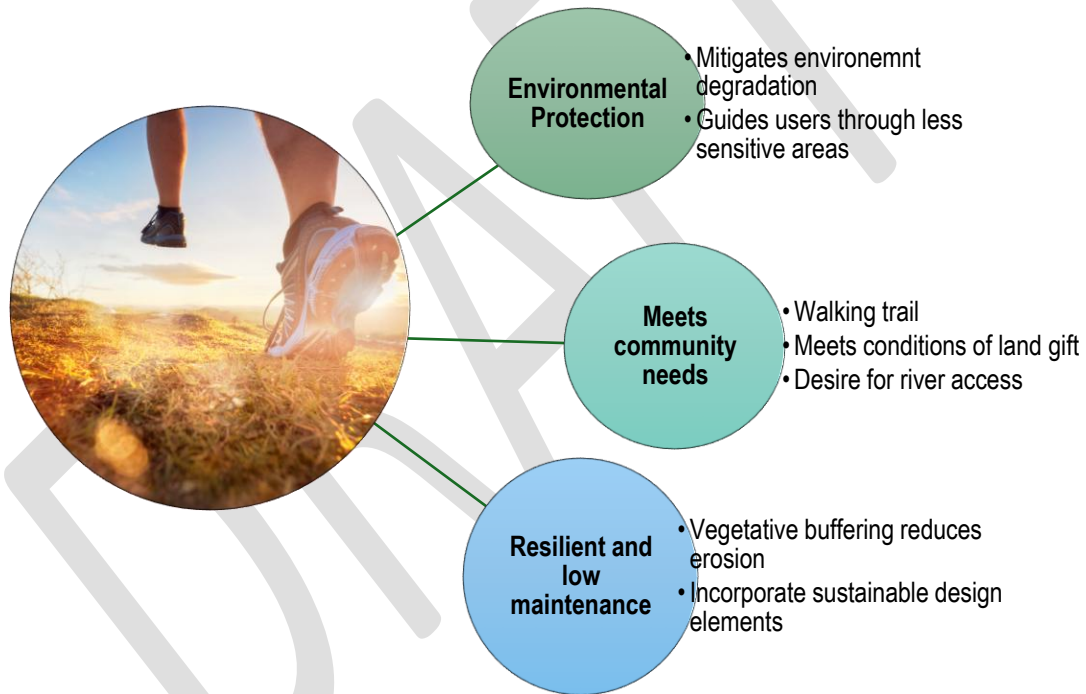
Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands.

The Section 404 Permit, provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers is the main permit requirement for wetlands, multiple agency review and engineering requirements should be considered in the time and cost of trail development for Spikes. The permit review process is looking to see if the applicants have considered the following in their development proposal

- Taken steps to avoid wetland impacts
- Minimized potential impacts on wetlands
- Provided compensation for any remaining unavoidable impacts

Key points and features to consider:

- **Understand floodplain/ wetland restrictions.** It is the community's responsibility to maintain a resilient floodplain by limiting any encroachments. Any development within the Regulated Floodway requires an encroachment assessment and No-Rise analysis by a certified engineer. The No-Rise ensures that the proposed development does not create adverse impacts by raising the water surface level or directing flood waters to other properties. A balance of cut and fill within the floodplain is encouraged.
- **Establish a management plan.** Balance compliance with floodplain regulations and conserving the natural environment. Consider mitigation strategies for impacts caused by human and pet excrement, litter, informal trails, vandalism, mechanical noxious weed control, etc.



Springs Park

An important recommendation for Springs Park is to install security cameras so that the restroom facilities can stay open, and the vandalism issues with lights and dog waste stations can be reduced or resolved by the cameras.

The open grass area near the baseball fields in Springs Park is a prime area for development of recreation facilities, whether that be multi-use grass fields, soccer fields, or development into different type of use. This area has significant potential for such facilities and may be a candidate for additional site specific master planning to coordinate development at this site.

McStravik Park

McStravik Park has been recently updated. Recommendations for this park include moving the picnic table to make it more accessible for all users and improvement of the parking lot area.

Radar Park

Radar Park has two separated sides, North and South Radar which are separated by Chilton Street. Currently, there is parking on both sides of the street. There are amenities in both sides of the park and it is heavily used by highway travelers, stopping for a break or simply visiting the area.

There is currently no crosswalk and the creation of a crosswalk between the two sides of the park would improve safety for pedestrians and also remind drivers of the possibility of pedestrians, as it is adjacent to a heavily traveled area.

Additions to Radar Park that would improve its attractiveness are a drinking fountain and pet waste station.

Other possible projects for this park include the installation of cultural or historical signage or art pieces such as a display, fountain, statue, or sculpture.

Before any additions or developments are installed in the Park, a certificate of survey (COS) should be completed to establish the boundaries of the park to ensure that the improvements are made to City property and not on the surrounding private property.

Dog Park

A dog park was a popular write-in comment in the community outreach survey for park development.

While there is an expressed desire from community members for a designated off-leash area for dogs the development of such an area would have many components ensure its success.

According information from National Recreation and Park Association website for designing dog parks , the basic improvements for designing dog parks are water, a good in-and-out system, well-designed gates and fences, and clear signage.

Like many other park facilities, dog parks vary widely in size, design, and features.

There is no size requirement for the size for a dog park, some are many acres in size, and some are less than one acre in size. Amenities and facilities in dog parks also vary greatly, usually being limited by space availability. A smaller community like White Sulphur Springs would likely not need a large dog park, additionally, a smaller size would allow for easier and less costly maintenance

Regardless of size, most dog parks have two separate fenced areas, one for small dogs and another for large dogs. Tables and benches are also a common but basic and low maintenance feature that allows comfortable supervision of dogs by their owners.

The City's ordinances for leashed/ unleashed dogs might need to be updated if a dog park is developed within City limits. Additionally, the City should ensure it has adequate liability insurance for the addition of a dog park on City property.

Community considerations would be noise concerns as the existing areas available for the development of dog parks are in or adjacent to already existing parks, which are all close to residential areas. However, hours of use and rules clearly posted can help mitigate noise issues.

Ice Rink



Figure 12 Philipsburg Ice Rink

A common winter recreation activity in Montana is an outdoor public ice-skating rink. Ice skating rinks can vary greatly in terms of the costs associated with construction and maintenance. For example, in Veterans Park in Billings, the parks department often will flood a flat grassy area and allow it to freeze. There are no other improvements associated with the rink. On the flip side, the Town of Phillipsburg has put more money into its improvements by providing a warming hut with free skate rental for the public, boards along the perimeter of the rink, as well as equipment for hockey games such as goals

Recreational Programming

A need for recreational programming was a theme of the responses to the Community Survey. Winter and summer programming and youth and adult programming were identified by respondents.

The City has successfully partnered with a community organization in the operation of a youth baseball program. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between the baseball group that the maintenance for the city-owned baseball facilities is to be done by the volunteer group. This model of a community partnership could provide the opportunity for additional youth sports and programming in White Sulphur Springs.

The City should regularly review these MOUs with community groups to determine if the price and responsibilities continue to accurately reflect expenses incurred. While the City should strive to offer affordability and accessibility in its park facilities for residents, it must consider the long term repair or update of facilities. . The City public works staff is limited and holds many responsibilities already, any additional maintenance needs as a result of programming need to be accounted for.

Recreational programming creates a need for personnel, whether the programming is for sports, fitness and wellness classes, or seasonal classes. Even if volunteers or community groups are undertaking most of the labor and responsibilities of the programming, consideration still needs to be made for the logistics of providing information to residents, creating schedules, recording registration and fees, as well as managing and coordinating instructors, coaches, referees, and volunteers.

The feasibility of the City providing fitness and wellness classes, summer or winter programming, or sports programs would be contingent on finding instructors and space/ facilities to run the programming including administration.

The City could consider contracting an instructor for fitness or wellness classes such as yoga or dance and charging a small admission fee for community members to offset the instructor or any other fees incurred by the programming. The City could also gauge the viability of having volunteers within the community undertake coaching or refereeing sports programs, camps, classes, or other applicable programming.

Springs Park Fields and McStravik Park offer space for outdoor sports programs or camps. Springs Park also offers other spaces for outdoor programming with its Rotary Shelter or open grassy area adjacent to the playground.

Additionally, if no City-owned areas are available to hold these activities, the possibility of using the facilities of the Stevens Youth Center or Stonecenter should be explored.

Additional considerations for successfully undertaking recreational classes, camps, and programs are adequate liability insurance and background checks for volunteers or staff. The City should ensure it has adequate liability insurance for these types of events being held on City property or if it is a City sanctioned property being held elsewhere, such as the school or other community facilities. Whether background checks are required for people involved in

recreational programming will need to be verified with current City policies and rules. Many local governments require those involved, whether volunteer or paid, to get a background check. These background checks are an additional expense to the City, but one option is that the personnel or volunteer get the background check themselves using a third-party service and provide proof to the City.

It is also important that as the City grows with the potential development of the Black Butte Copper mine and construction of the new hospital campus, there may be a higher need for recreational programming events. This could be done through a cooperative effort between the City, the County and other non-profits or organizations. This could be similar to the joint-sponsored effort with Showdown Ski Area to continue to provide ski access to people in White Sulphur Springs, specifically children.

Future Parks

DRAFT

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Parks Advisory Committee

White Sulphur Springs has an established advisory board, the Parks Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations regarding Parks to the City Council. The Parks Committee has been very proactive in its efforts to apply for grants and improve the parks for the community. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will help sustain these efforts.

Site Visits

Initial site visits with Parks Committee Members, City Council Members, and City Public Works staff proved extremely beneficial in gaining a good perspective on the current conditions of the parks, and city-owned land that has not yet been developed. Opportunities and challenges were discussed based on the physical conditions of each of the parks. Stakeholders provided insight on the users, maintenance, and history of the parks.

Outreach Events and Activities

The Parks Advisory Committee attended several events with copies of the community outreach survey. The survey results demonstrated support for new paths and trails, improving existing trails, developing River access, improving walkability, and ensuring dog-friendly areas. Outreach undertaken by Parks Committee members included the following:

- Lions Club Meeting
- Stevens Youth Center
- Community Dinner
- Christmas Stroll

Survey

The City and committee distributed a community survey in November- December 2024, which received 182 total responses. The respondents to the survey indicated that the Springs Park was the most used and visited park in White Sulphur Springs. Below are the top three parks and recreation priorities identified by the respondents:

- The development of summer recreational opportunities such as a splash pad and other water recreation opportunities.
- The development of winter recreation opportunities such as an ice-skating rink and cross-country skiing.
- The development of walking trails and a nature park at Spike's Happy Trails.

Respondents also stated that they would take full advantage of fitness and wellness programming. There were also a large number of written responses in the survey, where a reoccurring theme is that an off-leash dog park would be a great benefit to the community.

Funding Options

The acquisition, operation, and maintenance of Parks and Recreation facilities and programming requires time, money, and other resources. Varying levels of funding from Federal, State, and Local sources will be required to meet different needs. The following are potential funding mechanisms, broken down by national organizations and federal grants and local grants, that could help make the recommendations of this plan a reality.

Federal	State	Local	Private/Non-profit
USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program	Community Development Block Grants	Lion's Club	Hydroflask Parks for all Program
	Montana Land & Water Conservation Fund Program	Rotary Club	Safe Places to Play Grant US Soccer Foundation
		Bair Family Foundation	Dicks sporting Goods sports matter Grant
		Red Ants Pants Foundation	Treacy Foundation
		Diamond City Lodge #7	US Tennis Association
			MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Grants

Sources