

# **Florence Township Park Plan 2012**

# Florence Township Park Plan

## **Introduction**

Florence Township's parklands are distinctive public resources that enhance the beauty of its natural surroundings, and enrich the lives of its residents, neighbors, and guests. The residents of Florence Township have been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for these parks. To that end, in the fall of 2011, the Florence Township Board of Supervisors appointed a group of township residents to draft a new Park Plan and complete the necessary steps for the Town Board to create a new Park Commission. The Board intends to transfer responsibility for the parks from the Heritage Preservation Commission to the Park Commission. This transfer of responsibility will be effective upon the formal establishment of the Park Commission. The ordinances of both Commissions will be revised to reflect this transfer of responsibilities. The new park plan will replace the 2006 Park Plan and serve as an updated blueprint to guide the new Park Commission.

The new Park Plan consists of three main sections. The first section describes the Plan. The second section lists specific policies of the Plan. The third section discusses each of the township's four parks: the Community Center Park, Valhalla Park, the Frontenac Station Play Park, and Wakondiota Park.

## **I. Park Plan Description**

### Authority

This plan is in effect with the approval of the Florence Township Board of Supervisors and intends to comply with all Township, County, State, and Federal regulations. Regarding the Township's parks which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, special consideration will be given to the guidelines of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Plan will be implemented by the Florence Township Park Commission under the supervision of the Florence Township Supervisors.

### Objective

To provide the new Park Commission with a blueprint for the management of township parks. Objectives for each of the four parks will be addressed individually.

# Florence Township Park Plan

## Scope

The Plan will focus on Florence Township's four public parks, the Community Center Park, Valhalla Park, the Frontenac Station Play Park, and Wakondiota Park.

## Park Commission role

The Park Commission is responsible for implementing the Park Plan under the supervision of the Florence Town Board and managing the Park Supervisor. The Commission is also responsible for allocating the resources of its annual budget.

## Budget

The Commission will request from Florence Township an annual budget to assist the Commission in implementing the Park Plan.

## Regulatory framework

The regulatory framework for the Plan includes the ordinances of Florence Township and Goodhue County, the laws of the State of Minnesota and the Federal Government, and the U.S. Department of the Interior Guidelines. County, State and Federal authorities, for the most part, delegate control of local parklands to their local governing bodies. In other words, Florence Township is primarily responsible for the parklands within its boundaries.

Managing parklands often involves managing the vegetation within them. While State and Federal laws don't offer much guidance for managing vegetation in township parks, Goodhue County has ordinances relevant to the Park Plan.

The most recent Goodhue County Zoning Ordinances ( Article 11, section 7, subdivision 3. - amended August 12th, 2010) offer standards and criteria for managing vegetation in the context of Commercial Timber Harvesting operations. Two additional County ordinances, (Article 30, section 11 - amended May 19th, 2009, and Article 12, section 4 - amended May 19th, 2009) concerning Shore land and Bluff land Protection are relevant to Valhalla Park given its proximity to the Mississippi River. Both ordinances refer back to Article 11, for a description of the County's standards and criteria for proper vegetation management. This Plan intends to comply with the spirit, and the literal application when applicable, of these County Ordinances.

State law primarily concerns only Minnesota's state park system but the Minnesota Historical Society has a helpful set of guidelines for communities managing historic landscapes. These guidelines are relevant to Wakondiota Park and Valhalla Park and can be found on the Society's website, <http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/shpo/landscape/landscape3.html>.

The U.S. Department of the Interior provides detailed guidance on preserving historic landscapes. These Federal Government guidelines apply specifically to both Wakondiota and Valhalla. A detailed treatment of the Department's guidelines

# Florence Township Park Plan

can be found at the following website,  
<http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief36.htm>.

## **II. Park Plan Policies**

### Park Alterations or Additions

The Commission will administer an approval process for residents who wish make changes to the parks including:

1. Altering or eliminating existing structures
2. Adding new structures
3. Altering, eliminating, or adding vegetation
4. Altering, eliminating, or adding playground equipment

This approval process will require residents to submit a completed Park Activity Application (PAA) to the Park Commission. The Park Commission will review all PAA's and then make specific recommendations regarding the PAA to the Town Board. After receiving the Park Commission's recommendation, the Town Board will determine whether or not to approve the PAA.

The Park Commission may request a professional review of some projects. In the event of such a request, all PAA's affected by the review must explicitly address the conclusions of the professional review.

Alterations or additions to permanent structures in historic districts will be submitted to the Heritage Preservation Commission for approval before a recommendation to the Town Board is made.

### Invasive Species

The removal of invasive species from the parks is encouraged. Removal of Buckthorn, Black Locust, Prickly Pear, Honeysuckle, and species listed in the Minnesota DNR's website, and the Midwest Invasive Plant Network website, <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/index.html>

<http://mipncontroldatabase.wisc.edu/Default.aspx>

does not require Park Commission approval for projects affecting less than 1 acre of parkland. For large-scale projects affecting more than one acre of parkland, residents need to submit a PAA to the Park Commission for Township approval.

### Dead Vegetation

Dead trees can be removed from the parks with approval from the Park Commission and the Town Board in the following cases:

1. Where the dead vegetation poses a threat to the safety of residents
2. Where the dead vegetation detracts from the health of the park
3. Where the dead vegetation detracts from the natural beauty of the park

# Florence Township Park Plan

## Park Use

Residents need to request approval from the Park Commission to use the parks for:

1. large gatherings
2. regularly scheduled events
3. special events

The Commission will appoint a contact person for scheduling park events and develop a calendar to track park availability.

## Dumping

The parks should not be used for dumping of any kind of waste including yard waste, except in areas designated by the Florence Town Board.

## Signage

Signs explaining the history of Parks in historic districts, listing hours of operation, prohibiting motorized vehicle use, and communicating other information, may be erected or replaced if deemed necessary by the Park Commission in collaboration with residents living adjacent to the area where the sign is erected. Signs will be maintained by the Park Commission. All signage must comply with Park Commission, Heritage Commission, and township ordinances.

## Boundaries

The boundaries of the parks will be clearly marked, and surveyed as needed.

## **III. The Individual Parks**

### Community Center Park

#### *History:*

In 1983 the Frontenac Sportsman's Club purchased, using charitable gambling funds, two parcels of property just west of Frontenac Station in order to build a community facility. This facility was then donated to Florence Township.

#### *Description:*

The Community Center can host up to 200 people , and includes a kitchen, barbeque pit, large dining area, rest rooms, covered picnic area, play ground equipment, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and a 10 acre lawn. The Town

## Florence Township Park Plan

Board appoints a manager to schedule rentals, maintain the facility, and enforce the Community Center rules.

### *Vision:*

To have the Community Center Park serve as a place where township residents, guests, and the Sportsman's Club can host social gatherings and community events.

### *Objectives:*

Florence Township seeks to continue to provide and promote a safe and economical community meeting facility for residents and guests to enjoy. The Township also seeks to increase revenues associated with the use of the facility by better advertising its availability, and to continue to update the facility as needed.

Initial steps in implementing the Plan will involve an evaluation of the safety of the park's playground equipment, and taking an inventory of maintenance issues that should be addressed.

## Valhalla Park

### *History:*

Valhalla was platted in 1857 by General Israel Garrard and Evert Westervelt. The park originally served as an overlook to provide lakeshore views to Garrard, Westervelt, and other residents and guests of Frontenac.

### *Description:*

Valhalla is located directly to the east of historic Old Frontenac properties including, St. Hubert's Lodge, Locust Lodge, Winona Cottage, Dakota Cottage, and Greystone. It begins just to the north of Dakota Cottage and extends to the south from Locust Lodge, past Greystone, along County Road 2.

Florence Township recognizes Valhalla Park as a 'Historic Vernacular Landscape' as defined by the US Department of the Interior, "a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape". According Charles Birnbaum who wrote the Department's Preservation Brief entitled, Protecting Cultural Landscapes, Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes, "Function plays a significant role in Historic Vernacular Landscapes. According to Birnbaum, these landscapes can be a collection of properties along a river valley, and examples include rural villages.

Florence Township's rural village of Old Frontenac with its collection of properties along the Mississippi River is a good example of a Historic Vernacular

## Florence Township Park Plan

Landscape whose function is to provide the residents of Florence Township and their guests panoramic views of the Mississippi River.

### *Vision:*

To have an historic park that honors its heritage and its evolution over the past 150 years. To have a beautiful public space offering views of Lake Pepin framed in an environmentally robust mixture of flora and fauna, including a flourishing bird population to inspire the park's many bird watchers.

### *Objectives:*

Florence Township seeks to restore one of its most beautiful legacies. Creating a healthy park that offers spectacular views of Lake Pepin, respects the needs of township residents, and possesses a diverse mix of flora and fauna will be challenging. Initial steps in implementing the plan will involve:

- 1) Enlisting the help of professionals to design an environmentally sound park faithful to the legacy of Israel Garrard and Evert Westervelt.
- 2) Encouraging residents of Florence to participate in the design process alongside the professionals.
- 3) Solicit the help of organizations with experience in rehabilitating historic parks. These organizations could include, the DNR, Historical Societies, the National Audubon Society. and the US Department of the Interior.
- 4) Enlisting the help of professionals, residents, and others to implement the Design.
- 5) Solicit funds for the project from a variety of donors, including government grants and private donations.
- 6) The Design will be added to the Park Plan as an addendum after it is approved by the Town Board.

Once the Design has been approved and implemented a policy of ongoing maintenance will be implemented to facilitate the process of keeping up with ever-changing park conditions. Residents may seek Commission and Township approval to maintain specific areas of the design on an ongoing basis. Ongoing maintenance activity will include eliminating invasives, and undesirable new growth without submitting a PAA. Activities requiring more extensive work will require a PAA.

Residents will not be permitted to alter an area within the park in a way that would be inconsistent with the Design's specific goals without first submitting a PAA.

## Florence Township Park Plan

The Commission will be responsible for monitoring the future condition of the Park to ensure the Design is maintained.. The Commission will also be responsible for supervising the activities associated with achieving these objectives.

The boat landing and public beach are considered part of Valhalla Park in this plan. These facilities will be improved and maintained as needed consistent with the overall Design for Valhalla Park.

### Frontenac Station Park

#### *History:*

In 1996 the Frontenac Sportsman's Club purchased an empty lot in Frontenac Station on the corner of Germania Street, and Caledonia Avenue. The Club then purchased and installed playground equipment for children of the township to enjoy. The Club donated the park to Florence Township upon its completion.

#### *Description:*

The park is on the corner of Germania Street, and Caledonia Avenue. It is an enclosed area with a variety of playground equipment.

#### *Vision:*

To have a safe park for Florence Township children and families to enjoy.

#### *Objectives:*

Florence Township seeks to continue providing a safe place in Frontenac Station for children to play. Initial steps in implementing the Plan will involve an evaluation of the safety of the park's playground equipment, and taking an inventory of maintenance issues that should be addressed.

### Wakondiota Park

#### *History:*

Wakondiota Park was platted as parkland in 1857 by Evert Westervelt and Israel Garrard. In 1859 the Park moved one block east and quadrupled in length. Wakondiota Park and Delta Park lying immediately to its north are treated as one park for the purposes of this plan.

#### *Description:*

The park lies to the east of Christ Church and stretches to the north and south to form a large rectangular area that straddles Route 2. Originally, the park served as

# Florence Township Park Plan

a venue for a variety of town gatherings. Today the park hosts baseball games and provides a scenic setting for social events.

*Vision:*

To have a scenic natural space in which residents and guests can play baseball, gather for social events, and simply enjoy.

*Objectives:*

Florence Township seeks to maintain the ball field facilities, ensure the safety of the playground equipment, update the public bathroom facilities, and eventually improve, or replace the pavilion in the park. Initial steps in implementing the Plan will involve an evaluation of the safety of the park's playground equipment, baseball facilities, bathrooms, and pavilion structure, and taking an inventory of other maintenance issues that should be addressed.

## Conclusion

Florence Township has drafted this Park Plan to ensure the Township's parklands are improved and maintained for many years to come. This Park Plan has been approved by the undersigned and is in force as of the date of the Supervisor's signature:

Park Commission Chairman,

\_\_\_\_\_, title \_\_\_\_\_, date \_\_\_\_\_

print \_\_\_\_\_

Florence Township Chairman,

\_\_\_\_\_, title \_\_\_\_\_, date \_\_\_\_\_

print \_\_\_\_\_

Goodhue County Land Use Representative

\_\_\_\_\_, title \_\_\_\_\_, date \_\_\_\_\_

print \_\_\_\_\_

Florence Township Park Plan  
Florence Township Park Commission

**Park Activity Application**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Activity Description

(please attach supporting materials, e.g. photographs, drawings, contracts)

Proposed Labor

(professional service name/contractor name/residents/other)

Estimated Cost Details and Total

(labor/materials/permits/other)

Proposed Sources of Funds

(township/private/endowments/grants/other)

Commission Action

- Approved:
- Approved with following Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Denied (reason): \_\_\_\_\_
- Reported to Town Board on Date: \_\_\_\_\_