

# PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

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*This section explores the city and county's existing network of parks, recreational facilities, and open space. It includes discussion regarding the various local, State, and private agencies developing and maintaining parks, trails, community centers, and recreational facilities.*

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## LINCOLN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

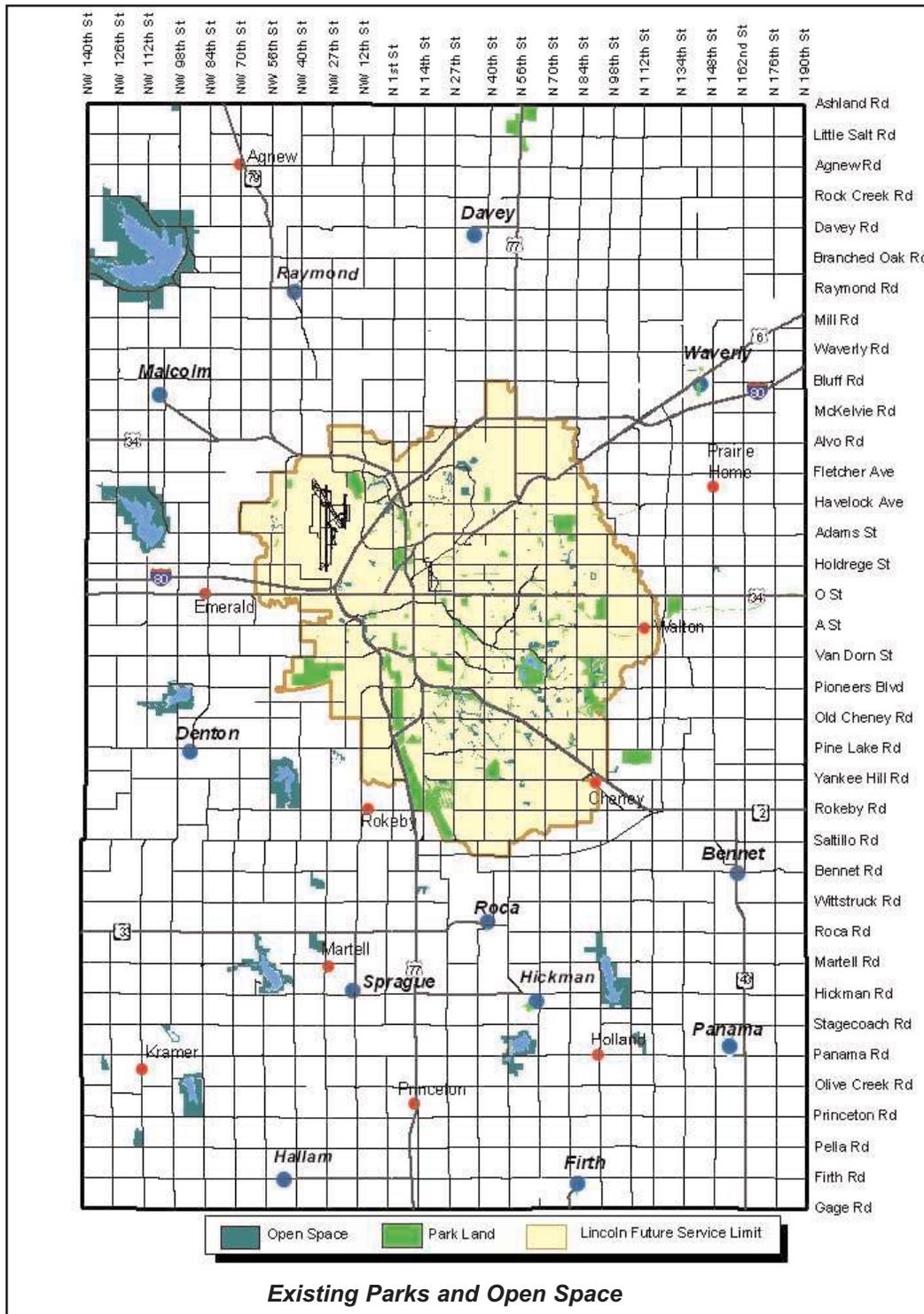
The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department is the primary public sector provider of recreational services to city residents. The Department manages 102 different sites on 5,474 acres of parks and open space land. The Parks and Recreation Department oversees 224 buildings and 80 playgrounds. It has responsibility for 20 lakes and ponds, totaling 225 acres — with Holmes Lake being the largest water body at 94 acres. The Department also operates five public golf courses, including Ager Junior, Highlands, Holmes, Mahoney and Pioneers.



Lincoln maintains a system of five park types - - mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks and natural resource / open space areas. Within these parks a variety of special purpose facilities are provided.

## LANCASTER COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES

Lancaster County does not directly operate parks or provide recreational programs. The County has acquired some park and open space in the past, most notably the 1,475 acre Wilderness Park in the southwest Lincoln area and Interstate Park located along I-180. The City Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains these areas under inter-local agreements between the city and county.



**Existing Parks and Open Space**

# NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

During the 1960's, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed a number of dams in Lancaster County for flood control and conservation purposes. Seven of these lakes (Blue Stem, Branched Oak, Conestoga, Olive Creek, Pawnee, Stagecoach and Wagon Train) are managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

These lakes and State Recreation Areas (SRA) consist of more than 11,000 acres of land and water bodies, providing a variety of recreational activities such as boating, swimming, water skiing, picnicking, fishing and hunting.

In addition, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission manages seven Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in Lancaster County. These areas are intended for a variety of recreational activities such as fishing and hunting. Included in this category are such activities as wildlife refuges, game management areas, access sites to reservoirs, and natural areas. These areas serve as regional parks sites readily accessible to residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT

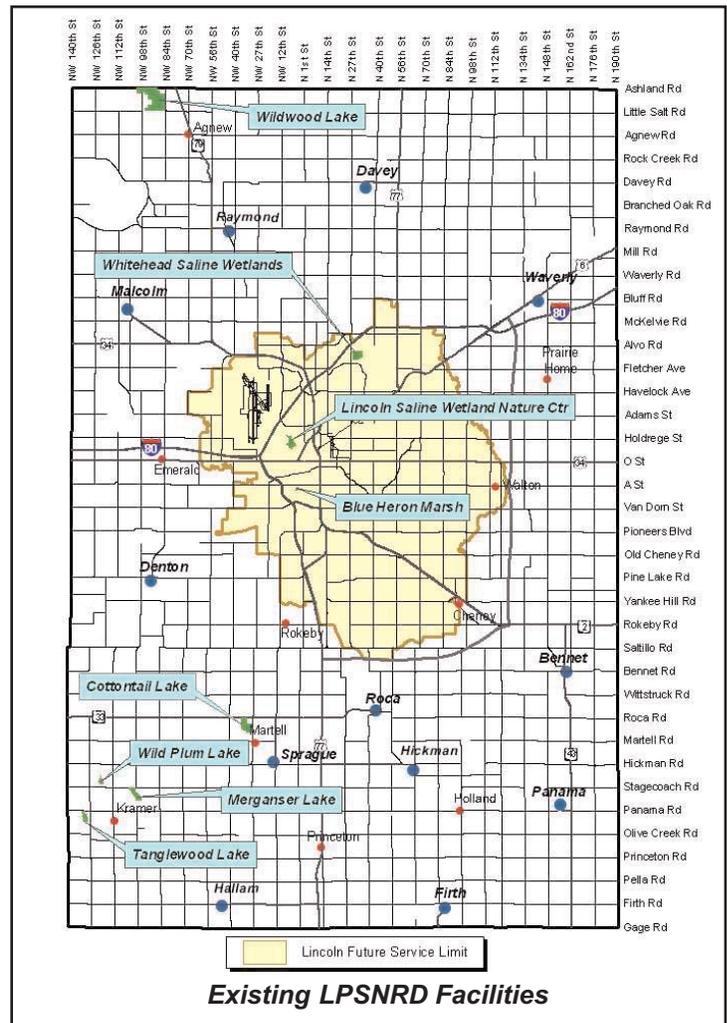
The Lower Platte South Natural Resource District (LPSNRD) manages a number of flood control structures, urban wetlands, and trails in Lancaster County. The five lakes are Wildwood, Cottontail, Merganser, Tanglewood, and Wild Plum. These lakes provide a variety of recreational activities such as swimming, camping, picnicking, fishing, and hunting. Other activities provided at some of the lakes include boating and hiking. Each lake includes a wildlife area for nature observation.

Three urban wetlands areas are managed by the LPSNRD. These wetland areas include the Lincoln Saline Wetland Nature Center, Whitehead Saline Wetland, and the Blue Heron Marsh. Public access to these wetlands may include walking trails for recreation and education programs.

## TRAILS

Trails offer a broad variety of benefits for our community, providing not only recreation, but also a safe transportation network for bikers, walkers, and runners. Many of Lincoln's trails are located within existing parks and recreation areas. Through joint efforts of the City, public agencies such as the Lower Platte South NRD, and private partners like the Great Plains Trails Network, Lincoln has developed an exemplary urban and rural trails system. The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District maintains approximately 16 miles of trails in Lancaster County.

Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department maintains approximately 78 miles of recreation and commuter trails. Of this total, approximately 39 miles – or half – are classified as commuter trails. Lincoln Parks and Recreation has a goal to provide a trail within 1 mile of every household in the city.



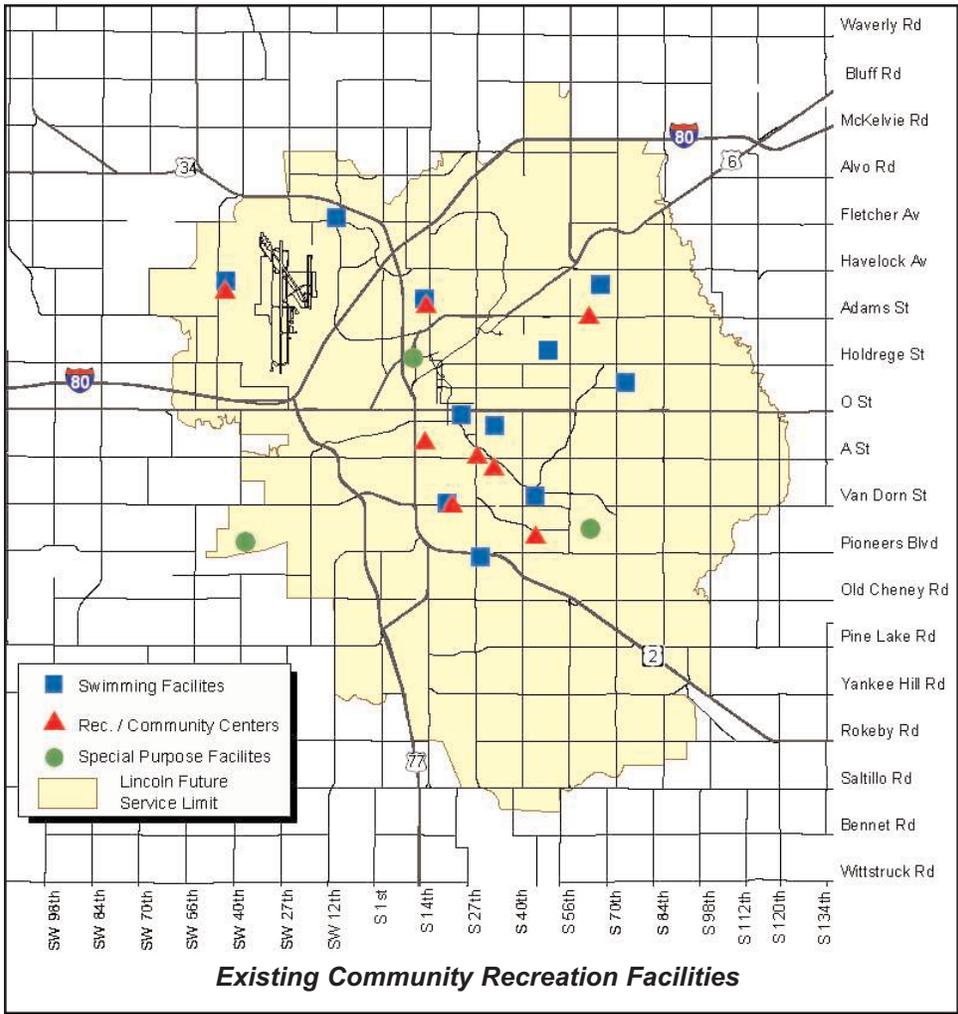
The MoPac East Trail connects to the MoPac Trail in Lincoln, linking it to the city’s trail network. The MoPac East Trail stretches from Lincoln through Walton in Lancaster County and into Cass County. The Trail offers year-round recreation for hikers, runners, bicyclists, horseback riding and nature observation.

The Wilderness Park trail system, one of four National Recreational Trails in the state, connects to the city’s trail network. The potential for extension of the Wilderness Park trail system south to connect with the Homestead Trail exists, and could continue into the State of Kansas.

## COMMUNITY CENTERS/RECREATION CENTERS

The City of Lincoln owns eight recreation/community centers (including an indoor playground), eleven outdoor swimming pools [including nine neighborhood pools, a regional family aquatics center (Star City Shores), and a regional outdoor competitive diving and swimming facility (Woods Memorial Pool)]. All of these facilities are managed by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department.

In addition the City owns and operates three special purpose facilities — the Pioneers Park Nature Center (an interpretive facility for native prairie, plants, animals and landscapes), the Hyde Observatory near Holmes Lake, and an indoor rifle range.



In collaboration with the University of Nebraska and Lincoln Pro Baseball, the City of Lincoln participated in the development of Haymarket Park adjacent to Downtown’s historic Haymarket District. Opened in June, 2001, the complex includes a 4,500 seat baseball stadium and a 750 seat softball stadium. The facility is used by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Men’s Baseball Team, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Women’s Softball Team, and the Lincoln Saltdogs Professional Baseball Team. The Park is connected to the Haymarket District by a 1,000 ft. pedestrian bridge.

## **O**THER PUBLIC, SEMIPUBLIC, AND PRIVATE FACILITIES

Additional recreational facilities under the control of public schools, private and parochial schools, the State of Nebraska, other units of local government, and private interests are available to local residents.

### **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

The Lincoln Public Schools, various private and parochial schools, and other school districts in Lancaster County play a key role in the overall system of recreational facilities and services. Schools are focal points for surrounding neighborhoods. School playgrounds and facilities can be the most significant recreation resource at the neighborhood level.

### **UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES**

Local colleges and universities also provide a wide range of participant activities and spectator sports available to both students and the community. Major sports, music, and entertainment programs often are held in facilities owned by colleges and universities.

### **NON PROFITS/ORGANIZATION**

The YMCA, YWCA, and other private organizations sponsor programs in swimming, athletics, arts and crafts, camping, and various club activities and provide facilities for more casual recreational activities. Some examples of private sector recreation facilities include bowling alleys, sport courts, soccer complexes, gyms and athletic clubs and the privately owned golf and miniature golf courses.

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