

Our City's Parks and Other Public Lands

The City has substantial public green space available to our residents. Not only do we have Musser and Harmon Parks; but also the Wahl Wetland. The MNDOT pond with wetland near the NE corner of the City and MNDOT-managed land along Robert Street and Highway 494 are also public green space. Some of these spaces adjacent to highways were associated with Highway 494's construction. This means that while public park space in the City is somewhat lower than the national average, when it is combined with highway adjacent public lands and our large individual home sites, our total public/private green space is huge. We truly live in a nearly rural setting within a large metropolitan area. All the public parks and green spaces are accessible from public streets or highways, and none have off-street parking. Access **Musser Park** by parking on the south side of Salem Church Road adjacent to the park as there is no parking on the north side of Salem Church Road. **Harmon Park** is located on the west side of Angell Road at the far end near the circle turn around dead-end. **Wahl Wetland** is only accessible across public land directly from Highway 62 on the north edge of this wetland. In all cases other points of entry into these City green spaces would require crossing private property. The other MNDOT properties are accessible only from adjacent highways or from the eastern section of Salem Church Road.

Musser Park was given to the City in by the Musser Family and is a city park that is managed by Sunfish Lake with supervision by the Minnesota Land Trust. Musser Park is about 20 acres in size. A walking trail makes a long loop through the park from the west side of the north meadow through the woodland areas and back out near the east side of the same meadow. A secondary walking trail crosses the interior meadow from the main trail on the west to the main trail on the east. There are four benches adjacent to theses trails for resting or contemplating this lovely natural area. A Boy Scout project installed bluebird houses in the meadow areas and bluebirds have been seen using them over the years. Arbor Day tree plantings and a Tree Trust planting event significantly increased the tree species diversity along the north woodland edge. No tree planting is planned within 100 feet of Salem Church Road, to prevent winter roadway ice problems.

Harmon Park was given to the City by the Harmon Family and is a minimally managed eight-acre woodland. The dead end at the end of Angell Road marks approximately the center of the east side of the park. From the dead end, a private driveway bisects the middle of the park from the east side to a residence on the west side of the park. There is a walking trail that has fallen into disrepair due to heavy snows, storm damage and dead trees that occasionally fall over. If you would like to see where this trail circles through the park, please contact the City Forester and he will happily show you the old "trail route."

One story I have heard about the **Wahl Wetland** is that this parcel of land was given to the City as a location to eventually build a city hall. That is not likely to happen due to the substantial expense of maintaining such a facility along with the fact that most of the property is a wetland. Thus, there are no trails in the Wahl Wetland other than those created by our abundant wildlife. Another story shared with me was that the wetland itself was once farmed to grow celery. Horses were used then and the horses wore something like snowshoes covering their feet so they could walk through the marsh safely. Fascinating ...

There are no maintained trails on the various MNDOT owned lands though they can be accessed for walking, birding, or hiking related activities.