

# Scott County Comprehensive Plan

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## **CHAPTER 7: RECREATION**

### ***Introduction***

Recreational amenities offered in Scott County are invaluable to the local communities as they provide for a higher quality of life and continued economic vitality for the area. The quality of life for residents of Scott County is directly linked to the quality of the region's environment and all that it has to offer. Bordered in part by the Mississippi and Wapsipinicon Rivers, Scott County has a variety of recreational opportunities and scenic beauty that enriches the lives of those who reside here and make it a truly livable community. Not only do the County's recreational facilities and conservation areas provide numerous social and economic benefits to local residents, they also provide recreational opportunities for the non-resident tourists as well. By continuing to provide ample, well maintained park and recreational facilities, a richness of life is achievable while increasing opportunities for economic activity in the sector of recreational tourism.

### ***Social Benefits***

As a nation, we are growing increasingly aware of the benefits that can be gained through outdoor recreation, exercise, and leisure activities. Keeping with the national trend, citizens of Scott County have also shown a great deal of interest in these areas as demonstrated by resident comments submitted at a series of public input meetings. High public interest in recreational facilities, outdoor leisure activities, recreational tourism, and a variety of physical fitness opportunities was evident throughout a series of six public meetings hosted by Scott County. The County's leisure opportunities, park system, cultural activities, and bike trails were noted as strengths by various members of the public.

“Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. Regular physical activity has been shown to increase health and reduce the risk of a wide range of diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes. Physical activity also relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety, improves mood, and enhances psychological well-being. Beyond the benefits of exercise, a growing body of research shows that contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.” (Trust for Public Land, “The Benefits of Parks,” 2006)

Approximately 65% of American adults are overweight or obese. The portion of children who are overweight has tripled in recent decades, resulting in 16% of those ages 6 to 19 being classified as overweight. Public Health officials are alarmed because being overweight is tied to many serious diseases and conditions. If trends continue, one-third of children born in 2000 are expected to become diabetic. All of these issues are closely tied to the quality of one's life. It is important that the residents of Scott County have access to the necessary facilities to support the endeavors of individuals who are striving for continuous good health and well-being.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association:

- People with access to recreational facilities are two times more likely to get the recommended level of physical activity than those without access.

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- People living in areas without sufficient public outdoor recreation facilities are more likely to be overweight.
- People with the best access to a variety of built and natural facilities are 43% more likely to exercise 30 minutes most days of the week than those with poor access.
- Older people who bicycle, jog, or walk in parks are significantly healthier than those who don't, and report feeling "renewed" after using the park, with greater frequency of use linked to better health. These active users also report fewer physician visits.
- The closer people live to a bikeway, the more likely they are to use it.
- Older adults living near safe walking and bicycle paths, parks, recreation centers, and gyms are more likely to get enough activity.

## **Economic Benefits**

Economic benefit can be derived through outdoor recreational facilities in a variety of ways. According to the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated recreation (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census), \$823 million was spent on wildlife recreation in the State of Iowa in 2001. This money was spent on activities such as fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching. This survey provides insight into the importance of forest-based recreation and tourism to Iowa's economy, and therefore, in Scott County's economy as well. In 2001, more than 1 million individuals in Iowa at least 16 years old participated in wildlife-watching activities, which include observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife. It is overwhelmingly clear that Scott County's recreational facilities must continue to be maintained, upgraded, and expanded when needed to meet the demands of the market and to continue to capture its share of the dollars spent on recreation and tourism that will be filtered through the local community.

The three factors that tend to affect the way people recreate are income, education, and occupation. While there is no rule for calculating the exact effects of these differing conditions, a general analysis of the socio-economic makeup of the County aids in projecting recreation needs. Professional people and skilled craftsman, in general, participate most in outdoor recreation and farmers and farm workers participate in outdoor recreation the least. Scott County is an urban county with a high proportion of professional and skilled workers, and a declining farming population. These factors indicate outdoor recreation participation in Scott County should be high and should increase in the future with population trends. Also, considering that Scott County's 2005 Median Household Income was \$5,673 above the State Median Household Income, it is expected that recreation demands will be high and continue to increase in accordance with the higher levels of income.

The County also gains economic benefits from recreational facilities by their ability to attract and retain employees and members of the retired community. The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality-of-life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well educated individuals choosing a place to live.

In "The Benefits of Parks" by the Trust for Public Land, it states that numerous studies have shown that parks and open space increase the value of neighboring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefits on commercial property value.

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## ***Rivers and Waterways***

The major rivers and numerous creeks in Scott County offer great potential for outdoor recreation. The largest and likely most influential of these waterways is the famous Mississippi River. The Mississippi River conjures up a variety of visual and mental images. Its dramatic natural force of flowing water has created the current landscape and is a life force for humans and wildlife alike. Literature has heralded its spectacular and dynamic characteristics, transforming the Mississippi River into a cultural icon. The river has also played a significant role in the local area as well as in the development and westward expansion of our nation. As a working river, the Mississippi is an essential corridor for commerce. As a cultural resource, the Mississippi River provides a plethora of recreational and tourist opportunities. The river is the heart and soul of the Quad Cities, the foundation for our economy, the center of our culture, and our greatest natural treasure.

The Mississippi River is a shared resource and offers recreational opportunities such as pleasure boating, water skiing, and jet skiing. On any summer day, sailboats, motorboats, rowboats, windsails, kayaks and rowing sculls can be seen between the locks, in addition to the tugs and barges. Its shoreline is a collection of public and private ownership with a variety of uses from industrial/commercial to residential to recreational. Access to and along the river continues to be a major concern, and available opportunities to allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and recreators access to the water should be pursued.

The Upper Mississippi River was recognized by Congress in 1986 as a nationally significant ecosystem. The Upper Mississippi River provides winter habitat for one of the country's most important icons, the American Bald Eagle. The local area surrounding the Mississippi River is situated in the famous Mississippi Flyway, which biannually sees the migration of 40% of North America's waterfowl and shorebirds. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Flyway hosts over 300 species of migratory birds that traverse the River in the spring and fall, including up to five million waterfowl. These flights constitute an import economic and environmental resource. In addition to birds, there are 113 fish species in the river including carp, buffalo, channel catfish, walleyes, northern pike, bass crappies, bluegills, suckers, and bullheads. The recreational and ecological resources that the upper Mississippi River holds for the area are of tremendous importance to Scott County.

Other important water resources for Scott County include the Wapsipinicon River, Duck Creek, Mud Creek, and smaller waterways. These areas provide additional suitable localities for recreational opportunities such as camping and fishing, as well as more passive recreation like nature watching. The Wapsipinicon River, forming much of the northern border of Scott County, is one of Iowa's significant natural waterways and offers high recreation potential and opportunity.



Wapsipinicon River

## ***Scott County Conservation Board***

While Scott County has many naturally occurring opportunities for recreation, a great deal of time and resources are spent to maximize the potential of those areas. To direct those efforts of

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recreational development within the County, the Scott County Conservation Board was created. While the cities are the managers of local parks, trails, and open space lands in the incorporated areas, Scott County is the provider of local park trails and open space lands in the rural area. The Scott County Conservation Board was formed in 1956 and was the first county conservation board to be organized in Iowa. The mission of the Scott County Conservation Board is: “To improve the quality of life and promote and preserve the health, welfare, and enjoyment for the citizens of Scott County and the general public by acquiring, developing, operating, and preserving the historical, educational, environmental, recreational and natural resources of the County.” There are five members of the Conservation Board who are appointed by the Scott County Board of Supervisors to serve a five-year term. The Conservation Board’s primary task is to oversee, operate, and maintain the ten county parks.

The County parks include Allen’s Grove, Buena Vista, Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead, Buffalo Shores, Cameron Timber Preserve, Scott County Park, Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village, Glynn’s Creek Golf Course, Wapsi Environmental Education Center, and West Lake Park. Also within Scott County are two recreational areas, Crow Creek Lake and Princeton Wildlife Area, which are maintained by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and a third recreational area, Lost Grove Lake, which is currently under development. See the Table 7.1 for a more detailed listing of the County parks.

**Table 7.1  
Scott County Parks**

Facility Name	Size	Location	Amenities/Special Features
Allen's Grove Park	157 acres	Four miles north of Donahue on County road Y52	Boat ramp for access to the Wapsipinicon River, 147 acres for wildlife and public hunting area (No rifles).
Buena Vista Public Use Area	165 Acres	Two miles east of Dixon on the Wapsipinicon River	Wildlife timber area used primarily by fisherman & bow-hunters.
Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead	3.5 acres	Two miles southwest of McCausland on F33	Boyhood home of Buffalo Bill, including the restored house built by his father in 1847 that is furnished with antiques, and a pasture with live buffalo and Texas longhorn cattle. Souvenir shop and tours available.
Buffalo Shores Access Area	25 acres	At the western edge of Buffalo off of State highway 22	65-site campground, sand beach shoreline on river, double boat ramp and docks, picnicking with grills, tables, sand volleyball, and horseshoes.
Cameron Timber Preserve	33 acres	One mile west of Maysville on State Route 130	State Forest Preserve containing primarily hardwood trees and a variety of spring floras and bird species.

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Facility Name	Size	Location	Amenities/Special Features
Glynn's Creek Golf Course	18 hole course	On the northeast corner of Scott County Park	Championship golf course with five sets of tees at each hole, fully stocked clubhouse offering merchandise and concessions. PGA Golf Professionals available for lessons, clinics, or outing needs.
Scott County Park	1,280 acres	Nine miles north of Davenport on US 61	Historic Pioneer Village, five separate campgrounds, five reservable picnic shelters with tables and grills, Olympic-sized heated swimming pool with lifeguards and concession area, cabin and lodge rentals, multi-use trails ideal for hiking or cross county skiing, and radio controlled airplane field.
The Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village	Within Scott County Park	On the north side of Scott County Park	Eighteen original and replica historic buildings including Olde St. Ann's Church, a restored 1870's church ideal for weddings. Special events featuring period re-enactors demonstrating pioneer life and craft making.
Wapsi Environmental Education Center	225 acres	One mile west of Dixon off of county road Y-42E	Provides environmental education for school groups and the general public with an emphasis on resource protection. Education facilities include; the Eagle View Eco Center, an interpretive nature center overlooking an eagle roosting site, the Monsignor Menke Astronomical Observatory, an aquatics lab, and a teams course. Overnight rental facilities, the W.R.E.N., a quarterly newsletter on environmental topics, trail system for hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-county skiing.
West Lake Park	620 acres	West of I-280 off of US 61	Four lakes (two with boat ramps and handicapped accessible docks), two modern campgrounds, five reservable picnic shelters, sand beach with volleyball, food concessions, fenced children's area, and certified lifeguards, paddle boat rental, hiking, and fishing.

In addition to the park facilities, there are a variety of recreation program opportunities available in the County through the Conservation Board, such as American Red Cross swimming lessons in the newly heated Olympic-sized pool in Scott County Park and day or overnight field trips, teacher workshops, and internship opportunities through the Wapsi Environmental Education Center.

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Each of these county run facilities requires routine maintenance to ensure that they are operationally sound and can provide a safe, quality experience for the user. The Scott County Conservation Board must also constantly monitor the market to determine if additional facilities are needed to meet the demands of their customers, and if so, what type of facilities are required. In an effort to assess and prioritize these needs, the Conservation Board has developed a strategic plan. The plan outlines each of the recreational facilities and lists what, if any, maintenance and development, is planned for the future of the facility. Also included in the plan is an estimated budget that puts into perspective the timeline and funding that would be required to achieve the desired goals of the Conservation Board.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, Scott County's Conservation Board completed a visioning project in September of 2006 with assistance from the University of Northern Iowa. The purpose of the project was to generate a visioning process to guide the Conservation Department and allow the Conservation Board to direct future expansion of services and prioritize maintenance of existing facilities based on the perceptions of residents, users, and staff. Two questionnaires were developed at the beginning of the visioning project—one for residents of Scott County and the other for users of the Conservation Departments facilities. The response to the questionnaires assists in identifying trends in recreational facility usage, satisfaction with services, and preferred future improvements to the parks, facilities, and services provided by the Conservation Board. The resulting analysis of this visioning process will guide future decisions of the Conservation Board. A copy of the Scott County Conservation Board Visioning Project and the Scott County Conservation Board Strategic Plan can be obtained through the Conservation Department.

In addition to the Scott County Conservation Board and the local municipalities' park and recreation departments operating in the County, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) manages several recreation areas within the County. The Princeton Wildlife Area, Crow Creek, and Lost Grove Lake, which is currently in the final stages of development, all fall within the operations of IDNR. Also recreationally related are lock and dam 14 and 15, which are owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

## **Existing Trails**

As part of the planning process, trails are typically classified as a mode of transportation and, as such, are addressed as part of the transportation network. However, during the public input process for Scott County, trails were often discussed in relation to recreational facilities and, therefore, are being addressed as part of this recreation chapter. Comments from the public input process noted the trail system within Scott County as both a strength and an area for improvement. Scott County and the municipalities within Scott County are the home of a growing network of trails that extends throughout the County with some trails reaching national proportions. The following is a list of existing trails in the County:

- **Duck Creek Parkway Trail** – The Duck Creek Parkway Trail currently extends approximately 15+ miles west to east from Davenport's Emeis Park through Bettendorf to Riverdale. This separated corridor hard-surfaced trail is primarily utilized for recreation activities, but does serve the community as a transportation link between neighborhoods,

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commercial districts, recreation areas, and major transportation corridors. The Duck Creek Trail was one of the first separated multipurpose trail facilities in the Quad City metropolitan area. Extension of this trail is planned from Emeis Park to Interstate 280, approximately 3 miles on the west, with the potential of linking to West Lake Park. On the east, the trail is planned to connect to the Mississippi Riverfront Trail.

- **Mississippi River Trail (MRT)** – The Mississippi River Trail extends about 7.6 miles along the riverfront from Credit Island in Davenport on the west end to 17<sup>th</sup> Street in Bettendorf on the east end. The hard-surfaced separated corridor trail is primarily used for recreation but does serve the community as an important transportation link. An extension of this multipurpose trail is planned on the west to connect with the City of Buffalo's proposed Riverfront Trail. Additionally, there is a planned extension of the trail from Bettendorf up-stream through Riverdale to LeClaire and Princeton. This would complete a major section of the coast-to-coast, American Discovery Trail (ADT). The northern route of the ADT will pass through the Quad City Metropolitan Area. In August of 2005 the ADT crossing of the Mississippi River, via Arsenal Island, was officially designated and opened for use. This new trail crossing also provides a link between the Iowa and Illinois portions of the MRT. The western extension of the MRT is 4.2 miles to the corporate limits of Davenport and includes a proposed bridge from Credit Island to South Concord Street.
- **Cody Trail (Eldridge to LeClaire)** – The Cody Trail is a 25.5 mile shared access trail named after Buffalo Bill Cody. The trail extends from North First Street in Eldridge to the riverfront City of LeClaire. The trail is primarily labeled as a recreational and historical tour providing a glimpse of Scott County heritage. Recently, Eldridge developed a multipurpose trail from North 1<sup>st</sup> Street east to North 16<sup>th</sup> Street. This 16-block section of separated corridor trail parallels LeClaire Road and provides safe access under Highway 61. The City plans to continue extending this trail further east potentially connecting to the proposed Lost Grove Lake. The City is also looking at a possible extension to the south, along the railroad corridor. A separated corridor trail following the alignment of the existing rail track would provide a connection to the Duck Creek Parkway Trail through Davenport, Bettendorf, and Riverdale. In addition, the City is considering utilizing utility easements for intra-city connections.

## Proposed Trails

The following is a list of proposed trails in the County:

- **Mississippi River Trail/American Discovery Trail (Buffalo)** – The Mississippi River Trail (MRT)/American Discovery Trail (ADT) through Buffalo is an approximately 7-mile planned trail along the Mississippi River from the intersection of Highway 22 and Utah Street on the east to the Scott and Muscatine County line downriver to the west. Completing the Buffalo section of the MRT/ADT would be a significant accomplishment in the continuing development of both national trail systems. It would also be a giant leap towards linking Davenport to the City of Muscatine via an alternative transportation mode. An ancillary benefit would be the improved aesthetic nature of the scenic byway for motorists and trail users alike. The Mississippi Trail is being planned to connect the Iowa Quad City metropolitan area up-river to Lake Itasca in Minnesota and down-river to the Gulf of Mexico.

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This trail will span the entire eastern boundary of Scott County along the length of the Mississippi River shoreline.

- **Main Street Corridor and Trail (Davenport)** – The Main Street Corridor, dubbed Avenue of the Fountains, is a planned 2.5-mile multipurpose trail from the heart of the Davenport Riverfront to VanderVeer Park, one of the most historic parks in the Quad City Metropolitan area. The proposed trail will follow a recreated allee, an original component of the park. The Main Street Corridor will continue north connecting to the Duck Creek Parkway Trail. This corridor will enhance the transportation, recreation, cultural, historical, and economic elements of the community.
- **Kimberly Road Trail (Davenport)** – The Kimberly Road trail is a potential 4.5-mile corridor running parallel to Kimberly Road. This proposed corridor would provide links to numerous commercial and residential areas. Included would be four possible crossing points to accommodate newly developed north/south trails and to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. The development of this trail would create an alternative transportation system and access to amenities, such as the Duck Creek Parkway Trail and the Mississippi River Trail.
- **Blackhawk Creek Greenway Trail (Davenport)** – The Blackhawk Creek Greenway Trail is a potential 5.7-mile corridor that would trace the path of Blackhawk Creek. This trail would link neighborhoods, recreation areas, such as Southwest Park, and major transportation corridors including U.S. 61 with Telegraph and Rockingham Roads between West Lake Park and the Mississippi River. Proposed development of this trail includes a bridge connection from Credit Island Park across to South Concord Street with a link to the Nahant Marsh.
- **Silver Creek Greenway Trail (Davenport)** – The Silver Creek Greenway Trail is a potential 5.1-mile corridor along Silver Creek and linking neighborhoods, recreation areas such as the Duck Creek Parkway, commercial districts, and major transportation corridors including Kimberly Road/U.S. 6 between northwest Davenport and Duck Creek.
- **Goose Creek Greenway Trail (Davenport)** – The Goose Creek Greenway Trail is a potential 6.6-mile active greenway corridor path mirroring the flow of Goose Creek. Development of this trail would result in the connection of neighborhoods, commercial districts, recreation areas such as Duck Creek Parkway, industrial areas, and major transportation corridors including 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Brady Street, and Kimberly Road between north-central Davenport and Duck Creek.
- **Utica Ridge Road Trail (Davenport)** – A multipurpose trail is proposed along Utica Ridge Road extending south to 67<sup>th</sup> Street. The City is also planning a western connection to the proposed Goose Creek Greenway Trail and possibly east, into the City of Bettendorf, linking to the Crow Creek active greenway trail system. Development of this approximately 7-mile trail would link neighborhoods, commercial areas, recreational areas, and future development zones. In addition, it would connect rural areas of Scott County to the urbanized area's trail network and afford an opportunity to connect into the proposed north-south separated corridor trail along the railroad from Eldridge.
- **Wisconsin Avenue Trail (Davenport)** – This potential 5.5-mile trail would serve as a north-south connection from the developing areas of northwest Davenport to the proposed Blackhawk Creek Greenway Trail. The Wisconsin Avenue Trail would essentially link neighborhoods, recreation areas, and major transportation corridors. Furthermore it provides a vital connection to both the American Discovery Trail (ADT) and the Mississippi River

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Trail (MRT). As this area of the community continues to grow, many other opportunities exist for separated corridor development along easements or within active greenway corridors.

- **53<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor Trail (Davenport and Bettendorf)** – The 53<sup>rd</sup> Street corridor is identified for the potential placement of an approximately 5-mile multipurpose trail. This trail would link the cities of Davenport and Bettendorf. It would provide alternative transportation options and access for users to one of the most economically vibrant areas within Scott County. Connections could be established to other proposed multipurpose trails and existing transportation corridors. Access to and from residential, commercial, cultural, recreational, and other areas would be benefits derived from the development of this corridor. Safe crossing locations for cyclists and pedestrians will need to be considered as this route develops.
- **6<sup>th</sup> Street/Elmore Avenue Trail System (Bettendorf and Davenport)** – This potential 3.5-mile, north-south corridor would serve as a link between communities, neighborhoods, recreation areas, commercial areas, and major transportation corridors such as Kimberly Road, 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Locust Street, and U.S. 67. In addition, this planned route would provide access to the MRT.
- **18<sup>th</sup> Street Trail (Bettendorf)** – The 18<sup>th</sup> Street Trail is a proposed 3-mile, north-south multipurpose trail connecting to major transportation corridors such as 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Middle Road, and U.S. 67. This trail would provide links from residential neighborhoods, commercial districts such as Cumberland Square, and recreation areas such as Middle Park, to riverfront amenities and the MRT. It would also serve as an alternative mode of transportation into the heart of the proposed riverfront redevelopment district.
- **Middle Road to Spencer Creek Trail (Bettendorf)** – The City of Bettendorf is proposing a 4.5-mile multipurpose trail in the vicinity of Middle Road. This north-south trail would provide a connection from Middle Park, near Spruce Hills Road, to Spencer Creek near the I-80 Middle Road interchange. It would serve as a link between the urban and rural areas of the community. This strand would connect commercial, residential, retail, and recreational areas. The City has also identified a possible intra-city loop heading back towards the Mississippi River and the MRT along the Spencer Creek greenway. This would also allow a viable alternative transportation connection to the City of LeClaire.
- **Devils Glen Road Trail (Bettendorf)** – This potential 4-mile multipurpose trail would link the riverfront to other commercial residential and recreational amenities in the community. It would serve as a north-south connector to other transportation arteries within the city, including State Street, Middle Road, 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and the existing Duck Creek Parkway Trail.
- **Pigeon Creek Greenway Trail (Bettendorf)** – This proposed ¾ mile trail along an identified greenway corridor would follow Pigeon Creek and connect Pigeon Creek Park along the Mississippi River to the Mississippi River Trail in Bettendorf.
- **Crow Creek Greenway Trail (Bettendorf)** – The Crow Creek Greenway Trail is a potential 6.3-mile corridor along Crow Creek linking neighborhoods, commercial districts, and recreation areas. This active greenway and multipurpose trail would intersect major transportation corridors including Devils Glen Road, Middle Road, and River Drive/U.S. 67. It would serve as an alternative transportation mode and recreation corridor between Forest Grove Drive and the Mississippi River Trail.
- **Wisconsin Street Trail (LeClaire)** – The City is planning collectively with Pleasant Valley Junior High School to establish devoted bicycle lanes or a multi-purpose trail along

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Wisconsin Avenue. This would provide a viable alternative transportation link from the MRT on LeClaire's levee through the City and west to the junior high school. The proposed trail route would also utilize 35<sup>th</sup> Street South West turning onto Forest Grove Drive. The route then follows Forest Grove Drive west to Spencer Creek where it would connect into the Bettendorf trails system.

This network of trails will provide important connections both within communities and between communities, and at times portions of these trails will be located in the unincorporated areas of Scott County. A comprehensive master plan of proposed trails in the County would be advisable in order to prioritize trail needs in the County and to better assess future funding needs for trails.