

Parks and Recreation Framework

Section 5

Section 5 provides parks and recreation recommendations to serve Shawnee into the future. Parks and recreation facilities provide opportunities to explore the city, connect with neighbors, learn new hobbies, promote physical and mental health, and enjoy the natural beauty of the surrounding environment. They play a major role in the wellbeing of a community and overall quality of life.

Shawnee has a diverse inventory of facilities, such as the iconic and historical Shawnee Town 1929, the extensive Clear Creek Trail system, and the technically challenging skate bowl at Swarner Park. With countless opportunities to get moving outside or simply enjoy the scenery, Shawnee offers something for everyone. The existing network provides opportunity for future parks, recreation opportunities, and connectivity between existing and future destinations.

Recommendations in this Section are supported by *Guiding Principle 3: Healthy Lifestyles* and the accompanying goals and policies, as well as Goal SC-5 and the accompanying policies, as outlined in **Section 2**.



“ I love the parks, and focus on outdoor recreation and trails. I love the opportunities people have to express themselves.

- Shawnee resident

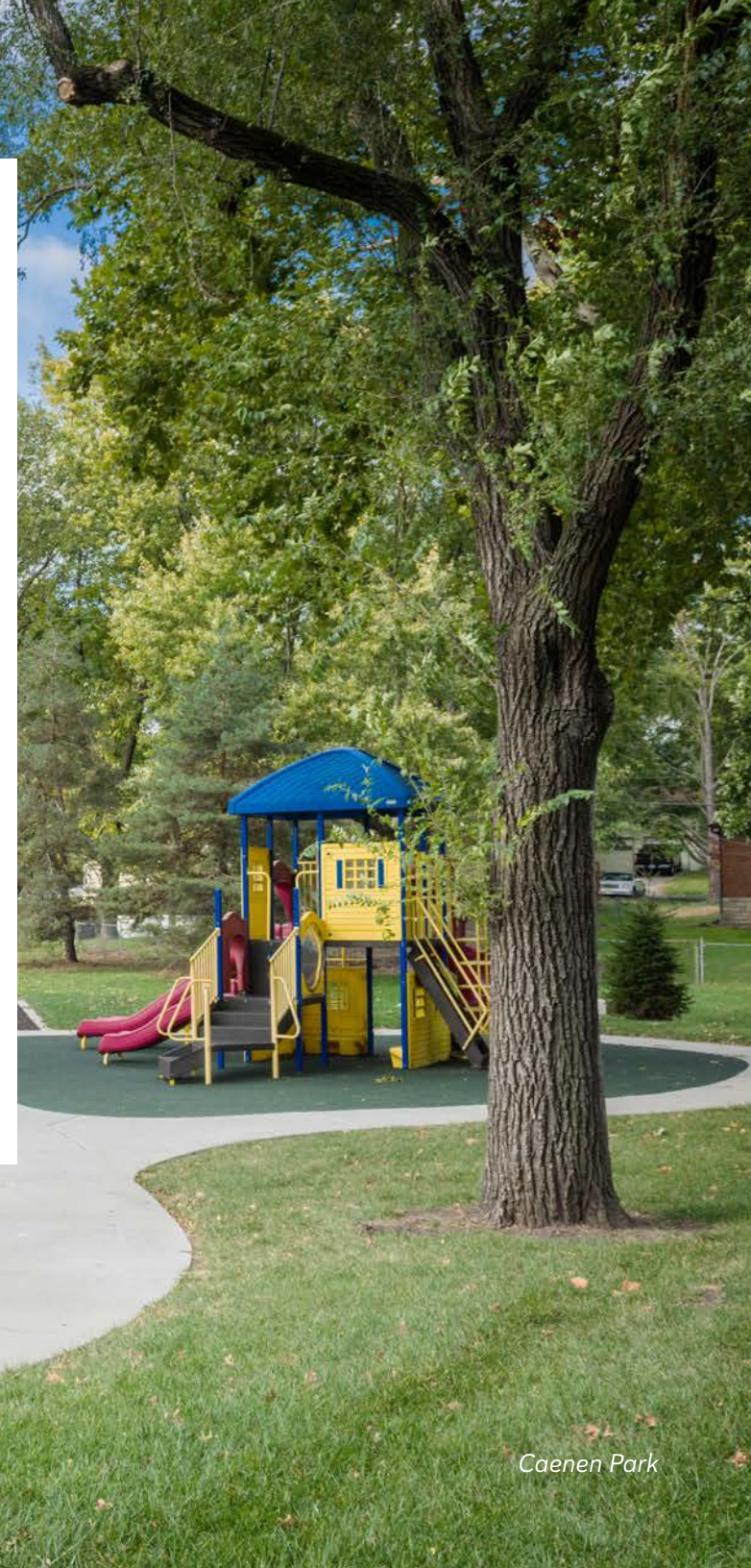
Listowel Park

Parks and Recreation Framework

Figure 5.1 and **Figure 5.3** show a comprehensive framework for bicycle routes, shared use paths, parks, and recreation opportunities in Shawnee. The maps features two main components: active transportation connectivity and parks, recreation, and destination areas. Shared use path infrastructure is part of Shawnee's active transportation network, representing ways to recreate and commute around the city in the future. Parks and recreation facilities feature Shawnee's existing and proposed parks or recreation areas, as well as "big idea" visioning studies that are proposed for major recreation destinations. Each of these components are described in the following section.

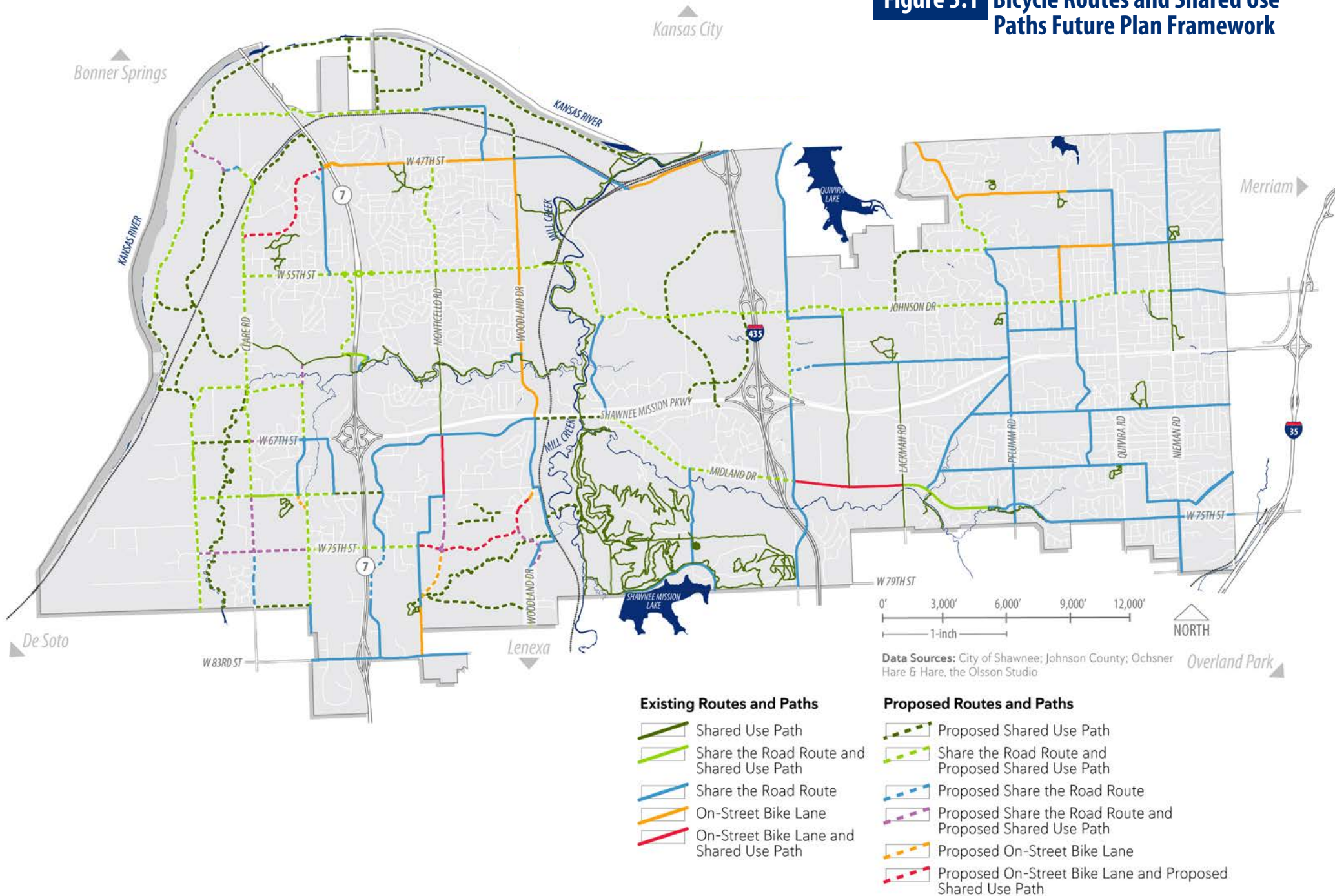
The Parks and Recreation Framework integrates Shawnee's existing and proposed park facilities into one framework plan and section in this Comprehensive Plan. Shawnee has studied its park and recreation facilities at length, indicating the importance these amenities have in the community. This Comprehensive Plan brings all of these pieces together, drawing from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Shawnee Town 1929 Strategic Plan, the Shawnee Bicycle Routes and Trails Future Plan, and special project area studies (Holliday Sand and Gravel Company, Destination Recreation, and Vision Document for Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area. *Please note, the special project area studies were not formally adopted by the Governing Body.*

Lastly, the future of the Johnson County Landfill offers the potential for unique future recreation uses with the steep topography and large acreage. Although beyond the lifetime of this Comprehensive Plan with its closure currently anticipated in 2043, this represents a significant component of the city that is reserved for parks and recreation uses. Inspiration for this area is described in this section.



Caenen Park

Figure 5.1 Bicycle Routes and Shared Use Paths Future Plan Framework



Active Transportation Connectivity

Bicycle Infrastructure

Bicycling infrastructure in Shawnee is broken out into two types of infrastructure: on-street bike lanes and share the road routes. On-street bike lanes represent bicycle lanes that are on *alongside* vehicular traffic lanes but designated for bicycle users only. They are indicated by painted striping, not raised curbs and/or buffers. The standard width for on-street bike lanes is six feet from the back of the curb or four feet from the edge of the pavement.

Comparatively, share the road routes (sometimes referred to as “sharrows”) represent the potential presence of bicyclists *in* vehicular traffic lanes. This is a designated on-street bike route utilizing standard width streets. Certain roads have been specifically identified as a share the road route because of their access to schools and parks. Most often, share the road routes are represented by a painted symbology in the center of the roadway. Because a bicycle is classified as a vehicle by state statute, any roadway, except limited access highways, freeways, and other roadways that specifically prohibit bicycle traffic, may be considered part of the on-street system for bicyclists.

In conjunction, the proposed bicycle infrastructure facilitate connections from existing routes to continually build out Shawnee’s bicycle infrastructure. In particular, connections are facilitated west of Woodland Road to address gaps in the existing system.

Shared Use Paths

This type of infrastructure refers to pathways physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by a buffer of some sort. Shared use paths are for use by many users, including bike riders, walkers, joggers, skaters, wheelchair users, and others. Existing shared use paths in Shawnee mostly run along stream corridors and existing parks or as off-road facilities along roadways. In many cases, the shared use paths provide connections to the larger trail network of Johnson County. This system is critical to maintain. Public sentiment overwhelmingly supports the maintenance and preservation of the existing shared use path system and the destinations they connect to. The existing shared use paths also serve as an economic development benefit to the City of Shawnee, drawing non-locals to the community for recreation.

Concentrated west of I-435, shared use paths are proposed to connect along future destination recreation areas on the northern and western boundaries of the City along the Kansas River. Shared use paths are also proposed along a streamway corridor west of Clare Road to facilitate multimodal connections to these future recreations destinations from existing and future neighborhoods.

Shawnee Mission Parkway

In addition to better connecting the existing bicycle infrastructure citywide, a reimagined non-vehicular network is proposed along Shawnee Mission Parkway, with emphasis on the section east of Pflumm Road (see **Figure 5.2**). With features such as off-street bicycle lanes and native landscape buffers between vehicles and sidewalks, these features would transform this roadway into a multimodal route. The available right-of-way could be reportioned east of Pflumm Road to a more traditional arterial street section with complete and/or green street treatments.

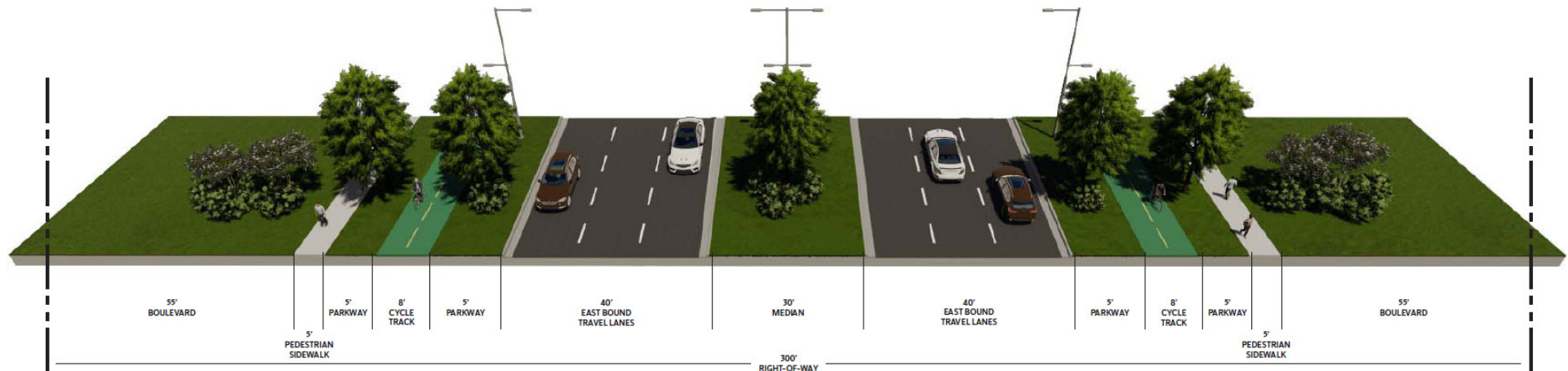
There are many ways to achieve enhanced non-vehicular connectivity along Shawnee Mission Parkway, including:

- Continuous sidewalks for pedestrians;
- Shared use paths with ample space for bicycle riders, walkers, and scooters alike;
- Landscape buffers to protect off-street uses from car and truck traffic; and
- Pedestrian amenities that provide increased comfort, such as benches and lighting.

West of Pflumm Road, green street treatments are more appropriate. Achieving connectivity between the varying section treatments east and west of Pflumm Road is important to make Shawnee Mission Parkway a cohesive multimodal corridor.

It is important to note that providing these multimodal facilities along this major corridor would not infringe upon traffic flow and would protect Shawnee Mission Parkway as the City's primary arterial. Rather, dedicating buffered space fosters a safer environment for all users and introduces Shawnee Mission Parkway as a viable commuting option without a personal vehicle.

Figure 5.2 Shawnee Mission Parkway Potential Section east of Pflumm Road



Parks, Recreation, and Destination Areas

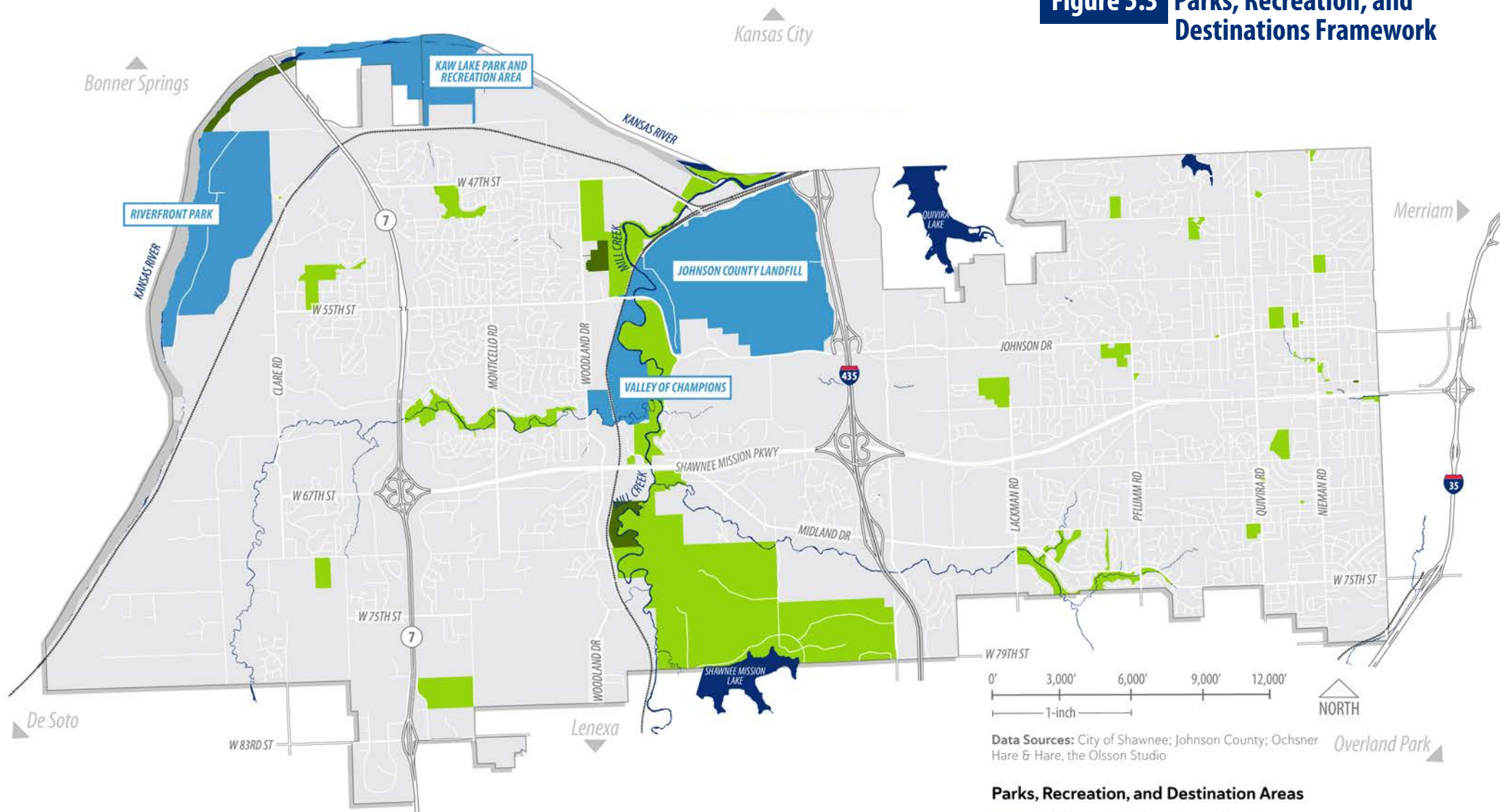
Shawnee's Parks and Recreation Department manages 26 developed parks, six undeveloped parks, a museum, a Civic Centre, and two aquatic centers. Existing parks and recreation areas in Shawnee are mostly congregated along the Clear Creek and Mill Creek Streamway corridors, with neighborhood-scale pocket parks in some residential and commercial areas throughout the city. Shawnee boasts a wide variety of parks with sports facilities, special use facilities, shared use paths, and open spaces.

Figure 5.3 shows existing park or recreation areas, along with proposed areas and proposed major recreation destinations. There are four large areas in the city, indicated on **Figure 5.3** in light blue, that either have existing plans or have the potential to become significant destination areas. Details on each are provided in the following sections.



West Flanders Park

Figure 5.3 Parks, Recreation, and Destinations Framework



Data Sources: City of Shawnee; Johnson County; Ochsner Hare & Hare, the Olsson Studio

Parks, Recreation, and Destination Areas

- Existing Park or Recreation Area
- Proposed Park or Recreation Area
- Proposed Major Recreation Destination*
(Valley of Champions, Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area, Riverfront Park, and Johnson County Landfill)

*Note: Pieces of Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area are not within Shawnee city limits. Discussions about the future of this amenity are ongoing with the City of Bonner Springs.

Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area

The Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area, in partnership with the City of Bonner Springs and Johnson County Park and Recreation District, is a vision to activate the riverfront by adding a lake and plentiful outdoor recreation amenities. The new park and recreation area would allow visitors to engage in a variety of activities in and around the water and would be a local and regional draw.

The main park entrance is located off West 43rd Street, leading into the primary lake drive loop that circles through the park and connects to a smaller vehicular traffic loop around the open lawn space and main parking lot. Kaw Lake will be surrounded by native plantings at the water edge, creating kayak trails and spaces for floating observation platforms, floating campsites, and floating shelters available for rent. The floating structures may be accessed by land, kayak, or through walkway connections. Swimmers can access the lake at the beach and swim to the large floating platform for additional sunning spots. Boat ramps and kayak launches for both Kaw Lake and the Kansas River will be accessible from the lake drive loop.

A corner section of the lake will be programmed as a kayak run, which will pump water from the lake to an upper pool to cascade down through a series of channels and pools, providing an exciting water trail for users of multiple experience levels.

A shared use path will surround the site and connect to a cyclocross loop, adventure park, and open lawn space. The adventure park could include activities such as zip lines, ropes courses, rock climbing, bicycle pump tracks, BMX tracks, a skatepark, and more. RV and camp sites will be available in areas along the lake drive loop. Permanent structures will include a facility and administration building and a space for an outfitter to provide rentals for equipment, campsites, and structures.



Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area, Stantec 2020

Riverfront Park

Plans for Riverfront Park were originally created in 2007 (see **Figure 5.4**). Since then, the city has classified the area as an undeveloped park site and listed the creation of an updated master plan and vision for the park as a key recommendation in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. To ensure proper connectivity between Riverfront Park and Kaw Lake Park and Recreation Area - two expansive riverfront destinations - a future shared use path along the Kansas River is proposed to connect these two amenities (see **Figure 5.1**).

The existing plan calls for the creation of an approximately 144-acre lake with a surrounding shared use path. Site amenities include shelters, camp sites, and sport courts. Surrounding land uses would be industrial in nature. An additional park, adjacent to the lake, is also shown with field spaces, shared use path connectivity, and viewpoints of the Kansas River.



Figure 5.4 Riverfront Park Concept

Riverfront Park Concept, HNTB 2007

Valley of Champions

The Valley of Champions Plan is a vision to upgrade current facilities at the Mid-America and Mid-America West Sports Complexes and Stump Park, and to expand this place into a recreation destination along the Mill Creek Corridor. See **Figure 5.5**.

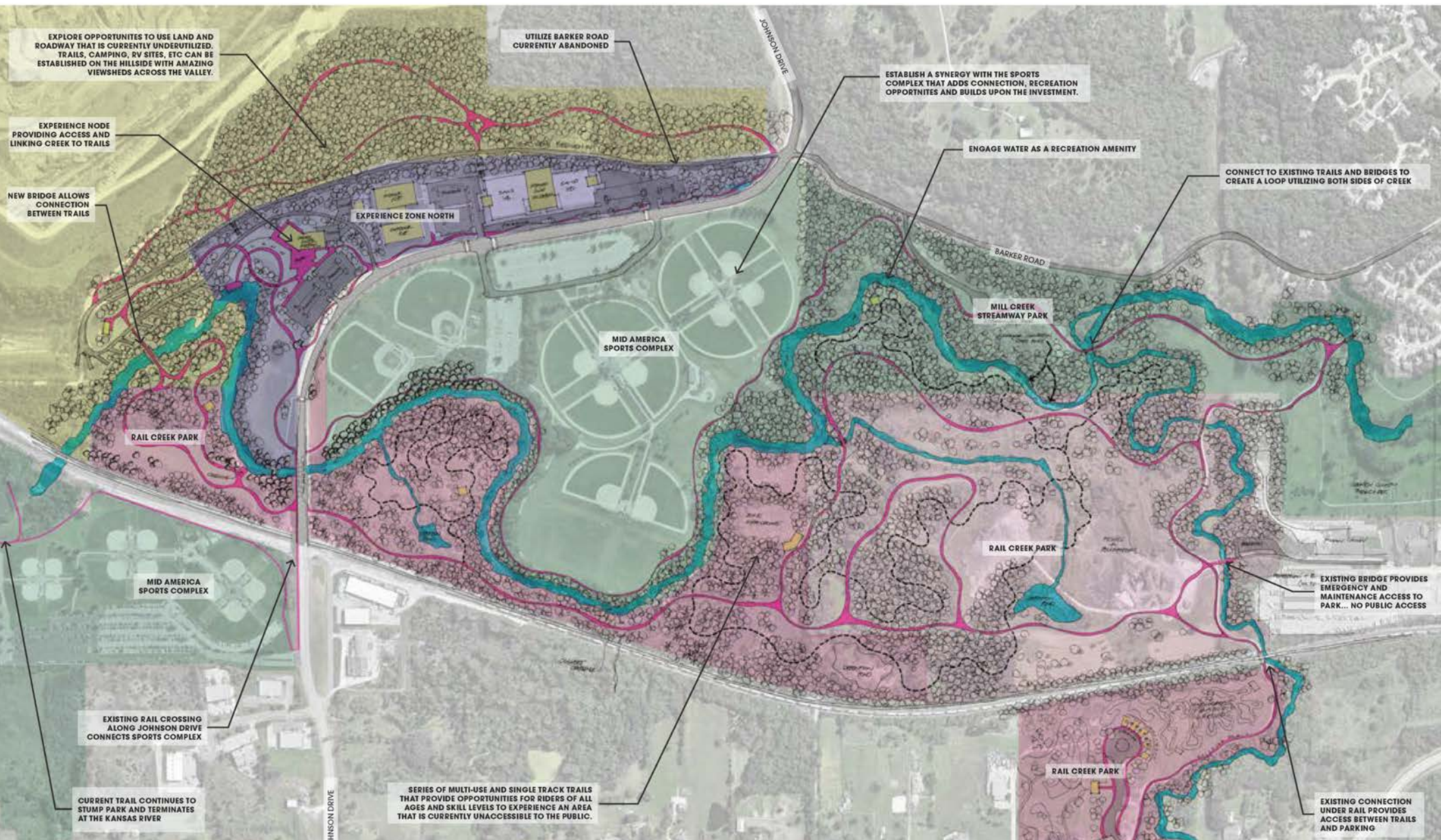
The vision for the site is to expand the current facilities and create a destination site beyond sports tournaments. The proposed build out would enhance the offerings to excite a wide variety of recreation seekers. Using existing fields, amenities along Mill Creek Streamway Park, and shared use path connectivity with the Gary L. Haller Trail, the Valley of Champions is envisioned as a major destination.

Specifically, the proposed plan expands on the Mid-America and Mid-America West Sports Complexes and Mill Creek Streamway Park by adding three additional amenity zones:

1. The proposed **Rail Creek Park** will provide high-quality shared use paths and training areas for bicyclists of a variety of experience levels. The shared use path system will be integrated throughout the wooded area surrounding the fields and Experience Zone North and connect to the existing Mill Creek Streamway trails.
2. The **Kayak Experience** will program Mill Creek into a kayak facility. A launch point accessible from Mill Creek Streamway Park allows for an entry point into the creek, which flows to the landing point at Experience Zone North. An outfitter near the landing will provide equipment rentals.
3. The area surrounding the existing KC Ice Center and sand volleyball facility - **Experience Zone North** - will be expanded into an amenity and lodging area for visitors. Lodging will include RV sites, cabins, and a hotel. Development will include spaces for retail, restaurants, and outfitters. Shared use paths and access to the Rail Creek Trails, Mill Creek trail network, and playing fields will be integrated throughout.



Figure 5.5 Valley of Champions Overall Vision



Overall Vision for Valley of Champions, Stantec 2020

Johnson County Landfill

Although outside of the timeline of this Comprehensive Plan, the closure of the landfill in 2043 will free up approximately 850 acres of land suitable only for certain parks and recreation purposes. **Figure 5.6** shows one idea for the future of the site. This concept imagines an all-season winter sport park using a synthetic panel system product to replicate the speed of snow. The existing topography of the site can be used to create ski slopes, toboggan runs, extreme jumps, a Nordic trail, and a bumper car-style tubbies track. The synthetic material is designed for typical ski and snow equipment.

The flat plateau at the current landfill entry will serve as the Resort Village. Existing landfill roadways will allow visitors to climb up to the Hilltop Oasis consisting of shelters and trees. New shared use paths and native plantings will provide open space exploration. Additionally, some of the large open areas in this flat plateau could serve as a future solar farm. Representative imagery of existing all-season winter park resorts is shown to illustrate what this might look like in Shawnee.

It is important to note that topography in this site offers challenges associated with development. At the time of the landfill's closure, appropriate studies must be completed to ensure any prospective development is safely constructed.

Figure 5.6 Winter Park Concept



A photograph of a stream with a wooden bridge. Two people are sitting on the bank near the bridge. The background is filled with trees and foliage.

Stream Buffers

In 2014, the City adopted a stream corridor policy to preserve and protect stream corridors and other valuable aquatic riparian resources within the City. Stream corridors provide multiple benefits to the citizens of Shawnee including:

- Preservation of habitat for plants and animals.
- Protection of water quality and base flow potential through infiltration, filtration, runoff velocity control and sediment retention.
- Stabilization of stream banks which minimizes bank erosion, stream migration, and property damage due to stream bank instability.
- Temporary storage and velocity reduction of flood waters.
- Recreational and educational opportunities.
- Beautification and aesthetic enhancement of the City.
- Effective visual and auditory screening between adjoining land uses.
- Enhancement of property values.

Proper management of stream corridors will continue to enhance the quality of life for residents and conserve and preserve stream corridors to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. Regulation of stream corridors by establishing acceptable minimum standards is an important component of the City's overall storm water management strategy and that such regulation is consistent with the provisions and goals of the Clean Water Act, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, and other federal, state, and local requirements for water quality and environmental preservation.

Figure 5.7 illustrates stream buffers throughout the City of Shawnee. Note that the buffer amount shown indicates the total stream buffer (e.g., an 80-foot buffer represents a 40-foot buffer on either side of a stream).

Figure 5.7 Stream Buffers Framework

