



OPEN SPACE *Greening the Good Life*

WHY OPEN SPACE?

Why do we live here? What makes Lancaster County our home -- the place we choose to put down roots and grow our lives?

Perhaps the most important reasons are the ones we take most for granted: clean air, clean water, beautiful parks, rolling prairies, vast sunsets, recreational opportunities, and expansive views of rich, productive farmland. We live here because our families are able to thrive and enjoy a quality of life rooted in 150 years of land-stewardship. We value the legacy we have inherited. We want to ensure that our children and those that follow will be able to enjoy an equally rich quality of life.

Over the next 25 years, as Lincoln and neighboring communities experience growth, the face of the county could dramatically change. It will become more challenging to maintain the delicate balance between the natural and built environments. Natural undeveloped areas, called *open space*, will be lost unless we make early decisions to protect the most significant of these so they can be sensitively integrated into future growth and development.

The quality of life for future generations will be reflected in the quality of the natural environment left to them by present generations.

*2025 Lincoln/Lancaster County
Comprehensive Plan*

Open Space is land largely free of residential, commercial, and industrial development that can provide access to recreation, wildlife habitat, and scenic views.

Greening the Good Life

Now is the critical time for Lincoln and Lancaster County to make plans and take action to preserve those sensitive or unique environmental resources that enhance our quality of life.



HISTORIC & CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Lancaster County has several historic and culturally significant landscapes which warrant preservation because of their unique character or impact. Examples of these include Pioneers Park, donated in 1928 by New York investment banker John F. Harris in memory of his parents. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Pioneers Park was designed by Ernst Herminghouse, Nebraska's first landscape architect. Other historic or cultural landscapes include Nine-Mile Prairie, which has been the site of ecology study since 1917, and Spring Creek Prairie, which marks the Nebraska City to Fort Kearny Cutoff along the Oregon Trail. The National Register of Historic Places includes three farmsteads in Lancaster County.

It is only by preserving our cultural and historic assets, that we can provide future generations with tangible links to the past and touchstones for the future.

SALINE WETLANDS



Lincoln's founders envisioned a major salt industry rising from the saline soils of Lancaster County. Today, the saline wetlands remain a unique historical and ecological feature in the county. Located primarily along Little Salt Creek and Rock Creek, the 1,200 acres of saline wetlands are home to the endangered Saltwort and Salt Creek Tiger Beetle.

Wetlands (*saline and freshwater*) improve water quality, supply water for recharge, provide habitat for wildlife and vegetation, control flooding and erosion, and offer laboratories for education.

Without our wetlands, endangered plant and animal life would be lost, water quality would be threatened, and the potential for flooding, soil erosion, and pollution would increase.

Stormwater, Floodplains & Water Quality

Natural watersheds (*or drainage basins*) drain surface water into lakes, wetlands and streams by way of floodplains, which act as a natural sponge to manage stormwater and flooding. Surface water is susceptible to run-off pollution from sediment and contaminants like fertilizer and pollution from automobiles. In addition to stormwater management and flood control, preservation of open space in floodplains, stream corridors, and wetlands provides natural filtration of surface water, improving water quality.

The most economical approach to clean water, erosion control, and flood management is to work with nature, not against her. By preserving watersheds and floodplains, we are eaving future generations with nature's self-maintaining infrastructure.



TRAILS & GREENWAYS

Lincoln enjoys a rich legacy of linear parks, trails, and boulevards beautifying neighborhoods and enhancing travel corridors. Contributing to increased property values and quality of life, examples of Lincoln's oldest greenways can be found in and around neighborhoods like Woodshire, Touzalin Avenue, Sheridan Boulevard, the string of parks that line Antelope Creek, Roper Park, along I-180, Capitol Parkway, and the 15th Street Capitol Mall.

Today, the development of greenways often includes trails for active uses, generating additional benefits of recreation, health, and connections between neighborhoods, schools, shopping areas, and employment centers. Trails and greenways are an important part of the community's infrastructure and add great value to our quality of life.

In order to sustain the same level of benefit for future citizens, now is the time to take the steps necessary to ensure an interconnected, community-wide trail system.

VIEWS & VISTAS



Citizens enjoy beautiful views and vistas throughout the county. By protecting the most significant of these, including State Capitol views, we can assure that future generations will be able to enjoy them as well.

The county has many locations with excellent views, some of which may be appropriate for public ownership as parks or overlooks. By identifying them early, steps can be taken to preserve parcels as they become available.

NATIVE PRAIRIES

Although tallgrass prairie was historically the prevailing landscape, native prairies are increasingly rare in the Nebraska landscape. Lancaster County is fortunate to have approximately 8,640 acres of native prairies remaining, including Nine Mile Prairie, home to the threatened Western Prairie Fringed Orchid, Spring Creek Prairie, and Pioneers Park Prairie.

Native prairies are irreplaceable sites and are vitally important for education and research in a variety of areas involving our native ecosystem.



“you don't know what you got til it's gone.”

Joni Mitchell

WILDLIFE HABITAT



The open spaces of Lancaster County - particularly the prairies, wetlands, and wooded stream corridors - provide a home to white-tailed deer, bald eagles, river otters, songbirds, migratory ducks and geese, and a host of other bird, insect, mammal, and fish species.

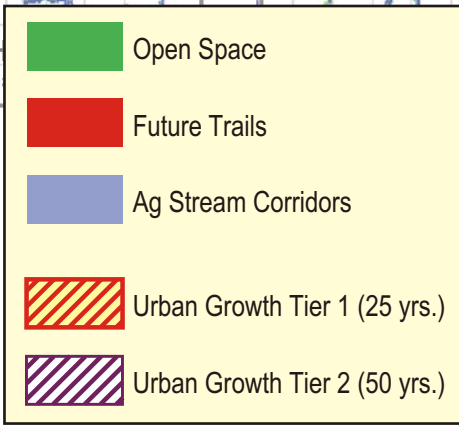
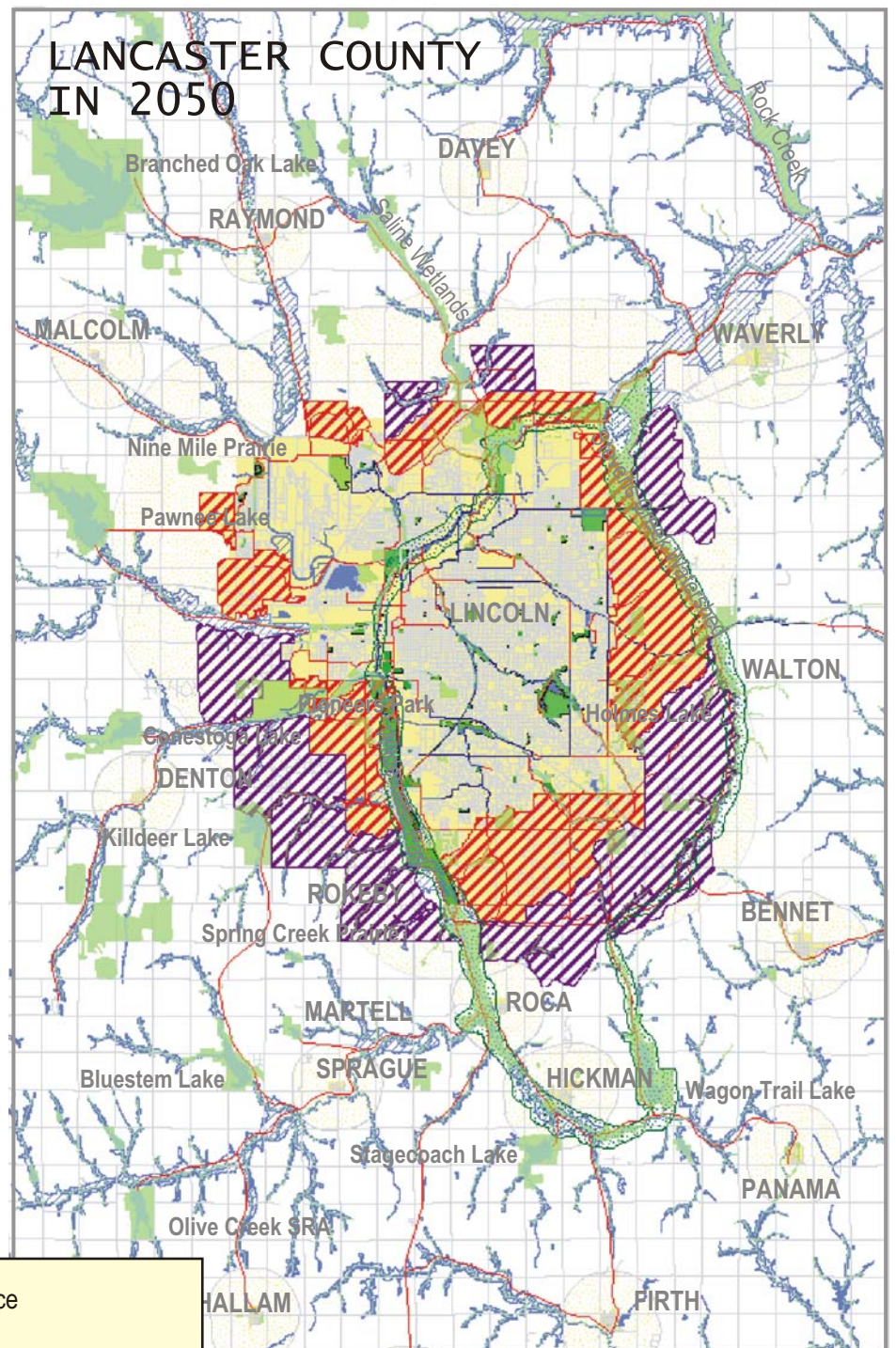
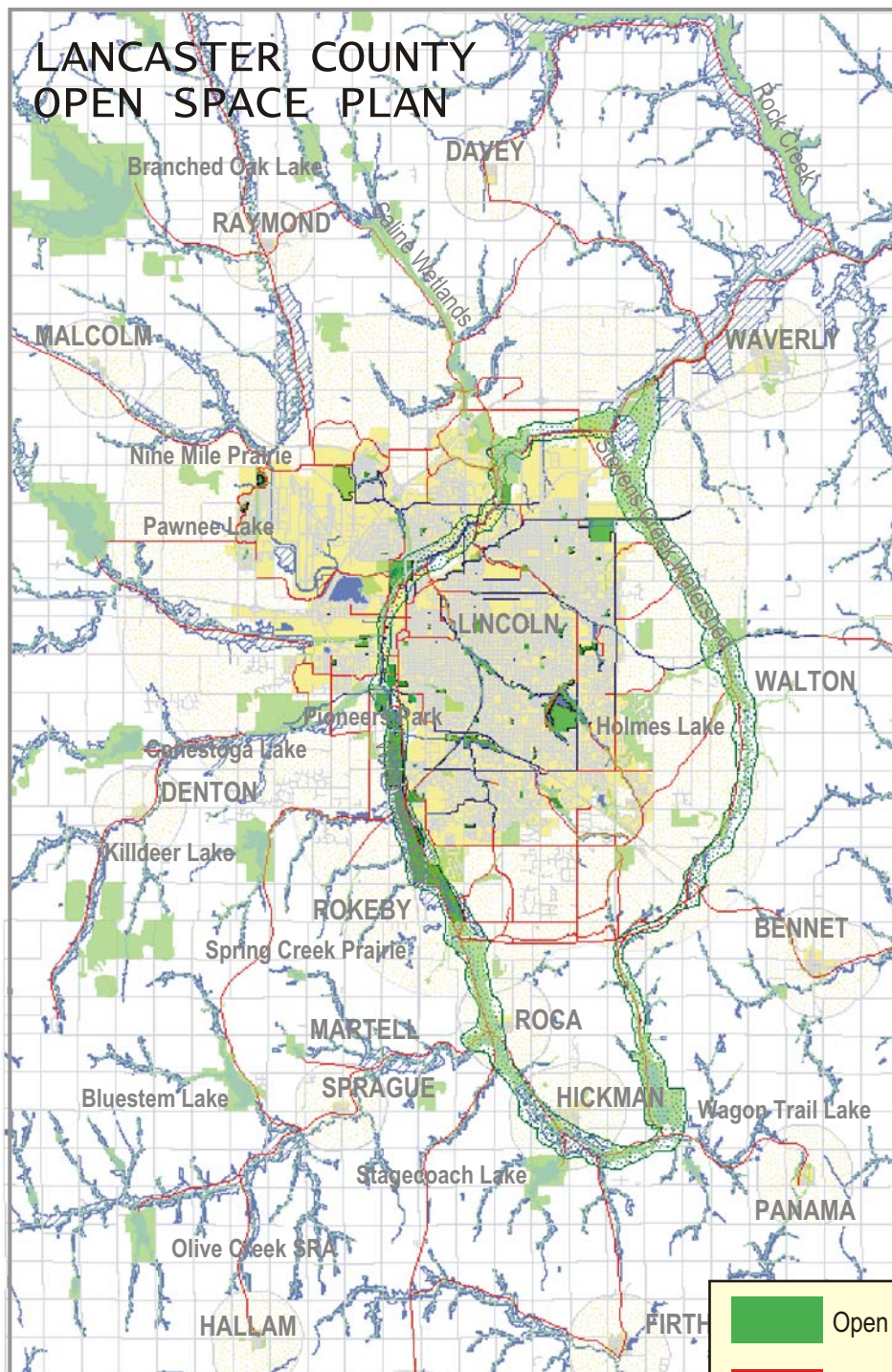
The continued presence of wildlife in the county not only assures the education and enjoyment of future citizens, but it affirms our commitment to live in harmony with our environment and thus the survival of us all.

AGRICULTURAL & STREAM CORRIDORS



In addition to their economic importance, agricultural lands are integral elements in the natural landscape, offering wildlife habitat, signature views, and historic landscapes. By preserving agricultural stream corridors, we reduce erosion and improve our capability to manage stormwater. Preserving farmland supports an important economic sector and provides all of us a living reminder of the vital agricultural heritage of Lancaster County.

Stewardship entails making wise decisions. Preserving the land that sustains us all is a wise investment for the future.



This map illustrates existing open space in Lancaster County. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan shows a greenway circling Lincoln and connecting various types of open spaces -- parks, trails, stream corridors, floodplains, wetlands, agricultural land, wildlife corridors, and transportation corridors. This greenway could include both public lands and private lands with conservation easements.

This map illustrates that significant urban growth and development may occur in Lancaster County over the next 25 to 50 years. Without a plan in place to preserve open space, we could lose those things that makes Lincoln and Lancaster County a good place to live.

THE OPEN SPACE PLAN

If we are to preserve what we value, we must take action now. Building on the direction set by the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department has begun preparing an Open Space Plan which will recommend strategies for conserving undeveloped land and how to pay for them. It will suggest potential partnerships between public and private entities and innovative initiatives for preserving open space without purchase through conservation easements, land exchanges, or a variety of donation options. The plan will also identify potential funding sources available to conserve open space such as bond issues, stormwater/open space fees, dedication requirements, taxes, mill levies, and developer incentives.

Lincoln Parks and Recreation wants to know what you think about the preservation of open space for the future.

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We want to know:

What undeveloped areas of the county do you think are particularly significant and worthy of preservation?

What do you think our highest priorities should be?

What do you think are the fairest and best ways to acquire land for conservation and pay for it?

We need to hear from you! Please send your comments to:

Open Space

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