



**CITY OF ALBERT LEA
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

*May 2026 Meeting
5/18/2026, 5:30 pm
Marion Ross Theater*

1. CALL TO ORDER:
 - Roll Call
 - Adopt Agenda
2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
 - April 20, 2026 Meeting Minutes
3. PUBLIC ITEMS:
4. OLD BUSINESS:
5. NEW BUSINESS:
 - Eddie Cochran Statue Request Discussion and Walking Tour to Fountain Lake Park
6. STAFF REPORT DISCUSSION:
7. BOARD MEMBER ITEMS:
8. ADJOURNMENT:

MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide quality recreational opportunities and to plan, acquire, develop and maintain attractive and safe parks and facilities that enhance the quality of life in the community of Albert Lea.”

PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

April 20, 2026 5:30 pm
Senior Center

Members Present:

Kent Rahn
Wende Taylor
Tom Jones- arrived at 5:45 pm
Joe Staloch
Whitney Sauer
Ted Herman (ex-officio)

Members Absent:

Amy Leach
Therese Salazar

Staff in Attendance:

Cathy Malakowsky, Engagement and Enrichment Director
Ben Bangert, Parks Superintendent
Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator

Others in Attendance:

Jill Bangert

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Wende Taylor at 5:30pm.

Adopt Agenda:

Joe Staloch made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Tom was absent). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Joe Staloch made the motion to approve the minutes from the February 2026 (March 2026 meeting was cancelled) meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Tom was absent). Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

Ted Herman was introduced as our new City Council Ex-officio.

Old Business Items:

Bridge Avenue Dock – Ben Bangert

The dock is delivered. It will be moved to the City Beach with the help of the street department. From there Brody Page will assist in placing the dock.

Splash Pad Bathrooms- Ben Bangert Presented

The epoxy flooring is now completed in the bathrooms. Kelly's Heating and Plumbing is working on finishing up their projects. The mirrors and hand dryers have been put up. Parks is hoping that the bathrooms will be open by the end of the month. Once the bathrooms are completed there will be a dedication ceremony.

There will also be security cameras installed and staff are deciding on the best line of sight. The internet will come from the theater. There are also going to be automatic locks installed so the bathrooms will be locked overnight.

New Fountains- Ben Bangert Presented

New fountains have been ordered. It will be a couple weeks before they are installed. These fountains include a new electrical box and an app that can control them.

Frank Hall Bike Shelter- Ben Bangert Presented

The contractor will start working on the bike shelter in about 4 weeks. Supplies are all in at Arrow building.

Status of Senior Center relocation-

Cathy gave a tour of the Senior Center. Cathy explained that the council has approved up to \$14,000 for a design for the new Senior Center within the Jim and Dude's building at the former Health Reach building. Two local businesses each will be donating \$5,000 to a total of \$10,000. Staff are going to start working with Wold Architects on Thursday. The city needs to give Skyline Plaza a 180-day notice of not renewing our lease.

New Business Items:

None

Staff Report Discussion:

None

Staff Updates:

None

Board Member Items:

Wende Taylor- The swings at Lakeview Park are very loud, Ben said he would look into greasing them. Wende also asked about shade structures at the All together playground. Ben said he would look into pricing.

Joe Stahloch- was wondering how we can go about getting a mini golf court set up in Albert Lea. Staff shared either the board can make a recommendation to look into pricing for a mini golf course, or people can use the Project Request Form. Joe also asked if the water shed district was still working on the path by the dam. Ben explained that this work is still in progress

Adjournment: Whitney Sauer made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0. Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dani Bakken
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Stand In Secretary

Approved:

Amy Leach
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chair

May Parks and Recreation Department Updates from Staff

Recreation: Report provided by Afton Wacholz and Dani Bakken;

- Summer program registration opened on May 4. We currently have the following for registration totals:
 - Swim lessons - 231
 - Water aerobics -24
 - Play park trips -3
- Adult Co-Ed volleyball started on Monday May 11. We have 10 teams playing this summer season.
- Recreation participated in the Cinco De Mayo event on May 8 and provided a kid's craft.
- Our next big event is Wind Down Wednesday, which will be June 10.
- Neighborhoods parks open on June 1
 - We will have Valley, Academy, Lakeview and Sondergaard parks open Monday-Thursday 9 am-4 pm.
- There are a few garden plots available for rent at both Brookside and Spark Ave gardens.
- There are a few dock permits on Fountain Lake still available for rent for the 2026 season. List of available dock spaces is at the Recreation Office.

Parks: Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Ben Bangert;

- Summer mowing crew is taking care of parks, athletic fields and greenspaces.
- Recently replaced equipment with new Vermeer BC1800XL Woodchipper and Landpride 11 ft All flex pull behind mower.
- Replacement fountains are being assembled and will be installed ASAP.
- Replacement perimeter screen for Hayek Field will be installed soon.
- Continual tree removals, playground equipment maintenance, trash collection, spraying weeds, and facility maintenance.
- Seasonal employees are returning and new members beginning throughout the next few weeks.
- Docks have been put out or are in the process of being put out – The new Bridge Ave. dock is close to being put out.
- Frank Hall bike shelter – We are still waiting on some supplies before we can start.
- Splashpad bathroom has a few loose ends but is open.

City Arena: Report provided by Afton Wacholz and Josh Heilman;

- Facility updates –
 - See Facilities Project Update below
- Events -
 - Youth hockey wrapped up a spring league for mites through Squirts on Thursday, May 7.
 - Learn to Skate will have its last session on Sunday, May 17. Due to having a class cancelled, we will be providing a free family skate for Learn to Skate families on Sunday, May 31 in partnership with a Try Hockey for Free event that the Youth Hockey

Association is hosting. From 2-3p youth hockey will hold their event, followed by the LTS family skate from 3-4p.

- Summer hockey will begin on Monday June 1. We hope to have Colstrup Rink operating by that time or soon after. Nystrom rink will stay on until that is ready.
- Other events –
 - Weekday public skate and stick and puck calendar can be found on our website or Facebook page. Special skating schedule for during Spring Break will be available.
 - There will limited option for public skating options through the summer but we plan to have stick and puck, freestyle figure skating and public skate once per week starting in June.

Aquatic Center: Report provided by staff;

- Aquatic Center will open for the 2026 season on Friday, June 5.
- Family and individual passes are currently available for purchase online or with the Recreation Office.
- All Aquatic Center programming is now open, including swim lessons and water aerobics. Registration can be done online, over the phone or in the Rec office.
- Managers will begin deep cleaning the facility on May 18 to get ready for opening day!

Senior Center: Report provided by Dani Bakken;

- Trips -
 - Nobody's Perfect – Day Trippers Dinner Theatre will be June 26.
- Programs/Events –
 - Puzzle Exchange May 19.
 - Summer Kick-Off BBQ at the Senior Center on May 29th at 11a.
 - Tech Thursday will be held on Thursday June 18.

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Afton Wacholz;

- Facility Updates –
 - See Rec facilities update below.
- Upcoming events –
 - ACT wrapped up the production of Father of the Bride in early May.
 - Auditions were held for My Fair Lady which will run June 18 through June 28.
 - ACT will be holding a summer Theater Camp July 6-10. Camp is for ages 8-13. There is a registration form on the ACT website: <https://actonbroadway.com/act-60th-season-2025-26/theatre-kids-camp/>

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

Senior Center: Wold Architects has prepared design concepts for the proposed space at Jim and Dude's. The concepts are under review by City staff, YMCA staff and soon the Senior Center. The plan is to take the new location proposal, with cost estimates, to the City Council for approval at the council's June 22 meeting.

Songbird Trail: County Engineer Phil Wacholz gave a terrific tour on April 28 to members of the Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission as part of the application to designate the Songbird as a regional trail. This designation would open up opportunities for grant funding. As follow-up to the visit, Phil is seeking a memorandum of understanding for trail maintenance between Freeborn County and the City of Albert Lea, Waseca County and Le Sueur County.

Bike Rodeo: About 60 grade-schoolers took part in the May 7 Bike Rodeo at Edgewater Park that included bike checks, free helmets and helmet fitting, safety instructions from firefighters and the police bike patrol, and a fun challenge course.

Referendum Project Updates

City Arena

Lobby and office area

- Staff are continuing work on furniture for the skate office, new lobby and Rec office.

Refrigeration and Colstrup Arena

- Work continues on the geothermal system and should wrap up the first week in May.

Aquatic Center

- Final touches are finishing up on the new ticket building. Epoxy flooring was completed this week as well as

Marion Ross Theater

- Staff is working on finalizing new window lights for the front arched windows of the lobby.

**** 2026 Top 5 Project Updates:**

Developing the Songbird Trail – see update from Cathy Malakowsky

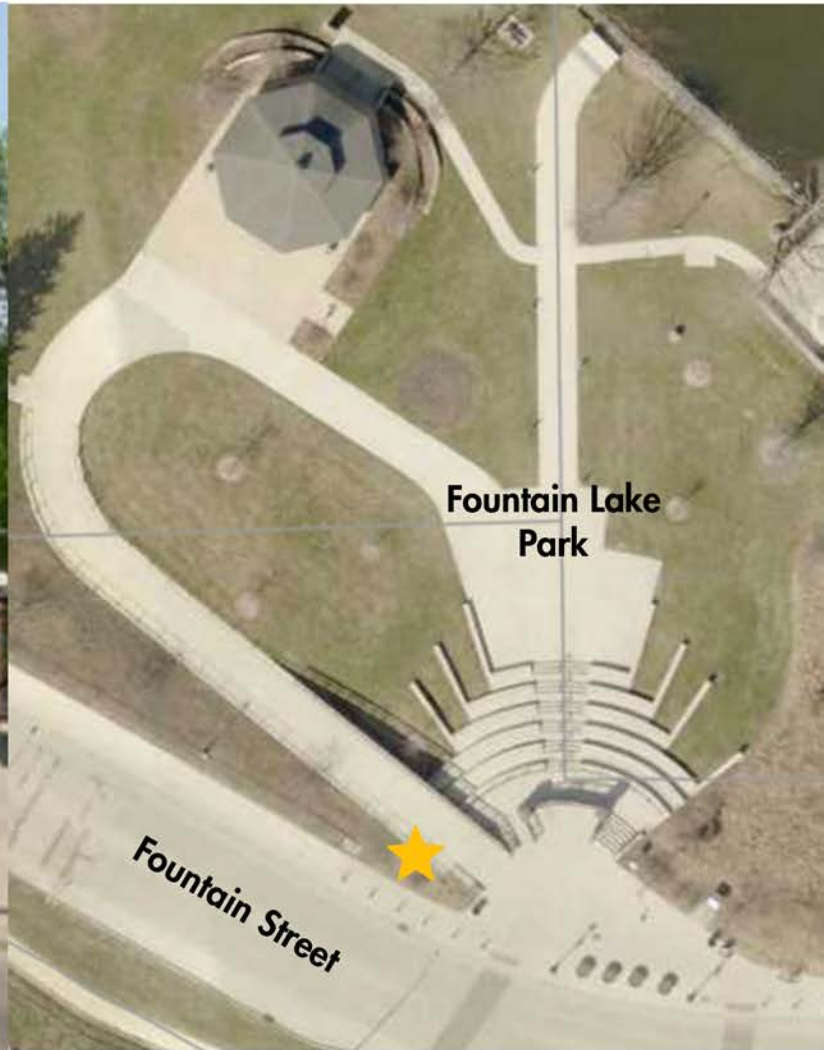
Completing the Miracle Field – no update

Mini Golf Course – no update

City Beach marina – no update

Security Cameras for Parks and Facilities – no update

DOWNTOWN AREA



Fountain Lake Park in place of the Art Walk piece

Pros

- Visibility
- Space for people to take photo with statue
- Proximity to Eddie Cochran Festival

Cons

- May not be enough space for pavers
- Need to move Art Walk piece

DOWNTOWN AREA



Fountain Lake Park east of entrance

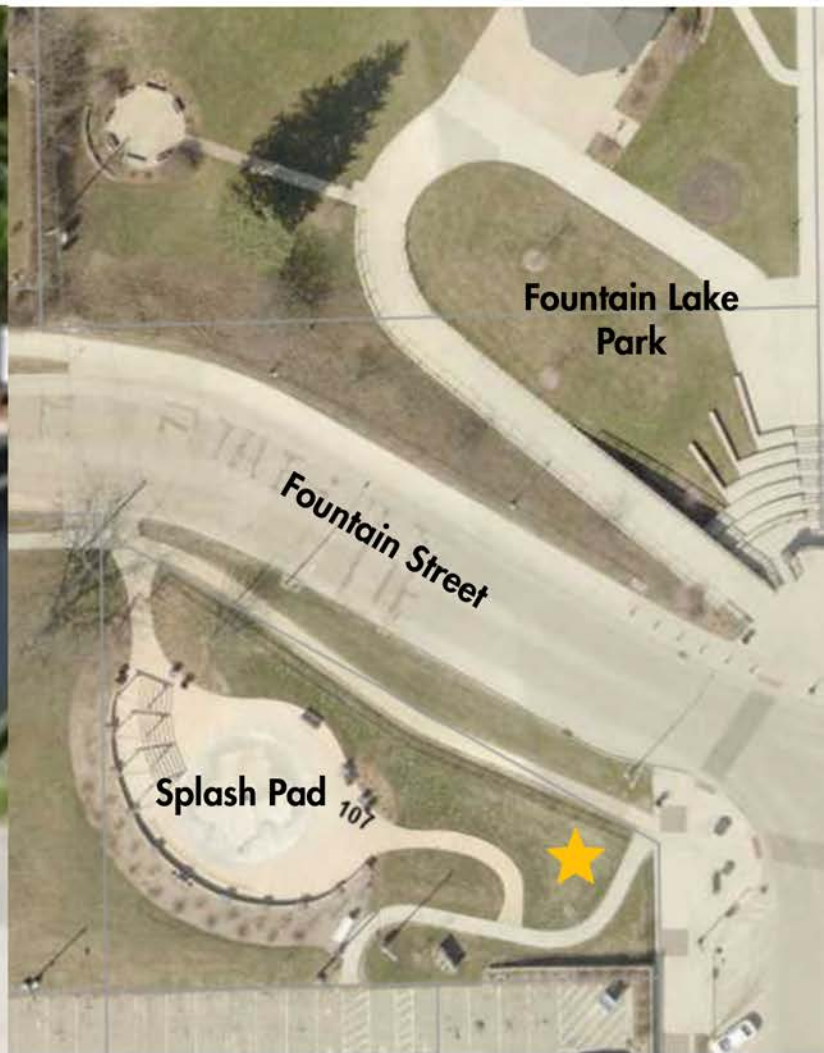
Pros

- Some visibility from street
- Some space for people to take photo with statue
- No need to move Art Walk piece

Cons

- Sight lines are busy with Blue Zones kiosk, trees and trash cans
- May be traffic hazard with people slowing down to look at statue
- May not be enough space for pavers

DOWNTOWN AREA



Splash Pad

Pros

- Visibility from street
- Convenient parking for people wanting to view statue
- Ample space for people to take photo with statue
- Ample space for pavers
- No need to move Art Walk piece

Cons

- Across the street from the park

FRANK HALL PARK



South of Eddie Cochran St., east of playground

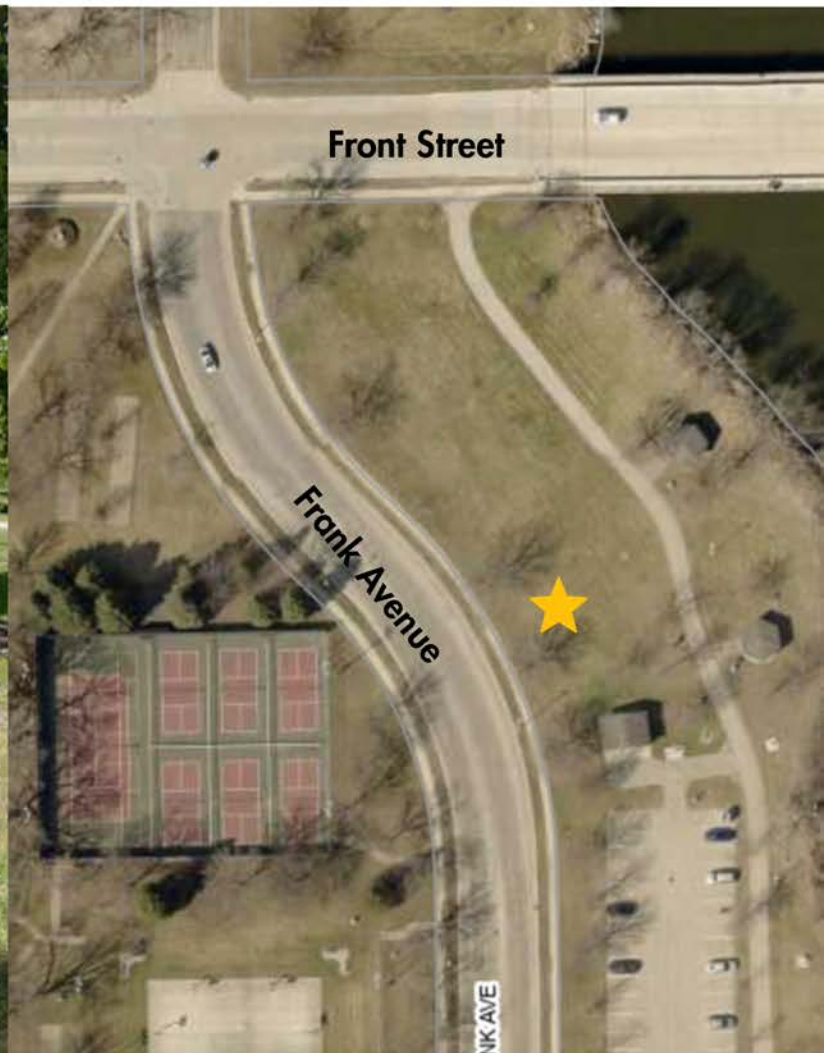
Pros

- Proximity to Eddie Cochran Street and where Eddie grew up
- Lots of visitors of different ages
- Raised landscape planter at the corner of Front St. and Frank Ave, has the rock and plaque dedicated to Eddie, from an Eagle Scout project from several years ago.
- Ample space for photos
- Near street, Blazing Star Trail, picnic area and new bike shelter

Cons

- Not near a music venue

FRANK HALL PARK



East of Frank Hall Drive - near trail and restrooms

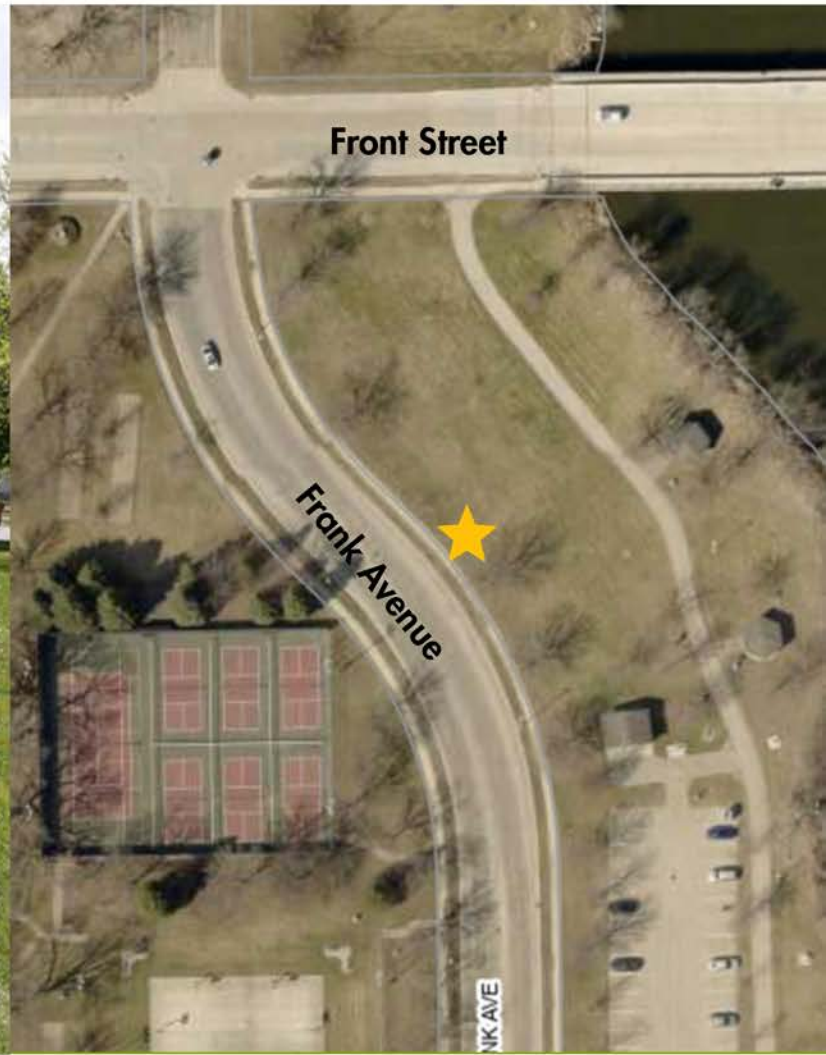
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- Not near a music venue

FRANK HALL PARK



East of Frank Hall Drive - near trail and picnic area

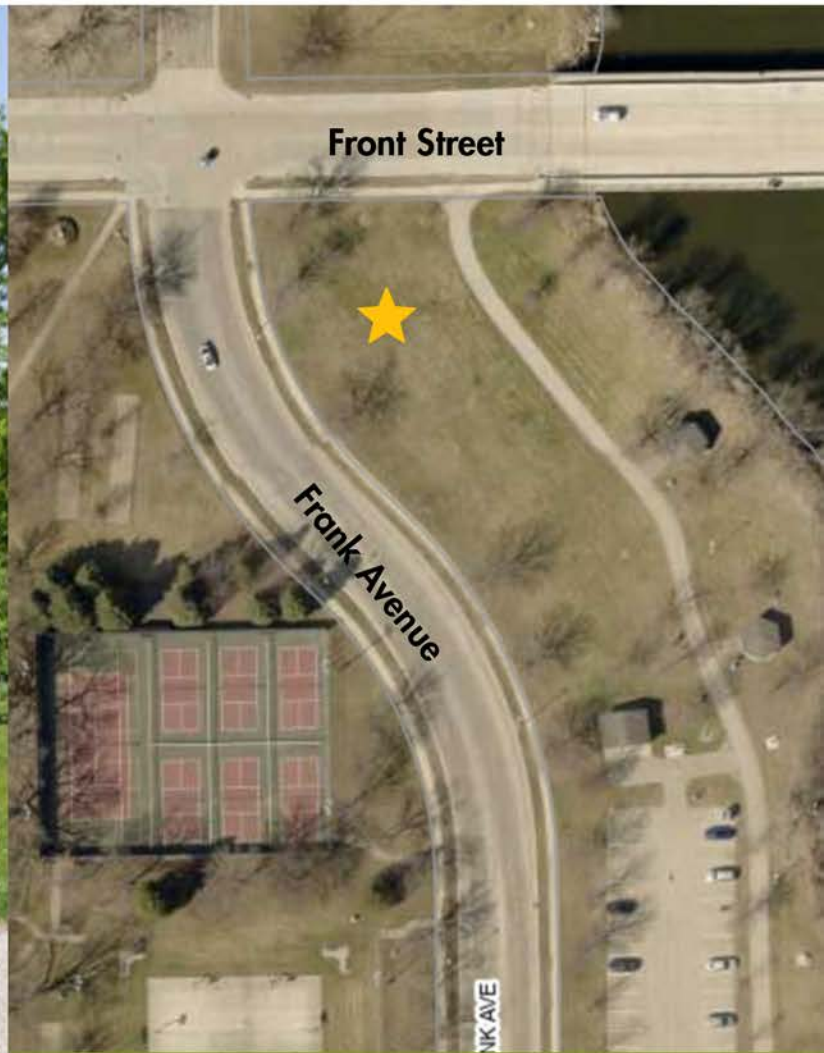
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Cons

- Not near a music venue

FRANK HALL PARK



East of Frank Hall Drive - near Front Street

Pros

- Proximity to Eddie Cochran Street and where Eddie grew up
- Lots of visitors of different ages
- Raised landscape planter at the corner of Front St. and Frank Ave, has the rock and plaque dedicated to Eddie, from an Eagle Scout project from several years ago.
- Ample space for photos
- Near street, Blazing Star Trail, picnic area and new bike shelter

Cons

- Not near a music venue