

Parks and Recreation Plan



The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan

The Parks Plan is one of six chapters of the 2020 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan



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Figure A. Park System



Introduction

Purpose

The Parks and Recreation Plan, a chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan, is a statement of official city policy to guide parks and recreation development, operations, and maintenance priorities and activities. The plan provides a comprehensive framework for meeting the needs, challenges, and opportunities confronting the City's parks and recreation system. Although most of the strategies, objectives, and policies in this plan relate specifically to the park and recreation system and assume that the City of Saint Paul's Department of Parks and Recreation is the primary actor, the course of action proposed in this chapter may influence and be influenced by the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

Setting

The city's parks, parkways, and natural features lend form, character, and identity to the city and its neighborhoods. They provide a strong framework for maintaining and improving every citizen's quality of life. Parks and recreation facilities function as neighborhood focal points, the center of community activity and life.

With 4,123 acres of parks, approximately 11 percent of Saint Paul's total land area is devoted to City parkland. When County, State, and Federal parkland is added in, over 20 percent of Saint Paul's land consists of park and natural areas. Saint Paul citizens enjoy 170 park properties owned by the City, 33 City-operated recreation centers, 108 miles of off-street trails, 70 miles of on-street bikeways, 24 miles of natural surface trails, 40 miles of parkways, and over 124,000 public-property trees that are maintained by Parks and Recreation.

Saint Paul's parks are highly regarded: the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, awarded the City of Saint Paul's Parks and Recreation Department the 2005 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. The Gold Medal represents and honors the nation's outstanding park and recreation agencies in communities of more than 250,000 in population for excellence in the field of recreation management.

The Parks and Recreation Department provides opportunities for participation in a very diverse range of activities through programming and facilities. Residents can play baseball, soccer, football, softball, ice hockey, golf, basketball, disc golf, tennis, walk, bike, and ski at City recreation centers and parks, as well as participate in many other activities. Kids enjoy access to over 70 tot lots around the city. Special events facilitated by parks staff and held in city parks promote tourism and build community identity. Aquatics facilities, skateboarding parks, and in-line skating trails offer cutting-edge recreation opportunities. Some of the system's most unique features – Midway Stadium, riverfront and downtown parks, and Como Park Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory – serve the region as a whole and showcase Saint Paul's wonderfully diverse system for a large audience.



Key Trends

Increasing demand. With Saint Paul's population growing in absolute numbers as well as in diversity, the demands being placed on the parks and recreation system have increased and will continue to grow. Saint Paul's parks serve more than just the city; many of the system's parks and recreation facilities are regional draws that attract visitors from around the metropolitan region and the state, and experience unique pressures due to their large constituencies. With more voices calling for additional facilities and programming as well as new kinds of park and recreation opportunities to meet emerging trends, the Parks and Recreation Department will be challenged to continue to provide high-quality facilities and programming that meet the needs of the community and enhance neighborhood quality of life.



Decreasing resources. Financial and land resources to support, enlarge, diversify, and maintain the parks system are extremely limited. Funding to support construction, operations, and maintenance has been woefully inadequate for years and will continue to be a major challenge in the future as the City struggles with an increasingly limited budget. Additionally, there has been an increasing budget reliance on user fees as public dollars have become unreliable. Many of the parks, buildings, and recreation infrastructure that were built in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s are in need of significant repair and renewal. Land for new parks and recreation facilities is a scarce resource in Saint Paul. With each passing year more demands are placed on the system, but there is less space and inadequate funding to meet them. Clear priorities and focus are required in this environment, and there is an increased need for compatible multiple uses of parkland, partnerships, volunteers, creative funding sources, and a renewed focus on quality.

Increased focus on sustainability. The increased emphasis on “living green” in all aspects of our lives will impact the parks system. From natural stormwater management to protection and restoration of native habitats, the link between open space and the city's precious natural resources will become more important in defining Saint Paul's quality of life. Parks will have to do as much as possible to help Saint Paul become more environmentally sustainable by preserving natural resources, building and operating more efficiently, and educating the public on the importance of the human connection to the natural realm.

A commitment to sustainability does not end with the natural environment – it also requires making choices that ensure equality of access and opportunity that are fiscally appropriate for the long term. Since the City does not have the financial resources to meet all of the diverse community needs by simply building more facilities and providing more services, the Parks and Recreation Department will have to prioritize well and find ways to deliver an efficient and equitable system. In part, this may mean building fewer, higher quality facilities and structures that will last for a longer time.

Sustainable choices will need to be based on an understanding of parks and recreation as a total, citywide system rather than as a collection of components located in distinct neighborhoods. Additionally, part of the solution is to integrate with and recognize regional opportunities so that Saint Paul does not recreate opportunities that already exist close by, even if they are in an adjacent community rather than in Saint Paul. Discipline and strategic thinking are crucial components of a parks system that will be sustainable in the long range.

Increased focus on active, healthy lifestyles. The Parks Department has a central role in helping people live more active, healthy lives. The Department assumes a responsibility to respond to the growing obesity epidemic as well as other health challenges that are facing the community by promoting and providing opportunities for adults and youth to make more healthy choices.



Parks and recreation facilities and programming are increasingly seen as a fundamental part of a more active, healthy lifestyle; survey respondents cite improved health and fitness as the top benefit of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. This broadening of expectations will impact how parks facilities are designed and where they are located, but it also creates an opportunity for parks to serve as the authoritative voice and information source for Saint Paul citizens who want to increase their physical activity level and live more healthy lives.

Major Strategies

The Parks Plan proposes six strategies to guide future development, operations, and maintenance of the Saint Paul parks and recreation system:

Promote Active Lifestyles. Policies in this strategy focus on promoting parks as hubs for active lifestyles, providing safe and secure access to and use of parks and trails, and being the leader in raising public awareness and providing opportunities for physical activity.

Create Vibrant Places. Policies in this strategy focus on reflecting the community, shaping the evolution of the city, and enhancing the city and its neighborhoods.

Promote a Vital Environment. Policies in this strategy cover natural resource protection, sustainable building and maintenance procedures, environmental education, and financial resources for environmental work.

Respond Creatively to Change. Policies in this strategy focus on understanding and responding to changing community needs and meeting those needs efficiently and effectively.

Innovate with Every Decision. The policies in this strategy focus on enhancing the sustainability of the parks system, using public and private partnerships to expand Parks' offerings, utilizing supplemental resources, and expanding the volunteer program.

Connect the Entire City. The policies in this strategy cover equitable access to parks and programs, as well as better connections for Saint Paul residents and the region through trail and parkway improvements.





Strategy 1: Promote Active Lifestyles

When asked about the benefits of parks, trails, and recreation facilities and services, Saint Paul residents overwhelmingly believe that parks facilities improve physical health and wellness. Increased physical activity has enormous health benefits in combating obesity, reducing the risk of chronic disease, and improving mental health. While individuals are ultimately responsible for their own health choices, many Saint Paul residents are challenged to get the exercise they need to stay healthy. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation assumes a responsibility to help Saint Paul residents live more active, healthy lifestyles, in part by promoting these lifestyle choices.

This responsibility goes beyond simply providing the parks and recreation infrastructure that Saint Paul citizens enjoy. Walkable, bikeable connections between parks and recreation facilities, as well as between parks properties and other important community assets – schools, religious congregations, community centers – are equally important. Saint Paul must work to reduce barriers to participating in physical activities whenever possible, whether they are due to physical access issues, access fees, or safety issues.

Although Saint Paul has wonderful parks and recreation facilities for its residents and visitors, these assets will not be fully utilized unless people know about them. Providing information and education about where people can go and why they should go there to participate in the activities they enjoy is a critical piece of Parks’ role. In addition, Saint Paul’s facilities and programs do not exist in a vacuum – Parks can serve as the authoritative information resource for physical and educational activity opportunities, whether or not the City of Saint Paul is the provider.

Trails and Bikeways

Saint Paul’s bikeways are the collection of on-road bike lanes, share-the-road facilities, off-road trails and paths, and bicycle boulevards. In general, the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for off-road facilities, while the Department of Public Works maintains bicycle facilities within the public right-of-way. While this strategy contains some policies on trails and bikeways, these connections are discussed in more detail in Strategy 6: Connect the Entire City. Additional policies are included in the Transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Parks as hubs for active and healthy lifestyles

1.1. Ensure convenient and equitable access to parks and recreation facilities.

- a. Publicly accessible park or outdoor recreation space should be very accessible to all residents. Establish new parks or facilitate public access to other outdoor recreation spaces in locations identified as park service gaps (Figure B).
- b. Publicly accessible indoor recreation should be accessible to all residents. In areas where there are concentrations of people with low mobility, provide better access to indoor recreation, and/or make other provisions such as improved transit, transit circulators, mobile recreation, or facility partnerships with other organizations.

1.2. Complete the trail and bikeway system.

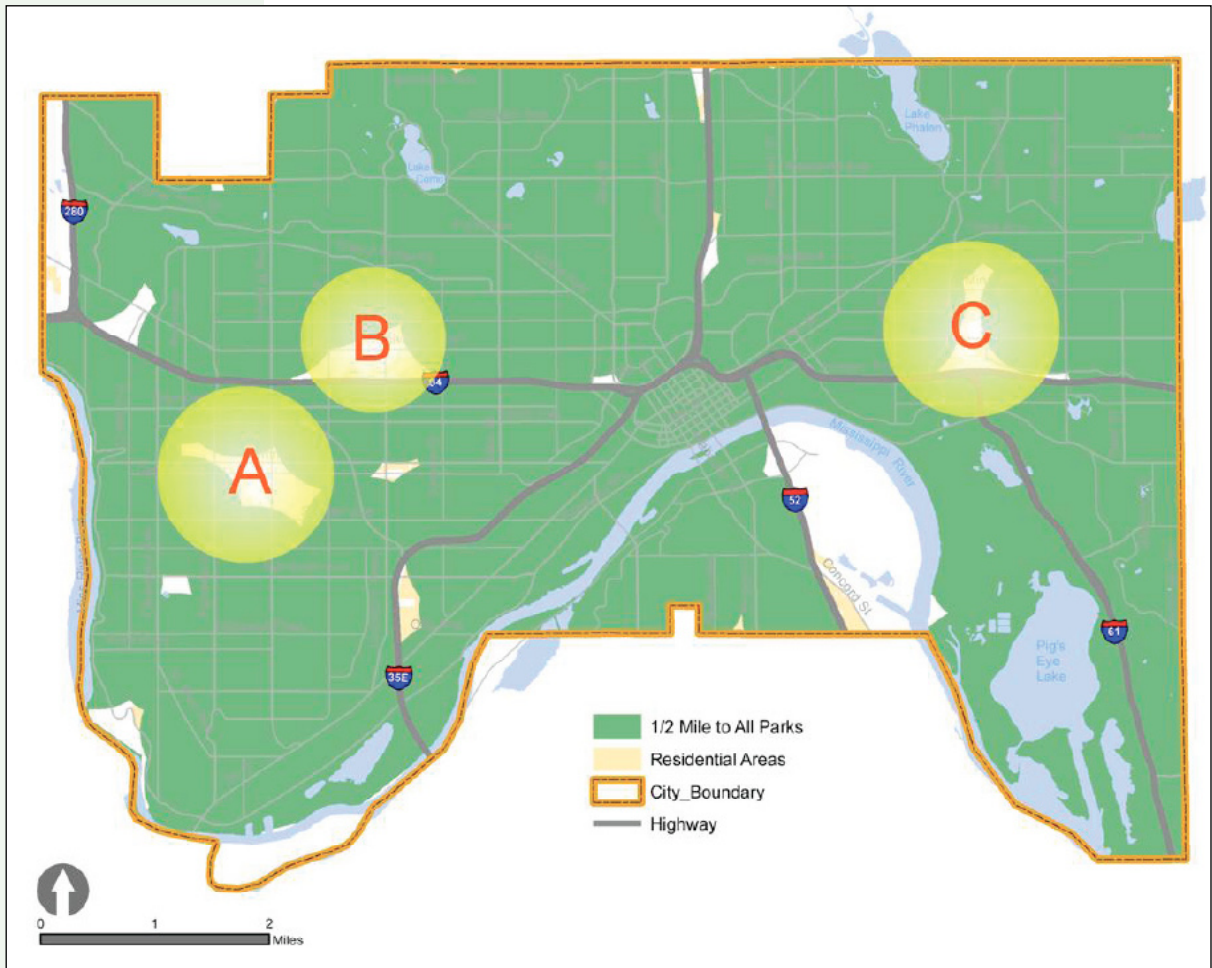
Complete the trail and bike system by implementing key projects, including those identified in policy 6.11 and shown in Figure F. The system should meet the needs of commuters, recreational riders, and casual riders; include amenities that encourage use such as restroom facilities and lockers; and be maintained adequately year-round.

1.3. Provide functional, accessible, and secure bike racks at all recreation centers and parks.

1.4. Provide programming and education on biking and walking.

Recreation centers need to be connected to the community and to each other, but they can also influence behavior through education; there is an opportunity to do programming for biking and walking to educate and encourage children and adults to choose to walk and bike whenever possible.

Figure B. Park Service Area Coverage and Gaps



1.5. Provide better public information on getting to parks and recreation facilities on foot and bike.

Safe and secure access to and use of parks and trails

1.6. Improve public safety in parks.

While Saint Paul parks are generally very safe, the perception of safety – or lack thereof – is a quality of life issue for Saint Paul residents. People will not use parks in which they feel vulnerable. Where major concerns exist and public safety improvements are needed, Parks will develop a park-specific strategy to address them.

1.7. Apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and design review for parks projects.

CPTED improves safety by applying design principles to the environment rather than focusing on hard security measures. Some of the issues that CPTED addresses include visibility within spaces and mobility options for people moving through spaces. The perception of safety, gained through environmental cues, results in real safety that lessens the need for enforcement staff. Parks design projects should involve CPTED staff as early as possible for maximum effectiveness.

1.8. Improve communications on public safety issues.

Saint Paul parks users should know how to effectively report public safety issues, and parks security staff should routinely reach out to the community. Effective communication and coordination between Department staff, park security, police officers, and neighborhood groups improves awareness and responsiveness to parks and neighborhood safety issues. Neighborhood input should be sought on safety issues and proposed responses. Develop a system to make data on public safety issues in parks available to the public on a park-by-park basis. (See policy 1.10.)

1.9. Explore increasing the use of proven technologies (such as cameras) in parks facilities to improve public safety and prevent crime.

There are security cameras and other surveillance technologies currently in use in some of Saint Paul's parks, but they are not widely used. Increasing the use of cameras in parks facilities should be explored further so that concerns about intrusions on privacy can be weighed against effectiveness. Public input on the installation and use of surveillance technologies is necessary.

1.10. Improve the use of data to track, manage, and prevent public safety incidents and to identify areas that need improvement.

This includes integrating information systems with the Saint Paul Police Department in a way that helps staff understand the crime and safety issues in parks. Additionally, gathering and integrating data on public safety issues is a necessary step in the process of expanding parks security staff.

1.11. Improve enforcement of parks rules to improve the quality of experience at parks and recreation centers.

1.12. Explore increased citation authority for parks security staff.

Parks security staff has the authority to issue citations for illegal parking, off-leash dogs, and failure to remove feces. Increased authority for parks security staff to enforce Parks rules on issues like alcohol consumption and illegal dumping should be considered.

1.13. Seek funding to expand parks security staff.

Parks security has the task of protecting patrons of parks as well as the substantial assets of the parks system. To do this job effectively, more staff is needed. The use of volunteers should be explored, possibly in roles as "Park Hosts" or through "Adopt-a-Park" programs where volunteers provide a visible presence in parks and report any security issues that arise.

1.14. Work with the Police Department to assign sworn officers to parks issues and facilities.

1.15. Demonstrate and encourage healthy choices for Saint Paul.

Lead by example in encouraging healthy choices for Saint Paul by offering nutritious foods and beverages in park vending and at events; restricting smoking and tobacco use in parks; and providing facilities such as bike racks, rest rooms, and changing rooms.

1.16. Utilize special events as opportunities to encourage biking instead of driving.

Give people a viable alternative to driving to special events by encouraging special events organizers to educate and encourage people to leave their cars at home by working with MetroTransit to provide transit access and providing adequate bike parking. Secured parking for bicycles should be pursued, possibly at a small charge.



1.17. Explore partnerships and improve communications with the Saint Paul/Ramsey County Public Health department and other health partners who are committed to helping Saint Paul citizens lead more active, healthy lives.

1.18. Pursue opportunities to promote Saint Paul's parks and recreation facilities as a health asset to Saint Paul residents through partnerships with healthcare providers.

Consider developing programs that are modeled on existing programs between healthcare providers and private fitness clubs, where club members who exercise several times in a month are given a discount or credit. People who use Saint Paul's trails, participate in recreation programming or activities, or even exercise in the downtown skyways could be given a reward or credit through their healthcare provider or through the Parks Department.

1.19. Become the trusted "go to" recreation clearinghouse by facilitating information to residents about all recreation options (city, other public, and private).

Communicating and marketing all recreation choices fosters a healthy community. Efforts should be made to simplify information and registration for all recreation options, whether they are provided by the City or by a partner. Use technology to provide information on opportunities and facilities that encourage physical activity.

1.20. Emphasize collaborative programs with Saint Paul Public Schools.

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation works collaboratively with Saint Paul Public Schools in many ways, including sharing facilities, coordinating recreation programming, and participating in summer lunch programs. These programs should be strengthened and expanded as opportunities arise.





Strategy 2: Create Vibrant Places

Seventeen miles of Mississippi River coursing through the urban core; beautiful tree-lined streets and parkways; unique parks at the heart of downtown; Como Park, Zoo, and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory; regional parks like Phalen, Highland, Indian Mounds, and Battle Creek: these are just some of the gems of a Saint Paul parks system that serves the people of Saint Paul and the region. The Saint Paul parks and recreation system is critical to the quality of life and sense of place that make the city a great place to live.

Our neighborhoods are strengthened and enhanced by the park and recreation facilities that serve as places for the community to gather, relax, recreate, and contemplate. Attractive, well-maintained park and recreation facilities become focal points of neighborhood pride and identity; they reflect and enhance neighborhood character. Beyond enhancing the intangible sense of place that defines Saint Paul, park facilities can play a concrete role in economic development. Parks augment the physical appearance of the city and contribute to increased property values. Housing and redevelopment projects are boosted by nearby park facilities that are seen as amenities to developers, residents, and businesses alike.

The existing network of parks and parkways in Saint Paul provides a strong foundation to build on, and opportunities to enhance the system must be continually pursued. Even though Saint Paul is a fully built city, the parks system will still have opportunities to evolve and improve over the coming years. The Parks and Recreation Department must continue to explore ways to serve, strengthen, and reflect the neighborhoods in which parks facilities are embedded.

No Net Loss of Parkland

One of the ways that parkland in Saint Paul is protected for future park users is the City's "no net loss" policy. This policy is a part of Saint Paul's City Charter, Section 13.01.1, and reads, "Lands which may have been heretofore acquired by any means or which may hereafter be acquired by any means for park purposes shall not be diverted to other uses or disposed of by the city" (<http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/web/CityCode/ch013.html>). When the city council decides that diversion or disposal of parkland is in the public interest, additional parklands must be acquired to replace the lands that are diverted, preferably within the same district council area and of a similar nature to the diverted parkland.



Enhanced city and neighborhoods

2.1. Review and revise zoning of parkland by adopting a new park zoning district.

The intention of the new zoning district is to reinforce the no-net-loss policy already required by City Charter and to make parks ownership more transparent and accessible to planners, developers, and residents. The new zoning district would apply only to Parks properties and is not intended to change the regulation of uses in Parks or transfer responsibility for Parks land use choices from the Parks Commission to the Zoning Committee or Planning Commission.

2.2. Ensure attractive, functional and engaging four-season public spaces.

- a. Provide continued and ongoing design innovation in parks and recreation facilities to ensure a high-quality system that enhances Saint Paul's neighborhoods.
- b. Allocate adequate resources to support site and facility maintenance that is appropriate to the size and use of each facility, enhances the visibility and attractiveness of facilities, and maximizes safety and security.

2.3. Improve communications, public relations, and marketing of parks.

Support marketing of the city through festivals and other events that take place in parks throughout the city. Promote parks as resources to businesses and their employees. Nurture partnership programs with businesses, like the "Adopt-a-Park" program.

2.4. Design parks and facilities for appropriate community gathering or festival opportunities based on park location, size, and function.

2.5. Evaluate the importance of food and explore the use of public/private partnerships for enhanced food experiences as a means to enliven parks and reinforce them as places of community gathering.



Parks and Recreation Commission

The Parks and Recreation Commission is a citizen group formed to advise the Mayor and City Council on Parks and Recreation matters of long-range and City-wide importance. Citizen participation is encouraged in all Commission business, and the Commission is often sought out by citizens as a place to voice their concerns and opinions. The members of the Commission are City residents appointed by the Mayor to staggered three-year terms.

This may mean more use of food carts and/or expanded food choices and food providers.

2.6. Analyze the costs and benefits of festivals and events and identify methods to make them fiscally sustainable.

While festivals and events are important economic, social, and community activities, they must provide enough community benefit to justify the public investment required to hold the events.

2.7. Increase volunteer engagement and participation by supporting meaningful volunteer experiences.

Parks' volunteer program should recognize that, for many people, volunteering is more than just an opportunity to do good in their community – it is also a recreational activity. Volunteer experiences should be rewarding and should enhance the lives of the volunteers. In addition to consistently recognizing and rewarding volunteer work, Parks' volunteer program should help volunteers understand the impact of their work whenever possible.

2.8. Support Blooming Saint Paul's efforts to beautify downtown and Saint Paul's neighborhoods by planting lush and colorful flowering plants in order to enhance the working, living, and tourism environment of the City.

Parks and recreation investments shape the evolution of Saint Paul

2.9. Manage and protect parkland effectively and appropriately by working to reduce encroachments and pursuing strategic acquisitions to fill any existing gaps or changing needs in the park system.

2.10. Require that location and design of parks, open space, and trails be an integral part of large-scale redevelopment projects.

Extend green space and trail links into redevelopment areas. Redevelopment projects should be compatible with and complementary to existing parks; consider relationships and connections to existing parks during the design phase of redevelopment projects. Ensure that development adjacent to parks does not in any way create a barrier to public access, use, or enjoyment of a park facility.

2.11. Involve all constituents (residents, park users, interest groups) in setting balanced priorities for planning, development, programming, maintenance, use of facilities, physical enhancement or development of facilities and/or open spaces, and other park-related matters.

Involving citizens in decisions regarding park planning, development, operations, and maintenance gives them a sense of ownership, responsibility, and control. Residents and volunteers play an important role in helping staff identify park and recreation needs specific to their neighborhood. Continuing programmatic and budgetary support for citizen participation must be provided to ensure that involvement is consistent, meaningful, and effective and has a clear impact on the quality of park and recreation services.

2.12. Utilize the parkland dedication ordinance to implement the Parks chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and the priorities of the Parks and Recreation Department.

2.13. Facilitate innovative communication technology, like wireless networks, in parks as partnership opportunities become available.



Parkland Dedication Ordinance

The ordinance requires that developers dedicate a portion of their land to parks or pay a fee in lieu of land for new developments that result in a net increase in parking spaces and/or a new plat. The fees collected can be used for existing parks or future parks, but there must be a direct relationship between where the development is located and where the money is spent: the money must be spent within the same Planning District as the development or within .5 mile of the development. The ordinance covers capital costs only – not maintenance – in order to ensure sufficient park and open space, but it is important not to develop more new parkland than can be maintained.

Consider installation of broadband along the Grand Rounds Parkway as a means to connect people, facilities, and the community.

2.14. Preserve historic buildings, memorials, and monuments found in parks throughout Saint Paul.

Provide opportunities to interpret the park system’s history and historic features through venues that are engaging and fun for park visitors.

2.15. Encourage the integration of public art in the development and renovation of parks and recreation facilities.

Public art enhances the public realm and enriches the experience of parks for visitors and residents. Ensure that any new public art is a sustainable asset for the Parks Department; recognize that public art has unique maintenance needs and upkeep requirements that must be considered upfront.

2.16. Complete and implement the National Great River Park Master Plan.

Continue to implement the park, trail, connection, and investment recommendations of the National Great River Park Plan, a completed chapter of the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework, which calls for Saint Paul to be more natural, more urban, and more connected and recognizes the Mississippi as a regional asset of national significance. Continue to build partnerships to enhance access, use, preservation, and the quality of the Mississippi River Corridor.

Parks and recreation reflect the community

2.17. Ensure staff are prepared to work with a diverse public through:

- a. Proactive recruitment and retention of people of color and bilingual people for staff and volunteer positions, and
- b. Training staff and volunteers to be sensitive to the city’s park users.

2.18. Anticipate and respond to the cultural diversity of the population.

- a. Offer a culturally rich selection of programs, and expand cross-cultural programming and interpretive opportunities.
- b. Tailor programs and services to the demographics and needs of the community.
- c. Seek involvement and feedback from primary cultural groups in key neighborhoods in order to involve immigrant, minority, and low-income groups that may not otherwise participate in mainstream stakeholder input processes.

2.19. Fully develop and implement a comprehensive fee-waiver program to aid individuals where fees are a barrier to parks and recreation participation.



Strategy 3: Promote a Vital Environment

The city's residents have access to tremendous environmental resources, including lakes, the river, trails, and natural areas. These should be protected not just because they are fragile and unique, but also because they contribute to the quality of life and sense of place for all of Saint Paul's residents. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation is the steward of these important resources, but the Department's responsibilities extend beyond simply protecting the city's natural resources. Over the term of this plan, the City's goal is to move beyond environmental remediation into having a net positive impact.

As climate change impacts the world around us, the importance of making sustainable environmental choices is increasingly clear. The Parks and Recreation Department should demonstrate leadership over the coming years, during the critical time window in which the course of climate change may be altered. Parks and Recreation should do more than protect the natural resources that are within the City's park system. The Department should set an example for the community by making good choices in City park facilities, operations, and maintenance; educating the public through programming, interpretation, and events; and working closely with partners who share a commitment to protecting environmental resources, both local and global. The kind of environmentally friendly policies that this plan recommends are not simply altruistic; sustainable choices make good business sense and will help stretch limited City funds over time.

In order to protect the environment, substantial financial resources are required to achieve significant results. It also requires a comprehensive approach – environmental issues should not be dealt with ad hoc, as they arise, or project by project. In an era of limited financial resources and an increasing need for costly environmental work, the City will have to aggressively pursue available funding sources to achieve maximum effectiveness.



Model environmental leadership

3.1. Model environmental leadership by:

- a. Using best practices in sustainable design of new buildings and retrofits, such as by meeting or exceeding LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards on all new park buildings and facilities;
- b. Promoting recycling efforts through education and making recycling services available as appropriate throughout the parks and recreation system and at events;
- c. Reducing the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides in parks and along parkways;
- d. Reducing the energy consumption of Parks' vehicle fleet by replacing traditional vehicles with alternative fuel/hybrid vehicles and encouraging increased use of transit and non-motorized transportation;
- e. Decreasing energy use in existing buildings through the use of energy audits and efficiency measures;
- f. Continuing partnerships to capture/reuse renewable energy resources like wood waste and tree trimmings;
- g. Using best practices in indoor and outdoor parks and facilities management and using green materials for concessions, operations, cleaning supplies, etc.; and
- h. Increasing water conservation and reducing water runoff from Parks' properties.





3.2. Utilize stormwater as a sustainable resource when parks are constructed or redesigned.

Improve water quality by increasing infiltration of on-site stormwater in parks. Strategies may include installing pervious pavements in parking lots; shoreline restoration and buffers; converting turf areas to native vegetation; allowing infiltration of water in swales, rain gardens, stormwater retention or detention ponds, or other methods. Consider collecting and treating off-site stormwater flow when the water can be a recreation amenity or when the water collection does not compromise recreation or park aesthetics. (See Strategy 2 of the Water Chapter.)

3.3. Publicize and promote Parks and Recreation’s environmentally friendly policies and successes.

Saint Paul will lead by example, but no one will know about the Department’s successes unless there is a deliberate effort to publicize and interest the public in what is being done.



Residents and visitors enjoy and understand the natural environment

3.4. Expand the environmental education program.

Develop programming to educate residents and park visitors on the importance of preserving and properly managing natural resources for environmental benefits, including health, water, and air quality. Provide programming that helps residents learn to reduce their individual negative impact on the natural environment. Include volunteer activities that promote service and learning; engage volunteers in the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the system’s natural resources.

3.5. Provide programming and recreation opportunities that encourage people to participate in ecologically sound outdoor activities.

Consider establishing a staff position devoted to organizing ecologically sound outdoor activities.

3.6. Provide interpretive signage and information on all environmental demonstration, applied conservation, and significant management projects.

Saint Paul’s park system contains many environmental education resources. Most notably, the presence of Como Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory offer a unique opportunity for people to see, sense, and learn about plant and animal relationships through informal and structured programming at an Association of Zoos and Aquariums accredited zoo and world-class botanical garden. Other areas containing significant environmental educational resources include Lilydale, Crosby Farm, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, and Indian Mounds parks.

Open space and natural resources are protected, preserved, and restored

3.7. Conduct a Natural Resource Inventory to prioritize protection and restoration of existing resources.

Develop environmental management plans for natural areas to identify compatible uses and integrate with other management frameworks, authorities, and city efforts. Anticipate and protect parks and natural areas from major disturbances, impacts of development, spread of disease, and invasive species.

3.8. Increase tree reforestation.

Increase the scale and quality of the urban forest by facilitating city-wide tree planting efforts and by updating and implementing the Street and Park Tree Master Plan.

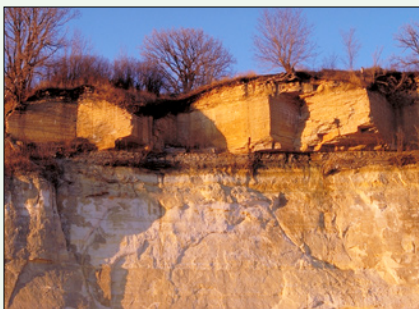
Forestry in Saint Paul

The Forestry Unit of Parks and Recreation is responsible for over 124,000 public property trees throughout the city. Forestry’s primary objective is to ensure the continued health of the city’s urban forest. As part of this responsibility, Forestry deals with boulevard and park tree planting, maintenance and removal, trimming, wood recycling, and education.



The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River Corridor Plan (<http://mn-stpaul.civicplus.com/DocumentView.asp?DID=2227>) is an existing, adopted chapter of the Comprehensive Plan that serves as the City's guiding policy on the river and explains the roles of the numerous entities with jurisdiction over the Mississippi River, ranging from local to federal units of government. The Mississippi River Corridor Plan was influenced by and is consistent with the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework (<http://www.riverfrontcorporation.com/framework.asp>), the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) Comprehensive Management Plan, and the State Critical Area program.



Pursue opportunities to partner with property owners and neighborhood groups to ensure proper care of boulevard trees, particularly those vulnerable to drought. Continue to pursue programs like "Trees Saint Paul," which receives donations that help pay for planting new trees in the city. Coordinate with Ramsey County's Plant-a-Tree program in order to avoid duplicating efforts and competing in a way that does not result in increased tree reforestation. Identify Saint Paul's tree-canopy coverage and evaluate the feasibility of maintaining coverage, such as with "no net loss" or one-for-one replacement policies for trees. (See policy 2.20 in the Water chapter.)

3.9. Maintain diversity within the parks system with native and some non-native plant species.

Conduct a study to determine the long-term costs and benefits of diversifying street trees. While block-by-block street-tree monocultures are aesthetically pleasing and easier to maintain, monocultures leave whole blocks vulnerable to a single invasive species or disease. With limited funding, however, the increased cost of maintaining a more diverse tree stock is a major factor in deciding whether block-by-block monocultures should be phased out.

3.10. Pursue opportunities and partnerships to acquire land specifically for open space and natural-resource protection, especially:

- Areas containing species included on the State or Federal list of endangered or threatened species;
- Areas representing significant landforms, native plant communities, or sensitive habitat;
- Areas that connect existing components of the open-space network; and
- Areas adjacent to existing parkland/open space.

3.11. Help to protect water quality throughout Saint Paul.

- Work with Ramsey County, the watershed management organizations and districts, and others to ensure the highest possible water quality in the city's lakes, streams, and the Mississippi River.
- Work with the National Park Service, State of Minnesota, Met Council, watershed management organizations and districts to preserve, protect, and enhance the Mississippi and its environs.
- Develop a plan for the promotion, protection, and desired levels of use for each of the water bodies in City parks, with input from citizens and other concerned entities. (See Strategy 2 of the Water chapter.)

3.12. Closely monitor invasive species and quickly respond to threats to parks.

Aggressively pursue funding opportunities to effectively deal with invasive species.

3.13. Develop comprehensive, consistent, citywide policies for managing deer, geese, and other animals that create livability issues for Saint Paul.

Coordinate resources with state, county, and regional agencies and identify regional priorities.

3.14. Review maintenance practices to protect and ensure the longevity of parks' natural resources.

Ensure day-to-day operations and construction do not damage natural resources within parklands. Provide education to staff to make sure best practices are understood and followed.



Financial resources and organizational capacity to ensure Parks' environmental leadership

3.15. Approach Parks' environmental responsibilities comprehensively rather than on a project-by-project basis.

When environmental issues are approached ad hoc, the solutions that emerge are not comprehensive in scope or as effective as they could be. Treating each project as an individual and original environmental issue results in duplicative work and costly processes that add substantially to project budgets. Instead, the Department should take a comprehensive, system-wide look at facility design, stormwater management, maintenance procedures, etc., before proposing and applying one-off solutions for individual projects. Because environmental leadership is a Parks and Recreation Department priority, the costs of implementing sustainable choices should be borne by the Department as a whole rather than divided among many small projects.

3.16. Pursue grant opportunities to fund projects and programs that address the causes and effects of climate change and to support environmental stewardship.

Work with private and public partners to coordinate the pursuit of appropriate grants.

3.17. Use partnerships with environmental advocacy groups as well as watershed management organizations and districts, county, state, and federal agencies (including the National Park Service) to increase capacity and leverage limited city resources available to address environmental concerns.

Emphasize regional coordination, placement, and leveraged-use agreements for high-quality recreational opportunities. Avoid duplications and redundancies.

3.18. Where Saint Paul Parks provides a valuable environmental service for other municipalities, agencies, or another City of Saint Paul department, leverage resources from these partners to help maintain Saint Paul's environmental resources.

3.19. Work with other City departments and appropriate staff in coordinating appropriate decisions and policies on water and energy issues.

Strategy 4: Respond Creatively to Change

Recognize the importance of approaching both water and energy issues comprehensively and with a multidisciplinary, citywide perspective.

The face of Saint Paul has changed significantly over the last decades due to a major influx of minorities and immigrant populations. These demographic shifts have given Saint Paul the kind of diversity that is typical of other cities, and are fostering major cultural changes that serve to enrich the community. Saint Paul's future citizens will be even more diverse, and Saint Paul's park system is challenged to meet the needs of this multifaceted, ever-changing population.

Changes are happening rapidly, and not just in the demographics of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation's clientele. The manner in which we are approaching our leisure time is changing for people in all stages of life. As many of us struggle to find a balance between work, family, and life, it seems like there is less time to fit in the all of activities we want to pursue. For kids and teens, the activities and programming offered by Parks and Recreation must compete for limited leisure time with a variety of technology, media, and entertainment options. By contrast, seniors and retirees have increased leisure time and are looking for rewarding ways to spend it. This competition and increased demand means that it is even more crucial that Saint Paul Parks and Recreation delivers the recreation programming and provides the parks facilities that people want and need.

While it is impossible to be certain about what people will want next, Parks can do a better job of evaluating how its current offerings are meeting Saint Paul's needs. The Department can then make adjustments based on what is learned— if the parks system and Parks and Recreation Department are flexible and adaptable enough to change courses when required. Achieving a nimble system is a major challenge, but it is a critical goal. One measure of success for Saint Paul Parks and Recreation in this time of change is the ability to anticipate and respond quickly and effectively to new circumstances. Parks will have to strive to be ahead of the trend curve whenever possible rather than simply delivering the same programs that have traditionally been offered. The struggle to look forward while continually evaluating where we are now will result in a more efficient system that makes the best use of our limited financial resources and does a better job of meeting Saint Paul's needs.

Changing community needs are anticipated and understood

4.1. Regularly gather customer and resident feedback on needs, satisfaction, and trends to improve athletic, educational, cultural, social, and contemplative experiences.

Repeat and update the survey performed as part of this Comprehensive Plan update at regular intervals in order to track and respond to changes in Saint Paul citizens' perceptions and priorities for parks. Adopt a data collection and management plan to guide the scope, types, and frequency of data collection. Make multiple listening posts available and ensure that data is centralized and reviewed for planning and action. Develop the capabilities of identified staff on the elements of the data management plan and on specific skills required to gather and analyze information.

4.2. Perform systematic and ongoing evaluation and assessment of programming, facilities, staffing needs, and public safety issues.

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation will use surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews to evaluate programs and events. Assessments should be centralized, integrated, and actively used for making decisions. Technology and new media should be used more extensively by the Department in order to facilitate effective and inexpensive information gathering and communication with the public.





Changing community and recreation needs met efficiently, effectively, and safely

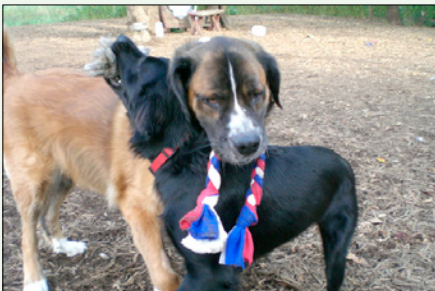
4.3. Meet changing recreation needs by:

- a. Adjusting the hours, quality, and flexibility of indoor recreation by consolidating and collaborating, providing access to higher quality concentrations of recreation and community activities in active lifestyle centers, and by increasing opportunities for after-school programs that meet the needs of children with working parents.
- b. Increasing the number of off-leash dog areas throughout the city. These facilities should vary in size and experience. Add new off-leash dog areas in locations that are ecologically appropriate and proximate to underserved residential areas.
- c. Providing good access to full-size, dedicated-use, turf sport fields (soccer, Lacrosse, rugby, etc.).
- d. Increasing access to community gardens by expanding the community garden program and leveraging partnerships.
- e. Adding senior fitness programs, especially in areas with high concentrations of seniors and by utilizing improved transit and walking trails.
- f. Offering recreation programs that are sensitive to cultural differences. This may result in more customized recreation programs and activities related to particular neighborhoods, cultures, or districts.
- g. Providing extreme sport opportunities, such as a skate park, BMX bike track, mountain bike trail, or others, where ecologically appropriate.



4.4. Provide activities and programming for alternative, emerging recreation trends, particularly those that meet the recreational needs of youth.

As interest in traditional sports like baseball, softball, golf, and football has leveled off or declined, non-traditional and self-directed sports are becoming more popular. Non-traditional recreation opportunities should be integrated in the parks system whenever possible. Opportunities for appropriate self-directed recreation in parks, on trails, and in recreation centers should also be available.



4.5. Create access to a broad range of aquatic experiences by:

- a. Increasing the number of unique aquatic centers that are a destination for the city; and
- b. Expanding access to public/private aquatics facilities and programs through collaboration, coordination, and communication.

4.6. Continue and expand the use of programs that promote flexible use of staff resources.

The use of "Go Teams" to meet staffing needs at recreation centers is an example of such as program. The Go Team is a way for Parks to deploy staff to recreation centers as needed for specialized leadership in places where there are more participants than staff can handle or to engage groups that are present but not participating. The Go Team supplements the staff that is permanently stationed at a recreation center and provides more flexible solutions to staffing issues.



4.7. Find ways to adapt winter recreation programming and facilities to respond creatively to climate change.

Winter recreation options that used to be provided by consistently cold, snowy Minnesota winters are a major challenge for the Parks Department as global warming changes expectations for winter weather. In the coming years, it may be increasingly necessary to make snow and provide refrigerated ice rinks in order to ensure that Saint Paul residents can continue to sled, ski, and skate in Saint Paul parks and recreation facilities.

4.8. Offer a full range of education programming at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory by following the strategies identified in Como’s education plan.

Expand program offerings as new facilities are opened, and expand free value-added program offerings.

4.9. Prioritize programming and area use in ways that maximize meeting the needs of multiple user groups.

Limited resources and increased demands frame the challenge facing Saint Paul. In order to meet the demands of Saint Paul’s population within a very limited budget, Parks and Recreation has to make some hard decisions and find creative ways to stretch funds and staff as much as possible without sacrificing quality services. The challenge to the Department is to find new ways to deliver services that satisfy and gratify residents without breaking the budget.

The Parks and Recreation Department can begin to address this challenge by setting clear priorities—but it must also maintain flexibility to respond to unforeseen oppor-





Strategy 5: Innovate with Every Decision

tunities and needs. The Department must tap the potential of its existing resources and be willing to explore new and alternative ways of doing things. The ability to continue to deliver high quality park and recreation services depends on the ability to use city resources in an efficient, effective, and innovative manner. Moving beyond city resources, this plan calls for increased utilization of volunteers, expanded use of partnerships, and a more coordinated pursuit of supplemental resources.

Sustainability—environmental, social, and financial—is a primary goal of this plan, and it cannot be achieved without a serious evaluation of the system as a whole in order to make better individual decisions. If we are not innovative and do not make wise choices about what the Parks Department will devote resources to and what it will not, the parks system will not be sustainable. The decisions of the Department must be based on meaningful community input, solid data, and an understanding of the whole system rather than the political will of the moment or the loudest voice in a neighborhood shouting match.

Enhanced sustainability

5.1. Design and implement a system-wide sustainability evaluation process to evaluate all new decisions and existing practices on the basis of contributions to fiscal, environmental, and social well being.

Evaluate all existing department operations and procedures and recommend changes in order to move the department toward a more sustainable, innovative operation.

5.2. Create a materials research report to identify and rate the sustainability of products that can be used in facility design and construction, and in operations and maintenance.

The purpose of this research report is for Parks staff to have the information they need to make innovative and sustainable decisions on materials used in design, construction, maintenance, and operations.

5.3. Make park and recreation facility and improvement decisions based on a system-wide evaluation of citizen needs and available resources.

- a. Create a comprehensive asset management program that determines infrastructure improvement priorities.
- b. Select priority facility improvements for bond funding based on the asset management program.
- c. Prepare a master plan and capital improvement plan for each park and all trails to help guide facility improvements and to identify long-term improvement funding needs.



Recreation Services Reorganization

Recreation Services continues a transition that was initiated in 2007, from a service delivery system that was strictly facility based, to a system that uses facilities as a resource. Programming teams connected to neighborhoods work to plan programs and services that citizens want and need. On-site staff assigned to recreation facilities supports the programming teams by implementing planned activities, providing day-to-day leadership in neighborhoods, and connecting to participants and affiliated groups.

Figure C: Quality of Recreation Centers

5.4. Renovate and upgrade low- and moderate-quality existing facilities that fall outside the service areas of high-quality facilities of the same type. (Fig. C and D)

5.5. Reprogram low- and moderate-quality existing facilities that fall inside the service areas of high-quality facilities of the same type. (Fig. C and D)

5.6. Choose refurbishment of existing facilities over new construction whenever feasible.

Consider adopting a "Fix it First" policy that prioritizes invest-

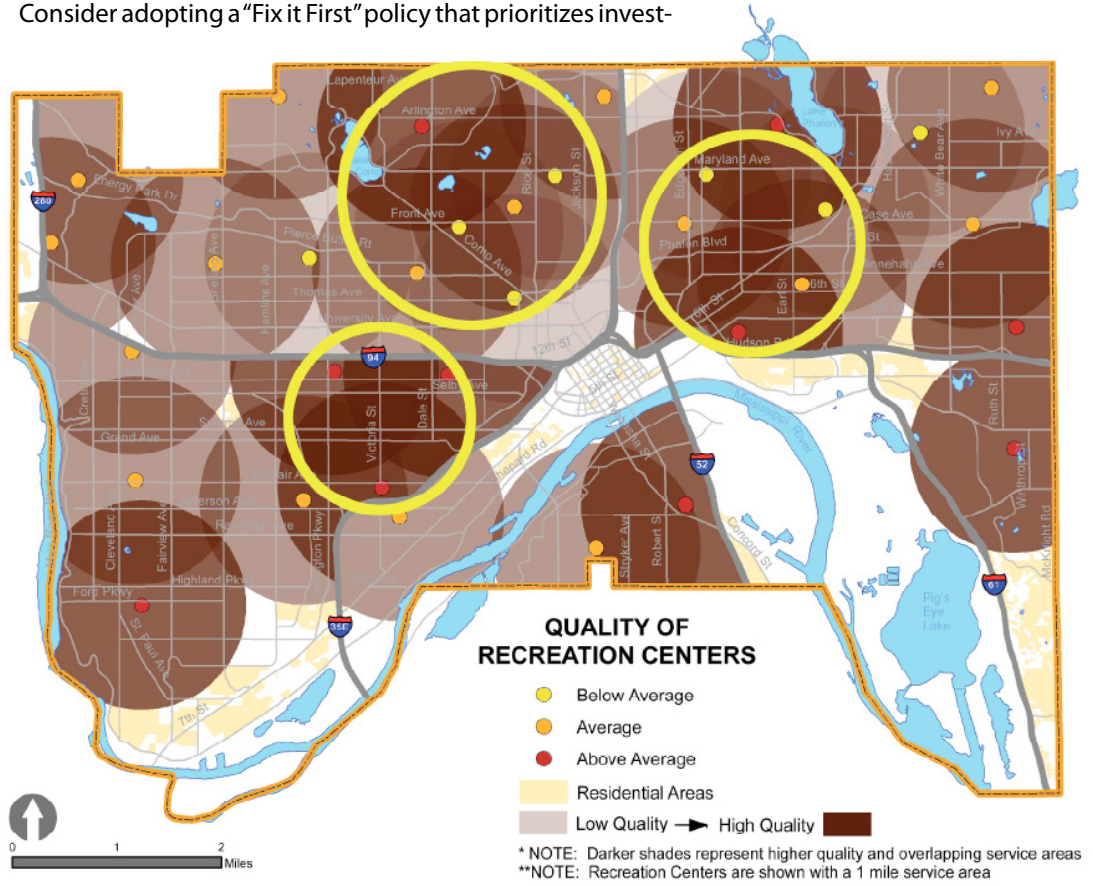
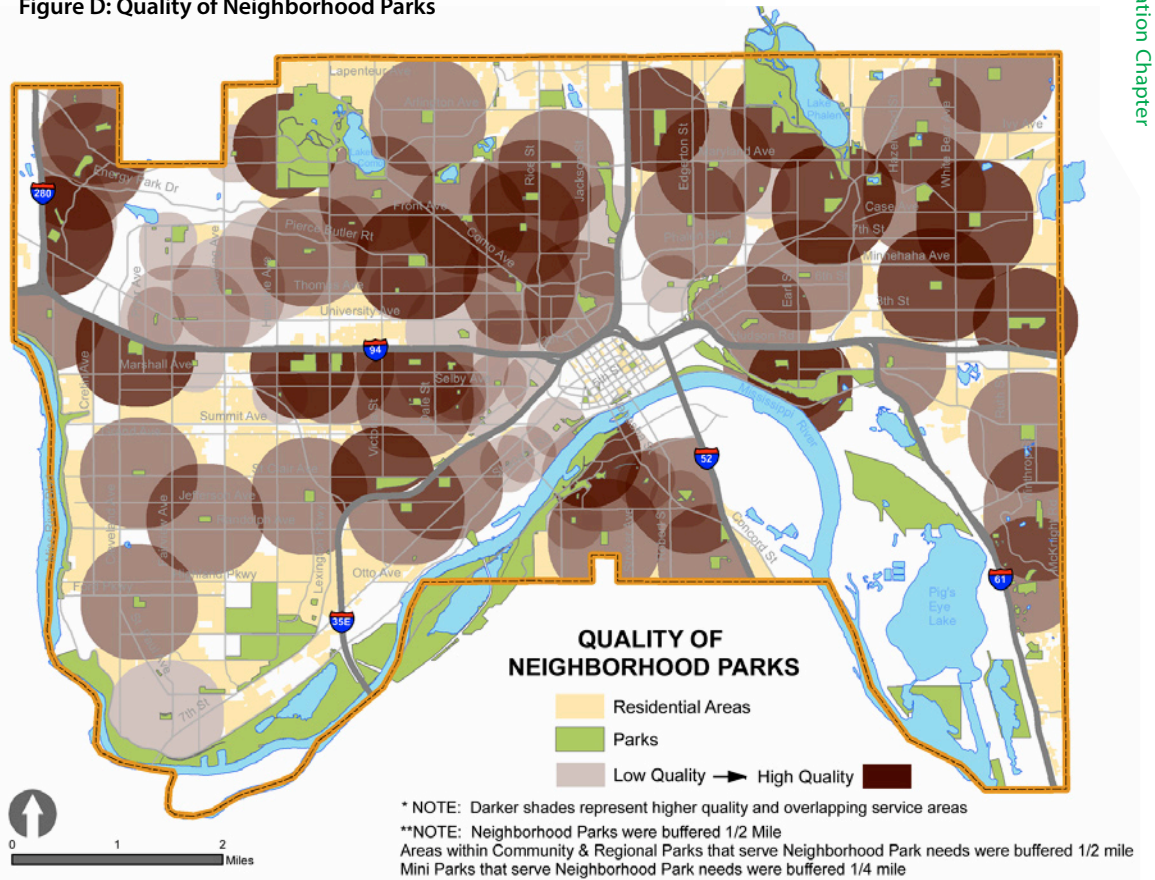


Figure D: Quality of Neighborhood Parks





ment in existing facilities, parks, and other infrastructure over expanding the system through new construction, acquisition, etc. Over the lifetime of this plan, there may be specific amenity needs that cannot be met by refurbishing existing facilities; the intention of this policy is not to prohibit such strategic investments, but rather to maximize the service life of system assets.

5.7. Improve outdoor sports experiences by enhancing the quality of athletic fields, such as through the use of artificial turf, engineered soils, lighting, irrigation, and other methods.

5.8. Establish and publicize replacement timelines.

Develop and publish a replacement timeline for each new facility at the time of proposal. Develop facility replacement renewal targets for existing facilities as part of the asset management program.

5.9. Think about the activity first, and then consider all possible facility and delivery options.

Continue to foster effective partnerships with private and other public organizations to offer seamless and efficient delivery of park and recreation services, programs, and facilities. This may mean using a school or other non-city facility for public recreation or using a City facility for private recreation, school, or other civic use.

5.10. Seek to develop shared-use facilities as a first option when contemplating new or replacement indoor-recreation facilities.

These could include combinations of schools, libraries, recreation, entertainment, shopping, services, and other complementary uses. Construction and operation of shared-use facilities should assure the long-term access, identity, use, and successful operation of the recreation components and compatibility with other uses.



Enhanced volunteer program

5.11. Develop and support a comprehensive, coordinated volunteer plan and program for the Parks department.

Develop a standardized system for recruiting, placing, retaining, managing, evaluating, and rewarding volunteers. Use best practices in managing volunteers, including procedures like screening volunteers working with vulnerable populations.

5.12. Explore the creation of one or more volunteer coordinator positions when adequate resources are available.

Build leadership and staff capacity to integrate and benefit from volunteer programs.

5.13. Capitalize on episodic and onetime volunteer activities to develop ongoing relationships with participants.

Encourage and manage large-scale volunteer projects that accommodate the desire of local businesses and corporations to volunteer in the community. Groups and individuals who participate in onetime and episodic volunteer activities should be alerted to further volunteer activities.

5.14. Partner with existing volunteer organizations with an interest in parks, environmental issues, and recreation programming.

5.15. Track volunteer hours to use as matches for applicable grants.





Public and private partnerships to provide and expand Parks offerings

5.16. Ensure that all partnerships provide substantial benefits to the public.

All partnerships and other enterprises on parkland should enhance the parks system and meet the high standards of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation.

5.17. Pursue partnerships to host special events, develop services and joint promotional packages, and finance maintenance and capital costs of parks and recreation facilities.

5.18. Engage in sustainable partnerships with local businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals that build on the value of the system without jeopardizing aesthetics or over-commercializing the public realm.

5.19. Encourage private landowners and developers to create and maintain publicly accessible open spaces or green infrastructure.

While there is a clear need for public park space, this policy is intended to increase the amount and distribution of green space across the city to provide a public benefit without adding significantly to Parks' landholdings and maintenance responsibilities. It is particularly important along major redevelopment corridors with little green space, where much development will occur over the lifetime of this plan.



Increased utilization of supplemental resources

5.20. Establish a foundation to provide additional financial and community support for parks and recreation.

Create a non-profit foundation to act as a promotion and fundraising arm for Parks and recreation. The partnership at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory with the Como Zoo and Conservatory Society has been a successful model that has raised significant funds and helped maintain free access. Explore creating additional conservancies and special endowments to help fund general parks functions as well as specific facilities, programs, and activities. Build leadership capacity to manage an increasingly diverse set of funding sources and partners.



5.21. Pursue opportunities consistent with Department priorities to secure federal, state, and private resources (like grants, gifts, and partnerships) when and where possible to:

- a. Ensure accessible programs and facilities;
- b. Build, operate, and maintain facilities;
- c. Expand current services and provide new services; and
- d. Enhance environmental protection, restoration, and remediation.

5.22. Pursue grants that further the work of the Parks and Recreation Department effectively and energetically through hiring grant writers/coordinators and/or supporting citywide grant coordination.

5.23. Review access and user fees to determine where increases are market appropriate and where raising or imposing fees would not significantly impact access.

Seek creative fee structures. Develop partnerships and reciprocity agreements with other cities to increase revenues. Increase enforcement of fee policies. Create incentives for compliance, like in Minneapolis where parking violators are given a choice of paying their parking ticket or buying a Minneapolis Parks Patron parking pass. Explore creating a patron fee system for Saint Paul parks and recreation facilities, where visitors can pay once and access all of the aquatic centers, etc.

Strategy 6: Connect the Entire City

Given the challenge of delivering great services on a limited budget, it is critical that Saint Paul Parks and Recreation's assets and programs be seen and used as a complete system rather than as a collection of elements. The system cannot work unless all of its component parts are coherently connected. Connecting the system is a way to extend the reach of the parks and recreation system without adding a single park or recreation center—if parks and recreation facilities are easily accessible and well networked with one another, the effective coverage of Parks and Recreation is improved.

Accessible and connected parks are a social equity issue—people in all of Saint Paul's neighborhoods should have equal access to parks and recreation facilities, even if they are not equally close to them. The Division must seek out opportunities to make connections and fill gaps in our park and open space system to ensure park facilities are readily accessible throughout the system. Enhanced and complete connections are a crucial part of creating a walkable, bikable city that makes it easier for people to develop active lifestyles.

Park and open space connections provide the means for moving between parks, moving within parks, and getting to parks in a safe, convenient, and enjoyable manner. While connections usually take the form of trails, linear parks, or parkways, sidewalks and streets providing access to parks through neighborhoods are also important. Transit provides yet another option for getting people to parks and recreation facilities from locations across the city. As such, it is essential to coordinate and integrate our trails and parkways with the City's network of sidewalks and streets and with transit routes to provide continuous, convenient, and safe access to, between, and within parks.

Equitable access to parks and programs

6.1. Connect parks to new transportation investments, especially the Central Corridor LRT line.

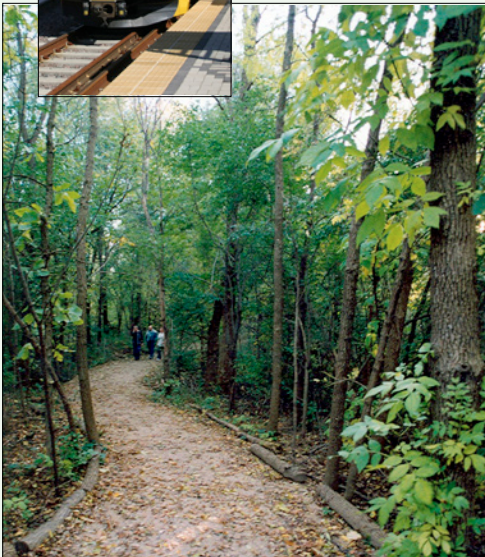
Locate a new high-quality park and recreation space/facility near the Central Corridor LRT line. This facility can capitalize on enhanced mobility in this area, and can fulfill a service need and/or replace multiple underperforming facilities. Work to create convenient connections to major parks and recreation facilities near LRT stops, e.g. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory and Jimmy Lee Recreation Center/Oxford Pool from the Lexington Station, Harriet and Raspberry Islands from Union Depot, etc.

6.2. Develop a comprehensive transportation management plan for Como Regional Park.

1.7 million people go through Como Regional Park a year; on a nice weekend day, about 10,000 people visit. Admission is free. There are 1,100 parking spots available. On Sundays and holidays, bus service is infrequent and there is no bus shelter within the park. Como Regional Park needs to find a sustainable way to deal with its transportation challenges without creating a disincentive for people to visit the park. A planned Central Corridor LRT stop at Lexington Parkway provides a new transportation opportunity.

6.3. Review parking across the Parks system and explore charging for parking at parks and recreation facilities.

Some parts of the system are especially problematic. Harriet Island Regional Park, host to many special events that draw huge crowds, presents a major challenge and is a priority for parking solutions.





Mobile Recreation

Saint Paul's mobile recreation program specializes in bringing recreation opportunities to underserved communities by providing recreation options at recreation facilities, passive parks, public housing sites, homeless shelters, and citywide special events.

As mobile climbing walls, jump castles, and other athletic equipment are brought to the community in non-traditional settings, parks can provide more recreation services where and when they are needed because of the flexibility of mobile recreation as well as promote other parks and recreation opportunities.



6.4. Enhance transit access to regional parks, community parks, and active lifestyle centers.

- Work to influence Metro Transit route decisions to bring transit closer to key park and recreation destinations.
- Establish and expand other options such as local circulators, ride sharing, and park and rides.
- Where MetroTransit service is inadequate, find permanent funding sources for circulators to provide access to valuable programming and facilities.
- Explore using recreation centers as potential transit partners that could sell bus passes to transit riders, provide route information, and educate parks users about transit use.

6.5. Expand the use of mobile recreation to fill park or recreation service gaps, enhance events, and to provide unique recreation to neighborhood and community parks.

6.6. Develop and encourage pedestrian and bicycle access to parks and recreation facilities as well as improved bus services to such facilities.

Provide better information on non-vehicular access to parks and recreation facilities on the Parks Web site.

Better connections for Saint Paul residents and the region

6.7. Build the Grand Rounds Parkway from a loop route to a complete parkway.

Add off-street trails, on-street bike lanes, and "green" the Grand Rounds to create a scenic recreational parkway experience, enhance property values, and build tourism (Fig. E). Achieve parkway identity through the use of cohesive paving, lighting, landscaping, signage, and street furnishings.

6.8. Connect the Saint Paul and Minneapolis Grand Rounds parkways together.

Since the 1880s, a true Twin Cities Grand Rounds parkway system has been envisioned. The two parkway systems would create the finest and largest urban scenic byway system in the United States.

6.9. Expand awareness of recreation opportunities through use of park and trail system maps, kiosks, developing and implementing a signage and way-finding master plan, web tools, etc.

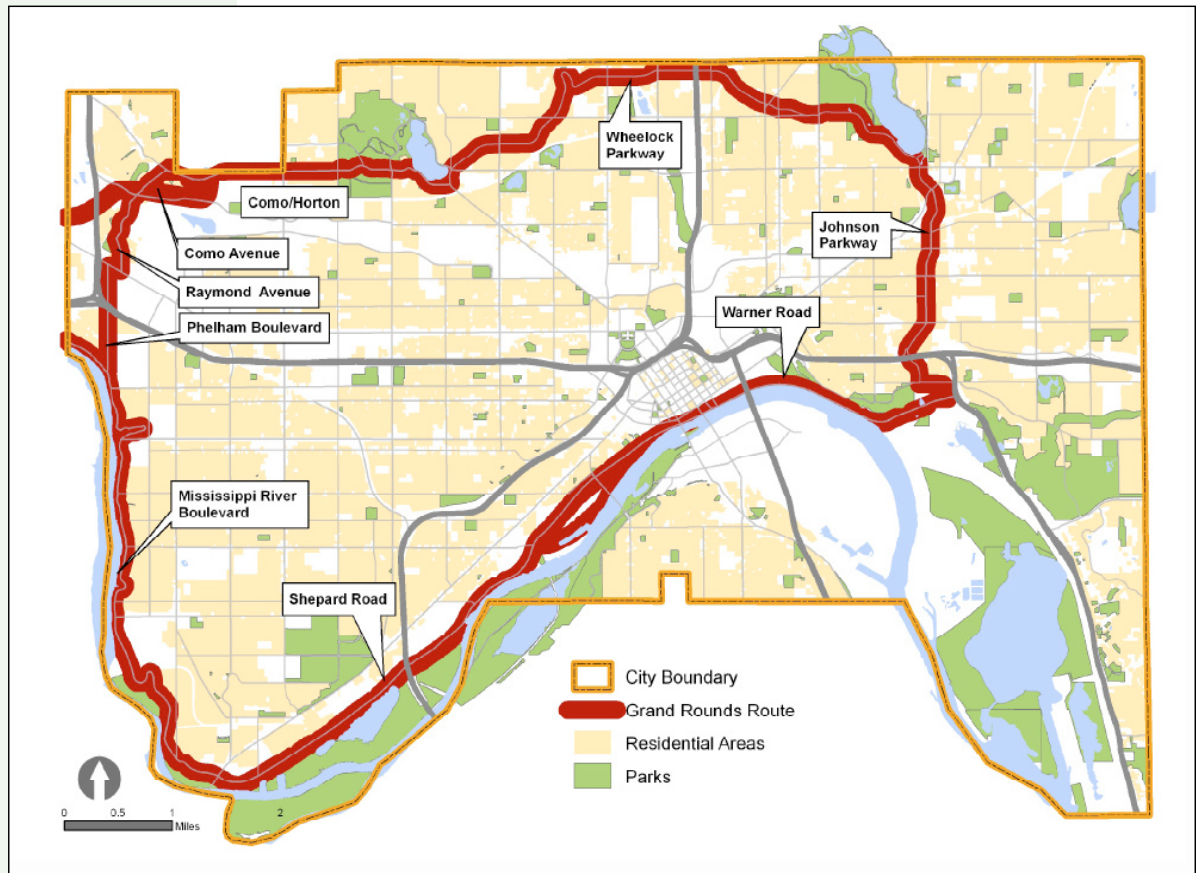
6.10. Implement a parkway study to define parkway character, features, and amenities; clarify parkway designations; and assign improvement responsibilities and resources.

Parkway designations vary widely, and design, maintenance, and use are unclear in many locations. Continue to enhance the City's parkway system through appropriate design and landscaping, limitations on uses within and adjacent to parkways to ensure compatibility and improve aesthetic character, limitations on traffic speed, provision of separate paths for pedestrians and bicyclists whenever possible, and provision of on-street bike lanes where feasible.

6.11. Work to close gaps in the trail system to ensure seamless connections for bicycles and pedestrians across the city of all ages and abilities.

There are over 100 miles of parks trails in the city, but there are significant gaps in the system that should be closed in order to truly connect the city. Priority trail connections are shown in Figure F. A top priority for off-street facilities in the next ten years will be the development of the Midtown Greenway extension into Saint Paul.

Figure E: Grand Rounds



Standards for Off-Road Bike Paths

Off-road bike paths should be paved for a smooth ride. The preferred treatment for new trails separates cyclists from pedestrians so as to avoid conflicts and accidents. Two-way bike paths should be 12 feet wide, striped down the middle, and signed for two-way use; a 10-foot minimum width may be acceptable where there are low bicycle volumes. Because one-way paths will often be used as two-way facilities, care should be used in selecting this type of facility; if necessary they should be 5 to 6 feet wide and designed to ensure one-way operation.

6.12. Work toward better pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, recreation centers, schools, major facilities, and special events.

Collaborate with partners in Public Works, Saint Paul Public Schools, Libraries, etc., to develop safe routes to schools, recreation centers, parks, and other major community facilities and events.

6.13. Build new off-road trails and upgrade existing off-road trails to make cycling and walking more convenient, safe, and pleasant and add facilities and amenities to improve the experience of using Saint Paul’s trails.

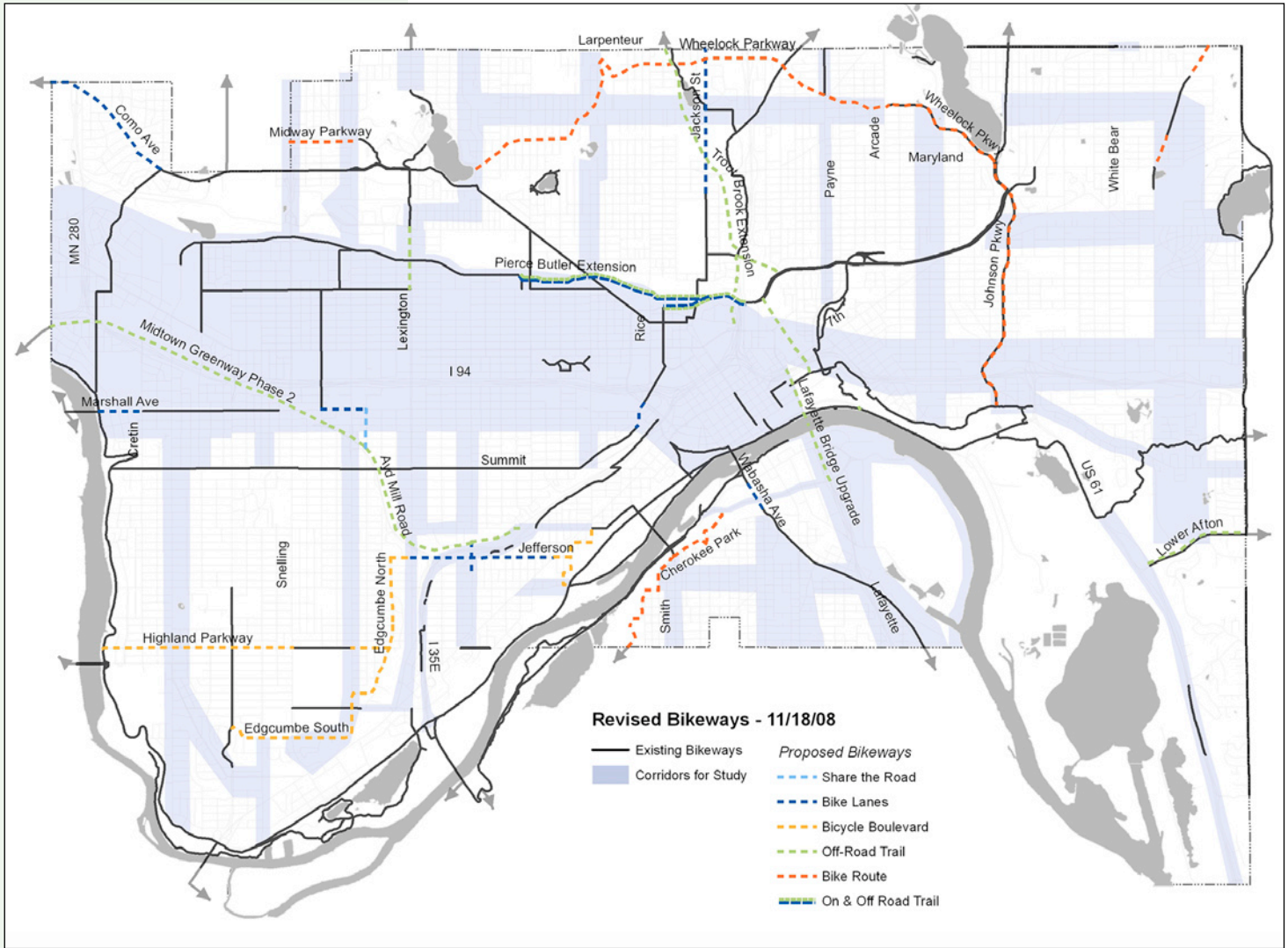
Older facilities should be upgraded with appropriate lighting and other security enhancements and design amenities. “Adopt-a-Trail” programs, and development of actively used adjacent spaces along trails should be highly encouraged, as increased activity along trail corridors promotes safety. Promoting safety through activity is of particular concern along dedicated trails that are isolated from public view.

Good coordination between the Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks and Recreation will be required to integrate Saint Paul’s system of off-road bicycle trails and facilities with on-street bicycle facilities.

6.14. Provide adequate funding to maintain existing trails so that they are convenient, safe, and pleasant.

Maintenance funding is essential for trail system sustainability and to achieve the health and transit benefits envisioned by this plan, but it is a huge challenge. Parks trails are not just for recreation; they are used as part of our transportation network. They must be well maintained to keep them safe, functional, and a viable transportation option.

Figure F: Priority Trail



A dedicated budget for trail maintenance will be needed to maintain a high level of service, which includes regular clearance of debris and snow removal in the winter. Volunteer trail maintenance groups such as “Friends of the Trails” or “Adopt a Trail” organizations should be encouraged and supported by the Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments.

Funds for trail maintenance should be secured as creatively as possible, utilizing grant monies and other public purpose funds. In addition, trail maintenance funds should be included in the capital improvement budgeting process whenever possible.

6.15. Enhance trails with improved, consistent signage.

Signage on trails should point users to local destinations of interest, including parks and recreation facilities. Trails with names should have signs with their names at all entrances. Trail exits should indicate the street or destination to which the trail is exiting. Primary trails should have mile markers to let trail users know how far they have traveled. Signs should also alert users to the distance to key destinations, especially parks and recreation facilities.

Implementation

This section includes implementation steps for achieving the vision of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

While all of the policies in this plan can be seen as a priority for Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, the following action steps will help determine where Parks Division will spend its money and concentrate its efforts over the life of this plan.

1. Continue to prepare yearly strategic action plans.

The intent of the strategic action plan is to provide a realistic work plan that focuses the work of the Parks and Recreation Division over a five-year period. The strategic action plan should be updated annually, presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and approval, and transmitted to the City Council.

2. Use the *Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Vision Plan* as a blueprint for making decisions and prioritizing actions.

The Parks and Recreation Vision Plan describes the future of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. It establishes goals, priority initiatives, actions and tools to help the city, residents, and partner organizations reach that healthier future. It is based on the Parks and Recreation chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and prioritizes actions to implement the Comprehensive Plan's objectives and policies. The Vision Plan is designed to be an illustrative guide to the vision for Parks and Recreation, as well as a "how to" manual for achieving that vision.

To that end, the Vision Plan includes initiatives for each of the six Comprehensive Plan strategies, and includes tools to help guide decision making, investment, and actions. The Vision Plan does not include all possible department actions or Comprehensive Plan policies. Rather, it focuses on the priority initiatives needed to achieve the vision, and it is designed to communicate that vision and those initiatives to a broad audience.

3. Continue surveys and data management efforts.

Many of the policies included in this plan call for increasing data-collection efforts and integrating data into the processes and decisions that guide Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. Accurate and timely information will help the Parks Division prioritize investments, evaluate programming, gauge support, and anticipate future needs. In order to continue to make good decisions that benefit parks and recreation users and Saint Paul citizens, the Division will need to gather information regularly and use the data to inform appropriate choices.

4. Complete development and redevelopment projects that enhance the park system.

There are many projects and plans that the Parks and Recreation Division will undertake in the next twenty years. Appendix A includes a list of current plans and projects that are expected to be implemented in the near term, and is an adopted portion of the Comprehensive Plan. As new circumstances arise, Appendix A can be updated to reflect an accurate list of plans and projects that can be completed to continue to enhance the park system.

Appendix A: Projects and Plans

This appendix consists of a list of current plans and projects that are expected to be implemented in the near term. As new circumstances arise, Appendix A can be updated to reflect an accurate list of plans and projects that can be completed to continue to enhance the park system.

Note: The projects and plans below are not listed in order of priority. Some plans and projects are listed more than once. For more information on any of these projects and plans, please contact Brad Meyer at 651-266-6377 or brad.meyer@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Redevelopment Projects:

1. Cherokee Trails
2. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
 - a. Japanese Gardens Experience
 - b. Gorilla habitat
 - c. Visitor center forecourt gardens
 - d. Pinniped habitat
3. Como Regional Park
 - a. Historic monument restoration
 - b. McMurray softball fields improvements
4. Deferred maintenance at Como, Highland 9, and Phalen golf courses
5. Duluth and Case Recreation Center
6. Grand Rounds
7. Harriet Island infrastructure and work replacement for the public dock
8. Highland national club house and historic pool building
9. Highland pool service building
10. Lilydale Regional Park
11. Maintenance buildings
 - a. 85 Water St.
 - b. Phalen/East Side
12. Midway Stadium renovation
13. Phalen Regional Park
 - a. Update Phalen Park Master Plan
 - b. Phalen Regional Park upgrades

New Development Projects:

14. Bluff Preserve/Highwood Hills trail system
15. Bruce Vento
 - a. Bridge to river
 - b. Interpretive center – acquisition
16. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
 - a. Off-site parking and shuttle
17. Como Regional Park
 - a. Aquatics facility
 - b. Entrance point and roadways
 - c. Woodland Classroom
18. Crosby parking lot
19. Destination garden
20. Fitzgerald Park
21. Harriet Island/S. Saint Paul trail
22. Henry Park Plan

23. Implement Aquatics Plan
 - a. Como aquatics facility
 - b. Highland aquatics center Phase 2
24. Joint facilities with Saint Paul Public Libraries
 - a. Payne/Maryland—Arlington Recreation Center and Arlington Hills Library
 - b. Conway Recreation Center and Sun Ray Library
 - c. Hillcrest Recreation Center and Highland Park Library
25. Off-leash dog areas
26. Signage system
27. Support new Parks Conservancy
28. Trillium/Trout Brook
29. Upper Landing Head House development and management
30. Xcel site/soccer fields

Plans and Studies

Implement:

31. Aquatics Plan
32. *Central Corridor Development Strategy* and Station Area Plans (6.1)
33. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory education Plan (4.7)
34. *Fitzgerald Park Precinct Plan*
35. *Street and Park Tree Master Plan* (3.8)
36. *Trout Brook-Lower Phalen Creek Small Area Plan*

New:

37. Como Regional Park transportation management plan (6.2)
38. Henry Park Plan
39. Materials research report (5.2)
40. National Great River Park Master Plan (2.14)
41. Natural resources inventory (3.7)
42. Parkway study (6.10)
43. Phalen Park Master Plan
44. System-wide review of parking
45. Volunteer plan (5.11)
46. Midway Stadium neighborhood planning

Appendix B: Regional Parks and Trails

This Appendix will be inserted prior to Metropolitan Council review

Credits

Chris Coleman, **Mayor**

City Council

Jay Benanav (to December 2007)

Dan Bostrom

Melvin Carter

Pat Harris

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