

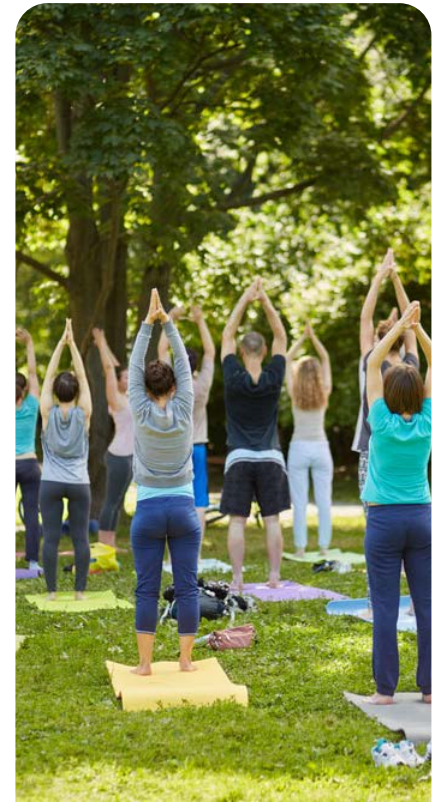
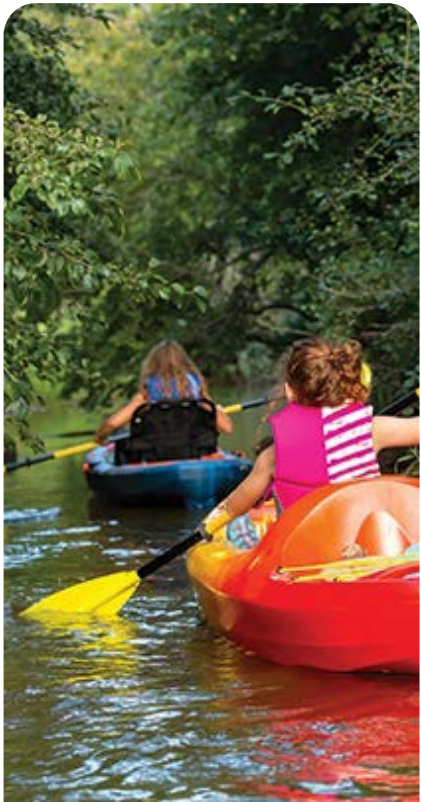
CITY OF
MINNETONKA
PARKS,
OPEN SPACE
AND TRAIL
(POST)
SYSTEM
PLAN



CITY OF
MINNETONKA

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POST System Plan



PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL (POST) SYSTEM PLAN

CITY OF MINNETONKA

2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**THANK YOU TO THE CITY OF MINNETONKA COMMUNITY WHO TOOK
THE TIME TO PROVIDE VALUABLE INPUT ON THIS PLAN!**

POST System Plan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks, open spaces and trails are important and cherished public amenities in the City of Minnetonka. Since 1959, when the City of Minnetonka received plans for its first park, Gro Tonka, parks have contributed to the quality of life that residents, employees and visitors enjoy. With approximately 1,300 acres of parkland,

including a significant amount of natural open space and over 100 miles of trails, the city's park system is fundamental to community building, environmental and economic sustainability, health and well-being and creating stronger connections to community destinations.

WHAT IS IT?

- 1 This Parks, Open Space and Trail (POST) System Plan provides a 15 to 20 year road map for planning and implementing park improvements.
- 2 The POST System Plan offers guiding principles, recommendations, priorities and tools to ensure the Minnetonka park system is relevant and functional into the future.
- 3 The POST System Plan aligns future investments with community needs to establish clear and realistic goals, initiatives and implementation strategies for new and improved park facilities and programs.
- 4 The POST System Plan complements goals outlined in the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) to preserve, protect and restore open space and significant natural resources in Minnetonka, and the Trail Improvement Plan (TIP) to provide opportunities for people of all abilities and access to parks and open spaces.
- 5 Recommendations in the POST System Plan are based on community input as well as analyses of demographic changes, future trends and Minnetonka's current park system.
- 6 The POST System Plan provides a framework to guide long and short-term decision making and investments for parks, open spaces and trails at a system-wide level. Specific recommendations such as improvements for individual parks will require additional detailed design.

GUIDED BY: DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST SYSTEM PLAN WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING MISSION AND PRINCIPLES:

As the City of Minnetonka changes over the next two decades, the quality of its parks, natural areas, trails and programs must evolve. New opportunities will be revealed, along with new challenges. Sustaining a welcoming, comprehensive and balanced park system throughout this evolution will require a vision founded with a shared community mission statement and set of guiding principles.

The mission and guiding principles were developed based on significant community engagement efforts with the general public, key stakeholders, city leadership and others. These efforts were combined with the existing conditions analysis and the needs assessment to coalesce into a comprehensive vision for the future of Minnetonka open spaces.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan is to be leaders in providing a welcoming, comprehensive and balanced system of high quality parks, natural areas, trails and programs for all to enjoy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

Preserve, protect and restore natural resources by supporting environmental stewardship and conservation, while building long-term sustainability of the park system.



PROVIDE CONNECTIONS TO PARKS, TRAILS AND PROGRAMS

Improve accessibility to park facilities and programs by reducing physical and financial barriers.



PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Support mental and physical health and well-being by providing a diversity of quality facilities and parks, open spaces, and trails to support life-long activity and meet the social needs of the community.



PROMOTE EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Prioritize equity throughout the parks, open space and trail system to support all users, celebrate diversity and embrace inclusiveness.



SUPPORT EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Provide a variety of innovative, new or improved active and passive park amenities and programs that are accessible to all park users.

PLANNING PROCESS

This 12-month planning effort began in February 2021, and represents input gathered from the community, stakeholders, city staff, and city officials. Valuable community input and feedback received through online surveys, listening sessions, community pop-ups, park and open space tours, public meetings and workshops guided the development of this plan. The plan also incorporates the expertise of the consultant team, an evaluation of existing conditions by city staff and the consultant team, current and future trends and key takeaways from the Needs Assessment. The planning process was guided by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of city staff and park board members. The TAC met on a regular basis and provided review and guidance to the consultant team throughout the planning process. The Minnetonka City Council and Park Board also provided guidance and input at key stages in the plan's development.

An important goal of the planning process was to ensure recommendations would reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The effort included community outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC and people with disabilities to ensure the park, open space and trail system will reflect the needs and desires of the whole community.

TRENDS

To meet the demands of a growing and changing population, the city staff and decision makers need to consider current local and national trends and potential implications to future parks, open space and trail system planning. Planning for change and building flexibility into the current park system will position Minnetonka to better adapt to current trends and future demands. The trends listed are in no particular order.

TRENDS OVERVIEW

1. Increasing Demand for Informal Recreation

Demand for informal recreation such as running, hiking, bicycling and fitness programs are increasing in popularity.

2. Resiliency to Climate Change

Conservation and ecological restoration may become as important as recreation. New parks will be designed with resiliency in mind.

3. Changing Demographics

The region will grow, age and become more racially and ethnically diverse.

4. Desire to be More Connected to the Land

There is an increasing desire to unplug and get back to the land and each other. This will lead to changes in public space and community programming. There will be greater emphasis on more natural areas and balancing environment with recreational needs.

5. Changes Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Parks, open spaces and trails became high priority destinations as people sought out places for distanced physical activity.

6. Parks, Open Space, and Trails Support Economic Development

Parks and recreation not only improve the quality of life, but they benefit the local economic development of a region.

7. Health and Well-Being

The movement towards health and well-being has been magnified by COVID=19 but will continue well beyond the pandemic with a greater focus on meeting the physical and mental health needs of communities.

8. Specialized Facilities and Non-Traditional Sports

Dog parks are the fastest growing type of park. Pickleball is popular, especially with ages 55 and older. Lacrosse is the fastest grown team sport.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Minnetonka in Context

The City of Minnetonka is in Hennepin County, located eight miles west of Minneapolis. It encompasses 17,901 acres (28.00 square miles) of land and borders the eastern tip of Lake Minnetonka, one of the largest lakes in Minnesota. The city is bisected by interstate highways 394 and 494 which link to Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Parks, Open Spaces and Trails Overview

The parks, open spaces and trails that connect them are what give Minnetonka its unique character. More than 20 percent of the city's land area are wetlands and lakes, with more than 268 acres of maintained parkland. Minnetonka has over 50 parks; over 100 miles of trails; and over 1,000 acres of natural public open spaces. With its parks, open space, and trail system, Minnetonka offers residents, visitors, and employees numerous active and passive recreation opportunities.

Demographics

Minnetonka's population has increased over the past 50 years, growing from 35,776 in 1970 to 53,776 in 2020. This growth is expected to continue, with 61,500 residents projected for the year 2040. One of the biggest demographic shifts affecting Minnetonka is that it is aging at a notable pace. It is predicted that the 60-74-year-old population will increase by 40 percent in the next 10 years. Demographic changes will alter the labor force and impact preferences for park needs, transportation and housing.

The majority of Minnetonka's population identified as white (82.54 percent); however, it is predicted that 92 percent of Minnetonka's population growth will be from people of color. Demographic shifts in the coming decades will result in a changing metropolitan area. The region will grow, age and become more racially and ethnically diverse. Recent data indicates these changes are well underway, especially when it comes to diversity in the region.

SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

- More than 20 percent of city's land area is city-owned parks, preserves, and open space, with more than 268 acres of maintained parkland and over 1,000 acres of natural public open space.
- The city has over 50 parks consisting of mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, preservers, and special use facilities.
- Over 100 miles of trails

FACILITIES

 29 playground areas	 8 canoe landings
 15 picnic shelters	 5 fishing locations
 36 picnic areas	 10 outdoor hockey rinks
 7 shelter buildings	 8 general ice skating rinks
 2 swimming beaches	 1 nordic skiing area (Three Rivers Park District)
 27 tennis courts	 1 multi-use mountain bike/snowshoeing trail
 8 pickleball courts	 1 fitness center
 16 diamond ballfields	 1 golf course (Three Rivers Park District)
 6 rectangular fields	 10 permanent restrooms (3 all year/7 seasonal)
 17 basketball courts	 2 historic sites
 1 skate park	 1 sand volleyball court
 1 community garden	 5 boardwalks
 1 boat launch	 +25 parks/open spaces with trails

Park Classification Overview

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND INVENTORY

Park classifications establish common terminology and an accepted benchmark standard for parks, open space and trail system planning. This categorization allows planners to understand the assets within a park system and ensure that it serves neighborhood and community needs with the appropriate geographic distribution of services.

In this POST System Plan update, the park classification system was updated from the 2001 Minnetonka POST Plan. New parks that were built since the creation of the last plan were added and classified. Minor changes to some of the classification descriptions were implemented.

Table 1 defines and clarifies each park classification with key uses, typical size and the types of facilities the park may include. *Table 2* categorizes parks and open spaces in the city. It also lists facility acreage defined by land type, the neighborhood park service area (NPSA) and ward for each park. *Figure 9* displays the geographic distribution of each park type within Minnetonka.

PARKS CLASSIFICATION OVERVIEW (TABLE 1)

Classifications	Descriptions	Size Criteria
Mini Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs, typically at the neighborhood level.	Up to one acre
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on active and passive recreation.	Typically 1 - 30 acres
Community Park	Destination park that is diverse in nature and serves a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community needs including recreational activities (i.e. athletic complexes/amenities, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas), preserve areas, and open spaces.	Varies, typically 30 acres or more
Athletic Complex	Programmed adult and/or youth athletic fields and associated facilities strategically located within the community.	Varies
Preserve	Park land maintained as habitat, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering. Also provides passive use opportunities (i.e., trails, overlooks, interpretive programs, nature-play areas, etc.).	Varies
Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use - such as historic sites, plazas, beaches, marinas, etc.	Varies

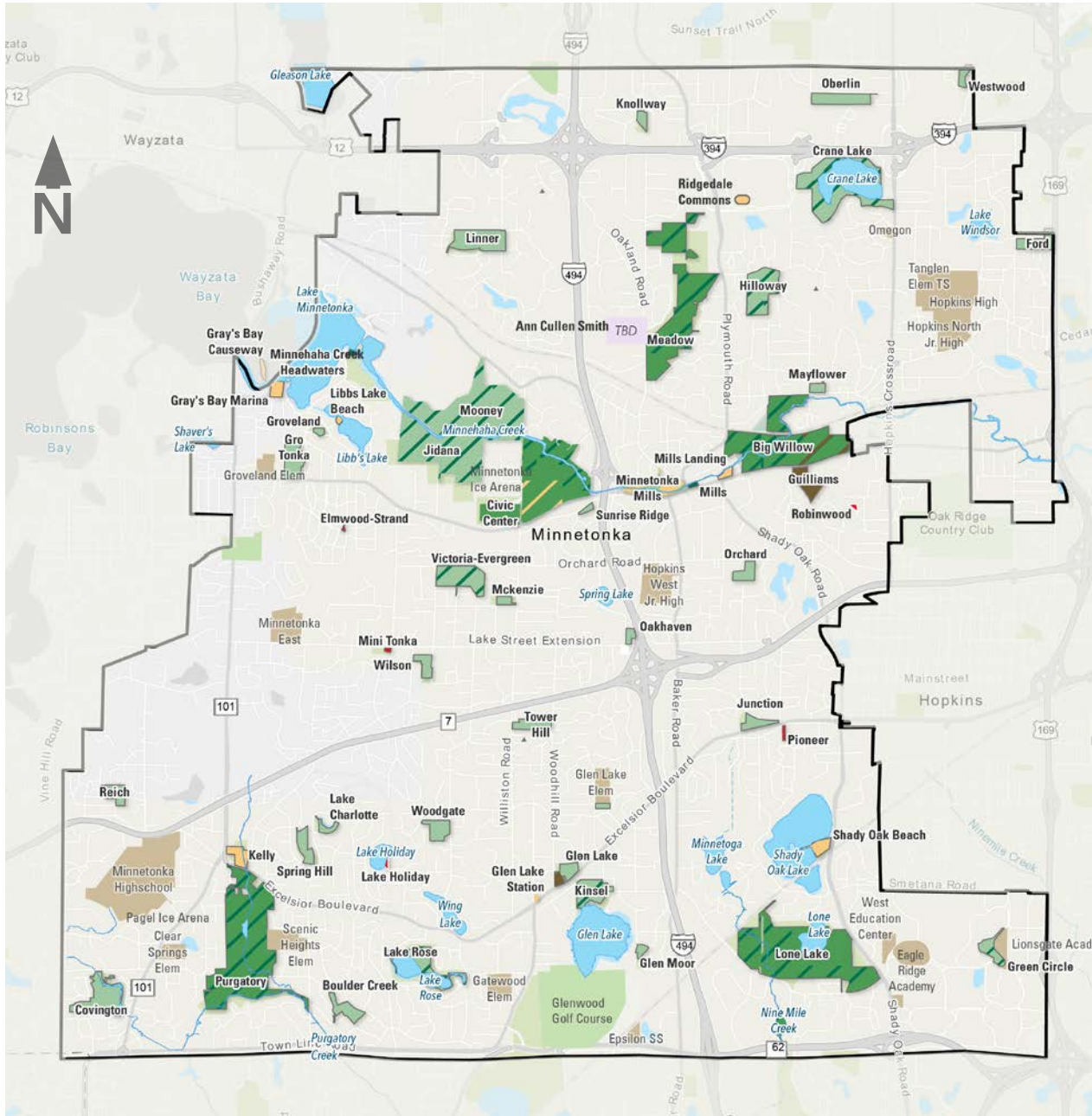
PARK CLASSIFICATIONS (TABLE 2)

	Park Name	NPSA	Ward	Size in Acres			Classification(s)
				Natural	Developed	Total	
1	Ann Cullen-Smith Property	6	2	30	0	30	TBD
2	Big Willow	11	2	56.5	45	101.5	Community Park/ Preserve/Athletic Complex
3	Boulder Creek	19	4	5.2	4.6	9.8	Neighborhood Park
4	Civic Center	9	3	73	35	108	Community Park/ Preserve/Special Use
5	Covington	15	4	20.2	8.1	28.3	Neighborhood Park
6	Crane Lake	7	2	83.1	0.9	84	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
7	Elmwood-Strand	12	3	0	0.6	0.6	Mini Park
8	Ford	8	2	8.1	3.1	11.2	Neighborhood Park
9	Glen Lake	16	4	0	8.5	8.5	Neighborhood Park/ Athletic Complex
10	Glen Lake Station	16	4	0	1.4	1.4	Special Use
11	Glen Moor	20	1	0.5	2.1	2.6	Neighborhood Park
12	Gray's Bay Causeway	9	3	0	0.9	0.9	Special Use
13	Gray's Bay Marina	9	3	0.4	4	4.4	Special Use
14	Green Circle	22	1	5.3	3.3	8.6	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
15	Gro Tonka	9	3	4.1	10.5	14.6	Neighborhood Park
16	Groveland	9	3	0.8	1	1.8	Neighborhood Park
17	Guilliams	13	1	5.9	8.7	14.6	Athletic Complex
18	Hilloway	7	2	26.3	2	28.3	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
19	Holiday Lake	16	4	0	0.76	0.76	Mini Park
20	Jidana	9	3	76	5	81	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
21	Junction	17	1	3	3.6	6.6	Neighborhood Park
22	Kelly	16	4	5	2.4	7.4	Special Use
23	Kinsel	20	1	14.5	2.5	17	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
24	Knollway	2	3	1.6	2	3.6	Neighborhood Park
25	Lake Charlotte	16	4	2.9	0.6	3.5	Neighborhood Park
26	Lake Rose	19	4	29.1	2	31.1	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve

	Park Name	NPSA	Ward	Size in Acres			Classification(s)
				Natural	Developed	Total	
27	Libbs Lake Beach	9	3	0	1	1	Special Use
28	Linner	5	3	19	6	25	Neighborhood Park
29	Lone Lake	21	1	132	14	146	Community Park/ Preserve
30	Mayflower	7	2	2.1	1.3	3.4	Neighborhood Park
31	McKenzie	12	3	0.5	2.7	3.2	Neighborhood Park
32	Meadow	6	2	94	10	104	Community Park/ Preserve
33	Mills Gazebo	11	2	0	1	1	Mini Park
34	Mills Landing	11	2	2	0.5	2.5	Special Use
35	Mini-Tonka	12	3	0	0.6	0.6	Mini Park
36	Minnehaha Creek Headwaters*	9	3	2	1.5	3.5	Special Use
37	Minnetonka Mills**	10	2	11.7	8	19.7	Neighborhood Park/ Special Use
38	Mooney	9	3	110	1	111	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
39	Oakhaven	12	3	1.7	1.2	2.9	Neighborhood Park
40	Oberlin	3	3	8.2	6.5	14.7	Neighborhood Park
41	Orchard	13	1	4.4	2.9	7.3	Neighborhood Park
42	Pioneer	18	1	0	1	1	Mini Park
43	Purgatory	19	4	131.9	24	155.9	Community Park/ Preserve
44	Reich	14	4	4.5	3.4	7.9	Neighborhood Park
45	Robinwood	13	1	0.7	0.2	0.9	Mini Park
46	Ridgedale Commons	7	2	0	2	2	Special Use
47	Shady Oak Beach	18	1	1	5	6	Special Use
48	Spring Hill	16	4	0.5	8.1	8.6	Neighborhood Park
49	Sunrise Ridge	12	3	0.6	1	1.6	Neighborhood Park
50	Tower Hill	16	4	8.9	0	8.9	Neighborhood Park
51	Victoria-Evergreen	12	3	22	3	25	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
52	Westwood	4	2	3	1	4	Neighborhood Park
53	Wilson	12	3	3	3.8	6.8	Neighborhood Park
54	Woodgate	16	4	5.8	3.5	9.3	Neighborhood Park
	Totals			1021.9	271.86	1293.76	

*Formerly named Gray's Bay Dam

**Formerly named Burwell House



MINNETONKA PARKS (FIGURE 9)

Park Classifications

- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Mini Park
- Special Use
- Preserve*
- Athletic Complex

Other

- Schools
- Privately Owned Park Space

Graphic Key

- Water Bodies
- Minnetonka Boundary

* The exact boundaries of the Preserve areas are to be defined in the future park-specific master planning processes.

Community Engagement

PROCESS AND SUMMARY

To create a POST System Plan that will meet the community's needs, an extensive community outreach effort was conducted to help identify and understand the values, needs and preferences of the community. Special effort was made to reach out to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC and people with disabilities with the intention that this plan will accommodate the whole community.

This process has been completed with the support of SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) and Hennepin County through an Active Living Technical Assistance grant. Engagement events and activities resulted in valuable information which will influence future development of parks to more closely meet the objectives of the community.

Public outreach methods included community pop-up events, meetings, an online community survey, listening sessions, and an online geographic mapping comment tool.

COMMUNITY EVENTS
(225+ participants)

- MINNETONKA FARMER'S MARKET - JUNE 8, 2021
- PARK BOARD TOUR - SHADY OAK BEACH - JUNE 24, 2021
- SHADY OAK BEACH - JUNE 26, 2021
- NIGHT TO UNITE - AUGUST 3, 2021

SURVEY
(661 participants)

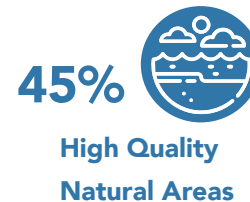
- ONLINE/PAPER SURVEY
- GEOGRAPHIC COMMENT MAPPING
- PRIORITY THEME RANKING

STAKEHOLDER/ COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
HENNEPIN COUNTY FUNDED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
(275+ participants)

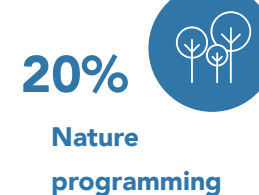
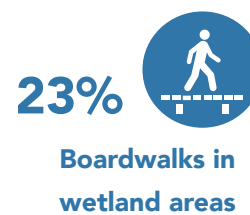
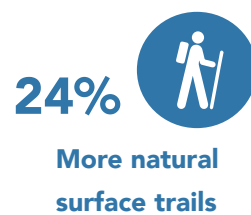
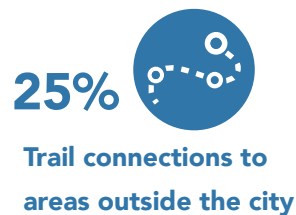
- BIPOC ENGAGEMENT
- SENIORS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ENGAGEMENT
- YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
COMMUNITY NEEDS
CONCERNS + CONSIDERATIONS

TOP 3 PRIORITY ISSUES AND THEMES MINNETONKA SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS IN THIS POST SYSTEM PLAN TO GUIDE FUTURE PARK, OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS



TOP 5 DESIRED NEW AND/OR ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS



SUMMARY - WHAT WE HEARD

Using the information gathered from the listening sessions, community events, completion of the survey and interactive mapping, the most common feedback was grouped into three categories:

- > Perceptions of Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Trails
- > New/Additional Things to do in Minnetonka Parks, and
- > Highest Priority Issues/Themes.

Commonly heard themes within each category influenced specific recommendations for the final POST System plan. The following represents the key findings from the engagement process from each category.

Highest priority issues/themes

- > New or improved recreational amenities
- > Rediscovering the creek
- > Connecting to nature
- > Iconic parks
- > Gathering and community building
- > High-quality natural areas
- > Environmental sustainability and resiliency
- > Connections to parks and trails

Perceptions of Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Trails

- > Natural areas for passive recreation and trail connections are very important.
- > Parks with recreational amenities are important to park users.
- > A significant number of park users enjoy the parks on a weekly basis.
- > Few park users get to the park system via public transportation.
- > Top barriers to visiting parks and open spaces include off-leash dogs and lack of information about park amenities.
- > The majority of park visitors feel safe in the parks.
- > The majority of park users feel the parks and open spaces are in good to excellent condition.
- > Park users are enjoying the parks and open spaces both for recreation and to engage with nature.
- > Park users would like to see a balance between natural resource protection and access for recreation.
- > Park users prefer quality ice rinks over the number of ice rinks. Few survey participants support ice rinks throughout the city.

New/Additional Things to do in Minnetonka Parks

- > Provide a year-round swimming facility
- > Consider rock climbing or bouldering features in the parks
- > Provide more nature programming
- > Provide nature play areas in community and neighborhood parks
- > Prioritize flexible spaces for special event programming
- > Provide a more significant/permanent skateboarding park
- > Upgrade playgrounds to make them more accessible
- > Provide a Ninja Warrior playground
- > Provide more pickleball courts
- > Provide a bicycle playground/pump track
- > Consider programming for and providing off-leash dog parks
- > Enhance trail connections to parks and open spaces from existing trail systems
- > More natural surface trails
- > Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas

System Assessment

The POST System Plan is based on the critical evaluation of the existing Minnetonka parks, open space and trail system components and their condition to meet current and future community needs. The evaluation is based on a review of existing conditions, community engagement input, comparison with national

standards and comparable peer communities, emerging trends and park system best practices. These evaluations are combined into a summary of key takeaways and recommendations that provide considerable input into developing the system recommendations and priority project identification.

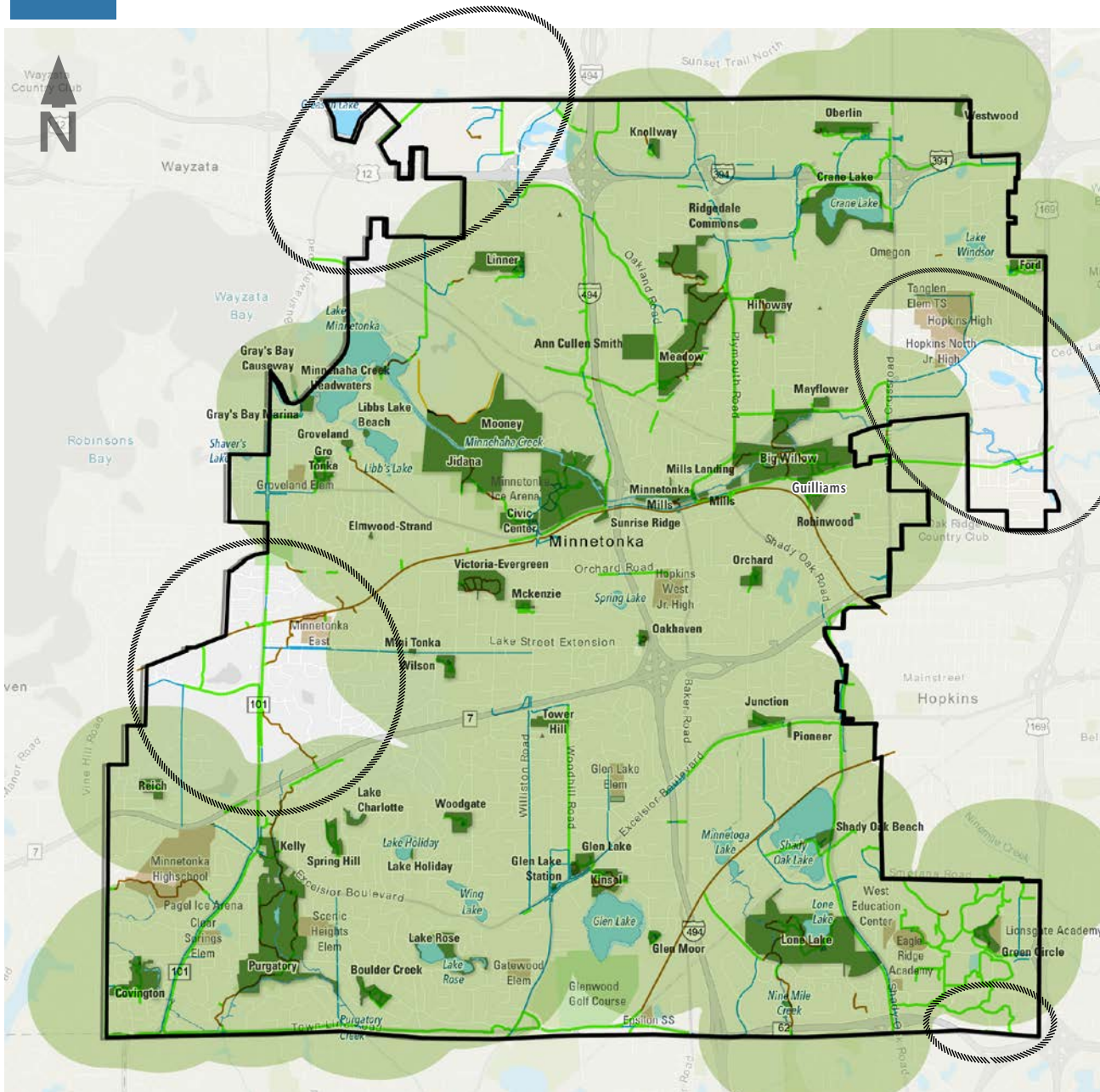
KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

PARKS

- > The city provides 24 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, exceeding the national standard.
- > Over 70% of the population lives within a 10-minute walk of a park, compared with the national average of 55%.
- > Residential areas that are not within a 10-minute walk primarily exist on the edges of the community. The city should focus on serving areas that are outside the 10-minute walk distance to parks as well as anticipated developments with medium and high-density housing. These gaps should be addressed through partnerships with schools, adjacent communities, and other agencies.
- > At existing parks, user amenities like consistent site furnishings, lighting, wifi, accessible facilities and upgrades to permanent restrooms are suggested potential improvements.
- > Improvements to the overall park system wayfinding signage are suggested.

FACILITIES

- > The number of facilities is generally adequate for the city's current size. As the city grows, aging facilities will need to be replaced to ensure that they continue to be located within a reasonable distance of high-density areas and that they address emerging trends.
- > The addition or replacement of playgrounds should focus on underserved areas, primarily where playgrounds are not within a 10-minute walk of residential areas.
- > Expanding universal access to play areas and nature-based play areas should be considered when renovating, upgrading, or building new playgrounds.
- > The community would like more picnic shelters.
- > Traditional athletic facilities, such as diamonds and rectangular fields, and informal sports facilities, such as tennis, basketball and open playfields, are well distributed throughout the community. In the engagement process, additional pickleball and multi-use fields were requested.
- > Consolidating ice rinks should be considered due to maintenance and cost concerns as well as the effects of climate change.
- > The community requested more year-round recreation and community facilities for group gatherings and programs, as well as additional fitness facilities and classes, meeting rooms, family activity opportunities, and children's programming. Input from the community also favored more aquatic amenities, such as a community pool and an outdoor splash pad.
- > New construction and renovations should incorporate emerging trends that have the community support such as a dog park, a splash pad, a ninja course, a bouldering wall, a bicycle pump track, a skate park and/or a nature play area.



AREAS WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK OF CITY PARKS

- City Parks
- 10 Minute Walk from City Park
- Identified Gaps

71% OF MINNETONKA RESIDENTS LIVE WITHIN A 10 MINUTE WALK OF A PARK

55% NATIONAL AVERAGE

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SYSTEM ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

PRESERVES AND OPEN SPACE

- > Minnetonka's natural resources are unique and distinguishing. These natural resources are a highly cherished component of the city. More than 20 percent of the city's land area is classified as wetlands and lakes.
- > This POST System Plan supports and upholds the goals and objectives of the NRMP within parks and open spaces in the city.
- > Community input revealed that there is a strong desire to continue to preserve, protect and restore natural areas.

TRAILS

- > The POST System Plan supports and upholds the goals and priorities outlined in the City of Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP). The TIP builds upon the existing trail infrastructure already in place within the city to create a comprehensive system of trails that provide recreational value as well as pedestrian and bicycle linkages throughout the city.
- > Community input found that respondents strongly support trails within the city. There is a desire for more natural surface trails and boardwalks to connect with nature within the parks and trail connections to neighboring communities.
- > The existing conditions analysis found that there are areas where trail surfaces are in poor condition and lack ADA compliance. Additionally, there are gaps that could be filled to provide more complete connectivity. Trail priorities and reducing gaps in trail linkages are addressed in the TIP.

PROGRAMMING

- > Recreational opportunities for youth and adults are available in Minnetonka's park system year-round, including programmed and non-programmed and activities.
- > Hopkins-Minnetonka Joint Recreation Services is responsible for providing recreation programming for residents of Hopkins and Minnetonka.
- > Ongoing goals and priorities of the Recreation Services include:
 - > Continuing to provide recreation programs that serve community needs.
 - > Working effectively with local associations and school districts to provide a full palette of recreational opportunities for residents.
 - > Maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of facility use given the limited opportunity and cost to develop new facilities.
- > Program development and evaluation should continue to identify participant needs not currently addressed in programming. For example, community input indicates the desire for more nature-based programming.
- > Community input indicates a desire to expand community event offerings.
- > Community input also requested increased advertising and communication about parks and recreation programming, especially in under-served areas and areas of higher population density.

ACCESSIBILITY

- > To meet the needs of existing and future users, Minnetonka must continue to prioritize and expand accessibility.
- > An analysis of existing conditions revealed that improved accessibility is needed for many of the city's play areas, trails, and other park facilities.
- > To ensure that everyone has equal access to parks, open spaces, trails, facilities and programs, the city is committed to increasing the accessibility of its park system.

AREAS OF NEED

- > Existing conditions analysis identified potential areas of need within the city's park system. The evaluation process began by identifying and mapping the following characteristics:
 - > Areas of higher density housing
 - > Areas of high minority populations
 - > Areas that are greater than a 10-minute walk to a city park or open space within Minnetonka
- > Potential areas of need were identified in places where two to three of the characteristics are present (see Figure 45: Areas of Need). School districts, facilities owned or operated by private associations, and relationships with neighboring communities can provide access to parks, facilities and programs to meet some of these needs and gaps within the park system. However, in light of the city's projected population growth, future studies should consider these areas for their potential needs.

SYSTEM PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The POST System Plan recommendations were prepared based on key takeaways from community input, needs assessment, review of the comprehensive plan and other related documents and policies, technical advisory committee discussions and input received from the park board. The recommendations are organized into goals and initiatives intended to support the mission and guiding principles.

Goals and Initiatives are organized by the topic areas of **Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency, Connections to Parks and Trails, Community Health and Wellness, Equity and Inclusion, and Excellence and Innovation.**

Goals are high-level statements that describe the desired outcomes necessary for implementation of the guiding principles over the next 15 to 20 years. **Initiatives** describe the general course of action that will guide city decision making to achieve stipulated goals. The following pages contains a summary of these goals by topic area.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

Environmental sustainability and resiliency in the POST system focuses on the preservation and protection of natural resources. It supports environmental stewardship and conservation while building long-term sustainability of the park system. The goals and initiatives presented here are in support of the goals outlined in the City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) and the Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP).

Goal 1: Promote sustainable design practices and build environmental resiliency into the park system to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Goal 2: Reduce negative impacts to Minnetonka's waterways and natural resources.

Goal 3: Balance the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational programs and facilities.

Goal 4: Promote sustainable maintenance practices.

CONNECTIONS TO PARKS AND TRAILS

Access to parks, natural areas and outdoor recreation is vital to the long-term sustainability and livability of a community. Providing better access to parks and trails will contribute to a higher quality of life for park users. The recommendations provided here offer a guide for not only enhancing connections to parks and trails, but also ways for community members to better connect with each other and with nature.

Goal 1: Ensure all park users have safe and convenient access to parks, open spaces and trails.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming.

Goal 3: Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature.

Goal 4: Improve access to neighboring communities of Minnetonka.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Parks, open spaces and trails help keep park users fit and healthy. Parks provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. The following goals are recommended to ensure that all park users have access to park facilities and programs essential to community vitality, health equity, improved individual and community health and enhanced quality of life.

Goal 1: Ensure that park programs and facilities support public health and wellness for all park users.

Goal 2: Provide for a healthy park experience that is accessible, enjoyable and relatable to all park users.

Goal 3: Promote health and wellness through education and park programming.

Goal 4: Strengthen relationships with partners to improve overall health outcomes.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Parks and recreation facilities and programs help to build diverse, equitable and inclusive communities where everyone can come together to learn, experience, interact and to grow. The goal of this plan is to create a park system that provides quality parks and connections to green space, recreation facilities and programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming.

Goal 1: Develop park programs and facilities that fit the needs of the community through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Goal 2: Encourage recreation participation by all park users regardless of race, age, gender, or ability.

Goal 3: Expand access to parks and build and repair parks in underserved communities.

Goal 4: Engage community members meaningfully in the design and planning of parks to ensure that parks and park programming reflect community values and priorities.

EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

This plan provides a guide for opportunities to provide excellence in the park system and incorporate current trends in park planning and design. Innovative, forward-thinking solutions to park design and maintenance that incorporate best practices should be encouraged in order to achieve those goals.

Goal 1: Explore and prioritize a variety of new or improved active and nature-based passive park facilities and programs that reflect community values and desires.

Goal 2: Support year-round recreation by improving access to outdoor winter facilities and programs.

Goal 3: Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, community groups and volunteers.

Goal 4: Expand marketing and awareness of park facilities, programs and natural amenities.

Goal 5: Model sustainable practices in park construction, maintenance and operations.

Goal 6: Create new park master plans as the need for new parks and park improvements arise.

IMPLEMENTATION

The POST System Plan, coupled with the Trail Improvements Plan, provides direction for the City Council, the Park Board, and city staff to guide decision making that will impact future park, open space and trail improvements. To achieve the vision set forth, priorities and initiatives were identified for future park system improvements that support the overall system vision and guiding principles. Guidance was also provided for park facilities, identifying costs related to priorities, potential funding sources, and establishes the need for measuring progress.

The priorities are organized into five categories: facilities, plans and studies, programming and events, communications and marketing, and operations and maintenance. Prioritization was based on public interest, availability of resources (funding, staff, land, etc.), alignment with the Natural Resource Master Plan and Trail Improvement Plan, and City Council and Park Board priorities. The following pages contains a summary of the priorities by topic area.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

FACILITIES

- > Implement trail recommendations provided in the city's Trail Improvement Plan
- > Improve trail connections to parks, open spaces, and public transportation facilities
- > Provide accessible features in play areas
- > Incorporate new picnic facilities and park shelters in parks
- > Incorporate multi-generational park facilities into parks
- > Explore options for additional park land in the Opus area
- > Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas
- > Expand the number of formal trails in parks
- > Provide facilities that support year-long activities and recreational opportunities
- > Provide additional winter recreational opportunities in Community Parks (i.e. snowshoe trails, cross-country ski trails)

PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

- > Collaborate with cultural groups and community groups
- > Incorporate multi-generational park programs
- > Expand opportunities for more nature-based programs and facilities
- > Continue to partner with neighboring communities to share parks and facilities
- > Provide activities that contribute to physical and mental health, and social wellbeing
- > Partner with health sector organizations to fund, program, and facilitate events
- > Celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion through community event programming
- > Expand programming that serves low-income communities and communities of color

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES CONTINUED

PLANS AND STUDIES

- > Incorporate park resilience strategies in the city's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
- > Conduct study to improve pedestrian crossing safety at roadway intersections adjacent to Community Parks
- > Conduct an ADA accessibility audit to identify and address compliance issues
- > Evaluate park safety in order to create safe and inviting spaces
- > Conduct plan to add community gardens to the park system
- > Conduct plan to incorporate public art in the park system
- > Study the feasibility of adding a year-round swimming facility
- > Update guidelines for requests to park board for special projects
- > Conduct a study to expand or add a skate park
- > Study the feasibility of adding a dog park
- > Conduct master plan study for Community Parks: Big Willow, Civic Center, Lone Lake, Meadow, Purgatory
- > Conduct master plan for: the Cullen Smith property, Jidana Park, Victoria Evergreen Park
- > Study the feasibility of condensing ice skating rinks
- > Incorporate an initiative to establish a process for decision making for project review

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

- > Increase awareness and expanded trail use through signs, maps and trail wayfinding
- > Promote and advertise park programs and events in diverse communities
- > Provide interpretive and educational features in parks
- > Expand volunteerism and educational programs
- > Promote the benefits of parks on health and wellbeing
- > Explore using multi-lingual text and/or universal symbols in marketing and on park signage
- > Create a consistent, branded strategy and standards for park features, materials, signage, etc.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- > Incorporate stormwater and green infrastructure best practices in park and facility design
- > Utilize native plant materials to reduce maintenance and irrigation needs
- > Offer recycling programs and facilities
- > Utilize integrated pest management strategies
- > Explore options to implement a turf conversion program
- > Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse park system workforce
- > Incorporate sustainable best practices in the operations and maintenance of park facilities
- > Review trail and sidewalk winter maintenance priority designations as the trail and sidewalk system expands

FUNDING

Implementing the vision and key initiatives for the parks, open space and trails system will require additional funding to support new park features and programs, revitalization efforts, maintenance and operations, park planning and outreach, etc. Significant investment is needed for Minnetonka to provide for, maintain and operate the type of parks, open space and trails system identified in this plan. The POST System Plan provides a list of potential funding sources and partners the city should consider when planning for future investments in the park system.

MEASURING PROGRESS

The POST System Plan success must be measured not only by assessing community needs and satisfaction, but also by responding to park users' wants and needs. Park use and recreation trends are dynamic and constantly changing. Demographic changes in the community, new recreation activities, equipment changes, and other forces may cause the need to adapt and update this plan from time to time as the city continues to evolve.

A periodic review of this plan to make sure that priorities and recommendations are still relevant, and that progress is regularly tracked is essential. Regular assessment of the parks, open space and trail system is particularly useful when requesting funds for new or updated park facilities, staff needs and volunteer efforts. It is also important to communicate the benefits parks, open spaces and trails provide to the community to ensure elected officials, decision makers and the public have a clear understanding of system benefits and how their dollars are being used to improve the park, open space and trail system. Regular evaluations can also better identify which improvements would better serve park system users and achieve the vision and guiding principles outlined in this plan.

POST System Plan



This Parks, Open Space and Trail (POST) System Plan provides a 15 to 20 year road map for planning and implementing park improvements. It offers guiding principles, recommendations, priorities and tools to ensure the Minnetonka park system is relevant and functional into the future.

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CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

01

CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

Parks, open spaces and trails are important and cherished public amenities in the City of Minnetonka. Since 1959, when the City of Minnetonka received plans for its first park, Gro Tonka, parks have contributed to the quality of life that residents, employees and visitors enjoy. With approximately 1,300 acres of parkland, including a significant amount of natural open space and over 100 miles of trails, the city's park system is fundamental to community building, environmental and economic sustainability, health and well-being and creating stronger connections to community destinations. The City of Minnetonka has a joint recreation agreement with the City of Hopkins that has been in place for over 50 years. The joint program offers activities at Hopkins city facilities, and parks.

Community input gathered during the planning process indicated that residents greatly value the existing park, open space and trail system, but improvements could be implemented to meet the needs of current users. Over 80 percent of participants in the online survey conducted in

the summer of 2021 gave the system a positive satisfaction rating. The majority of survey participants expressed satisfaction with the overall condition, appearance and maintenance of natural areas, park features and facilities. Areas identified for improvement include recreational amenities; ecological restoration; accessible playgrounds; expanded and enhanced trail connections, particularly to destinations outside the city; more natural surface trails; boardwalks in wetland areas; nature programming; and a year-round swimming facility, among other things.

Improving the park, open space and trail system will require continued big-picture thinking, creativity, commitment, resources and the ability to adapt and change over time. The planning process demonstrated that the existing park, open space and trail system has a broad, diverse base of park users, partners and supporters; each with its own set of values, needs and desires. The ability to adequately address those diverse needs and desires will be the challenge for future park planners and decision makers.

This Parks, Open Space and Trail (POST) System Plan provides a 15 to 20 year road map for planning and implementing park improvements, helping the park board, city council and city staff prioritize park improvements and ensure that changes and investments to parks, trails and open spaces continue to serve the needs of the entire community. It offers guiding principles, recommendations, priorities and tools to help the city, its residents and partner organizations keep Minnetonka's Parks, Open Space and Trail System relevant and functional into the future.

The POST System Plan aligns future investments with community needs to establish clear and realistic goals, initiatives and implementation strategies for new and improved park facilities and programs. It complements goals outlined in the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 4 - Parks, Trails and Open Space), the Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) to preserve, protect and restore open space and significant natural resources in Minnetonka, and the Trail Improvement Plan (TIP) to provide opportunities

IMPORTANCE OF PARKS, OPEN SPACES AND TRAILS

for people of all abilities and access to parks and open spaces. Recommendations in the POST System Plan are based on community input as well as analyses of demographic changes, future trends and Minnetonka's current park system. The POST System Plan provides a framework to guide long and short-term decision making and investments for parks, open spaces and trails at a system-wide level. Specific recommendations such as improvements for individual parks will require additional detailed design.



Civic Center Park

Minnetonka's parks, open spaces and trails are integral to community identity and character and are vital to the physical, social, economic and environmental health of the city and its residents. According to the National Recreation and Park Association "Parks and recreation services are often cited as one of the most important factors of how livable communities are. Parks provide important community gathering places, improve community health objectives and contribute to the economic and environmental well-being of the community."

Community Building

Parks and open spaces provide important gathering places for community members. They provide a sense of community identity and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life. Community surveys point out that the character of Minnetonka is closely tied to the quality of its parks and open spaces. High quality natural areas, well maintained parks and recreation facilities, connections to creeks, lakes, wetlands, forests, historical and cultural facilities and play areas are all attributes of Minnetonka that contribute to its community character. Parks also provide places for community building activities, such as festivals and celebrations, farmers markets, concerts, theatrical performances and nature-based programs.

Health and Well-Being

Healthy and active lifestyles are encouraged by easy access to parks, open spaces and trails. Access to high quality natural areas that parks and open spaces offer provides opportunities

to improve physical health, mental well-being and psychological health. Recreation facilities and programs which are offered for a variety of ages and income levels promote lifelong learning opportunities, community health and emphasizes the importance of active living.

Environmental Sustainability

Parks and open spaces provide numerous environmental benefits to communities. High quality natural areas improve air and water quality while providing habitat for diverse plant and animal communities. Parks and open spaces also play a key role in managing stormwater runoff and protecting the quality and vitality of important natural areas. Well managed natural areas reduce the presence of invasive plant species and improve environmental health in the community.

Economic Benefits

Several studies have shown that proximity to parks, open spaces and trails can enhance property values and tax revenues. The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay more for property located close to parks, open spaces, and trails. Quality outdoor public spaces can also impact decisions for locating businesses, reduce municipal costs related to stormwater treatment and generate revenue from fees, vendors and special events.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Minnetonka's Parks, Open Space, and Trail (POST) System Plan is organized into six chapters (see *Figure 1*) and provides a 15 to 20 year road map for planning and implementing park improvements. It offers the park board, city council and city staff a framework to guide future decision making and investments. It is anticipated that this plan will continue to transform as the community adapts to future trends, demographic changes, needs and opportunities.

FIGURE 1: POST SYSTEM PLAN OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction

- > Introduction to the POST System Plan

Chapter 2: Trends

- > Addresses trends that impact current and future park, open space, and trail use and development

Chapter 3: Existing Conditions

- > Overview of existing park, open space, and trail system in Minnetonka
- > Community Engagement overview

Chapter 4: Vision

- > Future vision and guiding principals for Minnetonka's parks, open space, and trail system

Chapter 5: Systems Plan

- > Establishes goals and initiatives recommended to achieve the vision and guiding principles.

Chapter 6: Implementation

- > Provides implementation tools, including priorities, phasing strategies, and potential funding sources.

Appendix A: Glossary

- > Provides a definition of terms used in the POST System Plan

PLANNING PROCESS

The 12-month planning effort began in February 2021 and represents input gathered from the community, stakeholders, city staff and city officials. Valuable community input and feedback received through online surveys, listening sessions, community pop-ups, park and open space tours, public meetings and workshops guided the development of this plan. The plan also incorporates the expertise of the consultant team, an evaluation of existing conditions by city staff and the consultant team, current and future trends and key takeaways from the Needs Assessment.

The planning process was guided by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of city staff and park board members. The TAC met on a



Youth engagement - Park Adventures - July 2021



Night to Unite pop-up event

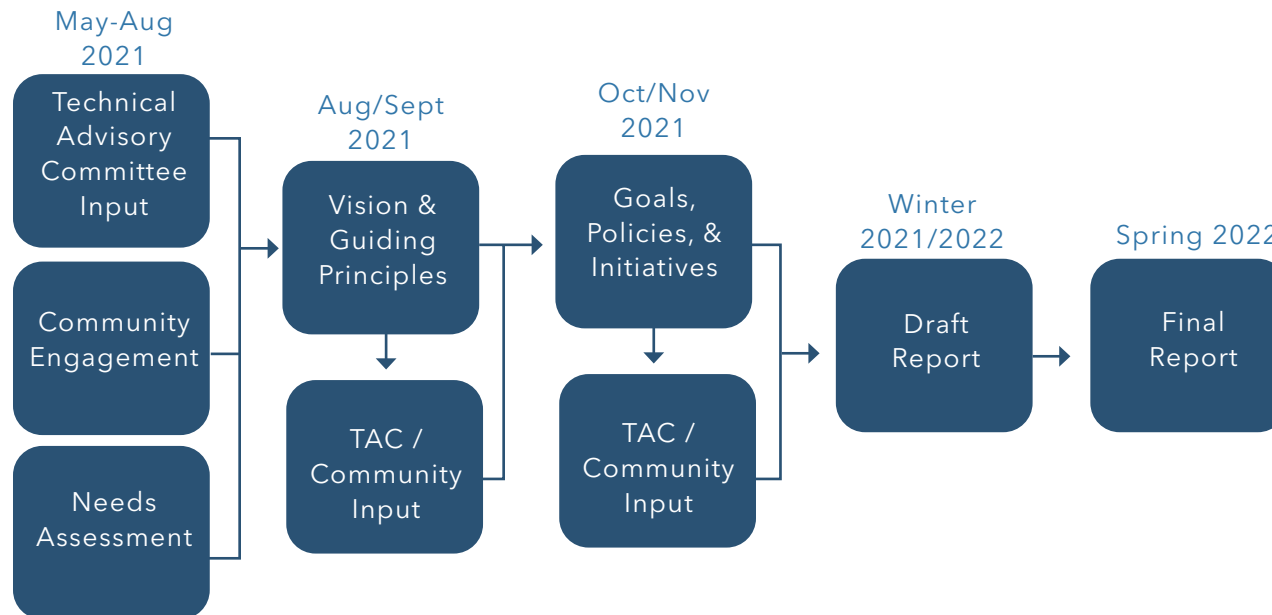
regular basis and provided review and guidance to the consultant team throughout the planning process. The Minnetonka City Council and Park Board also provided guidance and input at key stages in the plan's development.

An important goal of the planning process was to ensure recommendations would reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. To help identify and understand the values, needs and preferences of the community and create a plan that meets their needs, input was gathered through community engagement events. The effort included community outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC and people with disabilities to ensure the park, open space and trail system

will reflect the needs and desires of the whole community.

The engagement process was led by the consultant team and city staff with the support of SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) and Hennepin County through an Active Living Technical Assistance grant. Stakeholder engagement events and activities included:

- > *Technical Advisory Committee Meetings*
 - > Six TAC meetings spread throughout the year-long planning process
- > *Community Events*
 - > Minnetonka Farmers Market - June 8th
 - > Park Board Tour at Shady Oak Beach - June 24th
 - > Pop-Up at Shady Oak Beach - June 26th
 - > Night to Unite - August 3rd
 - > 225+ participants
- > *Community Surveys*
 - > Online/Paper Survey
 - > Geographic Comment/Mapping
 - > Priority/Theme Ranking
 - > 661 participants
- > *Stakeholder Community Conversations*
 - > BIPOC Engagement (Listening Sessions)
 - > Seniors and People with Disabilities Engagement (Listening Sessions)
 - > Youth Engagement (Pop-Ups and Listening Sessions)
 - > 275+ participants



EXISTING PLANS

Analysis included the review and synthesis of several existing plans and reports and findings from community engagement efforts. Key plans, reports and surveys that helped guide the development of this plan include:

- > 2001 Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trail System (POST) Plan
- > Imagine Minnetonka
- > 2018 Community Facility and Programming Space Study
- > 2019 Community Surveys
- > 2020 Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan
- > 2040 Comprehensive Plan
- > Opus Placemaking and Urban Design Report

FIGURE 2: KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM EXISTING PLANS

- * Maintain, preserve and enhance the parks, open spaces and trails that give Minnetonka its unique character
- * Provide equitable park facilities and programs that match the desires, needs and abilities of all residents and visitors as Minnetonka grows, ages and becomes more racially and ethnically diverse
- * Continue to develop a walkable/ bikeable Minnetonka that will safely and comfortably connect people to parks, open space and village centers and build a culture of active living
- * Protect and preserve the outstanding quality of life currently enjoyed in Minnetonka and ensure the same quality of life is available for future generations
- * Identify opportunities for new parks and open spaces
- * Foster resiliency of parks and open space to be resistant to and recover from and adapt to climate change and extreme events
- * Develop a safe interlinking looped trail system network throughout the city and provide connections to neighborhoods and individual parks
- * Protect and enhance the health of the ecosystems in Minnetonka
- * Improve the biological diversity of its native habitats
- * Provide an appropriate balance between resource preservation, recreational use and community growth
- * Establish partnerships and stakeholder involvement with a variety of agencies and citizens in the community to perpetuate sustainable resources in Minnetonka and surrounding areas
- * Strategically upgrade neighborhood and community parks
- * Maintain and enhance open space, even with new development and increasing density in the city
- * Expand best practices for green infrastructure
- * Connect all Minnetonka residents to woodlands and wetlands
- * Provide more gymnasium space, swimming pool and fitness facilities

RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

The following related planning efforts were recently completed and/or underway simultaneously with the development of the Parks, Open Space and Trail System (POST) Plan. Each of these plans complement the POST Plan and provide more specific recommendations for trails and natural resources, elements that were covered in more detail in the 2001 POST Plan.

2020 Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP)

The City of Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP), completed in 2020, provides a guide for future trail improvements and investments in the city. The plan prioritizes high use trail segments that are easy to construct above those trail segments that may have less users and/or those that are more invasive to construct. The high priority trail segments all utilize existing rights of way in the city and are intended to complete gaps in the current trail system and better connect people to community destinations and transit facilities.

2021 Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP)

The City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) was being updated in correlation with the POST System Plan update. The last update to the NRMP was completed in the late 1990's/early 2000's. The new plan focuses on ecological restoration and habitat quality, particularly along the creeks and in the preserve areas. The NRMP provides park restoration and protection recommendations and priorities for 12 parks in the city's system. The NRMP also provides guidance for how to engage residents in stewardship and natural resource protection.



2020 Trail Improvement Plan cover



2021 Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan cover

POST System Plan



Chapter 2 explores current trends and potential implications to future parks, open space and trail system planning. Planning for change and building flexibility into the current park system will position Minnetonka to better adapt to current trends and future demands.

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CHAPTER 02 TRENDS

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CHAPTER 2 | TRENDS

The demands of a growing and changing population in the City of Minnetonka will require city staff and decision makers to consider how the dynamic nature of demographics, technologies, trends and activities will affect park and recreation facility and programming needs. The following chapter explores current trends and potential implications to future parks, open space and trail system planning. Planning for change and building flexibility into the city's parks, open space and trail facilities will position Minnetonka to better adapt to current trends and future demands. The trends listed are in no particular order.

FIGURE 3: TRENDS OVERVIEW

1. Increasing Demand for Informal Recreation
2. Resiliency to Climate Change
3. Changing Demographics
4. Desire to be More Connected to the Land
5. Changes Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic
6. Parks, Open Space, and Trails Support Economic Development
7. Health and Well-Being
8. Specialized Facilities and Non-Traditional Sports

TREND 1 | Increasing Demand for Informal Recreation

- Participation in softball leagues in Minnesota is half of what it was in the mid-1990's.
- Basketball participation has seen a 75 percent decrease since the mid-1990's.
- The City of Minnetonka and surrounding communities' recreation departments have seen a decline in the number of teams registering for softball, basketball and football leagues.
- At the same time, the demand for informal recreation such as running, hiking, bicycling and fitness programs are increasing in popularity.



Trend 1 - Imagery of informal recreation

TREND 2 | Resiliency to Climate Change

- Conservation and ecological restoration may become as important as recreation. As climate change begins to impact wildlife and landscapes more directly, parks and protected natural areas are becoming increasingly important in mitigating the negative impacts of climate change.
- New parks will be designed with resiliency in mind. Parks will increasingly provide multi-beneficial landscapes that protect against flooding, clean and filter stormwater, produce shade and reduce heat island effects, use more native plantings and promote environmental and social resiliency.



Trend 2 - Adapting to Climate Change

TREND 3 | Changing Demographics

- The Met Council projects that Minnetonka will add 10,000 residents and 5,500 households by 2040.
- As of 2020, Minnetonka's population includes 11.5% foreign born people and people of color, an increase of 3,680 people in the past 20 years
- In the three largest schools in Minnetonka, there are between 40 and 42 languages spoken.
- Our region will grow, age and become more racially and ethnically diverse.
- The widest age bands are those aged 55 and above. It is predicted that Minnetonka will follow other affluent suburban areas and as residents age, the 60-74-year-old cohort will increase by 40 percent in the next 10 years.
- It is important to acknowledge the different needs of user groups to ensure Minnetonka's parks reflect the needs of all residents and are welcoming, inclusive places.



Trend 3 - Changing Demographics

TREND 4 | Desire to Be More Connected to the Land

- There is an increasing desire to un-plug and get back to the land and each other. Examples include community supported agriculture (CSAs) and farmer's markets, buy local/eat local movements, nature watching, national night out events and support for pollinator and community gardens.
- This will lead to changes in public space and community programming and will impact both the design and management of outdoor space. There will be greater emphasis on more natural areas and balancing environment with recreational needs.



Trend 4 - Desire to be more connected to the land

TREND 5 | Changes Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic

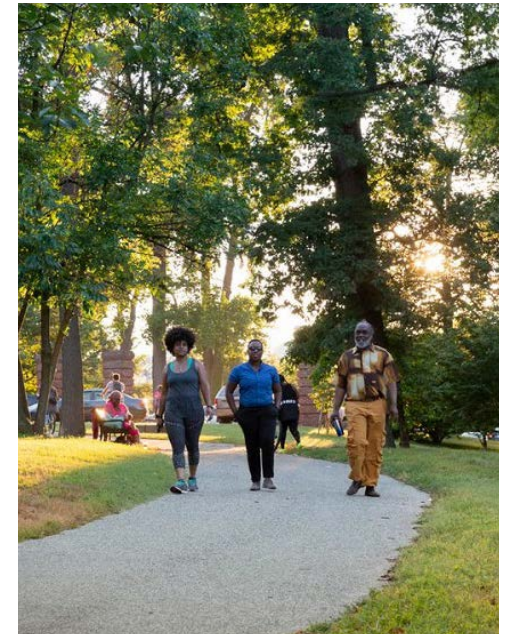
- The pandemic caused communities across the nation to shut down, yet parks and open spaces became ever more popular. As people sought out places for distanced physical activity, Parks, Open Spaces and Trails became high-priority destinations.
- The expansion of pedestrian spaces and outdoor dining on urban streets; the conversion of streets to bike lanes and trails; and the installation of parklets in parking spaces have increased the possibilities for new types of urban parks.



Trend 5 - Changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

TREND 6 | Parks, Open Space, and Trails Support Economic Development

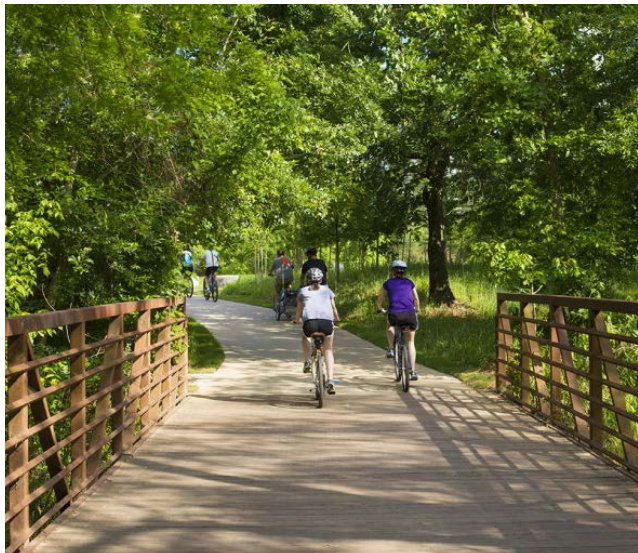
- Parks and recreation not only improve the quality of life, but they benefit the local economic development of a region.
- A high-quality park, open space and trail system can support tourism in the regional economy.
- Homes and properties located near parkland tend to have higher values and generate more in tax revenues than those farther away.
- People seek high-quality park and recreation amenities when they are choosing a place to live and work.



Trend 6 - Parks, open space, and trails support economic development

TREND 7 | Health and Well-Being

- The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) states one of the strongest emerging trends in 2021 is the focus on health and health equity. This movement toward health and well-being has been magnified by COVID-19 but will continue well beyond the pandemic with a greater focus on meeting the social needs of communities.
- “Parks and recreation will play a greater role in supporting mental health and well-being, amplifying recent efforts to address trauma and substance use disorders” says Allison Colman, NRPA’s director of health.
- Implications for parks and recreation support active living, more walking, running and biking trails, social gathering spaces and spaces designed for reflection and meditation.



Trend 7 - Health and well-being

TREND 8 | Specialized Facilities and Non-Traditional Sports

- According to the NRPA, dog parks are currently the fastest growing type of park, which is not surprising since 39 percent of US households own at least one dog.
- Pickleball has become an alternative to tennis and is particularly popular among people ages 55 and older.
- Lacrosse is the fastest growing team sport in the US.
- There is growing demand for flexible multi-sport fields to accommodate a greater variety of recreational activities.



Trend 8 - Specialized facilities and non-traditional sports

SOURCES

- » *Metropolitan Council*
- » *Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board*
- » *Minnesota Recreation and Park Association*
- » *National Recreation and Park Association*

POST System Plan



This chapter combines the system audit with demographic data, a gap and distribution analysis, the results of the community engagement process, and comparisons to peer communities and national standards to establish how well the city is currently serving the needs of the community, as well as how well it is positioned to meet any future needs that may arise.

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CHAPTER 03

EXISTING CONDITIONS

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CHAPTER 3 | EXISTING CONDITIONS

Introduction

Assessing the existing conditions of the community is one of the fundamental steps of park system planning. An inventory conducted at the beginning of this planning process involved identifying and mapping the City of Minnetonka's current parks and facilities, followed by tours to assess and audit current conditions. To establish how successfully the city is meeting the needs of the community, the audit was studied with demographic data, facility distribution mapping analysis, community engagement results, national standards and comparisons with peer communities. This comprehensive analysis is indicative of how effectively Minnetonka will meet future park user needs.



Music in the Park - Civic Center Park



Minnetonka Farmers Market - Civic Center Park



Meadow Park trail



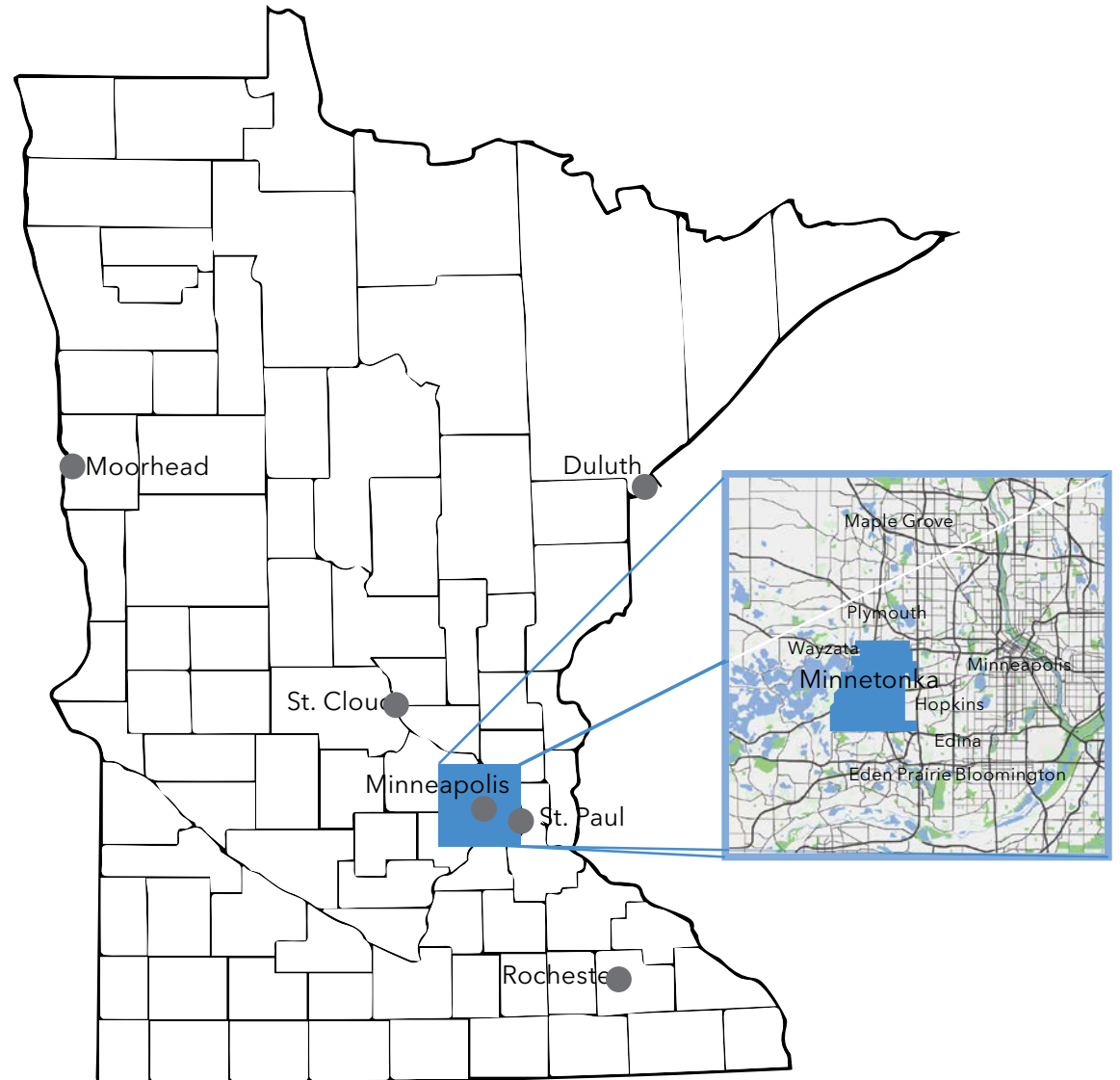
Playground at Lone Lake Park

MINNETONKA IN CONTEXT

The City of Minnetonka is in Hennepin County, located eight miles west of Minneapolis. It encompasses 17,901 acres (28.00 square miles) of land and borders the eastern tip of Lake Minnetonka, one of the largest lakes in Minnesota. The city is bisected by interstate highways 394 and 494 which link to Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Minnetonka's natural resources define the community's distinct character including the headwaters of Minnehaha Creek and numerous wetlands, prairies, and forested areas. The city's strong connection to its natural resources and open spaces, strong public school system, wide range of housing options, and a thriving mix of businesses make Minnetonka a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Minnetonka's joint recreation agreement with Hopkins offers recreation programming and activities to one of the most racially and socio-economically diverse communities in the Twin Cities. Almost 40 percent of the Hopkins community is made up of people of color and over 40 different languages are spoken throughout the city. While demographics in this chapter reflect those living within Minnetonka, goals and policies of this plan extend to the programming and services offered to residents of Hopkins.



Community Context Map

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Population

Minnetonka's population has increased over the past 50 years, growing from 35,776 in 1970 to 53,776 in 2020. According to the Metropolitan Council, this growth is expected to continue, with 61,500 residents projected for the year 2040; nearly 8,000 more residents than reported in the 2020 census (see *Figure 4*).

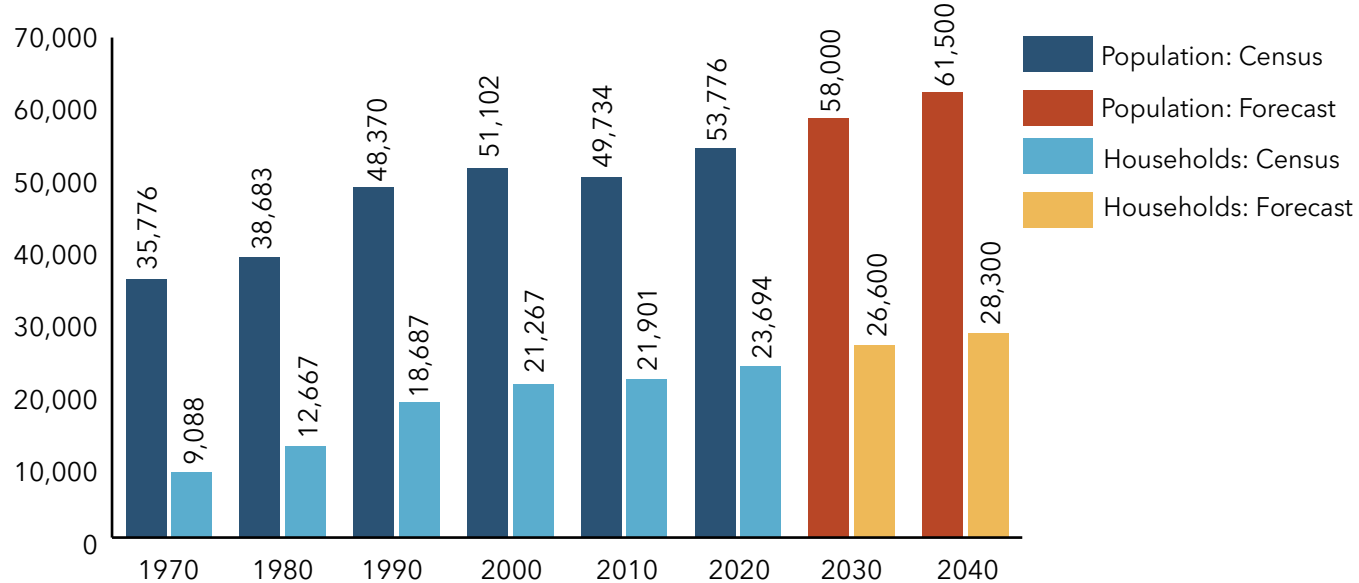
Age

One of the biggest demographic shifts affecting Minnetonka is the aging of the resident base defined as adult households aged 55-64. The widest age bands are those aged 55 and above. It is predicted that Minnetonka will follow other affluent suburban areas and as residents age, the 60-74-year-old cohort will increase by 40 percent in the next 10 years. Demographic changes will alter the labor force and impact preferences for park needs, transportation and housing (see *Figure 6*).

Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, the majority of Minnetonka's population identified as white (82.54 percent). Of the remaining almost 19 percent, 4.61 percent identified as Asian, 4.53 percent as Black or African American, and 3.62 percent as Hispanic or Latinx. Less than 1 percent identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

FIGURE 4: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS IN MINNETONKA - CENSUS AND FORECAST



Source: US Census Bureau and Met Council

In the past 20 years, Minnetonka has attracted 3,680 foreign born people and people of color. In school districts serving Minnetonka there are 42 languages spoken. Approximately 29 percent of East Africans in the US are in the greater Minneapolis metropolitan area. This is on par with the Minnetonka 2040 Comprehensive plan which predicts that 92 percent of population growth will be from people of color. Demographic shifts in the coming decades will result in a changing metropolitan area. The region will grow, age and become more racially and ethnically diverse. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates

these changes are well underway, especially when it comes to diversity in the region (see *Figure 5*).

Households

The total number of households in Minnetonka has increased by over 10,000 units since 1980. While most households in the city are occupied by families (60 percent), the number of family households with children decreased by 4 percent and the amount of non-family households increased by 4 percent between 2000 and 2010. These statistics are representative of a larger

trend towards smaller households, resulting in an increase in the total number of households; an increase in the percentage of married couples with no children households; and an increase in the percentage of households with individuals over 65.

Minnetonka has an aging population and there is a strong desire by many residents to age in place and remain active in their community. It is important to consider changing demographics to ensure Minnetonka's parks reflect the needs of all park users and are welcoming, inclusive places, regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity.

Income

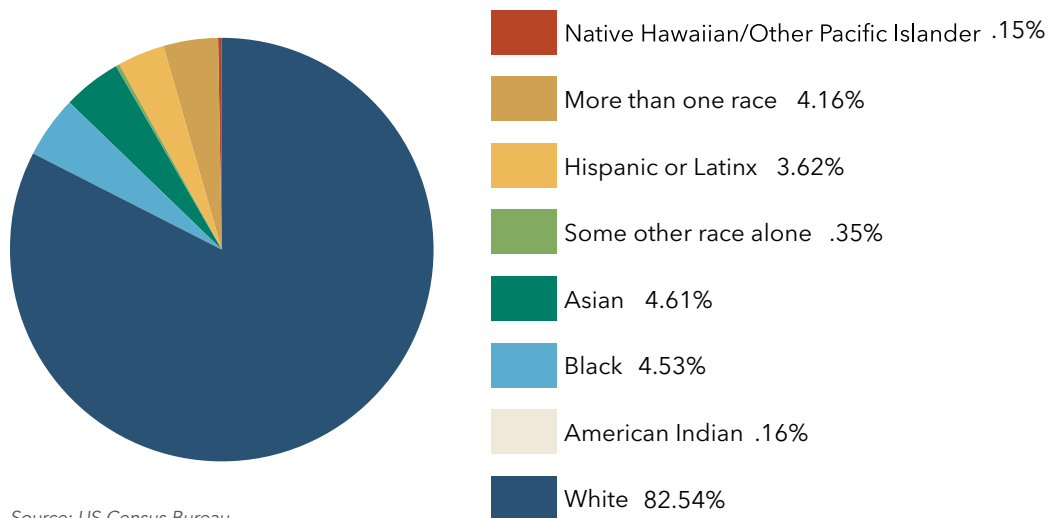
Minnetonka is an affluent city, with a median household income of \$95,600 in 2019 according to the American Community Survey. Household incomes have increased by over \$45,000 since 1990. In comparison, both the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area median household income (\$80,400) and the average median household income of Hennepin County (\$78,200) were lower than that of Minnetonka in 2019.

While the city's 4.1 percent poverty rate in 2019 is below the national poverty rate of 15.4 percent, consideration of how well the parks and recreation system is serving those with limited incomes is important, particularly by providing access to park facilities within convenient walking or biking distance.

Education

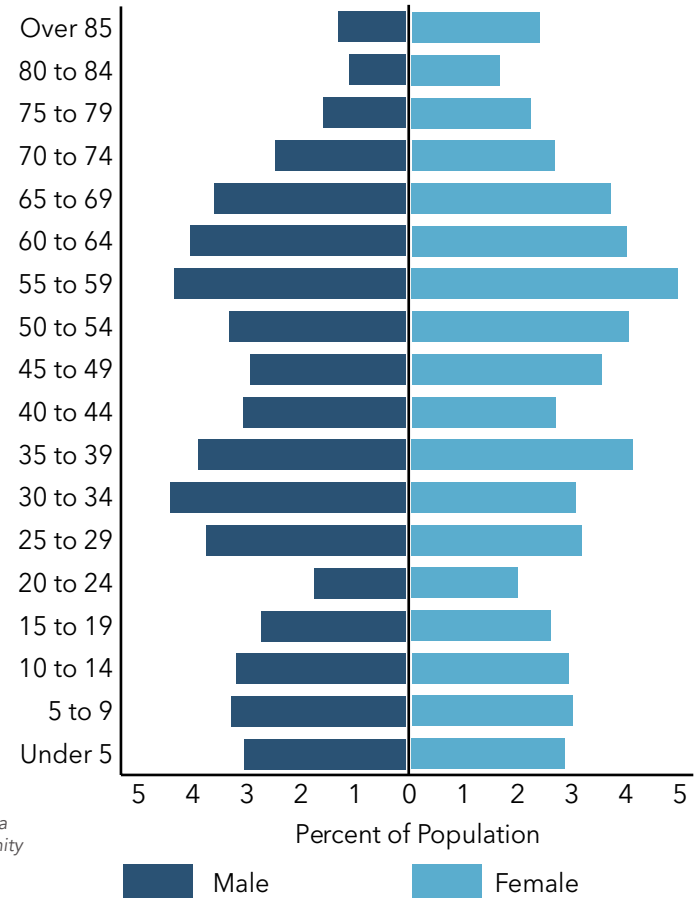
In 2019, 97 percent of Minnetonka residents 25 and older have a high school diploma or higher; 60 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher; and over 23 percent a Graduate or Professional degree. The percentage of residents with bachelor's degrees or higher has increased from 51 percent in 2000. These numbers are comparable to those of surrounding communities.

FIGURE 5: POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN MINNETONKA (2019)



Source: US Census Bureau

FIGURE 6: POPULATION BY AGE AND GENDER IN MINNETONKA (2019)



Source: Met Council via the American Community Survey

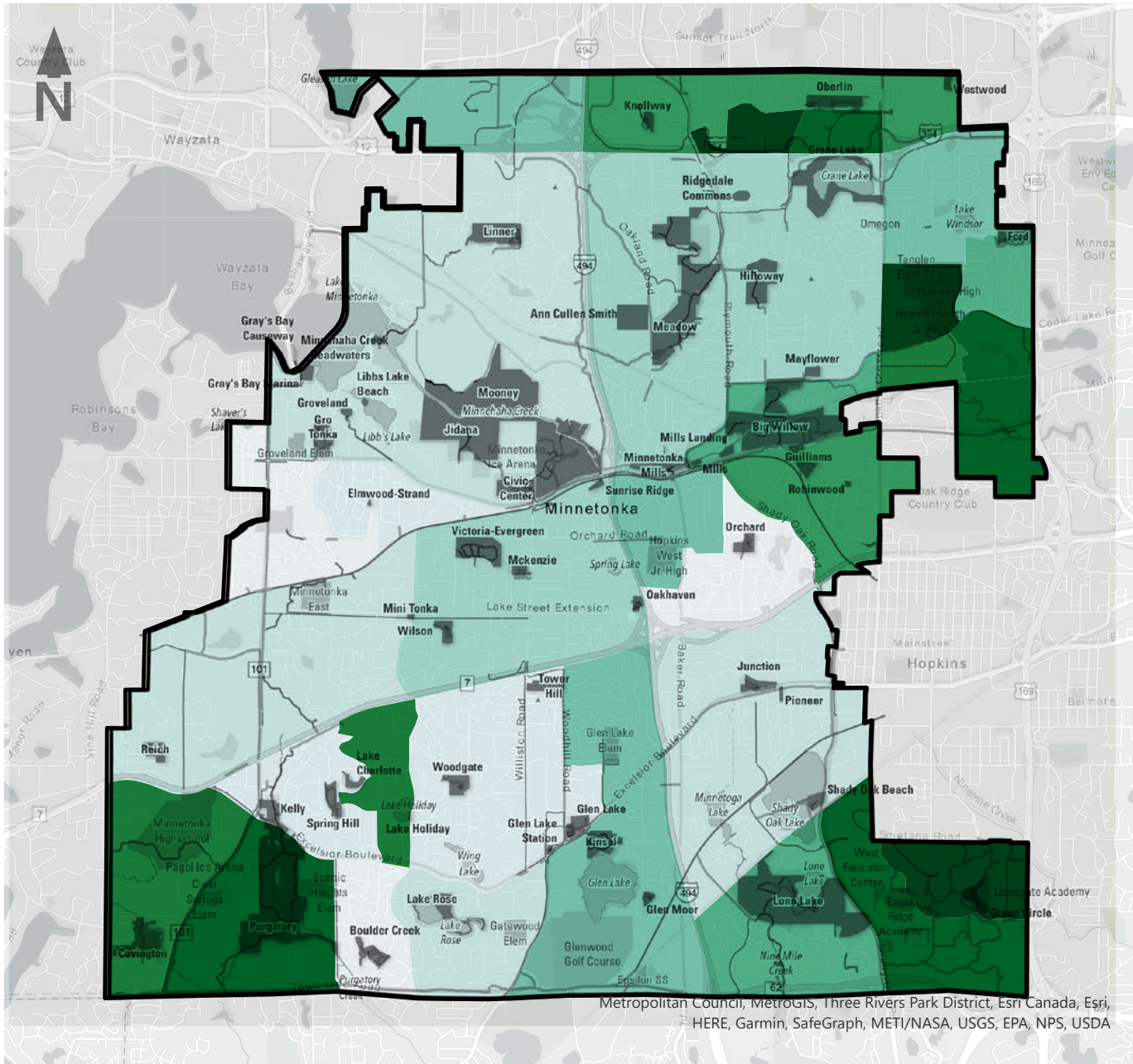
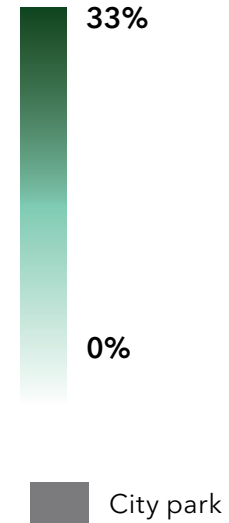


FIGURE 8: NON-WHITE PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BY TRACT AREA



SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

The parks, open spaces and trails that connect them are what give Minnetonka its unique character. More than 20 percent of the city's land area are wetlands and lakes, with more than 268 acres of maintained parkland. Minnetonka has over 50 parks; over 100 miles of trails; and over 1,000 acres of natural public open spaces.

With its parks, open space, and trail system, Minnetonka offers residents, visitors, and employees numerous active and passive recreation opportunities. Consequently, the community experiences the physical and psychological benefits of an active population.

SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

- More than 20 percent of city's land area is city-owned parks, preserves, and open space, with more than 268 acres of maintained parkland and over 1,000 acres of natural public open space.
- The city has over 50 parks consisting of mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, preservers, and special use facilities.
- Over 100 miles of trails

FACILITIES

 29 playground areas	 8 canoe landings
 15 picnic shelters	 5 fishing locations
 36 picnic areas	 10 outdoor hockey rinks
 7 shelter buildings	 8 general ice skating rinks
 2 swimming beaches	 1 nordic skiing area (Three Rivers Park District)
 27 tennis courts	 1 multi-use mountain bike/snowshoeing trail
 8 pickleball courts	 1 fitness center
 16 diamond ballfields	 1 golf course (Three Rivers Park District)
 6 rectangular fields	 10 permanent restrooms (3 all year/7 seasonal)
 17 basketball courts	 2 historic sites
 1 skate park	 1 sand volleyball court
 1 community garden	 5 boardwalks
 1 boat launch	 +25 parks/open spaces with trails

Park Classification Overview

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND INVENTORY

Park classifications establish common terminology and an accepted benchmark standard for parks, open space and trail system planning. This categorization allows planners to understand the assets within a park system and ensure that it serves neighborhood and community needs with the appropriate geographic distribution of services.

In this POST System Plan update, the park classification system was updated from the 2001 Minnetonka POST Plan. New parks that were built since the creation of the last plan were added and classified. Minor changes to some of the classification descriptions were implemented.

Table 1 defines and clarifies each park classification with key uses, typical size and the types of facilities the park may include. *Table 2* categorizes parks and open spaces in the city. It also lists facility acreage defined by land type, the neighborhood park service area (NPSA) and ward for each park. *Figure 9* displays the geographic distribution of each park type within Minnetonka.

TABLE 1: PARK CLASSIFICATIONS OVERVIEW

Classifications	Descriptions	Size Criteria
Mini Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs, typically at the neighborhood level.	Up to one acre
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on active and passive recreation.	Typically 1 - 30 acres
Community Park	Destination park that is diverse in nature and serves a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community needs including recreational activities (i.e. athletic complexes/amenities, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas), preserve areas, and open spaces.	Varies, typically 30 acres or more
Athletic Complex	Programmed adult and/or youth athletic fields and associated facilities strategically located within the community.	Varies
Preserve	Park land maintained as habitat, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering. Also provides passive use opportunities (i.e., trails, overlooks, interpretive programs, nature-play areas, etc.).	Varies
Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use - such as historic sites, plazas, beaches, marinas, etc.	Varies

Glossary

Neighborhood Park Service Area

There are 23 identified neighborhood park service areas (NPSAs) within the City of Minnetonka. The NPSAs are primarily defined by infrastructure barriers that make it difficult for residents and users to access other existing parks. In general, the mini and neighborhood parks in one NPSA function together to service the localized needs for that NPSA. See *Figure 10* for a map of the NPSA boundaries.

Ward

Minnetonka is divided into four wards based on population, with a city council member dedicated to serve each ward.

TABLE 2: PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

	Park Name	NPSA	Ward	Size in Acres			Classification(s)
				Natural	Developed	Total	
1	Ann Cullen-Smith Property	6	2	30	0	30	TBD
2	Big Willow	11	2	56.5	45	101.5	Community Park/ Preserve/Athletic Complex
3	Boulder Creek	19	4	5.2	4.6	9.8	Neighborhood Park
4	Civic Center	9	3	73	35	108	Community Park/ Preserve/Special Use
5	Covington	15	4	20.2	8.1	28.3	Neighborhood Park
6	Crane Lake	7	2	83.1	0.9	84	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
7	Elmwood-Strand	12	3	0	0.6	0.6	Mini Park
8	Ford	8	2	8.1	3.1	11.2	Neighborhood Park
9	Glen Lake	16	4	0	8.5	8.5	Neighborhood Park/ Athletic Complex
10	Glen Lake Station	16	4	0	1.4	1.4	Special Use
11	Glen Moor	20	1	0.5	2.1	2.6	Neighborhood Park
12	Gray's Bay Causeway	9	3	0	0.9	0.9	Special Use
13	Gray's Bay Marina	9	3	0.4	4	4.4	Special Use
14	Green Circle	22	1	5.3	3.3	8.6	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
15	Gro Tonka	9	3	4.1	10.5	14.6	Neighborhood Park
16	Groveland	9	3	0.8	1	1.8	Neighborhood Park
17	Guilliams	13	1	5.9	8.7	14.6	Athletic Complex
18	Hilloway	7	2	26.3	2	28.3	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
19	Holiday Lake	16	4	0	0.76	0.76	Mini Park
20	Jidana	9	3	76	5	81	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
21	Junction	17	1	3	3.6	6.6	Neighborhood Park
22	Kelly	16	4	5	2.4	7.4	Special Use
23	Kinsel	20	1	14.5	2.5	17	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
24	Knollway	2	3	1.6	2	3.6	Neighborhood Park
25	Lake Charlotte	16	4	2.9	0.6	3.5	Neighborhood Park
26	Lake Rose	19	4	29.1	2	31.1	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve

	Park Name	NPSA	Ward	Size in Acres			Classification(s)
				Natural	Developed	Total	
27	Libbs Lake Beach	9	3	0	1	1	Special Use
28	Linner	5	3	19	6	25	Neighborhood Park
29	Lone Lake	21	1	132	14	146	Community Park/ Preserve
30	Mayflower	7	2	2.1	1.3	3.4	Neighborhood Park
31	McKenzie	12	3	0.5	2.7	3.2	Neighborhood Park
32	Meadow	6	2	94	10	104	Community Park/ Preserve
33	Mills Gazebo	11	2	0	1	1	Mini Park
34	Mills Landing	11	2	2	0.5	2.5	Special Use
35	Mini-Tonka	12	3	0	0.6	0.6	Mini Park
36	Minnehaha Creek Headwaters*	9	3	2	1.5	3.5	Special Use
37	Minnetonka Mills**	10	2	11.7	8	19.7	Neighborhood Park/ Special Use
38	Mooney	9	3	110	1	111	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
39	Oakhaven	12	3	1.7	1.2	2.9	Neighborhood Park
40	Oberlin	3	3	8.2	6.5	14.7	Neighborhood Park
41	Orchard	13	1	4.4	2.9	7.3	Neighborhood Park
42	Pioneer	18	1	0	1	1	Mini Park
43	Purgatory	19	4	131.9	24	155.9	Community Park/ Preserve
44	Reich	14	4	4.5	3.4	7.9	Neighborhood Park
45	Robinwood	13	1	0.7	0.2	0.9	Mini Park
46	Ridgedale Commons	7	2	0	2	2	Special Use
47	Shady Oak Beach	18	1	1	5	6	Special Use
48	Spring Hill	16	4	0.5	8.1	8.6	Neighborhood Park
49	Sunrise Ridge	12	3	0.6	1	1.6	Neighborhood Park
50	Tower Hill	16	4	8.9	0	8.9	Neighborhood Park
51	Victoria-Evergreen	12	3	22	3	25	Neighborhood Park/ Preserve
52	Westwood	4	2	3	1	4	Neighborhood Park
53	Wilson	12	3	3	3.8	6.8	Neighborhood Park
54	Woodgate	16	4	5.8	3.5	9.3	Neighborhood Park
	Totals			1021.9	271.86	1293.76	

*Formally named Gray's Bay Dam

**Formally named Burwell House

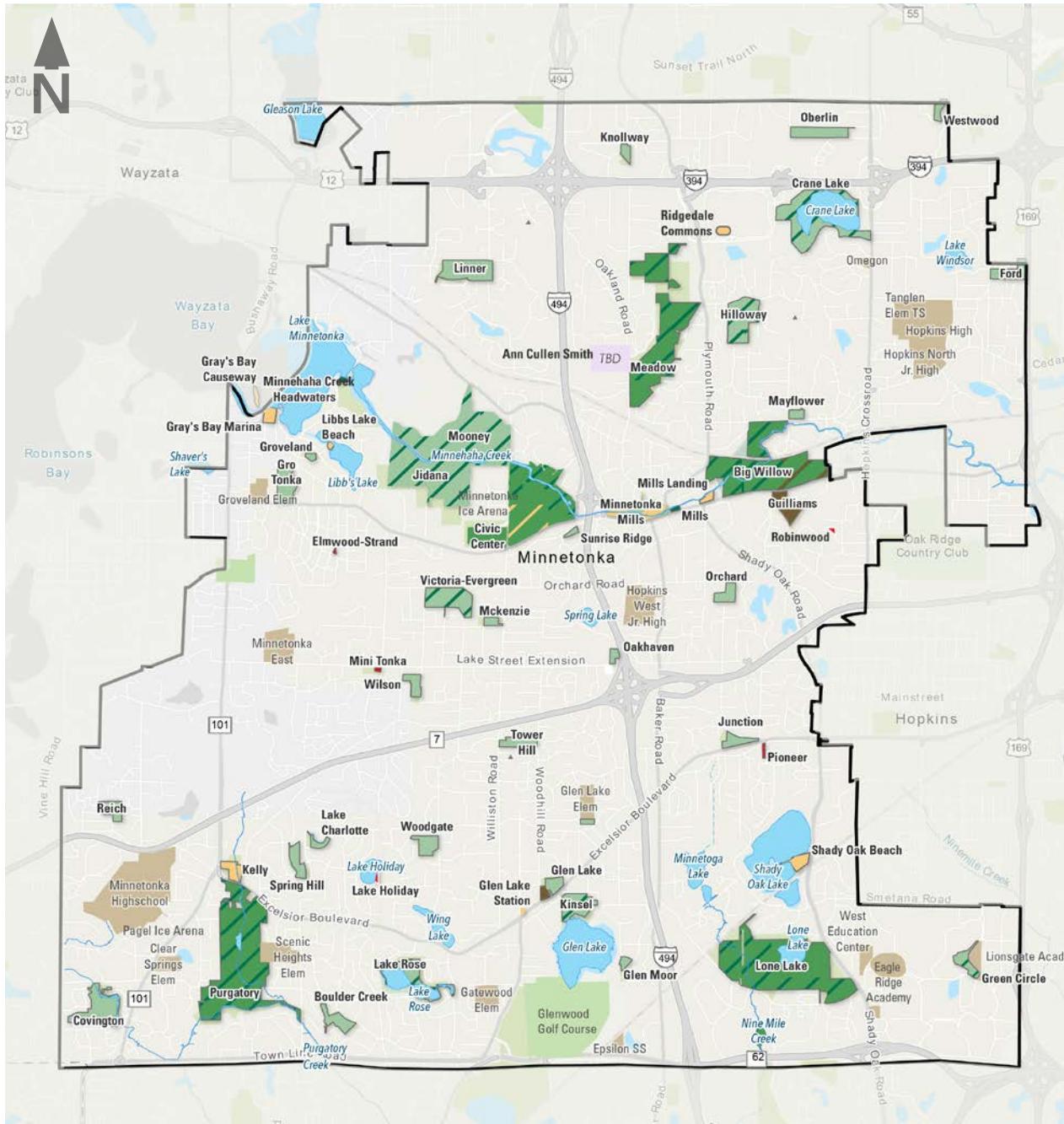


FIGURE 9: MINNETONKA PARKS

Park Classifications

- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Mini Park
- Special Use
- Preserve*
- Athletic Complex

Other

- Schools
- Privately Owned Park Space

Graphic Key

- Water Bodies
- Minnetonka Boundary

* The exact boundaries of the Preserve areas are to be defined in the future park-specific master planning processes.

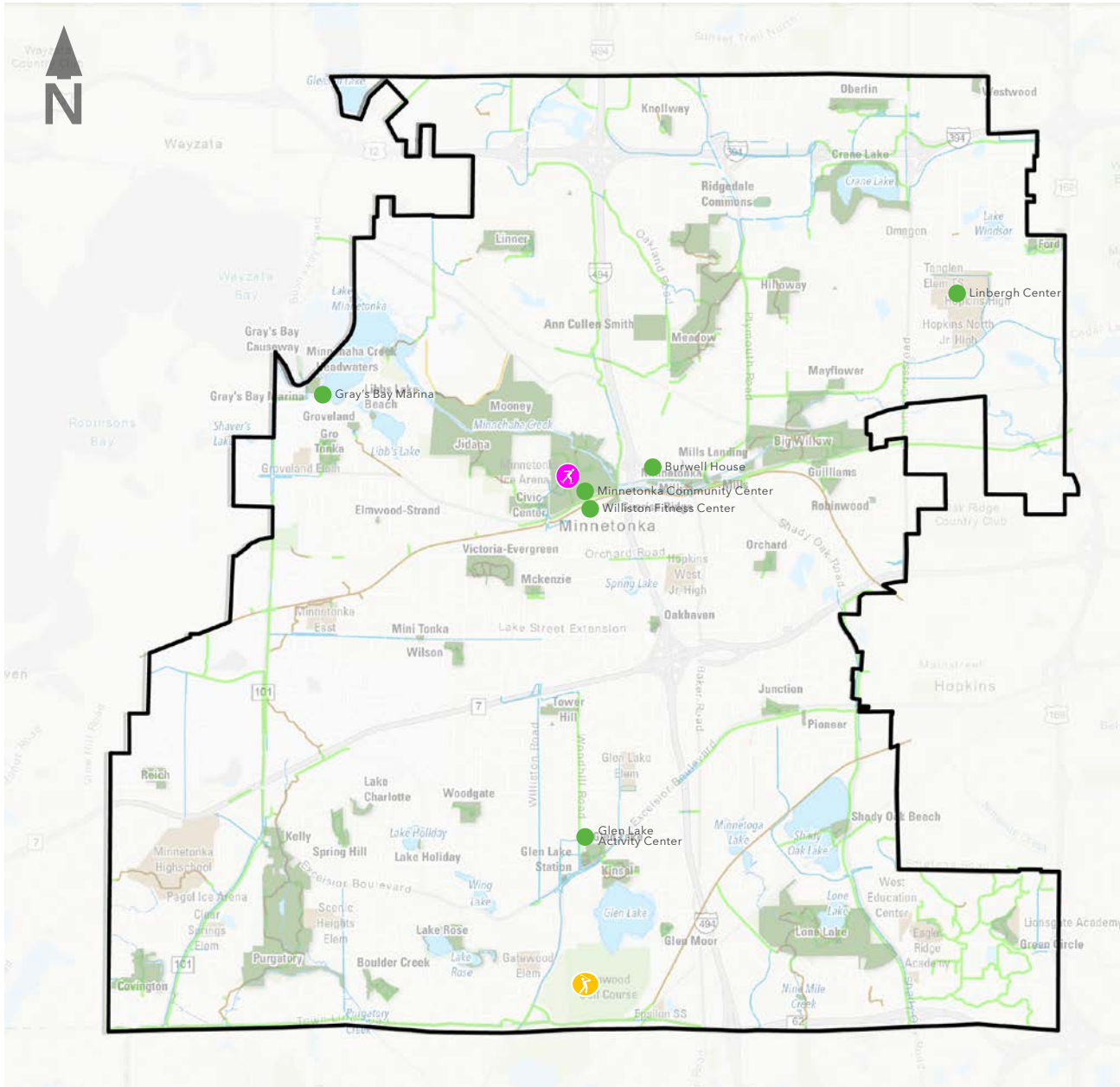


FIGURE 11: NOTABLE FACILITIES

- Schools
- Golf Courses
- Ice Arenas
- Other Facilities
- City park

FIGURE 12: COMMUNITY PARKS

Big Willow Park

The 101-acre Big Willow Park is located between Minnetonka Boulevard and Cedar Lake Road, just west of Minnetonka's Public Works facility. It is the city's smallest community park. Big Willow offers views of Minnehaha Creek, extensive trails, community athletic fields, a play area, and a canoe launch. It is also classified as a preserve and an athletic complex.



Big Willow Park



Civic Center Park

Within the Civic Center Park's 108 acres, just north of Minnetonka City Hall, there are soccer fields, play equipment, trails, a canoe launch on Minnehaha Creek, and an outdoor amphitheater. The park hosts a number of community events, including Summer Fest, the Minnetonka Farmer's Market, and movies and live music. Providing non-structured recreation facilities, this park is a social center for the community and provides open space for informal play. It is also classified as special use and a preserve.



Civic Center Park



Meadow Park

Meadow Park is a large 104-acre community park located in north-central Minnetonka, with the majority of its land devoted to natural areas. In terms of classification, Meadow Park falls into the category of a community park and preserve as it serves both community recreational park needs and protects natural open spaces. Trails weave through the park's natural areas and wetlands. There are many amenities at the park, including a tot lot and play equipment, tennis and basketball courts, and two all-season hockey rinks.



Meadow Park



Lone Lake Park

This 146-acre community park is located in southeast Minnetonka. It has a large natural area as well as community park amenities like soccer fields, tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts, a play area, a picnic shelter, open picnic areas, a dock, and trails. The park has two key functions: to provide community park facilities and natural open space within a developed area of the city. Lone Lake Park is also classified as a preserve and offers a large natural area with trails for hiking, mountain biking, and snowshoeing.



Lone Lake Park



Purgatory Park

With 155 acres, Purgatory Park is the largest of Minnetonka's community parks and is also classified as a preserve. The park offers views of Purgatory Creek, open spaces, and trails. Starting from the parking lot, a 1.2-mile trail loop provides scenic views of the park's various ecological areas, which include wetlands, woodlands, and prairies.



Purgatory Park



FIGURE 13: SPECIAL USE AND NOTABLE CITY FACILITIES

Burwell House

Charles H. Burwell House, located at 13209 East McGinty Road in Minnetonka, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is owned and operated by the City of Minnetonka. It is part of the Minnetonka park system, offering a picturesque setting for weekday picnics, painting, drawing, or photography, or for small family gatherings.



Burwell House

Glen Lake Activity Center

The Glen Lake Activity Center has meeting space for up to 50 people. It can also be divided into two smaller and equal size rooms by using a collapsible divider wall. There are restroom facilities, and the building is available for rent.

Gray's Bay Marina

The City of Minnetonka worked closely with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Hennepin County, the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and the Gray's Bay Task Force to acquire the Gray's Bay Public Access property. The DNR and the city have entered into an agreement to allow the city to operate the site as a public boat launch. It has a general parking area for cars and trailers. In addition, Minnetonka owns and operates 29 permanent boat slips, as well as an office, vending machines, public restrooms, and storage.



Gray's Bay Marina



Glen Lake Activity Center

Royals Athletic Center

The City of Minnetonka and the Hopkins School District jointly own and operate the Royals Athletic Center (formerly the Lindbergh Center). The facility is connected to Hopkins High School.

Amenities:

- > Five regulation basketball courts, two of which include adjustable height baskets for all levels of play
- > Seven regulation volleyball courts
- > 200-meter competitive running track
- > 300-meter walking/jogging track
- > Exercise and conditioning room with specialized machines, free weights and cardiovascular equipment
- > Additional amenities available for track, baseball, softball, wrestling, aerobics, badminton and golf



Royals Athletic Center

Minnetonka Ice Area

City programs, such as public skating, lessons, and adult hockey, are available at Minnetonka Ice Arena, which also houses the Lake Minnetonka Figure Skating Club, the Hopkins Youth Hockey Association, and the Minnetonka Youth Hockey Association. The facility is also used by high school hockey programs from Minnetonka, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park. Over 260,000 people use the facility annually.



Minnetonka Ice Arena

Minnetonka Community Center

The Minnetonka Community Center is available to residents and local organizations for a variety of meeting and banquet needs.

Shady Oak Beach

The Shady Oak Beach facility is owned by the City of Hopkins, and operated by the City of Minnetonka's Recreation Department. The 85-acre recreational area includes 76 feet of sandy beach shoreline and clear spring-fed waters, as well as a multi-age playground area, lifeguards, swimming, a high dive, concessions, a changing area, rentals for canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards, as well as sand volleyball.



Shady Oak Beach



Minnetonka Community Center

Williston Fitness Center

The Williston Fitness Center is owned and operated by the City of Minnetonka. Features and services include:

- > 25-yard swimming pool and splash pad
- > Five indoor tennis courts
- > Aerobics studio
- > Baseball/softball cages & training
- > Basketball court
- > Fitness equipment
- > Equipment orientations
- > Kid's Corner child care
- > Land and water aerobics, run club, cycle classes
- > Meeting/party room
- > Personal training
- > Wellness and nutrition coaching
- > Indoor playground (TreeHouse)
- > Whirlpool and saunas.



Williston Fitness Center

MINNETONKA TRAIL SYSTEM

The Minnetonka trail system provides a comprehensive system of trails that offer recreational value and pedestrian connections throughout the city (see *Figure 14*). The trail system connects Minnetonka's cultural and commercial activity centers and similar destinations in adjoining communities. It also directly connects to several regional amenities including transit facilities, Bryant Lake Regional Park, and the Three Rivers Park District's combined 27-mile Lake Minnetonka and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Trails. Trails are located off the road wherever possible and follow the city's three major creek corridors: Minnehaha, Nine Mile and Purgatory. These existing trails wind through many city parks and natural open space areas, providing access to wetlands, lakes, marshes and woodlands. A five-mile mountain bike trail was added to the trail system in 2021. Users of the trail system experience much of the natural environment characteristics of Minnetonka. Throughout the height of the season, trails are patrolled regularly by Minnetonka Police Department personnel on bicycles and in special police vehicles. In addition, Three Rivers Park District rangers patrol the Three Rivers LRT Trails from April through November.

Minnetonka's Trail Improvement Plan (TIP) is a list and map of multi-use trail corridors for future expansion. These multi-use trails differ from the

original trail plan in that they follow the street corridors and serve transportation as well as recreational use. They are prioritized by high use segments and degree of difficulty to construct. These trails often involve multiple agency stakeholders such as MnDOT and Hennepin County as well as individual property owners along the corridor for right of way.

Trail Facilities

Restrooms and drinking fountains are available at each of the five community parks.

Terrain and Traffic

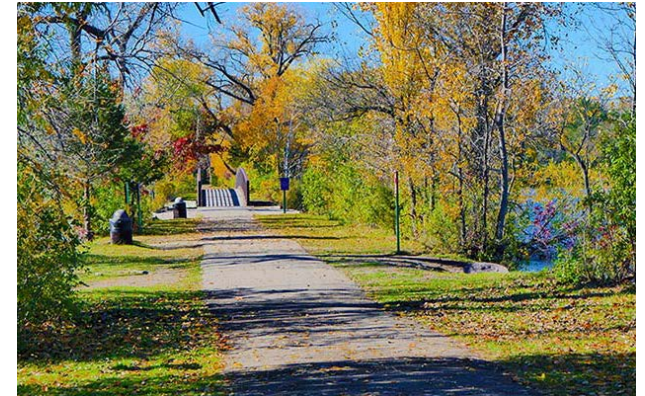
Trails are typically eight to ten feet wide and designed to accommodate two-way bike & pedestrian traffic. Surfaces are either compacted crushed limestone or asphalt, depending on the area and terrain. At some uncontrolled intersections with major roadways, the trail will cross the road via a pedestrian underpass or overpass to minimize conflicts with traffic.

Trail Maintenance

Much of the trail system is plowed during the winter months, making it usable throughout the year. Cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are not allowed on trails.



Trail example within Minnetonka parks.



Trail at Shady Oak Beach.

For details regarding trails, including trail regulations and existing and proposed trail improvements, visit the City of Minnetonka's 2020 Trail Improvement Plan (TIP).

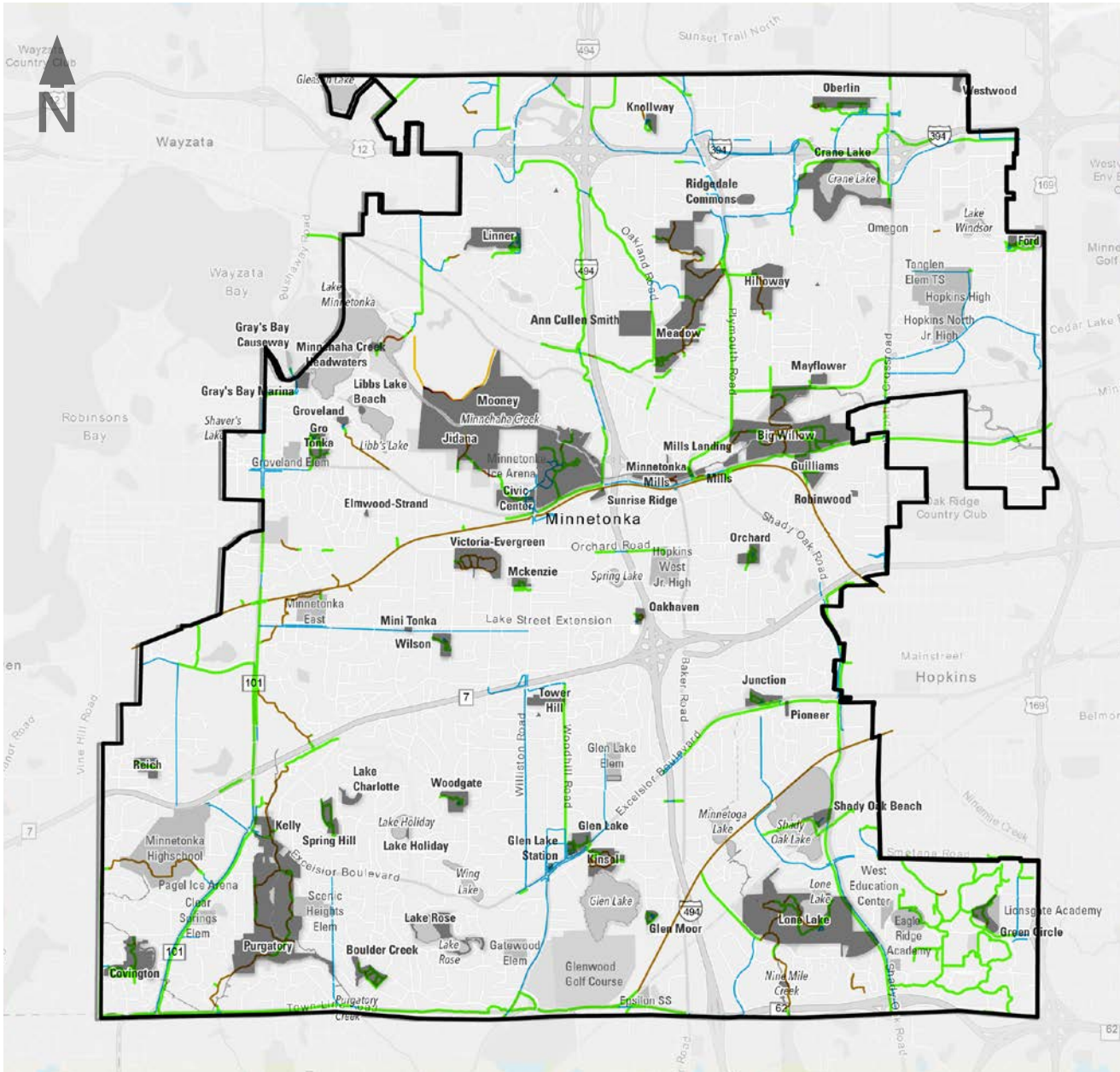


FIGURE 14: TRAILS

- Trails (Asphalt)
- Trails (Unpaved)
- Sidewalks
- City park

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

A needs assessment was conducted as part of this planning process to understand the state of Minnetonka's park, open space and trail system, including its facilities, programming and operations. The assessment included evaluating existing conditions, an extensive community outreach effort, alignment with national standards, comparison to peer communities, and evaluation of national and local trends (see Chapter 2). This analysis identified current and future system needs and desires, forming the vision and guiding principles of this POST System Plan (see Chapter 4). The needs assessment process included:

- > Engaging the community (events, surveys, and stakeholder conversations) to gather input on existing conditions and proposed improvements
- > Evaluation of the park, open space and trail system including the programs, operations and facilities
- > Meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Park Board, City Council and City Staff
- > Existing and forecasted demographic analysis
- > Evaluation of current park classifications
- > Identification of issues and opportunities at a system-wide level, including identifying areas of need
- > Comparison of existing parks and facilities with national standards and peer communities
- > Evaluation of national and local park and recreation trends



Glen Lake Skate Park



Boulder Creek Park



Covington Park



Gro Tonka Park

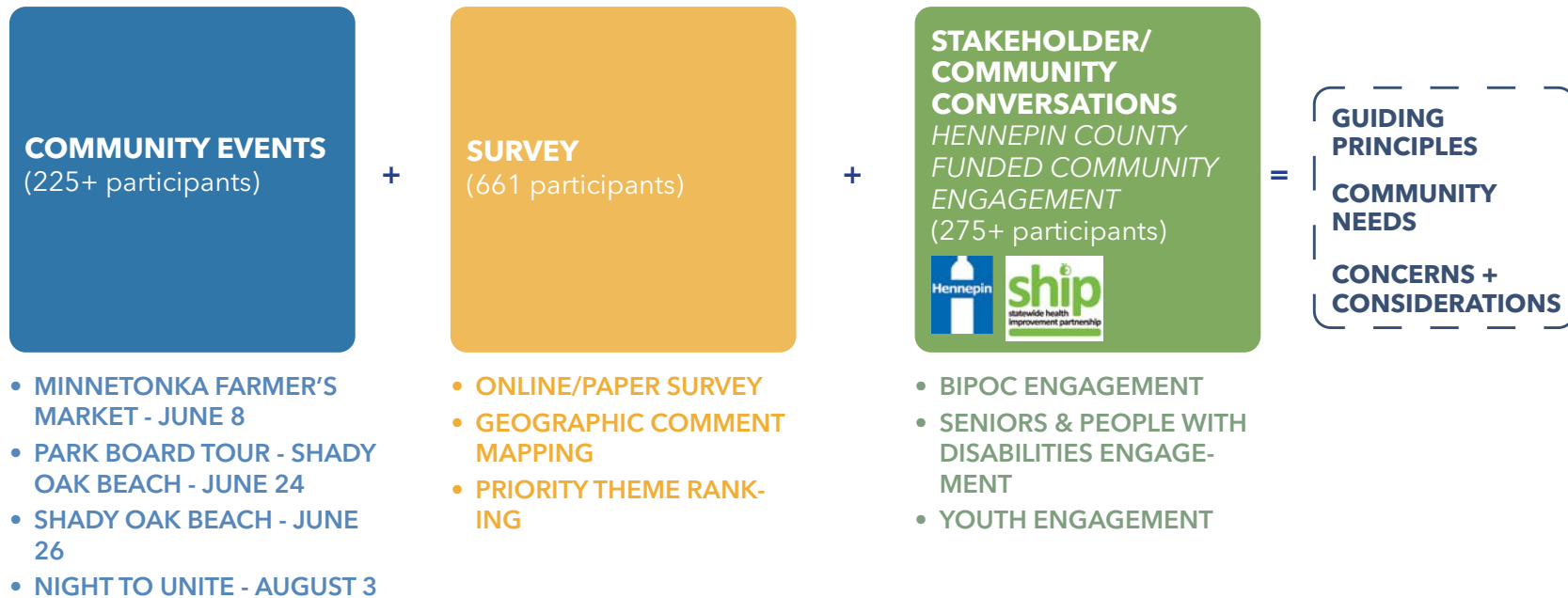
Community Input

PROCESS AND SUMMARY

To create a POST System Plan that will meet the community's needs, an extensive community outreach effort was conducted to help identify and understand the values, needs and preferences of the community. Special effort was made to reach out to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC and people with disabilities with the intention that this plan will accommodate the whole community.

This process has been completed with the support of SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) and Hennepin County through an Active Living Technical Assistance grant. Engagement events and activities are shown in the timeline and have resulted in valuable information which will influence future development of parks which more closely meet the objectives of the community.

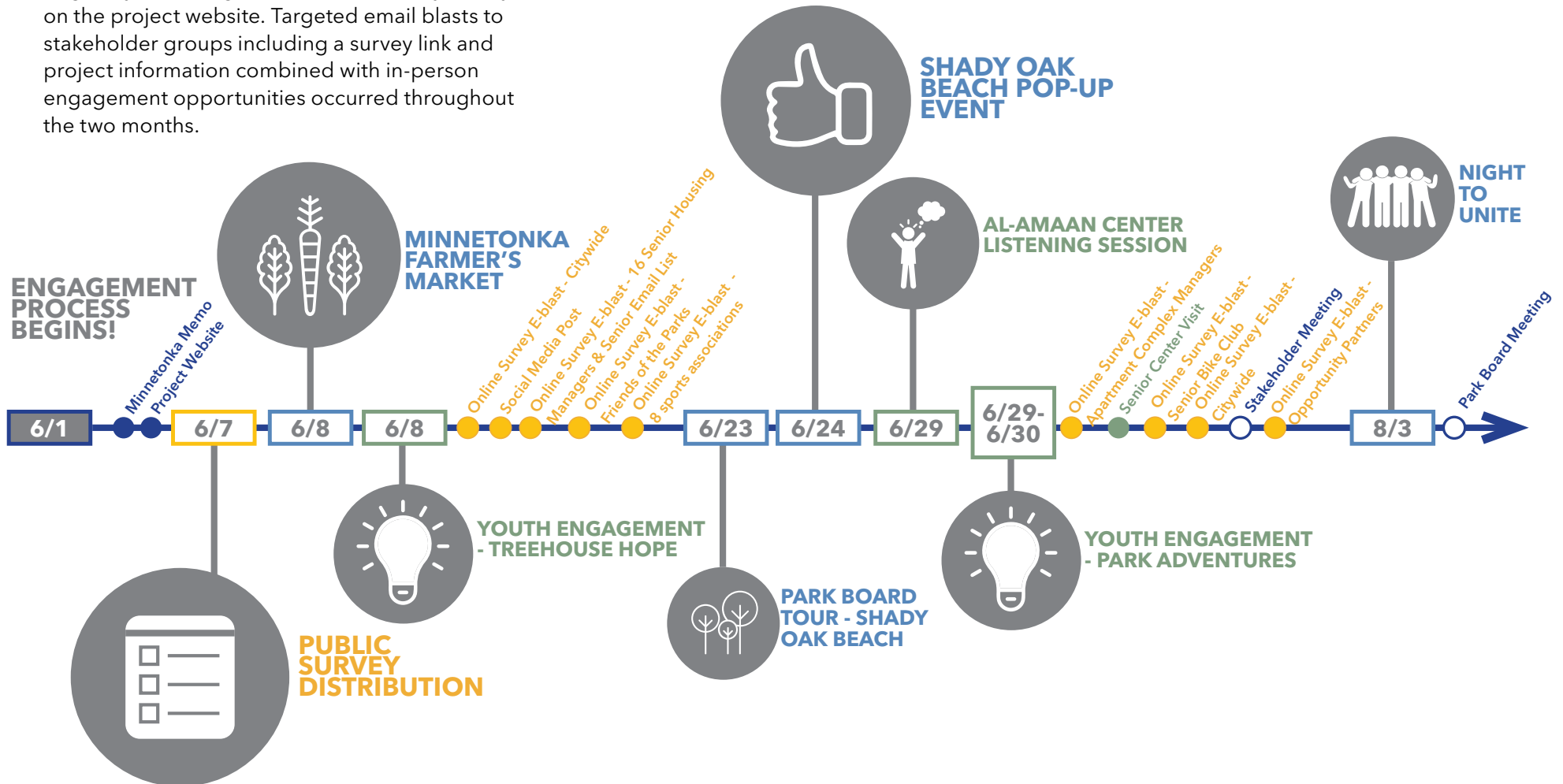
Public outreach methods included community pop-up events, meetings, an online community survey, listening sessions, and an online geographic mapping comment tool.



Summary of Community Engagement Efforts

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

Community engagement efforts spanned two months in June and August 2021. The process began by launching an online community survey on the project website. Targeted email blasts to stakeholder groups including a survey link and project information combined with in-person engagement opportunities occurred throughout the two months.



Timeline of Community Engagement

EVENTS WHERE USED

AMOUNT OF INPUT



Night to Unite Neighborhood Pop-Up

August 3, 2021
109 votes cast



Minnetonka Farmer's Market Event

June 8, 2021
174 votes cast



Shady Oak Beach Pop-Up Event

June 24, 2021
222 votes cast



Dot Voting Takeaways

Figures 16 and 17 show the voting results from the board that asked participants: "What new and/or additional things would you like to do in Minnetonka parks?"

Skateboarding and having a bicycle playground/pump track were the most selected responses.

The next most selected new/additional things to do were:

- > Rock climbing or bouldering ,
- > Special events,
- > Nature play areas,
- > Year-round swimming facility, and
- > Pickleball courts.

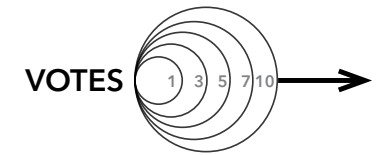


FIGURE 16: DOT VOTING RESULTS - WHAT NEW AND/OR ADDITIONAL THINGS WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS? (IMAGERY RESPONSE #1-#15)

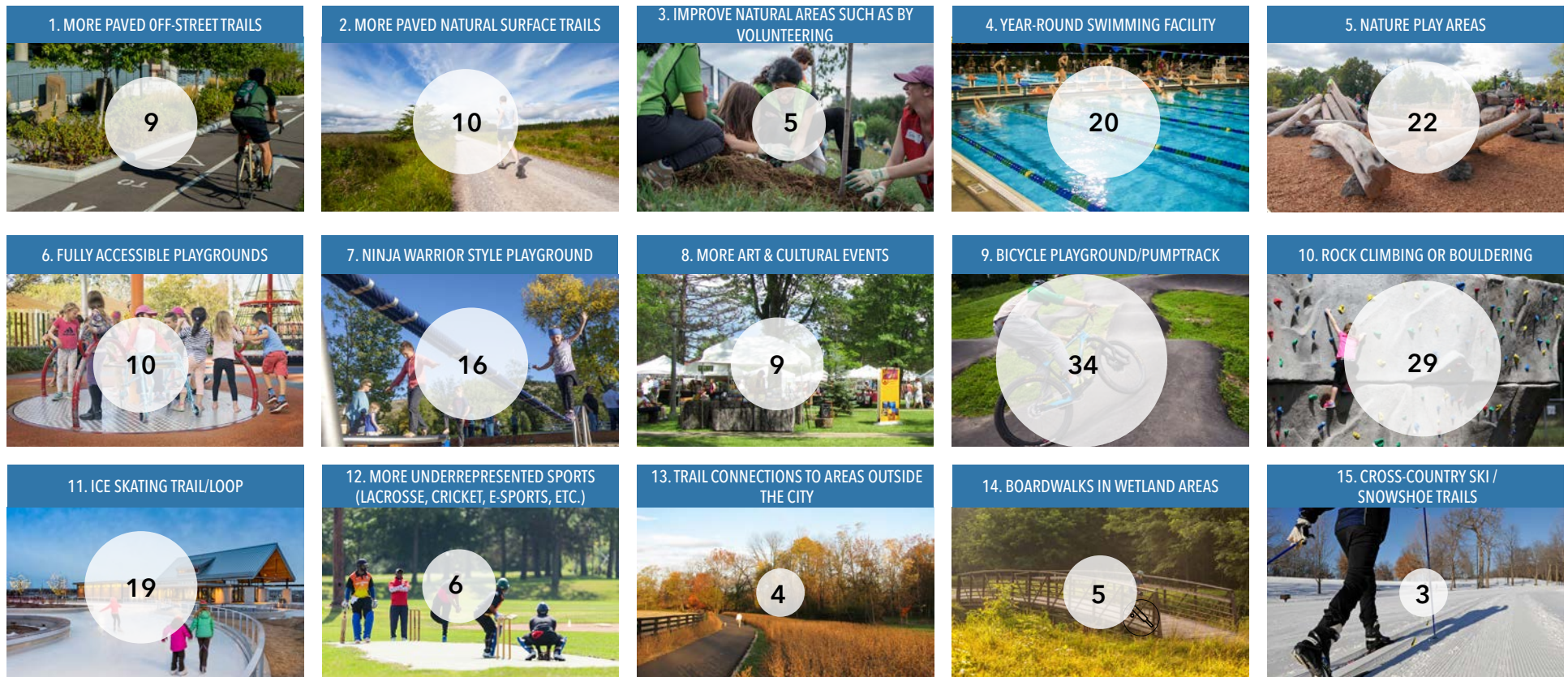
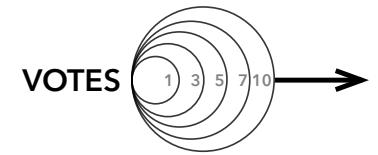


FIGURE 17: DOT VOTING RESULTS - WHAT NEW AND/OR ADDITIONAL THINGS WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS? (IMAGERY RESPONSE #16-#26)



16. NATURE PROGRAMMING (PLANT ID WALKS, BIRD ID/WATCHING, CANOEING/KAYAKING)



17. FITNESS CLASSES



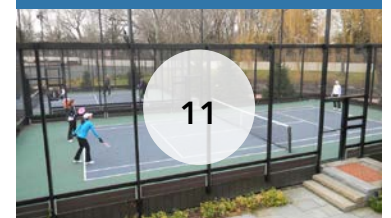
18. SPECIAL EVENTS (CONCERTS IN THE PARK, FESTIVALS, MOVIES, ETC.)



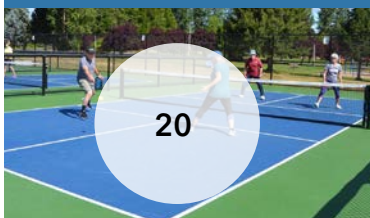
19. OFF-LEASH DOG PARK



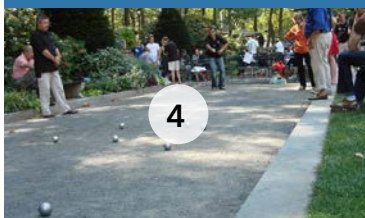
20. PLATFORM TENNIS



21. PICKLEBALL COURTS



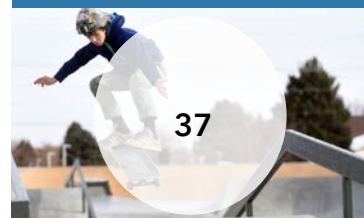
22. BOCCE



23. SAND VOLLEYBALL



24. SKATEBOARDING



25. GARDENING



26. MORE WINTER TRAILS



COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

A 30-question public survey was developed to collect feedback between June and August of 2021. The survey was publicized through email, social media, and at community events. Respondents were able to participate online, or in person with printed versions available at the Minnetonka Senior Advisory Committee meetings, the Minnetonka Community Center, community events, and stakeholder engagement/listening sessions.

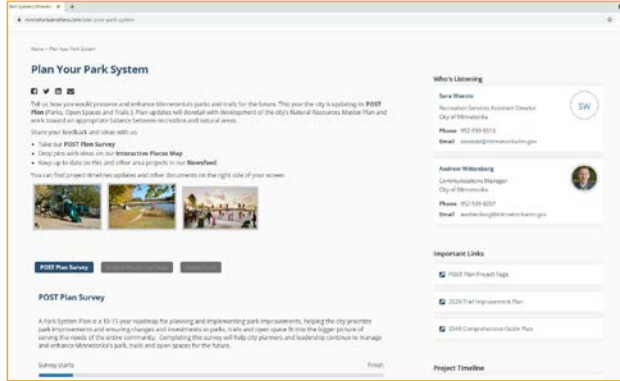
In total, **661** people responded to the survey. The following section summarizes the results of the survey.

Minnetonka Matters - Hub for Online Engagement

Minnetonka Matters was the hub for the online engagement and provided communications, information about the existing park system, and provided two main ways to engage with the POST System Plan:

- Survey - 30 questions
- Geographic Comment Mapping
- Community engagement took place for 3 months

<https://www.minnetonkamatters.com/plan-your-park-system>



Minnetonka Matters website

FIGURE 18: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



FIGURE 19: TOP 3 PRIORITY ISSUES AND THEMES MINNETONKA SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS IN THIS POST SYSTEM PLAN TO GUIDE FUTURE PARK, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS.

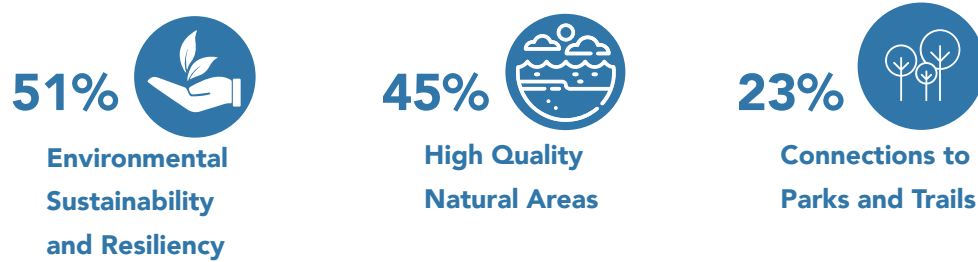


FIGURE 20: FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO MINNETONKA PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS BY RESPONDENTS

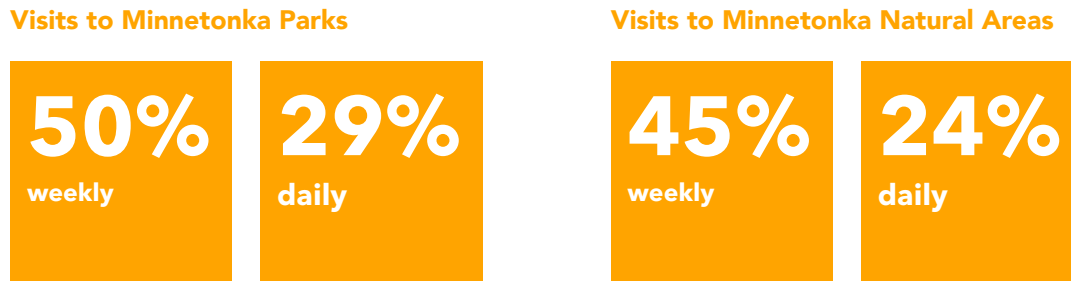


FIGURE 21: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

OVER 92% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE MINNETONKA RESIDENTS.

OVER 60% HAD LIVED IN MINNETONKA FOR 11+ YEARS.

THE SURVEY MAINLY REACHED PEOPLE AGES 31 AND OLDER.

ALMOST 60% OF RESPONDENTS WERE WOMEN.

FIGURE 22: HOW DO YOU INTERACT WITH MINNETONKA'S NATURAL AREAS?

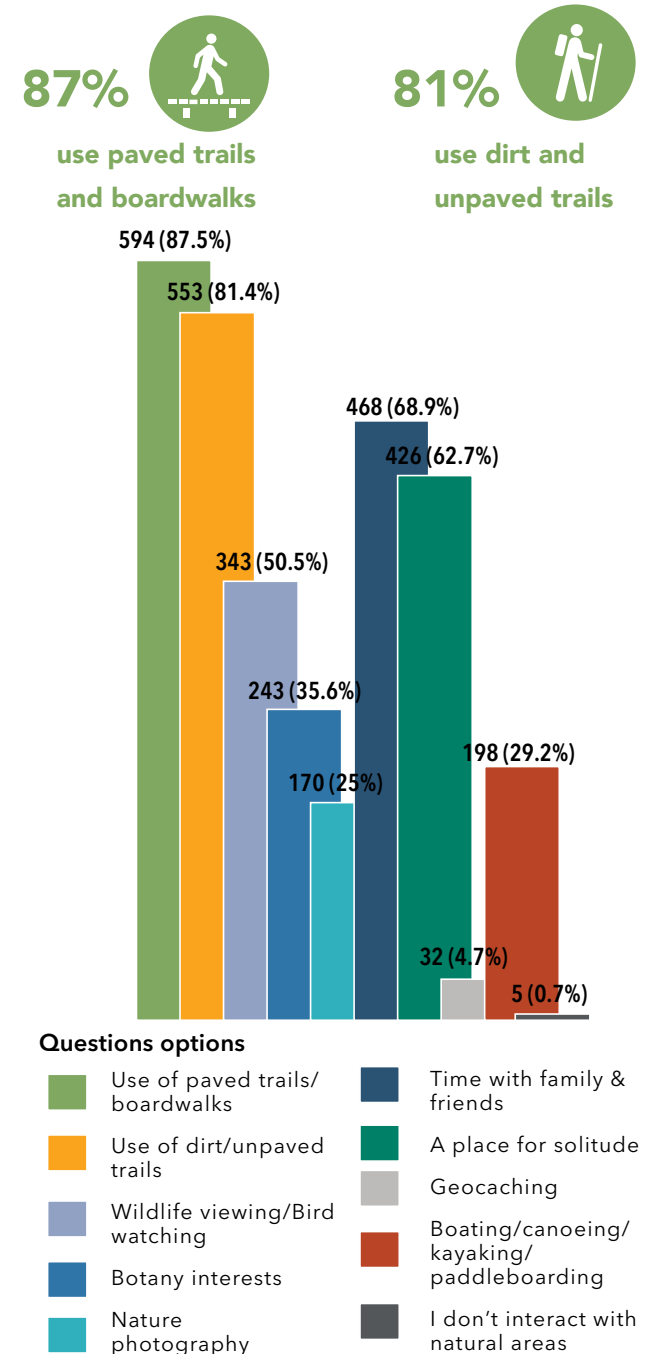
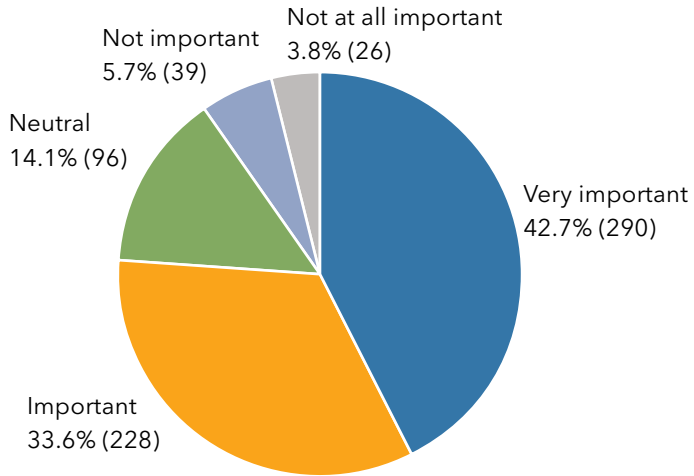
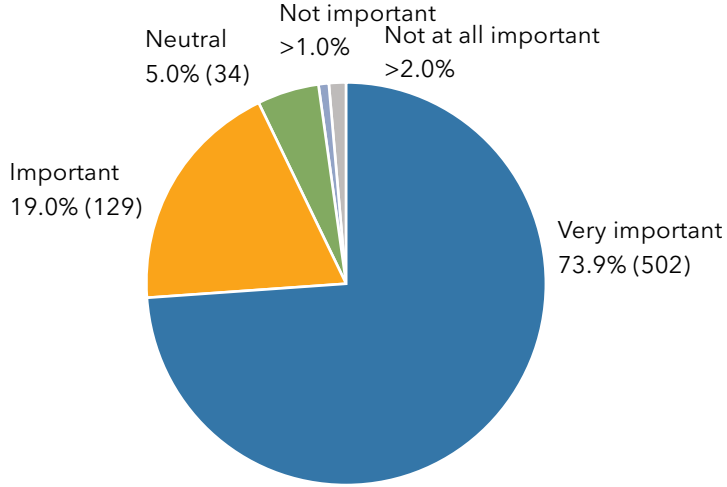


FIGURE 23: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TO THE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN MINNETONKA?

Parks with recreational amenities



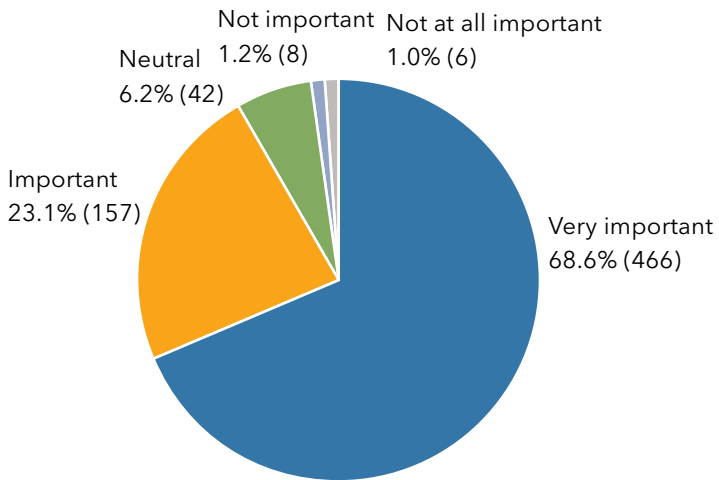
Trails and trail connections



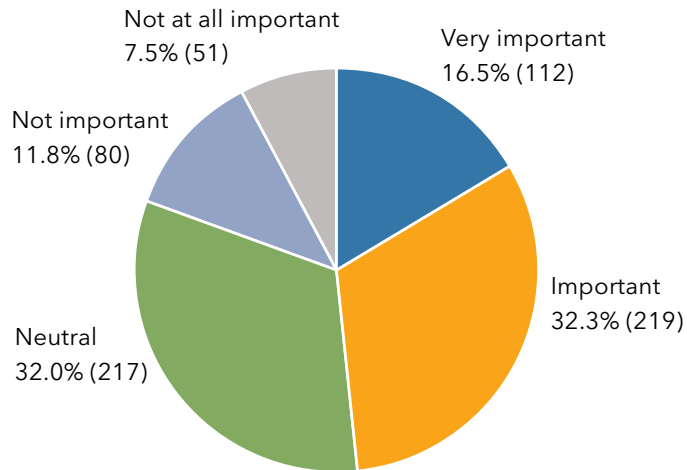
Questions options

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not important
- Not at all important

Natural areas for passive recreation

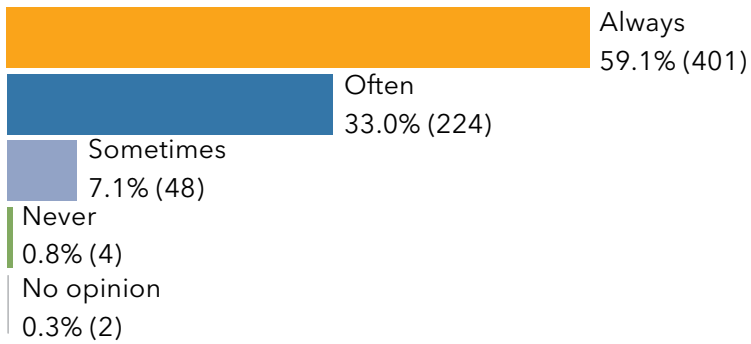


Recreation programming



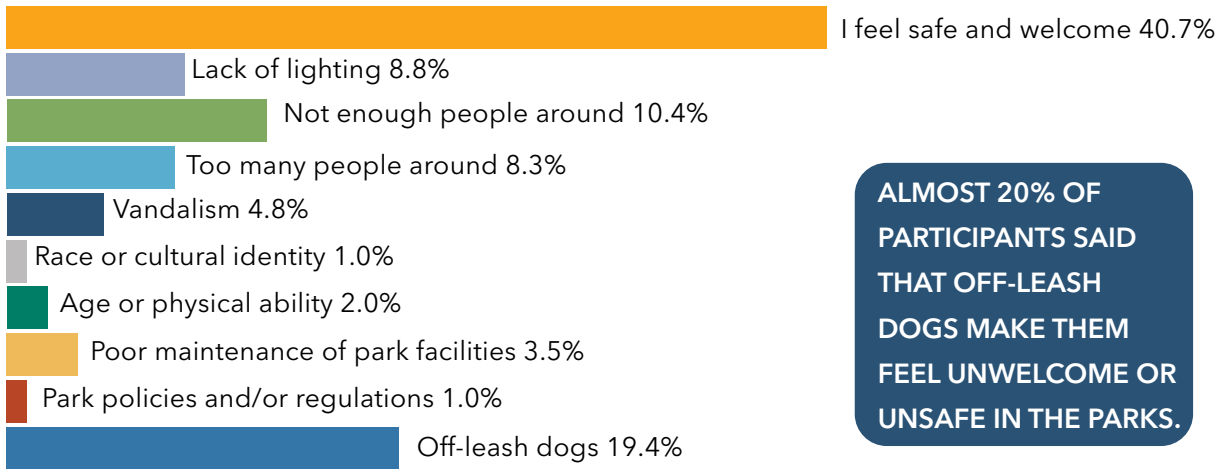
TRAILS AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS and NATURAL AREAS FOR PASSIVE RECREATION are very important to over 73% and 68% of respondents, respectively.

FIGURE 24: DO YOU FEEL WELCOME AND SAFE IN MINNETONKA PARKS?



THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS FELT SAFE 'ALWAYS' (59%) OR 'OFTEN' (33%) IN THE PARKS.

FIGURE 25: IF NOT, WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL UNWELCOME OR UNSAFE IN THE PARKS?



ALMOST 20% OF PARTICIPANTS SAID THAT OFF-LEASH DOGS MAKE THEM FEEL UNWELCOME OR UNSAFE IN THE PARKS.

FIGURE 26: TOP 5 DESIRED NEW AND/OR ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS

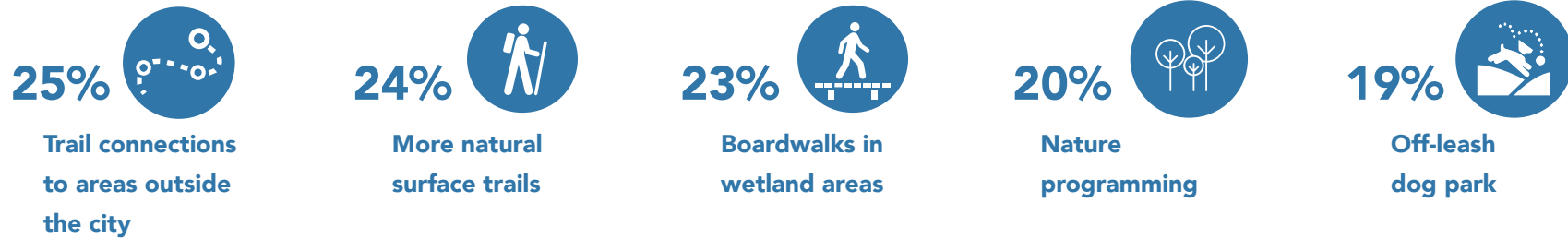


FIGURE 27: HOW SHOULD MINNETONKA PARKS BALANCE NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION WITH HUMAN USE AND ACCESS FOR RECREATION?

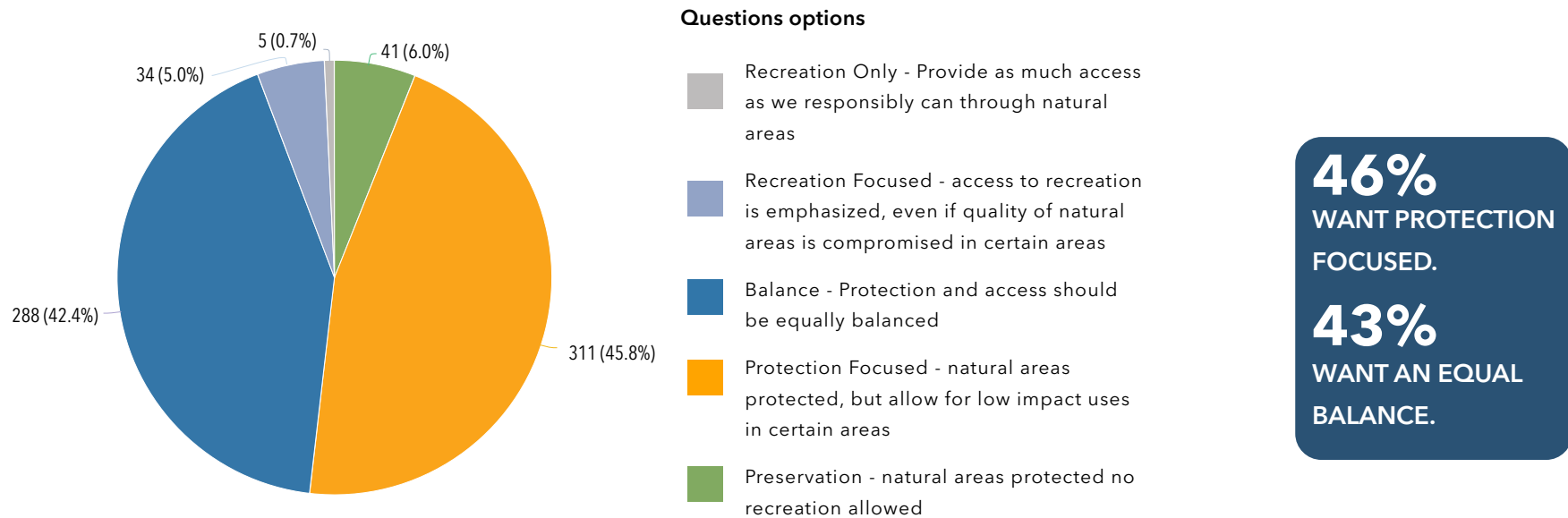


FIGURE 28: WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ENJOY MOST AT MINNETONKA PARKS?

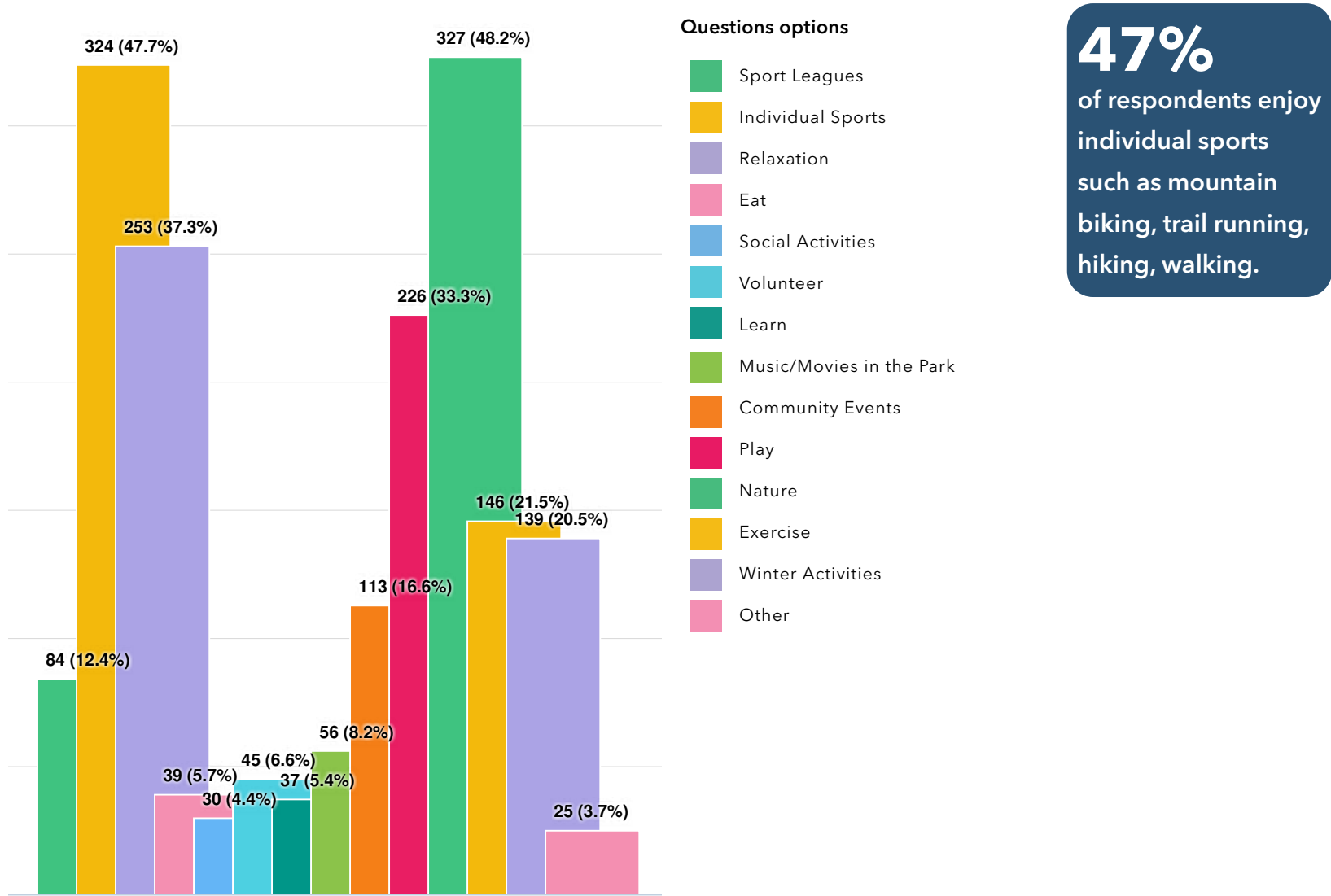
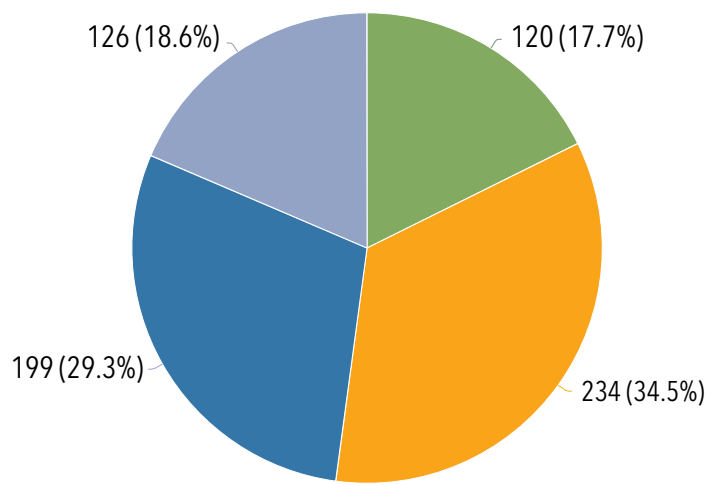


FIGURE 29: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SHIFTING TRENDS HAVE CREATED CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDING OUTDOOR ICE SKATING. WHICH APPROACH DO YOU THINK MINNETONKA SHOULD USE TO ADAPT TO THESE CHALLENGES?



Questions options

- Close to Home - There should continue to be outdoor rinks throughout the city, even if quality is less consistent
- Quality over Quantity - Concentrate on fewer outdoor facilities with higher quality ice that might not be a close to my home
- None - I'm not likely to use city-provided outdoor ice skating facilities
- Destination - Create one high quality outdoor ice skating facility (ice trail, holiday skating rink, etc.)

LESS THAN 19% OF PARTICIPANTS FEEL THAT THE CITY SHOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUTDOOR RINKS THROUGHOUT THE CITY, INSTEAD PREFERRED QUALITY OVER QUANTITY, NONE, OR A DESTINATION RINK.


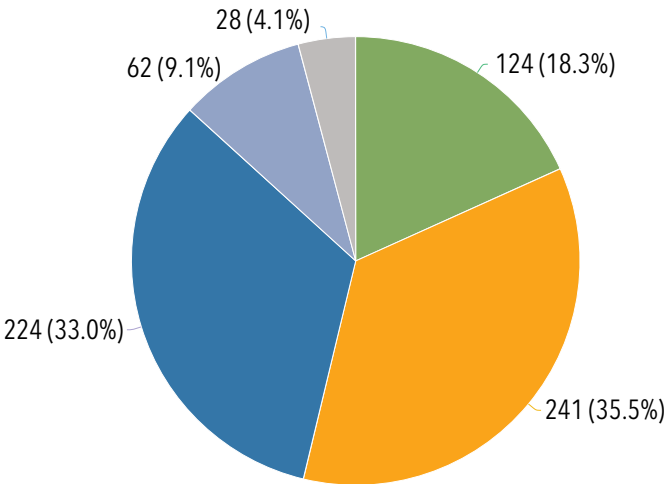


FIGURE 30: NATURAL, UNMAINTAINED AREAS OF THE CITY HAVE TRADITIONALLY ALLOWED FOR DOGS OFF-LEASH UNDER VOICE COMMAND, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN ISSUES WITH DOG/PEOPLE INTERACTIONS. WHICH APPROACH SHOULD THE CITY USE TO ADAPT TO CHALLENGES?



Questions options







- Include a dog park in a future new park space
- Ban dogs from being off-leash in parks Do not create an off-leash dog park.
- Create fenced off-leash dog park(s)
- Identify specific parks and areas with those parks where dogs are allowed to be off-leash under voice control
- Keep as is - dogs should be allowed off leash under voice command in natural, unmaintained areas

ABOUT 18% OF PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE POLICY AS IS. 33% PREFER TO CREATE AN OFF-LEASHED DOG PARK. ABOUT 36% WOULD LIKE TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC PARKS WHERE DOGS ARE ALLOWED TO BE OFF-LEASH.



GEOGRAPHIC MAPPING COMMENT SUMMARY

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to place 'pins' on an interactive map and add notes to share more information. A tool allowed respondents to zoom in on specific park, trail, and open space areas. There were six categories for comments:

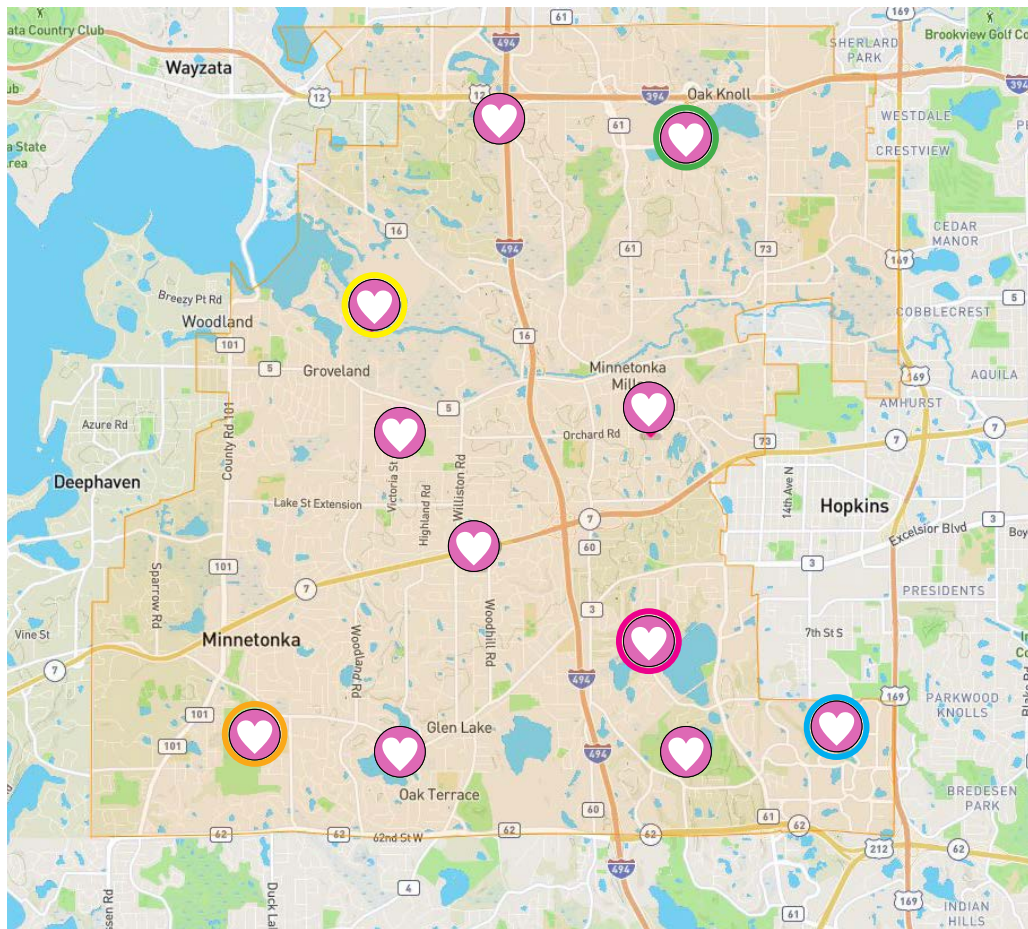
-  What do you love?
-  What are your ideas?
-  What needs work?
-  Where are there gaps in the system? (i.e. facilities, trail connections, open space preserves, etc.)
-  What bike/pedestrian issues have you observed?
-  Where are there opportunities to improve the system or add new parks, open spaces, or trails?

There were 149 comments made with the interactive mapping tool. The following pages provides a summary of comments for each category.

149
MAP COMMENTS



What do you love?



Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

Location: 31XX Fairchild Avenue, Minnetonka
This is THE BEST winter outdoor space!

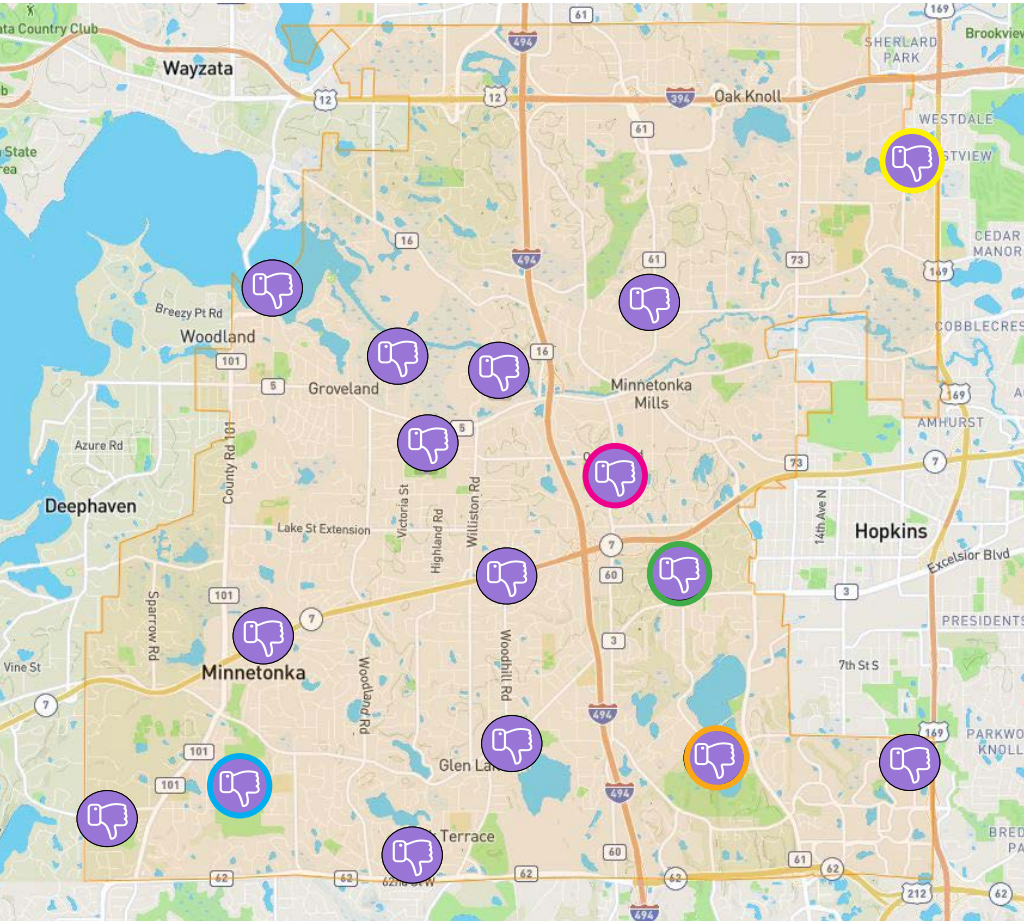
Location: 19XX Dwight Lane, Minnetonka
I love this little connection here from the neighborhood to Ridgedale and the YMCA. We need more connections like this that makes Minnetonka more walkable!

Location: Purgatory Park
Comment 1: Awesome park! We love the natural area and walking trails. Would love additional parks like this one!
Comment 2: The restored prairie is a beautiful amenity in this park. It is in need of further restoration and management (increase number of flowering plants).

Location: 52XX Dominick Drive, Minnetonka
I love how this has been kept mostly open and prairie right now. The frogs, turtles, and fireflies love this area.

Location: Green Circle Park
Love the pollinator habitat here. Please add more in Minnetonka Parks!

What needs work?



Location: Ford Park
 Play equipment is old, tired, and some items don't operate as intended

Location: Junction Park
 The tennis courts are in terrible shape. Pickleball courts are very busy in the evening at other parks. Restore the tennis courts with pickleball lines so families can play in the evening.

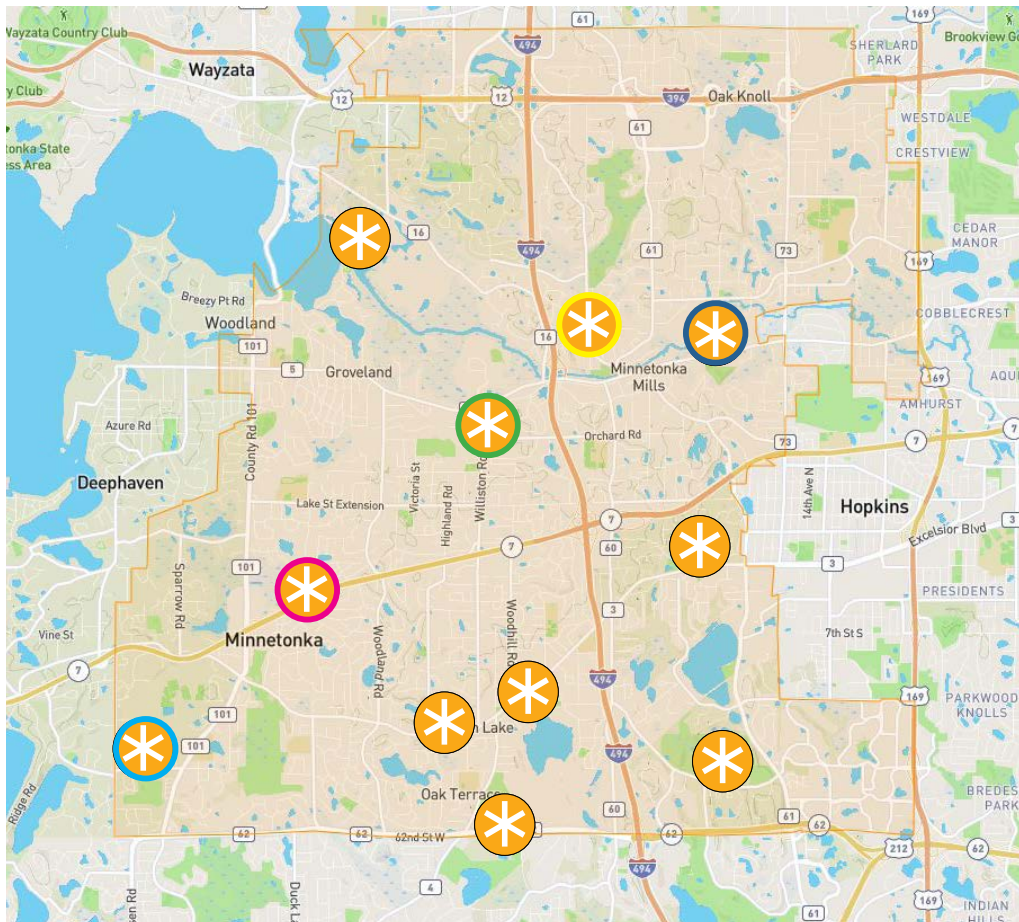
Location: Shady Oak Park
 This path is often under water due to the lack of water outlet for Shady Oak. Also there is a lot of erosion here from the hill above that could be fixed fairly easily.

Location: Meadow Park
 The rocks that form the border around the play set is quite sharp and is a risk to kids who run (and fall).

Location: Purgatory Park
 I am a dog lover and understand the value of walking a dog off leash. The problem in this park is that the areas used for off leash walking are managed/maintained areas. The city leash ordinance states dogs can be off leash in unmaintained areas. The city has invested significant time and resources restoring this park and it is being significantly degraded by the overuse. Please find an unmaintained area for people to walk their dogs off leash or build a dedicated dog park.

Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

What bike/pedestrian issues have you observed?



Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

Location: 13XXX McGinty Road East, Minnetonka

This area is heavily used by walkers, runners, and bikers and is very dangerous because there is no path and cars go very fast. A path needs to be added to connect the walking path that ends at Surry Lane to Plymouth Road (61).

Location: 18XXX Covington Road, Minnetonka

This path that leads to a blind stop sign on a steep slope. Cars drive too fast and there needs to be speed bumps or a path clearly labeled on the road for peds to access the park path.

Location: 11XXX Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka

When biking from the LRT trail through Guilliams Park to get to Big Willow Park, there is no connection here even though the trails are so close. You have to unsafely ride along Minnetonka Blvd to get down to the Big Willow entrance. I'd like to see a connection here to the Minnetonka Loop Trail

Location: 16XXX Minnesota State Highway 7, Minnetonka

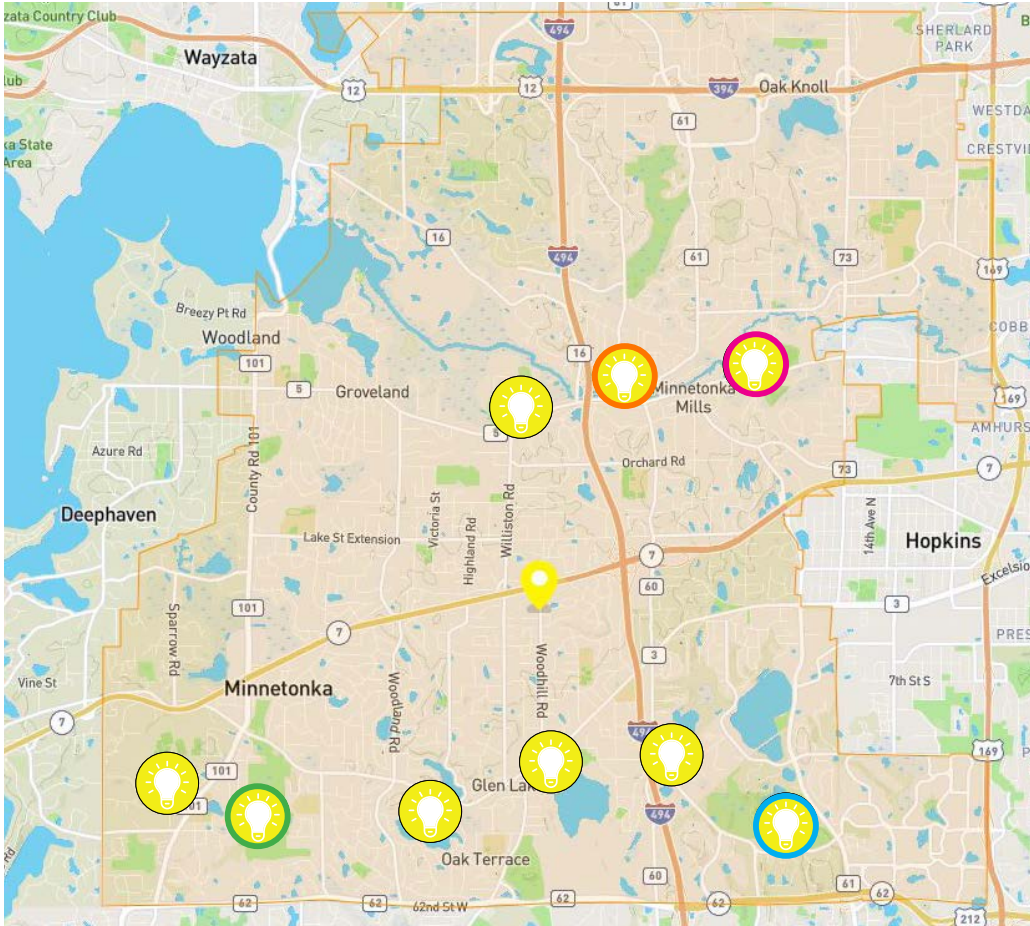
The black tarmac path here is in quite rough shape, and oddly has no fence between it and the highway.

Location: 3XXX Williston Road, Minnetonka

I've observed (and been a participant) of the bike/foot traffic that uses Williston to hook up with the Mtka LRT. Would love to see a dedicated path or protective barriers for the ped lane since it's a decent hill and cars come flying down. Also since it's a common road to head into City Hall where the farmers market and other community events are held - big need for a pedestrian path for safer travel.



What are your ideas?



Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

Location: 13508 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka
 This would be a great spot for a narrow natural surface bike / walk trail making a better connection from Burwell to the west than the narrow, slanted, often uncleared in winter sidewalk.

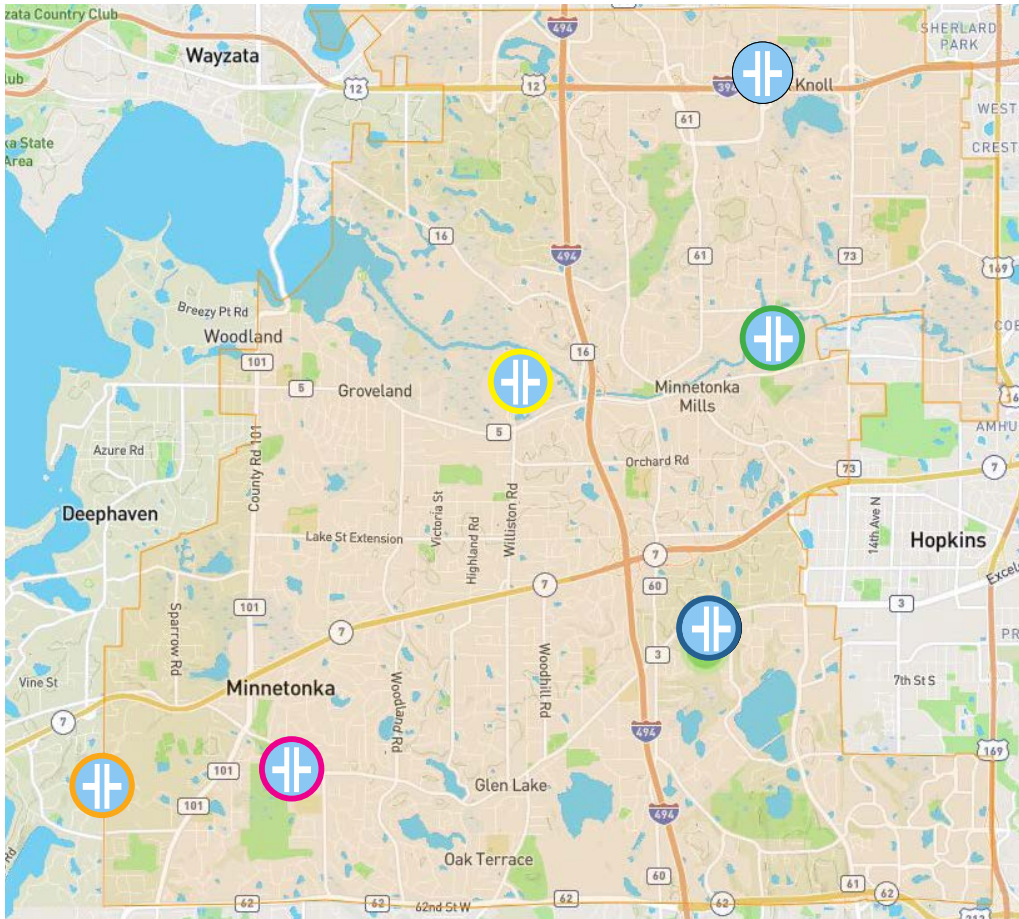
Location: Lone Lake Park
 Comment 1: When the city re develops the signage for the park it needs to provide some history on the indigenous people (before settlers) who lived here plus the distinctive natural elements of the park including the vistas, lake, creek, remnants of big woods, etc. Kind of a cultural and physical history.
 Comment 2: No one uses this large area of turf. Why not create a pollinator meadow?

Location: Minnetonka Loop Trail Systems, 12523 Creek Rd W, Minnetonka
 Big Willow would be a great place to add a short (likely VERY short) beginner level single-track loop.

Location: Purgatory Park
 Comment 1: When the city re develops the signage for the park it needs to provide some history on the indigenous people (before settlers) who lived here plus the distinctive natural elements of the park including the vistas, lake, creek, remnants of big woods, etc. Kind of a cultural and physical history.
 Comment 2: Connect Purgatory Park to Covington Park through a pededstrian path or have better signs to direct people from one park to another



**Where are there gaps in the system?
(i.e. facilities, trail connections, open space preserves, etc.)**



Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

Location: Civic Center Campus

A more general comment - please update City statutes / ordinances to allow people on bicycles to access the "unmaintained" trails in Minnetonka parks.

Location: 55XX Vine Hill Road, Minnetonka

Minnetonka should extend the path from Vine Hill to connect to the trail system behind the Minnetonka High School going into the Tamarack neighborhood. This is a very dangerous trek, especially when walking with children, to get to the path.

Location: Junction Park

Two tennis courts are in terrible shape. Would love to see both courts resurfaced with one court kept at tennis and the second court turned into two pickleball courts. The courts now are currently frequently used as off leash dog runs.

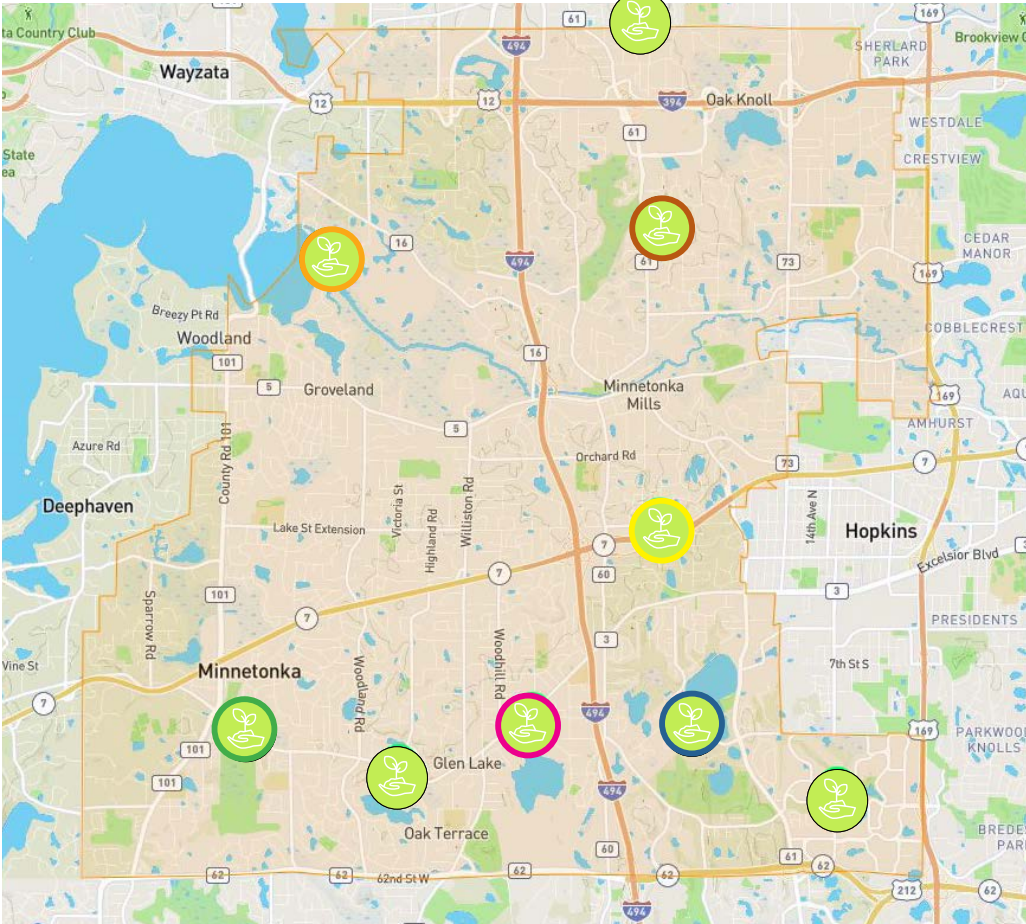
Location: Purgatory Park

The park appears to be saturated with memorial benches at this point. I would think we should stop this program going forward and initiate a new dedication program if desired. Perhaps an arched pagoda over by the entrance in the lawn area or by the barn.

Location: Big Willow Park

It would be great if there were nets around the outfield fences on all Big Willow baseball fields, but particularly the back two. The only parking available for people playing sports (soccer and softball) is right beyond the outfield fences. Everyone tries to park as far away as possible and crosses their fingers that they won't come back to a smashed windshield. I've seen a number of dented cars and smashed windshields from Softball players hitting home runs.

Where are there opportunities to improve the system or add new parks, open spaces, or trails?



Location: 43XX Briarwood Drive, Minnetonka
This would be a great place for a pedestrian/bike overpass of Hwy 7. These two neighborhoods are completely disconnected right now due to Hwy 7.

Location: 16XXX Grays Bay Boulevard, Minnetonka
Provide better access to Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek for non motor boat users.

Location: 12XXX Hilloway Road West, Minnetonka
Would absolutely love some kind of playground feature the Sherwood Forest neighborhood could walk to safely.

Location: Shady Oak Access
It would be nice if the city made the informal path that starts here and accesses the trail in Lone Lake Park official. It has been here a long time and right now we need some ground rules for it.

Location: Kinsel Park
Would like to see Kinsel park preserve be better maintained. Trails need work, picnic tables inaccessible, and maintain it in winter for winter walks, snowshoeing, X-skiing would be great.

Location: Purgatory Park
The city recently replaced a pipe draining polluted parking lot water and water from Excelsior Blvd to flow directly into the creek. This could have been an innovative project that showcased best management practices. Please consider a watershed partnership to fix this antiquated storm sewer system of dumping directly into water bodies.

Note: This is a summary of comments for each category.

STAKEHOLDER/COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS SUMMARY

STAKEHOLDER/ COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

HENNEPIN COUNTY FUNDED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(275+)

PROJECT SUPPORT

The city received project support from Hennepin County Active Living funded through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), Minnesota Department of Health, to deepen community outreach and engagement. This support supplemented the planned engagement activities by adding additional resources to specifically engage underrepresented communities, including BIPOC, seniors, youth, and persons with disabilities.



STAKEHOLDER/COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

BIPOC

City staff from the city's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group determined appropriate forums, methods and/or events to facilitate engagement with BIPOC communities. It was determined that conducting Listening Sessions was a good way to reach out to BIPOC communities. A listening session was conducted at the Al-Amaan Center on June 19th.

Apartment complexes were identified as places to reach out to the BIPOC community. An online survey e-blast to 37 apartment complex managers was sent out in June. In addition, at Night to Unite, pop-up events were held at various neighborhood gatherings at apartment complexes.

Youth

- Engagement with Treehouse Hope youth group - June 8th (~18 participants)
- Pop-up event at Shady Oak Beach to engage with youth - June 26th (~60 participants)
- Six visits to the Park Adventures camps in Minnetonka - June 29th/30th (60)

People with Disabilities

- An online survey e-blast was sent to Opportunity Partners, a nonprofit organization that works alongside people with disabilities to provide job training, employment and residential support for people to live more independently.

Seniors

- City staff met with the city's Senior Advisory Board to review online survey questions/topics to gain better insight and make adjustments to the survey. As a result, more natural resources questions were added to the survey as well as more questions regarding senior programming.
- City staff/project team provided hard copy surveys to senior groups/facilities to complete. Results were transferred to the online survey and the results tallied with the other online surveys.
- Outreach happened at city locations to reach out to seniors and people with disabilities, including multiple visits to the Community Center/Senior Services.
- An online survey e-blast was sent to the Senior Bike Club in June.

SELECT GENERAL COMMENTS FROM LISTENING SESSIONS

FIGURE 31: HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY USE MINNETONKA'S PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND TRAILS?



FIGURE 32: WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT MINNETONKA'S SYSTEM OF PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND TRAILS?



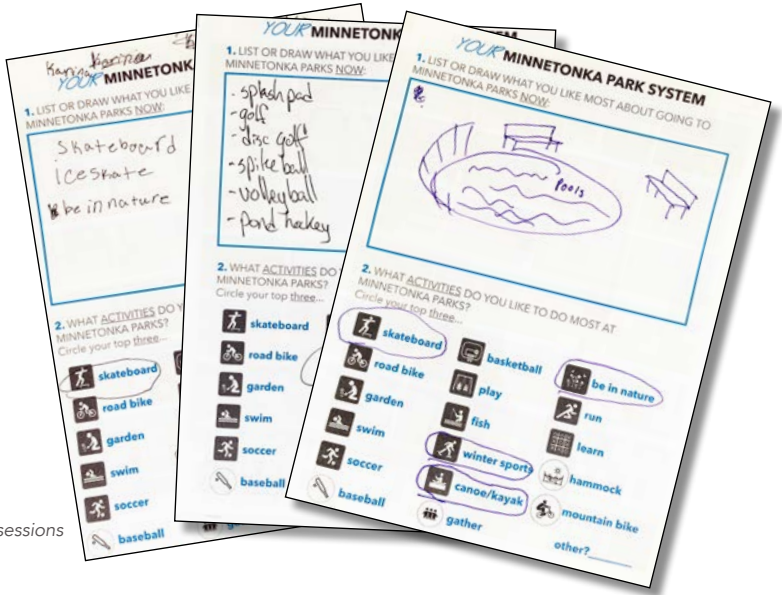
Treehouse Hope Youth Group Engagement Session



FIGURE 33: WHAT IS MISSING IN THE EXPERIENCE OF VISITING THE CITY'S SYSTEM OF PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND TRAILS?

What improvements could be made?
Are there other activities, features, facilities and/or programs that you would like to see offered?

- More shade
- More water parks
- More running tracks and fields
- More flexible/multi-use park space
- Indoor soccer facilities
- Climbing walls
- Youth Center
- Places to pray (indoor)
- Places for large gathering (200-300 people) w/kitchen & dining areas
- More picnic facilities with shade
- Grilling facilities



Visual surveys at stakeholder engagement sessions

FIGURE 34: DOES ANYTHING MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO VISIT MINNETONKA'S PARKS OR TRAILS, OR PARTICIPATE IN RECREATION PROGRAMS?

- Parks should be more accessible – ability to walk safely to parks
- City should advertise parks and park events better – with park images and in multiple languages
- Advertise through schools and direct mailers/fliers to multi-family housing units/apartments, particularly to under-served communities
- Include more multi-lingual park signage
- Create more opportunities for people to feel a sense of belonging and ownership of the parks

FIGURE 35: DO YOU FEEL SAFE AND WELCOME IN THE CITY'S PARKS AND TRAILS?

- WE FEEL SAFE AND WELCOME IN PARKS
- CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO FEEL A SENSE OF BELONGING AND OWNERSHIP OF THE PARKS

Summary - What We Heard

Using the information gathered from the listening sessions, community events, completion of the survey and interactive mapping, the most common feedback was grouped into three categories:

- > Perceptions of Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Trails
- > New/Additional Things to do in Minnetonka Parks, and
- > Highest Priority Issues/Themes.

Commonly heard themes within each category influenced specific recommendations for the final POST System plan.

PERCEPTIONS OF EXISTING PARKS, OPEN SPACES AND TRAILS

What We Heard

The following represents key findings from the engagement process focused on perceptions of existing parks, open spaces and trails:

- > Natural areas for passive recreation and trail connections are very important.
- > Parks with recreational amenities are important to park users.
- > A significant number of park users enjoy the parks on a weekly basis.
- > Few park users get to the park system via public transportation.
- > Top barriers to visiting parks and open spaces include off-leash dogs and lack of information about park amenities.
- > The majority of park visitors feel safe in the parks.
- > The majority of park users feel the parks and open spaces are in good to excellent condition.
- > Park users are enjoying the parks and open spaces both for recreation and to engage with nature.
- > Park users would like to see a balance between natural resource protection and access for recreation.
- > Park users prefer quality ice rinks over the number of ice rinks. Few survey participants support ice rinks throughout the city.



NEW/ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS

What We Heard

The following represents key findings from the desired future park, open space and trail programs and facilities:

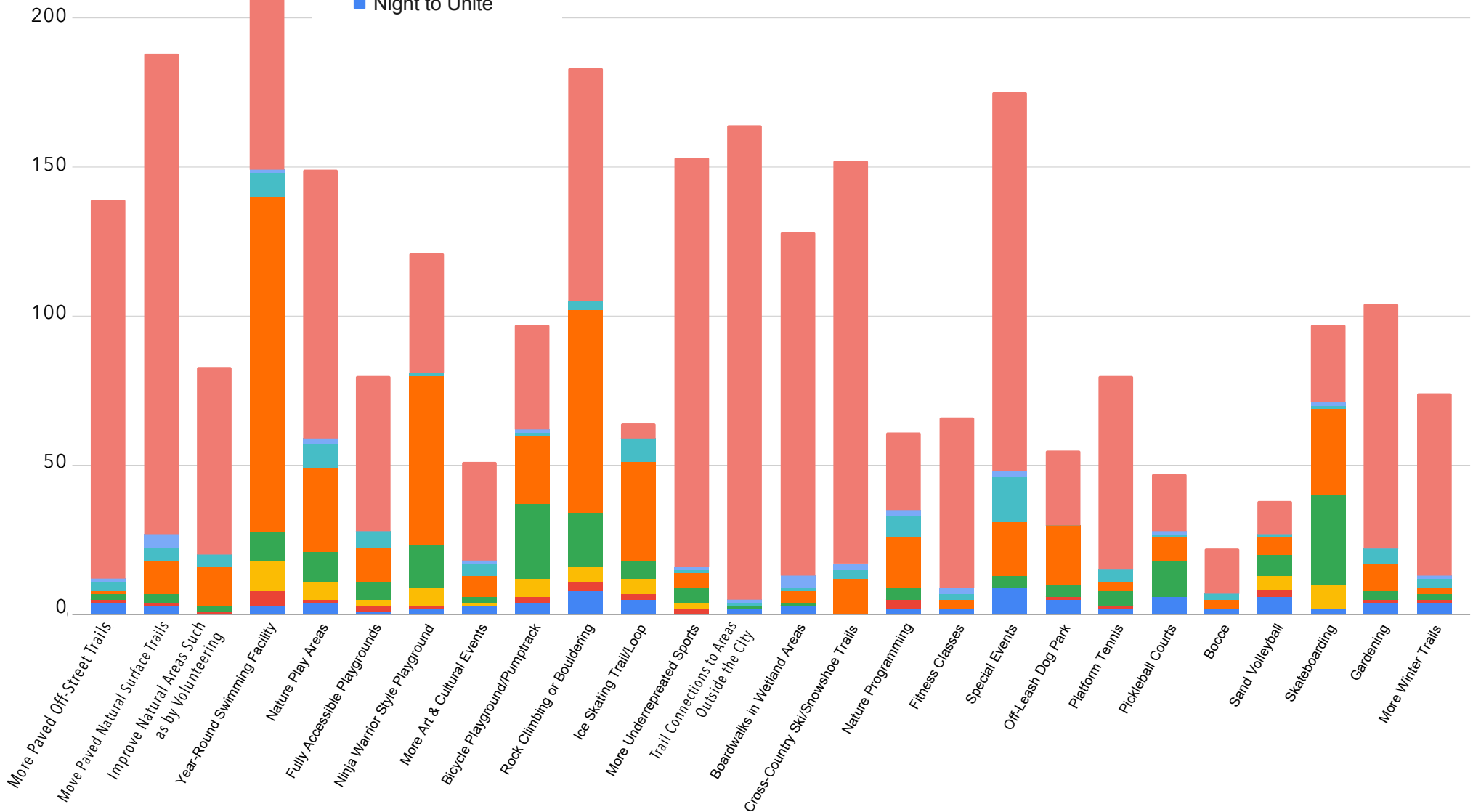
- > Provide a year-round swimming facility
- > Consider rock climbing or bouldering features in the parks
- > Provide more nature programming
- > Provide nature play areas in community and neighborhood parks
- > Prioritize flexible spaces for special event programming
- > Provide a more significant/permanent skateboarding park
- > Upgrade playgrounds to make them more accessible
- > Provide a Ninja Warrior playground
- > Provide more pickleball courts
- > Provide a bicycle playground/pump track
- > Consider programming for and providing off-leash dog parks
- > Enhance trail connections to parks and open spaces from existing trail systems
- > More natural surface trails
- > Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas.



- Survey
- Senior Center
- Farmers Market
- Park Adventures
- Shady Oak
- Treehouse Hope
- Al-Amaan Center
- Night to Unite

FIGURE 36: VOTING SUMMARY OF NEW/ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS FROM ALL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH

This is a summary of voting from all the community engagement for new/additional things to do in the Minnetonka park system. These numbers include all of the community events, survey, and stakeholder/community conversations.

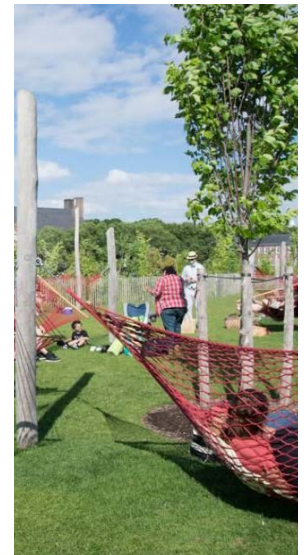


HIGHEST PRIORITY ISSUES/THEMES

What We Heard

The following represents key findings from the engagement process specific to the highest priorities and themes to consider in the POST System Plan:

- > New or improved recreational amenities
- > Rediscovering the creek
- > Connecting to nature
- > Iconic parks
- > Gathering and community building
- > High-quality natural areas
- > Environmental sustainability and resiliency
- > Connections to parks and trails



System Components and Condition

SYSTEM CONDITION OVERVIEW

The POST System Plan is based on the critical evaluation of the existing Minnetonka parks, open space and trail system components and their condition to meet current and future community needs. The evaluation is based on the following analysis: a review of existing conditions, community engagement input, comparison with national standards and comparable peer communities, emerging trends (see Chapter 2: Trends) and park system best practices. These evaluations are combined into a summary in this system components and condition section.

PARKS

The city has over 50 parks, composed of 1,293 acres (269 maintained and 1,024 natural), providing about 24 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This acreage exceeds the national standard of 14 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (see *Figure 37*).

When compared with peer communities of similar-sized populations, Minnetonka has a comparable number of parks and acres of parkland. An analysis of neighborhood and community parks found that the city has succeeded in ensuring most residents are within a reasonable walking distance of a park. Over 70 percent of the population

lives within a 10-minute walk of a park, compared with the national average of 55 percent. Residential areas that are not within a 10-minute walk primarily exist on the edges of the community (see *Figure 39*). These identified gaps could be addressed through partnerships with schools, adjacent communities, and other agencies, or utilization of vacant city-owned property.

With the expected population growth within Minnetonka (a projected increase of almost 10,000 residents by 2040), the city should focus on serving areas that are outside a 10-minute walking distance to parks as well as anticipated developments with medium and high-density housing. In 2040, with the projected population increase, if the acres of parks and open space remain the same within the city (1,293 acres), the acres of parkland per 1,000 residents would lower from the current quantity of 24 acres per 1,000 residents to 20 acres per 1,000 residents (see *Figure 38*). This projection still exceeds the national average of 14 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

At existing parks, user amenities like consistent site furnishings, lighting, wifi, accessible facilities and upgrades to permanent restrooms are suggested potential improvements. Currently, there is no

FIGURE 37: ACRES OF PARKS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS IN MINNETONKA

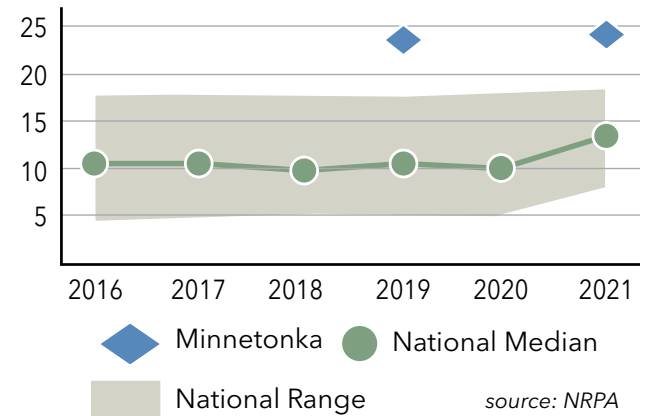


FIGURE 38: IMPACT OF EXPECTED POPULATION GROWTH ON ACRES OF PARKS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS PROJECTION

	Total acres of city	Total park acres within city limits	Acres of parks per 1,000 residents
Census population 2020 53,776	18,061	1,293	24
Forecasted population 2040 61,500	18,061*	1,293*	20
			National median 14

*Projection calculations for 2040 uses the same park acreage within city limits as existing conditions in 2020 as an exercise to demonstrate that acres per 1,000 residents would still be above national median with the projected population increase. This number of park acres within city limits may potentially change in the future.

consistent style of site furnishings including benches, tables, bicycle parking and light fixtures. Standard, system wide furnishings and lighting will enhance branding, create cohesiveness and improve the efficiency of operations and maintenance within the parks.

Improvements to the overall park system wayfinding signage are suggested. Currently, wayfinding and identity signage are minimal and dated at most of the city's parks and open spaces. Recommendations for signage include new, uniform and branded park entrance signs, increased interpretation signage, and increased wayfinding signage throughout the park, open space and trail system.



Park signage example - Covington Park



Bench example - Gro Tonka Park



Table at Ford Park



Mountain bike trail signage at Lone Lake Park



Warming house and restroom at Covington Park



Trash receptacle at Ford Park



Entrance sign at Green Circle Park



Informational sign about dog waste at Kinsel Park



Benches at Meadow Park

71% OF MINNETONKA RESIDENTS LIVE WITHIN A 10 MINUTE WALK OF A PARK

55% NATIONAL AVERAGE

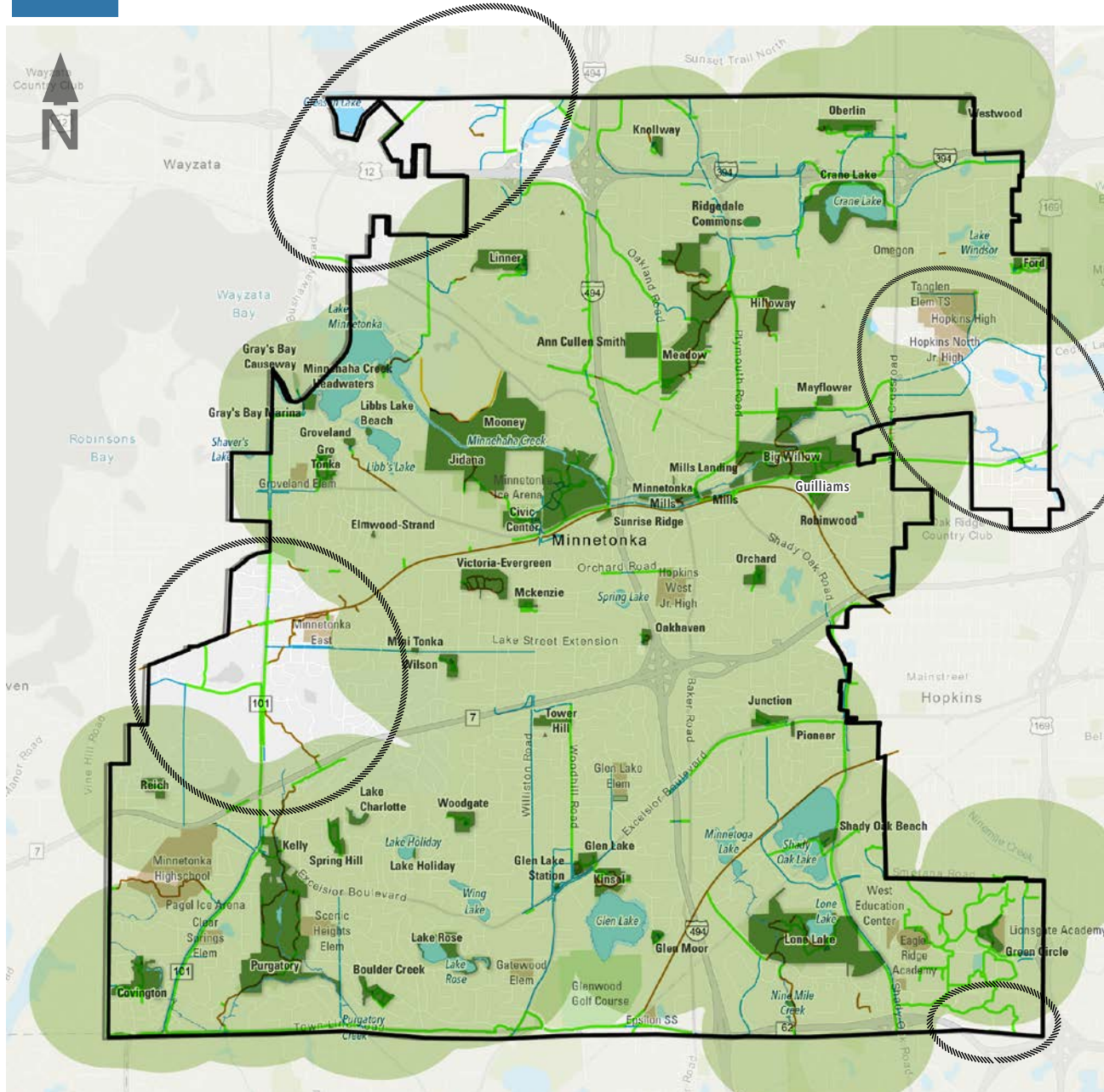





FIGURE 39: AREAS WITHIN 10-MINUTE WALK OF CITY PARKS

-  City Parks
-  10 Minute Walk from City Park
-  Identified Gaps

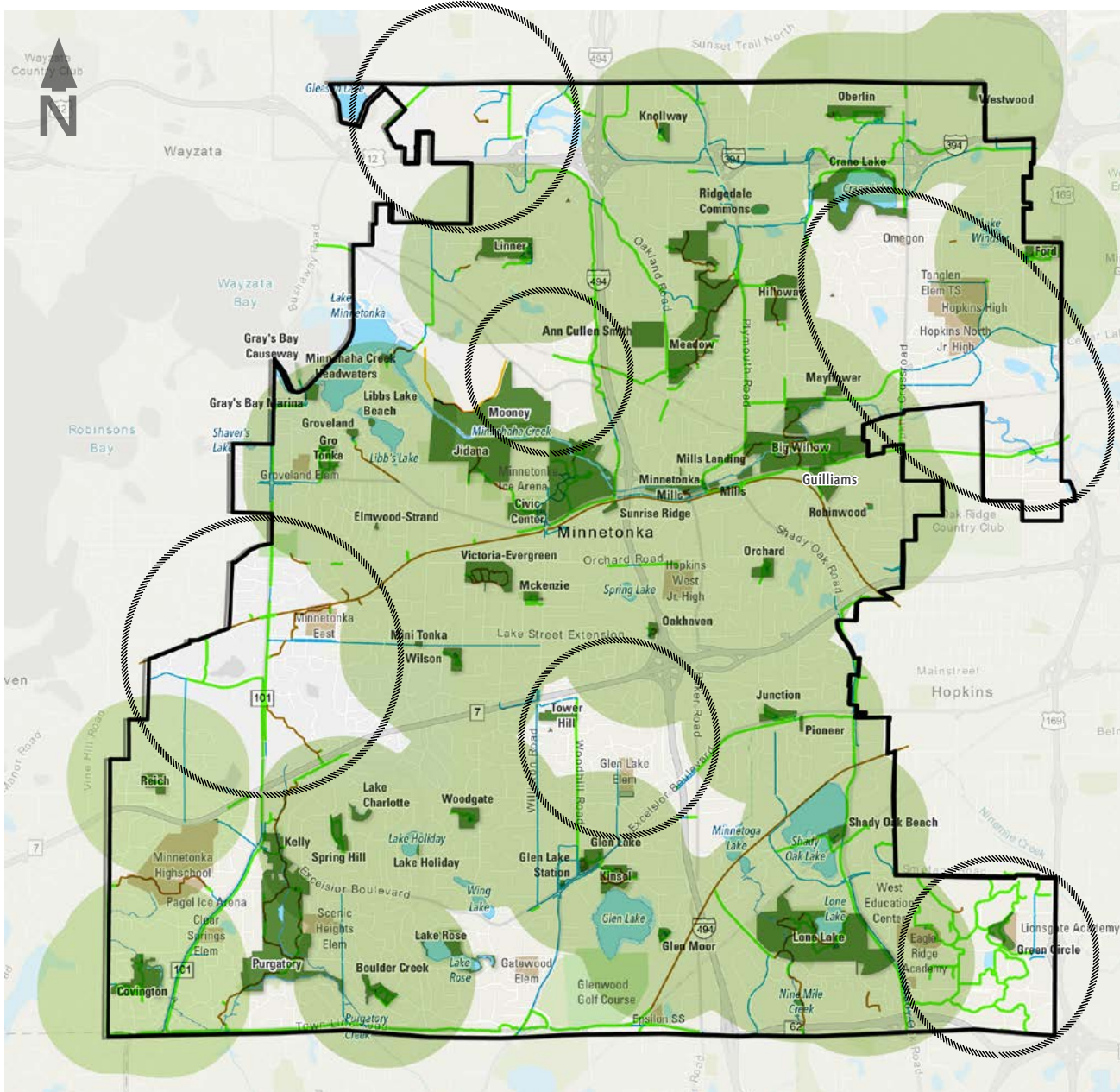





FIGURE 40: AREAS WITHIN 10-MINUTE WALK OF CITY PARKS WITH PLAYGROUNDS

-  City Parks
-  10 Minute Walk from City Park with Playground
-  Identified Gaps

FACILITIES

Minnetonka provides a wide range of facilities throughout its system. According to national standards and peer community comparisons, the number of facilities is generally adequate for the city's current size. As the city grows, aging facilities will need to be replaced to ensure that they continue to be located within a reasonable distance of high-density areas and that they address emerging trends.

The quantity of playgrounds is consistent with that of peer communities; however, based on an analysis of how play areas are distributed throughout the city, there are gaps in coverage, found primarily at city boundaries (see *Figure 40*). In these gaps, playgrounds are not within a 10-minute walk of residential areas. In some of these locations, schools and other private facilities offer playgrounds that

meet community needs; however, as the city population is projected to grow, the addition or replacement of playgrounds should focus on these underserved areas.

A strong desire identified in the community input was for the inclusion of nature-based play areas. Additionally, compromised accessibility was identified as an issue at many of the city's playgrounds. When renovating, upgrading, or building new playgrounds, the addition of nature-based play areas as well as expanding universal access to play areas should be considered. These strategies will help diversify playground experiences in the community and enhance equitable access.

During the community engagement process, a strong desire was expressed for more picnic shelters. The current distribution of picnic

Glossary: Facility

A built feature in a park or preserve that adds, supports or enhances a recreation activity.

shelters leaves a gap in coverage in the core of the city between Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 7.

An examination of traditional athletic facilities, such as diamonds and rectangular fields indicates they are well distributed throughout the city. Community needs are enhanced by a number of private association and public school fields and athletic complexes.

Informal sports facilities, such as tennis, basketball and open playfields, are well distributed through the community (see *Figure 43-44*). When compared with peer communities, Minnetonka provides more than the average numbers of facilities including basketball, pickleball and multi-use courts. In the engagement process, additional pickleball courts and multi-use fields were



Playground example - Gro Tonka Park



Example of a natural play area



Picnic shelter at Meadow Park

requested. These requests should be considered as renovations, upgrades or new construction occurs.

Currently, the number of outdoor ice rink facilities exceeds peer communities. Consolidating ice rinks should be considered due to maintenance and cost concerns as well as the effects of climate change. Feedback from the community survey was supportive of this idea (see *Figure 29*).

The community requested more year-round recreation and community facilities for group gatherings and programs, as well as additional fitness facilities and classes, meeting rooms, family activity opportunities, and children's programming. Input from the community also favored more aquatic amenities, such as a community pool and an outdoor splash pad.

Maintenance and replacement of aging parks and support facilities should be a priority over the next 20 years to meet both current needs and those expected as population increases, ages and diversifies. New construction and renovations should incorporate emerging trends that have the community support such as a dog park, a splash pad, a ninja course, a bouldering wall, a bicycle pump track, a skate park and/or a nature play area. Many of these amenities will require major capital investment and require further study.



Baseball and softball fields at Big Willow Park



Pickleball courts at Lone Lake Park



Outdoor ice rinks in Minnetonka

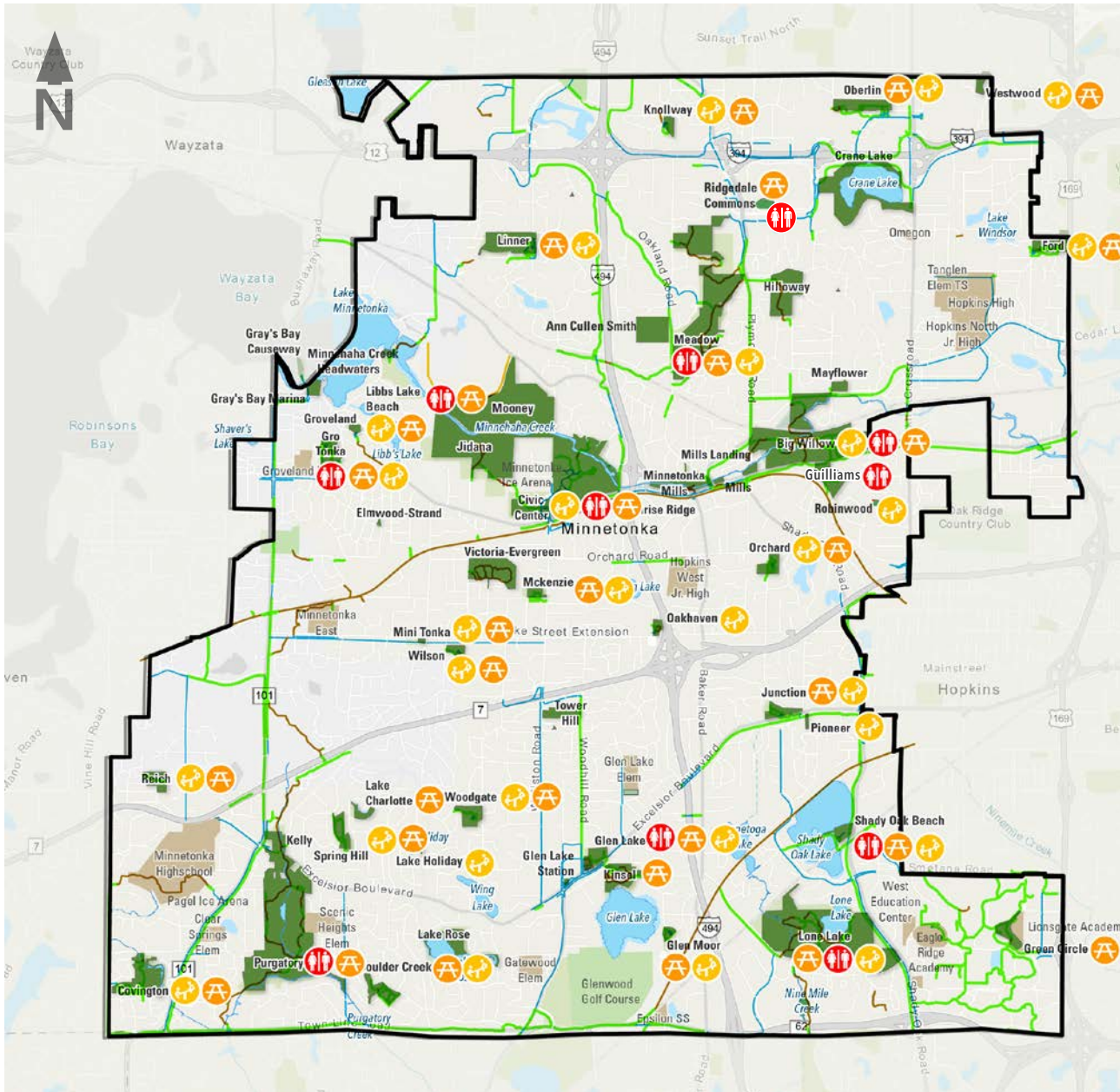



FIGURE 41: FAMILY FACILITIES

-  PERMANENT RESTROOM
-  PICNIC AREA
-  PLAY EQUIPMENT
-  CITY PARK

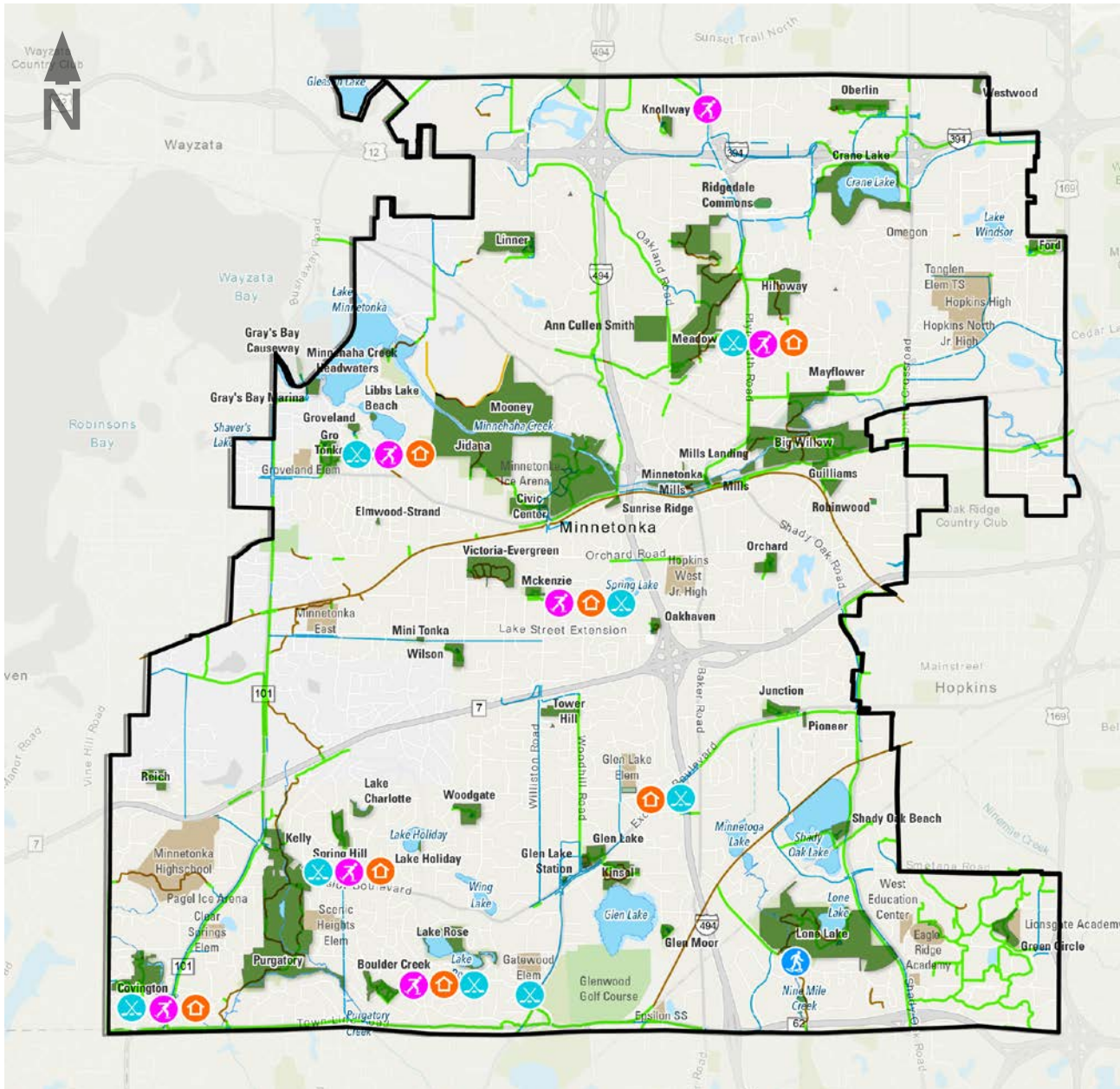


FIGURE 42: WINTER OUTDOOR FACILITIES

-  OUTDOOR HOCKEY
-  SNOWSHOEING
-  GENERAL SKATING
-  WARMING HOUSE
-  CITY PARK

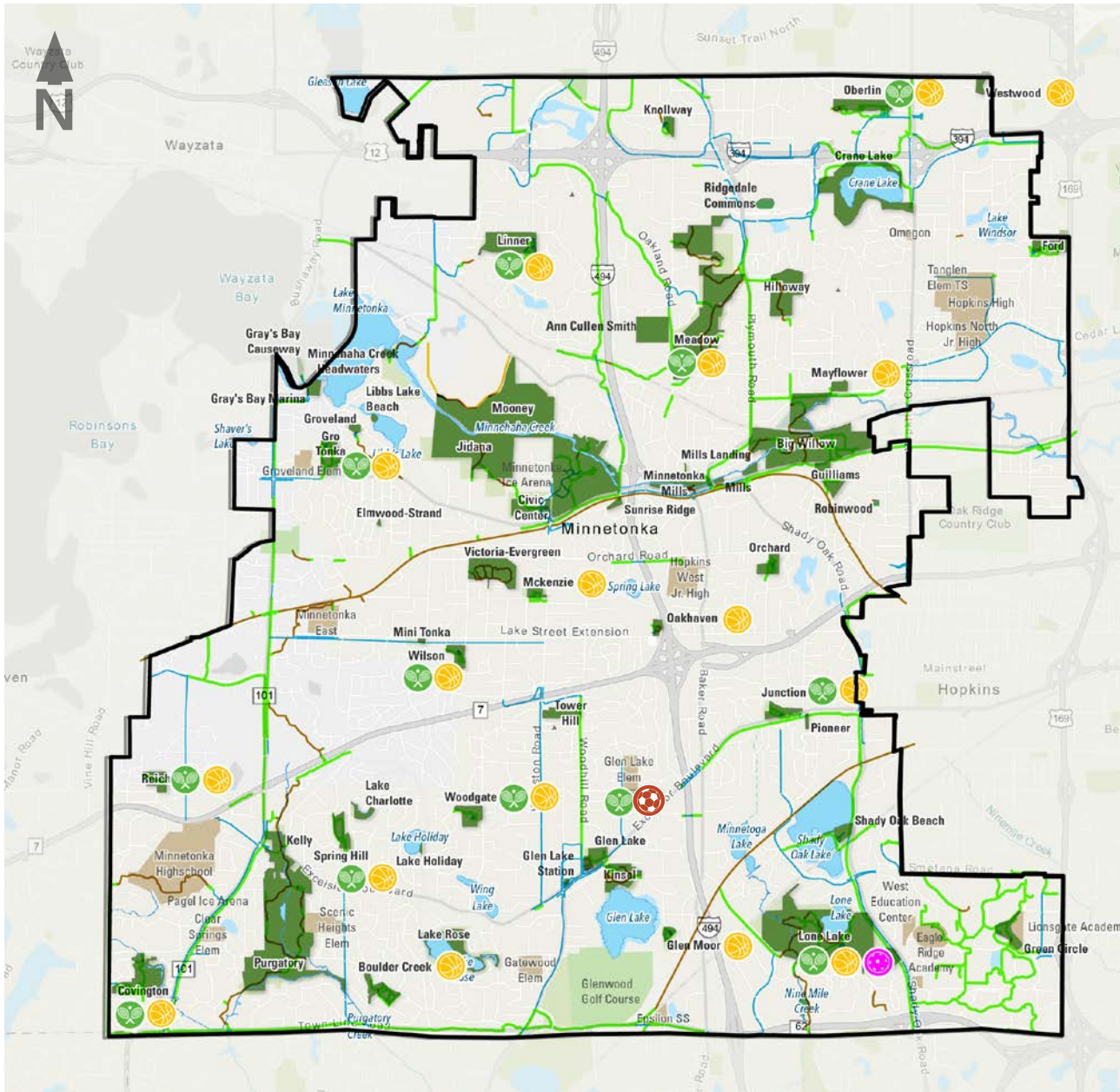




FIGURE 43: HARCOURT FACILITIES

-  BASKETBALL
-  TENNIS
-  PICKLEBALL
-  FUTSAL
-  CITY PARK

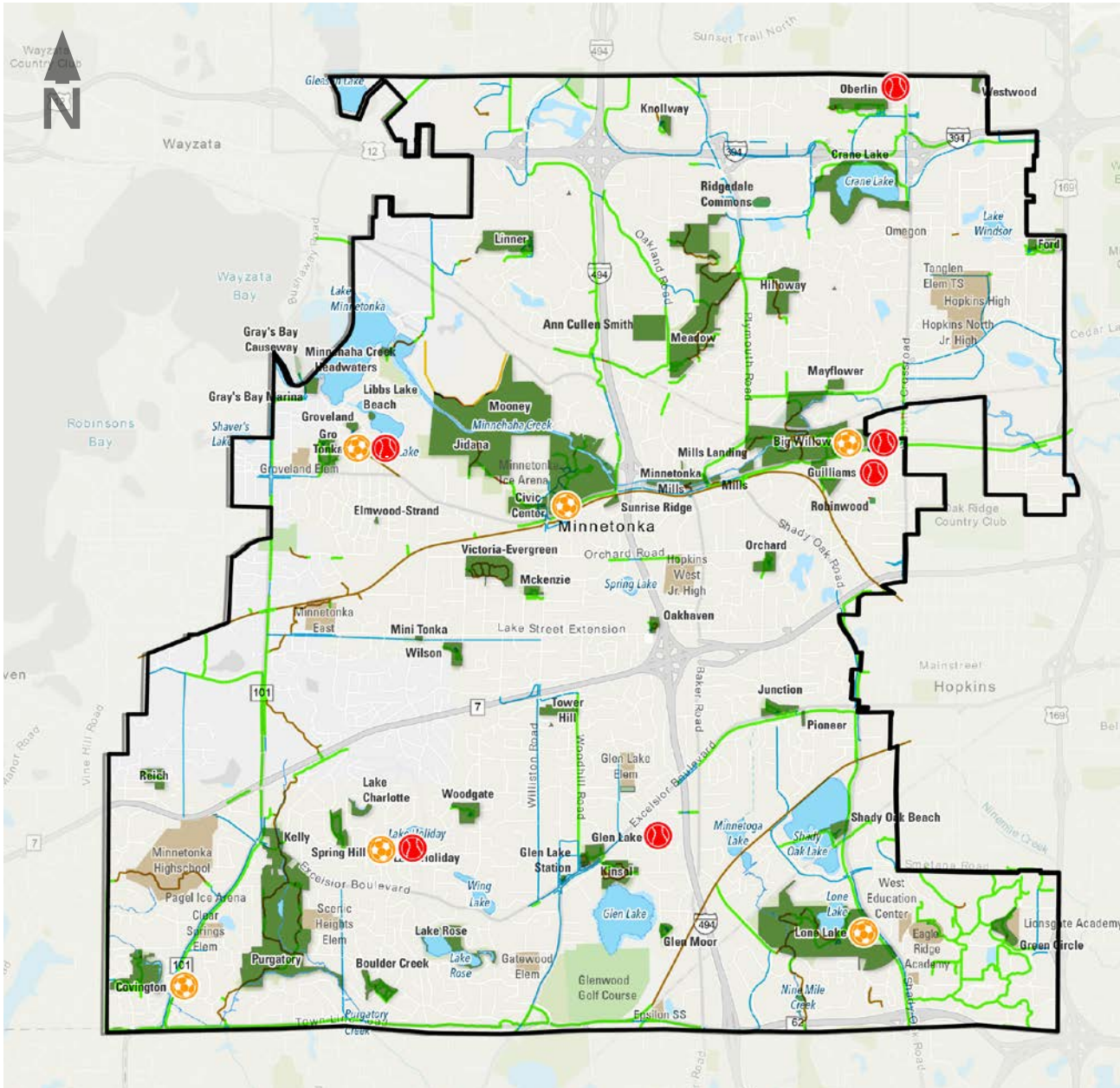





FIGURE 44: CITY-OWNED ATHLETIC FIELDS

-  BASEBALL/SOFTBALL
-  SOCCER/FOOTBALL
-  CITY PARK

PRESERVES AND OPEN SPACE

Minnetonka's natural resources are unique and distinguishing. These natural resources are a highly cherished component of the city. More than 20 percent of the city's land area is classified as wetlands and lakes. The city has more than 1,000 acres of natural public open spaces, including many preserves (see *Figure 9*).

In 2021, the city developed and implemented an updated Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP), a high-level guiding document focused on three main goals: improving habitat, protecting Minnetonka's community forests and engaging the public in those efforts. This POST System Plan supports and upholds the goals and objectives of the NRMP within parks and open spaces in the city. The guidelines, goals and initiatives within the POST System Plan include advancing environmental sustainability and resiliency and focusing on the preservation and protection of natural resources. General goals of this philosophy include:

- » Preserve, protect and restore natural resources by supporting environmental stewardship and conservation and focus on the long-term sustainability of the park system.

- » Promote environmental resilience throughout the park system to address the effects of climate change.
- » Engage and support volunteers to expand capabilities and environmental stewardship.
- » Balance the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational opportunities that build stewardship for users to preserve, restore and educate.
- » Foster environmental, social and economic sustainability that protects Minnetonka's water and natural resources.

Community input revealed that there is a strong desire to continue to preserve, protect and restore natural areas. High-quality natural areas were selected as one of the top priorities to include in the POST System Plan. There was also a communicated need for more natural surface trails within parks and the opportunity to connect with nature.



Purgatory Park



Kinsel Park

TRAILS

The city's more than 100 miles of trails are an asset to the park system and larger community. Trails are an essential component of an accessible recreation system. The trails are managed by the city's Public Works Department.

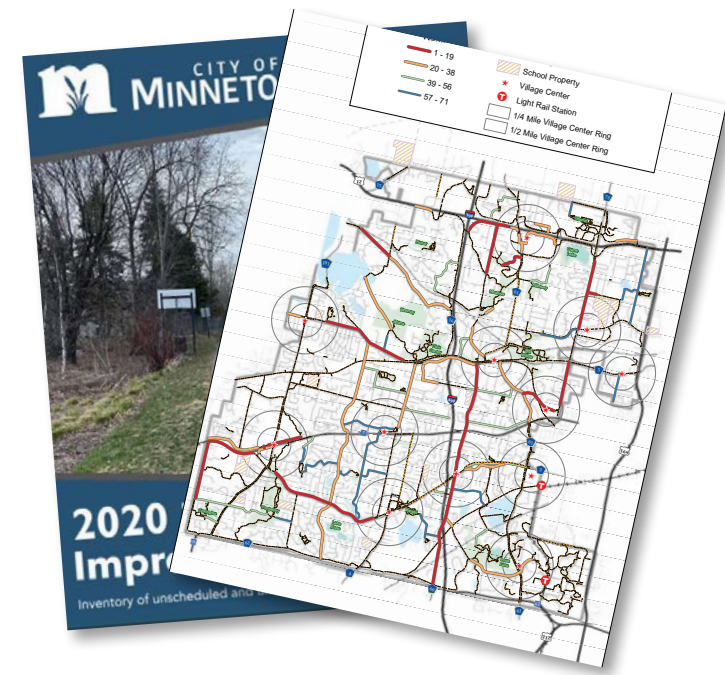
This POST System Plan supports and upholds the goals and priorities outlined in the City of Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP). The TIP builds upon the existing trail infrastructure already in place within the city to create a comprehensive system of trails that provide recreational value as well as pedestrian and bicycle linkages throughout the city. The TIP includes a ranking system to prioritize unfunded trail segments for proposed trails within Minnetonka. The proposed future trail segments include areas of identified gaps in the system and connections to adjacent cities and regional trails. Prioritization ranking is calculated based on: degree of difficulty, cost-effectiveness, nature of use and community access. The overriding goals of the city trail system is to"

- » Develop an interlinking, looped trail system throughout the city and interconnect with other local, state and regional trail systems

- » Provide reasonable trail access to the natural resource amenities within the community without unduly compromising their integrity and natural qualities.
- » Provide trail linkages from the looped system to neighborhoods and, where feasible, individual parks.

Community input found that respondents strongly support trails within the city. There is a desire for more natural surface trails and boardwalks to connect with nature within the parks and trail connections to neighboring communities.

The existing conditions analysis found that there are areas where trail surfaces are in poor condition and lack ADA compliance. Additionally, there are gaps that could be filled to provide more complete connectivity. Trail priorities and reducing gaps in trail linkages are addressed in the TIP.



City of Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP)



Trail in Purgatory Park

PROGRAMMING

Recreational opportunities for youth and adults are available in Minnetonka's park system year-round, including programmed and non-programmed and activities. The Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services program provides recreational services to Minnetonka and Hopkins residents through a joint agreement, dedicated to developing, promoting and providing programs and facilities that respond directly to the recreational needs and interests in the community.

The department is divided into a number of areas of responsibility, which include:

- » Hopkins-Minnetonka Joint Recreation - responsible for providing recreation programming for residents of Hopkins and Minnetonka.
- » Ice Arena Management - responsibilities include scheduling, maintenance and supervision of the City's two ice arenas.
- » Facility Management - responsible for the scheduling and supervision of events at the Minnetonka Community Center and Glen Lake Activity Center.
- » Williston Center - responsible for the operation of the Williston Center starting in 1995.

- » Additional departmental responsibilities include: organization of the Minnetonka Summer Fest, scheduling of city-owned athletic fields, interaction with Park Board activities, and distribution of program brochures.

Through Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services, a wide variety of programs are offered for all ages and abilities. Coupled with the offerings of the local athletic associations and community education, residents have a vast array of recreation programs in which to participate. *Table 3* includes a list of the types of programs offered throughout the year.

Ongoing goals and priorities of the Recreation Services include:

- » Continuing to provide recreation programs that serve community needs.
- » Working effectively with local associations and school districts to provide a full palette of recreational opportunities for residents.
- » Maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of facility use given the limited opportunity and cost to develop new facilities.

Program development and evaluation should continue to identify participant needs not currently addressed in programming. For example, community input indicates the desire for more nature-based programming.

Community events such as the Summer Fest and Kids' Fest as well as the seasonal weekly farmers' market are very popular. Community input indicates a desire to expand these community event offerings.

Community input also requested increased advertising and communication about parks and recreation programming, especially in under-served areas and areas of higher population density.

TABLE 3: HOPKINS-MINNETONKA RECREATION SERVICES PROGRAMS

Preschool & Youth Programs

- > Arts and Crafts
- > Camps
 - Skyhawks
 - Baseball
 - Skateboard
 - Lacrosse
 - Jidana Day Camp
 - Basketball
 - Soccer
 - Cheerleading
 - Music
 - Chess
 - Safety
 - Rugby
- > Dance
- > Hop-Kids
 - Flag Football
 - T-Ball
 - Golf
 - Soccer
 - Sports Medley
 - Fishing
 - Sports Sampler
 - Bowling
 - Dance
 - Amazing Athletes
 - Wrestling
- > Kids Corner
- > Martial Arts
- > Music
- > Swimming Lessons
- > Sports
 - Tennis
 - Lessons
 - Clinics
 - Basketball League
 - Soccer League
- > Technology

Teen Programs

- > Paintball
- > Canoeing
- > Horseback Riding
- > Log Rolling
- > Kayaking
- > Zipline
- > iFly

Adult Programs

- > Badminton
- > Fitness
 - TRX Training
 - Boot Camp
 - Run Club
 - Yoga
 - Pilates
 - Cycling
 - Personal Training
- > Martial Arts
- > Paddleboarding
- > Pickleball clinics
- > Yoga
- > Tennis
 - Leagues
 - Lessons
 - Clinics
 - Camps
- > Sports Leagues
 - Basketball
 - Broomball
 - Kickball
 - Soccer
 - Softball
 - Volleyball

Senior Programs

- > Arts & Crafts
 - > Bird Club
 - > Bridge
 - > Canoe Trips
 - > Day Trips
 - > Education
 - History
 - Astronomy
 - Presentations
 - Computer
 - Nature
 - > Fitness
 - Yoga
 - T'ai Chi
 - Line Dance
 - Over 50 and fit
 - Meditation
 - Bike Club
 - Golf League
 - Softball
 - > Hikes
 - > Lunch and a movie
 - > Mahjonn
 - > Memory Café
 - > Dementia Friends
 - > Monthly parties
 - > Travel Showcases
- #### Special Events
- > Night to Unite Dance
 - > Kids' Fest
 - > Parking Lot Bingo
 - > Spring Eggstravaganza
 - > Summer Fest
 - > Burwell Spooktacular



Minnetonka Kids' Fest



Minnetonka Summer Fest



Senior programming by Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The city's Public Works Department is an all-encompassing department responsible for the operations and maintenance of the city's infrastructure including parks, open spaces and trails. Routine functions of the Public Works Department relative to parks, open spaces and trails include:

- > Turf Management
- > Park and Trail Routine Maintenance
- > Playground Safety Inspections
- > General Park Inspections
- > Snow Removal
- > Park and Trail Upgrades
- > Natural Resources Stewardship Program
- > Hockey / Skating Rink Maintenance
- > Park and Recreation Buildings/Special Facilities Maintenance
- > Recreational Facilities Coordination and Setup
- > Coordinate Volunteer Programs
- > Urban Forest Management
- > Reforestation Program
- > Natural Resources Education, Outreach and Volunteer Program

The responsibilities of the Public Works department and the effort to stay within established operating budgets is an ongoing challenge. Establishing priorities is fundamental to meeting the needs of the

community in a fiscally responsible way. Expectations of performance must be aligned with overall budgets and available resources.

To reduce costs, the city has partnered with various associations, organized user groups and volunteers for making improvements to and maintaining park facilities throughout the city.

ACCESSIBILITY

To meet the needs of existing and future users, Minnetonka must continue to prioritize and expand accessibility. An analysis of existing conditions revealed that improved accessibility is needed for many of the city's play areas, trails, and other park facilities. To ensure that everyone has equal access to parks, open spaces, trails, facilities and programs, the city is committed to increasing the accessibility of its park system. These steps include:

- > Modifications to improve the accessibility of existing trails where feasible and appropriate.
- > All new trails and sidewalks will be built to ADA standards whenever possible.
- > Engage advocates for people with disabilities during planning for parks, open spaces and trails.

- > Make adjustments to the height and placement of signs to be ADA compatible where feasible.
- > Play areas and other facilities should have ramps, guardrails, and accessible pathways where possible and appropriate.
- > Improve parking areas to facilitate increased accessibility.
- > Create accessible maps and informational materials.
- > Provide and expand adaptive recreation programming and partnerships with organizations.
- > ADA compatible play equipment should be included in community and neighborhood parks dispersed throughout the city as part of any replacement, renovation, or new playground construction projects



Play area at Covington Park

FIGURE 45: AREAS OF NEED

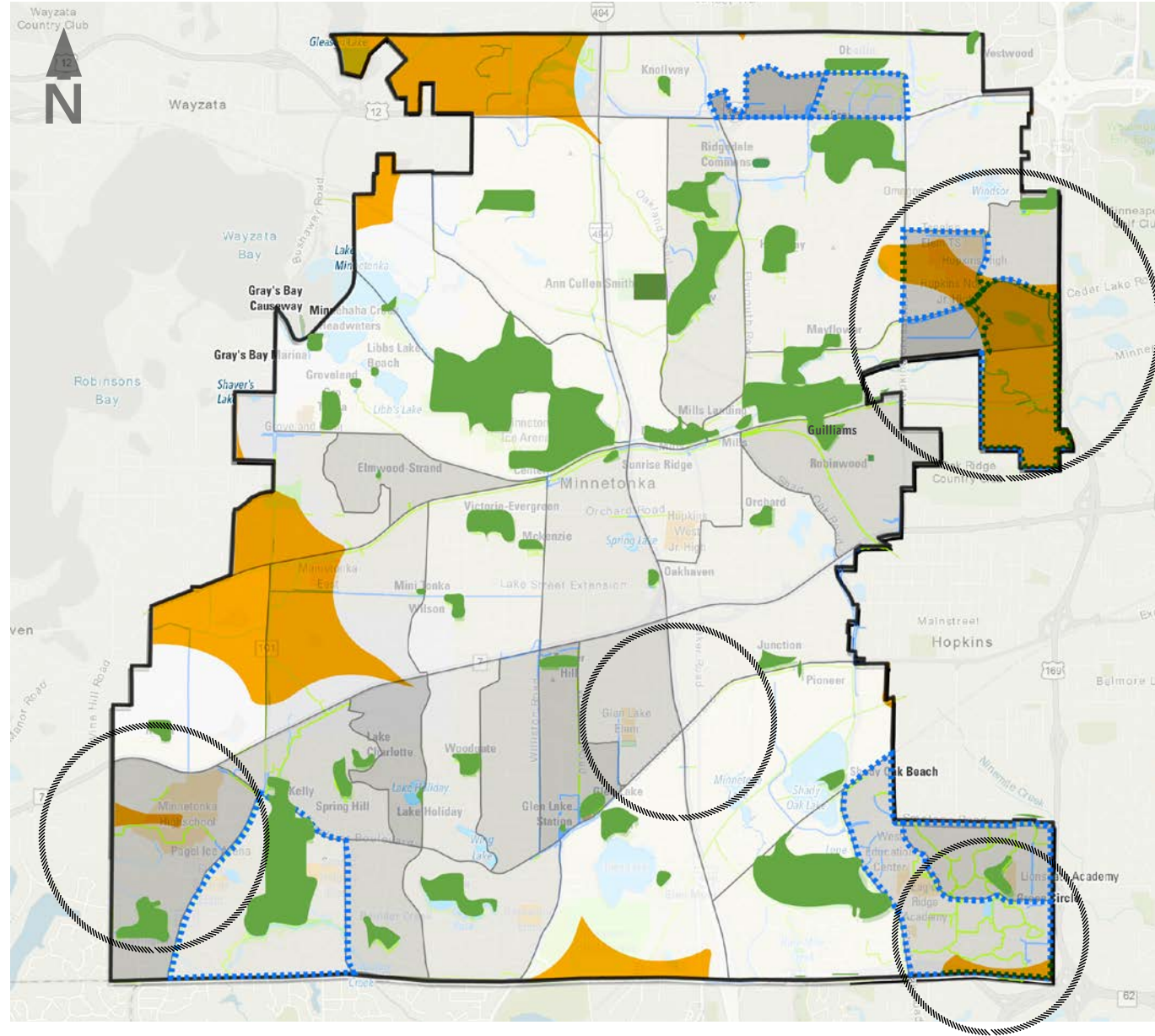


AREAS OF NEED

Existing conditions analysis identified potential areas of need within the city’s park system. The evaluation process began by identifying and mapping the following characteristics:

- > Areas of higher density housing
- > Areas of high minority populations
- > Areas that are greater than a 10-minute walk to a city park or open space within Minnetonka

Figure 45: Areas of Need shows an overlay of these characteristics on a map. Potential areas of need were identified in places where two to three of the characteristics are present. Potential gaps for areas outside of a 10-minute walk of parks and playgrounds can also be found in *Figures 39 and 40*, respectively. School districts, facilities owned or operated by private associations, and relationships with neighboring communities can provide access to parks, facilities and programs to meet some of these needs and gaps within the park system. However, in light of the city’s projected population growth, future studies should consider these areas for their potential needs.



An aerial rendering of a park plaza. In the center, a green food truck with a white awning is parked. To its right, several white square tables are arranged in a grid. A curved wooden building with a large overhanging roof is in the background. A curved wooden walkway or ramp is on the right. The plaza is surrounded by trees and greenery. People are scattered throughout the scene, some walking, some sitting at tables, and some near the food truck. The overall color palette is warm and natural, with greens, browns, and greys.

POST System Plan



Chapter 4 describes the vision for the future of the park system and states the mission statement and guiding principals which will influence it's continued evolution.

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VISION

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CHAPTER 4 | VISION

UPDATED MISSION

As the City of Minnetonka changes over the next two decades, the quality of its parks, natural areas, trails and programs must evolve. New opportunities will be revealed, along with new challenges. Sustaining a welcoming, comprehensive and balanced park system throughout this evolution will require a vision founded with a shared community mission statement and set of guiding principles.

The mission and guiding principles included here were developed based on significant community engagement efforts with the general public, key stakeholders, city leadership and others. These efforts were combined with the existing conditions analysis and the needs assessment outlined in Chapter 3 to coalesce into a comprehensive vision for the future of Minnetonka open spaces.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan is to be leaders in providing a welcoming, comprehensive and balanced system of high quality parks, natural areas, trails and programs for all to enjoy.



Theater in the Park - Civic Center Park



Burwell House



Shady Oak Beach

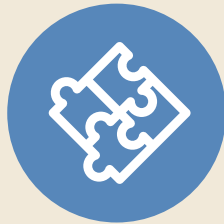
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles will shape the implementation of the POST System Plan within the Minnetonka parks and recreation system.



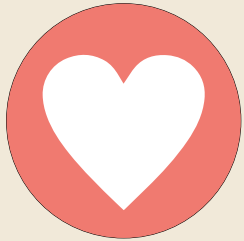
ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

- Preserve, protect and restore natural resources by supporting environmental stewardship and conservation, while building long-term sustainability of the park system.
- Promote environmental resilience throughout the park system to address the effects of climate change.
- Engage and support volunteers to expand capabilities and environmental stewardship.
- Balance the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational opportunities that build stewardship for users to preserve, restore and educate.
- Foster environmental, social and economic sustainability that protects Minnetonka's water and natural resources.
- Support and uphold the goals, practices and policies of the City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources Master Plan.



PROVIDE CONNECTIONS TO PARKS, TRAILS AND PROGRAMS

- Improve accessibility to park facilities and programs by reducing physical and financial barriers.
- Ensure parks and open spaces are safe, accessible, bike and pedestrian friendly for both active and passive recreation.
- Provide safe connections to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Increase connectivity to neighboring communities of Minnetonka.
- Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming.
- Link the community together through quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs.
- Promote and advertise park programs and events within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- Service youth and adult athletics by providing high quality facilities strategically located throughout the city.



PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Support mental and physical health and well-being by providing a diversity of quality facilities and parks, open spaces, and trails to support life-long activity and meet the social needs of the community.
- Support healthy living by providing a well-connected pedestrian and bicycling network throughout the community.
- Offer facilities, programming and education to support healthy lifestyle choices.
- Support the desire and ability to stay healthy, active and engaged in the community.



PROMOTE EQUITY AND INCLUSION

- Ensure equitable distribution of parks, facilities and open spaces throughout the community.
- Prioritize equity throughout the parks, open space and trail system to support all users, celebrate diversity and embrace inclusiveness.
- Expand community engagement in current and future park planning to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC and people with disabilities to ensure the park system will be an asset for the whole community.
- Create a multi-generational park system that builds community, attracts young families, and supports aging in place.
- Prioritize and address accessibility issues throughout the park system to minimize physical, financial, and social barriers.



SUPPORT EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

- Provide a variety of innovative, new or improved active and passive park amenities and programs that are accessible to all park users.
- Create parks with amenities and programming for all seasons.
- Meet increasing demand for informal and passive recreation opportunities.
- Maintain park system quality, condition and safety.
- Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools and volunteers.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships to fund parks, open spaces and trails, restore natural areas and maintain facilities, programs and events.
- Maintain flexibility to re-purpose parks facilities to address changing trends and park user needs.
- Parks, open spaces and trails will retain their excellence through timely and ongoing maintenance.

POST System Plan



The system plan recommendations are intended to support the vision and guiding principles expressed in Chapter 4. The recommendations describe the desired outcomes for the park system's guiding principles to be achieved over the next 15 to 20 years.

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CHAPTER 05

SYSTEM PLAN

05

CHAPTER 5 | SYSTEM PLAN

The POST System Plan recommendations were prepared based on key takeaways from community input, needs assessment, review of the comprehensive plan and other related documents and policies, technical advisory committee discussions and input received from the park board. The recommendations are organized into goals and initiatives intended to support the vision and guiding principles expressed in Chapter 4. **Goals** are high-level statements that describe the desired outcomes necessary for implementation of the guiding principles over the next 15 to 20 years. **Initiatives** describe the general course of action that will guide city decision making to achieve stipulated goals.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

Environmental sustainability and resiliency in the POST system focuses on the preservation and protection of natural resources. It supports environmental stewardship and conservation while building long-term sustainability of the park system. This includes a wide range of activities aimed at reducing consumption of natural resources, minimizing impacts to waterways and natural areas, promoting sustainable management of resources and building stewardship through the practice of preservation, restoration and education. With approximately 1,300 acres of parkland including a majority of natural open spaces and over 100 miles of trails, there are many opportunities to positively impact the City's ecosystem and be a model for sustainability and resiliency. The goals and initiatives presented here are in support of the goals outlined in the City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) and the Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP).

> Highlighted initiatives can also be found in the city's Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP).

Goal 1: Promote sustainable design practices and build environmental resiliency into the park system to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Initiatives:

- > Increase biodiversity in parks and open spaces and utilize native plant species more adaptable to climate change.
- > Explore ways to integrate green infrastructure into parks to manage stormwater runoff generated from rainfall.
- > Consider ways to create multi-functional park spaces that incorporate environmental benefits including habitat, stormwater management, air quality, thermal heat island, etc.
- > Develop sustainability education campaigns to educate residents on the benefits of minimizing chemical use and reduced park maintenance in

strategic areas that may have significant environmental value.

- > Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to parks to encourage alternative modes of transportation to parks, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality and promoting healthy lifestyle choices.
- > Use sustainable building practices when developing, expanding, or renovating park facilities.
- > Improve energy efficiency when renovating or constructing new facilities.
- > Showcase sustainability best practices in the parks such as water and energy conservation practices, green infrastructure, native and pollinator plantings, etc. in highly visible locations accessible to the public.
- > Raise awareness about sustainability and best practices through social media, educational programs, interpretive elements and marketing information.
- > Develop a park resilience action plan as part of any city-wide efforts to efficiently adapt to climate change effects.
- > Continue to engage and support

volunteers and community groups to expand capabilities and encourage environmental stewardship.

Goal 2: Reduce negative impacts to Minnetonka's waterways and natural resources.

Initiatives:

- > Incorporate stormwater best practices (rain gardens, bio-swales, water retention, native landscaping and permeable paving) in park and facility design.
- > Explore the use of permeable surfaces in the future design of parks and park facilities.
- > Establish native vegetation buffers around wetlands, creeks, ponds and lakes on park land to filter stormwater runoff.
- > Incorporate natural streambank erosion control methods.
- > Continue to manage the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides to control weed and insect problems.
- > Protect, preserve and restore high quality waterways and natural resources.



Example of incorporating stormwater best practices



Example utilization of native plant species

Goal 3: Balance the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational programs and facilities.

Initiatives:

- > Create an equitable balance between the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with the development of recreational programs and facilities.
 - > Limit development in park preserves to improvements that support passive uses or address water quality and habitat.
 - > Prioritize the development of recreational programs and facilities in already developed areas of parks or low-quality natural areas.
 - > Balance natural resource protection with human use and access for recreation.
 - > Continue to protect, preserve and restore sensitive lands within the city's park preserves.
- > Continue to minimize the application of chemicals to turf to reduce leaching of chemicals into ground and surface water.
 - > Offer recycling programs/facilities in neighborhood, community, athletic and special use parks.
 - > Utilize integrated pest management strategies to control nuisance plants, weeds, insects, rodents, etc.
 - > Explore options to implement a turf conversion program to transition underutilized turf areas to forest or other native ground cover.
 - > Continue to implement vegetation management practices to protect water quality.
 - > Design future parks and park improvements to include low maintenance, durable and recycled materials as much as possible.

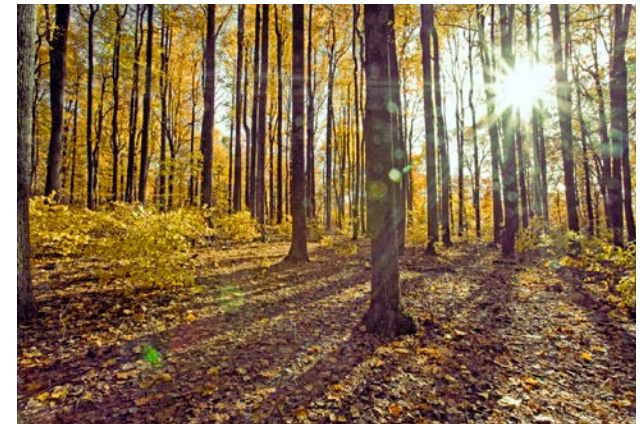
Goal 4: Promote sustainable maintenance practices.

Initiatives:

- > Utilize native plant materials to reduce maintenance and irrigation needs.



Explore options to implement a turf conversion program to forest or other native ground cover



Limit development in park preserves to improvements that support passive uses or address water quality and habitat.



Offer recycling programs/facilities in neighborhood, community, athletic, and special use parks

CONNECTIONS TO PARKS AND TRAILS

Access to parks, natural areas and outdoor recreation is vital to the long-term sustainability and livability of a community. Parks, open spaces and trails enhance property values, provide community gathering places, provide environmental benefits and opportunities for people to connect with nature. They contribute to more active lifestyles throughout the community and reduce the need for automobile transportation. Providing better access to parks and trails will contribute to a higher quality of life for park users. The recommendations provided here offer a guide for not only enhancing connections to parks and trails, but also ways for community members to better connect with each other and with nature.

Goal 1: Ensure all park users have safe and convenient access to parks, open spaces and trails.

Initiatives:

- > Implement trail recommendations provided in the City's Trail Improvement Plan and explore options to accelerate funding for trail improvements.
- > Prioritize the elimination of gaps in the city's trail, bikeway and sidewalk system to better connect park users to parks, open spaces and trails.
- > Enhance trail connections to parks and open spaces from existing trail systems.
- > Explore options to improve pedestrian crossing safety at roadway intersections that connect people to parks, open spaces and trails (i.e. traffic calming, traffic signals, marked crossings, signage, lighting, etc.) with future projects.
- > Emphasize safety, convenience and comfort when designing new trails or rebuilding those that already exist.
- > Improve connections to public transportation facilities near parks and trails.
- > Increase awareness and expanded trail use through maps and trail wayfinding to help identify locations, destinations and distances.
- > Reduce financial and physical barriers to access parks, facilities and programs.
- > Improve access for people of all ages and abilities by ensuring ADA access to parks and trails.
- > Support trail accessibility through the identification of easily accessible routes that do not have steep slopes, gaps, or challenging transitions.



Explore options to improve pedestrian crossing safety at roadway intersections that connect people to parks, open spaces, and trails.



Increase awareness and expanded trail use through maps and wayfinding signs.

- > Provide accessible play areas and park facilities where feasible in neighborhood and community parks.
- > Improve the trail user experience through improved maintenance, wayfinding and trail amenities (i.e. seating, signage, public art, bike parking and repair facilities, etc.).
- > Consider grade-separated crossings to better connect trails across busy transportation corridors/barriers.
- > Preserve abandoned or vacated rights of way for future trail expansion.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming.

Initiatives:

- > Continue to program events, festivals and community gathering opportunities in Minnetonka's parks.
- > Collaborate with cultural groups and community groups to provide community events in the parks.
- > Promote and advertise park programs and events within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- > Incorporate additional picnic facilities and park shelters in neighborhood and

community parks to encourage community gathering in parks.

- > Incorporate multi-generational park facilities and programs into parks.
- > Provide flexible spaces for special event programming.
- > Ensure parks are accessible, safe and welcoming to all residents, visitors and employees in the community.
- > Consider opportunities to create new park spaces intended to accommodate community gatherings.
- > Continue to provide volunteer opportunities and events.

Goal 3: Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature.

Initiatives:

- > Expand opportunities for more nature-based programs and facilities, such as bird watching, canoing, hiking or interpretive trails in Minnetonka's natural areas and waterways.
- > Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas.
- > Expand the number of formal trails in parks.



Expand opportunities for more nature-based programs and facilities, such as bird watching, canoing, hiking or interpretive trails.

- > Create more opportunities for people to access and recreate on Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka and other water bodies in the park system.
- > Improve access for people of all abilities by incorporating accessible trails in parks and preserves where feasible.
- > Incorporate interpretive features in parks and preserves to provide information about the environment, history, or culture of natural places.
- > Build stewardship for the natural environment through volunteerism and educational programs.
- > Encourage interaction with natural areas by providing signage, wayfinding and maps to

guide people to natural areas.

Goal 4: Improve access to neighboring communities of Minnetonka.

Initiatives:

- > Enhance trail connections to surrounding communities and the broader regional trail system.
- > Continue partnering with surrounding communities, regional park organizations and schools to program recreational opportunities on joint-use facilities.
- > Explore opportunities to partner with neighboring communities to share parks and park facilities for similar programming.
- > Uphold the joint recreation agreement with the City of Hopkins and explore ways to increase programming and events in Hopkins parks.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Parks, open spaces, and trails help keep park users fit and healthy. All people need physical activity to maintain fitness and health. Physical activity increases strength, flexibility and endurance; relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety; improves mood; and enhances

psychological well-being. Parks provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Park and recreation facilities support good health for people of all abilities, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities. They foster community health and wellness in the following ways:

- > Help reduce obesity, diabetes and chronic disease by providing opportunities for physical activity
- > Provide connections to nature which can relieve stress, build relationships and improve mental health
- > Provide access to nutritious food
- > Foster overall wellness and healthy lifestyle habits

The following goals and policies are recommended to ensure that all park users have access to park facilities and programs essential to community vitality, health equity, improved individual and community health and enhanced quality of life.

Goal 1: Ensure that park programs and facilities support public health and wellness



Create more opportunities for people to access and recreate on Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka, and other water bodies in the park system.



Enhance trail connections to surrounding communities and the broader regional trail system.

for all park users

Initiatives:

- > Provide activities that contribute to physical, mental and spiritual health and social wellbeing.
- > Support healthy living by providing a well-connected park, open space and trail system.
- > Provide facilities and programs that support year-long activities and recreational opportunities.
- > Enhance access to healthy foods by incorporating additional community gardens in the park system.
- > Incorporate facilities and programs that reflect the diverse health and wellness needs of multi-cultural communities in Minnetonka.
- > Provide multi-generational facilities and programs to attract park users of all ages and abilities to enjoy the health benefits of outdoor activity and recreation.
- > Offer increased opportunities for health enhancing recreational activities.
- > Improve and maintain existing and new park facilities, programs and environments

to optimize health benefits.

Goal 2: Provide for a healthy park experience that is accessible, enjoyable and reliable to all park users.

Initiatives:

- > Provide a well-connected pedestrian and bicycle trail network throughout the community.
- > Enhance public transportation connections to parks, open spaces and trails.
- > Provide accessible, safe and convenient connections to parks, open spaces and trails.
- > Enhance opportunities for community gatherings at parks through event planning and programming.
- > Provide programs and facilities that meet the needs of the surrounding neighborhood by engaging with neighborhood stakeholders during the park planning and design process.

Goal 3: Promote health and wellness through education and park programming.

Initiatives:

- > Increase awareness and understanding

of how parks and trails can contribute to health and wellness through educational campaigns and park programs.

- > Promote health and wellness as an



Enhance access to healthy foods by incorporating additional community gardens in the park system.



Enhance opportunities for community gatherings at parks through event planning and programming, such as Minnetonka Summer Fest.

interrelated system linking physical and mental health to physical activity, social interaction and connection to nature.

- > Provide interpretation and educational features in parks that communicate the health benefits of parks and natural environments.

Goal 4: Strengthen relationships with partners to improve overall health outcomes.

Initiatives:

- > Explore opportunities to share resources and expertise with the health sector to pursue common health education goals.
- > Partner with health sector organizations to fund, program and facilitate events and recreational opportunities.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Parks and recreation facilities and programs help to build diverse, equitable and inclusive communities where people from all walks of life can come together to learn, experience, interact and to grow. The goal of this plan is to create a park system that provides quality parks and connections to green space, recreation facilities and programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally

relevant and welcoming. Just and fair access to high-quality parks creates healthier, cohesive and stronger communities. Minnetonka is an aging community with a lower concentration of households with children. It's also becoming more culturally diverse, attracting thousands of residents of color in the past 20 years. As the community becomes more ethnically diverse and ages, it is important to acknowledge the different needs of these user groups to ensure Minnetonka's parks reflect the needs of all residents and are welcoming, inclusive places.

Goal 1: Develop park programs and facilities that fit the needs of the community through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Initiatives:

- > Identify opportunities to address and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in park programs and facilities.
- > Provide opportunities for the community to communicate their needs and concerns regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.
- > Coordinate with the other entities within Minnetonka to promote and celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion.



Increase awareness and understanding of how parks and trails can contribute to health and wellness.



Engage diverse community groups and all potentially impacted stakeholders in setting balanced priorities for park-related matters. Image: Night to Unite Engagement - August 2021

Goal 2: Encourage recreation participation by all park users regardless of race, age, gender, or ability.

Initiatives:

- > Provide park facilities and recreation programs that reflect a multi-cultural, aging demographic that is representative of the community.
- > Engage diverse community groups and all potentially impacted stakeholders in setting balanced priorities for park-related matters.
- > Minimize physical, financial and social barriers to accessing parks, facilities and programs.
- > Improve access for people of all ages and abilities by ensuring ADA access to parks and trails.
- > Provide accessible play areas and park facilities where feasible in neighborhood and community parks.
- > Provide parks, facilities and programs that are well-distributed throughout the community.
- > Provide multi-generational park facilities and programs to provide opportunities for recreating for all ages and abilities.

- > Celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion through community event programming and historical and cultural interpretation.
- > Incorporate public art and interpretative features in the park system.
- > Explore using multi-lingual text in marketing and on park signage.
- > Provide a variety of free and low-cost programs and events.

Goal 3: Expand access to parks and build and repair parks in underserved communities.

Initiatives:

- > Prioritize funding projects that increase park access for low-income communities and communities of color in terms of proximity and the quantity of park space available per person.
- > Invest in creating, improving and expanding programming that serves low-income communities and communities of color.
- > Explore the use of transportation and public safety funding to address mobility



Provide multi-generational park facilities and programs to provide opportunities for recreating for all ages and abilities.



Provide accessible play areas and park facilities where feasible in neighborhood and community parks.

and safety concerns that limit accessibility and usability of parks by low-income communities and communities of color.

Goal 4: Engage community members meaningfully in the design and planning of parks to ensure that parks and park programming reflect community values and priorities.

Initiatives:

- > Create park planning processes that provide meaningful opportunities for community residents to shape decisions about future park system planning and investments.
- > Recruit, hire and retain a diverse park system workforce that is representative of the community to ensure parks are inclusive environments and are better equipped to meet the needs of the diverse communities they serve.
- > Partner with schools, neighborhood groups, service providers, faith-based institutions and other community-based organizations to connect to underserved residents and engage them in decision-making processes.
- > Seek funding sources to deepen inclusion and cultural relevance across the park

system.

- > Engage in marketing campaigns that promote parks as safe and inviting places for all members of the community to recreate and enjoy the outdoors.

EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

The Minnetonka parks, open space and trail system must strive to meet the range of recreational needs and expectations for all park users. This plan provides a guide for opportunities to provide excellence in the park system and incorporate current trends in park planning and design. Change is inevitable and park facilities and programs should be adaptable to variations in community demographics, user needs and desires. Future park improvements should be resilient and flexible enough to address the economic, social and environmental impacts of climate change. Innovative, forward-thinking solutions to park design and maintenance that incorporate best practices should be encouraged in order to achieve those goals.

Goal 1: Explore and prioritize a variety of new or improved active and nature-based passive park facilities and programs that reflect community values and desires.

Initiatives:

- > Meet an increasing demand for more informal, passive and nature-based recreation opportunities.
- > Study the feasibility of adding a year-round swimming facility to the park system.
- > Consider the following improvements in future park planning:
 - > Rock climbing or bouldering features in the parks
 - > Nature play areas and more nature-based programs in community and neighborhood parks
 - > A more significant and permanent skateboarding park
 - > Accessible playgrounds
 - > Ninja warrior playground in one of the community parks
 - > Additional pickleball courts
 - > Bicycle playground/pump track
 - > Off-leash dog parks
 - > Community gardens
 - > More natural surface trails
 - > More boardwalks in wetland areas

Goal 2: Support year-round recreation by improving access to outdoor winter facilities and programs.

Initiatives:

- > Provide at least one type of winter recreational opportunity in each Community Park.
- > Increase winter trails for hiking and snowshoeing. Explore a cross-country ski trail in the park system.
- > Provide warming facilities for winter activities such as ice skating, hockey and cross-country skiing to encourage winter recreation.
- > Provide winter trail signage.
- > Provide community gathering opportunities through winter event planning and programming.
- > Consider fewer neighborhood ice rinks to focus on higher quality ice rinks in the community.

Goal 3: Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, community groups and volunteers.**Initiatives:**

- > Establish and enhance partnerships and

stakeholder involvement with a variety of agencies and members of the community.

- > Create opportunities for people to feel a greater sense of ownership/volunteerism.
- > Support volunteer engagement and participation to enhance stewardship, programming, social cohesion and ownership.

Goal 4: Expand marketing and awareness of park facilities, programs and natural amenities.**Initiatives:**

- > Create marketing strategies and branding materials intended to create a greater sense of identity and awareness of park facilities, programs and natural amenities.
- > Design and implement consistent and branded park amenities (benches, bike racks, shelters, trash receptacles, lighting, etc.) and wayfinding signage.
- > Promote and advertise community events, park programs and recreation opportunities within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- > Send email reminders, social media



Provide at least one type of winter recreational opportunity in each Community Park.



Create opportunities for people to feel a greater sense of ownership/volunteerism.

notifications and newsletters about upcoming events.

- > Encourage diverse communities to register for events and recreation opportunities.

Goal 5: Model sustainable practices in park construction, maintenance and operations.

Initiatives:

- > Incorporate sustainable best practices in the operations and maintenance of park facilities.
- > Continue to manage invasive plant species in parks and open spaces as guided by the City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan.
- > Incorporate maintenance strategies that are flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate changes due to climate, community demographics, user needs and desires.
- > Account for seasonality and climate resiliency in the design, maintenance and programming of park and recreation facilities to maximize activity throughout the year.
- > Improve safety in existing and future parks through design, maintenance and

programming.

- > Use data driven evaluation of park facilities to develop a maintenance and replacement schedule and plan for future budget needs.

Goal 6: Create new park master plans as the need for new parks and park improvements arise.

Initiatives:

- > Engage community members in the planning and design for new parks and park improvements.
- > Incorporate park programs and facilities that reflect community needs and desires.
- > Incorporate best practices in the planning and design of new parks.
- > Incorporate multi-functional park spaces that provide environmental, social, economic and health benefits.
- > Ensure that new parks and park improvements incorporate as many of the above-mentioned goals and objectives as is possible.



Buckthorn removal. Continue to manage invasive plant species in the city's parks and open spaces guided by the Natural Resources Master Plan.



Create new park master plans as the need for new parks and park improvements arise, such as Ridgedale Commons shown in the image, currently under construction in Minnetonka.

POST System Plan



The POST System Plan will guide decision-making for the City of Minnetonka over the next 15 to 20 years. The Implementation Chapter is intended to provide a framework for decision-making and public investment by identifying priority actions and improvements, associated costs, and potential funding sources.

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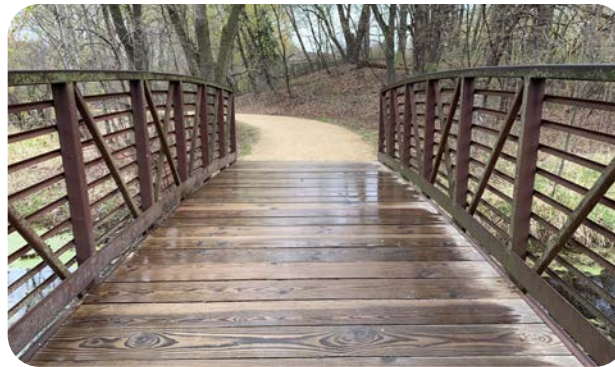
CHAPTER 06

IMPLEMENTATION

06

CHAPTER 6 | IMPLEMENTATION

The POST System Plan, coupled with the Trail Improvements Plan, provides direction for the City Council, the Park Board, and city staff to guide decision making that will impact future park, open space and trail improvements. The purpose of this Implementation Chapter is to identify priorities and initiatives for future park system improvements that support the overall system vision and guiding principles. The Implementation Chapter also provides guidance for park facilities, identifies costs related to priorities, potential funding sources, and establishes the need for measuring progress.



Trail at Meadow Park



Lone Lake Park



Burwell House



Shady Oak Beach

TABLE 4: FACILITY DELIVERY GUIDELINES

Facility	Class of park that may provide this facility
Provide within each Neighborhood Park Service Area (NPSA)	
Playground every 1/2 mile	Mini Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Open Play Field	Mini Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Basketball - one half court or full size court	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Diamond Field (baseball/softball)	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Athletic Complex
Nature Area (1 acre+)	Mini Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Preserve
Rectangular Field (soccer/football/lacrosse)	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Tennis (set of 1 to 4 courts)	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Provide within the Community	
Community Garden	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Special Use
Hockey/Pleasure Skating	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Special Use
Interactive Water Feature	Community Park, Special Use
Pickleball Courts	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Sand Volleyball	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Aquatics (pool)	Community Park, Special Use
Swimming beach	Community Park, Special Use
Archery	Community Park
Cross-country skiing	Community Park, Special Use, Neighborhood Park
Golf	Special Use
Indoor Athletic Facility	Community Park, Special Use
Indoor Multi-Purpose Facility	Community Park, Special Use
Mountain Biking	Community Park
Nature Center	Community Park
Skate Park	Community Park, Special Use
Sports Complex (outside)	Community Park, Athletic Complex
Nature play area	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Off-leash dog park	Community Park, Special Use
Ninja Warrior Playground	Community Park
Bicycle Playground/Pump Track	Community Park, Special Use
Rock climbing/Bouldering Feature	Community Park
Trails	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Preserve
Boardwalks	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Preserve

FACILITY GUIDELINES

Table 4: Facility Delivery Guidelines provides a list of park and trail facilities and the class of park that may provide each facility. The delivery levels range from city to neighborhood scale and define the expectations for the quantity and general location of a particular facility. Providing equitable and convenient access to recreation facilities is important. This should be factored into the allocation of facilities across the city.

Several of the park facilities listed should be seen as baseline level park facilities and located within each Neighborhood Park Service Area (NPSA). Other park facilities may be available throughout the community. Some of these facilities already exist within the system, others were identified through the community engagement/input process. It is important to protect the city’s natural resources by concentrating recreation facilities out of community preserves and other protected open spaces. These are general facility guidelines. Any significant new or modified facilities/amenities would go through an approval process before implementation. Accordingly, the park classification guidelines in *Table 1* reflect these considerations.

PRIORITIES

Recommendations identified in Chapter 5 have informed these implementation priorities. The priorities are organized into five categories: facilities, plans and studies, programming and events, communications and marketing, and operations and maintenance. Prioritization was based on public interest, availability of resources (funding, staff, land, etc.), alignment with the Natural Resource Master Plan and Trail Improvement Plan, and City Council and Park Board priorities.

The city's ability to implement these priorities will depend on staff resources, funding, and need. Some initiatives may involve more staff time or require more funding for a one-time improvement. Other initiatives may require less staff time or funding but present a long-term commitment to implement. Funding and/or partnership opportunities may also influence the timing of certain initiatives. Implementation of new park spaces may occur as opportunities arise (i.e. Opus)

Implementation phasing should be flexible and dependent on regular project prioritization based on needs, funding availability, and partnership opportunities. Funding availability may cause the need to consider phasing of larger capital improvement projects. While phasing large

projects may not be ideal, extending the implementation time-frame and potentially adding cost to the project, this strategy could allow the city to implement multiple capital improvements at the same time.

Table 5 provides a prioritized list of capital improvements or actions and estimated costs for each category. Many of the initiatives are aspirational and difficult to estimate potential costs without further study. All costs provided are in 2022 dollars and are planning level cost estimates that will need to be confirmed with further planning and design. In some cases, the estimates do not reflect soft costs, such as planning, engineering, design, construction administration, and staff time. Additional costs for these professional services may add another 20 to 30 percent to project costs.



Lone Lake Park



Shady Oak Beach

TABLE 5: PRIORITY INITIATIVES

	Priority				Notes	Cost
	High	Medium	Low	Ongoing		
FACILITIES						
Implement trail recommendations provided in the City's Trail Improvement Plan	X			X	Refer to TIP for priorities and cost information	Cost to be determined per project
Improve trail connections to parks, open spaces, and public transportation facilities		X		X	Conduct study to identify gaps in system	\$50/LF - \$125/LF
Provide accessible features in play areas	X			X	Provide ADA-compatible play equipment, access to play features, and surfacing where feasible in replacement, renovation, or new playground construction	Cost to be determined per project
Incorporate new picnic facilities and park shelters in parks			X		Identify through park master planning	\$250K-\$750K/park
Explore options for additional park land in the Opus area		X				Cost to be determined
Incorporate multi-generational park facilities into parks				X	Identify through park master planning	\$50K-\$200K/park
Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas				X	Identify through park master planning	\$500/LF-\$2,000/LF
Expand the number of formal trails in parks				X	Identify through park master planning	\$50/LF - \$125/LF
Provide facilities that support year-long activities and recreational opportunities				X	Identify through park master planning	Cost to be determined per project
Provide additional winter recreational opportunities in Community Parks (i.e. snowshoe trails, cross-country ski trails)		X			Conduct study focused on winter recreation opportunities in parks	Cost to be determined per project
PLANS AND STUDIES						
Incorporate park resilience strategies in the city's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan		X			Identify opportunities through park master planning	Cost to be determined per project
Conduct study to improve pedestrian crossing safety at roadway intersections adjacent to Community Parks				X	Identify through park master planning	Included with master plan
Conduct an ADA accessibility audit to identify and address compliance issues		X			Study should include all parks, trails, and access to parks and trails	\$30,000-\$60,000
Evaluate park safety in order to create safe and inviting spaces		X		X	Coordinate study with public safety staff	\$30,000-\$60,000
Conduct plan to add community gardens to the park system		X			Identify through park master planning	\$10,000-\$30,000
Conduct plan to incorporate public art in the park system			X			Staff time

	Priority				Notes	Cost
	High	Medium	Low	Ongoing		
Study the feasibility of adding a year-round swimming facility		X			Feasibility study	\$30,000-\$60,000
Update guidelines for requests to park board for special projects	X					\$15,000-\$30,000
Conduct a study to expand or add a skate park	X				Feasibility study	\$20,000-\$40,000
Study the feasibility of adding a dog park	X					Staff time
Conduct master plan study for Community Parks:						
Big Willow	X				Master plan	\$40,000-\$80,000
Civic Center			X		Master plan	\$40,000-\$80,000
Lone Lake		X			Master plan	\$40,000-\$80,000
Meadow		X			Master plan	\$30,000-\$50,000
Purgatory	X				Master plan	\$40,000-\$80,000
Conduct master plan for the Cullen Smith property	X				Master plan	\$20,000-\$40,000
Conduct master plan for Jidana Park		X			Master plan	\$30,000-\$50,000
Conduct master plan for Victoria Evergreen Park			X		Master plan	\$20,000-\$40,000
Study the feasibility of condensing ice skating rinks		X				Staff time
Incorporate an initiative to establish a process for decision making for project review		X				Staff time
PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS						
Collaborate with cultural groups and community groups				X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Incorporate multi-generational park programs				X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Expand opportunities for more nature-based programs and facilities	X			X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Continue to partner with neighboring communities to share parks and facilities				X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Provide activities that contribute to physical and mental health, and social wellbeing				X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Partner with health sector organizations to fund, program, and facilitate events		X		X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project

	Priority				Notes	Cost
	High	Medium	Low	Ongoing		
Celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion through community event programming	X			X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Expand programming that serves low-income communities and communities of color	X			X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING						
Increase awareness and expanded trail use through signs, maps and trail wayfinding	X				Conduct wayfinding and signage master plan	Cost to be determined
Promote and advertise park programs and events in diverse communities	X			X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Provide interpretive and educational features in parks		X			Identify through park master planning	Cost per project
Expand volunteerism and educational programs	X			X	Ongoing initiative	Staff time
Promote the benefits of parks on health and wellbeing				X	Ongoing initiative	TBD
Explore using multi-lingual text and/or universal symbols in marketing and on park signage		X				Staff time
Create a consistent, branded strategy and standards for park features, materials, signage, etc.		X		X	Conduct park system branding strategy	Staff time
OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE						
Incorporate stormwater and green infrastructure best practices in park and facility design				X	Determine opportunities through park master planning/ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Utilize native plant materials to reduce maintenance and irrigation needs				X	Ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Offer recycling programs and facilities	X			X	Ongoing initiative	TBD
Utilize integrated pest management strategies				X	Ongoing initiative	TBD
Explore options to implement a turf conversion program				X	As opportunities arise	Cost per project
Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse park system workforce	X			X	Ongoing initiative	TBD
Incorporate sustainable best practices in the operations and maintenance of park facilities	X			X	Determine opportunities through park master planning/ongoing initiative	Cost to be determined per project
Review trail and sidewalk winter maintenance priority designations as the trail and sidewalk system expands.				X		

FUNDING SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Implementing the vision and key initiatives for the parks, open space and trails system will require additional funding to support new park features and programs, revitalization efforts, maintenance and operations, park planning and outreach, etc. Significant investment is needed for Minnetonka to provide for, maintain and operate the type of parks, open space and trails system identified in this plan. The following provides a list of potential funding sources and partners the city should consider when planning for future investments in the park system.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

General Funds

General funds are typically used to maintain and improve the parks, open space and trail system. General funds are also the primary funding source for on-going maintenance, operations, and amenities.

Dedicated Tax Levy

The city can hold a referendum for a dedicated tax levy with funds directed toward parks and recreation. This levy can be used for capital projects as well as operations and maintenance. Funds generated through

the tax levy may be used in place of general funds or be supplemented by general funds.

Bonding

General Obligation Bonds, Annual Appropriation Bonds, Tax Abatement Bonds, and Revenue Bonds can be used to provide additional sources of implementation funding for new park facilities, as well as repairs and/or upgrades to existing facilities.

Local Sales Tax Option

Minnesota Statute 297A.99 provides the authority to levy a local sales tax with special legislation of a dedicated tax. The statute requires that a resolution also be passed by the jurisdiction including, at minimum, information on the proposed tax rate, how the revenues will be used, the total revenue that will be raised before the tax expires and the estimated length of time the tax will be in effect. Once legal authority has been granted, an election must be held prior to a jurisdiction actually levying the sales tax. The election will permit the use of the sales tax for specific capital improvements.

State Aid Funds

State aid funds are available for pedestrian and bicycle improvements on state aid

streets. This funding source is useful when street construction or re-construction projects are being funded. Minnetonka should consider this option for funding needed trail and sidewalk improvements as part of the Trails Improvements Plan.

Park and Trail Dedication

Cash payments received must be used only for the acquisition and development or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open space based on the approved park systems plan. Cash payments must not be used for ongoing operation or maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open space.

School Districts

The city partners with the Minnetonka and Hopkins School Districts, particularly in the use of athletic fields. The continued collaboration between the city and the School Districts is important in ensuring adequate access to athletic facilities and minimizing overlap in programs. Communication should occur on at least an annual basis about planned projects and additional opportunities to jointly develop open space and public facilities.

Partnerships

Partnerships with public and private organizations are important opportunities to fund park facilities and programming. Partner funding can also provide assistance with design, community engagement and maintenance.

Donations

Private donations are another potential funding source. These may be financial donations from individuals or private corporations.

Volunteers

Volunteer efforts of labor from volunteer groups and associations have been very successful in Minnetonka to help raise awareness and defer costs of maintenance of parks, trails and open spaces.

Grants

Grants are another great opportunity to supplement funding for park facilities and programs. Below are some examples of grant opportunities that may be available to assist with funding of park improvements and programming:

» ***Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)***

The DNR provides state funding for parks and trails, offering a variety of grant programs and technical assistance. Grant programs provide assistance for nordic skiing trails, mountain biking trails and recreational trails. Some programs also offer assistance for the development of park or for trail amenities such as shelters, restrooms, lighting, and seating.

» ***Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)***

MnDOT offers funding for trail or bikeway improvement projects. These may utilize a portion of federal dollars. Federal highway funding reauthorization may include funding for trail or sidewalk improvement projects under programs such as Safe Routes to School or the Regional Solicitation managed by the Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board.

» ***Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment***

In 2008, Minnesota's voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy Amendment) to the Minnesota Constitution to: protect drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore wetlands, prairies,

forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve arts and cultural heritage; to support parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater.

The Legacy Amendment increases the state sales tax by three-eighths of one percent. The program began in 2009 and continues until 2034. The additional sales tax revenue is used to fund clean water, outdoor heritage, arts and cultural heritage, and parks and trails.

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

In 1988, Minnesota's voters approved a constitutional amendment establishing the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (Trust Fund). The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide a long-term, consistent, and stable source of funding for activities that protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources for the benefit of current citizens and future generations.

Foundations and Non-Profits

Several foundations and non-profits support local projects such as park and trail improvements. The Minnesota Council of Foundations is a good place to identify foundations for potential funding of parks and trails in Minnetonka.

MEASURING PROGRESS

The POST System Plan success must be measured not only by assessing community needs and satisfaction, but also by responding to park users' wants and needs. Park use and recreation trends are dynamic and constantly changing. Demographic changes in the community, new recreation activities, equipment changes, and other forces may cause the need to adapt and update this plan from time to time as the city continues to evolve.

A periodic review of this plan to make sure that priorities and recommendations are still relevant, and that progress is regularly tracked is essential. Regular assessment of the parks, open space and trail system is particularly useful when requesting funds for new or updated park facilities, staff needs and volunteer efforts. It is also important to communicate the benefits parks, open spaces and trails provide to the community to ensure elected officials, decision makers

and the public have a clear understanding of system benefits and how their dollars are being used to improve the park, open space and trail system. Regular evaluations can also better identify which improvements would better serve park system users and achieve the vision and guiding principles outlined in this plan.

The assessment process should include an analysis of progress toward achieving the goals and initiatives recommended in this plan. The following provides examples of the kind of information and data that should be gathered and reviewed as part of a comprehensive assessment process:

- » Number of recreation activities and participants
- » Number of events, facility users and participants
- » Number of volunteer participants

- » Number of people using parks, open spaces, and trails
- » Number of park master plans completed
- » Miles of trail improvements completed
- » Park and trail safety - number of accidents, incidents, and crime reports
- » Continue annual city-wide survey and track park and recreation input
- » Survey park users to learn more about park use, facilities, programs, and events
- » Evaluate progress on marketing and communication efforts
- » Evaluate progress on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals
- » Evaluate progress on accessibility goals
- » Document community engagement processes utilized in planning efforts and lessons learned



Playground at Lone Lake Park



Trail at Big Willow Park

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— PLAN YOUR PARK SYSTEM —

WHAT NEW/ADDITIONAL THINGS WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO IN MINNETONKA PARKS?
Please vote by 2021-2022

POST System Plan



Chapter Contents

Glossary of Terms

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APPENDIX

A

GLOSSARY



APPENDIX A | GLOSSARY

Access (egress/ingress)

The ability to enter a site (ingress) from a roadway or trail and exit a site (egress) onto a roadway or trail by vehicle, bike, walking, etc.

Accessible Playground

An accessible playground allows children with or without disabilities to access and use a variety of playground equipment. It also invites parents, caregivers, or older siblings with disabilities into the play area to supervise children or play on the equipment too.

Active recreation means a leisure activity, usually of an organized nature, often performed with others and sometimes requiring equipment, taking place at a prescribed place, site, or field including, but not limited to baseball, football, soccer, tennis, hockey, pickleball and skateboarding.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

For purposes of park planning, a federal law that generally requires that parks, park facilities, open spaces and trails be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Athletic fields

The combination of ball fields and multi-use fields.

Ball fields

Baseball or softball fields of all size. Ball fields include a backstop and can include foul line fencing, spectator/player seating, skinned or grass infields, lights, scoreboards and supporting amenities.

Best Practices

A best practice is a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means, or because it has become a standard way of doing things.

Capital Costs

Fixed, one-time expenses for parks, recreational facilities, and equipment.

Climate Change

Climate change refers to significant changes in global temperature, precipitation, wind patterns and other measures of climate that occur over several decades or longer.

Conservation

The preservation or efficient use of natural resources.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a term used to describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures and sexual orientations.

Dog park/off leash dog exercise area

A specifically designated recreational facility where dogs are allowed to be off-leash while still under voice control by their handlers.

Facility

A built feature in a park or preserve that adds, supports or enhances a recreation activity.

Formal Trail

A city-approved purposefully built trail maintained by the city that can be asphalt, natural surface (crushed limestone, compacted soil, mulched), or boardwalks.

Habitat

The environment suitable for a particular animal or plant in which to live, grow or reproduce.

Informal Trail

A path or trail of disturbance created by park users through a park or natural area that is not city-approved. Informal trails are not maintained by the city.

Interpretation

A communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource. The term is used to describe communication activities designed to improve understanding at parks, nature areas, historic sites, and other community destinations.

Interpretive activities

Hikes, talks, tours, or demonstrations that provide the participants with information and inspiration on a given natural or cultural resource. Participants learn and discover new ideas or concepts about the subject.

Interpretive exhibits

Exhibits that are planned, designed, and fabricated to provide an educational and interpretive message to the visitor. Can be based on natural or cultural resources within the park or open space. Interpretive exhibits contain themes, interpretive goals, interpretive objectives, appropriate media, and are accessible to persons with disabilities. The purpose of the interpretive exhibit is to educate and inspire the visitor.

Invasive Species

A species that is non-native to the ecosystem and whose introduction/perpetuation causes or is likely to cause environmental harm such as a loss of biodiversity.

Kiosk

A structure frequently found at the entrance or exit of a park facility to control access/ egress of park users, collect fees, provide information, first-aid and public safety, etc, usually located at a key access point. For example, educational brochures and maps are found at many park kiosks.

Landscaping

Plantings including trees, shrubs, and ground covers suitably designed, selected, installed, and maintained to enhance a site, the surroundings of a structure, or the sides or medians of a roadway. Landscaping may also refer to structural improvements like retaining walls, structures, walkways, drainage, and lighting.

Maintenance

The regular tasks that keep parks, natural areas, recreational facilities, and trails clean and safe to use. For example, trash collection, safety inspections, replacement of broken parts on equipment, care of fields, etc.

Multi-generational park facilities

Multi-generational park facilities are park and recreation facilities designed to encourage use among children, parents, and grandparents. These spaces are designed to include people of all abilities and ages, so that everyone may find enjoyment, recreation, and entertainment at their neighborhood or community park.

Multi-use fields

Flat rectangular fields for soccer, football and other sports and activities. These fields can include goals, spectator/player seating, scoreboards, lights and supporting amenities.

Native plants

Species of plants that occur naturally in a particular area; plants that have not been introduced to the area by humans, either accidentally or intentionally.

Natural areas

Natural areas are lands managed in a natural state. Their size and shape is determined by the natural resources contained in these sites.

Nature-based play area

Typically, a play area designed to stimulate the creativity, physical ability, and imagination of children to connect with nature. It frequently includes tools and materials so children can construct things of their own design or experiment with earth, water, sand, wood, and other materials. Most often nature play areas are constructed of natural materials such as logs, boulders, rope, etc.

Neighborhood

One section of a community, often centered around a school and/or park that tends to have cohesive forces holding it together as a unit.

Neighborhood Park Service Area (NPSA)

There are twenty-three identified neighborhood park service areas (NPSAs) within the City of Minnetonka. The NPSAs are primarily defined by infrastructure barriers that make it difficult for residents and users to access other existing parks. In general, the mini and neighborhood parks in one NPSA function together to service the localized needs for that NPSA.

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

The nation's largest independent non-profit public service organization advocating quality recreation and parks for the American people. The Association provides services to recreation and park professionals and the general public, including the provision of recommended park and open space standards and maintenance standards.

Open space

Land that has been acquired to be maintained in its natural state for its intrinsic and/or open space value (buffer, habitat preservation, heritage tree stands, park and recreation, conservation of natural resources for historic or scenic purposes).

Park

Land area developed for neighborhood or community gathering and/or recreation use.

Park Classifications

See Table 1, page 51 for definitions of Mini Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Athletic Complex, Preserve and Special Use.

Park programming

The classes, activities, sports, and special events that are provided by the City of Minnetonka and other providers within and around Minnetonka.

Parklet

A small seating area or green space created as a public amenity on or alongside a sidewalk, especially in a former roadside parking space.

Parks, open space, and trails system

The combined total of city-owned park lands, the features and facilities that support recreation opportunities, and protect natural and historic resources. Recognizing that other public and private entities provide additional land and recreation facilities in Minnetonka, this plan refers to the system as including the city-owned, public parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, and trails.

Passive recreation means recreational activities that are commonly unorganized and noncompetitive, including, but not limited to, picnicking, wildlife viewing, bicycling, and walking. May also be referred to as informal recreation.

Preservation

The protection and maintenance of native lands and habitats.

Public access

A trailhead, trail or road that allows the public to reach or use public parks, lands, or assets. Sometimes the access may cross private lands to reach public lands.

Recreation

A pastime, diversion, exercise, or other resource affording relaxation and enjoyment.

Recreation facilities

The built features within parks that create opportunities to engage in specific games and activities. These can range from single courts or small play areas to larger recreation facilities, such as Big Willow Park, which supports a wide variety of self-directed and programmed recreation.

Recreation needs

Refers to existing and future demand by citizens and visitors for recreations areas, facilities, and opportunities.

Resiliency

Resiliency in park planning and design is the ability of parks and open spaces to recover more quickly from extreme events such as drought, fire, flooding, biodiversity loss, etc.

Restoration

The repair to a condition similar to that which existed at a defined period in history.

Skatepark

A skatepark consists of a diverse arrangement of structures constructed to accommodate skate boarding. Skateparks have delineated edges so that it's clear where the skatepark begins. In addition to trash cans, water and seating, neighborhood skateparks benefit from nearby parking, though most users will skate to the park.

Special Use Area

Public recreation lands that are specialized or single purpose in nature. Examples are dog parks, skate parks, golf courses, display gardens, recreation centers, and a wide range of other activities and facilities.

Splash pad

An aquatic feature that provides water play (splashing, spraying, dumping) with no standing water, eliminating the need for supervisory and lifeguard staffing. Splash pads are typically not programmed, free to access and operate seasonally.

Stewardship

The demonstration of care for something, i.e. the environment.

Stormwater

Precipitation that accumulates in natural and/or constructed storage and conveyance systems during and immediately following a storm event.

Stormwater management

Functions associated with planning, designing, constructing, maintaining, financing, and regulating the facilities (both constructed and natural) that collect, store, control, and/or convey stormwater.

Sustainability

The broad definition of sustainability is the integration of environmental health, social equity and economic vitality in order to create thriving, healthy, diverse and resilient communities for this generation and generations to come. In the context of this document, sustainability focuses on using methods, systems and materials that won't deplete resources or harm natural cycles.

Trails

This system includes pathways within parks, off-street greenways and multi-use paths, and on-street connections (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) that provide both a transportation route and opportunities for walking, running, bicycling and other activities.

Ward

Minnetonka is divided into four wards based on population, with a city council member dedicated to serve each ward.

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