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# Appendix F: Park Board Plan

## Background

The governance of the parks and recreational areas in Minneapolis is unique compared to most other municipalities in the United States. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is a semi-autonomous body of city government, which oversees the City's park system. The MPRB has nine elected officials (Board of Commissioners), who serve four-year terms. It is the Board, rather than the City, which is responsible for maintaining and developing the Minneapolis park system and street trees.

In 2006-2007, the MPRB completed a comprehensive plan of its own, the first such initiative by this body since the 1960's. The final version of the plan was approved by its board on October 17, 2007. Due to its high level of relevance to the City's park system, the MPRB plan is included in this appendix in its entirety. Portions of the plan are also summarized in Chapter 7 – Open Space and Parks.

The MPRB plan can also be found on the [MPRB website](#).

## Coordination Between Plans

Throughout the planning process for both the City and MPRB comprehensive plans, staff from both entities worked together to ensure the plans were consistent and complementary with one another. The MPRB primarily focused on planning for improvements on land it owns and maintains, while the City focused on lands outside of the official park system.

While each entity has its own goals, vision, and scope of influence, the two plans have much in common. There is strong potential for the two to work together into the future for the betterment of all who live, work, and play in Minneapolis.

# Comprehensive Plan

Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board



**2007 – 2020**

Approved October 17, 2007

**President**

Jon Olson, District 2

**Vice President**

Tracy Nordstrom, District 4

**Commissioners**

Mary Merrill Anderson, At Large

Walt Dziedzic, District 1

Bob Fine, District 6

Carol Kummer, District 5

Tom Nordyke, At Large

Scott Vreeland, District 3

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**Mission** The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board shall permanently preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board exists to provide places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment.

In 1883, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was created by an act of the Minnesota State Legislature and a vote of Minneapolis residents. It serves as an independently elected, semi-autonomous body responsible for governing, maintaining, and developing the Minneapolis park system. Every four years, nine commissioners are elected to this Board – one from each of the six park districts within the city and three that serve at-large. In 2008, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will celebrate 125 years of providing outstanding park and recreation services to residents and visitors of Minneapolis. As this milestone is achieved, the future is envisioned through this document.

The Board's governance structure is unique and reflects the commitment residents have made to parks and recreation in Minneapolis. Credited in part for the success of the park system, the Board's structure affords it the ability to focus on permanently preserving and protecting natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future city residents and visitors. Its governance powers include, but are not limited to, the ability to levy taxes and own land within and outside the City of Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board engages many partners including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations to provide an outstanding park and recreation system. A primary partner is the City of Minneapolis. The Park Board's comprehensive plan provides the City of Minneapolis with information it will need to address Metropolitan Council requirements for parks in the City's 2008 comprehensive plan update.

Dear friend of the Minneapolis park system,

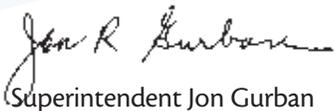
The early visionaries of the Minneapolis park system made no small plans; they dared to dream. More than a century later, we still marvel at their vision as we provide ongoing stewardship of one of the finest park systems in the country. We emulate the dedication, uncompromising will to succeed, and the value they placed on providing relevant park and recreation opportunities. We continue the tradition of shaping the character of the city and enhancing the quality of life for its residents through quality parks and recreation.

As Minneapolis and the lifestyles of its residents and park visitors continue to change, the park system will also evolve, sparking new development and providing parks, programs, and services that are relevant to peoples' lives. To ensure that future generations have an opportunity to enjoy an outstanding park and recreation system, we approach the future with a focus on sustainability. It is with great pride that we set forth a direction for the Minneapolis park system in this Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comprehensive Plan. It is with even greater pride that we invite you to enjoy the Minneapolis park system.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Jon Olson, President



Superintendent Jon Gurban

*“Look forward for a century, to the time when the city has a population of a million, and think what will be their wants. They will have wealth enough to purchase all that money can buy, but all their wealth cannot purchase a lost opportunity, or restore natural features of grandeur and beauty, which would then possess priceless values.”*

H. W. S. CLEVELAND  
1883



*(Front, left-right)*

Annie Young, At Large; Bob Fine, District 6;  
Mary Merrill Anderson, At Large; Walt Dziedzic,  
District 1

*(Back, left-right)*

Vice President Tracy Nordstrom, District 4;  
Scott Vreeland, District 3; President Jon Olson, District 2;  
Carol Kummer, District 5, Tom Nordyke, At Large

**The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's vision for the future continues the long tradition of preserving land and emphasizes connecting people to the land and to each other.** The Minneapolis park system will continue to enhance the quality of life for city residents and will play a significant role in shaping the character of the city through quality parks and recreation.

Direction from park commissioners and insights from residents, visitors, staff, and elected officials shaped the ambitious direction set forth in this comprehensive plan.

### The Commitment and Outreach

In 2005, a two-year commitment was made to complete the comprehensive plan. The five-phase development process for the comprehensive plan is:

■ **Phase I – Assessment**

Where are we today?

■ **Phase II – Community Outreach and Research**

What are the current demands and needs, and what are the evolving trends?

■ **Phase III – Comprehensive Plan Development**

Based on what is known, what outcomes are desirable?

■ **Phase IV – Priority Setting and Decision Making**

What priorities and short- and long-term actions are in the best interests of the public?

■ **Phase V – Implementation**

What resources should be allocated to accomplish goals?

This comprehensive plan marks the completion of the first three phases of the comprehensive planning process. Nearly 4,000 residents, visitors, and elected officials contributed to the development of this plan, and more than 100 staff have been involved in one or more phases of the comprehensive planning process.

During Phase I, staff teams collected information regarding infrastructure, demographics, and programs and services. Each team focused on creating methods or tools that could be updated regularly and would increase the park system's capacity to use this information for future planning. Six

additional teams were established during the assessment phase – information management, sustainability, planning, community outreach and research, evaluation, and art and history. Many of these teams will continue beyond the development of the plan. The focus of these teams ranges from completing inventories of artistic and historic elements of the park system to developing a sustainability plan.

When Phase II began in the fall of 2006, the community outreach and research team launched a process that gave all city residents, park users, and local elected officials the opportunity to share their thoughts about the community's park and recreation needs. The process included a questionnaire mailed to 172,300 Minneapolis households, seven town meetings, twenty focus groups, three appointed community leader workshops, and a statistically valid phone survey. The goal was to determine top community park and recreation needs.

After careful listening and analysis of comments received, the following top community needs emerged:

- Involving children and youth in positive activities
- Protecting and spending time in the natural environment
- Pursuing health and physical fitness
- Keeping parks clean and well maintained
- Providing safe parks

## The Direction

Throughout the first two phases, commissioners participated in working sessions. During these sessions they articulated their vision for the future of the park system and the values that depict what the organization stands for and the manner in which it carries out its activities. The direction they set was guided by the results of the community outreach and research process. Key directions include:

**Be a sustainable organization** When considering how work will be conducted at the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, sustainability tops the list. This will require meeting current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns. This comprehensive plan calls for the development and implementation of a sustainability plan that will further articulate how sustainability will be integrated into the everyday work of the park system.

**Provide urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate** Land, trees, and water – the foundation of the park system – require long-term investment and care. Parks are protected to benefit the entire city; therefore, all residents have a stake in the future of these resources and bear responsibility for their stewardship. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to providing leadership in natural resource management, connecting people to their natural environment, and fostering a sense of stewardship. The plan articulates goals and strategies that call for outstanding management of the park system's natural resources, programming that connects people with the natural environment, protection and care of boulevard trees, and development of partnerships that will further the goals of protecting natural resources and connecting people to them. It also calls for balancing the distribution of natural areas throughout the city, giving particular focus to north and northeast Minneapolis.

**Deliver recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community** The future calls for leadership that inspires all people to engage in recreation. In this plan, recreation includes all activities that make leisure time more interesting, enjoyable, and personally

satisfying. Furthermore this plan recognizes that the benefits of quality recreation are astonishing, ranging from the development of life-long skills to fostering community and crime prevention. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to enriching the lives of individuals, families, and the entire community through positive and fulfilling recreation experiences, and to offering physical, artistic, environmental, and social activities tailored to the diverse communities throughout the city. The plan calls for the development of a new community center service model that is relevant to community members, provides the personal touch and easy access of the current model, creates a social gathering space for the community, and is delivered from a sustainable number of community center hubs. The plan also sets forth goals and strategies to support the health and fitness goals of residents and to connect people to each other through recreation.

**Create dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs** As the city's demographics evolve, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board must create parks and amenities that are flexible, sustainable, and aesthetically beautiful, and with which residents and visitors can identify. This includes recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects the city's demographics. Achieving this vision requires that the organization listen carefully, anticipate future needs, explore new operating models, and obtain new funding sources. The Park Board will continue to be a strong leader by retaining an independent focus on parks and recreation, stretching the imagination for shaping the city, and seeking partners to fulfill the mission of the organization. The plan calls for the development of park plans for areas where the city's population is growing or expected to grow. Similarly, the plan articulates a need to fill service gaps throughout the system, especially in north and northeast Minneapolis. The plan also calls for determining the service and delivery goals of existing and new recreation activities through thoughtful examination. This will allow the park system to be proactive in offering new facilities, removing outdated or under-utilized facilities, and partnering with other service providers to prevent duplication.

### **Maintain a safe place to play, celebrate, contemplate, and recreate**

Keeping the parks safe requires a long-term commitment to people and places by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and its many partners. Safety, both real and perceived, is achieved through a combination of preventive and corrective measures. Delivering consistently safe parks also requires that they are well maintained and designed to prevent accidental injury. The plan calls for bolstering preventive measures that include developing ongoing relationships with park visitors, setting clear expectations of appropriate behavior in the park system, providing training to staff and visitors, and providing parks and park facilities that are safe by design.

### **The Research**

The plan recognizes the need of the organization to evolve to meet the changing park and recreation needs of Minneapolis residents. The directions set in the plan are guided by the insights gained through the community outreach and research process. They are also guided by knowledge of changes in the city since the last major system-wide study, the 1965 Brightbill Study. The changes in the city that are most significant to future park and recreation delivery include:

- **Demographic shifts** The number of households with individuals living alone has increased from 27.6% in 1960 to 40% in 2000. During the same time period, the number of households with children has declined from 34.8 % to 25% of households. The city has also become more diverse and home to an increasing number of foreign-born residents.
- **Recreation trends** Adults, especially Baby Boomers, are staying active longer. Young adults raised on youth athletics are seeking to maintain active lifestyles. In addition, interest in non-traditional and self-directed recreation is rising.
- **Health trends** Nationally, research shows obesity and related health concerns are rising along with health care costs. Parks and recreation play an important role in supporting the active lifestyles that can reduce health concerns and bolster preventive care.

### **Guiding Statements**

The mission, vision, and values are the guiding statements for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. These statements will be connected to the work of the organization through annual budgets, work plans, and a five-year implementation plan. Progress toward achieving the vision set forth in the plan will be evaluated at an individual, organizational, and community level. The guiding statements are as follows:

**The mission statement** articulates why the organization exists:

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board shall permanently preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board exists to provide places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment.

**The values statements** identify how the organization performs its work:

- **Sustainability** Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.
- **Environment** Sustain and enhance parklands, waters, and urban forests.
- **Economic** Develop short-term and long-term financial stability of the park system.
- **Equity** Provide residents with the opportunity to improve their quality of life and well-being through outstanding parks and recreation services that are suited to their respective needs.
- **Visionary Leadership** Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.
- **Safety** Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors.

■ **Responsiveness and Innovation** Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.

■ **Independence and Focus** Independence allows the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to focus on providing and obtaining the resources necessary to accomplish its mission and form effective, responsible partnerships.

**The vision statement** describes what the organization hopes to become by 2020:

In 2020, the Minneapolis park system is a premier destination that welcomes and captivates residents and visitors. The park system and its beauty are part of daily life and shape the character of Minneapolis. Natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and recreational resources cultivate outstanding experiences, health, enjoyment, fun, and learning for all people. The park system is sustainable, well-maintained and safe, and meets the needs of individuals, families, and communities. The focus on preserving land continues, with a strong emphasis on connecting people to the land and each other. Aware of its value to their lives, residents are proud stewards and supporters of an extraordinary park and recreation system.

### **The Promise**

This plan embraces innovation. It also communicates that ongoing learning and community outreach and research is required to provide the best park and recreation services to Minneapolis residents and visitors. The success of this vision is tied to the commitment of the Park Board, its employees and partners, and the value the public places on maintaining and improving the Minneapolis park system.

As the plan is implemented, residents and park visitors can look forward to an exciting future in which services are continually evaluated and improved to ensure community needs are met, facilities are renewed, connection with the natural environment is strengthened, sustainable practices are expanded, and parks are safe for everyone.

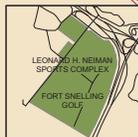
# Map I: Existing Minneapolis Park System

**LEGEND**

-  Parkland less than 1 Acre
-  Existing Parkland

*Park properties shown are those where the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has site control through ownership or lease. Water bodies shown are those where the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has site control of part or all of the surrounding land.*

*Not shown on this map is approximately 605 acres of land within the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport jurisdictional boundary in which the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board retains an interest.*



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## Minneapolis residents deeply value their parks.

**Founders of the system understood that parks play an essential role in a healthy, livable, and balanced city.**

Residents often remark that the Minneapolis park system is essential to their quality of life and to the identity of the city. Founders of the system understood the role parks play in a healthy, livable, and balanced city. They made preserving land for future generations a priority. Their success shaped the character of Minneapolis and continues to improve people's lives. This comprehensive plan builds on this strong foundation: it boldly envisions a sustainable park system that continues to be integral to the health and well-being of the city, its residents, and its communities.

**The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board envisions not only preserving land, but also enhancing people's connection to the land and to each other.**

Current trends suggest that the health and well-being of future generations are threatened by obesity, minimal leisure time, concerns about safety, social isolation, and separation from nature. While technology and new discoveries open up marvelous new opportunities for future generations to fulfill their dreams, they will not replace or diminish the need for personal wellness and connection to nature and one's community. Therefore, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board envisions not only preserving land, but also enhancing people's connection to the land and to each other.

**Commissioners, staff, residents, and local leaders had the opportunity to share their impressions of the park system.**

Since 1883, the independent Park Board has and continues to serve as the guardian and advocate for parklands and natural areas throughout the City of Minneapolis. It builds and maintains a wide range of parks and recreation facilities. It also invites people of all ages and abilities to engage in a host of recreation activities, to attend community celebrations and events, and to reconnect with nature. It extends park-like beauty into every residential street through the planting and maintenance of boulevard trees. It attracts more than 14 million visitors a year, helping to support a strong local and regional economy.

**Setting direction until 2020, this comprehensive plan ensures the Minneapolis park system will continue to be essential to quality of life in Minneapolis.**

In 2005, a two-year commitment was made to complete a comprehensive plan for the Minneapolis park system. Throughout 2006, commissioners, staff, residents, and local leaders had the opportunity to share their impressions of the park system, including its strengths and areas needing improvement. The vision, goals, and strategies put forth in this plan were shaped by this outreach process. Setting direction until 2020, this comprehensive plan and the organization's commitment to implementing it, ensure the Minneapolis park system will continue to be essential to quality of life in Minneapolis, and play a vital part in supporting the health and well-being of Minneapolis residents and visitors.

**The vision statement and the four vision themes will guide future development, operations, and maintenance of the Minneapolis park system into 2020.** A series of goals and strategies for each vision theme further guides the work of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

**Vision Statement** In 2020, the Minneapolis park system is a premier destination that welcomes and captivates residents and visitors. The park system and its beauty are part of daily life and shape the character of Minneapolis. Natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and recreational resources cultivate outstanding experiences, health, enjoyment, fun, and learning for all people. The park system is sustainable, well-maintained and safe, and meets the needs of individuals, families, and communities. The focus on preserving land continues, with a strong emphasis on connecting people to the land and each other. Aware of its value to their lives, residents are proud stewards and supporters of an extraordinary park and recreation system.



**Vision Themes** As a renowned and award winning park and recreation system, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board delivers:

#### VISION THEME 1

*Urban forests, natural areas, and waters*  
that endure and captivate

#### VISION THEME 2

*Recreation*  
that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and  
a sense of community

#### VISION THEME 3

*Dynamic parks*  
that shape city character and meet diverse community needs

#### VISION THEME 4

*A safe place*  
to play, celebrate, contemplate, and recreate

## *Urban forests, natural areas, and waters* that endure and captivate

*“For in the end we will  
conserve only what we love.*

*We will love only what we  
understand.*

*We will understand only  
what we are taught.”*

BABA DIOUM  
1970

Land, trees, and water – the foundation of the park system – require long-term investment and care. Parks are protected to benefit the entire city; therefore, all residents have a stake in the future of these resources and bear responsibility for their stewardship. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to providing leadership in natural resource management, connecting people to their natural environment, and fostering a sense of stewardship.

### **Connection, Leadership, Stewardship**

Preserving, managing, and enhancing the city’s natural lands, waters, and urban forests is a core responsibility of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. For more than a century, the Board has protected and preserved natural areas for future generations; monitored the quality of lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands; and managed trees throughout parks, natural areas, and boulevards. The Park Board creates opportunities for people to experience the beauty of nature through a variety of gardens, environmental programs, and self-guided explorations. All of these efforts attract people to the natural environment and foster the next generation of stewards.



**FINDINGS** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 1:

**Community Outreach and Research\***

Minneapolis residents value the natural environment and seek opportunities to preserve and spend time in nature. When asked to rate the importance of various park system amenities, residents rank natural areas and boulevard trees highest. Related amenities such as trails and environmental programming also receive high rankings. When comparing resident satisfaction and the level of importance they place on amenities and activities in the park system, the satisfaction level was significantly lower than the importance level for boulevard trees and environmental programming. This indicates additional focus is needed for these areas.

Within the natural environment, residents indicate they enjoy walking, biking, viewing nature, and picnicking. Residents indicate they want more focus on keeping parks clean, improving water quality, providing environmental programming, and preserving natural areas and boulevard trees.

**Impact of the Built Environment**

As the Twin Cities area continues to grow, access to natural areas

decreases and open space becomes increasingly fragmented.

Minneapolis' natural areas become refuges within otherwise developed settings. Consequently, natural areas within the Minneapolis park system are more susceptible to invasive species. Lakes, streams, creeks, wetlands, and other water bodies are especially affected by flooding, shoreline erosion, and other storm water impacts. Applying best practices in land and water management will help mitigate the impact on natural areas. Those best practices require stable, adequate funding to be effective.

**Sustainability**

Sustainability is most commonly associated with the protection and management of the natural environment. The Minneapolis Park Board supports the perspective that the environment, economics, and equity are equally important when considering sustainability. Therefore, sustainability is integrated throughout this document and featured specifically in the values section. A sustainability plan for the organization will further articulate how sustainability will be incorporated into the entire system.

**Disconnected from Nature**

Nationally, there is growing concern that people, especially children, are losing their connection to nature. Some cite technology as directly competing for their leisure time, while others fear that technology is replacing hands-on learning with indirect learning. There is also concern that immigrant populations and people of color are not pursuing nature-based activities in their leisure time. Forging a connection between people and natural areas will help ensure the long-term stewardship of the park system and build valuable life lessons.

**Changing Conditions and Regulations**

The park system is affected by local, regional, national, and even global changes, many of which demand the commitment of significant resources. Over the past 30 years, the park system has fought invasive species, managed specific tree diseases, and adapted to new regulatory requirements. Looking to the future, new invasive species, diseases, regulations, and the effects of pollution and climate change will require increased commitment and financial investment in managing the park system's natural resources.

*\* This is a summary of the key community outreach and research results as they relate to this vision theme. Please see the Comprehensive Planning Process in Review section for more details about the outreach and research process.*

## Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate

### GOAL

**Sound management techniques provide healthy, diverse, and sustainable natural resources.**



### STRATEGIES

- Develop and implement a natural area management plan that ensures natural areas (prairies, shorelines, and woodlands) are ecologically diverse, sustainable, and managed with scientifically-based methods, giving preference to remnant native plant communities (see Map II, page 15).
- Develop and implement management plans for all lakes and water bodies within the Minneapolis park system that ensure these resources will be protected and enhanced. Outline in the plan the partnerships with cities and watershed organizations that will aid in managing these resources.
- Develop and implement a land management plan for the grounds, trees, and gardens of parks and golf courses in the Minneapolis park system.
- Work with and advise the City of Minneapolis as necessary to develop an integrated tree canopy plan that is consistent with the specified roles of each governing unit in existing agreement and policy documents.
- Provide leadership and coordination with area partners and regulatory agencies in monitoring, regulating, and improving water quality and the ecological integrity of water bodies throughout the park system. Enforce regulations and policies as necessary.
- Collaborate with local, state, and federal organizations to plan for and fund ongoing ecological management and restoration.

### GOAL

**Healthy boulevard trees connect all city residents to their park system.**

### STRATEGIES

- Revise and maintain the master planting plan for boulevard trees.
- Plant boulevard trees that complement the park system's natural areas and are appropriate for the conditions of the boulevard.
- Formalize a boulevard tree management plan that promotes a pleasant and safe street environment and focuses on scientifically-based methods of planting and caring for boulevard trees.
- Maximize every opportunity to reforest city boulevards.
- Work with the city to ensure that boulevard conditions and designs heighten tree longevity.

**GOAL**

**Residents and visitors enjoy and understand the natural environment.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Encourage people to experience the natural environment by providing and maintaining, where feasible, trails and access points that serve people of all ranges of ability.
- Provide environmental education, and nature-based recreation that encourages all people, especially children and new populations, to explore, protect, understand, and become stewards of natural areas.
- Develop a strong connection between community/neighborhood center programming and the natural areas in the regional parks.
- Provide or support other entities in providing programming that teaches residents to reduce their individual negative impact on the natural environment.

**GOAL**

**People and the environment benefit from the expansion and protection of natural resources.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Ensure day-to-day operations and construction does not damage natural resources within parklands, and require replacement when loss or damage occurs.
- Within the park system, protect natural resources recognized as significant city, regional, or national resources due to historical, ecological, or aesthetic value.
- Enforce leash laws and use of designated trails to protect sensitive ecosystems and wildlife.
- Balance public access to natural areas throughout the city, giving priority to acquiring, developing and/or restoring areas in north and northeast Minneapolis.
- Enhance natural features in neighborhood and community parks to increase residents' awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment.



## *Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate*

### GOAL

**Knowledgeable stewards and partners generously support the system's natural resources.**



### STRATEGIES

- Develop programming to educate residents and park visitors of the importance of preserving and properly managing natural resources for health, water, and air quality, and general environmental benefits.
- Be a resource for residents and visitors seeking information about the park system's natural resources and urban forests.
- Engage volunteers in the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the system's natural resources.
- Lead efforts to establish public and private partnerships that enhance the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's management of natural areas, waters, and urban forests. Sponsor programs and events that promote exploring, protecting, and enhancing these resources.
- Strengthen opportunities for research and cooperative exchange of information with universities, state and federal agencies, and recognized experts.
- Participate in efforts sponsored by local partners that enhance the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's goals for managing natural areas, waters, and urban forests within the park system.



## *Recreation* that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

*"Inspiration adds spice and zest to our lives and allows them to be lives not just existences."*

ANNE WILSON SCHAAF

The future calls for leadership that inspires all people to engage in recreation. Recreation includes all activities that make leisure time more interesting, enjoyable, and personally satisfying. The benefits of quality recreation are astonishing, ranging from the development of life-long skills to fostering community to crime prevention. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to enriching the lives of individuals, families, and the entire community through positive and fulfilling recreation experiences. This will require offering physical, artistic, environmental, and social activities tailored to the diverse communities throughout the city.

### **Healthy Fun**

Whether one wishes to walk along the river, coach a sport, help restore a park area, picnic under an oak tree, have fun on a playground, join a hockey team, create a ceramic figurine, attend a concert, or watch nature unfold, the Park Board provides a wide range of healthy recreation choices. The park system's numerous recreation and volunteer opportunities inspire people to make a difference in their own lives, in the lives of others, and to their surroundings.



**FINDINGS** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 2:

**Community Outreach and Research\***

Overall, residents feel the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is doing a good job of providing for their household's park and recreation needs. Residents say it is important for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to provide health and physical fitness opportunities and positive recreation activities for children and youth. They frequently mention the need for additional or improved programming, especially for children. The main barriers to participating in recreation activities and programs were lack of time and concerns about personal safety.

Residents rank recreation centers, athletic fields, programming (all ages), and athletic courts as moderately important. Program recommendations focus on providing more programming for each age group. Arts and crafts and physical fitness classes were common requests for all age groups. When considering recreation centers, some residents felt gaps exist between what recreation centers provide and what their community needs. Suggestions to improve recreation centers include:

- Heightened security
- Better or improved access to information about available programs and activities

- Cleaner, better maintained, and updated centers
- Expanded evening and weekend hours
- Restrooms open longer

Trails and environmental programming rank as very important to residents. Residents commonly request more trails of all types and emphasize the importance of keeping them well-maintained. Strategies for trails are included in Vision Theme 3 and strategies for environmental programming are in Vision Theme 1.

**Community Center Model**

Minneapolis residents enjoy a greater diversity of recreational interests and lifestyles than in the 1960s when the current recreation center model was designed for the park system (see *Key Challenges and Opportunities section for demographic and recreation trends*). The small size of existing park centers adequately served that earlier era, but no longer supports the extensive recreation needs of today's children, youth, young adults, single adults, adults, older adults, and families, making it difficult to foster community among diverse lifestyles. A new model is needed; one that retains the personal touch and easy access of the 1960s model, while effectively

meeting the recreation needs of today's diverse communities. As current centers are increasingly in need of upgrading, it is vital that this new model be sustainable, be cost-efficient, and maximize the value of existing development, operations, and maintenance resources. (See *Diagram 1, page 21.*)

**Health, Physical Fitness, and Wellness**

Since their creation, parks have been viewed as key to the health and well-being of Minneapolis residents and visitors. The challenges facing society today may be different, but the expectations of the park system have not changed. Today's park system continues to be a positive influence by aiding individual health and fitness, and by countering obesity and related complications, isolation from community, and the stress of hectic lifestyles. Increasingly, people recognize the relationship between health care costs and lifestyle choices. Parks and recreation are a link to the active lifestyles that can have a profound affect on community wellness.

*"We do not cease to play because we grow old. We grow old because we cease to play."*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

\* This is a summary of the key community outreach and research results as they relate to this vision theme. Please see the *Comprehensive Planning Process in Review* section for more details about the outreach and research process.

*Recreation* that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

**GOAL**

**People play, learn, and develop a greater capacity to enjoy life.**



**STRATEGIES**

- Provide programming, especially for children, youth, and teens, in four key areas – physical, artistic, environmental, and social – at a level where high quality can be ensured.
- Adapt programming to busy lifestyles and make it easy for individuals and families to participate.
- Enrich physical, artistic, environmental, and social program delivery by partnering with other agencies, professionals, and providers.
- Identify and reduce physical and financial barriers to participation in programming.
- Develop connections between programming in the community/neighborhood park system and the regional park system.
- Provide opportunities to interpret the park system's history and historic features through venues that are engaging and fun for park visitors.

**GOAL**

**Residents, visitors, and workers enjoy opportunities to improve health and fitness.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Provide access and encouragement for children and youth to participate in fundamental-level athletics.
- Provide team sports for all age groups.
- Provide opportunities for self-directed recreation on land and water throughout the park system.
- Form or encourage groups and clubs that help motivate individuals to reach their health and fitness goals.
- Explore ways to integrate non-traditional recreation opportunities for all ages into the park system.
- Provide recreation opportunities that support active lifestyles for workers before, after, and/or during their workday.
- Ensure recreation opportunities are available for persons with disabilities.



**GOAL**

**People connect through parks and recreation.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Offer a culturally rich selection of programs, expanding cross-cultural programming and interpretive opportunities.
- Be the source of information about recreation opportunities city-wide.
- Develop programming partnerships with groups and organizations that provide life-long learning or work readiness skills, such as community education.
- Encourage opportunities that nurture relationships, develop an understanding of differences, and develop team-building skills.
- Encourage the use of parks for public cultural, art, and history events, giving priority to those that support local artists or foster an understanding of local cultures and history.
- Create and support events, concerts, festivals, athletic events, and celebrations that can be enjoyed by the entire community.
- Tell the story of the park system through interpretive displays and programming, and by celebrating key milestones in park history.

**GOAL**

**Volunteers make a vital difference to people, parks, and the community**

**STRATEGIES**

- Provide volunteer opportunities that are meaningful to individuals of all ages and families and further the work of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
- Promote volunteer opportunities in each park.
- Recruit neighborhood adults to be positive role models in the lives of youth through mentoring and coaching.
- Encourage and manage large scale volunteer projects that accommodate the desire of local businesses and corporations to volunteer in the community.
- Initiate, sponsor, and support city-wide volunteer projects and events.



*Recreation* that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community



**GOAL**

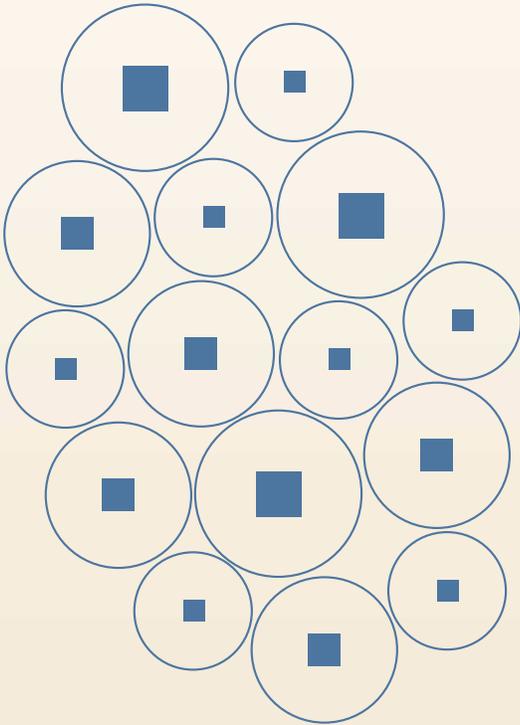
**Parks provide a center for community living.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Design and implement a community center service model that is relevant to community members, provides a personal touch and easy access for all residents, creates a social gathering space for the community, and is delivered from a sustainable number of community center hubs (also a component of Vision Theme 3).
- Provide programs for family members to enjoy within the same location.
- Tailor programs and services to the demographics and needs of the community.
- Deliver programming that connects individuals to the land and to each other.

Diagram I:

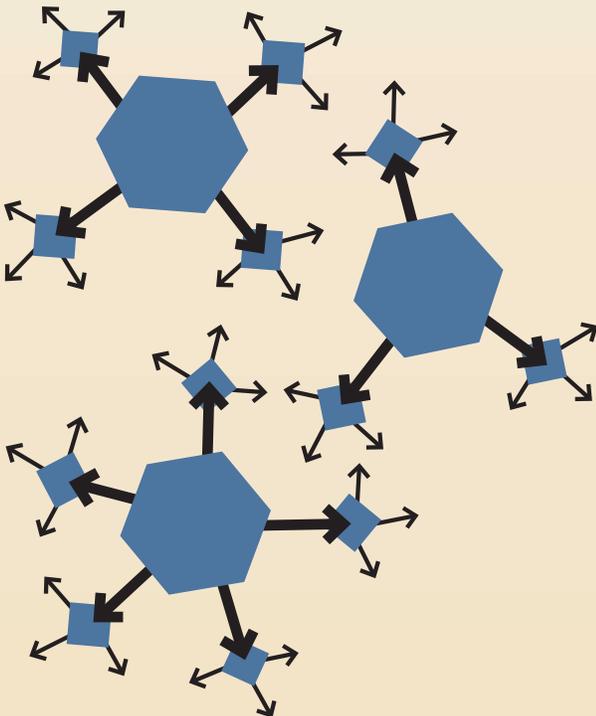
## Minneapolis Past to Present: Changing Recreation and Community Needs



### 1960: Free-standing Recreation Centers

*Minneapolis Characteristics at a Glance*

- Relatively homogenous population (*see Chart IV, page 44*)
- Similar park and recreation needs in each neighborhood
- Building schools
- 34.8% of households have children (1960 Census)
- 27.6% of households have individuals living alone (1960 Census)
- No digital communications or media
- Primarily detached single family housing



### 2007: Community Center Hub Model

*Minneapolis Characteristics at a Glance*

- More diverse population (*see Chart IV, page 44*)
- Larger and more diverse range of park and recreation needs across the city
- Closing schools
- 25.0% of households have children (2000 Census)
- 40.0% of households have individuals living alone (2000 Census)
- Explosion of digital world
- Increased housing in previously industrial or commercial areas of the city

## *Dynamic parks* that shape city character and meet diverse community needs

*"...it is the duty of a Park Commission to open the way to new, not to follow old customs; to lead public opinion, and not to tag after it."*

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED  
1886

As the city's demographics evolve, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board must create parks and amenities that are flexible, sustainable, and aesthetically beautiful, and with which residents and visitors can identify. Achieving this vision requires careful listening, anticipating future needs, exploring new operating models, and obtaining new funding sources. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will continue to be a strong leader by retaining an independent focus on parks and recreation, stretching the imagination for shaping the city, and seeking partners that will help fulfill the mission of the organization.

### **Vision, Leadership, Renewal**

A rich history of visionary leadership created a legendary park system that shapes the character of Minneapolis and the quality of life for its residents. The central Mississippi riverfront is a prime example of how new development and private investment frequently follow public investment in park amenities. Plans are in place to expand this success into the upper Mississippi River area. Similarly, plans to realize a century-old vision of completing the Grand Rounds through northeast Minneapolis are in progress. To support the park system, a diverse range of funding sources, such as a park dedication ordinance and private partnerships, are being explored. Increased emphasis is being placed on sustainable practices, communication, demographic trends, and effective outreach to ensure new and renewed facilities meet the needs of current and future generations.



**FINDINGS** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 3:

**Community Outreach and Research\***

According to residents, parks define the city and are very important to the quality of life in Minneapolis. Residents want more investment in the care and upkeep of park and recreational facilities and enhanced communication, as well as a greater connection between community needs and the services provided by the park system. They emphasize a desire for greater development and maintenance of all types of trails. Residents encourage the development of partnerships with public and private entities that further the goals of the Park Board. When considering the private sector, they recommend partnerships with local businesses and those that do not commercialize the park system.

**State of the Park System**

The Minneapolis park system is over 6,400 acres and is comprised of both regional (75% of the park system – see Map III, page 28) and neighborhood and community parks (25% of the park system). It equates to approximately 16% of the land and water in Minneapolis, and includes land in Edina, Hopkins, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Robbinsdale, St. Anthony, and Fridley. Significant changes to the park

system since 1920 include land acquisition along the Mississippi River to develop the central riverfront, to implement sections of the Above the Falls master plan, and to provide the first permanent headquarters for the Park Board; reconfiguration of Minnehaha Park; Leonard H. Neiman Sports Complex and Fred Wells Tennis Center; land acquisition for the Cedar Lake Trail; and the purchase and lease of land for Edward C. Solomon Park.

**Growth of the Minneapolis Park System**

Future growth of the park system is anticipated in two areas – filling existing service gaps and serving new growth areas of the city. To reduce existing service gaps, the system will focus on providing parkland within walking distance for each resident and better distribution of significant amenities, especially in north and northeast Minneapolis. Growth areas of the city are typically former non-residential areas that are not well served by park amenities. Park development will focus on serving and helping to spark additional growth in these re-development areas.

**Funding Fluctuations**

Traditional capital improvement funding sources have diminished

for the Minneapolis park system in recent years. In 1999, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board developed an “Infrastructure Replacement Model” that replicated a model used by the City of Minneapolis. At that time, the assets of the neighborhood park system totaled \$147 million, resulting in an annual capital funding need of \$6 million, based on an average useful life of 20 years. A 2000 agreement between the City of Minneapolis and the Park Board was designed to increase funding for the neighborhood park system. This would have provided \$8 million from net-debt bonds and property taxes in 2004, with property tax-based funding anticipated to increase with inflation after that point.

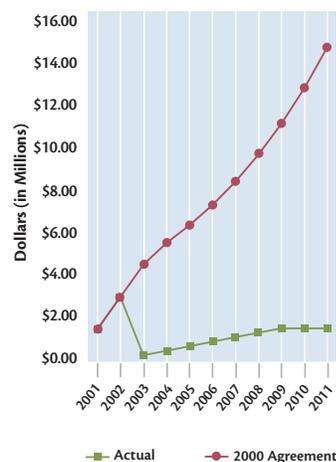
In 2003, the City reduced the annual funding by \$4.2 million to meet other funding priorities and to cope with budget deficits it faced. Since that time, the funding commitments of the 2000 agreement have not been met. Based on current projections, neighborhood park system capital funding from 2003 to 2011 will be significantly less than the 2000 agreement (Charts I and II). Unpredictable funding levels make it difficult to project capital improvements for the system. Cultivating a diverse range of consistent funding sources will help assure a sustainable and well maintained park system.

**Chart I: Actual and 2000 Agreement for Proposed Net-Debt Bonding for Neighborhood Parks**



Source: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Finance Department

**Chart II: Actual and 2000 Agreement for Property Taxes for Neighborhood Parks**



Source: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Finance Department

\* This is a summary of the key community outreach and research results as they relate to this vision theme. Please see the Comprehensive Planning Process in Review section for more details about the outreach and research process.

## Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs

### GOAL

#### Parks shape an evolving city.



### STRATEGIES

- Continue to expand physical access to the Mississippi River in a manner that is aesthetically compatible with the riverfront and sensitive to ecological function, giving priority to implementing the Above the Falls Master Plan.
- Provide a well-maintained, safe, and continuous trail system (see Map III, page 28), giving priority to completing the “missing link” of the Grand Rounds Parkway (see Map IV, page 29), and providing trail connections in north and northeast Minneapolis.
- Balance the distribution of premier park and recreation features across the city, giving priority to adding features to north and northeast Minneapolis (see Map IV, page 29).
- Help shape the built form of the city by developing and/or implementing park plans to acquire parkland and build amenities in current or projected growth areas of the city: Bassett Creek Valley, Hiawatha LRT Corridor, Downtown, Southeast Minneapolis Industrial, Midtown Greenway Corridor, Upper River, Northeast Industrial, North Loop, and Central Riverfront (see Map IV, page 29). Periodically examine trends in household and population growth or shifts, and identify additional study areas as necessary.
- Ensure park access for all residents by providing parks within an easy walk from their homes (no more than six blocks) and achieving a ratio of .01 acres of parkland per household (see Map IV, page 29 for service gap study areas).
- Work with the City of Minneapolis and other entities to identify and support multi-mode transportation corridors between parks, with preference given to routes that encourage non-motorized linkages between parks.



## GOAL

**Park facility renewal and development respects history and focuses on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and beauty.**

## STRATEGIES

- Integrate sustainable practices, ecological design for landscapes, and green building techniques into new construction and renewal of all amenities, giving priority to those practices that meet or exceed established standards, improve ecological function, and minimize long-term maintenance and operating costs.
- Design and implement a community center hub model that serves community members, is sustainable, and taps the resources of area neighborhood, community, and regional parks (also a component of Vision Theme 2).
- Implement a sustainable, long-term renewal plan based on a complete inventory of the system, life-cycle cost analysis, and condition assessment of all park facilities.
- Systematically develop activity plans that outline the delivery goals, benefits, facilities, operations, and maintenance required to provide each major recreation activity (or group of similar activities) in the park system. Use these plans to guide capital improvement and facility maintenance programs.
- Build or renew facilities to meet or exceed standards for accessibility.
- Build quality facilities that can be adapted to new uses as community needs change.
- Maintain an inventory of historic structures, documents, landscapes, features, and archeological sites that includes site analysis, evaluation of integrity, and historic significance. Develop a management and interpretive plan for significant historic resources.
- Beautify the park system by integrating gardens and art into park designs, and provide strategically placed gardens and art displays throughout city parklands and facilities.



## Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs



### GOAL

**Focused land management supports current and future generations.**

### STRATEGIES

- Maintain a vital park system for city residents with a thoughtful acquisition and disposition plan and practice.
- Acquire land that meets one or more of the following criteria (*in priority order*): fulfills park needs for growing areas or implements adopted park plans, meets the needs of areas under-served due to poor access or insufficient parkland acreage per household, provides trail connections or natural areas, establishes clear park boundaries, eliminates easements and leases, promotes ecological function, and secures unique sites or facilities.
- Ensure parcels considered for disposition meet one or more of the following criteria: removing the parcel does not diminish recreation or environmental function of the park system, the parcel is not accessible by the public, the parcel does not serve the needs of individuals within a growth area of the city or is not part of an adopted park plan, and the parcel is too small for future park or natural area development.
- Monitor and update lease and joint-use agreements to meet current and anticipated park and recreation needs.
- Pursue public and private partnerships to acquire, or promote access to, land for parks, open space, and recreation.
- Pursue land trades when the trade will result in equal or more parkland that will provide greater function to the park system.

### GOAL

**Financially independent and sustainable parks prosper.**

### STRATEGIES

- Increase revenue and develop sustainable spending practices throughout the park system that consider the short- and long-term costs and priorities for projects, programs, or services.
- Work with necessary partners to enact and implement a park dedication ordinance to ensure new city development is adequately served with park and recreation facilities.
- Prepare for future opportunities by increasing funding reserves and establishing a park endowment fund.
- Obtain grants that further the work of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
- Engage local businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals in sustainable partnerships that build on the value of the system without jeopardizing aesthetics or over-commercializing the public realm.
- Create opportunities for entrepreneurs, both non-profit and for-profit, to enrich the park experience and implement innovative approaches to revenue generation.
- Work with all levels of government to secure consistent, dedicated funding for park development, maintenance, and operation.
- Develop and maintain a five-year financial plan that includes disaster recovery provisions.



**GOAL**

**Through outreach and research, park and recreation services are relevant today and tomorrow.**

**STRATEGIES**

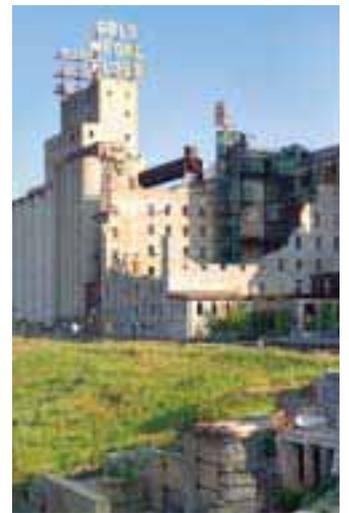
- Create a community outreach and research plan that focuses on identifying the park and recreation needs of the city's dynamic populations.
- Evaluate current facility and program delivery based on key indicators and park visitation to determine the best way to meet the park and recreation needs of residents and visitors.
- Regularly review social and demographic trends that affect service delivery. Be the first to identify and address new recreational needs and to reposition those recreational facilities that are no longer relevant.
- Ensure staff are prepared to engage a diverse public by training staff to be sensitive to the park system's users, recruiting bilingual staff, and recruiting and retaining people of color for staff and volunteer positions.
- Engage and involve residents in identifying the program, service, and facility needs of their respective communities.
- Anticipate and respond to the cultural diversity of the population.

**GOAL**

**Easily accessible information supports enjoyment and use of the park and recreation system.**

**STRATEGIES**

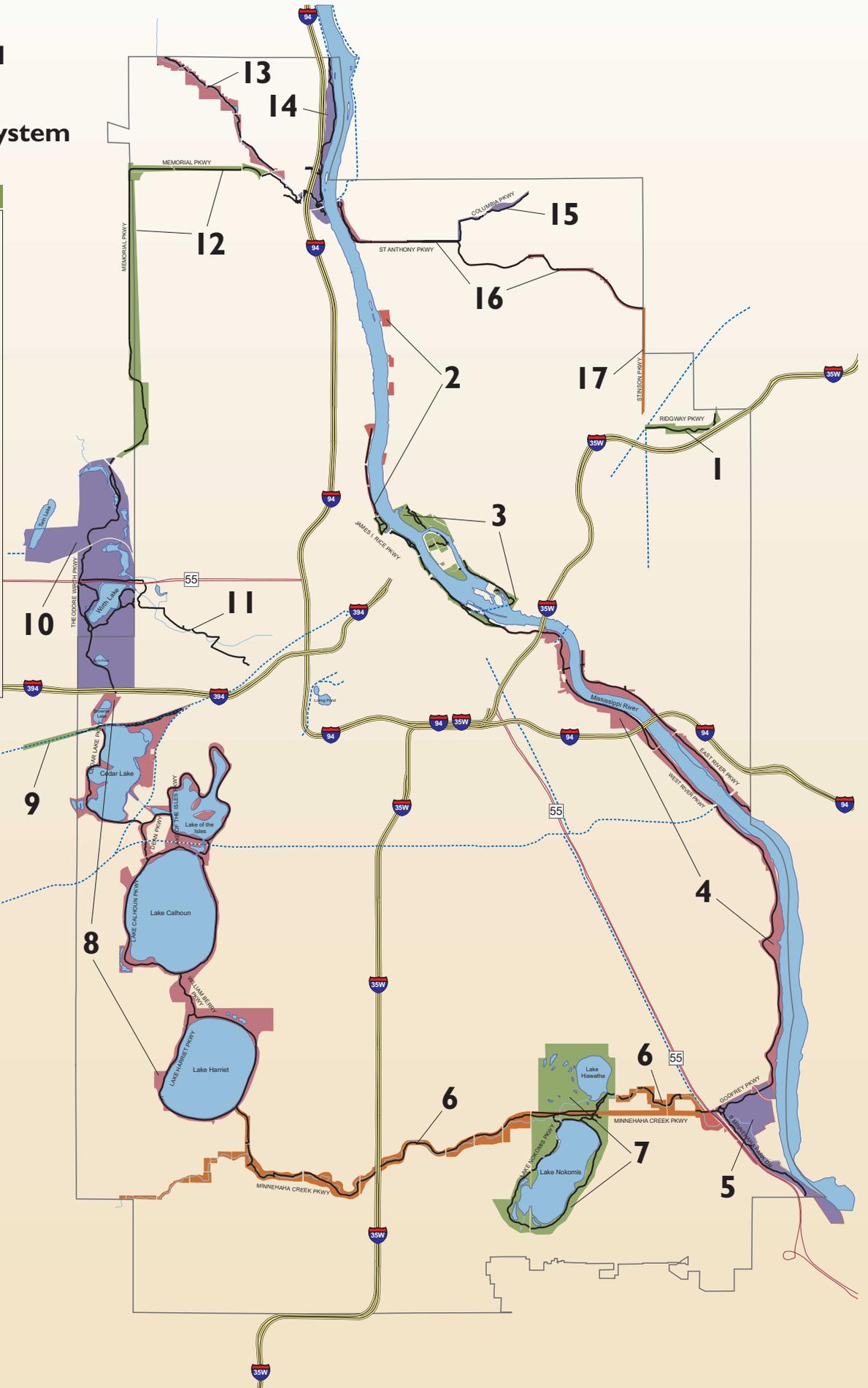
- Implement communication strategies to provide timely, accurate information to Minneapolis residents and park visitors, including those who do not speak English.
- Enhance technology to share information effectively and efficiently across the organization and with the community.
- Cultivate open communication with the city, county, Metropolitan Council, and other elected officials or appointed groups.
- Develop and implement a customer service program, including training, to ensure customer service techniques are applied effectively and consistently across the organization.
- Effectively utilize technology to make program registration and enjoyment of services easy.



# Map III: Minneapolis Trail System and Regional Park System

LEGEND	
1	Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail
2	Above the Falls Regional Park
3	Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park
4	Mississippi Gorge Regional Park
5	Minnehaha Regional Park
6	Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail
7	Nokomis – Hiawatha Regional Park
8	Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park
9	Cedar Lake Trail*
10	Theodore Wirth Regional Park
11	Luce Line Regional Trail
12	Wirth Memorial Parkway Regional Trail
13	Shingle Creek Regional Trail
14	North Mississippi Regional Park
15	Columbia Parkway Regional Trail
16	St. Anthony Parkway Regional Trail
17	Stinson Parkway Regional Park
—	Park Board Trails
---	Public Off-street Trails Provided by other Entities

Park Board properties shown on this map are designated as regional facilities in the Minneapolis park system, and are shaded to reflect their boundaries. Park Board and other publicly owned off-street trails are also shown on this map. Those that are numbered are designated as regional trails. When the property adjacent to the trail is also designated as regional, its boundary is reflected by the shaded area. Note that the Luce Line Regional Trail only includes the trail and not the adjacent park property. Similarly, note that the Cedar Lake Regional Trail is maintained by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and resides partially on Park Board property, but is not owned by the Board.

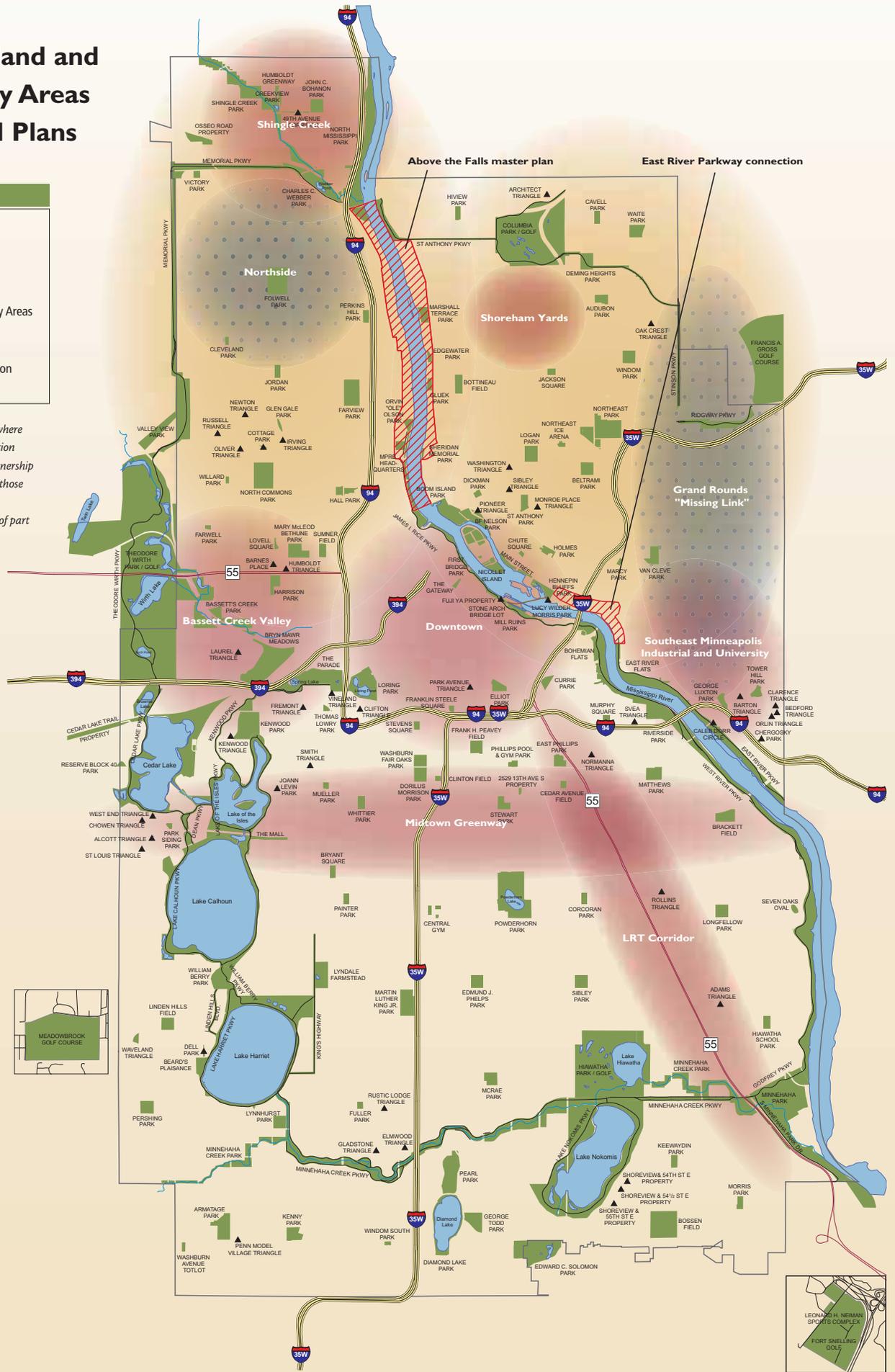


# Map IV: Future Parkland and Facility Study Areas and Adopted Plans

**LEGEND**

-  Parkland less than 1 Acre
-  Existing Parkland
-  Adopted Plans
-  Project Growth Area Study Areas
-  Service Gap Study Areas
-  Premier Park and Recreation Feature Study Areas

*Park properties shown are those where the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has site control through ownership or lease. Water bodies shown are those where the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has site control of part or all of the surrounding land.*



Map V:

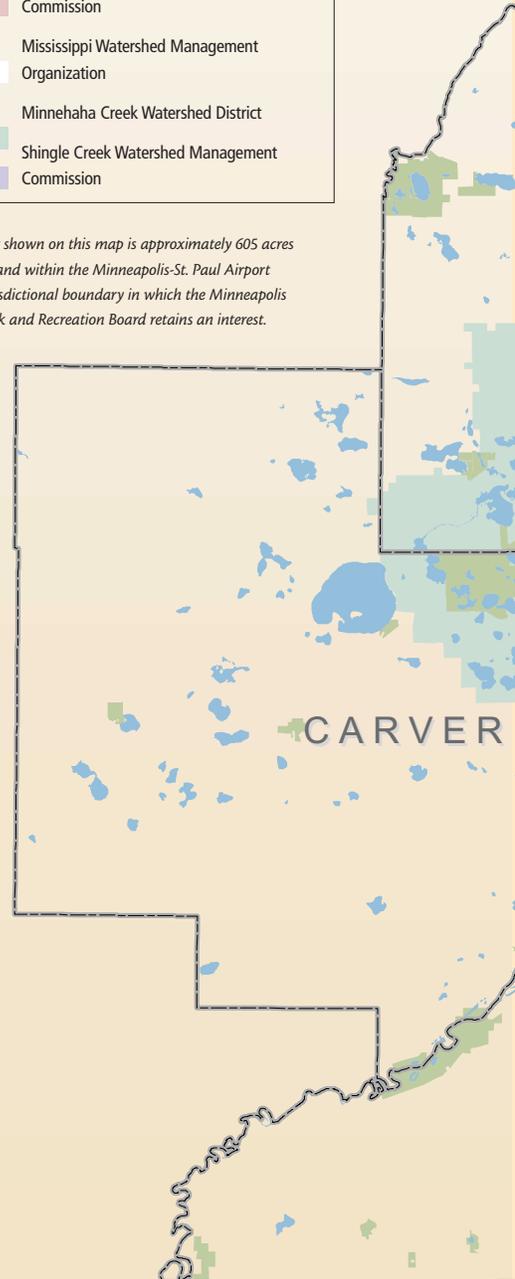
# Seven County Metropolitan Area

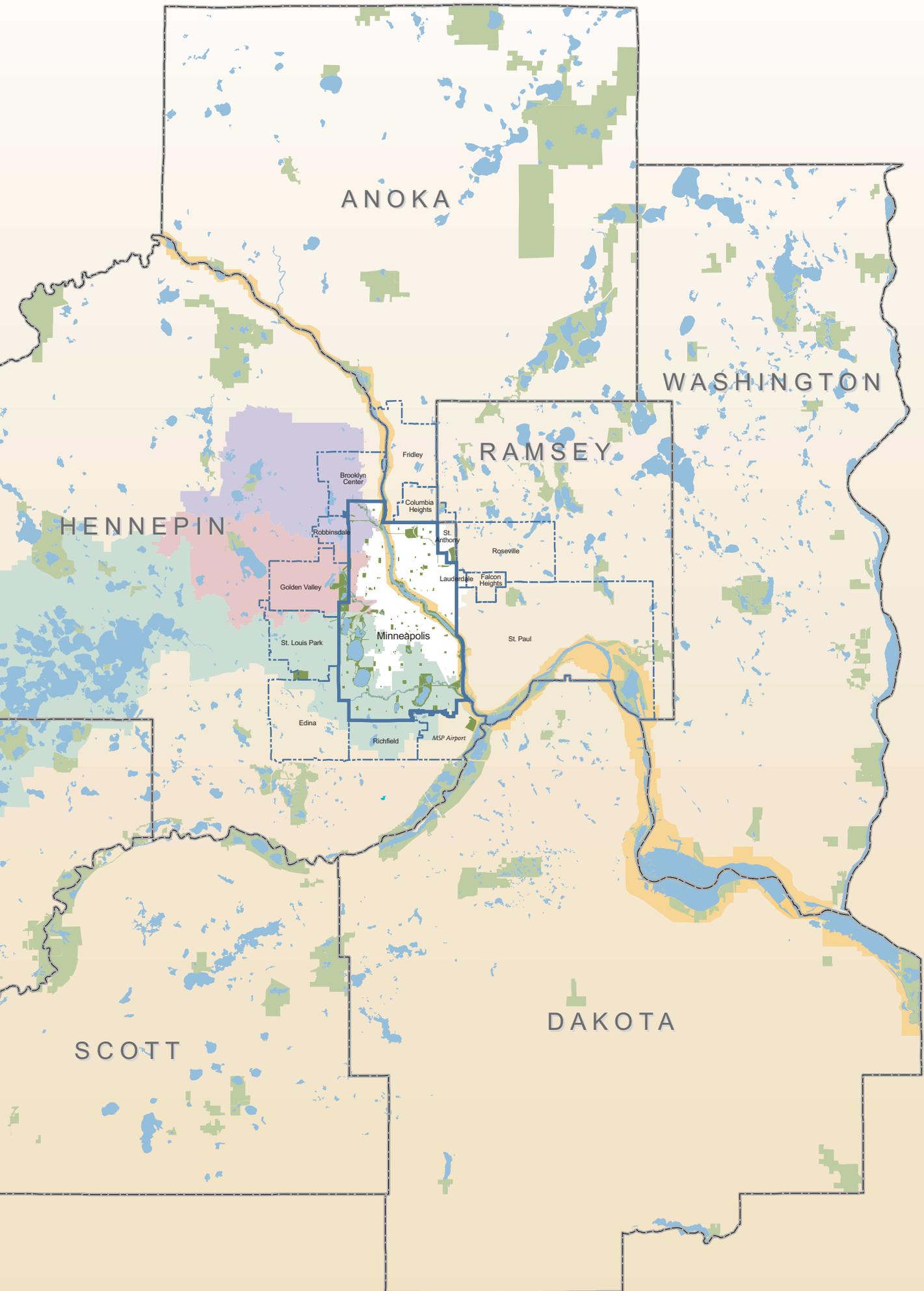
## Regional Connections and Pressures

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is one of ten implementing agencies that provide regional parks in the metropolitan area. Since 2000, the regional parks of the Minneapolis park system have received approximately 13.8 million visits annually: 26.8% or approximately 3.7 million of those visits are made by non-residents. As regional development and growth continues, the demand on the Minneapolis park system is expected to grow. Several watersheds and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area also span across the Minneapolis park system, underscoring its significance regionally, as well as nationally, in providing high quality parks and recreation and protecting natural resources.



*Not shown on this map is approximately 605 acres of land within the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport jurisdictional boundary in which the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board retains an interest.*





## *A safe place* to play, recreate, contemplate, and celebrate

*"...It is my earnest desire  
to make the parks of  
Minneapolis useful and safe  
for the people."*

THEODORE WIRTH  
1921

Keeping the parks safe requires a long-term commitment to people and places by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and its many partners. Safety, both real and perceived, is achieved through a combination of preventive and corrective measures. Delivering consistently safe parks also requires that they are well maintained and designed to prevent accidental injury. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to making choices that foster the safety and well-being of its park visitors and staff.

### **Prevent, Protect, Welcome**

Safety within the Minneapolis park system is a core responsibility of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. While its independent police force is a key factor in fulfilling this responsibility, all staff members play a vital role in keeping parks safe. Park programs inspire youth to engage positively in their communities. High standards for removing graffiti, addressing vandalism, and keeping the parks in good condition set high expectations for behavior. Park police build relationships with youth and communities, and redirect behavior through education instead of arrests and citations whenever possible. Renewal and development of new amenities are designed with safety in mind.



**FINDINGS** The following findings helped shape the goals and strategies for Vision Theme 4:

**Community Outreach and Research\***

Aside from lack of time, Minneapolis residents and park visitors report that their concerns about safety are the greatest barrier to using the park system. Their concerns include both personal and property safety and range from fears about off-leash animals to gang activity. People want to see more police presence in parks, enhanced lighting, and a more visible staff role in park and recreation center safety.

Additional recommendations for improving the safety of the parks include:

- Greater adult presence
- Well-maintained facilities
- Clear expectations for park users
- Well-designed facilities
- Multi-cultural and bilingual staff
- Walking and activity groups
- Community dialogue about safety needs within the parks

**An Integrated Approach**

Park police alone cannot provide a safe park system. Each employee and park visitor plays a role in fostering a safe, welcoming environment. An approach is needed that integrates prevention through safe design, well-maintained facilities, proper training of park visitors and all park staff, clear communication, and swift modification of inappropriate behavior.

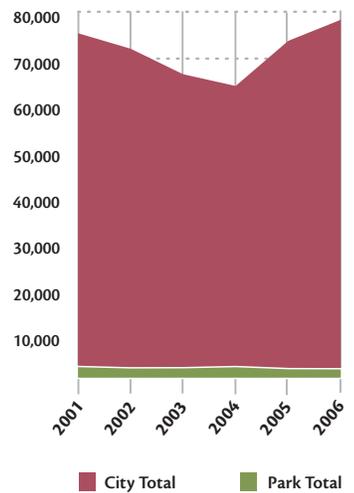
**City-wide Trends**

Fluctuations in crime statistics across the city play a large role in the real and perceived safety of the park system. Between 2001 and 2006, reported crimes across the city ranged from a low of 60,767 in 2004 to 76,361 in 2006. These numbers included crimes ranging from vandalism to homicides. On average 2.5% of all crimes committed in the city each year occurred in the parks (Chart III). Similar to crimes reported in the city as a whole, crimes most commonly reported in parks are vandalism and theft.

**Work Place Safety**

Safety at work is also important to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Staff that work safely are more likely to provide a safe environment for park visitors. Considerable time and resources are required to adequately train staff and provide a safe working environment. Work place safety is further discussed in the values section.

**Chart III:**  
**Crimes Reported in the City of Minneapolis 2001-2006**



Source: Minneapolis Park Police, Uniform crime report summary of offenses on park property 2001 to 2006

\* This is a summary of the key community outreach and research results as they relate to this vision theme. Please see the Comprehensive Planning Process in Review section for more details about the outreach and research process.

*A safe place to play, recreate,  
contemplate and celebrate*

**GOAL**

**Positive recreation experiences and welcoming parks prevent crime.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Get to know and positively influence youth.
- Communicate clear expectations of behavior to park visitors.
- Train all staff to recognize and divert dangerous activity within the park system.
- Balance the ratio of children to adults at neighborhood, community, and regional parks by engaging all in positive activities.
- Implement a safety first policy in which programs are cancelled when established minimum safety standards are not met.
- Ensure that all staff are visible, welcoming, and positive.
- Set park hours to promote safe use of the parks and safety in the community.
- Ensure facilities are well-maintained (see park facilities renewal goal of Vision Theme 3).



**GOAL**

**Residents, park visitors, and staff make safe choices in the parks.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Educate park visitors on personal safety and actions they can take to avoid being a target of crime.
- Install clear signage that instructs park visitors to safely use or access park amenities.
- Teach drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists the rules of the road and path safety.
- Educate residents and park visitors about the negative impacts of feeding or interacting with wild animals.
- Dedicate staff time to safety training and risk assessment to prevent accidents that can lead to injuries and lost staff time.



**GOAL**

**Intervention and communication reduces safety concerns.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Identify recurring safety concerns and devise new prevention plans using available resources. Eliminating a service or facility will happen only when attempts to modify the problematic behavior have failed.
- Increase visibility of park police officers.
- Modify behavior that may cause harm to persons, the environment, or property within the park system.
- Warn park visitors and staff of one-time, seasonal, and periodic hazards related to natural occurrences, environment, operating and maintenance practices, and property damage.
- Facilitate quick emergency response by installing distinguishable markers and building addresses that are recognized by 911.
- Develop and maintain a disaster recovery plan for the park system.

**GOAL**

**Parks are safe and welcoming by design.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Design parks to meet or exceed safety standards, building codes, and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Develop and implement lighting standards by park amenity to promote a safe, welcoming environment while respecting natural habitats.
- Provide access to restrooms, drinking water, bike racks, and shade throughout the park system.
- Monitor park amenities to ensure safety standards and codes are continually met, and develop plans to meet standards or remove facilities that do not meet minimum safety requirements.
- Adopt new technology proven to effectively enhance safety throughout the system.
- Work with communities and the city to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to and within parks.



*A safe place to play, recreate,  
contemplate and celebrate*

**GOAL**

**Communities, public and private partners, and staff cooperate to promote safety.**

**STRATEGIES**

- Ensure at least two adult staff are present during open building hours within neighborhood and community parks.
- Support community policing efforts.
- Cooperate with other agencies to develop an integrated approach to chronic issues within and beyond park borders.
- Work with communities to identify necessary safety improvements within parks.
- Pursue public and private partnerships to promote safety in the parks and expand available resources.



## Values guide how commissioners, staff, and volunteers do their work.

Applying the values of good conduct – respect, integrity, fairness, and dignity – sets an example for behavior within the park system.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has identified five additional values to apply to all of the work in the park system. These values are:

**Sustainability** Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.

**Visionary Leadership** Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.

**Safety** Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors.

**Responsiveness and Innovation** Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.

**Independence and Focus** Independence allows the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to focus on providing and obtaining the resources necessary to accomplish its mission and form effective, responsible partnerships.

## Values guide how commissioners, staff, and volunteers do their work.

### Sustainability

Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.

**Environment** Sustain and enhance parklands, waters, and urban forests.

**Economic** Develop short-term and long-term financial stability of the park system.

**Equity** Provide residents with the opportunity to improve their quality of life and well-being through outstanding parks and recreation services that are suited to their respective needs.

Sustainability is a high priority for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. It cannot, however, succeed in isolation as the environmental, economic, and equity concerns it faces require action on a broad scale. A sustainability plan for the system will be prepared and implemented to make sure that sustainable practices are integrated throughout the organization. This commitment to sustainability will create a diverse workforce ready to actively and creatively respond to local issues and allow the Minneapolis park system to be a role model and resource for residents and partners.

#### ACTIONS:

- Identify opportunities to test and/or showcase best practices throughout the system.
- Provide park system infrastructure at a sustainable rate.
- Reduce energy use in buildings, vehicles, and equipment.
- Purchase “green” products made from high recycled and post-consumer waste material content and focus on quality versus quantity.
- Choose economically sustainable options, taking into consideration staff time, resource use, and life span costs with the understanding that initial costs might be greater than other methods.
- Balance the economic and environmental costs and benefits of providing parks and recreation across the city.
- Reduce the release of human-made chemicals into the environment.
- Build a diverse workforce at all levels of the organization that reflects city demographics.

### Visionary Leadership

Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.

A visionary sees the future and a leader gets you there. The Minneapolis park system is the product of both vision and leadership. To further this tradition the system must recruit bright, talented staff and volunteers. It must also cultivate new leadership, encourage implementation of best practices, and provide opportunities to explore new ideas.

#### ACTIONS:

- Learn and apply best practices.
- Participate in training opportunities.
- Openly explore new ideas and trends.
- Foster new leadership.
- Share knowledge with co-workers.
- Encourage bold, effective ideas.
- Increase training opportunities.

## Safety

Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors.

It is important to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board that the work of the organization be done safely. Setting and achieving high goals for safety in the workplace is essential to reducing the cost of injury and loss of staff time. Commitment to this value means that staff are trained to safely complete their work and that the working environment will be safer. As a result, it will be possible to place more focus on providing outstanding programs, services, and facilities for residents and park visitors.

### ACTIONS:

- Dedicate staff time to safety policy development, risk management, and safety training.
- Participate in periodic safety trainings and share safety information with co-workers and park visitors.
- Support the work of the staff safety committee.
- Report and address safety concerns promptly to ensure safety of visitors and staff.
- Be visible, welcoming, and professional.
- Implement and revisit safety agreements developed by recreation, operations, and park police staff to provide safe, clean, welcoming parks.
- Eliminate on-the-job injuries by staying informed and following safety guidelines.

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## Responsiveness and Innovation

Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.

A successful park system is relevant to the community it serves. This requires acting on knowledge of the park and recreation needs of the community, as well as providing visitors with customer service that maximizes their experience. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board must not only react to change, but anticipate and address it with ingenuity, creativity, and innovation.

### ACTIONS:

- Research and report observations on the changing needs of residents, visitors, and workers.
- Provide excellent customer service with every visitor interaction.
- Stay informed and provide visitors with accurate park information.
- Systematically research and respond to trends, opportunities, and external influences.
- Look for innovative ways to better provide park and recreation services.

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## Independence and Focus

Independence allows the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to focus on providing and obtaining the resources necessary to accomplish its mission and form effective, responsible partnerships.

The semi-autonomous governing structure of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board guarantees strong, ongoing advocacy for the park system. By continuing this governing structure, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will maintain its focus on permanently preserving and protecting the parks for future generations.

### ACTIONS:

- Understand the history of the park system and the significance of its independence.
- Ensure all work is consistent with the mission and vision for the park system.
- Seek funding to maintain the system.
- Periodically revisit and refresh the mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization to maintain a clear focus.

**A unified approach to decision-making will swiftly propel the organization toward a common direction.** The following decision principles will be considered when making decisions that have a district or system-wide impact.

**Research conducted for this comprehensive plan reinforces the importance of basing program and facility decisions on specific community needs and the demographics of the city.**

### **Identified Community Need and Demographics**

The 2005 reorganization of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board better positioned staff to address the needs or requests of individual communities. The new geographically based structure brings decision-making closer to the community. The research conducted for this comprehensive plan reinforces the importance of basing program and facility decisions on specific community needs and demographics, since recreation needs vary across the city. Moving forward, emphasis will be placed on researching community need and demographics of the area. Equity, therefore, will be measured by how well a community's needs are addressed.

**Overbuilt or under-utilized facilities will be removed and replaced with sustainable options or other amenities that better meet the needs of the community.**

### **Quality versus Quantity**

The amenities provided to meet the park and recreation needs of communities will be high quality and sustainable. Overbuilt or under-utilized facilities will be removed and replaced with sustainable options or other amenities that better meet the needs of the community. Amenities that have completed their useful life-cycle, especially those with a blighted appearance, will be removed and, as funding becomes available, replaced with new amenities.

**Decision-making will embrace technology to better serve the community.**

### **Embracing Technology**

Beyond gadgets, video games, and cyberspace, technology is transforming the delivery of meaningful park and recreation experiences: new artificial turf technology provides hours of play on a single surface, new playground equipment enhances a child's experience, new modes of communication increase information sharing, and renewable energy sources reduce operating costs. Decision-making will embrace technology to better serve the community.

## **Fostering a New Face for Partnerships**

Partnerships are commonplace for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, often resulting in enhanced service delivery. Some, however, are less mutually beneficial. In the future, the Park Board will evaluate partnerships on an ongoing basis and will actively seek a new contingent of partners. The decision to enter or rejuvenate a partnership will be based on how it contributes to the organization's mission, vision, goals, and strategies. Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organization's mission will be encouraged.

## **Focusing on the Activity, Then the Infrastructure**

In the 1960s and 1970s, when much of the park system's infrastructure was built, the demographics of the city were considerably more homogenous than they are today. In that era, evenly spacing infrastructure across the city was an effective delivery model. Today, new recreation trends, shifting demographics, and more private recreation options highlight the need for a new model. Infrastructure decisions will begin by determining the need for a particular recreation activity and the value and service it delivers. After thorough evaluation of what the Park Board currently provides, the status of other service providers, and existing infrastructure, infrastructure will be provided to meet the service goals for that activity. Service goals for an activity will be based on demographics of an area, identified community need, and the identified target audience for the activity. See Table I (*page 42*) for additional details.

## **Sustainable Rate**

Increasing operational costs, environmental regulations, expanding requests for services, land use pressures, environmental degradation, and social disparity can create a sense of scarcity and compromise the long-term vitality of an organization. An alternative is to provide services at a sustainable rate, such as providing infrastructure that can be reasonably maintained, setting realistic program and service delivery targets, or modifying land management techniques to increase efficiency. Future decisions will support a sustainable park system that prevents crisis situations, protects the land for future generations, and actively balances services across the city.

**Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organization's mission will be encouraged.**

**Infrastructure decisions will begin by determining the need for a particular recreation activity and the value and service it delivers.**

**An alternative is to provide services and infrastructure at a rate that can be reasonably maintained.**

**Guidelines for Activity Delivery or Opportunities Within the Minneapolis Park System**

Focusing first on the activity and then the infrastructure needed to deliver or accommodate that activity opens up new opportunities to form partnerships and to maximize the use of the resources available within the park system. It also introduces residents and visitors to new expectations for services and activities. Service goals for an activity will be based on demographics of an area, identified community need, and the identified target audience for the activity. Then, after thorough evaluation of what the Park Board currently provides, the status of

other service providers and partners, and existing infrastructure, infrastructure will be provided to meet the service goals. The guidelines below provide direction regarding the point of access residents and park visitors can expect for a particular activity. The point of access is the minimum level at which an activity is provided, with the most concentrated level being activities that people access within their neighborhood. In this model, some activities may shift between points of access over time due to changes in popularity of the activity, community needs, demographics, and funding sources.

Table 1:

**Guidelines for Activity Delivery or Opportunities Within the Minneapolis Park System**

**Examples:**

1) Lacrosse is an emerging sport in Minneapolis. Initially a resident may be able to access this sport within the park service district in which they live. An increase in popularity may cause it to be offered at a more concentrated level such as within a resident's community or neighborhood.

2) Kayaking, canoeing, and sailing are limited to areas of the park system that have publicly accessible water. A resident, therefore, can expect to access this activity within the city.

Point of Access	Guidelines
<b>Within the city</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The activity draws participants from across the city.</li> <li>■ Infrastructure needed for the activity can be delivered at a sustainable rate at a city-wide level.</li> <li>■ The activity requires natural, artistic, or historic resources that are only available in specific locations.</li> <li>■ The activity serves both local and regional park visitors.</li> <li>■ Parkland or water limitations restrict activity to one or two locations.</li> <li>■ Participants have transportation or can access transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Within one or more of the three park service districts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The activity draws participants from across the district.</li> <li>■ The activity is new or emerging and needs to be tested before further integration into the system.</li> <li>■ The activity addresses a specific need of a park district.</li> <li>■ Infrastructure needed for the activity can be delivered at a sustainable rate at a district-wide level.</li> <li>■ Participants have transportation or can access transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Within a community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The activity draws participants from across the community.</li> <li>■ The activity can help create community cohesion.</li> <li>■ The activity is well-established and in high demand.</li> <li>■ Infrastructure needed for the activity can be delivered at a sustainable rate at a community-wide level.</li> <li>■ The activity addresses specific needs of the community.</li> <li>■ Participants have transportation or can access transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Within a neighborhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The activity draws participants from across the neighborhood.</li> <li>■ The activity is focused on children and youth.</li> <li>■ Infrastructure needed for the activity can be delivered at a sustainable rate at a neighborhood-wide level.</li> <li>■ The activity addresses specific needs of the neighborhood.</li> <li>■ Participants do not have easy access to transportation.</li> </ul>

**This section outlines how the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will use this plan to guide the system to 2020. A complete review of the comprehensive plan is recommended to begin in 2018.**

### Planning for Change

The comprehensive plan consists of a number of key elements that complement and support each other to provide simple, concise direction. Each part of the plan has a function. The mission articulates why the organization exists. This is supported by the values, which identify how the organization performs its work. Vision statements follow, describing what the organization hopes to become by 2020. Goals represent incremental steps toward accomplishing the vision, and strategies set out long-term plans or specific directions that lead to the goals. The pyramid (*see Figure 1, page 45*) indicates how these separate statements support each other. Organizational implementation commitments are the base of the pyramid.

Three primary processes will ensure that the work of the commissioners and staff reflects the direction provided in the comprehensive plan. These processes are:

**Five-year Implementation Plan** The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will rely on a five-year implementation plan, updated yearly, as a blueprint for achieving the strategies, goals, and ultimately the vision of the comprehensive plan. This implementation plan will reflect the specific tactics, measures of success, timetables, and resources required for a five-year period.

**Work Plans** Each department, district, and work group will develop annual work plans that tie to the strategies, goals, and visions outlined in the comprehensive plan. Developed annually, these plans will include indicators and will help manage workflow and ensure that daily work corresponds to the direction set forth in the comprehensive plan. The actions set forth in these plans will be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-framed.

**Annual Budget** Annual budget requests by each department, district, and work group will be tied to the strategies, goals, and visions outlined in the comprehensive plan. The budgeting process will allow spending across the organization to relate to both the implementation plan and the comprehensive plan. Financial reporting will correspond to the plan's strategies, goals, and vision statements.

**The implementation plan will reflect the specific tactics, timetables, and resources required for a five-year period.**

**Annual work plans will help manage workflow and ensure that daily work corresponds to the direction set forth in the comprehensive plan.**

**The budgeting process will tie spending across the organization to the implementation plan and the comprehensive plan.**

Details about park management, future park development, and the goals, objectives, and strategies for providing specific recreation opportunities will be captured in separate complementary plans. These documents are:

**Careful monitoring will allow commissioners and staff to determine if a selected course of action is achieving desired outcomes.**

**Measuring the impact of a program or project becomes increasingly important in a tight-funding climate.**

**An organizational performance review will measure the overall success of the organization in achieving its vision.**

**Future Development of Planning Documents** As an overarching guiding document, the comprehensive plan calls for additional planning in several areas. This future planning will allow for greater exploration, evaluation, and community research on several topics. The resulting plans will also provide greater detail of the Board's goals and objectives in these areas. Plans identified for development in the comprehensive plan include (not an exhaustive list): a land management plan, a natural area management plan, a sustainability plan, park plans for growth areas, a communications plan, an overall physical system plan, and a recreation activity plan. These plans will be structured so they can easily be updated as social trends change, population grows and shifts, and as research reveals new best practices. Each plan will stipulate how frequently it should be reviewed and updated.

### **Measuring Progress**

Each direction suggested in the comprehensive plan may be achieved by numerous methods. The professional expertise and experience of commissioners and staff will enable the organization to achieve the vision set forth in the plan. Careful monitoring will allow commissioners and staff to determine if a selected course of action is achieving desired outcomes, allowing corrections to be made and successful outcomes celebrated. To comprehensively monitor the progress of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, evaluation will be viewed from three perspectives: impact on community, organization performance reviews, and individual performance reviews.

**Community Impact** Measuring the Park Board's community impact helps determine if the community's park and recreation needs are being met. Measuring the impact of a program or project becomes increasingly important in a tight funding climate and is a key to judging the effectiveness of the comprehensive plan. Key indicators that anticipate program and project outcomes will be identified and monitored over time. The information obtained from these measurements will allow the five-year implementation plan and work plans to be adjusted appropriately to achieve the vision of the organization.

**Organizational Performance Reviews** An organizational performance review will measure the overall success of the organization in meeting its vision. Key indicators relating to the goals, vision, and values will be selected and monitored on a yearly basis. The results of the review will allow appropriate changes to be made to the five-year implementation plan and work plans.

**Individual Performance Reviews** Employees move the organization toward the vision set by commissioners and they will be evaluated on the work they do to achieve that vision. Employees will also be evaluated on how their work upholds the values of the organization. This tool will be used to effectively direct the skills of individuals and teams toward achieving the vision of the organization and will include opportunities for personal growth. Reviews will help identify when adjustments should be made and when achievements should be celebrated. Individual performance reviews will also help supervisors monitor workflow and keep their annual work plans on target.

**Employees move the organization toward the vision set by commissioners and they will be evaluated on the work they do to achieve that vision.**

### Relationship to Other Guiding Documents

The comprehensive plan sets a direction for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board through 2020. It will help apply resources to best meet the park and recreation needs of residents, visitors and workers. The Park Board’s policies, ordinances, and laws pre-date this plan and address topics ranging from park classification to operating hours. These policies will be systematically updated to assure consistent direction is provided throughout the life of the plan.

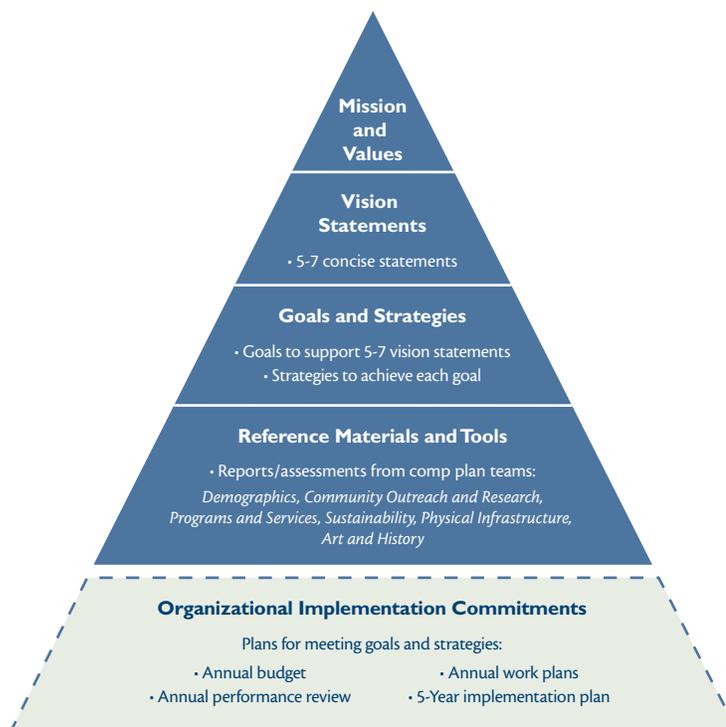


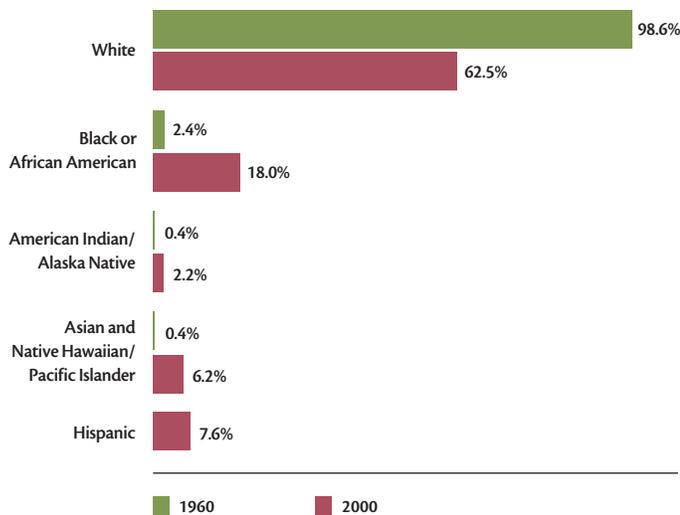
Figure 1

The development of the comprehensive plan revealed several challenges and opportunities for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The following circumstances will have the greatest impact on the future of the park system.

**Minneapolis is a Built City**

Unlike the late 1800s when the park system was created, Minneapolis is a fully developed urban city: its boundaries are established, re-development commonly transforms former industrial space into residential, and few parcels remain that are suitable for parkland. Consequently, the high cost of land will limit the ability to add new parks to the system. At the same time, demand on the parks is expected to grow as residents and visitors throughout the region rely on them for the recreation amenities and natural resources they offer as the metropolitan area expands.

Chart IV:  
Race and Ethnicity in the City of Minneapolis: 1960 and 2000  
As a Percentage of Total Population\*



Sources: Data presented by Hazel Reinhardt, former Minnesota State Demographer, March 2004.

\* Based on one race alone except for Hispanics who are of any race.

**Demographic Shifts in the City**

At a population of approximately 382,000, the city's population is smaller than it was at its 1950s peak, even though its total number of households has increased slightly. Changes in the city's population include:

- Higher number of individuals living alone (27.6% of households in 1960 to 40% of households in 2000)
- Fewer households with children (34.8% of households in 1960 to 25% of households in 2000)
- Broader race and ethnic composition (Chart IV)

Current projections show that households will increase by 15.2% by 2030 which is estimated to add 24,650 people to the city. Much of the development will occur in former industrial areas and along the commercial and community corridors defined by the City of Minneapolis. An evaluation of the park and recreation needs for these growing areas will be necessary.

**Environmental Pressures**

Today, due to invasive species, tree diseases, and pollution, the management of natural areas, trees, and water bodies requires a new level of investment of both time and finances. Furthermore, the need is expected to grow as development outside of the city reduces natural resources in the metro area and as new invasive species and diseases are introduced into the parklands.

**Regional Connections and Pressures**

Within Minneapolis, some parks are designated as regional parks (see map III, page 28). The development and maintenance of these parks are partially funded by the Metropolitan Council. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is one of ten implementing agencies that provide regional parks in the metropolitan area. Since 2000, the

regional parks of the Minneapolis park system have received approximately 13.8 million visits annually: 26.8% or approximately 3.7 million of those visits are made by non-residents. As regional development and growth continues, the demand on the Minneapolis park system is expected to grow. Several watersheds and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area also span across the Minneapolis park system, underscoring its significance regionally, as well as nationally, in providing high quality parks and recreation and protecting natural resources (*see map V, page 30*).

### Signs of the Times

Local, state, national, and world events also shape the perceptions and needs of city residents and park visitors. Key factors include:

- Trends toward global conflict have led to greater interest in emergency preparedness. Park facilities provide a possible resource to city emergency preparedness plans.
- Economic trends including rising health care costs, anti-tax movements, and increasing fuel and material costs are reducing the resources available to provide park and recreation services.
- A greater understanding of the environment and recognition of climate change will increase the need for park operations and facilities to continue focusing on issues like carbon dioxide emissions and chemical use in parks.
- An increase in the appeal of public and private partnerships, which was well documented in the community outreach and research, presents an opportunity for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to expand service delivery in cooperation with local businesses, and public and private entities.

### Heritage and Historic Preservation

As the park system ages, its features gain historic importance. This opens up opportunities for greater historic interpretation as well as new programming or creative new use of existing facilities. It can also increase maintenance costs and limit the introduction of new facilities into the park system. These limitations can be minimized or eliminated by integrating historic preservation into early planning stages.

### New Recreation Trends

Recreation is shaped by a number of factors, from shifting demographics to the introduction of new activities. Local, state, and national trends influencing recreation in Minneapolis include:

- Greater numbers of young adults are pursuing active lifestyles.
- The introduction of club sports for youth is leading to greater sport specialization and year-round engagement in one sport versus a rotation of sports throughout the year.
- Interest in traditional sports, including baseball, softball, golf, and football, is declining while interest in non-traditional sports such as skateboarding, mountain biking, soccer, disc golf, lacrosse, and cricket is increasing.
- Older adults, primarily Baby Boomers, are re-writing the script for aging by participating in active recreation decades longer than previous generations. They also have more discretionary income than previous generations, and are increasingly applying those funds toward programming and activities for their grandchildren.
- New technology is enhancing performance and delivery of existing recreation activities.
- Self-directed sports such as running and biking are popular among adults.
- More leisure time, especially among youth, is spent enjoying a multitude of media, technology, and entertainment options.
- Hobbies, gardening, history, and other self-directed activities are increasingly popular among adults.
- An increase in foreign-born residents requires focus on reducing language barriers and gaining better understanding of the recreational needs for these individuals.

While several trends indicate a growth in recreation or leisure activities, especially among adults, competition for leisure time requires greater attention to delivering programs and services that residents value. It is especially important to maintain strong public support for the park system during challenging economic periods.

### In 2005, a two-year commitment was made to complete the comprehensive plan.

A goal of the process was to identify or cultivate the expertise among staff to develop the plan, utilizing the talents of consultants as necessary. More than 100 staff have been involved in one or more phases of the comprehensive planning process. The five-phase development process for the comprehensive plan is:

■ **Phase I – Assessment**

Where are we today?

■ **Phase II – Community Outreach and Research**

What are the current demands and needs, and what are the evolving trends?

■ **Phase III – Comprehensive Plan Development**

Based on what is known, what outcomes are desirable?

■ **Phase IV – Priority Setting and Decision Making**

What priorities and short- and long-term actions are in the best interests of the public?

■ **Phase V – Implementation**

What resources should be allocated to accomplish goals?

Phases I and II are integral to developing the plan and are highlighted below. Phase III was the actual writing of this plan and phases IV and V will be part of its implementation.

#### **Phase I – Assessment**

Staff teams that focused on infrastructure, demographics, and programs and services were developed during this phase. The infrastructure team conducted an inventory of park amenities. The programs and services team developed a method of categorizing the programs and services delivered in the park system and made recommendations to improve existing data collection methods. The demographics team identified demographics of the city that most impact park and recreation service delivery. Each team focused on creating methods or tools that could be updated regularly and would increase the park system's capacity to use this information for future planning.

Six additional teams were initiated during the assessment phase – information management, sustainability, planning, community outreach and research, evaluation, and art and history. The information management team continues to work to heighten the capacity of the organization to collect, store, and use the information collected by the assessment teams. The sustainability team is writing a sustainability plan that will integrate sustainability – environment, economics, and equity – throughout the park system. The planning team developed a process for reviewing and analyzing new projects or program proposals relative to the comprehensive plan. The community outreach and research team coordinated the community outreach and needs assessment for the comprehensive plan. The evaluation team is developing the processes to evaluate the park system's progress toward achieving the directions set forth in the comprehensive plan. Finally, the art and history team is developing an inventory of the artistic and historic features of the park system.

## Phase II – Community Outreach and Research

In September 2006, the community outreach and research team launched a program to give all city residents, park users, and local officials the opportunity to share their thoughts about the community's park and recreation needs. A summary of key findings as they relate to each vision theme can be found in the vision section of the document. The outreach and research process included the following:

**Town Meetings** The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board invited city residents and park visitors of all ages to attend one of seven town meetings held throughout the city in September and October. The meetings were promoted through a mailing to 172,300 households, news releases to Minneapolis newspapers, neighborhood association newsletters, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board website. More than 229 residents attended the meetings. Children and teens also participated in the town meetings. Park staff, with assistance from Minneapolis Institute of Art staff, provided fun, engaging, age-appropriate activities designed to capture kids' thoughts and ideas about parks. Language interpreters were provided at three town meetings and available at the other meetings upon request.

**Questionnaire** Community members and park visitors were also encouraged to complete a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire was available online, at golf courses, and at all 49 recreation centers from September 15 to October 15. In early September, all Minneapolis households were mailed an informational map about the park system that featured the questionnaire and town meeting dates. The questionnaire was interpreted into other languages upon request. In total, 2,728 questionnaires were received.

**Focus Groups** In order to gather input from the broadest spectrum of community perspectives, focus groups were conducted with individuals from communities who were not heavily represented through the questionnaires and town meetings. When forming the focus groups, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff took into consideration communities that experience language, cultural, or physical barriers to traditional community participation formats. In total, 20 focus groups were conducted. Pre-existing Park

Board databases were used to mail questionnaires to seven additional groups. Focus groups were aimed at individuals or individuals representing groups that included the following: teens, single parents, elected officials, racial and ethnic communities\*, foreign-born communities\*, people with disabilities, vulnerable teens and adults, university students, environmental groups, local history and arts communities, active older adults, local business owners, and downtown workers and residents. Questionnaires were mailed to the following: Rec Plus parents, coaches, faith-based community groups, park facility reservation groups, sports councils, volunteers, and neighborhood organizations.

\* As defined by the 2000 U.S. Census

**Community Leader Workshops** The Park Board sought the input of people who are recognized leaders in their communities to discuss not only community needs but to provide input on some of the broad themes articulated in questionnaires and town meetings. Each Park Board Commissioner nominated three community leaders to participate in three workshops.

**Phone Survey** A phone survey was undertaken in order to gather statistically valid information. Questions for the phone survey were developed from responses to questionnaires, town meetings, and focus groups. The survey was conducted during December 2006 by an external market research firm. Efforts were made to ensure the survey takers closely reflected citywide demographics as detailed in the 2000 U.S. Census. The survey was administered in other languages as needed to reach foreign-born residents.



### **Activity Plans**

Plans that outline the delivery goals, benefits, facilities, operations, and maintenance required to provide each major recreation activity (or group of similar activities) in the park system.

### **Baby Boomers**

People born between (and including) 1946 and 1964.

### **Community Park**

These parks are a minimum of two blocks (6 acres) in size and provide facilities for an entire community.

### **Land Management Plan**

A plan that sets management guidelines for the grounds, trees, and gardens of parks and golf courses, excluding natural areas.

### **Natural Areas**

Sites that have been planted as part of a landscape plan to restore a native landscape or habitat, stabilize shorelines, reduce mowing, or improve water quality.

### **Natural Resources**

The urban forests, natural areas, and water bodies within the Minneapolis park system.

### **Natural Area Management Plan**

A plan that sets out the management guidelines for natural areas.

### **Neighborhood Park**

Parks that are one block or less in size and provide basic facilities within a neighborhood.

### **Open Space**

An undeveloped piece of land that is accessible to the public and is suitable for future development as a park, natural area, or recreation facility.

### **Recreation**

Activities that a person or group chooses to do to make their leisure time more interesting, enjoyable, and personally satisfying. These activities may promote personal growth, healthy lifestyles, developing new skills, and a sense of community. Not confined solely to sports and physical activities, it includes artistic, social, and environmental activities.

### **Regional Park**

These parks are owned, operated, and maintained by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, but they are also designated as part of the Metropolitan Council System of Regional Parks and Trails. These parks are usually large in size, often over 100 acres, and contain most of the natural areas in the Minneapolis park system. These parks serve regional visitors as well as Minneapolis residents. As such, they are eligible for regional funding through the Metropolitan Council. (See Map III, page 28.)

### **Remnant Native Plant Communities**

Plant communities that existed prior to European settlement. While they might be altered by invasive species and urbanization, a semblance of the original native plant community remains.

### **Sustainability**

Meeting current park and recreation needs without sacrificing future needs, by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.



### **Deep gratitude is extended to all those who contributed to this process. Your work will shape the future of the Minneapolis park system.**

The dreams of many are captured in the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comprehensive Plan. Thousands of people, including residents, park visitors, elected officials (city, county, and state), and commissioners, participated in the comprehensive planning process. The time and talent of more than 100 staff was instrumental throughout this process. Completion of this plan is the result of dedicated leadership by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners and its Superintendent.

The sincerity, dedication, team-work, and “can do” nature of those involved in developing this plan is reflective of their deep commitment to improving the lives of those who work, live, and play in Minneapolis. The effect of this type of dedication is reflected in a thank you received during the process from a local resident.

*“I’ve always wanted to thank the park system for helping me bring up my son. We moved next to Longfellow Park when he was four. He played hockey, baseball, football, and soccer. The park staff were his mentors. They helped shape his character.”*

While park and recreation needs of a community will change over time, the desire and commitment to positively impact the lives of Minneapolis residents will persist. This focus on meeting the ever-changing needs of the community brought together individuals from across the city.

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