

# 03

## THE PARKS BLOOMINGTON NEEDS

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City of Bloomington prioritized Community Engagement for the Park System Master Plan (PSMP). Engagement has historically been a priority in the City but has recently become a primary focus. The City Council confirmed engagement was critical for the PSMP and the team devoted significant resources to community communications. The robust engagement plan for the project planned to reach out to people and gather voices that have not historically been heard in planning projects.

To do this, the project team and City staff devoted specific time and resources to engage with residents that are traditionally underserved. Several web based discussions were organized and undertaken to hear those voices. These efforts were called Community Conversations and included specifically organized online meetings for groups such as Latino Outdoors, Jefferson High School, etc.. A comprehensive suite of small group conversations, surveys, geographic commenting tools, priority ranking, and general conversations were utilized to capture a significant cross section of the City. City staff understood, and took great care to use this process as an opportunity to reach out to new stakeholders and build relationships that will benefit them in the future.

## ENGAGEMENT GOALS AND PURPOSE

Bloomington has changed significantly since the parks were originally designed and built. Demographics have changed. Projections highlight more dramatic change in the next 20 years. The park system has not kept up with these demographic changes. The PSMP is redeveloping/ re-visioning the parks to ensure they reflect the neighborhoods around them - like they once did. People give the parks life and the parks should provide the 'things' that people need and want to do.

The outcomes of our engagement will tell us how people would like to use the parks throughout the City. We endeavored to ask all people what they would like to do in their parks, based on the City's current and projected demographics. This question was asked in a few different ways to understand what people thought the priorities of the City should be, and what they would like the park they visit the most to look like. To do this for the whole city we needed to talk to everyone, not just the loudest voices or those that are familiar with the City's traditional communications and input methods. We needed to provide multiple ways for people to tell us what they would like to see, and ask them to participate in ways they felt comfortable. While the engagement efforts did not fully meet the stated goal of matching the City's demographics, significant progress was made in starting to build relationships with groups and populations who have not been a part of these types of projects in the past. These efforts are building a foundation of

respect and trust for future efforts.

The PSMP used the input received from the Community to provide a roadmap for future engagement efforts and how the City can create the parks that Bloomington residents want and need.

## COVID-19

COVID struck the world in the spring of 2020 and affected community engagement for the PSMP just as the project was getting ready to go out into the parks and meet people.

The project team shifted gears and turned to a strictly online approach with similar philosophy - making it easier to engage with people who were typically not asked their opinions or felt that their voices should be heard. Park Staff and Community Outreach and Engagement Department (COED) facilitated numerous web-based focus groups called Community Conversations with members of the community, and a virtual town hall meeting was conducted to replace the in-person town hall style meetings already planned. While nothing can replace face to face contact in building relationships, virtual meetings were more flexible for participants with child-care, work, or other issues. It allowed them to participate more easily from home and is a technique that should be utilized in future as a part of the suite of engagement techniques to communicate directly with residents.

Additionally, the project team was already utilizing an online platform to collect engagement from the residents of Bloomington. Social Pinpoint was already being used and new features were added to the platform to continue the dialogue with the public online. An additional survey was added with specific questions that were derived from the previous engagement that had already occurred. These surveys were also made available in a physical paper format and drop boxes were provided throughout the city so that respondents could return in a contact-less format.

## WHAT WE HEARD

The following section summarizes the engagement results for the PSMP. A full report including notes from focus group meetings can be found in the Appendix.



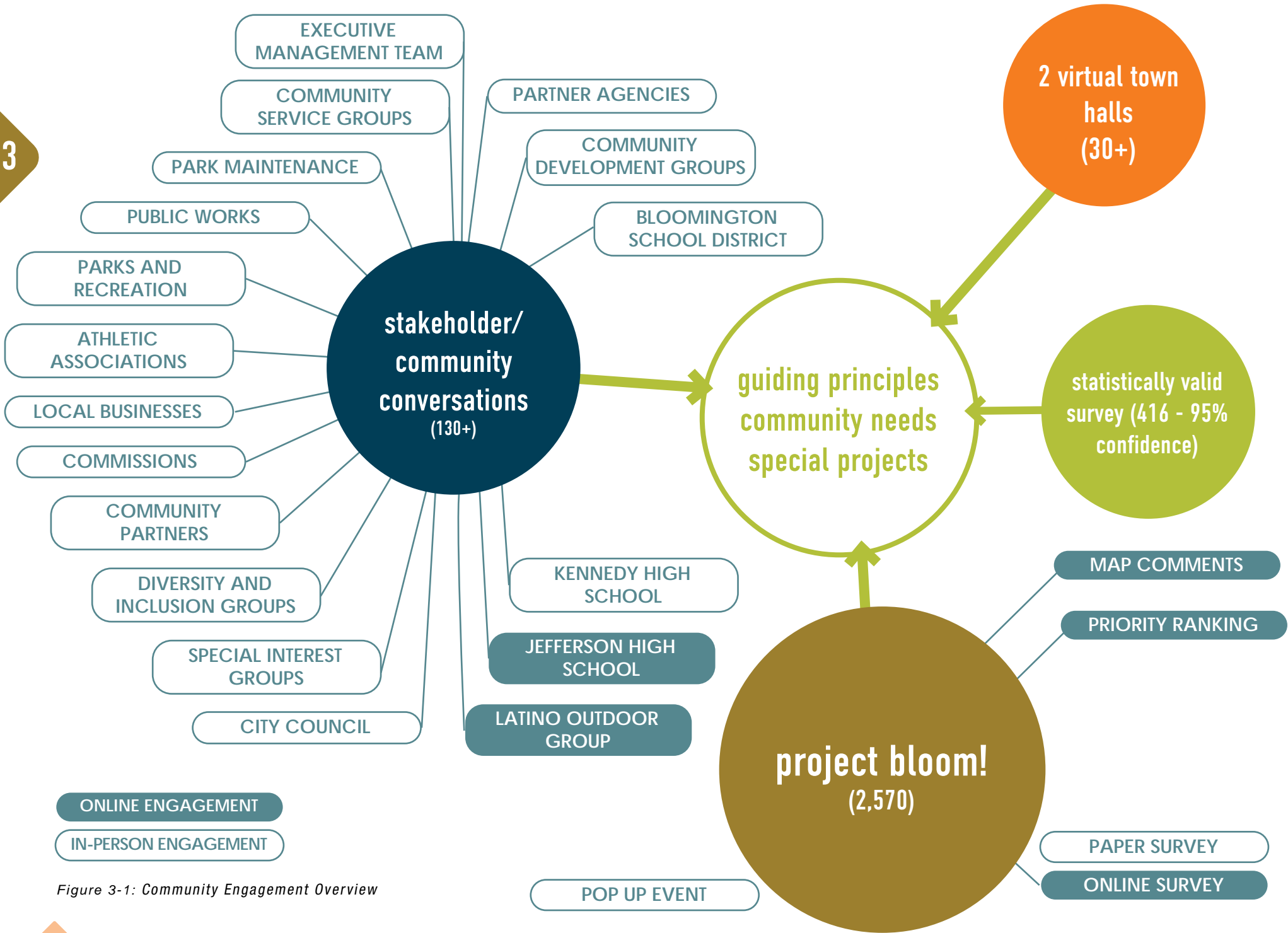


Figure 3-1: Community Engagement Overview



Figure 3-2: Community Engagement Relationship Graphic

# 2020

- JAN 11, 2020**
  - Scope
  - Work plan
  - Community engagement plan
  - Communication plan
- FEB 10, 2020**
  - ETC survey
  - Engagement plan, outreach approach and event schedule
- AUG 17, 2020**
  - Engagement update
  - Demographics and Trends Analysis Report
  - Level of Service Study – over-served and under-served facilities
  - Community-driven park planning
- OCT 12, 2020**
  - City Council interview summary
- NOV 16, 2020**
  - Recreation Program Assessment
  - Cost recovery framework
  - Introduction of Service Areas
  - Level of Service – ice rink reductions and study locations for new park amenities

# 2021

- JAN 11, 2021**
  - Plan framework – main document
  - Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles
  - Intro to Equity and Natural Resources in the Plan
  - Capital Improvement Plan framework – Service Area Boundaries, park shelter building program and locations, new facilities locations and over-served
- MAR 8, 2021**
  - Benchmark Report
  - Equity-based prioritization model for park planning and investments
- MAY 17, 2021**
  - Draft Plan review
  - Key issues and recommendations
- JUNE 14, 2021**
  - Public Comment
- AUG 2, 2021**
  - Plan approval

Figure 3-3: Park System Master Plan City Council Discussion Summary



Figure 3-4: Park System Master Plan Park, Arts, and Recreation Commission Discussion Summary

## STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

ETC Institute completed a statistically valid survey in the Fall of 2019 at the beginning of the PSMP process. The purpose of the survey was to help the City better understand residents' values and priorities for future planning and improvement of parks, programs, and facilities.

The results of the survey influenced the additional survey and theme questions explored in *project bloom!*. A total of 416 residents completed the survey. The overall results for the sample of 416 households have a precision of at least +/- 4.8% at the 95% level of confidence.

The demographics of the survey participants closely mirrored that of the City of Bloomington's overall demographics. Responses to key questions that influence the PSMP are summarized here. The full executive summary report can be found in the Appendix.

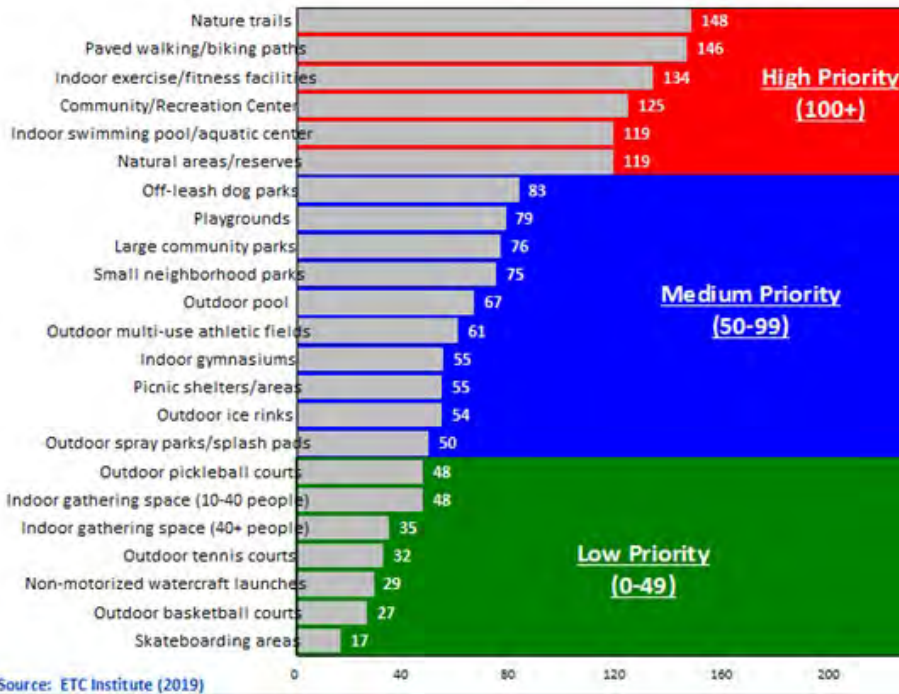


Figure 3-5: Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Facilities Based on the Priority Investment Rating

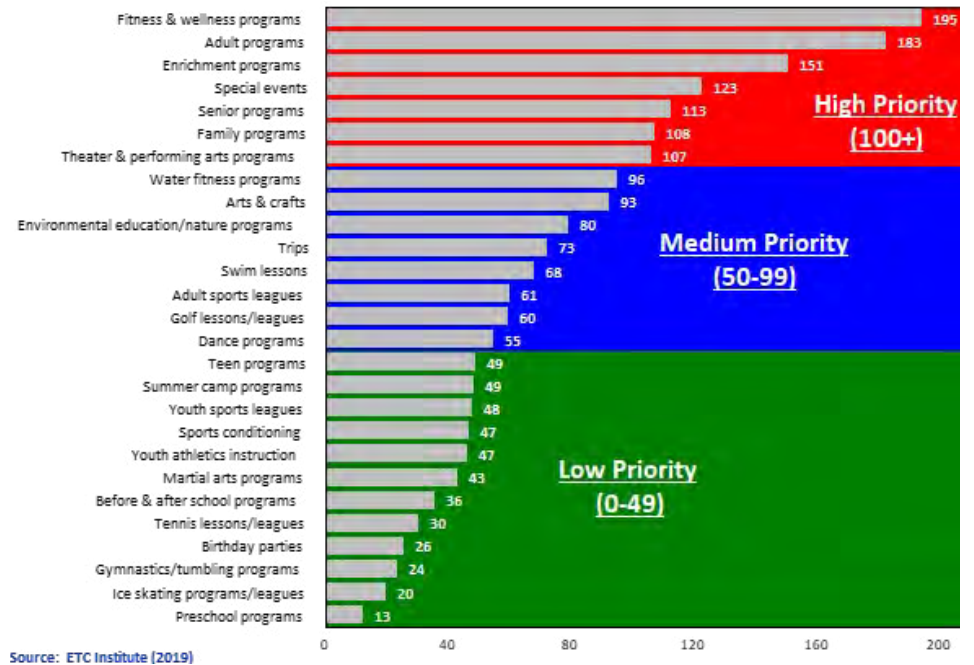
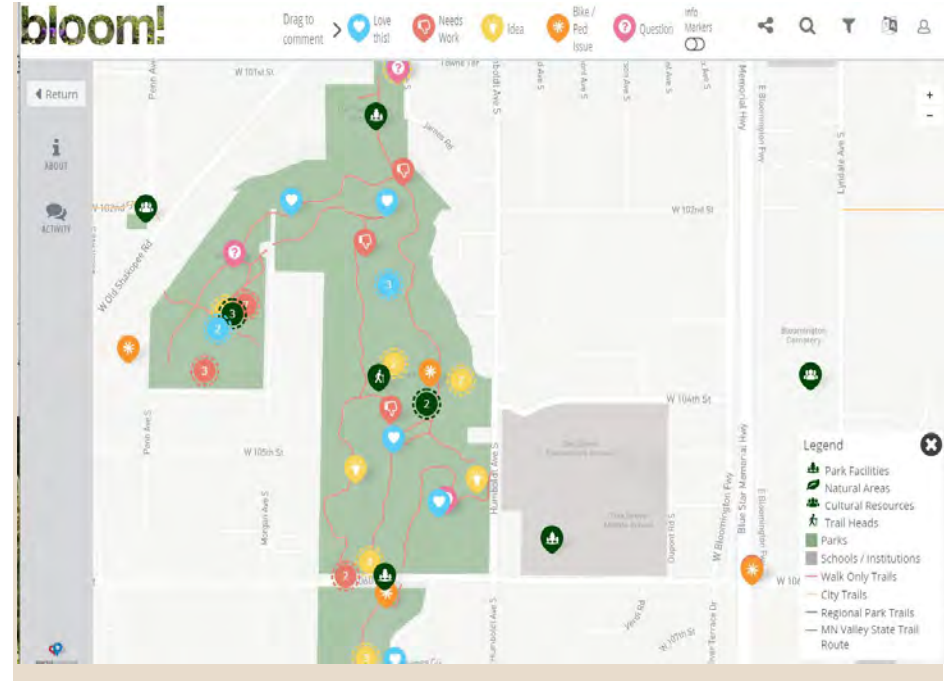


Figure 3-6: Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Programs Based on the Priority Investment Rating





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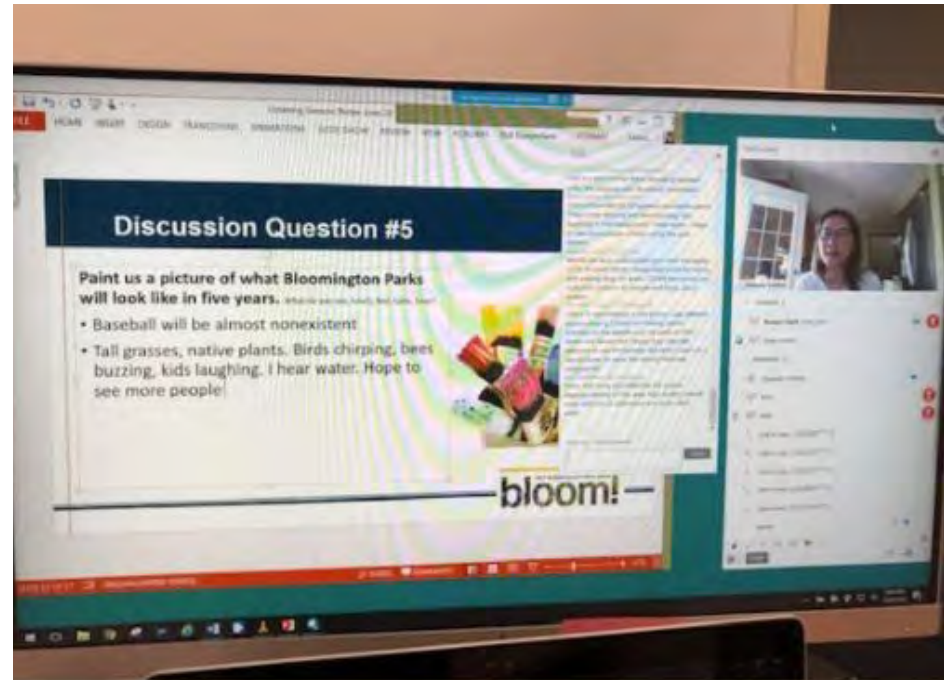


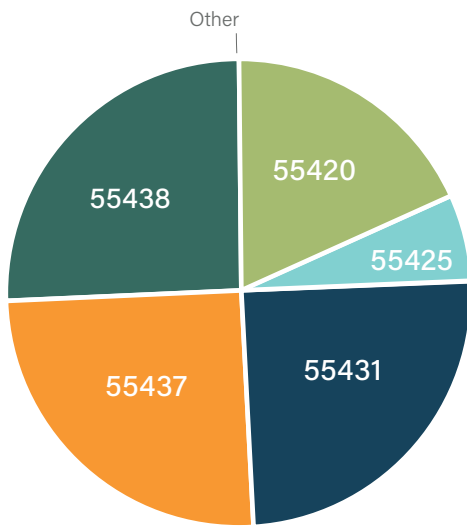
Figure 3-7: Community engagement techniques and tools - in person and digital

## PROJECT BLOOM! ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

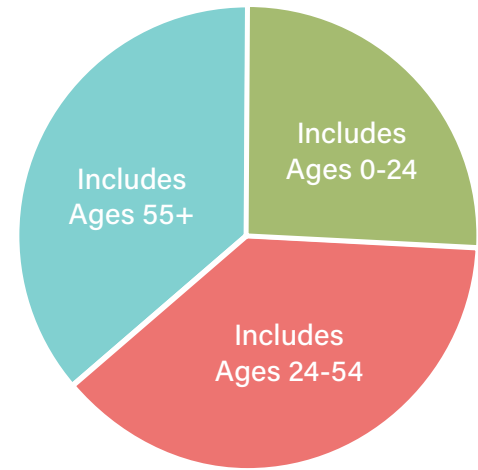
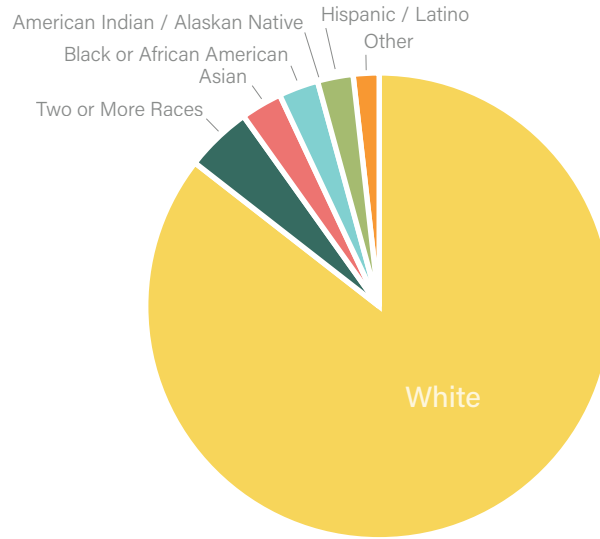
Project bloom! provided the bulk of engagement. The following section summarizes the results of key engagement activities for project bloom!

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Zipcodes



Which of the following describes your household?



**2602**  
Number of bloom! Site Users

**526**  
Survey Responses

**306**  
Priority Theme Voters

**9168**  
Number of bloom! Site Visits

**711**  
Map Comments

Figure 3-8: Key Engagement Activities Summary



What new things would you like to do at Bloomington's Parks now (rank your top 5)?

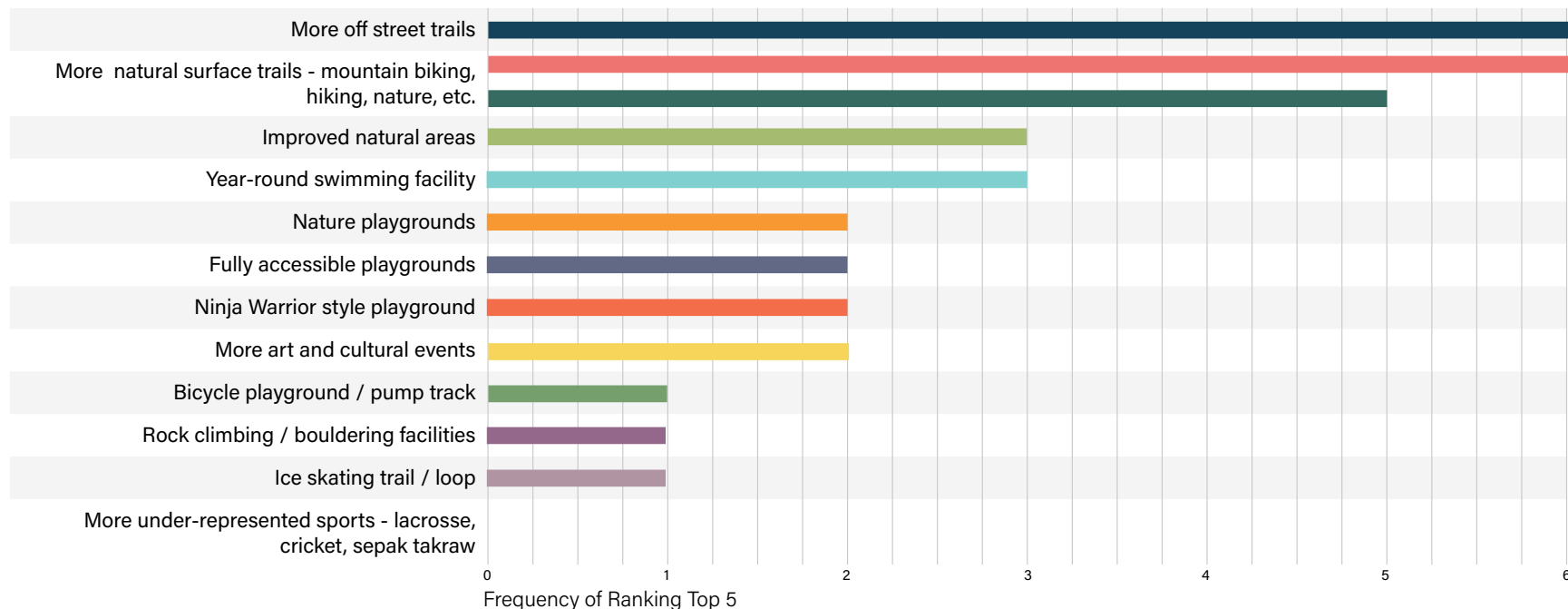


Figure 3-11: Desired New Activity Ranking Summary Chart

Trails have been identified as an important feature in Bloomington. What type of trail would you use most (rank your top 3)?

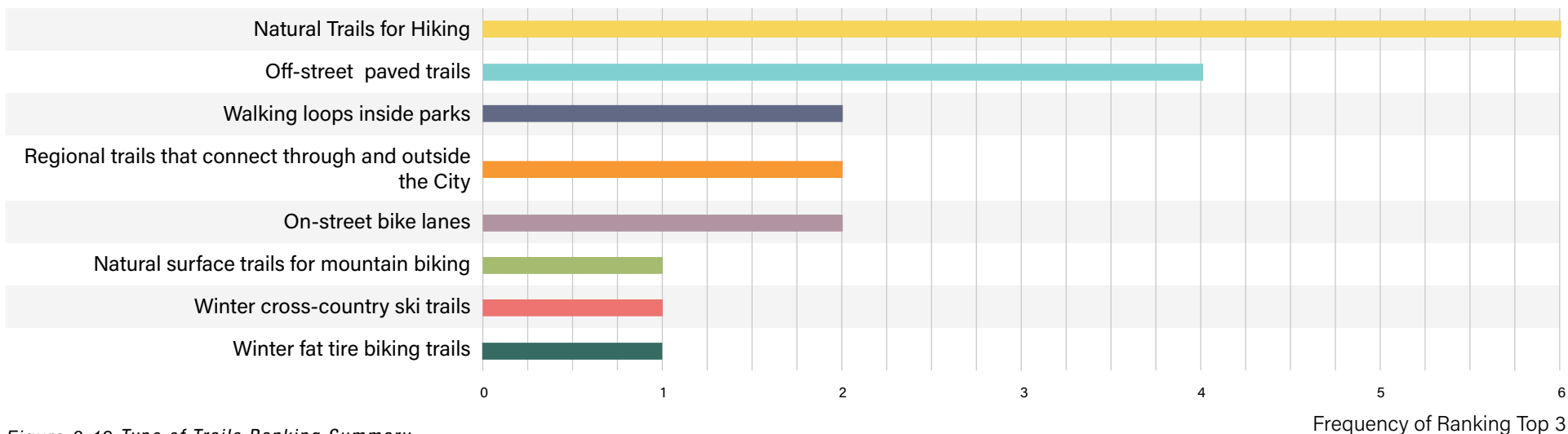


Figure 3-12: Type of Trails Ranking Summary



The City is studying the role of ice skating in parks and how to best provide this activity in the future. Climate change and shifting recreation trends have created challenges for providing outdoor skating.

Which approach to providing OUTDOOR ice skating do you think the City should use to adapt to challenges?

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

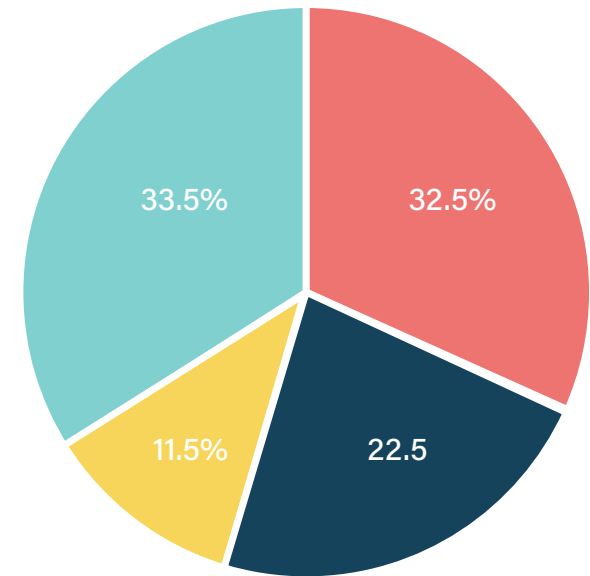
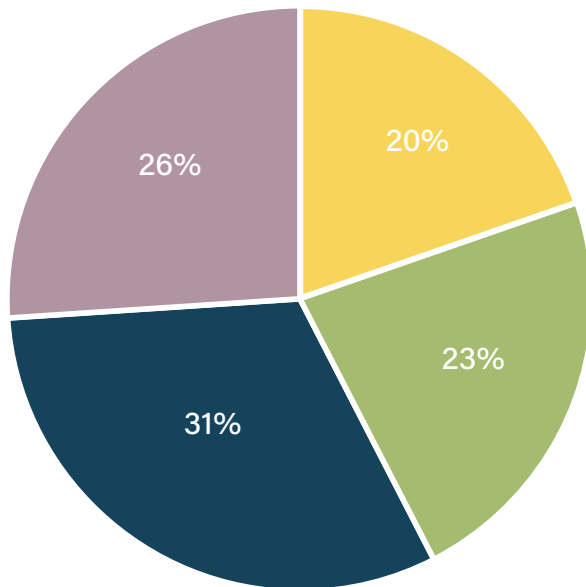


Figure 3-14: Ice Skating Approach Summary

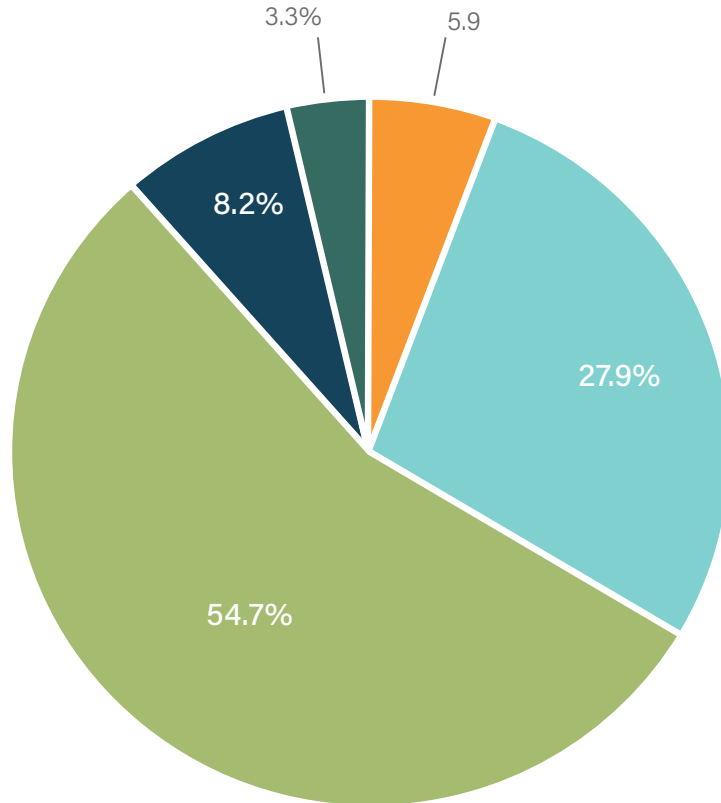
Aquatics - which type of aquatic facility are you most likely to use?



- Smaller neighborhood focused wading pools and splashpads
- None - I'm not interested in using city provided aquatic facilities
- A larger centrally located INDOOR facility destination usable all-year long
- A larger centrally located OUTDOOR facility destination (similar to Bloomington Aquatic Center)

Figure 3-15: Aquatic Facility Types Summary

## Nature and Recreation - how should city parks balance environmental protection with access for recreation?



**55%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO BALANCE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WITH ACCESS FOR RECREATION

**28%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOCUS

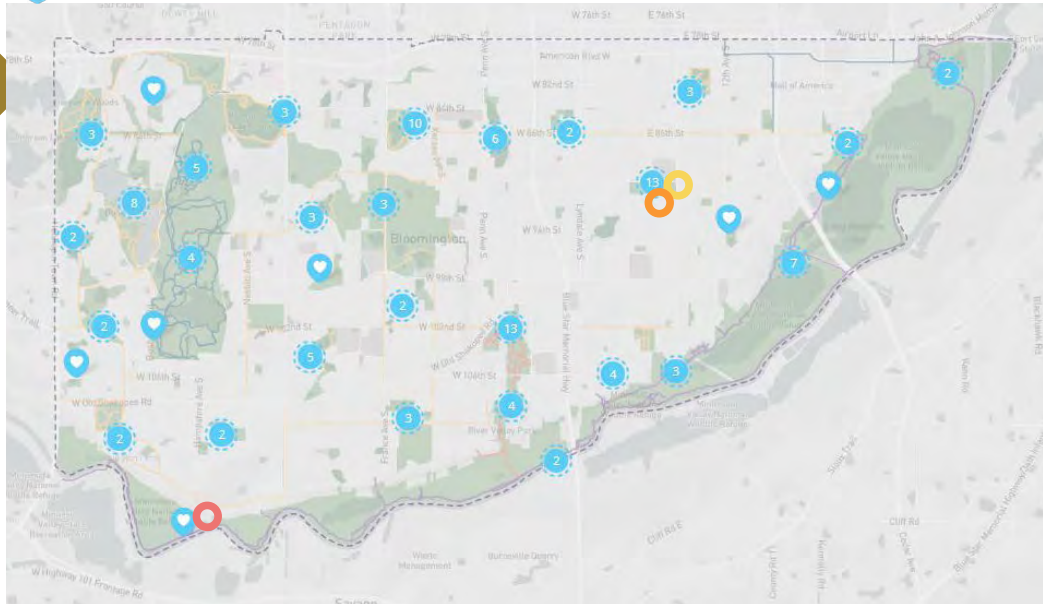
Figure 3-16: Nature and Recreation Balance Summary

- **Protection and Education** - natural areas should be protected and recreation NOT allowed within. Trails and activities degrade quality.
- **Protection Focused Balance** - natural areas should be protected and allow low impact uses in certain areas only.
- **Balance** - best practices, research, budgets, and recreation needs should balance protection and access.
- **Recreation Focused Balance** - access to recreation is emphasized, even if natural areas quality is compromised in certain areas.
- **Recreation Only** - given high interest and desire to recreate in natural areas, provide as much access as we responsibly can throughout the city's natural areas.

# MAP YOUR COMMENTS SUMMARY



## What do you love?



The outdoor pool is great and highly used. I love the...diversity of users [at] the pool as well as the competitive swim teams. I also love the Firemans Park, softball fields, tennis, basketball courts, [and] even the horse shoe pits for the older generation.

I love Red Haddox Baseball Field. It is one of the best local baseball fields around. I live near the park and see how the softball fields are busy with games...I hope that Valley View Park stays as it is.

Keep the biking trail along the Minnesota River unpaved and natural. This is one of the last natural areas in our city and it needs to be protected from unnecessary development.



## What needs work?

We definitely need to have a trail put in to reach West Bush Lake Park from Veness Rd. Residents in this area have to walk in the road around a blind curve to get to the trail in the park. People drive fast, it's very dangerous for drivers and walkers.

I dislike that parking is not allowed along this street to allow access to this trailhead.

Buckthorn removal needed.

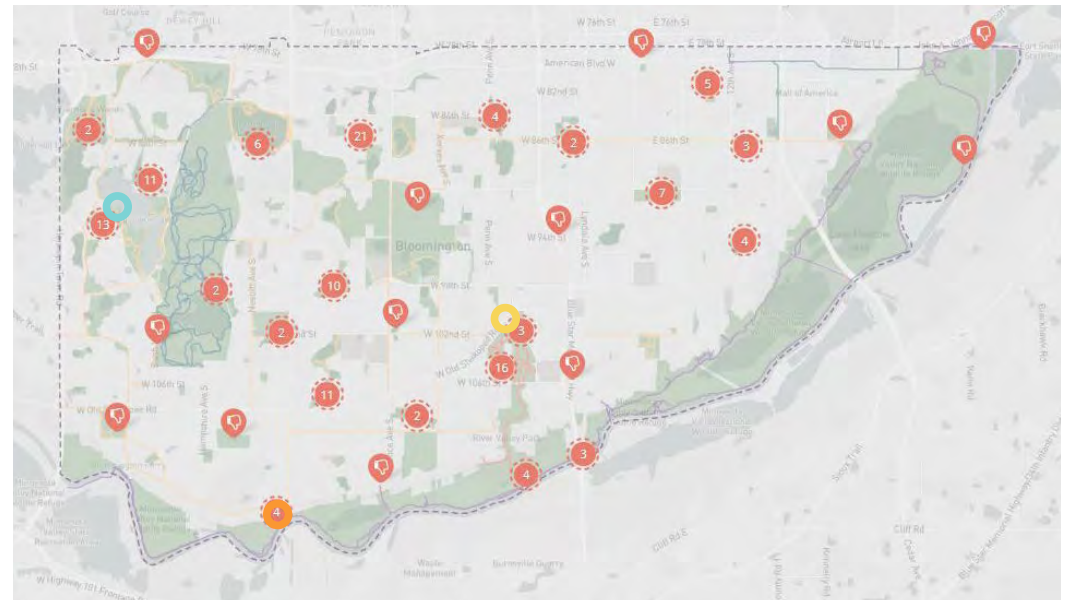


Figure 3-17: Map Your Comments Summary





# PRIORITY THEME VOTING

What are the highest priority issues and themes that the City should attempt to address in this master plan to help the parks bloom! into the future?

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**Health and Well Being:** Maximize the health benefits of parks with health and well being focused programming and infrastructure. Encourage physical and mental activity by providing active and passive uses.



**Connections to Parks and Trails:** Prioritize safe connections to all parks and trails including local and regional trails, sidewalks, transit access, safe intersections and crossings.



**Multi-Generational Parks:** Engage every person at every life stage by providing inclusive and accessible facilities and creating programming for all residents.



**Gathering and Community Building:** Focus on bringing the community together through group gathering facilities and programming. Create neighborhood pride through parks and encourage neighborhood gatherings



**Natural Resources:** Connect the public to Bloomington's quality natural resource opportunities. Preserve existing quality areas and restore degraded ones. Create landscapes that build resiliency for the park system and city.



**History and Cultural Resources:** Capitalize on Bloomington's rich cultural resources and focus on preservation. Evolve interpretation and education programming to engage diverse populations and ages.



**Fiscal Responsibility:** Sustaining park programs and infrastructure, and by developing creative public-private partnerships



**Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency:** Focus on environmental health and resiliency by reducing energy consumption and waste. Ecosystem services provided by parks should be maximized through green infrastructure and environmentally focused park design.



**Equity:** Ensure all residents have access to quality parks and programming, regardless of income, mobility level, or demographics. Provide opportunities that are inclusive to all though accessible infrastructure and affordable opportunities.



**Rediscover the River:** The Minnesota River Valley is an unrealized jewel. Priority should be placed on preserving and restoring this amenity, and balancing with enhanced public access, programming, and infrastructure.

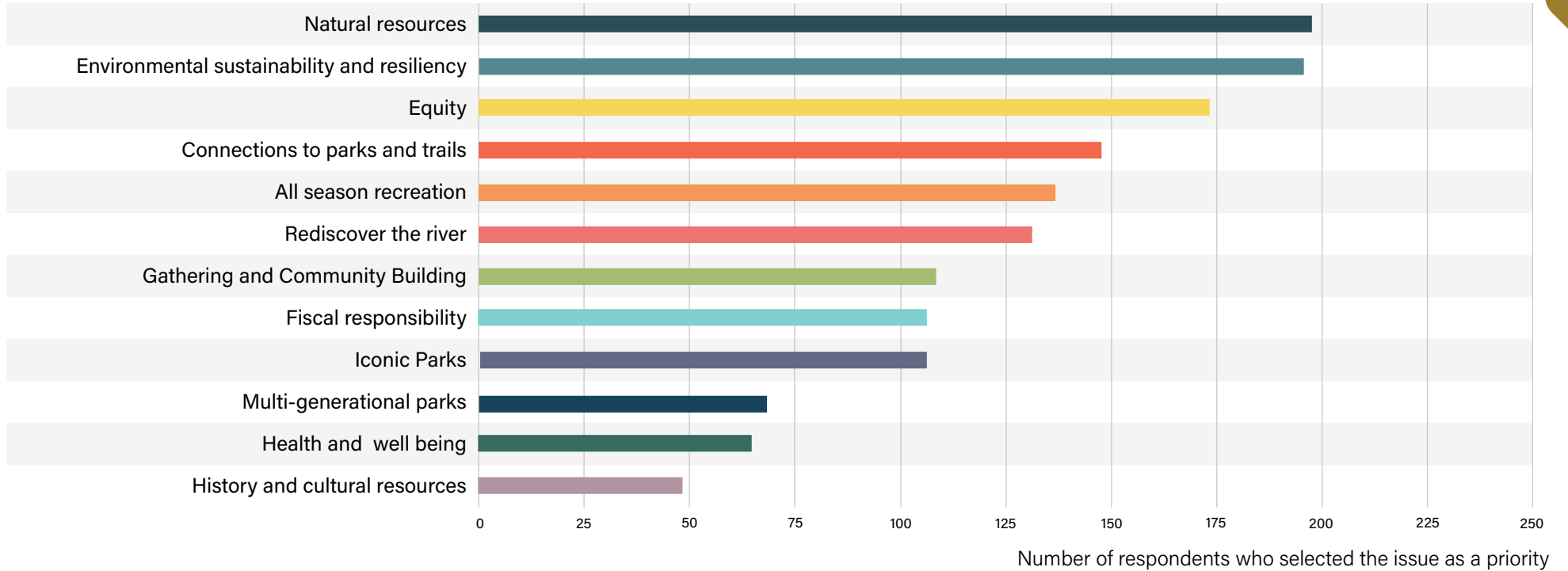


**Iconic Parks:** Parks and trails are recognizable and symbolic of Bloomington's high quality of life. Parks are a major contributor to a strong community identity and are regional destinations.



**All Season Recreation:** Provide recreation opportunities all-year long and make winter recreation a priority. Provide both recreation opportunities and events to celebrate all-seasons.

What are the highest priority issues and themes that the city should attempt to address in this master plan to help the parks bloom into the future?



**63%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

**58%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

**48%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS PRIORITIZE EQUITY

Figure 3-19: Issues And Themes Suggestion for The City Master Plan

## RECREATIONAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Trends Analysis provides an understanding of national, regional, and local recreational trends as well as generational participation trends. Trends data used for this analysis was obtained from Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI). All trends data is based on current and/or historical participation rates, statistically-valid survey results, or NRPA Park Metrics.



## NATIONAL TRENDS IN RECREATION

### METHODOLOGY

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report 2019 was utilized in evaluating the following trends:

- National Sport and Fitness Participatory Trends
- Core vs. Casual Participation Trends
- Participation by Generation
- Non-Participant Interest by Age Segment

The study is based on findings from surveys carried out in 2018 by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), resulting in a total of 20,069 online interviews. Surveys were administered to all genders, ages, income levels, regions, and ethnicities to allow for statistical accuracy of the national population. A sample size of 20,069 completed interviews is considered by SFIA to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.31 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 300,652,039 people (ages six and older). The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S.

## CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION

In addition to overall participation rates, SFIA further categorizes active participants as either core or casual participants based on frequency. Core participants have higher participatory frequency than casual participants. The thresholds that define casual versus core participation may vary based on the nature of each individual activity. For instance, core participants engage in most fitness and recreational activities more than 50 times per year, while for sports, the threshold for core participation is typically 13 times per year.

In a given activity, core participants are more committed and tend to be less likely to switch to other activities or become inactive (engage in no physical activity) than casual participants. This may also explain why activities with more core participants tend to experience less pattern shifts in participation rates than those with larger groups of casual participants.

## NATIONAL TRENDS IN GENERAL SPORTS

### PARTICIPATION LEVELS

The most heavily participated in sports in the United States were Basketball (24.2 million) and Golf (23.8 million in 2017), which have participation figures well in excess of the other activities within the general sports category. This was followed by Tennis (17.8 million), Baseball (15.9 million), and Soccer (11.4 million).

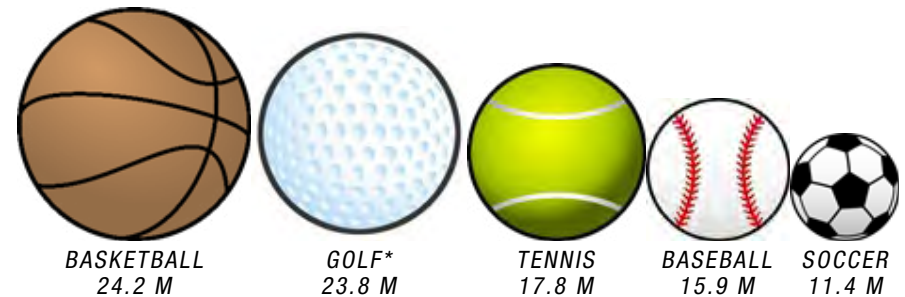
Even though Golf has experienced a recent decrease in participation, it still continues to benefit from its wide age segment appeal and is considered a life-long sport. Basketball's success can be attributed to the limited amount of equipment needed to participate and the limited space requirements necessary, which make basketball the only traditional sport that can be played at the majority of American dwellings as a drive-way pickup game.

## FIVE-YEAR TREND

Since 2013, Roller Hockey (33.6%) and Rugby (31.9%) have emerged as the overall fastest growing sports. During the last five-years, Baseball (19.5%), Cheerleading (18.7%), and Flag Football (17.1%) have also experienced significant growth. Based on the five-year trend, the sports that are most rapidly declining include Ultimate Frisbee (-46.6%), Touch Football (-22.7%), Tackle Football (-16.4%), Badminton (-11.4%), and Outdoor Soccer (-10.4%).

## ONE-YEAR TREND

In general, the most recent year shares a similar pattern with the five-year trends; with Pickleball (5.4%), Basketball (3.5%), and Baseball (1.5%) experiencing the greatest increases in participation this past year. However, some sports that increased rapidly over the past five years have experienced recent decreases in participation, such as Roller Hockey (-5.5%). Other sports including Squash (-13.9%) and Ultimate Frisbee (-13.3%) have also seen a significant decrease in participation over the last year.



# NATIONAL TRENDS IN GENERAL FITNESS

## PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Overall, national participatory trends in fitness have experienced strong growth in recent years. Many of these activities have become popular due to an increased interest among Americans to improve their health and enhance quality of life by engaging in an active lifestyle. These activities also have very few barriers to entry, which provides a variety of options that are relatively inexpensive to participate in and can be performed by most individuals. The most popular general fitness activities amongst the U.S. population include: Fitness Walking (111.1 million), Treadmill (53.7 million), Free Weights (51.3 million), Running/Jogging (49.5 million), and Stationary Cycling (36.7 million).



*Fitness Walking*  
111.1 M



*Treadmill*  
53.7 M



*Dumbbell Free Weights*  
51.3 M



*Running/Jogging*  
49.5 M



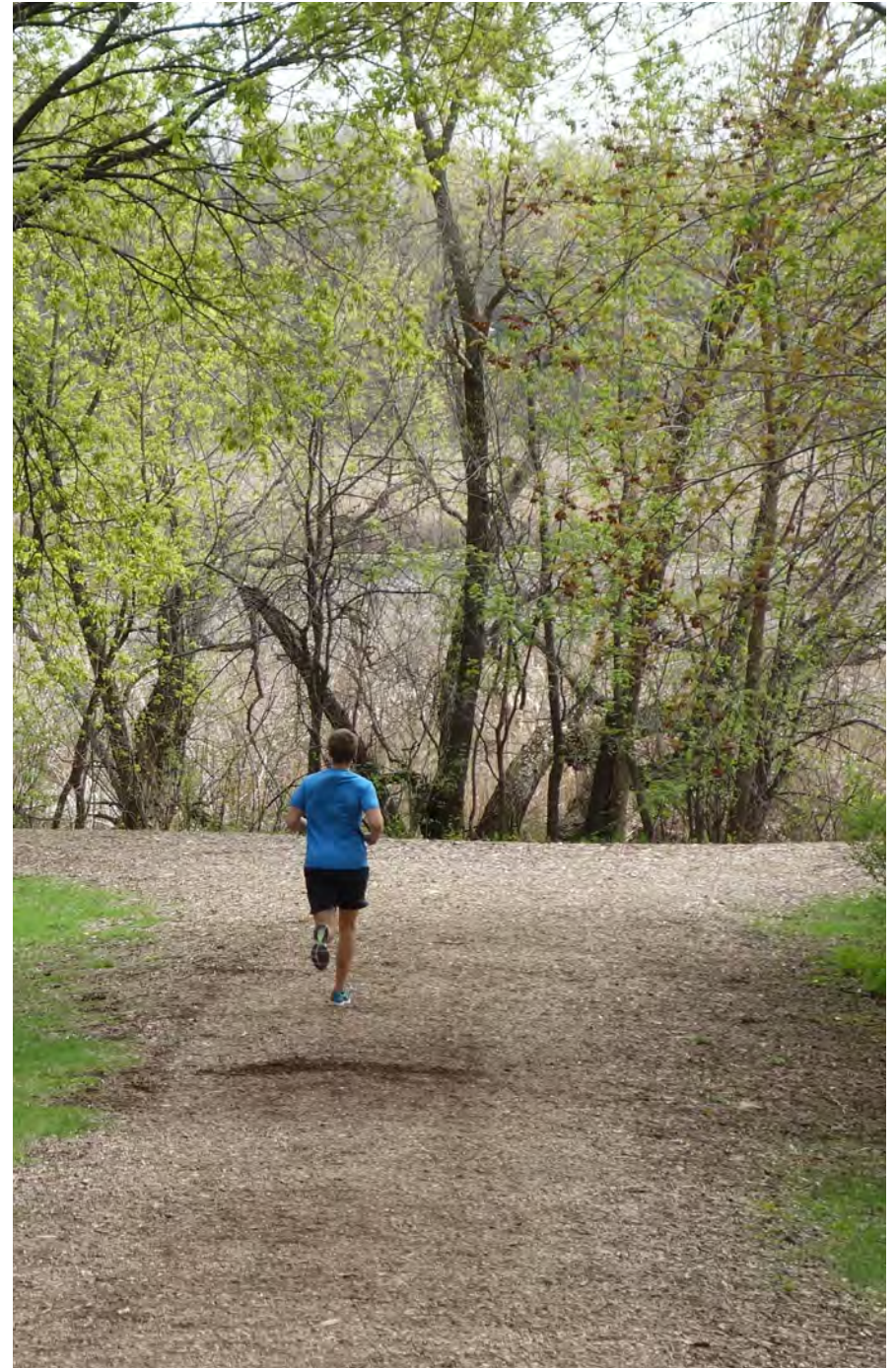
*Stationary Cycling*  
36.7 M

## FIVE-YEAR TREND

Over the last five years (2013-2018), the activities growing most rapidly are Trail Running (47.4%), Aerobics (24.8%), Barre (21.8%), Stair Climbing Machine (18.8%), and Yoga (18.2%). Over the same time frame, the activities that have undergone the biggest decline include: Dumbbell Free Weights (-12.0%), Running/Jogging (-8.7%), Fitness Walking (-5.3%), Traditional Triathlon (-4.2%), and Boot Camps Style Cross Training (-3.1%).

## ONE-YEAR TREND

In the last year, activities with the largest gains in participation were Trail Running (9.4%), Yoga (5.1%), and Elliptical Motion Trainer (3.0%). From 2017-2018, the activities that had the largest decline in participation were Non-Traditional Triathlon (-15.5%), Running/Jogging (-2.6%), and Cross-Training Style Workout (-2.1%).



## CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN GENERAL FITNESS

It should be noted that many of the activities that are rapidly growing have a relatively low user base, which allows for more drastic shifts in terms of percentage, especially for five-year trends. Increasing casual participants may also explain the rapid growth in some activities. All of the top trending fitness activities, for the one-year and five-year trend, consist primarily of casual users. This is significant, as casual users are much more likely to switch to alternative activities compared to a core user.

Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2013	2017	2018	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Fitness Walking	117,351	110,805	111,101	-5.3%	0.3%
Treadmill	48,166	52,966	53,737	11.6%	1.5%
Free Weights (Dumbbells/Hand Weights)	58,267	52,217	51,291	-12.0%	-1.8%
Running/Jogging	54,188	50,770	49,459	-8.7%	-2.6%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	35,247	36,035	36,668	4.0%	1.8%
Weight/Resistant Machines	36,267	36,291	36,372	0.3%	0.2%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	30,410	32,283	33,238	9.3%	3.0%
Yoga	24,310	27,354	28,745	18.2%	5.1%
Free Weights (Barbells)	25,641	27,444	27,834	8.6%	1.4%
Bodyweight Exercise	N/A	24,454	24,183	N/A	-1.1%
Dance, Step, & Choreographed Exercise	N/A	22,616	22,391	N/A	-1.0%
Aerobics (High Impact)	17,323	21,476	21,611	24.8%	0.6%
Stair Climbing Machine	12,642	14,948	15,025	18.8%	0.5%
Cross-Training Style Workout	N/A	13,622	13,338	N/A	-2.1%
Trail Running	6,792	9,149	10,010	47.4%	9.4%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	8,309	9,409	9,434	13.5%	0.3%
Pilates Training	8,069	9,047	9,084	12.6%	0.4%
Cardio Kickboxing	6,311	6,693	6,838	8.4%	2.2%
Boot Camp Style Cross-Training	6,911	6,651	6,695	-3.1%	0.7%
Martial Arts	5,314	5,838	5,821	9.5%	-0.3%
Boxing for Fitness	5,251	5,157	5,166	-1.6%	0.2%
Tai Chi	3,469	3,787	3,761	8.4%	-0.7%
Barre	2,901	3,436	3,532	21.8%	2.8%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	2,262	2,162	2,168	-4.2%	0.3%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	1,390	1,878	1,589	14.3%	-15.4%

NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over

Legend: Large Increase (greater than +25%) Moderate Increase (0% to 25%) Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%) Large Decrease (less than -25%)

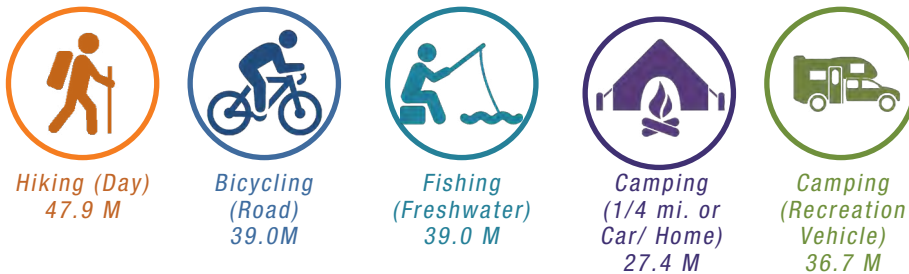
Figure 3-20: General Fitness National Participatory Trend



# NATIONAL TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

## PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Results from the SFIA report demonstrate a contrast of growth and decline in participation regarding outdoor/adventure recreation activities. Much like the general fitness activities, these activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or within a group, and are not as limited by time constraints. In 2018, the most popular activities, in terms of total participants, from the outdoor/adventure recreation category include: Day Hiking (47.9 million), Road Bicycling (39.0 million), Freshwater Fishing (39.0 million), and Camping within ¼ mile of Vehicle/Home (27.4 million), and Recreational Vehicle Camping (16.0 million).



## FIVE-YEAR TREND

From 2013-2018, BMX Bicycling (58.6%), Day Hiking (39.2%), Fly Fishing (18.1%), Backpacking Overnight (16.2%), and Recreational Vehicle Camping (9.8%) have undergone the largest increases in participation.

The five-year trend also shows activities such as In-Line Roller Skating (-17.8%), Birdwatching (-12.8%), Camping within ¼ mile of Home/Vehicle (-6.3%), and Road Bicycling (-4.5%) experiencing the largest decreases in participation.

## ONE-YEAR TREND

The one-year trend shows activities growing most rapidly being Day Hiking (6.6%), Camping within ¼ mile of Home/Vehicle (4.4%), and Fly Fishing (2.2%). Over the last year, activities that underwent the largest decreases in participation include: Adventure Racing (-12.4%), In-Line Roller Skating (-4.3%), and Overnight Backpacking (-4.0).

## CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

A large majority of outdoor activities have experienced participation growth in the last five- years, with In-Line Roller Skating, Birdwatching, Camping within ¼ mile of Home/Vehicle, and Road Bicycling being the only activities decreasing in participation. Although this a positive trend for outdoor activities, it should be noted that a large majority of participation growth came from an increase in casual users. This is likely why we see a lot more activities experiencing decreases in participation when assessing the one-year trend, as the casual users likely found alternative activities to participate in.

National Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2013	2017	2018	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Hiking (Day)	34,378	44,900	47,860	39.2%	6.6%
Bicycling (Road)	40,888	38,866	39,041	-4.5%	0.5%
Fishing (Freshwater)	37,796	38,346	38,998	3.2%	1.7%
Camping (< 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	29,269	26,262	27,416	-6.3%	4.4%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	14,556	16,159	15,980	9.8%	-1.1%
Fishing (Saltwater)	11,790	13,062	12,830	8.8%	-1.8%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	14,152	12,296	12,344	-12.8%	0.4%
Backpacking Overnight	9,069	10,975	10,540	16.2%	-4.0%
Bicycling (Mountain)	8,542	8,609	8,690	1.7%	0.9%
Archery	7,647	7,769	7,654	0.1%	-1.5%
Fishing (Fly)	5,878	6,791	6,939	18.1%	2.2%
Skateboarding	6,350	6,382	6,500	2.4%	1.8%
Roller Skating, In-Line	6,129	5,268	5,040	-17.8%	-4.3%
Bicycling (BMX)	2,168	3,413	3,439	58.6%	0.8%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,319	2,527	2,541	9.6%	0.6%
Adventure Racing	2,095	2,529	2,215	5.7%	-12.4%

NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over

Legend: Large Increase (greater than 20%) Moderate Increase (0% to 25%) Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%) Large Decrease (less than -20%)

Figure 3-21: Outdoor / Adventure Recreation Participatory Trends



# NATIONAL TRENDS IN AQUATICS

## PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Swimming is deemed as a lifetime activity, which is most likely why it continues to have such strong participation. In 2018, Fitness Swimming was the absolute leader in overall participation (27.6 million) amongst aquatic activities, largely due to its broad, multigenerational appeal.



Swimming  
(Fitness)  
27.6 M



Aquatic  
Exercise  
10.5M



Swimming  
(Competition)  
3.0 M



## FIVE-YEAR TREND

Assessing the five-year trend, all aquatic activities have experienced growth. Aquatic Exercise stands out having increased 24.0% from 2013-2018, most likely due to the ongoing research that demonstrates the activity's great therapeutic benefit, followed by Competitive Swimming (15.4%) and Fitness Swimming (4.6%).

## ONE-YEAR TREND

Similar to the five-year trend, all aquatic activities also experienced growth regarding the one-year trend. Fitness Swimming (1.6%) had the largest increase in 2018, with Competitive Swimming (1.3%) and Aquatic Exercise (0.6%) not far behind.

## CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN AQUATICS

All aquatic activities have undergone increases in participation over the last five years, primarily due to large increases in casual participation (1-49 times per year). From 2013 to 2018, casual participants of Competition Swimming increased by 45.5%, Aquatic Exercise by 40.0%, and Fitness Swimming by 10.7%. However, all core participation (50+ times per year) for aquatic activities have decreased over the last five-years.

National Participatory Trends - Aquatics					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2013	2017	2018	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Swimming (Fitness)	26,354	27,135	27,575	4.6%	1.6%
Aquatic Exercise	8,483	10,459	10,518	24.0%	0.6%
Swimming (Competition)	2,638	3,007	3,045	15.4%	1.3%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

Figure 3-22: Aquatic Participatory Trends

# NATIONAL TRENDS IN WATER SPORTS / ACTIVITIES

## PARTICIPATION LEVELS

The most popular water sports / activities based on total participants in 2018 were Recreational Kayaking (11.0 million), Canoeing (9.1 million), and Snorkeling (7.8 million). It should be noted that water activity participation tends to vary based on regional, seasonal, and environmental factors. A region with more water access and a warmer climate is more likely to have a higher participation rate in water activities than a region that has long winter seasons or limited water access. Therefore, when assessing trends in water sports and activities, it is important to understand that fluctuations may be the result of environmental barriers which can greatly influence water activity participation.



## FIVE-YEAR TREND

Over the last five years, Stand-Up Paddling (73.3%) was by far the fastest growing water activity, followed by Recreational Kayaking (26.4%), White Water Kayaking (19.4%), Boardsailing/Windsurfing (17.5%), and Sea/Tour Kayaking (4.1%). From 2013-2018, activities declining in participation most rapidly were Surfing (-21.4%), Water Skiing (-20.0%), Jet Skiing (-17.0%), Wakeboarding (-15.7%), and Rafting (-11.3%).

## ONE-YEAR TREND

Contradicting the five-year trend, Surfing was the fastest growing of all water sports/activities increasing 7.2% in 2018. Recreational Kayaking (4.6%) and Stand-Up Paddling (3.8%) also had a spike in participation this past year. Activities which experienced the largest decreases in participation in the most recent year include: Wakeboarding (-7.0%), Snorkeling (-6.8), and Water Skiing (-5.9%)

## CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN WATER SPORTS/ACTIVITIES

As mentioned previously, regional, seasonal, and environmental limiting factors may influence the participation rate of water sport and activities. These factors may also explain why all water-based activities have drastically more casual participants than core participants, since frequencies of activities may be constrained by uncontrollable factors. These high casual user numbers are likely why a majority of water sports/activities have experienced decreases in participation in recent years.

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2013	2017	2018	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Kayaking (Recreational)	8,716	10,533	11,017	26.4%	4.6%
Canoeing	10,153	9,220	9,129	-10.1%	-1.0%
Snorkeling	8,700	8,384	7,815	-10.2%	-6.8%
Jet Skiing	6,413	5,418	5,324	-17.0%	-1.7%
Sailing	3,915	3,974	3,754	-4.1%	-5.5%
Stand-Up Paddling	1,993	3,325	3,453	73.3%	3.8%
Rafting	3,836	3,479	3,404	-11.3%	-2.2%
Water Skiing	4,202	3,572	3,363	-20.0%	-5.9%
Surfing	3,658	2,680	2,874	-21.4%	7.2%
Scuba Diving	3,174	2,874	2,849	-10.2%	-0.9%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	2,694	2,955	2,805	4.1%	-5.1%
Wakeboarding	3,316	3,005	2,796	-15.7%	-7.0%
Kayaking (White Water)	2,146	2,500	2,562	19.4%	2.5%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,324	1,573	1,556	17.5%	-1.1%

NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over

<b>Legend:</b>	Large Increase (greater than 20%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)
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Figure 3-23: Water Sports / Activities Participatory Trends

## PARTICIPATION BY GENERATION

Analyzing participation by age for recreational activities reveals that fitness and outdoor sports were the most common activities across all generations. Breaking down activity level by generation shows a converse correlation between age and healthy activity rates.

### 2018 PARTICIPATION RATES BY GENERATION

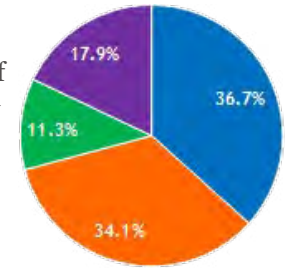
U.S. population, Ages 6+



Definitions: Active (3+ times per week), Casual (1-2 times per week), High Calorie (20+ minutes of elevated heart rate), Low/Med Calorie (>20 minutes of elevated heart rate), Inactive (no physical activity in 2018)

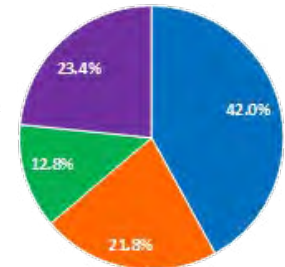
### GENERATION Z (BORN 2000+)

Generation Z were the most active, with only 17.9% of the population identifying as inactive. Approximately 81% of individuals within this generation were deemed high calorie burning in 2018; with 36.7% being active high calorie and 34.1% being casual high calorie.



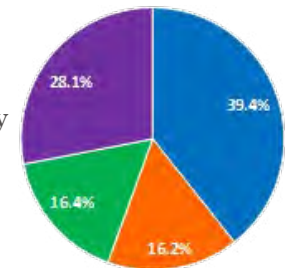
### MILLENNIALS (BORN 1980-1999)

Almost half (42.0%) of millennials were active high calorie (35.4%) or active & high calorie (11.3%), while 24.0% claimed they were inactive. Even though this inactive rate is much higher than Generation Z's (17.6%), it is still below the national inactive rate (28%).



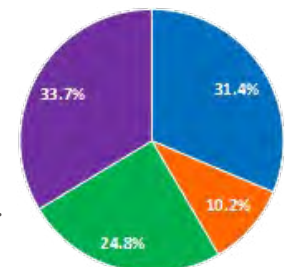
### GENERATION X (BORN 1965-1979)

Generation X has the second highest active to a healthy level rate (35.0%) among all generations, only being 0.4% less than Millennials. At the same time, they also have the second highest inactive rate, with 28.1% not active at all.



### THE BOOMERS (BORN 1945-1964)

The Boomers were the least active generation, with an inactive rate of 33.3%. This age group tends to participate in less intensive activities. Approximately 34% claimed to engage in casual & low/med calorie (4.3%) or low/med calorie (29.6%) burning activities.



Keys: Active High Calorie, Casual High Calorie, Low/Med Calorie, Inactive

Figure 3-24: Participation Charts by Generation

## NON-PARTICIPANT INTEREST BY AGE SEGMENT

In addition to participation rates by generation, SFIA also tracks non-participant interest. These are activities that the U.S. population currently does not participate in due to physical or monetary barriers, but is interested in participating in. Below are the top five activities that each age segment would be most likely to partake in, if they were readily available.

Overall, the activities most age segments are interested in include: Camping, Bicycling, Fishing, and Swimming for Fitness. All of which are deemed as low-impact activities, making them obtainable for any age segment to enjoy. These are all activities that are either already provided by Bloomington or could be provided.



### 6-12 Year-Olds

- Soccer
- Fishing
- Swimming on a Team
- Camping
- Martial Arts

### 18-24 Year-Olds

- Camping
- Martial Arts
- Backpacking
- Snowboarding
- Climbing

### 13-17 Year-Olds

- Camping
- Fishing
- Basketball
- Working out w/ Weights
- Running/ Jogging

### 25-34 Year-Olds

- Stand-up Paddling
- Swimming for Fitness
- Camping
- Bicycling
- Surfing

### 45-54 Year-Olds

- Camping
- Working out w/ Weights
- Stand-up Paddling
- Bicycling
- Swimming for Fitness

### 35-44 Year-Olds

- Stand-up Paddling
- Swimming for Fitness
- Camping
- Bicycling
- Working out w/ Weights

### 55-64 Year-Olds

- Bicycling
- Birdwatching / Wildlife Viewing
- Working out w/ Machines
- Camping
- Fishing

### 65+ Year-Olds

- Birdwatching/ Wildlife Viewing
- Fishing
- Working out w/ Machines
- Swimming or Fitness
- Hiking

Figure 3-25: Non-Participation Interest By Age Segment

## LOCAL SPORT AND LEISURE MARKET POTENTIAL

### MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data for The City of Bloomington’s service area, as provided by ESRI. A Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service within the City. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the U.S. national average. The national average is 100; therefore, numbers below 100 would represent lower than average participation rates, and numbers above 100 would represent higher than average participation rates. The service area is compared to the national average in four (4) categories – general sports, fitness, outdoor activity, and commercial recreation.

As seen in the charts below, the following sport and leisure trends are most prevalent for residents within the service area. The activities are listed in descending order, from highest to lowest MPI score. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater potential that residents within the service area will actively participate in offerings provided by the City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation.

### GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

When analyzing the general sports MPI chart, Golf (119 MPI), Volleyball (113 MPI), and Softball (112 MPI) are the most popular sports amongst City’s residents when compared to the national average.

### FITNESS MARKET POTENTIAL

The City’s MPI for Fitness is well above the national average of 100. The top four most popular activities are weight lifting (119 MPI), walking for exercise (117 MPI), Zumba (114 MPI) and swimming (107 MPI).

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL

When analyzing the outdoor activity MPI chart, Backpacking (121 MPI), Canoeing/Kayaking (117 MPI) and Hiking (116 MPI) were the most popular activity among the City’s residents. Overall, the City’s residents have a higher propensity for participating in outdoor activities.

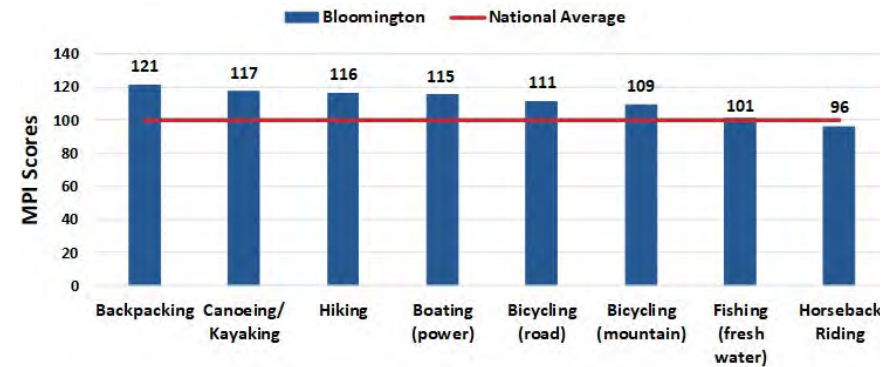


Figure 3-26: Outdoor Activity Market Potential Index

## COMMERCIAL RECREATION MARKET POTENTIAL

The commercial recreation MPI chart shows did painting/drawing (126 MPI), attended sports events (120 MPI), and went to an art gallery (114 MPI) as the most popular activities amongst City’s residents.

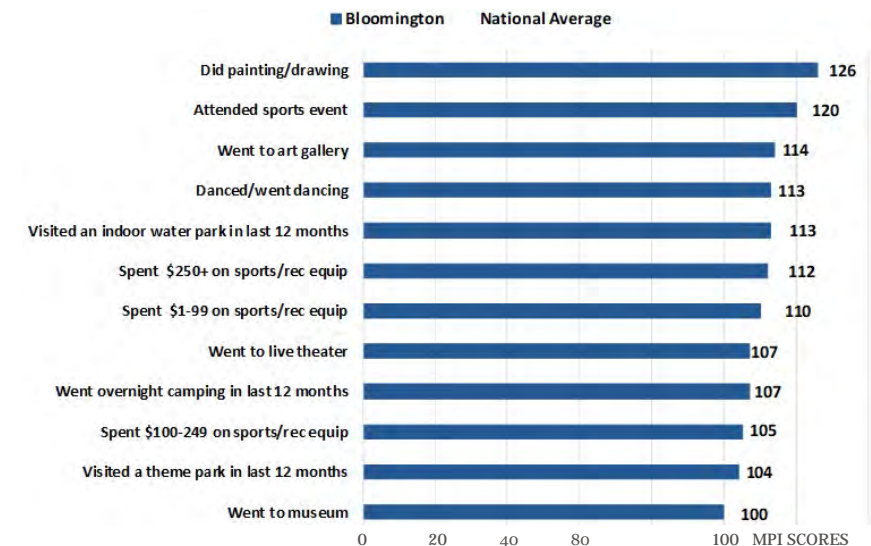


Figure 3-27: Commercial Recreation Market Potential Index

## UPDATED VISION AND MISSION

Bloomington's parks have been a critical element of city living throughout the City's history and their importance has only increased. During the process of this Master Plan COVID-19 shut downs and social distancing measures only served to reinforce the importance of accessible open space, trails, and outdoor amenities and activities. People throughout the state and metro were drawn to parks in record numbers and Bloomington was no exception. Google Community Mobility Reports tracked changes in mobility patterns for people during COVID-19. While visits to retail, recreation, workplaces, and grocery all plummeted in the last year, park visitation in Hennepin County increased by 77% over historic baseline for the first few months of 2021.

Parks, trails, and recreation are essential city services and provide exceptional health, social, community, and environmental benefits. Residents recognize their value and voice their opinion in annual surveys in which 80%+ of respondents identify parks as being an important part of their high quality of life. The master plan process included significant community engagement efforts with the general public, key stakeholders, city leadership, and others to determine the vision for the park system moving forward. A vision statement, mission, and four key guiding principles were established that will guide the park system to *bloom!*

### VISION STATEMENT:

The Vision Statement presents the Bloomington Parks and Recreation desire for the future:

Bloomington Parks and Recreation envisions an accessible system of interconnected vibrant parks, diverse recreation facilities, sustainable park resources and engaging recreation programs and experiences that contribute to healthy individuals and families, a thriving economy and a high quality of life in the City of Bloomington.

### MISSION STATEMENT:

The Mission statement describes how Bloomington Parks and Recreation will implement the vision:

The mission of Bloomington Parks and Recreation is to build our sense of community and enhance quality of life for all current residents, potential residents, and visitors through the management of high-quality parks and natural areas and by making parks accessible and providing exceptional experiences through innovative recreation programs, art activities, park facilities, and private partnership connections.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES:** The following guiding principles will shape the Parks Departments actions and approaches in carrying out their vision and mission. These principles will guide staff in closing the gap between strategies and delivery:



### BE BLOOMINGTON

- Re-establish parks and trails as the critical part of Bloomington’s image and neighborhood’s identity
- Connect the City with premier parks, safe trails, and highly desired facilities and programs
- Provide exceptional customer experiences and services
- Link the community together through quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs
- Organize and unleash the volunteer and charitable potential of Bloomington residents to improve parks and build community
- Celebrate the uniqueness of Bloomington through engagement, arts activities, and creative placemaking in the parks



### BE ESSENTIAL

- Be fiscally responsible stewards of entrusted funds
- Challenge the Staff to learn and grow
- Create capacity to endure and thrive
- Collaborate with other departments and public agencies to maximize resources
- Manage all parks, recreation facilities and program services to measurable outcomes



### BE RESILIENT

- Capitalize on Bloomington’s unique natural resources with recreation opportunities that empower residents to preserve, restore, educate, and build resilience
- Ensure long-term sustainability of the park and recreation system by building economic, social, and environmental resilience
- Integrate environmental resilience throughout the park system to address the effects of climate change
- Ensure financial resilience through capital planning, partnerships, and operations and maintenance transparency
- Build new partnerships and evolve existing relationships with private, non-profit, and other governmental agencies



### BE EQUITABLE

- Prioritize equity throughout the system to support all residents, celebrate diversity, and provide inclusiveness
- Strengthen all neighborhoods through diverse parks and trails that reflect surrounding neighborhoods
- Build relationships and prioritize community engagement
- Eliminate accessibility issues throughout the system including physical, financial, and social barriers

**CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:** The following city council priorities were used to inform and guide the direction of the park system master plan. Revised priorities are anticipated sometime after completion of the master plan. The plan should be updated to reflect any modifications.



COMMUNITY AMENITIES



ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY



EQUITY AND INCLUSION



COMMUNITY IMAGE



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



FOCUSED RENEWAL



HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

**PARK SYSTEM GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

*Park System Guiding Principles were informed by and complement the City Council's Strategic Priorities. The Park System is a reflection of the City of Bloomington and the strategic and operational values and mission should always speak to each other.*



*If Council Priorities are adjusted following the publication of this master plan, the Guiding Principles should be evaluated for compatibility.*





# PARK ELEMENT FRAMEWORK: ELEMENTS IN THE PARK SYSTEM THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED FOR SUCCESS. PRIORITY ELEMENTS ARE

## PRIORITY PARK ELEMENTS

### PARK ELEMENT 01 NATURAL RESOURCES

Protect and restore natural resources to sustain a healthy, diverse and balanced natural park system for all to enjoy and understand.

### PARK ELEMENT 02 PARK NEEDS (LEVEL OF SERVICE)

Achieve an appropriate balance of parks, recreation facilities, programs, and experiences in each planning area to support access to parks, trails, sports facilities, and recreation amenities that residents want and need.

### PARK ELEMENT 03 TRAILS AND MOBILITY

Implement past planning recommendations and integrate parks as key destinations into the overall transportation system. Provide a variety of interesting and safe trail experiences inside parks to encourage mobility as recreation.

### PARK ELEMENT 04 EQUITY AND ACCESS

Build equity and accessibility into the park system to provide exceptional parks and recreation opportunities for ALL residents that meet their needs, and their community's needs.

## ADDITIONAL PARK ELEMENTS

### PARK ELEMENT 05 SUSTAINABILITY

Practice sustainability initiatives in projects that relate to the use and management of environmental resources.

### PARK ELEMENT 06 ARTS AND PLACEMAKING

Work with existing successful arts and placemaking organizations to implement more artistic elements into the park system.

### PARK ELEMENT 07 CORE SERVICES - EXPANDING USER BASE

Provide additional Health, Fitness, Environmental Educational, Recreational, Sports and Special Event Experiences.

### PARK ELEMENT 08 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Create an organizational structure that provides the best customer experience and cost management for the future of the Department.

### PARK ELEMENT 09 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUDGET ENHANCEMENT

Promote economic development and establish a budget that matches the expectations of the community.

### PARK ELEMENT 10 POLICY UPDATES

Create policies that provide flexibility for the Director to operate efficiently and effectively to achieve the Vision for the Master Plan.

### PARK ELEMENT 11 EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Create Key Performance Metrics to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department.

### PARK ELEMENT 12 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Understand, respect, and honor the cultural resources throughout the City and beyond that connect it to the past, present, and future.



## PRIORITY PARK ELEMENTS

The following priority park elements are the most vital to address for substantial parks and recreation system improvement. Section 02 identified the existing conditions and issues surrounding these priority elements. The following section will provide a framework for addressing them in both the short and long-term. These priority element recommendations are further developed in Section 04's Action Plan.

The priority park elements were identified through a combination of system analysis, community engagement, and city leadership input. There is a significant amount of overlap between the priority park elements. Addressing issues and opportunities in one of the priority elements will likely have a positive impact on improving the others. The 4 priority park elements that need to be addressed to build the park system Bloomington needs include:

1. Natural Resources
2. Park Needs (Level of Service)
3. Trails and Mobility
4. Equity and Access

## PRIORITY 01 | NATURAL RESOURCES

The fabric of Bloomington's park system is built around key natural areas that remain after in the City. The Minnesota River Valley and Bluff, Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve, Marsh Lake Wetland Complex, and Nine Mile Creek and it's corridor are the signature natural areas that exist in modern Bloomington. These resources are under pressure from a number of factors that are degrading their quality, and require management to prevent further deterioration. These natural areas, and others throughout the City, provide a number of ecosystem services to residents and need to be protected and enhanced. Natural resources and natural areas are vital to Bloomington because they:

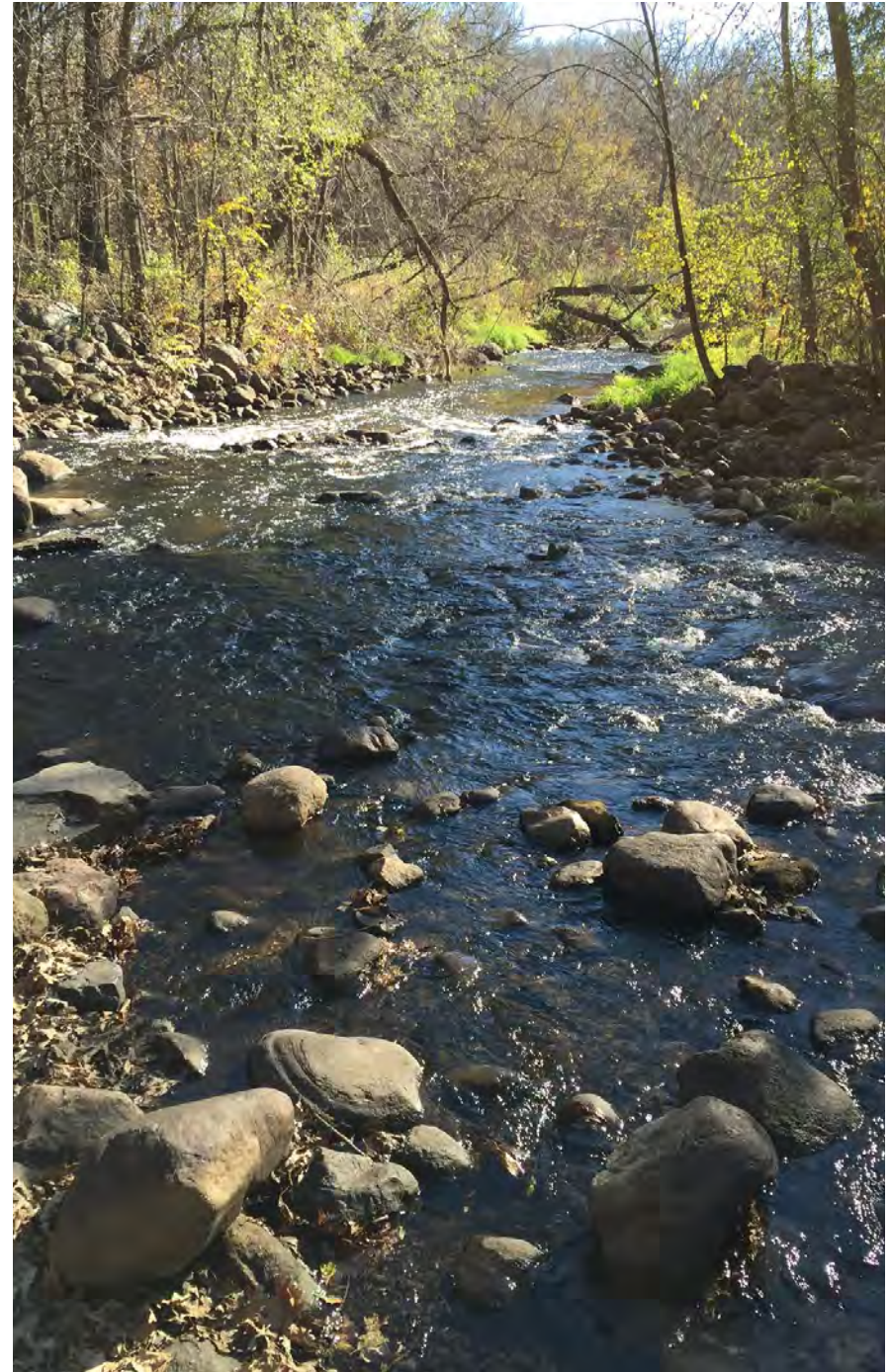
- Provide ecosystem services such as flood control, cleaning water and air, capturing carbon, providing wildlife habitat, reducing the urban heat island
- Preserve biodiversity
- Enhance overall park system resiliency
- Add positively to Bloomington's image and quality of life
- Indicate the health of the overall community
- Provide healthy opportunities for activity and mental restoration
- Reduce long-term maintenance needs and costs
- Make the City more resilient to the effects of climate change

### KEY NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

Section 02 identified a number of challenges and issues to natural resource preservation and restoration at an effective scale in the City. The key issues that need to be addressed to provide effective preservation and restoration of natural areas in Bloomington include:

- Prioritizing Resources
- Leadership and Collaboration
- Access and Preservation

City staff, the Sustainability Commission, and members of the public have provided considerable planning, restoration, and maintenance work around natural resources and natural areas. However, this work is not as organized and effective as it could be if all parties were working together toward shared



goals, and were effectively communicating and collaborating. This work is piecemeal at times and there are individuals and groups that are not aware of natural resource related work that has been completed by other parties. This lack of organization and communication, along with the underfunding of operations and maintenance work are evidence that natural resources have not been a top city priority in the past. Community engagement from the PSMP and Council Priorities have identified that natural resources is a top community priority.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

There are 3 primary recommendations that the Parks Department can implement that will functionally prioritize natural resources within the City. These recommendations will provide a structure and framework for all of the current work that is being done to be more effective and collaborative. The 2-key steps to make natural resources a priority in Bloomington include:

- 1. Assign a Manager position to work on natural resources Full Time.
- 2. Complete a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) that builds on past planning work and creates a clear roadmap.

### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER POSITION

A city the size of Bloomington should have a full time natural resource manager position. One way for us to achieve this prioritization in the short term would be to formally add these duties to a member of the PM staff team. One logical choice would be the Park Superintendent. If this were to happen, other duties would have to be removed from his job, namely the duties for the facilities division. The Park Superintendent spends approximately 50% of his time on duties for the facilities division.

This position would be responsible for organizing operations activities, communications, coordination, grant pursuit, and resource allocation. A major function of the position would be as a point of contact around natural resources, to create a more cohesive unit working together towards common goals and strategies. Additionally, they would provide leadership, coordination, and collaboration with city staff across departments on



natural resource issues. The activities and work items this position would coordinate are currently being completed by various staff, but would benefit from one person being able to see the big picture AND all of the individual tasks and projects being completed by others. Likely responsibilities would include:

- Provide a point of contact for multiple groups and agencies working with the City;
  - Inside the City: Sustainability Commission, property owners, etc.
  - Outside City Agencies: Watershed Districts, USFWS, MnDNR, Great River Greening, Three Rivers Parks District (handle MOU agreements)
  - Volunteer Groups: Isaak Walton League, etc.
- Review of development plans
- Wildlife management program coordination
- Public education and volunteer coordination
- Management and monitoring programs
- Grant applications and coordination
- Liaison between Public Works, Sustainability Commission, Parks Department, and PARC
- Setting an annual budget focused on maintenance and restoration priorities identified in the NRMP
- Tracking all natural resource related costs

Various staff are completing some of these activities now. This position will assist in helping everyone work together better.

Developing an accurate job description for this position would assist in future hiring. The job description would ensure a qualified person fills the position with appropriate experience and expertise. This job description will be unique as the current Asst. Park Maintenance Superintendent has a unique set of experience and background that will be difficult to replace in one candidate in the future. City forester duties should also be a part of this job description to ensure that expertise is replaced in the future when the current staff member retires.

A critical responsibility of the position will be to communicate and interact with Partnering Agencies and organizations and establish Bloomington’s role as well as any modifications or establishment of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) related to management of natural resources areas.

One of the first tasks of this position is to provide input and guidance on the NRMP that will be completed in 2021. The Natural Resource Manager position will be responsible for implementing the NRMP recommendations and should provide input based on their experience in the City and understanding of maintenance needs and challenges.

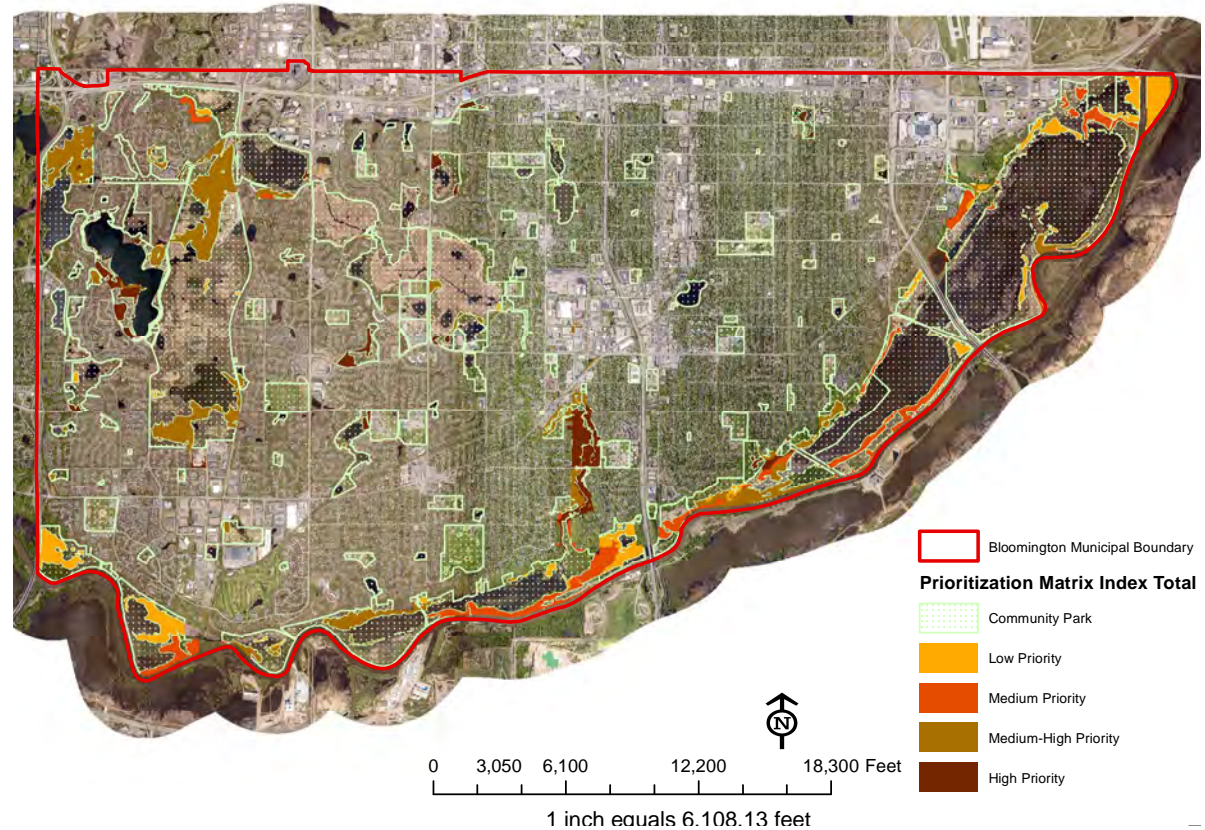


Figure 3-28: Public Open Space Restoration Prioritization. Source: City of Bloomington

## COMPLETE A NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A City of Bloomington's size, with the amount of natural resources the City possesses, should have a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) to guide work. The lack of an NRMP is further evidence that natural resources have not been a priority in the past. Completing an NRMP will be a critical step in re-prioritizing natural resources in the City.

Development of the NRMP will be accelerated by the extensive work that was previously completed by City staff and the Sustainability Commission. The overriding goal of the NRMP is to bring all of these studies together, as well as ongoing projects that might be occurring in other City Departments, and create a comprehensive vision for natural resources in Bloomington.

The restoration priority study completed by the Sustainability Commission and Public Works Staff is a GIS based analysis that utilized past studies to identify priorities for restoration in the City. The NRMP will use this study as a base and layer in additional factors into the prioritization. These factors include the human component, and more specifically balancing access and with natural resource preservation. The NRMP should further prioritize the efforts of restoration in the City to ensure those efforts can be adequately resourced in terms of staff and funding.

The ultimate goal of the NRMP is to identify priorities and costs. The City knows the current budget allocations for maintenance and restoration are insufficient and needs to establish an appropriate budget for planning. In addition, the NRMP may consider addressing the following topics that directly impact Bloomington's Parks:

- Access issues
- Partnership opportunities, roles, and responsibilities

## ACCESS ISSUES

The NRMP may consider identifying high priority protection areas and make recommendations on access for these high priority areas. The public prefers a balanced approach to resource preservation and access to natural areas. The following issues are anticipated city-wide as residents are seek more access to natural areas:

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN SCOPE:

DEVELOPING AN NRMP IS VITAL FOR LONG-TERM PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL AREAS IN BLOOMINGTON. THE NRMP SHOULD FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING SCOPE ITEMS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS:

- CREATE A MAINTENANCE PLAN FOR NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT WE ARE ALREADY DOING THROUGH PARK MAINTENANCE AND OUR PARTNERS TO ENSURE IT IS PROGRAMED THROUGH ANNUAL WORK PLANS AND RESOURCED WITH STAFF AND FUNDING
- IDENTIFY PRIORITY RESTORATION ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS BASED ON EXISTING DATA AND PLANS
- PROVIDE A FUNDING PLAN TO SUPPORT EXISTING AND NEW INITIATIVES THAT INCLUDES LIST OF APPLICABLE GRANT OPPORTUNITIES
- CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR NATURAL RESOURCE BASED VOLUNTEER AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMING
- IDENTIFY A PHASE TWO NRMP SCOPE THAT CONSIDERS A MORE HOLISTIC LOOK AT ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES - MORE FULLY INTEGRATING WATER RESOURCES, FORESTRY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE/ADAPTATION

- **Overcrowding** – if the demand for natural surface trails and access to natural areas is not met, residents will congregate at existing facilities. Overcrowded natural areas and trails can significantly diminish the nature-based experience and accelerate maintenance and operational challenges. Safety issues can occur at points of conflict between bikers and pedestrians. Overcrowding can create issues with parking, litter, restroom issues, and other supporting services that would extend into the neighborhoods surrounding access points.
- **Litter** – Trash and recycling issues increase with the popularity of a facility. Littering and carelessness can degrade the aesthetic and functional quality of a place.
- **Pets** – Pet waste can be a health and environmental issue. Pets can also negatively affect vegetation if allowed to wander off trail. Dogs can also impact wildlife with their presence.
- **Limited Access** – Service Area 4 has the least overall access to natural areas. This is an equity issue. The north-central portion of Service Area 4 relies on the smaller scale restoration areas at Smith Park and Bryant Park for nature access. These smaller parcels and projects should be noted in the NRMP with regard to how they serve the surrounding neighborhood. The NRMP should explore additional areas for natural resources restoration such as the Xcel Utility Corridor that can address this need. River Valley access points on the east and south side of the Service Area could be better served by enhanced infrastructure. Existing trailheads should be studied for improvements and enhancements that would increase their value and usability for resident and visitors, while increasing environmental education, outlining rules, and defining etiquette practices for trail users.
- **Education and Value**– Some residents may not understand or value natural resources. Providing education and access is a way to build support for restoration and preservation as well as encouraging people to engage and experience the benefits of connecting to nature. A city-wide education campaign could build awareness and education about Bloomington’s natural areas while encouraging residents to explore responsibly. Natural resource-based programming was identified in community engagement as a need. The City should explore opportunities to meet this needs internally or working with partners like Three Rivers Park District who have significant experience providing quality programming opportunities. The NRMP should provide recommendations on education themes.
- **Green Infrastructure** - The Water Resources Department staff identified opportunities to integrate Green Infrastructure into Park spaces. The NRMP should evaluate and confirm recommendations.

**55%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO BALANCE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WITH ACCESS FOR RECREATION

**28%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOCUS



The NRMP should ground truth priority recommendations from the Sustainability Commission study. Particular attention should be paid to areas where there are known recreation and preservation issues. The following were identified during the PSMP and should receive a recommended approach for balancing access and preservation of high quality natural areas:

- **Mountain Biking Trail Development** - Mountain biking is a growing sport with a strong history in Bloomington and additional trails could further define Bloomington as a mountain biking destination. Potential singletrack trail development was identified in *project bloom!* engagement at select parks. The same engagement prompted negative responses to trails in locations due to negative impact on natural resources. The NRMP should evaluate the potential for trails in these areas and the effect on natural resources. A strong consideration should be to identify rare/ high quality resources that should be preserved.
- **Additional access in the Minnesota River Valley** - Bloomington is improving access routes to trailheads for the MN River Valley. The NRMP should identify potential issues with increasing access to the River Valley and strategies to mitigate these issues.
- **Nine Mile Creek Corridor** - The creek takes on different characteristics through the City. The NRMP should make recommendations on restoration opportunities that the City could partner with the Watershed District on. Creating a fully connected green corridor with a continuous trail along the creek and through wetland properties would be an attractive destination and important habitat corridor. Additionally, as the creek flows through Moir/ Central Park there is a section of the creek that is highly accessible to the public. Evidence of heavy pedestrian traffic on the banks in areas suggest the public is using the creek for wading, swimming, fishing, and other uses. What are the considerations for balanced access to the creek along with bank stabilization and protection?

## PARTNERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Bloomington currently has formalized partnerships with USFWS and TRPD with Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) to assist in maintenance of large natural areas in the Minnesota River Valley and Hyland Park areas. Expanded partnerships should be considered to help in the operations and maintenance of these natural areas and open spaces.





MOU's should be revisited to affirm existing relationships. Partnership opportunities regarding Natural Resources should consider and include:

- MOU Agreement Updates:
  - Continued / expanded maintenance assistance.
  - Clarify budget and timing expectations to ensure these lands are actively managed and not allowed to degrade.
  - Combining resources to maximize cost/ benefit and target grants.
  - Explore the potential for the concept of MN River Valley as a Regional Park Reserve with multiple stakeholders on both sides of the river and an expanded partnership role of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to increase resources for natural resources management.
  - Coordinate within the City on high level of volunteer interest.
  - Coordination and alignment of agency priorities.
- Identify Park Department's role in working with agencies to prioritize human resources. Likely scenarios could be envisioned where staff has leadership roles in some projects and provides support to other agencies in others. The following scenarios outline potential relationship dynamics:
  - Parks Staff Lead: Smaller local projects relying on long-term maintenance by City park staff. Example – Park project incorporating native landscape gardens.
  - Partnerships: Projects that require inter-departmental collaboration and/ or working with other agencies and non-profits within the City. Example – Stormwater Green Infrastructure Projects that requires collaboration with Public Works and the Watershed District.
  - Support Role: Larger scale projects that likely are guided by MOU's and/ or occur in property not owned or actively managed by the City. Example – Work in the Minnesota River Valley or Regional Parks.

## CONCLUSION

The recommendations of the PSMP regarding natural resources aim to align the stated high priority of natural resources in the City with the allocation of resources that devotes to prioritize natural resources. The Parks Department can take two immediate steps to re-align priorities around this topic:

1. Assign a Manager position to work on natural resources full time.
2. Complete a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) that builds on past planning work, creates a clear roadmap for.

These two steps will create a strong framework for natural resource management today and into the future. The two recommendations above are utilized by cities that prioritize natural resources.



## PRIORITY 02 | PARK NEEDS (LEVEL OF SERVICE)

Bloomington parks no longer fully reflect the modern needs and wants of residents that use them. They need to be updated to reflect current park trends, national standards, and community engagement. Staff and the consultant identified key needs in the system and geographically distributed the facilities to promote equity throughout the city. The following maps represent preliminary locations for proposed facilities based on geographic distribution and park suitability. When park plans are developed for individual parks these recommendations should be used to evaluate the facility needs in that park with a more detailed look. Figure 3-27 shows all of the proposed facilities to be included except for a community center facility. Site selection and details for community center facilities is ongoing and should continue.

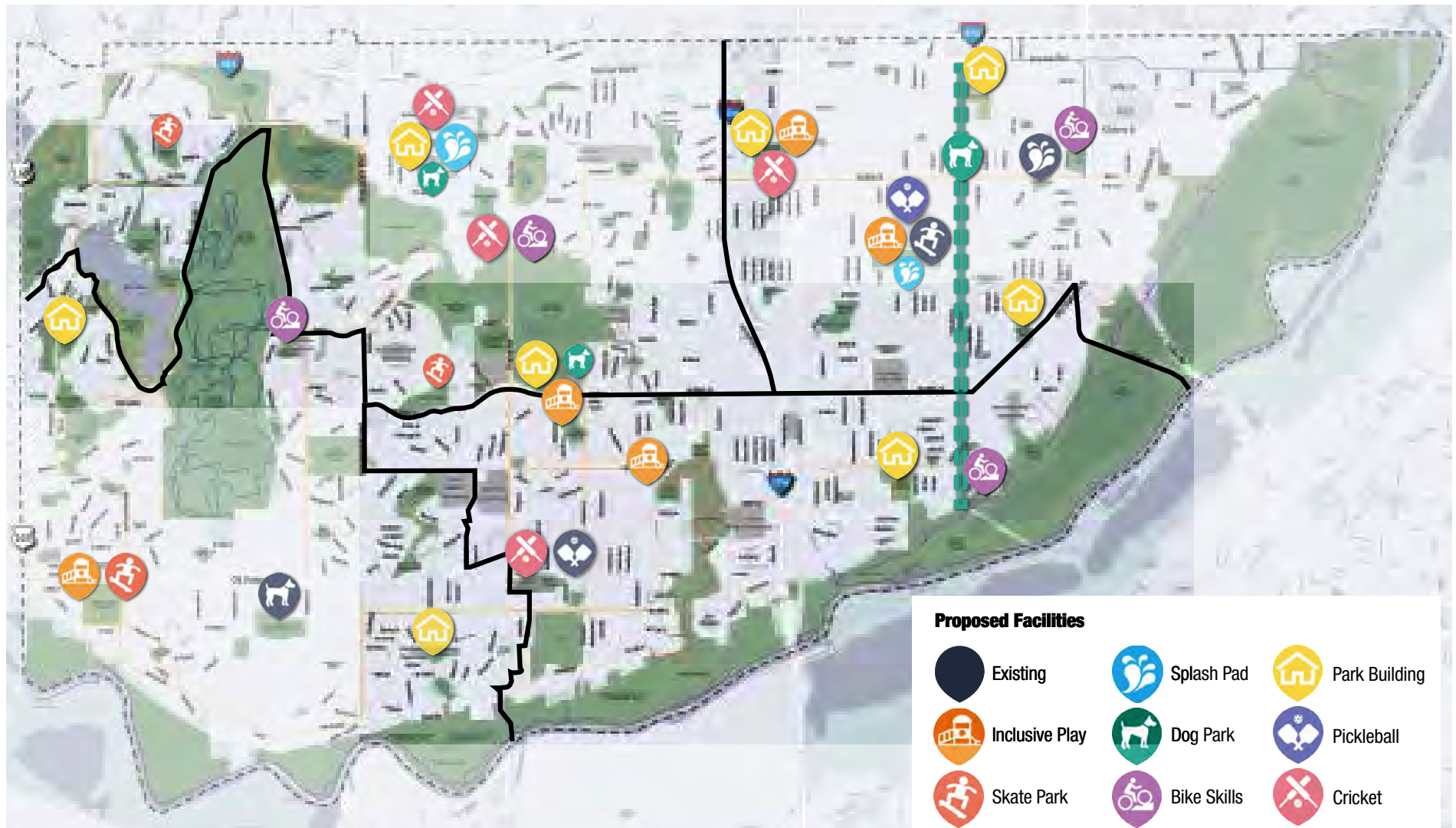


Figure 3-29: New Facility Proposed Locations

## COMMUNITY PARK BUILDINGS

Community Park buildings are proposed to support the idea of ‘Centers of Community’. These are places in each area of the City that promote and facilitate gathering for the surrounding neighborhood. They would provide indoor spaces for general meetings, rental events, warming house in the winter, and general use by the neighborhood. Community park buildings would be fully accessible and include restrooms, meeting spaces, and areas to host winter warming house activities. General sizing would be in the range of 2,700-5,000 sf depending on the anticipated service level.

Local examples include park buildings in Edina and Roseville. These facilities serve as warming houses in the winter and as neighborhood gathering centers throughout the year. They are rentable for community members @ \$75/ half day and \$110/ whole day (2020 rates).

The buildings are four season hubs and centers for the community. The proposed facilities are located at parks that will have skating in the winter, and were geographically distributed to provide equal access for all residents. Park suitability is an important factor in defining a location that can handle the increased traffic from visitors. Sunrise and Kelley Parks could be moved to the end of the priority list because they are the newest and most adaptable buildings to renovation. Existing park shelters that will not be replaced should be decommissioned due to ongoing maintenance challenges.

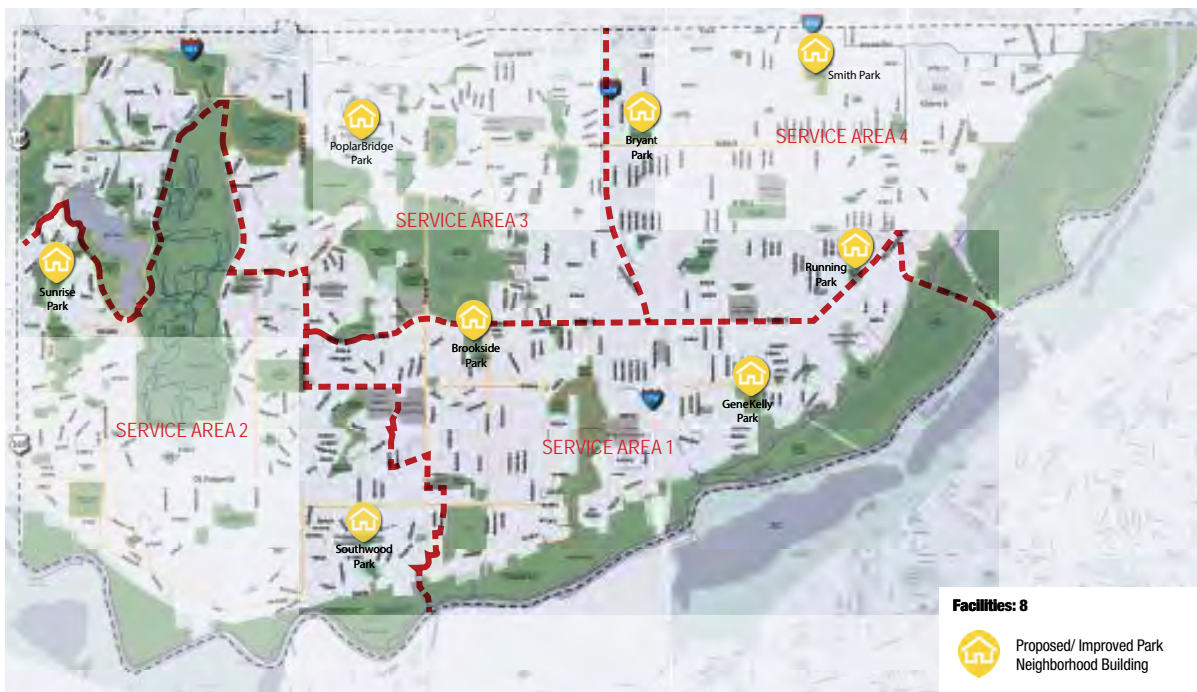


Figure 3-30: Proposed Service Area Boundaries and Park Building Locations



## INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

Inclusive playgrounds are designed to provide universal access and sensory-rich environments that enable children to develop physically, socially and emotionally. They are engaging place that provide the appropriate level of challenge for all kids and offers opportunities to succeed. Bloomington does not currently have any inclusive playgrounds. Most communities of Bloomington's size have 1-2 fully inclusive playgrounds. A west and east location would be ideal for Bloomington to promote equality and minimize transportation issues.

Inclusive playgrounds should be located at parks that have existing services such as restrooms, close proximity parking, and are located on arterial streets that are easy to navigate. Playground users are often accompanied by a caretaker who may not be familiar with the area, so easy access is important.

These playgrounds are open and attractive to all residents and are often the most popular in the City, so there should be ample parking and space for gathering. Surfacing is important for inclusive playgrounds and often a big factor in the cost. Poured in place rubber surfacing provides excellent shock absorption and is easy to navigate. However, this surfacing is expensive and can absorb a lot of heat. Shade structures should be included in the design to provide comfort for playground users and parents or caretakers.

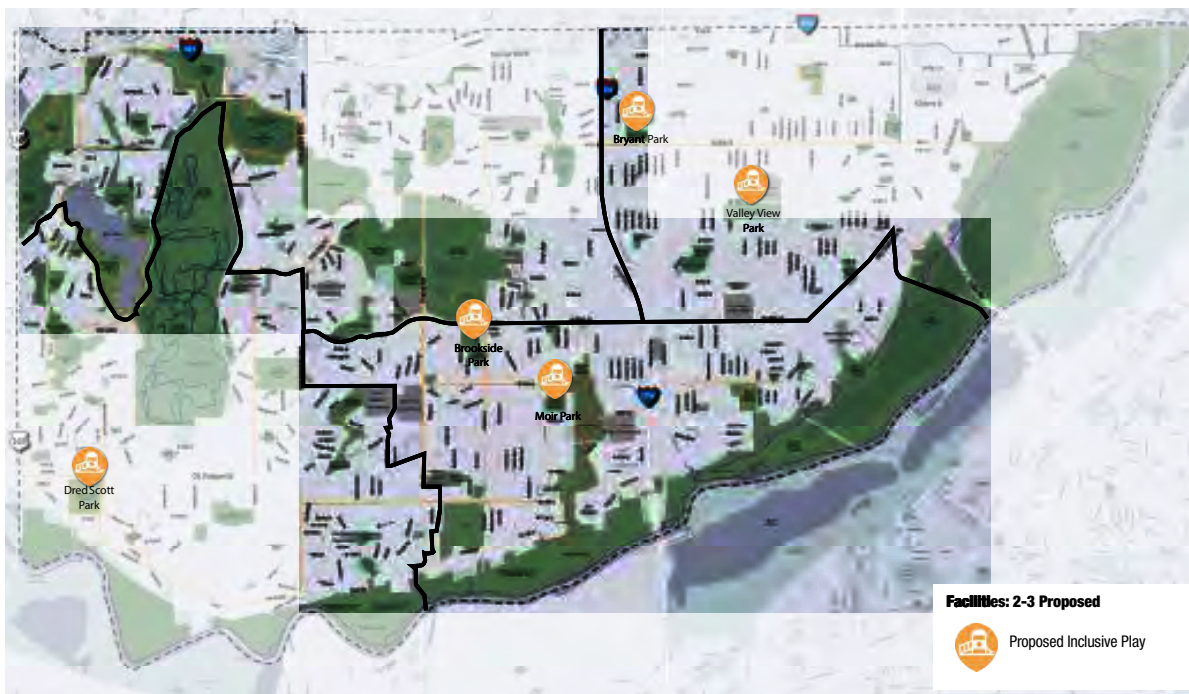


Figure 3-31: Proposed Inclusive Play Locations

## SKATE PARKS

Skate parks are an important part of a modern park system. Skateboarding, scooter use, and bmx bicycles can use similar facilities for recreational purposes. Skate parks were once considered ‘alternative’ to traditional athletics but have become a common park facility. Spohn Ranch (a skate park design/ builder) published a report regarding the benefits of skateparks <https://www.spohnranch.com/the-top-6-benefits-of-public-skateparks-2014-03-02>. They found the top 6 benefits to include:

1. Skateparks reduce illicit behavior.
2. Skateparks provide a safe environment for skateboarding.
3. Skateparks reduce damage to private property.
4. Skateboarding has significant health benefits.
5. Skateboarding has significant mental health benefits.
6. Skateparks have a positive economic impact.

Bloomington currently has 1 skatepark at Valley View on the City’s east side. Bloomington should introduce more skateparks throughout the City with a hierarchy of scale. Smaller neighborhood skate areas are cost effective and can be inserted into existing tennis courts or other paved surfaces to provide a local place for beginners and smaller kids to learn skating. Larger facilities should be located on the both the east and west side of the city to create more of a destination for better skaters and older kids to skate and socialize. Valley View should be expanded and improved with updated equipment. A new location at Dred Scott should be strongly considered to provide another community level skate facility. Neighborhood and community skateparks should be designed to be used by multiple modes, such as skateboards, scooters, and bikes.

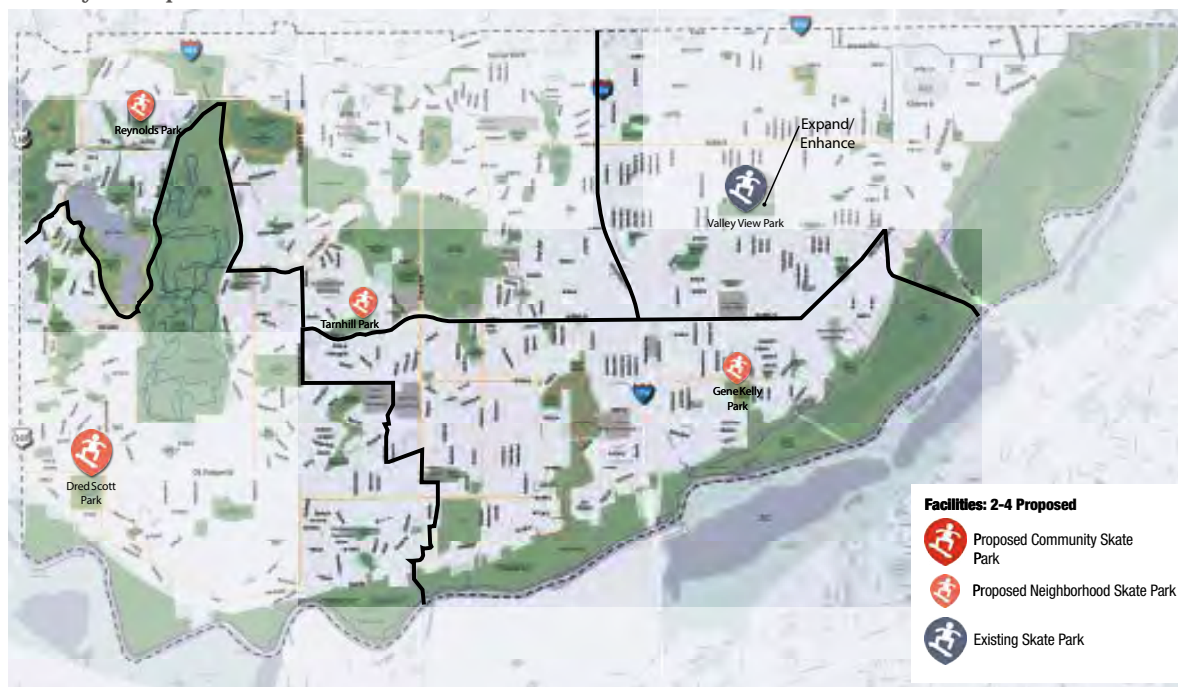
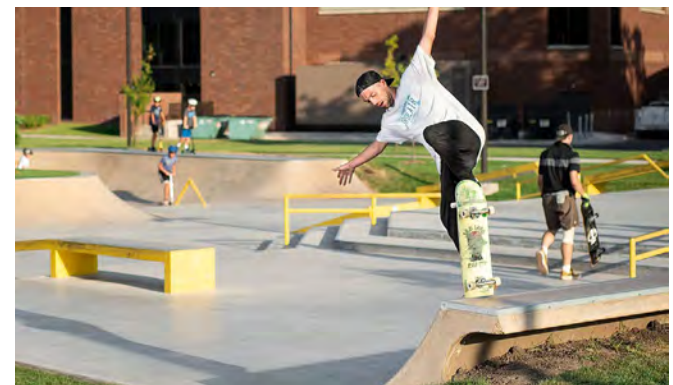


Figure 3-32: Existing And Proposed Skate Park Locations



## SPLASH PADS

Splashpads have become a popular recreation amenity in parks. They are not meant to replace pools, but they do provide a fun aquatic experience at a reasonable cost. Splashpads typically do not have standing water so a lifeguard is not needed and generally require less supervision than a pool. They are typically more attractive to younger children and can be very interactive. Ongoing maintenance and cost of water can be an issue for systems that use city water but do not recirculate. Re-circulating systems are typically more expensive up front and do require more maintenance to ensure filters are changed out and safe water is provided. Splash pads located in parks typically do not have a use fee. Other components that are important with splash pads are access to restrooms and shaded seating areas for parents and caretakers.

Splash pads did not emerge as a high priority need in Bloomington based on community engagement. It is recommended that they are a lower priority item in the City, but still an important part of aquatics recreation.

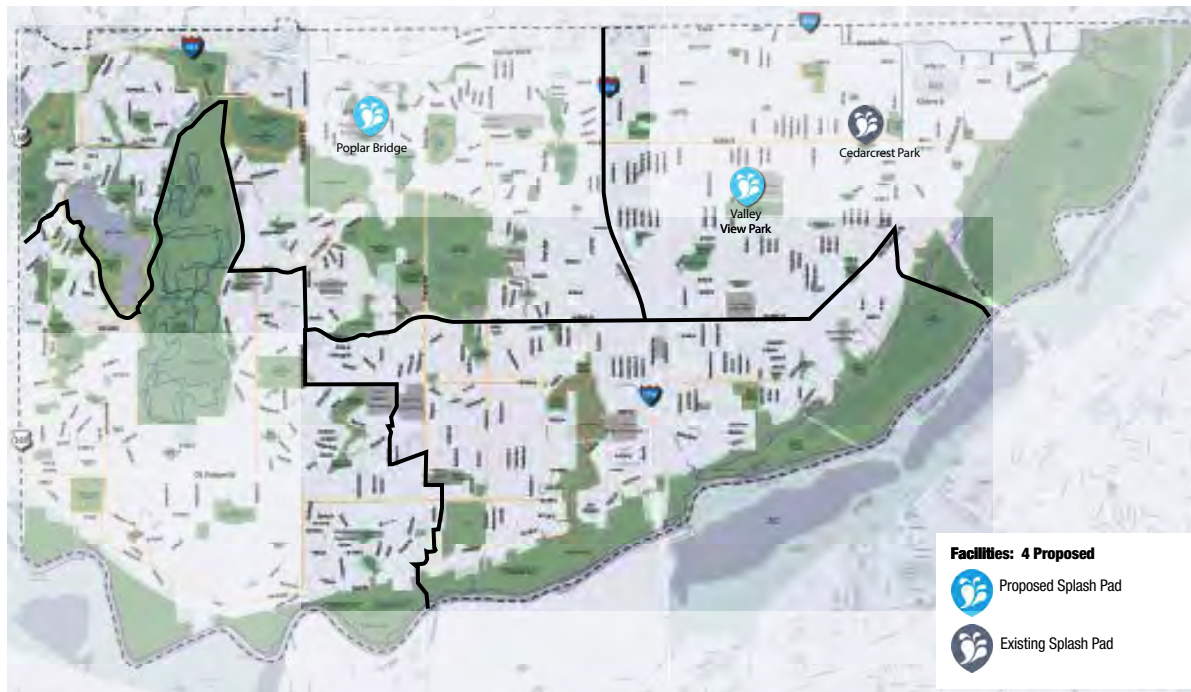


Figure 3-33: Existing and Proposed Splash Pad Locations



Cedarcrest Park Splashpad

## DOG PARKS

Pet ownership has steadily grown over time, with some estimates that ownership is up 12% over the last 15 years. There is evidence that dog adoption and purchases increased significantly during COVID stay at home orders. Dogs are often considered and treated as family members. Dog parks and exercise facilities are not only beneficial for the animals themselves, but they provide physical and mental health benefits for their owners. These features are social hubs for dog owners and provide a destination for walks. Off-leash areas are great neighborhood gathering places. Experience shows that off-leash areas build strong neighborhoods and communities. Crime has decreased in many cities near the off-leash areas and people who normally would not talk to each other will start conversations when a dog is there to break the ice.

Bloomington has one off-leash dog park in Service Area 3. This is a large facility that is well used and well loved by people and dogs. Improvements to this facility could include adding more shade with trees and shade structures, and exercise skills features for dogs that are popular amenities. Bloomington should add another larger off-leash facility on the east side and should continue to explore options for a suitable location. The City should consider and discuss including a facility within the Xcel Energy utility corridor. Additionally, we recommend using off-season hockey rinks that keep the boards up year round to provide smaller neighborhood scale dog parks spread throughout the City.

These dog park locations are opportunities to provide education about the expectations and rules of dog ownership in Bloomington. Facilities such as dog waste stations should be provided at all dog park facilities and at popular dog walking areas throughout the City. Maintenance expenses for these facilities are significantly less than other athletic facilities.

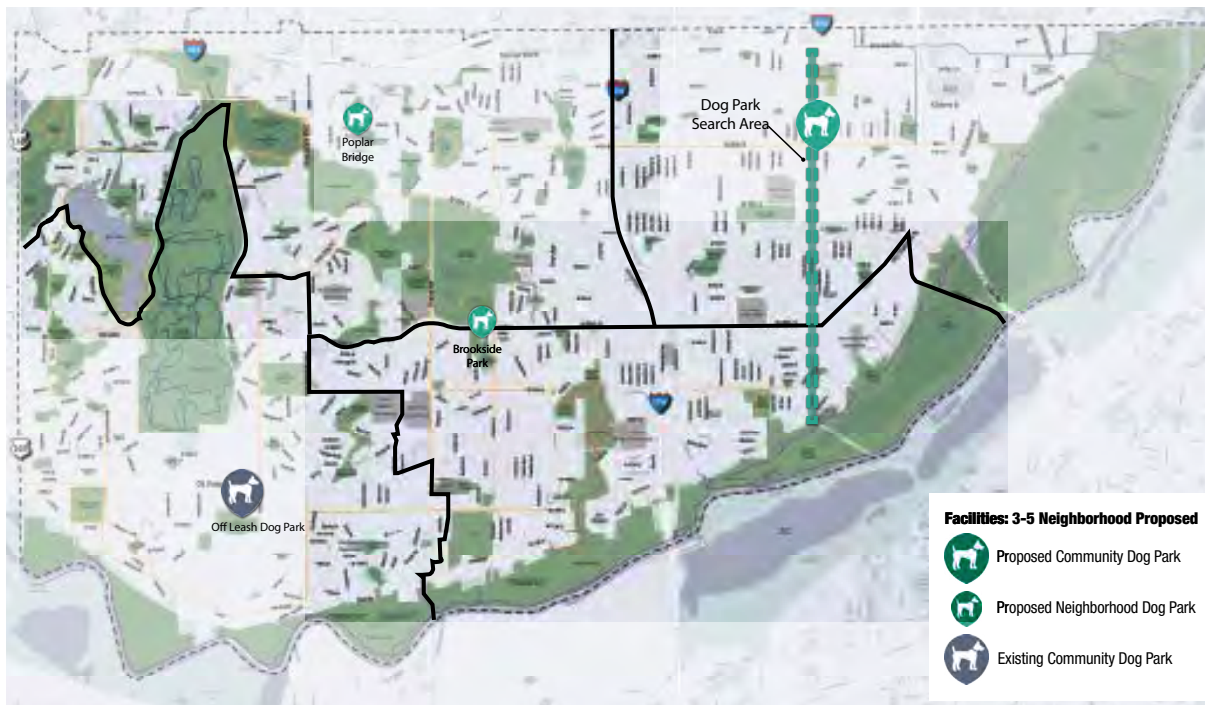
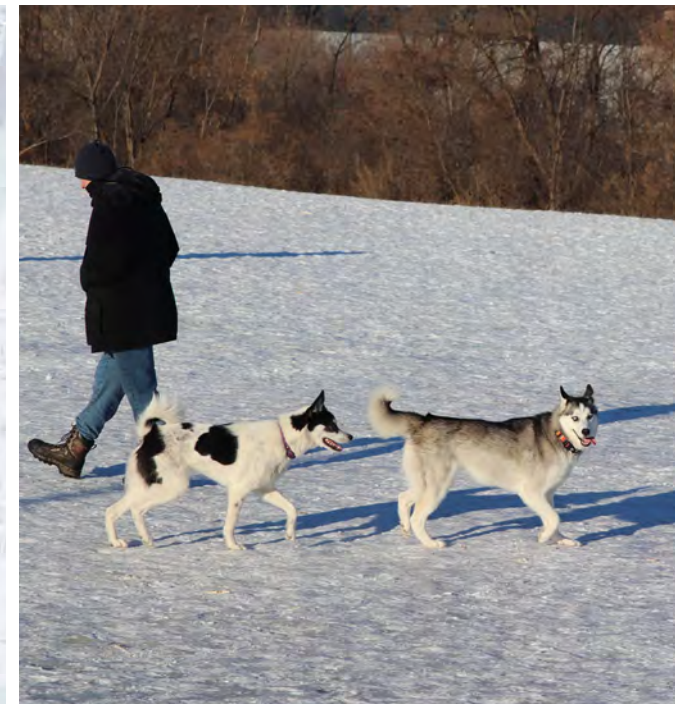


Figure 3-34: Existing and Proposed Dog Park Locations



*Dog Parks are a year-round amenity*

## BIKE PLAYGROUND/ SKILLS AREAS

Bike playgrounds and skills areas are built features with an emphasis on balance maneuvers, bike skills development, and progression in riding capabilities. These facilities appeal to a wide market including youth and beginners, but certain areas can be constructed for more advanced riders to allow for a progression of skills. More advanced skills areas can include jumps and pump tracks.

They are typically dirt surfaced but can include hardened surfaces such as asphalt. Skills areas are typically smaller scale, not centralized, and found throughout a trail system or at trailheads and ride centers. They can also be fit into the fabric of an existing park and function as stand alone facilities that could accommodate bikes, scooters, skateboards, or other wheeled vehicles.

See Priority 03 Trails and Mobility for an expanded discussion of bike playgrounds/ skills areas and how they can improve the alternative transportation system.



Figure 3-35: Proposed Bike Playgrounds/ Skills Area Locations





## PICKLEBALL

Pickleball is a fast growing sport throughout the United States. It is a racket sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis. Two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball over a net. The rules are simple and it is an easy game for beginners to pick up. Advanced players play a fast-paced, competitive game.

Pickleball is very social sport. Numerous leagues and tournaments have developed to build on this socialization. Private businesses have integrated pickleball into restaurant/ bar developments to take advantage of this aspect as well. While significant growth has taken place in older segments of the population, pickleball is spreading among all age ranges. A significant part of the sports appeal is that it doesn't rely on highly technical skills, it can be learned with a little bit of practice and without expensive lessons.

Another appealing aspect for Parks Departments is that the courts are relatively small - 44' x 20' typical. This allows the courts to be integrated into older tennis courts that are under used. Multiple pickleball courts can be re-striped into the same footprint as one tennis court.

Westwood Park contains the City's only pickleball courts and they are very popular. Valley View Park is a recommended location for a larger pickleball facility because of it's infrastructure to host leagues and/ or tournaments.

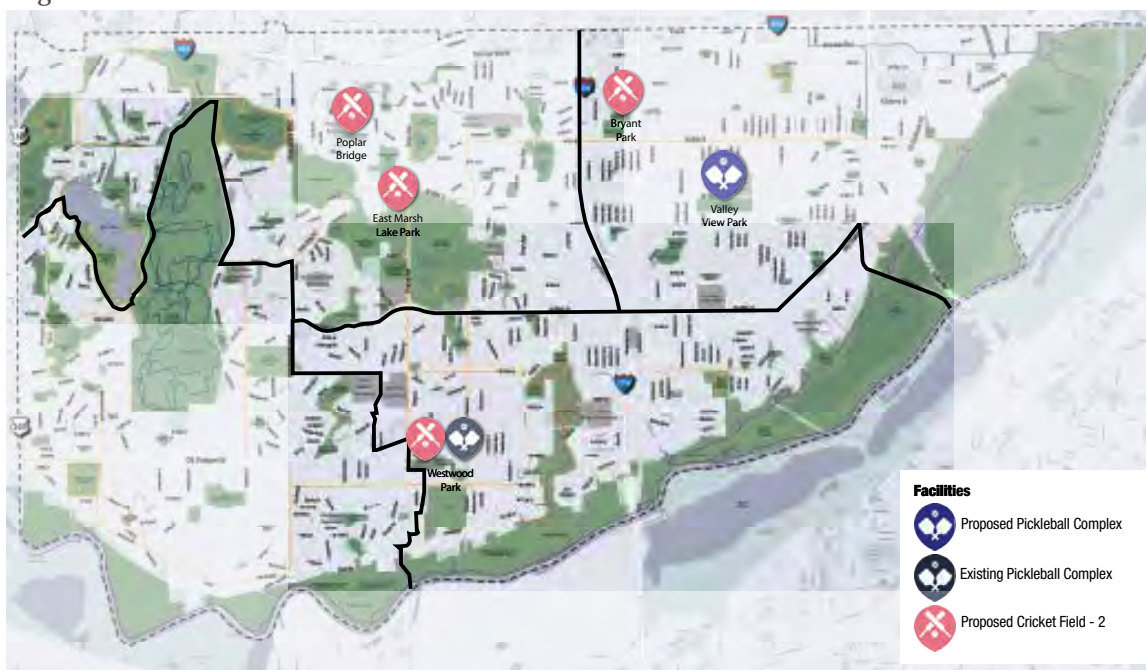


Figure 3-36: Proposed Pickleball and Cricket Field Locations

## CRICKET FIELDS

Cricket is a sport that is very popular around the world but is just now gaining in popularity in the United States. Cricket is being played in Bloomington informally. Anecdotally games are being played on open multi-use and diamond fields at Westwood and other parks in times that fields are not rented out. Integrating fields into Bloomington's busy field scheduling will be challenging but is a need into such a large and diverse community.

A few challenges with cricket integration is the size of the field - a 400' diameter circle that is almost the size of 2.5 football fields. There is also a 66' x 6' 'pitch' that sees a lot of intense use and usually kills the turf and quickly turns to a dirt patch. Established cricket fields will typically convert the pitch to concrete, artificial turf, or something similar. This creates challenges with integrating into soccer, football, or other fields. The PSMP is proposing to establish 2 cricket fields that could be programmed.



## LET'S TALK BLOOMINGTON

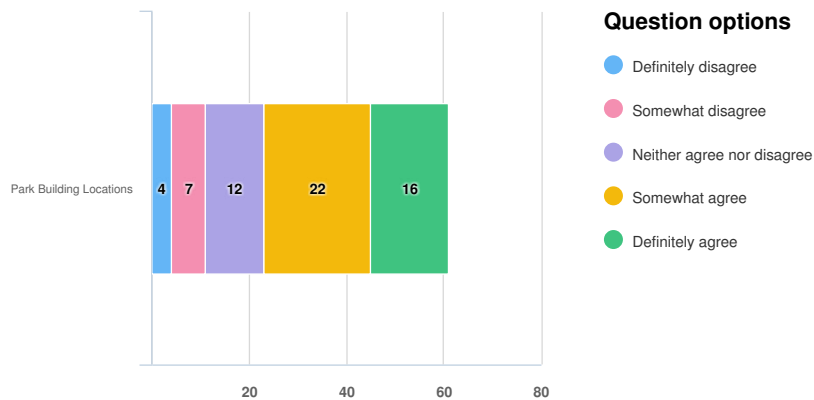
The City of Bloomington tested the proposed locations of facilities and their locations with the general public on their engagement platform - *Let's Talk Bloomington*. The following sample results highlight the community's response to the proposed new amenities in the park system. The City will need to continue this discussion and test these facilities when individual park plans are being designed. This is a critical part of the ongoing community engagement process.

Select question results are included below. See the Appendix for the full result summary.

### Potential Park Buildings and Service Areas

Visitors <b>197</b>	Contributors <b>64</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>64</b>
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To what extent do you agree with the proposed park building locations.



Optional question (61 response(s), 3 skipped)  
Question type: Likert Question

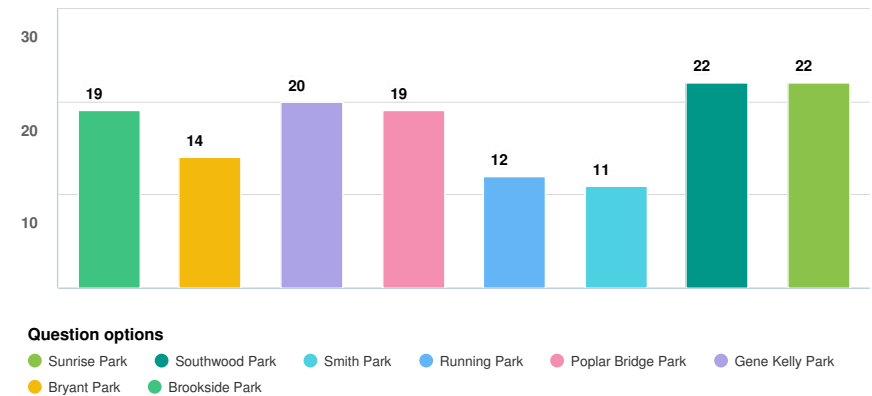
## CONCLUSION

Bloomington needs to update their park system to meet today's resident needs. The facilities discussed above are missing or under-served in Bloomington as identified by the Level of Service Study, community engagement, and city leadership input. Staff and the consultant team identified potential locations for these facilities based on geographic distribution, park suitability, and equity attributes. These locations were tested with the public, and will continue to be tested as improvements and park plans are completed.

This discussion has not included two other major needs including a community/ recreation center and an indoor aquatics facility. These are well known and studied needs in the City. The statistically valid survey and Level of Service Study both identified these needs as high priorities for Bloomington. These significant facility investments will continue to be a part of the implementation discussion.

Implementation of these elements will be a significant effort for the City and require additional capital investment for park facilities. Section 04 discusses potential financing approaches to update the park system.

Check your top three locations for new or remodeled park buildings.



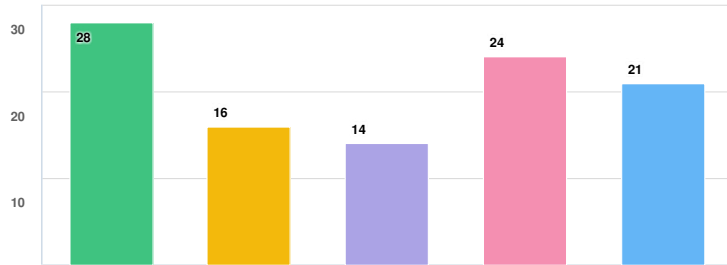
Optional question (54 response(s), 10 skipped)  
Question type: Checkbox Question

Figure 3-37: Select Survey Question Responses

### Skate Park Locations

Visitors <b>68</b>	Contributors <b>47</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>47</b>
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Please select your top 3 locations for proposed skate parks.

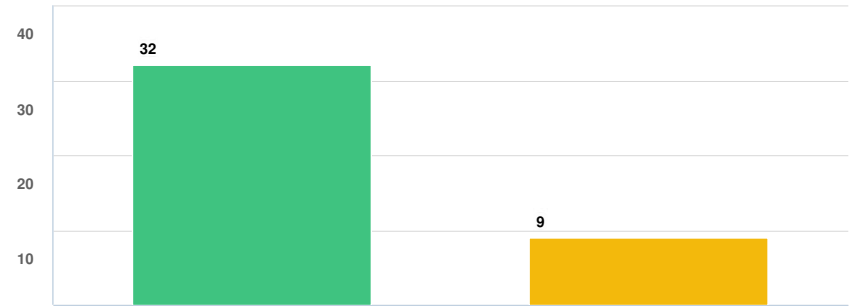


**Question options**

- Valley View Park (expanded)
- Tarnhill Park
- Reynolds Park
- Gene Kelly Park
- Dred Scott Park

Optional question (42 response(s), 5 skipped)  
Question type: Checkbox Question

### Should skate parks be inclusive of skateboards, scooters and bikes?



**Question options**

- NO
- YES

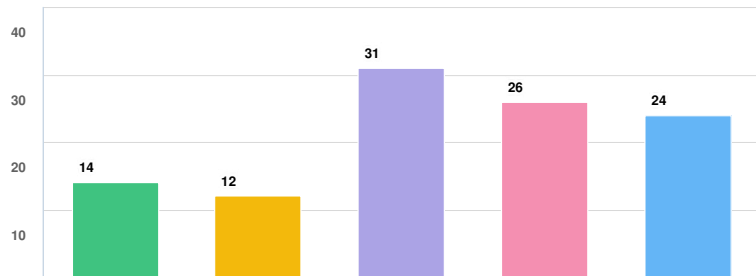
Optional question (41 response(s), 6 skipped)  
Question type: Checkbox Question



### Inclusive Play Locations

Visitors <b>66</b>	Contributors <b>43</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>43</b>
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Please select your top 3 locations for proposed fully inclusive playgrounds for people with all abilities.



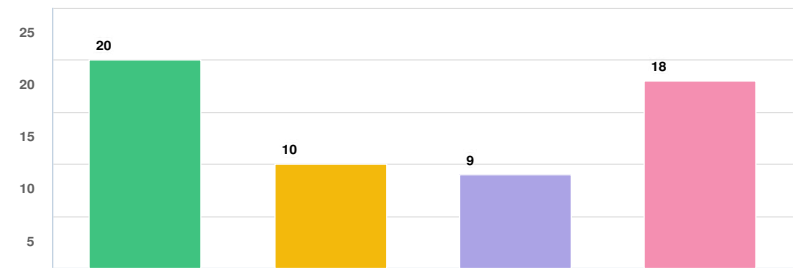
**Question options**

- Valley View Park
- Moir Park
- Dred Scott
- Bryant Park
- Brookside Park

### New Athletic Facilities Locations

Visitors <b>67</b>	Contributors <b>40</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>40</b>
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Please select 2 preferred locations for proposed cricket fields.



**Question options**

- Westwood Park
- Poplar Bridge Park
- East Marsh Lake Park
- Bryant Park

Optional question (31 response(s), 9 skipped)

# PRIORITY 03 | TRAILS AND MOBILITY

While Bloomington has quality local trails and regional facilities that establish foundation for a robust system, there are key elements and critical infrastructure that could be added to transform the system from average to great. This is important beyond the recreational needs and desires of the community. A complete, safe, attractive trail system will benefit existing businesses, school safety, provide transportation equity, attract development, and create a healthier and more vibrant community. These issues have been studied in past plans and are discussed in Trails and Mobility in Section 02. The PSMP supports the recommendations found in the Alternative Transportation Plan (ATP) and the Comprehensive Plan. The PSMP advocates for off-road trails wherever possible. These facilities are much more safe and attractive to general riders than on-street bikeways, especially for kids and riders that aren't that experienced.

As shown (right), four types of cyclists have been categorized from extensive research. The PSMP advocates for providing better connections for over 50% of riders who are currently interested in bicycling in the City, but may be concerned with some of the options that currently exist. These users typically include those with children, the elderly, and casual riders. The most successful trails attract the greatest number of these interested, but concerned riders who overwhelmingly prefer off road trails.

An overriding issue to the trail system in Bloomington is the presence of major highways and arterial roads that divide the City and create significant barriers. These roads often divide neighborhoods and physically separate residents from key parks and trails amenities that are within visual sight but physically challenging to access. The City should continue to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian facilities over high traffic roads including Interstates 35W and 494, Highways 169 and 77, and all internal arterial streets. The Crossing at W. 106th St. is an excellent example of improving crossings in the City.

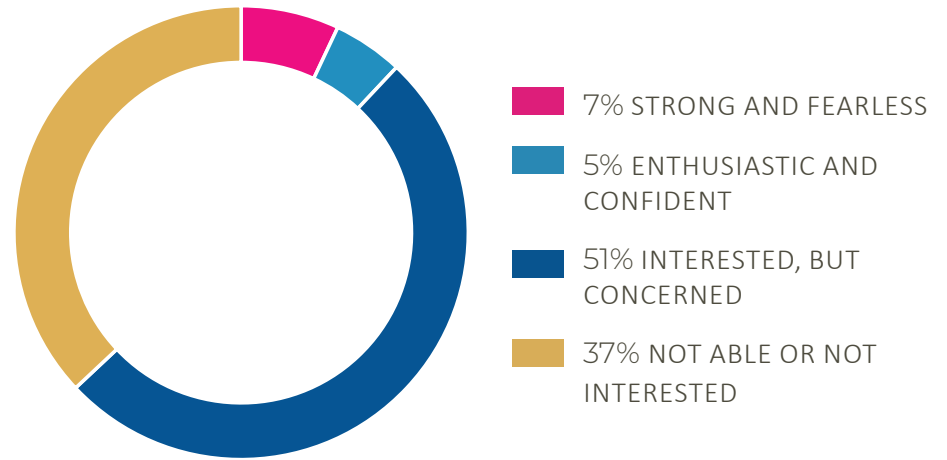


Figure 3-38: Jennifer Dill and Nathan McNeil, "Revisiting the Four Types of Cyclists: Findings from a National Survey," *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, 2587: 90-99, 2016.



Separated by landscape beds



Proposed crossing design at W. 106th



Barrier separation



Green lanes (and landscape separation)

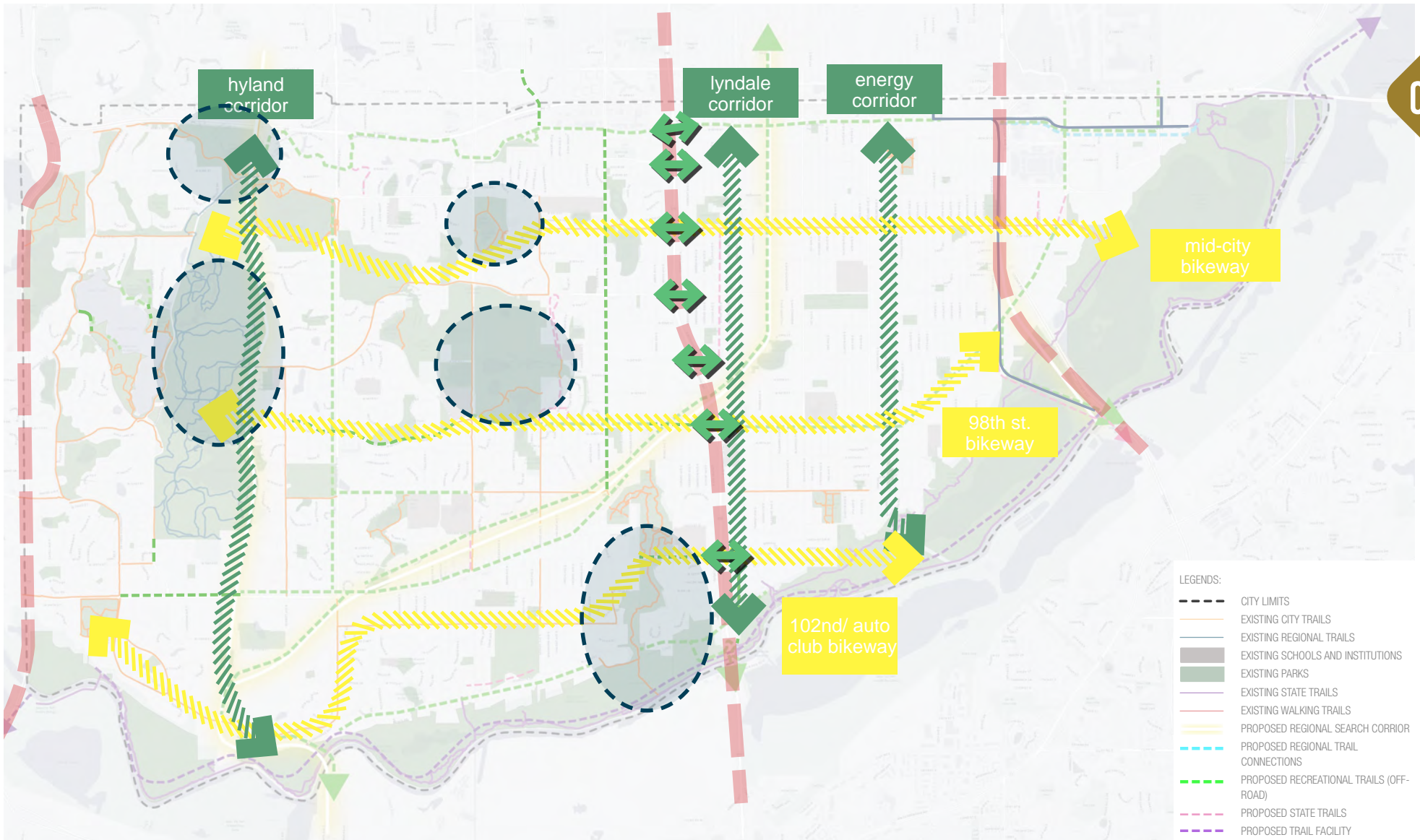
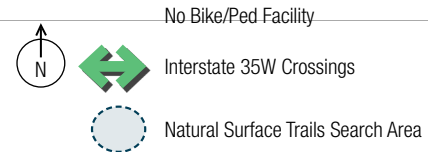


Figure 3-39: Trail Issues and Opportunities



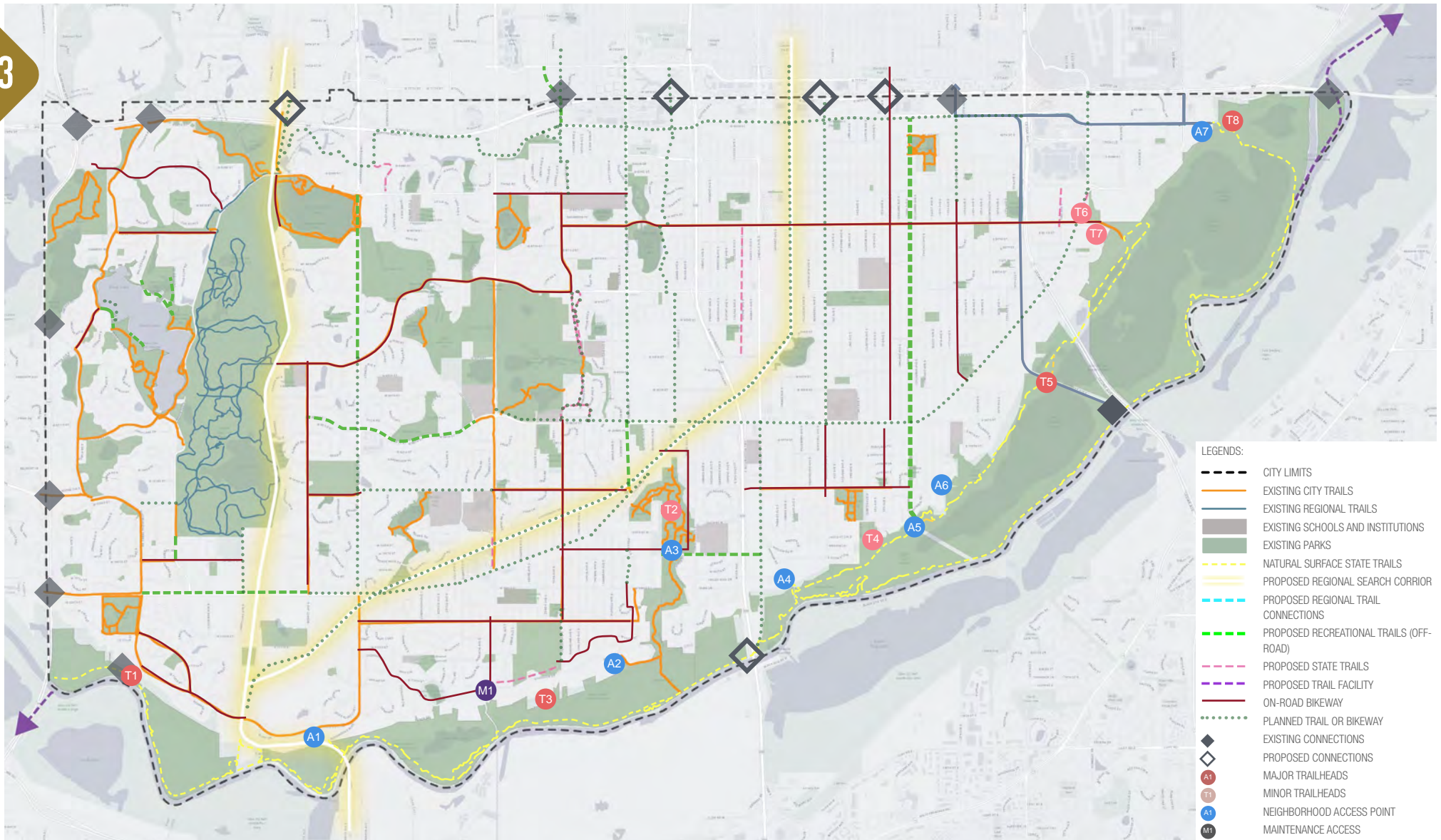


Figure 3-40: Trails and Mobility Overview

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The PSMP supports the recommendations of the ATP and Comprehensive Plan and the City should continue to implement as budget and project alignment opportunities unfold. This section will focus on supplemental recommendations that are more specific to park connections and trails within parks. Trails and Mobility recommendations include:

- Complete a signage and wayfinding plan
- Develop a natural surface trail plan
- Provide trail loops inside parks
- Invest in bike playgrounds and skills areas
- Explore additional trail opportunities
  - Xcel Energy Corridor
  - Central Park bike trail feasibility

## SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING PLAN

Wayfinding signage throughout the City is important. Wayfinding is important for both residents and visitors. The easier it is for visitors to identify where a city's attractions are, the more likely they are to spend time and money in the community. Bloomington attracts a lot of visitors and efficient wayfinding can also help ease traffic congestion and provide clear routes for pedestrians and motorists.

A hierarchy of signage and wayfinding should be implemented that distinguishes between the parks and amenities that function regionally, such as Hyland trails and MN River Valley trails, versus the more neighborhood focused parks. A consistent visual identity that reinforces Bloomington's brand would help wayfinding, but also reinforce the community's historic charm, which was identified by the public as important to preserve. Bloomington's existing signage and wayfinding is a mixture of different styles and time periods.

Signage and wayfinding packages can provide many benefits to a community other than simple navigation. They can build community pride, encourage



new users, and economic investment by directing users to businesses and shops. General guidelines for creating an effective signage and wayfinding package include the following elements:

- Be Simple - signage need to convey a lot of information quickly and without much interpretation.
- Be Inclusive - translations and iconography should be easily understood by a variety of audiences.
- Be Predictable - consistent colors, branding, and

Figure 3-39 displays how these elements and signage packages can be combined to create an effective signage package for trails and parks that can tie into the City's other facilities and branding.

Trailhead signage for the Minnesota River Valley should be prioritized and include key information regarding usage, right-of-way expectations, general etiquette, and river conditions for flooding. These elements exist at some locations but should be standardized across all trailheads.

## NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL FEASIBILITY PLAN

Bloomington has a notable natural surface trail system in the Minnesota River Valley and Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve. These trails are informal, generally not ADA accessible, and allow a more intimate experience with nature. Surfacing is typically native ground, wood chips, loose gravel, or a combination of natural surfaces. Natural surface trails are generally utilized by pedestrians but can accommodate specialized bike uses such as mountain bikes. Hikers, mountain bikers, bird watchers, trail runners, and dog-walkers routinely enjoy the physical and mental health benefits provided by natural surface trails. Access to natural surface trails and open space is increasingly a major quality of life indicator nationally, and Bloomington residents verified support for this in community engagement efforts. Just as Alternative Transportation Plans and shared bikeways have changed transportation planning and design, recent trends in recreation-focused natural surface trails require a new lens to view the intentional planning and design of natural surface trails.



Figure 3-41: Typical Signage and Wayfinding Package





Natural trails for hiking was identified as one of the highest priority items from the statistically valid survey and community engagement. Mountain biking received comments on *project bloom!* and is one of the faster growing sports in Minnesota, especially at the high school level.

Natural surface trails can be designed to accommodate a mix of users or a narrow focus depending on the desired experience. Exercise, play and challenge, and experiencing nature and solitude are some of the most common reasons people enjoy natural surface trails. These trails typically serve a variety of objectives for an assortment of user groups when located in urban areas. It is important to understand the specific types of trail experiences users desire so trails can be designed to accommodate these goals. Additionally, it is sometimes impossible to provide a high-quality trail experience for all users on a single, shared use (open to all non-motorized users) trail. High user volumes, steep terrain, or limited sight lines can degrade the trail experience, create conflicts, and amplify safety issues between trail users. Trails designed and managed for a single-use can address these issues and provide a high-quality experience for the intended user group. In a fully developed urban area like Bloomington, it can be difficult to find natural areas large enough to devote single-use trails to each user group's satisfaction.

Multi-use natural surface trails should be designed to balance resident needs for natural surface trails. The two primary users of these trails in Bloomington are hikers and mountain bikers. Multi-use trails in the river bottoms accommodate both without significant conflicts. There are some issues with users not fully understanding rules, and general etiquette. Consistent signage with etiquette instructions is an effective way to address this issue at all trailheads.

There are situations where hiking and biking on a shared trail do not make sense and can be dangerous for both users. Multi-use trail situations are not compatible with the following conditions:

- **Low visibility areas** - heavily wooded, sharp turns, overgrown buckthorn thickets, etc.
- **High speed zones** - notably downhill segments where mountain bikes carry excess speed with long stopping distance zones.
- **Designated nature trails** - where use is specifically set for low impact activities such as bird watching, plant observance and identification, forest bathing, etc..
- **Steep slopes** - that increase speeds of bikes beyond safe limits.



## BIKE OPTIMIZED SINGLE-TRACK TRAILS

*Project bloom!* collected suggestions for other potential new bike optimized single-track trails in the City. A natural surface trails plan could incorporate any natural resources recommendations and evaluate the feasibility of including bike optimized single-use trails that were identified in *project bloom!* Sustainable trail building techniques should be used to minimize impacts and erosion from the trail. Parks that received comments identifying potential for mountain bike optimized natural surface trails include:

- **Moir/ Central Park** - several comments about developing a separate single-track trail from the existing pedestrian trail. Mountain biking and trail running were the suggested uses. The park acreage would likely support trails. However, the topography, natural resource value, and potential conflicts with other trail users would need to be examined. A trail route that is separated from the existing trail should be explored for a bike optimized single-track trail.
- **Tierney Woods** - this park is part of the Regional Park Reserve and is designated as a sanctuary. Trail Development is not allowed without a master plan change.
- **North Corridor Park** - this park is part of the regional park reserve. Mountain biking was evaluated in the last Master Plan update and may be eligible. This park is connected to other trails, has interesting topography, and elements that would be beneficial for mountain biking.
- **South Glen/ Heritage Hills Pond** - this park is likely too small for true single-track trails. A bike playground or skills area would be more suitable.
- **Hyland Greens Golf Course** - biking and golf are not compatible uses. Winter fat tire biking could be a possibility.
- **Lake Girard Park** - an existing natural wood chip trail surrounds a lake/ open water wetland. Explore the feasibility of shared-use trail.
- **USFWS Wildlife Refuge** - this land is not owned by Bloomington. New trail development would need to occur with USFWS concurrence and an MOU developed for development and maintenance. This areas would connect well to the existing natural surface trails.
- **Hyland Hills Ski Area (HSA)** - HSA has been discussed as a mountain biking opportunity in the past. Buck Hill in Burnsville is a good precedent for a ski area functioning as a summer mountain biking

optimized facility. Developing Hyland Hills so close to the River Bottoms Trails would create two destination worthy facilities in Bloomington with the potential for long-term connection. Hyland Hills is owned and operated by TRPD, who controls any new trail development. The City should support and work with TRPD to include HSA in a Natural Surface Trail Feasibility Plan to evaluate the opportunity for mountain biking.

## TRAIL LOOPS INSIDE PARKS

Providing trail loops within parks is a simple but effective way to support healthy lifestyles and activities. Section 04 provides an example of a Bloomington neighborhood park's evolution and how a trail loop could be integrated. Shorter trail loops create walking opportunities for surrounding residents, office employees, and park visitors. They are simple loops for walking the dog after work, pushing a stroller, and providing a safe space for kids to learn to ride a bike or scooter. These features provide a consistent, reliable route for local residents to use and see their neighbors (and neighbor dogs). Ideally these trail loops are connected to the City's larger sidewalk and trail network and are fully accessible.

Sight lines are important at neighborhood parks for safety. Loops can utilize city sidewalks to complete a full circuit but are generally more interesting and well used if they are located inside the park. Loop trails should be plowed in the winter to provide continued opportunities for walking and exercise.



## BIKE PLAYGROUNDS AND SKILLS AREAS

As described in Priority 02 Park Needs, bike playgrounds can help develop better bike riders. Providing opportunities for children and adults to have fun and practice bike handling builds confidence, better balance, and understanding of spatial relationships related to speed and stopping. These facilities can be used for programming opportunities to teach about rules of the road and general riding techniques. Having a range of different types of facilities with different skill levels is important for continued development.

Different surfaces and designs can also accommodate other wheeled vehicles and provide some of the same skill building opportunities. Ideally these facilities are located adjacent to existing or proposed trails so they are integrated into the trail system. However, they can be stand alone facilities in isolated parks and still provide tremendous recreation and skill building value.



## ADDITIONAL TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

The Alternative Transportation Plan identifies additional on road and off-road trail needs. Bloomington will continue to integrate cycling infrastructure into the City as roads and Right of Ways are redeveloped and/ or reconstructed. However, there were a few trail opportunities that were brought up throughout community engagement efforts, analysis, and stakeholder group discussions that are not included in tandem with roadways or along future railway abandonment:

### XCEL ENERGY UTILITY CORRIDOR

This electrical powerline utility corridor runs continuously from American Boulevard on the north to the river corridor at the south side of the City. Located east of Interstate 35W, the corridor is in an area that is currently underserved with trails and off-road trail infrastructure. A feasibility study for the Xcel Energy Utility Corridor should be completed that examines the potential for trails, phased implementation, additional natural resources restoration, road crossing issues and opportunities, programming opportunities, and Xcel Energy's reception to further park and trail development on their land. This corridor presents one of a few opportunities for integrating additional open space and park space/ activities into Service Area 4. A strong north-south connection could potentially link multiple parks, schools, and the Minnesota River Valley together.

There are numerous road crossings that would need to be addressed for a continuous trail. These crossings should be studied for short and long-term feasibility and safety. A long-term goal is a continuous connection from north to south. However, short term opportunities to connect key blocks between arterial streets should be investigated. A trail in the corridor would provide critical local connections and safe routes to schools, parks, and general recreation opportunities. Figure 3-40 highlights that a 1-mile segment could be created by providing crossing improvements at 3-low traffic cross streets between Old Shakopee Road and E. 90th Street.



Figure 3-42: Xcel Corridor Short-Term Crossing Improvements

## MOIR/ CENTRAL PARK BIKE FEASIBILITY

Central Park, and the trail along Nine Mile Creek, is a hidden gem within the City. Comments in community engagement and stakeholder meetings were made about increasing access to bikes in this area. Biking has historically not been allowed on this trail south of 106th for a long time. Providing bike access should be examined for feasibility due to the increase in overall biking in the City, the development of the state trail in the River Valley, and future segments that would connect directly to Central Park. The feasibility of this proposal would need to consider potential conflicts, effects on the user experience, logistics of fitting a separate but parallel trail within the river corridor, and the benefits it would provide park users.

Suggestions have included creating a separate single track mountain bike trail in the hillside and upland areas, as well as providing a parallel trail for bikes along the existing trail. Small segments of the existing trail might need crossing points or short tracks of shared trail to make this work. This scenario should be examined with a natural surface trail feasibility study.

## CONCLUSION

Bloomington has been implementing its trails plan through a number of departments, but mainly through Planning and Engineering as roadway improvement projects are implemented. Trails are one of the most popular and requested amenities in the City. This is not likely to change in the near future as populations become more mobile and desire new forms of recreational trail facilities. The PSMP supports the recommendations of the ATP and Comprehensive Plan and the City should continue to implement as budget and project alignment opportunities unfold. Within park properties the PSMP recommends the following:

- Complete a signage and wayfinding plan
- Develop a natural surface trail feasibility plan - specifically for mountain bikes
- Provide trail loops inside parks
- Invest in bike playgrounds and skills areas
- Explore additional trail opportunities
  - Xcel Energy Corridor
  - Central Park bike trail feasibility

Comprehensively addressing the trail and mobility issues and opportunities in the City will help build a comprehensive trail network that encourages pedestrian and bicycle usage for commuting, transportation, recreation, and health and wellness. Parks can be an excellent provider of recreational and leisure trail loops as well as safe spaces to learn how to become better bikers.



## PRIORITY 04 | EQUITY AND ACCESS

The process toward advancing equity in parks and recreation has started at the staff level, primarily through community engagement and relationship building with residents. This includes reaching out to those that historically have not been engaged in these types of processes. The following recommendations provide a framework for continuing this work into the future by routinely considering these four key questions:

- Who has access to parks?
- Who designs the parks?
- Who decides what programs and services will be offered at parks?
- What dollars are allocated to which parks?

These questions were developed by Glenn Harris, President of the non-profit racial justice organization Race Forward. The questions help frame how Bloomington Parks and Recreation can be successful in understanding and advancing racial and economic equity within their communities.

### EQUITY THROUGH TWO LENSES

The PSMP answers the four questions by examining them through two lenses, Citywide and Neighborhood:

- *The Citywide lens* looks at the whole of the City to understand big picture needs. This lens also recognizes important geographic patterns, barriers, and relationships across the City.
- *The Neighborhood lens* zooms in further on certain areas of the City and recognizes that neighborhoods are unique and have different needs and wants based on city infrastructure, demographics, and history.

### WHO HAS ACCESS TO THE PARKS?

Historically there has been a friendly rivalry between East and West Bloomington. This rivalry was brought up throughout the engagement process and a general sentiment was that there was a disparity between access to parkland between the East and West side of Bloomington. This impression was validated with a high-level inventory of parkland and amenities across Bloomington (see Section 02).

### Citywide Lens Recommendations

- The staff and consultant team developed Park Service Areas for the city to provide boundaries for comparisons. The Service Areas were based on pre-existing Council district boundaries with the exception of a small portion around Bryant Park that was switched from Service Area 3 to 4.
- Larger community facilities that the community needs were identified and located throughout the City using the Service Areas and geographical mapping. The intent was to balance facilities across the City and distribute them so that all areas of the city would have Equal access to them.
- The Service Areas were used to further analyze the system through comparison.

### Neighborhood Lens Recommendations

- Increase the amount of amenities or experiences in Service Area 4. Parks in Service Area 4 need to ‘pull more weight’ than other parks in the City because of their smaller size and larger nearby populations.
- Ensure all large-scale redevelopment projects include a provision for additional parkland to meet the needs of increased population density. The Lyndale Ave. retrofit strategy recommends this and should be supported during implementation.
- Prioritize trail and mobility improvements in Service Area 4 to improve access to parks and open spaces.
- Utilize a quantifiable Equity based priority tool to ensure Service Area 4 receives fair and equitable investment compared to other parks throughout the city.
- Explore partnership opportunities for increased park and trail experiences including Xcel Energy Corridor (paralleling Park Ave), YMCA, Three Rivers Park District (programming), US Fish and Wildlife Service use of the National Wildlife Refuge.



## WHO DESIGNS THE PARKS?

This question is often overlooked when discussing equity and design. However, it is a critical component of truly understanding a community and being able to provide for their needs. There inherently is a connection between a designer/ planner's background, experiences, biases, and their produced work. A designer that has a similar background and life experiences to the community they are working with is likely to understand that community's needs and be able to translate them to a more successful park design or plan. Unfortunately, Landscape Architecture, Planning, and Architecture are underrepresented with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) professionals. This can create challenges for connecting to these communities and building trust. Open and honest feedback from the community is critical to understanding the full depth of their needs. A designer that looks like, and has similar life experiences to, the community they are working with is much more likely to garner trust. Community engagement is one way to bridge this gap and the PSMP has been creating new relationships and reaching out to the community in ways that the City has not historically done.

Bloomington's Park System was largely developed in the 1960's-70's when the City's demographics were much more homogeneous than today. Park amenities were often funded with a program that utilized a kit of parts for popular amenities at the time. That legacy is still apparent in Bloomington today. Demographics and recreation trends have changed significantly since that time and now it is time to re-design parts of the Park System. Giving the community input in the design process will be important at the City-wide and Neighborhood scale. The PSMP started a process of engagement to build trust with the community that should serve as the foundation for future efforts. Following is an overview of how the PSMP engaged residents to give them authorship of this document, and how that authorship can be promoted in future engagement efforts:





## City Wide Engagement for the PSMP:

- A statistically valid survey that mirrored the City’s current demographic breakdown was taken.
- An online engagement tool called *project bloom!* open and advertised to all was heavily trafficked.
- Virtual Town Halls allowed a forum to collect thoughts and ideas.
- Community conversations provided a small group web based forum to talk to underrepresented groups in the City.
- ‘Let’s Talk Bloomington’ has provided survey questions and discussion of Community Facility placement and other parks related topics.

## City-wide Engagement Future Recommendations:

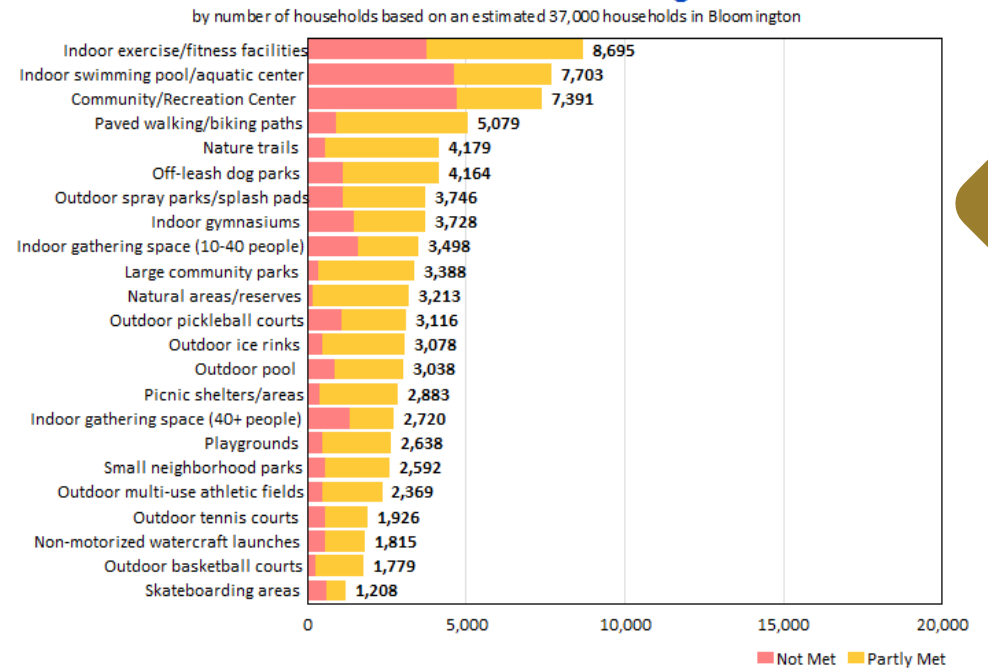
- Create an annual survey at minimum to engage with the community and get feedback on capital improvement and programming plans.
- Approach hiring for full time staff and seasonal staff to mirror the city’s demographic breakdown.
- Incorporate translations as appropriate to engage with all residents.
- Hire qualified BIPOC consultants and/ or integrate BIPOC engagement specialists into the process.
- Continue to build relationships and give as many people as possible authorship for future park improvements.

## Neighborhood Engagement for PSMP

- Several focused stakeholder meetings and interviews were conducted.
- Some on-site pop-up event style gatherings occurred pre-COVID stay at home orders.
- Connected with apartment developments and groups that have historically never interacted with the city.

## Neighborhood Engagement Recommendations:

- Continue building relationships with under-represented populations within the City. This is hard work and most successful at a personal level. COED has been making significant progress in these efforts and should be supported.



Source: ETC Institute (2019)

Figure 3-44: Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs For Facilities Are Not Being Met Summary Chart



- Establish a policy that identifies a park improvement cost threshold or thresholds that will require projects to include a significant public engagement process including:
  - » Create Community Driven Park Plans for significant park projects.
  - » Develop a standard engagement process that is equitable and repeatable. Plan should be developed with Parks Department Staff and Community Outreach and Engagement Division (COED).
  - » Focus engagement efforts and notifications on properties within 0.5 miles surrounding neighborhood parks being considered for improvements. Community parks engagement efforts should be broader since they are regularly used by people throughout the City.
  - » Utilize a combination of online and in-person engagement that is cost effective, but builds the personal relationships that are necessary for meaningful engagement.
  - » Report back to the community how their input was integrated into park design, planning and funding decisions.

### WHO DECIDES WHAT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WILL BE OFFERED AT PARKS?

Programs and services are critical to a Park System and offer an excellent way for residents to engage with the parks and their neighbors in a more in-depth way. Programs and services can provide needed child care, education, health and wellness, and community building opportunities. Community events are open to all and provide entertainment as well as an opportunity for connection to the larger city, helping residents understand their home and take pride in their city.

Under-represented people will feel more comfortable and will frequent a park or facility more often if they see other people that look like them using the spaces. Access to programs and services is also a critical component of an equitable park system and the Parks Department should strive to identify barriers for all residents so they can be addressed. Community engagement efforts of the PSMP have laid a foundation for future engagement work around programs and services:

### City-wide Lens Recommendations:

- Bloomington should increase its core services to expand its user base
  - » Prioritize engagement with BIPOC community in Bloomington to fully understand their programming needs
  - » Evaluate locations of programming and services and ensure residents are able to access them safely and effectively
- Conduct annual surveys with existing and potential users to identify needed programs and services
  - » Surveys should evaluate barriers preventing participation such as
    - \* Cost
    - \* Travel/ access issues
    - \* Childcare
    - \* Communication issues
- Fee structure/ assistance should be provided.
- Develop a pricing policy and assign an annual budget item to address and track – reevaluate annually.
- Policy should address pricing reductions and no-fee programs for residents unable to pay.
- Define the role of other service providers and potential partners in the City and define gaps. These providers could be offering similar services. Work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the community’s needs. Potential partners include:
- Bloomington Public Schools, YMCA, County libraries, Bloomington charter schools, (OASIS for Youth, VEAP, etc.).
- Other city departments - Public Health, Fire/Police, and COED).
- Other park agencies with programming opportunities: Three Rivers Park District, Metropolitan Council Parks, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Services.
- Develop hiring practices to mirror city demographics for full-time and seasonal staff hires.

## WHAT DOLLARS ARE ALLOCATED TO WHICH PARK?

The final question directly addresses one of the most prominent issues relating to equity – distributing funds to specific parks. Historically, park improvements have often been directed toward the loudest voices in the room, the most organized neighborhood groups, the most well connected, and generally wealthier areas of a community. Parks in lower income and more diverse areas are often less prioritized. Allocating dollars based on equity means allocating dollars to what a park needs and not just equally spreading money to all parks. Some parks do more heavy lifting than others. They are accessed by more people on less acreage, are located near larger populations of low-income residents, have higher neighborhood crime issues, and a multitude of other factors and pressures that would identify them as having a higher priority based on equity. While the entire park system needs to be updated, there are some parks with greater needs. An analysis tool to help prioritize equity and ensure the playing field is level is proposed to address this last question in Bloomington. Parks that should be prioritized for capital improvement based on equity are typically parks in neighborhoods that have:

- Higher populations and population density.
- Less nearby parkland. They are more isolated.
- Lower income residents.
- Higher BIPOC populations.
- Higher population of kids below age 18.
- Higher crime rates.
- Poor park conditions and historic lack of investment.

These characteristics describe a number of the parks in Service Area 4. However, investment is needed throughout the city and not all dollars should be funneled only to Service Area 4 parks. This would create a significant equity issues in other parts of the City and would weaken the system overall. Using the scale of City-wide and Neighborhood lenses to answer this question will provide balance and address both equality and equity simultaneously.



## City-wide Approach to Dollar Allocation – Geographic Balance

The Service Areas are proposed to provide balance throughout the City and ensure all areas of the community are served by larger recreation facilities. These community recreation facilities were proposed based on an assessment of the current needs of the park system and input received from community engagement throughout the project. The facilities were distributed throughout the City based on a balance between Service Area geographic distribution, park access, park suitability, and stakeholder feedback. A key amenity identified are the proposed Park Neighborhood Buildings. These structures would serve as neighborhood hubs for recreation, gathering, and community building. Prioritizing these structures at the City-wide level will provide much needed recreation investment distributed equally throughout the City.

## Neighborhood Approach to Dollar Allocation – Equity Prioritization Tool

Individual parks throughout the City have different levels of need based on the characteristics of the neighborhoods surrounding them, the population dynamics around the park, and the condition of the facilities inside the park. Analyzing these conditions and using the results to develop an Equity Prioritization Tool has been done by cities throughout the country. The goal of these equity prioritization tools is to quantifiably evaluate individual parks and ensure investments are equitably distributed. These tools provide staff with a quantifiable and transparent method to propose capital improvements to parks based on their needs related to equity. Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department is pursuing the development of this equity prioritization tool in order to assist staff in prioritizing capital investments and create a more equitable and inclusive park system infrastructure.

For this study, Bloomington examined models developed by the cities of Minneapolis and Milwaukee. Milwaukee's approach is based on the Minneapolis model, which was one of the first Equity Prioritization Tools developed to guide park investments. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) uses a 23-point scoring method that considers various community and park characteristics. Milwaukee adapted MPRB's

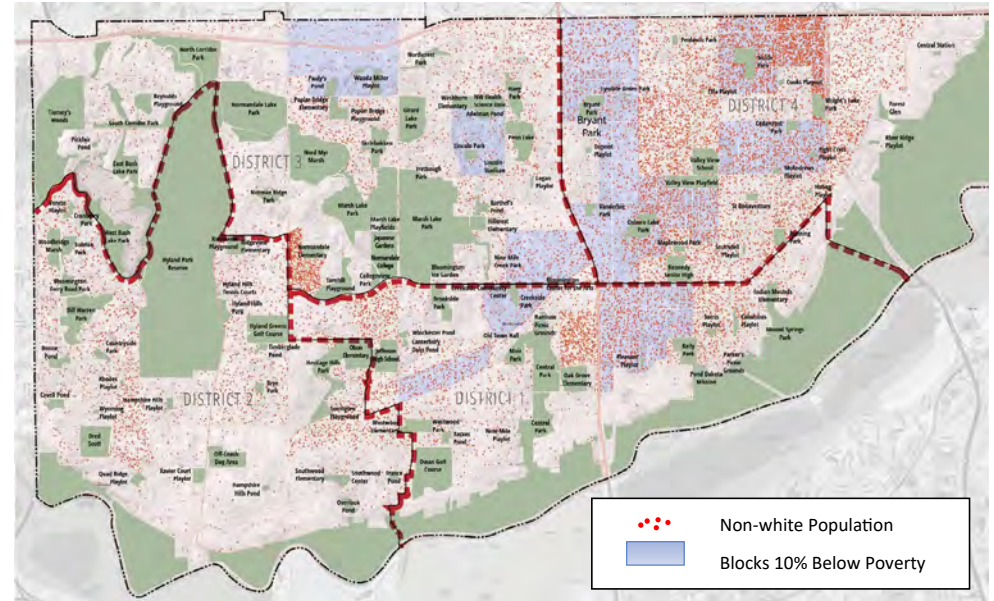


Figure 3-45: Parks and Population Distribution



Figure 3-46: Proposed Park Neighborhood Building Locations

system to meet their needs by reducing the point scoring analyses to 8 quantifiable criteria and changing the area analysis radius around each park. Ultimately Bloomington chose to use Milwaukee’s approach as it fit their needs and the analysis approach aligns better with Bloomington’s staff resources.

## BLOOMINGTON'S APPROACH TO EQUITY PRIORITIZATION

One key distinction of Bloomington’s approach compared to Milwaukee is the reduction of the 1-mile analysis radius to a .5-mile radius. The reduced radius is a better fit with Bloomington’s park access walking times and provides greater data distinction between park properties (.5 mile radius graphic).

### Step 1 -

Bloomington is proposing to utilize the same 8 criteria as Milwaukee to evaluate park needs based on equity. These criteria may change or be adjusted in the future but the successful approach is being borrowed currently. The criteria evaluated are based on three categories of characteristics:

- **Neighborhood Characteristics** – Convenient Public space access is vital for families with limited incomes, restricted mobility options, and dense multi-family housing situations. Park access can lessen the disparity between wealthy and poor neighborhoods by enhancing park assets. Studies have shown that youth in low-income neighborhoods rely more on nearby public spaces and serve as many children’s only access to playgrounds, social spaces, and contact with nature.
  - » **Income** – Lower income neighborhoods historically have received lower inputs in neighborhood infrastructure.
  - » **Poverty Rate** – People living in poverty often have low access to personal vehicles, lower quality housing choices, and limited recreation and socialization options.
  - » **Race** – BIPOC communities have historically experienced a lack of public and private investment in public parks and amenities.
  - » **Crime** – Park safety and park usage go hand in hand. Higher crime areas discourage park use and underutilized poor-quality parks can foster an atmosphere of increased crime.
- **Population Characteristics** – The number of people using public space has an affect on equipment lifespan, available quantity of open recreation space and programs, and the possibility of periodic overcrowding at parks and trails.

- » **Total Population** – Areas with more people experience more pressure on nearby park resources.
- » **Population under the age of 18** – Park amenities for youth can impact health outcomes and promote positive developmental play and socialization aspects. Parks are vital for kids to thrive.
- » **Adjacent park land** – Isolated parks in dense neighborhoods receive more usage and pressure which increases deterioration times. Isolated parks may be the only space accessible to some families.

- **Conditions Characteristics**

- » **Ranking of condition of facilities** – The ranking of facilities conditions highlights usage, time since last investment, safety of infrastructure, and desirability of features (new items are generally of more interest). Milwaukee uses a one element score for condition assessment that averages the scores of all the amenities in the park (1-4 with 1=poor and 4=excellent).

The data sources for the characteristics described again should be reevaluated by city staff over time to ensure the most accurate and relevant data sources are utilized. Additionally, staff should continue to evaluate the characteristics themselves and whether other characteristics would provide a more accurate assessment of equity issues for Bloomington residents. For instance, discussion around using characteristics such as ‘households with no car’ or ‘households with English as a second language’ were evaluated during conversations around the Equity Prioritization Calculation.

**Step 2** - The raw scores calculated and gathered during Step 1 are likely in different formats and need to be ‘normalized’. Normalization of the data is a calculation that changes the values and variables to a common scale so they can be compared as ‘apples to apples’.

**Step 3** –The individual elements of each characteristic are weighted and then added together to create a total characteristic value.

- **Neighborhood Characteristic Weight**

- » **Income** .20
- » **Poverty** .30
- » **Minority Pop.** .30
- » **Crime** .20

- Population Characteristics Weight
  - » Total Pop. .30
  - » % under 18 .50
  - » Adjacent Parks .20
- Condition Characteristics
  - » Only one element so no weighting is needed

**Step 4** – The final calculation weights the characteristic scores prior to adding them together. Characteristic weighting includes:

- Neighborhood Characteristics .25
- Population Characteristics .25
- Condition Characteristics .50

The final scores for each park can be ranked with the highest scores prioritizing capital improvement based on Equity. This score can be used as a quantifiable number in the City’s current CIP planning process. The Equity score will need to be weighed against other city priorities to determine its overall priority. The Equity score is the first of the Council’s CIP Criteria to develop a quantifiable metric. This process and calculation would likely need to be repeated annually by staff to account for demographic changes, conditional assessment changes, and new information being received by staff.

The process described above was undertaken by the consultant and staff to test the calculation against Bloomington’s data. A prioritized list was produced but will not be displayed in this PSMP because of critical missing data. This missing data is the park condition characteristic information. There is currently no assessment of park quality. The trial run used an estimated park condition score based on playground age to simulate the calculation. The next step in developing this tool is to complete a system-wide inventory and assessment of Bloomington’s Parks and Facilities and add the assessment scores into the calculation to complete the Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool. BPRD should continue to evaluate the Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool for effectiveness and fit with Bloomington, and adjust accordingly.

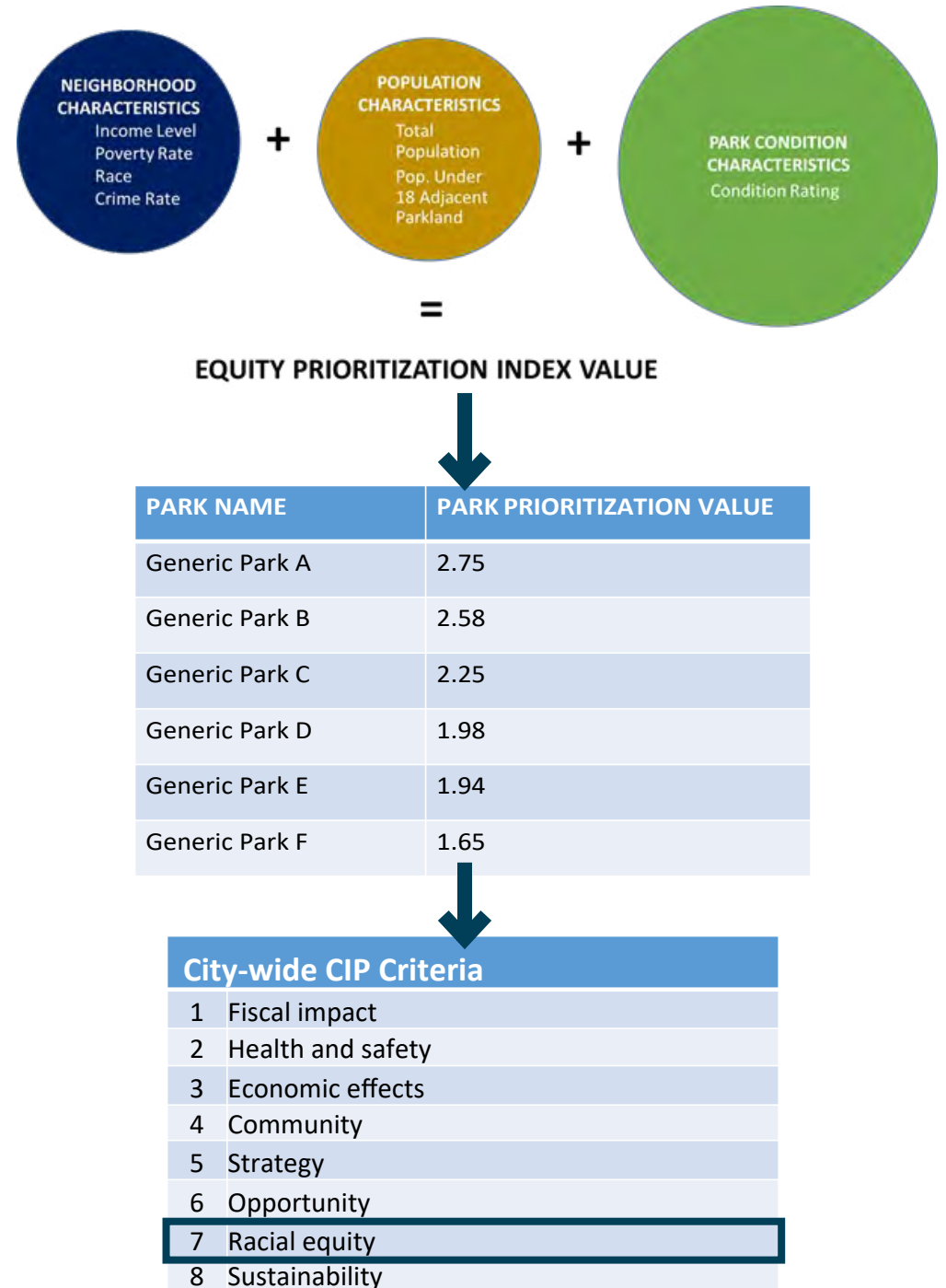


Figure 3-47: Equity Based CIP Prioritization Process

## LEADERSHIP ROLE - PARKS EQUITY POLICY

BPRD has taken a leadership role in developing the Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool. In addition to the needs and recommendations identified above. The Department can integrate inclusivity and equity into their work by addressing the following elements:

- Diversifying staff team – both seasonal and long-term employment
  - » Recruiting – partnering with HR
  - » Develop internship programs
- Provide leadership staff training
- Develop and implement park maintenance standards that are consistent across the City – shifting resources as necessary

Additionally, Bloomington has a history of excellent partnerships with other park providers such as Three Rivers Parks District and the Metropolitan Council that are addressing Equity issues in their work. Alignment with the Metropolitan Council’s developing policies should be a focus of the City to ensure the best possible position for future funding access and partnerships. The Metropolitan Council intends to promote Equity by:

- Using the Council’s influence and investments to build a more equitable region
- Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race, ethnicity, economic means, and ability
- Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region’s transit corridors
- Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making

One of the ways BPRD can begin to move toward Equity and Inclusion in the parks is to develop a policy that outlines the agency’s dedication to these elements and helps ensure community inclusion. The NRPA encourages this approach and provides significant guidance, example language, and templates for developing these policies (found in the Appendix). A comprehensive policy does the following for the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Provides guidance on achieving goals, strategies and objectives
- Sets clear expectations and rules for staff and community members
- Provides a framework for clear and consistent action and reaction when responding to the public

- Sets rules and guidelines for decision making in routine situations that may arise at park and recreation facilities or within programs
- Holds organizations accountable for their decisions and actions
- Supports sustainability and long-term change

Some of this work has been started by the Racial Equity Action Team and BPRD should continue to provide leadership in those efforts. The efforts described above are the beginning of actionable Equity and Inclusion efforts in the City of Bloomington. The PSMP work provides the foundation for future improvements, modifications, and continued relationship building that will make this priority a success story in the upcoming decades. The intent of this framework is to be flexible and incorporate changes and improvements as they are realized.

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