

# 03

## THE PARKS BLOOMINGTON NEEDS

### SECTION CONTENTS:

- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- RECREATION TREND ANALYSIS
- UPDATED VISION AND MISSION
- PRIORITY PARK ELEMENTS

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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 become the focus recently, with PSMP being one of the early projects to devote significant resources to the project. The City Council also confirmed this in early discussions. They wanted engagement to reach out to people and gather voices that hadn't necessarily been heard before.

### PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Bloomington has changed significantly since the parks were originally built. Demographics have changed, and projections are that they will change more dramatically in the next 20 years. In many ways the parks have not kept up with these changes. The PSMP is redeveloping/revisioning the parks to make sure 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 in the city and parks they live near. We asked all people what they would like to do in their parks, based on the city's current and

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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 get out into the parks, provide multiple ways for people to tell us what they would like to see, and ask them to participate in ways they felt comfortable. The PSMP used the input received from the Community to provide a roadmap for how the city can create the parks that Bloomington residents want and need.

### COVID

COVID struck the world in the spring of 2020 and affected the 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 more 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 COED facilitated numerous web-based focus groups 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.

## 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.



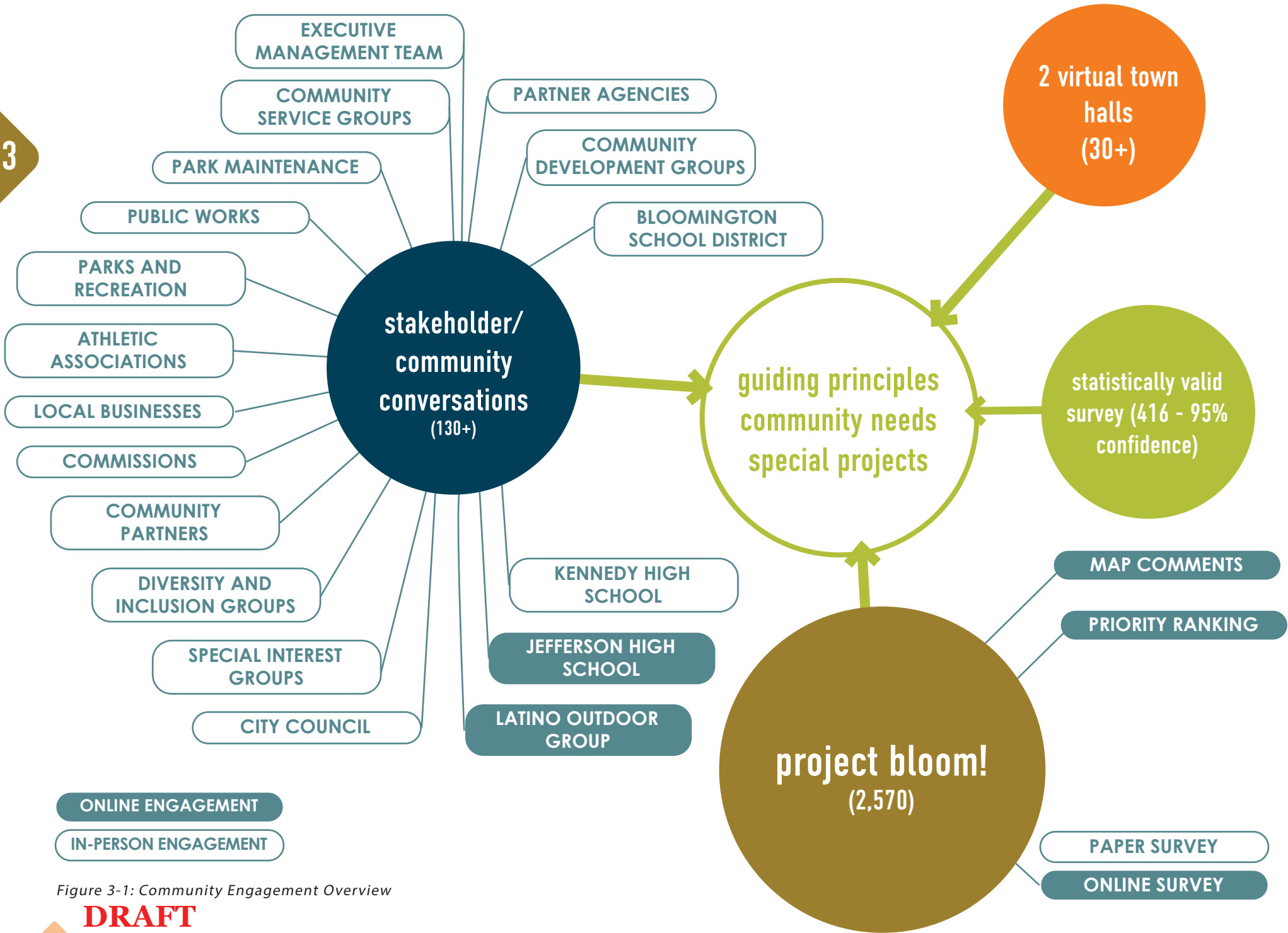


Figure 3-1: Community Engagement Overview

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In Late 2020 the project's engagement switched over to the City's new website for community conversations called Let's Talk Bloomington



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Figure 3-2: Community Engagement Relationship Graphic

## 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.

## FACILITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

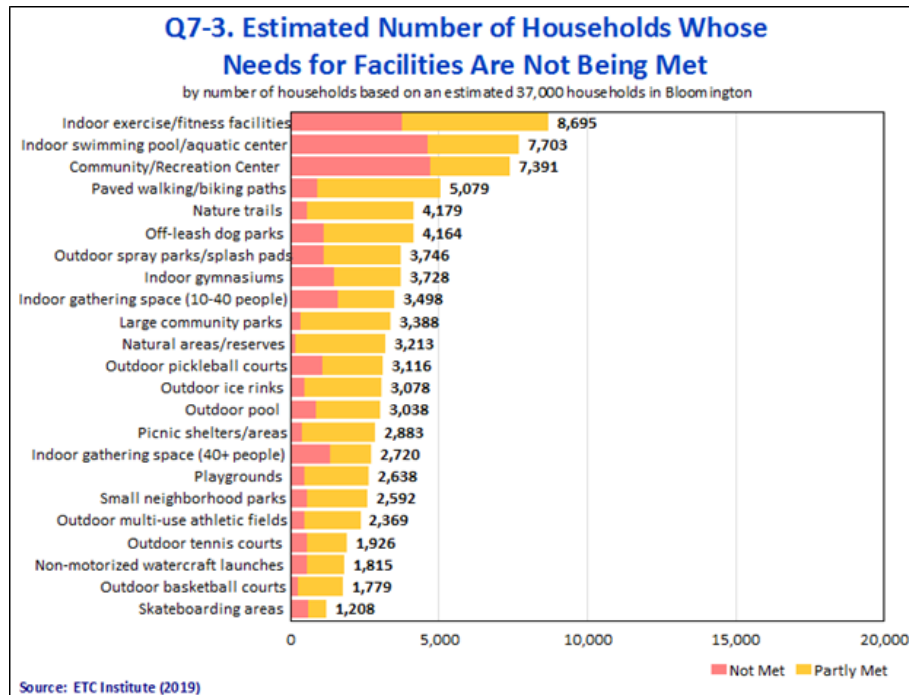


Figure 3-3: Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs For Facilities Are Not Being Met

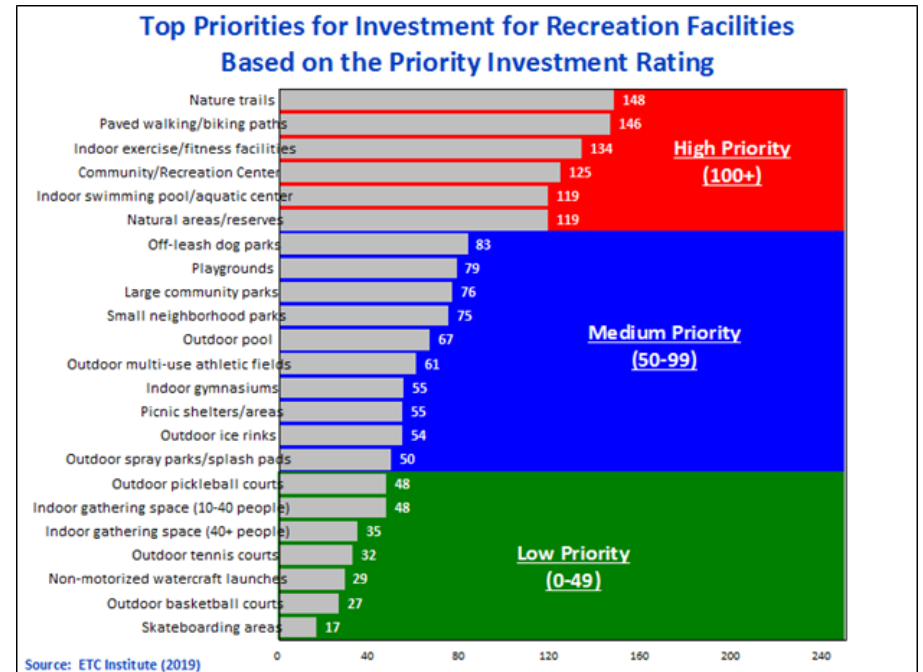


Figure 3-3: Top Priorities for Investment For Recreation Facilities

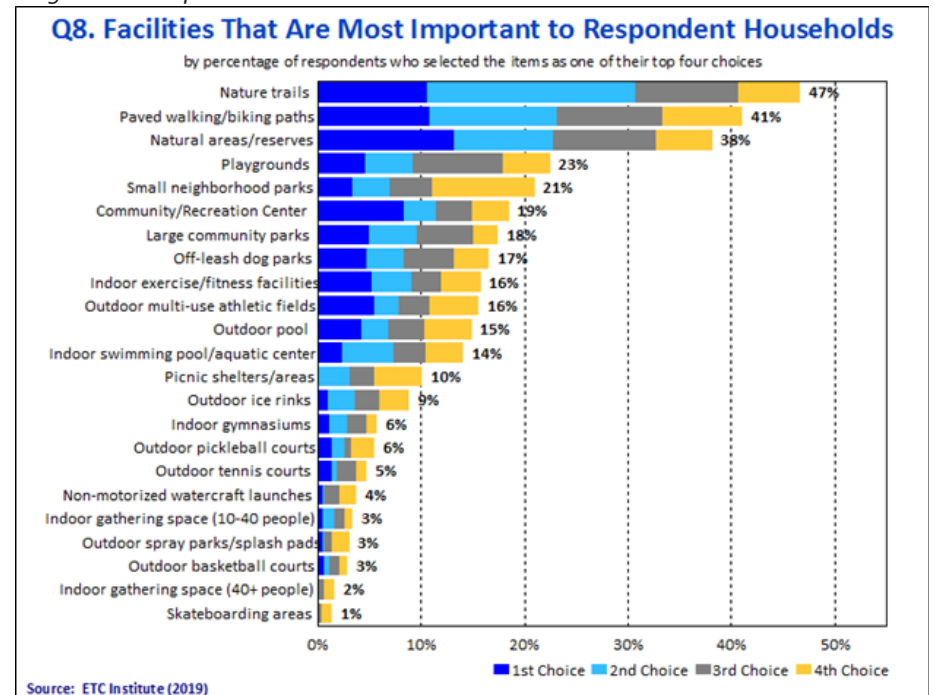


Figure 3-5: Facilities That Are Most Important To Respondant Households

# PROGRAMMING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

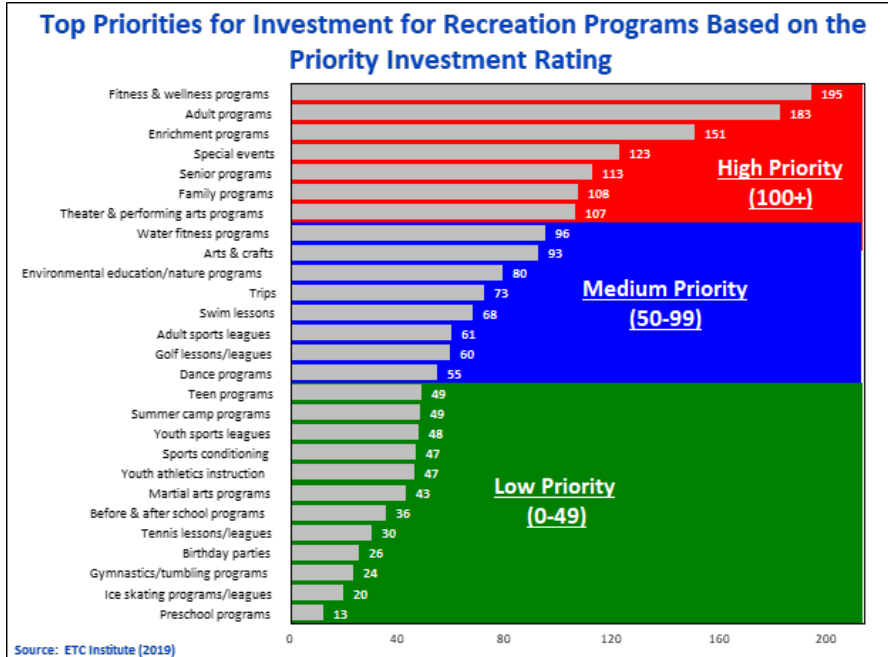


Figure 3-6: xx

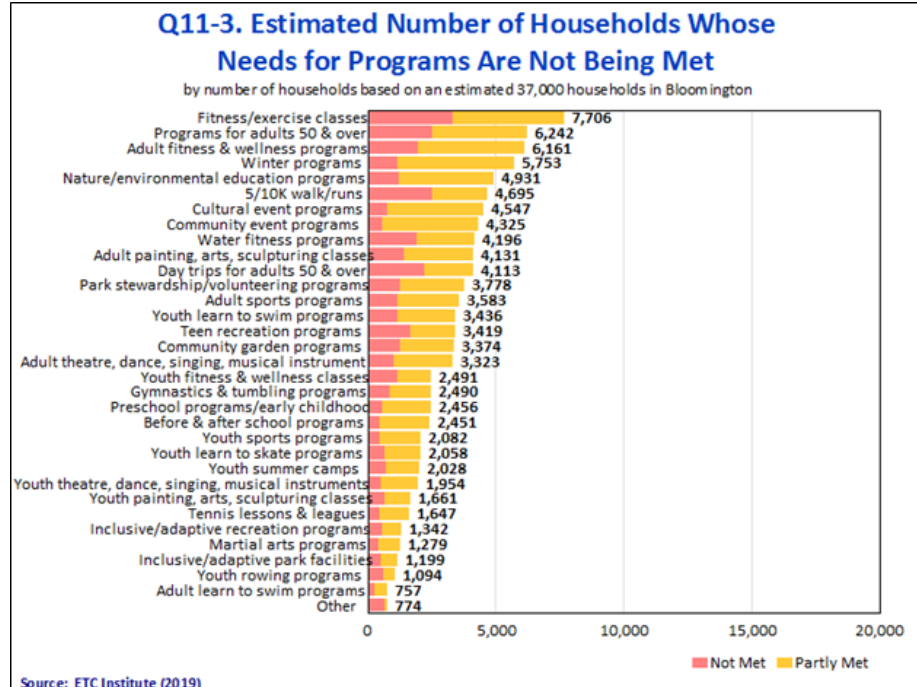


Figure 3-7: DRAFT

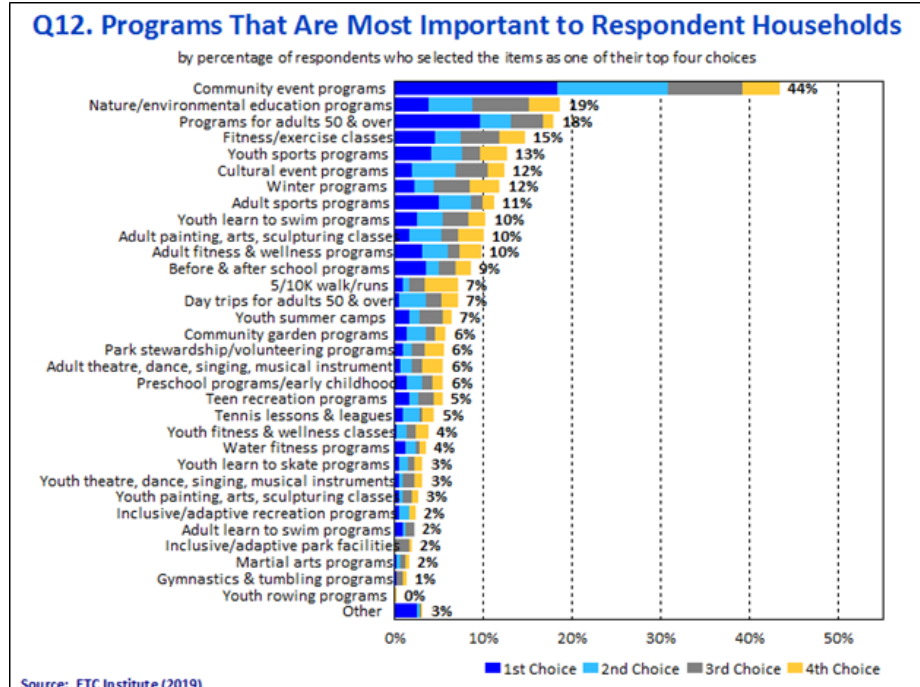


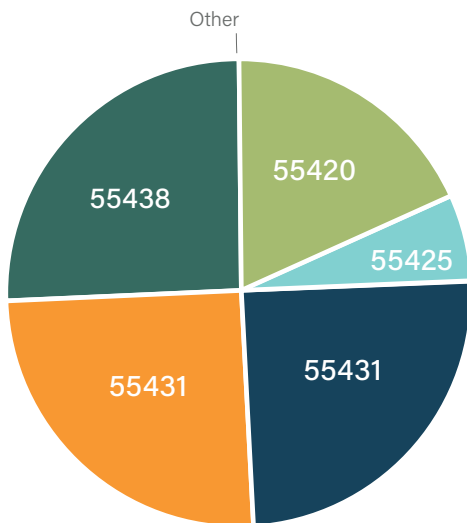
Figure 3-8: xx

# PROJECT BLOOM! ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

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

Zipcodes



Which of the following describes your household?

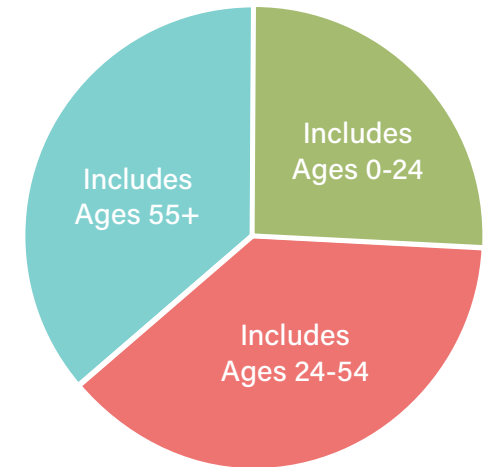
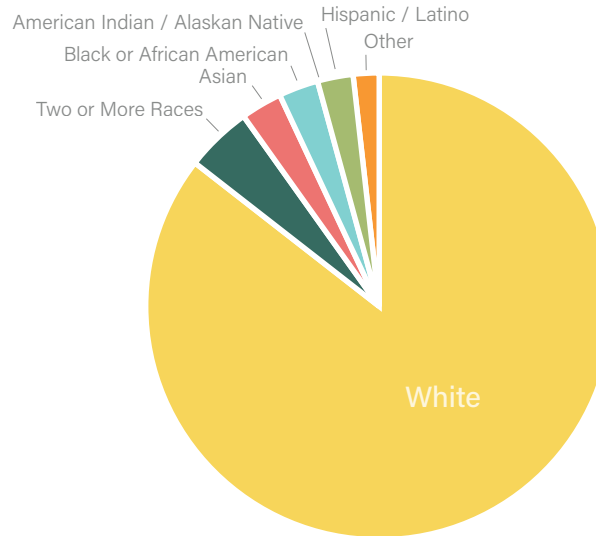


Figure 3-9: Participant's Zipcode

Figure 3-10: Household Demography Based on Race

Figure 3-11: Demography Based On Age

**2602**  
Number of bloom! Site Users

**526**  
Survey Responses

**306**  
Priority Theme Voters

**9168**  
Number of bloom! Site Visits

**711**  
Map Comments

Figure 3-12: Survey Participant Summary





What do you and your family and friends like to do most at Bloomington Parks (Rank your top 3)?

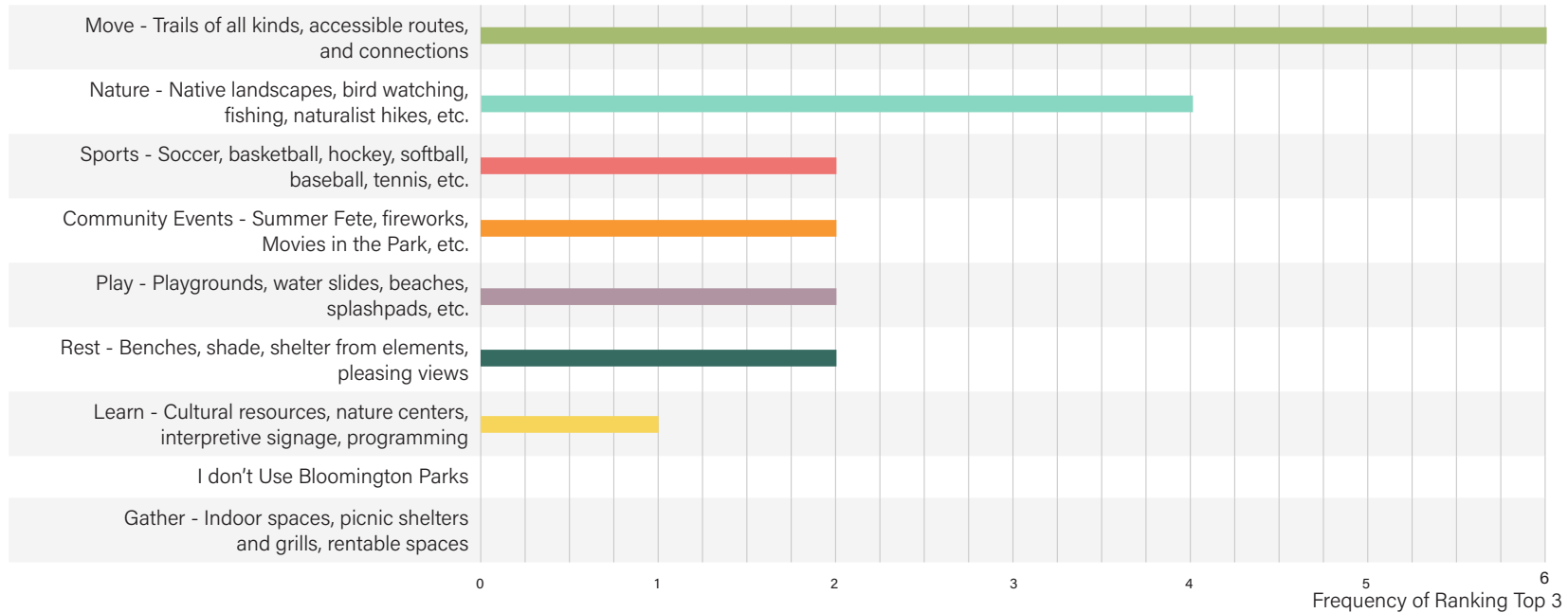
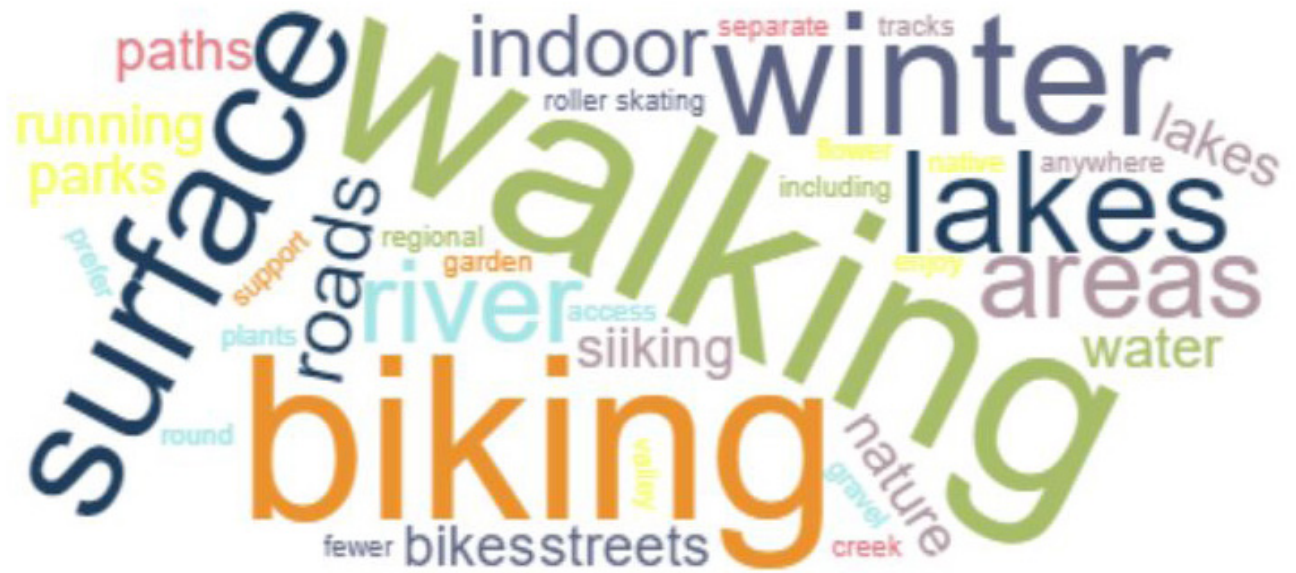


Figure 3-13: Current Activity Ranking Summary Table

What other types of new things would you like to do at Bloomington Parks?



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Figure 3-14: Desired Activity Summary

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

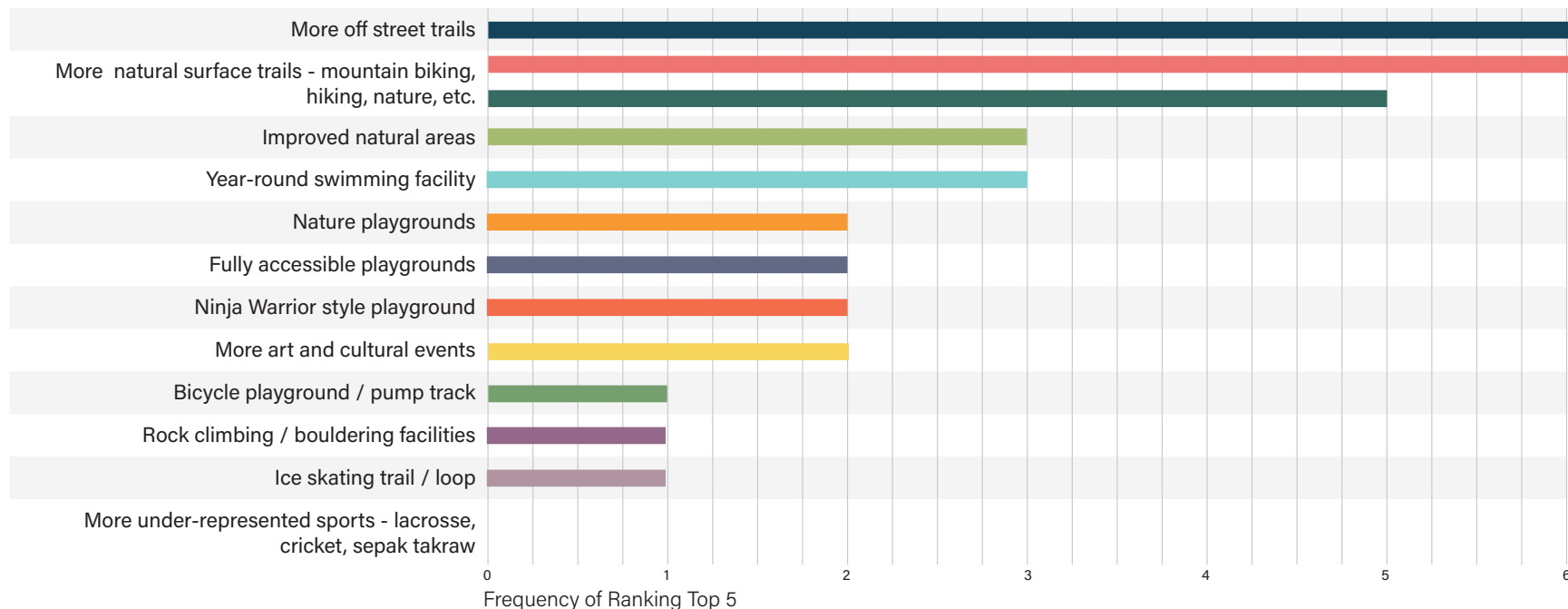


Figure 3-15: Desired New Activity Ranking Summary Chart

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

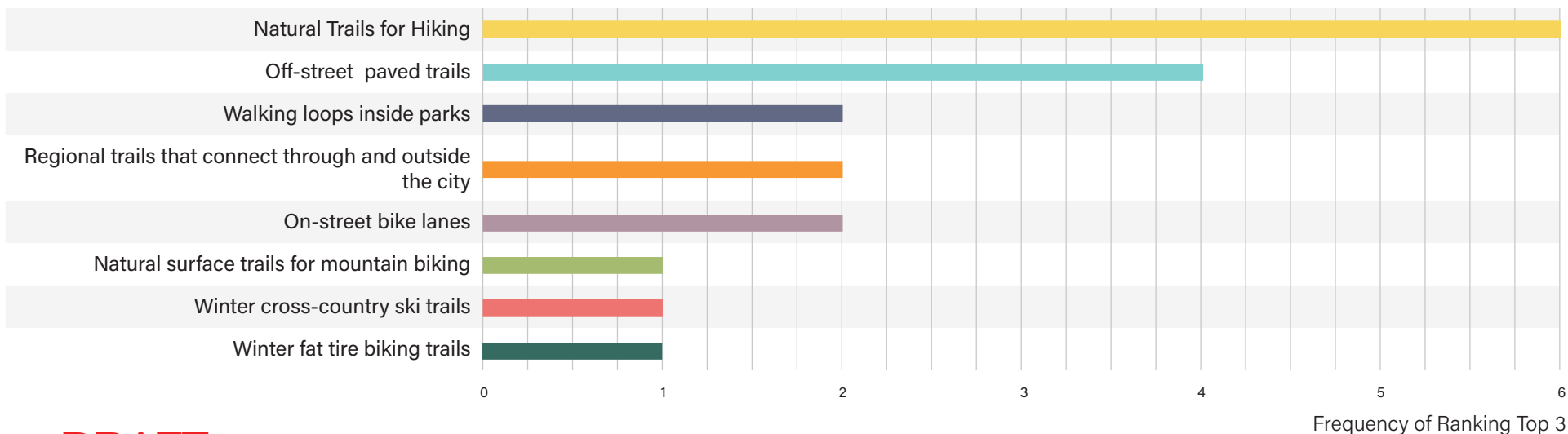


Figure 3-16: Trail Type Ranking Summary Chart

What other types of trails would you use?



Figure 3-17: Desired New Trail

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

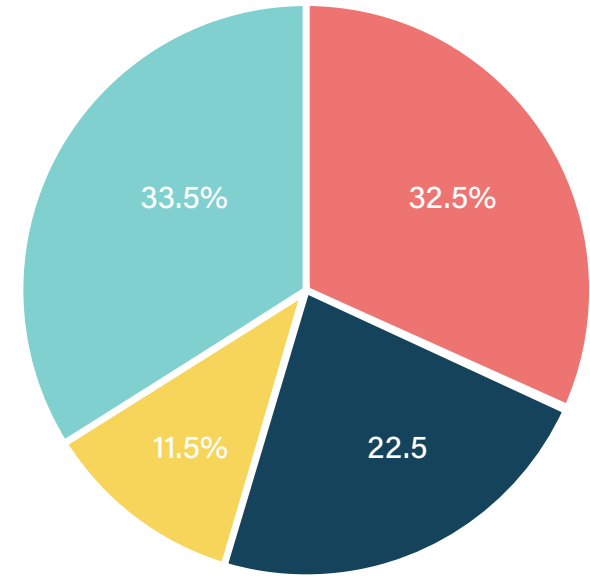
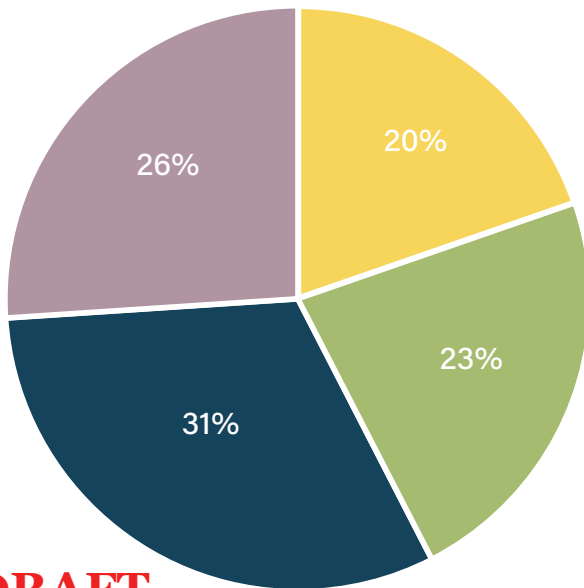


Figure 3-18: Ice Skating Approach Summary Chart

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)

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Figure 3-19: Aquatic Facility Summary Chart

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

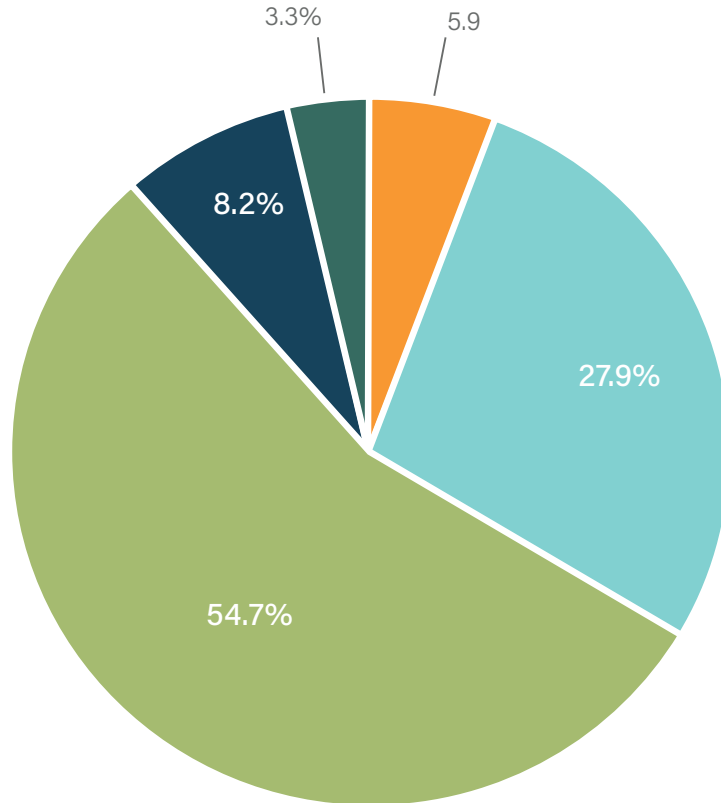


Figure 3-20: Nature and Recreation Chart

- **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.

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

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

# MAP YOUR COMMENTS SUMMARY



## What do you love?

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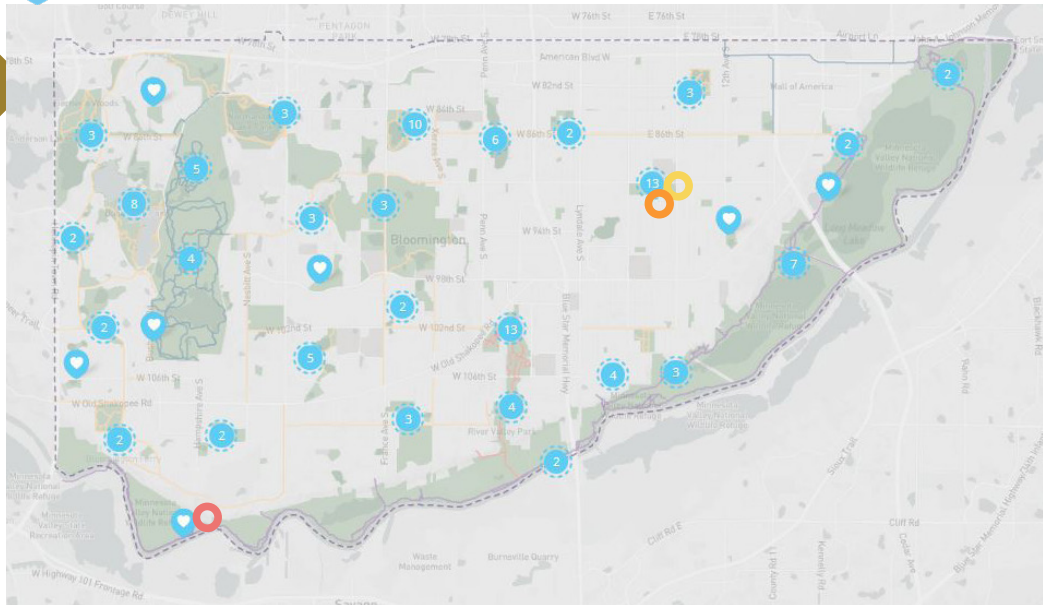


Figure 3-21: Comments Summary Map

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 Haddock Baseball Field. It is one of the best local baseball fields around. I live near the park and see how to 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.

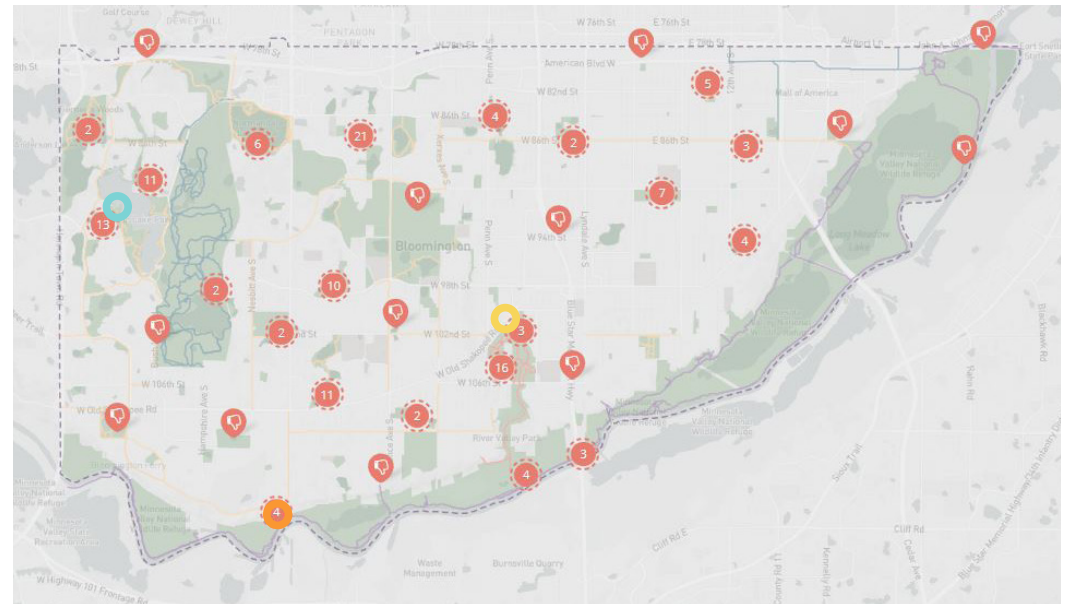


Figure 3-22: Work Suggestion Map

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## \* What bike / pedestrian issues have you observed?

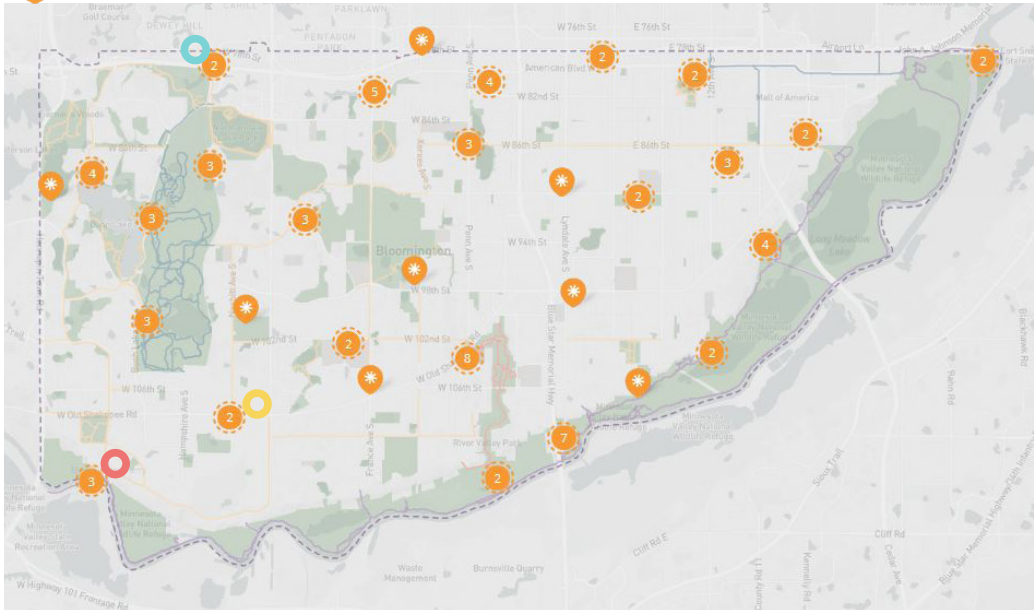


Figure 3-23: Bike/ Pedestrian Issues Map

Get a decent bike trail going along...and/or parallel to Old Shakopee [Road] so people can ride bikes from one side of the city to the other.

Southbound on Bush Lake Road is a major bike commuting route from the Minneapolis Greenway...The traffic speeds here are fast. Please consider adding a bike lane that spans across the 494 overpass and tie it into the bike path...that heads towards Buch Lake.

Trail was unusable for most of 2019 due to flooding.

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## What are your ideas?

A well managed and designed natural mountain bike trail / multi user trail system could be developed in this area.

This is a great area but in need of an upgrade. It would be great to incorporate different areas of play like a splash pad...natural play...[or] amphitheater.

Would like to see an inclusive playground to use. Bloomington needs to do better when it comes to inclusive equipment, it is very difficult to get a wheelchair or stroller even through the wood chips.

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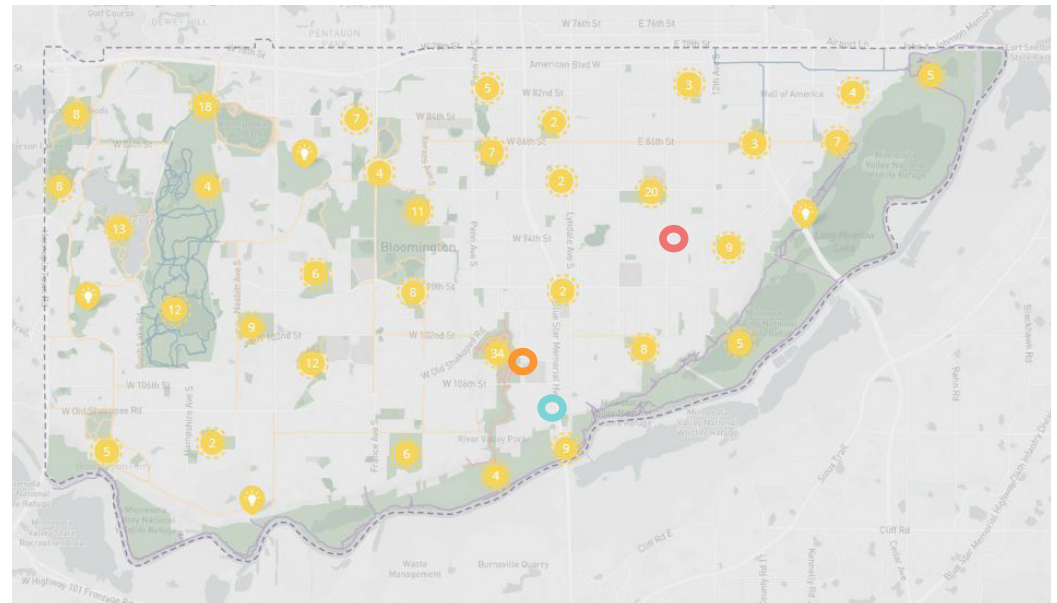


Figure 3-24: Ideas Map

# 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?

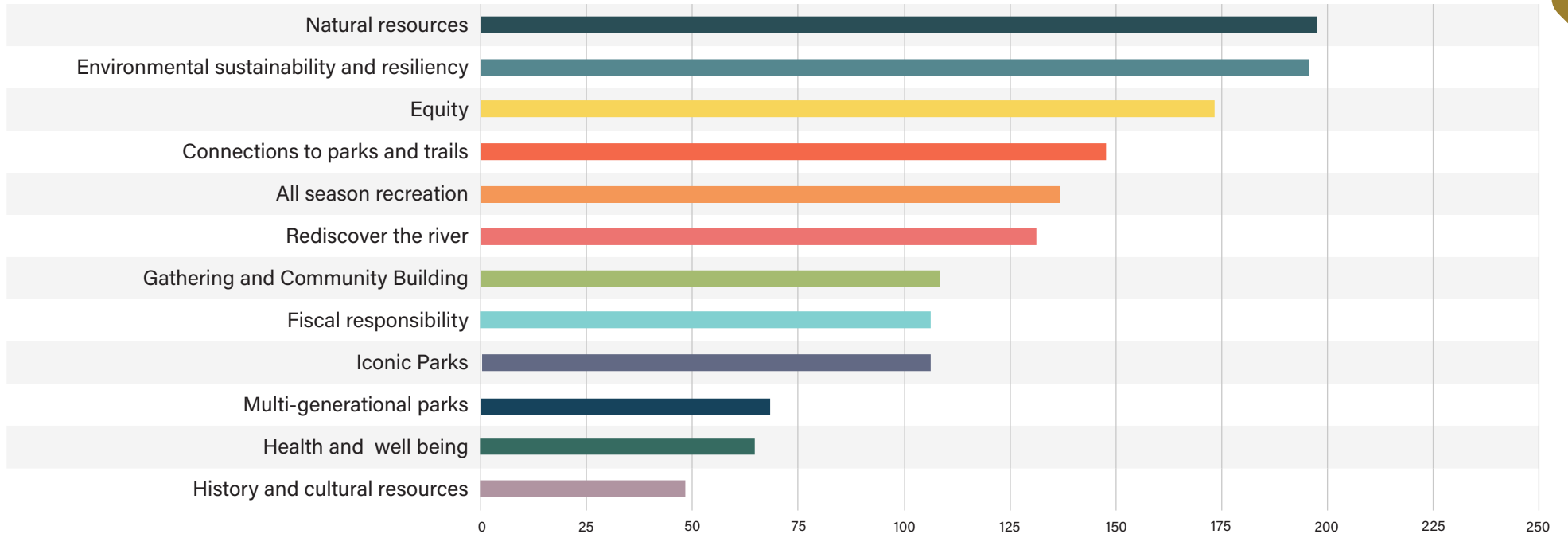


Figure 3-25: Highest Priority Issues and Themes

Number of respondents who selected the issue as a priority

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

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

**48%** OF ALL RESPONDENTS PRIORITIZE EQUITY

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# 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.



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# 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).

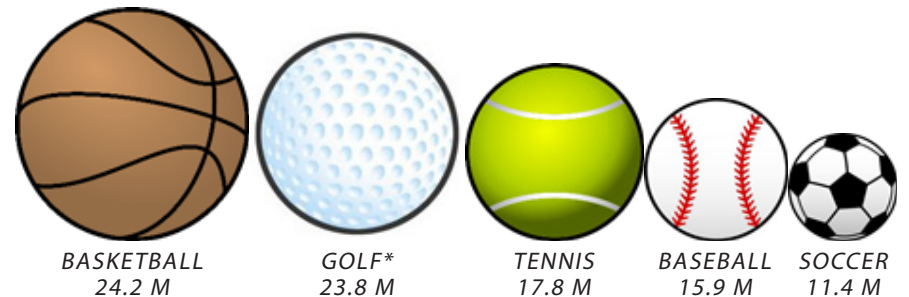
Even though Golf has experienced a recent decrease in participation, it still continues to benefit from its wide age segment appeal and is considered a life-long sport. Basketball's success can be attributed to the limited amount of equipment needed to participate and the limited space requirements necessary, 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



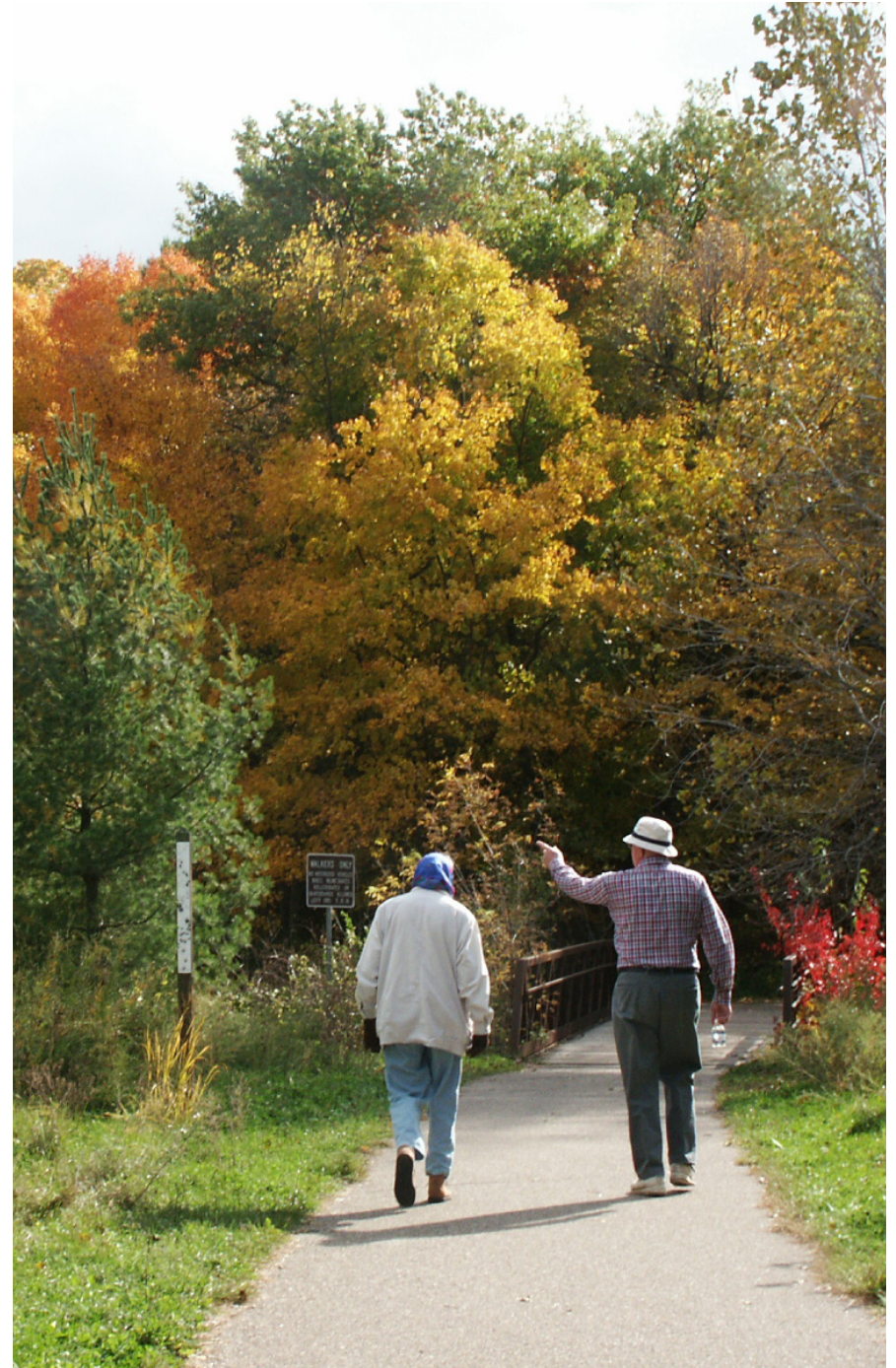
*Stationary Cycling*  
36.7 M

## 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



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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.

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness					
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 3-26: General Fitness National Participatory Trend

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# 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

<b>Legend:</b>	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to 25%)	Large Decrease (less than 25%)
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Figure 3-27: Outdoor / Adventure Recreation Participatory Trends

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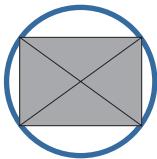
# NATIONAL TRENDS IN AQUATICS

## 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



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## 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

<b>Legend:</b>	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)
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Figure 3-22 Aquatic Participation 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.



Kayaking  
11.0 M



Canoeing  
9.1 M



Snorkeling  
7.8 M



Jet Skiing  
5.3 M



Sailing  
3.8 M

## 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 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)
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Figure 3-29: Water Sports / Activities Participatory Trends

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## 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+

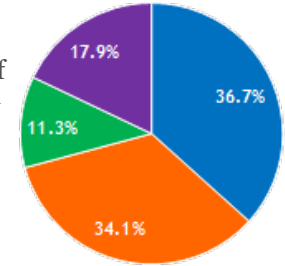


Definitions: Active (3+ times per week), Casual (1-2 times per week), High Calorie (20+ minutes of elevated heart rate), Low/Med Calorie (>20 minutes of elevated heart rate), Inactive (no physical activity in 2018)

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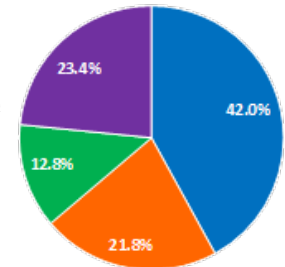
### GENERATION Z (BORN 2000+)

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.



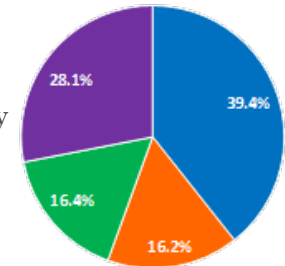
### MILLENNIALS (BORN 1980-1999)

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%).



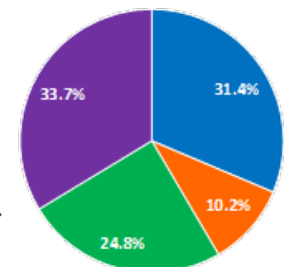
### GENERATION X (BORN 1965-1979)

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 3-30: 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.



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Figure 3-31: 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

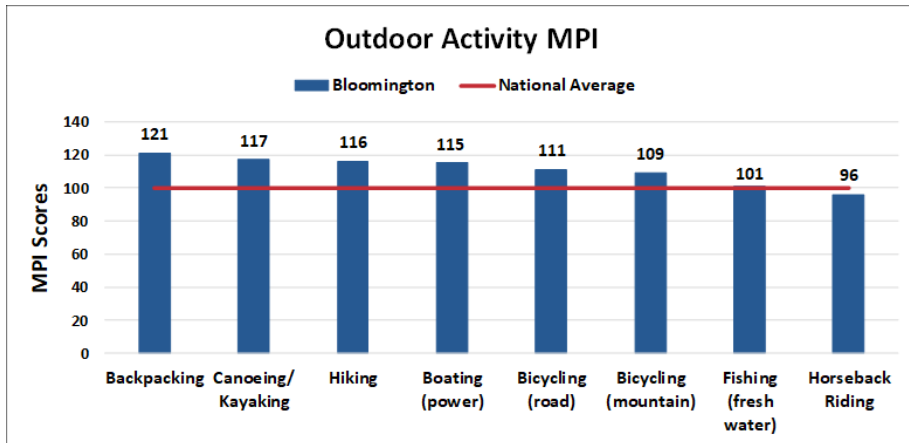


Figure 203 Outdoor Activity Participation Trends

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

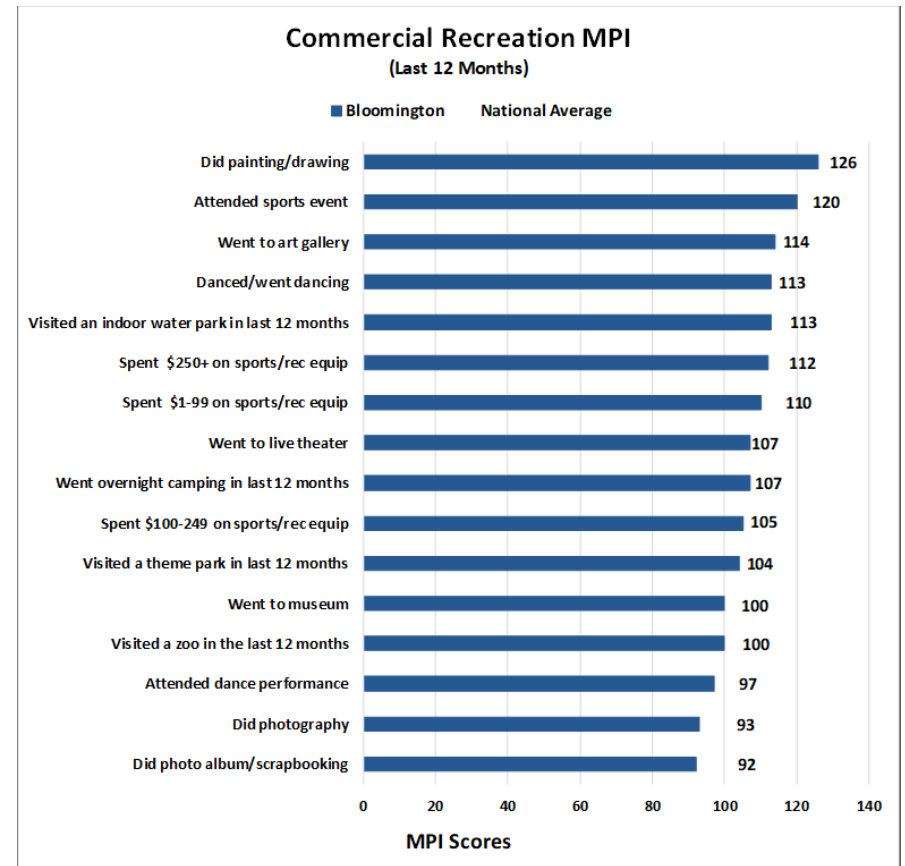


Figure 213 Commercial Recreation Participation Trends



## INTRODUCTION + DOCUMENT PURPOSE

### 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 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!*

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#### VISION STATEMENT:

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

Bloomington Parks and Recreation envisions an accessible system of 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 residents through the management of high-quality parks and natural areas and by providing exceptional experiences through innovative recreation programs, art activities, and park facilities.

**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.

03



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.*



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## PRIORITY PARK ELEMENTS FRAMEWORK

### PARK ELEMENT 01 NATURAL RESOURCES

The Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department does not have natural resource plans in place for their natural areas that would guide efforts to manage the resources and access them for recreation use.

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

Update the Level of Service (LOS) as it applies to Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Natural Areas, Trails and Greenways, Sports Fields, Recreation Facilities, and Amenities based on NRPA Best Practice Standards.

### PARK ELEMENT 03 TRAILS AND MOBILITY

These park amenities are not linked to neighborhoods, schools, other park systems, and attractions in the city.

### PARK ELEMENT 04 EQUITY

Prioritize equity throughout the system to support all residents, celebrate diversity, and provide inclusiveness.

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## 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 a new organizational structure that provides the best customer experience and cost management.

### 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 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

DESCRIPTION PLACEHOLDER

### PARK ELEMENT 13 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

Many elements make up Bloomington's Park System that will need to be addressed for improvement. The following are the Key Elements identified that need to be prioritized above all others. Section 02 identified the issues surrounding these elements, and the following paragraph will provide a framework for how to address them and move the Park System Master Plan forward. The key elements were identified through a combination of system analysis, community engagement, and city leadership input. There is a significant amount of overlap between the elements and working on one will impact the others. The 4 key elements include:

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

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## PRIORITY 01 NATURAL RESOURCES

The fabric of Bloomington's park system is built around key natural areas that remain after the plow and development. The Minnesota River Valley and Bluff, Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve, Marsh Lake Wetland Complex, and Nine Mile Creek and its corridor are the signature natural elements that exist in modern Bloomington. They are under pressure from a number of factors that are degrading the resources quality and require management to prevent further deterioration. These natural resources, 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 for the following reasons:

- 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 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.

## KEY NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

Section 03 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 around the city include:

- Prioritizing Resources
- Leadership and Collaboration
- Access and Preservation

City Staff, the Sustainability Commission, and members of the public have been doing excellent planning, restoration, and maintenance work around natural resources and natural areas. However, this work is not organized and effective as it could be if all parties were working together toward common goals and were effectively communicating and collaborating. This work is

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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 city priority in the past. Community engagement from the PSMP and Council Priorities have identified that natural resources is a community priority.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are 2 primary recommendations that the Parks Department can facilitate 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 done more effectively and collaboratively. 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, creates a clear roadmap for .

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER POSITION

A position is needed in Public Works to work on natural resources issues full-time. The size, scale, and complexity of Bloomington's Natural Resources warrants this dedication. The current Park Superintendent is a logical staff member to assume this new role. They have the expertise, institutional knowledge, and existing relationships to be successful in elevating natural resources to a high priority item in the City. Many of their responsibilities will be the same; however, they will be able to focus on this important issue full time.

This position would be responsible for organizing operations activities, communications, coordination, grant pursuit, and resource allocation. A major goal 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

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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
- Liason 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 and working together. 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 Park Supervisor 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).

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**Public Open Space Restoration Prioritization, City of Bloomington**

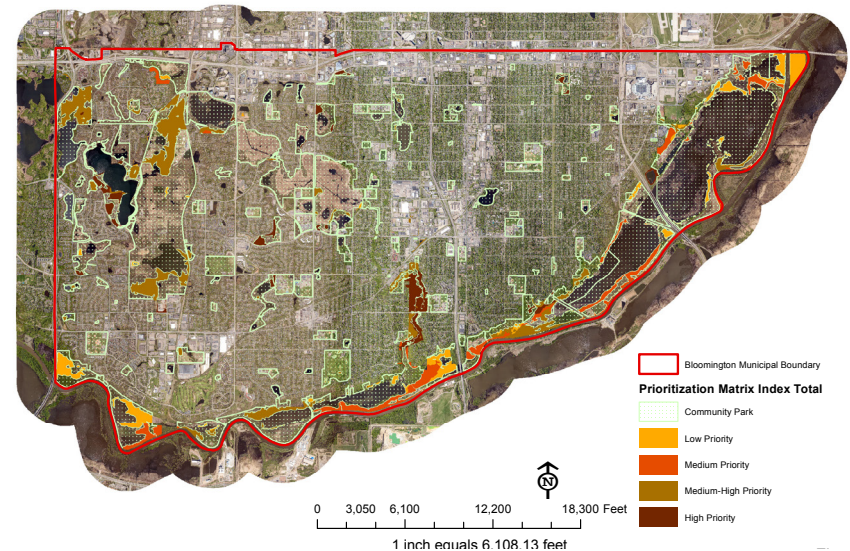


Figure 3-34: Public Open Space Restoration Prioritization

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.

## COMPLETE A NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

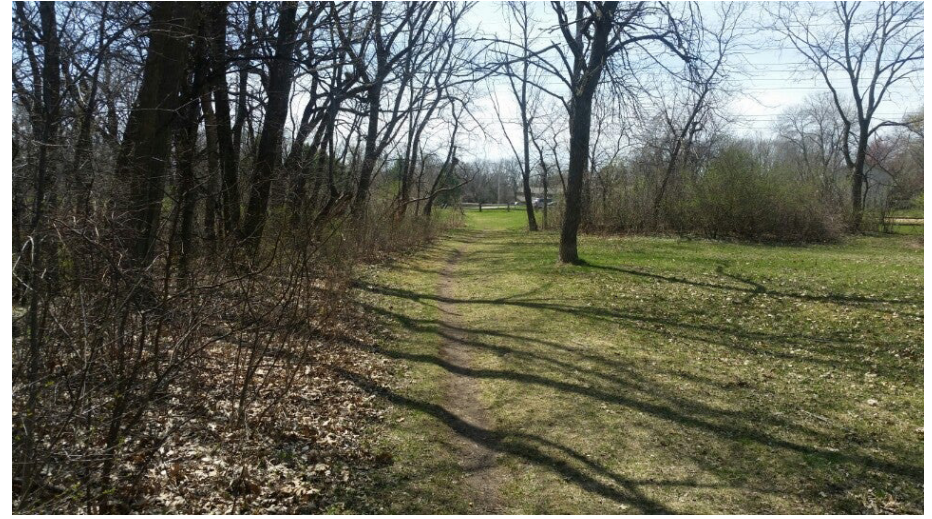
Most cities Bloomington's size, with the amount of natural resources the city possesses, have a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) to guide work. The lack of an NRMP is further evidence that natural resources has not been a priority in the past. Completing the NRMP will help change this dynamic.

Development of the NRMP will be accelerated by the extensive work that was previously completed by City staff and the Sustainability Committee. 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 NRMP will build upon previous work, most recently the restoration priority study completed by the Sustainability Commission. This study is a GIS based analysis that utilized past studies to identify priorities for restoration in the City. The NRMP will need to 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 recreational opportunities with natural resource preservation.

The ultimate goal of the NRMP is to understand priorities and costs. The City knows the current budget allocation for maintenance and restoration is insufficient and needs to establish what the appropriate budget number should be for planning. The NRMP should address the following topics that directly impact Bloomington's Parks:

- Access issues
- Prioritization and budget
- Partnership opportunities, roles, and responsibilities



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## ACCESS ISSUES

The NRMP should make recommendations on access issues in natural areas both city-wide and in specific areas. The public prefers a balanced approach to preservation and access. The following issues are anticipated city-wide as residents are looking for nature access:

- **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 issues** – 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 northern-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. 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 bike infrastructure. Existing trailheads at the Minnesota River Valley should be studied for improvements and enhancements that would increase their value and usability for resident and visitors.
- **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 realize 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

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55%

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

28%

OF ALL RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOCUS



03

opportunities. The NRMP should provide recommendations on themes for education in Bloomington.

- **Green Infrastructure** - The Water Resources Department completed a feasibility study of opportunities to integrate Green Infrastructure into Park spaces. The NRMP should evaluate and confirm recommendations.

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:

- **Mountain Biking Trail Development** - Mountain biking is a growing sport with a strong history in Bloomington and additional trail areas could further define Bloomington locally 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 the potential negative affect 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 areas that should be avoided. Sustainable trail building techniques would be used to minimize impacts, but the NRMP should make a recommendation on the prospect of mountain biking in these areas in relation to the natural resource value they posses and the negative impacts mountain bike trails might present. Parks that received comments identifying potential for mountain bike optimized natural surface trails include:
  - Corridor Park
  - Tierney Woods - Tierney may be a part of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve which would impact ability to add additional recreation elements.
  - Lake Girard Park
  - Marsh Lake Park
- **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** - 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. Specifically, as the creek flows through Moir/ Central Park there is a section of the creek that is highly



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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 updated 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.
  - Provide leadership for the concept of MN River Valley as a Regional Park Reserve with multiple stakeholders on both sides of the river.
  - 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 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 Project 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 portions of the city 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 revolve around the concept of aligning the stated high priority of natural resources in the City with the allocation of resources that actually does 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.

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## PRIORITY 02 PARK NEEDS (LEVEL OF SERVICE)

Bloomington parks no longer fully reflect the residents that surround 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 parks these recommendations should be used to evaluate the facility in that park with a more detailed look. Figure XX shows all of the proposed facilities to be included except for the Community Center. Site selection for a Community Center would continue once funding is secured.

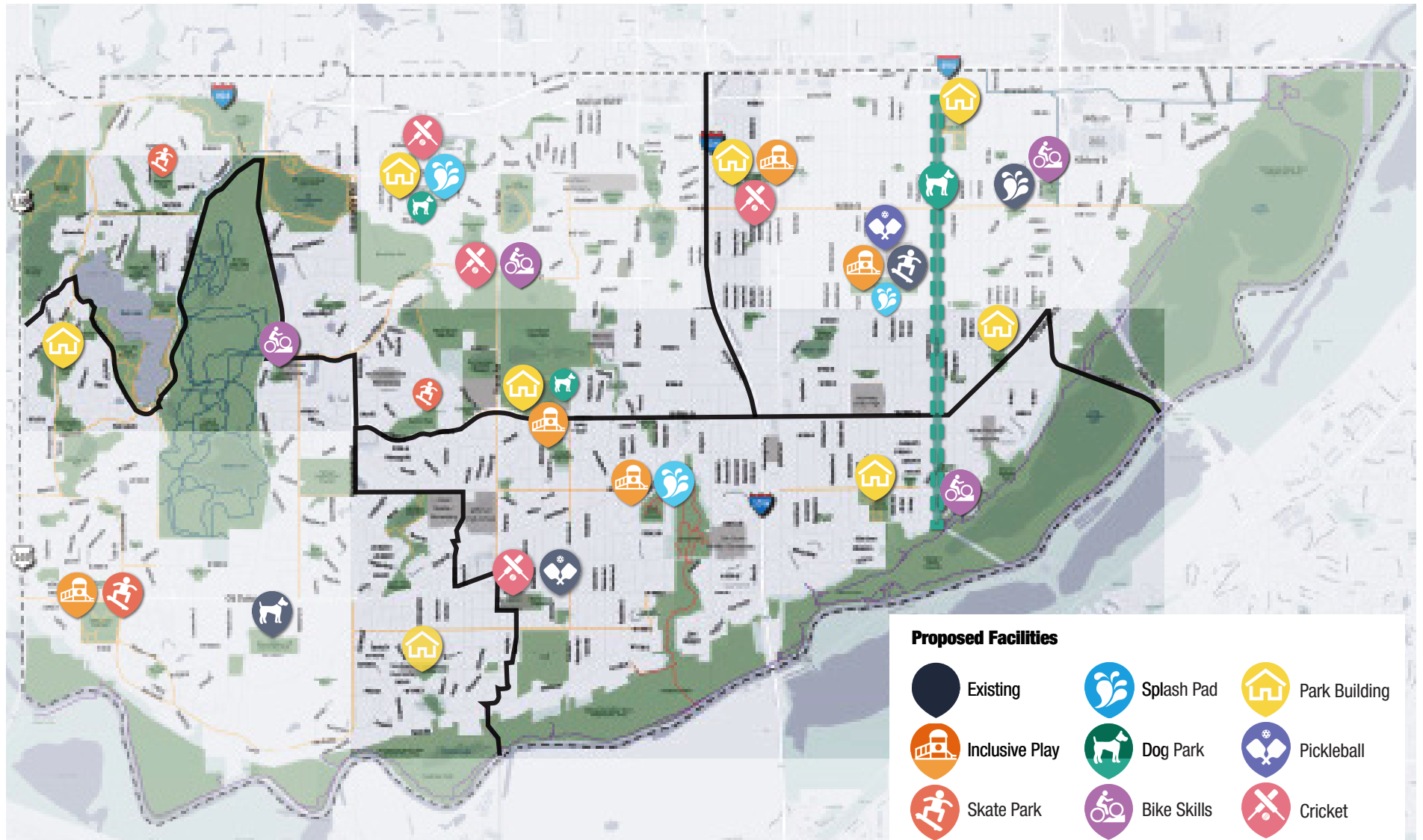


Figure 135: Level of Service (LOS) Map



## COMMUNITY PARK BUILDINGS

Community Park Buildings were developed to support the idea of ‘Centers of Community’. These are places in each area of the City that would be gathering areas 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 to community members for \$75/ half day and \$110/ whole day.

The buildings are hubs and centers for the community in all four seasons. The proposed facilities are located at parks that will have skating in the winter, and were geographically distributed to provide 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 could be moved to the end of the priority list because they are the newest and most and most adaptable for renovation. The other parks shelters need to be decommission and/ or they do not currently have a park building.

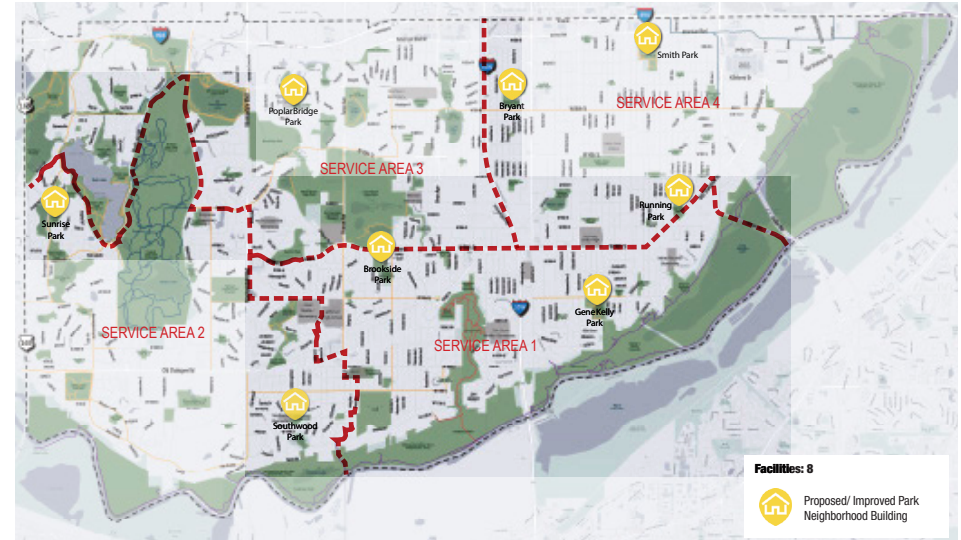


Figure 3-36: Proposed Service Area Boundaries and Park Buildings



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## INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND

Inclusive playgrounds are a universally designed, sensory-rich environments that enable children to develop physically, socially and emotionally. An engaging place that provides the just-right level of challenge and offers opportunities to succeed. Inclusive playgrounds are for the entire community and are often the most popular in the city. Bloomington does not have any Inclusive playgrounds. Most Communities Bloomington's size have 1-2 fully inclusive playgrounds. A west and east location would be ideal for Bloomington.

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

These playgrounds are typically the most popular in the City so there should be adequate parking and space for gathering. Surfacing is important for inclusive playgrounds and often a big factor in the cost. Shade structures should be included in the design to provide comfort for playground users and parents or caretakers.

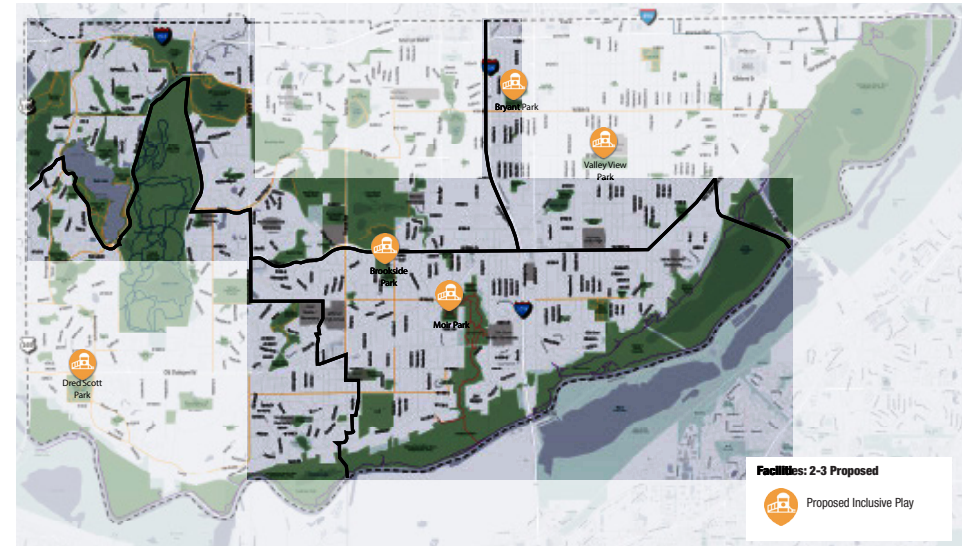


Figure 3-37: Proposed Inclusive Play



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## 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 common. Spohn Ranch published a report on their website about the benefits of skateparks <https://www.spohnranch.com/the-top-6-benefits-of-public-skateparks-2014-03-02>. The top 6 benefits of skateparks 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 east side. Bloomington should introduce more skateparks to 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 both sides of town 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 a community level skate facility.

Neighborhood and community skateparks should be designed to be used by multiple modes. Skateboards, scooters, and bikes should be able to use the infrastructure at a skatepark.

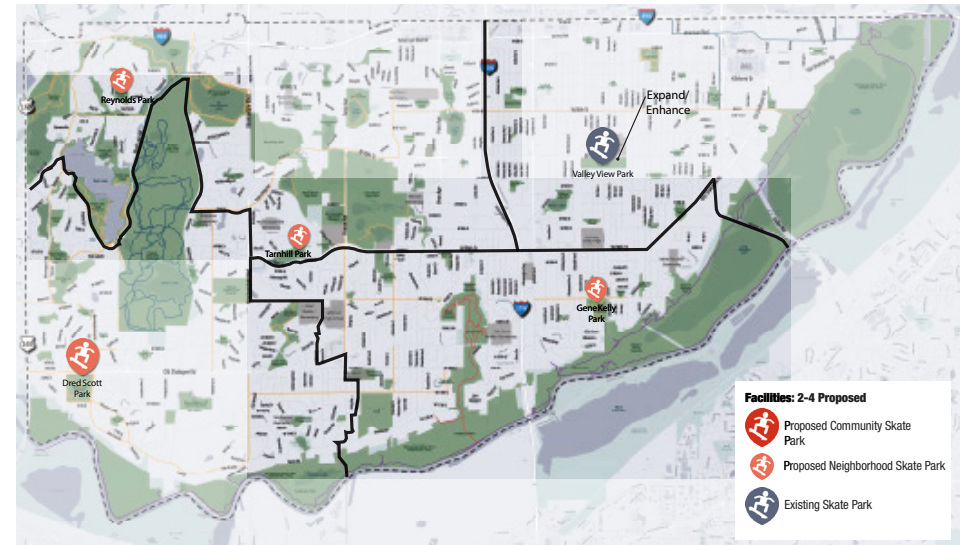
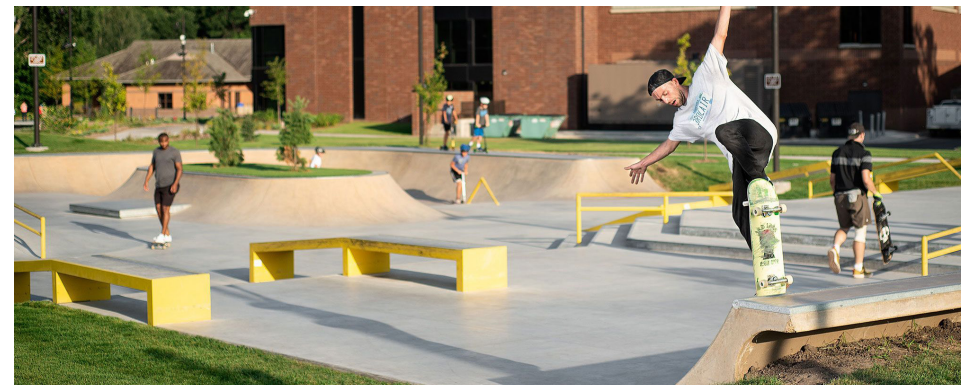


Figure 3-38: Existing And Proposed Skate Park



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## 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.

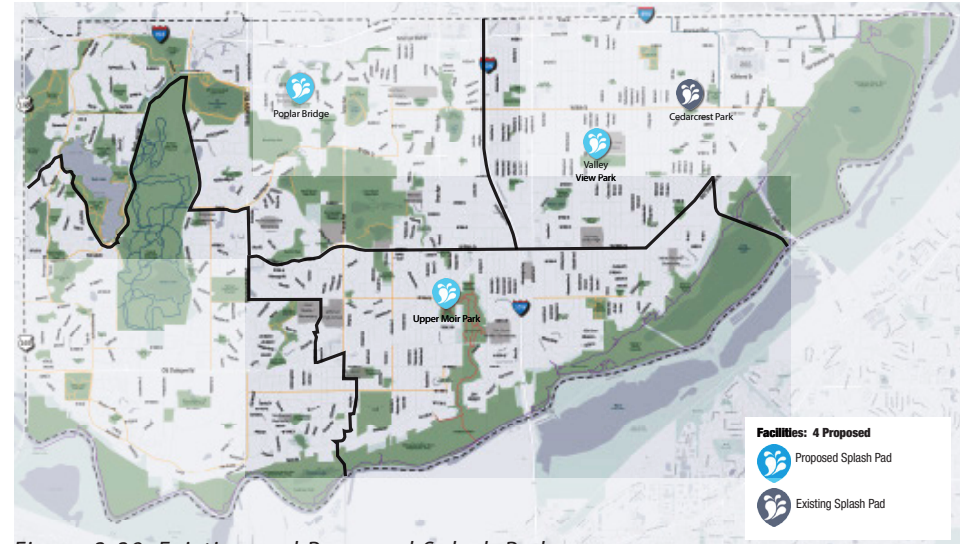


Figure 3-39: Existing and Proposed Splash Pad



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## DOG PARKS

Pet ownership has grown steadily over time. It is estimated that pet 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. Dog parks 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 have become popular. Bloomington needs another larger off-leash facility on the east side and should continue to explore options for providing. The City should consider and discuss including a facility in the Xcel Energy utility corridor. Additionally, we recommend using off-season hockey rinks that keep the boards up 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 the city. 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 in the City.

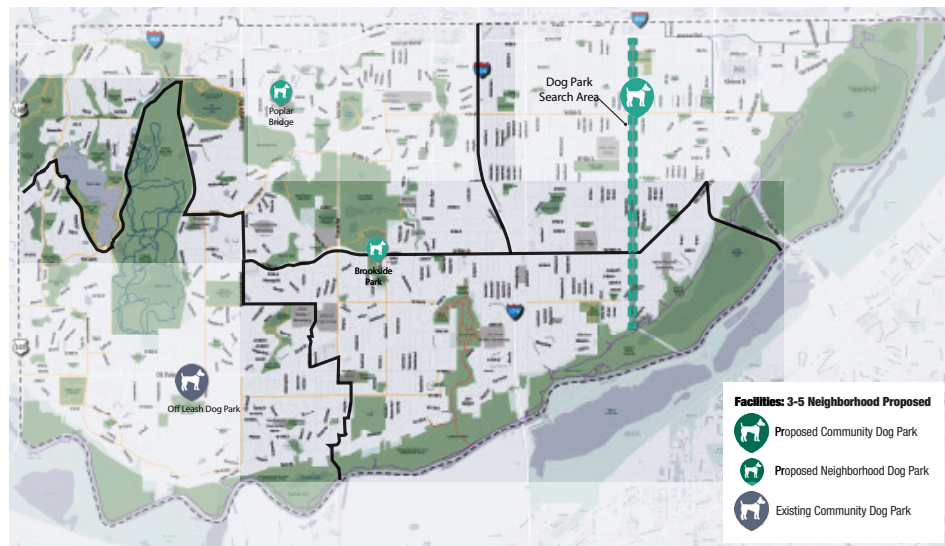
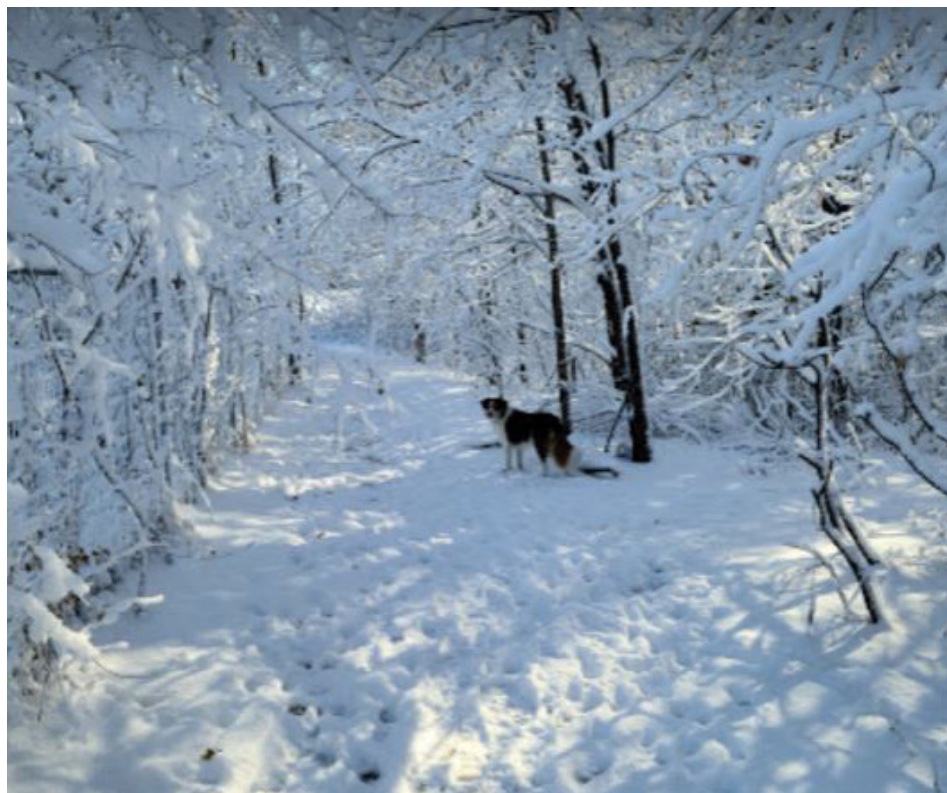


Figure 3-40: Existing and Proposed Dog Park



# BIKE PLAYGROUND/ SKILLS AREA

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 jump and pump tracks.

They are typically dirt surfaced but can include hardened surfaces. A few facilities are currently planned along the Duluth Traverse and this plan recommends locations for additional facilities. Skills areas are typically smaller scale, not centralized, and found throughout the trail system or at trailheads and ride centers. They can be fit into the fabric of an existing park.

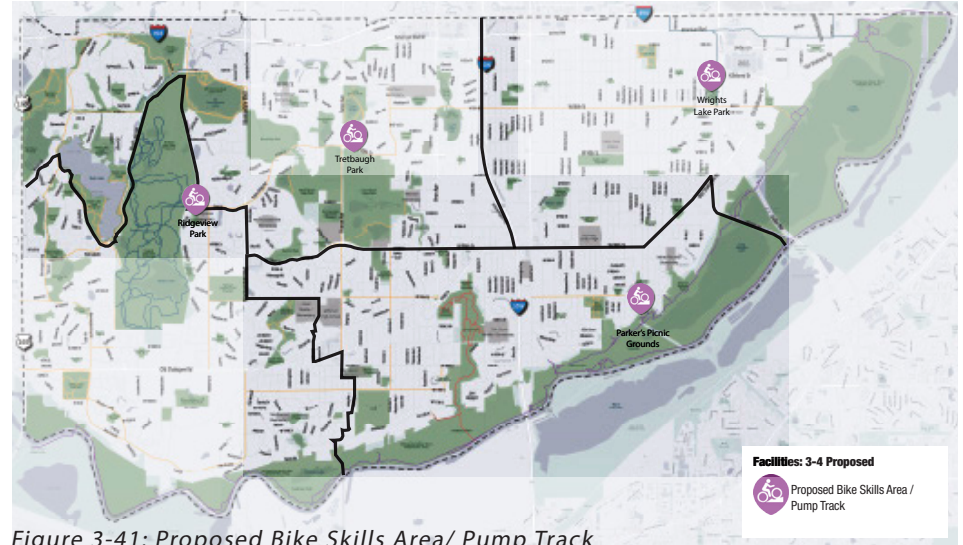


Figure 3-41: Proposed Bike Skills Area/ Pump Track



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## PICKLEBALL

Pickleball has been a fast growing sport throughout the United States. It is a paddle sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis. Two to 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 quick, fast-paced, competitive game.

Pickleball is very social sport. Numerous leagues and tournaments have developed to build on this socialization. Private businesses have included 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 pickleball's appeal is that it doesn't rely on highly technical skills like tennis or golf. Pickleball can be learned with a little bit of practice and doesn't need 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 restriped into the same footprint as one tennis court.

Westwood Park contains the city's only pickleball court and is very popular. Valley View Park would be another great location for a larger pickleball facility as it has infrastructure to host leagues and/ or tournaments.



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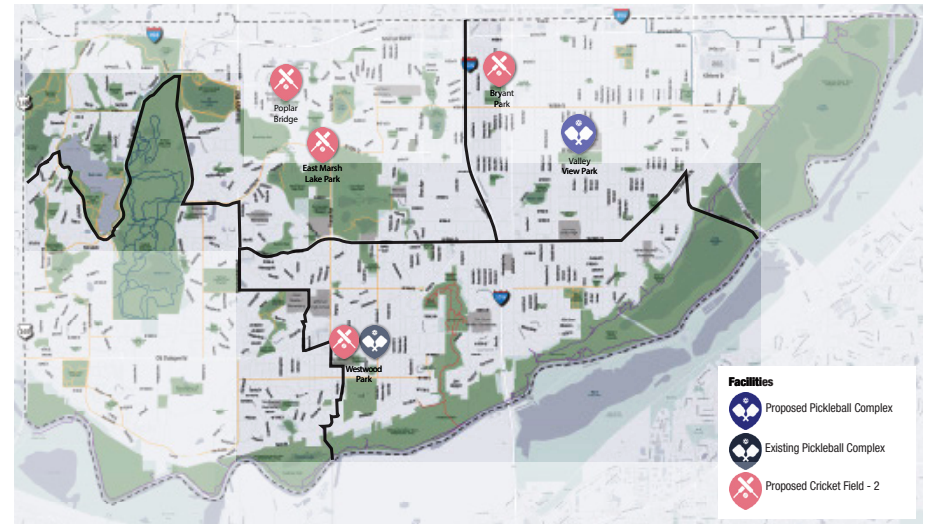


Figure 3-42: Existing and Proposed Pickleball Complex

## 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 new engagement platform - *Let's Talk Bloomington*. The following results for each of the facilities and locations proposed above follow. 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.

03

## Potential Park Buildings and Service Areas

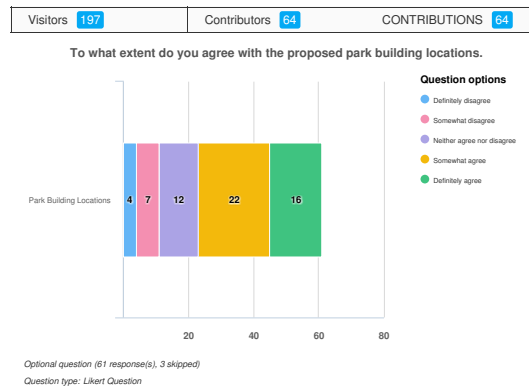
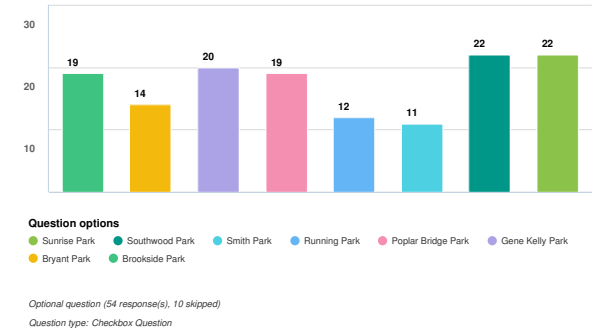


Figure 3-43: Potential Building Parks and Service Areas Figure 3-44: Top Three Building Locations Responses

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



## Dog Park Locations

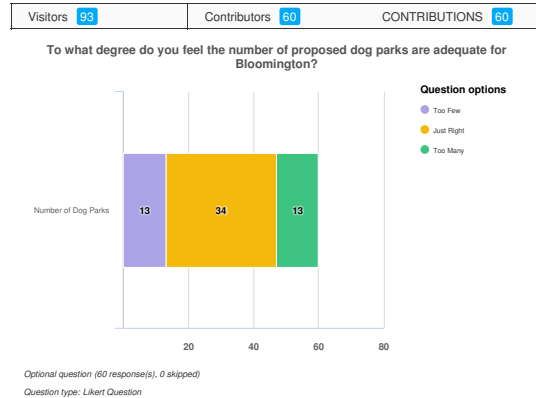


Figure 3-45: Dog Park Quantity Responses

## To what degree do you feel the proposed dog park locations are adequate for Bloomington?

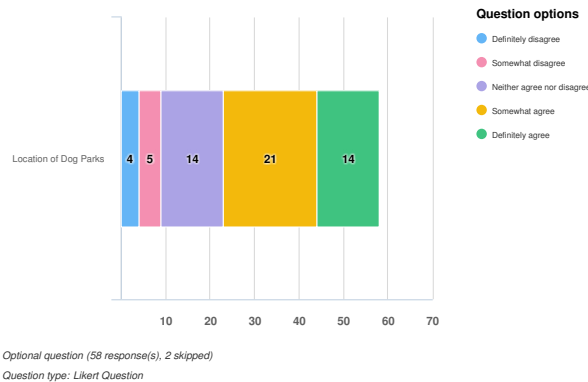


Figure 3-46: Dog Park Locations Responses

## Bike Skills Area/Pump Track Locations

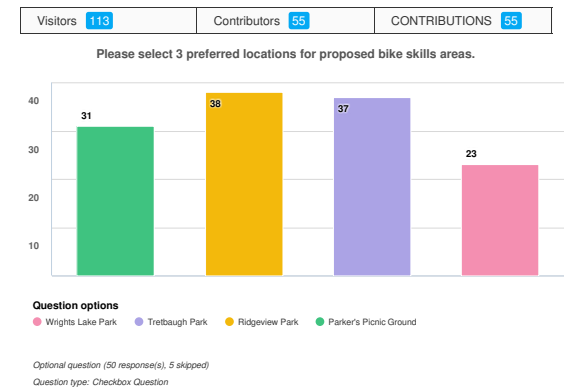


Figure 3-47: Bike Skills Area Locations Responses

## Splash Pad Locations

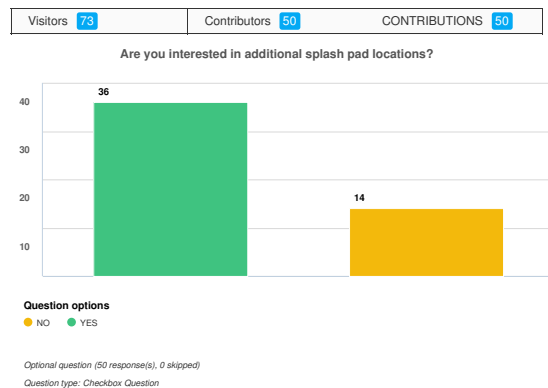


Figure 3-48: Splash Pad Locations Responses

## To what extent do you agree with the proposed splash pad locations?

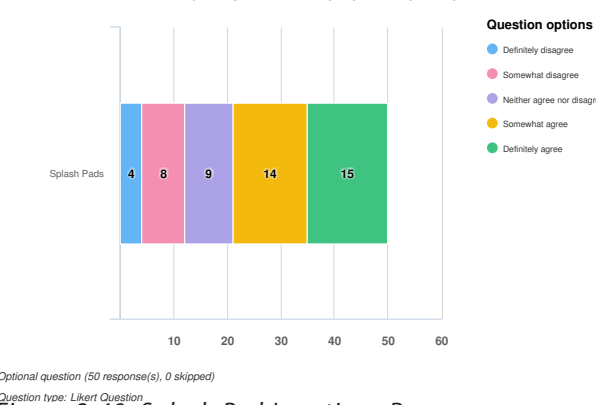


Figure 3-49: Splash Pad Locations Responses

## Skate Park Locations

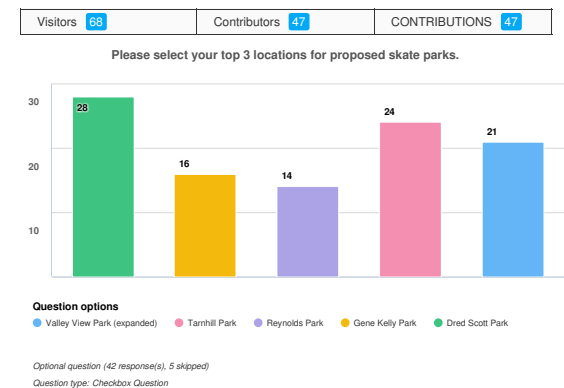


Figure 3-50: Skate Parks Locations Responses



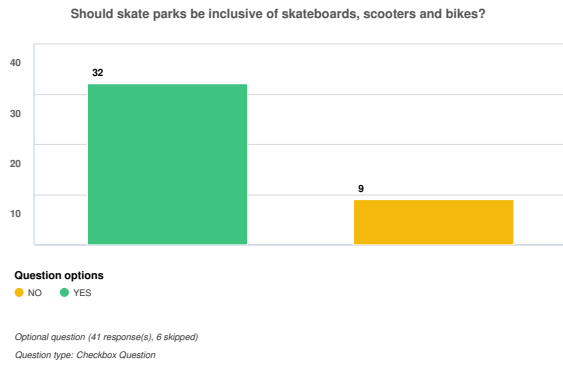


Figure 3-51: Skate Parks Inclusivity Responses

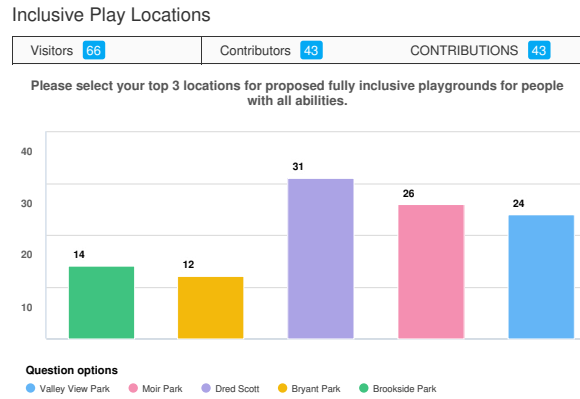


Figure 3-52: Inclusive Play Locations Responses

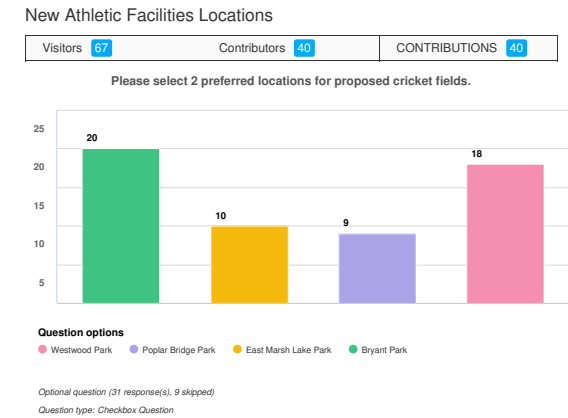


Figure 3-53: Athletic Facilities Locations Responses

## 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 capital investment for park facilities. Section 04 discusses potential financing approaches to update the park system.

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## PRIORITY 03 TRAILS AND MOBILITY

While Bloomington has quality local trails and regional facilities that have the potential for a robust system, there are key issues 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 barriers often divide neighborhoods and physically separate residents from key parks and trails amenities that are within visual sight but physically impossible to connect to. The City should continue to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements over major automobile traffic barriers 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.

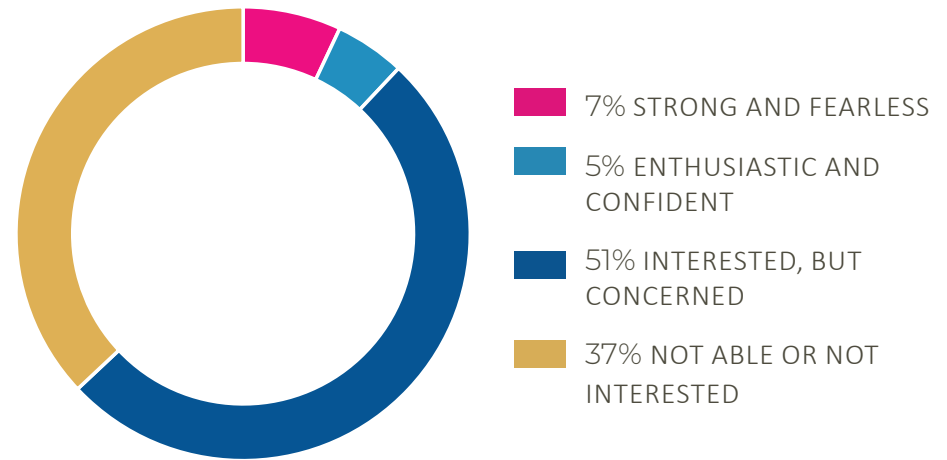


Figure 3-54: Jennifer Dill and Nathan McNeil, "Revisiting the Four Types of Cyclists: Findings from a National Survey," *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, 2587: 90-99, 2016.



*Separated by landscape beds*



*Fully separated by boulevard - Normandale*

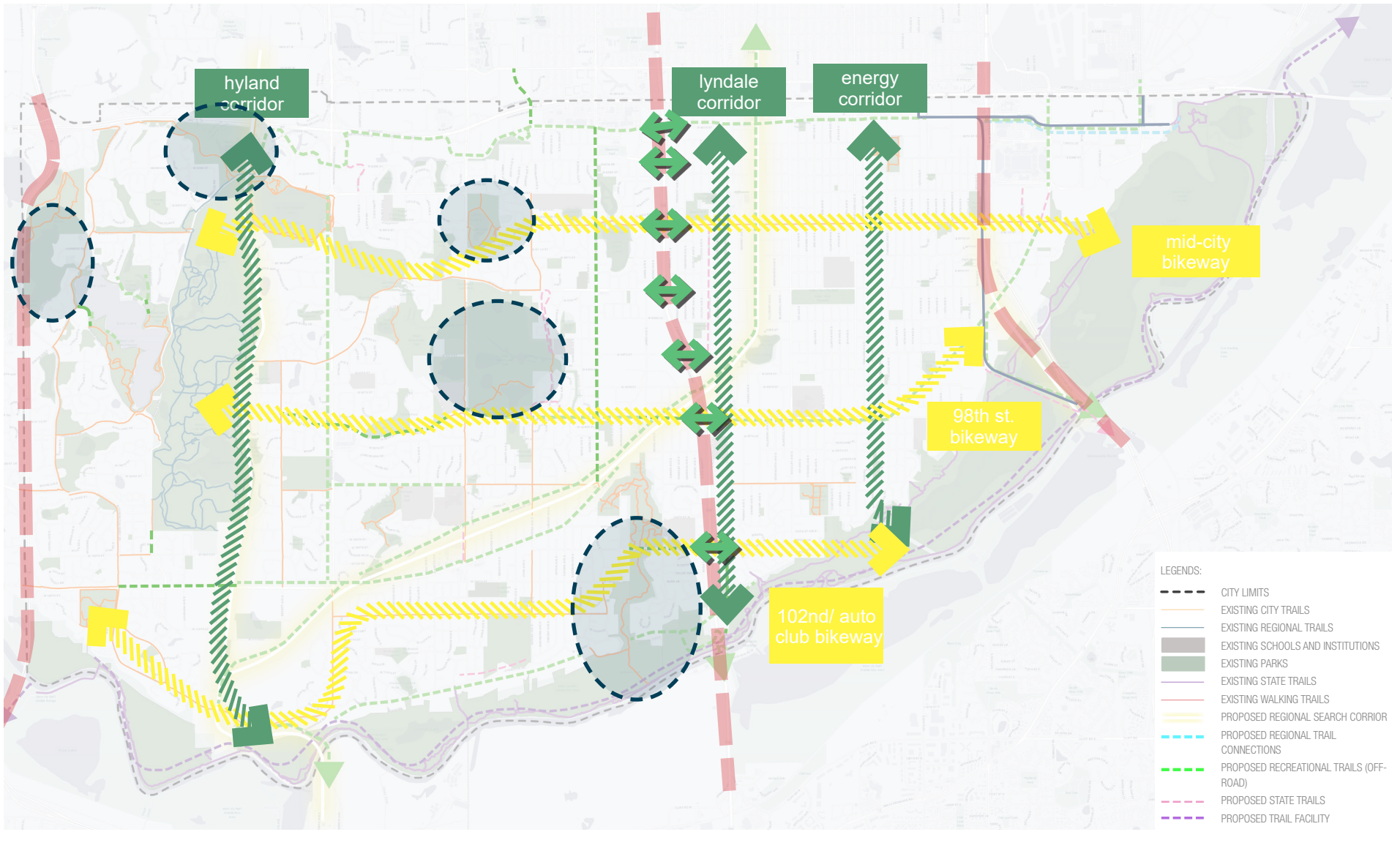


*Barrier separation*



*Green lanes (and landscape separation)*

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No Bike/Ped Facility

↕ N ↕

↔ Interstate 35W Crossings

○ Natural Surface Trails Search Area

Figure 3-55: Trail Opportunities Map  
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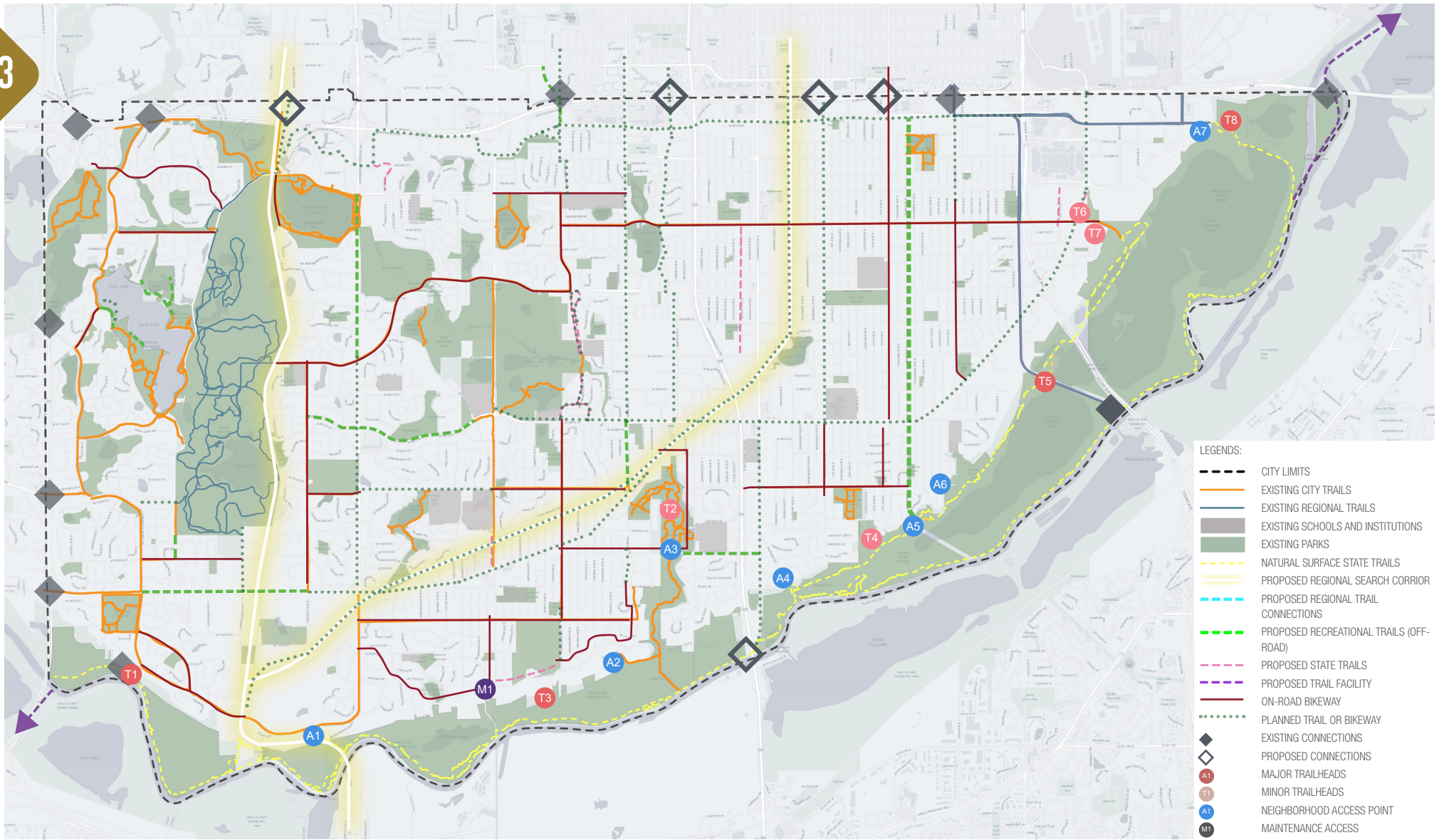


Figure 3-56: Trails and Mobility Overview Map

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## 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 connection and trails within parks. Trails and Mobility recommendation 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 more of 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, that was identified by the public as being 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 riders, and economic investment by directing users to businesses and shops. General guidelines for creating an effective signage

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and wayfinding package include the following elements:

- Be Simple - they 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 XX displays how these elements and signage packages can be combined to create an effective 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.

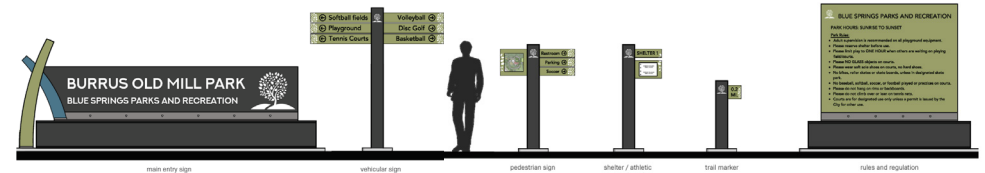


Figure 3-57: Proposed Typical Signage Design

## NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL 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 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.

Natural trails for hiking was identified as one of the highest priority items from the statistically valid survey and community engagement. Additionally, 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. Natural surface trails in urban areas typically serve a variety of objectives for an assortment of user groups. It is important to understand the specific types of trail experiences users desire so trail planners and designers can accommodate these objectives. In addition, 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 enough natural areas to devote single-use trails to each user group’s satisfaction.

Multi-use natural surface trails should be explored to balance resident needs for natural surface trails. The two primary users of these trails in Bloomington are hikers and mountain bikers. The river bottoms is an example of a multi-use trail that accommodates both without significant conflicts. There are some issues with users not fully understanding rules, expectations, right-of-way, and general etiquette. Part of this could be addressed with consistent signage 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.



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One location that has been discussed as a significant mountain biking opportunity is the Hyland Hills Ski Area. Buck Hill in Burnsville is a good precedent for what Hyland Hills could become as a summertime mountain biking destination. Adding Hyland Hills to the River Bottoms would create two destination worthy facilities in Bloomington. However, Hyland Hills is a Three Rivers Park District facility and part of a park reserve that limits the amount of active uses relative to the natural areas in the park.

*Project bloom!* collected suggestions for other potential new single-track mountain bike trails in the city. While there was support for these locations, there was also push back from those wanting to maintain the natural resource conditions, and felt that introducing mountain bike trails would diminish quality. The Natural Resource Management Plan discussed in the Natural Resources Priority should evaluate the feasibility of trails and impacts on the natural areas. A natural surface trails plan could incorporate the natural resources evaluation and evaluate the viability of including mountain biking single-use or multi-use trails that were identified in *project bloom!*:

- **Moir/ Central Park** - several comments about developing separate single-track trail from the existing pedestrian trail. Mountain biking and trail running were the suggested uses. The park acreage would support trails, but the topography, natural resource value, and potential conflicts with other trails would need to be examined.
- **Tierney Woods** - this park is part of the regional park reserve and may be subject to recreation use restrictions. Additionally, high quality natural areas are likely present and would need to be studied with a recommendation coming out of the NRMP.
- **North Corridor Park** - this park is part of the regional park reserve and may be subject to recreation use restrictions. The natural areas quality may be less of an issue than at Tierney Woods.
- **South Glen/ Heritage Hills Pond** - this park is small for true singletrack trails. A beginners course or skills area would be more suitable uses.
- **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 facility.
- **USFWS Wildlife Refuge** - this land is not owned by Bloomington and new trail development is unlikely in a wildlife refuge

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Natural surface hiking trails are also desired and there is significant potential throughout the city that could studied with specific issues and opportunities identified for new trail development.

## TRAIL LOOPS INSIDE PARKS

Providing trail loops within parks is a simple but effective way to enable healthy lifestyles and activities. Section 04 provides an example of the evolution of a neighborhood park and how a trail loop can be integrated. Shorter trail loops provide excellent opportunities for short walks for surrounding residents, office employees, and park visitors. They are simple loops for walking the dog after work, pushing a stroller, allowing kids to learn to ride a bike or scooter in a safe environment. They 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 completely ADA 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

These facilities help develop better bike riders. Providing opportunities for children and adults to have fun and practice handling their bikes builds confidence, better balance, and understanding of spatial relationships related to speed and stopping. These facilities can be used for programming opportunities 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.



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## ADDITIONAL TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

There were a few short-term trail opportunities that were brought up throughout community engagement efforts, analysis, and stakeholder group discussions:

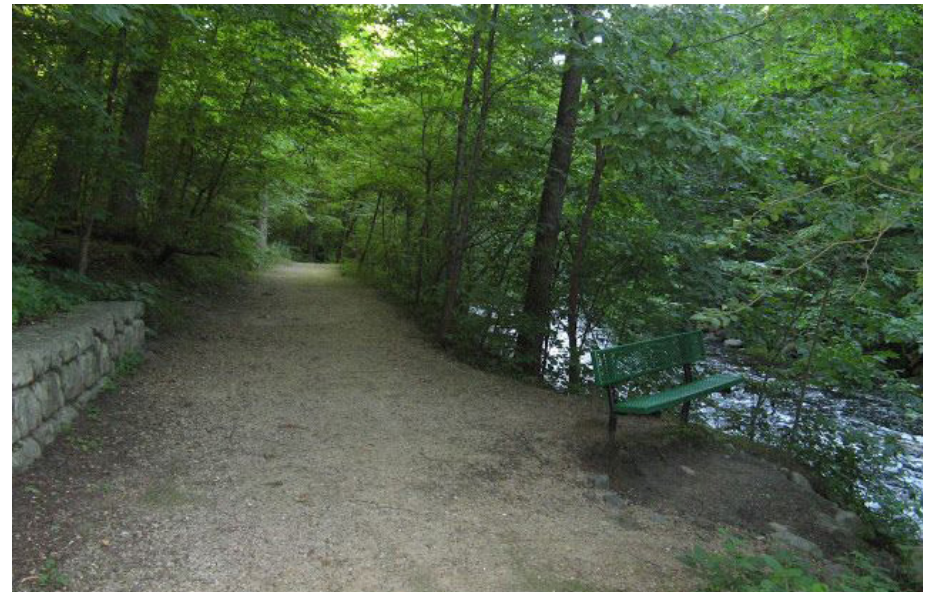
### XCEL ENERGY UTILITY CORRIDOR

A feasibility study for the Xcel Energy Utility Corridor should be considered. 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 occur for a continuous trail. These crossings could be studied for opportunities and feasibility. There may also be great value in providing local trail connections through the corridor to provide safe routes to schools, parks, and general recreation.

### CENTRAL PARK BIKE FEASIBILITY

Central Park, and the trail along Nine Mile Creek, is a hidden gem within the City. There were comments in community engagement and stakeholder meetings about increasing access to bikes. 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. 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 examine potential conflicts, effects on the user experience, logistics of fitting a separate but parallel trail in, and the benefits it would provide park users.



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## CONCLUSION

Bloomington has been working on their trails plan through various departments, but mainly through Planning and Engineering as roadway improvement projects are implemented. Trails is also one of the most talked about and requested amenity 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 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

Comprehensively addressing the trail and mobility issues and opportunities in the city will help build a comprehensive system 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

Parks and recreation are an essential service in Bloomington. The benefits of access quality parks, open space and recreation opportunities have been well studied. Research continues to highlight and uncover key connections between parks and community health. Property values, air quality, mental health, crime rates, physical activity levels, community identity, and combating chronic diseases are a few of the societal challenges that are all improved through access to the outdoors and to parks. The evidence is clear that these benefits are inclusive across racial and economic boundaries. Additionally, access to parks has been shown to have positive effects on individuals with diagnoses of ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other social, communication, and developmental disabilities. However, these benefits are not equally accessible and inclusive to everyone in Bloomington.

This section will highlight these inequities and provide a framework to address them moving forward. The Parks Department can be a pioneer in addressing inequities within Bloomington. Parks are inherently a democratic element in city life and the mission has always been to serve all residents within the city. This section will address how that balance has been lost and strategies to reestablish equity so that the park system can be fully inclusive and work for all residents. An important piece of this puzzle is how park system equity is grounded in the City of Bloomington's overarching strategies and policies to address racial equity.

### CITY OF BLOOMINGTON EQUITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

In September of 2016, the Council adopted a strategic plan that includes equity and inclusion as a key priority. In December of 2017, the City Council adopted a Racial Equity Vision Statement that reads:

*"The City of Bloomington will act courageously to advance racial equity. We will be a vibrant, safe, and healthy place where people of all races thrive."*

In October 2019, the City hired a racial equity coordinator to integrate racial equity principles into all operations, projects, and services of the City through the application and integration of best practices, training and development of City staff, and tracking and measurement of outcomes.

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In October 2020, the City Council unanimously adopted a Racial Equity Business Plan. The plan provides goals, strategies, and performance measures that will drive future racial equity work.

In addition to adopting a racial equity business plan the City has been making progress in the following areas:

- **Recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce.** Of the more than 100 individuals hired for full-time City positions since January 2016, 24% identify themselves as persons of color. Having a workforce that reflects the community the City serves builds connections, enhances trust and expands perspectives, which ultimately results in better service to all residents.
- **Hosting a series of training sessions for staff and Council.** Training is designed to help City staff and Councilmembers recognize institutional and systemic barriers to services and opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC communities).
- **Updating of job descriptions is underway.** Key objectives of the citywide update include removing unwarranted barriers to entry and incorporating racial equity as a core competency required of all staff.
- **Conducting a series of department-specific, safe-space discussions.** These facilitated discussions allowed staff to share thoughts and feelings in reaction to the death of George Floyd, and the resulting protests and civil unrest.
- **Committed to addressing racism as a public health crisis.** The City Council adopted a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis in Bloomington. The resolution acknowledges that racism is a threat to the health and well-being of the city's Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities. The resolutions outline a number of commitments that support addressing the root causes of disparities in the underlying social determinates of health.
- **Initiated Department Racial Equity Action Teams.** These are staff driven teams that will advance racial equity work from the unique perspectives of individual departments or divisions.
- **Centering racial equity in our decision-making process.** We understand that when racial equity is not explicitly brought into operations and decision-making, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated. The City Racial Equity Action Team utilizes racial equity impact assessments to systematically examine how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision.

## PARKS AND RECREATION EQUITY APPROACH

The Parks Department is actively engaged in many of the Equity and Inclusion efforts described above and desires to integrate an equity-based approach into their typical work. Utilizing an equity-based approach to creating and managing parks, trails, and recreational programs will assist staff in ensuring that all residents are served with parks facilities and programs that they desire and need to increase their quality of life. Parks should reflect the neighborhoods and people that surround and use them. An equity-based approach will give residents a role in the process to re-make their parks and ensure that their voices are continuously heard.

A common understanding and definition of Equity in Parks and Recreation is important. The National Recreation and Park Association's definition of Equitable Park and Recreation Access is:

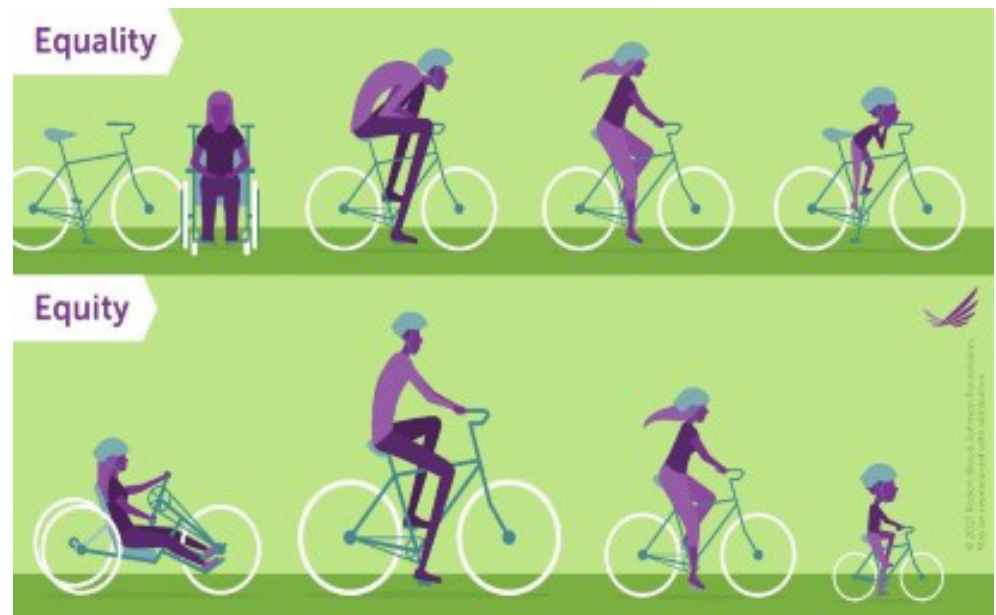
*The just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks and green space, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone.*

*When people have just and fair access, our health and social wellbeing improve, and our communities can protect and better recover from environmental, social and economic challenges.*

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EQUITY?

An important consideration of equity is the distinction from equality. Equity and equality are often used interchangeably, but they mean different things. Equality ensures everyone receives the equal amount of investment. Equity is about ensuring everyone receives the appropriate investment to meet their needs (insert graphic). This is an important distinction for Bloomington's parks moving forward. Significant investment in the park system will be required to update parks to meet modern needs of Bloomington's residents. Parks throughout the city are outdated and have been historically underfunded. Both larger scale Community Facilities and Neighborhood Parks need updates and improvements. Replacement of deteriorating facilities is appropriate in some neighborhoods but not in others. A park focused example of the distinction of Equity and Equality focuses on the replacement of tennis courts:

- An equality focus would make sure the tennis courts were repaired and revitalized in all parts of the city to ensure things are equal.
- An Equity focus first asks whether a neighborhood needs a tennis court. Some neighborhoods might answer yes, while some neighborhoods would answer no. An Equity centric approach would focus on understanding what that neighborhood needs and modifying the reinvestment to satisfy those needs.



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## KEY QUESTIONS

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 answering 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 these questions by examining them through 2 lenses, Citywide and Neighborhood:

- *The Citywide lens* looks at the whole of the city to understand the 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, history, and demographics.

## 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.

### Citywide Lens Analysis

- Bloomington has great access throughout the city to parks and open space. 87% of all residents are within a 5-10 min. walk from a neighborhood, community, or regional park. This percentage remains high for all age ranges and racial backgrounds. (include map)
- There are significant barriers that physically divide the City. Interstate 35W is one of the largest.
- A majority of the natural areas, wetlands, and creek features are in the western, central, and southern parts of the city. (include map)

### 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 boundaries with the exception of a small portion around Bryant Park being switch from Service Area 3 to 4. (include map and break out explanation)
- 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. (include overall map)
- The Service Areas were used to further analyze the system through comparison.

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## Neighborhood Lens Analysis

- While distribution of parkland is great throughout the city, the amount of parkland in each Service Area is not equal. Service Area 4 has less significantly less neighborhood and community parkland per population than the other service areas (insert map)
  - » Service Area 1 = 29.59 acres/ 1,000 people
  - » Service Area 2 = 19.22 acres/ 1,000 people
  - » Service Area 3 = 66.86 acres/ 1,000 people
  - » Service Area 4 = 6.49 acres/ 1,000 people
- Service Area 4 has a number of aspects that signify an equity issue is present.
  - » Highest density – Top 8 parks in the system with the most population living near them.
  - » Highest amount of poverty – 8 of the top 10 parks with the most number of block groups with 10% or more below the poverty line
  - » Highest Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) – Top 11 parks with highest number BIPOC living near
  - » Highest Density of children – 9 of the top 10 parks with the most kids living near.

## 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 higher 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. project plan allows for this and should be supported during implementation.
- Prioritize trail and mobility improvements in Service Area 4 to maximize access.
- 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 the following opportunities Xcel Energy Corridor (paralleling Park Street), YMCA, Three Rivers Park District (programming), US Fish and Wildlife Service as of the National Wildlife Refuge.

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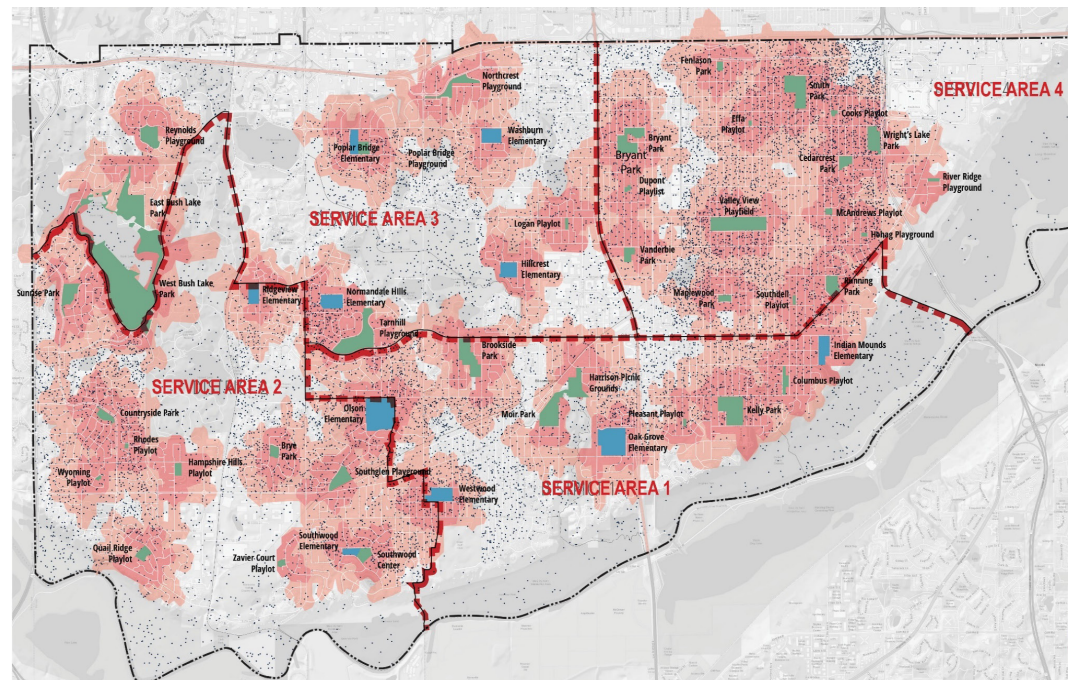


Figure 3-58: Bloomington Service Area Map

## 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 BIPOC professionals. This can create challenges for connecting to these communities and building trust with design professionals. 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 homogenous 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. The following documents 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:



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## City Wide Engagement for the PSMP:

- A statistically valid survey that mirrored the city's current demographic breakdown was taken.
- An online engagement tool open and advertised to all was heavily trafficked.
- Virtual Town Halls allowed a forum to collect thoughts and ideas.
- '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.
- Reached out to 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.
- Establish a policy that identifies a park improvement cost threshold or thresholds that will require projects to include a significant public engagement process including:

» Creating Community Driven Park Plans for significant park projects.

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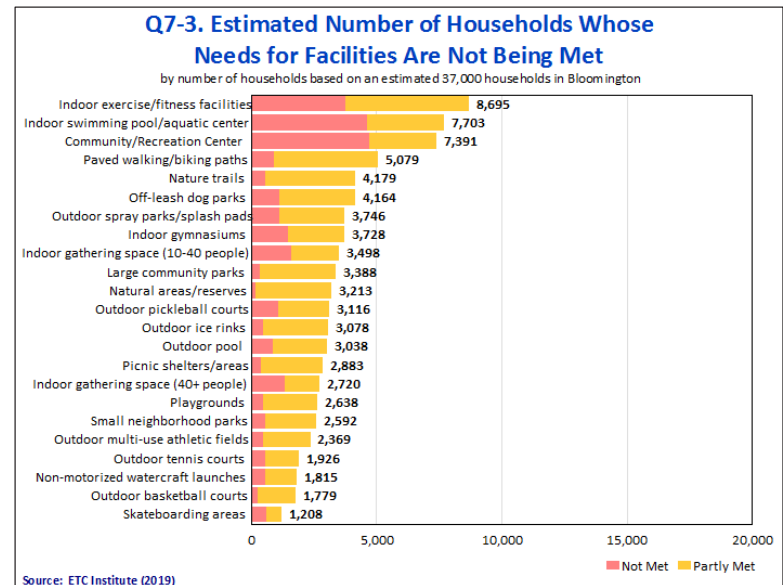


Figure 3-59: Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs For Facilities Are Not Being Met Summary Chart



- » Developing a typical engagement process that is equitable and repeatable. Plan should be developed with Parks Department Staff and Community Outreach and Engagement Division (COED).
- » Focusing engagement efforts and notifications on properties 0.5 miles and less surrounding neighborhood parks being considered for improvements. Community parks should widen the focus of engagement since they are regularly used by people throughout the city.
- » Utilizing a combination of online and in-person engagement that will be cost effective, but not lose the personal relationships that are necessary for meaningful engagement.
- » Reporting back to the community how their input was integrated into park design and planning 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



- Annual surveys with existing and potential users should be performed to identify needed programs and services
  - » Surveys should also evaluate existing barriers preventing participation such as
    - \* Cost
    - \* Travel 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. Working together could offer all parties increased 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 developing 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. Park improvements have historically 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 crime issues, and a multitude of other

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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 in Bloomington. 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 distinct areas of the community are served by larger recreation facilities. These community recreation facilities were proposed based on the current needs of the park system and 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.

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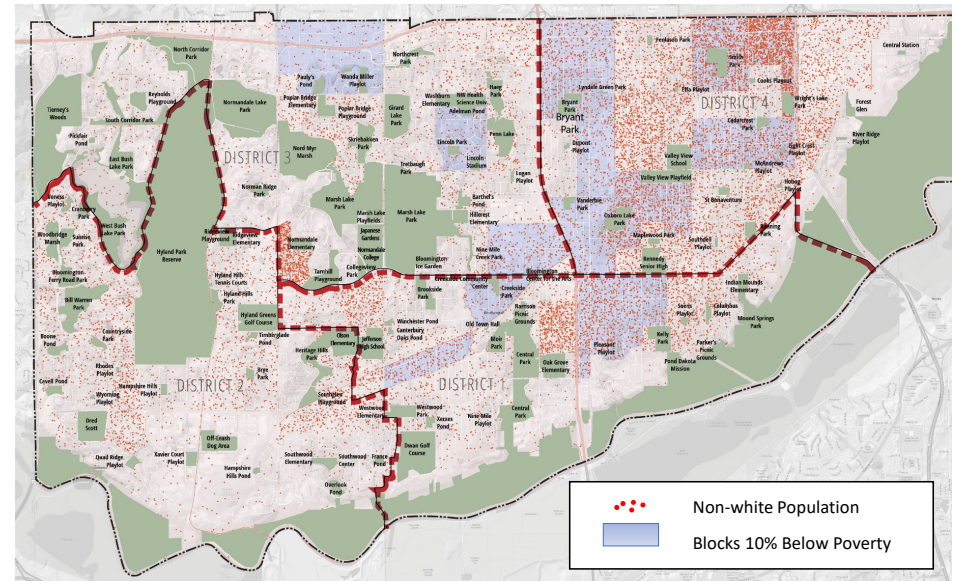


Figure 3-60: Parks and Population Distribution per Service Areas Map

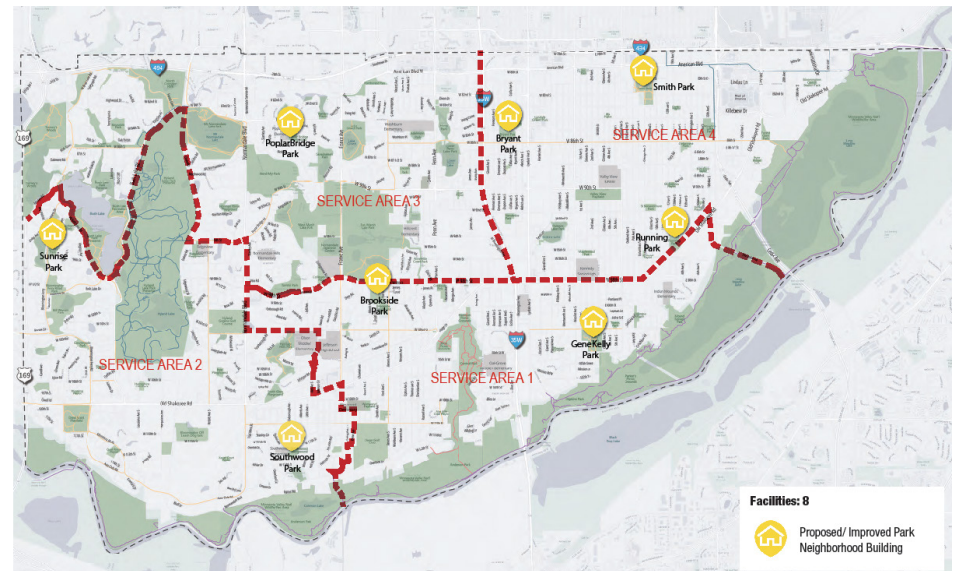


Figure 3-61: Proposed Park Neighborhood Building in Service Areas Map

## 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 the course of 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 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 – 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 – Populations 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.
  - » 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 – More people put 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.
  - » 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 condition of facilities 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).

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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 more '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
- Conditional Characteristics .50



**EQUITY PRIORITIZATION INDEX VALUE**

PARK NAME	PARK PRIORITIZATION VALUE
Generic Park A	2.75
Generic Park B	2.58
Generic Park C	2.25
Generic Park D	1.98
Generic Park E	1.94
Generic Park F	1.65

City-wide CIP Criteria	
1	Fiscal impact
2	Health and safety
3	Economic effects
4	Community
5	Strategy
6	Opportunity
7	Racial equity
8	Sustainability

Figure 3-62: Equity Prioritization Chart

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 conditional 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 feed 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.

### 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 similar 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 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

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- 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

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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.

## SECTION 03 REFERENCES

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