

# 04

## HOW WE GET THERE

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## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) APPROACH

Bloomington's parks are outdated and require significant investment to update. The park system has focused on maintenance and replacement of facilities which has led to little innovation and transformation since construction in the 1960's-70's. Despite the emphasis on maintenance the facilities and park infrastructure has fallen behind. Bloomington's 5-year average for Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) spending was \$1,340,000. This was second lowest in the Benchmark Communities and low compared to recommended standards from the NRPA. Other benchmark communities were in the \$3.8-\$4.8 million dollar range (insert Benchmark table). Bloomington will need to increase its CIP funding in order to update the Park System and set it up to meet residents needs for the next 10-20 years.

Agency	Population	Paved Trails	Unpaved Trails	Total Trail Miles	Trail Miles per 1,000 Residents
City of Brooklyn Parks and Recreation	80,160	56	12	68.00	0.85
Lee's Summit Parks and Recreation	99,218	91	0	91.00	0.92
Carmel Clay Parks and Recreation	95,797	21	3.67	24.70	0.26
City of Plymouth Parks and Recreation	79,745	167.7	7.04	174.70	2.19
City of Rochester Parks and Recreation	116,961	100	0	100.00	0.85
City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation:	84,943	41.3	43.9	85.20	1.00

Figure 4-1: Comparative Study Of Parks

## INVESTMENT NEEDS

The completed Level of Service (LOS) Study showed that there are substantial needs for updated park facilities and experiences. Additionally, the statistically valid survey identified a number of needs by the community and asked residents what investments they would support in the future. The following were the highest activities/ investments with support for future investments:

- Maintaining and upgrading natural areas (89%)
- Maintaining parks with play equipment (85%)
- Upgrading neighborhood parks and playgrounds (85%)
- Upgrading nature trails (81%)
- Developing multipurpose paths/ trails in parks (80%)

Additionally, residents were asked which actions were most important to their household. The following three items rose to the top of the list:

- Maintaining parks with play equipment (26%)
- Maintaining and upgrading natural areas (23%)
- New indoor community recreation center (23%)

Finally, the Statistically Valid Survey ranked the top priorities for recreation facilities based on a Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The PIR was created by equally weighting:

1. The importance that residents place on facilities, and
2. How many residents have unmet needs for the facility

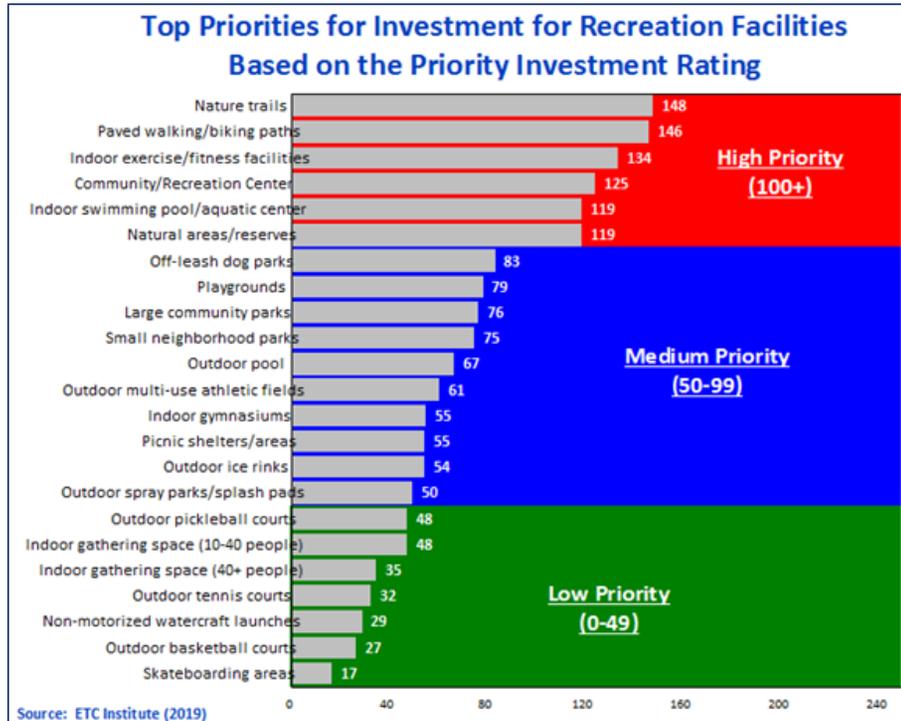


Figure 4-2: Top Priorities For Investment For Recreation Facilities Based On The Priority Investment Rating

The items listed above are significant investments and will require an increase in CIP and maintenance funding to meet the needs and expectations of the community. While the PSMP is focused on outdoor parks facilities, it is notable that there are significant indoor facilities identified in the High Priority categories above. Indoor exercise/ fitness, Community/ recreation center, and Indoor swimming pool/ aquatic center will require significant investment to provide. The popular Bloomington Ice Garden is also due to receive much needed maintenance, mechanical updates, and visitor experience improvements.

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Extensive Community Engagement verified the findings of the quantitatively focused Statistically Valid Survey. The qualitative engagement work also identified other facilities and park experiences that residents desired. Combining this qualitative engagement work with the Level of Service was important to understand the full breadth and depth of needs in the Community and how the park system could transform over time. Staff and the consultant preliminarily studied the locations and quantities of these new facilities in the park system and focused on equity and geographical distribution throughout the city (Figure 4-4). This type of transformation will require significant investment and prioritization

## PRIORITIZATION

The PSMP has discussed prioritization of projects in a few places. One place where prioritization is critical is in the Equity discussion. The CIP Equity Prioritization Tool provides a framework to make decisions for investment in neighborhood and community parks with an Equity focus. The quantitative score produced by the analysis and calculation focuses on Neighborhood Characteristics, Population Characteristics, and Park Condition Characteristics.

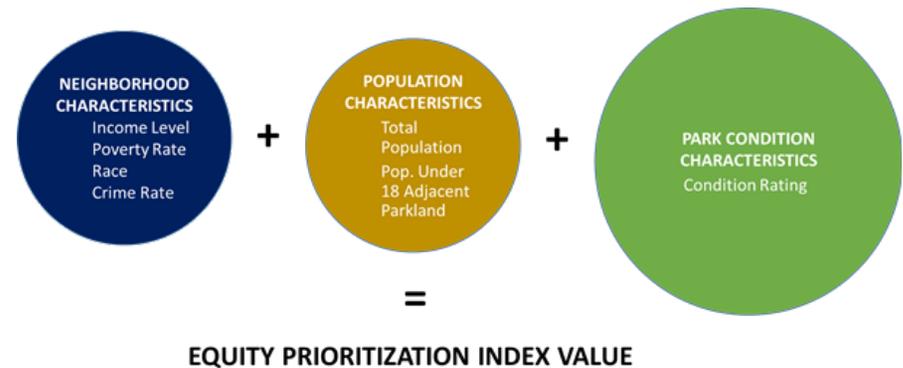


Figure 4-3: Equity Prioritization Index Value

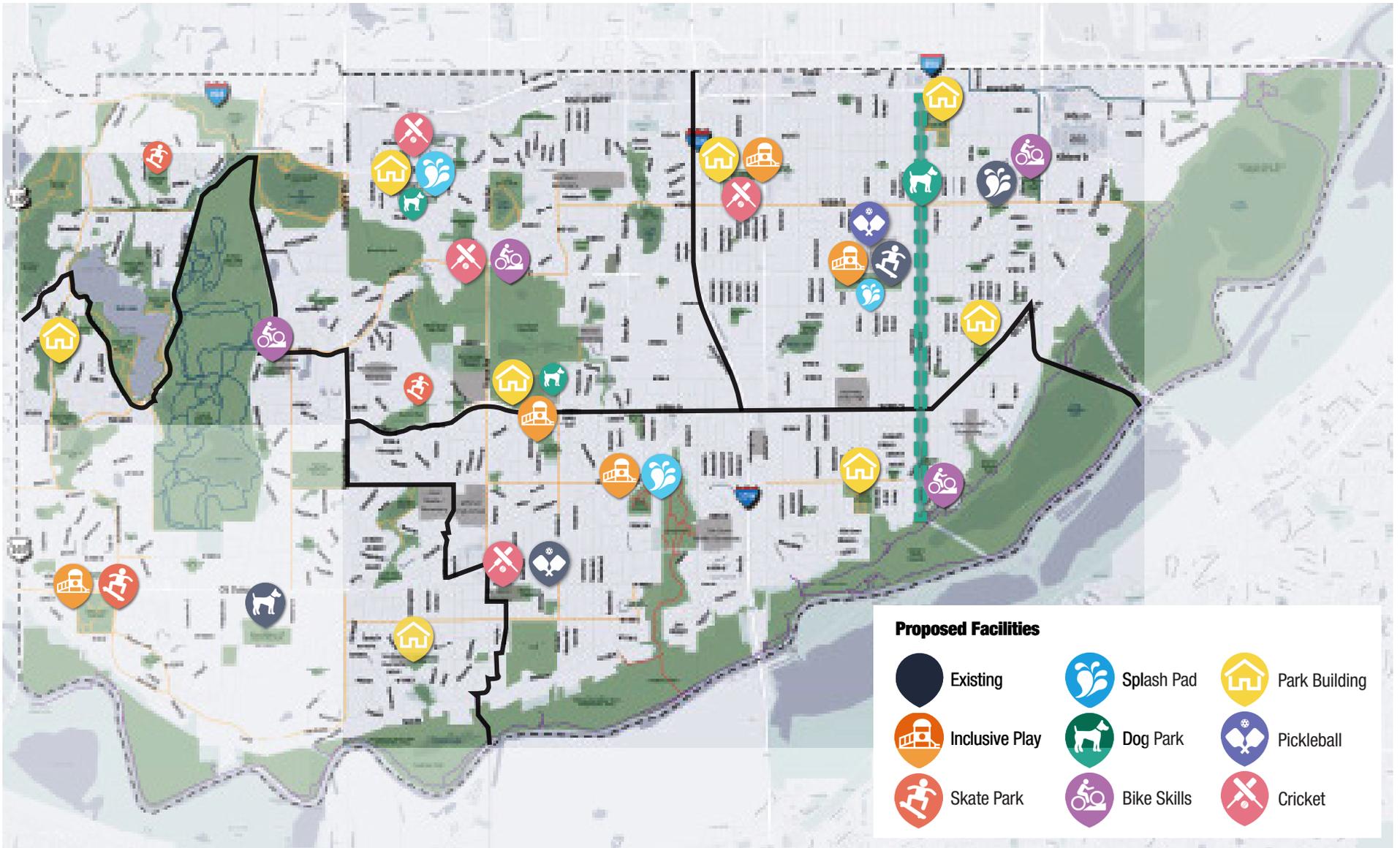


Figure 4-4: Proposed Facilities Map

The results of this analysis are fed directly into the city’s CIP planning and prioritization list under the Racial Equity criteria (Figure 4-5). Racial Equity is 1 of 8 criteria the city uses to establish priority projects. The Parks Department will have to continue working with other Departments and city leadership on refining the City-wide criteria and advocating for benefits of the park projects that have been discussed throughout the PSMP process.

There is an expectation that the other city-wide criteria will eventually develop a quantitative tool similar to the Bloomington Park and Recreation Departments (BPRD) Racial Equity tool to aid the transparency of this ranking. This city-wide CIP prioritization criteria and ranking tool is a work in progress and will be adjusted in the future. BPRD will need to remain an integral part of the CIP conversation to advocate for the value of park investments.

Staff and the consultant have combined all of the community engagement (statistically valid and qualitative), Level of Service study, and PARC and Council member input to develop a working Priority List of CIP Facility Needs. Figure 4-6 highlights the Underserved Facility Need, Relative Investment Amount, Area of Impact (how many people that facility is likely to impact), and a Priority Designation. This list is a work in progress and will be updated by staff over time, as needs change, and as financing options are understood further. All of the items on this list are priority items for Bloomington’s Park System. However, park resources are limited and this table provides another method of comparing project cost-benefits so staff can have flexibility in matching funding to priority projects.

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 4-5: City-Wide CIP Criteria Summary

UNDERSERVED FACILITY NEEDS	INVESTMENT	AREA OF IMPACT	PRIORITY
Community Center – Indoor Recreation	\$\$\$\$	CITY	HIGH
Fully Accessible Playgrounds	\$\$\$	SERV. AREA-CITY	HIGH
Community Hub Buildings	\$\$\$\$	NEIGHBOR	HIGH
Dog Parks	\$\$-	SERVICE AREA	HIGH
Natural Resources Management & Restoration*	\$\$\$	SERV. AREA-CITY	HIGH
Neighborhood & Community Park Plans	\$\$	NEIGHBOR-CITY	HIGH
Bike Skills Area/ Pumptracks	\$\$	SERVICE AREA	HIGH
Pickleball Courts	\$\$\$	CITY	MED.
Cricket Field	\$\$-\$\$\$	CITY	MED.
Skate Park	\$\$-\$\$\$	SERV. AREA	MED.
Paved and un-paved Trails	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	SERV. AREA-CITY	MED.
Playground Updates	\$\$	NEIGHBOR	MED.
Splashpads	\$\$	NEIGHBOR	LOW

Figure 4-6: Capital Improvement Plan Summary Chart

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## INCREASED INVESTMENT

Current CIP funding is not adequate for the park improvements listed above and described throughout the PSMP. Significant increases in the CIP allocation to parks will need to occur. There are multiple approaches to securing this funding, but the following options are the most realistic for meeting the significant challenge:

- **INCREMENTAL** – Staff is proposing to increase the Park CIP budget from \$1.3 million/ year to \$3-4 million/ year annually for 20 years. This increase would apply only to parks and not address facility needs.
- **IMMEDIATE** – Utilize a referendum to speed up the process and provide investment across the entire community in a 5-year time frame. The referendum would include facilities investment and address the entire system at once.

Grant applications, foundation development, donations, corporate sponsorships, and partnerships are all supplemental methods to making up the significant budget shortfall. The approach is being discussed at the city level while this PSMP is being developed. The PSMP will be updated accordingly when the CIP funding decision is finalized and implemented. Bloomington voters approved park focused referenda in the past in 1963, 1968, 1974, 1990, and most recently in 2000 for the Bloomington Art Center.

Another approach is to maintain the status quo and continue on with the inadequate CIP funding approach. The negative consequences to this approach will likely impact the park system to such an extent that any future improvements will be more costly than addressing these issues now. Reasons to not defer CIP increases include:

- Continued deterioration of park facilities equipment like playgrounds.
- Closed facilities and equipment due to safety concerns.
- Amenities that are no longer valued by the public and not used.
- Safety hazards and injury concerns with amenities like courts.
- Replacement parts will no longer be produced.
- Community image and pride affected as equipment continues to deteriorate.
- Potential for major issues to surface that will require reactive spending vs. strategic spending (e.g. the Aquatic Center cracks, breaks, or mechanical equipment fails and needs immediate replacement).

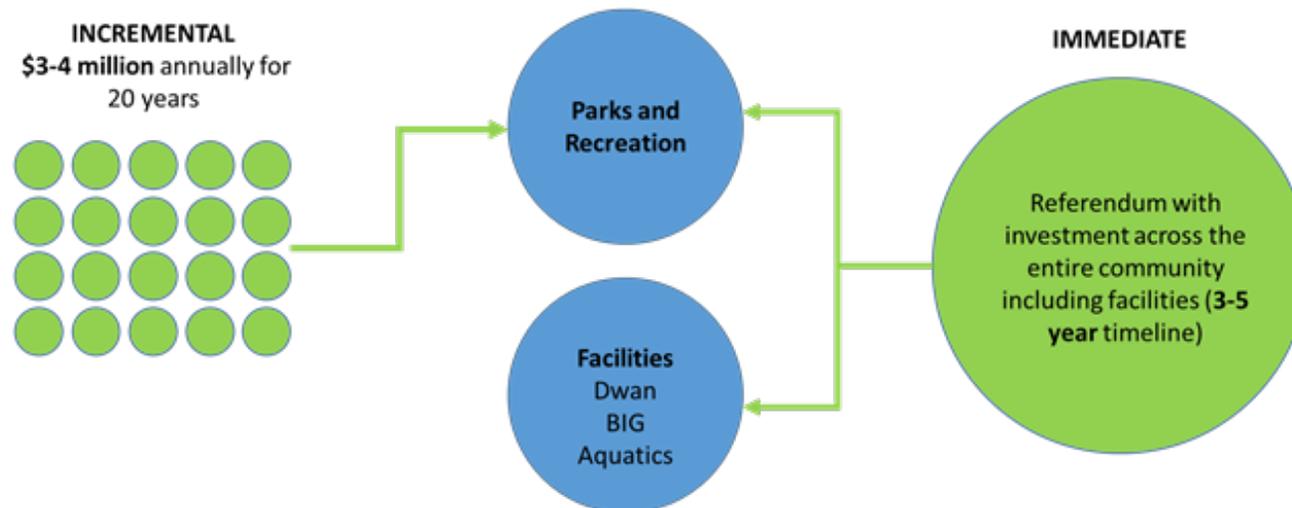


Figure 4-7: Incremental and Immediate Approach

## CONCLUSION

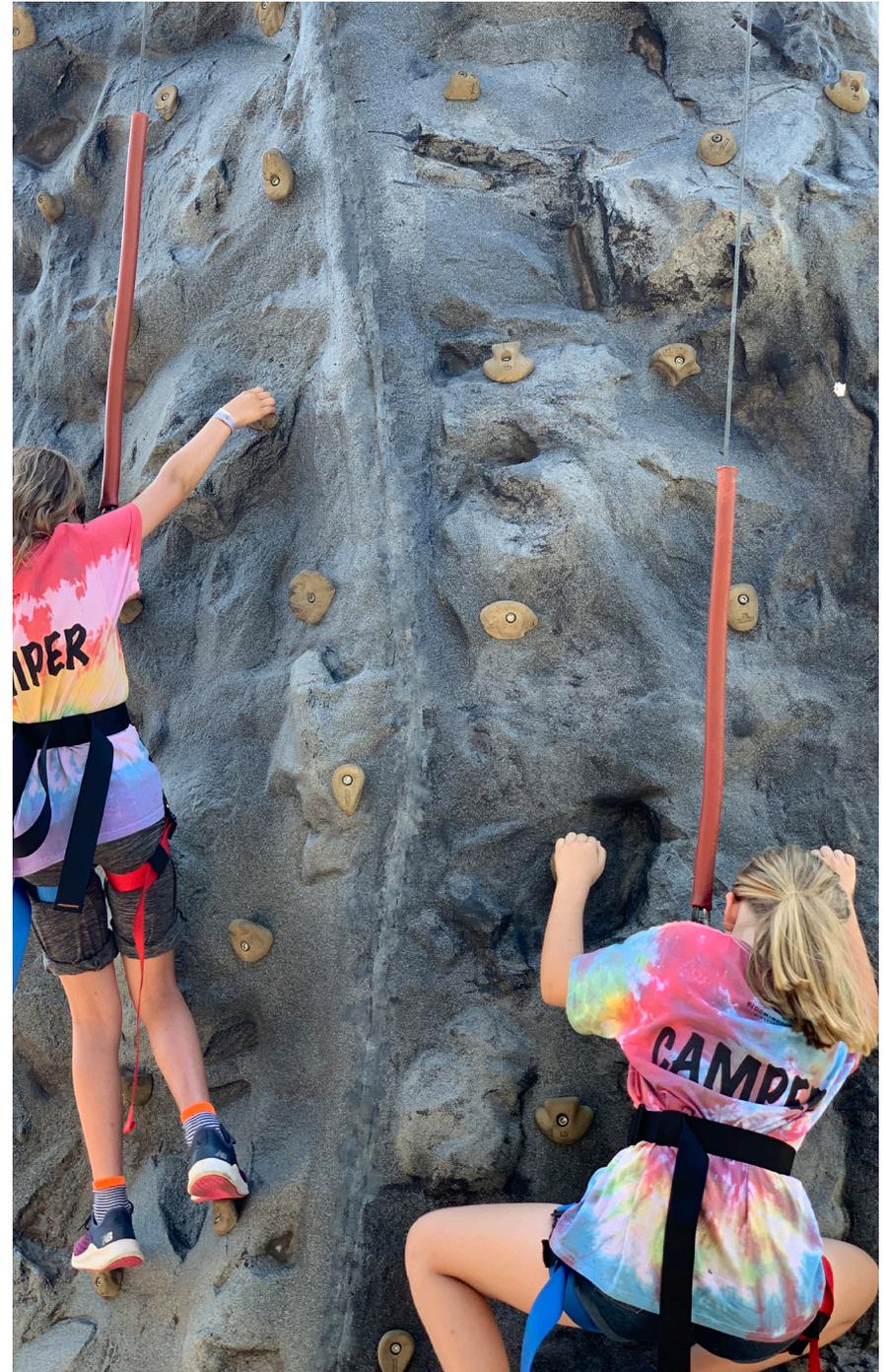
Bloomington Parks will need to increase the annual CIP spending by approximately 3x current levels over the next 20-years in order to update the park system and meet the current and future needs of residents. These needs have been consistently identified throughout the PSMP process during engagement, the LOS study, and input from city leadership. Most residents love the existing park system but see the need for updating and investment. Staff has identified a plan for providing community facilities and improving individual parks that is based on Equity. Funding these improvements will be a significant challenge and the city can approach it Incrementally or Immediately.

The Incremental approach means that some areas of the city will see limited development in the next 20-years and equity issues would shift throughout the city as CIP improvements play catch up. 20-years is a significant time period and the city and parks, and recreation will likely change dramatically in that time frame. The improvement priorities are flexible and can adapt to future conditions.

The Immediate approach would require a referendum and allow the most comprehensive method to address the park system in a timely manner. COVID stay at home orders showed how important parks and trails are to the community and how well utilized this investment would be. A referendum could potentially address park needs and facility needs at the same time. Long-term, the BPRD should focus on creating an annual park facility replacement program that mirrors the City's pavement management program. Funding would be set aside and earmarked for a planned set of annual improvement/ replacement projects. This system would reduce the funding gaps in future years for park improvement projects.

Both approaches build on the strong foundation of the park system and allow updates to be realized. Improvements and reinvestment have been deferred for years and now is the time to address issues before they become more severe. Bloomington's park system has the potential to be one of the premier systems in the metropolitan region with the appropriate investment.

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## PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND REDEVELOPMENT

It is important to classify the types of parks located within Bloomington to understand what functions and facilities are currently provided in comparison to those recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). These classifications are based on NRPA definitions; staff and consultant analysis; and field visits. Defining park classifications helps establish a standard for the level of service to the residents and future recommendations on facility development or improvement. The parks were grouped and categorized to assist in planning efforts, level of service expectation, as well as future planning efforts (e.g. facilities standards, maintenance needs, etc.)

### REDEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION POLICY:

The following policy for land acquisition should be considered by the Department to help the city acquire park land in redevelopment scenarios. Increased densities in areas of the city are highlighted in planning documents such as the Lyndale Avenue Retrofit Plan. Park land will need to increase to meet the needs of an increased, denser neighborhood. A policy should be developed that allows the Department to acquire land based on a set criterion versus because an opportunity came along:

1. The proposed land supports an unmet need in the community and is located in an under-served area of the community for that classification of park. Service Area 4 would qualify.
2. The land is identified as park land in city studies, planning documents, or area plans.
3. The land is adjacent to an existing park or trail and will provide greater access for the community to enjoy the resource.
4. The land supports a recreation facility needed in the community such as nature center, regional playground facility, and/ or a sports complex which is an unmet need.
5. The land supports a connectivity route for an existing or future trail extension.
6. The land is adjacent to a school where the value can be maximized by the School District and the Parks Department for needed programs.
7. The land supports and protects environmentally sensitive and/ or natural resource areas in the city and needs to be protected.
8. The land is donated, and it meets one of the top seven criteria listed above.

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## PARK DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

In developing design principles for parks, each park must be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall park and recreation system. The term programming, when used in the context of planning and developing parkland, refers to a list of uses and facilities and does not always include staff-managed recreation programs. The program for a site can include such elements as ball fields, spray parks, shelters, restrooms, game courts, trails, natural resource stewardship, open meadows, nature preserves, or interpretive areas. These types of amenities are categorized as lead or support amenities. The needs of the population of the park it is intended to serve should be considered and accommodated at each type of park.

Every park, regardless of type, needs to have an established set of outcomes. Landscape Architects design to those outcomes, including associated operational and maintenance costs.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose, and the features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. Recreation needs and services require different design standards based on the age segments that make up the community that will be using the park. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program depending on the classification of the park. The age segments are:

- Ages 2-5
- Ages 6-8
- Ages 9-12
- Ages 13-17
- Ages 18-24
- Ages 25-34
- Ages 35-44
- Ages 45-54
- Ages 55-64
- Ages 65-75
- Ages 76+

Park re-developments should occur in the context of the entire system and balance facilities and recreation and programming opportunities. Care should be taken with examining barriers to access parks and how that influences the mix of amenities in a particular area of the city. For example, if there are two neighborhood parks that are particularly close to each other - within a 1/2 mile walk - they should not contain similar facilities targeting the same age segments. A balance of facilities should be explored.



*Trail development*

The city should invest in new and existing parks to serve redevelopment projects if the park is within the 15-minute walk radius without major barriers. The Lyndale Avenue Retrofit Plan identified new park space and more urban focused public plaza space to accommodate the expected increase in density. These parks should be invested in to serve the larger population by providing facilities and amenities that will meet the needs of the new residents. A public engagement process should be undertaken with a Licensed Landscape Architect to engage the community and redevelop the parks to accommodate much more intensive uses. Additionally, trail and sidewalk connections from the surrounding neighborhoods should be prioritized.

Park Design Principles in this document should apply to existing and future developments and those needing Master Plans or updated park plans. Definitions used in the Park Design Principles:

**Land Usage:** The percentage of space identified for either passive use or active use in a park. A park master plan should follow land usage recommendations.

**Programming:** Can include active or passive (i.e., none). Active means it is organized and planned with pre-registration by the user. Examples of active programming include sports leagues, day camps, and aquatics. Passive programming is self-directed by the user at their own pace. Examples of passive programming include playground usage, picnicking, Disc Golf, reading, or walking a dog.

**Maintenance Standards:** Three maintenance levels are generally defined. The difference between levels is the frequency of maintenance as determined by funding availability. Maintenance Standards have these general characteristics.

- Level 1 Maintenance: High profile areas where the entire area is visible to foot traffic such as entrances to community centers, signature facilities, and areas where funding accommodates a higher level of maintenance. Examples of maintenance activities include: Mowing twice per week, 95% turf coverage at the start of season with 5% weeds and no bare areas, edging once per week, tree pruning cycle once annually, and litter pickup twice per week.

- Level 2 Maintenance – Moderate to heavy use is typical of most parks. Examples of maintenance requirement include: Mowing and edging once per week, 88% turf coverage at the start of the season with 8% weeds and 4% bare area, tree pruning cycle every seven years, litter pickup once per week.
- Level 3 Maintenance – Typical low usage parks or when funding is limited. Examples of maintenance requirements for this level include: Mowing and edging every 10 days, 80% turf coverage at the start of season with 20% weeds, edging once per week or every 2 weeks in off-season,\* tree pruning cycle every 10 years, litter pickup every other week.

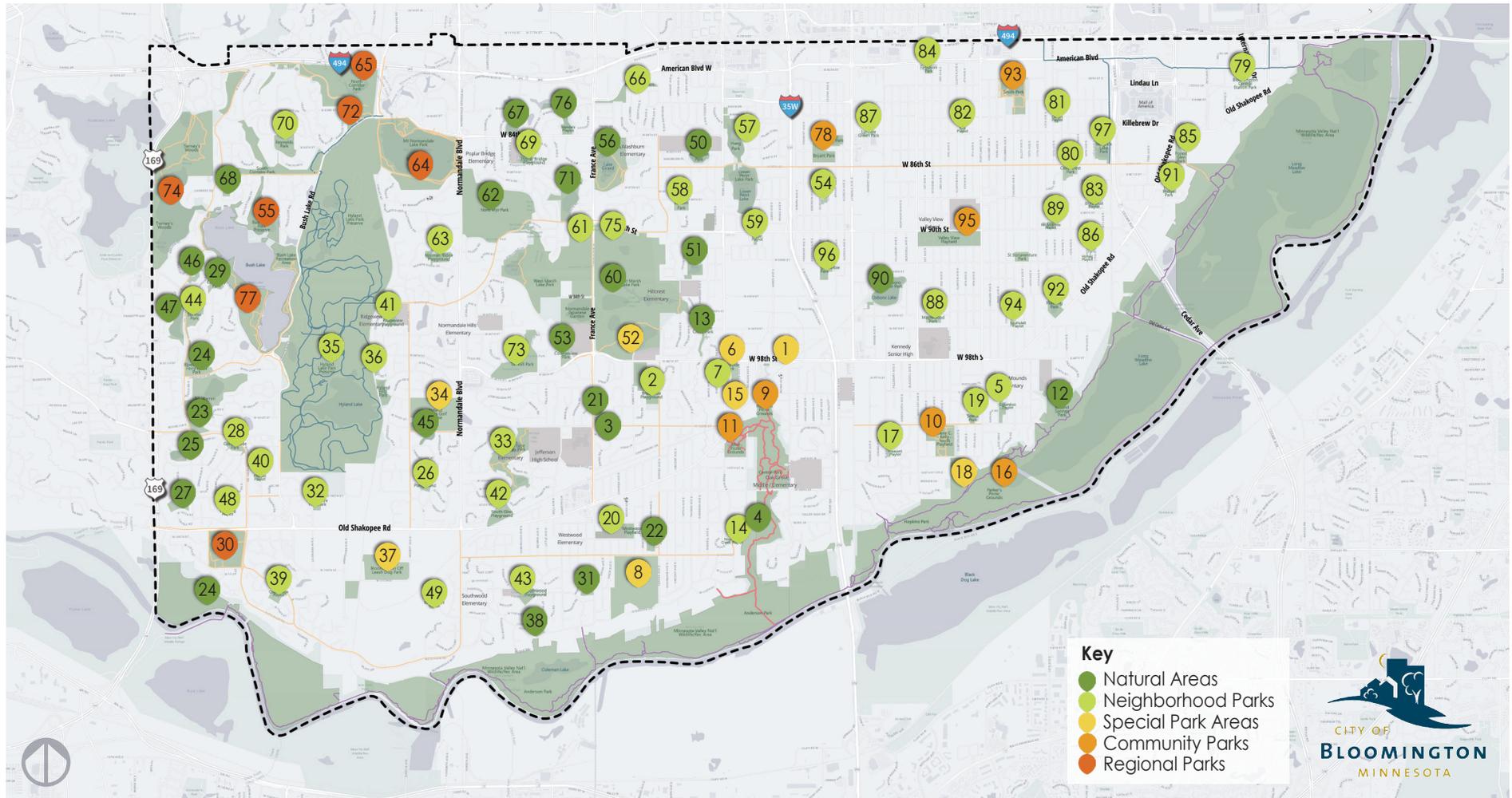
\*In areas where turf does not impact quality of experience (i.e., dog parks) or non-landscaped open space areas, demand-based maintenance is provided according to funding availability.

**Park/Facility Classifications:** Includes; Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, Sports Complex Facilities, Special Use Parks/Facilities, Greenbelts/Trails/Paseos, and Open Space/Natural Areas.

**Revenue Facilities:** These include facilities that charge fees to play on them; access fee, player fee, team fee, or permit fee. These could include pools, golf courses, tennis courts, recreation centers, sport field complexes, concession facilities, hospitality centers, reservable shelters, outdoor or indoor theatre space, and special event spaces.

**Signature Facility/Amenity:** This is an enhanced facility or amenity which is viewed by community as deserving of special recognition due to its design, location, function, natural resources, or specific use spaces.

# BLOOMINGTON PARK LOCATIONS



- |                                     |                              |                                 |                             |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ● 1 Bloomington Center for the Arts | ● 17 Pleasant Playlot        | ● 33 Heritage Hills Park        | ● 49 Xavier Court Playlot   | ● 65 North Corridor Park      | ● 81 Cooks Playlot          |
| ● 2 Brookside Park                  | ● 18 Pond Dakota Mission     | ● 34 Hyland Greens Golf Course  | ● 50 Adelman Pond           | ● 66 Northcrest Playground    | ● 82 Effa Playlot           |
| ● 3 Canterbury Oaks Pond            | ● 19 Soens Playlot           | ● 35 Hyland Hills Playlot       | ● 51 Barthel's Pond         | ● 67 Pauly's Pond             | ● 83 Eight Crest Park       |
| ● 4 Central Park                    | ● 20 Westwood Park           | ● 36 Hyland Hills Tennis Courts | ● 52 Bloomington Ice Garden | ● 68 Pickfair Pond            | ● 84 Fenlason Park          |
| ● 5 Columbus Playlot                | ● 21 Winchester Pond         | ● 37 Off-Leash Dog Area         | ● 53 Collegeview Park       | ● 69 Poplar Bridge Playground | ● 85 Forest Glen            |
| ● 6 Creekside Community Center      | ● 22 Xerxes Pond             | ● 38 Overlook Pond              | ● 54 Dupont Playlot         | ● 70 Reynolds Playground      | ● 86 Hohag Playlot          |
| ● 7 Creekside Park                  | ● 23 Bill Warren Park        | ● 39 Quail Ridge Playlot        | ● 55 East Bush Lake Park    | ● 71 Skriebakken Park         | ● 87 Lyndale Green Park     |
| ● 8 Dwan Golf Course                | ● 24 Bloomington Ferry Road  | ● 40 Rhodes Playlot             | ● 56 Girard Lake Park       | ● 72 South Corridor Park      | ● 88 Maplewood Park         |
| ● 9 Harrison Picnic Grounds         | ● 25 Boone Pond              | ● 41 Ridgeview Playground       | ● 57 Haeg Park              | ● 73 Tarnhill Playground      | ● 89 McAndrews Playlot      |
| ● 10 Kelly Park                     | ● 26 Brye Park               | ● 42 Southglen Playground       | ● 58 Lincoln Park           | ● 74 Tierney's Woods          | ● 90 Oxboro Lake Park       |
| ● 11 Moir Park                      | ● 27 Cavell Pond             | ● 43 Southwood Park             | ● 59 Logan Playlot          | ● 75 Tretbaugh Park           | ● 91 River Ridge Playground |
| ● 12 Mound Springs Park             | ● 28 Countryside Playground  | ● 44 Sunrise Park               | ● 60 Marsh Lake Park        | ● 76 Wanda Miller Pond        | ● 92 Running Park           |
| ● 13 Nine Mile Creek Park           | ● 29 Cranberry Park          | ● 45 Timberglade Pond           | ● 61 Marsh Lake Playfields  | ● 77 West Bush Lake Park      | ● 93 Smith Park             |
| ● 14 Nine Mile Playlot              | ● 30 Dred Scott              | ● 46 Veness Pond                | ● 62 Nord Myr Marsh         | ● 78 Bryant Park              | ● 94 Southdell Playlot      |
| ● 15 Old Town Hall                  | ● 31 France Pond             | ● 47 Woodbridge Marsh           | ● 63 Norman Ridge Playlot   | ● 79 Central Station          | ● 95 Valley View Playfield  |
| ● 16 Parker's Picnic Grounds        | ● 32 Hampshire Hills Playlot | ● 48 Wyoming Playlot            | ● 64 Normandale Lake Park   | ● 80 Cedarcrest               | ● 96 Vanderbie Park         |
|                                     |                              |                                 |                             |                               | ● 97 Wriant's Lake Park     |

Figure 4-8: Bloomington Park Locations

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are often the centerpiece and should be designed to fit into the fabric of the community. They should reflect the residents that live around them as they are the primary users that will visit often. Trail connections and neighborhood parks should be integrated as part of a comprehensive design that are consistent with this master plan, the Alternative Transportation Plan, and the Comprehensive Plan.

A neighborhood park should be three to 10 acres; however, some Neighborhood Parks are determined by use and facilities offered and not by size alone. The service radius for a neighborhood park is one half mile or six blocks. Neighborhood Parks should have safe pedestrian access for surrounding residents; parking may or may not be included but if included accounts for less than ten cars and provides for ADA access. Neighborhood Parks serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity.

See Section 03 for retrofit of a typical neighborhood park that updates activities and facilities.

Typical characteristics of a neighborhood park include:

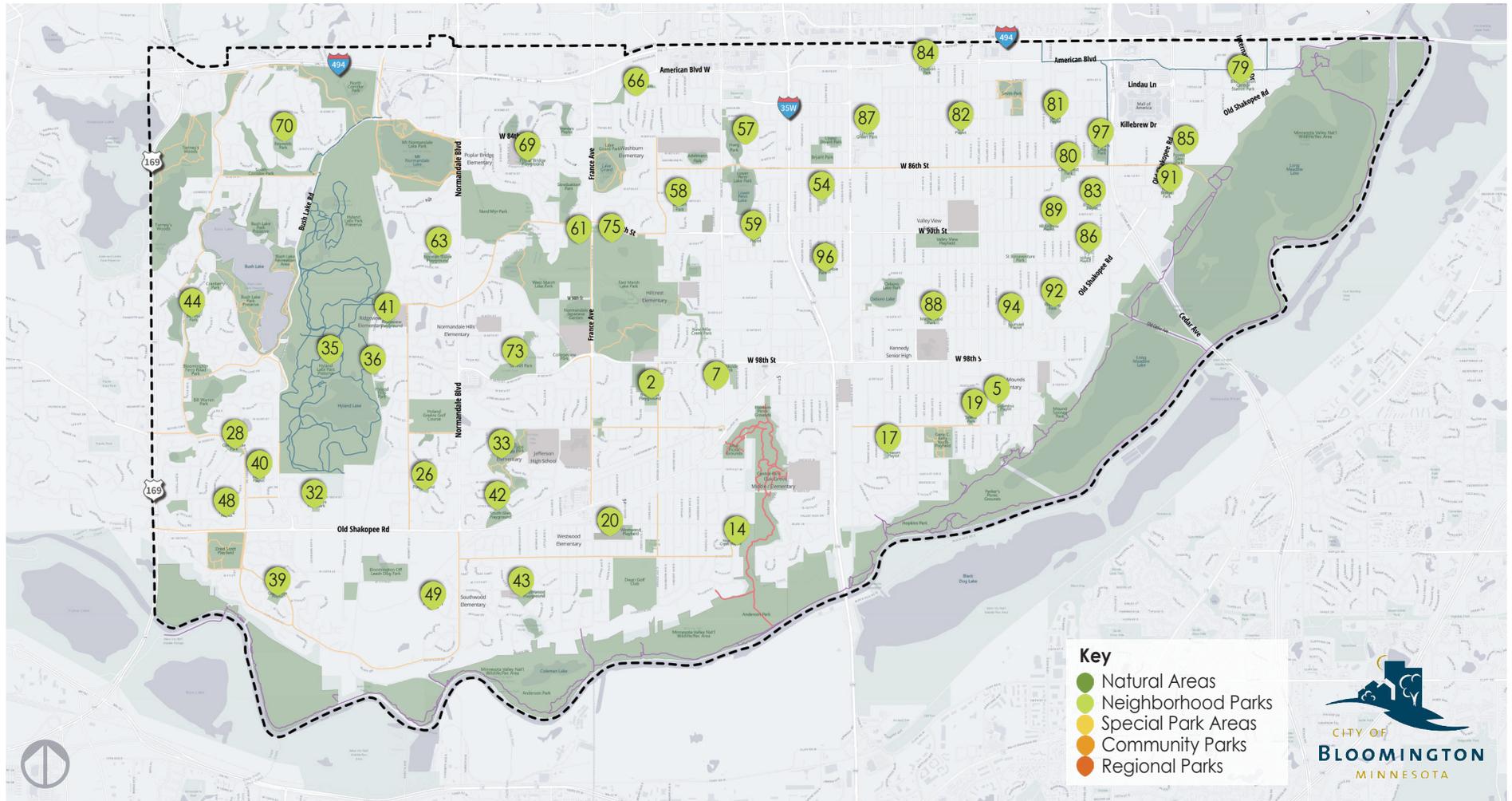
- **Size:** 3-10 acres (8 preferred)
- **Service radius:** 0.5-mile radius (15 minutes)
- **Siting preference:** local or collector street. Where possible, next to a school or other community gathering center. Encourage location to link neighborhoods and linked by trails and sidewalks to other parks.
- **Length of stay:** One-hour experience or less is typical.
- **Amenities:** One signature amenity (e.g. major playground, splashpad park, sport court, gazebo); no restrooms unless necessary for signature amenity; may include one non-programmed sports field; playgrounds for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements; no reservable shelters; loop trails as possible; one type of sport court or multi-court; no non-producing/unused amenities; benches, small picnic shelters with shade located next to play areas. All amenities are ADA compliant.
- **Landscape Design:** Native plantings/natural areas should equal a minimum 15% of park area and 20-35% typical. This will require converting turf areas to native in non-active use areas. Low

maintenance turf could fulfill a part of this requirement. Range of turf conversion percentage will vary by park usage, park design, and overall design.

- **Land usage:** 80 percent active/20 percent passive typical, but will be determined by each park.
- **Programming:** Typically, none, but a signature amenity may be included which could be programmed.
- **Maintenance Standards:** Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities may require Level 1 maintenance
- **Parking:** Should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. Goal is to maximize usable park space. As necessary, provide 5-10 spaces within park including handicap spaces. Traffic calming devices are encouraged next to the park.
- **Lighting:** Security or amenity only. Lighting on dual system with 50 percent of lights off at a set time and 50 percent on all night for security is ideal. Lighting level determined by park uses.
- **Other:** Park designs should also utilize the following guidelines:
  - **Stormwater:** Single-use stormwater facilities (traditional ponds, infiltration basin) should not take up more than 10% of active park space. Multi-functional Green Infrastructure (GI) is encouraged whenever possible. Parks should collaborate with Engineering to integrate GI into parks.
  - Customize facilities and uses to demographics of neighborhood through community engagement;
  - Safety design meets established Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards;
  - Internet- city (fiber) provided at select parks. Typically at busier facilities or those with buildings or structures.

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# NEIGHBORHOOD PARK LOCATIONS



- |                                 |                               |                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ● 2 Brookside Park              | ● 42 Southglen Playground     | ● 81 Cooks Playlot          |
| ● 5 Columbus Playlot            | ● 43 Southwood Park           | ● 82 Effa Playlot           |
| ● 7 Creekside Park              | ● 44 Sunrise Park             | ● 84 Fenlason Park          |
| ● 14 Nine Mile Playlot          | ● 48 Wyoming Playlot          | ● 85 Forest Glen            |
| ● 16 Parker's Picnic Grounds    | ● 49 Xavier Court Playlot     | ● 86 Hohag Playlot          |
| ● 17 Pleasant Playlot           | ● 54 Dupont Playlot           | ● 87 Lyndale Green Park     |
| ● 19 Soens Playlot              | ● 57 Haeg Park                | ● 88 Maplewood Park         |
| ● 20 Westwood Park              | ● 58 Lincoln Park             | ● 89 McAndrews Playlot      |
| ● 26 Brye Park                  | ● 59 Logan Playlot            | ● 91 River Ridge Playground |
| ● 28 Countryside Playground     | ● 63 Norman Ridge Playlot     | ● 92 Running Park           |
| ● 32 Hampshire Hills Playlot    | ● 66 Northcrest Playground    | ● 94 Southdell Playlot      |
| ● 33 Heritage Hills Park        | ● 69 Poplar Bridge Playground | ● 96 Vanderbie Park         |
| ● 35 Hyland Hills Playlot       | ● 70 Reynolds Playground      | ● 97 Wright's Lake Park     |
| ● 36 Hyland Hills Tennis Courts | ● 73 Tarnhill Playground      |                             |
| ● 39 Quail Ridge Playlot        | ● 75 Tretbaugh Park           |                             |
| ● 40 Rhodes Playlot             | ● 79 Central Station          |                             |
| ● 41                            | ● 80 Cedarcrest               |                             |

Figure 2-9-5-20-19-08 Neighborhood Park Locations

## COMMUNITY PARKS

Community Parks are intended to be accessible to multiple neighborhoods and should focus on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Community Parks are generally larger in scale than neighborhood parks, but smaller than regional parks and are designed typically for residents who live within a three-mile radius. When possible, the park may be developed adjacent to a school. Community Parks provide recreational opportunities for the entire family and often contain facilities for specific recreational purposes: athletic fields, swimming pool, tennis courts, extreme sports amenity, recreation center, loop trails, picnic areas, reservable picnic shelters, sports courts, permanent restrooms, large turf and landscaped areas and a playground or splashpad. Passive outdoor recreation activities such as meditation, quiet reflection, and wildlife watching also take place at Community Parks.

Community Parks generally range from 20 to 100 acres depending on the City. Community Parks serve a larger area – radius of one to three miles and contain more recreation amenities than a Neighborhood Park.

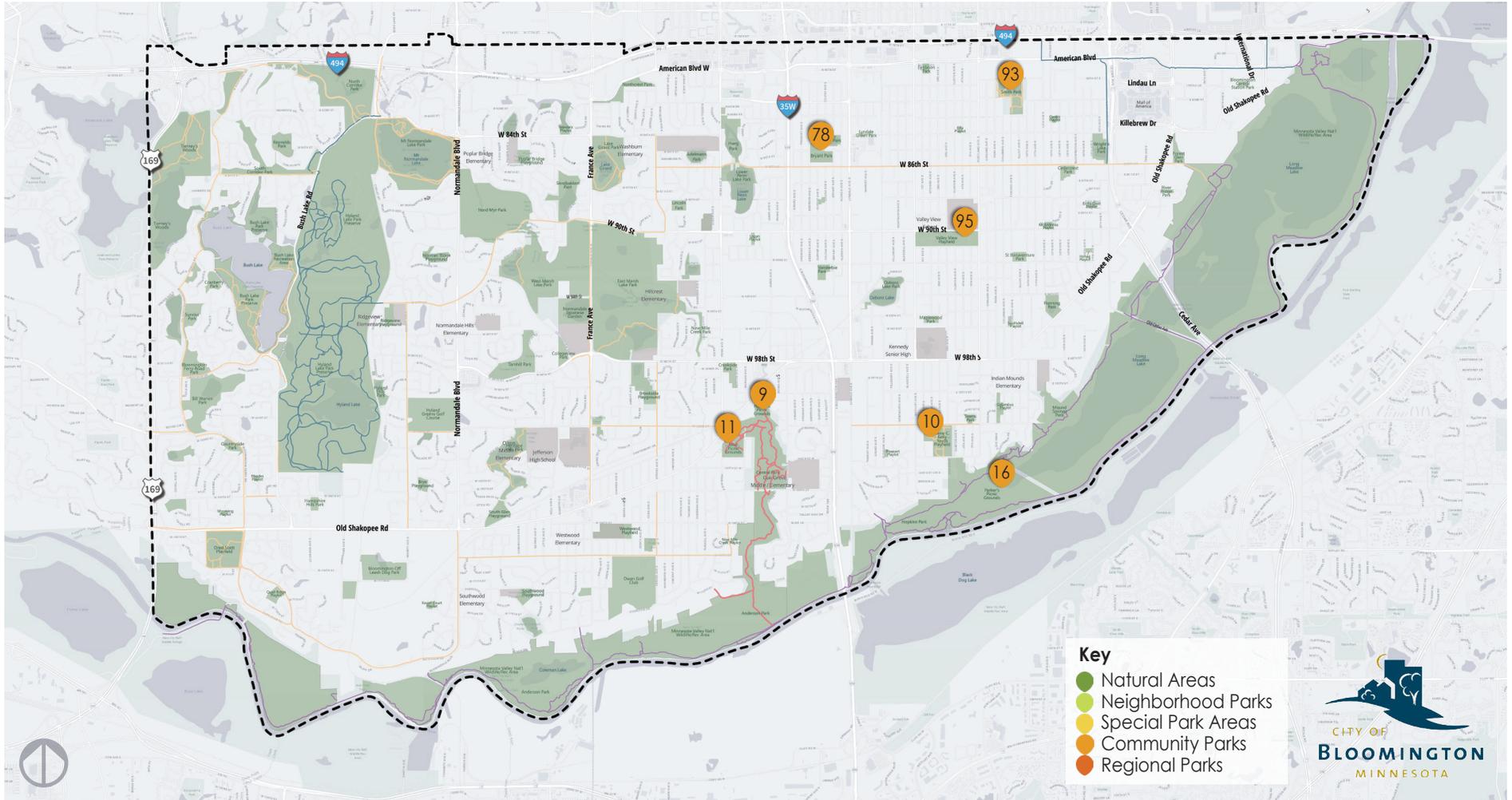
Typical characteristics of a community park include:

- **Size of park:** 20 to 60 acres typical. Can be up to 100 acres (usable area measured).
- **Service radius:** One to three-mile radius
- **Site Selection:** On two collector streets minimum and preferably one arterial street. If near arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Minimal number of residences abutting site. Preference is streets on four sides, or three sides with school or municipal use on fourth side. Encourage trail linkage to other parks and transit routes with stops
- **Length of stay:** Two to three hours experience
- **Amenities:** Four signature amenities at a minimum: (e.g., trails, sports fields, large shelters/ pavilions, community playground for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements, recreation center, pool or family aquatic center, sports courts, water feature); public restrooms, ample parking, and security lighting. Amenities are ADA compliant. Sport Fields and Sport Complexes are typical at this park (e.g. Dred Scott and Valley View). Loop trails should be typical.

- **Revenue facilities:** One or more (e.g. pool, sports complex, pavilions)
- **Landscape Design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and key areas throughout park. Natural areas desired at 30% min. unless a special use sports facility.
- **Land usage:** 65 percent active and 35 percent passive is typical.
- **Programming:** Minimum of four essential program services (e.g. sports, day camps, aquatics) is typical.
- **Maintenance Standards:** Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities may require Level 1 maintenance
- **Parking:** Occupies no more than 10 percent of the park for special use facilities or 5% for traditional community parks. Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. Goal is to maximize usable park space. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to the park.
- **Lighting:** Amenity lighting includes sport field light standards. Security lighting on dual system with 50 percent of lights off at a set time and 50 percent on all night for security.
- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience. May include kiosks in high traffic or easily identified areas of the facility.
- **Other:** Strong appeal to surrounding neighborhoods; integrated color scheme throughout the park; partnerships developed with support groups, schools and other organizations; loop trail connectivity; linked to Regional Park, trail or recreation facility; safety design meets established CPTED standards. Internet should be typical at Community Parks with City provided fiber.

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# COMMUNITY PARK LOCATIONS



- 9 Harrison Picnic Grounds
- 10 Kelly Park
- 11 Moir Park
- 16 Parker's Picnic Grounds
- 78 Bryant Park
- 93 Smith Park
- 95 Valley View Playfield

**Key**

- Natural Areas
- Neighborhood Parks
- Special Park Areas
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks



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Figure 4-10. Bloomington Community Park Locations

## SPECIAL USE PARK/FACILITY

Special Use facilities are those spaces that don't fall within a typical park classification. A major difference between a Special Use facility and other parks is that they usually serve a single purpose whereas other park classifications are designed to offer multiple recreation opportunities. It is possible for a Special Use facility to be located inside another park. Special Use facilities generally fall into four categories:

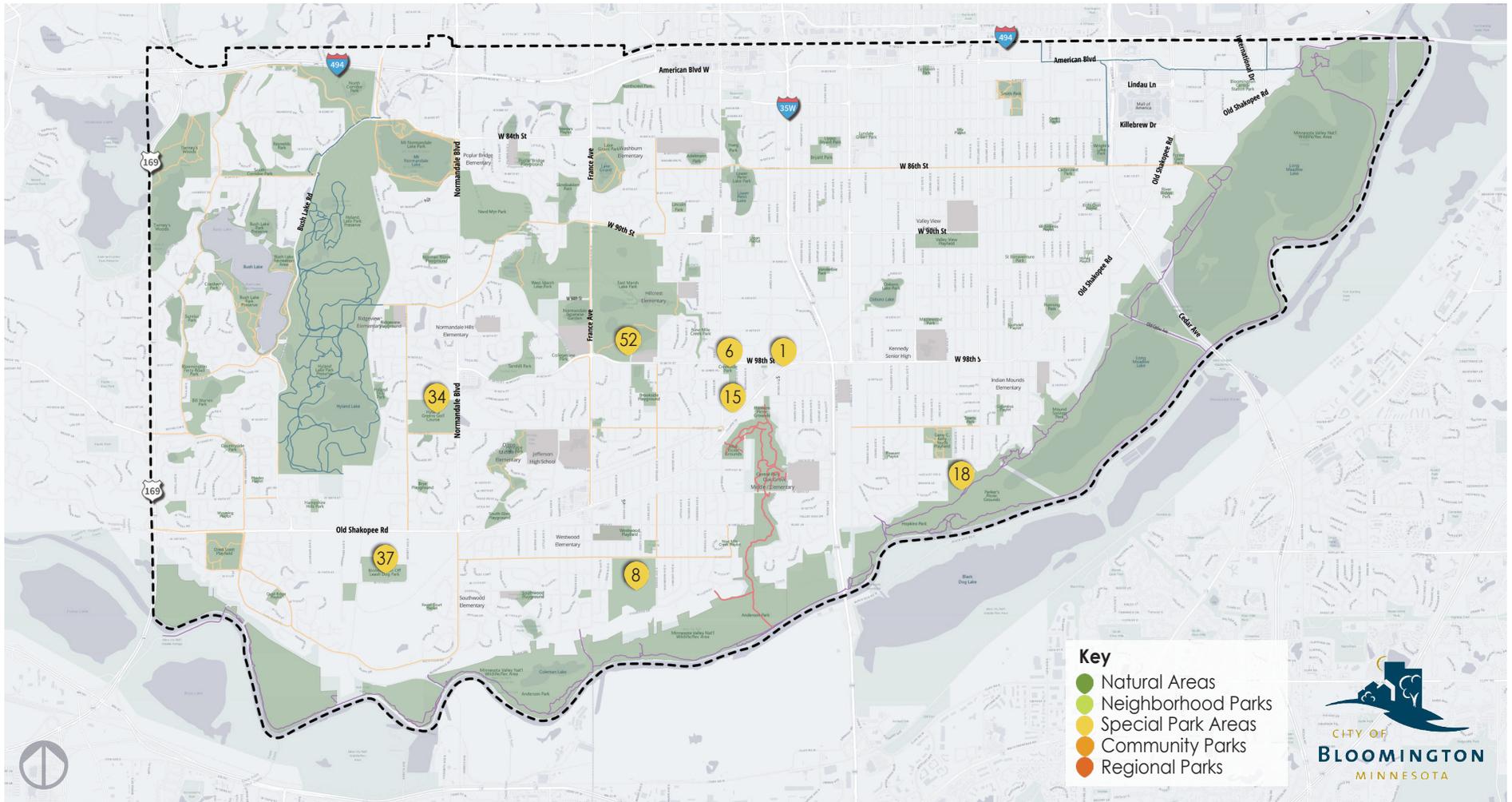
- **Historic/Cultural/Social Sites** – unique local resources offering historical, educational, and cultural opportunities. Examples include historic downtown areas, commercial zones, plaza parks, performing arts parks, arboretums, display gardens, performing arts facilities, indoor theaters, churches, and amphitheaters. Frequently these are located in Community or Regional Parks.
- **Golf Courses** – Nine and 18-hole complexes. Dwan and Hyland Greens golf courses are core program providers in the City. Hyland Greens is operated by Three Rivers Park District.
- **Indoor Recreation Facilities** – specialized or single purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers and community theaters. Frequently these are located in Community or Regional Parks. Bloomington Center for the Arts, Bloomington Ice Garden, and Creekside Senior Center are examples
- **Outdoor Recreation Facilities** – Examples include aquatic parks, disk golf, skateboard, bike playgrounds and skills areas, and dog parks, which may be located in a park.

Typical characteristics of a special use park/facility include:

- **Size of park:** Depends upon facilities and activities included. Their diverse character makes it impossible to apply acreage standards.
- **Service radius:** Depends upon facilities and activities included. Typically serves special user groups while a few serve the entire population.
- **Site Selection:** Given the variety of potential uses, no specific standards are defined for site selection. As with all park types, the site itself should be located where it is appropriate for its use.
- **Length of stay:** varies by facility
- **Amenities:** varies by facility

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# SPECIAL USE PARK/ FACILITY LOCATIONS



- 1 Bloomington Center for the Arts
- 6 Creekside Community Center
- 8 Dwan Golf Course
- 15 Old Town Hall
- 18 Pond Dakota Mission
- 34 Hyland Greens Golf Course
- 37 Off-Leash Dog Area
- 52 Bloomington Ice Garden

**Key**

- Natural Areas
- Neighborhood Parks
- Special Park Areas
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks



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Figure 4-11: Special Use Park/ Facility Locations

- **Revenue facilities:** Due to nature of certain facilities, revenue may be required for construction and/or annual maintenance. This should be determined at a policy level before the facility is planned and constructed
- **Land usage:** varies by facility
- **Programming:** varies by facility
- **Maintenance Standards:** Provide the highest-level maintenance with available funding. Seek a goal of Level 2 maintenance standards. Some amenities (i.e., rose gardens) will require Level 1 maintenance



## BLOOMINGTON ICE GARDEN

The Bloomington Ice Garden has three indoor rinks that meet the community’s existing needs for indoor skating except during the most sought-after prime hours. BIG is exploring remodeling options to maintain its competitive advantage and continue meeting the communities needs. Additional indoor skating facilities should be considered only after the debt on the existing facilities is retired. BIG hosts large tournaments and draws people to Bloomington from throughout Minnesota and neighboring states.

## GOLF COURSES

**Dwan Golf Course** is one of Minnesota’s busiest and most popular golf destinations and has a celebrated history. It is an 18-hole Par 68 and 70 course that was constructed in 1970.

**Hyland Greens Golf and Learning Center** is a nine hole park-3 course with a driving range, short game area, and practice green for residents to hone their golf skills. On Monday, March 1, 2021, the Bloomington City Council approved terms of a 3-year agreement for Three Rivers Park District to manage Hyland Greens Golf and Learning Center beginning with the 2021 golf season.



## BLOOMINGTON FAMILY AQUATIC CENTER

The Aquatic Center includes a zero-depth entry pool, interactive play



04



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## REGIONAL PARKS

A regional park serves a large area of several communities, residents within a city or county, or across multiple counties. Depending on activities within a regional park, users may travel as many as 60 miles for a visit. Regional parks include recreational opportunities such as soccer, softball, golf, boating, camping, conservation-wildlife viewing and fishing. Although regional parks usually have a combination of passive areas and active facilities, they are likely to be predominantly natural resource-based parks.

A regional park focuses on activities and natural features not included in most types of parks and often based on a specific scenic or recreational opportunity. Regional parks can and should promote tourism and economic development. Regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region.

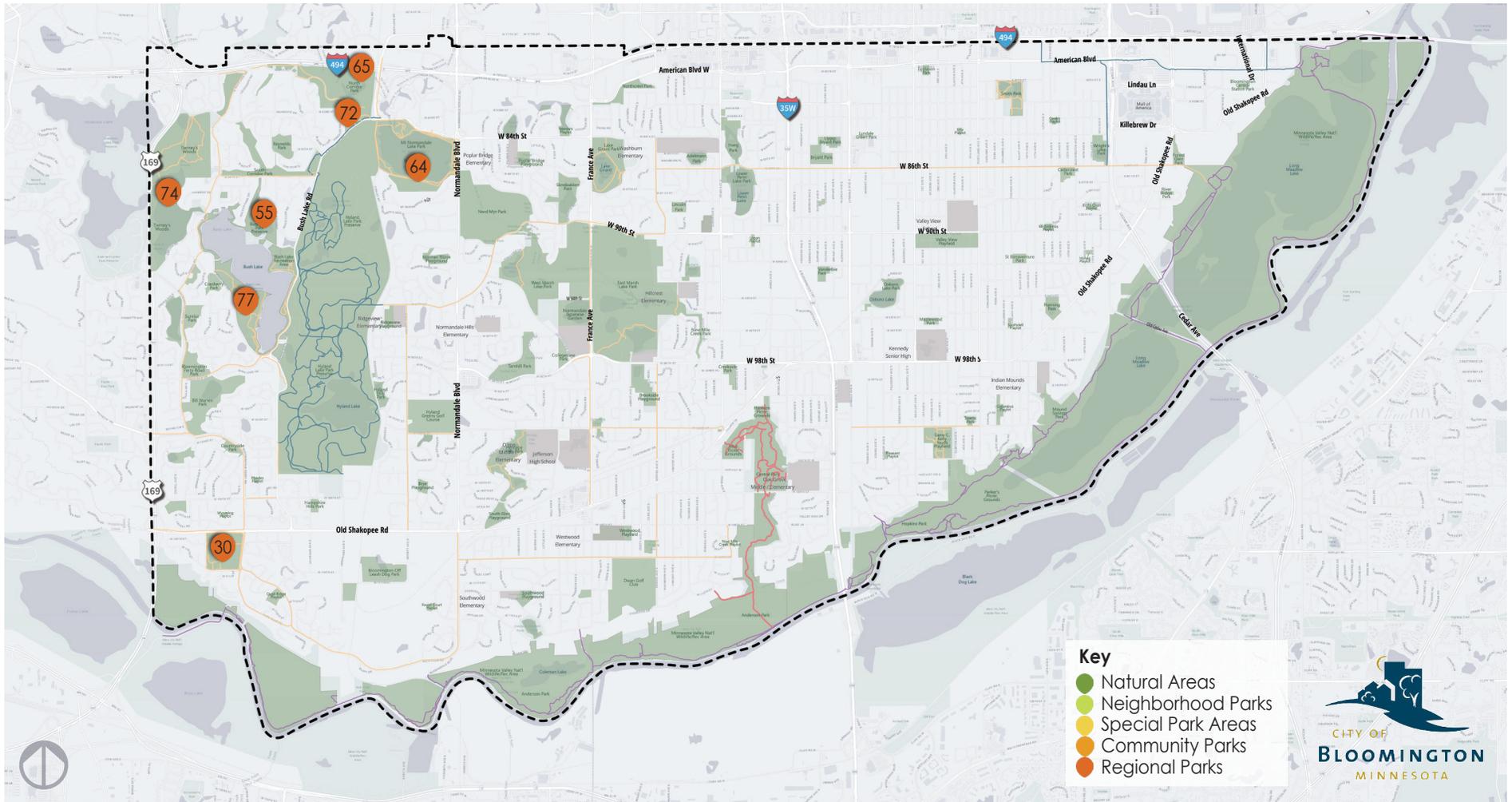
Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve, is operated by Three Rivers Park District, in association with Bloomington. Special recreation features, which are called for in state legislation, are defined as “Regional Parks System opportunities not generally found in the parks, the park reserves or the trail corridors.” Special recreational features often require a unique managing or programming effort on the part of the regional park implementing agency. Hyland Hills Ski Area provides a historical representation of life in a river town in the 1800s. No other regional parts are anticipated in Bloomington at this time.

The Metropolitan Council has developed Regional Park Policy Plans for the seven county metropolitan area that provides guidance for establishing new regional park and trail facilities. Under state law the Council provides oversight for acquisition and development of regional parks and trails. Those parks are typically operated by partnering cities, counties, and special districts. While there is currently no current plan for future park development, Bloomington would need to work with the Council and other partners to incorporate or modify a Regional Park, Trail, or Special Use Facility that they are the Implementing Agency for.

## STATE FACILITIES

There are some notable state park and trail facilities that traverse Bloomington, mainly centered on the Minnesota River. The Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area preserves part of the Minnesota River Valley. The multi-use Minnesota Valley State Trail parallels the Minnesota River with a section of trail from Bloomington

# REGIONAL PARK LOCATIONS



- 30 Dred Scott Park
- 55 East Bush Lake Park
- 64 Normandale Lake Park
- 65 North Corridor Park
- 72 South Corridor Park
- 74 Tierney's Woods
- 77 West Bush Lake Park

**Key**

- Natural Areas
- Neighborhood Parks
- Special Park Areas
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks



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Figure 4-12: Regional Park Locations

# EVOLUTION OF A TYPICAL PARK

04

Community and neighborhood parks are the foundation of Bloomington’s park system. Neighborhood parks can be the primary park experience for residents. These parks are within a 10-15 minute walk from residences and provide spaces to recreate, rest, gather, and exercise. Bloomington has excellent geographic distribution of parks and over 80% of residents are within a 10-minute walk. However, once they get to the park they may find an outdated experience that doesn’t meet their needs and desires. Bloomington’s parks were built for the community in the 1960’s and 1970’s and have changed little over time.

Applying the themes, guiding principals, and system-wide changes outlined in Section 03, the City can begin to objectively look at updating parks within the system and incorporating new trends in recreation. This creates a much more varied menu of park experiences that respond to Bloomington’s changing demographics. For example, some neighborhood parks with aging facilities may best serve residents by implementing a plan

that follows the new standards for park and trail design outlined above in this document. Other parks may have more of a passive use, natural area focus, or a more focused play experience. The proximity and geographic spread of facilities in surrounding parks should always be examined to identify any overlapping or duplicative facilities in nearby parks. The Service Area boundaries will also help balance facilities across the city more equitably and efficiently. This will allow the Parks Department to be careful stewards of the budget, provide the greatest cost benefit to residents, and update the system in a more equitable manner.

It is imperative to reiterate that when considering updated park plans, it is recommended that the City adhere to a standard procedure that the design process be led by a licensed Landscape Architect, and that a community-focused design is utilized with an engagement process facilitated by the Parks and COED Departments.

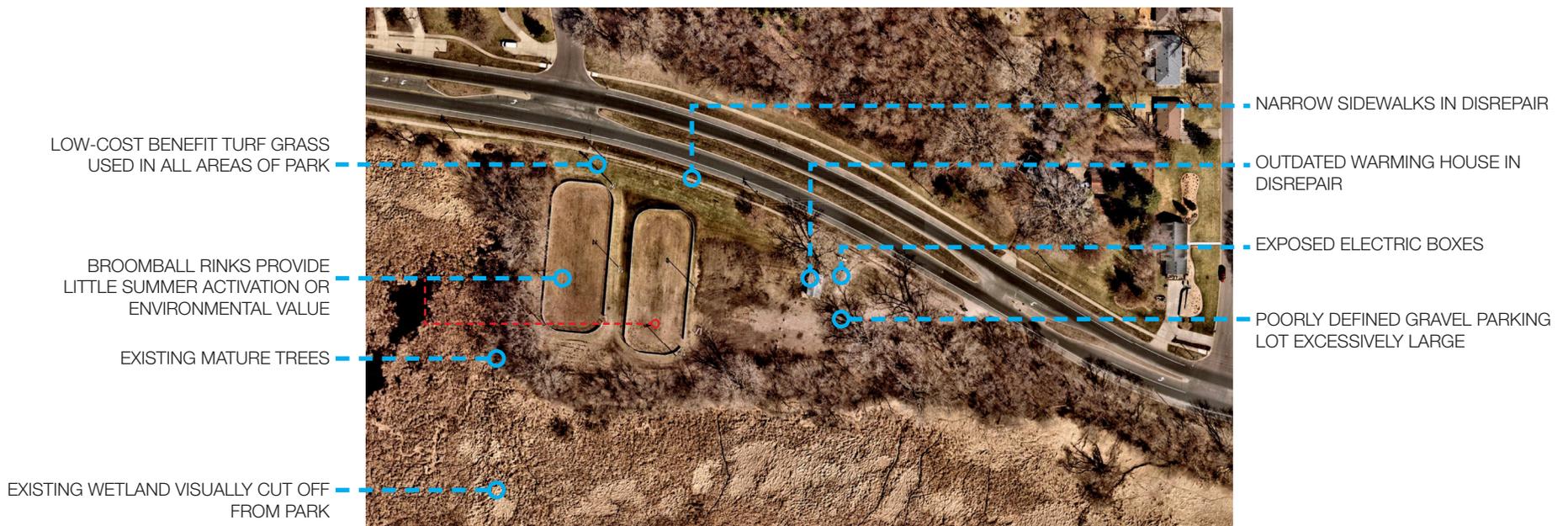


Figure 4-13: Existing Park (Tretbaugh) Satellite Image Source: ESRI



BIKE SKILLS AREA



ADULT FITNESS



GATHERING SHELTER



ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND



POLLINATOR FRIENDLY LAWN IN FOCUSED AREAS



LOOPED WALKWAY



HAMMOCK GROVE



NATIVE LANDSCAPING/  
RESTORATION  
**DRAFT**



RAIN GARDEN



EXPANDED OFF-ROAD MULTI-USE TRAIL



WETLAND OVERLOOK DECK

Figure 4-14: Re-visioned Park Example

## PLAYGROUNDS/ PLAY AREAS

Play areas should occur in every neighborhood as a safe place for families to gather, recreate, and exercise. Bloomington has a good distribution of playgrounds in residential areas. A diversity of play spaces throughout the city and in adjacent neighborhoods should be utilized to encourage different play experiences and travel between neighborhoods. Higher density areas and/or well connected trail systems should support a more complex, intricate playground or play area. Service Area 4 should receive a few larger playgrounds with additional play experiences to accommodate the increased number and density of kids under age 18.

The following system wide recommendations for play areas include:

- Provide ADA accessibility opportunities in all play areas per current universal design standards.
- All play areas should have seating and shade opportunities for caretakers.
- Evaluate the cost benefits of requested park facilities. explore the use of trial amenities to gauge interest level prior to larger construction projects - e.g. Gaga ball pits at playgrounds.
- Provide distinctly different play experiences for parks that are within 1/2 mile of each other and/or well connected by sidewalks or trails.
- Consider 2-3 playground manufacturers to provide equipment. Repair parts and maintenance will be easier and more efficient over the long-term.
- Incorporate nature play and adventure play into the system and distribute throughout the city and Service Areas.
- Coordinate with additional play providers, such as schools, for programming and to fill gaps. Update agreements with the School District to address playground overlap and sharing at facilities with after-school care programs.
- Include a licensed landscape architect in the design and planning for any major playground replacements in neighborhood parks and for all community parks.
- Consider decommissioning playgrounds in areas of accessibility overlap and prioritize quality over quantity play experiences.
- Encourage community engagement with large scale playground replacements to identify and meet needs. Including neighborhood

kids in the process builds a sense of ownership and displays investment and caring between the city and residents.

- Consider non-traditional playgrounds such as bike playgrounds and bike skills areas to complement traditional play options.
- See Fully Accessible Playground discussion in Section 03.



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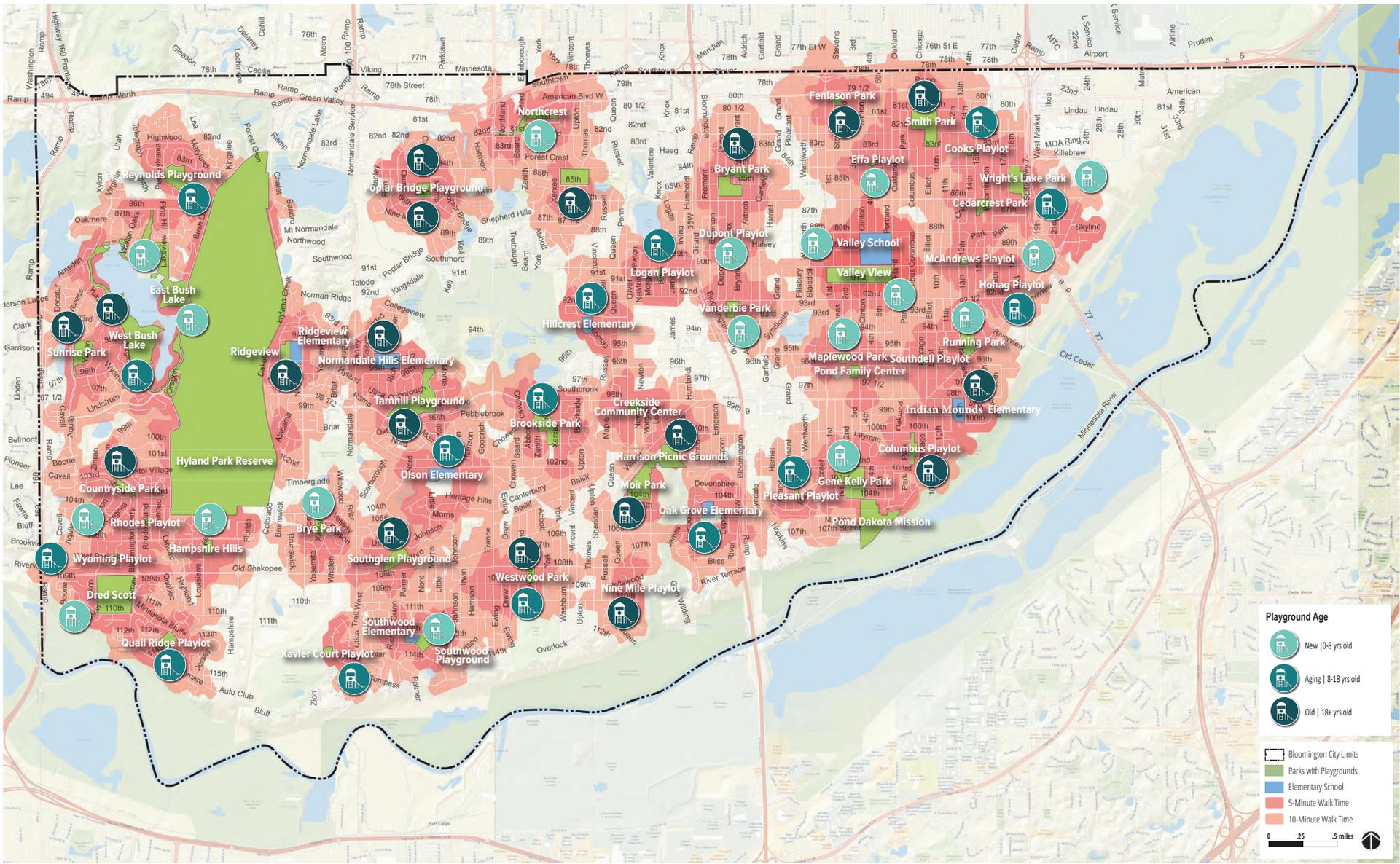


Figure 4-15: Playground Walking Accessibility and Age

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## PICNIC/ GATHERING SHELTERS

Gathering shelters and grilling facilities are popular facilities and support group gathering, celebrations, and community events. These facilities should be located in popular and larger parks to support larger group gatherings. BIPOC populations and recent immigrants often prefer to gather in larger groups and require larger facilities to accommodate.

System-wide recommendations for gathering shelters:

- Provide larger structure rental facilities at community parks - Bryant, Dred
- Ensure picnic shelters are ADA accessible
- Select 1-2 shelter manufacturers to provide structures to ensure design consistency and available repair parts.
- Wood features should be considered to blend into natural areas and Bloomington's natural theme.
- Electricity should be included in larger group gathering shelters to support food storage and warming in Croc Pots, etc.
- Consider gathering shelters for park redevelopment in the search areas noted on [Figure xx](#)



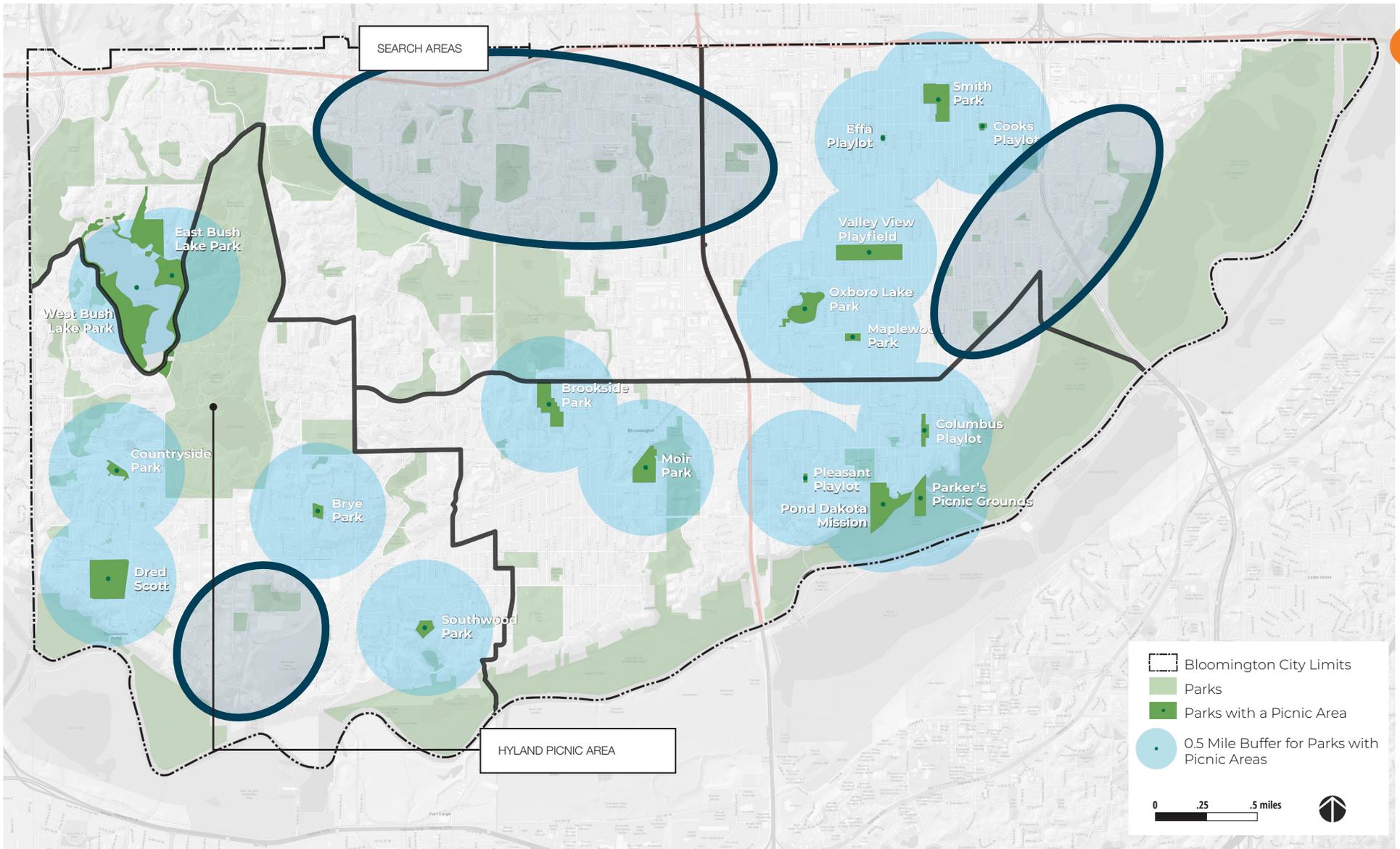


Figure 4-16: Gathering Shelter Facilities Map

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## FIELD SPORTS/ PLAY FIELDS

Field sports encompass a broad suite of athletic activities that utilize a large open grassy area - often rectangular. Field sports soccer and lacrosse are undergoing significant growth in both boys and girls youth participation. Bloomington's changing demographics often prefer soccer over traditional baseball/diamond sports. Additionally, less popular games like cricket are becoming more broadly played across the metro and community engagement suggested that Bloomington parks already host cricket games at Westwood. The increase in field sports puts pressure on traditional diamond sports. Over-served softball fields should be examined and conversion to multi-purpose fields should be considered.

Field sports are generally more flexible than diamond sports because they can be played in a variety of open lawn spaces, sometimes including diamond sports. This provides flexibility in scheduling but also puts pressure on maintenance.

Athletic associations are intimately intertwined with fields and field usage and Bloomington Parks will continue to interact and organize access. A close association with Bloomington Public Schools is vital to balancing field usage against capital and maintenance costs.

Multi-purpose fields are flexible and also serve another function in the community, providing informal open space for residents to fly kites, play catch, throw the frisbee, etc. These spaces are critical to households that don't have lawn space or usable backyards. Providing these spaces in Service Area 4 and other densely populated areas of the city is important. Bloomington will need to balance scheduling activities and providing non-programmed field time for resident use, especially at neighborhood parks near higher density developments.



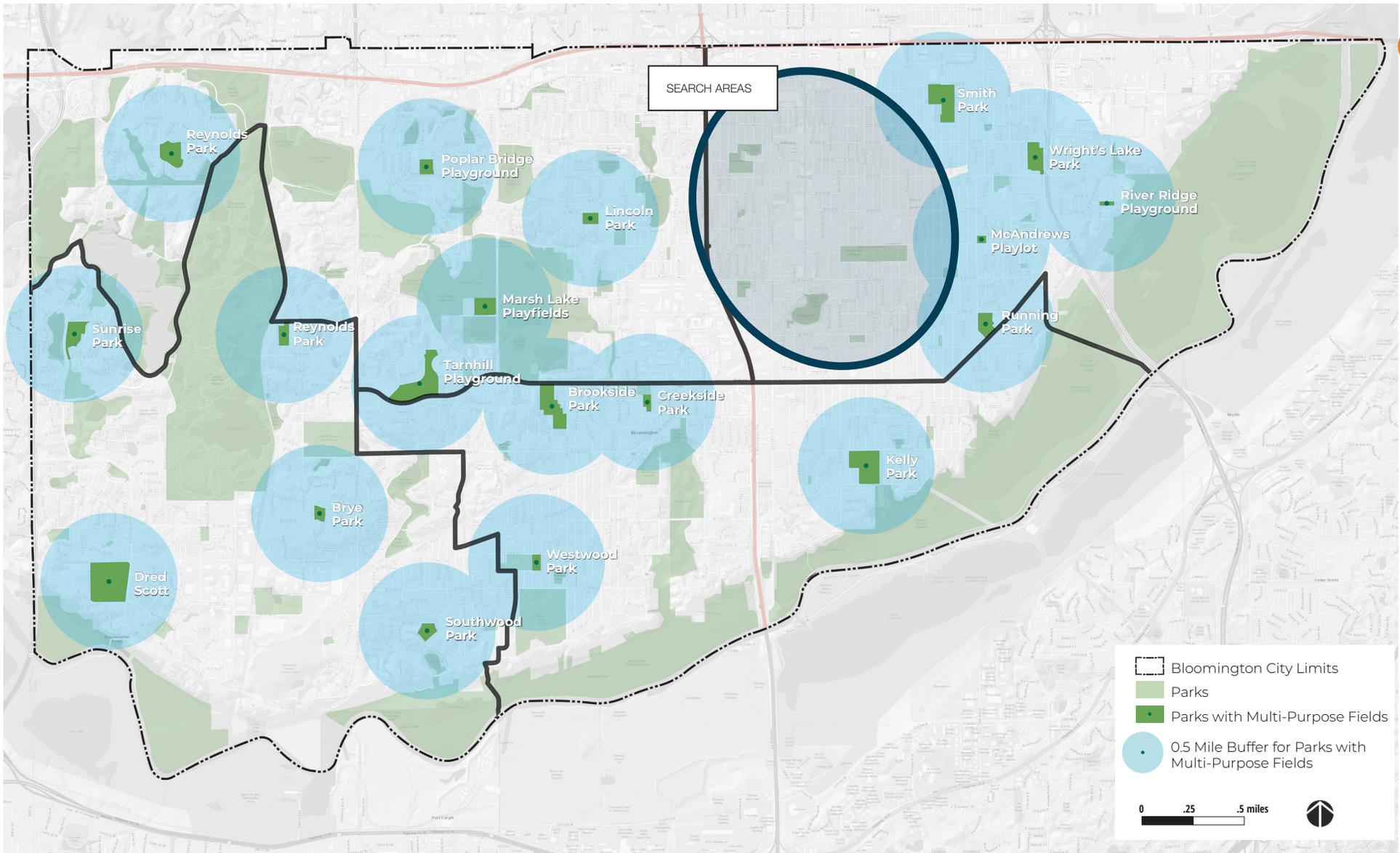


Figure 4-17: Field Sports And Play Fields Map

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## DIAMOND SPORTS

Despite recent declines statewide in softball, diamond sports are still an important part of Bloomington's Parks and Recreation picture. Red Haddox and Kent Hrbek Fields are popular and highly used. The Level of Service Study identified that the City is over-served with softball fields compared to the national standards. Figure 4-18 shows the distribution of softball fields which is robust throughout the city, and resembles the playground distribution mapping. This is a remnant of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) which funded significant portions of Bloomington's park creation. Softball fields were a typical facility that was funded at that time.

The City should decommission and convert softball fields to other uses as parks are redeveloped. Community engagement will help determine which use replaces the softball field but it could be as simple as creating multi-use fields. Softball fields that should be prioritized for decommissioning are those that:

1. The surrounding community identifies that they do not desire or need softball.
2. Other uses can easily and cost effectively replace the diamond such as multi-use field space.
3. Fields that are single or double fields in isolated areas.
4. Difficult to maintain fields, or fields that do not get regular use.

Bloomington should maintain fields in larger complex-like facilities primarily because of their ability to host larger tournaments and leagues. Bloomington's easy access from major highways, and plentiful nearby hotel options for out of town visitors makes it an ideal destination for regional tournaments. These events are money makers for Associations and bring outside money into the City from visitors.

Diamond sports are a major overlap facility with Bloomington Public Schools and Parks and Recreation should continue to work to continue a collaborative relationship that provides the most cost effective relationship for both entities.



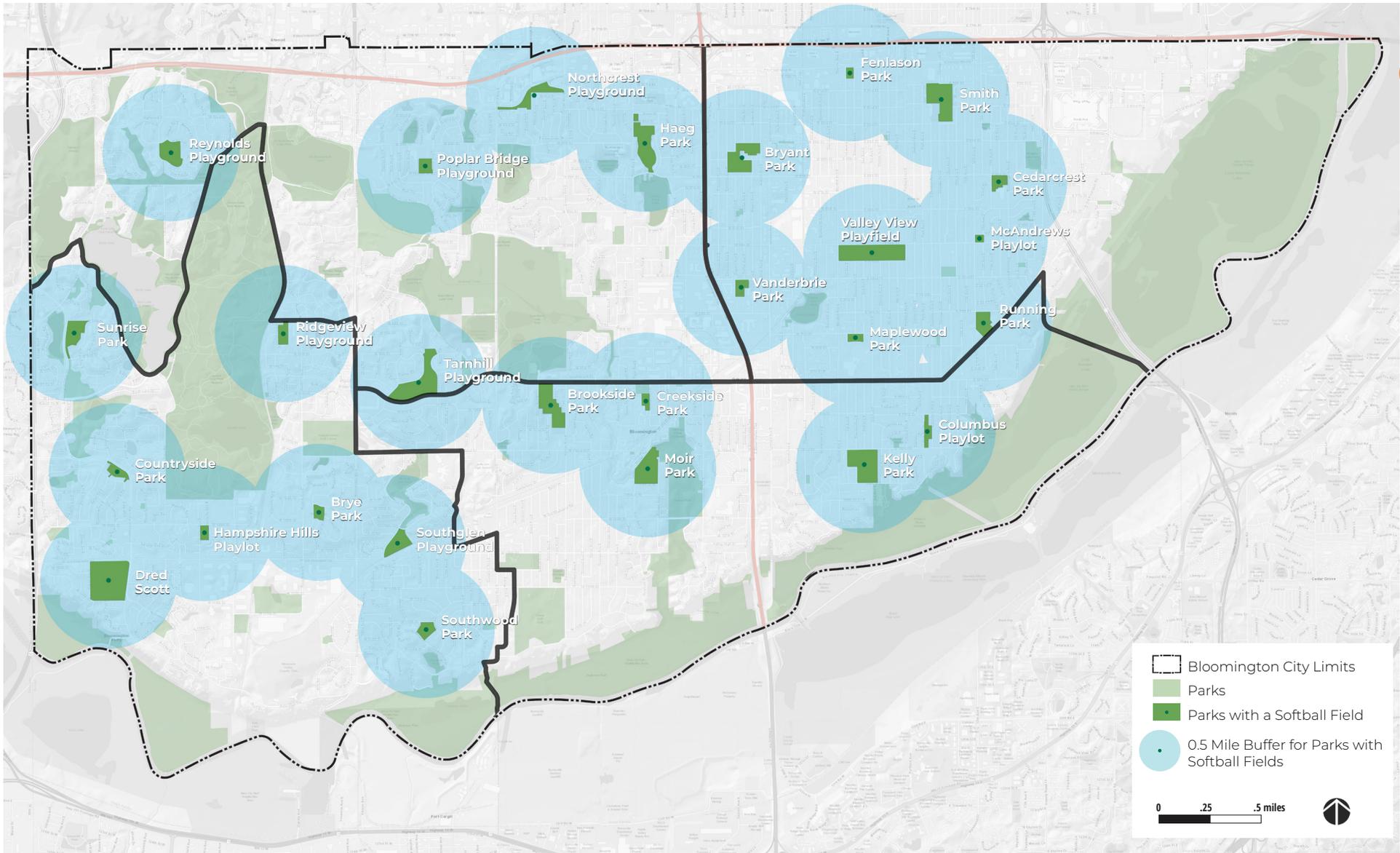


Figure 4-18: Bloomington Existing Softball Diamond Facilities Map

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## RACKET SPORT COURTS

### TENNIS

Tennis has waned in popularity in the last ten years but has steadied and become more popular with youth. Bloomington has a lot of tennis courts spread throughout all areas of the city as shown in Figure 4-19. The LOS Study identified that the City is over-served with tennis courts compared to the national average. Decommissioning lower use facilities is important as they are due for restoration. Similar to softball fields, single and double tennis courts should be the first eliminated. Maintaining larger clusters and areas of concentrated courts in key parks throughout the city is important. Courts should be in groups of greater than two in order to provide a critical mass for players and to provide resurfacing and maintenance efficiencies. Schools offer a good place to provide tennis facilities and the City should collaborate with Bloomington Parks and Recreation to provide access to residents and help meet needs. Middle and High Schools often offer tennis as a program and include courts on school grounds.



### PICKLEBALL

One of the most rapidly growing racket sports in Minnesota and the country is pickleball. While popular with seniors, pickleball is also becoming popular with younger adults and youth. Tennis courts can be re-striped to accommodate pickleball and the city has provided this treatment at a number of courts around the city. Both tennis and pickleball players prefer striping that is specific to their sport. Single game striping is less confusing and dedicated courts are likely to be easier to find an opening to play pick up games.



Pickleball is a highly social game and it has been most successful where there are 4+ pickleball devoted courts minimum grouped together. This raises the opportunity of finding court space and/ or competition, and takes advantage of the social nature of the game. Bloomington should continue to evaluate the need for outdoor pickleball and consider conversion of over-served tennis courts to pickleball.



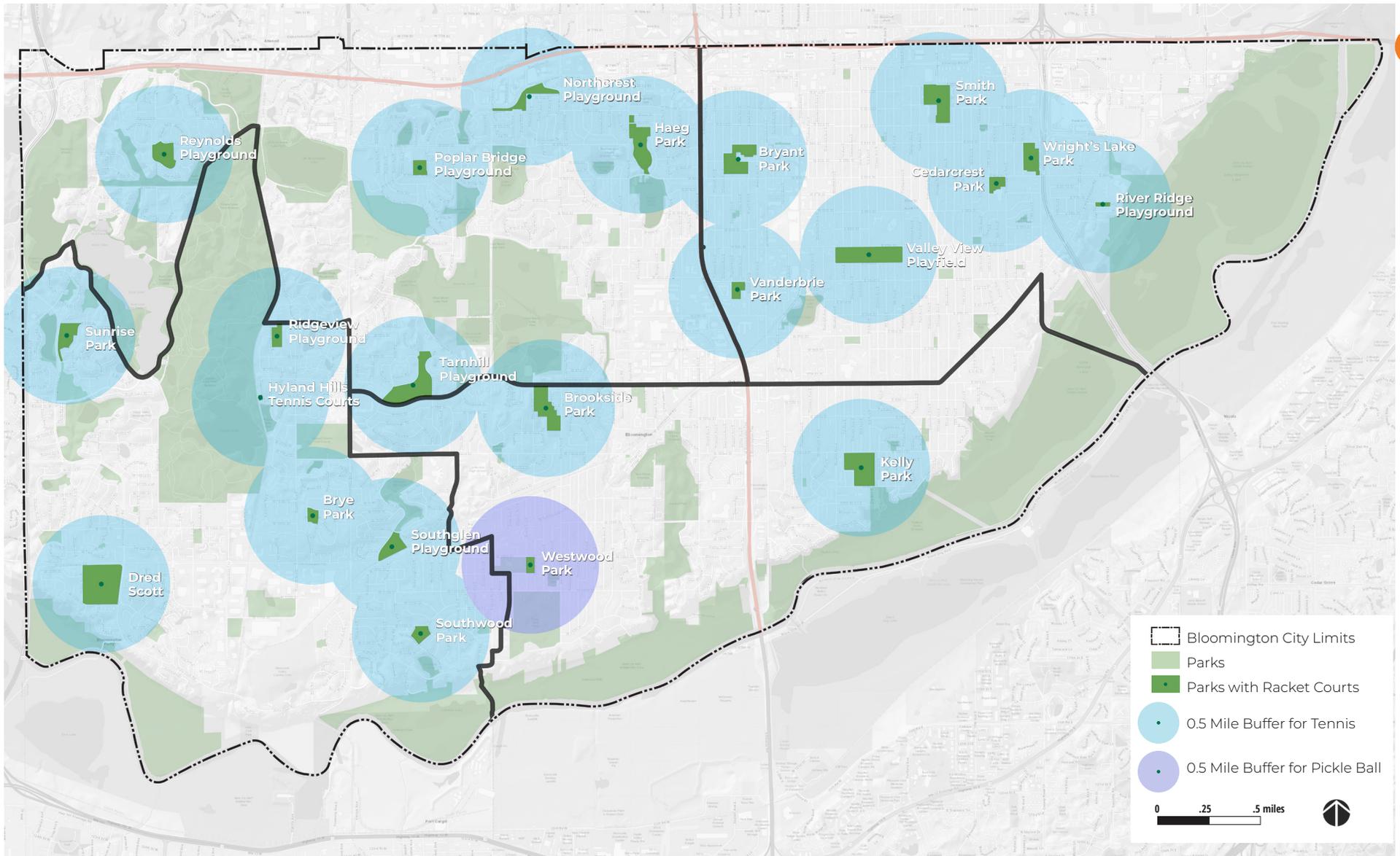


Figure 4-19: Tennis And Pickleball Court Facilities Map

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## AQUATICS

The Bloomington Aquatic Center (BIG) is Bloomington's only park based outdoor swimming opportunity. BIG provides a needed service and lower cost recreation opportunity for families. This is notable because of surrounding water parks, both public and private, that BIG is competing with and that provide a higher number of water experiences that are more contemporary. BIG does provide outdoor lane swimming that is in demand in the South Metro. Programming and adding facilities that complement and help utilize the space are important. The city should complete a business plan for BIG that will help guide investment and programming decisions.

Bush Lake Beach has served Bloomington, and the Southern Metro, since 1956. The beach is one of the state's most popular with over 100,000 visitors per year. Bush Lake is located in the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve but is currently operated by the City of Bloomington. The City should consider reevaluating their operating agreements and weigh whether Three Rivers Park District could provide effective management of the facility with a higher cost-benefit returns.

The Level of Service Study and statistically valid survey identified the need for an indoor aquatic facility. An indoor facility would extend Bloomington's aquatics programming opportunities through the winter and provide a service that is typically provided in similar sized cities.

Splash pads were identified lower on the list of amenities the public desired, but is still a consideration as the parks are redeveloped. They can provide an aquatic experience without having to staff lifeguards. Splashpads are successful in denser neighborhoods and lower income portions of the city as they don't require strict supervision or payment to play.

Nine Mile Creek is not identified as an aquatic facility. Sections of the creek in Moir/ Central Park are being used similarly by people wading into portions. Designing an area to allow safe access, while preventing erosion could be considered in future planning.



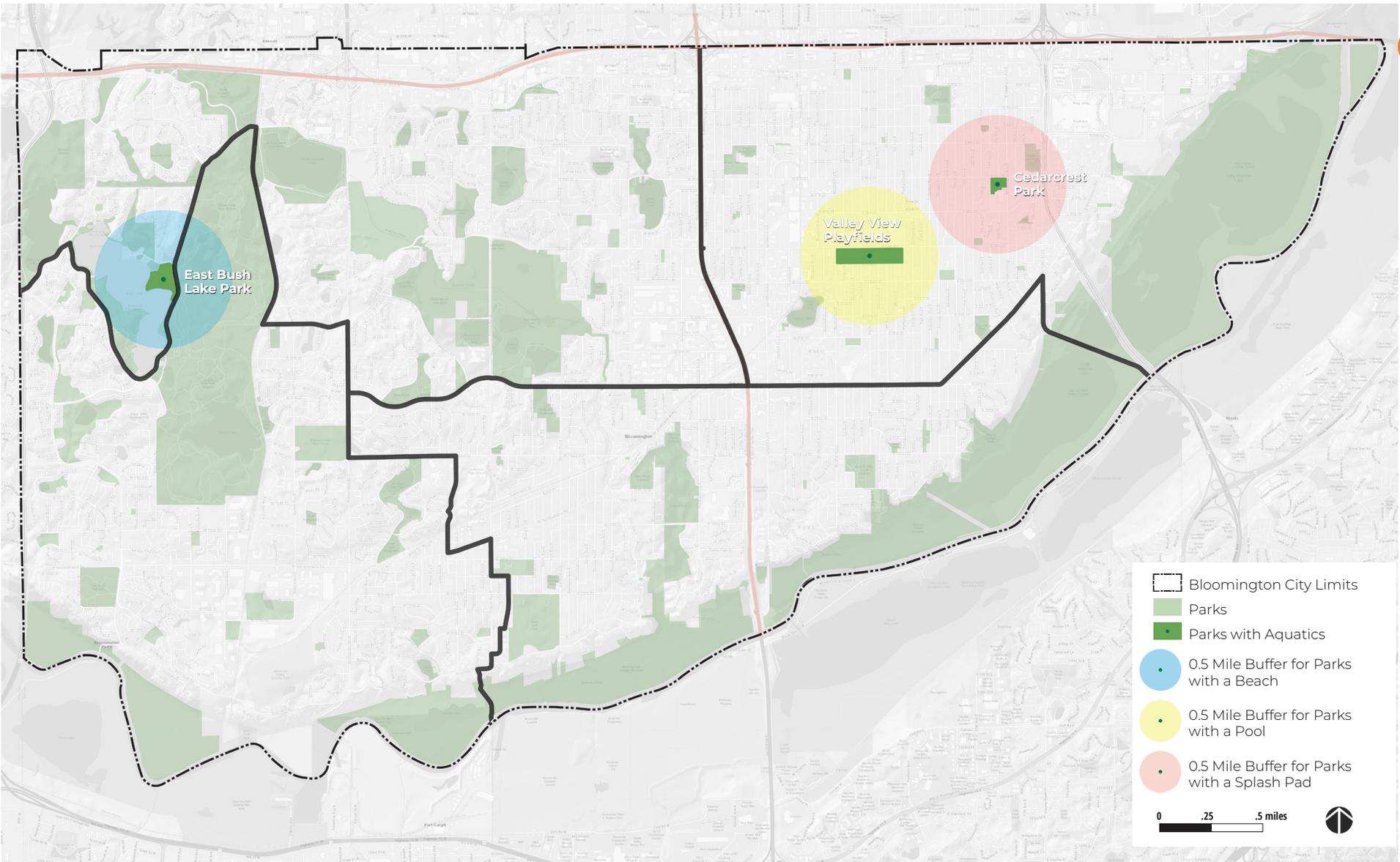


Figure 4-20: Aquatics Facilities Map

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0 0.5 Mile 1 Mile

Public Parking

## OPEN SPACE/NATURAL AREA

A detailed discussion of natural resources and natural areas can be found in Section 02 and 03. This section focuses on the experiential aspects of parkland in the city that should provide visual and functional access to nature. These spaces also provide many other ecosystem benefits. Open Space/Natural Areas are typically undeveloped but may include natural or paved trails. Grasslands under power line corridors are one example; stormwater ponds are another potential native restoration area. Open Spaces can contain natural resources that can be managed for recreation and natural resource conservation values such as a desire to protect wildlife habitat, water quality and endangered species. Open Space also can provide opportunities for nature based, unstructured, low-impact recreational opportunities such as walking and nature viewing.

Figure 4-21 shows the geographic location of natural areas and open spaces. Most of the open spaces identified have potential to be restored with native vegetation as discussed in Section 03. Service Area 4 has less access to natural areas within neighborhoods than the other Service Areas. Opportunities to increase the quantity and quality of natural areas in Service Area 4 should be a strong consideration of the prioritization work that is recommended in a subsequent Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP).

- Amenities: May include paved or natural trails, wildlife viewing areas, mountain biking, disc golf, interpretation and education facilities.
- Maintenance standards: Demand-based maintenance with available funding. Biological management practices observed. A range of environmental quality can be found in open spaces and natural areas depending on the larger goals of the City.
- Lighting: None, except potentially parking areas for safety.
- Signage: Interpretive signage and kiosks where appropriate.

- Landscape Design: Generally, none. However, the primary objective of Open spaces should be to support natural or native vegetation to increase environmental value and lower maintenance costs. However, natural areas are not maintenance free areas. Their maintenance regimes are different than Bloomington's typical mowing operations. Natural areas take longer to establish than turf grass, but once established will reduce staff input needs and resources.



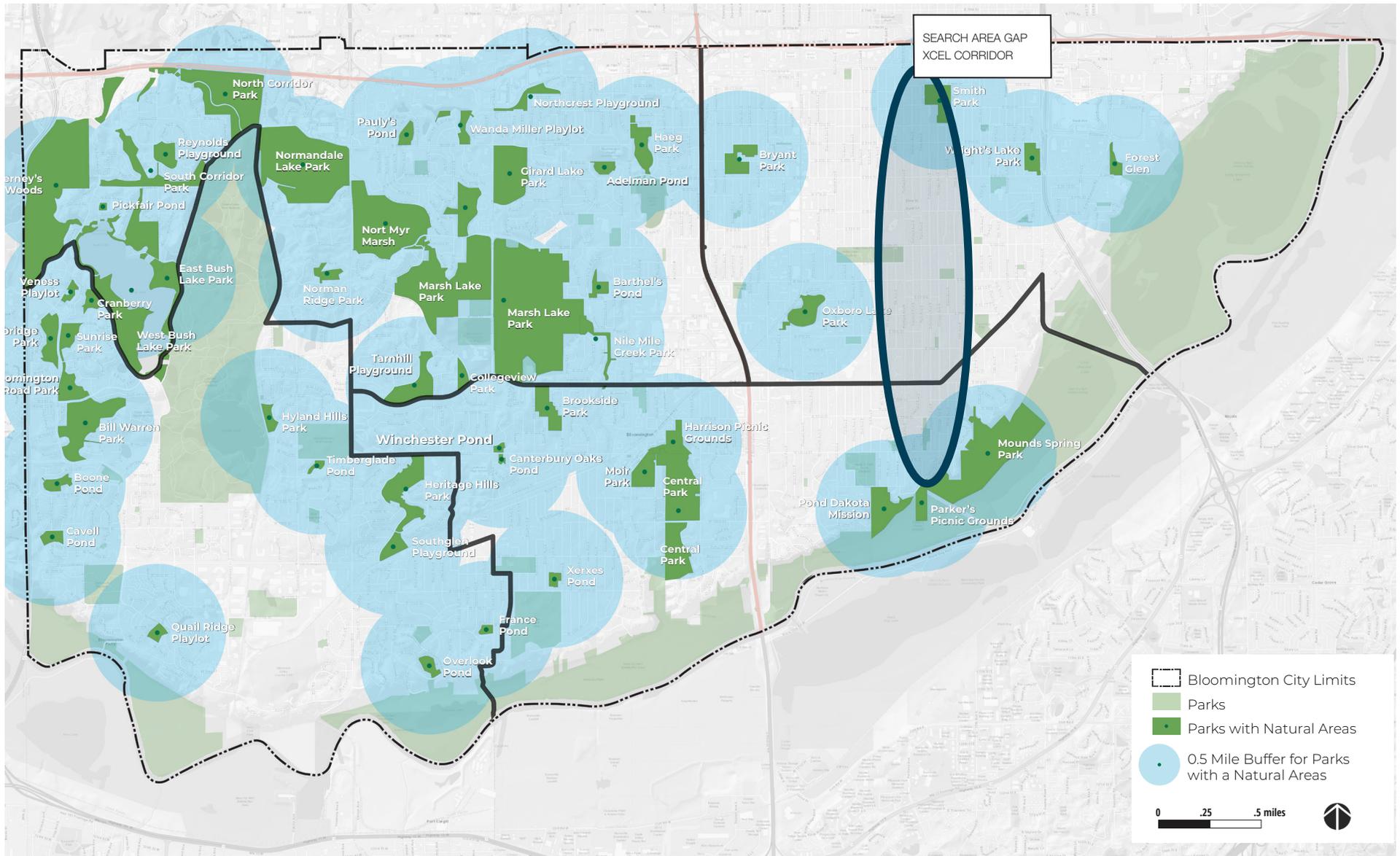


Figure 4-21: Natural Areas/ Open Space And Natural Area Map

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# ACTION PLAN

04

The Action Plan consists of goals and actions in 10 categories. Together, this mix of new programs, tools, and partnerships outlines a strategy to re-imagine and upgrade parks in Bloomington. As implementation unfolds, the city will assess and monitor these actions with an emphasis on adequate staffing, financing, and equitable resource allocation.

Bloomington also recognizes that given the long planning horizon of the Park System Master Plan (PSMP) it may be necessary to modify specific actions as conditions change. Shifts in development patterns, redevelopment, demographic changes, technology, or recreational interests can reshape needs and priorities, warranting new implementation approaches. The PSMP and this Action Plan are living documents that guide, but don't prescribe. The expectation is that modifications will be made in the future.

Along with a commitment to deliver accessible, equitable, innovative, and high quality recreational experiences, flexibility in implementation enables the City to adjust, refine, and improve strategies.

The PSMP policies reflect the overarching principles that seek to elevate the City's parks, facilities, and programs into an excellent system in the future.

The icons next to the policy categories represent the 4 - PSMP Guiding Principles and the 7 - City Council Priorities that are working together.

**PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN**  
**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

-  BE BLOOMINGTON
-  BE ESSENTIAL
-  BE RESILIENT
-  BE EQUITABLE

**CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**  
**2017-2020**

-  COMMUNITY AMENITIES
-  ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY
-  EQUITY AND INCLUSION
-  COMMUNITY IMAGE
-  ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
-  FOCUSED RENEWAL
-  HIGH QUALITY SERVICES



## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Goal:

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

Bloomington Parks and Recreation plays a significant part in making the residents of the city lives better. They create a living environment that makes living in Bloomington more adaptable. The city's networks of parks, green spaces, trees, and water protect sensitive natural resources that exist throughout the city. These natural areas give people the healing effects of the interaction with the outdoors especially during this past year in 2020 to get through the Covid-19 pandemic.

The multiple benefits of supporting and maintaining natural environments, using best design and operational practices and timely implementation of resiliency measures give Bloomington residents a high level of recreational value while protecting the future of Bloomington's natural resources.

The current parks and open spaces in Bloomington help to manage stormwater flow, lowering the risk of flooding and improving groundwater recharge. Trees improve air quality by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, reducing heat island effect, and serve as natural cooling centers for residents. Park space can enhance their own natural protective functions through low-impact design and create sustainable green infrastructure.

The parks and conservation areas within the city of Bloomington can better withstand extreme impacts of severe weather events and other effects of climate change with proper management.

### ACTIONS:

**NR1:** Establish a Natural Resource Manager/ City Forester position separate from the Park Maintenance Supervisor position. Shift existing staff to the Natural Resource Manager position.

**NR2:** Create a Natural Resource Division in the park maintenance budget.

- Move existing CIP budget item (Approx. \$70,000) to natural resource budget.
- Increase budget annually as work plans are developed.
- Include a natural resource section in the park maintenance annual work plan.

**NR3:** Complete a Natural Resource Management Plan in 2021 that builds upon and coalesces the previously completed plans and studies.

- Ground truth previous plans and priorities and refine the priorities to include community, equity, and park based criteria.
- Recommend an annual budget and work plan based on priorities and anticipated management strategies.
- Identify grant opportunities and funding strategy based on priorities.

**NR4:** Responsibility for natural resource issues should be given to the Sustainability Commission, who reports to the Sustainability Coordinator.

- PARC should receive bi-annual reports from the NR Manager.

**NR5:** Work with the Water Resources Department to implement projects from the completed parks opportunity zones study. Collaborate to integrate multi-functional Green Infrastructure into parks that increases both recreational and environmental value.

**NR6:** Build upon existing partnership with Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) and collaborate around opportunities to enhance natural resources in shared parks.

- Revisit the Implementing Agency agreement at Hyland-Anderson-Bush Lake Park Reserve. While not fully a natural resource issue TRPD's expertise in natural resources could be applied if the Implementing Agency roles were modified and they had greater control with their greater resources.
- Collaborate on ways to enhance natural resources at Hyland Greens and how TRPD's expertise can aid implementation.

**NR7:** Develop an urban forest inventory to understand and increase the park system's resiliency by diversifying the species composition.

- Ground truth previous plans and priorities and refine the priorities to include community, equity, and park based criteria.
- Identify and protect heritage trees within the park system to maintain aesthetic, historical, and ecological value of the urban canopy.
- Develop a canopy and shade cover study in parks. Create a shade cover standard for parks in the four Service Areas.

**NR8:** Identify opportunities to integrate more natural areas into Service Area 4. The Xcel Utility Corridor is a good candidate and has already completed restoration/ planting projects. Xcel has completed similar projects in other communities to foster good will and may be receptive.

**NR9:** Incorporate natural areas and native plantings into all park redevelopment plans as recommended in the park design standards. Incorporate Green Infrastructure into park redevelopment plans to treat runoff from proposed and existing impervious surfaces.



**NR10:** Provide natural resource based programming for residents. Partner with organizations already known for environmental and natural resources programming in the City such as USFWS, TRPD, and Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. These organizations may have ready made programming opportunities for residents.

**NR11:** Create an education and media program with the Communications Department that tells the story of natural resources in Bloomington. Utilize articles in the briefing, videos on the city's website, and on-site educational signage to alert residents to critical work that is being done, and why it's being done, by the city.

**NR12:** Coordinate volunteer efforts through the NR Manager position to fully engage the public. Develop a list of projects for resident participation and post on-line to encourage action and build community.

**NR13:** Take a leadership role in the discussion around developing the Minnesota River Valley as a Regional Park Reserve. Work with agencies on both sides of the river to coordinate opportunities around natural resources management and trail connections.

**NR14:** Identify the Park Department's role in working with Agencies to prioritize resources. Define leadership and relationship dynamics for the following situations:

- **Bloomington Staff Led:** Smaller city park projects relying on long-term maintenance by park staff. E.g. neighborhood park restorations and native garden development.
- **Partnerships:** Projects that require inter-departmental collaboration and/ or working with other agencies and non-profits within the City. E.g. Stormwater Green Infrastructure projects that require collaboration with Water Resources, the Watershed District, and Public Works.
- **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. E.g. the Minnesota River Valley or Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lake Park Reserve.

**DRAFT**

"For in the end we will  
conserve only what we love,  
We will love only what we understand,  
We will understand only what we are taught."  
Baba Dioum - 1970





## LEVEL OF SERVICE

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

Level of service allows the Department to measure the equity value of parks and park amenities by population served. This includes parks, facilities, and amenities and their level of population access impact. This method of measure has been used for thirty years by planners for park and recreation system master plans to demonstrate fairness and equity.

In addition, most recently Park Planners and Landscape Architects are also using a recreation value assessment which allows park agencies to assess how well their parks, amenities and facilities are used based on their condition value and how wide is the demographic appeal is for each type of park in the system has to the neighborhood or community its services. Just because there is a park within a 10-minute walk, but it has outdated amenities and equipment that gets no public use or little public use does not mean it is a productive park which equates to an unwise use of city funds to operate and maintain it. Creating both population-based metrics and recreation value metrics will create parks that have wide age segment appeal, wide recreation value and high park destiny value. In the end the city will create a more appealing park system to users of all ages and user capabilities.

## ACTIONS:

- LS1:** Address under-served amenities in the Level of Service study and needs identified during Community Engagement. Biggest needs include an indoor Community Center/ Recreation Center.
- LS2:** Increase the CIP budget to meet the redevelopment needs. Consider a referendum to address comprehensively and in a more timely manner.
- LS3:** Use Service Areas to balance facilities, amenities, and park experiences and to build equity throughout the system.
- LS4:** Decommission over-served facilities such as tennis courts, softball fields, and outdoor hockey/ skating areas in the city. Focus on maintaining larger facilities with multiple fields and/ or courts in order to host tournaments or league play.
- LS5:** Update individual park plans to meet current resident needs. Utilize a community-driven plan update process to ensure neighborhood needs are being considered.
- LS6:** Follow updated park design principles for neighborhood and community parks and focus on experiences in addition to amenities.
- LS7:** Enhance access to the regional park systems.
- LS8:** Provide new and emerging trend facilities to maintain innovative parks that meet the current resident needs. E.g. bike playgrounds/ skills areas.
- LS9:** Provide internet service at parks where feasible. Prioritize community parks and parks identified to receive an updated Community Building.
- LS10:** Provide quality LED lighting at key fields to extend programming hours and opportunities. Especially multi-use fields.

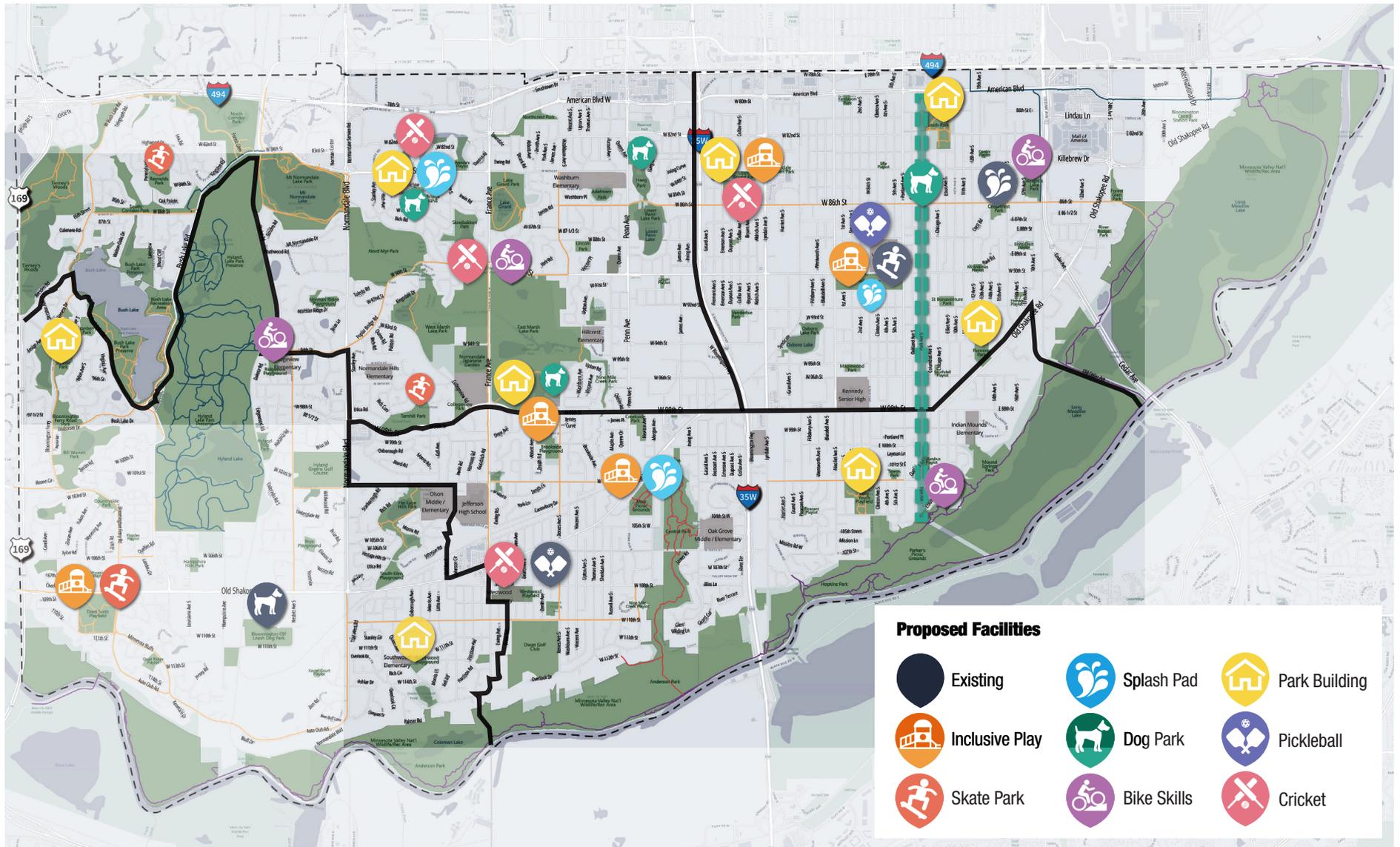


Figure 4-22: Proposed Facilities and Service Area Map

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## TRAILS AND MOBILITY

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

Trails are the number one desired amenity of park systems across the United States and were identified as high priority in Bloomington. Through coordinated planning and design, parks and trails can work in concert with other public services and infrastructure to improve quality of life in Bloomington. Trails, pedestrian paths, and bikeways expand mobility options, encouraging people to drive less and can connect to major attractions in the city. A connected trail system allows residents to travel through the city in a safe environment. Great cities have great connected trails systems. Off-street trails, bikeways, linear parks, natural surface trails, and multi-use paths all become part of a continuous network for people to experience their city without using their cars.

Busy, attractive trails bring positive energy to their surroundings, making neighborhoods safer and more prosperous. Trails used for exercise, regular social interaction and relaxation improve physical and emotional health of residents. Trails that combine elements of green infrastructure with recreational spaces can attract additional support and funding. Trails that connect public gathering spaces with commercial uses such as restaurants enliven their broader surroundings, creating momentum for economic investment.

Bloomington has a strong network of natural surface trails in the city that should be considered as a destination for residents and visitors. Natural surface trails provide significant cost-benefit value and should be considered and integrated into the overall trail plans for the city.



## ACTIONS:

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**TM1:** Support and assist the implementation of the Alternative Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Plan trail recommendations.

**TM2:** Develop loop trails in neighborhood and community parks.

**TM3:** Complete a comprehensive signage and wayfinding plan that addresses consistency across the city, integrates with regional trail signage, and brands individual trails and trail corridors in the City.

**TM4:** Ensure all new or reconstructed trails and walkways are fully Accessible.

**TM5:** Complete a natural surface trails plan to inventory natural trails, identify appropriate uses, vision expansion of the system, marketing the system, and assign an operations and maintenance strategy.

Make recommendations on mountain bike trail development in the City and working with other Agency landholders.

Identify trail and trailhead amenities that increase safety, awareness and trail experience.

**TM6:** Continue to support the State Trail development in the Minnesota River Valley as funding is available.

**TM7:** Prioritize off-road trails as they connect to parks to maximize safety and invite less skilled riders.

**TM8:** Provide infrastructure to develop more skilled riders. This will increase safety for all modes of travel. E.g. bike playgrounds/ skills areas.



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## EQUITY AND ACCESS

### Goal:

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

Equity and access to parks, recreation facilities and programs mean that all Bloomington residents regardless of where they live, their background, age, or ability can enjoy meaningful park and recreational opportunities. Factors, such as the distance from a park, the design of a park space, facility, or park condition, affect people's ability to access recreation. Designing parks for activation is critical to the success of every park in Bloomington. As many age segments as possible should be served through each type of design to create a positive experience.

Equity recognizes that many factors influence where parks are built and how they are maintained. Availability of quality recreational opportunities should be a given. An equity driven approach to parks and recreation facilities acknowledges that people who live in areas of the city not served by a park have greater recreational needs and the city needs to recognize and prioritize their investment in resources to support these citizen's needs.

When residents can get to parks and recreation facilities along a safe and convenient walking or biking trail, they are likelier to exercise, play, relax, or interact on a regular basis. The goal of a ten-minute walk to a park across the city can provide enormous opportunities for people of all ages to recreate. Once people get to a park, and the park spaces are safe, clean, and well-maintained they will continue to be users of the park for years to come. Facilities that incorporate multi-generational and multi-functional design welcome users of all ages, and abilities to participate fully and equally in recreational experiences that creates a lifetime user.



## ACTIONS:

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**EA1:** Complete the Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool started in the PSMP to inform CIP budget recommendations. An inventory and assessment of parks must be completed first.

**EA2:** Update neighborhood and park plans based on the completed Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool and update park design standards.

Service Area 4 replacement playgrounds should integrate a higher level of experiences at some parks due to equity issues and higher populations of children under age 18.

**EA3:** Continue working on ADA Accessibility compliance as parks are redeveloped.

**EA4:** Distribute larger community facilities equally across the city and Service Areas as recommended in Section 03.

**EA5:** Utilize a community-driven planning process for all major investments in parks. The Parks Department and COED should develop a standard engagement process and goals to be utilized for each project. Engagement goals should focus on the .5 mile radius around the park. An additional goal is to match engagement demographics to the City's.

**EA6:** Complete annual programming surveys to identify barriers to participation and program needs that aren't being met.

**EA7:** Continue to contribute and provide leadership for the City's Racial Equity Action Plan.

**EA8:** Create a policy for ability based payments for programs and create a separate budget item for payment assistance. This can be tracked over time to make budget allocations more accurate. Provide no-cost programming for those in need.

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## ADD CORE SERVICES TO EXPAND USER BASE

**Goal:**  
Enhance the value of recreation services by enhancing existing recreation facilities to build new facilities and support the existing and new core programs desired by the community in the most cost-effective manner.

Parks and recreation systems that evolve also actively connect residents and visitors to available amenities and services on a year-round basis. Most of this is done through active programming.

Bloomington has limited indoor recreation program space for a city its size. Being a cold weather city leaves many residents with limited access to indoor public park and recreation system type spaces to just six months a year. The exceptions are an indoor senior center, which is limited in size, and the Bloomington Ice Garden which is old but services both hockey and figure skating needs well.

The delivery of safe, affordable, and enjoyable indoor core programming spaces ensures meaningful recreation and social activities for people of all ages, including children, adults, and persons with disabilities on a year-round basis. Tying programs to facility design maximizes their use and grows a year-round multi-generational user base. Forcing programs into spaces that were not designed for that program creates a negative experience for the users of the program, as well as people teaching, training, or delivering the program.

Matching indoor spaces to core programs builds a year-round user base that maximizes the city’s investment and builds wider age segment appeal. Development of multi-functional and multi-generational facilities serve all residents versus special interest groups. Managing these types of facilities can support their operational cost if designed correctly and priced correctly. These types of facilities can have high economic impact value if designed correctly.

Marketing, particularly efforts to make use of social media and mobile platform technology build awareness and participation in programs and facilities. Communication efforts should factor in language and other barriers to reach all Bloomington’s residents.

An annual survey and feedback program would aid BPRD in identifying program successes and challenges, barriers for participation, and unmet programming needs.



## ACTIONS:

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**CS1:** Identify gaps in programs provided for existing core and non-core programs according to the Needs Assessment completed for this Master Plan. Find new ways to provide new core programs desired by the community and where and how to deliver them to the community. These could include fitness and wellness, outdoor adventure, environmental education, and winter programs.

**CS2:** Develop a true cost of service for all existing and new programs to classify them as core essential, important, and value added.

**CS3:** Develop a new pricing policy that incorporates the classification of programs, cost of service and cost recovery goal that will support operational costs based on a public and private good for the service.

**CS4:** Teach and train the staff to track the cost of service, price services based on classification and how to communicate the price of programs to the community.

**CS5:** Update the school district partnership agreements to make it fair and equitable and include a yearly review process.

**CS6:** Enhance pricing for golf, sports for youth and adults, ice related programs and facility uses, and aquatic related programs. They are undervalued for the quality of the experience.

**CS7:** Develop a sports tourism strategy for the department regarding tournaments in hockey, golf, adult and youth sports, aquatics, and outdoor adventure.

**CS8:** Determine a long-range vision for recreation, community centers, ice facilities and aquatic centers that will emphasize the preferred service-delivery model and its role in the community for all core services.

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**CS9:** Define the role of other service providers in the city and identify gaps.

**CS10:** Identify potential partners for capital investment, programming, and maintenance in existing and future facilities.

**CS11:** Find dedicated funding sources for recreation facilities in the city. Develop new facilities and update existing facilities over the next five years to maximize their value to citizens of the park and recreation system.

**CS12:** Develop feasibility and business plans during the inception of all new and renovated recreation facilities to maximize the cost recovery capabilities and operational costs.

**CS13:** Address the issue of blanket permitting of sports fields to Associations.

**CS14:** Add a new updated clubhouse to the golf course at Dwan to enhance programming and revenue generation.





## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### Goal:

Create an organizational structure that allows the Department to thrive, be accountable for all finances associated with parks and recreation and deliver on the standards they are capable of delivering.

The current organizational design of parks and recreation services is split between public works and the parks and recreation department. Though this organizational structure has been in place for a long time it limits the parks and recreation department its ability to have effective control over its parks and its budget. Nationwide, there are very few parks and recreation systems the size of Bloomington that have a split department. Ideally this requires more city-wide coordination to achieve the results desired. Based on observations the system has fallen behind in terms of updated park deign, park planning and management, indoor facility planning and in leveraging their budget. This organizational design needs to be monitored to its impacts on the city and the parks and recreation department on a yearly basis.



## ACTIONS:

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**OS1:** Adjust the Parks Department's relationship with Public Works to provide more input and coordination with staff and equipment that are utilized today.

Make the new organizational relationship effective for the 2021 budget.

All existing shop and storage space will continue to be used by Parks and Recreation staff to eliminate need for increased capital funding.

Re-prioritizing the Parks Superintendent role to focus on Natural Resources Management is part of this adjusted relationship.

Park and Recreation Director to provide input on hiring decisions related to Parks Maintenance.

**OS2:** Any Departments that receive dollars from the Parks and Recreation budget through an assessment process should demonstrate their value regarding how those dollars are spent and report the outcomes that were provided to Parks and Recreation. These Departments that receive budget money from the parks and recreation budget should treat the Parks and Recreation Department as their customer with direction and input by the Director.

**OS3:** Develop an operating budget so the Director will have full control of all costs and revenues. This will deliver the highest level of quality to the community.

**OS4:** All park and recreation capital improvement planning will include the Park and Recreation Director and key staff members in the planning, design, construction, furniture fixtures details and equipment requirements for the improved space.

**OS5:** A business development office or committee should be created to manage earned income opportunities, partnership equity, pricing of services, grant research and pursuit, tracking data on park programs and facility use, as well as tracking key performance indicators.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUDGET ENHANCEMENT

### Goal:

Demonstrate the economic value of parks as part of the budget process each year.

Currently the Department has not presented an economic impact assessment to the City Council of Parks and Recreation services to the community. This would include proximity values of homes to parks, health and wellness impacts to the community, economic impact of sport tournaments to the city through hotel taxes and food and beverage taxes and other economic elements. These analyses make the solid argument that parks, and recreation services is not a “spending” department but an “earned income” department.

Creating the system of tomorrow requires dedicated, sustainable, and equitable financing to support quality recreational experiences for residents and workers. A balanced investment approach to increase recreational opportunities throughout the city emphasizes funding for the development of new parks, investment in existing parks and operations and maintenance as well as access to recreation facilities and programs. The continued acquisition of new parkland in redeveloped areas, new park experience creation, and the construction of recreation facilities is a foundational action in meeting the recreation needs of existing and future populations. As they age, parks require periodic reinvestment to maintain consistency, and deliver quality experiences. Efforts to upgrade assets, add recreational amenities and expand capacity increases the recreational opportunities available within existing parks. Ongoing, there needs to be adequate resources for operations, maintenance and staffing. These are also essential in the strategy to extend in the parks system’s useful life and enhance user experiences.

As a citywide parks network, improving equitable access to parks and recreation programs for everyone is a foremost priority. Funding sources must be sufficiently flexible to address these historical deficiencies and reduce gaps in recreational opportunities that accumulate over time. Innovate equitable partnerships with private and other public not for profit entities along with new revenue generating opportunities can expand the resources to a create a system of tomorrow.



## ACTIONS:

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**EB1:** Seek a dedicated funding source for capital improvements for the department to update parks, develop new community center facilities, build trails and greenways, and improve existing infrastructure. Consider the following approaches:

Increase the annual CIP to \$3-4 million from current \$1.3 million. This would need to extend for the next 20-years to address the shortfall and would not include facilities cost.

Pursue a referendum to shorten the timeframe of redevelopment, inject life into the park system by addressing needs, and include much needed facilities.

**EB2:** Develop an Economic Impact Plan for the department every five years to focus on the approximate value of homes near parks, trails, and natural areas.

**EB3:** The Parks and Recreation staff needs to track costs and revenues per amenity and program.

**EB4:** Consider development of a Parks Foundation to help raise funds for the department as well as create advocacy for the department.

**EB5:** Seek CAPRA Accreditation from NRPA. Alternatively, use the CAPRA Accreditation process to promote excellence in the short-term.

**EB6:** Develop park plans for two to three parks a year and update them to achieve enhanced experiences needed in the neighborhoods they serve. Utilize an equity prioritization tool to establish priority.

**EB7:** Over the next three years, develop a data pack the department will use to track and demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness that can be shared with key leaders of the city.

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## UPDATED POLICIES

### Goal:

Establish equitable and fair polices for the management of partnerships, pricing, land use and development, earned income, administrative costs, and EDI to operate in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Bloomington Parks and Recreation department has many partnership arrangements with various groups across the city including other city departments. Many times, the partnership arrangements are not equitable due to the city or the parks and recreation department. The department has not effectively tracked their true cost of the partnership and its impact of their operational budget. Policies help to manage expectations, reduces a sense of entitlement, and creates fairness and equity if managed correctly.

With tight budes and growing needs, parks and recreation systems often must do more with less. Sustainable systems look for arrangements with other public agencies, not for profits recreation providers and the private sector and volunteers to expand possibilities for new parks and recreational offerings. These partners can complement city service delivery. Other partners can include school districts, not for profit providers, and private interest. Establish park foundations and conservancies can help raise money and provide operational dollars to support park attractions and programs.



## ACTIONS:

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**UP1:** Establish and or update existing partnership polices for public/ public partnerships, public/not-for-profit partnerships, and public/private partnerships. Partnerships that should be addressed include:

Bloomington Public Schools - Create fairness based on true cost of investment.

Three Rivers Park District - Review partnerships regarding Hyland Golf Course. Revisit the Implementing Agency discussion within Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve. Explore additional partnerships around environmental programming and moving programs to parks on the East Side of the City.

US Fish and Wildlife Services - Explore environmental programming opportunities. Revisit Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for maintenance in the River Valley.

Athletic Associations - Redefine expectations based on fairness and true cost of service. Address blanketed permitting of fields and diamonds.

**UP2:** Implement written partnership agreements that bind each partner in an accountable manner. Review and update these agreements on a yearly basis.

**UP3:** All partnership obligations will determine the true cost of each partner's investment in the partnership. This will assure there is no non-equitable spending by one partner over another partner that may cause entitlement to occur.

**UP4:** Pricing policies will be established based on a classification of what is core essential, important, and value-added services as well as the level of public and private good that exists. These policies will also outline the cost benefit of the service provided.

**UP5:** Not-for-profit partnerships will be established to support the end goal of the Department financially and ensure all costs / revenues are fair and responsible for the outcomes desired by each partner.

**UP6:** Staffing polices and costs will be driven by what is most efficient for the city.

**UP7:** Organizational policies will be determined by best practices in the industry regarding personnel, work culture, training, and safety of staff.

**UP8:** Asset management policies will be based on efficiency and effectiveness of the resources to ensure wise use of taxpayer dollars.

**UP9:** Policies written will follow as closely as possible to CAPRA Standards.

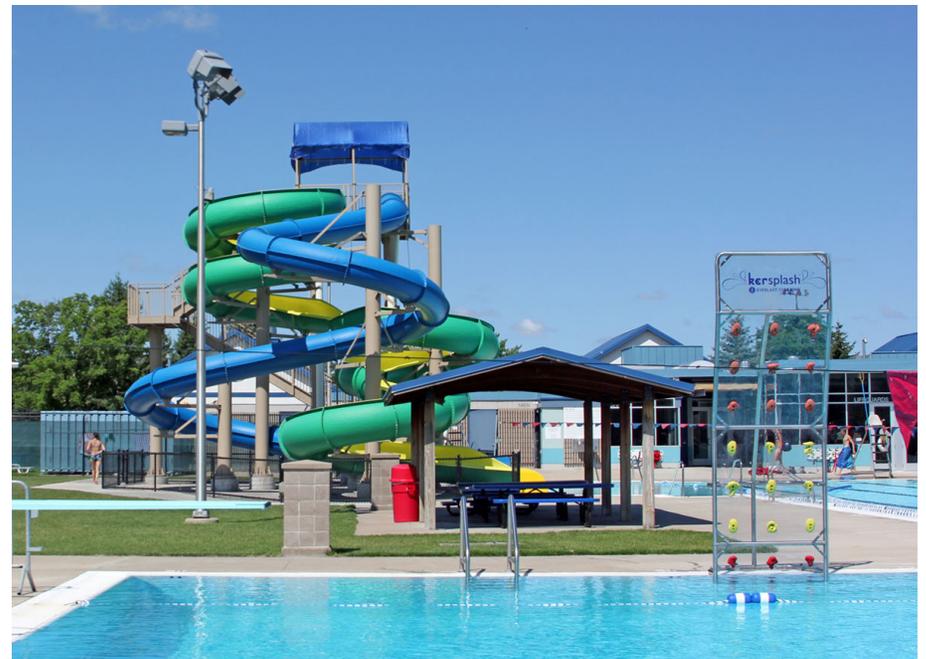


## EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

### Goal:

The Department will become an outcome based driven organization that tracks efficiency and effectiveness in all the services they provide.

Park and recreation systems inherently do not demonstrate how efficient and effective they are because they do not track data well on key performance metrics. These metrics tell their story of their daily, weekly, and yearly impacts on the city and show their operational budgets. When agencies tell their story well through data, they can demonstrate their value and impact on the community. Bloomington Parks and Recreation has limited performance measures that they track to tell their story and impact. Managing to outcomes versus effort will be a positive paradigm shift for the department in the future and in making their argument for needed facilities, programs, capital improvements to key decision makers in the city.



## ACTIONS:

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**EE1:** The Department should determine five performance metrics for each division in 2021 and add two additional metrics over the next five years. These metrics will demonstrate overall efficiency and effectiveness and the impact of their work.

**EE2:** The Staff will be trained to write and track key performance metrics for each division and report their results quarterly to the director.

**EE3:** One person will be responsible for working with the division managers to track their performance metrics and assist them in writing and reporting the results properly.

**EE4:** Resource spending on both the operational side and capital side of the park system will be tracked and recorded to demonstrate to the community that fairness and equity in serving the entire community's needs.

**EE5:** Based on establish metrics, low performing areas of the system will be opted out for change or eliminated to achieve maximum efficiency.

**EE6:** A cost benefit analysis will be developed to track programs, facilities, marketing, and maintenance expenditures. This method will be changed as needed.

**EE7:** Business plans will be created for revenue producing facilities. These plans may be for the golf courses, Bloomington Ice Garden, Bloomington Family Aquatic Center, and other revenue producing facilities.

**EE8:** All marketing and communication materials will be tracked for cost benefit. Changes will need to be made to direct staff on how to invest in the most cost-effective tools. These materials should appeal to the largest segment of audiences and encourage them to use the parks and recreation facilities as well as the services available to them.

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# SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

## Goal:

Support the ongoing efforts of the Sustainability Commission by making the park system more sustainable and resilient to the effects of climate change.

While natural resources is a significant component of sustainability and resiliency, there are several other aspects of sustainability that the Parks Department should consider in their work.

Park buildings are significant energy users. This energy use currently has a large impact on operating expenses and contributions to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. Facilities can have a large impervious surface footprint that contributes to water quality and quantity issues. Turf grass maintenance with mowers has a considerable impact on air quality and carbon emissions. Material choices in parks facilities can contribute to pollution by using unsustainable or toxic materials or production processes. Irrigation and aquatics use require significant water resources to be consumed. Fertilizers and pesticides can pollute waterways and harm beneficial insects.

Despite these issues Parks are a source of environmental health for the city due to the ecosystem services they provide such as flood control, water and air quality improvement, carbon capture and sequestration, wildlife habitat and biodiversity preservation, and numerous psychological and spiritual benefits for humans. The City Council has made Environment and Sustainability a priority for the city moving forward and the Parks Department, working with the Sustainability Commission, can be a leader in implementing strategies that make Bloomington more sustainable and resilient.



## ACTIONS:

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**SR1:** Any new park building facility, and major renovations, should strive to achieve Minnesota Buildings, Benchmark, and Beyond (B3) certification. B3 is designed to help make buildings more energy efficient and sustainable and is currently required for all State-funded projects in Minnesota.

**SR2:** Consider using SITES as a guide for major park redevelopment projects. SITES is a tool, similar to LEED, for outdoor environments that helps create ecologically resilient communities and benefits the environment, property owners, and local and regional communities and economies.

**SR3:** Identify areas of parks that can reduce actively maintained turf, and reduced mowing areas. Reducing mower run-time will have positive air quality and carbon emission benefits. The Sustainability Commission restoration priority study provided a start to this work.

**SR4:** Develop an urban forest inventory database to track the existing forest and plan for improvements. Increasing forest diversity and utilizing species more adaptable to climate change will make parks more resilient over time.

**SR5:** Improve the trail network and pedestrian access to parks in order to reduce the number of car-related visits.

**SR6:** Integrate Green Infrastructure into parks to manage stormwater runoff generated from rainfall. Partner with the Water Resources Dept., Nine Mile Creek and other Watershed Districts to use park land for stormwater quantity and quality control efforts in neighborhoods. Recreational needs should always be accounted for and protected so that valuable park land isn't taken for a single-use stormwater volume practice.

**SR7:** Continue to develop sustainability education campaigns through parks. Consider a 'Seeing Yellow' campaign or similar to educate residents on benefits of minimizing chemical inputs and allowing some areas of parks

to receive less maintenance – even if that means more dandelion growth. Similarly, pollinator lawn mixes contain clover and other non-traditional lawn species that may be considered weeds, but that have significant environmental value. Perception and education are key elements.

**SR8:** Develop a park resilience action plan to anticipate effects due to climate change and begin to adapt. Identify the key issues throughout the park system and prepare to address.

**SR9:** Consider long-term vs. short-term costs and payback periods in capital improvement planning. Sustainable approaches are often considered more costly upfront but provide long-term cost savings. The payback period should be considered.

**SR10:** Develop sustainable infrastructure that showcases sustainability such as solar panels, wind turbines, Green Infrastructure, natural areas, etc. in highly visible locations accessible to the public. Provide education opportunities associated with this infrastructure.

**SR11:** Continue to facilitate composting and recycling in the park system by maintaining collection points.

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