

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.

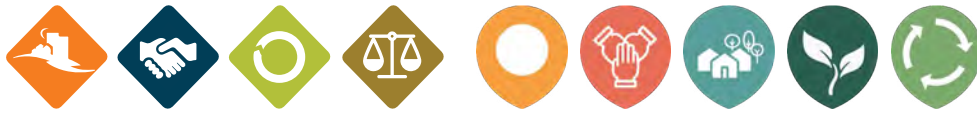
The icons next to the policy categories represent the 4 - PSMP Guiding Principles and the 7 - City Council Priorities that are working together.

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. The City's networks of parks, green spaces, trees, and water protect sensitive natural resources that exist throughout the City. These natural areas provide people the healing effects of the interaction with the outdoors that was especially during 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.

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 pollution and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, reducing heat island effect, and serving as natural cooling centers for residents. Natural protective functions of parks can be achieved through low-impact design and green infrastructure integration.

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

ACTIONS:

NR1: Establish a Natural Resource Management position.

NR2: Create a natural resource budget in the park maintenance budget.

- Reallocate existing CIP budget funds (Approx. \$70,000) to a natural resource maintenance budget.
- Increase natural resource maintenance 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 2021-2022 that builds upon and coalesces previously completed plans and studies.

- Ground truth previous inventories and findings 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: The Natural Resource Management Position should be responsible for prioritizing and addressing natural resource issues. The Sustainability Commission should advise and provide guidance on natural resource issues, and should receive periodic reports from the NR Management Position.

NR5: Work with the Water Resources Department to implement projects from their completed parks opportunity zones study. Collaborate to integrate multi-functional green infrastructure into parks that increase 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 role of TRPD and the City of Bloomington as Implementing Agencies of the Hyland-Anderson-Bush Lake Regional 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 responsibility with their greater resources.
- Collaborate on ways to enhance natural resources at Hyland Greens and how TRPD’s expertise could 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, especially west of Highway 77. 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 where appropriate.



NR10: Provide natural resource based programming for residents. Partner with organizations already providing environmental and natural resources programming 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, why it's important, and why it's being done by the City. Identifying natural resources in parks could be listed in a prominent location on the City's website.

NR12: Coordinate volunteer efforts through the NR Management position to fully engage and activate 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 and/or expanded partnership with the MN Valley Wildlife Refuge. Work with agencies on both sides of the river to coordinate opportunities around natural resources management and trail connections to support this effort.

NR14: Clarify the Park Department's role in working with agencies to prioritize resources. Define leadership and relationship dynamics for the following project types:

- **Bloomington Led:** Smaller city park projects relying on long-term maintenance by city 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 are led by others and likely 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.

"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 BPRD to measure the balance of parks and amenities throughout the City and by the population served. This includes parks, facilities, and amenities and their level of population access impact. This method of measurement has been used for thirty years by planners for park and recreation system master plans to demonstrate fairness and equity.

Additionally, 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 the demographic appeal is for each type of park in the system compared to the neighborhood or community its serves. A park within a 10-minute walk is a good indicator of equity and quality of life. However, if that park has outdated amenities and equipment that attracts little public use, it will not be a productive park and indicates 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. The end goal is to create a more appealing park system to users of all ages and capabilities.

ACTIONS:

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- LS1:** Address under-served amenities in the Level of Service study and needs identified during community engagement.
 - LS2:** Increase the CIP budget to meet the park redevelopment needs. Consider alternative funding strategies to address 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 considered and incorporated into all redeveloped parks.
 - LS6:** Follow updated park design principles for neighborhood and community parks and focus on experiences in addition to amenities.
 - LS7:** Enhance access and connections to the regional park system.
 - 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 high speed internet service at all facilities and public wi-fi access where appropriate. Prioritize community parks, recreation facilities, and community building park locations.
 - LS10:** Provide quality LED lighting at key fields to extend programming hours and opportunities. Especially multi-use fields.

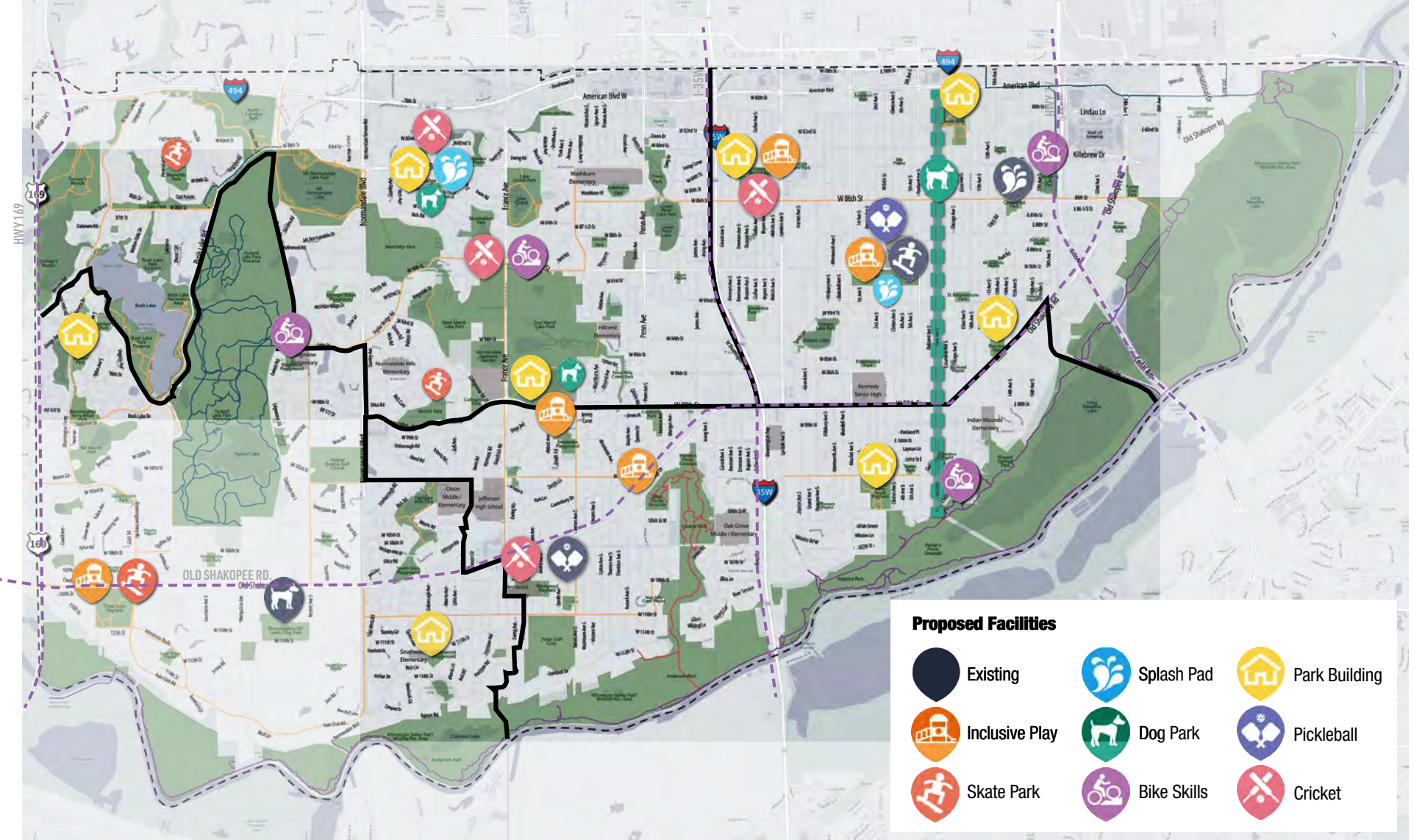


Figure 4-23: Proposed New Park Facilities - Potential Locations



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 highest 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, increase safety, encourage people to drive less, and connect major destinations in the City. 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:

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 and ADA compliant.

TM5: Complete a natural surface trails plan to inventory natural trails, identify appropriate uses, identify opportunities to expand the system, increase awareness through marketing, and assign an operations and maintenance strategy.

- Complete a feasibility study on mountain bike trail development in the City and coordinate with other agency landholders and non-profit groups for construction and maintenance.
- Explore bike trail connection through Moir/ Central Park to the MN River Valley
- Identify trail and trailhead enhancements and amenities that increase safety, awareness and trail experience.

TM6: Continue to support the completion of the state trail to make the connection to the Old Cedar Avenue bridge.

TM7: Prioritize off-road trails that directly connect to parks and schools in order to maximize safety and appeal for less skilled riders.





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 can enjoy meaningful park and recreational opportunities regardless of where they live, their background, age, or ability. 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:

EA1: Complete the Equity Prioritization Ranking Tool created during the PSMP process to inform CIP budget recommendations.

- An inventory and assessment of parks must be completed first. This will involve significant investment in a comprehensive GIS system which includes park facility data, park amenity condition ratings, recreation programming data, crime data, and demographic and property data.

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

EA3: Continue working toward ADA compliance for the park system.

EA4: Distribute larger community facilities as recommended in Section 03 to ensure equal geographic access across the City and service areas.

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 should focus on a .5 mile radius around the park. Utilize city-wide or neighborhood demographics as a goal for engagement as appropriate for the project.

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

EA7: Continue to collaborate and provide leadership for the city's Racial Equity Action Plan and support BPRD's Racial Equity Action Team.

EA8: Evaluate the fee assistance policy that allows ability to pay based pricing for programs. Create a separate budget and funding source to support payment assistance that can be tracked over time to ensure allocations are more accurate. Provide no-cost programming for those in need.





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 actively connect residents and visitors to available amenities and services on a year-round basis. Most of this connection is provided 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 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:

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.

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 serve the community up to the standards they are capable of delivering.

The current organizational design of parks and recreation services is split between public works which includes park maintenance and the parks and recreation department which carries out programing, facility management, and park planning. Though this organizational structure has been in place for a long time it limits the parks and recreation department in its ability to have effective control over the parks and its budget. This relationship is unique nationally, and among the communities compared for benchmarking. In Bloomington, the park maintenance duties include additional responsibilities not directly related to parks and recreation which needs to be accounted for in duties and expectations of staff members.

A higher level of city-wide coordination to achieve the desired results is needed. Communication and collaboration between Parks Maintenance and the Parks and Recreation Department is critical in this arrangement and processes should be defined for long-term success. The following action plan items address the necessary collaboration and communication strategies for organizational improvement. This organizational design needs to be monitored for its impacts on the City and the Parks and Recreation Department on a yearly basis.



ACTIONS:

OS1: Communication and collaboration between Departments is essential for long term efficiency and effectiveness.

- BPRD staff to participate in the hiring process for park maintenance positions and Park Maintenance Division staff to participate in BPRD full-time hire positions.
- All park and recreation capital improvement planning and changes to park amenities will include the key staff from BPRD and the Park Maintenance Division.

OS2: Develop a separate park maintenance budget within the Public Works general fund budget to better allow for transparency and accountability.

OS3: A position should be created or duties assigned 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.

OS4: Additional staff resources are needed to expand on community engagement and volunteer efforts associated with Racial Equity initiatives and park planning.

OS5: Supervision of Recreation Division should shift from the Parks and Recreation Director to the Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation.

OS6: Staff Levels are not adequate to complete recommendations in the PSMP. The following are needed to achieve recommendations:

- Increase staff capacity for Natural Resources Management. Examine internal job descriptions to shift capacity.
- Increase staff capacity for Community Engagement efforts.

- Increase staff capacity for Project Management of CIP projects.
- Conduct a staffing level assessment for the Parks Maintenance Department.



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:

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

- Increase the annual CIP to \$3-4 million from current \$1.3 million average for the next 20-years to address the funding shortfall. This amount does not include facilities cost.
- Consider a referendum or local option sales tax to secure funds to cover identified deficiencies, 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 to analyze benefits of parks, including the approximate value of homes near parks, trails, and natural areas.

EB3: Establish processes to track costs and revenues per amenity and program annually.

EB4: Explore establishing a Parks Foundation to help raise funds and advocate for the park system.

EB5: Consider utilizing the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agency (CAPRA) Accreditation from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Alternatively, use the CAPRA Accreditation process as a management system of best practices to promote excellence in the short-term.

EB6: Develop park plans for two to three parks a year to begin updating the park system. Utilize an equity prioritization tool to influence the order of parks.

EB7: Over the next three years, develop performance measures BPRD will use to track and demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery that can be shared with key leaders of the City.





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 and internal city departments. Not all partnership arrangements are equitable. BPRD has not effectively tracked their true cost of the partnership and its impact of their operational budget. Policies help to manage expectations, reduce a sense of entitlement, and create 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, 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 groups. Establishment of park foundations and conservancies can help raise money and provide operational dollars to support park attractions and programs.



ACTIONS:

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

- Bloomington Public Schools - Create equitable policies and fees.
- Three Rivers Park District - Review partnerships regarding Hyland Golf Course. Revisit roles as Implementing Agencies for the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve. Explore additional partnerships around the Minnesota River Valley, environmental education programming, and connecting residents from all of Bloomington to the Regional Park.
- US Fish and Wildlife Services - Explore environmental programming partnership opportunities. Update and consider expanding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for maintenance in the River Valley.
- Athletic Associations - Clarify expectations regarding fee for use and service levels based on programming and cost of service. Consider new field use fee as is done in most communities. Address blanket permitting of fields and diamonds.

UP2: Establish written partnership agreements that bind each partner in an accountable manner. Review and update these agreements on a yearly basis. All partnership obligations should 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.

UP3: 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 and should be coordinated and agreed to by all partners.

UP4: Not-for-profit partnerships should 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.

UP5: Organizational policies should be determined by best practices in the industry regarding personnel, work culture, training, and safety of staff to ensure the most efficient and effective service delivery.

UP6: Asset management policies should be developed based on efficiency and effectiveness of the resources to ensure wise use of taxpayer dollars.



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:

EE1: BPRD should identify five performance metrics for each division in 2021 and add two additional metrics over the next five years. These metrics will track overall efficiency and effectiveness and the impact of their work.

EE2: BPRD should train staff to write and track key performance metrics for each division and report their results quarterly to the Director.

- One position should be assigned to working with the Division managers to track their performance metrics and assist them in writing and reporting the results properly.

EE3: Resource spending on operations and capital improvements should be tracked and recorded to assess and demonstrate fairness and equity in serving community needs.

EE4: Established metrics will be used to identify low performing areas of the system that should be modified eliminated to achieve maximum efficiency.

EE5: A cost benefit analysis will be developed to track programs, facilities, marketing, and maintenance expenditures. This method will be modified as needed.

EE6: Updated business plans should be created for all revenue producing facilities including city golf courses, Bloomington Ice Garden, Bloomington Family Aquatic Center, and other revenue producing facilities.

EE7: Marketing and communication materials should be tracked for cost-effectiveness.

EE8: The Parks Maintenance Division should conduct a Service Evaluation to assess operations, adequacy of staffing and budget, and organizational setup. The report should make recommendations for improvements in these areas.





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 potential 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 BPRD, working with the Sustainability Commission, can be a leader in implementing strategies that make Bloomington more sustainable and resilient.



ACTIONS:

SR1: All new park building facilities, and major park renovations, should follow the City of Bloomington’s current Sustainability Policies and recommendations, and work towards the goals outlined in Bloomington’s Energy Action Plan (2018).

SR2: Consider using the Sustainable SITES Initiative 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 to the environment, property owners, and local and regional communities and economies.

SR3: Identify areas of parks where actively maintained turf can be reduced. Reducing mower run-time will have positive air quality and carbon emission benefits. The Sustainability Commission’s restoration priority study provides guidance for 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 and reduce maintenance costs.

SR5: Improve the trail network and pedestrian access to parks in order to reduce the overall vehicle miles traveled.

SR6: Explore integration of 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 identify park land for stormwater quantity and quality control efforts. 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 as part of any city-wide efforts to efficiently adapt to climate change effects. 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 lifecycle cost should be considered in budget decisions.

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 and interpretive signs associated with this infrastructure.

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

SR12: Develop a formal Integrated Pest Management Plan to be approved by Council.