

WSP PARKS RISING

2025 Parks & Recreation
System Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





R

REIMAGINE

Reimagine the layout and design of our parks, focusing on the future while infusing creativity and innovation.

I

INVEST

Make strategic and smart investments in the park system to improve usability, access, quality, providing the resources necessary to achieve our vision.

S

STRENGTHEN

Enhance how individuals engage with the parks and one another by offering top-notch events and programs, improving accessibility, and expanding communications.

E

ENGAGE

Engage in active and genuine listening to understand residents' needs, work practically to find solutions, and cultivate awareness of the issues, opportunities, and limitations at hand.



ROLE OF THE SYSTEM PLAN

WHAT IS A PARKS SYSTEM PLAN?

The Parks and Recreation System Plan serves as West St. Paul's comprehensive guide for delivering exceptional parks, recreational programs, facilities, open spaces, community events, and gatherings. This document provides direction for upcoming park enhancement projects, planning, policies, and operational strategies. Its purpose is to foster the growth of the city's park system by harmonizing visionary concepts with practical solutions.

WHY DO WE NEED A PARKS SYSTEM PLAN?

- The previous parks system plan was outdated
- The community, its priorities, and the way we interact with parks have changed and evolved
- Take advantage of new opportunities and community assets
- Address challenges of today - and tomorrow
- Align with other plans and strategic initiatives
- Align our values to how we build and operate the parks

WHAT WILL THE PLAN DO?

1

Involve the community in the future of the parks and recreation system

2

Evaluate existing parks and recreation features, amenities, services, and operations

3

Identify community needs, concerns, and best practices

4

Outline a vision for future park projects, programs, and partnerships

5

Provide guidance how to achieve the vision, when to tackle projects, and how to pay for improvements

6

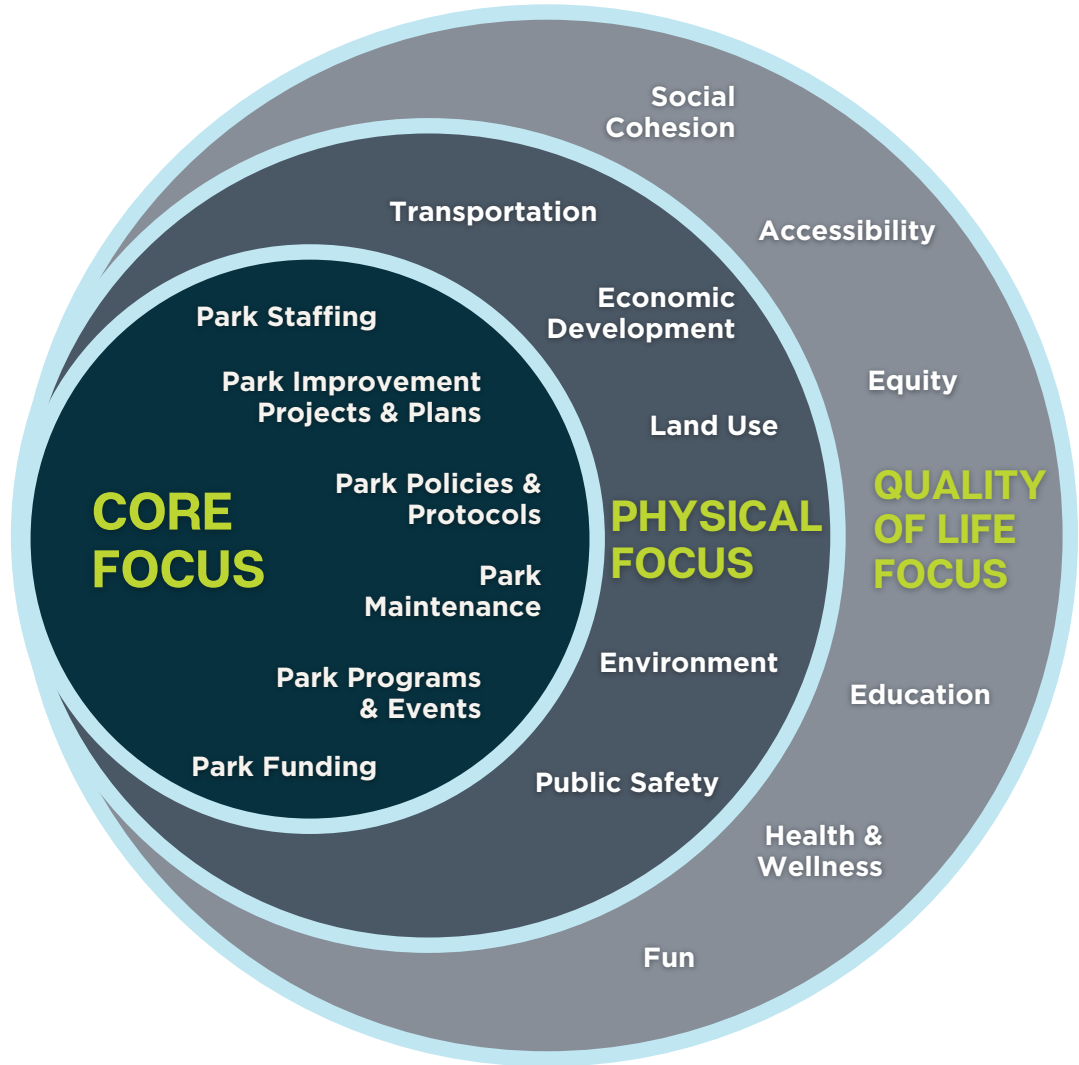
Spark conversations and inspire change

WHAT THE PLAN DOES NOT DO

- Implement itself - there's still a lot of work to do!
- Confirm, finalize, or make final design decisions, set budgets, or allocate resources
- Remain static - the plan can and should be updated as necessary

PLAN FOCUS

Parks are vital community spaces that require ongoing maintenance, investment, and programming to thrive. They are interconnected with various systems, such as transportation and public safety, and contribute to economic growth and quality of life. An effective parks system plan must recognize these interconnections and implement strategies that address them.



HOW THE PLAN IS ORGANIZED



The City of West St. Paul developed this plan through collaboration, involving data collection, public feedback, and discussions. Community members and city leaders played a key role in shaping the plan and its vision.

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The City of West St. Paul and its partners followed an iterative process of data collection, public input, assessment, and dialogue to develop this plan. The community and city leaders were involved in the plan's development and deeply contributed to the vision set forth.



STEP 01 UNDERSTAND

The project team assessed the existing parks and recreation system, studied existing conditions, and learned about needs, assets, and concerns from the community and city leaders.

STEP 02 ENVISION

Through in-person and online engagements, the community shared their vision and priorities for the future of the park system. Building upon the information gathered in Step 1, the project team began assembling a set of themes, guiding principles, and vision to drive change and improvement.

STEP 03 PLAN

During this phase of the project, we developed a plan that outlines how, when, where, and with whom steps can be taken to implement the community's vision.

STEP 04 CONFIRM

The draft vision and plan were shared with the community. As needed, refinements and changes were made to drive consensus-building and shared agreement.

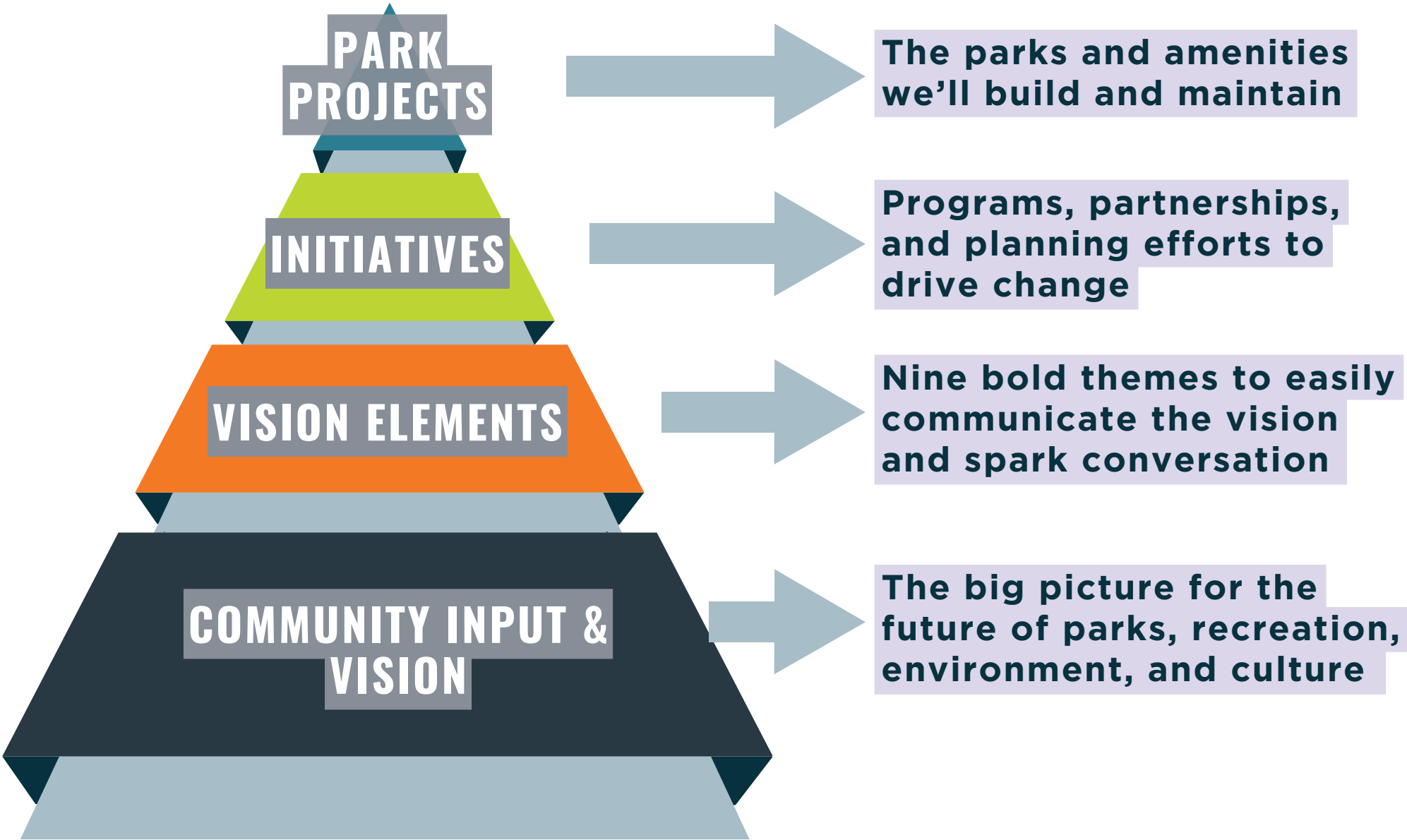


WHAT THE PLAN OFFERS

WE SET OUT TO REIMAGINE A NEW FUTURE FOR THE CITY'S PARKS SYSTEM...

- Improve satisfaction
- Increase participation
- Expand access
- Improve safety
- Think outside the box
- Develop a parks system for the 21st Century

THEN DEVELOPED THE ROADMAP TO MAKE THAT FUTURE A REALITY.



OUR PARKS SYSTEM TODAY

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

17

CITY PARKS

4

MAJOR FACILITIES*
THOMPSON ACTIVITY CENTER IS A SHARED FACILITY

12

YEAR-ROUND
PARK STAFF

15%

PERCENT OF CITY
THAT IS PARKLAND

145

ACRES OF CITY PARK LAND

94%

RESIDENTS WITHIN 10
MINUTE WALK OF A PARK

\$4.6M

BUDGET
OPERATING & CAPITAL

\$220

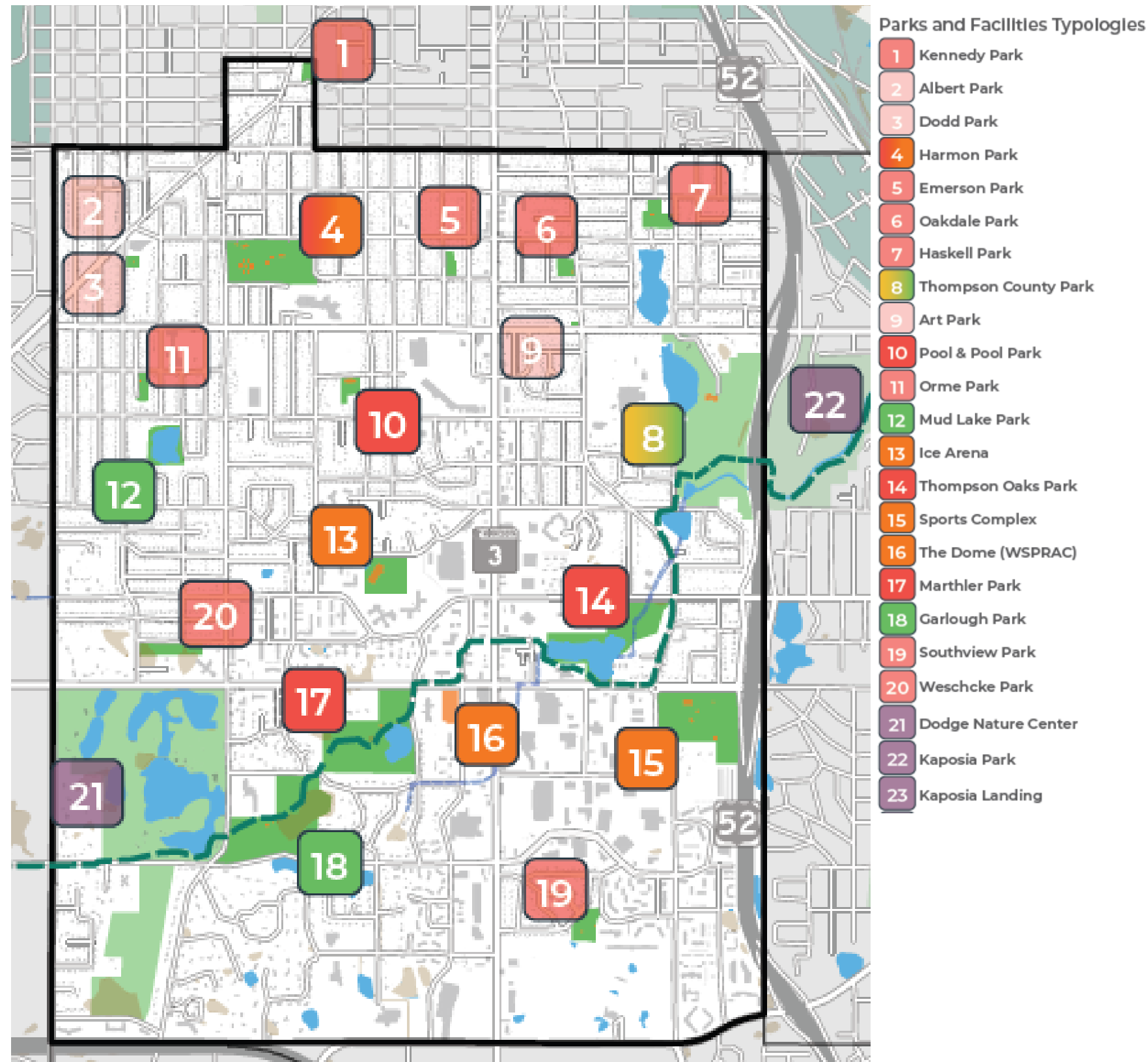
SPENDING PER
RESIDENT



EXISTING PARK AMENITIES

| | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 10 | Playgrounds | 7 | Picnic Shelters |
| 6 | Warming Houses | 6 | Skating Rinks |
| 6 | Basketball Courts | 8 | Baseball Fields |
| 4 | Nature Areas | 3 | Soccer / Football Fields |
| 3 | Monuments | 2 | Pavilions |
| 1 | Fishing Pier | 2 | Public Art |
| 1 | Volleyball Court | 1 | Splash Pad |
| | | 1 | Pool |

PARK SYSTEM MAP

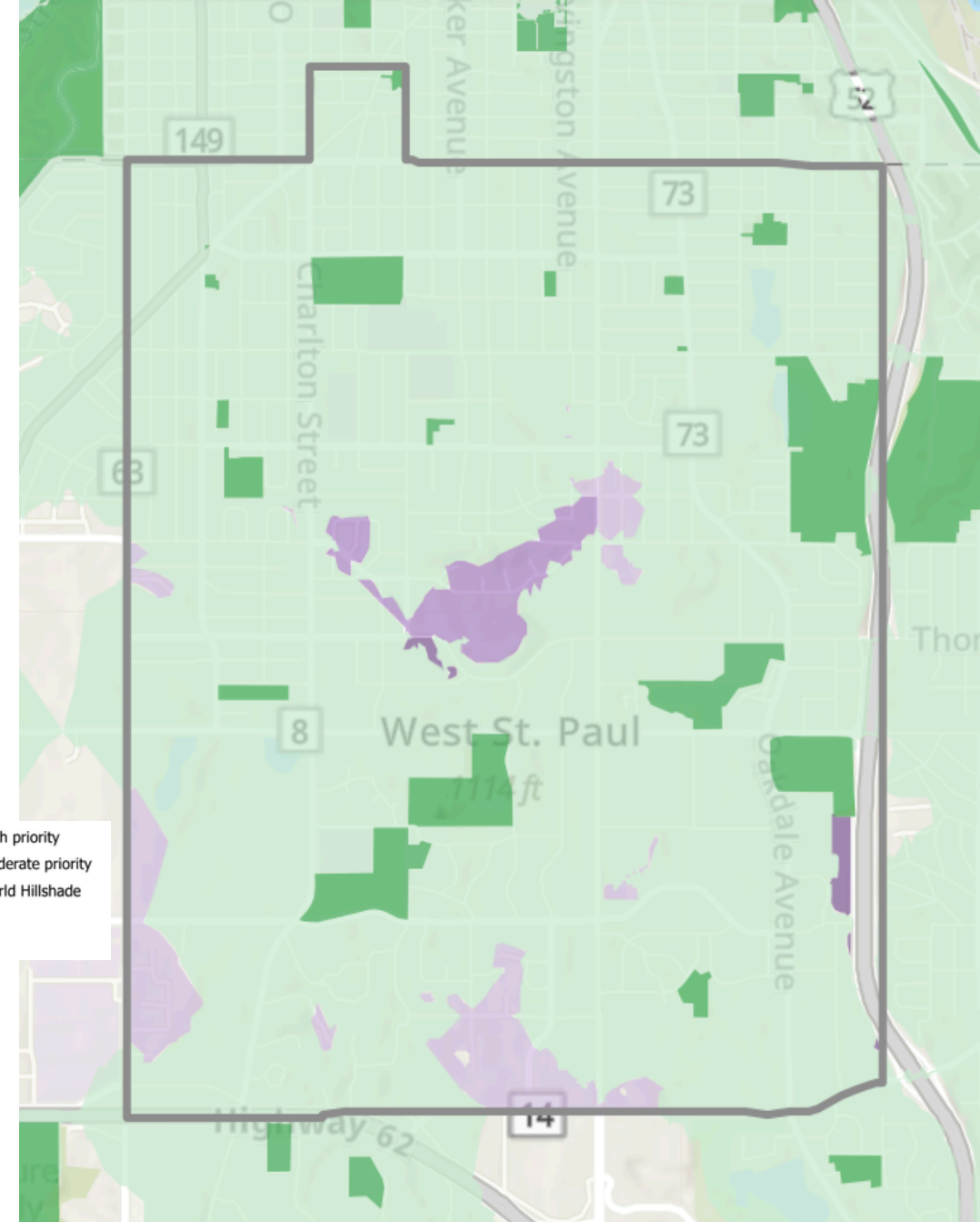


PARK ACCESS

Having a park nearby enhances health and well-being, fosters social connections, and boosts property values. According to the national standard set by the Trust for Public Land, all residents should be within a 10-minute walk of a park. West St. Paul boasts excellent park accessibility, particularly when considering the public Dodge Nature Center in the evaluation. With 90% of residents able to reach a park on foot, we are performing admirably. Although it may be challenging to bridge the remaining gaps in access as a fully developed community, it is not impossible. West St. Paul does have two distinct neighborhoods with limited access:

- Apartments near Carmel Ave and Bellows St: This high-density area lacks a public park, though Weschcke and Marthaler Parks are in close proximity. While the apartments offer large, albeit mostly unprogrammed, green spaces, residents still have some outdoor access.
- Single-family homes west of the Dakota County Northern Service Center: These spacious lots are heavily wooded, meaning outdoor access primarily occurs in private yards.

94% RESIDENTS WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK OF A PARK



EQUITY ANALYSIS

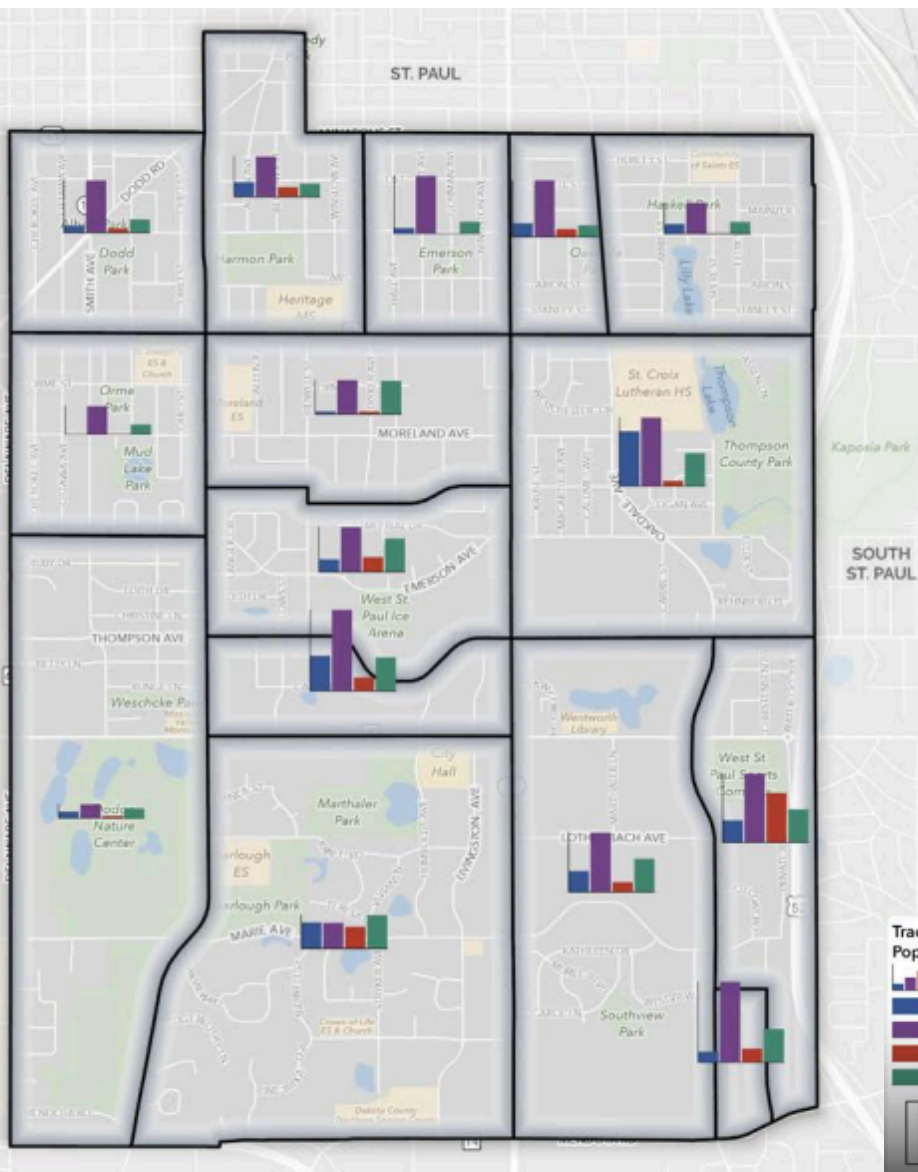
As one of the state’s most diverse communities, West St. Paul welcomes individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and resources.

Each neighborhood in the city is distinct, characterized by varying development patterns, land uses, histories, and demographics. The First Ward, which encompasses the eastern third of the city, has a higher concentration of low-income individuals and residents of color. As one moves west into the Second and Third Wards, neighborhoods tend to be more affluent and exhibit less racial and ethnic diversity.

The First Ward and the lower Second Ward feature numerous smaller homes and apartments, making them appealing and accessible to many low-income residents, people of color, and those without vehicles or with disabilities.

As we move forward in planning parks, facilities, programs, and events, it’s essential to take into account the unique needs and characteristics of each neighborhood. Additionally, we should consider public safety, health, transportation, and economic development as key elements that influence where, when, and what types of programs, partnerships, and practices are necessary or beneficial.

On the next page, we use data from the Trust for Public Land to understand who lives within a 10-minute walk of each park. While people visit many parks, they are most likely to visit the park within a half-mile of their home.



PARKS DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

✓ Parks, Trails, & Sidewalk Planning

✓ Parks & Facilities Operations & Maintenance

✓ Park Activation & Community Events

✓ Community Engagement

✓ Recreation Programming

✓ Recycling & Waste Abatement

✓ Sustainability & Environment

✓ Volunteer Engagement

✓ Arts & Placemaking

BUDGET

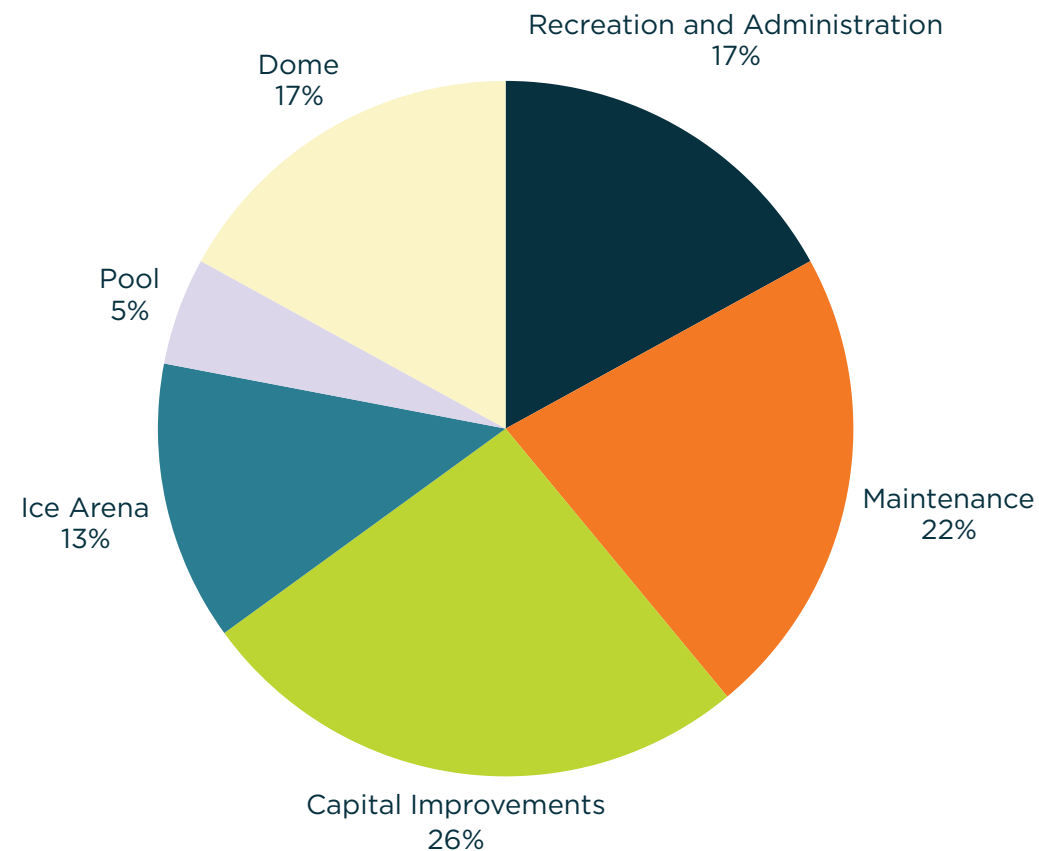
Municipal funding for parks is both dynamic and intricate, encompassing a variety of financial sources and allocations. This funding is essential to cover everything from maintenance of the grounds and facilities to programming, buildings, and overall operations. Running the park system requires a toolbox complete with equipment, facilities, supplies, technology including hardware and software, communications tools, vehicles, and the utilities and staff to run buildings, programs, and events.

Revenue streams can include local taxes, user fees, state and federal grants, and sometimes private donations. These funds ensure that parks remain clean, safe, and accessible, while also supporting diverse programs and activities for the community. Additionally, funding supports the upkeep of park infrastructure, such as playgrounds, walking paths, and recreational facilities, ensuring that these public spaces can be enjoyed by everyone.

The parks system is funded through a diverse portfolio of funding and revenue sources, including:

- General tax levy
- User fees and rentals
- Program registrations
- Grants
- Shared agreements
- Sponsorships and donations
- Enterprise fund balances (self-supporting facilities like the arena, dome, and pool)
- Development financing tools (e.g. TIF, park dedication fees)

Approximate Park Budget



Existing Conditions



I believe in put up or shut up.

Devona Weatherhead
First Woman to Serve on WSP City Council

How Data & Input Shaped This Plan

Types of Data

There are many different types of data that tell many different stories. We gathered - and balanced - three types of data:

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Anecdotal

Engagement Techniques

To hear from as many people as possible, several engagement techniques were utilized. Each form of engagement was valued equally. The engagement narrative in this plan is a tapestry woven from feedback from many people, which gives power to the community at large and seeks to avoid the pitfalls of 'squeaky wheel gets the oil' engagement.

- Meetings
- Events
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- 1:1 conversations
- Small group presentations
- Social media
- Committee meetings
- Website

Engagement Themes

When all community engagement data sources are viewed collectively, several themes emerge. These themes will drive the development of recommendations and the action plan.



ELEVATE WHAT WE HAVE

Bring our existing parks and facilities to the next level by investing in the pool, playgrounds, programs, bathrooms, communications, partnerships, and maintenance.



BUILD A COHESIVE SYSTEM

Work to build parks that function as a system rather than individual parks. Increase connections, reduce redundancies, increase wayfinding, and emphasis consistent branding.



CONNECT PARKS & COMMUNITY

Stitch the parks together with safe walking and biking loops. Leverage parks to advance economic development goals and to bring people together.



BUILD RESILIENCE

Climate change is impacting every aspect of our lives. The park system should be built in a way to adapt to, combat, and withstand these changes.



CELEBRATE COMMUNITY

The parks are at their best when they're full of people and life. Residents are looking for ways to connect, celebrate, and be together. We can do more to build and program parks in a manner that fosters livelihood.



DESIRE FOR NEW FACILITIES

Our parks system lacks amenities like a dog park, pickleball courts, gathering spaces, art installations, indoor recreation, and creative designs to better serve the community.



REDUCE BARRIERS

Several barriers limit use of the parks, including unsafe passageways, lack of universal design, real and perceived threats to safety, weather, lack of free time, and costs to participate.

What We Heard



ASSETS

- Amount of green space, number of parks, and proximity of parks
- Using the parks to walk/bike/run for exercise, to be in nature, and to use the playgrounds
- Generally feel safe using the parks and recreation facilities
- Programs and special events offered in the parks
- Parks and Green Space are top “what would you like to preserve” as outlined in the city’s Comprehensive Plan
- Value the good “community feel”
- 58% of residents rated the parks as Excellent or Very Good, only 10% rated poor

OPPORTUNITIES

- Parks could be updated and better maintained
- Add new amenities such as a variety of play equipment, public art, connections between parks, amphitheater, and gathering spaces
- New crosswalks across busy streets, and multimodal paths connecting parks and surrounding green spaces
- Restored naturalized areas and more landscaping
- More indoor recreation spaces for cold season activity
- Rentable pavilions and concert/performance spaces for cultural events

City's Guidepost

City Vision

WEST ST. PAUL IS STEPPING CONFIDENTLY INTO THE FUTURE: INVESTING IN THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS, REIMAGINED PUBLIC SPACES, AND A BUZZING LOCAL BUSINESS SCENE THAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER. OUR COMMUNITY'S STRENGTH LIES IN ITS SPARK, AND WE'RE A CITY THAT'S WELCOMING, EVOLVING, AND UNAPOLOGETICALLY UNIQUE.

City Values



Integrity



Opportunity



Responsive



Innovative



Connection



Fun

City Mission

In West St. Paul, big ideas and neighborly vibes go hand-in-hand. We team up, make moves that matter, and build a city that's inclusive, forward-looking, and full of momentum.

Strategic Priorities 2025-2026*

1. Community Engagement & Representation
2. Housing & Affordability
3. Public Spaces
4. Small Businesses

*Every few years, the City Council will set new priorities.

City Equity Vision

We envision a West St. Paul community that:

- Connects people and families of all races, ethnicities, ages, abilities, genders, sexual identities, orientations, and religions to a shared community experience
- Reflects the needs of all people, including those who have been historically marginalized, and intentionally engages all members in community decisions
- Nurtures the wellbeing of the whole person by ensuring personal safety, access to transportation, and economic opportunity

**DREAM WITH VISION.
PLAN WITH VISION.
ACT WITH VISION.**

Parks System Vision

We envision parks that are uniquely West St. Paul. Welcoming, well-maintained, and beautiful places for people of all backgrounds to recreate, gather, play, celebrate, learn, and relax, achieved through a place-based approach.



Theory of Change

OUR WORLDVIEW

- Parks & Rec makes lasting, life-changing impacts on people's lives
- Everyone deserves access to safe, healthy, inspiring environments
- Diversity is one of our greatest assets.

OUR APPROACH

- WSP is a city on the rise and our scrappy, hardworking spirit will take us to the next level
- We're a small but mighty team
- We're unburdened by the way it's always been done.
- Generic is out, local love is in. Distinctive, uniquely WSP places give residents and businesses something to rally around.
- Being small doesn't mean thinking small
- A vision with a plan is the best way to make things happen.

Continued community engagement, research, and ideation

ACTIVITIES

Creatively Redesign Parks to Balance Needs

Focus on Place & WSP's Unique Personality

Make the Parks Work for Everyone

Create More Gathering Spaces

Update Existing Facilities

Align Events & Programs with Community Needs

Make Decisions Through Health, Equity, & Sustainability Lenses

Improve Operations & Communications

Right-Size Investments in the Parks System

OUTCOMES

Maintained

The parks are kept to high standards and information is accessible and transparent.

Welcoming

The system encourages all people to visit, engage, and build community.

Beautiful

Spaces are built, created, and fostered that inspire, lift spirits, and bring comfort.

IMPACT

Higher Participation

Happier Residents

Higher Satisfaction w/ City Government

Improved Health

Safer, More Vibrant Community

Stronger Community Connections

VISION

Vision Elements

1



**CREATIVELY
REDESIGN PARKS TO
BALANCE NEEDS**

Say goodbye to generic design. West St. Paul deserves parks that cater to a diverse range of needs, encompassing both active and passive activities. We will infuse our park redesigns with enthusiasm and creativity, free from previous constraints. Our goal is to transform the parks for the 21st century.

2



**FOCUS ON PLACE &
WSP'S UNIQUE
PERSONALITY**

We're more than just a typical suburb; we're West St. Paul! We proudly embrace our unique identity and the qualities that make us exceptional. While we acknowledge that there's always room for growth, we believe that a little paint, a team of committed individuals, and some hard work can go a long way in making improvements.

3



**MAKE THE PARKS
WORK FOR
EVERYONE**

West St. Paul is a vibrant community with 23,000 residents. It's essential that everyone can access our parks safely, whether they choose to walk, bike, use a wheelchair, skateboard, take the bus, or drive. Once they arrive, we want to ensure that all individuals—seniors, youth, women, people of color, and those with disabilities—feel welcomed and included.

4



CREATE MORE GATHERING SPACES

Life's more fun when we do it together. We can foster community and togetherness by constructing new spaces to come together. Everything from new plazas to picnic shelters and indoor spaces can help. Who's ready to party?

5



UPDATE EXISTING FACILITIES

There's no doubt that we have ambitious goals. As we strive to implement transformative projects, introduce new amenities, and pursue our bold visions, it's essential to also take care of our current facilities.

6



ALIGN EVENTS & PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY NEEDS

Recreation programs, celebrations, festivals, and events are what make our community a fun place to be. We'll continuously work to ensure the offerings meet the community's needs. We'll keep traditions while not letting anything get too stale. And we'll consider our residents, both new and long-timers when planning.

7



**MAKE DECISIONS
THROUGH HEALTH,
EQUITY, AND
SUSTAINABILITY
LENSES**

Our parks are already making significant contributions, and we have ambitious objectives ahead. As we pursue the goals outlined in this plan, it is essential to focus on outcomes when making decisions. Undoubtedly, our efforts can enhance public health, promote equity, and boost sustainability.

8



**IMPROVE
OPERATIONS &
COMMUNICATIONS**

Overall, our small team excels at managing facilities and promoting our services. However, it's important to acknowledge that there is always potential for enhancement. By focusing on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and communication, we can achieve even better results.

9



**RIGHT-SIZE
INVESTMENTS IN
THE PARK SYSTEM**

Ultimately, ambitious goals require larger budgets. While we've made significant progress with limited resources, our potential is constrained without further investments. We can explore various revenue streams, but to meet the community's objectives, we will need extra financial support from the community.

Park Project Guidance

OUR FUTURE APPROACH TO PARK PLANNING

West St. Paul parks are poised for great things. The community shared a desire to reimagine the parks for 21st Century needs. Applying the themes, guiding principles, and system-wide changes outlined in this plan, we can begin to redesign parks in a manner that better serves the community.

To achieve our goals, we need to change the way we plan, design, and pay for our parks. Historically, at our neighborhood parks, we've updated and replaced amenities as they've reached the end of their useful life, but we haven't played around with the overall layout and design of the amenities within neighborhood parks. This will change. Moving forward, we'll make efforts to consider relocating, removing, and replacing amenities in a manner that encourages safety, equity, accessibility, and the other principles outlined in this plan. And investments in our large community parks will consider how we can better foster community connections, access to nature, and the arts.

- Use data and community input to drive decisions
- Divest from certain amenities and invest in others
- Implement a 'something for everyone' design strategy
- Reimagine neighborhood and pocket parks
- Make catalytic investments in community parks to drive social connection and economic development
- Apply the goals, guiding principles, and recommendations of this plan

Parks Guiding Principles

The System Plan is our opportunity to think and dream big. It's our chance to outline a new path for our community's parks and the well-being of future generations. Not all dreams come true, but by dreaming, we might be able to spark change!

ACCESSIBLE



WELCOMING



ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE



COMMUNITY-CENTERED



SAFE



CREATIVE



SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE DESIGN

Using Oakdale Park as an example "typical" neighborhood park within the City of West St. Paul, this plan contains numerous recommendations that can be applied to better serve the community and environment. These recommendations include features such as looped walking trails, low-maintenance native plantings that promote habitat, inclusive and themed playgrounds, and community gardens.

Note: These designs are meant to drive conversation and are not intended to suggest final designs. When Oakdale is scheduled for improvement, the goals stated in this plan, combined with community engagement, and civil design, will drive final designs.

Oakdale Park Existing Conditions



Non-looping and disconnected trail network

Unique historic signage



Aged and traditional courts and play structure

Expensive and ecologically burdensome quantities of turfgrass

Oakdale Park Proposed Improvements



Innovative play features that enhance the character of the park. For Oakdale Park, this could look like educational style play.



Plantings that provide habitat to mend together a natural and native environment for critical species.



Low-maintenance native plantings that reduce mowing and irrigation needs as well as increase biodiversity.



Looped trail systems to provide better connections and varied experiences within the park.



Flexible, multi-use amenities to serve various needs of the community at different times.



Sensory play equipment to excite and stimulate with creativity, learning and excitement in the parks.



Equipment and facilities that serve and engage all members of the community from various abilities and backgrounds.



Community gardens to strengthen healthy food systems and facilitate community bonding.

**For discussion purposes only.
The image on the right is not part of an approved plan.**

Action Plan Overview

DREAMING BIG

The System Plan is our opportunity to think and dream big. It's our chance to outline a new path for our community's parks and the well-being of future generations. Not all dreams come true, but by dreaming, we might be able to spark change!

RECOMMENDATIONS

The vision set forth in the Parks System Plan will be implemented through a set of recommendations and strategies over the course of the next decade.

1. **VISION ELEMENTS**
2. **SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES**
3. **PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

Shoot for the moon, and if you miss you'll be among the stars.

RECOMMENDATION CATEGORIES

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Recommendations to improve or continue best practices and customer-oriented, transparent operations.

BIG IDEAS

Recommendations that may be a change in direction or have broad impacts to the entire system, and may take time to implement.

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

Recommendations that have the potential for a domino effect. Due to catalytic nature, we may want to invest sooner rather than later.

BOLD AMBITIONS

Recommendations that may be difficult to achieve but that we'll include to inspire. We'll explore when the timing is right.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLBOX

Unique ideas, problems, and needs require unique approaches. We'll use a large set of tools to implement the recommendations set forth in the plan.



- **Projects**
- **Plans**
- **Programs**
- **Policies**
- **Protocols**
- **Partnerships**
- **Public Engagement**
- **Promotion & Education**

System-Wide Goals & Initiatives



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Operate with transparency, efficiency, and a focus on impact



SYSTEMS THINKING

Plan, invest, and operate the parks as a coordinated, cohesive, and unified system



BELONGING

Foster a strong sense of community, uniqueness, and inclusion



ACCESSIBILITY

Provide comprehensive amenities and safe connections that increase park equity, access, and use



RECREATION & PROGRAMMING

Support play, well-being, and growth for all ages



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Assemble a greener community and address climate change



STEWARDSHIP

Maintain and operate a great park system



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Invest in staff and their professional growth



FINANCIAL VALUE

Operate the parks system in a manner that is financially sustainable and of high value to the community

Park Projects Overview

Cost Estimates

- \$ - low or no cost, under \$25,000
- \$\$ - \$25,000-75,000
- \$\$\$ - \$75,000-150,000
- \$\$\$\$ - \$150,000-250,000
- \$\$\$\$\$ - \$250,000 - 500,000
- \$\$\$\$\$\$ - \$500,000 - 1M
- \$M - \$1M+

Timeline Guidance

- Near-Term: 1-3 years
- Mid-Term: 4-6 years
- Long-Term: 7+ years
- Rolling: Implement as part of broader park renovation projects
- Ongoing: Implement or begin efforts ASAP and then on a continued basis
- Continue: Existing efforts or practices that should be continued or expanded
- Sustained Commitment: A commitment to a resource-intensive project or initiative that requires time and careful planning, expecting long-term benefits despite few immediate returns.
- Funding Dependent: Implement if and when funding becomes available

ATHLETICS

- Flexible, multi-season spaces
- More volleyball and soccer to accommodate growing diversity
- Divest from some warming houses, ice rinks, and one baseball field
- Revitalized basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts

PASSIVE & PLAY

- Better signage and pathways to parks and within neighborhoods
- New dog park at Sports Complex
- More picnic shelters
- Creative playground design
- A universal playground at Sports Complex
- Plan for the future of the pool

NATURE

- Increased efforts to combat Emerald Ash Borer and increase the tree canopy
- Low maintenance gardens and landscaping to soften parks
- Community gardens
- Environment and sustainability education

COMMUNITY

- Convert the Sports Complex horseshoe pavilion into a multi-use gathering space
- New park plazas and amphitheater
- Art and placemaking strategy
- More indoor classroom and gathering space

Proposed Projects: Athletics

EMPHASIZE FLEXIBLE, MULTI-SEASON SPACES



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$\$\$ per Project

Residents of West St. Paul play a multitude of sports. Unfortunately, athletic facilities require a lot of space, and West St. Paul's park system is smaller than many neighboring and peer cities. To successfully offer a wide range of athletic facilities while maintaining space for community gatherings, nature, and passive recreation, we will seek creative solutions. The best opportunities exist where space could be used differently with the changing of the seasons, such as the example above where a hockey rink can serve multiple other sports in the warmer months. Combining facilities could save land and money for other needs.

INCREASE VOLLEYBALL & SOCCER TO SUPPORT GROWING DIVERSITY.



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$\$\$ per Project

Since the development of the park system primarily in the 1960s and 70s, the city's demographics have changed and diversified. To better serve a diverse population, we can diversify park amenities and offerings. Two sports popular with our Hispanic/Latino, East African, and Asian populations, but where we are outpaced by our peer cities exceed, are soccer and volleyball. The latter has been extremely popular at Marthaler Park, but is the only volleyball court in the system. We should add both to different parks in the system, including varieties like futsal and grass volleyball. Because these games are played by large groups and families, supportive shelters, tables, and waste receptacles should be nearby.

DECOMMISSION UNDERUSED FACILITIES



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: Dodd, Southview, Sports Complex, Weschcke
COST: Project Dependent

One thing is constant - change. We can respond to the combination of climate change (warmer winters), changing recreational participation (reduced involvement in team sports, fewer people playing hockey and baseball), and heightened park priorities (community gathering, art, nature, etc.) by strategically utilizing our park land in new and different ways. We propose a significant reduction in the number of warming houses and outdoor ice rinks, freeing up land for other uses. And like many cities, we propose a slight reduction in baseball fields.

Proposed Projects: Athletics

UPDATE TENNIS & PICKLEBALL COURTS



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: Emerson, Haskell, Marthaler, Weschcke
COST: \$\$\$\$ per Project

Twenty-five years ago, when the city last updated its Parks System Plan, most people had never heard of pickleball. Now, it's taking the country by storm and extremely popular. Tennis has seen steady growth, with a particular jump since the covid-19 pandemic. Many of the city's courts are showing their age and in need of investment. We propose courts are updated as part of larger park renovation projects. We also recommend the expansion of pickleball at Emerson from two to four courts and the introduction of shared pickleball-tennis courts at Marthaler.

REVITALIZE BASKETBALL



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: Emerson, Haskell, Oakdale, Southview, Weschcke
COST: \$\$\$ per Project

Years ago many of the city's full court basketball courts were removed. This leaves many residents without a popular sports, opportunity for exercise, and community-builder. West St. Paul should bring back full-court basketball and renovate and improve existing courts. We should also consider new and fun ways to play, including a bankshot court, which includes several hoops at various levels and configurations - think of the best game of 'horse' ever!

MODERNIZE THE ICE ARENA AND DOME



CATEGORY: Bold Ambition
TIMELINE: Funding Dependent
LOCATION: Ice Arena and Dome
COST: Project Dependent, \$M minimum

The Ice Arena and Dome provide important year-round access to sports teams, individuals, spectators, and learners. Users note that both facilities have facility needs, including mechanical and structural needs. We would like to see both facilities used for more events, tournaments, and gatherings. To become more inviting, the lobbies of both facilities should be modernized with a fresh look. Accomplishing these projects, which would require another major investment, may be difficult or impossible without outside funding, especially when considered within the context of the overarching goals of this plan.

Proposed Projects: Passive & Play

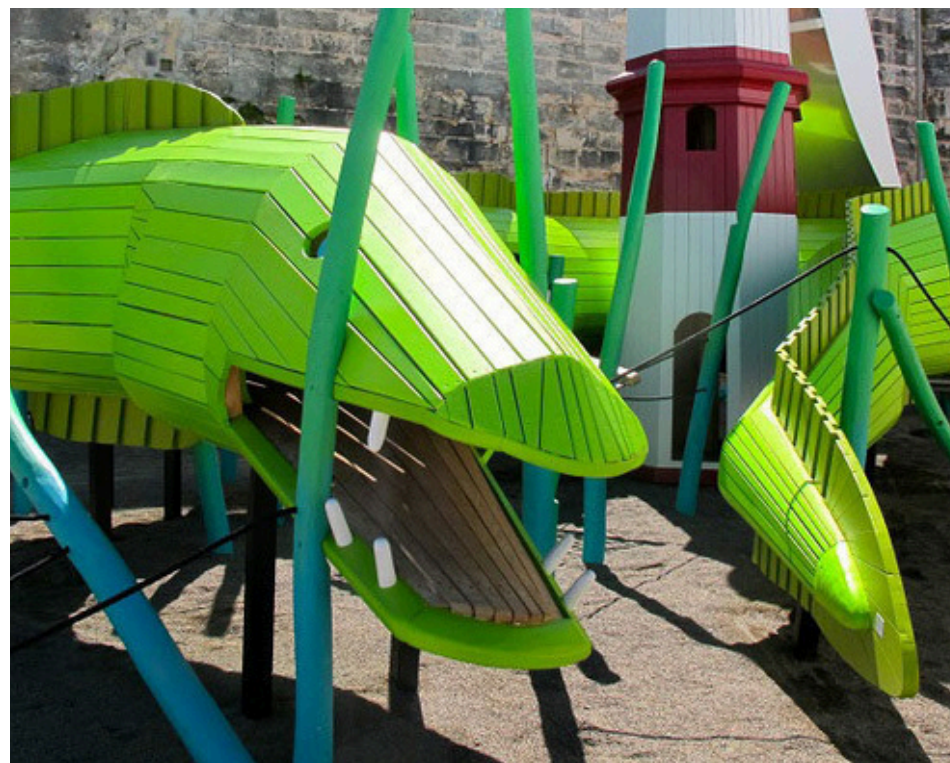
MORE AND UPDATED PICNIC SHELTERS



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ per Project

The city's existing picnic shelters and pavilions are heavily used with growing demand for rented space. And as weather changes with heavier storms and higher summer temperatures, the picnic shelters provide important cover and shade for park visitors, program participants, and staff. Several parks do not have shelters, so as larger park projects are pursued, we propose a range of shelter types and sizes be considered. One note of caution: the impact of users not cleaning up after themselves takes a considerable amount of staff time. The entire community will need to do its part to keep these spaces clean, safe, and healthy.

CONSIDER CREATIVE PLAYGROUND DESIGN



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ per Project

The jungle gym, invented in 1920, has changed with the times and available technology. Gone are the towering wood structures and metal slides of the 1970s and 80s. And now people seem generally bored with the overly cautious designs of safety-first playgrounds. Thankfully, today's playground designs offer a cornucopia of options, with considerations for sensory needs, all ages play, creativity and art, and local priorities. As playgrounds are updated, we should consider a range of playground designs, which will help differentiate individual parks, offer new types of play, and set West St. Paul apart from other park systems.

INCORPORATE BETTER SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$\$\$\$ City-wide

West St. Paul has many amenities that folks don't know about. Too often we hear things like, "We didn't even know the city had a pool!" We can build awareness through several avenues, including better maps, brochures, and website presences. We can also build awareness - and improve navigation - through improved signage. First, we propose a modernization of the park's monument signs. Second, we propose wayfinding or directional signage throughout the community to help people reach their desired destinations or encourage them to explore. The Parks Department will work to develop park sign design standards consistent with the city's brand.

Proposed Projects: Passive & Play

EXPLORE A DOG PARK AT SPORTS COMPLEX



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Mid-term
LOCATION: Sports Complex
COST: \$\$\$

The American birthrate has been on a steady decline for nearly two decades, recently hitting the lowest point in nearly 50 years. The number of households with pets has, on the other hand, experienced significant growth. And a somewhat stunning stat - more households have a dog (53%) than a child (40%). While a handful of apartment complexes have dog runs, the city has no dog park. With limited land and the need to minimize impacts to neighbors, we have few options for a dog park. One possibility is turning a baseball field at the Sports Complex into a dog park. Baseball use has declined and the space is already fenced.

EXPAND ACCESSIBLE PLAY



CATEGORY: Catalytic Project
TIMELINE: Long-term
LOCATION: Sports Complex
COST: \$\$\$\$\$

For far too long, far too many people have had to watch others play from the sidelines. Thankfully, playground designers and accessibility advocates have partnered to create new equipment and better design for all users. Accessible, or universal, playgrounds increase play for those with different physical and cognitive abilities and help foster a more welcoming community. With proposed or existing accessible playgrounds at Somerset School and Thompson County Park, we propose a new accessible playground be built further to the south at the Sports Complex. What'll warm your heart? When conducting engagement, kids of all ages and abilities were huge fans of a new accessible playground!

DEVELOP ALL AGES SPACES



CATEGORY: Catalytic Project
TIMELINE: Near-term
LOCATION: 150 Thompson, Albert-Dodd, Sports Complex, city-wide
COST: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$ per Project

What if it wasn't weird to see an adult giggling on a swing? What if we encouraged grandparents to enjoy the slide? What if we had a spot where teens could chill? Several new and existing parks could be great locations for new all ages play spaces, the new parks at 150 Thompson and Albert-Dodd in particular. The renovation of the Horseshoe Pavilion and accessible playground at the Sports Complex present another great opportunity to introduce all ages play space.

Proposed Projects: Passive & Play

PLAN FOR BASIC AMENITIES & SOMEWHERE TO 'GO'



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Ongoing
LOCATION:
COST: \$-\$\$\$\$ per project

It's a gorgeous day, you packed up the kids and five minutes into your time at the park you hear it. "I have to go to the bathroom." There's no bathroom on site so you're forced to scramble home or to the closest gas station. We should work to offer plumbed or seasonal bathroom facilities at each of the city's larger parks. Plumbed bathrooms should be reserved for community parks while neighborhood parks can reasonably be served for neighborhood parks. Bathrooms do present a maintenance need and may entice vandalism so caution will be necessary to ensure safe and healthy facilities are maintained.

DEVELOP A NATURE PLAYGROUND



CATEGORY: Catalytic Project
TIMELINE: Near-term
LOCATION: Kennedy and/or Weschcke Park
COST: \$-\$\$\$\$ per Project

Many of us have stories of playing in fields and forests, making stick forts, splashing in creeks, and searching for bugs. This early connection to nature can spark life-long stewardship of parks and the environment, and it builds capacity for creativity, exploration, and play. But not everyone has easy access to natural spaces, or play isn't encouraged in those spaces that are easily accessible. Through a nature playground, we can offer a unique type of play where people of all ages can reconnect to the earth.

CONSIDER WINTER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling and ongoing
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$-\$\$\$ per project

Minnesota winters can be long and isolating. But with the appropriate gear, a good attitude, and some creativity the winters can be quite fun. We already offer several winter amenities and programs, but there's always room for more, including new games, more locations, and quirky events. A bit of caution and consideration will be necessary - winter weather is changing, snow is less reliable, and not everyone can afford the winter gear.

Proposed Projects: Nature

PROTECT & INCREASE THE TREE CANOPY



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Ongoing
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$M city-wide

Emerald ash borer (EAB) has been devastating to West St. Paul's tree canopy. With 40% of the city's public trees under threat (or lost), we'll be fighting the invasive bug and its impacts for years to come. We should continue our first line of defense - treatment - as it has shown promise. Next, we should remove dead and dying trees to remove potential hazards. Finally, we should plant trees, using a variety of species, to recover what was lost and then to exceed the canopy we had before EAB.

SOFTEN PARK AESTHETICS WITH LANDSCAPING



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling and ongoing
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$-\$\$\$\$ per project

The community regularly shared the opinion that many of the city's parks could use 'softening.' Too many of our parks are too formulaic, with a mix of amenities but not much to make the parks feel like welcoming, natural spaces. Grass areas can be transformed to small gardens, tree groves, or pollinator lawns. Landscaping can be used to buffer parks from busy streets, add shade, or provide beauty. Humans and the natural environment alike will benefit.

BUILD COMMUNITY GARDENS



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: Southview, Orme
COST: \$-\$ per project

The ability to grow your own food is exceptionally rewarding. To do that in community with others even more so. West St. Paul is one of the few metro area cities without a public community garden, and with such a high percentage of residents renting their home, offering space for growing food is a logical endeavor.

Proposed Projects: Nature

EXPAND ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$ per project

The community showed strong interest in using our parks for habitat restoration and access to nature. As we pursue projects it will be important to make information and education easily accessible. By installing interpretative signs, updating websites, and using creative storytelling, we can build interest and understanding of how environment-friendly projects work and why they are important.

PROTECT OUR WATER BODIES



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling and ongoing
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: \$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$ per project

West St. Paul, uphill from two major rivers and home to several bodies of water, has a responsibility to protect its water. Already, the city has adopted practices and implemented projects - both public and private - that work to improve water quality and mitigate large rain events, but more can be done. While our parks space is limited, like our efforts to soften the aesthetics of our parks using landscaping, we can do the same with bioswales, rain gardens, and other green-blue infrastructure.

ADD A WHIMSY GARDEN



CATEGORY: Bold Ambition
TIMELINE: Funding Dependent
LOCATION: To be determined, possibly Kennedy, Orme, Sports Complex or 150 Thompson
COST: \$\$-\$-\$-\$-\$

Earlier we spoke about the desire for more gardens and landscaping. But what if we took it one step further with a garden space unique to any other. What if we drew on inspiration from Dr. Seuss and planted a garden with the oddest, weirdest, and most fun plants, art, and gathering space you can imagine? The ball-like alliums, the mysterious smokebush, massive sunflowers, winter-resilient brittle prickly pear cactus, and carnivorous pitcher plants.

Proposed Projects: Community

CONVERT THE HORSESHOE PAVILION INTO A MULTI-USE GATHERING SPACE



CATEGORY: Catalytic Project
TIMELINE: Mid-term
LOCATION: Sports Complex
COST: \$\$\$\$\$

The Sports Complex Horseshoe Pavilion is the largest structure in the parks system and a true asset. Horseshoe participation has been declining for years, while the need for gathering space has drastically increased. Unfortunately, the design of the pavilion as a horseshoe pavilion limits the ability to use it for other purposes. The pavilion, especially its flooring, is in need of investment. As we make improvements to the facility, we'll reimagine the space as a multipurpose community asset. The newly refurbished pavilion will be able to host events, gatherings, and celebrations - and could make an excellent beer garden. To bring life to the space, we can add yard games and gardens in the open space to the north of the pavilion.

PURSUE PARK-CENTERED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



CATEGORY: Catalytic Project
TIMELINE: Near-term
LOCATION: Smith-Dodd and 150 Thompson
COST: \$M per project

As a fully developed first ring suburb, West St. Paul will reinvent itself through redevelopment. Nationally, communities of all types have found success in park-centered redevelopment, where mixed use buildings are anchored by plazas, play space, and trails. Offices and job centers have also found success raised employee wellness by amplifying the quality of nearby public spaces. The Parks Department will work closely with Planning and Public Works to coordinate redevelopment in a cohesive, strategic manner. Two opportunities present themselves immediately at Smith-Dodd and 150 Thompson. Both projects will include new park spaces that will look and feel different than other parks in the city, with a larger emphasis on socializing, lingering, and the arts.

ADOPT AN ART & PLACEMAKING EVERYWHERE STRATEGY



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-Wide
COST: \$-\$\$\$\$ per project

A large goal of the community is to differentiate West St. Paul's parks from other communities. While some communities emphasize large sporting events or natural preserves, West St. Paul can creatively emphasize the arts. Our best bet is to integrate art into other projects and system needs. Adding art to the surface of a basketball court in need or repair can be a win-win. Working with neighborhood kids to design the art and a community artist to create the art is an excellent way to build social capital.

Proposed Projects: Community

BUILD MORE INDOOR CLASSROOM & GATHERING SPACES



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Near- to long-term
LOCATION: Haskell, Southview, or 150 Thompson
COST: \$M

Our parks are fantastic spaces for recreation and the outdoors, but the reality is our winters are cold and changing climate heightens the need for weather-safe spaces. Public input highlighted the need for indoor gathering and recreation space. User data from the Harmon Neighborhood Center and Thompson Activity Center showcase the regular and consistent use of our indoor community spaces. The dome and ice arena as specialized spaces are also routinely booked to capacity. As parks are renovated, we should consider the possibility of neighborhood center facilities. Haskell, Southview, and 150 Thompson present great equity-focused opportunities.

PARTNER TO ENSURE SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS



CATEGORY: Good Governance
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: Project dependent

Access to green space ties directly to a person's health and well-being—a connection now widely supported by evidence and accepted by policy makers. Today, ensuring access to green space for all people is a value that should be shared by every resident, community group, and government official. As we develop Safe Routes to Parks, we should consider the parks, park access points, and the infrastructure within a 10-minute walk of the parks. Safe Routes are supported by policy, enforcement, education, partnership, analysis, and infrastructure.

GET CREATIVE WITH GREEN LOOPS



CATEGORY: Big Idea
TIMELINE: Rolling
LOCATION: City-wide
COST: Project dependent

In addition to the spot enhancements listed previously, we could create several pathway loops to make it easier and safer to navigate the park system. Much like the River-to-River greenway now provides a multi-city east-west connection, these West St. Paul-focused green loops could provide connections to parks, shops, and schools. Loops could include additional infrastructure (as shown to the left) and wayfinding signage. Painting crosswalks and critical intersections with art. This could be a relatively simple, lower-cost option that would add color, art, and community involvement while slowing traffic and helping folks explore the community.

Proposed Projects: Community

EXPLORE A RECREATION CENTER & COMMUNITY HUB



CATEGORY: Bold Ambition
TIMELINE: As funding is available
LOCATION: To be determined
COST: \$M

West St. Paul's park system is missing indoor recreation and enrichment facilities. The absence of the YMCA as a communal gathering place continues to resonate, prompting many residents to advocate for a community or recreation center. While establishing a large community center may not be feasible due to the city's size, financial constraints, and limited land, a smaller recreation center featuring a gym, classrooms, and indoor play areas could be achievable. Additionally, exploring a community hub model that combines recreational and enrichment spaces with various community services could be beneficial. Although this model would depend on strong partnerships, it has the potential to attract grant funding and enhance its overall impact.

Executive Summary

UPDATE THE POOL



CATEGORY: Bold Ambition
TIMELINE: Funding Dependent
LOCATION: Pool
COST: \$M

West St. Paul has a long history of community aquatics. The City's community pool opened in the 1950s with major reinvestment in 1999. The pool facility is still popular, with the 2023 season being one of its busiest in recent memory, but the facility is showing its age, and we recognize that without additional investment, the facility will lose popularity, safety issues will arise, and maintenance concerns will grow. The facility is nearing an inflection point - either investment will be needed to update the existing facility's infrastructure, investments can be made to explore a new layout with expanded amenities and additional programming at the existing location, the pool could be relocated, or closed. With input from the community, the city and its consultant will study and explore options for the pool's future.

And when we're done, we're not gonna be like a regular first-ring parks system, we'll be a cool first-ring parks system.

Implementation Tools

To accomplish the system-wide goals set forth in this plan, we'll need to utilize a variety of tools. And like how one house project may require a hammer, another a screwdriver, and yet another both the hammer and screwdriver, so will different goal and objectives require different sets of tools. Below are the 11 typical project tools utilized by local government to implement goals. In Appendix C. Implementation Table we outline which tools we'll utilize to implement projects.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CAPITAL PROJECTS Physical improvements that improve public infrastructure and facilities, including parks, amenities, facilities, roads, trails, sidewalks, utilities, green infrastructure, and signage. | POLICIES Rules and regulations that govern the community, including the City Charter and Ordinances. | PROGRAMS Initiatives or other offerings which may include events, recreation, athletics, enrichment, or education. | PLANS A long-term document that offers a detailed strategic study of a topic or vision, including comprehensive plans, small area plans, park development plans, or other system plans. |
| PROTOCOLS An official procedure or way of doing work, including Standard Operating Procedures and emergency management plans. | PRACTICES Like protocols, but less formalized. May or may not be written down. Essentially the way we do our work. | PROMOTION & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT Involves working with the community to craft a vision for the future, provide feedback on proposals, and find solutions to a problem. Also includes education and awareness-building. | PROCESS Dialogue and conversation necessary to explore, study, develop, and improve a practice, policy, program, or other implementation tools. |
| RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT The creation of a tool to help in the aid of implementation of a goal or strategy such as workbooks, websites, trainings, or handouts. | PARTNERSHIPS Collaborative efforts that are strengthened or can only be achieved with multiple agencies, organizations, and/or individuals. | OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE The regular and ongoing work necessary to maintain the parks system and its infrastructure. | |

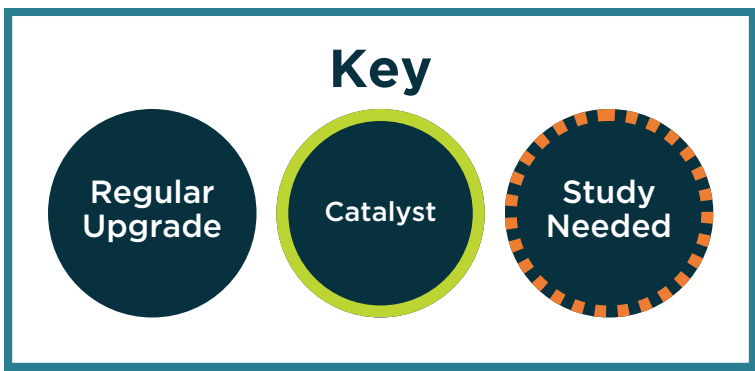
Capital Improvement Plan

PARK IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY PROJECTION

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) acts as a strategic tool for community planning and fiscal management, aimed at aligning the location, timing, and funding of capital improvements over several years. It generally encompasses detailed plans for the next five years, along with broader forecasts for years six through ten.

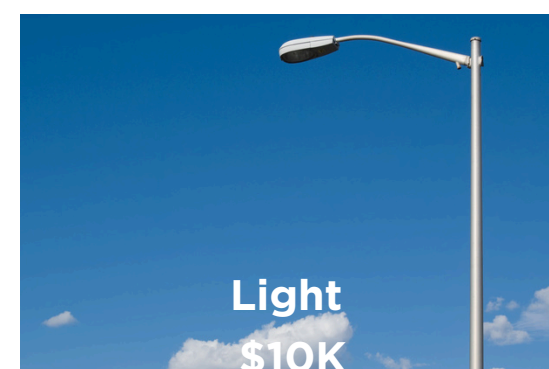
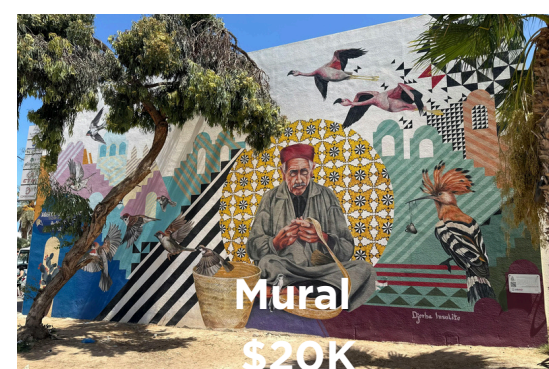
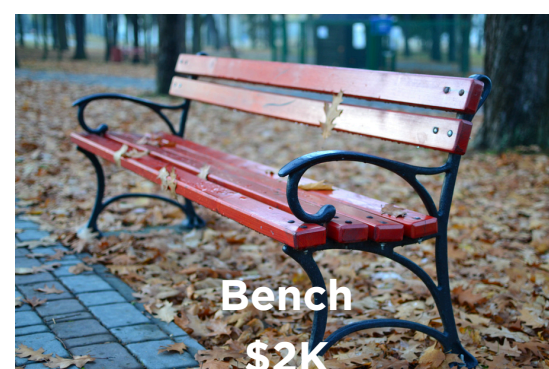
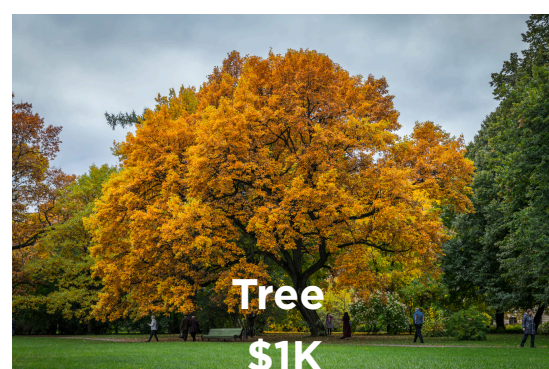
The implementation of this plan represents a notable change in our CIP planning method. Instead of replacing individual amenities throughout the entire system, we will concentrate on upgrading and reimagining individual parks.

Capital improvement planning offers a snapshot based on the information available at the time. Circumstances can change quickly; some elements may fail while others may surpass longevity expectations. Moreover, grants can be awarded, and partners may surprise us with unexpected generosity. As a result, the CIP is updated annually and is likely to evolve. This is why we refer to it as a CIP Projection, as it reflects our best estimate for 2025, fully recognizing that project sequencing may change.



ESTIMATING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COSTS

The costs related to capital improvement projects differ greatly depending on site location and design, making it difficult to predict future enhancements. In recent years, prices have risen considerably. Here are some approximate estimates for various amenities. Keep in mind that these figures are based on 2025 projections. Inflation has significantly influenced and will continue to impact project expenses.

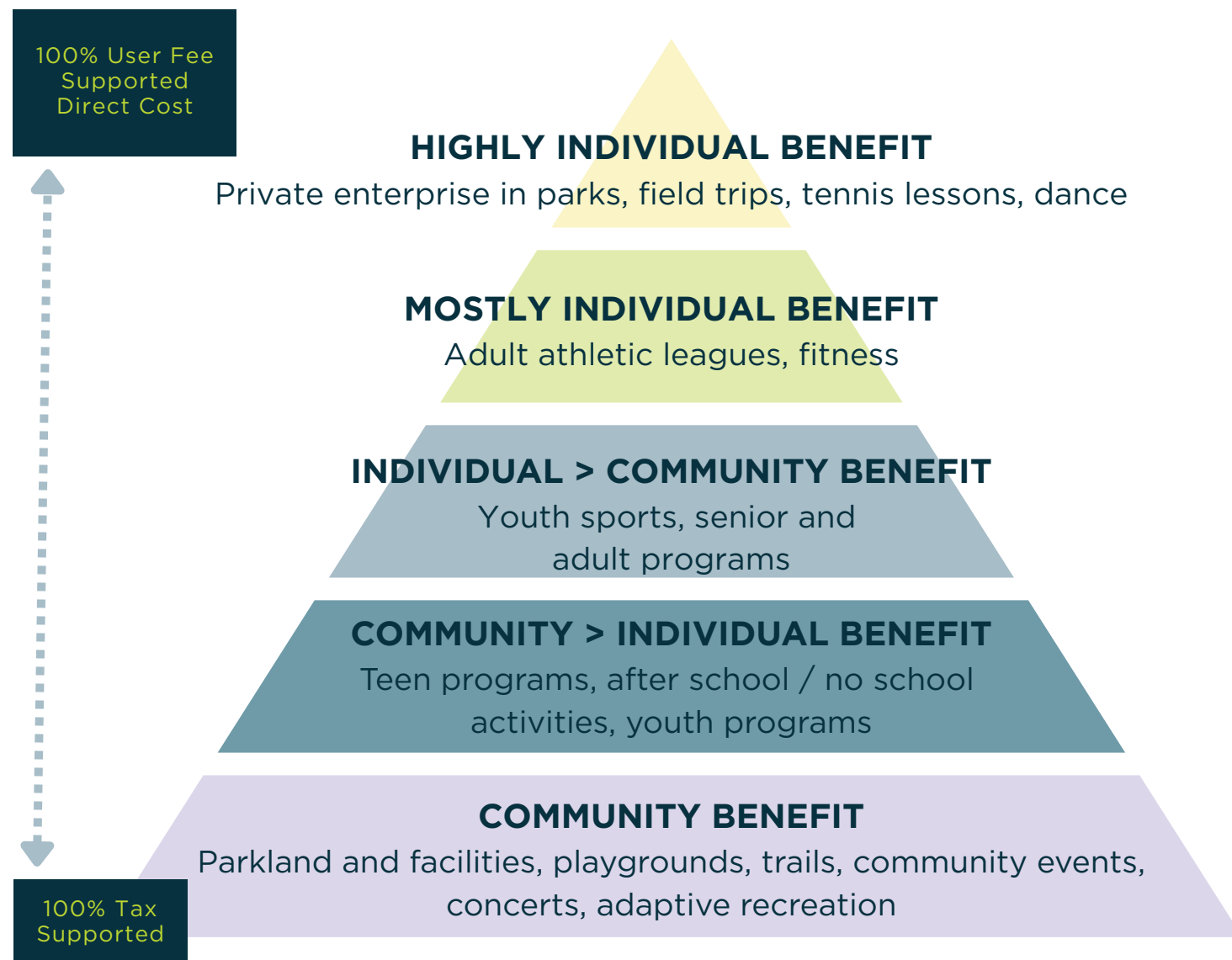


Operational Needs

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RECREATION

A "recreation tiered pricing model" in parks and recreation refers to a system where different fees are charged for various recreation programs or facilities based on factors like the level of service, community benefit, participant age, residency status, or the time of day, creating multiple price tiers to cater to diverse user needs while potentially maximizing revenue for the parks department.

In West St. Paul, we seek to set prices based on the diagram below. Our goal is to continue to provide free community-wide programming as a means to remain accessible and provide fun activities for everyone, especially our low-income residents.



STAFFING NEEDS

As we seek to add programs, projects, and new and improved parks spaces, we will need additional staff capacity. Our current staff levels are lower in comparison to neighboring cities.

In the future, we recommend the exploration of new positions, including

- **Recreation Coordinator:** Additional staff to lead programs, and to allow Recreation Manager and Recreation Supervisor the time to focus on higher-level efforts
- **Facilities Lead:** A supervisor position to oversee management of the city's three major facilities and athletic field permitting. The new position could focus on revenue generation, sponsorships, and advertising, partially helping to offset additional staff costs.
- **Facilities Technician:** Additional position(s) to support the management and operations of the city's park facilities. With a larger bench of staff to manage facilities, this will allow for improved scheduling, reduce burn-out, and lessen the reliance on seasonal staff. Cross-training across the facilities is critical to improved operations.
- **Community Connector:** One or more positions to support outreach, engagement, and community events with a focus on reaching high-priority populations such as renters, Spanish-speakers, and young people. Position(s) could be housed under the Parks Department, but service city-wide goals and priorities.

Funding Approach

The most significant challenge—and the toughest to tackle—in realizing the vision outlined in this plan is the shortage of financial resources required to develop and sustain infrastructure. Although we expect to explore various funding options, the current parks budget falls short of covering all the proposed park projects. To fulfill our vision, we will need to combine different funding sources with patience, resourcefulness, and creativity.

COMMON FUNDING SOURCES

GENERAL FUNDS (LEVY)
General funds are appropriate for developing and maintaining the parks and operating programs. General funds are the primary funding source for ongoing maintenance and operations. General funds can be used as grant-require matching funds.

DEDICATED TAX LEVY
A city can hold a referendum for dedicated tax levy with proceeds directed to parks and recreation. The proceeds may be in place of or be supplemented by general funds. Provides stable funding that does not have to compete with other city priorities.

BONDING
With voter approval, the city can issue debt to fund large public projects paid for by permanent or temporary tax increases.

DEVELOPMENT FUNDS
As a fully developed community, we have few opportunities to develop new parks. The use development-related funds like tax increment financing (TIF) and park dedication funds can help

PARTNERSHIPS/SPONSORSHIP
Collaboration with public, private, and civic organizations can share costs, maintenance, and programming. Sponsors may support projects for marketing and naming rights, involving neighboring cities, schools, athletic associations, and businesses. Additional revenue sources include cell towers, billboards, and franchise fees.

LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX
A local tax generated through sales of goods and services in the community. Revenues can be used for roads, parks, public buildings, and capital projects. Requires legislative and voter approvals.

GRANTS & FUNDS
Competitive application to public and private funding opportunities. Includes capital, planning, and programmatic opportunities. Should explore park and park-adjacent funds (ie. arts, environmental, transportation, public health).

DONATIONS
Cash, gifts, volunteerism, and professional services donated to the Parks Department for planning, acquisition, development, and programming.

COST RECOVERY
The practice of generating revenue through fees and charges for services like facility rentals, programs, or special events, to offset a portion of operational costs.

FUNDING PATH MOVING FORWARD

Funding Approach

The primary obstacle to achieving this vision lies in the disparity between the envisioned goals and the financial resources at hand. West St. Paul will require a diverse array of potential funding sources, combined with patience, creativity, and discipline, to develop and maintain its parks, trails, and recreational facilities over time.

Realizing the vision for West St. Paul's parks, trails, and recreation system demands a considerable investment. This is essential not only for new and innovative projects but also for revitalizing neighborhood parks, establishing trail connections, launching new programs, and ensuring ongoing community engagement. Merely relying on the city's historic baseline funding for park improvements falls short of meeting the system's needs or fulfilling the aspirations outlined in this plan.

Strategic Funding Approaches

Given the multitude of potential funding sources, the City must determine which tools to employ and how to implement them effectively over time. Essentially, there are two strategic approaches to consider:

- One that directs resources toward immediate, high-priority park enhancements.
- Another that focuses on transformative projects that will shape the long-term future of the system.

West St. Paul's funding strategy should pursue a balanced path - reinvesting in existing neighborhood parks and facilities while also advancing catalytic projects that require long lead times and staged funding.

This dual approach ensures that the system remains safe and functional in the short term, while also positioning the community for long-term transformational improvements.

- Provides visible improvements across the system that residents can see and enjoy.
- Builds momentum toward long-term community goals without deferring urgent needs.
- Strengthens competitiveness for grants by demonstrating both readiness and vision.
- Balances resources to avoid overextending staff capacity while still delivering progress.

Core Reinvestment Priorities

- Focus near-term resources on high-priority sites such as Albert, Haskell, Kennedy, Oakdale, Southview, and Sports Complex.
- Extend the useful life of playgrounds, trails, athletic fields, and other core assets.
- Address safety, accessibility, and usability issues before they become costly emergency repairs.

Catalytic Projects

- Begin planning and feasibility work for bold, system-shaping projects such as pool modernization, 150 Thompson, art/placemaking, and a community/recreation hub.
- Use phased funding strategies, starting with studies and preliminary design, to position these projects for outside grants and partnerships.
- Align catalytic investments with community growth and regional trail/park initiatives to maximize visibility and impact.

West St. Paul's funding strategy should pursue a balanced path - reinvesting in existing neighborhood parks and facilities while also advancing catalytic projects that require long lead times and staged funding.

Funding Need

Current baseline funding (\$500,000-\$750,000 annually through the Park Capital Improvement Fund) is insufficient to meet the needs of the existing system and the community's vision for the future. Full implementation of this plan over the next 20 years is estimated at \$50 million, not including ongoing reinvestment and operations.

Without increased and diversified funding, West St. Paul faces several risks:

- **Deferred Maintenance:** Playgrounds, trails, and facilities may age beyond safe and functional use, leading to closures or emergency repairs at higher cost.
- **Missed Opportunities:** The City may be unable to leverage matching grants, partnerships, or county/regional funds if local dollars are unavailable.
- **Equity Impacts:** Parks in underserved neighborhoods could continue to lag behind, reducing access to safe and inclusive recreation for all residents.
- **Community Perception:** A lack of visible improvements may erode public trust, reduce participation in programs, hamper economic development, and weaken future support for levies or bonds.
- **Higher Future Costs:** Delays often result in escalating construction costs, making projects more expensive the longer they are postponed.

Estimating costs is a complicated task. With so many variables, scenarios, and decisions still to be explored and vetted, the best we can do, at this time, is produce a 'rough order of magnitude' estimate. To achieve the vision laid out in this plan, we estimate that at least \$48 million is needed - over 15-20 years - to reimagine our parks system.

Achieving such a vision will take careful planning and require trade-offs, but with tenacity, grit, and resourcefulness, it is achievable.

We are also presented with different scenarios, where projects can be considered at varying levels of investment.

- Slim: which accounts for basic replacement, continued deferred maintenance, does not address the vision laid out in this plan
 - \$20 million
- Low: an option that works to achieve some parts of the vision, but requires strategic investments and certain cuts
 - \$34 million
- Medium: achieves the vast majority of the vision laid out in this plan, even if certain aspects may not fully meet aspirational goals
 - \$48 million
- Robust: full implementation of the plan, with the highest of quality in mind
 - \$61 million

\$48M+

**COST
ESTIMATE TO
IMPLEMENT
CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENT
VISION OVER
15 YEARS**

Implementation Strategy

Strategy for Assembling Funding

1. Start with readiness. Prioritize projects that have a defined scope, concept, and decision framework score. These are more competitive for grants and easier to schedule.
2. Sequence through the capital improvement projection. Move from system-wide replacements to park-specific upgrades. Refresh sequencing annually to reflect unexpected infrastructure failures, extended lifespans, and new opportunities.
3. Target catalytic and high need sites. Use Big Ideas, Catalytic Projects, and Bold Ambitions categories to time investments with outsized system impact and align them with equity and access needs.
4. Leverage trail and partner projects. Coordinate with Dakota County and School District 197 to fund connections such as River to River Greenway tie-ins and Safe Routes to Parks.

What Gets Funded First

- Capital improvement projection parks such as Albert, Haskell, Kennedy, Oakdale, Southview, Sports Complex, and 150 Thompson move forward as scopes are refined and matching dollars surface, with a goal of completion during 2025-2030
- Medium-priority projects move forward as funding allows between 2030 and 2035.
- Low-priority projects take place beyond 2035 as funding allows.
- Ambitious projects such as pool modernization and a potential recreation or community hub advance through study first, then phased funding as feasible.

GRIT

Noun

Courage, bravery, pluck, spirit, moxie, strength of character, strength of will, nerve, fortitude, resolve, hardiness, determination, tenacity, David amongst Goliaths, creativity, resourcefulness, audacious, perseverance, guts, spunk, West St. Paul.

Let's Get to Work!