



SECTION 3. NEEDS & PRIORITIES

What's Most Important

IN THIS CHAPTER

- How Data & Input Shaped This Plan
- What We Heard
- System Priorities
- Engagement Themes
- Trends Analysis

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 gather input from as many people as possible, several engagement techniques were employed. 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.

Existing Studies & Plans

Several adopted plans and studies guide the city's work. The community feedback and goals of these plans were considered in the development of our plan for the future of the parks system.

1967 Parks System Plan

The city's original parks system plan was created when the city had only eight parks and a pool. Fifty-some years and five thousand fewer people, the plan acknowledges the need for more park acres to meet residents' needs. The plan called for 25 parks. Many would be built, while others, particularly in the southern half of the city, would be developed for housing.

2000 Parks System Plan

The city's second parks system plan was adopted in 2000. The plan focused on the redevelopment and investment in the city's community parks and facilities. The plan spurred investment in Harmon, Sports Complex, and Marthaler parks.

Go West St. Paul

In 2022, the City of West St. Paul updated its Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, known as Go West St. Paul.

Go West St. Paul will continue to serve as a long-term, guiding document in transforming the city into a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly community. The goal of the plan is to support pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, enabling every citizen to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. Sidewalks, trails, bikeways, and street crossings around the city are addressed within the plan.

Comprehensive Plan

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2018, envisions community growth over the next two decades, addressing key topics such as land use, housing, economic development, and parks. Key objectives for Parks and Recreation include:

- Maintaining neighborhood park facilities.
- Providing community playfields for organized sports.
- Collaborating with regional park plans.
- Improving existing parks through a Long-Range Capital Improvement Program.
- Promoting school recreation facilities for community use.
- Expanding the local trail system and supporting the River-to-River Greenway.
- Developing community and neighborhood trails for better access.
- Ensuring equitable access to parks for individuals with disabilities.
- Seeking partnerships for park funding.
- Encouraging privately funded parks in new developments.

Small Area Plans

Neighborhood, corridor, or small area plans have guided community development of several of the city's nodes. These plans include:

- Robert Street Renaissance Plan
- Smith Avenue Revitalization Plan
- Smith Avenue/Dodd Road Small Area Plan

These plans have been critical in advancing projects at 150 Thompson/City Center and Smith/Dodd.

Did you know?

Comprehensive Planning in the Twin Cities

Planning makes good sense. Thinking ahead produces better results than just charging ahead without a vision, goals, or plans. Planning by local governments — including townships, cities and counties — enables them to grow and change in ways they can afford, and become the type of community they want to be.

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning agency charged with planning and coordinating the growth and development of the seven-county metropolitan area. While local governments focus on planning for their communities, the Council is responsible for regional services that communities need. The two groups coordinate their efforts by participating in a process of planning, negotiation, and final review of the local plans by the Met Council.

State law requires the Met Council to create regional plans and policies to guide growth and manage regional systems for transportation, aviation, water resources, and regional parks. The law also requires local governments to update their comprehensive plans. Cities in the metro area must update their plan at least once every 10 years (in years ending in '8).

The Met Council releases baseline standards for the content of local comprehensive plans, including what cities must include regarding parks and open space. These are minimum requirements that must be met, but cities can - and should - go above and beyond to make the comprehensive plan work for their community.

West St. Paul will need to update its comprehensive plan in short order. The parks system plan will serve as a strong foundation for the development of the comprehensive plan, with greater emphasis on quality, beautification, diversity, access, and uniqueness.

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 spaces 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, an 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

HOW PEOPLE GET INFORMATION ABOUT PARKS & REC

1. Physical Mailing / Newsletter
2. Social Media
3. City Email
4. Word of Mouth
5. City Website
6. Signs / Posters

MOST VISITED PARKS IN WEST ST. PAUL

1. Thompson County Park
2. Harmon
3. Marthaler
4. Garlough
5. Weschcke

OTHER FACTOIDS

- Outdated equipment and a lack of activities are the two biggest reasons why people view parks poorly.
- Most commonly, people visit parks to walk, bike, run, enjoy being outdoors, and use the playgrounds. Broadly speaking, using the parks for sports/athletics was not a popular reason for visiting.
- People utilize a variety of public and private spaces to meet their recreational needs, including neighboring cities, faith-based organizations, schools, and private gyms.
- Most people walk or drive to parks.
- 1/3 haven't visited any of our major facilities (pool, dome, ice arena)
- 1/5 have no need for the existing programming that is offered. 13% aren't aware of the programs. 70% participate in at least one event a year.
- Most feel program costs are about right.
- People are mixed about the programs offered. A plurality is neutral as to whether programs are diverse and meet their needs.
- Groups are evenly split on whether existing park amenities/features meet their needs. 1/3 agree, 1/3 are neutral, and 1/3 disagree.

MOST DESIRED FACILITY NEED

1. Paved trails
2. Natural Areas
3. Soft Surface Trails
4. Indoor Pool/Aquatics
5. Community Center / Recreation Center

Majority of people will travel to the park that meets their needs or offers certain amenities. And most people use the trails for recreation rather than utilitarian needs (getting to shopping, work)

78% agree the trail system needs some type of improvement

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly white, middle-aged, homeowners, with children at home.

This is not representative of the community as a whole and we have more work to do to better understand the needs of the full community.

THERE SHE IS
Miss WSP Parks!



MOST IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES

1. Bathrooms
2. Paved Trails
3. Benches
4. Natural Landscape Areas
5. Shade
6. Playgrounds
7. Lighting
8. Trash Receptacles
9. Parking
10. Picnic Tables

LEAST IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES

1. Adult Fitness Equipment
2. Bike Racks
3. Sports Fields and Courts
4. Off-Road Biking Trails
5. Indoor Athletic Fields
6. Indoor Ice Rinks
7. Outdoor Ice Rinks
8. Outdoor Athletic Fields

SYSTEM PRIORITIES

1. **Equity and Access**
2. **New and Innovative Features**
3. **Natural Areas**
4. **Trails and Connections**
5. **Culturally Relevant Activities**
6. **Systems Thinking**
7. **Maintenance**
8. **Funding and Program Costs**
9. **Premium Athletics**





HIGH PRIORITY POPULATION OUTREACH

Accessibility Focus Group

Accessibility was a common theme that emerged from other engagement events, so an accessibility group meeting was organized to understand how the park and recreation system currently serves the community, and what improvements could be made. The discussion covered a wide range of topics on accessibility, and centered around physical accessibility throughout the sidewalks and trails, accessible play equipment and programs, and the location of play areas. There are great examples of fully accessible play within the Twin Cities, and this project provides an opportunity to create a regional destination within the City of West St. Paul, and to set city-wide standards.

- Overall improved physical access for disabled individuals
- An inclusive park for range of physical abilities, ages, sensory experiences, and a variety in equipment and programming
- There is a need to enclose accessible play areas and further separate accessible play areas from traffic.
- Incorporate accessible and inclusive play throughout the system through equipment and programming.



Latina Focus Group

To better understand the unique needs of our Spanish-speaking population, the project team attended an event hosted by Huellas Latinas, a nonprofit organization that empowers Latina communities through inclusive outdoor programs. Attendees shared their thoughts on the needs specific to their community.

- Signs throughout the trail system in this park are limited to English, so many non-English speakers miss recreation opportunities
- There is an opportunity to incorporate technology for wayfinding and community bonding
- The system is not very accessible for the disability and special needs community
- Better lighting, more benches, trash bins, and dog waste stations are desired throughout the system
- Inclusive education programming and opportunities within the park spaces are desired
- Connections to the greater trail systems within the region (along the Mississippi in particular) are much desired

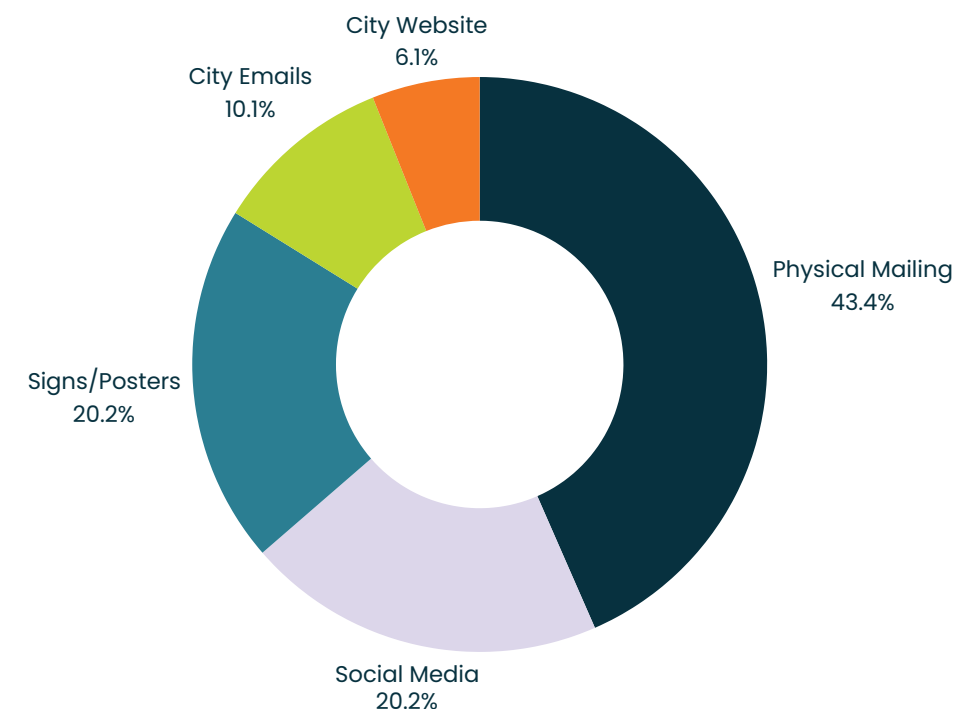


Needs & Priorities

Renters Survey

Renters who participated in the survey would like to see more community gathering events and nature-based education within the park and recreation system. They would like to see more natural areas, paved trails, and small neighborhood parks throughout the city, as well as a public indoor pool and an indoor space for gatherings.

The renter community enjoys the system, but would like to see a community center and improved winter maintenance. Other suggestions were focused on improving physical access throughout the city, senior-friendly classes and activities, affordability, increased cultural events, and more educational opportunities geared towards natural areas and gardening.



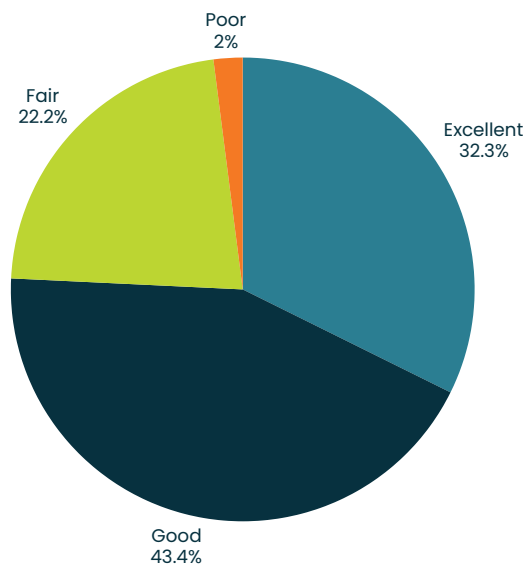
Renters preferred methods for receiving information about Parks and Recreation programs.

2024 NATIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

The National Community Survey (NCS) report is about the “livability” of West St. Paul. A livable community is a place that is not only habitable but also desirable. It is not only where people live, but where they want to live. The survey was developed by the experts from the National Research Center at Polco. West St. Paul conducts the survey every two years. Survey results were weighted so that the demographic profile of respondents was representative of the demographic profile of adults in West St. Paul. Data is then compared to benchmark data from similar communities nationwide.

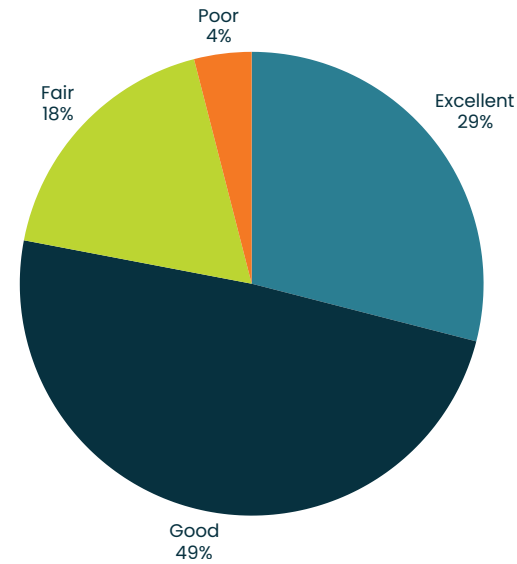
Parks and Recreation

“There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation programs for public use and enjoyment.”



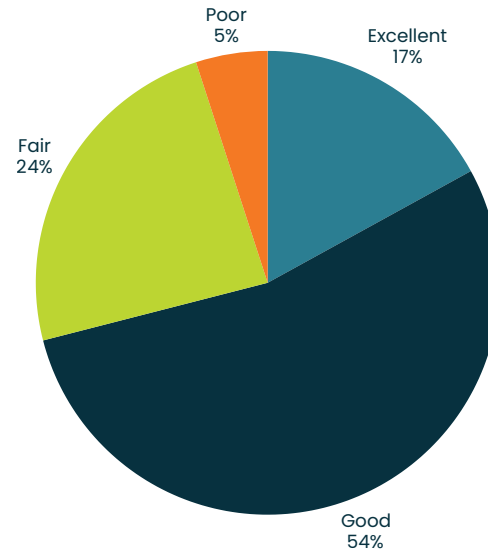
Natural Environment

The natural environment plays a vital role in the health and well-being of residents. The natural spaces in which residents live and experience their communities has a direct and profound effect on quality of life.



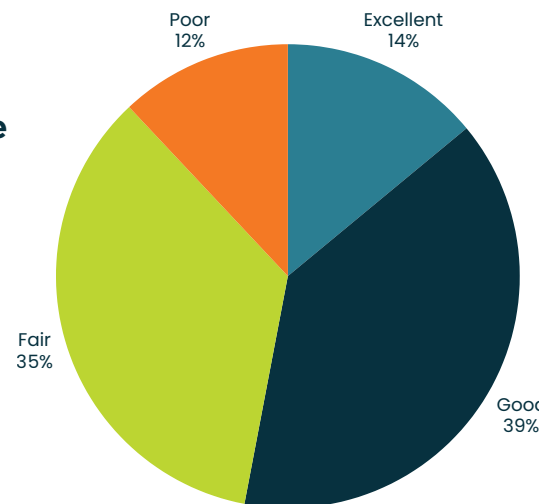
Health and Wellness

The characteristics of and amenities available in the communities in which people live has a direct impact on the health and wellness of residents, and thus, on their quality of life overall.



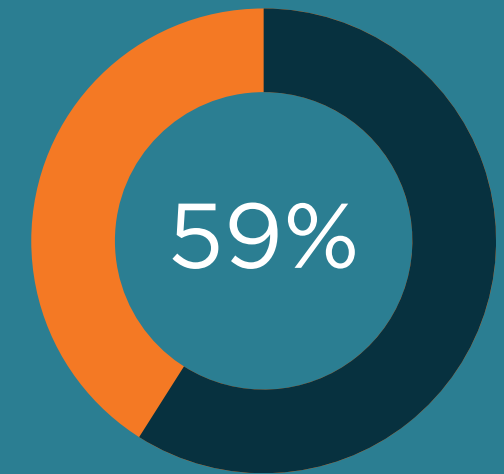
Education, Arts, and Culture

Participation in the arts, in educational opportunities, and in cultural activities is linked to increased civic engagement, greater social tolerance, and enhanced enjoyment of the local community.



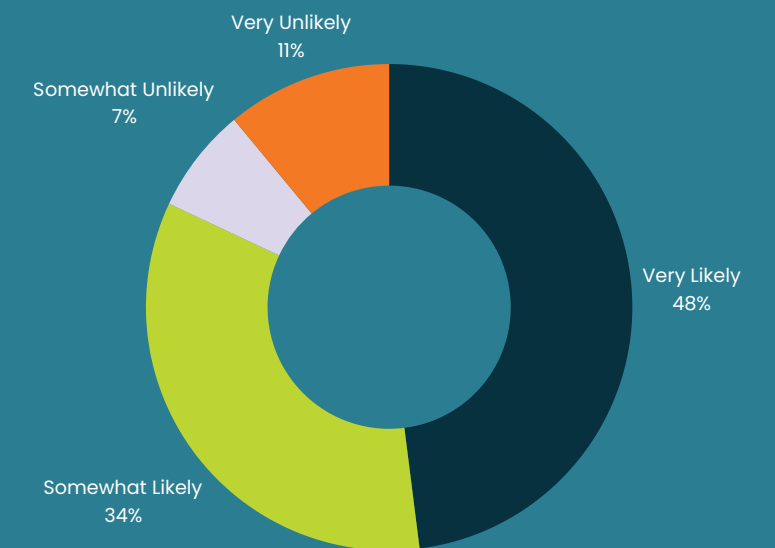
Community Center Questions

Residents of West Saint Paul and Mendota Heights have expressed interest in building a joint community center. As part of the NCS survey, we asked questions to gauge interest in a community center. Strong interest exists, but paying for such a large facility may still be out of reach.



Property Tax Increase

Three out of five respondents said they would support an increase in property taxes in order to pay for a community center.



Community Center Membership

The vast majority of respondents - 82% - expressed interest in becoming a member of a potential community center.

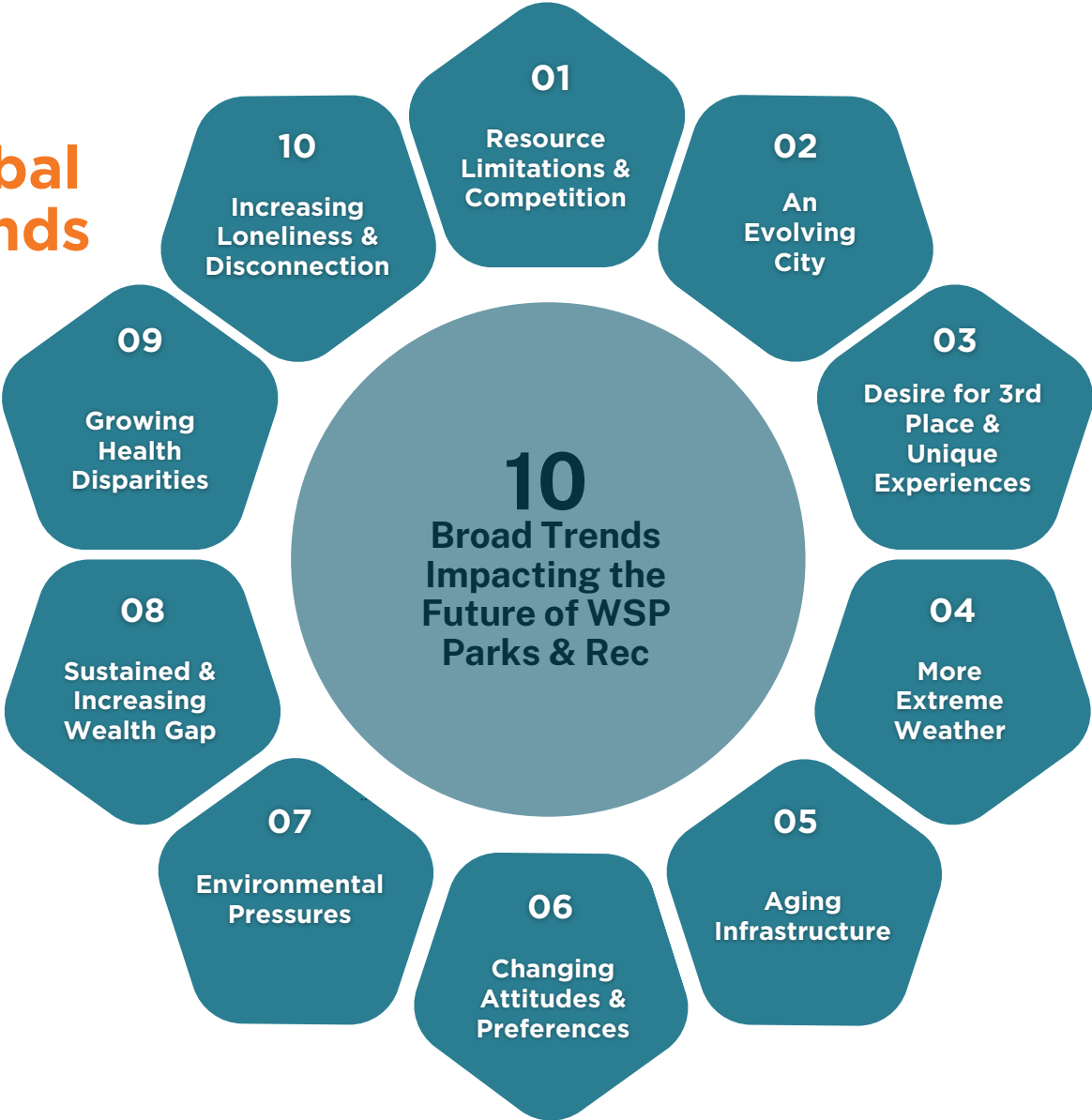


TRENDS

We have developed a plan for the future that aims to anticipate and address the changes that are likely to occur. Based on the available data and our understanding of the community, we have identified 10 interrelated trends we must consider and address in our work. Our goal is to mitigate or shift the impacts of these trends through our work. While we may not be able to address the effects of some trends solely at the city scale or with our limited resources, we must explore advocacy, partnership, and adaptation strategies that can. Some trends offer clear opportunities, while others hold more hidden silver linings that we must capitalize on.

It is important to note that trends are not permanent and can change quickly. Therefore, this plan must remain a living document, and our community must remain flexible. We present our analysis within the context of 2024, not to alarm but to encourage action. We are only victims of these trends if we do nothing. Our parks can play a crucial role in addressing each of these trends.

Global Trends



01 Resource Limitations & Competition

"Do more with less" has been a long-standing demand from government agencies, nonprofits, social networks, and corporations alike. Sadly, there never seems to be sufficient funding to execute plans effectively. New and urgent challenges constantly shift priorities, rising costs diminish impact, and the competition for grant money and business sponsorship intensifies each year. Unfortunately, park departments often face budget cuts first and receive funding last during times of resource scarcity. Many of these departments were still recovering from the Great Recession when they were hit hard by the pandemic, social unrest, and the escalating effects of climate change. We anticipate that these challenges will persist.

- Implications for Parks & Recreation:**
- Continued need for collaboration with partners and neighbors
 - Need to emphasize how to keep WSP competitive amongst its neighbors and amongst national competition
 - Need to layer project funding and dedicate park-specific funding sources

02

An Evolving City

Throughout its history, West St. Paul has undergone continuous evolution. From a small outpost to a suburban shopping destination to now an urbanizing first-ring suburb.

- Since the last park system plan was adopted in 2000, the city has grown by 12%, welcoming new residents and neighbors. Growth is expected to continue, albeit at a slower rate, as redevelopment progresses.
- West St. Paul has long been a diverse community. Over the past few years, the makeup of our community has shifted slightly towards a younger and whiter demographic. New developments have attracted younger middle-class workers, while the shift in housing supply from older to younger generations has led to a recent influx of families and young professionals.
- West St. Paul was one of the few metro communities to experience a population increase following the pandemic.
- Statewide trends, such as slowing growth, aging populations, and an increase in racial and ethnic diversity, will likely impact the city in the future.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- More senior and mid-day recreation programs
- Need for cultural recreation and programming
- Develop parks and facilities for a variety of mobility and activity levels
- Multi-language, multi-faceted marketing and outreach needed
- Ability to connect with transient and new residents
- Accessible and easy-to-navigate website
- New parks and facilities to meet changing demographics, such as volleyball, soccer, pickleball, dog park, walking paths, and community garden

03

Desire for 3rd Place & Unique Experiences

Third places are locations outside of home, work, and school where we connect with one another. They include places like parks, coffee shops, community centers, sidewalk cafes, bars, and religious institutions. Unfortunately, America has seen a decline in third places as a result of shifting economic trends, changing consumer habits, and decreased civic engagement. Generally speaking, our cities, for various reasons, have been built in a homogeneous fashion. Over the past few decades, with strategic investments, certain cities have achieved success in creating and cultivating distinctive spaces that bring people together.

- “Placemaking” is the process that facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution (Project for Public Spaces)

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Need to place higher emphasis on quality of design, aesthetics, and connection
- Effective wayfinding
- Creative, fun, engaging, and high-quality events needed year-round
- Public-private relationships critical, including with businesses, faith institutions, schools, and non-profits
- Consideration of four-season design and use
- Park-and place-centered economic development strategies key
- Need to differentiate West St. Paul from other suburban communities

04

More Extreme Weather

Our climate is changing. Minnesota’s winters are warming rapidly, spring is colder and snowier, and summer seems to extend into a shortened fall. Recently, we’ve faced air quality and heat warnings like never before, while the yo-yo of extreme rainfall events and drought has become increasingly common. This harms our people, health, infrastructure, and pocketbooks. We must design our parks and facilities to be safer and more resilient to extreme weather. Programming and procedures will need to adjust to ensure health and safety.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Unfortunately, winter sports may become less of a constant offering.
- We can expect more last-minute cancellations of programs and events as forecasting becomes more difficult and weather changes quickly
- We’ll need stronger emergency and contingency planning for weather events
- Lack of indoor space will limit our ability to offer programs

05

Aging Infrastructure

Many of the community's parks were first developed in the 1960s and 70s. Despite rehabilitation over time, much of the city's recreational infrastructure is beyond its useful life or nearing that stage. This situation is not unique to West St. Paul, as communities nationwide face aging infrastructure. Competition for limited resources, rising costs, increasing demand, and changing preferences have reduced the capacity for improvements. We'll need to make strategic decisions about the need for the replacement or the addition of certain facilities. We may also need to explore options for the infusion of resources to meet the community's vision.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Recognition that, without additional funding, standards may need to change
- Some facilities may need to be decommissioned
- Strong collaboration with transportation, public safety, public health, and community development

06

Changing Attitudes & Preferences

It's true that as time passes, people's opinions and priorities tend to shift. The younger generations tend to connect in different ways, and with growing diversity, new games and sports are introduced to the region. Advancements in technology also bring about new ways to share information. The COVID-19 pandemic has also altered the way we spend our time, with an increasing amount of time being spent at home. However, city leaders need to stay current while also recognizing that new trends can emerge and fade quickly. It can be challenging to make adjustments to a community's physical assets, as it takes time to plan and resources to implement. The key to success is to listen to the community, engage with them constantly, and be open to change.

- Since the mid-1990s, traditional sports such as basketball, baseball, hockey, and football have experienced significant declines in participation
- The rise of new sports and games like pickleball and e-sports
- Individual sports and recreational activities, such as walking, running/jogging, and bicycling, are on the rise.
- As of 2024, 56% of Americans have a dog

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Greater emphasis on trails, connected and looping systems
- Need to remain abreast of changing recreation trends
- With limited space and budget, it may be difficult or impossible to meet all recreation needs
- Need for more flexible space
- Reluctance to share facilities

07

Decreasing Biodiversity

According to nearly all scientific accounts, Earth is currently experiencing the sixth significant extinction event in its global history. Species diversity is declining precipitously around the world, with plant and animal extinctions occurring at an alarming rate. Sadly, fewer lightning bugs light up our summer skies, fewer birds perch in our trees, and, with the increase in diseases and pests resulting from climate change and human activity, we have fewer trees for birds to perch in.

- Situated between the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, West St. Paul is in a critical habitat zone with the potential to stave off biodiversity declines. Finally, not to be forgotten is the biodiversity of our soils, which also needs protection.
- A reduction in biodiversity means increased vulnerability to pests, diseases, freshwater supply issues, food security concerns, and economic instability.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- A stronger focus on natural preservation and restoration is essential
- There may be cascading effects stemming from environmental damage
- Increased education and awareness efforts are needed

08

Sustained & Increasing Wealth Gap

The gap between those with significant wealth and those considered “middle class” and “working class” is the widest it has been in more than 50 years. The top 10% of households by wealth held 69% of total household wealth, while the bottom 50% held only 2.5%. Race, age, and education are significant—and alarming—factors in wealth distribution. West St. Paul is a fascinating microcosm, with higher-wealth neighborhoods in the southwest, lower-wealth neighborhoods in the west and center, and middle-income neighborhoods in the northeast. Access to discretionary funds affects people’s ability to participate in paid programming, purchase equipment, acquire skills, and have the time and resources to access programs. This will require us to consider equitable access from financial, transportation, and personal development standpoints.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Facilities and programs for sports and activities with participants from higher-income backgrounds may have the potential to be self-funded.
- There is an ongoing and increasing necessity to provide scholarships, as well as low-cost and no-cost programs and events.
- Challenges related to time constraints and access to information persist.

09

Growing Health Disparities

The past few years have brought us an unfortunate statistic. America’s life expectancy has declined because of mostly preventable diseases and deaths – heart and liver disease, diabetes, suicide, homicide, infant mortality, overdose, and accidents. Fatal cancers, communicable diseases with co-morbidities, and unhealthy lifestyles factor into deaths. Health disparities exist by race, income, education, and, increasingly, gender. “Deaths of despair” are often linked to economic hardship, depression, and stress. Parks and recreation can play a huge role in improving physical and mental health, with doctors across the globe distributing “park prescriptions.”

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Collaborating with healthcare providers to integrate wellness programs into park facilities, offering resources like fitness classes, nutrition workshops, and mental health support.
- Ensuring that parks and recreational facilities are accessible to all, with trails and amenities designed to accommodate people of all ages and abilities.
- Promoting community engagement through events and initiatives that bring diverse groups together, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose.
- Focusing on sustainable practices in park development and maintenance to create healthier environments and support community well-being.

10

Increasing Loneliness & Disconnection

Even before the pandemic prompted people to adopt physical distancing measures, reports of increasing loneliness and disconnection were raising alarms. The issue became so critical that in 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness a public health crisis. There are several reasons for the trend, including polarization, increased screen time, concerns about mental and physical health, changing family dynamics, and a decline in socialization, ranging from team sports to civic involvement and volunteering.

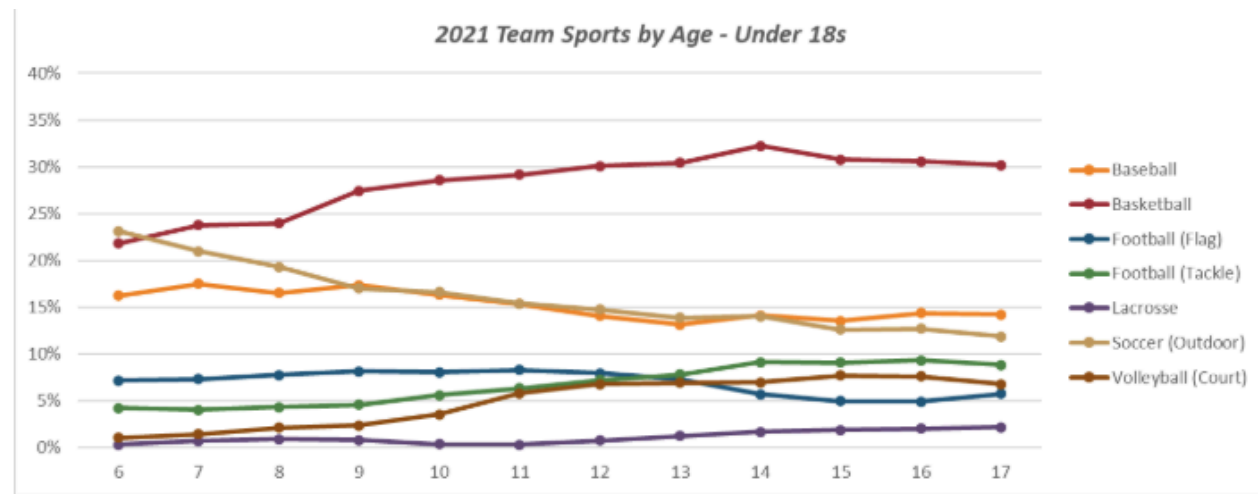
- One in three Americans reported feeling lonely frequently or almost all the time.
- Dramatic decrease in attending club meetings, having family dinners, and having friends over.
- Loneliness can increase the risk of early mortality by 26%. It can also increase the risk of developing dementia, heart disease, and stroke.
- Joining and participating in one group cuts in half your odds of dying next year.
- Every ten minutes of commuting reduces all forms of social capital by 10%
- Watching commercial entertainment TV is the only leisure activity where doing more of it is associated with lower social capital.

Implications for Parks & Recreation:

- Developing programs and events that promote social interaction, such as community festivals, group exercise classes, and volunteer opportunities.
- Designing spaces that encourage spontaneous socialization, like picnic areas, playgrounds, and community gardens.
- Enhancing accessibility to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic status, can participate in recreational activities and enjoy the benefits of nature and community.
- Collaborating with local organizations, mental health professionals, and community leaders to provide resources and support for individuals experiencing loneliness and isolation.

National Recreation Trends

The games we play, how we spend time with each other, and the ways we relax and recover have, and always will, change as new trends, technology, and priorities emerge. Interestingly, the pandemic accelerated certain trends (more e-gaming) and halted others (the decline in golf). The difficulty for parks departments is balancing the desire for new facilities and programs with the financial, staffing, and space allocation limitations. We'll need to strike a balance, work with partners, and make tough decisions to stay ahead of the curve.



Source: Sports & Fitness Industry Association

Core Participation in Select Sports, Ages 6-12

Percentage of children who participated on a regular basis in 2023

Sport	2013	2019	2022	2023	2022-23 Change	# of Kids in 2023
Baseball	14.2%	14.4%	11.5%	11.7%	1.2%	3,326,801
Basketball	16.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%	0.1%	3,983,521
Cheerleading	1.8%	2.9%	2.2%	2.1%	-6.4%	595,060
Flag Football	2.8%	3.5%	3.5%	3.8%	8.1%	1,086,440
Tackle Football	3.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.7%	4.4%	758,485
Golf	4.9%	4.6%	6.1%	6.1%	0.0%	1,700,000
Gymnastics	2.9%	3.6%	3.0%	2.9%	-6.1%	812,531
Ice Hockey	1.1%	1.2%	1.0%	0.9%	-6.4%	255,567
Lacrosse	0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	0.6%	-18.1%	168,019
Soccer (Outdoor)	9.3%	7.7%	8.0%	7.6%	-5.5%	2,152,491
Softball (Fast-pitch)	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	-3.6%	332,785
Swimming (Team)	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	1.1%	10.4%	309,066
Tennis	4.1%	4.3%	6.5%	6.3%	-14.3%	1,800,000
Track and Field	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	3.3%	296,309
Volleyball (Court)	2.7%	2.9%	2.5%	2.5%	-0.1%	711,432
Wrestling	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%	-14.6%	123,467

Core Participation in Select Sports, Ages 13-17

Percentage of children who participated on a regular basis in 2023

Sport	2013	2019	2022	2023	2022-23 Change	# of Kids in 2023
Baseball	8.3%	10.4%	8.7%	8.8%	0.9%	1,871,195
Basketball	16.6%	16.5%	16.3%	15.5%	-5.1%	3,282,607
Cheerleading	3.1%	3.0%	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%	485,076
Flag Football	2.6%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	-1.6%	542,072
Tackle Football	7.3%	7.0%	6.4%	6.5%	0.4%	1,371,876
Golf	7.1%	5.3%	7.9%	8.3%	5.10%	1,800,000
Gymnastics	1.5%	1.5%	1.1%	1.3%	20.6%	279,408
Ice Hockey	0.8%	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.8%	237,605
Lacrosse	1.8%	2.2%	1.8%	1.7%	-4.10%	359,456
Soccer (Outdoor)	8.2%	7.1%	7.1%	6.6%	-6.3%	1,404,243
Softball (Fast-pitch)	2.1%	2.0%	1.7%	1.7%	2.0%	366,470
Swimming (Team)	3.0%	2.8%	1.9%	1.8%	-4.3%	380,955
Tennis	6.1%	6.8%	8.5%	8.0%	-5.6%	1,700,000
Track and Field	5.8%	5.5%	4.6%	4.5%	-2.9%	955,403
Volleyball (Court)	5.1%	5.6%	5.0%	5.0%	-0.7%	1,051,346
Wrestling	1.1%	1.2%	0.9%	0.8%	-12.7%	162,145

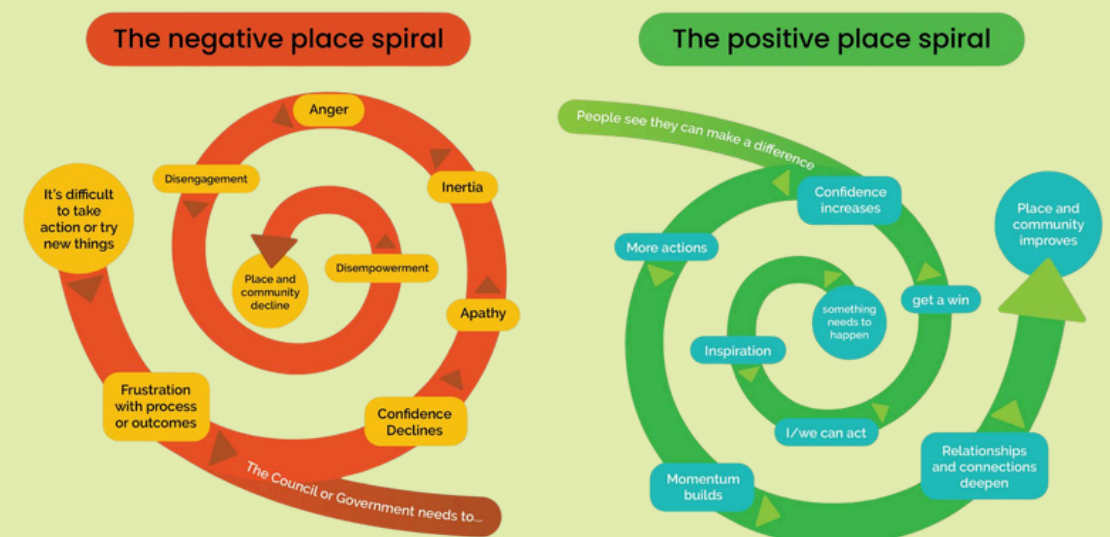
Source: Sports & Fitness Industry Association. Golf data came from National Golf Foundation. Tennis data came from U.S. Tennis Association.

Note: Core participation means playing regularly a number of times per year as defined by SFIA depending on the sport.

Did you know? THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

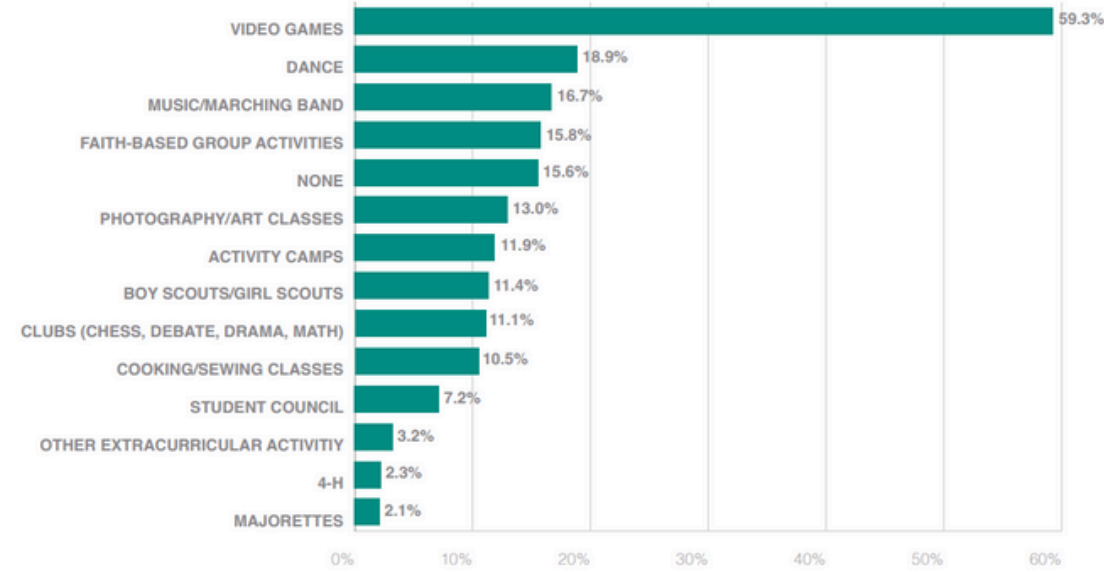
Recent images of certain cities, now lacking office workers and filled with homeless individuals, raise concerns about urban decline, referred to as the "urban doom loop." Experts warn of a downward spiral where fewer workers lead to shuttered businesses, decreased tax revenues, and reduced services. However, Jon Witten from Tufts believes cities can control their fate and offers strategies to improve outcomes:

- Avoid self-fulfilling prophecies.
- Prioritize safety and vitality in governance.
- Have a clear future vision.
- Promote and achieve success.
- Stay authentic as a community.
- Invest in small, impactful projects.
- Collaborate with key partners for growth.
- Celebrate even minor successes to boost morale.
- Maintain momentum in efforts.

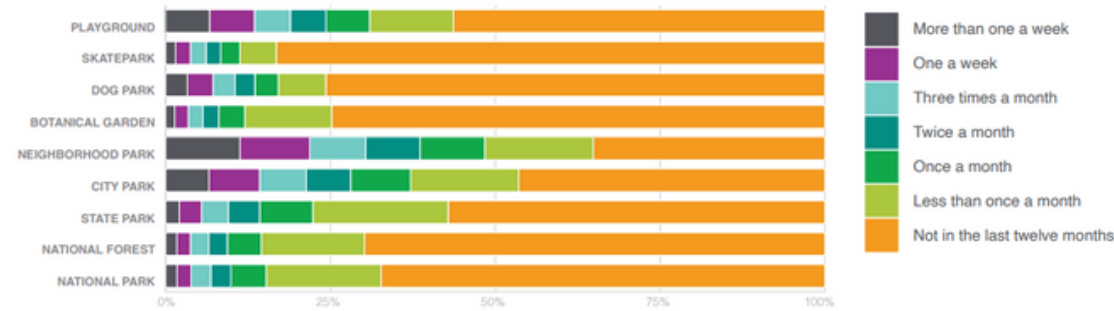




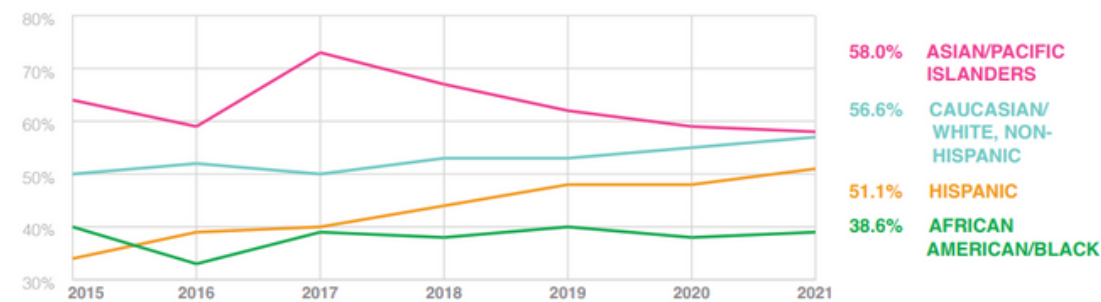
WHAT OTHER NON-SPORT/EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS? PARTICIPANTS, AGES 6 TO 17



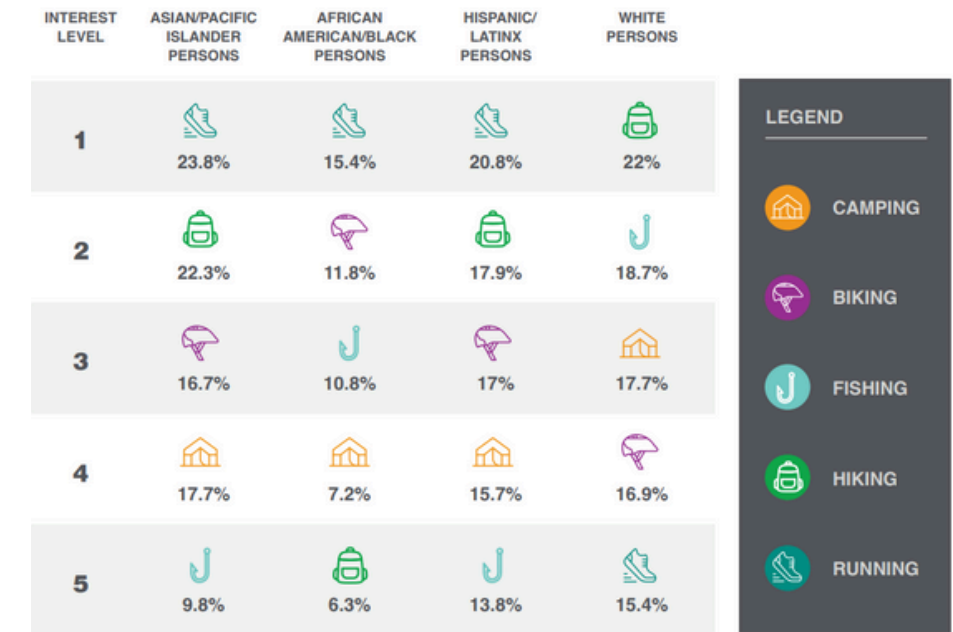
HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU VISITED THE FOLLOWING OUTDOOR VENUES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?



OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION RATES BY ETHNICITY AND RACE 2015 TO 2021



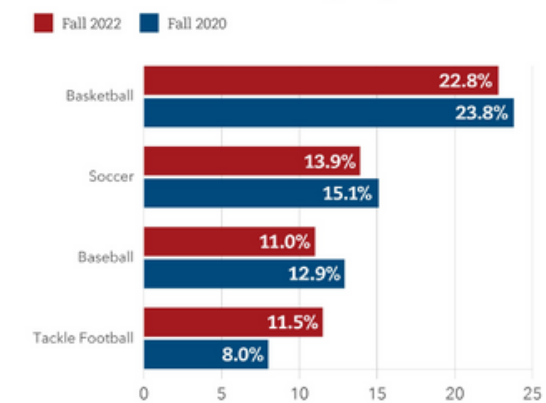
INTEREST LEVEL OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



MOST POPULAR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Activity	Participants (Millions)	Change 2020 to 2021
Hiking	58.7	+889 thousand
Camping	45.9	-2 million
Fishing	52.4	-2.3 million
Running	64.5	+739 thousand
Biking	51.4	-1.4 million

Children's Primary Sport



Source: Aspen Institute, Utah State University, Louisiana Tech University, TeamSnap youth sports parent surveys, 2020 and 2022

PARK COMPARABLES

Every park system has its own distinct characteristics. When compared to other systems, West St. Paul stands out as a leader in specific areas, like baseball fields, ice rinks, and playgrounds, offering more facilities per capita than its counterparts. However, there are certain aspects where we could improve by investing in additional facilities such as a dog park or community gardens.

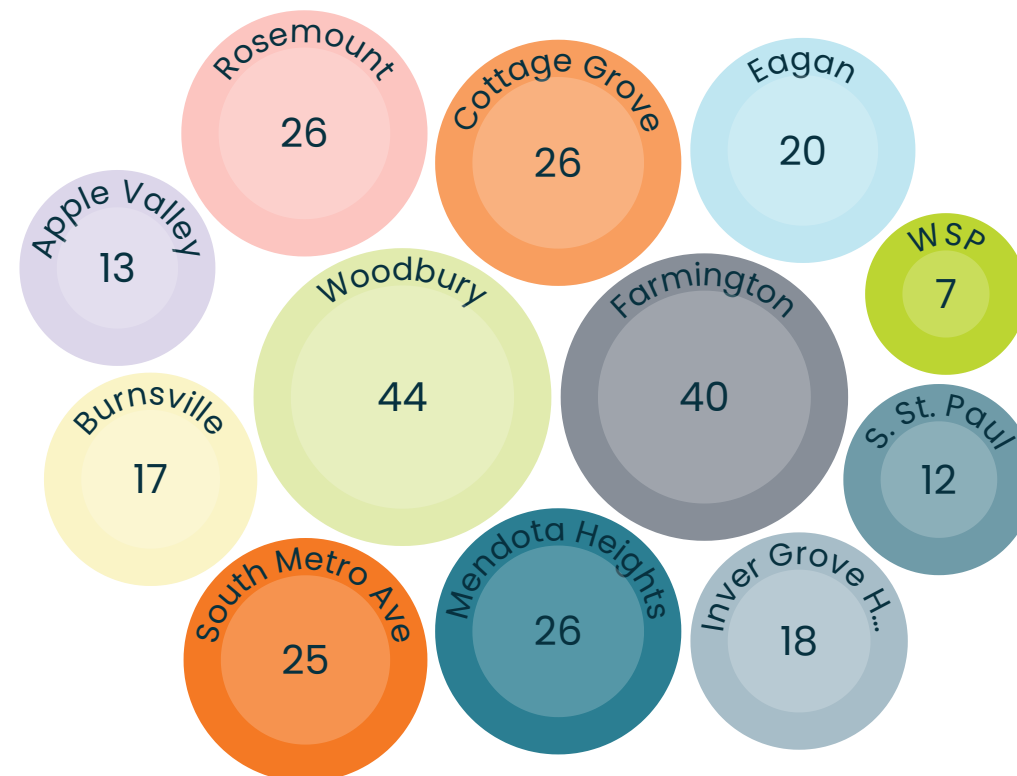
WHERE DO WE COMPARE TO OTHERS?	
LEADERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball Fields • Ice Rinks • Playgrounds • Outdoor Pool • Senior Center • Dome • Ice Arena
AVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickleball • Tennis • Basketball • Soccer/Football
BEHIND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of Parks • Total Park System Acreage • Dog Park • Skate Park • Community Gardens

Impacts of a Smaller Parks System

West St. Paul, when compared to nearly any national benchmark, has less park acreage. This comparison becomes even more pronounced when we compare ourselves to our neighbors in the southern metro, where the average city has nearly four times more land per 1,000 residents than we do. This means our neighbors have four times more space for baseball fields, parking lots, soccer courts, and playgrounds.

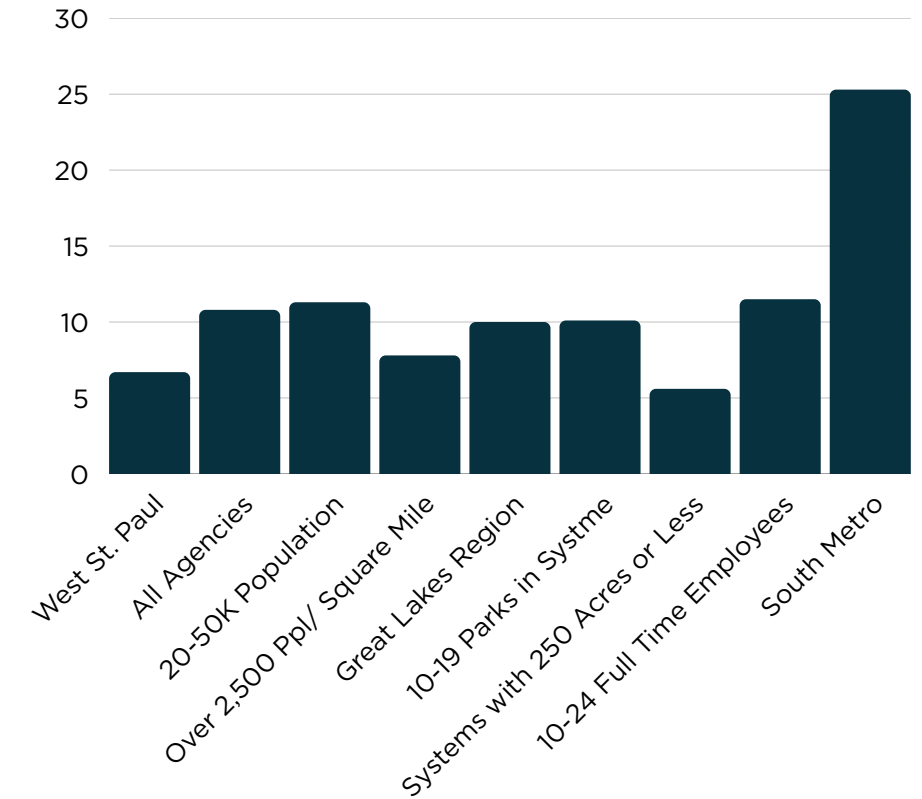
An interested neighbor came to us with the idea of building a cricket field. With such a small system, we literally have no space for something of that size. Other communities don't face such limitations.

What's the difference look like? The chart below shows the space available to 1,000 residents in WSP compared to our neighbors.

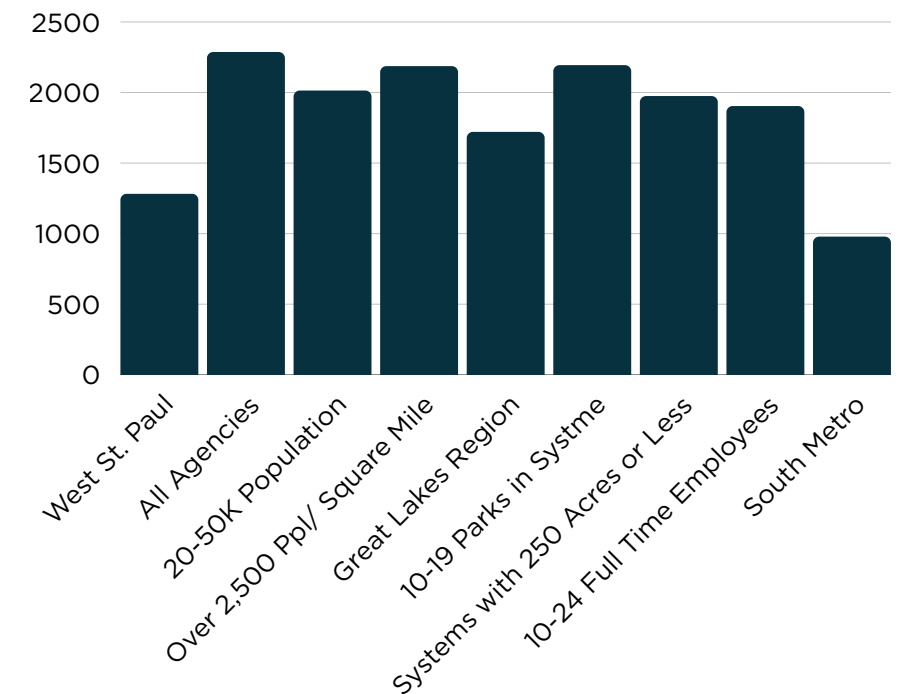


Average Acres per 1,000 Residents in West St. Paul Compared to the Average of its South Metro Neighbors

Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents



Residents per Park



Outdoor Facility Comparables

FACILITY	WEST ST. PAUL	ALL AGENCIES	20-50K POP.	OVER 2,500 PPL/SQ MI	GREAT LAKES	SOUTH METRO	AVERAGE	WSP COMP ANALYSIS
Baseball	2,179	13,455	11,363	19,335	9,225	1,369	10,949	Well Above Average
Football/ Soccer	10,897	9,177	7,674	10,323	6,747	2,624	7,309	Below Average
Basketball	3,632	7,404	7,117	7,495	5,303	2,936	6,051	Above Average
Tennis	3,113	5,860	5,815	5,938	4,213	5,645	5,494	Above Average
Pickleball	10,897	13,922	9,257	16,272	8,891	4,488	10,566	Average
Ice Rink	3,632	17,741	13,247	36,296	15,833	3,732	17,370	Well Above Average
Volleyball	21,794	17,475	14,800	17,691	14,828	11,271	15,213	Below Average
Skate Park	NA	53,144	32,000	57,918	39,230	42,089	44,876	Well Below Average
Playground	1,981	3,759	3,028	3,731	2,505	1,301	2,865	Slightly Above Average
Dog Park	NA	43,535	28,000	51,228	39,992	41,878	40,927	Well Below Average
Outdoor Pool	21,794	38,635	25,191	52,843	26,314	34,687	35,534	Above Average
Community Garden	NA	31,395	26,741	32,000	24,985	30,212	29,067	Well Below Average

Indoor Facility Comparables

FACILITY	WEST ST. PAUL	ALL AGENCIES	20-50K POP.	OVER 2,500 PPL/SQ MI	GREAT LAKES	SOUTH METRO	AVERAGE	WSP COMP ANALYSIS
Senior Center	21,794	59,727	31,199	73,346	44,413	42,568	50,251	Above Average
Teen Center	NA	55,494	31,645	75,000	51,865	-	42,801	Below Average
Nature Center	NA	120,000	32,000	127,909	72,299	74,533	85,348	Below Average
Performance Amphitheatre	NA	67,862	30,283	95,166	51,200	43,201	57,542	Below Average
Recreation Center	NA	31,215	24,380	38,224	20,909	15,820	26,110	Below Average
Community Center	NA	29,494	26,696	38,321	28,500	50,010	34,604	Below Average
Indoor Ice Rink	21,794	53,224	24,838	60,011	38,297	28,104	40,895	Above Average
Indoor Aquatics Center	NA	53,950	31,645	66,810	35,927	21,712	42,009	Below Average

WEST ST. PAUL RECREATION TRENDS

The Parks Department is responsible for hosting numerous events throughout the year. To do so effectively, we strive for a streamlined approach to event planning and execution. We acknowledge that prospective participants have limited time and resources, so we adhere to the principle that "one great event is better than 10 average events." Typically, events should have strong attendance, board support, and align with community needs. Being creative is encouraged, understanding that many great initiatives may take time to be fully adopted.

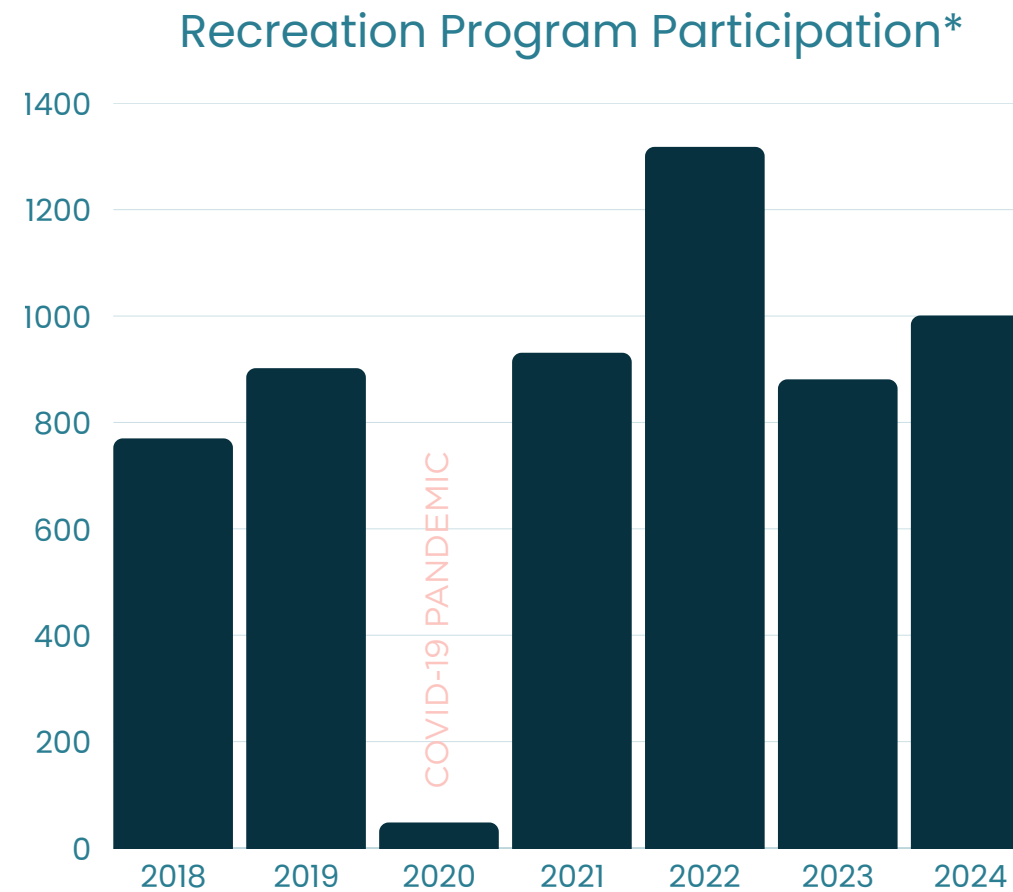
Explore West St. Paul Days is the city's legacy event, hosted on the first Thursday through Sunday in June, aligning with the end of the ISD197 school year. In 2022, the City reinvented this celebration, which had been formally held by a non-profit organization that disbanded after the COVID-19 pandemic. With each passing year, we have found a more consistent rhythm and feel that the events are being more widely embraced. Looking to the future, we aim to integrate more quirky experiences.

Partnerships with Tri-District Community Education, surrounding municipalities, the South Metro Fire Department, the West St. Paul Police Department, Dakota County Public Health, and more enable us to further meet the community's needs by working together. Sharing resources and creating new relationships is imperative to the success of many current and future events.

119%
**RECREATION
PROGRAMS COST-
RECOVERY**
2023-2024 AVERAGE

MOST ATTENDED PROGRAMS

- Fascinating Fridays
- Pee wee Sports
- Youth Soccer
- Sports Skills Camps



*Does not include city-wide community events



Trends Analysis

RECREATION PROGRAMS

For a small city, we do a fairly good job meeting the recreation and programming needs of the community. The city, along with TriDistrict and neighboring cities, provides a wide variety of sports, enrichment, and community activities. That said, there's room for improvement.

- Adult programming
- Community events
- Arts-based programs
- Environmentally-focused offerings
- Cultural events and programs
- Fun and quirky events

PARK DESIGN

From the simple jungle gyms of one hundred years ago to the complex playgrounds of today, we've come a long way in how we design for recreation and play. Design will continue to evolve with the introduction of new technologies and shifting priorities. To meet demands, we must rip the proverbial Band-Aid off our existing park design and reimagine our parks for the needs of today and tomorrow. This includes:

- General layout and flow of park spaces
- Playground design
- Safety
- Climate adaptation and mitigation
- Connection to water, each other, and nature
- Athletic facilities
- Trails
- Aquatics
- Winter recreation
- Gathering spaces



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 providing free community-wide programming as a means to remain accessible and offer enjoyable activities for everyone, especially our low-income residents.

