



SECTION 4.

VISION

What We Hope to Achieve

IN THIS CHAPTER

- City Vision, Mission, Values
- Parks System Vision
- Vision Elements
- Theory of Change
- Park Project Guidance
- Park Projects Overview

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 well-being 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

Welcoming

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

Maintained

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

Beautiful

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

VISION

IMPACT

Higher Participation

Happier Residents

Higher Satisfaction w/ City Government

Improved Health

Safer, More Vibrant Community

Stronger Community Connections



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.



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 the constraints of the past. 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 22,000 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 creating new spaces for people 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 avoiding anything from getting 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 of us. 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 essential to recognize that there is always room for improvement. 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 fund our parks. Historically, at our neighborhood parks, we've updated and replaced amenities as they reached the end of their useful life, but we haven't explored the overall layout and design of the amenities within these 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 of a "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 intended to spark conversation and are not meant to suggest final designs. When Oakdale is scheduled for improvement, the goals outlined in this plan, combined with community engagement and civil design, will inform the 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.**

Did you know?

What is Placemaking?

As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

Placemaking is

- Community-driven
- Visionary
- Function before form
- Adaptable
- Inclusive
- Focused on creating destinations
- Context-specific
- Dynamic
- Trans-disciplinary
- Transformative
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Sociable



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

What Makes a Great Place?

Most great places, whether a grand downtown plaza or humble neighborhood park, share four key attributes:

1. They are accessible and well-connected to other important places in the area.
2. They are comfortable and project a good image.
3. They attract people to participate in activities there.
4. They are sociable environments in which people want to gather and visit again and again.
5. People who care for and look after the space
6. Climate-appropriate shade and sun
7. Trees and/or greenery. Humans respond to green
8. Safe and welcoming
9. People and activity. People attract people
10. Places to sit and relax. Encourage people to stay awhile
11. Easily accessible for people of all ages and abilities
12. Things to see and do - reasons to be there

How Cities Transform Through Place

To be successful, cities need destinations. They need destinations that give their communities an identity and image, and that help attract new residents, businesses, and investment. But they also need strong community destinations that attract people. A destination might be a downtown square, a main street, a waterfront, a park, or a museum. Cities of all sizes should have at least 10 destinations where people want to be. What makes each destination successful is that it has multiple places within it. For example, a square needs at least 10 places: a café, a children's play area, a place to read the paper or drink a cup of coffee, a place to also sit, somewhere to meet friends, etc. Within each of the places, there should be at least 10 things to do. Cumulatively, these activities, places and destinations are what make a great city. Project for Public Space calls this big idea the "Power of 10+."



PARK PLANNING AND THE PARKS SYSTEM PLAN

Designing a park involves a series of thoughtful steps to ensure that the space meets community needs, enhances the environment, and provides an enjoyable experience for visitors. No two park projects are the same, but here's a general step-by-step process to design a park:

PARK CONSTRUCTION PROJECT TIMELINE

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
SYSTEM PLAN VISION & LONG-TERM BUDGET	SITE ASSESSMENT & ISSUE IDENTIFICATION	PARK CONCEPT PLAN & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	DETAILED DESIGN & PERMITTING	CONSTRUCTION	MAINTENANCE & STEWARDSHIP
Broad Community Engagement	Specific Community Engagement	Approvals	Outreach and Updates	Grand Opening	Enjoy!
<p>Identify Objectives and Goals for the System: Establishes a vision for the entire parks system with high-level guidance for each individual park.</p> <p>Set Aside Funding: The Capital Improvement Plan establishes a long-term funding strategy for park projects. It also sets the order and sequencing of park projects over a ten-year span.</p>	<p>Identify Objectives and Goals for the Park: Define the park's purpose (recreational, educational, or community) and establish goals like promoting sustainability and enhancing social interaction.</p> <p>Conduct a Site Analysis: Assess the park's location by analyzing landscape features (topography, soil, vegetation, drainage) and considering historical significance and challenges (pollution, invasive species). Review system plan for high-level guidance.</p>	<p>Engage the Community: Involve local residents and stakeholders through surveys and public meetings to gather feedback on their needs, ensuring the park is valued and well-utilized.</p> <p>Develop a Concept Plan: Create a layout based on community input showing general location and design. Concept plan does not include details like colors or tree species.</p> <p>Develop a Budget: Estimate the costs associated with the park's design, construction, and maintenance.</p>	<p>Create a Detailed Design: After concept approval, develop plans detailing dimensions, materials, and vegetation; include specifications for benches, restrooms, lighting, and signage, ensuring accessibility and safety compliance.</p> <p>Finalize Budget and Timeline: Update cost estimates based on the detailed design. Outline a timeline with key milestones—design approval, permitting, construction dates, and grand opening—allowing flexibility for delays.</p> <p>Obtain Permits and Approvals: Secure necessary permits from local authorities before construction, including zoning approvals and environmental assessments.</p>	<p>Implement the Design: Begin construction according to the approved plans. Work with contractors and landscape architects to ensure that the project is executed as envisioned. Regularly monitor progress and make adjustments as necessary.</p> <p>Incorporate Feedback During Construction: Maintain communication with the community during the construction phase. Address concerns and gather input on any changes to the design that may arise during the build.</p>	<p>Open the Park: Once construction is complete, plan a grand opening event to celebrate the new park. Promote the park through community outreach, social media, and local media to attract visitors.</p> <p>Maintain, Program, and Evaluate: After opening, establish a maintenance plan to ensure the park remains clean, safe, and functional. Regularly evaluate the park's usage and gather feedback from visitors to identify areas for improvement or future enhancements.</p>