

SECTION 6.

IMPLEMENTATION

How We Get There

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Decisionmaking Framework
- Defining and Measuring Success
- Implementation Tools
- Capital Improvement Plan Projection
- Funding Approach

Decisionmaking Framework

CAPITAL PROJECTS

With needs far outweighing available resources, the pragmatic implementation of this vision laid out in this plan will require strategic decisionmaking. As we develop the Capital Improvement Plan and park improvement projects, we'll use the decisionmaking tool as a guide.

The decisionmaking tool will help:

- Weigh several and sometimes competing considerations, including expansion of system amenities and investing in existing facilities
- Reduce “squeaky wheel gets the oil” park planning
- Emphasize people, need, safety
- Align investments with the goals of the system plan
- Guides but doesn't prescribe investments
- Officials use quantifiable and easily accessible data

Functional Considerations

- **Criticality:** How essential is the amenity to the park's core functions? Is it required for safety? Does it serve a unique purpose to the park or meet a unique community need?
- **Expected Lifespan:** How many years remain in the amenity's useful life?
- **Condition:** Is the amenity still in working order? Is it showing signs of deterioration or below standards?

User Considerations

- **User Experience:** How does the amenity impact park use? Does it negatively or positively contribute to the park? Does the amenity garner high use? Does it require specialized equipment to use?
- **Seasonality:** How many seasons can the amenity be used?
- **Usage in Prime Season:** How often is the amenity used during prime times?
- **Accessibility:** How accessible is the amenity to those with different abilities?
- **Mobility:** How easy is it for people to access the amenity by foot, bike, or transit?

System Considerations

- **Historic Investments:** How recently was the park invested?
- **System Redundancy:** Do similar amenities exist in parks, schools, or other public spaces within walking distance? Is the amenity the only of its kind within a neighborhood or the entire community?
- **Neighborhood Population:** How many people live within a 10-minute walk of the amenity?
- **Priority Neighborhood:** Is the amenity within a high-priority equity neighborhood?
- **System Plan Alignment:** Does the system plan explicitly outline the need for the amenity? Does it meet a stated goal?



NON-CAPITAL PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

This plan outlines various projects and strategies to achieve our future vision, acknowledging the lack of specifics and potential solutions. One key challenge is selecting the most suitable pathway. It helps us decide when to respond with 'yes,' 'no,' or 'maybe not at this time.' Evaluating solutions for emerging ideas and challenges, especially for non-capital projects, can be complex. The plan, along with its accompanying checklist, will guide our discussions.

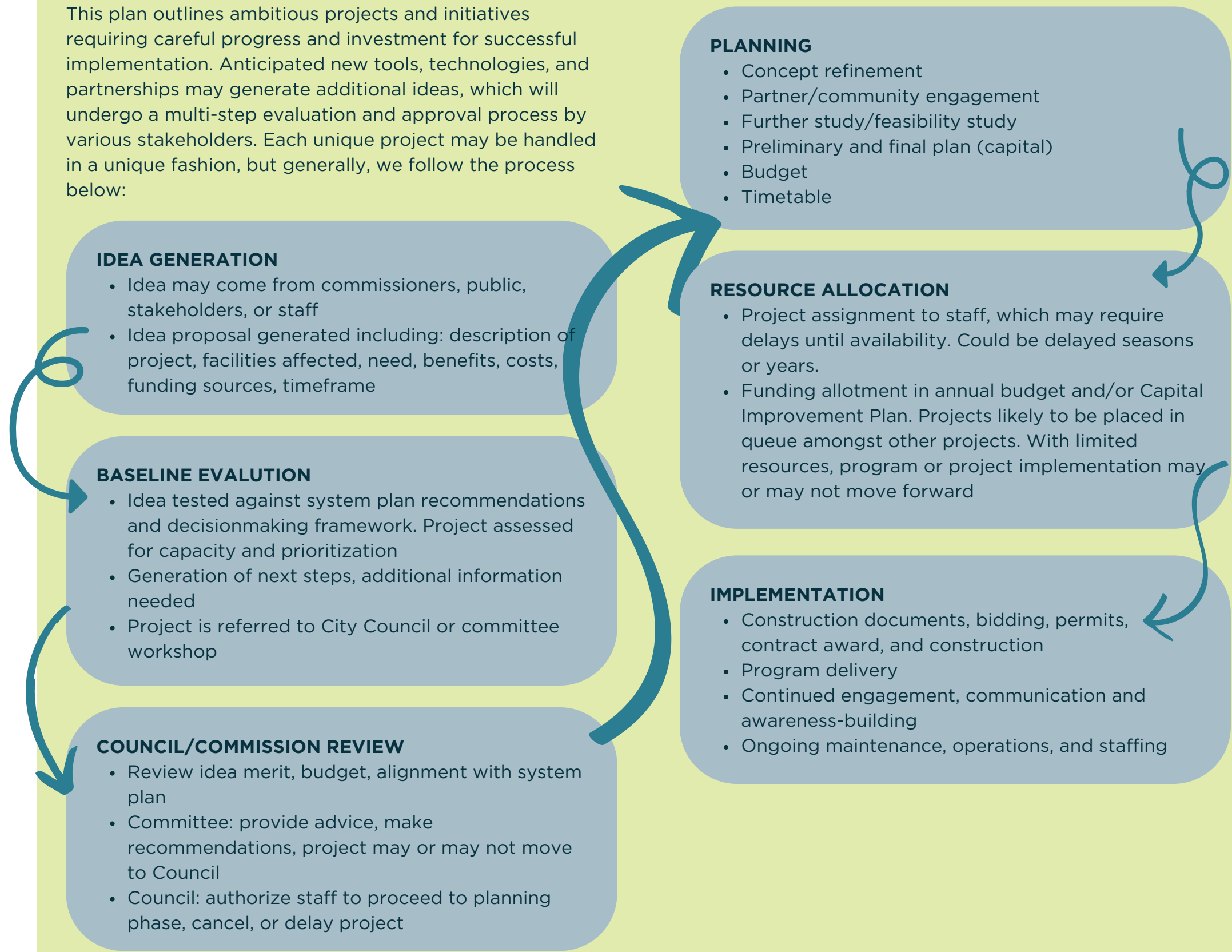


- Is the action economically and environmentally sustainable?
- Will the action help engage and connect people, parks, trails, and open space?
- Does the action support a city-wide system of parks and recreation?
- Will the action encourage community gathering?
- Does the action increase awareness of history, culture, and/or art?
- Have life cycle, operational costs, and safety been adequately addressed?
- Does the action reflect different needs for different neighborhoods, cultures, and backgrounds?
- Does the action serve an unmet need?
- Have all facility and partnership options been evaluated?
- Will the action expand equitable access to recreation?
- Does the action make it easier to access information or build awareness?
- Does the action inspire community pride?

Did you know?

HOW A PROJECT BECOMES REALITY

This plan outlines ambitious projects and initiatives requiring careful progress and investment for successful implementation. Anticipated new tools, technologies, and partnerships may generate additional ideas, which will undergo a multi-step evaluation and approval process by various stakeholders. Each unique project may be handled in a unique fashion, but generally, we follow the process below:



A NOTE ON BUDGETS, TIMELINE, AND IMPLEMENTATION

As Stephen Hawking once remarked, “One can’t predict the weather more than a few days in advance.” In this plan and its related implementation tools, we strive to utilize the information available in 2025 to estimate, budget, and prepare for the future. However, circumstances can shift. Factors such as economic fluctuations, adverse weather, political changes, and community discussions can all impact our plans. These changes can occur rapidly due to a single event or gradually over several years. Additionally, with our climate, planned wear and tear can significantly alter due to an especially harsh winter or a delightful summer.

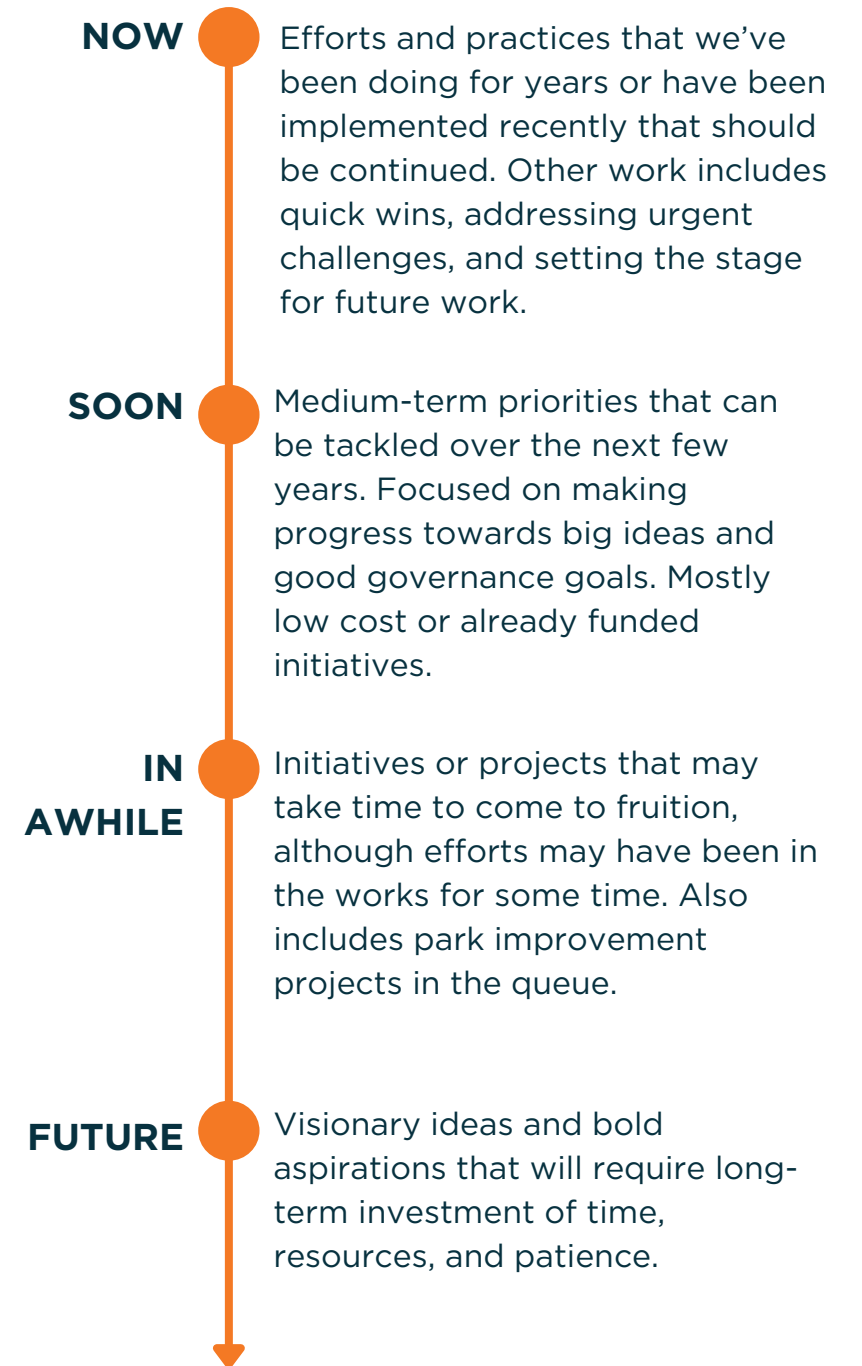
Given that this is a ten- to fifteen-year plan, we fully expect timelines to evolve. Some projects may need to take precedence over others due to the influx of grant funding or the urgent deterioration of a park or amenity. A new partner might bring resources to a project initially slated for the long term, and a straightforward opportunity cost analysis might reveal that advancing the effort sooner is too advantageous to overlook. Finally, the Parks Department will be faced with new challenges and issues not specifically guided in this document or on anyone’s radar in 2025.

This is to emphasize that this plan should be regarded as a guiding roadmap for our decisions, rather than an unchangeable decree.

We also firmly believe that “the best way to predict the future is to create it.” We have provided a diverse array of strategies and tactics to realize our vision, including:

- Quick wins that can be implemented easily to initiate change.
- Ongoing efforts that have proven successful.
- Long-term projects and initiatives that will require multiple steps or time to achieve fruition; we should begin laying the groundwork as soon as possible.
- Lastly, long-term aspirations or projects that may necessitate patience.

With thoughtful and strategic investments, commitments, and actions, we can influence and transform the course of the parks system and the community.



Defining and Measuring Success

MEASUREMENT

Routine evaluation serves as a valuable tool for narrating our story, recognizing success, and pinpointing areas that require attention. It is essential for guiding us on where to adjust our strategies, seek additional funding, or implement operational changes. While gathering local-level data can be challenging, we can gain insights into our current situation by integrating qualitative, quantitative, systems analysis, and anecdotal data.

The city is already tracking various metrics. As part of our citywide operational metrics initiative, we have successfully broadened the data we collect and will continue these efforts in the years ahead.

REPORTING

Effective governance is a key focus of this plan, encompassing a dedication to transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, engagement, and value.

This commitment also emphasizes the importance of honest and open communication. Therefore, we will strive to produce and distribute regular reports detailing our progress toward the plan's objectives.

These progress reports will serve to:

- Celebrate achievements
- Gain insights into budget requirements and capital improvement strategies
- Identify needs and areas that require attention
- Create actionable work plans
- Encourage meaningful discussions

Cities nationwide are creating engaging and accessible progress reports through websites, videos, and graphics. We find inspiration in these examples and aim to emulate their success. However, we recognize that producing these reports will require staff resources, which may sometimes be limited and stretched thin.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

Times and circumstances evolve. We gather more insights and receive ongoing feedback. Budgets may fluctuate. For these reasons and more, this plan should be regarded as a living document. Periodically, we may wish to review and revise it to better align with our needs and vision.

Updating this plan should not be seen as a shortcoming of the original process; rather, it signifies growth. A true failure lies in a document that gathers dust, rendered unusable and irrelevant.

It's important to note that while our core values and vision should remain consistent, as they are rooted in community feedback, the methods we use to achieve this vision may change over time.

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. | |

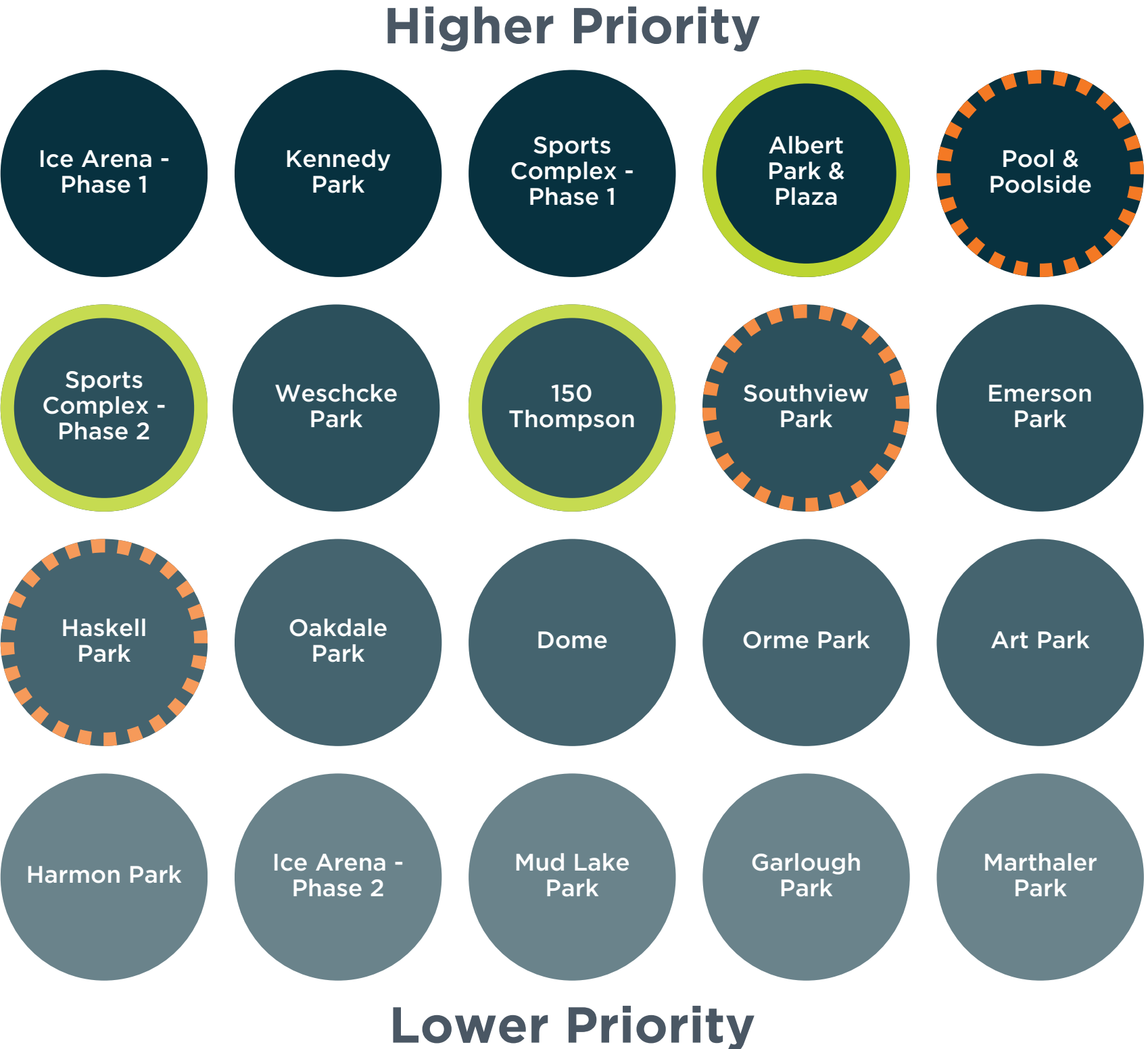
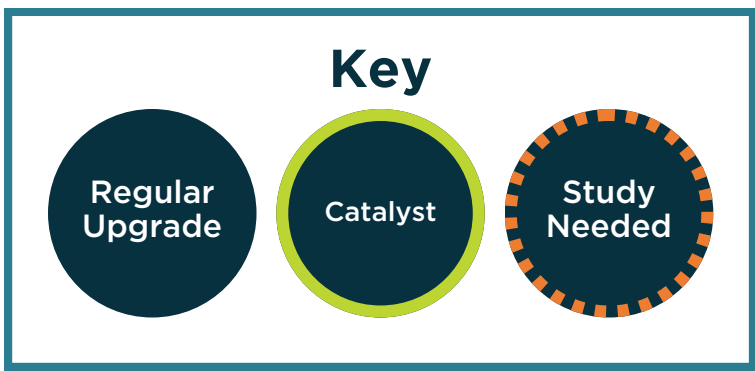
Capital Improvement Plan

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.



PARK PLANNING PROCESS

Reimagining a park involves careful planning, community involvement, and design. With the city's plans to improve parks facing funding shortages, a new approach is needed. Traditionally, the design process quickly moved from concept to construction, limiting time for fundraising. By extending the timeframe before construction, there will be more opportunities to secure funding. Smaller renovation projects, requiring less planning, can be handled directly through contractors or a design-build process.

DESIGN PROCESS

Small Area, System Plan, and Capital Improvement Plan:

- Establishes high-level vision and budget

Concept Design:

- Community engagement
- Define potential programming, desired amenities, issues
- Early sketches lead to 2-3 design alternatives/concepts
- Develop final preferred concept plan
- Develop fundraising materials

Schematic Design

- Community engagement
- Refine programming and amenities
- Explore spatial organization, materials, regulatory and budget requirements
- Develop a clearly defined and feasible schematic design

Design Development

- Advance and further design
- Explore and refine materials and constructability of design
- Finalize budget

Construction Documents

- Finalize design details and material selection
- Communicate a buildable design through drawings, details, and specifications

Construction

- Build park, work with contractors
- Develop as-built plans
- Establishment
- Maintenance Plan
- Community updates and awareness

Implementation

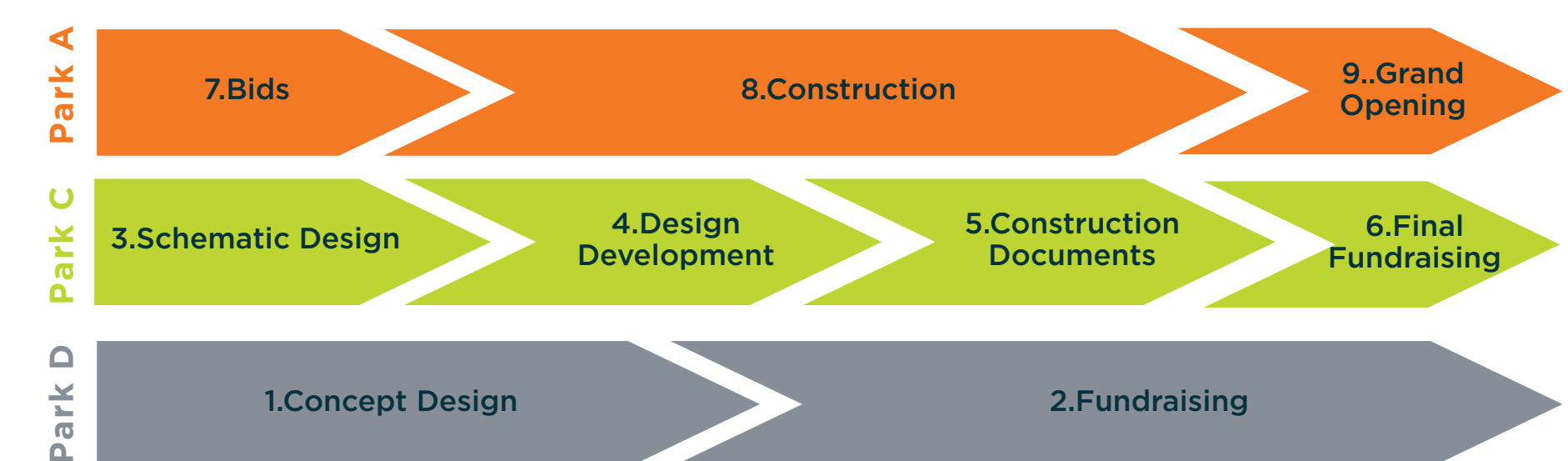
Year 1



Year 2

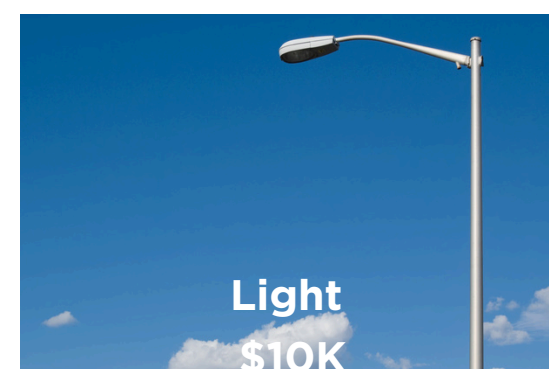
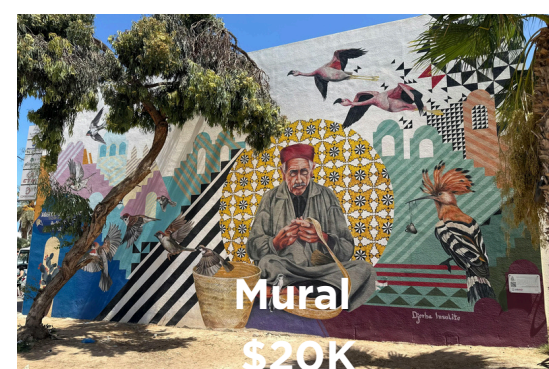
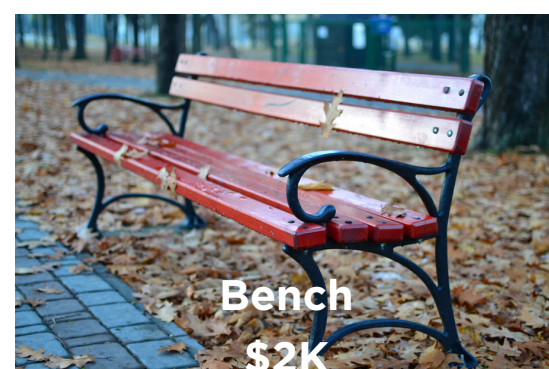
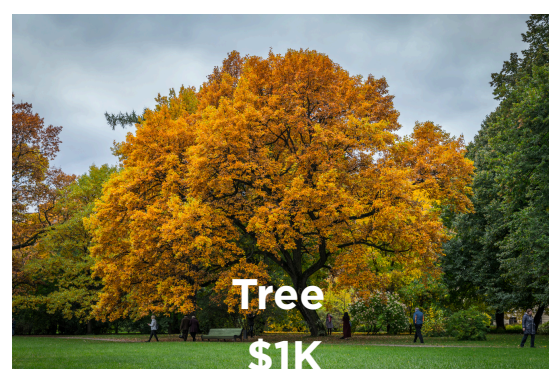


Year 3



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.



COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|---|---|--|--------------------|---|
| Mowed Turf Grass (irrigated) | Sod: \$70,000/acre Seed: \$40,000/acre | \$1,350 / acre | 15-30 years | Includes mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, and overseeding. |
| Mowed Turf Grass (non irrigated) | Sod: \$35,000/acre Seed: 3,000/acre | \$1,080 / acre | 15-30 years | Does not assume hydroseed. Includes mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, and overseeding |
| Irrigation | \$28,000 / acre | \$1,600 / acre | 25 years | Includes water costs and mechanical servicing |
| Contractual Landscape Maintenance (medians & prairie plantings) | \$8.75/square foot \$381,500/acre | \$0.25-0.40 / square foot \$8,712-\$17,424 / acre | 20 years | Typical for medians, boulevards, and prairie plantings. Annual costs include mowing, trimming, weed control, and periodic replanting. |
| Prairie Restoration | \$6,750 / acre | \$405 / acre | Indefinite | With ongoing maintenance |
| Naturalized Shoreline | \$135 / linear foot | \$8-15 / linear foot | 25-50 years | Includes invasive species control, replanting, and stabilization maintenance. Long-term life depends on water level fluctuations and bank erosion; with regular maintenance, plant communities can persist indefinitely |
| Woodland Restoration | \$7,000 / acre | \$350-600 / acre | Indefinite | Includes invasive species removal, selective thinning, prescribed burning or mowing (if savanna), replanting understory species, and periodic canopy management. Long-term success depends on consistent stewardship during first 5-10 years. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Stormwater Features | \$34 / square foot | \$0.25-0.50 / square foot \$10,890-21,780 / acre | 25-40 years | Includes vegetation maintenance, sediment removal, inspection and cleaning of inlets/outlets, and occasional replacement of filter media or rock. Lifespan depends on design and frequency of maintenance. Assumes standard soil media and native planting. Larger systems with forebays or underground storage may cost more. |
| Rain Gardens | \$80 / square foot | \$405 / acre | Indefinite | With ongoing maintenance |
| Trail - Asphalt (10 foot) | \$108 / linear foot | \$7,130 / mile | 30 years; overlay at 15-20 | Assumes 10-foot wide trail; full reconstruction at 30 years, overlay at 15-20 years |
| Sidewalk - Concrete (6 foot) | \$60 / linear foot | \$2-3 / linear foot | 40-50 years | Includes sealcoating, sweeping, patching, and periodic overlay (typically every 15-20 years). Full reconstruction at end of life. |
| Natural Trail - Crushed Limestone | Limestone ADA: \$40/linear foot Rustic Footpath: \$7/linear foot | \$500 / mile | Limestone: 15-25 years | Lifespan depends on erosion and resurfacing frequency. |
| Natural Trail - Rustic Footpath | \$7 / linear foot | \$500 / mile | | |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Tennis Court w/Lighting | \$200,000-260,000 / double court | \$1,500-2,000 / court | 25 years | Assumes 12,500 SF double court with LED lighting |
| Tennis Court | \$125,000-175,000 / double court | \$1,350 / court | 25 years | Assumes 12,500 SF double court. Standard asphalt/post-tension surfacing, color coating, fencing. |
| Pickleball Courts | \$25,000-60,000 / court | \$400-800 / court | 25 years | Smaller footprint (~2,200 SF) than tennis. Shared pods help lower unit cost, standalone courts at upper range of cost. |
| Basketball Court (concrete) | \$60,000-100,000 / court | \$400-600 / court | 40-50 years | Assumes 4,680 SF post-tension or reinforced slab, color coating, striping, double hoop with backboard and fencing. O&M includes crack sealing, repainting, and sweeping. |
| Basketball Court (asphalt) | \$35,000-55,000 / court | \$800 / court | 25 years | Includes asphalt paving, color coating, striping, and double hoop. |
| Basketball Half-Court (concrete) | \$30,000-55,000 / court | \$200-300 / court | 40-50 years | Assumes 2,300 SF post-tension or reinforced slab, color coating, striping, single hoop with backboard, and fencing. O&M includes crack sealing, repainting, and sweeping. |
| Basketball Half-Court (asphalt) | \$25,000-35,000 / court | \$250 / court | 25 years | Includes asphalt paving, color coating, striping, and single hoop. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Outdoor Hockey Rink w/Lighting | \$110,000-200,000 / rink | \$10,000-25,000 / rink | Boards / Lights: 10-15 years Base: 20+ years | Includes boards, lighting, asphalt or concrete slab, and water supply for flooding. Annual O&M covers flooding and removal, snow clearing, resurfacing, and seasonal set-up/tear-down. Life expectancy reflects resurfacing or replacement of boards and lighting every 10-15 years. Operating season is weather-dependent, typically 8-10 weeks. |
| Outdoor Refrigerated Hockey Rink - portable/small | \$750,000-\$2M | \$60,000-100,000 / rink | 12-15 years | Assumes modular seasonal system with temporary chiller and boards. Includes utilities, set-up/tear-down, chiller maintenance, and seasonal consumables. Shorter operating season and higher weather variability. |
| Outdoor Refrigerated Hockey Rink - permanent/medium to large | \$3M-5.5M | \$90,000-180,000 / rink | 25-35 years | Assumes permanent slab, piping, mechanical system, permanent refrigeration plant, boards, lighting, utilities, and site amenities. Allows summer multi-use (basketball, pickleball, plaza) |
| Skate Park | \$40 / square foot | \$3,000 / site | 10-15 years | Cost assumes poured-in-place concrete skate plaza or bowl-style park (typically 5K-20K SF). Includes grading, concrete surface, steel edging, rails, ledges, and site furnishings. Modular pre-fabricated skate elements may reduce costs by \$25-35/SF but have shorter lifespan. Annual O&M includes surface cleaning, graffiti removal, and minor concrete or equipment repair. Lifespan reflects resurfacing or replacement of select features every 10-15 years. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Baseball/Softball Field Amenities - Neighborhood Scale | \$5,000-\$25,000 | Negligible | 15-20 years | Basic fencing, benches, and possible dugout. |
| Baseball/Softball Field Amenities - Community Scale | \$150,000-\$250,000 / field | \$2,000-\$3,000 / field | 25-30 years | Includes chain-link fencing (backstop, baseline, outfield), two basic dugouts with metal roof and benches, player/spectator seating, and single batting cage. Suitable for neighborhood or practice-level fields with minimal electrical or scoreboard needs. Excludes turf, irrigation, and lighting (see separate line items). |
| Baseball/Softball Field Amenities - Tournament Scale | \$300,000-\$450,000 / field | \$3,000-\$5,000 | 25-30 years | Includes full fencing system, masonry or composite dugouts with storage, batting cages (1-2 lanes), bleachers with shade, scoreboard, power, and site furnishings. Costs vary based on lighting, press box, and field drainage integration. Exclude turf, irrigation, and lighting (see separate line items). O&M does not include tournament staffing costs. |
| Diamond Field - Neighborhood Scale / Maintenance | New Sod: \$35,000/acre New Seed: \$2,000/acre | \$1,000 / acre | 7 years | Mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, and overseeding. |
| Diamond Field - Community Scale / Maintenance | New Sod: \$35,000/acre New Seed: \$2,700/acre | \$3,000 / acre | 7 years | Mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, overseeding, and aglime. |
| Diamond Field - Tournament Scale / Maintenance (irrigated) | New Sod: \$50,000/acre New Seed: \$2,700/acre | \$5,600 / acre | 7 years | Mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, overseeding, and aglime. |
| Field Lighting - Diamond Field | \$300,000 / field | \$4,000 / field | 25-30 years | Electric, light replacements, and lighting app. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Practice Rectangular Field (1 acre), Least Maintained | New Sod: \$34,000 New Seed: \$1,500 | \$1,000 / field | 7 years | No irrigation |
| Small Size Rectangular Field (.54 acres), Highly Maintained | New Sod: \$32,000 New Seed: \$10,500 | \$2,000 / field | 15 years | Assumes irrigation |
| Medium Size Rectangular Field (.83 acres), Highly Maintained | New Sod: \$48,000 New Seed: \$16,000 | \$3,100 / field | 15 years | Assumes Irrigation |
| Large Size Rectangular Field (1.5 acres), Average Maintained | New Sod: \$50,000 New Seed: \$2,250 | \$2,700 / field | 7 years | No irrigation |
| Large Size Rectangular Field (1.5 acres), Highly Maintained | New Sod: \$88,000 New Seed: \$40,000 | \$5,600 | 15 years | Assumes Irrigation |
| Soccer Field Amenities Package | \$25,000-\$30,000 | \$1,000 / field | 10-15 years | Goals, benches, fencing, scoreboard, non-tournament |
| Football Field Amenities Package | \$30,000-40,000 | \$1,000 / field | 10-15 years | Goalpost, benches, fencing, scoreboard, non-tournament |
| Field Lighting - Rectangular Field | \$335,000 / field | \$9,000 / field | 25-30 years | Electric, light replacements, and lighting app. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Volleyball Court - sand | \$13,500 | \$300-600 / court | 20 years | Occasional net replacement. |
| Splash Pad | \$350,000-\$1M | \$4,000-8,000 | 15-20 years | Cost varies by scale and system type. Smaller neighborhood or natural-style splash pads (e.g., boulders, limited mechanicals) typically \$350K-\$600K. Larger community-scale pads with recirculating systems, themed features, and mechanical vaults range \$700K-\$1M. O&M includes seasonal startup/shutdown, water quality management, and feature maintenance. |
| Community Garden | \$25,000-\$35,000 / acre | \$1,000 / acre | 15-20 years | Includes fencing, water source, signage, and raised beds. O&M covers seasonal prep, watering, and compost delivery. |
| Dog Park | \$20,000-\$100,000 / acre | \$1,000 / acre | 15-20 years | Includes fencing, surfacing, water source, and signage. O&M includes mowing, waste removal, and surfacing replenishment every 3-5 years. |
| Disc Golf | \$475-\$1,350 / hole | \$50-100 / hole/year | 20 years | Includes baskets, tees, signage, and clearing. O&M covers mowing, trimming, and occasional replacement of damaged baskets. |
| Existing Neighborhood Park Amenity Upgrade Package | \$150,000-\$200,000 / park | \$3,000-\$6,000 / year | 20 years | Small playground, bench/picnic node, signage, landscaping, short walk loop. Minimal infrastructure (no restroom). |
| Existing Community Park Amenity Upgrade Package | \$200,000-400,000 / park | \$8,000-\$15,000 / year | 20 years | Includes multiple play/sport elements, small shelter, short trail loop, parking area, landscaping, and furnishings. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Playground - Neighborhood | \$125,000-\$300,00 / site | \$2,000-\$3,000 / site | 20 years | Smaller play areas serving local neighborhoods (5,000-7,000 SF). Includes basic play structure, swings, engineered wood fiber surfacing, and seating. Surfacing top-off every 2-3 years. |
| Playground - Community | \$300,000-\$600,000 / site | \$3,000-\$5,000 / site | 20 years | Larger play areas with multiple age zones, poured-in-place surfacing, seating, and accessible routes. May include shade, small plaza, or art features. Surfacing patch or recoat every 8-10 years. |
| Playground - ADA/Inclusive | \$300,000-\$1M+ | \$3,000-\$5,000 / site | 20 years | Represents fully accessible, inclusive playgrounds of a neighborhood to community scale with poured-in-place rubber surfacing, ramped structures, transfer stations, and accessible swings/spinners. Range varies by scale and surfacing type. O&M includes routine inspections, cleaning, surfacing repair, and equipment replacement at end of life. |
| Playground - Destination/Regional | \$600,000-\$1M+ | \$5,000-\$10,000 / site | 20 years | Signature play environment with custom or inclusive equipment, resilient surfacing, art, or water play. Includes complex features and specialty maintenance. |
| Natural Play Area | Free-\$600,000 | \$1,000-\$6,000 / site | 20 years | Design and O&M varies widely. Can be built using existing materials (logs) or a combination of natural and manufactured components. |

COST ESTIMATES - CAPITAL, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

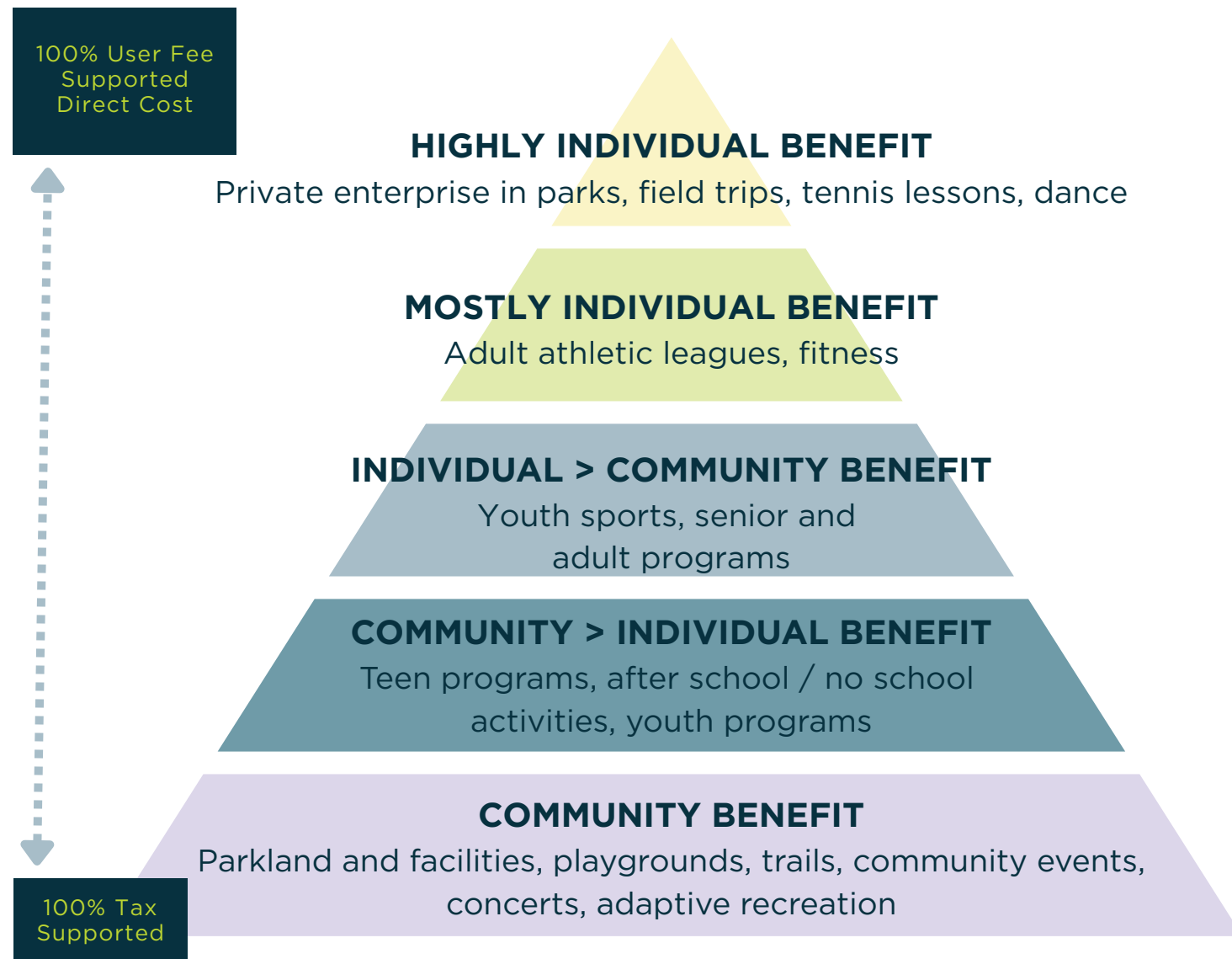
| PARK ELEMENT | CAPITAL COST | ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST | ESTIMATED LIFESPAN | NOTES |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Multi-purpose Building w/Restrooms | \$350-\$450 / square foot | \$10,000-\$15,000 / building | 35-40 years | Includes small community or park support building with conditioned space, plumbing, storage, and mechanical systems. Costs vary depending on finish level, mechanical complexity, and size (typically 1,200-3,000 SF). O&M includes cleaning, utilities, HVAC, and restroom maintenance. Site utilities and parking costs not included. |
| Multi-purpose Building w/o Restroom (Warming House) | \$250-300 / square foot | \$3,000-\$5,000 / building | 35-40 years | Unconditioned or minimally conditioned space for meetings, equipment storage, or community use. No plumbing or restrooms; limited mechanical systems. Includes basic finishes, power, lighting, and site connection. O&M primarily covers utilities, cleaning, and minor repairs. Site utilities and parking costs not included. |
| Picnic Shelter | \$50,000-\$100,000/ shelter | \$3,000-\$4,000 / shelter | 35-40 years | Range reflects small prefabricated neighborhood shelter (about 20x20). Includes concrete pad, roof, columns, lighting, picnic tables, and minor electrical work. Annual O&M covers cleaning, litter removal, repainting, minor repairs, and table replacement. Life expectancy assumes routine repainting and roof maintenance every 15-20 years. |
| Pavilion | \$200,000-\$300,000+ | \$4,000-\$6,000 / pavilion | 35-40 years | Range reflects large pre-fabricated pavilion (about 40x60). Includes same capital and O&M as picnic shelter. |
| Parking Lot - Asphalt | \$3,300-4,000 / stall | \$25-50 / stall | 30-40 years; overlay at 15-20 years | Includes sealcoating, sweeping, patching, and periodic overlay (typically 15-20 years). Full reconstruction at end of life. |

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**

LAND ACQUISITION

As a fully developed community, West St. Paul has limited opportunities to expand its park system. While a need for additional parkland exists, especially when West St. Paul is compared to its neighboring cities, which offer more public parkland, a careful and strategic approach is necessary to ensure sound decisionmaking and investments.

With the city pursuing a redevelopment strategy that will welcome additional residents and businesses, investments in the park system will help better meet the needs of an increased population and denser neighborhoods. Not all redevelopment projects will present opportunities to expand the system; therefore, the city should utilize guidance when considering projects.

- Proposed project/land supports an unmet need or services an underserved neighborhood.
- The project/land is identified as an opportunity area in this or other city-adopted plans.
- The land is adjacent to an existing park or trail and will provide greater access for the community to enjoy the space.
- The project/land supports a connectivity route for an existing or future trail extension.
- The project/land is adjacent to a public school, county-owned property, or other publicly-owned land where the city and its partners can maximize the value to meet needs.
- The project/land supports and protects environmentally sensitive and/or natural resource areas in the city and should be protected.
- The land is donated, and it meets one of the criteria listed above.

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.

Staying Nimble

- Plans and circumstances constantly change, so leaders will need to remain flexible to capture opportunities and address issues:
- Plan, budget, and report each year. Use the framework to select projects, update the capital improvement projection, and publish progress reports that celebrate wins, identify needs, and tune the funding plan.
- Deploy the full implementation toolkit, such as capital projects, programs, plans, policies, practices, partnerships, and operations. Match the tool to the funding source and the problem.
- Plan for staff capacity as projects and programs grow. Examples include recreation specialists, facilities roles, and community connectors.
- Confirm park concepts and rough costs, verify alignment to system goals and equity needs, identify partners and match sources, document framework criteria, and note near-term operations and maintenance impacts.
- Commit to routine evaluation and public-facing progress reporting, such as a web dashboard and short updates. This enables mid-course correction and strengthens future funding requests.

Funding Toolbox

- Baseline Park Improvements: General Fund (operations, grant match); Dedicated Parks Levy (stable, voter-approved).
- Big Ticket Park Improvements: Bonds (large capital projects); Local Option Sales Tax (state + voter approved).
- Opportunistic Projects: Grants (capital, planning, programs, plus adjacent sources such as arts, health, transportation); Development Funds (TIF, park dedication in limited cases).
- Partnerships: Donations, schools, county, nonprofits, and business collaborations.
- Programs and Events: Fees, rentals, sponsorships, and programs that offset operating costs.

Grant Opportunities

Grants will be a cornerstone of West St. Paul's funding strategy. Federal, state, county, and private grants can amplify local dollars and make transformative projects possible. Examples include:

- **Minnesota DNR Grants: Support for trail, park, and facility development.**
- **Transportation Alternatives Program / Safe Routes to School: For trail and sidewalk connections.**
- **Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment (Parks & Trails Fund): Dedicated statewide sales tax revenue for parks and trails.**
- **Dakota County & Metropolitan Council: Regional trail and park system grants.**
- **Private Foundations and Nonprofits: Funding tied to health, equity, environment, and arts.**

Funding Source Key

Best Likely Possible

| INITIATIVE | General Funds | Park Dedication | Grants | Partnerships | Donations | State Aid | Bonds/ Utility Fees |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| System Planning | Best | | Likely | | | | |
| Parkland Aquisition | Best | Best | Possible | Likely | Likely | Best | |
| Modernization | Best | | Likely | Likely | Possible | Likely | |
| User Amenities | Best | | Likely | Likely | Possible | | |
| Park/Facility Development | Best | Best | Possible | Possible | Likely | Best | Best |
| System Wayfinding | Best | | Likely | Likely | Likely | | |
| Bike/Ped Network | Possible | Possible | Possible | Likely | Possible | Best | Possible |
| Natural Resources Mgmt. | Possible | | Possible | Likely | Likely | Best | Likely |
| Public Art & Placemaking | Likely | | Possible | Best | Likely | | |
| Programming & Events | Best | | Likely | Best | Likely | | |

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!