

Chapter VII. Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan

The Minnetonka park, open space and trail system has become one of the more important community assets and serves city residents and businesses, alike. The park and open space system contributes a substantial amount of property for public activities in the community and reflects the city's commitment towards natural resource stewardship. Further, the trail system provides connections between public spaces and community-oriented activity areas within and outside the city.

The Minnetonka parks and recreation system has expanded and grown as the city has developed. Through thoughtful planning by community leaders in response to understanding the values and interests of the community, residents and workers enjoy diverse opportunities for leisure. As demographic changes continue to impact the city, it will be important to understand which recreational amenities can maintain the city's vitality and attractiveness.

The following chapter of the comprehensive guide plan provides a framework for the overall park, open space and trail planning activities through 2030. Much of the information within this chapter is based on the Minnetonka *Park, Open Space and Trail System Plan* (POST Plan) prepared and adopted by the city in 2000 and is referenced for specific park planning information. The POST Plan establishes a balanced approach to managing community and neighborhood parks, open space, athletic field and trail resources in the city.

The chapter includes:

- * a review of the park planning history in the city,
- * a summary of park, open space, trails, recreation resources in the city,
- * current strategic planning efforts,
- * future park, open space and trail improvements, and
- * concludes with implementation strategies and tools.

The basis for this chapter is represented in the Minnetonka 2030 Vision, and the community policies included in Chapter III - Overall City Policies.

A. Background

The Minnetonka parks and recreation system expanded over time in conjunction with the development and growth of the city. Early community leaders and residents had the foresight to acquire and preserve land for parks and open spaces, and over the years city decision makers have continued to understand the importance of this value to residents.

Soon after Minnetonka incorporated as a village (1956), the city developed a comprehensive park plan. At the time the plan was developed in the early 1960s, the city owned 332 acres of parkland at 14 sites, but only 70 acres were usable as the other 262 acres were used for water storage.

The long-term plan was to acquire an additional 1,050 acres and an initial bond referendum to fund acquisition and improvements totaling \$3,000,000 failed in 1969. The planned park activities included the acquisition and development of park lands, a year-round ice arena, an indoor swimming pool and golf course.

In 1971, the comprehensive park system plan was updated and a new bond referendum was held in 1972. The voters approved \$1,300,000 for park land acquisition, \$980,000 for park improvements, and \$134,000 for development of trails in the city.

Shortly after the bond referendum, the city started to experience significant development and subdivision of property. A large amount of acreage was obtained by the city, in addition to those acres acquired with park bonds, as a result of the park dedication requirements of the subdivision ordinance.

By 1984, the city had 43 park sites totaling 1,135 acres. In addition, significant acreage of floodplain and wetland areas were dedicated, donated and/or acquired by the city along Minnehaha Creek and Purgatory Creek. At that time, the city commissioned a planning document that included inventories and maps of every city park, along with a description of opportunities for development, if any, in each.

With a growing population and greater youth involvement in team sports, an athletic fields needs study was prepared in 1989 with updates in 1994 and 2004. As a result of the studies, several athletic fields were added to the city's inventory and agreements to share in the use and development of athletic fields were established with the Hopkins and Minnetonka school districts, and private athletic associations to maximize public athletic field needs.

In the mid 1990s, the city determined that a stewardship program was needed to effectively manage park properties and the growing acreage of open space in Minnetonka. A natural resources restoration and management plan for the city's five community parks and three creek corridors was prepared in 1996 to combat the degrading condition of the city's public natural areas. Further, due to continuing development pressure, the city council appointed a citizens task force in the late 1990s to determine strategies to preserve open space and criteria for the level of preservation in appropriate locations.

A comprehensive parks, open space and trail system plan update was completed October 2000 that incorporated the need to update existing recreational parks and more aggressively preserve open space. This plan was utilized for a successful referendum in 2001 that provided \$15 million in bonds for parks renewal and open space preservation.

B. Existing Systems

Minnetonka's parks, recreational and open space system provides recreational opportunities to a broad cross-section of city residents and employees of Minnetonka businesses, along with protecting significant natural areas. Its primary components are:

- * Public park system - five community parks and 54 neighborhood, preserve, and special purpose parks with more than 500 acres of maintained parkland.
- * Open space preservation - approximately 1,000 acres of natural public open spaces are preserved, some complemented by the Natural Resources Stewardship program.
- * Trail system - 33 miles of city trails and a 65-mile ancillary network of walkways, pedestrian-bike lanes and neighborhood connectors, plus two regional trails managed by the Three Rivers Park District.
- * Recreational facilities - owned and operated solely by the city and also in collaboration with other communities and school districts.

This system is complemented by private recreational facilities and the many playing fields and playgrounds provided by public and private schools.

1. Public Park System

The 2001 bond referendum for parks renewal and open space preservation approved by residents has resulted in the reconstruction and renewal of the city's parks and preservation of open space. Today, nearly all the parks have undergone renewal in accordance with the city Park Renewal program through a neighborhood involvement approach that encourages residents to participate in the planning of neighborhood parks.

The following section describes the function and status of the current Minnetonka park system. The locations and function of the parks in Minnetonka are shown on Figure VII-1.

a. Community Parks

These parks are designed to provide a combination of passive and active recreational activities for the entire community. Community parks include areas suited for intense recreational use, such as athletic field complexes and ice arenas. They also include areas of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, biking, picnicking and nature study. Community parks are generally sited along collector or arterial streets for easy access from all or a part of the community, and are well-buffered from surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Minnetonka has five large community parks: Lone Lake, Big Willow, Meadow, Civic Center and Purgatory, most of which are located along stream valleys throughout the city. One of the more major park renewals occurred at Civic Center Park in 2006, where the theme of woods and wetlands influenced the updating of the park. Rain gardens were incorporated into areas around the parking lots, the horse arena was converted to practice fields, and an outdoor amphitheater was constructed.

b. Neighborhood Parks and Play Lots

Neighborhood parks, the basic unit of the park system, generally are designed to serve a residential area within approximately a half-mile radius, sometimes in conjunction with an elementary school. Facilities typically include a preschool play area and an area for free play and organized games. They may also include equipment for older children,

Please Refer to Existing Parks and Open Space Map (Figure VII-1)

multipurpose hard surface courts, shelter buildings and restrooms, and picnic and seating areas.

An amenity commonly requested by residents when planning the renewal of neighborhood parks was the inclusion or expansion of trails internal to the parks. This has been added in all of the renewed neighborhood parks.

Twenty-two of Minnetonka’s parks are classified as neighborhood parks. The newest park, Oakhaven, developed in 2008 in the Spring Lake area (northwest corner of I-494 and Highway 7). The other parks are Boulder Creek, Covington, Ford, Glen Moor, Groveland, Gro-Tonka, Holiday Lake, Junction, Knollway, Linner, Mayflower, McKenzie, Oberlin, Orchard, Pioneer, Reich, Spring Hill, Sunrise Ridge, Westwood, Wilson, and Woodgate.

There are also two play lots, which are smaller parks with facilities limited to play equipment: Elmwood-Strand and Mini Tonka.

c. Preserve Parks

The city owns ten parks throughout the community classified as preserves. Generally the only amenity is trails, although Jidana Park has a canoe landing and fire pit. Several of the parks, including Green Circle, Hilloway, Jidana, Kinsel, and Victoria-Evergreen, have been subjects of the natural resources stewardship program. The other preserve parks are Crane Lake, Lake Charlotte, Lake Rose, Mooney, and Tower Hill.

d. Special Purpose Parks

These parks consist of one or more specialized facilities. Many of the city’s 12 special purpose parks are centered on athletic fields and beaches. Others have facilities such as boat or canoe launches, historic house or site, and community garden plots.

Special purpose parks and their uses are as follows:

Special Use Park	Use
Burwell Park	Historic Burwell house, canoe landing
Glen Lake Park	Athletic fields
Glen Lake Station	Fountain, flower gardens
Gray’s Bay Causeway	Fishing - Lake Minnetonka
Guilliam Park	Athletic fields
Kelly Park	Garden plots
Libbs Lake Beach	Public swimming beach
Mills Park	Gazebo, historic marker
Minnehaha Creek Headwaters	Gray’s Bay Dam, canoe launch, trail and boardwalk

Additional special use facilities include athletic fields at Bennett Family Park (privately owned and operated), Shady Oak Park (owned by the City of Hopkins with beach operations shared by both cities) and Glen Lake Golf Course (owned by Hennepin County and operated by Three Rivers Park District). The city has also jointly improved athletic fields at Hopkins School District and Minnetonka School District locations.

2. Existing Trail System

The city's existing trail system, shown on Figure VII-2 consists of off-road trails, walkways (asphalt trails that parallel roadways) and on-road pedestrian-bicycle lanes. The original Loop Trail System was designed to connect the city's major parks and activity centers, and to function as both a transportation and recreation system. Its 33 miles of trails is the centerpiece of the entire trail system that includes neighborhood connectors, sidewalks, pedestrian-bicycle lanes and regional connectors.

The main city trail system connects with the Three Rivers Park District's combined 27 mile south segment of Lake Minnetonka and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT regional trails (formerly Southwest Regional LRT). Both corridors begin in Hopkins; the north corridor extends to Victoria, while the south corridor extends to Chanhassen. The city's trail and walkway system also connects with a DNR state trail, the 62 mile Luce Line Trail, in Plymouth just north of Minnetonka.

Trail facilities, including restrooms and drinking fountains, are located at each of the city's five community parks. Much of the main trail system is plowed during the winter months, making it usable throughout the year.

Each year, the city continues to add to the trail system. New trails are generally added with major road reconstruction projects (e.g., CR 101 and the planned 2008-09 improvements to Shady Oak Road). Internal trails have been included with the park renewal projects.

3. Recreational Facilities

Through Minnetonka's Recreation Services Department, in conjunction with the Hopkins-Minnetonka Joint Recreation Division, the city operates a variety of facilities, sponsors community-wide events such as Summer Festival and Kids Fest, and provides a wide range of recreational programming including youth and adult athletic leagues, senior programs, aquatics classes, summer playground program, lessons for skating, tennis, and other activities, and exercise classes.

The following facilities are operated by the city.

Facility	Use
Arts Center on 7	Theater, rehearsal and office space at Minnetonka High School (jointly owned and operated by the city and Minnetonka School District)
Community Center	Senior center, meeting space, city council chambers, banquet facilities
Glen Lake Activity Center	Public meeting space, police and ambulance substation
Glen Lake Skate Plaza	Outdoor skateboard facility
Gray's Bay Marina	Public boat launch, rental slips (property owned by DNR; operated by city)
Ice Arenas	Two indoor ice arenas
Lindbergh Center	Indoor athletic courts, running track at Hopkins High School (jointly owned and operated by the city and Hopkins School District)

	District)
Mills Landing	Senior craft/gift shop
Shady Oak Beach	Public swimming beach, picnic shelter (property owned by city of Hopkins; operated by Hopkins-Minnetonka joint recreation dept.)
Westridge Pavilion	Public meeting space
Williston Fitness Center	Fitness center, indoor swimming pool, basketball and tennis courts, batting cages,

The recreational facilities and associated programs are an important community asset and serve to attract families to the city while at the same time meeting current resident and business needs. It is important that the facilities be maintained to a level that continues to attract residents as well as respond to changing demographics. Further, existing programs need to be reevaluated and new programs added to respond to residents needs and to provide quality customer service.

4. Open Space Preservation

Minnetonka has long been committed to open space preservation, most recently reflected by the passage of the 2001 bond referendum, a shift to conservation development, and updates of land use ordinances related to preservation of steep slopes, shore land and trees. Following the 2001 referendum, the park board and city council prioritized approximately 50 areas throughout the community for possible preservation. The rankings were based on factors developed by the citizen open space preservation task force and adopted by the city council. These factors include sensitive environmental features, buffers for neighborhoods, high visibility, size and linkage to other open areas.

Preservation strategies were developed for each of these areas, ranging from the negotiation of easements to outright purchase. Following the passage of the referendum, the city successfully negotiated acquisitions of five parcels along Minnehaha Creek. Additionally, the city acquired an option to purchase a 30 acre property across from Meadow Park. The city still holds that option, and the resident has donated a conservation easement over the entire property to the Minnesota Land Trust.

Additionally, conservation development agreements have been negotiated for a number of properties to preserve as many of the natural features of the land as possible. Often a property owner has dedicated a conservation easement that prohibits future development activity. Between 2000 and 2006, 159 acres of private land have been placed in conservation easements.

In addition to the donation of easements, other conservation techniques continue to promote the quality of the environment. These include smaller road widths, which allow more open space and less impervious surface, and rain gardens or infiltration systems to treat the storm water run off and promote better water quality.

Please Refer to Existing Trail System Map (Figure VII-2)

C. Strategic Planning Efforts

The Minnetonka Park Board, a city advisory commission, is charged with providing recommendations to the city council regarding park land, park facilities, program, and finances. The board's functions include long and short range planning related to capital improvement projects, acquisition, development and use of park lands, park facilities, recreational, and leisure time facilities, and recreational programs.

Annually, the Park Board establishes strategies that align with current planning efforts. The Board has adopted a "vision" and mission statement that serves as the framework for parks, open space and trails chapter of the 2030 Comprehensive Guide Plan as follows:

Vision: **A city with outstanding parks and recreational opportunities within a balanced natural environment.**

Mission:

- * **Protect and enhance Minnetonka's natural environment.**
- * **Promote quality recreation opportunities and facilities**
- * **Provide a forum for citizens interested in our parks, trails, athletic facilities, and open space.**

Additionally, the Park Board has adopted goals and specific strategic objectives (the order does not reflect priority) for the future, that are updated on an annual basis. The 2008 goals and objectives follow the policies included in Chapter III - Overall Policies pertaining to parks, open space and recreation:

1. To protect natural resources and open space

- a. Conduct an ongoing evaluation of the open space process
- b. Continue to review and comment on the implementation of the natural resources stewardship plan
- c. Assist staff in managing the open space process through successful completion
- d. Review options to enhance natural resources & open space
- e. Review all proposed changes to the city's code of ordinances that pertain to natural resources and open space
- f. Actively participate in development of the city's Minnehaha Creek Visioning Plan
- g. Consider a program to recognize historical aspects of the park system

2. To renew and maintain parks and trails

- a. Develop recommendations for scheduled 2008 park renewal projects
- b. Involve park board member participation in park projects
- c. Conduct an annual review of park dedication fees
- d. Utilizing completed updates to the Comprehensive Plan and the POST Plan, identify areas of the city that are deficient of adequate park amenities
- e. Conduct a comprehensive review of the trail system to identify missing links and required future improvements

3. To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities

- a. Implement recommendations for athletic field improvements as defined in the 2004 Athletic Field Needs Update

- b. Perform an annual review of the Gray's Bay Marina operations plan
- c. Evaluate 2007 - 2008 Glen Lake Golf Course cross-country ski trail operations and develop recommendations for 2008-2009
- d. Anticipate, review and respond to community needs not previously identified
- e. Annually review policies related to the operation and management of parks to determine if changes are required
- f. Review data related to changing demographics to ensure that park amenities address future community needs

4. Enhance long-term Park Board development

- a. Define capital improvement program projects for 2009-2013 related to parks, trails and open space
- b. Enhance council relations- serve as a voice to the council
- c. Actively participate in the process developed for updating the POST Plan
- d. Increase community awareness of park board initiatives
- e. Provide park board participation in the development of the city's Comprehensive Plan
- f. Schedule board member involvement in annual park board and city related activities
- g. Annually assess the park board strategic plan
- h. Receive and respond to a staff update of 2008 changes made to the Parks for Tomorrow Program

D. Future Park, Trail and Open Space Improvements and Needs

The primary improvements planned to the city's existing park system include the implementation of the Upper Minnehaha Creek corridor plan and increasing local and regional connectivity through additional trail connections. Further, continued investigation of natural resource stewardship of open space and park property, and the development and review of strategies to increase connectivity with public and private ecological resources is needed to realize the Minnetonka 2030 Vision. Lastly, the city will need to continue to provide recreation facilities that reflect the desires of aging residents and yet, attract youth and families to remain competitive in the region.

1. Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor Vision and Master Plan

The Upper Minnehaha Creek corridor extends from the creek headwaters at Gray's Bay for six miles through Minnetonka, encompassing nearly one-third of the creek's entire length. Approximately, 85 percent of the land adjoining the creek in the city is owned or controlled by public entities, allowing for opportunities to forge collaborative partnerships for planning activities. In 2007, the city, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board, Three Rivers Park District Board and Hennepin County began discussions for an overall "vision" for the corridor area, and partnership opportunities to develop and implement an overall master plan for Minnehaha Creek.

The overriding principles of the master plan for the Upper Minnehaha Creek corridor are designed to implement complementary activities in appropriate areas that emphasize the creek corridor's natural resources, and recreational, educational, historic, and scenic values. Currently, a policy steering committee, composed of the aforementioned agencies, has been established to translate the overall master plan and principles into specific projects and programs.

The overall Upper Minnehaha Creek Master Plan is -available at the Minnetonka City Hall.

Current and future creek corridor projects and programs are centered on the following:

- a. Preservation and restoration: Minnetonka and other groups have implemented on-going stewardship projects to remove buckthorn, Siberian elm and garlic mustard, and perform other ecological improvements. Future projects include restoration of native plants, wildlife habitat and ecological zones. Additionally, "best practices" will be utilized to achieve water management goals for watershed, stormwater drainage, bank stabilization and creek flow. The watershed district is examining water quality improvement methods and demonstration areas to reduce urban runoff and control surface water pathogens that enter the creek.
- b. I-494 gateway area: The restoration of the creek's natural character under I-494 is planned to provide an enhanced gateway entrance to the city at the freeway. When the freeway was constructed, the creek bed was rechanneled with concrete culverts and stone riprap. Refurbishment of this creek passage will restore the natural experience for waterway users, pedestrians, bikers and motorists.
- c. Canoe access: The Minnehaha Creek Headwaters Park at Gray's Bay was recently redeveloped by the city and the watershed district. The park includes a new canoe landing, interpretive exhibit, shoreland restoration demonstration area and boardwalk. Additionally, the city has invested in improvements to the Civic Center campus bordering the creek, including a new canoe landing.

Existing landings have been upgraded at the Headwaters Park, Big Willow Park and at Hopkins Crossroads at the Hopkins Municipal Site. New canoe landings and launches

are planned to improve access and provide floating interpretive experiences throughout the corridor, and a canoe rental and shuttle service is being implemented by the Three Rivers Park District.

- d. Trails: New pedestrian and bike trails are planned to connect users with the network of local pathways and the south segment of the Lake Minnetonka LRT regional trail, and many creek and park amenities. New or improved trail connections are planned at Baker Road, under Plymouth Road, I-494 and at various other locations for neighborhood access. Parking is planned at various “trail head” locations along the corridor.
- e. Interpretive center: The potential for an interpretive center to provide opportunities for school, nature and other groups to connect with the creek is under consideration for an area east of Minnetonka Mills. The center would likely be a partnership of various parties, and be a center for experiential programs occurring throughout the corridor.
- f. Minnetonka Boulevard Parkway Concept: A future study to be conducted in 2008-09 is underway for the portion of Minnetonka Boulevard, between the Civic Center and Big Willow Park. Opportunities will be examined to integrate roadway, waterway and trails systems, to allow drivers, bikers, walkers and paddlers to collectively experience the creek corridor in a safe manner.
- g. Historic Minnetonka Mills District: A new park is planned on both sides of the creek in the area between I-494 and the Minnetonka Mills business district, adjacent to Plymouth and McGinty Roads. The city has acquired and removed four residential properties in the area, and programmed funding to develop the new park, which is expected to incorporate unique botanical and art features, including those reflective of the historical nature of the area, ranging from early American Indian trails to milling operations; small parking areas and joint parking facilities; canoe landings; trails; and potential roadway access improvements.

2. Future Trails and Pathway Connections

Two major additional regional trail links are planned in Minnetonka in the coming years as well as several local trails and pathways.

a. Planned Regional Trail Improvements

CR 101 Future Regional Trail Connection

The park district is examining alternatives for a portion of the north connection from Minnetonka Boulevard to McGinty Road in Wayzata. Two alternatives include constructing a trail along CR 101 in conjunction with a planned roadway reconstruction project to the north of Minnetonka Boulevard along CR 101 or using the right of way of McGinty Road within Minnetonka from Minnetonka Boulevard at I-494 to CR 101 in Wayzata. The McGinty Road alternative offers more positive benefits because of lower adjacent traffic levels, the ability to utilize existing trail segments, aesthetic benefits to trail users, and easy connections to the Luce Line trail through Carlson Center.

Connection to North Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail

Plans to connect the Lake Minnetonka Regional LRT Trail to the North Cedar Lake Road LRT Regional Trail involve providing a connection along the Minnetonka and St. Louis Park portions of Minnetonka Boulevard. This “missing link” is relatively easy to provide because

partial local trails exist along Minnetonka Boulevard. New trail construction is needed near the TH 169 bridge, crossing Minnetonka Boulevard.

b. Local trail connections and pathways

Although there are numerous trails within the city, the trail system is many years from completion. As noted in Chapter VIII - Transportation, several trail connections are planned in conjunction with roadway improvements scheduled in the coming years. These trails will be physically separated from vehicular traffic.

However, there are numerous other trails and pathways that are needed to establish connections to the village centers, parks, schools, existing trails and other activity centers. Figure VII-3 shows the future overall trail plan and identifies numerous trails that currently remain unfunded. It is anticipated that the necessary right of way control and construction of the unfunded trails and pathways will eventually be accomplished as part of the following activities:

- * future roadway reconstruction,
- * new development and private development activities,
- * outside funding from other government agencies or private entities, and
- * future capital improvement programming.

3. Open Space and Natural Area Connections

The 2030 Minnetonka Vision shown as Figure III-1 in Chapter III - Overall Policies depicts the park and open space areas in the city under public control, water resources and areas of important vegetation in the city. The creek corridors, associated floodplain and wetlands, and trails create natural “greenways” within the city, often connecting the city’s parks that feature preservation and natural resource stewardship.

The 2000 POST Plan established the need to develop an overall program (with funding) for the preservation of open space under city control based upon the ecological qualities of the area. In the coming years, further study is needed by the city to determine the potential for other private and public stewardship activities to foster connections between the natural “greenways”, public open space and areas of important vegetation. Additionally, investigation is needed to review incorporating new stormwater sustainability techniques and address concerns with the growing number and type of plant and animal invasive species.

An update to the POST Plan is needed to further examine the potential for connections between the greenways, open space, and other conservation and sustainability efforts. Information pertaining to MLCCS data and other water quality management inventories reviewed in Chapter VI - Resource Management should be consulted and refined during the POST plan update process to determine the appropriate strategies for the city to manage public open space and encourage private conservation efforts on an ecological neighborhood basis.

4. Recreation Facilities

The continued growth of youth and young adult sports has continually created pressure for the programming of city and school district athletic fields. With limited open areas remaining

Please Refer to Future Trail Links Map (FigureVII-3)

in the city, it will be difficult to acquire reasonably priced land for additional athletic field development. The city will need to review alternative approaches for relieving pressure for athletic field use. These approaches may include the review of revised layouts and field materials of athletic fields and other public property and buildings to maximize use, and the evaluation of programming with a partnership of uses (the city, school districts, athletic associations and others).

City recreational facilities within parks and activity buildings need continual attention to maintain investment in the infrastructure and meet residents' needs. With an aging population and the need to provide affordable programs to continue to attract families, well-kept facilities that include space for activities that cater to older residents and youth is important. Therefore, the city is committed to continuing to provide renovation to existing facilities, providing recreational programs to meet increasing participation levels, and establishing new areas (such as off-leash dog areas) to meet future resident needs. For example, the city has programmed approximately \$2.6 million in funding over the next several years for improvements to the Williston Center.

E. Implementation Strategies

In the coming years, the implementation strategies oriented towards parks, open space and trails consist of the measures described in this section. The overall implementation theme emphasizes development of strategies that complement the overall Minnetonka 2030 Vision and the Minnetonka Park and Recreation Board strategic planning efforts, by incorporating the following:

- * Recognition of changing demographics and providing facilities and programs that reflect an aging population, yet serve to attract families;
- * Provide and enhance connections between the village centers, regional areas and existing neighborhoods; and
- * Provide reinvestment, new services and programs with the existing park and open space facilities.

1. Park Development

- a. Continuation of the park renewal program for designated parks as established by the Park Board and approved by the City Council.
- b. Provide multi-year funding for the implementation of the Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor Plan.
- c. Determine appropriate locations for off-leash dog areas within existing city parks to meet the increasing number of dog owners in the city.
- d. Continue reinvestment in city parks, park facilities and athletic fields to reflect demographic changes of Minnetonka residents and aging infrastructure.
- e. Utilize the Park Maintenance Standards, as may be amended, to respond to community needs; to maintain the infrastructure of city parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities in a manner that encourages sustainability; and to ensure public safety.

2. Trail/Pathway Development and Maintenance

- a. Continue yearly investments into the Future Trail Plan according to the schedule identified in the capital improvements program.
- b. Provide safe neighborhood trail connections to the overall trail system and community amenities in response to neighborhood requests or Park Board recommendations.

- c. Review and prioritization of the unfunded portions of the trail system by the Park Board to connect the village areas, community parks and adjacent communities.
- d. Incorporate identified trails, sidewalks and pathways connections in roadway reconstruction projects.
- e. Continue investments to rehabilitate older trail segments and improve signage (identification and wayfinding).
- f. Maintain trails in accordance with the Park Maintenance Standards, as may be amended, to improve “wheel-ability” for all age groups, sustainability and year round use, as appropriate.

3. Open Space

- a. Utilize the city open space preservation program and the management of natural resources policy to obtain, manage and improve open space for the public.
- b. Convert properties acquired for open space preservation to a park or natural setting environment.
- c. Continue to eradicate invasive plant and animal species from open space and other city property and maintain open space in accordance with the Park Maintenance Standards, as may be amended.
- d. Seek grants, funding partners and other outside funding opportunities to increase the amount of publically held open space in the city.

4. Education

- a. Continue to provide education programs to residents and businesses about resource protection, open space preservation opportunities and conservation management techniques to preserve the quality of private and public open space.
- b. Continue to participate in health initiatives, such as the “Step Up To Health” program to fight obesity and provide awareness of facilities and programs that meet healthy living objectives.

5. Implementation Tools

- a. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The city council annually allocates funding over a five year period for capital projects that involve park, open space, trail and recreational facilities. The current 2009 - 2013 CIP (attached in Appendix IV-A) includes numerous projects that directly implement the policies of this chapter of the Comprehensive Guide Plan. For example, significant funding over multiple years is programmed to increase “connectivity” in the city by improving trail and pathway connections individually, or as part of roadway projects.

Further, funding is provided to enhance maintenance of aging park facilities, improve and restore natural resources, and to reflect facility improvements needed to attract families and respond to an aging population. The funding identified in the CIP is often noted as the “city’s share”, in response to the need to maintain and forge new partnerships with the school districts, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District and the watershed organizations.

- b. Other funding

The city will continue to seek outside funding opportunities, where possible, to leverage city funds and provide financing for projects when local funding is not possible. This may

include seeking County, State or federal resources for specific projects and programs, or if reasonable, charging fees for services for specific programs, as appropriate.

c. Park dedication

The city's park dedication requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance requires that a reasonable portion of land (not less than 10 percent of the property) being subdivided be dedicated to the city for use as parks, trails or open space. At the city's discretion, a fee in lieu of all or part of the land may be required, based on a fee per lot or residential unit, or per acre for nonresidential development. Because the park system is generally fully developed, the fee is generally accepted by the city, unless the land within the development is needed to expand an existing park or trail or meet an existing need for parkland. Fees are allocated to the Park Dedication Fund and used for land acquisition or facility improvements.

d. Partnerships

The city has a successful track record working with the cities of Hopkins and St. Louis Park, local school districts and other agencies to provide recreational facilities and programs. These partnerships are planned to continue in the future and may expand dependent upon residents needs.

Additionally, new or expanded partnerships are planned with Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District for the long term development of the Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor.

e. Updates to planning documents

- * Update the POST plan to incorporate the 2030 Comprehensive Guide Plan and changes that have occurred with the overall park, trail and open space system since 2000.
- * Participate in an athletic needs study with appropriate agencies and partners.

Appendix VII-A

2009-2013 Capital Improvements Program

Please refer to Appendix VII-A for Capital Improvements Program