

Chapter Title: Parks, Trails and Open Space

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Introduction: Vision for the Parks, Trails and Open Space System

The parks, open space, and trails that connect them are what gives Minnetonka its unique character. The community feels like it is a part of nature, not apart from it. The strong connection the community has with its natural resources and open space will ensure Minnetonka is a community of choice where people live, work, play, and conduct business in a naturally beautiful environment. As a community with a dynamic population, it can be expected that the needs of individuals and families living in Minnetonka will continue to change and evolve through time. City staff are committed to providing a comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable system of parks, open space/natural areas, trails, and recreation oriented activities/programs that responds to the community's values.

Since the City is fully developed, the priorities for the future are to preserve and enhance existing features to allow current and future generations to enjoy these spaces and to identify appropriate new opportunities as redevelopment occurs.

Goals

- Maintain, preserve, and enhance the parks, open spaces and trails that give Minnetonka its unique character
- Equitable park facilities and programs that match the desires, needs, and abilities of residents and visitors
- Continue to develop a walkable/bikeable Minnetonka that will safely and comfortably connect people to parks, open space, and village centers, and build a culture of active living
- Protect and preserve the outstanding quality of life currently enjoyed in Minnetonka, and the desire to ensure the same quality of life is available for future generations
- Identify opportunities for new parks and open space
- Foster resiliency of parks and open space to recover and adapt to climate change and extreme weather events

History of Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trails

Minnetonka has a long history of taking care of its natural environment. The name Minnetonka comes from the Dakota Indian "mni tanka," meaning "great water". In 1967, some of Minnetonka's leaders had the foresight to start the Minnehaha Creek Corridor Plan, which enabled the city to purchase over 80% of the riparian edge along the Minnehaha Creek and protect it for current and future generations.

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 evolving youth involvement in team sports, an athletic fields needs study was prepared in 1989 with updates in 1994, 2004 and 2012. 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.

Current Trends

Recreation – Sports and Leisure

The Physical Activity Council, which tracks participation and trends in sports, fitness and recreation in the United States, has shown that while 72% of the U.S. population ages six and over are active, the level of activity continues to trend toward a lesser frequency. Further, trends in how people recreate continue to shift away from organized sports and toward more individualized activities and outdoor recreation. The City of Minnetonka and surrounding communities' recreation departments have seen a decline in the number of teams registering for softball, basketball, kickball and football leagues. Though not specific to the United States, recent publications by the Australian Sports Commission explored this trend, noting that participation in many organized sports is in decline, while non-organized sports are growing in popularity. Reasons cited for this shift include:

- Organized sports focus too heavily on competition rather than fun and enjoyment
- Organized sports choose teams on the basis of talent rather than friendship groups
- Organized sports lack flexibility around scheduling

- Organized sports provide limited opportunities for people with poor sporting competency
- Many adolescents report being self-conscious about poor sporting ability and find organized sporting environments intimidating and humiliating

Pedestrian and Bike

Residents who participated in Imagine Minnetonka were adamant about the need to improve pedestrian safety at key intersections and their desire for more connected bike and walking paths. The city has a comprehensive trail improvement plan, and has prioritized segments for implementation.

Mobility is intrinsic to quality of life. Pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure such as sidewalks and trails can be used for transportation, recreation and fitness. These types of infrastructure have been shown to create many benefits for their users as well as the rest of the community. The benefits of pedestrian and bike infrastructure are integrated. According to information readily available from FHWA, US DoT, Met Council, Walk Score® and other sources, some of these benefits are economic, such as increased revenues and jobs for local businesses, and some are non-economic benefits such as reduced congestion, better air quality, safer travel routes, and improved health outcomes.

Economic Benefits

- Sidewalks increase foot traffic in retail centers, delivering the customers that local shops and restaurants need in order to thrive

Safety Benefits

- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that is physically separated from vehicles can help increase bicycle use, especially by less confident riders, and support safe travel

Health Benefits

- People who live in neighborhoods with sidewalks are 47 percent more likely than residents of areas without sidewalks to be active at least 30 minutes a day
- Active lifestyles improve physical health, mental health, as well as dramatically reduces likelihood of chronic disease

Air Quality Benefits

- Reduced human exposure to transportation-related emissions and reduced transportation's contribution to air pollution

Roadway Benefits

- Reduced wear and tear on roadways and reduced congestion and traffic

Community Benefits

- Sidewalks are conduits for pedestrian movement and play a vital role in community life to enhance connectivity across generations & backgrounds to foster social interaction and build inclusiveness

Equity Benefits

- Removes barriers to mobility for people who are unable to, or choose not to, drive and increases the number of people who are able to walk, bike and access transit

Expanding and improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure means ensuring that a network of infrastructure is in place to make bicycling or walking viable modes of travel. It also means ensuring that the infrastructure is safe and comfortable to use.

Adapting to Climate Change

Resiliency to climate change - especially heavier rain and storms and longer and dryer periods between them - will impact Minnetonka's woods and wetlands. As the climate changes, Minnetonka needs to be vigilant about mitigation, adaptation, and proactive resource management.

Conservation may become as important as recreation. As climate change begins to impact wildlife and landscapes ever more directly, the natural values of every park, possibly taken for granted, will be considered one of the more important community-based means of adapting to climate-change conditions. Parks will be appreciated for their conservation values - places that reduce urban temperatures, habitats that protect nature and biodiversity, landscapes that naturally manage stormwater, and places that protect and preserve clean air and pure water. The public will turn out in ever greater numbers to volunteer for conservation activities in parks. Parks will play an increasingly important role in contributing to climate change response. Agencies will begin to utilize parks in new ways to respond to climate change such as providing emergency services to their communities in times of extreme weather events. Adaptation strategies may include developing 'sponge parks' in urban areas, acquiring and expanding open space parks in flood plains, and designing vegetative buffer parks to protect homes and development.

Changing Demographics

Different recreation needs. A community's preparation for increasing diversity can have a large impact on how residents respond and how smoothly newcomers are integrated into the community. The Met Council projects that Minnetonka will add 10,000 residents and 5,500 households by 2040. Between 2000 and 2013, Minnetonka attracted 2,300 residents of color. In the three major Minnetonka school districts, there are between 40 and 42 languages spoken. Approximately 29% of East Africans in the US are located in the greater Minneapolis metro area. This is on par with the Twin Cities metro region where 92% of population growth is from people of color. Demographic shifts in the coming decades will result in a different Twin Cities region than we know today and have known in years past. Our region will grow, age and become more racially and ethnically diverse. These shifts are not just in our future, however; recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau show these changes are well underway, especially when it comes to diversity in the region.

In addition to this, Minnetonka has an aging population, and is likely to see a changeover in housing stock in the coming years. There is a strong desire by many aging residents to 'age in place' i.e. remain located and active their community. This will lead to new, younger families moving in to the single family homes and the addition of new senior housing options. It is important to consider acknowledging the different needs of user groups to ensure Minnetonka's parks reflect the needs of all residents and are welcoming, inclusive places.

The Sharing Economy

The Internet is the engine driving the sharing economy, connecting people at unprecedented levels and enabling peer-to-peer transactions. This model provides more flexibility and reduces upfront investment for people, for example, who are looking to rent or borrow rather than own equipment. An example of this in parks and recreation is the high popularity of bike-share, kayak-share and scooter-share in the Twin Cities area. As these trends continue to evolve, it will be important for Minnetonka to engage with residents and neighboring municipalities to determine how to successfully adopt these strategies and ensure seamless use & accessibility.

A Desire to Be More Connected to the Land

As society is ever more connected and plugged in via the internet and smart phones, there is also an increasing desire to un-plug and get back to the land and each other. This manifests itself in a variety of ways that can include: community supported agriculture (CSAs) and farmer's markets, buy local/eat local movements, nature watching, national night out events, and support for pollinators, etc. There is also an increasing desire to know where products we buy are produced or grown, who makes it and how. This can be attributed to increased knowledge and awareness of fair labor practices, unhealthy processing practices, the desire to transfer knowledge from older to younger generations, a changed economy since the Great Recession, or a rejection of hyper consumerism, to name a few. This will lead to changes in public space and programming including what is designed and how it is managed.

Identity Politics and Civic Polarization

Due to demographic changes and a more partisan political atmosphere, many communities, regions and states have a growing number of factions. This has a tendency to divide (versus unite) communities. If ignored, identity politics and civic polarization could impact Minnetonka, dividing the community among age, class, racial or other lines. One example: throughout the Imagine Minnetonka process, several residents pulled consultants and staff aside to share their concerns privately (vs in front of their peers) about "those people" in the community. The implied message was that "those people" are the source of crime and are deflating Minnetonka's housing values and reputation as a great place to live. Data does not support their claims, but polarization is often built on not on facts, but on fears. This is one small example of how identity politics can take root in a community. People can come together and connect with each other in parks and through shared experiences.

Parks, Open Space and Trails as Drivers of Economic Development

Parks and recreation improves the quality of life in communities and benefits the local economic development of a region. A recent survey in Area Development notes that three-quarters of corporate executives rate quality-of-life features as important factors when choosing a location for a headquarters, factory or other company facility. Many local park and recreation agency amenities spur tourism to their respective locales, generating significant economic activity, including (but not limited to) increased sales at local restaurants/bars and hotels. An August 2017 National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Park Pulse poll found that park and recreation amenities - such as beaches, parks, trails and secluded and relaxing places - are important to people when choosing a vacation destination. Economic research has demonstrated consistently that homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those farther away. Higher home values not only benefit the owners of these properties but also add to the tax base of local governments. Eighty-five percent of respondents to the 2017 NRPA Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey seek high-quality park and recreation amenities when they are choosing a place to live.

Summary of Current Local Conditions

Minnetonka Parks & Open Space

The City of Minnetonka is blessed with a diverse and generally well-balanced parks and open space system that is well positioned to continue to serve the community and enhance residents' quality of life. This park system is more than a collection of individual park units. It represents a comprehensive system of parks and recreational facilities that give the community a variety of recreational opportunities and natural amenities to appreciate and experience.

Minnetonka's natural resources are its distinguishing feature, and the one feature of the city residents cherish most. From the headwaters of Minnehaha Creek to the many wetlands and forested areas, Minnetonka provides an oasis of natural beauty amid a major metropolitan area. More than 20 percent of the city's land area is wetlands and lakes, with more than 400 acres of maintained parkland in 51 parks; 33 miles of trails; and 1,000 acres of natural public open spaces.

Minnetonka residents place a high value on the city's park and trail systems and the surrounding natural environments. Community survey results show high support for this expansive and diverse system. The current park and open space system is over 1,200 acres, with 400 acres developed.

Recreational opportunities for youth and adults are available in Minnetonka's Park System year round, including programs and activities and non-programmed activities. These include picnicking, canoeing, fishing, skating, swimming and play equipment. Individual amenities vary from park to park. Please see the Park Facilities Chart **figure XX** for a complete list of amenities at each park.

Community Parks

Community parks serve a broader purpose and focus on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They offer unique features that have city-wide appeal, opportunities for large gatherings and have settings or facilities that would be too costly to replicate in one or more additional parks throughout the city.

Big Willow Park

Located between Minnetonka Boulevard and Cedar Lake Road, just west of the Minnetonka Public Works facility, Big Willow Park's 95 acres makes it the smallest of the city's five community parks. Big Willow's features include views of Minnehaha Creek, expansive open spaces and extensive trails along with community athletic fields, a play area and a canoe launch. Big Willow Park is one of the key parks in the community with a city-wide visitor draw. The park has two key functions. The first is to provide community athletic facilities for youth and adult sports, which is the premier facility in the city for these activities. The second is to provide natural open space within a developed area of the city. The community preserve portion of the site is kept natural and exhibits wooded areas, wetland areas and Minnehaha Creek running through it.

Civic Center Park

Located in the center of the city, just north of Minnetonka City Hall, the Civic Center Park's 146 acres features a soccer field, play equipment, trails, canoe launch on Minnehaha Creek and an outdoor amphitheater. This park plays host to a number of community activities including Summerfest, the Minnetonka Farmer's Market and movies & music in the park. This park provides neighborhood recreation facilities for non-structured activities, is a social center for the community and provides open space for informal play.

Meadow Park

Located in north central Minnetonka, Meadow Park is a large 110-acre community park, with the majority of the site dedicated to natural areas. Meadow Park is classified under both a community park and preserve due to its dual role of servicing local neighborhood

park needs and protecting natural open space. Trails crisscross the park through the natural areas and wetlands. The park boasts many amenities, from a tot lot and play equipment to tennis and basketball courts and two all-season hockey rinks. The combination of these functions provides a full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Lone Lake Park

Located in south east Minnetonka, Lone Lake Park is a large 146-acre community park and preserve and is comprised of a large high quality natural area as well as recreation features including: soccer fields; tennis, pickle ball and basketball courts; tot play area; picnic shelter and open picnic areas; dock; and 1.7 miles of trails. The park has two key functions: to provide community park facilities and natural open space within a developed area of the city. The close proximity to Shady Oak Beach expands recreational opportunities for the area as well as the broader community.

Purgatory Park

Located in the southwest corner of Minnetonka, Purgatory Park's 155 acres makes it the largest of the city's five community parks, with views of Purgatory Creek, expansive open spaces and extensive trails. A 1.2 mile trail loop that starts at the parking lot offers scenic views of the various ecological areas of the park, including wetlands, woodlands and prairies. The primary function of Purgatory Park is to preserve natural open space in a developed part of the city and provide passive recreational opportunities.

Restrooms and drinking fountains are available at each of the five community parks – Civic Center, Meadow and Purgatory (all year), and Lone Lake and Big Willow (seasonally).

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks serve as the backbone of the Minnetonka park system and serve as the recreational and social focal points of individual neighborhoods. As such, they focus on informal active and passive recreation that service day-to-day park and general recreation needs. There are twenty three identified neighborhood park service areas (NPSAs) within the City of Minnetonka, and over 40 neighborhood parks.

Recreation Facilities

The City of Minnetonka owns and operates several high quality recreation facilities to meet the varying interests and needs of community members. These facilities offer a range of amenities and services from event space, relaxation to fitness classes and historical education.

Buwell House

The Charles H. Burwell House, located at 13209 E. McGinty Road in Minnetonka, is listed on the National Register of Historic and is owned and operated by the City of Minnetonka. The site is part of the Minnetonka park system, and provides a scenic setting for a weekday lunch, picnic, painting, drawing, photography, or a small family gathering. Permits are available for private use of Minnetonka Mills Park and the Burwell site for events such as weddings and receptions.

The main event each year is the Burwell Festival, which is held on the fourth Saturday in June. This summer event offers entertainment, food, and free tours of the house. There

is a Holiday Open House on the first or second weekend of December, featuring Victorian Christmas decorations and tours of the house which is sponsored by the Minnetonka Historical Society.

Glen Lake Activity Center

The Glen Lake Activity Center has meeting space for up to 50 people. It can also be divided into two smaller and equal size rooms by using a collapsible divider wall. There are restroom facilities, and the building is available for rental Sunday through Saturday, between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Reservations are accepted and processed on a first come/first served basis.

Gray's Bay Marina

The City of Minnetonka worked cooperatively with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Hennepin County, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, City of Wayzata, and the Gray's Bay Task Force to acquire the property known as the Gray's Bay Public Access. The City of Minnetonka and the DNR have entered into an agreement to allow the City to operate the site as a public boat launch facility.

The site includes general parking for both vehicles and trailers. In addition, the City of Minnetonka owns and operate 29 permanent boat slips and a building that includes an office, vending, public restrooms, and storage.

Lindberg Center

The Lindbergh Center is jointly owned and operated by the City of Minnetonka and the Hopkins School District. The facility is connected to Hopkins High School.

Amenities:

- Five regulation basketball courts, two of which include adjustable height baskets for all levels of play
- Seven regulation volleyball courts
- 200-meter competitive running track
- 300-meter walking/jogging track
- Exercise and conditioning room with specialized machines, free weights and cardiovascular equipment
- Additional amenities available for track, baseball, softball, wrestling, aerobics, badminton and golf

Minnetonka Ice Arena

City programs such as public skating, skating lessons and adult hockey are offered through the Minnetonka Ice Arena, where the Lake Minnetonka Figure Skating Club, Hopkins Youth Hockey Association and Minnetonka Youth Hockey Association also operate their programs.

In addition, high school hockey programs from Minnetonka, Hopkins and St. Louis Park school districts utilize the facility. The arena is proud to serve as home ice for Hopkins Park girls' hockey, a co-op team of students from Hopkins and St. Louis Park high schools. Approximately 260,000 people use the ice arena facilities on an annual basis.

Minnetonka Community Center

The Minnetonka Community Center is available to residents and local organizations for a variety of meeting and banquet needs. Meeting facilities Meeting spaces are available

for groups of up to 120 people and can be reserved by Minnetonka residents up to one year in advance. Banquet facilities Accommodates up to 250 people. Minnetonka residents can make reservations 18 months in advance for special events, receptions and private parties.

Williston Fitness Center

The Williston Fitness Center is owned and operated by the City of Minnetonka.

Features and services:

- 25-yard swimming pool & splash pad
- Five indoor tennis courts
- Aerobics studio
- Baseball/softball cages & training
- Basketball court
- Fitness equipment
- Equipment orientations
- Kid's Corner child care
- Land and water aerobics, run club, cycle classes
- Meeting/party room
- Personal training
- Wellness and nutrition coaching
- Indoor playground (TreeHouse)
- Whirlpool and saunas

Minnetonka Trail System

The goals of the original trail system plan were to: create a system of interlinking and looped trails throughout the city as well as other local, state and regional trails, to provide trail access to natural resource amenities, provide linkages to neighborhoods, and a reasonable degree of universal accessibility. This plan recognized that the needs and skill levels of individual users are quite broad and are an important factor in successful implementation.

The trail system connects all of Minnetonka's cultural and commercial activity centers and many of those in adjoining communities. It also directly connects to several regional amenities including transit facilities, Bryant Lake Regional Park, and the Three Rivers Park District's combined 27-mile Lake Minnetonka and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Trails.

Trails are located off road wherever possible and follow the city's three major creek corridors: Minnehaha, Nine Mile and Purgatory. These existing trails wind through many city parks and natural open space areas, providing access to wetlands, lakes, marshes and woodlands. Users of the trail system experience much of the natural environment characteristic of Minnetonka. Throughout the height of the season, trails are patrolled regularly by Minnetonka Police Department personnel on bicycle and in special police vehicles. In addition, Three Rivers Park District rangers patrol the Three Rivers LRT Trails from April through November.

The City of Minnetonka has developed a list and map of multi-use trail corridors for future expansion. These multi-use trails differ from the original trail plan in that they follow the street corridors and serve a transportation as well as recreational use. They are prioritized by high use segments and degree of difficulty to construct. These trails often involve multiple agency stakeholders such as MnDOT and Hennepin County as well as individual property owners along to corridor for right of way.

Trails are usually eight to ten feet wide and provide ample room for two-way bike & pedestrian traffic. Surfaces are either compacted crushed limestone or asphalt, depending on the area and terrain. At some uncontrolled intersections with major roadways, the trail will cross the road via a pedestrian underpass or overpass to minimize conflicts with traffic.

Future

The parks, opens space, and trails that connect them will continue to give Minnetonka its unique character. The community will continue to feel like it is a part of nature, not apart from it. The strong connection the community has with its natural resources and open space will ensure Minnetonka is a community of choice where people live, work, play, and conduct business in a naturally beautiful environment. Simultaneously, it will be more important than ever that the natural resources within the parks and open spaces in Minnetonka become adapted to accommodate a changing climate.

A look to the future of our community is important to meet the resident demands on these systems. Through extensive community engagement, a number of ideas, policies and considerations were shared. A few themes began to emerge:

- Growing – Where additional densities are planned, add more parks and trails
- Adapting – Programming of spaces, amenities and activities should reflect community desires
- Connecting – Not only do parks and trails need physical connectedness, they also need to relate to and connect with the diversity of people in the community

Implementation Plan - How we will get there

Parks and open space are essential to a high quality of life, and are highly regarded by residents in Minnetonka. As the needs of the community change through time and the city experiences population growth, the parks and open space will become even more important. The policies and strategies below address the current parks, open spaces, and trails as well as potential future additions to the system.

Policies and Strategies

Policy 1 - Maintain, preserve, and enhance the existing wetlands, parks and open spaces that give Minnetonka its unique character and provide a high quality of life for all residents and visitors

Specific Strategies:

- Evaluate the park dedication fee ordinance to establish metrics for decision making
- Update the 2001 Parks, Open Space & Trail (POST) plan to reflect changing population, values, trends and opportunities
- Assess use of community level parks to determine optimal levels of programming and use
- Determine appropriate balance of natural resource preservation & park activities
- Develop master plans for all community level parks within the city
- Consider accommodating urban agriculture and edible landscapes within parks and open space

- Align parks and open space planning efforts with the City of Minnetonka 2040 Resource Management Plan
- Engage with the community to reinforce that public parks are for everyone
- Identify major park deficiencies in terms of individual park usage and park space ratios of the neighborhood park service areas

Policy 2 - Park facilities and programs that match the desires, needs, and abilities of residents and visitors

Specific strategies:

- Integrate equity into decision making for recreation programs so these opportunities are available and accessible to residents and visitors of all ages and abilities
- Continue to engage with the community and monitor and evaluate program registrations, regional trends and user satisfaction to consider additional programming and educational opportunities that reflect the changing needs of the community
- Continue to cooperate with the Minnetonka and Hopkins school districts in supporting community use of facilities
- Complete a facility and programming space study to assess the City's current space, and provide direction for future development and growth opportunities
- Collaborate with partner agencies and other non-profit organizations to provide recreation and programming opportunities for the community
- Create public/private partnerships to support recreation programs and opportunities
- Engage with employers to encourage employee recreational participation
- Consider public art incorporation into appropriate park and open spaces
- Continue to provide recreation program scholarships as funds are available
- Increase knowledge and appreciation of existing parks, open spaces and trails through targeted marketing

Policy 3 – A walkable/bikeable Minnetonka that will safely and comfortably connect people to parks, open space, and village centers, and build a culture of active living

Specific strategies:

- Continue to implement and evaluate the Minnetonka Trail Improvement Plan (TIP)
- Build off the existing TIP to create an active transportation masterplan.
- Continue to partner with peer agencies such as MnDOT, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District, and neighboring cities to implement trail connections
- Invest in walkability and cycling as a means of economic development
- Establish standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities at community parks and village centers including but not limited to: racks, secure storage lockers, bicycle repair facilities, drinking fountains and benches
- Pursue designation as a bicycle friendly city through BikeMN
- Continue to partner with Three Rivers Park District around planning, implementation and maintenance of regional bike trails that travel through Minnetonka
- Identify a consistent funding source to implement the trail improvement plan
- Continue to work with partner agencies including Hennepin County and MnDOT to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety education campaigns

Policy 4 - Identify opportunities for new parks and open space

Specific Strategies:

- Creation of new signature community level park/plaza space at Ridgedale and within Opus that creates a sense of place and provides recreational opportunities
- Identify parts of the city that do not have easy access to parks and open space to ascertain and prioritize land acquisition opportunities or facilitate trail connectivity to existing parks.
- Evaluate land use plans to determine future park and open space needs
- Identify opportunities for privately owned, publicly accessible space
- Continue to work with interested residents and property owners around land donations or conservation easements
- Designate the Ann Cullen Smith property and develop natural resources preservation & celebration based use

Policy 5 - Resiliency of parks & open space to recover and adapt to climate change and extreme weather events

Specific Strategies:

- Continue to partner with the natural resources division to implement the Natural Resources Management Plan in park spaces
- Foster partnerships and cooperation with peer agencies
- Connect people to the benefits of nature and the outdoors to foster appreciation and protection of natural resources and open spaces through increased access and recreational opportunities within natural resource areas, as appropriate
- Use or specify native plant materials for new plantings in parks & open spaces as appropriate
- Increase emphasis on minimizing runoff volumes, through implementation of storm water best management practices and other environmental practices that are technically acceptable and financially feasible
- Expand environmental education & recreation programs with partnerships in schools and in the community
- Design and install educational and interpretive signage in natural areas in parks and open spaces
- Promote diversity of species for new and refurbished plantings in parks
- Align parks and open space planning efforts with the City of Minnetonka 2040 Resource Management Plan

References utilized to draft chapter:

- Minnetonka 2040 Resource Management Plan
- Parks, Open Space and Trail (POST) plan
- Trail Improvement Plan (TIP)
- Mountain Bike Study
- Scope for Facility Needs Assessment Study
- Imagine Minnetonka Report
- Minnehaha Creek Corridor plan