



MEMO

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To: Common Council
From: Dave Kittel, Director of Planning and Community Development
Date: 9/26/2025
Re: Park Plan

Background Information:

About every 5 years the city updates a plan to assist in the direction and development of the park system and related amenities. Staff have been working on creating a new plan which is included in this packet for review. Over the last year, data has been collected through a community survey, listening sessions, and park inspections. Staff also looked at national data from the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and at some surrounding communities' plans to help establish a base line of existing amenities. Overall, the city meets or exceeds many of the national averages for the number of parks per resident and acres of parkland per 1,000 people. From looking through information from NRPA, previous park plans, and survey results, staff found four focus areas that kept coming up. Those areas are as follows: maintenance, amenities, community, and beautification. From those focus areas tactics have been created to help address these areas using the information and comments from the survey. Chapter 8 in the park plan has the details of these items and a simple summary is listed below:

Maintenance

- **Issue:** Maintenance is a long-standing concern across the park system.
- **Tactics:**
 - Develop a **park conditions report** to prioritize updates and preventive care.
 - Create a **user reporting system** for maintenance issues.
 - Conduct **semiannual park inspections**.
 - Explore hiring a **park foreman and dedicated maintenance staff**.
 - Investigate **security measures** (e.g., cameras, lighting) to reduce vandalism.

Amenities

- **Issue:** Residents want more diverse and accessible amenities.
- **Tactics:**
 - Explore **small dog areas** in parks.

- Implement a **public outreach policy** for park updates.
- Provide **digital and paper trail maps**.
- Improve **bike lanes** and **trail connector safety**.
- Continue planning for **new trails**.
- Use **national park standards** for amenity planning.
- Build a **permanent stage** for events.
- Develop a **Central Park redevelopment plan**.
- Create a **service area map** to guide future park development.

Community

- **Issue:** Desire for more community events and engagement.
- **Tactics:**
 - Assess feasibility of **community gardens**.
 - Explore **beer garden events** in parks.
 - Increase **social media promotion** of parks.

Beautification

- **Issue:** Residents want more attractive parks.
- **Tactics:**
 - Use **native plantings** to reduce maintenance and enhance beauty.
 - Form a **beautification committee**.
 - Add **landscaping at park entrances**.
 - Introduce **public art** (e.g., murals).
 - Launch an **adopt-a-park/planter program**.
 - Host **community clean-up events**.

These focus areas and tactics are designed to be achievable and address many of the comments from residents. It should be noted the 1,000 Islands should be separate and have its own strategic plan due to the size and specific focus of that area. Below is a link to NRPA for additional information on national statistics for parks:

<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

The Plan Commission has reviewed the park plan and recommends the approval of the plan. After the initial Plan Commission review a few additional comments on the plan were received by staff requesting changes to formatting to make some graphs easier to read and to address minor grammar type items. These changes have been updated in the attached plan. In addition, a few comments were received on some of the possible tactics that were proposed to address the four focus areas identified in the Park Plan, specifically comments stating that the small dog areas in parks and “beer garden” type events in the parks may not be good ideas. The format of this plan is to look into these items and then bring back the findings with recommendations to the Council for final action. During the investigation a different approach may be found or information discovered that make the implementation impractical for the city. Overall, this is to help ensure that the city is looking into items the residents are asking for and developing ways to achieve this and, if that is not feasible,

discover why. The plan should also be looked upon as a living document and as more work is done changes can be made to better reflect new information, strategies, growth, and opportunities.

Strategic Plan:

This aligns with community of choice strategic objectives and the vision of the strategic plan.

Budget:

There is no direct budget items with this document but some of the individual items will have budget impacts that will be a part of the Capital Improvement Plan and standard budget process.

Recommendation:

To review the park plan and to adopt the Comprehensive Outdoor and Recreation Plan.

