



Park Board

Memorandum

TO: Long Lake City Council
FROM: Erika Leachman, Park Board Secretary
DATE: February 29, 2024
RE: Outdoor Recreation Grant for the Conceptual Holbrook Park Skate & Splash Plaza Project

On behalf of the City of Long Lake (City) Park Board, this memorandum was prepared to engage the City Council in support of conceptual improvements envisioned for Holbrook Park and provide information about grant funding opportunities through Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program. The Park Board is seeking Council support to proceed with an application to this grant program to partially fund the design and construction of the Holbrook Park Skate & Splash Project (Project). Below, information about the Park Board's efforts on this opportunity, a summary of the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, and a conceptual description of the Project are presented for consideration and discussion.

Background

The Park Board is a five-member advisory board appointed by the City Council to provide recommendations and guidance related to parks, trails, and recreation areas within the city. A key role for the Park Board is to advise on the development, management, operation, and maintenance of the existing parks, trails, and recreation areas to ensure these spaces are well-maintained and serve the community effectively. If there are specific properties needed or desired to complete a comprehensive parks and recreation system in Long Lake, the Park Board makes recommendations to the City Council.

During the Park Board's regular meetings in December 2023 and February 2024, members discussed potential park and trail improvement projects in the City that could be supported through grant funding. Potential park projects were considered that are reasonably achievable within existing City-owned properties and help achieve long-held City goals. Through these discussions, improvements to the Holbrook Park ice rink area were discussed relative to the following City goals:

1. Upgrade the gravel trail at Holbrook Park and install a paved asphalt trail.

2. Work to attract rink attendant staff for the Holbrook Park warming house to ensure the facility is staffed during winter skating seasons.
3. Continue to explore opportunities to partner with Orono Youth Hockey for rink usage, potentially including an exchange of rink use for staffing assistance, while recognizing that any arrangement should limit the impact on public open skate hours
4. Research and consider alternatives to improve upon the current flooding system for Holbrook Park rink facilities.
5. Repair ice rink boards and posts, machine grade the rink area, and repaint the Warming House.
6. Consider exploring opportunities to partner with Orono Youth Hockey on possible rink facility improvements.

Key Issues for Holbrook Park Recreation Facilities

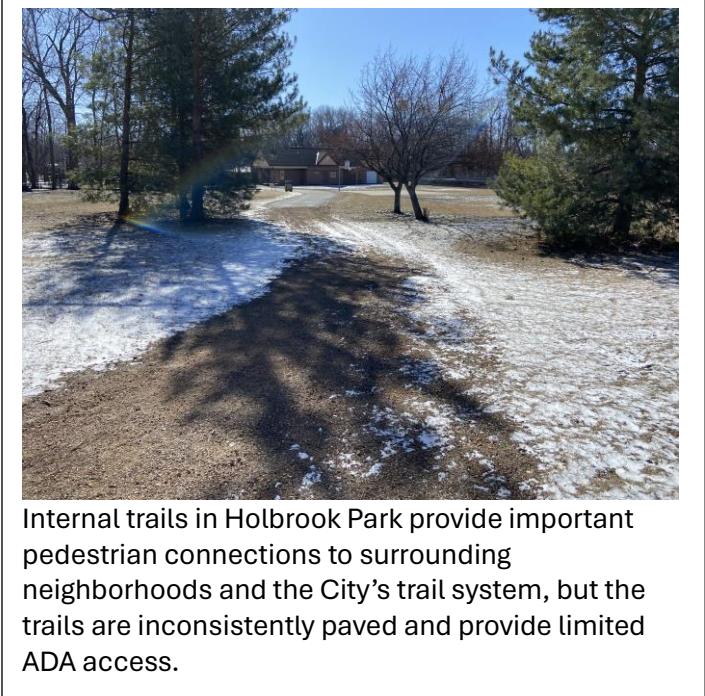
Holbrook Park provides a variety of recreation facilities, including a ballfield, half basketball court, a playground, and the existing unpaved ice rink area, as well as paved and unpaved trails. The ice rink area is aging and underutilized for several reasons. In the winter, the Holbrook Park seasonal ice rink is unpaved and the ice surface is directly exposed to the ground; as a result, soil temperature variation and moisture accumulation lead to inconsistent ice quality. Inconsistent ice quality at the Holbrook Park ice rink results in puddles, bumps, and rough patches, which make skating difficult and potentially hazardous to the public, shortens the skating season, damages the park's natural environment, and results in cost-inefficient maintenance and materials requirements. Further, as the rink area lies on natural turf with no piping or refrigeration, flooding the ~17,000 square-foot lawn area seasonally requires substantial manual effort and resources from the City's Public Works Department. In the summer, the rink area serves as an off-leash dog area that is unshaded and has no improvements to support high-quality or diverse dog recreation. The safety barriers/boards are also aging wood and installed permanently, which prevents flexible or secondary use of the area during transitional seasons or when conditions do not support the primary users of the space.



Holbrook Park has several needed improvements, including upgrading the existing outdoor ice rink, activating the existing warming house, and completing the internal paved trail to expand accessibility for all ages and abilities within the park.

Additionally, the park's internal trail system limits accessibility and use due to inconsistent paving and discontinuity with the neighborhood's sidewalks and trails.

The Park Board is aware of the strong interest in the community in upgrading the Holbrook Park ice rink area to provide reliable, cold season-long ice that supports both pleasure skating and competitive hockey for youth and adults. In particular, Orono Youth Hockey historically has advocated for a permanent outdoor ice rink that is maintained continuously through the winter sports season. Aside from Holbrook Park, there are no other public outdoor ice rinks in the Long Lake area.



The Morrison (Orono) Ice Arena provides an indoor ice rink and Wayzata provides the nearest seasonal outdoor ice rink. When the existing Holbrook Park ice area cannot be maintained with suitable ice or warm weather prevents ice from persisting seasonally, the need for an improved recreation facility to support these essential winter recreation activities becomes clear. Further, the Park Board is aware of a strong interest in more options for cooling during warm summer seasons, both locally and in the region. The Long Lake area does not have an outdoor swimming pool or splash pad/zone, and only Nelson Park on Long Lake provides the opportunity for water play and cooling in the City. As of the 2020 U.S. Census, nearly 20 percent of Long Lake residents are children, indicating the need for additional options for summer season water play and cooling. Currently, the nearest outdoor water play recreation facilities are located in Wayzata and Delano.

Overview of the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program

In December 2023, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released grant application materials for the Outdoor Recreation Program Grant. The goal of this grant program is to increase and enhance outdoor recreation facilities in local and community parks. Many recreation facilities are eligible for funding under the program, including skating rinks and internal park trails. The program provides matching grants to local government for up to 50 percent of the cost of the total project cost. The maximum grant award is \$350,000 (for a total project cost of \$700,000). The local match can consist of cash; the value of materials, labor, and equipment usage by the local sponsor; donations; or any combination thereof. Applications are due on April 1, 2024, and require a resolution of support from the sponsoring local agency.

The Park Board members can offer volunteer effort to prepare an application for one project to the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program in April 2024. Future cycles of this grant program, or new cycles for other programs, could present additional opportunities to fund additional improvements. The Park Board will continue to track and report back to the City Council regarding potential grant programs that could be suitable to fund City park projects.

Overview of the Conceptual Skate & Splash Project at Holbrook Park (Phase I)

In alignment with City goals and the General Plan 2040, as well as the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program goals, the Project's objective would be to dramatically enhance the quality and accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities for a wide range of users locally and regionally during all seasons while enhancing access to existing amenities within Holbrook Park. Key Project goals are to revitalize and activate Holbrook Park and maximize the use and value of existing onsite facilities, including an adjacent warming house that provides ADA-accessible restrooms, water fountains, seating, shade, and a concession stand, as well as two existing rink lights to support night skating and events.

To foster a working discussion, this section provides a conceptual description of the Project based on a preliminary review of City plans and goals; however, as a concept, **all components are subject to review and refinement prior to design and construction.**

As a first phase, the Project would replace and realign the existing unpaved outdoor seasonal ice skating area with a permanent all-season recreation facility. In its place, a new facility would ingeniously combine an outdoor refrigerated ice rink with a splash plaza and community picnic patio (see Figure 2 for examples of ice rink/splash pad combination facilities). The outdoor, open-air recreational facility would support ice skating, youth and adult hockey, and special events (e.g., broomball tournaments, skating lessons, or demonstrations) during colder months. During warmer months, the facility would transform into a surfaced gathering area providing a splash plaza/cooling center, patio and gathering area, and seating. The Project could also include a small covered stage or platform to support sports scorekeeping/announcing, picnicking, parties, roller skating, and special events such as movies in the park or small community music performances.



The Project would create an all-season recreation facility in Long Lake, the first of its kind in the area, combining a winter refrigerated ice rink with a summertime splash plaza. This combination has been successful in many community parks, including Lawrence Plaza in Bentonville, AR (pictured), where community events such as outdoor movies occur concurrent with the recreational activities. See Figure 2 for additional examples.

To substantially improve the quality, diversity, and value of Holbrook Park to all, the Project could include the following components (see Figure 1):

- Remove the existing rink boards and structures.
- Realign the rink/splash plaza site to interact with the existing warming house and lie closer to the existing trail and parking area; and reseed any disturbed natural turf in the site's playing field area to restore its natural features and recreational value.
- Extend the existing water and electrical utility lines to the rink site and install site drainage as needed.
- Install a regulation-sized (approximately 200-foot-long by 85-foot-wide) refrigerated outdoor rink and splash plaza using poured concrete overlying refrigeration and water pipes connected to an onsite cooler.
- Install bleachers/seating and stone/concrete fire pits adjacent to the rink/splash plaza.
- Install safety barriers as needed around the rink/splash pad site; consider removable barriers to support access during the summer season.
- Construct a low-profile covered stage/platform at the northern end of the rink/splash plaza site equipped with electricity and lighting to support the scoreboard and announcements.
- Install landscaping, lighting, and signage, including native species, shade trees for areas to the west of the rink/splash pad area, LED path lights and rink/splash pad lights to support evening use, and safety/use rules and guidelines.
- Pave new trail and patio connections to the existing warming house/concessions stand, existing paved trail, and parking lot at the eastern and southern sides of the rink/splash pad site. Permeable, anti-slip paving options would be prioritized.
- Pave the entire extent of the 1,400-foot-long park trail circling the ballfield and connect this path to the new trail and patio connections serving the rink/splash plaza.

Future Conceptual Improvements at Holbrook Park (Phase 2)

While not included in this Project for grant purposes, future phases could easily build upon this Project, including:

- Expanding the ice rink to create dedicated pleasure skating areas and/or a skating loop trail in addition to the regulation-sized hockey rink.
- Reestablishing the off-leash dog park with amenities (e.g., water, dog bags, fencing), signage, and terrain for dog recreation.
- Installing a cover/structure over the rink to protect the facility from damage and provide shade and/or heat and lighting for users seasonally.
- Developing additional trails to connect the park to additional neighborhoods.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Park Board is excited to present the concepts discussed above and hear feedback from the community and the Council. The Park Board has concluded that the Project would be an excellent candidate for grant funding under the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program to create a vibrant public space for active recreation, nature-based play, and community gatherings that cater to a diverse range of recreational needs, abilities, and activities. The Park Board recommends that the City Council consider the concepts and options presented to determine if the City could support the grant application for this Project. The Park Board would proceed with the application submittal only at the direction of the Council.

Enclosed:

Figure 1. Holbrook Park Skate & Splash Project Concept Map

Figure 2. Example Outdoor Ice Rink/Splash Pad Facilities