



VILLAGE OF WINNEBAGO

MEMORANDUM

Prepared By: Joseph Dienberg, Village Administrator
To: Committee of the Whole
Date: June 18, 2025
Subject: Capital Improvement Planning and Splash Pad Consideration

Background and Park Planning Context

In 2024, the Village completed a successful revitalization of Memorial Park, driven by a Board-appointed Park Subcommittee and supported through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. As part of that effort, the southern edge of the park was intentionally left open as a placeholder for a future splash pad or similar recreational amenity. This forward-thinking layout kept open the possibility of a phased approach to park improvements.

In support of those earlier planning conversations, the Community Development Committee previously worked with Burke Playground and Rain Drop, a splash pad equipment provider, to develop preliminary options. At that time, a simple splash pad design was quoted with the following estimated costs:

1. \$12,000 for the water feature equipment (Rain Drop)
2. \$23,000 for installation and surfacing (broom-finished concrete)
3. Total Estimate (not including water service or drainage): approx. \$35,000

Note: Cost estimates were based on 2022 figures and assumed proximity to a water line for potential savings.

While this project did not advance past initial discussions, it provides a helpful baseline for the current conversation and demonstrates that phased implementation was and still is a feasible option. Rather than moving forward with quotes or design work, this inquiry presents an opportunity to revisit our strategic goals, capital needs, and broader planning efforts. The goal is to gather Board direction on next steps while considering our fiscal context and community expectations.

Capital Improvement Planning and Strategic Alignment

The Village's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan identifies the development of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as one of our highest-ranked long-term complex goals. The plan emphasizes the need to: *“Establish maintenance schedules and identify funding sources for infrastructure improvements and facility upgrades including, but not limited to:*

- *Securing a new Village Hall / Police Department / Community Center*
- *Building a Public Works garage and wash bay*
- *Acquiring and razing the Bud's Automotive site downtown*
- *Implementing ‘Complete Streets’ projects for stormwater and pedestrian safety*
- *Exploring funding options such as bonding, CDBG, TIF, and partnerships”*

Separately, the plan also outlines a collaborative goal to:

“Work with the Winnebago Park District to maintain all parks in the Village area and promote the parks to those outside of Winnebago.”

This presents a natural tie-in to any future recreation investments, including a splash pad, particularly if regional partnerships or maintenance agreements can be explored.

Fiscal Context and Competing Priorities

The Community Development Fund currently has approximately \$300,000 in reserves. These funds are not legally restricted but are intended to be used for special projects, redevelopment, or infrastructure-related priorities. The Board has recently expressed interest in:

- Evaluating strategies for demolishing known deteriorating buildings in the downtown, with internal review underway on phased or full-scale approaches.
- Addressing infrastructure degradation at the lighted diamonds, which may require near-term capital investment, including the lights that are currently non-functional, the restrooms and concession stand.
- Broad interest in property revitalization and economic development throughout the village.

Any consideration of new amenities like a splash pad must be weighed against these existing priorities and the potential need to preserve fund flexibility for long-term infrastructure projects.

Options for Next Steps (Ranked by Strategic Alignment)

Below are several possible paths forward, ranked by alignment with the Strategic Plan and grounded in fiscal and planning best practices. Please note, that this is not a comprehensive list of options, and are just for discussion purposes only.

Option 1 (Highest Alignment): Begin Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Process First

- Initiate formal development of a Capital Improvement Plan as called for in the Strategic Plan.
- Inventory and prioritize needs, including infrastructure needs (Water, Streets and Stormwater), vehicle replacement, economic development, Memorial Park amenities, Lighted Diamonds maintenance, and facility upgrades.
- Defer exploration of splash pad or other new amenities until the CIP is developed and presented to the Board.

Strategic Alignment:

- ✓ Directly supports long-term complex goal on capital planning
- ✓ Supports infrastructure and organizational sustainability

Tradeoffs:

- Slower timeline for splash pad or park enhancements
- Requires time and effort to build a CIP framework before any spending

Option 2: Hybrid Approach – Launch High-Level CIP & Gather Cost Benchmarks

- Begin high-level capital planning and asset inventory (early phase of CIP)
- Simultaneously gather cost benchmarks for:
 - Splash pad installation at Memorial Park
 - Repairs/upgrades at lighted diamonds
 - Other known park infrastructure needs

Strategic Alignment:

- ✓ Advances CIP groundwork.
- ✓ Informs decision-making with comparative data.
- ✓ Respects the Park District collaboration goal

Tradeoffs:

- May stretch staff capacity across multiple planning fronts
- Could set early expectations around splash pad before CIP is finalized

Option 3: Refer the Splash Pad Concept to a Joint Park/Village Working Group

- Establish a working group or subcommittee with the Winnebago Park District
- Review recreation needs, funding models, and partnership opportunities
- Return to the Board with shared findings and potential options

Strategic Alignment:

✓ Supports Park District coordination and intergovernmental collaboration.

X Delays capital prioritization beyond current Village-only discussions.

Tradeoffs:

- Could delay action while partners organize
- May still need a broader CIP or planning structure to move forward meaningfully

Option 4: Proceed with Preliminary Splash Pad Exploration

- Direct staff to seek rough cost estimates for a splash pad at Memorial Park, without committing to construction
- Re-engage Park District to determine interest in potential collaboration
- Consider how splash pad priorities fit into broader park investment and maintenance discussions

Strategic Alignment:

✓ Advances the goal of Park District collaboration and community recreation.

X Does not address the CIP priority or broader capital needs planning.

Tradeoffs:

- May risk fragmented capital decision-making without a full plan
- Could reduce available reserves for strategic redevelopment priorities

Next Steps

Staff recognizes the community interest in continued park improvements and appreciates the Board's focus on serving residents through thoughtful capital investments. Depending on Committee feedback, staff is prepared to support whichever direction the Board wishes to explore; whether that be refining long-term priorities, pursuing project-level research, or initiating structured planning.