



20
40

PARKS AND TRAILS

Purpose

Ramsey County 2040 includes an overview of Ramsey County's current parks and recreation system and highlights from the [2018 Parks System Plan](#), which offers a detailed vision and plan for the system over the next ten years. The planning, review and implementation of that plan is separate from Ramsey County 2040, but strongly informs the broad themes and vision presented here. Community engagement will be an important and necessary component of all future planning. The Comprehensive Plan and Parks System Plan will provide a framework for the community to engage around.

Ramsey County is also one of ten implementing agencies that make up the Metropolitan Regional Park System. The update to the regional Parks Policy Plan will also influence and inform the planning process over the next 20 years.

KEY THEMES:

- ▶ Implement the 2018 Parks System Plan and conduct master plans for individual parks.
- ▶ Focus will be on redevelopment of parks rather than new, large parks.
 - ▶ Increase access to parks by foot, mobility device, bicycle and public transit.
- ▶ Develop and implement countywide Solar Energy Plan.
 - ▶ Expand and extend the regional trail network.
 - ▶ Manage the diversity and quantity of our natural resources to support key wildlife habitat.
 - ▶ Continue to measure park system metrics and compare benchmarks to similar-sized systems.
 - ▶ Create a system-wide network of volunteers.
- ▶ Park programming and facilities will adapt to remain relevant to increasingly diverse population.
 - ▶ Continue to evaluate arena and golf systems.
 - ▶ Create a non-profit foundation to support mission of parks system.
- ▶ Prioritize multimodal transportation and support active living, including bicycling and walking.

Current System

The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation system encompasses nearly 8,000 acres consisting of six regional parks including a family aquatic center and nature center, six regional trail corridors, nine county parks, nine protection open space sites, 13 indoor ice arenas and five golf courses. The parks and recreation services provided by Ramsey County complement services provided by municipalities.

Please see the system map located on the following page for locations of Ramsey County Parks & Recreation system components.

Ramsey County's park system represents the largest undeveloped land area in the county. The accessibility of these areas to residents provides both service opportunities and challenges. The opportunities center around easy access for all people, while the challenges relate to issues of carrying capacity (maintaining the quality and integrity of the resources that are subjected to intense use). The provision of recreation services must be evaluated based on the capacity of the resources to support public use.

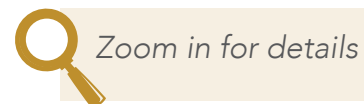
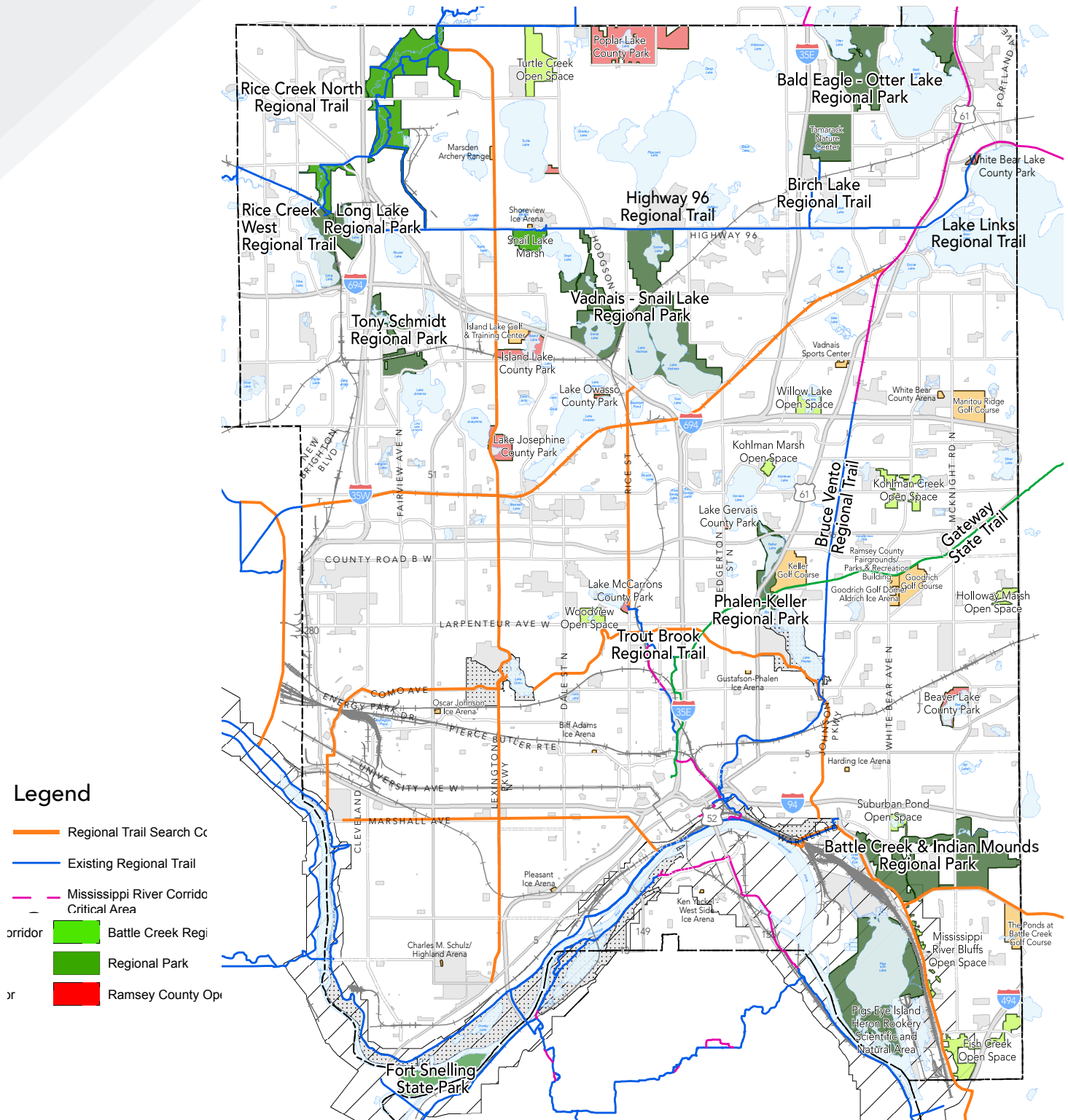
The Ramsey County Parks department has been nationally-accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) since 2004. It is currently the only county parks department in Minnesota to carry the accreditation, which recognizes park and recreation agencies for excellence in operation and service based on 144 standards.

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation System consists of:

- **Six Regional Parks including:**
 - Tamarack Nature Center
Tamarack Nature Center offers a nature pre-school in conjunction with the White Bear Lake Area School District as well as nature play, day camps, guided hikes, ski and snowshoe rentals, maple syruping, and a wealth of nature programs for all ages. Tamarack Nature Center is located within Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park.
 - Water Works Aquatic Center offers water slides and a splash pad.
- **Six regional trail corridors.**
- **Nine county parks.**
- **Nine protection open space sites .**
- **Eighteen special-use facilities.**
 - Eleven indoor arena locations with 13 sheets of ice.
 - Five golf courses.
 - Ramsey County Fairgrounds.
 - Marsden Archery Range.

The parks and recreation services provided by Ramsey County complement services provided by local cities. The majority of recreation services provided throughout the system consist mostly of passive recreation opportunities - facilities for archery, wildlife viewing, boating and fishing, biking, picnicking facilities, swimming areas, hiking, off-leash dog areas, sledding and snowshoeing, geocaching and orienteering. There are six staffed beaches and three unguarded beaches. These natural outdoor recreation facilities have historically been the fundamental components of the Ramsey County parks and recreation system. In addition to passive recreation opportunities, the parks and recreation system also provides active recreation facilities for cross-county skiing, golf, hockey, Tub Lub and mountain biking.

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM MAP



Resiliency

The park system makes Ramsey County more resilient by protecting and maintaining environmental areas. Climate change is expected to cause more frequent and severe storms throughout the year. Many of the county's parks and natural spaces are located in low areas, where storm water can pool and sometimes cause flash floods. For example, in the Snail Lake-Grass Lake area, heavy rain has created flooding problems for trails and the beach area. Redesigns of these areas could serve as models for more resilient park and trail designs in the other low areas of the county.

The resiliency topic leads the Executive Summary because many aspects of resiliency are intertwined throughout the Park System Plan.

Parks & Recreation manages 76 facilities with electrical service (23 of which also have natural gas service), from energy-intensive ice arenas to low-usage park shelters. Approximately 85 percent of the department's energy usage comes from the ice arenas.

In recent years, the department has completed a variety of energy efficiency and conservation projects, such as LED lighting retrofits, installation of solar light tubes in park restrooms, and building management/control systems. Other resilience-related technologies and best practices have also been incorporated, including permeable pavements, storm water management systems, and water reduction technologies. Design standards have been updated to incorporate energy efficiency, including the department's adaptation of SB2030 standards and net-zero design goals for future park redevelopments. Ramsey County has recently created an internal countywide team to oversee all energy related activities and the Parks & Recreation department actively participates on that team.

Future resiliency opportunities include energy studies, renewable energy implementation, enhanced storm water management practices, regional trail network extensions, water reduction strategies, and collaborative master planning.



Natural Resources

The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department's mission in managing plant, animal and water resources is to provide adequate sustainable habitat to support populations of native wildlife species within the county's park system.

By focusing on sustaining wildlife habitat, the surrounding ecosystem as a whole will be enhanced. The primary wildlife habitat targeted includes species of greatest conservation concern, such as grassland songbirds, shorebirds, turtles and numerous species of small mammals as defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-25. Many of these wildlife species and other wildlife native to Ramsey County require large areas of habitat. The parks department will work to manage the diversity and quantity of our natural resources to provide the largest possible tracts of land that contain key wildlife habitats within the Ramsey County park system.

Priority habitat restoration will be targeted first for implementation, with a goal of ongoing and progressive natural resource management for the entire park system.

Park System Metrics

As a component to the system plan update, the Parks & Recreation department initiated a process to develop metrics per the National Park and Recreation standards. This will assist the department effectively manage and plan the use of operating resources and capital facilities by providing helpful information for how the Ramsey County park system compares to similar local and national systems.

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Several county park systems with similar populations across the United States were chosen for comparison. Data reviewed was categorized into three areas, budget/expenditures, parks/trails, and programs. Information used considers a combination of operating metrics that factor budgets, staffing levels, and inventory of amenities. Due to differences in how each system collects, maintains and reports data, variations exist. These variations have an impact on the per capita and/or percentage allocations within the budget, park and trail amenities, and programs offered.

► **Budget/Expenditures** - Various areas throughout the parks department were considered in determining budget/expenditures for the level of service such as operating and capital budgets; operating expenditures; revenue from picnic reservations, programs offered, golf and arenas; and volunteer efforts to offset expenditures.

► **Park/Trail** – Facilities throughout the park system were considered in determining level of service. For example, the number of parks included regional parks and county parks; non-park sites consisting of ice arenas, golf course, open space areas, and special use-facilities such as the fairgrounds and Marsden Archery Range; and regional trails.

► **Programs** – A wide variety of various programs offered were considered in determining the level of service for non-fee programs and fee-based programs. Non-fee programs provided in regional parks through the Parks and Trails Legacy Amendment funding offered unique experience like canoing, fishing and gardening that are designed for inner city youth, recreation centers and non-profit organizations who work with a client base in need of these programs or other partnered non-fee programs with Ramsey County Library such as Story Trail; and fee-based programs offered at Tamarack Nature Center, arenas and golf.



PARKS AND TRAILS

Overall, Ramsey County fared well with budget/expenditures, parks/trails, and programs ranging in the medium quartile with similar county park systems. With some of the metrics, Ramsey County was either below average or above average in comparison based on 2017 data (see Park Metrics section of the Park System Plan for additional data).

Ramsey County Summary Effectiveness Ratio (based on 2017 data):

	Ramsey County Parks & Recreation	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Budget/Expenditures				
Capital budget for the fiscal year	\$5,290,545	\$5,290,545	\$8,879,578	\$12,248,757
Revenue per capita	\$14	\$2	\$8	\$14
Total revenue to total operating expenditures	66.8%	21.5%	30.4%	45.2%
Total tax expenditures per capita	\$7	\$5	\$12	\$24
Operating expenditures per acres of parks and non-park sites	\$1,381	\$1,381	\$2,391	\$3,436
Number of volunteers	650	553.3	925	1,332.8
Parks/Trails				
Total number of parks (regional park, county park)	15	13	39	104
Total number of non-park sites (arenas, golf course, open space, special-use facility)	33	11.8	12	17.3
Total acres of park and non-park site	7,020	3,388.4	6,139	10,794
Number of residents per park	36,043.3	5,989.7	12,708.3	42,318.2
Number of acres per park	468	46.8	217.7	298.3
Total number of trail miles managed or maintained by the agency	27.4	42.9	70	94
Programs				
Total number of programs offered	1,660	245	355	715
Number of fee-based programs	1,450	188.8	325	662.5
Number of participants per program	38.69	50.6	62.5	270.6
Ratio of fee programs to all programs	87.3%	63.0%	84.0%	90.5%
Ratio of building attendance to park	26.6%	26.1%	26.3%	26.4%

Below Average Effectiveness

Areas where Ramsey County was below average in level of service.

Budget/Expenditures

- Total tax expenditures per capita.
- Operating expenditures per acres of parks and non-park sites.
- Capital budget for fiscal year.
- Number of volunteers.

Ramsey County is investing less than similar-sized agencies to provide the park system. The number of volunteers is concentrated at Tamarack Nature Center and could be expanded system-wide with additional personnel.

Parks/Trails

- Total number of parks.
- Total number of trail miles managed or maintained by the agency.

Ramsey County's system tends to be fewer larger parks versus several small parks. The county is also the smallest in area within the state. The trails system is planning to grow in the near future.

Programs

- Number of participants per program.
- Number of non-fee programs.

The discrepancy for the number of participants per program reflects that most of the park use is by informal use. The nature center has been the source of the formal programs until the outreach program began in 2016. The department has been expected to cover a large portion of the cost of a program. Ramsey County does not program large community events which might be where the numbers skew in comparison.

Above Average Effectiveness

Areas where Ramsey County was above average in level of service.

Budget/Expenditures

- Revenue per capita.
- Total revenue to total operating expenditures.

The practice of raising two-thirds of the operational expenditures from fees originates mostly from the golf and arena portions of the budget. Both are large portions of the budget and are expected to come close to covering operating expenses. Subsidizing low, or no-cost, programs will be important when considering connecting under-served communities with the park system.

Parks/Trails

- Total number of non-park sites.
- Total acreage of park and non-park sites.
- Number of residents per park.
- Number of acres per park.

The golf and arena systems are large and typically operated at the city level. The high number of residents per park reflects the densely populated county and relatively small number of parks. The large acreage reflects the large area size of the small number of parks.

Programs

- Total number of programs offered.
- Number of fee-based programs.
- Ratio of fee programs to all programs.
- Ratio of building attendance to park attendance.

The data shows that many programs are offered to a small number of participants per program. The fee-based orientation of the programming reflects the pressure to cover costs. Moving towards serving underserved communities will require more subsidy and less reliance on revenue from fees and charges.

Other data and metrics will be gathered through satisfaction surveys, regional park surveys and user counts. Results from these and other metrics can be stored on [Ramsey County's open data portal](#) for all to access. Reports on use numbers can also be generated such as for golf course rounds played, ice rental numbers, and program participation.

Where Our System is at Today

The park system has made many improvements since the last plan. Keller Golf Course received a makeover with new clubhouse and more than \$4 million in improvements to the golf course. Vadnais Sports Center was purchased and the three outlots on that site have been sold and developed. Tamarack Nature Center within Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park has gone through multiple phases of development and redevelopment. Phalen-Keller Regional Park has undergone multiple phases of improvements and has one more major phase beginning in 2018.

The redevelopment of Lake Owasso County Park in 2018-2020 will represent a complete cycle of redevelopment for all county parks. The cycle will then begin again with at Beaver Lake County Park.

Ramsey County municipalities came together to develop a countywide approach to increase physical activity through biking and walking. The plan empowers the county and local communities with the tools and framework to create local pedestrian and bicycle networks with countywide and regional benefits. It includes a set of tools, analyses, and actions to engage communities in creating a place where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can safely and comfortably walk and bike in their daily lives. It provides resources and a guiding framework for developing a Connected Ramsey Communities Network where walking and biking are regular parts of people's daily lives throughout Ramsey County. The plan incorporates equity principles, tools, and performance measures with an emphasis on an All Abilities Transportation Network that serves all people throughout Ramsey County.

The Connected Ramsey Communities Network is a countywide network of existing and future bikeways, designed to serve as a backbone connecting local communities and the region. This network is built from local facilities and is guided by local and regional planning efforts. It serves as a guiding framework for planning, prioritizing, and designing local active transportation systems. When fully developed, it will connect people with desirable destinations throughout the city and county with high-quality, long-distance, and connector routes.

The [Arena Task Force recommendations of 2016](#) are guiding the next 10 years for our arenas. Refrigeration systems are currently being changed out one arena at a time. Demand is closely monitored to stay in tune with the appropriate supply of rinks. Energy efficiency will be introduced along with the reshaping of the system.

A golf system analysis will be conducted in 2018 to guide the future of golf facilities.

Master plans for Battle Creek & Indian Mounds Regional Park and Rice Creek Regional Trail are currently under revision and will guide the future development and redevelopment for those two popular parks. Significant growth is proposed for Battle Creek & Indian Mounds Regional Park. The [Rice Creek Commons](#) development will impact the Rice Creek Regional Trail area and bring people to the broader system through the trail network.

More information is detailed in the [Parks System Plan](#).

REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

The regional parks system was established in 1974 by the state legislature to provide parks and open space that would serve as the “state parks” for the metropolitan region. During the next 10 years, the Metropolitan Council will update its Parks Policy Plan that guides the provision and operation of the regional parks and trails. Major themes in this plan will include the addition and placement of new regional parks and trails to add to the system and the importance of racial equity. The racial equity topic will impact the master planning process, require more collaboration amongst the 10 implementing agencies, broaden the types of facilities and amenities provided for park users, and elevate the importance of access through trails and transportation networks as well as the proximity of parks to areas of racially concentrated areas of poverty.

Regional Park Objectives:

- To provide public access to major water bodies and watercourses.
- To provide sites of sufficient size (200-500 acres) that will accommodate a range of activities and large numbers of users.
- To provide a resource base with a carrying capacity for a high number of users.
- To emphasize outdoor recreational experiences as well as resource preservation.
- To provide recreational developments that are consistent with the specific resource base.
- To protect and manage significant natural resources within park units for aesthetic enjoyment and outdoor education.
- To provide internal trail networks that link or provide access to significant natural resources or outdoor recreation facilities.
- To provide special use areas such as off-leash dog areas that are compatible with the natural resources and other recreational development.

Environmental Natural Areas have been identified by Ramsey County in those Regional Parks that have significant natural resources. Environmental Natural Areas (ENA) are defined within Regional Parks as having significant, sensitive, and unique natural resources that warrant extended preservation. The habitat and vegetation within these areas is managed to support and enhance these natural communities. These areas are designated for increased habitat protection, ecological restoration, passive recreation and environmental education. Any development expansion within these areas is limited to trails only, with nature interpretation facilities, such as Tamarack Nature Center, allowed within the planned development areas of Bald Eagle – Otter Lake Regional Park only. Public access to these areas is restricted to designated trails and the use of these areas is limited to passive forms of recreation such as hiking, skiing and nature viewing. Bicycles and off-road cycling is allowed only on designated trails. Dogs and off-trail activities are not allowed. Designation of Environmental Natural Areas is a practice which is unique to Ramsey County and is not implemented throughout the metropolitan regional parks and trails system.

Official designation of regional parks requires approval by the Metropolitan Council. There are currently six regional parks under the jurisdiction of Ramsey County within the Regional Recreation Open Space System. These regional parks total 5,146.55 acres. In addition, the City of Saint Paul operates an additional four regional parks and Three Rivers Park District operates a Special Recreation Feature within Ramsey County.

PARKS AND TRAILS

The Park System Plan details information about each of the six regional parks within the Ramsey County system – Bald Eagle-Otter Lake, Battle Creek & Indian Mounds, Phalen-Keller, Long Lake, Tony Schmidt, and Vadnais-Snail Lake regional parks.

Some highlights include:

► BALD EAGLE-OTTER LAKE

The 1987 master plan is in need of updating to be relevant for current and future needs. This will redefine the future development as well as the redevelopment of existing facilities. There are in-holdings identified within the park boundary and can be updated with the master plan update. These are important future acquisitions for completion of the park area.

Tamarack Nature Center will experience phased development to complete the campus of facilities. The addition of a recreation program space will be the last major piece to accomplish along with a maintenance area.

Trails will continue to be a focus. Extensions of existing trails and the creation of new segments will help improve access to the park and to the various amenities within the park. Bruce Vento Regional Trail will pass by the park to the east and the Birch Lake Regional Trail will extend north to possibly connect with regional trails heading into Anoka County and west on the northern Ramsey County border.

The main features of this regional park are the lakes and natural areas. Preservation and restoration activities are high priorities. Some partnership experimentation is in place with environmental education and are hosted within the park. Water quality experiments have occurred and will continue to be tested.

► BATTLE CREEK & INDIAN MOUNDS



The master plan will be updated beginning in 2018. This will be an extensive examination of the largest park in the system. Already underway are an off-leash area master plan and an off-road cycling master plan for Battle Creek. The Great River Passage, an initiative led by Saint Paul, will also impact the park and future design of the Mississippi River portion. Plans for Pig's Eye Lake are also underway including the project proposal to create islands within the lake for increased habitat and wind erosion reduction.

The Water Works aquatic center will be a topic of discussion over the next 10 years. The infrastructure is aging to the point of rehabilitation and/or replacement. The decision will center around whether to do so or redevelop and repurpose that

area of the park. The current design appeals to younger families and has seen steady or declining attendance. Competition with large water parks and the contrast of the water park with the natural resource mission of the system are at odds.

The variety of natural areas is the main feature of Battle Creek. Woodlands, bluffs, prairies, wetlands, the creek, and the Mississippi River require attention to maintain and restore the complex ecosystems involved.

► PHALEN-KELLER

Phalen-Keller Regional Park will soon undergo a final phase of redevelopment concentrating on the support facilities surrounding the picnic areas. Previous phases recently completed have the park in a good position for the next 10 years.

PARKS AND TRAILS

► LONG LAKE

The next phase of development within this park is the pavilion, rest room and nature play area in conjunction with New Brighton's Lion's Park. Both entities agreed to cost-share the parking lot and rest room construction. Ramsey County will use state bond funds for this project.



► TONY SCHMIDT

The picnic shelter has been renovated and should be in good shape for the next decade. Trail connections are the focus of this park heading north connecting to other trails nearby.

► VADNAIS-SNAIL LAKE

Resolving the flooding problems of 2016 and 2017 are the priority for this park. Working with the watershed district and city of Shoreview will help develop a plan for resolving the sections of trails underwater and the flooded beach.

REGIONAL TRAILS

The regional trails are linear corridors that provide safe and enjoyable routes and support facilities primarily for recreational travel that pass through or provide access to elements of the regional parks system. They also connect communities to jobs, retail, schools and other amenities. Some regional trails are greenways and along waterways that provide corridors for wildlife to travel. The network of trails is becoming the major system for bicycling throughout the metropolitan area. Coordination among the 10 agencies is important for connections of the greater system.

Regional Trail Objectives:

- To provide alignments that accommodate unimpeded passages with a minimum disruption of the resource base.
- To provide alignments that parallel or traverse areas having scenic, historic, scientific or cultural qualities.
- To encourage multiple use when concurrent uses are compatible and multi-seasonal use when practical.
- To provide alignments that are of sufficient length for a meaningful experience and of sufficient width for safe passage, maximum capacity and minimal negative influence on adjacent community.
- To provide alignments that connect regional recreational open space sites.
- To provide alignments that utilize natural system corridors and man-made corridors.
- To function as arterial trail routes that intersect and complement local trail networks.

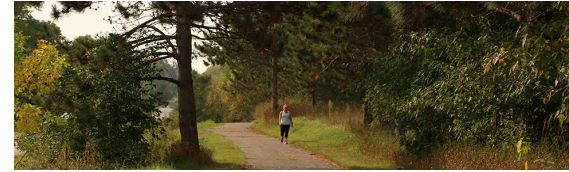
PARKS AND TRAILS

There are currently eight regional trails within the Metropolitan Council's Regional Recreation Open Space System under the jurisdiction of Ramsey County. These regional trail corridors include 880.54 acres and total 35.64 miles.

Ramsey County operates seven regional trails – Birch Lake, Bruce Vento, Highway 96, Lake Links, Lexington, Rice Creek North, Rice Creek West, and Trout Brook Regional Trails.

Some highlights from the Park System Plan include:

► **BIRCH LAKE** – The focus during the next decade is to complete missing segments of the trail. The preferred route has challenges including limited width in some areas.



► **BRUCE VENTO** – The preferred route has yet to be completed and is a priority for the next few years. Once the route is established, design and engineering of plans will be created in order to be poised for potential funding.

► **HIGHWAY 96** – This trail is due for redevelopment in some sections. Missing sections were recently completed over Interstates 35E and 35W making the entire stretch complete.

► **LAKE LINKS** – This section will be added onto in the future as part of a larger project to complete a trail around White Bear Lake. The Lake Links section will also be a connection to a regional trail heading east to Stillwater.

► **LEXINGTON** – The master plan will be developed over the next 10 years. Much of this trail is established by city and county trails. The trail will connect to Saint Paul with a goal to reach the Mississippi River.

► **RICE CREEK NORTH** – A missing link from County Road H to Long Lake Regional Park was completed in 2016. New sections are being created around the development of Rice Creek Commons. Once completed, the trail will take users from Lino Lakes to the Mississippi River in Fridley. A coinciding water trail follows the route through Rice Creek and is popular with canoeists and kayakers.



► **RICE CREEK WEST** – This is the portion of the Rice Creek Trail heading west from Long Lake Regional Park to Fridley. The water trail in Rice Creek in this stretch has been deemed to be too difficult and dangerous for both maintenance and use. While not promoting use, this section will be available for use by those who dare venture there.

► **TROUT BROOK** – The preferred route is currently being planned for with several difficult segments to solve. These segments tend to be developed areas where acquisition and easements may need to be negotiated. There are also segments that pass through residential areas that see a trail in their front yard as undesirable.

LOCAL COUNTY PARKS AND TRAILS

**County Parks**

The county park areas tend to be of limited size and resource base (generally associated with a significant water recreation resource) that offer a range of related outdoor recreational opportunities for county and metropolitan area residents. They have natural resource based facilities and amenities. County parks differ from city parks in that they tend to focus on passive recreation and the natural resources rather than active sports that city parks tend to accommodate.

County parks operation and capital funding is mostly provided through the property tax levy. There are occasional capital grants available but all regular funding comes from levy dollars.

County Park Objectives:

- To provide outdoor recreation facilities for intense public use that complement the natural resource base.
- To provide public access to water bodies.
- To accommodate maximum use of site resources.
- To provide facilities that require intense management.
- To accommodate exclusive-use requests and special-interest groups.
- To protect and manage significant natural resources within park units for aesthetic enjoyment and outdoor education.

PARKS AND TRAILS

There are currently nine county parks under the jurisdiction of Ramsey County. These parks total 726.49 acres.

The county parks and trails are also detailed in the [Park System Plan](#).

Highlights include:

- ▶ **BEAVER LAKE** – This park is the next to undergo a master plan update. Upon completion of the plan, the project will be placed in the queue of capital project funding requests.
- ▶ **ISLAND LAKE** – Heavily used and host to the Slice of Shoreview summer festival, this park is well-loved. Opportunities exists with the connection to the Island Lake Golf Course. Should that use change in the future, the land would be an opportunity for a park redesign.
- ▶ **LAKE GERVAIS** – The master plan could use a revision. One consideration received from the city of Little Canada is a request for a boat launch. The park used to host a launch but was redesigned eliminating the launch. The public launch serving the lake is on Spoon Lake which makes access sometimes difficult due to water levels in the summer and open water in the winter. Alternatives will also be studied.
- ▶ **LAKE JOSEPHINE** – This narrow park has limited room for amenities. Land across Lexington Avenue has possibilities for a formal trail. The city of Roseville is looking for a trail segment through that area. Future development of the Lexington Regional Trail could incorporate Lake Josephine improvements or inclusion into the regional system.
- ▶ **LAKE MCCARRONS** – A redevelopment effort is underway with stakeholders for the nearby Rice Street and Larpenteur Avenue intersection and surrounding area. Lake McCarrons County Park is a major focal point of the plans for the redevelopment. New housing complexes would add to the demand on the park. Ramsey County will work closely with Roseville, Maplewood, and Saint Paul to ensure planning for parks and open space is factored into the redevelopment and park dedication decisions.
- ▶ **LAKE OWASSO** – This park will be redeveloped in 2018 with a final phase in 2020 when the road through the park is rebuilt by the city of Shoreview. Features will be similar to the current design with the addition of a nature play area.
- ▶ **POPLAR LAKE** – This space is undeveloped except for a county yard waste site, the next step is for a master plan to be developed. This may come up within the next 10-year window.
- ▶ **TURTLE LAKE** – This recently redeveloped park will service the northern part of the county well during the next decade.
- ▶ **WHITE BEAR LAKE** – The beach was closed for several years due to low water levels until reopening in 2017. The boat launch is active and casual picnicking is popular. Reestablishing the beach will be a priority if the water level remains high enough for swimming.

PROTECTION OPEN SPACES

Outstanding landscape amenities, critical natural systems and vulnerable natural resources are characteristics of Protection Open Spaces. These characteristics contribute to public health, outdoor education, aesthetic enjoyment and ecosystem stability. Stewardship of these spaces is the charge for the parks and recreation department. This is a primary objective of the county's goal of community health and well-being.

Objectives:

- To protect unique features of aesthetic, educational or scientific value for public enrichment.
- To protect natural areas and manage the resources within these areas to support appropriate natural vegetation.
- To manage areas of suitable size and character to provide adequate food and shelter for significant wildlife populations within the urban environment.
- To protect a system of drainageways and holding basins critical to the surface movement, storage and treatment of storm water runoff.
- To provide public access for trails, nature appreciation and outdoor education.

There are currently nine protection open space sites under the jurisdiction of Ramsey County. These sites total 650.56 acres.

- Beaver Creek Open Space
- Fish Creek Open Space
- Holloway Marsh Open Space
- Kohlman Creek Open Space
- Kohlman Marsh Open Space
- Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space
- Suburban Pond Open Space
- Turtle Creek Open Space
- Willow Lake Open Space
- Woodview Open Space

SPECIAL-USE FACILITIES

Special-Use Facilities are areas or facilities that provide intense specialized or single-purpose indoor and/or outdoor recreation activities and require a specific resource base, location, restrictive control and management program above and beyond that associated with other general recreation activities.

Objectives:

- To provide only that natural or artificial resource base which is necessary to accommodate the intended use.
- To provide opportunities for involvement as a participant or spectator in a controlled setting.
- To encourage multi-seasonal use when feasible to maximize return on capital investment.

There are currently 18 special-use facilities under the jurisdiction of Ramsey County. These facilities include five golf courses; 11 ice arena locations (13 rinks); a fairgrounds (including horseshoe courts and historic cemetery) and an archery range. These sites total 591.12 acres (plus Keller Golf Course which is part of Keller Regional Park; and the Island Lake Golf Center which is part of Island Lake County Park).

Golf

Ramsey County's golf system includes five courses and one dome practice facility. Three of the county's five courses have a professional services contract with a PGA-Certified Golf Professional to manage the pro shop and clubhouse operations. The capital and maintenance at those three courses are managed and operated by the county. Those courses are Keller (18 holes, "flagship" course), Goodrich (18 holes) and The Ponds at Battle Creek (regulation nine-hole). The fourth course, Manitou Ridge, is operated under a professional service agreement, which covers the entire operation including clubhouse, pro shop and maintenance operation. The county maintains the capital needs of the course as part of the agreement. The fifth course, Island Lake, is an executive nine-hole course with a driving range. The course was established in a lease-to-build agreement. The county also has a land lease agreement for the operation of the Goodrich Golf Dome, which is separate from the course agreement.

In 2018, the golf operation will undergo an analysis to evaluate the current finances and operational practices at its golf facilities as they compare to industry best management practices in public golf course operations. The department is seeking assessment of the operational efficiencies and suggestions for enhancements that will increase revenues and decrease costs. In addition, the county would like an evaluation of its golf courses' position in the community and local market. Included in the final report, the county will have a review of golf operations in totality as well as facility-by-facility, the system's position in the local market environment, a review of the physical condition of the facilities and recommendations, and the results that can be expected from various management strategies and options. The evaluation will provide a foundation for operational and financial decisions for the upcoming biennium budget and long-term capital planning. The recommendations from the analysis are expected to be the 10-year plan for golf.

Arena System



Ramsey County Parks & Recreation operates one of the largest indoor ice arena systems in the country, consisting of 11 locations with 13 sheets of ice. Seven of the 11 locations are within the city limits of Saint Paul. Nine arenas were constructed between 1971 and 1975, some utilizing state funding initiated during the Governor Wendell Anderson administration. These facilities were prioritized in a targeted area in Saint Paul. The majority of the arenas were built as practice facilities or shelters from the elements for the local high school and youth hockey programs.

The oldest arena in the system is Aldrich Arena, built in 1962. The newest facility to the Ramsey County system is Vadnais Sports Center. The County acquired the facility in July of 2014. Vadnais houses two sheets of ice and a 100,000 square foot dome turfed facility. There are currently 133 different user groups utilizing the Ramsey County arena system recently renting a total of 18,038 hours of ice time throughout the year, with 12,293 hours rented from November to February.

In 2014, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners directed the County Manager to form an Arena Task Force to study the current state of the indoor ice arena system and make recommendations for the long-term future of the system. The task force examined the history of the arena system, the current operation, user groups, explored potential user groups, analyzed related issues and briefly explored possible alternative uses. Based upon the data analysis, trends examination, information from subject matter experts, community input, and the knowledge and experience of the task force members, the following list summarizes their topics of recommendations: Ice assigning/priority of use; Conditions for consolidation; Contracted use opportunities; Ice rental rates; Refrigerant replacement recommendation; Replacement schedule; Other capital improvements; Funding; Criteria for ending the use as an ice arena; Criteria for adding an arena; Repurposing process; Plan for non-county-owned arenas; Workforce impact. While the department's primary focus is on natural resource management, the Task Force did determine that the arena system does help accomplish the vision, mission and goals of Ramsey County through the provision of geographical access to a recreational amenity that provides healthy, safe, community-building opportunities. The arenas are an important part of the overall quality of life for Ramsey County residents, but for the future, careful consideration of recreational facility development should not supersede that focus.

The arenas within the Ramsey County system include:

- Aldrich
- Biff Adams
- Charles Schulz-Highland
- Gustafson-Phalen
- Harding
- Ken Yackel – West Side
- Oscar Johnson
- Pleasant
- Shoreview
- Vadnais Sports Center
- White Bear County

The age of the system and changes to refrigeration systems have the county looking at capital improvements to replace the refrigeration system and update the buildings making them more energy efficient. The refrigerant R-22 is banned from production as of the year 2020. Most of the Ramsey County rinks utilize R-22. The plan is to gradually change out the systems at each arena. The rinks are prioritized for capital improvements based on projected use out into the future as well as their age and condition. The lowest priority rinks may well be the first to be repurposed, ideally before any capital investment is made. There are a few rinks in the system that do not directly serve those living nearby and are possibly the first to be repurposed. An extensive public process will guide the ultimate decision about the highest and best use.

Other indoor arena operators will influence the future of the Ramsey County system. The closure or continued operation will impact the supply and demand for indoor ice.

Another recommendation of the task force is to cluster rinks in order to receive efficiencies in operating costs. Two rinks side-by-side can operate more efficiently than two rinks each on their own separate mechanical systems. Opportunities to operate multiple sheets of ice are present at Vadnais Sports Center, Charles Schulz-Highland and Aldrich Arena. The three sites are spread out geographically within the county.

PARK SYSTEM PLAN PUBLIC INPUT



Community Engagement was a goal to develop a framework that allowed Ramsey County residents, community members and organizations, and other local partners to participate in the planning process. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation recognized a need to review current recreation trends, park use, and available recreation amenities because much has changed throughout Ramsey County since the 2006 Park and Recreation System Plan was implemented. In an effort to evaluate the park and recreation system, a Comprehensive Parks Needs Analysis was launched to help direct the development of park and recreation space and programs throughout the county, and identify current and future community needs. As part of this process, a countywide parks planning survey has been created.

The parks and recreation survey will:

- Document existing park and recreation facilities, how they're used, who uses them and where improvements can be made.
- Help county officials, park staff and residents determine what steps to take to ensure all communities in Ramsey County have adequate access to our parks and open spaces.
- Determine the size, location and number of future parks in Ramsey County.

► ONLINE SURVEY

An online Parks Needs Assessment Survey was launched in July 2017 to solicit additional insight and comments for improvement to the park system. The online survey was active until February 2, 2018. (See the Park Needs Analysis Survey item for further detail).

► PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

The Parks & Recreation department launched a series of community engagement meetings to gain further insight and comments for improvement to the park system. Early in the process, it was a goal to provide way to seek meaningful engagement. As a result, the department developed a series of nine pop-up table meetings throughout the community at various locations and times:

- December 5, 2017 - Shoreview Library.
- December 9 - Tamarack Nature Center.
- December 16 - Battle Creek Community Center.
- December 18 - Maplewood Community Center.
- December 19 - Shoreview Community Center.
- December 30 - Highland Arena.
- January 5 - Vadnais Sports Center.
- January 6 - Health and Fitness Expo, New Brighton Community Center.
- January 18 - Roseville Library.

► PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

After review of information received from the online survey and public engagement meetings, staff developed user themes for the parks and recreation system.

► Existing System

- Accessible and free access.
- Well-maintained facilities.
- Wide range of recreation amenities.
- Connectivity to natural resource amenities.

► Gaps

- Trail connections.
- More variety of facility with food/concessions.
- More variety of recreation amenity rentals (boats, kayaks, recreation equipment, bikes).
- Extended park hours.

► Future Improvements

Park and Trail Improvements

- More mountain bike and cross-country ski trails.
- Addition of another nature center.
- Improved trail development for better connections to parks and communities.
- Add or improve recreation amenities (playgrounds, nature playground).
- Improved rental facilities.

Golf

- Improved connections and or access to facilities.
- Improved golf amenities and opportunities.
- Improve cost and discounts.
- Multi-use of golf course.
- Partnerships – reduce amount of tax dollars spent.

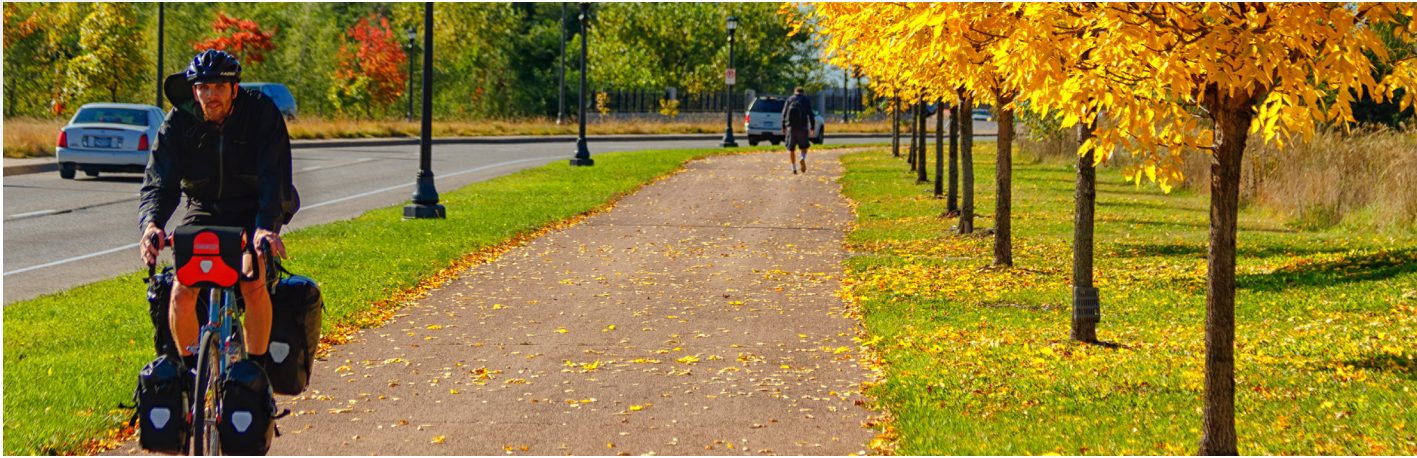
Arena

- Improved connections and or access to facilities.
- Improved arena amenities and opportunities.
- Multi-use of arenas.
- Improve use and operating costs.

Programing

- More programing opportunities throughout system.
 - Nature programming.
 - Recreation programming.

Active Living Summary



Active Living Ramsey Communities is a coalition created in December of 2004 by Parks & Recreation, other county departments, and community partners. For more than 10 years, the coalition has engaged the community to improve health. They create and promote environments that make it safe and easy for people of all ages and abilities to be physically active in their daily routines. Active Living Ramsey Communities encourages healthy lifestyles by bringing people and resources together to build active, walkable and bike-able communities. A collective vision and collaborative approach inform all aspects of this plan. Their work supports active living and active transportation for people in Ramsey County.

This comprehensive plan and the Ramsey County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan provide a framework for the development of a Connected Ramsey Communities Network. Implementing these plans helps to create a comprehensive network for people of all ages and abilities to safely, easily and comfortably walk, bicycle and be active.

Ramsey County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

Ramsey County municipalities came together to develop a countywide approach to increase physical activity through biking and walking. The plan empowers the county and local communities with the tools and framework to create local pedestrian and bicycle networks with countywide and regional benefits. It includes a set of tools, analyses, and actions to engage communities in creating a place where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can safely and comfortably walk and bike in their daily lives. It provides resources and a guiding framework for developing a Connected Ramsey Communities Network where walking and biking are regular parts of people's daily lives throughout Ramsey County. The plan incorporates equity principles, tools, and performance measures with an emphasis on an All Abilities Transportation Network that serves all people throughout Ramsey County.

Connected Ramsey Communities Network

The Connected Ramsey Communities Network is a countywide network of existing and future bikeways, designed to serve as a backbone connecting local communities and the region. This network is built from local facilities and is guided by local and regional planning efforts. It serves as a guiding framework for planning, prioritizing, and designing local active transportation systems. When fully developed, it will connect people with desirable destinations throughout the city and county with high-quality, long-distance, and connector routes.

Equity

Active Living Ramsey Communities incorporates an equity lens in their work. The coalition works closely with staff throughout Ramsey County including Public Health, Public Works, and Regional Rail to achieve the county's vision, mission, and goals. Working with community partners, especially local municipalities, is essential to achieving the goal of creating walkable and bike-able communities for all residents. These close working relationships help produce positive results to support residents in being physically active in their daily routine.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation System Survey

The 2018 Parks System Survey highlights the importance of pedestrian and bicycle connections to parks and filling gaps in pedestrian and bicycle corridors to create continuous pathways throughout Ramsey County. The following key themes and findings from the survey include:

- Walking, hiking, jogging, and cycling are the most popular park activities.
 - 85% of respondents use county parks for walking, hiking, or jogging.
 - 55% of respondents use county parks for cycling.
- Most park users travel to parks within bicycling distance, and many travel to parks within walking distance.
- Nearly half of park users surveyed walk and/or bike to county parks.
- Some respondents have trouble accessing the parks by bicycling and walking. Winter access, ADA accessibility, car traffic, and wayfinding were some of the issues cited by respondents.
- Trails were the third most cited facility priority for ADA improvements.

Opportunity and Constraints

Within the Parks System Plan, each park and trail description details opportunities and constraints specific to that location. This introduction attempts to describe broader opportunities and constraints not necessarily specific to any one location. With that in mind here are some thoughts about the next ten years:

SYSTEMWIDE OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Focus on acquiring in-holdings** – Developing a strategy to fund the purchase of properties within a park master plan or properties that border a park or trail corridor and would enhance the experience will take time even with persistent effort. The county will need to be prepared in order to move quickly when an opportunity presents itself.
- **Focus on redevelopment** – Maintaining assets within the system is critical to sustaining a functional system. Doing this in a flexible way to meet the needs and interests of a changing population is key.
- **Cultural diversity creates new and different facilities and program offerings** – New and changing demographics should yield a park system that looks different than the current park system. Community engagement, a racially representative staff, and equitable policies and processes are vital to all future planning efforts.
- **Focus on remaining opportunities such as AHATS** – Rice Creek Commons, the Ford plant site and other redevelopment not yet on the horizon offer opportunities to create more equitable park space and facilities. The Arden Hills Army Training Site offers vast opportunity for recreational use and a possible world-class venue for international meets and events.
- **Partnerships with other governmental agencies, stakeholders, and the private sector** – All major projects require a partnership at some level. Collaboration and cooperation will build the future. Relationships with the community and partners will cultivate the resources and momentum to get things done.
- **Master plan amendments or updates** – Several park and trail master plans were developed in the 1980s and 1990s and include amenities that were appropriate for the desired park use at that time. Due to changing recreation trends, demographics and use patterns, many of the park and recreation facilities are now out of date. Master plan amendments provide an opportunity to reevaluate park and trail facilities for improvements to existing infrastructure, new recreation opportunities not

PARKS AND TRAILS

currently within the park and trail system, and more equitable recreation amenities for all people, ages and abilities. Parks are community gathering spaces and there exists an opportunity to utilize those spaces to celebrate and bring awareness of the rich culture within Ramsey County. Space for public art installations, cultural events and programs opens the parks for wider use among residents.

- ▶ **Healthy food options** – Park and recreation facilities promote healthy lifestyles, activity and a sense of well-being. It's vital that all individuals have access to healthy food options in parks and other public spaces. Often there are either no or very few food options available, and those available are unhealthy. There are opportunities in key park locations to provide healthy food options in vending machines or concession stands.
- ▶ **Multi-use of facilities** - Use of park facilities has changed since they were originally developed more than 25 years ago. This provides an opportunity to review our park system and determine if facilities can accommodate more recreation activities or if there are other seasonal recreation opportunities that fit that facility.
- ▶ **Programming** – With the growth of population groups come opportunities for new programs. Community engagement will reveal interests and recreation activities that attract all groups into the park system. Formal programming or facilities that promote independent use of the park will be among the methods for accommodating new programs.
- ▶ **Natural Resources** – The park and recreation system is a natural resource-based park system that offers a variety of habitat areas in a developed urban area. Nature appreciation is an important method for building stewardship of the environment. Having such a densely populated area filled with natural open spaces is an opportunity to create appreciation.

SYSTEMWIDE CONSTRAINTS:

- ▶ **Almost fully developed county** – Opportunities to create something “big” are few and far between in a county that is almost completely developed. Instead, attention turns to redevelopment opportunities. This can take much longer to create versus projects that begin with a blank slate.
- ▶ **Accessibility by residents and visitors** – The parks are wrapped around preserved natural resources, not typically located in densely populated areas. Most of the system was developed when personal vehicle ownership was widespread and dominated the development landscape. Ramsey County is still vehicle-oriented but many residents use mobility devices, public transportation, bicycle or walk. The All Abilities Transportation Network will eventually create a more easily accessible network. Economic accessibility is also a constraint. Parks and trails are typically free of charge and financially accessible. Subsidizing the provision of parks and trails remains key to a thriving community.
- ▶ **Funding to maintain and operate the system is limiting opportunities** – Finding support for the funding necessary to build and maintain a park system is a never-ending challenge. While most residents acknowledge the importance of parks and trails and leisure-time activities to their quality of life, financial resources can be scarce. Parks and recreation opportunities are necessary for social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development and well-being. Parks and recreation can prevent illness, crime and other disparities. Understanding the vital role parks play in the larger social structure is key to gaining public support for funding.
- ▶ **The system was created 20 to 50 years ago and is slow to change to current and future needs** – A dominant culture still exists and influences decisions and priorities in the parks system. To date, many community members that attend open houses for future park development planning express ideas about what they used to do when they were younger. We need to ensure that a broad range of voices is represented in planning for a future inclusive of all of our communities.

- ▶ **Technology philosophies hold us to proven technologies and security concerns that raise the cost of operation** – Ramsey County has made a conscious decision to move forward with proven technology. The risk tolerance constrains opportunities to utilize technology that is farther along, friendlier for the public to access, and attractive to new or atypical users.
- ▶ **Age of infrastructure** – Much of the infrastructure across the park system is more than 25 years-old. Resources are spent maintaining what exists. Planning is important to decisions about whether to repair, replace, or re-purpose. In many cases, redevelopment of existing park and recreation facilities will be required to offer new or increased recreation amenities such as non-traditional playgrounds, larger picnic pavilions, and a wider variety of recreation amenity rentals such as kayaks, canoe, recreation equipment, and bikes.
- ▶ **Pedestrian Connections** – Transportation trends have changed over the years, there is higher demand to provide additional pedestrian access and trail connections from adjacent neighborhoods. In many cases, redevelopment of existing infrastructure and development of new connections will be required. New development opportunities present a challenge in many areas as additional land purchases or easements may be required to allow new pedestrian connections.

Communication Plan

Communication is an important component of all Parks & Recreation projects. Effective communication and engagement is essential for good decision-making. The fundamental objective of communication will be to develop strategies that ensure public engagement goals are met. Activities will include coordinating messages, information sharing and increasing awareness.

The scope of the communication plan will include:

- Social media.
- Web content.
- Subscription-based emails.
- Local media outreach.
- Print collateral and signage.

Community Engagement

Successful public engagement requires building trust, understanding and a foundation for informed consent. This requires a process that is characterized by technical competence, honesty, integrity, good listening and responsiveness. These principles will create the framework within which public engagement will continue to occur. For successful outcomes, this approach requires:

- Early and continuous participation of stakeholders.
- Reasonable availability of project information.
- Collaborative input on the preliminary planning.
- Open access to the decision-making process.
- Ongoing engagement through a variety of channels to reach community members throughout the development process.
- Proactive efforts to inform the public and engage them in the process, including those groups that are often underrepresented in design processes, namely people of color, immigrants, young people, renters, people with any disability, low-income residents, and people with limited English proficiency.

The approach to public engagement for Parks & Recreation projects is to intentionally expand the number and diversity of voices providing guidance. Our goal is to make public engagement easy and convenient for more people to participate.

How Do We Get There?

► **Partnerships** – All major projects require collaboration and working partners. Building relationships is be vital to achieving success. The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Commission has been meeting with cities' park commissions throughout the county. This helps coordinate plans and synchronize development projects. Annual communication takes place with parks and recreation staff from each of the cities in Ramsey County. A list of current partners is included in the Parks System Plan.

► **Foundation** – Creating a parks foundation is one tool that can build support and provide funding for major initiatives. This offers a blend of the public, private and non-profit communities to come together for the greater good.

Prioritized needs usually come with the resources to make them happen. Being current and relevant helps the department tune in to those needs. Relationship building, community engagement, and connections will keep parks and recreation in the forefront of people's minds and therefore relevant and a priority.

► **Responsive staff** – A staff that better represents the community will be a more responsive staff and more aware of the needs and interests of those they serve.

► **Relationship Building** – Relationships are often the most valuable outcome of shared work. Ongoing relationships are beneficial to all. Valuing relationships and spending the time to nurture them is what makes the work satisfying and enjoyable. Parks and recreation spaces create that sense of place and sense of community.

Working with the regional system and the implementing agencies, including the Metropolitan Council, the state legislature, the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks System are all vital to funding capital projects, operation and maintenance work and the future of the Legacy program. Cooperation and collaboration can improve how these groups work together to advance the quality of life that Minnesotans have come to expect.

10-Year Implementation Plan Priorities

There are several plans that have been recently developed as living documents that impact daily operations. Ongoing plans are revised periodically and will be prominent in the focus for the next ten years.

The Capital Improvement Program is a six-year plan that shapes projects, both regular and major. The plan is revised and updated every two years in conjunction with the county budget cycle. Work has begun on the next six year plan for the 2020-2021 county budget cycle. Future capital projects are placed in the [2020-2025 CIP budget](#) (see next page), future years aren't officially funded. This allows for some flexibility should the priorities shift and emerge.

Master plan updates with improved community engagement will be methodically revised until the system is completed. To project what each park will look like and what facilities and amenities are included would be presumptuous and ignore the community engagement process. Every aspect will include some form of engagement and will especially examine opportunities to eliminate racial disparities.

The Natural Resources Plan maps out the methods and priorities for protecting, preserving, and maintaining the natural resources that the park system is meant to steward. Funding opportunities are key to implementation of the plan.

The Arena System Plan, as presented by a task force in 2016, will help guide work over the next ten years. Arenas are prioritized in order of importance based on current demand. Lower priority arenas may provide an opportunity for repurposing in the future. Three arenas, Aldrich, White Bear County and Shoreview, are the first to see redevelopment. Charles M. Schulz -Highland will see redevelopment in the 2020-2021 budget cycle.

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION CAPITOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM 6 YEAR PLAN 2020-2025 (ESTIMATED SUMMARY)

PRIORITY	PROJECT OR ITEM	TOTAL PROJECT COST	ESTIMATED COST					
			2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
REGULAR COUNTY CIP PROJECTS (UNDER \$1 MILLION)								
1	NORTH OWASSO BOULEVARD COST SHARE	\$490,000	\$490,000	-	-	-	-	-
2	CAMPUS MASTER PLAN	\$200,000	\$200,000	-	-	-	-	-
3	NATURAL RESOURCE HABITAT RESTORATION - COUNTY PARKS	\$600,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
4	BATTLE CREEK WINTER RECREATION AREA	\$200,000	-	\$200,000	-	-	-	-
5	BITUMINOUS PROJECTS	\$2,270,817	\$263,797	\$107,238	\$263,603	\$373,283	\$856,508	\$406,388
6	CAPITOL ASSET MANAGEMENT- ARENAS	\$2,996,000	\$185,000	\$225,000	\$995,000	\$990,000	\$233,000	\$368,000
7	PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENTS	\$2,100,000	-	\$300,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
8	ASH TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT	\$450,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
9	ADA IMPLEMEN- TATION - COUN- TY FACILI- TIES	\$1,200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
10	WOODVIEW OFF LEASH DOG AREA MASTER PLAN	\$75,000	-	\$75,000	-	-	-	-
11	SATELLITE MAINTENANCE FACILITY	\$1,966,000	-	-	\$983,000	\$983,000	-	-
12	POPLAR LAKE COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000	-	-	-
13	CAPITOL ASSET MANAGMENT - PARKS (OVER \$50K)	\$100,000	-	-	-	-	\$100,000	-
14	GREEN ICE	\$871,062	-	-	-	-	-	\$871,062

Continued on next page.

Cont.

PRIORITY	PROJECT OR ITEM	TOTAL PROJECT COST	ESTIMATED COST					
			2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
LARGE COUNTY CIP PROJECTS (OVER \$1 MILLION)								
1	GOLF STUDY PROJECTS	\$11,562,246	\$3,677,311	\$2,432,935	\$2,500,000	-	\$2,952,000	-
2	HIGHLAND PARKING LOT	\$4,110,872	\$4,110,872	-	-	-	-	-
3	BITUMINOUS PROJECTS	\$2,395,938	-	\$1,395,485	\$260,974	\$105,688	\$259,512	\$373,279
4	ADMINISTRATION BUILDING RENOVATION	\$3,943,364	-	-	\$220,500	\$3,722,864	-	-
5	VADNAIS LAKES TRAIL	\$4,667,120	-	-	-	-	\$4,667,120	-
6	ARENA REGULATORY COMPLIANCE	\$4,138,818	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,138,818
REGIONAL PARK & TRAIL CIP/LEGACY								
-	REGIONAL PARK & TRAIL CIP/ LEGACY	\$13,882,477	\$2,916,220	\$1,510,557	\$3,072,925	\$1,654,925	\$3,072,925	\$1,654,925
-	REGIONAL HABILITATION OPERATION & MAINTENANCE (LOTTERY IN-LUE STATE FUNDS)	\$2,850,000	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$475,000	\$475,000
NATURAL RESOURCE - REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS								
-	CONSERVATION PARTNERS LEGACY PROGRAM (CPL)	\$1,200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
-	LESSARD SAMS OUTDOOR HERITAGE COUNCIL - PIGS EYE LAKE ISLANDS	\$4,337,000	\$4,337,000	-	-	-	-	-
COUNTY CAPITOL ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (UNDER \$50K)								
-	CAPITOL ASSET MANAGEMENT - PARKS (UNDER \$50K)	\$4,440,000	\$740,000	\$740,000	\$740,000	\$740,000	\$740,000	\$740,000
TOTALS		TOTAL	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		\$71,346,714	\$17,970,200	\$8,037,215	\$10,986,002	\$10,219,760	\$14,231,065	\$9,902,472

The Ramsey County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, completed in 2016, will guide the work in this area for the next ten years and beyond. Immediate work will fill gaps in the network system. Ramsey County will continue ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation of the existing system, and plan for opportunities to develop the system further. Developing an interconnected network of trails will be important work over the next ten years.

A Golf System Plan will be developed from a comprehensive analysis of the golf courses in Ramsey County in 2018. This will determine work in the courses for the immediate future. It is anticipated that the analysis will highlight improvements to customer service, market corrections, physical rehabilitation and preparing the golf system to meet future demands from the community.

Redevelopment of county parks continues methodically. After Lake Owasso County Park is redeveloped in 2017-2020, the process or redevelopment begins at Beaver Lake County Park. All county parks will follow. These redevelopment steps provide an opportunity to meet the changing needs and interests of the ever-changing population of Ramsey County. Community engagement will be vital to redesigning these parks which tend to be more locally based.

Creating a foundation for Ramsey County parks will begin within the next ten years. Formation of a non-profit group with a board to lead the effort will take time and energy. Board member selection will need to be done carefully to ensure an effective group of leaders can establish an impactful organization that supports the mission of parks in the county with a robust base of support.

Another financial focus is to create a method for funding the purchase of in-holdings. This may happen in conjunction with the foundation or in combination with a variety of funding methods. Having the ability to purchase properties as they become available is important to grow the system.

Park maintenance standards will be a priority to help Parks & Recreation operate effectively and efficiently. The asset management system will eventually allow for improved data collection that can help analyze the operation and be more playful.

Finally, the Energy Plan for the county and the Green Spaces, Green Places energy initiative created by the department will help us work towards goals of reduced electricity and natural gas use. Not only will this provide an economic benefit but will also better alignment the department with natural resources management and environmental stewardship.

The park ordinance is the legal policy in place, used for instruction, guidance, enforcement and protection of the parks, natural resources and people who use them. Keeping the rules and laws current and relevant to the community is important. The changing demographics of park users will raise issues and conflicts that need to be sorted out through the park ordinance.

Delivering the Vision

How does Parks & Recreation deliver the vision set forth by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners: A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive? For decades, the park system has delivered places and programs where many are valued and thrive. The challenge is to go further and make Ramsey County parks vibrant for all community members.

Following the Ramsey County mission - A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life - will be the guiding principle for service delivery. Working on established goals will further demonstrate how that vision is achieved. Each employee of the county will then use objectives and strategies that dive deeper into specific methods to make the vision a reality.

Diversify the workforce – This demonstrates to the community that Parks & Recreation staff are reflective of the community, are of the community and can relate to their interests and needs. Much effort will need to be exerted to change the internal culture that persists. The county is looking to implement changes that will influence the attraction, retention and promotion of talent.

Develop relationships in the communities underrepresented – This involves reaching out to all community members and will take intentional effort and focused resources. These communities are more difficult to reach and therefore take more resources to connect with as compared to the general population. The staff that reflects the community will help make this connection. New and different methods of outreach will be employed to build those relationships so critical to hearing voices not heard before. Use of a racial equity toolkit will help maintain the lens and eliminate disparities. The toolkit will inform all policies, procedures, facilities and planning for every aspect of the department.

Listen – The majority of time needs to be spent listening. What are residents saying? What messages are important to hear? Remove the barriers and focus on ways to enrich the conversation. The government exists to serve, not dictate to the residents.

Racial Equity Toolkit – We apply a racial equity lens for analysis of programs, policies, procedures, budgeting, capital planning – everything Parks & Recreation does. This is a formal method to listen and learn and respond appropriately. The toolkit will help formalize the process that will eventually become the way of doing business. Everything that is delivered will benefit all people.

Lead – Much of this effort takes leadership. The ability to inspire people to move forward, grow and change. To persevere even when resistance is blowing in the face of the leader. Knowing and believing in justice and what will benefit all – the community as a whole – not just the majority.

Implement change that reflects the needs and interests of the new community – This will result in changes that reflect what the community is saying. If the county delivers parks and recreation in this fashion, the vision will be realized.

The communication section describes the methods for keeping the public informed. General lack of awareness seems to be an important barrier to getting people out to the parks and trails. Increasing awareness through transparency will improve the use of the system. The county's online Open Data Portal will be one tool that can provide the public with information that they are looking for while telling important stories about the impact of parks and recreation on the community.

The operations and maintenance division within Parks & Recreation will standardize their operation. This will provide for effective and efficient use of resources. The standards will also provide justification for future budget needs. As the system changes, the use of data through asset management will be key to effective operations. The ability to model impacts of change to the system will improve resiliency, sustainability, and channel resources to essential areas.

Keeping natural resources front and center is primary to the mission of the Parks & Recreation department and should drive the decisions forward. Preserving and protecting what we have is vital. Restoring and creating improved natural resources enhances the scope of what the department is about.

Resiliency, sustainability and green energy are all related to the work of parks and recreation. Focus on these areas will set the department up for a long-range viability and keep the synchronicity of how environmental stewardship is linked to parks.

Funding the Vision

A major component of implementing the plan is funding. Limited funding is one of the reasons a comprehensive plan is essential to prioritizing the resources expended. Choices need to be made based upon plans laid forth. This plan relies upon multiple funding sources that include, but are not limited to:

1. **Tax Levy** – Currently the operating budget for parks and recreation is funded approximately one-third (33 percent) from the county's property tax levy.
2. **Revenue** – The balance of the operating budget is generated through fees and charges and some of the other funding sources listed below.

3. **Operations and Maintenance Regional Parks and Trails Funding** – The state legislature provides the Metropolitan Council with operation and maintenance funding that is distributed among the ten implementing agencies of the regional park system. Ramsey County's share varies with the funding amount. Recently the share has covered approximately \$250,000 of the \$6 million cost to maintain and operate the six regional parks and six regional trails in the system
4. **Parks and Trails Legacy Fund** – The State provides this funding through a portion of the sales tax to the regional park system. This can be used to fund projects, programs, positions and other initiatives that meet the four pillars of the program – Create, Connect, Coordinate, Care for.
5. **The Legacy Fund** also provides grants through the Conservation Partners Fund that support natural resource-related projects. The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund is a potential funding source for historical and cultural projects. Other Clean Water-related projects may be eligible as well.
6. **Capital Improvement Program – Regional Parks** – The state provides bonding for capital projects every two years. Every \$3 in bond funds are matched with \$2 in Met Council bond funds. Ramsey County receives a portion based on a formula. For more information see the [2020-2025 CIP budget](#).
7. **Capital Improvement Program – County** – Ramsey County has a Capital Improvement Program funded through the sale of bonds. Major Projects – are projects over \$1 million. Regular Projects – are projects under \$1 million. For more information see the [2020-2025 CIP budget](#).
8. **Federal Transportation Grants** – In recent years the status of these grants has been uncertain due to the volatile federal budget. The program funds trail projects.
9. **All Abilities Transportation Program** – A Ramsey County Policy which will vet all transportation related projects through a lens of the least mobile residents on up to large commercial carriers.
10. **One-half percent Transit and Transportation Sales Tax** – Utilizing the All Abilities Transportation Program policy, this funding source may be the source of some funds after the regional transportation projects are completed.
11. **Twenty dollar-per vehicle excise fee** – primarily used for road projects, related trails and trail connections are also a part of many projects.

Future Ideas

Create a Parks & Recreation Foundation 501(c)3 – Setting up an independent non-profit foundation would allow for fundraising, donations and initiatives related to supporting the parks system.

Sell park property and create a fund to be used to purchase in-holdings. The fund can receive other sources through donations, grants, and budgetary infusions. Currently, when in-holdings become available, there is no funding source readily available to respond within the window of opportunity.

Establish a revenue policy. Fees and charges for programs and services are categorized by policy. For example, programs, facilities and services (P/F/S) of community-wide benefit are usually offered at low or no charge. P/F/S geared toward a specific audience will be offered at market rates covering some of the cost. P/F/S that offer exclusive or special interest participation are expected to charge the amount needed to offer the P/F/S. This philosophy/policy will govern how the activities of the parks and recreation department are delivered. The policy also guides the budget development.

The shift towards racial equity and eliminating disparities will usually mean an increase subsidy to offer P/F/S that interest and attract those not currently utilizing the P/F/S. The current parks and recreation system was built based upon a majority dominant culture, more passive recreation, and relatively few programs. The demand is shifting towards programming, ease of accessibility both physically and financially, and facilities other than those offered in the past.

Partnerships with other government agencies – Partnerships can cost-share projects that provide benefit to all involved. New Brighton, for example, is sharing the cost of a parking lot and rest room

within Long Lake Regional Park. The lot and rest room will serve both regional park visitors as well as Lion's Park users.

School districts – Partnerships with public schools helped to build arenas at Harding and Johnson high schools. Renters at some arenas are the high school hockey teams. Relationships with schools provides regular programming with Tamarack Nature Center.

Partnerships with other entities – Cretin Derham-Hall, Hill-Murray, Woodbury and Mahtomedi youth hockey associations have helped keep certain arenas full. The arena flooring at Aldrich is being provided by a vendor through a revenue agreement.

Contract Services – Services such as canoe and kayak rental, food trucks, concessions, Go Ape, yoga-in-the-parks, and bike rentals are examples of contract services that could generate revenue.

Revenue Generation Ideas –

Camping – there are currently no camping opportunities within the park system. Camping cabins are a popular amenity.

Sponsorships of building and facilities – Sponsorship is a portion of the revenue at the Vadnais Sports Center. Naming rights and system-wide sponsorship are other possible expansions of this concept.

Advertising – Hockey boards and Zambonis display advertising. Electronic ads, sign ads at facilities, and ads on vehicles are some ideas.

Lease Agreements – Examples of this type of revenue include the golf dome, Island Lake Golf, and the Biff Adams Curling Club. Future repurposing of other arenas (curling clubs, lacrosse, hydroponics, other business use) are possibilities.

Operating Agreements – Manitou Ridge, Keller, and Goodrich golf courses all have agreements with the individual golf pros

Increase daytime users of indoor ice – The daytime user is always a sought-after commodity.

Increase dry floor use of arenas spring through fall – Many attempts have been made to increase use of the indoor arenas outside of the winter skating season.

Revenue generating facilities – Use of Aldrich Arena and other arenas with concrete floors for events such as concerts and large group gatherings such as quinceañeras. Other facilities could be built to host large events such as festivals and fairs.

Performance Measures

Performance measures play a critical role by defining goals, strategies and methods for tracking performance measures to make progress for towards each goal. The Parks & Recreation department implements two areas for performance measures to address Ramsey County Vision, Mission, and Goals, and for the Metropolitan Council Thrive 2040 Regional Park and Trail Policy Plan.

The performance measure in both areas may differ for proposed goals and strategies, but they are combined to create an overarching common goal for providing the highest quality park and recreation opportunities, experiences, and equity for all people, all ages and all abilities.

Ramsey County Performance Measures

Parks & Recreation plays a critical role within Ramsey County's vision and mission by defining goals for all park and recreation facilities, and implementing strategies and performance measures to make progress for towards each goal. This method provides a baseline for providing for providing the highest quality recreation opportunities throughout Ramsey County. Defined park and recreation goals and strategies include:

► **Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being through effective safety-net services; innovative programming; prevention and early intervention; and environmental stewardship.**

- Provide access to safe and well-maintained county and regional parks, offering a variety of services and facilities that promote healthy and active living for all residents of Ramsey County.
- Provide early learning opportunities with a nature-based curriculum.
- Promote environmental stewardship through preservation and restoration of natural resources.

► **Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.**

- Engage in proactive and constructive partnerships and dialogue with residents from all neighborhoods, races, classes, and cultures.
- Offer programming and facilities that reach across economic levels and allows opportunities for all residents.
- Create and expand opportunities for local, diverse, and women and minority-owned businesses and workers through Ramsey County's procurement efforts.

► **Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses through connections to education, employment, and economic development Throughout the region**

- Offer educational programming and opportunities, including the classes offered through the Tamarack Nature Center, and provide a field trip destination for schools throughout the region.
- Build, promote and improve pedestrian bike and trail systems that are accessible to all residents of Ramsey County and connect to neighboring regional trail networks.

► **Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments through professional operational and financial management.**

- Invest in the development and maintenance of parks and trail systems, ice arenas, and golf courses through grant opportunities and regional maintenance funding.
- Implement cost and energy saving measures at various parks facilities and buildings, taking into advantage of available programs and funding sources, including capital improvement funding.
- Reach out to residents of Ramsey County through social media and other methods to provide information on the many available parks opportunities.
- Strive to be accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CARPA).
- Actively recruit and engage volunteers to serve in a variety of capacities through the park system.

Thrive goals

In addition to following the Ramsey County Vision, Mission and Goals, this plan also supports the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan which outlines the Metropolitan Council's goals and strategies for the development of world-class regional parks. It reflects the regional vision set forth in Thrive MSP 2040 and describes how the regional parks system will be developed and operated to support Thrive MSP goals. The council adopted the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan on February 11, 2015.

The plan strives to build upon the existing good work of the implementing agencies to advance equity by committing to several strategies designed to strengthen equitable use of the Regional Park System. The planned regional parks and trails will enable residents to enjoy a variety of new park experiences throughout the region. Policies and strategies for regional parks include:

Expanding the Regional Parks System to conserve, maintain, and connect natural resources identified as being of high quality or having regional importance.

Providing a comprehensive regional park and trail system that preserves high-quality natural resources, increases climate resiliency, fosters healthy outcomes, connects communities, and enhances quality of life in the region.

Promoting expanded, multimodal access to regional parks, regional trails, and the transit network, where appropriate.

Strengthening equitable use of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin and ability.

As a requirement for regional park and trail funding, the department defines performance measures for Capital Improvement Program projects funded through state bonds and Parks and Trail Legacy Amendment funds received through the Legacy Fund.

The Parks and Trails Legacy Plan recommends how the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund should be used. The Parks and Trails Fund, one of the four funds created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passed in 2008, receives 14.25 percent of the money raised by the sales tax increase of three-eighths of one percent. The purpose of the amendment is to provide supplemental financial resources to traditional funding sources for support of state and regionally significant park and trail systems.

Legacy outcome measures as indicated in the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan should be tied to forward four strategic directions, also referred to as pillars or themes. The four are:

- Connect people and the outdoors.
- Acquire land and create opportunities.
- Take care of what we have.
- Coordinate among partners.

For both the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Capital Improvement Program there are performance measures tied to a racial equity tool. Agency project proposals answer questions about community engagement, how the project enhances racial equity, and how the project will be measured to determine the impact.