

Chapter 5 Parks and Trail System Plan

Overview

In mid-1995, the City of Circle Pines completed a comprehensive park and trail plan and development guide. In 2005, the City of Circle Pines updated that plan to respond to the changing needs and funding considerations. A number of meetings were held with the *Park and Trail System Planning Task Force* and interested residents through an Open House and Park Board and City Council meetings to ensure that planning outcomes were in line with public sentiment. The planning team was led by Brauer & Associates, Ltd.

Planning Updates to Section I - Introduction/Planning Framework

This document is the end result of a joint planning effort between the Task Force, Park Board, City Council, staff, and Brauer and Associates. The planning process took the following issues into consideration:

- Past history of the park system
- Changes to the park and trail system since the previous plan
- Community demographics
- Community setting
- Needs and desires of the local residents
- Natural and cultural resources
- Priority of improvements
- Other related issues

Public Involvement

As with the original planning process, policy makers and local residents were given numerous opportunities to participate in the planning process. Initially, the City of Circle Pines sent out letters and advertisements for interested individuals to join the Task Force. To encourage a variety of perspectives, all of those that submitted applications were asked to become part of the planning team. The Task Force included a cross-section of residents and members of the park board and city council.

The Task Force worked with the consultant throughout the planning process, including participating in public open houses and meetings where residents were invited to attend. Final consensus on planning issues was reached after all of the public input was considered.

Planning Updates to Section II - Needs Assessment

The recommendations associated with this plan are based on community needs as defined through the public process. Many of the needs defined during the 1995 planning process remain consistent with those defined in 2005. The following new or additional information augments the planning issues defined under the previous system plan.

Demographics

A 2002 *Demographic Change Report* (prepared by Excensus Community Demographics TM for the NM I-35 Corridor Coalition) provided the City of Circle Pines with updated demographics of the community. The key finding was that the overall age of the residents was continuing to rise consistent with trends associated with the baby boom generation. In Circle Pines, the age of the population and affordable home values suggests that there will be little housing turnover from now through around 2020. This means that there will be limited housing available for families starting out or wishing to upgrade from a starter home. Although some efforts have been made to provide newer housing, these opportunities are limited and it is expected that the community will consist of predominantly older households for quite some time.

Financial Resources

In the next three to five years, the City expects that funding for park and trail improvements through park dedication fees and property taxes will be limited. As of 2005, the City allocates approximately \$200,000 for the annual operation of the park system and has another \$400,000 remaining in its park dedication fund. It is not expected that either of these funding sources will significantly grow over this period of time.

Key Areas of Focus

In consideration of the findings of the public process, the general consensus by the Task Force was to focus on key areas for improvements to the parks, trails, and natural resource areas that would provide the best overall service to the community within the context of financial limitations. The finding and recommendations of this plan are based on this precept.

Planning Updates to Section III - Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is the benchmark policy document for the provision of parks, trails, and recreation programs.

The mission statement and goals established as part of the 1995 system plan remain consistent with current circumstances, albeit with some additional goals set by the Task Force to set the stage for specific implementation priorities.

Mission Statement

The mission statement that was established as part of the 1995 system plan is as follows: *"The purpose of the Circle Pines Park and Trail System is to provide a comprehensive, balanced, and high quality system of parks, natural areas, trails, and leisure-oriented activities/programs for city residents to use and enjoy in as cost effective manner as possible."*

This mission continues to have merit and reflects the desires of the community.

Goal Statements

Goals are broad statements that chart the course for achieving the stated mission. The goals define desired future conditions and outcomes. Under this plan, the main goal is to take action on the key priorities within the context of funding availability over the next three to five years. Specific goals in the plan include:

- **Park and Trail System Plan:** To ensure that the plan reflects the communities current needs and that key parks are highlighted in terms of relative importance to the community.
- **Park Land Acquisition and Development:** To select priorities that have the greatest value to the majority of residents.
- **Natural Resource Preservation and Management:** To continue to preserve and conserve natural resources and open space within the city and to partner with Anoka County Parks to on developing and implementing stewardship programs in as cost effective way as possible.
- **Trails Corridors/Right-of-Way Acquisition and Development:** To select priorities that focus on key connections within the community and to the regional park and trail system to improve safety and provide greater recreational value.
- **Community Participation and Interaction:** To continue to foster an open and ongoing dialogue with residents to ensure that priorities are in line with community needs.
- **Partnerships:** To further seek out and maximize the value of partnerships with local associations, adjoining communities, Anoka County Park, local school districts, churches, and civic organizations.
- **Recreation Programs:** To provide for the ongoing opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation activities by fostering city programs and supporting the programs provided by local associations and other organizations.
- **Park and Recreation Department:** To maintain a well-trained, highly motivated staff to carry out Circle Pines' mission and providing leadership in implementing the system plan.
- **Funding:** To maximize the value of local funding source through thoughtful selection of priorities and to pursue all forms of grants that may augment current funding sources.

Planning Updates to Section IV

Park System Planning Framework

This section of the 1995 system plan remains relatively unchanged, with the following exceptions:

- **Golden Lake Park was transferred over to the City to be included as a city park.** This park site contains many highly regarded recreational amenities and is considered to be a key component of the park system.
- **New housing developments have been constructed in the community of Circle Pines since the previous systems plan was prepared.** The housing has been a mixture of senior housing developments, as well as some townhome developments to help broaden the availability of affordable homes and bring in some younger homeowners. One of the townhome developments included the development of a small park area with passive recreational amenities that has since been included as part of the overall park system.
- **Pointcross Park was removed from the park system plan,** as this will be the site of a police station.

The first two bullet points bring positive changes to the park system and enhance the recreational opportunities available to the community. The last bullet point is also a reasonable land use change that has little impact to the overall park system.

Planning Updates to Section V Park and Trail System Plan

The 1995 system plan described the development program for each park and trail within the system, along with defining specific priorities to meet the needs at that time. This plan updates the previous plan to be consistent with current needs and financial resources. Importantly, the plan focuses on the next three to five years, at which time the city is encouraged to reassess its situation and adjust the plan accordingly.

Consistent with the 1995 system plan, factors that were considered in updating the system plan and implementation priorities include:

- Development patterns and population density in relation to recreational areas
- Reducing maintenance needs and expenses
- Maintaining / improving key recreational amenities
- Improving / maintaining safety for users
- Improving / maintaining community image of recreational amenities
- Community demand / recreational program needs
- Identifying needed trail links
- Redevelopment / upgrading of facility
- Funding availability / partnership opportunity
- Preservation of significant natural resources

Priority rankings were established by reviewing those established in 1995 and comparing that against current needs as defined during the public process. Ultimately, the Task Force established a listing of first and second tier parks and trails as a means to define which of these provided the greatest value to the community. First tier parks and trails are considered most critical to the success of the overall system and thus are the top priorities.

While still being important, second tier parks and trails do not rank as high and will not likely be pursued in the next three to five years during the life of this plan.

The following defines first and second tier parks and trails and the development priorities associated with them.

Priority Listing of First and Second Tier Parks

First tier parks are those that provide the community with the most beneficial recreational amenities based on their locations and development program. Each site is unique, offering varying recreational experiences and characteristics, which collectively provide a broad array of recreational opportunity for the community. In order of priority, first tier parks include:

1. Baldwin Park
2. Carl-Eck Park
3. Inner Park
4. City Hall Park
5. Golden Lake Park

Second tier parks are those that ranked lower in overall importance but still provide the community with much needed recreational amenities. Under this plan, it is recommended that these parks either be maintained to provide their current level of recreation or be modified to reduce maintenance costs until a time when funding becomes available to renovate them to meet contemporary needs. Second tier parks include (in no particular order):

- Center Park
- North Star Park
- West Oak (Biehn) Park
- Heritage Commons Park (Village at Circle Pines)
- Tamarack Park
- Aspen Park
- Pheasant Run Park
- Indian Hills Park

Priority Listing of First and Second Tier Trails

First tier trails are those that primary focus on key trail connections that will make the system more complete and safer for trail users. In order of priority, first tier trails include:

1. Lake Drive trail and crossings

2. City Hall trail Connection
3. Golden Lake School trail connection
4. Tamarack Park trail connection

Second tier trails relate to either specific trails or general improvements that are needed but are less of a priority than first tier trails. Second tier trails and improvements include (in no particular order):

- Trail surfacing and access
- Trail signage
- Regional trail connections
- Canoe launch
- County Road J trail improvements

Individual First Tier Park Improvements and Recommendations

The following provides a general overview and recommendations associated with each of the first tier parks. These provide a basis for developing individual master plans for each park as funding for improvements is authorized. Development of individual master plans should also include addition public involvement to ensure that all new development is consistent with the actual community need at the time of implementation.

#1 - Baldwin Park

Baldwin Park was selected as the top first tier park due to its overall importance to the community. The park provides active, programmed recreational amenities along with passive recreational opportunities and natural areas. The adjoining Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park also adds value to the park by providing additional natural areas and access to a growing network of trails. Through a cooperative agreement, the new master plan for the park fosters a direct link to Rice Lake Estates Park and provide service to residents in that area.

The following are adopted short and long term master plans for Baldwin Park.

Master Plan Development Program: The master plan prepared in the spring and summer of 2005 focuses on providing a balance between needed recreational amenities and preserving the site's natural amenities. The plan also strives to create social atmosphere to bring neighbors together to recreate and socialize. Included in the master plan were the following improvements, in no particular order:

- **Creative Play Area:** A high priority amenity that was needed to take the place of the play area that was removed for the Rice Lakes Estates Park. The play area includes a large playground suitable for various age groups. Surrounding walkways will improve accessibility. It is located in a highly visible area to ensure safety and surveillance. An arbor structure is also

provided adjacent to the play area to add an aesthetic quality to the park, and to provide some shaded seating.

- **Baseball Field:** Remains an important amenity and will continue to be extensively programmed. Improvements to the fencing around the field are included under the master plan. In the short term, general skating could occur on the field, if demand warrants.
- **Multi-Purpose Building:** The existing warming house / concessions building is to remain and be expanded to include an open picnic shelter.
- **Hockey Rink:** The existing hockey rink would be relocated to an area with more stable soils so that it can be paved for multi-seasonal use. Once paved, it will accommodate a full and/or half size basketball court, as well as provide hard-surface space for other summer uses.
- **General Skating:** Would be provided in one of several possible locations, which will be determined as the plan is implemented.
- **Parking Area:** Ultimately, the parking area will be moved to the current location of the hockey rink, with a curvilinear entrance drive envisioned to add interest and slow down traffic. Assuming soil issues can be resolved, a paved lot is recommended to reduce dust and ongoing maintenance, as well as provide a more delineated parking area.
- **Trails:** Asphalt trails would be provided throughout the park and connect into an existing asphalt trail system from Rice Lake Estates. The trails provide a number of loop options and access to the various recreational areas. Eventually, a trail link to the Rice Creek Regional Park trail system will be provided once that plan is implemented by the county.
- **Rice Lake Estates Park:** Land area would be converted to a natural landscape consistent with the natural surroundings. The park would also be used as a buffer between the trail and a future housing development.
- **General Amenities:** Includes adding benches, picnic tables, a bike rack, a drinking fountain, etc. in the main active recreational portion of the park site.
- **Aesthetics / Landscaping:** Includes providing a new park entrance sign, buffering parking lot from residential lots, and screening around the hockey rink. Providing screening around the storage area on the south end of the park site by the entrance to the regional park is also recommended.

#2 - Carl-Eck Park

Carl-Eck Park provides the community and larger region with much needed youth athletic fields. Tournaments are routinely held at this site on the two little league fields, which are heavily programmed throughout the season. A continuing priority with this park is seeking matching grants from the Minnesota Twins and other organizations to improve the facilities.

Development Program:

The majority of the development program for the park remains consistent with the 1995 system plan. A master plan should be created prior to any new development to ensure that improvements take into consideration other development issues and opportunities. Potential development items include:

- **Youth Ball Field:** To be located in the open green space off of Stardust Blvd., which is currently unused. Given the limited space, a T-ball field would possibly work in this location.
- **Ballfield Improvements:** As defined by the user groups, including improvements such as enhancements to fencing and adding irrigation.
- **Batting Cage / Warm Up Area:** Provide in a location that will not interfere with pedestrian circulation, parking, etc.
- **Parking:** Pave the gravel parking area (off of Firebarn Road and East Road) to reduce the confusion of parking, extent of on-street parking, dust, and overall maintenance needs. A small paved parking area should also be provided between the existing ballfields to provide handicap accessible parking stalls.
- **Asphalt Trails:** To provide links from parking areas to the ballfields and other recreational amenities, such as the children's playground.
- **Concessions Building:** Options for re-orienting the concessions building to be more accessible and centrally located should be considered in conjunction with any field improvement. Improving its appearance should also be considered.
- **Creative Play Area:** Should be replaced when needed and made more accessible to users with limited abilities.
- **Sledding Hill:** To remain, as this is popular with the neighborhood.
- **Aesthetics / Landscaping:** Improve landscaping to improve site aesthetics and provide buffering between the site and adjacent residential properties.

#3 - Inner Park:

Inner Park was defined as a first tier park due to its importance to servicing the recreational needs of the neighborhoods in the northern section of the city, which is isolated from much of the city by Lake Drive. The park is reasonably centrally located and has the potential to be a very successful park with the right kind of development. It already supports some neighborhood level recreation, with a primary focus on programmed athletic facilities that should be maintained and improved upon in order to meet the recreational needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Development Program: Much of the development program for the park remains consistent with the 1995 system plan. Prior to any new development, a master plan should be prepared to ensure a good balance between neighborhood level recreational amenities and athletic facilities is maintained. Creating a more inviting social setting should also be a major design focus. By bringing in more

people, the propensity for vandalism can also be reduced. Potential improvements to consider include:

- **Ballfield:** Improve existing field as needed, including fencing and possibly adding irrigation.
- **Hockey Rink:** Locate in location compatible with other amenities and pave the surface for multi-seasonal use, which could include a full or half size basketball court and other summer uses.
- **General Skating:** If determined to be needed, locate it where it is compatible with other uses.
- **Paved Parking Area:** Provide the minimum number of spaces to accommodate day to day needs.
- **Asphalt Trails:** Create a loop trail system within the park, with an accessible link to the various recreational amenities.
- **Creative Play Area:** Update the playground to accommodate a variety of age groups and abilities. It should be located in an easily viewed location and where it can be a focal point of the park.
- **Multi-Purpose Building:** The existing building could be replaced or even modified to provide a warming house, concessions area, restrooms, and picnic area for the site, if demand warrants.
- **Aesthetics / Landscaping:** Enhance landscaping to create a more park-like setting. Ornamental fencing in select locations would augment the landscaping and provide some safety in terms of keeping children from running into the adjacent street. Also use landscaping to screen or soften some of the built features, such as the hockey rink.
- **General Amenities:** Benches, picnic tables, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc. should be provided.

#4 - City Hall Park

City Hall Park was defined as a first tier park for a variety of reasons, including: its location near City Hall and other community facilities and services; the connection to nearby natural park areas; and the historic context for the park area (where Golden Lake Farm was once located and remnants currently remain). Although this is a first tier park, development planning should wait until the future of the existing library is determined. Whether it expands at this location or is relocated off-site, decisions about the library will likely affect the park's future development and the type of amenities that are needed at this site.

Development Program: A master plan was prepared for the City Hall Park almost a decade or so ago and should be updated prior to any new development, especially in light of the library situation. Since the master plan was completed, a creative children's play area was developed based on the Golden Farm theme. The play area has been very well received by residents. Potential nearer and longer-term improvements include:

- **Trail Improvements:** Include completing key connections to the adjacent neighborhoods to improve site access and pedestrian safety. This is

especially important considering the nearby senior housing units. One connection possibility is obtaining an easement through private property off of Oak Ridge Trail, just to the east of the community gardens. Other options include connecting the trail by the community gardens to the walkway leading to the Post Office, and then connecting trails around the west side of the site to create a nice loop. Improving the safety of the pedestrian crossing associated with the entrance drive to City Hall. Trails leading into adjacent natural park areas could also be improved for better accessibility and less maintenance.

- **Historical Features:** The historical aspect of the City Hall site should continue to be emphasized, perhaps by creating historical “stations” around the site that provide information on the various historic site references and to early times in the City of Circle Pines.
- **Shelter Structure:** Suitable for day-to-day picnic activities and larger community events. The structure should be architecturally aesthetically reminiscent of the historic structures of the past.
- **General Amenities:** Provide benches / seating areas, drinking fountain, bike rack, as necessary.

#5 - Golden Lake Park

Golden Lake Park was transferred over to the City in recent years through agreement with Anoka County. The park serves as a community park and has many newer amenities that provide active and passive recreational opportunities. The park is located along Golden Lake and includes a sand beach area, fishing pier, open lawn spaces, tennis courts, basketball ½ court, playground, trails, picnic shelter, and a variety of other amenities.

Development Program: Although much of the park is newly developed, there are a few potential improvements that would enhance the park, including:

- **Shoreline Improvements:** Includes re-naturalizing instead of maintaining the areas adjacent to the waters edge. This would also help remove nutrients from stormwater runoff entering the lake and thus help improve lake water quality
- **Asphalt Trails:** Create an internal loop within the park to augment existing trails and provide access to the various site recreational amenities.
- **Viewsheds:** Create some lake vista's from along the trails following the waters edge.
- **Parking Area:** Possibly incorporate more green space into the larger parking lot to break up the extensive amount of asphalt to make it more in keeping with the park setting.
- **Open Lawn:** Maintain this space for informal field uses, such as soccer, ball play, frisbee, etc. A programmed athletic field would probably conflict with the existing character of the site and is therefore not recommended.

- **Aesthetics / Landscaping:** Enhance the landscaping in various areas to screen developments such as the parking lots. Providing vegetative buffers along the street would also soften the edges of the park site. Also limit the area that is maintained turf to only that which is needed for park activities. The rest should be renaturalized to improve aesthetics and reduce maintenance.
- **Create a Sense of Entrance:** Adding an entrance feature to complement the park's natural characteristics.
- **Creative Play Area:** Update the children's play area when needed, making sure the playground is sized appropriately for a community park.
- **General Amenities:** Benches, picnic tables, bike racks, drinking fountains, etc., as needed.

Individual Second Tier Park Improvements and Recommendations

The following provides a general overview and recommendations associated with each of the second tier parks. These provide the basis for developing individual master plans for each park as funding for improvements is authorized. Development of individual master plans should also include addition public involvement to ensure that all new development is consistent with the actual community need at the time of implementation.

Center Park

Center Park is a linear park located in the northern part of the city. Current development includes concrete walkways, playground areas, and an open field area. The park is also connected to Inner Park via the trail system. Some of the improvements are relatively recent and should have considerable life left in them, especially the newer children's play area that should last another 10 years. Maintaining this park at its current level is recommended, with the exception of the following potential improvements that could happen in the nearer term:

- **Removals:** All of the older playground equipment should be removed from the site since it is very outdated and not up to desirable standards. The outdated shelters (which have attracted vandalism) should also be removed from the site.
- **Landscaping / Buffers:** Naturalizing or enhancing the landscaping along some of the maintained edges adjacent to the residential areas would provide additional buffering and help reduce maintenance.

North Star Park

Most of the worn-out amenities that were once at this park have been removed for safety and aesthetic reasons. Currently, only a paved trail remains along with some unwanted social trails in the wooded areas. Since this park is a lower priority than Inner and Carl Eck Parks, no significant improvements to this park other than minimal maintenance should be undertaken under the time frame

associated with this plan. Maintenance and minor improvements that could be made to enhance the park's safety could include:

- **Additional Removals:** Clean out and remove some of the understory plants to create “viewing windows” around the park and open up vegetated areas along the trail to improve opportunities for surveillance. Also continue to remove invasive species in the wooded areas to prevent that from getting out of hand.
- **Landscaping / Buffers:** Potentially re-naturalize some of the maintained park space to improve the sense of separation between park land and private properties. This would also help reduce maintenance.

West Oak (Biehn) Park

West Oak Park is a small piece of property off the end of a cul-de-sac that is also used as a water holding area in the lower portions of the site. This site is not seen as a highly developable piece of property and has a low priority for any improvements. It is recommended that this piece of property simply be re-naturalized to reduce the need for maintenance.

Heritage Commons (Village at Circle Pines)

This is a newly developed site that was created as part of a housing project. It contains numerous passive recreational opportunities with an “old town center” character to it. It serves the adjacent housing development and is also accessible by trails. Development includes a parkway setting with swinging benches, trails, a labyrinth, a shelter structure on a pier overlooking the pond, and seating areas. The only significant improvements is connecting the park to more of the trail system.

Tamarack Park:

This is a natural park with a trail running through it from the City Hall site. Potential trail improvements include providing links to adjacent streets and add a connection to the lake. Improving the surface of the trails to enhance accessibility and reduced maintenance is also recommended, as is providing additional seating and signage along the trails. Providing ongoing management of the natural systems is also recommended to control invasive species.

Aspen Park

This is a natural park with a trail. Potential trail improvements include establishing a better connection from the park to Golden Lake Park as well as improving access to the Village at Circle Pines. Improving the trail surface to enhance accessibility and reduced maintenance is also recommended, along with providing seating and signage along the trails. Providing ongoing management of the natural systems is also recommended to control invasive species.

Pheasant Run Park

This too is a natural park with a trail connection between Aspen Park and Golden Lake, and also provides a connection to Rice Creek Regional Park. Potential improvements include providing seating and signage along the trails and providing ongoing management of the natural systems.

Indian Hills Park

This is a small park located adjacent to Rice Creek Regional Park. The park offers scenic views and provides a small, outdated play area that should be removed. Due to its isolated location and small service area, it is not a top priority for improvement. Fortunately, the trail connection to the park does allow access to Golden Lake School, which offers playground equipment, court games and athletic fields suitable for neighborhood use.

Individual First Tier Trail Improvements and Recommendations

The following provides a general overview and recommendations associated with each of the first tier trails. These provide the basis for developing detailed plans for each trail as funding for improvements is authorized.

#1 - Lake Drive Trail and Crossings

Lake Drive is a very busy road with high speeds and difficult to use pedestrian crossings, effectively creating a barrier between the north and south half of the city. Given the circumstances, providing a formal paved trail along Lake Drive with safe pedestrian crossings across the road is a high priority. A formal trail along one or both sides of Lake Drive would also add to the overall trail system.

Key connections across Lake Drive include major intersections where crossings would be well marked and signed. Incorporating traffic calming techniques as part of any roadway improvements should also be pursued to increase safety at pedestrian crossings.

#2 - City Hall Trails

A trail connection from the City Hall Campus over to the Glen Oaks and senior housing area is a priority to provide better pedestrian movement between the sites. This is especially important for those that no longer drive but still need to get over to the campus area for a variety of social, recreational, and utilitarian reasons.

The preferred trail connection in this regard would be to provide a trail from the intersection of Shady Way and Oak Ridge Trail that connects into the existing aggregate trail running from the City Hall site into Tamarack Park. The city would need to acquire an easement through private property to make this trail alignment possible. The existing trail that leads into the City Hall site would also have to be extended to run adjacent to the roadway in order to connect into the existing walk/trail leading to the post office. This would ensure that pedestrians would not have to walk along the roadway. The secondary trail option, which

poses even more constraints, would run the trail along Civic Heights Drive between the two sites. The concern is the limited amount of space to retrofit a trail. A more detailed evaluation of both of these options is necessary to determine which is the most viable.

#3 - Golden Lake School

This relates to developing a trail from Golden Lake Road to the south side of Golden Lake School and then over to existing trails that link to the regional park. This would improve access and safety for the students going to the school site. (Students now walk along School Road, which is also heavily used by motor vehicles and buses.)

#4 - Golden Lake Park / Aspen Park Connection

Developing a trail from Woodland Road through Aspen Park and over to Golden Lake Park would significantly improve the overall trail system. This trail would provide a safe route from the park area associated with Village at Circle Pines all the way over to Golden Lake Park. (Currently there are no sidewalks along Golden Lake Road, so pedestrians must walk along a street that has a numerous curves and is considered unsafe for pedestrians.)

Notably, there are a number of constraints associated with developing this route. First, the trail alignment would not be entirely on existing park property, which would require acquiring easements. One possibility is using a utility easement owned by the City of Blaine.

The second constraint relates to the short section of trail between Woodland Road and the easement in Blaine. In order for this alignment to work, the trail would have to cross a private drive, a berm, and the roadway leading to the adjacent cul-de-sac. A more detailed evaluation of this alignment is necessary to determine its viability.

#5 - Tamarack Park Trail

The existing aggregate trail should be upgraded to asphalt to improve access and reduce maintenance. The crossing of several low areas would also have to be addressed as part of any upgrading of the trail to reduce the propensity for wash outs and erosion. There is also a general consensus that a trail connection to the lake should be made a part of this trail network. This would require easements across private property in order to gain lake access. (The homeowners in this areas already have some informal trails through the natural areas, as well as a small pedestrian bridge.)

Second Tier Trail Descriptions

The second tier trails relate to basic improvements to trails that are of less of a priority. The following recommendations are not in order of priority.

Trail Surfacing and Accessibility

General improvements should be made to enhance the trail systems to make them more accessible to a wider variety of users of varying abilities. This includes maintaining a minimum width of 8' on all trails and transitioning aggregate trails to paved surfacing to improve accessibility, reduce maintenance, and improve the overall sustainability of the trail systems.

Trail Signage

A consistent signage program along trails should be implemented to provide users with the information needed to understand the system and rules and to find their way around.

Regional Trail Connections

Once the proposed Rice Creek Regional Park trail system is completed, the City should pursue development of any remaining trail connections to maximize the value of this regional asset.

Canoe Launch

A continued desire to establish a canoe launch within the city persists and is worthy of pursuing. One potential location is at the end of Golden Lake Lane East. Development of a canoe launch at this location would also have to include a couple of parking spaces at the end of the cul-de-sac.

County Road J

A trail along County Road J currently leads up to the interstate. Making a safe crossing of the interstate should be a longer range priority once other higher priorities are implemented.

Planning Updates to Section VI- Implementation Plan

As previously defined, in the next three to five years the City expects that funding for park and trail improvements through park dedication fees and property taxes will be limited. The City allocates approximately \$200,000-\$300,000 for the annual operation of the park system and had another \$300,000 remaining in its park dedication fund. Under current City financing scenarios, it is not expected that either of these funding sources will significantly grow over the defined time period.

After considerable discussion, the Task Force, Park Board, and City Council reached a consensus that using available resources for making improvements to a limited number of top priority first-tier parks and trails was the best strategy to meet community needs. Should new funding resources emerge over time, additional improvements would be considered and acted upon in priority order as defined under this plan (or otherwise determined appropriate by the Park Board and City Council). By limiting investments to select top priorities, more significant and appreciable improvements can be made that will result in greater overall

public values than if resources were spread too thinly across the entire park and trail system.

Recommended Priorities and Budget Allocations

Based on the needs assessment and findings from the public process, the recommended implementation strategy is to take a balanced approach to park and trail improvements by allocating approximately 50% of available funding sources for park related improvements and 50% for trail related improvements.

Park Related Improvements

Under the defined strategy of making strategic investments, the priority parks for improvements over the next three to five years include:

- Baldwin Park-continued phased improvement redevelopment of this key community-level park based on the adopted master plan completed in 2005.
- Inner Park-redesign and phased redevelopment of this park to meet the recreational needs of the neighborhoods in the northern section of the city, which is isolated from many of the parks south of Lake Drive.
- Carl-Eck-continued phased improvement of this park primarily through leveraging grant dollars from outside sources. City funds may be needed to match grants in some cases.

An updated master plan should be prepared for Inner and Carl Eck Parks similar to the 2005 master plan for Baldwin Park in order to determine the implementation priorities and potential costs for making improvements to each of these parks. Based on the development programs outlined in this plan, it is anticipated that overall potential costs for improving these parks will exceed available resources by a considerable amount and that a phased approach will be required. For initial planning purpose, the cost for improving each of the listed parks is anticipated to fall within the following ranges:

- Baldwin Park-\$220,000 to \$300,000, exclusive of the play area constructed in 2005.
- Inner Park-\$225,000 to \$370,000 which is typical for this type of neighborhood park.
- Carl Eck-\$200,000 for general improvements, on up to \$980,000 for major renovations.

Actual budget allocations for these three parks should be based on the more detailed master plans. Also note that the costs assume that all of the work will be contracted out. Costs could be reduced if the City does some of the work and/or use in-kind contributions from local associations and residents.

Trail-Related Improvements: Under the defined strategy of making strategic investments, the priority trails for improvements over the next three to five years include:

- Lake Drive Trail and Crossings-this would need to be coordinated with any improvements make to Lake Drive by the County. The major limitation is the uncertainty of the redevelopment time frame, which is not directly controlled by the City. In the interim, the City is encouraged to reinforce with the County the importance of integrating trails along the road and improving the crossings to meet community needs and improve pedestrian safety.
- City Hall Trails-include trail links from the City Hall Campus to the Glen Oaks and senior housing area, as well as a connection over to the Village along Lake Drive (if not completed sooner as part of the first priority.)
- The city will continue to work with Anoka County to support the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve Master Plan.

A detailed alignment master plan should be prepared for each of these trails in order to determine the potential costs for making these trail connections. Based on the general cost data, the cost for paved asphalt trails typically ranges between \$90,000 and \$150,000 a mile, depending on site conditions. This does not include the cost for acquisition of easements or additional road right-of-way.

Working toward implementing these priorities over a three to five year time frame will position the City well for a more complete reevaluation and updating of the park and trail system plan five years out, or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Park Board and City Council.

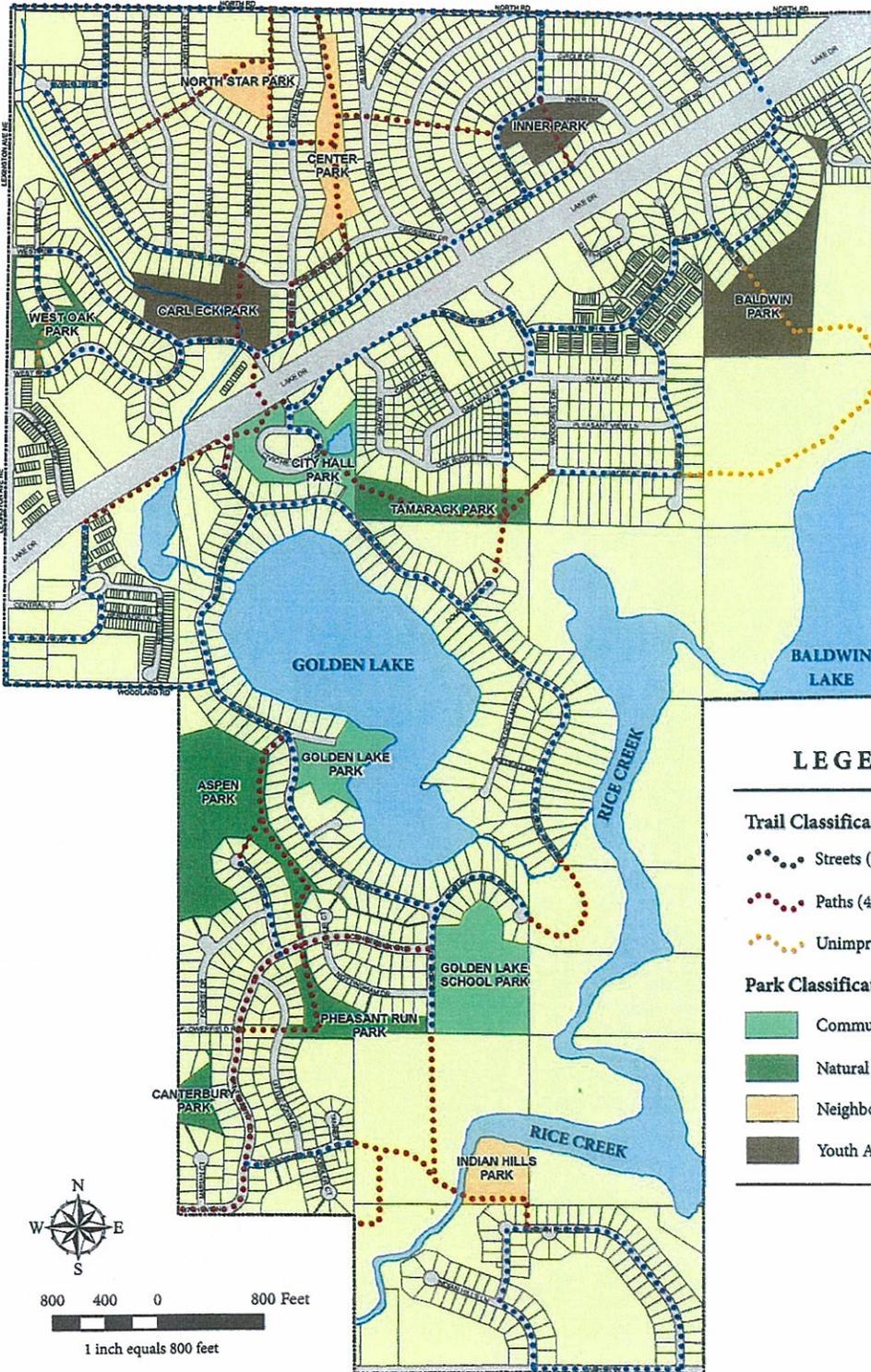


City of

CIRCLE PINES

PARKS AND TRAILS

Comprehensive Plan Map



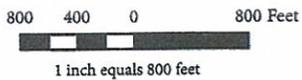
LEGEND

Trail Classification

- Streets (9.35mi)
- Paths (4.92mi)
- Unimproved (0.77mi)

Park Classification

- Community
- Natural Resource Area
- Neighborhood
- Youth Athletic





Legend:

- - - First Tier Trail
- - - Second Tier Trail
- Existing Trail
- - - City Sidewalk
- Regional Trail (Existing)
- - - Regional Trail (Future)
- ⊙ Major Intersection
- ★ First Tier Park



**Park and Trail System Plan -
2005 Addendum
City of Circle Pines, Minnesota**

Prepared by:
BRAUER & ASSOCIATES, LTD.
 Project #04-29
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