

Park and Trail System Plan

City Of Circle Pines

Prepared For:
City of Circle Pines
Park and Recreation Board

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Acknowledgements

Overview

In mid-1995, the City of Circle Pines commissioned Brauer & Associates Ltd. to prepare a comprehensive park and trail plan and development guide. The Park Board represented the citizens of the community and oversaw the project. A number of public meetings were held to gain public participation to ensure outcomes were in line with public sentiment.

Acknowledgements

The planning team led by Brauer & Associates, Ltd. would like to thank the City Council, Park Board, and city staff for providing their insight and understanding of the concerns and needs of city residents. We would also like to thank the individuals that attended the public meetings. The participation of committee members and the public allowed us to prepare a master plan that reflects the unique character and intrinsic qualities of the city.

Sincerely,
BRAUER & ASSOCIATES, LTD.

Jeffrey A. Schoenbauer, RLA, Vice President

Summary Statement

Section I - Introduction/Planning Framework

This document is the end result of a joint planning effort between the Circle Pines Park Board and city staff and consultant team. The project began in mid-1995 and reached completion in early 1996. The project focused on the preparation of a park and trail system plan. The planning process took the following issues into consideration:

- Past history of the park system
- Community setting
- Needs and desires of the citizens
- Natural and cultural resources
- Other related issues

Planning Framework

The Park and Trail System Plan presented here followed a new and evolving approach to planning recommended by the National Park and Recreation Association. It is referred to as the Systems Approach to Planning because it focuses on the systematic evaluation of community needs and then developing a system plan that responds to those needs. The key principle of this approach is that it fosters continuous improvement to the park and trail system through ongoing evaluation of the plan within the context of evolving and changing community needs.

Public Involvement

As stated, the Systems Approach to Planning is rooted in public involvement in the planning process and is responsive to understanding the needs, desires, preferences, and values of the people that live in the community. Regardless of how one defines target publics -- stakeholders or customers, guests or patrons, users or nonusers -- this approach to planning emphasizes an interactive and integrative process of citizen involvement and understanding for making decisions regarding the park and trail system that surrounds them. In the future, enhanced citizen involvement in the decision making process will be the foundation of all planning activities and reflected in outcomes that serve the needs of the people and protect the integrity of the city's landscapes.

Gaining the public's input and support upfront was critical to the outcomes and recommendations defined in this plan. It is important that public participation remain an inherent part of the planning process as this plan moves through implementation phases.

Section II - Needs Assessment

For any park and trail system to be successful, it must fulfill the physical, psychological, and recreational expectations of those it is intended to serve. In this context, the term "park and trail system" includes not only parks and trails per se, but urban spaces, greenways, streetscapes, schools, and natural resource areas (open spaces), as well. All of these components contribute in one way or another to the quality of the environment that surrounds each of us and the quality of life that we experience in our communities.

Assessing the needs of the community is critical to developing a successful park and trail system. Since Circle Pines is a dynamic community, it should be anticipated that the expectations, concerns, and needs of individuals and families living in the city will continue to change and evolve. Anticipating and preparing for these changes will require continuous measuring and monitoring in future years if the park and trail system is to be responsive to community needs.

Although the processes that foster public input are yet to be fully developed and used, citizens were given the opportunity to participate in the planning process at several levels. These interactions proved invaluable in defining the issues and concerns confronting the city and its residents. This assessment provided the insight and direction necessary to prepare a plan that will guide the development of the park and trail system. The needs assessment included:

- Demographic profile
- Locally-determined needs
- Selected trends in outdoor recreation
- General assessment of existing park, natural resource, and trail systems

Section III - Strategic Plan

Sometimes referred to as a comprehensive plan or business plan, the strategic plan is the benchmark policy document for the provision of parks, trails, and recreation programs. It provides a consistent, definable, and justifiable continuum of ideas, beliefs, and values that define the *vision* of the park system. It serves as the blueprint for decision making and provides the impetus for specific resource allocation strategies.

The assessment of need clarified and defined many of the pertinent issues affecting the park and trail system in Circle Pines. The results of that assessment served as the basis for the strategic plan, which includes a number of components:

- Mission statement
- Set of goals
- Set of objectives for each goal
- Set of policies for each objective

Mission Statement

The mission statement establishes the *vision* of the park system. It brings to light the basic precept by which the park system is built. The mission statement for Circle Pines reads: *"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."*

Goal Statements

Goals are broad statements that chart the course for achieving the mission of the Circle Pines Park and Trail System. They define desired future conditions and outcomes. Goal statements include:

- **Park and Trail System Plan:** To prepare and implement a Comprehensive Park and Trail System Plan.
- **Park Land Acquisition and Development:** To provide city residents with parks and natural areas for recreational uses, as visual/physical diversions from the hard surfacing of urban development, and as a means to maintain the character, ambience, appearance, and history of the community.
- **Natural Resource Preservation and Management:** To provide for the preservation and conservation of natural resources and open space within the city.
- **Trails Corridors/Right-of-Way Acquisition and Development:** To provide city residents with an interconnected trail system for transportation and recreation purposes.
- **Community Participation and Interaction:** To establish an effective, ongoing means of communicating and interacting with residents about issues related to parks and recreation facilities, programs, and future development. To provide residents with the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and programs through various civic and volunteer organizations.
- **Partnerships:** To maximize the recreational opportunities available to city residents through the development of fair and equitable working partnerships between the city and the local school district, adjacent cities, county, churches, and civic organizations.
- **Recreation Programs:** To provide the opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation activities through the implementation of well-designed, effective and interesting recreation programs.
- **Park and Recreation Department:** To maintain a well-trained, highly motivated staff to carry out the city of Circle Pines' mission of developing a quality park system and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for city residents.
- **Funding:** To secure the funding necessary to carry out the mission of the Circle Pines Park and Trail System.

Section IV - Park System Planning Framework

A park system framework describes the parameters and guidelines for establishing a park and trail system within a given community. It serves to translate the assessment of need and strategic plan into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy community needs. The framework follows the procedures recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (i.e., National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines -- completely revised publication due out in early 1996). To a limited extent, these recommendations have been modified in response to the unique circumstances particular to Circle Pines.

The planning framework consists of the *physical infrastructure* and *planning guidelines* components. The former relates to the community's physical infrastructure. The latter relates to various guidelines and planning considerations that give basis to the planning framework. The following summarizes each of these components and their impact on the development of the park and trail system plan.

Physical Infrastructure

Developing an understanding of the physical infrastructure and characteristics of the community played a vital role in developing the park and trail system plan. The infrastructure is based on a set of structural elements which, in one way or another, have a direct impact on the development of the park system. The key structural elements considered as part of the physical infrastructure include:

- Municipal/city boundary
- Zoning and guided land uses
- Transportation plan
- Urban services area
- Natural resource characteristics
- Current park and trail system
- County and regional park lands
- School district properties
- Adjacent cities park and trail systems
- Water resource plans

These factors have been integrated into the plan whereby they have become part of the very fabric of the system itself. Hence, the concept of the city-park comes to life.

Planning Guidelines

Planning guidelines give structure to the planning framework. They make it feasible to translate community needs into a physical plan that meets those needs. The guidelines presented here reflect those recommended by the National Park and Recreation Association, which are based on generally accepted practices across the country.

The planning guidelines seek to accommodate specific land-use functions usually ascribed to land and water resources designated for park and trail purposes. These functions include:

- Recreation
- Urban open space and amenity value
- Natural resources
- Reserve and contingency
- Trail corridors and right-of-ways
- Organizational

Through the use of planning guidelines, the various uses of park lands listed above can be appropriately addressed and accommodated in a physical system plan for the community. Through the use of these guidelines you can achieve:

- A level of service that is desired by the citizens (customers).
- An equitable distribution of parks and trails throughout the community.

The planning guidelines recommended and used as part of the planning framework for this plan include:

- **Level of Service Guideline (LOS):** Deals with determining the amount of physical space needed within a park system based on the demand for specific types of facilities *within a given community*.
- **Park Classifications Guidelines:** Define the minimum acreage and development criteria for different classes, or types, of parks. They are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the park system that ensures all community needs are fulfilled.
- **Trail Classifications Guidelines:** Define the development criteria for different classes, or types, of trails. As with parks, they are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the trail system that ensures all trail needs are fulfilled.
- **Facilities Type and Location Guidelines:** Identifies the more common types of recreation facilities and define their optimal location with respect to the various classifications.

Other guidelines defined in this section include:

- System flexibility
- Lifecycles of systems components
- Quality initiative
- Restoration of natural resources and ecological systems
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992
- Universal access
- Consumer Products Safety Commission guidelines

Section V - Park and Trail System Plan

The system plan describes the various components of the Circle Pines park and trail system. The plan is based upon the findings of previous sections and the framework presented in the last section.

Although nearly fully developed, Circle Pines is still a very dynamic city with a changing population structure and evolving community needs. Staying abreast of these changes and anticipating how they will impact the development of the park system is of paramount importance if the city is to be successful in meeting the needs of the community. In this context, it must be kept in mind that:

- All system components must be justifiable within the context of the park and trail needs, mission, and goals of the community.
- As the park and trail system needs, mission, and goals change in future years, the system plan itself must also change.

With the above understanding, the system plan defined in this document provides a strong starting point and valuable guide to park and trail development based on the current needs of the community and the opportunities and constraints facing the city.

The basic precepts behind the plan include:

- Developing a comprehensive and interrelated park and trail system.
- Using existing park land to its highest and best use.
- Recognizing the limitations of resources (physical and fiscal).
- Developing a plan that allows for incremental and orderly improvements -- visionary yet realistic.

The overriding goals of the system plan are to:

- 1) Foster the "city as a park" concept, whereby the park and trail system serve as primary factors in shaping the character of the community and creating a desirable place to live, work, and recreate.
- 2) Service neighborhood and community park and recreation needs.
- 3) Service youth athletics by providing facilities and providing access to facilities through partnerships.
- 4) Develop an interlinking trail system.
- 5) Provide access to facilities for adult participants through partnerships.
- 6) Protect and enhance natural resource amenities.

The overall system plan consists of the following:

- Park system plan (based on Neighborhood Park Service Areas)
- Trail system plan
- Regional and county parks and trails
- School district outdoor facilities
- Natural resources management planning
- Partnerships
- Private recreation facilities
- Urban open space and public amenities

The Park and Trail System Legend on page 68 and the Park and Trail System Maps on page 69 provide an overview of system components and how each of these components function together. The remainder of this section should be referred to for specific information about individual parks or trails.

Section VI - Implementation Plan

Partnership Approach to Implementation

This section focuses on establishing a framework and priorities for implementing the park and trail system plan. The following provides an overview to the key points of this section.

Success in implementing the park and trail system plan will be based on the strength of the partnership that includes:

- Park and Recreation Board
- City staff
- Residents at large
- User Groups
- Partnerships with adjacent cities, school districts, the county, churches, civic organizations, businesses, etc.

It is only through these partnerships that the plan presented here will become reality.

Cost Analysis

The Cost Analysis Table on page 100 defines the potential costs associated with each major component of the park and trail system plan. The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, implementation planning, comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another, and developing funding scenarios.

It is important to recognize that the range of potential development scenarios is quite broad with respect to implementing the system plan and the costs that go along with it. This ranges from a limited level of plan implementation which meets minimal system plan objectives to a maximum level of plan implementation which completes all aspects of the system plan. Ultimately, the citizens of the community will have to decide the level of implementation they wish to achieve.

Evaluation Criteria for Prioritizing Park and Trail Development

With limited resources, ranking the development of one park, trail, or development initiative against that of another is necessary to give structure to the implementation process and to proceed with improvements. Through the use of ranking criteria, objectivity can be injected into the decision making process. This criteria is based on and evaluated against factors that influence the demand for parks and trails. It must be broad based enough to consider the important and predominant factors, yet limited enough to be manageable and practical for decision makers to gain consensus and take action. Ranking criteria includes:

- Development Patterns and Population Density
- Community Demand
- Recreation Program Needs
- Redevelopment/Upgrading of Facility
- Funding Availability/ Partnership Opportunity
- Preservation of Significant Natural Resources

Prioritization of Park and Trail Initiatives

By applying the above evaluation criteria, one can begin to establish priorities for development initiatives. The basis for these priorities goes back to the assessment of need and strategic plan outlined in previous sections.

Critical to this debate is the understanding that the priorities presented in this section are based on the city's and consultant's understanding of community needs and the opportunities that are present today. These should not be viewed as absolutes. Instead, the priorities should serve as the beginning point for discussions that should involve the Park Board, City Council, city staff, and citizens living in the city. Involving citizens in this debate is of particular importance in that they are the customer and it is vital to meet their specific needs. In today's economic environment coupled with the public's attitude toward taxes and living expenses, it will be vital to "hit the mark" each time development initiatives are undertaken. Figure 6.1 on page 102 provides an overview of the priority categories for park and trail development. Pages 103 through 109 establish the basic priorities within each of these categories.

Funding Sources

The availability and timing of funding for the development of the park and trail system will have direct impact on the implementation of the plan. Figure 6.2 on page 112 provides a brief overview of the funding sources typically available at the local level of government. It also provides an overview of the probability of any given source adding to the funding stream for parks and trails within the city.

Each of the non-local funding sources require an application process which requires an action plan and description of funding requirements. All of these funding sources are competitive and/or require political action and citizen approval.

Joint-Use Agreements

With the availability of funding being limited, relying on partnerships will be vital to meeting the needs of the community in the future. This is especially true with respect to youth and adult athletic facilities. Critical to these relationships in the need for a high level of cooperation between members of the partnership.

Establishing clearly defined joint-use agreements between members of the partnership is important to their success. From a strategic and practical planning perspective, each of these agreements will greatly affect the city's development strategies and priorities.

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I - Introduction / Planning Framework

Overview/Project Scope

This document is the end result of a joint planning effort between the Circle Pines Park Board and city staff and consultant team. The project began in mid-1995 and reached completion in early 1996. The project focused on the preparation of a park and trail system plan. The planning process took the following issues into consideration:

- Past history of the park system
- Community setting
- Needs and desires of the citizens
- Natural and cultural resources
- Other related issues

The character of the community, personal conveniences, recreation opportunities, physical environment, extent of open space, and personal living space are all important to one's perception of the quality of life in a city. The parks and natural open spaces that surround us are intrinsically tied to our perception of a quality living environment. The park and trail system plan outlined here seeks to achieve this end by providing a comprehensive and interrelated network of parks, trails, and natural resource areas for public use.

Planning Framework

The planning framework provided structure to the undertaking of this project. The framework consists of a number of components:

- Planning process
- Public involvement
- Park Board and staff involvement

Planning Process

The Park and Trail System Plan presented here followed a new and evolving approach to planning recommended by the National Park and Recreation Association. It is referred to as the Systems Approach to Planning because it focuses on the systematic evaluation of community needs and then developing a system plan that responds to those needs.

The key principle of this approach is that it fosters continuous improvement to the park and trail system through ongoing evaluation of the plan within the context of evolving and changing community needs. This is of significant importance in today's constantly changing public park and recreation environment. In addition, there is an expectation by citizens, or customers, for high quality within the context of fiscal responsibility. As one would expect, responding to the public's expectations requires diligence directed toward understanding their needs and then responding to those needs. In other words, know what they want, then allocate resources to best addressing those needs.

Since the Systems Approach to Planning is dynamic, it has an in-born flexibility to respond to the ever-changing needs, opportunities, and limitations that will face the community in the future. The process allows for continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the plan is achieving desirable ends. This approach to planning:

- Provides an opportunity to view system components within an overall context
- Focuses all activities on providing services that benefit the customer
- Allows for needs to be evaluated in a comprehensive and comparative manner
- Allows for the allocation of limited resources to their highest and best uses
- Allows for incremental and orderly improvements to the park system

Figure 1.2 illustrates the planning process.

Public Involvement

Servicing the needs and desires of the citizens was the primary driving force behind the development of the park and trail system plan.

As stated, the Systems Approach to Planning is rooted in public involvement in the planning process and is responsive to understanding the needs, desires, preferences, and values of the people that live in the community. Regardless of how one defines target publics -- stakeholders or customers, guests or patrons, users or nonusers -- this approach to planning emphasizes an interactive and integrative process of citizen involvement and understanding for making decisions regarding the park and trail system that surrounds them. In the future, enhanced citizen involvement in the decision making process will be the foundation of all planning activities and reflected in outcomes that serve the needs of the people and protect the integrity of the city's landscapes.

Gaining the public's input and support upfront was critical to the outcomes and recommendations defined in this plan. Public input was achieved through:

- Open public meetings -- which allowed citizens to bring forth specific areas of concern
- Park Board meetings -- open to the public during all planning sessions
- User group participation -- individual user groups defined their specific concerns through public meetings and submittals to Park Board members and city staff
- Park Board members -- individuals appointed by the city to represent the citizens of the community
- In-park interviews -- informal interviews carried out by the consultant during in the field analysis of the park system

These points of public contact proved invaluable to understanding the needs of the community. It is important that public participation remain an inherent part of the planning process as this plan moves through implementation phases. To be successful, the users of the parks and trails must become their greatest advocates. To do that, they must be given the opportunity to participate and develop a sense of ownership in planning outcomes. Figure 1.2 illustrates the extent to which the public's involvement in the planning process is encouraged.

Figure 1.1 - Systems Approach to Planning Model

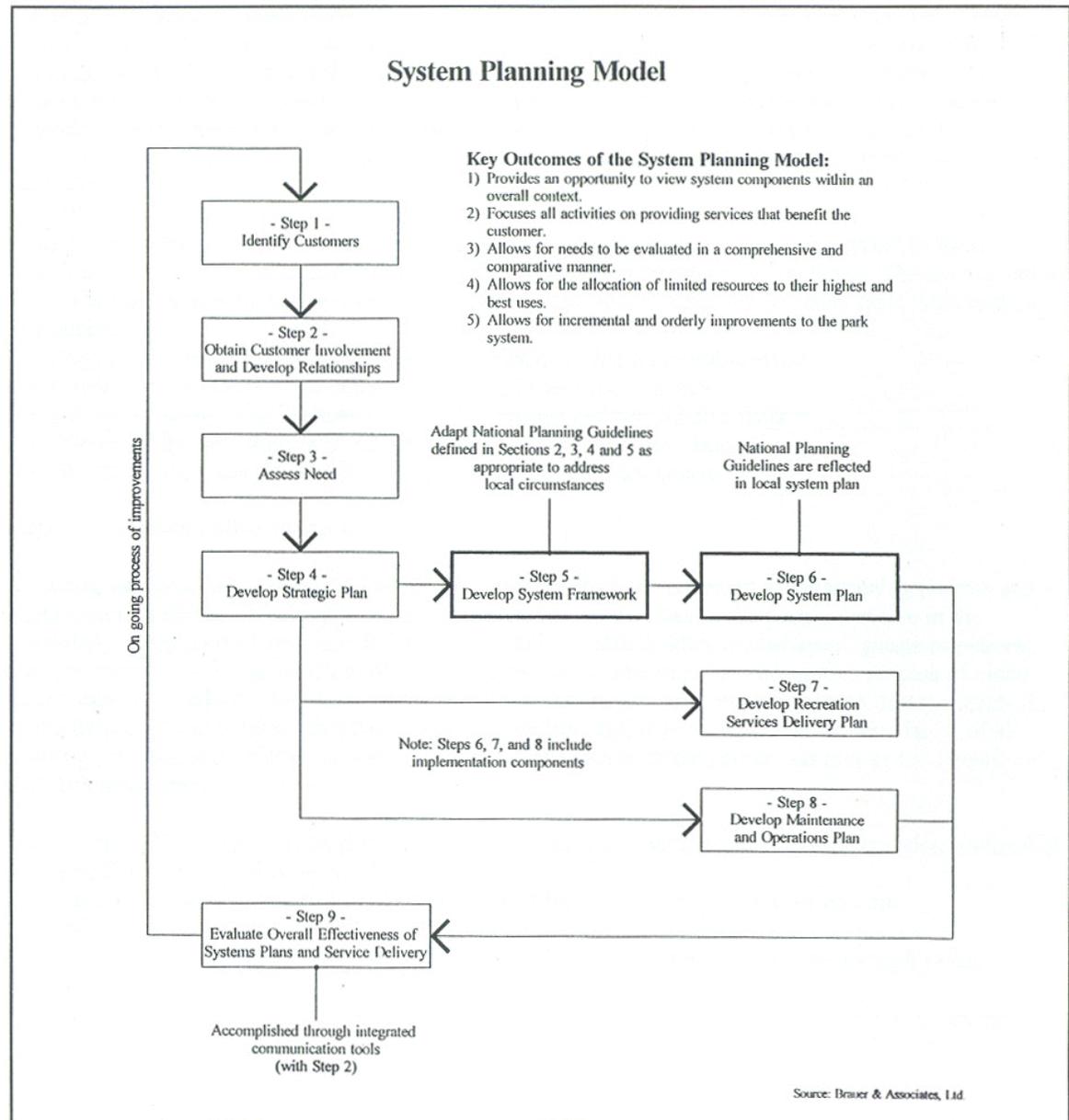
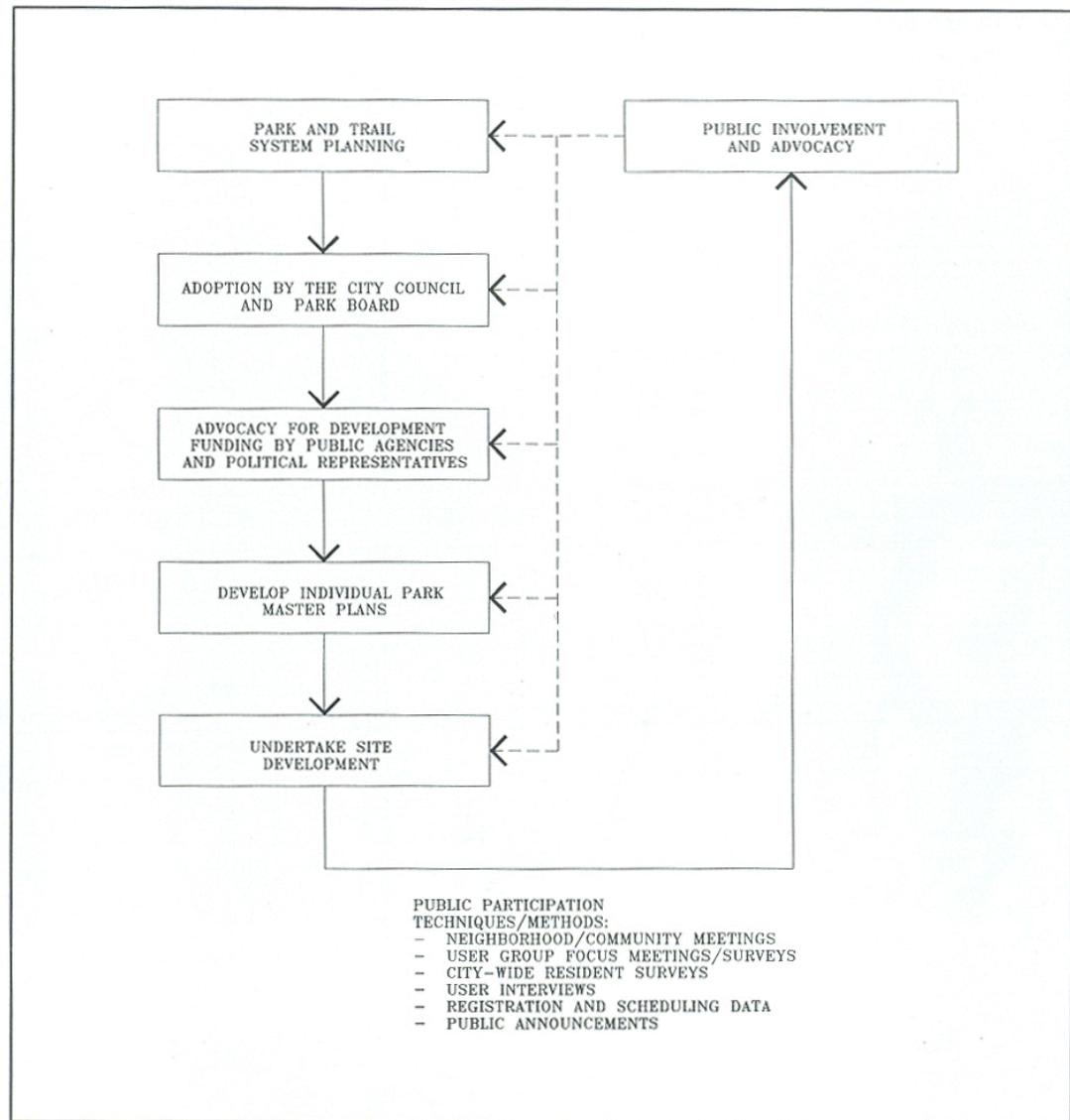


Figure 1.2 - Public Involvement in the Planning Process

To be successful, the users of the parks and trails must become their greatest advocates. To do that, they must be given the opportunity to participate and develop a sense of ownership in planning outcomes.



Park Board and City Staff Involvement

To ensure consistency with broader, city-wide strategic plans, planning objectives, and policies, the consultant team worked closely with the Park Board and city staff. Park Board members played a crucial role in the project by overseeing each step of the planning process. This helped ensure that outcomes were in sync with the needs of the community. City staff served in an advisory role and provided needed background information on pertinent planning issues.

II - Needs Assessment

Overview

For any park and trail system to be successful, it must fulfill the physical, psychological, and recreational expectations of those it is intended to serve.

It should be anticipated that the expectations, concerns, and needs of individuals and families living in the city will continue to change and evolve.

For any park and trail system to be successful, it must fulfill the physical, psychological, and recreational expectations of those it is intended to serve. In this context, the term "park and trail system" includes not only parks and trails per se, but urban spaces, greenways, streetscapes, schools, and natural resource areas (open spaces), etc. as well. All of these components contribute in one way or another to the quality of the environment that surrounds each of us and the quality of life that we experience in our communities.

Assessing the needs of the community is critical to developing a successful park and trail system. Since Circle Pines is a dynamic community, it should be anticipated that the expectations, concerns, and needs of individuals and families living in the city will continue to change and evolve. Anticipating and preparing for these changes will require continuous measuring and monitoring in future years if the park and trail system is to be responsive to community needs.

A variety of existing and new techniques should be used in the future to assess the needs of residents. Until these processes are fully developed and implemented, determining what types of parks, trails, and recreation services are most desired by the citizenry will have certain limitations. Under this pretense, building flexibility into the system plan today becomes paramount to meeting the needs of the community tomorrow.

Although the processes that foster public input are yet to be fully developed and used, citizens were given the opportunity to participate in the planning process at several levels. The results of these public sessions are presented in this section. These proved invaluable in defining the issues and concerns confronting the city and its residents. This assessment provides the insight and direction necessary to prepare a plan that will guide the development of the park and trail system.

The forthcoming needs assessment includes:

- Demographic profile
- Locally determined needs
- Selected trends in outdoor recreation
- General assessment of existing park, natural resource, and trail systems

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of Circle Pine's population allows for a general statistical understanding of the local population.

The demographic profile of Circle Pine's population allows for a general statistical understanding of the local population. It also helps in defining potential changes in the population makeup in future years. Key demographic variables include age, race, ethnicity, income, education, sex, marital status, household size and makeup (traditional/non-traditional), and population densities. Although age, race, ethnicity, and income are probably the most important, each of these variables add insight to understanding the target market.

The demographic profile of the city is valuable from a park system planning standpoint in that it illustrates the rate at which the city's population is growing and changing. The park and trail system will also need to change at a similar rate to keep up with demand for specific facilities and services.

Figure 2.1 - Demographic Profile of Circle Pines illustrates the key demographic variables and characteristics that will have an impact on the development of the park and trail system. This information was obtained from the City of Circle Pines and the Metropolitan Council (1990 Census). The following summarizes the city's demographic profile and identifies how these variables impact the development of the park and trail system.

Age

Like much of the nation, the average age in Circle Pines is creeping upward.

Summary: Like much of the nation, the average age in Circle Pines is creeping upward. In 1990, the 35-44 year age group accounted for 32.5% of the population, with the 25-34 year age group following at 28.0%. If national and state trends hold true, Circle Pines can expect that the average age in the community will continue to rise, resulting in more middle-aged and elderly residents than ever before. Consequently, as the Baby-Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) leave the child-rearing years, there will be an associated decline in the number of younger children in the community.

Impact on Planning: Age is an important factor in the propensity for an individual to participate in one leisure activity versus another. As our society ages, the trend in leisure activities will be profound:

- Baby-Boomers entering middle-age will significantly affect the demand for the certain types of leisure activities in a couple of ways. First, the preference for less-demanding, individual activities (i.e., walking, bicycling, nature observation, etc.) will likely grow. Second, the amount of time set aside for recreation will likely diminish as Baby-Boomers enter their highest earning years, resulting in a higher demand for leisure pursuits that are less time consuming, readily available near home, and flexible.
- As the Baby-Boomers leave the child rearing years, a smaller percentage of the population will be under the age of 18. This will result in less demand for leisure activities that appeal to these age groups, which includes many of the more active sports.

Age is an important factor in the propensity for an individual to participate in one leisure activity versus another.

Household Composition

The aging of society is a significant factor in changes to household composition.

The expected changes in household composition will impact the type of and demand for leisure opportunities desired by residents.

People and Families in Poverty

Although not pronounced, there is a demand for providing access to leisure opportunities for this subset of the population.

Race/Ethnicity

Although currently a relatively homogeneous community, it must be recognized that the population's racial and ethnic makeup may change and become more diverse over time.

Household Income

Since income plays a significant role in an individual's ability to access leisure opportunities, it will play a role in the type of leisure opportunities people expect from the city versus what they can afford to obtain through other means.

Summary: Household composition in Circle Pines has historically been relatively stable. With a rather homogenous population, the family structure has remained relatively stable and traditional. Married-couple families made up almost 73% of the households in the community in 1990, with 9.5% one parent families and 17.5% non-family households. Average persons per household in 1990 was 3.0. This is expected to decline to less than 2.5 by the year 2020.

Impact on Planning: The aging of society is a significant factor in changes to household composition. As older couples pass through their child-rearing years, average family size tends to decline and grow older. In addition, many other societal factors influence household dichotomies. Delayed marriage and child bearing, higher divorce rates, lower birth rates, declining household incomes, and so forth tend to reduce the size and increase the average age of households in the community. The expected changes in household composition will impact the type of and demand for leisure opportunities desired by residents.

Summary: About 2.1% of the population live in poverty in the city. About 5.1% live under 200% of the poverty level.

Impact on Planning: While the level of poverty in the city is not pronounced relative to many other communities, it does illustrate that there is a demand for providing access to leisure opportunities for this subset of the population.

Summary: At 98% of the population, Circle Pines is predominantly white. Asian is next at only 1.2%.

Impact on Planning: Clearly, Circle Pines is largely a homogeneous community, with relatively little racial or ethnic diversity. For the most part, providing leisure opportunities that appeal to this homogeneous population will be the primary concern. However, it must be recognized that the population's racial and ethnic makeup may change and become more diverse over time. State and national trends point in this direction. Given this, the city must continue to monitor changes in these dynamics to ensure that the needs of all population subgroups are being met.

Summary: Household income was on the high end of the scale, with about 45% of the households having incomes of \$50,000 or more. The distribution of income across the city is less defined, although property values may give some indication of income distribution. Based on a cursory review, the household values on the south end of the city tend to be higher than the older, more established neighborhoods on the north side.

Impact on Planning: Since income plays a significant role in an individual's ability to access leisure opportunities, it will play a role in the type of leisure opportunities people expect from the city versus what they can afford to obtain through other means. Given this, it is reasonable to expect that the needs in one part of the community may be decidedly different than those in other parts. This reinforces the need to monitor community needs on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis.

Figure 2.1 - Demographic Profile of Circle Pines

	Estimate		Forecast				
	1990	1993	2000	2010	2020		
1. Population	4,704	4,779	4,830	4,620	4,320		
2. Households	1,562	1,401	1,700	1,750	1,730		
3. Persons Per Household	3.0	3.0					
4. Age of Householder		1990	Percent				
- 15-24 Years		28	1.6				
- 25-34 Years		438	28.0				
- 35-44 Years		308	32.3				
- 45-54 Years		259	16.6				
- 55-64 Years		198	12.7				
- 65-74 Years		118	7.6				
- 75 Years and Over		16	1.0				
4. Household Compositions	1,562	100.0					
Family Households							
Married-Couple Family							
With Children Under Age 18	660	42.3					
With no Children Under Age 18	477	30.5					
One-parent families with Children Under Age 18:							
Male Parent	27	1.7					
Female Parent	72	4.6					
Other Family Households:	50	3.2					
Nonfamily Households:							
Householder Living Alone:	216	13.8					
Householder Not Living Alone:	60	3.8					
7. People & Families in Poverty	1989	Percent					
Total Persons	96	2.1					
Under Age 18	22	0.5					
Age 65+	27	0.6					
People Under 200% of Poverty	238	5.1					
Families Below Poverty	12	1.0					
Single Parent Families	7	0.6					
8. Race/Ethnicity	Total	White	Black	American Indian	Asian/Pac. Isl.	Other Race	Hispanic
Number	4,704	4,604	5	30	56	9	36
Percent	100.0	97.9	0.1	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.7
Total Minority (Includes Hispanic White) =			126	2.7			
9. Household Income by Race/Ethnicity of Householder, 1989							
Less than \$15,000	79	79	0	0	0	0	0
\$15,000 to \$24,999	188	181	0	0	7	0	0
\$25,000 to \$34,999	188	182	0	0	6	0	0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	416	411	0	5	0	0	6
\$50,000 and above	689	679	0	6	0	0	0
Less than \$15,000	5.2%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	10.3%	10.1%	0.0%	0.0%	36.8%	0.0%	0.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.3%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	31.6%	0.0%	0.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	27.3%	27.3%	0.0%	45.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
\$50,000 and above	65.0%	64.9%	100.0%	34.5%	31.6%	0.0%	0.0%
10. Persons in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity	96	76	0	0	20	0	0
Percent	2.1%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	0.0%	0.0%
11. 1989 Median Household Income		\$45,233					
12. 1989 Median Family Income		\$50,221					

Population - 1990	4,704
- 2000 projected	4,830
- 2010 projected	4,620
Age of Population - Non-elderly (0-64)	4,492 (95.5%)
- Elderly (65 and over)	212 (4.5%)
Median Household Income	\$45,233
Persons Below the Poverty Level - all ages	96 (2.1%)
Children Below the Poverty Level	22 (1.5%)
Households Paving Over 30% of Income for Housing:	
Owner Households	176 (11.7%)
Renter Households	19 (31.7%)
Total Labor Force	2,763
Unemployed	116 (4.2%)
Total Number of Jobs in the City - 1990	861
- 2000 projected	1,100
- 2010 projected	1,200
Percent Minority Population	2.7%
1994 Total Per Capita Property Tax Capacity	\$ 437
After Tax-base Sharing	\$ 545
Net Contribution (or distribution)	\$ (109)

Sources: 1990 Census, Metropolitan Council Forecasts, Citizens League

Locally Determined Needs

With great emphasis on developing a park and trail system that responds to locally determined values, needs, and expectations, ongoing citizen participation is a vital part of the process.

It is recommended that surveys and other instruments be used in the future as the city moves toward a more comprehensive approach to obtaining customer involvement in the planning process. This will become particularly important as this plan is implemented.

General Park and Trail System Issues and Needs

With great emphasis on developing a park and trail system that responds to locally determined values, needs, and expectations, ongoing citizen participation is a vital part of the process.

Locally determined values, needs, and expectations relate to issues and concerns that are identified and defined by the local population, or customer, through surveys, open public meetings, special interest group meetings, and interviews in a variety of park settings. Focus meetings and discussions with the Park Board (which is made up of appointed representatives from the community) are also vital to understanding local concerns.

As a first step in the public involvement process, an open public meeting was held in May, 1995 to obtain public input about the park system and needs of the community. This was followed by informal in-park interviews by the consultant during field investigations. Letters from citizens and user groups were also considered during discussions.

A more broad-based assessment of community needs, which would include a formal citizen survey, was not undertaken due to a limited planning budget. It is recommended that surveys and other instruments be used in the future as the city moves toward a more comprehensive approach to obtaining customer involvement in the planning process. This will become particularly important as this plan is implemented.

The issues and concerns brought forth during public input, coupled with the participation of the Park Board, set the tone for developing a system plan that is unique and appropriate for the city of Circle Pines. The following summarizes these issues and needs. The order does not necessarily reflect community priorities.

The following summarizes the common issues and themes that citizens brought forth during various public debates:

- **Safety:** A number of residents expressed concern about personal safety in the parks. Examples of problem areas involving youths include fighting, intimidation of younger children, graffiti, bad language, and illegal use of drugs and alcohol. The latter is a problem often associated with wooded, more secluded settings. Tamarack Park was mentioned several times in this regard. Suggestions included neighborhood watch groups, bike patrols/reserve police force, and park attendants.
- **Off-road trails:** Developing more trails that are stand-alone versus on the road was strongly encouraged for safety purposes and recreational value. Developing an interlinking system with other communities and the regional system was identified as desirable and a priority to residents.
- **Nature:** Preserving the natural character of our community was a common priority. Residents expressed concern that some of the wooded areas are "closing in", making them feel unsafe during the summer and losing the colors of the fall.
- **Seniors:** Lack of facilities and amenities for this group was also noted by a number of participants. One idea was to create a woodworking shop.
- **Trail crossing Lake Drive:** Safety and convenience of crossing was a noted concern of residents.
- **In-line skating:** Need to develop facilities/trails for this purpose was identified. A related issue is

the safety of existing trails given that in-line skaters are now using them even though they are not designed to accommodate them safely.

- **Extent of development in parks:** Many residents felt that a lot of the parks lack basic amenities and do not offer much reason to go there with children. Park Board members commented on whether the city was over extended in parks and therefore could not expect to fully develop all of them.
- **Children:** Lack of facilities and amenities for children was brought forth as a concern. It was noted that interesting and functional playground equipment is lacking in many parks. The safety of some of the individual pieces was also raised as a concern of residents.
- **Youth/teenagers:** Lack of facilities and amenities for this group was a noted concern because it leaves them with little to do with their free time. The potential for increased loitering, drinking, drugs, and teenage mischief were cited as concerns when teenagers lack more creative things to do with their time. A basketball court was cited as an example of the type of facility that would appeal to teenagers.
- **Community-wide facilities:** Ideas included canoe rental and improved facilities at Golden Lake Park (County park system).
- **Volunteering:** Many participants indicated that higher levels of volunteering should be sought from residents to improve and watch over the park system. Expanding the existing adopt-a-park program and forming neighborhood watch groups were cited as examples of how volunteers could play a greater role.
- **Partnerships:** Need to develop working relationships with other providers of parks, trails and recreation facilities (i.e., school districts, adjacent cities, athletic associations, etc.) was also cited.

Athletic Facilities

From the perspective of the user groups, the demand for all types of athletic facilities is exceeding supply.

From the perspective of the user groups, the demand for all types of facilities is currently exceeding supply. Although the degree to which this is the case varied by user groups, the shortage of facilities is of paramount concern to each of the user groups represented at the meeting. Specific examples of facility demand brought forth includes:

- **Youth Soccer:** 500+ children in program, half of which are from Circle Pines. Currently no designated space available for soccer within the city. The Association is willing to take any available field space.
- **Little League:** Centennial-Chain of Lakes Little League has over 104 teams and 1000 children playing in their Little League program. In addition, they also have 300+ children in their T-Ball program. Historically, the Association has paid for developing many of their facilities, including those in Circle Pines. Of the 29 fields that they use, only five are in Circle Pines. Lack of facilities has put them in a position of possibly having to limit registration. A 200' outfield distance is the desirable field size for their programs, with 150' being the minimum and 225' maximum.
- **Babe Ruth:** The Babe Ruth Association uses Baldwin Park almost exclusively. The single field within the park is used on a daily basis during the season, including weekends. The Association offers programs for 13-18 year olds. They have experienced a 25% increase in participation during 1995. Their biggest concern is how to deal with the youth that will be entering their program once

they leave Little League. One option was to add lighting to the existing field in Baldwin Park, which allows for one additional game each day.

- **Hockey:** The Hockey Association expressed a major concern about the availability of outdoor (and indoor) hockey rinks within the community. The Association had 180 children registered three years ago. They are expecting 500 registrants in the winter of 1995-96. The growing demand for girls hockey was cited as another need that cannot be accommodated with current facilities.
- **Girls and women in sports:** Youth association representatives pointed out that the ever-increasing participation of girls and women in organized sports will put additional pressure on limited resources. Girls softball and hockey were identified as examples of sports with fast-growing participation rates.

Selected Trends in Outdoor Recreation

Selected trends in outdoor recreation patterns and participation rates were considered to broaden the planning perspective.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Economic uncertainty may make Baby Boomers increasingly conservative in their spending, especially for "non-essential" programs and services. This may affect outdoor recreation, which is considered by some to be non-essential services.

Selected trends in outdoor recreation patterns and participation rates were considered to broaden the planning perspective. This allows for a clearer picture to emerge as to the trends that will be influencing the provision of parks and recreation services at the local level. It is important to note that substantive research on recreation trends at the state and national level is just now beginning to be undertaken in earnest. The city is encouraged to monitor these research initiatives through the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association, National Recreation and Parks Association, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota DNR, and other state and federal agencies.

The following provides some insight on societal trends at the state and national level that adds insight as to what the future will bring.

The SCORP provides a statewide perspective on outdoor recreation trends. Part I - Assessment and Policy Plan for 1995-1999 has been completed. Other parts of the plan are currently being prepared.

Although Part I of the plan calls for extensive recreation research, little ground has been made in this area at the state level in recent years. The Metropolitan Council is expected to undertake a survey in 1996, but the form that will take is still being finalized.

Part I of the SCORP does provide some insights to societal trends that have implications to Circle Pines.

Highlights of these trends affecting Minnesota include:

- State population will surpass five million by 2020
- An aging white population will grow by only 6%, with births barely exceeding deaths between 2015 and 2020.
- The younger minority population, with higher birth rates and in-migration, will nearly triple between 1990 and 2020.
- Baby Boom generation will push Minnesota's median age from 32.5 in 1990 to age 40 by 2020.
- Persons age 65 and older will outnumber children in most Minnesota counties.
- Many Baby Boomer's have delayed marriage and children, opting instead for education, travel, career, and self-fulfillment.

Economic uncertainty may make Baby Boomers increasingly conservative in their spending, especially for

National Trends Influencing Park and Trail System Planning

General Assessment of Existing Park and Trail System

While it was found that some parks appear to function very well, others clearly showed the wear of time and no longer effectively served a meaningful purpose.

General Overview

"non-essential" programs and services. This may affect outdoor recreation, which is considered by some to be a non-essential service.

The revised National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines define some of the trends that will influence park and recreation planning in the future. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of these to underscore the need to shift planning from a formula-driven to a systems approach to planning that is more responsive to the needs of individual communities.

The existing parks and trails were evaluated to establish a base point for system planning. While it was found that some parks appear to function very well, others clearly showed the wear of time and no longer effectively served a meaningful purpose. In a number of cases, existing park features were simply worn out and needed replacement. As with many park systems of this age, it was self-evident that the way individual parks are used needs to be reevaluated in light of community needs of today and contemporary planning approaches.

Observation also leads to the conclusion that the resources available to the city may not be sufficient to fully develop the parks as they are currently intended. This results in underdeveloped parks that do not effectively serve the target population. Again, this points toward reevaluation of the way individual parks are used within the context of the overall park system.

The following observations provide a general assessment of the existing park and trail system. (Note that the evaluation of each park will be more thoroughly reflected in the park plates defined in Section V)

Overall Park Land Area: Overall acreage is approximately 154 acres, with approximately 80 acres defined as programmable or usable space. The remaining acreage is either natural resource area or non-programmable space, like a drainageway.

Overall Design: Design quality is lacking in many parks, resulting in an eclectic collection of amenities that may or may not serve neighborhood or community needs. Most parks appear to be developed in a piece meal fashion, with no overall master plan guiding the orderly and appropriate development of the park.

Aesthetic Quality: The visual appeal in many parks is lacking, resulting in a functional recreational space impression rather than a comfortable park setting. This lack of a design character or theme inhibits a visitor from developing a sense of place and level of comfort while visiting a given park.

Outdoor Recreation Facility Mix: Current facilities need to be evaluated against definable community needs.

Natural Resource Quality: Signs of degradation can be found within the natural resource areas spread throughout the city. Examples include: invasive non-native plants (European Buckthorn) out-competing native plant species (oaks, maples, etc.); surface erosion in areas lacking native ground cover, and siltation of wetlands and pond/lake edges resulting in changes in water quality and vegetation dynamics.

Figure 2.2 (Part 1 of 2) - Trends influencing park and recreation planning.

Environmental Concerns:

- Disappearing resources - significant open spaces and natural habitats, original landscapes, wetlands and natural drainages, ancient forests, water shortages, energy resources.
- Environmental cleanup - contaminated soil and water, frequently on public lands previously considered "wasteland".
- Reduction of pollution and waste - recycling.
- Environmentally sensitive lifestyles -- including low impact resource use (walking, bicycling) and increase in aesthetic appreciation.
- More environmentally sound practices and habits - reduced pesticides and herbicides.
- Natural areas management - maintaining and reclaiming natural values and open spaces.
- Carbon dioxide emissions - within 10 to 20 years, without substantial reductions, the Greenhouse effect may disrupt some regional economies.
- Reduction in automobile trips - states and communities set targets.
- Federal water quality mandates - natural drainage systems become more important as urban waterways and wetlands are protected.
- State land use planning mandates - in response to growth and need for growth management.

Social Conditions:

- Coping with poverty - homelessness, destitution, malnutrition, unemployment, poverty as a lifestyle.
- Crime and violence - domestic, gangs, schools and other public places, drugs, vandalism, racial tension.
- Children at risk - child abuse, neglect, teen pregnancies, suicides, family instability, loneliness, alienation, rebelliousness, substance abuse.
- Stress of change - economic, social and technological change continues into 21st century.
- People empowerment - opportunities for building

community and social bonding, neighborhood watch, community policing.

- Citizen participation - involvement of "stakeholders" in public planning and decision-making.
- Social service networking - organizing community resources to attack complex social problems.
- Community safety and home security - increasing concerns for personal and family safety.
- Major public health issue - e.g., AIDS epidemic.
- Increasing importance of wellness activities.
- Inclusiveness - laws and public policies addressing discrimination, equal rights, accessibility of public facilities and services.

Economic Conditions:

- Tight personal budgets - reduced discretionary or leisure spending.
- Increasing public costs - associated with health, social services, environmental protection, and clean-up, aging infrastructure.
- Increasing labor and energy costs - consuming higher percent of budgets.
- Tax limitation measures - reduction in and/or caps on revenue traditionally used to support public programs (education, recreation, etc.).
- Increase in national poverty rate.
- Leisure services provided by multiple providers - private and non-profit sectors.
- More partnerships - doing more with less in conjunction with others.
- Economic re-structuring of communities - transition from single to diverse economies.
- Growing importance of tourism and travel.
- Economics of amenities - recognition of economic value of parks, open spaces and amenities.
- Declining regional economies.

Figure 2.2 (Part 2 of 2) - Trends influencing park and recreation planning.

Demographics:

- Aging of society - by 2030 baby boomers will be senior citizens (1/3 of the population).
- Proportion of middle-aged Americans - sharp increase in the 1990s.
- Less "traditional" family households - only 26% of the nation's households represent a married couple and children under age 18.
- Large number of single parent families.
- More emphasis on both eldercare and childcare.
- Declining divorce rate - more emphasis on families and family values. Increasing cultural diversity, shifts in common ancestry, increasing number of immigrants.
- Urban minority underclass - will continue to grow.
- Greater number of smaller households.
- Changing housing patterns - declining home ownership, more high density residential units, smaller houses on smaller lots, congregate retirement centers, homeless shelters, shared living spaces.

Technology:

- Technological change - rapid pace will continue.
- Easing of the effects of aging - research continues.
- Advances in information technology -- making products, services and information more accessible and targeted.
- Contact with computers - in some urban areas virtually every person will have contact with computers in the home or workplace.
- Work days will be less defined - information technology will blur work and home. Increased global thinking - understanding holism and interdependency.
- Media maladies - information overload, privacy, objectionable material, distorted reality.
- More public meetings aired on public/access cable television - more education on issues and services.
- Greater energy costs shaping technology - smaller cars and multi-modal transportation systems, more efficient buildings.

Urban Patterns:

- Increase in urban sprawl - located primarily along major transportation corridors and mass transit routes.
- Greater "in-fill" development - lands considered marginal will be upgraded for new development.
- Upgrading and retrofitting industrial plants and commercial centers - will include amenities to make them more marketable.
- Increasing importance of amenities - recognized as essential for maintaining competitiveness.
- Continued gentrification - caused by increasing high land values in central city areas.
- New ethnic centers - residents will stress maintaining cultural traditions, values and customs. Increased traffic congestion - placing more emphasis on mass transit and transportation options.
- More political pressure for urban growth management - balancing quality of life and urban development objectives, maintaining a sustainable future.
- Growth of partnerships - public and private partnering to address complex urban needs.

Summary Statement

The assessment of need clearly illustrates that the city has chosen an opportune time to reevaluate its park and trail system and establish a new course to follow into the future that is much more reliant upon public participation in the planning and development process. But addressing the ever-increasing demands of the populous will not be easy. It will require reorganizing the way some of the parks are used and the recognition that the city will have to make difficult choices. The latter is especially true today, where limited fiscal opportunities for funding park and trail development will force Circle Pines into making wise decisions with the use of limited resources.

It is clear from the assessment of need that there will be no shortage of park and trail development initiatives to choose from in forthcoming years. In their own context, each initiative will have considerable merit. Although this plan will spell out many of those choices, the burden of deciding which of these are of highest priority ultimately lies with the community residents, whose voice will be heard through their elected and appointed city officials.

Although fiscal realities will impact the speed at which development initiatives are undertaken, the current state of the park and trail system warrants a reevaluation of the resources the city currently directs toward parks and trails coupled with increased diligence toward finding alternative funding options and partnerships.

III - Strategic Plan

Overview

Sometimes referred to as a comprehensive plan or business plan, the strategic plan is the benchmark policy document for the provision of parks, trails, and recreation programs. It provides a consistent, definable, and justifiable continuum of ideas, beliefs, and values that define the *vision* of the park system. It serves as the blueprint for decision making and provides the impetus for specific resource allocation strategies.

The assessment of need clarified and defined many of the pertinent issues affecting the park and trail system in Circle Pines. The results of that assessment served as the basis for the strategic plan. This section defines the strategic plan and provides a basis for development of the park and trail system detailed in forthcoming sections.

The strategic plan includes a number of components:

- Mission statement
- Set of goals
- Set of objectives for each goal
- Set of policies for each objective

The following defines each of these in detail.

Mission Statement

The mission statement establishes the *vision* of the park system. It brings to light the basic precept by which the park system is built. The following mission statement was an outgrowth of the current assessment of need.

Mission Statement:

"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."

Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Goals are broad statements that chart the course for achieving the mission of the Circle Pines Park and Trail System. They define desired future conditions and outcomes. A set of objectives qualifies or more clearly defines specific goals. They describe how you will achieve a certain goal.

Policy statements define specific strategies and appropriate actions necessary to achieve specific objectives.

As with the mission statement, the goals, objectives, and policy statements presented here were derived from the current assessment of need. These will require refinement as the needs of the community become better defined in the future. Figure 2.3 illustrates the hierarchal relationship between strategic plan elements.

Figure 2.3 - Strategic Plan elements

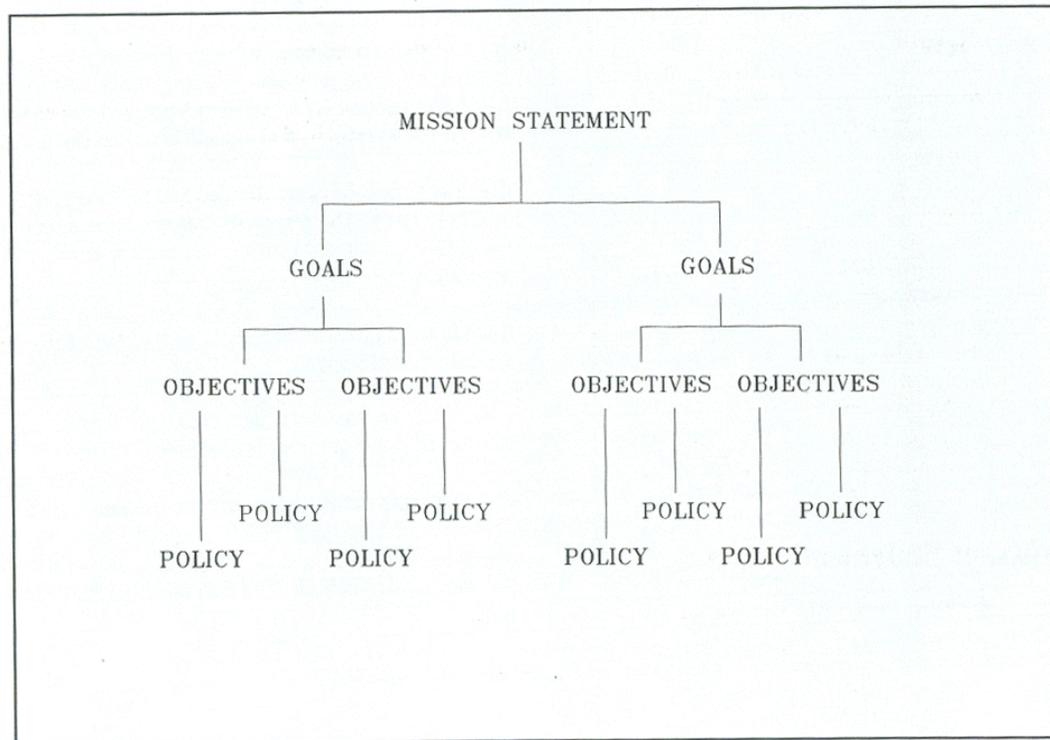


Figure 2.4 defines a set of park and trail system goals and a set of objectives and polices that relate to each goal.

Figure 2.4 (Part 1 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Park and Trail System Plan	
Goal Statement: To prepare and implement a Comprehensive Park and Trail System Plan.	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To systematically evaluate the existing park and trail system, recreational needs of the community, park and trail classifications and standards, and acquisition/development guidelines to ensure adequate parks and trails are provided in the city. ● To implement the plan for the purpose of guiding parks, trails, and recreational facility development in the forthcoming years. ● To develop a means for ongoing and systematic evaluation of park and trail system components, thus allowing for actual and perceived changes in community needs to be reflected in the park and trail system plan. ● To enhance the community's and public agencies' understanding of the park and trail system and development objectives. ● To develop a handbook so that incoming elected and appointed officials can readily understand the intent of the park and trail system. 	<p>Policy Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The plan shall be used to guide future park development within Circle Pines. All aspects of future park development shall be consistent with the park system framework, development criteria, and general principles as defined in the plan. ● Periodic review and updating of the plan shall be undertaken as warranted. Revisions and changes should be made based on perceived changes in community needs, unique conditions, or unforeseen opportunities. ● The plan shall be adopted by the City Council and represented through reference in the Comprehensive Plan for Circle Pines. ● Residents shall be given an ongoing opportunity to participate in the planning process (i.e., through needs assessment studies, neighborhood meetings, etc.) to ensure that their needs are understood and acted upon. ● Copies of the plan shall be made available to residents upon request.

Figure 2.4 (Part 2 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Park Land Acquisition and Development

Goal Statement: To provide city residents with parks and natural areas for recreational uses, as visual/physical diversions from the hard surfacing of urban development, and as a means to maintain the character, ambience, appearance, and history of the community.

Objectives:

- To enhance the quality of life within the city by providing adequate park land and natural resource areas to fulfill the present and future physical and psychological needs of residents.
- To use the parks and natural resource areas and interconnecting trail corridors as significant factors in shaping growth in Circle Pines in the future.
- To maintain and enhance the character and aesthetic appeal of the community through the provision of parks.
- To encourage a compact urban form that emphasizes orderly and sequential growth within the community and in harmony with the natural environment.

Policy Statements:

- Park land dedication policies and ordinances shall be adopted by the city to require each developer (of all land use categories) to dedicate land or, at the discretion of the city, an equivalent cash value contribution for parks acquisition and development.
- Parks, natural resource areas, and related recreation facilities shall be acquired and developed by Circle Pines in accordance with the plan for the purpose of shaping community development and establishing an image of balance between urbanization, parks, trail corridors, and natural areas.
- Acquisition of specific parcels of land for park uses shall be based on the quality of the land and natural resource, its suitability for the desired uses, and its location as defined in the plan (or accepted alternative). Undesirable land parcels with limited park and resource value shall not be accepted.
- The city shall reserve the right to acquire land within all development areas for park and trail purposes. This includes land acquired through dedication and land acquired through direct purchase by the city.
- Park development standards shall be based on the principle of providing and maintaining quality parks and facilities. The principles of universal access/barrier-free design shall be applied to all parks and trails.
- A reasonable and ongoing effort shall be made to eliminate all physical barriers that deter individuals from using existing or future parks and recreation facilities. Barrier-free design principles shall be implemented in accordance with accepted guidelines and laws.
- Design and maintenance procedures shall be consistent with accepted industry standards and be clearly defined and adopted. Design and maintenance of all parks and recreation facilities shall emphasize high quality, user safety, and cost accountability.
- The Park Board and staff shall review and comment on all planned development matters that impact park land and trail corridor dedication, acquisition, and development.

Figure 2.4 (Part 3 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Natural Resource Preservation and Management	
Goal Statement: To provide for the preservation and conservation of natural resources and open space within the city.	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To use natural resource areas as significant factors in shaping growth in Circle Pines in the future. ● To preserve significant natural resources as open space and important components of the overall park system. ● To maintain and enhance the character or appeal of the community through interconnected natural resource areas. ● To encourage a compact urban form that emphasizes orderly and sequential growth within the community and in harmony with the natural environment. ● To ensure sustainable and desirable natural resource areas and ecological systems are protected and managed within the city. 	<p>Policy Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A well-defined natural resources restoration and management plan shall be developed and implemented for the purpose of enhancing and protecting the natural resources and ecological systems within the city. A detailed study to define the natural resource areas within the city should be included in the plan. ● Residents shall be educated and informed about ecological issues so that they better understand the importance of restoration and management programs and their role in protecting the natural resources of the community. Environmental programs and recycling programs shall be developed and promoted. ● Natural resource areas may, at the discretion of the city, be acquired (through developer's agreements, direct purchase, or natural resource preservation acts) to set aside these areas as amenities. These areas shall be considered as desirable additions to, rather than substitutes for, other types of park land. ● Natural resource areas shall be defined to include all lands that are considered by the city to be natural amenities and/or of ecological significance. This includes, but is not limited to, the following ecological communities: old fields, wetlands, lakes and ponds, and forested communities. Land areas exhibiting steep slopes and other non-buildable space may, at the city's discretion, be set aside as natural resource areas and included as part of the park and trail system. ● Policies and ordinances protecting natural resources and ecological systems within the community shall be reviewed. This should include the review of current wetland and shoreland management policies to ensure that they are consistent with accepted statewide standards and requirements. A clearly defined water quality management plan shall also be developed and implemented by the city. ● A planting/reforestation program shall be developed and implemented in all parks and natural areas where trees and vegetation are lacking (in concert with the natural resources restoration and management program). Developers shall be required to include landscaping as part of their development plans. ● Property owners and the local school district shall be encouraged to preserve the natural character of their properties. The city shall provide educational information to aid in this effort.

Figure 2.4 (Part 4 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Trails Corridors/Right-of-Way Acquisition and Development

Goal Statement: To provide city residents with an interconnected trail system for transportation and recreation purposes.

Objectives:

- To provide a trail system that emphasizes harmony with the built and natural environment.
- To allow for relatively uninterrupted pleasure hiking, biking, and other uses to and through the city's park system and developed areas.
- To effectively tie the various parks together into a comprehensive park and trail system - with an emphasis on enhancing the recreational experience of the user.
- To safely protect users from urban developmental encroachment and associated vehicular traffic.

Policy Statements:

- Linear trail corridor and easement policies and ordinances shall be adopted that require developers to dedicate land for the core system of trails and providing access from subdivisions to those trails.
- Linear trail corridors shall be developed in conjunction with and integral to future developments, parks, natural resource areas, greenways, and roadway projects to provide transportation throughout the city and for recreation purposes.
- The trail system shall be developed to minimize the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.
- Trail types, development standards, and general location shall be in accordance with the plan. The trail system shall accommodate a range of activities (i.e., walking, hiking, bicycling, cross country skiing, and where designated, snowmobiling and horseback riding) and user abilities.
- Trail support facilities should be provided as warranted (including trail signage and striping, benches, picnic tables, bridges, restrooms, parking, shelters, etc.).
- Trail design shall be sensitive to the natural environment and character of the area it traverses.
- Trails shall be designed to be accessible to all populations with varying abilities wherever feasible, practical, and appropriate given the specific setting.
- Trails shall be constructed to require minimal maintenance and limit the opportunity for vandalism.
- Adequate screening and berming shall be provided where possible along trail corridors to provide a physical and psychological separation between the trail and adjacent land uses.
- Motorized vehicles shall be prohibited on all trails unless required for maintenance and safety (with the exception of designated snowmobile trails).

Figure 2.4 (Part 5 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Community Participation and Interaction

Goal Statement: To establish an effective, ongoing means of communicating and interacting with residents about issues related to parks and recreation facilities, programs, and future development. To provide residents with the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and programs through various civic and volunteer organizations.

Objectives:

- To promote active and ongoing interaction between the city and its customers (i.e., citizens, special interest/user groups, and individuals) to achieve effective recreational programming and facility development.
- To promote ongoing communication between the Park Board and city residents.
- To promote ongoing volunteer programs and civic and athletic/youth organizations to encourage residents and community organizations to assist in park improvements, maintenance, and recreation programs.

Policy Statements:

- Ongoing information and education processes shall be developed to enhance participants/residents knowledge of the existing programs and facilities (e.g., community newspaper/activities brochure, etc.).
- Community participation and interaction shall be promoted as a means to determine and interpret the needs and desires of the residents. Regularly scheduled public meetings, needs assessment surveys, neighborhood meetings, etc., shall be used as tools to assess the needs of the community.
- The formation of athletic/youth/civic groups and associations shall be promoted to assist in the continued development of recreation programs and facilities.
- Meetings between residents/special interest groups and the Park Board shall be undertaken when appropriate for the purpose of discussing specific park development projects and issues.
- Residents and the Park Board shall work together to define what park facilities and programs are desired, what can be provided, and what they as residents can do to assist (e.g., Adopt-A-Park).
- Meetings between youth/athletic/civic groups and the Park Board shall be undertaken when appropriate to define their seasonal facility and program needs.
- Volunteerism shall be promoted through the development of various volunteer programs (e.g., Adopt-A Park, etc.).

Figure 2.4 (Part 6 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Partnerships

Goal Statement: To maximize the recreational opportunities available to city residents through the development of fair and equitable working partnerships between the city and the local school district, adjacent cities, county, churches, and civic organizations.

Objectives:

- To fairly and equitably integrate the City of Circle Pines Park and Trail System *facilities* with those of the other members of the partnership.
- To fairly and equitably integrate the City of Circle Pines Park and Trail System *programs* with those of the other members of the partnership.

Policy Statements:

- An interactive dialogue and cooperative effort shall be undertaken between all members of the partnership to encourage the optimal use of limited resources and minimize duplication of park sites, facilities, and services.
- All agreements - although intended to be fair and equitable for all members of the partnership - shall be made in the best interest of the city.
- Clearly defined joint-use agreements and policies shall be formally adopted between all members. A consistent and equitable policy related to shared programs and facilities shall be created.
- Where feasible, cost effective, and appropriate, new facilities - developed by any member of the partnership - shall be planned in consideration of the needs of other members of the partnership.
- Where feasible, cost effective, and appropriate, new facilities - developed by any member of the partnership - shall be located adjacent to property owned by other members of the partnership to facilitate shared use and programming.
- Ongoing information sharing, communication, and interaction between all members of the partnership shall be undertaken to promote the integration of each's system and programs.
- The city shall appoint a staff person to be responsible for coordinating facility use and program development. Each member of the partnership shall be encouraged to do the same.

Figure 2.4 (Part 7 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Recreation Programs	
<p>Goal Statement: To provide the opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation activities through the implementation of well-designed, effective and interesting recreation programs.</p>	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide recreation programs that adequately address the recreation desires of all segments of the community including children, teens, adults, elderly, and the disabled. ● To support and encourage a wide diversity of recreation interests within the community. ● To administer programs on a fair and equitable basis to ensure all individuals and groups receive adequate representation and opportunity. 	<p>Policy Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principles and standards shall be established that apply uniformly to all programs, sites, and facilities. The set of principles and standards shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify the program objectives and facility needs for specific activities. b) Provide for all levels of ability. c) Develop programs which effectively meet program objectives. d) Ensure that adequate funding, staff, and facilities are available to carry out specific programs. e) Undertake a seasonal review of the effectiveness of specific programs and activities. (Programs which are not effective should be eliminated.) ● Leadership and Code of Conduct guidelines for each activity group and program shall be developed to define acceptable and appropriate actions and behavior of individuals responsible for overseeing specific programs and activities. ● People activities, not functional processes, shall be developed -- meaning that the program should fit the needs of the people versus people fitting into a predetermined program. ● An ongoing communication/information system shall be established between all groups to broaden recreation interests and track demand for facilities and recreation trends affecting the city. ● A program review board shall be established to review and evaluate program strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for improvements. ● Income from fees and charges shall be used to support the continuance and development of recreation programs. Programs shall strive to be cost effective and self supporting where possible. ● An equal opportunity to participate in recreation programs shall be extended to all city residents. The Park Board and staff shall establish specific special assistance eligibility requirements for all programs/activities.

Figure 2.4 (Part 8 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Park and Recreation Department	
<p>Goal Statement: To maintain a well-trained, highly motivated staff to carry out the city of Circle Pines' mission of developing a quality park system and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for city residents.</p>	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide adequate staffing to <u>manage</u> and <u>direct</u> the park system and programs in a professional, effective, and efficient manner. ● To provide adequate staffing to <u>maintain</u> the park system to provide quality parks and recreational facilities for use by the city residents. 	<p>Policy Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Budget/funding allocations shall be at the appropriate levels to provide adequate manpower to maintain the integrity and quality of the park system within Circle Pines. ● Staffing shall be held at a level that is adequate to service current management and recreational programming needs and maintenance requirements in a professional, effective and efficient manner. ● Personnel shall be planned for, hired and trained prior to the date of actual need to ensure that a consistent level of service is maintained as additional park lands are acquired, park facilities developed, and programs expanded. ● The Park Board and staff shall be responsible for determining the staffing levels necessary to effectively and efficiently service the management and recreational programming needs and maintenance requirements of the park system. ● Personnel shall be trained to handle specific staffing needs to provide for viable, efficient and effective operation of the Parks & Recreation Department. Personnel needs and objectives shall be written outlining overall staff needs and specific job requirements. ● Ongoing educational programs shall be established and maintained to provide continuing educational opportunities for staff. These programs shall be geared to meet the changing demands that will be placed on the staff as the park system continues to develop.

Figure 2.4 (Part 9 of 9) - Goals, Objectives, and Policy Statements

Funding	
Goal Statement: To secure the funding necessary to carry out the mission of the Circle Pines Park and Trail System.	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To define the funding options that are available for park land acquisition and development. ● To prepare a park land acquisition and development implementation plan which depicts the relative timing and extent of future park land acquisition and development. 	<p>Policy Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding for all components of the park system shall be pursued and secured on an ongoing basis and in a timeframe which is consistent with other community developments. ● A complete review and analysis of financing mechanisms available to the city for park land acquisition and development shall be undertaken and updated on an annual basis. ● A review of the park dedication formula and program fees (resident and non-resident) shall be undertaken on an annual basis. ● A priority ranking system and an implementation plan shall be prepared which prioritizes future park land acquisition and development in a manner in which future costs can be reasonably projected. ● Shared-cost and joint-use agreements between the city and members of the partnership shall be reviewed on an annual basis to determine if they are equitable and cost effective.

IV - Park System Planning Framework

Overview

A park system framework describes the parameters and guidelines for establishing a park and trail system within a given community. It serves to translate the assessment of need and strategic plan into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy community needs.

A park system framework describes the parameters and guidelines for establishing a park and trail system within a given community. It serves to translate the assessment of need and strategic plan into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy community needs.

The forthcoming framework follows the procedures recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (i.e., National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines -- completely revised publication due out in early 1996). To a limited extent, these recommendations have been modified in response to the unique circumstances particular to Circle Pines.

The planning framework consists of the *physical infrastructure* and *planning guidelines* components. The former relates to the community's physical infrastructure. The latter relates to various guidelines and planning considerations that give basis to the planning framework. The following defines each of these components and their impact on the development of the park and trail system plan. Other guidelines defined in this section include:

- System flexibility
- Lifecycles of systems components
- Quality initiative
- Restoration of natural resources and ecological systems
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992
- Universal access
- Consumer Products Safety Commission guidelines

Physical Infrastructure

The infrastructure is based on a set of structural elements which, in one way or another, have a direct impact on the development of the park system.

Developing an understanding of the physical infrastructure and characteristics of the community played a vital role in developing the park and trail system plan. The infrastructure is based on a set of structural elements which, in one way or another, have a direct impact on the development of the park system.

The success of the system plan lies in its power to influence land use patterns in a way that moves the community toward the fundamental proposition that the entire community is in fact a park. Within this park, all human needs such as housing, employment, commerce, education, transportation, preservation, conservation and recreation occur in rational and harmonious patterns.

The community infrastructure is largely a result of the comprehensive plan for the community. The park and trail system plan itself is an integral part of this plan. The success of the system plan lies in its power to influence land use patterns in a way that moves the community toward the fundamental proposition that the entire community is in fact a park. Within this park, all human needs such as housing, employment, commerce, education, transportation, preservation, conservation and recreation occur in rational and harmonious patterns. This supports the notions of quality of life, community sustainability and complimentary property relationships which in turn enhance individual and community wealth and prosperity.

The key structural elements considered as part of the physical infrastructure include:

- **Municipal/City Boundary** -- establishes the limits of the city and planning area.
- **Zoning and Guided Land Uses** -- the existing and proposed land uses (i.e., residential, commercial, industrial, business, etc.) give the city a certain developmental structure that greatly impacts the development of the park system. The areas zoned and guided for residential development are one of the primary factors in shaping and defining the extent of the park system plan. As a nearly fully developed city, the land uses are essentially set. The park system, then, must respond to these existing land uses.
- **Transportation Plan** -- existing and proposed thoroughfares play a significant role in the development of the park system by providing necessary access as well as physical barriers to system components. As an example, Lake Drive is a major roadway that effectively splits the city into two halves. As will be defined, this greatly impacts the park and trail system plan for the city.
- **Urban Services Area** -- dictates, through the Metropolitan Council, the controlled expansion of urban services (such as water, sanitary sewer, etc.) within a given community. The Metropolitan Urban Services Area (MUSA) greatly influenced the location and density of single family residential development within the city. Subsequently, the development of the park system reflects this impact. Since all of Circle Pines falls within the MUSA, its impact has already been felt and accommodated within zoning and land use guidelines.
- **Natural Resource Characteristics** -- the natural resource base of the city plays a large role in the ultimate character of the park system. Communities rich in natural resources -- lakes, wetlands, forested tracts, stream beds, and so forth -- will have a decidedly different intrinsic character than those that are highly urbanized or lacking in natural resource base. Circle Pines has an interesting natural resource dichotomy in that the north end of the city takes on an more urban character with limited natural resource areas, while the southern half has extensive natural resource areas interrelated with residential development.
- **Current Park and Trail System** -- as with the overall land uses within the city, much of the physical components of the park system are already in place. The essence of the park and trail system plan then becomes defining how these parcels of land should best be used to service the needs of the community.

- **County and Regional Park Lands** -- these lands have a significant impact on the park and trail system by providing natural resource areas and outdoor recreation space that would otherwise not be available to city residents. Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve has the largest physical impact on the city and offers extensive natural resources and trailways potential. Golden Lake County Park offers significant potential as a community-type park with a number of important outdoor recreational opportunities, such as swimming and beach facilities. From a parks planning perspective, these park units are truly treasures that need to be integrated into the city's park system plan.
- **School District Properties** -- as with county and regional parks, public properties under school district jurisdiction have a significant impact on the park and trail system by providing athletic facilities and neighborhood recreation space that would otherwise not be available to city residents. The Centennial School District's campus offers extensive athletic facilities opportunities. Golden Lake School offers both athletic facilities as well as play space within the neighborhood.
- **Adjacent Cities Park and Trail Systems** -- interlinking local systems plans with those of adjacent cities provides the opportunity for expanding the size, capacity, and recreational offerings of Circle Pines own park and trail system. These interactions and partnership agreements achieves a number of objectives: 1) maximize recreational opportunities available to local citizens; 2) create continuous city-as-a-park environment that transcends municipal or jurisdictional boundaries; and 3) create cost efficiency by providing facilities and services that benefit citizens of several cities.
- **Water Resource Plans** -- in addition to including water resources and natural areas as part of the park system plan based on their inherent benefits, there is also the opportunity to increase the amount of these lands within the park system through other means, such as water resources and environmental protection/enhancement plans. These plans relate to water quality and environmental protection issues affecting all cities. Through cooperative planning, drainageways and ponding areas created by these plans can become integral components of the park and open space system plan. In many cases, this "dual approach" to planning can add justification for the preservation of specific parcels of property within a city.

These factors have been integrated into the plan whereby they have become part of the very fabric of the system itself. Hence, the concept of the city-park comes to life.

Planning Guidelines

Planning guidelines give structure to the planning framework. They make it feasible to translate community needs into a physical plan that meets those needs.

Planning guidelines give structure to the planning framework. They make it feasible to translate community needs into a physical plan that meets those needs. The guidelines presented here reflect those recommended by the National Park and Recreation Association, which are based on generally accepted practices across the country.

The planning guidelines seek to accommodate specific land-use functions usually ascribed to land and water resources designated for park and trail purposes. These functions include:

- **Recreation** -- providing space and facilities for people to engage in active and passive recreation activities.

Through the use of planning guidelines, the various uses of park lands listed can be appropriately addressed and accommodated in a physical system plan for the community.

- **Urban Open Space and Amenity Value** -- structured and manicured areas used to humanize high density development areas that cannot be readily measured or evaluated by applying a single standard. This includes plazas, squares, parkways, gardens, and other urban spaces such as museums, libraries, performing arts centers, amphitheaters, and historic sites. Many of these spaces are best suited for passive recreation; therefore, the need for such spaces is often overlooked by recreation planners.
- **Natural Resources** -- relates to land and water areas specifically set aside for preservation and conservation of our natural heritage and protection of ecosystems that are vital to a viable living environment.
- **Reserve and Contingency** -- space set aside for park and trail purposes to accommodate new trends in leisure use, new activities or just greater rates of participation. Typically, it is recommended that communities include 10-20 percent more land than required from their immediate and projected needs.
- **Trail Corridors and Right-of-Ways** -- relates to land areas used for trails. Although these corridors offer benefits such as recreation, nature viewing, and so forth, their focus in this context is also on providing facilities that foster alternative (i.e., non-motorized) modes of transportation.
- **Organizational** -- space set aside for operations and maintenance activities.

Through the use of planning guidelines, the various uses of park lands listed above can be appropriately addressed and accommodated in a physical system plan for the community. Through the use of these guidelines you can achieve:

- A level of service that is desired by the citizens (customers).
- An equitable distribution of parks and trails throughout the community.

The following defines the planning guidelines being recommended and used as part of the planning framework for this plan.

Level of Service Guideline (LOS)

The level of service (LOS) guideline deals with determining the amount of physical space needed within a park system based on the demand for specific types of facilities within a given community.

Overview: The level of service (LOS) guideline deals with determining the amount of physical space needed within a park system based on the demand for specific types of facilities *within a given community*. This is a marked departure from past national planning guidelines that provided general space recommendations based on a homogenous population (i.e., 1 tennis courts per x number of population). The major advantage of this guideline is that it is far more responsive to the specific needs of a given community than past methods. The disadvantage (at least initially) is that it will require communities to more closely monitor demand for facilities through surveys and improved communications and relationships with user groups.

Application to Circle Pines: Historically, the city has not tracked the demand for and use of facilities to any significant degree. User groups have typically used available facilities on a first-come basis. Applying the LOS guideline will require greater emphasis on gathering actionable information (i.e., information that one can understand and act upon) about the demand for different types of programs and facilities in the future.

Gathering this data on an ongoing basis will be necessary if the city is to meet the changing needs of its citizenry. Data collection techniques include program registration and scheduling software, yearly user group participation surveys, participation projection software, and periodic community interest surveys.

In the absence of in-depth, actionable information, the park and trail system plan presented here focuses on addressing known demand and identifying future opportunities. It also places great emphasis on building enough flexibility into the plan to adjust to future opportunities as the city becomes more adept at obtaining information about the needs of the community.

Park Classifications Guidelines

Park classifications define the minimum acreage and development criteria for different classes, or types, of parks. They are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the park system that ensures all community needs are fulfilled.

Overview: Park classifications define the minimum acreage and development criteria for different classes, or types of parks. They are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the park system that ensures all community needs are fulfilled.

The classifications used here are based on the new national guidelines recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). The guidelines reflect contemporary planning practices born of successful systems across the country. They also establish a common terminology and an accepted benchmark standard for park and trail system planning. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of each park and trail classification.

Application to Circle Pines: In this case, the classifications "fit" quite well and will be used extensively as the basis for the city's classification system. But given the diversity, complexity, and changing needs of various parts of the community, the classifications are not to be viewed as absolutes. Some flexibility in the way they are applied will be necessary to address the conditions that are unique to each part of the city. In addition, a few of the existing parks fall under more than one classification. The most pronounced example of this is Baldwin Park, where it serves as a neighborhood park, youth athletic field, and natural resource area. In these cases, the park will simply have multiple classifications, or adjacency, rather than attempting to confine it to only one classification.

Trail Classifications Guidelines

Trail classifications define the development criteria for different classes, or types, of trails. As with parks, they are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the trail system that ensures all trail needs are fulfilled.

Overview: Trail classifications define the development criteria for different classes, or types, of trails. As with parks, they are important in that they provide a common, consistent, and justifiable framework for planning purposes, thus allowing for the orderly development of the trail system that ensures all trail needs are fulfilled. The classifications used here are again based on the new national guidelines recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA).

The classifications are a new component of the NRPA guidelines. They were developed in recognition that the potential range of need for trails dictates the need for different trail classifications which serve specific needs. The potential range of need encompasses:

- Recreation
- Commuting / Alternative Transportation

- Health and Fitness
- Nature Study
- Social Interaction

The potential skill level of bicyclists also dictates the need for different trail classifications which provide a safe riding environment for bicyclists with varying skills and comfort levels in traffic. The potential skill levels as defined by the Federal Highway Administration includes:

Group A - Advanced Bicyclists: Experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions. They comprise the majority of current users of collector and arterial streets and are best served by directness, minimal delays, and sufficient operating space.

Group B - Basic Bicyclists: Casual or new adult and teenage bicyclists who are less confident of their ability to operate without special provisions for bicycles. Some will develop greater skills and progress to the advanced level. They are best served by comfortable access to destinations (preferably a direct route), low-speed or low-traffic volume streets, or designated bicycle facilities.

Group C - Children: Pre-teen bicyclists whose roadway use is initially monitored by parents. They are best served by access to key destinations surrounding neighborhood areas (e.g., schools, recreation facilities, shopping), residential streets with low traffic speeds and volumes, well-defined separation from motor vehicles on arterial and collector streets and separate bike paths.

Application to Circle Pines: As with parks, the classifications for trails "fit" quite well and will be used extensively as the basis for the city's classification system. But given the varying infrastructural characteristics of the city, some flexibility in the way they are applied will be necessary.

Facilities Type and Location Guidelines

Facility Type and Location Guidelines identifies the more common types of recreation facilities and define their optimal location with respect to the various classifications.

Overview: Facility Type and Location Guidelines as shown in Figure 4.2 identifies the more common types of recreation facilities and define their optimal location with respect to the various classifications. These recommendations are derived from regional and national guidelines and previous regional park and trail system plans.

Application to Circle Pines: It is important to point out that the guidelines are general and not intended to define with absolute certainty what facilities should go where in the park system. More important, development of specific facilities within specific parks must be driven by demand rather than unbending guidelines. Actual, known demand based on current and anticipated needs, participation rates, demographic profiles, and recreational trends specific to Circle Pines must be used as the driving force behind facility location. As would be expected, monitoring and projecting demand on an ongoing basis is absolutely essential to ensuring that recreation facility supply is in line with projected demand.

Figure 4.1 - Park Classifications Overview (Source: Brauer & Associates as prepared for the National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines)

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Application of LOS
Mini Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Less than a 1/4 mile distance in residential setting.	Between 2500 s.f. and 1 acre in size.	Yes
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.	Yes
Park-School	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, athletic complex, and special use.	Driven by the location of school district property.	Variable -- depends on function.	Yes -- but should not count school only uses.
Community Park	Serve broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Driven by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.	Yes
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to service the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Driven by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.	Yes
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.	No
Greenways	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.	No
Athletic Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Driven by projected demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres optimal.	Yes
Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.	Variable -- dependent on specific use.	Variable.	Depends on type of use.
Private Park/ Recreation Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable -- dependent on specific use.	Variable.	Depends on type of use.

Figure 4.1 - Pathway Classifications Overview (Source: Brauer & Associates as prepared for the National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines)

Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type	Application of LOS
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with natural environment.	Type I: Separate / single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard- or soft-surfaced.	Not applicable.
Independent Bikeways	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate / single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters <u>located in independent r.o.w.</u> (i.e., old railroad r.o.w.) Type II: Separate / single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. <u>Typically located within road r.o.w.</u> Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. <u>Typically located within roadway r.o.w.</u>	Not applicable
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Lane: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Route: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.	Not applicable
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single- purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	Not applicable
Cross-County Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.	Not applicable
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking were conflicts can be controlled.	Not applicable

Figure 4.2 - Facility Type and Location Guidelines (Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd.)

Activity/Facility	Mini-Park	Neighborhood	Park -School	Community Park	Large Urban Park	Natural Resources	Greenways	Athletic Complex	Special Use	Private Park/Facil.
Informal play	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XX	XX	XX
Youth softball		X	XXX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Adult softball			XX	X	X			XXX	XX	XX
Youth baseball		X	XXX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Adult baseball			XX	X	X			XXX	XX	XX
Youth soccer		X	XXX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Adult soccer			XX	X	X			XXX	XX	XX
Youth football		X	XXX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Adult football			XX	X	X			XXX	XX	XX
Ice hockey		XX	XXX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Ice skating		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Tennis		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Basketball	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Hardsurf. games	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Sliding hill		XX	XX	XX	XX			XX	XX	XX
Play structures	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Horseshoes	XXX	XXX		XXX	XXX			XX	XX	XX
Volleyball	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Disc golf				XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Archery range				XX	XX	XX		XX	XX	XX
Track/field			XXX					XXX	XX	XX
Beach area				XXX	XXX				XX	XX

Legend: (open) = Not an appropriate location X = Appropriate on very limited basis (usually not desirable) XX = Appropriate on limited basis (desirable only if need is documented and/or if a more desirable location is not available) XXX = Appropriate and desirable location

Figure 4.2 - Facility Type and Location Guidelines (Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd.)

Activity/Facility	Mini-Park	Neighborhood	Park -School	Community Park	Large Urban Park	Natural Resources	Greenways	Athletic Complex	Special Use	Private Park/Facil.
Golf Course									XXX	XXX
Amphitheater				XXX	XXX				XX	XX
Nature center						XXX			XX	XX
Aquatics facility									XXX	XX
Fishing area		XX		XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		XX	XX
Picnic area	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		XX	XXX	XX	XX
Sm. pic. shelter	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		XX	XXX	XX	XX
Lg. pic. shelter			XX	XXX	XXX			XXX	XX	XX
Seating areas	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Restrooms		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Activities bldg.		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XX	XX	XX
Warming bldg. (port. or perm.)		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX			XX	XX	XX
Concess. bldg			XX	XX	XX			XXX	XX	XX
Parking		XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Park trails	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	XX
Independent bikeways	Most often associated with roadway right- of- ways and used for recreation and transportation -- Group B & C bicyclists						XXX			
On-street bikeways	Bike routes/lanes and used by more advanced bicyclist -- Group A & B plus			XXX	XXX		XXX	XXX		
All-terrain bike	Carefully selected setting only			XX	XX	XX	XX			
CC ski trail	Grooming usually required			XXX	XXX	XX	XXX	XXX		
Equestrian trail	Carefully selected setting only				XX	XX	XX			

Legend: (open) = Not an appropriate location X = Appropriate on very limited basis (usually not desirable) XX = Appropriate on limited basis (desirable only if need is documented and/or if a more desirable location is not available) XXX = Appropriate and desirable location

System Flexibility

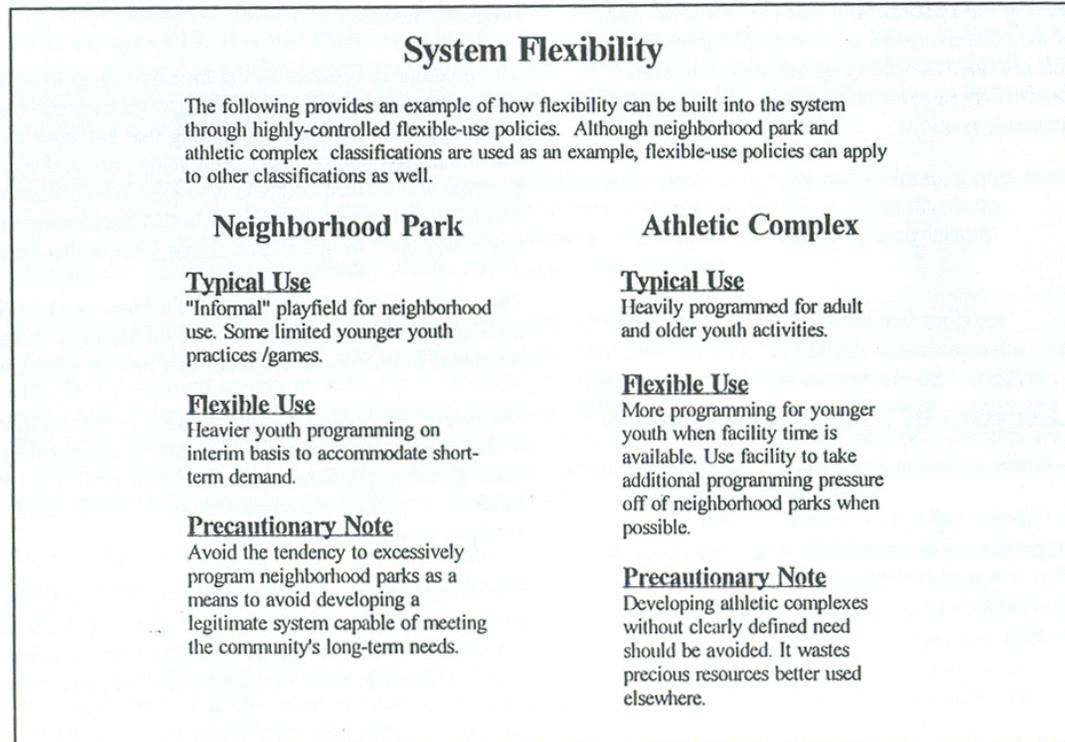
Building flexibility into a system plan is essential in order to accommodate the unique circumstances and situations that can and do arise in every community.

Overview: Building flexibility into a system plan is essential in order to accommodate the unique circumstances and situations that can and do arise in every community. Park and trail system planning -- like any other type of planning -- must be able to respond to unforeseeable events and windows of opportunity that can occur at any moment. This is not to negate the value of time-proven principles and procedures, but only to recognize that we must not let these become so rigid that opportunities are missed and leave local needs go unserved.

In this context, flexibility can occur in two ways: 1) in the way parks are developed and used; and 2) in taking advantage of opportunities as they occur.

With respect to the way parks are developed and used, Figure 4.3 provides an example of how system flexibility can be built into the system through flexible use policies.

Figure 4.3 - System Flexibility in Use
(Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd.)



The system plan should be responsive to prudent opportunity, rather than being some rigid blueprint that dictates what the system should look like irrespective of changes in community needs and unforeseen opportunities. This simply reinforces the basic precept that the system plan is dynamic by nature.

With the limited resources that the city will have available in the future, staying flexible and seeking out opportunities will be vital if the needs of the community are to be met. The city simply will not have the luxury of being able to move forward on its priorities without concern for the economic realities.

Lifecycles of System Components

The lifecycle of a park or other system components is essentially the timeframe between when it is first purchased and developed until it is rebuilt/refurbished to serve evolving customer needs.

The next flexibility issue is taking advantage of opportunities as they occur, even if they are counter to what has been previously planned. For example, the city may unexpectedly be given the opportunity to partner with an adjacent city on a development initiative not specifically called for in the system plan. If it makes sense within the context of servicing community needs and is cost effective, it is reasonable to pursue the opportunity. This type of issue gets to the heart of the systems approach to planning -- namely service the needs of the community first and foremost. What this means is that the system plan should be responsive to prudent opportunity, rather than being some rigid blueprint that dictates what the system should look like irrespective of changes in community needs and unforeseen opportunities. This simply reinforces the basic precept that the system plan is dynamic by nature.

Application to Circle Pines: With the limited resources that the city will have available in the future, staying flexible and seeking out opportunities will be vital if the needs of the community are to be met. The city simply will not have the luxury of being able to move forward on its priorities without concern for the economic realities.

The inherent limitations facing the city brings to light the importance of anticipating the most pressing needs of the community and then finding ways to accommodate those needs. This requires vision and a sound, on-going approach to systems planning that has built in flexibility. Communities that enjoy the benefits of vast interconnected opens spaces embracing park and recreation facilities are always the one's that had visionary planners and elected officials who took bold initiatives on behalf of present and future residents. The city of Circle Pines can put themselves in this position by adhering to the principles defined in this document and remaining open to opportunities that present themselves along the way.

The need for flexibility within Circle Pines is also reinforced by the fact that the city is not yet in a strong position to fully assess the demand for facilities through the application of the LOS guidelines. The plan presented in this document takes this into consideration to the degree possible.

Overview: An important consideration in system planning is the expected lifecycle of system components. In this context, the lifecycle of a park or other system components is essentially the timeframe between when it is first purchased and developed until it is rebuilt/refurbished to serve evolving customer needs. In most cases, parks have a lifecycle of 15 to 20 years, although this will vary substantially depending on the specifics of the park in question.

The design for any system component must take into consideration who the customers are likely to be throughout its lifecycle. In the case of a neighborhood park, amenities that appeal to those living nearby today may not be that highly regarded in the future as they grow older in the same residence (i.e., "age in place"). This has to be considered and adjusted for prior to the initial development of the park.

As you might expect, determining how a park's lifecycle will affect its initial design and development can be difficult. This is especially true with community-based parks such as athletic complexes, where developing a site that meets the needs of the community today may not necessarily meet their future needs. This is especially pertinent in Circle Pines, where the demographics of a city will likely change faster than the lifecycle of system components.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to rectifying these concerns. But it does drive home the importance of systematically evaluating the changing demographics of the city, projecting future changes in recreation trends, and staying in close contact with your customer to determine changing use patterns and needs.

Application to Circle Pines: As a community that is nearly fully developed, the biggest planning issue relates to tracking the changing dynamics of the population within the existing households. In review of the demographics of the city, projections point toward less people in slightly more households. This means is that the population of the city will continue to get older (in line with national projections) with less children under the age of 18. This will likely result in a higher demand for adult activities (i.e., nature viewing, walking, etc.) and somewhat lower demand for children's activities (although this reduced demand will probably be slow to manifest itself). The key is to consciously plan for this eventuality today so that new demands can be handled tomorrow.

Quality Initiative

With decreasing amounts of leisure time, citizens are placing ever-increasing emphasis on the quality of their leisure experiences. This orientation certainly affects public parks and recreation.

Without the perception of quality, use of the park system and related programs will always fall far short of their potential.

Overview: A basic principle of the systems planning today is the need to provide and maintain a high level of quality throughout a park and trail system in order to meet customer expectations. With decreasing amounts of leisure time, citizens are placing ever-increasing emphasis on the quality of their leisure experiences. This orientation certainly affects public parks and recreation.

With the expectation of quality, citizens are much more critical of the way public parks and trails are managed. In addition, they have become more selective about their personal and family leisure agendas, and specifically seek-out quality experiences. As Geoffrey Godbey, who has written extensively on recreation and leisure issues, states: "*first and foremost, Americans believe that recreation and leisure are a part of their lives which is of critical importance*". And he goes on to say: "*Ironically, thinking that recreation and leisure are important may be negatively related to supporting public recreation and park agencies, which may sometimes be viewed as providing trivial, irrelevant, or second-rate services.*"

Without the perception of quality, use of the park system and related programs will always fall far short of their potential. In the context of recreation and leisure, quality is important, in the words of Geoffrey Godbey: "*because our population is getting older, and older people are much more sensitive to aesthetics of the environment, cleanliness, natural beauty, safety, and other quality control issues. It is important because it helps teach the young that one's immediate environment is of great consequence and, therefore so are the individuals in it. It is important because our society is acquiring more formal education and individuals with formal education have higher expectations concerning quality of environment; particularly leisure environments.*"

It is critical that the parks and trail system provide high-quality outdoor experiences within the context of limited fiscal resources. What this means is that the plan must remain visionary yet not over-extend community resources.

Restoration and Management of Natural Resources and Ecological Systems

One of the most important aspects of the system plan relates to the recognition of these resources as being vital components of the park system.

And as he goes on to say, "*the condition and qualities of the leisure environment are often a critical factor in their (an individual's) decision to use or not use a given leisure area or facility.*"

Another important consideration is the very pronounced trend toward specialization in recreation and leisure activities. As individuals become more selective and skilled in their pursuits, they demand higher quality facilities and surroundings. In addition, people now more than ever before define their experiences within the context of the whole environment that surrounds them, rather than only the activity itself. This holds true for virtually all recreational and leisure activities, whether active or passive.

The point is that no longer can any provider of recreation and leisure services (public or private) avoid addressing the issue of quality if they are to remain competitive in the marketplace. A "good enough" attitude in today's marketplace usually means not good enough and is a prescription for failure.

Application to Circle Pines: In times of tight fiscal constraints, Circle Pines will have a difficult time determining the highest priorities for development. The temptation will always be there to spread the money out thinly across the community to give everybody something. Unfortunately, this usually results in the quality of the experience being compromised.

In this light, it is critical that the parks and trail system provide high-quality outdoor experiences within the context of limited fiscal resources. What this means is that the plan must remain visionary yet not over-extend community resources. Doing so would only result in poorer quality and failure to meet customer expectations. The plan presented here seeks to achieve this balance.

Overview: The assessment of need documented the importance of the city's natural resources to its innate character. One of the most important aspects of the system plan relates to the recognition of these resources as being vital components of the park system.

Initial field review brought to light some disturbing ecological concerns that need further scientific evaluation. Based on similar conditions found in this region of the country, the ecological conditions found within the city will likely lead to continued degradation of the ecological systems unless managed through a well-defined restoration and management program.

Section V addresses restoration and management planning within the context of the system plan.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA)

An important aspect of developing a quality park system lies in how well it serves the needs of the disabled. More now than ever before, municipalities have a responsibility (morally as well as legally) to provide a reasonable level of accessibility (to parks and programs) for individuals with varying levels of ability.

Overview: An important aspect of developing a quality park system lies in how well it serves the needs of the disabled. More now than ever before, municipalities have a responsibility (morally as well as legally) to provide a reasonable level of accessibility (to parks and programs) for individuals with varying levels of ability.

To help ensure that this in fact happens, the federal government has established guidelines - through the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992 - that provide for equal access to all users of public (and private) facilities and programs. Although still largely untested, the basic intent of the act is clear: reasonable equal access opportunities must be provided to those with disabilities.

There are no requirements within the ADA that mandate any spatial requirements relative to the size of any particular type of park and recreation facility. The act does, however, mandate that park areas and facilities be reasonably accessible and usable to all populations. The extent to which compliance with the act will impact the size or configuration of a particular facility is likely to be inconsequential in terms of a particular facilities size. It may, however, dictate some changes to specific design guidelines in response to the act.

Application to Circles Pines: Many of the older park sites in the city do not adequately address ADA issues. In the future, the city should seek to meet all the applicable ADA requirements as they impact park and trail facilities. A copy of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992 (and subsequent revisions) should be on file with the Park and Recreation Board for reference and application. Other publications covering the ADA concerns include the following:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Office on the ADA
P.O. Box 66118
Washington, DC 20035-6118 (202) 514-0301

Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas
Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
1111 18th Street NW, Suite 501
Washington, DC 20036

Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, General Service Administration
18th and F Streets, NW -- Room 3044
Washington, DC 20405 (202) 586-0038

Design Guide for Accessible Outdoor Recreation, USDA Forest Service, Auditors Bldg.
201 14th Street, SW at Independence Ave. SW
Attn: Access Coordinator, Recreation Staff
Washington, DC 20250

It is recommended that the Park and Recreation Board incorporate these guidelines into standard planning

Universal Access

procedures. Subsequent guidelines and legal standards should also be monitored and incorporated, as well.

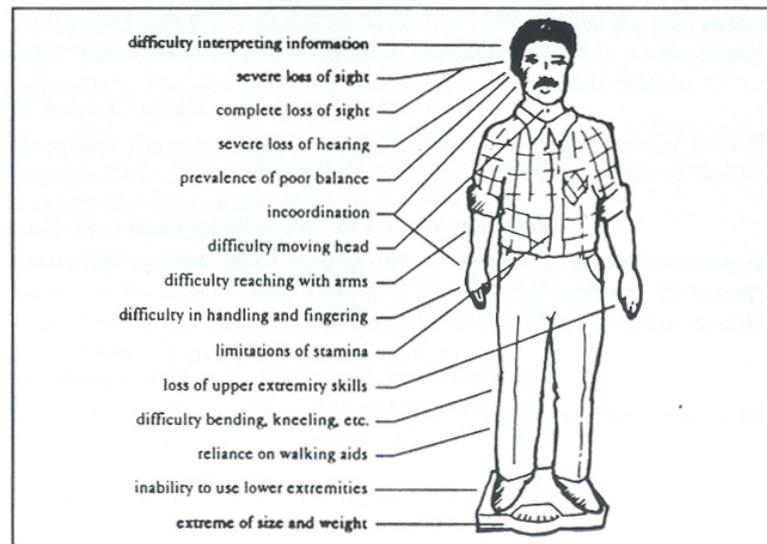
Overview: In recent years, extensive public debate has been focused on equal access to indoor and outdoor public spaces for all individuals. The ADA was the latest event in a string of developments dating back to the early 1920s. But the ADA is not an end unto itself. It is simply another step toward a design philosophy that ensures accessibility for all. The challenge is to move beyond the ADA to a more encompassing approach to design.

As stated in the recently published design guide *Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation* (PLAE, Inc. 1993), past criteria for barrier-free design (elimination of barriers to access) were based upon the needs of average human beings or the needs of the wheelchair user (which was often thought to represent the broadest spectrum of disabling conditions). In fact, the majority of people with disabilities are ambulatory and do not require a wheelchair. In reality, the range of abilities and disabilities goes well beyond these limited definitions. It becomes self evident that design philosophy must continue to evolve if a barrier-free environment is to be realized in the design of parks. Universal design is an approach to design that seeks to achieve this design philosophy by combining the basic principles of barrier-free design with a more comprehensive view of human beings, as expressed by the Enabler Model in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 - Enabler Model.

Source: *Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation*" (PLAE, Inc. 1993)

The Enabler model brings to light the broad spectrum of disability concerns that must be considered if universal design is to be achieved. The model serves as a conceptual aid that helps designers and lay persons empathize with the people who will actually be using a site, building, or facility, and encourages a more comprehensive and integrated view of people with and without disabilities.



The Enabler model brings to light the broad spectrum of disability concerns that must be considered if universal design is to be achieved. The model serves as a conceptual aid that helps designers and lay persons empathize with the people who will actually be using a site, building, or facility, and encourages a more comprehensive and integrated view of people with and without disabilities. As such, it forms the basis for a design philosophy that today is becoming known as universal design. *Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation* (PLAE, Inc. 1993) establishes a comprehensive view of this philosophy and serves as the basis for the forthcoming discussion.

By focusing attention on this broad spectrum of needs, facility design can accommodate people with varying degrees of abilities and disabilities. This is distinctly different than simply accommodating a set of accessibility requirements that ensure compliance to the law but may not ensure accessibility for all people.

Under this paradigm, universal design attempts to consider all degrees of sensory awareness, all types of locomotion, and all levels of physical and intellectual function. By doing so, the needs of individuals with varying desires, abilities, and expectations can be reasonably accommodated in an appropriate setting. The end result is that individuals with and without disabilities are accommodated in a manner that meets their expectations for a specific space or setting.

The end result (of universal design) is that individuals with and without disabilities are accommodated in a manner that meets their expectations for a specific space or setting.

The philosophical underpinnings of universal design as defined by *Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation* includes:

- People purposely choose settings for their recreation activities.
- Choices are made with the expectation of achieving specific recreation experiences.
- It is desirable to present as diverse a spectrum of activities and recreation setting opportunities as appropriate for a given site.

The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and outdoor recreation access classifications serve as a means to achieve this end. They are flexible guidelines that set the framework for making appropriate accessibility decisions that allow for universal access within the context of the public's expectation for a certain type of setting.

The ROS is a recreation management approach used by the USDA Forest Service that is in keeping with the principles of universal design. The ROS framework is based on a continuum of possible combinations of recreation settings, activities, and experiential opportunities, as well as the resulting benefits that can accrue to the individual (by improving physical and mental well-being) and society.

The ROS stratifies and defines this continuum into four classifications that cover the full spectrum of outdoor recreation environments. These classifications are divided primarily in terms of perceivable modifications to the natural environment and the related influences these modifications have upon customer expectations. The following briefly defines the four ROS classifications:

- **Urban/rural** areas, because they are highly developed, evoke expectations of easy access.

Under the ROS framework, it is not necessary or desirable to develop all recreation equally. From the ROS perspective, each site should be developed or modified in a manner that achieves harmony between recreation expectations and the environmental setting.

- **Roaded natural** settings are less developed than urban settings, but still contain a relatively high number of modifications to the environment. These areas evoke an expectation for a moderate level of accessibility.
- **Semi-primitive** areas are rarely developed, and evoke an expectation of difficult access.
- **Primitive areas** have few, if any, modifications. These evoke expectations for the most difficult access.

Under the ROS framework, it is not necessary or desirable to develop all recreation equally. From the ROS perspective, each site should be developed or modified in a manner that achieves harmony between recreation expectations and the environmental setting. Development must be tailored to complement the setting. As an example, it is a reasonable to expect that the access to the interpretive center would be greater than access to the more remote natural areas in the park. What is important is that the level of access must be in sync with what is expected by the public -- whether they are able-bodied or disabled -- for a particular setting.

Under the Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation framework, there are two classifications for paths in outdoor recreation sites. The following defines the accessibility guidelines for each:

- **Outdoor recreation access routes** are paths that provide access to the primary developed recreation areas and elements within a site. These routes typically provide an easy to moderate level of accessibility.
- **Recreation trails** are paths that provide access to other, lesser developed recreation activities and elements within a site. Guidelines for these trails are less stringent than those for outdoor recreation access routes.

Application to Circle Pines: Since the concept of universal design is still in its infancy, it has yet to become common practice in the design professions. The challenge, then, is to consciously apply the principles of universal design to every park setting to determine what will be most appropriate given the circumstances.

At the very least, the outcome of this approach is that more people of different levels of ability will have life enriching experiences in the park. At the very most, the park will serve as an example for others to follow, ultimately furthering the cause of making universal access an integral part of all design processes. An important aspect of developing a quality park system lies in how well it serves the needs of the disabled.

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent regulatory agency of the federal government with responsibility to inform the public of unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer products.

Overview: The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent regulatory agency of the federal government with responsibility to inform the public of unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer products. In 1991, the CPSC released an updated guideline entitled "Handbook for Public Playground Safety". This publication defines the generally accepted practices for providing a safe playground, especially with respect to play equipment for 2-5 year olds and 6-12 year olds.

Application to Circle Pines: As with ADA issues, many of the older park sites in the city do not adequately address playground safety issues. In the future, the city should seek to meet all the applicable CPSC requirements as they pertain to park and trail facilities. A copy of the CPSC handbook (and subsequent revisions) should be on file with the Park and Recreation Board for reference and application. The address: Consumer Products Safety Commission, Office of Information and Public Affairs Washington, DC 20207

V - Park and Trail System Plan

Overview

Although nearly fully developed, Circle Pines is still a very dynamic city with a changing population structure and evolving community needs. Staying abreast of these changes and anticipating how they will impact the development of the park system is of paramount importance if the city is to be successful in meeting the needs of the community.

The system plan describes the various components of the Circle Pines park and trail system. The plan is based upon the findings of previous sections and the framework presented in the last section.

Although nearly fully developed, Circle Pines is still a very dynamic city with a changing population structure and evolving community needs. Staying abreast of these changes and anticipating how they will impact the development of the park system is of paramount importance if the city is to be successful in meeting the needs of the community. In this context, it must be kept in mind that:

- All system components must be justifiable within the context of the park and trail needs, mission, and goals of the community.
- As the park and trail system needs, mission, and goals change in future years, the system plan itself must also change.

With the above understanding, the system plan defined in this document provides a strong starting point and valuable guide to park and trail development based on the current needs of the community and the opportunities and constraints facing the city. The basic precepts behind the plan include:

- Developing a comprehensive and interrelated park and trail system.
- Using existing park land to its highest and best use.
- Recognizing the limitations of resources (physical and fiscal).
- Developing a plan that allows for incremental and orderly improvements -- visionary yet realistic.

The overriding goals of the system plan are to:

- 1) Foster the "city as a park" concept, whereby the park and trail system serve as primary factors in shaping the character of the community and creating a desirable place to live, work, and recreate.
- 2) Service neighborhood and community park and recreation needs.
- 3) Service youth athletics by providing facilities and providing access to facilities through partnerships.
- 4) Develop an interlinking trail system.
- 5) Provide access to facilities for adult participants through partnerships.
- 6) Protect and enhance natural resource amenities.

The overall system plan consists of the following:

- Park system plan
- Trail system plan
- Regional and county parks and trails
- School district outdoor facilities
- Natural resources management planning
- Partnerships
- Private recreation facilities
- Urban open space and public amenities

The following defines each of these in detail.

Park System Plan

It is important to recognize that a park system is more than simply a collection of individual park units. It represents a comprehensive package of parks and recreational facilities that give those living in the community a cross-section of recreational opportunity and natural amenities to appreciate.

The park system plan consists of 14 park units contained within three neighborhood service areas. This includes one County park and one park-school site. The large regional park would be in addition to these park units.

It is important to recognize that a park system is more than simply a collection of individual park units. It represents a comprehensive package of parks and recreational facilities that give those living in the community a cross-section of recreational opportunity and natural amenities to appreciate. Each park must be viewed within the context of the whole park system to ensure that it functions properly in providing facilities and amenities that are balanced against those provided in other park areas.

The Park and Trail System Legend on page 68 and 69 provides a listing of the parks within each neighborhood service area and the community as a whole. It also defines each park's class or type, overall acreage, location, and page number for its individual park description.

The Park System Map on page 70 illustrates the neighborhood park service areas and the individual parks on a city map. It also illustrates the location of regional and county parks and park-school sites to give a complete picture of the park system plan.

Neighborhood-Level Parks within Neighborhood Park Service Areas (NPSA)

NPSAs are essentially a grouping of parks that work together to service a particular neighborhood's park needs.

At the neighborhood level, the park system plan consists of a three *neighborhood park service areas (NPSA)*. NPSAs are essentially a grouping of parks that work together to service a particular neighborhood's park needs. The boundaries of these service areas are based largely on the physical infrastructure of the city, which serves to define physical opportunities and constraints inherent to the city's form.

The use of park service areas in Circle Pines is especially important and appropriate for two main reasons:

- The existing park land configuration is such that individual parks at the neighborhood level are not well situated to service neighborhood needs on an individual basis.
- Resource limitations (funding) precludes the possibility of providing a full pallet of recreational opportunities within each park.

The use of park service areas allows for the grouping of individual parks so that they function together to service the areas park needs in a cost effective manner yet still provide adequate park amenities.

The use of park service areas allows for the grouping of individual parks so that they function together to service the area's park needs in a cost-effective manner yet still provide adequate park amenities. More specifically, each park service area provides:

- A full pallet of recreational opportunities to service neighborhood-level needs.
- Facilities and amenities that are accessible from throughout the service area (via trails and residential roadways).

By being part of a larger service area unit, the development program for each park can focus on complimenting what is offered in other parks, rather than duplicating it.

Community-Level Parks

Certain parks serve community-wide park needs in addition to neighborhood needs. This includes parks that have:

- Unique features that have city-wide appeal
- Larger and more extensive facilities that can accommodate larger groups
- More physical space not found at the neighborhood level
- Facilities that are too costly to duplicate in more than one or two parks throughout the city

City Hall Park in NPSA II and Golden Lake Park in NPSA III are the two defined community parks in the city. Although the latter actually falls under the Anoka County Park System, it serves community park needs very well and offers a great opportunity for joint development with the county.

The provision of community parks is greatly influenced by the presence of Rice Creek Regional Park Reserve.

The provision of community parks is greatly influenced by the presence of Rice Creek Regional Park Reserve. This large regional park with boundaries that cut across several cities offers many recreational opportunities for Circle Pines' residents that are often found within community parks. This takes much of the burden off the city to provide these facilities and thus allows already limited resources to be used elsewhere in the system.

In the context of overall needs, the two community parks in combination with the regional park reserve should be adequate to service the community.

Youth Athletic Facilities

The assessment of need defined some of the pressing needs for youth athletic facilities from the perspective of the user groups. It was clear from this assessment that the demand for facilities is already outpacing availability within and outside of Circle Pines. Since youth are usually less mobile than adults, it is most desirable to provide these facilities as close to home as possible. But the fiscal realities and limited land area also point toward much greater reliance on partnerships with other cities and school districts to service growing demand. As defined later in this section, these partnerships will play a significant role in servicing youth athletic needs, as well as other community needs.

Pursuing partnerships will become the primary

To alleviate some of the burgeoning demand, the system plan calls for expanding youth athletic facilities in a

means to alleviating the remaining (and yet to be completely defined) demand for youth facilities.

number of parks, including:

- Carl Eck Park -- potential to add facilities by maximizing the use of available space
- Baldwin Park -- partnerships with Lino Lakes and the county could result in additional usable land for youth athletic facilities. (It should be noted, however, that the county may be reaching its development capacity of 20% of the land area within the regional park preserve. If so, this would preclude the possibility of expanding active recreation opportunities adjacent to Baldwin Park.)
- Golden Lake School -- potential to add facilities by using the available open space more effectively and redesigning currently under-utilized land areas

Aside for these sites, the opportunities for adding youth facilities within the city is very limited. Acquiring additional land offers limited opportunities because much of the city is developed and to acquire, develop, and operate it would be cost prohibitive. Therefore, pursuing partnerships will become the primary means to alleviating the remaining (and yet to be completely defined) demand for youth facilities. This drives home the importance of the city being able to accurately determine the demand for facilities so that just the right mix of facilities can be provided for youth sports, whether within or outside the city.

Adult Athletic Facilities

Forming partnerships is a significant point in the case of Circle Pines in that there is very limited opportunity within the confines of the current land mass to provide adult athletic facilities.

Historically, the city has not provided much in the way of facilities for adult sports. Hence, the public input process did not bring forth much insight into the need for these facilities. The Park Board did, however, recognize that some degree of latent demand exists within the community. They also recognized that adults living in the city that wanted to participate in sports were forced to find opportunity elsewhere. Although the hard-core sports-minded individual seems to be finding a place to play, the city does have a responsibility to understand these demands and make reasonable efforts to address them. This again drives home two important points: 1) the need for the city to be able to accurately determine the demand for facilities; and 2) the need to work in partnership with other communities to provide the right mix of facilities for adult use.

Limited land availability within the city, coupled with the cost to acquire, develop, and maintain it, realistically precludes the city from developing new facilities on its own to any meaningful degree. Hence, there are no adult athletic facilities proposed for any of the existing parks within the city.

However, through partnerships the city can take advantage of economies of scale, shared costs to develop and operate, and the potential to offset costs through revenue generation (i.e., tournaments, special events, etc.). These would also allow the city to offer residents a broader spectrum of sports choices than they could feasible do on their own.

Natural Resource Areas

Natural Resource Area is a new park classification listed in the revised national guidelines and applied to Circle Pines. This classification was included in the guidelines as a way to give status or recognition to an important aspect of all park systems. As is most often the case, the natural resource areas of Circle Pines are vital to its overall character and sense of place. It therefore is important to clearly define the purpose of these areas within the context of the park system and city landscape. Classifying them under their own classification allows for this to happen. It also helps to avoid the confusion of the past as to how such land should be classified and used relative to other types of parks.

One of the strengths of the Circle Pines park system lies in its natural resource areas and the use of these areas as linkages between developed areas and city and regional parks. Six parks are at least partially classified as natural resources areas. The Park Map on page 70 illustrates the location of these park units. The individual park descriptions (in this section) provide more detailed information about each these sites.

Overall, natural resource areas account for approximately 71 acres (45 percent) of the 156 acres in the park system (including Golden Lake School and Golden Lake Park sites). The amount of land under this classification versus others is of little significance. Whereas land set aside for athletic fields or other park uses is typically based on demand, land set aside as natural resource areas is largely based on opportunity for preservation and community desire. These lands are a key ingredient to the "city as a park" concept and Circle Pines is very fortunate in that regard.

With the amount of acreage already set aside for this use, acquiring additional land for natural resources areas is not a top priority. Nor is there much opportunity given that the city is nearly fully developed.

Although acquiring natural resource land is not a concern, preserving it is a major one. Observation during field work brought to light some disturbing ecological concerns that need further scientific evaluation. Based on recent research, the ecological conditions found within virtually all of the natural resource areas is degraded and will likely lead to continued degradation unless they are managed through a well-defined restoration and management program. (A framework for this type of program is defined later in this section.)

Individual Park Descriptions

The Park and Trail System Legend on page 68 and 69 provides a listing of the parks within each park service area and the community as a whole. The individual park descriptions describe each park in greater detail, which includes:

- **Park Classification, Location, and Size**
- **Existing Site Features** -- defines the existing level of development within the park.
- **Existing Conditions/Characteristics** -- defines qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the park.
- **Interrelationship with Other Parks** -- defines the role the park plays within the context of the larger park system.
- **Development Program** -- defines the type of development that is appropriate for the park based on current community needs.
- **Aerial photograph** -- provides a general perspective of the park's layout.

Trail System Plan

The trail system plan consists of several different classes, or types, of trails that serve specific user groups with varying needs and skill levels. Like the park system, individual trails should be viewed within the context of the whole system to ensure that they function properly in providing an interlinking trail network. Figure 5.1 identifies the broad range of uses as well as skill levels that the different trail, or pathway, types seek to accommodate.

Figure 5.1 - Range of need for pathway (trail) facilities
 Source: National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines

Range of Need for Pathway Facilities

Potential Range of Need

- Recreation
- Commuting / Alternative Transportation
- Health and Fitness
- Nature Study
- Social Interaction

Potential Skill Level (Bicyclists)

Group A - Advanced Bicyclists: Experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions. They comprise the majority of current users of collector and arterial streets and are best served by directness, minimal delays, and sufficient operating space.

Group B - Basic Bicyclists: Casual or new adult and teenage bicyclists who are less confident of their ability to operate without special provisions for bicycles. Some will develop greater skills and progress to the advanced level. They are best served by comfortable access to destinations (preferably a direct route), low-speed or low-traffic volume streets, or designated bicycle facilities.

Group C - Children: Pre-teen bicyclists whose roadway use is initially monitored by parents. They are best served by access to key destinations surrounding neighborhood areas (schools, recreation facilities, shopping), residential streets with low traffic speeds and volumes, well-defined separation from motor vehicles on arterial and collector streets and separate bike paths.

Sources: Manual: Selecting Roadway Design Treatments to Accommodate Bicyclists (FHWA-RD-92-073), Federal Highway Administration and Brauer & Associates, Ltd.

Like parks, a variety of trail types are needed to accommodate the wide range of trail uses as defined above. The Park and Trail System Legend and Trail Map on pages 68 and 69 consider the different trail system components, which expand upon the trail corridors previously developed by the city. The classifications of individual trail types has changed to some degree to be more in line with the new national guidelines. The following provides an overview of the recommended trail, or pathway, classifications.

Park Trails

Although not a hierarchical relationship between trail types, the plan places emphasis on developing park trails, which are off-street trails located within a park, greenway, or natural resource area. Developing this particular type of trail is emphasized because they:

- Emphasize harmony with the natural environment.
- Allow for relatively uninterrupted pedestrian movement to and through the city's park system and development areas.
- Effectively tie the various parks and recreation areas together to form a comprehensive park and trail system -- with an emphasis on enhancing the recreational experience of the user, rather than simply providing a means of getting from one park to another.
- Safely protect users from urban development and associated vehicular traffic.

For the above reasons, park trails are a favored type of trail by a number of user groups. Figure 5.2 illustrates the three different types of park trails as defined by the National Parks, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines. Type II hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and in-line skaters is proposed for all of the park trails shown on the plan. Although asphalt is preferred, aggregate surfacing may also be appropriate in certain circumstances if deemed acceptable by the city.

Independent Bikeways

Independent bikeways are trails that are independent of roadways and often serve to link together and augment park trails. The significance difference between independent bikeways and park trails lies largely in their location. Whereas park trails emphasize a strong relationship with the natural environment within a park-like setting, independent bikeways emphasis is on safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. In general, independent bikeways are located within road right-of-ways and utility easements. Figure 5.3 illustrates the three different types of independent bikeways as defined by the National Parks, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines. Type II hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and in-line skaters is proposed for all of the independent bikeways shown on the plan. Although asphalt is preferred, aggregate surfacing may also be appropriate in certain circumstances if deemed acceptable by the city.

On-Street Bikeways

On-street bikeways are paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from traffic. They come in the form of bike routes and bike lanes. The distinction between the two is a matter of exclusivity. Whereas bike routes are essentially paved shoulders or segments of the roadway that serve as a means to separate bicyclists from traffic, bike lanes are designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

It is important to recognize that bikeways serve distinct user groups, including:

- Commuters/transportation -- those that use their bicycle as a means to get from point A to B as expediently as possible.
- Fitness enthusiasts -- those that bicycle for fitness as well as recreation.
- Competitive athletes -- those that bicycle competitively.

The needs of these user groups are distinctly different than those using park trails or independent bikeways for

recreational purposes. The most critical distinction is that of speed. At speeds in excess of 10 or 15 mph, the safety of a typical trail user (and bicyclist) becomes an important concern. Although some commuter-type off-street trails are specifically designed to accommodate higher speeds, the vast majority of recreation-type trails are not. Given this, it is important that the inherent differences in user group needs be recognized and that off-street trails not be used as a direct substitute for on-street bikeways (or vice-versa). Bikeways should be planned as a stand-alone system that acts as an interconnected overlay to the off-street trail system.

Figure 5.4 illustrates the two different types of independent bikeways as defined by the National Parks, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines. Bike routes are proposed for all of the on-street bikeways shown on the plan, which are limited at this time to Lexington Avenue and Lake Drive.

As the plan illustrates, on-street bikeways are not shown on the residential-level streets as shown on the city's current bicycle trail map. The reason for this is that on-street bikeways are typically associated with roadways of the collector level and above. In most, but not all, cases, residential streets are generally considered to be inherently suitable for both vehicular and bicycle use.

Although many streets within the city are not specifically defined as on-street bikeways in the plan, it is not the intent of the plan to preclude bicycle travel on them. Depending on the skill level of the individual bicyclist, virtually all streets are by law open to bicycle travel. The plan presented here defines those routes of travel that justify a higher level of bicycle facilities for safety, convenience to the bicyclist, and promotion of alternative forms of transportation.

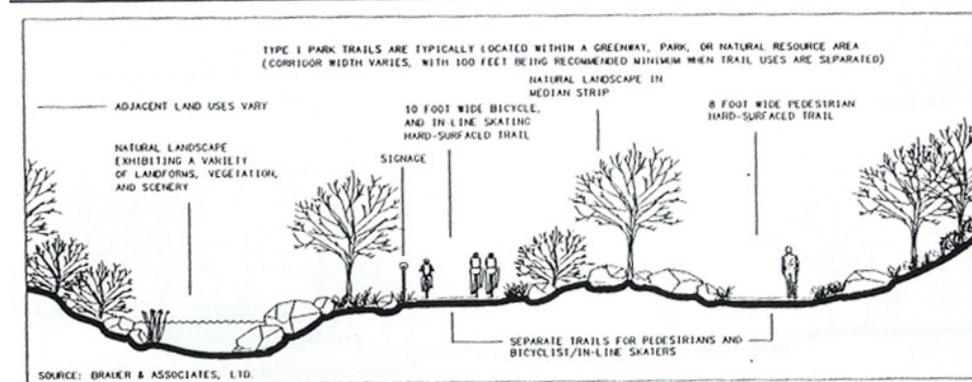
All-Terrain (Mountain) Bike Trails

Although relatively new to the recreation scene, off-road mountain biking has become a very popular activity that appeals to a wide range of age groups with varying levels of skill. Given its relative infancy, establishing trail standards to meet these divergent needs continues to evolve. Within Circle Pines, there is very limited opportunity for this type of trail and therefore no trails are being recommended. This should not, however, preclude the potential for this type of trail in the future. Opportunities in this regard include working with Anoka County Parks to develop an all-terrain bike trail within the regional park setting and connecting it to the city's trail system. With more extensive land holdings, the county park system is probably better suited for this type of trail.

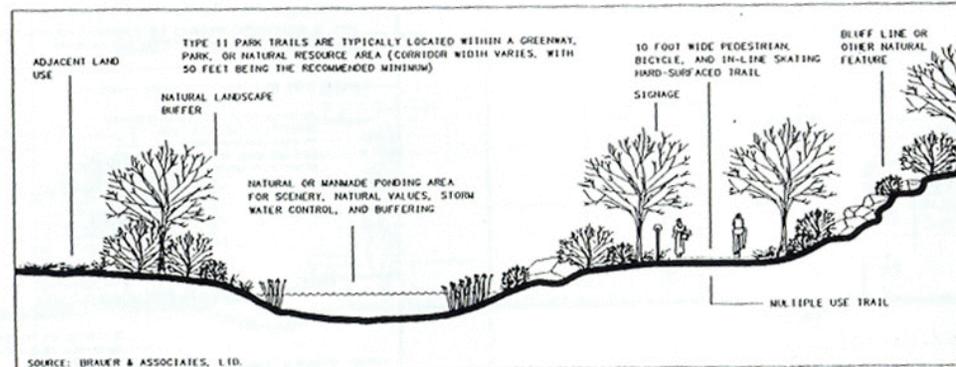
Cross-Country Ski and Equestrian Trails

The city's cross-country ski trail map defines a number of trail possibilities that can be continued if there is a local demand for this type of facility. In an ungroomed condition, they would be appropriate for short, close to home outings. For more extensive and groomed trail loops the city should rely on the regional trail system within Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve. The regional park setting and the grooming programs used by Anoka County Parks can more adequately address the needs of skiers than is realistic to provide at the local level. The same idea holds true for equestrian trails, where the city is better off working with the county than attempting to provide these on their own.

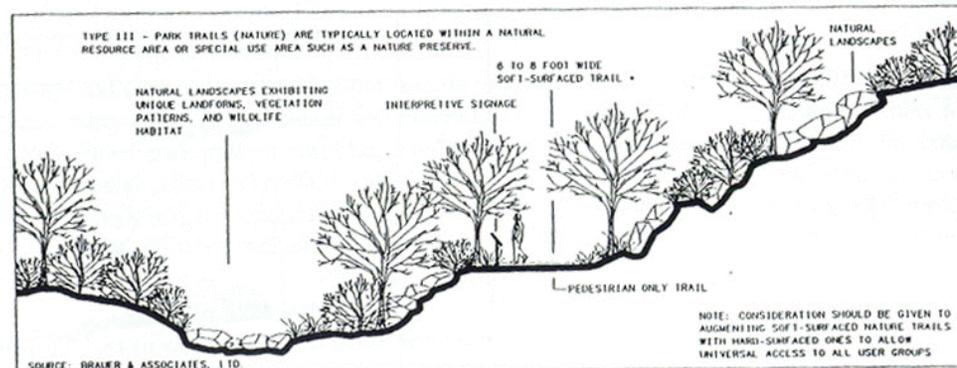
Figure 5.2 - Park trail types
 Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd. as submitted for
 the National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and
 Pathway Guidelines



TYPE I PARK TRAIL



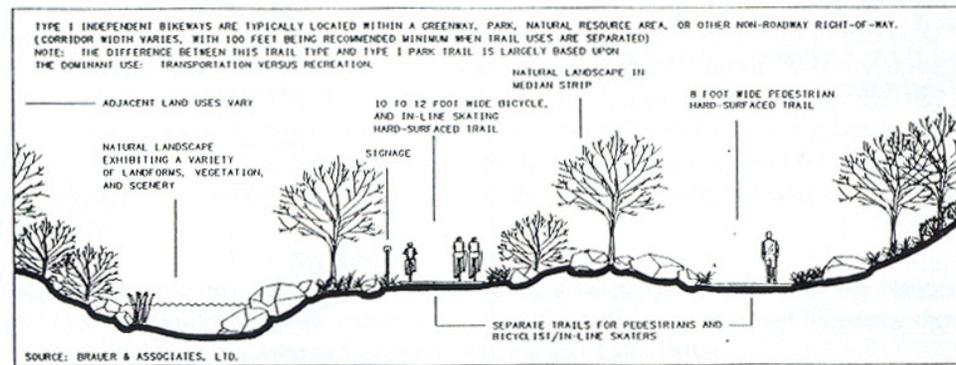
TYPE II PARK TRAIL



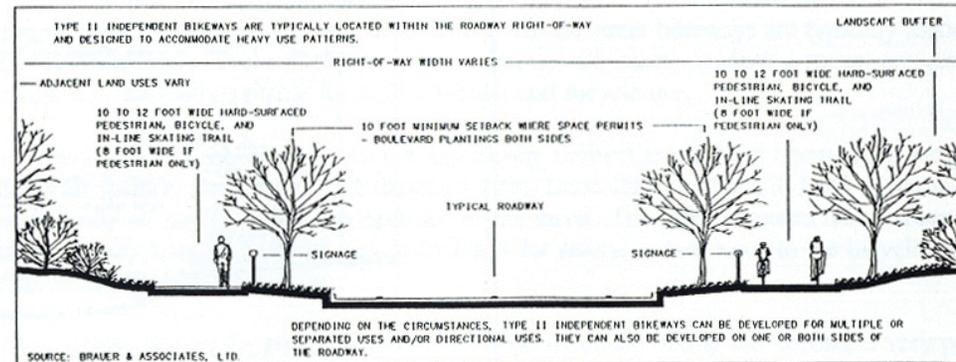
TYPE III PARK TRAIL (NATURE TRAIL)

NOTE: CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO AUGMENTING SOFT-SURFACED NATURE TRAILS WITH HARD-SURFACED ONES TO ALLOW UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO ALL USER GROUPS

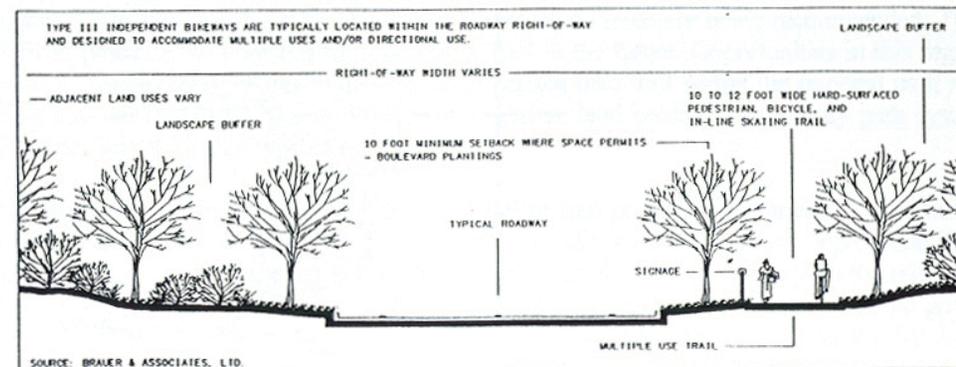
Figure 5.3 - Independent bikeway types
 Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd. as submitted for the National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines



TYPE I INDEPENDENT BIKEWAY

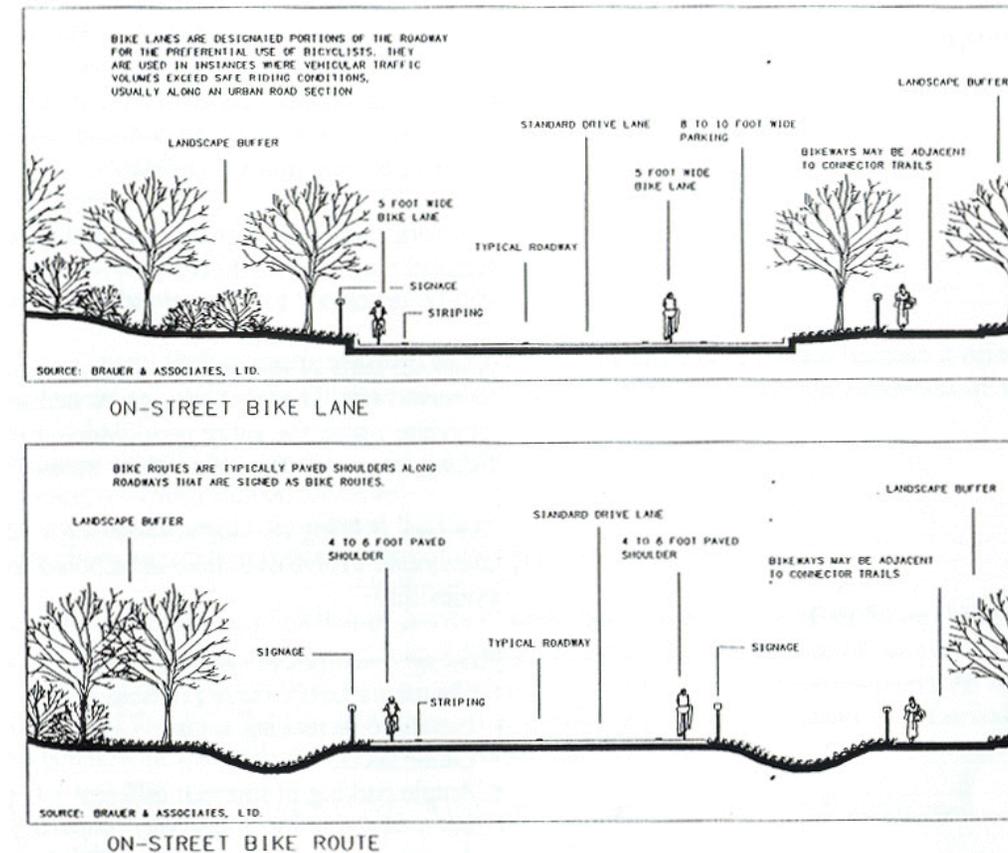


TYPE II INDEPENDENT BIKEWAY



TYPE III INDEPENDENT BIKEWAY

Figure 5.4 - On-street bikeway types
 Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd. as submitted for the National Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines



Regional and County Parks and Trails

The regional- and county-based park areas and facilities that directly affect Circle Pines are administered by the Anoka County Parks & Recreation and Planning Departments. These park units will play a significant role in Circle Pines' park system and thus warrant fostering a working partnership with the county as these parks are developed. This is especially important today because the county is undertaking a comprehensive review of their park and trail system to determine future potentials. This window of opportunity offers the city the best chance to work with the county to address future community needs in a proactive, cooperative fashion.

The following identifies the regional parks and facilities that have a direct impact on the city's park system.

Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve

From a park planning standpoint, Circle Pines is in the fortunate position to be bisected by the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve, an exceptional regional park amenity that traverses almost the entire eastern municipal boundary. This park has the potential to provide residents with a multitude of recreational opportunities not otherwise available within the city. Once fully developed, the park will serve as a major natural resource area and recreational amenity to the community and play a significant role within the city's overall park and trail system plan.

The park encompasses many land and water acres within the city of Circle Pines. It is designated as a regional park reserve, whereby 80% of the land area must remain in its natural state. The remaining 20% will be developed for recreational uses, most of which are passive in nature.

Although parts of the park are subject to flooding, proper management will allow the property to be preserved and, in some cases, developed for a variety of recreational facilities. The relative abundance of shoreline within the entire park (which goes beyond Circle Pines) will make swimming, boating/canoeing, fishing, camping, and nature study accessible to a variety of user groups.

The park is being developed following a master plan prepared back in the mid-1970's. The plan has and will continue to evolve over time in response to changes in recreational trends and demands and funding availability.

Existing development within the park reserve includes:

- Chomonix Golf Course (18 holes)
- Extensive picnicking areas
- Canoe access
- Ample parking in fourteen different lots (unpaved)
- Six to seven miles of parkway (unpaved)
- An extensive prairie restoration project
- A couple of boat accesses
- An 1,100 foot swimming beach with a bathhouse/ restrooms, playground, drinking fountain, picnic tables, etc.
- A new nature center (1991-92)
- Family camping
- Cross-country ski trails

Future development potentials include:

- An extensive trail system (12 miles)
- Pavement on parkways and parking lots
- Day camping
- Additional picnicking areas
- Additional restrooms
- Wildlife preserve
- Picnic shelters
- Field game areas
- Interpretive shelters

Golden Lake County Park

Golden Lake County Park is considered an integral part of the city's park system because it offers community-based recreation opportunities not otherwise available within the city. Amenities of significant importance include:

- Lake access (mostly for canoes)
- Swimming area with support facilities
- Large group picnic area with support facilities
- Usable (from an active recreation perspective) open space

Since the park is under the jurisdiction of Anoka County Parks, coordination of its future development program lies in their hands. The county does, however, recognize the importance of the park to the community and is interested in forming a partnership to ensure that its future development serves the needs of the county and the city. The city is encouraged to develop a joint-use agreement with the county so that the future potential of this park is fully understood and realized.

The park plate shown on page 93 provides additional information about this park within the context of the city's park needs.

School District Facilities

As with Anoka County Parks, establishing a close working relationship with the local school district with respect to the joint-use of recreation facilities will be important if the city is to meet the community's long-term recreation demands.

Centennial School District has a couple of sites that provide joint-use possibilities. Golden Lake Elementary offers the most direct opportunity due to its location and amenities. The athletic fields would serve youth sports needs and the play area, hardcourt, and open space would serve neighborhood park needs.

More indirectly, but no less important, the Centennial School District's campus just north of the city limits offers considerable opportunity for joint use of facilities. This is especially important with respect to athletic facilities. The forthcoming section on partnerships addressing this issue. Figure 5.5 provides an aerial view of the campus and illustrates the potential for shared use of facilities.

Figure 5.5 - Aerial view of Centennial School District's campus on the northern municipal boundary



The park plate shown on page 91 provides additional information about Golden Lake Elementary park-school site within the context of the city's park needs.

Natural Resources Management Planning

Contemporary park system planning places great emphasis on considering natural resource areas as integral components of the park system. This is counter to Circle Pines' past practices where these areas were looked upon as undeveloped open space or placed under other park classifications, such as community park.

Under their own classification, the role of natural resource areas as part of the park system is better defined and legitimized. As noted earlier, the new National Park, Open Space, and Pathway Guidelines includes this new classification in the revised park classification guidelines.

The primary goal of the natural resource classification is to provide for the preservation and conservation of natural resources and open space within the city. This includes setting aside land for this purpose as well as managing these resources to preserve their natural values and the integrity of ecological systems. Key objectives include:

- To use natural resource areas as significant factors in shaping the community's landscape and living environment.
- To preserve significant natural resources as open space and important components of the overall park system.
- To maintain and enhance the character and appeal of the community through interconnected natural resource areas.
- To encourage a compact urban form that emphasizes orderly and sequential growth within the community that is in harmony with the natural environment.
- To ensure that sustainable and desirable natural resource areas and ecological systems are protected and managed within the city.

The intertwining of parks, greenways, trails, and natural resource areas is what legitimizes the concept of the city as a park: Successfully integrating the human element with that of the surrounding natural environment. This concept gets to the center of quality of life issues and livable communities.

Circle Pines is in a good position with respect to the extent of natural resources within and adjacent to the city. These areas are significant in one's perception of Circle Pines as a quality place to live. Preserving them through restoration and management programs that focus on sustainable landscapes is the future challenge.

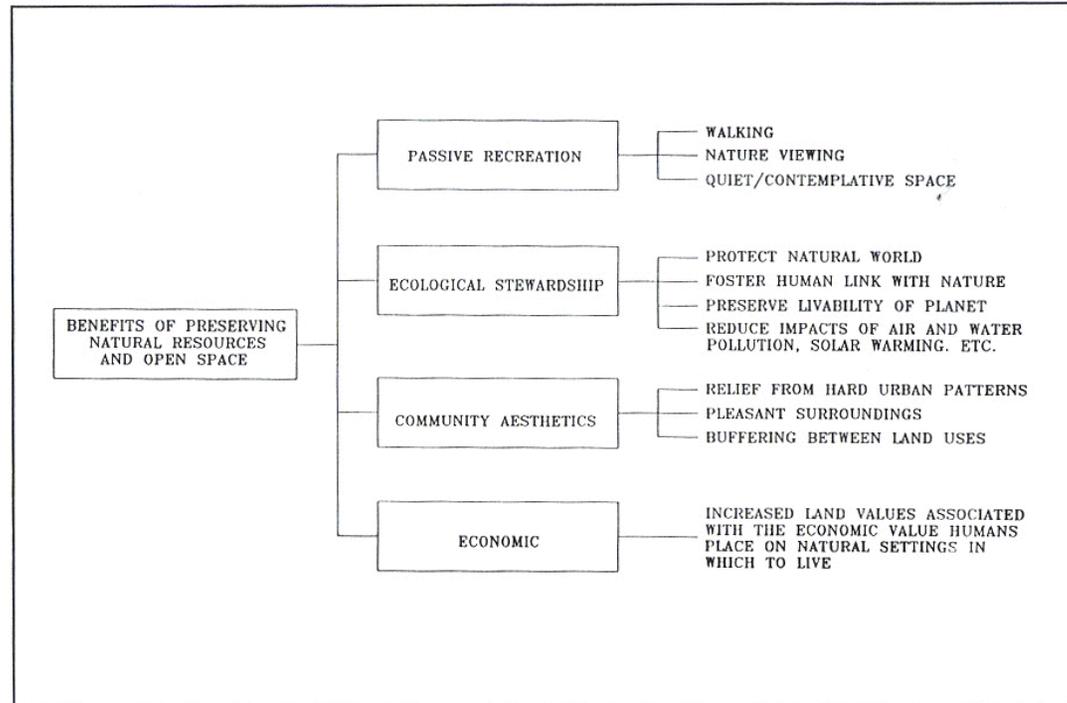
Benefits of Preserving Natural Resource Areas

Much has been written in recent times about the benefits of preserving our natural resources, from protecting a fragile planet for future generations to recognizing their intrinsic values to the quality of our own life. Figure 5.6 provides an overview of the many benefits of preserving the city's natural resources.

Figure 5.6 - Benefits of preserving natural resources

Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd.

As the figure illustrates, there are many compelling reasons for preserving the natural spaces within the city. The only way this can be accomplished is through insightful resource planning that ensures the long-term vitality of these ecological systems.



Overall Trends in Natural Resource Quality

Without human intervention, it is expected that the overall trend of the natural resources within the city will be toward continued degradation. Figure 5.7 graphically illustrates the ecological trend in a typical historic oak savanna system exhibited in Circle Pines and many other midwestern communities. This type of trend is reflected in all of the ecological systems found within the city.

Figure 5.8 graphically illustrates the current trend in natural resource quality and defines the spectrum of opportunity for reversing this trend.

Figure 5.7 - Ecological trend in a typical historic oak savanna system

Source: Applied Ecological Services, Brodhead, Wisconsin

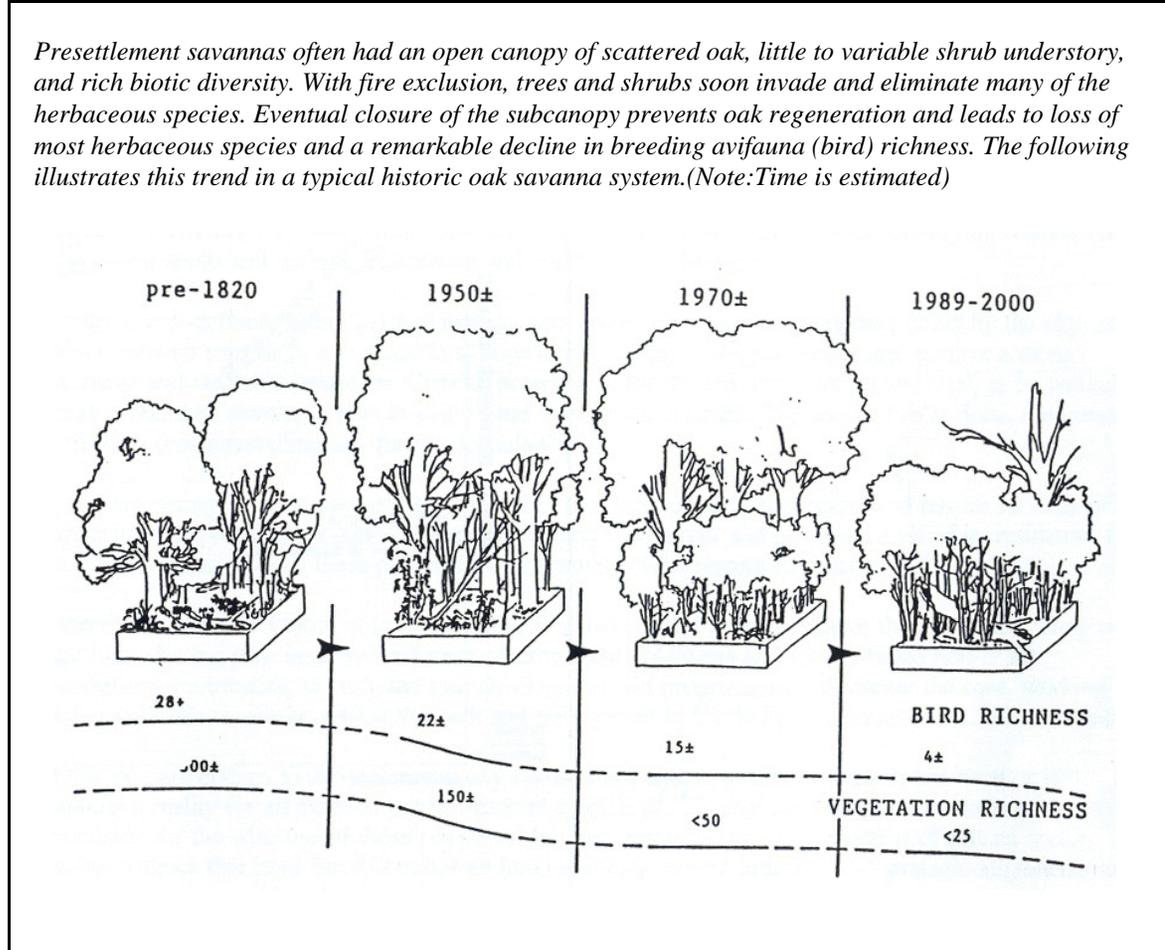
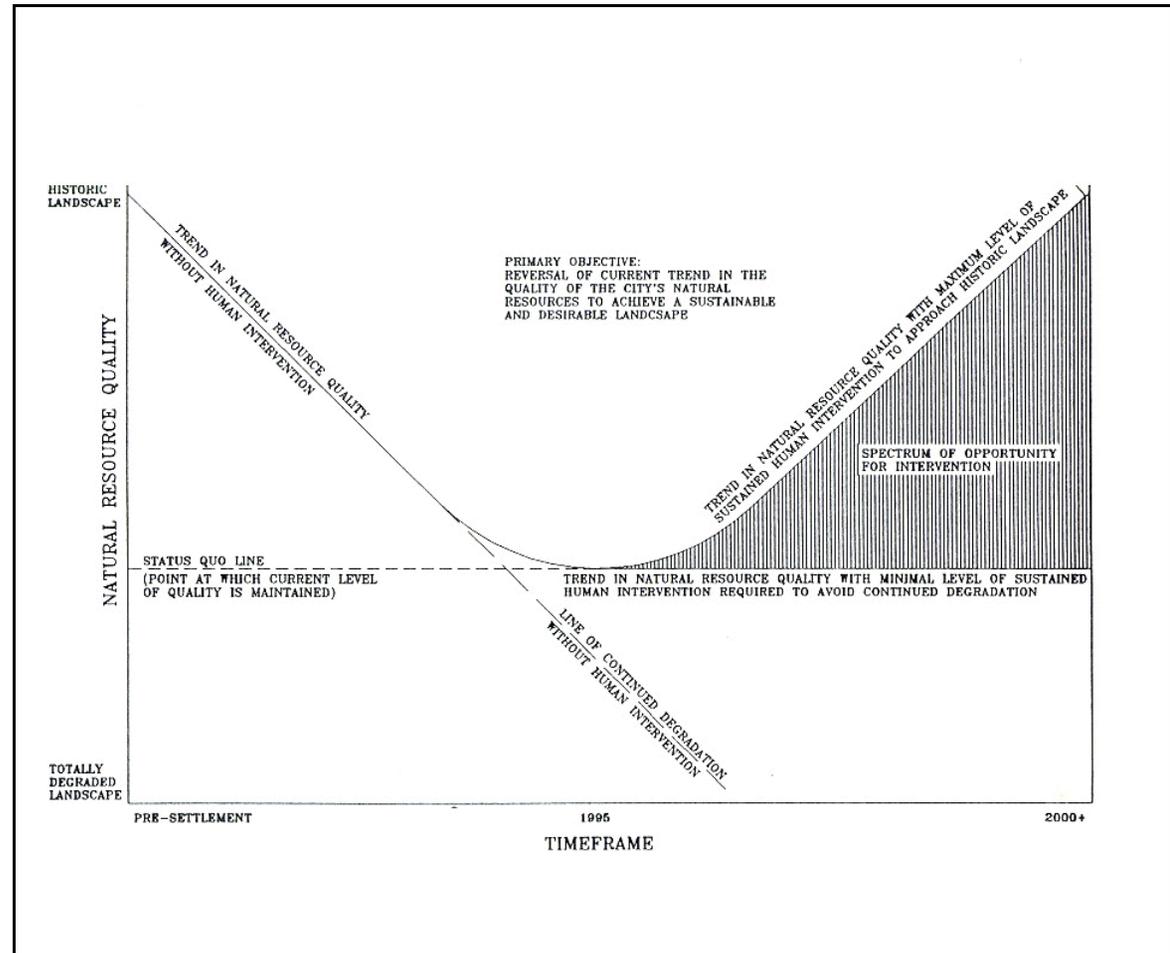


Figure 5.8 - Trend analysis
 Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd.



Spectrum of Opportunity for Restoration of Natural Resources

The spectrum of opportunity for reversing the trend in the quality and vitality of the community's natural resources is quite broad. At a minimum, a certain amount of effort will be required to simply avoid continued degradation. At the other end of the spectrum, achieving a historic landscape quality can be approached -- although it is unrealistic to expect that a pre-settlement quality could be replicated given the impacts to the land over the years since settlement occurred. It is recommended that the city seek to achieve a sustainable landscape quality, which is defined as the point at which the city can indefinitely maintain a certain level of resource quality.

This sustainable level is contingent upon two primary factors:

- Public understanding of and support for restoration and maintenance programs.
- Resources committed to undertaking restoration and management programs.

Community values and resource availability (i.e., funding and skilled manpower) will ultimately define what is a sustainable landscape quality within the city of Circle Pines. However, left unchecked, it can be expected that these ecological trends will also hasten reductions in wildlife species richness and the health and viability of other organisms in the ecological system. The goal then becomes identifying restoration and management needs and defining restoration and management strategies.

Through a well-defined restoration and management program, a concerted, ongoing effort by the city, and a public education campaign, it is feasible to reverse the current ecological trends and achieve a more sustainable and desirable landscape. Critical, however, is for the city to inventory and analyze its natural resources and then develop a plan to restore and manage these assets. The sooner this is done, the greater the likelihood of forestalling any further degradation.

Partnerships

Developing strong working partnerships with other providers of park, recreation, and leisure services will become more important each year if the city is to meet the current and growing needs of its residents. The plan identifies a number of these partnership opportunities with respect to specific parks.

Partnerships should be looked at in the broadest possible context to fully explore their potential. They can range from sharing park land with adjacent cities to local volunteers and locally-based non-profit organizations contributing to park and trail development and programming. Whatever the case, working together with others will be vital if the park and trail system in Circle Pines is to reach its fullest potential.

Relying on partnerships to service community needs is not unique to Circle Pines. It has been or is becoming a reality for all cities as public agencies grapple with limited resources and are held more accountable for the wise use of those resources. In many respects, this is a reflection of private sector business realities that have forced businesses into rethinking current practices and strategic alignments in light of increasing world-wide competition.

The use of partnerships as a means to service community needs should be viewed as very positive, as long as the relationship is clearly defined. Done correctly, they result in economies of scale, more efficient use of resources, and provide opportunities for park and recreation services that would otherwise be impossible to accomplish.

Circle Pines has much to gain through the wise use of partnerships. The city also has much to lose if these opportunities are not taken advantage of. This is most pronounced in the provision of athletic facilities for youth and adult sports, where the city faces a number of key challenges, including:

- Limited remaining park land suitable or desirable for athletic uses.

- Limited opportunity to acquire new land within the city. Land availability is limited and buying and developing it would be cost prohibitive given all the other park development issues facing the community.
- Growing demand that drives the need for facilities, but is not large enough to warrant the development of modern, high quality, and cost efficient facilities.

Given these challenges, it becomes paramount that the city develop stronger relationships with adjacent cities, school districts, and others to provide residents with greater access to quality facilities. Through fair and equitable joint-use agreements, each partner will benefit from working together to achieve common goals.

As an example, the city of Lino Lakes is considering developing a large athletic complex in the south-central part of the city. As of this writing, the city is assessing and projecting demand for specific facilities. Like Circle Pines, working together with other partners is an appealing approach to reaching their goal. The city of Circle Pines should assess the potential for joint-development and use of this facility to help offset the growing demand for facilities within the city. The advantage here is the potential for economies of scale and having a combined demand for facilities that warrants the investment by both cities.

Private Recreation Facilities

There are no private recreational providers present in the city at this time. Nor are there any strong possibilities on the table either. However, the demand for private recreational facilities, such as health and fitness clubs and golf courses, will likely increase as the regional population continues to grow. Trying to predict when demand will be sufficient to entice the development of private recreational facilities is speculative at best. Nonetheless, the city should stay abreast of and perhaps encourage private investment in recreation amenities as a way to help provide leisure opportunities for local residents. In addition, private/public ventures should be given due consideration as enterprise opportunities arise.

Urban Open Space and Public Amenities

Although this study focused on the parks and trails within the city, it is important to reiterate that the "city as a park" concept goes beyond the defined lines of these public spaces. The overall community aesthetic should include the interlacing of park and trail amenities with other urban open space and public amenities, which might include plazas, squares, parkways, streetscapes, gardens, and other urban spaces such as museums, libraries, performing arts centers, amphitheaters, and historic sites. In addition, the "city as a park concept" should be carried through all aspects of the city, from commercial corridors through private residential properties. As with the park system, the city should play a role in fostering this concept by adopting streetscaping and landscaping requirements and providing residents with the education and information they need to become part of (rather than a detraction to) this broad concept.

Park and Trail System Legend

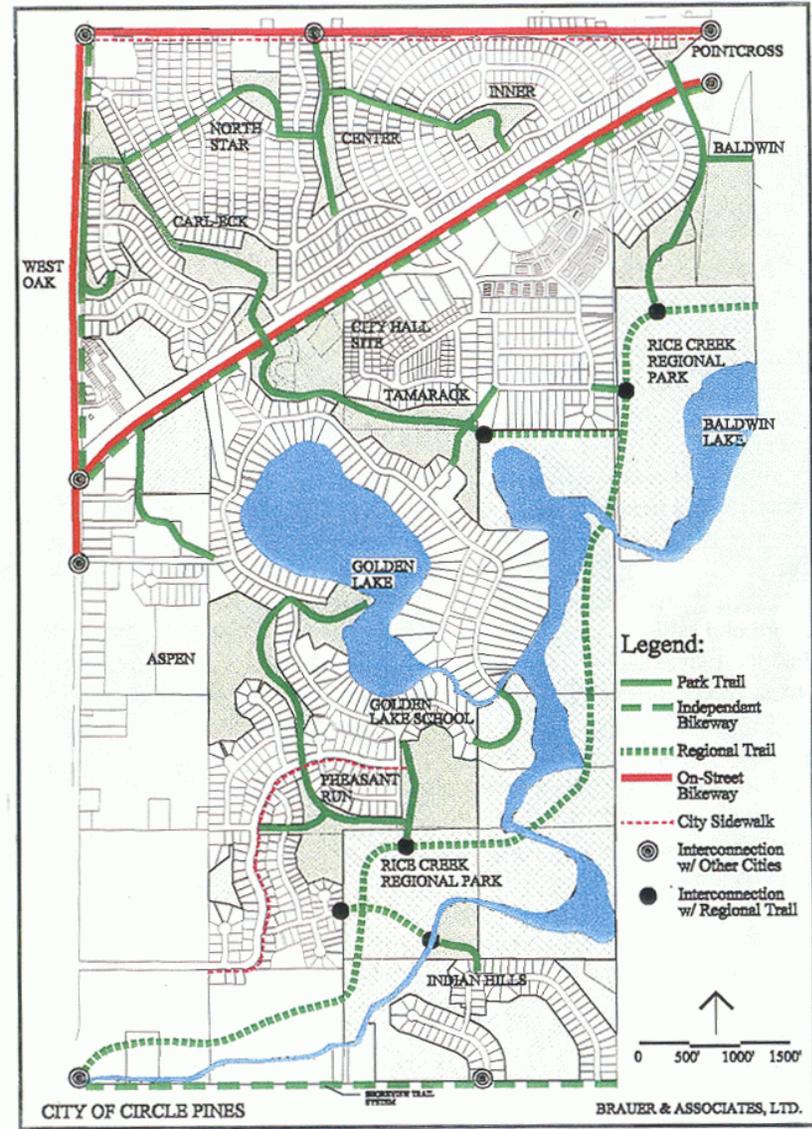
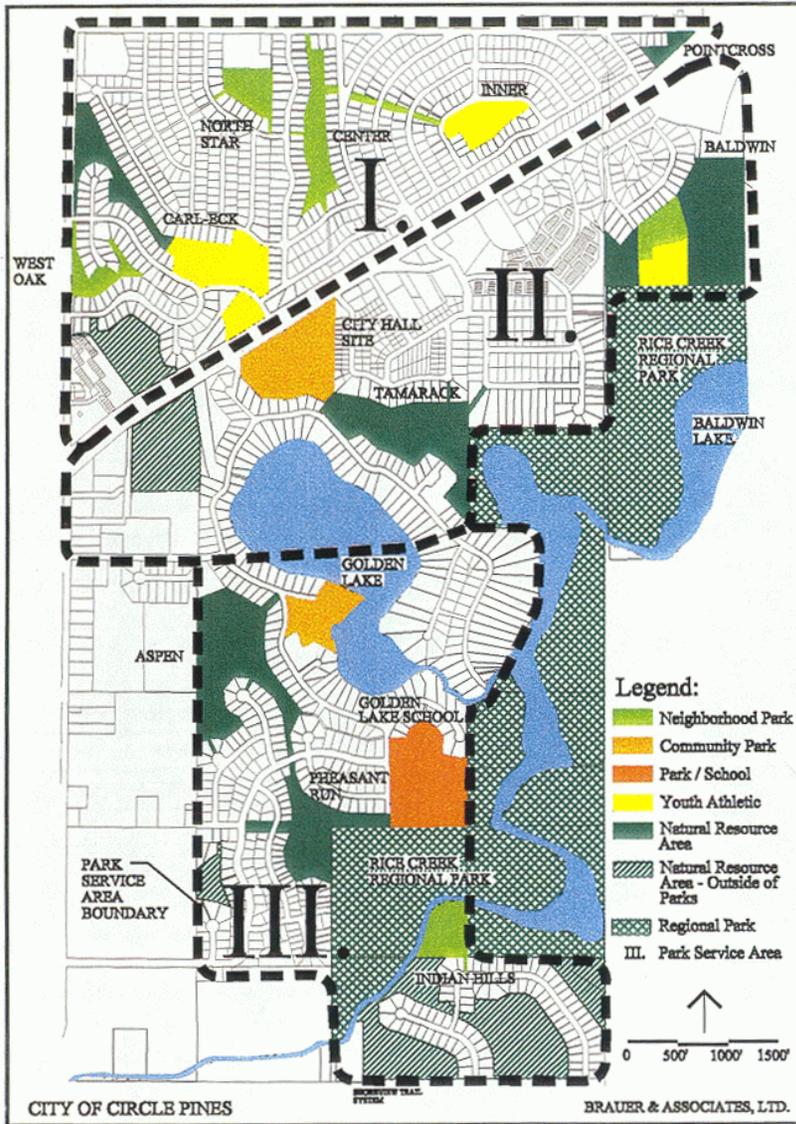
Parks Legend

Park Service Area/ Park Name	Classification Overview	Approx. Park Acreage			Location	Description Page No.
		Natural	Developed	Total		
Park Service Area #1						
Carl Eck Park	Youth athletic (with limited neighborhood park function)	3.5	12.2	15.7	Fire Barn Road and West Road	70/71
Inner Park	Youth athletic (with secondary neighborhood park function)	0	6.0	6.0	Inner Drive and Duen Way	72/73
Center Park	Neighborhood park (active recreation and social focus)	0	7.25	7.25	Center Road and Crossway Drive	74/75
North Star Park	Neighborhood park (passive recreation focus)	2.2	2.0	4.2	North Star Lane and North Road	76/77
West Oak Park	Neighborhood mini park (open space focus)	0	3.5	3.5	Lexington Avenue and West Road	78/79
Pointcross Park	Natural resource area (with special use potential)	1.5	0	1.5	Lake Drive	80/81
Park Service Area #2						
Baldwin Park	Youth athletic/neighborhood park/natural resource area	18.5	9.9	28.4	Baldwin Drive and Keith Road	82/83
Tamarack Park	Natural resource area (with limited passive recreation)	17.8	0	17.8	Oak Ridge Trail and Oak Road	84/85
City Hall Park	Community park (with secondary neighborhood park function)	0	14.0	14.0	Civic Heights Circle	86/87
Park Service Area #3						
Indian Hills Park	Neighborhood park	1.9	3.5	5.4	Indian Hills Drive	88/89
Golden Lake School	Youth athletics (with secondary neighborhood park function)	0	14.8	14.8	School Road	90/91
Golden Lake Park	Community park (partnership with Anoka County Parks)	0	6.8	6.8	West Golden Lake Road	92/93
Aspen Park	Natural resource area (with limited passive recreation)	19.4	0	19.4	West Golden Lake Road	94/95
Pheasant Run Park	Greenway (with natural resource component)	8.0	3.0	11.0	Canterbury Road	96/97
Total Acreage		72.80	82.95	155.75		

Natural Resource Areas Note: Several natural resource areas are shown on the plan that do not fall within a particular park. Although these land parcels are not labeled by name, they remain important components of the park system by providing valuable open space. In all cases, future development should focus on natural resource management and protection. These lands total approximately 60 acres.

Trails Legend: Refer to Park and Trail System Map on the next page for the trail system legend.

Park and Trail System Maps



Carl Eck Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Youth athletic (limited neighborhood park function)

Location: Fire Barn Road and West Road

Approximate Size: 15.7 acres (including potential expansion area)

Existing Site Features

- 1) Little League field (200') with dugouts
- 2) Concessions/restroom building
- 3) Warm-up area/general use space
- 4) Children's play area with play equipment
- 5) Access drive
- 6) Parking area (gravel and informal)
- 7) Wooded area along drainage ditch (largely volunteer growth)
- 8) Bridge across drainage ditch
- 9) Batting cage
- 10) Open space with scattered trees
- 11) Open space along Lake Drive (technically outside park property)

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing Little League fields are in good shape. The building is a newer structure and built of durable materials. Improvements continue to be made around the playing fields, with the bridge across the drainage ditch being the most recent. Concrete walks have also been added in recent years.

Basis for Park Need

As defined by the user groups, the demand for youth sports facilities is already high and continuing to grow. The existing fields are heavily programmed during the season of use, which runs from spring through mid-August. Additional fields are needed to keep up with known demand. Carl Eck Park will continue to play a major role in providing much needed youth athletic facilities within community.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Although located in Park Service Area I, Carl Eck should be viewed as a youth athletic complex that services the needs of the larger community.

Development Program

Maximizing the use of the available space within the park is of utmost importance to servicing the ever-expanding needs of the community for youth athletic facilities. A master plan should be completed to explore and define the optimal use of the available land for youth sports. This process should include the participation of the user groups, who are in the best position at this time to define specific needs.

The development program should continue to focus on youth sports to augment what is already in place. Possible facilities include (in no particular order):

- Youth ballfields (especially T-Ball with limited outfield requirements)
- Youth soccer (small field size)

Other development items include improving the:

- Off-street parking area (sized to accommodate field usage)
- Play equipment area to meet current standards
- Access to meet ADA and safety standards
- Site aesthetics (i.e., landscaping, opening up vegetation along ditch, etc.)
- Buffering between the facility and adjacent properties (this will become increasingly important as the site becomes more developed)
- Fencing on existing fields (i.e., adding sideline fencing)

The master plan process should be used to determine which facilities are most in demand, highest priority, and fit within the site. The city should work with the user groups to define these issues, as well as related operations, maintenance, and scheduling concerns. Adjacent property owners should also be involved to ensure that their concerns are addressed.



Inner Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Youth athletic (with secondary neighborhood park function)

Location: Inner Drive and Duen Way

Approximate Size: 6.0 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Youth and women's ballfield (250') with 4' fencing
- 2) Concessions/restroom building
- 3) Hockey rink
- 4) Children's play area with play equipment
- 5) Open skating area
- 6) Parking area (gravel)
- 7) Open play space.
- 8) Drainage swale
- 9) Access trail (from Center Park)
- 10) Access trail (from neighborhood)

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing ballfield and hockey rink are in good shape. The building is a new and built of durable materials. Improvements continue to be made around the building (walks and paving) and within the park (picnic tables). The play equipment is new and appears to meet current standards (should be verified). The parking lot is gravel surfaced. Site landscaping is limited.

Basis for Park Need

Inner Park serves an important function by providing:

- Open space within a developed residential area
- Facilities for youth athletics
- Facilities for neighborhood use

The existing athletic facilities are heavily programmed during the season of use. These facilities, along with the others listed, also provide for neighborhood needs. The mix of facilities in conjunction with its location will continue to make this park a valuable component of the park system.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Inner Park should be viewed as one component of an interrelated system of parks that service community needs in PSA-I, as well as offerings limited community-wide athletic needs. Its primary use focus is active recreation.

Development Program

Since much of the available space has already been developed, future development should concentrate on enhancing what is already there and improving the aesthetic quality of the park. A master plan should be completed to ensure that future improvements, especially landscaping, are undertaken following a defined plan. This process should include the participation of the neighborhood, as appropriate.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Inner Park (in no particular order):

- Enhanced landscaping to improve park aesthetics and provide shade
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the neighborhood (meet ADA standards)
- Paving the parking lot (with curb and gutter)
- Small shelter structure
- Hardcourt area (i.e., basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- Lawn games area and volleyball court (grass or sand)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)

Ideally, the ballfield outfield distance should be shortened to be more in character with a neighborhood park setting. However, the demand for the current size field will make this difficult to accomplish -- unless current users can be accommodated elsewhere in the system or through joint-use of facilities outside of the city.



Center Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Neighborhood park (with active recreation and social focus).

Location: Center Road and Crossway Drive

Approximate Size: 7.25 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Old children's play structure
- 2) Internal trail system (hardsurfaced)
- 3) Turfed open area
- 4) Overhead powerline
- 5) Residential properties surrounding park
- 6) Open area with bollard-type posts on perimeter
- 7) Trail access point from neighborhood

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing play equipment is old and in need of evaluation and likely replacement. Beyond the play equipment, the park does not offer many other recreational amenities. Although the site is relatively level, the grade is often uneven and therefore difficult to use for even informal games. The landscaping is limited with little overall design character.

Basis for Park Need

The location of Center Park central to the PSA makes it of vital importance to servicing neighborhood needs. This park has the potential to provide:

- Neighborhood recreation facilities focused on non-structured individual and family activities
- A social center for neighborhood gatherings
- Open space for informal group play (with limited use for organized or programmed activities)

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Center Park should be viewed as the central focus of the interrelated system of parks that service community needs in PSA-I. Its primary function will be to service the neighborhood-level recreation needs of the PSA as well as the social gathering area.

Development Program

Central Park is in need of extensive redevelopment to fulfill its role in the park system. The site lacks the facilities necessary for it to be a successful park. A comprehensive master plan should be completed to ensure that developmental opportunities and constraints are considered and that a defined and thought-out plan emerges that addresses neighborhood needs. This process should include extensive community participation.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Center Park (in no particular order):

- Enhanced landscaping
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the neighborhood (meet ADA standards)
- A small paved parking lot (with curb and gutter)
- A neighborhood gathering space with a picnic shelter structure and small amphitheater with informal seating for 200 people
- Children's play area (larger and more innovative than found in the other parks in this PSA)
- Hardcourt area (basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- Lawn games area and volleyball court (grass or sand)
- Informal field areas primarily used by the neighborhood but also used for limited youth sports (likely soccer, given the space)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)

North Star Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Neighborhood park (with passive recreation focus)

Location: North Star Lane and North Road

Approximate Size: 4.2 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Small old swing set and slide
- 2) Internal trail system (hardsurfaced)
- 3) Turfed open area (winter skating)
- 4) Woodlot (with extensive undergrowth)
- 5) Utility building
- 6) Wood-frame warming house
- 7) Church and church parking lot

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing play equipment is very limited, old and in need of evaluation for safety. Aside from the play equipment, the park does not offer many other active recreational amenities. Although the site is relatively level, the grade is often uneven. The existing woodlot exhibits some nice mature hardwoods. However, excessive invasive undergrowth is threatening their long-term vitality. Immediate vegetation management is needed to forestall any further deterioration. Turf areas exhibit the impact of winter skating.

Basis for Park Need

North Star Park provides much needed open space in a densely populated residential area. This park has the potential to provide:

- Passive oriented neighborhood recreation facilities (i.e., sitting areas, picnicking, strolling, etc.)
- A quiet neighborhood gathering area
- Ornamental and natural vegetation

Interrelationship with Other Parks

North Star Park primary role is to augment the amenities provided in Center Park. Whereas Center Park is a more active space and social gathering area, North Star would be more passive in character and offer the neighborhood a quiet, less active park area.

Development Program

Initially, the development program should focus on implementing a vegetative management program to preserve the site's natural vegetation. This should be completed at the same time as a comprehensive master plan to ensure that the parks fullest potential is realized. This will also ensure that development of this site is in concert with the development of Center Park and other parks in the PSA. This process should include community participation.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Center Park (in no particular order):

- Vegetation management program and enhanced landscaping
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the neighborhood (meet ADA standards)
- Facilities for small group and family gatherings, which could include a small shelter and surrounding picnic space.
- A small children's play area
- Lawn games area
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)
- Small architectural feature to add an aesthetic quality to the park and provide backdrop for events, such as weddings-in-the-park (i.e., entry arbor, trellis, etc.)

A joint-use agreement between the city and the church property to the north should be considered for shared use of church's parking lot. Otherwise, a parking lot in this park is not recommended.



West Oak Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Neighborhood mini-park (with open space focus)

Location: Lexington Avenue and West Road

Approximate Size: 3.5 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Mature hardwoods with open understory
- 2) Turfed open area
- 3) Cul-de-sac access point
- 4) Residential properties
- 5) Utility building

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The park is a largely undeveloped open space with a quality stand of mature hardwoods. Lacking recreational amenities, the park is used primarily as extensions of the backyard of adjacent residential properties. The primary point of access is the cul-de-sac at the end of West C.

Basis for Park Need

Although small in size, West Point serves as an important open space for this area within PSA-I. It also has the potential to provide some limited neighborhood recreation facilities to augment what is provided in other neighborhood parks, although this is a low priority relative to the other parks within this PSA.

This park has the potential to provide:

- Passive oriented neighborhood recreation facilities (i.e., sitting areas, picnicking, strolling, etc.)
- A small and quiet neighborhood gathering area
- Limited active recreation opportunities

Interrelationship with Other Parks

West Oak Park's primary role is to provide passive open space in a developed part of the community. If limited active recreation amenities are added at some point, it would also serve to augment the neighborhood-level amenities provided in Center and other parks. Because of its small size and limited service area, adding active recreation amenities to this park is only justifiable after the other parks in this PSA are developed.

Development Program

A comprehensive master plan should be prepared to ensure that the limited space in this park is used to its greatest benefit. This will also ensure that development of this site is in concert with the development of Center Park and other parks in the PSA. This process should include neighborhood participation to ensure that those it is intended to serve have a say in its outcome.

Potential long-term facilities/amenities appropriate for the future development of West Oak Park include (in no particular order):

- Enhanced landscaping
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the neighborhood (meet ADA standards)
- Small picnic area with tables and grill
- A small children's play area
- Lawn games area
- General amenities (i.e., benches, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)
- Small hardcourt area (half-court basketball and hardsurface games)
- Volleyball court (grass)

Involving the nearby residents in the design process will be important given the current relationship of the site with the adjacent properties.



Pointcross Park (Park Service Area I)

Park Classification: Natural resource area (with special use potential)

Location: Lake Drive (in north-east corner of city)

Approximate Size: 1.5 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Open area with natural grasses and weeds
- 2) Small drainage pond
- 3) Scattered tree and shrub growth, some quality hardwoods
- 4) Cattlepass for drainage under Lake Drive

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The site is undeveloped for park purposes. Most of the non-water areas are covered with natural grasses and weeds. Some quality hardwoods can be found on the high areas away from the pond. The woody material adjacent to the pond is characteristic of transitional zones, which include shrubs, boxelder, ash, and poplar. The pond is currently used as a drainage basin, with wetland vegetation around its perimeter.

Basis for Park Need

Pointcross Park is defined as a natural resource area because of the quality hardwoods found on the site. From a longer term perspective, the site offers a number of special-use park opportunities that are worthy of considering once other development priorities are completed. Special use opportunities include

- Community entry point
- Community and regional trail system access point

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Pointcross Park is a stand-alone park site that provides facilities and amenities not provided in other parks. Although independent from other park uses, this park can still function as an integral part of the overall park and trail system. In the long-term, the park can play a key role in establishing a community image on the primary thoroughfare through the city.

Development Program

From a natural resource perspective, the key objective is to preserve the mature trees and rid the site of undesirable non-native plant species as encountered. This is the most important short term objective with this site.

In the longer term, once other, more important development initiatives are completed, Pointcross offers some interesting development opportunities. From a community entry point perspective, the development program should focus on an appropriate theme for the city. Architectural structures (i.e., arbors, monuments, sculptures, fountain, etc.) and ornamental landscaping would be potential features. Turning the existing drainage pond into a site amenity would also be a key design objective and challenge.

With respect to the trailhead component, providing parking designed to be in concert with other site features would be a significant design challenge. The more important design concern relates to providing a safe trail crossing across Lake Drive that links this park and PSA-I to PSA-II & III and the larger regional trail system in Rice Creek Regional Park Reserve. The logical approach is to go below the road with an underpass, although other solutions should also be considered during the master planning phase for this park.

An internal trail system that links facilities within the park to the larger trail systems and general amenities (i.e. benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.) should also be considered. The size of the parking lot should be determined as part of the master plan design process.



Baldwin Park (Park Service Area II)

Park Classification: Youth athletic/neighborhood park/natural resources

Location: Baldwin Drive and Keith Road

Approximate Size: 28.4 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Baseball field (275')
- 2) Concessions/restroom building
- 3) Hockey rink with lights
- 4) Children's play area with play equipment
- 5) Access drive
- 6) Parking area (gravel)
- 7) Open skating area
- 8) Wetland
- 9) Lowland forested communities
- 10) Park land in Lino Lakes
- 11) Upland hardwoods

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing baseball field is in good shape. The building is a newer structure and built of durable materials. Improvements continue to be made in the park, namely a new play structure and pavements around the building. The play structure takes ADA accessibility guidelines and industry safety zones into consideration. The extensive wetlands provide an opportunity for natural resource preservation and an passive recreation (although they preclude the development of additional active recreation facilities).

Basis for Park Need

As defined by the user groups, the demand for youth sports facilities is already high and continuing to grow. The existing field is heavily programmed for Babe Ruth use during the season, which runs from spring through mid-August. The hockey rink, skating area, play equipment and building serve both the adjacent neighborhood and general park users. The surrounding wetlands provide open space.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Given its unique setting and past development, Baldwin Park serves a cross-section of community needs that can not be categorized under only one classification. Although the primary land uses are already set, ample opportunity exists to improve the park's function within the park system. Since the park services the eastern half of this PSA, every effort should be made to maximize its potential.

Development Program

A joint master plan should be completed between Circle Pines and Lino Lakes to explore and define the optimal use of the available park land. A joint effort will provide additional recreation opportunities for residents in both cities as well as avoiding duplication of facilities. This process should include the participation of nearby residents and user groups, who are in the best position at this time to define specific needs.

The development program should focus on refining the overall design for the park and adding features that will appeal to a broader cross-section of people. One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for future development in Baldwin Park (in no particular order):

- Hardsurface area within skating rink (for summer use)
- Hardcourt area (i.e., basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- Lawn games area and volleyball courts (sand or grass)
- Tennis court (as per Lino Lakes system plan)
- Interlinking trail system (with limited boardwalks) between the two cities and to the regional trail system
- Picnic area(s) with a shelter
- Improved site aesthetics (i.e., landscaping and design)
- Buffering between the park and adjacent properties
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)



Tamarack Park (Park Service Area II)

Park Classification: Natural resource area (with limited passive recreation)

Location: Oak Ridge Trail and Oak Road

Approximate Size: 17.8 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Older play equipment without container
- 2) Internal trail system (hardsurfaced) leading to play equipment
- 3) Woodlot (with extensive undergrowth)

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The existing play equipment is very limited, old and in need of evaluation for safety. Aside from the play equipment, the park is largely a wooded natural resource area. Although the existing woodlot exhibits some nice mature hardwoods and transitional forests, excessive invasive undergrowth is threatening the long-term vitality of the natural resources in this park. Immediate vegetation management is needed to forestall any further deterioration.

Basis for Park Need

Tamarack Park provides open space in a populated residential area as well as a natural resource amenity that makes the city an appealing place to live. This park has the potential to provide:

- Nature observation and interpretive area
- A trail corridor that links the park with developed areas and other parks
- Aesthetic amenity that softens the hardscape features of developed city

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Tamarack Park's primary role is to preserve the historic natural resources of the city and provide a park trail corridor and setting for nature interpretation.

Development Program

The development program should initially focus on removing existing play equipment and implementing a natural resource management program to preserve the site's natural vegetation. A comprehensive master plan should be completed in conjunction with the natural resource management plan to ensure that the parks fullest potential as a natural resource area and passive recreation space is realized. This process should include community participation.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Tamarack Park (in no particular order):

- Natural resources management program
- Internal trail system that links the park with other parks and development areas (meet ADA standards)
- Nature interpretive program (i.e., signage, observation points)
- Sitting areas, which could include small deck overlooks)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, drinking fountain, etc.)



City Hall Park (Park Service Area II)

Park Classification: Community Park (with secondary neighborhood park function)

Location: Civic Heights Circle

Approximate Size: 14.0 acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) City Hall (and Police)
- 2) Library
- 3) Post Office
- 4) Community vegetable garden area
- 5) Parking
- 6) Entrance circle with ornamental garden feature
- 7) Lake Drive
- 8) Drainage pond
- 9) Trail (gravel)

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

City Hall, other municipal buildings, and associated parking and drives consume much of the available site. The drainage pond serves as a storm water control basin, but offers ornamental possibilities. With the exception of the community vegetable garden, most of the remainder of the site is covered with turf grasses. Some high quality mature trees add to the overall appeal of the site. The ornamental character of the turn-around in front of the buildings begins to establish an ornamental character for the site which could be carried throughout more of the site.

Basis for Park Need

The park serves primary as a community park that provides an outdoor space to compliment and enhance the current civic buildings. It also serves an important neighborhood park function for the west-central portion of this PSA. Adding ornamental landscape elements will also add to the general appearance of the central civic feature of the community.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

As a community park, City Hall Park provides an outdoor space that aids in creating a positive community image and character. As a neighborhood park, it functions in conjunction with Baldwin Park to service the neighborhood-level recreation needs of this PSA. It also offsets the neighborhood park amenities taken out Tamarack Park.

Development Program

The development program focuses on two primary components:

- Fostering the "city center" concept by enhancing the outdoor spaces surrounding the existing buildings
- Providing recreation amenities to service the needs of the surrounding neighborhood

A comprehensive master plan should be completed that balances the city center related improvements against neighborhood needs. The process should include community and neighborhood participation.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of City Hall Park:

- Enhanced landscaping, ornamental gardening, and architectural elements that strengthen the relationship between civic buildings
- Pond edge enhancements, ornamental planting, strolling path, sitting area, small architectural features, etc.
- Enhance existing small amphitheater setting (grass seating)
- Internal trail system that links the park with the community trail system (meet ADA standards)
- A small gathering space with a picnic shelter/structure for small community groups (class size) and neighborhood gatherings
- Substantial children's play area with interesting play equipment
- Lawn games area and volleyball court (sand or grass)
- ADA accessible garden plots
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, etc.)



Indian Hills Park (Park Service Area III)

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park

Location: Indian Hills Drive

Approximate Size: 5.4 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Play structure with timber edger
- 2) Two sets of swings with timber edger
- 3) Turf area
- 4) Sand volleyball court
- 5) Access trail (to park and to regional trail system)
- 6) Natural vegetation
- 7) Trail to bridge crossing

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

As a newer park, the play equipment is in good condition and appears to comply with current safety standards (although no formal evaluation was undertaken). The turf areas are in fair condition. Natural vegetation surrounds the developed area. A gravel trail provides access to the park and to the regional trail system (which connects the park with other parks in PSA III). The park lacks an overall aesthetic quality.

Basis for Park Need

Indian Hills Park services the neighborhood park needs in an area of the community not readily serviced by other parks. It also provides access from the neighborhood to the regional trail system being developed in Rice Creek Regional Park Preserve.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

The primary role of Indian Hills Park is to provide neighborhood-level recreation facilities for this fairly isolated area within PSA-III. It functions in conjunction with Golden Lake School and Golden Lake Park to ensure that neighborhood-level recreation needs are met in this PSA.

Development Program

Although relatively new, the park lacks an overall design character. Amenities within the park seem to be placed rather than designed, resulting in a functional but not especially compelling park setting. Prior to additional work being completed, a master plan should be prepared to work out design issues in a comprehensive manner. This will ensure that a design emerges that takes neighborhood concerns into consideration as well as defines how the park is best blended into its natural surroundings. The process should include neighborhood participation.

In addition to the existing facilities, one or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Indian Hills Park (in no particular order):

- Vegetation management program (natural areas)
- Enhanced landscaping within the park to improve site aesthetics
- Small picnic shelter/gazebo-type overlook
- Lawn games area
- Hardcourt area (i.e., basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- Sitting areas/overlooks
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)



Golden Lake School (Park Service Area III)

Park Classification: Youth athletic (with secondary neighborhood park function)

Location: School Road

Approximate Size: 14.8 Acres (including school building site)

Existing Site Features

- 1) Multi-use fields with backstop (no outfield of foul line fencing)
- 2) School building
- 3) Hardcourt area (i.e., basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- 4) Children's play area with play equipment
- 5) Open space on side slope
- 6) Parking lot/entrance drive (asphalt)
- 7) Natural vegetation edge
- 9) Access trail (from regional park and neighborhoods)

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

Much of the property is already developed, with some opportunity for additional development on the south and southeast side of the school building (grading would be required). The school building is the dominant feature, with site development being secondary. The layout of play areas is spread out and is not very efficient use of limited outdoor space. The lack of more extensive landscaping takes away from the aesthetic appeal of the site.

Basis for Park Need

Golden Lake School serves two important park functions by providing much needed facilities for youth athletics and neighborhood recreation.

Given the need for youth athletic facilities and the lack of suitable land to accommodate them, efficient use of this site is important to servicing the needs of the community. In addition, augmenting the facilities available for neighborhood use is important and should not be overlooked. The mix of facilities in conjunction with its location will continue to make this park-school site a valuable component of the park system.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Golden Lake School should be viewed as one component of an interrelated system of parks that service community needs in PSA-III. It also serves an important community-wide youth athletic facility, which is in high demand. Although its primary use will focus on active recreation, servicing neighborhood needs is also an important function.

Development Program

Maximizing the use of available outdoor space for school and park purposes should be a primary objective. A master plan should be completed to ensure that future improvements undertaken follow a defined plan. This process should include the participation of the school district, user groups, and neighborhood, as appropriate.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Golden Lake School (in no particular order):

- Youth athletic fields (soccer)
- Enhanced landscaping
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the neighborhood (meet ADA standards)
- Small group gathering area for classes and neighborhood groups, (may include a shelter structure)
- Lawn games area and volleyball courts (sand or grass)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)
- Reorganized and expanded play equipment area



Golden Lake Park (Park Service Area III)

Park Classification: Community park (partnership with Anoka County Parks)

Location: West Golden Lake Road

Approximate Size: 6.8 Acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Multipurpose building (restroom/changing rooms/concession, etc.)
- 2) Parking lot
- 3) Canoe/boat landing
- 4) Picnic area with several small shelters and small play structure
- 5) Swimming area
- 6) Fishing dock
- 7) Tennis court
- 8) Parking lot
- 9) Group picnic area with larger picnic shelter

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The park is relatively old and in general need of upgrading. The main parking lot seems excessive for a park of this size and dominates limited open space. The smaller lot seems more in scale and services the large group picnic shelter. The tennis court is in need of surface repair. The existing mature trees and lake overlook possibilities are key amenities which should be preserved.

Basis for Park Need

Golden Lake Park is one of only two community-level parks within the city and provides amenities not found in any other park. Most notable among these is the beach area and the large group picnic facilities. The open space adds to the park atmosphere, provides informal play space, and opens up the potential for some limited youth athletic uses, especially soccer. Augmenting the neighborhood facilities provided in other parks is also an important feature of this park.

Interrelationship with Other Parks

As a community park, Golden Lake Park serves the broader community by providing important special use facilities. At the neighborhood level, the park works in conjunction with the other parks in this PSA to provide a full pallet of recreational opportunities for nearby residents. As a county park, the serves the needs of residents that go beyond the city level.

Development Program

A comprehensive master plan should be completed to ensure that the highest potential of this park is realized. Since it is a county park, this process will be driven by Anoka County Parks. The city should foster a positive working relationship with the county to ensure community needs are met and a well thought-out plan emerges. Naturally, the master plan process should include the participation of community and neighborhood residents, as appropriate.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Golden Lake Park (in no particular order):

- Enhanced landscaping to improve park aesthetics.
- Internal trail system that links facilities within the park and to the community trail system (meet ADA standards)
- More open play space for informal play and limited youth athletics
- Improvements to beach, beach building and adjacent picnic areas
- Substantial play area for children, which could be beach related
- Hardcourt area (i.e., basketball and hardsurface outdoor games)
- Lawn games area and volleyball courts (sand or grass)
- Improvement to tennis court(s)
- Improvements to large group picnic area
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, grills, bike rack, drinking fountain, etc.)



Aspen Park (Park Service Area III)

Park Classification: Natural resource area (with limited passive recreation)

Location: West Golden Lake Road

Approximate Size: 19.4 acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Lowland/wetland area
- 2) Internal trail system (softsurfaced)
- 3) Upland woodlot (with extensive undergrowth)
- 4) Golden Lake Park site
- 5) Trail connection to neighborhood

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

Aspen park is largely a natural resource area with past development limited to a trail corridor that links the park with the surrounding neighborhood and park system. The existing woodlot exhibits some nice mature hardwoods.

Unfortunately, invasive undergrowth in the woodlot plus elimination of natural revitalization processes (natural fires) is resulting in less diverse ecological systems which threatens the long-term vitality of this natural resource area. Immediate vegetation management is needed to forestall any further deterioration.

Basis for Park Need

Aspen Park provides needed open space as well as a natural resource amenity that enhances the overall character of the city. This park has the potential to provide:

- Nature observation and interpretive area
- A trail corridor that links the park developed areas with parks and nature areas
- Aesthetic amenity that softens the hardscape features of a developed city

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Aspen Park's primary role is to preserve the historic natural resources of the city and provide a park trail corridor and setting for nature interpretation.

Development Program

The development program should focus on implementing a natural resource management program to preserve the site's natural vegetation. A comprehensive master plan should be completed in conjunction with the natural resource management plan to ensure that the parks fullest potential as a natural resource area and passive recreation space is realized. This process should include community participation.

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Aspen Park (in no particular order):

- Natural resources management program
- Internal trail system that links the park with other parks and development areas (meet ADA standards)
- Nature interpretive program (i.e., signage, observation points)
- Sitting areas, which could include small deck overlooks)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, drinking fountain, etc.)
- Vita Course (fitness stations)



Pheasant Run Park (Park Service Area III)

Park Classification: Greenway with a natural resource component

Location: Canterbury Road

Approximate Size: 11.0 acres

Existing Site Features

- 1) Lowland/wetland area
- 2) Internal trail system (hardsurfaced)
- 3) Upland woodlot (with extensive undergrowth)
- 4) Trail connection to neighborhood
- 5) Trail connection to Golden Lake School and regional park
- 6) Open space (upland)
- 7) Old wood play structure

Existing Conditions/Characteristics

The only active recreation provided in the park is the existing play structure, which is old and in need of an overall review. Otherwise, the park is largely a greenway with a trail corridor that links the park with the surrounding neighborhood and park system. The existing woodlot exhibits some nice mature hardwoods. Unfortunately, as with the other parks, invasive undergrowth in the woodlot plus elimination of natural revitalization processes (natural fires) is resulting in less diverse ecological systems which threatens the long-term vitality of this natural resource area. Immediate vegetation management is needed to forestall any further deterioration.

Basis for Park Need

Pheasant Run Park provides a greenway, open space, and natural resource amenity that enhances the overall character of the city. This park has the potential to provide:

- Nature observation and interpretive area
- A trail corridor that links the park developed areas with parks and nature areas
- Aesthetic amenity that softens the hardscape features of a developed city

Interrelationship with Other Parks

Pheasant Run Park is considered a greenway because its primary function is to provide a park trail corridor. It also preserves the historic natural resources of the city and a setting for nature interpretation. It also offers some opportunity for community vegetable gardens.

Development Program

The development program should focus on implementing a natural resource management program to preserve the site's natural vegetation. A comprehensive master plan should be completed in conjunction with the natural resource management plan to ensure that the parks fullest potential as a natural resource area and passive recreation space is realized. This process should include community participation. In addition, there is some opportunity to relocate the community vegetable gardens now within City Hall Park to this location. This should be considered as part of the master planning process. (Other parks should also be considered for this amenity.)

One or more of the following facilities/amenities would be appropriate for the future development of Aspen Park (in no particular order):

- Natural resources management program
- Internal trail system that links the park with other parks and development areas (meet ADA standards)
- Sitting areas, which could include small deck overlooks)
- General amenities (i.e., benches, picnic tables, drinking fountain, etc.)
- Community vegetable garden

It should be noted that some of the existing turf areas within the park could be maintained as mowed open space for the local neighborhood residents to use.



VI - Implementation Plan

Overview

This section focuses on establishing a framework and priorities for implementing the park and trail system plan. This includes:

- Partnership approach to implementation
- Cost analysis
- Evaluation criteria for prioritizing park and trail development
- Prioritization of park and trail initiatives
- Funding sources
- Joint-use agreements

Each of these are defined in this section.

Partnership Approach to Implementation

Success in implementing the park and trail system plan will be based on the strength of the partnership that includes:

- Park and Recreation Board
- City staff
- Residents at large
- User-Groups
- Partnerships with adjacent cities, school districts, the county, churches, civic organizations, business community, etc.

It is only through these partnerships that the plan presented here will become reality.

It is only through these partnerships that the plan presented here will become reality. Successful implementation will be based upon a willingness of participants to be:

- Proactive -- continuing the work started as part of this planning process.
- Able to recognize and work within the limited resources.
- Willing to find alternative solutions (and funding) for plan implementation.
- Willing to form partnerships to achieve common goals
- Advocates of the system plan, resulting in a greater awareness of plan and increasing public support and enthusiasm

Cost Analysis

The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, implementation planning, comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another, and developing funding scenarios.

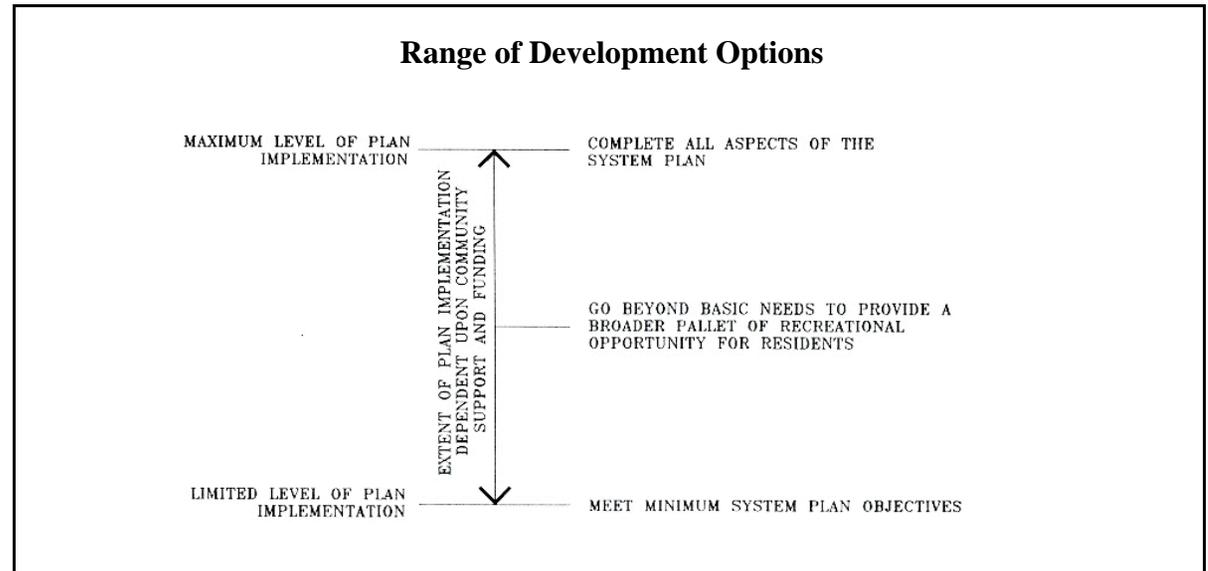
Although the intent is to be conservative, it must be recognized that actual costs will vary -- perhaps significantly -- depending on the scope of the project and the bidding environment when the various development initiatives are actually implemented.

Range of Development Options

The Cost Analysis Table on the next page defines the potential costs associated with each major component of the park and trail system plan. It is based on a combination of site-specific development issues and projects of similar characteristics. The costs are also based on having the work completed by contractors and specialists. It does not take into consideration work that would be performed by volunteer groups or through other means, such as city employees. Since the availability of detail design, technical engineering information, and related information is limited at this time, professional judgement has been exercised in determining potential costs.

The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, implementation planning, comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another, and developing funding scenarios. The costs are in 1995 dollars. Although the intent is to be conservative, it must be recognized that actual costs will vary, perhaps significantly, depending on the scope of the project and the bidding environment when the various development initiatives are actually implemented.

The range of potential development scenarios is quite broad with respect to implementing the system plan and the costs that go along with it. The following figure illustrates this issue.



Cost Analysis Table for Parks

Park Service Area/ Park Site	Site Prep./ Grading	Utility/ Lights	Play Equip.	Ath./Sport Facil.	Site Equip.	Shelter	Bldg./ Restroom	Parking Lot	Trails	Landscape/ Seed/Sod	Misc.	Totals
Park Service Area #1												
Carl Eck Park	15,000	10,000	15,000	35,000	6,000	0	0	30,000	10,000	10,000	3,000	134,000
Inner Park	5,000	5,000	4,000	12,000	5,000	15,000	0	20,000	13,000	15,000	3,000	97,000
Center Park	20,000	15,000	60,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	60,000	18,000	18,000	15,000	10,000	266,000
North Star Park	6,000	4,000	15,000	0	8,000	15,000	0	0	10,000	6,000	10,000	74,000
West Oak Park	3,000	2,000	15,000	5,000	3,000	0	0	0	4,000	3,000	2,000	37,000
Pointcross Park	8,000	5,000	0	0	3,000	10,000	10,000	20,000	6,000	5,000	10,000	77,000
Service Area #1											Total	685,000
Park Service Area #2												
Baldwin Park	9,000	6,000	4,000	30,000	6,000	15,000	0	30,000	15,000	6,000	10,000	131,000
Tamarack Park	4,000	5,000	0	0	8,000	0	0	0	13,000	2,000	4,000	36,000
City Hall Park	20,000	15,000	60,000	12,000	12,000	20,000	0	0	10,000	10,000	40,000	199,000
Service Area #2											Total	366,000
Park Service Area #3												
Indian Hills Park	3,000	1,000	4,000	2,000	2,000	10,000	0	0	5,000	4,000	3,000	34,000
Golden Lake School*	18,000	3,000	5,000	40,000	2,000	0	0	0	5,000	5,000	5,000	83,000
Golden Lake Park*	20,000	10,000	50,000	45,000	10,000	40,000	50,000	15,000	10,000	8,000	30,000	288,000
Aspen Park	8,000	4,000	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	12,000	3,000	4,000	41,000
Pheasant Run	5,000	2,000	0	0	3,000	0	0	0	10,000	3,000	4,000	27,000
Service Area #3											Total	473,000
Grand											Total	1,524,000

* = Development of these parks would be a joint venture with Anoka County Parks and the local school district, as appropriate.

Notes: The above costs are based on a combination of site-specific development issues and projects of similar characteristics. The costs are also based on having the work completed by contractors and specialists. It does not take into consideration work that would be performed by volunteer groups or through other means, such as city employees. Since the availability of detail design, technical engineering information, and related information is limited at this time, professional judgement has been exercised in determining potential costs. The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, implementation planning, comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another, and developing funding scenarios.

The costs are in 1995 dollars. Although the intent is to be conservative, it must be recognized that actual costs will vary, perhaps significantly, depending on the scope of the project and the bidding environment when the various development initiatives are actually implemented.

Evaluation Criteria for Prioritizing Park and Trail Development

With limited resources, ranking the development of one park, trail, or development initiative against that of another is necessary to give structure to the implementation process and proceed on making improvements.

With limited resources, ranking the development of one park, trail, or development initiative against that of another is necessary to give structure to the implementation process and to proceed with improvements. Certainly, all development issues identified in the plan are pressing concerns needing attention. Realistically, the city is going to have to pick and choose those that are the most pressing and those that improve the services to the residents and user groups most in need. Making this as objective as possible is a key concern.

Through the use of ranking criteria, objectivity can be injected into the decision making process. This criteria is based on and evaluated against factors that influence the demand for parks and trails. It must be broad based enough to consider the important and predominant factors, yet limited enough to be manageable and practical for decision makers to gain consensus and take action.

Evaluation Criteria for Prioritizing Park Land Development

The table defines the criteria for prioritizing the development or improvement of one park or development initiative over that of another.

Evaluation Criteria	Criteria Description
Development Patterns and Population Density	Action is warranted to service the needs of the area based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current and projected residential development patterns - Current and projected population and demographic profiles
Community Demand	Action is warranted due to identified community demand based on needs assessments studies and defined trends
Recreation Program Needs	Action is warranted based on current and projected city and local associations' recreation program needs
Redevelopment/Upgrading of Facility	Action is warranted due to facility being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unsafe conditions / poor quality - Old and at the end of its useful lifecycle - Ineffective at servicing current needs
Funding Availability/ Partnership Opportunity	Action is warranted due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding availability for specific use - Partnership opportunity for specific development
Preservation of Significant Natural Resources	Action is warranted to preserve and/or enhance significant natural resources in the city

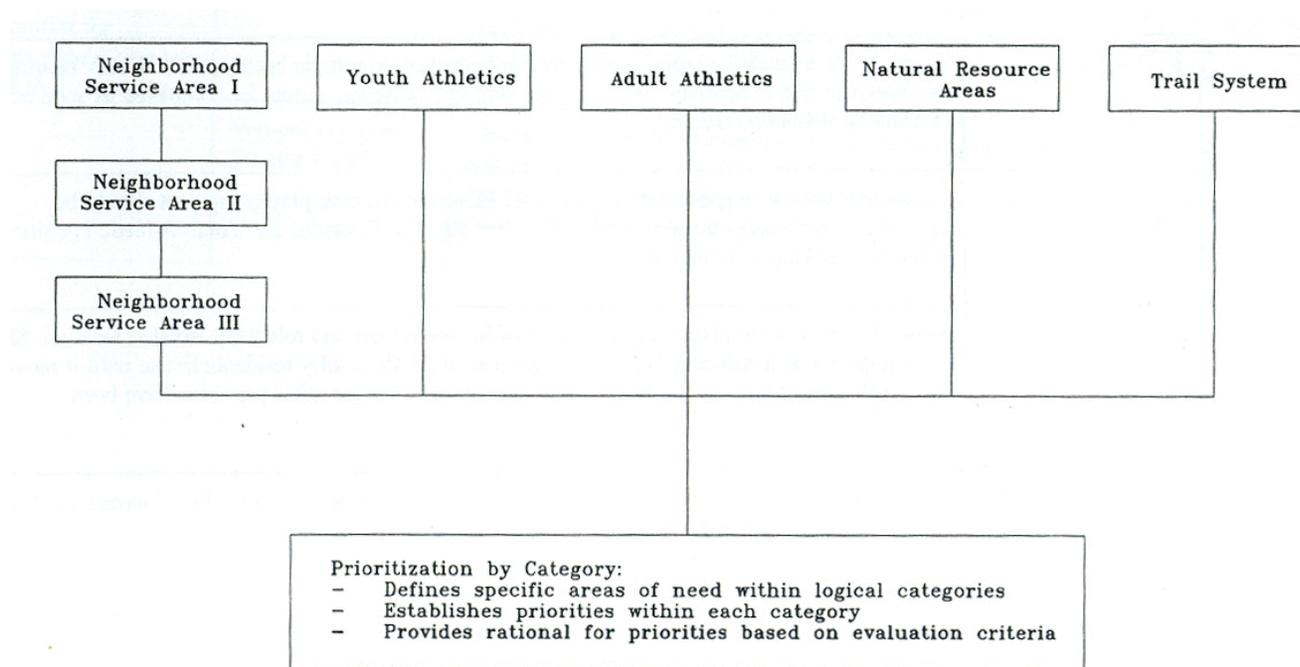
Prioritization of Park and Trail Development Initiatives

Involving citizens in this debate is of particular importance in that they are the customer and it is vital to meet their specific needs.

By applying the evaluation criteria previously defined, one can begin to establish priorities for development initiatives. The basis for these priorities goes back to the assessment of need and strategic plan outlined in previous sections.

Critical to this debate is the understanding that the priorities presented here are based on the city's and consultant's current understanding of community needs and the opportunities that are present today. These should not be viewed as absolutes. Instead, the priorities presented here should serve as the beginning point for discussions that should involve the Park Board, City Council, city staff, and citizens living in the city. Involving citizens in this debate is of particular importance in that they are the customer and it is vital to meet their specific needs. In today's economic environment coupled with the public's attitude toward taxes and living expenses, it will be vital to "hit the mark" each time development initiatives are undertaken. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the priority categories for park and trail development. The following pages establish the basic priorities within each of these categories.

Figure 6.1 - Priority Categories for park and trail development



Priorities Related to Neighborhood Service Area I

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>Neighborhood parks warrant significant upgrading to effectively serve neighborhood needs. Existing parks have limited facilities that are often old and in need of replacement. Providing a pallet of recreational opportunities for residents should be a top priority in this service area.</p>	<p>1) Center Park</p>	<p>Central location, space availability, trail connections, and lack of existing park amenities make this the highest priority in this service area. The park ranks high against develop patterns/population density and redevelopment/upgrading of facility evaluation criteria.</p>
	<p>2) North Star Park</p>	<p>Secondary priority relative to Center Park. Existing site amenities that are worn out and/or unsafe should be removed. Woodlots within the park need significant and immediate restoration and management attention and is therefore a high priority. The park ranks high against preservation of significant natural resources evaluation criteria. But it ranks lower than Center Park against development patterns/population density and redevelopment/upgrading of facility evaluation criteria.</p>
	<p>3) Inner Park</p>	<p>Ranks lower than above parks against the same evaluation criteria because it is already nearing full development and is relatively new. Current projects, however, should be completed as soon as possible to maintain continuity.</p>
	<p>4) Carl Eck</p>	<p>Ranks low from a neighborhood perspective. However, existing play equipment should be upgraded if necessary to meet safety guidelines. Refer to Priorities for Youth Athletic Facilities for additional ranking information.</p>
	<p>5) West Oak</p>	<p>Ranks low relative to above parks because of limited access and relatively isolated location. Should be maintained as a sub-neighborhood level open space for nearby residents to use until it moves toward the top of the priority list, which would occur after the other priorities have been completed.</p>
	<p>6) Pointcross</p>	<p>Ranks low from a neighborhood perspective due its location and end use. Development of this park should only occur after the higher priorities are completed.</p>

Priorities Related to Neighborhood Service Area II

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>New facilities are needed to effectively service neighborhood level needs. With the exception of Baldwin Park, the facilities available and appropriate for neighborhood use are very limited. Providing a pallet of recreational opportunities for residents should be a top priority in this service area.</p>	<p>1) City Hall Park</p>	<p>Strategic location within the service area, ease of access, space availability, trail connections, and lack of existing park amenities make this park the highest priority in this service area. Adjacency to city hall and other public buildings add to it potential to serve both neighborhood and community needs. The park ranks high against develop patterns/population density evaluation criteria. It also ranks high against the redevelopment/upgrading evaluation criteria because it takes the place of the neighborhood amenities currently in Tamarack Park.</p>
	<p>2) Baldwin Park</p>	<p>Secondary priority relative to City Center Park because it already has some development appropriate for neighborhood use. Additional development is necessary to round out the development program and to create a more effective neighborhood park component in this multi-functional park. Refer to Priorities for Youth Athletic Facilities for additional ranking information.</p>
	<p>Non-priority park: Tamarack Park</p>	<p>This park will be transitioned away from servicing neighborhood needs toward a natural resource area as City Hall Park is developed. The park is not well suited for neighborhood park uses and the existing play equipment is not up to current standards. Refer to Priorities for Natural Resource Areas for additional information.</p>

Priorities Related to Neighborhood Service Area III

Priority Statement:	Priority Ranking	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>Of the three service areas, this one offers the most with respect to neighborhood level facilities. Indian Hills initial development phase is completed and servicing neighborhood needs. Golden Lake School offers a number of amenities appropriate for neighborhood use.</p> <p>As with the other service areas, providing a pallet of recreational opportunities for residents should be a top priority in this service area.</p>	<p>1) Golden Lake Park</p>	<p>As the oldest park in this service area, many of the existing amenities are worn out and/or are not effective in servicing current needs at both the neighborhood and community level. This coupled with its strategic location, space availability, and trail connections make this the highest priority in this service area. The park ranks high against development patterns/population density and redevelopment/upgrading of facility evaluation criteria. As a county park, it also ranks high against the partnership opportunity evaluation criteria.</p>
	<p>2) Golden Lake School</p>	<p>Secondary priority relative to City Center Park because it already has some development appropriate for neighborhood use. Additional development is necessary to round out the development program and to create a more effective neighborhood park component in this multi-functional park. As a school site, the park ranks high against the partnership opportunity evaluation criteria. Refer to Priorities for Youth Athletic Facilities for additional ranking information.</p>
	<p>3) Indian Hills</p>	<p>Ranks lower than above parks against the same evaluation criteria because it is already nearing full development and is relatively new. Current projects, however, should be completed as soon as possible to maintain continuity.</p>
	<p>Non-priority park: Pheasant Run</p>	<p>This park will be transitioned away from servicing neighborhood needs toward a natural resource area. The park is not well suited for neighborhood park uses and the existing play equipment is not up to current standards. Also, this service area can be well serviced by the other three parks, thus reducing the need for this park to offer neighborhood level facilities and amenities. Refer to Priorities for Natural Resource Areas for additional information.</p>

Priorities Related to Servicing Youth Athletic Needs

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>New youth facilities are needed to meet the demand for youth athletic facilities (based on participation rates obtained from various user groups). New facilities should be provided by building new one's on available land and through partnerships.</p>	<p>Development Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carl Eck ● Golden Lake School ● Baldwin Park ● Golden Lake Park (partial) 	<p>Providing new facilities for youth sports ranks high against recreation program needs evaluation criteria. It also ranks high against partnership opportunity evaluation criteria. Each of the parks listed offer some, albeit limited, opportunities for expanding youth athletic facilities within the city. In all likelihood, the city will also have to develop partnerships with other cities and local school districts to meet all of its future needs.</p> <p>With the many pressing needs of the city, reliance on partnerships will be vital to meeting community needs. These partnerships could range from local associations providing funding and labor to develop a new fields to joint-use agreements with local school districts and adjacent cities.</p>
	<p>Related Non-Development Priorities:</p>	<p>Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the magnitude of demand for facilities for youth athletics is vital to the efficient use of limited resources. To many facilities of one type or another takes resources away from other priorities. To few and user group needs go unmet. Developing a means for tracking the registration and scheduling of individuals participating in programs should be high priority to minimize ineffective use of resources. This includes tracking individuals participating in both city and user group sponsored programs. The city should seek to form a partnership with other cities and agencies to minimize the costs of gathering user information and to keep track of users that cross jurisdictional boundaries.</p>

Priorities Related to Adult Athletic Needs

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>The need for new adult facilities are undefined and require additional assessment to determine true demand. If warranted, facilities should be provided through partnerships with other cities and, to a more limited degree, local school districts.</p>	<p>Development Priorities:</p>	<p>The demand for adult facilities remains relatively undefined since no city programs exist and the demand for facilities has not been extensively tracked in the past. Whatever the demand, the city undoubtedly will have to develop partnerships with other cities and local school districts to meet any need that materializes. The city simply does not have adequate land or economic resources to provide facilities for adult athletic uses on its own.</p> <p>Relying on partnerships with other cities is the only realistic approach to meeting these needs as they materialize.</p>
	<p>Related Non-Development Priorities:</p>	<p>Like youth athletics, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the magnitude of demand for facilities for adult athletics is vital to the efficient use of limited resources. This is especially true in this case, where adult groups are not adequately represented by local associations and there are no facilities in the city that would meet their needs. It would also allow the city to determine if a need even exists -- thus avoiding the potential of wasting resources on non-existent demand.</p> <p>Developing a means for tracking the registration and scheduling of individuals participating in programs should be high priority to minimize the ineffective use of resources. Again, the city should seek to form a partnership with other cities and agencies to minimize the costs of gathering user information and to keep track of users that cross jurisdictional boundaries.</p>

Priorities Related to Restoration and Management of Natural Resource Areas

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>Preserving the natural resources in the city is of vital importance to maintaining the innate character of the city's landscapes.</p>	<p>Related Non-Development Priorities:</p>	<p>Initial field review brought to light some disturbing ecological concerns that need further scientific evaluation. Based on similar conditions found in this region of the country, the ecological conditions found within the natural resource areas will likely lead to continued degradation of the ecological systems unless managed through a well-defined restoration and management program.</p> <p>The assessment of need makes it clear that preserving the natural resources of the city are vital to its innate character. Developing a comprehensive restoration and management plan is the necessary first step toward ensuring that the character and quality of these resources are protected on into perpetuity.</p>
	<p>Development Priorities:</p>	<p>As part of the restoration and management plan, test plots, or prototypes, should be identified and used to test restoration and management approaches. The selection of test plot locations should be based on the proximity of vegetative communities and the degree of current degradation found. After test results have been analyzed and public education programs are undertaken, restoration and management practices should be used in each of the natural resource areas.</p>

Priorities Related to Trail Needs

Priority Statement:	Priority Rankings	Rationale for Ranking Based on Evaluation Criteria
<p>The trail system should continue to be developed on a yearly basis, with the city working closely with Anoka County Parks to interlink the city's system with that of the county's. This also holds true with adjacent communities.</p>	<p>1) Completion of city trail system</p>	<p>A continuing yearly effort should be made to add to the existing trail system until it is 100% complete. Continuing the city's past commitment to trails will become even more important in the future as recreation trends continue to show an increase in usership of these city amenities.</p>
	<p>2) Completion of interlinkages with the county and other local communities trail systems</p>	<p>Hand in hand with completing the city's own system, an effort should be made to make the interconnections with the county and adjacent communities trail systems. Once in place, these connections will greatly expand the trail opportunities available to the local citizenry.</p>

Funding Sources

The availability and timing of funding for the development of the park and trail system will have direct impact on the implementation of the plan.

The availability and timing of funding for the development of the park and trail system will have direct impact on the implementation of the plan. Figure 6.2 provides a brief overview of the funding sources typically available at the local level of government. It also provides an overview of the probability of any given source adding to the funding stream for parks and trails within the city.

Each of the non-local funding sources require an application process which requires an action plan and description of funding requirements. All of these funding sources are competitive and/or require political action and citizen approval.

Joint-Use Agreements

Establishing clearly defined joint-use agreements between members of the partnership is important to their success.

With the availability of funding being limited, relying on partnerships will be vital to meeting the needs of the community in the future. This is especially true with respect to youth and adult athletic facilities. Critical to these relationships in the need for a high level of cooperation between members of the partnership.

Establishing clearly defined joint-use agreements between members of the partnership is important to their success. From a strategic and practical planning perspective, each of these agreements will greatly affect the city's development strategies and priorities.

Agreement Process

Establishing a clear and definable process is critical to the long-term success of joint-use agreements. The process consists of a number of important steps that lead to fair and equitable agreements. The key elements of this process are:

- **Equal Representation:** Through mutual agreement, each member of the partnership appoints an individual to represent their interests in the partnership. This ensures continuity in communication between parties and follow-through on discussion issues.
- **Interactive Dialogue:** For the purpose of defining the issues that impact the formulation of effective agreements.
- **Implementation Planning:** Focuses on defining the commitments and responsibilities of each member of the partnership (on an overall basis and on a specific facility basis).

Agreement Parameters

Agreement parameters define the important aspects of the agreement, what each of the parties can and are willing to bring to the partnership, and define what is a fair and equitable solution. It is important to recognize that the objective of joint-use agreements is for the city to derive some benefit from forming a partnership versus going it alone, even though the agreement itself may not represent an even split with respect to commitment or responsibility.

The following defines the important considerations and clauses of a typical joint-use agreement:

- **Name of Project/Park Site:** Defines the name for the site being discussed, such as "Golden Lake School."
- **Parties to the Agreement:** Defines the parties involved in the agreement.

- **Date and Term of Agreement:** Defines the starting and ending date of the agreement. Makes provisions for annual review (to ensure that the agreement is meeting its objectives) and automatic renewal (often automatically renewed on a yearly basis unless request are made for revisions).
- **Site Description:** Clearly defines the property limits, including legal descriptions as appropriate.
- **Ownership:** Clearly defines who owns the property and defines their long-term ownership intentions with the property.
- **Lease Agreement:** If a particular parcel of property is leased to the city (or vice-versa), the conditions of the lease arrangement should be clearly defined.
- **Development Program and Site Master Plan:** Clearly defines how the site will be developed in the future. This should include a written program which defines all facilities and site amenities and a master plan which graphically illustrates their locations on the property.
- **Development Responsibilities:** Clearly defines the responsibilities of each party with respect to economic commitment (i.e., who will pay for the development) and actual development (i.e., who will oversee and administer the construction). The timeframe for development of the site should also be clearly defined.
- **Maintenance Responsibilities:** Clearly defines the responsibilities of each party with respect to maintaining the facilities. This should be *very specific*, including a facility by facility breakdown. Also important to define is which party has the authority to limit use of a particular facility for maintenance purposes (typically given to the party who is responsible for the maintaining the facility). The expected level of maintenance should also be defined, such as "safe, sanitary, and operable conditions shall be maintained at all times."
- **Scheduling of Activities:** Clearly defines each party's use of the various facilities and the manner in which they are scheduled, including which party has priority status.
- **Insurance:** Clearly defines what level of insurance each party must carry on the site. Typically, each party carries liability insurance for the site and lists each other as "additional insured."
- **User Fees and Income from Activities:** Clearly defines how user fees, if collected, and other income will be used. Typically, user fees and income are used to off-set debt and maintenance costs.
- **Review Process/Dispute Resolution:** A provision should be included which establishes an agreement review process - whereby each party has the opportunity to review and, if necessary, make agreed upon changes to the agreement in response to changes in their needs. A provision should also be included which establishes a dispute resolution process. In this instance, an arbitrator - who is acceptable to both parties - should be identified and have the responsibility to fairly arbitrate disputes and formulate resolutions.
- **Rules:** Clearly defines the standard operational rules, such as time of operation, reservations, use of facilities, etc.

Although these agreements will likely have to be legal and binding documents, it is important that they be written in a manner which is understandable to those who will be implementing them: namely the Park & Recreation Board and Department, maintenance crews, and programmers.

Figure 6.2 - Potential Funding Sources for park and trail development

Funding Source		
Funding Source	Description/Overview	Probability
State Outdoor Recreation and LCMR Grants	The State of Minnesota annually allocates funds for park acquisition and development projects which meet recreational needs identified by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The grants are competitive and awarded by the Department of Natural Resources according to project merits.	Qualifying for funding for restoration and management of the city's natural resources has some potential. Very competitive.
Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program	Provides state grants to local units of government for up to 50% of the cost for acquisition and betterment of natural and scenic areas. Focus is on acquisition, but minimum betterment (such as interpretive, educational , boundary signing and protective fencing) also qualifies.	Very limited opportunity.
Conservation Partners Program	The program encourages private organizations and local governments to: cost share enhancement of fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats; research and survey fish and wildlife; and related educational activities. Grants may be up to \$10,000 each and must be equally matched.	Very limited opportunity.
Land and Water Conservation Fund	The federal government allocates monies each year from revenue obtained from off-shore oil drilling leases to each state for public acquisition and development projects. The State of Minnesota Administers these grants through the Department of Natural Resources.	Funding availability through this program has been reduced in recent years. As such, opportunities are limited.
Community Development Block Grants	These funds are administered by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The monies come from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.	Worth keeping abreast of, but potential is limited.
ISTEA	The federal government allocates monies each year for alternative forms of transportation, which includes bicycle trails that focus on transportation.	Funding availability through this program is facing cutbacks given the current political environment in Washington. As such, opportunities are more limited.
Property Tax	Minnesota statutes authorize cities to levy taxes on all taxable property in the city as needed to fund a park system.	One of the primary sources at the local level.
Bonds	Minnesota statutes enables cities to issue bonds for park acquisition or improvements.	One of the primary sources at the local level. Often used for larger-scale projects or general improvements that are beyond the reach of the annual CIP funding.
Fees/Enterprise Funds	Minnesota statute allows cities to prescribe and provide for the collection of fees for the use of any city park or other unit of the city park system or any facilities, accommodations, or services provided for public use therein.	Becoming a much more relied upon funding source, especially for singular use facilities ranging from ballfields to hockey areas.
Partnerships	Relates to partnerships formed with adjacent cities, the county, and school districts to develop, maintain, and operate parks and recreational facilities on a joint-use basis.	With limited funding options, forming partnerships to spread the cost of providing a specific type of service will play a critical role in funding park and recreation initiatives.
Donations	Relates to cash donations, gifts, volunteerism, and professional services donated to the park for planning, acquisition, or development purposes.	Limited potential from a cash perspective, but important with respect to the use of volunteers to offset some program costs.