Introduction

This chapter is a strategic guide to park and recreation improvements, program enhancements and operations from 2007 to 2026. The Needs Assessment identified two over-arching issues that need to be addressed: capital improvements needs (mostly for trails and ongoing facility replacement) and a capital improvement funding gap. In order to reach the parks and recreation goals and to respond to community needs, this chapter proposes a strategic refocusing of park facility investments. This would be a change from the old model of providing a full array of recreation facilities in each neighborhood park to one that strategically invests monies in targeted parks and facilities to serve a broader district area. This strategic repositioning of the park system will in the long-term allow greater efficiencies, improve quality, minimize maintenance and replacement costs, improve system responsiveness and improve the economic sustainability of the system. This chapter identifies parks and recreation strategies by area of need, followed by specific implementation tasks. These strategies build on the draft parks and recreation strategies of the Imagine Bloomington 2025 Strategic Plan. Strategies for addressing the capital funding gap are addressed in Chapter 7.

Priority Strategies

A set of 36 strategies were developed to implement the Master Plan goals and initiatives. Citizens, City staff, Citizen Task Force members and the Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission were asked to prioritize the strategies. The top ten priorities and their strategies are listed below:

1. Park Revitalization Program Strategy # 34 – Adopt and fund a park revitalization program for park infrastructure. The park facility improvement in the park system Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will need to be reviewed and prioritized relative to the Park and Recreation goals and strategies and ongoing revitalization of parks.

2. Signature Parks Strategy #1 - Reposition parks to reduce maintenance and capital investment costs, improve quality to better meet evolving park and recreation needs and the increasingly diverse

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Goals

1. Maintain and enhance city park and recreational assets.
2. Anticipate the needs of the changing community and structure programs and facilities accordingly.
3. Preserve and maintain our natural resources for ourselves and future generations.
4. Enhance the City’s arts, cultural, and historic assets.
5. Promote a sense of community through recreation programming.
6. Connect the community with trails, walks and bikeways.
7. Build community support for parks and recreation.
Park Renovation

The first park and recreation goal is to: *Maintain and enhance city parks and recreational assets.*

Community input identified a need for park revitalization to upgrade aging facilities, to improve the function and aesthetics of parks, and to make parks more relevant to the neighborhoods they serve. Based on community-identified needs, detailed improvement plans have been prepared for 23 of the City’s parks. The new facilities identified in the park plans will be added to the City’s CIP (Capital Improvement Projects) list for future prioritization and funding. The park improvements identified in the Parks Master Plan are part of a twenty-year vision and not all listed projects will necessarily be completed due to the City’s limited financial resources. The list of projects in the CIP does not obligate the City to undertake the improvement. The completion of the Parks Master Plan, will allow the City to review and prioritize the CIP, including newly recommended improvements, with respect to the Park and Recreation goals and strategies of this Plan (See Appendix B - Existing Park Inventory Maps and Park Improvement Recommendations).

Much of the park system was built in the 1960’s and 1970’s and many facilities in them have reached their useful lives. Focused and phased renovation is needed to keep the system safe, vital and functioning as a community asset. While the City’s preference is to replace, renovate and maintain all park and recreation facilities at the highest level of quality, it is possible that sufficient funding may not be available to replace all needed facilities when their useful life is reached and their condition deteriorates. Employing a repositioning strategy as a guiding principle for park renovation will focus renovation where it is most needed and will better allow the City to address these evolving needs.

Park System Repositioning - Create Signature Parks

If funds are not available to replace all existing facilities, then the recommended approach is to reposition or guide investment in aging parks to create attractive community oriented parks at key locations, or signature parks. Depending upon funding availability this may mean shifting investment from smaller parks to certain
larger parks to create signature parks with higher quality unique features, a greater range of amenities with more opportunity park programming. With a greater range of quality amenities and programming opportunities, signature parks will become gathering focal points for the community. The smaller nearby parks over time might then receive less investment with fewer or smaller facilities or be allowed to become neighborhood open space. Investment in smaller parks should not stop, but when a facility has deteriorated, individual case-by-case decisions would be made whether to reinvest funds to replace that equipment or use those funds to create a higher quality recreation at a signature park. The repositioning would be tailored to create a more sustainable system overall by changes such as, replacing worn out tennis courts with gardens, lawn, natural plantings or another recreation facility with lesser initial and on-going operational costs.

The City has created such a signature park, Cedarcrest by renovating a pair of aging tennis courts into a combination tennis and basketball court, and adding a water play splash pad, rain garden and new landscaping. Cedarcrest has become a recreation destination and gathering space for the community due to its unique mix of facilities.

Focusing investment to create signature parks may result in some people having to travel further to reach certain park facilities. This can be offset somewhat by connecting signature parks with a City-wide bikeway/walkway network.

The City has begun studying the potential for park repositioning in the park system as the Capital Improvement Program is updated. A final determination will be based on an independent public input process.

Strategies for park renovation include:

**Strategy 1: Reposition parks to reduce maintenance and capital investment costs, improve quality to better meet evolving park and recreation needs and the increasingly diverse park user.**

- The City should evaluate repositioning opportunities across the City, to create signature parks where there are multiple parks serving a district area,
duplication or under-utilization of facilities, and facilities in need of renovation.

- Develop signature facilities in parks to serve as neighborhood focal points and icons.

**Strategy 2: Develop/improve facilities and parks to enhance sense of community.**

- Create large and small socializing and gathering spaces when parks are renovated.
- Determine the role of park buildings in neighborhood activities and potential use/reuse or rehabilitation needs.
- Provide accent landscaping (native plantings) and provide port-a-potty screening in the parks.

**Strategy 3: Promote active living in parks.**

- Add looped trails of varying lengths in parks where feasible.
- Improving accessibility.
- Provide shade and resting places.
- Improve lighting and safety measures.
- Implement CEPTD standards (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

**Strategy 4: Improve park identification and way-finding.**

- Improve signs with park and trail system maps.
- Integrating parks with the City’s trail network.

**Parkland Acquisition**

There are two City park service area gaps in Bloomington; James Avenue neighborhood and the Highwood Avenue neighborhood. The City should continue to seek to fill service gaps by identifying parkland acquisition sites as opportunities arise. Similarly, as redevelopment occurs, the City should evaluate park and recreation needs associated with new multi-family development as it has occurred with the Lyndale Green and Bloomington Central Station multi-family developments. The majority of the proposed parkland acquisition sites border Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve and these properties are increasingly expensive to acquire (See Appendix I for complete listing of potential future parkland acquisitions). Acquisition and funding
recently completed a natural resource inventory for the City (See Figure 6.5 and Appendix M).

HCDES gathered information on land cover throughout the City of Bloomington (examples of land cover include maple-basswood forest, hay field and cattail marsh). The collected data will inventory and assess the existing plant community composition and quality. The NRI data can be used by the city for long-term planning and conservation efforts.

The inventory will provide an opportunity to identify high quality plant communities in the City and in particular within City parks and open space and then prioritize conservation and management efforts.

The long-term success of management and conservation efforts will depend in large part on improved and continuing public education on the plant communities and the ecology of the City of Bloomington and allocation of resources and staff.

The recommended approach to natural resource management includes:

**Strategy 7: Hire an ecological consultant to develop a natural resources management plan of priority preservation and management areas to support the regeneration and expansion of native plant communities.**

- Identify areas of relatively intact native plant communities in parks and open space; Utilize the Land Cover Mapping to prioritize preservation and management activities.

- In priority management areas or “management cores”, eradicate invasive species such as Common Buckthorn, hybrid Honeysuckle, Garlic Mustard and Spotted Knapweed. By anchoring these core communities of high ecological value, management efforts can then radiate outward into more disturbed areas, improving with time the plant community quality and ecological function of the parks and open spaces. Specific tasks include:
  - Begin by removing invasive species from high quality areas then over time expand management efforts to the lower quality areas.
Initiate invasive plant removal with the species of greatest threat. For most of the park system, this entails buckthorn and garlic mustard control. Where buckthorn removal is limited by labor and/or time, efforts should focus on removing fruiting trees first.

As management moves to medium quality areas, remove invasive species from around large oaks, basswood and other desirable remnant natives. Removing invasive trees and shrubs (buckthorn, honeysuckle, Siberian elm, etc.) from around these large trees will enhance both regeneration of native trees and the establishment of forest floor shrubs and herbs which will move in from adjacent high quality areas.

Expand existing education programs in Bloomington to improve citizens understanding of ecological processes and environmental benefits.

Provide interpretive signage along trails and at key locations in parks.

Partner with local homeowners and environmental organizations such as the Izaak Walton League - Bush Lake Chapter to build rain gardens, to plant native species, conduct community educational workshops and other community stewardship actions.

Encourage citizen volunteers in the implementation of the management plan to create more sustainable effort- stretching management efforts.

**Strategy 8: Use native plants to meet environmental objectives and reduce maintenance requirements.**

- Use native plants to reduce watering, fertilizing, and mowing.
- Promote the use of native plants as a source of food and shelter for wildlife.
- Restore and manage native prairie where appropriate.

**Strategy 9: Preserve and manage aquatic and terrestrial environments.**

- Develop and implement control methods for nuisance species such as geese and deer.
- Use native plant species as a buffer around shorelines to control runoff into ponds, lakes, streams and rivers and to discourage geese.

Control invasive plant species.

- Seek biologic controls for invasive species.
- Monitor plant and animal disease outbreaks and plan/act accordingly.
- Develop a City policy for delineating and creating wetland buffer zones.
- Implement and enhance City policies and criteria for stormwater maintenance activities consistent with planning objectives for development.
- Implement and enhance criteria to determine ponding requirements, acceptable storm sewer drain expectations, and reasonable sediment levels.
- Evaluate best management practices to improve storm water management techniques and reduce levels of pollutants in water.
- Explore greater use of pervious pavers and rain gardens to create demonstration projects in the parks, such as proposed overflow parking at Brookside Park.
- Encourage broad citizen participation in the development of policies, programs, and criteria for stormwater management.

**Strategy 10: Promote community stewardship of natural areas.**

- Inform citizens of available maps of areas that are currently considered wetland areas, park-related, and non-buildable areas.
- Hire a natural resource coordinator City staff position.
- Creating an advisory commission on environmental resources.
- Maintain the “Tree City USA” designation.
- Sign the U.S. Mayors Conference Climate Protection Agreement.
- Coordinate activities for Arbor Day and Earth Day with local neighborhoods and schools.
- Develop a public information program and prepare materials on specific areas of environmental interest.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the adopt-a-bit-of Bloomington programs and evaluate opportunities to improve this program.
Figure 6.3 - Natural Resources/Open Space Natural Community Quality Map
Work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MnDNR, and private organizations to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a trout stream from a bluff seep or stream to the Minnesota River.

Add natural resource and environmental interpretation/education signs and information in conservation areas and during environmental management activities.

Encourage citizen volunteers in natural resources management efforts.

**Strategy 11: Partner with agencies, organizations and businesses to enhance natural resource access and management.**

- Leverage available resources by pursuing co-funded and/or cooperative agreements for provision and maintenance of natural resources and management.
- Support public and private efforts to acquire, develop and maintain open space for public use.
- Take advantage of opportunities that arise from redevelopment activities to add to or to enhance access to the City’s open space and natural resources while protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
- Emphasize the adopt-a-bit-of-Bloomington program for maintenance and management of open spaces and natural resources.

**Trails and Bikeways**

The sixth parks and recreation goal is to: *connect the community with trails, walks and bikeways.*

Trails have been identified as the most used and desired facility in the park system for a host of reasons including to enhance health, fitness, use for transportation, recreation, accessibility and usability by all ages. The City of Bloomington was primarily developed around automobile transportation and pedestrian and bike facilities were secondary considerations. The City is now mostly developed and lacks a comprehensive network of trails and pedestrian facilities. The City is presently (in 2007 and 2008) preparing an Alternative Transportation Plan, a comprehensive system for inter- and intra-city travel via walking, bicycling, personal transportation assistance devices and rollerblading.

![Figure 6.4 - Youth volunteers posing during Buckthorn pull at Pond-Dakota Mission Park](image-url)
and their connections/interface with transit (LRT and bus) (See Appendix N). Establishing a system of trails in an existing built community will be a challenge, although trails are the only facilities eligible for Federal and State funding. To establish a system of trails the City will need to utilize numerous strategies identified in the Alternative Transportation Plan (see the working draft Alternative Transportation Plan Map) and as follows:

**Strategy 12: Improve bicycle and pedestrian access across highways and major roads and the Minnesota River.**
- Replace Long Meadow Bridge for bicyclists and pedestrian traffic.
- Add safe and convenient bike and pedestrian crossings of I-494, I-35W, TH 169 and TH 77 and other high traffic streets.
- Invest to keep trail surfaces and street crossings in safe and good condition.
- Create grade-separated crossings where feasible.

**Strategy 13: Adopt the Alternative Transportation Plan.**
- Identify planned bike trails, lanes, routes and sidewalks.
- Create landscaped boulevards with a continuous bikeway and walkway.
- Provide amenities such as public art, gardens, and benches along routes.
- Integrate parks with transportation, transit and other destinations.
- Explore opportunities to reclaim space for off street trails when roads are rebuilt.
- Utilize opportunity corridors (Minnesota River, Xcel Transmission line).
- Add a trail from I-494 to the Minnesota River Valley largely within the Xcel transmission line corridor. Work with Richfield and Minneapolis to extend that trail north to the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes.
- Create linkages to trail systems in adjacent communities.
- Work to develop a MN River valley trail from Fort Snelling to LeSueur, MN.

**Strategy 14: Improve access to and promote use of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR).**
- Increase the number of bike and pedestrian access points.
- Provide connections to the City trail system.
- Improve signage for access points.
- Coordinate connections to the planned MnDNR Minnesota Valley River Trail.
- Partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Friends of Minnesota Valley River to market MVNWR facilities and programming.
- Enhance interpretive and educational opportunities in MVNWR.
- Provide natural surface trails for bikers and hikers separate from a paved Minnesota River Valley Trail.
- Provide docks and piers for fishing, bird watching and water access.

**Strategy 15: Develop trails and bikeways to meet a range of needs for an aging population.**
- Add loop trail opportunities within parks.
- Provide amenities such as public art, gardens, and benches along routes.
- Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards.

**Recreation Facilities**

The second park and recreation goal is to: anticipate the needs of the changing community and structure programs and facilities accordingly.

The community demographics are changing and with it recreation demands and needs are changing including a desire for quality indoor facilities. In order to address recreation facility needs, the following strategies are recommended:

**Strategy 16: Maximize use and quality of existing**
community recreation facilities.

- Add restroom timer locks to park buildings.
- Evaluate the ongoing use and maintenance of outdoor hockey rinks relative to the feasibility of adding refrigerated outdoor rinks.
- Determine the role of park buildings in neighborhood activities and potential use/reuse or rehabilitation needs.
- Implement a preferred Tennis Courts Study 2005 recommendation option to reduce the number of courts and overall maintenance costs.
- Evaluate existing facilities to add quality improvements to extend use such as: lighting, irrigation, artificial turf, etc.
- Partner with the school district to install artificial turf at Lincoln Stadium to expand community usage of this facility.

Strategy 17: Modify park and recreational facilities to meet a range of needs for an aging and diverse population.

- Develop facilities for passive and unstructured recreation to address trends and changing tastes.
- Identify and eliminate barriers to physical accessibility in existing facilities.
- Continue to develop accessible playgrounds with appropriate equipment for people with disabilities.
- Enhance access to athletic fields to promote use by people with disabilities.
- Build or renew facilities to meet or exceed standards for accessibility.

Strategy 18: Assure quality community facilities to meet evolving needs.

- Build quality facilities that can be adapted to new uses as community needs change.
- Pursue opportunities to add soccer/lacrosse fields in the system, in particular a lacrosse field for Heritage Hills Park.
- Evaluate cost-benefit of continued use of City funds for the Bloomington Armory.
- Evaluate Family Service Center needs, benefits and feasibility including a teen center component.
- Plan for reuse of Wallo Property as part of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Master Plan update.
- Support active living movement in facilities.
- Pursue opportunities to create additional dog exercise areas and provide the following improvements to the existing dog exercise area:
  - Trash cans inside at the entrance and within the park area.
  - Boundary fence around the dog exercise area.
  - A small dog area with fenced boundary.
  - Drinking fountain for dogs and people.
  - Security lighting in the parking lot.
- Provide access to restrooms, drinking water, bike racks, and shade throughout the park system.

Strategy 19: Develop community gathering locations and improve facilities and parks to enhance sense of community.

- Develop Normandale Lake Park to improve profile and access for large community gatherings.
- Develop a lawn games location.
- Determine the role of park buildings in neighborhood activities and potential use/reuse or rehabilitation needs.

Programs and Events

The second and sixth parks and recreation goals are particularly relevant to programming: Anticipate the needs of the changing community and structure programs and facilities accordingly, and Promote a sense of community through recreation programming.

The City of Bloomington gets high marks on the quality of its recreation programs, but there is room for improvement, in particular in outreach to underserved populations. There are numerous factors that influence recreation participation, including barriers to participation, program communication and marketing and the quality of facilities. Barriers to participation can be: physical, social, cultural, economic affordability, scheduling, language, culturally appropriate methods of engagement and safety. The Needs Assessment suggested that barriers to
participation might be affecting participation from certain segments of the population, particularly those from immigrant families. In many cases citizens are unaware of program offerings or there is an issue with the presentation. In other cases the facilities used for the programming do not serve the program well or meet resident’s expectation for quality. Strategies related to programming and events are as follows:

**Strategy 20: Serve a spectrum of age, ability, and interest.**

- **Develop inter-generational opportunities in programming:**
  - Programs that get kids to Creekside Community Center.
  - Programs where seniors can teach, reading, knitting, etc.
  - Programs for family members to enjoy within the same location.
  - Encourage seniors to volunteer in schools and playgrounds.
  - Provide volunteer opportunities to provide transportation for seniors.
  - Provide volunteer opportunities for children to teach computer skills to seniors.

- **Develop programs to reconnect families and children to nature.**

- **Develop programs to teach residents about geocaching in the parks (Global Positioning System treasure hunting)– to get more residents, especially children into parks and natural areas.**

- **Develop history programs to engage children, such as contemporary history.**

- **Use participant and community feedback to keep programs and activities fresh and appealing.**

- **Benchmark programs annually to determine effectiveness. Evaluate and retool programs not achieving benchmark targets.**

- **Use pilot programs to determine effectiveness and increase efficiency.**

- **Develop more cooperation between arts program and facility providers in the region to allow more quality, specialized programs and to eliminate duplication of programs.**
Work to obtain popular music groups at music events at the Normandale Bandshell and Bloomington Central Station Park; partner with surrounding communities to share resources.

Strategy 21: Improve program accessibility to allow for broad community participation.

- Continue to offer programming and facilities to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Provide grants and scholarships to eliminate financial barriers.
- Create a blog to allow networking between program participants.
- Expand off-peak programming with more programs over the Noon hour and weekends.
- Improve the cooperation and connections with the police and neighborhoods with events such as “Bloomington Night Out in the Parks”.

Strategy 22: Distribute community events geographically across the quadrants of the City.

- Match park attributes to prospective events.
- Use census data and participant mapping to determine likely popularity of specific events with neighborhoods.
- Use block clubs to plan and promote neighborhood events.

Strategy 23: Promote informal and casual gatherings.

- Schedule neighborhood get-togethers at picnic shelters.
- Coordinate community gardens.
- Identify and promote a “Game of the Week” to encourage casual get-togethers.
- Add a movies in the park program to provide family oriented and community oriented activities.
- Provide informal/drop-in activities for people of all ages.
- Promote the Normandale Bandshell with an electronic reader board sign on Normandale Blvd.
**Strategy 24: Provide culturally rich and cross-cultural programming.**

- Build on the popularity of the Latino music festival and provide similar events focused on other cultures.
- Develop shows for children and diverse cultures at the Center for the Arts.
- Add another ethnic festival, i.e., a multi-ethnic food and culture festival.
- Provide translation, work with cultural groups, and recruit leaders to assist with overcoming language, social, and cultural barriers.
- Target neighborhoods with diverse populations and conduct special events such as roving playground programs, carnivals, music, events with food, etc.

**Operations and Maintenance**

The Parks and Recreation Department has on average an operations and maintenance budget of approximately $4.7 million dollars of which roughly 37% is for park and facility maintenance. Public input suggests there is desire for high quality and well maintained parks and facilities and that the City has been able to meet this challenge. However, to continue to do so, will be increasingly difficult with aging facilities and declining revenue. Responsibility for parks and facility maintenance is with the Public Works Department and associated costs are billed back to the Park and Recreation Division. This has functioned fairly well over time; however, this arrangement lessens the Parks and Recreation Division's control over its maintenance budget, priorities, and expenditures. Public input also suggests a growing interest in environmental sustainability. Greater sustainability can be achieved over time through operations, maintenance and facility changes. The following operations and maintenance strategies are recommended to improve operations, reduce costs and create greater environmental sustainability:

**Strategy 25: Continue to increase operational efficiency and innovation.**

- Work with the hockey association to improve the quality of outdoor ice.
- Use the latest technological resources to improve field irrigation, lighting, etc., to reduce repair time and use water and energy more efficiently.

**Strategy 26: Develop and implement environmentally sustainable practices.**

- Determine the cost-benefit of “naturalizing” unused portions of parks. A no-mow policy for parks generally requires intensive restoration and periods of intensive maintenance initially, but lower day-to-day costs associated with routine mowing. Larger areas of parks restored to prairie or no-mow tend to be more successful than smaller areas.
- Provide education and interpretation to inform the public about the purpose and function of no-mow natural areas.
- Purchase “green” products made from high recycled and post-consumer waste material content and focus on quality versus quantity.
- Choose economically sustainable options, considering staff time, energy use, resource use and life-cycle costs.
- Encourage employee use of alternative forms of transportation for commuting to work.
- Train staff in sustainable maintenance and environmental management best practices (BMP’s) such as Integrated Pest Management.
- Integrate sustainable practices, low impact development practices and green design into new construction and renewal of all facilities.

**Arts and History**

The fourth parks and recreation goal is to: *Enhance the City's arts, cultural, and historic assets.*

The construction of the Bloomington Center for the Arts at the Bloomington Civic Plaza in 2002 provided a central facility for performing and visual arts in the community. While the Center is a wonderful facility, there is a need to extend art out into the community. This can occur though programs, events and physical art elements in parks and public places. Public art and events help build a feeling of community, create identity, attract visitors, supports economic development and enhances aesthetics. Art programs and instruction
build well-rounded individuals and provide social opportunities. Author Dr. Richard Florida in “The Rise of the Creative Class” asserts that creativity has emerged as the single most important source of economic growth. He states that an economic engine of growth are people who value investments in research and development, the arts, and education rather than sports stadiums and strip malls and that these people and their activities have a profound affect upon the economy, society and class structures.

Bloomington has a rich heritage of Native American and pioneer settlement, city formation, culture, entertainment, transportation and hospitality. The City has been expanding its effort to restore and encourage access to this history through projects like Pond-Dakota Mission Park and the restoration of the Old Town Hall.

Bloomington can expand the reach of the arts, history and culture through the following strategies:

**Strategy 27: Integrate public art into community life.**
- Designate locations for public art.
- Seek sponsors for creation of public art.
- Hold an annual art fair.
- Integrate art into park and public space improvement projects. This can be free-standing art elements or artistically designed infrastructure, such as fences, benches, lighting, etc.

**Strategy 28: Increase opportunities to participate in arts and culture activities.**
- Provide informal/drop-in activities for people of all ages.
- Increase the variety and number of opportunities for interactive participation.
- Partner with the Bloomington Fine Arts Council to bring art and cultural activities into neighborhoods.
- Include shows for children and diverse cultures at Center for the Arts concert series.
- Offer culturally based programs and classes.

**Strategy 29: Identify and preserve sites and properties of historic significance.**
- Increase programming to educate residents about the region’s history, including Native American history, and preservation of historic assets.
- Adopt evaluation criteria for potential sites and properties to be added to the Bloomington Historical Register.
- Rebuild the historic barn at Pond - Dakota Mission Park.
- Work with Bloomington Historical Society to raise funds for the completion of phase three and four of the Old Town Hall interior restoration and to undertake the evaluation of the Town Hall for placement on the Register of Historic Places. The Bloomington Historical Society will undertake the raising of funds to upgrade the storage and exhibit capabilities for the continuing preservation of its significant collections.

**Communications and Marketing**

The last parks and recreation goal is: *Build community support for parks and recreation.*

The success of this Plan is dependent on the Park and Recreation Division’s ability to provide public awareness and promote park programs, operations, facilities and policies as well as being able to receive meaningful community feedback to guide the parks system into the future. Specific communications and marketing strategies are as follows:

**Strategy 30: Improve communication and marketing to increase knowledge of recreational opportunities, needs and benefits.**
- Use internet and new technologies to provide 24/7 customer service.
- Provide translation, work with cultural groups, and recruit leaders to reach an ethnically diverse population.
- Provide information on the City’s web site and in other publications about parks and facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities.
Become a clearinghouse for community events, facilities and recreation programs.

Add a business liaison to the parks and recreation commission.

Highlight the economic and quality of life benefits of parks, trails, recreation and open space. Consider using the VIP (Vision, Insight and Planning) as a model of communications.

Acknowledge and recognize parks and recreation sponsors and donors.

Increase public, partner and city and staff awareness of Parks and Recreation services, programs, and facilities.

Ensure a Parks and Recreation Division workforce that is reflective of city demographics.

Produce marketing materials to be distributed to hotels and businesses.

Notify hotels of community events to promote visitor participation and enhance the City’s reputation as a tourist destination.

**Partnerships and Community Outreach**

The Bloomington parks system consists of a mix of public and private parks, facilities, open spaces. The City has long maintained partnerships with schools, churches, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Three Rivers Park District, recreation groups and others to provide public access to facilities (fields, gyms, playgrounds, etc.) and to operate programs. These partnerships are an efficient and generally mutually beneficial arrangement, and in some cases critical to providing needed neighborhood or community facilities, but there are challenges of coordination and access to facilities. Continued partnerships and outreach to businesses, service groups, and other alternative organizations, and better recruitment and management of individual volunteers and volunteer groups will become even more critical to the park system to respond to community need and recreation trends, to improve service efficiencies, and to minimize facility and maintenance costs. Strategies for partnerships and community outreach are as follows:
Strategy 31: Promote volunteer involvement in parks.
- Host a community park clean-up day.
- Hire a volunteer coordinator.
- Provide volunteer opportunities that are meaningful to individuals of all ages and families.
- Recruit adult volunteers to be positive role models for youth through monitoring and coaching.
- Partner with businesses and hotels to identify needs of non-resident population.
- Partner with civic organizations to form a festival planning committee.
- Work with volunteers to create gardens, perform trash clean-up, park maintenance efforts, and other such beautification projects.

Strategy 32: Develop collaborative partnerships with individuals, public, private and non-profit organizations, schools and associations to build support for parks and recreation.
- Work with parks and recreation departments in other municipalities to promote and provide special event services.
- Update Joint Use and Programming Agreements with the school district, college and other entities serving residents to maximize public access to community resources.
- Establish and maintain ongoing formal relationships with partners to facilitate communication, needs identification and program delivery.
- Establish agreements and relationships with service clubs to enhance program opportunities through the sharing of resources.
- Foster partnerships with businesses to develop and provide resources for recreational programs and facilities.
- Seek non-traditional partnerships to provide new and greater recreational opportunities.
- Pursue public and private partnerships to acquire or promote access to land for parks, open space and recreation when commitment to develop, operate and maintain the land and or facility is established.
- Partner with environmental groups to provide educational opportunities.

Future Plan Review and Updating
This Master Plan is a general guide to park and recreation improvements, program enhancements and operations over the next 20 years (2007 to 2026) however, to keep it relevant, it needs to be evaluated and refined on a regular basis to keep pace with demographic, recreation, funding and other trends as they evolve.

Strategy 33: Keep the Park Master Plan updated and relevant.
- Survey residents biannually to determine needs and trends.
- Review and refine the Park Master Plan annually as needed and do a major update every ten years.