

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The County did a visioning process in 2001 with the Chisago County Comprehensive Park Planning Task Force acting as a focus group to study the issues (see Chapter 4) that were identified during the planning process. The task force also developed goals and strategies related to each issue. The statements were reviewed and approved by the Chisago County Parks Department (CCPD) staff and the County Park Board. During their review, CCPD staff drafted additional action statements that apply to daily activities in the management and operation of the park system.

The goals identified specific accomplishments that the Chisago County Parks Department would strive for during the next 5, 10 and 20 years. The strategies defined actions that would be taken by the department to satisfy the intent of the goals. The goal and action statements also were used during the 2001-2002 planning process to provide guidance for preparation of Recommendations that are included in the other chapters of the Master Plan.

In 2013, as part of the plan update process, the County adopted newly refined vision and mission statements for the parks, trails and open space system. Chisago County adopted the following vision statement to guide future County park and trail acquisition, development and programming priorities:

“A park and trail system focusing on diverse natural resources and the recreational needs of Chisago County residents and visitors.”

The Chisago County Parks and Trails System adds value to all peoples' lives and contributes to the well-being of local and regional communities by providing public enjoyment and education and maintaining and restoring high quality natural areas. By virtue of its size, high quality facilities, and dispersed locations, the County Parks, Trails and Open Space System preserves and showcases the county's heritage and provides a place for users to find solitude, green space, access to natural resources, clean water and a place to recreate.

The County also has adopted the following mission statement for its parks, trails and open space system:

“Protect the natural resources, balance the demand for recreation with the need for conservation, offer recreation opportunities that encourage healthy lifestyles and provide clean, safe and accessible places for leisure time activities.”

The 2013-2015 Plan update process has resulted in additional and updated goals and strategies for the County Parks. County staff has updated the goals and strategies (based on input from the County Park Board) as follows:

Goal

A park classification system should be developed for the Chisago County Parks Department. This classification should be specific to the needs of the department while reflecting standards of the County park system.

Strategies

- a. The park system provides a variety of experiences.
- b. Each site within the park system takes on a unique identity and role.
- c. The County park system places an increasing amount of importance on the respect and priority for natural resources and wildlife.
- d. More natural areas shall be incorporated into the park system. These areas will be enjoyed through passive activities that are compatible with preserving special areas.
- e. The park system provides educational opportunities about cultural, natural and historical features.
- f. The park system encourages use by a broad cross-section of persons.
- g. The park system acknowledges the changing population of Chisago County with respect to increasing proportion of seniors and the increasing suburban population. As such, the County should update design standards and concepts to reflect the increasing urbanizing characteristics of Chisago County.
- h. Trails should connect parks, local communities and points of interest.
- i. The department is committed to providing the most effective results from the work it does.
- j. The department operates in a positive, open and inclusive manner with all stakeholders.

RECREATION PROVIDERS

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should cooperate in the planning and coordination of trails, park facilities, recreation programs and in marketing with other outdoor recreation providers.

Strategies

- a. Increase coordination with other recreation providers about the use of the Chisago County Parks and Trails facilities.
- b. Implement strategies to cooperate on the use of equipment, technology and information across agencies.
- c. Cooperate with other agencies in the planning and coordination of trails, park facilities and recreation programs.

- d. The County shall provide areas and facilities that allow the public to participate in recreational activities that take place in or emphasize the natural setting and suitably provided for within County resources.
- e. The County will place emphasis on activities that have broad general appeal and are participant-oriented. Chisago County will stress the provision of opportunities for recreation uses that occur on a self-directed basis.
- f. If funding becomes available, Chisago County should explore options for the programming of organized activities within the County parks.
- g. The County shall work in cooperation with technical resource agencies such as the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District, local watershed districts and Department of Natural Resources to ensure the comprehensive management of the park system's natural landscapes and water resources.
- h. If state funding is reestablished for the program, work in cooperation with regional planning authorities toward the vision of creating natural greenways and trail corridors that connect regional parks to other significant natural areas within the county.
- i. Continue to actively pursue outside grant funding from other agencies including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, State Legacy funds, Conservation districts, Minnesota Historical Society, etc.
- j. Actively pursue technical planning services available through colleges and universities in the areas of resource assessment, resource planning, park planning and other special related projects.
- k. Cooperate with other County departments for the maintenance, programming, marketing and other related projects and services.
- l. Expand and promote recreational lake access to the water, including improving lake and beach accesses, parking, boat ramps, canoe and kayak launches and the development of marked water trails or routes throughout Chisago County.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department is committed to a comprehensive or holistic approach to natural resource conservation. The intent is to focus on the diverse ecological and social inter-relationships of the area's natural systems. This goal should be met with the following strategies:

Strategies

- a. Identify and delineate properties and areas containing significant ecological resources, sensitive natural biological communities and potential social resource linkages.
- b. Assess and determine the ecological and social benefits and feasibility of designating new protections for areas with sensitive natural biological communities or significant ecological resources.
- c. Work with landowners to pursue cooperative methods of natural resource stewardship, including conservation easements and land trusts, for protecting valuable and sensitive natural communities and significant ecological resources.
- d. Seek financial and technical assistance from outside natural resource agencies to protect and improve ecologically sensitive natural areas.
- e. Monitor, document and minimize the cumulative effects of recreation use in the reserves and on sites identified by the Minnesota Department

of Natural Resources as areas with sensitive natural biological communities.

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department is committed to preserving existing pre-settlement landscape communities, protecting unique plants and animals and restoring remnant communities of native vegetation using an ecologically sound approach to sustainable parks and recreation development.

Strategies

- a. Develop a standardized natural resources classification system to guide park management decisions.
- b. Pursue grants for natural resource management.
- c. Use native plant material to restore disturbed natural areas and to integrate into formal landscape settings throughout the park system.
- d. Create meaningful relations with outside groups and agencies to achieve common goals relating to natural resources management.
- e. Educate park staff, contractors, local and regional policy makers and residents on management goals, procedures and outcomes.
- f. Consider recommendations from experts and specialists for reforestation, landscaping, prairie management, wetland preservation, lake restoration, shade tree disease control, wildlife management and other natural resource management goals.
- g. Develop policy directives to address natural resource issues and long term sustainable development.
- h. Monitor and document the cumulative effects of natural resource management practices using quantitative analysis. Coordinate with area lake associations and other regulatory agencies to monitor status of water resources and associated projects.
- i. Meet the standards of the Sunrise River Overlay District as outlined in the Chisago County Zoning Ordinance for any site development, activities or changes for any County Park or Reserve site within or next to the corridor.

Goal

The County needs to continue in its role as the leader in water resource protection. To support this role, Chisago County Parks Department is dedicated to preserving, protecting and maintaining the water systems in or adjacent to Chisago County park land. This is to provide optimal hydrological functions, aesthetics and recreation and wildlife habitat using an ecologically sound approach to sustainable parks and recreation management.

Strategies

- a. Develop scoring criteria and a standardized water resources classification system based on desired uses, to address priorities and to guide park management decisions.
- b. Clearly inventory and map existing and pre-settlement wetland types within the Chisago County Parks System using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Circular 39 classification system.
- c. Identify critical habitats and rare or threatened flora and fauna.
- d. Pursue grants which are available for water resource management.

- e. Use native plant materials to restore existing wetlands throughout the park system.
- f. Create meaningful relations with outside groups and agencies to facilitate the achievement of common goals relating to water resources management.
- g. Communicate and involve the community in a variety of water resource stewardship projects.
- h. Educate park staff, contractors, local and regional policy makers, residents and park users (most receptive) on management goals, procedures, and outcomes.
- i. Develop an understanding of the cause and effect relationship of past water resource management activities.
- j. Develop written recommendations for lake aeration, erosion control, nutrient loading, riparian vegetation, exotic species control, waterfowl habitat and other water resource management goals.
- k. Develop policy directives to address water resource issues and long-term sustainable development.
- l. Establish and maintain a database of general indicators to water quality.
- m. Monitor and document the cumulative effects of water resource management projects using quantitative analysis.

PARK AND TRAIL MASTER PLANS

Goal

The County's park and trail master plans need to be updated due to changes in recreation use patterns, planning concepts, funding programs and changes in regulatory requirements. The Chisago County Parks Department should implement the following strategies for the master plans:

Strategies

- a. Develop a model format or procedures for the master planning process.
- b. Identify and prioritize parks and trails for master planning and design.
- c. Identify existing natural resources, development patterns and surrounding land use impacts for each master plan.
- d. Inventory existing infrastructure with each master plan.
- e. Reflect the latest vision statement, mission statement, benefits analysis, user needs and park characteristics in a cost- effective manner in each master plan.
- f. Ensure architectural integrity and continuity in master plan designs.
- g. The County should use each master plan to guide development, preservation, management and improvements for each park and trail.

ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE DESIGN

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should develop cost efficient design standards that will:

- a. Create a unique, identifiable system-wide image;
- b. Standardize new and redeveloped projects;
- c. Promote public interest in the parks system;
- d. Improve the integrity, safety and maintenance of park facilities;

- e. Encourage a broad user base through diverse and/or multi-use facilities.

Strategies

- a. Inventory and analyze park facilities within the County Parks System that have shown good function, quality, aesthetics and maintenance durability from past use.
- b. Conduct an inventory and analysis of recreation and support facilities in other recreation provider systems to determine their applicability to the Chisago County Parks System.
- c. Establish baseline design parameters for buildings, recreation facilities, support facilities and site amenities including materials, colors, finishes and design continuity.
- d. Develop a standard design plate for basic park facilities including roadways, trails, signs, site amenities, picnic shelters, playground, perimeters, lighting and other common system elements.
- e. Research and analyze newly emerging technologies and materials used in park facility design and development including recyclable materials, energy efficient systems and higher technologies.

PARK DEVELOPMENT

Goal

Chisago County must be flexible and diverse in the development of county parks in order to effectively serve current and future residents of the region and county. There must be a balance between new development and redevelopment (maintenance, removal, refurbishing) of land/equipment/facilities such that the county does not miss an opportunity for the future, nor fails to adequately maintain its existing infrastructure.

Strategies

- a. Prepare updated master plans for each County park.
- b. Develop a long-range CIP for parks development and redevelopment.
- c. Respond to current recreation interests and needs.
- d. Review improvements periodically after implementation to ensure that benefits are provided.
- e. Coordinate park development with trail and greenway/green corridor planning and design.
- f. All park and trail plans should conform to the intent of the County parks vision and mission statements.
- g. Avoid damaging or disturbing sensitive natural resources.
- h. Offer multi-use facilities with the flexibility to provide for or be easily modified to provide for a variety of recreation needs.
- i. Exhibit character and quality that enhance unique attributes of the park sites.
- j. Create park improvements that are attractive, durable, vandal-resistant and safe.
- k. Generate a positive and consistent image of the County park system.
- l. Make maximum use of existing park improvements and avoid wasteful removals and demolition.
- m. Make sites and facilities accessible for persons with disabilities so all visitors can enjoy the range of experiences that the park system offers.
- n. Identify and establish easements or other control of additional lands that offer protection of valuable natural resources or provide recreation

- opportunities that are important to the vision and mission of the County Parks and Trails.
- o. Aggressively seek funding through grants and donations and through partnerships with other agencies and organizations, etc. to improve County facilities.
 - p. Efficiently and effectively use CIP funds to implement long-range capital improvement projects.
 - q. Develop resource protection tools for each County reserve and park including proactive management plans.
 - r. Use best management practices (BMP's) in facility planning and development.
 - s. Where possible, inject more life and color into the parks and preserves by adding outdoor classrooms and pavilions, environmental/historical/cultural exhibits (with QR codes) and kiosks and canoe and kayak launches and rentals.
 - t. Any proposal for a telecommunication tower in a county park must be reviewed by the County Park Board before County Board consideration and action.
 - u. Payments the County receives for the placement of telecommunication towers in County parks should be dedicated to the County park system for acquisition, redevelopment or development or for the operations and maintenance of the County parks.

TRAIL AND GREENWAY DEVELOPMENT

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department will respond to the increasing demand for trails. The principal users may include: hikers, bikers, in-line skaters, skate-boarders, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, horseback riders and others.

Strategies

- a. Pursue cooperative efforts to develop a trail system that links the Chisago County Parks System with adjoining local, regional and state trail systems.
- b. Consider the needs of a diverse user base in establishing trails including: multi-use, accessible hard surface trails; natural hiking trails; user-specific trails; horse or mountain bicycle trails; trail connections.
- c. Identify, protect and manage areas for wildlife/trail greenways and critical links between existing public areas.
- d. Closely coordinate the planning and preservation efforts for Sensitive Natural Area Biotic Communities with other units of government including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, cities, townships and watershed districts.
- e. Pursue the preservation of sites with significant ecological resources or designated as sensitive natural areas through cooperation with other public or private land preservation/conservation organizations.
- f. Pursue available funding resources, such as federal and state grants.
- g. Create a prioritization system for expanding and adding to the County trail system.
- h. Create and finance an on-going County trail maintenance and repair fund.
- i. Prepare a master plan for both the Sunrise Prairie Regional Trail and for the Swedish Immigrant Regional Trail. (Completed in 2015).

ACCESSIBILITY

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department is committed to meeting all applicable codes, laws and design guidelines pertaining to accessibility for all persons with disabilities in order to serve a broader cross-section of the public.

Strategies

- a. Perform a thorough ADA accessibility inventory of all existing parks, facilities and analysis of programs.
- b. Document all ADA accessibility deficiencies and indicate a time frame to correct these deficiencies.
- c. Prioritize—ADA accessibility deficiencies and begin implementation of retrofitting projects using available resources and personnel.
- d. Identify financial needs for ADA accessibility and retrofitting and incorporate those needs into the parks and trails Capital Improvements Program and seeking financing from other sources.
- e. Design and plan all new park facilities and park improvements with safety in mind, based on changing demographics and ADA requirements under the principles of “universal design”. This is to ensure the greatest integrations of persons with mental or physical challenges in the use of facilities and services.
- f. Make sure all new construction of park facilities and park programming follow the applicable codes, laws and design guidelines.
- g. Train and educate park personnel on the needs and requirements associated with the ADA guidelines.
- h. Document all ADA upgrading and retrofitting in compliance with federal and state guidelines.

FACILITY RENOVATION

Goal

To adequately maintain and upgrade existing facilities and infrastructure and to establish a long-term budget for maintenance of facilities.

Strategies

- a. Inventory and identify all facilities and infrastructure and determine maintenance needs based on this inventory.
- b. Assess maintenance priorities according to cost, timeliness, use and repair or replacement and common maintenance practices. Priorities should be reviewed and included in the department's budget process on an annual basis.
- c. Establish maintenance priorities as a part of the five-year CIP report and Maintenance Management Plan and review annually.
- d. Expand exploration of non-traditional funding sources, including federal and state grant opportunities, partnerships, private funding and other unique ways of raising revenue. In addition, Chisago County Parks Department should explore more traditional funding methods, such as, cost depreciation accounts or the earmarking of user fees to a long-term maintenance revolving fund.
- e. Evaluate, prioritize and incorporate ADA improvements and risk assessment into the long-range plan for renovations and upgrades.

- f. Implement, document and update plans to reflect infrastructure improvements and/or replacements.

FEATURE ATTRACTIONS

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should continue to consider and incorporate feature attractions (e.g. man-made vs. natural attractions) where they are appropriate to the overall mission and vision of the County parks system.

Strategies

- a. New features and attractions should complement the park system and be sensitive to the natural character of the site and of its ecosystems.
- b. Be consistent with the system vision and mission statements, values and uses when possible.
- c. Provide a feature that would increase the attractiveness or desired benefits of the park system to its users and be self-supporting or generate revenue sources for the system where appropriate.
- d. Be of quality design and construction while having the capability of being flexible in design to ensure continued future use.
- e. Be appropriate and consistent with the needs and desires of the surrounding land uses.
- f. Use the opportunity of possible private enterprise partnerships with the Chisago County Parks Department in their development and operations.

PARKS MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should strive to provide the public with safe, efficient, and attractive facilities and equipment through a variety of mechanisms including maintenance planning, budgeting and implementation.

Strategies

- a. Develop a Comprehensive Maintenance Management Plan that addresses maintenance guidelines, standards and schedules.
- b. Implement, update and request funding for the department's five-year Capital Improvements Program that includes building and facility rehabilitation.
- c. Implement, update and request funding for the department's 10-year equipment replacement program.
- d. Actively pursue alternate funding sources, such as grants, to aid in the acquisition and repair of facilities.
- e. Monitor, update and make recommendations on yearly budgets.
- f. Work actively with other government agencies on programs such as equipment and project resource sharing.
- g. Establish a depreciation schedule for equipment and facilities and develop a revolving fund for annual reinvestment.
- h. Develop and maintain an inspection and repair program for all facilities.
- i. Develop and implement programs to train and educate staff on newly emerging concepts and technologies used in parks and landscape maintenance.

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should strive to enhance the quality and efficiency of all maintenance services delivered.

- a. Make yearly budget recommendations to ensure funding for full-time and seasonal positions to meet present and future maintenance needs.
- b. Add additional training programs, both in-house and outsourced, to ensure that staff is equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of all maintenance services.
- c. Pursue all possible venues when recruiting and hiring full-time and seasonal staff. This will help to ensure the hiring of qualified, educated and skilled staff.
- d. Recruit and make use of volunteers in special projects.
- e. Make use of court-referred laborer services whenever possible.
- f. Fully implement the Comprehensive Maintenance Management Plan.
- g. Delegate responsibility for program implementation to the general foremen and/or the appropriate maintenance staff.
- h. Seek new ways to improve efficiency of maintenance operations through contracting, outsourcing, leasing, improved technologies, etc.
- i. Establish partnerships with other departments to assist in special areas (e.g. bituminous maintenance, road signage, etc.).
- j. Seek ways to optimize use of available resources by eliminating redundant or non-essential maintenance practices such as plowing under-used parking areas or mowing non-used turf areas.
- k. The County should review and update as necessary all park and trail ordinances and operational and management policies and manuals on regular basis to ensure they are meeting current standards and the needs of Chisago County and the public. These include but not limited to the County Park Ordinance, the Chisago County Parks Policy Statement, Sunrise Prairie Regional Trail operations manual and the Fish Lake Park Rangers manual.

LIABILITY AND LOSS CONTROL**Goal**

The Chisago County Parks Department should ensure the development and implementation of a liability/risk management plan for all park facilities and features.

Strategies

- a. In conjunction with the risk management department, perform a thorough risk liability inventory of all park facilities and features.
- b. Prioritize identified risks and begin implementing corrective measures using available resources and personnel.
- c. Identify financial needs for priority risk liability issues and incorporate those needs into the Parks Capital Improvements Program.
- d. Provide training and education to department personnel about appropriate safety procedures, operational policies and responses to emergency situations.
- e. Train and educate park maintenance personnel on the identification of risks and hazards in parks and recreation and appropriate corrective measures to be taken.
- f. Develop an emergency preparedness plan for the parks and recreation system.
- g. Install security systems and cameras and additional lighting in parking lots and on park structures.

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department should develop and implement constructive marketing plans for programs and services.

Strategies

- a. Recognize the overall system values and goals.
- b. Emphasize the unique qualities, features and opportunities of the individual system elements.
- c. Identify the strengths and weakness of Chisago County Parks as it relates to the existing facilities offered at other park agencies.
- d. Use various promotional methods, including public service announcements, County website, social media, print media, radio, television, internal communications and special events.
- e. Target market user groups such as families, mature head-of-households, etc.
- f. Review and revise marketing programs to determine effectiveness, geographic coverage and impact.
- g. Expand facility awareness through merchandising and advertising programs.
- h. Continually utilize market research and on-going opinion surveys of users.
- i. Anticipate new innovations of products in outdoor recreation and respond quickly to changing trends and product development.
- j. Develop a series of both web-based and printed guides to promote the County's systems and facilities that are "user friendly" and that inform residents and visitors about the details of each County system and facility.

PARK AND RECREATION FUNDING

Goal

Chisago County Parks needs are significant for both development and redevelopment within the park and recreation system. Funding for capital improvements (CIP) has been unpredictable and competes with fixed-levy operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. Chisago County should research and utilize all appropriate funding resources.

Strategies

- a. Determine appropriate designation of fees towards CIP and O&M budgets. This should be developed on a long-term schedule, based on the Plan, and reviewed and revised with each budget cycle.
- b. Reduce expenditures through facility upgrades, cross-utilization of staff, cooperative use of equipment, technology and information and outsourcing of maintenance and operations.
- c. Utilize all appropriate non-county funding sources (e.g. grants and donations).
- d. Seek the establishment of a permanent and sufficient CIP funding source from County funds for county park facility expansion and replacement.
- e. Expand the use of appropriate and consistent fee-for-service and/or user fees.
- f. Earmark proceeds from the sale of surplus County property for use in parks development.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Goal

A system of performance evaluation for the Chisago County Parks Department should be developed and implemented to evaluate customer perceived benefits of system programs and services. This system should serve to identify steps that must be taken in order to reach and maintain the highest level of user satisfaction and performance efficiency possible.

Strategies

- a. Identify system stakeholders and desired products/services.
- b. Define desired performance outcomes in general terms.
- c. Establish objective and measurable performance criteria for each outcome category.
- d. Select appropriate performance measurement methodologies including, but not limited to: customer surveys; use monitoring; national park and open space standards; national operations standards; best practices review; and trained observer ratings.
- e. Select and implement three or four performance evaluation methods.
- f. Use the information and analysis gained through performance measurement to improve the efficiency and/or effectiveness of service delivery.
- g. Evaluate the ability of the system resources to adequately support services, programs, facilities (e.g. staffing levels, employee skill levels, technical system support, etc.) and provide desired benefits.
- h. Continually monitor and make appropriate changes to the department's measurement system to ensure the greatest accuracy in interpretation of customer perceived benefits and internal operations/outputs.

SUMMARY

The goals and strategies that were drafted early in the 2001-2002 planning process, along with vision and mission statements, helped to make fundamental decisions on the approach and treatment of most of the other topics included in the original Chisago County Comprehensive Parks and Trails Plan. For example, goals that relate to natural resources helped to identify and describe their importance relative to the overall character and quality of the park system. Establishing the need to protect native plant and animal communities gave clear direction on topics such as park development and trail and greenway development.

The goals clearly support the first sentence in the vision statement drafted for the plan that states: "We envision a park system that reflects a high level of respect and priority for our natural resources and wildlife."

The goals and strategies will continue to provide guidance as the Comprehensive Parks and Trails Plan becomes a tool for decision making in the day to day management and operations of the park and trail system.