

1 Introduction

Why a Master Plan?

The City of Bloomington has one of the premier parks and recreation systems in Minnesota with nearly one third of the City being comprised of parks, open space, wetlands or lakes. The City park system consists of 97 parks, recreation or open space properties. Regional parks, Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve, along with school and other private recreation facilities complement City facilities. Much of the park system was acquired and constructed in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Many of these recreation facilities are aging and in need of replacement or updating. The population of the City is changing with many empty nester households, fewer children and more cultural diversity. New recreation trends have emerged such as lacrosse, in-line skating, skate boarding, off-leash dog parks, disc golf, etc., which may require facility or programming changes.

The City recognized the importance of parks and recreation to quality of life and initiated an update to the City Park Master Plan. The current Park Master Plan was prepared in 1973. That plan served the City well, but its focus is on acquiring and building the park system. The need now is primarily to fine-tune the system, to plan for and fund system upkeep and revitalization and to respond to changing needs.

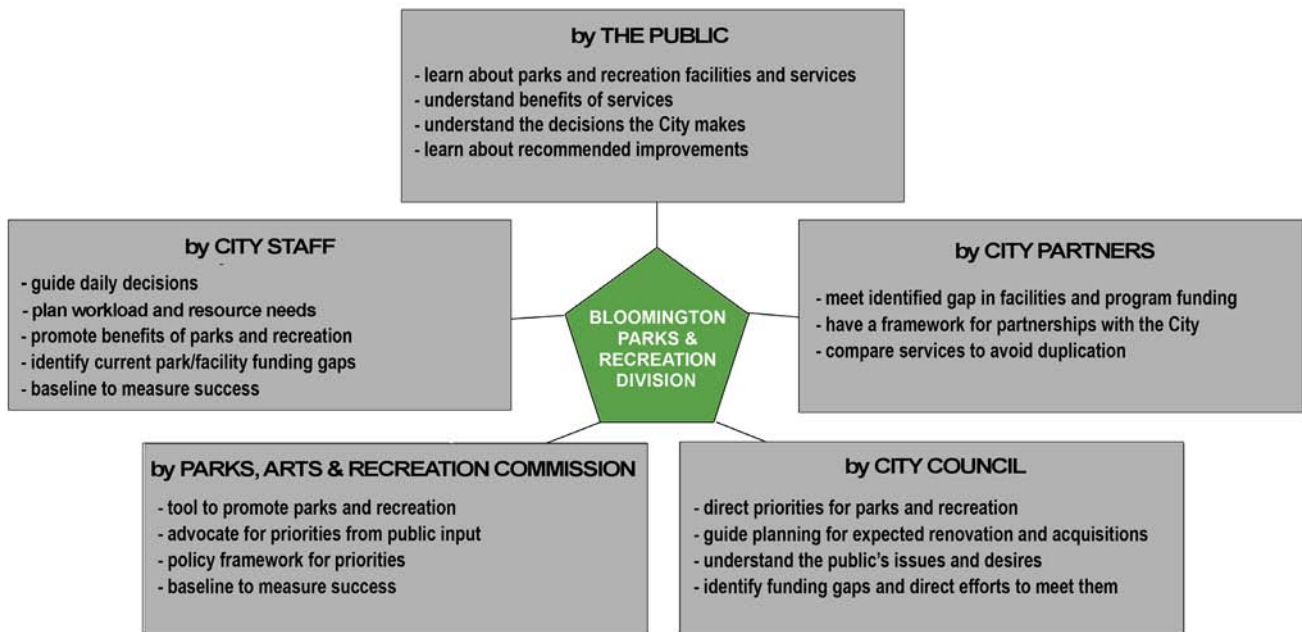
The goals of the Park Master Plan:

- ☒ Demonstrate the need for and benefits provided by the Parks and Recreation Division.
- ☒ Chart the growth, direction, priorities and agenda for the Division through 2026.
- ☒ Demonstrate the Division's alignment with and contributions to achieving the Parks and Recreation Division Mission and Goals and the [Imagine Bloomington 2025 Strategic Plan](#).
- ☒ Identify community needs and desires.
- ☒ Identify sustainable funding sources.
- ☒ Prioritize park and recreation system improvements.

Users Guide

This Park Master Plan is intended to act as a guide to the future and to set the general direction for parks and recreation from 2007 to 2026. The Plan includes a summary of public input, desires and needs, mission, goals and action plans. It also includes detailed park plans for physical improvement projects, as they are known in 2007. This Park Master Plan should be viewed as a living document, to be evaluated and refined on a regular basis to keep pace with demographic, recreation, funding and other trends as they evolve.

Figure 1.1 - Park Master Plan Use Diagram



Benefits of Parks and Recreation Services

The benefits of Bloomington parks, recreation and open space are broad-ranging and are important to the quality of life in Bloomington. Year round programs, activities and special events, parks, park facilities and open space all contribute to meeting the diverse needs of our community. Parks, recreation, and open space are not mere expenditures, but an investment in the future well-being of individuals and groups, as well as the continued attractiveness and viability of the City.

Figure 1.2 - Benefits of Parks and Recreation



Relationship to Other Plans

The City’s Park Master Plan was prepared in 1973 to guide the City on acquiring and building the park system. That plan served the City well, but times and conditions have changed. The park system is for the most part built. There is now a need for a plan to guide the City’s focus from building the park system to managing a park system to meet current needs including better connectivity, active living opportunities, a desire for high quality facilities, environmental and economic sustainability, etc. In 2000, the City updated its comprehensive plan with an updated parks element, which provided an overall framework and guiding policies for this anticipated Park Master Plan update.

In 2007, The City of Bloomington began preparation of Imagine Bloomington 2025 Strategic Plan, a city-wide strategic plan for development, redevelopment, City services, infrastructure, and fiscal strength and stability. The Strategic Plan is a work in progress as this Master Plan was being prepared. The Strategic Plan looks ahead 20 years and is being guided by resident input through an online survey, town hall meetings and focus groups. The Strategic Plan includes broad goals and strategies for parks and open space.

In 2007, the City also initiated an Alternative Transportation Plan to develop a comprehensive system for inter- and intra-city travel via walking, bicycling, personal transportation assistance devices and rollerblading -- and their connections/interface with transit (LRT and bus). The Alternative Transportation Plan will provide details on trails, walking and biking needs, and supplement those identified in this Master Plan. A working draft of the Alternate Transportation Plan can be found in Appendix N.

This Master Plan incorporates and builds on the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and the Imagine Bloomington 2025 Strategic Plan to plan for system upkeep and revitalization and to respond to changing needs. The updated Park Master Plan, by reference, will be incorporated into the 2008 City Comprehensive Plan update.

Figure 1.3 - Community Open House, March 21, 2007



Master Plan Development Process

The City of Bloomington hired Hoisington Koegler Group, inc., park-planning consultants, to work with city staff and officials, a citizen task force, stakeholders and the public to prepare a Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan to guide city-wide park and recreation improvements, operations, set priorities and to plan for sustainable funding for parks. The Park Master Plan Citizens Task Force consisting of a diverse group of residents was the main advisory body for the preparation of this master plan.

7. Funding Plan - The Funding Plan has been identified as “where the rubber hits the road.” This section identifies funding options and recommended funding alternatives to pay for community parks and recreation needs.

Organization of Master Plan

The Master Plan has seven sections:

1. Introduction.
2. Existing Park and Recreation System - Existing Park and Recreation System section is an overview of the park system today.
3. Parks and Recreation Division - The Parks and Recreation Division section provides an overview of the Division’s organizational structure.
4. Needs Assessment and Evaluation - The Needs Assessment included evaluation of existing parks, trails, open spaces, facilities, recreation programs and funding, an evaluation of park and recreation supply and standards, and review of existing plans and plans of surrounding communities. Input into the Needs Assessment was provided by the public and stakeholders, and guidance from City staff, the Park Master Plan Citizen Task Force, Arts and Recreation Commission.
5. Goals and Guidelines - The Goals and Guidelines section identifies the Parks and Recreation Division’s goals and level of service standards.
6. Parks and Recreation Action Plan - The Parks and Recreation Action Plan is based on findings found in the Needs Assessment with guidance from the level of service standards. The Parks and Recreation Action Plan sets strategies and actions to meet the identified needs.