

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The visioning process with the Chisago County Comprehensive Park Planning Task Force acted as a focus group to study the issues (see Chapter 4) that were identified during the planning process and develop goals and strategies related to each issue. The statements were reviewed and approved by the Chisago County Parks Department (CCPD) Staff and the Parks 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 identify specific accomplishments that the Chisago County Parks Department will strive for during the next 5, 10 and 20 years. The strategies define actions that will be taken by the department to satisfy the intent of the goals. The goal and action statements were also used during the planning process to provide guidance for preparation of Recommendations that are included in the other chapters of the Master Plan.

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 regional 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 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. Programming reflects the variety of people who use the system.
- f. The park system provides educational opportunities about cultural, natural and historical features.
- g. The park system encourages use by a broad cross-section of the community.
- h. The park system acknowledges the changing population of Chisago County with respect to increasing proportion of seniors, and also the increasing suburban population.
- i. Trails connect system parks, local communities, and points of interest.
- j. The department is committed to providing the most effective results from the work it does.
- k. The department operates in a positive, open and inclusive manner with all stakeholders of the organization.

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. Coordination with other recreation providers regarding the use of the Chisago County Parks Department facilities.
- b. Implement strategies to cooperate on the use of equipment, technology, and information across agencies.
- c. Cooperate in the planning and coordination of trails, park facilities, and recreation programs.
- d. 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.
- e. Work in cooperation with regional planning authorities toward the vision of creating natural greenways and trail corridors which connect regional parks to other significant natural areas within the county.
- f. Continue to actively pursue outside grant funding from other agencies including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council, Conservation districts, Minnesota Historical Society, etc.
- g. Actively pursue technical planning services available through colleges and universities in the areas of resource assessment, resource planning, park planning, and other special research related projects.
- h. Cooperate with other County departments in the provision of maintenance, programming, marketing, and other related projects and services.

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 regional natural systems. This goal should be realized through the following strategies:

Strategies

- a. Identify and delineate greenway corridors containing both significant ecological resources and potential social resource linkages.
- b. Assess and determine the ecological and social benefits and feasibility of the greenway corridor.
- c. Work with landowners to pursue cooperative methods of natural resource stewardship, including conservation easements and land trusts for protecting valuable resources and establishing greenways.
- d. Seek financial and technical assistance from outside natural resource agencies.
- e. Monitor, document, and minimize the cumulative effects of recreation use in the greenway corridors.

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 utilizing 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 as needed that are available for natural resource management.
- c. Utilize 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 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.

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and maintaining the water systems in or adjacent to Chisago County park land to provide optimal hydrological functions, aesthetics and recreation, and wildlife habitat utilizing 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. Utilize 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 MASTER PLANS

Goal

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

Strategies

- a. Develop a model format or procedures for the master planning process.
- b. Identify and prioritize parks that needs master planning and design.
- c. Identify existing natural resources, development patterns and surrounding land use impacts for each plan.
- d. Inventory existing infrastructure inventory with master plans.
- e. Reflect 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.

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 Parks System which 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 at all times 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 master plans for individual park sites.
- 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 is complete to ensure that benefits are provided.
- e. Coordinate park development with trail and greenway/green corridor planning and design.
- f. Conform with the intent of the 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 park system.
- l. Make maximum use of existing park improvements and avoid wasteful removals and demolition.
- m. Make sites and facilities accessible to the disabled 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.
- o. Aggressively seek funding through grants and donations and through partnerships with other agencies and organizations, etc.
- p. Efficiently and effectively utilize CIP funds to implement long-range capital improvement projects.

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, 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 greenway efforts with other units of government including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, cities, townships, and watershed districts.
- e. Pursue greenway preservation options through cooperation with other public or private land preservation/conservation organizations.
- f. Pursue available funding resources, such as federal and state grants.

ACCESSIBILITY

Goal

The Chisago County Parks Department is committed to complying with 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 park facilities and analysis of programs.
- b. Document all ADA accessibility deficiencies and indicate a time frame to correct these deficiencies.
- c. Prioritize identified ADA accessibility deficiencies and begin implementation of retrofitting activities using available resources and personnel.
- d. Identify financial needs for ADA accessibility retrofitting and incorporate those needs into the parks and recreation Capital Improvements Program and seek financing from other sources.
- e. Design all new park facilities under the principles of “universal design” to ensure the greatest integration 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 currently in force.
- 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 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, 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 and risk assessment into the long-range plan.
 - 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 parks and recreation system.

Strategies

- a. Complement the park system and be sensitive to the natural character of its ecosystems.
- b. Be consistent with the system 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. Utilize 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 which addresses maintenance guidelines, standards, and schedules.
- b. Implement, update, and request funding for the department's five-year Capital Improvements Program which 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 moving non-used turf areas.

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 regarding 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.

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. Utilize various promotional methods, including public service announcements, 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 awareness through merchandising 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.

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 periodic 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 which 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. Utilize 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 were drafted early in the planning process and, 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 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 which 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 plan becomes a tool for decision making in the day to day management and operations of the park system.