

# *City of Excelsior*

# 2009



## Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan



## ***A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S***

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The development of the Excelsior Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan Subcommittee and City Council. Their courtesy, cooperation, and contribution is greatly valued and appreciated.

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## *INTRODUCTION*

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The Excelsior Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2009, indicates that a Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan will be completed in 2009. The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is built on a foundation created by the Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan of 1991. In 2007, the City received funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield to promote active lifestyles and healthy living in the Comprehensive Plan and Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan.

The most significant aspect of Excelsior is its extensive shoreline on Lake Minnetonka. The Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior are historic, dating to the origins of the City, and are widely recognized as Excelsior's chief assets. The 13 acre park includes open recreation areas, picnic sites, playgrounds, two swimming beaches, tennis courts, baseball fields, a band shell, bathhouse, public restrooms, docks and buoys. In addition to traditional park uses, such as picnics and family gatherings, the Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior serve diverse recreational opportunities for all age groups with the annual Art Fair, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, organized sports, and other large events. In recognition of the importance of its lakeshore parkland, Excelsior residents amended the City Charter in 2008 to add the following provision:

The Commons and Port of Excelsior are to be preserved as parkland in perpetuity. This land shall not be sold and cannot be developed or leased except for City-sponsored parkland uses.

The amendment was approved by more than 83 percent of Excelsior voters in November 2008. A primary focus of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is to preserve, protect, and maintain Excelsior's parks for public uses consistent with the Excelsior City Charter. The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan also plans for recreational facilities and enhancements that will assist in increasing the level of activity and healthy living in the community.

Excelsior Parkland is a 15.5 acre park located on Oak Street (Highway 19) with considerable potential for combining active and passive uses within an attractive natural setting. The park currently includes rental garden plots and a large wetland, Studer Pond, which is bordered by trees and vegetation that is habitat for woodland animals. As a park, Excelsior Parkland provides a significant and desirable opportunity to observe and study the natural world that should be maintained and enhanced as part of the quality of life valued by Excelsior residents. In addition to Studer Pond, College Lake, Mitten Pond, Mud Lake, and Galpin Lake also provide opportunities for observing and appreciating the natural world. The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan encourages the preservation, protection and maintenance of all of these bodies of water.



## *INTRODUCTION*

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Ten public fire lanes exist at the ends of Excelsior streets. These were historically established by the City for an accessible water supply in fire fighting. Although the fire lanes are no longer needed for fire fighting, Excelsior residents value and appreciate these neighborhood public access points to Lake Minnetonka and Galpin Lake as a part of the quality of life in a lakeside community. It is important to the history and character of the City that public fire lane access be preserved.

Another significant aspect of Excelsior is that it is a walkable community in ways few other communities are on the shores of Lake Minnetonka. Excelsior is a small community, less than one mile square, that is unique in having a business center surrounded by residential neighborhoods of houses as close to each other as houses in Minneapolis. In addition, approximately one-half of Excelsior residents live in apartment or condominium units. A web of streets with sidewalks, streets without sidewalks, long-used public paths, and alleys between streets constitutes Excelsior's public walkways. The only trail within Excelsior is the regional trail that in times past was a rail line. One focus of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is to provide safe and convenient interconnections between neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas, the downtown, and institutions, as well as to other surrounding communities.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan acknowledges that the community is completely developed. The population and numbers of households is expected to remain stable in coming years. It is expected that the City's population will continue to age. In recognition of the demographics of the community, this plan seeks to provide opportunities for recreation for all ages.

The first section of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is a description and summary of the background inventory that provides the basis for the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan. The Inventory is followed by a chapter containing park and trail issues identified for each park and area of the City. The Issues Identification chapter contains more general constraints and opportunities the City faces in the implementation of its park and trail system. The Goals and Policies chapter contains policies that reflect the community's general treatment of its recreational services and provide more detailed guidance on park and trail development standards. The Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan follows the policies and provides the direction and recommendations for park and trail planning and development. The Planning and Design Guidelines and Standards follow as an appendix for parks and trails. Implementation is the final chapter of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan.



**MISSION STATEMENT**

To preserve, protect, and maintain for public use Excelsior's parks, lakes, ponds, and open space. To provide a walkable community, recreational facilities, and open areas for all ages of residents of Excelsior and visitors by linking all parts of the City internally via a safe and convenient network of streets, sidewalks, and public paths, and to neighboring communities via multi-use trails.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The first step in determining the needs of the City's recreational system is the identification of the existing conditions. The existing park, trail and walkway facilities were identified through site inspections by City staff and planning consultants. This identification process included location, size and physical amenities for the facility in question, as well as the condition and level of development of the facility. Both of the aforementioned may affect eventual use of the park, trail or walkway sites. The items inventoried for each facility were gathered with the goal of being able to place the parks, trails, and walkways in the context of a system of recreation opportunities. The baseline data provided in this effort helps the City to understand how its park and trail facilities fit together and provides the information necessary to identify gaps or areas of need.

The City of Excelsior contains established parks and several other designed gardens and undeveloped open spaces. These spaces vary in size, location and service. Parks play an important role, not only in their overall recreational benefit to the residents of Excelsior but, as a crucial destination point directly related to the establishment of trails. All are interrelated and each portion of the park land plays an important role in completing a recreational line, therefore adding to the comprehensive system.

Currently, the Excelsior parks and open space system is comprised of approximately 21.8 acres. In addition, 9.4 miles of sidewalks, walking and biking trails throughout the community are maintained by the City. The Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail also bisects the community for a 1.1 mile segment of its total 27 mile course. Maps identifying the location park and trail systems within the community are found on following pages.

## **EXISTING PARK INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT**

The City of Excelsior is serviced by a variety of recreational facilities provided by the City, regional government, school districts and private enterprise. In addition, the community has benefits from abutting communities whose facilities may service Excelsior's residents. This section summarizes these existing parks, trails, walkways, and open space facilities and the resources currently available to Excelsior residents.

### **Park Classification System**

Excelsior's park system is comprised of a variety of sites and facilities which conform to a classification hierarchy according to their use, size and facility development. Park classification assists in providing a comprehensive system which responds to the





community's needs, its land use patterns and densities, and the area's physical characteristics.

The City of Excelsior recognizes the importance of establishing and using park and recreation standards to:

- Define minimum acceptable facilities for citizens of the community.
- Establish guidelines to determine land requirements for various kinds of park and recreation areas and facilities.
- Establish a basis for relating recreational needs to spatial analysis within a community-wide recreation system.
- Utilize the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan as a means to justify the need for parks and open space within the overall land use pattern of the City.

Based upon an inventory of existing Excelsior parks, there are three general categories of parks currently within the community described as follows:

**Neighborhood Park.** The Neighborhood Park classification is intended to provide informal neighborhood open space for active residential neighborhood needs. Recreational activities include play equipment, walking trails with park benches, picnic areas and a limited amount of playfields. The service area range is one-half mile and is intended to serve a population of 1,000 people.

**Community Park.** The Community Park designation includes both parks and playfields that provide facilities for more intensive recreation activities, such as ball fields, tennis courts, ice skating rinks and picnicking. Community Parks desired service area range is typically one mile and serves a population of 1,000 people.

**Open Space / Special Use Area.** This category serves a City-wide function, but development is limited to enhancing the opportunity for activities such as nature study, educational objectives, hiking, etc.



**The Commons / Port of Excelsior**

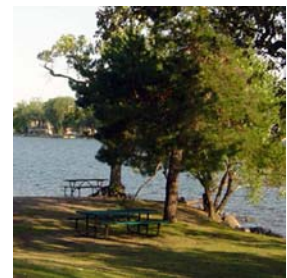
Park Facilities	Park Class	Total Acres	Archery	Baseball Field	Basketball Court	Biking/Walking Trails	Boat or Canoe Launch	Conservation Area	Cross Country Skiing	Equestrian Trails	Fishing	Flower Gardens	Football Field	Hockey Rink	Horseshoe Pit	Open Playfield	Park Building	Picnic Facilities	Picnic Shelter	Playground Equipment	Pleasure Skating	Restroom	Stedding	Skate Park	Snowmobile Trails	Soccer Fields	Softball Field	Swimming	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court
<b>COMMUNITY PARK</b>																														
The Commons	CP	13.06		●	●	●				●	●					●	●	●	●	●	●							1	●	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13.06</b>																												



Park Classification



Community Park



Location

Northeast edge of Central Business District on a peninsula between Excelsior and Gideon Bays.

Size

13.06 acres

Physical Features

The Commons' dominant physical characteristic is its extensive Lake Minnetonka shoreline, resulting in dynamic lake views and other beachfront areas. Topography varies from rolling hills to flat, shallow spaces. Spaces within the park vary from narrow shorelines along the southern leg to more generous, regular-shaped areas within the northern central area.

Vegetative Features

Mature canopy of trees are scattered throughout much of the park. These trees vary in their species and vitality.

Adjacent Land Use

Bordered by the Central Business District to the southeast, established residential neighborhoods to the south and west.

Notes and Comments

The Commons is the most heavily used park in Excelsior, providing two beaches, a playground, docks, and playfield, as well as space for a wide range of active and passive areas. It is the location of the Port of Excelsior and the site of special events such as the Fourth of July fireworks and Art in the Park. Events and the park's unique location draw many non-residents to The Commons. In this respect, it acts somewhat as a regional park as well as a community park.



- Insert The Commons / Port of Excelsior -



**Excelsior Parkland**

Park Facilities	Park Class	Total Acres	Archery	Baseball Field	Basketball Court	Biking/Walking Trails	Boat or Canoe Launch	Conservation Area	Cross Country Skiing	Equestrian Trails	Fishing	Flower Gardens	Football Field	Hockey Rink	Horseshoe Pit	Open Playfield	Park Building	Picnic Facilities	Picnic Shelter	Playground Equipment	Pleasure Skating	Restroom	Sledding	Skate Park	Snowmobile Trails	Soccer Fields	Softball Field	Swimming	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD PARK</b>																														
Excelsior Parkland	NP	15.50				●														●										
<b>Total</b>		<b>15.50</b>																												



Park Classification	Neighborhood Park
Location	South of County Road 19 on the western edge of Excelsior.
Size	15.5 acres
Physical Features	Significant wetland area, referred to as Studer Pond, surrounded by vegetation and some undeveloped land.
Vegetative Features	Wetland aquatic community, limited canopy trees except at parcel edges.
Adjacent Land Use	Low density residential, freestanding commercial business and natural open space.
Notes and Comments	<p>The Excelsior Parkland is currently utilized for passive use in an attractive natural setting. The park contains some undeveloped land which could be developed for more active use or the community may want to preserve it in its natural setting. The site is a former landfill site which may pose environmental constraints and implications. The City is currently working with Hennepin County and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on addressing any environmental issues.</p> <p>Currently 40 rental garden plots, each 15 x 20 feet are available.</p>



- Insert Excelsior Parkland -



**Fire Lanes**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Hidden Lane<br>Two fire lanes<br>(On St. Albans Bay)            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One, twelve foot wide fire lane on east side of marina</li><li>• One area, 200 feet of lakeshore with dock for two boats and slide for four boats, access off Excelsior Boulevard, Hidden Lane</li><li>• No parking</li></ul> |
| Lafayette Avenue<br>(On Gideon Bay)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 66 feet of lakeshore and slide for four boats</li><li>• Limited on-street parking</li></ul>   |
| George Street<br>(On Gideon Bay)                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 49½ feet of lakeshore with four slides</li><li>• Limited on-street parking</li></ul>  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street<br>(On Gideon Bay)                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 66 feet of shoreline</li><li>• Observation platform on top of old pump house building</li><li>• Steps leading down to grassy slope at concrete seat wall</li><li>• Limited on-street parking</li></ul>          |
| Bell Street<br>(On Gideon Bay)                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 60 feet of lakeshore with four slides</li><li>• Limited on-street parking</li></ul>   |
| Linwood Avenue<br>(On Gideon Bay)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 50 feet of lakeshore with four slides</li><li>• Parking meters</li></ul>  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Street<br>(On Gideon Bay)                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 50 feet of shoreline, adjacent to City beach area</li><li>• Metered parking</li></ul>   |
| Linden Street / Elm Place<br>Two fire lanes<br>(On Galpin Lake) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two rights-of-way areas on Galpin Lake</li><li>• Limited on-street parking</li></ul>  |

Notes and  
Comments

These fire lane parcels are remnant right-of-way areas which abut Lake Minnetonka. The 10 public parcels provide an opportunity for those residents without lake frontage or access rights to interface with Lake Minnetonka. Limited space exists within each of the fire access locations, which in turn will limit their opportunity for development. Other limitations vary by location including access, parking and boat dockage.



**Other Open Space and Schools in Excelsior**

- Veteran’s Memorial Park
  - Near Lake Street and Second Street.
  - Maintained by Men’s Garden Club
  
- Arey Memorial Triangle
  - Near County Road 19 and Water Street
  - Maintained by Men’s Garden Club
  
- Lyman Park
  - On Water Street, adjacent to Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail and Farmer’s Market
  
- College Lake Open Space
  - On Water Street, adjacent to College Lake
  
- Cemetery
  - On Excelsior Boulevard at the eastern border of Excelsior.
  
- Excelsior Elementary
  - At Water Street and County Road 19

Lake Minnetonka

No inventory of park and open space would be complete without mentioning the magnificent recreational resource embodied in Lake Minnetonka. This unique body of water is actually a series of lakes interconnected by channels. Providing more than 14,000 acres of water and more than 125 miles of shoreline, Lake Minnetonka serves as the dominant physical feature in the area. Many visitors are drawn to Excelsior specifically to enjoy lake sports and activities.

The shore of a lake holds attraction for all types of people and activities. The combination of water, trees, land and sky creates a dynamic landscape. Boaters, swimmers, and fisher people use the lake in an active sense, and at the same time passive users such as pedestrians and picnickers enjoy its resources.

The Lake Minnetonka Conservation District serves to maintain a balance between the interests of area homeowners and visitors, with the overall goal being the best possible management of the lake. The agency’s activities include weed control projects, safe boating education programs, and shoreland management guidelines.

Other Lakes and Waterbodies

Includes Mitten Pond, College Lake, Galpin Lake, Studer Pond, and Mud Lake. These lakes and waterbodies provide open space and the potential for natural study/educational areas.



**EXISTING SIDEWALKS, WALKING & BIKING TRAIL INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT**

**City Sidewalks, Walking and Biking Trails**

City trails and sidewalks supplement the regional corridors and adjacent community trails, connecting this larger trail network to local neighborhoods, commercial nodes, school facilities and other parks within the network. Approximately 9.4 miles of sidewalks, walking and biking trails currently exist within the City. The corresponding map can be found on the following page.

**Regional Railway Corridors and Adjacent Community Trail Connections**

The Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, maintained seasonally by the Three Rivers Park District follows abandoned railroad beds. The trail corridor was acquired by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) for future light rail transit use. A cooperative agreement between HCRRA and Three Rivers Park District allows the corridors to be used in the interim for recreational purposes. The 1.1 mile Excelsior portion of this regional trail bisects the City from west to northeast. It is surfaced with crushed limestone and measures 10 feet in width. Recreationalists utilize the trail for biking, walking or running.

In addition, adjacent community trail connections are identified on the corresponding maps on the following pages.





INSERT EXISTING SIDEWALKS, TRAILS, WALKWAYS, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



INSERT REGIONAL CONNECTIONS MAP



**Population, Households and Employment**

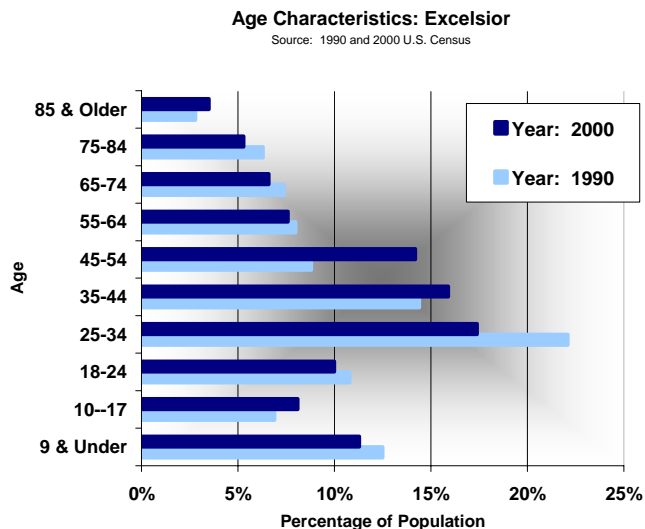
According to 2000 Census calculations, Excelsior’s population was 2,393 persons. Remaining relatively steady over the last 40 years, both the Metropolitan Council and City’s population estimates through the year 2030 are modest. The City expects to retain many of its current residents. As current residents mature, the population will require recreational programs and facilities for all ages.

<b>FORECASTED POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS, AND EMPLOYMENT: EXCELSIOR</b>						
<b>1970-2030</b>						
	<b>Population</b>		<b>Households</b>		<b>Employment</b>	
Year	Met Council	City	Met Council	City	Met Council	City
1970	2,563	2,563	900	900	1,190	1,190
1980	2,523	2,523	1,149	1,149	1,947	1,947
1990	2,367	2,367	1,160	1,160	1,656	1,656
2000	2,393	2,393	1,199	1,199	1,823	1,823
<b>2006</b>	<b>2,395</b>	<b>2,395</b>	<b>1,210</b>	<b>1,210</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>1,940</b>
2010	2,500	2,420	1,250	1,220	1,980	2,000
2020	2,700	2,480	1,330	1,240	2,250	2,170
2030	2,800	2,540	1,400	1,270	2,450	2,330

Source: U.S. Census and Metropolitan Council

**Age Distribution**

The 1990 and 2000 Census provides historical figures regarding Excelsior’s population by age category. Excelsior’s residential growth continues to be largely generated by young families. As indicated below, the City has a large percentage of its population that consists of young children to adults, which are typically individuals that seek active recreation activities. The provision of active play areas and play fields within walking distance to residential neighborhoods should be a priority for the park system. As nearly 12 percent of the population consists of children nine years and younger, there is a need to provide some recreation amenities designed to serve this age group as well as the older, active age groups.



## *ISSUES IDENTIFICATION*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkway Plan Subcommittee discussed issues relating to parks and trails in meetings on October 2, 2008 and October 30, 2008. The following is a summary of the issues raised by the Subcommittee and staff.

### **GENERAL PARK ISSUES**

- Preserve and maintain The Commons, beach area, Excelsior Parkland, Port of Excelsior, and other park and open spaces.
- Preserve fire lanes as important open space for the purposes of visual and physical access to the public waters.
- Continue to acknowledge Lake Minnetonka as a significant local asset as well as a regional resource. The City will continue to explore uses of this asset for the benefit of its residents and businesses which build on the lake's local and regional roles.
- Create a unified system of signage for the City, including the parks.
- Plan for parks as a unified system with consistent hours of operation.
- Determine whether existing and proposed park areas are desired for year-round or seasonal usage and what effect this will have on park facilities and design.
- Discuss how park and playground buildings can be constructed or remodeled to be compatible with surrounding neighborhoods in regard to scale, design, color, setbacks, and materials.
- Define the means by which park development can minimize impacts on adjacent properties, i.e., off-street parking, screening, landscaping, setbacks, etc.
- Provide disability accessible access for all park facilities.
- Identify in what park areas lighting would be appropriate or necessary. It is possible that this may only be accomplished as plans for each park or trail are established.
- Explore locating a public boat access off of one of the fire lanes.
- Continue to explore joint park use with Excelsior Elementary and adjacent facilities.
- Continue to work with religious institutions in the southeast section of the community on possible development of their open space for public recreational use.
- Expand the Farmers Market to include more weekdays and weekends.



## *ISSUES IDENTIFICATION*

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- Provide opportunities for all ages to participate in lifetime fitness through the use of trails, tennis courts, playground facilities, ballfields, and other activities.
- Develop recreational and environmental education programs to familiarize people with the parks.
- Decide if and how coordination with the recreational programs and plans of Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District, School District, or other community recreational programs can be accomplished.

### **THE COMMONS**

- Address safety concerns, better lighting, and more police patrol.
- Provide for better identification signage/interpretive and historical signage.
- Enforce dog leash requirements.
- Address noise concerns from concerts at the band shell.
  
- Explore irrigating the large grass area near the lake.
- Provide additional seating, grills and picnic areas.
- Develop a volleyball court.
- Improve appearance of band shell.
- Provide shady seating areas in front of band shell.
- Consider uses for the concession stand within the building by the ball field.
- Explore updates to the existing park buildings to improve functionality and appearance that is more compatible with surrounding neighborhoods in regard to scale, design, color, setbacks, and materials.
- Provide additional swings, including those that are accessible.
- Provide additional disability accessible compatible parking adjacent to the park.
- Explore widening the sidewalks in the park to a multi use path/trail to provide separation between walking, biking, blading, and skating.
- Provide additional flower/perennial plantings.
- Address whether the floating dock should be replaced at the beach.
  
- Naturalize shoreland areas; address erosion issues on steep slopes adjacent to shore.
- Provide additional park maintenance.
- Develop a tree planting replacement program for The Commons.
- Address the issue of beach cleaning in the Summer.
- Respect the topography of The Commons by preserving as much as possible, the hills, slopes and flat areas.



## *ISSUES IDENTIFICATION*

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### **PORT OF EXCELSIOR**

- Complete the entrance arch project for the Port.
- Improve the identification signage for the Port.
- Provide restrooms and possible service area for the charter boats and concession area.
- Expand the landscaping/flower plantings.
  
- Consider the appearance of the Port area in the Winter and continue to provide access for Winter recreational activities.
- Decorate ticket booth with seasonal lighting.
- Consider maintaining an ice skating rink on the lake.
- Light the American Flag.

### **EXCELSIOR PARKLAND**

- Provide improved signage and lighting.
- Improve parking area.
- Provide better park maintenance.
  
- Provide for access to the Parkland over/under County Road 19.
- Improve access from surrounding neighborhood by addition of a trail from College Avenue to the Parkland.
- Expand the community garden area as needed.
- Explore alignment of the park driveway with the Public Works driveway across County Road 19.
- The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan should address potential re-use/facility options for the Parkland to possibly include:
  - Disc Golf Course
  - Volleyball Courts
  - Soccer Fields
  - Dog Park
  - Horseshoe Courts
  - Ice Skating Rink
  - Skate Park
  - Park Shelter
  - Benches/Picnic Tables/Grills
  - Trails
  - Natural Landscapes/Wildflowers



### **GENERAL TRAIL/SIDEWALK ISSUES**

- Construct educational kiosks and signage for the trail and walkway system. Work with Three Rivers Park District in locating an informational kiosk along the regional trail specific to Excelsior, its history, and current information.
- Provide benches, resting areas, picnic tables, water features, and exercise courses along trails.
- Look at options and locations for lighting trail and walkway corridors.
- Provide trail and walkway connections to adjoining cities' existing and planned trail systems.
- Provide more bike racks throughout the City and encourage bike rental.
- Provide on-street trails where identified for bicyclists with proper signage and street markings.
- Provide a plan to address interconnections, especially as it relates to Highway 7, County Road 19 (Oak Street), and County Road 82 (Mill Street), and to connect with neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas, and institutional uses.
  
- Assure that all new trail, walkway, and sidewalk construction is disability accessible.
- Address sidewalk and trail maintenance especially as it relates to Winter users.
  
- Provide a biking/walkway map of Excelsior for distribution as a promotional device.
- Add bike lanes to streets, specifically from The Commons to Christmas Lake Road, Lake Street, Third Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets, and West Lake Street/Lake Street.
- Promote walking clubs.

### **PLANNING ISSUES**

- Identify a planning process for review and update of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan. Review may occur yearly, for instance, and comprehensive update of the plan may occur every five years. Future park, trail, and walkway needs should be evaluated regularly by the Park Commission in comparison to the plan.
- Define the means by which public participation can be a regular part of the planning process (meetings, surveys, etc.).
- Discuss the means by which to implement park, trail, and walkway facilities (i.e., policies versus ordinances).
- Determine under what circumstances volunteer efforts would or could be utilized to expand the City's recreational elements.



## ***ISSUES IDENTIFICATION***

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- Consider including a map of the City park, trail, and walkway areas, along with proposed routes, within a newsletter on a yearly basis to make citizens more aware of recreational opportunities.
- Determine if and where the establishment of user fees may be appropriate.

### **ACQUISITION ISSUES**

- Identify the acquisition means for parks, trails, and walkways (i.e., dedication, purchase, eminent domain, donation) when each system is appropriate and what will be the priority process.
- Define the minimum width necessary for park access within a subdivision when located between two lots, as well as the screening/buffering and maintenance requirements.
- Discuss sources of funds to be utilized for acquisition of park, trail, and walkway elements, i.e., dedication monies, capital improvement program, bond issuance, grant programs, etc.
- Establish who is responsible for establishment of approved park, trail, or walkway areas within subdivisions (developer or City).

### **DEVELOPMENT/MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

- Discuss what amount of maintenance is possible at the current staff level and at what point additional staff persons would be needed to maintain the recreational system as it grows.
- Define ways in which to minimize park, trail, and walkway costs, i.e., construction of trails and walkways in conjunction with roadway improvements or at time of subdivision.
- Develop a policy on snow removal from trails and walkways. A plan for removal should be coordinated with the Public Works Department which identifies high priority trails and walkways which demand immediate snow removal attention and those that are given attention only when time allows.
- Determine if certain trails or walkways should not be maintained in the Winter but be promoted for cross-country ski use.





## INTRODUCTION

Goals and policies reflect the community's direction as it relates to its recreation system and provides more detailed guidance on park and trail development. Park, trail, and walkway goals and policies were developed through an analysis of the issues identified in the Issues Identification phase of the process. Additionally, the policies were adopted to reflect the community's direction in land use growth and the resulting need for additional park land and facilities.

As with any policy plan, it is important to read the statements together rather than as disjointed declarations. Although conceptual development may leave the map out of date, it is expected that policies are more enduring.

## SYSTEM GOALS

- Protect, preserve and improve environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources in all parks, trails, and walkways corridor areas.
- Establish and maintain recreation facilities that maximize participation by residents and non-residents which overcome physical or economic limitations which may prevent equal opportunity, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, or place of residence.
- Plan and maintain an attractive and diverse system of parks that address the park needs and enhance the environment of each neighborhood and the City as a whole.
- Provide linkages within Excelsior via a safe and convenient system as well as to neighboring communities and regional systems by a safe and convenient multi-use trail/sidewalk/walkway system.
- Provide a variety of facilities for both active and passive recreation while complementing services available at other parks and duplicating services only where necessary.
- Provide programming that is important and valued, provide these activities in close proximity to the residents, and provide the programming that can be realistically supported by the City and its residents.



### **SYSTEM POLICIES**

- Develop an ongoing planning process for the establishment of parks, trails, and walkways which responds to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Policies as well as those identified herein.
- The City shall retain ownership and control over its parklands, fire lanes, and open space areas.
- Identify present and future park/trail needs on a regular basis for evaluation by the Park and Recreation Commission and City Council.
- Review the established park/trail/walkway plans on a yearly basis to ensure that needs and priorities are up to date.
- Prepare a master plan for each component of the park/trail/walkway system to be used as the basis for development.
- Promote public participation in the planning process via the Park Commission hosting forums for open discussion of issues, by newsletter, and the City's website.
- Identify the means by which to implement park/trail/walkway administration and operations (i.e., by the Park and Recreation Commission and City Council policies, procedures, and ordinances).

### **PROGRAMMING DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

- Create and maintain an attractive, diverse, and interesting system of urban parks/trails/walkways.
- Create a City-wide park, trail, and walkway system designed to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.
- Minimize park, trail, and walkway construction costs by constructing trails in conjunction with State, County, and City street improvements.
- Utilize utility rights-of-way for trails/walkways or linear parks.
- Encourage the private sector to provide recreational opportunities/facilities.



## *GOALS AND POLICIES*

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- Provide support facilities, such as bike racks, benches, and signage, in conjunction with trail development.
- Fully organize and outline new recreation programs prior to initiation and implementation.
- Determine where the establishment of user fees is appropriate to lower recreation costs.
- Determine under what circumstances unsolicited gifts and donations will be accepted if they are free of obligations or potential future impacts.
- Determine under what circumstances volunteer efforts will be utilized to expand the City's recreational elements.
- Active use recreation areas should be designed for year-round use with an established system of maintenance.
- Park and playground buildings should be compatible with surrounding urban or rural activities with regard to scale, design, color, setbacks, and materials.
- Park, trail, and walkway development should minimize impacts on adjacent properties through provisions for, but not limited to:
  - Adequate off-street parking.
  - Appropriate orientation and location of buildings and activity areas.
  - Screening, buffering, and landscaping.
  - Adequate setbacks and physical separation.
- Coordinate facility development with the needs of community residents, Park and Recreation Commission services, athletic associations, civic groups, etc.
- Maximize park accessibility by City residents to best serve the area.
- Coordinate yearly park events.
- Consider the long term costs of maintenance and operation in a facility's design and development.



## *GOALS AND POLICIES*

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- Preserve existing physical site amenities (natural or man-made) and encourage the establishment of new site amenities when planning and developing park areas.
- Besides the standard programs and facilities typically recognized by the City, consideration should be given to the following areas:
  - Areas for nature preservation.
  - Cultural enrichment.
  - Facilities for the disabled.
  - Public activity areas and facilities in employment centers.
  - Organized sports and recreational activities.
  - Teen programs and facilities.
  - Senior citizen programs and facilities.

### **PARK DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

- Work with Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District on park development/maintenance issues.
- Explore opportunities with Three Rivers Park District for providing access to Big Island through the Port of Excelsior.
- Preservation of a site's inherent physical attributes such as topography shall be an important priority of all development.
- Facilities development shall be based on local demand and needs.
- A neighborhood park should be of sufficient size to allow for development of multiple program activities appropriate to the neighborhood park.
- Development activities will recognize the park resources as individual components of an overall system. Where appropriate, uniform signage, outdoor furniture, landscaping materials, etc. will be used to strengthen public recognition of the parks as a system.
- Parks shall be an asset to the neighborhoods in which they are located. Deteriorated facilities have a negative impact on their immediate environment and shall be improved, replaced or removed.



## *GOALS AND POLICIES*

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- Public recreational use of natural areas should be enhanced in a manner that is compatible with the resource. Trails, nature study, and picnicking are examples of compatible uses.
- Development or redevelopment of play areas should focus on creating interesting environments for play, not just for the provision of play facilities. Play areas should be safe and appealing yet challenging and stimulating.
- Based on existing need, seek to expand the use period or capacity of existing recreational facilities (such as lighting of tennis courts or skating rinks) as a consideration before constructing new or additional facilities.
- Park facilities and buildings should be designed and constructed in a manner that is energy efficient, barrier free and vandal resistant.
- Encourage recreation among individuals of all age groups and abilities by providing facilities and programs geared toward lifetime activities.

### **TRAIL AND SIDEWALK DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

- Work with Mn/DOT, Hennepin County, and Three Rivers Park District on trail/sidewalk/walkway connections and construction that affect each of the jurisdictions.
- Parks and trails are constructed on a priority basis, according to capital improvement plan/available funds with the trail and walkway priorities as follows:
  - Trails and walkways along major streets which focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety and which provide direct access to City/regional destinations and parks.
  - Trails and walkways that will serve the most intensely used areas.
  - Trail and walkway construction within existing parks and upon municipal property.
  - Trail and walkway inclusion within subdivision or redevelopment.
  - Completion of links between existing trails and walkways and other communities.
  - Creation of links from existing walkways to regional trails.



## *GOALS AND POLICIES*

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- Work with the School District on creating safe routes to schools. Place an emphasis on implementation of improvements that address access to Excelsior Elementary.
- Provide varying types of trails and walkways to be used as the basis of planning and development for the multiple use trail and walkway system, defined as a comprehensive trail and walkway system for the integration of a variety of compatible non-motorized trail and walkway uses (pedestrian, bicycles, roller skating, cross country skiing, etc.).
- Grades of trails and walkways should not exceed five percent to ensure disability accessibility or eight to ten percent for all others.
- Design and construct trails and walkways according to the standards established by the National Park and Recreation Association, the State Department of Transportation, and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (see Trail and Walkway Design Standards attached herein).
- The inclusion of environmental sensitive areas (lake frontage, native prairie, bluffs, unique vegetative associations, etc.) into park, trail, and walkway facilities should be considered to contribute to the overall recreation system.
- Promote and encourage the utilization of bicycle and pedestrian corridors as ski touring or sledding routes during the snow season and consider other possible uses of such corridors when safe and proper.
- Maintain all trails and walkways in good repair and ensure that designated trail segments are kept open and clear of snow throughout the year unless designated as winter use trails.
- Consideration shall be given to safety, visibility, and emergency access into parks when acquiring land or planning for their development.
- Develop a policy for motorized vehicle use in City parks or on trail and walkway areas.
- Bicycles shall only be allowed upon paved surfaces within the City as designated by ordinance. Mountain biking is allowed on trails designated for this purpose.
- Develop policies for all terrain vehicle, mountain bike, and in-line skate usage.



### **THE COMMONS AND PORT OF EXCELSIOR POLICIES**

- Preserve The Commons and the Port of Excelsior as the preeminent City asset to be enjoyed by its residents and to be shared with the greater community.
- Work to enhance the facilities, beaches maintenance, appearance, landscaping, and trees of the park and port area.
- Consider the Port of Excelsior as a gateway into the community and as such, improve the signage, add restrooms (enhance the service areas for charter boats).

### **EXCELSIOR PARKLAND POLICIES**

- Develop a plan for the potential re-use/facility options for the Excelsior Parkland including Studer Pond.
- Improve access to the Parkland over/under County Road 19 and by the addition of a trail from College Avenue to the Parkland.
- Work to improve the signage, appearance, and maintenance of the Parkland.

### **SPECIAL POPULATIONS POLICIES**

- Meet the needs of seniors and other special populations by providing programs and services including recreation, information and referral services.
- Provide recreation programs and facilities for disabled persons as the needs for those facilities and services dictate.
- Introduce individuals with developmental disabilities to a variety of leisure opportunities within the community that encourage development of individual skills and behavior.
- Evaluate the younger and aging population in Excelsior and their future needs in relation to existing facilities and programs in order to project future growth requirements.



### **TREE PRESERVATION AND LANDSCAPING POLICIES**

- A tree preservation and landscape policy is intended to preserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty found in Excelsior.
- Work to provide tree buffer areas along Highway 7, especially in residential areas and adjacent to schools and parking areas.
- Implement a tree planting program to achieve at least a 50 percent canopy coverage in City parks.
- The policy shall adhere in principle and accordance with the site plan review requirements in the Excelsior Zoning Ordinance.
- Landscaping within the parks shall enhance the facilities, buffer adjacent and internal uses, provide shade and comfort for participants and create space within the park itself.
- Replacement plans for boulevard and park trees should be developed and provided a yearly budget for implementation.
- Yearly plantings of trees, shrubs, and flowers shall be allowed for in the budget and implemented during the Spring and Fall. Individual plans shall be reviewed and approved by the Park and Recreation Commission.
- Memorials will be accepted by the City for plantings within parks. Species, size and location will be addressed on an individual basis. Plaques and monuments will also be permitted upon review and acceptance by the City.
- Standard approved nursery practices shall be used when planting and maintaining all plant materials within park lands.

### **FINANCIAL POLICIES**

- Joint use agreements between the City and the School District, sports associations, Hennepin County or others should be pursued where there are proven financial and service advantages.





## *GOALS AND POLICIES*

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- Financing for the acquisition and development of the park and open space system should be provided through a variety of revenue resources to include the general fund, park dedication fees, grants, bond referendums and donations.
- Staff will review and secure all available County, State and Federal grants for assistance in the acquisition and development of park and recreation facilities, as well as the City trail system.
- Staff will provide a five year capital improvements program (CIP) that defines priorities and cost estimates for acquisition and development of parks, recreation facilities and trails to assist in the planning and budgeting for these projects. This CIP will be updated on an annual basis by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council.
- Staff will provide the Park and Recreation Commission and the City Council with regular reports regarding the financial status of the park development fund and its relation to scheduled acquisition and development projects.

### **ACQUISITION POLICIES**

- Acquire park/trail/walkway facilities to satisfy the recreational and transportation needs of the residents on both a neighborhood and community-wide basis.
- Identify means for park/trail/walkway acquisition, i.e., dedication, purchase, eminent domain, donation.
- Identify means for establishment of park/trail/walkway facilities within subdivisions, i.e., outlots, easements, etc.
- Ensure that the proper right-of-way widths are dedicated for sidewalks, trails and walkways during the subdivision process (see development standards contained herein).
- Identify sources of funds to be utilized for acquisition, i.e., trail dedication fund, capital improvement program, bond issuance, grant programs, etc.
- Establish who is responsible for park/trail/walkway construction within subdivisions.
- Determine to what extent wetlands, drainageways, floodplain areas, etc. should be accepted as part of park, trail, and walkway dedication within subdivisions.



### **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION POLICIES**

- Provide for the efficient maintenance and operation of clean, orderly, controlled, safe, and attractive parks and trailways. Park maintenance and operation shall safeguard the physical condition of trailways from deterioration or damage due to weather, vandalism, or other natural or human causes.
- Develop a clear and concise system of park, trail, and walkway graphics and signage that direct people along trails and into parks to specific points of interest.
- Define specific park, trail, and walkway safety rules that are posted and enforced.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY ISSUES POLICIES**

- Develop ways in which to promote citizen interest and volunteer involvement in the City's park, trail, and walkway system.
- Create and distribute the pamphlet that shows the trail/walkway routes, parks, service and public facilities.
- Monitor characteristics of use, safety, and other factors periodically throughout the park, trail, and walkway system.
- Develop ways to organize recreation programs and facilities to maximize participation and overcome physical or economic limitations which may prevent equal opportunity, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, or place of residence.

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES**

- Implement policies on low impact development (LID) principles and practices into design, construction, and operation of all public projects in the City.
- Utilize permeable pavers, asphalt and concrete surfaces in City parks and on City trails wherever feasible and when in proximity to water bodies.
- Incorporate sustainable development principles and practices into the design, construction, and operation of City facilities and projects.
- Work to incorporate green building practices in City construction projects.



# ***MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Excelsior Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is intended to provide guidance to the City for continued development and improvements of the City's park, trail and walkway system. The park facilities master plan provides lists of improvements for the existing parks and identifies recreational facilities that could be added in the southeast area of the community.

The trail and walkway portion of the plan indicates components that can be made to increase connections with neighboring cities and provides an overall plan for off-street and on-street trails and walkways that will connect all parts of the City. The trail and walkway system should not only ensure public access to community amenities, but will also provide recreational opportunities for all age groups and safer access throughout the City. The trail and walkway system, in connection with the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, as well as the Commons, Port and Excelsior Parkland, could be used as a marketing tool for the community as well as to bring visitors to Excelsior.

The Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan is based upon information gathered and analyzed in the Inventory, Issues Identification, and Goals and Policies sections of the plan. The following paragraphs detail the park, trail and walkway plans for the community to pursue in the next 10 years.

## **PARK PLANS**

### **The Commons**

The Commons is known for the access it provides to Lake Minnetonka, its sweeping open areas, its woods and hills, its beach, and its recreational facilities. What is lesser known is the history of the park, the fact that it is as old as the City itself and the role it has played as a community gathering place. Promoting that legacy should be an important part of any park planning. The plan for The Commons is more about maintenance, replacement and upgrades as needed. The plan on the following page indicates the planned improvements. A summary of the more significant improvements is as follows:

- A park sign and kiosk on the history of The Commons be provided at the entrance to the park at the corner of West Lake Street and Lake Street and along the sidewalk near the art sculpture.
- Plantings and landscaping be provided within the turnaround area on 1<sup>st</sup> Street.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT THE COMMONS PARK PLAN



## MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

- A volleyball court be added near the westerly swimming beach.
- The band shell be replaced or updated with a new surface such as low maintenance stucco and the lighting be improved. If replaced, the band shell could be reoriented with the opening toward the hillside, utilizing the slope for seating.
- Trees be planted in the seating area in front of the band shell.
- The softball practice field backstop be removed.
- Provide irrigation in the open field area and softball field.
- Provide for additional art sculptures to be added along the lake front.
- Provide separated pedestrian/bike trails from the Port of Excelsior through to the beach area.
- Remove the existing steps to the lake behind the band shell.
- Naturalize the shoreline with appropriate plantings, especially in the area between the residential docks and the band shell.
- Take action to protect the bluff area from erosion on the north and northeast shoreline.
- Provide canoe storage racks near the swimming beach.
- Develop a long term financing plan for funding the remodel of the beach and ballfield park buildings. Make the buildings disability accessible, improve the kitchen facilities, and provide a covered picnic area. Buildings could be remodeled or rebuilt in an historical style reminiscent of the amusement park historic kiosk at the Port of Excelsior.
- Over time, replace benches, lighting, trash receptacles to a consistent, historical style.

An ongoing issue that must be addressed in all parks is maintenance. Keeping the park and its facilities in top condition should be made a high priority. Funding for an additional seasonal park employee may be required.



# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

## **Port of Excelsior**

The Port of Excelsior has consistently been a hub of activity in the community, especially during the Summer months. In 2008, a landscaping project adjacent to the historic kiosk was completed, significantly enhancing the appearance of the site. In the Spring of 2009, a Port of Excelsior sign will be constructed at the Lake Street/Water Street entrance. A significant need for this area is a combined bathroom, concession and service area for the charter boats. This could be located near the existing location of the trolley concession stand and adjacent to the existing service area.

The map on the following page indicates the planned improvements. A listing of these improvements is as follows:

- Complete the Port of Excelsior sign.
- Construct a bathroom, concessions and boat service area near the existing trolley concession stand. The building could be constructed in the same architectural style as the historic kiosk with the same roof line.
- Water Street, adjacent to the Port, is wide enough to allow a 24 foot drive aisle for the Bayshore Condominiums and to allow a 10 foot boulevard area with trees adjacent to the sidewalk.
- Incorporate rain gardens, as room allows, at the end of Water Street to provide stormwater filtration prior to release into the lake. Rain gardens could also be added in the low area just north of the historic kiosk.
- Install decorative pervious pavement on Water Street and the service driveway for the charter boats.
- Provide for enhanced landscaping and trees on the sloped areas between the sidewalk and Lake Street.
- Provide for separated pedestrian bike trails from the Port of Excelsior into The Commons.
- Consider maintaining an ice skating rink on the lake.
- Decorate the historic kiosk with seasonal lighting.
- Light the American Flag at night.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PORT OF EXCELSIOR MAP



## MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

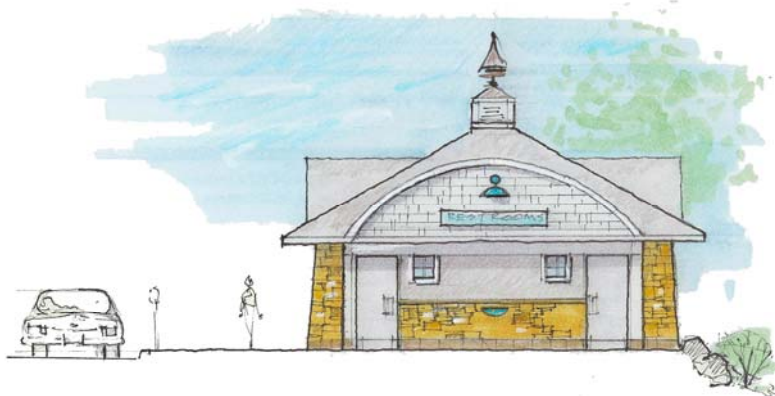
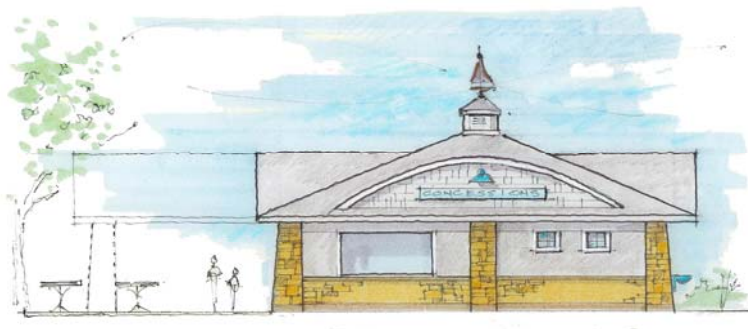
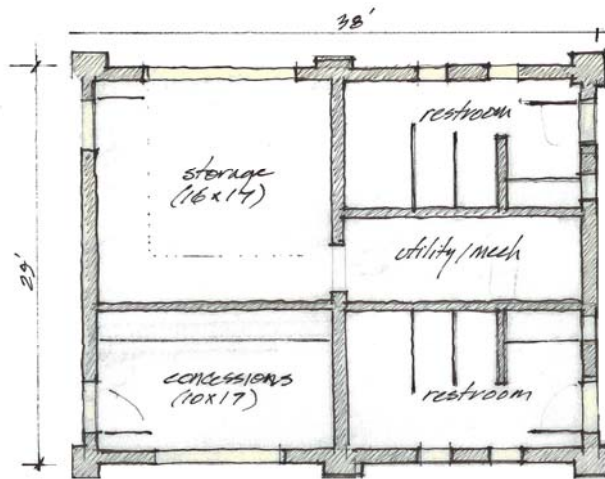
Schematic diagrams of a plan for remodeling the band shell are provided below. The diagrams show day and night time views of the band shell. These plans are provided as a representation of what the band shell could look like and do not constitute a final approved plan.





# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

A more detailed plan of the Port of Excelsior is found on the following page. Schematic diagrams of what the restroom/concessions and service building could look like are found below. The building design reference is taken from the structures that were found on the Excelsior Amusement Park grounds.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PORT OF EXCELSIOR DETAIL PLAN



# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

## **Excelsior Parkland**

Excelsior Parkland is an under-utilized park with considerable potential for combining active and passive uses within an attractive natural setting. The usable space for active use is limited, but it is expected that the community garden plots will continue, a park shelter with grills could replace the existing gazebo and uses such as a skate park and open area for a dog park could be introduced. The primary issue with this parkland is its inaccessibility. For that reason, planning activities for young adults and adults is preferable to gearing the park improvements for children.

The use of the site as a former landfill is of concern as it relates to future use. The City is currently studying the issues related to the landfill and what can be constructed on the site.

The City could make significant improvements for accessing the parkland by providing the following. The map on the following page highlights the access improvements.

- Work with Hennepin County to construct a trail on the southwest side of County Road 19 (Oak Street) from State Highway 7 through the City and into Shorewood. Continue to maintain the bike access lanes on County Road 19.
- Also work with Hennepin County on a possible trail tunnel under County Road 19, near the Public Works facility, when major utility improvements in this area are done.
- Construct a trail on the southeast side of the park, connecting County Road 19 to a point at the intersection of College Avenue and Glencoe Road.
- Resurface the existing bituminous trail in the park and consider an extension from the end near the community gardens, completely around Studer Pond. An easement would be required from property owner(s) to achieve this access.
- Redesign the driveway into the park that is directly across from the driveway of the Public Works. The visibility of this access point would be significantly improved over the existing location. A new driveway into the park and to the community gardens would be created.
- Expand garden plot area.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT EXCELSIOR PARKLAND PARK PLAN



## ***MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN***

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Future uses to be constructed on the site will partially depend upon the landfill analysis to be conducted by the City. The ideal uses and improvements for this park include the following. The map on the previous page reflects these planning objectives.

- Construct a park shelter (no restrooms) with views into the pond. Include picnic tables, grills, trash receptacles. Determine if the historic home at 712 Galpin Lake Boulevard can be moved and renovated as a park shelter.
- Naturalize the area adjacent to the existing trail through the park with trees and other wildflower plantings.
- Leave the open area clear of trees and promote as a dog park, soccer field, and active recreation area.
- Maintain a pleasure ice skating rink in the open recreation area.
- Develop a skate park.
- Remove the existing signage and replace with historical signage consistent with Port and The Commons signage.

### **Southeast Neighborhood Park / Play Area**

The City has identified the need to provide recreational facilities in the southeast corner of the City. The City does not control adequate property in this area to provide a park facility. It has been recognized that with the large number of multiple family units in the area, that at a minimum, playground equipment should be provided by the City.

Large open areas within the southeast neighborhood are not readily available. The Excelsior United Methodist Church, at 881 Third Avenue, does provide an open area with enough space to accommodate playground equipment, benches, picnic tables, and even a small pavilion. This open area is directly across Third Avenue from the largest concentration of multiple family units in the City. Off-street trail access along Third Avenue should also be addressed as well as a crosswalk across Third Avenue into the potential recreational area. An existing paved ancillary parking lot could be striped and provided portable basketball goals.

The City should actively pursue an agreement with the Church to provide these facilities. It would be a cooperative effort in fundraising with mutual benefit for both the City and Church.



# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

## **FIRE LANES**

The 10 fire lanes in the City provide public access to the lakes as well as open space areas throughout the community. All of the fire lanes have been surveyed and the City has actively pursued removal of private improvements in the fire lane properties and to sign the lanes as public use areas.

Other than providing continued public access, areas for boat docks and slides, and possible observation areas with benches, there are no improvements projected for the fire lanes.

## **OTHER OPEN SPACE IN EXCELSIOR**

### **Veteran's Memorial Park**

This park area, near Lake Street and Sunset Street, provides an attractive welcome into Excelsior at the Five Corners intersection. It has recently been upgraded with a new Veteran's memorial and historical lighting. No additional projects are planned at this time, but the signage could be replaced to a design consistent with what would be used for The Commons and Port.

### **Arey Memorial Triangle**

This park area, located near the intersection of County Road 19 and Water Street, also provides an attractive welcome into Excelsior. The park area is maintained by the Men's Garden Club as is the Veteran's Memorial Park. No improvements are planned for this park but the signage could be updated in a consistent style and design.

### **Lyman Park**

Lyman Park is a privately owned parcel of land on Water Street, adjacent to the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail and Farmers Market. Continued maintenance and an upgrade of the signage is all that is required.

### **College Lake Open Space**

An open area at the south side of College Lake, along Water Street, is maintained by the City. Other than a bench, there are no other improvements. The City will continue to maintain this as open space.



# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

## **Excelsior Cemetery**

The cemetery, owned and maintained by the City of Excelsior, is located between State Highway 7 and Excelsior Boulevard at the east edge of the City. The historical cemetery provides open space and the roadways for walking paths.

## **Lake Minnetonka and Other Lakes and Waterbodies**

Lake Minnetonka, as well as Galpin Lake, Mud Lake, College Lake, Mitten Pond, and Studer Pond provide recreational opportunities, significant open space, and potential for natural study/educational areas. Protection of these waterbodies from encroaching development and construction of facilities to pre-treat the stormwater prior to release is of the highest community goal.

## **PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

The park lands within Excelsior should be planned under a park classification system as part of a proposed Master Parks, Trails and Walkways Plan. Using the identification system to program the level of development for each of the parks will assist the City in planning for and scheduling the funding for completion of the facilities. Also, planning for types of park facilities and open space will maximize the use of park dedication and other park funds.

A park classification system is intended to serve as a guide to planning, not as a blueprint. Sometimes more than one component may occur within the same site, particularly with regard to a specialized use within a larger park. Based upon national standards, a park system, at minimum, should be comprised of a core system of park lands with a total of approximately 10 acres of open space for 1,000 population. The City of Excelsior offers more than 28.5 acres of park land for a population of 2,400 persons, which is a major benefit to the residents of the community. A listing and short description of park classifications is as follows:



## ***MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN***

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<b>Mini Park</b>	
Use	Intended to service special neighborhoods due to geographic limitations. They have insufficient size to fulfill the needs of a complete neighborhood park.
Service Area	Less than ¼ mile radius preferred. One-half mile in select circumstances.
Population Served	Depends upon the nature of the site and the needs of the adjacent population
Desirable Size	One to 5 acres
Acres/1,000 Population	0.25 to 0.5 acres
Site Characteristics	Seating areas, small picnic area, small parking structure, facilities for seniors such as horseshoe courts (in senior residential community), multi-use half court/basketball hard court.
Proposed Park	Southeast Neighborhood Park – possibly in conjunction with the Excelsior United Methodist Church at 881 Third Avenue

<b>Community Parks</b>	
Use	Area of diverse environmental quality which may include areas suited to intense recreational facilities such as athletic complexes, as well as passive type areas, depends largely upon the site location, suitability and community need
Service Area	Several neighborhoods, 1 to 4 mile radius for urban areas/unlimited for rural communities
Population Served	All ages, toddler to retiree, entire community for cities up to 25,000
Desirable Size	20 to 35+ acres
Acres/1,000 Population	5.0 – 10.0 acres
Site Characteristics	Provides for a combination of intensive and non-intensive development ranging from play equipment to trails, may include natural features, such as water bodies or forested land, must include support elements such as rest rooms, drinking water, parking and lighting
Existing Parks	The Commons / Port of Excelsior





## ***MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN***

<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	
Use	Area for designated active and passive recreation areas
Service Area	½ to 1 mile radius to serve a population of up to 5,000 persons (a large neighborhood)
Population Served	Focus upon ages 5 and over with emphasis upon ages 5 through 18
Desirable Size	5 to 10 acres
Acres/1,000 Population	1.5 – 2.0 acres
Site Characteristics	Suited for multi-use recreation development, easily accessible to neighborhood population, geographically centered with safe walking and bike access, may include school facilities
Existing Parks	Excelsior Parkland

<b>Natural / Conservancy Areas</b>	
Use	Protection and management of the natural/cultural environment with recreational use as a secondary objective
Service Area	No applicable standard
Desirable Size	Sufficient to protect the resource and accommodate recreational uses
Acres/1,000 Population	Variable
Site Characteristics	Variable, depending upon the resource being protected
Existing Parks	Excelsior Parkland / Studer Pond

<b>Schools</b>	
Use	Facilities developed in association with schools which are intended for children's educational and recreational instruction, which on a secondary basis, provide opportunities for community residents, this shared usage is positive in that it allows for daytime usage by students, evening, weekend, and summer usage by all
Schools	Excelsior Elementary
Facilities	Excelsior Elementary School has playground equipment and playfields.



# MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

## TRAILS AND WALKWAYS PLAN

### Regional Trails

The Regional Connections Map, found within the Inventory section of this plan, indicates the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail as well as the existing and planned trail connections with the adjacent Cities of Shorewood and Greenwood. The City of Excelsior will work with the Three Rivers Park District in providing additional trail connections from the regional trail to City trails, walkways, or destination points. Additionally, the City will work with the Three Rivers Park District on crosswalk issues, especially as it relates to the high traffic crossings at Water Street and Excelsior Boulevard.

A continuing dialogue with the Cities of Greenwood and Shorewood, as well as Hennepin County, will be needed to provide the linkages indicated on the Regional Connections Map. Off-street, as well as on-street, trails in these areas of connection are a high priority for the City of Excelsior.

### Local Trails and Walkways

The Proposed Trails, Sidewalks, and Walkways Map is found on the following page. It provides the City a plan for providing on-street trails as well as off-street trails and walkway connections. Also indicated is the location of disability accessible access points at street crossings. The Issues Identification process indicated that there is a strong desire to continue the interconnection of neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, public facilities, and parks. City staff has indicated that trails or walkways will be added as part of any City street project, where possible, and as part of any new or redeveloped commercial projects. The City will also work with MnDOT and Hennepin County on roadway upgrade projects to ensure that on and off-street trails and walkways are incorporated into the final design.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PROPOSED SIDEWALKS, TRAILS, WALKWAYS, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



## MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

Development of a comprehensive trails and walkway system plan as part of a master plan for the community should incorporate the following. The list is not in any priority order, all of the interconnections are deemed equally as important to the City.

1. Where trails and walkways will link together separate portions of the sidewalks and trail systems with each other.
2. Where trails and walkways will lead to parks, playfields and other recreational facilities.
3. Where trails and walkways provide access to existing regional trails.
4. Where trails and walkways will serve commuter destinations.
5. Where trails and walkways will connect neighborhoods to schools.
6. Trails, sidewalks, and walkways along major streets that have the most direct access to primary pedestrian destinations.
7. Connections to and linking neighborhoods with the commercial areas of the City.
8. Interconnections to the trails and walkways systems of the adjacent Cities of Greenwood and Shorewood.

### **Neighborhood Plans**

The Comprehensive Plan separated the City of Excelsior into four planning districts, the Central District (1); the Southwest District (2); the Excelsior Boulevard District (3); and the Southeast District (4). To highlight trail and walkway plans in more detail, the four district maps are provided as follows:

Planning District 1, Central District. The map on a following page indicates the following trail and walkway improvements within this district:

1. Improve Five Corners access issues.
2. Crosswalk or tunnel at County Road 19 between the Public Works facility and Excelsior Parkland.
3. Development of a trail along County Road 19.
4. Addition of on-street bike trail routes.
5. Addition of trails within The Commons.
6. Potential bridge over the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail at Courtland Street.



## MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN

Planning District 2, Southwest District. The map on a following page indicates the following trail and walkway improvements within this district.

1. Crosswalk or tunnel at County Road 19 between the Public Works facility and Excelsior Parkland.
2. Possible crosswalk at William Street and County Road 19.
3. Review crosswalks at Water Street and County Road 19.
4. Addition of off-street trails from College Avenue on Glencoe Road to Academy Avenue and back up to College Avenue on Water Street.
5. Provide trail connections from neighborhood to Excelsior Parkland. Extend a trail around Studer Pond.

Planning District 3, Excelsior Boulevard District. The map on a following page indicates the following trail and walkway improvements within this district.

1. Off-street trail/sidewalk and on-street trail on Excelsior Boulevard to connect with Greenwood trail system.
2. A pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Highway 7 at Division Street.
3. Through an agreement with Tonka Bay Excel Marina on Minnetonka Boulevard, Excelsior residents are provided with free boat launching.

Planning District 4, Southeast District. The map on a following page indicates the following trail and walkway improvements within this district.

1. Improve safety, signage and crosswalks at County Road 82 and Third Streets.
2. Provide a trail connection to the Linden Street/Elm Place neighborhood via access from Shorewood.
3. Provide off-street trails/walkways on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues.
4. On-street trail and off-street trail/walkway is provided on County Road 82.
5. Provide trail access from the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail to the Southshores senior living facility.
6. Trail access should be provided to a potential play area at the Excelsior United Methodist Church.



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PLANNING DISTRICT 1 IMPROVEMENTS MAP



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PLANNING DISTRICT 2 IMPROVEMENTS MAP



**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PLANNING DISTRICT 3 IMPROVEMENTS MAP





**MASTER PARKS, TRAILS, AND WALKWAYS PLAN**

INSERT PLANNING DISTRICT 4 IMPROVEMENTS MAP



## INTRODUCTION

The final phase of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan establishes a process of projecting park, trail, or walkway improvements, setting priorities, and scheduling for their provision and financing over a period of time. This process produces a long-range guide for recreation and requires that the City look toward the future to anticipate capital expenditures and to provide revenues to meet them. This section does not take the place of a capital improvements plan in that precise costs are beyond the scope of this document, however, the City must continue to update its five year priority list, analyzing the financial situation, and obtaining cost estimates for the desired improvements.

## PARK AND TRAIL DEDICATION FEES

For the most part, it is this plan's intention to provide parks, trails, or walkways which will not burden the City with high acquisition and construction costs. Land and right-of-way for trail or walkway construction will be acquired as part of the dedication process of a subdivision or as an improvement to be included as roads are built or upgraded wherever possible. Due to the obstacles that may arise through acquisition of a right-of-way, the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan provides only a general layout of trail or walkways routes and proposed park locations which may be altered at the time of actual acquisition and development.

The City has created a formula contained within the Subdivision Ordinance that provides an equitable system of park dedication based upon the provisions of State Statutes. This plan does not foresee the need for additional park land, except for a play area in the southwest area of the City. Of the vacant land supply in the City, most has been subdivided and the park dedication has been paid. There are a limited number of land parcels where a park dedication will need to be paid.

## OTHER FUNDING MECHANISMS

Financing the park, trail and walkway improvements will be an ongoing challenge for the City. The acquisition and development of the park, trail, and walkway system will not occur without adequate funding and taking advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. The financing of the park, trail, and walkway system will occur one of two ways – either by raising revenue or incurring debt. Revenues provide the means to make investments in the park system and can be saved to finance improvements. Borrowing money provides upfront funding and pledges to repay the debt. A brief description of potential funding sources is provided as follows:



### **Property Taxes**

The City has the ability to raise property taxes to help to pay for the park, trail, and walkway system. The use of property tax may be limited by overall financial management of the City or by State imposed limitations.

### **Special Assessments**

The ability of a city to levy assessments for park improvements is governed by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 429. This statute defines eligible park improvements as “acquire, improve and equip parks, open space areas, playgrounds, and recreational facilities within or without the corporate limits.” A special assessment represents the portion of a park improvement costs levied against benefiting properties. The special assessment tool must be reviewed carefully to identify whether historic park dedication fees have been collected and applied to the benefiting properties to ensure that owners are not charged twice for park, trail, sidewalk and walkway improvements. Also, an analysis would need to be done to identify which properties receive benefit from the park, trail, and walkway improvement as there must be a rational nexus between the charge and benefit received. The typical method would be to levy an equal assessment on each benefiting parcel. The assessment could be for all or any portion of the improvements. At least 20 percent of the costs of the improvement must be assessed to gain the authority to issue bonds. If less than 100 percent of the costs are assessed, then park dedication fees, property taxes, or other available revenues would be needed to pay back the debt.

### **Referendum – Voter Approved Bonds**

The City may place a referendum on voter ballots for consideration by the public to support park, trail, and walkway improvements. Voter approved debt service levies are spread on the market value of property. This funding mechanism is typically utilized for major improvements such as a community center, athletic complex or to acquire high amenity park and recreation areas.

### **Grants**

The City should continue to apply for available grants for development of its Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan through agencies such as, but not limited to, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Washington County, and any other agencies.



### **Private Donations**

The City should establish a list of facilities that can be provided to the public, charitable institutions, on the City website, etc., identifying park, trail, and walkway needs and the process the public can use to donate revenue or equipment. Additionally, the Park Commission could proactively contact private foundations such as The Trust for Public Land, 1,000 Friends of Minnesota, McKnight Foundation, Metro Greenways, and others to identify potential funding sources for the community park, trail, and walkway system.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**

Capital improvements programming provides an instrument for carrying out the objectives and recommendations of the Master Parks, Trails, and Walkways Plan. Through prioritization of five year capital needs for the City's park and recreational facilities and identifying the amount of money available to finance the improvements during this period, the City will be able to determine which improvements are necessary in terms of their ability to pay. The capital improvement program (CIP) is a flexible process, in that as the social, physical and financial conditions change within the City, the priority of the scheduled projects may also change. In response to the changes in the City, the CIP must be an ongoing process. Each year the CIP should be re-evaluated for consistency with the plan, current recreational needs, and fiscal condition of the City. As an implementation item, the Park and Recreation Commission should develop a capital improvement program for park, trail, and walkway development.

The following process should be utilized by the Park and Recreation Commission when reviewing potential park capital improvement projects:

1. Establish a five year priority list of park, trail, and walkway capital improvements that reflects current and projected recreation demands. Annually review and revise the five year priority list to reflect current demand and needs.
2. Analyze the City's current financial situation.
3. Obtain up-to-date cost estimates for high priority items.
4. Develop project descriptions and plans for the desired improvements which include proposed scheduling and phasing.
5. Make copies available of the CIP for public inspection prior to the City Council's presentation of the annual budget at the required public hearing.
6. Begin the process over again following approval of the CIP and the beginning of another calendar year.



It is recommended that a specific annual CIP review schedule be established for the review of potential park, trail, and walkway projects. This will enable persons who wish to request consideration of new items to present their position in ample time to change the CIP, if necessary, in a manner consistent with community needs and reducing or eliminating financial commitments being made for projects which might not proceed to the final construction stage in the event that they are deleted or moved back on the priority list.

### **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

An important aspect of park, trail, and walkway development is user knowledge of the recreational facilities. To promote the use of the community recreational system, the City should provide informational material to residents as the facilities are implemented. A newsletter and map mailed to each household is probably the best means by which to accomplish this. At the same time, the City should work to establish a list of rules and encourage community awareness of such.

The City should also develop a trail and walkway map that is used as a promotional device for the City. It could be done in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and paid for by local businesses.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

The City of Excelsior recognizes the value of the use of volunteers for park, trail and walkway upgrades, maintenance and programs. Volunteer programs could be developed utilizing service groups, garden clubs, Girl and Boy Scouts, seniors and disabled groups. An adopt-a-park program could also be organized by the City to facilitate the volunteer programs.

### **SIGNAGE**

As indicated throughout this plan, a clear and concise system of park and trail signage is beneficial in any recreational system to assist users in finding and using the facilities. Directional graphics may be in the form of painted pavement symbols/lettering or any variety of regulatory, warning, or guidance signage. Signage should include general identification of an area, layout and types of facilities present, directions for specific points of interest such as handicapped areas, restrooms, or connections to destinations, trail distances, and user/safety rules. The best location for much of this information is near the entrances to park, trail, and walkway segments or near parking areas. The signage should be consistent throughout the City and should be easily understandable and maintainable.



# ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Numerous physiological and psychological factors are involved in the planning and design of park, trail, and walkways areas which will undoubtedly affect their desirability among residents and anticipated development if not handled properly. The natural features both within and adjacent to a desired trail/walkway corridor or park site should be used to complement the desired recreational activity and if modified, should be done without causing irreparable harm to the environment. These include existing vegetation, topography, wetlands/ water bodies streams, or other natural features such as rock outcroppings. Built features are equally as important in their effect upon recreational elements and include such items as buildings, bridges, power substations, utility corridors, streets/parking lots, or other man-made and largely utilitarian components. The age, dominant characteristics, function, and condition of built structures should be evaluated to determine what, if any, modifications are needed (either to the structure itself or in areas surrounding it – such as a buffer) so that the structure remains an asset for recreational use.

## **TRAIL/WALKWAY GUIDELINES**

### **Composition**

Composition of proposed trail/walkway corridors refers to the original or altered surface upon which the recreational element will be constructed. The subsurface condition of areas have most likely been altered and may require specialized preparation or construction methods to establish them as a usable part of the recreational system.

### **Slope**

The cross slope which is perpendicular to the direction of travel may either be flat, convex (raised), concave (carved-out), or terraced (along a side slope) and may affect access to a certain area or drainage patterns. As a general rule, an acceptable cross slope for most trails is 2 percent. An accessible trail is a cross slope of 5 percent or less.



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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### **Spatial Values**

The sequence of different landscapes that compose a trail/walkway corridor makes it an interesting place to walk, bike, and ride. Spatial components of recreational systems include:

- ▶ Viewsheds. Lines of sight within a corridor or out to a landscape or adjacent built feature are called viewsheds. The views from adjacent lands into the trail corridor are just as important as views from the proposed trail. This is particularly important when you have a feature that should be highlighted or when an adjacent landowner objects to the trail corridor. Safety and visibility are the two viewshed issues of concern of future trail users. The need for unobstructed forward and rear views should be provided for each type of trail user classification: 50 feet for pedestrians and 150 feet for bicyclists/ roller skaters. Viewing opportunities from a trail affect the quality of users' experience and are classified as either open or closed landscapes.
  
- ▶ Open and Closed Landscapes. These affect viewsheds and light, provide structure, and heavily influence the spatial sequence of a trail corridor. An example of an open landscape is an agricultural field or meadow, while a closed landscape may be a segment of corridor surrounded by thick, overhanging trees or large buildings. An ideal trail has a contrasting sequence of both open and closed landscapes.
  
- ▶ Light and Dark Areas. These are determined by sun exposure, topography, surrounding vegetation, and adjacent structures. Light and dark areas alter the trail's environment, affect the soil's moisture content, influence temperatures, and vary the quality of the trail's features (which may change from season to season).

### **Intersections “Trail/Walkway Crossings”**

Intersections can pose challenges during trail design and development, but they can also provide trail/walkway access. Roads are the most hazardous and frequently encountered trail intersections and things such as how the trail will cross (at-grade, under, over), the degree of road traffic, alternative crossings, and money available to do the work will determine how to best incorporate them into the overall plan.

Driveways may be either residential, commercial or industrial in nature and will have differing effects upon the trail corridors, depending upon their frequency of use daily or monthly. If the traffic on the driveway is less than the anticipated trail traffic, then the trail should be designed to have the right-of-way at this intersection. Other trail



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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corridors and nearby trails allow you to link trails together. Assess any intersection trails for compatibility and conflict, based on types of use, surface, signs, and regulations.

### **Recreational Needs**

Like any major capital improvement, building a trail/walkway requires some thought about how the facility will be used and by whom. In other words, you need to market the trail. Determine the ratio of existing/proposed trail miles to the user population. Compare this to the National Recreation and Park Association's Open Space Standards which suggests a ratio of one trail mile per 2,000 people for multi-use (pedestrian-bicycle) trails. This number is intended only as a rough guideline and does not necessarily reflect local demographics, changing trends, uniqueness of the environment, or various other factors, but may help in estimating the over or under establishment of trails in relation to the number of residents. This, however, does not take the place of communicating with local residents, user groups, etc. to determine interest and needs.

### **Adjacent Land Uses**

Land uses (existing and proposed) adjacent to or directly abutting trail/walkway corridors should be evaluated to some degree relative to size, facilities, density, character, and type of ownership. However, unless safety factors prohibit such, the establishment of trails through all land use types should be promoted. Opportunities for or constraints against trail development exist in all areas of the community and depend more upon individual situations. In some situations, safety hazards or undesirables can be avoided through installation of a fence or berm while still allowing trail access and connections. Take special note of available properties adjoining the trail corridor as they may provide opportunity for public ownership and potential for establishment of sitting/picnic areas or landscaping. Vacant areas that remain privately owned provide excellent opportunities for additional trail links, access, or trail-related development.

### **Adjacent Landowners**

Of all the obstacles trail developers face, opposition by adjacent landowners can be the most troublesome. Regardless of the community-wide support for trails, opposition from some adjacent landowners will voice concerns about trail design, management, quality of life, careless maintenance, land loss, decreased property values, increased crime, and liability will be unavoidable.





## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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This and many similar concerns have been documented along trail projects across the USA and typically disappear once the trail is open but more commonly, the benefits outweigh the problems. In surveys conducted across the nation, it was shown that the vast majority of landowners living next to trail corridors were amenable to such and used the corridors frequently. With regard to crime, a specific study conducted in Minnesota showed that the incidence of crime is actually lower in homes near trails than those in surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, no negative effect upon property values has even been proven, either nationally or locally and in some cases, neighborhoods adjacent to trail corridors have been marketed using trails as an amenity with property values increased. Finally, liability is not a valid concern thanks to the recreational use statutes (RUS) in place in Minnesota which does not make landowners liable for recreational injuries resulting from mere carelessness. To recover damages, the trail user needs to prove “willful and wanton misconduct on the part of the landowner.” This would apply to easement situations in the City where the City does not own the land, but maintains control for trail access purposes via establishment of an easement.

In summary, problems may be exaggerated at the onset and others can be easily controlled through design and/or management solutions. Physical separation of trails from private properties via natural, vegetation or man-made means may also serve to alleviate homeowners concerns. Landowner involvement is the best and first step to a successful resolution.

### **FACILITY DESIGN STANDARDS**

Once a trail/walkway or system of trails is built, it will become an integral part of the community which is part of an ever-changing environment. With this in mind, it is important to make sure that the trails can adapt to changing needs. The best policy is to build a trail with adequate capacity (width) initially. A multi-use trail shared by pedestrians and bicyclists should be a minimum of 10 feet wide. A minimum of eight feet may be used on shared-use paths that will have limited use. If the budget only allows for an eight foot trail, obtain easements that will permit expansion of the trail to 10 or more feet in the future.

Bridges, tunnels, culverts and other infrastructure should be made extra wide at the onset to accommodate expansion. Deciding which components to build to wider standards first will depend on the trail surfacing to be used. Concrete is virtually impossible to upgrade safely once it is in place as joints create a hazardous situation for bicyclists. Widening an asphalt or crushed material surface is not as difficult because



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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the materials are less costly and can be blended. Basic grading should also be designed for the maximum future width if site conditions allow this.

Note that different segments of the trail are likely to have different levels of use, thus it may be necessary to provide a 10 foot width only in areas where heavy travel is expected to occur. Another option is to plan for two separate paths within the same (easement) corridor, by separating users such as pedestrians from bicyclists. Individual routes have been planned to vary as needed within the City, thus reference should be made to the section within this document which describes specific routes and trail segments.

Decisions about widening a trail should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis based upon a community's economics, politics, safety, and long-term project goals. Weigh the cost of extra length against extra width prior to beginning a project. It may be beneficial to construct an entire segment of the trail system at a less than optimum width in areas where trails are presently non-existent to heighten the excitement and promote usage by residents. But on the other hand, if larger than expected numbers of people use the trail, it will pose crowding and safety problems. It is generally best to construct individual portions of a trail (which maybe does not yet make a through connection) at the full, long-term width desired. While this is somewhat dependent upon the material used, maintenance needs, and material life, pressure will build (and money will become available) to develop additional segments.

### **Disability Accessibility**

At least a portion of your multi-use trail/walkway design should be accessible – free of barriers and obstructions – and usable by people with disabilities. The primary sources of information for developing accessible standards for all facilities are the *Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS)* and the *American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, both published in the *Federal Register* on July 26, 1991. These guidelines define what specifications must be met in order to be classified as an accessible trail such as trail width, passing space, surface, slopes, clearance, rest areas and signs.

Five feet is the minimum width to accommodate a wide range of users with disabilities in a one-way scenario. Hard surfaces such as asphalt and concrete make a trail most accessible. An accessible trail gradient should not exceed a cross slope of 5 percent. When trails must be built with steeper grades, it is essential that the lengths of the maximum grade segments are minimized to enhance accessibility and grade segments are free of other access barriers.



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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When it is not possible to having running grades at 5 percent or less, the following recommended guidelines should be used for designing maximum grades over short intervals:

- ▶ 8.3 percent for a maximum of 200 feet
- ▶ 10 percent for a maximum of 30 feet; and
- ▶ 12.5 percent for a maximum of 10 feet.

On recreational trails, a 14 percent maximum grade is acceptable for open drains when resting intervals are provided every five feet, and the maximum cross slope is 5 percent. Furthermore, the total running slope should not exceed 8.3 percent for 30 percent or more of the trail.

Any part of an accessible route with a slope greater than 5 percent shall be considered a ramp. Ramps, which should have a level landing at the bottom and top of each run for every 30 inches of vertical rise, must have a hard, slip-resistant surface and railings. An accessible trail calls for a rest interval before and after segments of steep grades, within 25 feet of the top and bottom of a maximum grade segment, preferably cleared with a bench located outside of the trail head. If numerous benches are not possible, the distances between stopping points should be posted so that users will know what is ahead.

### **Trail Width**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommends a 10 foot trail width, but some of these paths are too narrow to handle the ultimate volume of users and may not take into account other factors such as the trail surface, speed of trail users, etc. Consider the number of people who are likely to use your trail. Where “significant” trail traffic is anticipated (100 trail users per hour during peak periods), the width of a two-way shared path should be at least 10 feet in suburban areas. In rural and urban areas, the minimum trail widths change to eight feet and 12 feet, respectively.

### **Slope**

Topography, or the shape of the land, can be defined as flat, gently rolling, hilly, or mountainous. A physical assessment of a trail corridor determines the running and cross slopes of specific segments. An accessible trail will have a maximum running slope of 5 percent and a maximum cross slope of 5 percent. The following table lists ranges of running and cross slopes acceptable for specific trail user groups.



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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<b>Trail User</b>	<b>Average Speed</b>	<b>Running Slope</b>	<b>Cross Slope</b>
Pedestrian	3 to 7 mph	No Restriction	4% maximum
Bicyclist	8 to 20 mph	3% preferred; 8% maximum	2% to 4%
Equestrian	4 to 8 mph	10% maximum	4% maximum
Skier	2 to 8 mph	3% preferred, 5% maximum	2% preferred

### **Surfacing**

There are many surface types available to complete the cross section of your multi-use trail, including granular stone, asphalt, concrete, soil cement, wood chips, and natural surface. Surface materials are either soft or hard, defined by the material's ability to absorb or repel moisture. Many single use trails throughout the country, particularly hiking and equestrian trails, have soft surfaces (natural earth/turf, wood chips, etc.). These surfaces often do not hold up well under heavy use or varying weather conditions, and therefore are not ideal for multi-use trails. Hard surfaced materials (soil cement, asphalt, cement, etc.) are more practical for multi-use trails, especially in urban and suburban areas. They are generally more expensive to purchase and install but require less maintenance and can withstand frequent use. Hard surfaces also accommodate the widest range of trail users.

Trail surfacing can be used to encourage or discourage use. If you want to encourage as many users as possible, choose one of the hardest surfaces. If you want to limit the number or speed of users, choose a soft surface. Recycling options should also be considered when choosing a surfacing material. Car tires and other rubber products, crushed glass/pottery, and ground asphalt shingles are some of the materials that have been used in the construction of trails. The recycled products industry is expanding quickly, with new manufacturers emerging constantly. It may be worth doing some research into what types of recycled products are available to you and what type of strength, longevity, and durability they have in relation to their cost, ease of installation, effect upon the environment, etc.

### **Maintenance**

An often overlooked design factor is the long term cost of operations and maintenance. Prior to constructing trails, the City's Public Works Department should be consulted relative to their staffing, time, equipment, etc. to verify that the ability exists to properly maintain the trails which will be constructed. Also consider the long term replacement costs of trail surfaces and other major recreation components.



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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- ▶ Asphalt needs resurfacing every seven to 15 years depending on site conditions and construction quality.
- ▶ Concrete lasts approximately 25 or more years.
- ▶ Crushed stone will typically last 7 to 10 years, although it requires frequent patching and spot repairs.

Wood chips decompose rapidly under prolonged exposure to sun, heat, and moisture, wash easily under moderate slopes and rainfall, and require almost constant maintenance to keep the width and depth consistent. They are, however, often available at no cost (or a nominal cost) from commercial tree trimming services.

### **Trail/Walkway Support Facilities**

The types of support facilities your trail will need, and their replacement along the trail, depend on several factors: the setting and proposed uses of the trail; the trail's intensity of use; the level of servicing/maintenance that the facilities need; and the utility/infrastructure requirements of the facilities. Whatever the location, user groups, and desired activities along the trail, you must plan for trail facilities from the start. If you cannot afford to develop all facilities at the outset, know the types of facilities that you and your community ultimately want.

To a large degree, the parks, schools, and many commercial operations within Oak Park Heights act as “built in” trail nodes and stopping points where persons may rest, obtain shelter from the elements, eat lunch, use a bathroom or get a drink of water. The distance between these known points and exactly what they offer should be studied in the early stages of trail design and implementation. In areas where distances are excessive or where easy access (either physically or at certain times of day) is a problem, consideration should be given to establishing support facilities to supplement the existing ones.

### **Landscaping**

To get the most out of a trail/walkway experience, it helps to start with a beautiful trail setting which offers exceptional landscapes and visual amenities. In reality, however, not all trail corridors come with such benefits and require significant work in the form of landscaping to give the trail a personality of its own. To create a successful trail experience, you must consider the perspective of the user. Since the landscape is typically viewed while moving, a sequence of views is more important than a single view



## ***APPENDIX A – FACILITIES PLANNING - DESIGN GUIDELINES***

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in one direction. Trails are multi-dimensional, with things to see, hear, and feel along the way.

In developing a landscape plan for trails in the community, you must think of it as a phased process which is an ongoing commitment. The overall intent and that of specific areas may differ significantly based upon what land uses are adjacent to the trail, whether it is along a roadway or not, as well as what environmental and soil conditions are present. Ongoing maintenance is a major factor in a multi-use trail's landscape plan; even "natural" landscapes require trimming, weeding, etc. Cleared and mowed trail shoulders at least two feet wide on either side of the trail provide a groomed look, offer better visibility, and provide an option for those who like to utilize soft surfaces. It is best to set back trees and shrubs, when planted, at least five feet from the trail surface to control the inundation of paved areas by tree/plant roots.

