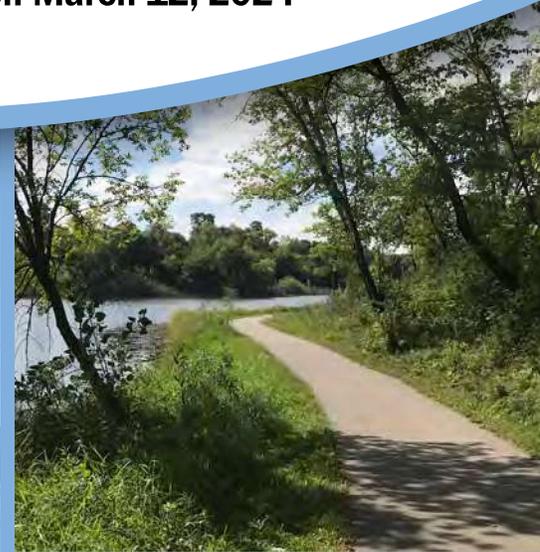




2040

Park & Trail System Plan

Adopted by the City Council on March 12, 2024



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A special thank you to all of the additional project stakeholders and community members who took time to provide input, data and attend meetings. You truly show how much you value and care about the future of the park, trail and open space system of Prior Lake!



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System Plan Overview

1.1 Introduction

The City of Prior Lake has an impressive park, trail and recreation system that provides abundant forms of recreation for its residents. The parks are fairly balanced in terms of distribution throughout the city and is fortunate to have several regional parks within a short distance that contributes to an even greater amount of recreation for its residents, contributing to the overall health, wellness and quality of life for the community.

The Prior Lake Park and Trail System Master Plan is a strategic and comprehensive master planning document that is meant to provide an overall community vision for the parks, trails and recreation for the City of Prior Lake for the next 20 years.

This plan provides the framework and recommendations for both short and long term improvements of the parks, trails and recreation programs to meet the needs of the community. It is meant to provide recommendations that will guide future investments for development and improvements by establishing goals, policies and objectives through development of priorities in line with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.



1.2 Planning Process

The planning process began in August 2018 with a kick-off meeting with the City of Prior Lake to explore ideas, concerns and goals for the planning process, as well as to gather important project data.

A critical piece of this planning process was the community engagement which was used to raise awareness of the project, identify a project vision, and to gain a good understanding of current community needs and desires. Input was solicited through various methods that included:

- Social Pinpoint interactive online engagement map
- Pop-up engagement events
- Public meetings
- Steering committee
- Stakeholder interviews
- Social media and press

An inventory and assessment of the existing system was undertaken in order to gain a good understanding of the nuances of the system as it relates to existing and future recreation needs. Current recreational trends were identified and demographic information was gathered to evaluate population trends and distribution of the populations across the community.

Site assessments of the parks were completed to determine the existing conditions, types of amenities available and location within the city, as well as architectural assessments of select community park buildings. The existing system was compared to the national recreational standards and comparison of similar communities to determine any deficiencies or particular concerns.

The findings of the community engagement, data collection and analysis process provided guidance to the development of preliminary recommendations for the draft master plan. The draft master plan went through a review and comment process to ensure the recommendations properly reflected the views of the community and to confirm priorities. Following refinements, the final master plan was finalized and adopted by the City of Prior Lake in 2023, to be submitted to the Metropolitan Council as an amendment to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.



A. Community Engagement Findings

The findings of the community engagement process identified key concerns, desired recreational activities and trends, and priorities, and were categorized into the following themes.



The highest priority was for trails with overall improved connectivity desired. The most commonly desired amenities included a splash pad, pickleball courts, challenge / ninja course, inclusive playground, improved parking accommodations at the existing community parks, and the desire for an additional dog park.

B. System Assessment Findings

The findings from the system assessments showed that, in most instances, Prior Lake exceeded national recreation standards for types, amounts and distribution of parks and amenities across the system. Prior Lake also generally ranked higher than similar communities in comparison.

Assessments of the trail system, individual parks and select buildings resulted in the following findings.

1. Most parks are generally at the end of their life span, resulting in numerous parks in need of significant repair or replacement.
2. At the time of the building assessments, it was determined that various improvements would improve the overall function and desirability of the buildings, though more in-depth studies would need to be completed to determine if the costs for renovation are more cost-effective than a full building replacement based on life spans and cost-benefit.
3. There are some identified major trail gaps, primarily along Highway 13, with additional gaps desired to for improved connectivity to primary destinations and adjoining communities.
4. There were several trail routes with degraded trail conditions.
5. Overall there was generally a good distribution of parks, though some gaps were identified for future search areas or improved connectivity to existing parks.



1.3 Community Vision and Goals

A. Project Vision Statement

The following vision statement was developed during the planning process that defines the vision that Prior Lake aspires to attain by the year 2020.

The City of Prior Lake contains safe, attractive and fun outdoor recreational experiences that encourage a healthy lifestyle, meet the diverse needs of its residents, connect people to the outdoors, preserve the natural resources and open spaces, and highlight its cultural resources.

B. Goals and Objectives

The following goals were developed to represent the end conditions that Prior Lake is striving to attain under the primary categories established in the needs analysis.

Connectivity

- Provide an interconnected and accessible park, trail and greenway system for recreation and transportation

Quality

- Create a unique and high-quality park and trail system that responds to the evolving demands of recreational trends, populations, demographics, and income levels

Sustainability

- Create a sustainable park, trail and recreation system that adequately meets the needs of the community



1.4 Recommendations & Implementation

A. Parks and Recreation System Plan

The recommendations for the park and recreation system are based on increasing site visits by meeting the needs of the community and are as follows:

Park Priority Recommendations

1. Prioritize the improvements and development of community parks that serve the greater needs of the community to include (not in particular order of importance);
 - Redevelopment of Lakefront Park per the master plan to meet current programming demands as a key community park.
 - Full redevelopment of Sand Point Beach to be a prime destination community park focused on water recreation.
 - Potential development of Spring Lake Park with athletic facilities to help meet the current community demands.
 - Improvements to Thomas Ryan Memorial and The Ponds to meet athletic and user needs for parking, (improvements to parking contingent on relocation of some athletic fields).
 - Complete development of Pike Lake Park as a natural resource based passive use park with water recreation.
 - Improvements to Memorial Park as the location for the town ballfield with additional park recreational amenities.
 - Secure lands as needed and funding for the development of additional community parks as needed to help supplement additional athletic and recreational needs of the growing community (50-80 acres preferable).
2. Within each neighborhood service area, ensure one high-quality developed neighborhood park based on varying criteria such as suitability for development, recreational programming and having 300 or more children within a 1/2 mile radius.
3. Focus improving connectivity, quality and sustainability goals by implementing the system plan recommendations, to include;
 - Complete recommended park designation modifications and align park developments accordingly.
 - Improve quality of experiences.
 - Reduce redundancy.



B. Trails and Open Space System Plan

The recommendations for the trail system are as follows:

High Priority Recommendations

1. Prioritize filling in major gaps in the system to allow for greater connectivity and safe pedestrian travel to primary destinations within the city and to regional connections.
2. Following primary trail gaps, prioritize the improvement of existing trails over the development of new trails to be based upon the pavement ratings.
3. Prioritize funding of trail improvements and developments.
4. Seek funding and partnership opportunities to implement the trail improvements and developments.

C. Implementation

Implementing the recommendations for the park and recreation system will take significant and strategic efforts on behalf of the city. The City needs to continually review and adjust priorities for parks, trail and recreational programs to be in alignment with current funding available and according to current community sentiment. The following strategy is recommended for implementing recommendations for the park system.

1. Maintain dedicated staff person to manage the park, trail and recreation system: Responsible for the management of the parks, trails and recreation system and staff, budget for improvements, seek partnerships and opportunities, and act as a community liaison.
2. Establish an initial 5-year improvement program: This establishes priorities for park and trail developments, redevelopment and improvements.
3. Prepare a master plan for high priority parks: This should involve the community stakeholders and include a cost estimate and listing of priorities within each park site.
4. Implement improvements: Undertake initial park and trail improvements projects consistent with the priorities and funding available.
5. Community awareness: Implement an awareness program to identify upcoming projects and promote the investments that the city is implementing



The following outlines the overall estimates for all parks and the high priority trail segments.

Description	Low Priority	Medium Priority	High Priority
Community Parks	\$2,556,200	\$6,432,000	\$55,000,000
Neighborhood & Special Use Parks	\$5,228,400	\$10,282,100	\$6,287,900
Trail Segments			\$26,572,000
Total:	\$7,784,600	\$10,288,532	\$87,859,900

These numbers do not account for costs related to the acquisition or development of future parks, parks that require a master plan study with associated cost estimate, maintenance and replacement costs, or lower priority trail segments.

This system plan is meant to provide the city with the initial high priority elements to start using as a basis for budgeting and a Capital Improvement Plan.

Funding will likely need to include additional mechanisms to make the most of the city's dollars, such as grant opportunities and shared costs through partnerships. The city may decide to seek additional methods for increasing the amount of funding available to make more significant improvements. This may include measures such as bonding, a dedicated tax levy or franchise fees, though a more thorough examination of the city resident's willingness to participate in these funding initiatives will be necessary to determine if they are viable options at this time. Even if measures such as these are successful, they are not meant to be used to fund a few significant improvements every 10 to 20 years without additional yearly funding in between to keep the system functioning at an optimal level.

