

7

The Parks System

Introduction

Parks are an essential amenity that positively impact the health of the community. The City's investment in the parks system is an indicator of a high quality of life. Richfield has more than 460 * acres of parkland, 21 parks and several key community facilities that provide community gathering, athletic fields and facilities, such as Veterans Memorial Park, featuring an ice arena, outdoor pool, arts center, mini-golf, farmer's market and the Honoring All Veterans Memorial; the Richfield Community Center featuring meeting rooms and a banquet facility, where most of the City's recreation programming occurs; and Wood Lake Nature Center, featuring wetlands, walking paths, and an interpretive center. Wood Lake Nature Center has become an attraction and destination for the metropolitan region.

In 2008, the City prepared a Park System Master Plan. This chapter is a summary of that more detailed master plan which provides a physical plan for park improvements, and provides a road map addressing existing and future parks system needs.

* Includes Open Water

Benefits of Parks

The benefits of parks are broad-ranging and important to the quality of life in Richfield. The parks system consists of year-round programs, activities and special events, parks, trails, recreation facilities and open space. All of these components contribute to meeting the diverse needs of Richfield's residents. Parks are not mere expenditures, but an investment in the future well-being of individuals and groups, as well as the continued attractiveness and viability of the City. The benefits of parks and recreation include:

- outdoor and indoor recreation experiences.
- exercise and wellness.
- connected families.
- a sense of community and place.
- ethnic and cultural harmony.
- reduction of crime and substance abuse.
- a positive effect on property values.

- protection of open space, appreciation of the natural environment and informal outdoor educational opportunities for all ages.
- community pride.

Existing Parks and Facilities

Richfield has more than 460 acres of parkland, 21 neighborhood and community parks, a nature center, and many community and athletic facilities well distributed across the community and highly accessible to residents (See Table 7-1: Richfield Parks System Map). Richfield's parks provide diverse recreational amenities including walking trails, picnic facilities, children's play areas, skating rinks, a swimming pool, court games, playfields, and more. Community facilities include a community center for senior activities, mini-golf, a farmers market, an ice arena, outdoor pool, and arts center. An inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities can be found on Table 7.2 Parks Classification and Facilities Matrix. Park inventory maps of existing City parks can be found in the more detailed Park System Master Plan, Appendix A.

Existing Open Space

Within the City there are two unnamed open spaces in the Park System. The parcels are too small for

recreation purposes and serve as neighborhood open space only. The first parcel is a boulevard area located at 68th Street and Oliver Avenue South. The second parcel is located at Lyndale Avenue adjacent to the Crosstown Highway right-of-way. This parcel was given to the parks system in exchange for land taken for the Crosstown Highway improvements. Also within the City are several stormwater ponds. Although providing open space, they are not considered part of the parks system.

Parks Associated with Federal and State Fund

There are nine parks in the Richfield Park System that were purchased with, or contain recreation facilities that were developed with Federal or State funds. Depending on the source of funding, specific restrictions may exist related to the park or improvement. Parks associated with Federal and State funds are shown on below on Table 7-1.

Figure 7.1 Richfield Parks System Map

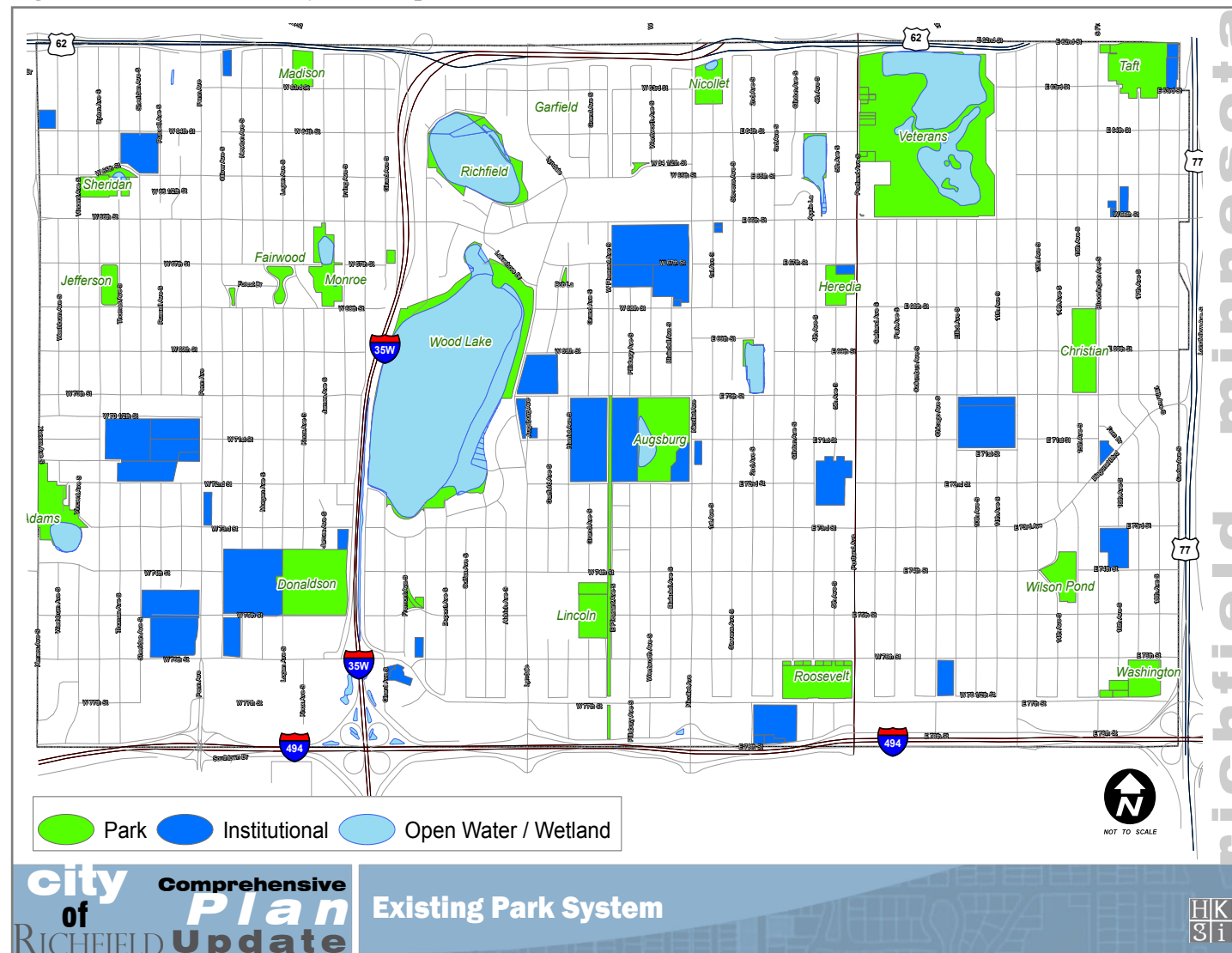


Table 7.1 Parks Classification and Facilities Matrix

	Acres	Walking Path (miles)	Park Building/Shelter	Tennis Court	Football/Soccer Field	Softball Field	Baseball Field	Play Equipment	Basketball Court	Pleasure Rink	Hockey Rink	Volleyball Court	Horseshoe Court	
	L=Lighted													
Adams Hill														Neighborhood Park
7200 Washburn Ave	13.0	0.6					1	1			1			
Apple Blossom														Mini-Park
6645 Girard Ave	0.6													
Augsburg														Community Park
7145 Wentworth Ave	21.0	0.4	3	6L			2	1	1	1				
Christian														Neighborhood Park
6900 Bloomington Ave	11.0	0.7	1	4	1L	1	1	1	1	1				Athletic Complex
Donaldson														Athletic Complex/ Community Park
7434 Humboldt Ave	23.6	0.4	1	4	1L	2L	1	2	1	2				
Fairwood														Neighborhood Park
6700 Logan Ave	2.5		1	2			1					1		
Fremont														Mini-Park
7445 Fremont Ave	0.6						1	0.5						
Garfield														Mini-Park
6301 Garfield Ave	0.8						1	1						
Heredia														Neighborhood Park
6710 Portland Ave	3.6	0.3	1	2		1	1	1						
Jefferson														Neighborhood Park
6700 Thomas Ave	4.0		1	2		1	1	1	1		1			
Lincoln Field														Athletic Complex
7500 Pleasant Ave	7.1					4								
Little Bob's														Mini-Park
6700 Harriet Ave	0.3						1							

Table 7.1 Parks Classification and Facilities Matrix (continued)

	Acres	Walking Path (miles)	Park Building/Shelter	Tennis Court	Football/Soccer Field	Softball Field	Baseball Field	Play Equipment	Basketball Court	Pleasure Rink	Hockey Rink	Volleyball Court	Horseshoe Court	
	L=Lighted													
Madison														Neighborhood Park
6244 Knox Ave	4.5	0.3	1	1		1		1	1					
Monroe														Neighborhood Park
6710 Irving Ave	9.5	0.7	1			1		1	1					
Nicollet														Neighborhood Park
6300 First Ave	6.5	0.3	1	1		1		1	1			1		
Richfield Lake														Neighborhood Park
6400 Dupont Ave	24.0	1.0						1	1					Stormwater Pond
Roosevelt														Neighborhood Park
7644 Fourth Ave	13.5	0.3	1	2			4	1	1	1	1			
Sheridan														Neighborhood Park
6500 Upton Ave	6.8		1	2		1		1	1			1	1	
Taft														Athletic Complex
1800 E 63rd St	42.0	1.0	2		1L	4L		1	2	1	1			Community Park
Veterans Memorial														Community Park
6335 Portland Ave	108.0	2.0	2					1				1		Stormwater Pond
Washington														Neighborhood Park
7600 17th Ave	8.0	0.4	1	2	1L			1	1					Athletic Complex
Wood Lake Nature Center														Nature Preserve
6710 Lake Shore Drive	150.0	3.1	1											Stormwater Pond
Totals	460.9	11.5	19	28	4	7	10	20	18	6	6	5	2	

Trails and Bikeways

Richfield was primarily developed during the 1940's-1960's, at the same time as the rise of the automobile as the dominant transportation mode. At that time, trails were not popular and were not planned for. As a result, there are relatively few trails in Richfield, and those that exist are primarily located within individual parks or are sidewalks along streets. The existing grid of streets and sidewalks offer relatively safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to many destinations in the City.

Table 7.2 Parks Associated with Federal and State funds

PARK	STATE	FEDERAL
Adams Hill	X	X
Christian	X	
Fairwood	X	
Monroe	X	
Richfield Lake		X
Sheridan	X	
Taft	X	X
Taft Fishing Dock	X	
Veterans Memorial	X	
Wood Lake Nature Center	X	

Existing Partnerships

The Richfield Parks System relies on partners such as the Richfield School District, the Academy of

Holy Angels, the YMCA, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), and the Adaptive Recreation and Learning Exchange (AR&LE), and adjacent cities to provide access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and recreation programming. The City partners with the School District and the Academy of Holy Angels through Joint Facilities Agreements to share fields, courts, gymnasiums and other recreation facilities. The School District provides an integral role in the parks system by providing public access to School ballfields, soccer fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, etc. The Academy of Holy Angels provides public use of a baseball field and a soccer field. In turn, the Richfield High school uses the tennis courts at Augsburg Park and the Academy of Holy Angels uses the tennis courts at Heredia Park and the soccer field at Washington Park. Both the High School and the Academy of Holy Angels use the Richfield Ice Arena in Veterans Memorial Park as their home arena. The Tri-City Skate Park is a partnership between the YMCA and the Cities of Edina, Bloomington and Richfield with the YMCA responsible for programming, operations and staffing. The City has an agreement with the MAC for use of land for Taft Park. The Adaptive Recreation and Learning Exchange (AR&LE) is a cooperative partnership between the cities of Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Edina and Richfield and the School District

to offer recreation, leisure and community education opportunities specifically designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Park and Trail System Needs

Introduction

There is no precise standard measurement to determine absolute park and recreation needs for a community. Each community is unique in its needs and opportunities. Richfield's Park System needs were determined by comparing the park system to national park and recreation standards and by an analysis of recreation and demographic trends to determine existing and future park needs.

Park Land Acquisition Needs

The Richfield Parks System is fully developed; however, there is a need to acquire additional park land at key locations if and when the opportunity arises to provide expansion of existing parks or to provide for new community recreation facilities. The City policy on park land acquisition is that the land will be acquired only on a willing seller basis. The identified park land acquisition sites are identified in Table 7.3.

Parkland Acquisition Site	Associated Parkland	Potential Use
American Legion Site	Veterans Memorial Park	Parking and Banquet Facility
Right-of-way	Taft Park	Storm water ponding and looped trail around Mother Lake
Mobile Home Park	Lincoln Park	Community Athletic Fields

Park Improvement Needs

Many of Richfield's parks and recreation facilities have been updated over the past few years, in particular the ballfield complex in Roosevelt Park, ballfield fencing in Taft Park, the outdoor pool and ice arena at Veterans Memorial Park, and new exhibits, prairie restoration and an outdoor orientation and reception area at Wood Lake Nature Center. Also, Fairwood, Nicollet, and Little Bob's parks have been renovated recently with new neighborhood park facilities. While many improvements have been made, an analysis of the parks system identified additional revitalization needs at several parks as a result of aging infrastructure, changing recreation trends, and demographic changes.

Park revitalization needs identified by a needs analysis and community input include:

- Adding electrical service in some park shelters.
- Finding a reuse for existing park buildings. Many park buildings are underutilized due to staffing issues, reduction in summer and winter youth programming, fewer program participants, budget cuts, and vandalism.
- Looped trails, in parks. Looped trails are a benefit for walking, biking, and in general active living. Loop trails around natural areas can increase understanding and appreciation for the environment. Trails are one of the most popular amenities and in demand by park users.
- Handicap accessibility. Some parks lack handicap access to playgrounds, shelters, courts, etc.
- Safety and security improvements. Park users increasingly feel unsafe in parks and desire safety and security improvements such as surveillance cameras, improved lighting, opening up views to trails, clearing of understory brush and providing new uses to activate parks.
- Facility replacement. Recreation facilities are aging and some are in need of replacement. Prior to replacement, the City needs to monitor the use of such facilities to determine whether replacement is warranted. Recreation trends show that some sports have seen a decline in popularity and participation. In these instances, alternate uses or removal of a facility should be considered.
- Off-leash dog exercise areas.
- Large picnic shelters for an increasingly diverse community.
- Other improvements to reflect the changing community and diversity, such as, facilities catering to seniors, gardens, landscape accents, shade and seating.
- Increased access to restrooms and drinking water in the parks. Park buildings are often closed with restroom facilities off limits to park users. Drinking water and restrooms are highly desired in parks. Bathrooms must be durable to withstand vandalism.
- Natural resource and sustainability improvements such as energy efficient buildings, improved stormwater treatments, etc.
- Potential need for an additional soccer field in the system.
- Potentially additional ball fields, depending upon use levels and recreation trends.

- Continued lifecycle replacement of playgrounds and other park facilities.

Trails and Bikeway Needs

In the 1940's – 1960's when the City developed, the present popularity of bicycling and walking as a mode of recreation and transportation and the emphasis on active living, were not anticipated or planned for. As a result, the City lacks trails and bikeways, bike racks and other supporting facilities. There is a need for greater connectivity to places of interest in the City and to bike and trail networks in adjacent cities. There are opportunities within some City rights-of-way to provide bikeways and the railroad right-of-way to provide an off street trail. Future redevelopment along the I-494 corridor presents one of these opportunities for a linear east-west pedestrian or bike trail.

Community Facility Needs

The Richfield parks system has a number of community park facilities and sites that are well suited to serve the community. The City has a significant investment in these facilities and has done well over the years to meet the needs of the community with these facilities. However, the community is changing with an increase in age and diversity and unique needs and wants that result from that change. The ice arena is a single use facility and hockey and skating participation has

begun to decline. The Richfield Community Center has outgrown its space for senior programming. It is forecasted that there will be even more seniors in Richfield in the future. The mini-golf facility at Veterans Park is reaching the end of its useful life and needs replacement. The outdoor pool has been renovated and does well to meet a specific need in the community, but indoor swimming facilities in communities nearby are popular and attract Richfield residents away from the Veterans Park pool. For some time, there has been a strong interest and growing need for a community center in the City to meet the community's need for a central gathering location, indoor program space for families, youth, teens, adults and seniors, community meeting rooms, banquet facilities, indoor playground and other recreation facilities, etc. Moving forward, the City needs to continually assess the changing park and recreational facility needs in order to appropriately address this issue. Most of the community facilities and festivals are located in Veterans Memorial Park. Improvements to this park should be a high priority.

Natural Resource & Sustainability Needs

Community input suggests a growing desire for natural resource preservation and environmental sustainability in part due to concerns about climate

change, invasive species, awareness raised through the Nature Center and other factors. Richfield parks are highly developed and all but a few lack natural character. There is a desire for passive areas of parks to be restored to a more natural character, and for existing natural areas to be better preserved. There is also a growing desire for more environmentally sustainable maintenance/management practices including best practices for stormwater management, and the incorporation of environmental sustainability into new facility programs.

Parks System Master Plan

Introduction

The Park System Master Plan is a separate document that is a guide to park and recreation system improvements, including park system policies, park and recreation facility improvements, park acquisition, trail improvements, and community facility improvements. The System Plan is based on an analysis of the park system and community input. The following is a summary of the Richfield Park System Master Plan.

Policies

City policies influence land stewardship and recreation resources. Good policies have a direct affect on the quality of parks and recreation experiences and on the quality of life in the City. The City of Richfield adopts the following policies with this Plan to provide guidance for future decision making regarding parks and recreation:

- It is City policy that there will be “no net loss of parkland”. Richfield has suffered losses of parkland as the result of freeway/ road right-of-way and airport expansions over the years. As a fully developed city, replacing parkland can be expensive, but also important to the quality of life in Richfield.
- It is City policy that it will not program adult or youth athletics in neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks by design and location are for informal active and passive recreation. Scheduled league play should only occur in community parks and athletic complexes.
- It is City policy that all residents have access to and have the opportunity to be involved in recreation programs. The City has long offered financial assistance to those residents who need assistance with program fees and this practice shall continue.

- It is City policy that all new park and facility improvements include criterion that improves sustainability of materials, energy use, operating cost and lifecycle replacement and natural environmental impact.
- It is City policy that it shall incorporate best practices for stormwater retention in new park development and in the renovation of existing parks.
- It is City policy that new development have a provision for public/private open space. In particular the I-494 corridor study recommended a continuous green area along the I-494 edge with a new open space south of 77th Street and other public/private open spaces throughout the corridor.
- It is City policy that park land acquisition be on a willing seller basis. Where possible, the City will work to obtain a first right of refusal to purchase lands identified in this document.
- It is City policy that tobacco use is prohibited at all recreational facilities. The City should continue this policy and consider prohibiting tobacco use in all City parks.
- It is a City policy that sloped areas in parks will be naturalized with prairie grasses and flowers to minimize maintenance costs and to beautify parks.
- It is a City policy that planned-facility improvements and lifecycle replacement will be made based on demonstrated need. The City will evaluate recreation facility use prior to improvements or and at the end of a facility's lifecycle and will determine at that time whether participation or use warrants replacement, conversion to an alternate uses, or removal.
- It is a City policy to provide adequate seating, shade and a trail loops of varying lengths in parks to encourage active living for an aging population.
- It is a City policy to provide public safety improvements as needed to ensure park and trail user's well being. The City will utilize Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies.
- It is a City policy to provide parks and recreation facilities that are handicap accessible consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Building and Facilities and universal design principles.

Park Improvements

Based on an analysis of the park system and public input, the City residents are well served by its parks and recreation facilities. Many facilities have seen

rehabilitation in recent years, yet improvements are needed, as a result of aging infrastructure, changing recreation trends, and demographic changes, such as:

- Electrical service in park shelters. Add electrical service and outlets in parks and park shelters where the use justifies the investment.
- Looped trails, shade, and seating areas to encourage active living. Looped trails are a benefit for walking, biking, and in general active living for a variety of ages and abilities. Loop trails also can provide greater environmental awareness when encircling natural areas and with environmental interpretation.
- Improvements catering to the needs of the changing community and diversity such as: facilities for seniors, gardens, landscape accents, shade, seating, looped trails for a variety of ages and abilities.
- Handicap accessibility and safety improvements.
- Balance aesthetic improvements with the needs for public safety. Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards for park safety.
- Consider safety and security improvements such as surveillance cameras, improved lighting, increased park patrols, etc.

- Provide restrooms and drinking water in the parks as justified by park use.
- Incorporate natural resource and sustainability improvements into park and facility improvements, such as energy efficient buildings, improved stormwater improvements, etc.
- Lifecycle replacement of playgrounds and other park facilities.

Potential park improvements have been suggested for many parks in the system to address aging infrastructure, changing recreation trends, and demographic changes. These potential improvements can be found in Appendix A of the more detailed Richfield Park System Master Plan. A summary of the potential park improvements are found in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Potential Improvements by Park	
Park Name	Potential Improvements
Adams Hill	Paved trail around the pond with additional landscape definition to protect private property, additional trees and plant material, and handicap accessibility improvements.
Apple Blossom	None
Augsburg	Remote timer tennis court lighting controls and wiring, bury power lines, a performance stage, replacement and repair of bounce wall and fencing, trail around the pond, trail connections to park facilities for handicap accessibility, an additional picnic shelter, tree replacement plantings, type 1 skateboard facility, parking lot screening, and improvements to the Community Center Building (See Community Center Building).
Christian	Landscape lighting features near the pond and reconfigure parking lot for more capacity.
Donaldson	Full sized lighted soccer field, an age separated play area, and a concessions/restroom building renovation.
Fairwood	None
Fremont	The existing storage structure should be replaced by an open shelter.

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Table 7.4 Potential Improvements by Park	
Park Name	Potential Improvements
Garfield	No improvements are planned for the park, however the park has the potential to be reconfigured into an urban/passive park as part of the redevelopment of K-Mart. Planning should allow for possible reconfiguration and expansion with future redevelopment of the area.
Heredia	Landscaped plaza and covered shelter
Jefferson	None
Lincoln Field	Potential redevelopment into two 225' fields and up to two 200' softball fields, children's playground area, parking and connecting perimeter trail. Potential park expansion. A rail line lies to the east of the park that has the potential to become a linear trail in the future. Development of the trail corridor would provide needed trail access to the park and would connect the park to other destinations in the City.
Little Bob's	None
Madison	None
Monroe	Turf improvements, additional paved trails, and vehicle barriers on 67th Street alignment.
Nicollet	None

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Table 7.4 Potential Improvements by Park	
Park Name	Potential Improvements
Richfield Lake	New playground, 1/2 basketball court, and sun shelter
Roosevelt	Removing the hockey and pleasure rinks and replacing them with open turf to be used for youth soccer, realign trails, expand playground for an 8-12 year old area and additional parking with a driveway to Portland Avenue.
Sheridan	None
Taft	Additional fishing piers, picnic shelters, additional parking, ballfield foul ball-line fencing, safety netting, abandon Cedar Avenue around Mothers Lake adding trails and open space, a full sized soccer field, a new restroom building, lighting improvements, and connecting trails for accessibility.

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Table 7.4 Potential Improvements by Park	
Park Name	Potential Improvements
Veterans Memorial	Expanded farmers market parking lot with permeable pavers, an off-leash dog exercise area, an expanded community playground area, widened boardwalk, nine hole disc golf course, Veterans Memorial, trail improvements, lighting and signage improvements, a new monument sign, new mini-golf area to share the pool entry and concessions, additional ice arena parking and rain garden (electrical service needed in ice arena parking lot with expansion), and an electronic reader board sign at the corner of Portland and 66th Street to provide information about activities in the park.
Washington Park	Soccer field and practice field turf improvements, remove large earthen hill, add large community picnic shelter with serving counter and electric service, expanded parking and connecting trails. To improve public safety, portions of the existing noise wall should be removed to open up views into the park. A pedestrian tunnel is planned for under 77th Street in the future to improve pedestrian access to and from the south.

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Table 7.4 Potential Improvements by Park	
Park Name	Potential Improvements
Wood Lake Nature Center	Promote area as a key tourist attraction and fundamental City asset. Way finding signs throughout the City.
Richfield Arts Center	Future expansion
Richfield Outdoor Pool	Future splash play and shared entrance and concessions with mini-golf.
Richfield Ice Arena	None, however, in recent years, the Richfield Hockey Association has seen a slight decline in participation. Should the trend continue, and profitability of the facility declines, a reuse study may be a needed to study alternative uses or multiple uses of the facility.
Adventure Garden sMini-Golf	Dismantle after 2010 and potentially relocate in area lot between the Richfield Outdoor Pool and 66th Street to share concessions and entrance with the pool. The potential for relocation should be studied prior to 2010. The existing mini-golf location is being considered for a potential off-leash dog exercise area.
Richfield Community Center	Potential improvements to the existing facility include: a covered walkway from the parking lot, and a new outdoor patio area. Evaluate larger City-wide community facility needs.

Park Buildings

The City has a large investment in park buildings in City parks. Many of the park buildings were originally built as warming houses. As outdoor hockey and skating participation declined and staffing costs increased, the City reduced the number of skating rinks and closed a number of warming houses. Some of the park buildings have been renovated in recent years, but they remain too small or inflexible for much of the Recreation Department programming needs. Finding a reuse for park buildings was identified as a park system need. The Recreation Department has been working to find alternate uses where possible. Some of the buildings are being used for storage, the park building at Heredia is used as a carpentry shop, at Roosevelt it is used for concessions, and others are opened up for community groups. Other suggested uses include reuse for preschool programming, teen drop in sites, and expanded playground programming focused on immigrant families. Marketing to youth groups, such as boys and girl scouts, neighborhood watch groups and others should continue. Minimal improvements to park buildings such as adding media equipment or other such features should be supported to make the buildings more attractive to specific users or programming needs. Although not serving much of a recreation function, the storage use of park buildings makes sense when no better use can

be found considering the City's existing investment. For those buildings that have reached the end of their useful life, and rehabilitation into a multi-use facility cannot be made, the buildings should be removed.

Trails and Bikeways

Trails and bikeways are highly desired by the citizens in Richfield and are currently lacking. The Richfield Comprehensive Transportation Plan in Chapter 6 incorporates sidewalk, bikeway and trail and landscape enhancements to improve safety and connectivity within the City, to local destinations, and to adjacent City's trails. Planned City trails include:

- Richfield Parkway Bike Route. This is a planned bike route that will run north-south along Cedar Avenue along Diagonal Boulevard and along 73rd Street. The parkway would have enhanced landscaping, trails/bike lanes, seating and other amenities. The route will connect Taft and Washington Parks and to Lake Nokomis and the Minnehaha Parkway trails in Minneapolis.
- North East -West Route. A pedestrian/bike route exists from Veterans Park to Richfield Lake mostly along the Crosstown Highway frontage where cul-de-sacs and local streets have been connected by short trails to create a

continuous route. This route will be continued to connect to 66th Street and to Cedar Avenue.

Also planned are long term pedestrian improvements to the 66th Avenue right-of-way connecting Veterans Memorial Park to Wood Lake Nature Center.

General City trail and bikeway improvements will include:

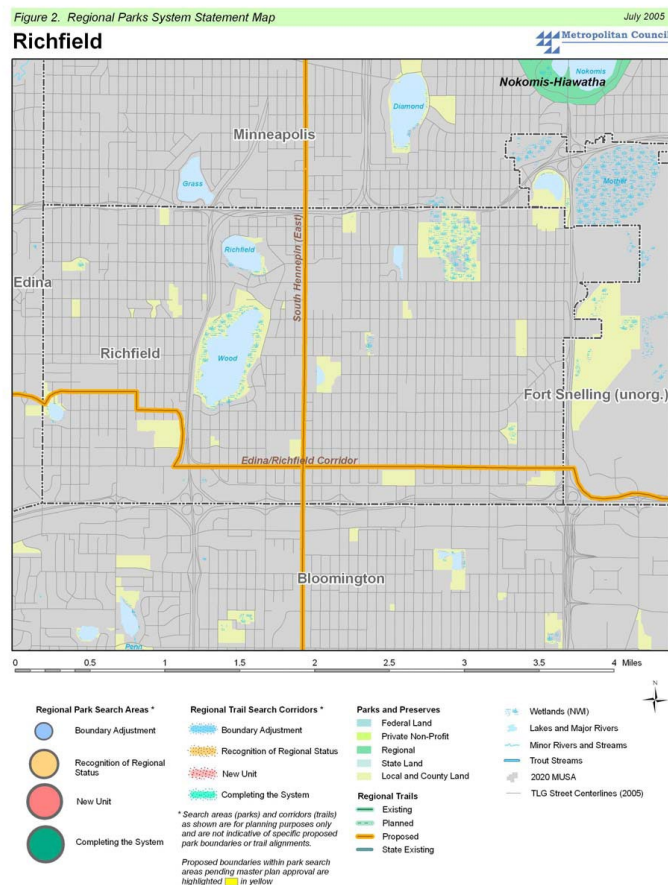
- Improved wayfinding signs, incorporating historical markers and places of interest.
- Enhanced landscaping, i.e., benches, shade trees, parking areas.
- Safety improvements such as bike friendly stop lights; stop lights that are triggered by the presence of bicycles at the intersection.

Regional Trails

Two regional trail corridors are planned for the City of Richfield (see Figure 7.2):

- South Hennepin (East) Regional Trail. The South Hennepin (East) Regional Trail is a proposed regional trail that would follow an existing north-south railroad grade in the City. The railroad is still in active use so planning for the conversion to a regional trail is on hold pending a change in status of the railroad operations. There is no schedule for the rail to be discontinued at this time. This corridor

Figure 7.2 Regional Park System Statement Map



would connect schools, parks and destinations through the center of the City, including Academy of Holy Angels, Augsburg Park, Lincoln Field and the I-494 Corridor. This trail would also extend to and connect with the City of Bloomington trail system and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes.

- The Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail is regional trail planned by Three Rivers Park District who worked with a number of suburban communities to complete the First Tier Trail Plan which includes a trail along the 76th Street alignment in Richfield. The final trail alignment and detail design have not been completed yet for this trail. The timing of the trail improvements will be coordinated with sewer and water improvements to the 76th Street. This trail will connect the Jr. High School, Donaldson Park, Roosevelt Park and Washington Parks and the Edina bikeways.

Community Recreation Facilities

There is a growing need in Richfield for community facilities to address changing needs related to aging and diversity, to provide community gathering space, to promote a sense of community, and promote cultural understanding. The City needs to develop a strategy to fulfill this community need. The City has limited ability to bond for such improvements and

has bonding commitments through 2012, so by 2012, the City should develop a strategic and feasibility plan for community facilities. A community center strategy should determine or weigh the costs and benefits of investing strategically in existing park building renovation/expansion to fill existing program needs or whether to invest in a single City-wide community center to fulfill current and future needs. The Strategic Plan should determine potential community center locations, programs, costs including staffing and maintenance considerations, funding options/mechanism, and timing.

Potential uses of a community center include: a central gathering location, program space for a diverse and aging citizenry, community meeting rooms, senior facilities, pre-teen and teen gathering locations, banquet facilities, and indoor playground and recreation facilities, etc.

Natural Resources and Sustainability

Although the Richfield park system is highly developed within the community, there is a growing desire for natural resource preservation and environmental sustainability. Strategies to improve natural resources and environmental sustainability include:

- Use native plants to reduce watering, fertilizing, and mowing and as a source of food and shelter for wildlife.

- Continue to plant prairie and native flowers in areas difficult to mow such as on steep slopes.
- Use native plant species as a border around shorelines to control runoff and to control geese.
- Control invasive plant species and seek biologic controls where possible.
- Be a model for stewardship through City practices, maintenance, operations, land management and facilities.
- Add natural resource and environmental interpretation/education signs and information in areas with natural resources.
- Encourage citizen volunteers in natural resource management efforts.
- Develop best management practices to improve stormwater management techniques and reduce levels of pollutants in water, such as use of rain gardens, pervious pavement, etc., to capture stormwater, improve ground water infiltration, improve water quality, and to lessen erosion.
- Consider environmental sustainability in new facilities.
- Consider forming an Ecological Resource Commission.

Partnerships

The City of Richfield currently maintains partnerships with schools, agencies, non-profits and private businesses to provide public access to facilities (fields, gyms, playgrounds, etc.) and to operate programs. Partnerships are an efficient and generally mutually beneficial arrangement, recognizing that there are challenges with coordination and access to facilities. In some cases the partnerships are critical to providing needed neighborhood or community facilities. Continued partnerships and outreach to businesses, service groups, and other organizations; and better recruitment and management of individual volunteers and volunteer groups will become even more critical to the park system to respond to community need and recreation trends, to improve service efficiencies, and to minimize facility and maintenance costs. The City should maintain these partnership relationships, work to update current agreements and work to form new partnerships. Updating or establishing an agreement with MAC for land used for Taft Park is of critical importance because of the athletic facilities located in that park. Strategies to encourage and maintain partnerships are as follows:

- Involve potential partners in identifying the program, service and facility needs of their community.
- Foster partnerships with businesses to develop and provide resources for recreational programs.
- Seek non-traditional partnerships to provide new and greater recreational opportunities.
- Engage businesses and employees in active living actions and facility development.
- Work with parks and recreation departments in other municipalities to promote and provide special event services.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of adopt-a-park program and identify ways to improve the program.
- Acknowledge and recognize parks and recreation volunteers, sponsors and donors.
- Establish and maintain ongoing formal relationships with partners to facilitate communication, needs identification and program delivery.
- Update Joint Use and Programming Agreements with the School District, MAC, MN/DNR and other entities serving residents to maximize public access to community resources.
- Establish agreements and relationships with service clubs to enhance program opportunities through the sharing of resources.
- Continue cooperative and coordinated interaction with exiting park system partners for efficient utilization of funding, facilities, staff and sites for recreation and programs.

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