



7. PARKS & RECREATION

Introduction

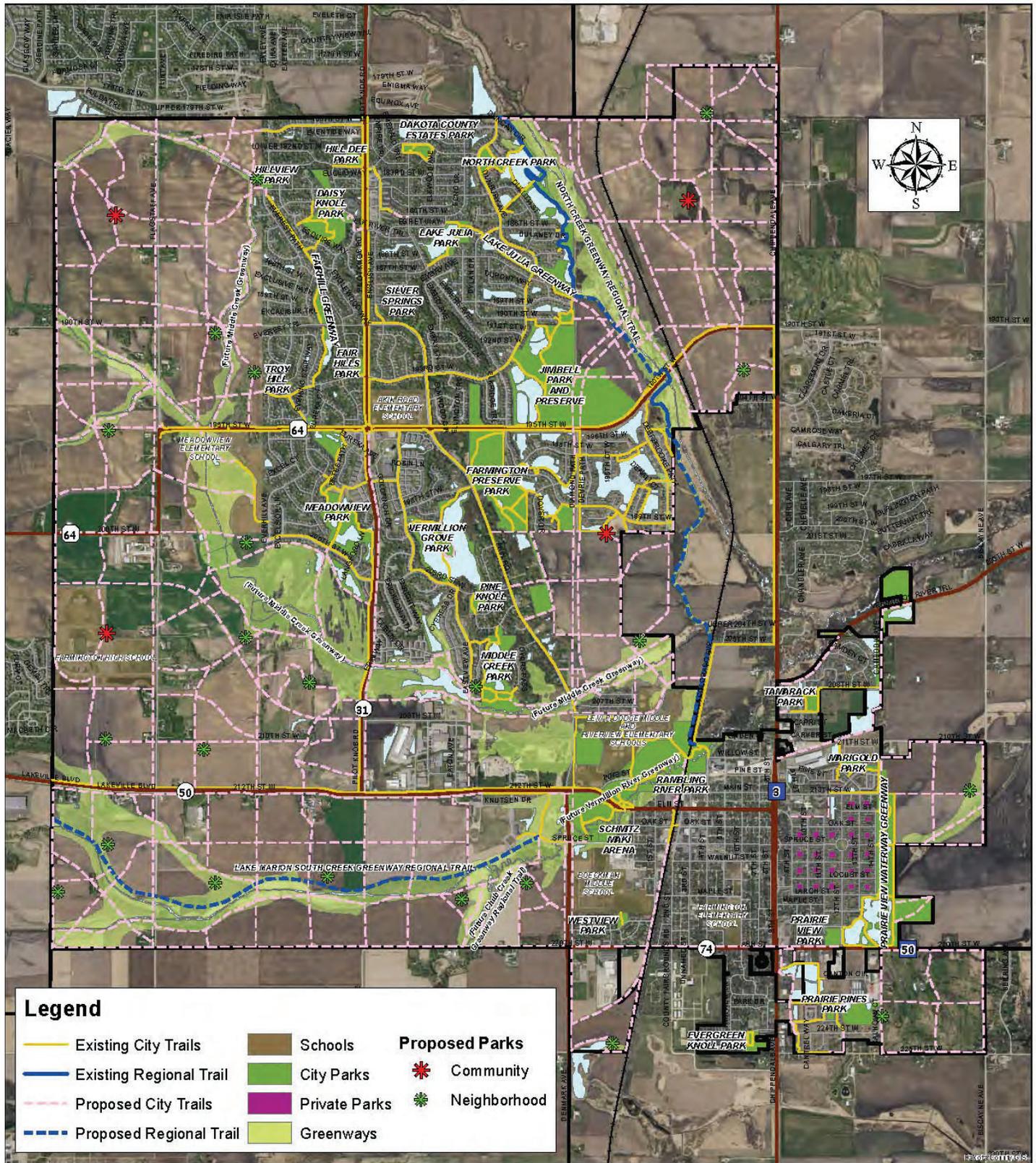
Parks and recreation plays an important role in creating a high quality of life for city residents. It provides opportunities to learn and play, meditate and rejuvenate, create and imagine, and enjoy life. As required by the Metropolitan Council, a regional planning agency serving the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area whose responsibilities lie with providing essential services to the region, a city's park and open space plan is required to be updated every 10 years as part of the city's Comprehensive Plan update.

In 2008, a 2030 Comprehensive Plan was approved containing a Park and Recreation Master Plan chapter. This plan has reached a ten-year threshold, requiring it to be updated to be in compliance with the Metropolitan Council requirements. This required update enhances and updates city information and data allowing elected/appointed officials and staff to accurately assess the current and future direction for parks and recreation in the community. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan is the document that will provide the guidance upon which the city continues to make its decisions for parks, trails, recreational programs and facilities. The new updated plan will create a blueprint for making well-informed decisions that will move parks, open space, trails, and recreation forward in the community for the next 20+ years.

Figure 7.1 shows Farmington's Existing and Proposed Park, Trail and Open Space Plan Map, including community parks, neighborhood parks, city trails, regional trails, and greenways.

Figure 7.1 Existing and Proposed Park, Trail and Open Space Plan

City of Farmington



Map dated March, 2018.

0 1 2 Miles

Prepared for the Farmington Parks Department by the Dakota County Office of GIS.

Historical Perspective

The city began its parks and open space system with the acquisition and development of Rambling River Park and Evergreen Knoll Park in the early 1970s. From these initial park developments and during the next 30+ years, additional acreage has been added to the system bringing the total in 2017 to 930 acres. The city has not experienced much new residential development since the 2030 Comprehensive Plan was approved. In 2017, one new residential development was platted resulting in one new park being dedicated. Because of this recent development activity in Farmington, it is expected the park and open space system will continue to grow in the coming years.

Parks and Recreation was first organized through the creation of the Park and Recreation Advisory Commission in the 1970s. Hiring of the first Parks and Recreation Department staff member occurred in 1974. In subsequent years the city of Farmington added staff in the areas of facilities, park maintenance and recreation programs. The Parks and Recreation Department currently consists of 10 full-time staff, two part time staff and numerous seasonal staff making it the largest department (staffing wise) in the city.

Over the years, the city of Farmington has been fiscally responsible in its development of the parks and recreation system. Acquisition of parkland has been accomplished through creation of a park dedication ordinance and thus has only used fee acquisition in a limited basis to secure public parkland. This park dedication process has also generated money that has been used to develop the park and trail system resulting in a zero debt parks and trail system. In 1974 the city did issue general obligation bonds from a voter approved referendum for the construction of the current ice arena. These bonds have long since been paid off. In previous years development of some park facilities were completed due to the efforts of volunteer organizations and individuals in the community.

Recreation programs began to be offered to residents in the 1990s when the first full-time recreation staff member was hired and whose time was solely dedicated to planning and providing recreational programs. When recreation programs were first provided, only a handful of programs were offered. Today the community enjoys a diverse mix of programs and classes year-round.

Currently the city operates a senior center known as the Rambling River Center, which provides services to older adults in the community while allowing the community to rent the building for gatherings. The Rambling River Center was started by a group of citizens who raised funds to purchase and renovate an existing building in the downtown area of the city in order to create a senior center. When the senior

center was not able to make it financially in the 1980s, its operations were taken over by the city. In 2009 the Rambling River Center relocated to the former City Hall building after it had been renovated.

The city also operates Schmitz-Maki Arena, which provides ice skating, event and indoor turf opportunities during the year. It was constructed in 1975 and opened in 1976 for use. In 2010 and 2012, it received major upgrades to its refrigeration, dehumidification and dasher board systems. In 2016, an electric Zamboni resurfacers was purchased, resulting in cleaner air standards being met.

The city operated an outdoor pool from 1971 to 2017. The city attempted to replace the existing outdoor pool in 2016 by holding a General Obligation Bond Referendum to construct a new aquatic facility. However, the referendum that would have provided the funds needed to construct a new aquatic facility, failed by a just-over five percent (5%) margin. A decision was made to close the pool after the 2017 season. The 2018 budget includes funds to complete demolition of the outdoor pool.

Demographic Profile

The city of Farmington has seen a rapid pace in its growth over the past twenty years. U.S. Census data showed that in 1990, the population of the city was 5,940. In 2000 the population of the city had increased to 12,365 people. In 2010 the population had increased to 21,086. Since the Census in 2010, the city has continued to grow. It is estimated at the end of 2015 there were 22,159 residents living in Farmington. This represents a 5 percent increase in the population from the 2010 Census and a 79 percent increase from the 1990 Census. Most of the growth since 1990 has occurred in the northern and central parts of Farmington. There has however been some smaller residential growth in the east and south areas of Farmington, which has allowed the growth to spread and connect with older established neighborhoods.

The age group distribution of Farmington based on 2015 Census estimates indicates a heavy concentration of families and the overall median age of 33.9 years is lower than the national median age average of 37.9 years. Although Farmington can be classified as a young community with the median age being 4 years lower than the national level, the age groups that will experience the most growth over the next 40 years is likely to be between the ages of 45 to 74. Median household income in 2015 is estimated to be \$87,925, which is about 55 percent higher than the national median household income of \$56,516. Age and household incomes are two significant factors that impact participation in Parks and Recreation services.

While the city has not experienced rapid growth since the 2030 Plan, there are still many acres yet to be developed before the community is considered “built out”. The final population will of course depend

on the development of existing properties in the city as well as what properties outside of the city are annexed into the city. Based on the number of available residential lots and future allocation of MUSA by the Metropolitan Council, the 2040 population is projected by the Metropolitan Council to be 32,500 residents.

While the city has seen some change in the distribution of housing types in the past ten years, it is important to remember that residents, who live in multi-family neighborhoods without sizeable yards of their own, or with a small common park area, often look for a public neighborhood or community park to meet their recreational needs. While it is important for the city to provide park and open space for all residents, it is especially critical the city continue to provide park and open space in multi-family housing neighborhoods in the future.

Park And Open Space Areas

As of the 2040 Plan update, the city of Farmington owned park and open space land totaling 930 acres, which represents about 9.8 percent of the total land of 9,490 acres in the city. The breakdown of this acreage includes 490 acres of park land and 440 acres of open space. In addition, the Farmington School District owns and provides land for athletic fields. The School District also utilizes its school buildings for indoor recreational spaces. However for the purposes of creating an updated 2040 Plan for the city, the school district facilities, while mentioned, should not be used to determine the city's needs. Even though the School District facilities are available to the public, the city has no control over their scheduled use and said facilities are to be used first and foremost for school related programs and activities. Furthermore, the School District's boundaries extend beyond the city's boundaries and so only the area inside the city's boundaries should be addressed in the 2040 Plan.

With the city's estimated population of 22,159 in 2015, the city parks and open space acreage of 930 acres provides a ratio of 41.96 acres of park and open space per 1,000 residents. However a further analysis finds that of the 930 acres, only 490 acres is active park acreage. The remaining 440 acres consists of open space areas. This means the ratio for active park acreage is 22.11 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents, well within the minimum commonly accepted standard identified by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) of at least 10 acres of active park acreage per 1,000 residents. Previously the city had adopted, in its 2020 Plan, a policy of at least 20 acres of active park acreage per 1,000 residents should be provided to residents living in Farmington. This policy was carried forward in the 2030 Plan. The current ratio of 22.11 acres per 1,000 residents meets the policy adopted in the 2020 Plan and carried over into the 2030 Plan. While a past acceptable practice has been to follow park acreage standards established by the National Recreation and

Park Association, it is not the only method. Parks and recreation professionals and professional planners also incorporate community demand/benefits into the formula when determining park acreage standards for communities. The thinking is that minimum park acreage requirements for communities should not solely be based on minimum number of acres needed per 1,000 residents but rather park acreage should be determined according to what each community needs based on the demand being made by park users. The city may want to continue to further explore this notion of having the park and open space acreage standards based on demand rather than a standard based solely on the population.

The city lacks adequate athletic facilities based on the minimum standards developed by the NRPA. Of most concern is the shortage of outdoor athletic facilities that the city provides. There is a low inventory in the number of existing ballfields that are provided for youth baseball and adult softball. There is intense pressure currently in the community for green space for soccer. With youth lacrosse now firmly established in the community, the pressure for additional green space has only intensified. The city should focus on correcting these field shortages by constructing additional outdoor athletic facilities for both youth and adult sports in order to meet the increased growth in participation that has occurred in the community.

The city maintains 22 neighborhood parks and 2 community parks. During the warm months of the year maintenance tasks performed typically include: mowing grass; trimming weeds and grass around fixed objects; dragging ballfields; marking fields; repairing playground equipment; removing weeds from landscaped areas; fertilizing grass areas; and planting and trimming park trees. During colder months of the year maintenance tasks performed typically include: removing snow from trails and parking lots; trimming trees; removing dead and diseased trees; flooding outdoor rinks; and repairing playground equipment.

Trails

The city currently owns and maintains 45 miles of paved trails, a mile of soft trails and about a half mile of boardwalks. Traditionally community surveys show trails scoring highest in the areas of the most used and most favored park and recreation facility by city residents.

A majority of the paved trail system was constructed during the peak development that occurred from the 1980s through 2006. As a result the city did not initially have to provide much funding to build the trail system that is currently in place. The city has done a nice job of ensuring the trail system is relatively well connected. It has made an effort to fund the construction of paved trails where gaps have occurred. The city should continue to make an effort to ensure that gaps in trail connections are completed either when new development occurs or when the city has funds to do so when no development is imminent or feasible in areas where there is a gap in a trail connection. A good way to do this is to develop a Bike and Pedestrian Plan that can be used to identify where these gaps currently occur along with ensuring that future new trails are connected to the existing trail network.

The city implemented an annual pavement management program for trail maintenance in 2012. The pavement management program provides annual funding for crack sealing and fog sealing trails. The city is broken into five areas, which results in every trail in the city receiving maintenance work at least once every five years.

While there is annual funding in place for pavement management of trails, there is currently inadequate funding for replacement of trail sections that have so badly deteriorated that crack sealing and fog sealing hold no benefit. This is due to parts of the trail system being initially constructed more than 30 years ago. As a result, if the city wishes to continue to have a usable, safe and connected trail system, then a long term funding plan and source should be explored to be implemented in order to provide the funds needed to replace the city's existing trail infrastructure over time.

The city has also worked with Dakota County on a regional trail system plan. This includes two approved master planned regional greenway trail corridors in Farmington - North Creek and Lake Marion(South Creek) - with a third regional greenway trail corridor yet to be master planned (Chub Creek). As a result of trail planning occurring on a regional basis rather than a local basis, the city will be connected to regional parks and trails not only in Dakota County, but will also be connected to regional parks and trails in other metro area counties.

Since the city began constructing trails in the 1980s, it has placed a requirement that all trails be accessible according the requirements outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA

requires trails to be relatively flat with a slope of 5% or less. In situations where ADA requirements could not be met, the city has provided a secondary or alternative trail route that accommodates people of all ages and abilities to use the trail system.

In 2017, a trail wayfinding signage program was initiated. Three different park and open space areas were identified that contained highly used trail loops. Then a design of the maps occurred identifying where the trails signs should be located and what kind of information should be included on the sign. The trail wayfinding maps included information such as: distance of the loop, so people using the trail were made aware of how far they would have to travel to complete the various trail loops in the park; park and trail use rules; a map legend explaining symbols used on the map; a “You are Here” symbol so users could orientate themselves to the trail; and a depiction of the where the trails were located in the park and open space areas. The wayfinding signage program was funded by the municipal Farmington Liquor Store operational profits.

Recreation Programs

The Department’s recreational programming has been staffed by professionals who are imaginative, resourceful and comprehensive in the planning and facilitating of programs. The innovative and imaginative programs that have been provided to the community has resulted in several recreational programs being recognized in the past with Awards of Excellence, which is a state-wide award provided by the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association.

Recreational programs have been offered in such areas as youth and adult sports, pre-school activities, arts and crafts, fitness, team sports, individual sports, senior citizen programs and trips. Department staff plan and facilitate some of its own special events that are sprinkled throughout the year. There is also involvement through partnerships with other local organizations to provide seasonal special events and celebrations.

Park And Recreation Administration

The Parks and Recreation Department provides the administrative oversight for the recreational services, recreational facilities, parks and trails that are offered to the community. The City Council approves the operating and capital improvement budgets that provide the annual funding for the Department. In 2018 operational costs for all Divisions within the Department was budgeted at just over \$1.6 million. Capital improvement costs for park and trail improvements, was budgeted at \$75,000.00. Table 7.1 shows how the budget is distributed to the various divisions within the Department

Table 7.1 Department's Annual Budget by Division

DIVISION	AMOUNT OF DEPARTMENT'S 2018 BUDGET
Park Maintenance	39%
Park and Trail Improvements	4.4%
Recreational Programs	6.7%
Park and Recreation Administration	15.8%
Schmitz-Maki Arena	19%
Rambling River Center	10.6%
Outdoor Pool	4.5%

Since the 2030 Master Plan was approved in 2008, the City has focused on developing new parks and redeveloping existing parks to make them accessible, attractive and safe. In order to ensure that all parks received a review and a master plan, the Parks and Recreation Department developed a planning and improvement schedule. Design standards were also developed for neighborhood parks, which provided equity in the design and amenities provided in neighborhood parks.

2040 Park And Recreation Master Plan Public Input

Public input on the 2040 Plan was received in many different ways. Some of the input occurred through earlier studies where the public was invited to participate on task forces and committees. Further input was solicited through attendance at pop-up events, public meetings and from a web-based questionnaire. A community-wide survey was held in 2015 that provided insight about how satisfied residents were with existing services and facilities and what the community desires in the future. The recommended actions being offered in the 2040 Plan reflect the results of the public input received during the community survey, public meetings and from web-based questionnaires.

This includes the following:

- » Improve recreational facilities/parks/trail facilities
- » Create additional larger community parks
- » Trails are important
- » Develop a wide variety of parks
- » Develop a wide variety of recreational programs
- » Community values the open space and natural beauty of the area
- » Community favors community parks, neighborhood parks, trails and ballfields

Guidance for Implementing the 2040 Plan

The city has seen small growth in its parks and recreation system since the 2030 Plan was approved. However, the growth of the park and recreation system has not kept pace with the city's population growth since 2008. The city has completed several studies, surveys and plans related to parks, recreation, facilities and trails in the past fifteen years. Studies that have been completed include: Recreational Facility Needs Study, Community Center Feasibility Study, a Community Center Facility Site Plan Study, Community Attitude and Interest Citizen Survey and Aquatic Feasibility Study.

A summary of the highest priorities for parks and recreation based on the information collected from the public studies, community surveys and during public meetings are identified below. It will be important for the city to continue to review these priorities and modify these priorities on an annual basis.

1. Develop a park and open space system that includes active and athletic spaces.
2. Develop a park and open space system that includes natural areas and environmentally sensitive areas for passive and un-programmed spaces.
3. Expand the city's trail and sidewalk system, including adding regional trails that are safe and provide connections between schools, parks, neighborhoods, commercial areas, open space/natural areas, other communities and regional parks.
4. Develop a long-term financial plan for the development and redevelopment of parks, open space and trails.
5. Develop maintenance standards for recreational facilities.
6. Increase marketing of parks and recreation (recreational programs, parks, open space, trails and recreational facilities) to the community.
7. All city parks should have approved master plans to guide their development.

8. Construct new recreational facilities when it may not be financially feasible or structurally possible to make improvements to existing recreational facilities.
9. Acquire land in a manner that maximizes the size of parks when possible.
10. Explore opportunities to expand youth, teen, adaptive, adult and senior programs including possible partnerships with other organizations or governmental agencies
11. Maximize and optimize recreational facility usage when possible.
12. Look for ways to expand community gathering spaces and events.
13. Develop and implement a Bike and Pedestrian Plan.
14. In new residential developments make sure there are adequate pedestrian connections through sidewalk and trail construction.
15. Utilize volunteer resources to assist with parks, open space, recreational facilities and recreation maintenance and operations.
16. Implement sustainability practices in recreational facilities, parks and open spaces.
17. When financially feasible, utilize existing and emerging technology in the parks and recreation department's maintenance and operations.
18. Continue to maintain parks and recreation system so it continues to be a community asset.
19. Construct the facilities identified in the Jim Bell Park and Preserve Master Plan and in the Aquatic Feasibility Study including athletic facilities and a new aquatic facility.
20. Create a system that is equitable and diverse, so it accommodates uses by all demographic groups represented in the community.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A five year capital improvement budget is vital in determining future parks and trail projects and the funds needed to complete the projects. The capital improvement projects in parks and trails have been funded over the years through two funding sources. The first funding source has been through funds received from residential, commercial and industrial development. These funds were received as cash in lieu of land through the park dedication process. The second source of funding has been through the City's municipal liquor store profit transfers.

As a result, a capital improvement budget for its parks and trails has been developed and ties to the schedule that has been created. By the year 2020, all new and all but one existing parks will have received a review resulting in a master plan developed. Then, based on the approved master plan for each park, improvements are completed based on the funding available. The city's most recent five-year capital improvement plan is included in Chapter 10. Implementation.

Table 7.2 below provides the most recent five year capital improvement plan for the years 2018-2022. It identifies which park improvements are to be made in, the type of park and/or trail improvement to be made, the year in which the improvements are to be made and the estimated cost of the improvements. No improvements are currently planned in 2021 and 2022 in order to allow the fund balance to grow.

Table 7.2 Five Year Parks and Trail Improvement Budget

NAME OF PARK AND PROJECTS	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Prairie Pines Park: grading turf seeding and site improvements	\$50,000	\$150,000			
Marigold Park: playground, shelter, turf seeding, shelter, landscaping, trees planted, grills, waste containers, picnic tables and bike rack		\$70,000			
Dakota County Estates Park: basketball court surface improvements and painting new lines	\$5,000				
Evergreen Knoll Park: basketball court surface improvements and painting new lines	\$5,000				
Rambling River Park Feely Fields: outfield fence replacement	\$15,000				
Westview Park: basketball court surface improvements and painting new lines		\$5,000			
Farmington Preserve Park: basketball court surface improvements and painting new lines			\$5,000		
Town Square Park: master plan development and park signage			\$15,000		