MEMORANDUM

To: **Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Communities Planning Project Team**

From: **Matthew Gabb, Research Assistant and Ross Daniels, Community Planner**
               Public Health Law Center

Re: **Indicator Analysis: Recreation Opportunities for Metropolitan Communities**
               Healthy Communities Planning Project

Date: October 1, 2021

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Indicator: Public Recreational Opportunities

The following discussion includes key findings and analysis of the reviewed comprehensive plans regarding the public recreation opportunities health indicator. The Project Team defines this indicator as planning for "access to public recreational opportunities." The project emphasizes walkable and bikeable access to parks, greenspace, and trails, as well as changing recreation opportunities, culturally appropriate programming, and including parks and trails in transportation networks.

Overall Takeaways

In total, all but one of the studied communities include recreational opportunities as part of their comprehensive plan. When taken as a whole, these communities approach increasing recreational opportunities through improving walking and biking facilities, and through parkland dedication requirements assessed to local developers that pay for park space to be incorporated into both new development and redevelopment.

Equity

Equity considerations for parks and recreation were identified in a number of plans which is discussed further in the community designation section. Plans in urban communities acknowledge that existing barriers to recreation in certain populations are more than just spatial (i.e., planning for facility upgrades in a park in a majority BIPOC neighborhood), but also related to considerations such as language and financial security. Suburban communities are committed to equitable design standards and creating new, more inclusive recreation opportunities. Rural communities acknowledge both a need for universal accessibility in facilities, and cultural diversity in recreational opportunities. Please see each of the community designation sections for an in-depth discussion about how communities address equity.

Walking & Biking

Across all scoring levels and community designations, Metro communities are expanding recreational opportunities by improving walking and biking facilities. **Belle Plaine** specifically ties together walkability and recreation access by "prioritizing the creation of a system of neighborhood and community parks within walking distance (e.g. six blocks) of all residents" (Belle Plaine, 6-14). **Nowthen** indicates that:

> "[t]o improve upon pedestrian and bicycle mobility within the City, corridors have been identified by the City and Anoka County for future trails. The corridors identified by the City will connect residential developments with parks and public facilities, including the regional trail system. The corridors identified by Anoka County will connect regional parks with other significant destinations" (Nowthen, 122).

St. Francis has three specific policies on safe, multimodal park access:

"Policy 2.1: Reconstruct sidewalks and trails that are in disrepair and install new sidewalks and trails to eliminate gaps in the system and better connect to parks. Conduct these efforts in combination with road reconstruction/repair projects when possible.

"Policy 2.2: Within the developed areas of St. Francis, work to provide parks and school facilities that are accessible to all residents without having to cross high speed/high traffic streets. If major roads must be crossed, provide safe crossings.

"Policy 2.3: Support Anoka County in the development of the proposed Sugar Hills Regional Trail" (St. Francis, 85).

One specific priority consistently identified by communities across the Metro is in building out their trail networks. **Lake Elmo** has a plan to "[c]reate a trail network that is regular and consistent so users know that they can access the system and complete their routes" (Lake Elmo, 36). In **New Brighton**, "[t]he addition of trails will help shape community reinvestment and build vitality" (New Brighton, 91). **Chanhassen** expects to "[p]rioritize the elimination of trail gaps based on safety, connectivity and cost" (Chanhassen, 103). And **Maplewood** has a goal to "[a]cquire, develop, and maintain an interconnected trail system for transportation, recreation, and educational purposes" (Maplewood, 207).

Parkland Dedication

In order to expand the recreational opportunities cities can offer, they are seeking to expand their available parkland. The most common method used in the Metro is through parkland dedication requirements for development. The city of **New Hope** "established a Park Dedication Fee in 2003, which helps pay for park projects as new development or redevelopment occurs" (New Hope, 332). **Lake Elmo** will explore "opportunities, either by ordinance, or through the development review process to support and enhance the Green Network through the continued enforcement of the park dedication ordinance" (Lake Elmo, 10-10). The city of **Newport** plans to "use its park dedication fee to require future development and redevelopment to incorporate new neighborhood parks, trail and sidewalk connections to the City's overall trail system" (Newport, 98). The multi-pronged policy of **Denmark Township** is to:

"[r]equire the dedication of park or open space land, or cash in lieu of land, in conjunction with the subdivision of all properties. Accept land gifts or require land dedications in areas with potential open space, natural feature or habitat qualities. [...] Encourage developers to provide trails and access to public trails" (Denmark Township, 18).

Interesting and Innovative Approaches

Some of the most interesting approaches taken by communities in addressing parks and recreational opportunities are mobile and pop-up parks in urban communities, safe routes to school, senior recreation options, and focusing on trail snow removal.

Mobile & Pop-Up Parks

Both Bloomington and Maplewood explored the use of mobile and pop-up parks to close gaps in recreational programming. **Bloomington** plans to "[e]xplore opportunities to use temporary and/or mobile recreation units (i.e., "pop up parks") to serve neighborhoods that lack close proximity to park and recreation facilities" (Bloomington, 75). In **Maplewood**, the city will "[u]se mobile/pop-up delivery methods to offer similar programs in each of the park service areas" (Maplewood, 106).

Other Interesting Approaches

Other interesting approaches include:

- Safe Routes to School: **Eden Prairie** is building on its school partnerships, prioritizing safe routes to school with a plan to "[d]esignate and offer supportive planning for safe walking and biking routes to all Eden Prairie Schools" (Eden Prairie, 174).
- Recreation Options for Seniors: In **Mahtomedi**, the city is specifically planning recreation options for seniors:

  "[The City recognizes] that Mahtomedi's demographic characteristics include an aging population and that the parks need to be accessible to an aging population and accommodate their needs accordingly. For example, provide adequate seating, passive opportunities, accessible trails/walks, etc. to make parks more accommodating" (Mahtomedi, 103).

- Snow Removal from Trails: In a recognition of Minnesota winters, **Plymouth** includes a recreational policy to "[r]emove snow from designated trails and sidewalks based on defined City Council approved criteria" (Plymouth, 523). (emphasis added)

Ranking Analysis

Each community received a score of 1 to 4 on the recreation indicator, which ranks it on how much it incorporates access to public recreational opportunities in its comprehensive plan. If a community scored a 1, that means there is no mention of access to public recreation. The recreation sections of plans scoring between 2 and 4 were scored with the following criteria:

- Level 2 communities broadly mention access to public recreation, but do not include goals and policies to this end.
- Level 3 communities include goals and policies for walkable and bikeable access to parks, greenspace, trails, and recreation programming.
- Level 4 communities include goals and policies for improving access to recreational opportunities, identify strategies for implementing these policies, and dedicate resources toward achieving them.

The number of communities to receive each score was:

Level 1	1 community
Level 2	5 communities
Level 3	19 communities
Level 4	24 communities

Differences in themes and focus across the ranking levels show what different communities rely on to improve access to recreation for their residents. Lower scoring communities tend to focus on building new facilities and partnering with other organizations/agencies, while higher scoring communities plan for diverse programming, system maintenance, and neighborhood access. This was one of the few indicators for this project where a majority of communities scored a 4.

Level 2

Communities that received a score of 2 on this indicator **mention access to public recreation in the body of the plan**, **but do not include goals and policies to this end**. They focus on pedestrian safety and regional connectedness.

Pedestrian Safety

In level 2 communities, cities are looking at ways to improve pedestrian safety. In the city of **Cologne**, for example, "[n]ew sidewalks and trails will be constructed as part of the development of new neighborhoods, connecting residential areas, parks, and community destinations" (Cologne, 86). **Minnetonka Beach** plans to "[d]esign trails, paths and sidewalks for safe pedestrian use" (Minnetonka Beach, 47). And tying it to connectedness, **Lilydale** hopes that "[f]uture development should consider the link between the Mary Jane Mullarky Pedestrian Trail and the Mendota Heights trails on Lexington Avenue South, and ways to foster safe pedestrian access to trails west of Lilydale" (Lilydale, 39).

Regional Connectedness

Level 2 communities also prioritize using their regional connections to improve regional or their own recreation amenities. The city of **Lilydale** states that it is "in a unique position in that over half of its land area is comprised of a regional park maintained and operated by the City of St. Paul. In addition, two regional trails traverse and connect the regional park to Lilydale and its adjacent Cities" (Lilydale, 52). In **Marine on St. Croix**, "[m]ost respondents to the community survey reported using state and regional parks and the St. Croix River for outdoor recreation. Improving access to these existing public amenities may make them more convenient or user-friendly, specifically along the St. Croix River where public access is limited" (Marine on St. Croix, 45). And a goal of **Cologne** is to use its partnership with Carver County to get "[r]egional and state grant funding," to develop "[a]ctive and passive recreational opportunities" (Cologne, 103).

New Recreation Opportunities for New Development and Redevelopment

Tied to future population growth, the five level 2 cities are looking at ways to leverage development to improve recreation facilities. **Cologne** requires that "[n]ew trails will be constructed as part of the development of new neighborhoods, connecting residential areas, parks, and community destinations. The exact location and route of these will be determined at the time of development" (Cologne, 55). **Lilydale** priorities how "[f]uture development should consider the link between the Mary Jane Mullarky Pedestrian Trail and the Mendota Heights trails on Lexington Avenue South, and ways to foster safe pedestrian access to trails west of Lilydale" (Lilydale, 38).

However, not all cities in the Metro are projected to grow by 2040. This is a reality reflected in **Woodland**'s plan:

> "The need for park space is motivated by current deficiencies or population growth. Woodland's population, as projected by the Metropolitan Council, is projected to be stable between now and the year 2040. As a result, park needs will not be created by population increases and the lack of publicly owned property suggest that no parks will be planned for the future" (Woodland, 30).

Level 3

A ranking of 3 on this indicator means that the **plan includes goals and/or policies to address access to recreational opportunities.**

Emphasis on New Trail Systems

While communities across the Metro are making plans for their trail systems, level 3 communities focus more on building *new* trail systems and corridors. The **Dakota County Collaborative** plans to "[i]dentify the potential for trail corridors in the community that link local and regional trails, parks, natural features, and community destinations" (DCC, 11). And in **Coon Rapids**, the city will "[d]evelop trails in conjunction with future developments, parks, natural resource areas, greenways, and roadway projects to provide transportation throughout the City and for recreation purposes" (Coon Rapids, 126).

Partnering with Local School Districts

To expand recreation opportunities and reduce duplication, level 3 communities are looking to partner with their local school districts to jointly provide recreational facilities and programs. A goal for **Osseo** is to "[c]oordinate with the school district on planning, developing, and preserving access to shared community and school district recreational facilities when possible" (Osseo, 130). In **Mahtomedi**, the city plans to "[p]artner with the Mahtomedi School District, Century College, athletic organizations, surrounding communities, and others to address recreation needs that cannot be met exclusively by the City or others" (Mahtomedi, 102).

Strategies for Long-term System Maintenance

In level 3 communities, while specific financial resources are not usually dedicated for it, there are a variety of strategies to plan for long-term recreation system maintenance. **Eden Prairie** is encouraging "[a]dopt a Park Programs that allow volunteers from civic organizations, social clubs, neighborhood associations, individual families, faith based organizations, and school groups […] to assist in the maintenance of parks and development of programs and events" (Eden Prairie, 78). In **Richfield**, the city "will evaluate recreation facility use prior to improvements or and *[sic]* 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" (Richfield, 44). **Plymouth** plans to "[e]stablish a functional hierarchy of trails and sidewalks relating to maintenance, jurisdiction and financing" (Plymouth, 523).

Focus on Recreation for All Ages

Level 3 communities are planning facilities, amenities, and programs that can uniquely serve a variety of age groups, so that there are recreation opportunities for everyone. The **Dakota County Collaborative** plans to "[s]upport active youth and senior recreational opportunities and facilities in area cities and schools" (DCC, 5). The city of **North St. Paul** will continue to collaborate "with local athletic associations to offer sports programming for youth in the parks, offers adult softball leagues and contracts with a variety of groups to offer programming for residents such as preschool classes, adult driving courses and gun safety" (North St. Paul, 10-6). **Plymouth** will "[c]ontinue to provide a broad range of recreation programs that meet the needs of all age groups, from pre-school to seniors, in a cost effective manner. Emphasize the commitment to health, wellness and fitness" (Plymouth, 546).

Culturally-Relevant Programming

Finally, level 3 communities are also hoping to expand their culturally-relevant programming as their populations continue to diversify. **Oakdale** plans to "[c]ontinually evaluate the relevancy of current recreational programming and park amenities" to ensure it lines up with residents' wants (Oakdale, 49). And **Columbia Heights** will "[e]xplore the addition of offering culturally related programs within the park and recreation system" (Columbia Heights, 163).

Level 4

To score a 4 for this indicator, communities must include not only goals and policies for improving access to recreational opportunities, but also **identify strategies and dedicate resources toward implementing these policies.**

Community Trails Network

Rather than exclusively new trails, level 4 communities are looking to improve their trail networks and use them as a way to connect the community. In **Bloomington**, the city will "[i]dentify and work to eliminate gaps in the City's sidewalk and bicycle trail network" (Bloomington, 75). **Lake Elmo** plans to "[c]reate a trail network that is regular and consistent so users know that they can access the system and

complete their routes" (Lake Elmo, 36). And a goal of **Chanhassen** is to "[m]aintain a comprehensive and easily navigable trail and sidewalk system that connects neighborhoods to park and recreation facilities, schools, community destinations and other communities" (Chanhassen, 101).

Neighborhood Parks

In level 4 communities, there is also a focus on small, hyper-local neighborhood parks scattered to improve system access throughout the city. **Belle Plaine** plans to "[c]ontinue prioritizing the creation of a system of neighborhood and community parks within walking distance (e.g. six blocks) of all residents" (Belle Plaine, 157). In **Woodbury**, the city "foresees the need for approximately six new neighborhood parks in addition to expansions at neighborhood parks that are suitable for active and passive recreation" (Woodbury, 165). One of **Roseville**'s priorities is to "[e]stablish a service standard of having a neighborhood park or active play space in every park service constellation" (Roseville, 296).

Acquiring New Park Land

Level 4 communities also outline specific strategies to acquire new land for parks so that they can expand their system. **Stillwater** plans to "[s]tudy and pursue various means of funding the acquisition, operation and maintenance of park, open space, trail, and recreation facilities" (Stillwater, 311). In **Scandia**, the city will "[u]se park search areas and recreational facilities search areas and other natural resource information to guide and encourage park acquisition donations and potential site acquisitions when property becomes available" (Scandia, 36).

Variety in Programming

Level 4 communities focus on providing a variety of recreation programs across the community and throughout the year. One goal of **Golden Valley** is to "[d]eliver a variety of recreational, educational, and athletic programs and events that are responsive to the changing needs and interests of the community" (Golden Valley, 6-22). **Roseville** plans to "[e]xpand and maintain year-round, creative programs and facilities for all ages, abilities, and interests" (Roseville, 2-12). And **Maplewood** prioritizes providing "the opportunity for all community residents to participate in recreation, education, and arts activities through partnerships and the implementation of programs that are well-designed, cost effective, and meet the evolving needs and interests of the community" (Maplewood, 11-195).

Partnering with Local School Districts

Finally, as part of their focus on programmatic variety, level 4 communities are looking to partner with their local school districts to jointly provide recreational facilities and programs. **Inver Grove Heights** will "[e]ncourage joint use of facilities by incorporating school facilities with park and recreation programs whenever possible" (Inver Grove Heights, 182). **Brooklyn Center** plans to "[e]xplore opportunities to partner with local school districts and the private sector to improve, and in some areas complete, the park and recreation system" (Brooklyn Center, 45).

Community Designation Analysis

All 51 plans, representing 54 communities, reviewed in the project were sorted into three main designations: urban, suburban, or rural. The project researchers analyzed these types of communities separately to see if they approach recreation opportunities in different ways that are more specific to their community type. These larger categories are combinations of the more narrowly defined categories the Metropolitan Council (Met Council) uses to distinguish communities. The urban category is made up of urban center and urban communities, while the suburban category is made up of towns that the Met Council defines as suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge communities. The rural category is a combination of rural center, diversified rural, rural residential, and agricultural communities.

Urban

Urban communities are seeing demographic changes, and many are working to build equitable parks and recreation systems to respond to these changes. Because so much of these communities are already developed, many are shifting focus from creating park space to enhancing amenities in their existing parks. Additionally, many urban communities are seeking partnerships for programming opportunities; school districts and non-governmental entities were both identified as partners in many plans.

Equity Themes

Plans in urban communities approach equity through acknowledging that existing barriers to recreation in certain populations were more than just spatial. Urban communities are interested in dismantling financial, language, and accessibility barriers to recreation opportunities and involving more diverse populations in park planning and recreation programming.

Beyond Spatial Barriers

Several urban communities approach equity as about something more than spatial or infrastructural in nature. **Bloomington** acknowledges that "[u]nderstanding demand for programs and facilities and potential barriers to participation is essential to evaluating program and facility efficacy," and lists "language barriers, safety concerns, costs, transportation, and lack of time" among these barriers (Bloomington, 7-16). One of **Maplewood**'s goals in their Parks, Trails, and Open Space element is to "[e]nsure equitable access to (recreational) programs" and commits to "[p]rovid(ing) grants and scholarships to eliminate financial barriers" (Maplewood, 11-200). **Columbia Heights** recognizes that "[l]anguage and lack of awareness can be a barrier" to participation in local parks and recreational activities (Columbia Heights, 153).

Dismantling Barriers to Participation

Urban communities also are beginning to acknowledge and work to dismantle barriers to equitable recreation participation. In **Bloomington**, "[u]nderstanding demand for programs and facilities and potential barriers to participation is essential to evaluating program and facility efficacy" (Bloomington, 7-16). **Columbia Heights'** plan recognizes that "[l]anguage and lack of awareness can be a barrier" to

participation (Columbia Heights, 153). **Maplewood** plans to "[p]rovide grants and scholarships to eliminate financial barriers" to access recreation programming (Maplewood, 11-200).

ADA Compliance in Recreational Facilities

Another barrier a handful of urban cities are working on is finally achieving Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in parks and recreation facilities. In **Minneapolis**, a policy goal is to "[e]valuate universal accessibility of all parks and open spaces, making improvements to ensure they are all accessible, enjoyable, and welcoming to all people regardless of age, ability, geography, or cultural background" (Minneapolis, 226). **Richfield** is working to "[p]rovide 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" (Richfield, 44).

Involving Diverse Groups in Recreation Planning

To provide better programming and know where other barriers exist, urban communities are starting to prioritize involving diverse groups in recreation planning. The city of **Roseville** plans to "[i]nvolve a diverse and representative group of participants in the parks and recreation planning process" (Roseville, 297). In **Golden Valley**:

> "[a] more diverse population in Golden Valley demonstrates a need for a wider variety of recreation and education programs, classes, and events. In order to provide high quality services, the City should continue to evaluate existing programs for efficiency and relevance, expand current efforts where additional needs are warranted, develop new initiatives that respond to demand, and anticipate future trends" (Golden Valley, 1199).

Responsiveness to Demographic Changes

While cities took multiple approaches, across all urban communities one common approach was responding to demographic changes in the planning of recreation opportunities. The city of **Brooklyn Center**'s plan states that the city will "[s]upport the continued use of citizen surveys and interviews to understand the effectiveness of existing facilities and, programs and system deficiencies" (Brooklyn Center, 2-18). A goal of **Minneapolis** is "to improve the design and programming of parks to better serve a changing population" (Minneapolis, 225). And in **Lauderdale**, the city will "[c]ontinue to adapt parks and open space programming and uses to reflect the demands and needs of the residents. […] Explore the use of period on-line surveys to solicit information from residents about their current and expected park needs and wants" (Lauderdale, 2-11).

Focus on Amenities

Another approach common to urban communities was providing infrastructural amenities for various recreational opportunities. **Crystal**, with an eye to wear and tear, states the need for "neighborhood park development funding [...] to replace specific amenities, taking into account the physical condition of the amenity and needs of the community" (Crystal, 59). Many communities are gearing their park amenities

to specific age groups. **Richfield**, for example, plans to "[p]rovide adequate seating, shade, trail lighting and a trail loops of varying lengths in parks to encourage active living for an aging population" (Richfield, 41). And in **Osseo**, "[t]he planned expansion of Boerboom Park will introduce new recreational amenities, such as a picnic shelter and playground facility, to bring recreational opportunities for all ages of Osseo residents to downtown" (Osseo, 130).

Partnering with Local School Districts

To expand recreation opportunities and reduce duplication, urban communities are also looking to partner with their local school districts to jointly provide recreational facilities and programs. **Columbia Heights** will continue to "[a]nnually collaborate with youth in the community and the school district to enhance youth recreational programming & facilities" (Columbia Heights, 160). Also building on previous school collaboration, a goal for **West St. Paul** is to "[e]ncourage the continued use of school recreation facilities for City as well as school purposes" (West St. Paul, 222). **Falcon Heights** focuses more on programming, planning to "[o]ffer park/recreation programs to residents that complement recreation programs available from surrounding cities and the school district, and duplicate programs only when necessary" (Falcon Heights, 126).

Collaborating with Non-Governmental Partners

Beyond school districts, urban communities also collaborate with a variety of non-governmental partners in order to provide more robust recreational programming. In **North St. Paul**, the city "collaborates with local athletic associations to offer sports programming for youth in the parks, offers adult softball leagues and contracts with a variety of groups to offer programming for residents such as preschool classes, adult driving courses and gun safety" (North St. Paul, 222). **New Hope** plans to "[c]ontinue to partner with as many community groups and organizations as possible to extend limited resources, promote volunteerism, and to facilitate a wide array of programs that would not be possible on the City's own" (New Hope, 198). **St. Louis Park** states that they will both "[c]ontinue programs to promote volunteer efforts to assist with park amenities and aesthetic appeal," and "[c]ontinue to support partnerships with outside entities" (St. Louis Park, 73).

Suburban

As the Twin Cities' suburban communities continue to grow, these cities are planning for increased recreation opportunities, creativity in funding, and improving walkability for pedestrians. Several suburban communities incorporated equity through universal design standards and new, inclusive recreation opportunities.

Equity Themes

Suburban communities approached equity in their plans for public recreation through incorporating universal design standards for facilities and creating new, more inclusive opportunities to recreate and engage with park planning processes.

Incorporating Design Standards

In order to address equity in recreation plan elements, a handful of suburban recreation plans also are incorporating design standards and goals into their policies. Like many cities, **Shakopee** has a goal to "[e]nsure park and facility designs are accessible to the broadest range of individuals regardless of difference in age, ethnicity, mobility level, income, etc." (Shakopee, 329). **Woodbury** is specifically focusing on universal design:

> "There is an increasing desire to provide parks, trails and open spaces that are safe and comfortable for people of all user groups. A universal design approach considers the needs of all ages and abilities and is intended to create positive park experiences for all residents. An emphasis on universal design will guide development of new parks and recreation facilities as well as renovations of existing parks" (Woodbury, 163).

Similarly, **Coon Rapids'** stated design standards/policies also prioritize removing physical barriers in facilities:

> "[Policies] 1-4 Make a reasonable effort to eliminate all physical barriers that deter individuals from using existing or future parks and recreation facilities. Barrier-free design principles shall be implemented in accordance with accepted guidelines and laws. [...] 1-7 Improve the overall park design quality throughout the system without all parks having identical elements. Efforts will be made to design parks so they entice individuals of all ages, races, and ability levels to use them. [...] 1-11 Identify partners to provide ADA accessibility and inclusion in parks." (Coon Rapids, 6-9).

Creating New, More Inclusive Recreation Opportunities

Some suburbs are also creating new, more inclusive recreation opportunities due to increasing racial diversity. **Burnsville**'s plan recognizes that "[t]he park system will also need to change to address demographic and lifestyle changes in the city's population and determine how the parks system can best respond to these changes to serve the future population" (Burnsville, 443). **Oakdale** plans to "[i]nclude a diversity of stakeholders, to include age, race, ethnicity, and income in parks and recreation program planning" (Oakdale, 53).

Alternative Funding Streams

The Metro's suburban communities addressed recreation opportunities by taking proactive approaches to alternative funding streams. **Arden Hills** expresses a concern many growing suburbs are facing, because "much of the City is developed, park and recreation expansion improvements cannot rely on park dedication fees alone. Therefore, the City may need to explore other financing options. Pursuing funding opportunities may help advance implementation of this plan at a faster rate than would otherwise be able to occur" (Arden Hills, 9-16). Similarly, **Stillwater** is looking at three specific streams to expand their park system to:

"1. Require park land dedication or cash in lieu for all new residential, commercial and industrial developments.

2. Study and pursue various means of funding the acquisition, operation and maintenance of park, open space, trail, and recreation facilities.

3. Seek opportunities through public or private funds for the establishment of new neighborhood parks and/or redevelopment of existing neighborhood parks" (Stillwater, 12-17).

Many suburban communities, in addition to alternative financial sources, are looking at volunteerism as a supplement to their recreation budgets. **Shakopee** plans to "[p]romote and/or initiate formal commitments from organizations and groups to aid in trail maintenance. This could function as an Adopt-A-Trail programs that becomes an extension of the city's existing Adopt-A-Park program" (Shakopee, 333). And **Chanhassen** will explore "options to expand the use of volunteers to support park operations and programming" (Chanhassen, 104).

Park Space & Population Changes

Suburban communities also are planning for park space that directly responds to changes in the community's population. As **Arden Hills** works to expand its recreational offerings, "[t]hree City parks will be located within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Amenities will be planned for each park based on the population served and to complement existing amenities in the developed portion of the City" (Arden Hills, 9-14). **Newport**'s plan states that the city's "parks and trails will provide social and recreational opportunities for current and future generations. The City will update its park system plans in 2018 to respond to the changing demographics and needs of the community" (Newport, 99).

However, not every suburb is projected to experience population growth. For example **Woodland** acknowledges:

"The need for park space is motivated by current deficiencies or population growth. Woodland's population, as projected by the Metropolitan Council, is projected to be stable between now and the year 2040. As a result, park needs will not be created by population increases and the lack of publicly owned property suggest that no parks will be planned for the future" (Woodland, 30).

Pedestrian Safety

As communities across the Metro shift to a focus on walkability, suburban communities specifically are working to improve pedestrian safety. The city of **Coon Rapids** plans to "[d]evelop the trail system, including tunnels under railroad tracks and overhead bridges over major transportation corridors, to minimize the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles" (Coon Rapids, 126). Looking at specific areas of concern, a priority for **Lilydale** is that "[f]uture development should consider the link between the Mary Jane Mullarky Pedestrian Trail and the Mendota Heights trails on Lexington Avenue South, and ways to foster safe pedestrian access to trails west of Lilydale" (Lilydale, 39). And in **Eden Prairie**, the city will "[d]esignate and offer supportive planning for safe walking and biking routes to all Eden Prairie Schools" (Eden Prairie, 174).

Improving Sidewalk Network

An aspect of pedestrian safety suburban communities are tackling is improving their sidewalk networks, both with routine maintenance and identifying where gaps may lie in their network. **Spring Lake Park** is planning to "[c]omplete sidewalk and trail gaps to establish a connected network for pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the city" (Spring Lake Park, 16). The city of **Plymouth** is exploring projects to "[c]onsider providing trails and sidewalks on both sides of streets when roadway traffic speed, volumes or other safety considerations warrant" (Plymouth, 523). **Woodbury** will "[r]equire trails and sidewalks internal to private developments and connecting to the main City trail system through the development review process" (Woodbury, 168).

Rural

Due to usually having more land readily available, rural communities are able to focus less on identifying funding for recreation and more on improving on what they already have.

Equity Approaches

Though the project researchers did not find overall themes in how rural communities incorporate equity in their plans, there are a few unique rural approaches to equity that are worth mentioning.

Cultural Diversity in Recreation

Besides their unique focus on connecting to natural resources and spaces, some rural communities have priorities not seen in many of their peers' plans. **Lake Elmo** was a rare rural plan to emphasize cultural diversity in recreational opportunities:

> "A critical component to consider when planning for the future of the PTOS system is the City's socio-economic and demographic trends that will impact the types of improvements and acquisitions to the system that will best serve the community for generations to come. [...] It is important to offer a diverse mix and to understand that some park activities are generally associated with specific age or cultural group" (Lake Elmo, 130).

Accessibility

And leading the way in rural spaces is **Inver Grove Heights**, which prioritizes universal design and accessibility, stating that, "[s]pecial attention should be given to park and open space improvements that provide for handicap accessibility consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Building and Facilities and universal design principles" (Inver Grove Heights, 184).

Connections to Nature & Destinations

In their recreation plans, rural communities prioritize connections both to nature and to other rural destinations. The **Dakota County Collaborative** is looking to "[i]dentify the potential for trail corridors in the community that link local and regional trails, parks, natural features, and community destinations"

(DCC, 11). The city of **Belle Plaine** plans to "[c]ontinue to assemble non-motorized links between residential neighborhoods, community facilities (including parks), special use areas, schools, Downtown, the river, other communities, and other unique or special destinations as a means of connecting and unifying the City" (Belle Plaine, 158).

Capitalizing on Minnesota's rivers and lakes, many rural communities specifically include connections to water as part of their recreational opportunities. **Belle Plaine** plans to "[p]urposefully offer recreation and community enrichment activities in shoreland areas near the Minnesota River" (Belle Plaine, 6-13). **Cologne's** plan mentions that "[l]ong term, there is support for extending a trail around Benton Lake, to complete a trail loop" (Cologne, 55). As part of the city's "unique character," **St. Francis** has a goal around improving access to natural spaces through three policies: "[reconnecting] the Rum River to the City as an important recreational amenity without degrading habitat or water quality [… incorporating] natural features and areas into the parks system when possible and applicable" and "[coordinating] with the School District to encourage environmental learning" (St. Francis, 6-15).

Collaborating with County Government

To help leverage other financial resources and maintain connections from city to city, rural communities prioritize collaborating with their county governments in improving recreational opportunities. **Nowthen** states that "[t]o improve upon pedestrian and bicycle mobility within the City, corridors have been identified by the City and Anoka County for future trails" (Nowthen, 122). The city of **Scandia** plans to "[c]ontinue to work closely with Washington County, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on more detailed planning efforts to insure the regional green infrastructure system is designed in a manner compatible with existing and planned development in the City" (Scandia, 66).