

CHAPTER 6:
Parks, Trails & Open Space





PARKS, TRAILS & OPEN SPACE
City of Brooklyn Center Comprehensive Plan 2040

INTRODUCTION

As a first-ring suburb and fully-developed City, Brooklyn Center benefits from a well-established park and trail system. Natural features in the community, including the Mississippi River, Single Creek, Palmer Lake, and Upper and Middle Twin Lakes, provide premier natural areas, open space, and amenities for popular urban recreation. A 21-mile trail system extends the recreational opportunities and connects residential neighborhoods with parks and other destinations.

Parks and trails are a valued asset to community. High interest and participation from residents continues to justify the ongoing maintenance, management, and investment needed for high-quality recreation, trail use, and park facilities in the City. To thoughtfully plan for the parks and trails system, it is important to understand the changing characteristics of the City's park and trail users, keep current on the existing system's conditions, and identify gaps and opportunities for new parks, trails, or facilities that will benefit the City. The purpose of this Chapter will review these features and context and provide recommendations for Brooklyn Center's parks and trails system through 2040.

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2040 Parks, Trails & Open Space Goals

- » Provide a park and recreation system that is based on the needs of the City's residents and stakeholders.
- » Encourage residents and stakeholders to participate in the park and recreation system planning process.
- » Explore ways to incorporate design and preservation standards into the City's ordinances and policies to improve and maintain a high-quality system.
- » Support efforts to maximize the use and accessibility of the system by local residents.

** Supporting Strategies found in Chapter 2: Vision, Goals & Strategies*

Growth and Demographics

The forecasted population in the community is expected to rise by approximately 2,250 households by 2040, which will alter the demands and needs from the City's parks and trails system. Changing land use and redevelopment impacts areas of natural features and open space. Some redevelopment may enhance and improve the quality of those features, such as Shingle Creek which has been identified as having impaired waters. Chapter 3: Land Use & Redevelopment of this Plan discusses the anticipated changes in land use and related demographics of the community. Parks are indicated on Map 3-2. Future Land Use.

Association of Recreation Type and Age

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A critical component to consider when planning for the future of parks and trails in Brooklyn Center is the socio-economic and demographic trends that will impact the types of improvements, development, and programming within the system that will best serve the community for generations to come. A high-quality parks and trails system provides for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors with facilities and activities that appeal to all age groups. It is important to offer a diverse mix and to understand that some park activities are generally associated with specific age groups. Active recreation facilities, such as soccer fields and playgrounds, are typically used by younger people and children while passive recreation facilities, such as picnicking, walking, or fishing, are generally associated with adults and older people.

The Background Report, contained in Appendix C, describes the City's current demographic and socio-economic trends. Since 2010, the number of households with children in both single-parent and married couple households has been growing significantly. The percentage of households with children is now approaching 40%, which is well above the rate in Hennepin County and the metro area in general. The trend among households without children is conversely on the decline. The population is generally getting younger, likely due to a relatively homogeneous and affordable housing stock dominated by single-family residential uses. As the City's residential make-up changes, it will be essential to understand who is moving into the community and what the target market of redevelopment is so the parks and trails system can expand and grow to meet needs of future residents.



THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

Brooklyn Center currently hosts 24 developed local parks, one regional park, and a municipal golf course, providing a variety of recreational opportunities for all segments of the population. In addition, considerable undeveloped public open space is held in the Twin Lakes area and along the Mississippi River. Recreation and leisure opportunities range from passive pursuits such as sitting, walking, picnicking, fishing, and enjoying music to more active pastimes such as organized sports, pick-up athletic games, bicycling, running, and in-line skating.

Many of the City parks are adjacent to schools or other open space. Popular Centennial Park is adjacent to the Community Center and Civic Center and functions as a central hub for recreation amenities in the City. Parks are generally distributed evenly throughout all areas of the City, and the variety of recreational facilities available enable the park system to provide recreation access to all residents. There is excellent coordination of programs and facilities between parks and schools, and between parks, City and county facilities. The trail system links parks, schools, and other activity centers.

Park and Open Space Classifications

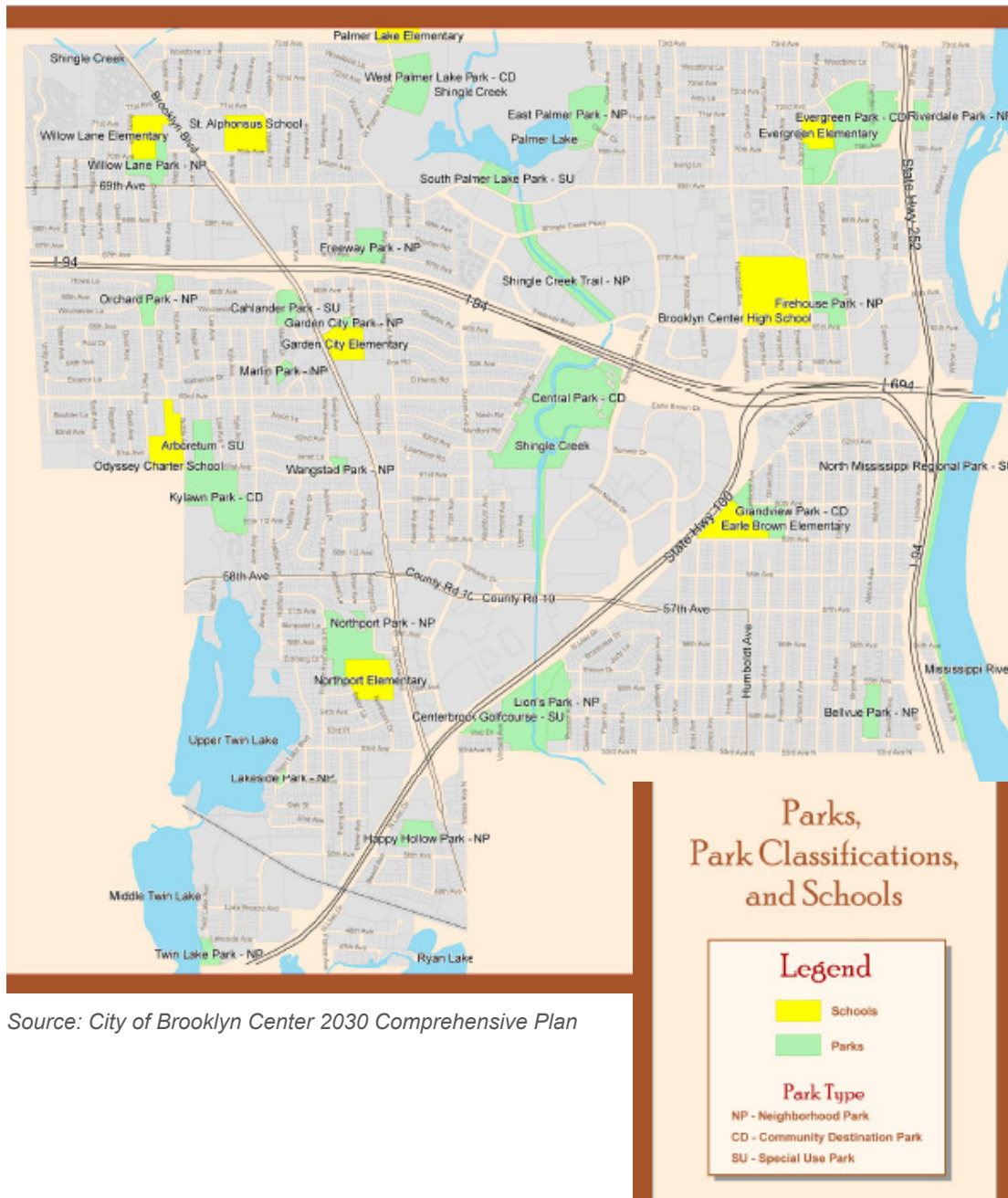
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The City's parks are classified according to a functional hierarchy that suggests the types of facilities and development that are appropriate to each park. However, specific improvements are individually tailored to each park based on neighborhood desires, historical presence of certain types of facilities, proximity to other uses, and resources available.

The various types of parks are sited and designed to serve different needs and populations of residents. It is a policy of the City to locate at least one park in each neighborhood that is safely accessible to pedestrians—especially children—within a reasonable walking distance of approximately one-quarter to one-half mile. At the other end of the spectrum, one or two larger parks in the City aim to meet organized sports and specialized and community-wide recreation.

The following classification system has been developed by City staff based on national standards. It is similar to the system the City has used for park and recreation planning for the past twenty years. However, the classification of parks within the system has been changed in order to make better use of park resources, meet neighborhood needs, and address issues of demographic and social change. This classification also incorporates regional parks, which are not specifically managed by the City but should be considered for coordinated access and related park and facility development. Map 6-1 illustrates the City's park locations and classifications.

Map 6-1. Existing Parks and Classifications



Source: City of Brooklyn Center 2030 Comprehensive Plan

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The Brooklyn Center park system is therefore divided into the following broad categories, each described in more depth to follow:

1. Regional Parks
2. Neighborhood Parks
3. Community Destination Parks
4. Special Use Parks and Open Spaces

Regional Parks

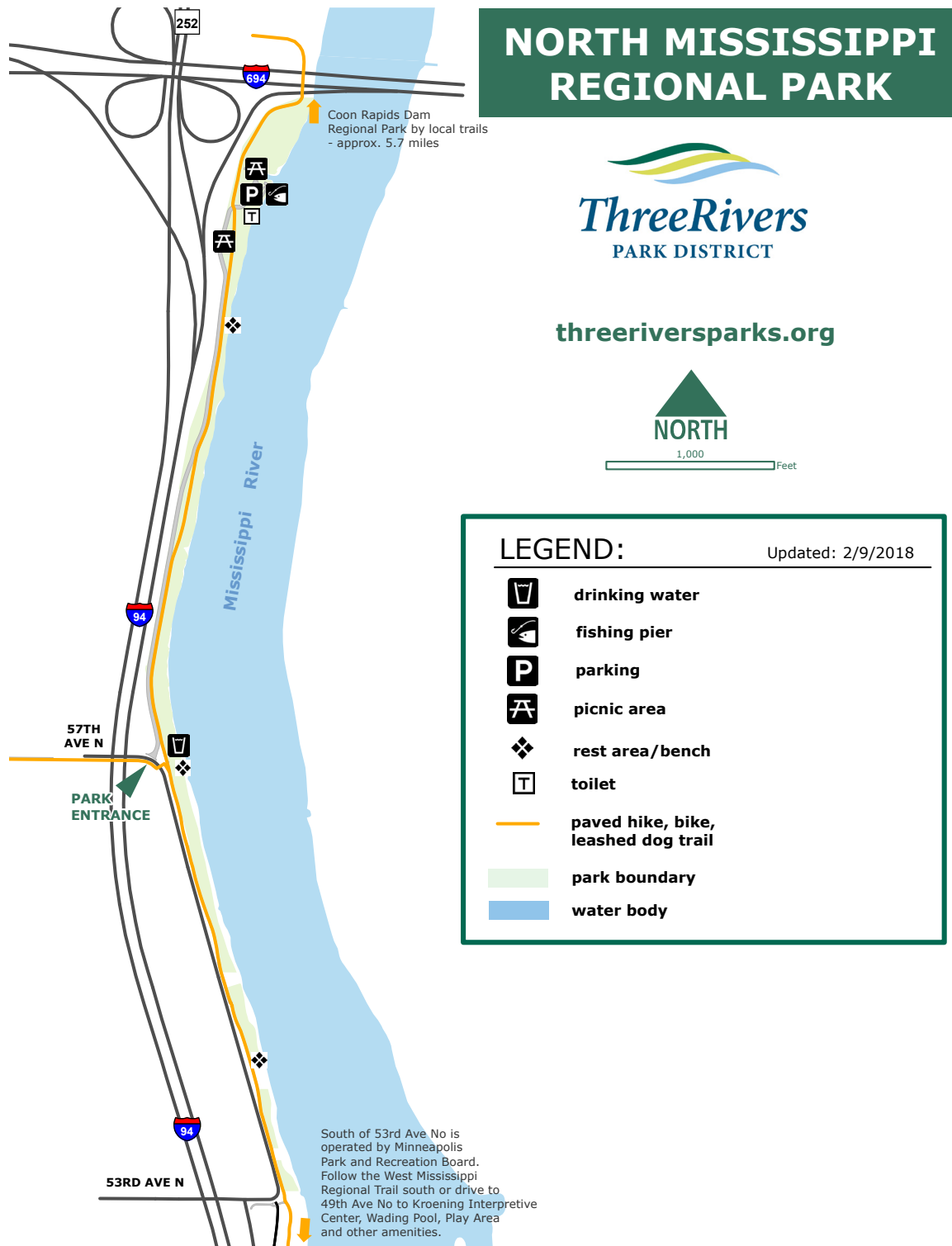
Regional parks in the Twin Cities metropolitan area usually contain a diverse mix of nature-based resources, are typically 200-500 acres in size, and accommodate a variety of outdoor recreation activities. These parks are often owned and managed by larger parks districts or counties but coordination with local municipalities and local park systems is important to the success of the broader metro area park systems.

The North Mississippi Regional Park (Regional Park) is the only regional park within Brooklyn Center city boundaries and is managed by the Three Rivers Parks District; most of the property is also owned by Three Rivers Park District. It is located east of the I-94/TH 252 alignment, extending along the west bank of the Mississippi River from the City's south boundary at 53rd Avenue north to the I-694 crossing. The primary access to the Regional Park is at 57th Avenue where a park drive leads north and a trailhead and wayfinding structures mark the park's main feature: the corridor for the Mississippi River Trail (MRT)—a dually-designated state and regional trail—which runs north/south through the park adjacent to the Mississippi River. The trail's regional naming designation, provided by Three Rivers Park District, is West Mississippi River Regional Trail (WMRRT) More information about the MRT/WMRRT follows later in this Chapter.

Other amenities in the Regional Park include a picnic area, fishing pier, and parking. The park offers spectacular views of the Mississippi River and opportunities for watching wildlife. Trails connect with Webber Parkway and commuter routes into downtown Minneapolis. The park is adjacent to the North Mississippi Regional Park owned and operated by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board just south of the City, seamlessly extending the recreational use of both jurisdiction's regional parks. Map 6-2 shows the Regional Park Map developed by Three Rivers Park District. In addition, the Metropolitan Council provides information shown in Map 6-3 with relation to the provision of regional parks and trail accommodation in Brooklyn Center.

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Map 6-2. Map of North Mississippi Regional Park

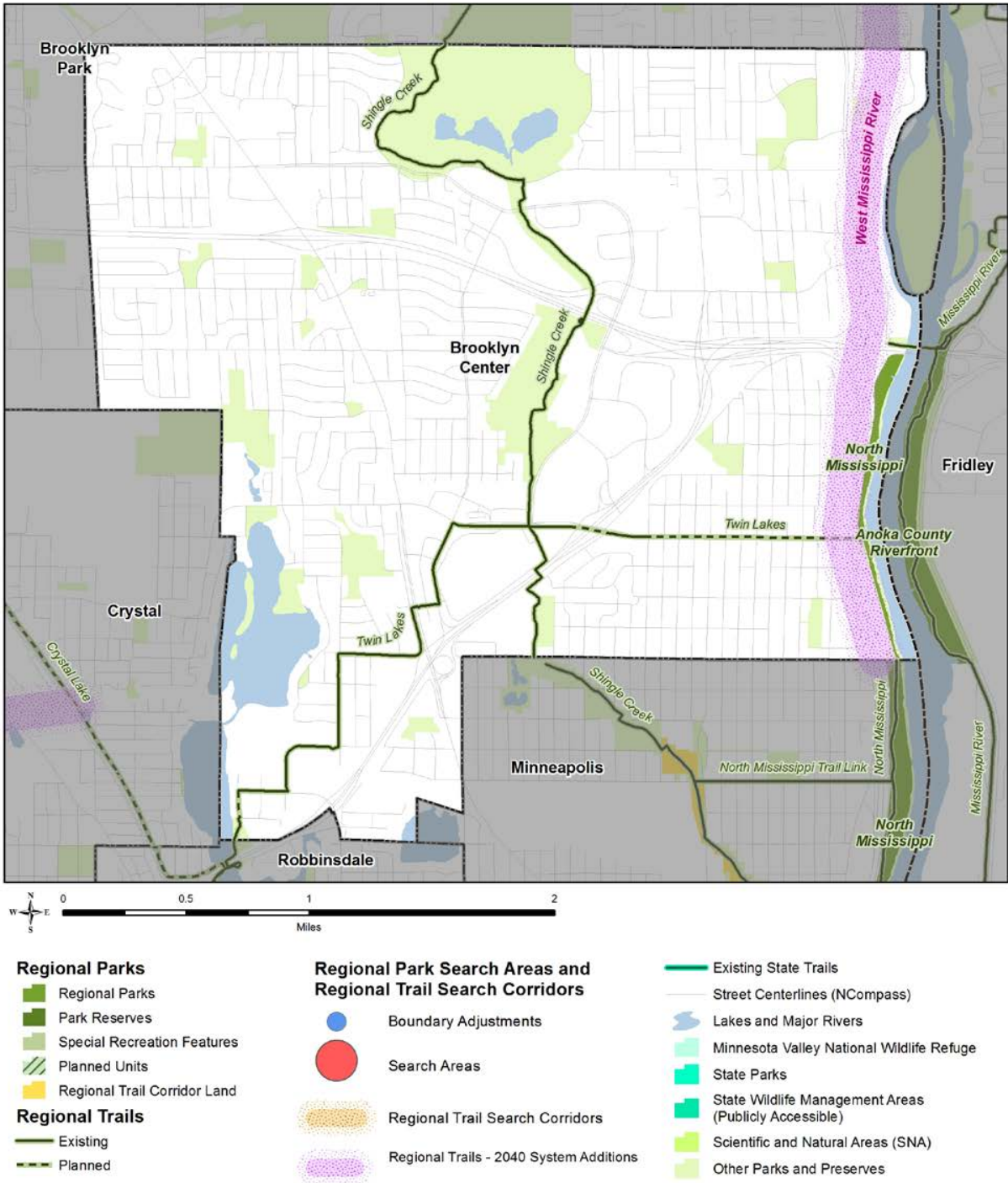


6-6

Source: Three Rivers Park District



Map 6-3. Regional Parks and Trails



6-7

Source: Metropolitan Council

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks include the following three types: 1) Play Lot; 2) Playground; 3) Playfield.

Play Lot

Play lots are the smallest unit of the park system both in terms of size and area that they serve. The primary function of a play lot is to provide play facilities for pre-school children who are not conveniently served by larger parks or playgrounds. It may contain play equipment, sandboxes, paved areas for wheeled toys, walking and bike trails, and seating areas.



- **Service Area:** The sub-neighborhood level of 500 to 2,000 persons within a ¼ mile radius
- **Desirable Size:** .25 to 2 acres
- **Acres per person:** No set standard; desirable in higher-density areas.
- **Site Characteristics:** Should be located so that children do not have to cross major streets and include (or be combined with) an adult seating or gathering area; can be combined with a school.

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Playground

Parks designed for use by children from pre-school to age 12. Often coincides with the service area for an elementary school and may adjoin and complement the school facility if intended to serve the same age group. Facilities and programs of a neighborhood playground should be designed to meet the particular requirements of each individual neighborhood. May include a larger play area with equipment for older children; an area for free play and organized games; minimum maintenance ball diamond, multi-purpose hard surface courts; walking and bike trails, pleasure skating rinks, and seating areas. Some parks may contain portable restrooms.



- **Service Area:** A population of up to 4,000 with a ¼ to ½ mile radius.
- **Desirable Size:** 5 to 10 acres.
- **Acres per 1,000 pop.:** 2.0
- **Site Characteristics:** Geographically centered in neighborhood with safe walking and bike access. Suited for intense development. Helpful if located adjacent to a school.



Playfield

Larger parks designed to provide recreation opportunities for all ages. They may contain all the features of playgrounds, with groomed ball facilities suitable for adult play. Hockey and pleasure skating rinks are lighted. May include portable restrooms and sheltered picnic areas.



- **Service Area:** Neighborhood-wide; serves entire population with special emphasis on organized adult sports, ideally within a 1½ to 2 miles biking distance.
- **Desirable Size:** 20 acres or more.
- **Acres per 1,000 pop.:** 1.0 to 2.0
- **Site Characteristics:** Direct access from all parts of the neighborhood or quadrant. Level terrain with few water bodies or other environmental constraints. Easily accessible by large numbers of vehicles. Physically separate from homes so as to minimize light and noise problems.

Community Destination Parks

Relatively large parks serving as a recreational focus for a neighborhood of the City. Community Destination Parks are noted for having a wide variety of leisure and recreational options and are fully accessible to persons of all abilities. Lighted areas for evening play are provided. Daytime recreational programming and playground supervision are provided in the summer months. Heated, enclosed park shelter buildings provide for recreational spaces and warming houses.



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Community Destination Parks are intended to include costlier types of facilities, and each has a distinct identity or theme. Central Park is the flagship park of the system, with substantial improvements that serve the entire community. Evergreen Park focuses on team sports; Kylawn/ Arboretum Park builds on its nature areas of the Arboretum and the Preserve; West Palmer Park is seen as a prime family picnic and outings area; and Grandview Park's focus is on youth and winter recreation.

- **Service Area:** A neighborhood or quadrant of the City
- **Desirable Size:** 25 acres or more.
- **Acres per 1,000 pop.:** 5.0
- **Site Characteristics:** Easily accessible from all parts of neighborhood or quadrant. Should be located on collector or arterial streets to provide adequate access for residents and should be well-buffered from adjacent residential areas.

Special Use Parks and Open Space

Special use parks and open spaces are areas providing specialized or single-purpose recreational or leisure activities. These parks generally do not provide extensive permanent facilities but may provide nature interpretation, trail and greenway corridors, and/or walking or biking paths. Trails or greenways should connect with other components of the recreation system, schools, community facilities, or neighborhoods.

Existing Parks Inventory

Existing parks are well-dispersed through the City of Brooklyn Center. Table 6-1. illustrates the location and classification of each park in the City's system. In addition to parks, the City's maintains several areas of open space, including the 65-acre Centerbrook Municipal Golf Course, Greenways along Shingle Creek Parkway, 69th Avenue, and 53rd Avenue, and several properties serving as natural areas around Twin Lakes.

6-10 Parks Management

Management of the local park system is the responsibility of the City's Community Activities, Recreation, and Services (CARS) department. Bi-yearly citizen surveys help inform the CARS department on changing interests and requests from area residents related to programming, facilities, and park use. Input from these surveys is used to identify and prioritize projects in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), see vww D.

Also informing parks use, development, and management is the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission which meets monthly and advises the City Council on parks and recreation issues in Brooklyn Center.



Table 6-1. Inventory of Park Amenities

City of Brooklyn Center Park Amenities		Off-Street Parking	Shelter Building	Picnic Shelter	Picnic Area	Grill	Playground Equipment	Baseball Diamond	Softball Diamond	Tennis Court	Skating Rink	Hockey Rink	Basketball Court	Soccer Field	Football Field	Paved Trail	Nature Trail	Archery
Map Key																		
1	Arboretum	■														■	■	
2	Bellvue Park			■			■		■		■		■			■		
4	Cahlander Park															■		
5	Centennial Park	■		2	■	2	■		2					2		■	■	
6	Centennial Park West	■	■				■				■	■	■			■		■
13	East Palmer Park	■		■			■		■				■			■		
15	Evergreen Park	■	■	■	■		■	■	2	2	■	■	■	■	■	■		
16	Firehouse Park	■		■	■	■	■		2				■			■		
17	Freeway Park	■		■			■		■				■			■		
19	Garden City Park	■	■				■											
20	Grandview Park	■					■	■		2	■	■	■	■	■	■		
21	Happy Hollow Park	■		■		■	■		■				■			■		
22	Kylawn Park	■	■	■	■		■		2		■	■	■			■		
24	Lions Park	■		■	■	2	■						■			■		
25	Marlin Park						■									■		
28	Northport Park	■		■	■		■	■		2	■	■	■	■		■		
30	Orchard Lane Park	■		■		■	■		■				■			■		
32	Palmer Lake Park	■			■											■	■	
34	Riverdale Park			■			■		■		■		■			■		
35	Shingle Creek Trail															■	■	
37	Twin Lake Park	■		■		■	■						■			■		
38	Wangstad Park						■						■			■		
40	West Palmer Park	■	■	■	■		■	■	2	2	■		■			■	■	
42	Willow Lane Park	■		■	■		■		■		■	■	■	■		■		

Source: City of Brooklyn Center



BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN TRAIL SYSTEM

The City's current bicycle and pedestrian trail system consists of a mix of sidewalks, paved off-street trails, and some on-road bicycle lanes. Connection between neighborhoods and parks, residents and city destinations, and local and regional facilities continues as a priority for the development of the system. Three regional trails extend through the City further providing connection within the community and to broader regional trail networks beyond. Map 6-4 illustrates the City's extensive trail network.

Regional Trails

Three regional trails provide a backbone of trail system within and through the City. Local connection to these regional trails provides opportunity for extensive multi-modal transportation for area residents. These trails tend to be paved road-separated facilities; most are under the jurisdiction of Three Rivers Parks District with some portions managed by the City. The three regional trails include: 1) Shingle Creek Regional Trail, 2) Twin Lakes Regional Trail, and the MRT/WMRRT. Map 6-5 illustrates the regional trails in the City.

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Shingle Creek Regional Trail

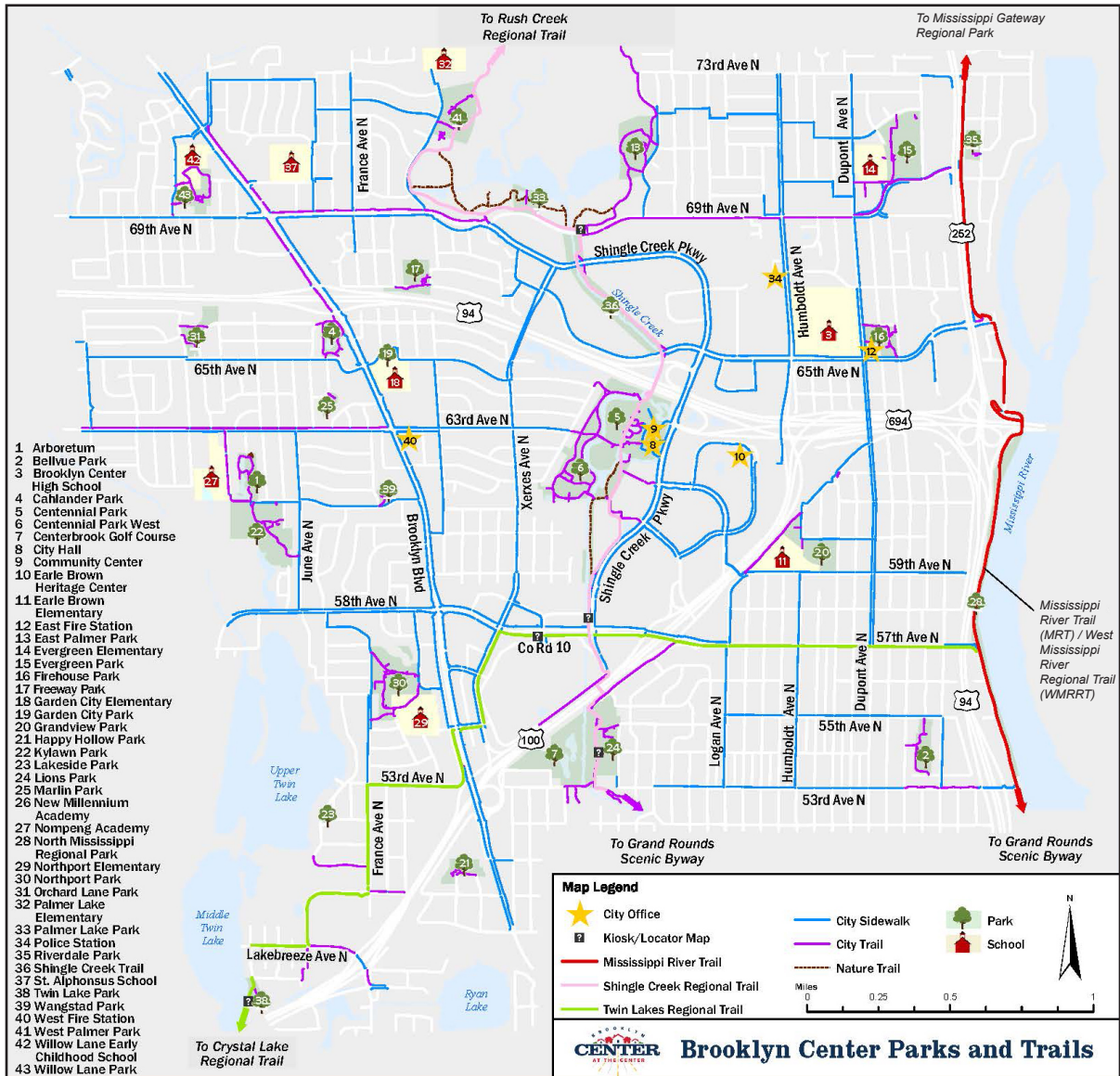
The City's bicycle and pedestrian trail system is anchored by the Shingle Creek Regional Trail, an off-street separated trail which runs from the north to the south City limits along Shingle Creek. For much of its length, separate trails are provided for bicyclists and pedestrians. The north end of the trail circles Palmer Lake, and a portion of this trail section is maintained by the City. Beyond Brooklyn Center, the regional trail travels from Minneapolis in the south to Brooklyn Park in the north and connects to the Above the Falls Regional Park, Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail, Twin Lakes Regional Trail and Rush Creek Regional Trail.

Twin Lakes Regional Trail

This regional trail travels through Brooklyn Center and Robbinsdale as it connects the MRT/WMRRT, Shingle Creek Regional Trail, and Crystal Lake Regional Trail. Its alignment utilizes a combination of paved road-separated trail and sidewalk. The City of Brooklyn Center's Pedestrian Bicycle and Trail Plan identifies proposed improvements to the trail to eventually complete a connection between the Crystal Lake Regional Trail and MRT/WMRRT.



Map 6-4. Brooklyn Center Trails



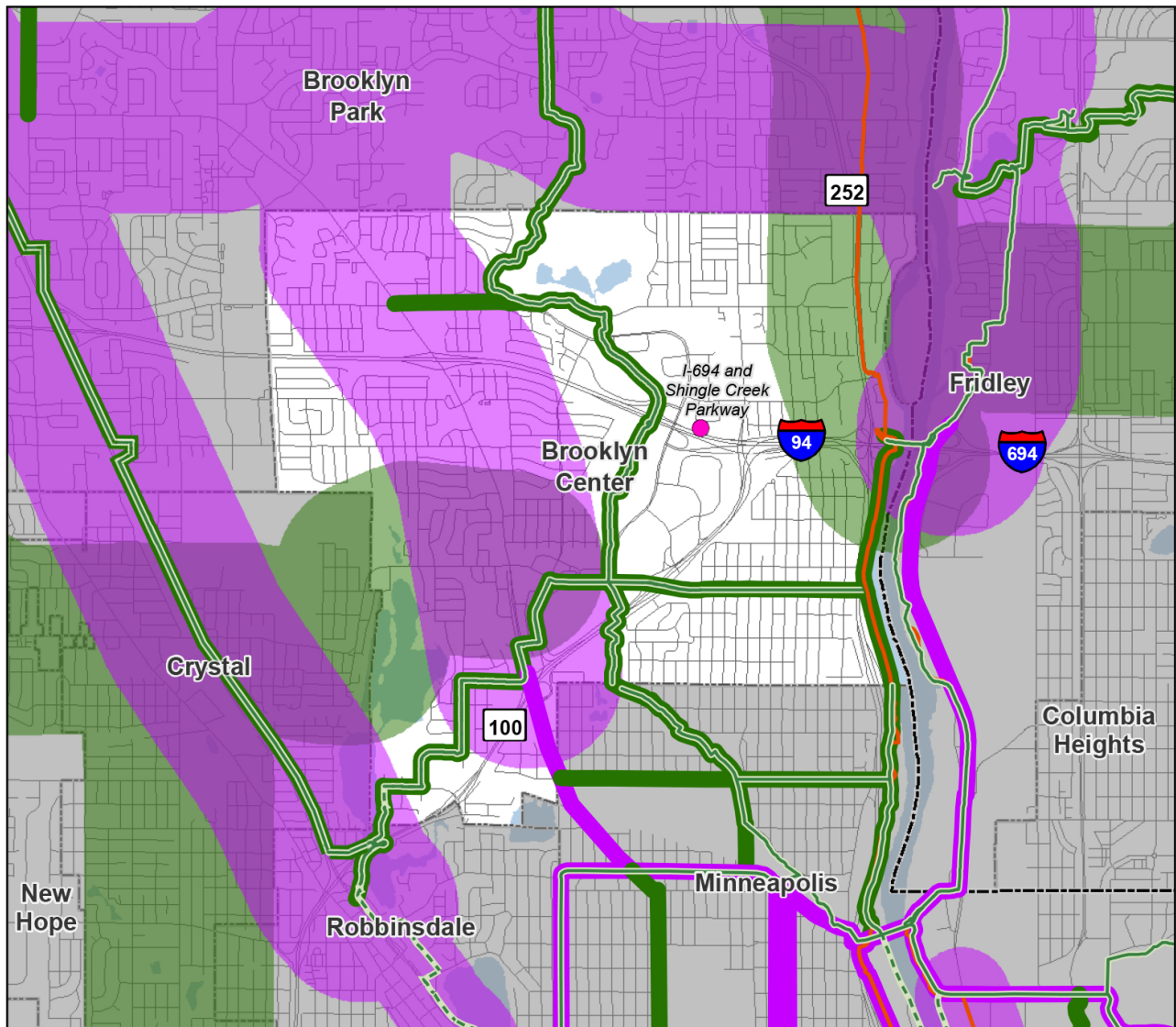
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Source: City of Brooklyn Center, updated by SHC



Map 6-5. Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN), Brooklyn Center

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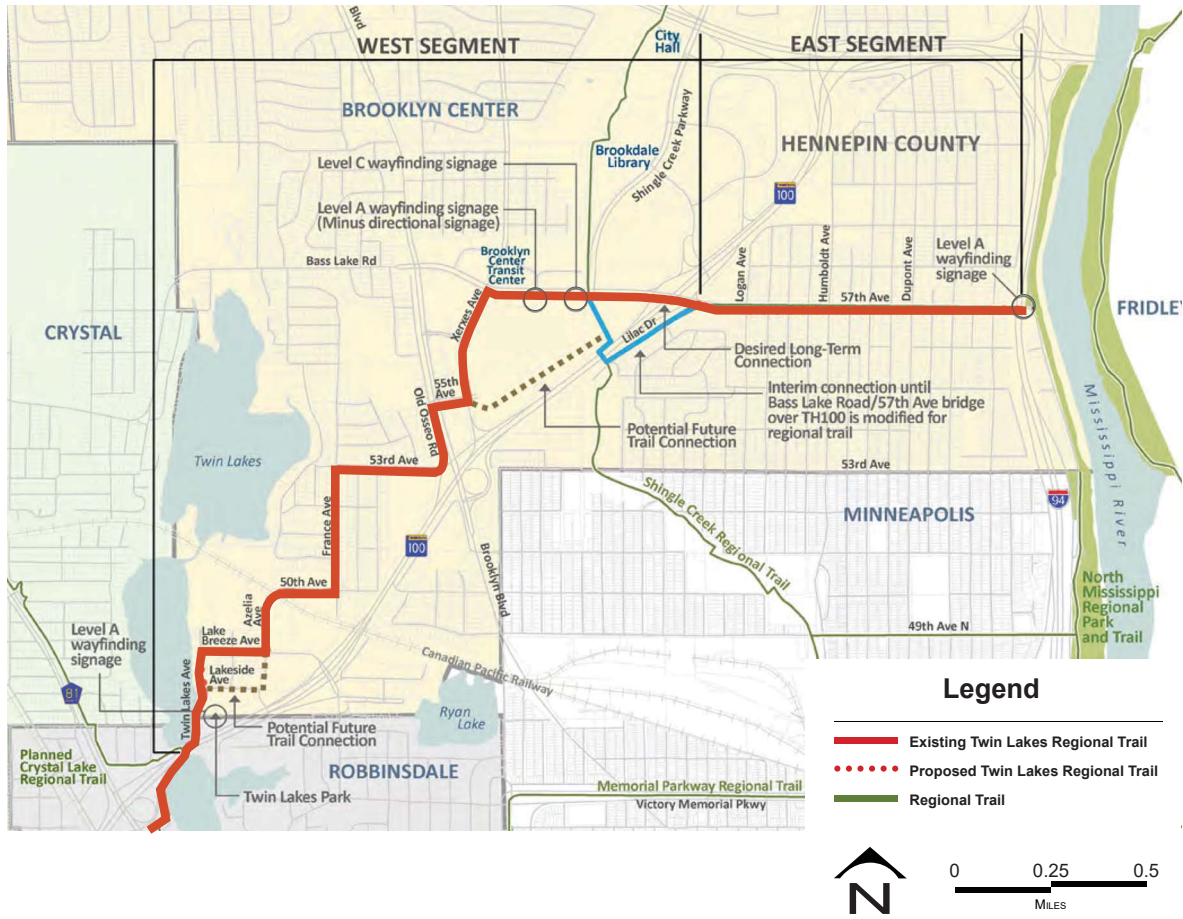


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| <p>RBTN Alignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 Alignment Tier 2 Alignment <p>RBTN Corridors (Alignments Undefined)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 Priority Corridor Tier 2 Corridor | <p>Regional Destinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metropolitan Job Centers Regional Job Centers Subregional Job Centers Large High Schools Colleges & Universities Highly Visited Regional Parks Major Sport & Entertainment Centers | <p>Regional Trails (Parks Policy Plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Planned County Boundaries City and Township Boundaries NCompass Street Centerlines Open Water Features Existing State Trails (DNR) Mississippi River Trail |
|--|---|---|

Source: Metropolitan Council, updated by SHC



Map 6-6. Twin Lakes Regional Trail Improvements



6-15

Source: Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan, 2014. Updated by SHC.



Mississippi River Trail and West Mississippi River Regional Trail

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) / West Mississippi River Regional Trail (WMRRT) through Brooklyn Center is just a small segment of the roughly 600-mile long trail that travels through the state adjacent or near to the Mississippi River, beginning at the headwaters in Itasca State Park. A portion of the trail in Brooklyn Center is complete as a paved road-separated trail located within the North Mississippi Regional Park. This segment—from 53rd Avenue to the I-694 crossing—is owned and managed by Three Rivers Park District. A trailhead marker and wayfinding information is located next to the MRT at 57th Avenue in the regional park. Map 5-7 shows the route of the MRT in Brooklyn Center and Fridley, provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

The trail portion managed by Three Rivers Park District currently travels east at I-694 to the east side of the river, connecting with the segment in Fridley. It is the intent and goal of the MRT and City to extend the trail along the west side of the river north in the corridor now known as the West Mississippi River Regional Trail (WMRRT). A short gap in the off-road facility currently exists between I-694 and 66th Avenue. While this segment is signed with MRT markers, trail users must travel within the road or sidewalk along Willow Lane. At 66th Avenue, a paved off-road trail travels north again; this segment is managed by the City.

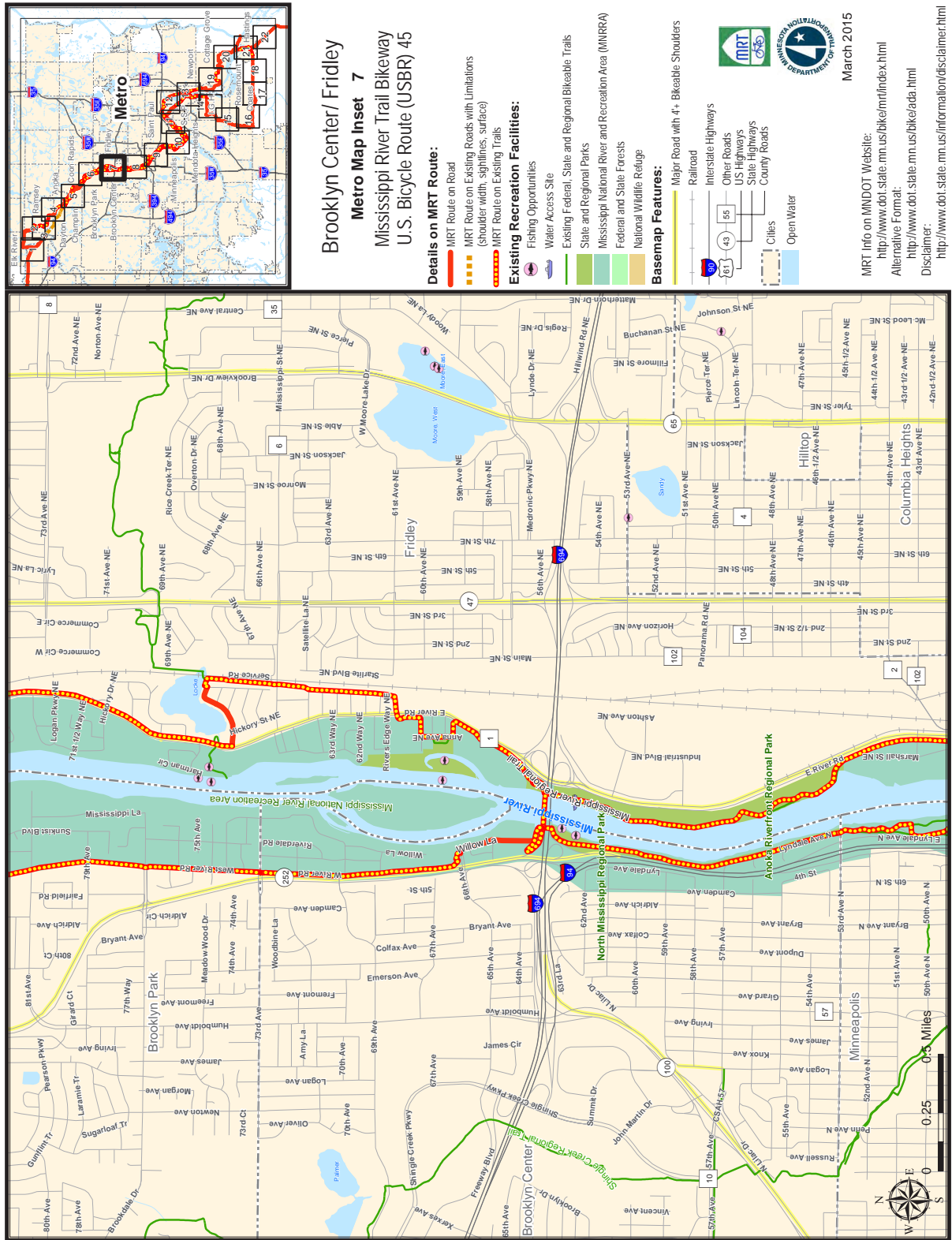
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A regional trail search corridor for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail is included in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan to travel through Dayton, Champlin, Brooklyn Park, and Brooklyn Center as it connects Crow River Regional Trail Search Corridor, Elm Creek Park Reserve, Rush Creek Regional Trail, Mississippi Gateway Regional Park, Twin Lakes Regional Trail and North Mississippi Regional Park. A master plan for the WMRRT was adopted in May 2018.

The trail route celebrates the Mississippi River's significance within Hennepin County, traveling approximately 20 miles adjacent to or near the river through northeastern Hennepin County. It connects the communities of Dayton, Champlin, Brooklyn Park, and Brooklyn Center—with the confluence of the Crow/Mississippi Rivers and the Minneapolis Grand Rounds as bookends to the trail alignment. The West Mississippi River Regional Trail will link Coon Rapids Dam and North Mississippi regional parks, and the Rush Creek, Medicine Lake and Twin Lakes regional trails. Map 6-8 is excerpted from the regional trail master plan and illustrates the MRT/WMRRT alignment through Brooklyn Center.



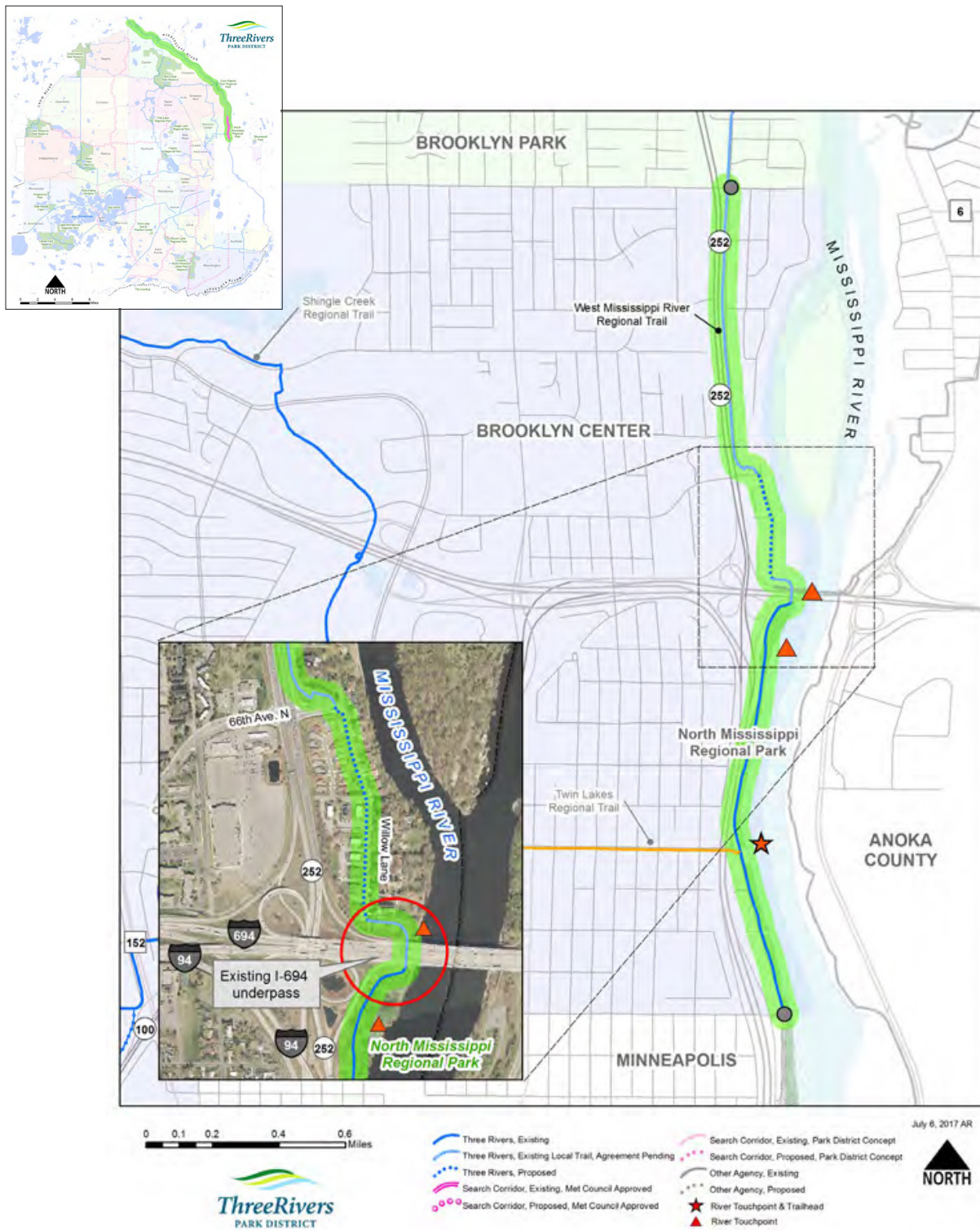
Map 6-7. MRT through Brooklyn Center and Fridley (MnDOT)



Source: MnDOT



Map 6-8. West Mississippi River Regional Trail (WMRRT) Alignment



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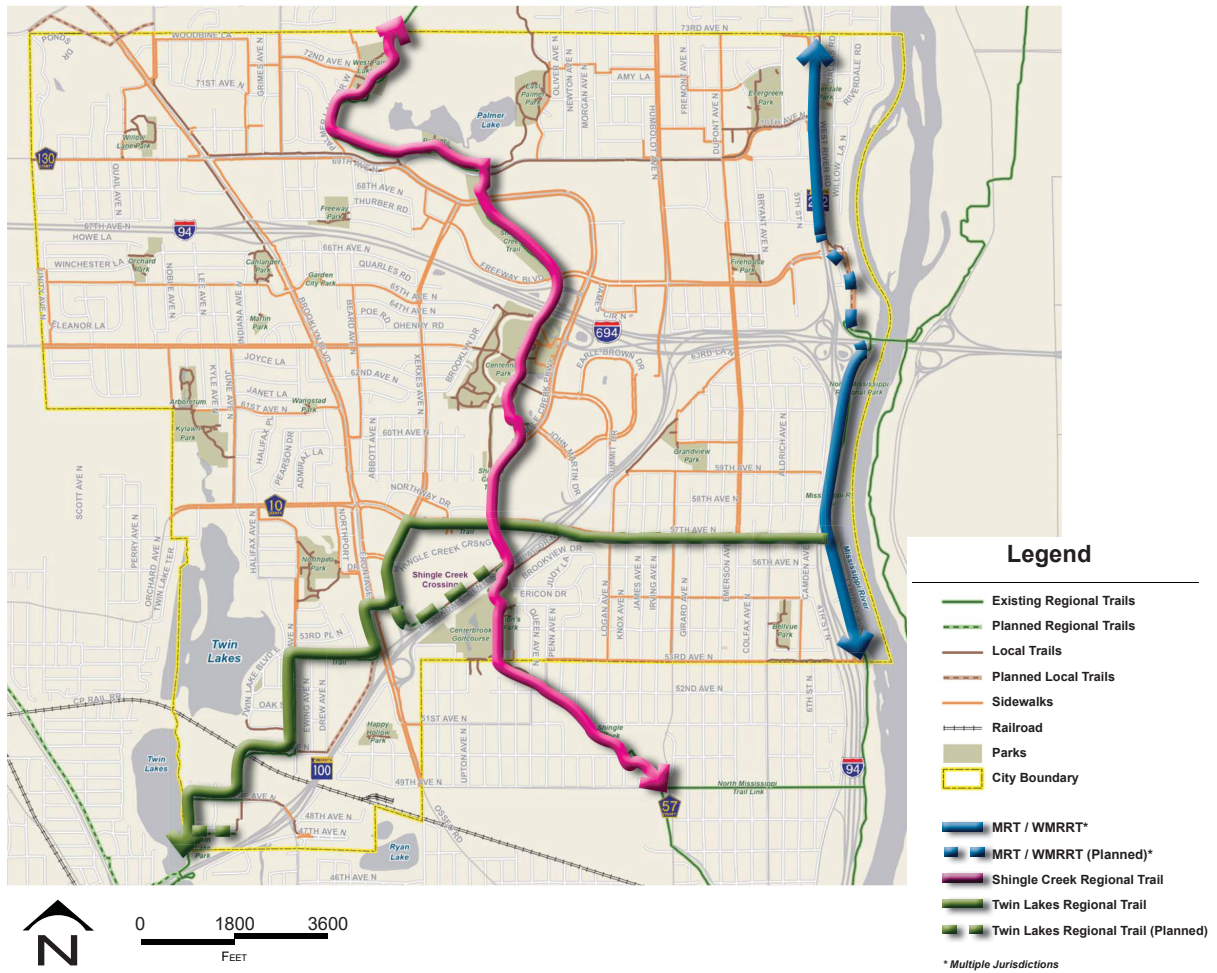
Source: Draft West Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District



City Trail Network

Beyond the largely north/south alignments of the City’s regional trails, the City manages east/west trails to link trails providing a connected network. East-west links include the 69th Avenue greenway, the Freeway Boulevard/65th Avenue trail; and the 53rd Avenue greenway. Sidewalks and other neighborhood trails complete the finer grain of the network and local trail system. Map 6-9 illustrates existing trails in Brooklyn Center along with potential alignments of proposed connections.

Map 6-9. Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Trail Network (City)



Source: Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan, 2014
Updated by SHC

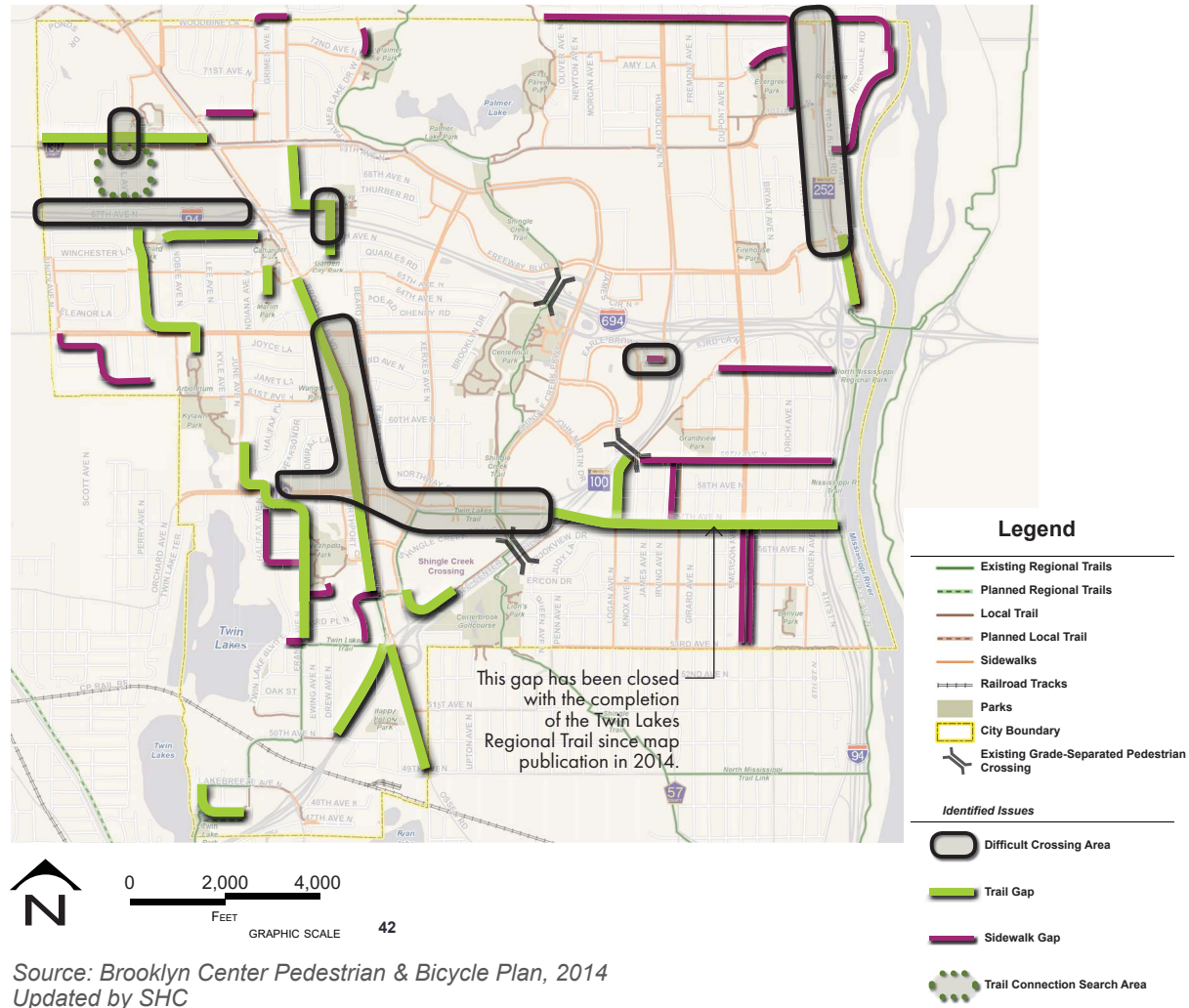


Trail Issues

In 2014, the City conducted a thorough study of its pedestrian and bicycle system. The Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan is the resulting document that addresses the issues, gaps, and needs of the existing system. Through study and public engagement, the document identifies gaps in the City's sidewalk, trail, and crossings systems for pedestrian and bicyclists. Map 6-10 is taken from the study and highlights the locations of gaps identified in the study process. The document also identifies other public needs for pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, including requests for improved lighting, availability of bicycle racks, wider trails, better-maintained trail surfaces, winter snow removal, and added security. Information about ongoing management and implementation of identified projects is contained in the pedestrian and bicycle plan.

Map 6-10. Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Trail Network Gaps

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PARKS & TRAILS – NEEDS, GOALS & POLICIES

Identifying Needs

In an effort stay current with the needs of a changing community, the City conducts a citizen survey to assess what residents want to see changed or improved with the area’s parks and recreation. These surveys are conducted every other year. Results influence projects the City includes in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for parks. Examples of projects include conversion of baseball fields to soccer fields, addition of nature trails, or replacement of playground equipment. The last survey was completed in 2017. Primary desires expressed in this survey include the addition of a splash pad, dog park, and indoor walking facility to the system.

Goals and Policies

In Chapter 2: Vision, Goals & Strategies of this Plan outlines the goals for parks and trails in Brooklyn Center. The City’s primary goal is to provide a robust system of parks and recreation that serves the diverse needs of community residents. Parks and trails are important amenities to the quality of life within a community, and focus on their development, enhancement, and integration with changing community environments is critical for the City’s future. Community input and engagement is a key piece of this focus.

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IMPLEMENTATION

In Brooklyn Center, the City’s public parks and recreation are the responsibility of the Public Works department and under the direction of the Park & Recreation Commission. Together these groups manage the planning and development of a Parks and Trails System that addresses the ongoing management, maintenance, budgeting, programming and resourcing for parks and trails. Projects and improvements for the system should be updated regularly, respond to resident needs, and accommodate changing community demographics so all residents benefit from access to outdoor recreation and natural areas. Further detail about implementation is included in Chapter 9 of this Plan.



Capital Improvements

Park improvements included in the City's CIP address the construction of trails, shelters, playground equipment, athletic field lighting and other facilities that enhance the general park aesthetics and attract park usage by providing recreational facilities that meet community needs. Funding of capital improvements to parks and trails comes from a combination of sources including public utility funds, special assessments, and capital projects funds.

Until recently, capital improvements to parks followed a roughly 20-year cycle. In 1960 and in 1980, the citizens of Brooklyn Center approved bond referendums for financing the development and improvement of park facilities. This included acquiring land, installing new playgrounds, developing ball fields, tennis courts and other facilities. Following these improvements, for a time no formal plan was put in place for a systematic update. Following up on the City's practice of programming for street reconstruction 15 years into the future, the City recently began developing a 15-year capital improvement program (CIP) for parks. The current CIP includes the following park and trail projects planned for implementation in the year listed. Further details can be found in the CIP Tables in Appendix D.

- 6-22
 - Centennial Park Tennis Courts Resurfacing, Basketball Court Project - 2018
 - Bridge Rehabilitation (4 Bridges) - 2018
 - Park Playground Equipment Replacement – 2019 through 2021
 - Brooklyn Boulevard City Entrance Signs Rehabilitation - 2020
 - West River Road, Arboretum, Freeway, Palmer Lake and Northport Trails Reconstruction – 2022
 - Evergreen Park Scoreboard Improvements - 2023
 - Centennial Park Softball Field Improvements - 2024
 - Park Name Sign Replacement - 2025
 - Hockey Rink Rehabilitation/Replacements - 2026
 - Irrigation Systems Rehabilitation/Replacements - 2026
 - Softball/Baseball Fence Replacement - 2027
 - 69th Avenue Trail Reconstruction – 2027
 - 69th Avenue Landscape Rehabilitation - 2027
 - Park Trail and Parking Lot Lighting Improvements - 2028
 - Park Bleacher Replacement - 2031
 - Park Bleacher Replacement - 2032

