



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over its 50 years, Chanhassen's Parks and Recreation System has improved the community's quality of life, economic development, and environmental resources. With over 900 acres of parks and open space, 30 parks, and almost 80 miles of trails, the Chanhassen Parks and Recreation System is an essential component of the City.

This System Plan was shaped by the Chanhassen community, and aims to forward the City's tradition of providing excellent parks and recreation by guiding investment and development throughout the Parks and Recreation System over the next 20 years.

This Plan complements the directions established in the Comprehensive Plan, and provides detailed guidance in the development, management, and operations of the system. This direction is based on the community's expressed needs and desires, as well as analyses of demographic changes, future trends, and Chanhassen's current system. This Plan addresses community needs at a system-wide level. Specific initiatives, like the development of an individual park, should be guided by this document, but will require additional, detailed master planning.

WHAT WE HEARD

“ Keep up the great work and enhance our parks; one of the main reasons we live here.”



Girl walking on tree at the Arboretum by Jason Lehman



Townhomes Fronting Pioneer Pass Park

Importance of Parks & Recreation

When people talk about the places they love in the city or neighborhood, parks are typically at the top of the list. They are sources of civic identity and pride, and parks and recreation are also essential to the physical, economic, environmental, and social health of cities and their residents. Quality parks, along with schools and access to transportation, are typically the top three criteria people consider when choosing a place to live.

Health

A healthy recreation and park system equals healthy residents. Simply put, people who engage in regular physical activity are healthier and happier. When people have access to parks, trails, and recreation, they exercise more. In addition, increased exposure to natural areas has been linked to improved physical and psychological health.

Recreation programs contribute to community health. Recreation programs offered for all ages (families, youth, adults, and seniors) promote life-long learning and a supportive community atmosphere. Specific programs can help accomplish other community goals, such as education about sustainability or youth development.

Recreation and Parks encourage play. Parks are often cited as people's favorite places. They are the places people go to have fun, relax, and play. Whether it's a place to play a game of soccer, garden with neighbors, take a quiet walk through the woods or go on a vigorous run with the dog, a balanced park and recreation system has something for everyone.

Property Values

Parks and open space increase property values. Numerous studies show that proximity to parks, trails, and open spaces increases residential property values. Parks and open space can also positively affect commercial property and can be catalysts for redevelopment.

Beauty

Parks contribute to aesthetics. Parkways, tree-lined streets, gardens, lush landscaped areas, views of rivers and lakes, stately woods, and public art are all things that make a city a beautiful place to live, work, play, and shop. They make essential contributions to a city's livability and vitality.

Natural Value & Environmental Benefits

Parks and open space provide environmental benefits. Trees and vegetation found in parks, preserves, and open spaces improve air and water quality. These areas also play a role in managing stormwater runoff and protecting natural areas.

Cultural & Social Amenities

Parks preserve natural and cultural heritage. Significant natural features, such as the Bluff Creek Preserve, numerous lakes, wildlife refuges, and Minnewashta Regional Park, are preserved for today's residents as well as for future generations.

Parks have important social benefits. Parks are often the focal points of neighborhoods. As places for neighborhood activities, celebrations, and informal interaction they provide places for community members to come together.

How to Use the Plan

Chanhassen's Parks and Recreation System Plan is organized into six chapters. Chapter One introduces and provides context for the plan. Chapter Two outlines national and local trends that impact current and future development and the use of parks and recreation systems. Chapter Three provides an overview of Chanhassen's existing park system. Chapter Four contains the vision and guiding principles that guide the future of Chanhassen's Parks and Recreation System. Chapter Five identifies the goals, policies, and initiatives recommended to achieve the guiding principles. Chapter Six provides implementation tools, including priorities to assist with future decision-making, general cost estimates, potential funding sources, and a process to review future project proposals.

Throughout the entire plan, gray call out boxes are used to provide supplemental information to document text. Purple call out boxes highlight some of the quotes from community members who participated in engagement efforts conducted throughout the system planning process.

The system plan is supplemented by two appendices. The first appendix has full page versions of the system maps. The second appendix has all of the input received during the community engagement process.

It is important to recognize that the recommendations contained within this plan do not constitute all possible future actions. Instead, this System Plan provides a framework to guide future decision-making. Given the 20-year time frame, it is anticipated that the System Plan may need to change as the community responds to future trends, needs, and opportunities.

As a supplement to this document, a Park System Inventory was completed that takes stock of the system's existing amenities.



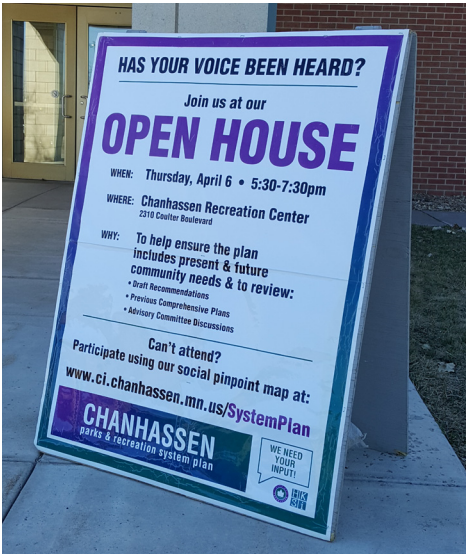
Fall Kayaking on Lake Ann by Sarah McGinn



Son & daughter walking at the Arboretum by Amy Huang

Planning Process

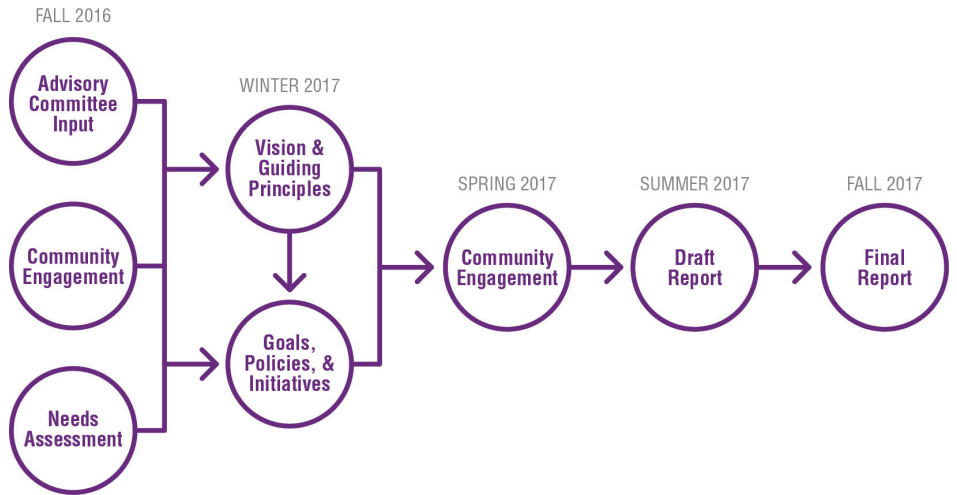
This year-long planning effort began in August of 2016, and represents input gathered from the community, stakeholders, city staff, and city officials. Online questionnaires, meetings, focus groups, park and community tours, open houses, and group brainstorming efforts guided the development of the System Plan by providing valuable input and collective wisdom. The plan also incorporates the expertise of the consultant team, analysis of benchmarking data, a system-wide audit conducted by city staff and the consultants, and best practices collected from other peer communities.



Open House Sign



Open House Participants



The planning process was guided by an Advisory Committee that met 7 times throughout the process. The Chanhassen City Council and Park and Recreation Commission provided guidance and input throughout every phase of the plan's development. Meetings between the project team and the **City Council** were held on September 26, 2016, February 4, 2017, and September 11, 2017. The **Park and Recreation Commission** collaborated with the project team on December 13, 2016, March 28, 2017, July 25, 2017, and August 22, 2017.

Community Engagement

The goal of the planning process was to educate and raise awareness about the importance of parks and recreation while ensuring that future investment in Chanhassen's system meets the needs of the community. Throughout this planning process, over 1,000 residents and stakeholders were engaged to ensure the final plan was reflective of community desires.

Public outreach efforts included:

- » Six Advisory Committee meetings spread throughout the year-long planning process
- » Two listening sessions (Athletic Associations, Senior Center Commission)
- » Three online questionnaires and two online interactive mapping exercises which reached almost 2,000 individuals and solicited 1,500 responses
- » Seven Pop-up meetings at community events
- » A Community Open House held on April 6th of 2017, where over 70 community members provided feedback on the System Plan's draft recommendations

Existing Plans

While this is the first Parks and Recreation System Plan for the City of Chanhassen, several previous planning efforts helped guide the development of this document.

- » The National Citizen Survey conducted in 2013 and in 2016
- » Parks and Recreation Annual Report
- » 2015 Athletic Facilities Study
- » 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- » Bandimere Park Master Plan
- » Fox Woods Preserve Master Plan
- » County Road 61 Corridor Study

Coordinated Planning Efforts

Park System Inventory

As part of this planning process, a Park System Inventory was developed to take stock of every amenity present in Chanhassen's existing system. The creation of this document acted as a starting point for the audit of the City's existing conditions included in this Plan. The Park System Inventory provides detailed maps and information regarding every park within the City and is available on the City's website.

Chanhassen 2040 Comprehensive Plan

This planning process corresponded with the development of the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. A parks and recreation chapter was written based on the recommendations established in this System Plan.

