

Soldiers Field Memorial Park

2022 Master Plan Update



Prepared for:
The City of Rochester
Park Board
OCTOBER 2022



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RECREATION**
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Executive Summary

Soldiers Field Master Plan Update

Purpose of the Master Planning Process

Over the last five years, the City of Rochester has nearly finished implementing the interim recommendations from the 2014 Master Plan. This plan update process was undertaken to reexamine and solidify the long-term (10+ year) vision for the park and identify short- and long-term strategies to reach that vision.



In 2020, the city approved a referendum for park investment. Approximately \$7 million of the referendum funding has been targeted for Soldiers Field Memorial Park. The Master Plan Update was intended to identify what improvements would be made with this funding in the next three years, and what improvements should be considered when funding is next made available. Since the beginning of the update process, the city has received additional grant and local funding and now has \$18.5 million to invest in improvements over the next three years.

Executive Summary

Surrounding Context

Soldiers Field Park is situated directly south of downtown and is a shared amenity for the public, the University of Minnesota Rochester and the renowned Mayo Clinic. Downtown Rochester is a vibrant and growing city that features historic architecture and established walkable neighborhoods situated around the Zumbro River. The future economic health of the city looks bright; a diversified economy is bolstered by similarly diverse residents. The University of Minnesota Rochester and the Mayo Clinic have plans to grow, and the urban areas adjacent to Soldiers Field are slated for future development.

The park is bounded generally by 12th Street / Highway 14 on the south, Broadway on the east, 7th Street on the north and a residential neighborhood on the west. The formal entrance to the park is at 3rd Avenue on the park's north side by the war memorials; a secondary entrance is at 1st Avenue, and access to parking is off Soldiers Field Drive and George Gibbs Drive.

History of the Park

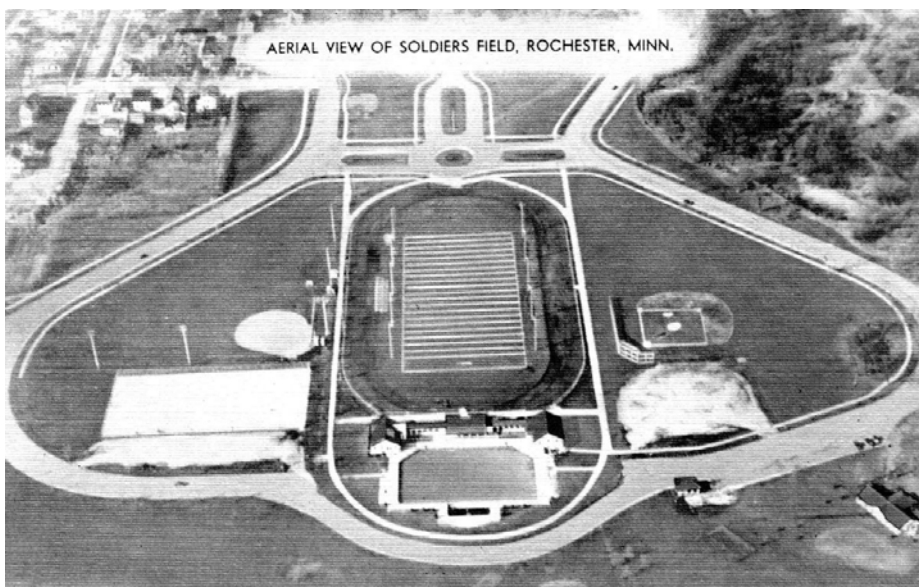
Originally a pasture, Soldiers Field was envisioned as parkland by the American Legion. The golf course was the first development in the park. Initially, it was six, and then nine holes with sand greens. Later this was extended to an 18-hole course.

The South Fork of the Zumbro River was diverted to its present position in 1933. The engineering, which includes the three dams, was done by the State Highway Department. The river is prone to seasonal flooding in the spring which must be mitigated and considered in any design.

The park has been a core part of Rochester's history for nearly a century. One of the most historically significant events held at Soldiers Field was in 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt conferred American Legion citations to Drs. C.H. and W.J. Mayo.

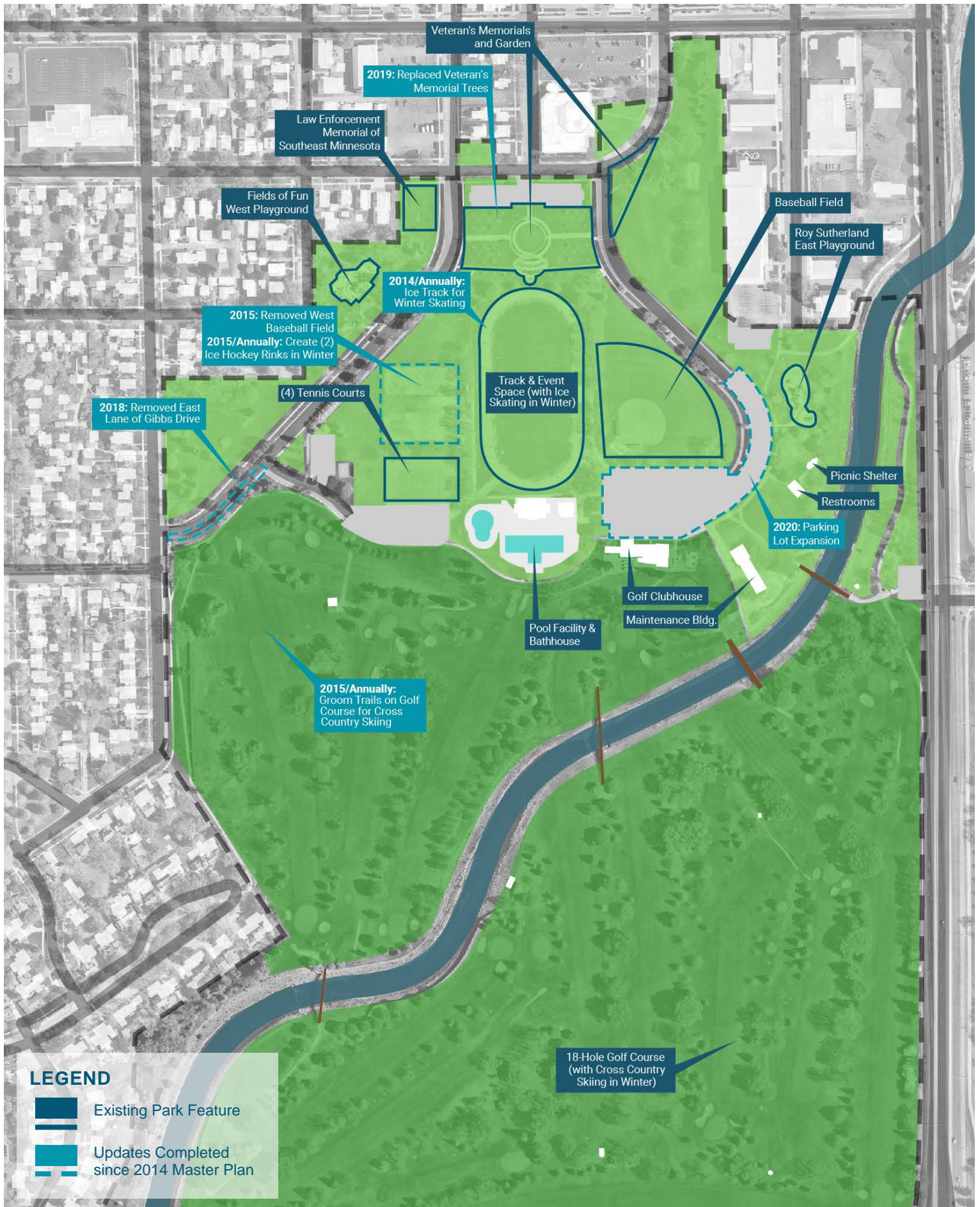
Development of the drives on the north end were completed in 1936, and the Legion Memorial was installed in 1951 with an appropriate dedication ceremony. The memorial and symmetry of the drives are key to the park's historic character.

The swimming pool, built in 1936 as a W.P.A. project, has been a popular destination for generations of Rochester residents, and has been rebuilt over time.





Existing Conditions and Recent Projects



Soldiers Field Today

Soldiers Field Memorial Park offers a wide variety of programming and activities in its 150 acres of park space.

The memorials at the park's northern entrance provide the community with a place for remembrance and reflection. In addition, there are many facilities for active recreation, including:

- an 18-hole golf course
- a 50m lap pool and splash pad
- a track and field with ice skating in winter
- tennis courts (4)
- a baseball/softball field
- playgrounds (2)
- hockey rinks in winter (2)

The northern portion of the park has several buildings which include a pool house, a clubhouse for the golf course and utility buildings, many of which are showing signs of age and need maintenance.

With nearly 4,000 feet of riverfront, the park also possesses potential for visual and physical access to the Zumbro River. Currently, the primary experience of the river is limited to golfers, except for a short stretch along Broadway Avenue near the east playground.

Guiding Principles

A set of guidelines were developed to help shape the discussion and design ideas proposed for Soldiers Field. These guiding principles were initially developed during the 2014 Master Planning process and were evaluated and updated according to stakeholders and community input for this Master Plan Update.

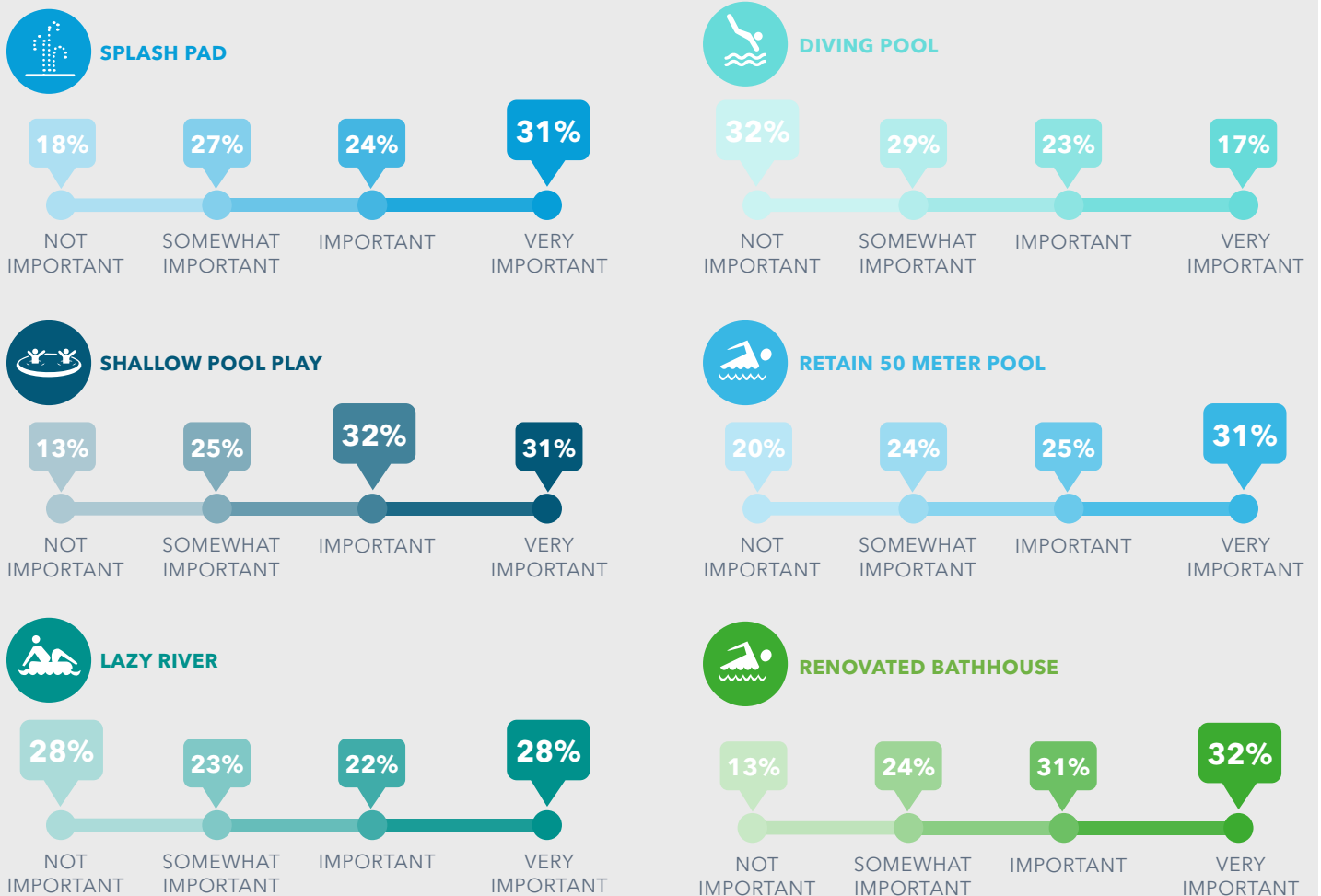
1. Preserve the park and the park boundary from future encroachment
2. Provide a welcoming and inclusive park for a growing and diverse community
3. Provide a variety of outdoor park spaces and programs, including opportunities for non-programmed recreation
4. Preserve the intent of the memorial areas
5. Address community needs for park evolution while incorporating historic design elements
6. Strengthen park access and connections to downtown and other surrounding neighborhoods
7. Provide trails and gathering spaces that engage park users with the river
8. Enhance the signage and wayfinding system to orient and direct park users
9. Provide opportunities for winter use
10. Incorporate sustainable design practices
11. Consider life-cycle costs as well as capital costs for park improvements

Community Engagement

To understand current needs and desires of the community and surrounding neighborhoods, engagement opportunities were used to involve residents, visitors, and stakeholders in providing feedback about the development of the master plan update. The public was asked to review initial ideas about park programming and provide input on three design concepts.

Over two phases of public engagement, the effort was successful in generating nearly 3,000 survey responses and online comments in addition to 12 stakeholder meetings and four in-person events. The input was evaluated by the project team and city staff and used to inform the planning process and, ultimately, the final plan included in this Master Plan Update.

RESULTS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS RANKING POTENTIAL AQUATICS IMPROVEMENTS:



RESULTS OF A SURVEY QUESTION ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO IDENTIFY UP TO 8 OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES TO RETAIN IN THE FINAL PROPOSED CONCEPT:



RIVER PLAZA WITH PAVILION & OVERLOOK



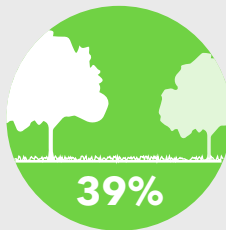
FOOD TRUCK PROMENADE



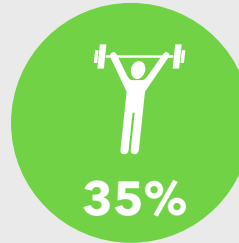
PICKLEBALL



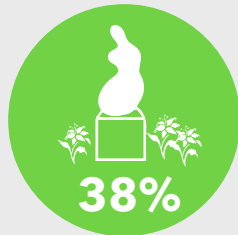
ARBORETUM



GREAT LAWN/FLEX LAWN



KINETIC PLAY/ FITNESS CIRCUIT



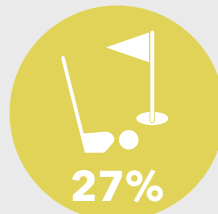
SCULPTURE/FORMAL GARDENS



BASKETBALL COURTS



VOLLEYBALL COURTS



GOLF PUTTING COURSE



INDOOR CURLING



BOCCE COURTS



OUTDOOR CURLING



BASEBALL STADIUM



GOLF SIMULATOR

Master Plan

After gathering a significant amount of public feedback on the preferred uses and design concept options during both phases of community engagement, a preferred master plan for Soldiers Memorial Field Park was created. Priorities for the preferred plan were also developed from a review of the 2014 Master Plan (a process that also included extensive community input).

The goal was to identify a master plan that was both feasible and desirable to the community. Grounded in the 2014 Master Plan document and adjusted based on knowledge of the 2016 Parks and Recreation System Plan, the updated preferred plan for Soldiers Field Memorial Park incorporates the desires heard through the most recent community engagement efforts, while minding the vision for the park system as a whole. The preferred plan is divided into a short-term (0-3 years) phase that will capitalize on grant and other immediate funding opportunities, and a long-term phase (10+ years) intended to guide future investments.

Short-term Preferred Plan

The short-term preferred plan focuses on improvements that would be completed within approximately three years. These improvements are projects that were identified as priorities through public input, the 2014 Master Plan, and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) federal grant that was awarded to the City. The ORLP grant projects include the aquatics facility expansion, playground and shelter improvements, and additional trail connections in the northeast and southwest corners of the park.

Key Recommendations:

- **Aquatics**
 - Expand aquatics facility with renovated lap pool and bathhouse, additional features, and lounge space
- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 2 basketball courts near the existing tennis courts
 - Add 1 fitness circuit station near existing hockey rinks (to be expanded in future)
- **Site Amenities**
 - Add west picnic shelter with restrooms south of existing west parking lot
 - Renovate existing east picnic shelter building and restrooms
- **Playgrounds**
 - Retain the west playground
 - Complete 4,500 SF expansion of east playground to add inclusive playground
 - Add a small nature play area near proposed west shelter
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Add trail through the northeast corner of the park as part of Downtown River Trail Connection project
 - Add perpendicular parking area off of Gibbs Drive near west playground
 - Extend existing trail along southwest property line from Memorial Parkway SW to the Zumbro South Trail at Highway 14.
- **Golf**
 - 18-Holes of golf remain, though possible minor reconfigurations in the northwest portion of the course (at holes 1, 3, & 9) will allow for expanded park amenities and trail connections

Short-term Preferred Plan Example Imagery



Nature play area



Inclusive playground



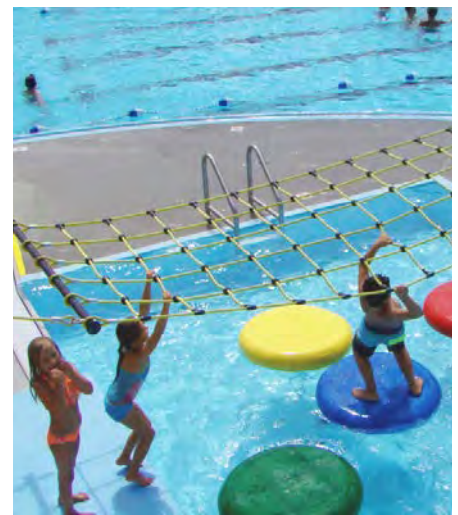
Lazy river



River overlook



Future SW trail connection location



Deepwater play pool water walk



Deepwater play pool climbing wall



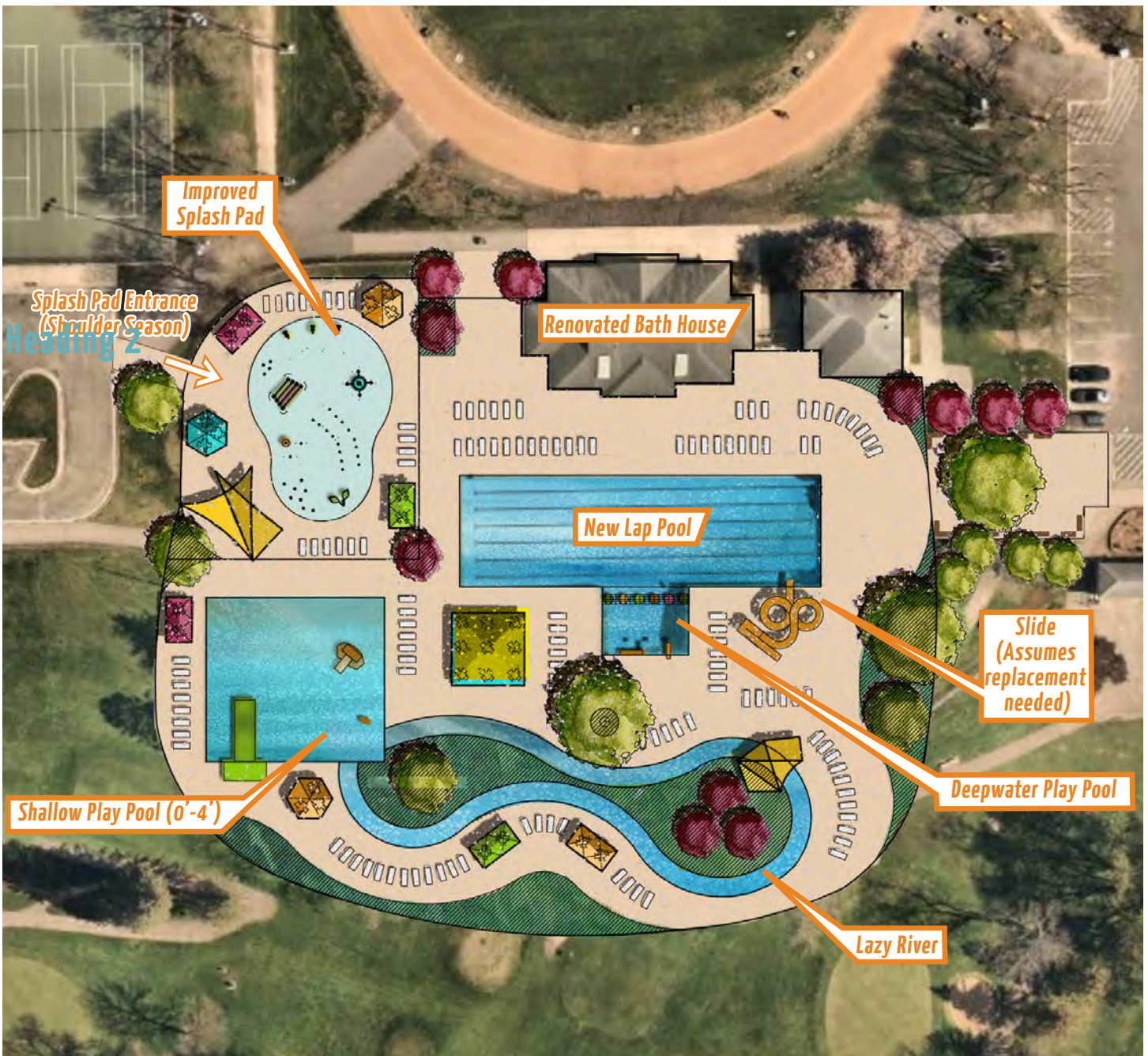
Shallow play pool



Splash pad improvements

Expanded Aquatics Facility

An expanded aquatics facility was one of the most requested features throughout public engagement. This plan proposes to expand the aquatics facility to 70,000-80,000 total square feet, roughly double the current size. The bathhouse requires renovations in order to better serve visitors. In addition to these investments, the expanded aquatics facility is proposed to include improvements to the splash pad, along with the addition of a shallow play pool, lazy river, and deepwater play pool. New lounging areas, shaded seating areas, and landscaping will provide an attractive and comfortable setting to spend a fun day.



Aquatics Expansion: Potential Layout

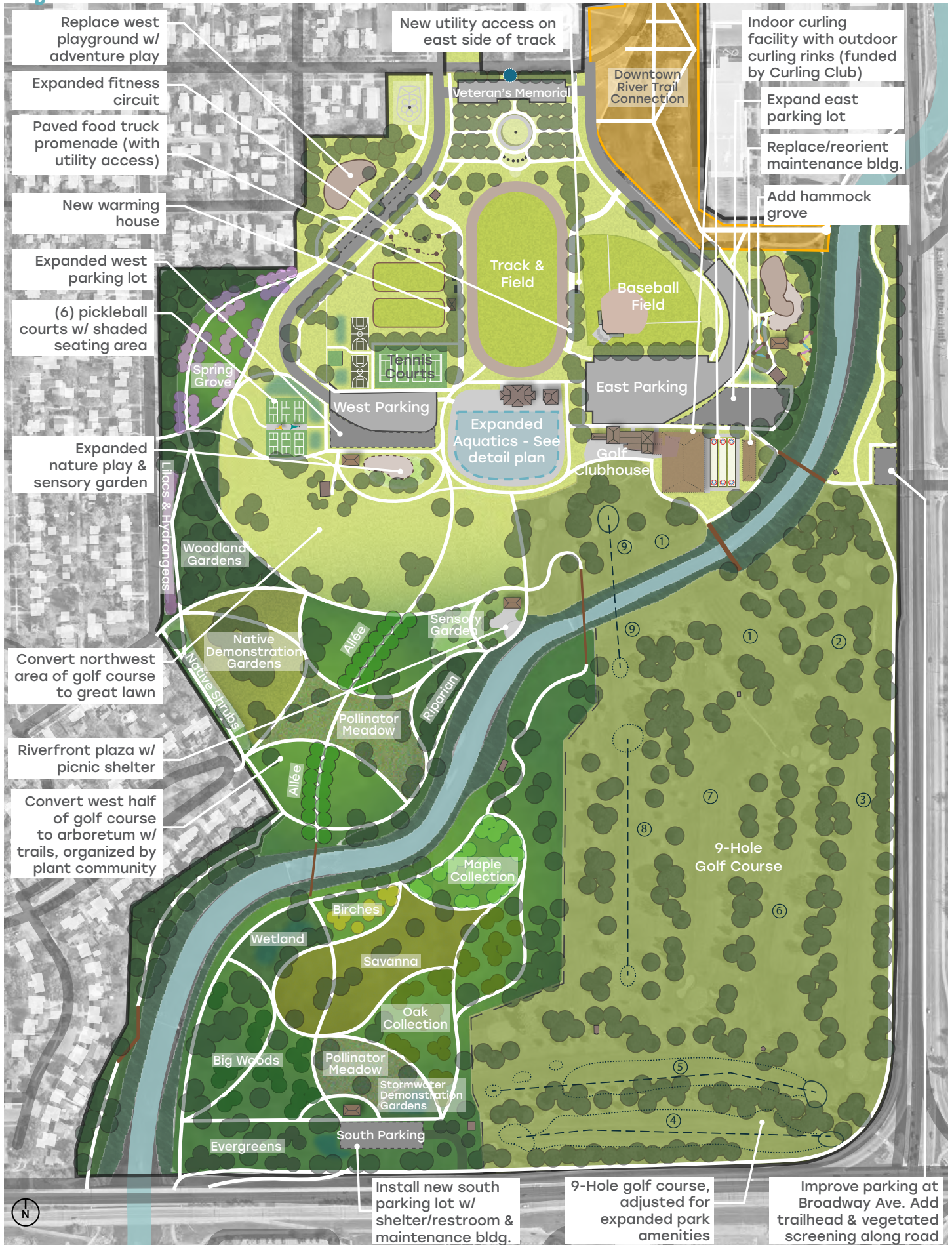
Long-term Preferred Plan

The long-term preferred plan achieves a longer range vision for Soldiers Field Park and focuses on improvements that would be completed in ten or more years. These improvements include expanding active recreation as well as introducing more passive recreation and flexible space, and working to improve accessibility and neighborhood connectivity throughout the park. While the long-term plan was adopted, there was also commitment to have ongoing discussions regarding the plan, with the first occurring again in 2028.

Key Recommendations:

- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 6 pickleball courts and viewing area with seating and shade structures west of the west parking area
 - Expand fitness circuit - add stations to create loop
- **Site Amenities**
 - Pave food truck promenade and add utility access on east side of track
 - Add new warming house on east side of track
 - Add Indoor curling facility & restaurant onto existing clubhouse, with outdoor recreational curling/lawn bowling (project to be funded through a partnership with the Rochester Curling Club and implemented when funding goal is reached)
 - Develop Riverfront Plaza and terrace with new picnic shelter south of aquatics facility
 - Create Great Lawn for flexible use south of west parking and picnic shelter
 - Establish Arboretum/botanical gardens on western portion of existing golf course with trails and interpretive signage
 - Add new picnic shelter with restroom and small maintenance building near Arboretum at proposed south parking lot area off Broadway Ave
- **Playgrounds**
 - Replace existing west playground with Adventure Playground when equipment reaches end of lifespan
 - Add hammock grove near east picnic shelter
 - Expand nature play area near proposed west shelter and add adjacent sensory garden area
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Expand existing west parking lot
 - Expand existing east parking lot when curling facility project is implemented
 - Reconfigure Gibbs Drive - remove roadway connection to 6th Ave SW, add curve to match Soldiers Field Drive SW, remove existing parking lot west of tennis courts
 - Expand and improve existing parking lot off Broadway Ave, add trailhead with wayfinding signage and bike racks
 - Install new south parking lot off Highway 14 at 4th Ave SW with access to the Arboretum and trails (requires further coordination and approvals from MnDOT)
 - Add neighborhood access/trail connection points at 4th Ave SW, 9th St SW, 11th St SW, Memorial Parkway SW, Highway 14, Broadway Ave S, 1st Ave SW, and 2nd Ave SW
- **Golf**
 - Convert golf course to 9 holes using eastern portion of existing course, reconfigure hole 9, hole 13 (becomes 4), hole 15 (becomes 5), and hole 18 (becomes 8)
 - Relocate golf maintenance building when curling facility project is implemented

Long-term Preferred Plan



Implementation

The anticipated cost of the Short-term Preferred Plan is \$18.5 million dollars. Funding sources for these initial projects include a federal grant, state grant, funds from the Destination Medical Center (DMC), park dedication funds, and park referendum funds. Short-term projects will commence upon approval of this plan, and occur over the course of the next three years.

Items in the Long-term Preferred Plan are anticipated to be funded and completed in ten or more years, and will likely be revisited in the following Master Plan update. Their estimated cost is \$15.9 million. This number does not include costs for the potential indoor curling facility with outdoor rinks, as these are anticipated to be funded through outside investment.

The total anticipated cost for both phases of the plan over the next 10-20 years is roughly \$34.4 million.



Short-term Preferred Plan Cost Estimate

Improvement Area	Capital Cost
Central Track (Access drives)	\$55,000
Downtown River Trail Connection (Northeast trail and riverfront overlook)	\$1,500,000
East Playground & Picnic Area (Renovated shelter and new inclusive play)	\$835,000
Expanded Aquatics (70-80k sf total w/ renovated bathhouse)	\$10,050,000
Southwest Trail (Trail, bridge relocation, golf modification)	\$500,000
West Park Athletics (2 basketball courts)	\$120,000
West Picnic & Play Area (Nature play, shelter, restrooms, trail)	\$408,000
West Playground (Additional parking)	\$72,000
Inflation (5%)	\$602,000
Soft Costs (20% of construction cost)	\$2,490,000
Contingencies (15% of construction cost)	\$1,868,000
TOTAL	\$18,500,000

Long-term Preferred Plan Cost Estimate

Improvement Area	Capital Cost
Broadway Avenue Trailhead (Screening, kiosk, seating, lighting)	\$35,000
Central Track (Food truck promenade, fitness circuit)	\$288,000
East Activity Node (Parking, maintenance building, golf course)	\$1,542,500
East Playground & Picnic Area (Hammock area)	\$20,000
Great Lawn and Riverfront (Shelter, restroom, terraced overlook, lawn)	\$1,490,000
North Arboretum (Gardens, trails, signage, wayfinding)	\$2,875,500
South Arboretum (Gardens, trails, signage, wayfinding)	\$1,265,000
South Picnic and Parking (Parking, shelter, restrooms, maintenance)	\$780,000
West Park Athletics (Warming house, pickleball, parking, trails, Gibb's Drive realignment)	\$704,000
West Picnic & Play Area (Sensory gardens at nature play area)	\$135,000
West Playground (Replace with Adventure Play)	\$450,000
Inflation (3%/year for 7 years)	\$2,203,400
Soft Costs (20% of construction cost)	\$2,357,700
Contingencies (15% of construction cost)	\$1,768,300
TOTAL	\$15,915,000

1

Introduction

Purpose of Master Planning Process

Over the last five years, the City of Rochester has nearly finished implementing the interim recommendations from the 2014 Soldiers Field Master Plan. This plan update process was undertaken to reexamine and solidify the long-term (10- to 20-year) vision for the park and identify short- and long-term strategies to reach that vision.

In 2020, the City approved a referendum for park investment. A portion of the referendum funding has been targeted for Soldiers Field Memorial Park. This Master Plan Update was intended to identify what improvements would be made with this funding in the next three years, and what improvements should be considered when funding is next available. Since the beginning of the update process, the City has received additional grant and local funding and now has \$18.5 million to invest in improvements over the next three years.



Guiding Principles

A set of guidelines were developed to help shape the discussion and design ideas proposed for Soldiers Field. These guiding principles were initially developed during the 2014 Master Planning process. They were evaluated and updated according to stakeholders and community input as part of this Master Plan Update.

1. Preserve the park and the park boundary from future encroachment
2. Provide a welcoming and inclusive park for a growing and diverse community
3. Provide a variety of outdoor park spaces and programs, including opportunities for non-programmed recreation
4. Preserve the intent of the memorial areas
5. Address community needs for park evolution while incorporating historic design elements
6. Strengthen park access and connections to downtown and other surrounding neighborhoods
7. Provide trails and gathering spaces that engage park users with the river
8. Enhance the signage and way-finding system to orient and direct park users
9. Provide opportunities for winter use
10. Incorporate sustainable design practices
11. Consider life-cycle costs as well as capital costs for park improvements

History of the Park

History

Originally a pasture, Soldiers Field was conveyed by several individuals including: Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Graham, Mr. and Mrs. Huney, Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, Mr. and Mrs. Haugen, Mr. William and Mrs. Fitzgerald, Mr. Enke, and Kathleen Fitzgerald. Historical press releases indicate that the American Legion negotiated a lease to initially develop the park.

Any restrictions that may have been placed on the properties prior to or as part of the actual deeds have long since expired based on state statutes. Because the Legion has had a positive impact on the development of the park, they have an interest in making sure that the park remains and meets their goals.

The golf course was the first development on the area. It was six and then nine holes with sand greens. Later this was extended to an 18-hole course and bent grass greens were developed, plus two putt greens. The first clubhouse was a simple wooden structure, which functioned primarily a concession stand and golf privileges were dispensed at this location. In 1929, the first golf pro was hired.

The Zumbro River runs through the park, and at the eastern edge of Soldiers Field was a dam called “Strawberry Dam”. It was installed in the river to create a water head via the mill race to operate a grist mill that was located about half a block east of Broadway on Third Street SE. Strawberry Dam was just slightly east of where the south end of First Avenue SW now is. The water above the dam backed up to the west and north. That backing up to the west kept a very high water table in most of the pasture area and there were many low marshy areas and even some ponds.



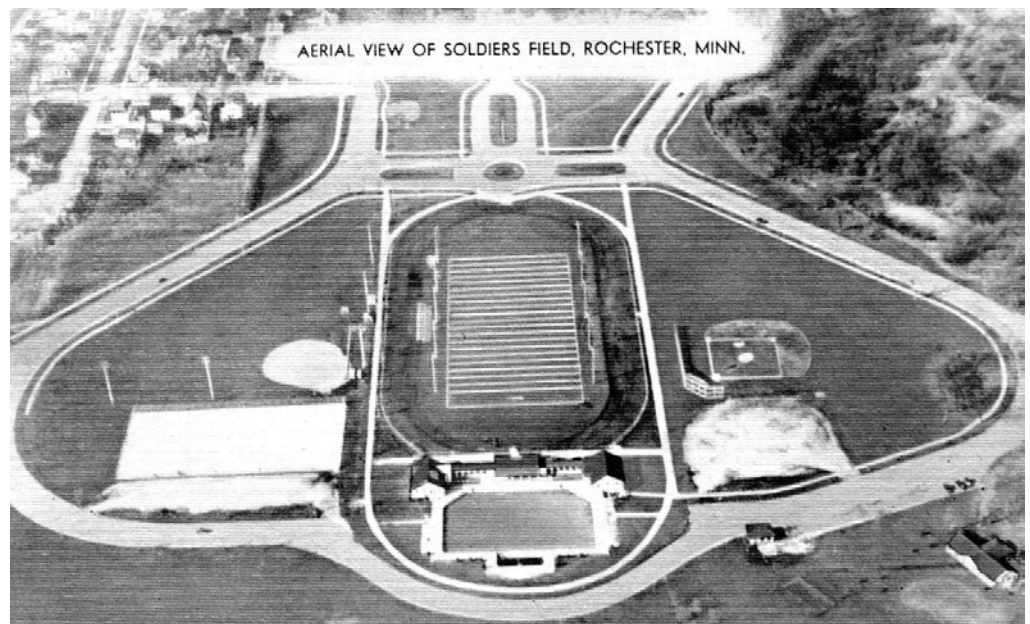
The main channel of the Zumbro came approximately to where the golf clubhouse now stands. From there it went due east to about where the picnic shelter and restroom building is and made a short turn to the north and west. It then made a big bend that encompassed the trees that are southeast of the ball diamond. In fact, the leaning maple tree in this group was right over the swimming hole.

The section of the river that backed up to the north extended up to 6th Street SW at the present location of the Colonial Park Restaurant. The mill race originated at this location and extended in a northeasterly direction, crossing the corner of the property now used by the gas company as a parking lot, and it ran right along back of the present Nelson Tire Company building and went through the building now occupied by Orlen Ross Company.

The river was diverted to its present position in 1933. The engineering, which includes the three dams, was done by the State Highway Department. One of the most historically significant events held at Soldiers Field was in 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt conferred American Legion citations to Drs. C.H. and W.J. Mayo. The changes in the stream led many areas of old river bottom to populate quickly with weeds and brush. As soon as the river was diverted and this large pond became dry, people started using it as a place to dump rubbish. All types of rubbish were dumped here filling the area about 150 feet from 6th Street SW by 1951. In 1952, the Clinic was digging the basement for the Mayo Building. By arrangement with the contractor, the Park Department got all the large stone hauled to Soldiers Field at no cost. This area of the park was covered with spoil as the stone was moved into this depression.

Development of the drives on the north end were completed in 1936, and it was the intention of the designer that the east and west panels be used as flowerbeds to embellish the area. The center circle was to contain the Legion Memorial. This was installed in 1951 with an appropriate dedication ceremony. The area east and west of the Third Ave entrance, which was to be the formal entrance, was to contain an athletic building. The original design of this building was intended to be a two-part building with a connecting arch and passageway over the Third Avenue entrance to the park.

The lights on the Soldiers Field gridiron were paid for out of the student athletic fund of the high school. By agreement with the Park Department, the school was to have full control of the usage of the track and gridiron and could charge admission to events. For many years, 1929 to 1958, this cooperative arrangement worked very well. The Park Department furnished the grounds and buildings complete with seating for approximately 5,000 and the school took care of lighting the field, opening and closing gates, and turning on the lights and controlling the crowds.



The swimming pool was built in 1936 and it was designed to take advantage of the existing athletic building and to line up as a terminus of the view down the Third Avenue entrance.

The pool was a W.P.A. project and was financed by matching funds with a federal grant. The matching funds were provided by an arrangement where the Legion borrowed money from the Mayo Properties Association and paid it back over a period of years. The Park Department furnished the operating costs out of its regular budget and turned the receipts over to the Mayo Properties Association for the retirement of the Legion's indebtedness. This loan was paid off in 1944.

The swimming pool revenue has been retained by the Park Department since that time to help finance operation. Revenues have never been equal to the expenditures, although in the peak years, it came very near balancing. In 1955, the Soldiers Field Pool had 123,000 swimmers. In 1956, a campaign was started to show the need of additional swimming facilities. The population spread was such that it would take two additional pools to accommodate the population in the future. The Silver Lake Pool was located in northeast Rochester with consideration that the third pool would have to be in the northwest.



The bridges on the golf course have had many changes. As mentioned, the Highway Department built the dams in Soldiers Field. When building the dams, they incorporated a set of steps down each flashing and a row of piers 10 feet apart across the river in the apron below each dam. These piers had two eye bolts protruding out of the top of each one so that a plank could be laid from one pier to the other thus forming a bridge for the golfers.

Each successive flood tore the planks up. Eventually the Park Department decided to build new bridges above flood level. The first bridges were built in 1935 and were of two types. One was made by the stringing of cables between trees on either side of the stream and installing planks on the cables. The other bridges were rigid structures constructed on stilts over the previously mentioned piers. Neither bridge type could withstand the force of floods, however, so they had to be replaced frequently.

In 1939 the Highway Department had three permanent bridges built across the river. One was located at the dam by #5 tee and one on #9 fairway. Both were footbridges 5 feet wide. There was also a vehicle bridge below #10 fairway that was ten feet wide. These bridges stood until the flood of 1945 when the two footbridges were tipped over and had to be rebuilt. The flood of 1951 twisted the upper one of these again. The Park Department personnel rebuilt the bridge and it has withstood all floods since that time. The middle bridge was rebuilt in a similar manner following the flood of 1956.

In 1951, the Park Department determined that a footbridge between #18 and #10 fairways would speed up play. The Park Department built a suspension bridge at this location. The flood of 1963 ruined the 10-foot vehicle bridge and it was rebuilt 4-feet above the former level, with no center column so it would never suffer flood damage again.





2

Context & Analysis

Existing Conditions

Surrounding Context

Soldiers Field Memorial Park is situated directly south of downtown and is a shared amenity for the public, the University of Minnesota Rochester and the renowned Mayo Clinic. Downtown Rochester is a vibrant and growing city that features historic architecture and established walkable neighborhoods situated around the Zumbro River. The future economic health of the city looks bright; a diversified economy is bolstered by similarly diverse residents. The University of Minnesota Rochester and the Mayo Clinic have plans to grow, and the urban areas adjacent to Soldiers Field are slated for future development.

The park is bounded generally by 12th Street / Highway 14 on the south, Broadway on the east, 7th Street on the north, and a residential neighborhood on the west. The formal entrance to the park is at 3rd Avenue on the park's north side by the war memorials; a secondary entrance is at 1st Avenue, and access to parking is off Soldiers Field Drive and George Gibbs Drive.

In the Downtown Master Plan, the area north of the park entrance along 3rd and 4th Avenues is proposed to become a green spine connecting the UMR campus to the established Mayo Clinic campus. Directly adjacent to the west along 1st Avenue SW, several new facilities will be built to expand the Mayo Clinic campus. These new connections to Soldiers Field Park present contextual opportunities for the park to develop.

Existing Park

Soldiers Field Memorial Park offers a wide variety of programming and activities in its 150 acres of park space.

The memorials at the park's northern entrance provide the community with a place for remembrance and reflection. In addition, there are many facilities for active recreation, including:

- an 18-hole golf course
- a 50m lap pool and splash pad
- a track and field with ice skating in winter
- tennis courts (4)
- a baseball/softball field
- playgrounds (2)
- hockey rinks in winter (2)

The northern portion of the park has several buildings which include a pool house, a clubhouse for the golf course and utility buildings, many of which are showing signs of age and need maintenance.

With nearly 4,000 feet of riverfront, the park also possesses potential for visual access to the Zumbro River. Currently, the primary experience of the river is limited to golfers, except for a short stretch along Broadway Avenue near the east playground. The South Fork of the Zumbro River is prone to seasonal flooding in the spring, which is largely managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, but should be considered in any design.

Most of Soldiers Field Park is occupied by an 18-hole golf course bisected by the Zumbro River. The course is mostly flat. The northern portion of the park has one baseball field, a 400-meter running track, tennis courts, a swimming pool, children’s water play features, and bituminous asphalt surface parking lots. The northern portion of the park has several buildings which include a pool bathhouse and pumphouse; a clubhouse for the golf course; and utility buildings, many of which are showing signs of age and need maintenance.



2014 Master Plan Accomplishments

The 2014 Master Plan proposed a number of near-term improvements in an “interim master plan.” The purpose was to provide cost-effective and achievable recommendations that would enhance the park and enable progress toward the long-term vision while providing some immediate benefits.

Improvements Made from Plan

Below is a summary of the recommended projects that have been completed since the 2014 Master Plan:

2015

- Rochesterfest was moved to Soldiers Field
- Electrical and water was enhanced to accommodate festivities

2017

- Created permanent event access drives to track area

2018

- Tennis maintenance and improvements

2019

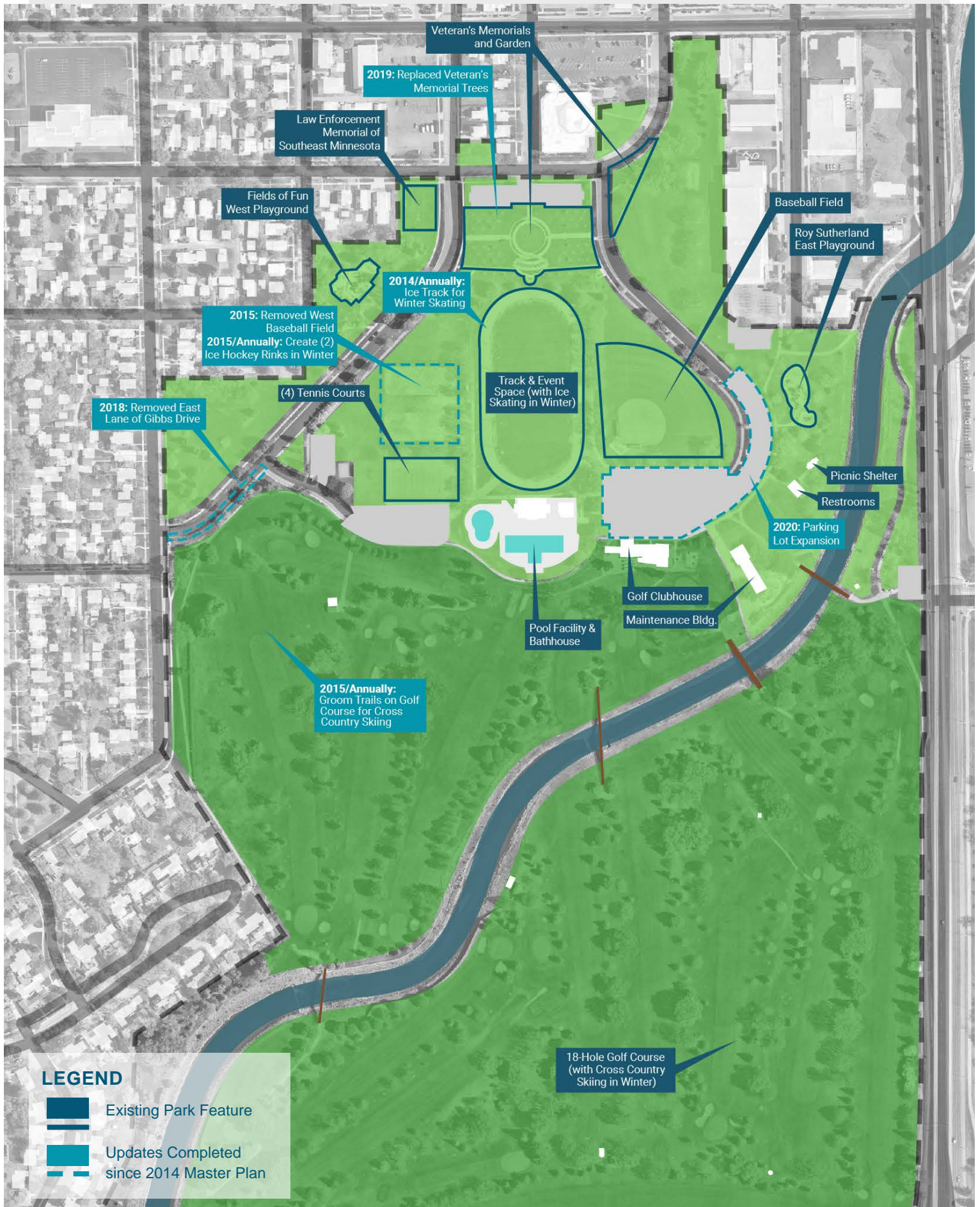
- Lighting modifications to northern half of the park
- Removed permanent outfield fence on east baseball field

2020

- Modified track for event and running activities
- Installed permanent gate at Gibbs Drive and 6th Ave
- Installed gate at track entry areas



Interim Master Plan Completed Projects



Project Context & Related Plans

There are a number of planning projects that are already shaping the future of Rochester. Several of these projects are adjacent to, or interact directly with Soldiers Field Memorial Park, and were important contextual considerations in the master planning process.

In addition to the planned development, Rochester has seen a boom in housing development completed since 2014. Now, more people are living downtown, adding to the patients and visitors coming to Rochester for the Mayo Clinic. With Soldiers Field's close proximity to downtown, this increases both the number and demographics of future potential park users.

Changing demographics play a role in influencing recreation trends. Evolving community desires impact both the potential for new programming proposed at the park as well as the relevance of existing programming. An evaluation of such also factored into the development of the master plan.

Destination Medical Center (DMC) Development Plan - 2015

The DMC's overall vision for Downtown Rochester proposes several major projects that will shape the city's public space, including Heart of the City, Downtown Waterfront, Discovery Walk, and Discovery Square. The plan proposes to physically connect downtown to its surrounding context - including Soldiers Field - through several "green corridors" and enhanced pedestrian connections. These projects are anticipated to drive residential and economic development, which will further influence the population growth and shifting demographics in an area immediately adjacent to the park.

Downtown Waterfront Southeast Small Area Plan - 2021

The Downtown Waterfront Southeast is an urban infill development project planned for an existing light industrial area directly across the Zumbro River from Soldiers Field. This project will revitalize an underutilized area of downtown. Views to the east of the park will change dramatically upon implementation of this development across Broadway Ave.

Discovery Walk – Soldiers Field Trail Connection

This pedestrian corridor connects the Heart of the City project in the center of downtown to the Zumbro River. Its south-most segment routes through the northeast corner of Soldiers Field Park. The proposed design includes paths, seating, and planting, and terminates at a river overlook looking toward the Downtown Waterfront Southeast project.

University of Minnesota Rochester Campus Master Plan - 2014

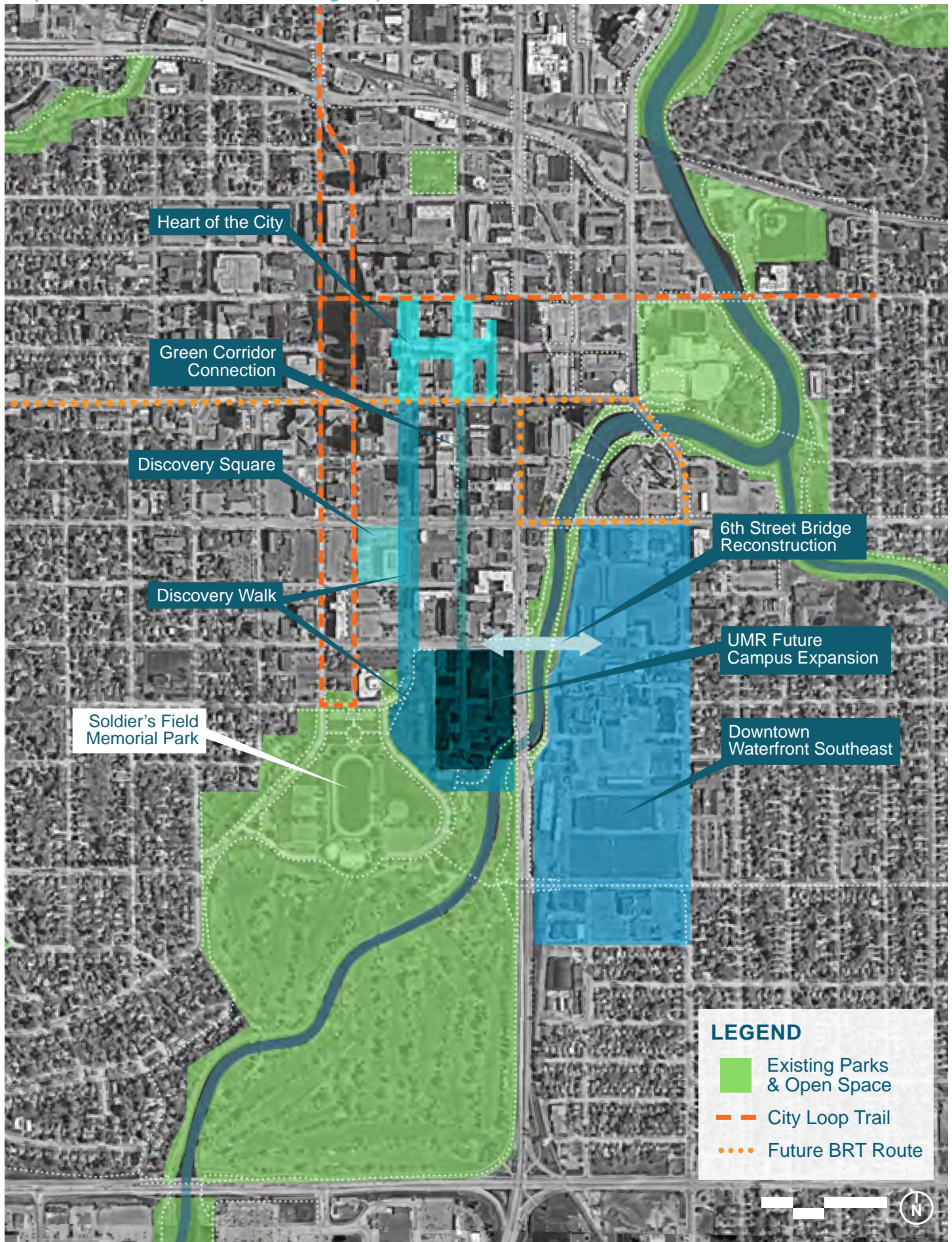
As part of the larger master plan, the UMR examined an area adjacent to the northeast corner of Soldiers Field that would integrate an urban college campus and recreation. Including student residences and amenities, this project would establish a new group of neighbors to engage with the park on a daily basis. This user group will have an important impact on potential programming and was a serious consideration of the Soldiers Field Master Plan Update. The UMR anticipates the construction of the first building in this area to be completed soon.

6th Street Bridge Design

This project proposes adding a bridge across the Zumbro River to connect 6th Street SW and 6th Street SE. This would link Soldiers Field, Discovery Walk, and the UMR campus expansion to the Downtown Waterfront Southeast project, a bustling new commercial/mixed-use district, and expand pedestrian access to the park.

Golf Evaluation Report (National Golf Foundation) - 2021

A study on the City's golf facilities found that revenue at Soldiers Field is the lowest of the three 18-hole courses in the system and significant growth is not expected. The older course would also require major capital investment, which the study does not necessarily recommend. It does recommend rethinking the future of golf at Soldiers Field, and conclude that enhancement, reduction, or closure are all viable options.





3

Community Engagement

Community Engagement Framework

Overview and Structure

Engagement opportunities involving residents, visitors, and stakeholders were provided throughout the process in order to better understand the needs and desires of the community and surrounding neighborhoods and to inform the preferred concept.

Over two phases, community engagement efforts were successful in generating nearly 3,000 survey responses and online comments in addition to 12 stakeholder meetings and four in-person events. The input was evaluated by the project team and city staff and used to inform the planning process and, ultimately, the final plan included in this Master Plan Update.

Project Schedule

The graphic below outlines the project schedule and strategy for the community engagement, concept development and refinement, and plan approvals for the Soldiers Field Master Plan Update.



Community Engagement Phase 1

Phase 1 Overview

From December 2021 through February 2022, the project team and city staff led a series of community engagement activities to gain insight on how community members currently use the park, identify possible needs or gaps in service, and seek input on potential activities and programs that could be included in the Master Plan Update.

Throughout the engagement, several special interest groups had strong participation in the outreach and led an organized effort in providing feedback. In particular, it should be noted that a number of comments were received in the online survey and Social Pinpoint interactive map regarding the golf course. Concurrent discussions by the City Council about the city-wide Golf Study at the time of the outreach drew a lot of attention from golf club members. This contributed to a high level of participation in the Soldiers Field engagement efforts, and may not reflect the opinions and attitudes of residents and visitors as a whole.

Stakeholder Meetings

City staff met with representatives from local organizations and user groups to discuss how participants currently use the park, identify needs or gaps in service, and have a conversation about participants' vision for Soldiers Field. Notes from these meetings are included in the Appendix.

Community Online Survey

A survey was hosted through Polco, the city's platform for online community engagement. The survey was advertised on the city's website as well as by word of mouth through stakeholders' networks. Respondents were asked about when and how they typically use the park, and what would make their experience more enjoyable. Over 1,500 responses were collected. The full survey results are included in the Appendix.

Online Interactive Map

Social Pinpoint, an interactive mapping tool, was paired with the online survey to collect comments about the park keyed to specific locations on a map. These pinned comments identified what the community likes and dislikes about the park's existing conditions, as well as opportunities and concerns for the park's future development. A full record of the map's comments is included in the Appendix.

Stakeholder Meeting Summaries

Between January and February 2022, City Staff hosted 12 stakeholder meetings with various local organizations, user groups, and special interest groups. A presentation that summarized the project vision and goals, related ongoing planning efforts, project schedule, and public engagement plan was presented to participants. A summary of the 2014 Master Plan proposed improvements was included, as well as tasks that have been completed so far. Stakeholders were asked for their feedback on what remaining improvements were still important to consider and what new ideas should be explored.

Meeting Summaries

The following comments represent the primary topics brought forward by participants in the stakeholder meetings.

Facilities

- Expand pool facility to improve accessibility; update bathhouse; provide indoor, year-round use.
- Reconfigure current warming house to accommodate winter use.
- Incorporate a restaurant into the Clubhouse to draw people to the park.
- Add facilities to serve the west side of the park, including a restroom and picnic pavilion. Add parking to support this side of the park.
- Integrate accessibility improvements into all new/retrofitted facilities.
- Improve park wayfinding and signage.

Park Program

- Make inclusivity and accessibility a priority of park programs and facilities.
- Add dedicated pickleball courts to existing tennis courts. Expansion of tennis is not necessary.
- Prioritize flexibility of park spaces and programs in order to accommodate multiple uses and activities.
- Introduce more all-season activities in order to address desire for year-round use of the park.
- Add space for user or event equipment storage.
- Understand that the existing lighted facilities are a huge asset to the park.

Trails

- Widen trails to accommodate multiple uses, or separate trails for different user types.
- Consider circuit-training or fitness trails.
- Improve circulation within the park; the area near track and pool is a bottleneck.
- Add more trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods/paths of travel and improve connections to the river.
- Remove Gibbs Drive to create more green space.

Events & Partnerships

- Partner with the Library and other organizations for youth programming.
- Partner with surrounding apartment buildings on park programming and activities.
- Activate areas of the park that are under-utilized.
- Introduce more spaces for gathering, like pavilions, picnic areas, gazebos, or outdoor classrooms. Create a central "heart" for gathering at Soldiers Field.
- Connect with the Master Gardener program.

Environmental

- Provide more opportunities for shade (with seating).
- Increase native plantings and pollinator habitat. Take advantage of the many grants available for environmental improvements.
- Add an arboretum or botanical garden.

Participation

The following is a list of the groups that were invited to attend stakeholder meetings.

- Downtown Neighborhood Association
- Historic SW Neighborhood Association
- Parkway Neighborhood Association
- R Neighbors
- Rochester Running Club
- Lil Sluggers
- Rochester Youth Basketball Association
- Rochester Tennis Connection
- YMCA
- Rochester Art Center
- University of Minnesota Rochester
- Destination Medical Center Economic Development Agency
- Rochester Downtown Alliance
- Rochester Public Library
- We Bike Rochester
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMICIL)
- ExcercisABILITIES
- RT Autism Awareness
- Special Olympics
- AccessABLE Recreation
- Law Enforcement Memorial of Southeast Minnesota Representative
- Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial Committee
- Rochester Garden Club
- Diversity Council
- Pamoja
- Barbershop Social Services
- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association
- Out Rochester
- City of Rochester Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Men's Golf
- Men's Senior Golf
- Women's Golf
- Experience Rochester
- Rochesterfest
- Rochester Swim Club
- City of Rochester Park and Recreation Staff
- Community Mobilization Resource Coalition
- Rochester Public Schools
- Olmsted County
- Mayo Clinic
- Legal Assistance of Olmsted County
- Unidos MN
- Emmright Business Management and Consulting

Community Survey Summary

An online community survey was launched at the end of December 2021 and was open until January 18, 2022. This survey contained eight questions intended to help understand current users and user habits, programming desires, and thoughts on the project’s Guiding Principles. An additional nine questions were asked at the end of the survey to understand the demographics of the participants. The survey was designed to take ten minutes to complete.

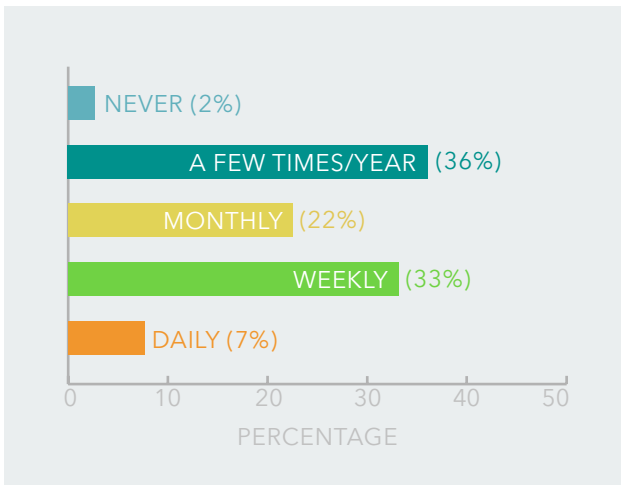
Participation

Over the 4 weeks that the survey was open, 1,560 responses were collected. The survey was advertised through the project website, social media accounts of the Parks and Recreation Department, and through Stakeholder Groups’ networks.

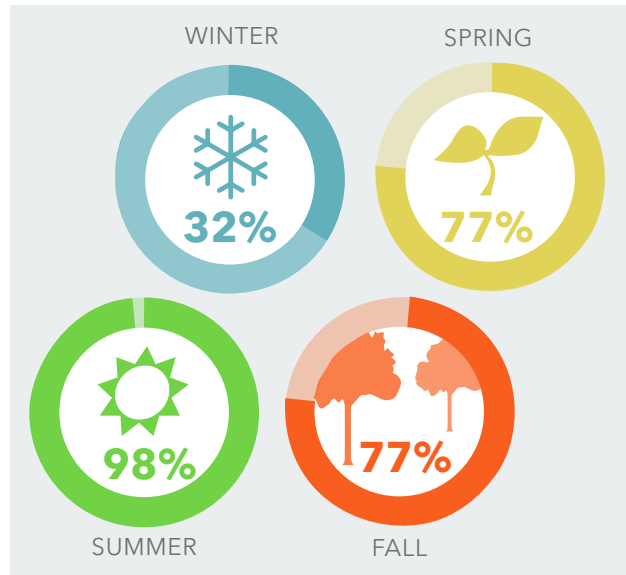
Survey Results

The following is a summary of key questions asked and responses gathered through the community survey. All questions were optional.

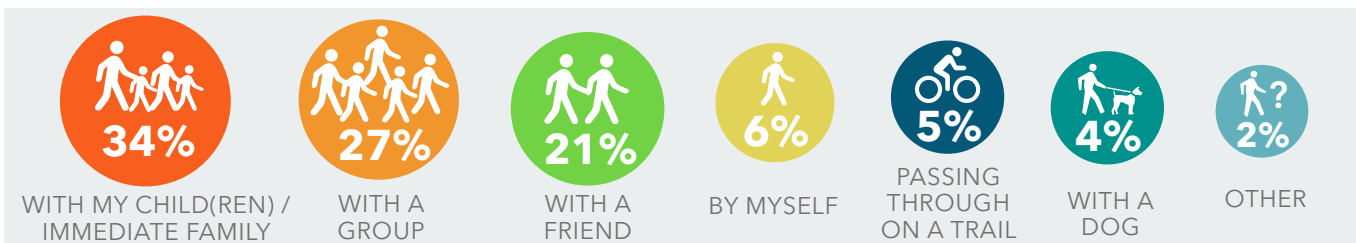
HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU TYPICALLY VISIT SOLDIERS FIELD PARK?



PLEASE CHECK IN WHICH SEASONS YOU VISIT SOLDIERS FIELD PARK (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

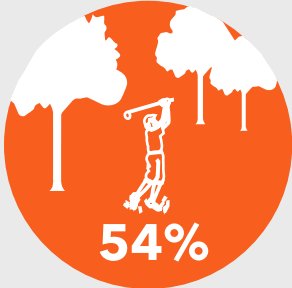


WHO DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR TIME AT SOLDIERS FIELD PARK WITH?

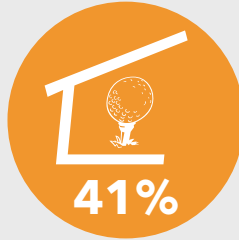


IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, WHAT FACILITIES HAVE YOU USED AT SOLDIERS FIELD PARK?

(SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



GOLF COURSE



GOLF CLUBHOUSE



TRAILS



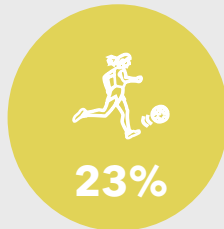
VETERANS MEMORIALS AND GARDENS



POOL



ROY SUTHERLAND EAST PLAYGROUND (NEAR THE Y)



FIELDS WITHIN THE TRACK



FIELDS OF FUN WEST PLAYGROUND



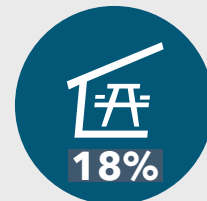
TRACK



POOL HOUSE



ICE OVAL FOR ICE SKATING



PICNIC SHELTER



ICE SKATING AND ICE USES



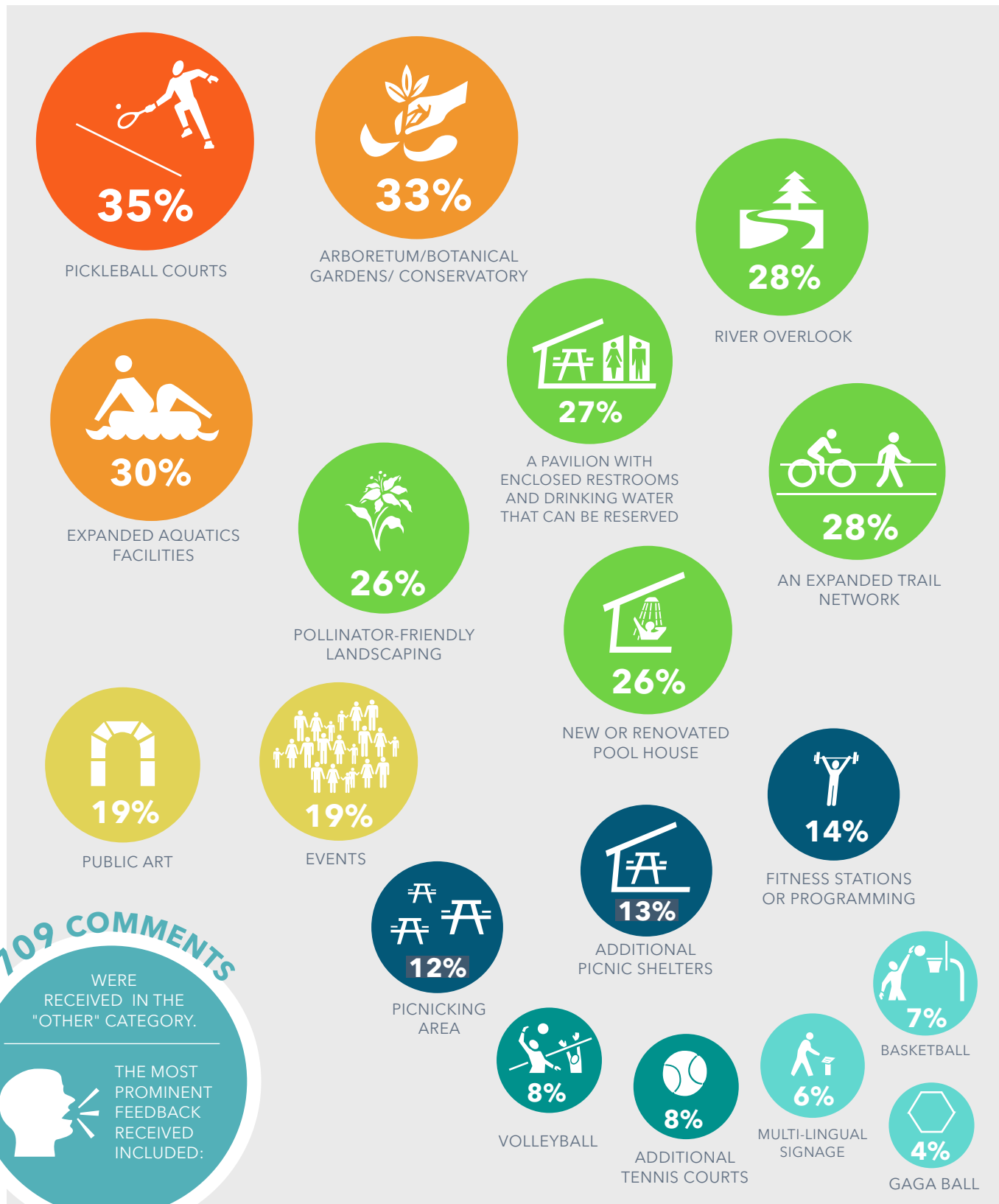
TENNIS COURTS



BASEBALL FIELD

WHAT NEW FACILITIES OR AMENITIES WOULD MAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE MORE ENJOYABLE?

(SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



709 COMMENTS

WERE RECEIVED IN THE "OTHER" CATEGORY.

THE MOST PROMINENT FEEDBACK RECEIVED INCLUDED:

165 (11% of 1,560)
KEEP OR IMPROVE THE GOLF COURSE

101 (6% of 1,560)
AQUATICS IMPROVEMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL

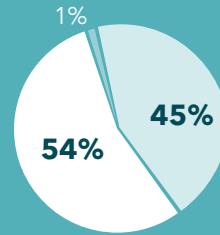
85 (5% of 1,560)
IMPROVE THE CLUBHOUSE AND ADD FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPTIONS

63 (4% of 1,560)
ADD A CURLING FACILITY AT THE PARK



Who Participated?

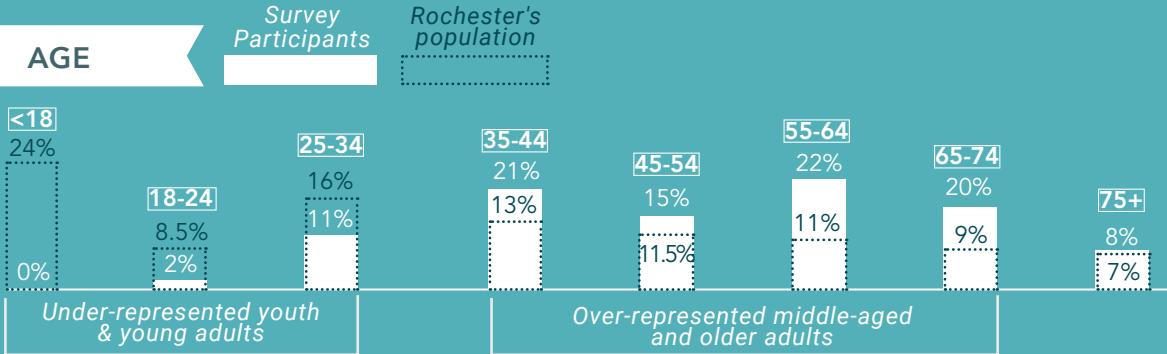
And is it representative of Rochester's population?



GENDER

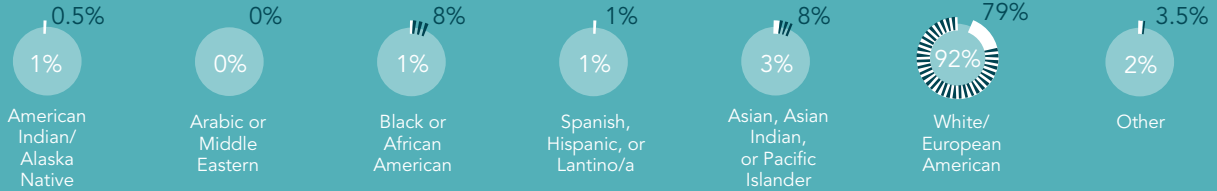
45% - Female
54% - Male
1% - Other

AGE



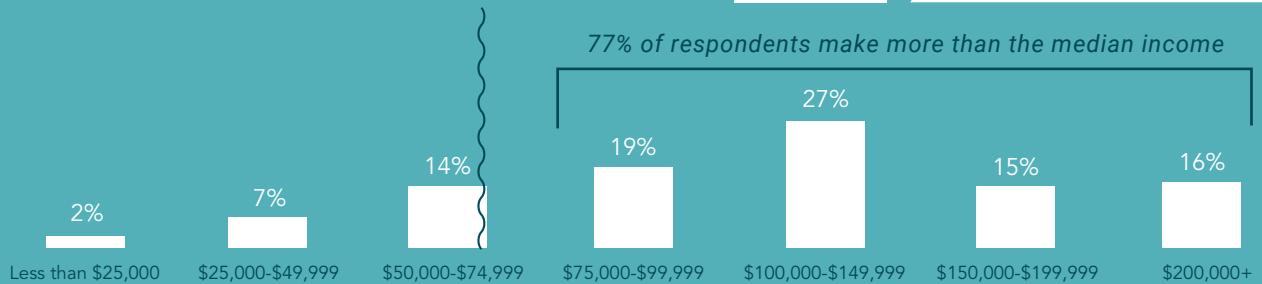
RACE/ETHNICITY

(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY) Survey Participants Rochester's population



2019 Rochester Median Income: \$73,100

INCOME



HOMEOWNERSHIP

68% of Rochester Residents | 94% of survey participants

Interactive Map Comments Summary

Social Pinpoint is an interactive mapping tool that allows participants to provide comments directly on a map. Visitors to the website can also view, comment, and like or dislike comments left by others on the map. Participants are encouraged to use color-coded markers to indicate whether comments are ideas, concerns, or relate to another topic. The tool was launched alongside the Polco Community Survey in December 2021 and was open for comment through January 2022.

Participation

The site had over 800 unique visitors and 168 comments were left on the map; with the largest proportion (39%) being comments that supported ideas proposed in the 2014 Master Plan.

Mapping Results

The Social Pinpoint map and map comments (below) illustrate a sampling of the feedback received through the interactive map. A full summary of common themes and discussions can be found on the following pages.

Map Comments





Summary of Comments

Recurring comments or themes from each of the marker categories:

Keep this in the Plan:

- Desire to keep the golf course at 18 holes
- Support for the expanded winter activities, including the ice skating rinks and groomed cross-country ski trails
- Desire for improvements to the pool and bath house facilities
- Support for trail connection at Hwy 14/12th Street SW
- Support for the Southeast Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial

I don't think we need this:

- Opposition to proposal to reduce the golf course to 9 holes
- Concern about cost of or desire for proposed trail connection at Hwy 14/12th Street SW

Here's a New Idea:

- Pickleball, either as dedicated courts or shared with tennis courts
- Expanded tennis courts
- Permanent restroom facilities at convenient locations throughout the park
- Public art and native planting/pollinator habitat
- Indoor pool facilities

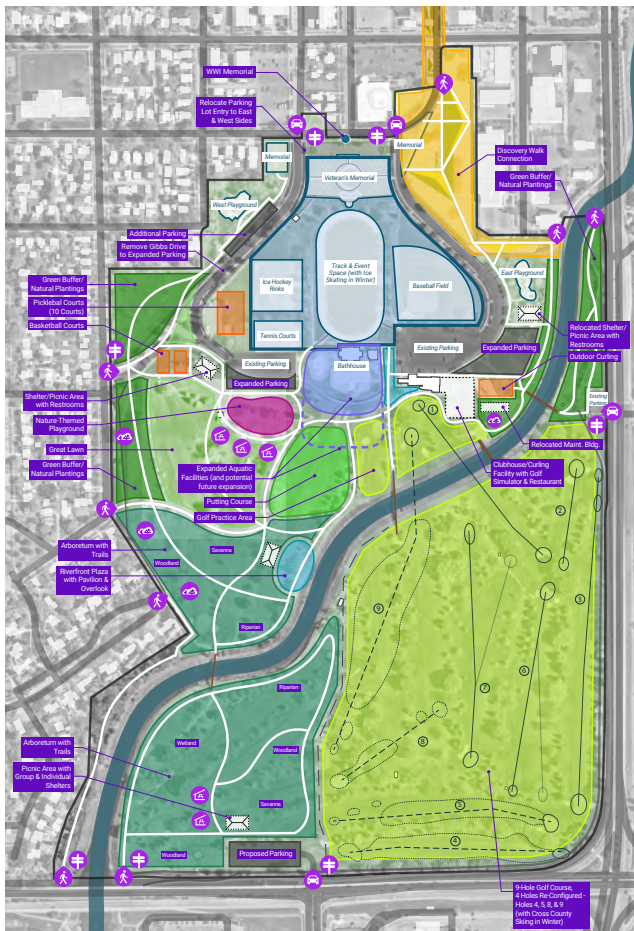
I have a Comment:

- Support for expanded pool facilities, including a splash pad and other water park features for children and families
- Add comfort amenities to improve user experience at the Field of Fun playground (on the west side of the park), including restrooms, more seating, and parking closer to the playground
- Desire for park improvements to consider environmental impacts and water quality
- Reiterated desires for expanded tennis facilities and the addition of pickleball courts
- Support for trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods

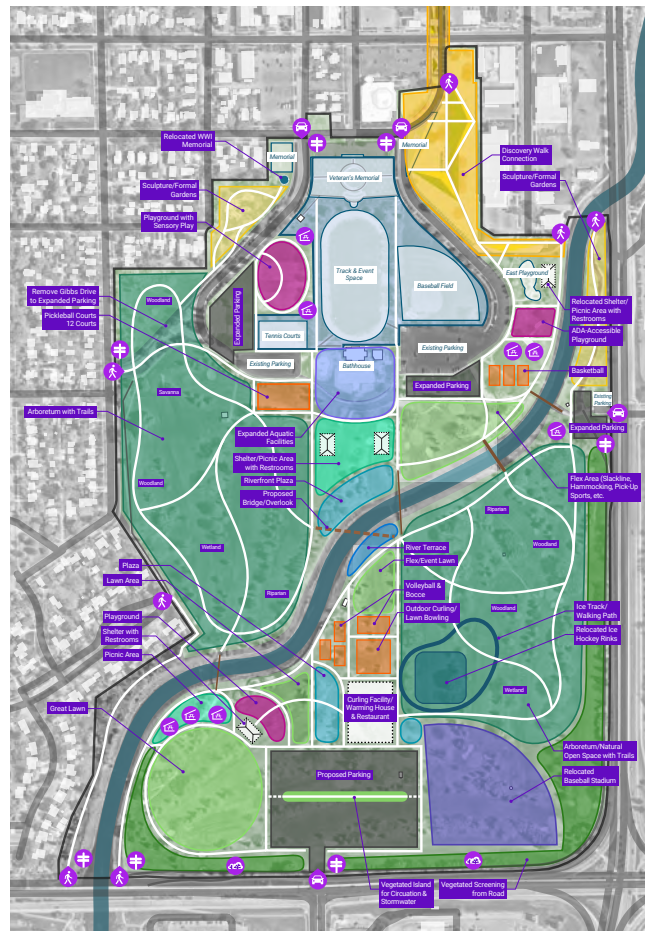
I have a Concern:

- Concern about appropriateness of the Southeast Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial
- Concern about the noise associated with adding pickleball courts

Concept 2 Plan



Concept 3 Plan



AQUATICS FACILITY EXPANSION

SHARE YOUR INPUT!

Scan this QR Code to fill out an online survey!

POTENTIAL FEATURES

An expanded aquatic facility was one of the most requested features throughout public engagement. The lap pool has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. The bathhouse requires renovations in order to better serve visitors. In addition to these investments, there may be funds available to improve the splash pad and/or add new features, like a shallow play pool, lazy river, or diving pool.

Help us determine what's most desired by marking your highest priority with a green dot. Put red dots next to things you don't think are needed.

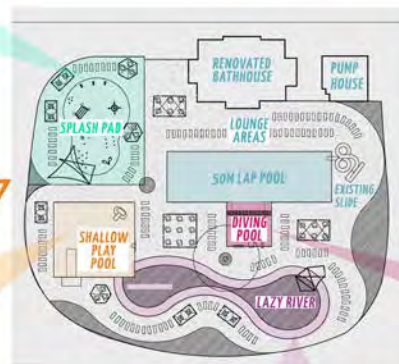
EXPANDED SPLASH PAD

Playable Fountain Jets	a	
Bucket Dump Tower	b	
Water Archers	c	
Water Blasters	d	
Rain Shower Tower	e	

THE CITY MAY HAVE TO PHASE THE AQUATICS EXPANSION:
WOULD YOU PREFER A SPLASH PAD, SHALLOW PLAY POOL, LAZY RIVER, OR DIVING POOL?

PLACE A GREEN DOT NEXT TO YOUR FIRST PRIORITY

EXAMPLE LAYOUT



PLANNED INVESTMENTS

50m Lap Pool (replace)	a	
Existing Slide (keep)	b	
Bathhouse (renovate)	c	
Rental Pavilions	d	
Shade Structures	e	
Lounges	f	

SHALLOW PLAY POOL (0'-4')

Zero-depth Entry	a	
Splash Jets	b	
Toddler Slide	c	
Family Slide	d	
Basketball Hoop	e	
Volleyball Net	f	

LAZY RIVER (3'-4')

Gentle Current for Flotation

Interior Landscaped Island



DIVING POOL (4' - 12.5')

Dive Pool	a	
3m Springboard	b	
1m Diving Board	c	
Climbing Wall	d	
Water Walk	e	

In-Person Events

City staff attended four in-person community events during the months of June and July 2022, interacting with over 200 people. The city displayed presentation boards of design concepts and potential aquatics features for the public to review and provide comments on with post-it notes or dots. Verbal comments were documented via meeting notes.

Below is a summary of the verbal and written comments collected during the in-person events:

- Aquatics was a key item that the attendees were excited about and saw high value investing in. Many comments were received on the aquatics expansion/upgrades, especially the potential lazy river feature.
- There were varying opinions collected regarding golf, both in support of keeping golf and in support of reducing golf, but overall, the majority of attendees expressed an interest in reducing golf (either to 9 holes or removing golf completely). Many comments expressed an interest in sunsetting golf or reducing to a 9 hole course to allow for greater access to the southern portion of the park.
- There were mixed comments on the need for another playground versus expanding the existing playgrounds. However, many attendees liked the adventure playground option and wanted to keep it in the master plan.
- Attendees expressed a strong need for greater accessibility.
- There was a desire for more access to the river.
- Many comments expressed a need for more trails, especially where there is a lack of trails/connections on the southwest side.
- There were also comments to establish better access across Broadway Ave and 12th Street to serve more neighborhoods.
- Recurring comments requested more un-programmed open space as shown in Concepts 2 & 3. There were also multiple comments about wanting a “Central Park” feel at Soldiers Field.
- There was a strong desire for having plenty of shade at Soldiers Field.
- Most attendees had positive reactions to Concept 3 even when pointed to the other concepts for review.
- Pickleball was a topic of interest and had support.
- There were a few comments about adding curling.
- Event vendors that commented on the design concepts expressed a need for access to water utilities on the east side of the track (instead of having to provide temporary water during events). There was also a desire for an area for backstock vehicles with power available (suggested in the west parking lot but could be flexible).



Collecting input on the design concepts at a public engagement event in June 2022.

AQUATICS FACILITY EXPANSION

POTENTIAL FEATURES

An expanded aquatics facility was one of the most requested features throughout public engagement. The lap pool has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. The bathhouse requires renovations in order to better serve visitors. In addition to these investments, there may be funds available to improve the splash pad and/or add new features, like a shallow play pool, lazy river, or diving pool.
 Help us determine what's most desired by marking your highest priority with a green dot. Put red dots next to things you don't think are needed.

THE CITY MAY HAVE TO PHASE THE AQUATICS EXPANSION.
WOULD YOU PREFER A SPLASH PAD, SHALLOW PLAY POOL, LAZY RIVER, OR DIVING POOL?
 PLACE A GREEN DOT NEXT TO YOUR FIRST PRIORITY.

EXPANDED SPLASH PAD

- Playable Fountain
- Bucket Dump Tower
- Water Arches
- Water Blasters
- Main Shower Tower

EXAMPLE LAYOUT

PLANNED INVESTMENTS

- 50M Lap Pool (replace)
- Existing Slide (keep)
- Bathhouse (renovate)
- Rent Pavilion
- Side Structure
- Lounge

SHALLOW PLAY POOL (0'-4')

- Zero-deep Entry
- Splash Jets
- Toddler Slide
- Family Slide
- Basketball Hoop
- Volleyball Net

LAZY RIVER (3'-4')

- Water Walk

DIVING POOL (4' - 12.5')

- Dive Pool
- Spring
- Jim Diver
- Climbing Wall
- Water Walk

Community feedback on the aquatics facility expansion

Community Survey Summary

A second online community survey was launched in June 2022 and was open through July 2022. This survey contained 13 questions about the different elements featured in the design concepts, intending to capture respondents' preferences on individual potential improvements rather than a selection or ranking of the concepts. An additional seven questions were asked at the end of the survey to understand the demographics of the participants. The survey was designed to take ten minutes to complete.

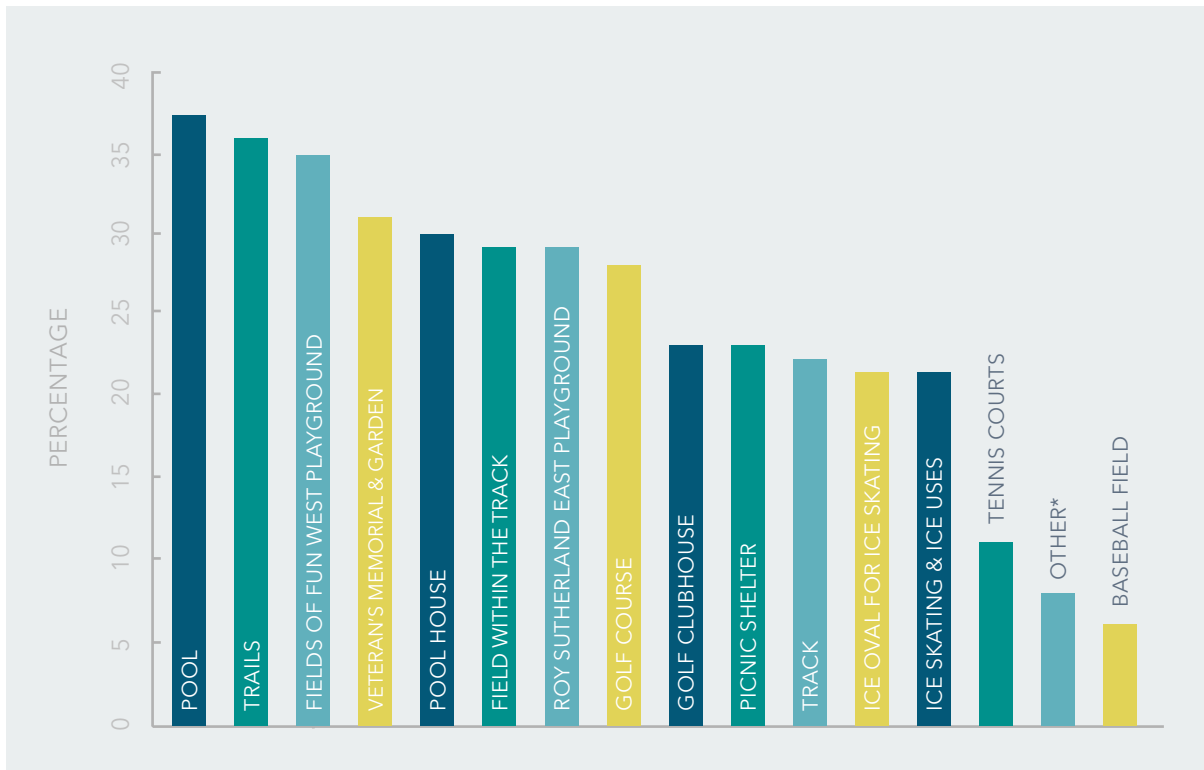
Participation

Over the three weeks that the survey was open, 1,000 responses were collected. The survey was advertised through the project website, social media accounts of the Parks and Recreation Department, and through stakeholder groups' networks.

Survey Results

The following is a summary of key questions asked and responses gathered through the community survey. All questions were optional.

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, WHICH FACILITIES HAVE YOU USED AT SOLDIERS FIELD PARK
(SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



*TOP 'OTHER' RESPONSES: WINTER USE, DOG WALKING, ROCHESTER FEST/PRIDE/EVENTS, TRAILS, FLEX LAWN (FOR DISC GOLF, SOCCER, ETC)

THE THREE CONCEPTS EXPLORE ADDING NEW FEATURES TO THE PARK. PLEASE IDENTIFY UP TO 8 OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES TO RETAIN IN THE FINAL PROPOSED CONCEPT.



RIVER PLAZA WITH PAVILION & OVERLOOK



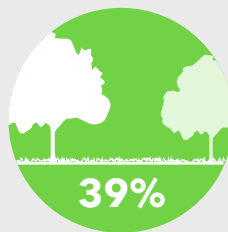
FOOD TRUCK PROMENADE



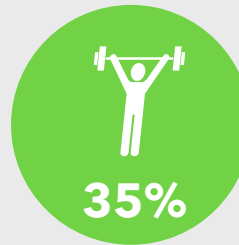
PICKLEBALL



ARBORETUM



GREAT LAWN/FLEX LAWN



KINETIC PLAY/ FITNESS CIRCUIT



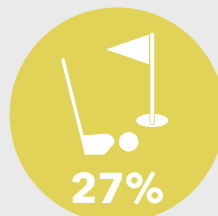
SCULPTURE/FORMAL GARDENS



BASKETBALL COURTS



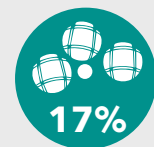
VOLLEYBALL COURTS



GOLF PUTTING COURSE



INDOOR CURLING



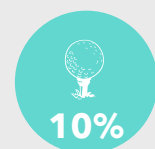
BOCCE COURTS



OUTDOOR CURLING

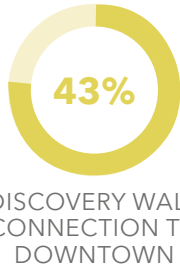
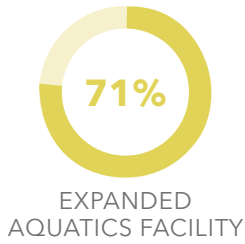


BASEBALL STADIUM



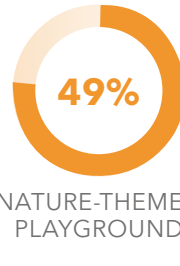
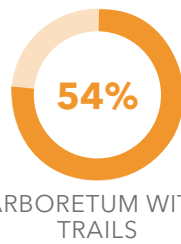
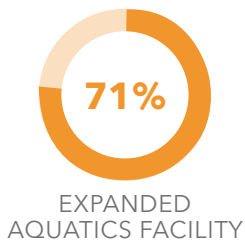
GOLF SIMULATOR

WHICH FEATURES IN CONCEPT 1 ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (SELECT UP TO 5)



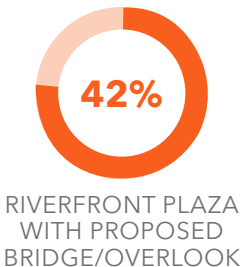
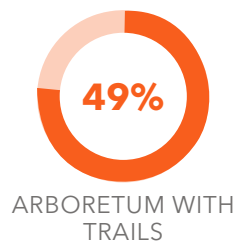
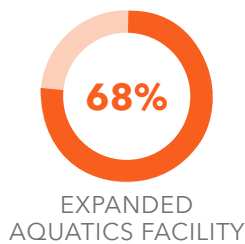
- 35%** PICKLEBALL COURTS
- 32%** PICNIC AREA WITH INDIVIDUAL SHELTERS
- 31%** SCULPTURE/FORMAL GARDENS
- 26%** KINETIC PLAY/FITNESS CIRCUIT
- 19%** FLEX LAWN WITH RELOCATED ICE HOCKEY RINKS
- 15%** BASKETBALL COURTS

WHICH FEATURES IN CONCEPT 2 ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (SELECT UP TO 5)



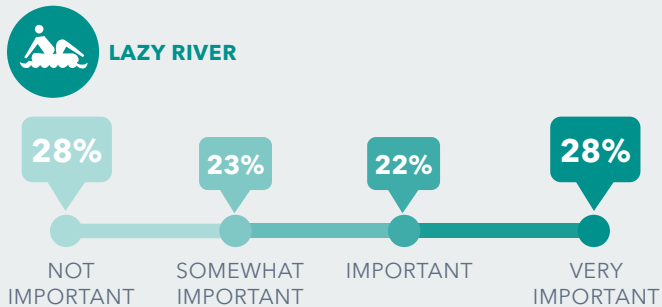
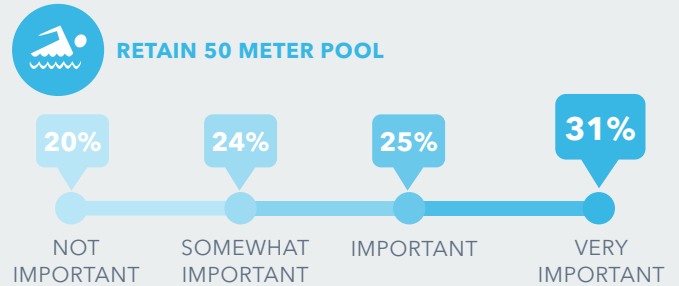
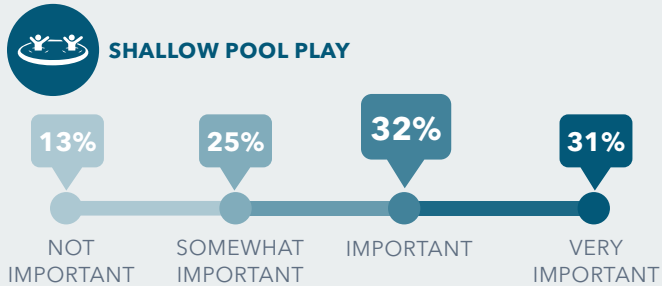
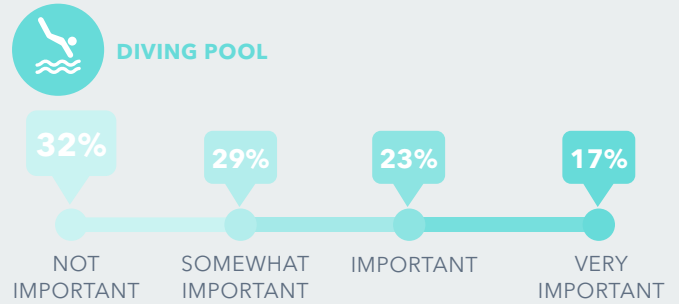
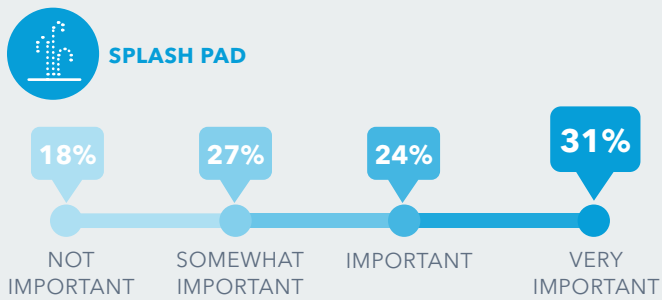
- 35%** PICKLEBALL COURTS
- 31%** PICNIC AREA WITH SHELTERS
- 28%** GREEN BUFFER/NATURAL PLANTINGS ALONG 6TH AVENUE
- 23%** PUTTING COURSE
- 17%** BASKETBALL COURTS

WHICH FEATURES IN CONCEPT 3 ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (SELECT UP TO 8)

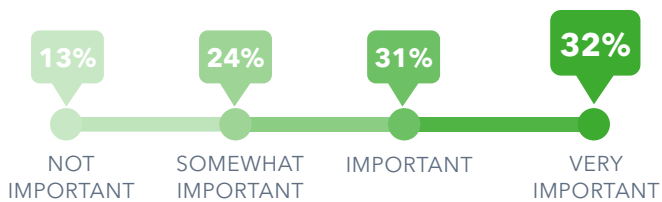


- 38%** PLAYGROUND WITH SENSORY PLAY
- 31%** PICKLEBALL COURTS
- 30%** ICE TRACK/WALKING PATH
- 29%** RIVER TERRACE
- 27%** SCULPTURE/FORMAL GARDENS
- 27%** PICNIC AREAS WITH SHELTERS
- 22%** OUTDOOR CURLING/LAWN BOWLING
- 21%** FLEX LAWN
- 16%** BASKETBALL COURTS
- 15%** VOLLEYBALL & BOCCIE COURTS
- 9%** RELOCATED HOCKEY RINKS
- 5%** RELOCATED BASEBALL STADIUM

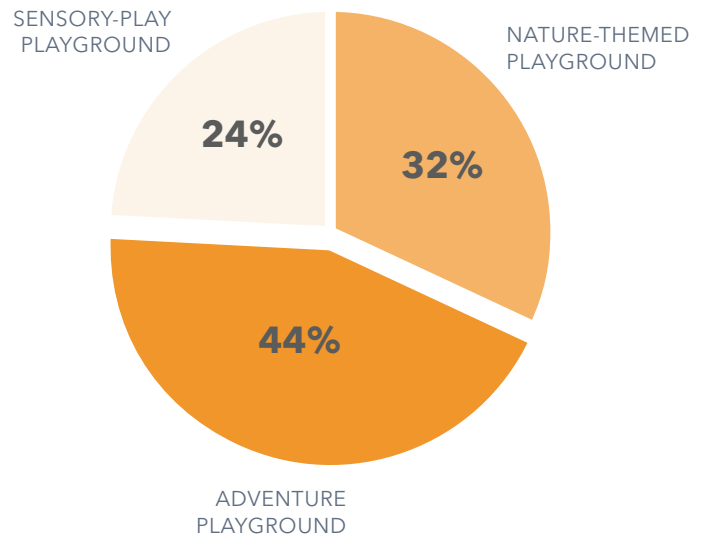
THE CONCEPTS EXPLORE THE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION OF THE PARK'S AQUATICS FACILITIES. PLEASE HELP PRIORITIZE BY RANKING THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS.



THE 3 CONCEPTS EXPLORE IMPROVING THE BATHHOUSE (AREA WHERE YOU CAN CHANGE AND USE THE RESTROOM AT THE POOL). HOW IMPORTANT IS A RENOVATED BATHHOUSE TO YOU?



THE 3 CONCEPTS EXPLORE THREE NEW TYPES OF PLAYGROUNDS. PLEASE RANK YOUR PREFERRED TYPE OF PLAYGROUND.



4

Master Plan

Preferred Plan Overview

Preferred Plan Process

After gathering a significant amount of public feedback on the preferred uses and design concept options during both phases of community engagement in the spring and summer of 2022, a preferred master plan for Soldiers Memorial Field Park was created. Priorities for the preferred plan were also developed from a review of the 2014 Master Plan (a process that included extensive community input).

The goal was to identify a master plan that was both feasible and desirable to the community. Comments from the public, as well as ideas presented in the 2014 Master Plan document, were taken into consideration in developing the updated preferred plan. The preferred plan was then presented to city staff for further refinement. A series of recommended improvements and phasing was formulated regarding proposed design, layout, and programming offered at the park. More information about the initial design concept options can be found in Chapter 3.



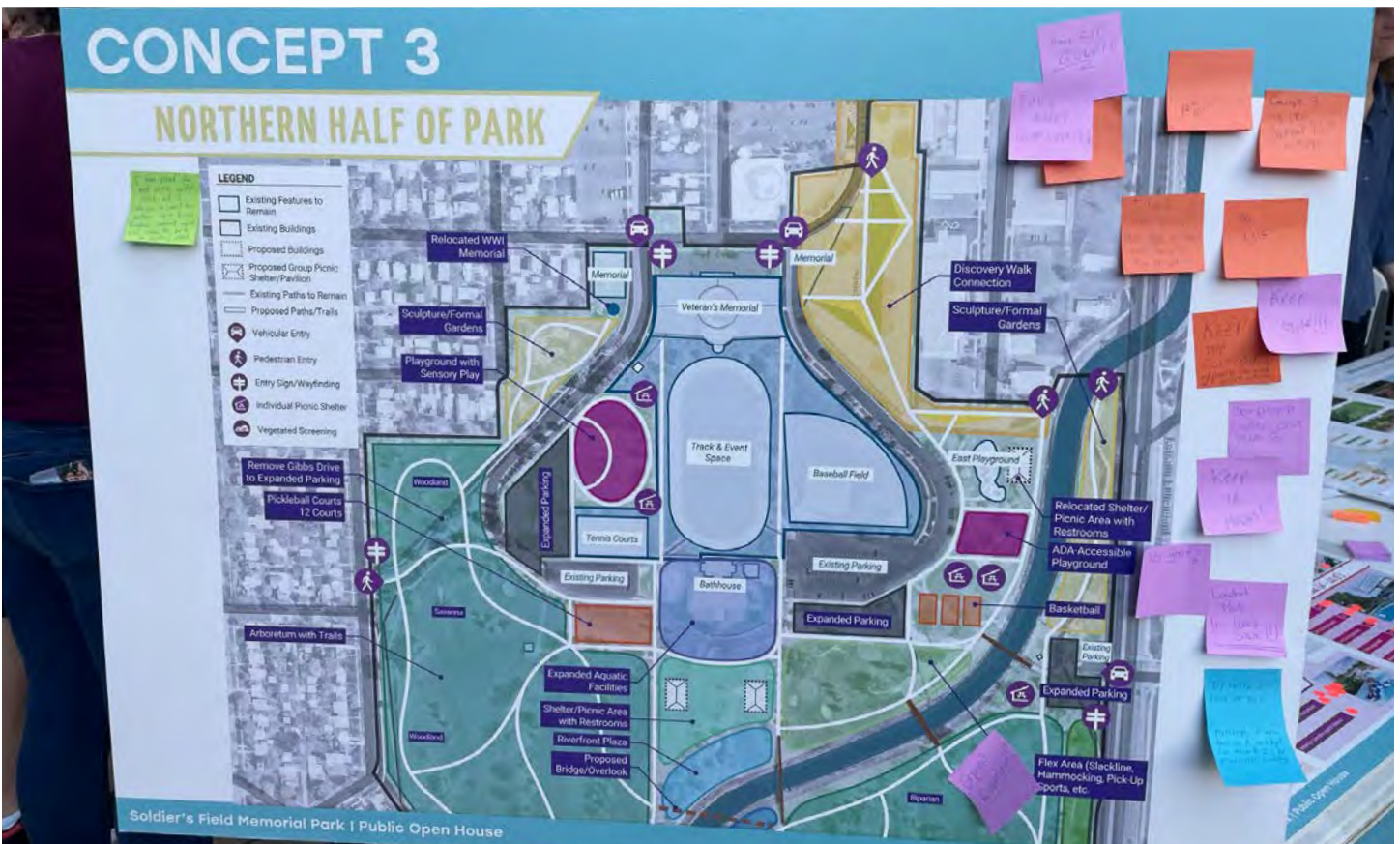
Community feedback on the design concepts



2014 Master Plan Preferred Plan



Collecting input at a Thursday Downtown event in June 2022.



Community feedback on the design concepts

Short-term Preferred Plan (0-3 Years)

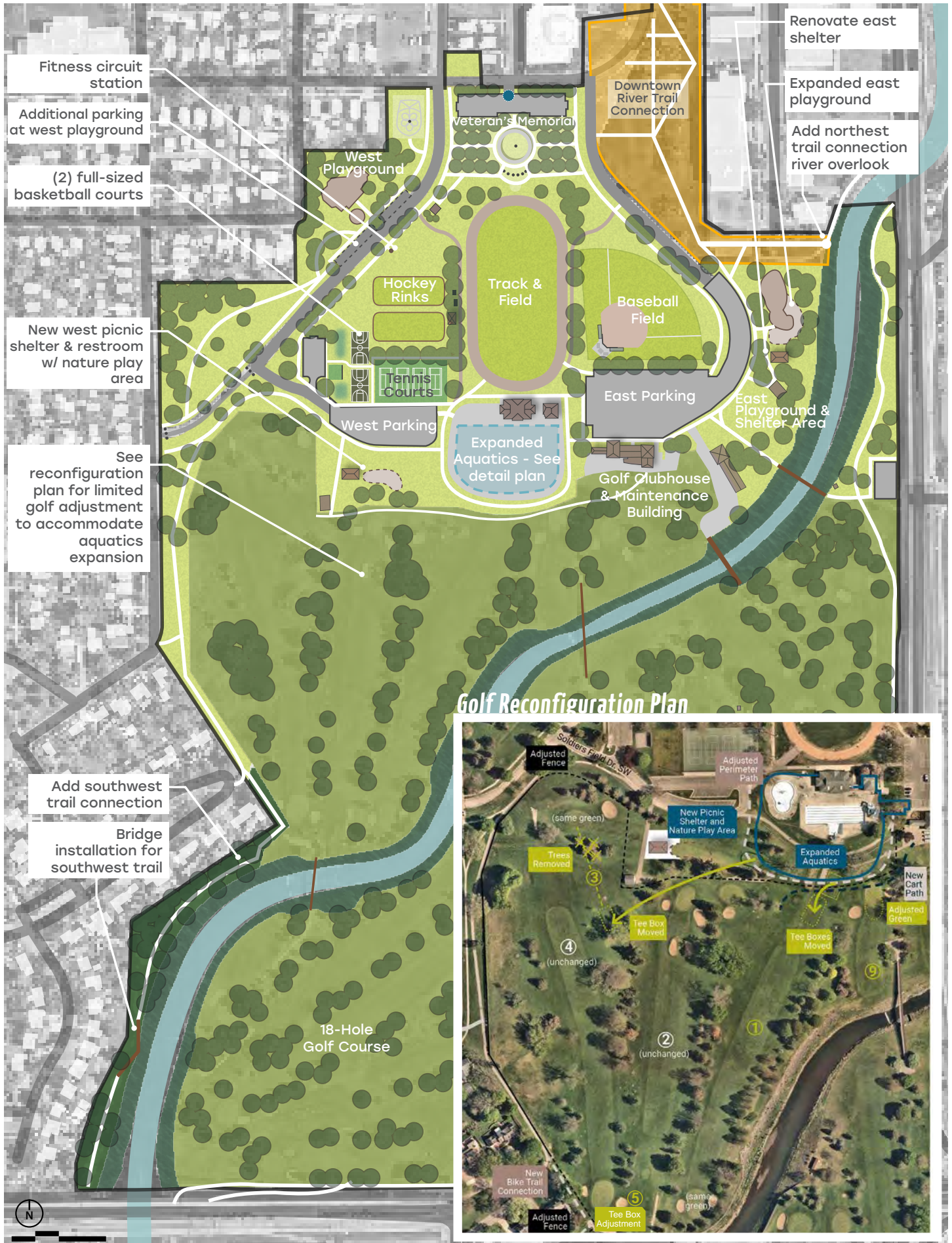
Overview

The short-term preferred plan focuses on improvements that would be completed within approximately three years. These improvements are projects that were identified as priorities through public input, the 2014 Master Plan, and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) federal grant awarded to the City in 2022. The ORLP grant projects include the aquatics facility expansion, playground and shelter improvements, and additional trail connections in the northeast and southwest corners of the park.

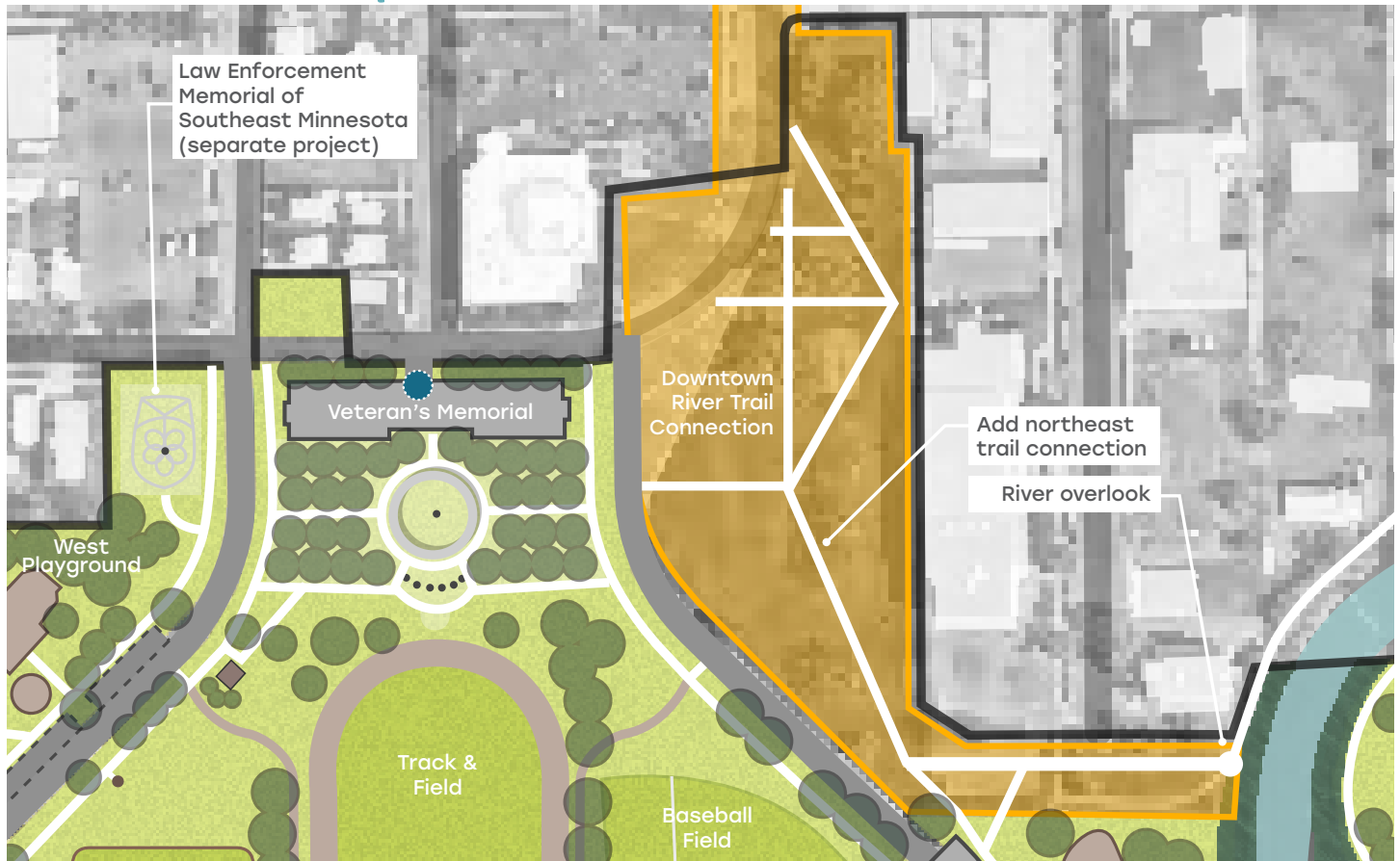
Key Recommendations:

- **Aquatics**
 - Expand aquatics facility with renovated lap pool and bathhouse, additional features, and lounge spaces
- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 2 basketball courts near existing tennis courts
 - Add 1 fitness circuit station near existing hockey rinks (to be expanded in future)
- **Site Amenities**
 - Add west picnic shelter with restrooms south of existing west parking lot
 - Renovate existing east picnic shelter building
- **Playgrounds**
 - Retain the west playground
 - Complete 4,500 square foot expansion of east playground to add inclusive playground
 - Add a small nature play area near proposed west shelter
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Add trail through northwest corner of the park as part of the Downtown River Trail Connection
 - Add perpendicular parking area off of Gibbs Drive near west playground
 - Extend existing trail along southwest property line from Memorial Parkway SW to the Zumbro South Trail at Highway 14
- **Golf**
 - 18-Holes of golf remain, though minor reconfigurations in northwest portion (at holes 1, 3, & 9) will allow for expanded park amenities and trail connections

Short-term Preferred Plan



Memorials Area Improvements

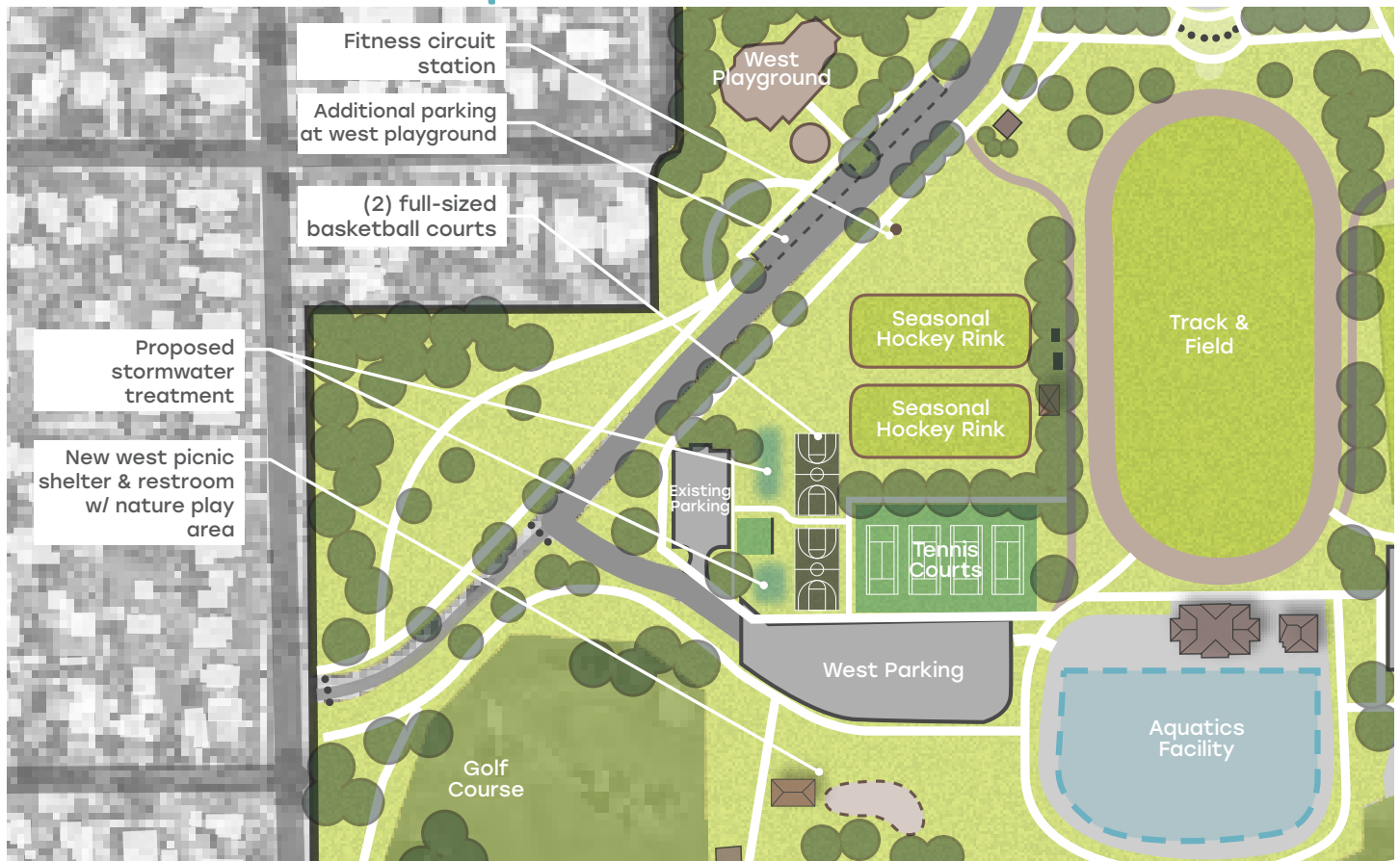


Key Recommendations

- **Memorials**
 - No changes to Veteran's Memorial and other existing memorials
 - New Law Enforcement Memorial of Southeast Minnesota, north of existing west playground (project not part of Soldiers Field Master Plan Update)
- **Site Amenities**
 - Downtown River Trail Connection project implementation in northeast corner of park- project includes paved paths, trail connection, opportunities for public art, seating and planting improvements, and a river overlook
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Add trail through the northwest corner of the park as part of the Downtown River Trail Connection project. Trail enters the park from 2nd Avenue SW and also connects to existing trail connection on Broadway Avenue S

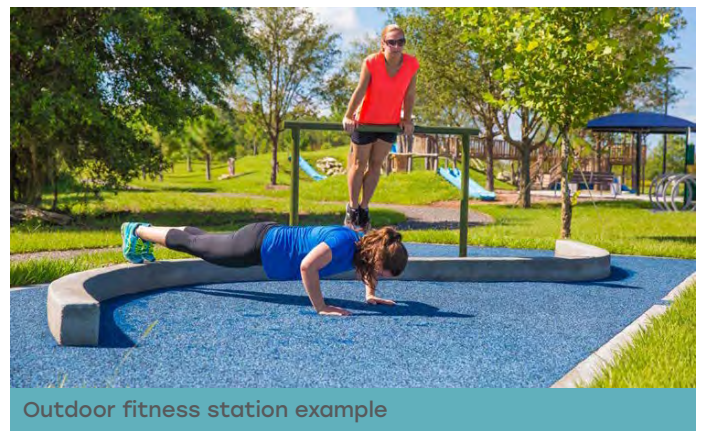


Northwest Park Area Improvements

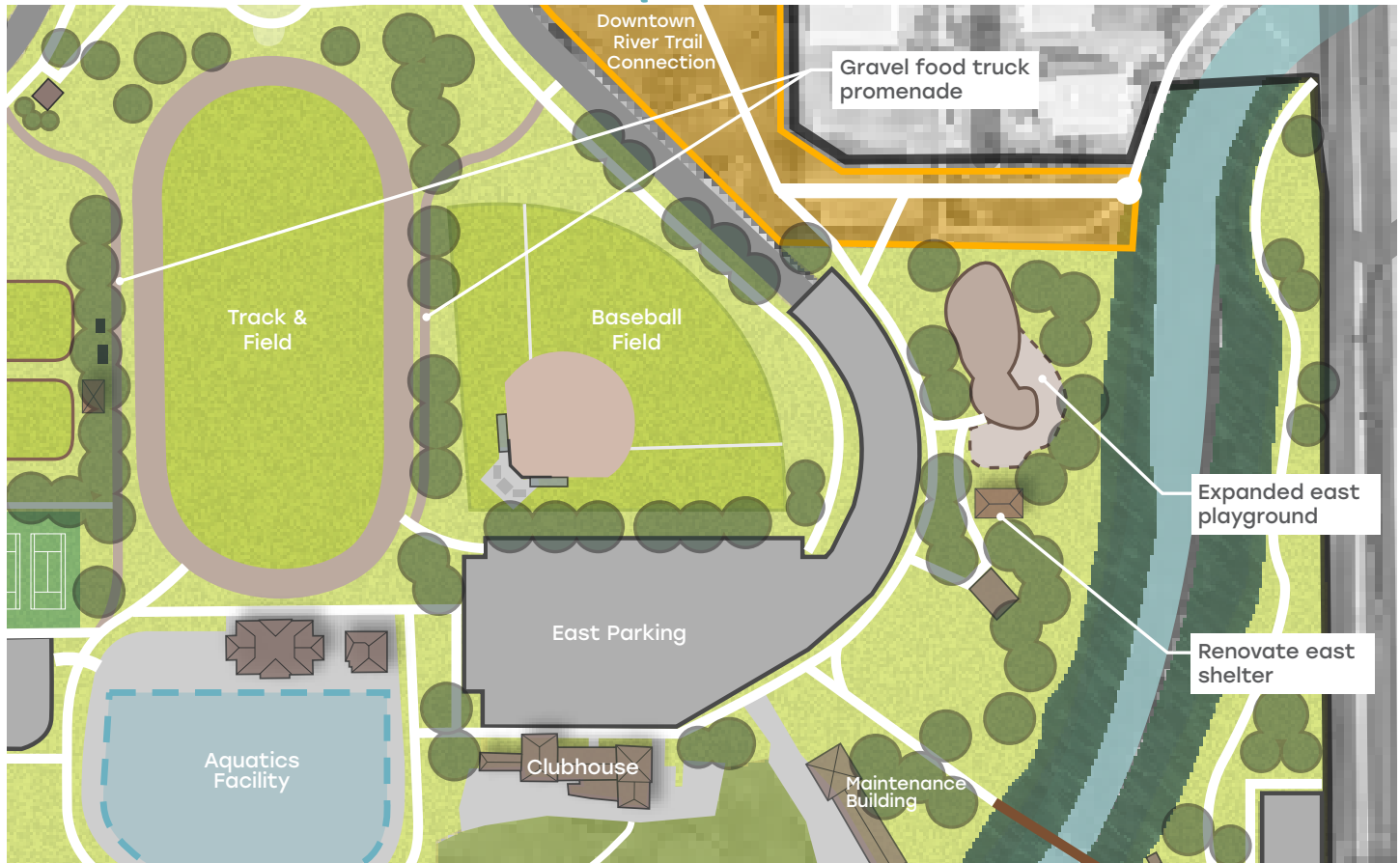


Key Recommendations

- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 2 basketball courts near existing tennis courts
 - Add 1 fitness circuit station near existing hockey rinks (to be expanded in future)
- **Site Amenities**
 - Add west picnic shelter with restrooms south of existing west parking lot
- **Playgrounds**
 - Existing west playground remains
 - Add small nature play area near proposed west shelter (to be expanded in future)
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Add perpendicular parking area off of Gibbs Drive near west playground. Parking to accommodate approximately 20-30 new parking stalls



Track & Northeast Park Area Improvements



Key Recommendations

- **Site Amenities**
 - Add gravel paths for food truck promenade and event space on east and west sides of track (to be paved in the future). Connect access to existing utilities on east side
 - Renovate existing east picnic shelter
- **Playgrounds**
 - Expand east playground by 4,500 square feet for new inclusive playground equipment



Inclusive playground example

Golf Course Improvements



Key Recommendations

- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Extend trail existing trail along southwest property line from existing trail connection at Memorial Parkway SW to new trail connection at the Zumbro South Trail at Highway 14
- **Golf Course**
 - 18-Holes of golf remain, though minor reconfigurations in northwest portion (at holes 1, 3, & 9) will allow for expanded park amenities and trail connections



Future trail connection to Zumbro South Trail at Hwy 14

Expanded Aquatics Facility & Improvements

Overview

An expanded aquatics facility was one of the most requested features throughout public engagement. This plan proposes to expand the aquatics facility to 70,000-80,000 total square feet, roughly double the current size. The bathhouse requires renovations in order to better serve visitors. In addition to these investments, the expanded aquatics facility is proposed to convert the existing splash play area to a zero depth splash pad, as well as add a shallow play pool, a lazy river, and a deepwater play pool. New lounges, shaded seating areas, and landscaping will provide an attractive and comfortable setting to spend a fun day.

Lap Pool

The current 50 meter lap pool has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. It is proposed to be redone in its current configuration. The existing slide is being assessed and will be repaired and retained if possible. Otherwise a new large slide will be located on the southeast side of the lap pool.

Deepwater Play Pool

A deepwater play pool will provide an activity hub for older children and teens on the south side of the lap pool. The current slide will be replaced with a 1 meter diving board and a climbing wall. A new water walk will allow children to hop from one floating pad to the next with the help of an overhead net.



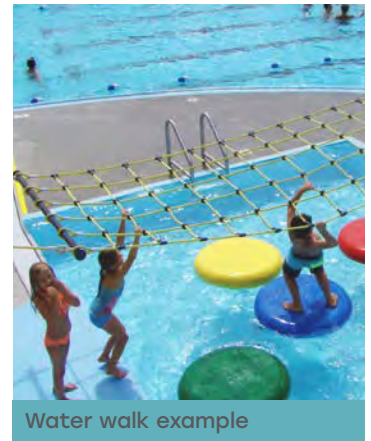
Lap pool example



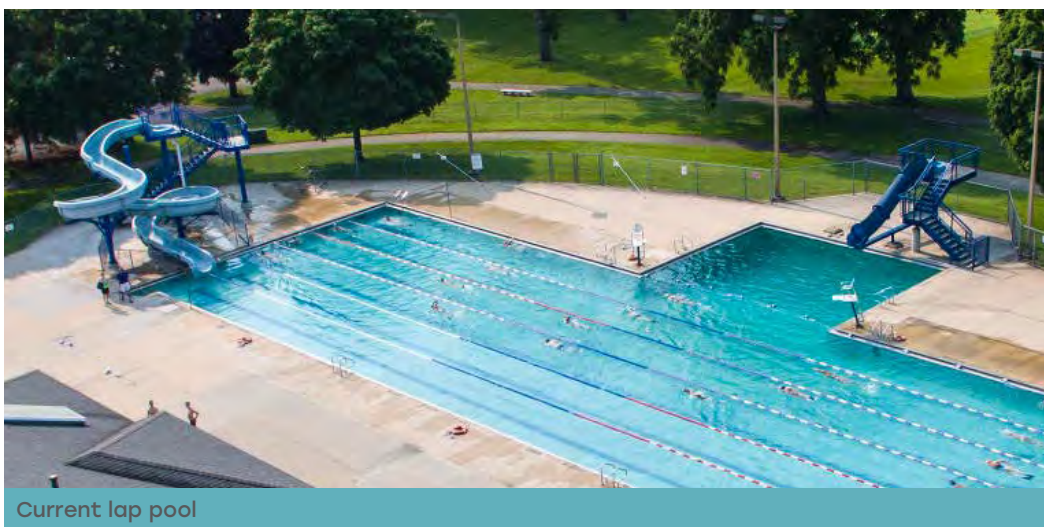
Diving board example



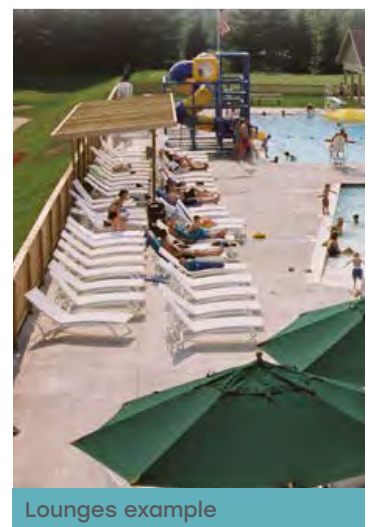
Climbing wall example



Water walk example

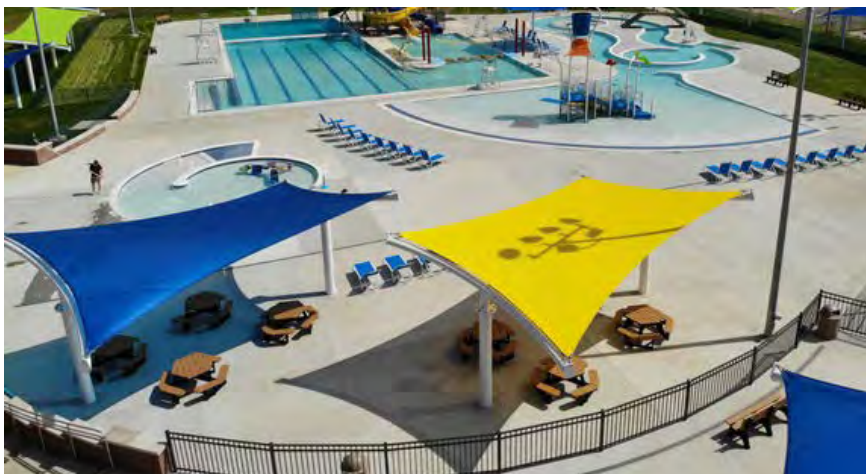
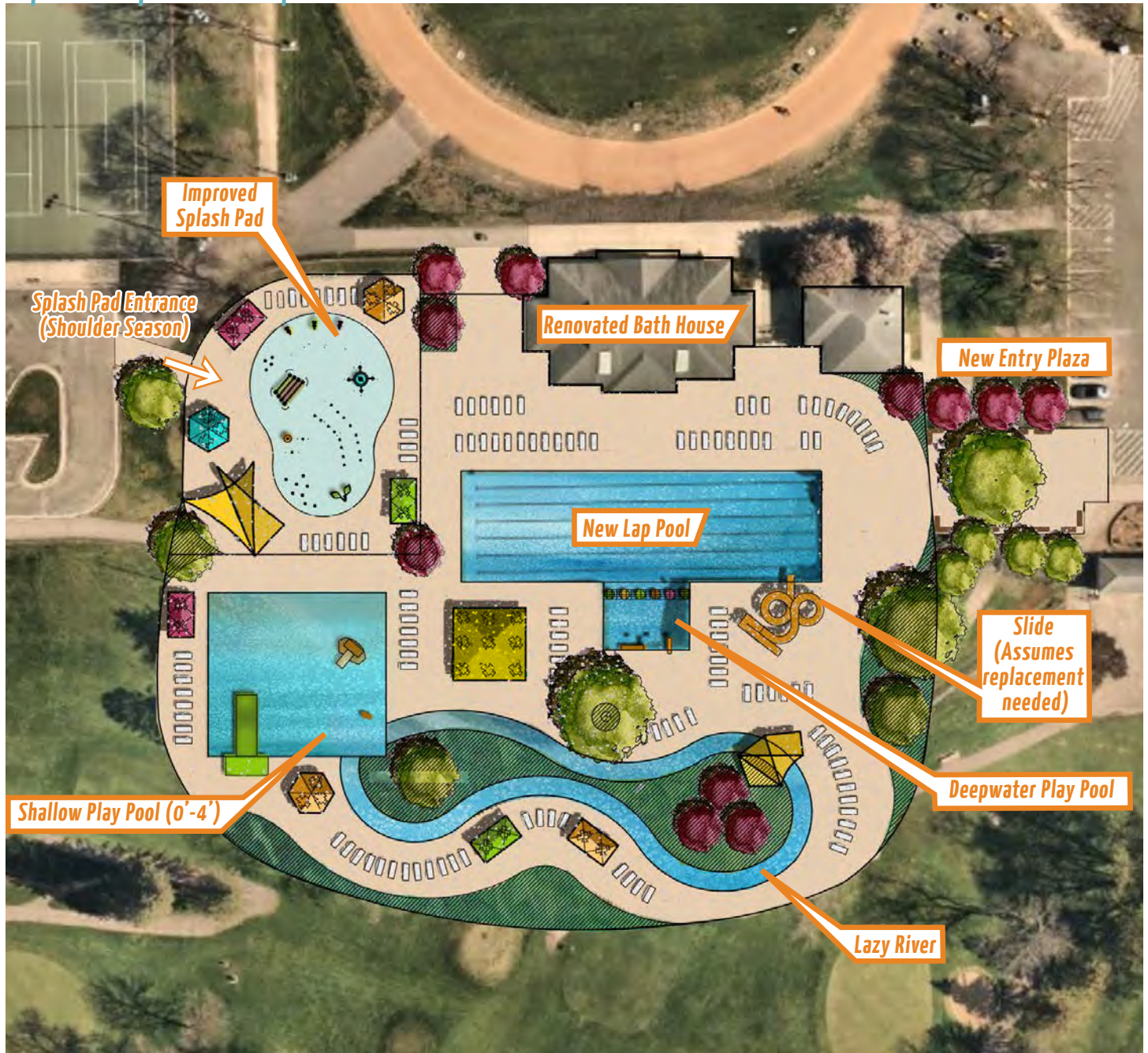


Current lap pool



Lounges example

Expanded Aquatics Concept Plan



Shade sail example



Umbrella example

Splash Pad

A new splash pad maintains the footprint of the current splash play area, but removes the liability of having standing water. The new splash pad also replaces the current features with a suite of engaging and playful elements, including fountain jets, a bucket dump tower, water arches, a rain shower tower, and water blasters. The area is rounded out by the addition of shade sails, lounges, and shaded seating areas. The splash pad is situated such that it can be fenced off from the rest of the aquatics facility and open during seasonable weather in the shoulder seasons (pre-memorial day and post-labor day) for expanded use. Temporary fencing around the splash pad can be removed in the summer for seamless movement between the splash pad and the rest of the facility if desired.

Shallow Play Pool

A shallow play pool (0'-4' deep) provides a place for families to relax where their littles can safely begin learning to swim. A zero-depth entry eliminates surprises and provides a gradual way for kids to get comfortable in the water. Optional toddler and family slides offer age-appropriate thrills.

Lazy River

A 3 to 4 foot deep lazy river flowing out from the shallow play pool provides a gentle current for relaxed flotation around an interior landscaped island.



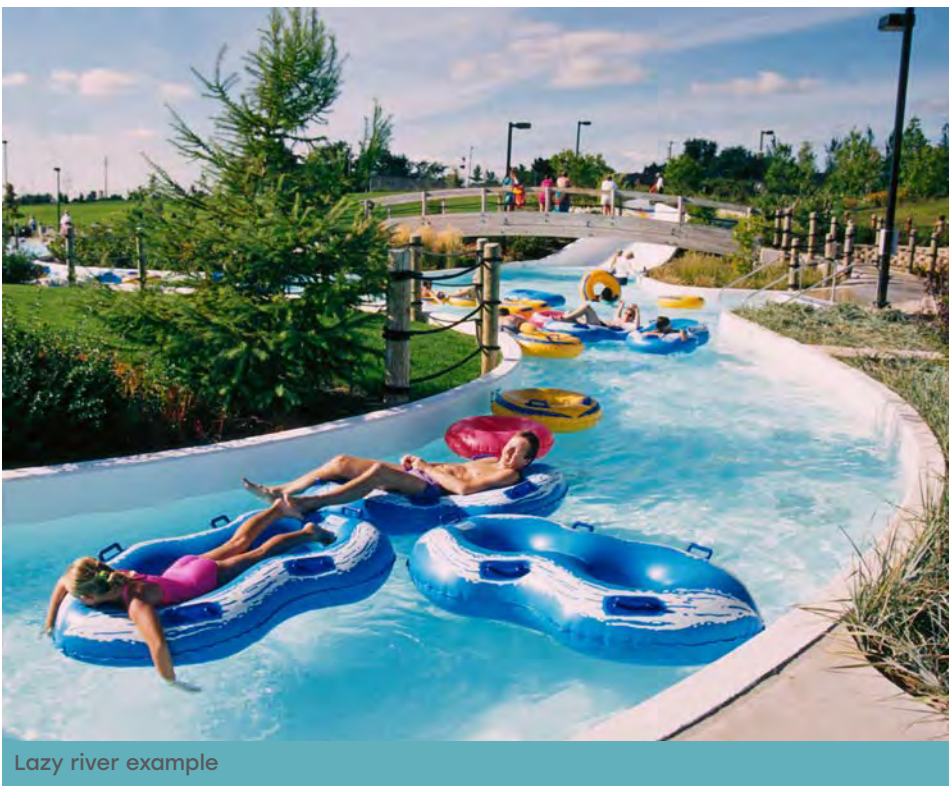
Splash pad example



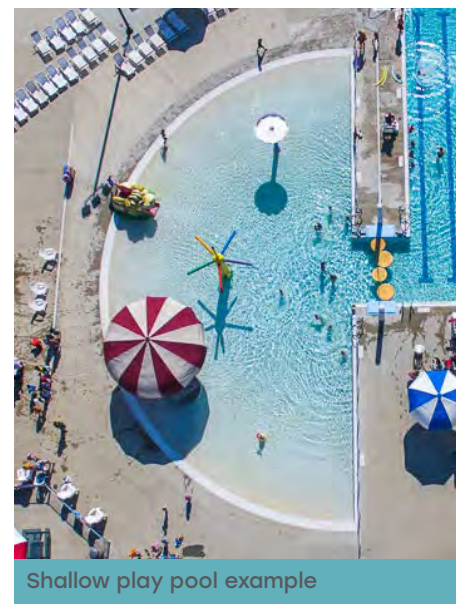
Splash pad example



Shallow play pool example



Lazy river example



Shallow play pool example



Existing bathhouse and aquatics facility entry



Existing splash play and pool area

Long-term Preferred Plan (10+ Years)

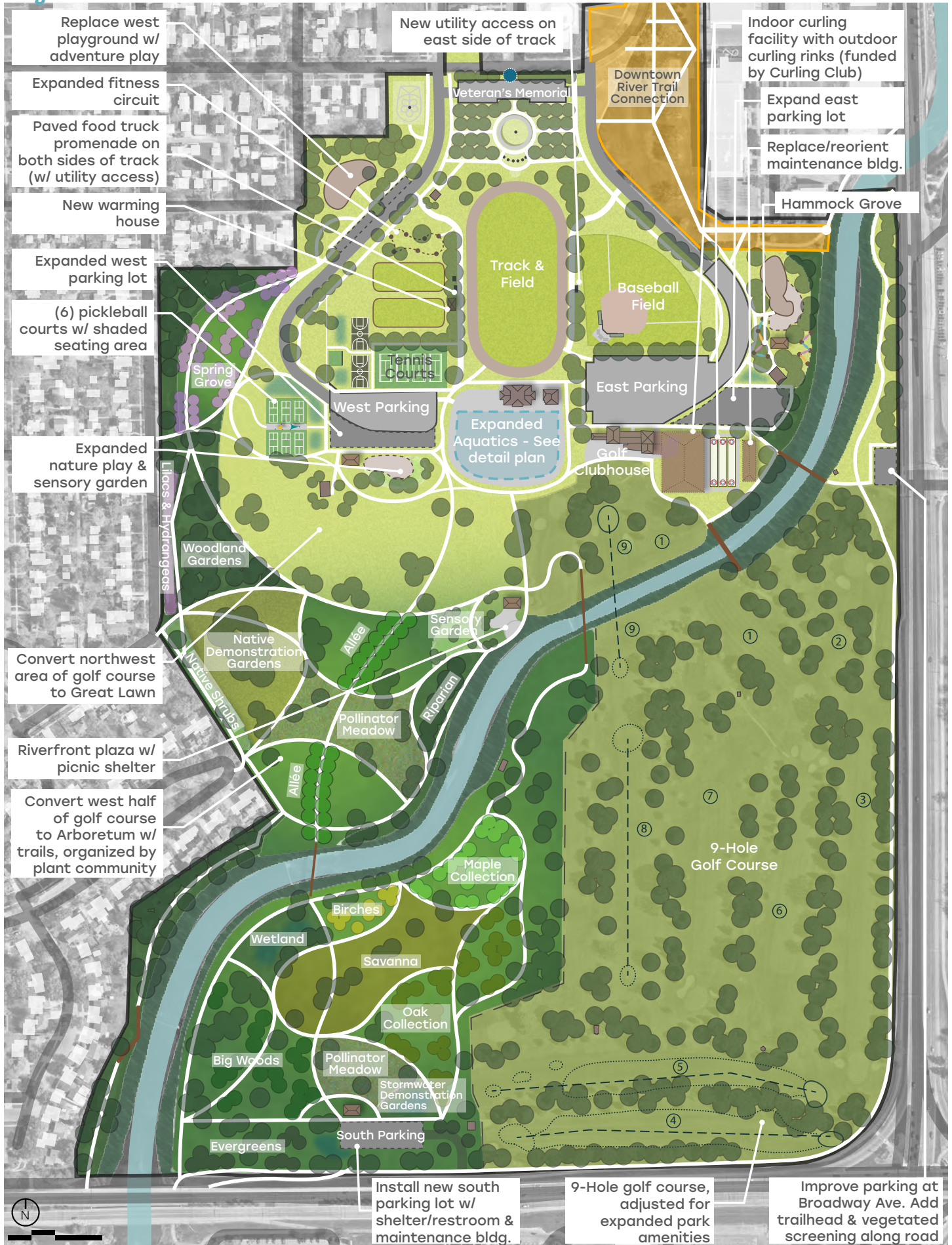
Overview

The long-term preferred plan achieves a longer range vision for Soldiers Field Memorial Park and focuses on improvements that would be completed in 10+ years. These improvements include expanding active recreation, introducing more passive recreation and flexible space, and working to improve accessibility and neighborhood connectivity throughout the park. The long-term preferred plan may need adjustment as a result of the short-term improvements.

Key Recommendations:

- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 6 pickleball courts and viewing area with seating and shade structures west of the west parking area
 - Expand fitness circuit - add stations to create loop
- **Site Amenities**
 - Pave food truck promenades and add utility access on east side of track
 - Add new warming house on west side of track
 - Add Indoor curling facility & restaurant onto existing clubhouse, with outdoor recreational curling/lawn bowling (project to be funded through a partnership with the Rochester Curling Club and implemented when funding goal is reached)
 - Develop Riverfront Plaza and terrace with new picnic shelter south of aquatics facility
 - Create Great Lawn for flexible use south of west parking and picnic shelter
 - Establish Arboretum/botanical gardens on western portion of existing golf course with trails and interpretive signage
 - Add new picnic shelter with restroom and small maintenance building near Arboretum at proposed south parking lot area off Broadway Ave
- **Playgrounds**
 - Replace existing west playground with Adventure Playground when equipment reaches end of lifespan
 - Add hammock grove south of east playground
 - Expand nature-themed playground near proposed west shelter and add adjacent sensory garden area
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Expand existing west parking lot
 - Expand existing east parking lot when curling facility project is implemented
 - Reconfigure Gibbs Drive - remove roadway connection to 6th Ave SW, add curve to match Soldiers Field Drive SW, remove existing parking lot west of tennis courts
 - Expand and improve existing parking lot off Broadway Ave, add trailhead with wayfinding signage and bike racks
 - Install new south parking lot off Highway 14 at 4th Ave SW with access to the Arboretum and trails (requires further coordination and approvals from MnDOT)
 - Add neighborhood access/trail connection points at 4th Ave SW, 9th St SW, 11th St SW, Memorial Parkway SW, Highway 14, Broadway Ave S, 1st Ave SW, and 2nd Ave SW
- **Golf**
 - Convert golf course to 9 holes using eastern portion of existing course, reconfigure hole 9, hole 13 (becomes 4), hole 15 (becomes 5), and hole 18 (becomes 8)

Long-term Preferred Plan



Northwest Park Area Improvements

Key Recommendations

- **Active Recreation/Sport Courts**
 - Add 6 pickleball courts and viewing area with seating and shade structures west of the west parking area
 - Expand fitness circuit - add stations to create loop
- **Site Amenities**
 - Pave food truck promenades and add utility access on east side of track
 - Add new warming house on east side of track
 - Develop Riverfront Plaza and terrace with new picnic shelter south of aquatics facility
 - Establish Great Lawn south of west parking and picnic shelter for picnicking, events, intramural/pick-up sports, flexible space, etc.
- **Playgrounds**
 - Replace existing west playground with Adventure Playground when equipment reaches end of lifespan
 - Expand nature-themed playground near proposed west shelter and add adjacent sensory garden area
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Expand existing west parking lot
 - Reconfigure Gibbs Drive - remove portion of roadway connecting to 6th Ave SW, add curve in roadway to match Soldiers Field Drive SW and maintain historical symmetry
 - Remove existing small parking lot west of tennis courts



Food truck promenade example



Great lawn picnicking example



Pickleball courts with shaded seating area



Fitness circuit loop

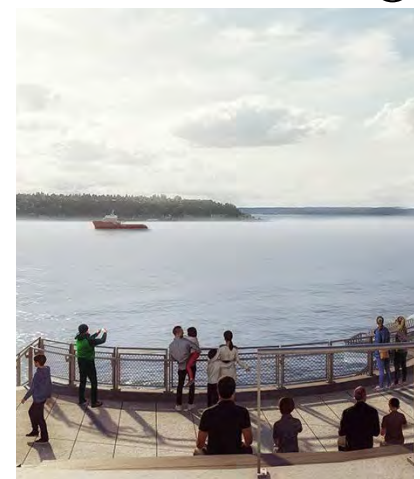
Northwest Park Area Improvements Plan



Adventure play example



Sensory garden example



Riverfront terrace example

Track & Northeast Park Area Improvements

Key Recommendations

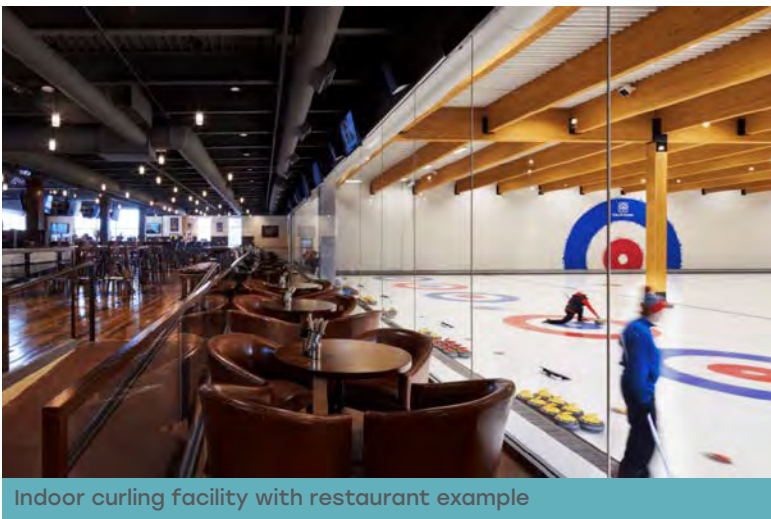
- **Site Amenities**
 - Pave food truck promenades and add utility access on east side of track
 - Add hammock grove south of east playground
 - Add indoor curling facility & restaurant onto existing clubhouse, with outdoor recreational curling/lawn bowling (project to be funded through a partnership with the Rochester Curling Club and implemented when funding goal is reached)
- **Parking/Circulation**
 - Expand existing east parking lot when curling facility project is implemented
 - Expand and improve existing parking lot off Broadway Ave, add trailhead with wayfinding signage and bike racks. Add vegetated screening between trail and Broadway Ave
- **Golf**
 - Relocate golf maintenance building when curling facility project is implemented



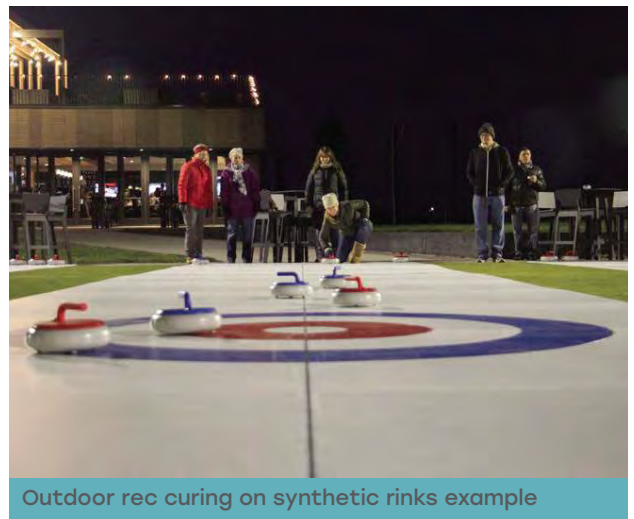
Food truck promenade example



Outdoor seating/event space example

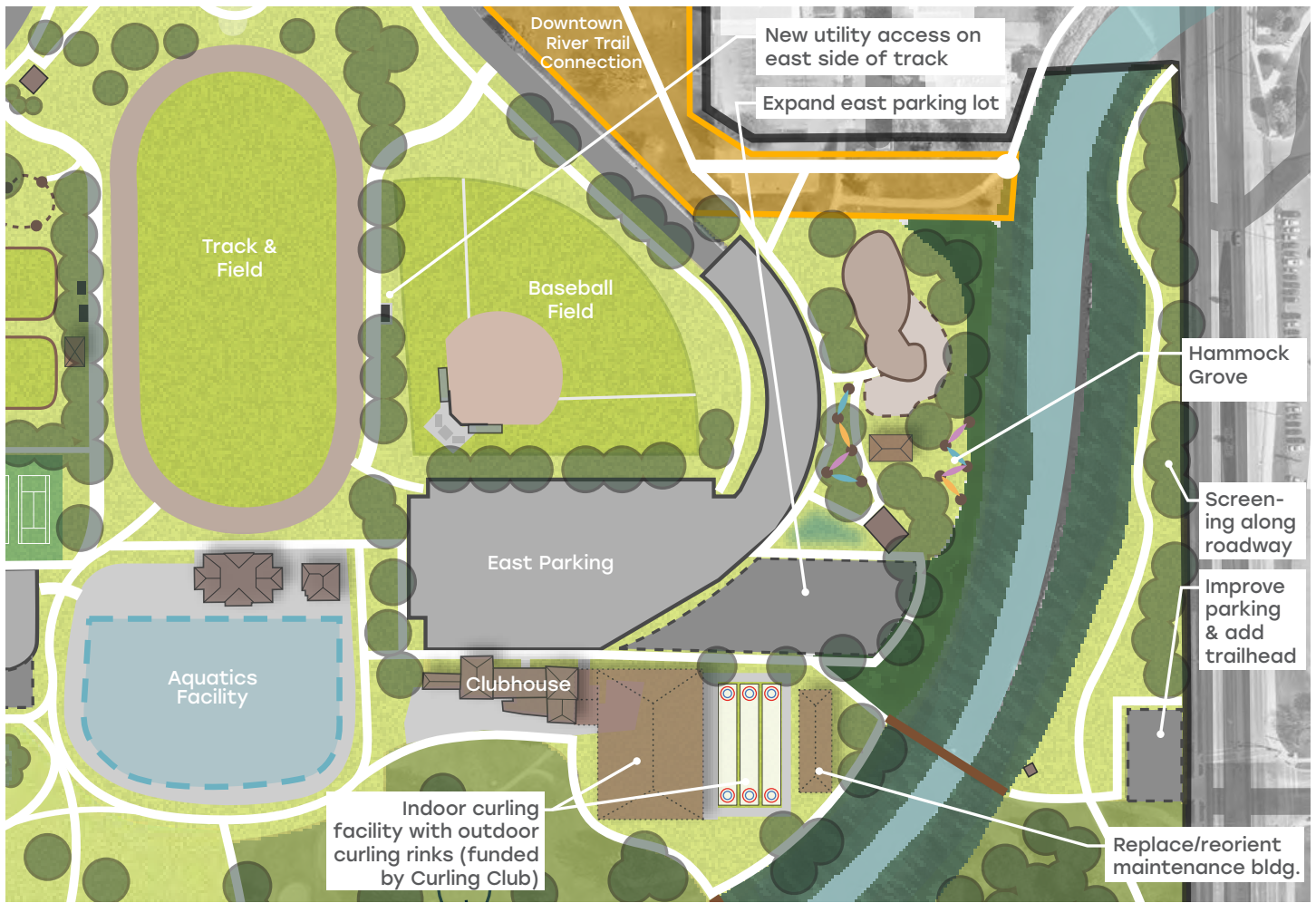


Indoor curling facility with restaurant example



Outdoor rec curling on synthetic rinks example

Track & Northeast Park Area Improvements Plan

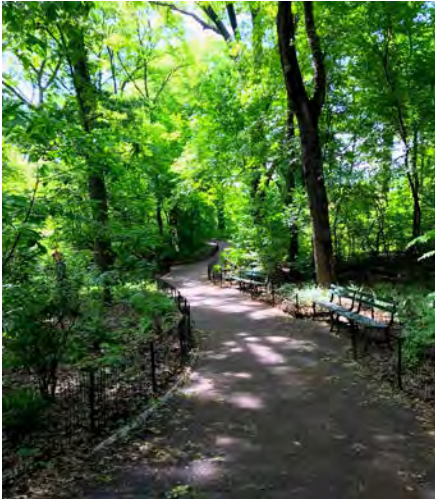


Roadway buffer example



Trailhead improvement example

Examples of Recommended Golf Course Improvements



Central Park rambles



Rambles - soft surface path



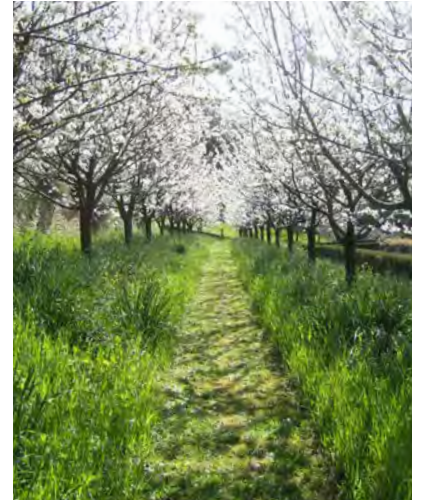
Plant community gardens - birch collection



Path with allée of trees



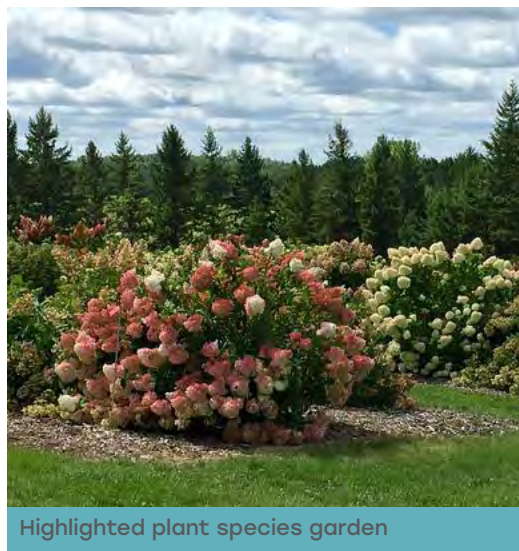
Lowland plant community with raised boardwalk



Orchard walk with mowed path



Informational signage



Highlighted plant species garden



Botanical/manicured garden

Long-term Golf Course Improvements Plan



Key Recommendations

• Site Amenities

- Establish Arboretum/botanical gardens on western portion of existing golf course with focused planting/plant community areas, paved and natural surface trails, and interpretive signage
- Add new picnic shelter with restroom and small maintenance building near Arboretum at proposed south parking lot area off Broadway Ave

• Golf

- Convert golf course to 9 holes using eastern portion of existing course, reconfigure hole 9, hole 13 (becomes 4), hole 15 (becomes 5), and hole 18 (becomes 8)

• Parking/Circulation

- Install new south parking lot off Highway 14 at 4th Ave SW with access to the Arboretum, trails, and new picnic shelter (requires further coordination and approvals from MndOT)

Park-wide Systems

Circulation

All of the circulation within Soldiers Field Park is currently asphalt trail or concrete sidewalk. Expanding the amenities at Soldiers Field Park to include an arboretum and other nature-focused experiences lends itself to the addition of a natural surface trail alternative. Crushed aggregate paths (packed crushed limestone or decomposed granite) offer an ADA-accessible, non-slip surface that complements the arboretum setting. Concrete sidewalks and plazas will still be available in the core of the park, providing access between parking areas and primary attractions like the aquatics facility and food truck promenade. A system of 8' wide asphalt trails will provide multi-use connections through the park for commuters and those looking for a scenic route of travel.

Accessibility & Inclusion

A person using a mobility device, someone with arthritis, a woman 8-months pregnant, a dog walker, a double-stroller wielding parent, and an octogenarian all have different needs when using parks and trails. For this reason, it is important to provide not only ADA-accessible routes throughout the park, but also amenities and features that enable all people to feel welcome, safe, and comfortable accessing and using the park for more than an hour at a time.

Seating

Offering seating at regular intervals increases confidence in visitors who may not feel comfortable exploring the park not knowing if there will be a place for them to rest should they need a break. Benches or other seating should be provided at activity nodes and at least every 1/4-mile along the trail network. Benches should have backs and arm rests in order to provide additional support for those who might appreciate it.

Lighting

Well-distributed lighting expands the usable hours of the park, especially important in our northern climate. It also improves feelings of safety among visitors. Lighting should be appropriately scaled and dark sky friendly, in order to limit light pollution.

Restrooms and Water

When selecting a park for a playdate, stroll, or gathering, restrooms make an enormous difference in decision-making. Investments in amenities such as picnic shelters and playgrounds will not be well-enjoyed if restrooms are a several minute walk away. Access to restrooms becomes more essential during certain life stages, and being uncertain about their availability along a trail is enough to prevent large segments of the population from being able to get out and enjoy the park.



Circulation Diagram (Long-term)

LEGEND

- Boardwalk
- Concrete
- Natural Surface
- Asphalt



Park Stormwater Treatment Diagram

LEGEND



Potential Areas
for Stormwater
Treatment



This plan proposes additional restrooms near the expanded west parking lot, the south parking lot, and the riverfront pavilion. These will complement existing restrooms in the bathhouse, clubhouse and east playground, to ensure an even distribution of facilities that will allow people to navigate the park comfortably and without concern. Where possible, drinking water should also be made available at these locations.

Inclusive Recreation

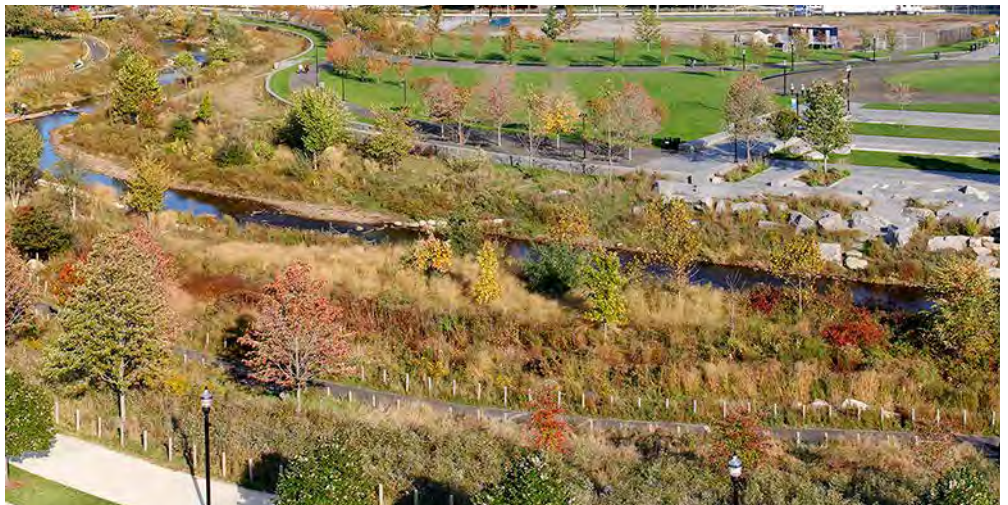
Many of the recreation adjustments proposed as part of this plan stem from a desire to make Soldiers Field a more inclusive park, rather than one that devotes a large share of its land to a sport that some feel is intimidating or exclusionary. In addition to introducing approachable, nature-based recreation with the arboretum, the new basketball and pickleball courts, hammocking area, and sensory gardens all will attract a more diverse set of visitors. Formalizing the food truck promenade and introducing the river pavilion and terrace will facilitate large gatherings and celebrations where groups can gather from all over to enjoy themselves at the park. These types of events will increase familiarity with the park and hopefully encourage subsequent visits.

The aquatics facility can pursue inclusion by offering a variety of programming catered to those with differing cultural backgrounds, ages, and skill levels. From tot play time, to swim classes for adults, to all female pool hours, programming should endeavor to actively welcome groups that are not always comfortable in an aquatics setting.

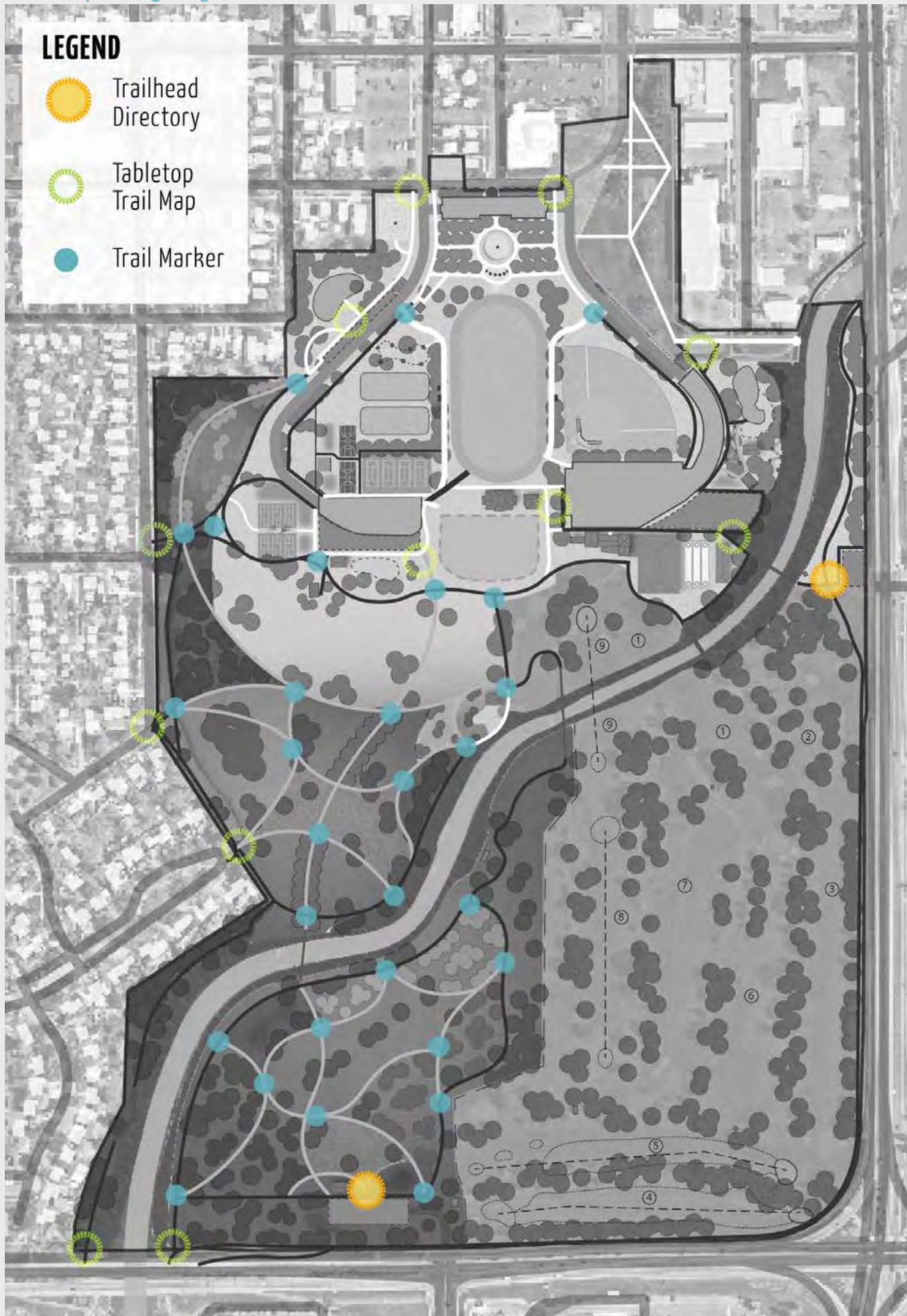
Stormwater BMPs and Flood Control

Sustainable design necessitates that the addition of impervious surfaces within the park should be offset by the creation of areas for stormwater collection and infiltration. The Park Stormwater Treatment diagram outlines areas adjacent to new impervious surfaces where stormwater best management practices (BMPs) could be located. This diagram is only intended to illustrate potential areas for BMPs; upon design of each feature, suitable areas should be identified and sized based on topography, soil suitability, and intended BMP type.

While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has designed the South Fork of the Zumbro River to manage flooding, the deep profile of the engineered embankments is not particularly inviting. Where possible, the adjacent land should be restored to a more naturalized riparian environment, taking care to maintain the corridor's striking views and functional flood control. In the future, collaboration with the Army Corps to explore alternatives to the fenced and walled portions of the river should be pursued.



Park Wayfinding Diagram



Wayfinding and Interpretation

The park’s proposed trail network expansion may require a new suite of wayfinding signage to help visitors navigate the park. Signage should be durable, low impact, judiciously sited, and reflective of the park’s surroundings. Wayfinding is most successful when it seems to appear when you have need for it, but otherwise blends into the background. Three primary types of signage are proposed:

Trailhead Directory

These kiosks would be the most identifiable, full-service signage structures within the park. They could be one or two-sided and include a small roof overhang. Set at trailhead parking lots, they provide a full map of the park’s trails and amenities along with space for brochures, posted rules, and flier notifications. These should be surrounded by an ADA-accessible surface. At minimum, the east park trailhead along Broadway and the proposed south parking lot should have these kiosks. The renovated bathhouse can provide similar information inside as well.



Tabletop Trail Map

This single-sided sign has an angled panel set at an accessible height and features a map of the park marked with the user’s current location. These are useful at neighborhood park entries that do not have a trailhead directory. Trail maps should be sited on an ADA-accessible surface.



Trail Marker

These low profile markers are useful at trail intersections where users have multiple options that may lead to different locations or amenities. Text or iconography showing whats available nearby should help guide visitors to their desired locations.

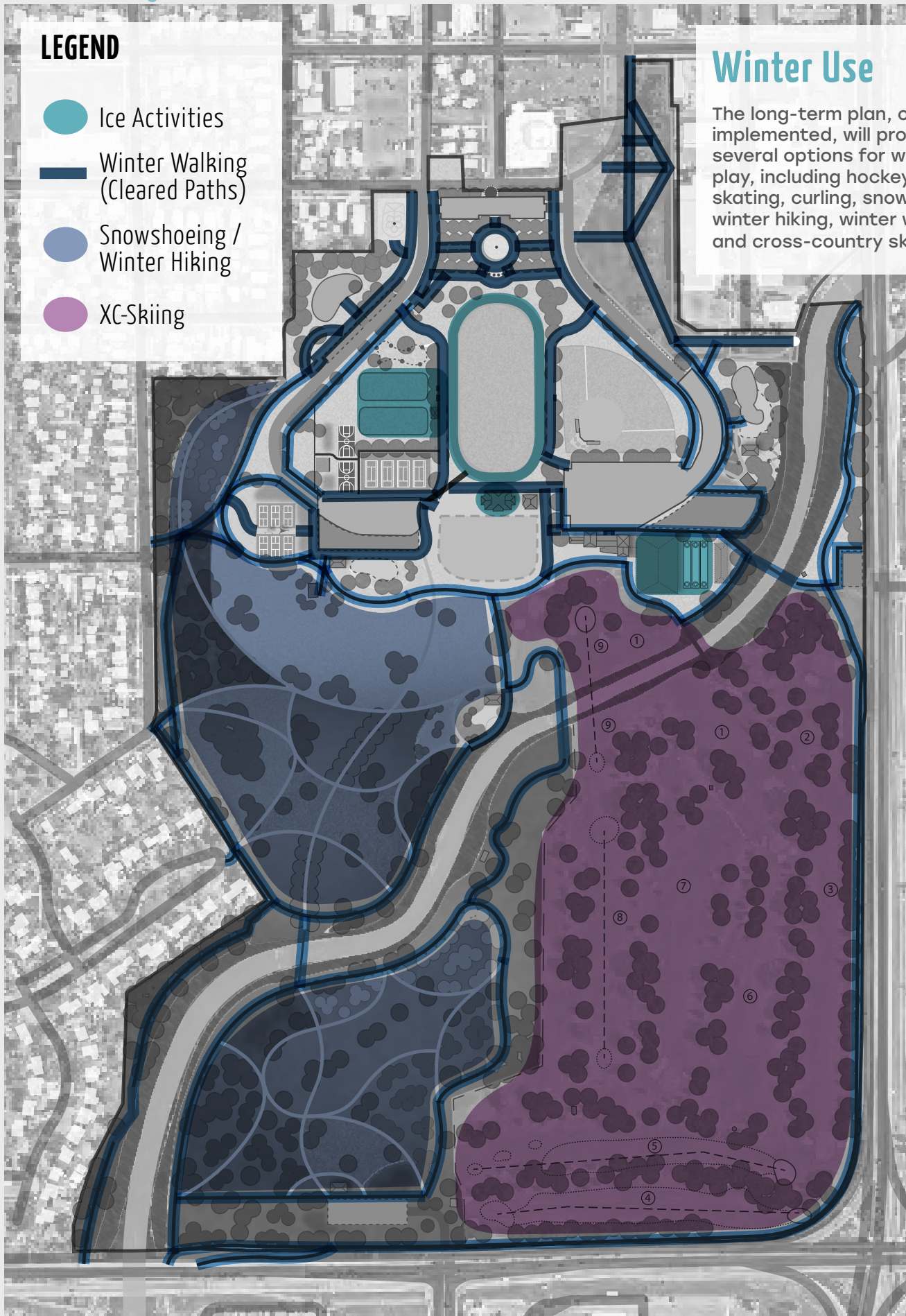


LEGEND

- Ice Activities
- Winter Walking (Cleared Paths)
- Snowshoeing / Winter Hiking
- XC-Skiing

Winter Use

The long-term plan, once implemented, will provide several options for winter play, including hockey, skating, curling, snowshoeing/winter hiking, winter walking, and cross-country skiing.



5

Implementation

Phasing, Cost Estimates, & Funding

Phasing Strategy

Phasing of improvements at Soldiers Field Park falls into 0-3 year (short-term) and 10-year+ (long-term) phases. The short-term improvements already have identified funding sources and are slated to roll into schematic design following approval of this plan update. The projected \$18.5 million investment over the first three years of the plan represents a significant funding push that necessitates a subsequent pause in investments over the next handful of years. As such, long-term improvements are anticipated only after 10 or more years, once additional capital can be generated for their implementation.

Cost Estimates and Funding Sources

Funding sources for short-term projects include:

- federal grant
- state grant
- the Destination Medical Center (DMC)
- park dedication funds
- park referendum funds

Short-term Preferred Plan Cost Estimate

Improvement Area	Capital Cost
Central Track (Access drives)	\$55,000
Downtown River Trail Connection (Northeast trail and riverfront overlook)	\$1,500,000
East Playground & Picnic Area (Renovated shelter and new inclusive play)	\$835,000
Expanded Aquatics (70-80k sf total w/ renovated bathhouse)	\$10,050,000
Southwest Trail (Trail, bridge relocation, golf modification)	\$500,000
West Park Athletics (2 basketball courts)	\$120,000
West Picnic & Play Area (Nature play, shelter, restrooms, trail)	\$408,000
West Playground (Additional parking)	\$72,000
Inflation (5%)	\$602,000
Soft Costs (20% of construction cost)	\$2,490,000
Contingencies (15% of construction cost)	\$1,868,000
TOTAL	\$18,500,000

Long-term Preferred Plan Cost Estimate

Improvement Area	Capital Cost
Broadway Avenue Trailhead (Screening, kiosk, seating, lighting)	\$35,000
Central Track (Food truck promenade, fitness circuit)	\$288,000
East Activity Node (Parking, maintenance building, golf course)	\$1,542,500
East Playground & Picnic Area (Hammock area)	\$20,000
Great Lawn and Riverfront (Shelter, restroom, terraced overlook, lawn)	\$1,490,000
North Arboretum (Gardens, trails, signage, wayfinding)	\$2,875,500
South Arboretum (Gardens, trails, signage, wayfinding)	\$1,265,000
South Picnic and Parking (Parking, shelter, restrooms, maintenance)	\$780,000
West Park Athletics (Warming house, pickleball, parking, trails, Gibb's Drive realignment)	\$704,000
West Picnic & Play Area (Sensory gardens at nature play area)	\$135,000
West Playground (Replace with Adventure Play)	\$450,000
Inflation (3%/year for 7 years)	\$2,203,400
Soft Costs (20% of construction cost)	\$2,357,700
Contingencies (15% of construction cost)	\$1,768,300
TOTAL	\$15,915,000

Operations and Maintenance & Partnerships

Items in the long-term preferred plan are anticipated to be funded and completed in ten plus years, and will likely be revisited in the following Master Plan update. Their estimated cost is \$15.9 million. This number does not include costs for the potential indoor curling facility with outdoor rinks, as these are anticipated to be funded through outside investment.

Total anticipated cost for both phases of the plan over the next 10+ years is roughly \$34.4 million.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M)

O&M is defined as the day-to-day activities (e.g., mowing, contract services, general maintenance, cleaning, and staffing) that keep the park running, while maintaining the grounds and facilities in a “state of good repair.” Current O&M staffing and funding levels may need to be expanded in the short-term based on the proposed improvements at the park. As long-term improvements are constructed, a shift in the maintenance regime from intensive mowing and golf-course related maintenance to a more natural resource-oriented maintenance paradigm will be necessary. The introduction of native plantings, meadow landscapes, woodlands, and gardens will require new expertise and may necessitate additional training or contracting out certain maintenance activities.

Partnerships

Rochester Parks and Recreation is able to provide unique programming throughout its parks with the help of local partners. As Soldiers Field Park develops, partnerships could be explored that offer new types of activities, expand visitorship, encourage stewardship, and increase awareness of the park and its offerings. Potential partners include:

- Rochester Parks Foundation
- The Curling Club of Rochester (for funding/operations of the proposed curling center)
- Rochester Swim Club
- Rochester Active Sports Club (RASC)
- Quarry Hills Nature Center (Passport to Parks program, or others)
- The DMC
- Rochester Public Schools
- Olmsted County Public Health
- Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Partnership Program
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Friends Groups
- University of Minnesota Rochester
- Food Trucks
- Local Restaurants and Breweries
- Local fitness instructors
- Rochester Area Pickleball Association (RAPA)
- Rochester Public Library

Programming

Introduction of expanded aquatics and new features such as pickleball courts, the arboretum, and the potential curling center open up the park to expanded and new programming opportunities.

Expanded Aquatics

- Lazy river aerobics/fitness classes
- Pool parties
- Tot time
- Lap swim
- Swimming lessons / practices

Golf Course

The golf course's reconfiguration provides an opportunity to usher in a new way of thinking about golf at Soldiers Field Park. New programming should endeavor to make golf approachable to new audiences and to diversify participation in the sport, in addition to making use of the course in new ways.

- FootGolf
- Golf Course performances (One act/vignette per hole. Audience members can walk or rent a cart)
- Themed Golf Tournaments (Zombie Golf, Christmas in July, Garden Party, etc.)
- Easter Egg Hunts / Trick or Treating
- Glow Golf (evenings with glow in the dark balls, hole lighting, glow sticks, etc.)
- Ski, skijoring, or dogsledding programs/events

Pickleball

- Round robin mixers
- Classes (beginner, intermediate, advanced)
- Tournaments
- Events (Dinks and Drinks, Costume Party, Musical Courts (Chairs), Glow Ball, etc.)

Arboretum

- Guided walks (birding, plant ID, etc.)
- Holiday light displays
- Rotating curated art
- Storywalks
- Fitness classes on the great lawn or riverfront plaza
- Plein air art classes
- Dog day in the park

Curling Center

- Lessons
- Bonspiels
- High school curling club
- Parties and event rental
- Patio curling (open play and by reservation: outdoor synthetic ice curling rinks paired with bar/restaurant patio)

Example Imagery of Potential Programming



Birding walks



Movies in the park



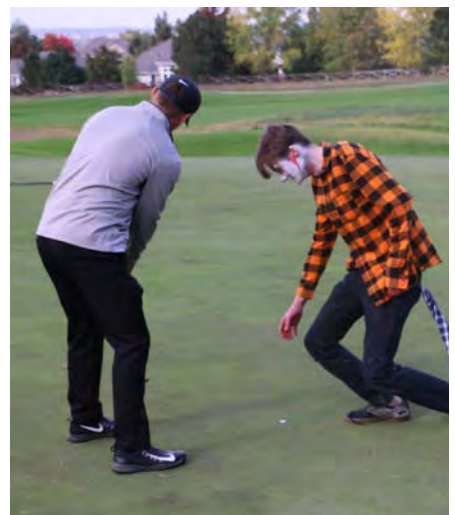
Lazy river aerobics/fitness



Pickleball tournaments



Temporary art exhibitions



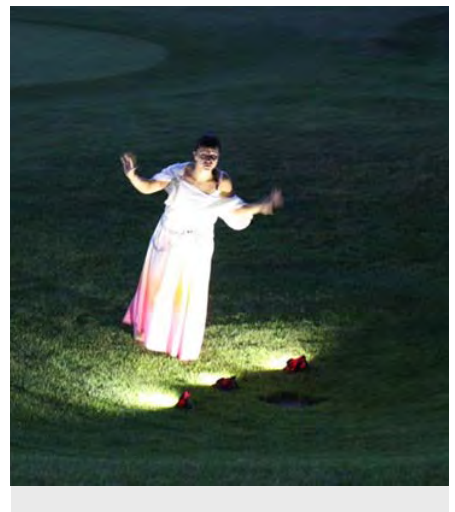
Zombie golf



Plein Air art classes



Outdoor patio curling



Golf course performances



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Soldiers Field

2022 Master Plan Update