



## CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS

### PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION WORK SESSION MEETING AGENDA

January 14, 2025 at 6:30 PM  
Mendota Heights City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Discussion**

- a. Ivy Hills Playground Request for Proposals (RFP) Review
- b. 2025 Commission Work Plan

**3. Adjourn**

**Next Meeting**  
**February 11, 2025 at 6:30 PM**

Information is available in alternative formats or with the use of auxiliary aids to individuals with disabilities upon request by calling city hall at 651-452-1850 or by emailing [cityhall@mendotaheightsmn.gov](mailto:cityhall@mendotaheightsmn.gov).

**City Council Work Session Memo**

**MEETING DATE:** January 14, 2025

**TO:** Chair Blanks and Commissioners

**FROM:** Meredith Lawrence, Parks and Recreation/Assistant Public Works Director

**SUBJECT:** Ivy Hills Playground Request for Proposals (RFP) Review

**ACTION REQUEST:**

The Commission should review the Request for Proposals (RFP) drafted by staff based on discussion and review from the Ivy Hills Playground Subcommittee, and alert staff to any concerns regarding the scope and desired features for the project. Staff anticipates bringing this item to the City Council for review and approval to release at the January 21 meeting.

**BACKGROUND:**

Based on the age and current condition, the Ivy Hills Park playground needs to be replaced. The majority of the existing playground was built in 2007, although the swing set was not replaced in 2007 and staff cannot find documentation of when it was last replaced. A standard life expectancy of playgrounds is typically between 15-20 years of service.

The Parks and Recreation Commission established a playground work group that met with staff in order to develop criteria for the attached Ivy Hills Park Playground Remodel RFP.

Features requested to be included in all proposals for reconstruction include:

- At least five swings including the following types: Wheelchair swing, parent/child swing, belt swing, toddler swing and arch swing with sensory seat
- A dramatic play element
- A communication board
- At least two slides
- At least two vinyl coated steel benches with banks anchored in the ground within the container area
- Engineered Wood Fiber Surfacing

All proposals must include demolition and disposal of current playground equipment, any

necessary site work, the container shape update, playground equipment, engineered wood fiber surfacing, and installation for the playground site. The work group requested a bright color pallet to be used for the playground features.

The 2025 budget included \$160,000 for this project from General Fund Balance Reserves- which includes all costs associated with the project, including the demolition and disposal of existing equipment, an updated container, surfacing, structures, delivery, installation, construction permits, taxes and service charges. Staff is recommending increasing the size of the container by approximately 17%, which would provide additional space for features which will need larger safety zones due to new regulations, and make it similar to other neighborhood park playgrounds recently updated. This would require a \$20,000 contribution from the Special Parks Fund for this enhancement to the existing playground. The attached map outlines the updated container shape.

The proposed timeline for the project is as follows:

- Proposal submittal deadline: 10am on February 17, 2025
- Staff review proposals the week of: Week of February 17
- If more than three proposals are received, staff and the playground work group will narrow down the proposals to the top three for engagement with the community
- Review by residents (survey and open house) and Parks and Recreation Commission completed by: April 9, 2025
- Approval by City Council: April 15
- Notification of Contract Award: April 16
- Installation of playground structure at Ivy Hills Park must be completed by the end of 2025

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Ivy Hills Playground RFP
2. Ivy Hill Playground



# **City of Mendota Heights**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**IVY HILLS PARK PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT**  
**645 Butler Avenue**  
**Mendota Heights, MN 55118**

**PROPOSAL DEADLINE: February 17, 2025 • 10:00am**

Released: January 22, 2025

## **Section 1: General Information**

### **1). Contract Administration**

All correspondence regarding this RFP (Request for Proposals) and the proposed services must be addressed to:

Meredith Lawrence, Parks and Recreation Director/Assistant Public Works Director  
City of Mendota Heights  
1101 Victoria Curve  
Mendota Heights, MN 55118  
Phone: 651-255-1354  
Email: [mlawrence@mendotaheightsmn.gov](mailto:mlawrence@mendotaheightsmn.gov)

Submission must be sent by email. One hard copy PDF of the proposal and any relevant attachments should be sent to the mailing address above.

### **2). Tentative Timeline**

Due Date: 10:00am on February 17, 2025 (includes both digital and physical submission)

Review by Parks and Recreation Commission on April 9, 2025

City Council Approval of Project on April 15, 2025

Notification of Award on April 16, 2025

Delivery and Installation of Playground must be complete by end of 2025

### **3). Acceptance of Proposals Contents**

The contents of this RFP and the proposal will become contractual obligations if a contract ensues.

Failure of the consultant to meet these obligations may result in cancellation of the award. All information in the proposal is subject to disclosure under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13—Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

## **Section 2: Project Overview**

### **1). Project Overview and Purpose**

The purpose of the Request for Proposal (RFP) is to obtain site plan design and quotes to include demolition and disposal of current playground equipment, any necessary sitework, an expanded container, playground equipment, engineered wood fiber surfacing and installation for the playground site at Ivy Hills Park, 645 Butler Avenue, Mendota Heights, MN 55118. The Parks and Recreation Department is challenging various playground manufacturers to use their professional expertise and creativity to develop a unique play structure.

### **2). Owner**

The City of Mendota Heights is designated as Owner. All work shall be on public property. The contractor shall, at all times, confine operations to stay within the limits of the property. Any repairs or restorations required outside the property limits due to the Contractor's carelessness shall be repaired by the Contractor at their expense.

## Section 3: Proposals

To be considered, each firm must submit a complete response to this RFP, using the format provided. The proposal must be signed in ink by an official authorized to bind the submitter to its provisions. The proposal must include a statement as to the period during which the proposal remains valid. This period must be at least one hundred twenty (120) days from the due date for this proposal. Respondents shall include one digital and one hard copy of their proposal document.

### 1). Specifications

- A. Structure shall meet and comply with all current ADA Legislation and ASTM F1487 and include demolition and disposal of current playground equipment, any necessary sitework, an expanded container and playground footprint, playground equipment, engineered wood fiber surfacing and installation for the playground site.
- B. All equipment must meet age-related design criteria suitable for 2-5-year olds and 5-12 year olds and be IPEMA certified.
- C. Recycled wood timber container expansion must be included to meet the design of the updated enclosure attached and match the color and style of the existing container timbers to remain. The existing container does not need to be completely replaced but must have portions replaced to ensure it meets ADA requirements and safety standards. It is anticipated that the existing container timbers to be replaced will be salvaged from the existing infrastructure; however, container replacement may require select timbers to be furnished by the contractor if salvaged timbers are deemed unusable or are insufficient to meet any modified measurements of the container.
  - a. To allow for adequate playground access space meeting current ADA requirements for a pedestrian ramp, the existing bituminous surface access shall be removed and replaced with a concrete pedestrian ramp. Bituminous surface removal limits shall be limited to only what is necessary to remove to achieve ADA compliance within the pedestrian ramp but may require removals up to the connecting trail system through Ivy Hills Park.
- D. The play structure quote must include the following features:
  - a. At least five swings including the following types:
    - i. Wheelchair swing
    - ii. Parent/Child swing
    - iii. Belt Swing
    - iv. Toddler Swing
    - v. Arch Swing with Sensory Seat
  - b. A dramatic play element
  - c. A communication board
  - d. At least two slides
  - e. At least two vinyl coated steel benches with backs anchored in the ground within the container area (if vendors would like to retain and reinstall the two existing blue playground benches, that is acceptable. The two existing blue playground benches shall be removed from the site by the contractor should new vinyl coated steel benches be selected for use.)
  - f. Engineered wood fiber surfacing
- E. Other amenities may include, but not be limited to the following: plastic slides, climbing walls/units, ladders, play panels, transfer deck, fire pole, spinner, overhead glider, play accessories, shade structures, etc.
  - a. It is not a requirement that the sandbox remains, vendors are welcome to propose using that space for different features.

- F. Wear pads must be installed below the bottom of slides and swings.
- G. The playground container is currently 3,815 square feet. The new playground will be increased to 4,472 square feet. The attached map outlines the container space available for expansion in green and pink.
  - a. Expansion of the northeast section of the playground container is anticipated to require saw cutting and removal of a portion of the existing concrete pad used for bicycle storage and trash collection to better align the container's perimeter with the adjacent trail system. The anticipated concrete removal limits can be seen on the attached playground map.
- H. The site shall have signage information provided appropriate to the structure/area. If signage includes photos of individuals, the photo must include a diverse group of users.
- I. All plastic and coating products must be UV and color stabilized to resist fading.
- J. Supplier must be able to provide a tool kit for fasteners, parts manual (both hard copy and electronic) and touch up paint kit for all structure colors.
- K. All parts must have a corrosion resistant finish and be capped on the top end.
- L. All metal decks must be manufactured from sheet steel conforming to ASTM specification A-569 and be finished with a vinyl coating.
- M. All connecting hardware used must be zinc plated or stainless steel, free of protrusions, vandal resistant and have a tamper proof design. A Service kit for tamper proof fasteners must also be provided.
- N. The color pallet for the playground is requested to portray bright colors.

## **2). Submission Requirements**

Each of the following items shall be considered an integral part of the Contractor's proposal and shall be submitted to the City on or before the date and time as stated:

- 1. One copy of a completed and signed Proposal Form.
- 2. A list all base materials
- 3. A list of all equipment included in the plans, with quantities.
- 4. One copy of a play area equipment layout drawing to scale showing layout, safety zones, accessibility, border and outside dimensions.
- 5. One bound notebook or plan size sheet of all components and features specific to the project.
- 6. One complete copy of all warranty information.
- 7. The contractor shall indicate all deviations from the specifications.
- 8. Provide a letter from the manufacturer or an independent consulting firm stating all equipment meets the current ASTM F1487 standards
- 9. Estimated timeline for construction.
  - a. The installation of the entire playground must be completed by paid professional staff. Any deviation from the use of paid professional installers must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Director.
- 10. Documentation that all equipment quoted is covered by product liability insurance.

## **3). Project Budget**

The fee proposal must not exceed \$180,000 and must include all elements associated with the project, including procurement of all documents, demolition of existing equipment, new container materials and installation for area of expansion, installation of replacement recycled wood timbers in areas where unsafe, surfacing, structures, delivery, installation, construction permits, taxes and service charges. Each firm is requested to provide the maximum amount of play activities for that fee.

#### **4). Proposal Receipt**

Proposals must arrive at the Mendota Heights City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights, MN 55118 on or before 10:00 AM Monday, February 17, 2025.

### **Section 4: Playground Regulatory Compliance**

Each playground proposal must meet the following regulatory compliance requirements:

1. All equipment provided and all areas around and between equipment must comply with most current Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines and The American Society for Testing and Material (ASTM) standards. It is the responsibility of each bidder and manufacturer to be aware of these guidelines. Please list all deviations where your proposal does not comply totally and explain each in detail when submitting the proposal. Equipment that requires intensive labor measures or modifications, after installation, such as the cutting of bolts, to bring equipment into conformance with CPSC and ASTM will not be accepted. As recommended by CPSC, a project specific maintenance manual shall be provided at the end of the project.
2. The entire playgrounds must meet the current requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and ASTM F1487.
3. All equipment must be IPEMA certified.
4. All surfacing materials must meet current CPSC guidelines, ASTM F1951 and ASTM F1292 standards, as well as be IPEMA certified.
  - a. Once installation is complete on all equipment, the supplier must provide a formal safety audit of the installed equipment. The audit must document that equipment meets all current standards listed above. Final payment for the structure, payment for base materials and installation will not be processed until after the safety audit inspection and document has been completed and delivered from a certified playground inspector. CPSI documentation must be included.

### **Section 5: Proposal Selection**

Responses to this RFP will be evaluated based on the following process:

1. Staff will review the firm's response to the RFP, including a computerized drawing of the proposed project and determine if the proposal meets all criteria for consideration.
2. The Parks and Recreation Commission's subcommittee and staff will narrow down the complete proposals to the top three designs to be considered by the community.
3. A neighborhood meeting and community survey will be conducted so residents can review the proposed play structure options and provide feedback on a preferred plan.
4. The Parks and Recreation Commission will review the neighborhood meeting and community survey results and make a recommendation to the City Council on the desired playground for the park.
5. City staff will present the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation to the City Council for a final decision.

Staff will use the feedback from the resident groups and a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to enable the City Council to make a formal decision. If necessary, an interview/informational meeting may be requested by staff with potential vendors.

#### **1). Award of Contract**

The City of Mendota Heights will award one contract for this entire project to a responsible bidder submitting the Quote meeting all performance and required criteria as set forth by this set of contract documents, plans and specifications.

## Section 6: Project Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to this contract and Request for Proposals (RFP):

1. The City of Mendota Heights is not liable for any cost incurred by the prospective firms prior to the signing of the contract.
2. The contents of this proposal will become contractual obligations if a contract ensues. Failure of the selected consultant to accept these obligations may result in cancellation of the award.
3. The City of Mendota Heights reserves the right to award the total proposal, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, and to waive any informality or technical defects, in the City's judgment. In determination of award, the qualification of the proposal submitter, the conformity with the specifications of services to be supplied and delivery terms will be considered.
4. The city assumes no responsibility or liability for costs incurred by the firms prior to the submission of a proposal. Total liability of the City of Mendota Heights is limited to the terms and conditions of this agreement.
5. The successful respondent will be required to furnish appropriate certificates of insurance as part of the final contract negotiations.
6. The contractor shall pay all sales, consumer, use and other taxes required to be paid by them in accordance with the law of the place where the work is to be performed.
7. The contractors shall provide and maintain all necessary temporary enclosures and barricades to adequately protect the work and materials from the elements and persons not involved with construction. The Contractor shall remove all temporary enclosures, barricades and fences upon completion of the work.
8. The contractor shall provide for and be responsible for protection of existing pavements, utilities, fencing, etc. In general, all existing materials, surfaces, sod, etc., to remain which are affected by the work shall be repaired and restored to an original and functional condition.
9. Before making any shipment of materials to the site, the contractor shall ascertain whether the site is in a condition to receive the shipment. Where this provision is neglected and material is delivered to the site when the latter is not in condition to receive it, such materials shall be properly stored elsewhere at the contractor's expense and adequate insurance coverage provided for off-site storage.
10. The contractor shall provide storage as required to protect and preserve all materials stored at the site. Materials are not to be stored directly on the ground. Storage of materials is to be confined to areas designated by the City. The city will not sign for or be responsible for materials delivered to the site.
  - a. Equipment delivered early will not be paid in full. Full payment of structure and installation will be paid when installation is complete and a compliance audit has been received.
11. Working hours shall be from 7:00am- 8:00pm on Monday-Friday and 9:00am-5:00pm on Saturday and Sundays.
12. All work areas shall be returned to a condition equal to or better than was in existence at the beginning of the project. All construction debris, including excavated soil, shipping materials including cardboard, pallets, etc. shall be removed and disposed of in a manner satisfactory to the City.

## Ivy Hill Playground

Date: 1/9/2025



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**City Council Work Session Memo**

**MEETING DATE:** January 14, 2025

**TO:** Chair Blanks and Commissioners

**FROM:** Meredith Lawrence, Parks and Recreation/Assistant Public Works Director

**SUBJECT:** 2025 Commission Work Plan

**ACTION REQUEST:**

Commissioners should prepare for the discussion by bringing notes on the following discussion topics:

- 2024 Accomplishments
- In-Progress Items/Strategic Priorities
- Barriers/Setbacks for Success
- Goals for the Next Three to Five Years

**BACKGROUND:**

In June, 2021, the Parks and Recreation Commission participated in 12 hours of strategic planning with Hue Life, the City's consultant, to prepare a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. At the strategic planning sessions, members of the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council discussed goals for the future of Parks and Recreation in Mendota Heights. Ultimately, a strategic plan was built out by staff, based on the discussions at the strategic planning sessions with the Commission and City Council.

The plan outlined the following eight categories:

1. Sustainable source of funding for Parks and Recreation
2. A leading community with invested partners
3. Greater connection to the natural environment
4. A safe, connected, walkable and bikeable community
5. Vibrant and diverse community programming
6. Active recreational facilities for all ages
7. Effective two-way communication with an informed community

At the January 2025 work session, Commissioners will be asked to discuss 2024 accomplishments, in-progress items/strategic priorities, barriers/setbacks for success, and goals for the next three to five years. Staff will lead Commissioners through the discussion and then develop a 2025 Strategic Planning guide for the Commission to refer to, utilizing the existing Strategic Plan.

In 2025, the Park System Master Plan will be completed, which will take the place of the Strategic Plan that was developed for the department in 2021.

The 2024 Work Plan is attached for reference.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft Strategic Plan ML 112722
2. PRC Planning Calendar 2024 ML December

*City of Mendota Heights*

Parks & Recreation

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

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## INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

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The City of Mendota Heights offers a robust system of recreational and open space options, which includes regional trails, lakeside parks, scenic bluffs, and nature preserves. The City's facilities provide unique features that shape the character of Mendota Heights beyond the ordinary. The City's parks provide a visual identity to the City, in addition to contributing to the quality of life for those who recreate in the community.

Mendota Heights provides both active and passive recreation areas, along with other state and private parks. The City's 33 miles of trails offer an excellent opportunity for exercise and relaxation. Opportunities for walking, bicycling, bird watching, cross country skiing, golfing and nature hiking are sprinkled throughout Mendota Heights. The City has 17 public parks throughout the community, including Oȟéyawahe/Pilot Knob Preservation Site. These parks contain over 295 acres of land area.

The City's parks are supplemented by three golf courses: Mendakota Country Club, Somerset Country Club, and the Mendota Heights Par 3 Community Golf Course. These contribute to open space views and recreational opportunities for residents.

Throughout the last fifteen years the city has made improvements and developed new parks. It has also made efforts to maintain existing open space such as purchasing the 17-acre Mendota Heights Par 3 Golf Course. The City recently joined in partnership with other public entities and purchased the 25.5-acre Oȟéyawahe/Pilot Knob Preservation Site, which will be retained as open space. Protection of the Pilot Knob area as an important Dakota site has been identified as a critical issue for many residents within the City. Oȟéyawahe/Pilot Knob Preservation Site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. A task force has been formed to pursue short and long-term goals for the preservation of and improvements to Historic Pilot Knob.

In the 1990's, the majority of park upgrades were made due to a voter approved parks focused referendum. While the need and interest for recreational opportunities has increased over the years, the improvement of park equipment and infrastructure has not occurred due to inconsistent funding and a lack of proactive planning.

Over the last thirty years the way residents recreate has also changed. Recreational interests have evolved to include new opportunities such as skateboarding, pickleball and cricket. The City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and staff must evaluate the current parks infrastructure and recreation programming along with the proposed recreational and park improvements from a 21<sup>st</sup> century lens.

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## GOVERNANCE

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The Parks and Recreation Commission is appointed by the Mayor with the consent of the majority of the members of the City Council and has the following responsibilities:

- Advise the City Council on matters pertaining to parks and recreational development programs and shall cooperate with city personnel in implementing the parks and recreation programs
- Advise the City Council on the establishment of written rules and regulations for the use, management, and operation of public parks and recreation facilities, the same to be approved by the action of the City Council before being put into effect
- If requested by the City Council, prepare plans for the acquisition, development and improvement of the City public parks and recreational facilities and shall, if requested by the City Council, develop a comprehensive plan for future park development and open space
- If requested by the City Council, prepare a capital improvements program for the purpose of determining priorities and apportioning costs of scheduled improvements
- In performing the aforementioned duties and responsibilities, exhibit the initiative in formulating policies which will be responsive to the anticipated needs and objectives of the community.

The City Council reviews the recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve the annual budget, finalize the scope of park improvement projects, institute policies, establish fees, and address long-term planning in regards to prioritizing initiatives.

## STRATEGIC PLAN PURPOSE/PROCESS

To start the discussion regarding the future of Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation, Parks and Recreation Commissioners and City Councilmembers along with key staff underwent strategic planning sessions to discuss the current conditions and desired future of the park system and programming. This process articulated the needs and wants of residents and how that is different from the facilities and programs that are currently offered within the City. The resulting strategic plan includes information and data from following areas:

- Inventory of Existing Park Amenities
- National Metric Comparison Research to Current Facilities (in progress)
- Community Engagement Results to Determine Needs
- Discussions Surrounding Future Goals of Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation
- Policy Direction and Implementation Planning

The plan serves as a road map to how and where park and recreational improvements should be developed in both the immediate future and in the long-term.

### **Mendota Heights Vision Statement:**

Mendota Heights will be recognized as a high quality, family-oriented residential community, with a spacious natural feel and the amenities of a city.

### **Mendota Height Mission Statement:**

Our mission is to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Mendota Heights by providing quality public safety, infrastructure, and planning for orderly and sustainable growth.

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# CURRENT STATE OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS PARKS AND RECREATION

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## STRENGTHS

### 1. Stable Tax Base

The City of Mendota Heights is comprised of a strong tax base consisting of formidable income and economic activity within the City. Mendota Heights features high median property values and incomes, which provide strong financial support for City goals, initiatives and projects. The City also boasts a AAA bond rating, which reflects the City's financial strength and stability.

### 2. City Good Will

The City has established strong relationships with residents which has resulted in trust and respect between elected and appointed officials, staff, and the community. By properly engaging stakeholders, the City has established connections to discuss wants/needs and next steps moving forward. Relationships with residents are imperative to ensure a successful Park and Recreation operation into the future.

### 3. Sustained Commitment to Excellence of Services

The City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission holds staff to a high standard in regards to programming, park planning, community building and engagement. Staff works to implement best practices in their work and deliver process improvement and policy changes to best serve the residents of Mendota Heights.

### 4. Existing Partnerships

The City of Mendota Heights values its positive working relationships with the Cities of West Saint Paul, South Saint Paul, Inver Grove Heights, and ISD 197. These existing partnerships enable large scale programs and events that would be difficult to host singularly. By working together each city's budget is stretched further and human capital is shared. Discussions regarding current and future partnership opportunities are ongoing and staff is working to form partnerships with other local organizations for optimized opportunities for our residents.

### 5. Educated and Motivated Citizens

The residents of Mendota Heights care about their community and are passionate about their park system. Garnering community engagement is important as residents and stakeholders ask educated and intellectual questions surrounding programming and park planning. The Mendota Heights community wants to be involved in providing high quality programming and facilities within the City.

## WEAKNESSES

### 1. Lack of Planning Around Funding

Many of the City's amenities and facilities within the Park System have not been replaced or updated since a Park referendum in the late 1980's. Adequate funding for the upkeep and maintenance of exiting infrastructure has not been budgeted for or properly planned. The Special Parks Fund has restrictions for use and with a lack of land for development, future funding from this revenue source will not be reliable.

### 2. Insufficient Planning

Proactive park improvement project planning has not been a priority. A rolling Capital Improvement Plan has not been regularly reviewed in order to properly schedule projects and ensure funding is available. Moving forward, dedicated staff to supervise this process as well as regular review of the process/strategic plan is necessary to ensure proactive forethought is developed.

### 3. Competing Interests

The Mendota Heights community consists of passionate individuals surrounding recreational opportunities. This results in differing priorities for park improvement projects and programming. Prioritizing park project requests, field and facility usage, and the utilization of funding available has been challenging.

### 4. Lack of Indoor Programming Space

The City lacks indoor gathering space to hold differing and unique programming opportunities. Currently, all indoor programs are conducted in partnership with the City of West Saint Paul. In the future, West Saint Paul's programming may increase and there may not be an opportunity for partnership. This could restrict the type and number of programming Mendota Heights can offer in the future unless ample indoor space is added in the City for programming.

### 5. Lack of Future Park Land

The City of Mendota Heights is 95% built out, resulting in a lack of new recreational park land for development. The redesigning of existing park spaces will be crucial in providing modern and contemporary park amenities. With a lack of land, properly prioritizing projects will be imperative to providing an equitable park system.

### 6. Lack of Staff Resources

The current Mendota Heights organizational structure provides one dedicated administrative employee working on parks planning and recreational program organization. With the current staffing model, being proactive on park projects and increasing recreational offerings is difficult to achieve.

# OPPORTUNITIES

## 1. Generational Turnover

The demographics of Mendota Heights have changed since the 1989 parks referendum. The median age of Mendota Heights residents is 51.2 years, which is considerably higher than surrounding cities.

### Median Age of Surrounding Cities:

- Eagan: 38.2 years
- West Saint Paul: 37.3 years
- South Saint Paul: 35.1 years
- Inver Grove Heights: 39.7 years
- Apple Valley: 38.2 years
- Saint Paul: 33 years
- Lakeville: 36.6 years
- Farmington: 33.7 years
- Burnsville: 36.8 years

### Mendota Heights' 2020 population by age category are as follows:

- Age 0-5 Years: 4.47%
- Age 6-12 Years: 7.44%
- Age 13-15 Years: 3.24%
- Age 16-17 Years: 2.74%
- Age 18-24 Years: 6.78%
- Age 25-34 Years: 8.33%
- Age 35-44 Years: 10.84%
- Age 45-54 Years: 14.42%
- Age 55-64 Years: 18.09%
- Age 65 Years and Up: 23.65%

### Mendota Heights' 2030 population projections by age category are as follows:

- Age 0-5 Years: 4.43% (.04% decrease from 2020)
- Age 6-12 Years: 6.97% (.47% decrease from 2020)
- Age 13-15 Years: 2.84% (.4% decrease from 2020)
- Age 16-17 Years: 2.51% (.23% decrease from 2020)
- Age 18-24 Years: 6.58% (.2% decrease from 2020)
- Age 25-34 Years: 7.78% (.55% decrease from 2020)
- Age 35-44 Years: 11% (.16% increase from 2020)
- Age 45-54 Years: 14.43% (.01% increase from 2020)
- Age 55-64 Years: 14.61% (3.48% decrease from 2020)
- Age 65 Years and Up: 28.84% (5.19% increase from 2020)

### Mendota Heights' 2040 population projections by age category are as follows:

- Age 0-5 Years: 4.44% (.03% decrease from 2020)
- Age 6-12 Years: 6.87% (.57% decrease from 2020)
- Age 13-15 Years: 2.72% (.52% decrease from 2020)

- Age 16-17 Years: 2.33% (.41% decrease from 2020)
- Age 18-24 Years: 6.23% (.55% decrease from 2020)
- Age 25-34 Years: 7.97% (.54% decrease from 2020)
- Age 35-44 Years: 10.31% (.53% increase from 2020)
- Age 45-54 Years: 14.62% (.02% increase from 2020)
- Age 55-64 Years: 15.49% (2.6% decrease from 2020)
- Age 65 Years and Up: 29.01% (5.36% increase from 2020)

Source-Metropolitan Council: <https://gisdata.mn.gov/dataset/us-mn-state-metc-trans-anlys-zones-offical-curent>

With these changing demographics the City must offer programs and provide facilities that enable adults and senior citizens to be active. Equity within a park system is imperative to ensure all residents have equal opportunities to recreate near their home. Engaging the senior population will be important in order to better understand our community's wants and needs.

## 2. Public Interest in Parks

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mendota Heights park system saw record setting usage. Parks became one of the only places people could visit when restaurants, stores, and entertainment venues were forced to close. Our park system was recognized as an essential resource for the physical and mental health of residents. This realization sparked an interest from residents to determine how parks could be improved and better utilized moving forward.

## 3. Potential Funding Sources

The City of Mendota Heights has been approached by residents and groups wanting to financially provide support for ongoing improvements in the parks. Finding proper channels and processes to receive these donations will be important to successfully upgrading the park system. Opportunities regarding grants are also available. Staff time needs to be allocated to this function.

## 4. Underutilized Volunteers

The City has many talented and passionate residents who want to give back to their community. Currently, the City of Mendota Heights lacks a formalized volunteer program. The need for a formal volunteer program to solicit volunteers, ensure proper backgrounding, provide work direction, and track hours in order to provide recognition is necessary.

## 5. Bourn Lane Site

The City has one remaining parcel of land in the Southwest portion of the City that the City Council will need to advise staff in the future of how they want that land utilized. This 14.75 acre parcel is being considered for park usage, in addition to being considered for other uses within the City.

## 6. Additional Resources and Options

With an additional Parks and Recreation staff planned in FY2022, Mendota Heights can expand opportunities in regards to programming and infrastructure improvements. Discussion and decisions regarding funding allocation in future years will also be important to determine the need for better communication, extensive maintenance, and other public services to the community.

## 7. Regional Partnerships

Mendota Heights has many local businesses, non-profits, and neighboring governmental organizations that provide opportunities for joint programming and partnership on facilities. Each neighboring jurisdiction providing unique amenities enable the community many recreational options in close proximity. Duplication of unique amenities is not necessary, if proper planning is developed.

# THREATS

## 1. Neighboring Cities

Neighboring cities to Mendota Heights currently have more facilities and better indoor space for programming and rentals. The reality is larger cities typically have larger budgets, which results in larger and more diverse facilities. As a smaller City this is something that will need to be understood and accepted by the community.

## 2. Increasing Costs

With the reality of the economy, the cost of services, goods, and equipment is going to continue to rise. This is something that will need to be considered when discussing new capital projects, as well as budgeting the cost to maintain existing infrastructure.

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# FUTURE OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS PARKS AND RECREATION

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In the next five years the following will be accomplished based on the desires of the City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and staff.

**Guiding Principles** explain the vision of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation and provide the basis for goals, actions, and outcomes.

**Goals** provide desired results that are planned and committed to.

**Action Items** provide the steps necessary for staff, commissioners, and councilmembers to complete in order to achieve the stated goals and guiding principles.

**Outcomes** state the end result of completing the action items.

## *Guiding Principle:*

### **Sustained Funding for Parks and Recreation**

#### **Goal: Secure Sustainable Funding for Projects**

##### **Action Items:**

- ✓ Staff will provide the City Council with funding options to ensure there is financing for future park improvements and recreational programming for future generations.
- ✓ Policy recommendations regarding field and facility naming rights for donations as well as identifying corporate partners will be provided to the City Council.
- ✓ A relationship with the Mendota Heights Community Foundation will be formed to enable private donation opportunities for residents who want to financially support park and recreation opportunities.
- ✓ Staff will research grant opportunities available for projects included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and will work with the City Council to submit applications.
- ✓ The City Council will discuss the conversion of the Par 3 bond payments into a park improvement levy starting in 2023.
- ✓ A referendum will be researched and information provided to the City Council in order for an educated decision to be made on next steps moving forward.

##### **Outcome:**

Long term Parks and Recreation dedicated finances will be identified and will be utilized to fund projects under the parks Capital Improvement Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan will be well developed to ensure projects are following the recommended useful life timeframe

outlined in the Asset Management Plan, while ensuring all parks have adequate funding to ensure equity within the City. The City will have developed and maintained strong public/private partnerships within the Community to provide optimal recreational opportunities to our residents at a reasonable taxing rate.

### *Guiding Principle:*

## **A Leading Community Agency**

### **Goal: Mendota Heights is a Model Organization**

#### **Action Items:**

- ✓ Staff will provide the City Council with recommended policy changes in regards to the allocation of fields and facilities reservations, special events, donations, etc.
- ✓ Staff will form a successful volunteer program that helps to provide more human capital within community initiatives.
- ✓ Staff will work with the City Council to follow the organizational recommendations and standards of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Commission of Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) program in order to provide continued high-level services to the residents of Mendota Heights
- ✓ Mendota Heights staff will chair a group consisting of neighboring cities to discuss projects to ensure duplication does not occur, opportunities for partnerships on programming and facilities, and to provide a basis for policy recommendations.
- ✓ City staff will submit initiatives to be considered for the Minnesota Recreation Park Association (MRPA) awards of excellence, which are awarded to Cities that have outstanding achievements in the following categories: administrative or management strategies, marketing and communications, park and facility projects, programming and events, sponsorships and partnerships, and volunteer initiatives.

#### **Outcome:**

City Staff will work closely with the City Council to make strategic decisions that ensure the City is a recognized leader throughout the industry on best practices. This will include being innovative and creative in regards to constructing new amenities, implementing new and emerging trends nationwide, and developing policies to ensure equitable practices.

Mendota Heights will be a recognized leader in the Park and Recreation field in Minnesota

*Guiding Principle:*

## Greater Connection to the Natural Environment

### Goal: Manage Park Natural Resources

**Action Items:**

- ✓ A Natural Resource Commission will be established to provide the City Council with recommendations on sustainability, environmental stewardship, and preserving natural habitats. Recommendations will be made on policies and initiatives that enhance and preserve the environment and natural resources within the community.
- ✓ Staff will determine locations that grass areas can be converted to no-mow areas to provide more native spaces within the park system and community as a whole.
- ✓ Joint meetings between the Parks and Recreation Commission and Natural Resource Commission will provide opportunities for the two advisory commissions to ensure they are working together for the betterment of Mendota Heights parks.
- ✓ Opportunities for nature-based recreation and nature play areas will be researched.

**Outcome:**

Through partnership with the Natural Resource Commission and Natural Resource staff our parks will provide a clean and safe space with natural areas. Passive recreation areas will be reviewed and prioritized for refurbishment to ensure residents have easy access to nature play locations and programming.

*\*A Natural Resource Management plan is being written. Many natural resource initiatives within parks will be included in the Natural Resource Management Plan. Those policies and practices were not included in this plan to reduce duplication and to hone in on priorities. \**

*\* The City Council will continue to work with the O'heyawahe/Historic Pilot Knob Task Force to protect and preserve the natural space and sacred history the space provides.*

*O'heyawahe/Historic Pilot Knob Task Force initiatives were not included in this plan, as their own future planning is developed in a separate document. \**

*Guiding Principle:*

## A Safe, Connected, Walkable and Bikeable Community

### Goal: Improve Trail Connectivity

**Action Items:**

- ✓ A bike and pedestrian plan will be completed to determine gaps within our trail system. Staff will work with the City Council to address these gap locations and provide plans for improvement.
- ✓ Staff will work with the City Council to rehabilitate existing low-quality trails to improve connectivity.
- ✓ Staff will continue to advocate for residents by encouraging partners to add sidewalks on state and county roads.
- ✓ Encourage the prioritization of safety when making decisions regarding trail connectivity.

**Outcome:**

With renovated trails residents will be encouraged to walk to parks, shopping areas, and other local destinations. Residents within Mendota Heights will have the ability to safely bike and walk within the community. This work will proactively provide better neighborhood connectivity to bring the community together for social interaction and morale building. The overall safety of Mendota Heights residents will be greatly improved by this initiative.

*Guiding Principle:*

## Vibrant and Diverse Community Programming

### Goal: Expanded Programming

**Action Items:**

- ✓ Staff will provide the City Council with a yearly calendar of programming ideas during budget development to determine the necessary costs needed for execution.
- ✓ Staff will increase the amount of community events.

**Outcome:**

The City will organize programming for residents that provide opportunities for all residents regardless of age, race, ethnicity, income and skills to participate. New, innovative program offerings will be provided in addition to the regular offerings currently provided. Staff will work to collaborate as much as possible with neighboring cities in order to minimize costs and staff needs.

*Guiding Principle:*

## Recreational Facilities for All Ages

### Goal: Prioritize Projects and Initiatives

**Action Items:**

- ✓ A rolling Capital Improvement Plan will be reviewed bi-annually and updated by staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council. This list will be formed utilizing the Asset Management Plan in relation to useful life, community needs based on resident engagement, and national trend research and comparisons.
- ✓ If directed by the City Council, staff will explore the utilization of the Bourn Lane site for recreational use in the form of a Master Plan/Concept Plan to determine if the proposed recreational space is the correct use for the community.
- ✓ The City will look for opportunities to form local partnerships that ensure our community is involved in and has access to regional facilities.
- ✓ Staff will regularly compare our park amenities to the national park delivery standards for cities our size.
- ✓ Engagement with the residents, stakeholders and user groups will be conducted to get feedback on features, amenities, and layouts desired in new facilities.

**Outcome:**

The City will have a roadmap for the next five years on plans to properly provide safe and equitable recreational facilities for residents. With a defined process for reviewing capital improvement project requests, astute financial planning will work hand in hand with our Capital Improvement Plan and Asset Management Plan to ensure an organized process moving forward.

***Guiding Principle:*****Effective Two-Way Communication with  
an Informed Community****Goal: Know the Community****Action Items:**

- ✓ Staff will continue to find creative ways to provide the community with information surrounding Parks and Recreation. A survey will be conducted to determine what are the best forms of communication for our community.
- ✓ In collaboration with other city departments (Police and Fire) our staff will be present in the community and form relationships to better understand the wants and needs of our residents.
- ✓ Listening sessions will be conducted regularly with groups of the community by the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- ✓ A new website will be completed and launched with better Parks and Recreation information easily accessible to residents.

**Outcome:**

By better understanding our community, decisions surrounding park improvement projects and programming will be made to best serve the Mendota Heights community. Information will be more readily available to residents and new information and updates will be better communicated to reach as many residents as possible within reason.

## *Guiding Principle:*

### **Human Capital**

#### **Goal: Attract and Retain Qualified Employees and Volunteers**

##### **Action Items:**

- ✓ Add a Parks and Recreation Manager to the City's organizational structure to manage park improvement projects and planning and lead golf course operations in collaboration with the Recreation Program Coordinator (1 FTE) and an Office Support Assistant (.5 FTE-Park and Recreation Time Allocation).
- ✓ Establish a City volunteer program where volunteers can help on projects and at special events. A formal policy for volunteering will be written and presented to the City Council.
- ✓ Bring recommended updates to the seasonal pay matrix to recruit and retain qualified staff for programming, park maintenance, and Par 3 operations.
- ✓ Provide training and education for park and recreation employees to ensure a qualified and engaged team of employees is developed.
- ✓ Conduct a yearly review of staffing to determine if adequate resources are available to implement the priorities of the strategic plan by the City Council.

##### **Outcome:**

By properly utilizing volunteers and empowering staff to think outside past practices, the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Department will consist of high-quality employees dedicated to serving the residents of Mendota Heights and surrounding communities.

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## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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Our Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are a set of quantifiable measurements that will be used to determine the Park and Recreation staff's achievement of the City Council approved Strategic Plan. These KPI's will be tracked throughout the year and provided in the annual report. Quarterly updates will be provided to the City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission to ensure organized execution. Each year these will be compared to previous years to determine resources and direction needed from the City Council for the upcoming year.

1. Number of Recreation Program/Event Participants
2. Number of Special Events Planned and Held
3. Amount of No Mow Areas Utilized in Parks
4. Number of Volunteers Processed and Approved to Volunteer
5. Number of Volunteer Hours Utilized
6. Hours of Fields, Facilities and Picnic Shelters Allocated
7. Number of Capital Projects Completed on Time and on Budget
8. Number of Partnership Projects Initiated
9. Number of Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Standards Completed
10. Number of Listening Sessions Completed
11. Number of Grants Applied to and Received
12. Amount of Grant Funding Received

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## APPENDIX

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- A. 2040 Comprehensive Plan
- B. Asset Management Plan
- C. Capital Improvement Plan
- D. Current Planning Calendar

## 2024 STRATEGIC GOALS

ACTION ITEM	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE												UPDATE
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Completion of Park System Master Plan	All	Parks and Recreation Director													The consultant shared their findings at the November 12 Joint Work Session. Staff and the consultant are working on the 95% plan to be provided to residents for public input. The Final Plan should be approved by Council in May.
Finalize Sponsorship, Donation, and Event Policies	Sustainable Funding Source for Parks and Recreation	Parks and Recreation Director													The sponsorship policy has been approved by the City Council and is in effect. Staff will begin work on the donation and event policies in 2025.
Work with businesses (Village and Plaza) for Event Engagement	A Leading Community with Invested Partners	Parks and Recreation Director/Recreation Program Coordinator													Cupid's Crawl with businesses was held at Frozen Fun Fest. Music in the Park had a great 2024 year. Staff connected with businesses for Trick or Teeing.
Work with the City of West Saint Paul to determine if a joint facility is feasible.	A Leading Community with Invested Partners	City Administrator/ Parks and Recreation Director													West Saint Paul has a community building on their 2025 Legislative Priorities. At this time, the City of Mendota Heights is not involved in that process.
Create Trail CIP Program	Greater Connection to the Natural Environment	Public Works Director													This item was presented at the June meeting.
Update Trail Maps to Be More Accessible	A Safe, Connected, Walkable and Bikeable Community	Parks and Recreation Director/Senior Engineering Technician													The interactive online map for the Mendota Heights Park System has been completed and is now launched on the City's website.
Diversify Programming Offered (Senior and Teen Programming)	Vibrant and Diverse Community Programming	Recreation Program Coordinator													The Coffee, Cards and Cribbage series has increased to a weekly event. The Summer Adult Walking group took place in 2023 and in 2024. Staff continues to look for ways to engage seniors and teens. Teen Nights are being planned for 2025.
Coordinate Ongoing Community Engagement Plan for Commissioners	Effective Two-Way Communication with an Informed Community	Commissioners													Commissioners discussed engagement at their April work session for Phase 1 and Phase 2 engagement was discussed at the August meeting.
Continued Success of the Volunteer in the Parks (VIP) Program	All	Commissioners and Staff													Staff continues to seek volunteers for events when necessary.