

Related 2050 Vision Plan Goals and Strategies

The following goals and associated strategies provide current guidance on the County's role in protecting land and stewardship of natural systems.

Goal A: Nurture the reciprocal relationship between people and nature.

Strategy 2. Maintain impactful land conservation, visitor services, and natural resource management plans as budgeting, capital implementation, and operating tools.

Strategy 3. Commit to systematic care, management, and enhancement of lands across the system.

Strategy 4. Exemplify sustainability and innovation in design, implementation, and maintenance practices.

Goal E: Expand environmental stewardship through outdoor programs, learning, and volunteerism.

Strategy 1. Offer year-round program and volunteer opportunities for all ages, abilities, and skill levels.

Strategy 2. Partner with cities, schools, libraries, watershed organizations, and other organizations to advance environmental learning.

Strategy 3. Provide community outreach and education that inspires environmental awareness and understanding.

Strategy 4. Encourage volunteerism to restore natural resources and build a conservation ethos.

Goal G: Strengthen partnerships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities for the protection of lands and traditions.

Strategy 6. Employ Indigenous experts for teaching and planning and apply Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) that stewards healthy water and land.

Goal H: Locate new park units close to people or to protect natural areas and recreational assets.

Strategy 5. Protect park land and greenway corridors ahead of development pressure.

Strategy 7. Employ land protection tools to conserve shorelines, springsheds, and sensitive landscapes.

Strategy 8. Work with partners to protect regionally important private recreational lands if they are threatened.

Goal I: Lead and support on ecological stewardship and climate resilience.

Strategy 1. Develop and maintain a systemwide approach to identify, protect, connect, improve, and manage landscapes. Regularly update this approach based on data and best practices and integrate into long-range plans.

Strategy 2. Develop climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and resilient restoration practices.

Strategy 3. Continually innovate to reduce environmental impacts of park development, programming, and operations.

Strategy 4. Prioritize habitat in environmentally sensitive areas.

Strategy 5. Be a cooperative platform, providing technical support to others' protection efforts.

Strategy 6. Reduce the park system's carbon footprint.

Strategy 7. Use preliminary Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a framework for protecting and connecting natural areas and habitat.

Strategy 8. Continually assess new environmental threats and plan for responsive actions.

Strategy 9. Assess cumulative effects and impacts on natural systems when planning new development and improvements in parks, greenways, and conservation areas. Minimize, mitigate, or prevent impacts.

Strategy 10. Develop a process and criteria for identifying and designating resource-sensitive areas where special management or limited access may be needed to protect resources or sites.

Goal J: Protect, improve, and manage the natural resources of Dakota County.

Strategy 1. Use Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a landowner discussion framework for protecting and connecting natural areas.

To prioritize, protect, and restore surface/ground waters and reduce flooding.

To protect critical habitat on public and private lands.

To provide compatible and appropriate outdoor recreation activities.

Strategy 2. Partner with the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (WMO), the North Cannon River WMO, the Black Dog WMO, the Eagan-Inver Grove Heights WMO, the Lower Minnesota River WMO, and others to promote, incentivize, and implement water management and soil health practices in agricultural areas.

Strategy 3. Protect and restore critical infiltration areas outside CFAs identified by the County Groundwater Plan and in springsheds to protect cold water trout streams.

Strategy 4. Develop and implement a Pollinator Habitat Network.

Strategy 5. Provide timely Land Conservation Program information to public and private partners.

Strategy 6. Implement the Dakota County Land Conservation Plan and support implementation of the Dakota County Ground Water Plan in collaboration with other Dakota County departments.

Strategy 7. Restore and manage natural spaces to support and nurture wildlife and plant communities.

Goal L: Seek and sustain values-based and mission-driven partnerships.

Strategy 1. Expand strategic partnerships with cities, watershed organizations, nature based nonprofits, and other agencies, nonprofits and organizations to provide nature-based recreation, restoration, and other services to avoid duplication and enhance service levels.

Strategy 5. Partner with state and federal agencies to improve parks/sites with state and federal significance.

Strategy 6. Partner with private land owners on conservation and land management.

Strategy 7. Maximize interdepartmental partnerships for stacked benefits.

Goal M: Care for the system through sustainable and innovative funding.

Strategy 1. Identify and allocate consistent and dedicated funding for operations and maintenance.

Strategy 4. Seek out grants, legislative funding, and sources of private funding.

Strategy 5. Explore revenue capture such as:

Carbon offset credits.

Donor giving and stewardship programs that align with the County gift policy and incorporate a financial assistance program to increase philanthropic interest.

Vendors and public/private partnerships.

Strategy 6. Infuse the budgeting process with metrics that illustrate the balance between capital investments, programming costs, operational demands, and revenue streams.

Strategy 7. Evaluate organizational structural changes that would consolidate the full scope of parks, greenways, and natural systems operations either continuing as a department within Dakota County or as an autonomous park district.

Strategy 8. Explore the possibility of a voter-approved bond referendum to fund parks, greenways, and natural system projects.

Goal N: Invest in a thriving parks workforce that represents the communities served.

Strategy 2. Collaborate with schools and professional organizations to elevate park and natural resource career pathways.

Strategy 3. Maintain an organizational structure and culture that provides opportunities for career growth and fulfillment.

Strategy 4. Invest in innovative recruitment and retention strategies.

Strategy 5. Identify and implement adequate staffing levels to operate and maintain amenities and services and adjust growth accordingly.

Strategy 6. Invest in staff training and development to deepen cultural competencies.

Strategy 7. Invest in youth programs, outdoor education, mentorship, and training that supports pathways to outdoor careers and future workforce diversity.