

Developing the 2050 Vision Plan for Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems

The [2030 Parks System Plan](#) identifies a vision that incorporates three elements:

- Great Places: more to see and do in Dakota County's Parks
- **Connected Places: Greenways that connect parks and community places**
- Protected Places: Protect and manage natural and cultural resources in Dakota County's Parks

Connected Places:

Collaborative city and county greenways can bring parks to people. Greenways connect and enhance habitat, stream corridors, and natural areas.

The 2030 vision element of Connected Places are multi-purpose corridors that combine habitat improvements, water quality, and a trail for recreation and transportation. Much progress has been made in implementing the vision for the 200-mile greenway network. Greenways expanded from three corridors to ten, 48 trail miles are complete, and greenway visits account for 39% of system use. Despite this impressive progress, visitor surveys show that people of color, households with lower incomes, youth, older adults, and women are all underrepresented in greenway visitation. In addition, the water quality and habitat restoration of greenways have not been fully realized. Increased habitat fragmentation and declining water quality mean that addressing these functions is even more urgent than it was in 2008. As we look ahead to the next 25 years, broadening the appeal of greenways and integrating ecological function will be major challenges. How will Dakota County Parks adapt to these issues so that the county remains a great place to live with quality natural areas? What will Connected Places look like in 2050?

The purpose of the June 10, 2024, discussion is to receive input from the Physical Development Committee of the Whole regarding changes, edits, and additions to the **existing** 2030 vision, goals, and objectives in the area of Connected Places that are necessary to take Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems into a healthy future.

2030 Vision for Greenways:

Create a seamless and interconnected greenway framework of parks, natural areas, lakes, and rivers, from which to provide convenient and high-quality recreation for our citizens and protect and restore Dakota County's natural systems.

Goal 6 ***Protect, restore, and connect Dakota County's urban natural areas and open space (green infrastructure), using recreational greenways as a building block.***

Objectives

1. *Improve water management and water quality with a collaborative network of multipurpose greenways.*
2. *Contribute to improved habitat for native species a collaborative network of multipurpose greenways.*
3. *Connect recreational open spaces via a collaborative network of multipurpose greenways.*

What We've Heard So Far

- *Geographic equity in communities*

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- *Focus on better integration of habitat and water quality with greenways particularly in the urban and suburban areas*
- *Consider new search corridors (e.g., Dan Patch, Soo Line)*
- *Include trail connection between east and west Lake Byllesby Regional Park units in the regional trail or regional greenway network (currently part of the Lake Byllesby Regional Park Master Plan per Met Council guidance)*
- *Support greenway and trail efforts by state and federal agencies (e.g. Mill Towns State Trail, Mississippi River Greenway)*

Goal 7 **Provide convenient and accessible recreational open space.**

Objectives

1. *Bring parks to people; improve connectivity to recreation where people live, work, and want to go with a collaborative network of multipurpose greenways.*
2. *Provide more of the popular recreational amenities that people want.*

What We've Heard So Far

- *Integrate art, culture, and history into the greenway experience*
- *Integrate playful elements like selfie stops*
- *How is electrification (electronic bikes, scooters, wheelchairs) impacting use of the greenways and needed support facilities (e.g. charging)*
- *Connect both local and regional parks to the greenway system*
- *Focus on accelerating the 'hard to do' like the Dan Patch corridor*
- *Add community loop trails in the next 5 years.*
- *Promote the greenways with community events.*

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- *Broaden appeal of greenways-provide more for people to do at trailheads and neighborhood gateways*
- *Include separate walking and biking trails in high traffic areas*

- *Add interpretation as a core public value to the greenway vision*
- *Implement wayfinding and branding*
- *Support infrastructure through newly adopted donation plan*
- *Activate greenways with events and programs*
- *Provide support infrastructure for events and programs (outdoor classrooms, electrical outlets, restrooms, lighting)*

Goal 8 Create a Greenway Collaborative to achieve mutual objectives for greenways and trails.

Objectives

1. *Form an intergovernmental partnership/committee to develop a shared greenway model that addresses planning, funding, cost sharing, implementation, and operations.*
2. *Prepare a joint development master plan for proposed greenway regional trails with the Greenway Collaborative.*
3. *Work with school districts to promote and enhance safe opportunities for children to walk to school using greenways and trails.*

What We've Heard So Far

- *What is the role for the county in local trail and sidewalk loops?*
- *Formalize policy guidance for cost share*

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- *Expand collaboration to include city loops that combine water quality, habitat, transportation, recreation, art, culture, and heritage*
- *Collaborate with state and national partners for expanding corridors along the Mississippi (MRT) and Cannon Rivers (MTST)*
- *Collaborate with Indigenous partners on greenway alignment, construction, cultural sites, natural landscape*
- *Collaborate with local partners on ecological restoration*
- *Develop greenway naming process/policy*

*What vision, goals, and objectives changes would you like to see?
Are there new goals of interest that are not reflected in the 2030 Goals for Connected Places?*