



Discussion And Direction On Parks, Greenways, And Natural Systems 2050 Vision For Great Places And Interim 2017 Visitor Service Plan Goal Targets

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Overview



- Review 2030 vision for Great Places and provide direction on 2050 plan
- Provide direction on 2017-2022 Visitor Service Plan interim goal targets for 2024-2025

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2030 Vision- Great Places



Great Places: Improved Parks, New Parks

Serve County residents and park visitors by enhancing the overall park experience. Make parks great destinations by realizing the potential and unique qualities of these remarkable settings.

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2030 Vision – Great Places



Dakota County is known as a leader in providing exceptional nature-based recreation, with the following hallmarks:

- Balanced variety of quality, popular, year-round activities to promote healthy lifestyles
- Welcoming to visitors of all backgrounds and abilities to a conveniently accessed network of parks, trails, and greenways
- Innovative, sustainably-designed recreation to protect our natural legacy
- Quality education that builds appreciation of natural and cultural resources and inspires greater stewardship

How will Dakota Count provide exceptional outdoor experiences over the next 25+ years?

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Goal 1



Provide a balanced variety of high-quality, popular, year-round activities to promote healthy active lifestyles

What We've Heard So Far

- Does the Dakota County Parks System need to remain solely a "nature-based system"?
- Greater emphasis on physical and mental health
- Consider economic development impact of parks and open space
- Do the recreational activities offered meet the needs of the changing demographics of the metro area?

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- New activities that appeal to new visitors (more active recreation and cultural options)
- Expanded commercial use (e.g. restaurant, recreation equipment outfitter)
- Provide more than one location for most popular signature activities (e.g. new mountain bike facility in the southern part of the County, addition of nature center(s))

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Goal 2



Welcome visitors of all backgrounds, interests, and abilities to their parks.

What We've Heard So Far

- We need to move beyond just "welcoming" to a create sense of "belonging"
- Ensure public safety

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- More equitable, accessible, and inclusive facilities, programs, and activities
- Bridging facilities (Met Council designation)
- Level of services for each park
- New park units closer to where people live
- Explore park unit partnerships with other agencies (e.g. Fort Snelling State Parks, City Parks)
- Public and bike-walk transportation to parks
- Continued growth in outreach and engagement programming and experiences
- Diversifying and training staff for a more inclusive and supportive culture

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Goal 3



Exemplify sustainability and innovation as recreation trademarks of Dakota County Parks.

What We've Heard So Far

- Incorporate the international horticultural expo
- Move to current language of "adaptation and resiliency"

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- Keystone species re-introduction
- Climate resiliency and adaptation planning and development guidelines
- Sustainable trail design
- On-site stormwater treatment
- Public and non-motorized transportation to parks
- Adaption and mitigation strategies for increasing environmental threats/changes (challenges to snow-based activities, expansion of warm-weather recreation season, risk to visitors from extreme weather events)

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Goal 4



Enhance provision of quality outdoor and environmental education.

What We've Heard So Far

- More emphasis on natural, historic and cultural interpretation
- Incorporate art into the park system provision
- We need to move beyond just "welcoming" to a create sense of "belonging"
- Greater emphasis on physical and mental health, of both individuals and communities

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- Meeting unmet demand in youth programming
- New nature center(s)
- Guided programs at more parks
- Facilities and logistics (e.g. transportation) to support school field trips
- Outreach and mobile programs
- Continued growth in partnerships
- Focus on unique park amenities and facilities
- Interpretive plans
- Greater emphasis on programming to support mental and physical wellness
- New programs/activities based on public interest and changing demographics

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Goal 5



Provide exceptional service delivery and build public awareness of recreation opportunities.

What We've Heard So Far

- *Ensure signature activities in each park*
- *Develop a signature event/feature for lesser visited parks*
- *Role of parks, greenways, natural lands in economic development opportunities*

Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities

- *Provide programs and activities to meet community demand and interests*
- *Role of Dakota County park system in creating vibrant, healthy, and livable communities*
- *Special feature for Dakota County Parks that is unique to the region*
- *Collaborating with community partners to enhance program offerings*
- *Reframing access to nature as a basic human right and an essential service provided by the county*
- *Strategic marketing/promotions approach to building awareness of the park system*

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Two-year Interim Visitor Services Plan Goal Targets



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Interim Visitor Services Targets



- Current plan adopted October 31, 2017
- Goals remain the same, targets being extended
- Interim targets needed until plan update occurs



KEY FINDINGS

- VSP targets for all areas were met in 2019. Although the pandemic impacted numbers for most programmatic areas, targets were met in 2023 in awareness and outreach, outdoor education, events, and facility rentals. Numbers of volunteers have steadily grown since the pandemic and are nearing the target. Equipment rentals have increased since the pandemic but have also been affected by beach closures and warm winters.
- Overall park visitation has significantly increased since 2017.
- Positions identified in VSP have been filled and are responding to current level program and service demands.
- Parks fee-based revenue increased by 43% over 2017 baseline to over \$1.5M.
- Cost Recovery Policy and approach was approved by County Board in July 2020.
- Temporary staffing approach impacts efficiency in program delivery.
- The 2050 Vision Plan will guide direction of the next Visitor Services Operational Plan (planning 2025, implementation 2026).

VSP Interim Goals & Targets:

Interim targets have been added to existing plan goals in order to continue operations and to attempt to meet additional demand.


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Interim Goal Targets




Service Area	2017-2022 Target	Years Target Met	Two-year Interim Targets	Status Recommendation
Park Visitation	5% increase in park visitation	2018 2019 2021 2022	N/A	N/A
Awareness and Outreach	No specific outreach targets identified in plan	N/A	2024: 6,000 people engaged 2025: 6,000 people engaged	Status-quo Status-quo
Outdoor Education	<u>Participants</u> 5,645 program participants <u>Students</u> 6,270 student participants	2019 2023 2019	<u>Participants</u> 2024: 8,000 2025: 9,000 <u>Students</u> 2024: 6,000 2025: 7,000	Meet demand Meet demand Status quo Meet demand

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Interim Goal Targets				
Service Area	2017-2022 Target	Years Target Met	Two-year Interim Target	Status
Events	6,000 participants	2019 2023	2024: 9,000 participants 2025: 10,000 participants	Growth Growth
Volunteers	6,123 hours	2019	2024: 6,000 hours 2025: 6,500 hours	Status quo Growth
Facility Rental	1,400 rentals	2019 2022 2023	2024: 2,500 rentals 2025: 2,600 rentals	Growth Growth
Equipment Rental	Increase rentals to 11,949	2019	2024: 8,000 rentals 2025: 8,225 rentals	Status quo Status quo

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Next Steps	
<p>Upcoming Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 14 PDC – Protected Places • June 11 PDC – Connected Places • July 19 Strategic Planning Workshop – Funding • July 23 PDC – Review Draft Vision and Goals 	

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