

# 5

## *Comprehensive Plan 2030*

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# PARK SYSTEM PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

**B**rooklyn Center is a fully developed suburb with a well-established park and open space system. No new parks are planned for acquisition or improvement. Improvements will be confined to enhancement of the recreational facilities, improvement of trail linkages, and possible acquisition of additional open space.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan examines Brooklyn Center's park and recreation system, analyzes how well it meets the City's needs on both a neighborhood and a citywide basis, and makes recommendations for changes and additions to park facilities. This chapter includes the following sections:

- The Existing Park System
- Park Classification System
- Park Policies
- Park and Open Space Needs
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail System and Park Linkages
- Relationship to Regional Park Facilities
- Park Profiles

## THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

The City's park system, as shown in Figure 5-1, is one of the most extensive municipal systems in the region. The system includes 24 developed parks and a municipal golf course, providing a variety of recreational opportunities for all segments of the population. In addition, considerable undeveloped public open space is held in the Twin Lakes area. Recreation and leisure opportunities range from passive pursuits such as sitting, walking, picnicking, fishing, and enjoying music to more active pastimes such as organized sports, pick-up athletic games, bicycling, running, and in-line skating. Many parks are adjacent to schools or other open space, and one park, Central, is adjacent to the Community Center, which houses an indoor 50-meter pool with a water slide and other indoor recreational opportunities.

The even distribution of parks throughout all areas of the City and the variety of recreational facilities available enable the park system to serve all areas of the City and all segments of the population. There is excellent coordination of programs and facilities between parks and schools, and between parks and City and county facilities. The trail system links parks, schools, and other activity centers. However, like the rest of the City's public facilities, the park system is beginning to show its age, and its size and scope create maintenance burdens for the City.

Previous park planning efforts date back to the late 1970s: the Park and Recreation Policy Plan of 1976 and the subsequent Park Development Schedule formulated by the Park and Recreation Commission in 1978. These documents established a classification system for the parks, and set priorities for park system investments, which have largely been followed to date.

Capital improvements to parks have followed a roughly 20-year cycle. In 1960 and in 1980 the citizens of Brooklyn Center approved bond referenda for financing the development and improvement of park facilities. This included acquiring land, installing new playgrounds, developing ball fields, tennis courts and other facilities. Following these improvements, for a time no formal plan was put in place for a systematic update. Following up on the City's practice of programming for street reconstruction 15 years into the future, the City recently began developing a 15-year capital improvement program for parks.

## OTHER OPEN SPACE

The City owns much additional open space above and beyond the park system. These areas include the following:

- Three trail corridors: Shingle Creek, 69th Avenue, and the new 53rd Avenue Greenway;
- The Centerbrook Golf Course, a 65 acre public facility managed by the City;
- Additional undeveloped open space that the City retains in its natural state. This includes substantial areas around Twin Lake.

## ISSUES

- Is it practicable to continue to maintain the existing park system at its current levels?
- How can the park system best meet the changing needs of the City's population? In other words, how can it keep pace with social and demographic changes that affect the population?

Fiscal and staffing constraints make it difficult to continue to maintain the park system at its current level. Staffing levels have declined since 1981, while the number of parks and trails has increased. Demographic and social changes also affect the park system. The City's population increased slightly during the 1990s while the number of school-age children in the City increased significantly during that decade. Meanwhile a significant decline in the number of pre-school children occurred in the 1990s. These trends are opposite of the prior decade. In response to the issues, Public Works staff and the Park and Recreation Commission have developed a parks systems plan that revises the way in which parks are classified and reallocates the resources that each classification of parks will receive.



**Table 5-1: Park Facilities**

<b>Brooklyn Center Parks — Locations &amp; Amenities</b>																	
I=Lights All rinks are litged	Ares	Shelter Building	Picnic Shelter	Playground Equipment	Baseball Diamond	Softball Diamond	Tennis Court	Skating Rink	Hockey Rink	Basketball Court	Archery	Soccer Field	Football Field	Picnic Area	Grill	Bituminous Pathway	Woodchip Trail
Arboretum — 61 <sup>st</sup> & Major Ave	8															X	
Belvue — 55 <sup>th</sup> & Aldrich Ave	7		1	X		1		X		X				X		X	
Bob Cahlander — 65 <sup>th</sup> & Brooklyn Blvd	5															X	
Central — 6301 Shingle Creek Pkwy	48		2	X	1	2L	2			2	X			X		X	
Central West — 63 <sup>rd</sup> & Brooklyn Dr	20	X		X				X	X	X						X	
East Palmer — 71 <sup>st</sup> & Oliver Ave	15		1	X		2								X		X	
Evergreen — 72 <sup>nd</sup> & Bryant Ave	20	X		X	1L	2L	2	X	X	X		1L	1L	X		X	
Firehouse — 65 <sup>th</sup> & Bryant	10		1	X		2								X	X	X	
Freeway — 67 <sup>th</sup> & Beard	6		1	X		1				X				X		X	
Garden City — 6500 Brooklyn Blvd	1	X		X													
Grandview — 60 <sup>th</sup> & Humboldt Ave	10			X	1		2	X	X	X		1L	1L			X	
Happy Hollow — 50 <sup>th</sup> & Abbott Ave	6		1	X		1				X				X	X	X	
Kylawn — 61 <sup>st</sup> & Kyle Ave	22	X		X		2				X				X		X	X
Lions — 55 <sup>th</sup> & Russell Ave	18		1				2			X				X	X	X	
Marlin — Marlin Dr & Indiana Ave	2			X												X	
Northport — 55 <sup>th</sup> & Sailor Ln	25	X	1	X	1		2	X	X	X		X		X		X	
Orchard Lane — 65 <sup>th</sup> & Orchard Ln	7	X		X		1				X				X		X	
Palmer Lake 69 <sup>th</sup> Ave between East & West Parks	196													X		X	X
Riverdale — Dallas & Riverdale Rd	4	X		X		1				X				X			
Twin Lake — 58 <sup>th</sup> & Major Ave	3		1	X											X	X	
Wangstad — 61 <sup>st</sup> & France Ave	2			X						X				X		X	
West Palmer — 72 <sup>nd</sup> & W Palmer Lk Dr	15	X		X	1	2	2			X				X		X	X
Willow Lane — 69 <sup>th</sup> & Orchard Ave	8			X		1		X	X					X		X	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

North Mississippi Regional. Enter at 57<sup>th</sup> & Lyndale. 15 Hennepin Parks System. Paved trail, picnic area and fishing pier.  
 40 City of Brooklyn Center/Crystal. Adjacent to Kylawn Park. Natural habitat and chip trails.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Parks are classified and developed according to a functional hierarchy. This functional system suggests the types of facilities and development that would be appropriate in each park; however, specific improvements are individually tailored to each park based on neighborhood desires, historical presence of certain types of facilities, and resources available.

Different types of parks are located and designed to serve different needs and populations. For example, there should be a park in each neighborhood that is safely accessible to pedestrians, especially children, within a reasonable walking radius of one-quarter to one-half mile. At the other end of the spectrum, one or two larger parks in each neighborhood needs can meet organized sports and specialized and community-wide recreation.

The following classification system has been developed by City staff based on national standards. It is similar to the system the City has used for park and recreation planning for the past twenty years. However, the classification of parks within the system has been changed in order to make better use of park resources, meet neighborhood needs, and address issues of demographic and social change.

The system is divided into three broad categories: neighborhood parks, community destination parks, and special use parks and open spaces.

### *NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS*

Neighborhood Parks include the following three types:

#### PLAY LOT

The smallest unit of the park system both in terms of size and area that it serves; its function is to provide play facilities for pre-school children who are not conveniently served by larger parks. It may contain play equipment, sandboxes, paved areas for wheeled toys, walking and bike trails, and seating areas.

Service Area:	The sub-neighborhood level of 500 to 2,000 persons with a ¼ mile radius.
Desirable Size:	.25 to 2 acres
Acres per person:	No set standard -- desirable in higher-density areas.
Site Characteristics:	Should be located so that children do not have to cross major streets. Should include or be combined with an adult seating or gathering area; can be combined with a school.

#### PLAYGROUND

Parks designed for use by children from pre-school to age 12. Often coincides with the service area for an elementary school, and may adjoin and complement the school facility if intended to serve the same age group.

Facilities and programs of a neighborhood playground should be designed to meet the particular requirements of each individual neighborhood. May include a larger play area with equipment for older children; an area for free play and organized games; minimum maintenance ball diamond, multi-purpose hard surface courts; walking and bike trails, pleasure skating rinks, and seating areas. Some parks may contain portable restrooms.

- Service area: A population of up to 4,000 with a ¼ to ½ mile radius.
- Desirable Size: 5 to 10 acres.
- Acres per 1,000 pop.: 2.0
- Site characteristics: Geographically centered in neighborhood with safe walking and bike access. Suited for intense development. Helpful if located adjacent to a school.

## PLAYFIELD

Larger parks designed to provide recreation opportunities for all ages. They may contain all the features of playgrounds, with groomed ball facilities suitable for adult play. Hockey and pleasure skating rinks are lighted. May include portable restrooms and sheltered picnic areas.

- Service area: Neighborhood-wide; serves entire population with special emphasis on organized adult sports, ideally within a 1½ to 2 miles biking distance.
- Desirable Size: 20 acres or more.
- Acres per 1,000 pop.: 1.0 to 2.0
- Site characteristics: Direct access from all parts of the neighborhood or quadrant. Level terrain with few water bodies or other environmental constraints. Easily accessible by large numbers of vehicles. Physically separate from homes so as to minimize light and noise problems.

## *COMMUNITY DESTINATION PARK*

Relatively large parks serving as a recreational focus for a neighborhood of the City. Community destination parks are noted for having a wide variety of leisure and recreational options, and are fully accessible to persons of all abilities. Lighted areas for evening play are provided. Daytime recreational programming and playground supervision are provided in the summer months. Heated, enclosed park shelter buildings provide for recreational spaces and warming houses.

Previously known as community parks the name for this type of park was broadened in 2000 to incorporate the idea that these parks would contain the costlier types of facilities and that each would have a distinct identity or theme. Central is the flagship park of the system, with substantial improvements that serve the entire community. Evergreen focuses on team sports; Kylawn/Arboretum builds on its nature areas of the Arboretum and the Preserve; West Palmer is seen as a prime family picnic and outings area; and Grandview's focus is on youth and winter recreation.

Service area: A neighborhood or quadrant of the City

Desirable Size: 25 acres or more.

Acres per 1,000 pop.: 5.0

Site characteristics: Easily accessible from all parts of neighborhood or quadrant. Should be located on collector or arterial streets to provide adequate access for residents, and should be well-buffered from adjacent {residential areas.

**SPECIAL USE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

These are areas providing specialized or single-purpose recreational or leisure activities. These parks generally do not provide extensive permanent facilities, but may provide nature interpretation, trail and greenway corridors, or walking/ biking paths. Trails or greenways should connect other components of the recreation system, schools, community facilities or neighborhoods. Table 5-2 illustrates the facilities and improvements that would be expected in parks of each classification. Table 5-3 shows how the City's parks are classified, and Figure 5-2 illustrates the classification system.

**Table 5-2: Park Classification and Improvements System**

Improvement	Community	Playfield	Playground	Play lot	Special Use
Playground Equipment	■		■	■	
Shelter Building	■	<i>Storage</i>			
Baseball Field	■				
Softball Field	■	■			
Football Field	■				
Soccer Field	■				
Tennis Court(s)	■				
Hockey Rink	■				
Skating Rink	■	■	<i>As needed</i>		
Basketball Court	■	■	■		
Volleyball Court	■	■			
Other:					
Horseshoe	■				

Archery	■				
Lighting for:					
Baseball	■				
Softball	■				
Football	■				
Hockey	■				
Skating	■				
Trails, walkways	■	■	■	■	■
Picnic Areas:					
Pavilion	■	■			
Tables	■	■	■	■	
Restrooms	■		■	<i>As needed</i>	

**Table 5-3: Park Classifications**

<b>Park</b>	Community	Playfield	Playground	<i>Play lot</i>	Special Use
Arboretum					■
Bellvue			■		
Cahlander					■
Central Park	■				
Central Park West	■				
Evergreen	■				
Firehouse		■			
Freeway			■		
Garden City				■	
Grandview	■				

Happy Hollow			■		
Kylawn	■				
Lakeside				■	
Lions		■			
Marlin				■	
Northport		■			
North Mississippi (Three Rivers)					■
Orchard Lane			■		
Palmer Lake (east)		■			
Palmer Lake (west)	■				
Palmer Lake (south)					■
Riverdale			■		
Twin Lake			■		
Wangstad				■	
Willow Lane		■			

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAIL SYSTEM AND PARK LINKAGES

A comprehensive system of on and off-street bicycle trails has been developed and integrated with the park system. The use of this system as a means of transportation is addressed in the Transportation Plan.

The City's bicycle and pedestrian trail system is anchored by the Shingle Creek Trail, an off-street separated trail which runs from the north to the south City limits along Shingle Creek. For much of its length, separate trails are provided for bicyclists and pedestrians; a short segment across the Brookdale Shopping Center uses a sidewalk trail. The north end of the trail circles Palmer Lake; a portion of that trail is located in the City of Brooklyn Park and is maintained by that city.

The other major north-south trail system is the Mississippi River trail system, which from north to south consists of: the West River Road off-street trail; an on-street trail on Willow Lane extending to the trail link under the 1-694 bridge, and then the existing Hennepin Parks trail in North Mississippi Regional Park.

East-west links include the 69th Avenue greenway, the Freeway Boulevard/65th Avenue trail; and the 53rd Avenue greenway.

On- and off-street trails have been designed to link community parks and playfields to the major trail systems. Within parks, trails continue to major facilities such as ball fields, playgrounds and shelters.

The on-sidewalk portion of the Shingle Creek Trail across the Brookdale Shopping Center site is substandard in that it is not adequately separated from traffic. This segment detracts aesthetically from the overall feel of the trail, most of which travels through natural areas, and should be separated from traffic circulation on the Brookdale site. Consideration should be given to providing a greenway trail easement across the property to link the pedestrian bridge to the south and the existing trail to the north at the intersection of Shingle Creek and Bass Lake Road.

## PARK GOALS AND POLICIES

Development and improvement of the park and recreation system has been consistent with the Park and Recreation Policy Plan of 1976. This document was reviewed and revised in 1997. The goals and policies expressed in this document are excerpted as follows:

Base park and recreation planning on the needs and demands of all segments of the City's population.

- The Park and Recreation System consist of a mix of facilities to provide a mix of opportunities for persons of all ages and abilities.
- New park and recreation services and facilities will be considered where recreational opportunity is deficient or nonexistent, and where appropriate, they will be provided in cooperation with local school districts and the private sector.
- Citizen surveys and interviews will be conducted periodically to evaluate the effectiveness of existing facilities and programs and system deficiencies.

Incorporate citizens into the planning process at every level.

- A citizen's Park and Recreation Commission is appointed by the City Council to advise the Council on matters relative to parks, recreation and environmental planning.
- Neighborhood groups are encouraged to participate in the planning of all major park improvements.

Establish high-quality planning design, and preservation standards in the development and maintenance of the system.

- Consistent with economic realities, innovative park and recreation development will be pursued.
- Park design and development will embody a balance between function and aesthetics, including the conservation of natural resource areas.
- Water resources in parks, including wetlands, will be preserved for habitat and wildlife corridors where appropriate.
- Consistent with economic realities, trees will be planted and maintained in those parts of parks not

planned for open field uses.

- Creativity in park design is encouraged to stress variety and diversity from park to park.
- Where possible, park design may be used to establish a neighborhood improvement theme, or complement redevelopment.

Maximize accessibility and use of park and recreation facilities by area residents.

- Improve access to, signage for and information in support of Central Park thus driving increased awareness and use.
- All park facilities will be connected and accessible using the City's system of bicycle/pedestrian trails and/or collector sidewalk system.
- Volunteers and service organizations in the community will be afforded opportunities for service in the development and maintenance of the park and recreation system.
- The special place of the Mississippi National Recreational River Area in the park and recreation system will be promoted and further developed.
- Provide an identification system of all park areas, facilities and programs that is consistent, functional and creative, and which identifies the total system as an attractive, identifiable feature of the city.
- Through the use of signage, kiosks, and other forms of communication, a park system identity that is aesthetic yet informational will be established and updated as necessary.
- There will be an ongoing information and education process to make residents aware and knowledgeable of park and recreation facilities and programs.

Maximize the impact of resources dedicated for park and recreation facilities.

- A functional classification system for parks will identify the types of facilities appropriate for different types of parks. Each park will be classified according to that system.
- Facility improvements and recreational programming provided in each park will be consistent with the classification scheme.
- The highest-priority improvements will be those that address health or safety concerns, reduce maintenance costs, or address overall system deficiencies.
- Improvement and maintenance of the system will be pursued on a regular and continuous basis through the operating budget and the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) so as to avoid development of a costly backlog of improvements.

## PARK AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS

The City's current park acreage and facilities are sufficient to meet the needs both of its present population and of the projected 2030 population and number of households. Table 5-4 evaluates parkland needs based on the projected 2030 population of 29,500, using national guidelines. The table shows that although the City falls somewhat short of land in community parks, it more than makes up for the deficit through the large amount of land in neighborhood parks and special use parks. The "neighborhood parks" category includes play lots, playgrounds and playfields. Under the City's proposed classification system, playfields will fulfill many of the active, organized recreational functions of community parks, while the many special use parks will be used for individual recreational activities such as hiking and nature study.

**Table 5-4: Comparison of Park Acreage with National Guidelines**

Park Classification	Acreage, 1997	Guideline	2030 Target	Surplus/deficit
Community Parks	135	5/1,000 pop.	148	(13)
Neighborhood Parks	104	2/1,000 pop.	59	45
Special Use Parks	200+	no guideline		

Furthermore, the distribution of parks across the City is such that each of the City's six neighborhoods has one large community park or playfield and several playgrounds or play lots (see Table 5-5 and Figure 5-1). Most parts of the City are within walking distance of a neighborhood park (play lot, playground or playfield) and within a short drive or bike ride of a community park.

**Table 5-5: Parks by Neighborhood**

Neighborhood	Play lot	Playground	Playfield	Community Destination	Special Use Park
1 - Central	Garden City				
2 - Northeast		Riverdale Firehouse	Palmer Lake East	Evergreen	
3 - Northwest		Freeway	Willow Lane	Palmer Lake West	Palmer Lake South
4 - Southeast		Bellvue	Lions	Central Grandview	North Mississippi Regional
5 - Southwest	Lakeside	Twin Lake Happy	Northport		
6 - West Central	Marlin Wangstad	Orchard Lane		Kylawn	Arboretum Cahlander

## RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL PARK FACILITIES

Three regional park/recreational facilities are located within Brooklyn Center: part of the North Mississippi Regional Park, the Shingle Creek Trail and the Twin Lakes Trail.

### *NORTH MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL PARK*

A section of North Mississippi Regional Park is located along the Mississippi River from 53rd Avenue to I-694. From 53rd to 57th Avenue, it includes the area between Lyndale Avenue and the river and from 57th Avenue to I-694 it includes the area between I-94 and the river. The primary improvements within Brooklyn Center are an off-street bicycle path and a DNR fishing pier at the foot of the I-694 bridge. The bicycle path links to another in the regional park in Minneapolis. At the park's north end the trail goes under the I-694 bridge, providing a connection to the City's trail system at Willow Lane.

I-94 is a significant barrier between the residents of Brooklyn Center (and Minneapolis) and the Regional Park. Bridges over I-94 provide possibilities for City trail linkages at 53rd and 57th Avenues. The 53rd Avenue Greenway improvement enhanced linkage to the park from the Brooklyn Center's Southeast Neighborhood immediately to the west. As discussed in the Trail System section below, improved linkage to the park will result from the proposed Brooklyn Center-Robbinsdale Twin Lakes Trail that will provide a connection to the park from the Shingle Creek Trail and the proposed Crystal-Robbinsdale Trail as well as the neighborhoods along those trails. Aside from the linkage, it is expected that the Twin Lakes Trail will "open up" the Mississippi riverfront to Brooklyn Center and Minneapolis residents, who do not currently have a pleasant, easy means of reaching it. As indicated in the Land Use Plan, the residential use of the properties along the west side of Lyndale Avenue from 53rd to 57th Avenues are proposed to continue.

### *REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM*

The North Hennepin Shingle Creek Trail running generally along Shingle Creek is part of the regional trail system and was developed as part of the forty-mile North Hennepin Trail System loop. This Trail was constructed by Brooklyn Center in conjunction with the development of Central/Garden City Parks and the Palmer Lake basin. It is a very popular and heavily used trail year-round. Brooklyn Center is working in partnership with Three Rivers Park District to define maintenance and reconstruction responsibilities and to explore options for improvements.

Except for the short segment across the Brookdale Shopping Center, the trail is located entirely on City-owned parkland or open space. Major renovation or partial redevelopment of Brookdale would provide an opportunity to improve this important segment and to protect it with an easement for public use.

The proposed Twin Lakes regional trail will connect the Crystal-Robbinsdale trail running along Highway 81 at a point near Lower Twin Lake, to North Mississippi River Regional Park. This trail will run along the west side of Lower Twin Lake and the east side of Middle and Upper Twin Lakes, through or around the Brookdale site and in proximity of 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue North (perhaps in the transmission line easement north of 57<sup>th</sup>) easterly to North Mississippi Regional Park. Figure 5-2 is a map of the City of Brooklyn Center showing both the city and regional park and trail system within the City.

