

# PARKS & RECREATION

6

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*Photo Credit: Davin Brandt*

**JUNE 8, 2021**

Parks support community and individual well-being by providing the opportunity for physical activity and play, both structured and unstructured. Parks also facilitate social interaction and interaction with nature and open spaces, which has been shown to reduce stress; all of which supports mental health. Finally, parks offer environmental benefits by providing stormwater capacity, natural habitat, and open space.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### PARKS AND RECREATION

Ensure park and recreation facilities are conveniently and equitably located and have sidewalks and/or trails that safely inter connect all areas of the community.

### DIVERSITY

Provide a well-balanced and high quality parks system that offers passive and active recreation areas for people of all abilities and interests. Parks are comprised of a combination of public and private joint-use and multi-use facilities that maximize the value that each entity can offer.

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Protect and preserve the natural environment with emphasis on the overall open space system that satisfies the varied needs of individual residents and the community at large and ensures enjoyment of natural resources for future generations.

### TRAIL SYSTEM

Design and/or support the design of trails for bicyclists, pedestrians and other compatible modes to ensure access and accessibility for users of all ages and abilities. Strong connections between parks, neighborhoods and businesses with efficient wayfinding techniques will also empower residents to use alternative modes of transportation for their daily needs.

## PARK AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

The City owns and manages approximately 239 acres of parks and open space included in 36 park and recreation facilities. These facilities provide area residents, employees, and visitors with numerous opportunities for active and passive recreation. The park and open space system's natural resources also provide numerous benefits to the community's ecosystem and users' physical and mental health. The City's Park and Open Space System is described in Table 6.1 Table 6.2, and Table 6.3 below.



Railroad Park  
Credit: Dan Jones



Group Bench Lake View  
Credit: Mike Brooks



Matoska Gazebo  
Credit: Dan Jones



Boy reading in Fall  
Credit: Davin Brandt

## TABLE 6.1: PARKS AND OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATIONS

Park classifications are used to ensure that a parks and recreation system has sufficient diversity and geographic distribution of parks to serve various neighborhood and community needs. In White Bear Lake, there are eight types of parks and open space: community park, dock, mini park, neighborhood park, open space, playfields, special facility, and urban plaza. This table provides a more detailed description of the intended uses, size, and service area for each park type in White Bear.

## TABLE 6.2: 2018 INVENTORY OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

This table inventories each recreation area within the City and specifies the classification and size of each as well as any amenities available.

## TABLE 6.3: 2018 INVENTORY OF PARK AMENITIES

This table lists the amenities offered in each recreation area located in White Bear Lake.

**Table 6.1 Parks and Open Space Classifications**

Type	Description	Service Area	Size
Community Park	Park areas used for a variety of active and passive recreations including picnicking, hiking, and organized outdoor sports.	City and adjacent communities	5 acres or more
Dock	Public dock extending into a Lake for public swimming/fishing.	¼ to ½ mile	Less than 1 acre
Mini Park	Small park that serves a limited population or specific group such as tots or seniors.	¼ mile	1 acre or less
Neighborhood Park	Park area for intensive active use by the abutting neighborhood – usually involving play or outdoor sports activities.	½ mile	1 to 10 acres
Open Space	Area of natural quality such as water courses and wetlands that are preserved for environmental or aesthetic benefits and are to remain undisturbed. Typically double as drainage facilities for stormwater.	Varies	Variable
Playfields	Park area for intensive, usually highly organized athletic activity, lighted fields, parking, and bleachers.	City and adjacent communities	10+ acres
Special Facility	Property for specific use, such as golf course, nature center, conservatory, arboretum, ice arena or historic building.	City and adjacent communities	Variable
Urban Plaza	Small pocket park designed for moderate to intensive urban use, typically integral to the built environment.	City	Variable

*Classifications defined by City Staff, loosely based on the Metropolitan Council's classification system. Regional Parks not included/defined because the City does not have any located within its corporate limits*

**Table 6.2 2018 Inventory of Parks and Open Spaces**

City Recreation Areas			Acres			Amenities
Name	Type	Land	Water	Total		
Armory	Special Facility	.28	0	.28	Rental hall	
Arts District Wetland	Open Space	.13	4	4.13	No facilities	
Bossard Park	Community Park	15.95	.70	16.65		
Boatworks Commons	Urban Plaza	.34	0	.34	Rental hall, public art, public restrooms.	
Clark Ave. Boulevard	Special Facility / Dock	NA-ROW	0	NA-ROW	Historic monument, seating/lookout, dock on WBL	
Cottage Preserve	Open Space	1.93	0	1.93	No facilities	
Ebba Park	Neighborhood Park	1.37	0	1.37		
Hidden Hollow Park	Neighborhood Park	8.95	0	8.95		
Highway 96 Wetland	Open Space	6.62	26.49	33.11	No facilities	
Hiner's Pond	Open Space	3.51	11.74	15.25	No facilities	
Jack Yost Memorial Park	Neighborhood Park	4.5	0	4.5		
Lakeview Park	Mini Park	NA-ROW	0	NA-ROW		
Lakewood Hills Park	Community Park / Dock	63.06	17.07	80.13	Hanlos Dock	
Lions Park	Neighborhood Park / Dock	1.83	0	1.83		
Mainstreet Square	Urban Plaza	.1	0	.1	Seating and decorative landscaping	
Matoska Park	Community Park / Dock	5.65	0	5.65	7th Street Dock	
McCarty Park	Neighborhood Park	2.3	0	2.3		
Otter Lake Road Dock	Dock	.11	0	.11	On Birch Lake	
Peppertree Pond	Open Space	.22	5.91	6.13	No facilities	
Podvin Park	Community Park	17.80	0	17.80		
Public Works Wetland	Open Space	6.27	15.36	21.63	No facilities	
Railroad Depot Building	Special Facility	.21	0	.21	No facilities	
Railroad Park	Urban Plaza	.36	0	.36	Gazebo, decorative fountain	
Ramaley Park	Neighborhood Park	2.79	0	2.79		
Ramaley Wetland	Open Space	3.61	5.54	9.15	No facilities	
Rotary Nature Preserve	Open Space	14.54	21.69	36.23	Parking (15), restrm, trail, pavilion	
Spruce Park	Neighborhood Park	2.0	0	2.0		
Stellmacher Park	Community Park	9.30	0	9.30		
Stillwater/Long Wetland	Open Space	2.0	3.23	5.32	No facilities	

City Recreation Areas			Acres			Amenities
Name	Type	Land	Water	Total		
Varney Lake Park	Open Space	11.56	8.6	20.16	No facilities	
Veteran's Memorial Park	Mini Park / Dock	.2	0	.2		
West Park / Memorial Beach	Community Park	4.6	0	4.6		
Weyerhaeuser Park*	Playfield	8.68	0	8.68*		
White Bear Lake Sports Center	Special Facility	8.60	9.77	18.37	Parking (111+unmarked), ice rink, racquet ball courts, aerobic classrooms	
Willow/Buerkle Wetland	Open Space	18.17	59.0	77.17	No facilities	
Willow Marsh Reserve	Open Space	11.66	3.0	14.66		
City Totals		238.86	192.10	431.05		

Source: Ramsey County GIS and White Bear Lake Public Works Department


Note: The Fillebrown House is considered a quasi-public facility, but is not included in the above table because it is not owned by the City, it is owned by the Historical Society.

\*Weyerhaeuser Park is considered to be 14.76 acres in size, however, only 8.68 acres is owned by the City. 2.1 acres is on Weyerhaeuser Corp. property through a use agreement.

For information on the City's trails, please refer to the Non-Motorized Transportation Map found in the Transportation section of this comprehensive plan.

County Recreation Areas			Acres			Facilities
Name	Type	Land	Water	Total		
Manitou Ridge Golf Course	Special Facility	138.16	2.01	140.17	Public, County-owned 18-hole golf course	
Ramsey County Beach	Special Facility	10.72	2	12.72	Parking, picnic tables, restrooms, boat launch, swimming beach, play equipment	
White Bear Ice Arena	Special Facility	9.8	0	9.8	Parking (see Lakewood Hills Park), Ice arena	
County Totals		158.68	4.01	162.69		

Table 6.3 2018 Inventory of Park Amenities

 <b>White Bear Lake Park Facilities</b>		Basketball	Batting Cage	Caroe Launch	Disc Golf	Dock	Gazebo	Golf Course	Grills	Hockey Rink	Lacrosse Field	Orienteering Course	Parking Course	Paved Track	Pavillion	Play Equipment	Measure Rink	Picnic Tables	Restrooms	Shelter/Kitchen	Skateboard Park	Soccer	Softball	Sliding Hill	Swimming Beach	Tennis	Volleyball	Walking Trails	Warming House	Zip Line	
White Bear Lake Facilities	Bossard Park						x						x	x		x	x			x	x	x				x					
	Boatworks Park			x	x						x		x			x	x										x				
	Cottage Park																														
	Ebba Park												x	x		x							x								
	Hidden Hollow Park							x						x		x											x				
	Jack Yost Memorial Park							x			x		x	x		x	x					x	x				x				
	Lakeview Park		x	x											x																
	Lakewood Hills Park		x	x	x			x			x		x	x		x	x	x				x	x	x			x				
	Lion's Park		x	x	x			x			x		x				x	x									x				
	Matoska Park		x	x	x						x						x	x							x		x				
	McCarty Park													x	x		x						x	x							
	Podvin Park	x							x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								x		
	Railroad Park					x																									
	Ramaley Park	x						x			x		x	x	x	x	x						x				x				
	Rotary Nature Preserve										x		x				x	x										x			
	Spruce Park	x						x							x	x	x	x						x			x	x			
	Stellmacher Park	x						x	x					x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x		x	x			
	Varney Lake Park										x																	x			
	Veteran's Memorial Park				x			x			x						x											x			
West Park/Memorial Beach							x						x	x		x	x					x	x		x	x			x		
Weyerhaeuser Park		x								x						x	x					x									
Willow Marsh Reserve																										x					
Other Facilities	Manitou Ridge Golf Course						x				x						x														
	Ramsey County Beach				x						x			x		x	x							x							
	White Bear North Campus*							x	x		x	x									x	x			x			x			
	Lincoln Elementary	x									x			x									x	x							
	Birch Lake Elementary	x									x			x									x								
	Lakeaires Elementary										x			x									x								
	Sunrise Park Middle School							x	x		x	x											x			x			x		
	Matoska Intern't'l IB School	x									x			x									x								
	White Bear South Campus									x		x	x										x			x					
	Willow Lane Elementary										x			x									x	x							
Area Learning Center	x									x			x									x	x			x					

\*Includes Central Middle Sch

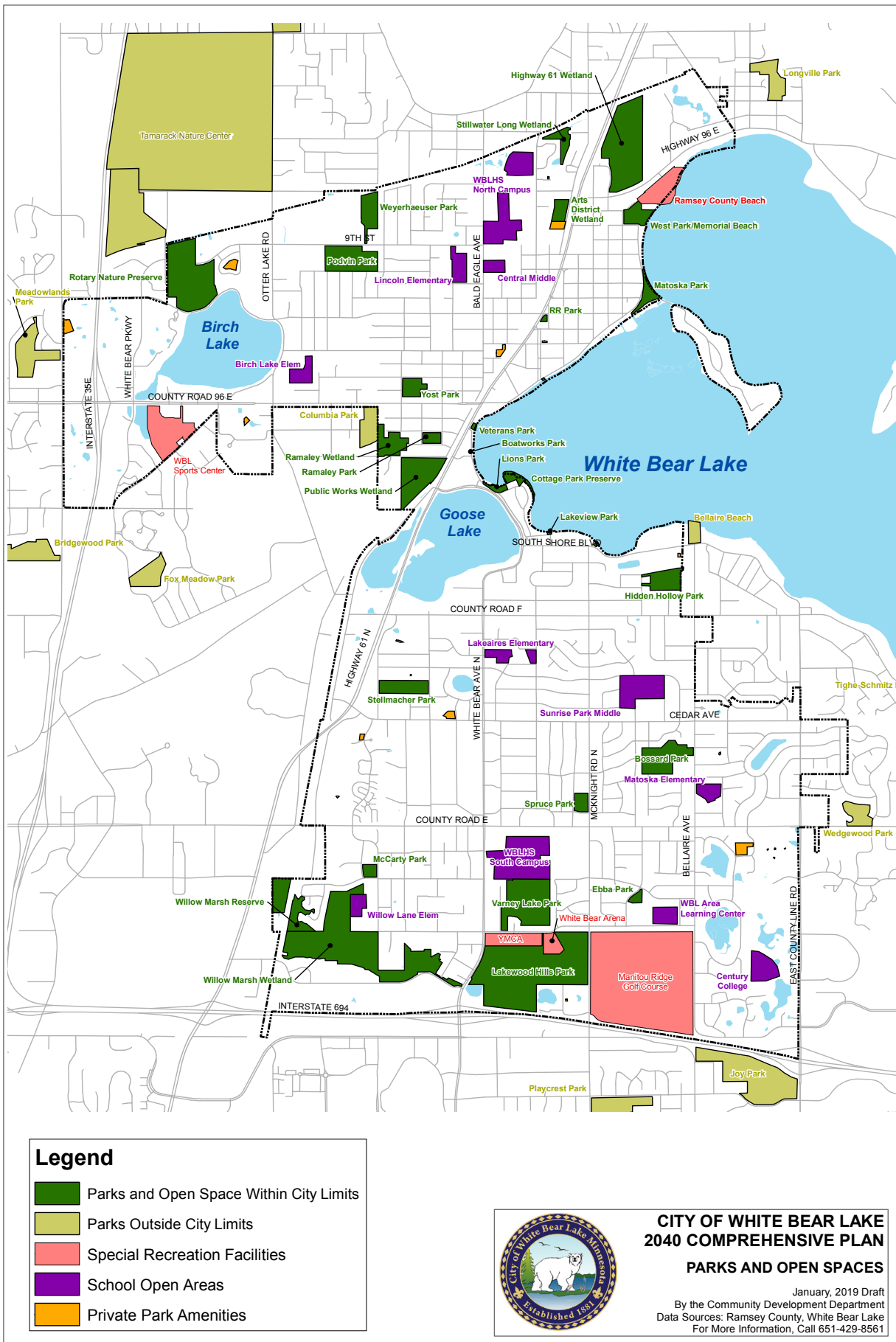
## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

### Parks and Open Spaces Map (Figure 6.1)

This map identifies all the recreational spaces within the City, both passive and active, including city and county parks, sports fields and open areas on school properties, “private” parks (such as tot lots constructed to serve a specific apartment complex or townhome development), and wetlands/natural areas. The map also identifies parks located just outside of the City’s municipal boundaries that may be used by the City’s residents.

The map shows that White Bear Lake’s parks and open spaces are well-dispersed throughout the community. Parks are mainly located along the southern and northern borders of WBL, as well as in the

Figure 6.1 Parks and Open Spaces Map



center of the City near the lakes (White Bear, Goose, Birch). School facilities provide a majority of open space and recreation facilities in the remaining areas of town.

### **Parks, Open Space and Trails Map (Figure 6.2)**

This map shows the existing trails, sidewalks and bike lanes within the City and how they interact with and connect to the City's parks and open spaces. (Note: this map does not include the private parks or parks located outside of the City's boundaries.) Most parks in the City are accessible by sidewalk.

In the southern portion of the City, sidewalks are located along the major roadways including White Bear Ave, McKnight Road E, Bellaire Ave, County Rd E East, Cedar Ave, and County Rd F East. An on-road bike lane extends from the City's southern boundary north to White Bear Lake on McKnight Road N. In the northern area of White Bear Lake, sidewalks extend east/west along Highway 96 E, Birch Lake Ave (County Road 91), 4th St, and 9th St (County Road 93). An extensive sidewalk network is located in the northeastern area of the city along the shores of White Bear Lake. Several on-street bike lanes extend north-south from Highway 96 to the eastern shore of Birth Lake, along Highway 96 on the northern shore of White Bear Lake, and along Clark Avenue between Highway 61 and Lake Avenue.

### **Park Coverage Map (Figure 6.3)**

The Trust for Public Land has launched a nation-wide "10-Minute Walk Campaign" promoting the idea that everyone in urban America should live within a 10-minute walk to a high quality park. The City of White Bear Lake already exceeds this standard. If a 10-minute walk (a half-mile buffer) is applied, all properties within the City are within the buffer area. Figure 6.3 shows a gap analysis for park coverage utilizing a 5-minute walk (a quarter-mile buffer). All areas identified on the Parks and Open Spaces Map, excluding some wetlands, are included in the analysis. The three wetlands which were included in the analysis are the Arts District wetland, Rotary Nature Preserve, and the Willow Marsh wetland. These wetlands were included in this analysis due to their existing trails or the desire to install boardwalks within these areas in the future, opening them up for passive access and enjoyment.

The analysis reveals only very narrow gaps in coverage, mainly located on the south side of the City. When the private park amenities are not considered, it appears that the largest gap in coverage is located between Cedar Avenue and County Road E, east of 61 and west of White Bear Avenue. For this reason, the City should consider the creation of a public park in the Strawberry Acres area concurrently with any redevelopment that may occur there in the future. The best opportunity to site and build a substantial amenity would come along with the comprehensive redevelopment of the area. Smaller-scale or piecemeal redevelopment in the area will complicate efforts to create a



Figure 6.2 Parks, Open Space and Trails Map

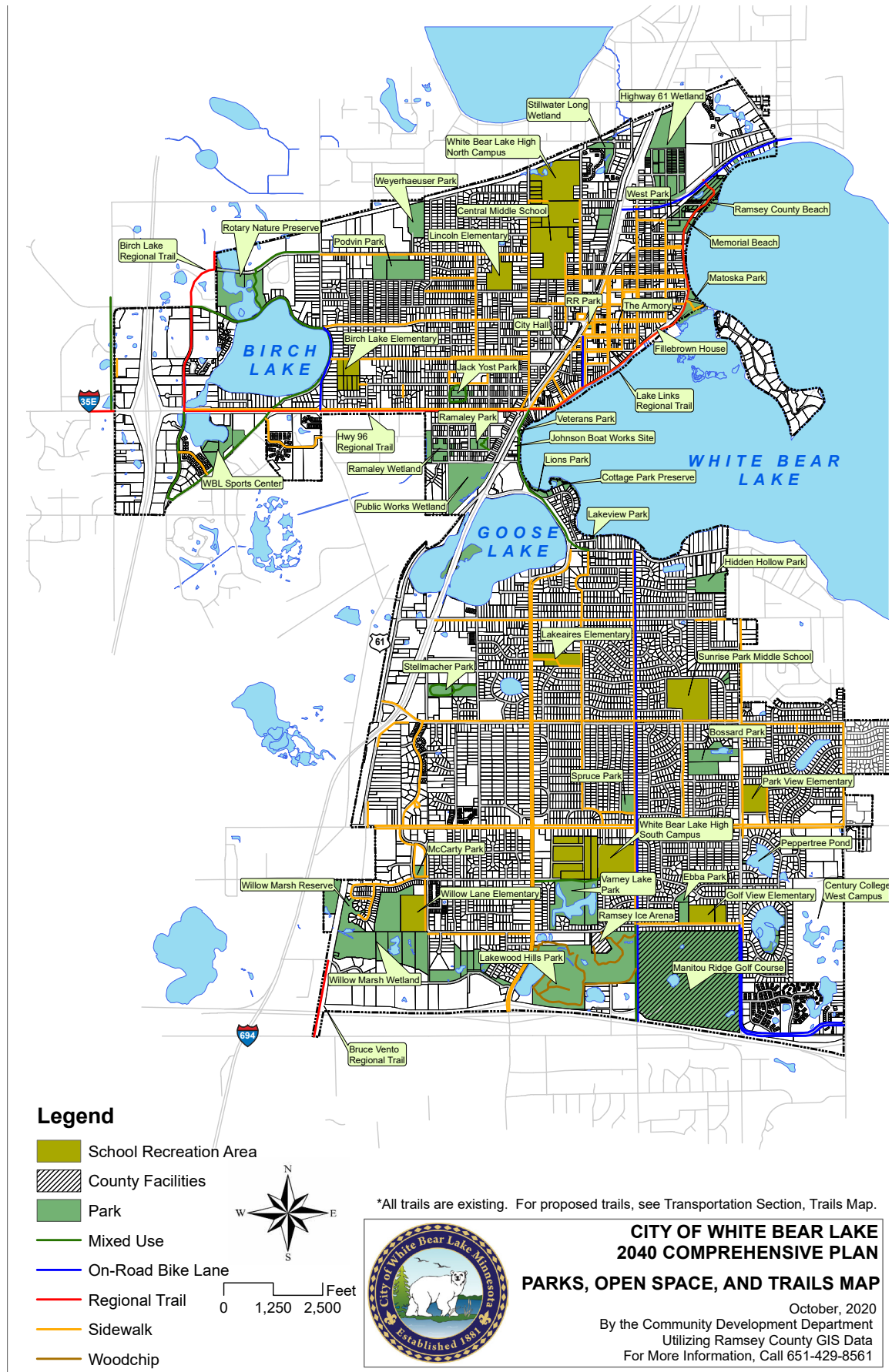
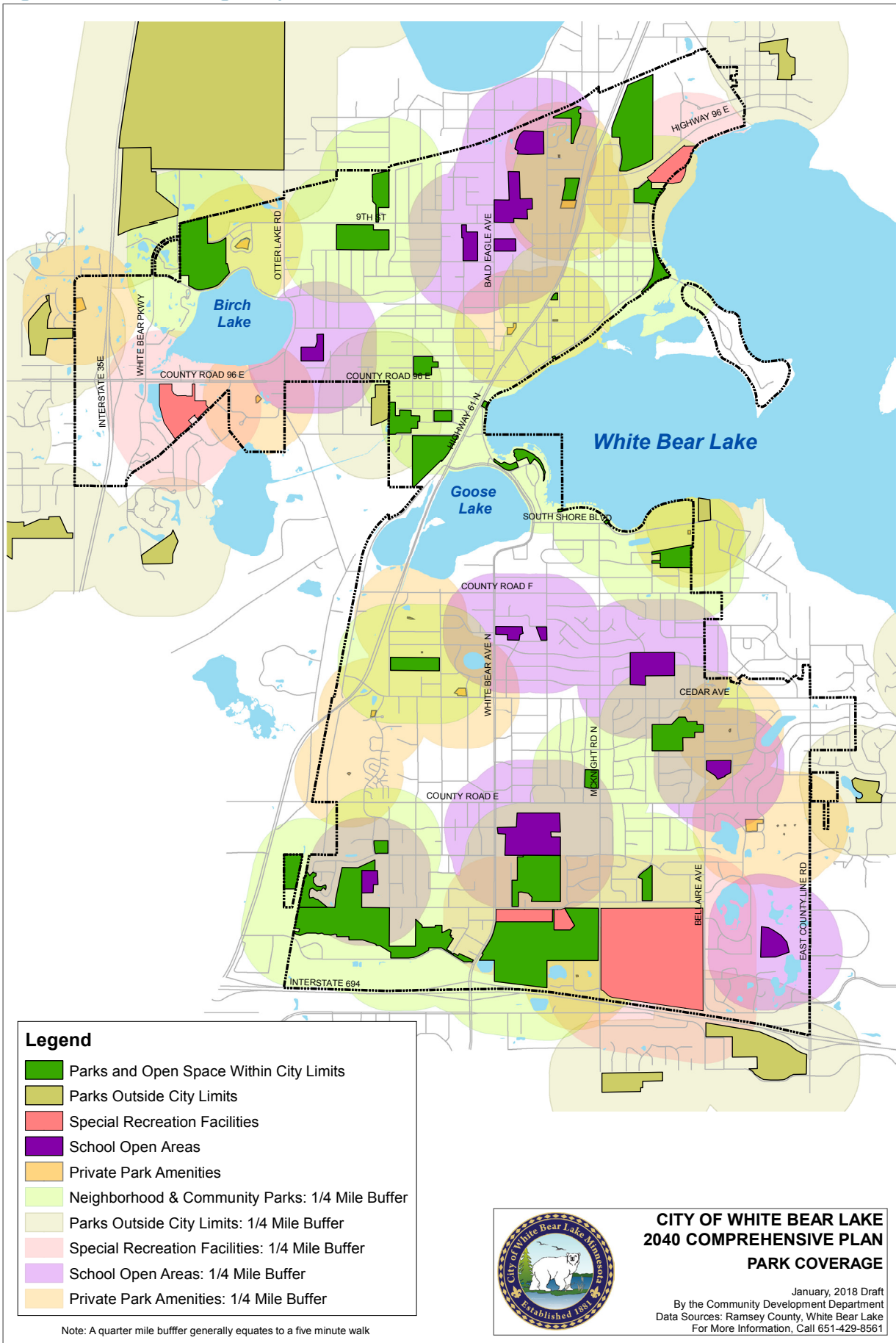


Figure 6.3 Park Coverage Map



**Legend**

- Parks and Open Space Within City Limits
- Parks Outside City Limits
- Special Recreation Facilities
- School Open Areas
- Private Park Amenities
- Neighborhood & Community Parks: 1/4 Mile Buffer
- Parks Outside City Limits: 1/4 Mile Buffer
- Special Recreation Facilities: 1/4 Mile Buffer
- School Open Areas: 1/4 Mile Buffer
- Private Park Amenities: 1/4 Mile Buffer

Note: A quarter mile buffer generally equates to a five minute walk



**CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE  
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PARK COVERAGE**

January, 2018 Draft  
By the Community Development Department  
Data Sources: Ramsey County, White Bear Lake  
For More Information, Call 651-429-8561

significant park.

### **Northeast Metro Area Parks and Regional Trails Map (Figure 6.4)**

The City of White Bear Lake does not contain any regional parks within its boundaries. However, several regional parks, including Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park and Vadnais-Snail Lake Regional Park are located a short distance from the City. There are also several larger parks in the immediate area that serve the population of White Bear Lake and the northeast metro area as a whole that are not designated as regional parks by the Metropolitan Council.

The Birch Lake, Highway 96, and Bruce Vento regional trails are existing regional trails in White Bear Lake. The Birch Lake trail is considered a Tier 2 alignment in the RBTN network and connects the Highway 96 Regional Trail to Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park. The Highway 96 regional trail is considered a Tier 1 RBTN alignment and travels from New Brighton to White Bear Lake, connecting several parks and trails in the regional system.

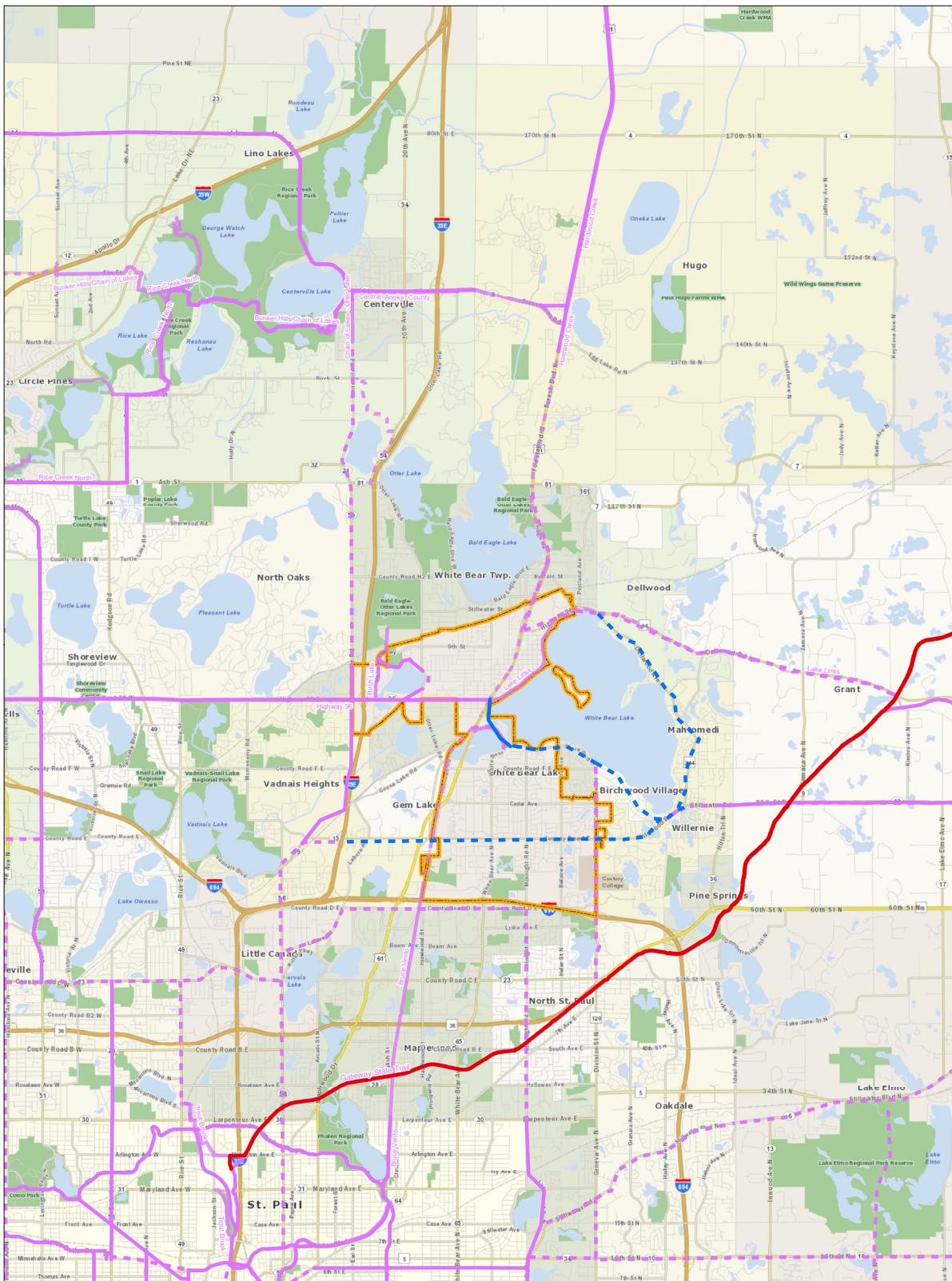
The Bruce Vento regional trail is considered a Tier 1 RBTN alignment and contains segments that are planned to extend north-south through White Bear Lake. The City is working in collaboration with Ramsey County to realign the planned corridor for this route north of Highway 96. There is strong community support to extend the trail along the Highway 61 corridor through Downtown, however, such an alignment is problematic given the proximity of the railway and potential impacts on private properties. It is anticipated that the final design of the trail extension will be completed by the end of 2019.

The Lake Links Trail is a planned regional trail that travels along the northwestern shore of White Bear Lake and will connect the Bruce Vento Regional Trail with the Gateway State Trail. A large portion of this regional trail has already been constructed within City limits and is known locally as the Mark Sather Trail. The regional trail is currently continuous from Ramsey County Beach, along Lake Avenue, to Highway 96, where it connects with the Highway 96 Regional Trail. South of Highway 96, the local segment continues through Veterans Park, the Marina Triangle District, and Lions' Park before terminating on South Shore Boulevard (at Hazel Street). The two segments of the trail within the City to be constructed are the regional segment along TH 96 north of White Bear Lake east of Ramsey County Beach to Northwest Avenue and the local segment along the South Shore corridor between Hazel Street and Bellaire Boulevard. Efforts to extend these two remaining segments of the Lake Links Trail in the City have strong community support and intergovernmental collaboration.



*Joggers on Lake Avenue*

Figure 6.4 Northeast Metro Area Parks and Regional Trails Map



Legend		
Local Trails Existing	Regional Trails Existing	State Trails Existing
Local Trails Proposed	Regional Trails Proposed	State Trails Existing
Regional Parks	White Bear Lake City Limits	



**CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE  
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
NORTHEAST METRO AREA  
PARKS AND TRAILS**

October 2020  
By the Community Development Department  
Data Sources: Metropolitan Council, White Bear Lake  
For More Information, Call 651-429-8561

# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## PLAYGROUND COST SHARE PROGRAM

The City has a Playground Cost Share Program which helps to finance improvements such as play equipment on White Bear Area School District properties. The program requires that the school keep the equipment open for public use. Public, charter, and private schools have participated in this program recently, including the Willow Lane and Lincoln Elementary Schools in the White Bear Lake Area School District (ISD 624), Level Up Academy, and Frassati Catholic Academy. The City should consider expanding the Cost Share Program to include adult-focused outdoor amenities, such as tennis courts and racquetball walls.

## MARINA TRIANGLE AREA

The City adopted the Marina Triangle District Master Plan in 2002. The plan envisions two recreational amenities for a “Village on the Lake” – an urban plaza, and a lakeside linear park connecting Lion’s Park to Veteran’s Park. With the redevelopment of the Boat Works property in 2012, a 13,600 square foot public green, a 3,000 square foot community meeting room and a new boardwalk the length of the property were constructed, fulfilling much of the vision of the original master plan. However, due to its smaller size and its position on the northern end of the district, the Boat Works Plaza should not be the only public space in the district. A larger public space that more closely meets the intent of the Master Plan’s “Village Green” should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the White Bear Shopping Center.

## SPORTS CENTER UPDATE

The White Bear Lake Sports Center, an ice arena and racquetball facility that has been owned and operated by the City since 1988, recently underwent a \$5.2 million dollar renovation. The White Bear Lake Hockey Association contributed \$2.5 million towards the project, bringing the facility up to current standards for safety, ADA accessibility, and energy efficiency. As part of the project the refrigeration system was sized to accommodate a second sheet of ice to prepare for the possibility of a future building expansion. It is highly likely that such an expenditure would need to be largely off-set financially through partnership or spear-headed by another agency. The natural setting of the Sports Center’s location on the south shore of Birch Lake provides an opportunity for passive outdoor amenities that complement the active indoor amenities the Center provides.

## COMMUNITY CENTER/YMCA UPDATE

The idea of a community recreation center, with a wide variety of programs and opportunities, is one which City officials have visited on and off for many years. Recognizing that the YMCA provides a community center, the City gave “The Y” 2.7 million dollars for



*Boat Works Plaza*



*Boardwalk on the Lake*



*Boardwalk Stairs*



*Sports Center Renovation*

expansion and upgrades in 2010. At that time, the name was changed from the Northeast Branch YMCA to the White Bear Area YMCA.

## PUBLIC ART

The public restrooms at Boatworks Commons feature a large tile mosaic of the White Bear Lake contour map. The City also recently installed public art sculpture in the green space just outside of the Boatworks Community Room. In anticipation of future art installations, footings have been installed both at Railroad Park and on the boulevard in front of the post office.

## PROPERTIES BETWEEN LION'S PARK AND LAKE AVENUE

There are two businesses and seven single family homes located north of Veteran's Park and south of Lake Avenue North. It was previously envisioned that these narrow, substandard properties would be acquired to enhance and expand the proposed waterfront promenade and/or around the lake trail, as well as open up lake views from Highway 61. With the construction of this segment of the Lake Links trail in 2014, City staff concluded that such an expensive endeavor was no longer practical. The lakefront properties contribute to the tax base, the buildings provide a noise and visual buffer between the road and its traffic and the lake, and the trail could be accommodated without displacing these residents and businesses.

## BENEFITS OF PUBLIC ART

Public art strengthens the uniqueness of place and hence pride in a community. Art can tell a story, evoke emotion, inspire people to question and to explore, connect us to our history and culture, and be a catalyst for social interaction. In short, it enriches the experience of a public space. Public art need not be large, stand-alone, or "art for art's sake." The more integrated and practical the art is, the more appropriate and appreciated it will likely be. Streets and right-of-way comprise more than 80% of the public space of an average city. White Bear Lake should strive to include public art not just in parks, but in more unexpected public places, such as street crosswalks, utility boxes, and sidewalks and trails. When possible, art installations should integrate environmental benefits as well. With property owner consent, public art could also be considered for temporary activation of an unused private space, such as a vacant lot.



## CLARK AVENUE STREET END

In recent years, the City has not maintained a swimming dock or kayak racks at the Clark Avenue street end due to low lake water levels. Now that the water level appears to be returning, the City may consider the reuse of this area.

## EXERCISE CIRCUIT

Residents have expressed a desire for a “fitness trail,” an outdoor route with exercise stations that provide a variety of strength building exercises that can be done in between walking or jogging along the trail. Possible locations for such an amenity have not yet been considered, but Lions Park and Lakewood Hills Park have both been suggested.



*Exercise Circuit*  
Source: audraogilvy.com

## SPLASH PAD

The City would like to work with Ramsey County to establish a splash pad at Ramsey County Beach. The amenity would provide a source of water recreation that is more suitable for younger children, while older children enjoy the lake. If located near the playground, which is close to the water, parents would be able to keep an eye on both older and younger children at the same time.



*Splash Pad*



*Splash Pad - Delano, MN*

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