

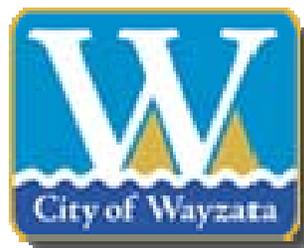
# Parks & Trails Task Force Report

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to

Wayzata City Council

April 17, 2012



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## Introduction

Wayzatans are justifiably proud of our parks, which have been important gathering places for our community throughout its history. In recent years, the community has enjoyed the addition of scenic trails to its outdoor assets. These trails and parks enhance the City's quality of life for all age groups. Earlier generations' foresight gave us these treasured assets, and it is our obligation to care for them so that future generations of citizens can enjoy them as we have. In the spring of 2011, the Wayzata City Council appointed a task force to evaluate the physical condition of the City's park and trails and recommend improvements. This is our report. It is important to emphasize two key points at the start of this report:

**First, this report should not be regarded as criticism of our staff or parks department.** The Wayzata Parks Department has endured staff reductions in the past several years and yet continued to maintain our parks through dedication and hard work. In fact, our City Planner/Assistant City Manager and our parks staff have contributed to the task force's knowledge and recommendations.

**Second, the task force did not address park and trail programming.** The focus has been entirely on the *physical condition* of park amenities and the desire for more safe trails for pedestrians and bicyclists. Creating programming for those amenities is a subject to be addressed at another time and by another group.

As the task force proceeded to assess the condition of our park and trail assets, we found our work to be aligned with the recommendations and aspirations of the City's most recent Comprehensive Plan Task Force. That group of citizens defined 10 "broad objectives" for Wayzata. Six of those objectives, reprinted below, are directly relevant to the mission of the Parks and Trails Task Force:

**Preserve and enhance Wayzata "small town" character**

- *Scale, walkability, land use patterns, street and boulevard character*

**Family orientation**

- *Build the physical environment to allow for the development of cultural and social activities that provide the opportunity for social engagement*

**Community heritage**

- *Build community form; redevelopment of significant properties; small town roots*

- *Preservation of historic properties*

**A connected community**

- *Build physical and psychological connections between all residential neighborhoods, business areas, and links to other recreational amenities*

**Protection of amenities**

- *Preserve and protect significant natural resource areas*

- *Promote access to community park and open space resources*

**Sustainability**

- *As addressed in policy decisions, legislative actions, administrative actions, and project implementation*

## Task Force

**Jon Halverson** is an international business consultant who lives on Central Avenue in the Old Holdridge neighborhood east of downtown Wayzata. John is a parent of young children and has a strong interest in pedestrian and bike safety.

**Anne Goodmundson** is a lifelong Wayzatan and employee of School District 284. She is a parent of adult children raised in the Goodmundson home next to the Bell Tennis Courts shelter and in the shadow of the water tower.

**Tom Kraus** is a resident of the Holdridge neighborhood and parent of young children. Tom, an e-commerce executive, is a serious bicycle athlete and interested in trail connections.

**Dick Flint** is a lawyer and former city council member in Orono, where he worked to improve that city's parks and trails. He was also one of the leaders in creating a bike trail connecting the Luce Line to Baker Park and working with the rail and park authorities to convert the Dakota Rail Line into a bike trail. He now lives in Wayzata's Waycliffe neighborhood. Dick's children are grown, but he is an avid user of bike trails and enjoys taking his grandchildren on bike rides in Wayzata.

**Wendy Shore**, a resident of Circle A Drive in the Old Holdridge neighborhood, is a new mother and elementary school teacher.

**Lynn Gruber**, a resident of the LaSalle area in Old Holdridge, is a healthcare consultant. She served on the Planning Commission through the end of 2011. Her home is close to the abandoned Nature Center.

**Merrily Borg Babcock**, a lifelong Wayzatan, is an artist, a Planning Commissioner and resident of Reno Street in Old Holdridge. Merrily is a strong advocate for city parks, which she frequents with her grandchildren. A champion of the Big Woods, she has also led volunteer efforts to eradicate invasive species, and she has created activities, such as maple sugaring, there.

**Bryan Gadow** is Wayzata's City Planner/Assistant City Manager. He served as the key staff person and lead report writer for the task force that wrote the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which dealt extensively with parks and trails, and he served on the recently completed Lakeshore Task Force.

**Andrew Mullin** is a member of the City Council and a resident of Huntington Ave. in Old Holdridge. A marketing executive, he is also the parent of two young children. He co-chaired the Lakeshore Task Force to promote long-range planning for our important lakefront area that includes park and trail assets.

**Mary Bader** is a member of the City Council, a writer and editor. City parks, especially the beach, were important to her children who grew up in Wayzata. Now her grandchildren enjoy those parks. She lives on Peavey Lane near Shaver Park.

## Mission and Objectives

The mission of the Parks and Trails Task force is to evaluate the physical condition of Wayzata's parks and trails and recommend improvements to the City Council.

Early in our process, the task force agreed on the following objectives for its work:

- Develop a perspective and plan for how the *parks* in Wayzata can be improved and made more attractive to all citizens of Wayzata and our visitors.
- Develop a perspective and plan for how the *trail system* in Wayzata can serve all the neighborhoods in Wayzata by providing safe and attractive access to downtown Wayzata, and links to the neighboring communities.
- Review and make recommendations for implementing related sections of the comprehensive plan (e.g. sidewalks and trails expenditures).
- For the funds available, develop a priority list for new trails and for the improvement of existing parks and trails.
- Ultimately, offer actionable recommendations to the City Council on how to
  - improve the existing parks and trails;
  - create new trails;
  - allocate existing Parks and Trails CIP funds, and
  - explore new options for funding.
- Base our decisions on the following criteria:
  - what would directly benefit the largest number of people;
  - what would benefit Wayzata businesses;
  - what would create safe walking trails for young families and the elderly;
  - what would encourage the use of our parks and trails.

## Process

**FIELD TRIPS** - The task force members formed three teams to visit and assess the current conditions in 15 public parks. On their site visits in early spring of 2011, the teams recorded maintenance needs and evaluated the potential of all the existing parks. The findings from those site visits are contained in this report.

**SURVEY** - In August, the task force conducted a paper-based and online survey. Lynn Gruber and Ann Goodmundson wrote, distributed, and summarized results of a survey to gauge Wayzata residents' attitudes and awareness of City parks and trails. Tom Kraus coordinated an online version of the survey. The survey results provide a qualitative assessment of public opinion about our parks and trails.

**STAFF INTERVIEWS** – These staff members provided information to the task force:

- City Manager Al Orsen
- Public Services Director Dave Dudinsky
- Scott Roberts of the City Parks Department
- City Engineer Mike Kelley
- City Planner/Assistant City Manager Bryan Gadow

**MEETINGS** - Over the course of 12 meetings, held between April 2011 and April 2012, the task force discussed findings from the site visits and survey; met with staff members; reviewed park CIP plans; reviewed 2030 Comprehensive Plan information; and achieved consensus on our recommendations to the City Council.

## Task Force Findings

### FROM SURVEY

The task force prepared a survey to determine public awareness, opinions and frequency of park use. The survey was mailed with the August 2011 utility bills. By the September 15, 2011 deadline, 232 replies had been received, including 80 submitted online. Based on the total number of Wayzata households<sup>1</sup>, the survey had a 13-percent response rate. Attachment A (page 14) contains a copy of the survey and a full report of the survey findings. Some highlights:

- Safety ranked as the top concern of those who responded to the survey.
- They favored expanded trail connections for neighborhoods.
- Among the survey responders
  - 52 % have used Wayzata Beach and Marina
  - 52 % have used the Dakota Trail
  - 44 % have used the Depot
  - 38 % have used the Luce Line Trail
  - 35 % have used Klapprich Field
  - 53 % said they use City parks weekly
  - 63 % said they are “very satisfied” with Wayzata’s parks and trails, 17 % said they are “somewhat satisfied,” and only 5 % said they were “unsatisfied.”

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<sup>1</sup> 2041 households is the number shown in the 2010 Census; however, only 1795 of those households were occupied at the time of the census. For our calculations we are using the 1795 number. The vacant households could include vacant rental properties and the residences of “snowbirds” whose legal residence is in another state. The survey is a useful indicator of public opinion, but it did not have the design or controls to allow us to claim that it is a scientific poll.

## FROM SITE VISITS

Three teams of task force members visited City parks in spring 2011. They found the majority of our parks in good or reasonably good condition, although in almost every park the teams had ideas for improvements that could be made to help achieve the vision articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. In several parks, the task force found serious shortcomings, the correction of which should receive priority.

At each park site, the field trip teams recorded park size, condition, accessibility, public awareness, signage, parking, maintenance needs, suitability for use by children, and improvement ideas. Their results are summarized in the two charts on page 8. Detailed descriptions of the teams' comments and task force recommendations for improvements to specific parks are contained in Attachment B (page 16).

Wayzata has a hard-working Parks Department, but it was cut to the bone in recent years of budget austerity. This report indicates that our staff will need more resources – either people or money, or both – to keep our treasured parks in the condition envisioned by the writers of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. While we can be rightly proud of the maintenance of our Library Park, Heritage Park, Klapprich Field ice rinks and our colorful flower gardens, there are other parks whose condition frankly alarms us. In particular:

**Section Foreman's House** - This little known remnant of Wayzata history could become a tourist attraction as part of a narrative that tells the story of the railroad in Wayzata, but it needs significant, immediate work, or we will lose it. The Heritage Preservation Board and the Wayzata Historical Society have been trying to figure out a source of funds to restore and preserve this City property for several years. Now, the Lakefront Task Force has also identified the house's potential. It is time for the City Council to decide the future of this asset, perhaps by adapting the building for a different use. *For action items on this park facility see page 18.*

**The Nature Center** - The nature center, an important wetland filter for Lake Minnetonka, was created in the 1970s with TIF funds and effectively abandoned some time in the 1990s. City Council minutes from the 1980s indicate staff could not dedicate adequate maintenance time to the nature center. Although our task force has so far failed to locate documentation on the stated reasons for closing the nature center, the former city manager's recollection is that neighboring property owners complained that young people were lighting fires and using drugs in the nature center, creating a difficult-to-police environment. And so, the wetland park was closed to the public. Now, the boardwalk that once allowed children on field trips to walk around the rim of the marsh has degenerated beyond repair. People have dumped trash at the edges of the area. The bridge leading into the nature center from the Boardwalk Senior Apartment Building is impassable due to overgrowth and deterioration. And the entire 13.5-acre nature center is a marshy staging area for invasive buckthorn and garlic mustard. Here is a sad example of what happens when we establish a new park but do not set aside the funds to maintain it. Let this be a lesson for our future. *For action items on this park facility see page 19.*

**The Big Woods** - Our 14-acre, rare urban-forest preserve is protected by a permanent conservation easement. The woods provide an opportunity to promote visits to Wayzata by families, scout troops and others interested in nature. There is a management plan for the woods, and it needs to be given higher priority by the City lest neglect and invasive species, especially buckthorn and garlic mustard, overrun the woods as they have the Nature Center. At the present time, the condition of the woods is best described as only fair due to inattention and invasive species. *For action items on this park facility see page 19.*

**Bell Courts Shelter** - The courts, recently rebuilt, are in good condition. However, that is not the case with the adjacent Louise H. Bell Memorial tennis shelter. The shelter was repainted and its roof replaced in 2011, but the original siding is almost 50 years old and needs to be replaced. Moreover, the bathroom and water fountain should be restored and made useable to serve tennis players and people using the nearby playground. A major problem with the tennis shelter is that part of it has been leased to a cellphone company. “Danger” signage, which may not even be necessary, discourages people from venturing near the shelter. The shelter was a gift to Wayzata from the Bell family. By allowing the shelter to be neglected and misused, we are not only abusing a public asset, but we are sending the wrong message to other families that might wish to finance a useful public asset as a memorial to a loved one. *For action items on this park facility see page 22.*

**Water Tower Area** - This area was set aside as the first city park on the original 1854 plat of Wayzata. The City has claimed part of the park for a water tower and water treatment plant. More controversially, the City has turned the water tower and part of the park into a revenue-producing, industrial-looking enterprise for cellphone equipment. As far as we know, the decision to take parkland for such a purpose was made without citizen input. It is the sort of short-term thinking that Wayzata cannot afford if it truly values its parks and neighborhoods. *For action items on this park facility see page 22.*

## **FROM STAFF**

Meetings with the Parks Department yielded additional ideas. Attachment C (page 24) contains an extensive list of planned improvements and creative ideas from Scott Roberts, but here are some of the staff’s general observations:

- Park signage is inadequate. People often contact crews working in our parks to ask the name of a park or directions to a park they have heard about.
- The staff recognizes the need to work with volunteers in an effort to contain the spread of buckthorn and garlic mustard throughout the City, including in our parks. The Parks Department continues to collaborate closely with the Volunteer Project, planning educational programs and work projects.

- Among the creative additions that staff would have the City consider in the future for our parks are a fountain, several park shelters, an arbor, swinging benches and a putting green.

**SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE SITE VISIT FINDINGS 2011 – CHART 1**

| PARK FACILITY           | Size<br>A = acre | Condition<br>GOOD | Condition<br>FAIR | Condition<br>POOR | Accessibility | Public Awareness<br>Based on Survey |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Beach (1)               | See (1)          | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 54 %                                |
| Marina (1)              | See (1)          | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 54 %                                |
| Shaver Park (1)         | 7.3 A            | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 42 %                                |
| The Depot               |                  | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 52 %                                |
| Section Foreman House   | 0.84 A           |                   |                   | X                 | None          | n/a                                 |
| Big Woods               | 14.1 A           |                   | X                 |                   | Good          | 50 %                                |
| Nature Center           | 13.5 A           |                   |                   | X                 | None          | 28 %                                |
| Heritage Park           | 0.48 A           | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 44 %                                |
| Post Office Park        | 0.15 A           |                   | X                 |                   | Good          | 46 %                                |
| W.Mid Sch. Courts       |                  | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 46 %                                |
| Library Park            |                  | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 41 %                                |
| Klapprich FieldPark(2)  | See (2)          | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 67 %                                |
| Bell Courts/Shelter (2) | See (2)          |                   |                   | X                 | Mixed         | 41 %                                |
| Water Tower Park (2)    | 8.8 A            |                   |                   | X                 | Good          | n/a                                 |
| Margaret Circle Park    | 0.95 A           | X                 |                   |                   | Good          | 29 %                                |
|                         |                  |                   |                   |                   |               |                                     |

(1) Collectively, the beach, marina and Shaver Park cover of 7.3 A.

(2) Collectively Klapprich Field & Park, Bell Courts and Water Tower Park cover 8.8 A.

**SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE SITE VISIT FINDINGS 2011 – CHART 2**

| PARK FACILITY          | Signage | Parking | Maintenance<br>Needs | Suitability<br>For Children* | Active or<br>Passive | Improvement<br>Ideas |
|------------------------|---------|---------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Beach                  | None    | yes     | Ongoing              | Yes                          | Active               | See page 16          |
| Marina                 | None    | yes     | Ongoing              | No                           | Active               | See page 17          |
| Shaver Park            | Good    | yes     | No                   | Yes                          | Active               | See page 17          |
| The Depot              | Fair    | Yes     | No                   | Yes                          | Active               | See page 18          |
| Section Foreman House  | None    | No      | Major                | No                           | Closed               | See page 18          |
| Big Woods              | Poor    | Yes     | Some                 | Yes                          | Semi-active          | See page 19          |
| Nature Center          | None    | No      | Major                | No                           | Closed               | See page 19          |
| Heritage Park          | Good    | No      | None                 | Minimally                    | Passive              | See page 20          |
| Post Office Park       | Poor    | Street  | Medium               | No                           | Passive              | See page 20          |
| W.Mid Sch. Courts      | None    | Yes     | None                 | Yes                          | Active               | See page 20          |
| Library Park           | None    | Yes     | None                 | Yes                          | Passive              | See page 21          |
| Klapprich Field & Park | None    | Street  | Ongoing              | Yes                          | Active               | See page 21          |
| Bell Courts & Shelter  | Poor    | Street  | Major                | Yes                          | Active               | See page 22          |
| Water Tower Park       | Pending | Street  | Major                | No                           | Co-opted             | See page 22          |
| Margaret Circle Park   | None    | Street  | Minimal              | Yes                          | Active               | See page 23          |
|                        |         |         |                      |                              |                      |                      |

\* Based task force members' observations during 2011 site visits.

## **ABOUT TRAILS**

The task force also addressed the subject of trails. Sidewalks are a separate entity, but we included City sidewalks in our discussions about trails because – as with the Comprehensive Plan Task Force – our focus was on *safe connections* for pedestrians and bicyclists, a standard we view as a key ingredient in Wayzata’s small town character and a key ingredient in the viability of our retail community.

At the present time, there is only one City-owned trail in Wayzata – the trail that runs along Gleason Lake Road from Wayzata Blvd. That trail is in poor shape. Two better known and better maintained trails are the Dakota and the Luce Line, both owned and maintained by Three Rivers Park District. With the help of City Engineer Mike Kelly, we reviewed the 2009 SRF report on possible connections for the Dakota and Luce Line trails. That report subsequently resulted in the selection of the current connecting route via Barry Avenue. Mr. Kelly also presented possibilities for the future restriping of Lake Street for an east/west bike trail connection. The City continues to work with county staff to find trail solutions.

Concurrently, we learned of a plan developed by the City’s Bushaway Road Task Force. That plan proposes creation of a trail on the west side of Bushaway between McGinty and Wayzata Blvd., an idea that could be a promising north-south connector as well as a connection to downtown for several neighborhoods.

City Planner/Assistant City Manager Bryan Gadow provided information on an existing trail plan for the city, which is included in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and in this report as Attachment D (page 26).

Also, task force members Dick Flint, Merrily Borg Babcock and Jon Halverson presented their concepts for specific neighborhood connecting trails. See Attachment E (page 27).

Trails, however, require a different approach than our parks. One consideration is that Wayzata is almost completely developed, so adding trails involves complications such as right-of-ways and easements, not just construction funds. But the issues are not insurmountable, and the desire for better and safer pedestrian and bicycle connections is so longstanding and so widely held that City officials should make addressing it a higher priority than they have to date.

## **ABOUT FUNDING**

We also reviewed the City’s parks capital improvement fund, how it is currently being used, and options for replenishing it. We see a number of problems:

- For one, citizens have a limited voice in decisions about park investments or maintenance. Priorities, for the most part, are determined by staff and approved by City Council in a budget process that allows limited time for studying and discussing the status of our parks and trails. Our observation is that, generally, our parks and trails have been shortchanged in the ordinary contest for resources. The City Council should have a more active role when it comes to setting priorities and allocating resources for our

parks. One way to assure a more active role for the City Council would be to appoint an advisory Parks and Trails Board to study issues and recommend spending priorities.

- Second, the park capital improvement fund has been tapped as needed for general maintenance of things that are, strictly speaking, not parks, e.g. prairie burning and boulevard tree replacement. Such flexibility may make it easier to balance the City budget, but, in the process, parks and trails sink lower in City priorities.
- Third, the source of funding dedicated to parks is diminishing as the potential for park dedication fees from new development declines along with the availability of land for development. A new source of park funding needs to be considered.

## Recommendations for Action

### PRIORITIES

The task force concluded that there are many needs, many possible improvements and many creative suggestions. At the same time, our resources, including staff and funds, are limited. We cannot do everything at once. Therefore, we set the following three priorities on which to base our recommendations for action:

**Stewardship of Our Community Assets.** *Existing* parks and trails should be well maintained and receive priority for staff and financial resources. Any *new* parks or trails developed should have maintenance needs and funds factored into their planning to ensure good stewardship of our community assets for future citizens.

**Lakefront Enhancement.** Our lakefront is our most important amenity for residents and our main attraction for tourists. It encompasses not only the beach, our most popular recreational feature, but also the marina, Shaver Park, the Depot area and the Station Foreman's House. We support careful investment in these amenities to benefit all our citizens and businesses.

**Community Connectivity.** Safe pedestrian and biking connections – whether trails or sidewalks – from all neighborhoods to downtown, as well as from Bushaway Road to the Dakota Trail, are essential to Wayzata's small town character and improved vitality of its business district.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Based on the three priorities above, and as a result of our findings, the task force recommends that the City Council take the following actions:

1. **Park Maintenance** - Establish a policy that gives priority to maintenance and necessary improvements of *existing* parks and trails as detailed in this report and enforce that policy through budget allocations and progress reports. A list of *highest priority* maintenance needs follows (page 12). The items on this list are from task force assessments and from the City Parks Department. We urge the Council to give *immediate* attention to those necessary improvements. Additional suggested improvements to our parks listed in Attachment B are less urgent but still important. They offer ideas for future consideration by the City Council and staff.
2. **Trail Expansion** - The overall recommendation of the task force regarding trails is to increase *safe* connectivity for pedestrians of all ages and bicyclists of all skill levels. To that end, we recommend establishing safe, lighted, well-thought-out east/west and north/south connections for pedestrians and bicyclists from neighborhoods to downtown. These may be either trails or sidewalks, but the emphasis should be on *safety*. Priorities for trails include an east/west connection from Bushaway Road to the Dakota Trailhead via Lake Street and two north/south connections – one on Bushaway Road between McGinty and Wayzata Blvd., the other from Wayzata Blvd. to Lake Street via Central Avenue South and Circle Drive.
3. **Funding Parks and Trails** - More closely monitor the uses of the city's capital improvement project (CIP) funds set aside for parks and trails so that those funds are not diverted to other needs. It is also imperative that we identify a new funding source for parks and trails to replenish the diminishing funds anticipated from park dedication fees tied to development. (Profits generated by the municipal liquor operation are one potential funding source. Another would be an expanded program offering opportunities to people to buy and dedicate new benches, picnic tables or other amenities to our parks and trails.)
4. **Public Awareness** - Increase awareness of our parks and trails through improved signage and more information on the city website.
5. **Parks and Trails Board** - Establish a permanent board to champion parks and trails in the City and advise the Council on issues related to park improvements, trail expansion and maintenance needs, as well as how to allocate CIP funds. There are other benefits to a Parks and Trails Board, too. Such a board could be useful in improving awareness of our parks and trails and in seeking outside money, such as Legacy Funds. It could also explore ways to add new energy to Wayzata through activities in collaboration with neighboring communities.

## **MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES**

The following are *immediate* maintenance needs. We recommend that those immediate maintenance needs be implemented beginning in the current year, 2012. Additional enhancements for parks are listed in Attachments B and C (pages 16 and 24) and ideas for trails are listed in Attachment E (page 27). We recommend that many or all of those ideas be considered for fiscal year 2013 and thereafter by the City Council and staff in consultation with a newly established Parks and Trails Board.

### **Beach and Marina**

- Replace or repair boardwalks at Wayzata Beach and Marina.
- Eliminate edge-dropoffs on both sides of bridge.
- Restore riprap in marina.

### **Shaver Park**

- At Shaver Park, review age, health and species of trees and create plan for replanting and sustaining them. Similar plans should eventually be prepared for *all* City parks.

### **Dakota Trailhead**

- At Dakota Trailhead, clean up lift station and water tank on northwest side of Grove Lane.

### **Section Foreman's House**

- Cut back overgrowth
- Do exterior repairs as identified by Parks Department.

### **Big Woods**

- Follow existing management plan.
- Organize community for buckthorn and garlic mustard eradication.

### **Nature Center**

- At Nature Center, clean up entrances and remove any hazards.
- Post "no dumping" signs.

### **Heritage Park**

- Remove buckthorn from hilly periphery and replant with shrubs.\*

### **Post Office Park**

- Replace or repair boardwalk.

### **Bell Courts and Watertower Area**

- Replace bathrooms and water fountain at Bell Courts shelter.
- Remove Nextel equipment from Bell courts shelter.
- Allocate and spend estimated \$20,000 (or less) for consultant to investigate the feasibility of relocating telecom equipment from watertower area.

## **SUMMARY**

The Parks and Trails Task Force thanks the City Council for the opportunity to serve our community through this process. We believe we have followed our mission and achieved our objectives. We have developed a perspective and plan for how the *parks* in Wayzata can be improved and made more attractive to all citizens of Wayzata and our visitors. Similarly, we have developed a perspective and plan for how the *trail system* in Wayzata can serve all the neighborhoods in Wayzata by providing safe and attractive access to downtown Wayzata, and links to the neighboring communities. We have reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and made recommendations for *implementing* it. We have developed a priority list for investments and improvements. And, most importantly, we have offered actionable recommendations to the City Council on how to improve existing parks and trails; how to create new trails; how to allocate existing Parks and Trails CIP funds, and where to find new options for funding. As was our intention, we have based our recommendations for action on what we believe would directly benefit the largest number of people; benefit Wayzata businesses; create safe walking trails for young families and the elderly; and encourage the use of our parks and trails.

We strongly urge the City Council to adopt our recommendations and set in place the policies and infrastructure that will help achieve the ideals of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and improve our treasured park and trail amenities for future generations.

## **ATTACHMENTS FOLLOW**

- A. Survey Results
- B. Recommendations and Ideas for Specific Parks
- C. Parks/Trails Improvement Ideas from Parks Staff
- D. Trail Map
- E. Ideas for Trails

## **Attachment A – Survey Results**

The survey was mailed with the August 2011 Portal and returned by mail. We also offered people the option of answering the survey online. By our September 15 deadline we had received 232 responses, including 80 online responses. Here are the results:

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 232 (a 13% response rate based on 1795 occupied residences in 2010 census)

AGE OF RESPONDERS: 190 of the 232 surveys contained information about the age of the person who filled out the survey.  
57% aged 60 to 89  
20% aged 50 to 59  
12% aged 40 to 49  
8% aged 30 to 39  
3% aged 20 to 29  
<1% aged 18 to 19

NUMBER OF YEARS IN WAYZATA:

| <u>Years</u> | <u>Number</u> | 112 of the 232 surveys contained information about length of residence. |
|--------------|---------------|---|
| 0-5          | 28            |   |
| 6-10         | 17            |   |
| 11-20        | 41            |   |
| 21-30        | 37            |   |
| 31-40        | 12            |   |
| 41-59        | 17            |   |

HOW MANY OF 232 RESPONDENTS HAVE USED

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 120 | Wayzata Beach and Marina (52%)         |
| 120 | Dakota Trail (52%)                     |
| 103 | The Depot Park (44%)                   |
| 87  | Luce Line Trail (38%)                  |
| 81  | Klapprich Field (35%)                  |
| 66  | Bell Tennis Courts (28%)               |
| 63  | Shaver Park (27%)                      |
| 59  | West Middle School Tennis Courts (25%) |
| 57  | Library Park (24%)                     |
| 39  | Big Woods Forest Preserve (17%)        |
| 39  | Post Office Park (17%)                 |
| 35  | Heritage Park (15%)                    |
| 30  | Margaret Circle Park (13%)             |
| 16  | Nature Center (7%)                     |

HOW OFTEN DO 232 RESPONDENTS USE THE PARK?

- 124 Weekly (53%)
- 76 Monthly (33%)
- 37 Other – some said “daily” (16%)

*\* Based on 232 respondents*

HOW SATISFIED ARE THEY WITH WAYZATA’S PARKS AND TRAILS

- 145 Very satisfied (63%)
- 39 Somewhat satisfied (17%)
- 12 Unsatisfied (5%)

*\* Based on 232 respondents*

AWARENESS – HOW MANY DID NOT KNOW OF . . .

- 4 Luce Line Trail (2%)
- 5 Wayzata Beach and Marina (2%)
- 25 Klapprich Field (11%)
- 27 The Depot Park (12%)
- 29 Dakota Trail (13%)
- 34 Big Woods Forest Preserve (15%)
- 44 Shaver Park (19%)
- 45 Library Park (19%)
- 54 Post Office Park (23%)
- 55 West Middle School Tennis Courts (23%)
- 60 Bell Tennis Courts (26%)
- 62 Heritage Park (27%)
- 110 Margaret Circle Park (47%)
- 114 Nature Center (49%)

*\* Based on 232 respondents*

| RESPONDERS RANK OBJECTIVES                        | <u>High</u> | <u>Med</u> | <u>Low</u> |
|---|-------------|------------|------------|
| Improving parks to be more attractive and useable | 65          | 93         | 34         |
| Improving trails to be more accessible & useable  | 93          | 75         | 33         |
| Safety  | 129         | 51         | 11         |
| Creating connections for business and recreation  | 86          | 48         | 38         |
| More bike and pedestrian trails for neighborhoods | 94          | 67         | 52         |
| Adding new outdoor recreation opportunities       | 54          | 80         | 70         |

*\* Based on 232 respondents*

## **Attachment B– Recommendations and Ideas for Specific Parks**

In the spring of 2011, task force members assessed conditions in specific park areas and listed ideas for improvements. The City Parks Department staff also contributed to the list. We have put some of those ideas on our high priority maintenance list (page 12). The task force hopes that other ideas listed will be considered by City staff, the City Council and a City Council-appointed advisory Parks and Trail Board. The following is a summary of the task force's findings on each park area. Park staff comments are included. Additional staff ideas are found in Attachment C (page 24) :

**WAYZATA BEACH** - Improvements and ongoing maintenance at the beach are essential. The beach is an amenity well used by local families. It is also one of the top attractions that bring visitors to Wayzata in all seasons of the year. With the painting of the beach house in 2011 and recently replaced playground equipment, the beach area is in good condition; however, longtime residents express disappointment that the dock and raft are no longer part of the swimming experience at the beach. Others are critical of recent cuts in lifeguard hours. Questions have also been raised about cars parking on the beach in winter, creating a potential for petroleum contamination of the sand. And, of course, zebra mussels may soon completely change the beach environment. *Our recommendations for Wayzata Beach improvement:*

### **Highest Priority**

- Repair or replace boardwalk from beach to the Depot. Also, use any leverage the City has to get owners of the Boatworks to replace the boardwalk fronting their property.

### **Additional Recommendations**

- Beach needs a prominent sign, possibly with garden plantings surrounding it.
- The holding pond on the east side of the beach should be cleaned out, and the berm should become a butterfly garden.
- Add bike racks.
- Add "H" dock, raft, *or both*.
- Increase lifeguard hours.
- Add signage for bathhouse hours and open/close dates.
- Add swipe cards for locks to provide more access to restrooms. Or install electronic locks to control extended opening and closing times.
- Add a fire pit at beach to create an all-seasons gathering area.
- Increase number of picnic tables and BBQ grills.
- Add a snack concession with picnic tables (outsourced to a vendor) near the beach area and Dakota Trailhead. Revenue sharing from such a concession could help fund improvements at the beach.
- To prevent petroleum-leak contamination of the beach sand, outlaw parking on the beach.

**MARINA** – The City marina is a convenient, attractive amenity available to only 100 residents selected by lottery. It is maintained in good condition. *Some recommendations for the marina:*

**Highest Priority**

- Continue maintenance/replacement of marina boardwalk.
- Improve riprap.
- Eliminate edge drop-offs on both sides of bridge.

**Additional Recommendations**

- To offset maintenance costs, increase fees based on boat size.
- Explore possibility of adding public docks at the Boatworks for visitors.
- Install low-maintenance surface under canoe racks.

**SHAVER PARK** – Located on the west end of the lakeshore area, this park is in daily use by walkers and is lightly used in warm weather for family picnics. Older teens and young adults use the volleyball area, and canoe owners use the available storage. In winter the park offers a fine sledding hill. *Some recommendations:*

**Highest Priority**

- City forester should review the age, species and health of the trees in the park and create a plan for replanting and sustaining the trees, the park's focal point.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Add bike racks.
- Add more grills and picnic tables.
- Explore the possibility of canoe or kayak rental (outsourced to a vendor).
- Add new tree varieties.
- Remake garden area around park sign using perennials.

**DAKOTA TRAILHEAD** – Although the trailhead is the responsibility of Three Rivers Park District, it is an important new factor in our lakeshore, and the City has a stake in keeping it attractive. *Some recommendations:*

**Highest Priority**

- Clean up the lift station and water tank on the northwest side of Grove Lane.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Add a snack concession with picnic tables (outsourced to a vendor) near the beach area and trailhead. Revenue sharing from such a concession could help fund improvements at the beach.
- Work with Three Rivers on improvements to the trailhead.

**DEPOT** – Wayzata’s most important historic site, the Depot has considerable potential to attract more visitors. It will be a focal point in all lakeshore planning. It is also the starting point for a historical narrative that features the railroad’s role in Wayzata. *Our task force identified a number of big and small ideas to enhance this community treasure:*

- Add signage to the public dock to inform visitors about the Depot’s history.
- Post Depot opening/closing dates and hours.
- Add bikes racks and drinking fountain.
- Explore possibility of the Depot being available for party rentals.
- Explore how street access from Lake Street could be improved.
- Explore possibility of a band shell or dance floor over the water.
- Consider permanent Adirondack chairs facing the lake.
- Consider a public bathroom to replace unsightly “porta-potty.”
- Remove overgrown trees on east side of Depot and relandscape.
- Add a pergola.
- Redo wood on picnic tables.
- Add swinging benches apropos “the town’s livingroom.”

**SECTION FOREMAN’S HOUSE** – This little known remnant of Wayzata history could become a tourist attraction as part of a narrative that tells the story of the railroad in Wayzata, but it needs significant, immediate work, or we will lose it. The Heritage Preservation Board and the Lakefront Task Force are dealing with issues involved in preserving the house. *Our task force recommends the following also be done:*

**Highest Priority**

- Trim brush and trees.
- Do necessary exterior maintenance.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Put City resources behind maintenance and restoration of the building.
- Explore the possibility of offering the house rent-free to a quality carpenter who is willing to provide restoration plans (to be approved by the City Council in consultation with the HPB) and execution of plans in exchange for 20 years of free rent. There would be some provision that part of the house would be open to the public at specific times, an historic-preservation strategy used in other parts of the country.

**BIG WOODS** – Our rare urban-forest preserve provides an opportunity to promote visits to Wayzata by families, scout troops and others interested in nature. There is a management plan for the woods, and it needs to be followed more closely. Invasive species, buckthorn and garlic mustard, threaten the health of the woods, which are currently in only fair condition. *Some improvements needed:*

**Highest Priority**

- Follow existing maintenance plan.
- Organize community for buckthorn and garlic mustard eradication.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Increase awareness of the woods through publicized activities such as maple-sugaring and guided nature walks.
- Interest volunteers in creating educational programs and tours.
- Monitor and discourage dumping by residents of adjacent apartment building.
- Continue to rely on volunteers for help in controlling invasive species.
- Improve signage at entrance to park, at trail entrance, and along trail.

**NATURE CENTER** – The nature center is in extremely poor condition and overgrown with buckthorn and garlic mustard. It was neglected and ultimately abandoned by the City after reports of illegal fires and drug use in the secluded area, public safety issues and maintenance costs. The marshy acreage, which is an important water filtering system for Lake Minnetonka, was acquired as part of the 1970's Broadway Senior Apartments project. While the land was purchased with TIF funds, no additional funds were set aside for maintenance. The boardwalk that once circled the marshy land is badly deteriorated, and staff does not consider it salvageable. Fallen trees have destroyed much of the fence surrounding the entire park area. This fence is of little use (illegal fires can still be set) and inhibits a natural wildlife corridor. At the LaSalle Ave. entrance to the nature center, people have dumped trash. There is no signage, no accessibility, and little public awareness of this public park. If there were an opportunity to build a trail on hard ground encircling the marsh, it might be worth doing, but we feel that the expense of rebuilding a boardwalk on the marshy land would not be the highest priority for City park funds at this time. *Our recommendations for the nature center are modest:*

**Highest Priority**

- Clean up entrances and remove any safety hazards.
- Post “no dumping” signs.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Remove fence (except where there is a safety concern) to allow area to serve as a wildlife corridor.
- Consider making it a wildlife preserve and adding signage.
- Explore the idea of adding an observation deck and offering naming rights for the wildlife preserve in exchange for financing the observation deck.

**HERITAGE PARK** – This well maintained park is a place for sitting quietly or strolling. It is also the scene of community events like the recent Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs. It is accessible, especially for the residents in the adjacent senior apartments. Signage is excellent; however, the only parking is at Colonial Square on the other side of Wayzata Blvd. *Our recommendations for this park:*

**Highest Priority**

- Remove buckthorn from hilly periphery and replant with shrubs.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Increase awareness of Heritage Park. Despite the park's prominent location, more than a quarter of our survey respondents said they were unaware of it.
- Hold more community events there to underscore the concepts of heritage and promote community spirit.

**POST OFFICE PARK** – This quiet park across from the post office is a peaceful resting spot one block off busy Lake Street. It seems to be lightly used, although it is accessible and adjacent to on-street parking. *We have a few recommendations:*

**Highest Priority**

- Repair or replace boardwalk.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Because of its architectural distinction, this park could be promoted as a destination for visitors on self-guided walking tours.
- Add signage on Lake Street to inform visitors about the park.
- Avoid allowing the park and grass to look slightly unkempt (as it did on our visit).
- Consider adding more variety in shade plantings.
- Dedicate more staff time to this area.
- The park could use an irrigation system.

**WEST MIDDLE SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS** – These three tennis courts were built by the City to replace previous courts at West Middle School. The courts are in excellent condition but they are not very visible to the average resident. *Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the City. Major repairs and maintenance, which includes playing surface repairs, resurfacing and fence repair is to be shared equally by the City and the school district. We recommend:*

- Add signage for “Public Tennis Courts” on Wayzata Blvd.
- Add benches on the east and west sides of the courts.
- Add recycle and trash bins near the courts.
- If feasible, add a drinking fountain.
- The courts need new windbreaks as well as signage.

**LIBRARY PARK** – This small, beautiful park on the south side of the Wayzata Library overlooks downtown and the lake. It is well maintained, has adequate parking, and is accessible from the library level. It can also be reached via stairs from Broadway Ave. There is no signage for this park, but none seems to be needed. On the north side of the library building is the Children’s Garden, which city staff says is hard to maintain. *Some recommendations:*

- Consider the addition of an attractive railing around the south side where there is a steep drop off.
- Consider a fountain or sculpture for the southeast corner of the park.
- Consider renting this space for receptions and charging a fee to cover event maintenance and property maintenance.
- Consider ornamental trees, swinging benches and a putting green on the south side.
- Redesign north side garden for easier maintenance.

**KLAPPRICH FIELD and PARK** – With a newer warming house, new lights, and well maintained skating rinks, Klapprich Field -- Wayzata’s winter showcase – is in good condition. On summer evenings the field is frequently filled with ball players. The steep hill that forms the adjacent park area contains playground equipment and is well used by children. *Our recommendations:*

- Add signage for the field and park on Wayzata Blvd.
- Add benches and picnic tables throughout the park area.
- Add trashcans and recycle bins.
- Consider a dog park in the hockey rink area during warm weather months.
- For safety of older residents accessing the field, add a railing and graded decline into the park.
- On south side of park along Wayzata Blvd., plant ornamental trees. Light in winter.
- Clean out brush on hillside.
- On east side of park, beyond hockey area, design arboretum-like area for walking with low maintenance trees and shrubs. This area could extend across the street to the north and into the park area near the Bell Courts.
- When time comes to replace warming house, consider building new facility into hillside on the east side of park and creating a multi-use building.

**BELL TENNIS COURTS and CHALET** – The courts, rebuilt in 2009, are in good condition. That is not the case with the tennis shelter/chalet, even though it was repainted and the roof was replaced in 2011. The bathrooms and water fountain are out of order. Most inappropriately, telecommunications equipment is housed in the north end of the chalet. “Danger” signage discourages people from venturing near the shelter. Meanwhile, signage for the courts and chalet is inadequate. The chalet was a gift to Wayzata from the Bell family, whose members still live in the City. By allowing the chalet to be neglected and misused, are we sending the wrong message to other families that might wish to finance a useful public asset? *Our recommendations:*

**Highest Priority**

- Replace bathrooms and water fountain. Issue swipe cards for residents, if necessary.
- Move Nextel out of chalet. Get rid of danger signs associated with Nextel.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Add trashcans and recycle bins.
- Add permanent benches and a table to the chalet.
- Paint a pedestrian crosswalk between Klapprich Park and the tennis courts.
- Add signage.
- Remove arborvitae around shelter and replace planting.

**WATER TOWER PARK AREA** – This park was the first City park. Named simply “Park” on the original City plat of 1854, the area was later informally referred to as the “Tourist Park.” It seems to have no formal name. Since the City claimed part of the park for a water tower and water treatment plant, it has become a less attractive amenity. Recently, the City has taken steps to be more sensitive to neighbors, starting with the design of the new water treatment plant, but there is a long way to go. A good place to start would be to spend the estimated \$18- to \$20,000 for a consultant to study the technical feasibility of moving the telecommunications equipment to a new location and discuss how to replace the significant revenue the City gains from telecom leases. *We recommend the following:*

**Highest Priority**

- Allocate and spend estimated \$20,000 (or less) for consultant to investigate the feasibility of relocating telecom equipment from watertower area.

**Additional Recommendations**

- Grow climbing vines on the water treatment plant to soften its appearance.
- Replace the swing set and horseshoe pit that used to be in the park.
- Add picnic tables and benches.
- Formally name the park. Obviously, we should add signage once we do settle on a name.
- Add plantings, including heritage trees.

**MARGARET CIRCLE PARK** – This small, open green space was deeded to the City as dedicated parkland by Roger Fazendin, the developer of the Margaret Circle subdivision. In warm weather, the City mows the grass, and the park is used by neighbors and others for informal play. In the winter, the City floods the park for an ice rink, used not only by the neighborhood but also by families and hockey players from outside the neighborhood. Teams of very young hockey players also stage games there. The term “low key” applies to this park asset, and our task force believes the current level of City maintenance is adequate, given our resources. *Our recommendations:*

- Someone has placed a decorative patio bench at the park, but several regular City benches would be an enhancement for the park. Neighbors might be willing to donate them to honor loved ones.
- The addition of signage would clarify that this is, indeed, a public park.
- Smooth out ruts in park surface and replant grass.

**Attachment C - Parks/Trails Improvement Ideas From Staff (Scott Roberts 4/3/12)**

- Beach:**
1. Fix Entrance with a sign and a perennial filled garden
  2. Removal Brush around holding pond (East side of beach)
  3. Re-landscape the beach berm

- Marina:**
1. Make the entrance of the bridge better and safer by adding more boulder to both sides.
  2. Make the canoe rack area easier to maintain (concrete pad or ag-lime )
  3. Board walk and Rope Replacement (Spring 2012)

- Shaver:**
1. Repair sod areas around the picnic area
  2. Edge and plant shrubs around sign to make it easier to maintain
  3. Replace post and net for the sand volleyball pit (Cost estimate \$600/in house)

- Depot:**
1. Redo area on East end of depot
    - a. Fix large depression in grass area
    - b. Plant annual Christmas tree/for annual lighting
  2. Remove large trees and re-landscape the park
  3. Fix picnic tables, benches/ swing benches
  4. Small shelter/ pergola/Swing benches

**Section Foreman House:** Trim brush around the house/ maintain the outside!

**Big Woods:** Organize a Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard removal program with volunteers, boy scouts (other)

**Nature Center:** Nothing at this time. Verify cost & everything with city council.

**Heritage Park:** Removal of buckthorn and other junk trees on the south west end of the park and replant with ornamental trees, small shrubs and perennials. Getting cost estimate.

- Post Office Park:**
1. Replace boards/ walkway with concrete or new lumber.
  2. Add irrigation system.
  3. Possible removal of cottonwood tree

Note: Look back into council minutes to see if there are expectations of the donor for this park. This park is under utilized. There are some large expenses that will occur to keep this park maintained.

**Wayzata West Middle School:** New wind breaks on fence. Price estimate for the windbreak.

**Library Park:** 1. Reduce the size of the garden area. (The plant material is very invasive and hard to control with our staff)  
2. Add Retaining wall down Broadway side of the garden

**Library Park**

South side:

1. Use of ornamental trees.
2. Add putting green and swing benches.

**Klapprich Field:** 1. Planting of ornamental trees along Wayzata Blvd  
2. Removal of underbrush on north hill side  
3. Design and plant the large area to give it an arboretum look and feel  
4. Fix erosion / road on north side of park  
5. Potential 2-3 story porch area/warming house/stairway

**Bell Court:** 1. Redo bathrooms so they can be open to the public  
2. Re-do landscaping around the building  
3. Planting of more trees

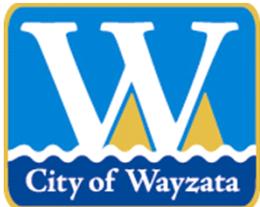
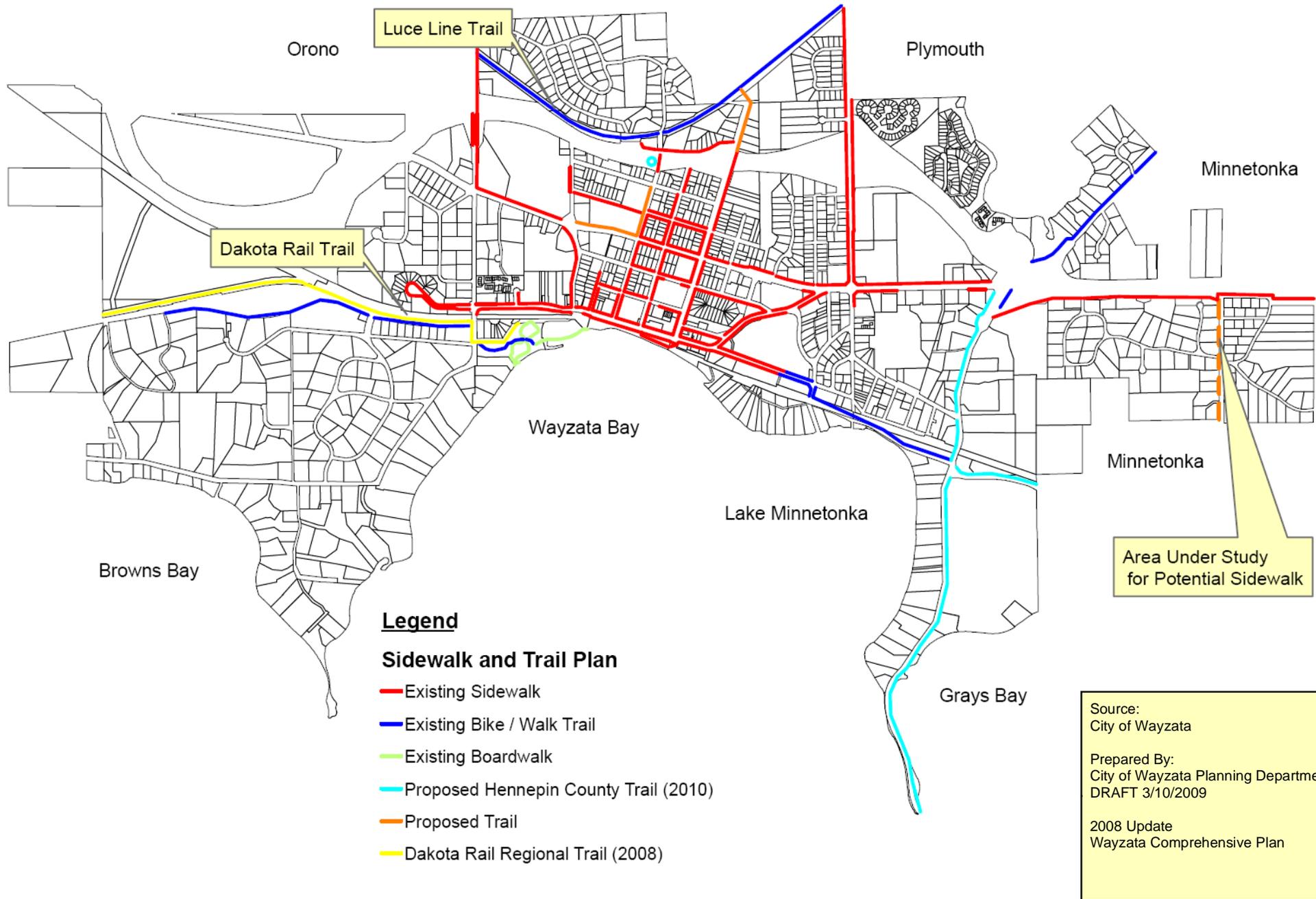
**Margaret Circle:** Smooth out ruts in the lawn and reseed

**Pocket Park:** Removal of all sea green junipers around trees clean out brush around back side. Re-landscape with new trees and shrubs. With completion of M.C.S. project.

**Dream List Ideas for the Large Park:**

1. A large fountain (In the parking lot west of Sunsets)
2. Shelter/pergola/arbor (At the Beach and Depot area)
3. Putting green/ mini golf (South Side of the Library)
4. Swing benches (Depot, Library, Beach)

**Attachment D - Existing Trail Map**



# Sidewalk and Trail Plan

## Map 5.12



## **Attachment E - Ideas for Safe New Trail Connections**

The following are *ideas* generated by the task force for specific new trails and trail promotion:

- **East/West Via Lake Street** – Connect Bushaway Road with the Dakota Trail along Eastman Lane and Lake Street. Three Rivers Park District may help pay for the connection.
- **North-South Connection** – One of the most difficult problems that Wayzata trail planners face is creating a north-south connection between the Luce Line and the Dakota Trail. One possibility would be to work with Hennepin County to provide a bikeway along one side of County Road 101 North from the Luce Line to Wayzata Boulevard, with the other side of the roadway having a sidewalk exclusively for pedestrians. This would allow a safe way to bring both bikers and walkers into the heart of Wayzata for access to the stores at Colonial Square. They could cross Wayzata Boulevard at the intersection, which already has traffic lights. Separated bike trail and pedestrian walkway would then continue south on Central Avenue to Wayzata's Lake Street and an east/west connection to the Dakota Trail.
- **North-South Connection** – We could create a north-south bike connection from the Luce Line Trail to downtown by striping Broadway Ave.
- **North/South Bushaway Road Opportunity** – Reconstruction of Bushaway Road and the County's plans for a bike trail there present an opportunity for Wayzata. A pedestrian/bike trail on the west side of Bushaway, between McGinty Road and Wayzata Blvd., could serve as a north-south connector for the LaSalle and Holdridge neighborhoods. It could also be a new connection to downtown for the Gleason Lake area.
- **North/South Old Holdridge Connection** – Extend South Central Ave sidewalks to Circle Drive area to connect with the east end of the Bay Center. This would provide increased access to downtown as well as increased safety for pedestrians and some bicyclists from neighborhoods north of the Hwy 12 bypass. For the immediate neighborhood, it would partially mitigate the problem of cut-through traffic, which is expected to increase with the development of the Bay Center.
- **Tunnel a Connection to Holdridge Neighborhood** – Increase safety for foot or bike traffic from Holdridge by creating a tunnel under the to-be-reconstructed Bushaway Road and easements over private property to connect the Holdridge neighborhood to LaSalle Ave. Alternatively, a tunnel and trail under Bushaway Road near the BP station on Wayzata Blvd. would increase safety.

- **Tunnel a Connection to Hollybrook Road cul de sac** -- A tunnel and trail under the exit ramp for 101 South could connect the townhomes on Hollybrook Road with Wayzata Blvd. and Gleason Lake Rd.
- **Ferndale Connection** – Despite it not being marked as a trail and despite the steep hill, pedestrians and bicyclists continue to use Ferndale Road between Wayzata Blvd and Lake St. Although this route for a trail was ruled out in the past, it may warrant another look.
- **Temporary Connection** – While the Bay Center remains undeveloped, it is important to provide a safe connection to downtown from the Old Holdridge neighborhood. This could be easily accomplished with an asphalt trail, extending the existing sidewalk that runs along the Bay Center property on the north side of Lake Street.
- **Increase Public Awareness** – The existing connection for the Dakota and Luce Line trails runs through downtown Wayzata, but there is a perception that bicyclists are not aware of it.
- **Use College Interns** -- Staff should consider using college interns to do labor-intensive work of grant applications for funds to expand trails.