

# DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Dakota County Western Service Center – Room L139  
14955 Galaxie Avenue  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
Thursday, May 23, 2024  
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

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## Agenda

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Public Comments:**

Anyone wishing to address the Planning Commission on an item not on the agenda may address the Planning Commission at this time (comments are limited to 5 minutes).

**IV. Approval of the Agenda**

**V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes of Meeting Held on March 28, 2024**

**VI. Dakota County 2050 Vision for Parks and Natural Resources - Information**

(Lil Leatham – Planning Office, Niki Geisler – Parks Department)

**VII. Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions**

- Discussed 2050 Vision for Parks and Natural Resources – Great Places (April), and Protected Places (May)
- Provided direction on Parks and Greenways 2025 Capital Improvement Program
- Authorized contract with Landbridge Ecological for natural resource management in Lebanon Hills Regional Park
- Authorized contract with TLALLI for the Dakota County 2050 Vision for Parks and Natural Resources
- Accepted donation of greenway easement from Smead Manufacturing in Hastings
- Received update on scope and approach for the History Interpretation Loop Trail Pilot Project

**VIII. Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach**

County Highway 91 Construction Open House	June 4 <sup>th</sup> , 4:30pm-6:30pm Douglas Town Hall, 12409 240 <sup>th</sup> Street E, Hampton
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**IX. Topics for Next Meeting** (Thursday, June 27, 2024 – 7 p.m., Western Service Center, L139)

- Solid Waste Management Plan – 2<sup>nd</sup> round of public engagement and draft policies

**X. Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates**

**XI. Adjourn**



## Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-DRAFT

Date: 3/28/2024

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

### Attendance

#### Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Kelly Kausel
- Dennis Peine
- Brady Folkestad
- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith
- Barry Graham

#### Member(s) Absent:

- Mike Cahn

#### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Georg Fischer, Physical Development Division Director
- Mary Jackson, Senior Planner
- Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor
- Gena Gerard, Sr Environmental Specialist
- Dave Magnuson, Waste Regulation Supervisor

### Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:02 p.m.
- By Chair, Commissioner Amy Hunting
- Commissioner Hansen arrived at 7:03 p.m.



## Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

## Approval of Agenda

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 9 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Approval of Minutes (from January 25, 2024)

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Kausel, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Dakota County Solid Waste Management Plan - Information (Renee Burman – Environmental Resources)

The Planning Commission received an update on the Dakota County Solid Waste Management Plan, including findings from the Fall 2023 of public engagement, adopted State Policy Plan strategies, schedule for an update of the County's plan, and review of the potential new strategies in the County plan.

Dave Magnuson, Waste Regulation Supervisor, provided an overview and comparison of the waste ordinances in place for counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Questions and comments by the Commissioners, along with responses from staff (*italics*):

Do the waste haulers inspect waste containers to check if any items violate the regulations? *Staff responded that they generally do not. However, there are periodic waste inspections at landfills, and waste that is not permitted is turned away. Waste haulers will often notify customers of waste that has been improperly placed in the wrong containers and, in some instances, will charge an additional fee for the added expense of managing waste that has contaminated recyclables.*

Do haulers transport recyclable materials overseas? *Staff responded that some coastal states have done this in the past, but Minnesota has not shipped recyclables overseas because the overland transportation costs are too high.*

Does the United States accept regulated industrial debris from Canada? *Staff responded that they were not aware of this practice and did not believe Minnesota had received waste.*

What are recycling requirements for parades and festivals? *Staff responded that large events with more than 300 people are required to provide recycling containers.*

The Planning Commission discussed recycling at schools and commented that the lunch rush is so short in some schools that students do not have time to recycle properly. *Staff responded that a recycling coordinator at Dakota County works with schools, and they will let the recycling coordinator know of the issue.*

A comment was made that food rescue organizations do not seem to have an efficient way of collecting and disposing of organic waste. *Staff responded that they are aware of that particular challenge, and staff are exploring opportunities to make that system more efficient.*

The Planning Commission discussed the MPCA's new requirements for collecting organics. It was noted that there will be challenges with collecting organics from different types of residential properties and that, in some circumstances, more bins may be difficult to manage for people living in apartments, townhouses, or places that do not have the space. A comment was made that providing some flexibility in the County's new ordinance may be necessary to collect organic waste differently in those circumstances.

The Planning Commission discussed providing educational materials to help residents learn what can and cannot be recycled. Several Planning Commissioners mentioned using the County's recycling guide booklet or going to the County's website online to learn about what can and cannot be recycled. A comment was made that there are occasional discrepancies between what the County says can be recycled and what waste haulers say can be recycled. *Staff responded that residents should follow the County's guidelines when a discrepancy exists because the County works directly with local waste processors to prepare annually updated educational materials. Waste hauling companies are often national companies that use nationally prepared educational materials, and unfortunately, these messages don't always align with local waste processing requirements.*

The Planning Commission discussed public engagement to date and made the following comments:

- The County did a good job gathering surveys from over 900 respondents as part of the public outreach effort for the plan update.
- Based on some of the comments received, it appears that residents are looking for convenience but that haulers are more focused on efficiency.
- The County should explore ways to get more responses from schools and businesses in future engagement rounds. Perhaps a meeting with students would be a good approach.
- Consider meeting with school staff, such as the nutrition director, as opposed to the principal, as staff at this level may be able to spend more time working toward solutions.
- Make sure to engage businesses and to address potential costs of recycling
- Engage seniors and provide recycling refresher courses in senior living facilities

The Planning Commission discussed the MPCA waste management targets in the State plan. There were several comments from planning commissioners that the MPCA's landfilling target of 5% appears to be unrealistic. Planning commissioners asked about the future of waste management and whether any new waste-to-energy facilities are being planned. Does Dakota County need to meet the landfilling target in the state plan to approve our plan? *Staff responded that the MPCA's landfilling target appears to be aspirational and would be very difficult, if not impossible, to reach in the current waste management environment. There are no plans for a new waste-to-energy facility in the region, although there have been private proposals for anaerobic digestors and energy recovery facilities that have not been implemented due to economic feasibility. Dakota County does not need to meet the 5% landfilling target for plan approval but does need to include enough optional strategies to fulfill the point thresholds that have been established by the MPCA. The Planning Commission will be reviewing these at a future meeting.*

The Planning Commission discussed Dakota County's current Solid Waste Plan and waste regulation requirements compared to other metro area counties. It was noted that Dakota County and Hennepin County appear to have more regulation than some of the other counties. *Staff responded that Dakota County has more requirements than some neighboring counties due to how waste is collected and processed across the metro area. Dakota County does not own or operate waste collection or processing facilities like some other counties. There are two large private landfills and several other landfills located in Dakota County. In this privatized system, waste is regulated through County ordinances. County inspectors periodically inspect waste that arrives at landfills.*

The topic concluded with staff providing an overview of the next steps, including when a draft of the plan with recommended strategies will be presented to the Planning Commission.

## Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- Provided direction on County Park System Plan scope, schedule, and major topic areas
- Provided direction on County Solid Waste Management Plan within framework of State Solid Waste Management Plan
- Authorized contract for design of Veterans Memorial Greenway memorials
- Authorized natural resource restoration contracts for Lebanon Hills and Lake Byllesby regional parks

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Solid Waste Management Plan Public Intercepts	April, TBD
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## Topics for next meeting (Thursday, April 25, 2024)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided an overview of next month's meeting topics:

- None at this time

## **Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:**

No updates or announcements were given.

## **Adjournment**

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Folkestad, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. **Voice Vote:** Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County  
Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator

# DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE:** May 23, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM:** Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems Vision Plan

**PREPARED BY:** Lil Leatham

## PURPOSE

Provide Planning Commission:

1. An update on the planning process
2. An opportunity to provide input on desired updates to the 2030 vision

## BACKGROUND

In 2024 the Dakota County Parks Department will be updating the 2030 Parks System Plan with a Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems 2050 Vision Plan. This plan will focus on vision and goals and provide overall policy direction. The 2050 Vision Plan will inform updates of the 2017 Natural Resources Management System Plan and 2017 Parks Visitor Services Plan in 2025.

The 2008 Park System Plan outlined an ambitious 2030 vision for Great Places, Connected Places, and Protected Places. Link to 2030 Park System Plan:

<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks/About/ParkMasterPlans/Documents/ParkSystemPlan.pdf>

Since the 2030 vision was adopted in 2008, much progress has been made implementing the vision in all areas. A key question for the plan update is what changes are needed to the 2030 vision, goals, and objectives to ensure that Dakota County is a leader in parks, greenways, and natural systems in 2050?

## ATTACHMENTS

Schedule

Background (*note that background information on Greenways is in development*)

Discussion

## QUESTIONS

The following questions are intended to help assist in review of the packet materials.

1. *What changes to the 2030 Vision, Goals, and Objectives would you like to explore in Great Places?*
2. *What changes to the 2030 Vision, Goals, and Objectives would you like to explore in Connected Places?*
3. *What changes to the 2030 Vision, Goals, and Objectives would you like to explore in Protected Places?*

# PARKS, GREENWAYS, AND NATURAL SYSTEMS 2050 VISION PROJECT SCHEDULE

## COUNTY BOARD INPUT

	2024																							
	Feb		March				April					May				June				July				
	19-23	26-1	4-8	11-15	18-22	25-29	1-5	8-12	15-19	22-26	29-3	6-10	13-17	20-24	27-31	3-7	10-14	17-21	24-28	1-5	8-11	15-19	22-26	29-2
Project phase	Feb - April 100% of work staff-led											May-Dec consultant assistance												
Rescope project																								
Consultant RFP and contracting										CB														
Research																								
PDC 2008 Vision and Goal Review					V#1				V#2			CRG #1	V #3	PLANC			V #4							CRG #2
Extend VSP and NRMSP goals									PDC				PDC											
Community Engagement																								
Draft Vision and Goals																			PLANC				PDC	
Prepare Draft Vision Plan																								
Public Review Period (21 days)																								
Final plans and approvals																								

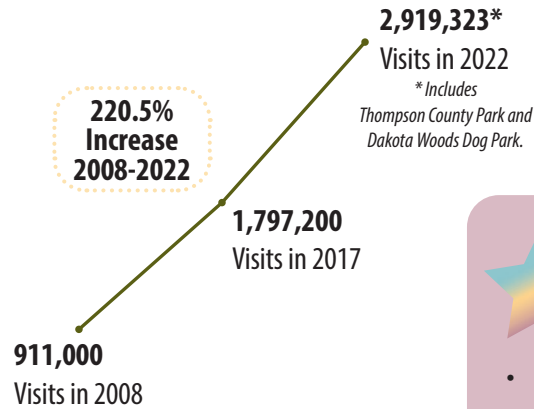
	2024																	
	August				Sept				Oct				Nov				Dec	
	5-9	12-16	19-23	26-30	2-6	9-13	16-20	23-27	30-4	7-11	14-18	21-25	28-1	4-8	11-15	18-22	25-29	2-6
Project phase																		
Rescope project																		
Consultant RFP and contracting																		
Research																		
PDC 2008 Vision and Goal Review		CRG #3																
Extend VSP and NRMSP goals																		
Community Engagement																		
Draft Vision and Goals																		
Prepare Draft Vision Plan			PLANC				PDC	CB										
Public Review Period (21 days)																		
Final plans and approvals															PLANC	PDC		CB

Legend	
Planning Commission	PLANC
Physical Development Comm.	PDC
PDC Parks Vision Discussion	V
County Board (Consent Action)	CB
County Board Role of Government Workshop	CRG
Community Engagement	
Project Focus Area	

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

Date	Committee	Action
March 19	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Vision Workshop #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems 2050 Vision Plan introduction</li> </ul>
April 16	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Vision Workshop #2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Places</li> <li>• Approve extended goals for 2017 Visitor Services Plan</li> </ul>
April 23	County Board	Authorization to enter into consultant contract
May 7	County Board Strategic Planning Workshop	Role of Government
May 14	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Vision workshop #3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protected Places</li> <li>• Approve extended goals for 2017 Natural Resource Management System Plan</li> </ul>
June 11	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Vision Workshop #4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected Places</li> </ul>
July 9th	County Board Strategic Planning Workshop	Funding and Budgeting
July 23rd	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Provide direction on updated vision and goals
July 30 <sup>th</sup>	County Board Strategic Planning Workshop	Health and Accessibility (Vision statement for accessibility)
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Recommend release of draft plan for public review
September 24th	County Board	Draft plan released for public review
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	Recommend to adopt final plan
December 3rd	County Board	Adopt plan

# PARK, GREENWAY, AND NATURAL AREAS LAND AND VISITOR INVENTORY



**Pt. 1**  
**We've grown a lot**



## KEY FINDING

- Dakota County Park System has grown substantially in the areas of Greenways and annual visits since 2008.

Table 1.1 Percent Change for Dakota County Population, Parks Acreage, Greenway Trail Miles, Inholdings, and Annual Visits, 2008-2022

	2008	2022	% Change
County Population	391,613	443,905	12%
County Population as a Percentage of Metro Area	12.14%	12.0%	-1.17%
Parks	6	7	17%
Park Acres	4,750	6,280	32%
Park Conservation Areas	0	7	New
Park Conservation Area Acres	0	204	New
Inholdings Left to Acquire - Acres	1,025	569.4	-44.45%
Greenways	3	10	233%
Greenway Trail Miles	14	46	229%
Annual Visits	911,000	2,919,323	220%

## Land Conservation Program – Natural Resource Restoration & Management

Dakota County is also protecting **11,620** acres in land conservation.



**5,165** total acres  
of natural areas  
protected



**6,455** total acres  
of agricultural land  
protected



**96** total miles  
of shoreline  
protected

Table 2.1 Ownership Compared to Other Implementing Agencies

Implementing Agencies	Regional Park, County Park, & Park Reserve Acreage	Parks % of Regional Park System	Acres per 1,000 people	Total open regional trail miles	Miles per 1,000 people
Anoka	8,538.4	13.37%	23.67 acres	97.7 miles	.27 miles
Carver	712.3	1.12%	6.74 acres	37.6 miles	.36 miles
Dakota	6,209.67	9.72%	14.25 acres	46 miles	.14 miles
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	3,128.8	4.90%	7.36 acres	51.8 miles	.12 miles
Ramsey	5,442.7	8.52%	9.91 acres	28.4 miles	.05 miles
Scott	4,298.8	6.73%	28.74 acres	12.9 miles	.09 miles
St. Paul	1,956.67	3.06%	6.3 acres	29.5 miles	.10 miles
Three Rivers Park District	23,850.2	37.34%	18.78 acres	190.2 miles	.15 miles
Washington	7,194.6	11.26%	27.17 acres	22.1 miles	.08 miles
Total Average	6,814.68	10.67%	15.84 acres	60.75 miles	.15 miles

**Dakota County's**  
park acreage and regional  
trail miles are close to the  
regional average.

**Pt. 2**  
**We are keeping pace**  
compared to other  
Metro agencies  
in acreage



Table 3.1 Dakota County Comparison to Metro System

	Metro Area	Dakota County 2020, Actual	Dakota County 2020, based on 13.9% share	Dakota County Projected 2050 share
Population	3,163,104	439,882 = 13.9%	439,882	529,027 = 13.75%
Park Acres	54,465 acres	6,280 acres	7,571	7,962
Parks	56	7	8	8
Special features	8	0	1	1
Bridging facilities	11 (proposed, Three Rivers)	0	2	2
Regional trails	55	10	8	8
Trail miles	415 miles	46 miles	58	58
Annual visits (2022)	69,000,000	2,919,323	9,591,000	9,487,500
Suburban Population (excluding Minneapolis & St. Paul)	2,427,041	18.1% = 439,882 / 2,427,041	N/A	17.89% = 529,027 / 2,956,778
Suburban annual visits (excluding Minneapolis & St. Paul)	34,300,000	2,919,323	18.1% share = 6,208,300	17.89% share = 7,462,932

Population Data Source: Met Council Regional Forecasts, 2024. Dakota County 2050 share of suburban regional visitation is based on applying the percent increase of the Metro region to suburban annual visitation.

**Pt. 3**

**We are behind in visitors based on our share of the regional population**

This is where we would be if we had our share of the regional park system.

**Dakota County Parks would need 3,288,977 more visitors to meet its regional suburban share of visitation in 2022.**



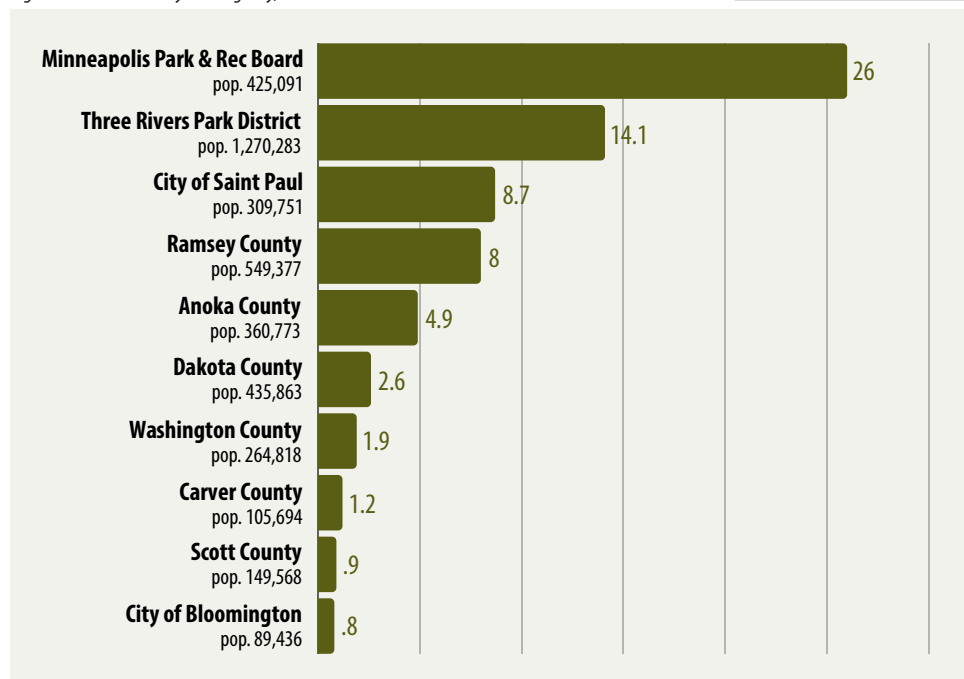
## KEY FINDINGS

- Residents are visiting parks at an increasing rate.
- However, Dakota County is still lacking in its share of the Metro area's regional park visitation.

Despite being the third most populous area of the ten implementing agencies, Dakota County is 6<sup>th</sup> in visitation.

Figure 3.2 2022 Visits by Park Agency, in Millions

## AGENCY COMPARISON



Data Source: 2021 Met Council Annual Use Estimates, July 2023.

Pt. 4

Visitor demographics do not reflect  
County resident demographics



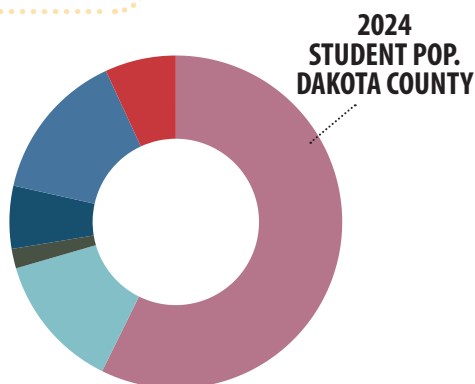
## KEY FINDINGS

- Although visitation has increased since 2008, park and greenway users are not representative of the makeup of the county population. Key populations are underrepresented, including people of color, women, youth, the elderly, and low-income individuals.

**People of Color** in Dakota County visited County Parks at a rate of **33 %** of their expected representation and visited County Greenways at a rate of **28.4%** of their expected representation.

Unless noted, numbers used in this analysis do not include Thompson County Park and Dakota Woods Dog Park.

The current student population in Dakota County shows that future generations will be more diverse.



Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education, 2023-2024 Public School Enrollment.

Table 4.1 2021 Visitor Snap Shot

## 2021 Visitor Snap Shot



		Under - Represented		On - Target		Over - Represented	
		PARKS	GREENWAYS	PARKS	GREENWAYS	PARKS	GREENWAYS
AGE	12 - 17	✓	✓				
	18 - 24	✓	✓				
	25 - 34			✓	✓		
	35 - 54					✓	✓
	55 - 74					✓	✓
	75 +	✓	✓				
HOUSEHOLD INCOME							
	Less than \$40,000	✓	✓				
	\$40,000 - \$79,999	✓	✓				
	\$80,000 +					✓	✓
GENDER							
	Male					✓	✓
	Female	✓	✓				
RACE							
	People of Color	✓	✓				
	White					✓	✓
ETHNICITY							
	Hispanic/Latino	✓	✓				

Data from 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study and 2022 US Census ACS Estimates, Table DP05.

Figure 4.2 Public School Student Population in Dakota County, 2024

Race	
Dakota County Public Schools, 2023-2024	
White	57.3%
Black or African American	13.2%
American Indian & Other Indigenous Peoples	1.9%
Asian	6.1%
Pacific Islander	0.1%
Hispanic or Latino	14.6%
Two or more races	6.9%

Race by the Numbers  
Dakota County

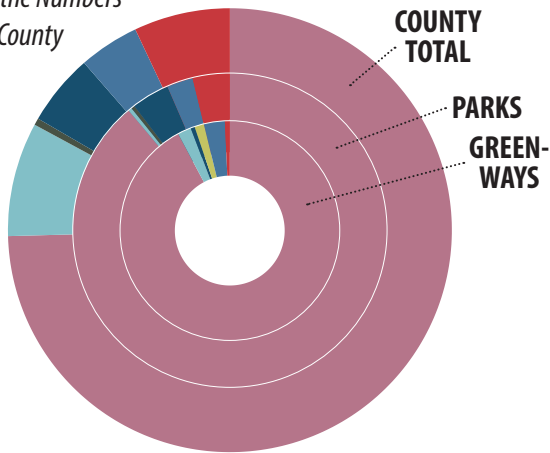


Figure 4.3 Racial Demographics in Dakota County, in Dakota County Parks, and in Greenways Visitation

Race	Dakota County Total Population, 2022	Dakota County Parks Visitation, 2021	Dakota County Greenway Visitation, 2021
White	74.50%	88.86%	92.20%
Black or African American	8.30%	0.37%	2.00%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.50%	0.37%	0.00%
Asian	5.20%	3.90%	0.60%
Pacific Islander	0.10%	0.00%	1.40%
Some other race	4.40%	2.69%	3.09%
Two or more races	7.00%	3.81%	0.71%

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study and 2022 US Census ACS Estimates, Table DP05.

Race - Metro Area & Regional System

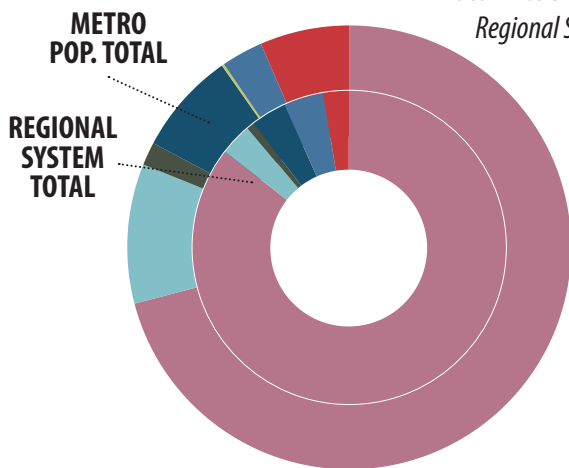


Figure 4.4 Racial Demographics in the Twin Cities Metro Area and for Regional Park System Visitation

Race	Metro Area Population, 2022	Regional System Visitation, 2021
White	79.50%	85.47%
Black or African American	11.40%	3.32%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1.90%	0.80%
Asian	8.40%	3.66%
Pacific Islander	0.20%	0.07%
Some other race	3.40%	4.08%
Two or more races	7.30%	2.60%

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study and 2022 US Census ACS Estimates, Table DP05.

Dakota County and the Metro region as a whole are both underrepresented by people of color in park and greenway visitation. The gap in Dakota County is considerably more pronounced.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Women are underrepresented at parks and greenways in Dakota County. This is a similar trend to the Regional Park System, though for greenways in Dakota County it is especially pronounced.
- Dakota County had the lowest female visitation on regional greenways of all the agencies in the 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study.

COUNTY TOTAL

Female  
50.3%

Male  
49.7%

## GENDER

PARKS

Male  
54.3%

Female  
44.2%

GREENWAYS

Male  
66.7%

Female  
35.4%

Figure 4.5 Gender in Dakota County, in Parks, and in Greenways Visitation

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study; US Census ACS 2022, Table DP05.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- Less than \$40,000
- \$40,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 +

### COUNTY TOTAL



### PARKS



### GREENWAYS



### METRO TOTAL



Figure 4.6 Household Income of Dakota County Residents, Dakota County Park and Greenway Visitors, and Twin Cities Metro Residents

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study; US Census ACS 2022, Table S1901.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Low- and middle-income households are underrepresented at Dakota County parks and greenways.
- The median income for Dakota County was \$97,501 in 2022. Dakota County has more residents in higher-income ranges compared to the Metro area.

### Pt. 5

Some communities have less park acreage\*

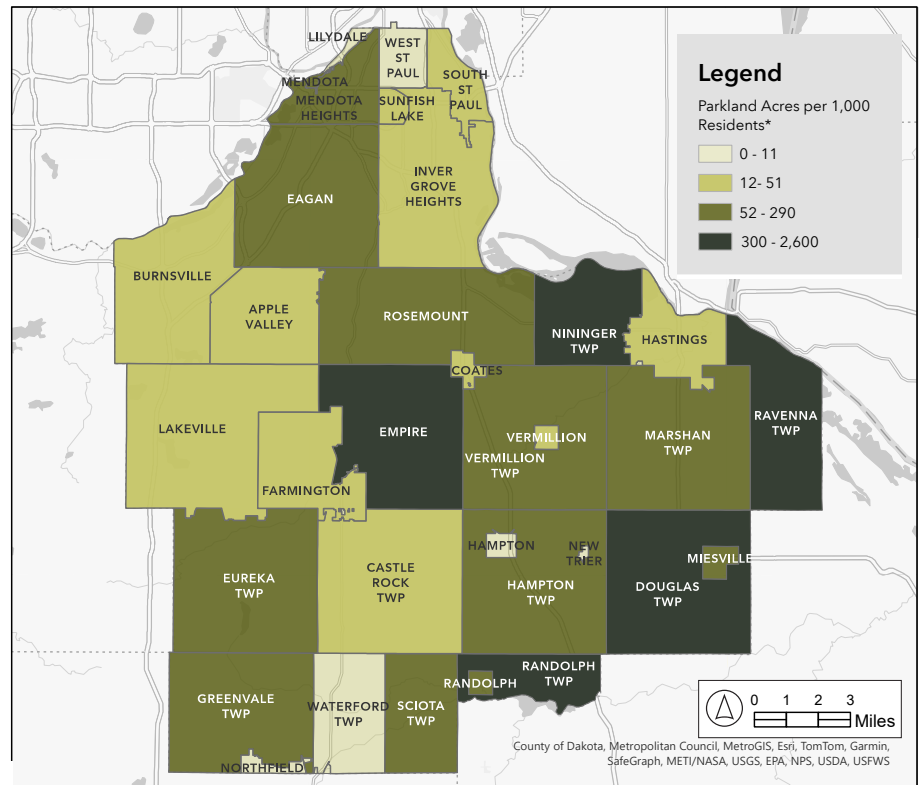
## KEY FINDING

- Three areas of the county that have fewer park acres per 1,000 people:
  - Northeast: West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Inver Grove Heights
  - West: Burnsville, Apple Valley, Lakeville and Farmington
  - East: Inver Grove Heights

\*Includes: City parks, County Parks, County Park Reserves, County Park Conservation Areas, US Fish and Wildlife Services Areas, and MnDNR Management Units

The NRPA national agency median in 2023 was 10.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

Figure 5.1 Parkland per 1,000 Residents in Dakota County Municipalities, 2023, Map





## KEY FINDINGS

- Dakota County is lacking in its share of the Metro area's regional park visitation.
- Dakota County Parks and Greenways are under-represented by youth, people of color, lower-income individuals, and women.

Dakota County  
Parks would need  
**3,288,977** more visitors  
to meet its regional suburban  
share of visitation  
in 2022.

## 2021 Visitor Snap Shot

	Under - Represented		On - Target		Over - Represented	
	PARKS	GREENWAYS	PARKS	GREENWAYS	PARKS	GREENWAYS
<b>AGE</b>						
12 - 17	✓	✓				
18 - 24	✓	✓				
25 - 34			✓	✓		
35 - 54					✓	✓
55 - 74					✓	✓
75 +	✓	✓				
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>						
Less than \$40,000	✓	✓				
\$40,000 - \$79,999	✓	✓				
\$80,000 +					✓	✓
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male					✓	✓
Female	✓	✓				
<b>RACE</b>						
People of Color	✓	✓				
White					✓	✓
<b>ETHNICITY</b>						
Hispanic/Latino	✓	✓				

Data from 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study and 2022 US Census ACS Estimates, Table DP05.

## AGENCY COMPARISON

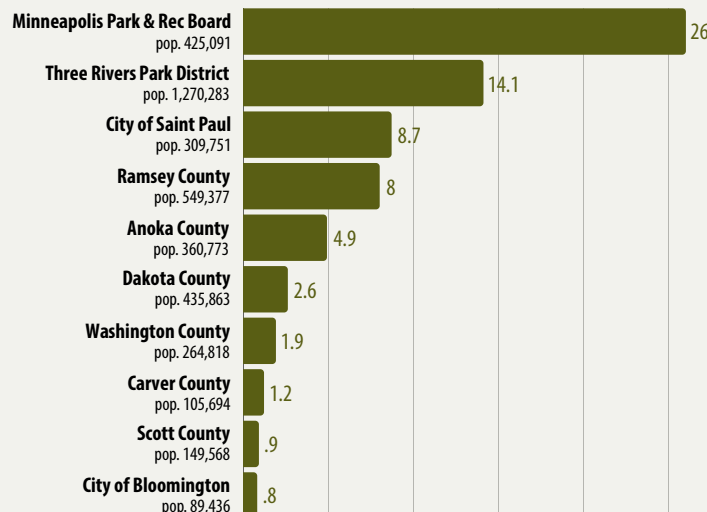


Figure 1.1 2022 Visits by Park Agency, in Millions\*

Despite being the third most populous area of the ten implementing agencies, Dakota County is 6<sup>th</sup> in visitation.

\*Does not include Thompson County Park

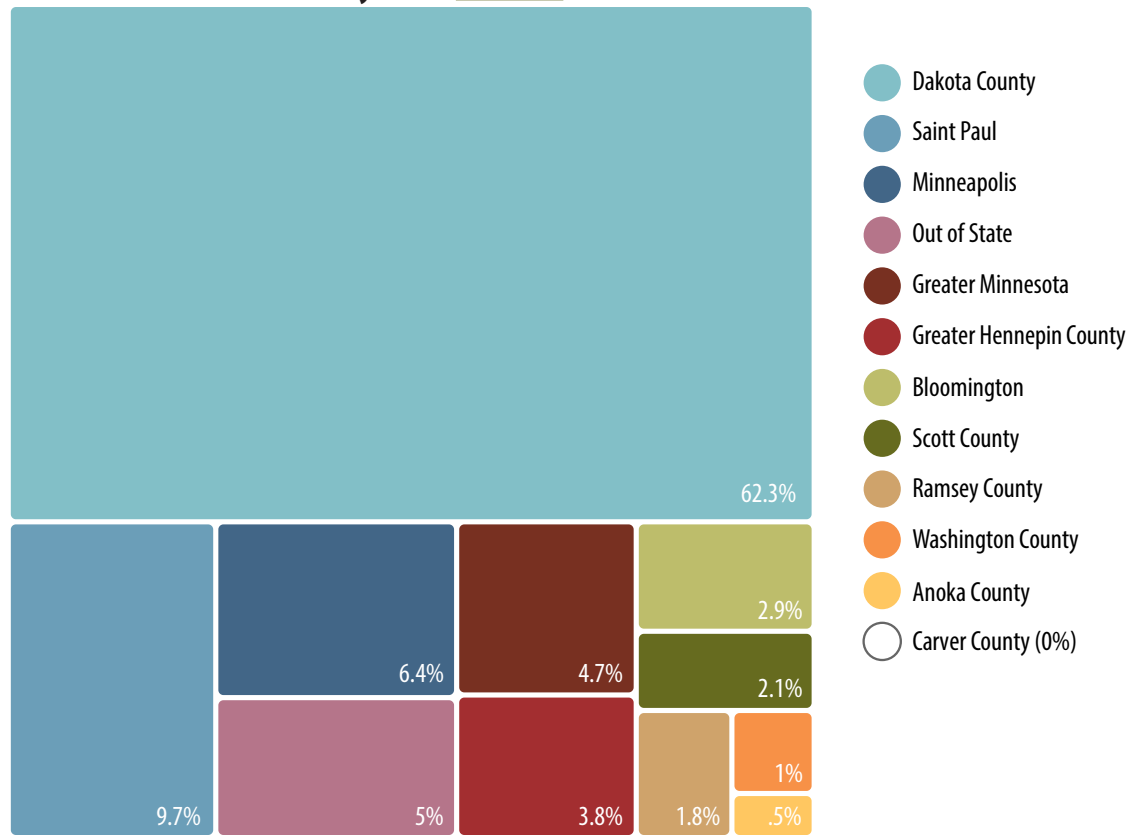
Data Source: 2021 Met Council Annual Use Estimates, July 2023.



## KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of visitors to Dakota County parks live in Dakota County.
- Of the agencies that Dakota County residents visit besides Dakota County Parks, Scott County, Saint Paul, and Washington County Parks are visited most by residents.
- Park export rate is no longer the issue it was, at 37.7% in 2021 versus 68% in 2008.
- Favorite activities to do in Dakota County Parks: 1st: Hike/walk, 2nd: Biking, 3rd: Mountain Biking, 4th: Dog walk/dog park, and 5th: Running.

### Where do Dakota County Park visitors live?



### What park districts are Dakota County residents visiting?

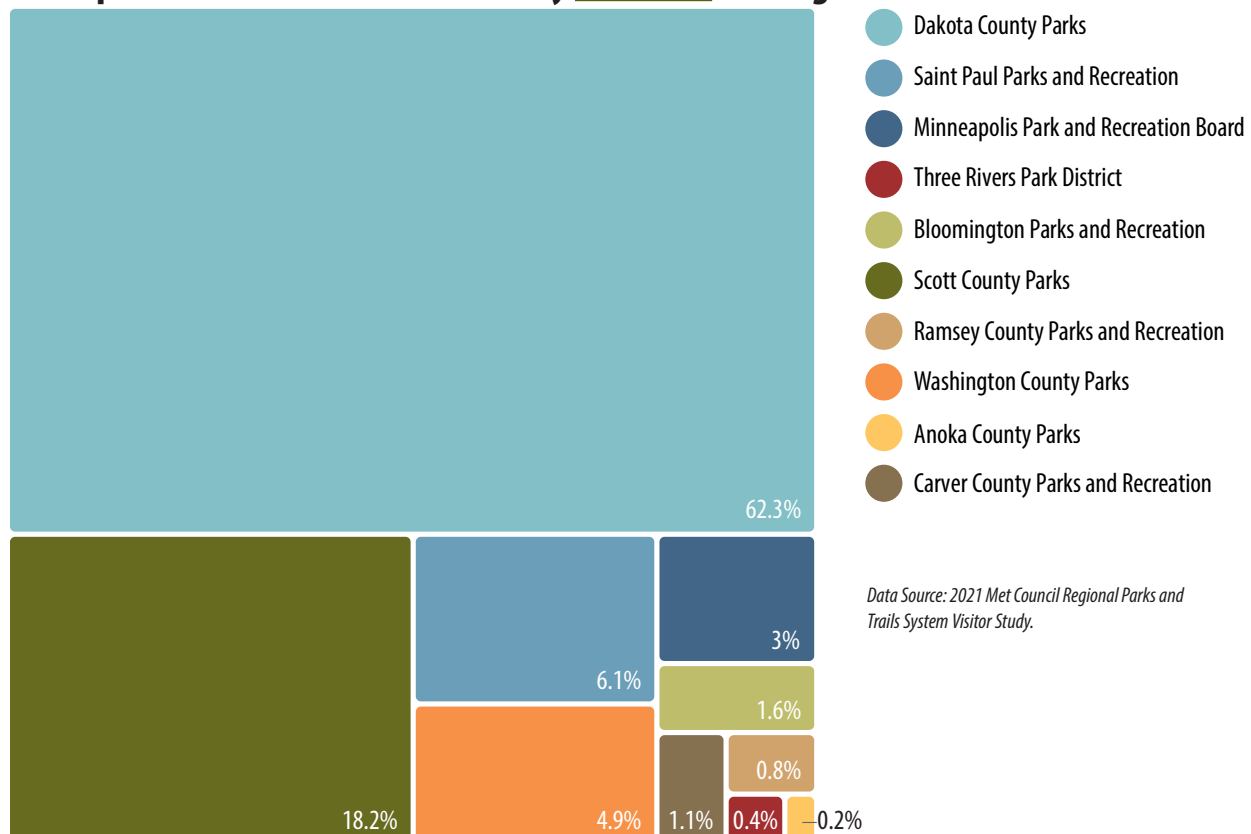


Figure 1.2 Percentage of visitation local to agencies.

Agency	Percentage of local visitors
Anoka County	70.4%
Three Rivers Park District	66.5%
Scott County	64.9%
Minneapolis Park & Rec. Board	63%
Ramsey County	63%
Bloomington	62.4%
Dakota County	62.3%
Washington County	62.1%
Saint Paul	54.7%
Carver County	47.9%

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study.



Figure 1.3 10-Minute Drive-Time to Dakota County Parks Map

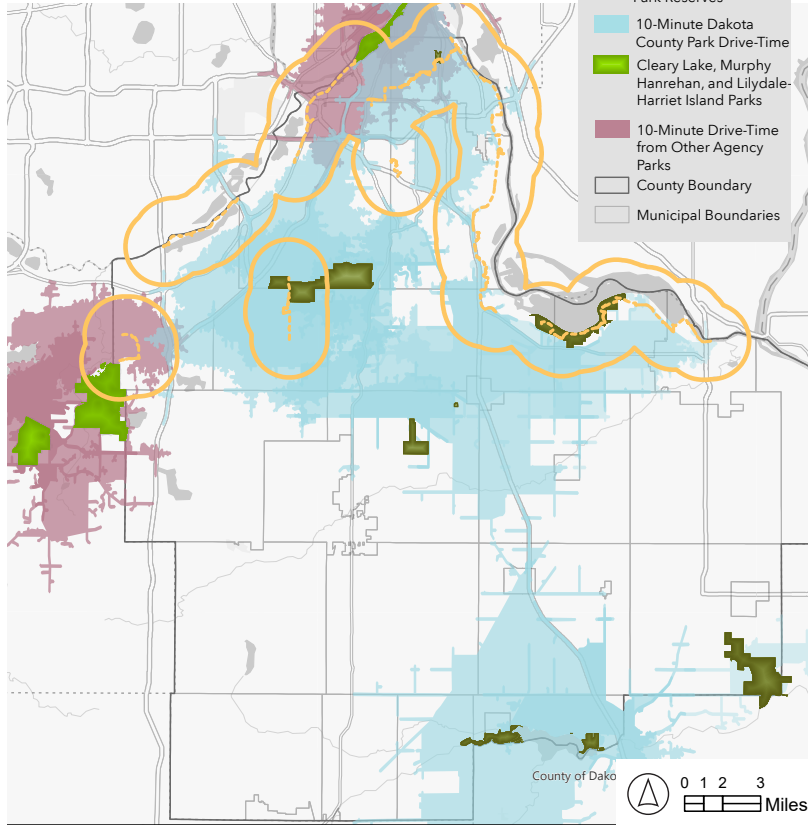
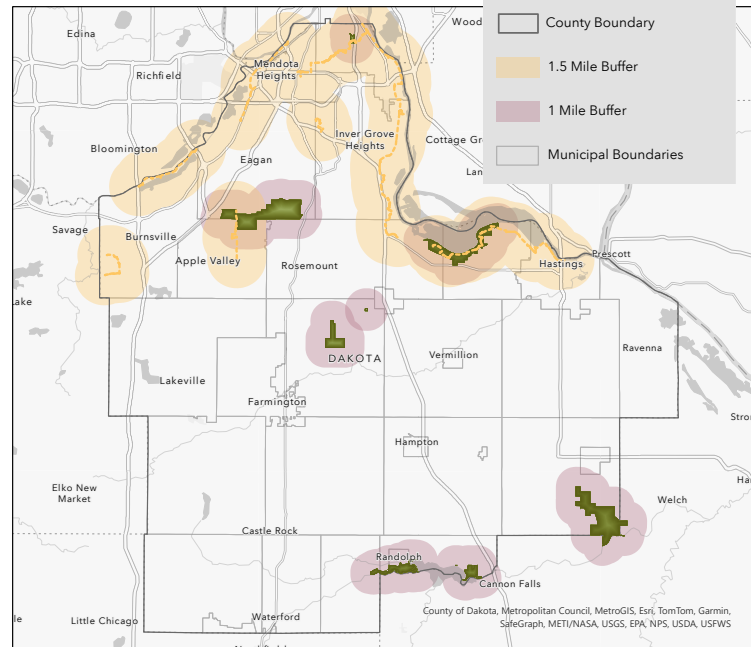
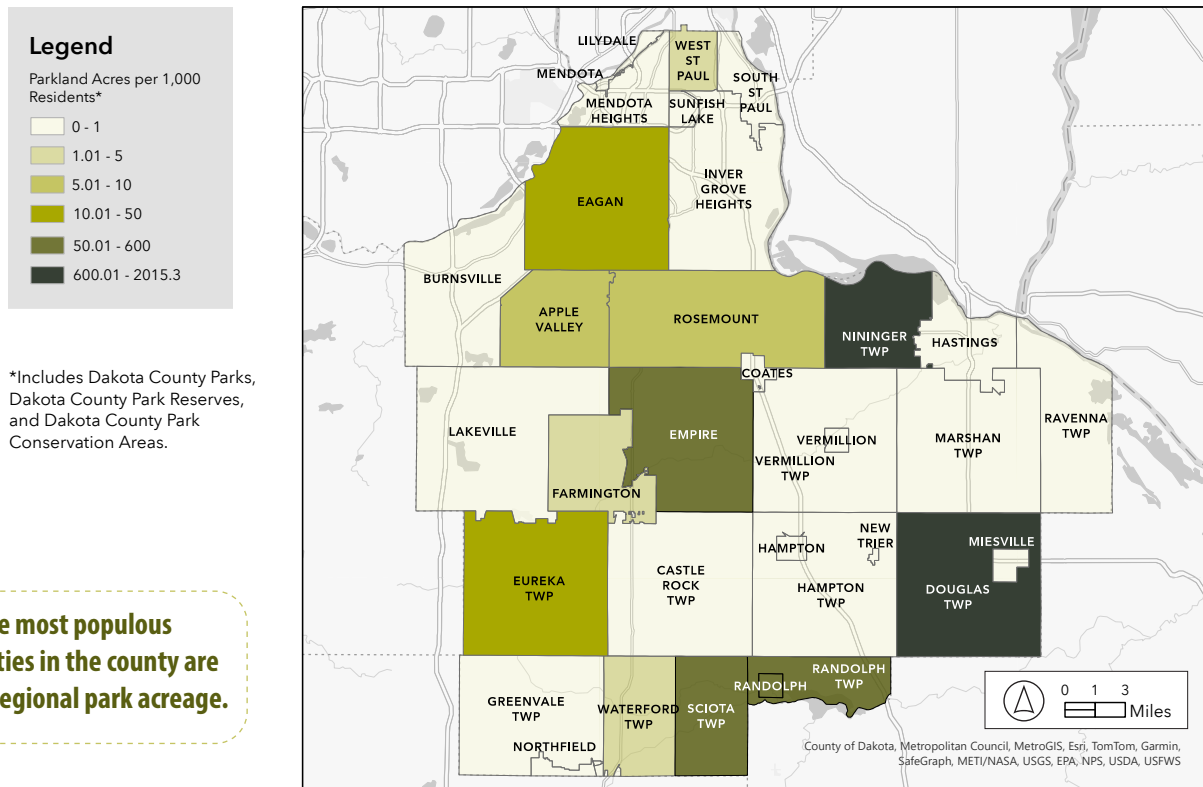


Figure 1.4 Walkable Distance to Existing Dakota County Parks and Greenways Map



Parks accessible by transit: Thompson County Park  
Transit serves Mississippi River Greenway, River to River Greenway, Minnesota River Greenway, and North Creek Greenway

Figure 1.5 Parkland per 1,000 Residents in Dakota County Municipalities, 2023, Map



Some of the most populous municipalities in the county are lacking in regional park acreage.



## KEY FINDINGS

- The county is committed to promoting inclusivity and diversity with its staff, programming, and planning processes.
- Dakota County Parks has made focused outreach efforts to reach target populations, including Spanish-speakers, partnership with community leaders who represent Latinx, Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color, and hiring multilingual staff.
- Dakota County Parks utilized a Met Council Equity Grant to fund equitable community engagement for Creating Equitable Spaces Along the Mississippi River Greenway, including a bilingual survey in Spanish.
- The County hired an Indigenous Liaison in 2023.
- Parks compensates people for their time when working with community members on programming/partnerships.



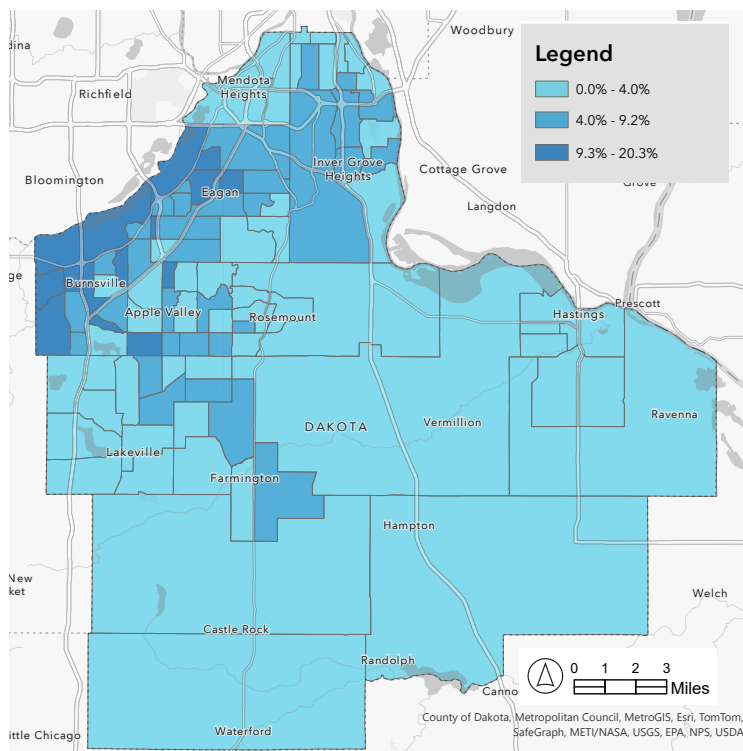
### Pt. 1 Dakota County Parks Current Equity Work

Specific outreach programs that have been created to address equity in the outdoors include: partnership with Caminatas Domingueras, District 196 Diversity in Skiing Program, Nature Walks with Latino Families series, Fiesta en la Nieve, Somali Girls Leadership Group Day in the Park, and the Community Liaison Program.



**People of Color in Dakota County visited County Parks at a rate of 33 % of their expected representation and visited County Greenways at a rate of 28.4% of their expected representation.**

Figure 3.1 Percentage of Residents Who Speak English Less Than "Very Well," 2021, Map



Data Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021, Table DP02.

**30% of Dakota County adults whose income is below 200% of the poverty line have been in a situation where they have felt they are not accepted because of their race, ethnicity, religion, or immigration status.**

Data Source: Dakota County Adult Health Survey, 2023.



### Pt. 2 Race & Cultural Equity

#### Findings from the Met Council Report (2014): "Regional Park Use among Select Communities of Color"

##### Preferred Outdoor Activities (from Focus Groups):

- Asian Immigrant/Asian American focus groups identified their top three preferred activities as walking, fishing, and rest or relaxation.
- African Immigrant focus groups most frequently noted playground use, walking, and being with family.
- Hispanic participants most frequently noted celebrations and parties, followed by picnicking and/or barbecuing, and spending time with family.
- African American participants identified picnicking and/or barbecuing as the most frequent preferred activity, followed by biking and basketball.
- Walking, playground use and swimming or going to the lake were the top three most frequently noted preferred activities among diverse composition focus groups.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY + OBESITY



**28% of Dakota County adults whose income is below 200% of the poverty line do not engage in any leisure-time physical activity.**

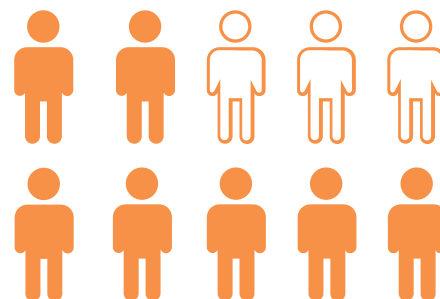
- Only 31% of adults below 200% of the poverty line met “Healthy People Physical Activity Guidelines,” i.e. moderate exercise 30 or more minutes, 5 or more days per week; vigorous exercise 20 or more minutes, 5 or more days per week; or both; during an average week.
- Only 46% of all Dakota County adults surveyed met these standards.



**32% of all Dakota County adults surveyed walked or biked to get to and from places in 2023.**

- Walking and biking was low for those with lower and higher incomes (33% with incomes below 200% of the poverty line walked or biked and 31% at or above 200% of the poverty line walked or biked).

*Data Source: Dakota County Public Health, Dakota County Adult Health Survey, 2023.*

Pt. 2  
Health Equity

**71% of Dakota County students were physically active for at least 60 minutes, three or more days a week in 2022.**  
**On average, 18% of students were physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.**  
**However, this is a decrease from 2016, when about 20% of students engaged in 60 minutes of physical activity daily.**

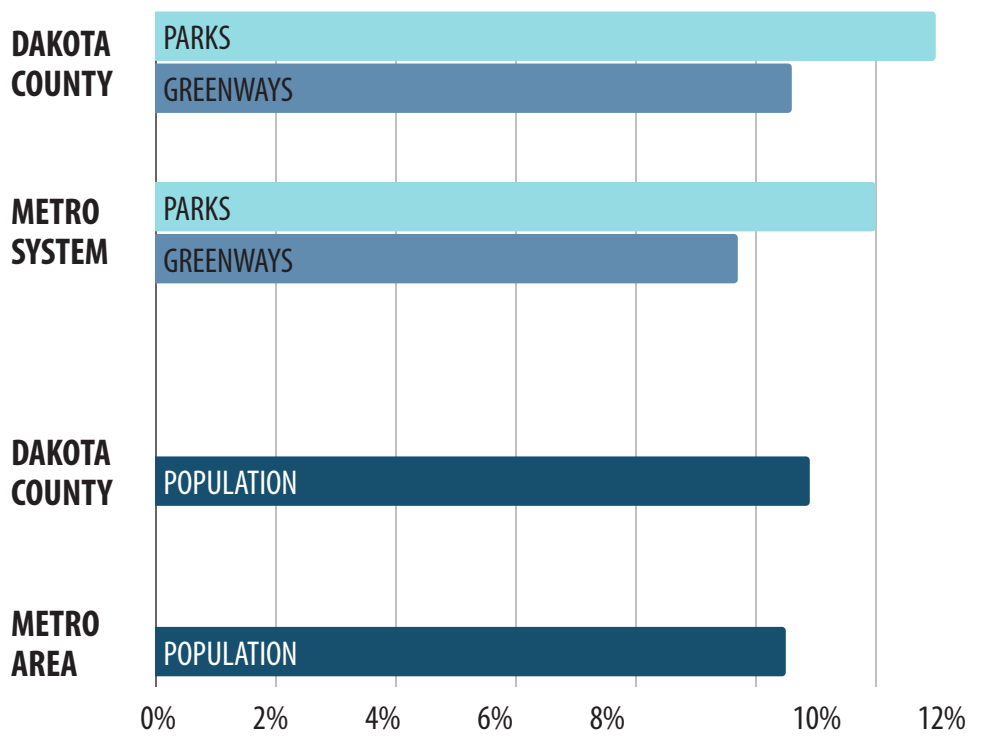
## Pt. 4 ADA Accessibility



### KEY FINDINGS

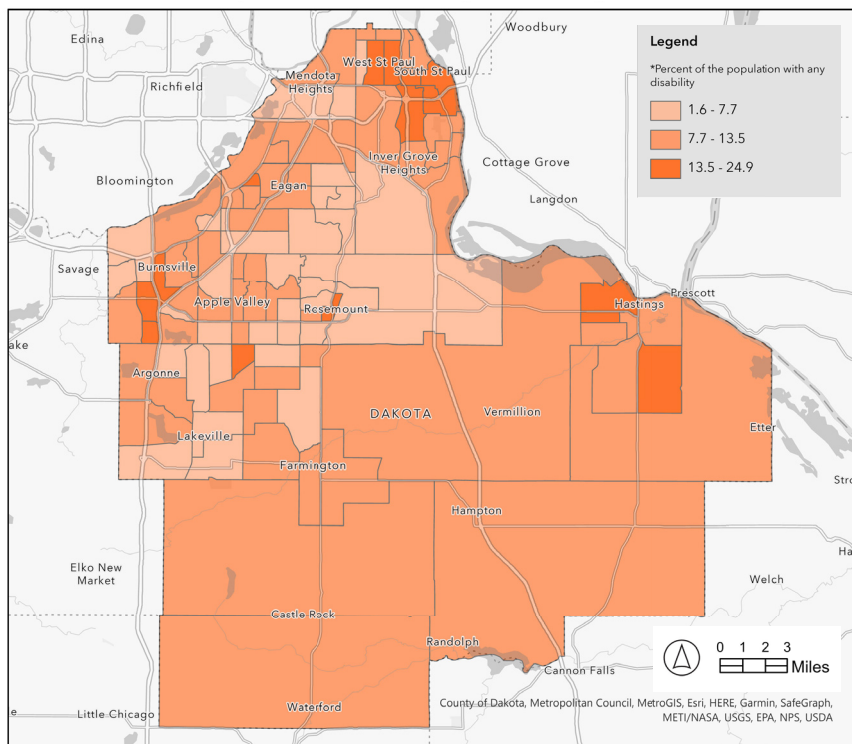
- 10.9% of Dakota County residents have a disability.
- Most prevalent disabilities: Cognitive difficulty (5%), independent living difficulty (4.9%), and ambulatory difficulty (4.5%).
- 18.2% of those 65-74 years of age have a disability; 38.2% of those 75+ have a disability.
- About 12% of groups visiting a Dakota County Park surveyed by Met Council had a resident with a disability.
- Dakota County meets state standards for accessibility for new facilities.
- Dakota County has added accessible trails in the last 10 years.

Figure 4.1 Percentage of Residents with a Disability visiting Dakota County Parks and Greenways, Metro Regional Parks and Greenways, in Dakota County, and in the Metro Area, 2021 & 2022



Data Sources: 2021 Met Council Regional Park and Trail System Visitor Study and US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2022, Table DP02.

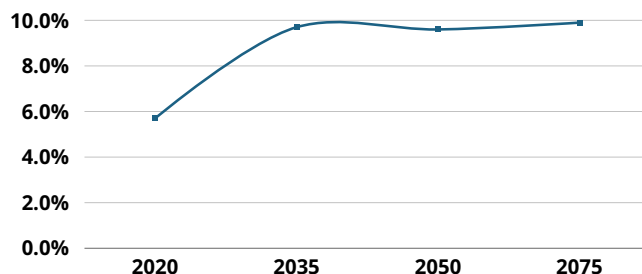
Figure 4.2 Percentage of the Population with Any Disability in Dakota County, 2021, Map



Data Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2022, Table DP02.

The number of visitors with disabilities in Dakota County is similar to the number in the Regional System, and both are similar to the region's proportion. Dakota County Parks have a slightly higher visitation of residents with disabilities.

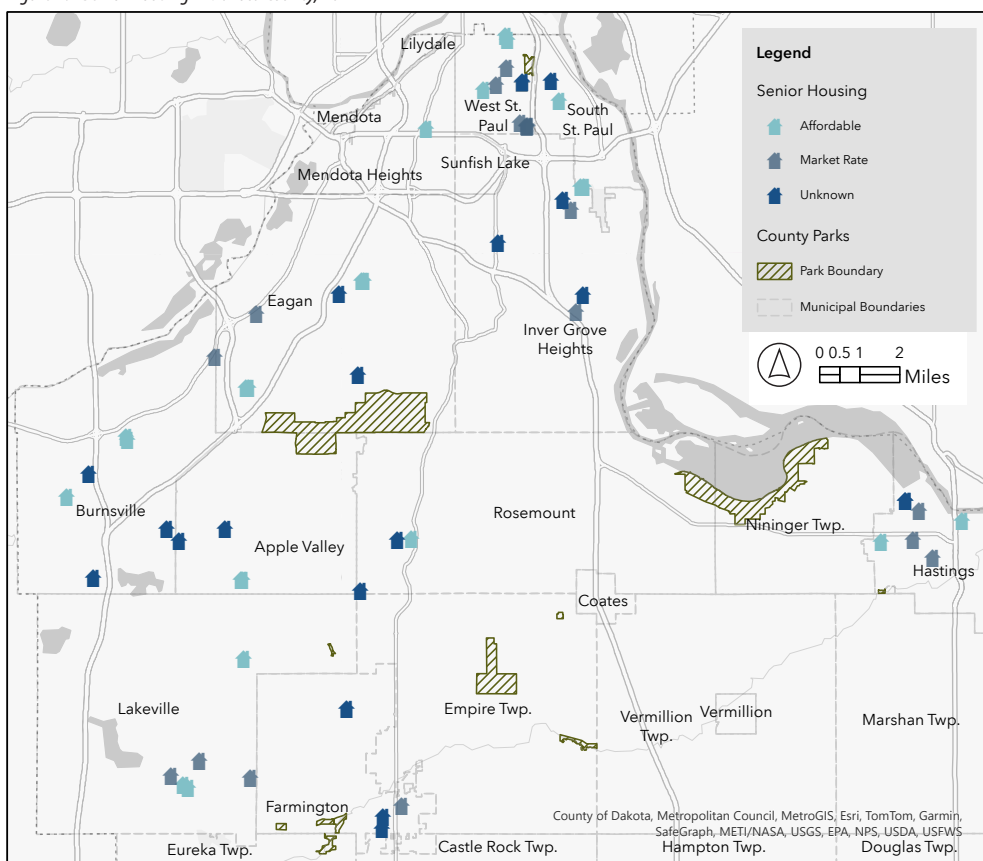
Figure 4.3 Percentage of Dakota County Residents age 75+ in 2020, 2035, 2050, & 2075.



Data Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center, Long-Term Population Projections for Minnesota, 2020.

**Thompson County Park is currently the Dakota County Park in proximity to the most senior housing units in the county.**

Figure 4.4 Senior Housing in Dakota County, 2022



Data Source: Dakota County GIS, 2022.

### Dakota County Parks and Greenways In Proximity to Elderly & Disabled Populations

Residents with an ambulatory difficulty	River to River Greenway (7.2% of people within 1 mi.)
	Spring Lake Park Reserve (4.7% of people within 3 mi.)
Residents with any other disability	River to River Greenway (6.3% of people within 1 mi.)
	Whitetail Woods Regional Park (5.3% of people within 3 mi.)
Residents Age 65+	Big Rivers Regional Trail (27.5% of people within 1 mi.)
	Spring Lake Park Reserve (17.4% of people within 3 mi.)

Data Source: Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Equity Tool, ACS 2019.

### Pt. 5 Youth

### Dakota County Parks with Play Areas:

- Thompson County Park\*
- Lebanon Hills Regional Park
- Spring Lake Park Reserve
- Whitetail Woods Regional Park
- Lake Byllesby Regional Park\*

\*Play areas with inclusive elements

### City-Owned Nature Play Areas in Dakota County:

- Patrick Eagan Park (Eagan)
- Terrace Oaks East (Burnsville)
  - Schwarz Pond Park (Rosemount)

## KEY FINDINGS

Feedback from *Dakota County Parks Awareness and Promotion Plan* on youth and parks:

- Every community engagement group (except the American Indian group) discussed visiting the parks for spending time with their families and children.
- Participants with children expressed concern for safety of children with dogs and litter in parks.
- Several family representatives noted that more families would be able to participate in programming if childcare were to be provided.

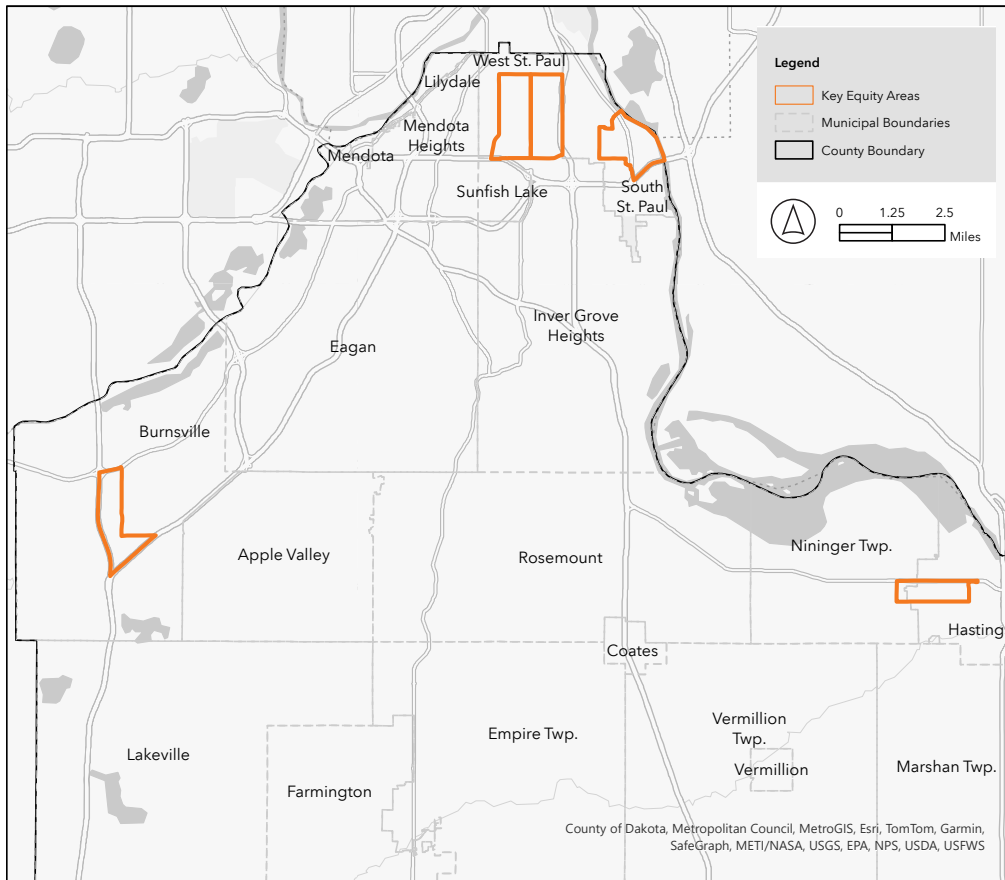
### Dakota County Parks and Greenways In Proximity to Children and Youth

Residents under age 15	North Creek Greenway (26% of people within 1 mi.)
	Whitetail Woods Regional Park (22% of people within 3 mi.)
Residents age 15-24	Vermillion Highlands Greenway (15.8% of people within 1 mi.)
	Miesville Ravine Park Reserve (13% of people within 3 mi.)

Data Source: Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Equity Tool, ACS 2019.

\*Excludes Thompson County Park

Figure 6.1 Key Equity Areas in Dakota County



Data Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2021, Tables DP02, DP05; Met Council's Equity Considerations Dataset.

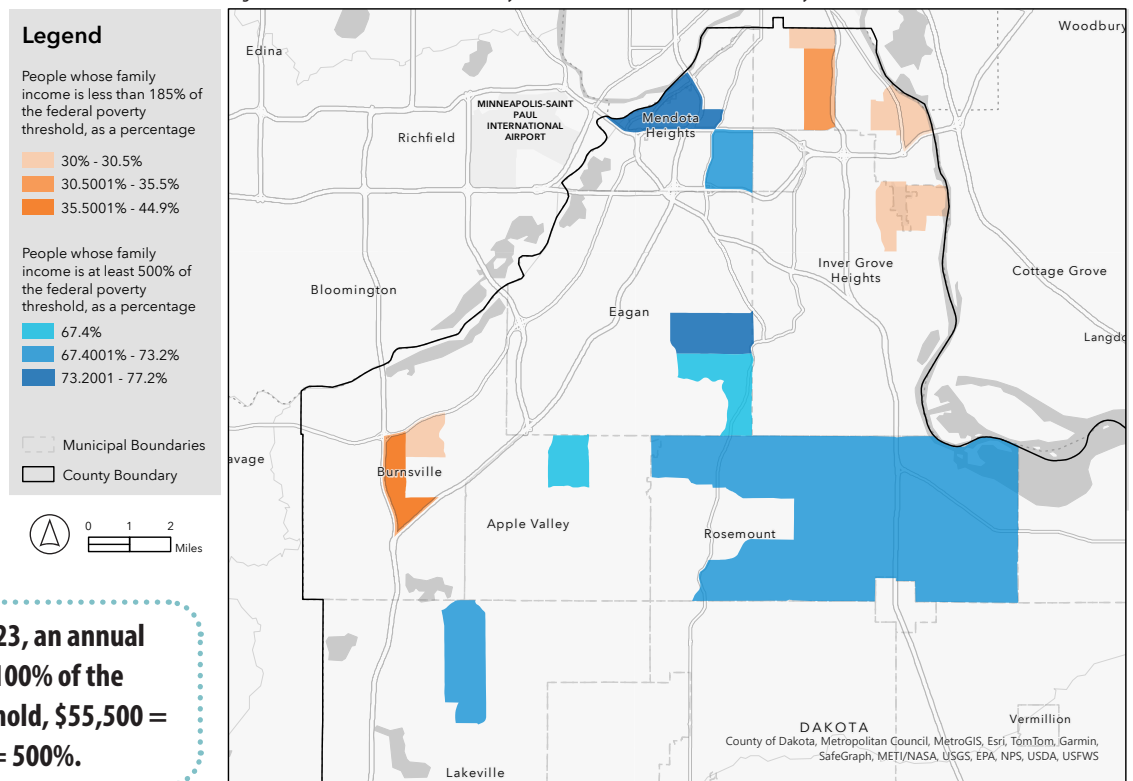
## Pt. 6 Income Inequality

**Key Equity Areas** are Census tracts that are high in two or more of the following categories:

- Proportion of the population with no vehicle
- Proportion of residents who speak English less than "very well"
- Number of people of color
- Proportion of residents with any disability
- People whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold

These Key Equity Area tracts are in West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Hastings, and Burnsville.

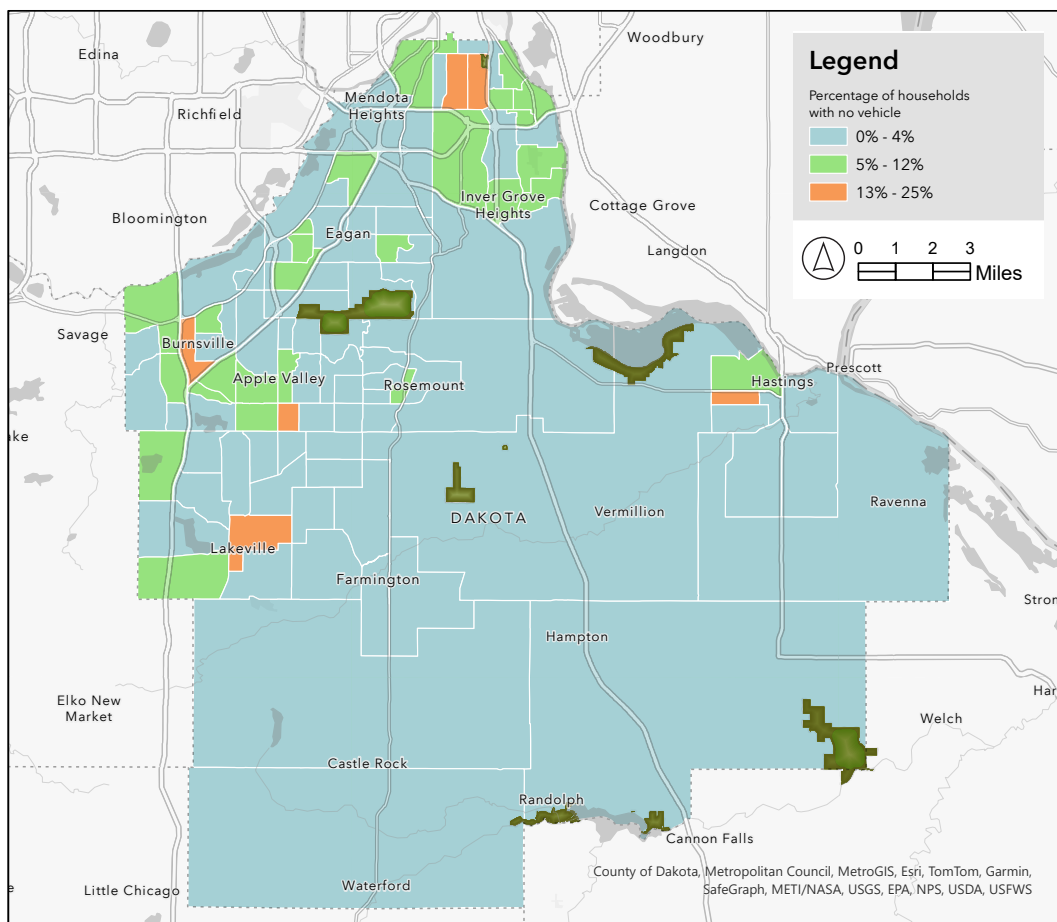
Figure 6.2 Areas of Concentrated Poverty & Concentrated Affluence, Dakota County, 2021



For a family of 4 in 2023, an annual income of \$30,000 = 100% of the federal poverty threshold, \$55,500 = 185%, and \$150,000 = 500%.

Data Source: Metropolitan Council, Equity Considerations for Place-Based Advocacy and Decisions in the Twin Cities Region, 2021.

Figure 6.3 Proportion of Households with No Vehicle, Dakota County, 2021



Residents without vehicle access would have a difficult time reaching some of Dakota County's parks.

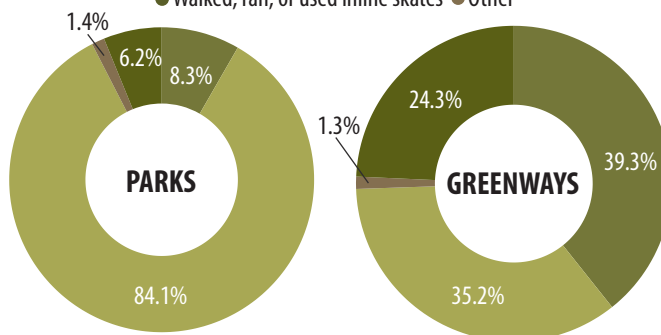
Data Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2021, Table DP04.

## TRAVEL MODE

Figure 6.4 Travel Mode to Dakota County Parks & Greenways

● Bicycle ● Car or other vehicle  
● Walked, ran, or used inline skates ● Other

Most Dakota County Park visitors arrive by car or other vehicle and most Dakota County Greenway visitors walk or bike to the trails.



Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study.



## Dakota County Parks Facilities

### Parks and County Park Conservation Areas

- 7 parks, 6,280 acres
- 7 County Park Conservation Areas, 204 acres



### Buildings

- 34 operated buildings
- Square footage of operated buildings: 79,586 sf



### Campgrounds

- Lebanon Hills (93 sites)
- Lake Byllesby (83 sites)
- Whitetail Woods (5 cabins)



### Youth Camp

- YMCA Day Camp Spring Lake at Spring Lake Park Reserve
  - Held at Camp Spring Lake Retreat Center
  - Archery games, outdoor education, arts, canoeing, swimming



### Bathrooms

- 17 permanent and semi-permanent restrooms
- 2 facilities with restrooms available free of use to public, not included above



### Play Areas

- 6 play areas
  - 5 for ages 5-12
  - 1 for ages 2-5
  - 1 inclusive play structure
  - 2 nature play areas



### Other Facilities

- 1 community garden
- 1 dog park

Figure 7.2 Drivers for Growth: Accessible Lake Loops/Lakeside Trails

Parks	2008	2023	Notes
Lebanon Hills	0	1	McDonough Lake
Spring Lake	0	1	Spring Lake
Lake Byllesby	0	1	Lake Byllesby
Miesville Ravine	0	0	
Thompson	0	1	Thompson Lake
Whitetail Woods	NA	1	Empire Lake
Greenways	2008	2023	
Mississippi River Greenway	0	2**	Lake Rebecca and Spring Lake
Minnesota River Greenway	0	1	Black Dog Lake
River to River Greenway	0	2	Marthaler Lake, Thompson Oaks Lake
Vermillion River Greenway	NA	0	
Rosemount Greenway	NA	1	Horseshoe Lake
Vermillion Highlands Greenway	NA	0	
Lake Marion Greenway	NA	2	Lake Marion, Sunset Lake
North Creek Greenway	0	2	Cobblestone Lake, East Lake
Total	0	14	

Units in italics are new since 2008

\*\* Spring Lake is along both the Mississippi River Greenway and is in Spring Lake Park Reserve

Figure 7.3 Signature Facilities at Dakota County Parks

Dakota County Parks	Signature Facilities
Lebanon Hills Regional Park	Staffed Visitor Center Swimming Beach Trail recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain bike trails</li> <li>• Equestrian trails</li> <li>• Hiking trails</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing trails</li> </ul>
Spring Lake Park Reserve	Mississippi River views and access Bison Indoor event space rental
Lake Byllesby Regional Park	Lake recreation Camping
Whitetail Woods Regional Park	Camper cabins Events Largest lake loop Sledding hill Nature play area
Miesville Ravine Park Reserve	Trout fishing Cannon River access
Thompson County Park	Accessible Playground Community gathering Indoor event space rental



CURRENT PARK OFFERINGS

Figure 7.1 Current Dakota County Park Offerings

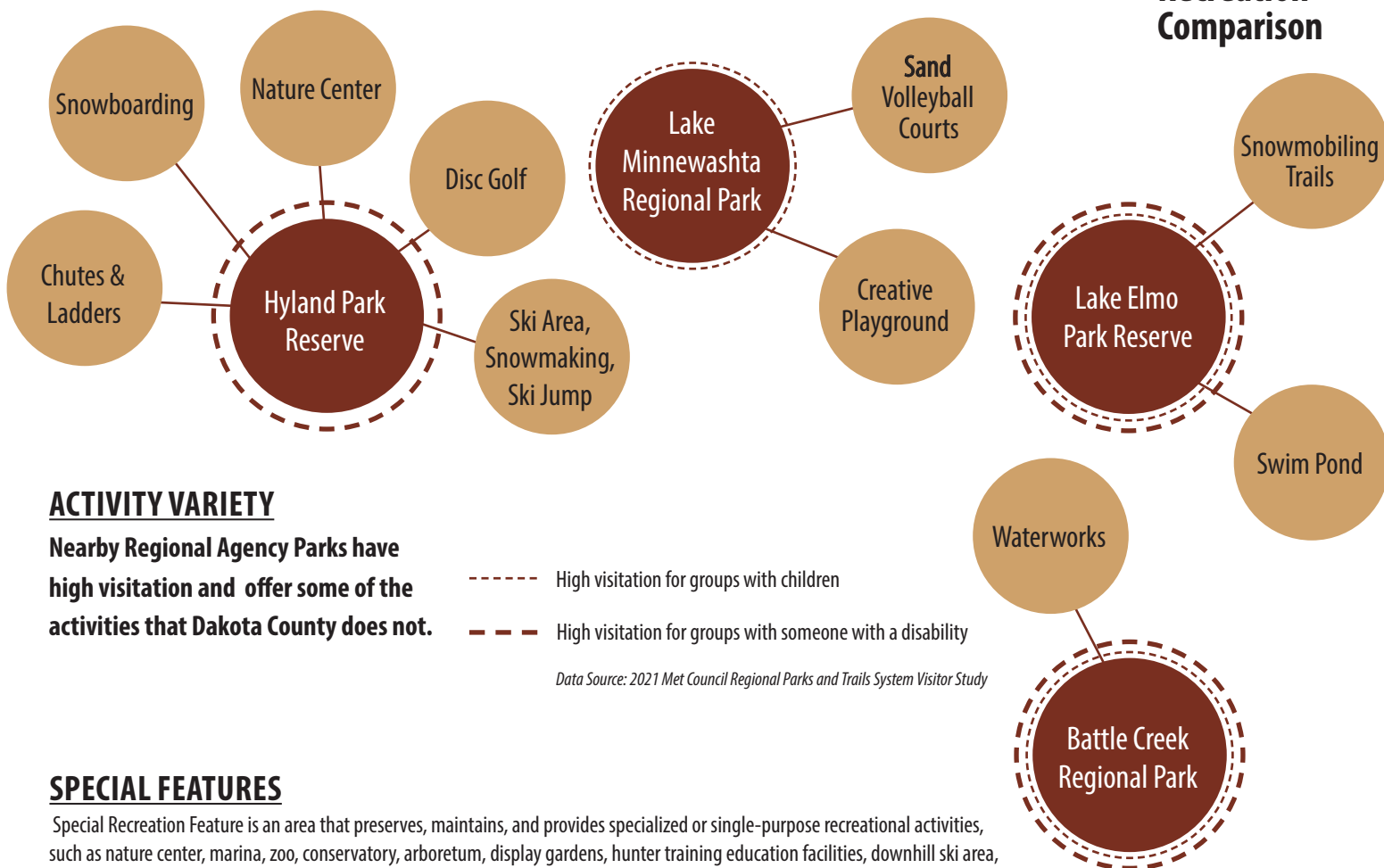
Parks	Picnicking	Fire Ring	Ice Fishing	Visitor Center	Hiking	Snow-shoeing	Dog On-Leash	Biking	Fishing	Geocaching	Dog Sled Trails	Play Areas	Sledding Hill	Cross-Country Skiing
Dakota Woods Dog Park														
Lake Byllesby Regional Park														
Lebanon Hills Regional Park														
Miesville Ravine Park Reserve														
Spring Lake Park Reserve														
Thompson County Park														
Whitetail Woods Regional Park														

Parks	Ice Skating	Kicksledding	Skate skiing	Mountain Biking	Equestrian Trails	Camp-grounds	Nature Education	Archery	Gardening	Swimming	Paddling	Camper Cabins	ADA-Accessible Trail
Dakota Woods Dog Park													
Lake Byllesby Regional Park													
Lebanon Hills Regional Park													
Miesville Ravine Park Reserve													
Spring Lake Park Reserve													
Thompson County Park													
Whitetail Woods Regional Park													

\*Equestrian trails in Whitetail Woods available through a partnership with MnDNR at Vermillion Highlands

**Dakota County Parks provides lower-cost, nature-based activities.**

## Recreation Comparison



Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study

## ACTIVITY VARIETY

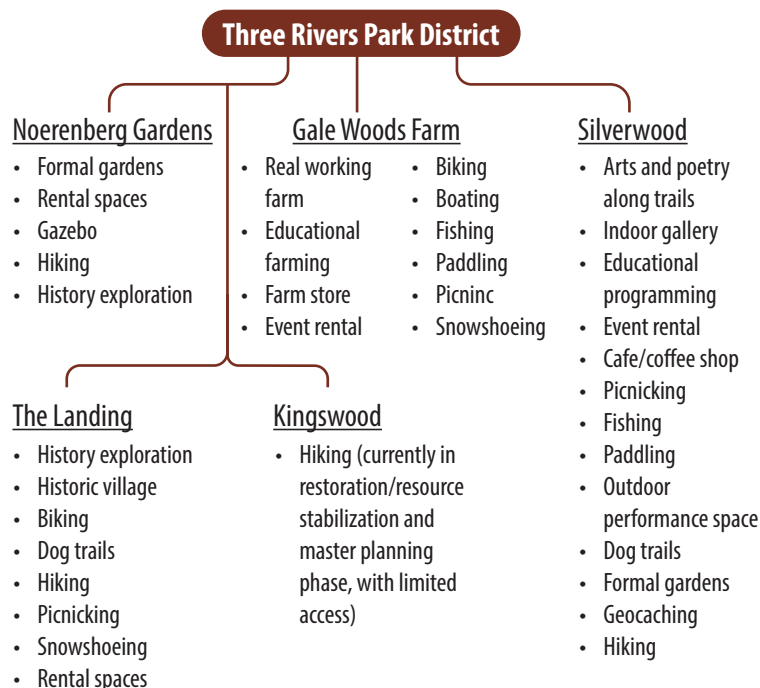
Nearby Regional Agency Parks have high visitation and offer some of the activities that Dakota County does not.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

Special Recreation Feature is an area that preserves, maintains, and provides specialized or single-purpose recreational activities, such as nature center, marina, zoo, conservatory, arboretum, display gardens, hunter training education facilities, downhill ski area, sites of historic or archaeological significance, and bridging facilities.

- Metropolitan Council 2040 Parks Policy Plan

## What parks have special features in the Regional Park System?



### St. Paul Parks & Rec.

#### Como Zoo & Conservatory

- Zoo
- Como Town rides
- Conservatory gardens
- Special events

Park	2021 Visitation
Como Zoo	1,377,672
Silverwood	394,121
Square Lake	138,317
Gale Woods Farm	130,495
Noerenberg Gardens	98,061
The Landing	33,028
Kingswood	21,879

### Washington County Parks

#### Square Lake

- Canoeing/kayaking
- Fishing
- Grills
- Hiking
- Boat launch
- Swimming beach
- Designated as a "Special Recreation Feature" because of outstanding water quality
- Used by scuba divers

Dakota County would have 1 Special Feature to match its share of the Regional Park System.



## NRPA PARK METRICS - AGENCY COMPARISON



### Operating Expenditures

- In 2023 we spent about half as much as Minneapolis Park and Rec. Board and about \$20,000 less than Three Rivers Park District.



### Personnel

- We have less full-time employees than all of the agencies shown
- Non-full-time employees: we have 27, MPRB has 1,323, and Three Rivers has 75
- MPRB has about twice as many people in programming



### Volunteers

- Three Rivers has less volunteers but more volunteer hours
- Minneapolis has more volunteers and ten times as many volunteer hours



### Activities / Programming

- Of 18 popular activities, MPRB offers all activities listed, Dakota County offers 5/18 activities, and Three Rivers offers 13/18.
- Most other agencies offer After School Programs, Dakota County does not.
- Most other agencies offer Teen Specific Programs, Senior Specific Programs, and Programs for People with Disabilities.

Activities	Dakota County	MPRB	Three Rivers
Health and wellness education	X	X	X
Safety training		X	X
Fitness enhancement classes	X	X	X
Team sports		X	
Individual sports		X	X
Running/cycling races		X	X
Racquet sports		X	
Martial arts		X	
Aquatics		X	
Golf		X	X
Social recreation events	X	X	X
Cultural crafts		X	X
Performing arts		X	X
Visual arts		X	X
Natural and cultural history activities	X	X	X
Themed special events	X	X	X
Trips and tours		X	X
eSports/eGaming		X	

### What we're not doing

#### that other Metro agencies are:

- Concessions (food and alcohol)
- Social spaces
- Event stage/performance space
- Nature center
- Waterpark
- Athletic facilities
- Lighted areas to use at night
- Bridging Facilities
- Special Feature
- Indoor gathering area or picnic shelter for 200+ people
- Snowmaking
- Ski area
- Art center

## NATURE CENTERS

### Which Metro agencies offer Nature Centers?

0 Nature Centers	1 Nature Center	3 Nature Centers
Dakota County Parks	Minneapolis Park and Rec. Board	Three Rivers Park District
Carver County Parks	Anoka County Parks	
Scott County Parks	Ramsey County Parks	
St. Paul Parks & Rec.		
Washington County Parks		

### Other Nature Center Organizations in the Metro Area:

**Dodge Nature Center** (non-profit located in West St. Paul, with additional properties in Mendota Heights, West St. Paul, and Cottage Grove)

**Carpenter Nature Center** (non-profit located in Hastings, MN, and Hudson, WI)

**Wood Lake Nature Center** (City of Richfield)

**Harriet Alexander Nature Center** (City of Fridley)

**Springbrook Nature Center** (City of Fridley)

**Westwood Hills Nature Center** (City of St. Louis Park)



## KEY FINDINGS

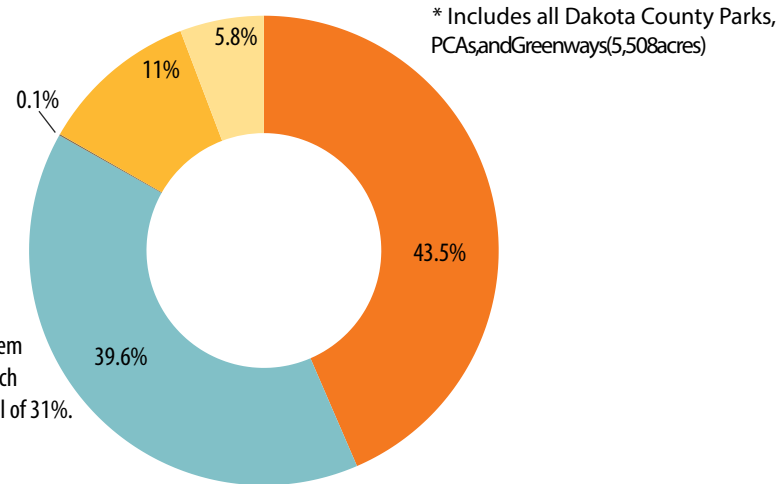
- Dakota County Parks is seeking to go beyond restoration practices into enhancement, including implementing climate adaptation practices.
- Highly invasive plants were controlled on 324 parkland acres in 2023.
- Dakota County parks was awarded a NACo award for reintroducing bison at Spring Lake Park Reserve.
- 605 volunteers in 2022 helped with native plant production and seed collection, installation of native plants, survey of wildlife, and served as landscape stewards.

## Natural Resource Management

### RESTORATION - ENTIRE DAKOTA COUNTY SYSTEM\*

Figure 1.1 Acres Restored and Managed to Date, 2024

- Yet to be Restored
- Restored
- Manage Highly Invasive
- Active Restoration
- Stabilized



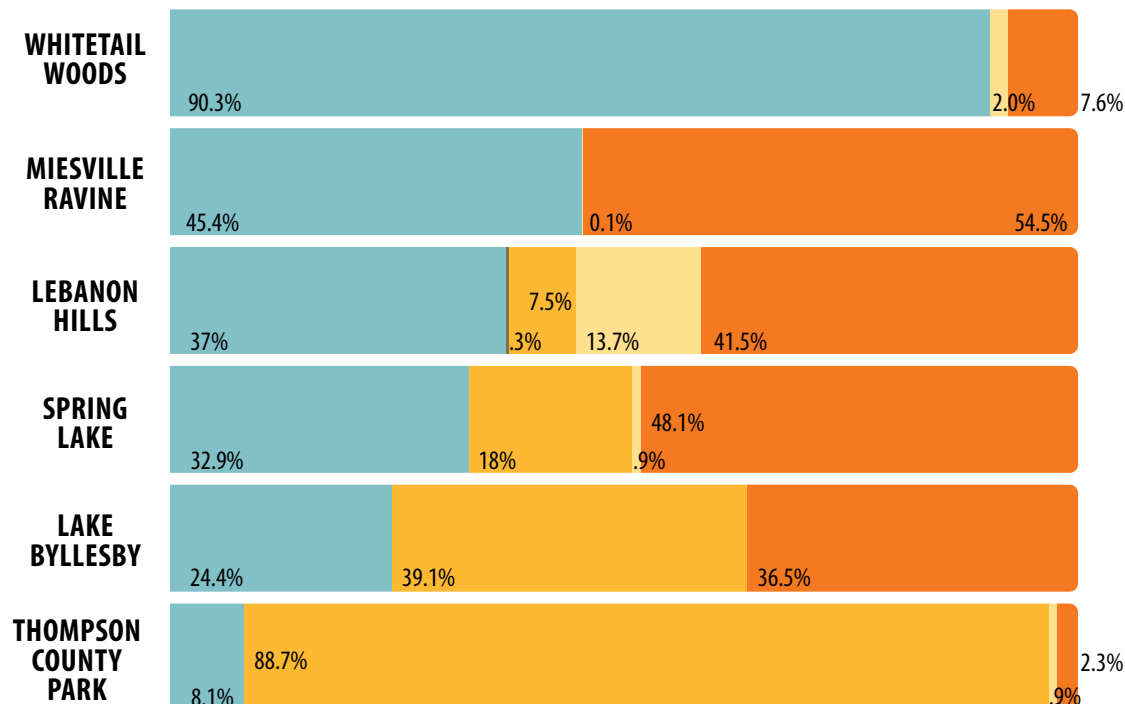
Nearly 40% of the system has been restored, which exceeds the 5-Year goal of 31%.

Four restoration projects for 60 acres have occurred for Greenway habitats.

### ACRES RESTORED

- Restored
- Manage Highly Invasive
- Active Restoration
- Stabilized
- Yet to be Restored

Figure 1.2 Restoration Acres for Dakota County Parks, 2024



- 1,434 acres of vegetation were restored from 2017-2023.
- 35 projects improved habitat for species including rare species.
- Natural Resources Management Plans for 4 greenway corridors were developed from 2017-2023.

## NATURAL RESOURCES SUCCESS STORIES

### Biochar

When Dakota County restores woodlands and forests, we remove a lot of invasive shrubs, like buckthorn and honeysuckle.

In Lake Byllesby Regional Park, we've started a restoration project that removes these invasive shrubs from the floodplain forests and slopes near the Cannon River, just west of MN Hwy 56 and south of the City of Randolph.

The wood from these shrubs will mostly be mulched by forestry equipment and spread thinly throughout the forest floor, but some of it will be burned. Dakota County is trying a new process for burning piles of wood waste by using biochar kilns. These mobile burn chambers offer a low-tech solution to wood waste by sequestering up to 20% of the woody biomass into a charcoal form that can last for centuries to over a millennium, and this creates a positive feedback loop for establishing native plants and healthy forest soils while doing so.

As an added bonus, burning in biochar kilns creates less air pollution for our neighbors, and it doesn't heat the soil up as much as conventional burn piles, which leave ugly burn scars on the land. We're hoping to continue using innovative ways to make our ecological restoration efforts more sustainable, as we allow ecosystems to function in a way that offers progress towards solutions to face our future changes in climate in a resilient way.



### Hill's Thistle

Our seasonal natural resources technicians made an exciting discovery in one of our parks! This spikey plant is Minnesota's least common native thistle, Hill's thistle. It was listed as a Minnesota Special Concern species back in 1984. Thanks to our restoration and surveying efforts, this small population, as well as many other rare plant species throughout the park system, has been found and can now be conserved!



### Butterfly Surveys

With the help of two experts, two of our parks have been surveyed for butterflies and moths over the last couple of years. Over 315 species of moths and over 40 species of butterflies were identified - a few uncommon and rare species among them!



Hickory Hairstreak



Dion Skipper

Two of the rare butterfly species found at Spring Lake Park Reserve.

### WATER QUALITY

Water quality continues to be a concern and Natural Resources works with SWCD to preserve water quality. Natural Resources is working in Lebanon Hills and Trout Brook in Miesville Ravine Park Reserve to improve water quality, in collaboration with other organizations.

In 2023, Natural Resources conducted water quality monitoring in six lakes within parks. Water quality data was collected in the Trout Brook watershed, Chub Lake watershed, and at wells for bison at Spring Lake Park Reserve. Natural Resources also completed a wetland management plan for Whitetail Woods and obtained a state grant for implementation.



Brightly illuminated sheet that attracted many insects on a moonless summer night at Spring Lake Park Reserve - one of multiple survey techniques used!



## KEY FINDINGS

- Contemporary park and greenway long-range plans document history of the land within the park boundaries and inventory known cultural sites.
- Dakota County Parks would like to move from a strategy of identification of sites to protection, restoration, and co-management of sites, as appropriate.
- Management plans are needed for cultural sites within park boundaries.



View of Mississippi River above Hastings, ca. 1890 (MNHS) MD2.9 NG h1 (Locator Number) YR1939.5715 (Accession Number)



Cannon River Bluffs before the Lake Byllesby Dam was built, Cannon River Historical Society.

Figure 2.1 Cultural Resources at Dakota County Parks

Dakota County Parks	Cultural Sites
Lebanon Hills Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-settlement dwelling remains and 1 pre-historic artifact</li> <li>• Linkert Family Farmstead</li> <li>• Speculative mercury mine remains</li> </ul>
Spring Lake Park Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCarriel's Mill site: CE 1854 to 1932</li> <li>• 7 archaeological sites associated with early Indigenous occupation ca. 6000 BCE to CE late 1840s</li> <li>• 1 post-contact archaeological site</li> <li>• Farm buildings from early to mid-20th century</li> </ul>
Lake Byllesby Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 previously recorded architecture/history property and portions of 4 others (Byllesby Dam &amp; one extant bridge, two highway bridge ruins, and railroad bridge)</li> <li>• No archaeological sites, though 9 sites located during a water draw down in 1987, with 8 other identified within one mile of the park in 1978 and 2015</li> </ul>
Whitetail Woods Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Native American habitation sites identified in 1992-1994, along with 9 early Euro-American farmsteads</li> </ul>
Miesville Ravine Park Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 archaeological sites within the park reserve- lithic scatters</li> <li>• 9 archaeological sites within 1 mile of park reserve</li> <li>• Four areas containing several dozen Traditional Cultural Places</li> <li>• 8 former and existing historical farmsteads (Farm equipment and farm foundation remnants)</li> </ul>
Thompson County Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One archaeological site</li> </ul>

## Traditional Cultural Places

The Minnesota, Mississippi, and Cannon River Valleys have been home to the Dakota for thousands of years.

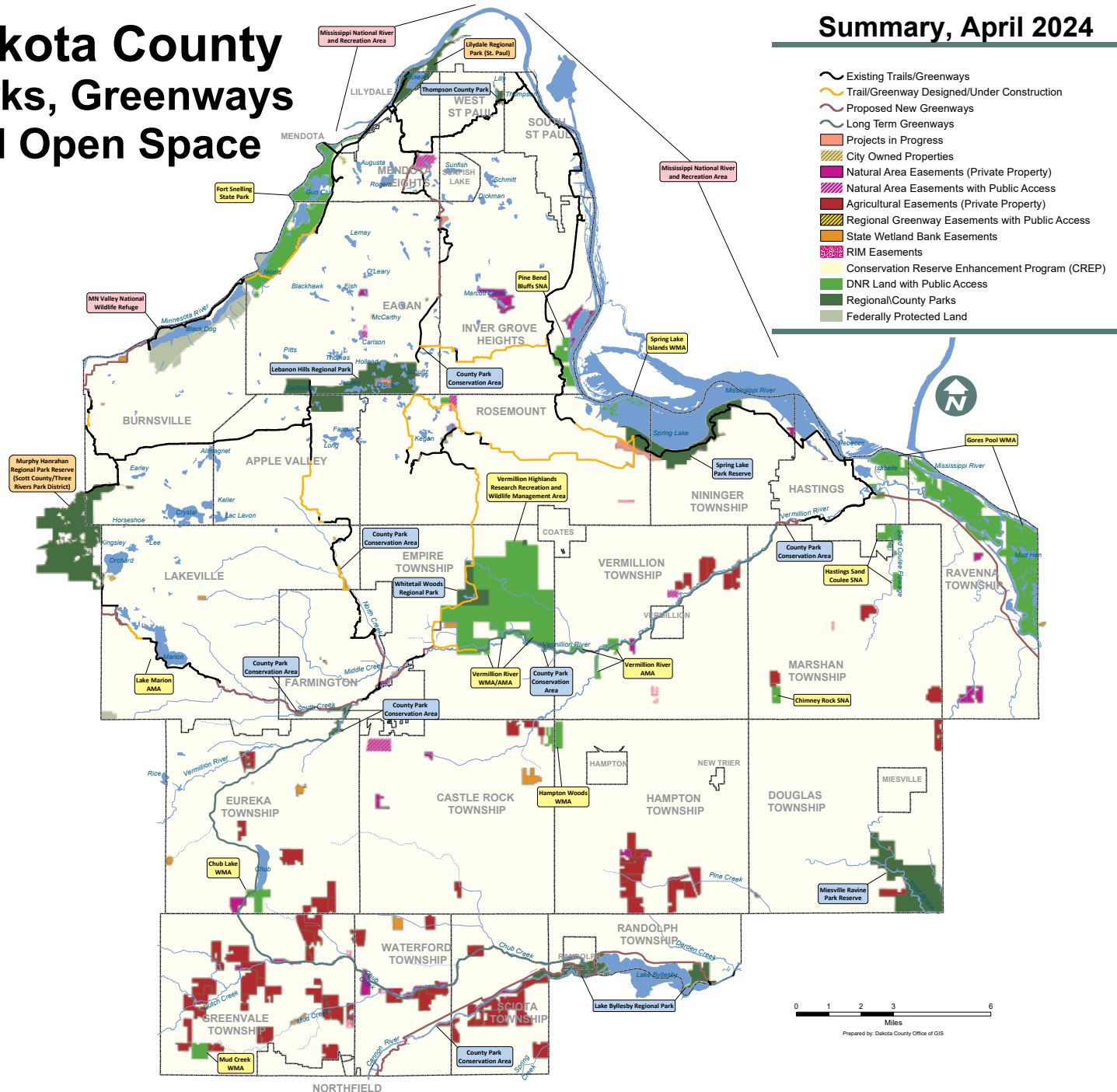
Traditional Cultural Places (TCP) are associated with the cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts, crafts, or social institutions of a living community and are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. In addition to the fundamentals of food, water, and shelter there is the spiritual and ceremonial practices that are core aspects of cultural identity. The most significant are related to birth, milestones in life, and burials. Sites chosen for these ceremonies were in use for many generations and are not limited to a specific location with a clear boundary. Instead, an area is identified as significant and over hundreds or even thousands of years families and nations continue to choose to hold their ceremonies at unique locations within the larger culturally significant area.

Traditional Cultural Places (TCP) surveys have been conducted for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and Spring Lake Park Reserve. Surveys indicated significant areas of TCPS in both parks. There are likely TCPs within the boundaries other parks and greenways, particularly those along the Minnesota, Mississippi, and Cannon Rivers.



Figure 3.1 Dakota County Parks, Greenways, and Open Space, 2024

# Dakota County Parks, Greenways and Open Space

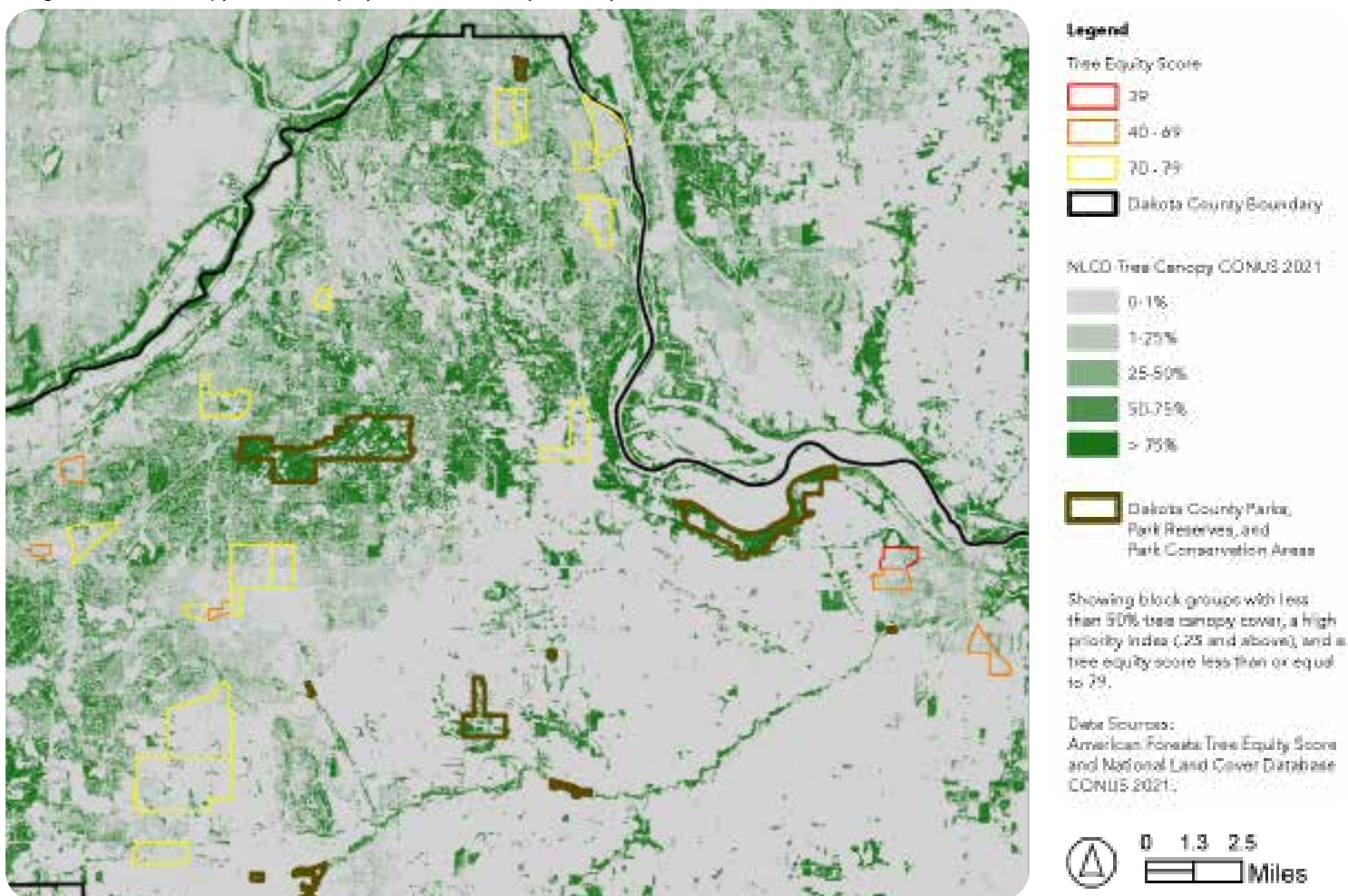


**The Land Conservation Plan adopted in 2020 addresses both work on ecological systems outside of park boundaries and green infrastructure.**

Conservation Site Type	Acres
<b>Parks/Park Conservation Areas</b>	
Completed - Owned	5,811
Completed - Easement	12
In Progress	270
<b>Conservation Easements</b>	
Completed	9,767
In Progress	80
<b>Greenway Easements</b>	
Completed	46
In Progress	7

Figure 3.2 Conservation Acres Completed and In Progress, 2024

Figure 4.1 Tree Canopy and Tree Equity in Dakota County - Priority Areas



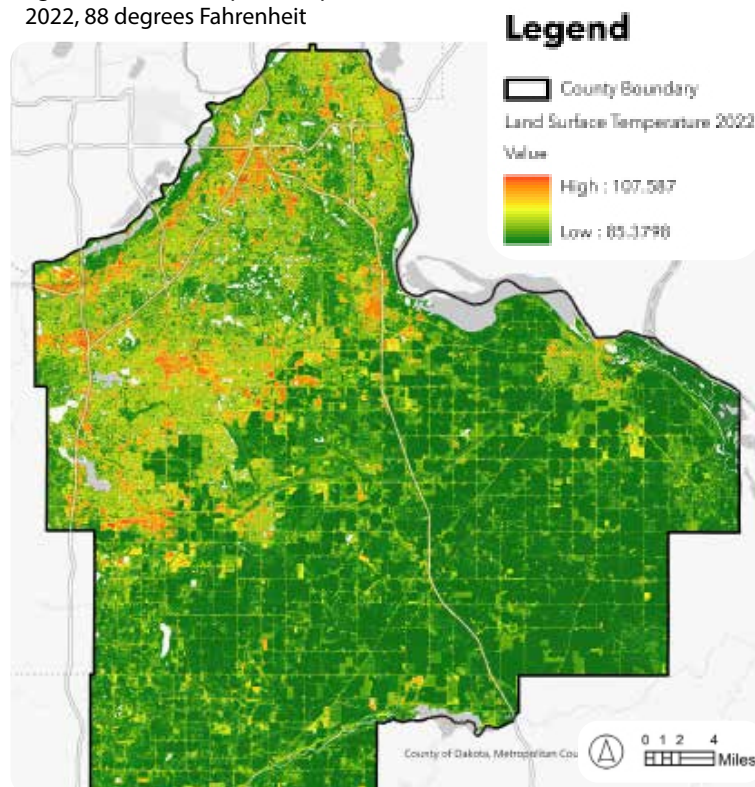
## ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) defines resilience as “not just the ability to maintain essential function, identity and structure, but also the capacity for transformation.” The IPCC considers resilience both in terms of **ecosystem recovery** as well as the recovery and adaptation of **human societies** to natural disasters.

Human activities such as exploitation of natural resources, pollution, land use, and anthropogenic climate change are causing regime shifts in ecosystems to degraded conditions. Environmental resource management and ecosystem management builds ecological resilience. Resilient ecosystems provide a number of services for humans (see next page).

Through protection and restoration, parkland and conservation areas also create more resilient floodplains. Parkland, particularly soils and forests, enhances carbon sinks, which has climate change mitigation effects.

Figure 4.2 Land Surface Temperature, September 1, 2022, 88 degrees Fahrenheit





## HEALTH BENEFITS OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks and greenspace play a role in the well being of the environment as well as our health. In 2023, 24% of adults surveyed in the Dakota County Healthy Adults Survey had been told they had depression at some point in their lives. Of adults surveyed with an income below 200% of the poverty line, 46% had ever been told they had depression. Depression rates in the County have been rising since 2014. As for anxiety, **57% of adults surveyed with an income below 200% of the poverty line had ever been told they had anxiety.** According to the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (2020), greenspace use for adults results in a variety of health benefits including stress reduction, better mental and physical health, improved cognitive performance, improved sleep quality, and reduced cancer risk. For children, benefits of greenspace include improved attention capacity, concentration, emotional and behavioral development, coordination, balance, self-confidence, self-discipline, and social skills. Dakota County Greenways especially assist in improving users' physical health as well.



## Green Infrastructure and Land Conservation

Green infrastructure elements can be at multiple scales. At the neighborhood scale, this may include rain gardens or restoring wetlands. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can include protecting large open spaces which bring value in terms of flood protection, habitat, carbon sequestration, erosion control and other ecosystem benefits.

The Dakota County 2030 vision for green infrastructure is "Through a unique intergovernmental and public/private partnership model, a comprehensive and interconnected system of parks, natural areas and other lands in Dakota County will be protected and sustained to provide multiple economic, ecological and social benefits for current and future."

The 2020 Land Conservation Plan outlines vision and goals, and strategies for intergovernmental and public/private partnership model and identifies 24 preliminary land conservation focus areas (CFA) that consist of natural features, connectivity, hydrology, and land ownership with renewed emphasis on water quality. These CFAs are landscape scale green infrastructure.

The preliminary CFAs provide a framework for landowner outreach, collaborative landscape conservation and public investments.

In 2023, Twenty-one restoration projects on 345 acres of land were actively managed. Staff worked with city partners to begin implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative (CCCC).

A total of eight CCCC projects in five cities totaling 358 acres have begun with the County leading development of initial natural resource management plans.

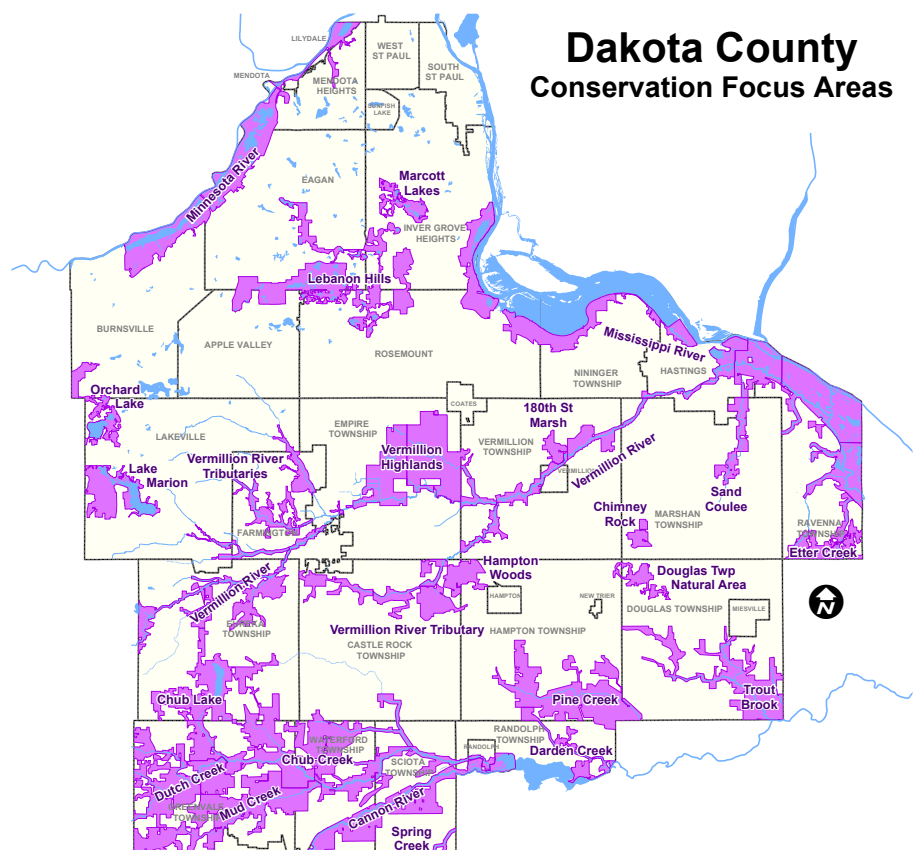
Green infrastructure is also present at the site or park scale – for example raingardens and storing stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces.

## Land Conservation Ecosystem Services

"Benefits that protected and restored forests, grasslands, and wetlands can provide include:

- Absorbing nutrient runoff, toxins, and sediments for cleaner water downstream
- Promoting infiltration and groundwater recharge and protecting drinking water supplies
- Moderating drought and flood
- Improving soil health
- Providing wildlife habitat and sustaining pollinators
- Providing opportunities for recreation, education, and inspiration
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change"

-Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County



**Dakota County  
Conservation Focus Areas**

Figure 4.5 Dakota County Conservation Focus Areas

## PARKLAND ACCESS

Populated areas in the north are lacking access to Dakota County Parks.

\*Includes:  
City parks, County Parks, County Park Reserves, County Park Conservation Areas, US Fish and Wildlife Services Areas, and MnDNR Management Units

Figure 5.1 Percentage of Parkland Acreage per Municipality in Dakota County All Natural Areas

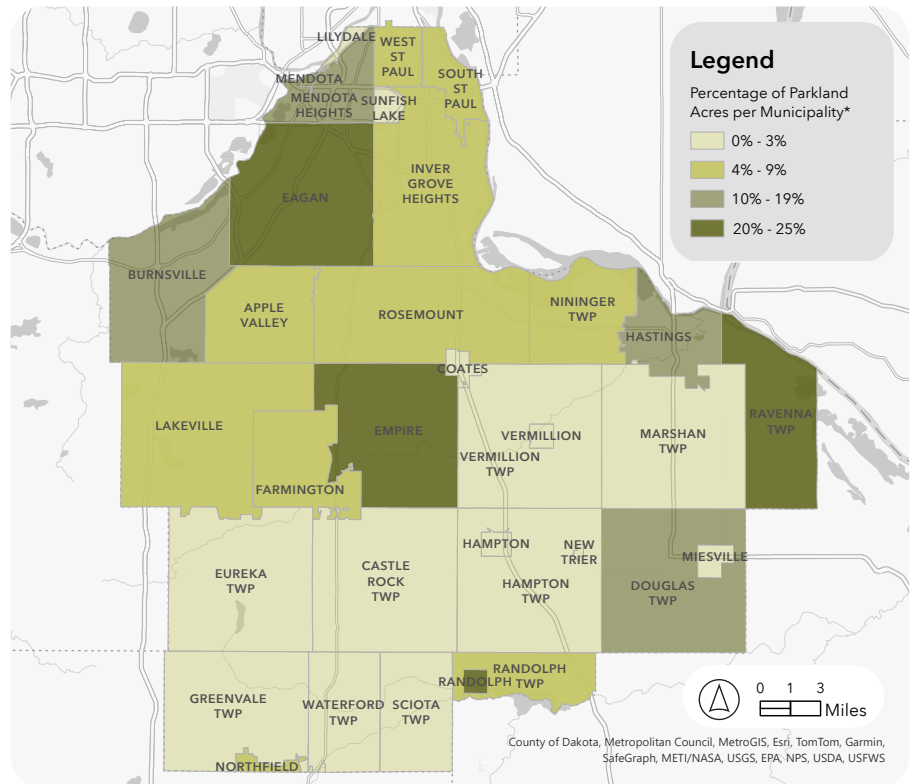
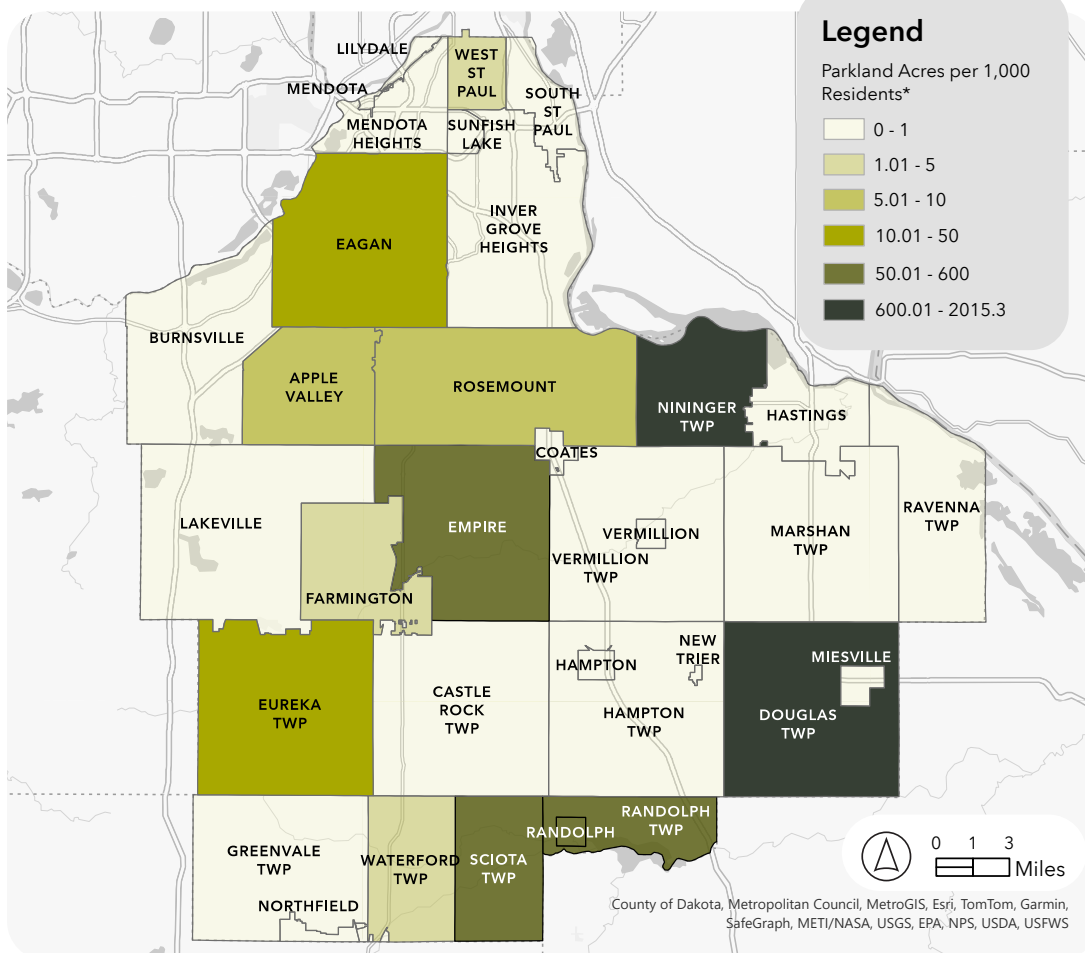


Figure 5.4 Parkland Acres per 1,000 Residents - Dakota County Parks and PCAs Only



\*Includes Dakota County Parks, Dakota County Park Reserves, and Dakota County Park Conservation Areas.

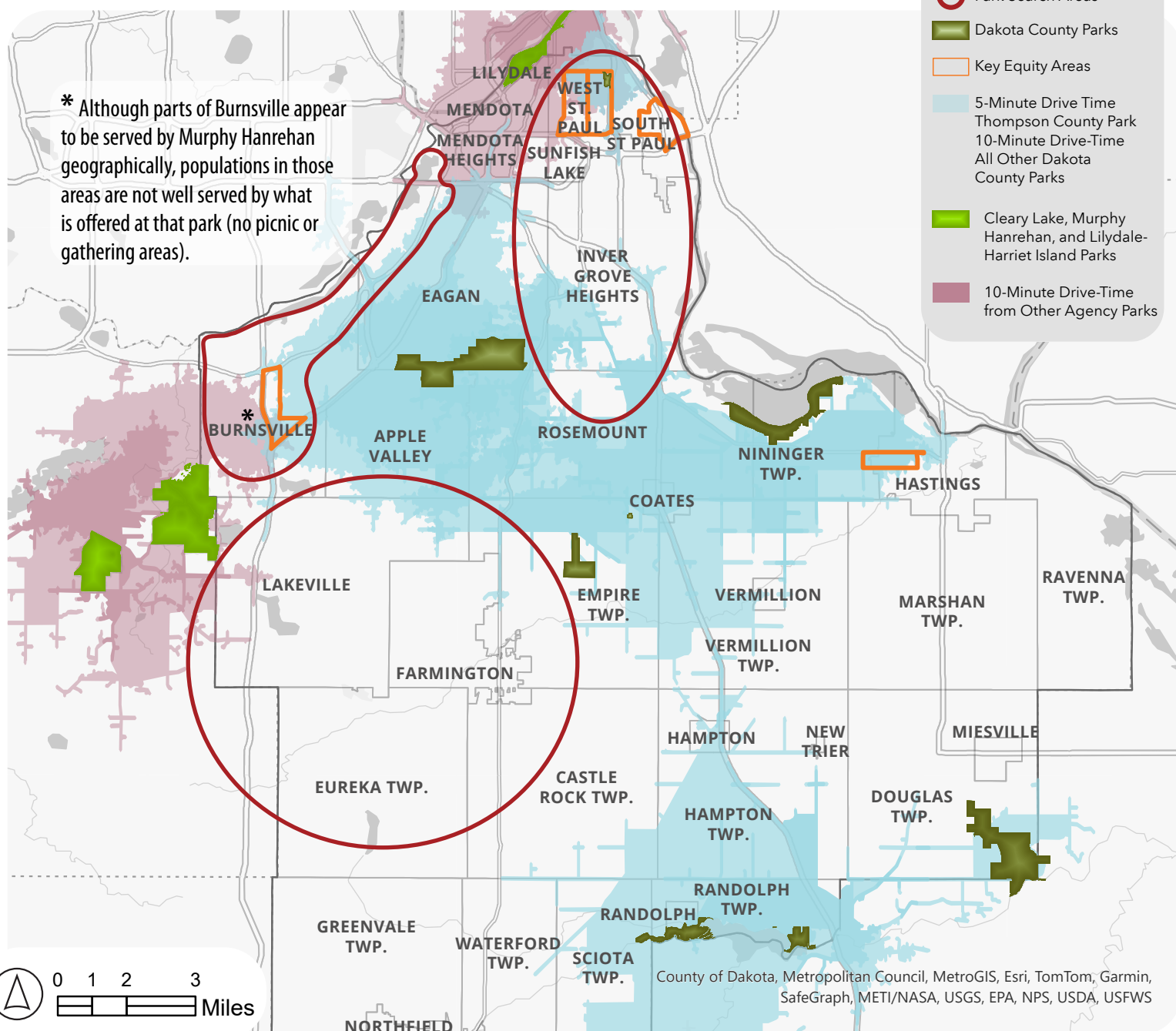
The NRPA national agency median in 2023 was 10.8 acres per 1,000 residents.





- There are access gaps in the north, even with other agency's nearby Regional Parks included in a drive-time analysis.**

Figure 5.4 Drive-Time to Dakota County Parks, Key Equity Areas, & Park Search Areas



## New Units? River and Shoreline Opportunities

There is opportunity to provide greater access to Dakota County rivers and lakes through new units.

Dakota County has over 33 miles of shoreland along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers.

There are two federally designated corridors in Dakota County:

- 1) Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS)
- 2) Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (NPS)

Segments of the Vermillion River are designated as a Minnesota DNR designated Trout Stream.



### AREAS OF NEED

Bridging facilities may make sense in some areas of Dakota County that are close to where people live and close to populations underrepresented in park visits.

Figure 5.5 Population Density, People of Color, and Key Equity Areas

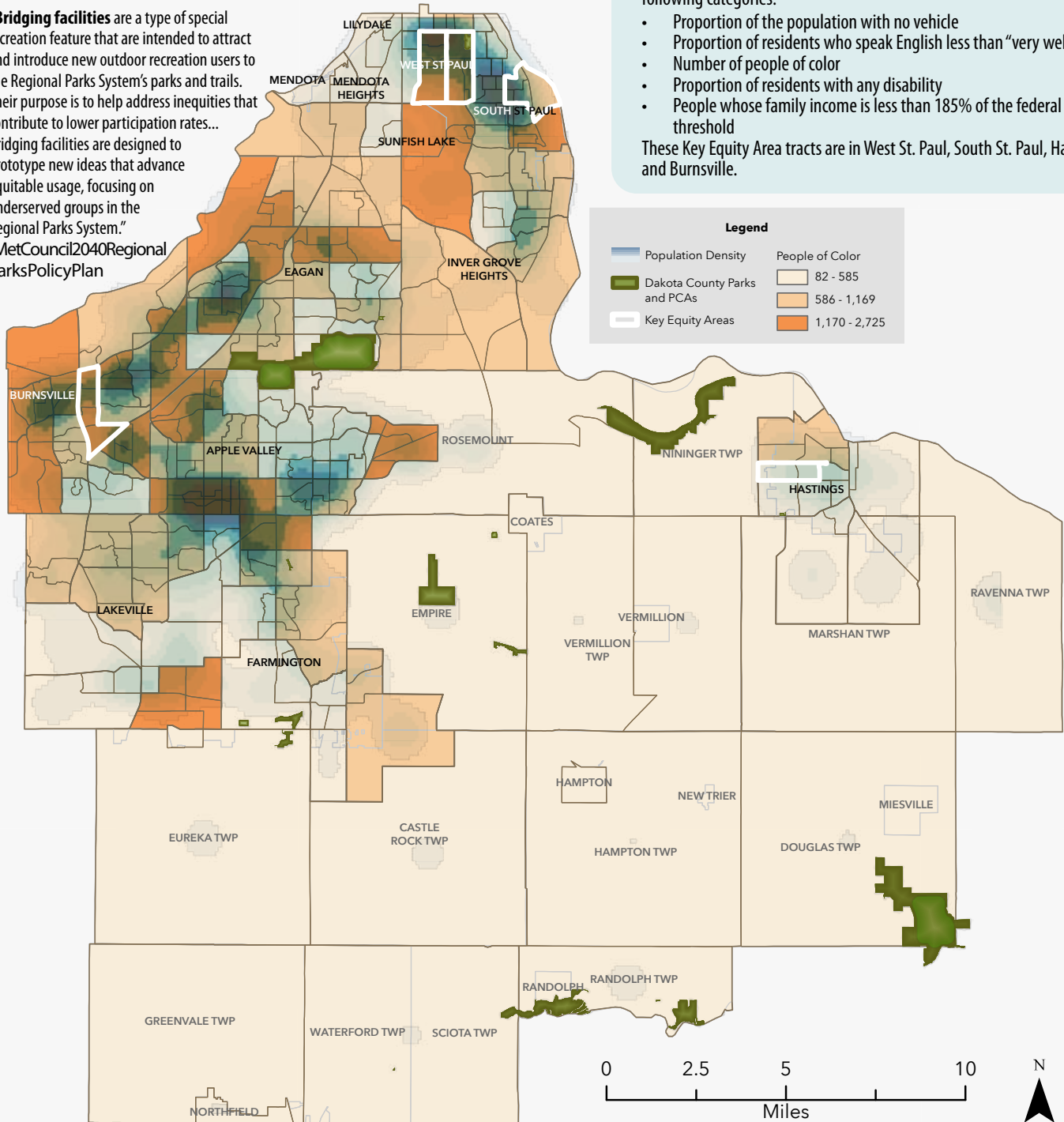
**"Bridging facilities"** are a type of special recreation feature that are intended to attract and introduce new outdoor recreation users to the Regional Parks System's parks and trails. Their purpose is to help address inequities that contribute to lower participation rates... Bridging facilities are designed to prototype new ideas that advance equitable usage, focusing on underserved groups in the Regional Parks System."

-MetCouncil2040Regional ParksPolicyPlan

**Key Equity Areas** are Census tracts that are high in two or more of the following categories:

- Proportion of the population with no vehicle
- Proportion of residents who speak English less than "very well"
- Number of people of color
- Proportion of residents with any disability
- People whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold

These Key Equity Area tracts are in West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Hastings, and Burnsville.



### KEY EQUITY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

#### South St. Paul Tract

- Proportion of residents with any disability (603.01)
- People whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold (603.01)

#### West St. Paul Tracts

- Federal Area of Persistent Poverty (601.05)
- Proportion of the population with no vehicle (601.05, 601.04)
- Proportion of residents who speak English less than "very well" (601.04)
- Number of people of color (601.05, 601.04)
- Proportion of residents with any disability (601.05, 601.04)
- People whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold (601.05)

#### Burnsville Tract

- Federal Area of Persistent Poverty (607.11)
- People whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold (607.11)
- Proportion of the population with no vehicle (607.11)
- Number of people of color (607.11)
- Proportion of residents with any disability (607.11)

#### Hastings Tract

- Proportion of the population with no vehicle (611.06)
- Proportion of residents who speak English less than "very well" (611.06)



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

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

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

The purpose of the May 23, 2024 discussion is to receive input from the Planning Commission regarding whether changes, edits, and additions to the **existing** 2030 vision, goals, and objectives are necessary to take Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems into a healthy future.

## **Great Places: Improved Parks, New Parks**

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

### *Improve Recreation and Services:*

- *Offer more activities, more choices.*
- *Fill gaps in popular "basic" recreation. (biking, picnicking, trails, shorter paved trail loops).*
- *Enhance delivery of recreation services.*
- *Promote awareness of recreation opportunities.*
- *Plan and open Vermillion Highlands Regional Park.*
- *Explore opportunities with South St. Paul for a regional park combining Thompson County Park, Kaposia Park, and Port Crosby Park.*

The 2030 vision element of *Great Places* is focused on how visitors experience Dakota County Parks and prioritizing improvements to deliver high quality balanced recreation and education opportunities with excellent visitor service delivery and park information, in a setting of healthy park landscapes.

The Dakota County Parks System is evolving. Fifty years ago, the focus was on acquisition and land protection, 20 years ago, on developing the park system with access and basic facilities, while fostering resilient and healthy landscapes. As we move into the next 25 years, how **people** experience and interact with both the natural and created environments will require greater consideration than in the past. The world has changed since 2008 when the 2030 vision was adopted. Dakota County residents are more racially diverse and older. The population is more connected to technology and more concerned about the impacts of climate change. Children are less likely to play outside and experience nature. People are more sedentary, there are greater health disparities, and there is a mental health crisis. How will Dakota County parks adapt to these issues in the next 25 years so that the County remains a great place to live with quality natural areas? What will Great Places look like in 2050?

### **2030 Vision for Recreation and Education in Dakota County Parks:**

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

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

### **Goal 1    *Provide a balanced variety of high-quality, popular, year-round activities to promote healthy active lifestyles***

#### **Objectives**

1. *Balance recreational offerings to ensure that the most popular and inclusive nature-based activities are available at all parks.*
2. *Enhance and improve the availability of year-round recreation opportunities*
3. *Trails are the recreational backbone of Dakota County's parks. Provide a trail system that exceeds expectations with improved accessibility within parks and enhanced trail access to parks.*

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

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

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

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

### **Goal 2    *Welcome visitors of all backgrounds, interests, and abilities to their parks.***

#### **Objectives**

1. *Expand park opportunities for visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.*
2. *Improve the overall park recreation experience by enhancing basic visitor safety, hospitality, and support facilities.*

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

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

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *More equitable, accessible, and inclusive facilities, programs, and activities*
- *Bridging Facilities (potential new Met Council regional park facility designation)*

- *Level of services for each park (e.g. is there adequate staff presence on-site?)*
- *New park units closer to where people live (new units or units in partnership with other agencies)*
- *Explore park unit partnerships with other agencies (e.g. Fort Snelling State Parks, City Parks)*
- *Public and non-motorized transportation to parks*
- *Continued growth in outreach and engagement programming and experiences (or offerings)*
- *Diversifying and training staff to better represent a more inclusive and supportive culture*

**Goal 3    *Exemplify sustainability and innovation as recreation trademarks of Dakota County Parks.***

**What We've Heard So Far**

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

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

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

**Goal 4    *Enhance provision of quality outdoor and environmental education.***

**Objectives**

1. *Increase visitors' understanding and enjoyment of Dakota County's natural and cultural resources, sustainability, and healthful outdoor recreation with high quality staff-led and self-guided education opportunities.*
2. *Through education opportunities and key messages, inspire visitors to practice stewardship of natural resources, the environment, and self through healthful activity.*

**What We've Heard So Far**

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

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Meeting unmet demand in youth programming*
- *New nature center(s)*
- *Guided programs at more parks*
- *Facilities and logistics (e.g. transportation) to support school field trips*
- *Outreach and mobile programs*
- *Continued growth in partnerships*
- *Focus on unique park amenities and facilities*

- *Interpretive plans- development and implementation*
- *Greater emphasis on programming to support mental and physical wellness*
- *New programs/activities based on public interest and changing demographics*

**Goal 5     *Provide exceptional service delivery and build public awareness of recreation opportunities.***

**Objectives**

1. *Provide service excellence through an integrated service model.*
2. *Improve visitor and public awareness of parks, recreational opportunities, and services.*

**What We've Heard So Far**

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

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

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

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

**Connected Places:**

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

The 2030 vision element of Connected Places is for multi-purpose corridors that combine habitat improvements, water quality, and a trail for recreation and transportation. Much progress has been made in implementing the vision for the 200-mile greenway network. Greenways expanded from three corridors to ten, 46 miles trail miles have been built, and greenway visits accounted for 40% of system use in 2022. Despite this impressive progress, visitor surveys show that people of color, households with lower incomes, youth, older adults, and women are all underrepresented in greenway visitation. In addition, the water quality and habitat functions of greenways have not been fully realized. Increased habitat fragmentation and declining water quality mean that addressing these functions is even more urgent than it was in 2008. As we look ahead to the next 25 years, broadening the appeal of greenways and integrating ecological function will be major challenges. How will Dakota County parks adapt to these issues so that the County remains a great place to live with quality natural areas? What will Connected Places look like in 2050?

### **2030 Vision for Greenways:**

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

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

#### **Objectives**

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

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

- *Geographic equity in communities*

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Focus on better integration of habitat and water quality with greenways particularly in the urban and suburban areas*
- *Consider new search corridors (e.g., Dan Patch, Soo Line)*
- *Include trail connection between east and west Lake Byllesby Regional Park units in the regional trail or regional greenway network (per Met Council staff guidance)*

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

#### **Objectives**

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

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

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



#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

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

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

##### **Objectives**

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

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

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

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Expand collaboration to include city loops that combine water quality, habitat, transportation, recreation, art, culture, and heritage*
- *Collaborate with state and national partners for expanding corridors along the Mississippi (MRT) and Cannon Rivers (MTST)*

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

#### **2030 Vision for Protected Places**

#### **Green Infrastructure Includes Parks, Greenways, Open Space, and Natural Areas**

##### **Healthier Natural Systems Countywide**

- Collaborate with agencies and landowners to protect, enhance, and connect parks, open space, and natural systems in a larger, more ecologically sound framework.
- Preserve stream corridors in undeveloped areas by working with public and private landowners to protect land and help shape future growth into the most suitable areas.
- Provide a recreational “voice at the table,” to seek opportunities for recreation over the long term, and near-term recreation in designated public areas only.

##### **Healthier Park Landscapes:**

- Improve ecology and visual quality.

- Use a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing park resources.

The 2030 vision element of Protected Places focuses on three areas: 1. Vibrant healthy park landscapes, 2. Parkland acquisition and protection, and 3. Collaborating in a green infrastructure. Dakota County has accomplished much in these areas since 2008. Restoration and natural resource management of parks has expanded to nearly 40% of park land; 1,734 acres of new park land and county park conservation areas have been acquired; the 2020 Land Conservation Plan outlines a collaborative model for protecting open space. At the same time, urban development, climate change, and agriculture have led to declining water quality, declining soil health, groundwater depletion, fragmented wildlife habitat, and declining species diversity. As we look ahead to the next 25 years, management, and enhancement of restored areas, protection of park land close to where people live, connection of natural areas to make functioning ecological corridors, mitigation, and adaption to climate change will be major challenges. How will Dakota County parks adapt to these issues in the next 25 years so that the County remains a great place to live with quality natural areas? What will Protected Places look like in 2050?

### **2030 Vision for Park Resources in Dakota County Parks:**

- A healthy and biologically diverse mosaic of resilient landscapes and waterways that represents the natural heritage of Dakota County and supports a range of nature-based recreation activities.
- Cultural resource management that preserves the irreplaceable and increases understanding of our collective past.

**Goal 9**    ***Develop a comprehensive, strategic park natural resource management approach to:***  
***1) Preserve the highest quality resources***  
***2) Restore targeted areas that bring economic and ecological value***  
***3) Enhance visitor experiences***  
***4) Enter all parkland into appropriate and sustainable management regimes.***

### ***Objectives***

- 1. Identify and preserve the highest quality park resource areas to enhance natural diversity.***
- 2. Identify and strategically restore targeted park areas that provide economic and ecological returns on investment.***
- 3. Manage resources to enhance park visitor experiences, using a demonstration approach.***
- 4. Enter all parkland into appropriate, sustainable, long-term management regimes to prevent further degradation and protect past investment.***

### ***What We've Heard So Far***

- *Assess the need for a natural resources management systems plan if we have a natural resources management plan for each park*
- *Improve soils*
- *Expand native seed propagation*

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- Restoring lakes
- Reclaiming landfills after they are full
- Expand management on lands on county easements and partnerships through the City County Conservation Collaborative
- Manage lands for climate adaptation and resiliency
- Reintroduction of native species and introduction of climate resilient species
- Enhance already restored areas so they are more ecologically diverse and resilient
- Designating Natural Resource Protection zones to protect highly sensitive areas
- Support strategies that allow wildlife to thrive
- Natural resource management on county land beyond parks (highway right-of-way, library, service centers)

#### **Goal 10    *Protect, design, and maintain scenic park viewsheds to enhance visitor experience.***

##### **Objectives**

1. Identify high priority park viewsheds for protection and enhancement, e.g., the Trout Brook Valley viewshed.
2. Develop and employ an effective range of techniques to protect priority viewsheds and opportunities for visitors to appreciate them.

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

- Continue to protect, design, and maintain scenic park viewsheds

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- Acquire conservation land to protect key viewsheds (may require legislative action)

#### **Goal 11    *Protect park cultural resources and offer appropriate opportunities for visitors to experience them.***

##### **Objectives**

1. Map and classify cultural resource sites according to sensitivity and protection needs, restoration needs and potential, and suitability for public access and direct interpretive opportunities.
2. Develop stewardship plans to protect sensitive cultural resources.

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

- Interested in how we will interpret cultural sites
- Explore interpretation through art

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- Continue to understand Indigenous cultural significance of land within the boundaries of parks and greenways
- Consider inclusion of significant cultural sites within conservation focus areas
- Partnerships with Indigenous community leaders
- Co-management of sacred sites with Indigenous organizations/Tribal Governments
- Work with Indigenous communities for traditional knowledge and interpretation in all park and greenway areas and County-protected lands

- *Develop and implement stewardship and interpretation plans for all cultural sites*

**Goal 12    *Design and maintain park facilities sustainably, to reduce and avoid negative environmental impacts.***

**Objectives**

1. *Minimize the impact of park infrastructure.*
2. *Design sustainable, ecologically appropriate park use areas and facilities.*

**What We've Heard So Far**

- *Continue to focus on sustainability and resilience*

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Environmentally appropriate lighting, maintain dark skies*
- *Wildlife friendly design (e.g. tunnels for wildlife under roads, bird friendly windows)*
- *Design for climate mitigation and adaptation*
- *Sustainable trail design*
- *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for park development*
- *Utilize existing best practices as identified by state and federal agencies and emerging technologies*

**Goal 13    *Expand resource management partnerships to leverage skills, policies, and access.***

**Objectives**

3. *Jointly manage floodwater and improve water quality in parks and at locations upstream from parks.*
4. *Collaborate on opportunities for ecologically friendly new development and land uses adjacent to parks.*
5. *Explore partnerships to provide or improve habitat for migrating species.*

**What We've Heard So Far**

- *Maintain current partnerships*
- *Expand partnerships*

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Pursue climate action grants (e.g. Climate Pollution Reduction grants)*
- *Facilitate partnerships among easement landowners to increase skillset base*
- *Joint-powers agreement with other counties to share equipment*
- *Remove barriers to collaboration and work with private landowners and other agencies*
- *Stay current with landscape and restoration ecology best practices and emerging science and technology*
- *Grow and maintain relationships to support Indigenous Knowledge*
- *Explore partnerships to improve habitat for keystone species*

### **2030 Vision for Parkland Acquisition and Protection in Dakota County Parks:**

- Acquisition and protection is focused on parklands with high quality natural resources, priority planned recreational areas, and enhancing connectivity of parks.

### **Goal 14    *Acquire and protect parklands and regional trail right of way through a strategic and comprehensive approach.***

#### **Objectives**

1. *Develop and maintain a prioritized inventory of park inholdings and regional trail needs.*
2. *Develop new tools and alternative approaches to facilitate parkland and trail acquisition and protection.*

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

- *Create and implement interpretive trail loops using greenways as a spine*
- *Make sure all people have access to parks*
- *Many of Dakota County's parks are far from communities of color. Consider adding parks closer.*
- *Lakeville and Burnsville residents do not have convenient access to Dakota County parks*
- *Look at geographic equity and parity*
- *Closely coordinate with cities to ensure we are addressing growth areas*

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *New units along the Mississippi River and Minnesota River and lakes*
- *Connect existing parks with ecological corridors*
- *Explore options for new units in areas where there are County park service gaps*
- *Partner with cities to create new loop trails, including trails around lakes*

### **Goal 15    *Develop and enhance collaborations that advance County parkland acquisition and protection.***

#### **What We've Heard So Far**

- *Partner and coordinate with city, state, and federal park providers*
- *Avoid duplication of services*

#### **Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Explore partnerships with other park providers for bridging facilities (new Met Council park classification)*
- *Develop partnerships with a focus on climate mitigation and adaption*

### **2030 Vision for Green Infrastructure in Dakota County Parks:**

- Through a unique intergovernmental and public/private partnership model, a comprehensive and interconnected system of parks, natural areas and other lands in Dakota County will be protected and sustained to provide multiple economic, ecological and social benefits for current and future residents.

**Goal 16** *Protect public-value lands through a strategic and comprehensive approach.*

**Objectives**

1. *Identify high quality public-value lands with resources, connectivity, and qualities that contribute to green infrastructure.*
2. *Identify key partnerships to advance green infrastructure benefits.*
3. *Develop a collaborative green infrastructure map with parks and greenways at its core and appropriate implementation tools.*

**What We've Heard So Far**

- *Continue to protect land in conservation focus areas identified in the Land Conservation Plan*
- *Strengthen partnerships with watershed organizations*

**Other Potential 2050 Vision Plan Priorities**

- *Partner with public and private landowners to establish ecological corridors that connect parks in urban and rural areas of the county*
- *Work with the transportation department on wildlife crossings*
- *Consider wildlife habitat relations, species requirements, and habitat corridors when designing and establishing corridors.*

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