

DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Dakota County Western Service Center – Room L139
14955 Galaxie Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124
Thursday, November 20, 2025
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

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 September 25, 2025
- VI. County Natural System Plan Update Kickoff - Information
(Tom Lewanski – Parks, and Mary Jackson- Planning)
- VII. County Public Art Plan - Information
(Lil Leatham - Planning)
- VIII. Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions
 - Adopted Solid Waste Management Plan
 - Adopted Mississippi River Greenway Natural Resources Management Plan
 - Authorized funding request to State Park Road Account to pave west Spring Lake Park Reserve entrance roads
- IX. Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

County 42 Project in Hastings (Trail and safety Improvements) Open House	December 3, 5pm-7pm Hastings YMCA, 85 Pleasant Drive
West Lake Byllesby Park Improvements (from the master plan) Open house	December, TBD
- X. Topics for Next Meeting (Thursday, December 18, 2025 – 7 p.m., Western Service Center, L139)
 - None at this time
- XI. Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates
- XII. Adjourn



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

Date: 9/25/2025

Minutes prepared by Cindy Tonsager

Location: Western Service Center, Apple Valley, L139

Attendance

Members Present

- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- Kelly Kausel
- Steve Shurts
- Jerry Rich
- Lori Hansen
- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Cindy Tonsager, Admin Operations Manager
- Tony Wotzka, Manager Parks - Greenways
- Michael Honer, Parks Project Manager

Member(s) Absent:

- Paul Nasvik
- Andrea Vaubel

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Chair, Jim Guttman

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 Guttman asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Shurts moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from July 24, 2025)

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

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

MOTION: Commissioner Hunting moved, seconded by Commissioner Kausel, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 11– Nays – 0 - Unanimously Approved

County's Greenway Plan Kickoff - Information (Tony Wotzka and Michael Honer – Parks, and Kurt Chatfield - Planning)

The Planning Commission received an update on the process for Dakota County's Greenway Plan Kickoff.

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

Planning Commissioners engaged in a discussion about what they like about the County's current greenway system, specifically:

- Especially like greenways where water (lakes, rivers, streams) is within the corridor
- Absence of cars/noise
- Like that, greenways are in open space corridors
- Opportunities to interact with nature
- Beautiful views and overlooks
- Peaceful places to walk
- Nice trails
- Opportunities to learn about area history
- Protected natural spaces
- Trails are accessible for people who have disabilities

- Tunnels or bridges make it safe and easy to cross major roads
- Provides kids with a place to play in nature within their neighborhoods
- Opportunity to visit many different types of parks that are along greenway corridors
- Greenways can be pollinator corridors
- Greenways take people to unique places
- Represents many of the different landscapes that are found in Minnesota
- Greenways may have different themes that make each one unique

Planning Commissioners discussed opportunities to improve the current greenway system:

- Maybe have some rental bikes, similar to the Hastings outfitter under the Hwy 61 bridge
- Think about how people can explore their hobbies within greenways (flowers, history, bird watching)
- Provide connections between where people live or are planned to live so that they can get to greenways
- Address safety concerns such as high-speed users, or areas that are very busy and lead to user conflicts

Planning Commissioners discussed the following issues that could be addressed in the update of the Greenway Plan:

User Conflicts

A Planning Commissioner suggested that some busy parts of the system may need to have dual trails, similar to the Minneapolis lakes.

Consider forming a volunteer trail patrol, similar to ski patrol or the volunteers that serve the mountain bike trails at Lebanon Hills.

Use signage, such as the speed check signs adapted for bicyclists, to check the speeds of faster users.

It was noted that at some locations in the system, such as Kaposia Landing, there are good sightlines, and that e-bikes and walkers do not seem to have many conflicts.

A suggestion was made to collect and track accident data to identify locations that could be prioritized for safety or enforcement.

A comment was made that certain segments of the greenway system may need different rules and restrictions than other segments based on the context and the character of the greenway.

The County may need an education campaign to help reduce user conflicts on the system.

Increasing the Appeal of the System

Several commissioners mentioned that the system already has broad appeal and that, outside of marketing and communication that the County should not change the existing greenway system very much.

There was general discussion about what types of events could occur on the system, and that some of the events are likely to be scheduled by private groups independently of County Park programs.

A comment was made that the County should look at opportunities to make connections to the Public Transit system to make the greenway trails more accessible to more people.

Improved wayfinding will increase use and result in more people learning about greenway trails and where they go.

School field trips and volunteer events along the greenways will increase exposure to the system and result in more use.

Greenway Widths

Planning Commissioners discussed greenway widths of the wider natural corridor, and of the trail itself. A comment was made that it is important to limit impacts to the natural area corridor when installing trails by doing everything possible to narrow construction limits.

If the County knows that a section of trail will be popular, it would be better to plan for a wider trail upfront to minimize user conflicts.

Planning Commissioners stated that they are interested in having this discussion at a follow-up meeting, when the discussion can be informed by natural resource experts who will be able to provide information about minimum widths for habitat, wildlife corridors, and water quality.

Role for Interpretation Along Greenways

The majority of comments were favorable for including a strong role for interpretation along greenways.

Interpretation may be especially important for the segments of greenways that are along roads or less interesting segments that could be improved by interpretation.

Interpretation may be about area history or may incorporate the work of local artists.

A comment was made that the Veterans Memorial Greenway may be a special case because the memorials along that greenway are important, but they are not place-specific.

Importance of Local Trail Loops and Connections

Planning Commissioners commented on the importance of trail loops and that they are especially important to people who are not able to walk very far.

A comment was made that trail loops and access points are important for local economic development and provide access to local businesses along greenways.

Several examples of the importance of local trail connections in cities such as Hastings and South St Paul were referenced in the discussion.

Role of Collaboration Along Greenways

Planning Commissioners commented on the importance of collaboration. Several mentioned the importance of collaborating with cities and recommended that we engage city staff as part of the plan update process.

A comment was made that the County should collaborate not just with cities but with groups such as art committees and other groups that may donate or collaborate with Dakota County.

A comment was made that the County has strengths, such as expertise in natural resources and trail design, and that cities have strengths, such as landowner contacts and local knowledge. Collaboration creates the opportunity to combine these strengths.

The discussion on the Greenway Plan Update concluded with staff outlining the process to hire a consultant, engage stakeholders in the process, and return to the Planning Commission for additional comment.

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:

- County Board authorized grant application for PFAS settlement program
- Metropolitan Council is reviewing proposed city/county changes to the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN)
- System Statements are scheduled for release this month, kicking off the round of local comprehensive plan updates due in 2028

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Public Art Plan Pop-up open houses	1) Sept. 20-21 st , Lakeville Arts Festival 2) Sept. 24, 5pm-7:30pm, Art Extravaganza at Wescott Library 3) Sept 27, 1pm-3:30pm, Pet Portraits at Wescott Library Dakota County Public Art Questionnaire
Lebanon Hills Greenway Design (formerly the Lebanon to Mendota Greenway) Pop-up open house	October 3 rd , 3:30pm-6:30pm. Lebanon Hills Visitor Center Lebanon Hills Greenway, Inver Grove Heights and Eagan Segment Dakota County

Planning Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Hansen informed the Planning Commission about the 2025 World Booya Championship in South St. Paul scheduled for October 4th, 2025.

Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved, seconded by Commissioner Shurts, to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m. **Voice Vote:** Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 7 p.m., Western Service Center, Conference Room L139

- No topics are scheduled for this meeting at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager

DRAFT

DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: Parks Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan (*information*)

PREPARED BY: Mary Jackson

PURPOSE

Provide Planning Commission:

1. An introduction to the technical merger of the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan and the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan.
2. An overview of draft objectives, strategies, and tactics for the combined plan, with opportunity for discussion

BACKGROUND

Dakota County adopted a Natural Resources Management System Plan ([NRMSP](#)) for its Parks in 2017, which addressed the Park System (parks, greenways, and park conservation areas) and private natural area easements. In 2020, Dakota County updated its Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan as a more targeted County Land Conservation Plan ([LCP](#)). With completion of the 2050 Parks Vision Plan, staff are combining the NRMSP and the LCP into a unified operational plan.

The new plan serves as a bridge between the high-level goals of the 2050 Vision Plan and the site-specific recommendations included in individual park and greenway Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs). It is intended to be clear enough to guide work for the next five to ten years, but have flexibility to respond to changes and new opportunities.

Staff have been merging the “action portions” of the two plans – goals, objectives, and strategies. Because the Land Conservation Plan is relatively new, fewer changes are being recommended. The NRMSP is older and included only goals, requiring more updating and build-out of strategies. The Vision Plan goals provide overarching guidance for the new plan. Additionally, the 2050 Vision Plan identified new goals related to natural resources that were not in the NRMSP or LCP. The attached draft objectives, strategies, and tactics reflect updated content and incorporation of new elements from the 2050 Vision Plan for two new chapters of the combined plan: Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship.

Next steps will include build-out of the implementation sections of the plan, to address targets, priorities, and timeframes, metrics, budget and CIP, funding sources, partnerships, and outreach. Targeted stakeholder engagement will be held on any areas of substantive change. A draft plan document is anticipated for late in the first quarter of 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics, Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

QUESTIONS

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

1. What do you like about the County’s natural systems?
2. What did you like in the draft objectives and strategies?
3. Do the draft objective and strategy packages provide strong enough guidance and flexibility?

Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan: Draft Objectives and Strategies

Goals from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan provide overarching guidance.

Working Definitions

Question	If the answer is “yes,” it’s likely a...	Example
Does it describe <i>what success looks like</i> in measurable terms?	Objective	“Increase pollinator habitat acreage by 15%.”
Does it describe <i>how you intend to achieve</i> that success, in broad strokes?	Strategy	“Focus habitat restoration near existing high-quality prairies to expand connectivity.”
Does it describe a <i>specific action, tool, or step</i> to carry out the strategy?	Tactic	“Seed 10 acres adjacent to Prairie Preserve with native grasses and forbs.”

A. Land Protection

Goals, strategies, and tactics pertaining to land protection from the Land Conservation Plan were largely retained and reformatted as objectives, strategies, and tactics (displayed as I. *objective*, A. *strategy*, and 1. *tactic*). Minor updates to wording were made. Content from the Land Conservation Plan that relates more to stewardship and management was moved to the Natural Systems Stewardship chapter.

I. Ecologically important areas are prioritized for protection.

- A. Use preliminary Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a framework for protecting and connecting natural areas and habitat.
 - 1. Refine and periodically update acquisition project evaluation criteria and weighting for different classifications (surface water, wetland/upland and upland) to prioritize potential land protection projects.
 - 2. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
 - 3. Create detailed, baseline information profiles for each CFA to document natural resource quality, needs, and opportunities with evolving updates.
 - 4. Prioritize identified wetland basins for landowner outreach and further hydrological analysis and cost estimates.

5. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and land registry.
6. Protect representative, high-quality native communities (wetlands, grasslands and forests) within the County.
7. Establish a technical advisory group to evaluate and develop recommendations for the use of property tax modifications as conservation incentives.
8. Review CFA boundaries every five years and revise as needed, based on new information.

B. Expand strategic partnerships with agencies and organizations.

1. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative for natural resource planning, protection, and management.
2. Assist townships with natural resource planning, protection and management in preparation for 2050 comprehensive planning.

II. Water quality and quantity are enhanced and protected.

A. Use preliminary CFAs to identify, prioritize, protect, and restore wetland basins, shoreland, headwaters, and groundwater recharge areas to improve water quality and supply and to reduce flooding.

1. Review and revise evaluation criteria and weighting as needed to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
2. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
3. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and explore options for long-term agreements.

B. Protect and restore critical infiltration areas outside CFAs identified in the County Groundwater Plan.

1. Establish evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
2. Conduct landowner outreach in other important areas to inform and engage landowners and initiate wetland restoration.
3. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and permanent or temporary easements.

III. Biodiversity is restored and sustained.

A. Use CFAs to identify and prioritize habitat protection for rare, declining, and special concern species on public lands.

1. Identify and inventory areas of existing high biodiversity and high restoration potential.

2. Develop baseline biodiversity data, goals, priorities, and monitoring protocols for the County and each CFA.
 3. Compile a comprehensive list of plant and animal species found in the County.
- B.** Use CFAs to identify and protect habitat for rare, declining, and special concern species on private lands.
1. Prioritize biodiversity in CFA protection and restoration criteria, weighting, and implementation.

IV. The public is informed, involved, and strongly supports natural resource protection and management.

- A.** Provide timely and relevant Land Conservation Program information.
1. Update the Land Conservation Communication Plan to provide a wide variety of information and stories to the general public throughout the year.
 2. Develop a collaborative, countywide, web-based network and interactive map to share natural resource information with the general public.
 3. Provide environmental assessments for interested landowners.
 4. Provide regular program updates and information to property owners with County easements information and two-way communication opportunities for participating landowners.
- B.** Work with partners to engage the public through in-person conservation events and activities.
1. Facilitate volunteer opportunities in partnership with other agencies and organizations (e.g., BioBlitz, seed collection, invasive species control, and vegetation and wildlife monitoring).
 2. Provide programs, workshops, and tours.

V. Nature-based recreational access to conservation lands is enhanced.

- A.** Add new publicly accessible recreational lands within CFAs.
1. Work with landowners and partners to add and/or expand publicly accessible land within each CFA.
 2. Inventory and select multiple countywide locations for the public to experience high quality, representative wetland, grassland and forest communities.
 3. Recreational amenities in conservation lands should be passive in nature and require minimal operations and maintenance, defined with a new minimum amenity package (to be developed). NEW
- B.** Restore, enhance, and maintain non-County land used for outdoor recreation

1. Partner with other public entities to increase restoration, enhancement, and long-term management of natural resources on non-County public lands.
2. Work with partners to provide natural resource information for outdoor recreation participants through a number of venues and methods. Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to provide more public amenities (kiosks, benches, trails) on state Wildlife and Aquatic Management Areas.

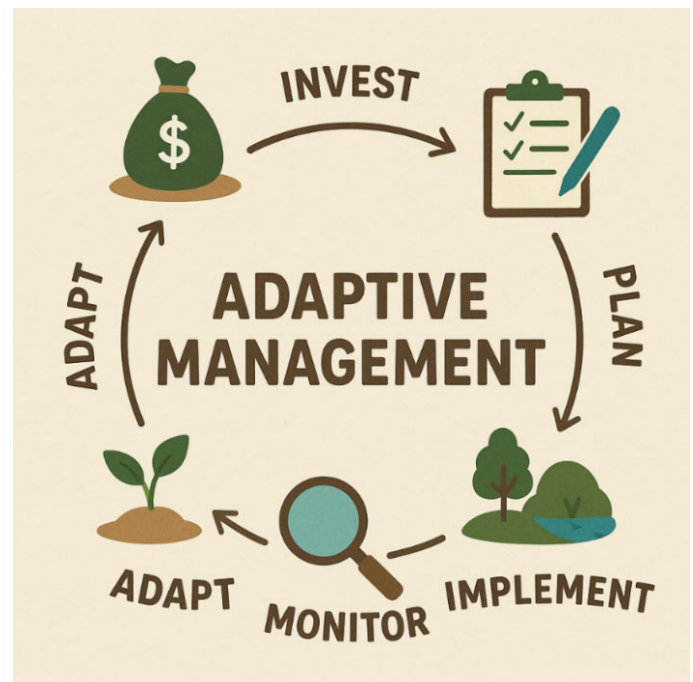
B. Natural Systems Stewardship

The 2017 Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) included goals for vegetation, water, wildlife, greenways and conservation easements but did not articulate supporting strategies or tactics. New objectives, strategies and tactics were developed, incorporating the goals from the previous plan and building out from the 2050 Vision Plan goals. Selected content from the Land Conservation Plan was also incorporated into this stewardship and management chapter.

I. **Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.** (new) (based on concept of adaptive management cycle, drawn from NRMSP)

A. Invest: Commit to natural systems restoration and perpetual maintenance on county lands and in partnership with others for lands they manage.

1. Provide adequate funding and staff resources to improve and sustain natural system quality and integrity for the long-term.
2. Build and sustain partnerships with other public agencies, organizations, and individuals managing land (cities, SWCD, state, federal, tribes, organizations, landowners).
3. As the system grows, provide necessary capacity.



B. Plan: Develop a phased and organized approach based on in-depth study of each management unit and its role in natural systems health.

1. Base management plans in sound ecological science
2. Develop individual and prioritized natural resource management plans (NRMP) for each park, greenway, and easement being managed, and update plans regularly. (new)

3. Engage partners, landowners, and experts in the scoping and planning activities.
4. Integrate priorities across individual NRMSPs into system-wide priorities.
5. Identify needed resources to maximize ecological and other benefits and make best use of funding and staff capacity. (new)

C. Implement: Implement plans in accordance with the principles of natural systems management and the 2050 Vision Plan.

1. Base plan implementation in sound ecological science including Adaptive Management principles.
2. Address system-level priorities in work planning and align resources to match, incorporating enough flexibility to address emerging issues with significant impacts.
3. Identify and adhere to standards for desired restoration outcomes that reflect ecological context, visitor uses, and potential climate impacts.

D. Monitor: Monitor work progress and natural system recovery over time.

1. Monitor vegetation, water and wildlife to track restoration and enhancement success and progress in a well-designed system that can be maintained over time.
2. Track insect, disease, and animal pests and use Early Detection Species monitoring protocols.

E. Adapt: adjust approaches

1. Refine and improve management approaches based on adaptive management principles and lessons learned.
2. Create opportunities to test new resource management approaches.
3. Incorporate flexibility in plans to account for unforeseen changes and opportunities.

II. Manage natural systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. (new) (from 2050 Vision Plan)

- A.** Improve the climate resilience of natural communities to better withstand extreme temperatures, severe storm events, drought, and the influx of new pests and diseases from other climate zones.
- B.** Explore the use of assisted migration methods to carefully introduce selected species that are native to warmer climate zones.
- C.** Increase ecologically appropriate and diverse tree and vegetative planting as a cooling and carbon sequestration mechanism in targeted locations, while protecting against attacks on specific species by pests, invasives, and changing climate.
- D.** Increase species diversity as a critical element of climate resilience.
- E.** Reduce emissions resulting from resource management activities (e.g., biochar in lieu of burning wood, prairie mowing or grazing in lieu of prescribed burns where appropriate).

III. Improve ecological functioning in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands. (new) (incorporates NRMSP and LCP content)

- A.** Restore, enhance, and maintain natural systems on County-owned public lands. (formerly the NRMSP vegetation goals)
 1. Focus on controlling the most invasive species in the highest quality areas.

2. Match habitat management approaches and desired ecological outcomes to the likely ecological potential of the different County natural resource units. (new)
3. Increase native plant diversity and community resiliency. (new)
4. Enhance ecological functioning in targeted restorations with the addition of selected native species. (new)
5. Designate selected areas within the park system that have higher natural resource quality, unique habitat value, restored areas, or areas with sensitive cultural resources as places where the priority use and management will be to protect, improve and maintain resource integrity. within the park system integrity (new)
6. Propagate local native ecotypes for vegetation restoration projects (new)

B. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on non-County public lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

1. Use the CFA framework to determine natural resource management priorities and develop criteria and weighting for prioritizing potential natural resource management projects within CFAs.
2. Review funding formulas for restoration projects on public lands within and outside of CFAs.
3. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative to increase natural resource management within ecologically significant city lands using shared and leveraged resources.
4. Expand strategic partnerships to increase natural resource management using shared and leveraged resources for ecologically significant, non-County public land.
5. Coordinate natural resource information with other public entities.
6. Establish a network of natural resource restoration reference sites.
7. Develop and implement county wide monitoring protocols of restoration sites to assess results.

C. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on protected private lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

1. Use the CFA framework to determine natural resource management priorities and develop criteria and weighting for ranking potential natural resource restoration projects within CFAs.
2. Review funding formulas for restoration projects on private land within and outside of CFAs.
3. Continue requiring ongoing restoration, management and maintenance activities as part of land protection easement agreements.
4. Partner with the SWCD and other entities to promote, incentivize, and implement natural resource management practices on private lands.
5. Provide new incentives for improved natural resource management on protected and non-protected private lands.
6. Work with other jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations to share natural resource management information and techniques with private landowners.
7. Explore options for using a private funding entity to secure and disburse private funds for natural resource restoration and maintenance on protected private lands.

8. Develop and implement monitoring protocols of restoration site management areas to assess results.

D. Identify natural system management gaps not addressed through County lands, other public protected lands, and permanently protected private lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

1. Consider refinements to the Conservation Focus Areas as new opportunities arise for stewardship of sensitive natural resource lands.
2. Consider opportunities to assist other private property managers in managing natural systems on their lands.

IV. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality. *(modified from NRMSP water goals)*

A. Support partner efforts to address surface water impairments in County Parks based on lakes study and collected data. *(Adapted from NRMSP water goals)*

1. Support partner efforts to address the most significant aquatic invasive species (AIS) (Eurasian watermilfoil and curly leaf pondweed) and the most significant wetland invasive species.
2. Support partner efforts to install stormwater best practices at priority locations in park watersheds outside of park boundaries to address impairments.
3. Assist in water quality monitoring to track progress and facilitate adaptive management.
4. Refine management priorities and activities through park-specific NRMPs and Long-Range Plans.

B. Use a range of natural resource management techniques within and outside of CFAs to restore, enhance and maintain lands for improved water quality, infiltration and storage to reduce flooding and provide wildlife habitat benefits. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

C. Partner with the SWCD and watershed organizations to promote, incentivize and implement water quality and quantity management and soil health practices in agricultural use areas within or outside of CFAs (e.g., functional buffers, perennial vegetation on critical recharge areas, erosion control, wetland restoration, water retention basins). *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

1. Review existing programs to determine if there are gaps or new opportunities and develop and implementation plan.
2. Secure new cost-share funding for best management practice (BMP) implementation.
3. Promote awareness of BMP opportunities among landowners and operators.
4. Leverage financial and staff resources to implement projects on protected lands.

V. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands. *(Adapted and expanded from NRMSP wildlife goals)*

A. Monitor selected resident and migratory species (both short- and long-term, by County and by others) to track progress and guide adaptive management and priorities.

B. Use effective methods of control for overabundant species that have a detrimental impact on the natural systems. *(new)*

C. Enhance wildlife movement corridors in greenways, parks, and other lands for selected species, to help maintain population genetic health. *(new)*

- D.** Manage the Spring Lake Park Reserve Bison herd to sustain their health and provide ecological and cultural benefits within their range. (new)
- E.** Seek other opportunities for wildlife species re-introduction, as appropriate. (new)
- F.** Partner with the MN DNR, adjacent jurisdictions, and others on regional wildlife habitat and connectivity. (new)
- G.** Develop and implement a Pollinator Habitat Network for the County. (from Land Conservation Plan)
- H.** Partner with transportation agencies and utilities to improve pollinator habitat within right-of-way and corridors.
- I.** Consider ways to remove barriers to wildlife movement.

VI. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others. (new) (from Vision Plan)

- A.** Create and foster long-term partnerships with other land managers to share expertise, leverage resources, and manage resources in a systems approach. Potential partners include:
 - 1. County departments
 - 2. City-County Conservation Collaborative and Greenway Collaborative
 - 3. Tribes and experts in Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
 - 4. State and federal agencies
 - 5. Organizations
- B.** Help increase the capacity of others to manage natural systems.
- C.** Provide educational resources and ongoing support for private landowners.
- D.** Train, educate, and coordinate volunteers.
- E.** Promote the parks as a resource for others.
- F.** Work with educational institutions, training programs, and organizations to build capacity in the Natural Systems Management workforce.
- G.** Evaluate a range of opportunities (e.g., technical assistance, incentives, or collaboratives) to assist private landowners, corporations, and institutions in managing their land for natural systems.



Update on the Dakota County Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

Tom Lewanski
Dakota County Parks
Mary Jackson
Office of Planning
Physical Development Division

1

Overview



- Plan Purpose
- Related/Guiding Plans
- Project Approach
- Draft Objectives and Strategies
 - Land Protection
 - Natural Systems Stewardship
- Next Steps
- Questions/Comments

2

Purpose



Combine the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) with the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan (LCP) to:

- Build from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan (VP) foundation
- Provide minor updates to original plans
- Update strategies, priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Streamline content

3

Related Plans: NRMSP



Dakota County
Natural Resource Management System Plan
May 2017



2017 NRMSP

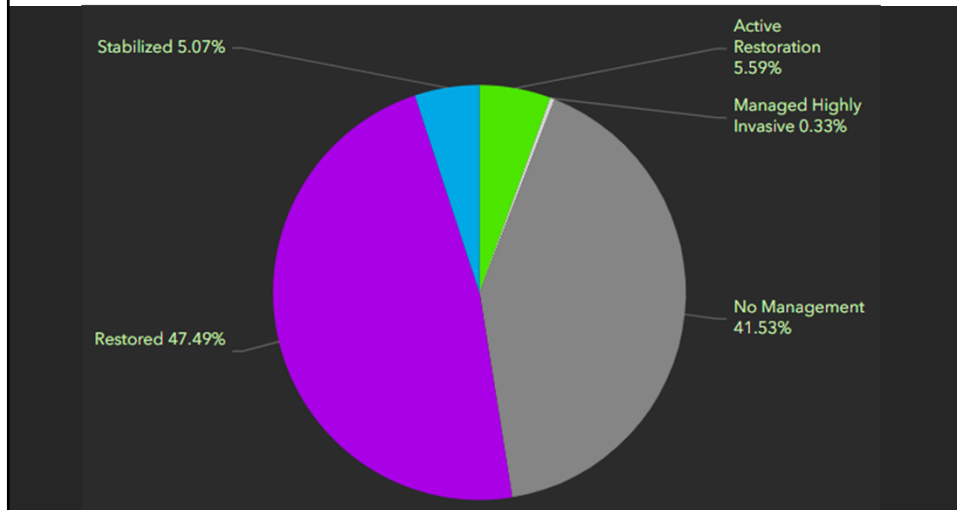
- Increased investment in Parks natural resources
- Has guided restoration of roughly half of the Park System to-date

4

Related Plans: NRMSP



Current Status: Parks, Greenways, Natural Area Easements, and Selected Service Centers and Libraries



5

Related Plans: NRMSP



Highlights: Wildlife

- Bison Reintroduction
- Cliff Road Wildlife Tunnel
- Saw-Whet Owl Banding



6

Related Plans: NRMSP



Highlights: Plants

- Rare species discovered or rediscovered



7

Related Plans: NRMSP



Highlights:

- Active volunteer participation
- Greenhouse for propagation
- New partnerships



8

Related Plans: LCP



Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County



Adopted on November 17, 2020



2020 LCP

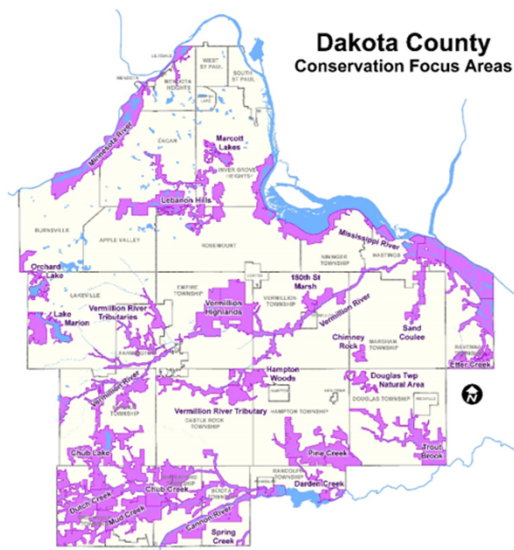
- Refined land protection priorities into Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs)
- Initiated the City-County Conservation Collaborative
- Updated guidance for the County Land Protection program

9

Related Plans: LCP



- 180th Street Marsh
- Cannon River
- Chimney Rock
- Chub Creek
- Chub Lake
- Darden Creek
- Douglas Township Natural Area
- Dutch Creek
- Etter Creek
- Hampton Woods
- Lake Marion
- Lebanon Hills
- Marcott Lakes
- Minnesota River
 - Black Dog Unit
 - Fort Snelling Unit
 - Mendota/Lilydale Unit
 - Oheyawahe Unit
- Mississippi River
 - Pine Bend Unit
 - Spring Lake Unit
 - River Bluffs Unit
 - Vermillion Bottoms Unit
- Mud Creek
- Orchard Lake
- Pine Creek
- Sand Coulee
- Spring Creek
- Trout Brook
- Vermillion Highlands
- Vermillion River Main Stem
- Vermillion River Tributaries



- 74,863 acres total
- 21,990 acres public lands

10

Related Plans: LCP



- 10 Natural Area easements acquired since plan adoption, protecting 243 acres
- 3 County Park Conservation Area acquisitions, 188 acres

11

Related Plans: VP



2050 VISION PLAN

DAKOTA COUNTY PARKS, GREENWAYS, AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

Nature Protected, Community Reflected, All Are Connected

ADOPTED BY THE DAKOTA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JULY 29, 2025



2050 Parks Vision Plan (VP)

- Updated the Dakota County Parks vision with more emphasis on inclusivity and the interconnectedness of nature and people
- 15 Goals
 - ✓ Included goals for natural systems stewardship
 - ✓ Included goals for land protection

12

Related Plans: VP



Vision Plan Areas to Incorporate:

- Climate mitigation and resilience
- Engagement of Tribal Nations in traditional ecological knowledge
- Greater outreach and partnerships
- Investment in opportunities to increase natural resource career pathways
- Recommendations for new park search areas
- Protection and resource goals

13

Project Approach



Merge the LCP and NRMSP into one document with Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship chapters

- Incorporate new content from the 2050 Vision Plan
- Update objectives and targets (mostly NRMSP, the older plan), with lessons learned
- Streamline background content
- Provide a clear implementation path

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Draft Objectives



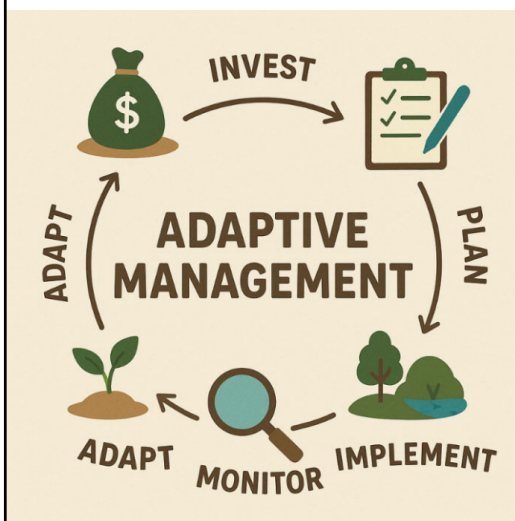
Land Protection Chapter

LCP Goals become objectives (mostly unchanged)

1. Ecologically important areas are prioritized for protection.
2. Water quality and quantity are enhanced and protected.
3. *Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.* (moved to next chapter)
4. Biodiversity is restored and sustained.
5. The public is informed, involved, and strongly supports natural resource protection and management.
6. Nature-based recreational access to conservation lands is enhanced.

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

Objectives restructured from NRMSP

1. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner (Invest, Plan, Implement, Monitor, Adapt).

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

2. Manage systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
3. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

4. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.
5. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

6. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

- A. Engage Tribal Nations to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into stewardship approaches
- B. Co-management of cultural sites

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Draft Objectives



Questions and Thoughts on Draft Objectives?

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Next Steps



Build Out Implementation Chapter:

- Update and incorporate lessons learned for setting priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Metrics and reporting
- Budget and CIP
- Funding sources
- Partnerships and program operations
- Public information and outreach

Engagement to be held on selected areas of change in the plan

Draft document in first quarter of 2026

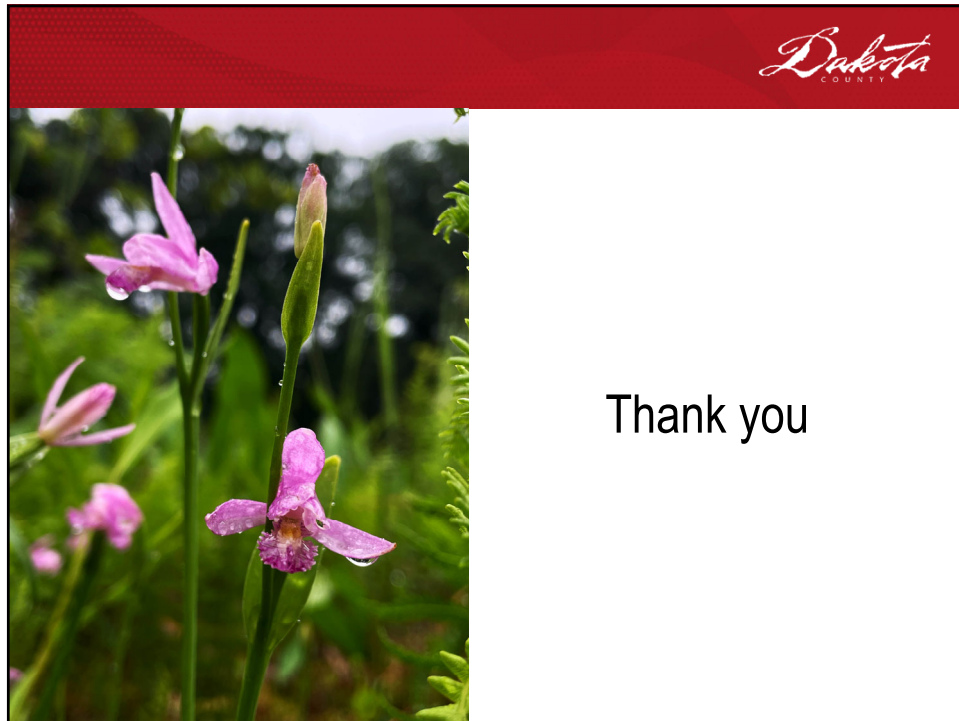
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Next Steps



Questions?

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DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: 11/20/2025

AGENDA ITEM: Dakota County Public Art Blueprint (*information*)

PREPARED BY: LIL LEATHAM

PURPOSE

Provide Planning Commission:

1. *An introduction to the project*
2. *The opportunity for discussion about vision for a future public art program in Dakota County*

BACKGROUND

Dakota County is in the process of developing its first public art blueprint. The blueprint will assess how public art can be incorporated across County libraries, parks, and facilities. The blueprint will define a unifying vision and goals for public art and tackle practical aspects like funding, maintenance, and policy.

Project goals include:

- ♦ Articulate a role for Dakota County in public art provision and develop a vision, goals, strategies, and high-level policies to guide the County's future activities in a more coordinated manner.
- ♦ At a county level, identify opportunities and general themes for public arts in County facilities.
- ♦ Identify funding models, organizational structure, policy, procedural, and oversight needs, and partnership opportunities.
- ♦ Define policies for public art, including process for future public art acquisition and development, guidelines for maintenance, and deaccessioning of public art.

ATTACHMENTS

Public Art Blueprint Presentation

QUESTIONS

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

1. *Thinking about a future public art program, what is one word that you would want to use to describe the public art in Dakota County?*
2. *What impact can public art have in Dakota County?*
3. *What kinds of projects do you think would be most successful? Why?*
4. *What are the places or types of places where you think public art would be successful?*



1

Agenda

1. Public Art in Dakota County
2. Public Art Framework Plan Goals, Outcomes, and Planning Process
3. A Vision for Public Art - Discussion

via:

2

Public Art in Dakota County

via:

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What is public art?

Working definition:

Permanent or temporary elements of a public place that are designed by an artist or artist team, that reflect an awareness of the site, and that enrich the character of the location. Public art can be stand-alone or integrated into the architecture, landscape, or infrastructure of places such as public buildings, parks, greenways, and roadways. Public art can be the sole creation of the artist or be the result of a design team approach in which artists work on a project team with architects, engineers, landscape architects and others to design and create public places.

via:

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How public art is supported in Dakota County today:

Works commissioned or supported through the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC). *\$30k levy funded annual budget*

Works *donated* to the County.

Works on *loan* from a City, artists, or other partners.

Interpretative projects in parks that incorporate artwork or artistic elements. *Can be funded with grants, regional funding, or incorporated into the project budget*

Architectural elements in libraries that incorporate artwork or artistic elements. *Grants, state library funds, or incorporated into project budget*

Exhibitions in Libraries organized by local arts organizations. *Loan*

via:

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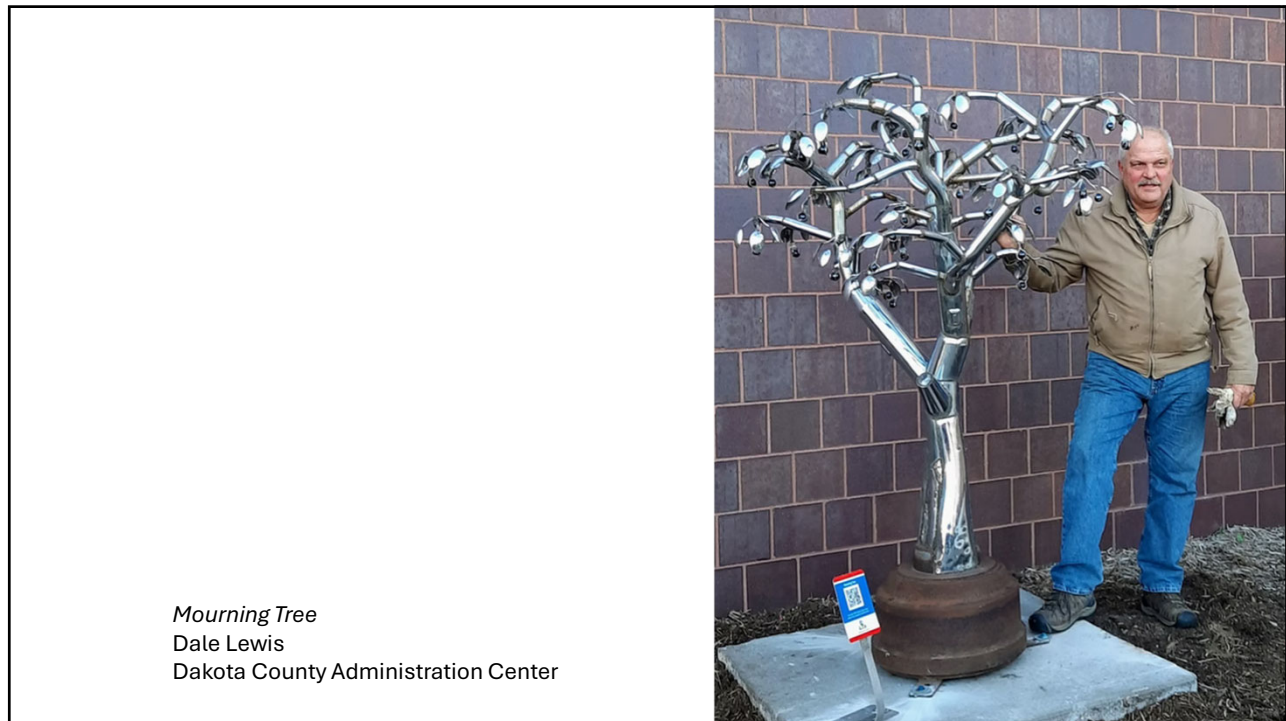
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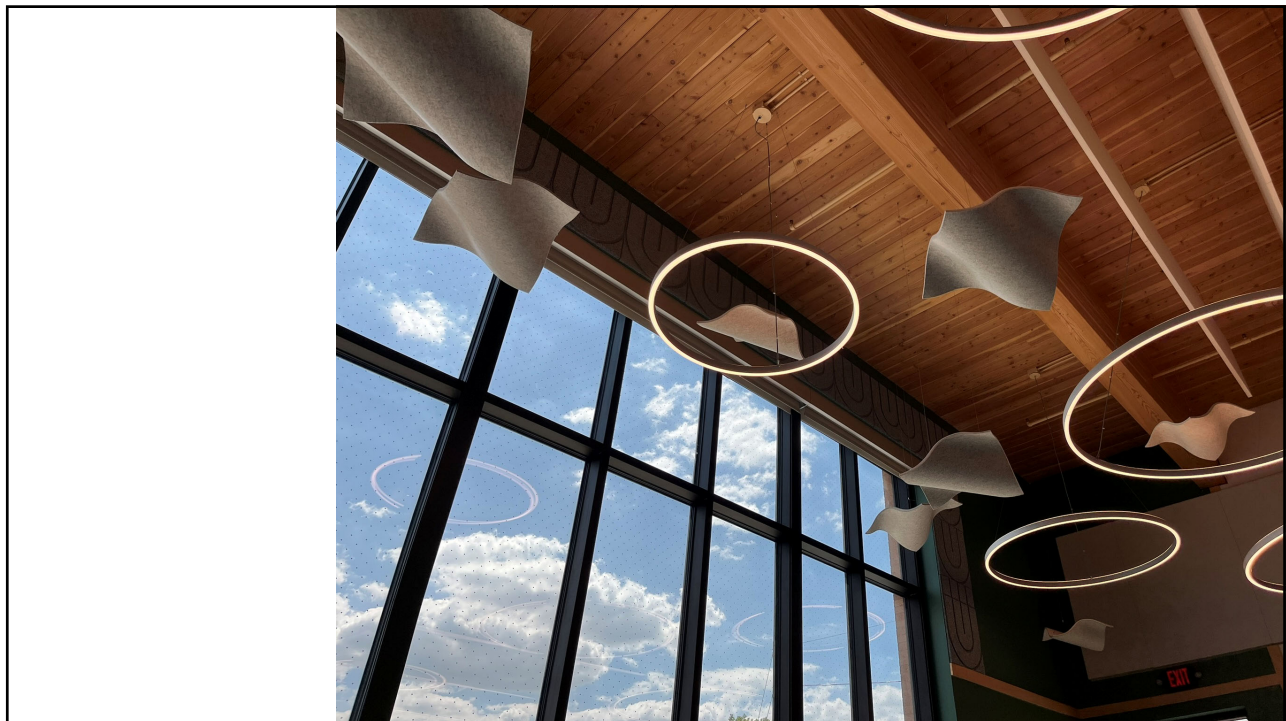
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Public Art Framework Plan Outcomes

Vision, Mission & Goals = Why
 Opportunities = Where + What + When
 Administrative Tools = How + Who

via:

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Key issues the blueprint will address

Should there be a unifying vision and goals for public art in Dakota County, and if so, what should these statements express about the impact of public art in the community?

What are important places for public art in Dakota County?

What approaches to public art are the most appropriate for these places?

What resources (staffing and funding) are available for new art as well as the care of existing artwork in Dakota County?

What are the criteria for the review of new commissions, acquisitions, gifts, and loans of art?

What is the role of the County staff, PAAC, County Board, and other stakeholders?

via:

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Vision Discussion

via:

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Public Art Can Take Many Forms

via:

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Public Art Goals

Develop Community Identity
Nurture Health and Wellbeing
Encourage Exploration and Play
Promote Creativity
Connect to the Natural World

via:

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Develop Community Identity

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Nurture Health and Wellbeing

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Bob Cassilly, *Turtle Park*

Encourage Exploration and Play

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Ohio Birds Mural, Columbus, OH

Promote Creativity

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Cloud House
Matthew Mazzotta,
Springfield, MO



Connect to the Natural World

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Vision Question

Thinking about a future public art program, what is one word that you would want to use to describe the public art in Dakota County?

via:

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Vision Questions

What impact can public art have in Dakota County?

What kinds of projects do you think would be most successful? Why?

What are the places or types of places where you think public art would be successful?

via:

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What's Next

- December - Update to Dakota County Board
- January 2026 – Draft blueprint document development
 - Vision, mission, and goals for public art
 - Future opportunities
 - Administrative tools
- July 2026 – Anticipated project completion

via:

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