



5 Year Park Planning

2024-2028

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Purpose

In the simplest of terms, this planning tool is intended to provide a 5-year guide for staff and elected officials as budget planning efforts are undertaken, and to address the recreational needs of Hastings residents.

Hastings has a robust parks and trail system which includes 37 parks and 30 miles of trails. Also, within the system are specialty facilities including the Hastings Civic Arena, the Hastings Family Aquatic Center, and Veterans Athletic Complex. All of these facilities are critical components of the Hastings community, and each enhance the livability and quality of life in Hastings. It is vitally important to invest in all of these facilities to ensure they are “keeping up with the times” and remain in good working order. A quality park system can and does attract new residents to a community, helps retain existing residents in a community, and provides a positive economic impact for local businesses.

Everything within Hastings’ Park System has an expected life cycle, and will need replacement, major maintenance, reconstruction, or will need to be re-envisioned as the community evolves. The most common or most routine elements of this life cycle are replacing playground equipment and reconstructing trails, both are relatively easy to plan for, typically having a 20-year lifespan. The more complicated, or specialized elements of the Park System require more thought and visioning since investment in these facilities can be much greater and the lifespan is most often a bit longer, 30-50 years.

Alignment with Park System Plan (Comprehensive Plan)

Hastings has a very thoughtful and detailed Park System Plan, originally developed in 2008-2009. This Park System Plan has also served as the Parks, Trails & Open Space component of Hastings' Comprehensive Plan. As it serves a dual purpose, the plan was updated in 2018 as a part of the 10-year Comprehensive Plan process. In the last update, there were no significant changes to the plan, rather it was an opportunity to "check boxes" of accomplishments, and re-affirm the content of the plan. It is important to note that during the development of the 2008-09 Park System Plan, intensive public engagement was sought and accomplished. The plan was developed based upon community needs, community vision, and as such, is a plan which allowed the community voice to be the dominant voice. The Park System Plan is Hastings' guidebook for park and recreational needs.

Neighborhood and Community Parks:

The Park System Plan states that the Hastings community can support and deserves quality recreational facilities. Specifically, that the neighborhood and community park service level should be in the Upper Basic to Medium level of intensity/quality. The plan provides a list of common amenities within these levels, and a price range a community can expect (in 2007 dollars) to invest in these facilities to provide the desired level of service to the community. In dollars, the Basic Service Level suggests up to \$200,000, and the Medium Service Level suggests between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in 2007. To be accurate now, we must calculate inflation since 2007 which is somewhere around 40-45%.

As mentioned earlier, a routine investment in these parks is necessary to keep up with current trends and ensure the neighborhoods and community at large is being served well. The most typical investment is new playground equipment, and the most typical replacement schedule is every 20 years. During difficult economic times, Hastings fell behind this typical schedule, but is primed to meet a 25-year playground equipment replacement schedule. That is the schedule staff have proposed in the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

Natural & Open Spaces:

Similar to neighborhood and community parks, natural and open spaces within the park system provide recreational opportunity for the community. In addition to recreation opportunities, quality natural and open space areas provide habitat for all sorts of wildlife, native vegetation, and opportunities for activities like birding, hiking, wildlife watching, and environmental education.

Hastings has continually invested in natural and open space enhancements, management, and acquisitions, and has a significant inventory of these valuable park spaces available for the community. Continued investment in enhancement and management of these areas is crucial for the success of these areas.

Trails:

Hastings' Trail System is the envy of many other communities, and is a highly regarded asset with residents, visitors and our local Tourism Bureau. With approximately 30 miles of trails in Hastings, connections to regional trail systems and regional attractions, the Hastings trail system is vitally important to the quality of life of residents and the economics of tourism-based businesses in Hastings.

Along with an extensive trail system, comes the responsibility to maintain the trails just as roadways are maintained. This responsibility requires routine and reliable funding to plan and complete trail maintenance and reconstruction projects to ensure the safety and quality of the trail system. In recent years, Hastings has invested in a Pavement Management Plan which inventoried the quality of all trails and provided recommendations for maintenance. Hastings also developed the People Movement Plan, which compliments the Pavement Management Plan by evaluating how trails are used, how complete the system is and identified areas where trails could be added to enhance user experiences and pedestrian movements throughout Hastings. Both of these plans are valuable tools as Hastings develops plans to invest in the trail system.

Athletic Facilities:

One of the most pointed findings and recommendations from the Park System Plan is the communities need for additional athletic facilities to meet the needs of youth and adult athletics in Hastings. An additional 40-90 acres of athletic field space was identified in the Park System Plan in 2008.

Hastings' current athletic complex, Veterans Athletic Complex is comprised of 1 adult size baseball field, 4 adult slow pitch softball fields and 4 "athletic greens" which can be used for soccer, lacrosse and football. The remainder of the city's athletic facilities are housed within neighborhood parks, parks that do not have the required facilities (bathrooms & parking are most notable) to support organized athletics long term and reduces the recreational opportunity of park neighbors to utilize their neighborhood parks. This configuration also puts additional strain on the youth athletic organizations in a few notable ways; they are spread out in the community, they are not intended for competitive athletic play, they are not compatible with tournament style play. Undue strain is also encountered by the Park Maintenance Division which is responsible to the care and maintenance of these facilities, most notable is the geographic spread of the facilities which requires many hours of travel time.

Neighborhood and Community Parks 2024-2028

These parks are included based on a 25-year playground equipment replacement schedule. The general plan here is to replace the playground equipment, update or upgrade the safety surfacing, and consider other site amenities like small shelters, tables, benches, athletic courts, etc.

Each park will be reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC), and opportunity for unique enhancements will be sought. This could mean installation of equipment other than traditional play equipment, it could be a reduction or enlargement of the play area, it could be moving the play area, or a host of other options within the suggested budget amount. Once guidance is provided, staff and PRC will work with playground designers to develop 2-3 viable options for the park. With those options in hand, the staff and the PRC may solicit ideas and information from the neighborhood residents and at the same time share the preliminary designs. Final design will be chosen by the Parks & Recreation Commission and implemented within budget allocations.

2024: \$1.1m

1. Conzemius Park @ \$200k: a 3,800sf playground installed in 1999
2. Pioneer Park @ \$200k: a 3,300sf playground installed in 1999
3. Tuttle Park @ \$200k: a 5,000sf playground installed in 1999
4. Vermillion Falls Park @ \$500k: a community park in need of a facelift (shelter and overlook rehab, consideration of additional park amenities, parking lot renovation, possible trail upgrades)

2025: \$500k

1. Roadside Park @ \$500k: a 8,600sf playground in a community park installed in 2000, also need to provide a facelift to the picnic shelter and consider other amenities.

2026: \$200k

1. Wallin Park @ \$200k: a 6,300sf playground installed in 2001

2027: \$400k

1. Cannon Park @ \$200k: a 3,700sf playground installed in 2002
2. Greten Park @ \$200k: a 6,000sf playground installed in 2002

2028: \$400k

1. Pleasant Park @ \$200k: a 7,500sf playground installed in 2003
2. Riverwood Park @ \$200k: a 6,000sf playground installed in 2003

Trail System

Hastings' expansive trail system is a gem in the community and a focus area for tourism in Hastings. Previously noted, Hastings' trail system is also connected to Dakota and Washington Counties' regional trail system, and perhaps in the future will be connected to Goodhue County, the City of Redwing, and the Cannon Valley Trail. Just as maintenance and reconstruction of roads in a community is necessary, so is the maintenance and reconstruction of trails.

A bonus for Hastings needs to be highlighted. Beginning a few years ago, the City of Hastings partnered with Dakota County to complete trail reconstruction on the Mississippi River Regional Trail between the Lock and Dam and the Hwy 61 bridge. This partnership was made possible by staff and elected officials of both Dakota County and the City of Hastings, and ultimately reduces the miles of trails Hastings needs to plan and pay to maintain. Similarly, the Vermillion River Regional Greenway, part of Dakota County's Regional Greenway System, has miles of trail within it that will be upgraded and reconstructed by Dakota County. These two Regional Greenway Trails encompass nearly 7 miles of highly valued trails in Hastings, which equates to 7 miles fewer that Hastings needs to allocate funding to maintain and improve.

2024 – 2028: \$2m

Allocate \$400,000 annually to complete trail reconstruction projects throughout the trail system beginning with those that are in the greatest need/have the lowest PASER rating and consider trail sections that are most heavily used. Consistent and reliable funding will allow Engineering staff or consultants adequate time to prepare pre-construction investigation, construction documents, and develop bidding documents and bid the identified projects.

Natural & Open Spaces

Hastings continues to complete great work and make good progress in enhancing and managing a variety of natural and open space areas within the park system. This important work is made possible through partnerships with organizations like Friends of The Mississippi River (FMR) and Hastings Environmental Protectors (HEP). There are a couple of natural & open space areas where organized athletics are supported, and in an ideal situation those uses would stop and shift to a more appropriate facility. Both Rosemary Ponding Basin and Featherstone Ponding Basin are used to support youth athletics, and that was not the intended purpose of those areas.

Current projects include Hastings River Flats, Old Mill Park, Vermillion Falls Park, Vermillion Linear Park and the Southwest Ponding Basin (aka Louis Lane Ponding Basin).

2024-2028: \$60,000

This includes already planned and forecasted work at the above locations in partnership with FMR. It is important to note that the City funding provided is only a portion of the funding actually required to complete the work, FMR staff continue to successfully acquire grant funding in addition to City funding to make these important projects work.

Hastings Civic Arena

The Hastings Civic Arena was originally constructed in 1974 with the second sheet of ice (West Rink) being added in 1998. The arena currently has an R-22 freon refrigeration system that needs to be updated to a new, more environmentally friendly refrigeration system. Not only is a new refrigeration system needed, the roof over the West Rink and lobby area are also in dire need of replacement.

If you live in or around Hastings you know how important the Arena is to residents of Hastings and the surrounding areas. Over 125,000 people visit the Arena during the year with the primary use being hockey, with skaters of all ages and abilities. The Civic Arena is also home to Riverblades Skating School, a well known and respected skating school offering opportunity to skaters of all ages and abilities to learn and improve their skating skills.

2024-2028: \$5m

This cost estimate includes a new refrigeration system, new roofing, adding solar panels to that roof, lighting and efficiency upgrades of around \$4m. It also includes upgrades/replacement to the East Rink bleachers, replacement of the East Rink boards, a public restroom remodel and possible upgrades to the entrance area of the Arena.

Hastings Family Aquatic Center

The Hastings Family Aquatic Center (HFAC) is a very popular park system asset during the Minnesota summer season. This facility was constructed in 1998, and has been a staple in the community ever since. In recent years, sufficient funding has been allocated to provide a much-needed facelift to much of the facility with reconditioning of the slides and play structure, the addition of a climbing wall, pool house and mechanical room upgrades, a new roof and a new interior and exterior paint job. The city has also invested in mechanical equipment like pool water heaters, and pumps and filters.

What's left? In the not too distant future it will be time to remove and reinstall the plaster in the pool shell itself. This is a large and expensive job, and staff work with specialty contractors to evaluate the health of the plaster periodically. If this expense can be pushed out year over year, we will make that recommendation, but there will come a time when it needs to be completed.

2024-2028: \$240k

To include re-plaster and replacement of the slide tread steps. *Plaster pricing has not been investigated in very recent years, this will need to be updated.

Other Considerations

While the Parks & Recreation Department staff are continually working to maintain and enhance our facilities, provide the highest level of customer service and community programming, we also continue to have a keen eye on ways in which we can improve efficiency and repurpose facilities and equipment. Following is a list of ideas we have identified as possibilities or opportunities.

- Con-Agra Park: this greenspace on the north side of East 18th Street just north of Ardent Mill (formerly Con-Agra) is not owned by the City, it is a leased parcel of land that has been leased since the mid 1980's. The lease is an auto renewing 5-year lease that can be ended by the City or by the property owner, Ardent Mills. Many years ago, the parcel was used for car shows, and for the Rivertown Days Craft Fair. Outside of those uses, the City has been maintaining the property for nearly 40 years without any substantial development or purpose.
 - Ending the lease on this roughly 3.2 acre parcel would reduce weekly city mowing during the growing season by an estimated 45 minutes per week.
- Featherstone Ponding Basin: as mentioned earlier, a portion of this ponding basin is utilized to support youth athletics, and historically some YMCA activities. Youth soccer, youth lacrosse, girls rugby, ultimate frisbee, and smaller sports camps have used this site in the past. The demand fluctuates each year depending upon the number of youth sports participants in a variety of sports.
 - Roughly 5 acres of this ponding basin are mowed weekly, with an estimated 60-75 minutes of time being required to complete that task.
 - This area could be renovated into natural and open space and support native vegetation/pollinator habitat.
- Rosemary Ponding Basin: this ponding basin on Pleasant Drive, just south of 14th St. W. has been used to support youth athletics for years. Again, depending upon the numbers in athletic programs dictates whether or not it is used for that purpose each year.
 - A little over 4 acres of this ponding basin are mowed weekly and roughly 50 minutes of time is needed for that effort.
 - This area could also be converted to natural and open space and support native vegetation/pollinator habitat.
- Athletic Facilities: the City's facilities to support youth and adult athletics are spread throughout the community with only one facility, Veterans Athletic Complex, resembling a basic level athletic complex. This creates a substantial inefficiency in the maintenance efforts completed for athletic facilities. Equipment to groom fields, paint lines, fertilize grass, repair fences, adjust bases, etc. must be transported to many different locations on a daily basis to complete routine maintenance.
 - Combine all competition level athletic facilities into one athletic complex, could be completed with an expansion of Veterans Athletic Complex or could be located on current vacant land on the outskirts of Hastings (new build).
 - Reduces shotgun approach to maintenance, allows storage of specialized maintenance equipment and supplies where those are needed and used.
 - Allows for high quality athletic tournaments to be hosted in Hastings
 - positive economic impact on local businesses, hotels, etc.
 - showcases Hastings invests in youth athletics, and important strategy to attract and retain young families.

10-year Budget Estimates

This graphic is a more detailed look at projected needs, some of which differ somewhat from what has been presented previously in this document. This graphic is based upon the City’s Capital Improvement Plan proposal and two notable differences are Trails and Vets. Estimates in this chart are based on specific projects in those two areas in specific years, information earlier in this document point to a need for consistent and reliable trail funding, and point to the need to do something different for organized athletics where this chart is just taking care of what we have now.

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	
Neighborhood&Community Parks	\$ 1,219,000	\$ 530,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 430,000	\$ 230,000	\$ -	\$ 230,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,239,000
Trails + D&E	\$ -	\$ 643,515	\$ 803,316	\$ 199,545	\$ 786,134	\$ 546,135	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,978,645
Natural & Open Space	\$ 36,380	\$ 11,260	\$ 11,200	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 58,840
Civic Arena	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 90,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 575,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,685,000
Aquatic Center	\$ 47,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 210,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 372,000
Vets Athletic Complex	\$ 130,000	\$ 392,225	\$ 650,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,372,225
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	\$ 5,432,380	\$ 1,707,000	\$ 1,874,516	\$ 619,545	\$ 1,816,134	\$ 806,135	\$ 10,000	\$ 430,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$12,705,710

Funding Options

Funding planned projects is challenging and requires dedication and some amount of risk, however it is vitally important to maintain Hastings' quality of service, residents' quality of life, and the ability to attract and retain young families in Hastings. Below are a few options that have been discussed, and staff would propose in an effort to keep Hastings' Parks and Trail System in good repair and in good standing with residents and visitors alike.

Park Dedication Fees:

These fees are collected for new residential/commercial/industrial developments and are calculated for each new development. These fees ensure that NEW residents of Hastings pay for the facilities that will support their recreational needs and demand that NEW residents pay for the same level of service that existing residents have paid. Hastings' Park Dedication Fees have not been adjusted since 2004, and there is a need to update the fees and memorialize the process used to calculate these fees. The League of Minnesota Cities has a published methodology we can confidently use to calculate Park Dedication Fees for Hastings.

Per Player Fees:

Fees that would be paid by all youth and adult athletic players on a per season basis to help fund maintenance or improvements to athletic facilities. These fees are common fees in almost all surrounding communities, however Hastings has chosen to not implement these fees, it is time to take advantage of this ability and to help supplement the City budget.

Park Bond Referendum:

To my knowledge, Hastings has never proposed a Park Bond Referendum, however it is apparent that our system has needs that the annual budget levy cannot support. A successful Park Bond Referendum would tackle high dollar, larger scale and impactful projects within the park and trail system. Specific projects would need to be identified, planned and presented to the voters of Hastings.

Local Option Sales Tax:

Somewhat similar to the Referendum, specific projects would need to be identified and presented to the voters for approval. A one-half percent local sales tax is estimated to generate around \$500,000 annually in Hastings, much of which COULD be generated from non-residents of Hastings as they travel to and through Hastings purchasing goods and supplies.

Levy Support:

This option would simply raise the annual tax levy by a calculated amount to support the funding needs of the Parks & Trail system plan.

Park Committee of Council Review, Ideas & Discussion

At the March 27, 2023 P&R Committee of Council meeting(*Folch, Lund, Pemble), this plan was discussed at length, resulting in a variety of thoughts and ideas and some key outcomes/recommendations. The following are in no particular order of importance, rather are how my notes and memory reflect the meeting.

- **Thorough trail signage needs:** with miles of trails, many points of interest, and general need for “you are here”, committee members are supportive to develop a comprehensive trail signage and implementation plan.
 - o 2 Dakota County Regional Trails in Hastings – one has county signage, the other will.
 - o 10-mile loop and the many points of interest and hidden treasures should be easy to follow and find.
 - o Staff are inquiring with consultants to estimate costs for planning.

- **Neighborhood and Community Parks:** extensive discussion around planned playground equipment replacements and the costs to complete these.
 - o I want to remind everyone the playground replacement schedule is now on a 25-year rotation, where industry standard would be 20 years. Simply put, we are behind the curve and will see deterioration of equipment components which will still need to wait their turn in the schedule.
 - o Discussion on if \$200k per neighborhood park is the correct amount.
 - Replacement playground equipment, installed is closer to \$120k
 - Remainder could be used for poured in place rubber safety surfacing, small park shelters, tables, benches, or other park amenities or projects in the park.
 - Unneeded funds can also just remain unspent.
 - Staff used \$200k as a standard for all neighborhood parks assuming same size playground, with potential to complete a little bit extra if desired.

- **Athletic Facilities:** extensive conversation about the state of our current athletic facilities, their distribution across the community and if this is the best configuration/situation for Hastings. It was noted that expanding the current athletic complex and removing athletic facilities from neighborhood parks was/is a top priority in the Park System Plan (which also serves as the P&R chapter of our Comprehensive Plan).
 - o Geographic spread creates challenges for youth athletic associations, city maintenance staff, as well as teams who come to town to play, often causing confusion.
 - o Consolidating makes a lot of sense, eliminates confusion on where to go, creates a sporting atmosphere, has appropriate support facilities for visitors and maintenance staff, allows hosting of tournaments, generates revenue and economic development, creates one more factor in attracting families with school aged kids to want to live in Hastings, etc.
 - o Parks & Recreation Commission will be making a recommendation/request at their April, 19, 2023 meeting to use park dedication funds to hire a consultant to develop a master plan to expand and renovate Veterans Athletic Complex.
 - Committee was receptive to this idea.
 - Some discussion on if Vets is the correct place, staff would suggest YES at this time.
 - IF supported, and athletic facilities are removed from neighborhood parks, there is a great opportunity to “reimagine” some key parks to create destination parks. Reimagining these parks requires the athletic facilities to be removed.

- Question regarding what the projects are in the chart on page 12 for Veterans Athletic Complex. Below are the items proposed in the CIP, these are rough numbers!
 - 2024: \$30k proposed for updated backstop netting at baseball field, \$100k proposed for updated field lighting at baseball field.
 - 2025: \$312,225.00 in Pavement Management Plan for a road project, \$80k proposed for baseball field fencing
 - 2026: \$250k proposed for softball field fencing replacements, \$400k proposed for updated field lighting at softball fields.

- **Hastings Civic Arena:** expensive major maintenance projects are needed, (\$420k in fund balance right now).
 - West Rink roof replacement was estimated around \$800k in June of 2022, expect it is more than that now. Current roof is a ballasted membrane roof (rubber membrane with river rock on the top), and is over 20 years old. Proposed roof is a modified built up roof (layers of insulation, hot tar, membrane) and allows drainage to be directed.
 - Refrigeration plant conversion: if we want to make this a 2024 project, we need to order long lead items no later than June/July (\$300k+, not sure on full cost, but it is considerable).
 - Desire to consider the future of the facility... what should be done to bring the facility up to date and be ready for the next 30-50 years?
 - Interior remodel (restrooms, lobby, office, storage, lighting, etc.)
 - Expansion of the lobby (large walkway area at front entrance), multi-story, meeting rooms, viewing of west rink,
 - New bleachers, expanded seating in west rink
 - Electronic display sign on West side of West Rink... and maybe a facility sign as well.

- **Park Dedication:** engaging discussion around the need to update the park dedication calculation and fee in lieu of land.
 - Current fee structure in place since 2004 and does not reflect any land value increase since that time.
 - Staff working with city attorney to ensure we are in line with state statute and recent/current legal decisions.
 - One big change, not highlighted at this meeting is that park dedication cannot be automatically applied to commercial and industrial development, but shall be evaluated on a case by case basis. This is in accordance with state statute and the need to clearly show a nexus to the need created by the development.
 - LMC has a sample methodology which staff have used to propose a calculation method for both physical land dedication and fee in lieu of land.
 - Staff have inquired with at least one land appraiser to determine current fair market value (FMV) of residential zoned, development land in Hastings.
 - Request of staff to show a relevant scenario calculation.

- **The 5 Year Plan After Discussion:** recognizing there is a City Council Workshop scheduled for April 3, 2023, and the discussion generated during this Committee meeting, staff proposed providing the current plan to City Council for the workshop and highlighting the need to discuss financial strategies as a priority. It was discussed

that IF Council supports the effort to develop a renovation/expansion master plan for Veterans Athletic Complex, much of this plan makes a 180 degree turn and isn't accurate.