Bemidji Parks and Recreation Department

Strategic Plan

Adopted April, 2018
Acknowledgments

The Strategic Planning team would like to thank the City Council, the Parks and Trails Commission, City staff, and dozens of community groups for helping to make this plan possible. This City of Bemidji Parks and Recreation Department Strategic Plan would not be possible without the leadership of the following groups and individuals. In-depth involvement from user groups across the community was also vital to the creation of this collaboratively-built plan. Their involvement is detailed in the Planning Process section of this document. Strong public/private relationships have been, and will continue to be, critical to the quality of recreation programming across the community.

Bemidji City Council

Rita Albrecht – Mayor
Michael Meehlhause – Ward 1
Roger Hellquist – Ward 2
Ron Johnson – Ward 3
Richard Lehmann – Ward 4
Nancy Erickson – Ward 5
Dave Larson – At Large

Bemidji City Staff

Nate Mathews – City Manager

Parks and Trails Commission

Tina Kaney – Chair
Tom Anderson
Don Heinonen
Annette Meyer
Wendy Kvale
Mary Auger
Tonya Prim
Michael Meehlhause – Council Liaison

Parks and Recreation Department Staff

Marcia Larson – Parks and Recreation Director
Jamie Anderson – Recreation Coordinator
Lolly Randall – Administrative Assistant
Nick Swanson – Park Programming and Special Events Assistant

Planning Consultant

Joe Czapiewski – JFC Strategic Services
Purpose: To develop a strategic plan for the department’s operations and programming, with focus on building a plan for matching programming and services with known demand and available resources. Parks and trails facility development will not generally be a component of this plan (see Bemidji Parks, Open Space, and Trails System Plan); this plan will complement the physical system plan by setting strategies for operations and recreation programming that make the best use of the City’s parks and trails.

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Theater Camp
**Parks and Recreation Department Background**

**Overview**
Bemidji Parks and Recreation is a department of the City of Bemidji, responsible to the City Council. The department is led by a Department Director, who reports to the City Manager. A Parks and Trails Commission, made up of city residents selected by the Council, provides an advisory role for the department regarding facility development, operations, and policy development.

The department maintains approximately 22 parks and about 250 acres of parkland or open space within the City. The Parks Superintendent is responsible for overseeing general maintenance and operations of the park facilities as well as city forestry functions. Development of the system is guided by a Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan.

As the Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan has come to fruition, the department’s recreation programming has expanded along with it. A Recreation Coordinator is responsible for leading a staff team in implementing a far-reaching programming strategy.

**History**
Bemidji has operated a parks system for over 40 years. Most of that time, department operations were managed by one Parks and Recreation Superintendent under Public Works with minimal, if any staff. Projects were carried out by Public Works staff, part-time seasonal staff, or contractors. Almost no recreation programming, outside of athletic fields and club/youth sports like baseball, softball and hockey, was carried out until the system started expanding in the late 2000’s.

Over the past fifteen years, Bemidji has invested heavily into its parks and trails system, thanks largely to a voter-approved sales tax that resulted in nearly $10 million in one-time park and trail improvements starting in 2006. In 2008, the City expanded the Parks Recreation Superintendent role into a separate Parks and Recreation Department with its own Director. This move expanded capacity to steer the improving park and trails system and also to grow programming.

Since the 2001, the City’s system has expanded from 14 parks covering 205 acres, to 22 parks covering 250 acres (2017). There were zero trails in 2001; now more than 10 miles have been completed to date. Even more impressive is the expansion and replacement of amenities, such as new beaches, basketball courts, softball and baseball fields, playgrounds, pickleball courts, a dog park, and community gardens. Several key parks have been completely re-visioned and renovated.

Programming participation has been even more impressive. In 2009, twelve programs were offered with 660 people participating. By 2011, 36 programs saw 1775
participants. Similar growth continues today. In 2017, there were 35 programs with 2587 participants, growth of 31% in just six years. Staff in 2009 included one seasonal recreation specialist and no budget. Today, the full-time recreation coordinator works with one part-time recreation events specialist and four seasonal camp staff plus interns. An additional 50 volunteers help with special events annually.

**The Future**

Bemidji’s growth as a regional center, including population, economic, and visitor-based growth, has combined with the outstanding system to place strong demands on the department’s recreation programming capacity.

This plan is designed to leverage existing resources and invest new resources where it makes sense from a performance and sustainability perspective. Both the Parks and the Recreation divisions of the department depend on General Fund support for their budget, augmented with facility use fees, program or activity fees, grants, sponsorships, and donations. Where feasible, this plan targets the use of non-General Fund revenues to drive expansion of services and personnel.

**City of Bemidji Vision/Mission/Values**

The following Vision/Mission/Values for the City of Bemidji serves as the core for all department activities. The department Vision/Mission/Values identified in this plan build upon this direction in a way that is appropriate for the types of facilities and services provided by the department.

The Vision of the City of Bemidji is to become an active, safe and inclusive community.

The Mission of the City of Bemidji is to provide essential services and fun for our regional community.

The Core Values of the City of Bemidji are:

- Communication – be open, consistent, truthful, and respectful in all communications
- Ethics – maintain the highest standards of professional behavior
- Civility – maintain an atmosphere of respect and civility
- Stewardship – responsible and sustainable use of the City’s limited resources
- Creativity and Innovation – keep an open mind to new concepts and solutions
- Leadership – advocate to further the vision of a quality community
Planning Process

The 2018 Strategic Plan was developed as an inclusive process that involved and was informed by other key constituencies and existing information. The plan is designed to be an active document, updated over time as the plan progresses and circumstances change.

Bemidji Parks and Recreation Department staff, led by the Director, was responsible for management of the strategic planning process, in coordination with and in oversight of the Consultant. The Director coordinated planning activities and delivering project outcomes with the Commission, Council, and other city staff as needed for the process.

The Commission had responsibility for the overall plan direction, including participation in the designated Strategic Planning Meetings, selecting recommended goals, strategies and actions included in the plan, and supporting the Council’s decisions upon completion.

The City Council has all final decision-making authority over the direction and content of the plan. Commission and staff provided the Council with timely reports on planning progress, allowing the Council proper oversight and approval of key decisions, goals, strategies, and adoption of the final plan.

Strategic Planning Process and Activities

Survey and Assessment
Consultant conducted an anonymous survey of the Commission, Council and staff to gauge areas of common interest and concern. Department reports and trends were reviewed and summarized.

Planning Meeting #1
Commission reviewed and discussed survey and assessment/scan data, then developed an updated mission/vision/values for the department.

Stakeholder Interviews
Over the course of three weeks, forty-nine representatives of twenty-seven different community organizations that utilize or partner with Bemidji Parks and Recreation were interviewed by the consultant and staff team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Itasca Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beltrami County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Lacrosse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great River Rescue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bemidji Police Dept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Fire Dept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Bemidji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Mountain Bike Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice Ride Bemidji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSU Recreation Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Youth League Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legion Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Baseball Foundation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Strategic Planning is an organizational process of articulating a commonly desired future and setting realistic goals and strategies to achieve that future.

Common steps include understanding the current situation, creating a vision and mission, establishing broad goals, implementing strategies with available or developable resources, and evaluating the results.
Fast Pitch Softball
Boys and Girls Club of the Bemidji Area
Garden Club
Bemidji Community Theater
Headwaters Science Center
Curling Club
Lake Bemidji State Park
Bemidji Youth Hockey
Bemidji Community Arena
Bemidji Youth Advisory Commission
Bemidji Adult League Softball

An additional twelve organizations that utilize the Lake Bemidji waterfront, parks and trails for community events attended a focus group discussion facilitated by the consultant.
Watermark Art Center
Northwoods Battered Women’s Shelter
Blue Ox Marathon
Mississippi Music
Dragon Boat Festival
Bemidji Jaycees
Headwaters Science Center
Bemidji Chamber of Commerce
Sanford Health Foundation
Alzheimer’s Walk
KC Walleye Classic
Evergreen Shelter

An overview of the results of these discussions can be found in the appendix to this plan.

Planning Meeting #2
The Commission reviewed department performance data and stakeholder interview results, prioritized top issues and opportunities, set goals, and brainstormed implementation strategies.

Action Step Vetting
Consultant facilitated staff meetings that created a structure for the plan’s goals, strategies and action steps and drafted implementable action plan options for Commission review.

Strategic Planning Meeting #3
The Commission finalized their recommended goals and implementation plan (action steps, responsible parties, and timelines).

Finalize and Adopt Strategic Plan
Consultant worked with staff to finalize the action plan and evaluation methodology based on Commission and Council direction. Council adopts final plan with Commission recommendation.
**BEMIDJI PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT DASHBOARD**

The following dashboard offers key highlights from the Parks and Trails Commission’s stakeholder interviews. Additional observations and insights were discussed by the Commission and staff as a part of the assessment and goal setting phases of the planning process.

**Ways Users Partner with/Utilize the Department**
- Recreation programming space
- Programming run by department in other’s indoor or outdoor space
- Cooperative programming/activity management in various spaces
- Community events & fundraisers
- Registration and scheduling
- Long-term leases for activity space

**Communication with the Department**
- Great, once system is figured out; staff are very responsive
- Protocol is inconsistent, but flexible (appreciated)
- Online registration is great, when it can be found (website design issues)
- Not all park and trail events go through the department, confusing approach
- All partners need earlier coordination, especially for large events
- Online facility reservation system is incomplete

**Services and Collaboration Review**
- City has quality facilities and maintenance
- Want a more formalized event process, direction
- Want to know more of what city has to offer
- Partners have more programming, but need support
- Partners have more event opportunities to bring to the City
- Partners have facilities that the Dept. could help program

**Opportunities to Consider**
- Others could provide more services on city facilities, including rentals
- Department could provide more programs in partner facilities of various types
- Multi-agency facility coordination needed (hockey, baseball, softball)
- Department promote recreation events/programs/activities
- Support coordinated online registration, scheduling, and promote recruitment
- Exchange more services with partners outside city
- Modify existing facilities to meet changing needs
BEMIDJI PARKS AND RECREATION – PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD
The following dashboard offers key highlights from a review of department outcomes and performance.

**ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION**

*Trends*
2017 – 2552 total participants: 58% at department-led events/6% youth/14% adults/9% preschool/13% day camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Participants</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>360*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day Camp Participants</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Program Participants</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>550</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Reflects the loss of the free-to-user Sanford Steps program.

*Patterns*
Adult Participants – Prior to 2017, stabilized +/-700 for four years.
Day Camps – Over 2014-2016, 11 camps avg 20-22 participants per camp; jumped on total and per-camp basis in 2017.
Youth Programs – Grown to mid-500’s last four years. Bump in 2015 due to Kids Kitchen. Many now full or wait listed
Overall – Participation numbers flat, 2800 +/- 300 since 2012

*Survey - Youth Preferences*
Department survey of 95 youth/parents shows:
Top activity preferences for high energy activities 84%/nature based activities 73%/arts & crafts 69%/skill building 61%
Top location preferences for City Park 67%/Diamond Point 63%/BSU 59%/Public Works 48%
62% interest in after-school programming, strongest from 3:30 – 5 PM M-Th
63% want ½ day summer camp, morning preference by 53%. 62% would prefer to pick days, 35% want the whole week
Even split on need for transportation to park programming
Typical comments – want Lego Club back and more Middle School programming

**FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

*Trends*
2017 Registration fees: 62% of fees from Day Camps/23% events/8% youth activities/6% adult activities
16% of youth registration fees covered by scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
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<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Revenue</td>
<td>$57,166</td>
<td>$44,272</td>
<td>$53,987</td>
<td>$60,754</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$67,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses Covered</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Patterns*
Total Program Revenue – Inconsistent, running $45-65,000/year. Projections for 2015 and 2016 had shown $53,000 each, then ended at $60,000 and $45,000.
Expenses covered by revenue – At current levels, expenses appear stable, revenue directly affects budget coverage.
Youth camps appear to have the strongest correlation to revenue collected.
Survey – Youth Preferences
Cost and conflicts with community education are concerns by respondents
It appears that day camp and after-school participants, in particular, expect fees; “how much” is the unknown

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS
• Future revenue growth will likely be driven by day camp participation, which has strong demand and revenue affinity. Opportunities in other categories are also possible, such as regular after-school programming.
• Raw numbers of participants are generated by events, followed by programs and then camps.
• Department youth activities, led internally or in partnership with other providers, can be differentiated from competitors by a focus on preferred activities and locations.

Demand-driven new facilities, such as the skate park, create opportunities to provide programming to residents and visitors who might not otherwise find an option that fits them.
Mission, Vision, Values and Priority Goals

Vision Statement
Bemidji sets the standard as an award-winning leader in parks and recreation. Our parks and trails will reflect our natural resources with innovative, high quality and thoughtfully designed facilities and programs that will sustainably improve the health and vitality of the community. Programs will focus on fun, healthy and inclusive activities that are accessible to the entire Bemidji region and beyond, delivered through broad and diverse collaboration.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Bemidji Parks and Recreation Department is to improve quality of life by connecting everyone to healthy activities and natural places.

Values
- Collaborative
- Creative & Innovative
- Diversity
- Engaged
- Fun
- Inclusive
- Leadership
- Respect
- Stewardship

Top Priority Goals
The top priority goals, as selected by the Commission, serve as the basis for the detailed action plan contained in this report. These goals are determined to be most critical to achieving the department’s mission.

Goal: Improve access to the department
Goal: Improve/increase staff capacity for both parks and recreation
Goal: Improve marketing and promotion

Other Goals
Other goals were identified by the Commission as important to the success of the department but will be driven as opportunities and resources allow. Note that there is some overlap with top priority goals.

Goal: Maintain and improve facilities
Goal: Identify, improve and enhance partnerships
Goal: Stewardship of our resources
Goal: Improve our facility use process/procedures
**Goal 1: Improve access to the department**

Objective 1: Find or build a new, visible and accessible “storefront” space for department recreation staff and indoor programming.

  Strategy 1A: Clearly define the departments operating facility needs; i.e. square footage, accessibility, amenities, and other features, as well as budgetary impacts.
  Resources: Funding for facility study
  Timeline: 2019

  Strategy 1B: Identify city facilities that may be convertible or expandable for department needs, i.e. Neilson Reise Arena.
  Resources: Funding for facility study
  Timeline: 2019

  Strategy 1C: Explore partnerships with other organizations that may want to collaborate on space
  Resources: Funding for facility study
  Timeline: 2019

  Strategy 1D: Go through an inclusive process with Commission and Council to determine final location and funding mechanism.
  Resources: Funding for facility study
  Timeline: 2020

Objective 2: Improve access to department staff and facilities through an improved website and social media presence.

  Strategy 2A: Work with city website staff and framework to redevelop the department website
  Resources: Existing staff and pending process
  Timeline: End of 2018

  Strategy 2B: Explore and incorporate a park tour app
  Resources: GIS/Planning Dept staff resources or Parks Dept Operations budget
  Timeline: Summer 2019

  Strategy 2C: Improve registration and scheduling software and utilization by external partners
  Resources: Savings by switching to updated software
  Timeline: Late fall 2018, launch Jan 2019

The department relies on a variety of facilities designed for other functions, including the public works building, for many recreation programs.
Strategy 2D: Streamline and redesign the department’s social media and traditional media presence
Resources: Underway, current marketing intern
Timeline: Spring 2018

Objective 3: Improve locational and directional signage for parks, trails and departmental office facilities

Strategy 3A: Add a department sign at the 5th St. entrance and directional signs along 5th St. Add internal directional signage for the department within the building.
Resources: Minimal cost, existing budget
Timeline: Spring 2018

Strategy 3B: Use designs of new Depot trailhead sign as a brand design for other parks; prioritize information kiosks for each park or trailhead.
Resources: $2,500 per kiosk, from CIP allocation
Timeline: 1st Priority – Lakeshore park system, end of 2020; 2nd Priority – Other parks and trailheads, as feasible or in conjunction with other projects.

Strategy 3C: Collaborate with trail user groups (i.e. Blue Ox Marathon) to create and implement a trail marker plan.
Resources: GreenCorp partnership on trails
Timeline: 2019, completely early 2020

Objective 4: Coordinate and streamline registration, special event permitting and facility reservation into an easily accessible, one stop process.

Strategy 4A: Complete special event ordinance to meet the objective.
Resources: Existing staff time
Timeline: Adopted by mid-2018

Strategy 4B: Complete update of Parks and Trails rules and regulations ordinance.
Resources: Existing staff time
Timeline: Adopted by mid-2018

Resources: Existing or increased staff time, depending on process selected
Timeline: December 2018

Dozens of walking and running events are held in Bemidji every year. Each one currently sets and marks its own route.

Internal events, like camps, as well as external events and programs can benefit from a single, cost effective, centralized reservation and registration system.
Goal 2: Improve/increase staff capacity for both parks and recreation

Objective 1: Identify appropriate staffing needs for recreation programming and facilities maintenance and adjust staffing and workflow to maximize the staff resources and skillsets available.

Strategy 1A: Hire seasonal skilled FT Assistant Camp Director
Resources: Increased camp revenues
Timeline: March 2018

Strategy 1B: Create another FT Recreation Special Event position to facilitate and implement programs set up by the Recreation Coordinator.
Resources: Increased fee generation/revenues plus 2019 budget
Timeline: 2019

Strategy 1C: Conduct a work time study for all Maintenance/Operations Parks and Trails staff; utilize a time management app for each employee to record tasks, location, skill level, and travel time.
Resources: Current budgeted funds
Timeline: Summer 2018

Strategy 1D: Add GreenCorp staff to help facilitate trail and program development projects.
Resources: In-kind costs for GreenCorp program
Timeline: Fall 2018

Objective 2: Find new ways to utilize volunteers and partner programs to leverage department staffing capacity.

Strategy 2A: Leverage existing volunteer organizations, through volunteerbemidji.org, to coordinate volunteer-friendly one-time activities.
Resources: Existing staffing
Timeline: 2019

Strategy 2B: Establish a policy and protocol for the department's involvement at events on a management, support, or facility level, depending on revenue and staff needs, values, and guidance from the Commission.
Resources: Existing staffing
Timeline: 2019

Planning Definitions
Management Level Involvement: The Department is the lead for organizing and implementing an event or activity.

Support Level Involvement: The Department supports another lead agency with online tools (i.e. registration), day-of-event staff support, and planning participation.

Facility Level Support: The Department supports another lead agency by ensuring access and functional capabilities by that agency for their event.
Strategy 2C: Establish a policy and protocol for the department’s involvement in programming at a management, support, or facility level, based on revenue and staff needs, duplication, and priority audiences.
Resources: Existing staffing
Timeline: 2019

Objective 3: Utilize technology where possible to reduce human workload and improve customer service.

Strategy 3A: Improve registration and scheduling software and utilization by external partners (Duplicate of Goal 1.2C)
Resources: Savings by switching to updated software
Timeline: Late fall 2018, launch Jan 2019

Strategy 3B: Expand use of Forestry app, including more inventory data and tracking of tree maintenance.
Resources: Existing budget
Timeline: 2019

Strategy 3C: Expand use of work order app and playground inspection app for other fixit tickets.
Resources: Existing budget
Timeline: 2018

Strategy 3D: Identify and implement new tools for the public to notify the department of park or trail issues or ideas.
Resources: Unknown
Timeline 2019

Objective 4: Improve capabilities to recruit and retain seasonal and year-round staff.

Strategy 4A: Improve the department’s online employment application process.
Resources: 2018 budget (admin)
Timeline: Summer 2018

Strategy 4B: Find and use new tools for employee recruitment and position awareness.
Resources: Unknown
Timeline: December 2018

Strategy 4C: Find new ways to engage and retain employees as a team.
Resources: Existing budget
Timeline: Ongoing
Goal 3: Improve marketing and promotion of the Park and Recreation Department

Objective 1: Increase the general promotion of the individual and community benefits of parks and trails.

   Strategy 1A: Biweekly/Monthly “interview” on upcoming park and recreation programs and the benefits of participating – to be posted on the city website and social media
   Resources: Volunteer/Existing Budget
   Timeline: 2018

   Strategy 1B: Create a display of Park and Recreation programming/parks and the benefits of parks and recreation.
   Resources: Budget
   Timeline: Staff dependent – Marketing Intern

   Strategy 1C: Attend Community Expo’s and events to promote parks and trails – Blue Ox Marathon, Sport and Travel Show, Camp Expo, Tiny Tots
   Resources: Limited Staff Time currently
   Timeline: Ongoing

   Strategy 1D: Explore “Rec on the Go” van to improve accessibility for apartment and other isolated neighborhoods.
   Resources: Staff time for research, unknown for development/purchase
   Timeline: 2020

Objective 2: Implement the “Did You Know” outdoor recreation marketing program for Bemidji.

   Strategy 2A: Create the “Did You Know” fact database.
   Resources: Budgeted – Marketing Intern/PT Staff
   Timeline: 2018 – and ongoing

   Strategy 2B: Incorporate “Did You Know” Facts in Park and Rec Brochure and fitness flyers.
   Resources: Budgeted
   Timeline: 2018

   Strategy 2C: Weekly “Did You Know” Facts on Social Media
   Resources: Budgeted – Staff – Marketing Intern/PT Recreation Staff
   Timeline: 2018

Example of a “Did you know” factoid shared on social media.
Objective 3: Provide equipment rental to improve trail and water usage through a public/private partnership.

Strategy 3A: Develop a Request for Proposals for a rental model that meets the City’s needs, with public input. Variables include demand for particular equipment, location preferences, service level and type, facility requirements, and revenue opportunities.
Resources: GreenCorp staff in partnership with local user groups
Timeline: Winter 2018/2019

Strategy 3B: Release RFP and select vendor; negotiate final contract.
Resources: Existing staff resources
Timeline: 2019

Yoga in Diamond Point Park
Sanford Steps Program Participants
Pickleball in Algoma Park
### Implementation Timeline and Dashboard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy #</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G2:4C</td>
<td>Find new ways to engage and retain employees as a team</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3:1C</td>
<td>Attend events to promote parks and trails</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Limited by staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:1A</td>
<td>Hire seasonal skilled FT Assistant</td>
<td>March 1, 2018</td>
<td>Increased camp revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:2D</td>
<td>Streamline and redesign the Dept social and traditional media presence</td>
<td>Spring 2018</td>
<td>Current marketing intern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:3A</td>
<td>Add a dept sign at 5th St, internal directional signage within building</td>
<td>Spring 2018</td>
<td>Minimal cost, existing budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:1C</td>
<td>Conduct a work time study for all M/O staff</td>
<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>Current budgeted funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:4A</td>
<td>Complete special event ordinance</td>
<td>Mid-2018</td>
<td>Existing staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:4B</td>
<td>Complete update of rules and regulations ordinance</td>
<td>Mid-2018</td>
<td>Existing staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:4A</td>
<td>Improve the dept online employment app process</td>
<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:3C</td>
<td>Expand use of work order app and playground inspection app for fixit</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Existing budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3:1A</td>
<td>Regular &quot;interview&quot; on upcoming programs</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Existing budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3:1B</td>
<td>Create a display of programming/parks and benefits of recreation</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Current Marketing Intern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3:2B</td>
<td>Incorporate &quot;Did You Know&quot; facts in traditional media</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Existing budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3:2C</td>
<td>Weekly &quot;Did you Know&quot; facts on social media</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Marketing Intern</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3:2A</td>
<td>Create the &quot;Did You Know&quot; fact database</td>
<td>2018/Ongoing</td>
<td>Current marketing intern</td>
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<tr>
<td>G2:1D</td>
<td>Add GreenCorp staff to help facilitate trail and program development</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>In-kind costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>G1:2A</td>
<td>Redevelop the department website</td>
<td>End of 2018</td>
<td>Existing staff and pending process</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3:3A</td>
<td>Develop an RFP for equipment rental model that meets City needs</td>
<td>Winter 2018/19</td>
<td>GreenCorp partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:4B</td>
<td>Find and use new tools for employee recruitment and awareness</td>
<td>Dec-18</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:4C</td>
<td>Implement streamlined event permitting process</td>
<td>End of 2018</td>
<td>Existing or increased staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:2C/3A</td>
<td>Improve registration/scheduling software use by partners</td>
<td>Launch Jan 2019</td>
<td>Savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:1A</td>
<td>Clearly define operating facility needs</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Funding for facility study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:1B</td>
<td>Identify city facilities that may be convertible or expandable</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Funding for facility study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:1C</td>
<td>Explore partnerships with other organizations on facilities</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Funding for facility study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3:3B</td>
<td>Release RFP and select vendor</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Existing budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:3B</td>
<td>Expand use of Forestry app for inventory and maintenance</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Existing budget</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bemidji Parks and Recreation Department
2018 Strategic Plan
Page 17
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G2:3D</th>
<th>Identify and implement new tools for public issues/idea sharing</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G2:2A</td>
<td>Leverage existing volunteer orgs to coordinate one-time activities</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Existing staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:2B</td>
<td>Establish policy for Dept. involvement in events</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Existing staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:2C</td>
<td>Establish policy for Dept. involvement in programming</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Existing staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:2B</td>
<td>Explore and incorporate a park tour app</td>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
<td>GIS/Planning Dept staff or Parks staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:1B</td>
<td>Create another FT Rec Spec Event position from current PT position</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Increased fee generation/revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:2B</td>
<td>Explore and incorporate a park tour app</td>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
<td>GIS/Planning Dept staff or Parks staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2:1B</td>
<td>Create another FT Rec Spec Event position from current PT position</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Increased fee generation/revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:3C</td>
<td>Collaborate with trail user groups on a trail marker plan</td>
<td>Early 2020</td>
<td>GreenCorp partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3:1D</td>
<td>Explore &quot;Rec on the Go&quot; van</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Staff time/unknown implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:1D</td>
<td>Inclusive process to determine final location and funding</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Funding for facility study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1:3B</td>
<td>Use designs of Depot trailhead for other park signs</td>
<td>End of 2020</td>
<td>CIP allocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral or budget reallocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential budget increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implementation**

- Started/On Time
- Started/Behind Schedule
- Not Started/Behind Schedule
Implementation Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Parks and Trails Commission have identified the following strategies to help guide implementation and measure outcomes as implementation unfolds.

Plan Adoption and Rollout Strategies
- Parks and Trails Commission attends City Council meeting to support plan adoption.
- Invite participating stakeholders to a “thank you” event, potentially at the South Shore in late spring or summer.
- Council members, Commission members and staff will use local media outlets (Chat About, Common Ground, Bemidji Pioneer, etc.) to promote and explain the plan.

Plan Implementation Strategies
- Tie plan strategy implementation and action items in the timeline to the monthly Parks and Trails Commission agenda.
- Maintain and update the plan’s implementation timeline worksheet.

Plan Update Strategies
- Compile an update on the plan’s implementation status and report to the Council twice per year.
- Include a plan implementation dashboard in the Annual Report to the public.
Appendix

Bemidji Parks and Recreation Leadership Survey
Summary
10/2017

Bemidji Parks and Recreation conducted a voluntary survey of staff members, Parks and Trails Commission members, and City Council Members in October 2017. The purpose was to gauge this group’s insight into several key department topics relating to its history and future. All data is included in the report in an aggregate form, so that no individual’s responses can be tied back to that individual.

This is a perception survey of the City’s Parks and Recreation leadership. It is not a comprehensive evaluation of user satisfaction, nor an assessment of department performance metrics. The purpose of this survey is to facilitate an initial discussion among leadership as to mission, values, opportunities, and partnerships. Additional evaluation data will be compiled and shared as the process develops.

Given the limited nature of the survey and the small sample size, the results here do not represent a scientifically significant sample for analytical purposes. It serves as a starting point for discussion only. This report was prepared for and discussed at a planning session held by the Parks and Trails Commission in November, 2017.

Q1. How well does Bemidji Parks and Recreation succeed at achieving its mission? (A higher Rating Average is better)

Mission: to provide facilities, activities, and parklands to enrich the lives of citizens and tourists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poorly</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Exceptionally Well</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:
- seems like it is lacking vibrancy in the word to just ‘provide’. Something more active, responsive would help the mission. Also, is it all citizens of Bemidji area? Or all citizens? A little more clarity may help here.
- Our recreation program is very successful.

Q2. If you were to change something about the mission, what would it be?

Comments:
- change "tourists" to "visitors," and wasn't "trails" part of the name?
- I think it is a good statement but would be open to a discussion about it.
- Maybe something about "enhancing the quality of life"
- "...to enrich the lives AND HEALTH of citizens, tourists, AND THE ENVIRONMENT."
- Let’s add something about our parks and rec ENHANCING Bemidji’s overall quality of life
- More reduced fee programs
Mentioned above in comments
Because we serve people beyond our city borders, perhaps add "citizens and tourists of the Bemidji region"?
nothing
add health/wellness and importance of trails
The mission is well stated
Recognize that park amenities add to the quality of place for the community and benefits businesses’ recruiting efforts.
nothing

**Q3. What are three really "lived" values in this Department? By "lived" we mean the values and beliefs we can observe in the organization, not just talk about.**

*Comments:*
- Stewardship (8)
- Creativity/Innovation (8)
- Civility (3)
- Leadership (3)
- Communication
- Respect and Nature
- Equity – we serve all community members In and out of the city
- Vision
- Health and Wellness
- Teamwork
- Fun
- Community Involvement

- Commitment – meets creativity and innovation,
- we offer a variety of programs and park types that show our commitment to serving our constituents
- Partnerships – we build partnerships that are mutually beneficial to meeting goals of increasing recreation, improving health outcomes, and sharing resources.

**Q4: What do you see as our 3 most important internal organizational strengths?**

*Comments:*
- Leadership (3)
- Creativity (2)
- Visionary (2)
- Director
- Ethics
- Stewardship
- Hard working staff
- Innovation and visionary
- Teamwork
- Existing staff – rec coordinator

- Creative staff
- Momentum
- Communication
- Creativity and Innovation
- Good parks and recreation to work in Stewardship
- Supportive Council
- Respectful of all viewpoints
- Use of limited resources
- Partnerships that have been developed in the community

**Q5: What do you see as our 3 most critical internal organizational weaknesses?**
Comments:
Turnover of staff
Leadership
Innovation
Understaffed/work volume is heavy
Adequate space to grow and expand
Communication
Lack of staff
Staffing
Flexibility – we must adapt new recreation programs to existing facilities...
Creativity and Innovation
Civility
City Council and Park Board alignment

Staff communication and direction
Appreciation for all that has been able to be accomplished by the Dept and how it enhances our community
Lack of indoor/programming space
Budget
Facilities
Being futuristic-related to flexibility. How do we plan for the future/meet needs of changing demographics?
Accessibility to the Community
Location – to improve our reach and effectiveness.

Q6: How do you think we are viewed by the following constituents and stakeholders? (A higher Rating Average is better)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Strongly Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neither Positive nor Negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Strongly Negative</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Program Participants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Users</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail Users</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Program Participants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Event Organizers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating Agencies/Orgs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics Organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Civic Leaders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:
Overall positively viewed. Only times a negative perception comes to mind is when large-scale events request park spaces that conflict with other users or go against the desired use of that location.
Often leaders from the Bemidji Chamber of Commerce and the Bemidji Hospitality Industry accuse the City that we have too many parks, which is extremely frustrating to hear.
I think the vast majority of constituents and stakeholders see the value in outreach.
Trail users have complained to me about garbage on the trail, and asked to put trash cans on the trail, they would pick up the garbage if there were a trash can. I also don’t think people are aware of the broad program offerings that the city has. Users do, but businesses, and non-users may not. An
annual report might help. I know we do a lot through press release, Facebook, the newsletter, but does the broader public understand how our parks investment is working?

**Q7: What are some of the most important current or potential partnerships that can help the Department succeed?**

**Comments:**

Organizations such as Figure Skating, Hockey, Disc Golf More with County
I think it's important for the department to build as many partnerships as possible within the community.
Partnering with Rotary to fund the Inclusive Playground = huge success. Potential partnerships with BSU Outdoors Program and Sanford Health for programming/equipment/expertise.
#1: BSU (facilities/programs) #2: ISD #31 Community Ed (programs?)
Bemidji State
DNR due to Lakes and river in city, DOT, civic, parent and youth groups, BSU, American Indian population, Arts Commission, Historical Society, Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board
A great potential partnership would be with the Bemidji Area Mountain Bikers which could open up new programming for youth.
Sanford Health - wellness center
Bsu opc
We need to have a strong relationship with our healthcare providers. Medical, dental, physical therapy, chiropractic. We need partnerships with other recreation providers, schools, university, clubs like B&G club, girl/Boy Scouts, faith communities, event organizers like Dragon Boats, marathons, bike races. We need good partnerships with LGUs, townships, the county and state.
Partnerships with helping organizations like garden club, master gardeners, lake associations, BDA, Jaycees.
Business

**Q8: List what you believe are the 2-4 more critical issues or opportunities facing Bemidji Parks and Recreation over the next several years?**

**Comments:**

Don't see any critical ones
Continued growth and development
Being competitive in the areas of providing engaging opportunities for all community members and tourists
Need for more year-round programming and admin staff.
Keeping our park land and facilities looking good
Ensuring park and trail space for the future to ensure every neighborhood has access to park space
Scholarships for low-income families.
City is expanding creating a larger demand
Recruiting and retaining staff
Facilities for rec programs
Maintaining parks buildings and infrastructure, including natural resources, e.g., turf, tree cover, shrubs, plantings
Too many

Appendix - Leadership Survey and Stakeholder Interviews 23
Maintaining current Parks and Trails
Continue growing our partnerships
Potential for partnerships with local institutions for programming/funding.
Keeping the beaches cleaned and swimmable
Expanding youth and adult activities with adequate supportive funding
Expanded staff for programming.
Aging population
Location of Rec dept.- with indoor facilities, accessible to the public
Staffing
Having adequate staff for maintenance and programming
Too much money
Support of City Council
Getting a consensus on what our goals and expectations on in the next several years
Global climate change and the impact on the urban forest.
Developing more use at North Country Park
Adequate space and visibility for growth. In the parklands protecting the natural beauty and health
of the environment
Programming for older youth (middle or high school), perhaps partnering with Bemidji Youth
Advisory Commission.
Identifying program needs or determining expansion
Budget
Getting people to recreate outdoors
Continuing developing new bike trails
Balancing adequate ice sheets and arenas with needs of other activities and park expenditures
Establishing and maintaining partnerships
AIS in our lake

Q9: What are the most important future needs and service expectations of Bemidji Parks and Recreation on the part of each of the following constituencies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments by Constituency:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Park and Trail Users</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probably just general maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of parks and trails, maintenance of parks, cost containment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine maintenance and upkeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue to be well-maintained, signed, and inter-connected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public expects more trails and hence the County needs to get involved with trails. The north loop of lake Bemidji is not safe for bikers. County punted to Marcia/City re trails for the Gene Dillon school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining, improving and connecting the parks and trails, including all walking and bike friendly trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good citizenship in trail use and maintenance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local trail connections/access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always more and better marked trails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parks that are safe, fun, and beautiful. Continue to build out trails, keep them maintained, both long term and short term needs like garbage and plant growth, recreation programs that are affordable and work with their schedule.

No new needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>probably just general maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued progress with Parks and program development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get the community involved and engaged in what we are doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue to offer a diverse range of programs across the age spectrum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chamber/business community needs to support parkland and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining accessibility to safe parklands and activities that meet the community needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued engagement and interest. Ownership in success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expanding opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after school and expanded programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have beautiful and safe parks. Something to be proud of as users or just knowing they are there in our community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Staff
- probably just general maintenance
- Support of City Council, financial support
- Finding consistent, caring staff
- Well-trained and motivated staff for both parks & programming.
- We need additional recreation support staff
- Having an adequate workforce to meet the needs
- Quality programming, park upkeep, diverse offerings.
- Ability to work as a team
- additional resources for staffing
- To be able to maintain and recruit new staff
- Council support for their work. Resources and equipment to get their work done.
- Keep up with maintenance

### Q10: What is your relation to the Parks and Recreation Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Staff:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Trails Advisory Commission Members:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji City Council Member:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please Specify):</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the course of three weeks, forty-nine representatives of twenty-seven different community organizations that utilize or partner with Bemidji Parks and Recreation were interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Use of Parks and Trails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Itasca Sports</td>
<td>Legion Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beltrami County</td>
<td>Bemidji Baseball Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Lacrosse</td>
<td>Fast Pitch Softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford Center</td>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of the Bemidji Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great River Rescue</td>
<td>Garden Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Police Dept</td>
<td>Bemidji Community Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Fire Dept</td>
<td>Headwaters Science Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Administration</td>
<td>Curling Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Bemidji</td>
<td>Lake Bemidji State Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Mountain Bike Club</td>
<td>Bemidji Youth Hockey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice Ride Bemidji</td>
<td>Bemidji Community Arena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSU Recreation Center</td>
<td>Bemidji Youth Advisory Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Education</td>
<td>Bemidji Adult League Softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bemidji Youth League Baseball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following record summarizes the highlights from 30 to 60 minute interviews with each partner. All interviews were conducted by an independent consultant, with one or more Parks and Recreation Department staff participating.

What do organizations use the parks and trails for?

- Itasca Sports provided bike rental program at Country Inn & Suites, plus human powered watercraft. Helped with watercraft for South Shore Park grand opening.
- Beltrami County – none at this time.
- LaCrosse – Last 2 years used the outdoor rinks during the summer, twice per week
- Sanford Center – help the program with Sanford Steps, Passport fitness, daddy/daughter dances. Facilitate community events such as Loop the Lake, Blue Ox Marathon. Share some equipment.
- Great River Rescue – Two events, Rotary Pavilion and trails.
- Police and Fire – Departments have some internal events in the parks. Departments support each other well. Neither has to respond to many events.
- Bike groups hold a number of events, bike rental programs, educational programming. Would like more off-road cycling facilities in town.
- BSU/OPC rentals right in the park, premier waterfront teaching space. BSU departments and clubs use DP park for events, picnics, field classes. Dragon boats stored there, challenging situation, having space at Cameron would help.
- Community Ed – Nothing, tough to get access to facilities for their needs. MAP is coming back in collaboration with THRIVE at Boys & Girls Club. Would love indoor space in the winter, families, daycare, and pre-K.
- Baseball – Three different groups use a variety of fields (BSU, MS, BYLB fields, N Country Park). Facilities need improvements at N County. Use Diamond Point for league picnics.
• Fast Pitch Softball (youth) – Limited on access to school fields, would like to use city fields more, have better amenities, concessions, need some modification.
• B&GCBA – MAP time program; they partner to provide access for their population/clientele to give them access to community service. They use Diamond Point mostly, sometimes skate park. They need a lifeguard to use the beach.
• Garden club – Primarily library grounds upkeep. Coordinate with City, who covers direct costs. Programs have worked great, not interested or have capacity to do more.
• Community Theater – Theater camp partnership! Dept does logistics, theater does operations, in Bangsberg. Partnership w/Kids in Motion makes a cost effective full day for kids/families.
• Science Center – ½ day camp, HSC does staffing, dept does location and advertising. Collaborate on New Years Eve in downtown and parks. Center Is alternate site for kids in Motion for weather. Supported World Wide Day of Play, Trollstice.
• Curling – Facility is working just fine.
• LBSP – Collaborative effort, give Dept a facility/naturalist/interns. LBSP will come in for World Wide Day of Play. Partner for Loop the Lake, Marathon, etc.
• Youth Hockey – BYH uses City Rink extensively, mostly Mite program, weekend tourneys. 2 Hockey ready outdoor rinks are packed. Summer hockey clinics, year-round programs, adult hockey clubs. 10u/12u groups rent ice all summer long independently. Can’t get consistent times at City Rink, full all summer, even out of town groups.
• BYAC – Youth use a lot of trails in the summer. BYAC uses parks for events, looking to return to skate park this J7 year.
• League Softball uses the fields 3 nights per week, 2-4 games per field per night. Church league is separate. Noted some issues with orientation and maintenance of the fields, location of concession and bathroom facilities is a little too far away.

Communication with the Department
• Mostly with Marcia
• Marcia in a mutual support role between agencies (Beltrami County)
• Lolly and Marcia, outstanding communication.
• Connect Marcia to appropriate Sanford Center staff. Working to improve communication.
• GRR starts at the City website; Michelle sometimes handles trail issues. Had an issue with an event last year, deposit was missed, ended up without a facility until last minute squeezed in.
• Police and Fire – Communication is good. Parks Dept doesn’t always know when something bad happens (rare). Departments need more planning notice, will put police reserves on for a site presence depending on size of the event.
• Bike groups have the phone numbers of staff they need. Email also works. Lots of personal communication.
• BSU – in person on projects, depends on the season. Looking forward to more cross-promotion on website; registrations for joint events have been working smoothly.
• Community Ed – Not much communication with current staff outside of MAP.
• Baseball – Use the website. BYLB doesn’t do much with City currently.
• Fast Pitch Softball – Marcia’s awesome, email. The department is great, the association has fallen down a bit.
• B&GCBA – Mostly Jamie, email is great.
• Garden Club chair works directly with Marcia, both phone and email.
• Theater – Ernie and Jamie phone often, regular meetings.

Appendix – Leadership Survey and Stakeholder Interviews
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• HSC – Phone or email with Jamie, good communications.
• Curling – club doesn’t always communicate well, Dept needs to know when large events are going on.
• LBSP – mostly email, some phone, both Jamie and Marcia
• Youth Hockey – Program scheduler handles it all, as smooth as it can be right now. BYH uses the website, works well. Sanford Center schedule is harder to work with, not published online. When BSU gets kicked out of Sanford Center for events, they are pushed to City rink.
• BYAC – setup went smoothly, storage is working ok.
• League Softball noted communication has been an issue in setting up the season, need more meetings early on. Communication with maintenance staff has been fantastic, wish there was more support later on during bad weather days.

Services and Collaboration
• High Quality trails. Access to the lake is improving. Bike repair stations are awesome.
• County helps city with forest management, city helps county with intense park design/management. Refer users to each other when appropriate, cross promotion. City ski trails are quality, county’s are quantity. Wish there were more opportunities for trail connections.
• Facility use and communication is most important service. Would like more grass in the summer rinks for Lacrosse, Nymore is better. Higher chain link fences on the end would help. Could use more access to the bathrooms and lights later in the season.
• City helps Sanford Center with grounds/exterior management, finding landscape/snow vendors. Programming helps bring people in the building. SC charges hard costs (mostly labor), no rent for their use. Need to explore partnership more.
• Great River Rescue would like a straightforward, simple way to reserve facilities and communicate. Small events are just as important as larger events.
• There are a lot of facilities, neighborhood parks, access to the lake. Many are more of a regional draw than a local draw because of location. Maintenance is important. Public safety education programs like Home Alone, risk reduction programs are a big part of what they do. Need more planning sooner for large events.
• Youth services seem to be the biggest draw for city leadership. Need to keep up maintenance, concerned about the need for program/office space.
• Bike groups – facilities are well designed, always in great shape. Health education events and programming are great, parks are a part of community health. WWDP, Couch to 5k, bike programs, native plantings are all important. Could use a place to snowshoe in town.
• Instruction and high service rentals are important to BSU. Dept needs to keep doing what they’re doing for kids to experience adventure. Quality of P&R is higher than other programs.
• Community Ed doesn’t know what the dept has. They’ve only seen the brochure, day camps. Dept feels the same way about Comm Ed. Want to build a relationship. Both are programs for the non-school activities, inexpensive sports.
• Youth baseball sees a need for some improvement to amenities at the North County Park field. Neighborhood park ballfield use is good for local youth activities.
• Fastpitch softball is looking for fields that fit their needs, and maintenance. They think they could run concessions. Chase being available on short notice has been great, bathrooms are great!
• B&GC, having well kept up systems, especially Diamond Point Park, is important. Looking to change access and policy for use of their gym to make it easier/cheaper to rent is a goal, although their programmed use is a conflict.
• Garden Club appreciates the department paying for hard costs! Work together well. City doing what they said they would.
• Community Theater appreciates help with registration, publicity/advertising, sign-in, it works very well. Website sometimes is tough to find the sign-up for clients. Some parents think of parks and rec as inexpensive babysitting, not what it is.
• BCT likes being involved in day camps, glad to see the dept involved in lots of outreach events. Established events grow over time.
• As long as the ice plant keeps working at the curling club, it’s ok! The club needs to recruit more.
• LBSP appreciates the collaboration, mutual support. They need help getting directed to the right city resources.
• Hockey ice time is packed. Could be more opportunities to improve coordination, who does what. Dept staff at Neilson is great. Figure skating is smaller organization, but a great opportunity.
• Softball fields for league play are kept up fairly well, need some rejuvenation. Field rental is expensive for them given falling participation, are offered one free tourney a year by the dept. They lose money on tournaments.

Opportunities
• Itasca Sports says there is demand for boats and bikes, if they could find an appropriate place, ideally be the waterfront or LBSP.
• County and city see continued opportunities for complementary services. Currently there are no opportunities for trail connections.
• LaCrosse has equipment for other youth programming, such as snowshoeing, cross country running (Montebello Trail?), water equipment, but don’t have locations or ability to pay rent. Other tribal youth organizations were identified that may also provide programming partnerships.
• Sanford Center wants to partner with Parks and Rec to better promote/grow events. Also, package the “fun” stuff for conferences.
• Great River Rescue is open to ways to make events better. They have 12 acres of land with walking trails available for events.
• Public Safety thinks a stronger policy on planning and holding large events should help. Big events need notice months ahead. Timeliness of notification is an issue. Moving people has sometimes been a larger issue than the event. Keep improving communication. A non-licensed park security staff may have big value, efficient.
• Administration sees the department in an educational role, the public will have to say which programs are needed (demand). Keep looking for strong youth partners.
• Bike groups noted a lack of places to mountain bike, fat bike or snowshoe in the winter. See opportunity to teach more kids if they had bikes available (mass rental location?), partner with ISD31, B&GC, other youth organizations. Collaborate with the City on Movil Maze would be appealing to kids. Sees the need to be flexible, City can facilitate a lot of other groups maximizing facility use.
• BSU sees opportunity for cross marketing, both for facilities and programs that the other offers (marketing committee already underway). Dept would love more BSU classes and skills for possible student interns that are relevant to parks and rec. BSU wants to see group fitness grow,
Dept can help drive people to classes at BSU. Use Park and Rec to teach lifeguarding. Dept website and registration is easier. Summer is underutilized. Pickleball! The OPC trains their rental equipment users at peak times, as opposed to mass all-day rentals.

- Community Ed needs to know more of what services are available, and more copies of brochures when available. They would like a conversation focusing on collaboration, not competition, as they cross-refer for services/facilities regularly. Sees a need for more school age care in the summertime. Comm Ed has the kids, every Friday is a field trip to a beach, a park, etc., go to Itasca regularly. Their staff attend, just need a facilitator/activity leader.
- Baseball sees the potential for the Legion team to have a home at North County Park, with some basic infrastructure improvements (dugouts, scoreboards, fence slats, lines/maintenance, etc.). They are also willing to possibly do neighborhood clinics at NC Park, with the right support from the City. They want an improved feeder program, need help with recruitment if they can do the work.
- Fastpitch softball - City fields are better than at the HS, amenities much better. Could see summer tournaments there with some age-appropriate modification of the fields.
- B&GCBA sees an opportunity for cross promotion/marketing. Transportation is hard for them, but they have a van if they have the staff (use BSU work study). They have underutilized space at certain times. See a need for more resources for the severely underprivileged. Adult enrichment is a possibility. Could use help with certain programming, such as babysitting. Would like a more traditional playground at NC Park.
- Garden Club notes that it is time to replace some of the shrubs at the library, revitalization of the beds. Might be a model for the Ridgeway neighborhoods to protect NC Park.
- Community Theater wants a downtown classroom building, which the Dept may want to use when BCT isn’t. May be a chance to expand the camps into other classes or opportunities. Also sees art and culture programming possibilities with the Watermark gallery and sculpture walk, history walk, community dance, etc.
- Science Center dreams of a yurt or other semi-outdoor winter space, as they need an outdoor component. Potential to work with the Dept on watershed education for middle school students – their numbers are good, partner with the B&GC. See a lot of programming and exhibits around water in the future. They can do summer camp programming.
- Curling is ingrained in the community, but membership is waning. Would like to cross promote more, provide joint programming. Bemidji Youth Curling is separate from the club, programming goes through Community Ed. Babe city rollers use facility in the summer, but there is now equipment for summer non-ice curing (they don’t have it yet).
- LBSP sees benefits to more cross-promotion. They will get more interpretation and programming with a new naturalist. Depending on expertise and site/location, programming could come from either agency into the other’s facilities.
- Youth Hockey recommends looking at covered outdoor rinks in Cloquet and range cities. Improve scheduling at Sanford Center. A coordinated scheduler or software could improve both convenience and efficiency across varied ice facilities/ownerships. Figure skating has a lot of potential, get kids into a non-ice curing program.
- BYAC sees potential in intramural sports/competitions. Music events for <18-year-olds. BYAC can help with event advertising to H.S. age youth if given enough time to prepare.
- Softball league concessions haven’t worked due to a number of potential issues; this supports league play in a number of other cities. Need help with cross promotion to attract new members, want a lower fee to entice more teams.
Appendix – Leadership Survey and Stakeholder Interviews

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Large Waterfront Event Organizational Focus Group
12/21/2017
Greater Bemidji Conference Room

Attendees - 17 people representing:
Watermark Art Center
Northwoods Battered Women’s Shelter
Blue Ox Marathon
Mississippi Music
Dragon Boat Festival
Bemidji Jaycees
Headwaters Science Center
Bemidji Chamber of Commerce
Sanford Health Foundation
Alzheimer’s Walk
KC Walleye Classic
Evergreen Shelter
How do you define success for your event?
- Many ways, depending on the event. Accountability
- Draws people/families into downtown on a Wednesday
- Fundraiser, number of people
- Number of artists, people, socializing
- Funds raised, a fun event even in bad weather
- All about partnership with Dragon Boats
- Break even financially, it’s a regional event to draw people in to town
- Fill hotels
- Connect people, raise awareness
- Raise funds, focus on safety
- Raise funds, visibility for the organization

The visibility of the waterfront location is great. Split event is working well for the Water Carnival.

What are some of the things that have worked well in your partnership with the Parks Department, or which services are the most important to you?
- Everyone: Keep cleaning up after the geese!
- Want a weekend contact for emergencies. Need help knowing how to use stuff. Dealing with storms.
- Use of Chamber bathrooms. Had an issue with something getting scheduled over them.
- Liked online and phone communications, and that chairs and tables were dropped off. Trails were in good shape, clean.
- Great relationship with the Department. Change to picking up barricades is hard.
- Greg has worked well with us.
- Citizens Patrol loss is important, especially for being able to get people and vendors in and out of the park safely. Police Reserves were mentioned as an alternative.

What are some of the things that the Department could improve that would help your event success?
- Improved electrical service on Library Park for food court. Sometimes lose lights and power, currently at cap for food and beverage for some events.
- Some discussion about surprise there isn’t a fee, or thankful there isn’t a fee; one event noted they pay a reasonable fee for their large electrical use.
- Location is more important than the actual use going on at the waterfront.
- Water connections would be helpful.
- Permanent markings for a 5K or other routes on the trails from the Waterfront or Sanford Center would be helpful.
- Discussion about a possible event size requirement for additional Porta- Johns.

What would it mean for you if there was a one- or two-day setup/tear down restriction for maintenance?
- The Jaycee tent is a major feature for a long duration in the park. This is a big part of the concern for maintenance or events squeezing around it, and is recognized for that when organizations try to cooperate on multiple events (Water Carnival, Fishing Has No Boundaries)
- The Dragon Boat/Taco Feed partnership works to improve both events, ends up with a long-term setup.

Appendix – Leadership Survey and Stakeholder Interviews
• How much flexibility can be provided for weather? Need flexibility for wind and rain forecasts to set up large tents and trailers.
• Groups need to know and communicate with other groups to plan and make concessions with each other and Parks Grounds staff. Might help to make contact information for reservations more readily available.
• Questions about priority uses of the park, is it just first come/first served (Not necessarily)? Multiple considerations were discussed, no consensus on how to prioritize.

If there was a user fee to cover costs for events, how might it be fairly structured? What about support for the Parks scholarship program?
• A lot of the events are fundraisers, makes it hard if they have to raise more/reduce profits to pay fees.
• A couple organizations already support Dept Day Camp scholarships/Park Partners in lieu of fees.
• Damage should definitely be payable.
• Cost varies by the size of the event. These events bring people and money to town, not having fees helps ensure lots of events and access to parks.
• Charge for out of town organizations, not in town groups. Still, it was noted that those events bring more outside money in.
• If a fee, consider how long the event is there, size, charity status, actual costs, be equitable.
• Park Partners for general manpower to help reduce costs.

The City is also looking at streamlining its event application process to more consistently serve events and user groups. How would that impact your event?
• Having the reservation/event calendar online would help.
• A combination of other departments in on planning early is important, no surprises either way.
• Alcohol permit works well, could be streamlined, consistent.
• A couple of alcohol-related events have to private pay for evening police presence. Is it a requirement to have them at a beer tent? No real history of problems.
• Smaller organizations want more guidelines, more calendar clarity/comprehensiveness.
• First right of refusal system?

Anything else?
• Can larger events help promote smaller events? Partnerships build festival events.
• Have an event/organization contact list available.
• Have a calendar/list of regular events, including 5K’s.