Closing the Gap: 
Investing in Our Neighborhood Parks

An initiative of the Superintendent and Commissioners to share information with Minneapolis residents and partners about the current condition and service level of neighborhood parks, and gather information about investment priorities for replacement, operating and maintenance of existing park assets.

Challenge: Taking Care of What We Have
• Neighborhood parks have greatest number of physical assets that require greater resources to operate, maintain and replace failing assets
• Park Board lacks sufficient resources to properly maintain, repair and replace all of its existing assets and provide public services at the current level
• Annual operating and maintenance budgets for neighborhood parks are behind by over $2 million just for mowing, trail repair, roof repairs and building maintenance
• From 2003-2012, the workforce was reduced by 136 full-time positions (23 percent); since 2013 Park Board has recovered 8 percent of the previously lost positions
• Park Board currently invests $4 - $5 million annually in neighborhood infrastructure replacement and improvements; however, current level of park assets requires $14.3 million and this funding gap will increase annually with inflation
• From 2000-2015, the funding gap for repairing and replacing aging and failing neighborhood park assets has grown to $111 million
• Unless the replacement and preventative maintenance costs associated with the park system’s infrastructure are addressed, the backlog and costs will continue to increase, and the funding gap will grow an additional $46 million from 2016-2020
• Challenge not unique to Minneapolis; issue being faced by urban park systems throughout country

Proactive Steps: Addressing Funding Gap & Long Term Sustainability
• 2012-2014 Improvements in operating efficiencies results in annual savings of $2.3 million
• 2015 McKnight Foundation grant to engage urban park leaders throughout country to learn what they are doing to address this challenge in their cities, and to engage Minneapolis residents and stakeholders in developing a plan to address funding challenges
• Educate residents on neighborhood park conditions and survey them on funding gap solutions

Community Information Sharing
• Public meetings held throughout the city with residents, key stakeholders and partners.
  • Multiple meetings in each quadrant of city; meetings scheduled 15-30 days in advance:
    June – North Minneapolis; June/July – Southwest Minneapolis; July/August – South Minneapolis; August/September – Northeast/Southeast Minneapolis; September – Citywide
  • Schedule at www.minneapolisparks.org/closingthegap
  • To request a meeting modification in order to participate, contact Emily Wolfe at ewolfe@minneapolisparks.org or 612-230-6415 in advance of the meeting
• Fact sheets, survey and park profile sheets available online and in recreation centers:
  • Survey to assess community funding priorities for replacement, operating and maintenance of existing neighborhood park assets
  • Park profile sheets show existing funding gaps (profiles for parks with most assets produced first and available according to meeting schedule; profiles of remaining parks available in September)

Timeline and Next Steps
• May - October: Community information meetings and survey
• Fall - Winter: Report to Board with decision by Board by December 2015

For More Information
• Subscribe to receive updates and meeting notices at www.minneapolisparks.org/subscribe then select the “Closing the Gap” topic in the “Planning” section
• Email closingthegap@minneapolisparks.org or call the hotline, 612-313-7789

Neighborhood Park fast facts

- 157 Neighborhood parks
- 6 million Estimated annual neighborhood park visits
- 9,000 Activities (programs, events, etc) offered annually

Assets include:
- 7 Athletic fields – artificial turf
- 390 Athletic fields – natural turf multipurpose
- 64 Basketball courts
- 49 Buildings – Recreation centers
- 48 Buildings – Non-recreation centers
- 48 Parking lots
- 112 Playgrounds
- 121 Tennis courts
- 63 Wading pools
- 2 Water parks

Numbers reflect current records and may change. Neighborhood Park operations, maintenance and replacement of existing assets funded through property taxes. For every dollar residents pay in property taxes, eight cents goes to Park Board.

Fast Facts do not include data about Regional Parks that annually serve more than 21 million visitors from throughout the metro region and are eligible for state, regional and federal funding for park improvements.

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