Achieving an Enhanced Quality of Parks, Playgrounds, and Recreation Centers in Dayton’s Bluff

Report #4/4 prepared for:
Dayton’s Bluff Community Council,
St. Paul, Minnesota

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The purpose of this report is to assess and communicate the risks of the parks, playgrounds and recreation centers of Dayton’s Bluff. Our goal is to support the community by helping to create safer, cleaner, and more valuable parks, playgrounds and recreation areas. The importance of this report is that it will provide the necessary tools for the community members of Dayton’s Bluff to continue to improve on the existing quality of their neighborhood.

The methodology used in this study included quantitative and qualitative techniques, obtained through surveys with citizens, interviews with community leaders, and a risk assessment of current resources. The subsequent data highlighted Dayton’s Bluff’s high quality of established parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. However, potential areas of improvement were also identified. In particular, the findings of this report found a lack of playground equipment maintenance, park accessibility & safety, and recreational sports options. These trends led to the following recommendations for the Dayton’s Bluff community:

- Enhance safe access to parks
- Increase recreational sports options
- Enhance park amenities
- Improve playground safety
- Facilitate options to reach report goals
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Introduction

It is important to create communities with safe and inviting parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers that will bring beauty and vitality to our cities (Crewe 2001). Enhancing the existing spaces creates an invitation to individuals and families to invest in and develop their urban neighborhoods.

This project was designed as collaboration between the Dayton’s Bluff District #4 Community Council and University of Minnesota students. Ideally this report will aid in supporting local residents’ efforts to meet the district plan’s goals. Students from the College of Natural Resources spent the fall semester of 2005 working in the Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood to create four reports for the Community Council addressing vegetation, trails, and environmental education, in addition to this report focusing on playgrounds, parks, and recreation centers. All of the reports identified benefits and used a risk assessment methodology to evaluate possible areas of improvement. In the case of parks, potential risks focused primarily on children and community safety. We hope this report will create an awareness of potential safety issues and supply feasible recommendations to manage these risks. By doing this we hope to give neighborhood residents some of the information necessary to strengthen their sense of community and personal attachment to their parks and playgrounds.

Issue Statement

Parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers are vital to creating an inviting urban neighborhood. Urban parks provide a connection between people and nature not often found in the city. These areas can serve to bring communities together as they offer a place for gathering and also foster a sense of belonging as residents play a role in their maintenance and upkeep. The development of safe and attractive urban parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers will serve to draw visitors and potential residents to the neighborhood, potentially increase property values, and provide an economic benefit for local businesses (Parks and Recreation 1998).

Risk management is a tool often used by urban communities to manage and maintain safety of public spaces. The process involves determining acceptable levels of risk for specific infrastructures (e.g., playgrounds) and then providing maintenance based on those recommendations. Although risk cannot be eliminated completely, a comprehensive approach to risk management should offer the community specific and detailed guidelines for making necessary improvements in a timely fashion (USDA Forest Service 2005). This report looks specifically at the parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers of the Dayton’s Bluff community and aims to provide community members with a plan that will enhance these spaces while keeping safety a primary concern.

Dayton’s Bluff has a long, interesting history and has experienced many changes over its 150 plus years. Today, important components of the neighborhood include the
large immigrant population, an increasing population of children between the ages of 5-17, and a highly diverse household income range (Wilder Research Center 2004). In light of these trends, this report is needed to assess existing resources, manage for risks, and support community efforts to further improve parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. The purpose of this report will be to gather information about the community’s assets and produce realistic recommendations to decrease risk and improve quality of life within the community. Specific parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers within the district have been chosen to insure that achievable recommendations are put forth.

**Vision Statement**

While this report focuses on the enhancement of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers in the Dayton’s Bluff area, the Community Council is also receiving reports focused on vegetation, trails, and environmental education. As a whole, these reports serve to create a comprehensive strategy for revitalizing the urban community of Dayton’s Bluff. Together we hope they contribute to a safe, beautiful, and vital community that meets local residents’ needs within an urban setting. The cumulative vision is:

*To enhance the community’s quality of life in Dayton’s Bluff by promoting education and involvement to protect and maintain the natural environment.*

The parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers group used the following vision to guide this report:

*To improve upon the existing quality of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers by promoting safety, environmental awareness, and a sense of responsibility among the citizens of Dayton’s Bluff.*

Providing the Dayton’s Bluff community with the necessary information and tools to improve the physical condition of the community’s parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers will be accomplished through the following objectives:

1. Inventory the existing facilities and features in parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.
2. Complete a risk assessment of the parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.
3. Survey community opinions about, awareness of, and involvement with parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.
4. Provide recommendations and action plans for park, playground, and recreation center improvements based on existing conditions and community member opinions.
Methods

Description of Study Area

The Dayton’s Bluff area has a rich history, beginning in 1849 when less than 500 people resided in St. Paul. Layman Dayton envisioned the high bluffs overlooking the scenic Mississippi River and growing city center as a prime real estate location. Between 1855 and 1857 the area quickly expanded with newly immigrated families, expanding to more than five thousand acres. Dayton came to Minnesota from the East Coast, where he had been a well-respected and influential businessman. After moving to Minnesota he also played a vital role in bringing the railroad system to Minnesota (Larson 2005).

Since this original influx of residents, the Dayton’s Bluff area has witnessed many changes. Today two major highways, Highway 61 and Interstate 94, intersect the district (Figure 1), while many early-twentieth century factories and mills stand empty today. The Hamm’s Brewery building is one of the last remaining brewery buildings in the District; many of the other industrial buildings no longer exist. The former 3M headquarters building is also still located in the area. Today 3M uses it for other purposes, but the building still creates a distinctive district boundary to the northwest. Other organizations have moved into the neighborhood overtime. Metropolitan State University extended their college services in 1994 by building an additional campus in the East Side of St. Paul, located along the western edge of Dayton’s Bluff. Today a public library is one of many advantages the area receives from this University. The most recent addition is the new Mexican Consulate located on 7th Street East.

Of approximately 276,963 people in St. Paul, 17,758 live in the Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood. The population of the area grew by 15% in the 1990s, strongly influenced by an influx of immigrant populations. The 2000 Census recorded that 19% of the area residents were not born within the United States, of which 70% were born in Asia and 25% were born in Latin America. Furthermore, school-age children between the ages of 5-17 increased by 55% between the 1990 and 2000 census (Wilder Research Center 2004).

The unique natural features of the area were realized long ago and attempts have been made to conserve and celebrate them. The bluffs overlook downtown St. Paul and the Mississippi River, and at one time Carver’s Caves at the base of the bluffs revealed ancient Indian drawings. Today the railroad tracks built at the base of the bluff block the entrance to these caves. Of important historical significance, are the 2,000-year-old Indian burial mounds of the “Paleo-Indians” that can be found along the bluff. Indian Mounds Park was designed around these mounds to preserve and pay respect to these ancient sites (Figure 2). The park was established in the early twentieth century before all the areas along the bluff were developed during the heavy influx of residents. Facilities built from 1910-1930 included a ski slide,
Figure 1. Map of Dayton’s Bluff Community with playgrounds and recreation centers.
Figure 2. Indian Mounds Park: access and amenities.
refectory house, tennis courts, and warming house. In 1929 one of many beacons was built to direct air traffic from Chicago to St. Paul. Today it is the only remaining one if its kind in the country.

In Indian Mounds Park, major renovations were not made again until the early 1980s when residents restored the pavilion, placed a decorative fence around the mounds, and added picnic tables, restrooms, and a children’s play area. During this time neighborhood festivals were started, but did not last for very many years (Trimble 2000). Other parks within the district are Swede Hollow Park and Skidmore Park (Figure 1). Swede Hollow Park adjoins the newly established Bruce Vento Trail. The Hamm Site Woodland Garden is also located in the Swede Hollow Park and is kept up by the Friends of Swede Hollow. Although the Skidmore Park is listed on St. Paul’s Park and Recreations website as a “Mini Park,” it is not more than a lot between two privately owned houses.

The increase in the number of children in the district over the last ten years has created a demand for playgrounds and recreation centers within the community. The Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center and playground and Margaret Recreation Center are both managed by the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department (Figure 1). A variety of recreation and educational programs are available through the two recreation centers. The Margaret Recreation Center currently lacks a playground but will be getting a new playground in the spring of 2006. Additional playgrounds exist at the schools in the neighborhood, including the American Indian Magnet School. The Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School and the Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center utilize the same indoor recreation facilities as well as an outdoor playground and recreation fields.

Dayton’s Bluff residents, with the help of the Community Design Center of Minneapolis, have installed a number of rain gardens and children’s gardens throughout the Upper East Side. These areas provide improved water filtration, youth involvement, community responsibility, as well as increase of greenspace within the neighborhood.

The Dayton’s Bluff district has many unique characteristics that help to define the area and create a sense of community. A number of small groups of concerned residents have formed working groups to improve aspects of the community. Their efforts are noticeable throughout the district and will likely continue to be visible as the numbers of involved and engaged residents increase.

**Data Collection**

The methodologies used in this study included quantitative and qualitative techniques. We reviewed documents and websites to obtain available electronic information pertinent to Dayton's Bluff parks, playgrounds and recreation centers. We interviewed community leaders and surveyed residents and park users to gain an insider viewpoint about park conditions, safety, and future possibilities. Finally, we
completed an inventory-based risk assessment to establish current safety conditions for parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.

Document and Internet Review
In preparation for fieldwork, we gathered background information via the Internet. We spent an estimated 30 hours researching sources that provided us with Dayton’s Bluff qualitative and quantitative demographic data including but not limited to: ethnic diversity, age structure, income distribution, as well as safety statistics, historical information, current plans, programs, and activities regarding Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers and their users. We also used sites to compare and contrast Dayton’s Bluff plans regarding parks, playgrounds and recreation centers with those of other districts, cities, and states. Using the Internet information, we were able to create some of the findings and support recommendations. Finally, we utilized an Internet search to identify funding options to support the recommendations.

Interviews
Interviews of Dayton’s Bluff community organizers and leaders were a primary form of assessing opinions and gathering information. The types of interviews varied and included four telephone interviews, three in-person interviews, and one group interview. The resulting information provided insights into the safety, current conditions, and future options for Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.

These interviews were done in September and October 2005. The content of the conversation and questioning style varied from individual to individual based on his/her knowledge and expertise. Primarily, open-ended questions were asked, promoting an open dialogue with the interviewee. The resulting conversations provided insight into park benefits, specific problems or concerns for the parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers, as well as ideas for improvement.

Surveys
On three days in October 2005, we surveyed several Dayton’s Bluff park users, parents, and business patrons, for a total of 28 people. We encountered people throughout the community on playgrounds, schools, park trails, local streets, café’s, businesses and libraries. The surveys took an average of five minutes to complete and were given in a written format on a clipboard to each respondent. They included ten questions—some yes/no and some short answer (Appendix A). Via these surveys, we were able to gain qualitative and quantitative information about community member use of the areas, knowledge about the current conditions, and future desires for parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas.

Inventories and Risk Assessment
A comprehensive inventory of Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers was undertaken to evaluate current resource conditions. The inventorying
categories included playground equipment, recreation centers, park amenities, and park facilities.

Playground equipment safety codes adapted from Otto’s (2005) *Playground Safety Hazards* and the US Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (2005) *Handbook for Playground Safety* were used as the risk assessment methodology (Table 1). These publications were consulted in an attempt to assess playground risks with the most up-to-date standards and procedures. The resulting data from the playground equipment risk assessment was used to designate a quantitative degree of risk for each playground. The Playground Risk Ratings were based on a scale from 1 to 3: 1 equals most dangerous playground, 3 equals least dangerous. The amount of use was collected from the surveys and interviews, 1 equals most heavily used park/school playground, 3 equals least used. The sites assessed included the American Indian Magnet School playground, Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center playground, and both Indian Mounds Park playgrounds.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Playground Equipment</th>
<th>B) Recreation Centers</th>
<th>C) Park Accessibility</th>
<th>D) Park Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific equipment present</td>
<td>Design risk</td>
<td>Bordering roads</td>
<td>Sports fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective surfacing</td>
<td>Spatial relationships</td>
<td>Crosswalks</td>
<td>Signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Kind</td>
<td>b/w buildings</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Grills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Depth</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Proximity to</td>
<td>Trash cans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Distance out</td>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>neighborhood</td>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protrusion risks</td>
<td>Miscellaneous hazards</td>
<td>Miscellaneous hazards</td>
<td>Miscellaneous hazards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recreation center inventory was done to determine each recreation center’s benefits and potential risks. Factors were selected based on their contribution to safety (Table 1). Both the Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center and Margaret Recreation Center were assessed.

Inventorizing of the broader aspects and benefits of parks, recreation centers, and playgrounds was divided into two categories: park accessibility and park facilities. The park accessibility inventory was designed to explore all aspects promoting or constraining community parks and recreation centers (Table 1). These factors were determined by examining what barriers lie between the park and a potential park user. The park facilities inventory identified established amenities and infrastructure of each park. These factors examined park benefits that could potentially draw people to the park (Table 1). The following parks, recreation centers, and recreation centers were inventoried for accessibility and facilities: Swede Hollow Park, Indian Mounds
Park, Skidmore Park, Hamm’s Park, Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center, Margaret Recreation Center, and Bates Raingarden.

Individual group members were responsible for completing the inventories and risk assessments of playground equipment, recreation centers, park accessibility, and park facilities. Each group member visually inspected and recorded risk assessments of their respective locations. The data was compiled and analyzed in preparing the recommendations for this report.

Findings

The findings in this report were obtained using three techniques: inventories, interviews, and surveys. These three methods provided baseline data on Dayton’s Bluff’s parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers.

Resource and Risk Assessment

Inventory results examined the established resource conditions in Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. A risk assessment framework served as the primary evaluation tool for playground equipment and park accessibility inventories (Otto 2005). In addition, a basic inventory of park amenities completed the assessment.

Park Accessibility

Park accessibility is a critical factor in risk assessment because park user safety is affected by their ability to enter the parks. Factors that influence a park user’s capacity to safely access each park include aids for crossing streets such as crosswalks or traffic lights, bordering roads, traffic levels, and proximity to neighborhoods.

The two best ways to make crossing the street safe are with traffic lights and crosswalks. No traffic lights were found adjacent to Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, or recreation centers, and a limited number of crosswalks exist (Table 2). Crosswalks were only present near Hamm’s Park and Bates Raingarden, both bordered by East 7th Street. All other parks, which do not border East 7th Street, lacked crosswalks.

Park Facilities

The availability and quality of park amenities is often a deciding factor when citizens choose parks. Factors that influence a park’s appeal include sports fields, signs, trash cans, grills, bathrooms and lighting. This inventory focuses on recreational sports options and amenities.
Table 2. Park accessibility, Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Bordering Roads</th>
<th>Crosswalks</th>
<th>Traffic</th>
<th>Proximity to neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bates Raingarden</td>
<td>North St., Bates Ave., 7th St E</td>
<td>One across 7th St. E</td>
<td>Heavy on 7th St. E</td>
<td>Adjacent to Swede Hollow neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swede Hollow Park</td>
<td>Greenbrier St., Maury St., Dellwood Pl., Margaret St.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Adjacent to Swede Hollow neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Mounds Park</td>
<td>Mounds Blvd., Earl St., Clermont St., Willshire Pl., Urban Pl., Bates Ave., McClean Ave., Shortline St., Cherry St., Plum St.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Medium on Mounds Blvd., Light on surrounding streets</td>
<td>Adjacent to large residential area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skidmore Park</td>
<td>Earl St., 4th St E</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Adjacent to large residential area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamm’s Park</td>
<td>7th St. E, Greenbrier St., Maple St.</td>
<td>Maple/7th St. E, Greenbrier/7th St. E</td>
<td>Heavy on 7th St. E</td>
<td>Adjacent to Swede Hollow neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton's Bluff Recreation Center</td>
<td>Conway St., Euclid St., Bates Ave., Mendota St., Arcade St.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Light to Medium</td>
<td>Adjacent to large residential area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Recreation Center</td>
<td>Margaret St., Earl St., Frank St., Beech St., Hancock St.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Light to Medium</td>
<td>Adjacent to large residential area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sports field options are quite limited in Dayton’s Bluff. There were five public baseball diamonds and four sets of tennis courts (Table 3). However, there were no soccer fields available. Signs appear to be well established in Dayton’s Bluff parks. There is at least one welcome sign in every park, except Bates Raingarden and Skidmore Park. Swede Hollow Park and Indian Mounds Park both have

Table 3. Park facilities, Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Sports Fields</th>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Trash cans</th>
<th>Grills</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bates Raingarden</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4 light posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swede Hollow Park</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2 welcome, 2 interpretive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Mounds Park</td>
<td>1 baseball backstop, 2 tennis courts</td>
<td>2 welcome, 3 interpretive</td>
<td>Numerous</td>
<td>Numerous</td>
<td>Alternating sides of Mounds Blvd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skidmore Park</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1 light post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamm’s Park</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1 welcome</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4 light posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton's Bluff Recreation Center</td>
<td>Tennis courts, 3 baseball diamonds</td>
<td>1 welcome</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Sports field lighting, 2 light posts near building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Recreation Center</td>
<td>Tennis courts, 2 baseball diamonds</td>
<td>1 welcome</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Sports field lighting, 2 light posts near building, 5 light posts on Beech St.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
historical/cultural interpretive signs. However, these signs are only available in English, lacking brail and alternative languages. Trash receptacles can also be found in most parks. Every park has at least one receptacle, except Skidmore Park and Hamm’s Park. Grills for picnics are lacking in most of Dayton’s Bluff parks. This may be intentional, but grills can only be found in Indian Mounds Park. Finally, the amount of lighting in Dayton’s Bluff parks is quite varied depending on park size and proximity to roads.

Playground Risk Assessment
The playground inventory evaluated physical and demographic usage, as well as potential injury risks presented by the equipment. Based on the risk assessment, safety levels could be improved for the Dayton’s Bluff area playgrounds (Table 4). Indian Mounds Park had the highest level of risk based on playground safety and use. But with the exception of Margaret Recreation Center, all the playgrounds received a moderate (2) to low (3) risk rating (Table 5). The Margaret Recreation Center will be getting a new tot lot in spring 2006, therefore the risk level of the new equipment should be low.

Recreation Center Risk Assessment
The recreation center inventory evaluated factors that contribute or diminish a recreation center’s ability to provide a safe place for citizens to recreate (Table 1). Margaret Recreation Center and Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center were evaluated. Margaret Recreation Center was found to have a limited supervision capacity due to its design, as well as limited lighting around the building (Table 6). Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center’s evaluation found superior design, supervision capacity, and lighting. Both recreation centers offer numerous baseball fields and tennis courts, but lack soccer fields.
Table 4. Playground equipment risk assessment, Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Inventory</th>
<th>Protrusions</th>
<th>Entrapment in openings</th>
<th>Age-appropriate activities</th>
<th>Lack of maintenance</th>
<th>Presence of nonrecommended equipment</th>
<th>Misc. Hazards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Magnet School</td>
<td>Activity Module, Slides (1 tube, 2 reg., 1 hard), Basketball, Rec Field</td>
<td>Some bolts protruding (not in hazardous locations). Broken off cement blocks from retaining wall</td>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Broken digger, worn-off rubber on some bars</td>
<td>All approved equipment types</td>
<td>Bad protective surface, pea rock has spilled over &amp; may cause someone to slip, climbing hazards (boulder area), fence of ball diamonds needs repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Mounds Park Playground (Mounds Blvd. &amp; Earl St.)</td>
<td>Tennis Courts, Veranda, 8 Swings (in 2 units), 4 Slides, Suspension Bridge, Sliding Pole, Digging Tools, Chain Net.</td>
<td>3 threads on upper attachment of tire swing, unsmooth edge at bottom of slide. Mostly all 5 plus feet.</td>
<td>Gap b/t wood planks and suspension bridge, openings on guardrails are 4-6 in. (should not be between 3-9). Metal great above spiral swing could catch fingers</td>
<td>Kids using playground are too young (16 months)</td>
<td>Guardrail on suspension bridge is loss, broken off upon next visit, some rust on the equipment.</td>
<td>Swinging Exercise Rings</td>
<td>4’ drop at slide poll, steps leading to slide on the side of the swings is designed so that kids enter &amp; exit the steps/platforms on the same side as the swings (potential to get hit by swings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mounds Park (Cyprus &amp; Mclean)</td>
<td>Activity Module, 3 Slides, Swings (2 reg., 1 tire, 2 infant), Basketball &amp; Tennis Courts, Rec Fields</td>
<td>Some bolts protruding</td>
<td>Cargo netting, 10” x 8”</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Rolling slide should be recovered with rubber</td>
<td>May Pole</td>
<td>Basketball poles should be covered with protective material, signage about hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center Playground</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some bolts protruding</td>
<td>Less than 6 years and 6-13 years age</td>
<td>Garbage can is broken &amp; sharp, rubber walkways not cleared of sand</td>
<td>All approved equipment types</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Playground risk ratings: on a scale of 1-3, where 1 = highest risk and 3 = lowest risk, all factors equally weighted; Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Distance out</th>
<th>Protrusion</th>
<th>Entrapment in openings</th>
<th>Lack of maintenance</th>
<th>Presence of nonrecommended equipment</th>
<th>Miscellaneous hazards</th>
<th>Amount of use (based on survey data and interviews)</th>
<th>Average playground risk rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Magnet School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Mounds Park Playground (Mounds Blvd and Earl St.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mounds Park (Cyprus and Mclean)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton's Bluff Recreation Center Playground</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6. Recreation Center risk assessment, Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreation Center</th>
<th>Design Risk</th>
<th>Spatial Relationships b/w Building</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
<th>Miscellaneous Risks</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Recreation Center</td>
<td>The door faces away from the rest of the facilities and towards the street. The building is essentially underground and has large pipes on a grassy area which is also the roof of the building.</td>
<td>No windows or doors facing the tennis courts, possible location for a playground, and grassy areas above building</td>
<td>Outside limited supervision. *Still need to get into the facility.</td>
<td>Lighting seems to be relatively limited, especially near the lower entrance to the facility. Too many places where people would not be seen at night.</td>
<td>There is a large cement structure with a few holes in it which could be a risk and is highly uninviting. The gravel area around it did not look like a good place for children to play. There were also many places for children to fall from the top of the building, although there was a railing, there is still a potential risk.</td>
<td>Baseball field, tennis court, baseball field marked over baseball field, stadium type setting, gravel pit with potential for playground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center</td>
<td>Newer building, some burnt out lights</td>
<td>Many programs, adult supervision, office staff available, separate rooms for all activities</td>
<td>Inside and outside lighting coverage good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 baseball diamonds, tennis courts, playground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interviews**

Interviews with community leaders and organizers assisted in learning their opinions about current conditions and ideas for improving parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. The resulting conversations varied in scope and content, but consistently highlighted novel ideas to reform and improve park conditions.

First, several interviews were done with the focus of identifying larger challenges in the Dayton’s Bluff community that may reduce the park system’s benefits. Jody Griffin, recreation center director for the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department, commented on the area’s high rental turnover rate and large number of newly immigrated citizens. She noted that the resulting low level of community identity could be improved by keeping housing costs low as well as providing interpreters and bilingual signs. Wally Waranka, Dayton’s Bluff Community Council member, mentioned that interpretive signs should be provided in more than one language. In addition, he thought brail signs should be included to accommodate the visually impaired.

Ruth Murphy, Director of the Community Design Center of Minnesota, also offered solutions to improving some of the communities underlying challenges. She commented that giving the area’s youth opportunities to work with community gardens and other projects could foster community responsibility. Finally, community members present at the Margaret Recreation Center block meeting were hopeful that the new Margaret Recreation Center playground would help deter the neighborhood’s high crime rate.

Another result of the large number of newly immigrated citizens to the Dayton’s Bluff District is a disconnect between the citizen’s favorite sports played in their home country and the sports offered by the recreation centers. Community members present at the Margaret Recreation Center block meeting mentioned that soccer and basketball are the two most popular sports in the neighborhood, but that there were limited opportunities for both. Interviews with Stacy Opitz, public relations director at CLUES, and Nachee Lee, Dayton’s Bluff Community Council staff member, indicated support for a joint-sports field initiative (soccer and baseball fields sharing common space). Nachee Lee offered his only concern as scheduling conflicts in moments when people want to play both sports.

Other interviews revealed concern for the safety and accessibility of parks. Some felt the safety of the parks could be improved by installing additional lighting in some parks. Wally Waranka noted that the risk of falling from the bluffs of Swede Hollow Park and Indian Mounds Park could be reduced if fences or barriers were installed around the edge. Park accessibility was also a concern. Installing more crosswalks, Wally offered, could improve this and promote park usage.

Finally, an interview with a private attorney, John Stechmann, explored the legal risks the city of St. Paul is subject to when if offers playgrounds for public use.
Despite being intermittently charged with playground injury lawsuits, John noted that a city rarely loses if it is not at fault, because it holds “statutory immunity” in such cases.

**Surveys**

The completed survey responses were divided into three categories based on the type of activity the individuals were partaking in when they were asked to complete the survey. These groups were parents picking up their children from school (n=8), business patrons within the community (n=7), and park users (n=13). Results were relatively consistent among these three groups (Table 7). Unanswered questions affected the results of the survey, because it is unknown if the individual surveyed did not understand the question or did not have an opinion about the question.

One important factor was the frequency of park usage and the most visited locations. Of the individuals surveyed, 82% visit the parks at least once per month. Indian Mounds Park and Swede Hollow Park were the most visited of any of the parks, while Margaret Recreation Center, the Indian Magnet School playground, and Skidmore Park were not mentioned by any of the respondents (Table 7).

The majority of respondents indicated that utilizing park equipment for recreational activities was their favorite activity. In addition, when asked what was missing from the parks, equipment was mentioned most often. Increasing the number of or improving the quality of facilities was also mentioned. Facilities were defined as, water fountains and bathrooms.

When questioned about greenspace, most individuals believed there were enough natural areas within the community. The wildlife, birds, and natural features were sighted by 29% of the respondents as the things best liked in the community’s natural areas.
Table 7. Response frequencies regarding use of, opinions about, and desires for the future of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers (n=28), Dayton’s Bluff 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents n=8</th>
<th>Business Patrons n=7</th>
<th>Park Users n=13</th>
<th>Total n=28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How often do you or your family visit a Dayton's Bluff park or recreation area?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 1 per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once per month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never visit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which park or recreation center do you visit most often?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Mounds Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swede Hollow Park</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton's Bluff Rec Center</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Vento</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Rec Center</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Magnet School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who goes with you to the parks or whom do you go with?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is your favorite activity?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing park equipment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking on Trails</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing the variety of sport fields &amp; courts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing the rec centers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnicking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you believe that the facilities &amp; equipment of Dayton’s Bluff park and recreation centers reflect the diversity of the community members?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If not, how could this be improved?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Community Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Lingual Signs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Shelters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is missing or what do you think should be added to make the parks a better experience?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Fields</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Number of Parks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboard park</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7. Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you like about all of the natural areas in your neighborhood?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birds/Wild-life &amp; Natural Features</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Neighbor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing to Like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you feel that the Dayton's Bluff community provides adequate natural areas?</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations

Improving upon the quality of Dayton’s Bluffs established parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers is a tedious process that involves careful analysis of established conditions and opportunities for improvement. Such an analysis has been facilitated through inventorying, surveying, and interviewing. The findings of these methods have uncovered the fact that Dayton’s Bluff is host to an impressive system of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. However, there is always room for improvement. Opportunities for such improvement, based on current conditions and citizens’ desires, are reflected in the following recommendations.

1. Enhance Safe Access to Parks

Park safety and accessibility are vital park features. It is important for users to be able to safely access a park and maintain a reasonable level of safety while in a park. Dayton’s Bluff citizens highlighted a lack of park safety as a primary reason for not visiting area parks more often, while park inventories suggested deficient park accessibility may be a problem. Two primary ways to increase safety for park users accessing a park are to provide crosswalks and improve lighting.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks serve as a designated location for pedestrians to cross streets as well as create signals to drivers to brake for pedestrians. These two main functions increase access safety to parks and minimize potential risk of accidents with motor vehicles.

Minnesota State law states that failure to stop for pedestrians at a crosswalk is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 90 days in jail, a $700 fine, or both (Minnesota Safety Council 2005). A public education campaign may be necessary to successfully enforce the law and promote the use of crosswalks. Such a campaign would increase the public’s awareness and willingness to obey crosswalks. The most
cost-effective option can be distributing educational flyers in schools and recreation centers as well as announcements in local newspapers. Yellow crosswalk signs can be a form of continual education at each crosswalk, but signage is a more costly alternative.

The Dayton’s Bluff parks, parks and recreation centers can be prioritized in their need of crosswalks based on the number of users and traffic levels (Tables 2 and 7) (Figure 3). Indian Mounds Park is a high use park with a high volume of traffic on the streets surrounding the park. This makes it the number one area in need of crosswalks. Second would be the Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center with medium use and medium traffic levels. Third is Margaret Recreation Center with low use and medium to low traffic levels. Despite the current low use, Margaret Recreation Center is planning on installing a new playground in spring 2006, which could increase its use dramatically. Fourth is Swede Hollow Park with high use and low traffic. Finally, Skidmore Park is last with low use and low traffic on the surrounding streets.

There are many types of crosswalks available, from simple painted lines to more expensive in-pavement flashing light crosswalks. In-pavement flashing light crosswalks provide a series of flashing light units installed just below the pavement surface along the crosswalk lines and facing traffic. Its purpose is to warn drivers of the presence of a pedestrian about to cross or already in the crosswalk at uncontrolled intersections. The City of Kirkland, Washington, installed several in-pavement flashing light crosswalks in 1999, paid for through the state’s traffic safety commission (City of Kirkland 2005). The high volume of traffic found near Indian Mounds Park would warrant an in-pavement flashing light crosswalk. However, simple painted line crosswalks would be adequate near Swede Hollow Park, Margaret Recreation Center, and Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center (Figures 2, 4, 5, and 6).

**Lighting**

If parks are going to be inviting to users at dusk, then there must be adequate lighting for the users to be able to see any possible risks that may exist. Lighting helps to deter crime as well by making important access areas visible. Some citizens of Dayton’s Bluff felt that it was unsafe to walk in parks at night due to poor lighting in areas. In particular, Indian Mounds Park was identified as the number one park in need of better lighting (Figure 2).

Upgrading lighting infrastructure can be expensive, but the added safety benefits justify the cost of improved lighting. The city of Chicago upgraded the lighting in 160 of its parks in 1998 with the main objective to increase safety in the parks (American City and County 1998). This project was very large and cost $15 million. The lighting upgrades required in Indian Mounds Park would cost much less. A better comparison for the lighting upgrades needed in Indian Mounds Park can be found in Canby, Oregon, Park and Recreation Master Plan, which cites the cost of
Survey Results—
Park or Recreation Area Most Frequently Visited

Figure 3. Responses to “Which park or recreation area do you visit most often?” (n=28), 2005.
Figure 4. Swede Hollow Park: access and amenities.
Figure 5. Margaret Recreation Center: access, safety, and amenities.
Figure 6. Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center and playground: access and amenities.
walkway lighting at $5,594 to $6,696 (City of Canby, OR 2005) (see recommendation five for funding options.)

2. Increase Recreational Sports Options
Parks and recreational areas should play an important role in promoting active lifestyles (Van Staveren 2003). While Dayton’s Bluff citizens benefit from adequate park and recreation space, they lack a diversity of recreational sports options that provide valuable physical activity. In fact, citizens surveyed ranked “utilizing variety of sports fields and courts” as the second least popular activity in parks. These results show a lack of interest in currently provided recreational sports options.

One possibility for the limited interest is that current sports options are not consistent with community cultural desires, based on the demographics of the community. Dayton’s Bluff census data shows that minorities make up 49% of the population. Moreover, 19% of neighborhood residents were born outside of the United States, and most are from Asia and Latin America (Wilder Research Center 2004). The most popular sport in these countries of origin is soccer; however, Dayton’s Bluff parks and recreation centers do not offer soccer fields or goals (Soong 1997). Interviews with community members present at the Margaret Recreation Center Block Meeting reflect this notion that park users are not given ample opportunities to play their favorite sports.

There are currently five public baseball diamonds and zero soccer fields in Dayton’s Bluff. The solution to this disparity in recreational sports variety is simply installing soccer goals on the already existing baseball diamonds of Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center and Margaret Recreation Center (Figure 7). When discussed with Margaret Recreation Center personnel about this issue, it was suggested that even removing one of their baseball fields to make room for a soccer field is a possibility. Support would first have to be found with the Margaret Block Club and the maintenance staff. Then the feasibility would be determined with maintenance staff and the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department. Such a joint-fields project has already been done successfully in many area parks, including Lake Nokomis and Phelps Park in Minneapolis.

Increasing recreational sports options in Dayton’s Bluff is central to the vision of improving the existing quality of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. Doing so will promote physical activity and greater participation among diverse groups in the parks and recreation center system.

3. Enhance Park Amenities
In the Dayton’s Bluff community there are many beautiful parks that are used by people on a regular basis. Dayton’s Bluff survey respondents stated that their decision to use parks is made in large part by what amenities the park offers. An increase in Dayton’s Bluff park amenities would enhance current park users
Figure 7. Configuration of a joint field, Margaret Recreation Center.
experience and possibly draw more users to the parks. The greatest need for improved amenities is in more trash receptacles, grills, and bilingual/brail signs.

**Trash Receptacles**
Increasing the number of trash receptacles in the parks could be a first step toward making the parks more inviting. Parents surveyed identified cleaner parks as a needed improvement, which could be partially addressed by increasing the number of trash receptacles (Table 7). According to Bryan Murphy, landscape architect for St. Paul’s Parks and Recreation Department, there is no specific number of trash receptacles required by the city for each park; the number of trash receptacles can vary depending on the needs of the park. Through inventoring it was found that Hamm’s Park and Skidmore park currently lack trash receptacles (Table 3). Added trash receptacles should be placed in areas convenient to pedestrian traffic.

In addition to simply increasing the number of trash receptacles, educational initiative should be undertaken to promote the use of trash receptacles. These initiatives could be in the form of highly visible signs on trash receptacles and other park facilities highlighting the purpose and benefits of trash receptacles.

**Grills**
An appealing component of Indian Mounds Park is its grills. These grills are used often, and draw a large number of people to the park for gatherings and social events. Unfortunately, none of Dayton’s Bluff’s other parks provide grills. This disparity could be addressed by installing at least two grills in Swede Hollow Park (Figure 3). Swede Hollow Park is an ideal park for grills because it already has picnic tables and interpretive signs. Installing grills may draw more people to the park, exposing them to the rich cultural history of Dayton’s Bluff.

**Brail and Bilingual Interpretive Signs**
Community leaders indicated there was limited historical awareness of Swede Hollow Park and Indian Mounds Park among some residents. Pockets of neighbors have a high level of awareness, but this knowledge is not widespread. Unfortunately, existing signs do not accommodate the large number of non-English speaking or visually impaired residents. Bilingual and brail interpretive signs could be installed adjacent to the established signs of Swede Hollow Park and Indian Mounds Park.

In Dayton’s Bluff there are many beautiful parks for the community members to use. For these parks and recreation areas to be used to their potential, attention needs to be paid to the amenities available. Increasing trash receptacles, bilingual interpretive signs, and grills, would round out the opportunities for park users, enhancing their enjoyment.

**4. Improve Playground Safety**
The existing playground or tot lot facilities in Dayton’s Bluff give the increasing population of school age children a place to recreate and play. Due to the limited
number of play areas compared to the number of children within the appropriate age to use playground equipment, it is important that the equipment they use is safe and that all risks are limited as much as possible. Although playgrounds allow children to develop physically and socially in a unique outdoor environment, they can also be the site of potential injuries (Minnesota Safety Council 2005). It is estimated that each year approximately 200,000 children, 14 years old and younger are treated in emergency rooms for playground injuries (National Center for Injury Protection and Control 2005). About 75% of these injuries occur on public playground equipment and of these, 76% occur in either schools or public parks (National Program for Playground Safety 2005). The high percentage of injuries outlined in these statistics needs to be addressed by local authorities as well as community members. Playground safety, including those playgrounds within Dayton’s Bluff, should be a priority in an effort to prevent and/or reduce potentially serious injuries to children.

Based on the playground risk assessment and neighborhood resident’s opinions, Indian Mounds Park Playground should be a high priority for fixing equipment (Table 4). The American Indian Magnet school should also be given special attention because many students use the equipment Monday through Friday during recess as well as before and after school.

St. Paul Park and Recreation does have a program for equipment maintenance. Weekly assessments are done in all the parks and the maintenance staff seems to be trying their best to respond quickly, repairing any hazardous or broken equipment. For instance, the first time the American Indian Magnet School was assessed by the research group on September 27, the slide was broken; however, upon returning two weeks later the slide had been fixed. This does not mean the community should not be alert for possible new or unforeseen hazards, but in this case the Parks authorities did appear to have timely evaluated and repaired equipment. But Park officials are not the only people responsible for taking care of park safety. It is important for the community to take an active role in furthering the safety of the neighborhood’s playgrounds.

The Dayton’s Bluff Community Council could encourage one of the many community groups to partake in the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Park Stewards Program. The program requires a one-year commitment, picking up litter, weeding, and surveying and reporting vandalism or damaged equipment. More information is available at the St. Paul Parks and Recreation website, www.stpaul.gov/dept/parks/environment/park-partners/ or by calling 651-266-6458. This group could become a voice and presence, working with park visitors, community members, and city authorities. It would also be very beneficial if at least one of the members of the “Stewards” group took a class to become a certified playground inspector. With a certified community member it would become much easier for the Dayton’s Bluff community to improve playground safety and help the city of St. Paul with timely information about the condition of the playground equipment.
Furthermore, because some of the observed safety hazards are related to structural problems, which cannot be addressed without major modifications, new playground equipment may need to be installed to eliminate the hazards such as unsafe distances between bars and obtruding bolts.

These playgrounds may be able to be funded through grants which are outlined in recommendation 5, as well as the KaBoom organization discussed below. Another option would be to get these sites on the cities playground replacement list. This list is based on foreseen priority and city funding. Therefore, it could take a substantial period of time before they would be replaced. However, it remains a possibility and is the way Margaret Recreation Center will be getting their new playground this spring.

An additional option to improve playground equipment is the KaBoom organization which devotes its efforts to providing all children with a place to play through a community-building model. The organization offers training, challenge grants, publications, and a free Online Project Planner. Their website has an abundance of information about how to get a project started and who to contact for assistance www.kaboom.org. Eleven KaBoom playgrounds have already been installed in Minnesota alone, one of which was done in conjunction with Common Bond’s Torre de San Miguel Homes on the west side of St. Paul.

Inspections and maintenance are both important in lowering risks associated with playground usage. The playgrounds will be kept in the safest condition if the community is willing to educate themselves about playground safety requirements and then use their knowledge to backup city inspections. Working to get grants for replacing playground equipment would also be very beneficial and revitalize the park atmosphere, hopefully improving community pride in its playground areas.

5. Facilitate Options to Reach Report Goals

Overcoming the budget constraints of the St. Paul’s Park and Recreation Department and the Dayton’s Bluff Community Council will require creative solutions. To achieve the four prior recommendations and the encompassing goals of this project, exploring volunteer options and grant possibilities will be necessary. The combination of volunteerism and grants will be the building blocks to facilitate the enhancement of Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, natural areas, and recreation centers.

Volunteer Programs/Services

Utilizing volunteers will provide a cost-effective way to implement this project’s recommendations, while also fostering community involvement. The St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department has an established volunteer core, with programs through the recreation centers and “Park Partners” (St. Paul Parks and Recreation 2005). Volunteer opportunities may also be found in the numerous local nonprofits working with urban development, such as the Community Design Center’s “Service Learning”
program (Community Design Center 2005). Ramsey County’s Sentence to Service program is an alternative to explore if citizen volunteers are difficult to find. Examples of projects that volunteers could help with include installing soccer goals, grills, and bilingual signs. Furthermore, the preceding volunteer programs could be used if any situations arise where there is a lack of personnel.

Grants and Funding
Volunteers can do a great deal, but financial resources will be needed to implement some of the more costly initiatives, such as lighting and crosswalks. Funding sources are varied, available at state, federal, regional, and private levels.

First, seed money to implement some projects and programs can be found through grants from state agencies. For example, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provides funding through its Natural and Scenic Area grants and Metro Greenway programs (MN DNR 2005). Such funding sources were successfully used in Elk River, MN, in 2001 to improve their Top of the World Park. With $700,000 in grants, the city of Elk River was able to double the park’s size and connect it to the larger Woodland Trails Park (Muonio 2005). Another project that was supported with a Natural and Scenic Area Grant is the Henry Park Land Acquisition. The fund enabled the preservation and protection of the Mississippi River Bluff area and will provide existing open space connections within the St. Paul park system (St. Paul City Council 2004).

The Local Initiatives Grant is another state level funding option offered through the DNR that allows the Department of Natural Resources to provide matching grants to local governments and organizations for projects related to the improvement of local parks, natural and scenic areas, and conservation efforts. Ramsey County projects that have been sponsored by such grants include but are not limited to: the Phalen Wetland Restoration Project and the Sackett Park Forest and Prairie Rehabilitation (Minnesota State Lottery 2005).

Federal grants can also be pursued to facilitate park projects. The federal government offers a host of funding sources through various agencies and initiatives. For example, the National Park Service’s Land and Water Conservation Fund provides matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities (National Park Service 2005). Most Land and Water Conservation Fund money goes toward acquiring new park land, which was the case for the Long Island Project on northeast Minnesota’s Burntside Lake. The fund secured the acquisition of an island on Burntside Lake in 2004, ensuring that the opportunity for public ownership would not be lost (The Wilderness Society 2005). There are also cases where Land and Water Conservation funds have been used to improve the condition of existing parks. Seattle’s Gas Works Park, for example, recently received funding to help enhance an unused portion of the park for neighborhood recreation.
Finally, private foundations and corporations are an excellent place to seek grant money for park programs and projects. For example, the Timberwolves Community Foundation donated $10,000 to the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Department in 2001 for a new Riverside Park basketball court that now sports the Wolves team logo (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board 2005). Organizations and companies located in the Dayton’s Bluff area are the private grant makers most likely to facilitate the goals of this project through community partnership efforts. 3M is a good example of a local company that has donated to the community in the past, is currently facilitating a project on the Lower Bluff, and should be a candidate for future funding support. Another partnership, established to beautify the Dayton’s Bluff business district occurred between the Dayton’s Bluff Garden Club and 15 local businesses in which the Garden Club placed flower baskets outside each business who in turn agreed to water the baskets. The partnership not only made the community more beautiful, but the baskets continue to attract positive attention to the businesses because of their appealing exteriors.

In short, if local businesses see an incentive for themselves, they will be more likely to assist with facilitating projects. Perhaps, one or more of the Dayton’s Bluff local businesses will be willing to purchase soccer goals, suggested in recommendation 2, if the equipment incorporates the business logo. If the business sector is reluctant to provide this assistance, the local soccer association is a viable funding option as they have made previous attempts to establish soccer fields within the community. Local businesses may also be utilized to fund the installation of garbage cans, grills, or signage if they are given credit for their community service. Some external companies and foundations are specifically interested in metro area community development and green space initiatives. (Appendix B).

Improving the condition of Dayton’s Bluff parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers is a worthy, yet lofty goal. Without the proper means to achieve these goals, it is difficult to improve the community one lives in. The means have to come from the residents, but help with matching financing and gifts always boost a neighborhood's hopes, allowing them to do a little more.

Conclusions

The Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood has many positive attributes, which should give residents a sense of pride and ownership. The rich history, diverse cultures, and exceptional urban parks make the community unique among others in St. Paul and the Twin Cities area. As with any community, improvements can be made to reduce potential sources of risk and instill a stronger sense of personal responsibility within the community. Due to the active usage of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers, potential risks can be extensive. Therefore, the recommendations within this report can be used as guidance to reducing risks assessed, such as installing
crosswalks and lighting. Additional amenities and facilities in the parks can improve the use, ownership, and appreciation of the existing parks by adding trash receptacles, bilingual and brail signage, grills, as well as increasing sports options and improving the play equipment. Neighborhood volunteers and new funding sources can be a way for the community and the Community Council to achieve these recommendations by building on the already existing quality of the neighborhood.

References


Appendix A: Dayton’s Bluff Survey

Dayton’s Bluff Survey

Name of person interviewed________________________________________________
Date and Time__________________Location__________________________________

Parks and Recreation Centers
1. a. How often do you visit a Dayton’s Bluff park and or recreation area?
   □ three or more times a week
   □ less than once a week
   □ once a month
   □ never have visited

   b. Which park or recreation area do you visit the most often?

2. a. Who goes to the park most in the family?

    b. Who do they go with?

    c. What is their favorite activity?
        □ utilizing the park equipment
        □ utilizing the recreation center
        □ utilizing the variety of sports fields and courts
        □ other_________________________________

4. What is missing or what should be added to make the parks a better experience?

5. a. Do you believe that the facilities and equipment of Dayton’s Bluff park and recreation centers reflect the diversity of the community members?
   □ Yes
   □ No

    b. If not, how could this be improved?

Green Space
1. What do you like about all of the natural areas in your neighborhood?

2. Do you feel that the Dayton’s Bluff community provides adequate natural areas?
   □ Yes
   □ No
Appendix B: Private Grant Makers

The Dayton’s Bluff Community Council has been given information pertaining to each of the private grant makers listed below including but not limited to: the grant maker's past funded projects, average amount donated, area of funding interest, current grant opportunities and information needed to apply for each grant.

- The Baker Foundation,
- The Buuck Family Foundation
- The Saint Paul Foundation
- The Marbrook Foundation
- The HRK Foundation
- The Laura and Walter Hudson Foundation
- The Ted Deikel Foundation
- The Roger L. and Agnes C. Dell Charitable Trust
- Center Point Energy Minnegasco
- The Central Minnesota Community Foundation
- Mayo Clinic
- The McGough Foundation
- The McKnight Foundation
- The McNeely Foundation
- The Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation