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We thank the City of Oakdale for inviting the students of the Environmental Science, Policy, and Management capstone course at the University of Minnesota to collaborate on a project to ensure Oakdale’s parks are well suited to resident’s values and ideal uses. This exciting partnership allowed us to apply our educational insights, along with those of the city staff and officials, to create useful recommendations for the city’s parks.

Oakdale City Officials
Thank you to Brian Bachmeier, Public Works Director/City Engineer, for discussing Oakdale’s vision and scope for the project with us, and to Jeff Koesling, Parks and Building Maintenance Superintendent, and Julie Williams, Recreation Superintendent, for providing previous park studies and sharing their perspective.

Oakdale Parks and Recreation Commission Members
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Additionally, we thank the Oakdale Athletic Association for discussing their ideas about current park use. We also thank the residents of Oakdale for their friendly reception at the parks and their input provided during park observations.

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We would also like to thank the individuals who provided information for this report via interview: Yingling Fan, Associate Professor, Humphrey Institute; Terry Furlong, City Council Liaison, North St. Paul Parks; Lloyd Grachek, Chairperson, North St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission; Jeannie Lanz, Executive Assistant of Administrative Support, School District 622; Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst, Regional Parks and Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council; John Elholm, Park Director, Washington County; Ed Marchan, Valley Branch Watershed District; Patti Anderson, Maple Grove Park Administrator Supervisor.

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Executive Summary

This report has been developed as a tool for the City of Oakdale to guide their work on the community's changing demands and values of park use.

Research has shown that parks bring communities together and offer a wide variety of benefits. The City of Oakdale commissioned this report in order to continue to provide these benefits to their community in the future. Oakdale’s parks have the potential to meet the needs of the growing community and the transforming future. This report aims to ensure that all community members’ park needs and desires are being met and that the community as a whole is enjoying the parks. To move forward in this goal it was essential to gain a better understanding of how the citizens of Oakdale use their parks as well as which residents are not using the parks, and why.

Students in the Environmental Science, Policy, and Management class have delved deep into a variety of research methods to understand resident’s needs as they pertain to the parks. These methods involved: researching significant literature resources, conducting interviews with experts and stakeholders, and gathering observations at Richard Walton, Eberle, Furlong, and Tanners Lake parks. This extensive research uncovered the following important findings:

With the demographics of Oakdale’s residents changing, the City of Oakdale would like to maintain social, physical, and community benefits while focusing on the changing park use trends and values within the community. Communities across the Twin Cities are also facing these similar issues and resolving them through infrastructure updates and increased community engagement. Our results showed that parks with the most amenities are more commonly used and the walking paths tend to be to most used amenity. Caucasian individuals use the parks more regularly and adults are the most frequent park users.

The findings mentioned above led to the formulation of recommendations that the City of Oakdale will be able to use as starting points for future renovations, additions, and research within their parks. These recommendations intend to bridge that gap between current park use and resident's ideal park use.

Increase Simple Infrastructure Updates to Enhance Current Use of the Parks:
Through interviews and observations, we recommend increasing simple infrastructure updates. The addition of benches, trash cans, solar lighting, and increased maintenance will enhance comfort and increase the citizens use and value of the parks.

Enhance Field Quality and Keep up with Sporting Trends: Increased field maintenance is a short-term undertaking for the city that will enhance field quality in terms of safety and playability. Dedicated fields is a mid-term project which can also
help enhance fields and lastly, as a long-term project this report recommends looking into multi-use courts as a chance to allow for more field space and as a way to keep up with ever changing sporting trends.

*Expand Park Activities and Events to Increase Park Use:* Diverse park activities and events are vital for a strong parks and recreation system. Continual investment in park activities and the implementation of exercise trails in parks is recommended. Participation in park activities can expand park use and increase community engagement.

*Increase Citizen Engagement in Park Decision-Making to Represent the Values and Uses of the Entire Community:* Increasing citizen input will help Oakdale meet all residents’ park values. A city-wide survey to engage citizens is recommended. Specific focus on low-response-rate areas is also recommended to reach all segments of the community. This is increasingly important as Oakdale becomes more diverse.

With these recommendations the City of Oakdale will be able enhance their parks to meet the needs of the community's changing values and beliefs while also adapting to meet future needs.
Introduction

Municipal parks are an important gathering place and unifying landmark in many cities. While urban parks provide many benefits, including social and environmental values, parks also face ongoing challenges such as financial uncertainty and the dynamics of varying use and community values. This report focuses on a park use assessment for the City of Oakdale, to provide the city with the tools to determine the values and uses of the parks by Oakdale residents as well as recommendations for the city’s future planning. This assessment was completed by students from the Environmental Science, Policy, and Management major at the University of Minnesota in collaboration with the City of Oakdale. It was designed to combine the skills and knowledge of the University students with those of city officials and key stakeholders, who have dedicated their lives to improving the quality of Oakdale’s recreational facilities, in order to provide valuable perspectives on the future of the city's parks.

Part of the greater Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area of Minnesota, the City of Oakdale is a beautiful northeastern suburb within Washington County. Oakdale currently has 28 parks, which account for 473 acres of land that benefit the community in a variety of ways. The parks provide a place for residents to engage in their community: where young children can play, teenagers and adults can participate in sports and other recreational activities, and families can celebrate birthdays or have barbecues. Parks also provide a venue for the city to host community-wide events. The City of Oakdale hosts free outdoor concerts, a summer farmer’s market, and other seasonal events in its parks (Oakdale Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, Sep. 17, 2013).

Parks, and the activities that take place within them, provide many social benefits for the city and its residents. Park activities allow people to interact with their neighbors and gain more familiarity with one another, “which arises when independent, anonymous people keep encountering each other” (Peters, 2010, p. 430). Such outcomes can lead to more social cohesion in a city (Peters, 2010). In addition, access to nearby parks is associated with more physical activity and has been shown to improve both mental and physical conditions for residents (McCormack et al., 2010). Parks also bring together groups of people from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds (Madanipour, 1999). These social connections help foster an improved sense of community (Peters, Elands & Buijs, 2010).

In addition to social benefits, parks provide ecological benefits. They keep the natural environment intact for wildlife (Kowarik, 2011), preserve the health of land and water (Bastian et al., 2012), and decrease the severity of climate change impacts (Pickett et al., 2011). The presence of open, undeveloped spaces also preserves the aesthetics of a community, as residents “appreciate green space in their city neighborhoods” (Baur et al., 2013, p. 110). These natural resource and social benefits
explain in part why Oakdale places a high priority on its parks (City of Oakdale, 2010).

The City of Oakdale’s numerous parks with their wide range of sponsored activities demonstrate the longstanding commitment to this resource. This long history of parks in Oakdale means, however, that most of Oakdale’s parks were established over two decades ago. As a result, the park infrastructure and recreational facilities were designed to meet the needs of earlier residents. Over the past 20 years, new residents have made Oakdale their home and have brought with them different uses, desires, and values. An ongoing challenge in Minnesota cities is adapting to meet the needs of new residents and changing times (Gould, Walker & Frazell, 2009). Another challenge facing cities in the current economic climate is budgeting for improving the park systems (Chipkin, 2011). In order to best match the community’s values for the parks with the park services and infrastructure provided by the city, it is essential to determine who is using the parks, how they are using them, what current residents desire in a park system, what they feel is missing from the parks, and most of all what they would like from their parks in the future.

As an important foundation, the City of Oakdale’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan addresses the need to provide parks that are appropriate for the community (City of Oakdale, 2010). The 2030 Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the importance of having recreational activities, walking trails, and open space for community members and reinforces the city’s commitment to providing those services. Guided by the goals laid out in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, this report delivers an assessment of four parks as a pilot study of the general state of Oakdale’s parks. It utilizes evidence from an infrastructure assessment, interviews, and use observations, and is supported by a review of the literature on municipal parks and existing city documents. The report lays out general recommendations for ideas the City of Oakdale can consider as it moves forward to update the park system in their next five year plan and provides Oakdale with the necessary information for tailoring the parks to the needs of the community in future projects.

Vision and Goals

The following visions, goals and objectives were used to guide this specific project as well as six other projects on topics encompassing Natural Resource Policy, Invasive Species, Alternative Vegetation Options for Public Lands, Risk Management, Sustainable Management for Tanners Lake, and Volunteer Programs.

Oakdale Vision

“The City of Oakdale is committed to serving the continuing community-wide needs of our citizens by enhancing the vitality and quality of life for all” (City of Oakdale Mission Statement).
Class Vision

We aim to create a cohesive, achievable set of recommendations in collaboration with the Oakdale community to enhance the vitality and quality of life, sustainability of the local land and waters, and foster greater community engagement now and into the future.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of this report is to support the city’s desire for a park system that addresses the changing values and uses of the parks for current residents and into the future. The following objectives guide the project:

1. Interview key stakeholders of the parks along with relevant Oakdale public officials, staff and park managers regarding current use, challenges, and future goals;
2. Assess the park infrastructure, use, and users through observation and stakeholder interviews;
3. Review relevant Oakdale documents in relation to the park system, specifically the City of Oakdale 2030 Comprehensive Plan;
4. Identify changes other communities have made to their parks in order to address critical challenges; and
5. Recommend next steps that could be taken in park management, infrastructure, and development in anticipation of future park use.

Methods

Site Description

Oakdale is a unique metropolitan suburb surrounded by the cities of Woodbury, Maplewood, North St. Paul, and Lake Elmo, along with a few smaller cities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota (Figure 1). It is a growing community (see Appendix A) with a bright future. The Oakdale Township was established on November 1, 1858. Specifically, the Village of Oakdale was formed in 1968 and transitioned into a city in 1974. Across the landscape white, bur, and black oak trees dominated, influencing city founders to select the name Oakdale to reflect the various tree species. Currently, Oakdale’s land is predominately used for residential homes and small businesses. There are a total of 28 parks in Oakdale with seven of those parks containing open space (grassy expanses without infrastructure). The majority of Oakdale residents are between 45 to 54 years old, with the remaining population more evenly distributed across age groups. Racial demographics of Oakdale are predominantly Caucasian, with growing minority populations such as Asian or Pacific Islander, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian Eskimo Aleut (2010 US Census) (Table 1).
Figure 1: Map of Oakdale within the Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota metro area.

Table 1: Percentages of Oakdale’s population by racial and ethnic diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial and Ethnic Diversity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To capture a detailed view of park infrastructure and users, this report focuses on four parks: Furlong, Tanner’s Lake, Eberle, and Richard Walton (Figure 2). These four parks are distributed throughout the City of Oakdale. Furlong Park is located on the
north end of Oakdale and Tanner’s Lake on the south end. Eberle and Richard Walton Park lie in the middle of the city and can be found off of Hadley Avenue, a signature street that runs north and south through Oakdale connecting many of the city’s amenities. This park selection gives an accurate depiction of the types of parks found throughout Oakdale.

Figure 2: Aerial maps of four case study parks with walking path noted: a) Richard Walton Park, b) Eberle Park, c) Tanner’s Lake Park, d) Furlong Park, Oakdale, Minnesota.
Furlong Park is the smallest park classified as a neighborhood park as it is completely surrounded by residential homes. Eberle Park is also considered a neighborhood park because of the size and surrounding residencies, but it is larger than Furlong Park. Tanner’s Lake Park is considered an active community park because it provides many amenities with the capacity to support large group events. Richard Walton is the largest park in the study and is also an active community park with multiple uses.

**Research Methods**

Multiple research techniques were used to evaluate the city’s current use and values for the parks. Field observations were conducted in order to assess activities taking place in the parks and current amenities available at the parks. Stakeholder interviews provided valuable insight into what different communities and organizations value in the parks and want to see for the future. Extensive secondary data and document research added demographic information about Oakdale, examples and knowledge about research methods as well as how to assess park use, and common concerns facing communities with parks.

**Observations**

The primary method to establish the current state of the City of Oakdale’s parks was observation. Observations began on September 14, 2013, with all observers. This group session was used to determine what details individual observers should take note of in concurrent observations and to find a representative sample of the different types of parks in Oakdale. Following this session, observations were conducted individually or in pairs at the four case study parks: Richard Walton, Tanner’s Lake, Furlong, and Eberle. These parks represent both active community parks, offering intensive recreation activities such as ball fields or tennis courts, and active neighborhood parks, which are smaller and offer limited recreational activities such as practice fields and playground equipment (City of Oakdale, 2010).

Between September 14 and October 27, 2013, 18 observation sessions took place at each park, for a total of 76 park observation sessions (Table 2). The observations were done at varying times of day, representing mornings, afternoons and evenings on weekdays and a more limited sample of weekend hours. To provide a better sampling of weekend activities, over the weekends of October 19 and October 26 an additional 12 weekend observations were conducted.

The observations were concluded by October 27, 2013, which allowed for a full month and a half to observe Oakdale’s parks. It should be noted that because of the nature of the class, observations took place during the fall season when the weather begins to cool and children are back in school. Future evaluations should complement this work with observation in the winter, spring, and summer seasons.
Table 2: Observed park use demographics (see Appendix D for more detail).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Toddlers</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Teenagers</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eberle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furlong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Walton</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanner’s Lake</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For every individual park observation, observers spent 30 minutes at each park. Observers recorded the following information at each session: date, time, temperature, and overall weather; approximate number of people at the park; what type of infrastructure is being used in the park and what is not being used in the park; type of activities going on in the parks (baseball, birthday party, family get together etc.); when appropriate, if an athletic group such as a sports group was conducting an activity; general age groups; and broad ethnic groups of park users, which may be subject to observational bias (Appendix B). Observations were compiled into a common spreadsheet, and analyzed to find patterns in the data.

Interviews

Stakeholder interviews provided information on how different groups value and want to use the Oakdale’s park system. City staff met with students in ESPM 4041 to provide an overview of the city’s vision for the seven projects. For the park system, the overarching issue was to make recommendations about how to identify the values of the community surrounding the parks. To accomplish this, key stakeholders with an interest in the future use of the parks were identified and asked to participate in an interview.

Stakeholders were identified by determining what groups would be most informative in answering the city’s main questions, those who contribute or are affected by changes in park values and use, and by asking stakeholders as they were identified, if they could recommend other groups to contact.

Stakeholders were identified by asking the following questions: what groups would be most informative in answering the city's main questions; who contributes or is affected by changes in park values and use; and what other groups have contacted stakeholder recommended?

In order to cover a wide range of potential user groups and gain expert knowledge, interviewers contacted 18 stakeholder groups and two park use experts. Stakeholder groups included City of Oakdale government officials, the Oakdale Athletic Association, public school representatives, Hmong community representatives, local
religious groups, the Oakdale Business Association, city park managers or planners from neighboring communities, county and Metropolitan Council representatives, senior associations, and the Valley Branch Watershed District. The experts contacted were from Three Rivers Park District and the University of Minnesota. Not every individual or group contacted was able to schedule an interview in the time period allotted for this study (see Appendix C). Of the 20 stakeholder groups that were contacted a minimum of two times, ten interviews took place.

Every interview was guided by a predetermined set of questions, and conducted by one or more group members. In interviews with multiple interviewers, there was at least one designated note taker. The interview questions were developed during group meetings before each interview (see Appendix C). Interviews were conducted either by phone or in person, depending on the preference and location of the interviewee. Interviews ranged from 20 to 60 minutes. The interviewer had the discretion to add follow up questions based on the content of the interview. At the start of every interview, the interviewees were thanked for their time, notified of the goal of the project and that the interview will inform a report for the City of Oakdale. Analysis was designed to identify patterns in the responses, unique values of specific stakeholder groups, and ideas for addressing park challenges. Group members reviewed interview notes first individually and then together to record major themes and findings from the interviews by comparing common or similar questions, looking for repeated ideas and contrasting responses.

Secondary Data and Literature
Researchers used the University of Minnesota library system’s wealth of studies published in journals to collect literature relating to use and values of city parks. The primary mode of research was an online search of University databases. In addition, past studies were used to identify research tools and questions regarding park use and park values.

Information from the 2010 Census (United States Census Profile, United States Census Quick Facts) and reports on cities (Census Viewer 2013, Hmong American Partnership; Gould et. al., 2009) provided demographic and general city information to inform this report. This information provided rationale for recommendations based on demographics and city characteristics.

Findings
The City of Oakdale is interested in addressing changing park use trends and values as the demographics of their residents change in order to maintain the social, physical, and community benefits associated with municipal parks. Through observational assessment of four case study parks—Eberle Park, Furlong Park, Richard Walton Park, and Tanner’s Lake Park—we found that the parks with the
most amenities are the most widely used. Caucasian individuals use these parks most regularly, and adults are currently the most frequent users of the parks (Table 2). Other park authorities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area are addressing similar issues through infrastructure updates and increased community engagement. These efforts can inform Oakdale in their planning as they move forward. The City of Oakdale has prioritized innovation and community involvement to meet the new needs of the changing communities into the future.

New Residents and Change in Demographics

To understand how Oakdale will change in the future it is essential to review recent demographic trends. In the decade from 2000 to 2010 the population of Caucasian residents in Oakdale decreased more than 10%, from 92.21% to 81.43%. Conversely, minority residents in Oakdale are increasing. Asian is the next most common demographic in Oakdale, and it increased from 2.45% in 2000 to 8.15% in 2010. The percentage of Black or African American residents in Oakdale has also increased from 2.29% in 2000 to 6.02% in 2010 (Census Viewer, 2013).

Of particular note is the growth of the Hmong community in Oakdale, having increased from 219 residents with Hmong heritage out of 26,653 total people in 2000 to 1524 Hmong residents out of 27,726 total residents in 2010 (Hmong American Partnership 2010, United States Census). This is an increase of more than six times the Hmong population ten years prior, an important rise that Oakdale officials and staff will take into consideration while planning for future park development and use.

Shifts in population demographics in a city can be a major driver of changes in park use and values (Fan Interview, 2013). Oakdale park officials and community groups are interested in addressing new values around park use, sports, and recreational activities. In discussion with Brian Bachmeier, City Planner, he noted the city’s interest in ensuring parks are providing the services desired by growing minority communities and youth residents, and the city is interested in following changing trends. The Oakdale Athletic Association, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Recreation Superintendent mentioned that they want to see an increased focus on Oakdale’s younger generations (respective interviews, 2013). Parks and recreation officials would like to get teenagers involved more with the parks and the events put on through the recreation department, as well as assess what the different communities in Oakdale want from their parks.

Infrastructure and Use

Park observations informed this report about the current infrastructure, timing, user demographics, and use of park amenities between September 14 and October 27, 2013, at the four case study parks—Eberle, Tanner’s Lake, Furlong and Richard Walton Parks (Table 3, see Appendix B).
Table 3: Summary park observation data: September 14 to October 27, 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parks</th>
<th>Park attraction in use</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Age ranges</th>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eberle Park</td>
<td>Walking Path, Soccer Field, Pavilion, Playground</td>
<td>Walking/Jogging, Soccer, Playing on Playground</td>
<td>Toddler, Children, Teenagers, Adults</td>
<td>Caucasian, Hmong, African, American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Walton Park</td>
<td>Playground, Skateboard, Open Space, Tennis Courts, Softball Fields, Pavilion, Walking Paths, Basketball Court, Soccer Fields</td>
<td>Skateboarding, Walking/Jogging, Tennis, Basketball, Softball, Pavilion Lunch, Birthday Parties</td>
<td>Toddler, Children, Teenagers, Adults</td>
<td>Caucasian, African American, Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanner’s Lake Park</td>
<td>Beach, Walking Path, Softball Field, Benches, Basketball Court, Tennis Courts, Playground</td>
<td>Swimming, Basketball, Walking, Playing on Playground, Tennis</td>
<td>Children, Teenagers, Adults</td>
<td>Caucasian, African American, Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furlong Park</td>
<td>Playground, Baseball Field</td>
<td>Walking/Jogging, Playing on Playground</td>
<td>Children, Adult</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The City of Oakdale is interested in ensuring the infrastructure in its parks meets the current use trends and values of its residents, as stated in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan: “recreational trends, playground safety standards and user preferences have changed significantly since the parks were developed” (City of Oakdale, 2010, p. 5.3). The city has identified that “many of the existing athletic facilities and park equipment are outdated and not meeting the needs of the community anymore” and recognized that including changing trends and values in park planning is crucial to enhancing and sustaining the park system (City of Oakdale, 2010, p. 5.3). There are currently various types of infrastructure available for use at each park (Table 4, City of Oakdale 2010).

At Eberle Park there are paved paths, picnic shelters, playground equipment and a soccer field. The paved paths were mainly used by adults for walking, biking, running and dog walking; these paths were observed in use in 7/19 observations. Primarily children used the playground during 8/19 observations. In two instances, adults were observed using the picnic shelters. The soccer fields were used during observations two times by youth soccer associations on weekday evenings. In these observations, 11 to 25 park visitors were present. These included children, toddlers, and accompanying adults, and were distributed between the playground and soccer field. Eberle Park was used most often on weekdays after 3:00 p.m. In nine observations, predominantly on weekday mornings and afternoons, there was no one using the park. Eberle Park and Richard Walton Park were the parks that had a tendency for the users to be more ethnically diverse.

Tanner’s Lake Park was used through out the week at different times of the day. The infrastructure present at Tanner’s Lake Park includes a beach area, a picnic shelter, playground equipment, volleyball, basketball, and tennis courts, a baseball field,
paved paths and open grass areas. The majority of users were adults using the walking paths. There were 20 observations taken at Tanners Lake Park; 10 of these times the walking paths were being used, primarily by adults. In two instances children accompanied adults using the paths and in one instance children used the paths independently. In 6/20 observations the park was completely empty. Children used the beach and open grass areas for unstructured play during 3 observations. The picnic shelters were used during one observation. Benches were used twice, and an adult used the beach area during one instance. Tanners Lake Park was used at various times throughout the week, with the least use occurring on Sundays and weekdays during the morning.

Table 4: Oakdale park and recreational facilities (City of Oakdale).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oakdale Park and Recreational Facilities</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Archery</th>
<th>Bandshell</th>
<th>Basketball Court</th>
<th>Beach</th>
<th>Boat Launch/ Pier</th>
<th>Horseshoe Pits</th>
<th>Ice Skating Rink</th>
<th>Inline Skating Rink</th>
<th>Open Space/Natural</th>
<th>Paved Trails</th>
<th>Picnic Areas</th>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Stand Volleyball Court</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Skate Park</th>
<th>Soccer Field</th>
<th>Tennis Court</th>
<th>Unpaved Trails</th>
<th>Warming Shelter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Armstrong</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Both adult and youth associations utilized Richard Walton Park with a variety of sports taking place throughout the week. Richard Walton Park has the most infrastructure of the parks surveyed, including tennis courts, baseball fields, playground equipment, soccer fields, picnic shelters, a skate park, football field and paved paths. Out of 19 total observations, the tennis courts were used during seven observations, baseball fields were used twice, playground equipment was used eight times, basketball courts four times, soccer fields five times, picnic shelters seven times, the skate park was used eight times, the football field was not used during observation times, and the paths were used seven times. A wide variety of people representing diverse age groups and ethnicities were present at Richard Walton Park. This park was used throughout the week at different times and had the heaviest usage during the evening hours on weekdays and weekends. No one was in the park during only 3/19 observations of this park.

Furlong Park was the least used of the observed parks. Activities were taking place at Furlong Park during 4/19 observations; the remaining 15 observations showed the park was not in use. In the few cases when people were in the park, children were playing on the playground equipment, adults were using the paved paths, all during the afternoon or early evening. Other than playground equipment and the paved paths, park infrastructure included a baseball field, which was not in use during the fall observation period.

The Recreation Superintendent reported that the recreational turnout for events do pretty well in the City of Oakdale except for the teen age group. The highest turnouts are usually with family and free associated events.

The use of sport fields and courts is one of the primary uses of the parks and represents a large portion of the infrastructure available in Oakdale today (see Table 4). The Oakdale Athletic Association (OAA), as one of the largest stakeholder groups that regularly uses Oakdale’s fields, has a strong interest in the future of park planning. Members of this group had a broad understanding of their current use of the sports fields. The association members noted that more dedicated sport fields would best meet their needs. For example, dedicated football fields would be used for just football and soccer fields used for just soccer. During an interview with the OAA members, they stated that they often deal with field use conflicts. The OAA group also mentioned that fields can get torn up with tournament use or simply from the sheer volume of games played on a field. Overuse would leave the fields in rough condition for some users. OAA President Steve Adamsky proposed an increase in maintenance following games and activities at the existing multi-use fields. Additionally, the OAA members commented that they would like to see some of the existing scoreboards fixed, have updates made, and see scoreboards put in on fields that don't have them.

Parks are a valuable part of Oakdale’s community that provide many benefits to society, but future park planning will continue to face challenges. Interviews with
other cities’ park officials, experts and other planners provided insight on issues that face park systems in general as they confront changing use and demands. Parks provide many benefits to communities, such as social cohesion (Fan Interview, 2013), physical health and as an attraction to bring people to a region (Youngquist Interview, 2013). Secondary research (Chipkin, 2011) and nearly every interview conducted seconded Oakdale’s concern that budgets and maintenance are the toughest challenges that parks face. Keeping up with sport trends, the changes in how parks are used, and trying to address everyone’s needs are also a challenges for parks today and in the future (Grachek Interview, 2013). The current trends observed in Oakdale were reported consistently in other cities as well, such as families and family age children primarily using the parks. An important consideration as Oakdale continues to diversify is that different communities use and value parks differently. Typically minority communities do not participate in high numbers in surveys and outreach (Fan Interview, 2013), a barrier to providing parks that best serve their needs. Water management problems are a challenge that will increase in the future (Marchan Interview, 2013). The Valley Branch Watershed District is one of the predominant watersheds in Oakdale, and they argued that parks will have to develop in ways that will start to address growing water problems (Marchan Interview, 2013). Lastly, the Law 103A. 205 states that all precipitation from the atmosphere is to be retained on properties as far as practicable (2013 Minnesota Statutes), which may influence park infrastructure in the future.

Oakdale city officials recognize the importance of addressing ongoing challenges as the city looks into the future of park planning. Both the Oakdale Parks and Recreation Committee and the Parks and Building Maintenance Superintendent stated that budget is the primary limitation to future changes in park infrastructure. The Parks and Recreation committee and city officials agreed that balance between keeping open space available and development is essential as parks change to meet new values and desired uses. Finally, the City Engineer of Oakdale emphasized in initial meetings that the city is interested in ensuring that as the makeup of the city changes, the parks are addressing the needs and values of new and old communities within Oakdale.

Recommendations

Oakdale has a wonderful asset in its park system that can continue into the future. This report provides four recommendations to assist the City of Oakdale in their future planning for park use and values. First, updating infrastructure within Oakdale's parks will increase maintenance, security, and comfort to enhance the residents' use of and value received from the parks. Second, enhancing field maintenance and updating courts will allow Oakdale to keep up with heavy use and changing sport trends. Third, expanding park activities and events and implementing exercise fitness trails are a way Oakdale can increase participation in parks as well as
the social and physical benefits that effective parks provide. Fourth, assessing citywide park values and desired uses with a survey, with focused recruitment in underrepresented communities, will increase community engagement and equitable representation in park planning from a wide base of the changing population in Oakdale. These recommendations are reflected in data from the above findings, and address guidelines laid out in the City of Oakdale 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

1. Increase Simple Infrastructure Updates to Enhance Current Use of the Parks

Simple infrastructure updates can have an impact on park use and value. For example, a simple update may include the addition of a trash can, a bench, a picnic table, or lighting; all which serve practical purposes. These additions and updates will increase the use and value citizens receive while visiting the parks. The Oakdale Parks and Building Maintenance Superintendent, Jeff Koesling, and Recreation Superintendent, Julie Williams, mentioned that small changes, such as benches and trash cans, can make a significant difference within a park. Through these simple infrastructural updates, the use of the parks will be maintained and citizens may value a park more due to its cleanliness, comfort, and/or security.

Benches are a great benefit for park use. Parents often accompany their young children in the parks, and additional bench seating can provide parents with a comfortable place to sit and watch their children. Benches placed close to playgrounds can enhance safety and security by allowing parents to remain close to their children and keep the children within easy view. Parents will also be within the proximity of the play area in case of unattended falls and within reach to assist children if conflicts arise. The addition of benches or updating existing benches can enhance playground safety and meet the needs of the community. This will be especially helpful in older parks and parks that have a high volume of parents and younger children.

The addition of benches is a relatively short-term proposal. Benches can be ordered and installed within a year. From the observations we made, additional benches are needed at Richard Walton and Eberle Parks. These two parks seemed to have the most children using the parks. Even though Richard Walton is new, it has a high volume of children and adults attending the park and playground; therefore, the benches are frequently in use. The installation of two recycled benches at Richard Walton's playground will cost approximately $800. An installation of one recycled bench at Eberle’s playground will cost $400 (The Bench Factory, 2013).

A barrier to additional benches may be the price of the bench. To overcome this barrier, an adopt-a-bench program can take place. As seen in New York City’s Central Park, citizens can purchase a bench for a particular park and have a personalized plaque on the bench (Central Park Conservancy, 2010). As a result,
funds can be raised for improvements, but in addition, there is a community connection and sense of belonging and memory just through a bench.

Trash receptacles can make a significant difference. With the addition of trash cans at various parks, parks can be kept clean and reduce maintenance time at parks. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan for Oakdale states, “well maintained, accessible parks and recreation facilities are key elements of strong, safe, family-friendly communities” (pg 5.3, 2010). Cleaner parks bring a cleaner atmosphere and influence how the citizens use and value the parks of Oakdale.

Trash cans may be ordered and installed in a relatively short time period. From our observations, Tanners Lake Park needed more trash cans. To keep parks such as Tanners Lake maintained, a trash receptacle can be purchased for around $800 (Trashcans Unlimited, 2013).

A barrier to the addition of more trash cans may be the initial cost of purchase and ongoing budget to collect the trash from more receptacles. To surpass this barrier, and to fund other infrastructural updates, the City of Oakdale could incrementally save small amounts of money annually to invest in infrastructure upgrades in the future. Another way to afford upgrades could be to ask businesses in Oakdale to make donations. Another issue may be that more citizens may want recycling receptacles than trash receptacles. A good example is Central Park’s trash management program. Central Park locates their trash and recycling receptacles together in strategic locations within the park. With the receptacles in place, there has been a 30% increase in recycling and a lot less trash on the park ground (Central Park Conservancy, 2010).

Finally, increased lighting in some areas will make park users feel more secure when using the parks. The installation of solar lights could cut the cost of electricity and illuminate the parks at night while saving energy and benefiting the environment. Lighting within the parks can also decrease the amount of vandalism that occurs within the parks, therefore giving the parks more value and saving on future damaged infrastructure. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan of Oakdale stresses a safe community; solar lights are a great way to enhance the safety of the community’s parks. An example of solar lights currently in use can be seen at the Northland Arboretum near Brainerd. The arboretum installed a solar array to produce electricity for their indoor, outdoor, and trail lighting (Meersman, 2010).

Solar lights can be ordered and installed when the time and funding are available. In general, solar lights should be placed at the parks with vandalism and the parks that are frequently used in the evening. From our observations, Richard Walton and Tanner’s Lake seem to be the parks for new lighting due to some vandalism and/or the high volume of people that enjoy these parks in the evening. Solar lights vary in price depending on how large the park is and how much ground the City of Oakdale wants to cover in lighting.
A barrier to solar lighting may be the cost of purchasing and installing these lights. For the solar lights, as well as other infrastructural updates, the City of Oakdale could set up a park fund for lighting. An example that the City of Oakdale could use as a reference is the City of North St. Paul’s park fund. North St. Paul has a park fund set up on their website that residents can make contributions to. The city then uses this money for park updates (Grachek Interview, 2013). Also, in the long run, solar lights will pay for themselves in approximately 10 years. In addition, there will be less money going into utilities and more money for park and recreation development (Meersman, 2010).

2. Enhance Field Quality and Keep Up with Sporting Trends

Oakdale’s fields experience high use year round. While this is a positive trend, such high use can often lead to the degradation of field quality. In addition, Oakdale’s population is expected to increase by 2% by 2020, adding another 540 people and 10% by 2030 adding an additional 2730 residents (see Appendices A & C). Given these trends it is unlikely the field use is going to decrease. Therefore, in order to maintain the current quality, or to increase quality, it is recommended that the city invest more resources into field maintenance. It is important to keep in mind that all grass fields need a “rest period” in order to restore fields to an acceptable quality for safety and playability. These rest periods should also include time for grass seedlings to become established (City of Surrey, Enhanced Maintenance Program, 2013). Enhancing field maintenance will help Oakdale to meet Parks and Trails goal #1 in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan: “(to) provide excellent park, open space, and trails system to meet the diverse and changing needs of Oakdale residents.”

Special attention to field upkeep may not be a continuous need; instead it may be subject to seasonal needs. For instance, seasons with high rainfall that lead to soggy fields or seasons with little rainfall causing dry, dying turf will require increased maintenance efforts. Since maintenance may be sporadic it is recommended that the city create a field maintenance fund in order to have a budget for increased maintenance when necessary. The city could also continue to utilize a capital improvements plan to fund these open space investments (City of Oakdale, 2010). Lastly, it is recommended that the city add maintenance plans in response to field quality within the future master plans for each park.

The 2004 Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trail System Study noted that Oakdale athletic facilities are “very near or beyond their functional capacity” (City of Oakdale, 2010). Certainly some things have been done in the past ten years but in order to mitigate damage to fields and potentially cut-down on maintenance needed the city could consider dedicated fields.

For sports that endure changing trends, such as baseball, football, and soccer, the OAA would prefer to see fields that are dedicated to one sport rather than used for
multiple sports. The basis for the OAA interest in dedicated fields is that multiple sports played season-round on the same field can quickly degrade field conditions. One example that was brought to attention during a meeting with OAA members was sharing of fields for soccer and baseball. Soccer cleats on soft turf can rip up a baseball outfield area and transitions from turf to dirt in a soccer field can change the speed of a soccer ball and increase potential for injuries. Multi-use fields can also lead to increased injury rates due to the associated poor field conditions (StopSportsInjuries.org, 2013). Dedicated fields are a possible way to prevent injuries (Adirim and Cheng, 2013) and would help to maintain the safety and playability of the field.

However, in order to meet this need for dedicated fields and also have enough playing fields for all sports leagues, it is necessary to identify additional space for fields. This would require significant investments in time and budget. For this reason developing dedicated fields and finding more field space is seen as a mid-term goal for Oakdale. When dedicated fields become a priority due to growing interest in field sports or growing populations, and when funds are available it is recommended that Oakdale revisit this idea.

While dedicated fields can be a mid-term goal for the city long-term projects can focus on keeping up with changing sport trends. In interviews three park managers—the Oakdale Recreation Superintendent, Maple Grove’s Administration Supervisor of Parks, and the Washington County Parks Director—all expressed that another major challenge parks systems face is the ability to keep up with changing trends. A long-term recommended solution to this challenge is the implementation of multi-use courts. Converting existing courts into multi-use courts would allow Oakdale to incorporate multiple games into one space, which then could be used by a wider array of Oakdale citizens (Multipurpose, 2013). For example, Tanner’s Lake Park could be a beneficial candidate for multi-use courts when in the future a major renovation is deemed necessary. The park currently provides two basketball courts, tennis courts, and a volleyball court; if these were combined into multi-use court(s) it would require less space, thus possibly opening up areas for the aforementioned dedicated sport fields or other uses that emerge with changing park use.

A second long-term recommendation is to include fields in the Oakdale stormwater management plan when it is developed. Many of the fields in Oakdale are subject to flooding (Oakdale Athletic Association Interview, 2013). Low impact development (LID), which mimics a site’s natural hydrology, is one of the best ways to manage stormwater (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency MPCA, 2013). LID implementations can include: rain gardens, vegetative filtration strips, grass swales, permeable pavements, and curb cuts. LID can also help mitigate the negative environmental impacts of stormwater runoff. Runoff can contain oils, phosphorus, toxic metals, and other debris. Therefore, managing stormwater is one of the surest ways to improve water quality for Minnesota’s lakes, rivers, and streams (MPCA, 2013). The City of Oakdale has already used plantings to bring beauty to their parks
(for example Tanners Lake Park), thus LID would coincide with previous and future efforts. Eberle Park has one field in particular that was mentioned as having flooding issues (OAA Interview, 2013). This makes Eberle a prime candidate for implementing LID techniques such as rain gardens in order to reduce flooding of sports fields. In order to minimize costs volunteers could be recruited to help with these projects (see Report #7/7 in this series).

By installing LID projects Oakdale can establish itself as a steward of the natural environment while staying ahead of the curve of growing stormwater concern. Legislation is beginning to prioritize stormwater related issues as an urban issue that cities will have to address. As a result, laws are being enacted that hold cities accountable for managing stormwater in order to mitigate negative impacts (2013 Minnesota Statutes). One of the benefits of starting LIDs in a pilot park such as Eberle Park is that Oakdale will be able to include a LID implementation timeline and budget for parks into their future stormwater management plan.

Overall, the Oakdale park system has a broad offering of fields and courts for active recreation. To address changing trends and maintain field quality, in the short term consider adding maintenance during high use periods, look into options for dedicated fields when space or funds become available, and increase the use value of existing fields by prioritizing flooded field areas in the stormwater management plan.

3. Expand Park Activities and Events to Increase Park Use

The community of Oakdale already hosts countless community events at the parks, especially at Richard Walton Park. The events are well received by community members and are a great use of the parks. Park events and activities are an opportunity for residents to engage with one another and with what the parks have to offer. The City of Oakdale has a wide variety of recreational activities available throughout its parks, expanding these events aids in giving the community a vital identity. Oakdale cites accessible park facilities as, “elements to strong, safe, family-friendly communities” (City of Oakdale, 2010).

It is important to diversify park activities because they provide many benefits that enhance goals outlined in the 2030 Oakdale Comprehensive Plan. Through park events and activities, “the park system provides places for learning, fun, and relaxation no matter what age” (City of Oakdale, 2010). When citizens are more involved with their parks and recreation systems, their quality of life improves. Events offer the chance for citizens to be engaged in the community and attend the parks (City of Oakdale, 2010).

When speaking with North St. Paul staff about their parks and recreation system, they mention that they have had success with events such as the Starwatch annual party at Casey Lake Park and the annual Tour de North St. Paul 5K (Grachek Interview,
Activities such as these are occasions for the city staff and residents to communicate. Residents can provide feedback about what they enjoy about park events, and what they wish to see in the future. Recreation at parks also creates engagement among citizens, which can reduce alienation, loneliness, and antisocial behavior (City of Oakdale, 2010).

In addition, park activities could create further opportunities for citizens to become engaged as volunteers. Events put on by community members will increase ownership of activities and possibly increase attendance. Parks are great community gathering spaces, and increased events can draw residents in. The city recognizes this as a benefit to parks and recreation, citing that in a national public opinions survey, 57% of respondents said that if they were in the market for a new home, they would likely select a home that is close to a park (Oakdale Minnesota, 2013). Finding volunteers may be an initial barrier to this recommendation, but the city can look at the Volunteer Programs (see Report #7/7 in this series), “Branch Out” framework as a reference for creating a volunteer program for parks and recreation activities.

Aside from continued investment into park events, the opportunity to provide physical activities is essential for the community well-being. A recent survey found that four out of five Americans use local government parks and recreational services. (Godby & Mowen, 2010) With changing trends and demographics of Oakdale the ability to meet the needs of all residents is extremely important. In other communities, parks have become valuable resources within the minority communities because of the strong relationship associated with physical fitness (Cohen et. al., 2007).

One of the ways to successfully meet the needs of all resident's needs is physical fitness trails. Physical activity within parks is a significant indicator for improving health across all ages. Oakdale has recognized in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, the accessibility to parks and recreations facilities leads to healthy lifestyles for people across all ages. Due to the frequent use of the walking trails and the proven health benefits of exercise at the parks, we recommend Oakdale develop exercise fitness trails consisting of 10 or 20 stations depending on the length of each trail.

The expansion of walking paths throughout the City of Oakdale has provided the opportunity to implement exercise fitness trails. The three parks recommended for the addition of exercise trails are Tanner’s Lake Park, Richard Walton Park, and Eberle Park. These three parks have a high number of park users that are actively engaged in walking or jogging (see Appendix B). Other communities have developed exercise fitness trails and could be sought out for suggestions about how to begin. One documented study that enhanced access for physical activity lead to 26% increase in trail use and exercise to three or more days per week (Sherer, 2006).

Since, the City of Oakdale is growing in population and projected to increase over the next year 17 years (see Appendix A). At the same time, the City of Oakdale is
becoming more racially and ethnically diverse across its residents (see Appendix D). To meet the needs of all residents providing exercise fitness trails groups can actively use for maintaining physical activity. According to a previous study, all residents enjoy the opportunities of parks and trails providing bonding with family and friends, being physically active, and nourishing mental health and spiritual well-being (Nickerson & Vlaming, 2010). The recommendation of exercise fitness trails provides the necessary health-related benefits and effectively enhances the quality of life for all members of the community.

Park events and activities along with new exercise fitness trails in Tanner’s Lake, Richard Walton, and Eberle Parks will make parks more accessible and enhance goals set out in Oakdale's 2030 Comprehensive Plan for the future. Well-maintained and used parks and recreation facilities are key elements of strong, safe and family-friendly communities (City of Oakdale, 2010).

4. Increase Citizen Engagement in Park Decision-Making to Represent the Values and Uses of the Entire Community

The City of Oakdale can increase citizen input and engagement in decision making about park changes through an expanded resident survey and by specifically reaching out to neighborhoods with low participation in previous efforts. Currently the City of Oakdale does neighborhood surveys based on proposed changes to specific parks such as the 2008 survey regarding Tilley Park (City of Oakdale, 2008). This is an excellent tool to assess what the local community values and how residents want to use a park. To gain a broader perspective on residents' values and uses of the park system as a whole, the city can consider performing a citywide survey. This approach will deliver a more comprehensive understanding of park values, in an effort to collect information from not just neighbors or park users, but all residents, about the park system as a whole.

Implementing a citywide survey about park planning and development for future uses and values will help the city continue to have “timely and meaningful community participation in all parks, open space and trails planning, design and development decision making” as outlined in the Oakdale 2030 Comprehensive Plan (pg 5.2, 2010).

Surveys are a common tool for evaluating park use and resident attitudes (Cohen et al., 2010; Chiesura, 2004; Baur et al., 2013). Two of the most common survey methods are web and mail surveys. Web surveys have the advantage of being inexpensive, while mail surveys achieve a higher rate of response than online surveys (Lin & Van Ryzin, 2012). The traditional mail survey will continue to be useful given its higher response rate. Surveys that have high response rates from a variety of user groups and diverse residents will generate more community input and, in the long-run, participation in park decision making. Survey responses are just a start.
Overtime the city will be able to understand and incorporate the values and desired uses of previously 'silent' residents in future park planning. As a step toward developing a citywide survey, see the draft survey template that Oakdale staff and officials can use in implementing this recommendation (see Appendix E).

When implementing a survey, or other community outreach, it is essential to make an extra effort to ensure that low-income residents and minority community members participate (Fan Interview, 2013). Low participation in formal information gathering techniques such as surveys or focus groups is one of the major challenges to assessing park uses and values for the entire community (Fan Interview, 2013). To address this challenge, we recommend the city make a special effort to include minority and low-income groups in surveys by identifying community leaders to work within these communities, perhaps going door-to-door in neighborhoods that may have lower participation in order to fill out the survey in a more comfortable conversation (Fan Interview, 2013). Potential first contacts for the city are identified in Appendix C. Low income and minority populations tend not to fill out surveys because of time constraints and a perceived lack of connection to the subject (Fan et al., 2013). A consistent team of people going door-to-door establishes a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. In addition, communication in settings and formats that are familiar to the target audience is essential to increased involvement from a wide range of groups. When a community member is present at a resident's home to go over the survey with them a personal relationship develops between the individuals. This open conversational setting creates a higher sense of investment for the resident, leading them to be interested in participating (Fan et al., 2013).

Barriers the city may face in implementing this recommendation are the time and resources needed to administer the survey in person. A possible solution to these problems could be to recruit a team of volunteers to assist with the fieldwork. Due to the influence of social and psychological factors on survey participation, such as the age, health, income and race of the interviewee and interviewer (Groves et al., 1992), volunteers who span ethnic groups and represent multiple generations would be ideal to create an inclusive conversation space with potential participants. (See Report #7/7 in this series for a framework for developing a sustainable volunteer base.)

Oakdale is becoming a more diverse community, experiencing a change in resident demographics that may influence the types of services and values expected from the park system. Between 2000 and 2010, Hmong residents increased by 6 times, from .008% to .05% of the residents (Hmong American Partnership, 2010) and at the same time the percentage of Asian and Black or African American residents also increased (see Appendix F).

As new residents move into Oakdale, they will continue to bring new values and ideas to the community. These changes extend to different values for and uses of city parks (Fan Interview, 2013). To accommodate changing park uses within the
community, it is important for the City of Oakdale to reach out to new residents to ensure its parks meet the values and desired uses of its new community members.

Conclusion

This report provides steps the City of Oakdale can take to address changing park use and values within their community. Based on field observations, stakeholder interviews and a literature review, these suggestions are intended for the city to implement in the next five to ten years. The four recommendations are: 1) simple infrastructure updates, 2) changing use at field and courts, 3) continued investment in park activities and events, and 4) increased citizen engagement in park decision making. Implementation of these recommendations will assist the city in increasing park use, keeping up with changing trends, maximizing physical and social benefits of the parks, and meeting the needs of all community members.

The major limitation of the findings in this report is the timing. Since it was conducted in the fall semester of an academic calendar, the observations took place during an off-peak park use season. As a first step, it serves as a foundation for future studies that can be conducted throughout the calendar year or by including stakeholder groups that were not consulted during the time period of this report. One suggestion is to identify a student intern or volunteer group who would be able to focus on park use during the spring and summer as well as interview additional stakeholder groups identified in Appendix C. Overall, future studies can examine park use during all seasons, focusing on the summer months as the next project.

Oakdale’s resident population will continue to grow and change; it is important that as the city develops the park system remains a vital component of the community. As the population density increases people will need a place to recreate—parks offer this opportunity. The city is also projected to become increasingly diverse; therefore, it will need to respond to new community members’ park uses and values. This report describes how the city can stay in communication with its residents and implement changes to parks based on changing uses and values. A strong park system offers many amenities that will draw future residents and visitors to the area. Looking into the future, Oakdale will want to continue to be a livable city that offers its residents areas to recreate and interact with one another, and parks are one of the best means for building strong communities.

References


Fan, Yingling. Interview by Cora Ellenson-Myers. Phone Interview. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 10/22/2013.
Gracheck, Lloyd. Interview by Julie Erdmann. Phone Interview. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 10/22/2013.


Oakdale Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, September 17, 2013. Oakdale, Minnesota.


Appendix A:

Actual and Projected Population Census of Oakdale Minnesota (City of Oakdale 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>12,123</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4,004</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>18,374</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6,669</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>26,653</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10,243</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010*</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020*</td>
<td>28,400</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030*</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Projected
Appendix B:

Park Observations Spreadsheet.

(See Park Observations Spreadsheet on the CD in the back pocket folder)
Appendix C:

Interview Contacts and Questions.

*Interview Contacts- completed interviews identified in bold*
- City of Oakdale Parks and Recreation Commission
- City of Oakdale Recreation Superintendent
- City of Oakdale Parks and Building Maintenance Superintendent
- Oakdale Athletic Association
- North St. Paul City Council Representative and Chair
- Woodbury Parks Representative
- Maple Grove Parks Representative
- Lake Elmo Public Works/Parks Manager
- Oakdale Business Association
- Metropolitan Council
- School District 622 Community Engagement Department
- Hmong Community Representative Senator Foung Hawj
- Hmong Baptist Church
- House of Prayer Lutheran Church
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Valley Branch Watershed District
- Washington County Park Department
- Oakdale Seniors
- Three Rivers Park District Associate Superintendent
- University of Minnesota Associate Professor Yingling Fan

*Interview Questions*

**Metropolitan Council Phone Interview Questions:**

1. What vision do they see for the parks under their jurisdiction? What do they see as the ideal use of parks?

2. How did they assess community values and use for their plan in Washington County?

3. What are the challenges and strengths of their approach to assessing resident use and values for the parks?

4. What are the challenges facing parks in the future?

5. What are the best benefits of continuing improvement/investment in parks?

**School District 622 Community Engagement Department Phone Interview Questions:**

1. Have you used the Oakdale parks for school sports or other events? If no, why not? If yes, how did the parks meet your needs?

2. How do Oakdale parks affect you/your school district? What stake does your group have in the parks? What services do parks provide your school district?
3. What does the school district like to see at the parks? How could they use parks more?

4. What are the school district's values of the parks in general?

5. What would you like to see in the future for parks?

**Washington County Parks Director (John Elholm) Interview Questions:**

1. What would you say is your vision for the Washington County parks system? What do you see as the ideal uses of the parks that you manage?

2. How did/do they assess community values and use for their parks plan in Washington County?

3. Do you believe that Washington County parks are currently meeting the demands/values of citizens? If yes, how? If no, what gaps exist & what are you doing to try to address them?

4. What are the challenges facing Washington Counties parks in the currently? In the future?

5. What do you believe are the benefits of continuing improvement/investment in parks?

**City Superintendent Parks and Recreation Interview Questions:**

**General: Opening Understanding about you and the Oakdale Park System**

1. How long have you been with Oakdale Parks and Recreation? Have you worked anywhere else before, if so where and in what capacity?

2. Overall, what do you see as the primary purposes of the Oakdale Park system?

3. How has this changed over time?

4. How do you think Oakdale’s parks fit in the larger compliment of parks in the northeast metro area, or broader metropolitan area?

5. What do you see are some of the challenges the Oakdale’s park systems will have to confront in the next 10 years … or longer?

**Focusing: on specific issues in the parks**

6. What is the state of the parks infrastructure?

(Ask about the play equipment if they don’t mention it.)

7. Can you provide a few examples of some of the best assets and some that you would like to improve?

8. Do you have any past surveys or studies about the parks or park users that would be useful for us to use in our report? If so, how can we get ahold of them?

9. How is the participation and turnout for city park events?

10. What is an example of an event with the best attendance? Why do you think this one is interesting for residents?
11. What are events you thought would produce interest/participation but at this point they are not reaching their potential? Why do you think this is?

12. Do you have any recommendations for changes in Eberle Park, Furlong Park and Tanner’s Lake Park?

13. What are your thoughts on a theme park?

14. Do you know of any stakeholders or other key people we could interview?

15. If we were to design a few example user or resident surveys for Oakdale to use, what would you like to know that we could include in a survey?

16. Is there anything else, you’d like to share with us that would be helpful for us to consider as we develop this report for you?

**Oakdale Parks and Recreation Commission Interview Questions:**

1. What are your long and short term goals for park use?

2. What current weaknesses or specific problems are facing the parks?

3. What stakeholders should we talk with to understand the values people have for the parks?

4. Do you want to maintain open space in the parks or focus on developing infrastructure?

5. Do you have any previous studies or reports we can use?

**Valley Branch Watershed District Interview Questions:**

1. What is the goal and purpose of a watershed district and how do parks affect that goal and purpose?

2. What does your organization like to see from the parks to help your goals and purpose?

3. Do you foresee any laws or general policy changes in the future that might change how cities go about planning for parks?

4. Does your organization use parks for events? Is there any specific infrastructure you look for or would look for?

5. What would you like to see parks do in the future and why?

**Yingling Fan Phone Interview Questions:**

1. What is your current position at the University?

2. What interested you in studying parks?

3. In your “Neighborhood green” article, you discuss how structured park space provides more social benefits to communities than plain vegetated green space. Can you explain some of the services that parks provide to a community?

4. What are some trends you foresee happening in park planning and use in the next 5-10 years?

5. How does ethnicity affect how an individual uses and values a park?
6. How does ethnicity affect how communities value and use parks differently?

7. What are some steps that cities can take to make sure the diverse needs of their communities are being met? Especially in a city with increasing minority populations?

8. Have you worked with specific minority groups or more generally for your research?

9. What are some barriers faced by cities in including minority group’s values in park planning?

10. Is there anything else you can think of related to park use and values you’d like to share with me?

**North St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission Interview Questions**

1. Can you describe the overall state of North St. Paul parks? (Infrastructure updates, well used?)

2. What changes have been made to the parks recently that successful?

3. What age groups use the parks the most? Are there any underrepresented groups?

4. What is the process for updating the parks based on changing values of residents?

5. What challenges do you see facing parks in the next 5-10 years?
Appendix D:

Population of Oakdale by Race with Respect to Age (Census Viewer, 2013).

Table D: Population by Race, 2010 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by Race, 2010 Census</th>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska native alone</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>8.15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>6.02%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific native alone</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.03%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race alone</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>2.78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>22,293</td>
<td>81.43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure D: Population by Age and Race—race categories by color noted in table above.
Appendix E:
Prototype of a Park Use Survey.

Oakdale Park Use and Value Survey

Introduction: This survey was designed to support park planning regarding park user activities and to discover values the community of Oakdale holds for its parks. The survey results will be used by Oakdale city staff to best plan and implement changes to parks in the future.

This survey gathers public comments about the City of Oakdale’s park/recreation facilities. It is designed to be anonymous and all answers confidential. Thank you for taking the time to complete the questions.

1. How often do you visit the City of Oakdale’s parks? Please check the statement that best applies:
   o At least once a week
   o A few times a month
   o Monthly
   o Less than once a month
   o Seldom or never

2. If you use the parks, which three parks do you visit most often? Please list their names.

   1. Most Often:
   2nd:
   3rd:

3. How important to you are each of the following benefits provided by parks and recreation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of Open Space/Nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity/Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty and Aesthetics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preservation and Management of Open Space/Nature

Maintenance of Parks

Family Friendly Activities

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not safe and 5 being very safe, how safe do you feel at Oakdale’s parks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Safe</th>
<th>Very Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. If you do not use the parks and recreational facilities, why not?

6. If you use the Oakdale Parks, what facilities do you utilize the most? Please check all that apply.

- Neighborhood parks
- Recreation Center Programs
- Picnic shelters
- Tennis Courts
- Athletic fields
- Hockey rink
- Trails/Bike/walking/running
- Basketball Courts
- Archery
- Playground Equipment
- Open Space

Other: ________________________________________________________

7. Including yourself, how many people are in your household? Please check the number that best applies.

- 1-2
8. What is your age? Please check the year that best applies.
- Under 18
- 18-25
- 25-35
- 35-50
- 50-65
- 65 and over

9. What is your ethnicity?
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other: ____________________________
Appendix F:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oakdale, Minnesota Overview</th>
<th>2010 Census Counts</th>
<th>2000 Census Counts</th>
<th>2000-2010% Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
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<td>26,653</td>
<td>2.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>241.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>169.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific native alone</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>300.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race alone</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>57.28%</td>
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<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>49.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>22,293</td>
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