

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT, RECREATION, AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM

OVERALL VISION

Richfield is a progressive, peaceful, healthy, and active community where informed citizens take personal and group responsibility for the well-being of their community ensuring that ecological and socioeconomic systems flourish in a sustainable fashion.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

VISION

Our vision for the year 2020 is to maintain a “small town” atmosphere that beams with community spirit. Richfield will preserve and expand our unique character and self-identity. Our community identity is rooted in family and neighborhoods, and invites all residents to participate. Residents and non-residents will feel comfortable and welcomed in our community. People will be proud to say they live, work, learn, and play in Richfield. Community spirit will be notable everywhere, the evidence of which will be the number of residents who take part in community events and activities. It will also be evident in the pride manifested when residents speak to others about Richfield. And it will be evident in the way non-residents talk about the positive aspects of Richfield.

GOAL NUMBER ONE

Build, improve, and foster an image of City Government as a partner and an ally in meeting our current and future goals for Richfield.

RATIONALE

Citizens are more apt to participate in problem solving, and on task forces and commissions if they feel that their input is heard, valued, and used. Positive and negative opinions of City Council actions tend to be among the first topics of conversation among residents and between residents and those outside the community. Positive opinions will build positive images of Richfield.

STRATEGIES

1. Improve and maintain an approach to City Council actions that is marked by listening and investigation before actions are taken. Improve trust in the City and the City Council by explaining how decisions are made, by making clear the process used to listen to citizens, and by making clear why any particular action is, at the end of the day, the best alternative.

2. Polish the image of Richfield following the completion of the Best Buy deal. Showcase our community as a small City with big ideas. Promote the City as a progressive community and the best place in the metro to live, learn, work, and play. Exploit the presence of the Best Buy Corporate Headquarters and make the most of the benefits that accompany the location of the headquarters in our City.
3. Make possible regular Internet chat sessions with members of the City Council.
4. Distribute *Your City* on the Internet. Emphasize facts and their impact on our community without editorial comment. Strive to explain in plain language the impact of City Council actions on the residents and on business.
5. Host a community issues forum on-line. Host on-line chat groups relating to community issues.

GOAL NUMBER TWO

Promote a campaign that features the City as a welcoming and friendly place.

RATIONALE

Citizens are more apt to participate in the life of our community and to spread the positive values of Richfield if they feel that they are welcomed and feel comfortable in their surroundings.

STRATEGIES

1. Restart the "Welcome to Richfield" campaign for new residents.
2. Establish a Cultural Awareness Week to spotlight and to inform our citizens about the many ethnic backgrounds which contribute to the character of Richfield.

GOAL NUMBER THREE

Build strong neighborhoods.

RATIONALE

Strong neighborhoods that are safe, neat, and clean reflect the residents care for and pride in the place where they live. Strong, vital neighborhoods are key ingredients for a healthy city.

STRATEGIES

1. Hold Neighborhood Forums with the City Council.
2. Create a campaign with the goal to include all neighborhoods (including apartment complexes) in the "Neighborhood Watch" program.
3. Develop a campaign to focus attention on our image as a crime-free, safe City.

4. Increase involvement in the “Adopt a Park” program.
5. Install street lights with a distinctive appearance that fosters a comforting, small town atmosphere.
6. Insure that alleyways are people friendly allowing safe biking, walking, and neighbor interaction.
7. Promote more porches and reduce restrictions on things which make for a friendly, neighborhood atmosphere.

GOAL NUMBER FOUR

Develop a one-stop community activity calendar on the City web site which will serve to encourage, expand, and promote communication about events in the community, both those sponsored by the City and those sponsored privately.

RATIONALE

A well-organized web site that is diligently kept current respecting events in the City can be a key factor in promoting the active participation of citizens in the life of the community.

STRATEGIES

1. Foster a climate such that events and activities open to the public are advertised in print and on-line regardless of whether they are sponsored by the City, the schools, churches, or business.
2. Develop on-line and cable Community Bulletin Boards of events. Emphasize the information through an alert system distributed to the *Sun Current*, to bulletin boards and to City web sites.
3. Create an e-mail distribution list of citizens, businesses, and any other interested parties.

GOAL NUMBER FIVE

Promote and build upon Richfield's unique people and places.

RATIONALE

Community spirit and pride in Richfield is strengthened when we know more about our history. Pride in Richfield promotes community spirit that is shared with our neighbors as well as non-residents.

STRATEGIES

1. Install a memorial statue or marker at Veterans Memorial Park commemorating veterans from our City.
2. Promote and build an official Richfield Drinking Water Station to feature our great Richfield water.
3. Establish historical markers throughout the City that identify people, places, or things of historical significance.
4. Upgrade and maintain the Richfield Pool.
5. Build a new Community Center. Integrate cultural activities and events into its curriculum.
6. Promote Wood Lake Nature Center and its progressive programs to highlight its image as a special Richfield amenity which also serves the whole metropolitan area.

RECREATION

VISION

The City of Richfield will continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to the development of recreation programs and park facilities. Throughout the next twenty years, Richfield will strive to meet the recreational needs of all residents regardless of age, race, or physical and mental capacity. Richfield will forge a strong link to its minority population which will foster cultural understanding. The City will make concerted efforts to update recreational facilities and to maintain them in good condition. Richfield will also build new, innovative facilities, such as a multipurpose community center, to meet the future needs of its citizens.

BACKGROUND

Parks and recreation are essential amenities and services in the City of Richfield that positively impact the health of our community. A strong commitment to parks and recreation is an indicator of high quality of life in a community. Recreation promotes ethnic and cultural harmony and builds strong families. Recreation is an integral part of the City of Richfield's plan for the future.

The City of Richfield has demonstrated a strong commitment to the development of parks and recreation programs. The City now offers a full array of recreational services and operates a comprehensive system of parks. Although the citizens are currently receiving excellent leisure

services, improvements to parks infrastructure are needed and opportunities for program development abound.

Richfield has many recreational strengths: Wood Lake Nature Center, newly renovated ball fields, updated neighborhood parks, excellent recreation staff, citizen involvement in planning park improvements, citizen involvement with community event committees, willingness to collaborate with neighboring communities and organizations, and a high percentage of park land and open space.

Richfield faces challenges with respect to recreation in the City such as aging recreational facilities (pool, community center, Taft Athletic Complex, Lincoln Athletic Complex, nature center, and ice arena). In addition, at present there are few services provided to the teen population, there is a lack of connection with the minority population, and there is scant available land for new recreation amenities.

GOAL NUMBER ONE

Serve the recreational needs of Richfield's aging population.

RATIONALE

In A. D. 2020, the Baby Boomer generation will range in age from sixty to seventy-five, and they will form a large segment of Richfield's population. Accessibility, safety, exercise, volunteer opportunities, social activity, and leisure services will be important issues for seniors. A continued commitment to recreation development throughout the next twenty years will produce programs that promote wellness, safety, and productive living. In the year 2020, Richfield will rely heavily on seniors in the community for their contributions to the life of the City.

STRATEGIES

Note: The strategies indicated below were suggested by the findings of a special study conducted for the cities of Richfield and Edina by the Hennepin South Services Collaborative. The title of the study is *Community for All Ages: Planning for and Responding to the Needs and Opportunities of an Aging Population*.

1. Ensure that all parks have adequate handicapped parking, streetlights, long crosswalks, smooth surfaces, lowered curbs, and safe paths for wheelchairs.
2. Develop a resource directory which lists parks, restaurants, shops, and other public spaces that are accessible to those with disabilities.
3. Educate older adults regularly on health issues, preventive measures, and self-care using recreation programs and community events.
4. Establish a check-in system using peers, neighborhood members, or volunteers.
5. Encourage the development of neighborhood barter systems for chores, house watch, and child care.

6. Offer a-la-carte services for assisted living.
7. Establish a comprehensive advisory mechanism that will involve seniors in program evaluation and needs assessment.
8. Recognize three generations of older adults with different needs and develop programs to serve each group.
9. Educate baby boomers now about the realities of aging and the importance of planning in advance to meet the challenges that will arise.
10. Create a directory which lists both older adults who are willing and able to offer their talents and expertise and those paid opportunities available in the community.
11. Host events such as "Senior Day in the Parks," and expand programs which offer activities targeted at wellness and prevention.
12. Expand intergenerational programming.

GOAL NUMBER TWO

Create a unique trail system that enables citizens to move easily throughout the community and will also offer regional connections to neighboring communities in all directions.

RATIONALE

By the year 2020, the number of Richfield residents electing to ride bicycles or walk will increase dramatically. People will be less dependent upon motorized vehicles and will rely more on walking, bicycling, and other non-vehicular transportation for utilitarian purposes, recreation, and exercise. Through collaboration with local, regional, and state agencies, Richfield has the opportunity to create a trail network suitable for our citizens and which will also benefit the larger metropolitan area.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop a core group of bicycle and pedestrian advocates who are committed to developing a trail plan and who will be advocates for trail development.
2. Assign a person from City Staff to serve as "Trail Coordinator."
3. Create a trail system that is distinctive to our community and connects to trail networks in the larger metropolitan area.
4. Incorporate historical markers and places of interest in the trail system.
5. Design a trail system that will connect East and West Richfield.

6. Establish a regional trail corridor along the Soo Line Railroad (Pleasant Ave.) right of way. Create a parkway on this trail corridor featuring native plantings and places to rest. Design the corridor to accommodate all urban trail usage.
7. Ensure that alleyways are safe for biking and walking.

GOAL NUMBER THREE

Serve the recreational needs of families, adults, and children.

RATIONALE

Technological advances will enable more people to work at home and will result in more time for leisure pursuits. Richfield must continue to encourage and support collaborative efforts among local organizations which provide recreation services to produce quality programming that avoids gaps and duplication of service. Richfield should develop a strong connection to its diverse population so that the City can offer programs for a variety of interests. Information about recreation programs should be readily available through the use of the Internet and through other means of communication. Users of recreation programs must be involved in the evaluation and development of programs.

STRATEGIES

1. Continue efforts to reach out to minority populations by networking with Richfield faith communities.
2. Offer recreation classes in and promote programs in other languages.
3. Seek to reflect Richfield's diverse population with persons of color employed by the City in recreation positions at all levels.
4. Promote performing arts and expand the Summer Concert Program.
5. Establish a teen advisory commission.
6. Use existing park shelters as gathering places for youth and teen programming.
7. Increase efforts to include recreation information on the Internet, including on-line registration and user feedback.
8. Develop large-scale adopt-a-park and park-watch programs.
9. Establish evening service hours for Wood Lake Nature Center to accommodate evening and weekend education sessions.
10. Partner with Richfield Public Schools to incorporate use of storm water ponds into ecology curriculum and arrange to have students perform regular testing of Richfield storm water ponds.

GOAL NUMBER FOUR

Develop new recreation facilities and improve those which already exist

RATIONALE

Investment in parks and recreation facilities increases the quality of life of Richfield's citizens. Such investment also makes the community a more attractive place to live. Parks and recreation infrastructure are essential to support effective leisure services. Meaningful leisure services reduce the high cost of vandalism and criminal activity. Community recreation promotes ethnic and cultural harmony.

STRATEGIES

1. Build a new Community Center by 2020. This multipurpose recreational facility should be designed to serve the whole community and to accommodate other community services. The new Community Center should be located in the center of Richfield and serve as a focal point of the community. The City should encourage partnerships in the facility with other organizations.
2. Renovate the existing Richfield Community Center to accommodate recreational programming. After the renovation of the existing Community Center is completed, a long-term planning process should begin for the new facility.
3. Construct a golf driving range.
4. Participate with neighboring cities and agencies serving youth to build and operate a regional indoor/outdoor skating facility. Consider building smaller outdoor skate ramp facilities in all Richfield community parks that would be free of charge to the users.
5. Renovate the Richfield Pool. Continue to operate the outdoor pool, making regular improvements to increase the service life and the appeal of the facility to the community. Design renovations and set pricing for the pool that will transform it into a social gathering point.
6. Expand Wood Lake Nature Center. Wood Lake Nature Center will continue to be the pride and joy of Richfield. Every effort will be made to sustain this natural area. Facilities will be expanded to accommodate the increased demand for services including classroom and rental space. Add a number of observation facilities. Continue efforts to improve the water quality of Wood Lake and to reduce the effects of storm water contamination.
7. Construct a natural amphitheater in a suitable community park to accommodate an expanded summer concert program. Construct a permanent stage area which includes state-of-the-art sound and light equipment.
8. Ensure that all Richfield neighborhood parks have accessible play equipment that meets current safety standards. Use existing enclosed park shelters for year-round youth and teen programs. Maintain all neighborhood parks at a high level of excellence. Acquire land to

expand some neighborhood parks identified as too small to accommodate neighborhood needs. Install drinking fountains and swings in every Richfield Park.

9. Improve Richfield's community parks to better serve programs such as Farmers Market and community-wide events. Select one community park in which the City will construct the 'Official Richfield Drinking Water Station', promoting the City's excellent drinking water. Restore portions of community parks to their natural state.
10. Richfield will rebuild its existing athletic complexes at Taft Park, Lincoln Park and Donaldson Park. The intended result is athletic facilities marked by equity between girls and boys. The new complexes will accommodate traditional sports as well as non-traditional sports from other cultures.
11. By the 2020, Richfield will boast of clean storm water ponds. Each pond will be a suitable home to wildlife and natural habitat. Walkways and open space around storm water ponds will be valued recreation amenities. This effort will begin with a pilot project for Richfield Lake. Successful efforts to improve the water condition and natural habitat of Richfield Lake will lead to plans for other Richfield storm water ponds.
12. The City will continue forward-looking efforts at recreation planning seeking the involvement of citizens. Some examples of possible future facilities are: an archery range, indoor playground, fitness facilities, pet exercise areas.

ENVIRONMENT

VISION

In the year 2020, residents and non-residents will recognize Richfield as a leader in healthy environmental education, environmental awareness, and sound environmental practices. Our yards, parks, holding ponds, and nature areas will be evidence of environmentally friendly maintenance. We will have improved water quality, improved run-off quality, and restored damaged ecological systems.

BACKGROUND

Sustainable development is about finding long-term solutions to development-related problems that benefit people, business, and the environment. If Richfield's prosperity is to be sustained over time, then the objectives for business, the environment and communities must become one and the same. The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development in the following way: "The needs of the present must be met without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This is the essential challenge of sustainable development, a concept that we fully embrace for Richfield in A. D. 2020.

Insuring that the ecological and environmental infrastructure of a community is in good health is a prerequisite for a healthy and vital community. Richfield has a tremendous ecological history. In the course of the last 150 years, our community was developed from an environmental setting which comprised prairie and oak savanna with lakes and wetlands interspersed. The historic

ecological patterns and vegetation communities were those that were adaptable to the local soil conditions, hydrologic patterns, and climate. These natural plant communities existed prior to European settlement and have been drastically altered. At present the landscape is dominated by remnants of these historic systems (our natural heritage), communities of plant species introduced later, and our own developments. Small remnants of earlier plant varieties are still found in isolated locations (e.g. Wood Lake Nature Center, Augsburg Park Oak Savanna) and serve as reminders of our ecological history pointing the way to a healthy future.

GOAL NUMBER ONE

City Staff is accountable for including ecological concerns into all aspects of City planning and activity.

RATIONALE

Ecology, culture and economy are intrinsically linked components of a sustainable community. Local ecology can only be successfully preserved when it is taken into account within, and balanced against, the other two components of community development. This must be done. Integration of environmental and ecological principles into all development and conservation activities in Richfield is critically important to achieving a sustainable community.

STRATEGIES

1. Integrate into the current structure of Richfield City Government a staff component responsible for ecological concerns and environmental impacts with respect to all City planning.
2. Work in conjunction with local transportation committees to establish sustainable solutions for noise, air, and water pollution
3. Create a citizen-based Ecological Resources Commission.
4. Promote commercial and residential recycling programs.
5. Implement surface water management and monitoring programs.
6. Conduct an assessment of the condition of existing ecological systems – lakes, wetlands, prairies, forests, etc. -- for the purpose of identify areas with potential for restoration to native vegetation.
7. Establish management and monitoring programs for prairie and woodland restoration.
8. Consider seamless integration of natural resource areas with parks and green ways (e.g. Soo Line Rail to Trail corridor).

GOAL NUMBER TWO

Maximize environmental engineering opportunities.

RATIONALE

In developed areas such as Richfield opportunities exist to consider alternatives to traditional engineering to achieve multiple community goals.

STRATEGIES

1. Apply environmentally-friendly storm water management and water quality approaches to reduce reliance on man-made systems
2. Treat all City waters (including catch basins) as a public asset and work to improve quality.

GOAL NUMBER THREE

Restore disturbed ecological systems.

RATIONALE

The plant and animal communities in Richfield have been altered over the last 150 years. In many cases, plant communities have been totally destroyed. In other cases, we are left with significantly disturbed systems from which exotic species should be removed. These latter have the potential for restoration to states similar to their pre-settlement condition. Such restoration will also restore important ecological functions among which is attracting various species of wildlife to these areas.

STRATEGIES

1. Restore degraded ecological systems where feasible (e.g. native prairie in Augsburg Oak Savanna; exotic species removal from Wood Lake and other areas within the community)
2. Reconnect fragmented natural resource systems whenever possible.

GOAL NUMBER FOUR

Provide ecological buffering.

RATIONALE

Ecological buffers are important aspects of conservation conscious development. They are fundamental to the long-term sustainability of the ecological systems they help protect. Buffers provide physical separation between sensitive and vulnerable natural resources and the built environment of roads, yards, lawns, and other areas actively used by people. They provide separation from sources of noise, light, and other contaminants and from debris carried by wind and water.

A principal reason for use of buffers is to reduce direct entry of water from storm run off, from sump pumps, and from drainage into areas that are ecologically vulnerable. Water that

originates in built environments may contain ecologically damaging substances. Such contaminants derive from activities like road and highway maintenance and use, yard maintenance, and maintenance of commercial and industrial lots and grounds. These contaminants often include things like oils, greases, combustion byproducts, salts, heavy metals, organic chemicals, debris, fertilizers, pesticides, and so on. Buffering serves to reduce entry of these substances into the ecosystem.

STRATEGIES

1. Integrate ecological buffers into development plans to protect critical ecological systems from adverse affects.
2. Create buffers around identified special natural resource areas.
3. Engage private landowners in buffer strategy.

GOAL NUMBER FIVE

Ensure ecological management and monitoring.

RATIONALE

Since we must be responsible stewards of our finite land and water resources, it is extremely important to manage these resources wisely. Richfield residents are stewards of the Mississippi River basin and the Minnesota River basin. Our personal and group activities have an impact downstream in each of these river systems. Ultimately the health of our environment and its ecosystems is dependent upon our individual stewardship of our own 'back yards'. The object of this goal is to insure that we monitor, protect, and improve the health of the natural systems that sustain us.

STRATEGIES

1. The City of Richfield shall support ongoing management and monitoring of land and water resources.
2. Develop a community-based, volunteer-staffed water quality monitoring program in conjunction with the schools and retired citizens.
3. Develop an index of ecological health and create a strategy to move towards high ratings with respect to environmental sustainability.

GOAL NUMBER SIX

Enhance ecological education with the purpose of fostering an understanding of sustainable community development and of protecting Richfield's air, land, and water resources.

RATIONALE

An informed and educated citizenry is one of our most important assets. Most citizens have a limited understanding of the principles of environmental planning and conservation development. A concerted educational effort in this area will provide people with a better understanding of the impact that humanity has on the land leaving them with a greater sense of personal responsibility for being good stewards of that land.

STRATEGIES

1. Ensure that Wood Lake Nature Center maintains its leadership in the community and region in providing ecological training and environmental education to children and adults.
2. Provide Land-Steward Kits to all land owners - include information on how each of us is ecologically (e.g. watersheds and eco-regions) connected to the rest of our community.
3. Encourage private natural landscaping through Richfield Land Steward Kit. Leverage block captain system to roll out Land Steward program to educate residents about Richfield's natural systems and the role individual citizens can play in improving land use and water quality.
4. Richfield presents an annual Land Steward Recognition Award.
5. Monitor and interact with all legislative activity which might impact the health of Richfield's ecosystem.
6. Identify and showcase sites of natural land use history with ecological markers.

GOAL NUMBER SEVEN

Encourage use of native landscaping.

RATIONALE

Plant species found in native landscapes have adapted over thousands of years to survive climatic extremes and are well-suited to local soils and other plants in their community. The richer, more diverse, and better suited to its site a plant community is, the healthier we all are. Once a native plant site is established, it is not necessary to introduce fertilizers and pesticides. Such a reduction of foreign inputs to the natural system provides an environmental benefit. Benefits of native plant landscapes include: improved water quality; long-term cost savings, enhanced aesthetic appeal, and a better wildlife habitat.

STRATEGIES

1. Reclaim natural space where possible and promote planting of native vegetation by the citizens. Promote planting of native vegetation in all new developments, including transportation corridors.
2. Revise City vegetation ordinances to promote planting of native species in all developments and residential lots.

3. Promote native plant landscaping on all roadsides, trails, and trail corridors (e.g. areas such as the new Gateway at the intersection of 35W and 66th Street and along 77th Street).

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