

Chapter 3:

Existing Conditions + Needs

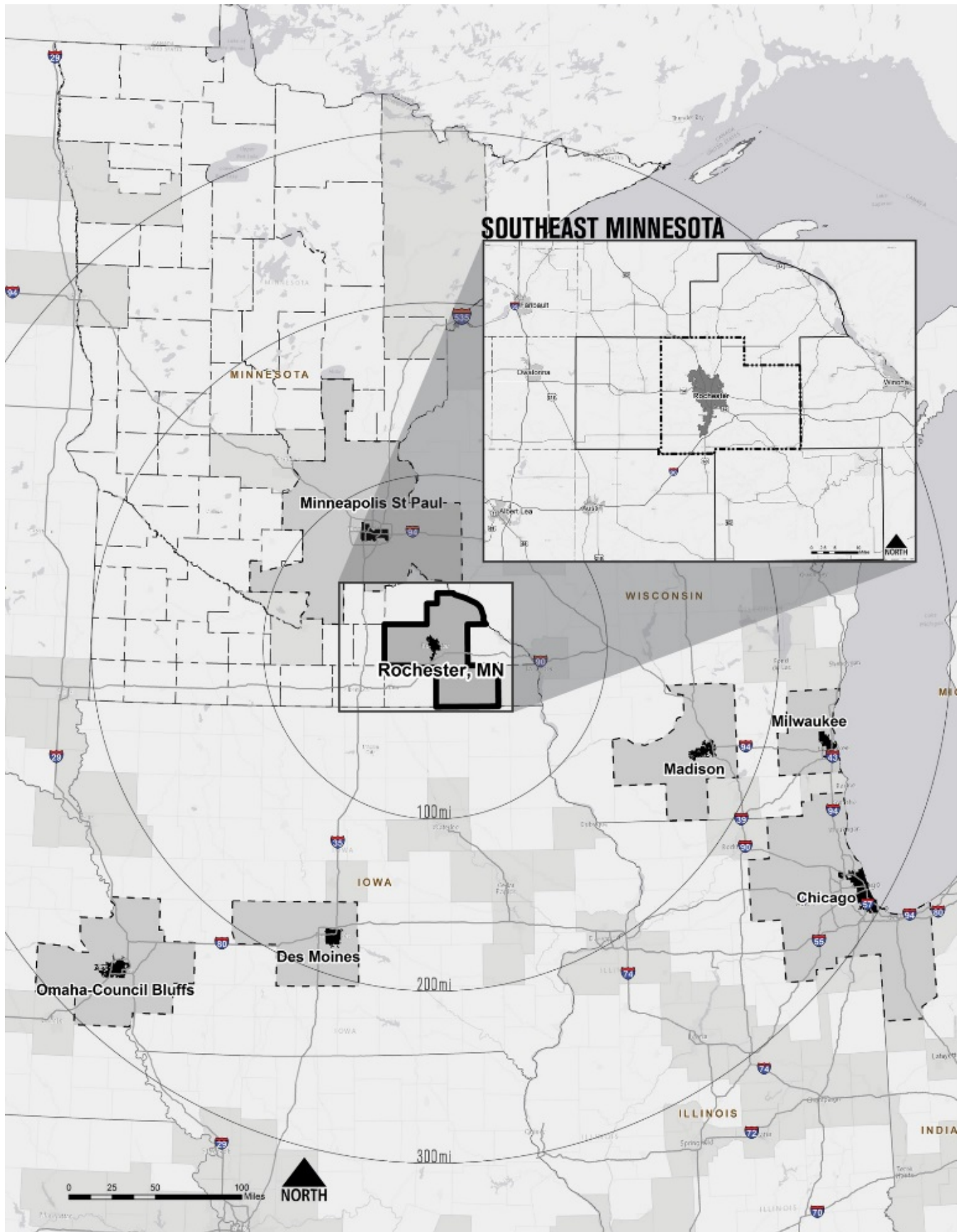
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The foundation of the system planning process is the examination of existing conditions to determine how well the system is meeting the needs of residents and visitors today and how well it is positioned to meet future needs.

With more than 4,200 acres of city-owned parks, preserves and open space, Rochester offers a wide range of facilities, from ½-acre mini-parks to 300-acre regional parks. Recreation and gathering facilities are distributed throughout the community to provide users the opportunity to be active; connect with family, friends, and neighbors; and immerse in the natural environment. The community also boasts more than 85 miles of paved trails that provide cross-city connections, as well as recreational loops.

The existing conditions and needs analysis found that Rochester has built an extensive parks and recreation system that generally meets basic needs. Growth in parks and facilities will be needed to meet needs as the community expands. In addition, significant investment is needed to restore aging parts of the system to modern standards.

FIGURE 3-1: REGIONAL CONTEXT



Rochester in Context

Located in the southeast portion of the state, Rochester is the third largest city in Minnesota and the largest city outside the Twin Cities. It is well-known for its businesses of international significance, especially the Mayo Clinic (Minnesota’s largest employer) and IBM-Rochester. The city is within a 3-hour drive from other regional cities, including Minneapolis-St Paul, Madison and Des Moines, and a 1-hour flight from Chicago, Milwaukee and Omaha. As a regional hub, Rochester serves smaller cities in southeastern Minnesota including Faribault, Owatonna, Albert Lea, Austin, and Winona (all within 50 miles). Major thoroughfares connecting Rochester to these regional destinations include Highway 14, I-90, US 63, and US 52.

Demographic Overview

Population

The 2014-2015 population of Rochester was 106,769 people. Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department projects continued growth over the next 25 years, with the city’s population projected to exceed 160,000 residents by 2040.

Age and Gender

Currently Rochester is a relatively youthful city. By age, the largest population segment in Rochester as of 2010 was the 25-29 cohort, followed by the 30-34 cohort. Population projections, however, show an aging population by 2040. The largest percentage growth will be in the 65 to 85 cohort. Younger cohorts, age 39 and under, will also grow, with the 25-29 cohort projected to be the largest age group. Demographic changes will alter the labor force and also impact preferences for transportation, housing, and park needs. For instance, both millennials and seniors will be seeking walkable neighborhoods and expanded trail facilities.

Race & Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic diversity is increasing in Rochester, with non-whites comprising 18.8% of the City’s population in 2015. The majority of this growth is coming from international migration of minority populations into Rochester rather than from growth of non-white populations already within the City. Eighty-one languages are spoken in the homes of Olmsted County K-12 students, and approximately 18% of households speak a language other than English as the primary language.

FIGURE 3-2: AGE & GENDER DISTRIBUTION, ROCHESTER 2010

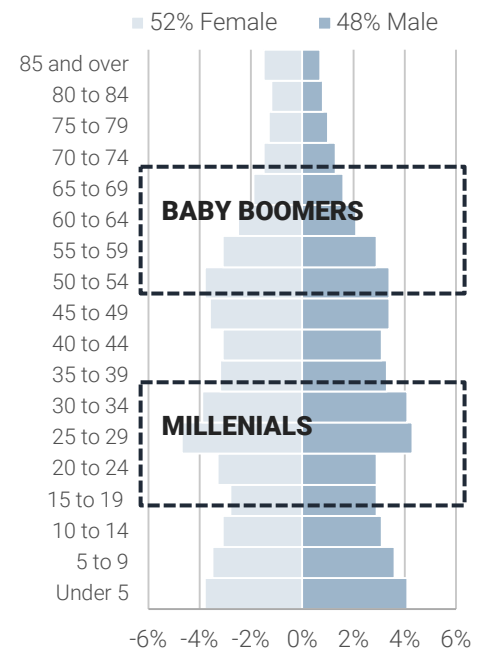
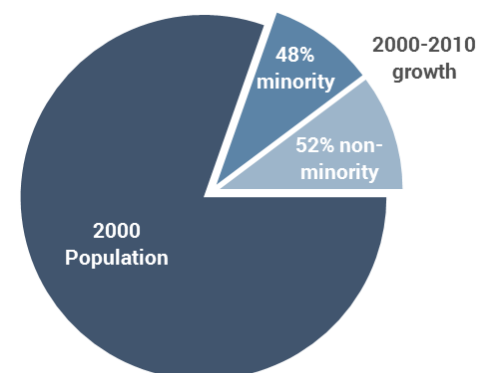


FIGURE 3-3: NET POPULATION GROWTH IN ETHNIC & RACIAL MINORITIES, 2000-2010



Households

In 2010, married couple families still accounted for about half of all households, and 22% of these households included children. However, shifts in household types that started between 2000 and 2010 are expected to continue. This shift includes smaller households, resulting in an increase in the total number of households; an increase in the percentage of married couple, no children households; and an increase in the percentage of households with individuals over 65.

Income

While the median household and median family income for Rochester decreased between 2000 and 2010, Rochester remains an affluent city that enjoys relatively high incomes with 27% of all households and 35% of all family households making over \$100,000. Despite this affluence, if trends related to income and housing costs continue—as assumed by Rochester’s P2S2040—then Rochester can expect to continue to see an increase in the number of households experiencing a housing cost burden, defined as a household in which more than 30% of household income goes towards housing. This burden is important to monitor as it can lead to a decrease in usage and participation rates for parks and recreation, as well as an increased need for financial assistance.

While the City features a poverty rate that is stable and well below the national poverty rate, consideration still needs to be given to whether the parks and recreation system is sufficiently serving those with limited incomes, particularly by providing access to facilities within a walking or biking distance. As described in on page 3-30, particular attention was given to whether identified areas had safe, nearby access to playgrounds, open field areas, and basketball courts.

Education

Rochester residents are generally well-educated, with high rates of college and post-graduate attainment. Forty-three percent of residents over 25 years of age hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Growth in educational attainment levels since 2000 can be attributed to the in-migration of highly educated residents. School enrollment in Rochester has increased across almost all grade levels since 2000.

Visitors

In addition to residents and employees, Rochester’s parks and recreation system serves all of the visitors who come to the region for health care, shopping and services, conventions, events, and sports tournaments. Annually, Mayo Clinic serves more than 1.3 million people and their families from all 50 states and more than 140 counties. The Rochester Amateur Sports Commission (RASC) found that in 2015 more than 116,000 people came to the City for tournaments.

System at a Glance

Rochester's Park and Forestry Division maintains 4,200 acres of parkland, including 120 parks, 85 miles of trail, and over 100,000 trees. These facilities provide area residents, employees, and visitors with numerous opportunities for active and passive recreation. The system's natural resources also provide numerous benefits to the community's ecosystem and users' physical and mental health.

Park Classification

Park classifications are used to ensure that a parks and recreation system has sufficient diversity and geographic distribution of parks to serve various neighborhood and community needs. In Rochester there are nine types of parks: mini, neighborhood, community, regional, athletic complex, special use, environmental, linear, and golf. Table 3-1 defines and clarifies for each park type the intended use, the area served, the typical size, the types of facilities it may include, and a few examples. Figure 3-4 displays the geographic distribution of each park type, and contains labels for community parks, regional parks, and athletic complexes.

In 2014 three parks – Cascade Lake, Gamehaven, and Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center - achieved regional designation by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). This designation recognizes the parks' natural settings, regional use, and natural resource based recreational facilities and activities. These designations provide opportunities to seek State Legacy Funding.

Notable Facilities

Rochester Recreation Center

For more than 40 years the Rochester Recreation Center has been a hub for indoor sports and recreation. The facility has an Olympic length swimming pool that meets all AAU and FINA standards and regularly hosts regional swim meets with a 50-meter pool that has 8 swimming lanes, two 3-meter springboards, two 1-meter springboards, and a movable bulkhead that can create two 25-yard swimming areas. The center also has two 85' x 200' ice rinks that serve hockey teams ranging from adults to juniors to youth, as well as the Rochester Figure Skating Club. The multipurpose gymnasium is designed to accommodate one official high school basketball court or one full-size competition volleyball court. Renovations completed in 2015-2016 will create a senior center; update the pool area to improve turnover time and allow simultaneous events; improve lockers; and provide for expanded restrooms, concessions and a secure ticket/administration area.

System Facility Highlights

- » 86 playground areas
- » 54 diamonds fields (baseball/softball)
- » 37 rectangular fields (soccer/football/lacrosse/rugby)
- » 34 tennis courts, including striping for 6 pickleball courts
- » 34 horseshoe courts
- » 19 sand volleyball courts
- » 17 picnic shelters
- » 15 basketball courts
- » 12 indoor gyms
- » 7 outdoor hockey rinks, 6 indoor hockey rinks, and 4 pleasure skating rinks
- » 2 outdoor pools, 2 beaches, and 1 indoor pool
- » 4 golf courses with 63 holes
- » 3 groomed cross country ski trails
- » 2 dog parks
- » 2 archery ranges
- » 2 disc golf courses
- » 2 garden plot sites plus 6 smaller



National Volleyball Center

National Volleyball Center

The National Volleyball Center is a 51,000 square foot, multi-use building located adjacent to Century High School that brings over 15,000 regional visitors to Rochester and hosts numerous local leagues and tournaments. Developed in partnership with the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, the center was developed for world-class volleyball players with high ceilings, Olympic quality lighting, and a cushioned floor. There are eleven volleyball courts within the Center and three additional courts in Century High School. The center is also routinely used for basketball, badminton, cheerleading, dodgeball, indoor soccer, and pickleball.



Plummer House of the Arts

Municipal Golf Courses

Rochester has three 18-hole golf courses and one 9-hole course, which is a First Tee Facility. Participation remains steady with more than 79,000 rounds played in 2015. The golf courses, which are distributed throughout the City, include:

- » Eastwood, 3505 Eastwood Road SE, offers a fully equipped Pro Shop, driving range, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, and Men's and Women's clubs.
- » Soldiers Field, 244 East Soldiers Field Drive, is a classic course in downtown Rochester that offers a Golf Shop, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, and leagues.
- » Northern Hills, 4721 West Circle Drive NW, offers a fully equipped Pro Shop, driving range, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, leagues, and junior golf camps.
- » Hadley Creek Golf Course and Learning Center, 2447 Hadley Valley Road NE, has been designated a First Tee Facility to support youth 6 to 18 in the game of golf. The facility offers nine-hole golf course, driving range, putting greens, and golf lessons. Over 450 Rochester youth attended golf classes and an additional 600 individuals participated in one day training sessions.
- » Rochester's golf courses also provide a location for winter activities. Trails are groomed for cross country skiing at both Eastwood and Soldiers Field with the sites also hosting high school events in the fall.

Plummer House of the Arts

Plummer House of the Arts is a historic home that serves as a tourist attraction, a facility for weddings, receptions, meetings, instructional classes, and parties for groups up to 100 people. The site includes 11 acres of beautiful landscaped grounds and formal gardens. Public access to the grounds is available sunrise to sunset except if private functions have rented the grounds.

TABLE 3-1: PARK CLASSIFICATION TABLE

Classification	Use	Service Area	Location	Size (typical)	Facilities (examples)	Examples
Mini	Address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	1/4 mile radius, uninterrupted by highways or freeways	Easily accessible to neighborhood residents with safe walking and biking access.	1 acre	Playground, seating	Baihly Heights Tot Lot, Good Shephard
Neighborhood	Primary recreation facility to meet the day-to-day needs of neighborhoods. Provides active recreation and informal gathering spaces for families and groups of neighbors. Fields are sized for practice/youth games.	1/2 mile radius, free of major barriers such as highways or waterways	Easily accessible to neighborhood residents with safe walking and biking access.	2 to 15 acres	Playground, open/rectangular play field, diamond field, tennis court, sand volleyball, hockey/pleasure skating, small picnic shelter, restrooms, etc.	Goose Egg, Nachreiner, Weatherstone
Community	Provides facilities serving the community with programmed, active recreation areas and access to natural areas. May serve regional visitors, although not as primary function.	Community wide in strategic, consolidated locations at a few sites	Sited to be accessible to community and take advantage of natural amenities. Accessible by foot, bike, auto, and bus.	15 to 100 acres	Neighborhood park facilities, basketball, aquatics, multi-purpose facilities, skate park, disc golf, trails, natural areas, large picnic shelters, restrooms, etc.	Soldiers Memorial Field, Silver Lake, Foster Arend
Regional	Areas that provide natural resource-based setting and activities that draw visitors from beyond the City.	Community and Regional Draw	Sited based on natural resource features. Automobile parking provided. Connected to trails to serve foot and bike.	>100 acres	Neighborhood park and community park facilities appropriate for natural setting.	Quarry Hill, Cascade Lake, and Gamehaven Reservoir
Athletic Complex	Provides organized athletic fields and associated facilities for youth athletics and adult/regulation-sized fields. May include neighborhood-park functions.	Community wide in strategic, consolidated locations at a few sites	Connected to trails and sidewalks. Automobile parking provided.	10+ acres	Athletic fields, concessions, playgrounds, trails, restrooms, etc.	Fuad Mansour Sports Complex, McQuillan Field
Special Use	Areas primarily serving a single-use activity	Community & Regional Draw	Site specific.	Varies	Dog park, community garden, indoor recreation/gathering facility, stadium	Pipsqueaks/United Way, Mayo Field, Graham Arena
Environmental	Areas focused on the provision of natural environments, passive recreation, and ecological education.	Community & Regional Draw	Centered around natural resources and amenities.	Varies	Natural areas, trails, restrooms, etc.	Willow Creek Reservoir, Prairie Crossings
Linear	Areas preserved to link park components together.	Community Wide in strategic locations at a few sites	Centered around natural resources and trail corridors	Varies	Trails, Landscaped Areas	Mayowood Corridor, Elton Hills Run
Golf	Areas dedicated to golf, including golf courses, driving ranges, and clubhouses	Community and Regional Draw	Sited to be accessible to community and take advantage of natural amenities. Accessible by	Varies	See use.	Eastwood Golf Course

Graham Arena

The Graham Arena Complex is owned by Olmsted County but is managed and operated by the City of Rochester Park & Recreation Department. The complex, consisting of four large arenas, is located at the Olmsted County Fairgrounds and hosts fair events from mid-July through August. From October through June, indoor and outdoor ice is available for youth and adult hockey, figure skating, and broomball. Off-ice events occurring between March and September include trade and exhibit shows, arts and craft fairs, concerts, agricultural and livestock events, rodeos, and car shows. The arena also hosts its share of weddings.



Graham Arena

Pipsqueaks

Pipsqueaks is Rochester's indoor play zone designed for children kindergarten-aged and younger. A community partnership between Rochester Parks and Recreation and the United Way of Olmsted County Inc., Pipsqueaks is located in the gymnasium of the United Way at 903 West Center Street, and is generally open from November to April so families have a place to go indoors in the winter months. Pipsqueaks can be rented for private birthday parties and special occasions.



Pipsqueaks indoor play zone

Reservoirs

Rochester has seven reservoirs specifically designed and constructed as part of the City's Flood Control Project. These reservoirs are intended to store rainfall in the upper portions of the South Zumbro Watershed. Management of these reservoirs is part of the Parks and Recreation System. While the primary role for these reservoirs is flood control, they are also available for recreation.

FIGURE 3-4: ALL CITY PARKS

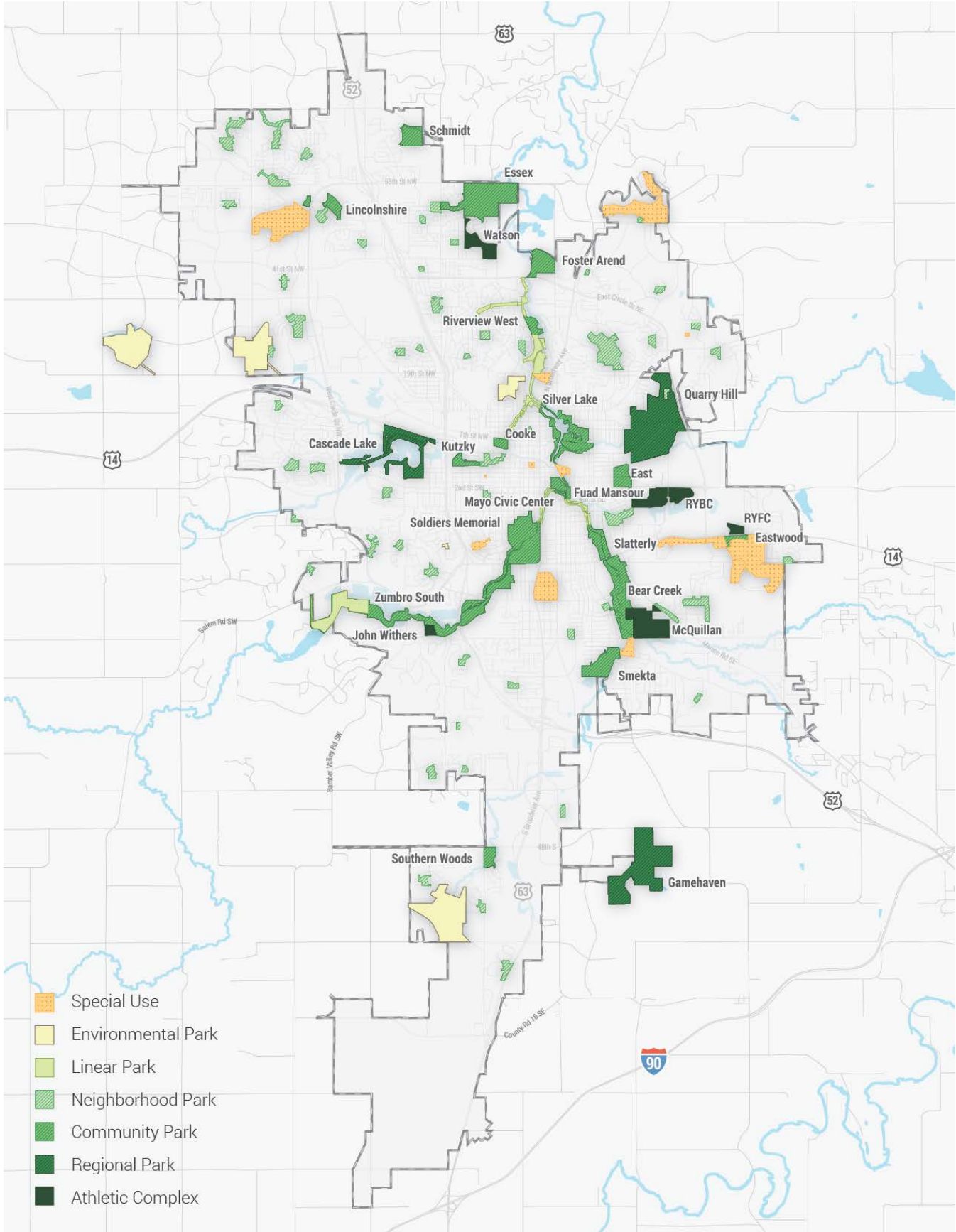


FIGURE 3-5: NOTABLE CITY FACILITIES

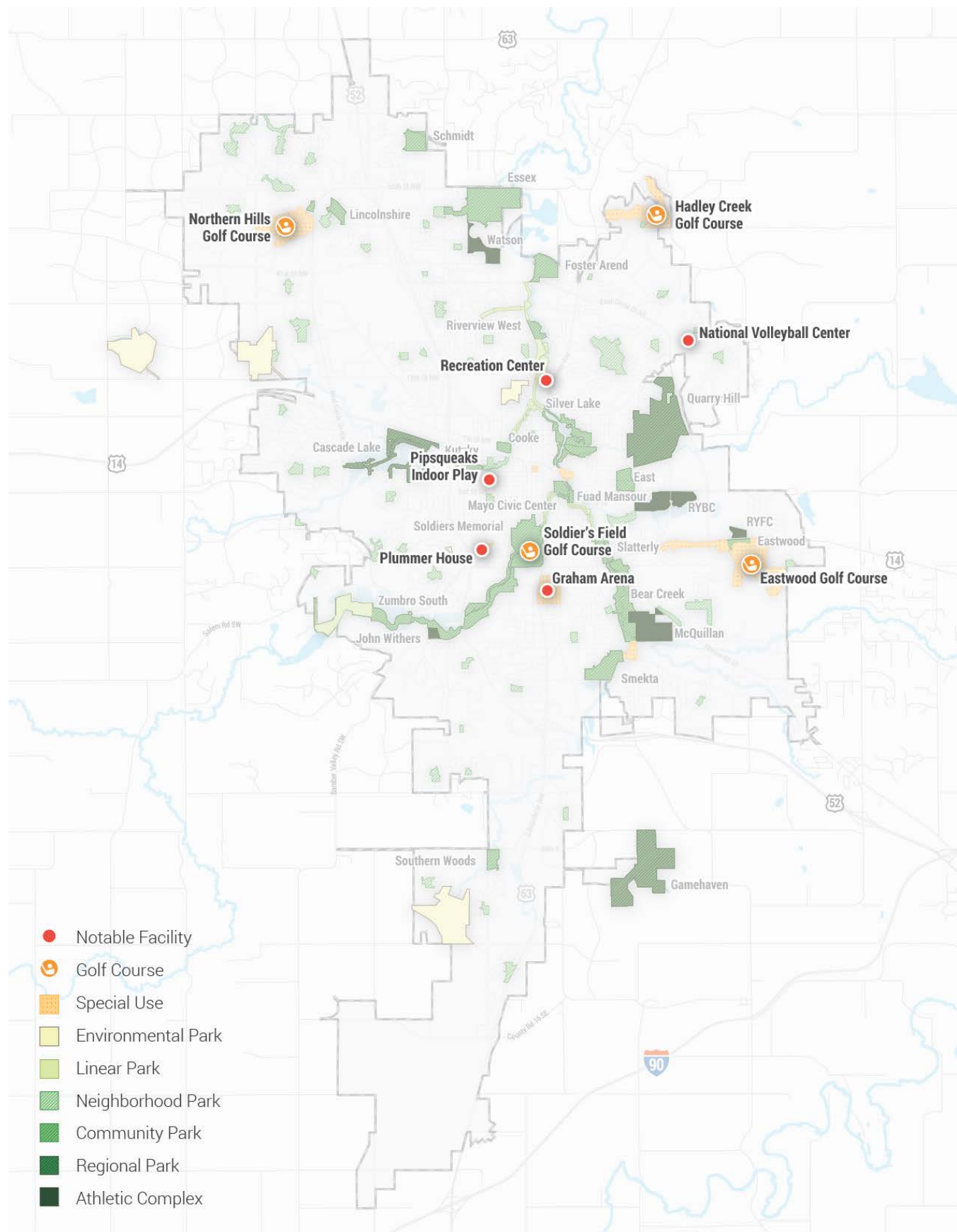
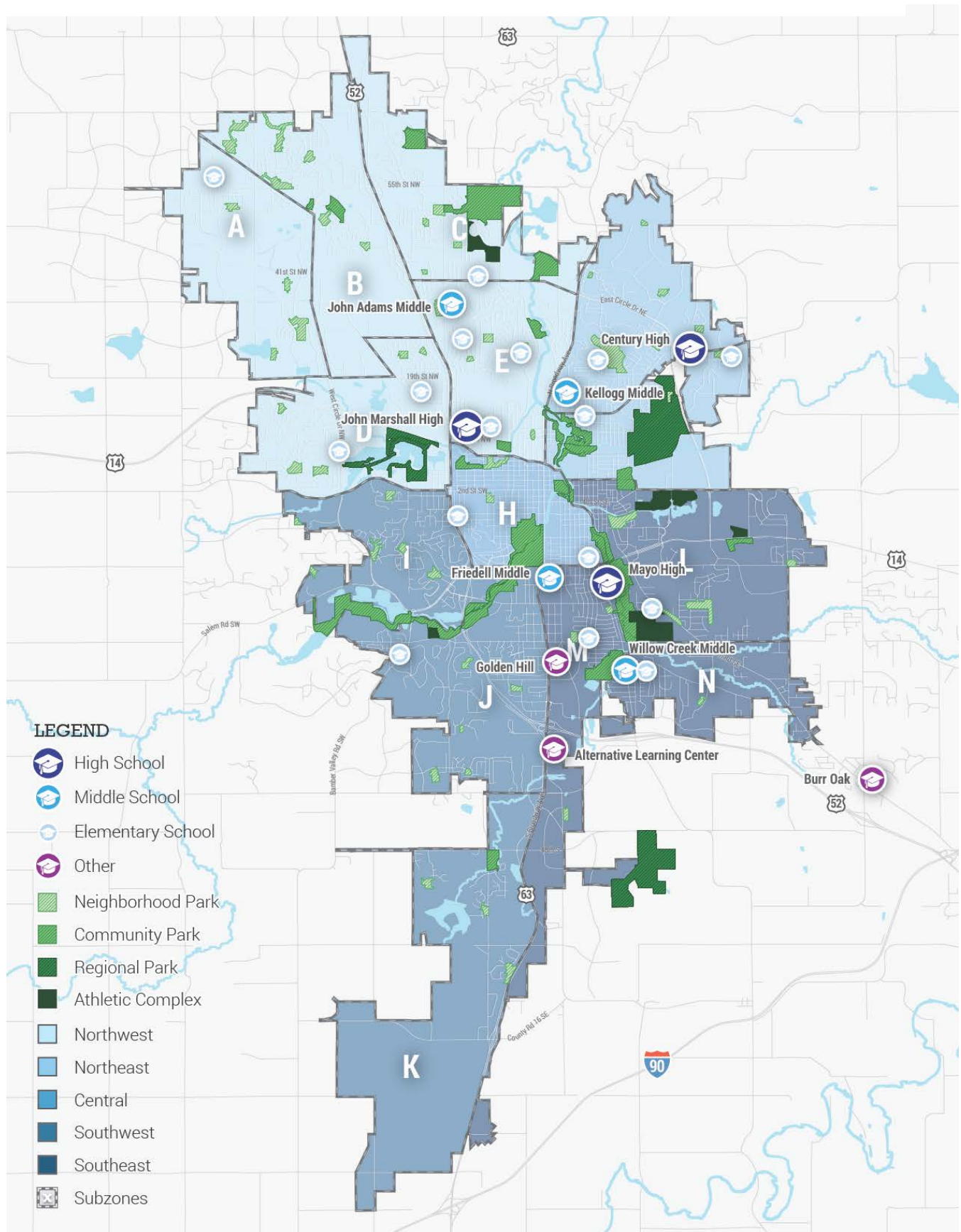


FIGURE 3-6: ROCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION





Camper Cabin at Chester Woods Park



Nature-based play area at Oxbow Park

Other Community/County Facilities

Mayo Civic Center

The Mayo Civic Center is Southeastern Minnesota's largest event center. Known for its warm hospitality and full-service flexibility, the Center provides first-rate facilities for conventions, sporting events, entertainment, and social events. Beautiful Mayo Park, with patios, walkways, and 8 acres of tranquil green space, overlooks the Zumbro River, and is often used for both public and private events.

Rochester Schools

An analysis of a parks and recreation system would not be complete without recognition of the value provided by school facilities and programming. Rochester Public Schools is the 7th largest district in the state with more than 17,000 students and an attendance area of 218 square miles. It includes 17 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, and an alternative learning center. The City of Rochester and Rochester Public Schools collaborate in many areas, including the National Volleyball Center and recreational programming. Several joint park/school locations exist to help meet neighborhood needs and to increase the efficiency of both collaborating organizations.

Rochester school district facilities supplement the parks and recreation system that use priorities for school facilities are given to youth sports and activities, planning for the parks and recreation system cannot assume availability of any individual school facility to serve general community needs over the long-term.

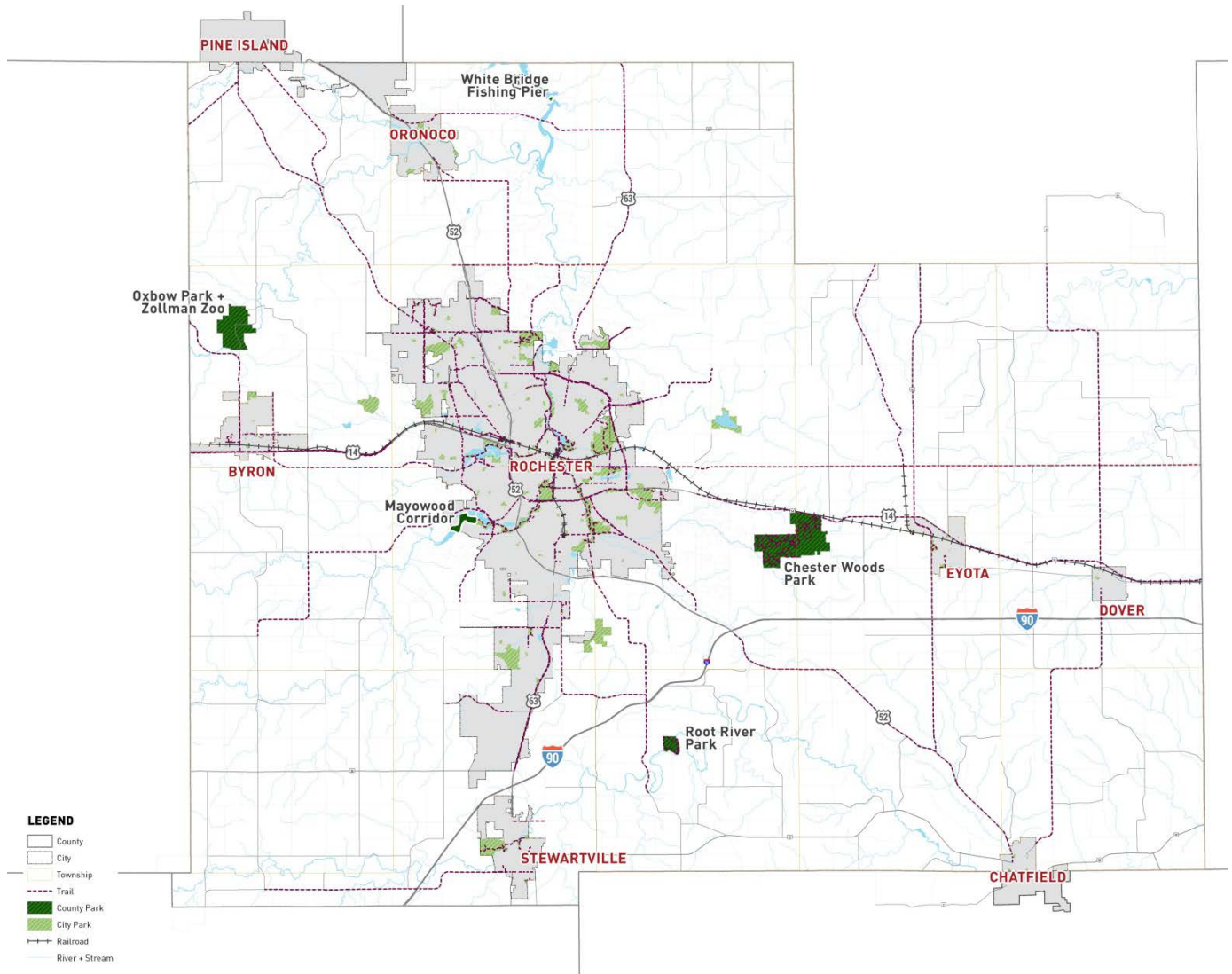
Olmsted County

Olmsted County has more than 2,000 acres of park and open space land in five units. The mission of Olmsted County Parks is "to foster an appreciation of the natural world through environmental education, natural resource management, and public participation in the stewardship of our park lands." The permanent park staff of 11 is supplemented with an equal number of seasonal employees and more than 25,000 volunteer hours.

The five units of the Olmsted County Park System include:

- » Chester Woods, the largest at 1,300 acres, is located 7 miles east of Rochester along Highway 14. It includes a campground, swimming beach, fishing, boat rental, picnicking, hunting, playground, nature play area, and trails for horseback riding and hiking.
- » Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo, located north of Byron, is over 600 acres and includes the Zollman Zoo, a nature center, campground, playgrounds, nature play area, picnicking, and hiking trails.

FIGURE 3-7: OLMSTED COUNTY FACILITY DISTRIBUTION



- » Root River, located southeast of Rochester, is the newest Olmsted County unit and has 125 acres. The site is under development and currently consists of trails for horseback riding and hiking.
- » Maywood Corridor is located near Historic Maywood in southwest Rochester and includes facilities for hiking, biking, and running. While the County owns this corridor, it is operated and maintained by the Rochester Parks and Recreation Department.
- » White Bridge Fishing Pier is located on Highway 12 between Oronoco and Sandy Point. The site offers handicapped accessible fishing and picnicking.



Community input was gathered through public open houses and online questionnaires

Needs Assessment

This plan is based on a critical evaluation of Rochester's Parks and Recreation System, including analyses of existing conditions, peer communities, national standards and trends, best practices, and community input. These analyses identified current and future needs and desires, which subsequently guided the development of principles, recommendations, priorities, and strategies intended to guide the future of the system.

The evaluation process included:

- » Meetings with the City Staff, Advisory Committee, Park Board, and the City Council
- » Evaluation of the entire system of parks, trails, natural resources, connectivity, programs, and facilities
- » Demographic analysis
- » Evaluation of current park classification system and standards
- » Evaluation of service areas, future growth, and development needs
- » Identification of issues and opportunities at a system-wide level
- » Comparison of existing supply, quality, and distribution of features and facilities to national standards, and to peer communities
- » Evaluation of emerging trends influencing future needs of the system

Community Input

To best serve the residents of Rochester, an understanding of their needs and desires regarding parks and recreation was an essential component of the planning process. Community input was gathered to identify satisfaction with the existing park system, the level of parks and recreation use, opinions on the system's needs, issues, and priorities, and desires for future system development. A number of collection methods were employed throughout the planning process, resulting in fundamental feedback that helped shape both this plan and the future of Rochester's parks and recreation. Key findings from the initial outreach in the fall of 2015 are summarized below. Outreach conducted in the spring of 2016 resulted in direct changes to the system plan.

Resident and stakeholder outreach methods included:

- » Community Open House to collect input (October 15, 2015)
- » Listening sessions with key stakeholder groups (October 22, 2015)
- » Online community questionnaire (November 2015)
- » Community Open House to affirm plan direction (April 28, 2016)
- » Online community questionnaire to evaluate proposed direction (May 2016)

Listening Session Key Findings

A series of seven listening sessions were held with 25 stakeholder representatives (of 75+ invited groups) in the areas of arts, nature/environment, indoor sports, outdoor field/court sports, outdoor adventure sports, and diversity.

Key findings from this community engagement effort include:

- » Partnerships between Parks and Recreation and community organizations continue to grow
- » Marketing/brand awareness is needed
- » Direction is needed on natural areas
- » Facilities are aging or are insufficient for needs
- » Recreational needs continue to evolve and expand
- » More outreach to minority/ethnic groups is needed
- » The community enjoys strong recreation associations

Online Questionnaire Key Findings

The October online questionnaire generated 2,186 responses from community members, including more than 3,200 individual comments.

Upon analyzing these responses, the following key findings emerged:

- » General satisfaction with the system but room for improvement
- » Recognition that maintenance/upgrading of facilities needed
- » Desire for improving existing system rather than significant expansion
- » Additional needs in recreation programming – swimming currently most utilized program
- » Upkeep concerns around cleanliness and trail/sidewalk repair
- » Most used facilities include trails, Quarry Hill, and community/neighborhood parks
- » Desire for more natural areas

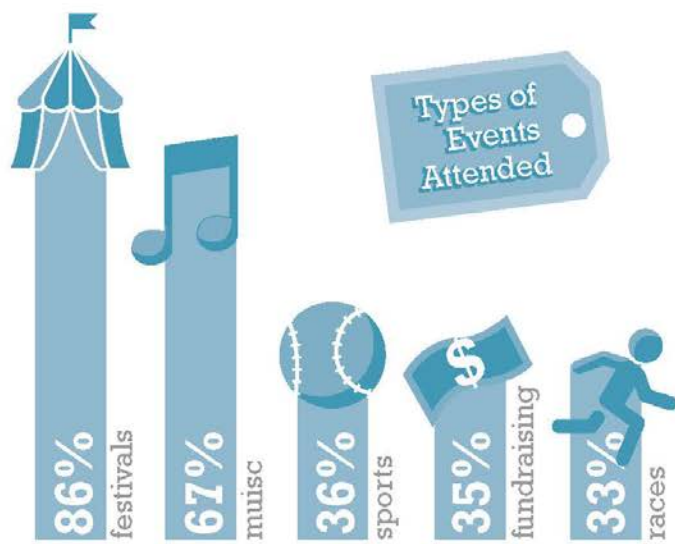
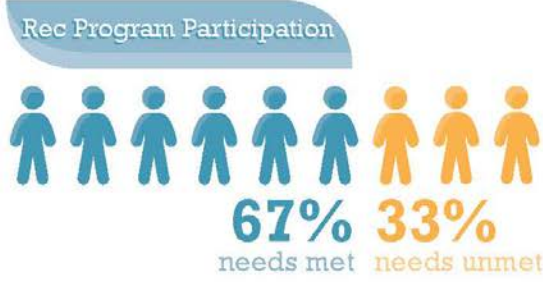
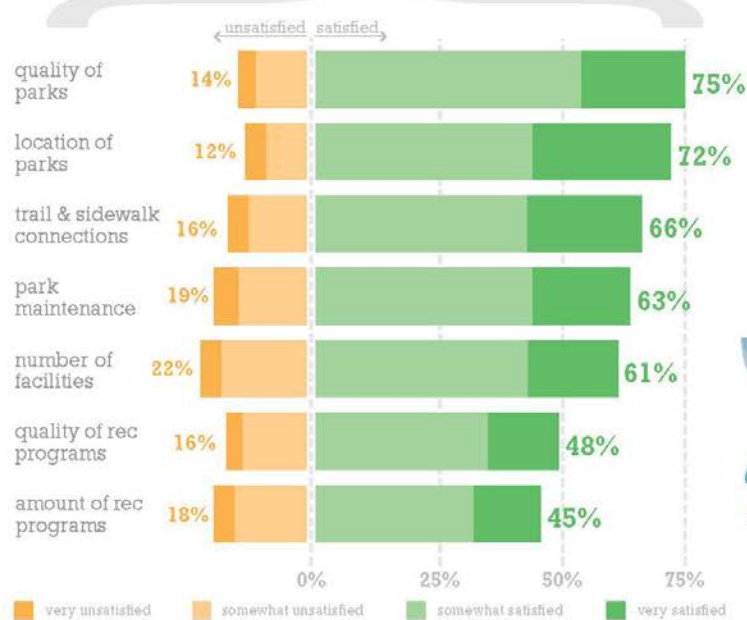
A more detailed look at the results of the initial online questionnaire can be found in Figure 3-8 and Figure 3-9.

FIGURE 3-8: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY, PAGE 1

Rochester Parks & Recreation
November 2015 Community Survey

72% satisfied overall
15% unsatisfied with Rochester Parks & Recreation

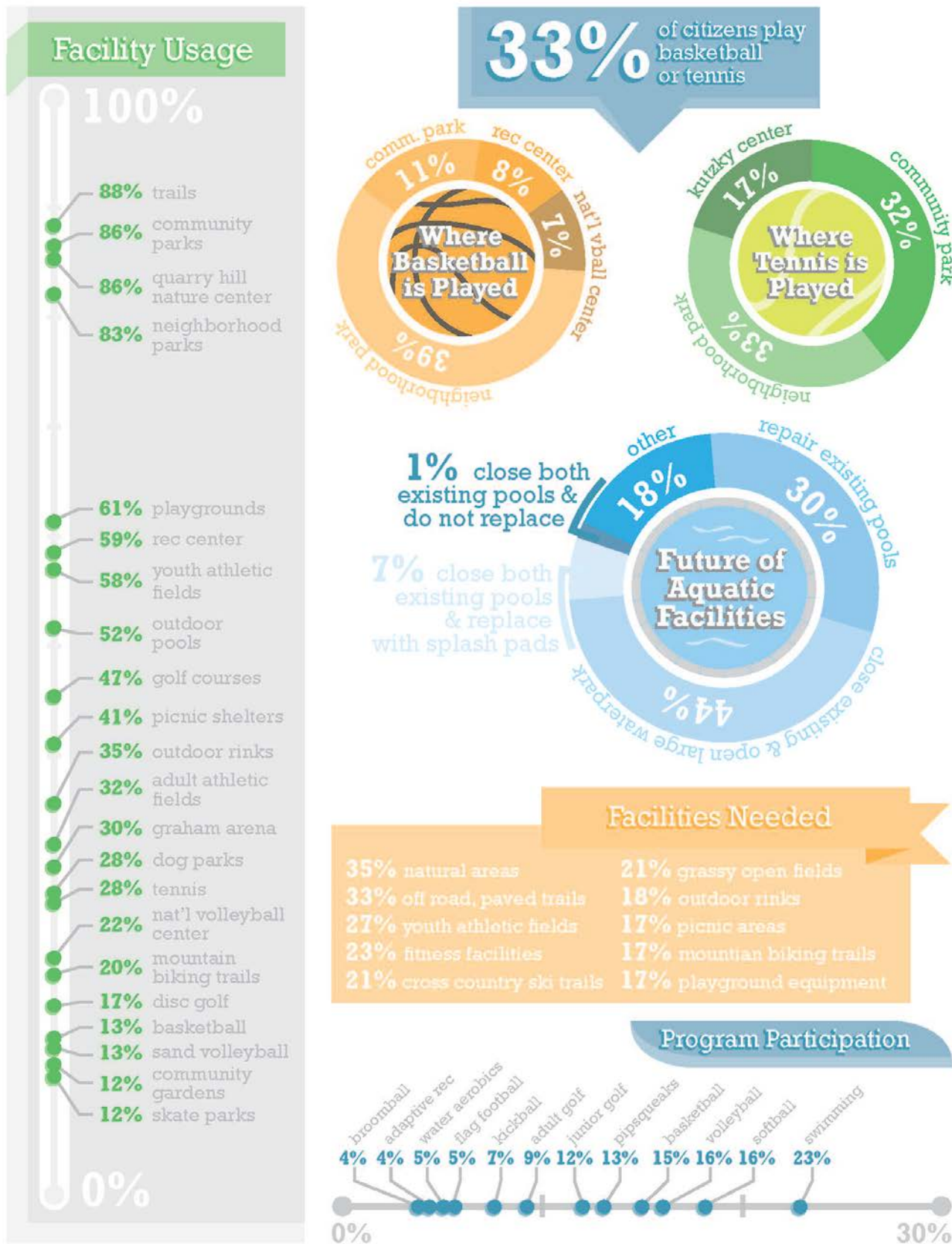
- Top Priorities**
- 30% better maintenance of existing facilities
 - 27% add amenities in existing parks
 - 26% more paved trails
 - 24% more indoor rec facilities
 - 22% more natural areas
 - 20% more youth athletic fields
 - 20% development of water splash pad for children



System Upkeep Ratings



FIGURE 3-9: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY, PAGE 2





Rochester currently provides residents with exceptional access to parks

System Condition

Rochester's Parks and Recreation System has been developing over the last 150 years. Individual parks range from new and high-quality to older and in need of reinvestment. Discussions throughout the planning process indicate that the system is in need of significant investment to meet the expectations of users. While there are no facilities in unsafe conditions, deferred maintenance and investment has resulted in facilities that are not up to modern standards. Routine upkeep ensures that there are not a large number of individual complaints, but does not result in great admiration for the park system. In particular, the system's restrooms, shelters, and aquatic facilities are in need of major reinvestment. Investments are also being requested for Mayo Field, the baseball/softball complexes, and tennis center to ensure their competitiveness for the tournament marketplace.

System Components

Zones + Subzones

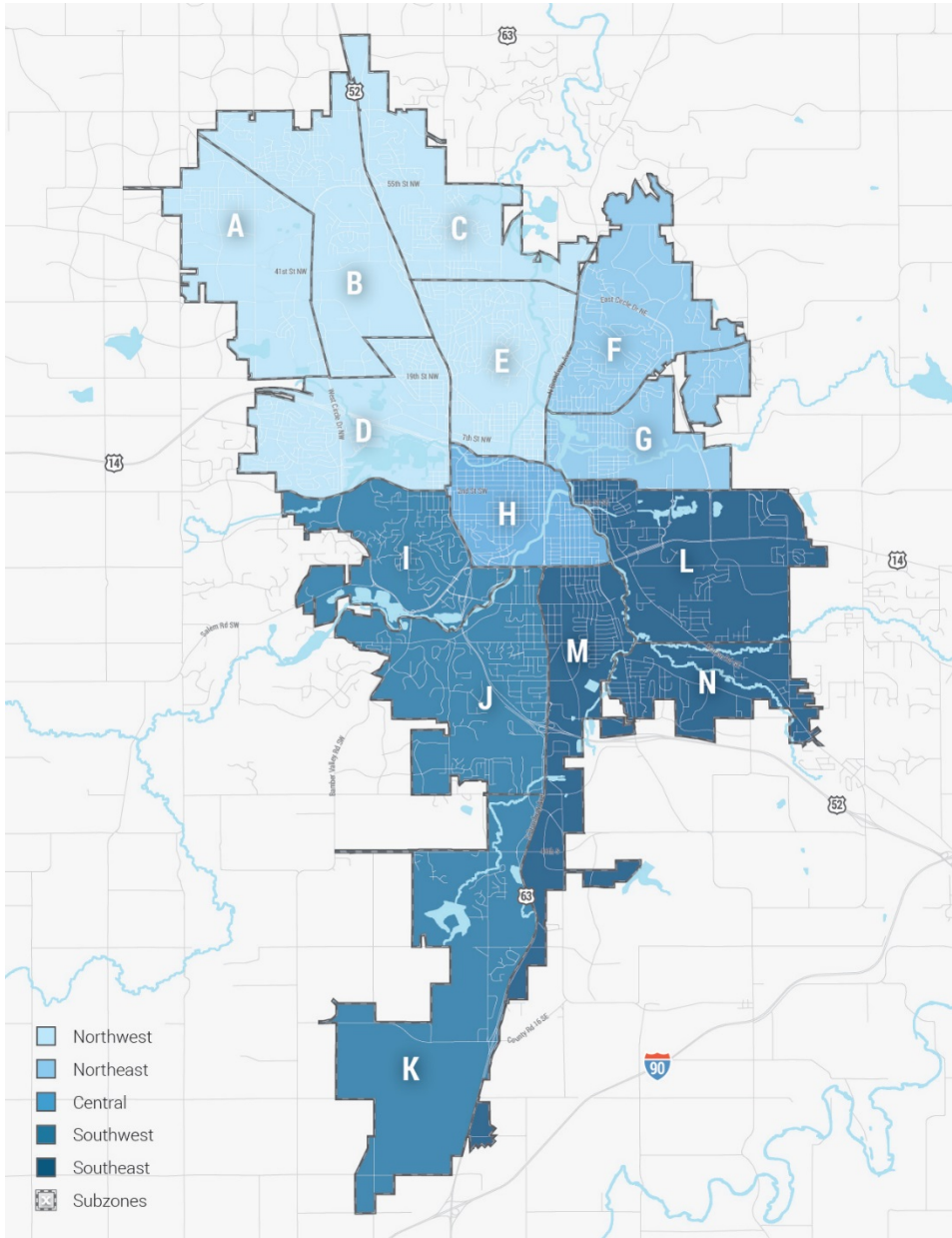
To assist in ensuring system components are distributed equitably across the City, a system of park zones and subzones were created. The zones were developed recognizing the uniqueness of the central core of the community and the park dedication ordinance which requires that land and funds dedicated within an area must stay within that general area. The five zones therefore consist of central, northwest, northeast, southeast, and southwest (see Figure 3-10). Subzones further divide the zones using connectivity barriers like roadways and waterways. Zones and subzones are used throughout the recommendations to identify how frequent a specific facility or amenity should be within the system.

Parks

There are currently 120 parks throughout the City of Rochester, providing 31.6 acres of park for every 1,000 residents. The current number of parks and park acreage is adequate for Rochester's existing population, but it will not be able to meet the needs of the expected population growth in the next 10 to 20 years.

A comparison with peer communities finds that Rochester is similar in its number of parks and may have slightly more acres of parkland than other, similarly sized communities. An analysis of service gaps of neighborhood and community/regional parks found that the City has succeeded in ensuring most residents are within a reasonable walking or biking distance of a park. Service gaps primarily exist on the edges of the community and should be able to be addressed as the community grows.

FIGURE 3-10: ZONES + SUBZONES



While Rochester has a good system of neighborhood parks, community input indicates a desire to make the parks more distinctive. This could be accomplished through the inclusion of more natural features, public art, or ensuring that parks have a different mix of recreational facilities.

FIGURE 3-11: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS DISTRIBUTION & GAP ANALYSIS

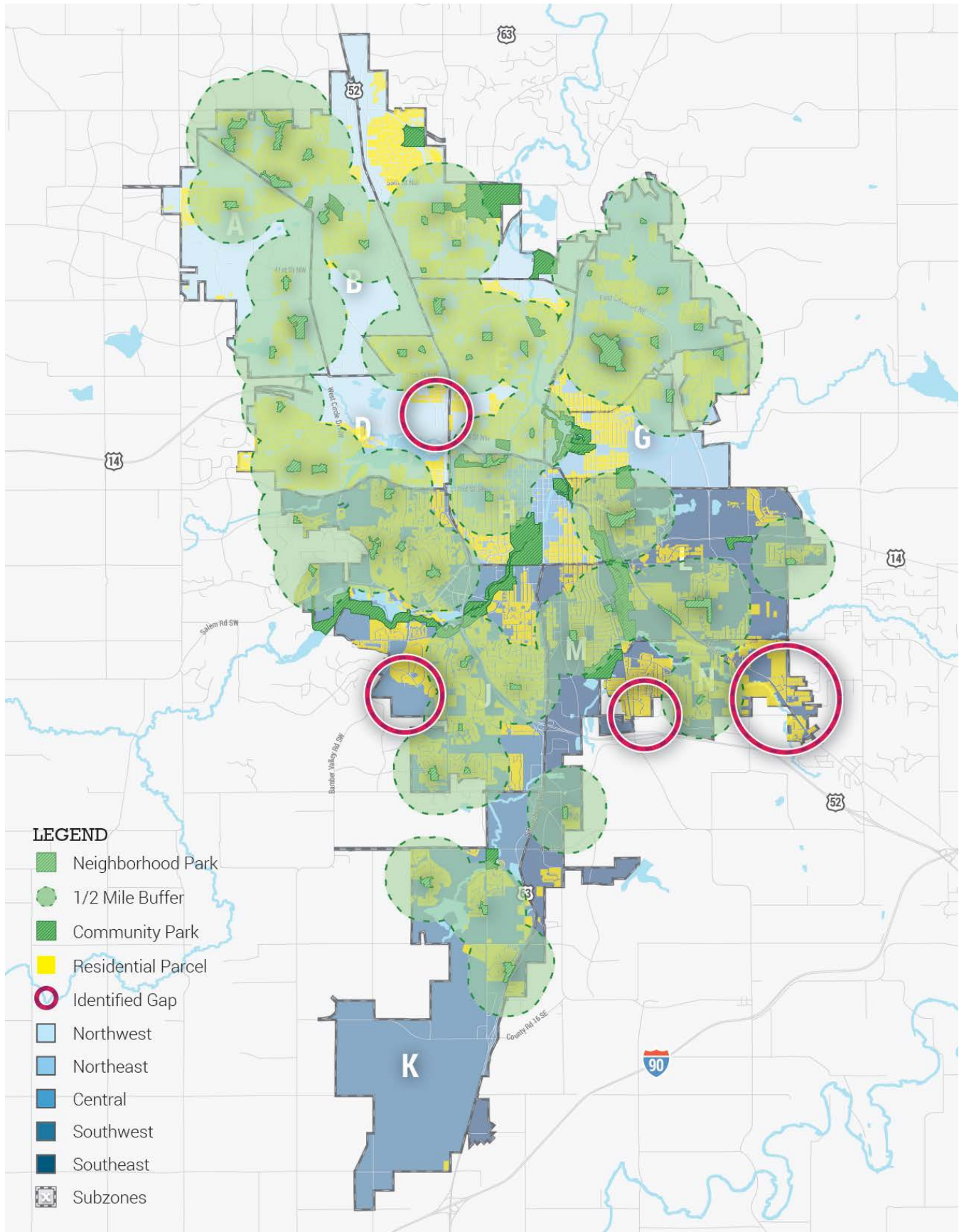
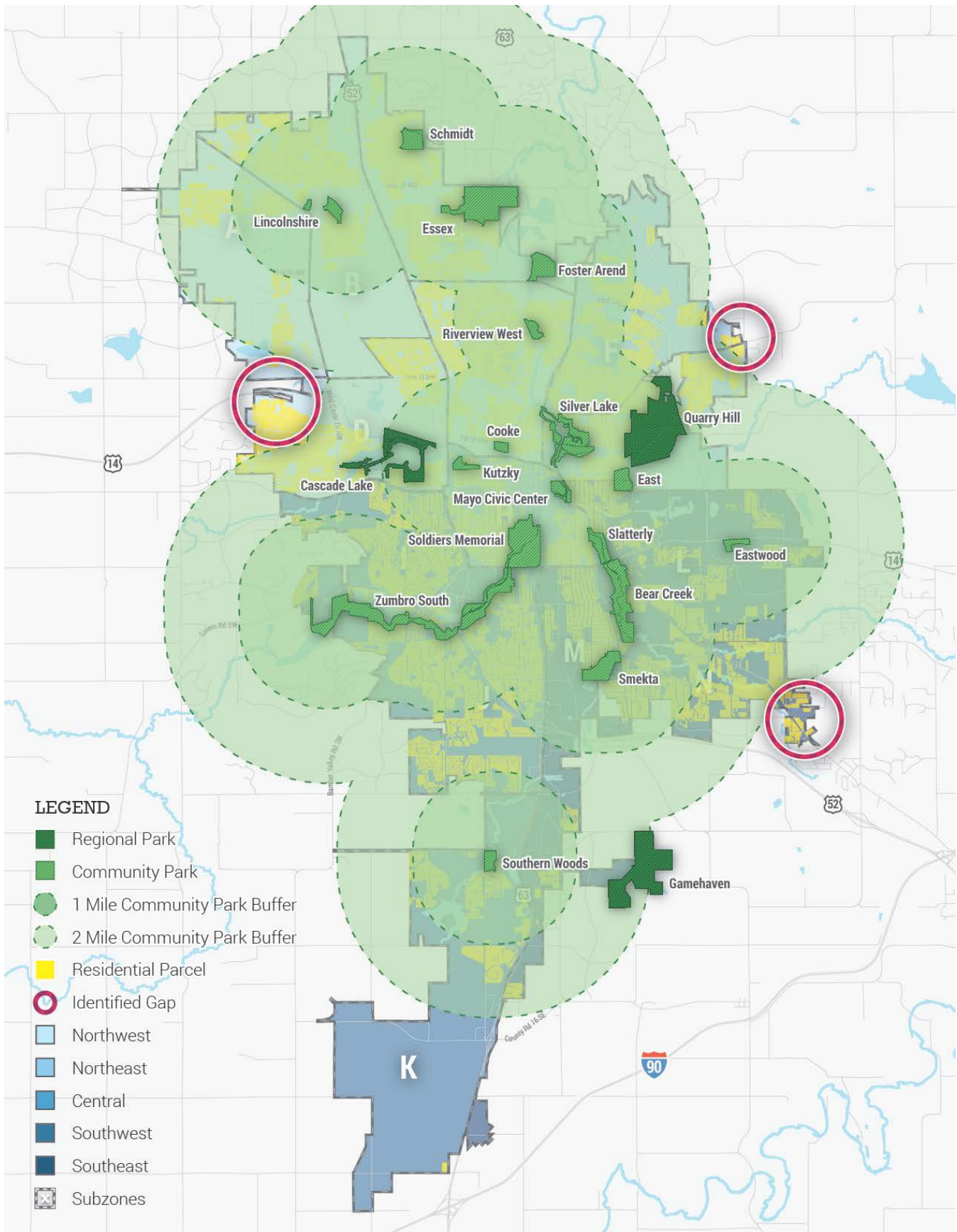


FIGURE 3-12: COMMUNITY PARKS DISTRIBUTION & GAP ANALYSIS





Facilities

Rochester provides a wide range of recreational facilities throughout its system. According to national standards and peer community comparisons, the number of facilities is generally adequate for the city's current size. Additional facilities will be needed as the city grows to ensure there are sufficient facilities per capita and to ensure that facilities are within a reasonable distance of expanding areas. ADA accessibility, which is provided in some places, also needs to be expanded moving forward to meet the needs of present and future residents.

An analysis of how facilities are distributed throughout the City found that most residential areas have a playground within a reasonable walking or biking distance. For efficiency, care should be taken to ensure future playgrounds are not placed too close together. More than 25% of the City's playgrounds are over 20 years old. Replacement should be a focus to ensure equipment is safe. As replacements and upgrades occur, consideration should also be given to adding naturalized playscapes to diversify the types of playgrounds in the community.

An examination of traditional athletic facilities finds that diamond fields for baseball and softball are distributed throughout the city, with most locations having only 1 or 2 fields. This distribution ensures fields are in close proximity to neighborhoods, but does reduce efficiency in maintenance and operations for both the city and the sports associations.

In contrast, the city's tennis courts tend to be located closer in the core area, with Kutzky Park having a significant concentration. This distribution limits the ability of users to have a tennis court convenient to their neighborhood.

While basketball courts are distributed throughout the community, there are gaps in the southeast of the City. The City is currently exploring transitioning the location of basketball courts from neighborhood parks to community parks. This transition is to address noise and parking issues associated with basketball courts. The transitioning process will provide an opportunity for the city to revise court locations to ensure they are distributed adequately throughout the community.

Overall, the mix of facilities needs upgrading to incorporate both current needs and needs driven by emerging trends such as the growth in underrepresented populations. Examples might include additional dog parks, indoor facilities, community gardens, lacrosse fields, and pickleball courts. Some of these specialized facilities will require major capital improvements to achieve (i.e. pools, tennis courts, golf clubhouse, etc.).



A wide range of facilities are offered throughout the parks and recreation system

FIGURE 3-13: PLAYGROUND DISTRIBUTION

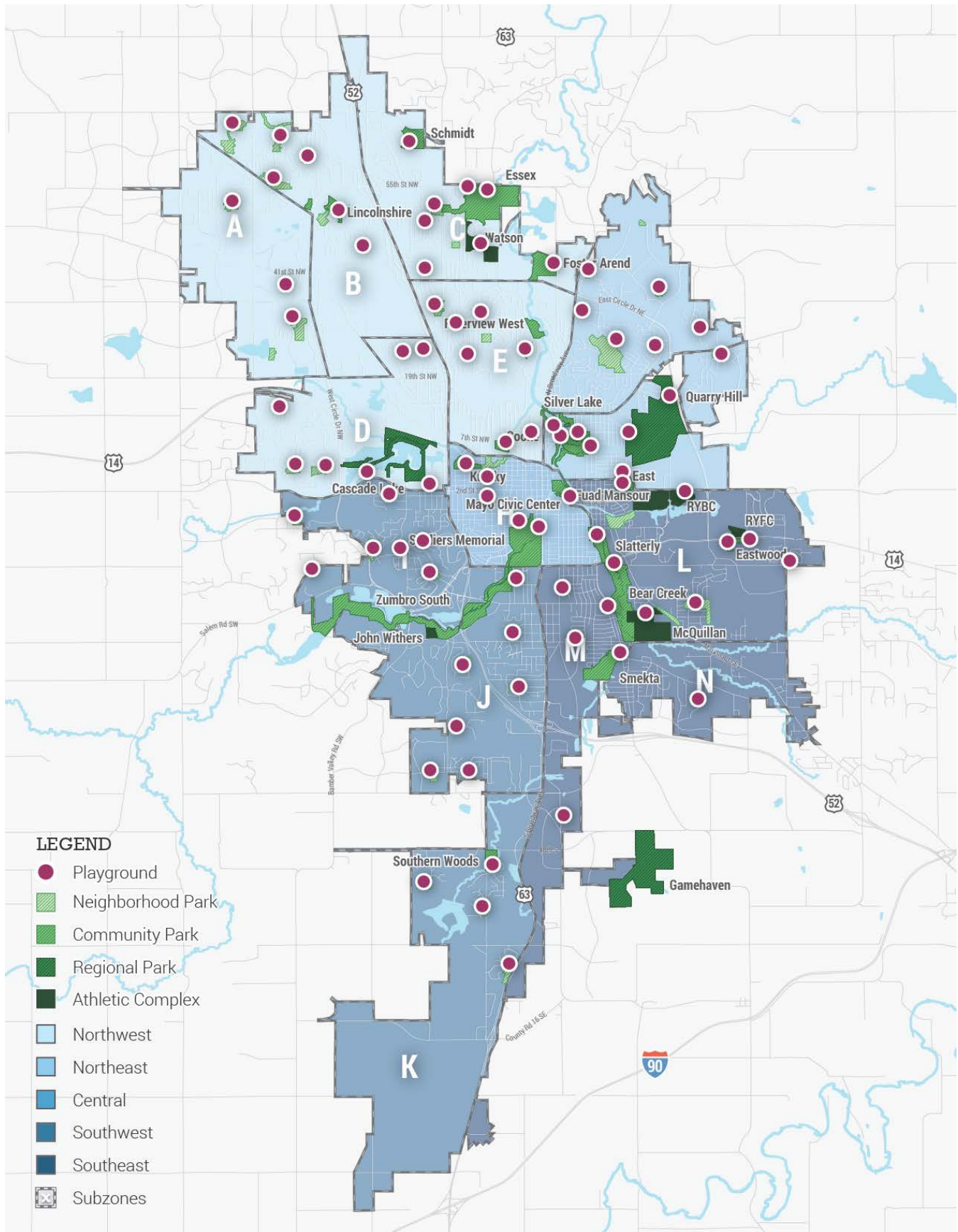


FIGURE 3-14: DIAMOND FIELD DISTRIBUTION

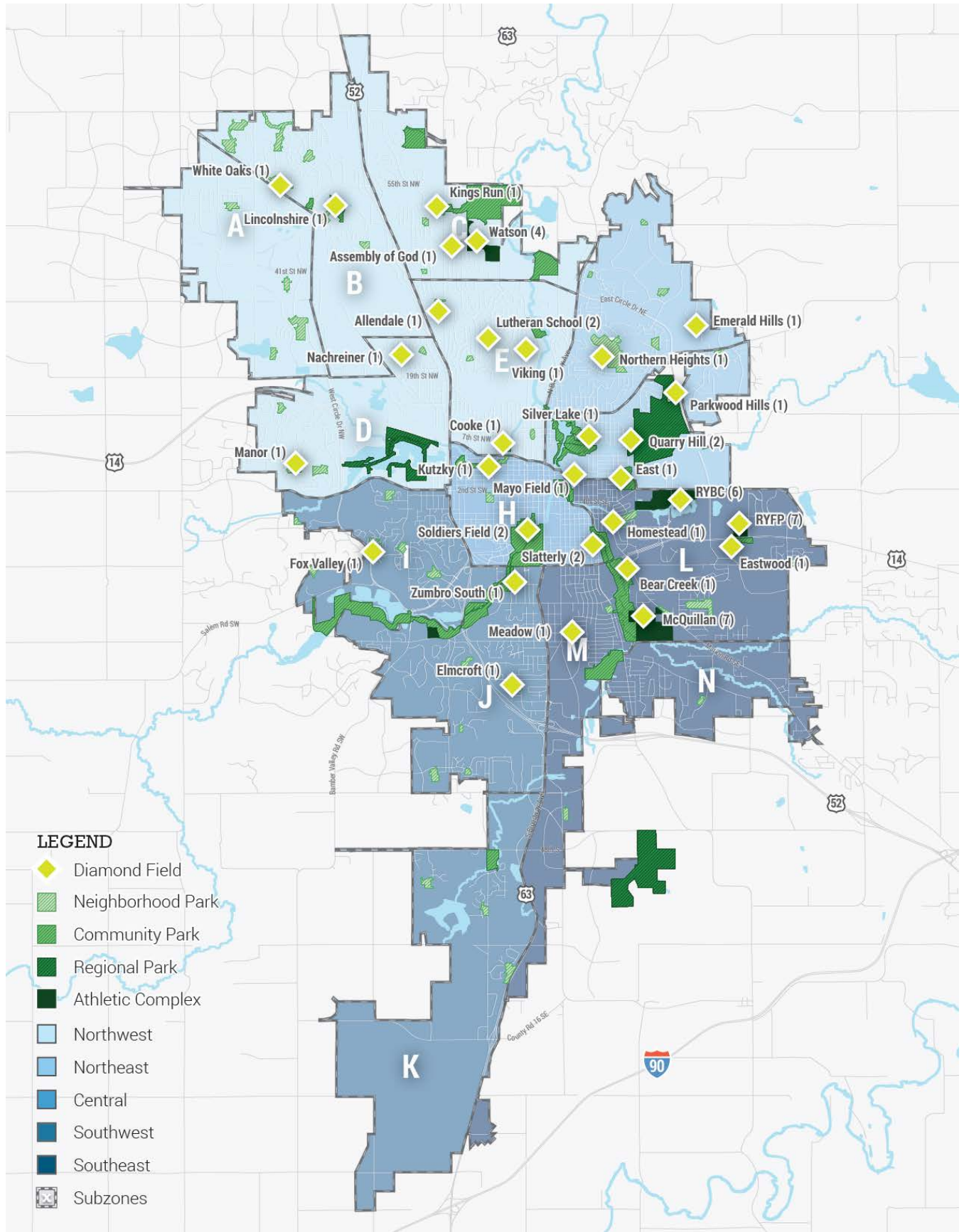
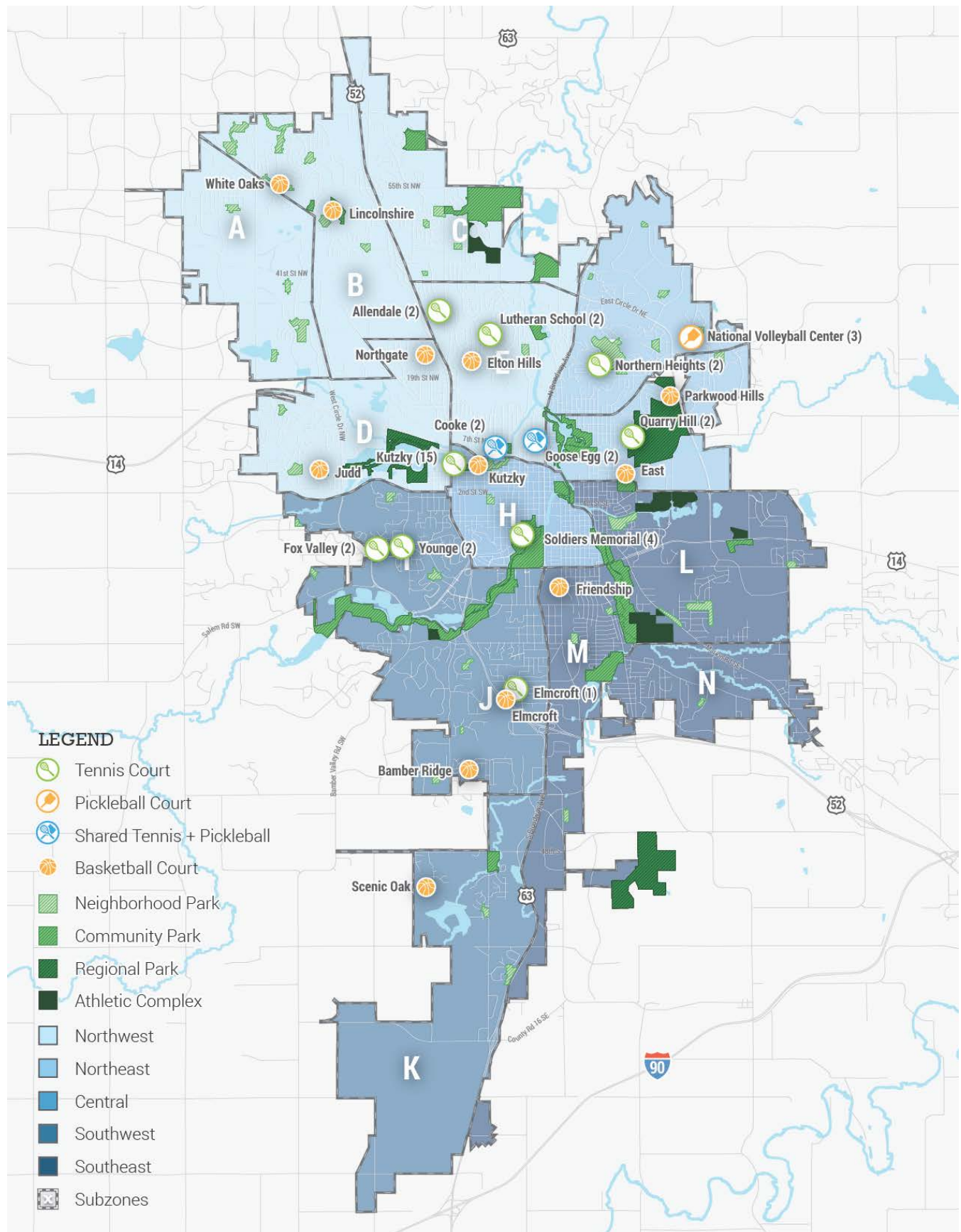


FIGURE 3-15: TENNIS, PICKLEBALL, & BASKETBALL DISTRIBUTION





Natural areas are a treasured part of Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center

Trails

The City's trail and sidewalk system is a great asset to the parks and recreation system. The system is managed by a cooperative effort between the Parks and Recreation Department (for trails on park property) and Public Works (for trails along roadways). The fall 2015 survey found that 86% of respondents have used a trail in the last year, the highest for any facility in the system. The system planning process did find that there are areas in which trail surfaces are in poor condition and significant investment is needed to bring the system back to acceptable condition. Additionally, while there are either trails or sidewalks in every zone of the City, there are gaps that could be filled to provide more complete connectivity.

Natural Areas

The City of Rochester has thousands of acres of natural areas throughout the community. These natural areas range in size from small, one-acre remnants in neighborhood parks to the hundreds of acres surrounding the city's reservoirs. Participants in the system planning process expressed interest in enhancing the quality, health, and management of existing natural areas, conserving additional natural areas, and improving access to both new and existing areas. There is a desire as the community grows to utilize natural areas as green corridors to enhance connections within the City's park system and to connect to natural areas outside of Rochester's boundaries.

The Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center is a prized and highly utilized amenity in Rochester. A perfect example of Rochester's partnerships, Quarry Hill is a collaborative effort between the Friends of Quarry Hill Nature Center, the City of Rochester, Rochester Public Schools, and many other organizations in the community and region. With 329 acres, the park features diverse native communities and one of the largest nature centers in the state of Minnesota. The center promotes hands-on natural science education, active living, and life-long appreciation of nature. As the hub for environmental programming, Quarry Hill is in need of additional investment, and improvements have already begun in 2016. As it is currently the only location with consistent, nature-based programming, additional locations for nature-based programming could be considered to improve distribution and help meet future demand.

FIGURE 3-16: CITY TRAILS

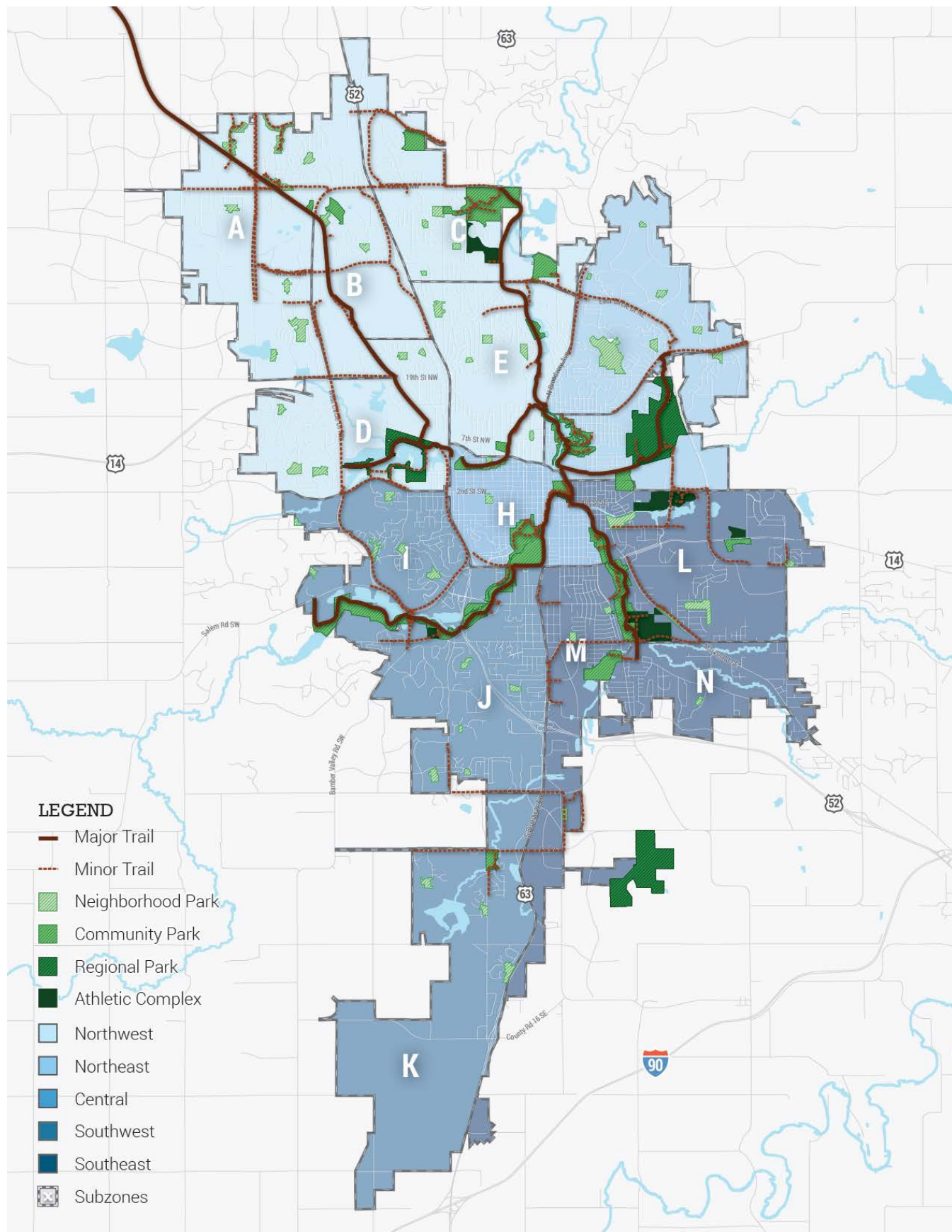
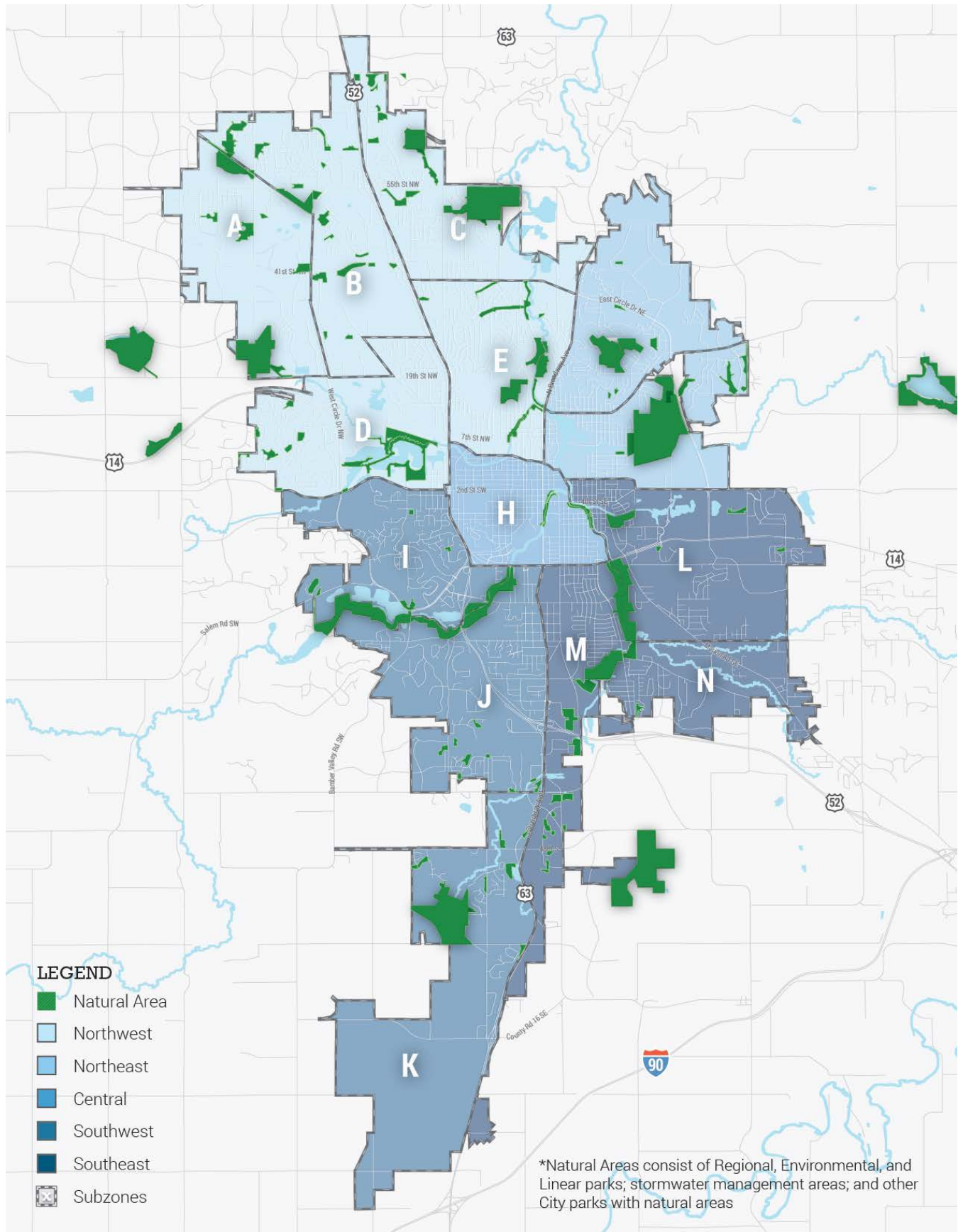


FIGURE 3-17: NATURAL AREAS OF 20+ ACRES



Programming

While there are many recreation-related programming opportunities available throughout Rochester, very few are actually administered through the Parks and Recreation Department. This is due to the exceptional working relationship the City maintains with recreation groups and associations, who do a great job of providing a variety of quality programs. Moving forward, the City's role in these programming opportunities should be more defined to ensure the City is being appropriately credited and to avoid confusion regarding who is providing the programming.

Program development and assessment should be conducted to identify participant needs not currently addressed in programming provided by associations and groups. For example, while the festivals and music events are currently very popular, community input indicates a desire to expand arts programming as well as unstructured, family-based, nature-based, and drop-in activities. More integration of technology (i.e. Wi-Fi) or additional programming in under-served or underutilized areas could also enhance parks and recreation programming. Increasing volunteerism could assist in expanding programming opportunities, but would require coordination by an increasingly over-worked City Staff.

Operations

Currently, Rochester's Parks and Recreation System is well-managed but insufficiently funded to meet community expectations. Discussions throughout the planning process acknowledge that the department is doing the best it can. However, aging infrastructure means that even well-maintained clean facilities are perceived to be in substandard condition.

As the community has grown the Parks and Recreation Department has outgrown its current facility located next to Mayo Field. Less than 3,000 square feet of space currently houses offices, locker rooms, a conference/meeting room, and a breakroom for 31 permanent staff members and approximately 30 seasonal staff members.

The site is also insufficient to address maintenance and storage needs. Several off-site locations are used to store vehicles, equipment and supplies at Essex Park, Quarry Hill Park, Plummer House, Public Works Traffic Operations Building, Judd Park, Watson Field, Fuad Mansour Sports Complex, and West Silver Lake.

A review of department financing over the last 30 years shows that the Parks and Recreation Department has been doing more with less. While the community has grown 72% in population since 1980, the Parks and Recreation Department has only been able to increase its staffing by 20%, and this includes staffing for additional, non-traditional responsibilities like flood control and parkway/landscaping maintenance.



Programming offerings in Rochester are primarily provided through partnerships with recreation groups and associations

Volunteers contribute more than 15,000 hours annually to support the Parks and Recreation Department. While additional volunteers could be used to support the Parks and Recreation Department, current staffing does not have the capacity to oversee a significant increase.

Areas of Need

As part of the needs assessment, the planning process evaluated the accessibility of parks and facilities in areas in which a potentially higher concentration of users may need to walk or ride a bike. The assessment process began by identifying areas of concentrated higher density housing; areas in which household incomes are less than the school district's threshold for free and reduced lunch; and areas in which the household diversity is greater than 30%. Areas of high (where all three characteristics exist) and moderate (where two or more characteristics are present) were mapped and analyzed to ensure access to playgrounds, informal playfields, rectangular fields, and basketball courts within about a ½-mile radius. The analysis found that needs are addressed for playgrounds but that gaps for more difficult to address as those are organized into fewer, larger complexes. It was recommended that consideration be given to locating future complexes near areas with higher concentrations of lower income families and that planning for trail access be considered. Additional access to basketball courts is needed, with particular focuses needed in subzones C, G, H, I and L.

Accessibility

Rochester Parks and Recreation Department strives to make its parks, facilities, and programs accessible to everyone in the community. However, due to the variety of parks and facilities accessibility is not able to be provided for all. Steps taken by the Parks and Recreation Department to provide accessibility include:

- » Adaptive recreation programming and partnerships with organizations for adaptive activities.
- » Provision of ADA accessible play structures in some neighborhood parks dispersed throughout the community.
- » Accessible play equipment included in new community and regional parks and as part of renovation projects.
- » Constructing ADA accessible sidewalks along the parks during new construction.
- » Installing an ADA accessible walk within the park to the play areas and other amenities where appropriate and possible.
- » New building construction meets ADA standards, while building renovations consider meeting ADA accessibility components where possible as part of the project.
- » Improvements to parking areas to facilitate accessibility.
- » Outreach to advocates for ADA accessibility in planning efforts.

FIGURE 3-18: POTENTIAL AREAS OF NEED

