Follow the city’s strategic priorities

In 2018, the St. Louis Park City Council adopted the following five strategic priorities. Look for the icons throughout this and future editions of the Park Perspective to read stories about how the city is working to meet these priorities.

St. Louis Park is committed to:

- Being a leader in racial equity and inclusion in order to create a more just and inclusive community for all.
- Continuing to lead in environmental stewardship.
- Providing a variety of options for people to make their way around the city comfortably, safely and reliably.
- Creating opportunities to build social capital through community engagement.
- Providing a broad range of housing and neighborhood-oriented development.
- Continuing to lead in environmental stewardship.
- Creating a cohesive community for all.

State primary election day: Aug. 11, 2020
Early voting (absentee) period: June 26 – Aug. 10


If you would like to vote in the state primary election on Aug. 11, you have many options to participate. Our elections office is anticipating that many voters may wish to vote by mail using the absentee voting system. Due to potentially high demand, we encourage you to apply for an absentee ballot as soon as possible. Remember, applying for or receiving an absentee ballot does not mean you have to vote using that method. You are only marked as having voted using the absentee method once a completed ballot has been accepted by either city or county election officials.

Apply now online at mnvotes.org or by contacting the elections office at elections@stlouispark.org or 952.924.2503.

How to vote by mail

**Step 1:** Apply to receive a ballot in the mail

**Online**

- Apply online at mnvotes.org by computer or mobile device.

OR

**By mail**

- Fill in the paper form, address the envelope and mail it to Hennepin County Elections.

**Step 2:** Receive your ballot and vote

- Receive your ballot during the early voting period (June 26 – Aug. 10).
- Vote your ballot. A person may assist you at your request.

**Step 3:** Return your ballot

- Return your ballot by mail or in person at city hall by Election Day.
- Track your ballot status online at mnvotes.org to see when it gets counted.

How you can help: register to vote!

The city elections office is requesting your help to ease the pressure on election systems. Please check now and make sure you are registered to vote. If you have moved, changed your name or not voted in the past four years, you may no longer be registered to vote. In addition, voters who will turn 18 between now and Election Day, had their rights restored after a criminal conviction or who have newly attained citizenship must register before they can vote.

Check your registration status or register to vote at mnvotes.org. You can also check your own registration status during regular business hours by calling the elections office at 952.924.2503. You can’t receive registration information for anyone else, such as a spouse, child, parent or sibling. Our elections staff can provide you with tools to register to vote, including providing a voter registration application if you need one. Registration materials are also available in alternate languages.

Why should you check your registration now? Registered voters take a fraction of the time to process on Election Day. Additionally, being a registered voter also helps process vote by mail requests much quicker and reduces the amount of paperwork you will have to complete with your ballot. You can help us today by taking five minutes to make sure you are registered to vote.

Precinct 9 polling place change

Voters in Precinct 9 will go to a new polling location for the August and November elections. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Knollwood Place Apartments will be closed to the public. All voters in Precinct 9 will be notified by mail of the new polling location once it is approved. As the selection process moves forward, look for updates at www.stlouispark.org/vote and on the city’s social media, @stlouispark.

COVID-19 election update

Our elections office continues to receive frequent updates from Secretary of State Steve Simon and Hennepin County Elections Manager Ginny Gelms about the upcoming election. Rest assured that our top priority remains the health and safety of our community. Planning for all possible scenarios is underway. The city must follow all state and federal rules related to the administration of elections. If changes are implemented that will affect standard election procedures, the best way to stay informed about those changes is by visiting www.stlouispark.org/vote, calling 952.924.2503 or emailing elections@stlouispark.org. We remain committed to providing a safe and secure election for all residents of St. Louis Park. We are here to help you!

COVID-19 resources for residents and businesses:

www.stlouispark.org/our-city/coronavirus
Transportation projects underway

The City of St. Louis Park has several transportation projects scheduled for this construction season. Learn more about the projects and sign up for email and text updates at www.stlouispark.org/construction-updates.

Following guidance from state health officials and to prevent further spread of COVID-19, the contractors and city staff are following work environment protocols as outlined by public health agencies, including asking employees to say home if sick, frequent hand washing and maintaining physical distance while working.

Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT)

Construction of the SWLRT line has continued over the winter with significant progress on bridges along the line and enhancements to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. Crews are working at Louisiana Avenue and Beltline Boulevard to construct trail bridges that will go over the roadway. At Wooddale Avenue, crews are building an underpass to allow the trail to go under the road. Wooddale Avenue, between 36th Street and the Highway 7 South Frontage Road, is expected to be closed from early May through early June to finish building the underpass. Look for notifications of upcoming road closures and traffic detours as work progresses at these locations. Visit www.swlrt.org to learn more about the project and to sign up for weekly updates. To report construction issues, call the 24-hour hotline number at 612.373.3933.

Monterey Drive/Beltline Boulevard/36th Street bikeway improvements

Monterey Drive, from Excelsior Boulevard to just north of Park Commons Drive, will be under construction this summer to make operations and safety improvements to the area. The intersection of Park Commons Drive and Monterey Drive will be restricted to a three-fourths access (no left turn to northbound Monterey Drive from eastbound Park Commons Drive). In addition, space for bike lanes will be added to Monterey Drive and travel lanes on Monterey Drive will be reduced from four lanes to three. These improvements will be carried forward to phase 2 that is expected to occur in 2021 from Park Commons Drive to the intersection of Beltline Boulevard.

Pavement management 2020

This year’s pavement management project is underway in the Fern Hill Neighborhood. This project is included in the capital improvement program, with improvements paid for using city funds rather than assessments to property owners.

Crosswalk safety for drivers and pedestrians

Minnesota State law is clear that pedestrians have the right of way at any marked crosswalk and at all intersections without marked crosswalks or stop lights. It is common for drivers to think they don’t need to yield to pedestrians unless they are at a signed and striped crosswalk; however, if someone is waiting to cross at any intersection, drivers will need to yield to them.

Pedestrians:
- Be aware that just because a driver sees you, it doesn’t mean they are going to stop. Pedestrians must remember to take charge of their own safety.
- As you are getting ready to cross a road, do not step off the curb unless the vehicle approaching you has enough space to come to a complete stop.
- If you are crossing a multi-lane road and a vehicle stops in the closest lane for you, stop at the end of that vehicle and look to be sure that any approaching vehicles in the other lanes stop for you as well.

Drivers:
- Stay alert and look for potential pedestrians that may want to cross the road.
- Keep in mind that in low light conditions, pedestrians can be difficult to see.
- Anticipate pedestrians around schools and parks.
- When turning, look in all directions for pedestrians or bicyclists.
- When yielding to a pedestrian, stop far enough back so the pedestrian has good sight distance past you and drivers in other lanes can also see the pedestrian in time to stop.
- Do not block crosswalks while stopped or parked.
- Be aware that a stopped vehicle in front of you may be stopped for a pedestrian, so use caution when passing that vehicle.

Bicycle safety for drivers and bicyclists

Whether driving a car or riding a bike, safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Turning across a bike lane

You must yield to approaching bicyclists before merging into and turning across a bike lane (MN State Statute 169.19). You would never merge into an adjacent travel lane without looking and yielding to approaching vehicles. Please remember to do the same for bike lanes and bicyclists.

Passing a bicycle

When passing a bicyclist, drivers must pass at a safe distance, never less than 3 feet from the bicycle (MN State Statute 169.18). Drivers can also cross a double yellow line to the left side of the roadway to pass a bicyclist going in the same direction when it is safe to do so.

Crossbikes

You can think of a crossbike like a crosswalk, but for people biking across an intersection. They are used to highlight locations where vehicles turn or merge across a bike lane. The crossbikes are colored green to draw further attention to them. When you are driving, check your blind spot for bicyclists when approaching an intersection with these markings. Regardless if a bike lane is green or not, drivers must stop and let a bicyclist pass before turning. When you bike across any intersection, use caution and assume motorists cannot see you. You’ll find crossbikes at intersections throughout the city.

Bicycling while being predictable is safe, easy and the law.

Disregarding traffic laws is illegal and unsafe. Bicyclists must:
- Stop at all stop lights and stop signs (MN State Statutes 169.06 and 169.222)
- Ride with traffic, not against it (MN State Statutes 169.18 and 169.222)
- Use a front light and rear light or reflector in the night (MN State Statute 169.222)
- Signal turns and lane changes with your arm unless both arms are needed to control the bicycle (MN State Statute 169.222)

Bicycling at traffic signals

Some traffic lights require the presence of a car to change to a green light. Bicyclists may proceed through a red light they believe is not responding if (MN State Statute 169.06):
- The bicycle has come to a complete stop
- The traffic signal stays red for an unreasonable amount of time
- The bicyclist believes the signal is malfunctioning or needs to be triggered by a vehicle to turn green
- There is no cross traffic

Rainwater Rewards program

Thinking about landscaping projects that can help manage stormwater? The city’s Rainwater Rewards program offers funding and technical guidance to residential property owners who install projects that do at least one of the following:
- Protect and restore stormwater by capturing pollutants in rainwater runoff
- Increase the watershed’s ability to store water
- Preserve and restore native plant and wildlife communities
- Protect and preserve groundwater quality and quantity

Program benefits include cost share, guidance with management practices, selecting designers and contractors, and future planning.

Project examples:
- Rain gardens
- Tree plantings
- Rain barrels
- Permeable pavement
- Green roofs
- Other innovative stormwater management practices

The program is available to residential properties in St. Louis Park. Applications are accepted year-round on a first-come, first-serve basis. To learn more, visit www.stlouispark.org/rainwater-rewards, or contact Erick Francis, water resources manager, at efrancis@stlouispark.org or 952.924.2690.
View the city’s clean energy production

Next time a beautiful sunny day rolls around, look at how much clean energy St. Louis Park’s city solar panels are producing! At the Municipal Service Center, 50 kilowatts of solar capacity were recently added to the existing 79-kilowatt rooftop solar system. View the dashboard for the 50-kilowatt system at bit.ly/MSC_Solar2, and the 79-kilowatt system at bit.ly/MSC_Solar. Together these solar systems offset approximately 25 percent of the building’s electricity consumption. This system and the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) associated with its solar output are owned by the city, which allows the city to clearly monitor its own progress towards meeting the goals of the Climate Action Plan.

The 40-kilowatt rooftop solar system at Fire Station 2 provides on average about 30 percent of the building’s total electricity consumption. View the station’s dashboard at bit.ly/FS2_Solar. Combined, the lifetime solar production of the systems at these three buildings has the environmental equivalent of planting more than 10,000 trees. This June, the new Westwood Hills Nature Center interpretive center will open with a 122-kilowatt rooftop solar system, adding more solar to the city’s portfolio.

Although other city buildings don’t have rooftop solar systems, all city operations are powered by 100 percent renewable energy through Xcel Energy’s renewable energy subscription programs, Renewable Connect and Windsource®.

Efficient building benchmarking ordinance

One of the midterm goals of the city’s Climate Action Plan is to reduce energy consumption by 30 percent in large commercial buildings, by 2030. To support this, the city passed the efficient building benchmarking ordinance in December 2019, requiring owners of commercial, multifamily and public buildings greater than 25,000 square feet – about 260 buildings – to report their annual energy and water use. Affected building owners and managers received instructions in March about how to report their data. Benchmarking only takes a few hours each year and requires no out-of-pocket expense to the building owners.

The reported data will be used by building owners to benchmark their energy consumption, compare their energy use with other buildings and identify opportunities for improvement. Increasing energy efficiency in St. Louis Park’s large buildings can help reduce the city’s carbon footprint and help it make progress toward its Climate Action Plan goals, while likely cutting owner and tenant utility bills. Technical support staff from the Hennepin County Benchmarking Collaborative are available to answer questions and provide support to property owners.

Visit www.stlouispark.org/building-benchmarking-ordinance to learn more.

Is your property at risk of flooding?

The city will give you the following information at your request:

- If your property is in or out of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) as shown on the current Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the city; in or out of the floodway; or in or near an area where the problems are not shown on the FIRM.
- Additional flood insurance data for a property, such as the FIRM zone and the base flood elevation or depth, if shown on the FIRM, and if a property is in or near an area of historical flooding and/or natural functions floodplain.

To request information, call the community development department at 952.924.2575 and provide your street address and, if available, the subdivision, lot and block number.

Learn more about flood hazards, risks and building responsibility at www.stlouispark.org/floodplain.

Historic Walker Lake facade grant program

The facade grant program offers grant assistance to businesses and property owners in the Historic Walker Lake business district to make lasting physical improvements to their building facades. Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis from May 30, 2020 – Dec. 31, 2021. Grants will pay for up to 50 percent of the total project cost up to $10,000, and will require 1:1 matching funds. Property owners, tenants and for-profit and not-for-profit businesses located in the Historic Walker Lake business district are eligible to apply for a grant. For more information or to schedule a meeting to discuss your project ideas, contact Julie Grove, economic development specialist, at jgrove@stlouispark.org or 952.924.2423.
Emergency repair grants

The city offers emergency repair grants for households below 50 percent area median income to make immediate emergency repairs, such as furnace replacement, roof repair, or plumbing or electrical emergencies. This program is administered by Sustainable Resources Center (SRC). For more information, call SRC at 612.813.5524.

Home improvement loans available

Low-interest home improvement loans can be used for most interior and exterior home improvement projects, such as roof replacement, new windows and kitchen or bath remodeling. Loans amounts range from $2,000 to $35,000. Interest rates are between 3 and 4 percent and are determined by household income. Income limits apply. The lending center at the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) administers this program for the city. Call 612.335.5884 or visit mncee.org/loans for more information.

Yard waste collection guidelines

Yard waste is collected weekly on the same day as garbage at no additional charge. Collection continues through November if weather permits.

- Yard waste must be set out by 7 a.m. to ensure collection.
- Yard waste includes garden waste, grass clippings, leaves, weeds, wood chips, twigs and branches (see size and weight restrictions below).

Set yard waste out for collection in one of these ways:

- Use your own sturdy reusable container. The container should have handles so it can be lifted by a single person.
- Use brown paper Kraft lawn bags or certified compostable bags.
- Branches must be less than 4 inches in diameter and less than 4 feet long. Put branches in a container, bag or tie in bundles with string.

Containers, bags and bundles should not weigh more than 40 pounds. Yard waste cannot be placed in organics carts, garbage carts or regular plastic bags.

Missed pickup

If your yard waste is missed, call Waste Management at 763.783.5423.

Note: Collection may be impacted by COVID-19.

Visit www.stlouispark.org/garbage-recycling for updates.

Spring Cleanup Day canceled

Visit www.stlouispark.org/cleanup for other disposal options, including curbside pickup of many items typically collected at the cleanup event.

Note: Curbside pickup option is for households with city solid waste service. Resources for all households can be found on the city’s website.

Recreational fire permits required

Permits are required for recreational fires (in-ground fire pits, portable fire pits, fire bowls, chimneys, etc.). Natural gas and propane fire pits and fireplaces do not require a recreational fire permit. Visit www.stlouispark.org/firepermit to view or print the permit application and to find complete information and regulations.

Summer event and program status

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many city events, programs and activities have been postponed or canceled.

Visit www.stlouispark.org/our-city/coronavirus for the most updated information on the status of events, programs and facilities.

For ways to stay informed with news from the city, see the article at right.

Stay informed about city news and events

Sign up for email or text alerts on several topics, including city news, road construction, community events, recreational programs, job openings, waste reduction opportunities and more. When signing up, select the St. Louis Park neighborhood you live in to receive neighborhood-specific updates. Visit www.stlouispark.org/sign-up to sign up.

Submit issues through mystlouispark

Do you know of a pothole, damaged sidewalk or streetlight that needs to be addressed in St. Louis Park? Submit these issues and many others through mystlouispark, an online tool where residents can submit, track and view nearby service requests.

The mystlouispark tool is available online at www.mystlouispark.org. You can download the app for your smartphone through Google Play or the App store by searching for mystlouispark.

Discount program for Emerald Ash Borer prevention

The city contracts with Rainbow TreeCare to treat public ash trees growing along streets and in parks. As part of this partnership, a citywide discount will be offered through 2021 to St. Louis Park homeowners to treat privately owned trees that are at least 10 inches in diameter and in good physical condition. The citywide discount provides homeowners with an affordable option for managing their ash trees for long-term protection. For more information about the discount program or to schedule a free consultation, visit www.rainbowtreecare.com/stlouispark, email info@rainbowtreecare.com or call 952.767.6920.

Spring street sweeping

The city started spring street sweeping in April. However, the statewide stay-at-home order resulted in more cars than usual on the street. All city streets will be swept again in May after the trees have leaves.

Hours of sweeping will be 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday. Avoid parking on streets during daytime hours. Although the city can’t tell you which day your street will be swept, staff can give you a date range when your neighborhood will be swept. Visit bit.ly/street-sweeping or the city’s social media, @stlouispark, for sweeping updates.

As always, street sweeping is weather permitting and completed dependent on escalated work or other emergencies.