



MRPA Says ‘Thank You’ to Founding North Star Partners

The new tiered partnership program is a win-win for both MRPA and the companies that have become founding partners.

MRPA is grateful for our long-time partners and their dedication to the Association. Together, we have offered valuable, close-to-home education for members, which has positively impacted the communities they serve.

MRPA reviewed ways to offer additional benefits for our partners. The outcome was a new partnership package adopted by the MRPA Board of Directors. The new North Star Partnership Opportunities launched earlier this year.

The North Star Partnership Opportunities is a way for corporate members to gain high visibility and engagement opportunities year-round, while allowing MRPA to provide quality educational opportunities with topics impacting our industry. The MRPA North Star partners provide the

highest level of support for the Association and parks and recreation profession.

MRPA is grateful for our founding North Star partners and their commitment to the Association: Landscape Structures/Flagship Recreation, WSB & Associates, RJM Construction, and Hiway Federal Credit Union. Please take time to read the articles that follow, and reach-out to say thank you to them for their MRPA partnership.

We also look forward to future conversations with long-time corporate members seeking more information on the North Star Partnership Opportunities. Contact Michelle Snider at 763.571.1305 x100 for more information.

2020 FOUNDING NORTH STAR PARTNERS



The Importance of Play

There is a lot of uncertainty in the world right now due to the coronavirus pandemic. One thing we are sure of is that kids, teens and adults need outdoor activity to keep themselves healthy—both physically and mentally.

By Lynn Pinoniemi, vice president of marketing at Landscape Structures Inc.

Making time for free, unstructured play is tricky in our 24/7 world, but research tells us that carving out time and space for outdoor play and activity is worth it. For children, playtime allows them to be in control and use their imaginations all while developing a range of important skills. There are benefits for teens and adults as well. Not only does

exercising outdoors lead to better physical health, but it may contribute to increased energy, reduced anger, tension and depression.

So, as communities begin to slowly and safely reopen their parks and playgrounds, it's important to offer play and recreation solutions that help individuals of all ages stay active and healthy.

Landscape Structures Inc., based in Delano, Minn., has curated a collection of dynamic playground designs to give parks and recreation departments innovative and iconic choices at an affordable price point. Included in this collection is the new Tree Tops playstructure. This new offering delivers the feel of exploring a forest canopy branch by branch.





Spark Hours of Imaginative Play

Give kids ages 5 to 12 the opportunity to explore a forest canopy branch by branch with the new TreeTops playstructure. Beyond the normal ups and downs of traditional tree climbing, this wondrously abstract playground design allows kids to navigate across wiggly bridges, roar down two different slides and so much more. Learn more at playlsi.com/great-designs.



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However, beyond the normal ups and downs of traditional tree climbing, this wondrously abstract playground design allows kids to navigate across wiggly bridges, roar down two different slides and so much more.

If an entirely new playground isn't in the current plan, adding freestanding play components is a great way to freshen up the play experience. Even better, offering spinners, bouncers and spring riders to visitors allows them to adhere to the social distancing guideline from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Extreme fitness is gaining popularity because of current T.V. shows, and these high-intensity strength training courses encourage kids, teens and adults to get and stay fit. FitCore™ Extreme obstacle courses can be designed for teens and adults, or for kids ages 5 to 12 to deliver exciting fitness challenges in community parks, schools and neighborhood gathering areas. Obstacles for 5- to 12-year-olds provide the right amount of challenge to build physical and mental agility. While FitCore Extreme obstacles designed for teens and adults invite friendly competition. Communities can choose from predesigned courses or create a customized course to challenge upper- and lower-body strength, coordination as well as problem-solving skills.

As more communities begin to reopen and create their new normal following the coronavirus pandemic, it's important to remember that everyone will benefit from outdoor play and recreation.





In addition to these extreme fitness environments, traditional outdoor fitness equipment remains popular in communities. The HealthBeat® Outdoor Fitness System targets three core fitness areas—muscle strength, cardiovascular health, and balance and flexibility—through 14 workout stations. Park planners can include all 14 stations, focus on just one or two core fitness areas, or mix and match among them.

As more communities begin to reopen and create their new normal following the coronavirus pandemic, it's important to remember that everyone will benefit from outdoor play and recreation. Choose to invest in amenities that will boost community members' physical and mental wellbeing.

Learn more about the new great designs available as well as extreme and traditional fitness equipment from Landscape Structures by visiting playsi.com. Or contact your local playground consultant—Flagship Recreation or Dakota Playground—to get started on playground and fitness environment designs that meets your community's needs.



Oh, the endless days!

Gathered together
 Reveling in the joy of play.
 Where watery wonders excite us
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 And invite us to set our imaginations free.

To learn more and inspire your outdoors, visit aquatix.playsi.com.





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Creating a Magical Space



The City of Shoreview and RJM Construction Partner on Two-Phase Shoreview Commons Park,

By Maria Manske, marketing manager, RJM Construction

PHASE I

In July, the City of Shoreview and RJM Construction teams wrapped-up Phase I of Shoreview Commons Park, a spacious recreation area with state-of-the-art amenities and features. From casual strolls around the decorative pond and formal garden area to vigorous workouts on the plaza-style skate park, there is something for everyone in this Ramsey County community to enjoy.

The city worked with LHB's design team to develop outdoor space that would complement the recently expanded community center and provide improved connections to the Ramsey County Regional Library. New trails and sidewalks throughout the

site allow residents and visitors alike to easily gain access between facilities and access to the nearby regional trail system.

Located next to the existing Haffeman Pavilion is a brand-new pond and garden area. This formal space will provide residents a beautiful venue for special events and gatherings. The extensive landscaping features many different varieties of perennials to provide color throughout the year. There are many seating areas around the new pond, which will convert to a unique ice-skating environment in the winter.

The new skate park plaza is a dream come true for all levels of in-line skaters, bikers, and of course,

skateboarders. With the quarter pipes, wedges, grind rails, and steps, it is bound to become a destination spot to test and show off skills. The skate park is designed by the noted skate park design firm Spohn Ranch from Los Angeles, California.

Shoreview Commons Park also includes a full-size soccer field, tennis and basketball courts, a neighborhood playground area and picnic shelter. The Haffeman Pavilion is used for a wide variety of events and activities, including the popular Concert in the Commons Summer Music Series.

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In 2019, the Twin Cities metro area experienced historical rainfall that presented numerous challenges for the construction team. They creatively worked through the challenges by resequencing work and some minor design revisions to ensure the project was ready for use in 2020.

PHASE II

The City of Shoreview and LHB are actively working on plans for Phase II Commons Park improvements, which will include a new destination playground and a park building and picnic shelter. The playground will provide a large-scale unique play experience and will be accessible to all ages and abilities, with a variety of unique, fun equipment. The playground and new park building will be located near the intersection of



Victoria Street and the entrance drive to the community center at the site of the former softball field. The grove of oak trees at this location will be preserved to provide a shaded environment for users of the area.



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Changing Perspectives

Navigating Recreational Engagement Efforts in a Post-pandemic Landscape

By Candace Amberg, Sr. Landscape Architect, WSB & Associates, Inc.



The importance of parks and trails has become much more fundamental to our communities' wellbeing since COVID-19 hit and stay-at-home orders were issued throughout the country. As an escape, many of us have explored parks, trails and green spaces near our homes more than ever before. How will this moment in time affect the value we place on these spaces? How will this change the way we design moving forward? How are perspectives shifting and what is the next recreational trend? While there are still many unknowns, as planners and designers we have a unique opportunity to better understand how we can create recreational opportunities while still accounting for safety measures through creative design.

A quick glance at the news or social media has the ability to instantly highlight differences in opinions, and I feel many of the issues that seem to drive us apart are based on a

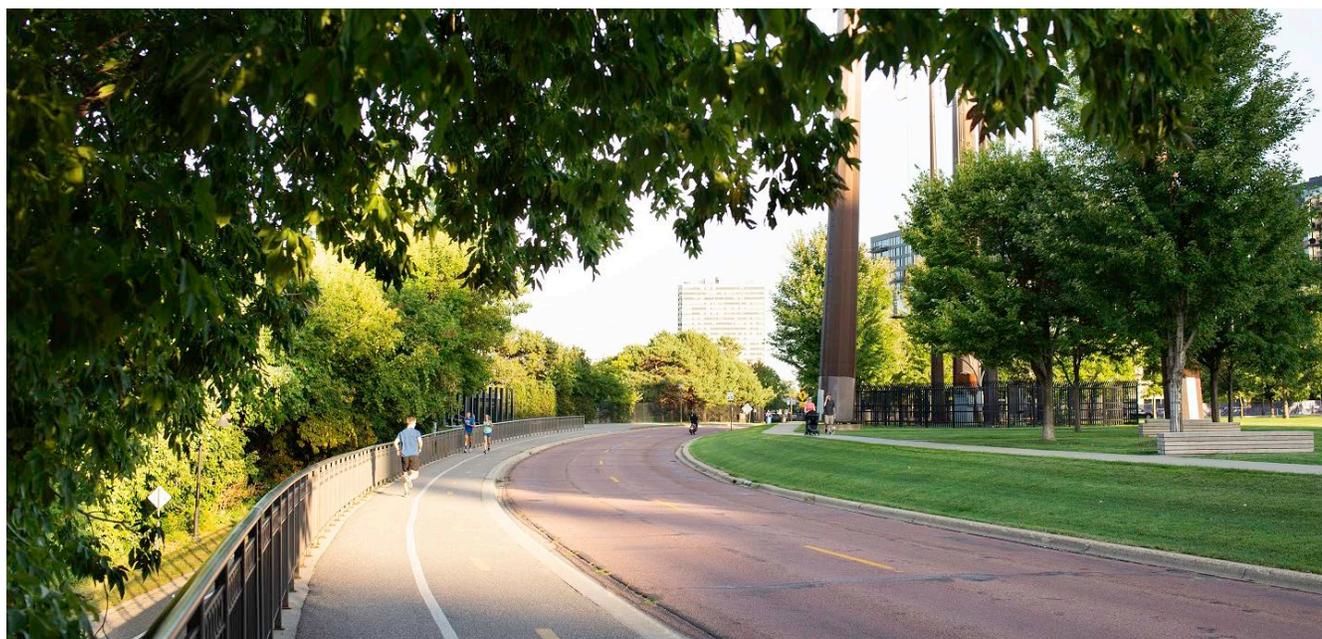
lack of understanding of the varying perspectives behind them. As I am writing this article from my home office, I gaze out my window and see the colorful crabapples blossoms against a lush green landscape that is now exploding with life, something I have anxiously awaited all winter. Others may see this as a full-blown attack of pollen ready to aggravate their allergies and altering their ability to breathe or taste for the next few weeks. Same event, different experience and therefore, different perspective.

I also see a neighborhood that, much like the trees coming out of dormancy, is full of life and activity. I see families playing with their kids out on the street, I see more bikes on the roads than vehicles, and I see people flocking to the open spaces to get some piece of normalcy back into their daily routine, as well as for stress relief and a respite from home schooling. How is this changing the

perspectives towards our parks, trails and open spaces?

I grew up on a farm in North Dakota and had ample open space all to myself. I didn't fully understand the value of this space until I moved to Minneapolis. Here, I found dense populations with shared outdoor spaces, but I also found an abundance of renowned public parks, trails and scenic settings like I had never seen before - and trees! Have I mentioned we don't have many trees in North Dakota?

I discovered that these thriving spaces were the direct result of devoted leaders who worked endlessly to develop high quality parks and trails, expanded recreational programs for diverse populations, built successful community centers, and preserved the natural resources that are fundamental to our Minnesota character. We can attribute many of the quality spaces we have today to their visionary work. Places to



West River / James I. Rice Parkway Trail

Photo: WSB



socialize, play, exercise, take in a walk, or just sit and watch the world go by.

Our collective group of designers and planners see this “time-out” as an opportunity to reach out to our community members and let them know that not only are we here for them, but that we can work together to improve their quality of life. Now is the time to be the visionary leaders for the next generations and in order to do so, we must better understand the changing perspectives of the community through meaningful engagement.

While COVID-19 has made our engagement efforts slightly more challenging, we are starting with a great toolbox of methods to keep communication efforts strong. These methods will become even more important as we continue to navigate the challenges brought on by COVID-19.

A few examples include:

- **Interactive project maps:** Interactive maps, such as Social Pinpoint, are not only convenient and easy to use, they also gather very detailed and relevant information that, in some instances, have aided our design process much more significantly than other engagement methods.
- **Story maps:** ArcGIS and ESRI Story Maps provide a visually appealing method to catch a user’s attention while portraying useful information, including tours, maps, and visual displays.
- **Social media:** Instagram, Twitter, Facebook are a few examples of social media platforms that are being heavily used to reach audiences. They are great tools to highlight awareness, bolster engagement, and gather quick ideas.
- **Videos:** Anyone with a teen understands the TikTok and YouTube

phenomenon. We have found success developing project videos as well as promoting them through social media spending to reach a broader, more targeted audience.

- **Virtual meetings:** Virtual meetings and presentations provide a great method to interact with task force groups, commissions, councils, etc., and can also reach a more flexible audience who can engage when and where it’s convenient for them.
- **Engagement events:** With a significant increase in park users during almost all days and times of the week, in-person engagement events that follow social distancing recommendations remain a valuable opportunity.

Let’s keep moving forward and take this moment to reach out to the community members, understand their perspectives and work with them to create tomorrow’s next successful project.

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Hiway Federal Credit Union – With You on the Road of Life



By Kent Wipf, Hiway Federal Credit Union

Hiway Federal Credit Union has been around for almost 90 years, starting in November, 1931 by employees from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). The Credit Union's beginning was very modest, conducting business out of a cash box, while never losing sight of its purpose: to help members succeed financially.

Founded to serve the employees of the Minnesota Highway Department, thus Hiway Federal Credit Union, Hiway has since grown the membership to include state agency employees, military service members, small businesses, individuals and families throughout Minnesota. In addition, the Credit Union supports the Minnesota Park and Recreation Foundation, which has led to a variety of mutually beneficial programs. Hiway has had the opportunity to be a presenting sponsor at the Minnesota Park and Recreation Association's Annual Conference,

giving Hiway exposure to many park and recreation professionals across the state of Minnesota. In addition, Hiway has been a part of the Foundation's scholarship program, financially supporting students who are seeking a degree in recreation, parks and leisure services.

Hiway's partnership with the Minnesota Park and Recreation Foundation has allowed Hiway to further a cause that is part of our roots: Financial Literacy and Financial Education. Through our partnership we have been able to participate in some of the Foundation's programming offered throughout the state. For example, Hiway has offered Financial Reality Fairs at the University of St. Thomas and Highland Park High School as part of the park and recreation programs in those communities. These Financial Reality Fairs allow hundreds of students the opportunity to learn about real-life

situations and financial circumstances and help them make educated decisions. The Financial Reality Fairs have been very popular and this year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we launched a "virtual" version of the reality fair which the students were able to do on their laptop, notebook or smartphone while interacting with our associates and learning the same lessons.

Like every business, the COVID-19 Pandemic has forced us to do business a little differently the past few months. Hiway is a business that exists to serve our members and to be part of the community. The past few months, we have had to adjust to how we do that and what that looks like while keeping in mind our members and our partners still need many of the same things we've always provided. So even though our lobbies were closed for a period of time, we were able to support our



Hiway Federal Credit Union President/CEO Dave Boden (left) kicks off the #CUs4U Challenge by sending cookies from Cookie Cart to workers at the Minnesota VA Hospital. At right, a VA Hospital police officer delivered the sweets to staff.

It is during times like we've all experienced the past few months, that we appreciate even more the opportunity to partner with others to support our communities and to offer financial assistance during good times and challenging times.

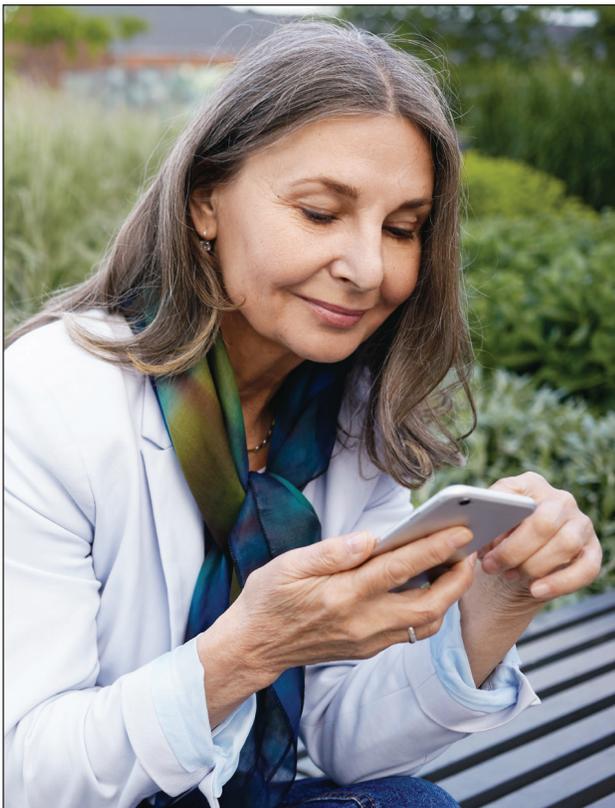
members with added online services, additional phone support and extended hours at our drive-thru windows.

We didn't forget about our many partnerships. In March, Hiway launched the #CUs4U Challenge in which we purchased meals and supplies from a local small business and then donated them to local agencies working to support people in our communities. Hiway's first donation was lunch and cookies delivered to the Minnesota VA Hospital staff. Hiway then made a lunch donation to two local YMCAs that had been turned into childcare facilities for essential workers. Part of this program was to then challenge another Minnesota credit union to do something similar. Through June, over 20 credit unions in Minnesota have participated in the #CUs4U Challenge, and countless meals and boxes of supplies have been donated to Minnesota's essential workers.

Hiway's partnership with the Minnesota Recreation and Park Foundation and the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association over the years has given us exposure across the state that we otherwise wouldn't have had. And it is during times like we've all experienced the past few months, that we appreciate even more the opportunity to partner with others to support our communities and to offer financial assistance during good times and challenging times.



Hiway associate Tina Jones (far right) helped deliver lunch that Hiway had purchased for the workers at the Midway YMCA as part of the #CUs4U Challenge



We're with you on the road of life.

Though many things in our daily lives have changed, one thing remains the same: Hiway is here to provide the financial services, resources and support you need at every stage of life. Visit us online or call us — we're available 24/7.

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