

# City of Northfield, MN

## Streets and Parks Organization Assessment

Final Report: June 17, 2024



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## Executive Summary

### Project Introduction

The City of Northfield, Minnesota (City) engaged Baker Tilly in January 2024 to conduct an organizational assessment of its Streets and Parks Division (Division) including: a review of the Division's organizational structure, staffing levels, and efficiency of staff roles and responsibilities. Through this project, the Division is identifying process improvement areas, areas at risk of significant institutional knowledge loss and level of service preparedness. This report summarizes the observations and recommendations of the organizational assessment of the Streets and Parks Division.

### Summary of Recommendations

A summary of the recommendations, attached priority, and implementation time is provided below. We do not recommend the Division attempt to implement all recommendations at once. Therefore, each recommendation contains an implementation timeframe of either within six (6) months, six (6) months to twelve (12) months, six (6) to eighteen (18) months, twelve (12) months to eighteen (18) months, or thirty-six (36) months. We recommend the Division focus attention and resources implementing recommendations that are listed as high priority and have an implementation timeframe of within six (6) months.

Priority	Organization Assessment Recommendations	Timeline
High	Restructure the Division and Increase Staffing	0 – 36 Months
High	Develop a Structured Operations Training Program	12 – 18 Months
High	Identify a Work Order Tracking System to Improve Task Distribution	6 – 24 Months
Medium	Implement Strategies to Recognize Employees	0 – 6 Months
Medium	Centralize Training for Workorder Input and GIS Proficiency	6 – 12 Months
Medium	Reassign Contract Management Responsibilities to Alleviate Workload	12 – 18 Months
Low	Hire the Maximum Number of Seasonal Staff	0 – 6 Months
Low	Analyze Overtime Expenditures to Optimize Staffing	0 – 12 Months
Low	Involve Key Staff in Vehicle Purchasing for Maintenance Efficiency	0 – 6 Months

### Scope and Methodology

To achieve the project goals Baker Tilly reviewed a considerable amount of data provided by the Division including 26 documents, conducted seven (7) individual employee interviews, two (2) focus groups, benchmarked six (6) comparable organizations and created a survey to identify staffing, performance metrics, and operational duties of comparable organizations.

This data was used to facilitate interviews and identify comparable organizations for peer benchmarking. The following serves as a summary of the data reviewed:

- Organizational charts
- Number of full-time equivalents (FTE)
- Policies and procedures
- Job descriptions
- Equipment and vehicle lists
- Performance metrics
- Key technology systems
- Prior Capital Improvement Plan study

### Summary of Focus Areas



We focused the review into two components, including:

**Staffing:** Our team conducted interviews with employees representing all functions of the Division found in Appendix A, which includes the following positions:

- Public Works Director
- Streets and Parks Manager
- Streets and Parks Supervisor
- Horticulturist/Arborist
- Administrative Associate
- Mechanic
- Operator II
- Operator I

Interviews provided our team with a clear understanding of current staffing levels. Our analysis identified existing bottlenecks and areas where additional staffing could significantly enhance the efficiency and productivity of the Division.

**Roles and Responsibilities:** Our review provided valuable insights into the communication patterns, workload distribution, and role allocation within the Division. We identified areas where workloads were heavy and conversely, areas where capacity was available. This highlighted opportunities for function reallocation to balance workloads more effectively. Our recommendations will inform future decisions on role realignment and responsibility distribution, enhancing the Division's operational efficiency and staff satisfaction.

#### Resources and Benchmarks

We relied on public sector experience, industry associations, comparable organizations, and research institutions for background information for this report. Comparable organizations were selected in conjunction with the Division's recommendations and the criteria considered included combination of services provided by similar divisions, geographic region, and the 2022 Northfield Parks & Recreation CIP Study<sup>1</sup>. Cities used for benchmarking during the organization assessment include:

City	Northfield	Stillwater	Faribault	Owatonna	Farmington	Willmar	Albert Lea	Average of Comparisons
Population <sup>2</sup>	20,790	19,394	24,453	26,420	23,632	21,015	18,016	22,155
Total Number of Employees <sup>3</sup>	114	114	207	166	98	118	138.67	140.28
Streets and/or Maintenance FTE <sup>4</sup>	6	9	12	19	11	4.6	12.54	11.36
Parks FTE	6	9	9	18.2	10	21.7	9.5	12.91
Total	12	18	21	31.2	21	26.3	22.08	23.10

Industry tools used for the organizational assessment and recommendations include:

<sup>1</sup> Comparable organizations pulled from the CIP Study included Owatonna.

<sup>2</sup> Population: Based on 2020 Census numbers pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>3</sup> Total Number of Employee and FTEs: Based on the most recent/available Annual Budget, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report or benchmark survey responses

<sup>4</sup> The Streets and Parks Manager, Streets and Parks Supervisor, and Administrative Assistant were combined to 3.0 FTE and divided amongst Streets and Parts FTEs.

- The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)
- American Public Works Association (APWA) – Minnesota Chapter
- The League of Minnesota Cities

The engagement team is confident that all Division staff connected to the assessment had an opportunity to offer insight with significant participation in the project.

### Strengths & Alignment with Best Practices

During our review, the Baker Tilly team noted several areas of strength within the Division. These are listed below in no particular order:

1. The Streets and Parks Division has undergone significant changes since hiring the new Streets and Parks Manager. Employees have reported positive improvements in various aspects of the Division's operations, including services, technologies, asset tracking practices, and internal communication.
2. The advancements in technologies such as ArcGIS Field Maps and Fleet Maintenance Pro have streamlined processes, leading to better resource management for the staff.
3. Improved internal communication through morning team meetings has fostered a more collaborative and informed workforce, which is crucial for the Division's success.

### Baker Tilly Project Team

We are pleased to have had the opportunity to serve as a strategic partner to the City on this project. The Baker Tilly project team would like to thank the City project sponsors and staff for their participation in this organizational assessment and all the effort dedicated to producing this report. We look forward to continuing to serve as your valued business advisor.

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## Observations and Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Restructure the Division and Increase Staffing

**Recommendation:** Restructure the Streets and Parks Division into separate Streets and Parks sections and increase staffing to efficiently maintain the City's existing infrastructure and beautification standards.

**Detailed Observation:** A benchmarking analysis of full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels was done for peers provided by the Division and compared with Northfield Streets and Parks Division information. An overview of this data, which can be found in Appendix B of this document, indicates the Division maintains a leaner staffing model than peers. Areas where efficiencies can be made to maximize the use of existing resources are listed below:

#### Streets and Parks Manager:

- Currently responsible for Division purchasing and 20+ outsourced contracts. Contracts are monitored well; however, the manager's ability to monitor the contracts is at its maximum capacity and additional requests could result in compliance lapses.
  - An example includes the waste hauling contract. The hauler has lapses in service resulting in no trash pickup on Fridays, leading to additional work by Operators on the weekends and the Streets and Parks Manager having to rectify the situation with the vendor.
- Performs responsibilities that could be delegated to other Division employees which takes away the ability to focus on high-level improvements, addressing personnel issues, strategic initiatives, grant funding, requests for proposals, Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), and event coordination.
  - Examples include ordering smaller tools/equipment, coding invoices, and occasionally assigning work duties. Typically, Council-related tasks are prioritized, while smaller items often get pushed to a later date.
- Covering a wide range of functions, including Streets, Fleet, Forestry, Parks, Buildings/Grounds, GIS/Data Collection, asset management, and personnel issues.
- Monthly, the Streets and Parks Manager serves as a staff liaison to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and also participates as a member of the Mill Towns State Trail Board.

#### Horticulturist/Arborist:

- Depends on Operator I/II for tree pruning, trimming and removal during the winter months and on a case-by-case basis.
- Occasionally requests other staff to help load and transport equipment and materials to job sites for tasks that require more than one employee.
- Lacks enough time for administrative tasks such as creating work orders, contacting vendors about large tree removals, identifying grants and responding to residents.
- Receives a limited number of seasonal support FTE during the summer months. Downtown Northfield is a high-traffic area that requires daily maintenance because of its businesses, riverwalk, garden plots, and flower baskets. This focus on upkeep limits the time available for other responsibilities beyond this central district.

#### Mechanic:

- Regularly works independently, which can become a liability in the event of an accident. The Mechanic oftentimes must rely on other employees to help when equipment is too heavy.

- Ideally, the Mechanic would like to add all City vehicles under their purview to streamline vehicle brands and type of equipment, as well as to improve the level of maintenance attention other City vehicles receive (e.g., oil changes).
  - There is fear that the addition of a singular mechanic would not be sufficient for the number of vehicles the employees would oversee.

**Detailed Recommendation:** The Streets and Parks Division's structure can be characterized as flat, which has resulted in operational inefficiencies. The sole Streets and Parks Supervisor is responsible for coordinating the day-to-day activities of seven (7) Operators I/II, which are responsible for the maintenance of all streets and parks infrastructure. This has led to a stretched capacity, particularly in areas such as task allocation and contract management over both sections. Consequently, the Streets and Parks Manager is often required to address these gaps, which detracts from their ability to provide effective management oversight, engage in strategic thinking, and long-range planning for City Council.

To address these challenges, we propose the following structural and staffing changes to the Streets and Parks Division:

### Division Reorganization:

We recommend creating separate Streets and Parks sections, each led by its own Supervisor. This delineation of responsibilities will enable more focused oversight and specialized guidance within each section. Streets will concentrate on streets, and downtown, while Parks will be responsible for oversight of parks, trees, and park buildings, shelters, and warming houses. Our team proposes a three-phase process that is outlined in the future state organization charts in Appendix C-E.

*Table 1 – Phased Division Reorganization: FTE Changes*

Position	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Assumed Internal Hire	Change in FTE
<b>Streets or Parks Supervisor</b>	-	+1.0 FTE	-		+1.0 FTE
<b>Lead Mechanic</b>	+1.0 FTE	-			+1.0 FTE
<b>Operator I</b>	-	+2.0 FTE	+2.0 FTE		+4.0 FTE
<b>Lead Operator</b>	+2.0 FTE	-	-	+2.0 FTE	-
<b>Net Change</b>					<b>+6.0 FTE</b>

### Implementation Timeline:

- Phase One: Introduce an Operator Lead position to provide work direction to Streets and Parks Operator I/II's. These positions will help delegate work, oversee on-site responsibilities on job projects, and help provide training. Assess the readiness of current employees for the Operator Lead before external recruitment for this position. Additionally, it is recommended to hire a Lead Mechanic to help oversee fleet assets, maintenance of vehicles, and vendor management.
- Phase Two: Restructure the current Streets and Parks Supervisor role into two separate positions and hire a dedicated supervisor for each section. The Streets and Parks Manager is encouraged to

assign the current Supervisor to the Supervisor position that aligns best with their skills. Additionally, it is advisable to employ two more Operator I staff members in response to the operational needs.

- Phase Three: Hiring two additional Operator I's is recommended to foster the growth of in-house expertise, expand team capacity, and enable the Division to internalize services that are outsourced..
- Phase Four: As the Division enhances its management of assets and metrics, it is recommended for leadership to conduct benchmarking exercises with neighboring communities and align with industry best practices. This will help identify areas where staff performance excels and pinpoint aspects of operations that may lag. Based on those results, the need for additional staffing can be determined.

This proposed reorganization is designed to streamline day-to-day operations, enhance long-range planning, and bolster management support, thereby ensuring better alignment within the Division. Additionally, this new management layer will create opportunities for career progression and help facilitate succession planning.

Furthermore, additional Operators will put the City of Northfield closer to its peers' staffing levels, which will allow them to maintain the public's quality standards. This is underscored by their maintenance of a similar number of athletic fields and playgrounds with fewer staff members. Northfield Operators manage approximately 265 acres, below the peer average of 371.25 acres. Mowing crews are on a two-week rotation for mowing neighborhood parks. If it is desired to mow each neighborhood park weekly, additional Operators may be needed to accommodate the workload.

This trend continues with snow removal services, where Northfield's use nine FTEs compared to a peer average of 17.75. Additionally, each Operator is responsible for 26 center lane miles, nearly triple the peer average of 9.79 miles.

### New Positions:

- **Streets Supervisor (Responsibilities previously held by Streets and Parks Supervisor):** Adding a Streets Supervisor to the Streets and Parks Division will separate duties and create an additional layer of supervision, ensuring both areas are managed effectively.

This new role will complement the Division of operations allowing for more focused management and resource allocation. With dedicated staffing for street maintenance, the team can better prioritize and execute projects. This separation will streamline operations such as pavement maintenance and repair, pavement markings and signing, lighting systems, traffic signals, street sweeping, and the snow removal program, leading to improved efficiency and service delivery.

Further training will empower the Streets team to handle concrete pouring and maintain sidewalks and streets, potentially eliminating the need for the Division's current concrete contract, which is worth approximately \$30,000. Additionally, they will oversee a portion of seasonal staff dedicated to street-related efforts, ensuring a cohesive and robust maintenance strategy throughout the year.

- **Parks Supervisor (Responsibilities previously held by Streets and Parks Supervisor):** This parks specific position will create focused supervision over the maintenance and repair of storm ditches and ponds, street medians and landscapes, parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, irrigation systems, park buildings, trail systems, and forestry programs. In addition to these responsibilities, the supervisor will also manage a segment of seasonal staff who are committed to park maintenance efforts.



This shift enables the Streets and Parks Division to refine its operations, with the Streets Supervisor concentrating on the streets' needs while the Parks Supervisor dedicates their efforts to aspects of park management, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of both.

- **Lead Operator:** The addition of a Lead Operator position in each Streets and Parks Division brings multiple advantages. This will introduce additional staff capable of training, and adding supervisory presence on-site, ensuring tasks are managed more effectively and staff receive guidance from experienced personnel. Furthermore, this will allow the Streets or Parks Supervisor to concentrate on strategic responsibilities such as contract management, vendor relationships, and workload distribution.

Additionally, this will create a career progression pathway, rewarding employees with job experience, certifications, soft skills, and tenure with opportunities for advancement.

- **Lead Mechanic:** The introduction of a Lead Mechanic is necessary to ensure the Division can accommodate growing service demands. This position will provide on-site supervision, ensure vehicle and equipment maintenance tasks are executed with precision, and handle vendors for outsourcing services. The possibility exists that the Division will assume responsibility for the maintenance of all City vehicles in the future. Additional assistance should allow the Division to bring some contracted work in-house.

The current structure, with only one employee maintaining 117 vehicles, is not staffed adequately to meet this. Peer benchmarks indicate an average of 143 vehicles maintained overall, with a ratio of 46 vehicles per mechanic. An overview of Maintenance Repair Units (MRU) for Northfield equipment list is located in Appendix B.

### Distribution of Duties:

- **Streets and Parks Manager:** The creation of separate Streets and Parks Supervisor roles allows the Streets and Parks Manager to reassign tasks such as purchasing, contract management, ordering tools and equipment, and coding invoices. This will allow the Manager to concentrate on strategic initiatives, grant funding, capital projects, and council-related priorities.

### Best Practices

#### *Number of Residents per Park*

NRPA's 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review reveals that Northfield is significantly outperforming the national average by providing one park for every 594 residents, compared to the typical rate of one park per 2,386 residents. This indicates a strong commitment to recreational spaces in Northfield and suggests that residents have better access to park facilities relative to many other jurisdictions. For comparison, jurisdictions with populations fewer than 20,000 people, 1,172 people are served per park<sup>5</sup>. Northfield has 35 parks and is servicing roughly 594 people per park based on a population of 20,790. This abundance of parks per capita enhances the quality of life, promotes community well-being, and reflects Northfield's prioritization of green spaces for its citizens.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review](#)

<sup>6</sup> [2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review](#)

### *Practices for Effective Local Government Management and Leadership*

ICMA's professional development programs encourage local government professionals to think in terms of leading the organization and not just managing the organization. Leadership is engaging with and inspiring others to participate in developing, achieving, articulating, and embodying a shared set of values, shared sense of purpose, and shared vision of the desired community outcome. Using ICMA practices to help train Supervisors in their new positions will be beneficial. Below are management dimensions that contribute to leading<sup>7</sup>:

- Setting clear expectations for the organization and work groups.
- Creating an empowering work environment that encourages responsibility and decision making at all organizational levels.
- Delegating: assigning responsibility to others and relying on staff.
- Coaching and mentoring: providing direction, support, and feedback to enable others to meet their full potential.
- Conducting effective performance evaluations, reviewing success and opportunities for achievement of goals and work objectives, providing constructive feedback, and identifying others' developmental needs and available ways to address those needs.
- Creating a positive atmosphere where interactions are based in respect and professionalism.

Timeline for Implementation: 0 – 36 Months

Priority: **HIGH**

<sup>7</sup> [ICMA: Practices for Effective Local Government Management and Leadership](#)

## Recommendation 2: Develop a Structured Operations Training Program

**Recommendation:** To ensure the Streets and Parks Division operates at peak efficiency and compliance, it is recommended that the Streets and Parks Manager, Streets and Parks Supervisors, and Lead Operators collaborate to develop a comprehensive operations training program to be overseen by a Supervisor.

**Detailed Observation:** The Streets and Parks Manager requests the Supervisor to annually review safety trainings and advise of any changes or additions to the training schedule. However, both full-time and seasonal employees reported receiving minimal introductory training on their roles, responsibilities, safety, and locations of City assets.

Furthermore, there is a cultural issue where tenured employees are unwilling to train others on equipment since it is not in their job duties. This can lead to a decrease in employee morale and cooperation, as the culture does not encourage knowledge sharing and mutual assistance.

Examples of Additional Equipment Training Needed:

- Street sweeper (Sweepster Broom): The Streets and Parks Manager requested Northfield's street sweeper vendor come to the Division to help train staff on the vehicle. While helpful, Operators communicated that the time on the vehicle was not enough. One Operator was later assigned to operate the vehicle with limited training and felt uneasy about the experience. It should be noted that this type of operational/equipment training and experience with the vehicle comes with time.
- John Deere and Toro mowers, Ryan Jr Sod Cutter, and Brush Bandit Chipper: Seasonal workers are tasked with operating large mowing equipment with little to no formal operational/equipment training. Interviews with Operators revealed that this can result in seasonal workers causing more work than helping due to occasionally hitting park fences and damaging City property and equipment.

The Division has begun drafting operations training programs for both full-and-part-time employees but has yet to determine who will be responsible for conducting training. Enhancing the Divisions training programs can improve operational efficiency and reduce the risk of property damage. Ensuring proper safety training and equipment can minimize the risk of workplace accidents, protecting both the employees and the Division from potential liabilities. Finally, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility can boost employee morale and productivity, and therefore support employee retention and leading to a more effective and harmonious workplace.

**Detailed Recommendation:** The Streets and Parks Manager should collaborate with the Streets and Parks Supervisors, Lead Operators and Safety Committee to develop a comprehensive operations training program tailored for both full-time and seasonal employees in the Streets and Parks Division. Additionally, the Operator II job description needs to be revised to encompass the role of aiding in the training and mentoring of colleagues, ensuring a widespread understanding of job expectations and proper equipment handling.

Once the training program is established, the Streets and Parks Supervisor will be responsible for monitoring the progress of each employee and their certifications, overseeing, and conducting trainings. It would be beneficial for the Streets and Parks Manager to collaborate with the Supervisors to assess the number of certifications that could enhance efficiency. Long-term, the Division should work to cultivate a continuous improvement environment with training becoming the norm. Ideally, this plan would cover a range of essential certifications and licenses that support the varied responsibilities within the Division, including but not limited to:

- Certified Pesticide Applicator

- Certified Irrigation Specialist
- Certified Arborist
- Certified Playground Apparatus Inspector
- Training in equipment such as snowplows, street sweepers, and mowers.

The Supervisors and Lead Operators should first seek out Operator II's with a deep understanding of the Division's equipment to provide "train the trainer" sessions. Once this internal resource is exhausted, the Supervisors or Lead Operators must proactively work with vendors to organize and conduct training for employees, ensuring compliance with all state and federal regulations.

In addition to spearheading the operations training program, the Streets and Parks Supervisors should initiate training sessions to familiarize employees with Fleet Maintenance Pro and ArcGIS Field Maps. The Streets and Parks Manager is actively testing processes to introduce these training opportunities to staff. It is advisable for the Supervisor to oversee this rollout. Their direct daily engagement with the employees positions them to manage this process, ensuring effective adoption and utilization of these tools within the Division's operations.

To foster a culture of growth and retention, the training program should also integrate incentive mechanisms that reward employees for achieving various training levels, thereby encouraging advancement within the Division.

#### Best Practices:

SHRM issued seven (7) key steps to consider when developing an effective training and development programs<sup>8</sup>:

1. Benchmarking against peer comparisons
  - a. Before agreeing to support a new initiative, organization leaders always want to know what the competition is doing and whether you are doing more or less
2. Surveying your employees
3. Aligning training with management's operating goals
  - a. Design onboarding procedures and new-hire training that ensures employees will be knowledgeable and focused on standards and customer satisfaction.
  - b. Consider contracting with vendors, and community colleges. They are trained in instructional design and can work with your organization's subject matter experts to create useful and professional instructional materials.
4. Running the program like a business
5. Weaving it into your organization's culture
  - a. When making promotion decisions, give preference to employees who completed training and performed well.
6. Continuing to innovate and evaluate the program
  - a. Continue to research the latest trends online, network with other organizations and training professionals, and revise our programs to take advantage of the latest best practices.
7. Measuring results

Timeline for Implementation: 12 – 18 Months

Priority: **HIGH**

<sup>8</sup> [SHRM: 7 Key Steps for Better Training and Development Programs](#)



## Recommendation 3: Identify a Work Order Management Program to Improve Task Distribution

**Recommendation:** To ensure a consistent workstream and optimized operations, strategic changes are proposed. These include the implementation of a work order system coupled with digital tracking of assignments for enhanced operational efficiency. Further, the development of park-specific maintenance plans is suggested, along with the assignment of subject matter experts to specific tasks.

### Detailed Observation:

#### Manual Processes

Daily work assignments are tracked on paper and are discussed during the daily meetings. Similarly, when issues in the field are brought to the attention of staff they are tracked on paper. This practice does not enable tracking over time or support retrospective analysis for process improvement.

#### Emergencies

Leadership often redirects Operators to address emergencies. However, the term ‘emergency’ is used loosely, and often apply to non-urgent matters. The emergency requests result in staff switching back-and-forth between their responsibilities with little notice. Based on conversations with Operators, there are typically three-to-five ‘emergencies’ per week. Examples are provided below.

- Operators are reassigned from their task to move branches on paths that could have been moved the next day or later in the week.
- Operators reassigned from their tasks to pick up garbage on the side of the road.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to optimize staff resource allocation to manage time-sensitive tasks more effectively. An example involved a scenario where two Operators were engaged in a project, while concurrently, other Operators were stationed in the shop awaiting the assignment of a different task. In this scenario one of the two Operators working on the project was pulled away to respond to the emergency.

#### Lack of Direction and Responsibilities

The Streets and Parks Division conducts three sets of meetings throughout the week for a quick 15–30-minute meeting:

**Monday, 8:00 – 8:30am:** Streets and Parks Manager, Streets and Parks Supervisor, Horticulturist, and Administrative Assistant

**Mondays, 7:00 – 7:30am:** Streets and Parks Manager, Streets and Parks Supervisor and Operator I/II’s

**Monday – Friday, 7:00am:** Streets and Parks Supervisors and Operator I/II’s

In one instance, Operators were dispatched to replace a street sign, but were not informed that the post was also damaged. This resulted in a return trip to the shop for additional materials. The full extent of the task was not apparent to the Supervisor due to their limited capacity to review each request in detail. As the Supervisor often assigns work based on preliminary information, without having personally assessed the situation in the field, it is not uncommon for Operators to encounter unforeseen issues, such as a damaged sign post. This lack of comprehensive information upfront can necessitate additional trips to the shop to obtain all materials required to complete the task, including those for unexpected repairs.

The meetings are positively received by all staff, both field and office, indicating a foundation of effective communication. Yet, there is a desire for more clarity regarding the distinct positions and responsibilities for the week. For example, tasks typically take around 1.5-2 hours to complete. This results in employees

frequently returning to the Division and waiting for additional instructions. Improved planning and communication could lead to better-prepared staff and more sustained task allocation.

**Detailed Recommendation:** The Streets and Parks Division has established a commendable foundation of communication and task distribution. The creation of a work order management program will provide leadership with data to support staff resource optimization and provide a clearer understanding of assets and work order assignments to build upon and continue the process and efficiency improvements already made.

### *Implementing a Work Order System*

A robust streets and parks work order system is essential for the Division to streamline task assignments, track maintenance progress, and ensure efficient utilization of resources. By integrating software that supports budget requirements and work request management, the Division will enhance communication, improve operational efficiency, and provide a more organized and responsive service delivery.

1. Select a system that aligns seamlessly with the nature of work of Streets and Parks. Given the distinct operational needs, it may be a different system than what other divisions in the Public Works Department utilize. Conducting due diligence through a needs assessment, request for proposal, system demos and walkthroughs is essential to gauge the capabilities of each system. Involving a member from Information Technology in this process is vital to ensure the chosen system(s) integrate well with Northfield's existing technical infrastructure.
2. Implement a comprehensive work order tracking system. This system will provide supervisory staff with a structured maintenance plan, spanning daily to annual tasks, enabling them to allocate workloads based on priority and staff availability.
3. Develop and adhere to maintenance plans for each parks and streets. The purpose of maintenance plans is to identify and develop standards and frequency for all City property and facilities. These standards would be provided to current Operators to inform them of the expectation and serve as guidelines in the completion of all related maintenance work. The plans should reflect the expectations of City management and maintain flexibility for modifications.

### *Asset Management Program*

1. Successful asset management programs are governed by an asset management policy, frequently updated, incorporate service level targets, and consider prioritization and budget <sup>9</sup>.
2. The Division should take immediate steps to create an asset management policy which will govern how the program is approached, its objectives, and ensures compliance with local, state and federal regulations.
3. Work to inventory all large equipment, vehicles, Division maintained infrastructure, and other large assets. The inventory should include a preventative maintenance framework, estimated replacement period, hours operated, last serviced date, current condition, and estimated replacement cost. Once

<sup>9</sup> APWA – Minnesota Chapter: Asset Management: A Tool for Long-Term Infrastructure Planning and Budgeting

the initial inventory is created, Supervisors will be responsible for updating on a reoccurring basis, annually as a minimum requirement.

4. Establish and diligently utilize an inventory and asset management program within the Division to ensure the system effectively tracks the information necessary for making informed management decisions regarding equipment and other assets. Inconsistency and lack of reliable updates will render the asset management plan ineffective.
5. To ensure consistent service delivery and accountability, the Streets and Parks Manager and Mechanic could begin creating service level agreements (SLAs) with other City Departments for fleet and equipment maintenance. These SLAs will define the expected level of service, response times, and maintenance schedules, providing a clear framework for collaboration and performance measurement.
6. Assign the Streets and Parks Manager to review the asset management plan on an annual basis. The plan will be used to inform the City's strategic plan, capital project planning, and annual budget.

To further improve efficiency and ensure a steady stream of work for Operators, the following improvements are recommended:

#### *Detailed Task Allocation for Weekly Meetings and Delegation of Duties*

- Provide Operators with a detailed list of responsibilities every morning to prevent frequent returns to the Division for additional instructions. More detailed information regarding responsibilities during the morning meetings with the Streets and Parks Supervisor could prevent situations where Operators are not fully equipped to handle tasks.
- Replace the practice of tracking daily work assignments on paper with a digital system to ensure that no information is overlooked or misplaced. This would also allow employees to have a full day's worth of work planned out, reducing downtime. Work order data should be categorized and analyzed in the future for better understanding of approximate time and staff resource needs.
- Establish a clear definition of 'emergency' needs to only reassign Operators for truly urgent matters. Efficient delegation of emergency tasks will prevent unnecessary disruptions in the workflow.
  - a. Create a layout of what would constitute an emergency versus tasks that can be completed at the end of the workday or week by categorizing tasks by low, medium, and high. When creating the categories, consider safety risk, public perception, and urgency.

#### *Assigning Subject Matter Experts to Responsibilities*

- Designate employees to oversee specific tasks such as patching or mowing could distribute responsibility more evenly and improve the planning structure. This would reduce the heavy reliance on the Streets and Parks Supervisor and Manager for direction.

Implementing these recommendations will result in a more efficient and effective Division, with clear task allocation, improved planning structure, and minimal disruptions in workflow.

#### *Best Practices*

The League of Minnesota Cities provided information on how to best document street maintenance in

2022<sup>10</sup>. A similar checklist should be introduced to Parks staff. They state that maintenance should be documented and filed so that records are easily accessible. It is also important to provide training, so City employees complete the forms properly. Ideally, cities should be able to determine which employee did what maintenance on what street at what time. Records could include:

- Inspection records
- Complaint records/work orders
- Daily logs
- Memos
- Time sheets

#### Benchmark Work Order Systems

Four of five peer benchmarks use a system/software for tracking requests and work orders, those included:

- Cartegraph
- GIS developed in-house
- Tyler Technologies
- OpenGov Asset Management

Timeline for Implementation: 6 – 24 Months

Priority: **HIGH**

<sup>10</sup> [Information Memo: Acquisition and Maintenance of City Streets](#)



## Recommendation 4: Implement Strategies to Recognize Employees

**Recommendation:** Baker Tilly recommends implementing strategies to recognize employees for the work completed around the City. This includes community engagement initiatives, recognition programs and creating opportunities for constructive conversation and feedback.

**Detailed Observation:** Employees feel they are not acknowledged for their achievements by City leadership and residents. This is common amongst Public Works, Streets, and Parks employees based on our experience nationally. Examples of responsibilities which go unrecognized include:

- Set-up/tear down of community events
- 2:00am street sweeping and snow plowing
- Weekend trash pick-up
- Changing downtown banners

Minimal or irregular feedback may be contributing to the low morale amongst some Division employees. It needs to be acknowledged that since starting, the Streets and Parks Manager has made tremendous strides in building employees trust and has begun identifying ways to boost morale and recognition, which includes posting their efforts on social media and periodic team lunches purchased by leadership following large projects.

**Detailed Recommendation:** To assist with internal efforts to boost Division morale, our team has provided the following considerations:

### Provide Opportunities for Constructive Conversation:

This dialogue is predicated on the premise that all participants perceive their voices as being acknowledged. Soliciting insights from employees serves as an effective strategy to foster engagement. It is important to be deliberate in identifying common language and processes that encourage staff to share respectful communication and impart their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences, creating a positive environment.

### Formal Recognition Program:

Regular recognition of achievements, especially for tasks performed outside of regular working hours, will validate your employees' commitment and increase their motivation levels. Implement a formal recognition program that acknowledges the hard work and dedication of your employees. In addition to the recognition on social media and through team luncheons, the recognition program could include monthly awards, public acknowledgments, and continuing features on the City's website and social media platforms. This will provide visible appreciation for their efforts, boosting morale and reinforcing their value to the City and residents.

### Community Engagement Initiatives:

Create initiatives that involve community participation in recognizing the efforts of the Division. This could involve 'Adopt a Park' programs, community clean-up days, or appreciation events where residents can meet and thank the workers directly. Direct feedback and appreciation from the community serve as powerful motivators and affirm the importance of the employees' work to the City's well-being. Strengthening community ties will foster a sense of pride and ownership, leading to increased job satisfaction among employees.

### Employee Survey:

- Understanding employee perspectives is crucial for fostering a supportive and efficient work environment, ultimately benefiting the Division's operations and the community it serves. A survey

will identify strengths and weaknesses in the Division, providing a clear roadmap for enhancements. Insights gained will lead to targeted improvements, boosting service quality and employee satisfaction.

#### Best Practices:

Below are best practices from SHRM<sup>11</sup> for service-related awards:

- Recognition Awards:**  
 Keeping an awards program fresh and engaging is crucial for reinforcing the behaviors an organization values. Rather than merely focusing on tenure, awards should highlight the specific contributions an employee has made over time, thus reinforcing the organization's values. Appreciation is key; employees may express a desire for monetary rewards, but feeling valued is paramount. According to the 2008 World of Work study<sup>12</sup>, 76% of employees cited feeling valued as the most important factor for happiness at work, with recognition and appreciation following closely behind.
- Involvement of Managers:**  
 Personalized gestures, such as handwritten notes detailing an employee's valued contributions, can have a profound impact because of the thoughtfulness they convey. It is recommended that Human Resources Departments encourage managers to take an active role in presenting awards, rather than doing it themselves, to ensure the recognition is personal and meaningful.
- Recognition Events:**  
 Whether it is a grand annual event or departmental celebrations for larger organizations, the distribution of awards should align with what is most practical and impactful for the employer. Personalized recognition is deemed 'priceless' and can leave an impression on employees, enhancing their sense of belonging and value within the department.

Timeline for Implementation: 0 – 6 Months

Priority: **Medium**

<sup>11</sup> [SHRM: Personalized Recognition Is 'Priceless'](#)

<sup>12</sup> [World of Work Report 2008, International Institute for Labor Studies](#)

## Other Observations – Medium & Low Priority

During this review, our team noted additional observations which were considered to possess medium or low priority and were unlikely to have significant immediate impact on the Division.

#	Priority	Summary of Observation	Recommendation
1	MEDIUM	<p>The following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the Division's maintenance and request systems, detailing their respective impacts on asset management. Additionally, it underscores the importance of ongoing work order training.</p> <p><b>Fleet Maintenance Pro</b> The adoption of Fleet Maintenance Pro has greatly improved asset management for vehicle maintenance and repairs. Despite the additional time, the Division's Mechanic has effectively integrated the system into daily routines and values the software's capabilities. Fleet Maintenance Pro has empowered employees with vital information, improving operational efficiency. While the work order system needs further enhancements, continued training and usage are expected to refine its capabilities. The software is currently used for inventory maintenance of larger equipment, tools, and warranties, and will support informed purchasing and maintenance planning decisions.</p> <p>The individual responsible for work order entries in Fleet Maintenance Pro communicated that training other staff would be beneficial. Requests for maintenance issues are typically communicated in passing requiring the employee to document on a piece of paper to avoid losing record of the issue.</p> <p><b>ArcGIS Field Maps</b> The Division recently started using ArcGIS Field Maps, a mobile solution that enables efficient data collection, mapping, and collaboration. It is intended to streamline workflows, improve asset management, and enhance communication. As the system is used more often and capabilities are understood it could improve the efficiency of staff.</p>	<p>Invest resources in comprehensive training for staff on internal fleet, GIS tools, and workorder system to improve operational efficiency.</p> <p>This will not only modernize operations by moving away from outdated paper-based methods but also decentralize the workload, preventing bottlenecks at a single staff member.</p>

#	Priority	Summary of Observation	Recommendation
2	MEDIUM	<p>The Streets and Parks Manager is the project manager for 16 annual maintenance contracts averaging \$36,000/each and six (6) other large projects including park reconstruction, park master plans, and a streetlight replacement totaling \$9.3 million. This involves soliciting bids, preparing contracting, overseeing orders, contract lifecycle management, and maintaining vendor relationships. Tree removal, trimming and planting are coordinated by a separate employee, though the Streets and Parks Manager helps with bids.</p>	<p>To optimize operations, we advise delegating contract management duties to Supervisors skilled in vendor relations, bid solicitation, and contract oversight.</p> <p>Training provided by the Streets and Parks Manager will be essential to turning over this responsibility, however, this shift will alleviate the Manager's workload enabling a broader, long-term strategic focus rather than day-to-day contract administration.</p>
3	LOW	<p>The Division lists 17 possible seasonal positions throughout the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mowers (2)</li> <li>• Waterers (4)</li> <li>• Summer Laborers (4)</li> <li>• Winter Laborers (2)</li> <li>• Gardeners/Grounds (2)</li> <li>• Compost Attendant (3)</li> </ul> <p>Roughly ten of these positions were filled last year, aligning with other benchmark communities. Seasonal workers are primarily helping the Horticulturist. The Horticulturist has seasonal help from May to August, helping with tree staking, mulching, watering flowerbeds and baskets throughout the City, and small tree removal (cutting/digging). These seasonal workers provide limited assistance with Streets and Parks responsibilities.</p> <p>There is one Operator responsible for field maintenance. This includes mowing, painting, and general maintenance of the City's baseball, softball, football, lacrosse, and soccer fields. It was also noted that the City will be overseeing an additional seven soccer fields this summer. This is an area where other</p>	<p>Continue to recruit for the 17 approved positions for seasonal staff to assist during peak seasons. The seasonal staff should report to either the Park or Street Supervisors depending on their role.</p> <p>This strategy will ensure the efficient management of summer maintenance for downtown areas, streets, and parks. By doing so, the workload of full-time employees will be alleviated, allowing them to focus on projects requiring additional technical skills.</p> <p>Review compensation levels for competitiveness and opportunities for increased advertising open positions with local colleges, community colleges and high schools. Consider partnership with</p>



#	Priority	Summary of Observation	Recommendation
		<p>communities have utilized seasonal employees. Of the five peer benchmarks identified, four responded. All four peers use seasonal help during the summer: Albert Lea (5 – 9 seasonals), Owatonna (15), Faribault (1 – 4), and Willmar (25+).</p> <p>Tasks included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mowing and ballfield maintenance</li> <li>• Playfield inspection</li> <li>• Special projects</li> <li>• Event support</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Daily cleaning</li> <li>• Trash pick-up</li> <li>• Bathrooms/shelter preparation</li> <li>• Street maintenance</li> </ul> <p>The lack of seasonal help with Streets and Parks related duties results in heavier workloads for full-time employees. This is particularly impactful during the summer months when full-time employees are more likely to use PTO, directly affecting crew sizes and the completion of tasks. Ensuring adequate staffing levels is crucial for the efficient operation of the Division and seasonal help plays a significant role in managing workloads, particularly during peak periods. Without sufficient seasonal help, full-time employees may face increased stress and burnout, potentially impacting the quality of work and employee morale.</p>	<p>high school training programs for pipeline development.</p> <p>Operating at full seasonal capacity allows the City to uphold its standards on park beautification and the high traffic areas along the banks of the Cannon River.</p>
4	LOW	<p>An overtime and leave analysis were conducted with data provided by the Division. A full breakdown can be found in Appendix H. The following highlights our findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated total overtime cost of operators from 2021-23<sup>13</sup>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2021: \$27,350</li> <li>○ 2022: \$35,000</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>It's recommended that the Streets and Parks Division conduct a thorough analysis of its overtime hours and</p>

<sup>13</sup> The hourly rate used to calculate the cost of overtime was based on grade K step six pay scale.

#	Priority	Summary of Observation	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2023: \$31,200</li> <li>• Estimated total overtime hours for operators from 2021-23<sup>14</sup>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2021: 765</li> <li>○ 2022: 950</li> <li>○ 2023: 825</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Estimated annual available hours per Operator<sup>15</sup>: 1,879 hours</li> </ul> <p>Since the Division is facing staffing challenges, it leads to additional overtime hours for Operators, which could lead to increased fatigue. Moreover, this issue is compounded when staff take time off.</p> <p>A benchmark survey was also conducted, and the following information was received from peer organizations. Peers indicated the following overtime use information for their Streets employees based on this question “How many overtime hours did Streets staff work last year?”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Albert Lea: less than 200 hours</li> <li>• Willmar: 500 hours</li> <li>• Owatonna: 100 hours</li> </ul> <p>Peers indicated the following overtime use information for their Parks employees based on this question “How many overtime hours did Parks staff work last year?”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Albert Lea: less than 100 hours</li> <li>• Willmar: less than 25 hours</li> </ul>	<p>expenditures in future years. The overtime worked by Division Operators is higher than in many of the peer communities surveyed. The addition of Operators in future years could reduce the overall amount of overtime hours.</p> <p>The analysis in Appendix H provides additional information on the overtime hours worked, estimated overtime cost, average leave hours used, and estimated costs of a new Operator.</p>

<sup>14</sup> Hours do not include overtime hours worked where employees elected to receive deferred comp time.

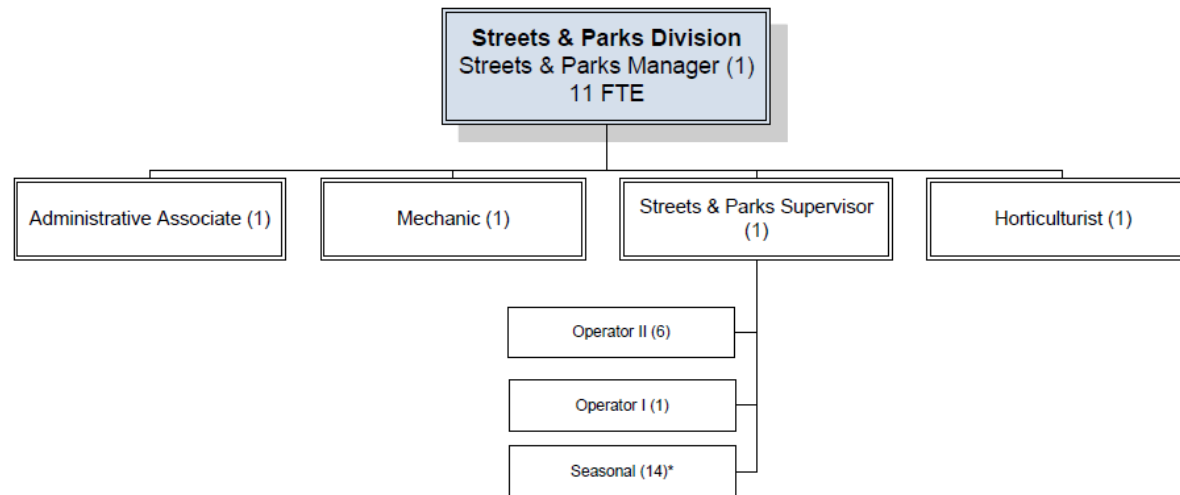
<sup>15</sup> The average working hours for an Operator, calculated to be 1,879 hours per year, does not factor in overtime hours. To arrive at this figure, we first determined the average time off and holiday time on a monthly basis. This was then subtracted from the standard annual full-time hours of 2,080. It is important to note that our calculation of the average working hours per year is based on a 38-month period, spanning from January 2021 to February 2024. This differs from a typical 36-month calculation, and the adjustment was made to account for the timing of this analysis.

#	Priority	Summary of Observation	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owatonna: budgeting \$20,000/annually. Owatonna hosts a national softball tournament which typically calls for 200 hours of project overtime.</li> </ul>	
5	LOW	<p>The Streets and Parks Division's diverse vehicle fleet, including brands like Ford, John Deere, CAT, and Chevy, presents challenges due to the electronic systems requiring brand-specific software for maintenance. The high cost of software subscriptions, up to \$1,500 per equipment, and the infrequency of use make it financially burdensome. The mechanic's request for input in vehicle purchasing highlights the need for a more standardized fleet to simplify maintenance and reduce costs. Streamlining the fleet could lead to more efficient operations and align with the Division's maintenance capabilities.</p>	<p>Maintaining a diverse fleet of vehicles has its barriers that need to be considered prior to purchase<sup>16</sup>. It is recommended that the Streets and Parks Manager, Supervisor, and Mechanic are involved in the process to ensure staff are able to repair and maintain the City's fleet.</p>

<sup>16</sup> [Northfield's Climate Action Plan](#): Details an internal fleet assessment project to assess vehicles that can be replaced with electric models. The Streets and Parks Division is unable to maintain electric vehicles in their current building due to state code requirements. Any electric vehicle maintenance would have to be contracted out. The building has the ability to service hybrid vehicles.

## Appendix A – Current State Organization Structure – Streets and Parks Division

The chart below shows the current state structure of the Streets and Parks Division. A well-documented organizational chart is crucial for clarity, transparency, and effective decision-making, ensuring that roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines are clearly delineated. It provides an insightful overview of the Division's hierarchy and the interrelationships between different roles and offices, thereby facilitating efficient communication and coordination within the organization.



**Color Key:**

\* = Not included in the FTE count



## Appendix B – Benchmark Survey Results

The charts below contain information from a benchmark survey developed by Baker Tilly using peers identified by the Streets and Parks Division. It provides a detailed comparison of how Northfield stands in relation to staffing for street and park metrics. Benchmarking against peers is crucial as it typically reveals areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, thereby guiding strategic decision-making and fostering continuous improvement.

We acknowledge that obtaining metrics from peers can be challenging; however, our team made multiple attempts to gather information directly from the peers or through publicly available budget documents on their respective websites. We did not receive responses from Stillwater and Farmington.

*Table 2 – Parks Metrics Benchmark Data*

City	Northfield	Faribault	Owatonna	Willmar	Albert Lea	Average of Comparisons
Total Parks FTE	6.0	7.5	14.0	9.0	9.5	10.0
Annual Number of Parks Related Work orders	1,110 <sup>17</sup>	500	1,300	63	-	621
Total Acreage of Parkland Mowed	265	390	225	400	470	371.25
Acreage of Parkland Mowed per FTE	44.16	52	16.07	44.44	49.47	40.49
Do you have Forester or Horticulturalist?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Who handles tree inspections and EAB <sup>18</sup> infestation?	Horticulturist	Parks Staff	City Forester <sup>19</sup>	Public Works Foreman	Senior Maintenance Staff <sup>20</sup>	N/A
Miles of Unpaved Trails	32 miles	-	25 miles	2 miles	-	-
Miles of Unpaved Trails per FTE	5.33	-	1.78	0.22	-	-

<sup>17</sup> This is a combination of both Streets and Parks requests.

<sup>18</sup> EAB: Emerald Ash Borer. This is an invasive insect that has killed millions of ash trees throughout the eastern half of the U.S. and southeastern Canada.

<sup>19</sup> The Street Department has a tree crew and designated City Forester. The City Forester inspects boulevard trees for EAB; however, the City does not inspect trees on private property. The Parks Department handles trees within parks.

<sup>20</sup> The Senior Maintenance Staff is shared with the Assistant Public Works Director

City	Northfield	Faribault	Owatonna	Willmar	Albert Lea	Average of Comparisons
Number of Playgrounds	21	23	16	28	26	23.25
Number of Playgrounds per FTE	3.5	3.06	1.14	3.11	2.7	2.50
Number of Baseball and Softball Fields Maintained	13	14	26	17	11	17
Baseball and Softball Fields Maintained per FTE	2.10	1.86	1.85	1.88	1.15	1.68
Number of Rectangular Fields Maintained	16	5	17	4	2	7
Number of Rectangular Fields Maintained per FTE	2.66	0.66	1.21	0.44	0.21	0.63
Number of Park Shelters	6	13	16	12	12	13.25
Number of Park Shelters per FTE	1.0	1.73	1.14	1.33	1.26	1.36
Public or Community Events Last Fiscal Year	30	45	N/A <sup>21</sup>	25	46	38.67
Public or Community Events Last Fiscal Year per FTE	5	6	-	2.77	4.84	4.53
Number of overtime hours worked last year	412.88 <sup>22</sup>	-	-	<25	<100	-

<sup>21</sup> Roughly 30 hours of additional work.

<sup>22</sup> The total number of 825.75 overtime hours was divided by two and split between streets and parks.

*Table 3 – Streets Metrics Benchmark Data*

City	Northfield	Faribault	Owatonna	Willmar	Albert Lea	Average of Comparisons
Total Streets FTE	6.0	9	17	24	12	15.5 <sup>23</sup>
Total Snow Removal Staff	9	15	22	20	14	17.75
Annual Number of Streets Related Work orders	N/A <sup>24</sup>	286	350	30	-	222
Pavement Condition Index	75	-	72.71	-	72.5	72.60
Total Count Of Assets, Both Small Equipment And Tools	150	52	500	100	-	217.3
Number of Center Lane Miles	156	115	163	130	125	133.25
Center Lane Miles per FTE	26	12.77	9.58	5.41	10.41	9.79
Number in Tons of Bituminous Asphalt Streets Staff Placed Last Fiscal Year?	N/A	1,100	6,000	500	-	2,533.3
Number of Mechanics	1	3	4	2	2	2.75
Vehicles Maintained by Staff	Streets and Parks <sup>25</sup>	All City Equipment	All City Equipment	All City Equipment	All City Equipment	N/A
Number of Vehicles Maintained	117	160	200	70	-	143.3
Number of Vehicles	117	53.33	50.00	35	-	46.11

<sup>23</sup> Stillwater did not provide metrics and was left off this list. They have 8.0 FTE. Including Stillwater, the average of comparisons equals 14.0 FTE

<sup>24</sup> Northfield began tracking work orders within the last calendar year and does not have an accurate count to measure against.

<sup>25</sup> The Mechanic will be assigned other Division vehicles on a case-by-case basis.

City	Northfield	Faribault	Owatonna	Willmar	Albert Lea	Average of Comparisons
Maintained per FTE						
Miles of Sidewalks Maintained	71 <sup>26</sup>	-	280	30	80	130
Miles of Sidewalks Maintained per FTE	11.83	-	16.47	1.25	6.66	8.13
Traffic Signs Maintained	2,617	>500	4,000	1,000	N/A <sup>27</sup>	1,833.3
Manholes Maintained <sup>28</sup>	N/A	-	3,100	130 - 150	-	-
Number of overtime hours worked last year	412.88 <sup>29</sup>	-	100	500	<200	266.67

*Staffing increases based on benchmark data:*

#### Mechanic

Maintenance and repair units (MRUs) are factors used to index the maintenance and repair requirements of different vehicle classes relative to a base class, typically a passenger car. They provide a more precise approach to fleet staffing by accounting for the size and composition of the fleet. MRUs are calculated by multiplying the MRU factor for each vehicle class by the number of vehicles in that class, summing them to get the total MRUs for the fleet. This helps convert a mixed fleet size into vehicle equivalent size, which is then used to estimate technician and indirect staffing requirements.

<sup>26</sup> Northfield maintains the sidewalks, but residents oversee their own snow removal.

<sup>27</sup> Traffic signals are maintained by Engineering Department staff and outside electricians.

<sup>28</sup> Faribault and Albert Lea maintain their cities manholes through the use of their Utilities Department.

<sup>29</sup> The total number of 825.75 overtime hours was divided by two and split between streets and parks.

Below is a table summarizing Northfield's vehicles and equipment based on ratios provided by Automotive Fleet<sup>30</sup>:

Northfield's MRU Computation			
Class	Vehicles	MRU Factor	MRUs
Pickups	11	1.5	16.5
Trailers	11	0.6	6.6
Utility Equipment	10	0.6	6.0
Buckets	9	3.2	28.8
Mowers	8	1	8.0
Tractors/Skid Loaders	6	1.4	8.4
Trucks/Semi	5	3.6	18
Loaders/Grader	5	3.8	19
Attachments/Shop Equipment	52	0.6	31.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>		<b>142.5</b>

Converting the MRUs into hourly equivalents by multiplying the fleet size expressed in MRUs times the number of hours needed to maintain the base unit, provides the total number of MRUs required for fleet maintenance. Thus, if the MRU factors had a basis of 13.3 hours per vehicle/equipment piece, Northfield, with a total of 117 vehicles and equipment totaling 142.5 MRUs, would require 1,895.25 technician hours for maintenance and repair.

Using the number of hours available per year for Operators, the Mechanic will have roughly 1879 hours left to complete their responsibilities (see Appendix H for calculation). Based on our interview, the Mechanic spends 70% of their time on technical work and maintenance, leaving 1,315.3 hours. This falls below the 1,895.25 hours required for maintenance and report of Northfield's vehicles.

The addition of one additional FTE in this area would allow the Division to properly maintain the current fleet of vehicles, but also begin helping with other City owned vehicles. With the addition of one more FTE, Northfield has 2,630.6<sup>31</sup> hours available for vehicle maintenance per year. After fulfilling the existing requirement of 1,895.25 hours for their current fleet, they have 735.35 hours left<sup>32</sup>. The following is an example of how the City can use this information to determine the additional number of vehicles their two Mechanics could service: Dividing the 735.35 hour surplus by the 13.3 hours needed per MRU, Northfield can maintain approximately 55 additional patrol vehicles, each with an MRU of 1.5.

### Operator

Northfield's staff, despite being smaller in number, effectively maintains a comparable quantity of athletic fields and playgrounds. The workload difference becomes clear with the mowing responsibilities; Northfield's team handles 265 acres, less than the peer average of 371.25 acres. A similar pattern is observed in snow removal, where Northfield allocates nine FTEs, while the average among peers is 17.75. Moreover, each Northfield Operator oversees 26 center lane miles, which is almost three times the peer average of 9.79 miles.

<sup>30</sup> [Automotive Fleet: How to Calculate Technician-to-Vehicle Ratios](#)

<sup>31</sup> This number represents 70% of 2080 hours used for technical work equaling 1,315.3 multiplied by 2.0 FTE

<sup>32</sup> Subtract the current required hours from the adjusted total available hours with the additional FTE to find the surplus hours: 2,630.6 - 1,781.25 = 849.35 hours.



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By introducing four more FTEs, Northfield Operators could see their center lane mile responsibilities decrease from 26 to 15.6 miles, and their mowing duties would be reduced to 66 acres from the peer average of 40.49 acres. Although these numbers still indicate a greater workload compared to their peers, the Northfield Operators' strong work ethic and efficiency make this workload more manageable. Such a change would not only ease the current demands but also pave the way for further beautification efforts in the downtown area and around the City.

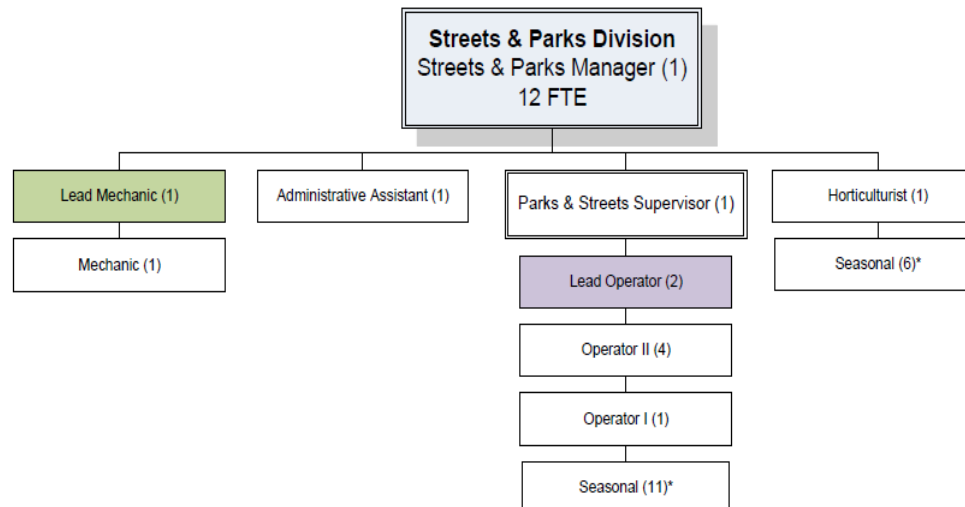
## Appendix C – Future State Organization Structure – Phase One

Phase one of the proposed future state organizational chart introduces Operator Leads to offload Supervisors from day-to-day field oversight, allowing them to focus on larger divisional needs such as overseeing contracts, assigning responsibilities, and managing vendors and payments. Operator Leads will also ensure that field crews are productive, stay on task, while also providing immediate access to expertise for any questions that may arise, thereby streamlining field operations and maintaining efficiency. Assess the readiness of current employees for the Operator Lead before external recruitment for this position is considered to help alleviate additional headcount. Additionally, it is recommended to hire a Lead Mechanic to help oversee fleet assets, vehicle maintenance, and vendor management. Based on the benchmarking from peers and the possibility of more City vehicles being maintained within this Division, a second mechanic is needed.



### Phase One

Position	Change in FTE
Streets Supervisor	+1.0
<b>Net Change</b>	<b>+1.0</b>



#### Color Key:

**Green Box:** New Position

**Purple Box:** Internal Promotion

\* = Not included in the FTE count

**New FTE Count: +1**

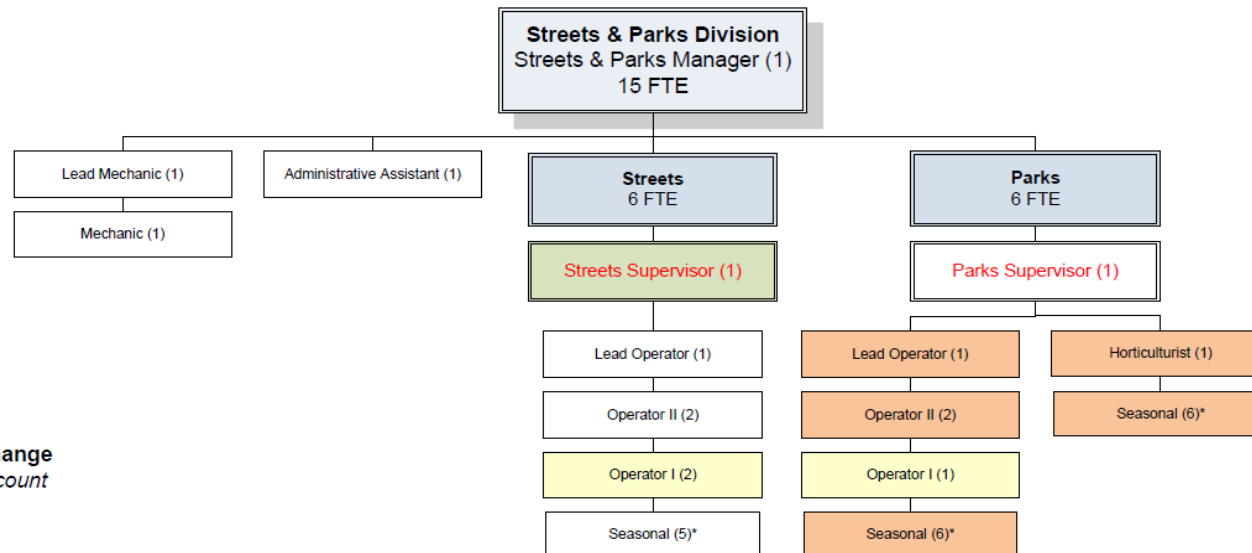
## Appendix D – Future State Organization Structure – Phase Two

Phase two Begins with dividing Streets and Parks into distinct units, which includes establishing a new role for a Streets Supervisor. The current Streets and Parks Supervisor position will be restructured into two specialized roles, with a new hire for the Streets Supervisor. The Streets and Parks Manager will have the opportunity to place the existing Supervisor in the role that best matches their expertise. The introduction of new Operator I positions will facilitate the creation of larger teams, enhancing the Division's capacity to execute tasks more swiftly and effectively. This addition also makes the Division more aligned with its peers in terms of staffing level. This phase will also transition the Horticulturist to Parks, aligning with their primary job responsibilities.



### Phase Two

Position	Change in FTE
Streets Supervisor	+1.0
Operator I	+2.0
<b>Net Change</b>	<b>+3.0</b>



#### Color Key:

**Red Text:** Title Change

**Green Box:** New Position

**Yellow Box:** New FTE

**Orange Box:** Reporting Change

\* = Not included in the FTE count

**New FTE Count: +3**

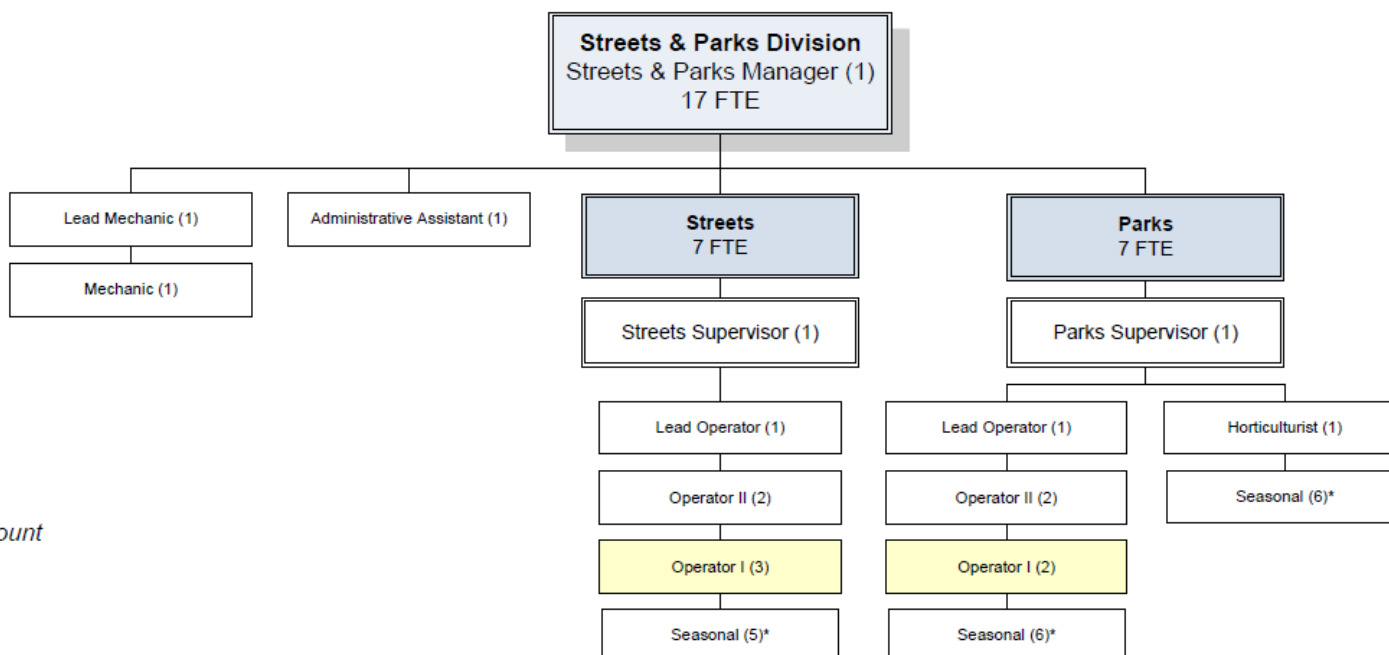
## Appendix E – Future State Organization Structure – Phase Three

In phase three, it is recommended to hire two additional Operator I positions. This increase in headcount will not only improve the efficiency of work crews but also enable the Streets and Parks Division to begin facilitating activities that are currently outsourced.



Phase Three

Position	Change in FTE
Operator I	+2.0
<b>Net Change</b>	<b>+2.0</b>



### Color Key:

**Yellow Box: New FTE**

\* = Not included in the FTE count

**New FTE Count: +2**

## Appendix F – Staffing Analysis

Shown in the chart below, the number FTE within Streets and Parks has seen a slight increase over the last ten fiscal years. Looking back to 2002, the Streets and Parks Division peaked at 12.6 employees before decreasing and reaching 11.0 in 2007<sup>33</sup>. It should be noted that the City's total FTE experienced a similar ebb-and-flow during this time.

The City has to scale up its workforce to effectively manage the day-to-day responsibilities and meet the service expectations of its residents. This growth in staff is a testament to the City's commitment to providing high-quality services and maintaining a responsive and efficient government operation.

FTE Count	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Streets and Parks Maintenance	8.3	9.0	9.0	8.6	10.5	10.5	13.3	13.2	12.7	12.0
Total City Staff FTE	93.6	95.8	97.4	98.5	104.9	104.9	111.8	114.7	114.0	114.0

The chart below presents a detailed comparison of Northfield's positions against its peers, focusing on titles and FTE counts. The table shows data gathered from organizational charts and our benchmark survey.

Notably, it includes the number of Mechanics responsible for maintaining the City's fleet and the personnel dedicated to Snow Removal. This side-by-side evaluation provides a clear viewpoint on Northfield's workforce allocation in relation to its peers.

City	Parks Positions	Streets Positions
Northfield	0.5 Streets and Parks Manager 0.5 Streets and Parks Supervisor 0.5 Administrative Assistant 1 Horticulturist 3.5 Operator I/II	0.5 Streets and Parks Manager 0.5 Streets and Parks Supervisor 0.5 Administrative Assistant 1 Mechanic 3.5 Operator I/II
Faribault	1 Superintendent 1 Foreperson 4.5 Light Equipment Operators 1 Building Maintenance Engineer	1 Superintendent 1 Streets Foreman 1 Equipment Maintenance Foreman 2 Mechanic 4 Heavy Equipment Operators 3 Light Equipment Operators
Owatonna	1 Park Manager 1 Park Foreman 1 Park Lead 2 Maintenance Workers 8 Laborers 1 Custodian	1 Maintenance Manager 1 Foreperson 2 Senior Maintenance Leads 10 Senior Maintenance Workers

<sup>33</sup> According to the 2011 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, In 2007, the Streets and Parks Division was a staff of 11.0 FTE



City	Parks Positions	Streets Positions
Willmar	1 Director 2 Coordinators 1 Facility Manager 3 maintenance staff 1 Administrative Assistant 1 Community Center Manager	1 Director 1 Superintendent 1 Project Manager 2 Mechanics 1 Foreman 18 Operators
Albert Lea	1 Superintendent 1 Foreman 4 Senior Maintenance 4 Maintenance (1 PT)	1 Superintendent 1 Foreman 2 Mechanics 3 Heavy Equipment Operators 5 Maintenance Workers
Stillwater	1 Assistant Public Works Superintendent 1 Superintendent 1 Lead Worker 6 Maintenance Workers	1 Superintendent 3 Lead Workers 5 Maintenance Workers

The comparison table below serves as a strategic tool for Northfield, highlighting core streets and parks functions across peers. Based on the analysis above, it is evident that Northfield's team is managing similar core functions to their peers in other cities, yet with a leaner staff.

Essential Responsibilities	Northfield	Faribault	Owatonna	Willmar	Albert Lea
<b>Streets</b>					
Road Maintenance and Repair	X	X	X	X	X
Snow Removal and Ice Control	X	X	X	X	X
Street Cleaning	X	X	X	X	X
Traffic Sign and Signal Maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Street Lighting	-	-	-	-	-
Sidewalk Maintenance and Repair	X	-	X	X	X
Storm Drainage Maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Parks</b>					
Park Maintenance and Upkeep	X	X	X	X	X
Recreation Programs and Services		X	X	X	
Trail and Greenway Maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Playground Safety and Maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Horticulture and Landscaping	X	X	X	X	X
Wildlife Conservation and Management	-	-	X	X	X
Community Engagement	X	X	X	X	X
Public Event Assistance	X	X	X	X	X

## Appendix G – Outdoor Park and Facility Standards

The table below includes metrics from the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review Report<sup>34</sup>, focusing on Outdoor Park and Recreation Facility standards. It reflects the median number of residents per facility, split by the population size of jurisdictions.

This data underscores Northfields' commitment to high service levels, as evidenced by the substantial number of fields and structures maintained for community use. The table also highlights the considerable workload shouldered by Northfields' staff, given the breadth of offerings they manage. This snapshot offers a glimpse into the diligent efforts and resources allocated to ensure residents have access to quality recreational spaces.

Type of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility		
	Population of Jurisdiction		
	Less than 20,000	Northfield (20,790)	20,000 to 49,999
Playgrounds or Play Structures	1,990	990 <sup>35</sup>	3,105
Diamond Fields	1,833	1,599 <sup>36</sup>	3,007
Rectangular Fields	2,493	1,299 <sup>37</sup>	3,333
Dog Parks	10,327	20,790	27,744
Pickleball Courts	3,390	5,197.5 <sup>38</sup>	7,737

<sup>34</sup> [2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review Report](#)

<sup>35</sup> Based on Northfields 21 playgrounds.

<sup>36</sup> Based on 13 diamond fields provided by the Streets and Parks Division.

<sup>37</sup> Based on the 16 rectangular fields found within the 2022 Northfield Parks and Recreation CIP Final Report.

<sup>38</sup> Based on the 4 pickleball courts found within the 2022 Northfield Parks and Recreation CIP Final Report.

## Appendix H – Analysis of Overtime and Leave

Our analysis of overtime and leave, using client-provided employee data, included an assessment of overtime and compensation costs, total Operator expenses, and annual available hours per Operator. This approach enabled us to find the cost-effectiveness of incurring overtime expenses versus the recruitment of additional personnel.

The two tables presented below detail the cost analysis for Operators, factoring in an hourly wage based on a standard 40-hour workweek and 52-week work year, with bi-weekly pay periods. It includes a benefits package an employee could elect if employed with the City, providing a clear answer to the question, “What is the estimated total annual cost of hiring a full-time Operator?”

Weekly Hours	Hourly Compensation	Weeks of Work Annually	Annual Wage
40	\$25.89	52	\$53,851.20

	Employee Benefits
Life insurance premiums <sup>39</sup>	\$84.00
Employer contribution to medical insurance <sup>40</sup>	\$7,500.00
Employer pension contribution <sup>41</sup>	\$3,500.33
Long-term disability premiums <sup>42</sup>	\$78.08
Employer contribution to dental insurance <sup>43</sup>	\$222.72
<b>Total Employer Paid Benefits</b>	<b>\$11,385.13</b>
<b>Total Annual Operator Cost: Annual Wage + Benefits</b>	<b>\$65,236.33</b>

The tables that follow outline total compensation hours and overtime detail that can be viewed as a future state liability cost. Our analysis shows how the Streets and Parks Division will either pay this out or the total cost will be used as time off, and the Division will need to pay someone else overtime to cover the hours. Please note that the tables below do not include 2024 for timeline continuity. Data below represents 2021 – 2023, equaling 36-months.

<sup>39</sup> Assumes employer pays \$7 per month for the basic life insurance policy.

<sup>40</sup> Assumes employer pays \$625 per month multiplied by 12-months for single employee electing the PPO Health Insurance Plan.

<sup>41</sup> Employer pension contribution is 6.5% multiplied by the gross annual wages.

<sup>42</sup> Employer pays premium of \$0.145 for every \$100 of wages earned.

<sup>43</sup> Employer pays premium of \$18.56 per month.

Year	Total Comp Hours	Total OT Hours	OT Pay Rate <sup>44</sup>	OT Pay Rate	Estimated Total Cost of OT	Total Cost
2021	304.7	764.5	1.5x	\$35.78	\$27,349.99	\$27,349.99
2022	373.25	952	1.5x	\$36.78	\$35,014.56	\$35,014.56
2023	370.75	825.75	1.5x	\$37.80	\$31,213.35	\$31,213.35

Year	Number of Employees <sup>45</sup>	Avg Comp Hours	Comp Hours into OT Hours	Avg OT Hours	Avg OT Cost	Total OT Cost
2021	6	50.78	33.86	127.42	\$6,837.50	\$27,349.99
2022	7	53.32	35.55	136.00	\$7,503.12	\$35,014.56
2023	7.5	49.43	32.96	110.10	\$6,242.67	\$31,213.35

Average working hours each year is calculated at 38 months (1/2021-2/2024) rather than 36 months.

Leveraging the Employee Leave History Report provided by the client, we calculated the annual available hours for each Operator by analyzing the leave taken by employees. This allowed us to determine the precise number of hours Operators are available for work throughout the year.

Leave Used between January of 2021 and February of 2024									
Comp. HRs	Personal	Sick 211	Sick 212	Sick 213	Sick S21	Sick 232	Wellness	Vacation	Total
618.03	52	151	148.50	199.52	209.5	6	9	966.95	2,660.5

Total Annual Hours <sup>46</sup>	Average Leave Hours <sup>47</sup>	Average Holiday Hours <sup>48</sup>	Average Available Hours Per Operator
2,080	105	96	1,879

<sup>44</sup> The employee decides if they want to use comp as 1.5x pay or accrued leave. This column assumes 1 overtime hour is equal to 1.5 comp hour.

<sup>45</sup> Due to staffing changes, each year will have a different average based on the number of Operators.

<sup>46</sup> Calculated by 40 hours per week multiplied by 52-weeks.

<sup>47</sup> Calculated by the average leave per month, per employee (8.75) multiplied by 12-months.

<sup>48</sup> Calculated by the average holiday leave per month multiplied by 12-months.