



**New Brighton Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Commission  
Agenda  
Upper Level | Conference Room  
New Brighton City Hall 803 Old Hwy 8 NW, New Brighton , MN  
6:30 PM April 1, 2026**

Members of the Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Commission will attend the meeting in person unless eligible to attend remotely per MN Stat. 13D.02.

To participate in this meeting, members of the public may:

- **Attend the meeting in person.**
- **Watch the meeting electronically.** Tune into CTV Channel 8023 (CenturyLink) or Channel 16 (Comcast). To observe the meeting as a livestream or a webcast, visit [NBMN.info/View-A-Meeting](http://NBMN.info/View-A-Meeting)

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Roll Call**

Chair Julia O'Rourke

Vice-Chair Abe McEathron

Commissioner Pauline Alfors

Commissioner Gary Bank

Commissioner Irie Haig

Commissioner Kristin Hicks

Commissioner Becky Slabiak

Commissioner Laura Sokol-Kraft

**III. Approval of Agenda**

**IV. Approval of Past Minutes**

A. February 4, 2026

**V. Business Items**

A. Results of the Shared City Campus Survey

**VI. Informational Items**

**VII. Announcements**

**VIII. Adjournment**



**MINUTES**  
**Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission**  
**February 4, 2026 City Hall**  
**6:30 p.m.**

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**II. Roll Call:**

Members Present: Commissioners Pauline Alfors, Gary Bank, Kristin Hicks, Abe McEathron, Julia O'Rourke (Chair), Becky Slabiak, and Laura Sokol-Kraft.

Members Absent: Commissioner Irie Haig.

Also Present: Director Jennifer Fink, DCAD Director Craig Schlichting and Councilmember Graeme Allen.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Sokol-Kraft, seconded by Bank to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

Director Fink noted there was one change to the minutes changing 2025 to 2026.

Motion by Bank, seconded by Sokol-Kraft to approve the December 3, 2025 minutes as amended. Motion carried 7-0.

**V. Business Items**

**A. Discuss Brightwood Hills Clubhouse Redevelopment Proposals**

Director Fink stated as part of the City's ongoing evaluation of long-term improvements at Brightwood Hills Golf Course, staff issued a request for development interest related to the potential redevelopment of the existing clubhouse site along Silver Lake Road. The intent of this effort is to explore opportunities that support reinvestment in golf course facilities, enhance the user experience, and align with broader City goals related to land use, housing, and financial sustainability. In response, the City received two redevelopment proposals. These proposals are being shared at a high level for informational purposes and to support preliminary discussion.

Director Schlichting provided an overview of the proposals. She stated both proposals include a combination of a new Brightwood Hills Golf Course clubhouse and market-rate multifamily housing. Each concept is intended to allow the golf course to continue operating while modernizing facilities and introducing new development on a portion of the site. Staff commented further on the conception options from the Equinox Development and The Beard Group proposals. Both proposals also contemplate public-private partnership structures and identify the need for further financial, operational, and policy discussions with the City.

Director Schlichting reported this item is intended to provide the Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission with a preliminary overview of the submitted proposals. Staff will provide an in-person presentation to walk through the concepts in greater detail, including site layout, clubhouse programming, and anticipated next steps. Future discussion will focus on community priorities, operational impacts to the golf course, financial considerations, and alignment with City plans and policies. No decisions are being made at this stage of the process. Rather staff will gather feedback that will help Council determine if proposal move forward.

Discussion included:

- Staff commented on how work would be done around the pond to ensure the water on site was properly addressed.
- The Commission supported access to the church parking lot being shared.
- Staff discussed how the recent housing study showed the City needed additional housing.
- The proposed number of parking stalls for the site was reviewed.
- The benefits of having a clubhouse with food options and golf simulator within the proposed housing was discussed.
- The Commission recommended the site have thoughtful signage to ensure the public knew the golf course was still open to the public and had not become private.
- The Commission supported the clubhouse area having a patio for visitors.
- The Commission suggested designated parking be considered for golfers.
- The Commission appreciated the fact the clubhouse and apartments would have a view of the golf course and pond.
- Councilmember Allen requested the developers be asked to include several three bedroom units within the housing project.
- The Commission requested the developers consider solar panels on the roof.
- The Commission suggested public art be considered at the new clubhouse.
- It was noted the clubhouse space would have a separate entrance from the housing.
- Staff noted this project would be reviewed by the EDC and City Council as the next steps.
- The Commission thanked staff for the detailed presentation and update on this project.

#### **B. Discuss Proposed Dedication of the Hansen Park Neighborhood Center**

Director Fink stated staff is requesting approval to include a recognition plaque inside the new building at Hansen Park in honor of former Park Superintendent Chris Wolla. This

request aligns with the City’s adopted Naming Policy and falls under the section on Recognition, which allows for plaques and dedications placed throughout City facilities with the approval of the appropriate Director and recommendation of the Council or Commission.

Director Fink reported Chris Wolla provided exceptional long-term service to the City of New Brighton and made a significant and lasting contribution to the Parks and Recreation Department. His leadership, work ethic, and character shaped both the physical condition of our parks and the culture of the department. Throughout his career, Chris championed improvements at Hansen Park, supported daily operations, and mentored staff across all divisions. His commitment was evident in every project he touched, and in the pride he took in creating outstanding spaces for the community. Chris passed away unexpectedly in 2023, and his absence has been deeply felt by staff and community members. Honoring him with a plaque in the new Hansen Park building allows the City to recognize his years of service, his impact on the park system, and his role in building and maintaining one of New Brighton’s most widely used and beloved parks. Hansen Park served as a central part of his work, and staff regularly associate his leadership with this site, making this location uniquely meaningful for a dedication.

Director Fink explained this request is not for the naming or renaming of the facility. It is for a recognition plaque under the “Recognition” section of the Naming Policy, which states:

- The City may give special recognition to commemorate long-term service to the community or to a distinguished citizen, contingent upon Council review and approval.
- Recognition plaques or dedications may be placed throughout the City by the appropriate Director with the recommendation of the Council or Commission.

Director Fink reported Chris’s contributions meet the policy criteria for recognition based on long-term service and exceptional contributions to both the facility involved and the community as a whole. It was noted there would be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Hansen Park building on July 21.

Motion by Bank, seconded by Slabiak to recommend the City Council name the Hansen Park building after Chris Wolla. Motion carried 7-0.

## **VI. Informational Items**

### **A. Low Income Tree Removal Pilot Program**

Director Fink stated the City of New Brighton is launching a Low-Income Tree Removal Assistance Program as a pilot initiative to help income-qualified homeowners address hazardous, dead, or declining trees that present a safety concern. This program is intended to reduce financial barriers, improve neighborhood safety, and support responsible urban forest management. This pilot is also designed to help the City better understand the level of need in the community, develop an equitable process for assistance, and evaluate what long-term program funding and staffing may be required to sustain this work in future years.

Discussion included:

- The cost for tree removal was discussed and staff noted the cost to remove one tree could be \$5,000 to \$8,000.
- Staff discussed how many trees in the community were aging out and had to be removed.
- The Commission suggested applicants at 80% AMI be provided 50% of the cost for the tree removal, but for applicants at 50% AMI be provided 80% to 100% of the cost for the tree removal. It was noted staff would look into this.
- Staff noted this would be a one year program.
- Staff reported the program would begin in May of 2026.
- The Commission recommended tree replacement be encouraged and staff noted this would be part of the program.
- The Commission thanked staff for putting this program together for the residents of New Brighton.

## **VII. Announcements**

Councilmember Allen stated the City Council has been focused on immigration enforcement and are concerned about what was occurring in the community. He reported the Council has held conversations regarding public safety and what messages should be put out to the public. He discussed how the local economy was being impacted and noted the City has created a flyer with resources that were available to those who were in need at this time. He stated the City was taking applications at this time for Commissioner vacancies.

The Commission suggested the City work with the Mounds View School Districts in order to get more information on the resources that were available for families. She encouraged the City Council to consider joining the Coalition for Safe and Stable Communities. Councilmember Allen explained this coalition was for cities within Hennepin County but noted the City would continue to look for ways to collaborate with other communities. Director Fink reported the City was doing its best to remain welcoming for all people. She reiterated that public safety does not cooperate with federal law enforcement agents on immigration matters.

The Commission inquired if the City was seeing impacts at the Community Center and with public safety due to the immigration efforts that were occurring. Director Fink reported the City sent a survey out to local business owners in order to better understand how businesses were being impacted at this time. She indicated the first few weeks of January are typically slow at the Community Center so she could not tell if numbers were down. Councilmember Allen commented on how the public safety department would be meeting with faith partners to further discuss what was happening in the community and how the City could offer support.

The Commission asked if there were volunteer opportunities in the community. Councilmember Allen explained the Council was still seeking a good avenue to address volunteerism and encouraged the public to contact local faith based or non-profits to see if they had any needs.

Director Fink stated staff had posted for the summer positions. She reported the City had 99 applications for the membership fitness coordinator position and noted the City was also in the process of hiring a special events/communications coordinator who would assist with hosting all of the City's special events and park discovery days.

Councilmember Allen thanked the parks and recreation staff for recognizing the needs of the community and for creating new events for the community to participate in.

Director Fink thanked the Commission members that participated in the downtown visioning event. She reported a survey regarding the City Hall/Community Center shared campus would be going live on February 9. She encouraged the Commissioners to spread the word regarding this survey. She noted the next activities guide would be out in early February for residents. She explained the Council discuss the purchase of two properties adjacent to Vermont Park and gave staff the go ahead with these purchases.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Motion by Slabiak, seconded by McEathron to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Fink". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Fink  
Director of Parks and Recreation



<b>Agenda Section:</b>	<b>Business Items</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>April 1, 2026</b>

**REQUEST FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ITEM DESCRIPTION: Results of the Shared City Campus Survey**

<b>Action Requested: <u>Informational</u></b>
<b>Form of Action: <u>N/A</u></b>
<b>Votes Needed: <u>N/A</u></b>

<b>Summary Statement:</b>	<p>The City of New Brighton recently conducted a community survey to gather input on the future of City Hall and the New Brighton Community Center, following facility assessments that identified both buildings as aging and increasingly constrained in meeting community needs. The survey was conducted between February 9 and March 2 and promoted through multiple channels including e-newsletters, social media, the City website, and in-person engagement efforts.</p> <p>While the survey was not statistically randomized, it provides meaningful insight from residents who are most engaged with and frequent users of these facilities. Results indicate strong ongoing use of the Community Center, high interest in expanded amenities such as fitness, gathering, and flexible community spaces, and a desire for improved convenience and accessibility of services.</p> <p>The survey also explored preliminary community sentiment regarding the concept of a shared “Civic Campus” that would combine City Hall and Community Center services. Initial results show that 47% of respondents are supportive of exploring this concept, with an additional segment</p>
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	<p>seeking more information.</p> <p>Key themes from open-ended feedback include a desire for informal “third spaces,” strong interest in programming and event spaces, concerns related to noise and traffic, and an emphasis on financial transparency and long-term planning. These themes closely align with the City’s 2040 Parks Comprehensive Plan goals related to community connection, access, and creating welcoming public spaces.</p> <p>This item provides an overview of the survey findings and is intended to inform ongoing discussions regarding future facility planning and potential redevelopment scenarios.</p>
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<b>Recommendations:</b>	Receive the presentation and provide feedback on survey findings and priorities to guide future facility planning and community engagement efforts.
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<b>Applicable Deadlines:</b>	<u>N/A</u>
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<b>Community Impact:</b>	This survey represents an important step in engaging the community in shaping the future of key civic spaces. The feedback highlights strong community investment in maintaining and enhancing accessible, inclusive, and multi-functional public facilities. Continued engagement will ensure that future decisions reflect community priorities, support evolving service demands, and strengthen New Brighton’s role as a connected and welcoming community.
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<b>Legislative History:</b>	August 12, 2025 - Council authorized staff to enter into an agreement with Kraus Anderson for a City Campus Feasibility Study
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<b>Strategic Priority:</b>	<p><b><u>Financial Sustainability</u></b></p> <p><b><u>City Assets</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Community Engagement &amp; Belonging</u></b></p>
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<b>Fiscal Impact:</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>Financial Consideration?</b></td> <td style="width: 50%;"><u>No</u></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Financial Consideration?</b>	<u>No</u>
<b>Financial Consideration?</b>	<u>No</u>		

	Revenue/Expenditure Amount:	\$
	Financing Source:	<b><u>N/A</u></b>
	Notes:	

<b>Attachments:</b>	1.	NewBrighton_SurveyResults

# Community Survey

## PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

New Brighton's recent facility assessments identified the Community Center and City Hall as opportune areas to improve, based on their age and growing demand for city services. In tandem with the city's Downtown Vision Study, the city is seeking public input to help inform future planning for these spaces.

A recent online community survey asked residents about the amenities they use most and would like to see improved. It also asked residents whether they support exploring the possibility of a shared "City Campus" that would combine City Hall and Community Center services in a single location to improve convenience and accessibility.

While not truly representative of city residents (sample was not truly randomized), these results provide helpful insight into the opinions of residents who use these key facilities the most.

The survey was conducted between **February 9 and March 2** and promoted via:

- The City's website
- Social media
- E-newsletters
- Physical signage at City facilities
- Tabling at local events

**558**

**Total number of residents who responded to the survey**

### COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY

The City is publishing both this summary of survey findings and the raw survey responses so residents can view the full range of community feedback and perspectives shared. All identifying information has been removed to protect respondent privacy.

## RESULTS

### COMMUNITY CENTER USE

**OVER 71%**

of respondents said they utilize the New Brighton Community Center in some capacity at least monthly.

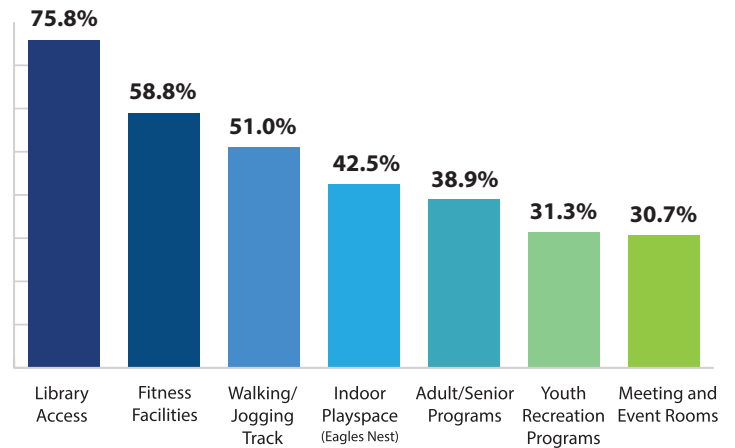


### COMMUNITY CENTER SATISFACTION

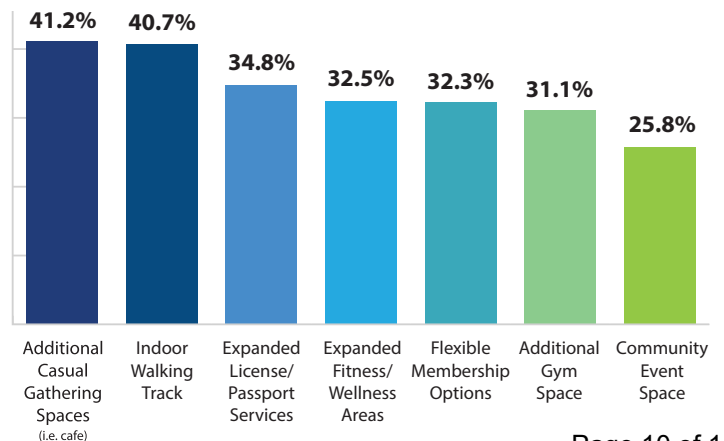
On average, residents who visit the community center at least monthly rated their experience a

**4.2 OUT OF 5**

### MOST IMPORTANT AMENITIES (COMMUNITY CENTER)



### SUPPORT FOR NEW IMPROVEMENTS



## RESULTS (CONTINUED)

### OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK

#### Interest in Informal “Third Spaces”

Many residents expressed support for more informal gathering spaces, such as a café, comfortable seating areas, and flexible spaces where they could work or study outside of home or work.

#### Noise and Traffic

Residents emphasized the importance of managing noise, traffic, and activity levels to ensure welcoming, accessible, and safe environments.

#### Financial Transparency

When asked for general questions or comments, many residents expressed interest in understanding the financial impact and strategy behind possible investments in civic facilities.

### ALIGNMENT WITH THE 2040 PARKS PLAN

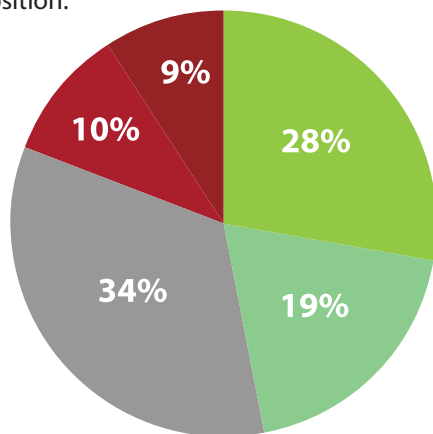
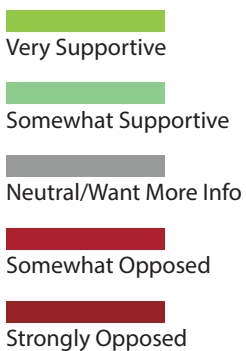
Top themes from the survey results align closely with several of the goals from the City’s **2040 Parks Comprehensive Plan**, including:

- Creating Spaces to Gather and Interact
- Safe, Comfortable and Attractive Public Spaces
- Creating a Sense of Place and Community
- Strengthening Community Connections
- Ensuring Fiscal and Environmental Responsibility

### PRELIMINARY SUPPORT FOR A CIVIC CAMPUS

Survey results suggest that residents are open to exploring the possibility of building a “Civic Campus” that would build a new City Hall and Community Center at a single location.

In total, 47 percent of respondents expressed support, while 19 percent expressed opposition.



### WHAT WOULD A CIVIC CAMPUS ACHIEVE?

The goal of a “Civic Campus” would be to bring many key community services and amenities under one roof to improve convenience for residents, reduce operational costs, and replace current city spaces that are either too inefficient, undersized, or costly to provide ideal services and amenities to residents.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### Programming and Event Spaces

Residents strongly support easy access to spaces to gather such as the Ramsey County Library and rooms that support organized programs for youth, adults, and seniors. This feedback indicates a need to better prioritize these spaces in future planning.

#### Expanded Gathering/Work Spaces

Residents desire a wider variety of gathering spaces to socialize and work that are open to the public and do not require a formal reservation.

#### Convenient Fitness Access

Spaces for fitness and play like the gymnasium(s) and Eagles Nest are essential features of the community center and must be a cornerstone of facilities planning.

#### Desire to Ensure Welcoming and Functional Environments

Residents recognize the importance of balancing spaces for play and fitness with those for socializing and focus. These comments reinforce the importance of thoughtful facility design that balances active recreation spaces with quieter, welcoming space for civic services.

#### Financial Transparency and Long-Term Planning

For any future facilities planning to be realistic, the cost and development needs must be clear and balanced with strong value for residents.

### NEXT STEPS

The City is still in the early stages of the planning for the future of the City Hall and Community Center. In coordination with the development of the Downtown Vision Plan, the City will:

- Share results of this survey with architects and building experts to help develop options for reimagining City Hall and community spaces.
- Evaluate the financial and development needs of all options to ensure clear value for residents.
- Share any future redevelopment options with the public to collect additional feedback from residents.