

Thompson County Park Inclusive Enhancements and Natural Area Restoration



[HF 4736 Clardy](#); [SF 4792 Pappas](#)

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Thompson County Park is located in West St. Paul, Dakota County’s most diverse population. The 58-acre park, adjacent to Highway 52, is connected to South St. Paul’s Kaposia Park and Kaposia Landing by the River to River Greenway. The urban park offers a variety of natural habitats to explore – from hilly savanna to shady woodlands.

Scenic trails, including one around Thompson Lake, and other amenities make Thompson County Park a popular destination for the more than 50,000 residents who live in northern Dakota County. The park provides outdoor recreational opportunities in the most economically challenged area of the county.

The Thompson County Park Master Plan identifies improvements prioritized over the next 10 years. Since the plan was adopted in 2020, Dakota County has invested \$3 million for an accessible playground, a plaza and picnic areas, lakeshore restoration and interpretive signage.

In 2023, the Legislature invested \$2 million for design of the next phase of enhancements, including a proposed land bridge over Highway 52 to connect Thompson County Park and Kaposia Park.

An additional \$10 million in state funding, matched by the county, would allow for the construction of more improvements, such as:

- Picnic area along River to River Greenway
- Thompson Park Center renovations to provide greater public access and a visitor center
- Pollinator habitat and stream restoration
- Recreation amenities (inclusive nature play area, outdoor equipment rental)

- Performance amphitheater
- Sensory gardens
- Simon’s Ravine overlook and trail upgrades
- Accessible signage, interpretation and artwork

State funding also could allow for final design of a land bridge over Highway 52 to connect Thompson County Park and Kaposia Park.

The issue: Dakota County invested \$3 million to upgrade Thompson County Park in recent years, completing a first phase of improvements identified in a new park master plan. That plan recommends additional park enhancements, and the state already invested \$2 million for their design.

The solution: State funding to construct park enhancements that will improve community access, restore native habitat, extend the park’s ADA-accessible trail system and enhance the overall park experience.

Project funding

State bonding request	\$10 million
Matching funds	\$10 million
Total cost	\$20 million

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