

WINDERMERE CENTRAL PLAY PARK



WINDERMERE CENTRAL PLAY PARK CONCEPT PLAN

Centered in a more active and mixed-use area of the Windermere development, the Central Play Park will balance innovative modern play concepts with gathering places for the surrounding community. Anchoring this northeast portion of the site at Highway 169 and Marystown Road will be a commercial node, a senior living community, single-family and affordable housing, as well as mid-density townhomes. With a bit more activity happening in this area, a park space should be activated with places to play and gather, with various looped trail options for local residents to enjoy and visitors to explore.

The Central Play Park at Windermere will feature premiere natural play and challenge play equipment for kids of all ages. Using the existing topography, a playful lookout tower anchors the northern end of the play portion of the park, giving children the opportunity to climb and overlook the Minnesota River Valley before sliding or climbing their way back down to the ground. Surrounding the lookout tower is the challenge play equipment - natural surfaces tracks for racing, boulder outcroppings built into the side of the hill for scaling, and other exciting active equipment that exercise the physical development for all age groups.

South of the challenge play within the greater play area is a nature playground rooted in activities that are more sensory, mentally challenging, and skill-building. Team activities such as constructing a shelter out of logs and sticks, solving nature-based puzzles, building castles out of soil and sand, or finding a comforting nest to silently observe others play from let children escape into the natural environment in an imaginative and engaging manner.

Setting these play areas in a wooded and topographically unique environment provides natural shade, enhances the nature play experience, and allows for the equipment and facilities to be integrated into the environment in a manner that adds a layer of connection and place to nature for children and their guardians who build these memories with them. Such a robust play experience would be a draw for those nearby and also from adjacent communities, working to weave the greater Shakopee

neighborhoods together here. An off-street parking lot would make visiting this park easier for those traveling from outside of the immediate neighborhood, removing parking from a busier set of adjacent streets. A shelter facility would provide restrooms and park information for visitors.

The south end of Central Play Park is already naturally cleared of most trees, and would be a great place for an open flexible lawn where the community can walk across the block to play catch, practice somersaults, host a senior yoga class, or establish a Windermere food festival with food trucks and vendor tents. This flex lawn would be one of two proposed outdoor "event" spaces in the Windermere area.

North of the play spaces and lookout tower is a picnicking area built within the wooded park, balancing between the more densely wooded area and the opened up pond area. A passive, woodland picnic experience is not found elsewhere in Shakopee, and is often not found outside of a campsite environment. This unique place of respite and gathering is available for residents across the street in the senior community, possibly for a weekly lunch excursion, for the greater residential community, or for a shady and cool place to take a break from the commercial area for visitors and workers in the area. Naturalizing and softening the edges of the highly engineered stormwater pond would provide a more aesthetic and pleasant overlook from the picnic sites, and build some buffer habitat in for species who may find resources in the stormwater pond.

Selective clearing, underbrush clearing, and invasive species removal will be a part of the preparation for the play and picnic areas. The green spine path begins in the Central Play Park, following a natural swale toward the southeast. See the following pages for the amenities featured along this green trail.