

Marshall Bandshell

History

Marshall is a city in Lyon County and serves as the commercial, healthcare, education, and employment hub of Southwest Minnesota. Liberty Park, established in 1917, is the oldest park in Marshall. The park is renowned for its mature trees, views of the Redwood River, and historic bandshell. Recent upgrades to the park include a new playground and a permanent restroom facility. The bandshell, constructed in 1951, is a focal point of the park and attracts regional residents and visitors who enjoy summer concerts, plays, and community events. However, after seven decades, the bandshell is in poor condition. The design does not meet ADA standards, the concrete facade has cracks, and the foundation is compromised. Investing in this iconic facility will ensure safe, high-quality park experiences for current and future users. The original bandshell was financed by band members from the \$3,000 a year allotment the band received from the city and from band member donations.

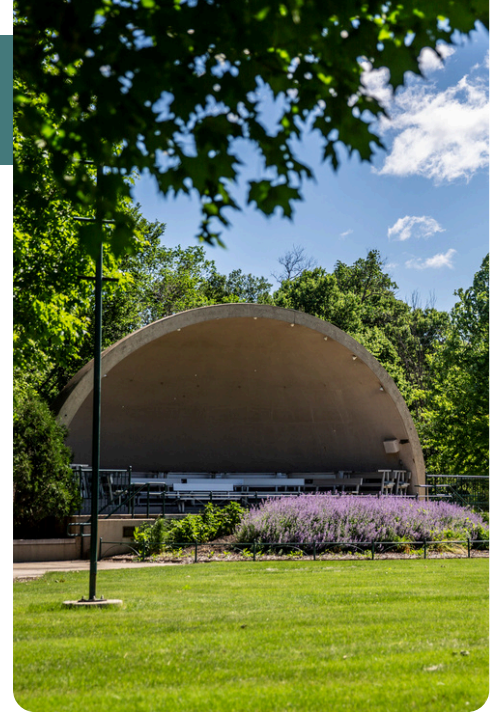
Facility Usage

The bandshell is the site of dozens of free concerts, plays, religious services, and community events throughout the summer and attracts an intergenerational, diverse population to the park. Marshall has had an active Municipal Band onward from the 1880s that performed for local civic groups until a new bandshell was built at Liberty Park in order to provide a venue for the area residents who volunteered their time and talent for the enjoyment of locals. The band has remained true to its first calling as a group that specializes to this day, in bass numbers and marching music. After completion of the bandshell, Wednesday evening concerts during the summer months became a tradition that is still in place today. The population of the City of Marshall has become more diverse in recent years. The park brings these diverse populations together with free concerts and plays, an annual variety show of local performers, and community celebrations.

Project Benefits

Immediate benefits include the replacement of a deteriorating bandshell with a safe and accessible facility. This enhancement will help preserve and increase the usage and enjoyment of the park, as residents attend performances and events in the newly renovated space.

The long-term benefits of this project are improved outdoor recreation opportunities for the changing demographics of the Marshall community. Between 2000 and 2022, the percentage of BIPOC residents increased from 8.7% to 23.4% of the total population (ACS 2022). The new facility is expected to attract more visitors over time, promoting community engagement and social interaction. As the community becomes more diverse, additional programming will aim to educate and enrich the community, building social cohesion.



Project Need

The total cost estimate for this project is \$1,100,000. The City's request of the Legacy Fund is for \$795,000. The City has received a \$100,000 project donation with plans to seek out further donations in addition to City funding to complete the project. After being exposed to the harsh elements of Minnesota for 70 years, the Liberty Park Bandshell is deteriorating. According to a 2021 engineering report, the bandshell's shell and foundation have been compromised, making it impossible to renovate the facility. The wood supports in the foundation and the concrete facade are cracking and splitting, making them structurally unsound. The redevelopment project scope would include adding an ADA-accessible route to access the bandshell, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate in outdoor performances alongside others. This promotes inclusivity and ensures that everyone can participate regardless of their mobility.

The redevelopment of this popular space will promote group-based recreation and multi-generational gatherings where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. The bandshell's free events offer a unique opportunity for Marshall's diverse community to connect. These performances appeal to different cultural and generational backgrounds, creating a shared space where people can gather, enjoy music, and celebrate diversity. Such gatherings not only provide entertainment but also strengthen community connections and promote inclusivity. Bandshells are the hearts in many parks across Minnesota. According to recent statistics, 35 towns still have municipal bands and most of them play in their community bandshells or bandstands.



Project Support

The bandshell replacement project has been discussed in recent community planning efforts. Robust community engagement has been at the forefront of these planning efforts, and community parks were a frequent topic in these discussions. On December 9, 2023, an editorial in the Marshall Independent highlighted the necessity of replacing the bandshell, drawing attention to the project's importance. The city adopted a Strategic Plan in 2020. Adoption of this plan included significant public input, including a survey in May 2019, focus groups in August 2019, and a public comment period on the draft strategic plan during February 2020. Park improvements were frequently discussed, and the plan included the following strategy: "Maintain and enhance quality, accessible public spaces development of parks and recreation projects."



To assist with future park planning opportunities, the City of Marshall Community Services Department conducted a random-sample survey of the City's registered voters in 2021. The intent was to gauge the community's support for potential improvements to the City's parks and recreations facilities and to measure reaction to possible methods for paying the cost of such enhancements. There were 303 respondents to the survey. Over 90% of survey respondents felt that parks are an essential component for quality of life and attracting individuals to live in and visit the Marshall community.