



Chapter 1

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The parkways of Minneapolis provide residents and visitors passage around the City, offer opportunities for relaxation and recreation, and contribute to the ecological health and function of the landscape. Part of the Grand Rounds, Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail has been a fixture of the City since the 1890s, after Horace Cleveland proposed the Minneapolis Park System in 1883. Since then, the parkway and associated trails have been constructed and reconstructed, agencies such as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has been established to manage the land and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) has been established to manage the water resources, however no formal or comprehensive master plan has been created to guide the future of the Parkway. This master planning process intends to:

- » Set a vision and priorities for future creek improvements and management along the trail for the next 20-30 years
- » Integrate the goals, plans, and investments of the MPRB, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and the City of Minneapolis by working in a three-agency partnership
- » Meet Metropolitan Council requirements for master plans in order to access regional and state funding
- » Create a written and graphic plan that will:
 - Enhance recreational opportunities in the creek corridor
 - Improve ecological function along the creek
 - Improve safety for Parkway users
 - Address flooding, stormwater inflows, pollutants, and other impacts of our urban landscape



PARTNERS IN PLANNING

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

In order to accomplish an efficient and comprehensive stacking of functions within the space of the Parkway, which falls within several jurisdictions, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and the City of Minneapolis came together to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU, approved in 2017, outlines how the agencies will work together to achieve the following goals:

- » Enhancing the ecological and recreational opportunities of the creek corridor
- » Reducing flooding
- » Achieving regional pollutant load reductions identified in TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads)
- » Reducing runoff volumes and peak flows to Minnehaha Creek
- » Eliminating combined sewer outflows

This master plan is one of the ways the agencies are collaborating to support the development of a shared vision for Minnehaha Parkway.

THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) oversees neighborhood and regional parks in the City of Minneapolis. MPRB’s 19 regional parks and trails received 23.6 million visits in 2019 according to Metropolitan Council estimates- its highest visitation ever. Parks range from local neighborhood play lots to large natural areas, and include the 55-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. MPRB provides administration, planning, development, maintenance, and police protection for parks and recreational facilities in the system. Environmental, recreational, and other programs and services are provided for park users of all ages and abilities.

Established in 1883, MPRB is the governing agency responsible for improving, operating, and maintaining Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail. The nine-member Board of Commissioners is an independently elected body responsible for maintaining and developing the Minneapolis Park system to meet the needs of Minneapolis citizens. Every four years, commissioners are elected to this Board: one from each of the six park districts within the city and three that serve at-large. This unique structure allows independent decision-making so the MPRB can efficiently oversee a diverse system of land and water.

MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) is a local unit of government which was established in 1967. MCWD is responsible for managing and protecting the water resources in one of the largest and most heavily-used urban watersheds in Minnesota. The MCWD covers 178 square miles within Hennepin and Carver counties and includes 29 municipalities. MCWD is governed by a seven-member Board of Managers, which are appointed by the Hennepin and Carver County boards.

Within the broader 178 square mile watershed, the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed encompasses all of the MCWD downstream of Lake Minnetonka. The Minnehaha Creek subwatershed is 47.3 square miles in size and includes portions of nine cities, including Minneapolis. MCWD’s management strategies within Minnehaha Creek subwatershed focus on stormwater management to reduce runoff volume and pollutant loading, stream restoration to stabilize streambanks and improve riparian buffers and habitat, and restoration of wetlands and ecological corridors in ways that reduce nutrient loading to downstream Lake Hiawatha, while improving the ecological integrity and corridor connectivity with the subwatershed.

MCWD’s approach to water resource planning recognizes the environmental, social, and economic value created when the built and natural systems work in harmony. As such, MCWD prioritizes partnership with the land use community to integrate policy, planning, and implementation. The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan can help MCWD achieve its strategic natural resource objectives, while working in close partnership with MPRB, the City of Minneapolis, and other state and regional agencies.

THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

The City of Minneapolis creates policies regarding the health, safety, and quality of life for its citizens and the use of its land. The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan can help to achieve many of the goals and policies developed in the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan, especially with regards to resilience, ecology and habitat, stormwater management, park access, and transportation.

Minneapolis Public Works executes Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs) approved by the City Council, including infrastructure projects that in some cases intersect with Minnehaha Parkway. Because of this, representatives from the City’s Public Works Department have helped to identify projects where collaboration may result in value added to existing planned investments, efficiencies in construction, and better projects overall.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

The Metropolitan Council (Met Council), with assistance from the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, facilitates planning and funding for the Regional Parks System. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail is 1 of 49 regional trails within this system.

Met Council works with implementing agencies, such as the MPRB, to realize improvements according to Met Council policies and practices. Policies guiding this work support the regional goals for parks and open space, including protection of the region’s water quality, implementation of best management practices, and coordination with other regional functions like housing and transportation. The Met Council’s planning requirements help to ensure consistency throughout the region. Plan approval by the Met Council is necessary in order to receive acquisition, development, and operational funding.

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan and contains the following required elements:

- » Boundaries and acquisition costs
- » Demand forecast
- » Development concept
- » Conflicts
- » Public services
- » Operations
- » Partner engagement
- » Public engagement and participation
- » Equity analysis
- » Public awareness
- » Accessibility
- » Stewardship plan
- » Natural resources inventory



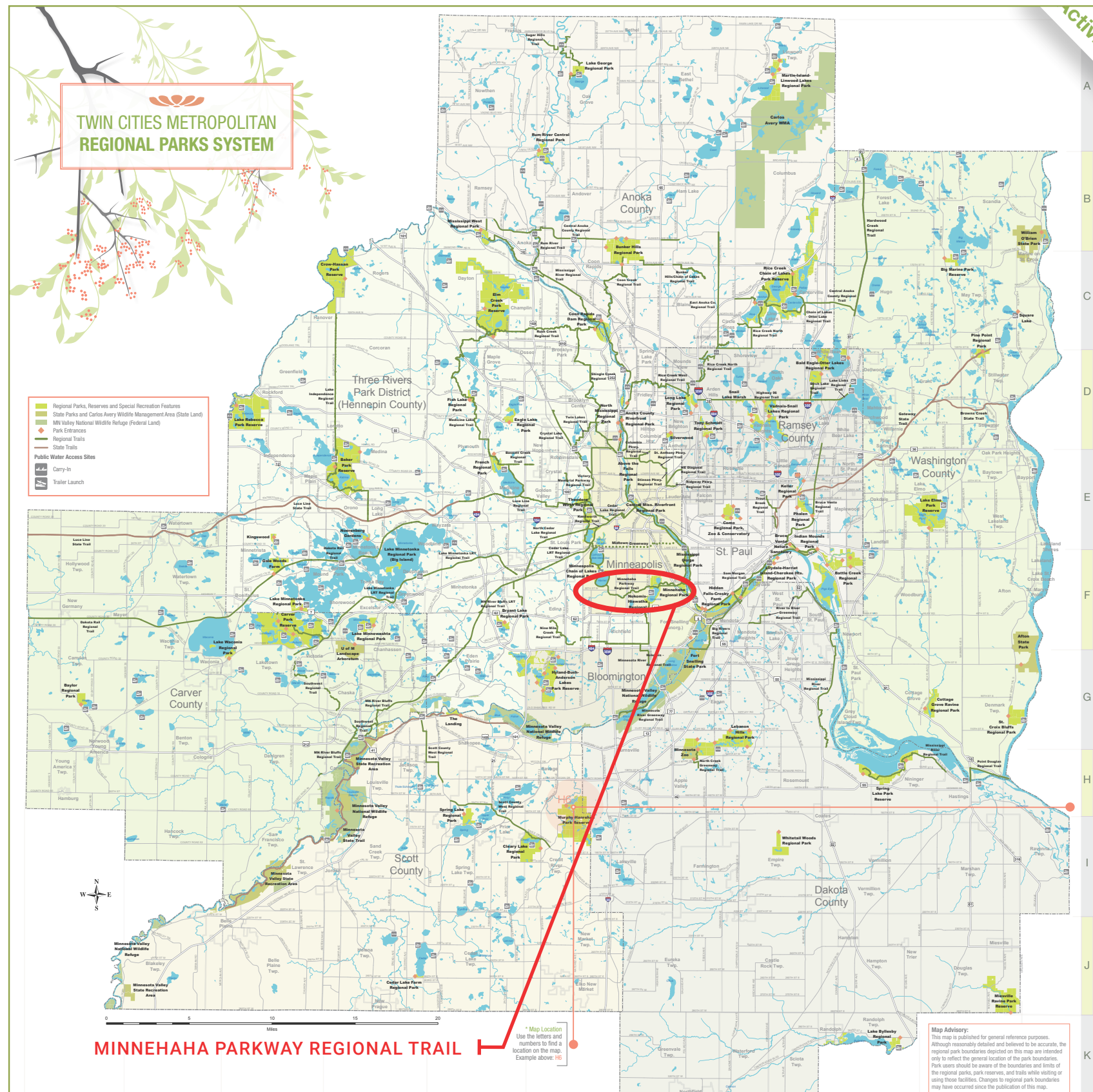


Figure 1.1 Twin Cities Metropolitan Regional Parks System Map (2017)

A MULTI-AGENCY EFFORT

Minnehaha Creek and Minnehaha Parkway cross multiple jurisdictions and intersect with many agencies whose work impacts this Master Plan, including:

- » The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD)
- » The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR)
- » The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- » The Metropolitan Council
- » The City of Minneapolis
- » Hennepin County

MPRB SYSTEM-WIDE PLANS

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has system-wide plans in place that provide guidance on specific topics. The following documents were considered as a part of this planning effort and will affect ongoing prioritization, development, and maintenance along Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail.

- » Urban Agriculture Activity Plan (2014)
- » Skate Park Activity Plan (2017)
- » Ecological System Plan (2020)
- » RecQuest (in-progress)
- » Trail Standards for Regulatory Signs and Pavement Markings (in progress)
- » South and Southwest Service Area Master Plans (policy direction for neighborhood parks)
- » Racial Equity Action Plan and ADA Action Plan

OTHER PLANS OF NOTE

- » Minneapolis 2040 (Comprehensive Plan, 2018)
- » The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan (2018)
- » The Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan (2011)
- » Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Watershed Management Plan (2018)
- » Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan (2015)

IN-PROGRESS PLANNING EFFORTS

SOUTHWEST SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN (SWSAMP)

The SWSAMP reviewed all outdoor park assets in order to create improvement plans for the 42 neighborhood parks south of I-394 and west of I-35W. It guides decisions on capital improvements, how to spend 20-Year Neighborhood Park Planning (NPP20) funding, land acquisition, and development of new parks. This endeavor, along with the MPRB’s other neighborhood parks plans, sets a 20-30 year vision for park improvements, and provides cost estimates for each park’s improvements and an overall operations and maintenance cost estimate.

The Southwest Service Area master planning process was undertaken concurrently with the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan. Two of the four segments of Minnehaha Creek studied in this Regional Trail Master Plan run through the Southwest Service Area. Because this project engages many of the same stakeholders as the SWSAMP, efforts were made to coordinate outreach at a variety of engagement events, and to ensure that projects proposed in the two plans are consistent, complementary, and do not compete with one another.

MINNEHAHA CREEK FEMA FLOOD REPAIRS

In 2014, the Twin Cities observed the wettest January - June on record, which led to record flows and prolonged flooding along Minnehaha Creek. MCWD completed an assessment along Minnehaha Creek to identify flood damage and coordinated the results of that assessment with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA awarded MCWD grant funds to repair the flood damage along Minnehaha Creek. MCWD discussed and reviewed the proposed flood damage sites with MPRB and the City of Minneapolis to determine which sites should move ahead with repair and which sites could be improved or redesigned as part of the broader vision of the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan. Based on these discussions, MCWD implemented repairs at nine sites between 2018-2020 and deferred six sites to be included in the master plan.

HIAWATHA GOLF COURSE PROPERTY MASTER PLAN

After major flooding in 2014, a study determined that more than 260 million gallons of groundwater is being pumped from the golf course into Lake Hiawatha annually. Amidst concern about what would happen to nearby properties if this pumping was halted, potential impacts on the golf course, and the ecological implications of groundwater pumping, the MPRB commenced a master plan process to guide the use of the golf course property while exploring water management strategies. The results of the Hiawatha Golf Course Property Master Plan are not likely to impact the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, as the section of Minnehaha Parkway running through Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park was master planned as a part of that park’s 2015 master plan, and is not being addressed as a part of this project.

NOKOMIS AREA GROUNDWATER & SURFACE WATER EVALUATION

In recent years, property owners to the west and south of Lake Nokomis have experienced wet basements, wet backyards, and extended periods of saturated soils in previous dry areas. Additionally, the City of Minneapolis has heard concerns about deteriorating private sewer laterals (the line that runs from the street to a house) and groundwater impacts to basements and foundations. Groundwater and surface water management in Minneapolis fall under several jurisdictions, therefore, a group of agencies are working in partnership to evaluate and understand what is happening and how to address observed concerns. This inter-agency team includes staff from Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Geological Survey. This inter-agency team is working to understand if surface water and groundwater levels near Lake Nokomis are rising, the extent to which groundwater levels interact with surface water levels, what are the potential impacts that rising water levels might have on public and private infrastructure, and what can be done if groundwater and/or surface water levels are rising. Collectively the inter-agency team has reviewed over 70 studies and resources, held over 20 meetings, and invested over \$140,000 to install six groundwater wells to gather new data. In 2020, the inter-agency team will summarize all

of the studies and resources that have been collectively examined and the working conclusions drawn from that information in the form a white paper. Once complete, any relevant findings from the Lake Nokomis Groundwater and Surface Water Evaluation White Paper will be integrated into future project planning and construction associated with the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan.

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM PLAN

This collaboration between the MPRB and the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) seeks to understand the ecology of the City and its watersheds, and envisions parks and public lands design, operations, and management that will benefit both humans and nature. It addresses specific threats such as climate change, worsening water quality, invasive species, increasing runoff, and fragmentation of habitat. It will envision a more environmentally sound way of managing the impacts of the city, so that the city can be cleaner, greener, cooler, and more efficient. The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan endeavors to incorporate the tenets of the Ecological System Plan throughout the corridor.



Seasonal flooding is common along Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail

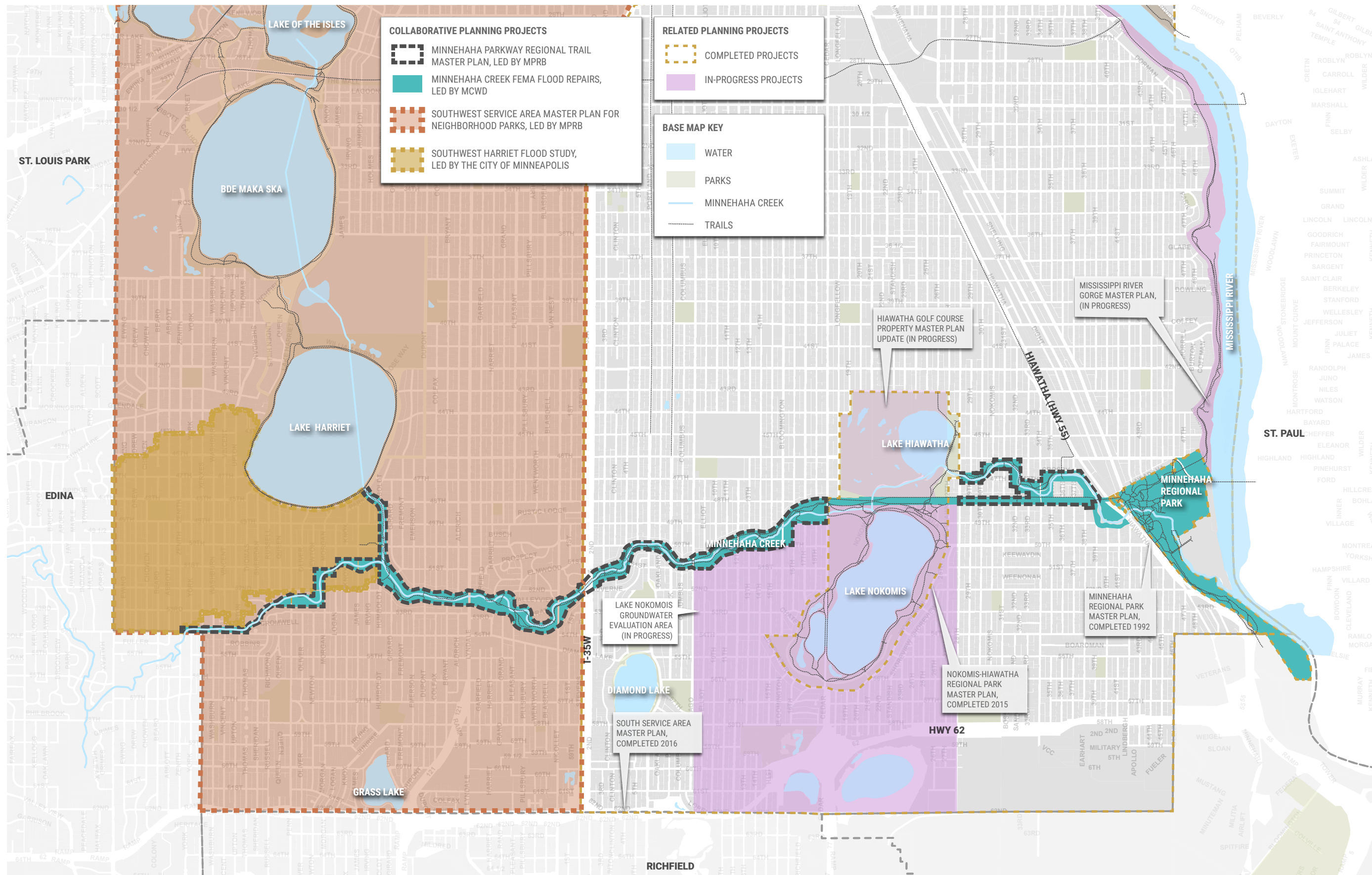


Figure 1.2 In-Progress and Completed Planning Projects Related to the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan

COMPLETED PROJECTS

NOKOMIS-HIAWATHA REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park was master planned in 2015. The resulting document pushes the park in a decidedly more ecologically-friendly direction, by shifting many of the park’s under utilized and often flooded green spaces from lawns to naturalized habitat areas. The plan includes proposed improvements to the section of Minnehaha Parkway running through Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park; as such, the segment of Parkway between Cedar Avenue and 28th Avenue is not a part of this Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan.

MINNEHAHA REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

Minnehaha Regional Park was last master planned in 1992. Restoration of the historic Minnehaha Refectory and improvements to circulation and gathering spaces around the building were completed in 2016.

SOUTH SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN

The first of MPRB’s neighborhood parks plans, the South Service Area Master Plan studied each of the outdoor amenities and features offered by the 32 parks south of downtown and east of I-35W. The vision put forth in the plan will guide capital improvements, maintenance, operations, and park programming over the coming decades. Two of the four reaches studied in the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan run through the South Service Area. Efforts have been made to explore connections between neighborhood parks and the creek, as well as to ensure that Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail provides experiences and amenities that complement and do not compete with those of nearby parks.

SOUTHWEST HARRIET FLOOD STUDY

The Southwest Harriet Flood Study was undertaken by the City of Minneapolis in partnership with MPRB and MCWD to investigate the feasibility and costs associated with a range of potential solutions to flooding challenges in the area southwest of Lake Harriet.

BDE MAKA SKA-HARRIET MASTER PLAN

Completed in 2017, the Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan helped to create and prioritize improvement projects around the two lakes, which are a part of the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. Trail and access improvements were constructed on the southeast corner of Lake Harriet, where West Minnehaha Parkway meets Lake Harriet Parkway. The design of this intersection showcases up-to-date safety and traffic upgrades in the Minneapolis Parks System, and was used as a model for trail crossings in this master plan.



NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail runs through or near the following Minneapolis neighborhoods:

- » Fulton
- » Armatage
- » Lynnhurst
- » Kenny
- » Windom
- » Tangletown
- » Field
- » Page
- » Northrup
- » Hale
- » Diamond Lake
- » Ericsson
- » Keewaydin
- » Wenonah
- » Minnehaha
- » Hiawatha

Since 2013, associations representing Minneapolis neighborhoods have been able to submit neighborhood priority plans that highlight opportunities, focus on specific issues, and plan for local improvements. Where neighborhood priority plans address issues or opportunities along Minnehaha Parkway and the Creek, this plan works to incorporate and support these efforts.

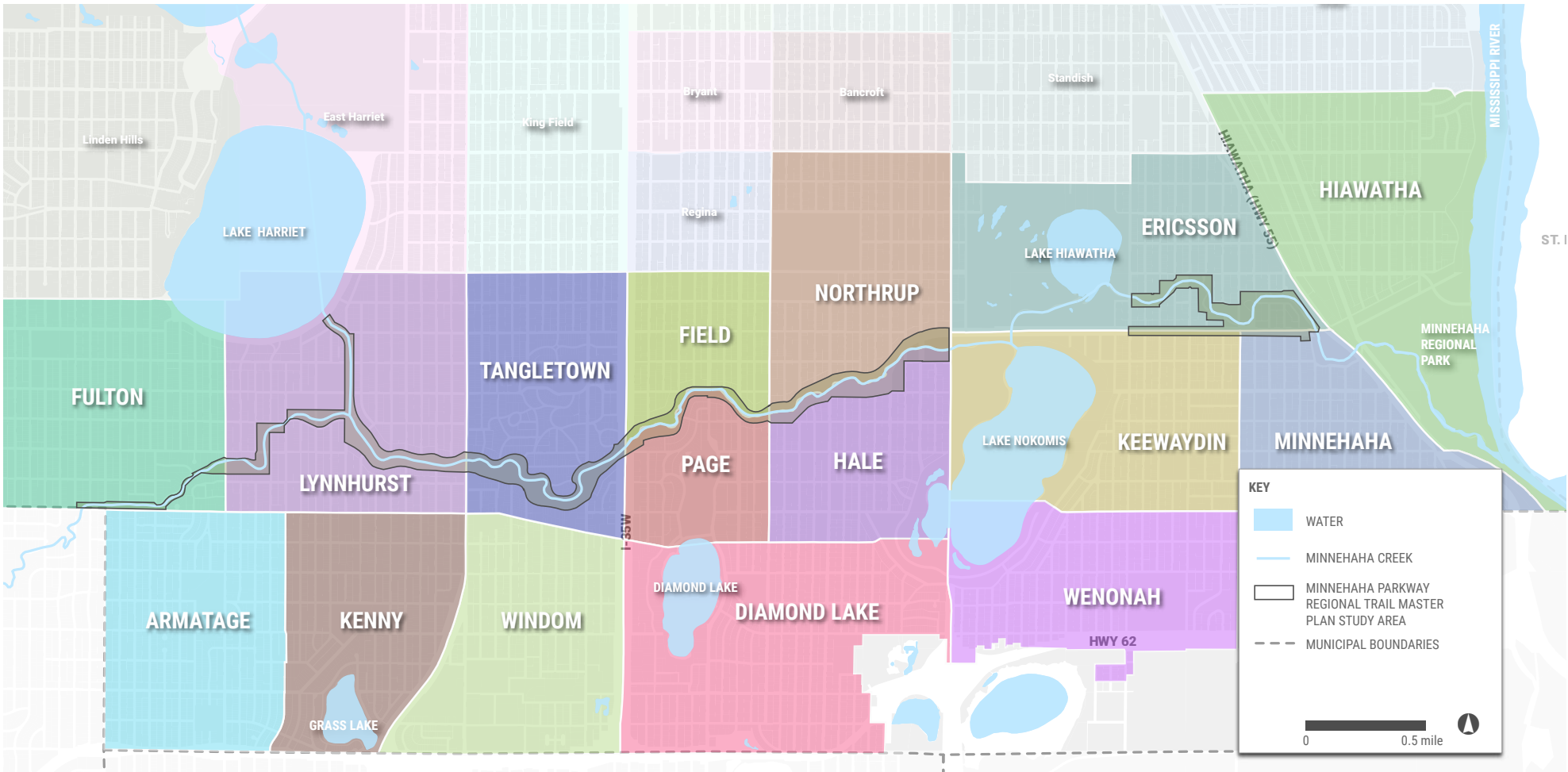


Figure 1.3 Neighborhoods adjacent to the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan Study Area

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT AREA

The project area spans a roughly 7-mile stretch of Minnehaha Creek through Minneapolis between Zenith Ave at 54th Street and Longfellow Gardens. Though this entire area constitutes Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail, paved pedestrian and bicycle trails and the parkway road only currently exist from Lake Harriet eastward. The western segment of the project area (west of Lynnhurst Park) does not feature a formal network of trails or the Parkway road along the Creek. The section of Parkway through Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park was master planned as part of the 2015 Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan, and is not included in the project area for this plan.

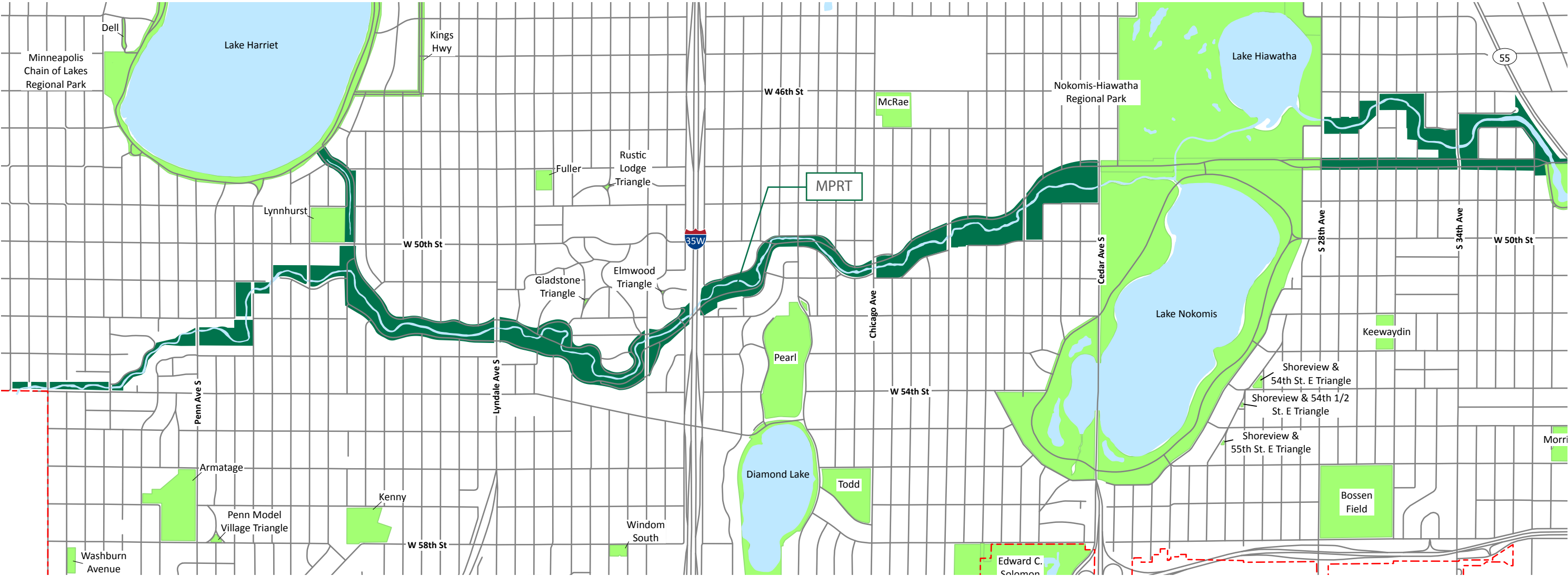


Figure 1.4 Project Area

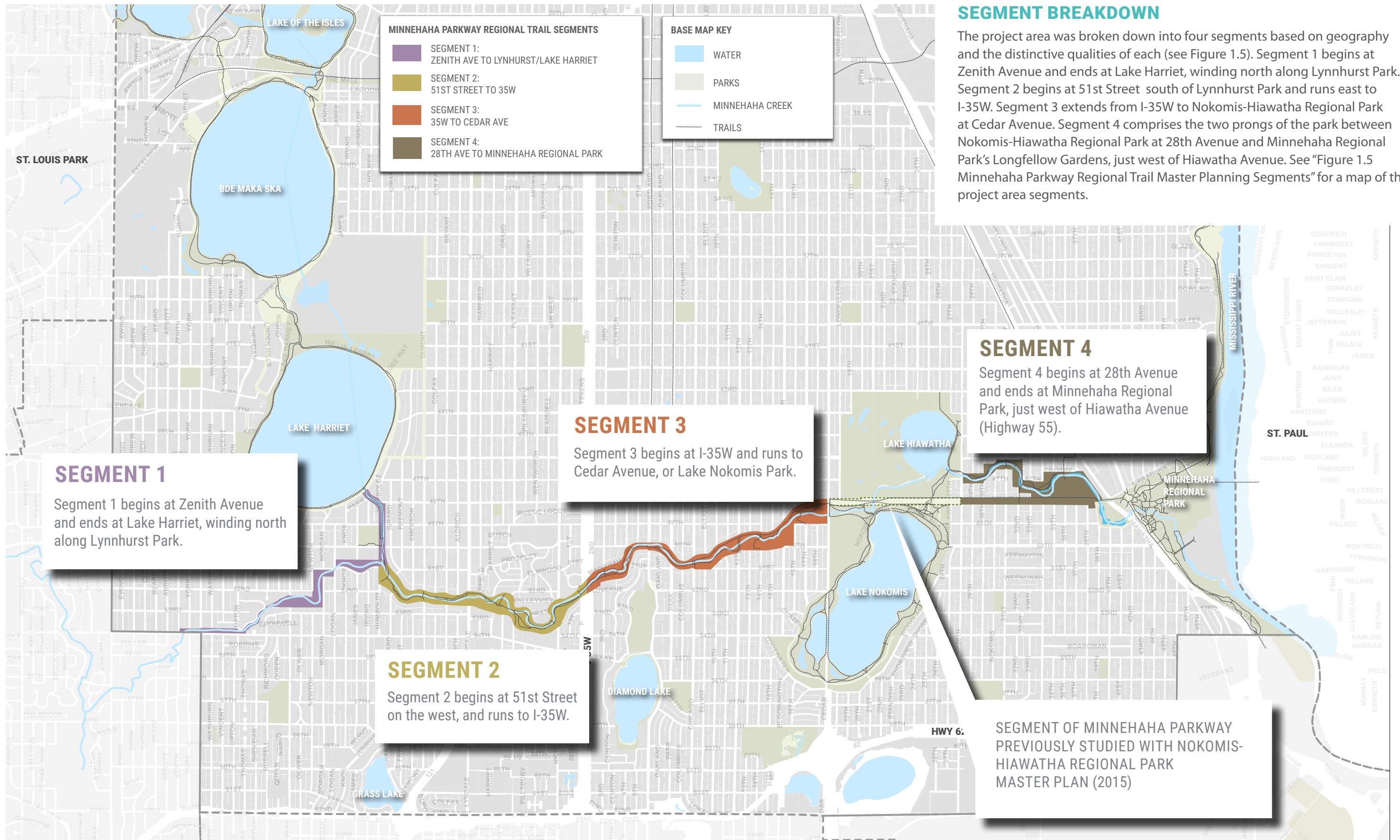


Figure 1.5 Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Planning Segments



Cyclists bike on Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail

PHASING, TASKS, & TIMELINE

The master planning process began in the spring of 2018 with Discovery and Assessment, a phase that explored natural resources, recreation, connectivity, historic resources, infrastructure, and hydrology in the project area. The findings of this task are outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The Master Planning phase began in autumn 2018 with the development of guiding principles and an exploration of concepts for each segment. This phase continued through spring of 2020 as the concepts evolved and the master plan document was drafted. May of 2020 brings the third phase, which includes a public comment period on the draft master plan, subsequent adoption by the MPRB and approval by Metropolitan Council. “Figure 1.6 Master Planning Process” illustrates the timeline and community engagement associated with each phase of the project.

FUNDING

Funding for projects identified in the master plan includes the following, as approved in MPRB’s capital improvement plan:

- » \$2,978,663 total funds in 2018, 2019, and 2020
- » A minimum of \$256,000 for the Master Plan
- » \$1.1 million dedicated to the completion of the Lyndale Avenue underpass
- » Approximately \$1.25 million in MPRB funds for master plan-driven projects

High priority projects identified in the master plan can be implemented with the approximately \$1.25 million immediately available following the master plan’s adoption. Additional projects will be completed with future MPRB CIP funds, funds from MCWD and funds from the City of Minneapolis where projects align to meet the ecological and water resources goals of those partner entities, and other yet undetermined sources over the next 20+ years.

CE = Community Engagement

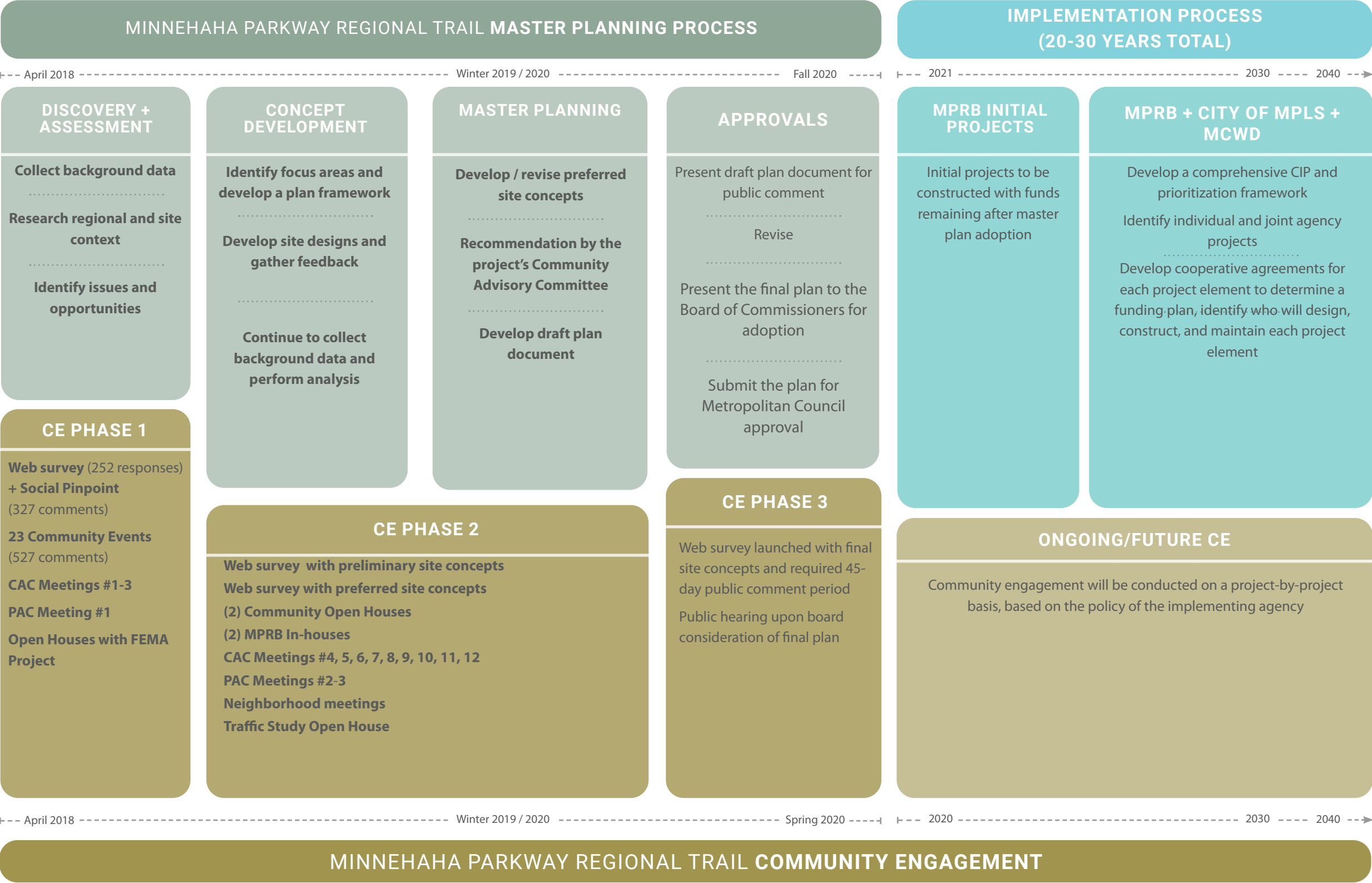


Figure 1.6 Master Planning Process



Improvements at Lyndale Avenue for bicycle and pedestrian access were implemented during the planning process