





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The North Service Area Master Plan (NSAMP) is the result of dedicated and ongoing collaboration among residents and stakeholders. The Plan was shaped by those who served on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), members of the general public who attended meetings and interacted with MPRB staff in the parks, neighborhood and community service organizations, MPRB staff from across the organization, and elected officials. MPRB Planning staff thank all these individuals for their contributions to the plan.

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# INTRODUCTION & PLANNING FRAMEWORK



## **SECTION CONTENTS:**

- INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE
- MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD
- DOCUMENT OVERVIEW
- RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

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## INTRODUCTION + PURPOSE

The neighborhood parks of the north side are unlike those anywhere else in Minneapolis. The gravity of several larger-than-average squares—Folwell, Farview, North Commons—anchors an orbiting collection of smaller play areas and open spaces. The amenities in these parks are unmatched: a big-slide waterpark in the middle of a neighborhood, playgrounds nestled in between curving city-grid-breaking streets, not one but two creeks flanked by trails and playgrounds, a grand hilltop with expansive views of the burgeoning city. These are the places north siders come to play basketball, football, and soccer; to gather for annual traditions like Juneteenth; to practice their art and to hear others sing and rap; to get wet and cool during the hottest days of summer; and to rest or stroll under trees as old as the parks themselves.

The north service area (defined for this project as the area north of I-394 and west of the Mississippi River) has some of the oldest and

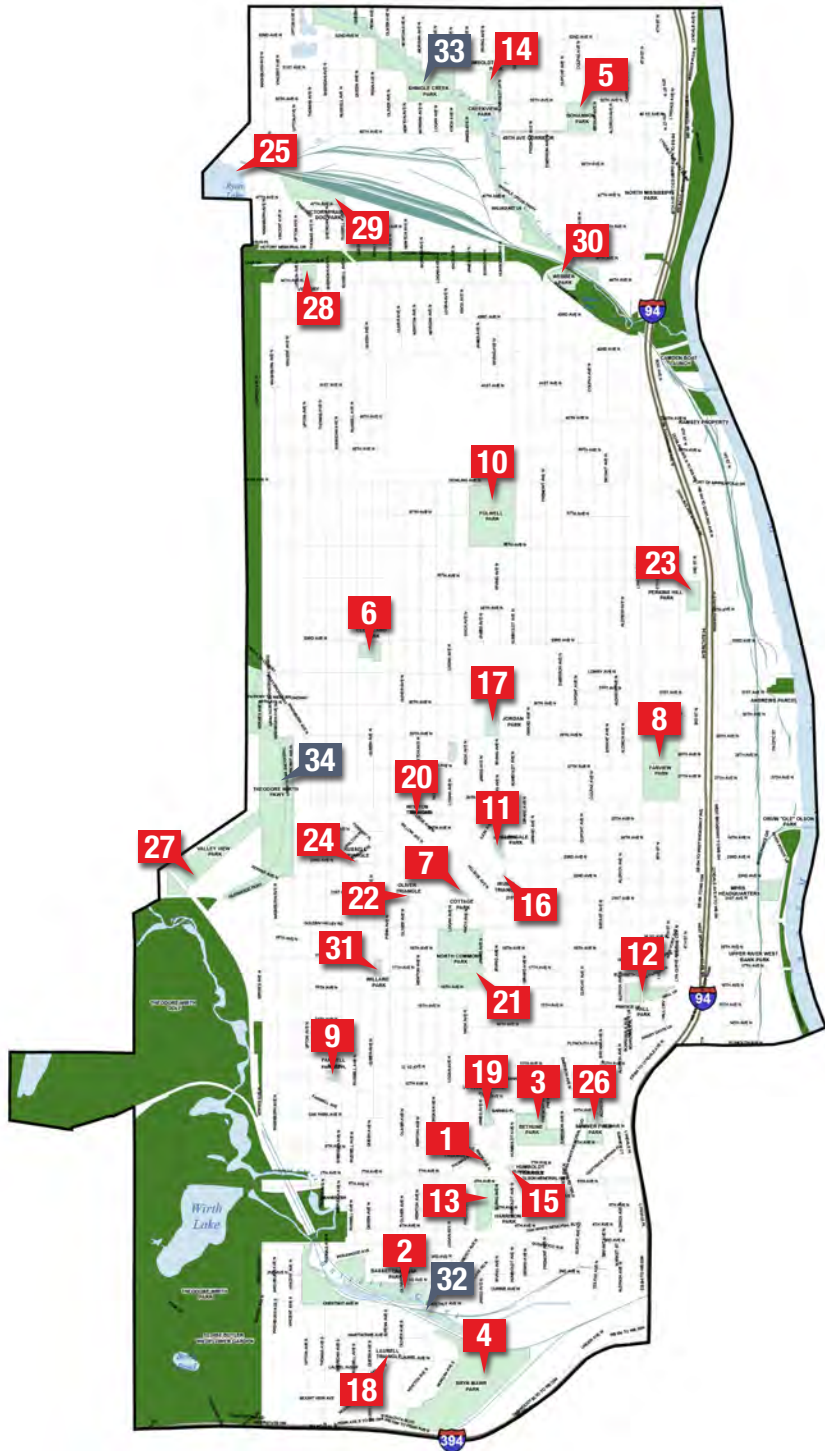
some of the newest parks in the Minneapolis system. That fact is one part of the racial story of this part of town. Currently 69.9% people of color, the north side has historically been an area with lower access to wealth and opportunity. For decades it was one of the few places African-American people could own homes and businesses. Though several large parks were set aside very early, park development in this part of town stalled because of the Park Board's Elwell Law, under which the agency only acquired and built parks by assessing area residents for the costs. Few north side neighborhood residents had the ability to pay these assessments, so they went without parks. Beginning in the late 1960s MPRB stopped using Elwell for neighborhood parks and instead sought grants, bonding, and other sources.

An acquisition and building boom took place in the 1970s and 1980s, but many of these newer parks could never become as large as the

existing big centers of activity—the costs were too high. Also in the 1960s and 1970s, MPRB built recreation centers across the city. On the north side, attention again focused on the largest and oldest parks for these new community hubs.

Minneapolis is blessed with a park system that puts 97% of people within ¼ mile of a park. This, with a couple of exceptions, is true on the north side—but the nearby park might be small or have limited amenities. For all these converging reasons, the neighborhood parks on the north side, more than anywhere else, must function as a network, both physically and programmatically, with smaller parks serving as gateways or stepping stones to the larger ones. Safe and legible routes to, from, and between parks is more critical here—especially due to the north side's lower than average automobile ownership compared to other sectors of the city.

Parks are critical for the health of the north side, its youth, and its adults. Parks can quite literally



## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS INCLUDED

- |                            |                                       |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Barnes Place Triangle   | 17. Jordan Park                       |
| 2. Bassett's Creek Park    | 18. Laurel Triangle                   |
| 3. Bethune Park            | 19. Lovell Square Park                |
| 4. Bryn Mawr Park          | 20. Newton Triangle                   |
| 5. Bohannon Park           | 21. North Commons Park                |
| 6. Cleveland Park          | 22. Oliver Triangle                   |
| 7. Cottage Park            | 23. Perkins Hill Park                 |
| 8. Farview Park            | 24. Russell Triangle                  |
| 9. Farwell Park            | 25. Ryan Lake Park                    |
| 10. Folwell Park           | 26. Sumner Field Park                 |
| 11. Glen Gale Park         | 27. Valleyview /Glenview Terrace Park |
| 12. Hall Park              | 28. Victory Park                      |
| 13. Harrison Park          | 29. Victory Prairie Dog Park          |
| 14. Humboldt Greenway Park | 30. Webber Park                       |
| 15. Humboldt Triangle      | 31. Willard Park                      |
| 16. Irving Triangle        |                                       |

## REGIONAL TRAILS INCLUDED

- 32. Luce Line Regional Trail
- 33. Shingle Creek Regional Trail (which includes Creekview and Shingle Creek Park areas)
- 34. Theodore Wirth Parkway

save lives. Health issues like childhood obesity and diabetes have reached what some call epidemic proportions, and incidence of these issues is higher in communities of color like most of the north side. Inactivity due to lack of access to green space and parks is considered a root cause of these and other health issues among children and adults. Mental illness among children and adults is becoming more recognized as a real health concern, and afflictions such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and even allergies are more in the public eye. In all these health considerations, the science is clear: access to physical activity and the outdoors has profound benefits. Furthermore, through the provision of daily snacks and lunches, children can access healthy food through parks and can form new eating habits.

Incarceration rates among people of color are far higher than for those of European descent. The issue is particularly pronounced among African-American males. Much has been written about this nationwide concern, and this document will not break new ground on this topic, except to say that parks can play a prominent role in disrupting this cycle. MPRB recreation, StreetReach and YouthLine staff, as well as program leaders and volunteer coaches, serve as critical mentors for youth. MPRB believes strongly that the more contact a young person can have with inspiring adults in the parks, the more likely they will equip themselves with the tools to succeed—even in the face of continued disparities in economic opportunity, incarceration, and access to wealth. If kids come to the parks, if they grow up in the parks, they will be better off. And that benefits the city as a whole.

Parks, therefore, must be designed so people want to use them. They must feel welcoming, they must include the activities youth and adults want, and they must be and feel safe and fun. Accomplishing those goals requires a vision driven by and supported by the north side community itself. The North Service Area Master Plan (NSAMP) documents that vision for 31 neighborhood park properties, as well as three Regional Trail facilities that are so inextricably linked to the neighborhood system they were included in this same planning effort. NSAMP is one of five such master plans that collectively redesign every neighborhood park in the city.

Minneapolis today is more diverse in terms of age, race and ethnicity, and recreational need than ever before. The last time the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board took a comprehensive look at its neighborhood parks was in the 1960s and 1970s when the recreation centers were being built. We are a very different city than we were then. It is time to rethink the neighborhood parks. It is time to set a vision for remaking them in the image of the community that surrounds them and gives them life.

This is a vision that will span decades. The physical transformation of the parks will happen gradually over time, project by project, like puzzle pieces fitting into place to form the overall design that is set forth in this plan. This vision will guide capital improvements to reconstruct or build new playgrounds, aquatic facilities, athletic fields, paths, and some amenities never before seen in Minneapolis' parks, like bicycle playgrounds and giant slides. It will allow MPRB to leverage additional financial resources by inspiring and then directing outside philanthropy and grant funding. This vision will—like the parks

themselves—bring the community together to imagine and then build the future of Minneapolis' neighborhood parks.

On April 29, 2016, an historic agreement was reached between MPRB and the City of Minneapolis to fund neighborhood parks of Minneapolis at significantly increased levels until 2037. This agreement demonstrates the importance the Minneapolis community places on its neighborhood parks, and addresses a long-simmering need to accelerate maintenance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of aging park assets. Instead of using this additional funding to merely put back what currently exists, the NSAMP and other service area master plans are asking the community what it wants and then providing guidance for spending. That is the most important reason for this planning effort: **to ensure MPRB uses its increased funding on things that are important to the people.**

A community-driven park system is a well-used park system. A well-used park system can combat physical, mental, and societal ills—by bringing people together for active recreation, relaxation, companionship, or solitude. This is the next legacy moment for Minneapolis parks.



## AS A RENOWNED AND AWARD WINNING PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM, THE MPRB DELIVERS:

**Vision Theme 1:** *Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate*

### Goals

- Sound management techniques provide healthy, diverse, and sustainable natural resources.
- Healthy boulevard trees connect all city residents to their park system.
- Residents and visitors enjoy and understand the natural environment.
- People and the environment benefit from the expansion and protection of natural resources.
- Knowledgeable stewards and partners generously support the system's natural resources.

**Vision Theme 2:** *Recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of*

### Goals

- People play, learn, and develop a greater capacity to enjoy life.
- Residents, visitors, and workers enjoy opportunities to improve health and fitness.
- People connect through parks and recreation.
- Volunteers make a vital difference to people, parks, and the community.
- Parks provide a center for community living.

**Vision Theme 3:** *Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs*

### Goals

- Parks shape an evolving city.
- Park facility renewal and development respects history and focuses on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and beauty.
- Focused land management supports current and future generations.
- Financially independent and sustainable parks prosper.
- Through outreach and research, park and recreation services are relevant today and tomorrow.
- Easily accessible information supports enjoyment and use of the park and recreation system.

**Vision Theme 4:** *A safe place to play, celebrate, contemplate, and*

### Goals

- Positive recreation experiences and welcoming parks prevent crime.
- Residents, park visitors, and staff make safe choices in the parks.
- Intervention and communication reduces safety concerns.
- Parks are safe and welcoming by design.
- Communities, public and private partners, and staff cooperate to promote safety.

## VALUES

We apply the following values to all of our work:

- **Sustainability:** Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.
- **Visionary Leadership:** Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.
- **Safety:** Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors.
- **Responsiveness and Innovation:** Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.
- **Independence and Focus:** Independence allows the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to focus on providing and obtaining the resources necessary to accomplish its mission and form effective, responsible partnerships.

## PRINCIPLES

We consider the following principles when making decisions that have a district or system-wide impact:

- **Identified Community Need and Demographics:** Emphasis will be placed on researching community needs and demographics when considering program and facility delivery.
- **Quality versus Quantity:** The amenities provided to meet the park and recreation needs of communities will be high quality and provided at a sustainable level. Amenities that have completed their useful life-cycle, especially those with a blighted appearance, will be removed and, as funding becomes available, replaced with new amenities.
- **Embracing Technology:** Decision-making will embrace technology to better serve the community.
- **Fostering a New Face for Partnerships:** Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organization's mission will be encouraged.
- **Focusing on the Activity, Then the Infrastructure:** After evaluation of what the Park Board currently provides, the status of other service providers, and existing infrastructure, infrastructure will be provided to meet the service goals for that activity. Service goals for an activity will be based on demographics of an area, identified community need, and the identified target audience for the activity.
- **Sustainable Rate:** A sustainable park system will be supported by decisions that provide services at a sustainable rate, such as providing infrastructure that can be reasonably maintained, setting realistic program and service delivery targets, or modifying land management techniques to increase efficiency.



## DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The North Service Area Master Plan document is the result of more than 18 months of community participation in designing neighborhood parks north of I-394 and west of the Mississippi River, along with three regional facilities: the Luce Line Regional Trail, the Theodore Wirth Parkway portion of Victory/Wirth Memorial Regional Trail, and Shingle Creek Regional Trail (which includes Creekview and Shingle Creek Parks). MPRB and its partners—neighborhood organizations, community service organizations, hired community connectors, stakeholder groups, and interested citizens—hosted more than 100 engagement activities. These ranged in style from formal meetings to community design workshops to spontaneous walks through parks. The community connectors engaged the public directly in gardens and barber shops, through dance and video, and with pizza parties and music festivals. The main purpose of this document is to describe and display the vision for the north service area parks.

Specifically, this document is meant to:

- Show the Minneapolis community what it can expect from MPRB
- Guide development of the Capital Improvement Program each year, through resources such as concept design plans and cost estimates
- Set a framework for collaboration with outside groups around implementation of, stewardship of, and fundraising for park improvements
- Create an MPRB-wide framework for park design and maintenance, so all divisions are on the same page
- Provide resources for tracking progress, so MPRB is continually accountable to the promises made during the north service area planning process

## THIS DOCUMENT HAS SIX PARTS:

ONE

**Introduction and Planning Framework** - This chapter provides an overview of the plan, this document, and related MPRB planning efforts.

TWO

**Planning Process** - This chapter documents how MPRB and the community arrived at this plan. It provides key background information on demographics, recreation trends, and the service area itself. It discusses the various stages of the planning process and the community engagement undertaken at each stage.

THREE

**Service Area Vision** - This chapter is a look at the service area as a whole. It features the “guiding principles” that are at the core of the plan, and provides graphic information on planned facilities across the service area.

FOUR

**Park Plans** - This chapter includes the designs for each neighborhood park in the south service area, and the three regional facilities included in this planning process. It features a packet of information for each park, including cost estimates and ongoing maintenance estimates.

FIVE

**5. Operations And Maintenance** - This chapter outlines recommendations for maintaining parks and includes background on the operations estimates included in the park plans chapter.

SIX

**6. Implementation** - This chapter speaks to future park planners, designers, and community advocates about how to make the park plans real. It provides guidance on using this planning document for capital planning, detailed design, partnerships, and park dedication expenditures. It discusses how to track progress and ensure accountability to the public

MPRB intends that this will be a living document. MPRB intends that it will be utilized regularly by all departments for everything from capital planning to detailed park designs to placement of new trees in parks. The document will exist as a complete, stand-alone book, but the material contained in it will also be disseminated in various formats throughout the organization, to ensure its principles are followed and its resources are utilized:

- The park plan “packets” can be separated into individual PDFs and placed into Planning Division files associated with each park. Project managers will have these packets as resources close at hand whenever they begin a project in a south service area park.
- Plan information may be associated with the new Asset Management System, so the future vision of each park is embedded into the process for facility evaluation, work orders, and project scheduling.
- The base CAD files that show the park designs can also be included in Planning Division files, as well as provided to Forestry to guide geo-referenced planting.
- The cost estimates shown in this document can be placed as active spreadsheets in each Planning Division park file, as a resource to project managers when they begin projects.
- The park plan packets can be linked to north service area park pages on the MPRB website. Visitors to a park’s webpage will not only be able to see what is offered in the park now, but also see what is planned in the future.

*\*Additional information is included in several appendices to this document, including expanded discussions of demographics and detailed documentation of community engagement.*

# RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS OVERVIEW

*Several other past, present, and future planning efforts are related to the North Service Area Master Plan.*

## OTHER SERVICE AREA MASTER PLANS

The neighborhood parks in the MPRB system are divided (for management and planning purposes) into five service areas. The South and Downtown Service Area Master Plans were adopted in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Unique among service area master plans, the Downtown Plan was created in collaboration with the City of Minneapolis and is a comprehensive look at all public spaces—parks, plazas, street corridors, etc.

The Northeast/Southeast (East of the River) and Southwest Service Area Master Plans were underway concurrent to this document and will be adopted subsequently.

## REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLANS

Many of the larger, natural resource-based parks in Minneapolis are Regional Parks. This includes (in the North Service Area) Wirth, North Mississippi, Above the Falls, and Victory Memorial

Parkway. Per Metropolitan Council funding requirements, these large parks are master planned individually. Though existing facilities within these parks are shown on many North Service Area Master Plan maps, it is the regional park master plans that govern future investment in these parks. For purposes of efficiency and effective communication, three regional facilities without current master plans were planned alongside the north side neighborhood parks. The Luce Line, Theodore Wirth Parkway, and Shingle Creek Regional Trail were planned as if they were neighborhood parks just like Farview or Harrison. Master Plans for these parks are included in this document, but they will be subsequently submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval.

## RECQUEST

This major multi-year project will create a new vision for recreation centers and programs

across the city. While the NSAMP is considering outdoor facilities (and has assumed, for the time being, the existing recreation center footprints as a basis for planning, with a few exceptions where a need arose to examine site impacts of community desires for building changes), RecQuest is looking at buildings and at how MPRB programs indoor and outdoor facilities. RecQuest has a direct relationship with all service area master plans, as it may create new models for outdoor programming and recreation center buildings. Careful coordination has taken place as these complementary projects unfold, to ensure community input is heard by all projects. Chapter 6 describes a method for modifying this plan should plans for recreation centers change.

## ACTIVITY PLANS

Activity Plans are topical resource documents that guide and are guided by service area master planning. They look at specific use types

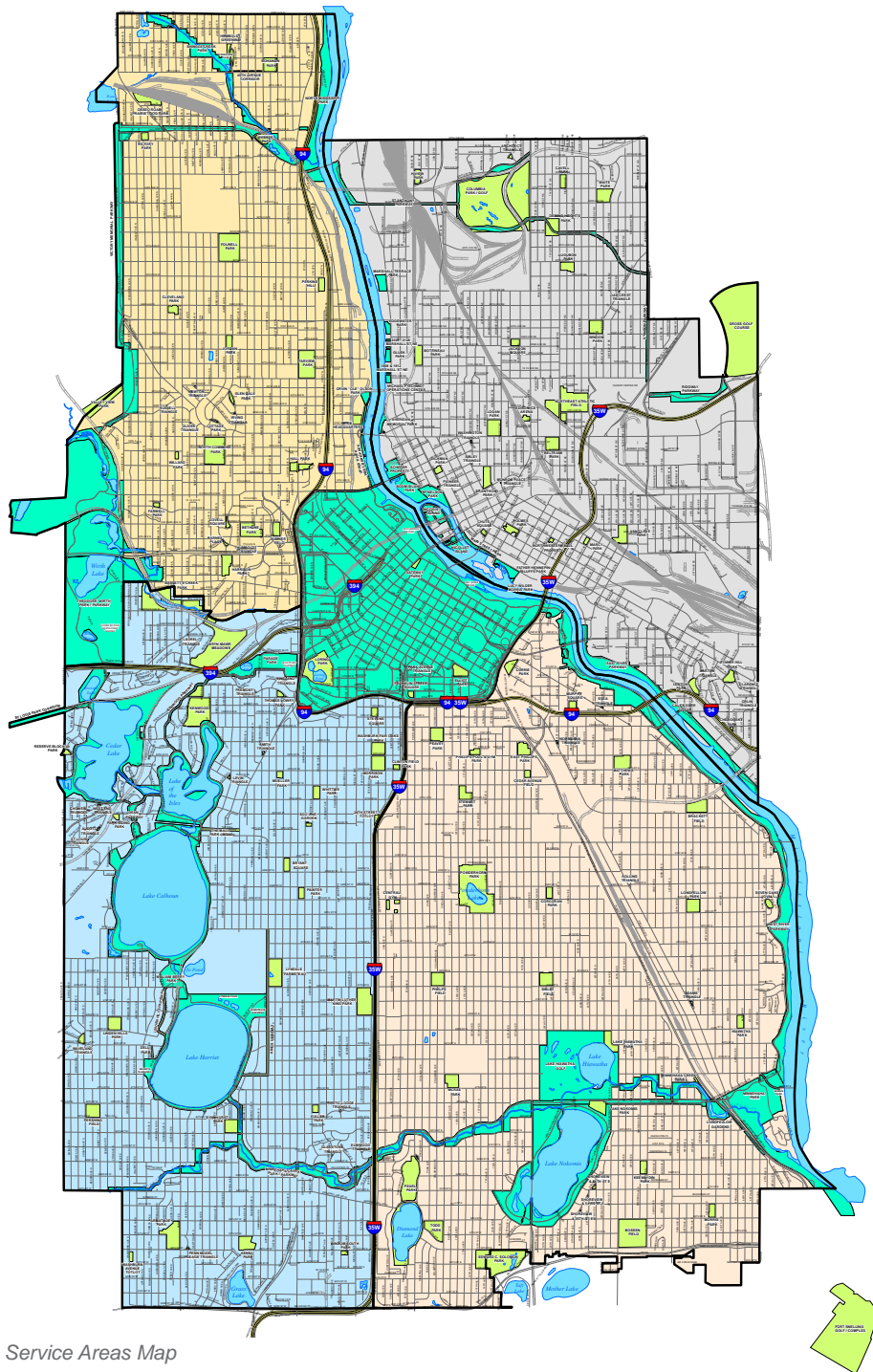


Figure 1.2 - MPRB Service Areas Map

in the parks (such as urban agriculture and skateboarding). They make recommendations for level of service, provide design standards and guidelines, and create task lists for improving delivery of an activity system-wide.

During the NSAMP process, two activity plans had been completed—the Urban Agriculture Plan and the Skatepark Activity Plan. The Urban Ag Plan guided the NSAMP relative to the placement and opportunities for urban agriculture areas. The NSAMP implements a key feature of the Urban Ag Plan and the Community Garden Policy by officially designating urban agriculture areas on park plans. Chapter 6 describes a process for adding additional urban agriculture areas in north service area parks. The Skatepark Activity Plan sets forth system-wide targets for total skatepark area and targets for different types of parks in the city. The NSAMP process follows this guidance, proposing skate/BMX/all-wheel parks in quantities in line with the Skatepark Activity Plan.

### MPRB COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2007-2020 comprehensive plan guides all decision making at MPRB. As such, many key principles of the plan are reflected in the SSAMP. However, the service area master plans can also be seen as a look forward to the next revision of the comprehensive plan, as they are an important documentation of community desires around neighborhood parks

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