



THEODORE WIRTH REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN



MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD
ADOPTED MARCH 4, 2015

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March 4, 2015

MPRB Mission

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board shall permanently preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board exists to provide places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment.

Cover photo: Scott A. Schneider Photography





Figure 1. Views of Wirth Park.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Why Plan?
Geographic Areas
Vision for Theodore Wirth Regional Park
Acknowledgements

Introduction

Theodore Wirth Regional Park (Wirth Park) is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). Located within the cities of Minneapolis and Golden Valley, it is a jewel of the Minneapolis park system, containing diverse recreational opportunities, lakes, woodlands, prairies, a remnant tamarack bog, and views of the downtown skyline within its 720 acres. Visitors to Wirth Park enjoy multi-use trails, 18-hole and Par-3 golf courses, gardens, historic sites, picnic areas, winter recreation activities, and the nation’s oldest wildflower garden. There is something for everyone to enjoy and treasure in Wirth Park.

Wirth Park is generally bound by Golden Valley Road on the north, Interstate 394 (U.S. Highway 12) on the south, Xerxes/Russell Avenues on the east, and France Avenue on the west. Two rail corridors cross the park: the Burlington Northern running north-south, and the Luce Line running east-west. The park lies about half way between Highway 100 and Interstate 94, and is just over 4 miles from downtown Minneapolis, less than a 10 minute drive (figure 4).

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

In 1883, MPRB was created by an act of the Minnesota State Legislature and a vote of Minneapolis residents. It is the unit of government that is responsible for governing, maintaining, and developing the Minneapolis park system. The MPRB’s governance structure is unique and reflects the commitment residents have made to

parcs and recreation in Minneapolis. The MPRB engages in many relationships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations to provide an outstanding and nationally-acclaimed park and recreation system (figure 2).

Today, the MPRB owns and manages over 180 park properties within and outside the Minneapolis city limits, incorporating more than 6,700 acres of land and water. The system is comprised of 75% regional parks and 25% neighborhood and community parks and makes up approximately 16% of all the land and water in Minneapolis. It receives over 18 million visits annually. In addition, MPRB owns and/or operates parkland in other cities, including Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Robbinsdale, Hopkins, and St. Anthony.

Why Plan?

A more robust understanding of community provides guidance and purpose. Master plans provide a process to:

1. Understand community values and apply expertise (design, ecological, historical) to those values;
2. Reflect an integrated approach to values and expertise within a vision for the future of the park; and
3. Translate the vision into a strategy for prudent, long-term investment of limited human, natural, and financial resources.

The master plan is a written and graphic document that captures current park data and analysis, communicates a plan for the park’s future, and guides strategic implementation of the plan over the next 20 years. It serves as a “memory” for decision-making, by reminding future residents, park visitors, and staff of the rationale behind the vision for the park and the recommended improvements.



Figure 2. MPRB ranked first in ParkScore Index, 2013 and 2014.

Geographic Areas

There are three geographic areas of Wirth Park - north, central, and south - that are characterized by both physical and programmatic differences throughout this master plan (Figure 3).

North Wirth

(North of Highway 55)
The golf courses (18 Hole and Par 3) and winter recreation area occupy much of North Wirth, along with Bassett Creek and several lagoons. The “Back 40” west of the Par 3 is an oak woodland and restored prairie area. It features the Luce Line regional trail and shoreline of Twin and Sweeney Lakes. North Wirth contains the Chalet building, Par 3 building and Tool House. Recreational activities in North Wirth include golf, disc golf, hiking, archery, bird watching, volunteering, biking and off-road cycling, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing, snowshoeing, and sledding.

Central Wirth

(From Hwy 55 to Glenwood Avenue, including the Picnic Pavilion).
Wirth Lake and Wirth Beach house are the focus of water activities in Central Wirth. Another focal point is the Wirth Picnic Pavilion and informal outdoor picnic areas, featuring concrete and metal picnic tables built by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers in the 1930s. Educational programs and day camps occur primarily in this Pavilion and in the J.D. Rivers’ Children’s Garden. Activities in Central Wirth include swimming, fishing, picnicking, sand volleyball, playground activities, biking, running, walking, canoeing and kayaking, fishing, bird watching, orienteering, volunteering, gardening, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and off-road cycling.

South Wirth

(South of the Picnic Pavilion on Glenwood).
South Wirth is the center of more self-directed, nature-focused recreation, featuring the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the Quaking Bog, and Birch Pond. Education programs take place in many of these locations. Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden contains the Martha Crone Visitor Center. Activities in South Wirth include bird watching, plant identification, volunteering, biking and off-road cycling, hiking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing.



Figure 3. Aerial view of Wirth Park. Internal geographic areas, adjacent cities (in black) and neighborhoods (in green) are labeled.

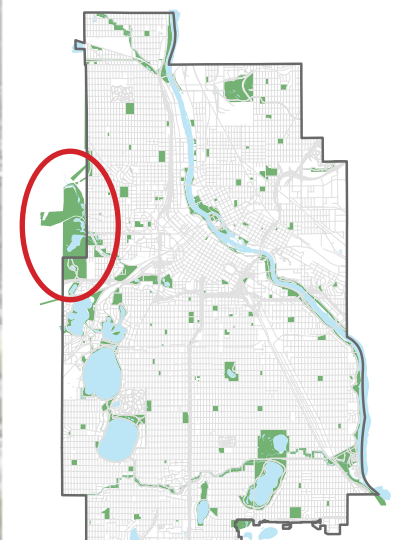


Figure 4. Wirth Park location within city of Minneapolis.

Vision for Theodore Wirth Regional Park

Theodore Wirth Regional Park plays a significant role in the history of the MPRB. The vision for its future is deeply rooted in that history as well as mindful of the MPRB's mission as a forward-leaning steward of parks that serve a spectrum of recreational, ecological, and city-building functions.

Guided by the mission and vision themes of MPRB's 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan, this master plan outlines a broad vision forward to the year 2035 for Theodore Wirth Regional Park. It contributes to the MPRB's long tradition of permanently preserving parkland and emphasizing the connection of people to the land and to each other. Through this master plan, the MPRB aims to continue to enhance the quality of life for regional visitors and to play a significant role in shaping the character of the city of Minneapolis for generations to come.

As the result of a multi-year community planning process, this plan reflects the work of a dedicated appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and input from dozens of user groups, Minneapolis and Golden Valley residents, stakeholders, consultants, and staff. It envisions protecting and enhancing Wirth as a dynamic urban and regional park destination that can be enjoyed by generations to come.

The MPRB recognizes the importance of balancing needs in the park and of focusing on equitable access for the variety of visitors. In particular, the MPRB recognizes that the racial and ethnic composition of future generations will change, and sets the expectation that



Figure 5. Downtown skyline view at Wirth Park.

a racial equity lens will be applied to the implementation of this plan (1).

The plan focuses on two key outcomes:

1. Wirth Park's unique natural and ecological resources will be protected and enhanced:

- Park resources and programming will promote both mental and physical health,
- The park will provide vital opportunities to experience and learn about the natural world in an urban setting,
- The park will play an important role in supporting healthy regional ecosystems.

2. Wirth Park's natural resources will be a basis for recreational and visitor experiences:

- The park's infrastructure and recreational amenities will be designed to support a balanced palette of complementary uses while preserving the ecological quality of the park,
- The park will balance responsiveness to recreational interests with a commitment to healthy natural resources,
- The park will offer safe and equitable access to accommodate a variety of local and regional users in all seasons.

The master plan builds on the original vision of Theodore Wirth and the 1980 master plan for the park. According to the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, Theodore Wirth is widely recognized as the "dean of the local parks movement in America." His intention for Wirth Park and much of the Minneapolis park system during his tenure was to increase resident access to parks and green spaces, increase the amount and size of parkland, and to beautify areas through landscape design that highlight natural features or create naturalized areas.

Wirth's early focus was on a balance of passive enjoyment of the natural and aesthetic character of the park, with active recreational uses. In much the same manner, the 1980 master plan for the park sought to "improve environmental conditions, identify and provide access to resources, and develop continuity between a variety of recreational experiences and locations." It declared that "development which creates access, continuity and identity is the primary objective for Wirth Park," and that "the motive for Wirth Park is to create an opportunity for the urban population to enjoy and appreciate abundant and thriving natural resources as an integral part of their leisure." (2).

(1) *Racial Equity: the proactive reinforcement of policies, procedures and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.*

(2) *Long Range Improvement Plan for Theodore Wirth Park, MPRB, 1980, pg 4*

Concept Master Plan

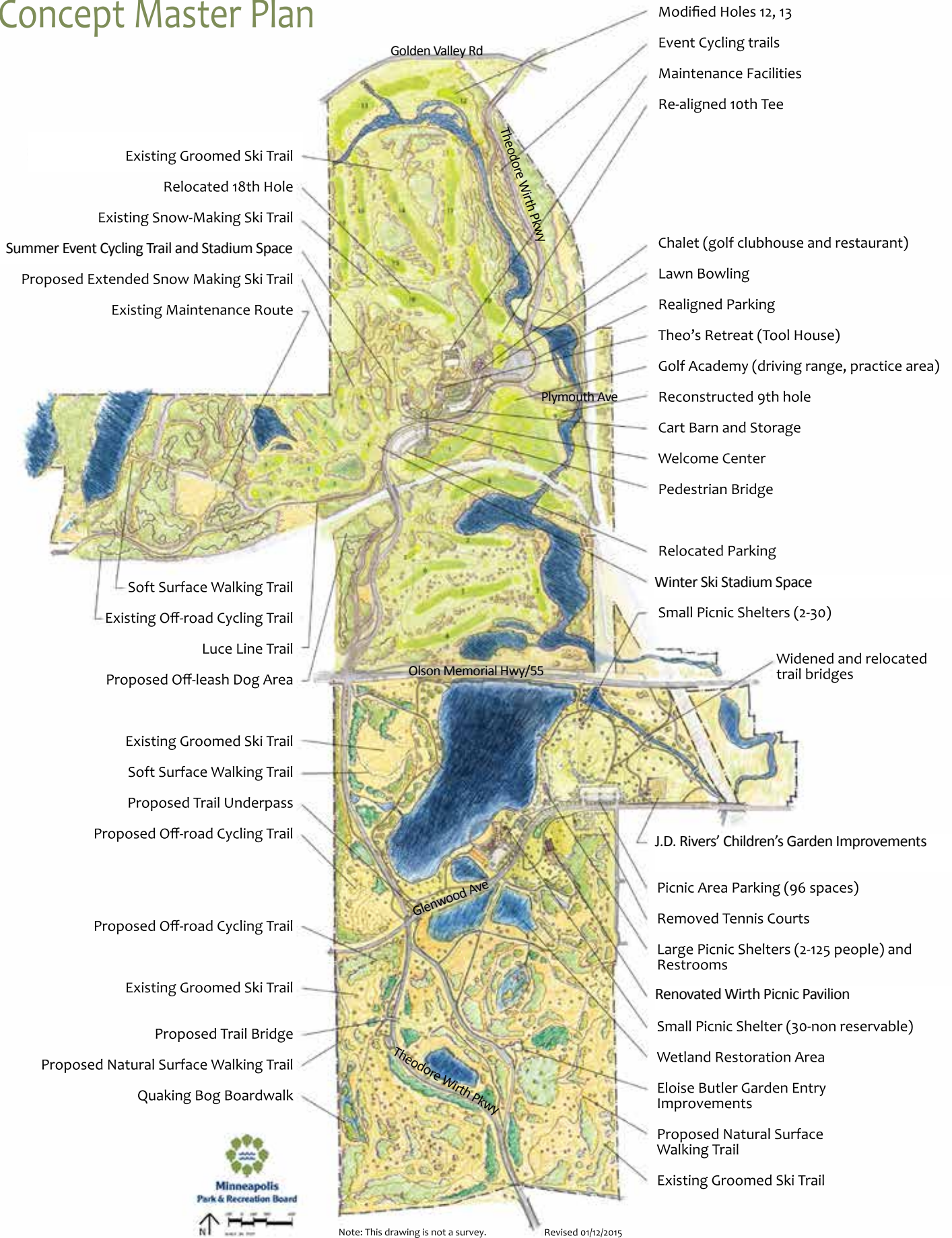


Figure 6. Concept Master Plan.

Acknowledgements

Many people and organizations contributed their time and talent to the formation of this Master Plan over a number of years. MPRB would like to acknowledge and thank the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the many residents, organizations, businesses, and public stakeholder groups who participated in this planning process. Public comments collected throughout the planning process are included in the appendix.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

MPRB Commissioner Appointees

George Puzak, Chair
James Archer
Jane Davis
Vida Ditter
Stephen Goltry
Cheryl Luger
Ed McRoberts
Matt Moore
Steve Pundt

John Munger
Piotr Bednarski

Municipal Appointees

Lynda Baker, Minneapolis
Zach Handler, Minneapolis
Marlin Poessehl, Minneapolis
Damon Struyk, Golden Valley

Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board Appointees

Evan Barnett
Natalie Chivers
Sikari Thompson
Aamina Muhammad

Neighborhood Association Appointees

Carrie Juntunen, Harrison
Karen Soderberg, Bryn Mawr
Joan Stauffer, Northside Residents
Redevelopment Council

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

US Army Corps of Engineers

Melissa Jenny
Joe Yanta

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Melissa Doperalski, MN Department of Natural Resources
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Scott Pedersen, MN Department of Transportation

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Carolyn Fackler, Permits Office
Joe Gladke, Regional Rail (Bottineau LRT)
Chris Sagsveen, Road and Bridge Operations
Joel Settles, Environmental Services Director
Ellen Sones

Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Jim Herbert, Engineer
Len Kramer, Engineer

City of Golden Valley

Jeanine Clancy, Public Works Director
Eric Eckman, Public Works Planner
Joe Hogeboom, Planning
Al Lundstrom, Environmental Coordinator
Jeff Oliver, City Engineer

City of Minneapolis

Lois Eberhart, Public Works Surface Water and Sewers
Greg Goeke, Public Works Property Services, Energy, LEED
Shane Morton, Traffic and Parking Services
Steve Mosing, Traffic and Parking Services
David Peterson, Bikeway Section
Gayle Prest, Sustainability Director
Bill Prince, Public Works Transportation On-street Parking

Consultants

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Barr Engineering
Leo A Daly
Design Workshop
Kari Haug Planning and Design, Inc.

Alta Group
Hess Roise
Two Pines Resource Group
Kveberg Photo

Scott A. Schneider Photography
Elizabeth Pezalla
Piotr Bednarski

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Board of Commissioners

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John Erwin, At Large
Bob Fine, At Large (past)
Meg Forney, At Large

Carol Kummer, District 5 (past)
Steffanie Musich, District 5
Jon Olson, District 2
Anita Tabb, District 4

Scott Vreeland, Vice President, District 3
Liz Wielinski, President, District 1
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Jayne Miller, Superintendent
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Andrea Salo Weber, Project Manager
Colleen O'Dell, Park Planner/Designer
Staff and Research Assistants of Planning, Recreation Services, Environmental Stewardship, External Relations, and Support Services

Other Involved Agencies and Organizations

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
Bassett Creek Watershed Management
Commission
Cedar Lake Park Association
City of Minneapolis
City of Golden Valley
Friends of The Wildflower Garden, Inc.
Friends of Par 3
Hennepin County

Hennepin County Regional Rail
Authority
Loppet Foundation
Metropolitan Council
Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling
Association (MOCA)
Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC)
Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board
MN Department of Natural Resources

MN Department of Transportation State
Historic Preservation Office
Neighborhood Associations of Bryn
Mawr, Harrison, Near North-Willard
Hay, and North Tyrol Hills
Northside Residents Redevelopment
Council
Theodore Wirth Golf Association
US Army Corps of Engineers



Figure 7. Wirth Lake at sunset, 2013.

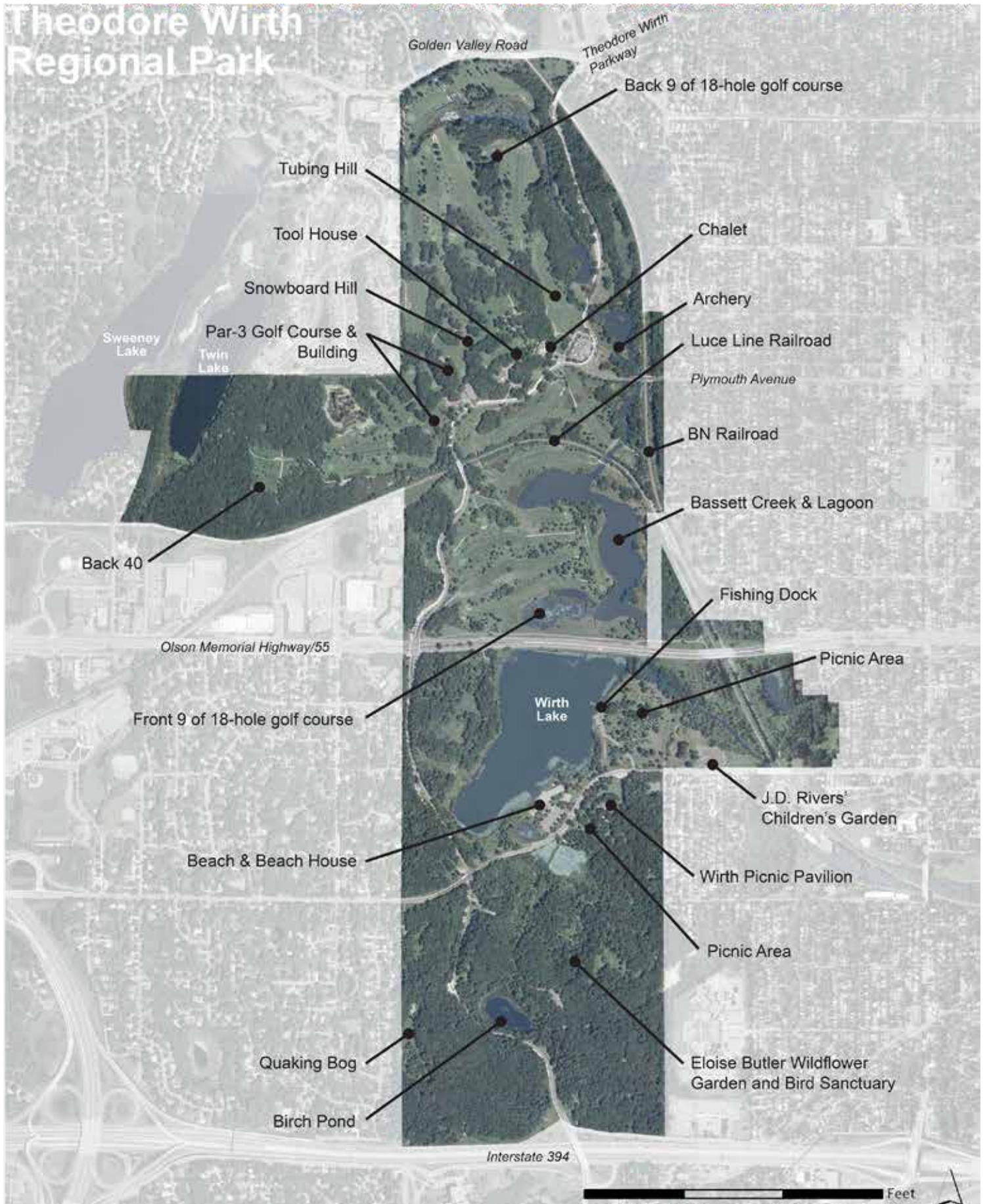


Figure 8. Existing amenities.



II. PLANNING PROCESS

Background
Local Framework
Community Engagement Process

Background

Wirth Park is part of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Regional Park System. While the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board owns and maintains the regional park, its location across two cities and at the heart of the metro area makes it an integral part of a broader metropolitan urban framework. This framework is influenced by local cities, Hennepin County, and the Metropolitan Council, and informs the design, planning, and community engagement for the park. This chapter highlights the local planning frameworks that relate to the park, past planning efforts, and the community engagement process used to develop the master plan.

Local Framework

Metropolitan Regional Parks System

The Metropolitan Council oversees the long range planning for the area’s regional parks system and helps fund the acquisition and development of regional parks, park reserves, regional trails, and special recreation features within the 7-county metropolitan region, with the goal of protecting natural resources, and providing recreation opportunities. The MPRB is one of ten agencies that implement the regional park and trail system. While the parks and trails within the regional system are owned by the

counties or cities in which the reside, the Metropolitan Council is charged with creating a Regional Park Policy Plan that lays out the goals for the expansion and development of the system and the strategies designed to meet these goals. Overall, the policy plan is focused on growth and expansion, but any changes in usage of existing parks and trails in the system must follow the policies laid out in the plan. It also sets out requirements for regional park master plans. This master plan addresses Wirth’s position in the regional system in accordance with the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan.

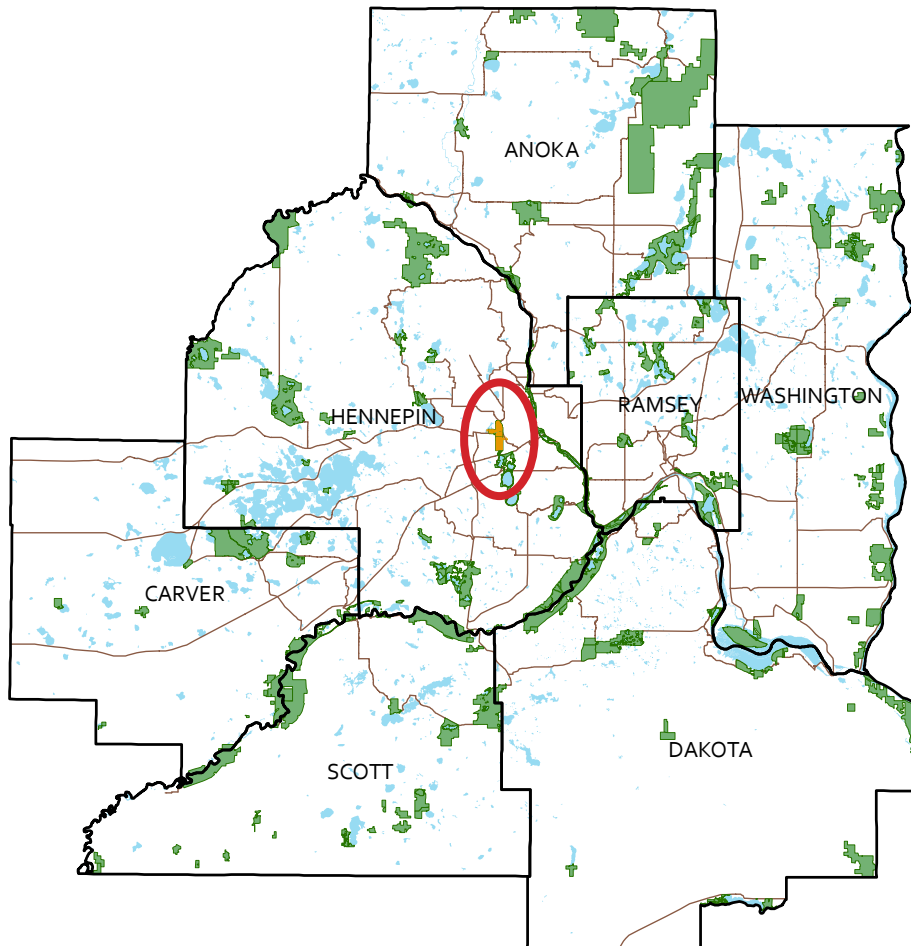


Figure 9. Wirth Park within the Metropolitan Council’s regional park system.

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Table 1. Metropolitan Council regional park master plan requirements fulfilled by this plan.

Because Wirth Park is already established, the following Metropolitan Council requirements do not apply to this master plan:

Stewardship Plan
Activities, expenses and revenue prior to development for recreation
Planned non-recreation uses and disposition of revenue before development
Development Concept
Timing of amendments to an acquisition-phase master plan

Table 2. Metropolitan Council regional park master plan requirements not applicable to this plan.

Additional Plans Referenced

Several prior planning efforts resulted in plan documents that preceded and informed this master plan, including the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2007-2020 and the previous Wirth Park Long Range Improvement Plan (1980).



Figure 10. Prior planning efforts informing this plan.

MPRB Park System

The MPRB governs parkland within the Minneapolis park system per Chapter 16 of the Minneapolis Charter, in accordance with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Code of Ordinances, and in compliance with the respective policies for park development activities it initiates and manages within each city it owns land. The MPRB's

2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan outlines the vision, goals, and strategies for the development, programming, and operation of all MPRB parks, including Wirth. Its ordinance and policy on community engagement provide consistent direction in working and communicating with Minneapolis residents and park users in the planning and development of projects budgeted within the MPRB Capital Improvement Program.

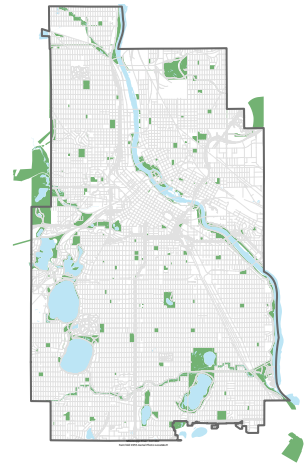


Figure 11. Minneapolis park system.

Additional Plans that Inform the Master Plan

- The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth. 2008 update, City of Minneapolis.
- Golden Valley Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018. 2008 update, City of Golden Valley and SEH, Inc..
- Existing Conditions and Long Range Improvement Plan for Theodore Wirth Regional Park. July 1980, MPRB.
- MPRB Wirth Park Winter Recreation Master Plan. July 30, 2004, Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH).
- Golf Chalet Master Plan. Circa 2000, Partners & Sirny Architects.
- South Wirth Trails Plan. 2005, MPRB.
- Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden Management Plan. 2010, MPRB.
- Wirth Lake Area Concept Plan. 2010, Sanders, Wacker, Bergley.
- Bottineau Light Rail Transit (LRT) Planning. (In progress), Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority.
- Plans released by the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC), including:
 - BCWMC Watershed Management Plan. 2004, BCWMC.
 - BCWMC Main Stem Watershed Management Plan. 2000, BCWMC.
 - BCWMC Resource Management Plan. 2009, BCWMC.
 - DRAFT Feasibility Report for the 2012 Bassett Creek Main Stem Restoration Project, Golden Valley Road to Irving Avenue North. June 2011, Barr Engineering.

MPRB Early Planning History of Wirth Park Area

Early planning in the park area by visionaries such as Charles Loring, William Folwell, Eloise Butler, and Theodore Wirth focused primarily on land acquisition, landform construction, planting, and parkway-building. MPRB's early planning efforts (primarily plan drawings) in the area included:

January 1907, Suggested Extension of Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks.

Undated (included in 1909 Superintendent's report), Glenwood Park and the Lake District. Unattributed.

January 1912, Suggested Extension of 8th Avenue North and Vacation of 6th Avenue North through Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.

January 1914, Ground Plan of Sheep Barns, Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks.

January 1914, General Plan for the Improvement of Glenwood Park. Designed by Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; Prepared by A.C. Godward, Engineer.

January 1917, Glenwood Park, Plan for Plymouth Avenue Extension. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.

January 1918, Proposed Bath House Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.

January 1918, Proposed Extension of Municipal Golf Course Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.

January 1918, Golf Shelter Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.
 Undated (included in 1921 Superintendent's report), Glenwood Golf House Perspective. Magney and Tusler, Inc., Architects and Engineers.

January 1922, Glenwood Golf House, First Floor Plan. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer; Magney & Tusler Inc., Architects and Engineers.

January 1922, Glenwood Golf House, Second Floor Plan. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer; Magney & Tusler Inc., Architects and Engineers.

January 1922, Vicinity Plan of Glenwood Golf House. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; A.C. Godward, Engineer.
 Undated (included in 1922 Superintendent's report), Location Map Showing Contemplated Acquisitions West of Glenwood Park and Sunset Hill. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks.

January 1927, Lagoon Plan - Glenwood Park providing for the Excavation of Bassett's Creek Straightening and Widening Its Channel and Raising the Adjacent Swampland. Designed by Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks and Engineer; A.E. Berthe, Assistant Engineer; C.F. Gosslee, Delineator.

February 1929, Sketch Plan and Profile Showing Location of Suggested Artificial Water Supply for the Chain of Lakes at Brownie Lake - Glenwood Park. Designed by Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks and Engineer; A.E. Berthe, Assistant Engineer; Harold W. Lathrop, Delineator.

February 1930, Proposed Picnic Shelter at Glenwood Park near Glenwood Avenue. Designed by Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks and Engineer; A.E. Berthe, Assistant Engineer.

January 1936, Map of Projected Development of a System of Lagoons in Glenwood Park. Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks, A.E. Berthe, Park Engineer.

Community Engagement Process

An integral part of the master planning was the community engagement process that, through the work of an appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC), set the vision for Wirth that focused on recreational, natural, and cultural/historic resources. The community engagement process was consistent with the MPRB's past and present community engagement ordinance and policy.

Community Advisory Committee

On October 20, 2010, the MPRB convened a 19 member CAC to accomplish the following charge:

“Prepare recommendations for the Board of Commissioners on the prioritization of improvements throughout Theodore Wirth (Regional) Park. The CAC shall consider existing plans and other park needs such as winter recreation/active sports facilities, operations facility consolidation, Wirth Chalet revitalization (including consideration of a restaurant), picnic pavilion rehabilitation, and trail and parkway upgrades. The CAC recommendations shall attract visitors to the unique historical, environmental, and recreational qualities of the park, while reducing maintenance and operating costs.”



Figure 12. Public Open House June 2, 2012.

Per the direction of the Park Board, the composition of the CAC was as follows:

Appointing Entity or Person	No. of People
President of the Board (This appointment is the chairperson)	1
Each Park Commissioner (not including president)	8
Mayor of Golden Valley	1
Bryn Mawr Neighborhood	1
Harrison Neighborhood	1
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council	1
Ward 5 Minneapolis Council Member	1
Ward 7 Minneapolis Council Member	1
Youth Coordinating Board (Youth)	3
Mayor of City of Minneapolis	1
TOTAL	19

Table 3. Information on CAC appointees.

The CAC had previously worked on a concept plan for the Wirth Lake beach area and was familiar with the park. To develop recommendations for the master plan, the committee met 20 times. This resulted in the MPRB approving the concept plan for the park and funding priorities on July 11, 2012. During the community engagement process, several methods were used to determine community needs and priorities for improvements, including:

Community Meetings

Meetings were led by the CAC chair and provided the format by which recommendations for the master plan were developed. Each meeting included an opportunity for public comment and several meetings included interactive sessions.

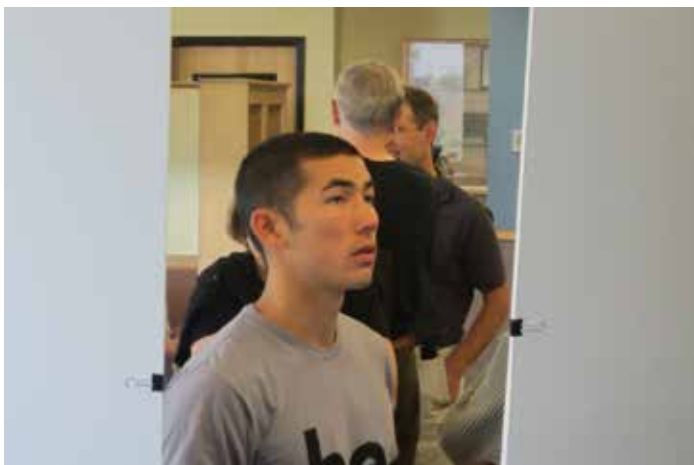


Figure 13. Public Open House June 2, 2012.

Multi-day Design Charrette

In response to significant community controversy that had developed around seemingly conflicting potential park uses in the North Wirth/chalet area of the park, a design charrette was conducted to generate new ideas and seek solutions. The design charrette took place from Wednesday, November 2, 2011 thru Saturday November 5, 2011 and brought together a team of expert consultants on golf, trails, winter recreation, cultural, and environmental resources and site design. The CAC and public were invited to participate in multiple events during the charrette. The charrette resulted in overall concepts for trails and a layering of recreational uses as well as three concepts for the North Wirth/chalet area which included winter recreation, golf, and cycling changes. The CAC later incorporated these concepts into the approved concept plan.

Online Survey

A survey of North Wirth users was conducted in early 2011. The survey provided good detail on the needs and interests of those interested in winter recreation and silent sports activities. It did not provide adequate information about the needs and interests of Par 3 or 18 hole golfers.

Study Teams

Study teams also met, comprised of MPRB staff, staff of non-profit organizations, consultants, and neighborhood representatives. They analyzed options for trail development in Southwest Wirth and golf and winter recreation in North Wirth and presented their findings to the CAC.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held in June of 2011 to gain a better understanding of the needs and interests of Par 3 golf users.

Comments

Individuals submitted comments by mail and email throughout the process. Visitors to the MPRB project webpage could also follow a link to leave comments for CAC members electronically. Comments received throughout the planning process are located in the appendix of this plan.

Public Hearing

As part of the approval process for the concept plan and CAC recommendations for the master plan, a public hearing was held on June 20, 2011.

Comment Period and Public Hearing for Draft Master Plan

This draft master plan was available for a 60-day public comment period in late 2014 that was extended by the Board into early 2015. Following the comment period and subsequent updates to the plan, the MPRB held a public hearing for the master plan on February 18, 2015.

Technical Advisory Committee

In addition to the CAC, the MPRB engaged technical experts in the design process. These experts were members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) listed in chapter 1. The TAC met early in the design process to provide comment and context into the concept plan. As necessary, MPRB staff would meet with TAC representatives for local or area jurisdictions to review and evaluate design ideas.

Notification

News releases were issued on a regular basis regarding planned public meetings, staff action, and plans for park improvements. Copies of these releases were sent to a targeted community and public relations group contact list. Postcards were mailed to residents within three blocks of Wirth Park prior to the first public meeting, charrette, and the public hearing. A project webpage was also created on the MPRB website with regular updates on the public process, dates for events, public impact, a project timeline, news releases, reports, plans, maps, project and park history, and staff contact information.

Design Elements and Tools

Several important themes emerged in the work of the CAC and through public comments. Based on these themes, the CAC approved a set of design elements and tools to help set a direction for their work (table 4).

No.	Design Statements	Design Elements and Tools
1	Provide a variety of activities/facilities, during all seasons, that help all park visitors experience the natural features of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter recreation – tubing, snowboarding, skiing, ski jumping, skating, cycling (off-road, recreational, commuter), snowshoeing, winter hiking, ice rink, organized events • Spring, summer, fall recreation – picnicking, cycling (off-road, recreational, regional), hiking, jogging, birding, performances, swimming, fishing, gardening, stargazing, orienteering, events, dog park • Existing facility improvements • Educational programs • Youth and senior programming • Programs and facilities that easily adapt to changes in the population (numbers, age, ethnicity, etc.) of the park’s service area • Quiet, natural settings • High quality facilities that are durable, long-lasting and easy to maintain • Features and facilities having regional significance
2	Increase safety and the perception of safety for park visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting • Clear views to improve surveillance • Clear park rules • Wayfinding signage and mapping • Collaboration between enforcement agencies • Short emergency response times • Good access to remote locations • Increase desirable and legitimate activities • More positive activity to help deter and decrease negative and undesirable activity • Improve access points to designated trails • Provide accessible areas/activities map/guide • Audio, Tactile, Braille features as part of interpretive and wayfinding signage • Post and enforce parking lot hours of operation • Parking areas with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
3	Minimize conflicts between park facilities/activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No overlap of conflicting seasonal activities • Clear trail signage • Clear trail layouts • Clear pedestrian/bicycle/vehicle circulation • Trail Right of Way: provide clear hierarchy of trails (and trail movement) with signage • Post activities that are happening within the park • Protection of sensitive areas
4	Improve the ease and safety of street crossings for park visitors and maintenance staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridges • Underpasses • Signs, pavement markings, electronic devices • Coordinate solutions with other agencies for adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions
5	Encourage volunteers to participate in park programs, maintenance, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality leadership • Clear goals • Proper equipment • Measurable results • Support facilities (restrooms, shelters, meeting spaces) • Post and make available contact information and description of the MPRB Volunteer program and direct people to MPRB website

Table 4. Design statements, elements, and tools approved by CAC members.

No.	Design Statements	Design Elements and Tools
6	Provide improved access for visitors from throughout the region and especially from north Minneapolis neighborhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good trail, vehicular and transit system connections • Good signage and wayfinding • Bus stop at Wirth Park Beach • Nice Ride Bike Station(s) • Gateways for entry points and inside the park, example: Glenwood and Wirth Parkway • Improve organized access to Wirth Park from Golden Valley • Use media more often and more frequently to promote programs, events and the park itself, examples: outreach to neighborhoods, North Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District • Improve ADA accessibility
7	Maintain trails so they are central to the park visitor's experience and provide trail systems that are useable by all park visitors throughout the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable trail surfaces - not all trail surfaces need to be paved, natural trail segments also appreciated year round • Good stormwater management • Good organization and layout • Good access • Safety and security • Good signage and wayfinding • Make better connections to Luce, Cedar Lake, and Kenilworth trails
8	Improve parking and expand with caution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate but not excessive parking • Environmentally responsible parking, for example integrate canopy shade trees and stormwater management into parking lot improvements • Good organization and layout, i.e. apply CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guidelines • Good access • Safety and security • Good signage
9	Protect, enhance and maintain Wirth Park's natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological survey • Natural resource management plan • Habitats managed to encourage wildlife diversity • Sustainable planning and design • Programs that help to connect visitors with nature • Interpretive signage • Environmental Education classes • Collaborate with other organizations such as the University of MN/Landscape Arboretum and the Audubon Society.
10	Protect, enhance and maintain Wirth Park's history and make it more accessible to visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archeological assessment • Protect restore, rehabilitate historic facilities • Interpret historic features • Native American • Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks • Brewery ruins
11	Design facilities to be long lasting and easy to maintain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable materials and designs • Convenient maintenance facilities • Proper equipment for the task • Good access throughout the park • Collaboration between maintenance groups • Collaboration between maintenance and planning for facilities and park design • Have on record the finance needs for the maintenance budget • Explore opportunities for alternative energy such as solar for new facilities and park amenities, example solar light pole(s)
12	Take care of the assets that are well-used before adding new.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration, rehabilitation of existing facilities • Consider permeable surfaces for repairs and new areas of hard surface spaces • Maintenance and Operations plan analysis for both existing and proposed changes to operations, facilities and park design • Update Wirth Park Master Plan

Table 4 (continued). Design statements, elements, and tools approved by CAC members.



III. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Park Description and Inventory Summary
Land Use
Access
Area Demographics

Park Description and Inventory Summary

Size	720 acres
Visitors per year	459,800 (2013 estimate)
Date acquired	First acquisition 1889
Previous master plan	1980
Location	Cities of Minneapolis and Golden Valley
Number of buildings	10
Number of parking spaces	Approximately 315
Hours	Developed park areas (illuminated, with parkways): 6 am to midnight, undeveloped areas: 6 am to 10pm
Metropolitan Council Districts	Districts 6 and 7
Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) Districts	Districts C and D
MPRB Commissioner district(s)	MPRB District 4 (A. Tabb) and District 2 (J. Olson)
Watershed	Bassett Creek Watershed District
Recreational opportunities offered	Year-round individual and group recreation, picnicking, trail sports, rentable spaces, nature education, large events (see chapter 4)
Natural land resources	Wildflower garden and bird sanctuary, quaking bog, deciduous oak forest, coniferous forest, prairie (see chapter 6)
Water resources	Wirth Lake, Birch Pond, Bassett Creek, lagoons, Ski Jump Pond, Twin Lake, Sweeney Lake, wetlands (see chapter 6)
Cultural and historic resources	Designed and cultural landscape, historic building structures, archeological features (see chapter 5)
Proposed improvements	Trail improvements, natural resource enhancement, garden enhancements, wayfinding, picnic shelters, parking, off-leash recreation area, Chalet rehab, Welcome Center, golf course improvements, activity re-location, off-road cycling event trails, maintenance facilities and improvements, meeting space (see chapter 7)
Proposed improvements revenue sources	Capital and enterprise funding, public-private partnerships, grants, donations
Adjacent Neighborhoods	Golden Valley, Minneapolis (Willard-Hay, Harrison, Bryn Mawr)
Nearby Public Schools	Bryn Mawr Elementary, Meadowbrook Elementary, Noble Elementary, Anwatin Middle School, Perpich Center for Arts Education
Transportation	Bus and Vehicle (Grand Rounds, parkway), Bicycle and Pedestrian (paved and natural surface trails, bus stops)

Table 5. Wirth Park description and inventory.



Figure 14. Aerial of Wirth Park, 2013.

Land Use

Wirth Park is surrounded primarily by single-family detached homes in residential neighborhoods of average urban density. Some commercial, educational, and institutional uses border it, as well as small lakes, creeks, waterbodies, and major transportation thoroughways.

Zoning

The areas of Wirth located within Minneapolis are zoned “R1” for low-density residential and the entire park is located within a shoreland overlay zone. Within Minneapolis, parks are a permitted use within all zoning categories. In Golden Valley, the park is zoned “Institutional:Sub-District I-4” which permits uses such as golf courses, parks, and playgrounds.

Park Acquisition and Boundary

Wirth Park began in 1889 with the 64-acre acquisition of Birch Pond and Brownie Lake and land east of it up to present day Xerxes Avenue for \$100,000. The owner of the land, Thomas W. Wilson, planned to drain the area and construct houses and streets. Area residents who disagreed with his intentions petitioned the newly formed Board of Park Commissioners to purchase the land with funds assessed to park neighbors. Known as the “Saratoga Springs Acquisition,” the land supported streams, marshes, ponds, swamps, tamarack bogs, and a wide array of trees including elm, linden, ironwood, ash, aspen, oak, and birch.

Originally called Saratoga Park, in 1890 it was re-named Glenwood Park, then renamed again in 1938 to honor Theodore Wirth, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Superintendent from 1906-1936. Over the years, the

park was expanded multiple times to reach its present size of 720 acres. In the 1950s, expansion of Hwy 55 from a county road into a highway through the park changed some property lines along the north side of Wirth Lake. In the 1950s, under intense pressure from the Minneapolis City Council, the Park Board sold 30 acres of park land just

west of Brownie Lake to Prudential Life Insurance to build their headquarters. Proceeds from the sale were used to purchase the “Back 40” part of the shore of Twin Lake at the western-most part of the park. In the 1960s and 1970s the MPRB acquired small residential parcels west of Xerxes Avenue and north of Glenwood Ave.

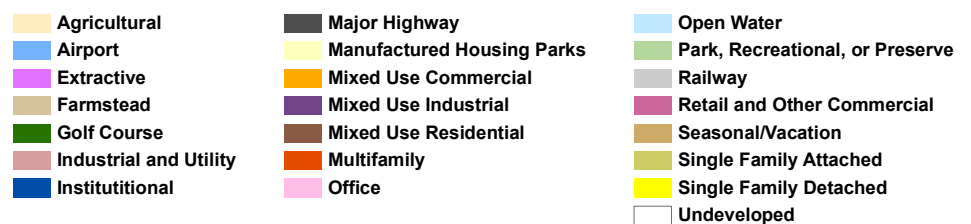
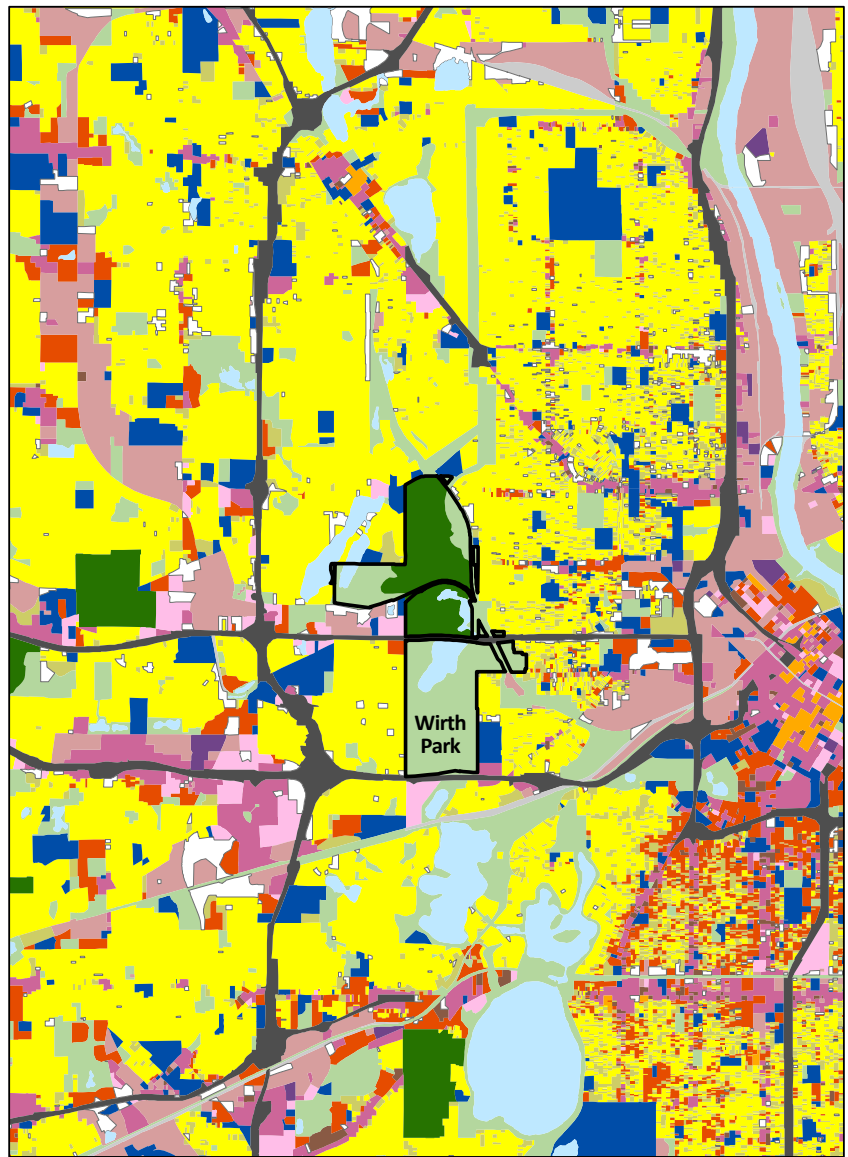


Figure 15. Generalized land use surrounding Wirth Park, 2010.

Access

Transportation

Visitors can access Wirth Park via the parkway, local roads, on-street bicycle routes, trails and sidewalks. It is accessible by motor vehicle from Highway 55/Olson Memorial Highway, Glenwood Avenue, Plymouth Avenue and Golden Valley Road, and has partial access from Interstate 394. Metro Transit public bus routes #755, 32, 14, and 9 serve Wirth Park including a stop at the Chalet. Several designated on-street bike lanes and off-street bike trails lead to the park including Theodore Wirth Parkway and adjacent/parallel bike paths, as well as the Luce Line Regional Trail.

Parking

The park includes approximately 300 parking spaces (table 6). Large event organizers routinely use shuttle buses to bring patrons from nearby commercial parking lots to the park.

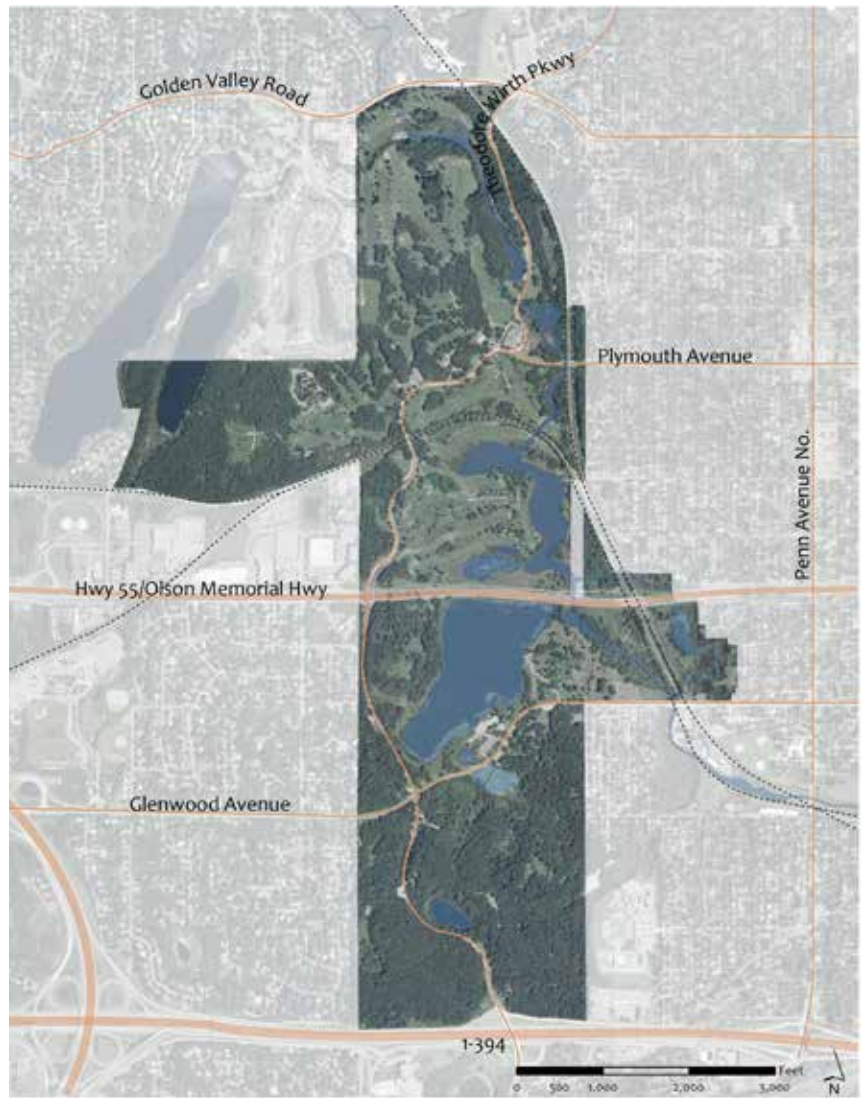


Figure 16. Transportation options in and around Wirth Park.



Figure 17. Paved trails at Wirth Park.

Location	Spaces	Type	Notes
Chalet	131	no-fee	6 stalls are ADA only
Chalet service bay	5	no-fee	for service/staff vehicles only
Maintenance Area	10	no fee	for maintenance/staff vehicles only
Par 3 Clubhouse	65	no fee	patron
Wirth Beach	74	no-fee	21 spaces are grass-paved, not plowed in winter
Theodore Wirth Parkway bay north of Chalet	6	no fee	on-street parking is not allowed on Wirth Pkwy outside of this bay
Eloise Butler lot	22	permit and meter	not plowed in winter
Quaking Bog lot	13	permit and meter	not plowed in winter
Wirth Lake boat launch lot	17 + 3 boats	no fee	
Glenwood streetcar shelter	15 approx.	no fee	gravel surface, not plowed
Wirth Pavilion	4	no-fee	ADA only

Table 6. Parking at Wirth Park.

Area Demographics

Data presented in this section focuses on jurisdictional areas from which Wirth Park draws visitors, as well as on neighborhoods immediately surrounding and within a relatively easy commute distance to the park. Wirth Park’s proximity to north Minneapolis provides an opportunity for the MPRB to deliver quality nature-based recreation and facilities to residents of neighborhoods that are among the most diverse in the city and have high rates of poverty. The demographic data also reveals that the neighborhoods near the park have a high percentage of households with children. The series of maps in this section display census data from a two mile radius around Wirth Park (3).

Age, Family Households, and Rental Status

Figure 19 shows high percentages of children and young adults living near Wirth Park, and indicates a high percentage of family households nearby. The total number of renters versus home owners surrounding Wirth is fairly evenly split; however the distribution indicates renters primarily live east of the park and home owners live to the west.

Race and Ethnicity

Communities to the northeast of Wirth Park are part of one of the most historically diverse sections of Minneapolis. Based on the 2010 Census, figure 20 shows higher percentages of the population that are Asian, Hispanic/

Latino, or African-American living to the northeast of the park compared to communities to the west and south.

Income Distribution, Poverty, and Vehicle Ownership

Median income ranges from over \$15,000 to \$115,000 annually near the park, and is highest in communities southwest of the park (figure 21). The percent of persons in poverty is highest northeast of the park. Access to a vehicle is least prevalent east of the park. Respondents in these areas are less likely to own a vehicle and may require more transportation and transit options to access Wirth Park and its amenities.



Figure 18. A collection of visitors to Minneapolis parks.

(3) Users within a two-mile radius of the park are the most likely to have multiple ways to access the park: via car, bike, bus, or walking. An average visitor could likely walk to the park if within a half mile, and bike or bus to it if within two miles.

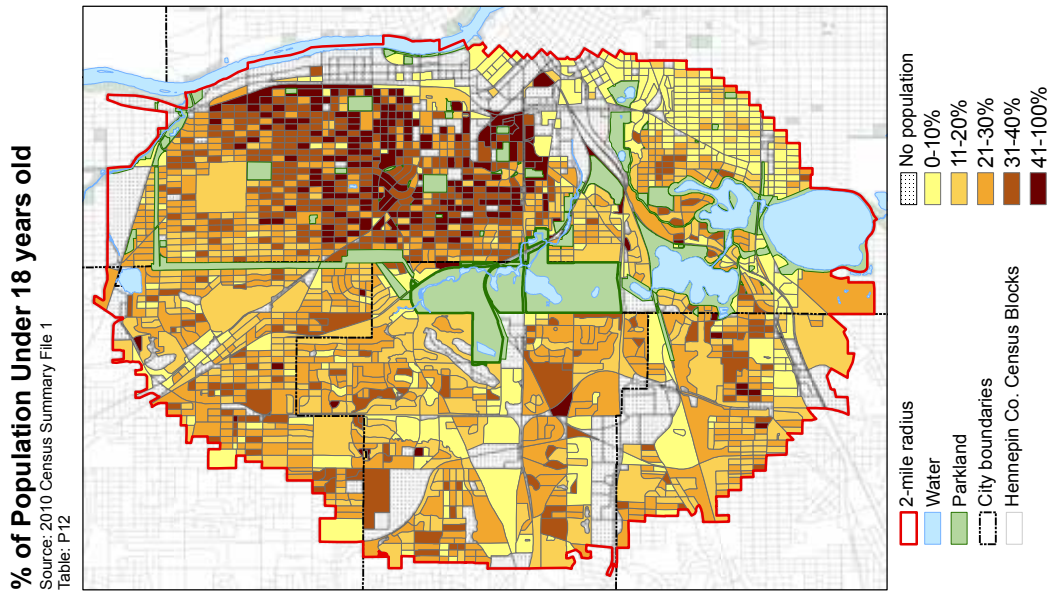
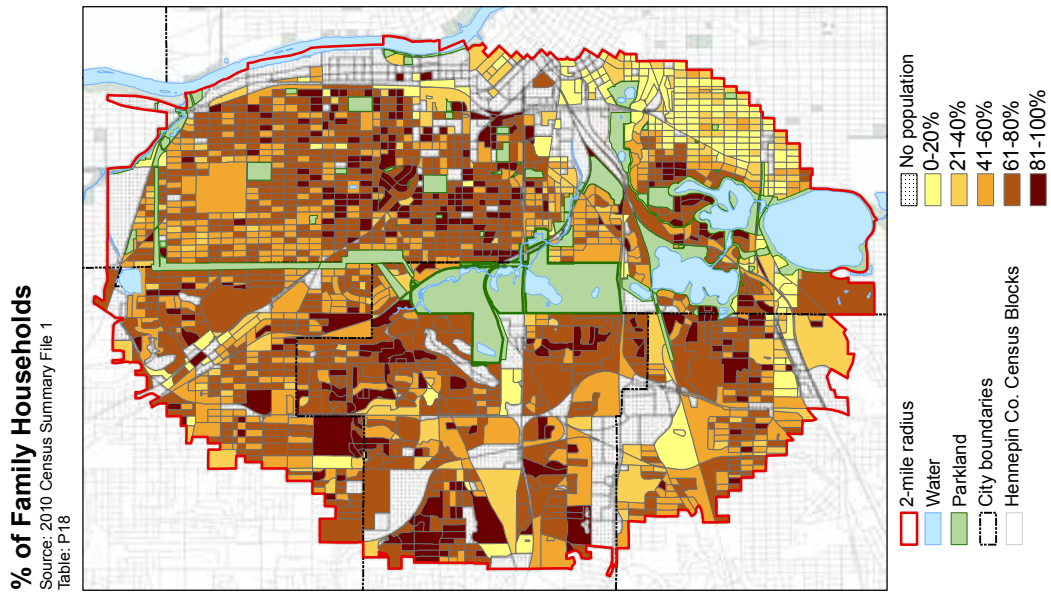
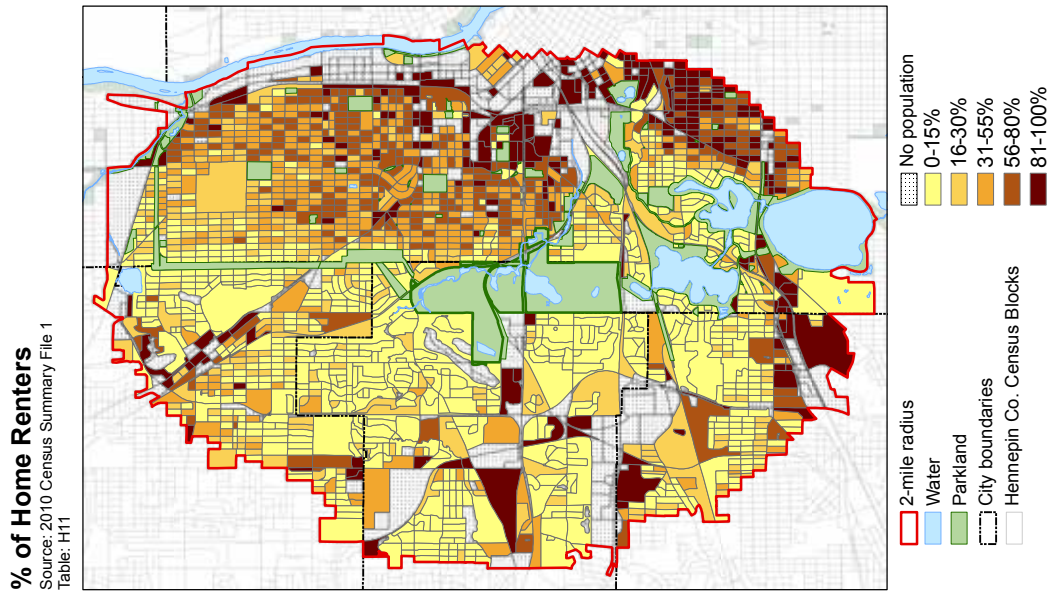


Figure 19. Maps of age, families, and renters in a 2-mile radius around Wirth Park.

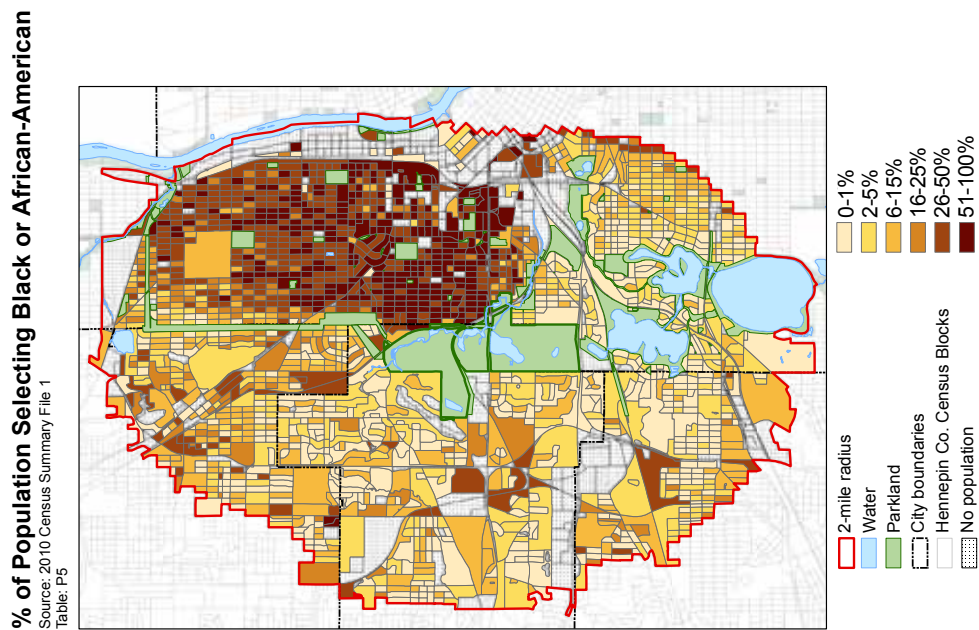
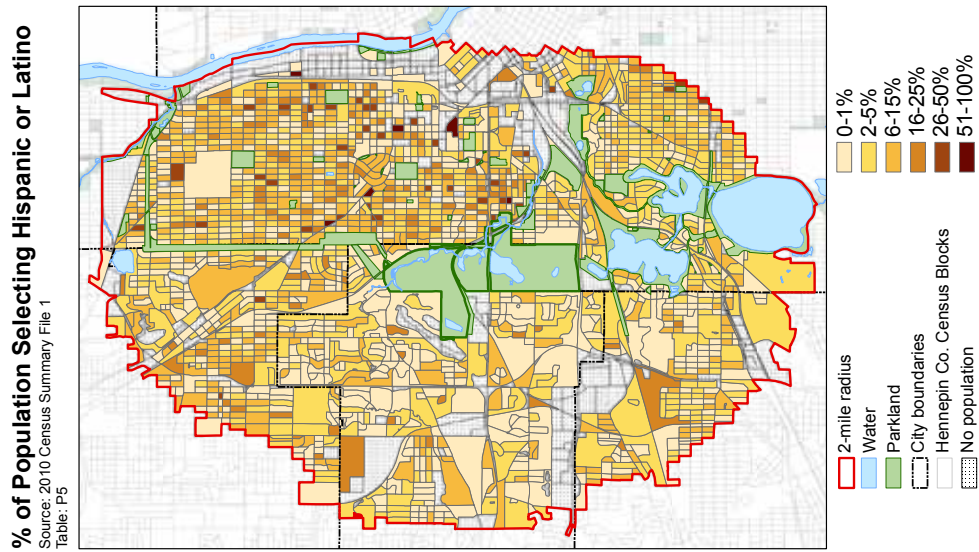
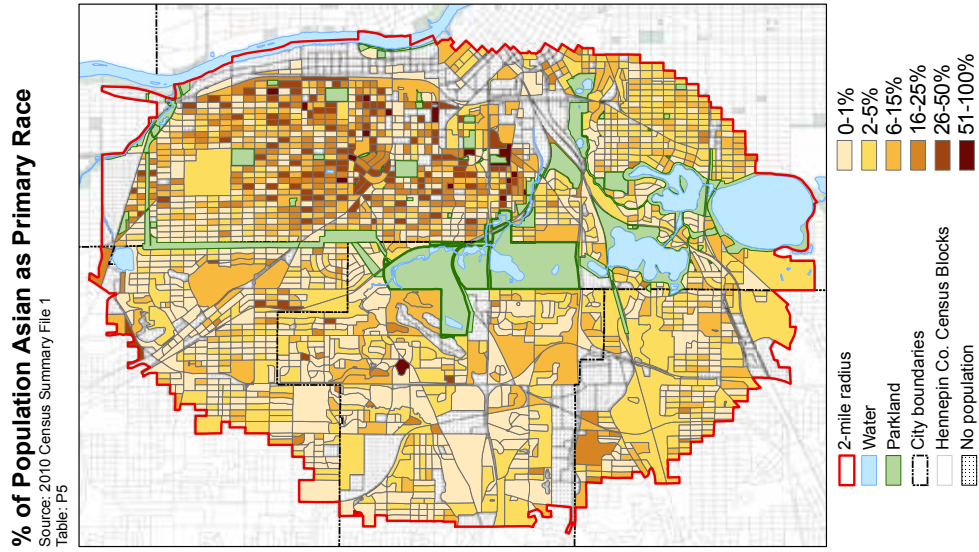


Figure 20. Maps of self-identified race/ethnicity in a 2-mile radius around Wirth Park.

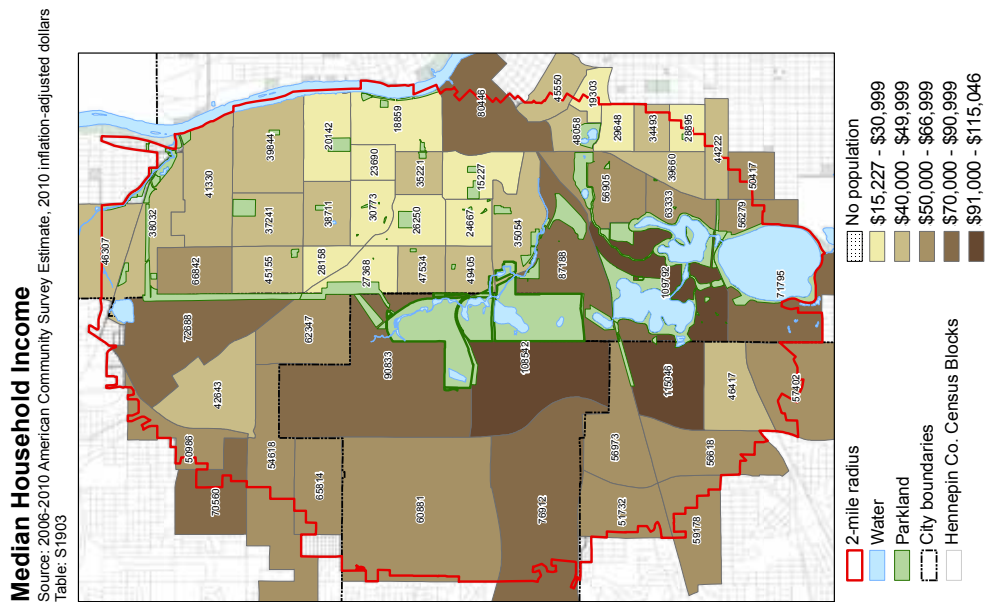
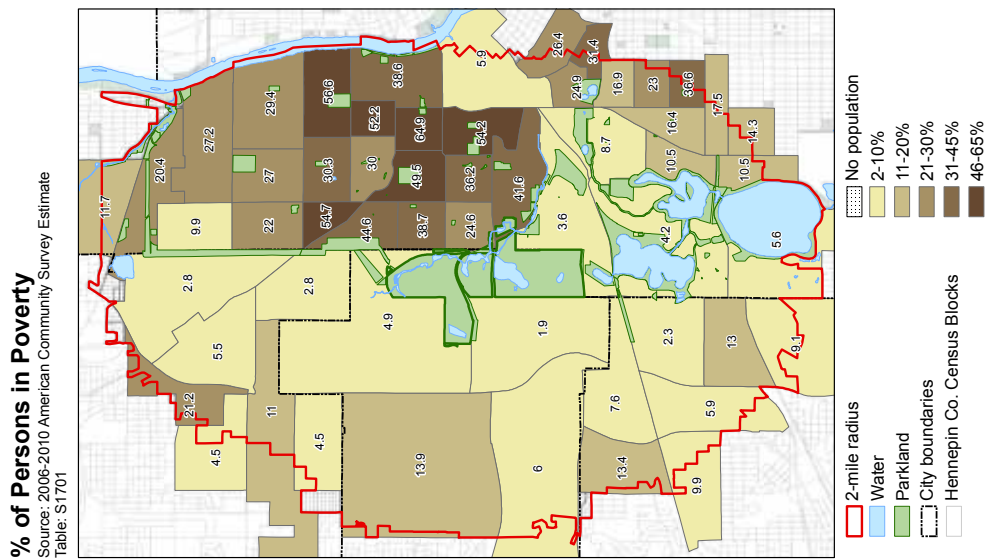
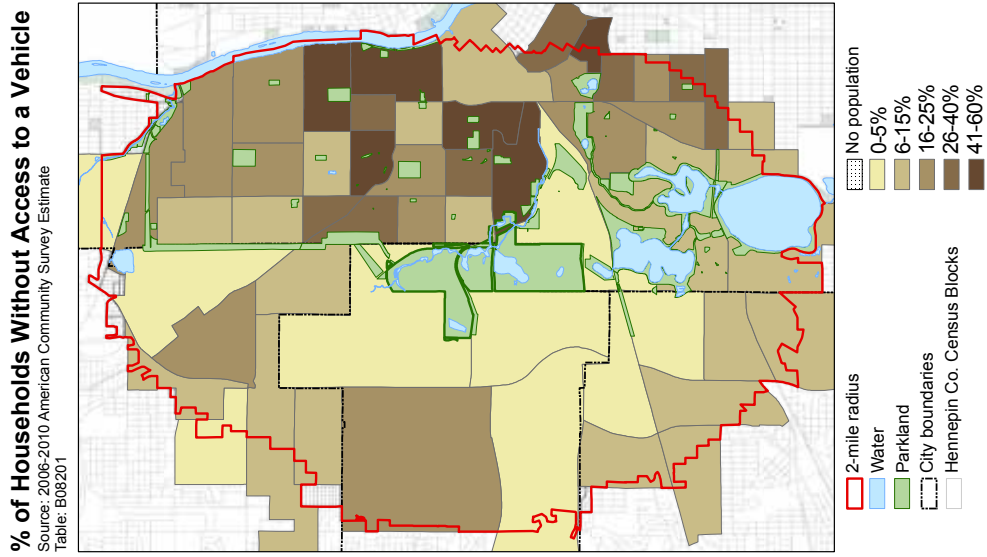


Figure 21. Maps of income, poverty, and vehicle access in a 2-mile radius around Wirth Park.



IV. RECREATION NEEDS FORECAST

Overview
Population Growth
National, State, and Local Trends and Concerns
Visitor Profile
Recreational Resources
Trends at Wirth Park

Overview

As a regional park, Wirth Park provides a wide range of natural resource-related recreational opportunities. Local, state and national research continues to illustrate the importance of nature-based recreation to the quality of life and health of a population, especially in an urban setting. Americans are interested in running, trail running, cycling and mountain biking and adults are trending toward individual versus team recreation activities. Meanwhile, concerns about childhood obesity and lack of nature-based recreation grow. There is also increasing concern in the park and recreation profession that immigrant populations and communities of color are not pursuing nature-based activities in their leisure time and receiving the benefits of nature-based experiences.



Figure 22. Golfer in Wirth Park.



Figure 23. Trail user in Wirth Park.

Population Growth

When the MPRB system of parks was first created and Wirth Park first acquired, Minneapolis was sparsely settled and primarily agricultural. Now it is a densely populated, fully urbanized city. Estimated at approximately 400,000 people in 2013 (4), the city's population is smaller than it was at its 1950s peak, even though its total number of households has increased slightly. Growth in population and density can increase the social and environmental value of park land, as it provides a refuge from bustling city life, noise, and distraction. However, a growing population can also place extraordinary environmental stress on parks and the ecosystems within them. The Metro Area as a whole, Hennepin

County and the cities of Minneapolis and Golden Valley are all projected to increase in population over the next 25 years, placing greater stress on MPRB parks and trails, including those in Wirth (figure 24).

Both the increasing rate of immigration and higher birth rates among Latino, Black, and Asian populations is expected to substantially change the racial and ethnic demographic make-up of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, with people of color comprising 40% of the region's population by 2040 (5). Projections show that as the overall population grows, these immigrant populations and people of color will represent a larger share of the workforce and families with children. In addition, the population of seniors and older

adults will double by 2030 and is projected to grow to 21% of the region by 2040, making up almost a quarter of total population (6). The number of households is also expected to grow, with increases in seniors living alone, single adults, and couples without children.

National, State and Local Trends and Concerns

Recreation is shaped by a number of factors, from shifting demographics to the introduction of new activities. National, state and local trends influencing recreation in Minneapolis and in Wirth Park are presented in this section.

(4) *Minneapolis Community Profile*, Metropolitan Council, www.metrocouncil.org, accessed Oct, 2014.

(5) *Thrive MSP 2040*, Metropolitan Council, 2014

(6) *Thrive MSP 2040*, Metropolitan Council, 2014

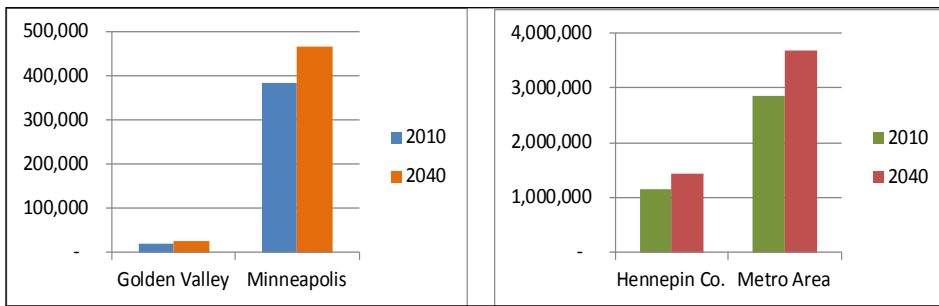


Figure 24. Population growth forecasts from 2010 to 2040.

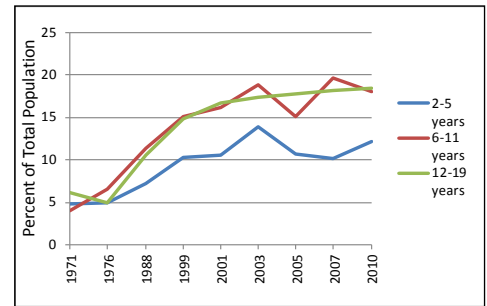


Figure 25. Obesity trends in children and adolescents from 1971 to 2010.

2009 Survey of Park and Recreation Organizations

A 2009 survey of park and recreation organizations by Recreation Management magazine indicated interesting trends in parks and recreation nationally:

- Increase in partnerships with local non-profit organizations, community groups, businesses, and other government agencies.
- Lower budget allocations and revenues, with a concurrent increase in use of facilities and amenities.
- Increased public awareness of skin cancer causes and prevention, increasing users' preference for parks with shelters and shade structures or tree canopy.
- Building and amenity expansion projects focus on playgrounds, restrooms, picnic shelters, natural areas and gardens, and outdoor sports courts.
- Increased reliance on volunteers to assist with programming, natural resources management, and fundraising.
- Focus on environmental / conservation issues, education, and leadership.
- Importance of holiday and special events programming, youth sports teams, day camp and summer camps, and adult sports teams.
- Number one planned future recreational offering was environmental education.

Outdoor Foundation 2010 Participation Report

According to the Outdoor Foundation's 2010 Participation Report, American's top two favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation were 1) running, jogging and trail running; and 2) road biking, mountain biking and BMX biking. This survey also showed that individual's participation in team sports peaks for both men and women during teenage years, then decreases. Participation in self-directed outdoor and indoor fitness activities increases with age.

Nature Deficit Disorder

There is a growing national concern that youth in particular are losing their connection to nature. The term "nature deficit disorder," coined by author Richard Louv in *Last Child in the Woods* (2005) attributes an increase in mental and physical health challenges to inadequate time spent outdoors in contact with nature.

Childhood Obesity

Nationally, rates of obesity and diabetes have been on the increase, most alarmingly in children (7). The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracks historical growth in childhood obesity (figure 25).

The CDC lists among its community recommendations the need to improve access to outdoor recreational facilities, and to enhance infrastructure supporting walking and biking.

Leisure Time Disparities/ Racial Equity

There is professional recreation and health-related research to support that immigrant populations and communities of color are not pursuing nature-based activities in their leisure time due to current economic and social factors. In 2014, the Metropolitan Council undertook a study focused on understanding regional park use among select communities of color (8). Participants identified their preferred outdoor recreation activities, their perceived barriers to visitation, and suggestions to enhance visitation. Findings of that study recommend park agencies develop strategies and actions to address the following:

- Increase awareness of the regional parks.
- Modify recreational programming to meet outdoor recreational activity preferences of communities of color.
- Design and manage parks to address outdoor recreational activity preferences of communities of color.

(7) NCHS Health EStat: "Prevalence of Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, Trends 1963-1965 Through 2009-2010", Fryar et al.

(8) "Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color", Metropolitan Council, 2014

The top ranked activities for communities of color as identified by the study are: walking, playground use, and swimming or going to the lake. When asked about the concept of the word “park”, themed responses included nature, safety and security, wildlife and amenities such as playgrounds, and the opportunity to spend time with friends and family.

Study participants indicated their top barriers to visiting regional parks were:

- 1) Lack of awareness
- 2) Time
- 3) Fear/Safety Concerns
- 4) Lack of Transportation Options
- 5) Language Barriers

To address these barriers, participants suggested that park agencies increase awareness, address safety, enhance the capacity of gathering space, diversity programming, and provide more events to increase usership of the regional park system by communities of color.

MPRB User Surveys

The MPRB and its partners periodically conduct phone surveys to understand user preferences. Surveys from 2007 and 2009 show that residents feel the MPRB is doing a good job of providing for their household’s park and recreation needs. According to residents, parks define the city and are very important to the quality of life in Minneapolis. Residents want more investment in the care and upkeep of park and recreational facilities and enhanced communication, as well as a greater connection between community needs and the services provided by the park system.

According to the 2007 phone survey, when asked to rate the importance of various amenities, Minneapolis residents rank natural areas like lakes, creeks, wetlands, woods and prairies, and boulevard/street trees highest (1).

(1) MPRB phone survey, conducted by CJ Olson for MPRB, 2007



Figure 26. 100-year anniversary party at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden.



Figure 27. Sculptures at Wirth Chalet.



Figure 28. MPRB trail user.



Figure 29. MPRB playground users.

Related amenities such as neighborhood and regional parks and trails and environmental programming also receive high rankings. Residents commonly request more trails of all types and keeping them well maintained and clean. Within the natural environment, residents indicate they enjoy walking, biking, viewing nature and picnicking. When residents were asked what park they visited most often, Wirth Park tied the Mississippi riverfront with 13% of residents polled.

Residents encourage the development of partnerships with public and private entities that further the goals of the Park Board. When considering the private

sector, they recommend partnerships with local businesses and those that do not commercialize the park system.

Visitor Profile

Visits to All Regional Parks and Trails

Since the mid-1980s the Metropolitan Council has produced annual use estimates for the regional park system, including Wirth, based on random sample counts of people entering a regional park or trail during the summer months. The Annual Use Estimate of

the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2013 states that 47,304,800 visits were made to the entire metro-wide Regional Park System that year, which is an increase of 3.2% from 2012 (table 7). In 2013, approximately 54% of all estimated visits occurred in the regional parks and trails in Minneapolis and St. Paul (9).

Visits to MPRB Regional Parks and Trails

According to the annual use estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2013, MPRB’s regional parks and trails receive the largest share of estimated visits at 33.8% of the overall visitation total. The MPRB regional parks and trails received an estimated 15,976,600 visits in 2013 (12,020,100 to parks and 3,956,500 to regional trails), an increase of 4.9% from 2012 to 2013. This increase is greater than the Regional Park System as a whole, which increased annual visits by 3.1% (10).

Visits to Theodore Wirth Regional Park

Of all estimated visits made to regional parks and trails in Minneapolis in 2013, 459,800 or 2.8% were made to Wirth Park. As with the regional system and the MPRB system as a whole, the

Metropolitan Council estimates that the majority of visits to Wirth are made during summer, followed by fall and spring, then winter. Wirth is home to many special events, especially in the winter months, and hosted 19,400 people attending 20 events in 2013. Due to the increased popularity of the winter programming at several key regional parks or reserves, including Wirth Park, additional analysis may be required to determine if the winter estimate continues to be accurate.

Demographics of Visitors

Approximately every ten years the Metropolitan Council conducts an intercept survey of park visitors. This provides additional information about the jurisdiction of origin, gender, race/ethnicity, recreation preferences and mode of transportation of summer visitors. The last survey was conducted in 2007 and is captured in the 2008 Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey report. The data does not reflect winter activities.

Jurisdiction of Origin

Based on the 2008 Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, slightly more than half of reported visits (55%) to all regional parks were “local” – made by a person who lives within the jurisdiction of the park

agency that owns or operates that park, and just over half the reported visits to the MPRB parks and trails were from people who live in Minneapolis. The graphs on page 4-6 show the origin of reported visits to the MPRB regional parks and specifically of Theodore Wirth Regional Park (11).

Recreational Resources

People who visit Wirth Park enjoy a wide range of activities. In this section are descriptions of some of the major recreation activities.



Figure 30. Sand volleyball at Wirth Beach.



Figure 31. Students visit the Quaking Bog.

	Total Annual Estimated Visits	MPRB Annual Estimated Visits (Percent of Total Visits)	Wirth Annual Estimated Visits
2007	35,563,700	13,404,400 (37.6%)	393,800
2008	38,512,200	15,442,400 (40.1%)	380,100
2009	38,062,500	14,113,000 (37.1%)	376,700
2010	40,867,600	14,768,100 (36.1%)	372,500
2011	44,111,200	15,098,800 (34.2%)	438,800
2012	45,843,800	15,223,900 (33.2%)	385,500
2013	47,304,800	15,976,600 (33.8%)	459,800

Table 7. Annual use estimates of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System and Wirth Park from 2007 to 2013.

(9) and (10) Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2013, Metropolitan Council
 (11) Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008

Where Do MPRB Visitors Come From?

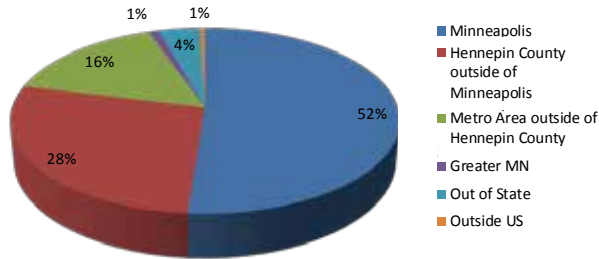


Figure 32. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Where Do Wirth Visitors Come From?

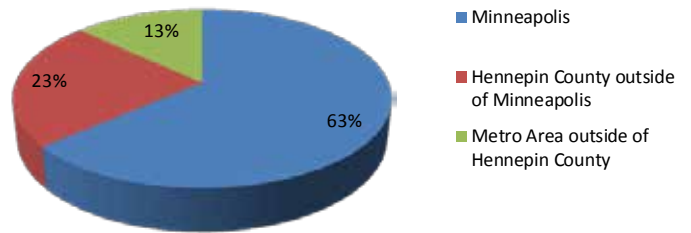


Figure 33. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Mode of Transportation to Park by Visitors

	MPRB Regional Parks and Trails Estimate	Wirth Park Responses*
Car, Truck, RV or Van	42%	90%
Walk, Run or Inline Skate	41%	3%
Bicycle	16%	3%
Other	1%	3%

Table 8. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Age of Visitors

	MPRB Regional Parks and Trails Estimate	Wirth Park Responses*
12-17	1%	3%
18-24	6%	17%
25-44	32%	30%
45-64	48%	40%
65+	12%	10%
Refused	1%	n/a

Table 9. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Primary Activity of Visitors (Summer Uses)

	MPRB Regional Parks and Trails Estimate	Wirth Park Responses*
Relax	4%	30%
Picnic	2%	20%
Walk or Hike	48%	17%
Swimming	2%	17%
Fish	2%	10%
Other or refused	3%	10%
Jog or Run	14%	7%
Bike	18%	3%
Sunbathe	<1%	3%
Playground Use	1%	n/a
In-line skate	1%	n/a
Boating	<1%	n/a
Dog walking	8%	n/a

Table 10. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Race/Ethnicity

	MPRB Regional Parks and Trails Estimate	Wirth Park Responses*
White or Caucasian	89%	70%
Asian	4%	13%
Black or African-American	3%	10%
Hispanic	2%	3%
Other or declined	3%	3%

Table 11. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

Gender

	MPRB Regional Parks and Trails Estimate	Wirth Park Responses*
Male	52%	50%
Female	48%	50%

Table 12. Metropolitan Council visitor data. (may not equal 100 percent due to rounding)

* Note: these numbers are reflective of responses from the 2008 survey only. Sample size not large enough to draw conclusions for a full estimate of Theodore Wirth Park visitors

Aquatics and Sand Volleyball

Demand has increased for sand volleyball following the Wirth beach improvements in 2010 and 2011. Adult sand volleyball leagues are held at four new Wirth sand volleyball courts in spring and summer session, each 10 weeks long, for 2, 4, and 6 person leagues. A total of 178 teams registered in 2013 and 222 teams in 2014.

The Wirth beach aquatics swimming area is enclosed by an arc-shaped, accessible floating boardwalk and accessible beach route. MPRB also offers swimming lessons at the new beach.

Archery

A small, informal archery course is available across the parkway from the Chalet, next to Bassett Creek. Users bring their own equipment and targets for practice.

Bird Watching and Nature Photography

Bird watching is popular in and around Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary (EBWG). EBWG offers public tours, special educational programs for youth, adults and families, and other group tours. The garden is designed, programmed, and maintained by staff while volunteers, particularly the Friends of the Wildflower Garden help staff the visitor shelter. The garden is open daily April 1-October 15 from 7:30 am to one hour before sunset. A variety of specialty programs are offered at EBWG including photography, medicinal plants, painting and others.

Canoeing and Kayaking

Boat activity on Wirth is limited to non-motorized vessels (canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards, water bikes, etc). The existing boat launch is closed to public trailered boats and will be removed.

Camping

Wirth Park does not offer overnight camping. It does however offer several day camps for youth each summer.

Cross-Country Skiing

There are up to 25 km (15 mi) of ski trails groomed for both classic and skate skiing in Wirth Park, depending on conditions. Wirth ski trails connect from North Wirth in Golden Valley all the way through the Chain of Lakes to Uptown Minneapolis. The MPRB has partnered with the Loppet Foundation to continue developing improvements to Wirth's system of ski trails, and to host major ski races and events. The MPRB has also teamed up with the Loppet Foundation and Courage Center to offer an Adaptive Cross Country Ski Program for individuals with visual impairments, or physical and/or developmental disabilities.

Levels of ski trail difficulty range from beginner to advanced. The MPRB maintains a lighted snow-making ski loop of 3.1 km during the winter season. Daily or seasonal trail passes are required of all ski trail users. Ski rental and concessions are available in the Wirth Chalet building. Several special ski events are held throughout the season in Wirth Park.

Disc Golfing

Placed alongside the Wirth Par 3 golf course, the 18 hole disc golf course features all Par 3 holes ranging from 46 to 156 yards. Tees for beginner and intermediate players are available. Players can rent golf carts and disc golf equipment from the Par 3 clubhouse. There is a Wirth disc golf league that is open to players of all abilities.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary

The values of the garden include preserving native plants and plant diversity; fostering a sanctuary for people, plants, and wildlife; maintaining the legacy of Eloise Butler; connecting city residents and visitors with nature; sharing knowledge about the natural world; and nurturing the health, beauty, and integrity of the greater natural world.



Figure 34. Nature Tots program at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden.



Figure 35. Bird watching at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden.



Figure 36. Snowboarding at Wirth Park.

Environmental Programming

MPRB's Environmental Education staff coordinate and lead educational classes and tours, activities, camps, gardening, and special events in four main areas of Wirth: Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the Quaking Bog, the Picnic Pavilion/Wirth Lake area, and J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden.

Fishing

Park visitors most often shore fish at Wirth Lake, particularly from the fishing pier on the east side and other locations along the shoreline. The pier is wheelchair accessible. The MN Department of Natural Resources stocks Wirth Lake with game fish. Fishing at the creek lagoon south of Hwy 55 and north of Plymouth are also popular.

Geocaching

Geocaching utilizes global positioning system (GPS) devices or GPS-enabled smart phones to find hidden containers or geocaches. Inside are trinkets which users can take if they leave something of equal value behind. There is also a logbook to sign. With over 1 million geocaches hidden worldwide, there are a few known locations in Wirth Park, independently monitored.

Golfing

One of the oldest designated activities in the park is golf. The 18 hole course has hosted an average of 30,500 rounds per year over the last decade, while the Par 3 course has averaged 15,000 per year (12). Total existing 18 hole yardage is 5285, while Par 3 is 1240. Wirth supports golf leagues for men, women, and seniors at both the 18 hole and Par 3 courses. Members of Wirth golf leagues also participate in weekly on-course events. MPRB offers adult and junior golf schools at Wirth. The Wirth Chalet and Par 3 buildings provide a golf shop, cart rentals and concessions.

Off-Road Cycling

Wirth contains 7.86 miles of single track off-road cycling trail, including the Back 40 Loop, South Loop, Glenwood Spur, and new trails that opened in southwest Wirth in late 2014. The Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists group (MORC) and its local chapter, Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates (MOCA) has partnered with MPRB to design, construct, and maintain Wirth's off-road cycling trails to safe and sustainable best-practice standards. Volunteers from both organizations assist with activities. Off road cycling trails are all located west of the parkway, are defined as multi-use trails, and are also used by trail runners, hikers and snowshoers in winter.

Orienteering

The MN Orienteering Club (MNOC) has set up three permanent orienteering courses of varying difficulty in the southern part of Wirth Park. In Wirth there is a 600 meter beginner course, a 1.8 km intermediate course, and a 3.0 km advanced course. The permanent courses start at Glenwood Avenue near the Wirth Beach parking lot. Users can purchase maps from MNOC, and can rent compasses from them. MNOC hosts special events on the course as well, where several users or teams compete.

Cycling (Paved Trails)

An extensive trail network connects most areas of the park. The trail network links users to the Grand Rounds, the Luce Line Regional Trail, and on-street bikeway system. These trails are also used by in-line skaters, roller skiers, roller skaters, and skateboarders. Wirth bike trails are cleared of snow during the winter and shared with pedestrians.

Picnicking

Picnicking is popular throughout Wirth, especially near Wirth Lake and the Picnic Pavilion. The Wirth Picnic



Figure 37. Nature photography at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden.



Figure 38. Swimming at Wirth beach.

(12) MPRB golf round history data, 2014

Pavilion is a reservable space that can seat 100. Nearby are multiple picnic tables available on a first-come basis that are busy most summer weekends with large family groups and other company events. Picnic tables at Wirth Beach are located near the playground. The beach also contains accessible picnic tables located close to accessible parking spots. Additional individual picnic tables can also be found throughout Wirth Park.

Playgrounds

The current playground, built in 2009, contains areas for children ages 2-5 and a separate area for ages 5-12. The ages 2-5 play area includes swings, sand play, a spring rocker and a boat themed play structure with ramp access to the upper level. The ages 5-12 play area is themed on the Aqua Follies stage, once located nearby on the edge of the lake. A long bench and shade structure facing the play area and looking toward the lake also recalls the bleacher seating at the Aqua Follies, a popular 1940's summer water spectacle on the shores of Wirth Lake.

Skijoring

This activity draws a small but dedicated group of users. Skijoring is a sport where both dog and skier wear a harness and ski together, with the dog pulling from in front of the skier. Skijoring trails are available in the front 9 golf course, J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden and Wirth Lake areas. Skijoring is not allowed on other trails in Wirth because of the extra grooming maintenance required.

Snowboarding

Wirth is home to the first snowboarding park in Minneapolis, with beginner slopes as well as advanced technical rails and jumps. This sport also benefits from the snowmaking capabilities and nighttime lighting. Both daily and seasonal passes are available, as well as

lessons, rental packages, and snowboard waxing. The snowboard park includes several types of runs at varying levels of difficulty. The snowboarding hill is located northwest of the Chalet, on the steepest slope available, with a two-rope tow.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is available on walking trails and off-road cycling trails during the winter. Snowshoe users will also be able to walk new natural surface trails. Snowshoes can be rented at the Chalet.

Snow Tubing and Sledding

Specially-designed, easy to carry tubes are available for rent at Wirth Park, where a tow rope carries tubers to the top of the hill on the 10th fairway. Sledding is also enjoyed throughout the park.

Trail Running

Trail running on unpaved, dirt trails is a popular activity in Wirth Park because of the park's naturalized setting and many natural surface trails including single track trails. Trail runners are compatible with mountain biking trails. They move at similar speeds and enjoy similar challenges in terrain. Volunteers help build and maintain parts of Wirth Park's trail system.

Walking and Hiking

An extremely popular unstructured activity in Wirth is walking and hiking, including leisurely nature walks and leadog-walking. Visitors of all ages hike or walk on Wirth's paved and unpaved trails at all times of year.

Weddings and Special Events

Weddings occur in designated locations of the park, including Wedding Hill across the parkway from the Quaking



Figure 39. Off-road cycling at Wirth Park.



Figure 40. Playground at Wirth Beach.



Figure 41. Youth horticulture program at J.D. Rivers Children's Garden.



Figure 43. Snow tubing at Wirth Park.



Figure 44. Wedding in the Wirth Chalet fireplace room.

Bog parking lot, the Chalet, and the Picnic Pavilion. Special events can be held in reservable spaces at either the Picnic Pavilion or the Chalet. The Picnic Pavilion is used for reunions, picnics, and day camps and can seat 100. Inside the Wirth Chalet a bar and grill offer food, drinks, and free wireless Internet. The Chalet's upper level/fireplace room can also be rented out for events for up to 150 guests.

Uses Not Currently Allowed

Some uses currently not allowed in Wirth Park include horseback riding, ATV use, snowmobiling, hunting, overnight camping, and unleashed dog walking.

Trends at Wirth Park

Bicycling and Walking on Paved Trails

The MPRB conducted bike and pedestrian trail counts at Wirth Park and other trail locations citywide as part

of a research study with the University of Minnesota and the Humphrey School of Public Affairs (13). Research indicates that traffic volumes on trails vary seasonally, with lower usage in winter, and that weekend traffic generally exceeds weekday traffic. Peak hour traffic typically occurs in the early evening during weekdays, while hourly traffic is more even and without peaks on weekends. The trail counts at Wirth indicate that there are more trips on weekends than on weekdays during all months except May. Figure 44 depicts average adjusted daily count from January to December. Trail traffic in Wirth reaches its highest level in July and August

Golfing

The National Golf Foundation has indicated that beginning in 2006, more golf courses closed than opened each year through 2013 (14). When revenue declines, maintenance is sometimes deferred, further reducing the ability to draw customers. In addition, cold climate courses like those in Minneapolis have only 165 playable days of golf per year, further reducing playability and profitability. MPRB is currently studying

innovative options for increasing visitation at all of its golf courses, including at Wirth Park. For example, in 2014 MPRB introduced "foot golf," a cross between soccer and golf at three golf courses. If successful it may be offered at Wirth in the future.

Cross-Country Skiing

Over the last several years, Wirth Park winter recreational programming has increased. This is, in part, due to the work of the Loppet Foundation (formerly known as the City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation). The Foundation began by coordinating the City of Lakes Loppet, a cross-country ski race from Wirth through the Chain of Lakes to Uptown. This race has since evolved into a weekend-long, urban winter celebration, with 10,000 registered skiers and many more spectators. The Loppet Foundation has also spun off a suite of year-round race events centered on Wirth Park as well as children's programming to grow skiing, trail running, canoeing, kayaking and mountain biking.

In addition, organized ski groups use Wirth winter trails extensively.

(13) "UMN/MPRB Joint Trail Traffic Study 2011 Summary", MPRB, June 2012. A model for trail traffic volume was measured using Trail Master infrared trail monitors, installed in December, 2010 on various park properties, including Theodore Wirth Parkway. These trail monitors count each time an infrared beam is broken by a passer-by, and cannot differentiate between bikers and pedestrians. The U of MN and MPRB team did a manual validation of the trail monitors by conducting field counts, because the trail monitors generally undercount about 15% of users due to various factors. The trail traffic counts do not represent separate individual trips and are not estimated park visitation rates, but are an accurate measure to use in modeling annual trail traffic at Wirth for park management purposes.

(14) Dashboard, The National Golf Foundation, Jan 2014 and www.golfblogger.com, accessed Oct 2014.

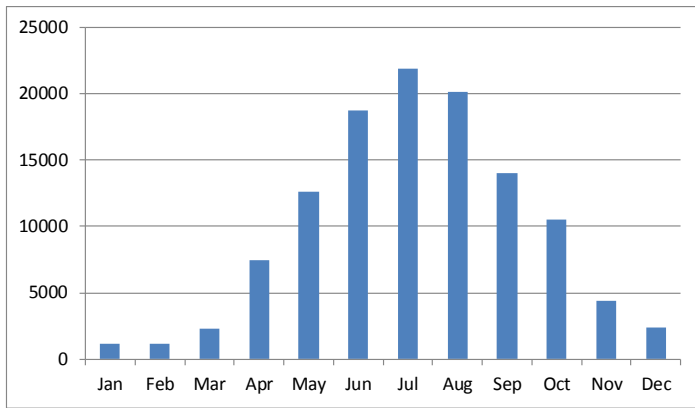


Figure 44. Average adjusted daily trail user count at Wirth Park.



Figure 45. Cross-country skiers in Wirth Park Minne-Loppet.

Loppet Nordic Racing-Winter has more than 5 different groups with over 150 participants; Loppet Ski Club recreational group has over 100 participants; Sisu (a Saint Paul-based organization that trains at Wirth) has 50 members; Minnesota Youth Ski League has 250 youth participating at Wirth (the biggest chapter in the state); and area high school ski teams have 500-800 participants a day using the snow-making trail during low-snow years (15).

Off-Road Cycling

There is growing participation in off-road cycling in Wirth Park. Much effort has been invested in existing trails and trail planning by representatives of MOCA and MORC, and MPRB staff. With heavy support of local bike advocates, off-road cycling at Wirth has been increasing in popularity, particularly as improvements are made to trails. In addition, a new Minnesota High School League for Mountain biking began in 2012 (16). There is currently no practice location within the city. Off-road cycling trails are actually designated by MPRB as multi-use, and used on occasion by trail runners and hikers.

Trail Running

There is increasing interest in unpaved trail running at Wirth. The Trail (Run) Loppet is a summer event with growing participation. In 2007 there were 150 runners. This has increased to 1600 participants in 2013 and is often at maximum capacity and turning away interested participants. The Tri Loppet is a paddle-trail run- mountain bike triathlon, which had 600 participants in 2013 and also drives the demand for trail running. There are several adult running clubs using Wirth, including the Loppet Run Club which has 60 participants, and the Surly Club which is at capacity filling three sessions with 50 participants per session.

Environmental Education

Environmental education programs in the Minneapolis park system are very popular. Residents and park visitors have expressed interest in a variety of programming and day camps focused on developing outdoor recreation skills (canoeing, camping, orienteering) and education (natural resource protection, plant identification, gardening, beekeeping). Interests vary among participants; some are also interested in

nature play areas and ropes courses. The Quaking Bog, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, Picnic Pavilion and J.D. Rivers Children’s Garden are well-suited to offer educational programs for youth and adults to gain immersive, hands-on experiences in nature identification, history, gardening, nature play and natural resources protection.

Other Trends

Several other recreation trends may already have had an impact on Wirth Park. These include the interest in off-leash recreation areas, disc golf, extreme races such as triathalons, paddle boarding, outdoor fitness classes (yoga, boot camp), activities for a range of ages, technology in parks (GPS, geocaching, QR codes) and destination restaurant venues.

(15) The Loppet Foundation, 2013

(16) Minnesota High School Cycling League, Official Project of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA)

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V. CULTURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP

Background
Historic Significance
Cultural Resources Inventory
Managing Cultural Resources
Recommendations

Background

Early Vision

When Theodore Wirth arrived in Minneapolis as superintendent of the park system in 1906, he was immediately drawn to the potential of the land in and surrounding the future Wirth Park (then Glenwood Park). He told the park commissioners: “If Minneapolis grows to build up the entire territory within the corporate city limits, a large park of this size and character will be needed.” Wirth later reflected: “The topographical contour and many natural attractions of those beautiful wooded hills and open country along the western city limits, as well as the possibilities offered for charming water landscape through the Bassett’s Creek Valley, impressed me as affording splendid opportunity for the development of an extensive natural park.” (17)

Parkway and Viewsheds

An important part of the park would be a parkway that traversed it south to north. This would form a critical link in the parkway system of the Grand Rounds, which was designed to highlight “the many priceless natural and scenic attractions that were still unspoiled within the city limits.” Both Wirth and Horace Cleveland were influenced by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who is credited with coining the term “parkway.” Cleveland had worked with Olmsted in the 1860s and Wirth began his professional career in the United States working at Central Park in New York, Olmsted’s most prominent design. Parkway were seen as an antidote to the increasing congestion and pollution of urban areas in the nineteenth century. They were a way of “extending the benefits of nature throughout the urban fabric” by mimicking the countryside, particularly its “traditional vernacular roadways.”

Glenwood Parkway was still under construction in 1910 when the Minneapolis Tribune anticipated that it would provide a “revelation [for] most people who will pass over it for the first time when it is completed. The natural picturesque features along this driveway, winding its way in easy curves along the steep and wooded banks and along the shores of the small, land-locked lake in Glenwood Park, mounting to the heights on easy grades through finely wooded gently rolling glens will be fascinating and a source of pleasure to all who enjoy nature’s handiwork.”

The parkway has historically provided the vistas that are most associated with the park. Its layout respected the park’s assets rather than forging through them. From the south, the wooded banks west of Birch Pond were preserved by constructing the parkway with fill obtained from the vicinity, thus allowing a picturesque view of that body of water. The parkway continued along the west edge of Glenwood Lake, the park’s largest water feature. As the parkway crossed over Sixth Avenue (Highway 55), its path became curvier, allowing sweeping views of the park and beyond.

Wirth maintained an interest in preserving the park’s picturesque views and natural character design even after he retired. In 1941, for example, he was somewhat displeased about the move of the Aquatennial’s Aqua Follies from Cedar Lake to Wirth Lake. Although conceding that this was “a more satisfactory and attractive setting,” he was concerned about the intrusions of the grandstand and pool on the lake’s east shore and felt that “some modification of the layout, and especially the diving towers, should be made to tone down



Figure 46. Theodore Wirth.

the obstructive aspect of the feature and blend it into the natural landscape of lake and woodland.”

Not all of the roads through the park are under the park board’s control today, but some, such as Highway 55, also have noteworthy views into and through the park. It originally traversed Glenwood Lake (Wirth Lake) by means of a wood bridge when the park was established. By the early 1920s, traffic had become so heavy that the Board of Park Commissioners voted to remove the bridge and replace it with “a road skirting the lake along the edge of the golf links.” The traffic has continued to increase, and Highway 55 is now the busiest road through the park. Although the views from the highway were not carefully designed, like those on the parkway, they have become iconic to the drivers passing through.

(17) Quotes in this section from “Minneapolis Park System 1883-1944”, Theodore Wirth, 1946



Figure 47. Sketch club at Glenwood Park, in 1924.



Figure 48. Ski jumping in Wirth Park.



Figure 49. Glenwood baths.

Buildings

Historic buildings are located throughout the park. Those constructed prior to 1935 were carefully sited by Wirth himself. The Chalet, which is the focal point of the golf course, became the inspiration for the buildings constructed after it in the golf course. Although the nearby Tool House is sited out of general public view and is more modest in scale, design and function, it references stylistic elements of the Chalet, thereby creating a significant relationship between the buildings and the landscape. The Chalet was already forty years old when architects Armstrong and Schlichting designed the Modernist Par 3 Golf Clubhouse, but they also referenced its design. The Par 3 Clubhouse's exterior walls of polychromatic, cut stone mimic the Chalet's first story of Saint Cloud granite, and the exposed rafter ends and shallow gable roof also play off of the Chalet's design.

In South Wirth, the design of the 1930 Picnic Pavilion, which is Spanish Colonial Revival in style, complemented the 1919 Wirth Beach House (since replaced), which users would see while using the pavilion.



Figure 50. Eloise Butler's office in the wild botanic garden.

Landscape

In 1925, Carl Sauer introduced the term “cultural landscape” in his text *The Morphology of Landscape*. His term defines a relationship where culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result. Wirth Park contains a unique, rolling terrain developed and utilized for natural resource-related recreation. While the natural qualities of the area drew Theodore Wirth to this land, it is important to understand that much of what we now enjoy as the park has been designed and engineered to better serve aesthetic and functional needs. The natural water bodies, topography and vegetation have all been modified through great effort and expense to achieve the aesthetic qualities that are now so integral to the character of the park and considered a cultural landscape.

An indication of the amount of these changes can be seen on the natural resources soils map, figure 70 in chapter 6. This map shows major portions of the park now are considered ‘anthropogenic soils,’ which means that these areas had significant grading and are not intact native soil profiles. In fact, there is likely a greater extent of anthropogenic soils in the park than shown on this map.

Historic Significance

Wirth Park is a contributing element of the Grand Rounds Historic District, which has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a cultural landscape with a period of significance extending from 1884 to 1942. The nomination is still in draft form and will be considered by the Minnesota Historical Society’s State Review Board in 2015. If this designation is approved by the National Park Service, the system will be officially listed in the NRHP. The State Historic Preservation Office has also determined that Wirth Park is individually eligible for the National Register, but it has not been individually nominated and a period of significance specific to the park has not been established. Proposed projects affecting properties that are listed, or determined eligible for listing, in the NRHP are subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if the project involves federal funds or permitting. Any work must conform to The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to avoid having an adverse effect. NRHP designation might allow capital projects to qualify for certain types of funding.

Cultural Resources Inventory

Cultural resources in Wirth Park have been inventoried. See Table 13 for general descriptions, dates, and significant renovation(s). The following are definitions of categories included in the inventory which relate to stewardship planning for the park.

Cultural Landscape

According to the Secretary of the Interior, a cultural landscape is “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with an historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. There are four general types of cultural landscapes, which are not mutually exclusive: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes.” The park as a cultural landscape also includes archaeological and above-ground built resources, which can be categorized in the same general groups as above.



Figure 51. Wirth Chalet.

Features

A “feature” can be the smallest element of a landscape, whether it be a designed landscape, archaeological or above ground historic [built] resource that contributes to the significance and that can be the subject of a treatment intervention. A feature is “contributing” to the historic designation if it was built during the era of significance (1884-1942) and is intact from that era. An official determination of contributing features in Wirth Park has not yet been completed as of the date of this publication. Although many features have been determined eligible for the NRHP, it is a draft and is not yet public. Features which are contributing may receive special protection after a nomination is approved. Those which are not contributing are not considered significant under the designation. The inventory identifies those that are “potentially contributing.”



Figure 52. Dog sledding in Wirth Park, in 1929.

Above-Ground Built Features

Above-ground built features are those most commonly thought of as “historic features” such as buildings and monuments. Above-ground built features still exist in a relatively functional state, are visible, and are not ruins. They include buildings, designed outdoor spaces, engineered structures (such as bridges), monuments, site furnishings and other user amenities that create habitable spaces in the park.

Archeological Features

Archeological features preserve evidence of human use and development of the park from times of pre-contact, through today. Periods include pre-contact, European immigrant settlement, early agriculture, urban development and early park development that consists of elements which may no longer exist above ground. Some sites have layers of resources that include both archaeological and above-ground built resources. Some also have different types of importance. Archaeology surveys may be protected data, which by law is not allowed to be released to the public in order to protect the resources involved.

Designed Landscape Features

Theodore Wirth was well known for his great earthwork projects as parks were shaped out of raw land. Important components of the park landscape have been designed and constructed to make these spaces more suitable for park use (see sidebar for examples).

Ethnographic Resources

Any of the above-listed features can also be identified as an ethnographic resource. In addition to being historically significant in-and-of-itself, a feature that is also an ethnographic resource has cultural meaning to the people traditionally associated with it. Anthropologists work with these groups to identify and understand ethnographic resources.

Designed Landscape Features represented some of the most iconic landscapes of the park today, such as:

- Wirth Lake shoreline was dredged and picnic areas nearby were filled to reduce wetlands and add more usable upland areas. Sand was hauled into the shallow, muddy-bottomed lake to create its beach.
- Bassett Creek was initially a small meandering stream through the park. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) crews completed work in the area, a series of large, languid lagoons had been dredged and the adjacent floodplains filled to become the front nine holes of the golf course.
- The “Back 40” has a beautiful tall-grass prairie at its center but it is a relatively recent restoration from about 1980. Prior to park acquisition, it was farmland.
- Vegetation in the Quaking Bog has not only been actively managed, but it was also the site of an (infamous) tuberculosis camp (TB camp) where children with this communicable disease were isolated.
- The Parkway roadway and trail curves were aligned to highlight the changes in topography, and they were also planted with large groupings of evergreens (not native to the park’s oak savannah) to heighten the experience of wildness. Evergreens likely reminded Theodore Wirth of his native Switzerland. To visitors today, they may evoke the north woods of Minnesota. Regardless, they take visitors away from the city as they travel along the parkway, creating a unique and memorable visitor experience that is distinct to Wirth Park.

No.	Feature	Date	Feature Type	Potentially Contributing?	Description
1	Theodore Wirth Regional Park	1889 – 1917	Cultural Landscape	Yes (some exclusions are detailed below)	Theodore Wirth Regional Park (originally Glenwood Park) was added to the Minneapolis Park system as a way to provide park amenities for residents in the northwest areas of the city. Wirth showed particular interest in the park which reminded him of his Swiss homeland due to its topography, which is unlike much of the rest of the city.
2	Forty-fifth Parallel Boulder	1916	Above Ground Built	Yes	The pink granite boulder, located at the intersection of Wirth Parkway and Golden Valley Road, was placed in 1917 as a “point of geographical interest” to mark the Forty-fifth Parallel, the point halfway between the equator and the North Pole. The plaque was replaced in the late 1990s due to theft.
3	Great Northern Railroad Bridge	1988–1991	Above Ground Built	No	The bridge on the parkway crosses the Great Northern railroad tracks near Golden Valley Road and replaced a previous steel structure.
4	WPA Bridge (creek/ parkway)	1940	Above Ground Built	Yes	Constructed by WPA crews, the Saint Cloud granite-faced, seam-faced concrete culvert bridge which matches the Chalet exterior carries Wirth Parkway over Bassett Creek north of the Chalet.
5	Winter Recreation Area	1889, and other	Archeological, Designed Landscape	Yes	The park was a winter recreation attraction from its inception, host to sledding, ice skating and a ski club, particularly near the lake and later the Wirth Chalet. During the winter of 1923-24, the Glenwood Park ski jump hosted the Northwest Ski Tournament, the National Ski Meet, and the United States Olympic Ski trials. The ski jumps do not exist above ground, though some landscape signature shows where they were and below ground structure may exist. The run out for the jump exists on the 10th fairway.
6	Theodore Wirth Chalet and Clubhouse	1922	Above Ground Built	Yes (exterior), Partial (interior)	The focal point of Wirth Park, the Chalet’s design was based on a model of a chalet the Wirths brought home from their honeymoon in Switzerland in 1895. Designed by architects Magney and Tusler, it is faced in Saint Cloud granite. Construction on the Chalet as a golf clubhouse began in 1922 and a second story was added in 1923 and was used overtime as the residence for the golf course superintendent. Around this same time, Wirth had groups of evergreen trees planted along the parkway to lend to the feeling of a Swiss village.
7	Tool House Building	1930	Above Ground Built	Yes *	Howard H. Eads designed a tool house building to complement the Chalet’s “Swiss type of architecture.” Furnished with an office and service and repair bays, it was built to house and serve as repair and maintenance space for the entire park. It is today largely as it was built.
8	Parkway Landscape Plantings (Evergreens)	1920s - 30s	Designed Landscape	Yes	Around the time the Chalet was completed, Wirth had extensive groups of evergreen trees planted along the parkway to lend to the feeling of a Swiss village.
9	Theodore Wirth Statue Garden	2007	Above Ground Built	No	Designed to commemorate Wirth’s removal of his predecessor’s “keep off the grass” policies, the bronze sculptures situated in front of the Chalet depicts the superintendent with four playing children. The sculptures were a gift from the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

Table 13. Cultural resources inventory for Wirth Park.



Figure 53. Fishing, in 1940.



Figure 54. Parkway paths.



Figure 55. Cultural resource locations in Wirth Park. Numbers indicate approximate locations and correspond to items listed in Table 13.

No.	Feature	Date	Feature Type	Potentially Contributing?	Description
10	Plymouth Avenue Bridge	1930, 2006	Above Ground Built	No	The six-span, reinforced-concrete slab bridge carries Plymouth Avenue over the BNSF railroad tracks. The timber-pile bridge was replaced by a reinforced-concrete structure in 1930 which was then substantially renovated in 2006.
11	Par 3 Golf Course	1961–1962	Designed Landscape	No	Designed from a small, unused area west of the parkway, on the recently acquired “back 40”, the course was designed by Park Board landscape architect Arnold Andreassen
12	Par 3 Golf Course Clubhouse	1961–1962	Above Ground Built	No	Built in conjunction with the Par 3 golf course, the one-story, 28’ x 50’ clubhouse was designed by Minneapolis architects Armstrong and Schlichting.
13	The Back 40	1952 -56, and 1960s	Designed Landscape	No	Efforts to restore this area to a thriving prairie began in the 1980s. The site had been farm pasture prior to park acquisition in the 1950s.
14	Luce Line Bridge	1990	Above Ground Built	No	The concrete slab bridge, which carries the parkway over the Luce Line, was constructed in 1990 and replaced an earlier structure.
15	Theodore Wirth Golf Course	1916–1994	Above Ground Built, Designed Landscape	Partial	Opened with nine holes designed by Charley Erickson in 1916, Glenwood (Wirth) was the first public golf course in the park system and the city. It contained clay tees and sand greens. In 1919, it was expanded to eighteen holes. In 1935, the Bassett Creek lagoons were constructed, sediment dredged from the lagoons was used on the golf course, and the sand greens were converted to grass and irrigation was first installed with assistance from the WPA. The first two seasons it was open, rounds were free of charge and the course had a temporary warming house and one instructor. Areas of the golf course were redesigned in the 1960s and 1990s. William Clark is credited with designing the second nine holes. The 18-hole course is the oldest public course in Minnesota.
16	Bassett Creek Lagoons	1935–1937	Designed Landscape	Yes	Bassett Creek and its original wetland floodplain drew Wirth to acquire it for the park. Lagoons on the golf course were first designed and proposed in 1913 by Theodore Wirth himself to transform swampland into dry upland areas and wetland lagoons, thereby expanding potential for the park. It took years to fund and construct the lagoons. During the Great Depression in 1933 construction was funded by the U.S. Civil Works Administration. It continued in 1935 with the assistance of the Civilian Conservation Corps and National Park Service, and was completed in 1938 by the Works Progress Administration. The creek bed was widened to create a series of eight lagoons between Glenwood (Wirth) Lake and Nineteenth Avenue North (Golden Valley Road), turning 63 acres of swampland into dry golf course and naturalized lagoons.
17	State Hwy 55 Bridge	1947, 1987–1988	Above Ground Built	No	The bridge is composed of a pair of concrete box culverts, the southern ends of which are faced in limestone. Originally constructed in 1947, the bridge was altered in 1987–1988 when the north ends of the culverts were rebuilt.
18	Glenwood Avenue Bridge	1982	Above Ground Built	No	Spanning Bassett Creek, the five-span, pre-cast channel-beam structure was constructed in 1982 and replaced an earlier structure.



Figure 56. Back 40 restored prairie.



Figure 57. Lagoon F.

No.	Feature	Date	Feature Type	Potentially Contributing?	Description
19	Keegan/Schell Farmstead	pre-1909	Archeological	Yes *	The Schell Farm was the original farm homestead on the west side of the lake. Several of its buildings were reused after it was purchased and used as the park board nursery. One building remains on the site, a concrete earth sheltered structure.
20	MPRB Nursery	1909-1980	Archeological, Above Ground Built, Designed Landscape	Partial	With the purchase of the old Schell Farm on the western side of Wirth Lake, a 20-acre nursery was established which provided the entire park system with trees and plants. A resident horticulturalist lived in the improved farmhouse on site. Scattered atypical trees from the nursery era can be found in the now wooded areas on the west side of the lake.
21	Theodore Wirth Lake	1909	Designed Landscape, Archeological	Partial	The largest water body in the park (38 acres) was also named after the former Superintendent, having its name changed from Keegan's Lake to Glenwood Lake in 1890, and finally to Wirth Lake in 1938. It was acquired by the Park Board in 1909 and a bathing beach was built there in 1916, with the original bath house built in 1918. Since its acquisition in 1909, the park board has undertaken extensive dredging work along the lake, with sediment used to raise and improve parkland near Glenwood Avenue. Sand was brought in from outside the park system to construct Wirth beach. Following its inaugural at Cedar Lake, the Aquatennial Festival was held at Wirth Lake from 1941-1964. The Aqua Follies – a diving extravaganza began in the second Aquatennial, and included a pool sculpted out of the Wirth Lake shoreline, diving towers, and a grandstand stadium to seat large crowds on the SE shore of the lake. The lake has been a popular picnic location since it was purchased.
22	Germania Brewery	1885-1900	Archeological	Yes *	Located east of Wirth Lake in the current picnic area. It was one of the four breweries that merged to become Grain Belt Brewing Company in 1890. It included a beer garden.
23	Finnish-American Monument	1958	Above Ground Built (ethnographic)	No	Situated on a hillside in the picnic grounds east of Wirth Lake, the monument of red Minnesota granite was placed by the local Finnish-American community to commemorate their presence in the local neighborhoods. They were also instrumental in bringing ski jumping into the park.
24	Loring Cascade	1917	Archeological, Above-Ground Built	Yes	Designed and constructed by artist Francois Scotti, the large, naturalistic outdoor sculpture originally had a waterfall cascading down concrete rocks. The Cascade was a gift to the park board from Charles Loring, first president of the Board, and was modeled on similar waterfalls Loring had seen in California. Craftsmen created boulders of steel mesh and concrete, and the area was planted with Alpine-style plantings similar to those close to the Chalet. The naturalized scene was unusual for its time, when monuments were typically formal and classical. By the end of Wirth's tenure the Cascade was in disrepair. During the 1970s, the Eckbo plan changed the height of parkway's roadbed along the west side of Wirth Lake, concealing and destroying a boulder with a plaque naming the Cascade.
25	Wirth Lake Beach	1916-2011	Designed Landscape	Partial	In its early days, it was one of the most popular beaches in the system. The beach remains but has had significant renovations between 2005 and 2013 which may reduce its significance.



Figure 58. Par 3 clubhouse.

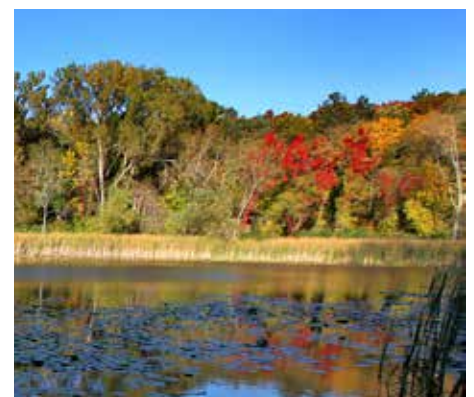


Figure 59. Wirth Lake.

No.	Feature	Date	Feature Type	Potentially Contributing?	Description
26	Heckrich Saloon	1860-1906	Archeological (ethnographic)	Yes *	Located to the east of Wirth Lake near the Germania Brewery site.
27	Glenwood Line Streetcar Shelter	1937 - present	Above Ground Built	Yes	Believed to be built by WPA crews as the terminal stop on the Glenwood Line, the open-air structure is the only extant streetcar building within the Grand Rounds.
28	Great Medicine Spring	Pre-settlement	Archeological (ethnographic)	Undetermined	Also referred to as "Big Medicine Spring." Located near the intersection of Glenwood and Theodore Wirth Parkway. Was of importance to local Dakota and Ojibwe people for its perceived healing virtues.
29	Wirth Lake Beach House	2004	Above Ground Built	No	Constructed in 2004, the current beach house is the fourth beach house at Wirth Lake and was designed to reference the nearby Wirth Picnic Pavilion.
30	Picnic Pavilion	1930	Above Ground Built	Yes	Situated at the top of a hill to overlook Wirth Lake, the Spanish Colonial Revival style picnic pavilion was designed by Harold Eads and equipped with a variety of amenities. Rehabilitation completed in 2013 followed Secretary of Interior Standards. It included rehabilitation of the restrooms and kitchen, and mechanical systems while preserving important details of the rest of the building, especially the exterior.
31	Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary	1907	Designed Landscape	Yes (garden)	Three acres of what is now the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden was first fenced in 1907, and called at the time the "Natural Botanical Garden." The now fifteen-acre site showcases plant collections of the native flora of Minnesota. Situated between Birch Pond and Wirth Lake, it is named after its first curator and one of the people who petitioned for its creation. Eloise Butler was a botany instructor in Minneapolis Public Schools who used Wirth Park as an experiential learning outdoor classroom. It was renamed after Butler in 1929 to honor her tenure and her early request to set aside part of the park for students of botany and nature-lovers. The garden also was designated as a bird sanctuary in 1969. The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary is the oldest public wildflower garden in the US.
32	Martha E. Crone Visitors Shelter	1969-1970	Above Ground Built	No	The small, one-story, frame building was named after Martha E. Crone, the curator who succeeded Eloise Butler. It was designed by architect H.H. Livingston and funded by the Friends of the Wildflower Garden, Inc.
33	Quaking Bog	1907-1913	Cultural Landscape	Yes (landscape feature), No (boardwalk)	The Quaking Bog is a five acre tamarack peat bog located west of Birch Pond and near the western edge of the park. The bog is unusual this far south, and is managed by MPRB to retain bog vegetation. A floating boardwalk was installed in 1986.
34	TB Camp	1920	Archeological	Yes	Located near the Quaking Bog in the southwest area of the park, this site was the location of a Visiting Nurses Association children's rest camp used during the tuberculosis outbreak of the early 20th century. It has not been determined if resources still exist from this feature. This feature may be the "Fresh Air Camp" mentioned in a 1914 Board Report.



Figure 60. Martha E. Crone Visitors Shelter.



Figure 61. Glenwood Line Streetcar Shelter.

No.	Feature	Date	Feature Type	Potentially Contributing?	Description
35	Birch Pond	1889	Cultural Landscape	Yes	Originally known as “Devil’s Glen,” or “Devil’s Mirror” Birch Pond was included in the original land acquisition for the park. The native birches found along its edge are the source of its name. The pond water level has been supported by a well.
36	Theodore Wirth Parkway	1889–1973	Designed Landscape	Partial	The first parkway was built through the park in 1890, spearheaded by William Folwell, and inspired by Horace W. Cleveland’s 1883 proposal for a system of connected parks and parkways circling the city. The 3.5-mile-long parkway begins at Interstate 394 and winds through Wirth Park, linking the Grand Rounds park system and providing sweeping views of topography and natural features of the park. Mass evergreen tree groupings were also planted by Wirth along the parkway, enhancing the Swiss concept for the park, which is also reflected in some of the early park architecture. Segments west of Wirth Lake and between Hwy 55 and the Luce line railroad bridge and in front of the Wirth Chalet have been re-aligned during the 1970 Eckbo era redo.
37	Victory Memorial Drive Boulder	1921	Above Ground Built	Yes	The pink granite boulder and plaque marks the south end of what was the original south end of Victory Memorial Drive.
38	Aqua Folies site	1941	Archeological (ethnographic)	No	An in-lake “pool”, diving towers, and grandstand were constructed on the shore of Wirth Lake for the Aqua Follies as part of 1941 Aquatennial celebration.
39	CCC camp	1938-1945	Archeological (ethnographic)	No	The National Park Service and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed “winter barracks” in the hills west of Wirth Chalet for Company 776: a group of 225 workers in from North Dakota who constructed the park’s lagoons. It consisted of cabins and communal buildings, and was shown on an early survey.

* Sites identified with an asterisk were identified as likely to be eligible by consultants to MPRB during fieldwork in 2008.



Figure 62. Wirth Picnic Pavilion.

Managing Cultural Resources

The Secretary of the Interior established standards and guidelines for the preservation of cultural resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties offer four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties—preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. The Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties illustrate the practical application of each treatment. The Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes apply the treatment standards to historic cultural landscapes. The standards are series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. The guidelines are advisory and offer general design and technical recommendations to assist in applying the standards to a specific property. Together, they provide a framework and guidance for decision-making about work or changes to a historic property.

Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.

Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

Restoration reconstructs a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

Reconstruction re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

The standards and guidelines can be applied to historic properties of all types, materials, construction, sizes, and use. They include both the exterior and the interior and extend to a property's landscape features, site, environment, as well as related new construction. A decision on the appropriate treatment should consider the integrity of the original features, the amount of historic material that survives, and the intended reuse.

Recommendations

Based on the cultural resources research on Theodore Wirth Regional Park, it is suggested that planning and management of the park's cultural resources should concentrate on the following:

- **Primarily adopt the “rehabilitation” treatment, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, for cultural resources within Theodore Wirth Regional Park:** Given the need to protect the cultural resources and adapt to changing park needs, the rehabilitation treatment is recommended for most resources within the park. Although rehabilitation allows alterations to Wirth Park, it is important to define areas where there are special concerns that may require a different treatment. The key to determining areas of special concern is the designated period of significance for the park.
- **Use the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes for cultural landscapes within the park to guide redevelopment maintenance and repair of park features:** Given the



Figure 63. Wirth Beach House.



Figure 64. Wirth toolshed.

historical importance of the cultural landscapes, including vistas and other viewsheds, the guidelines will help protect the landscape that has become associated with the park over the decades.

- **Use Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties as a guide for buildings to guide design development and operations strategies:** The careful consideration that has been given to the design of the buildings in the park over time underscores the importance that Wirth and his successors placed on the visual cohesiveness of the landscape itself.

- **Incorporate interpretive themes into outdoor education programming of the regional park:** Learning about the archaeology and history of Theodore Wirth Regional Park can help deepen the park experience by fostering a connection with the past, thereby enhancing a sense of ownership for people who use the park. Themes the park's resources address include:

Native American Settlement

Bringing to life stories and daily living experiences of native people at the site of the Great Medicine Spring can add meaning which enriches our

understanding of native cultures. Seeing the spring in an historic context and telling its story in consultation with people of local native communities honors this feature and its significance.

Early Agriculture and Horticulture

Additional interpretation on the west side of the lake can document the Keegan/Schell Farmstead and Park Board nursery. Themes there could include the Schell Family, what the farm produced, how it was run, all of which predate the park. The park board's tree nursery that subsequently occupied the vicinity is of interest to park historians and those interested in horticulture. Also of interest is the Linde Nursery on the current picnic grounds.

Transportation

The Glenwood streetcar line was petitioned to extend into the park by city residents eager to get out to nature. Picnicking was then a huge draw for weekend relaxation, the Wirth Lake beach added another component for leisure bathing which was also very popular. Once common, this is now the only existing streetcar shelter, and it remains in its original location, though the tracks have been removed. Streetcars

were once the lifeblood of the city and a primary force for the city development. People used them for work, but also for leisure travel. Connecting lines to Wirth Park, Lake Harriet and Lakes Minnetonka and White Bear made the Twin Cities a wonderful work/play setting.

Industrial Archaeology

The Germania Brewery was once a mammoth brew house, sited near the lake to allow use of ice to keep product cool, yet during this expansive period for industry, it only lasted just over a decade before disappearing from view (above ground). The brewery, nearby saloon, and beer garden are a compelling story, linked to the central riverfront breweries, caves and saloons there through common ownership and industry.

Theodore Wirth and His Impact on the Parks

Many people are not familiar with the important role that Theodore Wirth played in the development of the city's park system and his national influence on parks and recreation. It would be appropriate to interpret that legacy in the park that was named in his honor. The interpretation could provide information on several subthemes:



Figure 65. Bassett Creek at Theodore Wirth golf course.

- **Wirth and Park Design:** While contemporary landscape architects tried to duplicate the local rural landscape around cities, Wirth incorporated elements of his Swiss homeland into the landscape, such as in the Swiss chalet architecture of the golf clubhouse, which is the focal point of the park.

- **Wirth as a System-Builder:** Three years after Wirth retired as superintendent, the park board passed a resolution to change Glenwood Park's name to Theodore Wirth Park to commemorate his work on the park system. His achievements were also recognized on a national level when he was awarded the American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society's Cornelius Amory Pugsley Silver Medal. His work continues to be acknowledged by contemporary landscape architects and others.

- **Playing Favorites—Glenwood Park:** During his tenure as superintendent of parks, Wirth paid particular attention to Glenwood (Wirth) Park. The size of the park increased tenfold. Wirth imagined it as the Minneapolis equivalent to Central Park in New York. It was site of the city's and park system's first golf course and held unique places sponsored by Wirth, such as the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and the hand-dug Bassett Creek lagoons.

Golf at Glenwood Park

Wirth Park is “the birthplace of municipal golf in the city's park system.” As early as 1908, the park board was examining the park as a site for “a great people's park where riding, driving, and golf grounds free to the public may be made possible.” Established in 1916, the golf course was extremely popular and was open to more groups than private courses. In 1939, it held the first of many Minnesota Negro Open golf tournaments.

Acknowledgement of the park's ground-breaking role in making golf available to the public, describing the evolution of the course, the Par 3 course, and related facilities are important facets of this story.

Wirth Lake and Beach

Over the past decade, Wirth Beach has undergone numerous improvements, beginning with the construction of a new beach house in late 2004 (the third beach house, replacing a structure from 1957, which was preceded by the first beach house constructed in 1918). The area offers an opportunity to interpret the history of the nearby Aqua Follies.

The “People's Park”

From its earliest days, Glenwood Park was touted as a “people's park.” Various local groups have felt a close connection to the park, evidence of this is the Finnish-American monument in the picnic grounds. German-Americans enjoyed the site of the Germania Brewery and gardens, once adjacent to the park and later incorporated into it. Jewish residents of North Minneapolis also used the park as a family gathering place. African-Americans readily use portions

of the park and it was the site of the annual Juneteenth celebration for many years. Interpretation focusing on the various groups that have used the park could tell its history through their stories. This could also encourage current park users to relate to that narrative and take a personal interest its future.

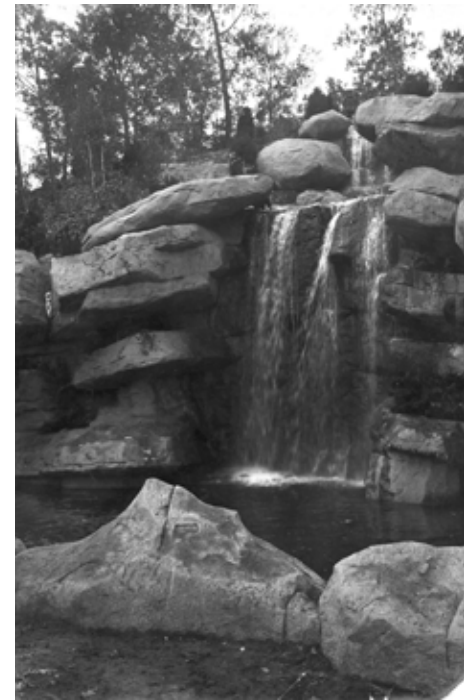


Figure 66. Loring Cascade.

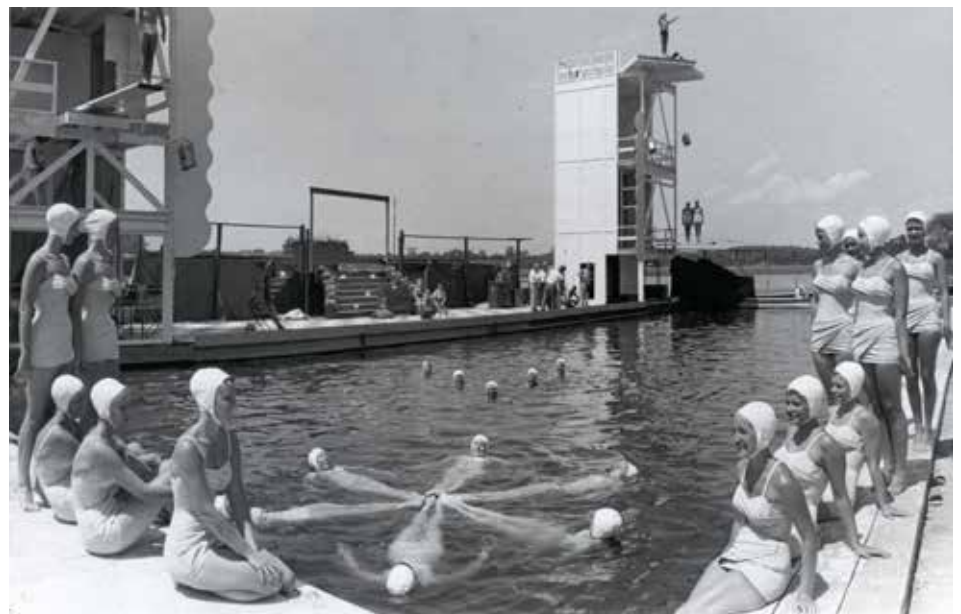


Figure 67. Aqua Follies at Wirth Lake, in 1957.



VI. NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP

Background
Inventory and Existing Conditions
Natural Resource Analysis
Recommendations

Background

Historically, native plant communities were self-sustaining. They rejuvenated through natural disturbances such as fire, water and flood. This resulted in a plant community with patches of differing successional stages in a large scale mosaic with a diversity of habitats and species.

After European settlement began, natural disturbance regimes were reduced or stopped. People understandably put out fires threatening their homes. Larger scale landscapes were introduced with farm crops. Invasive species were introduced. Livestock grazing maintained some areas similar to savannah, but they quickly changed to forest when grazing stopped. Today, plant community rejuvenation in urban parks like Wirth requires active management. Its historic patches of different successional stages (prairie-savannah-woodland) can be managed through activities including mowing, burning, tree and weed removal.

Park Changes Over Time

Park developments and natural processes constantly change the park. Recreational demands, maintenance practices and outside influences such as invasive species also cause change. A comparison of 1940 and 2010 air photo mosaics for the park highlights broad impacts of development on vegetation in Wirth over time (figure 68). In 1940 most of South Wirth remained oak savannah with widespread burr oaks growing above a ground layer of prairie grasses and forbs. The golf course in North Wirth was nearly treeless due to widespread grading along the creek and development of the golf course. Farming and grazing occurred in a large section of the Back 40, but the savannahs were still evident, though possibly beginning to succeed to woodland. The Park Board nursery was

bustling on the former Schell Farmstead site northwest of the lake, while the east side was still covered with a private nursery business containing greenhouses and other residential buildings. Mass conifer plantings more recently planted along the parkway were not visible in 1940.

In 2010, the Park Board and private nurseries were gone. The parkway evergreens that remained are now a clear cultural landscape pattern. The canopy in South Wirth has largely closed in and is now a mature woodland. The golf course also has dense woodland patches separating the mowed fairways. The savannah area north of the Chalet has grown in. The Back 40 area is also heavily wooded with a smaller prairie area. Lagoons have filled in with sediment and cattails. Though some of these processes are human derived and others natural, it is surprising how in just a few decades the park can visibly change so extensively while many other natural features, recreational facilities, and scenic views remain unchanged.

Inventory and Existing Conditions

Landform and Geologic History

The landscapes of Theodore Wirth Regional Park were shaped by the last period of glacial advance in Minnesota. During the time period stretching from 25,000 to 10,000 years ago, multiple glaciers advanced across the landscape now occupied by Wirth Park. The glaciers acted as large conveyors, moving rocks and soil toward the front of the glaciers and where they stopped, they deposited large mounds of materials called moraines. These moraines form the hills and rolling topography seen in Wirth Park today (figure 69).

As the glaciers melted, their water flowed southward, cutting channels through materials deposited in the park. Those channels are evident today in the valleys



Figure 68. Land cover changes from 1940 to 2010.

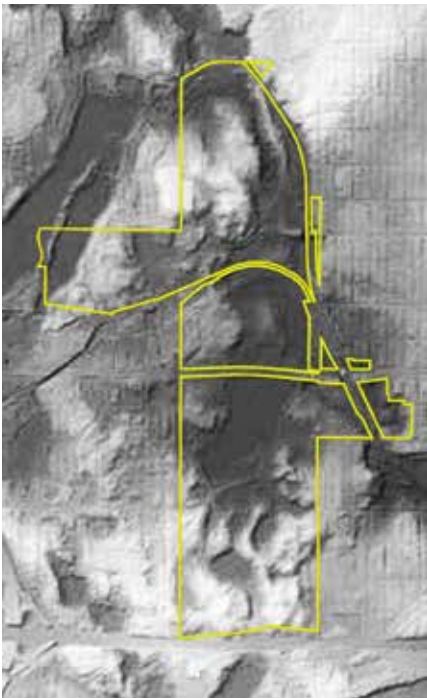


Figure 69. Geologic setting of Wirth Park.

that hold Sweeney Lake, Twin Lake, Wirth Lake, Birch Pond and the Bassett Creek Valley. Stream channels under the glaciers also deposited sand and gravel in stream beds. One of these deposits, called an esker, forms the ridge and isthmus between Twin and Sweeney Lakes. Birch Pond, the Quaking Bog and the small wetlands scattered across South Wirth and the Back 40 hold the landscape signature of ice blocks once buried in the glacial deposits, known as “kettle” depressions.

Soils

The glacial deposits of sand and gravel, and erosion of the landscape due to the glacier formed the basis of the soils in the park. In Wirth Park, there are four major types of soils formed by glacial and other formative forces, with three found in moraines and the fourth (anthropogenic soils) being those that have been altered by human settlement or use. (figure 70). Soils in the three moraine groups are either glacial till or stream sediment in the upland areas, or depressional soils in low wet areas. Most of the soils in the park are well-drained till soils composed of sand and gravel that lead to dry conditions.

The following soil groupings can help identify an area’s development potential and determine what plant communities were originally present during the pre-settlement era.

Well-drained soils (2 moraine till soils)

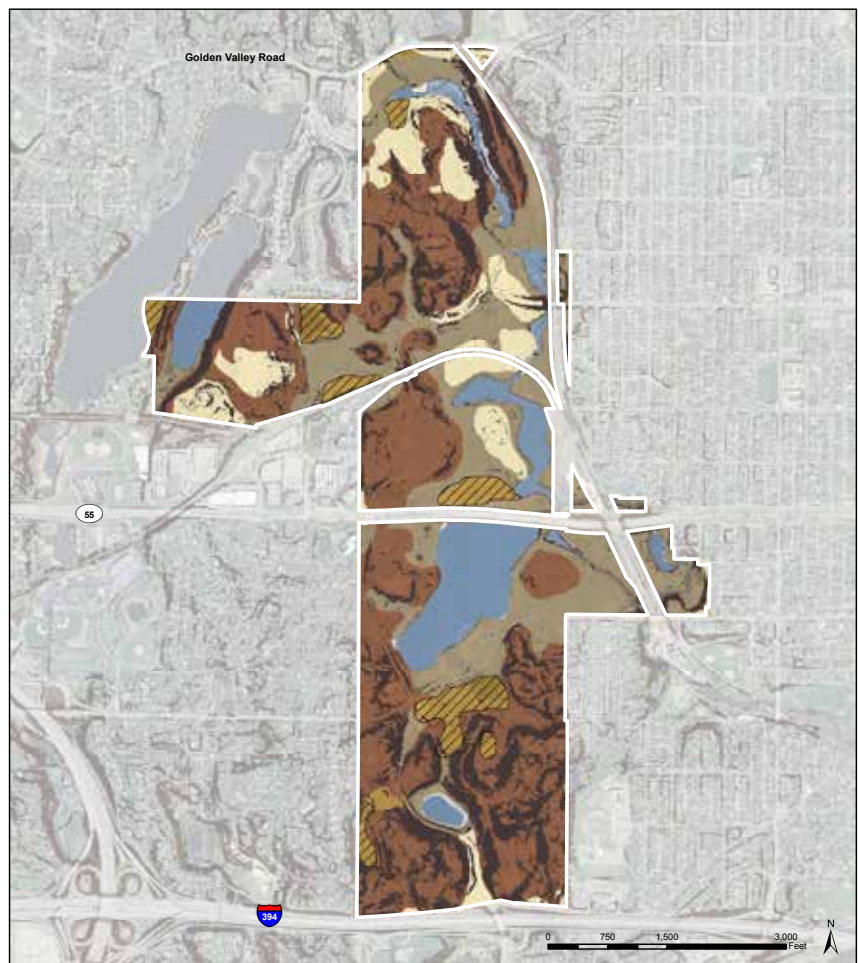
These are associated with oak openings and savannah plant communities. These soils, which are found in most of the park, are resistant to deep compaction and are well suited for many types of development, including natural surface trails, pavements and structures.

Soils in low lying areas with high groundwater levels (moraine depressional soil)

These are found in parts of the creek valley and in pockets throughout the park from current wetlands, wet prairies and floodplains which accumulated organic deposits over time. These are hydric soils, which are sensitive to development impacts due to their high moisture content, fine particle size and ponding of water during wet periods. Direct impacts to these soils should be avoided if possible or minimized.

Anthropogenic soils

These have been significantly altered by human use and do not fit into a native soil classification. Because human activities have changed the materials and the structure of the soils, a determination of the underlying soil type, structural



Legend

- Water Bodies
- Hydric Soils
- Steep Slopes >20% Slope
- Moraines - glacial stream sediment and till soils
- Moraines - depressional organic soils
- Moraines - glacial till soils
- Anthropogenic - disturbed or altered soils

Figure 70. Soils inventory.

qualities and development potential requires more detailed analysis. Anthropogenic soils are generally more susceptible to colonization by invasive and weedy species and have decreased function for infiltration of stormwater. Wirth Lake, Bassett Creek and other developed park areas such as the golf course are largely anthropogenic soils.

Topography

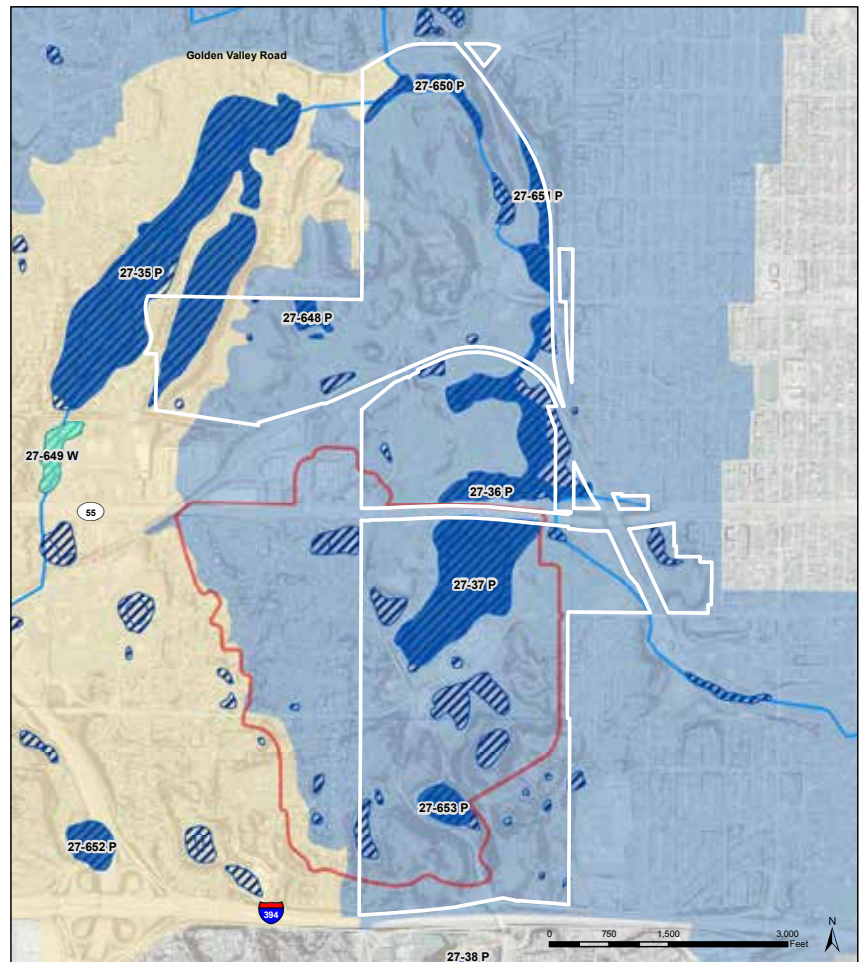
The northeast portion of the park has steep but mostly stable, wooded slopes covered by dry oak vegetation. The southern third of the park is woodland, with the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, an oak woodland that developed from savanna.

The western side of the park has conifer plantings and ravines, with 30 feet of topographic relief, mesic oak woods, and a 5-acre tamarack swamp which is a post-glacial relic. Twin Lake is on the west end of the park and has steeply sloped banks with wide views and some erosion along trails. This western arm contains the “Back 40,” and is high in elevation on a moraine ridge with a restored prairie, open meadows, coniferous upland tress, and dry oak woods.

The lowest and flattest part of the park lies between Plymouth Ave and Hwy 55. The existing 18 hole golf course in this location was developed in 1935 using sediment dredged from Bassett Creek when the lagoons were created. Some of these areas have drainage problems.

Land Cover Classification

The MN DNR’s Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) is a regional standard for documenting native landscapes and identifying native plant communities. The system ranks land cover according to the quality of its natural communities. Plant community quality is based on a field check by an ecologist. Wirth Park would be considered on the lower end of this type



Legend

 Wetland (PWI)	 Wirth Lake Watershed
 Lake (PWI)	 Sweeney Lake Watershed
 Wetlands/Lakes (NWI)	 Bassett Creek Watershed
 Stream	

Figure 71. Public waters inventory. Source: Barr Engineering.

of ranking, which is expected for a park which is relatively isolated in an urban setting.

Water Resources

Wirth Park features many types of water resources which contribute significantly to the beauty and identity of the park. Lakes, streams, and wetlands are all prominent features. Each type of waterbody plays an important and different ecological role in the landscape. Often the perception of the quality of a waterbody is simply defined by regulatory measures of water quality alone. However, lakes of all levels of water quality still provide critical ecological function due to their habitats, nutrient cycles and complex food chains.

Bassett Creek Watershed

Wirth Park is located within the Bassett Creek watershed, specifically in the Bassett Creek Main Stem (downstream), Wirth Lake, and Twin Lake subwatersheds (figure 71). Bassett Creek is a tributary to the Mississippi River. The Bassett Creek watershed is slightly larger than 40 square miles and is urbanized; land use in this watershed is mainly residential mingled with industrial, commercial, institutional, and park lands. The Bassett Creek watershed is administered by the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission.

Floodplain

Some areas of Wirth Park are located within the 100 year floodplain – most notably shoreland adjacent to Bassett Creek, the golf course lagoons, and

Twin, Sweeney, and Wirth Lakes. Low-lying areas near Bassett Creek were historically prone to severe flooding before construction of the lagoons. The park contains a structure from the Bassett Creek Flood Control Project.

Bassett Creek

The main stem of this tributary creek (MN PWI #27-650 P) flows through the park to the Mississippi River. It originates at the south end of Medicine Lake in Plymouth approximately 6.5 miles to the northwest of the park and winds generally south-eastward for a 1.2-mile course before it discharges into the Mississippi River just north of downtown Minneapolis. The creek originates from deep glacial lakes. The creek segment in the park is approximately 2.5 miles in length. The park segment of the creek has been significantly altered by the creation of the lagoons, which have become a cherished landscape in themselves.

Sweeney Lake

This lake (MN PWI #27-35 P) is located on the western boundary of the park. Park property includes a small segment of shoreline on the isthmus between Sweeney and Twin Lakes, which is undeveloped. The majority of Sweeney Lake shoreland is developed with single family residential homes.

Twin Lake

The southern half of Twin Lake (MN PWI #27-35 P) is located within Wirth Park. The northern half of the lakeshore is residential and institutional.

Ski Jump Pond Golf Course Wetland

Located west of the Par 3 golf course, this waterbody (MN PWI #27-648 P) is not actively used for recreation, due in part to its small size, steep banks and lack of trail access.

Lagoon C (a.k.a. Ski Jump Pond)

This 7-acre lagoon (MN PWI #651), created under the direction of Theodore

Wirth himself, is identified in some documents as Lagoon C, and in others such as those on file with the DNR as “Ski Jump Pond.” The MPRB has documents that instead identify Ski Jump Pond as the waterbody located just east of Twin Lake in the “Back 40.” This master plan refers to the lagoon in Bassett Creek as Lagoon C and the waterbody east of Twin Lake in the Par 3 golf course as Ski Jump Pond.

Wirth Lake

This lake (MN PWI #27-37 P) is completely contained within Wirth Park. The lake is adjacent to wetlands that provide waterfowl habitat. A fishing dock has been in place on the east side of Wirth Lake for many years and is well used. Shore fishing is popular and fishing also occurs on the new boardwalk along the north shore of the lake. A permanent winter-season aeration system was installed in the lake in 2002 with the cooperation of the MN DNR. The 2012 DNR survey also recorded the presence of turtles at Wirth Lake, including painted, smooth softshell, and snapping turtles. Invasives such as Eurasian milfoil and curly leaf pondweed are present in Wirth Lake and present an ongoing maintenance problem. Milfoil is managed under DNR permits.

Birch Pond

This pond (MN PWI #27-653 P) is contained within Wirth Park. It is surrounded by hills and mature trees.

The Quaking Bog

The Quaking Bog is unique in that it is a remnant native plant area, home to a very old stand of tamarack trees and remarkable vegetation. A floating boardwalk allows visitors closer access to the bog itself.

Other Waterbodies

Many other small kettle wetlands exist in the southeast Wirth woodland and “Back 40” woodland areas. These wetlands are typically less than 1/8 of

an acre and are fully within the park boundary. Many vernal pools are homes to birds and amphibians. Little change has occurred in these wetlands though some natural surface trails pass nearby and allow visitors views of the water.

Ground Water

Wirth Park has very high groundwater levels and a number of springs, particularly surrounding Wirth Lake and near Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Ground water in Wirth Park is high in dissolved minerals. Groundwater may also contain chloride above background levels due to the highly urban nature of surrounding land.

Water Quality

Water quality is monitored regularly by the MPRB and the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC). The city of Minneapolis has also sponsored WHEP teams to monitor various wetlands in the park. Under the federal Clean Water Act, states are required to monitor and assess their waters to determine if they meet water quality standards and thereby support the beneficial uses they are intended to provide. When a water body is determined to be polluted or ‘impaired’ beyond regulatory levels it is added to the Impaired Waters List, which is monitored by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Once on the Impaired Waters List, a study of the pollutants and how to decrease them, called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study is prepared. Each TMDL study includes measures and projects which are expected to reduce pollution and improve the water quality. The Local Government Agency (LGA) is typically the city the water body is in, which is responsible for implementing plans. MPRB is a single landowner in this process, though MPRB can authorize agreements with cities and watershed districts to work in

partnerships on projects involving park land.

The following park water bodies are on the MPCA Impaired Waters list: Sweeney Lake, Twin Lake, and Bassett Creek. Wirth Lake has an approved nutrient TMDL and was removed from the list. It is now on a watch list for chlorides. Others have not been monitored for the list, including: Birch Pond, Ski Jump Pond/ Golf Course Wetland, Quaking Bog, and smaller kettle ponds or depressions. It is possible to be de-listed once reduced pollutant goals are met.

MPRB has developed the Lake Aesthetic and user Recreation Index (LAURI) to help understand water quality from a recreational use perspective. This index is posted on the MPRB website. It shows whether a lake is in good condition for recreational uses, such as swimming or boating. Wirth is typically in good condition for swimming and has some of the best LAURI scores in the entire park system. Swimming beaches are monitored for E. coli weekly and results are posted on the MPRB website.

Terrestrial Resources and Conservation Areas

Native Plant Communities

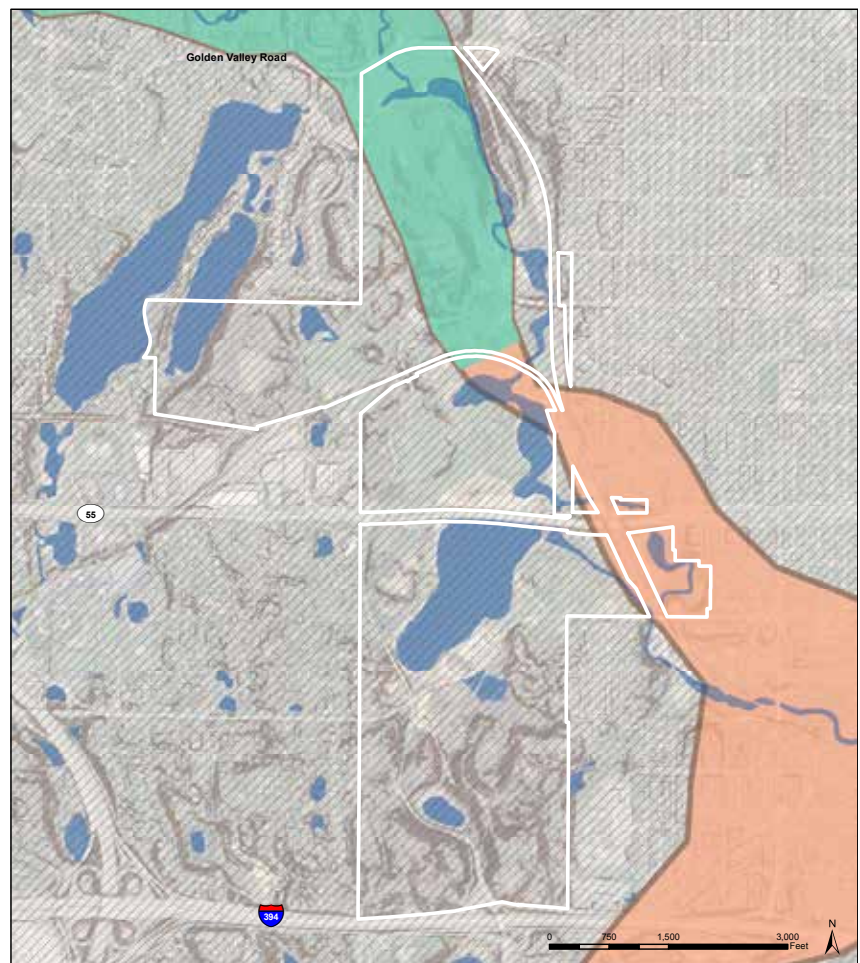
Just prior to European settlement of the metropolitan area around 1846, land surveyors gathered data on the vegetation that grew at the intersections of a one mile grid placed over the entire state as part of the Public Land Survey. These areas are published and in Minnesota are generally known as the Marschner Map. According to this resource, the dominant historic native plant community of the Wirth Park region was oak savanna (figure 72). Some remnants of the pre-settlement oak savanna are evidenced by the wide spreading canopies. Their direct descendants are the more upright oaks of the forest. Oak savanna is a fire-dependent plant community. Oak trees and prairie grasses are resilient to fire while the trees and understory

vegetation of a forest community are not. After humans began to settle and farm the area, fires were suppressed and the remaining savannas progressed into oak woodlands.

Within what are now the boundaries of Wirth Park, oak savanna once covered most of the northern and southern aspects of the site, and a band of maple-basswood forest existed in the lower elevations that fire did not reach. Wet prairie existed through an area of the park which is now a wetland, and big woods were also present. Within these large scale communities, small variations and unique communities existed. This included the tamarack bog as well as successional variations in patches ranging from prairie to forest.

Existing tree canopy cover in much of South Wirth is now 90% mature forest, and much of that is oak forest (figure 73). Many of these trees are greater than 20 inches in diameter. This canopy is estimated to be 5% open. Savanna restoration is best attempted where tree removal is needed for other purposes or when natural forces or events cause tree loss. Returning these areas to a pre-settlement mix of oak forest savanna would require significant tree removal and would likely incur large costs, which is not a realistic restoration goal.

Management of wooded 'natural' areas has occurred in the park in varying levels since the park was developed. The MPRB has also had to mount proactive and reactive efforts due to pests, diseases



Legend

Existing Water Bodies
Oak Openings and Barrens

Big Woods - Hardwoods
Wet Prairie

Figure 72. Pre-settlement vegetation.

and storms. The maple basswood forest area and tamarack swamp (Quaking Bog) are relatively unique within the oak dominated park. These pockets are well preserved and actively managed by park staff. The bog has had new tamaracks planted and the natural succession to maples has been staved off by actively removing them from the bog. Non-native invasive glossy buckthorn is also actively removed. Oak woodlands have been and are currently managed by removing common buckthorn and by removal of diseased oaks and root plowing to slow the spread of the fungal oak wilt disease.

The Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) identifies existing native plant communities throughout the

state. The natural plant communities identified in Wirth in 2011 include:

Oak Forest - The historic oak savanna has changed into oak forest because of several factors, largely due to the lack of fire to keep trees sparse.

Tamarack Swamp (Quaking Bog) - A beautiful example of a tamarack swamp exists in the southwest corner of the park. This mature stand of tamaracks and diverse understory make it high quality and highly unusual in this setting.

Maple Basswood Forest - There is a very small maple-basswood forest in and around a kettle basin south of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. The

“Do you know there is a ‘wild’ garden in Minneapolis and that it is only ten minutes ride from the heart of the city? Hidden away in a small valley surrounded by hills, this garden lies, a sequestered, unravished spot. Here in this tract of native wildness the flower lover may in a few hours view what would otherwise take days of search and travel. This bit of primeval wilderness, which has escaped the encroachment of civilization as the city has grown, is preserved in all its native wildness as a part of the city’s largest park – Glenwood [today, Theodore Wirth].”

- 1918 brochure promoting Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden



Legend

- Conifer Plantings
- Oak Forest / Savanna
- Managed Turf Grass
- Second Growth Mixed Forest
- Prairie
- Tamarack Swamp
- Wetlands
- Water Bodies

Figure 73. Existing plant communities.



Figure 74. EBWG trail.



Figure 75. EBWG blooms.

understory has lost its diversity, and little regeneration of sugar maples is occurring. This area developed because it was protected from pre-settlement fire within the oak forest savanna area due to steep slopes and moisture.

Prairie/Savanna - A few planted and restored prairies exist in the park (adjacent to J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden, former park nursery site and "Back 40"). True remnant native prairies have disappeared in Wirth as settlement, farming and park land development eliminated uncontrolled fires. In the absence of fire, trees colonized the prairies, creating oak savannas first that eventually succeeded to forest. Oak savanna is only found in the park in very localized transitions between prairies and forest.

Second Growth Mixed Forest - These are a mix of non-native and planted species. Some native trees have moved in from surrounding areas or non-native trees have been planted. They resemble no known native plant community and most have developed from areas that have been previously cleared for human use. Their understories lack diversity and are dominated by non-native invasive species.

Evergreen Plantings - One of the cultural landscapes, large evergreen plantings were established mostly along the parkway to enhance the winter effects of the park. These plantings also distinguish the park from some other sections of the Grand Rounds and give the park an "up north" feel which adds to the cultural perception of nature.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden (EBWG) - This naturally-arranged, cultivated botanic garden is home to over 500 plant species and over 130 resident and migratory bird species. The mission of the EBWG is to showcase native plants and birds to inspire stewardship and appreciation of the natural world.

EBWG has three distinct garden areas: woodland, wetland, and prairie. The garden is managed using four guiding principles of rhythm, vistas, unique focal points, and tempo - resulting in a dynamic naturalized environment that changes on every segment of trail. The 2010-2015 management plan for the garden focuses on fostering its unique character and addressing human-induced impacts. These impacts include the introduction of invasive species and changes in ground water dynamics.

The "Back 40" - The Back 40 is actually closer to 80 acres in size. This dry upland area has oak and maple-basswood forest as well as a restored native prairie and lakeshores.

Site of Schell Farmstead and MPRB Nursery - This site is in the northwest section of land between Wirth Lake and the Parkway south of Hwy 55. It was once extensively developed, first as the early farm settlement of the Schell family, then for several decades as a Park Board tree nursery and horticulture staff residence. When the nursery was dismantled in 1980, remaining buildings were removed with the exception of a concrete root cellar. The largely unmanaged area grew into the mixed woodland that exists today. There is a restored prairie in the upland portion of the site, but



Figure 93. Tamarack swamp.

wooded areas still bear the signature of the nursery, with unusual, non-native trees peppering the woodland, including crabapples, buckeyes, white poplar and various evergreens.

Rare, Endangered, or Threatened Species

The MN DNR provides MPRB with rare, endangered, and threatened species information through a Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) licensure agreement. The NHIS database identifies seven potential rare, endangered, or threatened species identified inside or within 1 mile of Wirth Park, consisting of both flora and fauna (table 14). The NHIS license agreement restricts the public distribution of certain types of proprietary information identifying specific locations of rare, endangered, or threatened species. For this reason, location information is not included in the table.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Notes
Valerian	<i>Valeriana edulis var. cilata</i>	Threatened	vascular plant
Pugnose Shiner	<i>Notropis anogenus</i>	Special Concern	vertebrate animal
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydiodea blandingii</i>	Threatened	vertebrate animal
Hooded Warbler	<i>Setophaga citrina</i>	Special Concern	vertebrate animal
Tamarack Swamp	<i>Larix laricina</i> swamp	n/a	terrestrial community
Bullfrog	<i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>	No legal status, gathering data	vertebrate animal
Dwarf Trout Lily	<i>Erythronium propullans</i>	Endangered	vascular plant

Table 14. Species identified in or near Wirth Park.

Unique Plants

Outside of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, a few unique or unusual plants and plant communities have been identified in the park (table 15). These areas warrant monitoring and management with protection if needed.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
Wild rice	<i>Zizania aquatic</i>	Located in the wetland south of Glenwood and north of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Ephemeral, may have been intentionally planted.
Butternut	<i>Juglans cinerea</i>	A butternut grove is located in the north-east corner of the park. Butternut trees have been largely extirpated throughout the state by butternut canker disease (<i>Sirococcus clavigigenti-juglandacearum</i>). There is no known prevention for the canker disease, these trees should be monitored.
Tamarack swamp	<i>Larix laricina</i> swamp	This is an unusual community this far south in Minnesota (though not the furthest south; another has been identified in central Scott County on tribal owned land in Prior Lake). It will need continued management to slow succession.

Table 15. Unique plants in Wirth Park.

Important Bird Habitat

Though Wirth Park’s natural resources are impacted by its urban surroundings, its size and connections to water bodies create useful resting and refuge points for both resident and migratory species. The park was recently added to the Chain of Lakes Important Birding Area (IBA), an Audubon Society designation of quality bird habitats and connections. The Chain of Lakes and Wirth Park form a side channel of the Mississippi River flyway, which is a major route for global bird migration through Minneapolis. In addition, the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden was declared a bird sanctuary in

1969. EBWG currently or in the past has partnered with the Audubon Society, The Minnesota School of Botanical Art, and the nonprofit organization Bird x Bird. Volunteers and staff at the Garden do regular reporting of bird species identified in and near the garden, including a survey done in 2009 which found 130 resident and migratory bird species present.

Impact of Invasive Species

As the Twin Cities area continues to grow, access to natural areas decreases and open space becomes increasingly fragmented. Natural areas within the Minneapolis park system are more susceptible to invasive species due to closer proximity to urbanized landscapes. Invasive species of several kinds both terrestrial and aquatic are well established in Wirth Park. Emerald Ash Borer and Dutch Elm Disease have both caused tremendous damage to wooded areas locally and nationally.

Terrestrial Invasive Species

Invasive plants have negative impacts not only on a biological level, but also on human use and enjoyment of the park. They can be physically and financially damaging, requiring large investments of time and equipment to reduce or manage. In many cases, elimination of invasive species may not be possible once they gain a foothold in an area.

The most aggressive invasive species in the park are common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). A dangerous and aggressive new invasive is wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), now found in two locations near Wirth Lake. Oils from this plant can in sunlight cause burns on exposed skin. Other less aggressive species include burdock (*Arctium* spp.), motherwort (*Leonurus cardiac*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), Tartarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). Some of these species are being actively managed (e.g. biocontrols for purple loosestrife), others are less active and don’t require as aggressive of treatments.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Eurasian watermilfoil is a problem in Wirth Lake. Its removal is regulated and it is routinely removed to preserve recreational uses. Within Wirth Park, reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and narrowleaved and hybrid cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) dominate parts of the lake shores, along with many wetlands and sections of creek banks. Curly-leaf pondweed is also present in Wirth Lake. Purple loosestrife can also be considered a wetland aquatic invasive species in Wirth Park.

Natural Resource Analysis

Ecological Sensitivity

An ecological sensitivity map was created as a tool for park designers and managers to understand which locations of the park are the most sensitive to recreational development (figure 79). Topography and soils form the base of the map. The map layers hydric soils, steep slopes (over 20% slope), wetlands and water bodies, areas of relatively high ecological quality (better plant communities), and floodplains.

Areas with colored shading or hatching have more sensitive qualities and plans must consider how to minimize impact to these areas. Areas without colored shading or hatching are more suitable for development (figure 77). The highest quality natural and ecological areas in Wirth are focused on bodies of water, and at the northwest and southern ends of the park. This is where more robust ecological communities exist. Conversely, the areas in central Wirth occupied primarily by the golf course are of lower ecological quality, due in large part to decades of disturbance and active recreational development. Ecologically sensitive areas of the park also exist on steep slopes prone to erosion.

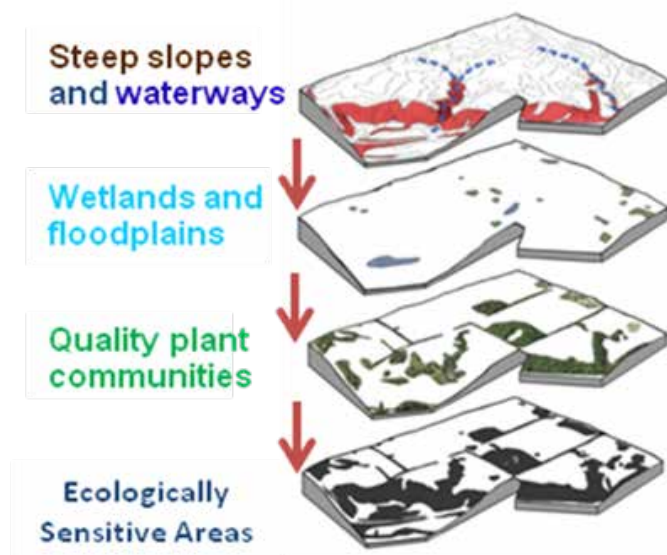
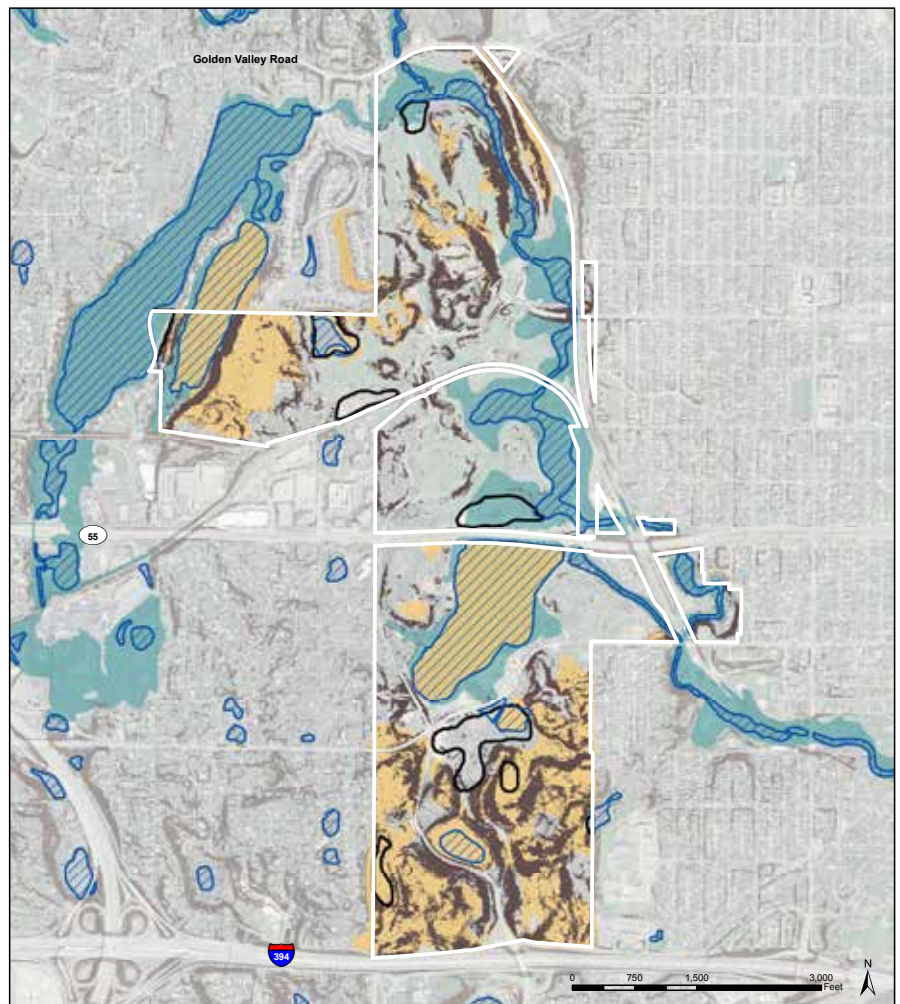


Figure 77. Conceptual diagram of the layers in an ecological sensitivity map.



Figure 78. Plants in the Back 40.



Legend






-  Water Bodies
-  Ecological Quality Areas - High and Medium Quality
-  Steep Slopes >20% Slope
-  100-Year Floodplain
-  Hydric Soils

Figure 79. Ecologically sensitive areas.

Recommendations

Based on ecological research and field review, it is suggested that the planning and management of Theodore Wirth Regional Park natural resources should concentrate on the following:

- **Strategically approach vegetation management in the park:**
 - o Maintain the highest quality ecological areas (first management priority)
 - o Maintain areas where large woody material has been removed (second management priority)
 - o Complete removals of invasive species along trail corridors and highest use areas, creating open sight lines from trails to promote safe use (eventual management priority)
 - o Use primarily native species for new vegetation and tree plantings (exception for Cultural Landscape features including evergreen tree masses)
- **Implement recommendations of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary Management Plan 2010-2015:** The management plan provides specific, relevant guidance for the maintenance and operation of the garden. Funding will be needed to fully implement the management plan.

- **Control invasive species:** There are several invasive species infestations within the park that are suggested for continued active control – including buckthorn and garlic mustard
 - o A maintenance and monitoring schedule to remove occasional re-colonizing invasive species must be developed and implemented. This will require fewer resources as time goes on and as seed banks in the soil are diminished.
 - o New invasive species, diseases and other impacts will appear in time. Management and development plans must foster conditions that favor and support diverse native communities which are more resilient than monocultures of one dominant plant.
- **Allow for new succession processes after a natural disturbance:** Disturbance regimes are an important aspect of native plant community management. When a natural disturbance that changes the plant community structure does occur, the reaction to try to replace what was lost should be checked.

- **Preserve old native trees and encourage regeneration:** The most significant part of the remnant native plant communities in Wirth Park are the trees. Scattered old oaks, some exceeding four feet in diameter with thick wide reaching branches, dot the park. Their wide-reach is a signature of savanna-grown trees.
- **Enhance the desired woodland community throughout the park with new tree plantings:** Formal, new tree plantings along roadways should not occur in areas that are already wooded and in native ground cover. Historical cultural plantings of evergreens should be supplemented with new evergreen plantings.
- **Work with BCWMC, MPCA, MN DNR and other partners to enhance water quality throughout the park:** Several agencies are invested in protecting and enhancing the water quality of waterbodies in Wirth Park. These relationships will need to be encouraged to make significant improvements.



Figure 80. Bassett Creek.



Figure 81. Quaking Bog.

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VII. THE PLAN

Overview
Background
Whole Park
North Wirth
Central Wirth
South Wirth
Design Advisory Areas
Addressing Known Issues
Recommendations

Overview

The plan for Wirth Park seeks to balance varied community interests and values around park development, preservation, and restoration of both natural and cultural features. The plan is also progressive in its pursuit to weave growing recreational trends into the storied traditions of Wirth Park. Seeking this type of balance in park development can be a tenuous proposition, as experienced in the lively, multi-year community process used to formulate this particular master plan.

The features of the plan are forward-thinking, well-vetted, respectful of the natural and cultural landscape, and as a result, an intentional package of ideas that will drive future success. The plan promotes continually-improving management of natural and cultural resources. It strikes a deliberate balance of quiet and active spaces. It enhances the visitor experience by reorganizing amenities for better function and fewer conflicts. It better meets the needs of year-round recreational pursuits. And, it establishes facilities and buildings that support robust programming and operations. The master plan is guided by a number of design statements set by the Community Advisory Committee during the planning process.

1. Facilitate a variety of recreational activities for all seasons that are integrated with the Park's natural and cultural landscape.
2. Enhance real and perceived safety for park visitors.
3. Minimize conflicts between the various park facilities and activities.
4. Improve the ease and safety of street crossings.
5. Encourage in-park volunteerism.
6. Improve visitor access - both regionally and most especially from surrounding neighborhoods.
7. Establish trail systems for multiple activities as central elements of the visitor experience.

8. Improve the efficiency and convenience of parking but expand cautiously and only deliberately.
9. Protect, enhance, care for, and interpret natural and cultural resources.
10. Construct long-lasting, efficient and sustainable facilities.
11. Care for assets to maximize life expectancy.

Background

This chapter is an illustrative and written description of existing and proposed park development. It is organized by park geography - first whole park, then North Wirth, Central Wirth, and South Wirth. Each geographic area will be described by its character and programmatic theme followed by a description of the development features envisioned for that geography of the park. This is followed by a discussion of elements that were determined in the planning process to need greater study before location or programmatic determinations could be made - called *design advisories*. The chapter also highlights how known issues are addressed in the master plan. The final section focuses on development recommendations that set the stage for chapter 9: Implementation and Management.

Whole Park

Theodore Wirth Regional Park is a picturesque cultural and natural landscape characterized by significant woods and wetlands in the south that give way to highly-sculpted and naturalized topography of woods, meadows, and lawns to the north. The park is envisioned to contain a robust and diverse collection of park facilities that establish it as a multi-faceted recreational destination. However, Wirth Park is also an important segment in the



Figure 82. Quaking Bog.

connective tissue of parkways, trails and greenways known as the Minneapolis Grand Rounds. Features throughout the park related to the Grand Rounds are linear in nature. They are the backbone of the strongest "whole-park" programmatic themes - trails, parkway, wayfinding, and off-road trails. These features are described below.

Parkway

The parkway through Wirth Park from the northern to southern boundary is fully developed. The parkway embodies the common design features and dimensionality of parkways in other segments of the Grand Rounds including a 25 mph speed limit, inset parking bays (where appropriate), rose-colored aggregate asphalt pavement surface, narrow drive lanes, specialty curbing, site furnishings, and decorative street lights. There are several parkway elements of note.

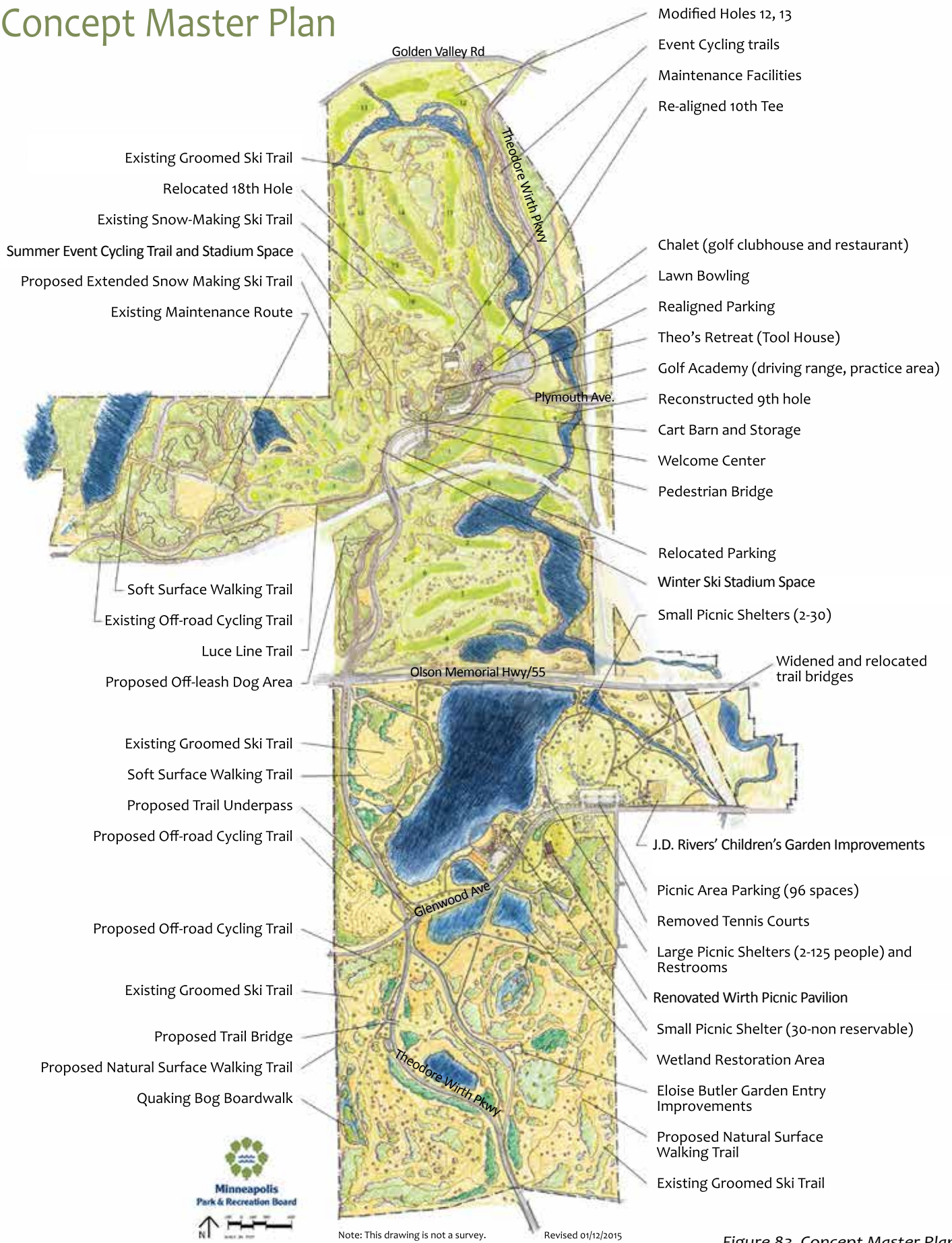
Bassett Creek Bridge Just North of the Chalet

Over Bassett Creek, the parkway traverses a small, stone bridge of historic significance. The bridge displays its original integrity although it will require ongoing repair and conservation.

Parkway Alignment Past the Chalet

The alignment of the parkway as it passes the Chalet has been altered in the past

Concept Master Plan



Note: This drawing is not a survey.

Revised 01/12/2015

Figure 83. Concept Master Plan

25 years to better accommodate parking and safe pedestrian circulation. While the current alignment has benefits, it also has a sharp curvature, floods at times of high water and is built on poor soils. As reinvestments are made to Chalet parking, parkway alignment as well as parking access locations will also be evaluated.

Parkway/Glenwood Intersection

The 4-way stop condition at the parkway intersection with Glenwood Avenue experiences relatively high rush hour vehicle traffic. This, in combination with a challenging gradient and significant pedestrian/bike crossings causes crossing conflicts and elevated accident potential. The master plan recommends creating a grade-separated pedestrian/bike/ski crossing of Glenwood Avenue. A solution that includes re-grading the intersection and constructing a pedestrian/bike/ski tunnel under Glenwood, slightly east of the intersection could address many of the concerns of the area.

Paved Parkway Trails

Adjacent to the parkway is a fully developed, paved pedestrian and bicycle trail that is combined in some areas and separated in others. The master planning process revealed the need to make paved trails safe for slower speed recreation use through design and education. While the master plan does not recommend alteration of the paved trail alignment, periodic reconstruction will provide opportunities to modify the design to reduce speeds, as necessary. The trail will require routine maintenance and reconstruction.

Off-Road Connective Trails

Interest in trail running/walking and off-road biking continues to grow. As a result, the Wirth master plan suggests the establishment of off-road, full-season earthen pedestrian and bike trails that

form a connective system from south to north through the park as part of the linear “whole park” experience. In South Wirth, off-road cycling trails are allowed on the west side of the parkway and the east side is reserved for pedestrian use.

An experience unique to Minneapolis is the ability to traverse the city by groomed ski trails from Wirth Park southward to the Chain of Lakes. This is a powerful identity and recreational signature for both Wirth Park and the city.

Wayfinding

One of the barriers of access to Wirth Park is visitor understanding of facility locations and circulation routes. The Grand Rounds offers the backbone of a park wayfinding strategy that will enhance visitor confidence in traversing the park. Key elements of the plan relate to developing clear connections, particularly along what is described as the “learning corridor” in South and Central Wirth.

North Wirth

North Wirth is characterized by a scenic landscape of rolling topography, framed meadow views and wooded hilltops. Many see this portion of the park as “natural.” However, much of it is actually highly sculpted and landscaped to establish a picturesque ideal.

The programmatic theme of North Wirth since the park’s inception over a century ago has been a mix of summer golf and winter sports including cross-country skiing, ski jumping, sledding, and ice skating. Significant community dialogue occurred in the master planning process around balancing winter and summer uses, minimizing recreational conflicts and fitting new summer activities into the predominantly golf landscape of North Wirth. The North Wirth development features are described below.

Golf

Golf (including a Par 3, 9-hole course, and an 18 hole course) is the predominant land use in North Wirth. For that reason, even though golf is an enterprise within the Minneapolis park system and not a regional park activity, the golf courses are inevitably touched by proposed regional park master plan recommendations. As a result, a significant community dialogue during the master planning process focused on analyzing and balancing regional park programs with golf course impacts.

Many golf course design alternatives were prepared, analyzed and vetted by the community during the planning process to address both golf course quality/playability and accommodation of other park activities within the golf course area. The four primary recommendations that emerged from the planning process include leaving the Par 3 course in its current configuration, adding a golf academy to the mix of uses, making a minor location adjustment to the 10th tee for Chalet site enhancements, and relocating holes 17 and 18 to establish space for a trail start/finish area and winter recreation. Course modifications necessary to accomplish golf hole relocation and a golf academy will be a detailed design process with the golf community.

Off-Leash Recreation Area

An off-leash recreation area is proposed for the current chipping green and adjacent woodland, which abuts private land owned by the Golden Valley Animal Humane Society. The facility’s location offers unique partnership opportunities for dog training, dog rehabilitation, and operations and maintenance.

Event Trails

A primary point of community dialogue during the master planning process was the proposed introduction of an event trail loop to meander through North Wirth, largely in woods and roughs adjacent to golf holes. The event trail is intended to accommodate the burgeoning sport of event off-road cycling (a MN high school league has recently formed) as well as walking and trail running events. During the planning process concerns arose about trail conflicts with golf play. It is expected that the concerns can be addressed through further design (see Design Advisory). Creation of a broad turf or savanna starting and finish area (called a stadium) for the event trail as well as cross-country skiing is a primary reason golf holes 17 and 18 are recommended to be relocated.

The roughly 5-mile event trail loop will be a combination of trail types from single-track to broader earthen trails to paved trails. Sustainable trail design techniques will be employed to minimize tree impacts, prevent erosion and reduce maintenance needs.

Snowmaking/Lighted Cross-Country Ski Loop

A 2.3 km snowmaking and lighted ski loop currently exists on fairly hilly terrain through portions of the Par 3 and 18 hole golf courses. The master plan suggests extending the loop farther into the Par 3 and Back 40 areas on gentler terrain to establish an approximate 5-7 km total loop distance. Snowmaking needs a broad, open start and finish area (stadium) and is the reason golf holes 17 and 18 are recommended to be relocated.

Natural Snow Cross-Country Ski Trail Network

Ski trails using natural snow in North Wirth are largely in place. Modifications to ski trails will likely continue to occur to minimize turf impacts on the golf courses, accommodate other program or facility additions, and employ sustainable trail design practices.

Mountain Bike Loop

A popular single-track mountain bike trail loop exists in the Back 40 portion of North Wirth. The trail was constructed and is maintained largely by the mountain bike volunteer community and connects to the linear, off-road trail network that extends to the south end of the park.

Soft Surface Trail Network

A network of soft surface pedestrian trails will be created in the same vicinity as the mountain bike loop.

Tubing & Sledding

A tubing hill (rentable inner-tubes and towrope) is currently located on the 10th fairway of the 18 hole golf course. The master plan suggests relocating the tubing hill to the proposed Welcome Center area in order to consolidate the contact station for winter recreation and eliminate golf course damage being caused by snowmaking for the tubing hill.

In place of the current tubing hill, free sledding is proposed on the 10th fairway. Sledding does not require snowmaking so golf course impacts will be nearly eliminated. Sledding has historically been offered in this location but was displaced when the fee-based tubing hill was installed.

Snowboarding

A snowboarding hill currently exists. Despite low use, it serves well as a teaching hill and it is well-located in proximity to the proposed Welcome Center.

Wirth Village

(Wirth Chalet, Tool House, and Welcome Center)

The central proposal for North Wirth is the establishment of Wirth Village – the interconnection of currently unrelated existing and proposed facilities into a unified visitor experience. The proposal would create a gardenesque stroll, bike, or ski between the celebrated Wirth Chalet, an adaptively reused Tool House, and a new Welcome Center. Together, the three facilities will establish a singular destination for North Wirth and support visitor activities, varied winter and summer recreation, large and small group events, and dining options.

Wirth Chalet

The Chalet will continue as the hub of golf in the park and will be revitalized as a 1920s period clubhouse and pro shop on the ground floor and a dining/event venue on the upper terrace level. The grounds around the Chalet will be altered to establish a landscape presence befitting the Chalet and the vision Theodore Wirth himself brought to the park. This will be accomplished by improving landscape connections to the building, modifying the parking lot to reduce its visual impact and improving circulation and adjusting the 10th tee to improve the golf holes and to provide space for a supportive recreational amenity such as lawn bowling or croquet. To support the Wirth Village vision, new landscape, trail, and promenade connections will be made to the side and rear of the Chalet leading to the Tool House.



Figure 85. Illustrative rendering of proposed tool shed (Theo's Retreat) in North Wirth.



Figure 86. Illustrative aerial view of proposed maintenance facility in North Wirth.

Tool House (Theo's Retreat)

The architecturally-interesting, 1930 Tool House will be rehabilitated and adaptively reused as a retreat (Theo's Retreat) for meetings, small gatherings, and catered events. An outdoor terrace and small garden space is envisioned to accompany Theo's Retreat and support its uses as well as create a midpoint stopover in the village stroll (figure 85).

Welcome Center

A signature addition to the park will be a new Welcome Center building, which will replace the current Par 3 golf clubhouse. The facility will be the primary destination for all ticketed winter recreation, summer/fall trail events, and Par 3 golf. The facility is generally anticipated to include visitor services, ski and bike shop, golf counter, food and refreshments, office/meeting spaces, and outdoor terrace. The building will be designed to accommodate large crowds of athletes and race-day spectators drawn to ski and bike events (a function not well accommodated by the Chalet).

Site improvements are critically important to the functions of the building. A broad event start and finish lawn (called a stadium) will be established adjacent to the building where spectators can watch race events. Other site improvements include relocated and expanded parking, drop-off facilities, enhanced parkway pedestrian crossings and parking lot entry, and pedestrian/ski/bike bridge over the parkway between the building and parking.

Maintenance Facility

A new maintenance facility is envisioned slightly north of the current Tool House. Maintenance facilities for golf and winter recreation demand adequate staff facilities as well as equipment storage and machine shop. An extended driveway access past the Tool House will be necessary to support the new facility (figure 86).

Central Wirth

Central Wirth is characterized largely by Wirth Lake, a shallow lake with recreational amenities at its southern edges and Highway 55 impacting its northern edge. Substantial investments have been made to improve lake water quality as well as refresh recreational facilities in this portion of the park over the last decade.

The programmatic theme of Central Wirth is largely self-directed recreation such as beach activities, playground use, family or group picnicking and walking. There is also a growing presence of urban agriculture and educational activities in this portion of the park that, together with nearby activities in South Wirth, form an impactful "learning corridor."

Wirth Beach

Over the past decade, Wirth Beach has experienced significant investments including a new beach house, rehabilitated sand beach with shade structures, seating, and floating boardwalk. A themed playground, picnic facilities, sand volleyball courts, half-court basketball, reconstructed parking and stormwater treatment round out

the package of amenities surrounding the beach. Aside from a small, 30-person non-reservable space (picnic shelter with open sides), the major capital investments contemplated by the master plan at Wirth Beach are complete.

Wirth Lake Trail Loop

A paved 1.3 mile walking trail encircling Wirth Lake was constructed in 2011. The trail includes a long boardwalk section on the north side of the lake along Highway 55. Wetland restoration and significant tree plantings complement the loop, which was hit by a tornado in the midst of construction in 2011.

Natural Snow Cross-Country Ski Trail Network

Groomed ski trails using natural snow in Central Wirth across the lakes and picnic area. To facilitate grooming and separation of different trail activities hosted in the park, the master plan proposes two bridges over Bassett Creek. One is in the current location and the second is closer to Glenwood Avenue. It may be possible to move the existing bridge to the new site if winter ski trail grooming equipment does not need to cross it. If it is desirable to have ski

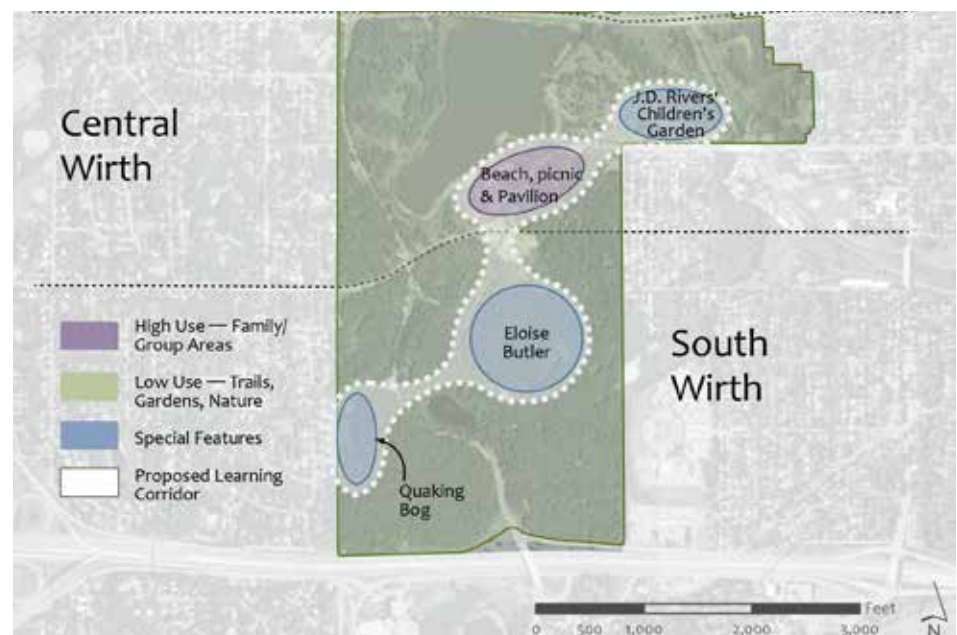


Figure 87. Learning Corridor in South and Central Wirth.

trail connections over both bridges, two new bridges would be required to accommodate grooming equipment. Modifications to ski trails will likely continue to occur to employ sustainable trail design practices.

J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden

This garden is a focal point of the outdoor programming offered at the park. The master plan recommends improvements to enhance the success of the programming at this facility. The improvements include fencing, improved access for materials delivery, water connections, an outdoor classroom shelter, and smaller shelters for tool storage and future small seasonal livestock.

Non-Motorized Boat Access

The boat launch has been closed for public use since 2011. Carried-in watercraft are permitted and canoe racks have been added near the fishing dock. An emergency boat access will be added on the west side of the lake, accessed from Hwy 55. Shoreline access points will stabilize popular shore fishing and lake and creek viewing areas.

Wirth Picnic Pavilion

The Wirth Picnic Pavilion south of Glenwood on the hill overlooking the park underwent renovation in 2012-13 to become a year-round education and event facility.

Picnic Grounds

New open-air picnic shelters are planned to improve group picnic opportunities near the lake. Two group shelters on the east side and two small shelters on the northeast side of the lake will be constructed. One non-reservable small shelter will be located near the beach and will be of open-walled construction, available on a first-come, first served basis. Further exploration of

the Germania Brewery archaeological site will resolve the final location of the large shelters (see Design Advisory Areas). The CAC desires that they be located farther from the lake if possible, but will accept a lakeside location if it better protects this resource. Parking near Glenwood and Xerxes Avenues will replace the existing boat launch road and parking. The master plan proposes a 96 bay parking lot, with 52 bays of paved parking and an additional 44 bays that can be added over time as warranted by use. If the parking was expanded to the full 96 bays, an alternative to pavement will be explored for the additional bays. The picnic area opportunities will be complemented with year-round restrooms, a small open play area and cultural resource interpretation. The picnic area will be connected to the beach area with an enhanced walk or "promenade" from the beach to the creek outlet area to encourage better connection between these spaces.

South Wirth

South Wirth is characterized by its hilly topography, wetlands, and dense woods which feel like a secluded, forested wilderness. This plan intends to preserve and celebrate this character.

The programmatic theme of South Wirth is nature-based recreation, learning, and silent sports. Most activities are linear – ski, hiking, and bike trails with a significant investment focus on sustainable trail design and maintenance, interpretation, and wayfinding. Trail investment in this area is predominately characterized by creating a deliberate, soft surface sustainable trail system that removes unauthorized trails and replaces them with fewer, ecologically-sensitive multi-use trails. After extensive discussion, the community recommended keeping off-road cycling trails on the west side of the parkway to reduce conflicts with the established uses on the east side of the parkway.

Learning Corridor

The learning corridor connects by trail the Quaking Bog, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, Wirth Picnic Pavilion and J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden (figure 87), thus connecting the main educational resources of South and Central Wirth. These trails will have special wayfinding and well-designed trails to make it easy for all groups to access the sites. Improvements between the Bog and EBWG are most in need of redesign, but will generally stay natural surface with a combination of natural and paved surface depending on the overlapping trail and maintenance uses. This section includes a new all-season bridge over the parkway that will allow park visitors to safely cross the parkway as they travel along the learning corridor and the South Wirth network of trails. The section between EBWG and the Picnic Pavilion will build on existing paths using sustainable design. The section between the Picnic Pavilion/Wirth Lake area and the J.D. Rivers' Children's Garden will follow the recommendations for Central Wirth.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary

The garden is another one of the focal points of the park that support nature-based programming. Improvements to the garden will increase access, protect or enhance the garden's plants and infrastructure, provide an enhanced self-directed experience, and support potential expansions in programming. Recommended improvements include main entry access improvements (though grades throughout the garden prohibit full ADA access at this site), as well as path, bridge/boardwalk improvements and other enhancements to building and facilities (as identified in the management plan of 2010).

Quaking Bog

The Quaking Bog is one of the hidden gems of the park and the western most terminus of the learning corridor. Visitors experience the Bog by strolling along a floating boardwalk. The learning corridor will improve access to the Bog through wayfinding and enhanced trail connections to other significant educational features of the park. The Bog needs ongoing investment to sustain its unique habitat within the urban setting and its boardwalk.

Natural Snow Cross-Country Ski Trail Network

Ski trails using natural snow in South Wirth are largely in place. Modifications to ski trails will likely continue to occur to employ sustainable trail design practices.

Soft Surface Trail Network

Soft surface walking trails are prolific in South Wirth. The current web of rogue trails are confusing and discourage use except by those very familiar with the area. The plan will significantly reduce these unsustainable trails and all natural surface trails, whether they are for skiing, biking, or walking will use sustainable design techniques. Trails will make clear connections between known access points to enhance navigation of the park.

Design Advisory Areas

Design advisory areas were identified during the planning process to earmark plan elements that require more in-depth analysis than possible at a master plan level. These areas are mapped (figure 88) and described below.

10th Tee and Event Cycling Proximity and Protection (Design Advisory A)

The 10th tee and proposed event cycling trails do not meet recommended safety zones for golf tees. Trail protection or a modified trail alignment will be required in this area.

Overflow Parking and Creek Protection (Design Advisory B)

Overflow parking areas proposed near the creek may require mitigation for impacts to floodplain storage and identification of potential wetland impacts.

Maintenance Facilities Planned and Space Needs (Design Advisory C)

MPRB system-wide operations facilities planning will determine the operations staff and facility needs for the park. The master plan shows an approximate space for those needs until the facilities plan is complete.

Snowmaking Pond (Design Advisory D, no specific location shown)

Constructing a pond in North Wirth that captures runoff and overflow well water would be a conservation-minded approach to using a sustainable water source for snowmaking. The master planning process explored possible pond locations but was unable to determine a solution.

Tubing Hill and Ski Trail Interactions (Design Advisory E)

The plan proposes relocation of the existing tubing hill, tow-rope and snowmaking to west of the current 17th fairway, close to ski trails.

Ski Stadium and Par 3 Golf Impacts (Design Advisory F)

The ski start and finish area (or stadium) is proposed near Par 3 golf holes 1 and 7. Concerns about how, if at all, the development of the stadium will impact on holes 1 and 7 arose during the design process. MPRB staff and the CAC do not recommend any changes to Par 3 for the stadium.

Front 9 Golf Improvements and Creek Floodplain Storage (Design Advisory G)

The creek floodplain is regulated and any earthwork that fills the floodplain must be balanced with areas where fill is removed. Plans for front 9 golf improvements will require careful attention to ensure the capacity of the floodplain is maintained.

Picnic Shelter, Shoreland Setback and Archeological Avoidance Area (Design Advisory H)

The Phase 2 Archeological Report for Wirth Lake recommends avoiding significant archeological resources on the east side of the lake where picnic shelters are originally proposed. Moving the shelters out of the archeological area places them in the shoreland setback for Wirth Lake. Local variances to setbacks are allowed in certain situations and would avoid seeking federal approval for impacting a resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

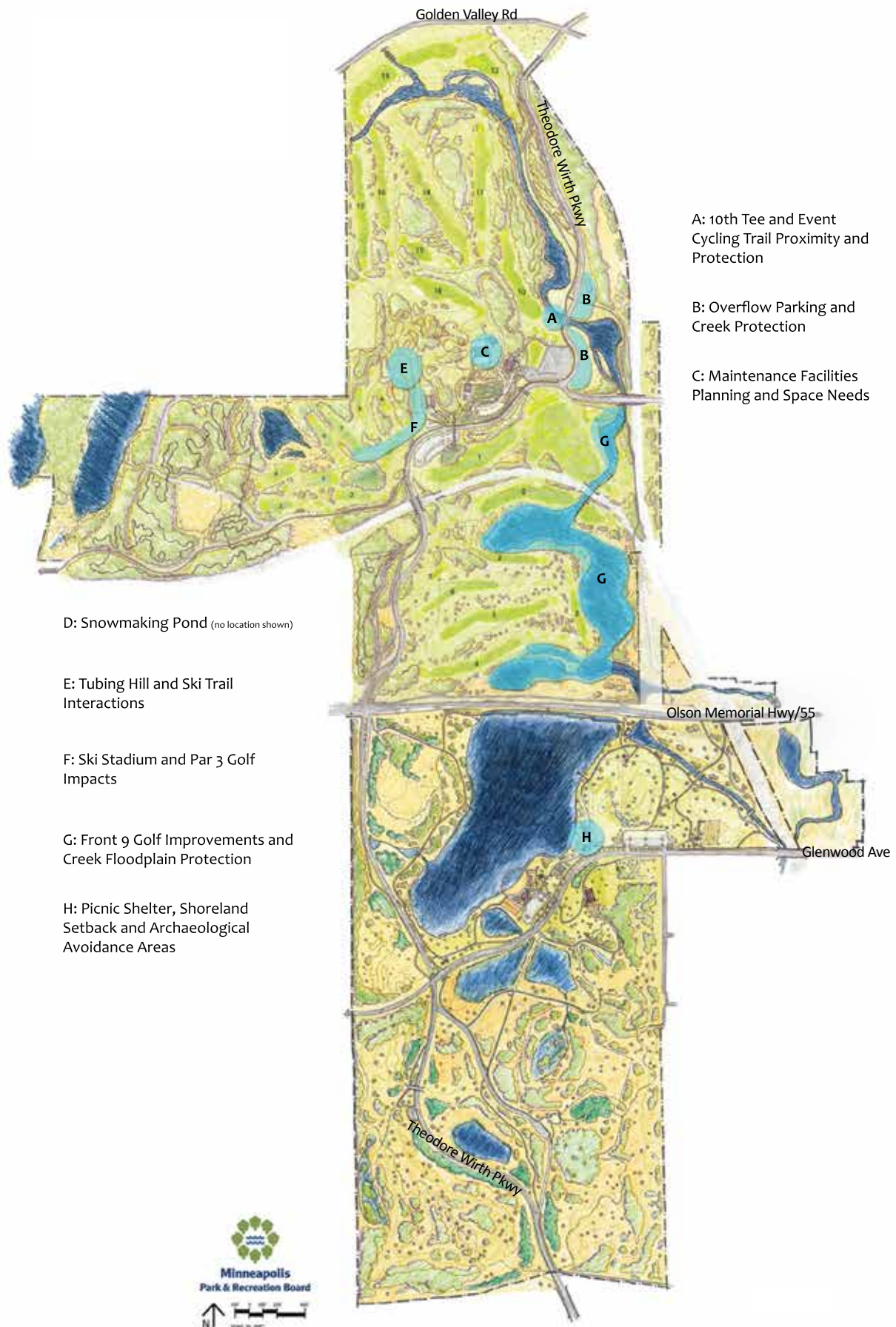


Figure 88. Design advisory areas.

Addressing Known Issues

This master plan addresses several issues that were brought out during the planning process. The primary issues and steps toward resolving them include:

Misuse of Designated Areas

Winter hiking and skiing at Wirth at times encounter conflict. Although not allowed, people tend to hike and walk with their dogs on ski trails in the winter because these are the only maintained, packed trails available for easy hiking. This plan proposes improving this situation by introducing a new trail type for year-round walking in South Wirth. These trails will be snow-packed in winter for walking, the first time this will be done in the MPRB system.

Overlapping Uses

Because Wirth is used year-round, there are sometimes conflicts between uses that overlap during transitional seasons. For example, there are ski trails maintained with artificial snow that retain their snow cover and wet conditions into spring, preventing the timely preparation of these areas for golf. This is most challenging during spring and fall seasons when snow cover and golf play are in conflict because each wants to extend their season. Therefore, design modifications that separate shared areas enough to allow for congenial overlapping uses during crossover seasons are important. This master plan proposes relocating two golf holes and the tubing hill in order to lessen seasonal overlap of uses.

Affordable Recreation

When fee based snow tubing (with special tubes and a tow rope) was moved to the 10th fairway just outside the Chalet, it displaced what had been used

by many as a free sledding hill. This disappointed members of the public who cherished affordable and free winter recreation for families at Wirth. This master plan relocates the tubing hill, tow-rope and snowmaking to west of the current 17th fairway, returning free sledding to the 10th fairway.

Snowmaking

Ideally, a space where water can be chilled prior to snowmaking for winter recreation activities would be located within the park. Space for an appropriately-sized reservoir to chill snowmaking water is not likely to be available in the near proximity to the snowmaking loop. Several locations were evaluated by staff and none have yet been found to be adequate. This plan considers this concept within a Design Advisory Area, designated for further study.

Snowboarding

The former downhill ski area was converted to the existing snowboard terrain park in the early 2000s. It is suitable for beginning level boarders only and does not have space to expand. Advanced boarders will have to continue to take advantage of private options at commercial ski hills.

Parking

Overflow parking needs are acute in winter evenings during the multiple weekly high school cross-country ski practices, meets and events. Parking is also in short supply during large summertime events. For this reason, special event coordinators are required to provide shuttles to remote parking at nearby business lots. Additionally, proposed development in the park could bring increased banquet, event, and meeting use of buildings in the Chalet village area and at the renovated Picnic Pavilion, which could cause parking

shortages. A Wirth Chalet study in 2000 recommended an increase in parking spaces near the Chalet to accommodate parking in this area, or the use of shuttle buses from the Par 3 parking lot. A new parking lot is proposed for the Wirth Lake area to help support lake-centered activities such as picnicing, volleyball, playground and beach recreation.

Conflicts Between Recreational and Natural Resources Needs

Recreational use and development and natural resource preservation are complicated to balance. During the clean-up from tornado damage in 2011-12 many neighbors and frequent park visitors expressed concerns about a loss of quiet recreation areas for walking and birding due to loss of mature tree cover. The new master plan proposes dedicated trails for quiet recreation. Walkers in all wooded sections of the park will find better trail alignments, simplified connections, clearer wayfinding and fewer conflicts with other recreational activities.

Natural Resource Restoration and Enhancement

Natural resource restoration and enhancement is proposed in the plan and takes into consideration protection of existing topography and wetlands. Some restoration has already taken place in the wetland south of Wirth Lake, and more is proposed in the wetlands south of Glenwood, as well as vegetation enhancement and invasive species control. Restoration is limited, however, by MPRB's ability to maintain specialized restored areas over time.

Tree Removal

In the past there has been public and staff concern expressed when mature oak trees are removed for development in the park. Oak wilt management is also being actively practiced and diseased

trees are regularly removed in the Back 40 and in South Wirth. Tree removals may be needed for some trail changes, and trail designers and MPRB Forestry staff will work to minimize removals. Several fairways on the Par 3 and a few of the back 9 holes are excessively shaded which decreases the ability to maintain acceptable turf for golf. Thinning of trees near fairways may at times be needed to maintain recreation program function.

Neighborhood Access and Barriers

Traffic and rail corridors effectively split the park into separate areas, acting as barriers to the park when traffic is high and speeds are fast, such as on Hwy 55 and I-394. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Luce Line rail corridors run through Harrison and Golden Valley, and steep slopes separate the neighborhoods from the park. Adjacent neighborhood access to the park varies in effectiveness. The Bryn Mawr neighborhood has more Wirth connections, including formal and informal at-grade connections, than Harrison (in Minneapolis) or North Tyrol (in Golden Valley) neighborhoods.

Public bus access to the park is extremely limited. The proposed Bottineau Transitway along the BNSF corridor has the potential to further limit connections to the park. With proper planning, transitway planning also has the potential to invest in formal access points for north Minneapolis residents. This

master plan for Wirth Park recommends strengthening several on-street and off-street trail connections and supports bus access to the park. As planning for the Bottineau Transitway continues, the Wirth Park master plan can serve as a guide for strengthening access and connections in north Minneapolis.



Figure 89. Tree removal following storm damage.



Figure 90. Bassett Creek bridge.

Recommendations

Whole Park

1. Diligently maintain and conserve the Bassett Creek bridge.
2. Evaluate current and historic parkway alignments in the context of any Chalet parking and access redesign.
3. Collaborate with City of Golden Valley and Hennepin County to design and implement intersection redesign and grade-separated tunnel.
4. Diligently maintain paved parkway trails to meet contemporary design standards and make trails safe for trail users of all abilities.
5. Trails:
 - a. Develop and maintain off-road, pedestrian/bike/ski trails that respect topography and are designed to meet contemporary sustainable trail standards that connect south to north through the park.
 - b. Design and build off-road cycling trails on the west side of the parkway that reduce conflicts, utilize sustainable design, and provide the most efficient route through the park from Glenwood Avenue to Brownie Lake while protecting natural resources.
6. Design and implement a comprehensive park wayfinding strategy that uses the Grand Rounds as its backbone.

North Wirth

1. Golf:
 - a. Keep the Par 3 course in its current configuration.
 - b. Relocate golf holes 17 and 18 to accommodate cross-country ski and event trails, start/finish area (stadium) and tubing hill. Prepare a detailed plan for how to accomplish in a collaborative fashion with a golf course architect and the golf community.

- c. Adjust the location of the 10th tee to improve the golf hole and accommodate modifications to the Wirth Chalet grounds.
 - d. Continue making quality upgrades to both golf courses including tee boxes, greens, drainage, cart paths, and sand traps (clubhouse upgrades are discussed elsewhere).
 - e. Continue to explore with the golf community ways to add/consolidate elements of a golf academy including driving range, chipping green, and putting green.
2. Develop an off-leash recreation area in the area of the current golf chipping green. Phase implementation of the dog park to allow continued golf use until a golf academy replaces the need or until user demand for the chipping green is nil.
 3. Develop and maintain an event trail loop that does not conflict with golf play, respects topography and is designed to meet contemporary sustainable trail standards.

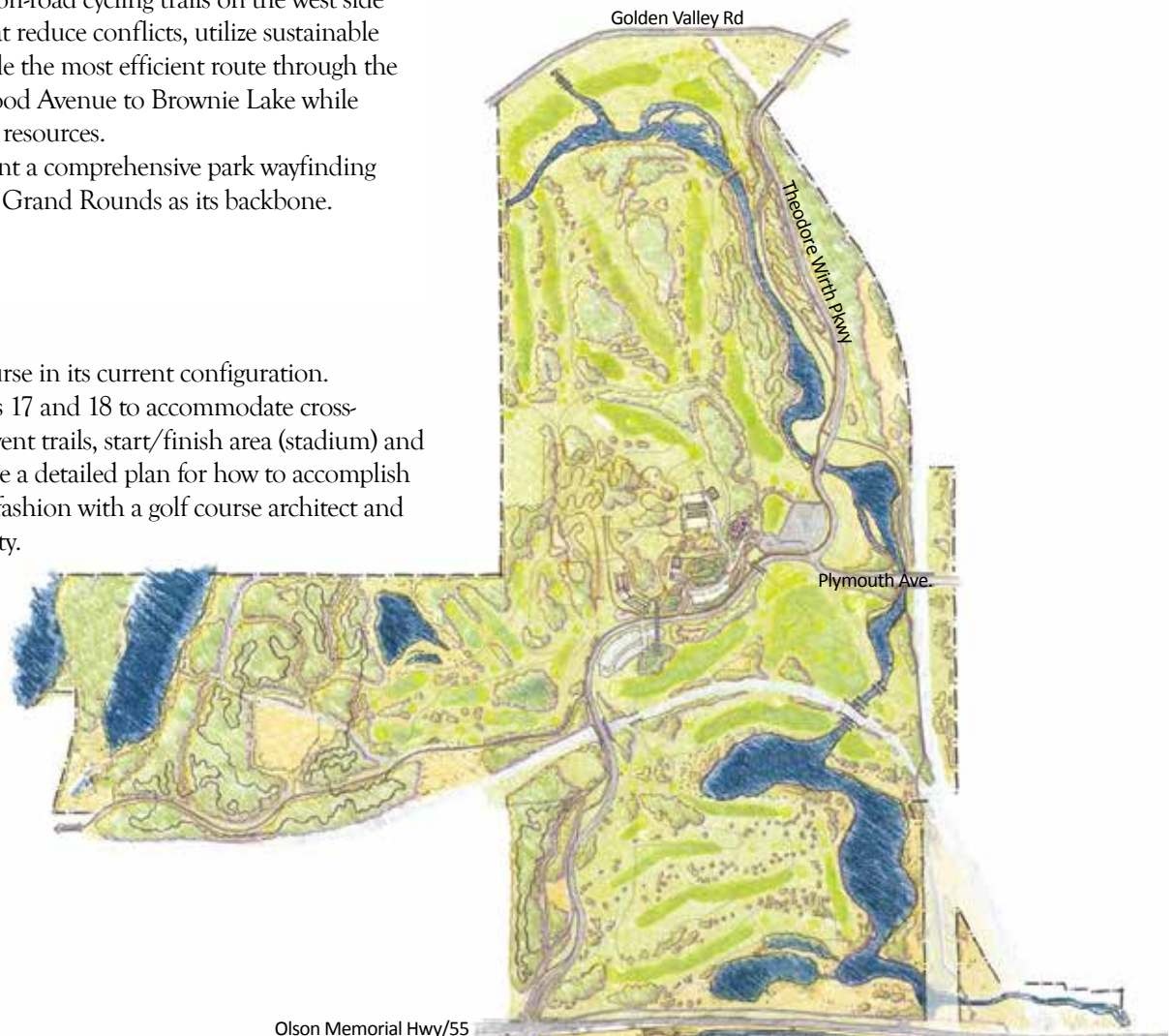


Figure 91. Concept Master Plan: North Wirth.



Figure 92. Concept Master Plan: Central Wirth.

4. Establish a 5-7 km snowmaking/lighted cross-country ski loop using water conservation practices and high-efficiency lighting.
5. Maintain and continue to improve premier cross-country ski trails that meet contemporary sustainable trail standards and minimize conflicts with other park uses.
6. Maintain and continue to improve premier mountain bike trails that meet contemporary sustainable trail standards and minimize conflicts with other park uses.
7. Develop and maintain a soft-surface trail network in the Back 40 that respects topography and is designed to meet contemporary sustainable trail standards.
8. Construct a tubing hill in the area of the proposed Welcome Center and reintroduce free sledding to the current tubing hill on the 10th fairway of the golf course.
9. Continue to make routine upgrades and maintenance to the current snowboarding hill as long as user demand meets minimal thresholds.
10. Create a gardenesque trail and walkway connection between the Wirth Chalet, Tool House, and Welcome Center.
11. Wirth Chalet:
 - a. Rehabilitate the interiors of the Wirth Chalet to recall the structure's architectural essence and support envisioned uses.
 - b. Rehabilitate the grounds in the foreground of the Wirth Chalet including redesigned parking, circulation, landscaping, adjustment of the 10th tee, and addition of a small, lawn-based recreational feature.
12. Rehabilitate the Tool House and surrounding landscape for adaptive reuse as a small-venue event and gathering facility.
13. Replace the current Par 3 Clubhouse with a new Welcome Center building and supportive site improvements.

14. Construct a new Wirth Park maintenance facility north of the Tool House.

Central Wirth

1. Continue to make routine upgrades and maintenance investments at Wirth Beach.
2. Construct a small, 30 person, non-reservable picnic shelter to augment existing amenities at Wirth Beach.
3. Continue to make routine upgrades and maintenance investments in the Wirth Lake trail loop.
4. Provide two trail bridges over Bassett Creek that serve multiple trail types and can support maintenance equipment for winter trail activities.
5. Maintain and continue to improve premier cross-country ski trails that meet contemporary sustainable trail standards and minimize conflicts with other park uses.
6. Make improvements to support more robust program development, including fencing, improving access for materials delivery, water connections, an outdoor classroom shelter and small shelters for tool storage and future small seasonal livestock.
7. Construct shoreline access points that stabilize the shoreline, allow for non-motorized boat access, support shore fishing, and provide picturesque lake and creek views.
8. Make routine upgrades and maintenance investments to return the character of the Picnic Pavilion.
9. Picnic Grounds:
 - a. Further explore the Germania Brewery site, resolve the final location of the picnic shelters on the east side of the lake, then construct shelters.
 - b. Construct smaller shelters on northeast side of the lake.
 - c. Replace existing boat launch and parking with a 52 bay parking lot near Glenwood and Xerxes. Continue to evaluate parking needs to determine if additional bays need to be added.
 - d. Construct facilities that will support the picnic area – restroom, open play area, and cultural resource interpretation of the area.
 - e. Construct enhanced walk or “promenade” from the beach to the creek outlet.

South Wirth

1. Learning Corridor:
 - a. Enhance and reconstruct, as necessary, the trail connections between the Bog and Wirth Picnic Pavilion/Wirth Lake.
 - b. Create a seamless wayfinding system for the learning corridor through Central and South Wirth.
 - c. Construct a bridge that is suitable for summer and winter use over the parkway between the Bog and the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Ensure the bridge can accommodate winter ski trail grooming equipment.
2. Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary:
 - a. Expand the existing waterline to allow for development and maintenance of plant collections.
 - b. Improve entrance and access paths with a more graceful and accessible path from the parking lot to the front gate of the garden.
 - c. Replace wetland bridges to ensure safety and improve access.
 - d. Adjust trail alignments and cross-sections to provide protection against erosion and rogue trails.
 - e. Replace building roofs to protect the existing infrastructure.
 - f. Restore shelter fireplace to allow it to function as a heat source for the building (completed in 2014).
 - g. Develop and implement a wetland restoration plan that improves the health of the aquatic system.

3. Quaking Bog: Maintain and continue to improve the unique habitat of the Quaking Bog and its boardwalk.
4. Maintain and continue to improve premier cross-country ski trails that meet contemporary sustainable trail standards and minimize conflicts with other park uses.
5. Re-align soft-surface trails to reduce conflicts between users and remove rogue unsustainable trails as outlined in the master plan.

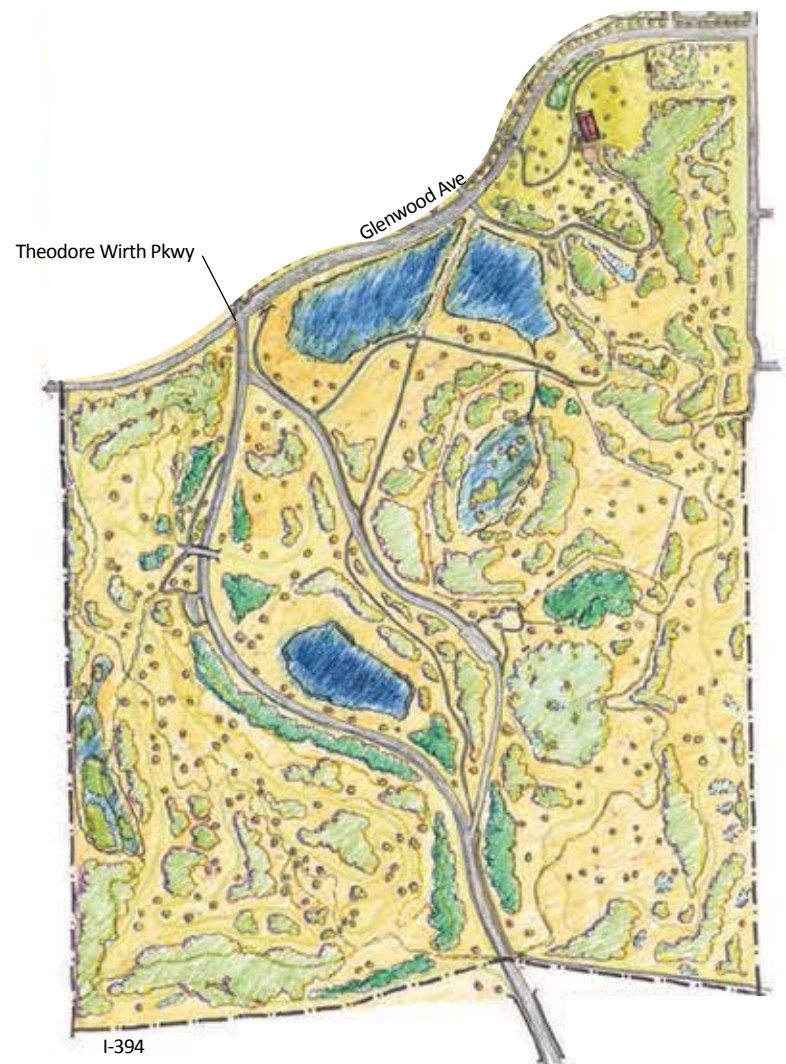


Figure 93. Concept Master Plan: South Wirth.



VIII. BOUNDARY AND ACQUISITION

Overview
Park Boundary and Acquisition Possibilities

Overview

This chapter addresses park boundary and acquisition possibilities for Theodore Wirth Regional Park. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and discuss any changes in the park boundary, needs for acquisition or new steward partnerships, and to document steward partnership agreements.

Key	Type	PID	Acres
1-a	Potential Acquisition	19-029-24-11-0003	2.36
1-b	Potential Acquisition	20-029-24-22-0006	9.86
1-c	Other Parcels	20-029-24-13-0045	3.43
1-d	Potential Acquisition	20-029-24-42-0003	2.29
1-e	Potential Acquisition	20-029-24-42-0005	0.78
1-f	Other Parcels	20-029-24-21-0001	2.02
2-a	Potential Acquisition	20-029-24-44-0072	7.01
2-b	Other Parcels	20-029-24-13-0002	2.92
2-c	Other Parcels	20-029-24-21-0004	3.35
3	Stewardship Partnership	17-029-24-34-0009	12.59
4	Stewardship Partnership	17-029-24-33-0001	

Park Boundary and Acquisition Possibilities

Table 16. Park boundary and acquisition possibilities.

Theodore Wirth Regional Park is largely established with very little, if any, future acquisition anticipated. There are several inholdings related to current and previous rail operations that the MPRB will continue to monitor for availability.

There are three important terms used in this section that warrant definition:

- Inholding** is a property within the designated regional park boundary but still in private ownership. When this section refers to inholdings, it is discussing privately owned lands in the current regional park boundary, not any boundary changes proposed by this master plan.
- Stewardship partnership** lands are outside the suggested boundary expansion but have a significant impact on the quality of the natural resources for visitor experience within the park. The master plan suggests close coordination with owners of these lands to enhance conservation and stewardship practices and recreational use management in order to lessen negative environmental and recreational impacts on the park.

3. Other parcels are currently planned for Bottineau LRT. These are labeled on the map to indicate that the MPRB will continue to monitor should they become available for uses other than freight or transit in the future. If these were to become available for acquisition, the MPRB would consider a future Theodore Wirth Regional Park Master Plan amendment.

If acquisition was contemplated for inholding parcels, they would be investigated for contamination. If contaminated, clean-up would need to be addressed before the land was purchased or accepted.

- Inholding #1 – Canadian Pacific Railway – Luce Line – potential acquisition if/when rail is no longer used.
- Inholding #2 – BNSF Railway Corridor along east side of the park – potential acquisition if/when rail is no longer used.

- Steward Partnership Parcel #1– BNSF License in place along active freight rail.
- Steward Partnership Parcel #2 - Part of the park used by City of Golden Valley. Agreement is in place to allow for water reservoir maintenance and monitoring well.

Costs for acquisition of the inholdings other than those labeled “other parcels” would be based on a future fair market value appraisal, made at the time of acquisition should these parcels become available.

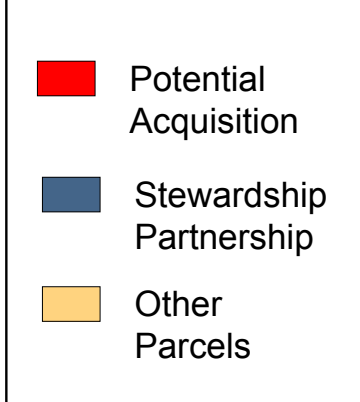
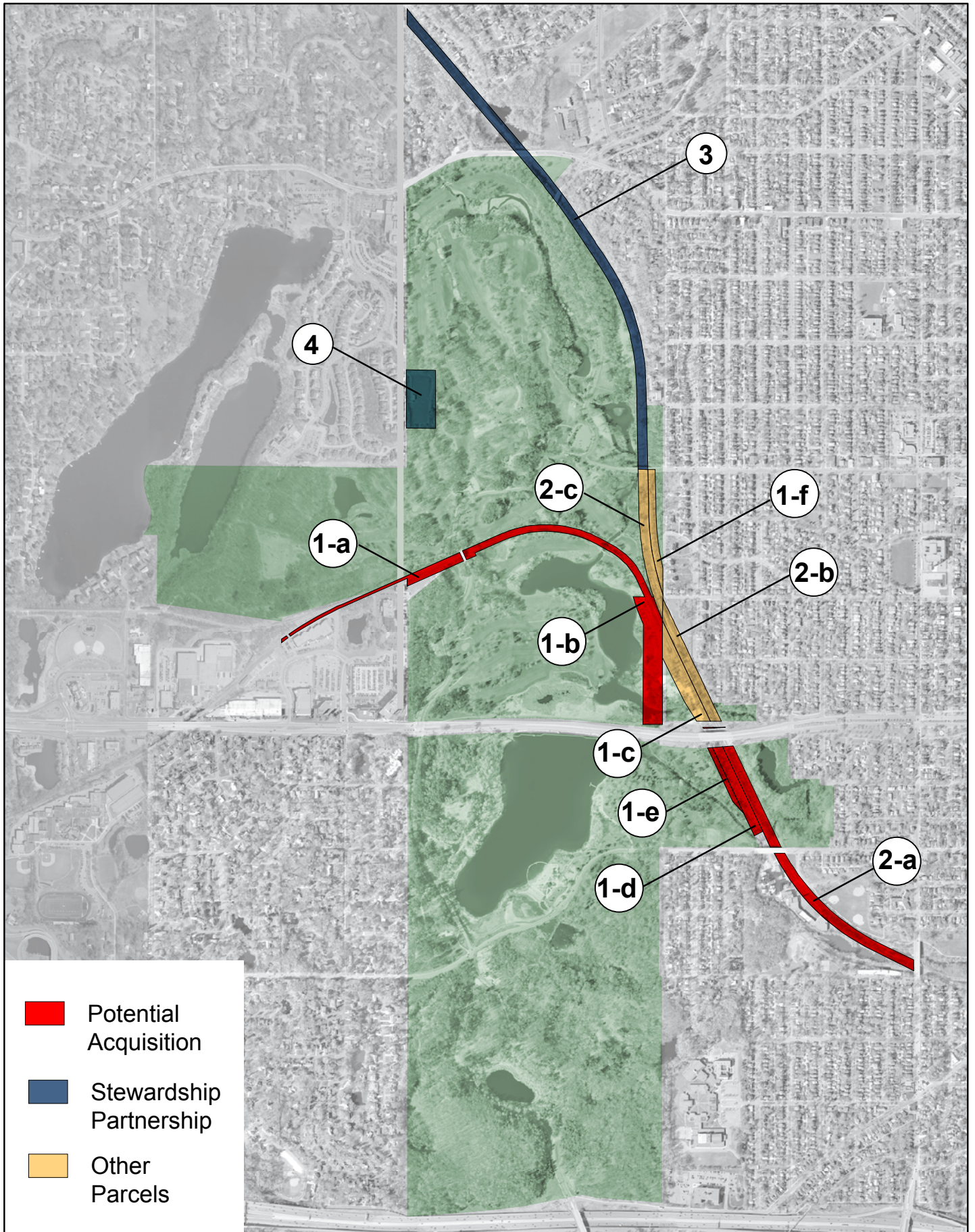


Figure 94. Park boundary and acquisition possibilities.

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IX. IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

Overview
Operations and Maintenance
Implementation
Public Awareness

Overview

This master plan represents a long-term vision and plan for allocating resources at Theodore Wirth Regional Park. The extent to which the overall plan is realized depends on the level of funding received through traditional sources, public-private partnerships, and donations. This chapter focuses on the implementation plan and management of the park, including an overview of staff resources, review of pertinent ordinances, and suggested phasing and estimated costs for improvements.

Operations and Maintenance

Staffing

Wirth Park is operated and maintained by professional recreation, environmental stewardship (Asset Management, Forestry and Environmental Management) and Public Safety staff. Services and maintenance staffing levels increase as needed and as funding permits through the employment of seasonal staff. MPRB Park Police provide public safety services. Environmental Stewardship staff provide maintenance of golf, winter recreation, trees, habitat, general park areas, and environmental programming. Customer Service staff manage permits and reservations throughout most of the park. Aquatics, golf and winter recreation is managed through the Recreation Division. Several groups, such as Friends of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, Loppet Foundation and Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates, provide resources and volunteer hours that supplement the operation of the park.

Ordinances Affecting the Site

The MPRB Code of Ordinances addresses the use of MPRB parkland, park hours, enforcement, construction,

permitting, community engagement, environmental protection, and more.

The MPRB Ordinances are part of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Minneapolis. A searchable ordinance database can be accessed from the MPRB's web site (www.minneapolisparks.org). Rules and regulations are also posted, as needed, throughout the MPRB properties and facilities. Posted information includes park hours, permitted and prohibited activities, fees and who to contact in case of emergency.

In addition, Titles 16-23 of the City of Minneapolis Code of Ordinances also may impact Wirth Park on certain occasions. These address streets and sidewalks, traffic, sewers, zoning, land subdivision, and heritage preservation.

Chapter 11 of the Golden Valley City Code of Ordinances addresses land use regulation and zoning, with Section 11.65 pertaining to shoreland management. Staff will continue to coordinate information with Golden Valley agency staff when implementing projects in that city.

Public Safety

Public safety is a priority for staff of all divisions at MPRB. The ways in which Minneapolis parks are designed, constructed, programmed, and managed impact public safety and contribute to a positive experience for park users. The Minneapolis Park Police Department is a law enforcement agency whose role is to protect park users as well as park property under the jurisdiction of the MPRB. The department's responsibility is to provide assistance to the public and gain their cooperation and compliance with established rules, regulations, and laws.

The department consists of sworn officers, park patrol agents, and support staff. Sworn officers in the State of Minnesota have the authority to arrest

and detain criminal offenders and enforce a variety of traffic laws. Park Patrol agents are non-sworn, seasonal employees who work in uniform in the parks. Their duties include general patrol of the park system, as well as parking enforcement, mountain bike patrol, administrative tickets and staffing the station desk. Park Police Officers strive to be proactive and use a variety of alternative patrol techniques that include bicycle, motorcycle and four-wheel ATV patrols.

Minneapolis and Golden Valley Police Departments also respond to emergency calls within Theodore Wirth Regional Park. MPRB Park Police will occasionally conduct joint meetings with Golden Valley Police to address areas of special concern in the park.

Park Maintenance Activities

The MPRB recognizes that maintenance is an investment with a high return. It provides routine maintenance as identified below for general areas of the park, as funding permits:

- Cleaning the Picnic Pavilion, picnic area, and Wirth Beach House, this includes basic tasks such as cleaning toilets and sinks, mopping floors, wiping down counters, washing walls and other duties.
- Empty garbage and recycling cans, pick up garbage where people congregate, clean debris from the water's edge and remove weeds.
- Address issues with lighting or plumbing in cooperation with MPRB trades personnel.
- Mow developed areas, except for golf courses, on a 10 day schedule and to blow debris off paths weekly.
- Conduct storm damage tree maintenance, Dutch elm, oak wilt and other diseased tree removal.
- Plant and prune trees as needed or specified within the master plan.

Golf

Golf course areas in Wirth Park are managed and maintained primarily

by Golf Course Operations and Maintenance staff. MPRB maximizes open course days so golf often opens in April and closes in October, meaning on occasion golf maintenance activities can overlap with ski preparation activities. The MPRB provides routine maintenance as identified below for golf, as funding permits:

- Complete trash and recycling removal.
- Maintain turf, including equipment maintenance, fertilization, aerification, seeding, sodding, top dressing, mowing, and pest control, basic tree trimming, bunker maintenance, irrigation system maintenance, hazard maintenance, buckthorn removal, and golf tee service.
- Cut and maintain the short grass on greens, fairways and tees daily; and the long grass on roughs, hazards and out-of-play areas 2-3 times a week except in the fall when leaves begin to drop.
- Blow leaves off short grass into the long grass. Other activities occur as needed or when time allows.

Winter Recreation Area

The Winter Recreation Area in Wirth Park is managed and maintained primarily by a special team of Operations staff. The MPRB will provide routine maintenance as identified below for winter recreation, as funding permits:

- Make snow for cross-country ski trails, snowboarding and tubing.
- Maintain and repair cross-country ski trail lights.
- Groom ski trails.
- Relocate snow to connect trails beneath bridges or other covered areas.
- Trim trees and maintain ski trail lights as needed and as time permits.
- Maintain snow guns and other equipment as needed and as time permits.

Paved Trails

Paved trails are checked periodically by maintenance staff, cracks are filled and minor holes patched. The bicycle trail that parallels Theodore Wirth Parkway

is plowed in the winter and becomes a combined bicycle and pedestrian path. The Luce Line Regional Trail is not plowed to accommodate the alignment of cross-country ski trails.

Soft Surface Trails

New soft surface trail alignments are designed with appropriate grades and cross slopes to ensure year round sustainability. Informal trails and trails with unsustainable design are closed and restored to native communities.

MPRB partners with Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates (MOCA) to sustainably design, build, and maintain Wirth's off-road cycling trails to minimize erosion and land disturbance, and to address maintenance issues when they do occur. MOCA members do trail building and maintenance weekly.

The Loppet Foundation recruits volunteers for seasonal trail maintenance events in spring and fall for running and ski trails. They also participate in some improvement work including trail alignment modifications, erosion control and tree planting.

Energy Management and Conservation Plans

Wirth Park contains historic and older facilities. As these facilities are rehabilitated, current energy codes will be met and energy-efficient materials will be added whenever possible while respecting and preserving the original building construction.

Solid Waste Recycling

MPRB operations staff collect and properly dispose of solid waste, recycling, and organic waste every day of the year within every property owned and managed by the MPRB. As Wirth Park develops according to the direction of the master plan, waste management plans, procedures, and staffing levels will be modified to keep Wirth Park clean and safe for the enjoyment of park visitors.



Figure 95. Wirth Pavilion.



Figure 96. Hand water pump.



Figure 97. Wirth trail and parkway.

Invasives to Manage at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden:

Buckthorn
Creeping Charlie
Garlic mustard



Figure 98. Buckthorn.



Figure 99. Creeping charlie.



Figure 101. Garlic mustard.

Natural Areas and Water Resources Management

The Environmental Stewardship Division (asset management, forestry and environmental management) of MPRB is responsible for care, maintenance and programming of MPRB's special natural areas and water resources. MPRB will provide ongoing and routine maintenance, enhancement, and restoration as identified below for natural areas, as funding permits:

- Invasive removal, vegetation surveys, water quality monitoring, and erosion protection at Wirth Lake, Birch Pond, and Twin Lake.
- Invasive removal, prescribed burns, vegetation surveys, and erosion protection at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the Quaking Bog and the "Back 40" prairies.

As per the Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Park Policy Plan and in keeping with best practices for natural and water resource management and protection, the MPRB will consult with natural resource professionals during the detailed design and construction of projects. Impacts to the resources will first be avoided, and if avoidance is not possible, impacts will be minimized. If minimization is not possible, mitigation will occur.

Natural Area Resources

Lakes, streams, creeks, wetlands, and other water bodies are especially affected by flooding, shoreline erosion, and other storm water impacts. New invasive species, diseases, regulations, and the effects of pollution and climate change will require increased commitment and financial investment in managing the park system's natural resources. Maintenance approaches to natural resources will need to remain flexible in an area as naturally diverse as Wirth.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary

Environmental Stewardship near term priorities in the woodland include creating pocket plantings in highly visible areas along the trails of wooded areas; developing native vine collection; and planting native canopy trees. In the wetland, priorities include a feasibility study on hydrology of the wetland; expanding pocket plantings; and reestablishing stream and Mallard Pool maintenance. In the upland prairie priorities include creating a high-diversity wet meadow/prairie in the low-lying, moist prairie bowl; adding diversity to the upland garden plant collection; and removing tree and shrub seedlings and saplings. Staff will also focus on increasing the health and diversity of the core native plant collections.

Completed priorities for garden infrastructure maintenance include adding two more water lines to the woodland garden; updating plant ID labels; replacing roofs and missing timber edges; restoring the fireplace; adding directional signs; planning and funding a bridge replacement project; developing an erosion control strategy for trails on slopes; and upgrading the self-guided interpretive system.

In wildlife management, priorities include establishing relationships with bird-focused organizations and researchers; enhancing habitat by adding diversity of plants; working with the MN Breeding Bird Atlas; hosting a MN bio-Blitz for intensive 24-hour on-trail observation work; maintaining fences to keep deer out; developing a plan to remove feral animals; and researching the presence and impact of non-native earthworms in the forest. For garden performance, plans are to conduct a plant survey every five years and to do a garden visitor survey every five years.

Quaking Bog

A significant restoration was done in the Bog in the mid-1990's which included installation of a boardwalk and bridge, development of a guidebook,

removal of buckthorn, and the planting of native bog plants such as pitcher plant and tamarack trees. In 2009 staff again worked intensively on buckthorn removal areas in the sphagnum portion of the Bog. In 2012 Conservation Corps Minnesota and MPRB summer youth employment program staff and youth removed buckthorn from the main access trail to the Bog.

Management of the Bog is unlike that for garden and forests, due to the sensitive ecological system. It is also unlike that for bogs in rural areas of the state, because of the pressures of urban invasive species and the high level of human use of the area. Tamarack bogs by nature succeed to wetlands over time, as is beginning to happen with the appearance of red maple and birch in the Bog which staff work to remove.

Water Resources

MPRB and local government agencies (Bassett Creek Water Management Commission (BCWMC), City of Minneapolis and Golden Valley) are responsible for monitoring and protecting water resources and are actively involved in multiple monitoring and improvement projects to improve water resources.

Water Quality Monitoring

The MPRB monitors lakes, streams, and stormwater flows for contaminants and other water quality indicators. Staff test for alkalinity, chloride, chlorophyll-a, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, E.coli, hardness, pH, phytoplankton, secchi transparency, silica, temperature, TKN, NO_x, TP, SRP, TN, and zooplankton.

In 2004 MPRB worked with Barr Engineering to develop the Lake Aesthetic and User Recreation Index (LAURI), a measurement with makes it easier for members of the public to understand conditions affecting their lakes. In 2009 LAURI was revised to have five indices: public health (E.coli

measured at public swimming beaches), water quality (water clarity/Secchi depth), habitat quality (aquatic plant and fish diversity), recreational access (availability and ease of public access), and aesthetic considerations (color and odor of water, garbage and debris).

LAURI results are presented in the MPRB Annual Water Resources Report and additional information is available on the MPRB website. Wirth's 2013 LAURI results ranked "excellent" for four indices, and "good" for one (figure 102).

Water Quality staff monitor water quality from April through October. There is one April and one October sampling session. From May through September monitoring is twice per month. Additionally, once each winter, staff test water quality and oxygen levels by drilling through lake ice.

The Wirth Golf Course participates in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program and Water Quality staff assist in the golf course certification by monitoring three wetland sites at the golf course. Three sites are monitored at Wirth once a year: Bassett Creek inlet at the northern border of the park, Bassett Creek outlet at the SE

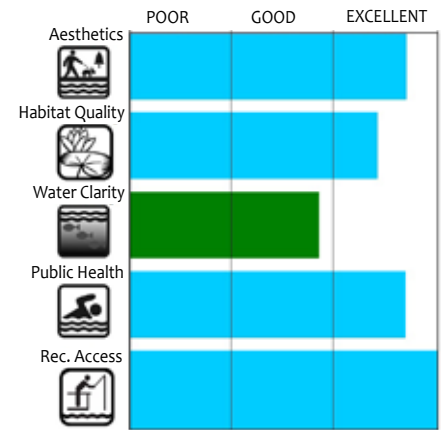


Figure 102. LAURI index for Wirth Lake.

edge where the creek meets Hwy 55, and within the Par 3 wetland. Golf staff and Wetland Health Evaluation Project (WHEP) volunteers monitor for physical parameters, chemical parameters, and a visual survey of aquatic and wetland vegetation.

The Bassett Creek Water Management Commission (BCWMC) operates the Bassett Creek watershed outlet monitoring program (WOMP) station in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council and the BCWMC. The BCWMC gathers data to build the rating curve for the station. The MCES laboratory analyzes all collected samples and maintains, repairs, and coordinates larger aspects of the station.



Figure 103. Wirth Lagoon.

The BCWMC collects biotic info on the Bassett Creek main stem and tributaries in the eastern half of Wirth Park every 2-4 years. The BCWMC also does biota sampling of invertebrate, and reports on an Audubon survey done in the Wirth golf course area, including lagoons.

MPRB also does wetland monitoring through WHEP, periodic aquatic plant monitoring, and beach quality testing.

Stormwater Monitoring

The MPRB monitors storm sewers within Minneapolis to comply with the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit (NPDES). The purpose of this monitoring is to characterize the impacts of stormwater discharges to receiving waters and review the effectiveness of treatment best management practices (BMPs). Monitoring partners have included Minneapolis Public Works, Metro Blooms, the Metropolitan Council Watershed Outlet Monitoring Program and the BCWMC.

New outlets were installed in Wirth in 1978 and 1996 and subsequently, fewer high water flow events backed up water

from Bassett Creek into the lake. In 2012 a new outlet control structure was installed where Wirth Lake flows into Bassett Creek to prevent creek water from entering Wirth Lake.

Invasive Species Management

Terrestrial Invasive Species Removal and Disease Prevention

MPRB staff conduct a number of invasive species removal and disease prevention activities in Wirth Park. Volunteers help with invasive species removal as well as planting projects. As funding permits, the MPRB conducts the following:

- An annual tree health survey, with a more intensive survey specific to oak wilt. In addition, Forestry works with the EBWG Curator to identify diseased trees and to develop an associated management and removal strategy each year in EBWG.
- Extensive invasive species eradication efforts in woodland, bog and wetland for buckthorn, garlic mustard, dame's

rocket, reed canary grass, honeysuckle, white mulberry, Japanese barberry, and poison ivy.

Aquatic Invasive Species

MPRB staff conduct a number of aquatic invasive species removal activities in Wirth Park. As funding permits, the MPRB conducts the following:

- AIS inspections of watercraft before launching any trailered boat in Minneapolis boat launches.
- Manual harvesting to control the growth of milfoil. Recent improvements at Wirth Beach included installation of a floating boardwalk at the beach, which prevents a mechanical harvester from accessing the beach area. Subsequently, in 2012 MPRB began a program for manual milfoil harvesting in this area, using scuba divers to remove plant material by hand.
- Manage milfoil with mechanical measures, and purple loosestrife with mechanical and bio-control measures.



Figure 104. MPRB Emerald Ash Borer outreach program.



Figure 105. Lake water quality monitoring by MPRB Water Resources staff.

Implementation

This master plan is intended to be a long term, 20-year vision for Wirth Park. Significant efforts will be needed in subsequent years to identify new funding sources and donors to achieve master plan goals. Strategic use of volunteers and partners will also be needed.

Estimated Development Costs

The estimated development costs for the plan total \$15-21million based on 2012 estimates recommended by the CAC on June 12, 2012 (table 17).

Phasing

This plan requires phased implementation. The Community Advisory Committee determined a priority project list that can serve as a phasing structure. The prioritization is broken into two categories: Traditional Public Funding and Public - Private Partnership/Donor funding. The numbers associated with each priority, such as "A-8," refer to the items listed in the estimated development costs table (table 17).

First Priority with Traditional Public Funding:

- North Wirth: A-8, Walking trail improvements
- North Wirth: A-9, Natural Resource Management
- North Wirth: A-13, Dog Park
- Central Wirth: B-1, Lake Area Picnic Shelters and Parking
- Central Wirth: B-2, Lake Area Trail Improvements and Features
- Central Wirth: B-3, JD Rivers' Garden Enhancements
- Central Wirth: B-4, Natural Resource Management
- South Wirth: C-2, Trail Improvements
- South Wirth: C-3, Eloise Butler Improvements
- South Wirth: C-4, Natural Resource Management
- Whole Park: C-1, Wayfinding

First Priority with Public-Private Partnership Donor Funding:

- A-3, Chalet Rehab and Site Improvements
- A-5, Welcome Center
- A-4 Welcome Center Parking
- A-11, Back 9 Golf Course Modifications (package)
- A-6, Re-located Tubing Hill
- A-7, Cycling Event Trails
- A-10, Ski Trail Improvements

CAC-Recommended Development Plan Estimated Costs

Packaged Elements		Capital Budget
Theo's Retreat and Maintenance Facilities		
A-1	Park Maintenance Facilities-(new garage/office, yard, access drive)	\$1,750,080
A-2	Theo's Retreat (rehabilitated Tool House for meeting/event facility)	\$1,436,400
A-1a	Golf Maintenance Facilities (cart barn, yard and portion of maint office/shop)	\$971,700
		Subtotal \$4,158,180
Chalet and Welcome Center for Par-3 Golf, Winter Rec, Event Trail, Trails		
A-3	Chalet Rehab and Site Improvements (18-hole clubhouse, restaurant lease, parking, landscaping)	\$1,451,400
A-5	Welcome Center (Par-3 clubhouse, Winter Rec, Event Trail, Trails)	\$4,932,300
A-4	Welcome Center Parking (135 stalls)	\$1,011,675
		Subtotal \$7,395,375
Back 9 of 18-hole Golf Course, Event Trail and Winter Recreation Facilities		
A-6	Re-located tubing hill (near 17th fairway)	\$150,060
A-7	Cycling Event Trails (events & individual use)	\$78,720
A-10	Ski Trail Improvements	\$584,250
A-11	Back-9 Golf Course Modifications	\$1,534,120
		Subtotal \$2,347,150
Front 9 of 18-hole Golf Course with Driving Range		
A-12	Front 9 Golf Course Modification & Driving Range	\$2,299,270
		Subtotal \$2,299,270
		Capital Budget
North Wirth		
A-8	Walking Trail Improvements (upaved in Twin Lake area, paved along Bassett)	\$565,800
A-9	Natural Resource Management	\$184,500
A-13	Dog Park	\$51,660
		Subtotal \$801,960
Central Wirth		
B-1	Lake Area Shelters and Parking (1 - 250 cap w/restrooms, 2 - 30 cap, gazebo)	\$1,316,100
B-2	Lake Area Trail improvements and Features	\$399,750
B-3	JD Rivers Garden Enhancements	\$239,850
B-4	Natural Resource Management	\$116,850
		Subtotal \$2,072,550
South Wirth		
C-2	Trail Improvements	\$894,173
C-3	Eloise Butler Improvements (trails, build maint, habitat)	\$669,087
C-4	Natural Resource Management	\$307,500
		Subtotal \$1,870,760
Whole Park		
C-1	Wayfinding (full park)	\$86,100
		TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET \$21,031,345

Table 17. Development plan estimated costs.

Project	Priority	Funding Source	Capital Budget
A-8 Walking Trail Improvements	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$565,800
A-9 Natural Resource Management	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$184,500
A-13 Dog Park	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$51,660
B-1 Lake Area Picnic Shelters and Parking	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$1,316,100
B-2 Lake Area Trail Improvements and Features	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$399,750
B-3 JD Rivers' Garden Enhancements	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$239,850
B-4 Natural Resource Management	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$116,850
C-2 Trail Improvements	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$894,173
C-3 Eloise Butler Improvements	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$669,087
C-4 Natural Resource Management	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$307,500
C-1 Wayfinding	First	Traditional Public Funding	\$86,100
A-3 Chalet Rehab and Site Improvements	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$1,451,400
A-4 Welcome Center	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$1,011,675
A-5 Welcome Center Parking	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$4,932,300
A-11 Back 9 Golf Course Modifications	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$1,534,120
A-6 Relocated Tubing Hill	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$150,060
A-7 Cycling Event Trails	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$78,720
A-10 Ski Trail Improvements	First	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$584,250
A-1 Park Maintenance Facilities	Second	Traditional Public Funding	\$1,750,080
A-1a Golf Course Maintenance Facilities	Second	Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding	\$971,700
A-2 Theo's Retreat	Third	Either Funding Source	\$1,436,400
A-12 Front 9 Golf Improvements	Fourth	Either Funding Source	\$2,299,270

Table 18. Development plan organized by priority.

Second Priority with Traditional Public Funding

(but not excluding private funding if available):

- Park Maintenance Facilities (A-1)

Second Priority with Public-Private Partnership and Donor Funding

(but not excluding private funding if available):

- Golf Course Maintenance (A-1a)

Third Priority with Either Funding Source

- Theo's Retreat (A-2)

Fourth Priority with Either Funding Source

- Front 9 Golf Improvements (A-12)

Materials

Staff teams led by planning seek input from operations and other staff as needed to make decisions on materials based on the CAC feedback as well as MPRB policies and initiatives. Sustainability and energy efficiency are priorities in MPRB's Comprehensive Plan that could affect materials choices. In general, materials chosen will be of durable quality, appropriate for a public setting, and aesthetically complementary to existing park surroundings and historic buildings and landscapes.

Capital Costs of Natural Resources Projects

As shown in the estimated development cost table, capital costs for natural resource-based projects are estimated at \$608,850. These numbers reflect per-acre restoration and limited management of native plantings, but are not divided into detailed projects. It is anticipated that natural resource enhancement will occur as a part of many different projects within the Park, particularly as sustainable trail development is established in North and South Wirth.

Operating Costs

Maintenance

Wirth Park is currently maintained and operated by the MPRB. Therefore, equipment and staffing resources required to maintain and operate the year-round park are included, as funding permits, within the existing MPRB budget. Many of the recommended improvements such as the reconfiguring of South Wirth trails are projected to address persistent design issues which place pressure on maintenance funding sources. A few amenities are expected to increase operating costs and revenue opportunities – such as the Welcome Center, Wirth Pavilion, and Theo’s Retreat.

As implementation is realized over time, alterations to staffing and funding will be considered in order to accommodate the maintenance of newer features. Concerns about invasive species, both aquatic and terrestrial, could lead to increased costs for prevention, removal, and/or management. Some park improvements are typically funded and maintained in collaboration with partners, such as City of Minneapolis and Bassett Creek Watershed District.

Natural Resources

The natural resources within Wirth Park are currently being maintained by the MPRB. However, the urban location of these resources makes them increasingly difficult to maintain. The development plan recommends improvements to natural resources, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, JD Rivers’ Children’s Garden and soft surface trails. These investments will help restore and protect these valuable resources. The MPRB will continue to seek additional dedicated funding to augment the equipment and staff resources it devotes to maintaining the natural resources of the park.

Public Safety

Wirth Park is currently patrolled by MPRB Park Police. A need to increase the patrols based on the development plan for the park is not anticipated.

Development Funding Sources

The Metropolitan Council and State of Minnesota provide funding for acquisition, development and redevelopment projects through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The development and redevelopment proposed in this master plan may be funded through the Regional Parks CIP. Additionally, donations, federal funding, local and state grants, and other funding sources will be explored. Improvements to the golf courses will be funded through non-Metropolitan Council funds unless they also benefit approved regional park activities. In these cases, MPRB staff will work with Metropolitan Council staff to determine cost sharing levels.

Operations, Maintenance, and Public Safety Funding Sources

Annual operating, maintenance, and public safety costs are funded through the MPRB’s General Fund budget. The primary source of funding is Minneapolis property tax with some revenue received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocations from the Metropolitan Council. Facilities that are shared by the MPRB’s golf operations at the park, are also supported by the MPRB’s Enterprise Fund or general fund.

All operating, maintenance and public safety costs and associated staff/equipment are subject to annual operating budget development that is administered by the MPRB’s Superintendent and approved by the Board of Commissioners.



Figure 106. Accessible boardwalk at Wirth Beach.

Other Revenue

Additional revenues in Wirth are generated by enterprise operations, youth and adult recreation programs, parking fees and passes, and special events.

Enterprise Revenue (Golf and Winter Recreation)

- Golf rounds (18-hole and Par 3)
- Food and beverage revenue at the Chalet and Par 3
- Golf lessons
- Golf pro shop sales
- Equipment rental for snowboarding, XC skiing, snowshoeing
- Snowboarding, XC skiing lessons
- Lift tickets and passes for snowboarding, tubing, XC skiing
- Event rental fees (Chalet Fireplace Room, Pub Room and Wirth Pavilion)
- Donations from friends groups, partners and stakeholder groups

General Fund Revenue

- Events
- Youth day camps
- Recreational and educational programs for adult and youth
- Donations from friends groups, partners and stakeholder groups
- Misc. sales (vending).

Public Services Needed to Support the Plan

Because of Wirth's location within an urban area, no additional public services such as water or sewer are needed.

Proposed construction projects and trail construction can utilize existing road and infrastructure networks. Stormwater will be treated onsite or diverted into city stormwater systems as designed. Lighting will be connected to existing electrical networks. New building facilities will access existing sanitary sewer and freshwater connections.

Because this master plan reflects changes to an established park, only limited impacts to public services will be necessary to complete the improvements. The plan does not change any major thoroughfares or public rights of way with the exception of two proposed trail bridges crossing the parkway at the Bog and Welcome Center.

Accessibility

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the MPRB will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities.

MPRB will, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in MPRB programs. MPRB will also make information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments whenever possible. MPRB will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of its programs, services, and activities.

Affordability

Many self-directed activities in Wirth can be practiced free of charge, most notably hiking and biking, off-road cycling, swimming, bird-watching, wildflower walks, nature tours, photography, archery, and others. Many of these activities do require specialized equipment, and the MPRB is continuing to establish partnerships with organizations that help youth access equipment. MPRB staff at JD Rivers' Children's Garden provide low and no-cost gardening instruction to area children.

Though golf and winter activities in Wirth often require a fee (with some limited free dates), a number of affordable or free activity options such as Minneapolis First Tee golf program, camps, field trips, ski and mountain bike instruction are offered through MPRB's partnership with the Loppet Foundation and other funding partners.

Permitting

Each project in the master plan will require technical consideration by staff, consultants, and governing and permitting agencies. Depending on the project, one or more of the following may need to be contacted for permits:

- City of Minneapolis
- City of Golden Valley
- Hennepin County
- State of Minnesota Department of Transportation
- State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- State Historic Preservation Office

Public Awareness

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has public relations, marketing and media-related tools, such as websites and social media, event planning and promotional materials to promote its regional parks. These tools will be used to continue to create awareness of the services that are available at Wirth Park. In addition, the MPRB will utilize its website and govdelivery to provide interested public and stakeholders with regular updates on the progress of the plan.



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100. Photograph of wild parsnip.
101. Photograph of garlic mustard.
102. LAURI index for Wirth Lake.
103. Photograph of Wirth Lagoon.
Source: Scott Schneider Photography.
104. Photograph of MPRB Emerald Ash Borer outreach program.
105. Photograph of lake water quality monitoring by MPRB Water Resources staff.
106. Accessible boardwalk at Wirth Beach.

Appendix B. List of Tables

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1. Metropolitan Council regional park master plan requirements fulfilled by this plan.
2. Metropolitan Council regional park master plan requirements not applicable to this plan.
3. Information on CAC Appointees.
4. Design statements, elements, and tools approved by CAC members.

CHAPTER 3 – EXISTING CONDITIONS

5. Wirth Park description and inventory.
6. Parking at Wirth Park.

CHAPTER 4 – RECREATION NEEDS FORECAST

7. Annual use estimates of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System and of Wirth Park from 2007-2013.
Data source: Metropolitan Council.
8. Mode of transportation to parks by visitors.
Data source: Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008.
9. Age of visitors.
Data source: Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008.
10. Primary activity of summer visitors.
Data source: Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008.
11. Race/ethnicity of visitors.
Data source: Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008.
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Data source: Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey, 2008.

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13. Cultural resources inventory for Wirth Park.

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14. List of species identified in or near Wirth Park.
Data source: Natural Heritage Information System database, MN DNR, 2013.
15. Unique plants in Wirth Park.
Data source: Natural Heritage Information System database, MN DNR.

CHAPTER 8 – BOUNDARY AND ACQUISITION

16. Park boundary and acquisition possibilities.

CHAPTER 9 – IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

17. Development plan estimated costs. Development plan as recommended by the CAC.
18. Development plan organized by priority.

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- Public comment summary: Master Planning Process
Public comment summary: Draft Master Plan

Appendix C. Public Comment Summary - Whole Park Planning Process

Public comments collected during the Wirth Park master plan planning process before the release of a draft plan on October 15, 2014 can be grouped into 19 general categories. A complete list of public comments is available on the MPRB website project page for Wirth Park Improvements (visit www.minneapolisparcs.org/currentprojects and select “Theodore Wirth Regional Park Improvements.”

Theodore Wirth Regional Park

Comments Collected During Master Planning Process

Comment Theme	Number of occurrences
Archery	12
Beach	12
Disc Golf	36
Dog Park	36
Funding	11
Golf	205
Hiking Trails	26
Invasive Species	18
Maintenance	67
Miscellaneous	169
Mountain Biking/BMX	419
Nature	170
Parking	44
Playground	8
Safety	71
Silent Sports Misc.	222
Skiing	264
Trails Misc.	120
Trees	14
TOTAL	1924

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MPRB Mission

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board shall permanently preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board exists to provide places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment.

