

WILLARD PARK



LOCATION AND HISTORY

Willard Park is located just west of North Commons Park in the central area of the north side. The park board's first involvement with the property was in 1968 when the board installed a playground for small children on school property. It was one of ten totlots installed that year in neighborhoods in near-north and south-central Minneapolis. In 1970 the park board successfully applied for matching grants from a "Parks in the Cities" program from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to acquire the half-block of land north of Willard School for development as a park. The land was acquired in 1973. Additional funding was obtained from a National Park Service program for urban parks. The cost of the improvements, including play equipment, a wading pool, and a toilet building, was split by a joint powers agreement between the park board and school board. The facilities were used as a recess playground for the school. Park construction began in 1975 and the final landscaping was completed in 1977.

The park was named for Willard School which was adjacent to the park. The school, built in 1910, was named for Frances Willard, an American author, educator and reformer. Willard was most famous for her fights to prohibit the sale of liquor, as the president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and to obtain for women the right to vote

In 2002 the entire park was renovated, the toilet building was remodeled, and a new wading pool was installed. Willard School closed in 2005.

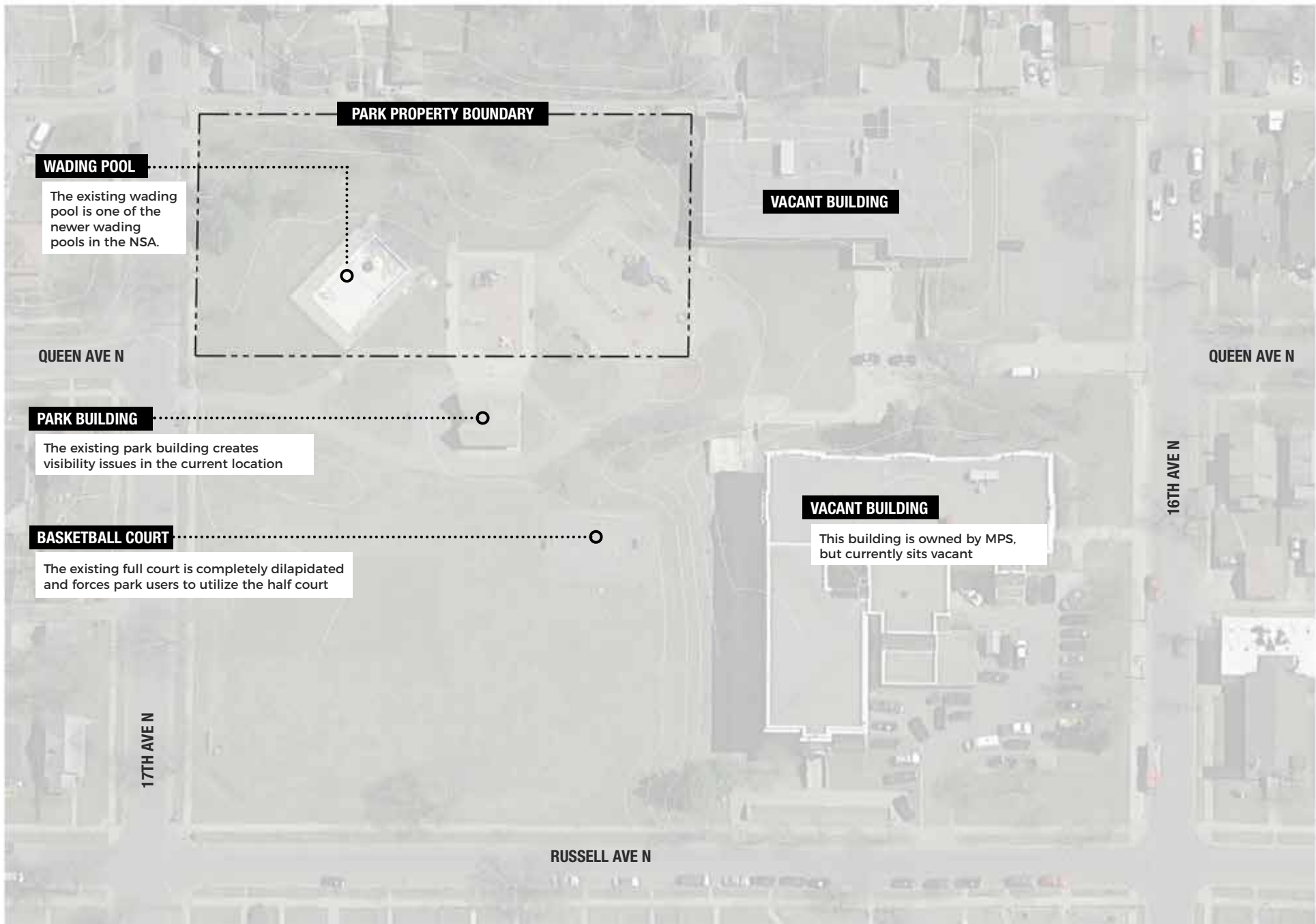
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CHARACTER

Though MPRB only owns the northeastern quarter of the Willard School block, it operates the whole northern half. The northwestern quarter is home to a multi-use field and a dilapidated basketball court that is no longer useable. The eastern portion features a restroom and storage building, play area, and wading pool. A small half-court basketball court nestles up against the western façade of the restroom building—a problematic location that limits access to the building and restricts court play. A walking path through the center of the park continues through the Willard School property to connect Queen Avenue on at the northern and southern edges of the park.

Willard Park is actively used, primarily through unprogrammed activities like water play and basketball. It has good street frontages on the north and west, but an alley frontage on the east and the school to the south limit visibility into the park. Willard Park could benefit from additional programming, perhaps as a satellite to North Commons and its burgeoning sports program.

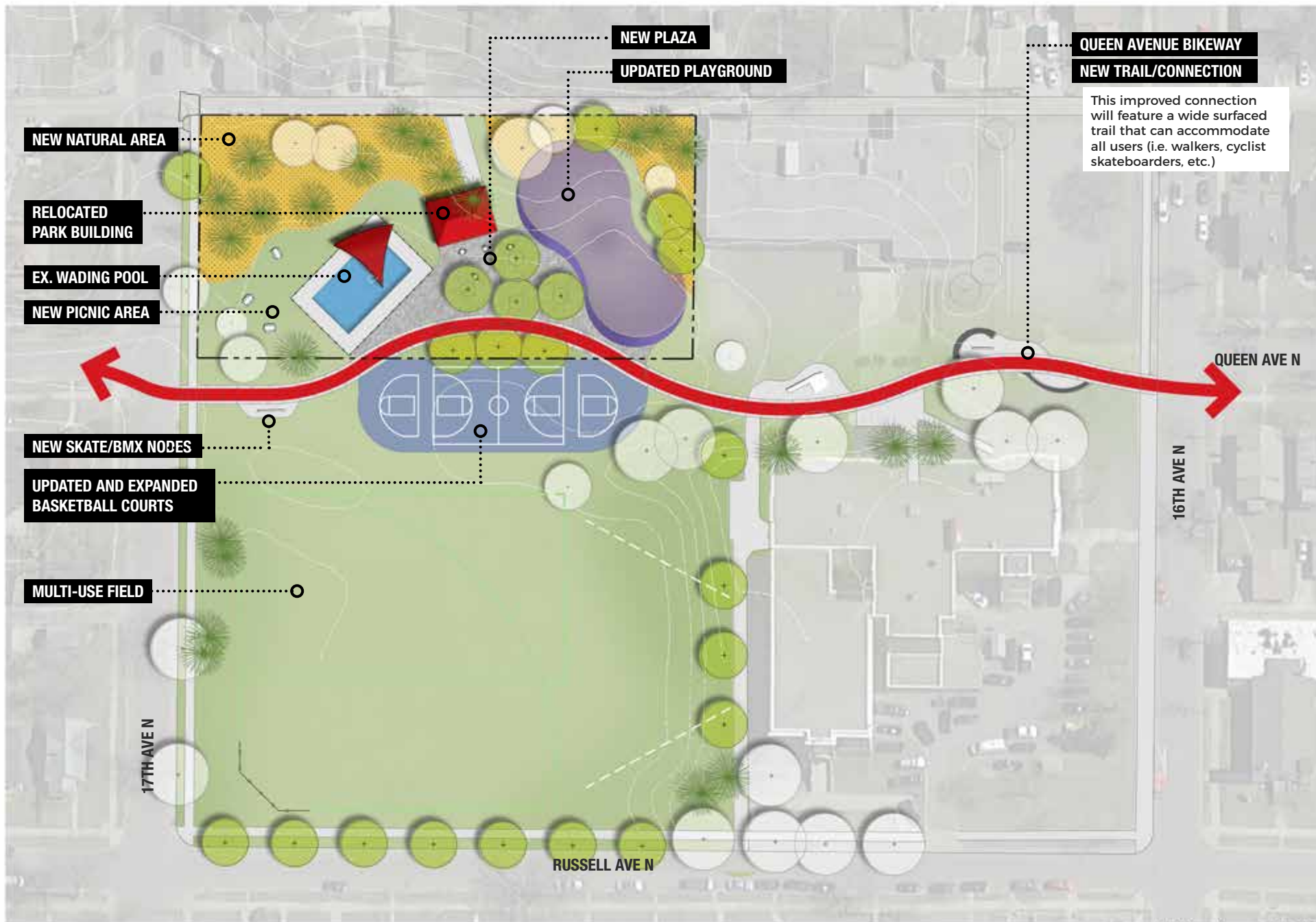
THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The design for Willard Park retains the same general arrangement of most facilities, but makes some rearrangements and improvements to visibility and quality. The wading pool remains where it is, but the remainder of the active



EXISTING CONDITIONS: WILLARD PARK





This improved connection will feature a wide surfaced trail that can accommodate all users (i.e. walkers, cyclist skateboarders, etc.)

PROPOSED PLAN: WILLARD PARK

facilities are reorganized. A new restroom and storage building sits closer to the alley, removing the structure from the center of the park to improve sight lines. The play areas are refurbished to the south of the building. The storage aspect of this building is critical to the idea of hosting some North Commons sporting activities in this park.

A new gathering plaza occupies the space between building, pool, and play area, to allow for easier supervision of all activities and for better youth hang-out space. An expanded basketball courts area—one full-court and two half-courts/shoot-hoops—sits between the plaza and multi-use field. That field is substantially improved, so it can be used for practices and games.

The Queen Avenue Bikeway passes through the center of the park and between the school building in a curving, calmed route. Along with trail improvement, Willard Park signage is installed at 16th Avenue, to encourage park entrance from the south side. Skate/BMX spots flank the bikeway—small ramps, rails, and jumps for practicing tricks.

The design for Willard is meant to activate the park—to capitalize on its casual unprogrammed character by bringing in the opportunity for more of that, as well as more programmed offerings. The additional visibility into and through the park and the additional activity will ensure positive energy and a safe environment.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARKS

The Queen Avenue Bikeway connects north and south across the entire north side. A proposed park connection on 16th Avenue connects east to North Commons Park and Hall Park.

KNOWN LAND USE AND COORDINATION ISSUES

Because much of the Willard Park land is owned by MPS and leased by MPRB, the schools must be consulted prior to any improvements on the site. Implementation of the Queen Avenue Bikeway will be led by the City of Minneapolis and will require coordination between the City and MPRB.

OPERATIONS ESTIMATE

WILLARD			
FACILITIES	Total Per Unit Operations Cost	△ Qty	△ Cost
Half Court Basketball	\$ 1,000	1	\$ 1,000
All-wheel Park	\$ 7,500	1	\$ 7,500
Plaza	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Trail Additions	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Difference			\$ 23,500

PROCESSES

	1: General Input Spring-Fall 2017 <i>Input themes prior to initial concepts</i>	2: Initial Concepts Winter 2018 <i>Input themes on initial concepts</i>	3: The Preferred Concept Now <i>Key elements of the concept</i>
aquatics	Wading pool very well liked →	Add a shade sail over part of the pool →	Wading pool retained in same location, with shade added
play	Play areas disliked due to condition →	no comments →	Updated play areas in same general location
athletics	Multi-use field opinions mixed, mostly citing lack of programming → Desire for soccer/football →	no comments →	Improved multi-use field
courts	All basketball courts are universally disliked, but basketball is very important in this park →	no comments →	New basketball courts: 1 full-court, 2 half-courts
winter	no comments →	no comments →	No winter activities planned for this park
landscape	no comments →	no comments →	New natural areas included around eastern edge of park
other	Use park building for arts and cultural events →	Consider Queen Ave bikeway through park →	Relocated park building with gathering plaza Queen Avenue bikeway passes through park, but calmed Skate/BMX nodes along Queen Ave bikeway through park

COST ESTIMATE

Asset Type	Project	2019 ESTIMATED COST/PROJECT
Aquatics	Wading Pool, incl. demolition of existing wading pool	\$ 854,268
Play	Traditional Play Structure in modified container	\$ 806,809
Athletics	Athletic Field renovation: multi-use field space	\$ 180,346
Courts	Basketball Court (1 full, 2 half)	\$ 246,789
Landscape	Naturalized areas	\$ 17,085
Other	Skate spots along central trail	\$ 75,935
Other	New restroom/storage building	\$ 783,079
Other	Gathering plaza	\$ 127,571
Other	Renovate walking paths	\$ 334,114
Other	Miscl. signs, trees, furniture	\$ 68,520
TOTAL		\$ 3,494,516

Note: The primary central path to be implemented as Queen Avenue Bikeway by City of Minneapolis