



Date of Board P+C: 3/4/2026

Date of Board Approval (for CAC's only): NA

Date of Most Recent Update: NA

Staff Lead: Michael Jones

Department or Division: Planning Division

Project Name: Smith Triangle Park Sculpture and Site Improvements Planning Process

Engagement Level: Involve, or Partner (*See Engagement Assessment attached*)

This plan serves as a guide for the community engagement process for the *Smith Triangle Park Sculpture and Site Improvements Plan*. The plan may be modified as circumstance warrants during project duration. Substantial modifications are to be communicated to stakeholders and the MPRB Board of Commissioners.

As required by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Community Engagement Policy, this project requires a Community Engagement Plan because the project falls under the *consult* category of community engagement for which MPRB is required to obtain stakeholder feedback on project, initiative, or program analysis, alternatives, or decisions. This CE Plan was used with a GARE Racial Equity Tool Kit framework.

Key Stakeholders should be engaged in the creation of this plan. Please explain who will be engaged:

Staff plans to combine community engagement efforts with the East Isles and Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Associations. It has been determined that East Isles will have priority of the overall feedback, while Lowry Hill East will provide feedback but understand this park is within the East Isles Neighborhood boundaries. We will continue to engage both neighborhood associations and other local stakeholders as the project moves forward. Staff will begin to attend and regularly attend the East Isles Neighborhood board meetings to stay informed. MPRB staff has determined the following groups as community stakeholders:

- East Isles Neighborhood Association
- Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association
- Temple Israel-Minneapolis
- Local Businesses along Hennepin Ave
- Local Skate Associations
- Minneapolis Police Department (MPD)
- MPRB Park Police, Maintenance, and Rec staff

Additional community partners may be identified as the process moves forward.

This plan may also be informed by agency partners whose jurisdiction overlaps with or is adjacent to Smith Triangle Park, including:

- City of Minneapolis
- Metro Transit
- Hennepin County

Engagement will respond and adapt to community and partner feedback throughout the process.

1. Project Description

1a. Project Overview:

Smith Triangle Park is located at the intersections of Hennepin Avenue South, Emerson Avenue South and West 24th Street. The park is named for C.A. Smith and his wife who donated the land which was officially accepted in 1900. This was not the first time this plot of land was considered to become a park. When attempts were made to acquire Hennepin Avenue as a parkway in 1884 (the project was ultimately abandoned in 1905), the owners of the land had proposed to create a park at the same location, but the Board voted against acquisition at that time for reasons that are not clear.

The triangle was filled with soil, graded, and seeded in 1901 at the request of the donors, but gutters and curbs were not added until 1909. Little else was done to improve the triangle until 1967, when the state highway department took possession of Virginia Triangle at the intersection of Hennepin, Lyndale, and Groveland Avenues, to make room for the new Interstate Highway 94. Virginia Triangle was where a statue of Thomas Lowry, founder of the original Minneapolis and St. Paul streetcar lines and a significant park benefactor, had stood since 1915. The statue and accompanying monument (referred to collectively as the Thomas Lowry Memorial), engraved with the words “Be this community strong and enduring—it will do homage to the men who guided its youth”, were designed by Austrian-American sculptor Karl Bitter. With the loss of Virginia Triangle, the Park Board decided to relocate the memorial to nearby Smith Triangle. The cost of the relocation was funded by the state highway department.

In 2015, the memorial was locally designated as a Historic Landmark for the City of Minneapolis. That same year the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission released design guidelines for any future alteration, restoration, or relocation of the Thomas Lowry Memorial. In 2017 the Park Board hired an art conservator to complete a condition assessment of it.

The current park is highly urban 0.26 acre triangle has Hennepin Avenue running along the eastern edge, the backside of a single story commercial building immediately to the north, Temple Israel synagogue across the street to the west, and local businesses near the southern point. The small space appears dominated by the centrally placed Thomas Lowry Memorial as there is little else other than vegetation and paths surrounding it. The sculpture, elevated plaza, carved monument with text, and bronze light poles are all part of this historic landmark.

Located along a busy street in a dense neighborhood surrounded by concrete and buildings, the triangle can be a loud place. The limited seating and activity options also make this triangle feel somewhat unwelcoming as a place to relax. One user group exception is skateboarders who have venerated and used the park for years.

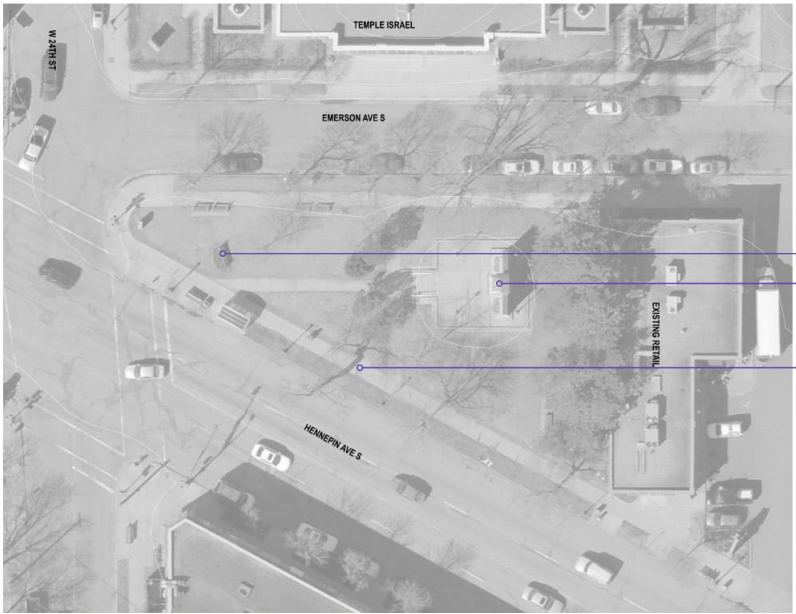
Behind the memorial several trees are planted and visibility is somewhat obscured by vegetation. At the south end of the park are two interior paths connecting the memorial to sidewalks along the east and west sides of the park. Several benches and the park name sign are located here as well.

The Smith Triangle Park Sculpture and Site Improvements planning work will build upon the approved vision of the Southwest Service Area Park Plan, that was approved in November of 2020. Along with guidance from a public art renovation consultant for the renovation of the Thomas Lowry Memorial Sculpture.

The current vision plan for Smith Triangle Park outlined in Southwest Service Area Park Plan proposed retaining the existing Thomas Lowry Memorial sculpture, while proposing additional improvements to the park that include:

- Relocated Existing Park Sign within Naturalized Plantings (*pollinator garden*)
- Tree Grove Plantings in Crushed Limestone Plaza
- Flexible Seating and Picnic Tables
- Naturalized Areas
- Outdoor Picnic Tables
- Open Play Area / Skate Spot
- Seat Walls

The scope of the project includes specific funding to first prioritize renovations to the existing Thomas Lowry Memorial Sculpture. The remainder of the funding is to support additional site improvements throughout the park. Based on community engagement efforts within the East Isles Neighborhood and other key stakeholders will ultimately inform what improvements will be prioritized for this project.



SMITH TRIANGLE - EXISTING CONDITIONS

Smith Triangle Park Engagement and Project Area Scope



SMITH TRIANGLE - PROPOSED PLAN

PROPOSED DESIGN FEATURES

1. RELOCATED PARK SIGN WITH NATURALIZED PLANTINGS (*pollinator garden*)
2. TREE GROVE PLANTINGS IN CRUSHED LIMESTONE PLAZA (*flexible seating, picnic tables, games*)
3. NATURALIZED AREAS
4. PING PONG TABLES (2)
5. OPEN PLAY AREA/SKATE SPOT
6. PICNIC AREA WITH ARBOR AND FLEXIBLE SEATING (*with solar panels and charging stations*)
7. SEAT WALLS

EXISTING FEATURES

- A. SIDEWALK
- B. PUBLIC ART - THOMAS LOWRY MEMORIAL

Smith Triangle Park 2020-Approved Southwest Service Area Park Plan

1b. MPRB Outcomes *(What goals, strategies, or values in the MPRB Comprehensive Plan does this project, program, or initiative relate to?):*

Similar Goals and Strategies for Franklin Steele Square as Elliot Park Playground and Park Improvements. Same neighborhood and similar community concerns.

Goal 3: Provide core services with care

- Strategy 11: Design and implement parks that are welcoming, climate resilient, ecologically healthy, playful, beautiful and safe as they age.
- Strategy 20: Prevent violence and mitigate impacts on public health, perceptions of safety and safety in the park system through multiple models of community safety and harm reductions.

Goal 5: Expand focus on health equity

- Strategy 1: Increase safety at parks through multiple strategies, specifically:
 - o Master planning and design;
 - o Activation, including by partners;
 - o Lighting that balances safety and light pollution;
 - o Security cameras, with consideration of the balance between safety and identity protection;
 - o Enhanced technology for crime prevention, intervention and investigation;
 - o Culturally sensitive practices;
 - o Staff visibility at parks; and
 - o Response and intervention plans for mental health crises in parks.

1c. Project Timeline:

January - February 2026: Initial project scoping

March-August 2026, Community Engagement and Concept Design

Fall 2026, Concept Approval by Board of Commissioners

Fall-Winter 2026/27, Construction Documentation

Winter 2027, Project Bidding for Construction

Spring-Summer 2027, Construction Start

Fall 2027, Construction Concludes

1d. Project Funding:

<u>Capital Sources</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Expiration</u>
NPP20 2023	\$232,000	none
TOTAL	\$232,000	

It’s possible that Park Dedication may also be used if additional funding is needed for improvements, but that would be determined in partnership with East Isles Neighborhood. Additional funding sources could be determined throughout the scoping and community engagement process.

2. Project Data:

2a. What are the boundaries of the community engagement area? *(For regional facilities include neighborhoods adjacent to the park and city/regional boundaries.)*

Smith Triangle Park exists entirely inside the East Isles neighborhood. The focus of community engagement will consist of park users, residents and businesses within the boundaries of the neighborhood, along with Lowry Hill East neighborhood.

2b. What are the demographics of the community engagement area? *(Please refer to percentages of the population when possible and note the sources of the data.)*

As of 2020, there were over 3,800 residents living in the neighborhood.

Regional race and ethnicity (Met Council 2023):

- White 83.5%
- Of color *suppressed**
 - *Black or African American alone suppressed**
 - *American Indian and Alaskan Native alone suppressed**
 - *Asian or Pacific Islander alone suppressed**
 - *Two or more races 4.6%*
- Hispanic or Latino (of any race) *suppressed**

**Data suppression is used whenever there is chance that the information contained in a publicly available report could be used to reveal or infer the identities of specific individuals*

About 2% of the East Isles Neighborhood population is under 18 years old, whereas 70% of the residents are between the ages of 18-64 with the highest percentage of ages between 25-34 at 27%. The average percentage of residents under the age of 18 in Minneapolis is ~25%, therefore this neighborhood seems to host a lot less youth who live in East Isles Neighborhood than other neighborhoods.

Almost 5% of residents in the neighborhood were not born in the United States, which is about half the statewide average of 8%.

About 51% of residents in the neighborhood live in a renter-occupied housing development. To be able to reach renters, it will be critical to connect with landlords and rental associations and community partners to ensure we connect with tenants.

Projections tell us that communities of color, youth, and seniors will double in current demographic percentages by 2040 (Thrive MSP 2040). Alongside the demographics of the neighborhood, this shift confirms how integral it is for MPRB to include a diversity of voices within the park planning processes.

2c. List any key findings or excerpts from relevant plans or policies that are informing this project, program or initiative, especially if community was engaged in the policy or plan: *The purpose of community research is to collect data that will best inform specific project decisions or strategic direction and support the policy goals of effective community engagement. Research completed in advance of and during project development may include review of previously completed directives or mandates, activity plans, master plans, community studies, industry trends and historical and demographic data. MPRB staff is responsible for determining the research data necessary to support and document decision-making for a project and building off prior community engaged planning, policy, and design.*

This project's main guide will follow the adopted plan from the 2020 Southwest Service Area Park Plan as a starting point for engagement and improvement prioritization, with a first prioritization of renovating the existing Thomas Lowry Memorial Sculpture. The community was engaged through a Community Advisory Committee, Project Advisory Committee, online surveys, and public open houses in 2018 and 2019.

Planning staff have also begun conversations with East Isles and Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Associations and will continue these conversations and expand to other identified local stakeholders.

2d. What are the data gaps? What additional research needs to be done to understand the project stakeholders and project scope?

How many park users use the Smith Triangle Park today and what type of activity happens within the park currently. Continued listening and building relationships will be integral to the success of this project, as sculpture renovation, park safety, and youth activation will be important for the end results.

3. Community Engagement:

The MPRB supports the use of a variety of techniques to interact with and obtain information from stakeholders. Outreach and research tools and methods can be applied for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the following:

- a. Evaluate success and measure community impact of existing programs, services or facilities.*

- b. Gain stakeholder insight and perspective regarding development of a new program, service or facility.
- c. Proactively identify or explore park and recreation trends or ideas.
- d. Determine essential services to be provided for a community or park area.
- e. Query stakeholders when proposing or revising policy.
- f. Resolve persistent conflicts or problems.
- g. Educate or inform the public on proposed changes, projects, programs, and initiatives.
- h. Reflect on projects, programs, and initiatives after adoption by the Board or report on how community input has been integrated.
- i. Learn the history of local context and community.

Project Stakeholder <i>(students, ethnic communities, neighborhood groups, community leaders)</i>	Outreach: How will you reach out to the stakeholder? <i>(i.e. go to parks, neighborhood listserv, engage with cultural media)</i>	Engagement: How will they participate? <i>(i. e. online survey, focus group, community open house, intercept survey)</i>	Reflecting Back: How will stakeholder groups be reflected back to about the project progress or outcomes? <i>(Posted on project website, ribbon cutting, e-blast, site visit, celebration)</i>
Current park users, which can include youth, local businesses and business visitors	Attend community events, present to neighborhood organizations, neighborhood listservs, flyering in the neighborhood	Online survey, community open house(s), attend existing community events	Website, direct email, GovDeliveries, news articles, flyers at community nodes
East Isles and Lowry Hill East neighborhood organizations and community groups (Temple Isreal-Minneapolis)	Attend community meetings and events, neighborhood listservs	Online survey, open house(s), and other neighborhood events	Website, direct email, GovDeliveries, news articles
MPRB staff who work in the East Isles and Lowry Hill East neighborhoods	Connect with Rec and Maintenance Staff in Service Areas to identify best process	Focus groups, community events	Direct email
Park Users	Go to parks/park events, MPRB listservs, social media	Online survey, in person survey at park events, open house(s)	Website, Gov deliveries, news articles
Non-park users	Connect with neighborhood groups to share through their networks	Online survey, neighborhood events	Website, Gov deliveries, news articles

Cultural communities	Community partners with focused constituents	online survey, open house(s), focus groups	Direct communication with partners
Seniors/elders and disability community and organizations	Community partners with focused constituents	online survey, open house(s), focus groups	Direct communication with partners
Renters and Landlords	Community partners with focused constituents	online survey, open house(s), focus groups	Direct communication with partners
Youth	Park-based youth programming	online survey, open house(s), focus groups	Share out with youth programming staff to share with groups

If needed, describe the outreach, engagement, or reflection methods you will use that are referenced above:

3b. Advisory Committees: Staff do not anticipate hosting a formal TAC for this work, but will reach out to adjacent agency partners as appropriate including:

Technical Advisory Committee: This roster is a list of agencies and groups that are on the TAC
The City of Minneapolis
Metro Transit
Hennepin County

Project Advisory Committee: This roster is a list of MPRB departments and divisions that are on the PAC
Community Connections and Violence Prevention
Strategic Planning
Design and Project Management
Forestry
Environmental Management
Recreation
Asset Management
Communications
Park Police

3c. Will a Community Advisory Committee be required for this project, program, or initiative? Y/N

If yes, complete 3d-3g. If no, please delete 3d-3g from the CE Plan.

No, as previously mentioned, this work will be completed using the template from the 2017 DSAMP, which already had a formal CAC to advise on the final design.

3d. CAC Charge:

3e. CAC Composition Goals:	<i>Appointers and the CAC Selection Committee should appoint individuals that represent one or more of the identities/perspectives listed below to ensure diversity on the CAC. This is not an exhaustive or conclusive list, and categories should be based on self- identification, and not assumption.</i>
Racial/Ethnic Diversity	
Generational Diversity	
Socioeconomic Diversity	
Linguistic Diversity	
Diversity of interests	
Gender Diversity	
Other:	

3f. CAC Selection Committee Roster: <i>This roster of groups and individuals that are participating in the CAC appointment process for the project, program, or initiative</i>

3g. Community Advisory Committee:	
Committee Recommended Slate	Board Approved Slate
Board Individually Appointed CAC Members	
Commissioner	Appointee

4. Analysis:

4a. What questions will you be asking community to respond to in your outreach and engagement?

- Do you currently visit Smith Triangle Park?
 - If yes, what activities/programs do you participate at the park?
 - If no, is there a reason why you do not visit the park?
- Do you feel safe when visiting Smith Triangle Park?
 - Why or why not?
 - What could MPRB do help you feel safer when visiting the park?
- Any additional ideas for how or who to engage with about this project?
- What issues currently exist that you would like the MPRB to address?
- What are the opportunities for improvement at Smith Triangle Park?
- We likely will not be able to afford everything we wish to build. How might we best prioritize the projects we've noted in the project description and in the bullets below to fit our budget?
- How can the new playground enhance users' experience in the park?

4b. How will your community engagement outreach, engagement, and methods make MPRB a more equitable system?

Ensuring that we are being inclusive with the voices that are represented throughout the process will help the Park Board develop a plan for Smith Triangle Park that elevates underrepresented voices and takes everyone's needs and interests into consideration.

4c. Identify one or more key project milestones when project evaluation will be performed *(i.e. Draft design review, draft policy review, project mid-point)*

Milestone #1: Complete Engagement for upcoming Improvements (Summer 2026)

5. Evaluation Summary: *To be completed at one or more project milestones as identified in 4c.*

5a. Who was engaged during the process? *(i.e. demographic info from online survey participants, the CAC, and community engagement whenever possible. Refer back to Section 2 in the CE Plan and how your engagement reflects the diversity of the community in the engagement area.)*

5b. How did the engagement inform the project outcome? *(i.e. public tabulation and amendments following a public comment period)*

5c. Please describe any new or innovative engagement methods used during the process:

5d. What recommendations do you have for future engagement around this topic, park, or area?

5e. What, if any, were the unintended outcomes of your CE Plan?

5g. Were there any barriers to successful implementation of your CE Plan?

5h. Were you adequately resourced, including staff support, expertise, and funding?

5i. If applicable, how can this project, program, or initiative, or MPRB continue to partner and deepen relationships with underrepresented communities?