Master Plan Recommendations: Equity

7.1 Equity

What is "equity"? Equity is the fair, impartial, just, and even-handed access to and use of social, civic, recreational, and economic resources that lead to success and quality of life. These resources include education, healthcare, housing, transportation, and employment. Unlike equality, equity does not mean equal sharing or exact division.

In the United States, one's racial identity predicts, in a statistical sense, how one fares in life. ***Racial equity*** acknowledges that past policies, practices and strategic investments have created barriers to success based on race. Racial equity is rooted in the proactive development of policies, practices, and strategic investments that aim to eliminate racial disparity trends.

Equity and the MPRB. The MPRB has been working on equity, inclusion, and diversity since 2011. Currently, three areas of work – racial equity, ADA, and gender inclusion – are the focus.

"Because parks play a special role in peoples's quality of life, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has a responsibility to strive for racial equity. As a proud member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, we are participating in local and national movements to advance opportunities for all, in the park system and within the organization. We are having conversations about race and putting new behaviors and policies into practice. We are committed to working with communities, the City of Minneapolis and other government agencies to eliminate inequities between white people and people of color - and increase everyone's ability to succeed."

Equity and the Master Plan. The MPRB Board of Commissioners charged members of the appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for the Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska – Harriet Master Plan with specific tasks, some of which related to equity and inclusion:

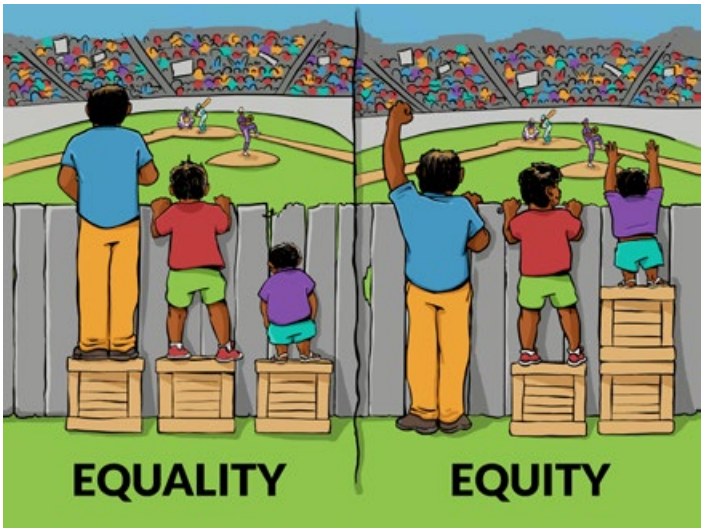
- Include the perspectives of people of diverse races, ethnicities, classes, ages, gender/gender identity, sexual orientations, abilities and national origin in developing its master plan recommendations to the MPRB Board and the Metropolitan Council;
- Engage in a dialog that fully and fairly addresses historic and contemporary cultural concerns in addition to recreation and environmental factors;
- Apply equity principles in decision-making based on training provided by staff and project consultants.

Consideration of equity is also a requirement for park master plans in the Met Council's 2040. Regional Parks Policy Plan. *Chapter 10: Public Engagement* of this master plan document more fully explains equity efforts and the outreach completed during the master planning process.

Voices for Racial Justice was hired to help with outreach to communities of color during the master plan process. They suggested the formation of an equity subcommittee of the CAC. The subcommittee met four times during the eleven months of the master planning process and made two presentations to the CAC.

Source:

The MPRB 2017-2018 Racial Equity Action Plan



"Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire."

Master Plan Equity Recommendations:

1. *The Park Board will support the official and legal restoration of the name "Bde Maka Ska" to Lake Calhoun and advocate for such restoration in all appropriate fora, including the Hennepin County Board, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota Legislature. To the extent that the Park Board determines that such restoration requires legislative action, the CAC recommends that the Park Board include such action in its legislative agenda.*
2. *Include universal icons in wayfinding and interpretive signage to improve the experience of park users. Where appropriate, signs may be multi-lingual, including Dakota and Ojibwe. As part of the theme of story awakening, look for opportunities to share diverse narratives in additional languages as well as English.*
3. *Where appropriate, include diverse community perspectives in crafting and displaying the content of storytelling and historic and cultural interpretation.*
4. *Design decisions implemented within the master plan shall address equity for all users and will be evaluated using racial equity principles.*

7.2 Highlights of the Master Plan Recommendations

The topic that garnered the most passionate discussion during the subcommittee and CAC meetings was that of the restoration of the Dakota name of Bde Maka Ska to Lake Calhoun *(see Chapter 1.5: History).* At the March 2016 CAC meeting #9, many Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos spoke in support of the recommendation to restore the name. Equity Recommendation #1 was one of the few recommendations specifically voted upon by the CAC and it passed 15 to 4.

Currently there is little visible evidence around Calhoun and Harriet of the inhabitation by Native Americans and Dakota. The master plan recommends enriching the visitor experience of the Chain of Lakes by interpreting the history of the Dakota and sharing stories of all cultures.

Equity issues in addition to the acknowledgement of the Native American culture and history of the lakes also exist. The listening sessions hosted by Voices for Racial Justice revealed little in the way of physical improvements that would make the lakes more welcoming or equitable. The lack of parking and restrooms in proximity to use areas was mentioned several times. However, since land is so limited and recreational demand so high, conversion of green space to parking was not suggested during the master planning process. As a way to lessen the demand for parking, the master plan recommends working with public transit providers to create a circulator bus route around the lakes, linking arrival points to park destinations *(Access and Circulation Recommendation #3).*

Improved communication about events, and destinations around the lakes was mentioned as an issue in some of the listening sessions. The CAC recommended the use of technology such as cell phone apps relay the location of available parking to visitors, direct newcomers to park amenities and destinations, and communicate information about the parks *(Access and Circulation Recommendation #5).* Improved way-finding signs with universal icons were also mentioned as a desired improvement, as were interpretive signs in multiple languages *(Equity Recommendation #2).*

The desire for picnic facilities with movable tables to serve groups of different sizes and locating picnic facilities near unprogrammed open space for informal play was inferred from the listening sessions. Many participants in the listening sessions also mentioned that were unsure about the rules and policies of the MPRB. For example, a Hispanic park user said that her large family often gathers for picnics by arriving in several cars. They like to move picnic tables together and set up several grills. They enjoyed music and dancing, but did not want to be chastised by park police for being too loud. Some also said that they preferred Minnehaha Park or other regional or neighborhood parks in the Minneapolis system, because they felt more comfortable in areas where gathering spaces weren't so close to upscale neighborhoods.

The cost of reserving picnic shelters was a barrier for some. People also expressed embarrassment at being asked to leave a shelter when those with reservations showed up. Since it is MPRB policy to charge a reservation fee for the larger shelters, the master plan recommends that any new shelters be small and on a first-come, first-served basis.

The cost for classes, renting boats and other recreational equipment, or reserving facilities is prohibitive for many. However, Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet offer many recreational opportunities that are free such as walking, picnicking, viewing gardens and wildlife, playing on the beaches and swimming, and fishing.

Programmed activities are not generally offered at MPRB's regional parks because staffed recreation centers are not available.

The following was written by a member of the Equity Subcommittee as a supporting document to the recommendation to restore the name Bde Maka Ska to Lake Calhoun:

.....traces of their vigor
and clear images
of their being
linger here still.....

*From Phillip Carroll Morgan's (Choctaw/Chickasaw poet) poem "**Council Fire**"*

Our charge as the Equity Subcommittee was to provide thoughtful, clear recommendations regarding the equitable distribution of the physical resources and improvements and an explicit inclusive vision for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Calhoun-Harriet Master Plan as part of the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park.

Much of our discussion focused on restoration of the Dakota name of Bde Maka Ska to what we now refer to as Lake Calhoun. It became clear to many of us on the Equity Subcommittee that this change would be a historic and important gesture of practical reconciliation. First, it would be a small step in addressing damage done to the Dakota community that has emanated from many years of invisibility and displacement experienced by the descendants of Chief Cloud Man whose village, Heyate Otunwe, existed on the shores of Bde Maka Ska. Secondly, the act of restoring the name would send a clear message of inclusion, not only to the Dakota people who visit this area feeling unrecognized and unwelcome; but to all people who feel marginalized or displaced due to culture, age, ethnicity or ability.

As a community we have always valued and fought for preservation of the historic buildings and public spaces that reflect both our struggles and accomplishments, Naming is a part of our collective history. The name "Calhoun" has become a symbol that indigenous history is not commemorated or valued as deeply as that of the majority culture.

We all want to be recognized with respect and clarity; this becomes essential as our community grows into a more diverse and culturally rich society. Our public spaces should both acknowledge and celebrate this diversity; they must speak to all and be welcoming and accessible to all.

The determined and respectful restoration of the Dakota name of Bde Maka Ska says that, as a community, we both understand and acknowledge the significance of name, heritage, culture, memory and the unique and indelible stories that each member carries in their hearts. It says in a clear demonstrative voice that we welcome, respect and appreciate all who come and who came before us to this beautiful place.