



SOUTH SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN

MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD

This is an abbreviated version of the full master plan. It shows only some introductory material and the plans for a single park. To view the entire document, visit the project webpage. Go to minneapolisparke.org/currentprojects and click on South Service Area Master Plan



Minneapolis, Minnesota
Approved September 28th, 2016



INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are where people come together. They are the literal and figurative centers of communities—the places where people learn a new sport, gather for a festival, bring out the extended family for a weekend picnic, soak up the fleeting winter sun, stroll under the trees, throw or hit or kick or shoot a ball, and squeal with delight at new experiences like zooming down a slide or swooshing through the air on a swing. Neighborhood parks are fun, active, and necessary for mental, physical, and environmental health.

Minneapolis is home to a park system that puts 95% of people within ½ mile of a park. The neighborhood parks are a critical piece of that puzzle, something early superintendent Theodore Wirth knew when he started securing land for them and designing them in the 1910s and 1920s. The earliest visions for neighborhood parks were as squares of green within the rapidly developing city. Following the lessons from the city parks movement that gave rise to landmarks like Boston's Emerald Necklace and New York's Central Park, Minneapolis' parks were to be the city's green lungs—places of health and respite, available to all people but meant especially for those who could not otherwise access green space for recreation and relaxation.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) built recreation centers across the city, and redesigned the neighborhood parks around them. Playgrounds, wading pools, and ball diamonds provided active recreation opportunities. Parks played baseball and football against each other, sporting their own colors and mascots and vying for city titles.

A SHIFTING CITY

Since around 2009, population growth in center cities has remained close to that of outer-ring suburbs—typically within several tenths of a percent. This reverses a decades-long trend of significantly higher growth in the suburbs than in the urban core. In fact, between 2011 and 2013, it was statistically even. Urban growth is being driven by an increase in children born to parents who are older on average than any previous generation (and who are more likely to live in the city), an increase in empty nesters moving back to the city from the suburbs, and an increase in recent immigrants who have come to the city for many reasons but who are all seeking to make a new life for themselves and their own children. Established sports and activities

continue to be played, but newer ones ranging from soccer to traditional lacrosse, skating to archery, outdoor fitness to birding and nature photography have become important.

At the same time, certain health issues have reached what can be described as epidemic proportions. Childhood obesity and diabetes have a higher occurrence than ever before. Inactivity is considered a root cause of these and other health issues among children and adults. Mental illness among children and adults is becoming more recognized as a real health concern, and afflictions such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and even allergies are more in the public eye. In all these health considerations, the science is clear: access to physical activity and the outdoors has profound benefits.

And inequity still exists. Institutional biases prevent equitable access to government services for people of color and those who self-identify as other than male. City and neighborhood parks were originally conceived in the late 1800s specifically to provide an escape from dense tenement blocks for lower class working immigrants and recently freed slaves. Frederick Law



Olmsted, the landscape architect of Central Park, had been a traveling journalist critical of the racial atrocities in the antebellum south. At Central Park and other parks he wanted to create spaces where all were equal. He went so far as to use his position as Superintendent of New York Parks to cajole the wealthy into donating substantial sums to improve the health and welfare of southern blacks moving north after the Civil War. H.W.S. Cleveland & Theodore Wirth worked in Minneapolis from the same model.

In Minneapolis, the 1911 Elwell Law determined that parks would be acquired and built through assessments on the surrounding neighborhood residents—with their consent. This practice put undue burden on lower income communities and led to inequities in the distribution of early parks. In the 60s this practice was largely discontinued in favor of city-wide funding of parks, a fact that led to the widely distributed system we have today.

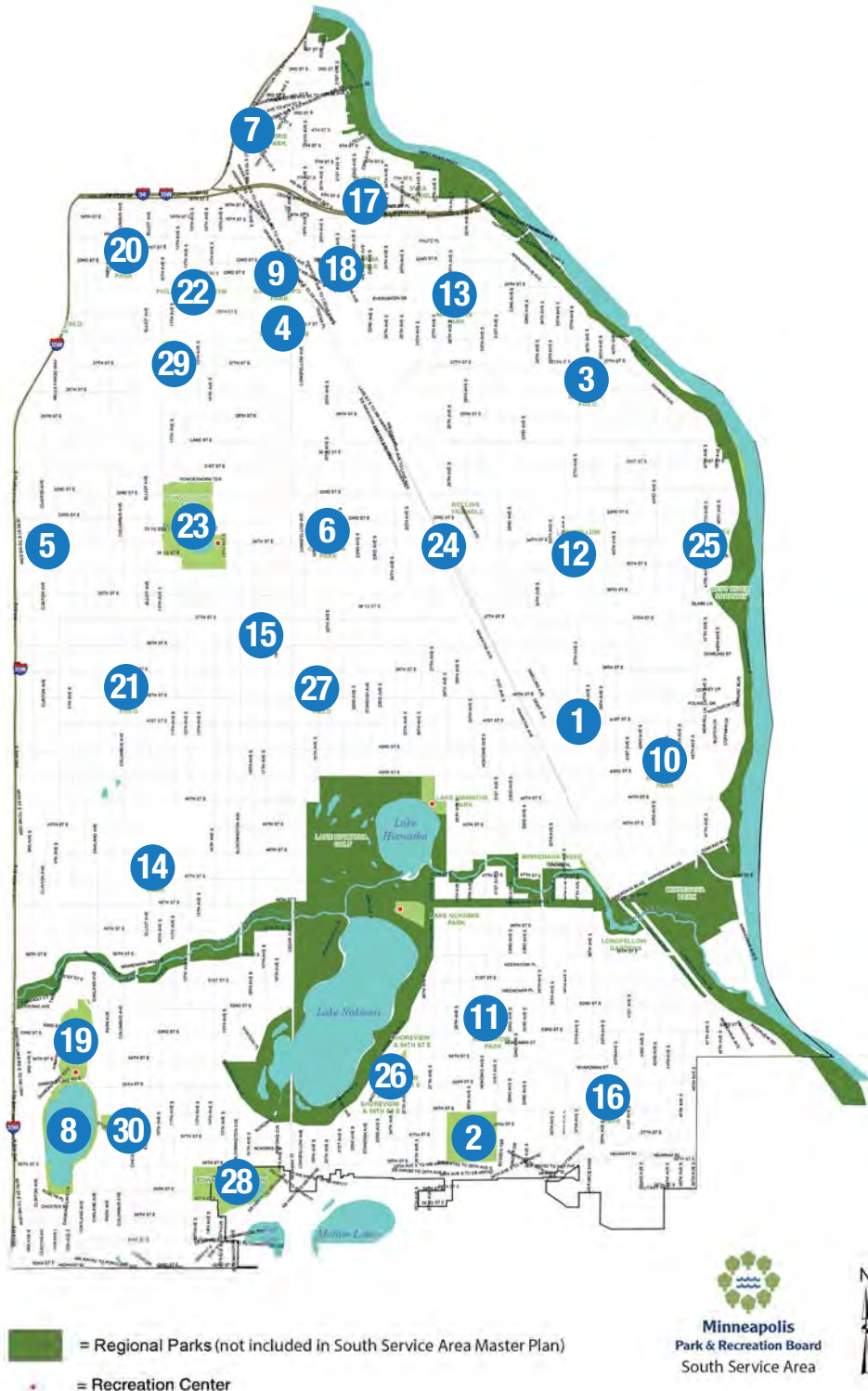
Though the historic legacy of the city parks movement is to ensure equitable access for all people, barriers still exist. Facilities for sports most likely to be played by people of color may be too few or nonexistent.

The same is true for sports most likely to be played by women and girls. And above all, communities of color must have a voice in this new vision. The transformation of the neighborhood parks must be based on the expressed needs of all people, with particular attention to the people of color and the women that were likely excluded from the planning efforts of a half-century ago.

WHY PLAN NOW?

Minneapolis today is more diverse in terms of age, race and ethnicity, and recreational need than ever before. Minneapolis has long planned, designed, and redesigned its parks. Wirth produced dozens of park plans in the annual reports of the early part of the century. The construction of the recreation centers meant the redesign and reconstruction of the parks around them. And the 2007 Comprehensive Plan envisioned new models for service delivery in neighborhood parks. But never before has a major portion of the park system been redesigned all at once, comprehensively, with an eye to what can exist in each park and also how those parks work together.

We are a very different city than we were in the 1920s and the 1960s. It is time to rethink the neighborhood parks. It is time to set a vision for remaking them in the image of the community that surrounds them and gives them life.

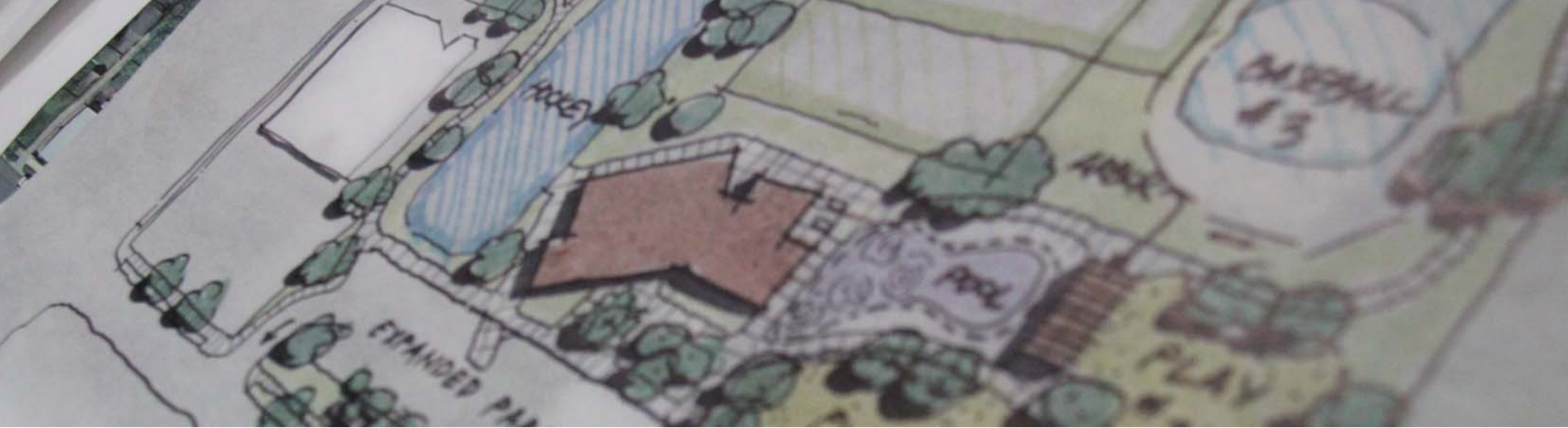


PARKS INCLUDED

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Adams Triangle | 20. Peavey Field Park |
| 2. Bossen Field* | 21. Phelps Field Park |
| 3. Brackett Field | 22. Phillips Community Center |
| 4. Cedar Avenue Field* | 23. Powderhorn Park* |
| 5. Central Gym Park | 24. Rollins Triangle* |
| 6. Corcoran Park | 25. Seven Oaks Oval |
| 7. Currie Park | 26. Shoreview Triangles (3 park properties) |
| 8. Diamond Lake | 27. Sibley Park |
| 9. East Phillips Park* | 28. Solomon Park |
| 10. Hiawatha School Park | 29. Stewart Park |
| 11. Keewaydin Park | 30. Todd Park |
| 12. Longfellow Park | |
| 13. Matthews Park | |
| 14. McRae Park | |
| 15. Meridian Garden* | |
| 16. Morris Park | |
| 17. Murphy Square | |
| 18. Normanna Triangle | |
| 19. Pearl Park | |

* These parks are considered as a part of the overall service area master plan but are considered special consideration parks. More on these special considerations parks can be found in chapter 4.

Figure 1.1 - Park Location Key



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The South Service Area Master Plan (SSAMP) establishes the vision for all the neighborhood parks south of downtown and east of Interstate 35W. Figure 1.1 shows a map of the thirty-two neighborhood park properties that are included in this plan. This South Service Area Master Plan is one of five such master plans that will collectively redesign every neighborhood park.

This is a vision that will span decades. The physical transformation of the parks will happen gradually over time, project by project, like puzzle pieces fitting into place to form the overall design that is set forth in this plan. This vision will guide capital improvements to reconstruct or build new playgrounds, aquatic facilities, athletic fields, hard surface courts, and some amenities new to the neighborhood parks, like climbing walls and adult fitness areas. It will allow MPRB to leverage additional financial resources by inspiring and then directing outside philanthropy and grant funding. This vision will—like the parks themselves—bring the community together to imagine and then build the future of Minneapolis’s neighborhood parks.

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

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



LENSES & ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The South Service Area Master Plan is guided by a series of **Lenses** and **Actions**.

LENSES

are the general basis for each decision contained within the SSAMP. They are the windows through which decision-making is viewed and the measures by which decisions are evaluated.

ACTIONS

are the specific items contained in the SSAMP. Actions are means of community engagement, decisions on park design, the mix of outdoor facilities, and any assurances regarding process and transparency going forward.

Actions are what the plan proposes. **Lenses** are why. **Lenses** are the intangible reasons behind the decisions in the plan (and, in fact the reasons for the plan). **Actions** are how the plan accomplishes change on the ground.



EXAMPLE

ACTION: *Reduce the number of multi-use diamonds, in order to increase acreage of multi-use field areas*

- **COMMUNITY FOCUS LENS:** This reduction reflects overall community desire for more fields, while still maintaining a variety of sports opportunities in most parks. The communities around some parks have specifically requested fields instead of diamonds, a request that is reflected in those parks.
- **RACIAL EQUITY LENS:** People of color are more likely to, and have expressed more desire to, participate in field sports (specifically soccer and football) than diamond sports. This transformation provides more space for these desired activities.
- **GENDER EQUITY LENS:** This transformation increases the amount of park space dedicated to soccer and other field sports in which women and girls are more likely to participate.
- **LIFELONG ACTIVITY LENS:** This change increases the flexibility of park space overall, allowing larger fields for adult and teen use, general open space for other all-ages programming, and larger areas for team sports increasing in popularity among non-youth, such as ultimate, rugby, flag football, and others.
- **DESIGN LENS:** This change allows greater flexibility in park design as a whole, and also removes safety concerns associated with overlapping outfields.



LENSES

The project's Community Advisory Committee made its recommendations on the basis that the six identified lenses were used in good faith by MPRB staff and consultants to design each of the 32 parks in the South Service Area and develop the service area's overall facility mix. MPRB staff will continue to use these six lenses in the implementation of this plan.

THE COMMUNITY FOCUS LENS

Consider local community need and desire, which is determined primarily by engaging with local residents and park users. Focus on local need, not area-wide equality. Reflect that need and desire in design, planning, and process decisions.

THE RACIAL EQUITY LENS

Ensure that people of color are not disproportionately and negatively affected by decision-making. Identify areas where existing conditions create a bias against people of color and work to rectify those biases to the benefit of all people. Include people of color, including recent immigrants, in the planning and design process. Ensure that parks are welcoming to people of all races and cultures. Continue to be transparent and make available to the public any and all efforts to involve the community through direct engagement, surveys, and email. Consider formally using Racial Equity Tools where feasible.

THE GENDER EQUITY LENS

Ensure that those who self-identify as other than male are not disproportionately and negatively affected by decision-making. Ensure that those with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual are not disproportionately and negatively affected by decision-making. Identify areas where existing conditions create a bias against these populations and work to rectify those biases to the benefit of all people.

THE LIFELONG ACTIVITY LENS

Consider use by all ages and stages of life. Recognize that older youth/teens and seniors are currently underserved. Identify other shortfalls by age range and work to rectify these.

THE DESIGN LENS

Parks must be carefully planned, organized, and detailed in order to create a pleasing and comfortable environment where all people want to gather, converse, relax, play, learn, and be active. Decisions should take design quality into account and should ensure parks are physically accessible to all people.

THE ENVIRONMENT LENS

Parks have the potential to do environmental harm, and also have the potential to improve the environment for plants, animals, and people. Decisions should consider impact on the environment and should seek ways to enhance habitat, water management, and overall environmental performance.



ACTIONS

The following actions are those that apply to the SSAMP as a whole. The individual park plans themselves are also ACTIONS—for instance: the addition of a basketball-focused multi-use court at Morris Park, as shown on that park’s plan, is an ACTION.

Actions in specific parks are shown in Chapter 4 and in Appendix A.

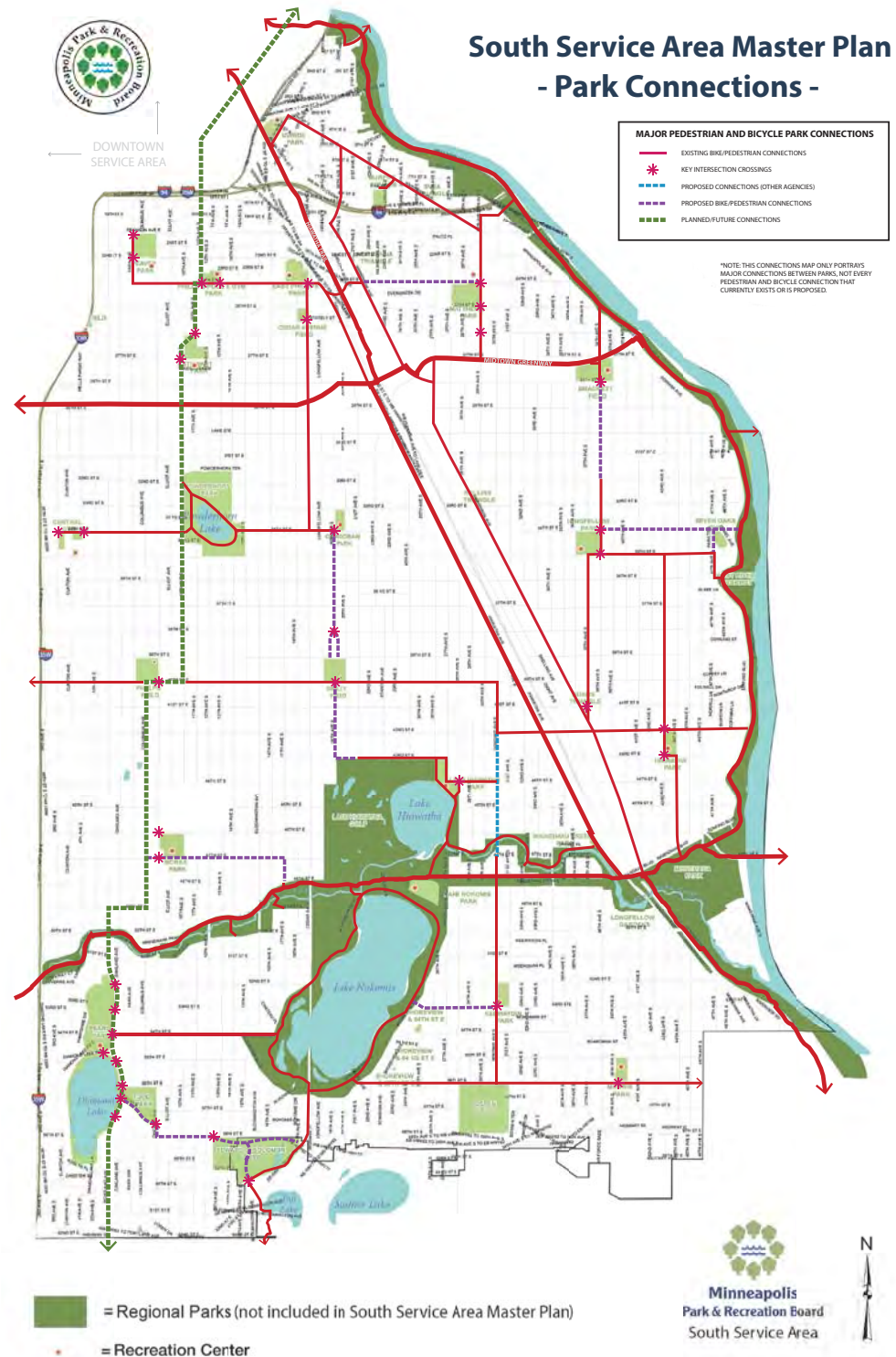
The following actions are grouped in categories for ease of understanding and numbered so they can be referenced in future documents and projects.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

1. Ensure transparency in decision-making.
2. Follow through with implementation.
3. Undertake appropriate subsequent community engagement during capital improvement projects, per the MPRB Community Engagement Policy.
4. Ensure cohesion between SSAMP and other planning efforts, such as RecQuest.
5. Leverage lessons learned by MPRB staff and the community from the SSAMP process to improve processes for future community involvement and engagement.



South Service Area Master Plan - Park Connections -



PLANNING AND DESIGN

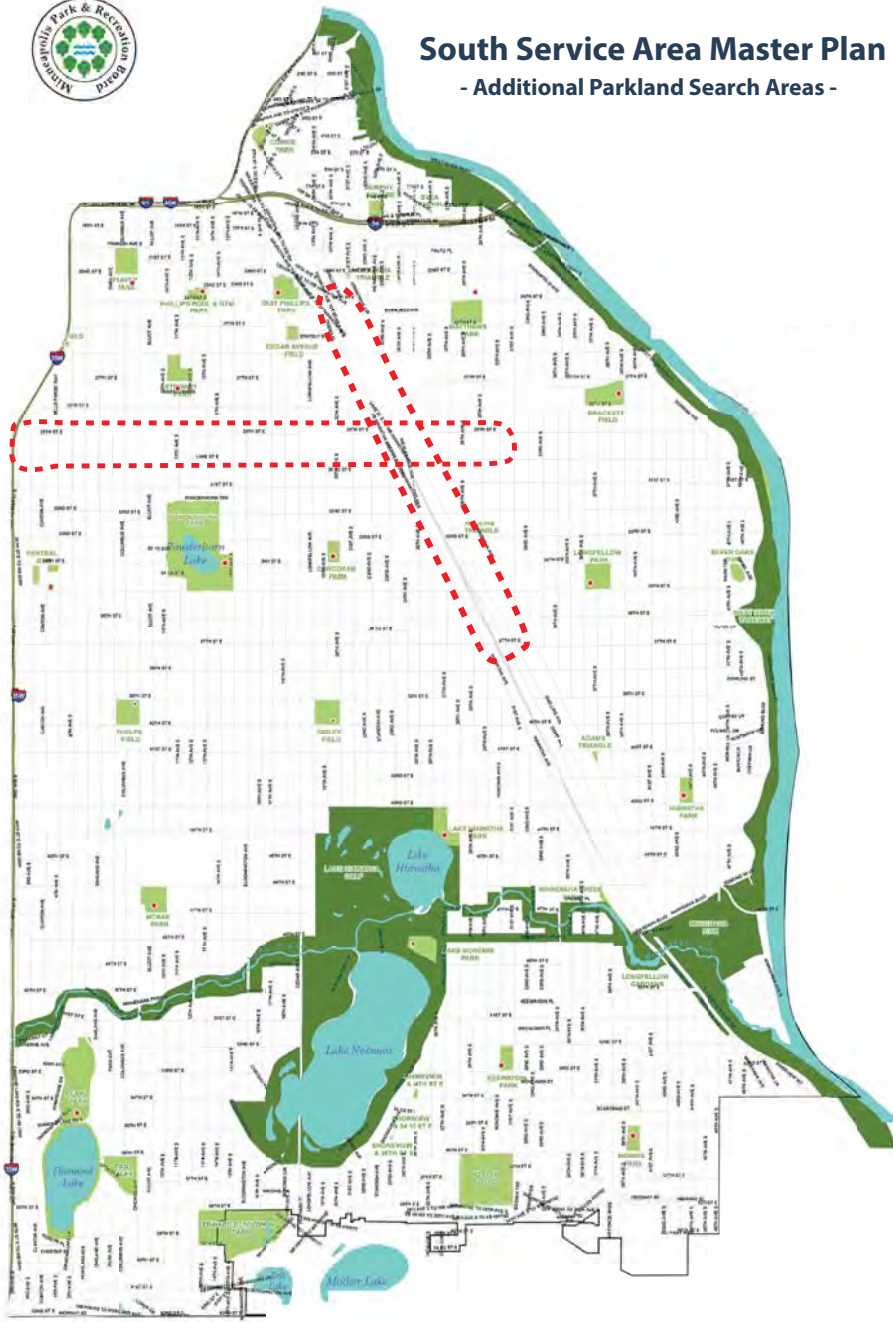
6. Create an individualized park plan for each neighborhood park property in the service area.
7. Recognize that every facility cannot be in every park.
8. Work with City of Minneapolis to implement safe, accessible connections between neighborhood parks and regional parks. Figure 3.1 depicts desired pedestrian, bicycle or other connections within the SSA.
9. Improve navigational signage to emphasize linkages between parks.
10. Support implementation of the Southside Greenway, as a means of connecting several parks. Figure 3.1 represents the Southside Greenway's approximate planned route.




Figure 3.1 - Park Connections



South Service Area Master Plan

- Additional Parkland Search Areas -



-  = Regional Parks (Not included in the South Service Area Master Plan)
-  = MPRB Recreation Center (or other like community-focused building i.e. Pillsbury United at Currie Park)
-  = Suggested Search Areas for Additional Parkland

PLANNING AND DESIGN (CONT.)

11. Wherever parkland is adjacent to a Minneapolis Public School, make efforts to align with that school on the utilization of shared land. Where appropriate, a community volunteer panel could be convened to help engage with MPS.
12. Seek additional parkland or private land available for public use in the Midtown Greenway Corridor west of Hiawatha Avenue and in the Hiawatha Avenue Corridor in the vicinity of Lake Street. Figure 3.2 depicts key search areas identified for additional parkland.
13. Analyze and describe ongoing maintenance costs associated with park plans.
14. Include maintenance and storage facilities, as needed, in neighborhood park plans.
15. Manage and resolve land use, land ownership, lease agreement, and other site control issues, if applicable, prior to implementation of capital improvements.

Figure 3.2 - Additional Parkland Search Areas



	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
OTHER	Group Shelter	1	15	14
	Stage / Bandshell	2	4	2
	Adult Fitness	1	4	3
	Walking Loop Trail	3	14	11
	Lawn/Court Games	1	4	3
	Dog Park	0	1	1
	Disc Golf	0	1	1
	Archery	0	1	1
	Skate Park	2	3	1
	Canoe/Kayak Storage	0	2	2
	Restroom/Storage Building	2	4	2
	Community Oven	0	2	2

Figure 3.3 - Proposed Facility Changes: Other Facilities

	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
L	Outdoor Gathering Space	1	15	14
	Urban Agriculture Area	3	10	7

Figure 3.4 - Proposed Facility Changes: Landscape

FACILITIES

16. Provide facilities for both programmed (sports, classes) and unprogrammed (walking, play) activity in every park.
17. Provide a walking loop with seating in most parks.
18. Increase diversity of activities available in the service area, with particular attention on skateboarding, pickleball, adult fitness, archery, climbing, bicycle polo, traditional lacrosse, and large-group picnicking.
19. Designate urban agriculture sites within the service area, as an aspect of implementation of the MPRB-adopted Urban Agriculture Plan.

Note: Figures 3.3 - 3.6 and 3.10 - 3.12 appearing throughout this chapter show the total existing and the total proposed for selected SSA Facilities by category. See overall changes for all categorized facilities in figure on page 51. The total does not include regional park facilities or facilities outside the project scope.



FACILITIES (CONT.)

20. Aquatics:

- a. Transition from wading pool dominated system to a mix of wading pools, splash pads, and hybrid facilities, in order to provide facilities for a broader age range of youth.
- b. Focus placement of splash pads and hybrid facilities in areas of high older youth/teen use.
- c. Limit large-scale swimming opportunities in the service area to the Lake Nokomis beaches and Phillips Pool, due to high cost of implementation and operation of additional large-scale facilities.

DEFINITIONS:

Splash Pad

There are currently no splash pads in the SSA

Key Features:

- No standing water
- Size and shape can vary
- Users tend to be from multiple age groups

Wading Pool

There are 17 Wading pools in the SSA. This type of aquatics is typical for Minneapolis Parks.

Key Features:

- 0' entry-2' max depth
- 30'x50' typical size
- Users tend to be younger

	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
AQUATICS	Indoor Swimming Pool	1	1	0
	Wading Pool	17	12	-5
	Splash Pad	1	4	3
	Interactive Water Play	0	1	1
	Beach Access	0	0	0
	TOTAL WATER ACCESS		19	18

Figure 3.5 - Proposed Facility Changes: Aquatics



DEFINITIONS:

Multi-use Field: open field spaces intended for use by athletics and other formal or informal gatherings/games. These are typical for most Minneapolis parks and many times overlap with multi-use diamonds.

Multi-use Diamond: the infield (dirt surface) with moderate maintenance levels and little built infrastructure. The outfield typically overlaps with multi-use fields.

Premier Field: field spaces intended for use by athletics. They require a higher level of maintenance and can include further build-out of infrastructure including enclosed fences, bleachers and benches. The surface type is not specified, however it is most likely to be artificial turf. Premier natural turf fields require periodic closure for resting.

Premier Diamond: an enclosed space intended for the use of baseball or softball. They require a higher level of maintenance and can include further build-out of infrastructure including bleachers, benches, dugouts, and scoreboards. The surface type is not specified, however it is of high quality.

Indoor Sports Dome: a bubble-like structure used to enclose a premier field space in winter. There are no sports domes within Minneapolis Parks.

FACILITIES (CONT.)

21. Athletic fields:

- a. Reduce the number of multi-use diamonds, in order to increase acreage of multi-use field areas*.
- b. Improve overall quality of multi-use fields and diamonds, through soil conditioning, irrigation, and other methods.
- c. Increase the number of premier fields (for soccer, football, lacrosse, etc), especially in areas currently underserved by this facility type.
- d. Improve availability of fields through new construction or transformation from one field type to another.
- e. Implement an indoor sports facility in the service area.
- f. Ensure that safe, non-toxic materials are used in the construction of any premier fields or play area surfacing in the parks.

	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
ATHLETICS	Premier Diamond	10	11	1
	Premier Field	4	6	2
	Multi-use Diamond	45	28	-17
	Sports Dome	0	1	1

Figure 3.6 - Proposed Facility Changes: Athletics

NOTE: Multi-use fields were not quantified into the matrix because of the complexity in definition and varying size.

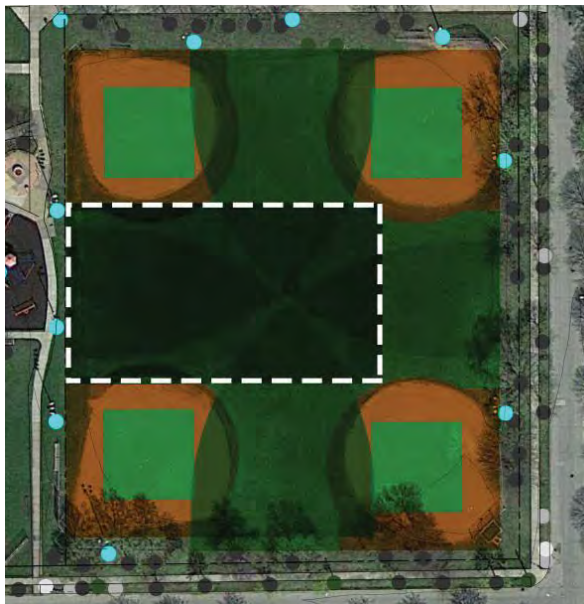


Figure 3.7 - Typical Current Field Arrangement

TYPICAL CURRENT ARRANGEMENT:

4 multi-use diamonds + multi-use field

- multi-use diamonds cannot be used concurrently with older age groups due to overlapping outfields.
- due to all the infields, limited field space is provided for other sports

COMMON PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT:

2 multi-use diamonds, + larger multi-use field

- creates more space for multi-use fields
- allows for more flexibility in field striping to meet age group demand
- still provides diamonds for youth leagues

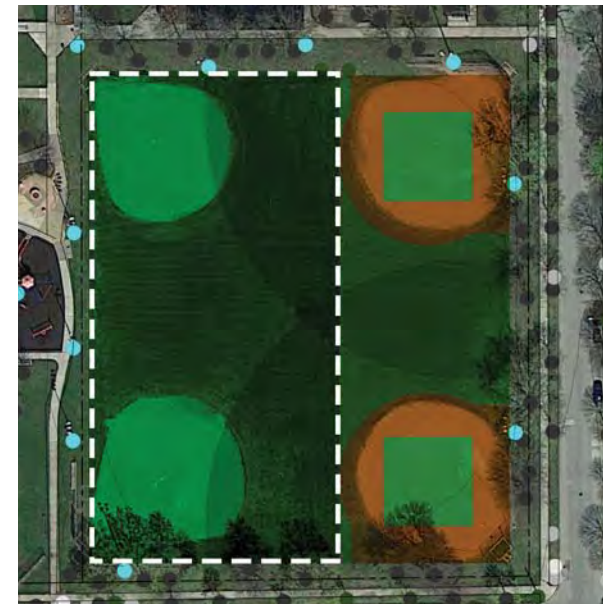


Figure 3.8 - Common Proposed Field Arrangement

* The Trend Analysis, Utilization Analysis and Community Engagement support the change from premier and multi-use **diamonds** to premier and multi-use **fields**. These documents can all be found within Appendices C, D and E.

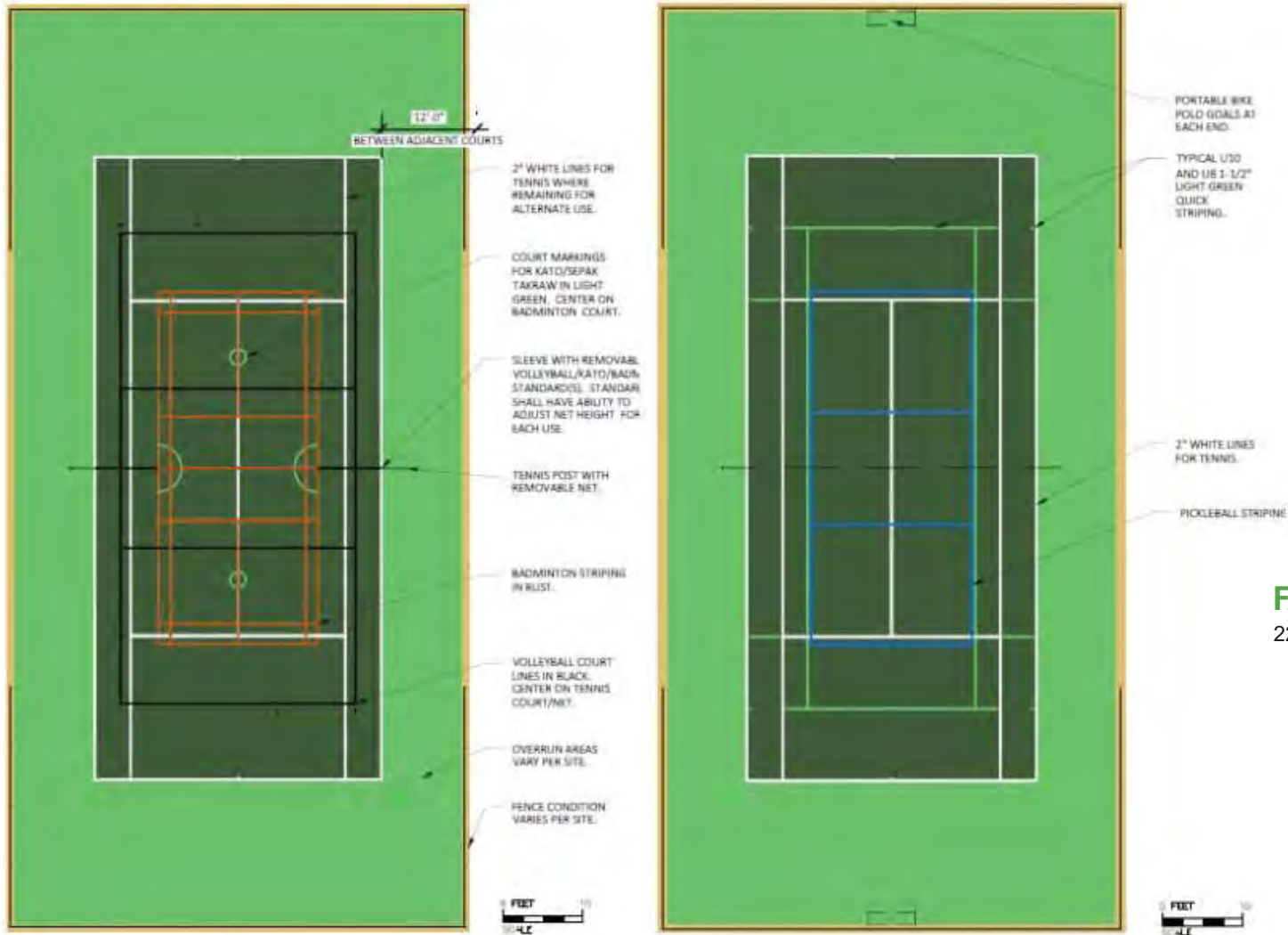


Figure 3.9 - Options for Multi-use Court Striping

FACILITIES (CONT.)

22. Courts:

- Continue commitment to basketball, especially full-court, throughout the service area.
- Decommission single and double banks of tennis courts, in favor of other amenities.
- Implement multi-use courts with striping for tennis, pickleball, and volleyball where appropriate (see figure 3.9)

FACILITIES		Existing	Proposed	Diff.
COURTS	Tennis Court	23	12	-11
	Full Court Basketball	13	21	8
	Half Court Basketball	15	16	1
	Volleyball	4	7	3
	Multi-Sport Court	0	6	6

Figure 3.10 - Proposed Facility Changes: Courts



Traditional Playground



Adventure Play



Nature Play

FACILITIES (CONT.)

23. Play:

- a. Increase diversity of play opportunities to include adventure and nature play.
- b. Provide play opportunities at every park, though not necessarily with traditional manufactured play structures.
- c. Seek partnership to provide indoor play.
- d. Ensure that play equipment is chosen with a consideration for user safety and equipment longevity.

DEFINITIONS:

Traditional Playground
Typical for Minneapolis Parks

Key Features:

- Manufactured and built to meet commercial standards
- Separate designs for two age groups (2-5 and 5-12)
- Recent designs focus on sensory stimulation for ages 2-5 and physical challenges for ages 5-12.

Adventure Play
None in the SSA

Key Features:

- Areas that offer challenges such as vertical climbing/ bouldering walls, obstacle courses or zip lines
- Usually targeted for older children and teens

Nature Play
None in the SSA

Key Features:

- Provides a creative and sensory rich experience in a setting with natural materials.
- Designs are intended to change throughout the season and over time.

	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
PLAY	Traditional Play Structure	28	26	-2
	Nature Play	2	5	3
	Adventure/Climbing Play	0	2	2
	TOTAL PLAY AREAS	30	33	3

Figure 3.11 - Proposed Facility Changes: Play



	FACILITIES	Existing	Proposed	Diff.
WINTER	Designated Sledding Hill	3	3	0
	Skating Rink	7	8	1
	Hockey Rink	5	5	0
	Broomball Rink	3	3	0
	Year-Round Rink	1	1	0
	Warming House	0	1	1

Figure 3.12 - Proposed Facility Changes: Winter Recreation

FACILITIES (CONT.)

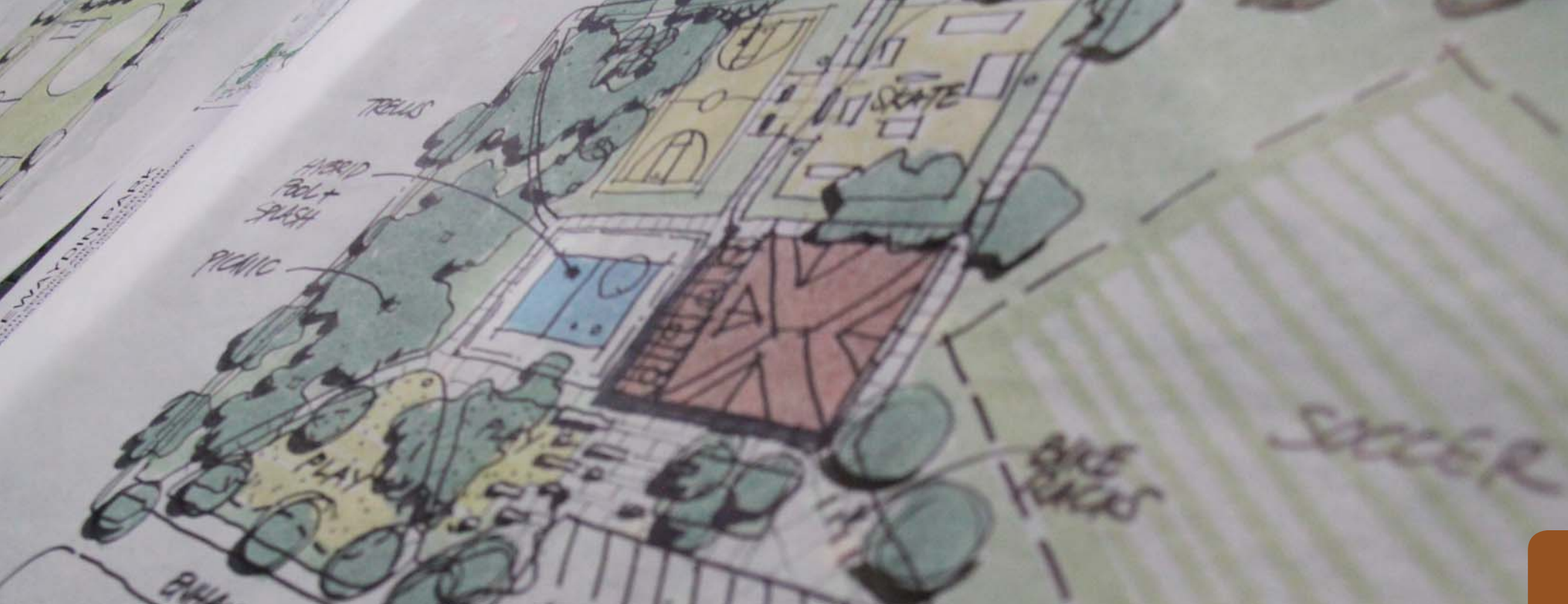
- 24. Increase winter recreation opportunities in areas currently underserved, namely the northern portion of the service area.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

25. Protect and enhance existing natural areas.
26. Provide some natural areas (pollinator gardens, rain gardens, forested areas) in most parks.
27. Explore use of sustainable construction methods and materials, even if initial and ongoing cost may be higher, in order to improve environmental performance in the long run.
28. Consider the construction of sustainable parking lots: those that manage their own storm water.
29. Reduce overall acreage of mown turfgrass.

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A PARK PLAN DOES DETERMINE

- The types and locations of facilities
- The general areas of mown and naturalized landscapes and the general location of trees
- The extent and general location of pathways

A PARK PLAN DOES NOT DETERMINE

- The specific design of facilities
- The location of minor amenities such as benches, drinking fountains, and signs

EXAMPLE:

A park plan DOES determine:

- That there will be a traditional play area in a certain location in the park (as opposed to a nature play area in a different location)

A park plan DOES NOT determine:

- The exact equipment, layout, color, surfacing

Future capital projects will have their own community engagement processes at the time of implementation.

KEY/LEGEND

AQUATICS

Places to play in the water
(swimming, splash pads)

- 

Wading Pool (small, shallow pool for children)
- 

Indoor Swimming Pool
- 

Beach Access
- 

Splash Pad (water play area with sprayers and fountains, with no standing water)
- 

Interactive Water Play (small stream/fountains for kids to play in)

PLAY

Places for youth to play (swings, slides, vertical climbing walls)

- 

Traditional Play Structure (swings, slides, climbers)
- 

Adventure Play (place for challenging play for older youth and teens including climbing walls, zip line, obstacle course)
- 

Nature play area (play area for children that encourages creative play with natural materials)

ATHLETICS

Sports on turf fields

- 

Multi-use Field (open turf that may be used for soccer or other sports)
- 

Multi-use Diamond (field for baseball or softball but the outfield may be used for soccer or other sports)
- 


Premier Field (High quality field for soccer or other sports, often with permanent stripes)
- 







Premier Diamond (High quality field for baseball or softball, usually with a fence around the outfield)
- 

Sports Dome (may be put up in winter to allow sports to be played year round)

COURTS

Sports on hard surface courts

- 





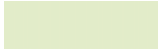

Tennis Court
- 

Basketball Court
- 

Volleyball Court
- 

Multi-sport Court (court striped to allow many different sports such as pickleball, bike polo)

WINTER USE

Places to play in winter (ice skating, sledding)

























-   Designated Sledding Hill
-   Skating Rink
-   Broomball Rink
-   Hockey Rink
-   Year-round Rink (*Hard-surface rink for hockey all year or bike polo in summer*)
-   Warming House

LANDSCAPE

-   Outdoor Gathering Space (*Open area for community gathering/picnics*)
-   Designated Urban Agriculture Area
-  Mown Turf Grass
-  Naturalized Area (*native vegetation areas,*

OTHER

Other types of recreation in outdoor parks

-   Group Shelter
-   Stage / Bandshell (for outdoor plays, music, or classes)
-   Adult Fitness (area with machines to work out in)
-   Walking Loop Trail (walking path that loops around the park, includes signs and seating)
-   Lawn/Court Games (small open lawn or court for games)
-   Dog Park
-   Disc Golf
-   Archery (archery course)
-   Skate Park
-   Canoe/Kayak Launch
-   Community Oven
-   Restroom/Storage Building

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PHELPS

LOCATION AND HISTORY

Phelps Field Park occupies a large city block bounded by 39th Street, Chicago Avenue, 40th Street, and Park Avenue. It is a park-in-a-bowl, like Sibley, with its northern edge being at street level and its southern side below surrounding streets.

The park was purchased in 1917, concluding a year of activism by residents in the vicinity of the park to have a playground. Their offer was that they would agree to be assessed for the cost of the land and would not to ask the park board to maintain or improve the park for five years. They volunteered to make improvements in the interim at their own expense under the supervision of the park superintendent.



The 1917 annual report included a grand and detailed plan for developing the park and building a field house in what Theodore Wirth called a “rapidly growing section of the city.” The plan was to develop the space primarily for athletic use, on three levels or terraces, but it still included significant landscaped space for walks and trees, or “attractive park effects” as Wirth called them. Wirth even had a scale model created of his plan. The most interesting aspect of the plan was Wirth’s proposed two-story field house, which included one wing for a gymnasium and another for an assembly hall with seating for 300 people. The plan reflected the national “social center” movement of the time in parks around the country. Wirth’s explanation of his plan practically defined the social center movement. “It will be more than a playground and neighborhood park,” he wrote, “it will be the meeting place at all times of the year for the people who are interested in the doings and welfare of their children, the development of the district in which they live, the advancement of the city as a whole, and, in fact, everything that tends toward the furthering of the community’s progress and a neighborly spirit of good-fellowship.”

Perhaps the plan was too grand, and too expensive for property owners to pay for. In 1922 Wirth presented a modified lower cost plan for the park. Wirth wrote in his report then that he regretted the high cost of his earlier plan, which he attributed to the topography of the land. The new arrangement offered nearly the same athletic facilities as the original plan, but the social center was missing; instead “an ordinary shelter is substituted.”

The improvements to Phelps Field Park were 85% completed by the end of 1924. A small remaining balance in the fund from assessments for the park was used in 1934 to construct a concrete wading pool and cement walks around it. The park was named for park commissioner Edmund J. Phelps in 1939. Phelps was a park commissioner from 1905 until he died in 1923. He was president of the park board in 1912 and 1913.

In 1964, the board spent bond funds to refinish the areas around the wading pool. A new recreation center was built at Phelps in 1969, at the beginning of MPRB’s city-wide buildings program. Once again the original plans for the recreation building at the park were scaled back, but this time for different reasons. In 1968 the

park board had ended the policy of assessing property owners for park improvements, but that created new problems. With improvements at all parks being paid for by city bonds, the park board had to balance demands from around the city for those funds. In this instance, the board approved more expensive plans for larger recreation centers at Sibley and Nicollet (King) parks, east and west respectively from Phelps Field in south Minneapolis, which required a cutback in the amount that could be spent at Phelps.

Those reductions were made later when the park board added a gym to the building at Phelps and renovated the park in 1993-1994. The funds for the project came from many sources and led to a new operating agreement with the Boys and Girls Club, which manages the building to this day. In 2010 two baseball fields were upgraded thanks to the Minnesota Twins Community Fund and The Toro Company.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CHARACTER

Phelps is dominated by a large multi-use field with multi-use diamonds in the northeastern and northwestern corners. Old backstops flank the other two corners, but the infields have been removed in favor of more field space. The building, currently operated by the Boys and Girls Club, is located at the northeastern corner of the park. To the east of the building, sandwiched between the building wall and the rising slope up to Chicago Avenue, is a secluded pair of half-court basketball courts.

Arranged along 39th Street west of the building are a wading pool, play areas, a small picnic area, and a tennis court. A small parking lot is accessible from 39th Street. A pathway runs around the outside of the athletic fields, and sloped paths ascend the hills to the surrounding sidewalks. This feature is rather unique to Phelps, and provides good accessibility into the park even with the challenges of the grade.

Though MPRB does not have a recreation center presence in the park, it is nevertheless very active because of the Boys and Girls Club. The park is situated among busy streets but feels quiet and peaceful because of its location many feet lower than those streets.



Existing Conditions: Phelps



Proposed Plan: Phelps

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARKS

Wayfinding and connections from Phelps Park should focus on:

- The existing RiverLake Greenway on 40th Street, which connects to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park across the 40th Street pedestrian bridge to the west, and to several parks to the east, including Sibley, Hiawatha School, and the Mississippi River. The interconnection between Sibley and Phelps is important because these two parks will have different aquatic facilities.
- The proposed Southside Greenway, a community and City of Minneapolis project that could run on 10th Avenue, 40th Street, and Columbus Avenue, intersecting the park directly.

THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The locations of the main elements at Phelps remain unchanged in the SSAMP plan. The athletic field layout features the two multi-use diamonds and large multi-use field as today. The building and parking lot remain in their current locations.

The basketball area behind the building is removed in favor of a more formal gathering space and outdoor classroom, which can be used by the community and the Boys and Girls Club. In meetings with the Club, this was an expressed desire, along with a concern for the safety of the basketball courts in that location. Instead, a new full-court basketball court replaces the tennis court at the northwestern corner of the park. Also included here are two practice hoops.

The wading pool is converted into a splash pad in the same general location. It was felt a splash pad would be a good fit in this location because of the age group served by the Club and of park users in general. The play areas are revised slightly and extended a little farther south toward the athletic fields

to make room for a new group picnic shelter and adult fitness zone. For the playground to be in this location, additional protection fencing will be necessary along the northwestern diamond.

Additional walking paths create a formal walking loop around the sports fields. The park slopes are naturalized with pollinator friendly plantings and additional trees, to reinforce the sense of enclosure from surrounding busy streets. Phelps Field keeps what it has—namely its character as a classic neighborhood park—but visitors will see a few new amenities. The splash pad promises to bring even more excitement to the park, while the improved picnic area and adult fitness equipment provide more fun for whole families.

KNOWN LAND USE AND COORDINATION ISSUES

During the SSAMP planning process, the Boys and Girls Club expressed some concerns about building maintenance and improvements (which is the purview of RecQuest), but also about the splash pad. The Club was in favor of the splash pad, but was concerned about the additional water cost. Prior to implementation, discussions about utility costs should be had with the Club.

UPDATE EXISTING



Multi-use Field



Multi-use Diamond



Traditional Play Structure



Basketball Court

NEW/ ADDED



Splash Pad



Group Shelter



Outdoor Gathering Space



Stage / Bandshell



Walking Loop Trail



Adult Fitness

PROCESSES

	1: General Input Spring-Fall 2015 <i>Input themes prior to initial concepts</i>	2: Initial Concepts Fall-Winter 2015/2016 <i>Input themes on initial concepts</i>	3: The Preferred Concept Now <i>Key elements of the concept</i>
aquatics	Add large umbrellas and splash features to wading pool →	Prefer splash pad →	Splash pad with shade structure instead of wading pool
play	Like play area, but expand and improve it →	Like adult fitness but keep kids' play area the same size →	Traditional play area reconfigured but the same size
athletics	no comments →	Like the multi-use field; ball diamonds get less use →	Field arrangement as exists today: 2 multi-use diamonds and large multi-use field
courts	Tennis court is unused →	Basketball doesn't work in the area behind the building; like the move to the existing tennis court area Consider multiple sports on the basketball court →	Basketball court moved from behind building to northeast corner, replacing tennis court. Basketball court includes one full-size court and two shoot-hoops. Court could also accommodate volleyball.
winter	no comments →	no comments →	No formal winter facilities planned for this park
landscape	no comments specific to Phelps; many comments want more natural areas in parks →	no comments specific to Phelps; many comments want more natural areas in parks →	Naturalized landscape on Chicago, 40th, and part of Park Avenue slopes
other	More grills, update picnic tables → Park entries need improvement →	Improve lighting, signs, and add bicycle racks → Like adult fitness Concern about the bocce/community oven area: visibility from corner? Unwanted gathering? Consider something the Club can program, like an amphitheater.	Addition of a picnic shelter and enhanced picnic area Addition of adult fitness Area behind building changed to community gathering space and small amphitheater Addition of walking loop around field area, and additional connection to Chicago/39th Street corner Addition of bicycle racks on 39th Street side of building

COST ESTIMATE

Asset Type	Project	2017 ESTIMATED COST	Implementation Sequence	Prioritization Category	Applicable SSAMP Actions
Aquatics	Splash Pad in same location as wading pool	\$ 1,314,180	stand-alone	FUNDED	16, 20a, 20b
Play	Traditional Play Structures (2) in revised containers	\$ 698,158	stand-alone	FUNDED	16, 23b, 23d
Athletics	Athletic field renovation, in same configuration (2 diamonds, large field)	\$ 1,396,316	stand-alone	PLANNED	16, 21b
Courts	Basketball Court: full court plus 2 shoot-hoops (incl. demolition of tennis)	\$ 172,486	stand-alone	PLANNED	16, 22a, 22b
Landscape	Naturalized areas within park	\$ 352,335	stand-alone	PLANNED	26
Landscape	Renovate parking lot	\$ -	stand-alone	PLANNED	28
Other	Outdoor gathering space	\$ 361,958	after basketball	PLANNED	16
Other	Adult fitness area	\$ 61,438	after/with play areas	PLANNED	16, 18
Other	Group picnic shelter	\$ 90,350	after/with play areas	PLANNED	16, 19
Other	Renovate walking paths	\$ 432,365	stand-alone (some with other projects)	PLANNED	16, 17
Other	Miscl. signs, trees, furniture	\$ 69,604	with other projects, as appropriate	PLANNED	9, 17
TOTAL		\$ 4,949,191			

OPERATIONS ESTIMATE

FACILITIES	Total Per Unit Operations Cost	△ Qty	△ Cost
Wading Pool	\$ 15,000	-1	\$ (15,000)
Splash Pad	\$ 35,000	1	\$ 35,000
Tennis Court	\$ 1,500	-1	\$ (1,500)
Full Court Basketball	\$ 1,500	1	\$ 1,500
Outdoor Gathering Space	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Group Shelter	\$ 4,000	1	\$ 4,000
Stage / Bandshell	\$ 1,500	1	\$ 1,500
Adult Fitness	\$ 2,500	1	\$ 2,500
Walking Loop Trail	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Difference			\$ 43,000