



SOUTH SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN

MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD



Minneapolis, Minnesota
Approved September 28th, 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The South Service Area Master Plan (SSAMP) is the result of dedicated and ongoing collaboration among residents and stakeholders. The Plan was shaped by those who served on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), members of the general public who attended meetings and interacted with MPRB staff in the parks, neighborhood and community service organizations, MPRB staff from across the organization, and elected officials. MPRB Planning staff thanks all these individuals for their contributions to the plan.

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A: Implementation Tracking Form
B: Park Condition Assessment
C: Demographic/Trends Analysis
D: Utilization Analysis
E: Community Engagement Documentation
F: Initial Design Concepts
G: CAC Meeting Notes
H: Operations and Maintenance Analysis
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Z: Signed Approval Resolution

**With the exception of Appendix A, the Appendices are not included in the printed document nor on the project website. This background information is contained in approximately one thousand pages of documents, making it cost-prohibitive and cumbersome to produce and store. Summaries of each appendix topic are included in the body of this document. Appendices may be made available for review via e-mail transmittal by requesting them from the project manager. Visit minneapolisparksparks.org/currentprojects and select South Service Area Master Plan to find applicable contact information.*

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INTRODUCTION & PLANNING FRAMEWORK



SECTION CONTENTS:

- INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE
- MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD
- DOCUMENT OVERVIEW
- RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS



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.

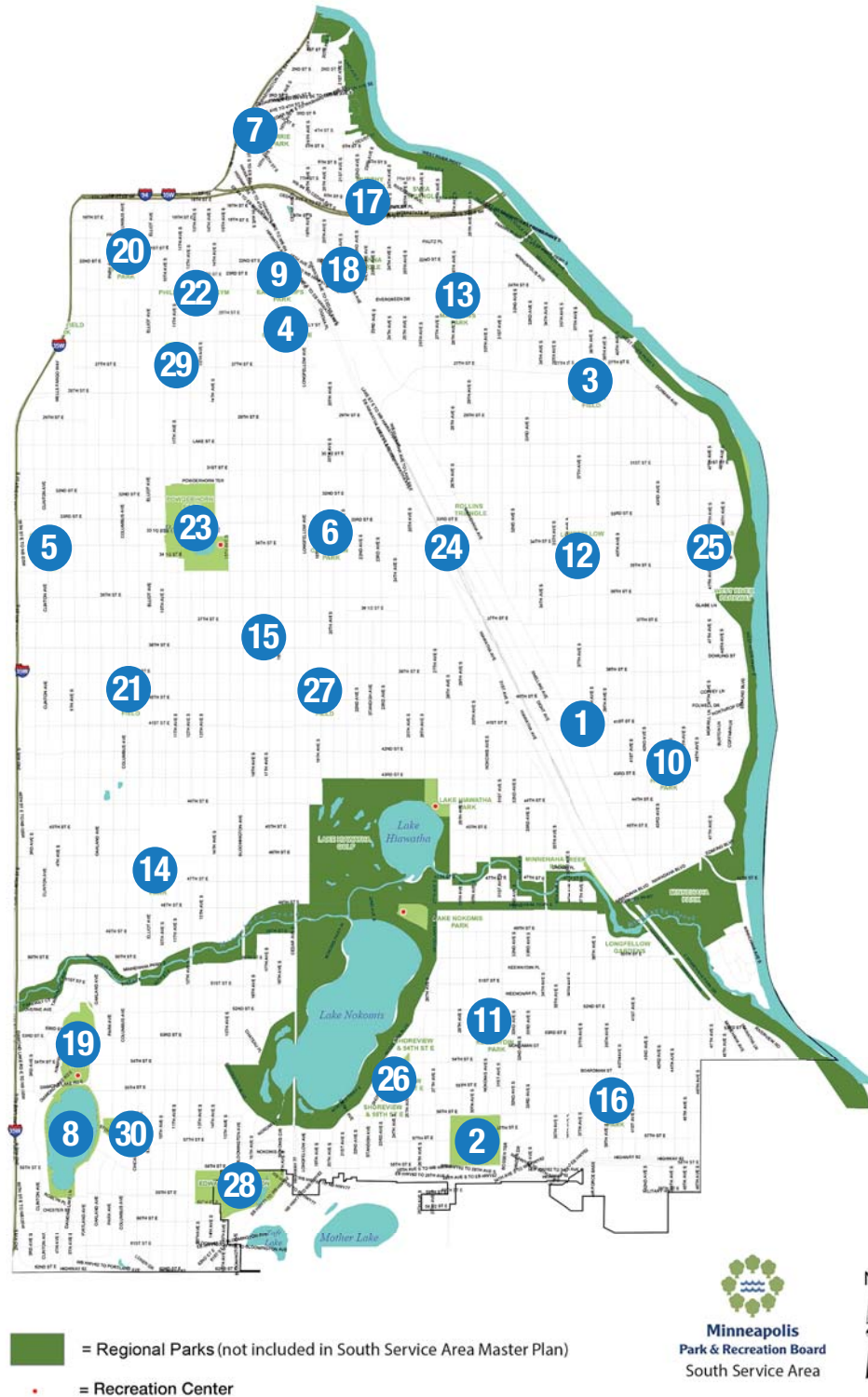
Though the historic legacy of the city parks movement is to ensure equitable access for all people, barriers still exist. Facilities for sports most likely to be played by people of color may be too few or nonexistent.

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.

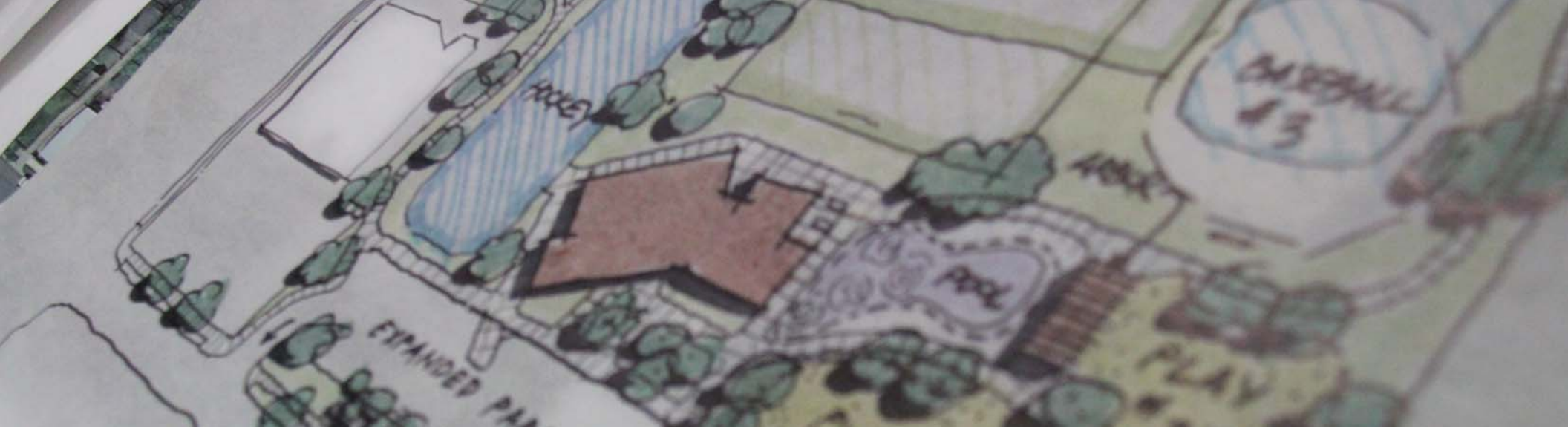


PARKS INCLUDED

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 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.



MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD

ABOUT

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) oversees parks in the City of Minneapolis. The MPRB is a diverse system of land and water spanning approximately 6,790 acres of parkland and water featuring:

251+ park properties including:

- the 55-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway;
- 200+ miles of biking and walking paths;
- 22 lakes;
- 12 formal gardens;
- 7 golf courses;
- 160 neighborhood parks;
- and 47 recreation centers.

Together these properties annually receive an estimated 21 million visits.

The MPRB provides administration, planning development, maintenance and police protection for parks and recreational facilities in the system.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is one of five Minnesota park agencies and one of approximately 130 agencies in the United States that is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

MISSION STATEMENT

"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"

VISION STATEMENT

In 2020, the Minneapolis Park System is a premier destination that welcomes and captivates residents and visitors. The Park System and its beauty are part of daily life and shape the character of Minneapolis. Natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and recreational resources cultivate outstanding experiences, health, enjoyment, fun, and learning for all people. The Park System is sustainable, well-maintained and safe, and meets the needs of individuals, families, and communities. The focus on preserving land continues, with a strong emphasis on connecting people to the land and each other. Aware of its value to their lives, residents are proud stewards and supporters of an extraordinary park and recreation system."



AS A RENOWNED AND AWARD WINNING PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM, THE MPRB DELIVERS:

Vision Theme 1: *Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate*

Goals

- Sound management techniques provide healthy, diverse, and sustainable natural resources.
- Healthy boulevard trees connect all city residents to their park system.
- Residents and visitors enjoy and understand the natural environment.
- People and the environment benefit from the expansion and protection of natural resources.
- Knowledgeable stewards and partners generously support the system's natural resources.

Vision Theme 2: *Recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community*

Goals

- People play, learn, and develop a greater capacity to enjoy life.
- Residents, visitors, and workers enjoy opportunities to improve health and fitness.
- People connect through parks and recreation.
- Volunteers make a vital difference to people, parks, and the community.
- Parks provide a center for community living.

Vision Theme 3: *Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs*

Goals

- Parks shape an evolving city.
- Park facility renewal and development respects history and focuses on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and beauty.
- Focused land management supports current and future generations.
- Financially independent and sustainable parks prosper.
- Through outreach and research, park and recreation services are relevant today and tomorrow.
- Easily accessible information supports enjoyment and use of the park and recreation system.

Vision Theme 4: *A safe place to play, celebrate, contemplate, and recreate*

Goals

- Positive recreation experiences and welcoming parks prevent crime.
- Residents, park visitors, and staff make safe choices in the parks.
- Intervention and communication reduces safety concerns.
- Parks are safe and welcoming by design.
- Communities, public and private partners, and staff cooperate to promote safety.

VALUES

We apply the following values to all of our work:

- **Sustainability:** Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental, economic, and equity concerns.
- **Visionary Leadership:** Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.
- **Safety:** Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors.
- **Responsiveness and Innovation:** Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the city's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.
- **Independence and Focus:** Independence allows the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to focus on providing and obtaining the resources necessary to accomplish its mission and form effective, responsible partnerships.

PRINCIPLES

We consider the following principles when making decisions that have a district or system-wide impact:

- **Identified Community Need and Demographics:** Emphasis will be placed on researching community needs and demographics when considering program and facility delivery.
- **Quality versus Quantity:** The amenities provided to meet the park and recreation needs of communities will be high quality and provided at a sustainable level. Amenities that have completed their useful life-cycle, especially those with a blighted appearance, will be removed and, as funding becomes available, replaced with new amenities.
- **Embracing Technology:** Decision-making will embrace technology to better serve the community.
- **Fostering a New Face for Partnerships:** Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organization's mission will be encouraged.
- **Focusing on the Activity, Then the Infrastructure:** After evaluation of what the Park Board currently provides, the status of other service providers, and existing infrastructure, infrastructure will be provided to meet the service goals for that activity. Service goals for an activity will be based on demographics of an area, identified community need, and the identified target audience for the activity.
- **Sustainable Rate:** A sustainable park system will be supported by decisions that provide services at a sustainable rate, such as providing infrastructure that can be reasonably maintained, setting realistic program and service delivery targets, or modifying land management techniques to increase efficiency.

DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The South Service Area Master Plan document is the result of nearly two years of community participation in designing the south service area parks. MPRB and its partners—neighborhood organizations, community service organizations, stakeholder groups, and interested citizens—hosted nearly 100 engagement activities. These ranged in style from formal meetings to community design workshops to spontaneous walks through parks. The main purpose of this document is to describe and display the vision for the south service area parks.

Specifically, this document is meant to:

- Show the Minneapolis community what it can expect from MPRB
- Guide development of the Capital Improvement Program each year, through resources such as concept design plans and cost estimates
- Set a framework for collaboration with outside groups around implementation of, stewardship of, and fundraising for park improvements
- Create an MPRB-wide framework for park design and maintenance, so all divisions are on the same page
- Provide resources for tracking progress, so MPRB is continually accountable to the promises made during the south service area planning process



THIS DOCUMENT HAS SIX CHAPTERS

1. Introduction and Planning Framework

(This is the current chapter)

2. Planning Process

This chapter documents how MPRB and the community arrived at this plan. It provides key background information on demographics, recreation trends, and the service area itself. It discusses the various stages of the planning process and the community engagement undertaken at each stage.

3. Service Area Vision

This chapter is a look at the service area as a whole. It explains the “lenses and actions” that guide the plan and documents additional recommendations made by the project’s Community Advisory Committee.

4. Neighborhood Park Plans

This chapter includes the designs for each neighborhood park in the south service area. It features a packet of information for each park, including cost estimates and ongoing maintenance estimates.

5. Operations & Maintenance

This chapter includes an overview of operational and staffing standards for the South Service Area (SSA) and includes a review of the current organizational structure, work group breakdown, operational standards, and desired outcomes.

6. Implementation

This chapter speaks to future park planners, designers, and community advocates about how to make the park plans real. It provides guidance on using this planning document for capital planning, detailed design, partnerships, and park dedication expenditures. It discusses how to track progress and ensure accountability to the public.

*Appendices

Additional information is included in several appendices to this document, including expanded discussions of demographics, community needs, and recreation trends. Detailed documentation of community engagement is also included here, as well as earlier designs for parks that were modified by the community through the planning process.

LIVING DOCUMENT

MPRB intends that this will be a living document. MPRB intends that it will be utilized regularly by all departments for everything from capital planning to detailed park designs to placement of new trees in parks. The document will exist as a complete, stand-alone book, but the material contained in it will also be disseminated in various formats throughout the organization, to ensure its principles are followed and its resources are utilized:

- The park plan “packets” can be separated into separate PDFs and placed into Planning Division files associated with each park. Project managers will have these packets as resources close at hand whenever they begin a project in a south service area park.
- The base CAD files that show the park designs can also be included in Planning Division files, as well as provided to Forestry to guide geo-referenced planting.
- The implementation tracking spreadsheet allows for regular digital input by park planners, to facilitate regular and easy updates to the board and public on progress.
- The cost estimates shown in this document can be placed as active spreadsheets in each Planning Division park file, as a resource to project managers when they begin projects.
- The “using this document” and “modifications” sections in Chapter 6 can become internal MPRB procedures filed with the Deputy Superintendent, along with all other procedures and policies.
- The park plan packets can be linked to south service area park pages on the MPRB website. Visitors to a park’s webpage will not only be able to see what is offered in the park now, but also see what is planned in the future.

RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

SEVERAL OTHER PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS ARE RELATED TO THE SOUTH SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN. THESE PLANS INCLUDE:

Regional PARK MASTER PLANS

Many of the larger, natural resource-based parks in Minneapolis are Regional Parks. This includes (in the South Service Area) Nokomis-Hiawatha, Mississippi River Gorge, Minnehaha, and Minnehaha Parkway Trail. Per Metropolitan Council funding requirements, these large parks are master planned individually. Though existing facilities within these parks are shown on many South Service Area Master Plan maps, it is the regional park master plans that govern future investment in these parks.

RECQUEST

This major multi-year project will create a new vision for recreation centers and programs across the city. While the SSAMP is considering outdoor facilities (and has assumed, for the time being, the existing recreation center footprints as a basis for planing), RecQuest is looking at buildings and at how MPRB programs indoor and outdoor facilities. RecQuest has a direct relationship with all service area master plans, as it may create new models for recreation center buildings. Careful coordination has taken place as these complementary projects unfold, to ensure community input is heard by all projects. Chapter 6 describes a method for modifying this plan should plans for recreation centers change.

ACTIVITY PLANS

Activity Plans are topical resource guides that guide and are guided by service area master planning. They look at specific use types in the parks (such as urban agriculture, skateboarding, or court sports). They make recommendations for level of service, provide design standards and guidelines, and create task lists for improving delivery of an activity system-wide.

During the SSAMP process, one activity plan had been completed—the Urban Agriculture Plan. The Urban Ag Plan guided the SSAMP relative to the placement and opportunities for urban agriculture areas. The SSAMP implements a key feature of the Urban Ag Plan by officially designating urban agriculture areas on park plans. Chapter 6 describes a process for adding additional urban agriculture areas in Southside revive area parks.

Two other activity plans—court sports and skateboarding—were near complete during the SSAMP process, but had not yet been officially adopted. Some of the draft recommendations from these plans were considered, such as the desire to move toward larger banks of tennis courts or the distribution of skate parks. They will become a more important resource as the south parks plans are implemented.

MPRB COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2007-2020 comprehensive plan guides all decision making at MPRB. As such, many key principles of the plan are reflected in the SSAMP. However, the service area master plans can also be seen as a look forward to the next revision of the comprehensive plan, as they are an important documentation of community desires around neighborhood parks.

Future/Current Service Area Master Plans:

- Downtown (Currently on-going)
- North (2017)
- Northeast/Southeast (2018)
- Southwest (2018)

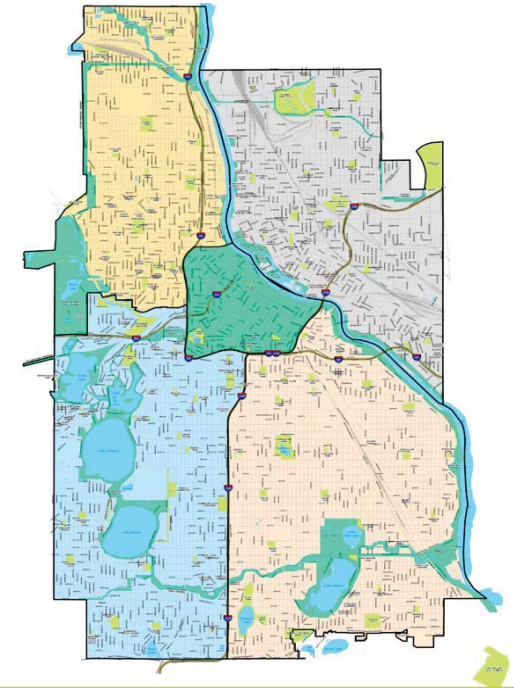


Figure 1.2 - MPRB Five Park Service Areas Map

OTHER SERVICE AREA MASTER PLANS

The 160 neighborhood parks in the MPRB system are divided (for management and planning purposes) into five service areas, as shown in figure 1.2. The Downtown Service Area Master Plan was undertaken concurrent to the South and had a similar approval timeline. Unique among service area master plans, the Downtown Plan was created in collaboration with the City of Minneapolis and is a comprehensive look at all public spaces—parks, plazas, street corridors, etc.

The North, Northeast/Southeast, and Southwest Service Area Master Plans will follow the South plan and will prepare neighborhood park plans at a similar level of detail as those contained in this document.

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