

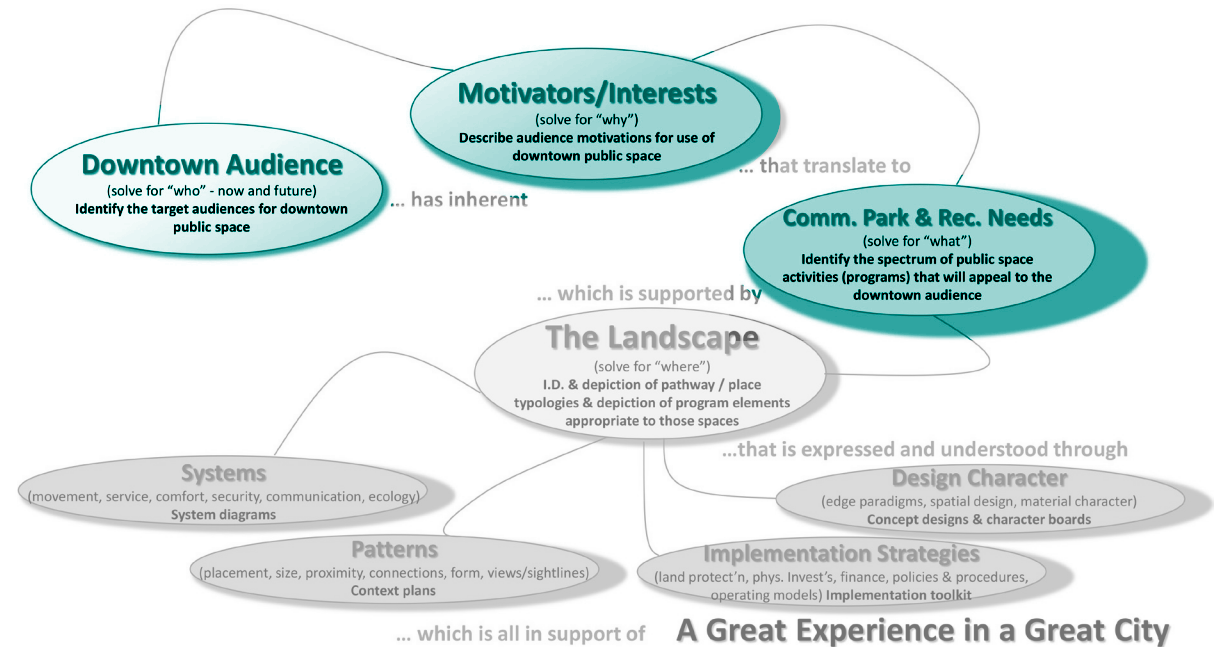
2 Planning Process

Project Timeline
Community Engagement
Downtown Audience
Motivators/Interests
Community Park and Recreation Needs
Guiding Principles
Inventory and Analysis

PROJECT APPROACH REFERENCE

The Downtown Service Area Master Plan (DSAMP) project approach has been comprehensive and multi-faceted– examining demographics, recreation needs, condition of current assets, best practices in urban park and recreation, and existing service gaps. Throughout the document the project approach diagram will be referenced, where appropriate, to depict how the information collected connects to these facets.

This chapter addresses the downtown audience, motivators/interests and community park and recreation needs.



PLANNING PROCESS

PROJECT TIMELINE

The DSAMP process occurred in four phases as shown in Figure 2.1

Project Start-up Phase

The Project Start-up Phase began in November 2014. The focus of this phase was to launch the assessments for the project and community engagement. In this phase project teams – appointed Steering Committee (SC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and staff Project Advisory Committee (PAC) – were launched and provided baseline data about downtown and downtown parks and assisted in further developing the community engagement plan for the project.

Discovery and Assessment Phase

The Discovery and Assessment Phase followed and focused on conducting assessments of downtown parks, conducting an inventory of existing facilities and activities, identifying trends and demographics, and gaining an understanding of community park and recreation needs. This phase included extensive community outreach through park events (intercept events), focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and online survey/mapping tools. Members of the SC

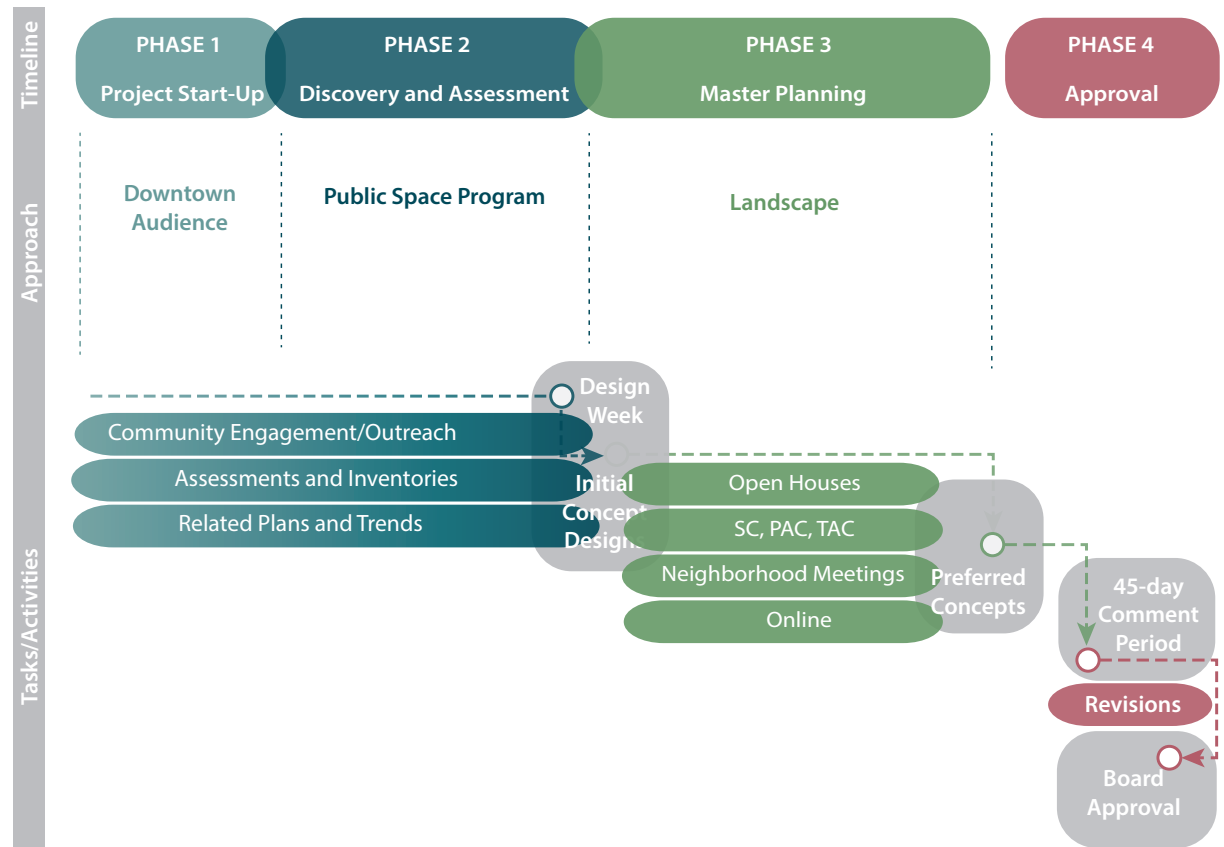


Figure 1.5 DSAMP Project Timeline and Approach

and TAC assisted in the engagement by identifying individuals and groups to engage and helping conduct outreach in the parks, as well as at meetings they regularly attend.

Master Planning Phase

The Master Planning Phase was launched with a multi-day Design Week exercise that built on the community engagement from the previous phase. Design Week included community open houses at the beginning and end of the week. Between the open houses, designers and planners from the consultant team and staff team created concept plans for existing and proposed downtown parks based on the outcomes from community input in Phase 2 and the inventories and assessments that had been completed for downtown and downtown parks. The initial concepts were available online and during a series of open houses for community review and critique. Staff also attended neighborhood meetings to discuss and refine the concepts. Based on community input, the designs were refined and reviewed by the Steering Committee. This phase culminated with the completion of the draft master plan for downtown and the final meetings of the SC and TAC.

Approval Phase

The Approval Phase started with a 45-day public comment period for the draft document. During the 45-day comment period the document was available online and at downtown service area recreation centers. Surveys to collect comments were also available at these locations. At the conclusion of the 45-day comment period, MPRB staff will tabulated the comments, made necessary changes to the document to reflect that input, and brought the final DSAMP before the Board of Commissioners for approval with a public hearing.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The DSAMP and the DPRFP shared an overarching identity, “Pathways to Places,” and a strategic community engagement process from September 2014 to February 2016. The process was designed and implemented by the project team to provide input relevant to both plans, maximizing engagement, and eliminating duplication between the highly interconnected stakeholder groups. The following is a summary of the target audiences, the range of engagement tools employed, and the key findings of the overall process.

Tools

The engagement process was built to provide layers of opportunities for everyone, from the casual user to the highly engaged community member, to share their thoughts about Minneapolis’ downtown park and public realm system. Some tools provided quick and easy access, while others required more time and consideration within a group. The process also balanced the ability for participants to come to meetings with opportunities that can fit into an already busy day. The following descriptions of each of the major tools include a summary of how



they were applied and the number and types of participants they engaged.

Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

Both a Steering Committee (SC) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were formed to provide guidance for both the DSAMP and DPRFP. Both committees were entrusted to become knowledgeable about the projects and their respective scopes and to play a number of important, yet distinct, roles throughout processes of each plan. There were 10 meetings of the SC and 10 meetings of the TAC. See Chapter 1 for list of appointing individuals and organizations for the SC and TAC.



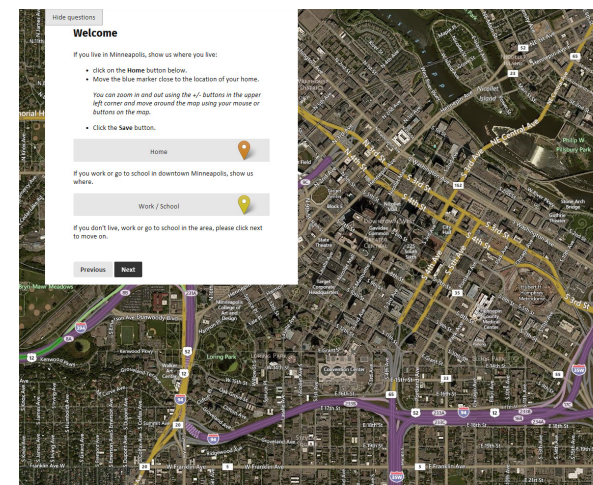
Intercept Events and Outreach Toolkit

A key method to collect input across the full range of downtown Minneapolis constituencies relied on taking the process to people. Intercept events created opportunities across downtown and at many existing community meetings and events to help define the future of parks, plazas, streets, and public spaces in downtown Minneapolis. The intercept technique encouraged participation by speaking directly to Minneapolis residents, workers, and visitors, walking them through a short set of questions and apprising them of upcoming engagement events. The events included interactive displays at prominent locations with heavy foot traffic (Nicollet Mall, various farmer's markets, Elliot Recreation Center, etc.) This tool allowed the design team to:



- » Reach residents and visitors who otherwise were unlikely to participate in the planning process
- » Explore why people visit Downtown, activities they would like to see happening, how far they would travel to a park, and what time of day they are most likely to spend time outdoors downtown
- » Generate an email list used to keep participants informed of future involvement activities
- » Record participants' relationship to Downtown, the number and the demographics of people they interacted with

The design team created a community engagement toolkit, using the same questions as the intercept events, to extend the reach of the project beyond



the capacity of MPRB staff. The toolkit created opportunities for one-on-one meetings, small groups, and presentations to established groups using a consistent set of replicable and customizable materials. A package of materials and instructions was provided to SC members, TAC Members, project staff, and other volunteers. It included the following:

- » Individual interview form
- » Display boards
- » Discussion guide handouts
- » Introductory “Pathways to Places” presentation
- » Customized presentation slides
- » Demographic card
- » Comment card
- » Online feedback form

In addition to the combined MPRB and City process for downtown (*Pathways to Places*), the MPRB was also engaged in a community discussion around the neighborhood capital backlog across the system and the need for additional funding to sustain the system into the future. This discussion, called “Closing the Gap: Investing in our Neighborhood Parks,” involved a series of community workshops during the same time as the *Pathways to Places* process. These workshops were designed to include an opportunity to gather additional input using the intercept boards and outreach kit tools.

Toolkit and Intercept Boards

Resulted in 35 additional engagement opportunities reaching over 1,200 participants

Online Surveys Using Mapita

To supplement the in-person meetings and intercept events, the process included an online interactive map, using Mapita, an easy to use website that allowed stakeholders to share their ideas visually. Mapita created a quick and accessible way to provide input about a variety of topics. The link to the Mapita survey was advertised through the email lists, Facebook, and the networks of committee members and focus group participants between June and September 2015. The tool created a convenient, direct line between participants and MPRB staff and consultants. The features of this tool allowed participants to:

- » Place points to indicate a location in answer to questions about favorite places, ideas for new parks or public spaces and barriers to walking and biking around downtown Minneapolis



- » Draw lines to indicate current and desired paths to downtown locations
- » Provide detailed follow-up to points and lines as well as multiple choice survey questions and preference sliders
- » Respond from any location, on their own schedule, and from any type of mobile device (smartphone, tablet, or computer)
- » Provide demographics to assist in tracking the project's reach (a profile of Mapita respondents is appended to this report)

Mapita Surveys

517 completed online surveys
3,175 data points
370 lines mapped across downtown



Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were small group meetings organized around specific topics to obtain more detailed feedback and discussion. Focus groups were formed by inviting or recruiting participants, some of whom are members of organizations representing specific interests in Downtown.

Focus Group and Individual Stakeholder Interviews

Over 50 participants
Stakeholder interviews included:

- Youth Coordinating Board,
- Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities
- Minneapolis Parks Foundation



Six focus groups were facilitated by the design team in April 2015. Each focus group was organized around a topic or group of interests, as follows:

- » Non-profits/human services organizations
- » Downtown residents, families, neighborhood organizations
- » Arts and culture organizations and advocates
- » Business and property owners
- » Recreation
- » Adjacent neighborhoods

2015 Design Week Public Participants

10/14 Loring Roundtable - 29

10/19 Workshop at Mill Ruins - 37

10/22 Open House at Walker Art Center - 41



Workshops and Charrettes

The most intensive working sessions with the public and the design team were held as in-person open houses, workshops, and design charrettes. These formats were used for internal working sessions and during a more intensive creative session referred to as Design Week, October 14–23, 2015.

At key points in the process, the design team (along with additional MPRB and City staff beyond the members of the design team) used a charrette process to advance the thinking and generate new ideas for downtown parks. Each work session gathered the most relevant project team members and any additional perspectives needed to consider the results of community engagement activities and technical analysis and push ideas forward within a limited period of time.

Design Week was a major transition in the community process, which consisted of a series of planning and design activities. This week marked the shift from primarily gathering information from the public to asking for assistance in applying the ideas at the site and service area level and then collecting feedback on the results. The many threads of input and analysis were collected and summarized to provide a solid

base of information. From intercept board responses, to meeting minutes from SC and TAC sessions, the input generated was significant in both volume and quality. In anticipation of the detailed feedback from the community surrounding Loring Park, a community roundtable was convened to preview the Design Week discussion and collect ideas specifically about this largest park in the service area. For the official opening of Design Week, the team facilitated an interactive public workshop at the Mill City Museum. The workshop offered an opportunity for the public to learn more about the progress so far (via a presentation) and to generate ideas with the design team for each of the MPRB downtown park sites and a key park search area in the North Loop. Ideas generated at the workshop kick-started a three-day charrette process that also included informational presentations from futurists, experts in placemaking, transportation and water infrastructure, as well as key downtown stakeholders. The design team worked for the next three days generating site-specific designs and programming options to activate downtown parks and public spaces. The results of the charrette were presented at a public open house on October 22, 2015 at the Walker Art Center.

DOWNTOWN AUDIENCE

Understanding park users in downtown Minneapolis requires understanding the different reasons people find themselves downtown. The basic breakdown of audiences (or types of users) includes those who live, work, or visit downtown. Some key facts about the scale and makeup of each of these audiences are:

30,000 people live downtown

- » There are 17,677 housing units as of 2011, a number that has been increasing rapidly with over 3,500 housing units permitted in 2013 alone
- » The Minneapolis Downtown Council's target is to double the downtown population by 2025
- » 7% of downtown residents (around 2,100) are under the age of 18
- » 13% of downtown residents (over 4,000) are over the age of 60
- » 9.5% of Minneapolis residents have a disability, making it likely that at least 2,850 downtown residents have a disability
- » While detailed numbers are difficult to obtain, at least 800 homeless residents are sheltered daily in downtown Minneapolis

158,000 people work downtown

- » Professional services, finance, insurance and management are the largest categories of employment, together making up 45% of all jobs
- » Many employees (27,000 jobs in all) are in downtown outside of daytime hours because they do shift or evening work, particularly in accommodation and food service, arts, entertainment and recreation, and health care

Over 30 million people visit the metro area, many of whom visit downtown

- » In 2014 the total anticipated attendance at all downtown events was 685,000, an all-time record
- » Downtown contains over 7,000 hotel rooms

These different audiences occupy and travel through the downtown area in different ways. The map (Figure 2.2) shows where they concentrate or enter downtown.



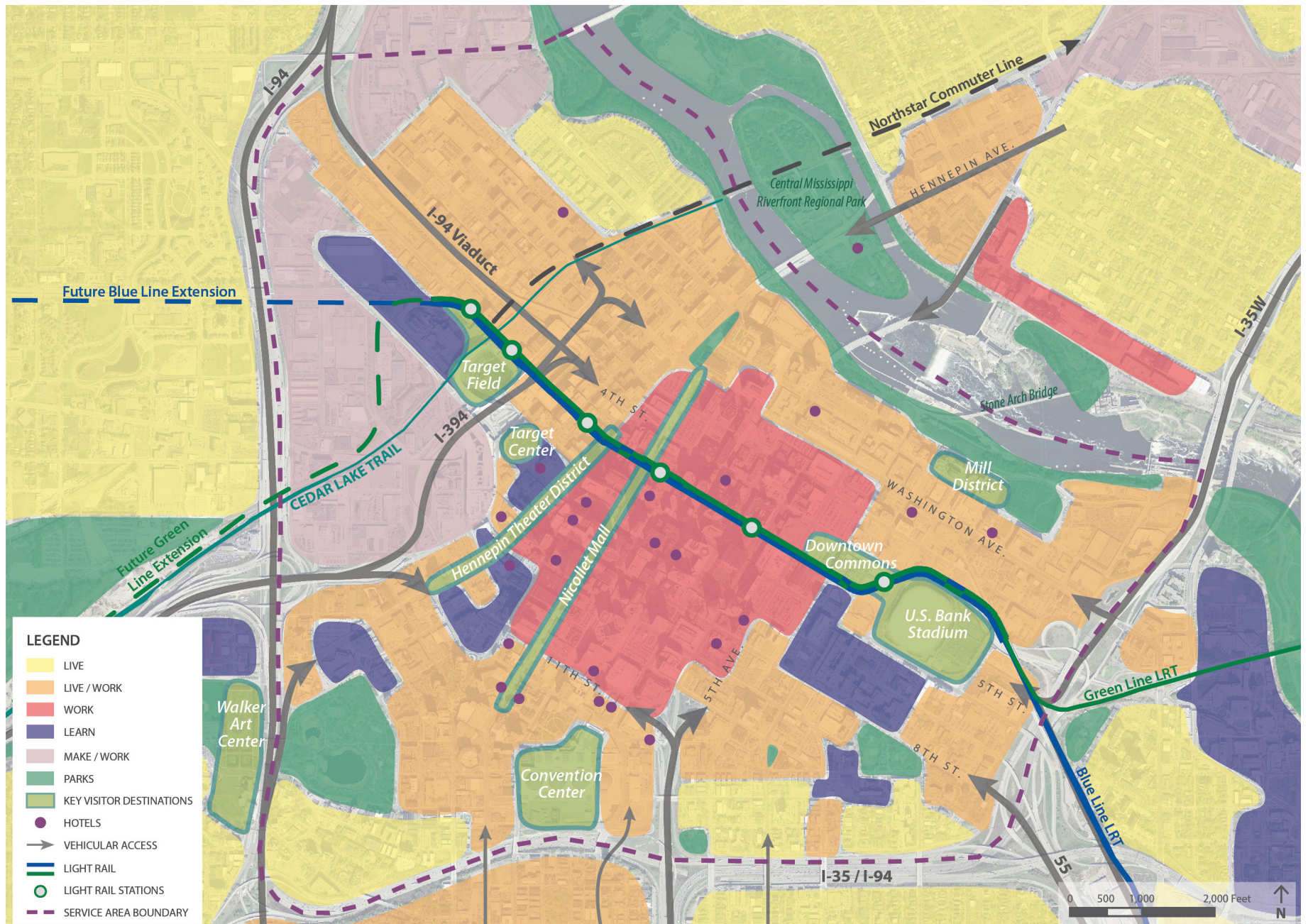


Figure 1.6 Workers, Residents and Visitors - an abstracted land use map based on City of Minneapolis Future Land Use GIS data

Identifying Target Audiences

The downtown Minneapolis constituency is complex. It includes a highly diverse population of dwellers/neighbors, workers, and visitors, each with a different motivation for being in downtown. Within these broad constituent categories, the *Pathways to Places* team, with guidance from the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee, developed a finer grained list of current and anticipated target audiences for downtown parks. The categories included:

- » government entities
- » recreation groups
- » visitors/tourism
- » underserved & underrepresented populations
- » associations, networks, and media
- » downtown residents
- » downtown workers
- » downtown business community

Each of the engagement tools for the DSAMP engagement process was designed with these audiences in mind. As the tools were rolled out, goals for each category were tracked using a graphic dashboard summarizing the current status of each target so that progress could be monitored and future engagement planned to ensure the mix of identified audiences had opportunities to participate.

Tracking Our Reach

Tracking engagement efforts across categories of participants included setting goals and showing progress using a community engagement dashboard (Figure 2.3). The dashboard tool was used and updated throughout the process to guide the engagement process towards an overall balance of effort and reach. Not every participant could be counted due to the nature of events such as intercepts, where people are walking up and are not asked to provide demographic information. An effort was made to record key demographics and affiliations for tracking purposes. Looking across sign-in sheets, collected demographic cards, and counts of responses at intercept events, at least 2,000 participants were counted across the *Pathways to Places* engagement



process. These participants represented a wide range of the diverse downtown audiences. Looking first at the major categories (live, work, visit), this process was able to reach all three in significant numbers.

The dashboard illustrates how the information gathered from public and project stakeholders directly shapes the DSAMP and related efforts for downtown Minneapolis parks. The targets were set with the assistance of the SC and TAC. From the start of the process, the team monitored the results of the community engagement plan and adjusted the approach to outreach to generate information that represented a mix of downtown's major audiences. As this information was coming in it continually informed the evolving ideas discussed by the committees and the design team. The elected official target was not fully met. The underserved and underrepresented target was modified to reach out directly to individuals versus service providers. Though not all targets were achieved, the end result of using the dashboard indicates a balanced outreach effort and results.

Population Data

The engagement process also tracked basic demographic categories of participants: sex, race/ethnicity, and age. These participation statistics were self-reported (using a demographic card) or extrapolated from the observations of staff and volunteers facilitating engagement events.

TARGET RESULTS

Government Entities

- 24 out of 32 identified MPRB Commissioners, members of city commissions, City Council members and Mayor

Recreation Groups

- 8 out of 10 groups

Visitors/Tourism

- 2 out of 2 organizations;
531 visitors (goal of 150)

Underserved and Underrepresented Populations

- 7 out of 15 organizations,
300 of 300 individuals

Associations, Networks and Media

- 11 out of 12 organizations

Downtown Residents

- 529 individuals (goal of 75)

Downtown Workers/Students

- 457 individuals (goal of 150)

Downtown Business Interests

- 7 out of 12 groups

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DASHBOARD

TARGET AUDIENCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

- Park and Recreation Commissioner
- Boards, Committees, Commissions
- City Councilors
- Mayor



RECREATION GROUPS

- Groups



VISITORS/TOURISM

- Organizations
- Individuals



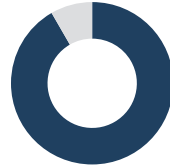
UNDER REPRESENTED POPULATIONS

- Organizations and Agencies
- Individuals



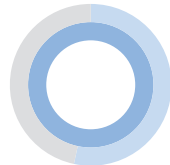
ASSOCIATIONS, NETWORKS + MEDIA

- Organizations



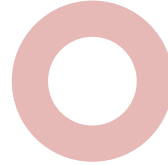
DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS

- Organizations
- Individuals



DOWNTOWN WORKERS

- Individuals



BUSINESS INTERESTS

- Organizations



Government Entities: includes formal meetings, conversations or presentations with elected officials, boards, committees and commissions. Minimum target is all 9 Park and Recreation Board commissioners, 13 city councilors, the mayor and at least 9 boards, committees, and commissions.

Recreation Groups: includes formal meetings, conversations or presentations with recreation-specific organizations. Minimum target is contact with at least 10 organizations.

Visitors/Tourism: includes formal meeting, conversations or presentations with tourism-specific organizations and agencies. Minimum target is contact with at least 2 organizations and 150 visitors.

Under-represented Populations: includes formal meetings, conversations or presentations with organizations and agencies serving a wide range of under-represented populations, such as low-income residents, youth, and people with disabilities. Minimum target is contact with at least 15 organizations and agencies and 300 individuals.

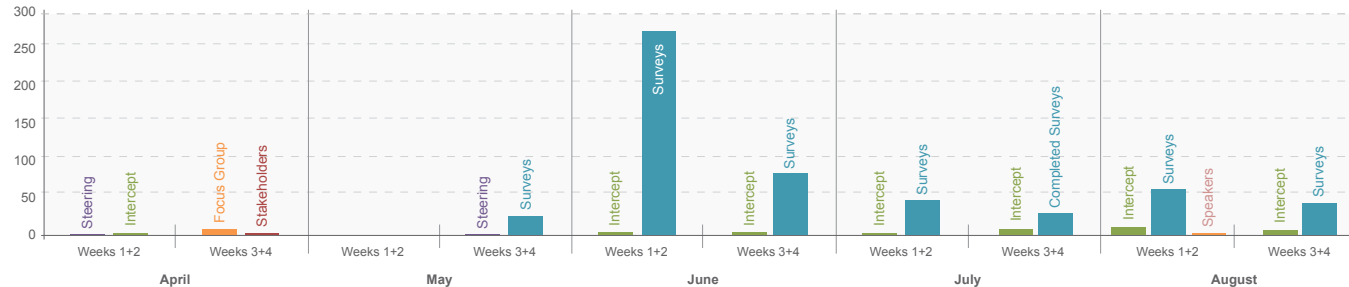
Associations, Networks and Media: includes formal meetings, conversations or presentations with non-recreation specific organizations. Minimum target is contact with at least 12 organizations.

Downtown Residents: includes workshops, intercept events or questionnaires involving people working downtown. Minimum target is contact with at least 12 organizations and 75 individuals.

Downtown Workers: includes workshops, intercept events or questionnaires involving people working downtown. Minimum target is contact with at least 150 individuals.

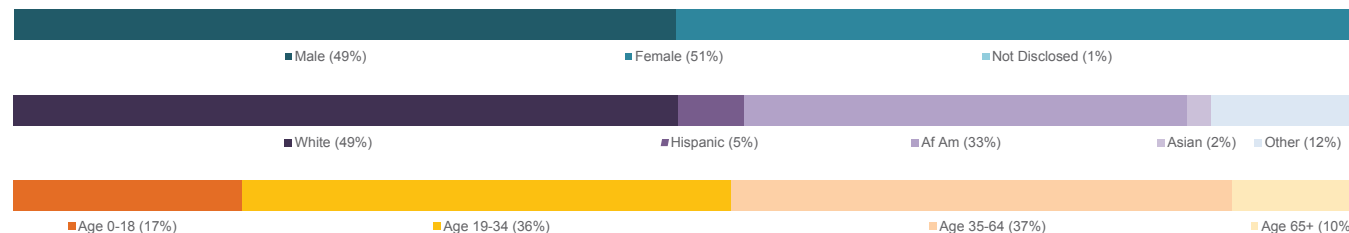
Business Interests: includes formal meetings, conversations or presentations involving downtown business owners and employers. Minimum target is contact with at least 12 organizations or business owners.

ACTIVITIES + ENGAGEMENT METRICS



Activities + Engagement Metrics Chart Color Key

POPULATION DATA CAPTURED



TOTAL RESPONDENTS



Figure 1.7 Community Engagement Dashboard

MOTIVATORS/INTERESTS

Identifying Target Audience Interests

In order to articulate and use the interests of the target audiences in the planning process, the project team worked with the SC and TAC to focus on what would motivate someone to use a downtown park and what the park user would need to support that use. This exploration began with the major categories of park users that had been identified: residents, workers, and visitors. Over the course of the community engagement process, it became clear that across these categories there are common reasons – or motivations – for an individual to use a park. This resulted in a framework of Absolutes, Motivators, and Modifiers as an organizing method of community needs.

Absolutes

Absolutes are the basic attributes or needs that every downtown park space should possess to serve all visitors. They can be features (like drinking fountains) or design techniques (like handicapped accessibility).

They are:

- » ADA/Accessible + Universal Design
- » Basic Needs + Comfort
- » Design for Playfulness
- » Mobility + Connections
- » Nature
- » Safety + Security
- » Seasonality

Motivators

Motivators are audience motivations to use the downtown park system (Figure 2.4). Users can often have multiple motivators to use a park. They are defined as follows:

Action/Adventure/Challenge

This motivation is about the desire to be challenged. For people with this motivation, parks provide a setting for stretching their limits, and experiencing new things. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the unique facilities available in parks, and they appreciate the additional stimulation of being outdoors.

Assembly

This motivation is about the desire for civic engagement in a public place. For a person with this motivation, parks provide a public setting to gather and express opinion. They choose to pursue this goal in a public space, rather than in another setting, because of the visibility it gives to their first amendment rights.

Action/Adventure/Challenge



Assembly



Be Entertained



Competition/Sport



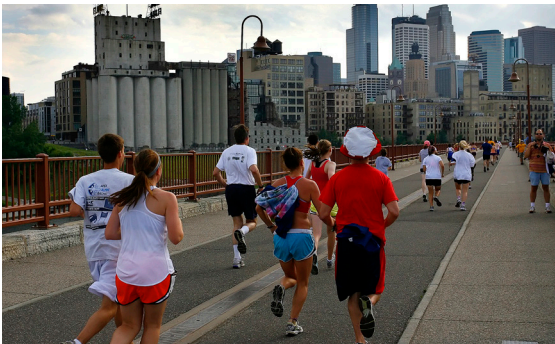
Explore/Learn



Family and Friends



Fitness/Health



Get Away/Retreat/Rest/Relax



Study/Think/Work



Figure 1.8 Downtown Service Area Motivators

Be Entertained

This motivation is about the desire to have fun, to observe others and to be seen. For people with this motivation, parks provide a setting for a wide variety of activities depending on their specific entertainment interests. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the unique social interactions that happen outdoors, they appreciate the experience of being outdoors, and they seek the programming provided by the park system.

Competition/Sport

This motivation is about the desire to participate in individual and team sports. For a person with this motivation, parks provide a setting for playing organized games or competing against one's self. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the unique facilities available in parks, they appreciate the additional stimulation of being outdoors, and they may seek the programming provided by the park system.

Explore/Learn

This motivation is about the desire to explore new environments and learn new things. For a person

with this motivation, parks provide a setting for learning about the natural world, history, and culture. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the availability of natural and interpretive elements, they appreciate the benefits of being outdoors, and they seek the programming provided by the park system.

Family and Friends

This motivation is about the desire to gather with family and friends. For a person with this motivation, parks provide a setting conducive to small and large group gathering. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the availability of public open spaces, they appreciate the benefits of being outdoors, and they seek the programming provided by the park system.

Fitness/Health

This motivation is about the desire to achieve, improve, or maintain physical fitness and overall well-being. Parks provide a setting for activities that are likely to be more vigorous: people with this motivation choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the specific facilities present at parks. They appreciate

the health benefits of being outdoors, and they seek the particular interactions with other people that can happen in parks.

Get Away/Retreat/Rest/Relax

This motivation is about the desire to be mentally and emotionally rejuvenated. For a person with this motivation, parks provide a setting for activities that are likely to be less vigorous. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the availability of quiet and solitary spaces, and they appreciate the emotional benefits of being outdoors.

Study/Think/Work

This motivation is about the desire to be intellectually stimulated. For people with this motivation, parks provide a setting for activities that are likely to be less vigorous physically. They choose to pursue this goal in a park, rather than in another setting, because of the unique educational opportunities, and they appreciate the intellectual benefits of studying or working outdoors.

Modifiers

Within a particular motivation for using the downtown park system, there may be a spectrum of park activities or facilities needed to carry it out. (Figure 1.9). For instance, if someone was motivated to use public space or a park for fitness/health they would have different needs depending on the amount of time they had to spend, the level of social interaction they desired, or physical intensity they were seeking. Those with young kids or pets would tend to stay fit in different ways than those without. Modifiers are expressed as a series of sliding scales and include:

- » Flexibility and Time
- » Kids
- » Pets
- » Desired Level of Social Interaction
- » Desired Level of Structure
- » Physical Intensity
- » Scale/Size of Group
- » Willingness/Ability to Pay
- » Nature

These absolutes, motivators and modifiers helped inform the design team as to what activities and amenities should be considered in the park planning design phase.

Primary Modifiers

Flexibility + Time

Open Schedule Firm Schedule

Kids

No Kids Kids

Level of Structure

Unstructured Organized

Nature

Wild Manicured

Physical Intensity

Calming More Intense

Scale/Size of Group

Intimate Large Scale

Willingness/Ability to Pay

Paid Events + Amenities Free Events + Amenities

Pets

No Pets Pets

Level of Social Interaction

Low Level High Level

Figure 1.9 Downtown Service Area Modifiers

COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS

While each engagement activity generated many individual ideas, the approach of this process is to look across these results and identify common themes and patterns that represent a broader view. The success of this process is measured both in the number and diversity of participants and the quality of ideas generated around the following major categories: locations, connections, and activities.

Support a Wide Variety of Users

Downtown parks serve not only an immediate and growing residential population but also the daily influx of employees in the Downtown Service Area and many visitors. These users add layers of activities and needs based on when they spend time downtown and in parks. The committees and the participants in intercept and Mapita activities indicated that most park users are already downtown (living, working, or going to school there) or come downtown for the unique blend of culture and variety of things to do. These reasons also impact the times that participants indicated they are most likely to be outdoors in parks: after work, evenings, and weekend afternoons/evenings. Focus groups and intercepts reaching social service organizations and representatives of under-

served communities illuminated the need for all-day uses that have no barriers to entry. Acknowledging and welcoming all park users builds ownership in the park sites and makes for a safer and more enjoyable experience through the provision of accessible open space, which is the core purpose of parks.

Add and Improve Park Locations

Throughout the process, participants identified MPRB parks as well as other public spaces downtown as important destinations. The transformation of the riverfront and two major current projects, Nicollet Mall and The Commons, have built excitement for the possibilities of public spaces downtown. Amongst the downtown MPRB parks, only one (Loring) was specifically called out as a destination on its own, although many also pointed to the riverfront. Since the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park is a regional park and the subject of the *RiverFirst* effort spearheaded by the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, it has been planned for separately from this document. Elliot Park was clearly significant to neighborhood residents, based on stakeholder input, but does not currently play a major role for visitors or workers. Most of the other existing MPRB sites (especially

Park Avenue Triangle) are relatively unknown to the majority of participants.

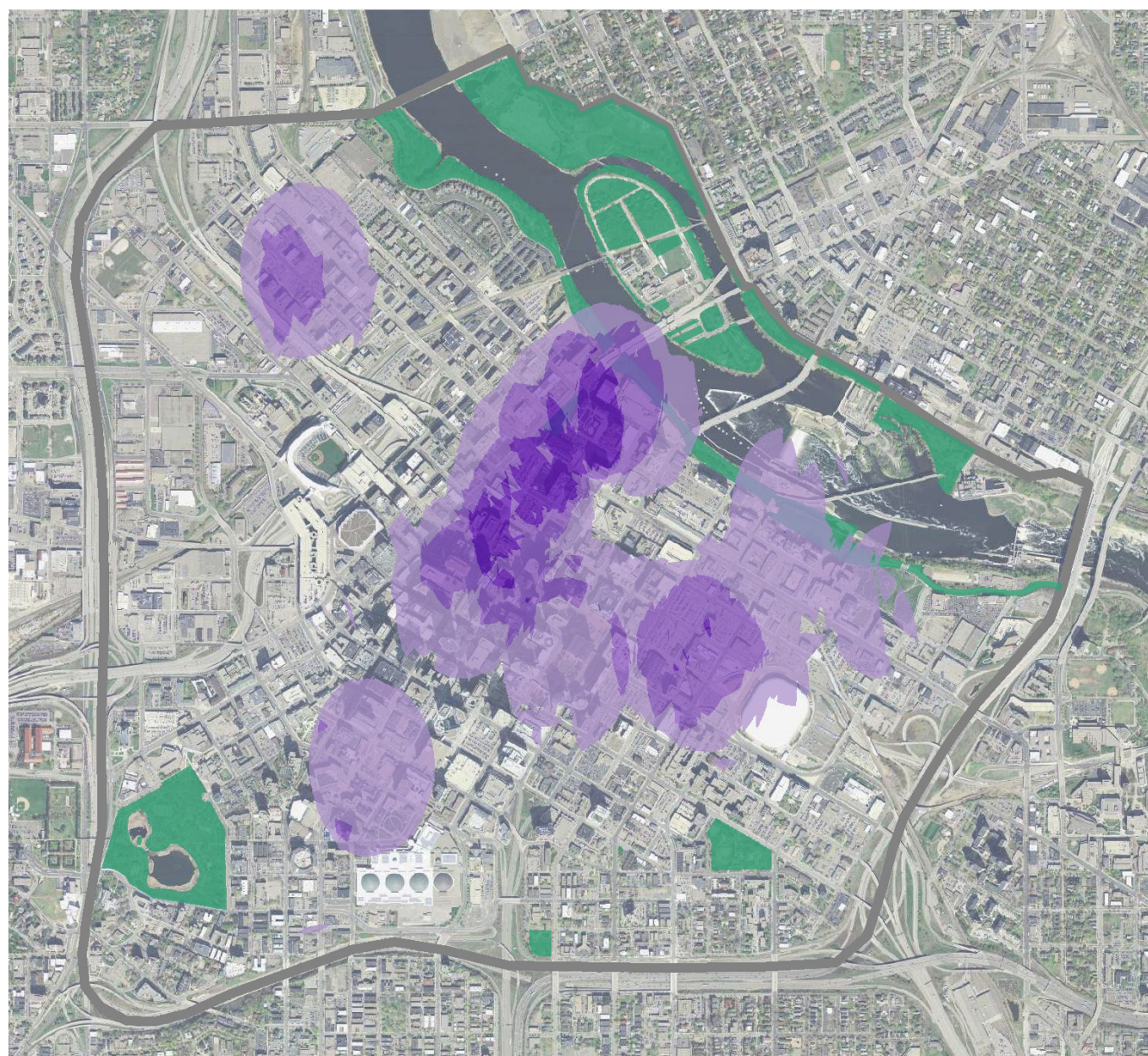
At many points in the public engagement process, participants were asked to share ideas for new downtown parks. Mapita participants were given the opportunity to directly pinpoint locations where new opportunities (new places and ideas) were desired (Figure 1.10). The design team aggregated the individual points and found there is interest in new spaces and more activation in the following areas of downtown:

- » North Loop area
- » Along Nicollet, particularly the northern portion through Gateway Park
- » The Commons and along 5th Street S
- » Peavey Plaza
- » Along West River Parkway near Gold Medal Park, Mill Ruins Park, and the Stone Arch Bridge

In addition to these general areas, the specific comments tied to each response were useful in designing specific physical and program improvements across downtown.

The Steering and Technical Advisory Committees examined a set of park search areas for the downtown. These areas were initially identified by evaluating gaps in the existing system of parks and public spaces, as well as by evaluating current opportunities for new park or park-like spaces. Each of the search areas was explored for specific sites or connections that would meet identified motivator or activity needs. In addition, the conversation between the committees and the design team focused significantly on making more and better use of other public and park-like spaces that already exist in order to create a more interconnected downtown Minneapolis experience.

The remaining park search area that was considered to be a priority area for new parks was the North Loop, given the lack of existing open space (MPRB or any other) in this booming transitional area. The desire to locate a new park in this area was tempered with a concern over the practicality of finding a site with the desired size and relationship to the rapidly growing residential community. The exploration of park sites for the North Loop was a focus of attention at internal design team charrettes and Design Week, where a variety of creative possibilities was advanced through illustrative concepts.



Density of Desired Opportunities and New Places

- No Density
- Low Density
- Medium Density
- High Density
- Downtown Parks
- DSAMP Boundary

0 1,000 2,000
Feet



Figure 1.10 Mapita Opportunities Density Map, 2016

Enhance Connections

A key part of the public engagement process was to understand how people move across, through and between the downtown parks, open spaces, plazas, and other public areas, as well as identifying new connections to improve the downtown experience. In one exercise, Mapita participants physically drew travel paths on a map of downtown (Figure 1.11). Existing travel paths are shown in yellow; areas where more people reported the same path appear darker yellow. Desired paths (not existing) are shown in shades of red; areas where more people reported the same desired paths appear darker.

The Mapita findings showed dominant existing travel paths in the following locations:

- » Nicollet Mall from Loring Greenway to Washington Avenue S
- » Cedar Lake Regional Trail from Linden Avenue to Target Field
- » Hennepin Avenue from 13th Street S to 6th Street S
- » Hiawatha Bike Trail to Nicollet Mall via Hiawatha Bridge Detour Trail and 4th and 5th Avenues S
- » Gold Medal Park to Mill Ruins Park

- » 2nd Avenue S between Gold Medal Park and Portland Avenue S
- » River Loop: West River Parkway – Stone Arch Bridge – Father Hennepin Bluff Park – Main Street – E. Hennepin Avenue

Mapita respondents indicated many similar routes as desired travel paths, indicating a potential need to improve them. Routes that resulted in a high density of paths include:

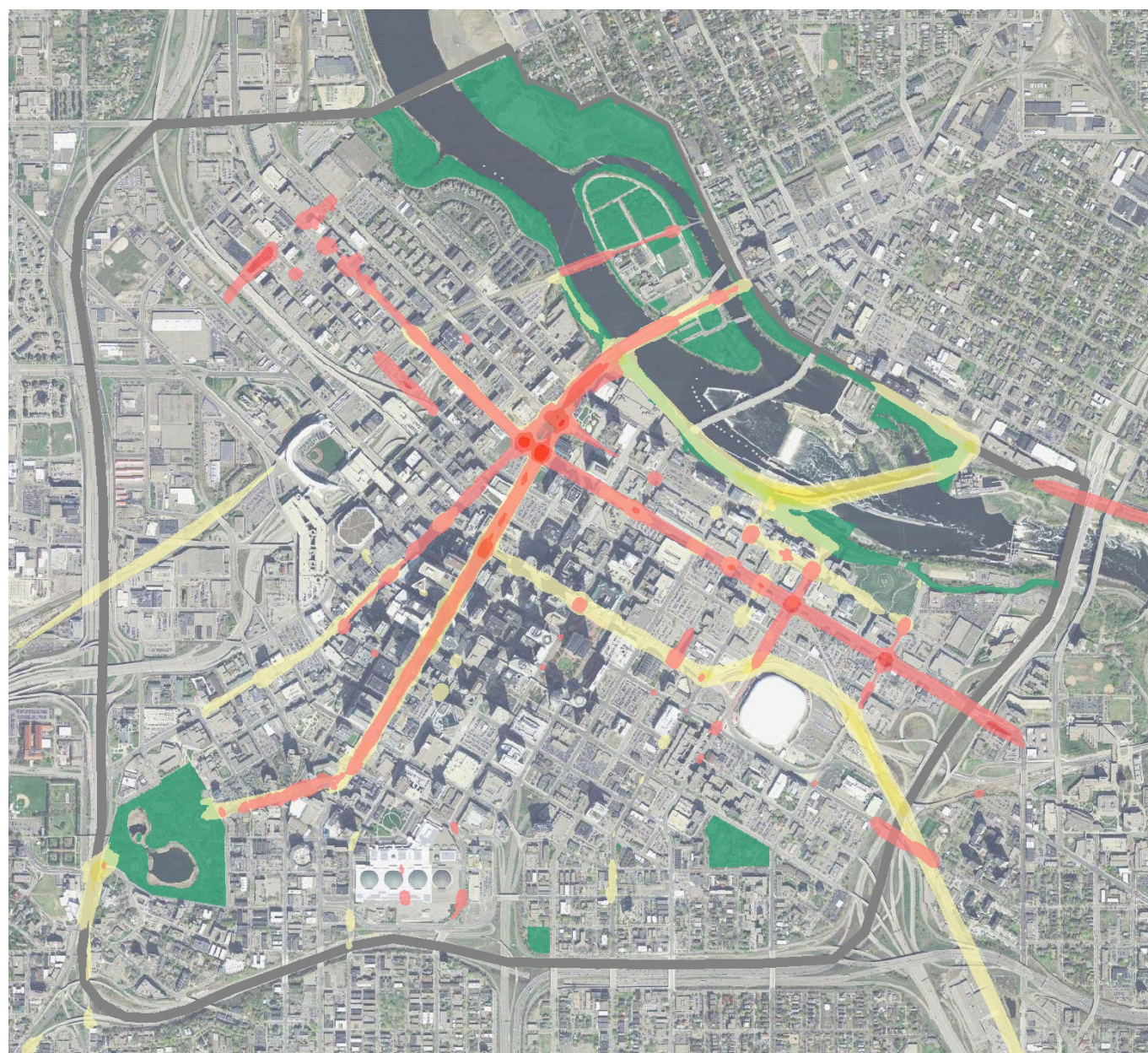
- » Washington Avenue S from Cedar Avenue to 8th Avenue N
- » Hennepin Avenue from 9th Street S to Nicollet Island
- » Nicollet Mall from Loring Greenway to Washington Avenue S
- » River Parkway W to Nicollet Island
- » 2nd Street S to 5th Street S via Chicago Avenue

These results shine a unique focus on the role of the Nicollet Mall and particularly on the intersection and convergence of many existing and desired routes at Gateway Park. Focus groups and the Design Week charrette process also emphasized connectivity, building from the following priority use corridors

identified by the Steering and Technical Advisory Committees:

- » Washington Avenue
- » Hennepin Avenue
- » Nicollet Mall
- » Cedar Lake Regional Trail
- » Chicago Avenue
- » 5th Street S
- » Portland Avenue

Downtown's central location and role as a hub in the regional transit system puts a focus on the experience of getting around in the area (particularly for those with lower incomes and disabilities). Pleasant, safe and sensory-rich experiences need to be created or enhanced. Finally, the barriers created by I-35W, I-94, and I-394 were identified in both outreach and analysis. The committees particularly suggested future study to investigate the feasibility of land bridge-style parks that could connect neighborhoods on both sides of these limited-access roads encircling Downtown.



Density of Current Typical Travel Paths

- No Density
- Low Density
- Medium Density
- High Density
- Downtown Parks
- DSAMP Boundary

Density of Desired Connections

- No Density
- Low Density
- Medium Density
- High Density

0 1,000 2,000
Feet



Figure 1.11 Mapita Travel Paths Map, 2016



Gather for Play, Art and Health

The range of activities needed to support downtown residents, visitors, and workers is different than a neighborhood elsewhere in Minneapolis. The engagement process provided an opportunity to explore what these target audiences would like to do in downtown parks and public spaces.

The existing activities quickly emerged, with participants in nearly all of the activities identifying that most of the programmed activities in Downtown are major events consolidated in a few locations. Some of these sites are strongly identified with particular (or multiple) event activities, such as:

- » Nicollet Mall (Farmer's Market)
- » Loring Park (Loring Park Art Festival, Twin Cities Pride Festival)
- » Hennepin County Government Center Plazas (rallies, announcements)
- » Riverfront (races and fundraising walk/runs)
- » Convention Center (industry meetings and trade shows)

Additionally, some sites are remembered for past events programming, notably Peavey Plaza. The festivals, events, and markets were also highly

rated by the participants completing intercept and Mapita surveys. While these events are undoubtedly popular, the number and size of events has at times overwhelmed local residents and daily activity. Some of the activities taking place in these large events—eating outdoors, live music, community gathering, etc.—could be recreated at a much smaller scale more frequently.

Large-scale gatherings and events represent one set of reasons that residents, visitors, and workers go to parks and public spaces. Beyond that, many of the people in the engagement process identified other attractive activities and reasons for getting into downtown parks. Some of these activities were drawn from the existing mix of offerings elsewhere in the system (that could be distributed to other sites or expanded into the downtown). Exercises with the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee early in the process generated a set of ideas for park activities and programming across downtown. Further discussion with focus group participants identified additional activities and ideas. The results of these discussions, along with the intercept and Mapita results, informed the set of activities discussed at the end of this chapter.

Additional ideas generated provide a starting point for specific improvements and programming. These include:

- » Using the Armory for indoor recreation
- » Adventure play/destination play
- » Indoor soccer
- » Seasonal inline skating
- » Skateboarding facilities
- » Gyms/courts for winter sports
- » Recreation center
- » Amphitheater/screen
- » Climbing wall, zipline
- » Adult playground, exercise circuit
- » Loop/corridor to connect Elliot Park, Park Avenue Triangle, and Franklin Steele Square
- » Winter activities, from warming huts to ice skating, sledding and Nordic skiing
- » Outdoor eating
- » Seeing or creating art, dance, or music

When exploring the park search areas and discussing the needs of residents in the mostly high-rise rental and condominium neighborhood of the North Loop, specific activities suggested by the Steering Committee and design team included:

- » Children's play areas
- » Kids programming
- » Dog park
- » Court sports
- » Adult workout areas
- » Bike practice area for kids
- » Sculptural bike facilities
- » Skate park
- » Musical history walk
- » Boulevard trees
- » Recreation center
- » Improved cross-block connections

Overall, the desire to create more variety in location and activity challenges the MPRB and the community to find new locations, more ways to accommodate and provide various activities, and ultimately to maximize the value that Minneapolis draws from parks and public spaces downtown.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles were developed based on the themes that emerged from the Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and initial community engagement. The supporting points under each principle represent the comments heard from the community that support that principle. These principles guided the development of park plans for downtown and are intended to be incorporated into future implementation of the DSAMP.

We envision parks as part of a 21st Century Downtown Minneapolis that are...

...**Playful** places for everyone.

- Are pleasurable and enjoyable
- Include an element of make-believe and creativity
- Provide the freedom to choose a unique adventure
- Support inclusion of all ages and abilities
- Focus on the process or experience rather than a goal

...**Valued** within and beyond Downtown.

- Downtown parks should be unique
- Downtown parks belong to all Minneapolis residents

- Downtown residents should have access to parks
- Parks Downtown are part of the cosmopolitan visitor experience
- Exploring, where feasible and consistent with adjacent land uses, 24-hour use

...**Simply beautiful** and ecologically functional.

- Provide habitat
- Improve environmental quality
- Bird habitat/wildlife watching
- Make parks attractive
- Environmental education
- Enhance environmental systems

...**Supportive** of whole life health.

- Increase physical activity
- Provide opportunities for sports
- Support mental wellbeing
- Strengthen social fabric
- Consider all ages and needs

...**Expressive** of our culture and history.

- Support public art
- Provide performance space
- Celebrate local history
- Reveal our diverse history/culture

...**Connected** to place and community.

- Connect to the river
- Respectful of neighborhood
- Improve wayfinding
- Encourage multi-modal connections
- Consider programming
- Creative use of space and infrastructure

...**Nurtured** by many.

- Keep parks clean
- Plan for maintenance and operations
- Improve safety
- Don't overbuild
- Design for longevity
- Encourage sense of community ownership
- Sustainable funding strategies

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Parallel to the community engagement process, the staff and consultant team completed assessments and inventories of downtown, with specific attention given to existing parks. This information provides the community, designers, and planners with baseline information of the current state of downtown. This information, when compared to the vision for the future, reveals the gaps between “what is” and what is desired. Knowledge of these gaps is critical to the design and implementation processes.

Downtown Service Area Context

The Downtown Service Area is bounded by the Mississippi River to the north/northeast and the I-94W/I-35 downtown loop to the west, south, and east (Figure 2.8). The service area encompasses Downtown Minneapolis and includes the following neighborhoods:

- » North Loop
- » East Town
- » Downtown West
- » Loring Park
- » Elliot Park

There are five neighborhood parks and one regional park within the Downtown Service Area today:

- » Gateway Park
- » Loring Park
- » Elliot Park
- » Franklin Steele Square
- » Park Avenue Triangle
- » Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park

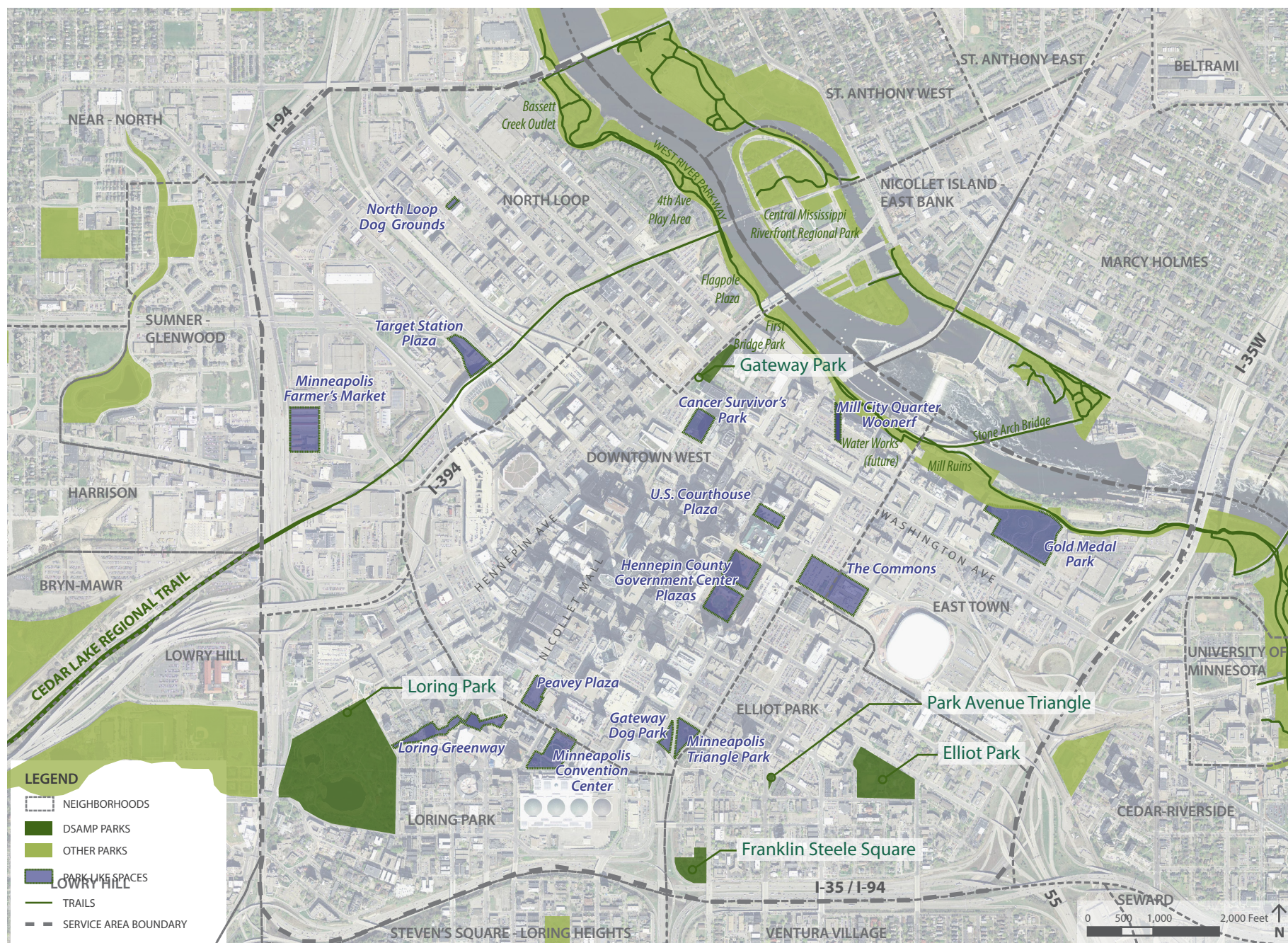
Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park (CMRRP) contains several MPRB properties and key attractions such as St. Anthony Falls, Mill Ruins, and the Stone Arch Bridge. The MPRB owns approximately 100 acres within the boundary of CMRRP. The properties and attractions that directly connect or will directly connect to downtown are:

- » 4th Avenue Play Area and Bassett Creek Outlet
- » Flagpole Plaza
- » First Bridge Park
- » West River Parkway
- » Water Works
- » Mill Ruins Park

The CMRRP recently went through a master planning process which has been approved by the Board of Commissioners and the Metropolitan Council and is therefore not being studied in greater detail as part of the Downtown Service Area Master Plan (DSAMP). However, these properties and attractions are key to the users experience of Downtown Service Area and were taken into consideration as part of the larger DSAMP park and recreation system. The role of the CMRRP in providing connectivity to the Mississippi River was also considered.

There are many privately or collaboratively owned and managed park-like spaces owned by other agencies within downtown that were taken into consideration as part of a larger park and public space system. Key properties include:

- » The Commons
- » Hennepin County Government Center Plazas
- » Target Field Station
- » Loring Greenway
- » Peavey Plaza
- » Convention Center Plaza
- » Gold Medal Park
- » Cancer Survivor’s Park



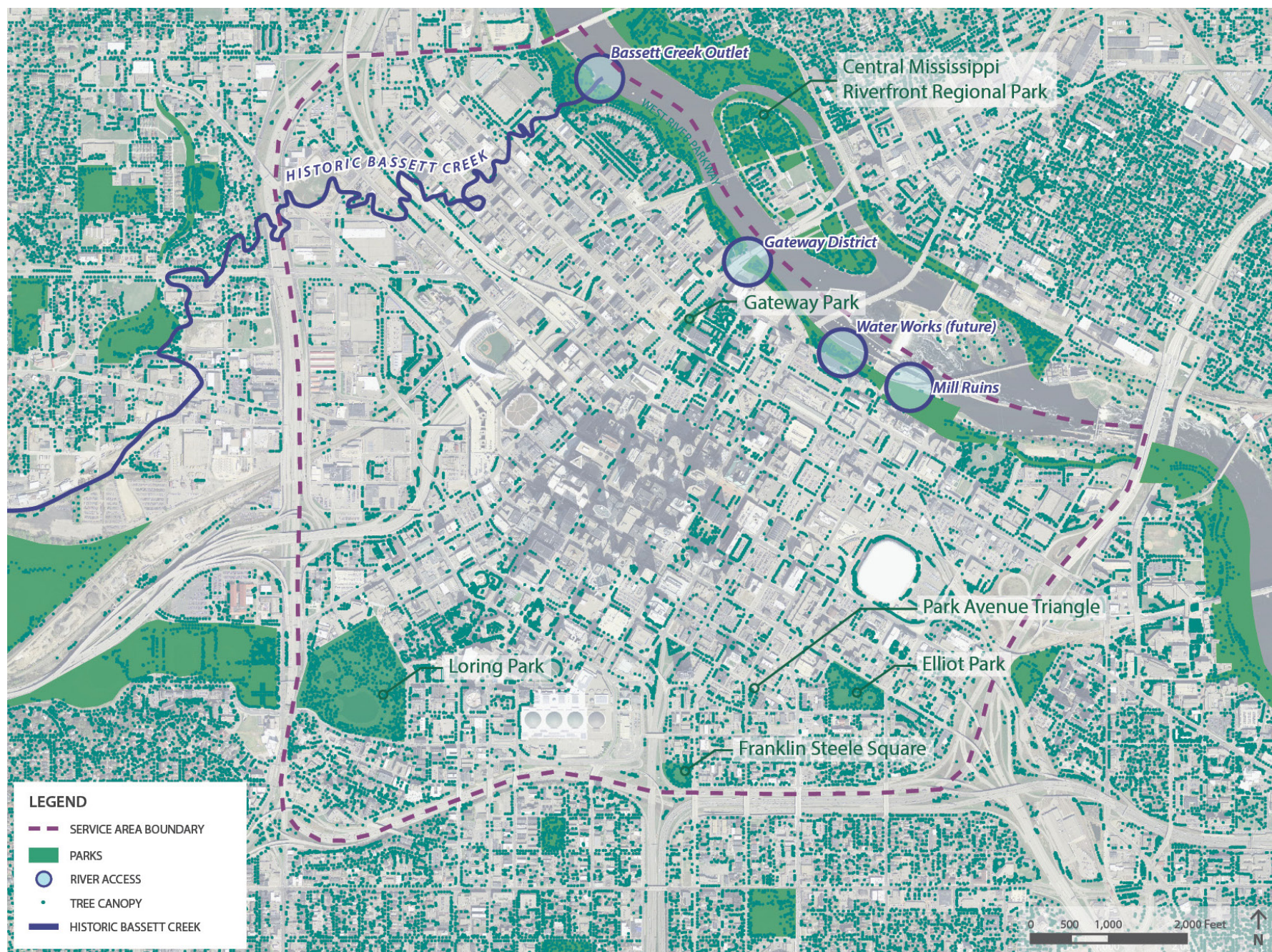


Figure 1.13 City of Minneapolis Tree Cover, Historic Bassett Creek Route and Existing River Access Points

There is an opportunity to create a diverse and robust interconnected network of parks and park-like spaces by focusing on the connections in-between the places. Providing a diversity of experiences to draw the user through downtown is a critical component of the *Pathways to Places* initiative.

Access to Urban Nature

Greening Downtown

The majority of downtown is covered by buildings and pavement. With the exception of the riverfront and the Downtown Service Area parks, very little green space can be found and the urban forest is sparse. In some parts of the Central Business District and North Loop no tree canopy exists (Figure 2.9).

There has been increased emphasis on improving greening and the public realm of downtown over the past few years. Access to parks and open spaces in urban settings improves overall livability and health and has been credited with attracting and retaining talent to improve economic and residential vitality.

In particular, the Minneapolis Downtown Council created a 2025 plan which seeks to:

- » Establish and intensify the tree canopy throughout downtown.
- » Create green corridors that connect downtown districts and close-in neighborhoods.
- » Enhance and emphasize the riverfront as a world-class destination and downtown's green focal point.

To carry this action forward, The Downtown Council created a new conservancy "Green Minneapolis." Along with *Pathways to Places*, these initiatives are converging to further the downtown greening vision.

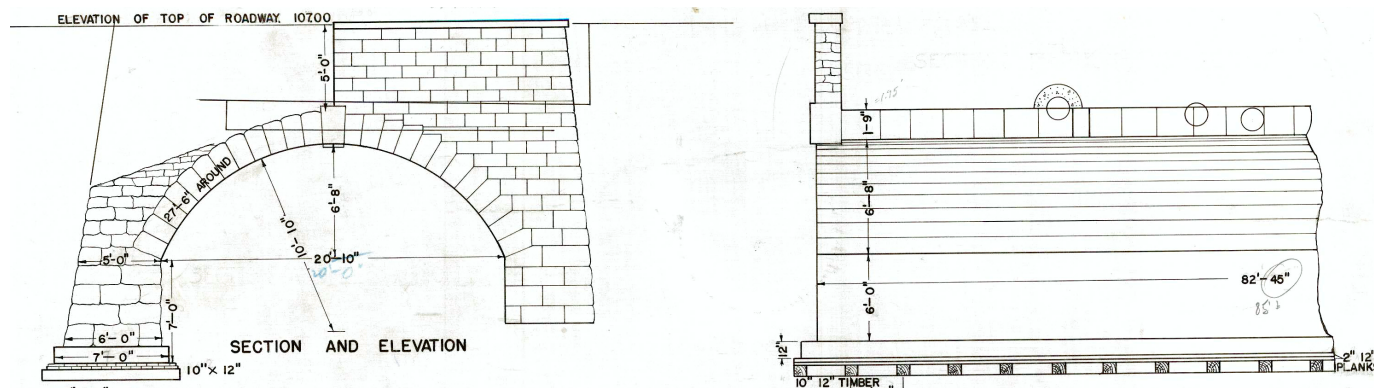
Greening provides ecological benefits as well. Increasing tree canopy alone has many benefits including improved air quality, mitigation of carbon emissions, and reduction of the heat island effect. Currently, the Mississippi River is on the federal list of impaired waters. By increasing the amount of green space in Downtown Minneapolis, there is an opportunity to reduce impervious surfaces, reduce stormwater run-off, and lessen negative impacts of urban development on the water quality of the Mississippi River.

Historic Bassett Creek

The natural features of downtown and the Mississippi Riverfront have been continually manipulated as the City of Minneapolis has developed over time. A prime example is Bassett Creek which once meandered through what is now the North Loop neighborhood on its way to the Mississippi River. This creek was once surrounded by wetlands, marshes, and prairie. As development continues to occur in downtown, Bassett Creek was crossed with road and railroad bridges. Its wetlands were filled and flooding in the Bassett Creek Valley became an issue.

After several floods, the creek was buried and enclosed in a pipe in the early 1900s. The bridges that crossed the creek were paved over and are still intact underground today.

As development continued to grow in the suburban neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, more stormwater was funneled to Bassett Creek and more flooding issues occurred. In 1992, construction was completed on a new tunnel that was routed through downtown with an outfall just downstream from St. Anthony Falls. This new tunnel carries the majority of the stormwater flow to the Mississippi River with a low base flow in the old Bassett Creek tunnel. While



many are interested in the idea of “daylighting” the former Bassett Creek, the concept was explored as part of other processes and determined not to be feasible.

Connecting to the River

The CMRRP and the adjacent Above the Falls Regional Park and Mississippi River Gorge Regional Park are part of the 72-mile Mississippi National River and Recreation Area at the regional scale and part of the Mississippi flyway migratory corridor at the national and global scale. The Downtown Service Area has a unique opportunity to strengthen connections to this vital ecological feature.



Figure 1.14 Historic plat maps and drawings for Bassett Creek tunnel Bridge at 3rd Street courtesy of City of Minneapolis Public Works

Key areas that are or will be critical to improving connections between downtown and the riverfront include:

Gateway District

- » Post Office parking ramp which blocks the connection between Gateway Park and the riverfront as stated in the CMRRP plan.
- » Connections between Nicollet Mall and riverfront through the Nicollet Hotel Block and enhanced connections through Gateway Park.

Mill District

- » Water Works with multi-modal connections at 3rd Avenue S and Portland Avenue S

North Loop

- » Potential connection at 8th Avenue N through Star Tribune property and Bassett Creek Outlet as stated in the CMRRP master plan.

By strengthening connections through downtown to the river, the connection between the Downtown Service Area and the MPRB Grand Rounds system are also strengthened. The Downtown Service Area is poised to serve as a gateway to the Grand Rounds for downtown visitors (Figure 1.15).

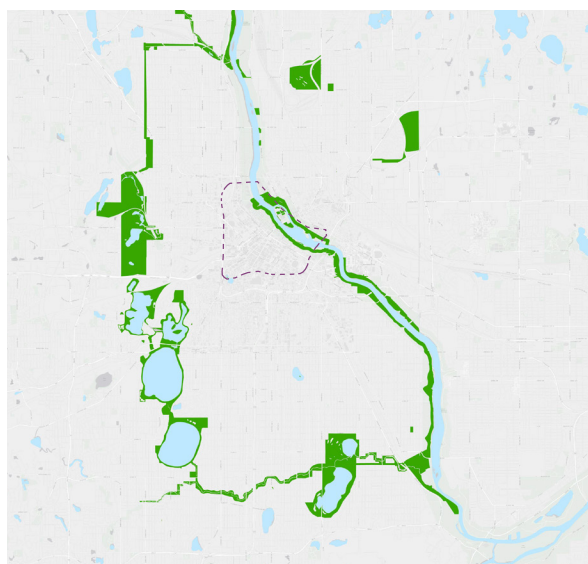


Figure 1.15 Downtown Service Area and the MPRB Grand Rounds System

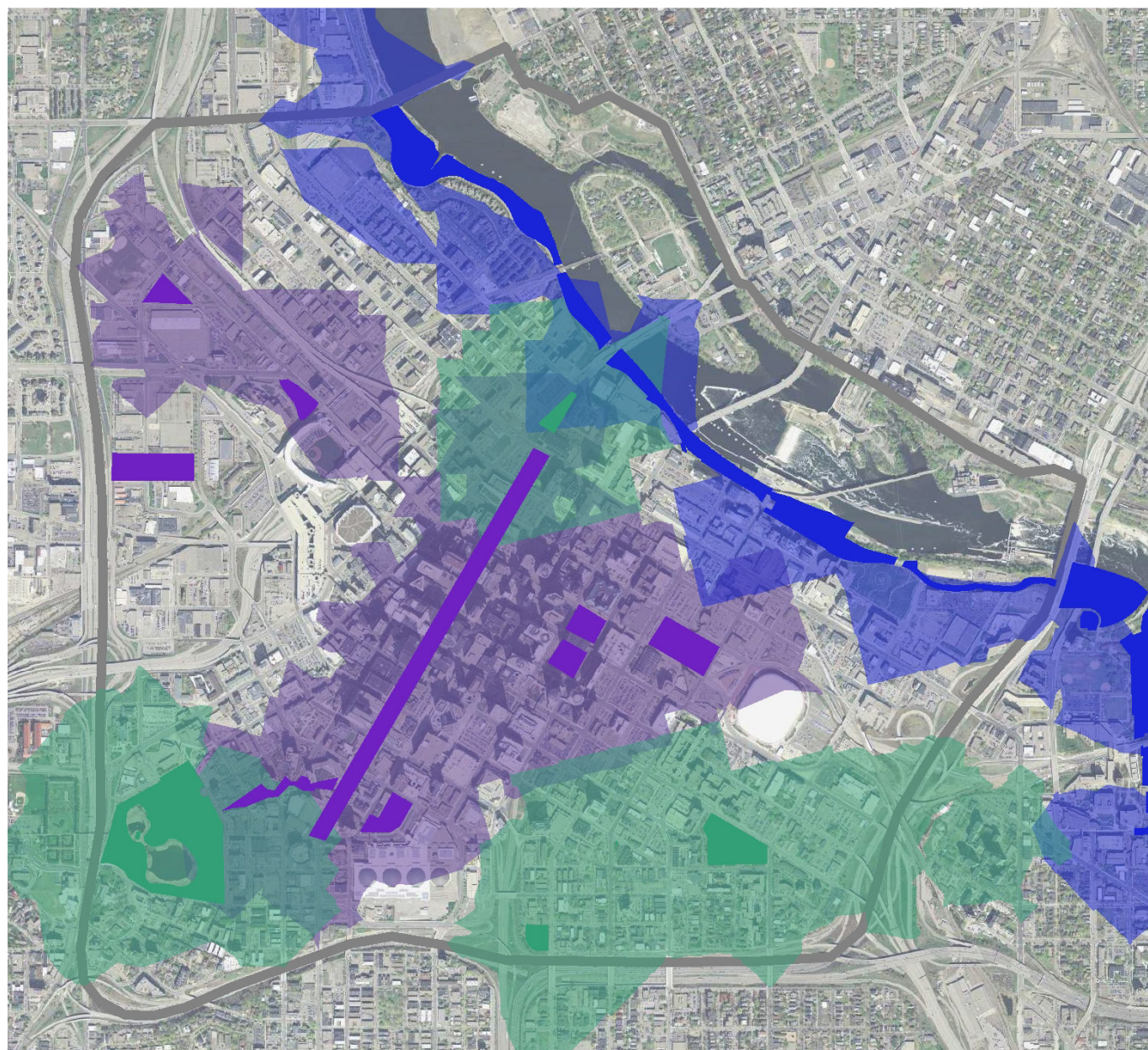
Providing Park Access

One of the most important factors in park use is the proximity of the park site to where people live and work. While some parks are destinations for people around the region, regular everyday use of a park is maximized when parks are within about a five-minute walk. For a typical pedestrian, this five minutes translates to approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Using this distance and a geographic information systems

(GIS) model of downtown Minneapolis, the blocks, buildings, homes, and workplaces that are within a five-minute walkshed of MPRB downtown parks, riverfront parks and all of the other public open spaces (from Nicollet Mall to the Government Center plazas) were mapped to see if there were existing gaps in park service (Figure 1.16).

This exercise found:

- » If only existing MPRB public parks are included in the service area, coverage of downtown is poor.
- » Overall coverage of downtown is quite good if park-like spaces are also included in the service area. These park-like spaces create the potential for park experiences but do not necessarily offer the same access, amenities and programming of a public park. In addition, some of these park-like spaces are not yet complete.
- » As the closest (or only) option for public space, these park-like spaces are important to meeting the day-to-day needs of many workers and residents.
- » There is a major gap in park and open space access in the North Loop neighborhood.



Five-Minute Walksheds

- Downtown Parks
- Riverfront Parks
- Park-Like Spaces
- Downtown Minneapolis Park Service Areas
- Riverfront Park Service Areas
- Park-Like Space Service Areas
- DSAMP Boundary

0 1,000 2,000
 Feet



Figure 1.16 Service Area Coverage



Even if there is a parkland or public space nearby, it doesn't necessarily mean people will want to use it if there is nothing to do there. Programming that engages people is essential to the success of parks and the public realm.

Existing Programming and Activity Assessment

The Downtown Service Area of Minneapolis faces a set of distinct challenges in determining the type of facilities and programs that should be included in new and existing parkland. With limited existing parkland, it isn't possible to provide everything imaginable in the downtown area. The challenge is to determine what should be included and which needs will have to be fulfilled beyond the Downtown Service Area. Additionally, much of the population that will enjoy parks in the Downtown Service Area are not residents. This forms a need to create a park system that addresses the requirements of workers and visitors as well as residents in order to maintain downtown's attractiveness as a place to work or set up a business.

The approach of this planning effort was to identify the types of activities most important to provide

the desired quality of life for the core populations of the Downtown Service Area (employee/employer, students, visitors and residents), and then to identify the types and location of facilities needed to support this range of activity. From the analysis of the existing parks and recreation system, the planning team developed a list of activity categories (Figure 1.18), with some supported within existing downtown parks and others representing activities supported elsewhere in the system or in other downtown public spaces.

Existing Park Conditions

Since DSAMP and South Service Area Master Plan (SSAMP) happened concurrently, inventory efforts were consolidated into a joint inventory and approach. The SSAMP design team was charged with collecting the overall inventory of park assets and rating their condition (i.e. benches, trash receptacles, playgrounds, etc.) for both the downtown and south service areas. The SSAMP design team created data which was then shared with the DSAMP design team.

QUANTITIES & AVERAGE CONDITION RATINGS	Elliot Park	Franklin Steele Square	Gateway Park	Loring Park	Park Ave. Triangle
	6.44 acres	1.57 acres	1.66 acres	33.94 acres	.03 acres
PARK PROGRAM ELEMENTS					
Play Area	4	2		3	
Wading Pool	1			1	
Splash Pad		1			
Soccer/Athletic Field	1				
Basketball Court	1	1		2	
Dog Park				1	
Skate Park	1				
Tennis Court				4	
Handball				1	
Shuffleboard Court				8	
Horse Shoe Pit				12	
Garden				10	
Chess Table	5			2	
PARK AMENITIES					
Bench	30	28	21	71	
Bike Pump	1				
Bike Rack	2	3		4	
Charcoal Grill	4	3		1	
Decorative Fountain			1	1	
Drinking Fountain	1	1		2	
Picnic Table	10	20		9	
Recycling	11	4			
Trash	24	2	2	37	
LIGHTING					
Athletic Field Light	2			1	
Landscape Light			12		
Pedestrian Light	11	6	27	61	
WAYFINDING					
Information Kiosk				1	
Park Identification Sign	1	1	1	3	
Park Information Sign	1			1	
BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES					
Bandstand				1	
Community Center with attached restrooms	1			1	
Fishing Pier				1	
Restroom Building		1			
Satellite/Portable Restroom				1	
Shelter/Pavilion		1			
PARK ACCESS					
Nice Ride Station			1	2	
Parking- Off-street					
Parking- On-street	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Paths- Biking				yes	
Paths- Walking	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Transit Stop	yes	yes	yes	yes	

AVERAGE CONDITION RATING*

- GOOD:** Park amenity is functioning with no damage.
- FAIR:** Park amenity is functioning, but with slight damage.
(i.e. may have graffiti, markings, or showing signs of wear)
- POOR:** Park amenity is not functioning.
(i.e. materials rotting or completely failing structurally,
seats or table tops missing, bench slats missing, etc.)
- Park condition rating for amenity was not relevant for
this scope of work.

* Based on data originally collected by the South Service Area
Master Plan team.

*Data collected by MPRB
consultant teams.

REPRESENTATIVE PARK IMAGERY



ELLIOT PARK



GATEWAY PARK



FRANKLIN STEELE SQUARE



LORING PARK

Figure 1.17 Park Inventory Assessment Summary

	Elliott Park	Franklin Steele Square	Gateway Park	Loring Park	Park Avenue Triangle	Loring Greenway	North Loop Dog Grounds	Minneapolis Farmer's Market	Target Station Plaza	US Courthouse Plaza	Hennepin County Plazas	Peavey Plaza	Minneapolis Convention Center	Gold Medal Park	Cancer Survivors Park	Minneapolis Triangle Park	Gateway Dog Park	The Commons	Mill City Quarter Woonerf
	EXISTING DOWNTOWN SERVICE AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS					EXISTING PARK-LIKE SPACES OWNED BY OTHERS													
Bicycling				●		●													●
Bird / Wildlife Watching				●															
Challenge Activities / Skate Park	●																		
Field and Court Sports	●	●		●															
Fitness and Exercise Equipment																			
Gardens, Gardening and Urban Agriculture		●	●	●		●					●	●	●	●	●			●	
Ice Skating or Hockey												●							
Learning	●			●		●									●			●	●
Making Art and Music	●			●								●		●				●	
Markets, Vending, Consessions				●		●		●			●	●	●	●				●	
Nordic Skiing																			
Outdoor Games	●	●		●		●						●	●					●	
Picnicking or Outdoor Eating	●	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	
Play (Children and Adults)	●	●		●								●						●	
Recreation with Off-Leash Dogs				●			●				●	●					●		
Respite and Relaxation	●	●	●	●		●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Socializing and People Watching	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Viewing Art / Live Music	●			●				●	●		●	●		●	●			●	
Walking, Jogging, Running, Snowshoeing	●	●	●	●		●								●	●			●	●
Water Recreation	●	●		●								●						●	
Indoor Space	●			●															

Figure 1.18 Existing Programming

	Water Power Park*	West River Parkway*	Bassett Creek Outlet*	4th Avenue Playground*	First Bridge Park*	Mill Ruins Park*	B.F. Nelson Park*	Boom Island Park*	Father Hennepin Bluffs Park*	Historic Main Street*	Nicollet Island*	Minneapolis Sculpture Garden	Parade Park	Currie Park	Stevens Square Park
	EXISTING ADJACENT MPRB-OWNED PARKS														
Bicycling		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●
Bird / Wildlife Watching	●		●				●	●	●		●				
Challenge Activities / Skate Park															
Field and Court Sports							●						●	●	●
Fitness and Exercise Equipment															
Gardens, Gardening and Urban Agriculture											●	●			
Ice Skating or Hockey													●		
Learning	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	
Making Art and Music	●					●		●	●		●	●			
Markets, Vending, Consessions						●			●	●	●	●			
Nordic Skiing															
Outdoor Games														●	
Picnicking or Outdoor Eating	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Play (Children and Adults)				●				●		●				●	●
Recreation with Off-Leash Dogs															
Respite and Relaxation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Socializing and People Watching	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Viewing Art / Live Music	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Walking, Jogging, Running, Snowshoeing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Water Recreation				●				●							
Indoor Space											●		●	●	

● Located within Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park

* Located within Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park

Figure 1.18 Continued



In Figure 1.17, each existing downtown MPRB park is listed with its corresponding number of program elements and amenities. Each element and/or amenity is also rated with a good, fair, or poor condition based on professional observation and the following criteria:

- » **Good:** Park amenity is functioning with no damage
- » **Fair:** Park amenity is functioning but with slight damage (i.e. may have graffiti, markings, and showing signs of wear)
- » **Poor:** Park amenity is not functioning (i.e. materials are rotting or failing structurally, seats or table tops missing, bench slats are missing, etc.)

Rating amenities and/or elements of a park cannot capture an overall condition of a park but this information helped inform the design effort as to which elements/amenities might be replaced or relocated, if they were considered important to meeting existing and future community needs. This exercise also helped provide a glimpse of the current overall allocation of program elements and supporting amenities in the Downtown Service Area.

Based on this overview, the following assumptions were made based on the design team's professional judgment:

- » Elements that support winter programming appear to be lacking.
- » The ratios of park amenities per acre (i.e. benches, picnic tables) is not consistent among the parks.
- » Of the five parks located in the Downtown Service Area only three are currently providing active programming: Elliot Park, Franklin Steele Square, and Loring Park.
- » The parks with recreation centers, Elliot Park and Loring Park, have the greatest variety of program elements and amenities to support programming.