3 Service Area Vision

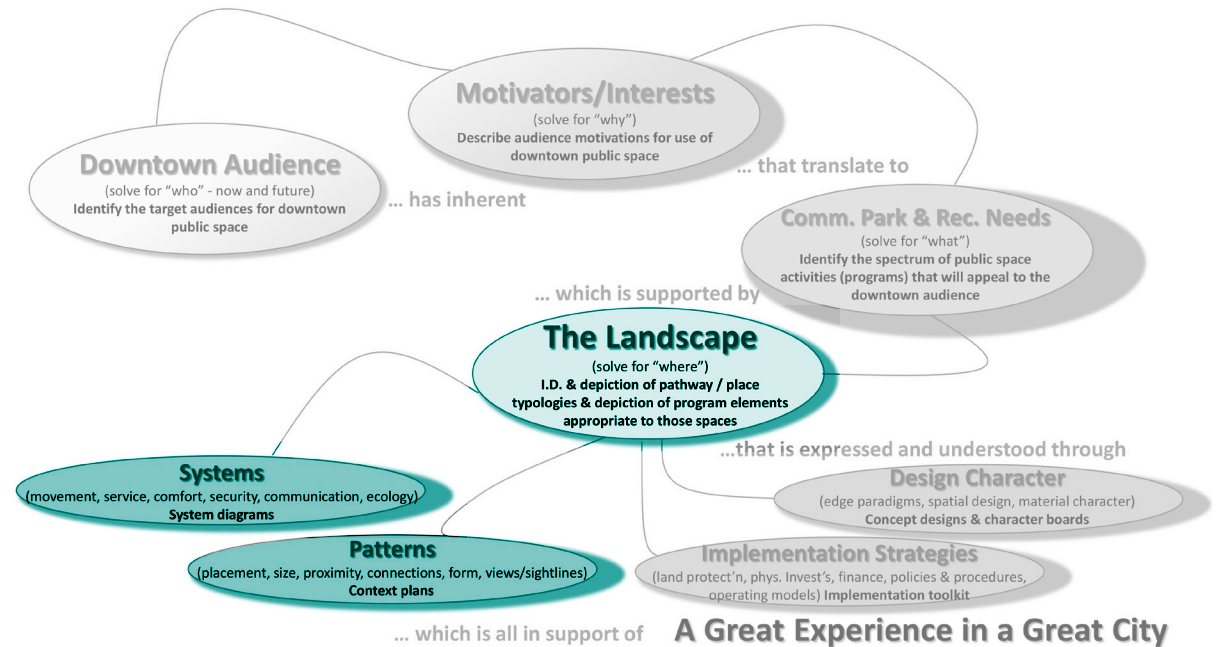**Introduction**
Park Constellation Concept
Park Constellation Elements
Parks and Park-Like Spaces

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 landscape, systems, and patterns.

Motivators/Interests
(solve for "why")
Describe audience motivations for use of downtown public space

... that translate to

Downtown Audience
(solve for "who" - now and future)
Identify the target audiences for downtown public space

... has inherent

Comm. Park & Rec. Needs
(solve for "what")
Identify the spectrum of public space activities (programs) that will appeal to the downtown audience

... which is supported by

The Landscape
(solve for "where")
I.D. & depiction of pathway / place typologies & depiction of program elements appropriate to those spaces

...that is expressed and understood through

Systems
(movement, service, comfort, security, communication, ecology)
System diagrams

Design Character
(edge paradigms, spatial design, material character)
Concept designs & character boards

Patterns
(placement, size, proximity, connections, form, views/sightlines)
Context plans

Implementation Strategies
(land protect'n, phys. Invest's, finance, policies & procedures, operating models) Implementation toolkit

... which is all in support of   **A Great Experience in a Great City**

SERVICE AREA VISION

INTRODUCTION

In defining this as the master plan for parks in downtown Minneapolis, it's critical to recognize the nature and complexity of urban space:

» Downtown isn't homogenous, so the opportunity exists for every park and park-like space to be more fully reflective of its place in downtown—larger or smaller, more or less green, filled with life or offering a quiet refuge, reflecting history, or suggesting the future.

» Downtown needs parks and the chance to fold park-like spaces into the experience of downtown should be embraced. There were once more parks in downtown and while reestablishing the former pattern of parks is prohibitively expensive, allowing the pattern to be some combination of public and private spaces better reflects the need for diversity in the experience of downtown.

» Other than the nearby riverfront and Loring Park, downtown's parks and park-like spaces aren't very large. In fact, many are really quite small. But finding ways for them to be connected makes for a larger and more vibrant experience.
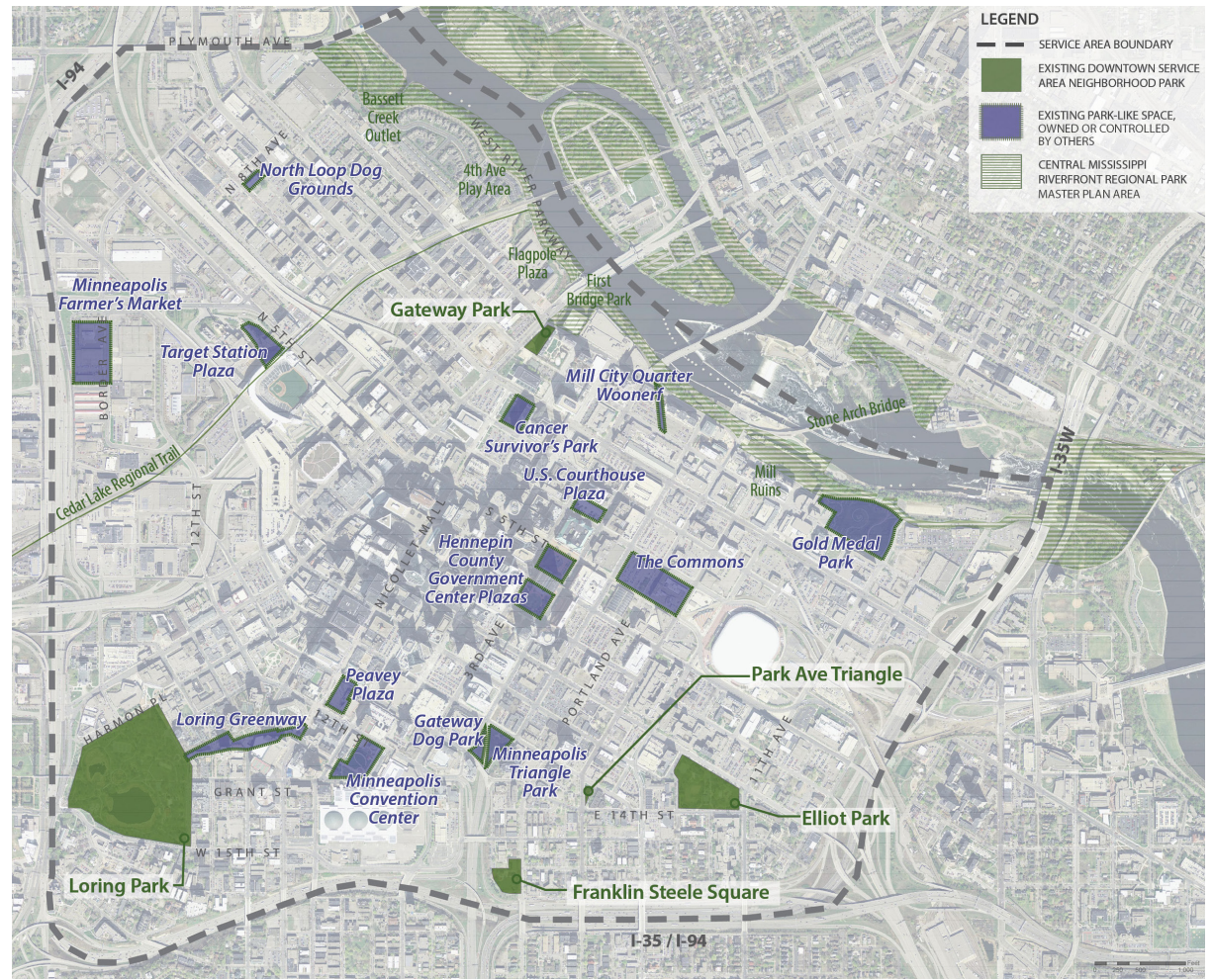

Figure 1.19 Existing Parks and Park-like Spaces

There are distinct differences framing an evolution for parks in downtown. When compared to other parts of Minneapolis, there's a dearth of parks, particularly when population is combined with geography. Still, public spaces are scattered throughout Minneapolis' downtown (Figure 1.19). Many aren't parks—at least in technical terms. Some are parks, and for those we have the opportunity to shape opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in activities resulting from the creation of more flexible spaces, to gather in a spirit of social interaction, or to simply seek refuge in a setting away from their downtown homes or businesses.

As much as a strategy is needed for downtown's parks, one is also needed for the non-park spaces of downtown—honoring that those spaces that dot downtown commonly serve roles similar to parks. Like parks, they provide space for gathering and respite, offer space for special events and activities, and, like parks, mark downtown with a landscape distinct from its looming towers and frenetic streets. This master plan recognizes the value of these spaces in relationship to parks and envisions constellations of spaces where no single park, public space, or park-like space fully serves the needs of downtown

residents or visitors, but where a series of connected spaces might form a brighter picture of linked recreation and social experiences. What's important is the way the downtown resident or visitor experiences downtown public spaces—they won't see the bright lines envisioned as the connective elements of a constellation, they certainly don't see the lines that define a space as public or private.

While this master plan intends to shape the future of parks in downtown—both those that exist and those that might someday be added to the system, it is aimed at realizing the city-shaping potential of parks. Throughout Minneapolis, the patterns of parks forms and connects neighborhoods and makes the experience of the entire city more livable and alive; in downtown, the constellations envisioned by this master plan might someday do the same.
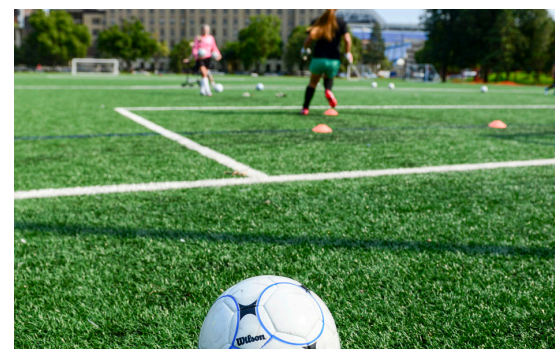
PARK CONSTELLATION CONCEPT

The guiding principles (see Chapter 2) established by the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee reflect unifying themes revealed through community engagement. These principles, along with the results of the downtown and downtown parks inventories and assessments, were the foundation of the draft park concepts created in Design Week. This information, when combined, reveals significant challenges to meeting the park and recreation needs of downtown residents, visitors, and workers due to the current level of residential and commercial development within downtown. It also reveals extensive potential for partnerships with private and public organizations and entities to meet these needs. Out of these findings, the Park Constellation Concept emerged as a potential solution with six unique and smaller constellations embedded within it (Figure 1.20).

To achieve connectivity within the downtown area between parks and other public spaces and meet park and recreation needs, parks can be positioned as one feature in a constellation of public spaces that combine to create a curated urban experience. Park

Figure 1.20 Constellation Concept Diagram

constellations are envisioned to be a set of close-proximity public parks and plazas, privately owned public spaces, and street corridors that are designed and programmed to work in unison as a whole experience.

A park or public space on its own might be a significant and useful piece of downtown, but when viewed as a part of a connected experience, a more vibrant picture becomes possible. The constellation concept is about creating exceptional interconnected public spaces that support how people actually experience cities – by moving through them and stopping along the way to collect memorable encounters. From a practical perspective, recreation amenities can be distributed through a series of parks without having to unnecessarily replicate assets or programs. And from a system perspective, a constellation allows each park to be a more unique reflection of its context within the downtown area.

The six park constellations envisioned as part of the Downtown Service Area (Figure 1.21) are:

» North Loop Constellation

» Twins Constellation

» Gateway/Mills Constellation

» The Commons Constellation

» Elliot Constellation

» Loring Constellation

PARK CONSTELLATION ELEMENTS

The Park Constellation Concept is comprised of several elements:

» parks

» park-like spaces

» connectivity and wayfinding priority corridors

» linear parks

Parks

Within the Downtown Service Area Master Plan, parks are public spaces that are owned by or under some site control by the MPRB. Parks are typically a primary destination within a park constellation. They are generally larger in size and possess the broadest opportunities for park facilities and programs, for tree canopy, gardens, lawn, and distance from buildings. Figure 1.22 shows existing parks and Figure 1.24 shows proposed or potential parks.

Park-like Spaces

Park-like spaces within the Downtown Service Area Master Plan are other spaces that are generally not controlled by the MPRB. They function similar to a park and also take on as prominent a role in the constellation. These spaces may be publically or privately owned, but are typically open to the public. In rare cases they are actually owned by the MPRB by under the control of another entity. The owners or entity that manages these spaces establish the design, policies, rules, and/or programming for them. They can be more varied in size and location and therefore their opportunities for recreational and ecological contribution are also more varied. For these same reasons park-like spaces often possess characteristics of parks. Figure 1.23 shows existing park-like spaces and Figure 1.24 shows proposed or potential park-like spaces.

Connectivity, Wayfinding and Potential Linear Parks

The park constellation concept shines a light on the importance of street corridors as critical features of a great downtown experience. The concept highlights existing streets, critical to park connectivity and wayfinding, and search areas for potential linear parks (Figures 1.20 and 1.21).

Connectivity and Wayfinding Priority Corridors

Connectivity and wayfinding priority corridors are streets where the MPRB would encourage actions that make or further the pedestrian and bicycle-friendliness of these corridors, including wayfinding that helps connect to parks. This plan does not propose that the MPRB invests in these corridors, but rather acknowledges these are important corridors within the City's *Pathways to Places* plan that specifically support park connectivity. Figure 1.25 includes connectivity and wayfinding priorities.

Linear Parks

Linear parks are the connecting corridors within a constellation. Today, Minneapolis is dependent on vehicular traffic; even on the corridors depicted

Figure 1.21 Constellation Concept Diagram - Individual Constellations

as linear parks. Looking at a 25-year horizon, the way the city is navigated may change dramatically. Envision a time when existing street segments are no longer necessary for vehicle traffic and become strategically important to the Downtown Minneapolis experience. When that time comes, linear parks can be contemplated and designed to include layers of functionality – linkage, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, recreation, and beauty. Investments in linear parks within these search areas would only occur if the MPRB secured site control at a point in time when these segments are no longer needed to convey vehicular traffic. Figures 1.24 and 1.25 include search areas for linear parks.

Design Qualities for Linear Parks

» Create dynamic and human-focused connections between parks and park-like spaces with features suggesting park characteristics, such as trees, seating and gathering areas, and programmable spaces.

» Enhance green infrastructure in the public realm, especially where ecologic function might be advanced as part of the connection.

» Accommodate pedestrian and bicycle movement and engage building frontages, with a high degree of interactivity between private frontages and the street.

» Set human activity into a larger network of connected green spaces in Downtown.

» Actively program features of linear parks through collaboration with partners.

» Create settings that support human use, enhancing opportunities for social interaction and neighborhood cohesion.

» Encourage public art as an integrated part of the linear park experience, especially in ways that highlight unique neighborhood context.

MPRB Ownership

It is important to note that the overall concept for downtown parks includes a combination of parks that are owned by the MPRB (Figure 1.22), those owned or under the control of another entity (Figure 1.23) and those that would be owned by the MPRB under specific conditions or those that would be owned by other public or private entities (Figure 1.24). These distinctions are based on existing or expected land ownership. The MPRB can fund and develop those parks or properties for which it has secured site control. Improvements on non-MPRB property, while suggested in this master plan, will require the approval of existing property owners. Finally, approval of this plan does not necessarily supersede approvals or development direction of existing landowners.

Considerations

The Service Area Master Plan illustrates several new ideas. They should be viewed in light of the following considerations:

» Improvements to existing parks or the creation of new parks will be prioritized within the MPRB's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

» Concepts shown on properties not owned by the MPRB demonstrate potential solutions. Implementation of those ideas requires coordination and cooperation with the property owner and may require approval from jurisdictions beyond the MPRB.

» New parks require funding for programming and operations prior to being implemented. The MPRB recognizes the need to explore innovative models to achieve desired levels of programming and maintenance.

Figure 1.22 Existing MPRB Parks

LEGEND

- - - SERVICE AREA BOUNDARY

EXISTING DOWNTOWN SERVICE AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN AREA

Figure 1.23 Existing Park-like Spaces

LEGEND

- - - SERVICE AREA BOUNDARY

EXISTING PARK-LIKE SPACE, OWNED OR CONTROLLED BY OTHERS

Map labels:
- North Loop Dog Grounds
- Minneapolis Farmer's Market
- Target Station Plaza
- Cancer Survivor's Park
- Mill City Quarter Woonerf
- U.S. Courthouse Plaza
- Gold Medal Park
- Hennepin County Government Center Plazas
- The Commons
- Peavey Plaza
- Loring Greenway
- Gateway Dog Park
- Minneapolis Triangle Park
- Minneapolis Convention Center
- Cedar Lake Regional Trail

LEGEND

- — — — SERVICE AREA BOUNDARY
- POTENTIAL PARK AND PARK-LIKE SPACE
- CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK BOUNDARY EXPANSION, OWNED BY OTHERS
- SEARCH AREA FOR FUTURE LINEAR PARK

Bassett Creek Expansion

Eighth Avenue Streamscape

Metro Transit Green

The Underpass

Bookmen Stacks Remnant

U.S. Post Office Site

Farmer's Market Planned Expansion

Skyway Commons Pocket Park

Nicollet Hotel Block

East 15th Street Park Search Area

I-94

WEST RIVER PARKWAY

I-35W

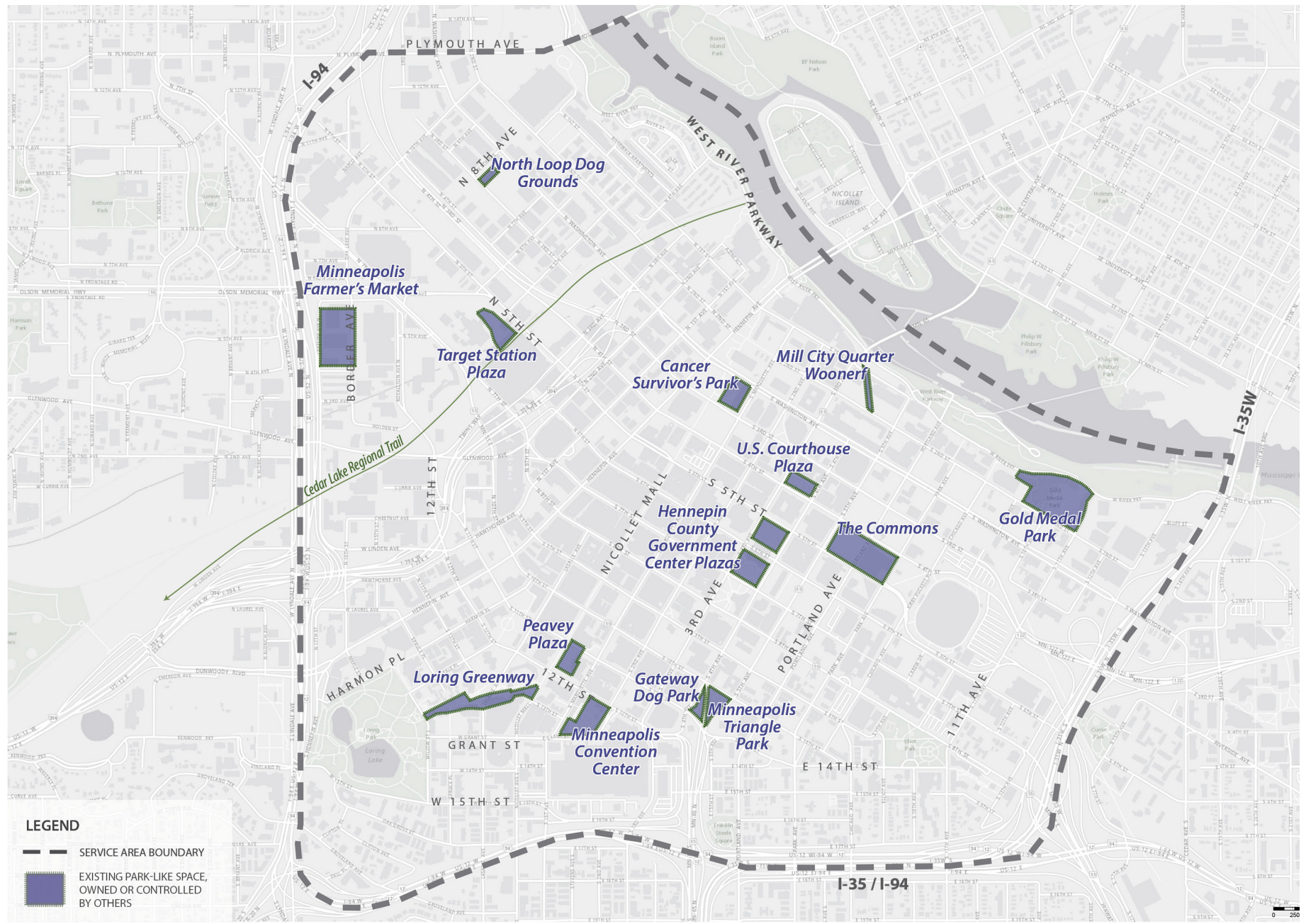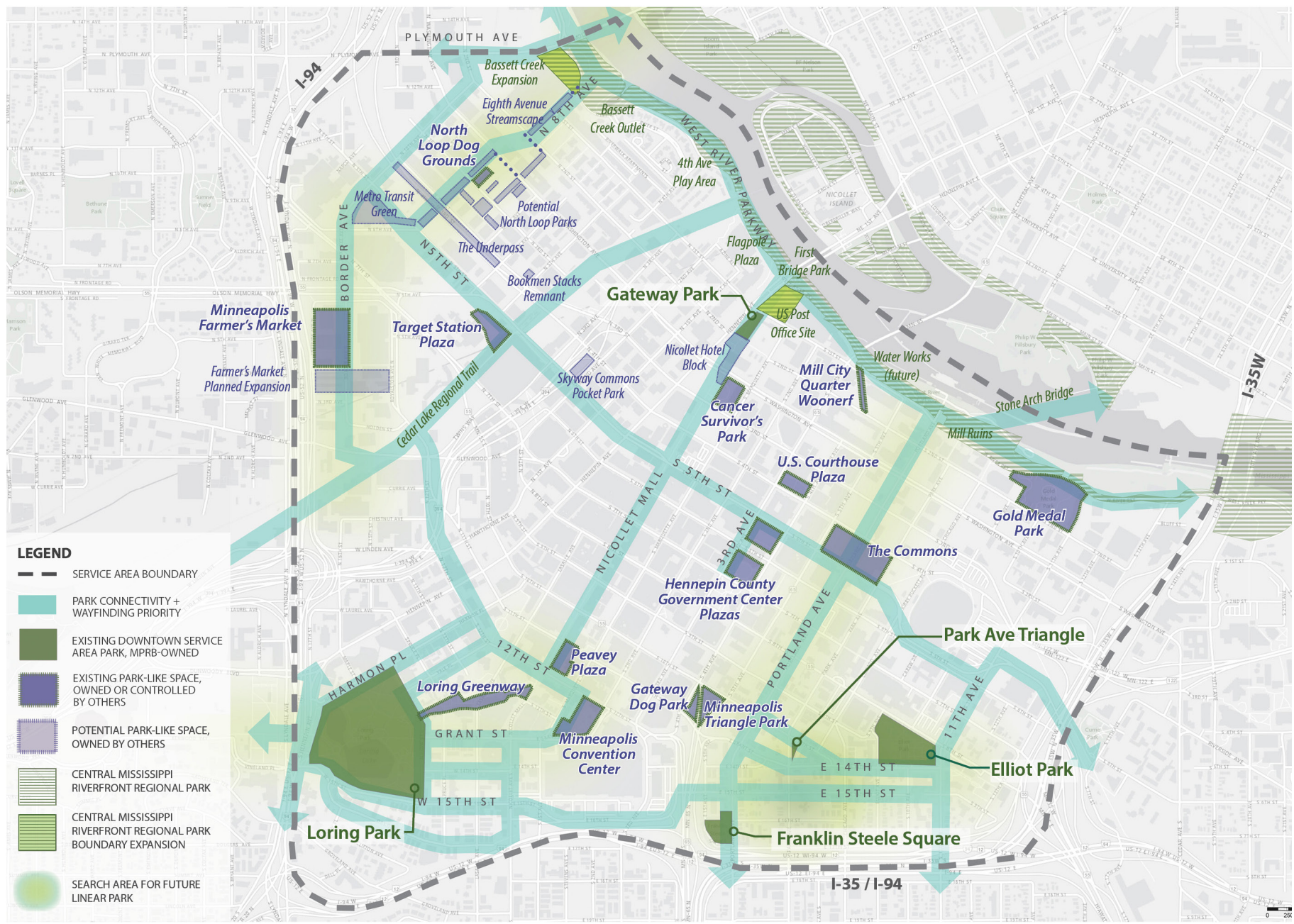I-35 / I-94

Figure 1.24 Potential Downtown Service Area Parks or Park-like Spaces

Figure 1.25 Overall System Plan

LEGEND

- - - SERVICE AREA BOUNDARY

PARK CONNECTIVITY +
WAYFINDING PRIORITY

EXISTING DOWNTOWN SERVICE
AREA PARK, MPRB-OWNED

EXISTING PARK-LIKE SPACE,
OWNED OR CONTROLLED
BY OTHERS

POTENTIAL PARK-LIKE SPACE,
OWNED BY OTHERS

CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI
RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK

CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI
RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK
BOUNDARY EXPANSION

SEARCH AREA FOR FUTURE
LINEAR PARK