SECTION 7

Park Land Acquisition, Easements, and Conflicts
BOUNDARIES AND ACQUISITION COSTS

The long-term vision for Above the Falls Regional Park is for continuous parks and trails along both sides of the river. The 2000 ATF Master Plan envisioned sweeping land assembly through eminent domain and a third-party development corporation. On the west bank, that included a new district where proposed parkway and riverfront parks were to be integrated with blocks of ambitious high-density, mixed-use redevelopment. In contrast, on the west bank, this 2019 ATF Park Plan plan shows West River Parkway aligned with the riverbank, framing future economic redevelopment but separate from it. Also in contrast to the 2000 ATF Master Plan, this plan calls for incremental property acquisition based on opportunity with willing sellers, over a long period of time.

Figure 7.1 shows parcels within the proposed Regional Park boundary that are identified for eventual acquisition and development as park land. The proposed Regional Park boundary follows existing parcel lines except for within the City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal site, where MPRB and the City will negotiate terms for dividing the UHT into areas for future park land and private redevelopment. The City’s ATF master Plan Update contains more information about this transition.

Within the UHT, this 2019 ATF Park Plan shows a new regional park boundary that has significant changes from the boundary proposed in 2000. The line has been expanded westward at the southern end of the property where, through coordination with Hennepin County, the Lowry Bridge was designed and constructed to accommodate a future West River Parkway through its specific western portal. Also, the current boundary reflects the 2015 – 2019 redevelopment planning process that balances the City’s plan for private development and the regional park along the river. This planning process has been further described in Appendices A and B.

As shown in Figure 7.1 many parcels within the proposed Regional Park boundary are owned by public agencies. The MPRB will continue to engage the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation regarding acquisition of agency-owned parcels.

Most of the private land acquisitions that would support the parks vision are located in the central portion of the park on either side of the river. The MPRB will continue its policy of working with willing sellers for the acquisition of these properties, and has recently expanded staff capacity toward this end. Recent successes in acquisition include the Scherer Bros. site and two smaller properties further north on the east bank.

Where acquisition is not practicable, MPRB will seek temporary or permanent easements to allow for the development of trails and other key components of ATF Regional Park. See Table 7.1 for a detailed look at individual parcels.

CONFLICTS

ATF Regional Park exists in a context of Minneapolis neighborhoods with a broad mix of existing uses. The park is compatible with and, in many cases, a benefit to existing uses. The proposed regional park boundary was developed in consultation with stakeholders and the City of Minneapolis to ensure...
Parcels within the regional park boundary are targeted for eventual acquisition or trail easement through negotiation with willing sellers. Publicly-owned parcels present significant partnership opportunities for park development.
compatibility with future economic development.

The Xcel Energy Riverside Generating Station at the northeast corner of the regional park is a property where industrial operations, safety concerns and security needs conflict with the park uses shown in the 2000 ATF Master Plan. Based on discussions with Xcel staff, it is clear that public access along the riverbank at the plant is not feasible due to security and operational concerns. Public access along the east edge of the plant’s property, on the west side of Marshall St. NE, is constrained by existing Xcel buildings and other structures. The ATF Regional Park boundary has been adjusted from its original location to exclude the Xcel Riverside Plant riverbank property from ATF Regional Park.

**EASEMENTS**

Xcel continues to be a valued partner of MPRB in developing neighborhood park amenities on Xcel property in northeast Minneapolis. Based on discussions with Xcel regarding potential trail easements, the ATF Regional Park boundary in this 2013 ATF Park Plan extends along Marshall St. NE and Columbia Ave. NE to include a corridor for future easements and trail development on Xcel-owned properties. This segment would connect the East Bank Trail to St. Anthony Parkway Regional Trail and the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway.

Existing Xcel power transmission corridors run through ATF Regional Park along both banks. (The corridors extend through the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park as well.) Long-standing easements, many on MPRB land, provide locations for Xcel-owned transmission pylons. Examples include Sheridan Memorial Park and the City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal. In general, these transmission facilities do not conflict with park development and use. MPRB will continue its practice of engaging directly with Xcel to manage potential issues between parks development and energy transmission.

In the southeast section of ATF Regional Park, Graco Inc. owns an industrial facility between 10th Ave NE and Broadway, adjacent to the Scherer Bros. site. Discussions are ongoing between MPRB and Graco regarding a potential riverbank trail easement on Graco property. Such an easement was first discussed among the City, MPRB and Graco as early as 2002. Here, too, operational and public safety concerns exist related to the potential alignment of the East Bank Trail through Graco property. Such issues will be resolved prior to execution of an easement and final design of the trail.

The proposed East Bank Trail also would connect to Sheridan Memorial Park by passing under the Broadway bridge, similar to the existing trail on the west bank. Hennepin County owns the bridge and has expressed strong support for a trail easement under the bridge.

On the west bank, MPRB will engage industrial property owners in discussion of potential trail easements as interim measures until land acquisition is possible. MPRB will consider pursuit of trail easements only where cost-effective, safe and useful connections can be made. Possible segments include 22nd Ave N to 26th Ave N, and 31st Ave N to 33rd Ave N.
Table 7.1 Park Inholdings

Table to come.
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