

EAST OF THE RIVER

PARK MASTER PLAN

SPRING 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The East of the River Park Master Plan (ERPMP) 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 organizations, MPRB staff from across the organization, agency partners, design team consultants, a Youth Design Team, and elected officials. MPRB Planning staff thanks all these individuals for their contributions to the plan.

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INTRODUCTION



Image 1 | Park visit. Source: MRPB



Image 2 | Community member talks with the Youth Design Team and MRPB staff during outreach event. Source: MRPB

INTRODUCTION + PURPOSE

Amidst a diversity of land use patterns ranging from commercial corridors to residential neighborhoods to industrial zones and railyards, the wide array of neighborhood parks scattered across the service area offers critical green spaces for northeast and southeast residents and visitors to play baseball, soccer, ice skate, and gather. While the Minneapolis neighborhood parks east of the Mississippi River are framed by the critical ecological, transportation and recreational corridors of the river and parkways, the industrial land use history equally defines the service area. The sprawling canopy of Logan Park, the vibrant bocce league at Beltrami and the popular afterschool programs at Luxton, to name a few, are all foundational qualities and amenities in the neighborhood park system. They are important public greens that create space for wildlife, play, gathering, stormwater, exercise, and transportation.

Minneapolis is a national leader in the realm of parks, with a park system that puts 97% of people within ¼ mile of a park. This, with a couple of exceptions, is true east of the

river. The historical industrial land use patterns of NE and SE Minneapolis resulted in areas of the service area that are underserved by parks. The railroads and the river played an important part in the past and future landscape of NE and SE Minneapolis. There are also several freeways moving through the service area including 35W and I-94, which have significantly shaped individual parks and also how people and ecological systems connect - or experience fragmentation - across the area east of the river.

Historically the land stretches from the heartland of the Dakota people to industrialists and immigrant workers to a bustling campus and arts district. Dakota villages once dotted the landscape of Minneapolis along the Mississippi water ways, and the Dakota and Ojibwe people remain a foundational part of the Twin Cities culture and community today. The nearby shores of Bde Maka Ska as well as embankments along the Mississippi hosted the Mdewakontan villages of Chiefs Cloud Man and Little Crow. This plan respectfully acknowledges the Dakota and Ojibwe People,

who have stewarded this land throughout the generations.

The rushing water of St. Anthony Falls, Minnesota's vast natural resources, and easy transportation along the Mississippi catalyzed industry in the old village of St. Anthony (following European settlement), later to be annexed by Minneapolis. As land was opened up for development, businessmen around the city capitalized on this confluence of these natural resources.

The great industries of Minneapolis required workers. Northeast Minneapolis swelled with working class immigrants from Eastern Europe, Italy, Scandinavia, and Germany. As each immigrant community began making Northeast Minneapolis their home, they established churches as cultural hearths. As workers and businesses flooded Northeast Streets, they created thriving business districts around East Hennepin, Central, 13th Avenue NE, and Lowry. This trend of immigrants continues today. In the 1990's, a Latino cultural district developed around Central and Lowry. There are also several

THE NE/SE MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY

Service Area makes up **18%** of the population in the City of Minneapolis.

1:6 households have 1+ children under 18

MN COMPASS, 2018.

58% of the households pay rent

MN COMPASS, 2018.



Young adults between the **ages of 15-25** make up **32.5%** of the population in the service area—compared to 17.5% in the City of Minneapolis.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS), 2015.

29% the NE/SE population identify as a person of color. **19%** speak a language other than English at home.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS), 2015.

The NE/SE population is expected to grow by

16% by 2026 - from **72,014 to 83,757**.

US CENSUS BUREAU

By 2040, 40% of our region's residents are expected to be people of color... 54% of residents under age 18 will be people of color in 2040.

-Thrive MSP 2040

13% of households rely on public transit for primary transportation needs.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS), 2015.

significant East African communities throughout NE and SE Minneapolis with several mosques and housing clusters, specifically near Luxton, Van Cleve and Bottineau parks.

Today Northeast’s traditionally working-class neighborhoods have begun to house a multitude of artists drawn to affordable housing and live/work spaces. 13th Avenue is now a bustling arts district with hundreds of lofts and studios for people to make, shop, and curate art and interact with the vibrant creative economy of Minneapolis. While these neighborhoods are bustling cultural hubs, they are also faced with rising rent costs and property values that have and may continue to cause displacement of working class communities. The parks are a critical public asset to the historic and future neighborhoods of NE and SE Minneapolis. The parks play a critical role in creating neighborhoods where people experience belonging, across income, age, race, ability, and interest.

Just down the river from the falls, as the gears of industry churned, the University of Minnesota grew studiously. Opening in 1867 as Minnesota’s official land grant institution, today, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities boasts more than 57,000 students. Because of a student housing development boom and students’ increasing preferences to live in the city as opposed to commuting, the neighborhoods around the university are filled with growing residential development. These new residents need access to new open space to meet their mental and physical health needs in an increasingly dense district around the University.

Though several large parks in NE/SE were set aside very early, including Van Cleve and Logan, park development east of the river stalled because of the Park Board’s Elwell Law, under which the agency only acquired and built parks by assessing area residents for the costs. Beginning in the late 1960s MPRB stopped using Elwell for neighborhood parks and instead

sought grants, bonding, and other sources. An acquisition and building boom took place in the 1970s and 1980s, but many of these newer parks could never become as large as the existing big centers of activity—the costs were too high. Also in the 1960s and 1970s, MPRB built recreation centers across the city. NE/SE Minneapolis has eight rec centers including the newly renovated NE Rec Center.

Parks are critical for the health of the east of the river youth and adults, and they can quite literally save lives. Health issues like childhood obesity and diabetes have reached what some call epidemic proportions across the nation, and incidence of these issues is higher in communities of color and low income areas. Inactivity due to lack of access to green space and parks 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. Furthermore, through the provision of daily snacks and lunches, children can access healthy food through parks and can form new eating habits.

Parks, therefore, must be designed so people want to use them. They must feel welcoming, they must include the activities youth and adults want, and they must be and feel safe and fun. Accomplishing those goals requires a vision driven by and supported by the SE and NE Minneapolis community itself. The East of the River Park Master Plan (ERPMP) documents that vision for 33 neighborhood park properties, as well as a Regional Trail facility that is inextricably linked to the neighborhood system, the Grand Rounds Missing Link. ERPMP is one of five such master plans that will collectively redesign every neighborhood park in the city.

Minneapolis today is more diverse in terms of age, race and ethnicity, and recreational need than ever before. The last time the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board took a comprehensive look at its neighborhood parks was in the 1960s and 1970s when the recreation centers were being built. We are a very different city than we were then. 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.

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, paths, and some amenities never before seen in Minneapolis’ parks, like bicycle parks and community kitchens. 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’ neighborhood parks.

On April 29, 2016, a historic agreement was reached between MPRB and the City of Minneapolis, the 20-year Neighborhood Park Plan (NPP20), to fund neighborhood parks of Minneapolis at significantly increased levels until 2037. This agreement demonstrates the importance that 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 ERPMP and 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.

The NPP20 funding plus Park Dedication Fees, represent a new era in neighborhood park funding for Minneapolis. As approved by the Minnesota State Legislature, MPRB has been collecting park dedication fees since January 1, 2014. Park dedication fees are assessed on any development within Minneapolis and are designed to enhance the park system for new residents or employees moving into the city. Common throughout the U.S., park dedication fees are akin to other development fees that create infrastructure to support those developments—infrastructure like sewer, water, and roads. The Minneapolis park dedication ordinance was passed by both the City of Minneapolis and MPRB.

A community-driven park system is a well-used park system. A well-used park system can combat physical, mental, and societal challenges—by bringing people together for active recreation, relaxation, companionship, or solitude and by making our communities more resilient as our climate changes. Parks also offer an excellent opportunity to improve and contribute to clean water, clean air, and a healthy natural environment for people and wildlife. This is the next legacy moment for Minneapolis parks.

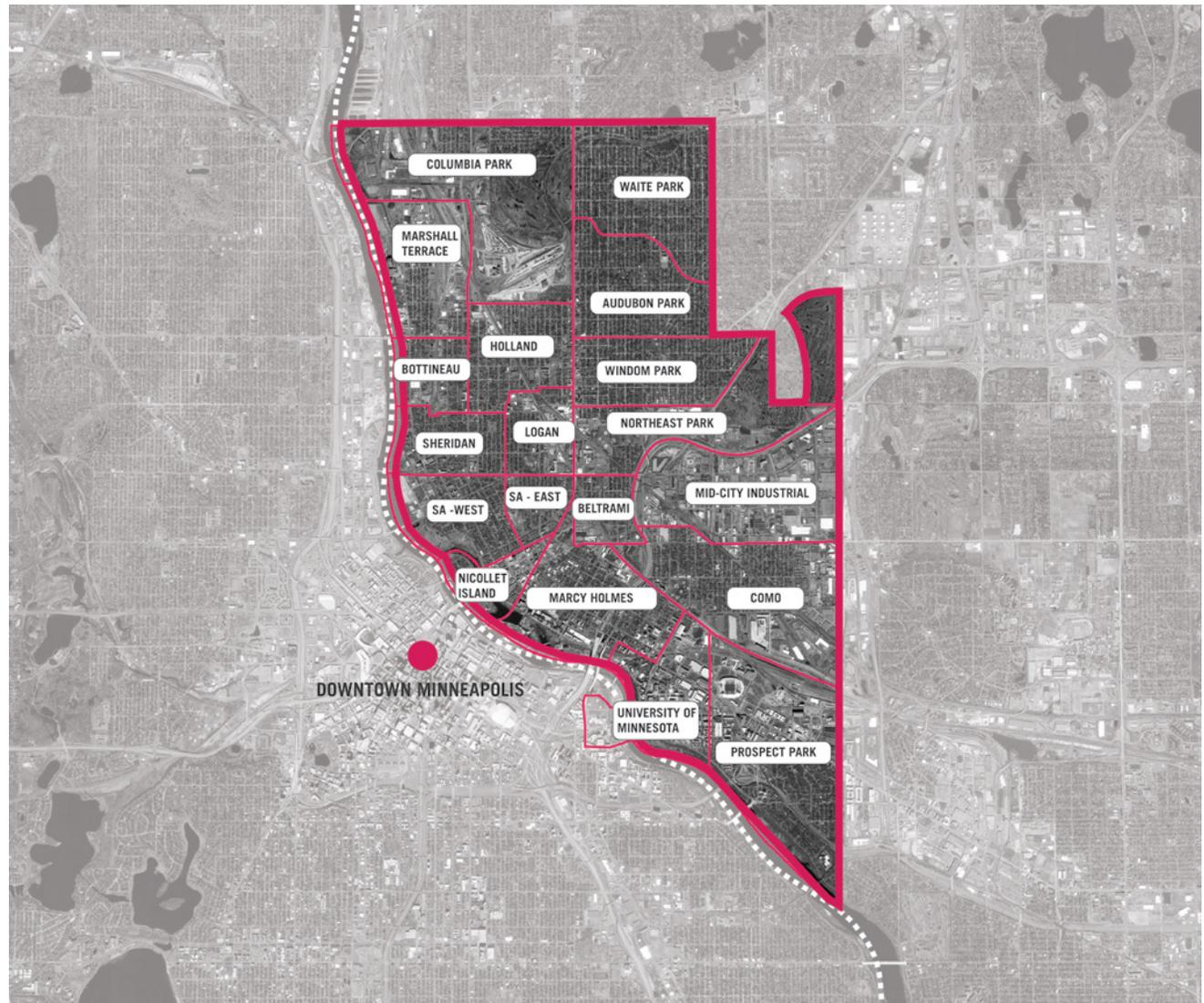


FIGURE 1 | NEIGHBORHOODS INCLUDED IN MASTER PLAN



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

- 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.



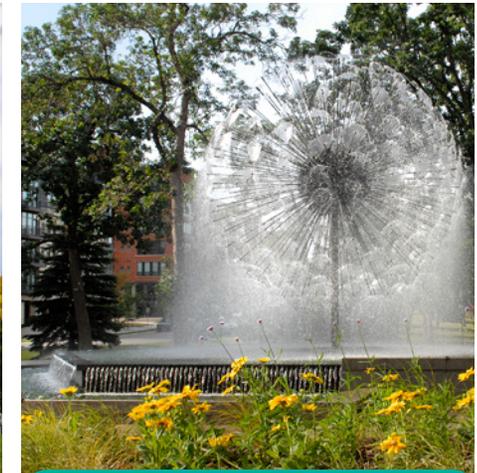
Theme 2: Recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community

- 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.



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

- 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.



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

- 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.

MPRB 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.

FROM MPRB 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



MPRB 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, new 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.

FROM MPRB 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The East of the River Park Master Plan document is the result of more than 18 months of community participation in designing neighborhood parks in Minneapolis east of the Mississippi River, along with a regional facility: the Grand Rounds Missing Link. MPRB and its partners—neighborhood organizations, community organizations, a youth design team, stakeholder groups, and interested community members—showed up and shared visions for the future of our parks at close to 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 NE and SE service area parks.

Specifically, this document is meant to:

- Show the Minneapolis community and public agency partners 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 fund-raising 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 east of the river service area planning process.



Image 3 | Youth Design Team Member reviews park concepts. Source: MPRB

This document has six parts:

1. The **INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK** chapter provides an overview of the plan, this document, and related MPRB planning efforts.
2. The **PLANNING PROCESS** 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. The **SERVICE AREA VISION** chapter is a look at the service area as a whole. It features the guiding principles and strategies that are at the core of the plan, and provides graphic information on planned facilities across the service area.
4. The **PARK PLANS** chapter includes the designs for each neighborhood park in the northeast and southeast service area and a regional trail included in this planning process. It features a packet of information for each park, including cost estimates and ongoing maintenance estimates.
5. The **OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE** chapter outlines recommendations for maintaining parks and includes background on the operations estimates included in the park plans chapter.
6. The **IMPLEMENTATION** chapter speaks to future park planners, designers, maintenance and trades staff, recreation staff, 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.



Image 4 | TOP : Design team and agency stakeholders reviews potential regional trail routes. Source: MRPB

Image 5 | BOTTOM LEFT : Community Advisory Committee and consultants review existing park conditions. Source: PERKINS + WILL

Image 6 | BOTTOM RIGHT : Site visit to Columbia Park. Source: MRPB

MPRB intends for this to be a living document and to 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 plans are roadmaps:

- The park plan “packets” can be separated into individual 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 NE/SE service area park. The park packets will include the individual park information as well as the service area wide Guiding Principles and Strategies.
- Plan information may be associated with the new Asset Management System, so the future vision of each park is embedded into the process for facility evaluation, work orders, and project scheduling.
- The base CAD files that show the park designs will also be included in Planning Division files, as well as provided to Forestry and other departments to guide geo-referenced planting.
- 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 park plan packets will be linked to NE/SE 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.



Image 7 | MPRB staff reviews initial park concepts with a community member. Source: MPRB



Image 8 | Youth Design Team reviews existing conditions in the service area. Source: MPRB

RELATED PLANNING

OTHER SERVICE AREA MASTER PLANS

The roughly 160 neighborhood parks in the MPRB system are divided (for management and planning purposes) into five service areas. The South and Downtown Service Area Master Plans were adopted in 2016 and 2017, respectively. The North Service Area Master Plan plan is to be approved in 2019. 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 Southwest Service Area Master Plans is underway concurrent to this document and will be adopted subsequently.

REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLANS

Many of the larger, natural resource-based parks in Minneapolis are Regional Parks. This includes (East of the River) Above the Falls, Saint Anthony Parkway, Ridgway Parkway, the Central Mississippi Riverfront and the Mississippi Gorge. Per Metropolitan Council funding requirements, these large parks are master planned individually. Though existing facilities within these parks are shown on many East of the River Park Master Plan maps, it is the regional park master plans that govern future investment in these parks. For purposes of efficiency and effective communication, one regional facility without a current masterplan was planned alongside the east of the river neighborhood parks: the Grand Rounds Missing Link. A Master Plan for this important connection is included in this document, but will be subsequently submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval.

RECQUEST

This major multi-year project will create a new vision for recreation centers and programs across the city. While the East of the River Park Master Plan is considering outdoor facilities (and has assumed, for the time being, the existing recreation center footprints as a basis for planning, with a few exceptions where a need arose to examine site impacts of community desires for building changes), 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 outdoor programming and 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 and skateboarding). They make recommendations for level of service, provide design standards and guidelines, and create task lists for improving delivery of an activity system-wide.

Leading up to the ERPMP process, two activity plans had been completed—the Urban Agriculture Plan and the Skatepark Activity Plan. The Urban Agriculture Plan guided the master plan relative to the placement and opportunities for urban agriculture areas. The East of the River Park Master Plan implements a key feature of the Urban Agriculture Plan and the Community Garden Policy by officially designating urban agriculture areas on park plans. Chapter 6 describes a process for adding additional urban agriculture areas in NE and SE service area parks. The Skatepark Activity Plan sets forth system-wide targets for total skatepark area and targets for different types of parks in the city. The East of the River process follows this guidance, proposing skate/BMX/all-wheel parks in quantities in line with the Skatepark Activity Plan.

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 ERPMP. 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. There will be a new MPRB Comprehensive Plan in place by the end of 2020.

MPRB ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS PLAN

The MPRB Ecological System Plan is being developed in parallel with the East of the River Master Plan. It will seek to first understand the ecology of the city and watershed, then plan for parks and public lands management and improvements that benefit both humans and nature. It will address specific threats such as climate change, decreasing water quality, explosion of invasive species, increasing runoff, and fragmentation of habitat. It will envision a more environmentally sound way of managing the impacts of the city, so that the city can be cleaner, greener, cooler, and more efficient.

Specifically, the ecological system plan will: compile, create, and illustrate city-wide ecological data; draft a vision for natural resources and public lands within the watershed and city; outline guiding principles for management; and challenge the community to rethink the city around them – from the local neighborhood park to the Grand Rounds to backyards – in terms of ecological function, benefit, and health. The East of the River Park Master Plan draws from the Ecological System Plan to better understand the ecological system of the service area as a whole.

PARTNER AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

There are several other plans and guidance documents that have informed the pages of the plan including numerous small area plans from the NE and SE neighborhood and City of Minneapolis. Many parts of Northeast and Southeast Minneapolis are experiencing periods of rapid growth. Most of these small area plans either reference or plan for this influx. As the number of residents in this part of the city increases, many small area plans suggest that parkland and amenities

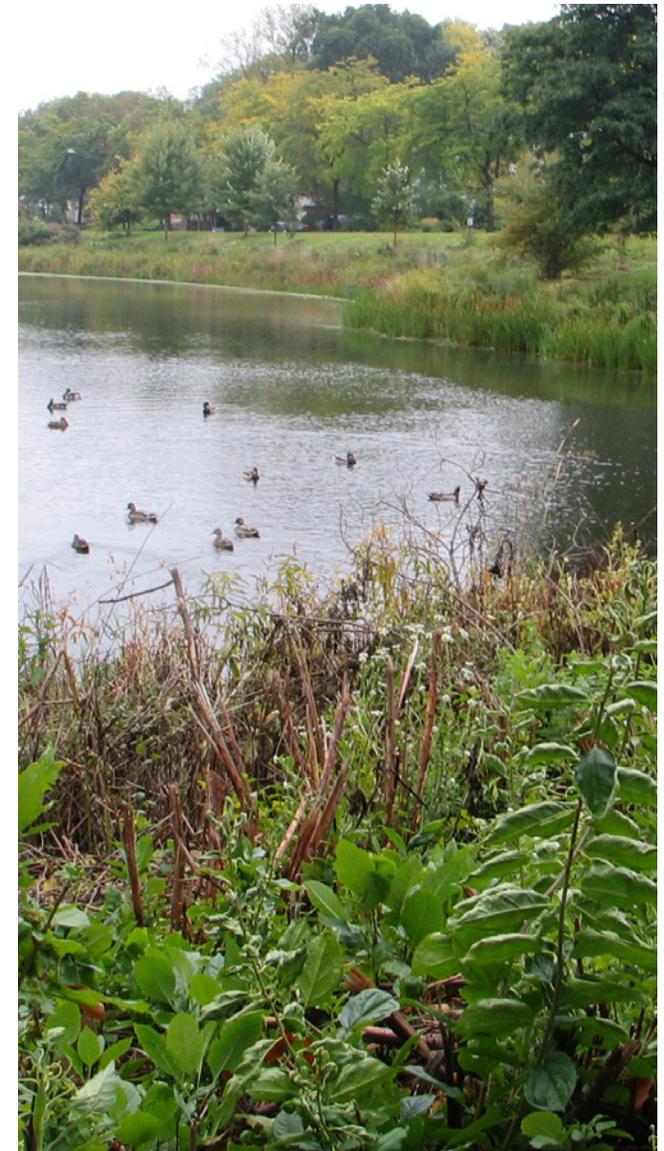


Image 9 | Bde Maka Ska Wetland Ponds Project. Source: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

also increase. The Nicollet Island-East Bank, Marcy-Holmes, Audubon Park, and Como neighborhoods have all requested new or expanded parks. Because of the revitalization of the river in Above the Falls, we will need to revisit the role and function of our neighborhood parks near the river as the River First vision is realized, especially in regards to supporting natural ecological systems. Planning staff consulted with neighbors on community driven park plans at Chute Square, Jackson Square, and Elwell Parks.

The planning staff consulted the following small area plan recommendations in the development of this plan:

- **15th Ave SE Urban Design Plan**
- **Audubon Park Neighborhood Small Area Plan**
- **Central Ave Small Area Plan**
- **Holland Neighborhood Small Area Plan**
- **Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Master Plan**
- **The University of MN Master Plan**
- **Towerside Framework for Planning and Implementation**

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Minneapolis Public Schools and the City of Minneapolis collaborated in 2016-17 to do a Safe Routes to School inventory that included many schools adjacent to parks in NE and SE Minneapolis. The recommendations put forth in their inventory were included in the site analysis and recommendations for parks with or near Minneapolis Public Schools.

NORTHEAST STORMWATER MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

In 2016, the MWMO (Mississippi Watershed Management Organization) approached the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and asked them to partner with MPRB on this effort. The first task was to clearly define each partners' goals (in terms of watershed management) for the area, noting where those goals overlapped and where they diverged. The partners agreed that overarching themes for our work in the 1NE Watershed are: increased flood resiliency, reduced pollutant loading to the Mississippi River and improved ecological function. Several preliminary recommendations from the study were incorporated into the concepts for Columbia Park and Golf Course as well as several neighborhood triangles and parks.



Image 10 | Example of a local MWMO project adjacent to Jackson Square Park. Source: MWMO

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