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PLANNING PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

The Southwest Service Area Master Plan is the result of more than 2 years of planning and design by MPRB staff, the community, and hired technical and design consultants. More than 170 community engagement events were held and several different stages of input garnered thousands of individual comments on park plans, guiding principles, and the planning process itself. At the core of the community engagement was the 18-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a group of community members appointed by MPRB Commissioners, City Council Members, and neighborhood organizations. The CAC met over 16 times as a group, including 6 subcommittee meetings. CAC members also created five formal working groups to address specific topics or geographic areas of the plan. Meetings of these working groups were scheduled and led by CAC members, with support from the MPRB project team. They delved more deeply into their topic areas and reported back to

the full CAC. The working groups were: partnerships, equity and accessibility, balanced field use, natural areas and recreation balance, and potential new parks. Many CAC members also connected directly with their networks and neighbors to bring valuable insight to the planning process.

Throughout the process, MPRB staff expended additional efforts to reach out to community members often left out of planning processes, namely people of color, young renters, and immigrant communities. Staff and design team members attended numerous community festivals, both in and outside of parks, and also simply visited parks on busy days to talk with users. Three additional efforts were specifically designed to involve more SW community members in the process and to make the design process itself more transparent: a targeted multi-media campaign, the Data Jam, and the Design Week.

As a supplement to the initial phase of direct engagement, MPRB hired a local producer to create two short outreach videos used on MPRB and neighborhood organization social media platforms. Staff also contracted with Comcast Spotlight to feature premium digital video targeted to southwest cable and internet users on a variety of formats: computers, tablets, phones, and smart tvs. Each campaign ran for several weeks and directed viewers to the SW Parks Plan webpage via a live link.

Staff also made surveys on iPads available for public use at some events to encourage input particularly from younger audiences more comfortable with screen interaction. A number of engagement events featured language interpreters, while newspaper ads, surveys, and flyers were translated into Spanish and Somali to increase awareness and direct people to the project's online resources. All the gathered input was incorporated into the Data Jam and provided to park designers.

At CAC meeting #4, the CAC and general public participated what MPRB calls a **Data Jam**. In an effort to involve the community in not just the gathering of data, but in the interpretation of that data, meeting participants were asked to sift through collected community engagement and demographic data. They developed major topics for both the service area as a whole, and for each individual park. They worked both individually and collectively, discussing and interpreting what the public feedback was actually saying.

A detailed list of engagement events can be found in the Appendix.

The results of the Data Jam fed directly into the initial designs of the parks themselves, which were also prepared in a new and different way. In order to diversify the pool of designers involved in the park designs and to open the process to the CAC and public, MPRB and project consultants SRF, 4RM+ULA, and MIG brought in 8 additional landscape architects and urban designers for one focused workshop-style week to help generate initial park designs. This was called **Design Week**.





The team worked during an intense 4 days that involved site visits, a charette-style working environment, and public events. Design Week began with CAC #5, at which CAC members and staff presented guidance from the Data Jam and working groups, then sat at tables with designers and the public and began thinking about park amenities and arrangement. Two days later, MPRB opened the design studio doors for a public walk-through, where community members could see the designers' early ideas while still in development and chat again with them about park designs.

The large amount of community engagement events, the multimedia outreach, the Data Jam, and Design Week were all done in an effort to ensure that the planning process was open and equitable, and to perform work through an equity lens focused on the full spectrum of communities that live and play in southwest. Community engagement unfolded in three main phases, in concert with the gradual evolution of park plans over 18 months (for a detailed list of engagement events, see the Appendix). The goal throughout the SW Parks Plan process was to go beyond business-as-usual for community engagement. Of course there is always room for improvement. The sheer population of the southwest neighborhoods and existing MPRB resources could not ensure every resident would be directly contacted. However, the extensive engagement associated with the SW Parks Plan process garnered input and dialog from a broad cross-section of the community. The SW Parks Plan is the result of input that spans ranges of age, gender, economic status, race and ethnicity, and historic involvement with park planning.

Most important, the planning process and park designs changed over the course of the project in response to the community's voice. The SW Parks Plan process unfolded slowly and deliberately over more than a year and a half, repeatedly asking the community to weigh in at each stage: at the initial visioning, on the community engagement data interpretation, on early hand-sketched designs, at the stage of design refinement, and even on this very document.

Though a park planning process cannot solve the deeply entrenched institutional bias that exists throughout government systems, it can recognize that such bias does exist. It can do its part to make decisions that set the stage for eliminating that bias in areas where MPRB has jurisdiction. MPRB recognizes the importance of the commitment to the SW Parks Plan process many community members have made—especially at a time of heightened tension and dialog around race, density, environmental efforts, and public expenditures—and the agency is indebted for that service.

The SW Parks Plan is a significant step forward in ensuring that racial and other bias is eliminated. It envisions a neighborhood park system that meets the needs of the changing community. It aligns park plans with community needs and invests in areas where those needs are greatest. It does not assume the parks will be remade just as they are now. It remakes the parks in the image of the present and future Minneapolis.





PROJECT PROCESS

The SW Parks Plan process unfolded in six distinct stages. The following is a brief stage-by-stage overview of the project.

1. EARLY CONNECTIONS & THE CAC

At the inception of the project, MPRB staff met with multiple community service organizations and every neighborhood organization in the Southwest Service Area. The purpose of these meetings was to make groups outside the normal planning processes aware of the SW Parks Plan and to also ask for help in broadening the applicant pool for the CAC. In

addition, MPRB staff attended park events during this start-up phase, to gather input and encourage CAC applications.

MPRB staff worked closely with appointers on the CAC composition, to ensure broad representation. It must be noted here that, as with any CAC, attendance was never perfect. MPRB recognizes that the multiple evening meetings demanded by the current CAC process can disproportionately affect those with lower incomes, single parents, and those with atypical work schedules. MPRB will continue to work on improving access to CAC meetings, including

continued consideration of altered meeting times, always providing food during dinner-time meetings, and bringing individual CAC members up to speed after the fact when they are unable to attend a meeting.

2. INVENTORY, ANALYSIS, & DATA

Somewhat outside the CAC and community engagement process, MPRB and its consultant team prepared an inventory and analysis of park assets, with descriptions of condition and also a demographic analysis of the service area. These documents were presented during CAC #2 and were also included in the Data Jam.

3. VISIONING & PHASE 1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

MPRB staff, consultants, and CAC members attended nearly 100 public events during phase 1 in 2018, both in the parks and elsewhere. No park designs were presented at that time. Rather, the engagement activities were designed to get people thinking generally about what the service area as a whole should be and what they would like to change or preserve in their local park. As a result of this engagement, the design team produced summaries of responses associated with each park. The analysis was organized so that responses could be sorted by event, by park, and by geographic area within the service area. This information was included in the Data Jam and provided critical insight as the design team began drawing the first initial park plans. Also during this phase, MPRB planning staff and consultants met with each SW recreation center director as well as with an MPRB staff team from across the organization.

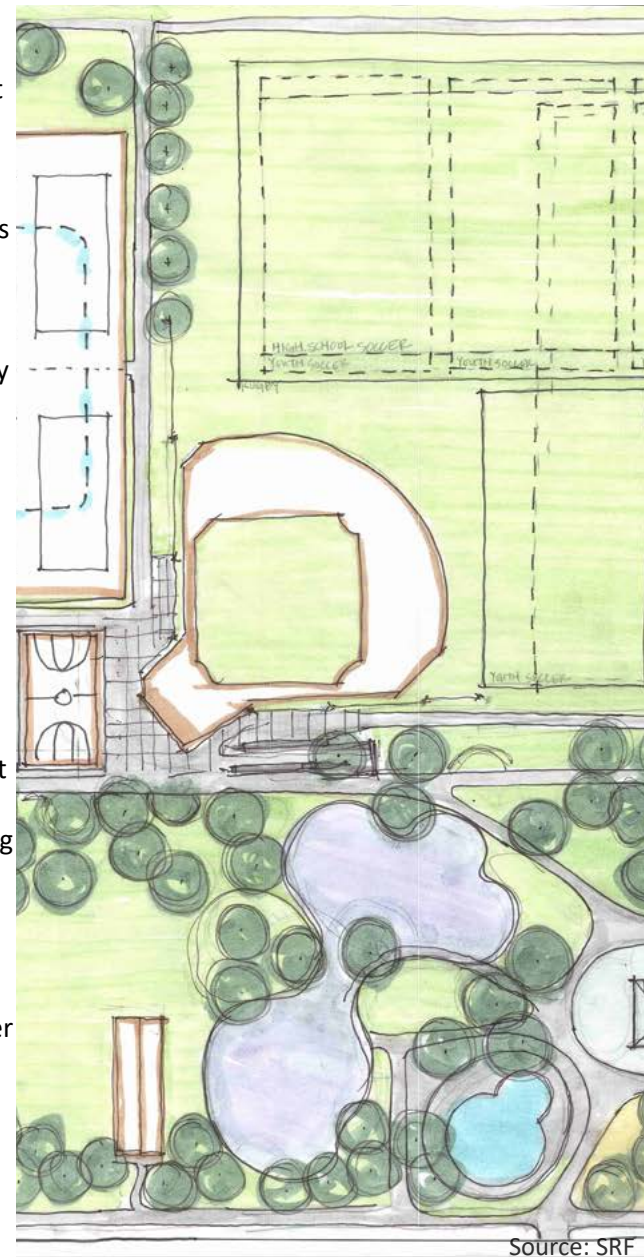
4. INITIAL PARK CONCEPTS & PHASE 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Based on the extensive phase 1 input and the Data

Jam in CAC #4, the expanded design team prepared the initial park concepts. During Design Week, the design team reviewed all the community engagement to date and hand-sketched one or two different concept ideas for each park. The team refined these sketches over the course of several weeks and then brought them back out to the community. The designs were intended to spur community discussion, test different ideas, and then be significantly revised in a later stage. The team also produced maps and charts showing the service area-wide facility mix for a variety of activities.

The initial concepts were brought out to the community in four open house workshops spread throughout the southwest area. The open house workshop set-up was such that community members could gather around the different designs and discuss them with neighbors, at times even drawing new solutions right on the initial sketches. MPRB also met with stakeholder groups during this process, conducted interviews, and revisited all the designs with recreation center directors, who understand best the daily use of the parks. Staff displayed posters of the designs in all SW recreation center buildings, along with comment cards and comment collection boxes. In addition, the initial concepts were available online with an accompanying survey.

Input from all sources—online, open house workshops, stakeholders, interviews, recreation center staff, etc.—was entered into MPRB's online survey system to generate detailed summaries for each park and ideas for the service area as a whole. The input from this stage is included in the Appendix, while the general input themes are included in the park packet for each park, in Chapter 4.



Source: SRF



5. REVISED CONCEPTS & PHASE 3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Based on input about the initial concepts, the design team met again to discuss revision of the designs. Each park was considered individually and in the context of the service area as a whole, with the draft guiding principles (see Chapter 3) also driving decision-making. The team produced a single “revised concept” for each park, which was drawn more formally in AutoCAD for easy alteration. These revised concepts were publicly released May 30th, 2019.

In CAC #7, CAC members and the general public participated in additional activities to hone in on some key questions that arose out of the community engagement, most notably around four “big questions” that seemed to be emerging through the community engagement. These focused on athletics balance, season extension, balancing parks and recreation, and bike/wheel skills areas. This meeting provided final guidance for the design team in preparing the revised concepts.

Community engagement around the revised concepts centered on the CAC and communication through a variety of media, neighborhood and community organizations, and the recreation centers. The revised concepts were discussed in meetings #8 through #16—meetings that regularly attracted between 20 and 60 members of the general public in addition to the CAC members. CAC #8 featured a process of sorting the parks into those that the CAC felt were in the realm of consensus toward recommendation and those that required further discussion. The

general public had an opportunity to speak about each park in turn as it was raised to the floor (see the Appendix for CAC meeting notes showing the details of the discussion). CAC #10 began the discussion of the “non-consensus” parks. CAC #16 was the final meeting, with the CAC reviewing the overall guiding principles and recommending the designs of all SW parks to the MPRB Commissioners. Concurrent to CACs #10-14, three subcommittees requested by the CAC convened to discuss the revised concepts in more depth and bring broader community perspectives to the CAC. These subcommittees discussed Lynnhurst Park, The Parade Park, and the balance of fields and diamonds in four parks in the far SW corner of the city (Armatage, Kenny, Linden Hills, and Pershing Field). The CAC also requested that the future Cedar-Isles Master Plan CAC strongly consider adding sand volleyball within that park, specifically by the lagoon near The Mall park.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE SW PARKS PLAN DOCUMENT & FINAL APPROVAL

At the conclusion of the CAC process, MPRB staff and consultants prepared the draft SW Park Plan document and provided it to the community for formal public comment. The document was made available online and in print at all southwest recreation centers. Surveys were made available online or printed in all SW recreation centers. When recreation centers were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 45-day comment period was extended to 170 days, and large format graphics of plans were displayed on the exteriors of SW recreation buildings.

After the comment period, MPRB staff tabulated comments, made necessary changes to the document to reflect that input, and brought the final SW Parks Plan document before the Board of Commissioners for approval with a public hearing.

RECOMMENDATION + ADOPTION

Approved November 4, 2020 by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners.



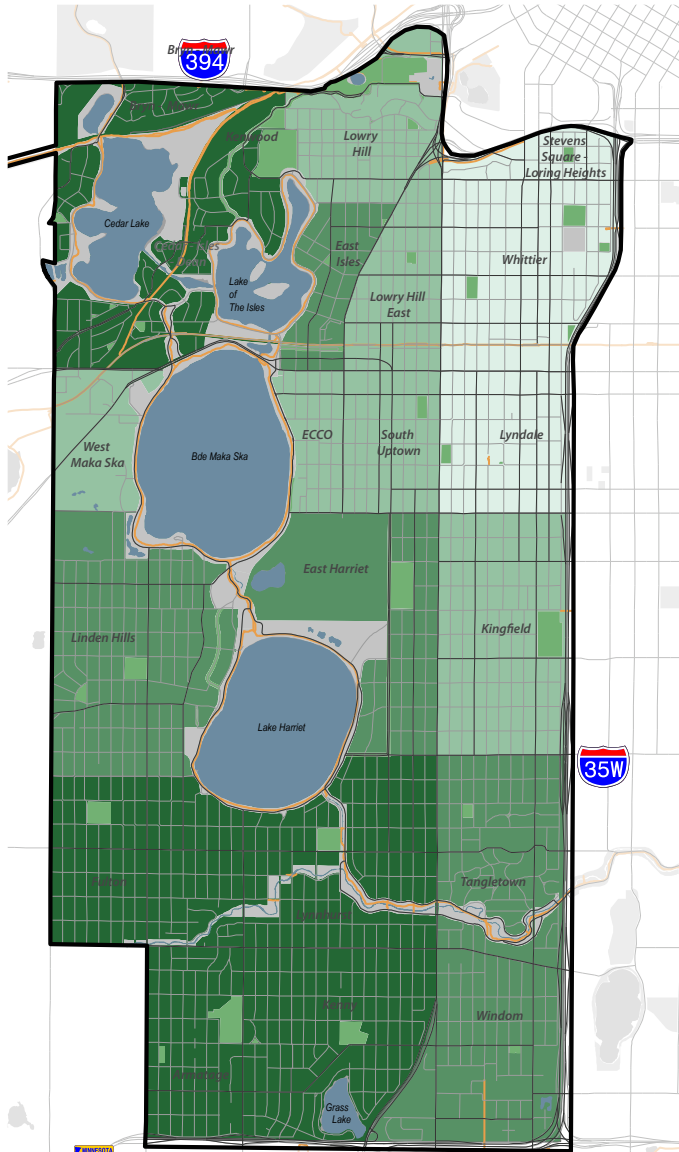


DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

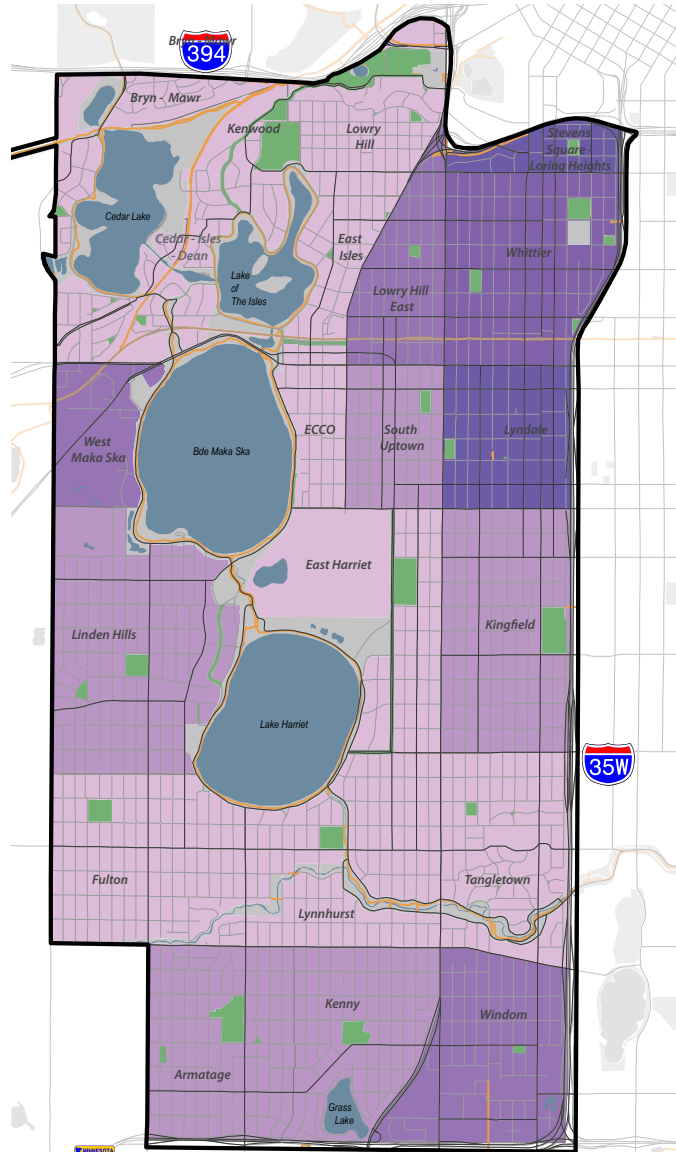
This section provides an overview of the population within the Southwest Service Area (SWSA) and its key characteristics such as age groups, income levels, race and ethnicity.

*Data for this section came from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey.

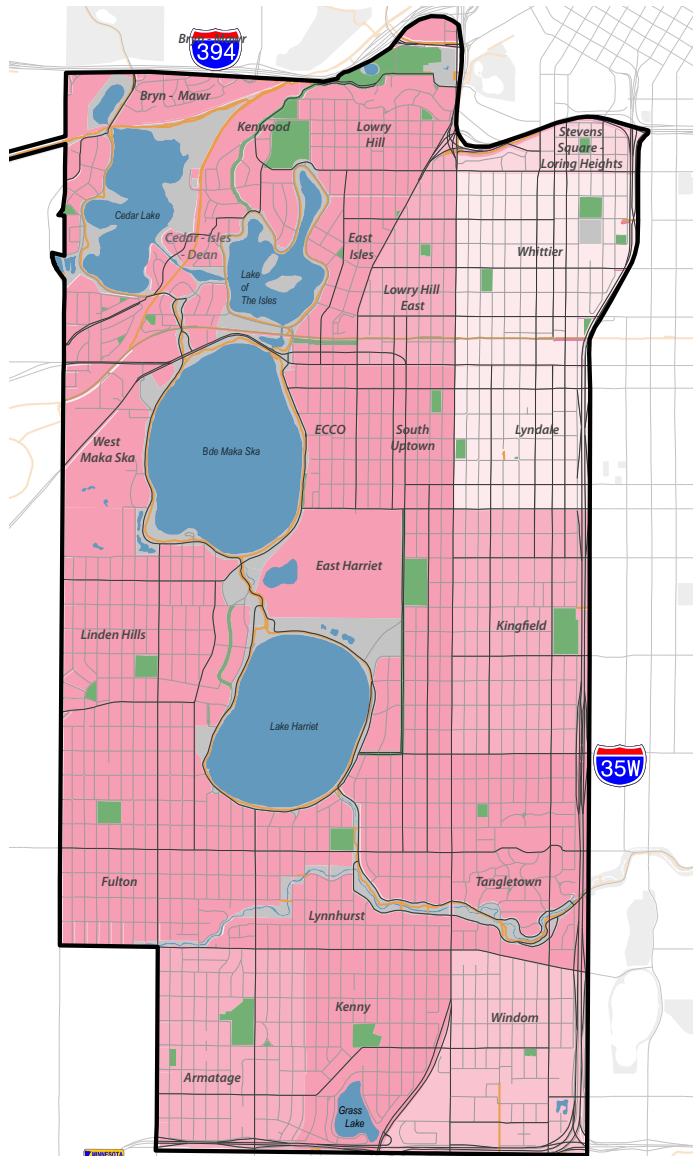
**More detailed coverage maps
can be found in the Appendix.**



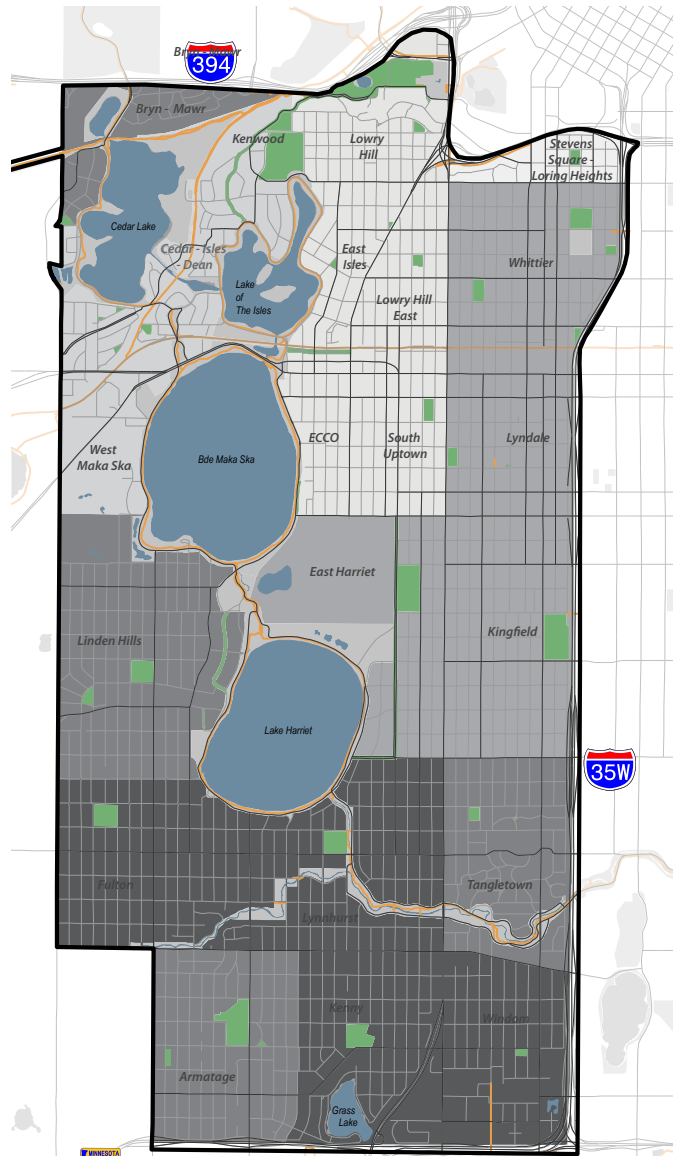
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



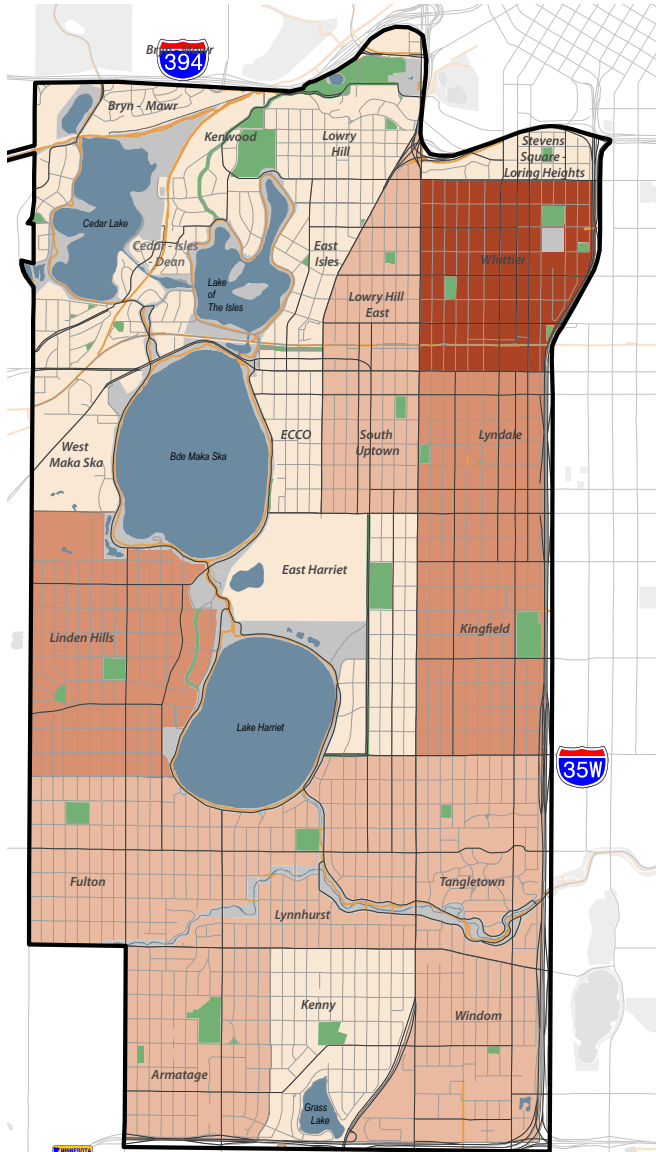
PERCENT OF RESIDENTS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL



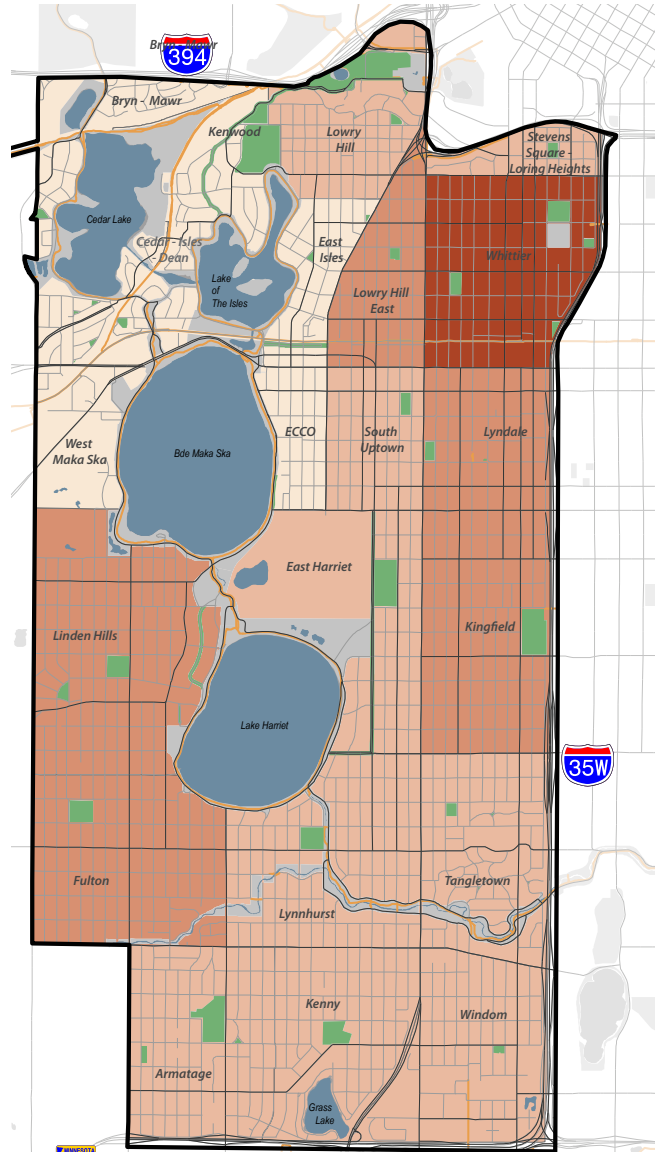
PERCENT CAUCASIAN RESIDENTS



PERCENT OF RESIDENTS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD



TOTAL POPULATION PER NEIGHBORHOOD



PROJECTED 2040 POPULATION PER NEIGHBORHOOD (+11.5%)

SUMMARY

- Southwest Service Area population represents 28% of the City of Minneapolis.
- The total population for the Southwest Service Area has undergone little net change over the past decade from approximately 105,178 in 2000 to an estimated 106,180 from 2013-2017. However, the Southwest Service Area is made up of a broad spectrum of individuals.
 - The neighborhood that experienced the most growth over the last decade was the Fulton Neighborhood. The Cedar-Isles-Dean and Lynnhurst Neighborhoods also experienced substantial growth during this time.
 - The neighborhoods that experienced the largest population declines over the last decade were: East Harriet, West Maka Ska (formerly West Calhoun), and South Uptown (formerly CARAG).
 - Southwest has a slower growth rate than Minneapolis, which grew 2.7% between 2010 and 2014.
- Approximately 45% of total Southwest Service Area households are families.
 - This varies greatly across the service area with the Stevens Square neighborhood having only 8% and the Lynnhurst neighborhood at 74%.
 - Neighborhoods in the northeast portion of the service area (Lowry Hill East, Stevens Square, and Whittier) are made up of approximately 86% renters while neighborhoods in the southernmost portions of the service area (Armatage, Fulton, Lynnhurst, Kenny, Tangletown, and Windom) are between 76-87% homeowners.
 - The average southwest area Median Income (\$79,117) is above the City average (\$58,323). However, there are disparities in wealth across the service area. The Armatage, Fulton, and Lynnhurst neighborhoods are among the wealthiest, where between 50-65% of households make \$100,000 or more annually. The Lowry Hill East, Lyndale, Stevens Square, and Whittier neighborhoods are among the least wealthy where 30-59% of households make less than \$35,000 annually.
 - 35-64 year olds represent the largest age group in the Southwest Service Area, comprising 38% of the population. However, this average does not represent the majority age group in the ECCO, South Uptown, Lyndale, East Harriet, Kingfield, Lowry Hill East, Stevens Square, and Whittier neighborhoods, which are comprised mostly of 18-35 year olds.



SUMMARY CONTINUED

- The Southwest Service Area is less diverse than the City of Minneapolis.
 - It is currently estimated that in the city of Minneapolis the population is about 59.9% White, with Black/African American (18.6%) representing the largest minority. The Southwest service area is estimated to be 77.7% White, with Black/African American (7.63%) representing the largest minority. However, the Lowry Hill East, Stevens Square, Whittier, Windom, and Lyndale neighborhoods are considerably more diverse than the other 16 neighborhoods in the SWSA.
- The 65+ age segment is growing rapidly in the City of Minneapolis, more so than any other age segment.
- In the Lowry Hill East, Stevens Square, and Whittier neighborhoods where median household income is well below city, state, and national averages there are no regional parks or trails. only neighborhood parks.



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