

SIBLEY

LOCATION AND HISTORY

Sibley Field is a square two city blocks in size bounded by Longfellow and 20th Avenues and 39th and 40th Streets in the Ericsson Neighborhood. It is a “park in a bowl,” not unlike nearby Phelps Field Park: its fields and other assets are significantly lower than the surrounding neighborhood, with steep slopes leading upwards to adjacent streets. This creates a feeling of comfortable enclosure, the recreational amenities contained in a sort-of valley or arena.

Sibley Field was designated for purchase by the park board on November 16, 1921, the same day as Bracket Field. The first petitions for a park in the vicinity were received by the park board in September 1921 and



acquisition of the park proceeded quickly. The first plan for the park was published in the 1921 annual report. The land purchase cost was assessed to property owners in the neighborhood, per the typical practice at the time. The park was named in 1923 for General Henry Hastings Sibley, the first Regional Governor of Minnesota, who was inaugurated in 1858. Prior to being named for Sibley, the park was referred to as Cedar Avenue Heights Park.

One of the main challenges in developing the park was its topography. Park superintendent Theodore Wirth wrote in his 1923 annual report that the “formerly unsightly low land” was brought to “attractive and serviceable” grades by using a steam shovel and horse teams to move 68,000 cubic yards of sandy soil. The project was complicated, and more expensive than estimated, because all four corners of the park were at different grades. By 1924 the playground was installed and a recreation shelter was completed in time to serve as a warming house for skating that winter. It would take a few more years to complete the fields, walks, and tennis courts because the costs of improvement were underestimated, mostly because so much earth had to be moved to create a level area for playing fields.

In 1946 MPRB chose Sibley as one of only five parks in the city to offer year-round programs. It was also one of nine parks at which senior citizen clubs were started in 1963.

Other than some landscaping at the park through federal work-relief programs in the 1930s, the first improvement at Sibley Field after its construction was a remodeled wading pool in 1963. A new recreation center and upgrades to the playgrounds and fields were completed in 1971. The playgrounds were updated again in 1994. The basketball court was resurfaced in 2014.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CHARACTER

Today, Sibley Field features a typical quartet of ball diamonds arranged around the edges of the main field area, with soccer fields striped between them during the soccer season. Arranged in a line along the southern edge of the park (40th Street) are a basketball court, recreation center building, wading pool, playgrounds, and tennis court. Surrounding the building is a large concrete plaza space. A small parking lot sits adjacent to 40th Street, which slopes steeply down at the center

of the park’s southern edge from high points at the southeastern and southwestern corners of the park. This steep and unusual grade creates somewhat difficult entry points to the parking lot, but also provides high vantage points into the park from the surrounding streets.

The arrangement of the wading pool and playgrounds is unique. The circular wading pool occupies the center of the play space, with two separate play areas flanking it. This arrangement creates narrow fingers of playground space into which it would be difficult to place equipment according to current safety standards. The tennis court is shaded by large trees on the slopes around it, as is the full court basketball court. The basketball court is small compared to many in Minneapolis parks, and does not feature a center circle.

The steep slopes on the eastern, western, and most of the southern edges of the park are home to mature trees and periodically mown turfgrass. Pathways traverse the slopes. Perhaps the most unique and misunderstood feature of the park area is an additional greenspace stretching to the north. This turfgrass area with its encircling paths is actually a stormwater management facility operated by the City of Minneapolis. It is not part of the park, but it sees many visits by Sibley Field users. It is a perceived extension of the parkland. 39th Street ends in a pair of cul-de-sacs between the park and stormwater area, and does not extend across the park.

Sibley has an active youth sports program and is home to a skating rink in the winter. The basketball court attracts regular impromptu games, while the tennis court is mainly used for other running/chasing games by the youth programs at the recreation center.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARKS

Wayfinding and connections from Sibley Field should focus on:

- The existing RiverLake Greenway (40th Street), specifically connections to Phelps Park and the Mississippi River.
- A proposed pedestrian and/or bicycle connection southward on 19th Avenue to Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park
- A proposed pedestrian and/or bicycle connection northward on 19th Avenue to Corcoran Park.



Existing Conditions: Sibley



Proposed Plan: Sibley

THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The design for Sibley Field Park modifies the arrangement of both the athletic fields and the play areas. The number of ball diamonds is reduced from four to two, with the remaining two aligned along the eastern edge of the park. A new wading pool is located where the tennis court exists today. Traditional play areas occupy the entire space between the wading pool and the building plaza. This new arrangement does move the wading pool farther from the building, which may require construction of a small mechanical building, but allows for built-in shading of the pool by mature overstory trees. Two separate play containers would likely be constructed, to separate age groups.

The basketball court—though recently resurfaced—is enlarged, to accommodate the heavy use. During the planning process, some concern was expressed about the secluded location of the basketball court behind the building, but its separation from the childrens' play areas is an advantage to its current location.

The sloped edges of the park are naturalized with pollinator-friendly native plants and trees, with improved walking paths allowing for walks around the park amidst the flowers. The stormwater facility north of the park proper is transformed into an open water wetland with a naturalized shoreline, new paths, and a short bridge or boardwalk offering wildlife viewing opportunities. Transformation of this facility from a dry grass reservoir to a habitat area will not negatively affect neighbors nor reduce stormwater storage capacity. To further mitigate stormwater runoff, the portions of 39th Street adjacent to the park (including the cul-de-sacs) are removed, with only alley access preserved to serve the homes backing up on the stormwater facility. Though this would eliminate some on-street parking, parking is not usually an issue around this park. An underground stormwater storage facility could be implemented under the reconstructed athletic fields, and used as an irrigation source. Stormwater management is important in Sibley

Park because the surrounding watershed flows into Lake Hiawatha, which is an impaired lake and around which flooding issues have occurred. Sibley Park can be part of a “top-of-pipe” solution to stormwater issues around Lake Hiawatha.

Near the building, the parking lot is generally unchanged, but an improved gathering plaza allows for additional programming, picnicking, and respite. The design team explored many different options for locating the parking lot, but the grades along 40th Street (and elsewhere in the park) make any other location impractical and expensive.

A long “Boardwalk” runs east-west between the fields and the recreation areas. A slight slope separates these uses now, and this new walkway and seating area with special paving sits at the crest of that slope, amongst a few larger trees. Backless benches allow for viewing of all major park features: fields, diamonds, wading pool, play areas, and basketball court. Imagine park users gathering here, arranged along the Boardwalk near the activity they are watching, strolling back and forth under the trees with long views out over the open space.

KNOWN LAND USE AND COORDINATION ISSUES

No known land use issues exist with Sibley Field proper, as the square of parkland has been fully owned by MPRB for nearly 100 years. Coordination with the City of Minneapolis, however, is necessary for any improvements associated with the northern stormwater facility, removal of street sections, or implementation of underground stormwater storage. These projects, in fact, will need to be instigated and led by the City with MPRB collaboration. Initial discussions with the City have taken place, but these ideas should be explored further as Sibley Field moves into implementation of capital projects.

UPDATE EXISTING



Traditional Play Structure



Wading Pool



Basketball Court



Skating Rink



Hockey Rink



Urban Agriculture Area



Multi-use Field



Multi-use Diamond

NEW/ ADDED



Outdoor Gathering Space



Walking Loop Trail

PROCESSES

	1: General Input Spring-Fall 2015 <i>Input themes prior to initial concepts</i>	2: Initial Concepts Fall-Winter 2015/2016 <i>Input themes on initial concepts</i>	3: The Preferred Concept Now <i>Key elements of the concept</i>
aquatics	Bigger, deeper pool →	no comments →	Wading pool relocated to existing tennis court location
play	Play area is in poor condition, and has an awkward arrangement →	no comments →	Traditional play area expanded in area of existing play area and existing wading pool
athletics	Multi-use fields are more heavily used and desired than multi-use diamonds →	Consider two diamonds on opposite corners from each other, for two games at once. Like change from diamonds to multi-use fields	Removal of two multi-use diamonds to create larger multi-use field space. Diamonds placed on eastern edge for greater flexibility of field space and reduce conflict with ice rink
courts	Tennis courts are not much used Basketball court sees heavy use but is in poor condition and is too small. →	no comments →	Expansion of basketball court to full-sized court in existing location Removal of tennis court to accommodate wading pool
winter	Sledding hill, though not official, is a heavily used and loved amenity →	Sledding on the east side of the park is great. Watch for conflicts with hockey rink. →	Relocation of ice sheet and rink to west side to overlap with multi-use field and minimize conflict with ad hoc sledding

PROCESSES

	1: General Input Spring-Fall 2015 <i>Input themes prior to initial concepts</i>	2: Initial Concepts Fall-Winter 2015/2016 <i>Input themes on initial concepts</i>	3: The Preferred Concept Now <i>Key elements of the concept</i>
landscape	Mixed perspectives on the community garden, likely because of under-use Consider northern (city-owned) green space in park planning	Be careful not to make vegetation too dense on edges: safety concern Enhance native landscape on slopes. Like natural stormwater area on city-owned land north of park	Addition of naturalized stormwater area on city-owned land north of park Addition of naturalized areas on park slopes Removal of cul-de-sacs on northern edge of park to increase green space Enhancement of urban agriculture area near building
other	Walking paths are in poor condition	no comments	Enhanced gathering plaza at building entry and viewing areas adjacent to fields, diamonds, play areas, and basketball Additional walking loops around wetland area on city-owned land north of park

OPERATIONS ESTIMATE

FACILITIES	Total Per Unit Operations Cost	△ Qty	△ Cost
Multi-use Diamond	\$ 20,000	-2	\$ (40,000)
Tennis Court	\$ 1,500	-1	\$ (1,500)
Outdoor Gathering Space	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Walking Loop Trail	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Difference			\$ (26,500)

COST ESTIMATE

Asset Type	Element	2017 ESTIMATED COST	Implementation Sequence	Prioritization Category	Applicable SSAMP Actions
Aquatics	Wading Pool, incl. tennis court demolition and existing pool demolition	\$ 997,955	before/with play area	FUNDED	16
Play	Traditional Play Structures (2) in new container	\$ 698,158	after/with wading pool	FUNDED	16, 23b, 23d
Athletics	Athletic field renovation, incl. demolition of 2 diamonds, renovation of 2 diamonds, renovation of fields	\$ 1,318,287	stand-alone	PLANNED	16, 20a, 20b, 20d
Courts	Basketball Court (full size full court)	\$ 106,777	stand-alone	PLANNED	16, 22a, 22b
Landscape	Naturalized stormwater wetland, incl. removal of cul-de-sacs	\$ 214,737	stand-alone	CONDITIONAL	17, 26, 29
Landscape	Naturalized areas on park slopes	\$ 16,427	stand-alone	PLANNED	26, 29
Landscape	Urban Agriculture Area	\$ -	stand-alone	CONDITIONAL	16, 19
Landscape	Renovate parking lot	\$ 180,700	stand-alone	PLANNED	28
Landscape	Stormwater management basin under athletic fields	\$ -	with athletic field renovation	CONDITIONAL	27
Other	Renovate gathering spaces around bulding (includes front plaza and spectator "boardwalk")	\$ 132,732	with/after wading pool and play area; could be phased	PLANNED	16
Other	Renovate walking paths	\$ 63,081	stand-alone	PLANNED	16, 17
Other	Miscl. signs, trees, furniture	\$ 73,039	with other projects, as appropriate	PLANNED	9, 17
TOTAL		\$ 3,801,893			

NOTE: The naturalized stormwater wetland as well as the stormwater basin under the athletic fields will have to be primarily funded by the City and the costs reflect paths and bridges only. Urban Agriculture Areas will be implemented in partnership with specific programs or community members.