



DATE: June 19, 2014

TO: Arne Stefferud, Manager, Regional Parks and Natural Resources

FROM: Adam Regn Arvidson, Design Project Manager, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board

SUBJECT: Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan

INTRODUCTION

In conformance with the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) proposes a Master Plan for Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail. This memorandum provides information for Metropolitan Council staff to analyze the proposed Master Plan using criteria in the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.



Figure 1 – Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail Aerial (existing conditions)

This Master Plan is necessary because, though the land for Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail has been a part of the Minneapolis park system since the 1930s, no master plan has been prepared aside from Theodore Wirth's original 1931 drawing. On August 7, 2013, the MPRB Commissioners authorized commencement of construction drawings for the reconstruction and relocation of trails in this park. Funding for short-term improvements is being provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council.

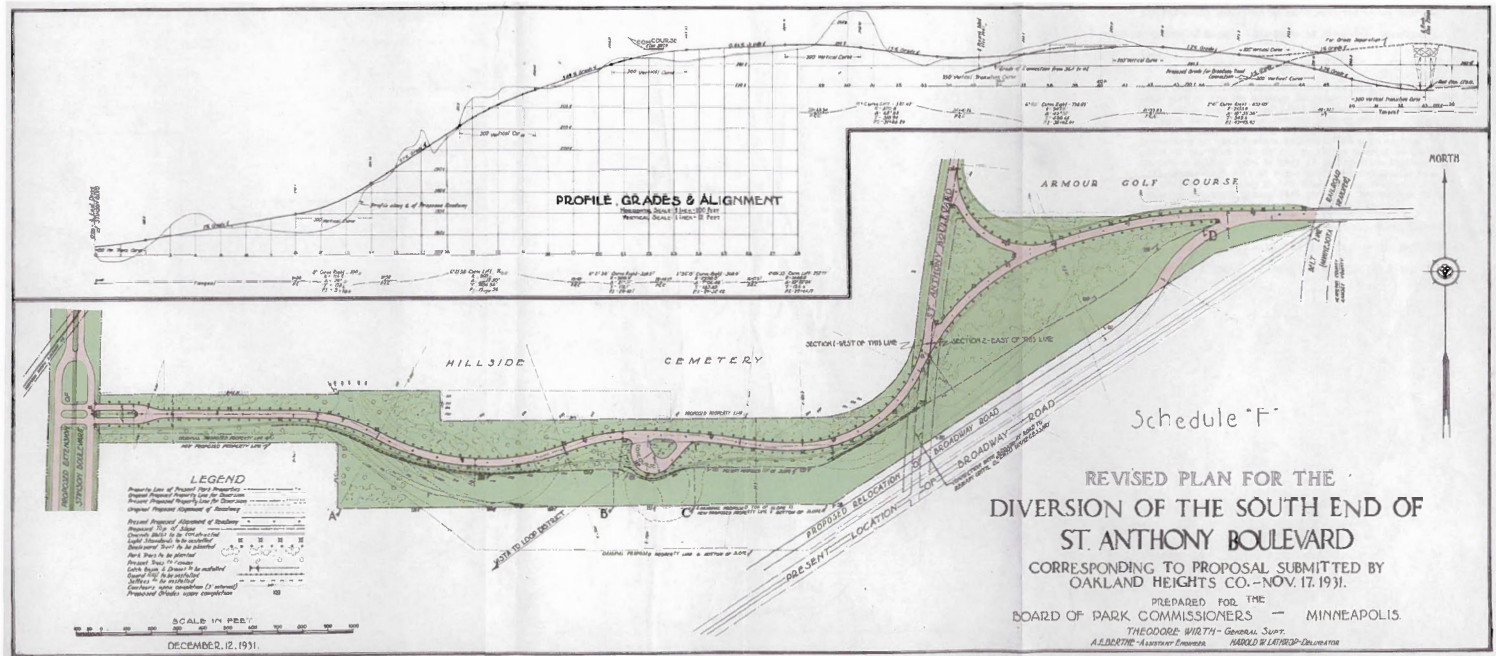


Figure 2 – Ridgway Parkway Map (1931), by Theodore Wirth

Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail is a 24-acre linear park parcel in northeast Minneapolis. It is part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway and is considered a key connector in the “missing link” of the Grand Rounds. In 1928 private property owners along St. Anthony Boulevard south of what is now I-35W asked the MPRB Commissioners to relocate that portion of the Grand Rounds to Stinson Boulevard. The owners wanted to extract gravel from their properties, and the southern portion of St. Anthony Boulevard would reduce gravel availability and would become an isolated roadway between gravel pits. The Board held a public hearing on February 3, 1932, and on April 20 of that same year approved a contract to exchange lands and create a parkway “diversion,” provided the owners pay the entire cost of the work. Per that proposal, the Grand Rounds would follow St. Anthony Boulevard from the north along the route now flanked by Gross Golf Course and the cemetery, then proceed west along the “diversion” (the new Ridgway Parkway) to Stinson Boulevard, then south along Stinson.

The east-west connection between St. Anthony and Stinson Boulevards was completed in 1935 and, according to Theodore Wirth's 1944 history of the Minneapolis park system, “has proven a satisfactory change.... The new route provides a fine concourse half way between the original route and Stinson Boulevard on the brow of the hill, from which a splendid view is obtained to the west and over the Loop District of the city.” When Wirth wrote the park system history, Ridgway was still referred to simply as a revision to the south end of St. Anthony Parkway. It was renamed later for James Arthur Ridgway, who served variously as Park Commissioner, President of the Board, and Board Secretary from 1889 to 1924.



Figure 3 – Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail in Grand Rounds context

This Master Plan describes minimal fundamental change from the original purpose of this connector. Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail's recreational focus is on walking, bicycling, pleasure driving, and viewing the landscape from a high promontory. The land therefore contains a roadway designed according to the standards of the overall Grand Rounds, a multi-use trail, an overlook with parking area, and native landscape restoration areas. The trail connects on the western end to the Northeast Diagonal Trail (a regional trail) in close proximity to the southern end of the Stinson Parkway Trail (a regional facility and a portion of the Grand Rounds). On its eastern end the trail and parkway would connect to the proposed Missing Link Parkway, approved by the MPRB Commissioners in 2008.

This Master Plan calls for the reconstruction and relocation of the multi-use trail and creation of a new overlook and parking lot. Both of these construction projects are expected to take place concurrently in 2014 and 2015.

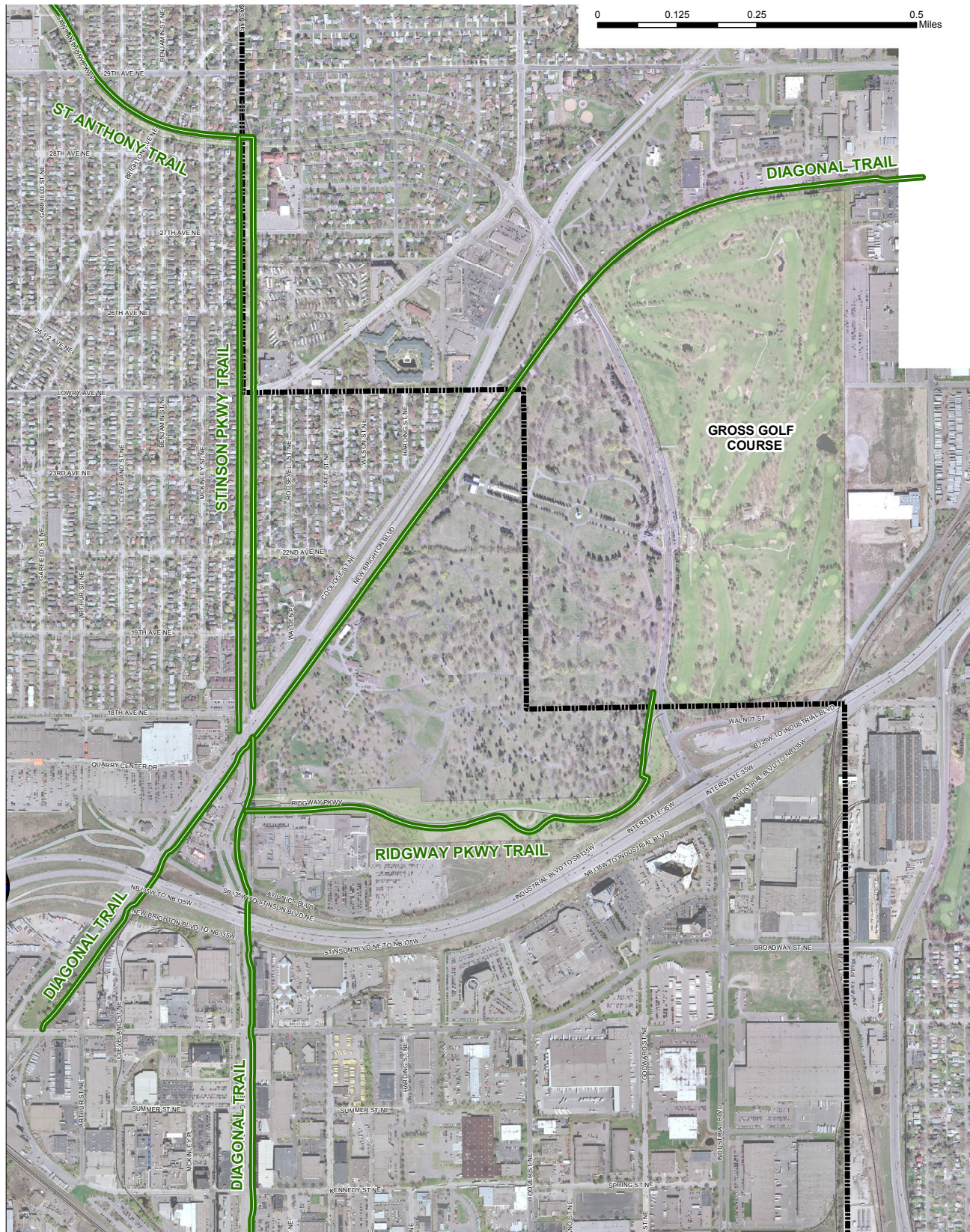


Figure 4 – Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail with other regional facilities

BOUNDARIES AND ACQUISITION COSTS

The Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan includes 24 acres, all of it within parcels wholly owned by the MPRB. Since the original 1932 land-swap, the Ridgway parcel has been modified slightly, most notably in the middle of the 20th Century, when land was sold to the Honeywell Corporation.

No additional acquisition is included in this Master Plan. There are no costs associated with property acquisition under this Master Plan.

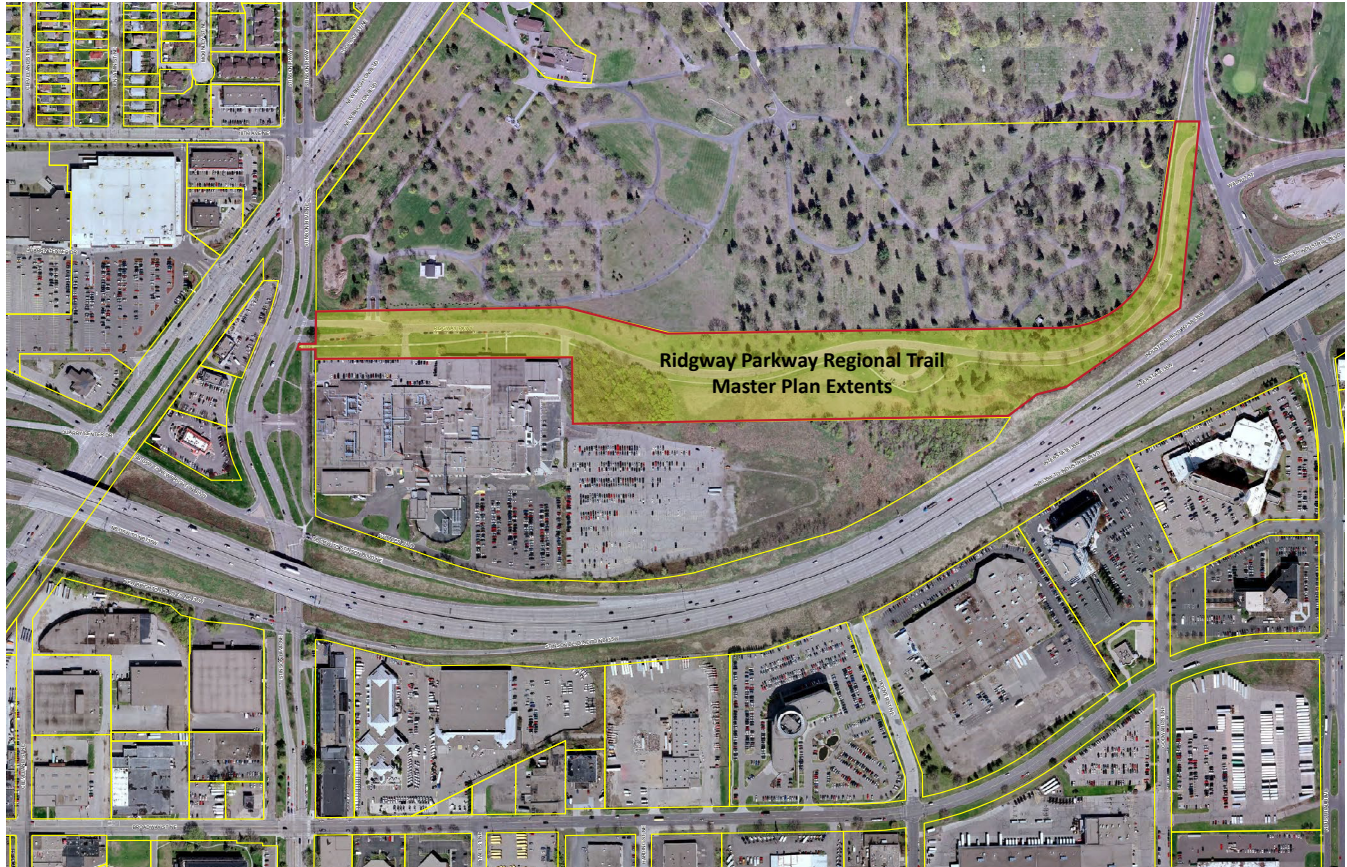


Figure 5 – Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan Extents

STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The primary recreation activities for the proposed area are pleasure driving, trail use, and viewing the landscape. The MPRB, in collaboration with the City of Minneapolis, currently maintains trails and roadways in this location. The multi-use trail will be maintained year-round. The MPRB estimates year round trail maintenance to cost approximately \$1,100 per year per mile. At the overlook area, MPRB will provide general maintenance and upkeep, trash collection, police patrols, and management of the portable restroom facility.

The development of the park will not remove existing revenue sources.

DEMAND FORECAST

Recreational demands met by this amendment primarily include continuous regional trail connections that serve northeast Minneapolis and adjacent northeastern suburbs. The existing trail connection through this park saw 18,500 visits in 2012, according to Metropolitan Council Data. Primarily, Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail functions as a pedestrian and bicycle connector between regional trails including the St. Anthony Parkway Regional Trail (229,300 visits in 2012), the Northeast Diagonal Regional Trail (117,000 visits in 2012) and Stinson Boulevard (visits not calculated by the metropolitan Council). Of course, trail use is driven largely by connections, so the MPRB expects the use of Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail to increase significantly when the remainder of the Missing Link is implemented.

The current overlook and parking area see regular but limited use. Improvements to these facilities as described in this Master Plan should increase the desirability and therefore use of this stunning vista.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The development concept for Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail does not propose significant changes from existing conditions. Because the primary purpose of this park site is (and always has been) to make pedestrian and bicycle connections as part of the Grand Rounds, development efforts are concentrated on trail improvements and vegetation. The primary change proposed by this master plan is to augment the existing viewpoint located approximately at the midpoint of this east-west linear park. The viewpoint is at the crest of a high ridge that offers unobstructed views of downtown Minneapolis to the southwest.

Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail is included in the 2008 Missing Link Development Study. That study identifies the entire Missing Link as a “Garden Route” designed to be an amenity unto itself, not merely a connector. In keeping with that idea, the Master Plan for Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail includes:

- Trees, shrubs, and perennials planted along the roadway portion of the park, in collaboration with local communities;
- Separated bicycle trail and pedestrian sidewalk;
- Signage and lighting that is consistent with the remainder of the Grand Rounds;
- A rest area, which may include drinking fountains, seating, bicycle racks, portable toilets with screens, and information kiosks;
- A formal entry gateway at the intersection of Ridgway Parkway and Stinson Boulevard;
- A turf trail, possibly with interpretation, through the restored prairie area; and
- Possible conversion of additional turfgrass areas to restored grassland (prairie and/or savanna) landscape types over time, as improvement and management funding becomes available.

Four main park elements will be developed in the short term (2014/2015): trails, parkways, the viewpoint (rest area), and vegetation.

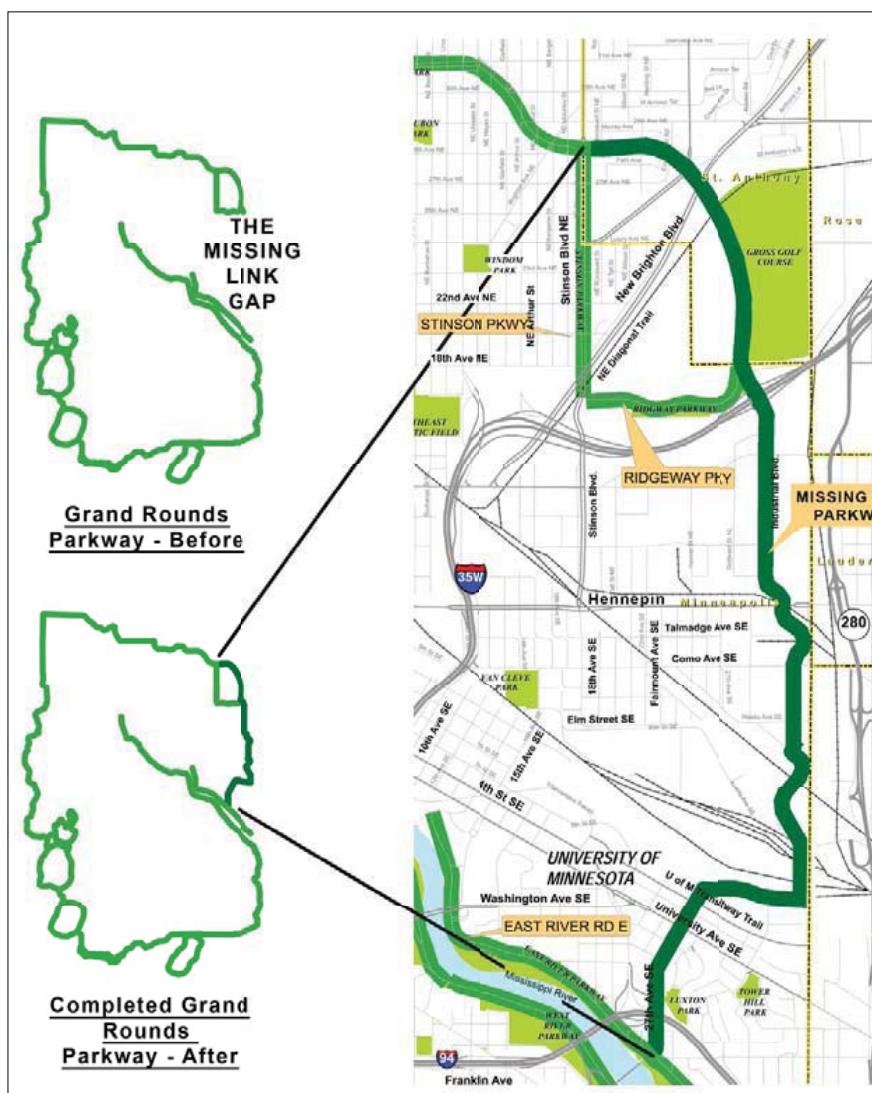


Figure 6 – Ridgeway Parkway Regional Trail as part of the Missing Link Study



1. Formal Entry Gateway
2. Addition of Pedestrian Overlook
3. Turf Trail Through Existing Prairie Restoration
4. Existing Trail

Figure 7 – Ridgeway Parkway Regional Trail Concept from the Missing Link Study

Trails

The Master Plan proposes replacement of an existing concrete sidewalk with an asphalt multi-use trail. The trail will extend for the entire nearly 4300-foot length of the park and connect to the Northeast Diagonal Trail on the west and St. Anthony Parkway on the east. The trail will follow the south side of the parkway road for most of its length, then cross to the north side near the eastern end of the park site. Accessibility and safety improvements will be made at roadway and driveway crossings. Non-motorized uses will be permitted on the trail, with bicycling and walking expected to be the primary uses.

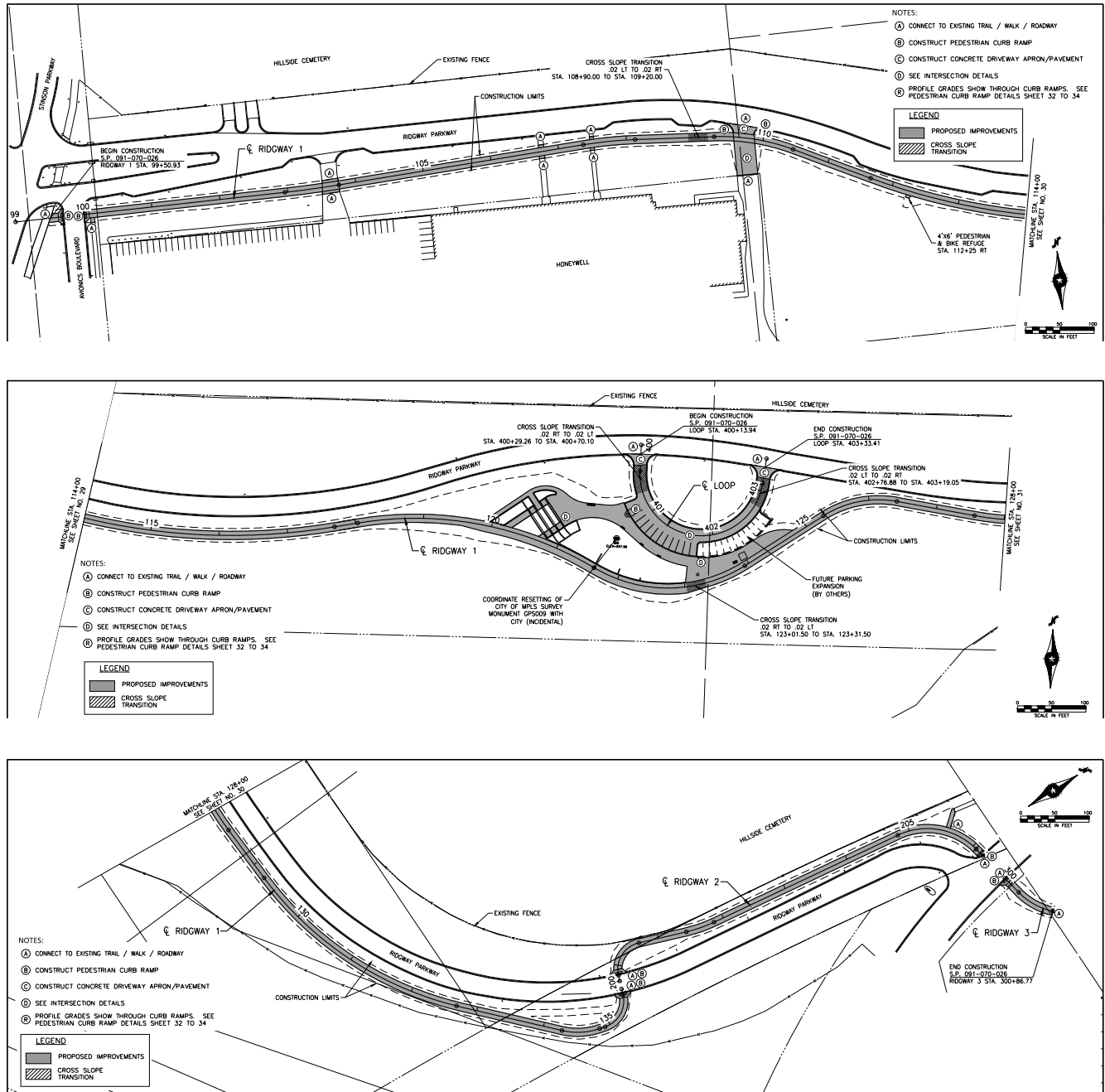


Figure 8 – Draft Trail and Overlook Construction Plans

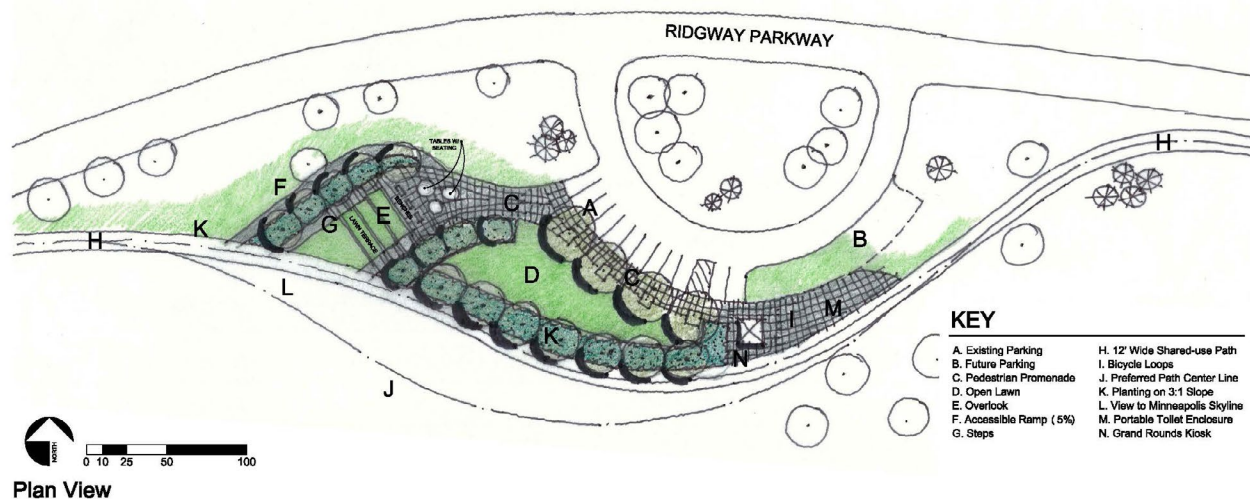
Parkways

The existing parkway road functions well in its current alignment, and this master Plan does not propose significant change to that alignment. Roadway resurfacing and/or reconstruction may be necessary over time, and will be performed in collaboration between the MPRB and the City of Minneapolis.

Viewpoint (Rest Area)

Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail provides an exceptional view to the southwest toward downtown Minneapolis. It is this feature that made this site originally attractive to the MPRB in the 1930s. A small parking lot currently exists at the viewpoint. This Master Plan proposes augmentation of the viewpoint through the construction of a viewing terrace. The terrace will include lawn areas at different elevations, an accessible pathway connecting the top and base of the terrace, and vegetation designed to focus views toward downtown Minneapolis.

The parking lot will maintain its general configuration, but be expanded over time by adding additional spaces around the drive loop. Resurfacing of the existing parking lot will be performed in the short term. New plantings, trash and recycling bins, a portable restroom with enclosure, and an informational kiosk will be added near the parking lot. Development of this viewpoint fulfills the Missing Link Study recommendation to include “rest areas... along the new parkway route.”



Overlook Alternative (Reduced)

Figure 9 – Overlook Concept

Vegetation

The existing landscape includes an oak-dominated woodlot, an area of restored prairie, and areas of mown turfgrass with a variety of specimen trees (a campus-like landscape). The Missing Link study recommended that the entire Missing Link route, including Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail, be considered a “Garden Route” with additional plantings of trees, shrubs, and perennials. No plantings will be implemented in the short term, except for some additional plants near the viewpoint. Vegetation in the vicinity of the viewpoint will be managed to ensure continued unobstructed views of downtown Minneapolis.

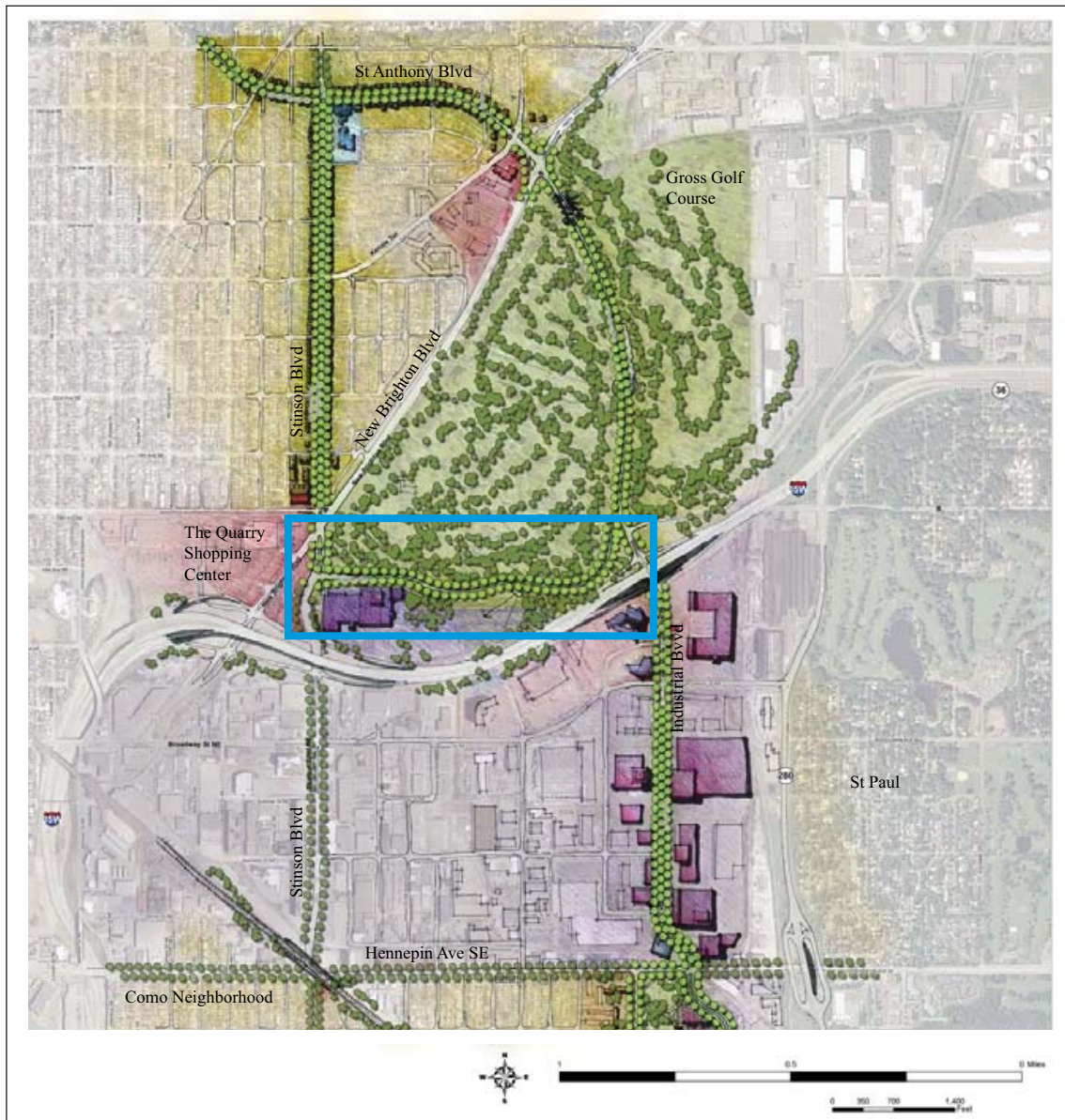


Figure 10 – “Garden Route” Concept from Missing Link Study

Costs

Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail is a park and trail facility that is already developed. Long-and short-term costs are limited to improvements rather than wholesale facility construction. Most long-term items in this Master Plan will be implemented as funding allows, likely drawing on partnerships for additional resources. The short-term improvement of Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail includes replacement of the concrete sidewalk with a multi-use trail, repaving of the overlook parking lot, and construction of a new overlook feature.

The following details the sources and uses for these short-term projects:

| Sources | | \$ | 800,000 |
|---|----|-----------|----------------|
| MnDOT State-Aid Grant SP 91-070-019 | \$ | 500,000 | |
| Metropolitan Council Regional Funds | \$ | 300,000 | |
| Uses | | \$ | 289,454 |
| Design Services: HNTB for concept design | \$ | 149,920 | |
| Design Services: SRF for final design, bidding, construction administration | \$ | 139,534 | |
| Balance (to fund construction) | | \$ | 510,546 |

The following is an estimate of all additional costs associated with implementing the Master Plan (in 2014 dollars):

| Master Plan Element | unit/quantity | total est. cost |
|--|---|------------------------|
| "Garden Route" plantings | approx. 170 trees; shrubs and perennials at key locations | \$100,000 |
| Separated pedestrian route | 4300 linear feet, 8-foot asphalt | \$272,000 |
| Formal entries | signage and plantings at two locations | \$100,000 |
| Native grassland interpretation | trail signage | \$20,000 |
| Native landscape restoration and initial management | 22 acres maximum | \$110,000 |
| Future improvements to overlook (parking expansion, kiosk, additional bike racks, tables, benches, etc.) | | \$52,000 |
| SUBTOTAL | | \$654,000 |
| | | |
| Contingency | 15% | \$98,100 |
| Consulting and Management Fees | 20% | \$130,800 |
| TOTAL | | \$882,900 |

CONFLICTS

This Master Plan does not conflict with existing or proposed projects. The entire parcel is owned and managed by MPRB, which has determined Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail is a critical first project in the completion of the Missing Link. Currently the site is zoned "Residential: R1" by the City of Minneapolis; parks are a permitted use in any zoning classification within the City.

PUBLIC SERVICES

This Master Plan will require no expansion of utility lines. The site is served by existing public and private utilities.

OPERATIONS

The current and future facilities in the amendment area will be overseen by professional public safety, operations, and maintenance staff. Services and maintenance staffing levels increase as needed and as funding permits through the employment of seasonal staff. MPRB Park Police Officers provide public safety services. Maintenance services will be provided by maintenance operations that currently serve the park. Trail operating and maintenance costs are estimated at \$1,100 per mile per year (2011 dollars). This includes sweeping, signage, trash removal, vegetation management, and snow removal. At 0.8 miles, MPRB expects to spend approximately \$1,000 per year in Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail on trail maintenance.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Extensive community participation took place in 2008 during the planning process for the Missing Link. That project was led by a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which recommended the final alignment of the Missing Link, the overall character of the new parkways, and the design of several proposed parks. The CAC also recommended priority projects. In 2012, the MPRB Commissioners authorized work at Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail as a first step toward fulfillment of the Missing Link Plan.

A community engagement plan (CE Plan) for Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail preliminary engineering was approved by the MPRB Commissioners on September 5, 2012. Because of the extensive community involvement with the Missing Link, the project's level of engagement was "inform." Two public open houses were held on January 15, 2013, and March 20, 2013, to allow the public the opportunity to view potential trail alignments and overlook concepts. A third open house on October 10, 2013, finalized, with public input, the design of the overlook.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

During construction, MPRB will notify the public of trail closures through news releases, on-site signage, and our govdelivery e-mail system. Following completion of improvements, additional press releases and public announcements are anticipated. These will occur through MPRB's established contacts and methods, such as our website, govdelivery e-mail system, contact with local press and neighborhood groups, and regular mailers and newsletters.

ACCESSIBILITY

All facilities within this proposed Master Plan will be developed in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Other local guidelines such as the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Bicycle Transportation Planning and Design Guidelines publication will be utilized when developing pedestrian and bicycle trails. All facilities will be open to the public.

NATURAL RESOURCES

This site has been used for park land since 1935. Though little detailed information exists on the original character of the site or the character of the site immediately after development of the roadway in 1935, over time the park likely became a mown turf landscape with scattered trees, like many such parks. A large woodlot composed mainly of oaks occupies the southwestern corner of the park. Trail relocation and grading will affect only the northern and western fringes of this woodlot. New trees will be planted in the overlook area.

A portion of the park within the viewshed of the viewpoint has been restored to a prairie/grassland landscape. This natural resource will be retained in the Master Plan, though it may be minimally affected by realignment of the multi-use trail. Additional natural surface trails could provide a pleasant walk through and interpretation of this restored natural resource.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – CE Plan

Attachment B – Overlook Concepts presented at Public Open Houses