

HIAWATHA GOLF COURSE AREA MASTER PLAN

Aligning Water Management and Use



AMENDMENT TO THE NOKOMIS-HIAWATHA REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is named for the lakes it surrounds, Lake Nokomis and Lake Hiawatha. The park is a treasured gathering space in the heart of South Minneapolis and is located along the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway and the banks of Minnehaha Creek. It provides a wide range of recreational opportunities, including a beloved 18-hole golf course on the west shore of Lake Hiawatha. The site was once the location of Rice Lake and a connected wetland complex. The lake was dredged and the wetlands filled in the 1920s, and the golf course was designed and constructed in the early 1930s over the dredge materials. The course has a classic feel with its tree-lined fairways and pushup greens. It is easily playable, but still challenging. And it is a course that is steeped in history and a tradition of welcoming all people.

In June of 2014, over 11 inches of rain fell over a large area of the Minnehaha Creek watershed, causing a severe flood and subsequent closure of the Hiawatha Golf Course for a significant period. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) began a process of assessing damages and working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to get the course up and running again. Quick actions by the golf course staff allowed the course to partially open for play later in 2014 and fully open in the spring of 2016.

When investigating the flood conditions at the course and in the nearby neighborhood, the MPRB and City of Minneapolis learned of significant groundwater pumping from the golf course. Master planning efforts, initiated prior to this discovery, were put on hold while the MPRB, City of Minneapolis, and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District conducted a study of the site’s conditions. A water management study for the course was completed in 2017, and the study demonstrated that:

- Water management can be improved.
- Pumping required to keep the golf course dry and playable can be reduced and relocated.
- Nearby homes, identified by the MPRB, can be protected from groundwater intrusion to the same degree that they are today.
- Flood-resiliency can be improved and some traditional golf can be retained on the site.

Even beyond the flooding in the summer of 2014, weather patterns produced seven years of rain in the last six years. The Minnesota Office of Climatology predicts these rainfall patterns to continue in the coming decades. This becomes important when comparing increases in the measured volume of pumped groundwater, which have increased from 242 million gallons in 2016 to more than 400 million gallons in 2019 and 333 million gallons in 2020.

This document is not an explicit plan for implementation of changes, but rather a guide aimed at long-term incremental change that aligns water management and use. As such, an evolution described by this plan might occur only over a period of 20 years or longer. As that occurs, pieces must fit at each stage of implementation such that each stage is a complete project

In March 2018, the Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan that would accommodate the proposed water management solution began. Near the beginning of the master planning process, some members of a Community

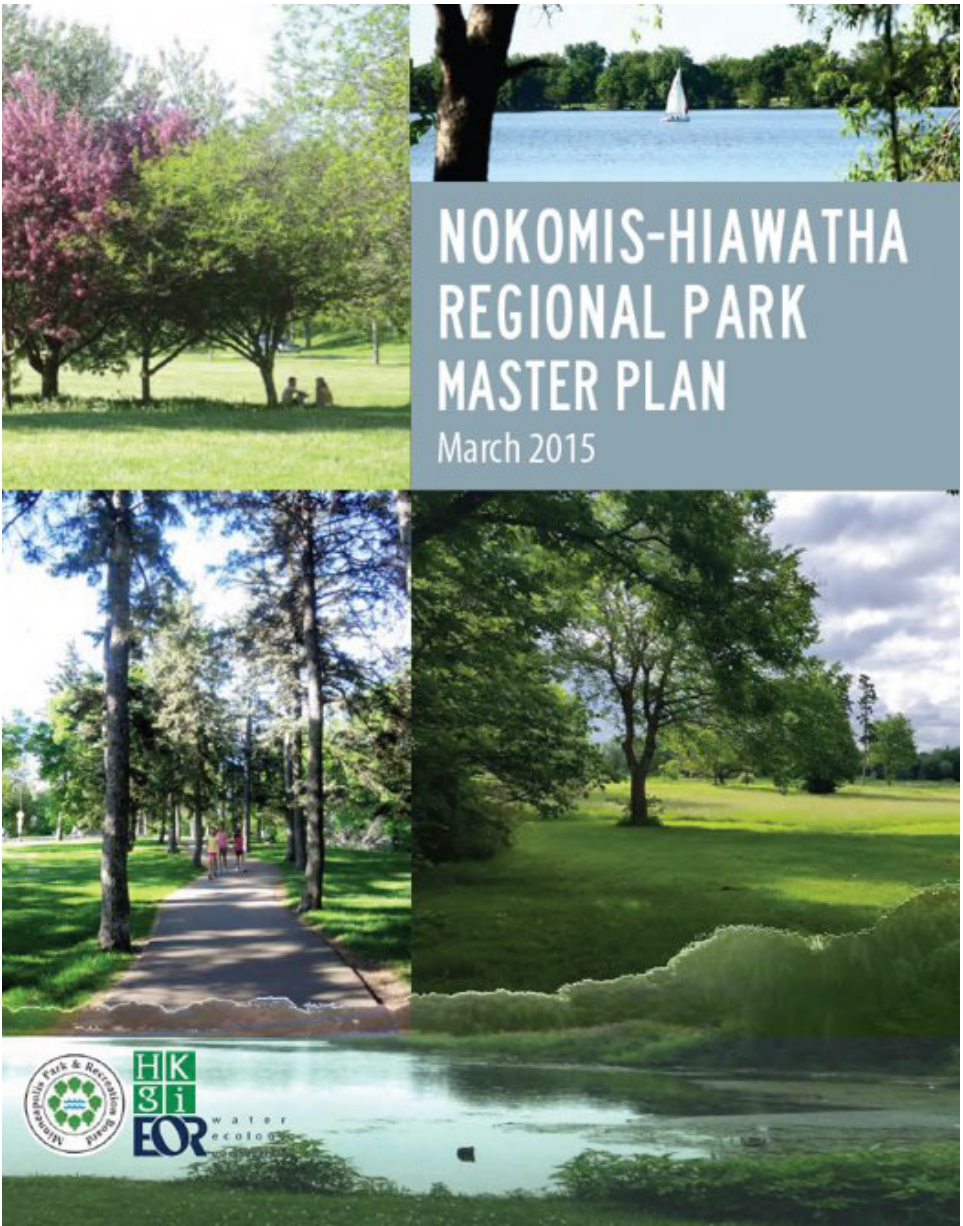
Advisory Committee (CAC) requested that the design team look at an 18-hole option. Given the increase in the anticipated water footprint within the area and the directive from the Board of Commissioners to achieve a flood-resilient design, the engineers, landscape architects, and golf course architect determined that an 18-hole golf course was not possible. However, by providing 9 holes, the MPRB will keep golf alive in South Minneapolis. Allowing for a course aligns with the water management strategy to restore ecological function, promote recreational diversity, increase park access for all visitors, and reduce pumping of groundwater.

The Board of Commissioners wants to improve water management, preserve traditional golf in some form, and celebrate the welcoming history of Hiawatha Golf Course. They affirmed this in resolution 2018-230 which includes:

- Pursuing a reduced-pumping scenario as conceptualized in [Water Management] Alternative B.
- At a minimum, providing a flood-resilient and ecologically driven 9-hole configuration for a golf course.
- Reflecting appropriate methods to recognize the role of Hiawatha Golf Course and the history of Black golfers in the Minneapolis park system.

The Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan was developed through a comprehensive public engagement process spanning over two years, including guidance from the CAC which developed a vision and guiding principles and prioritized plan element recommendations for the site. The master planning process provided an opportunity to develop a plan that re-imagines the Hiawatha Golf Course area as a place that not only celebrates the rich history at the golf course, but creates a space that celebrates nature in an urban setting, welcomes the larger community, and reconnects this land with the surrounding neighborhoods, Lake Hiawatha, and the larger regional park.

The plan pushes toward a balance of golf and other activities set in a landscape guided by water management. It necessarily bends toward ecology in its aspirations, recognizing that restoration of natural processes—which were significantly altered by Wirth’s dredging of Rice Lake—are a goal greater than those supporting human activities on the site. With ecology as the yardstick, choices favor preservation, conservation, and restoration rather than expanding past acts of disturbance or creating new development. While many uses are described, the restoration of sustainable water patterns and recreation, balanced in a new ecologically driven landscape, form the higher-order goals inherent in the plan.



The Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Master Plan was adopted in March 2015 (Source: MPRB)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the vision and guiding principles, the CAC’s prioritized design elements recommendation, focus-session input, community survey input, and input from our collaborating partners, the recommended Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan includes:

- Relocating an improved and reduced pumping strategy at the site to protect nearby low basements from groundwater intrusion to the same degree they are protected today.
- Reutilizing pumped water for a variety of potential uses (e.g. irrigation, snowmaking, facility heating/cooling).
- Improving water management at the site while providing opportunities to address flooding in the watershed to the north.
- Improving water quality in Lake Hiawatha and Minnehaha Creek.
- Creating a destination golf facility focused on learning the sport and increasing opportunities for new players, including a 9-hole golf course, driving range, and practice facilities.
- Celebrating the history of Black golfers at the course and supporting and providing an introduction to golf for people of color.
- Expanding access to the site with bicycle and pedestrian trails, a re-envisioned clubhouse area that welcomes the larger community, and other new community gathering spaces.
- Restoring ecological function through the creation of wetlands, riparian and shoreline restorations, upland prairie restoration, and protecting existing wildlife habitat.
- Creating a South Minneapolis winter recreation destination complementary to North Minneapolis’s Theodore Wirth Park.
- Developing nine experiences that tell the cultural and natural history through permanent elements and infrastructure, as well as through art, performance, community events, and ephemeral experiences.

Experiences include:

- A. Stormwater Terrace
- B. Pumping as a Resource
- C. All are Welcome
- D. A Place to Learn
- E. Island Respite
- F. Telling our Story
- G. A Connection to Water
- H. Urban Nature
- I. Celebrating Minnehaha Creek

Vision

The Hiawatha Golf Course property is a unique destination providing a welcoming and equitable park experience for both the surrounding community and regional park users that is ecologically responsible, addresses water management needs, and is respectful of the site’s natural and cultural history. Park development will have a long-term focus for year-round passive and active recreation, where golf and other recreation will interface with ecology and art to provide for a flood-resilient design that is accessible, connected, and celebrates the spirit of Minneapolis.

Guiding Principles

Natural Resources

- Honor water and realize its significance at the site, in our lives, and in our cultures
- Provide a flood-resilient design within the park area
- Protect nearby homes from groundwater intrusion to the same degree they are protected today
- Reduce flood impacts in the neighborhoods to the north and west of the site
- Reduce the volume of trash entering Lake Hiawatha
- Enhance ecological benefits on the site, including consideration of existing habitat and creation of more varied habitat to support wildlife
- Improve water quality, including treatment of runoff to improve Lake Hiawatha
- Reuse pumped groundwater for the betterment of the site and environment

Community and Equity

- Create equitable experiences and spaces that promote community with multi-generational, family-friendly, fun opportunities that are interactive and respectful for all park users
- Celebrate history in a meaningful way on the site
- Support sustainability in all aspects of the site, including environmentally, culturally, and economically
- Reduce barriers and encourage access to a broader set of park users
- Minimize negative impacts to the adjacent neighborhood, including consideration of impacts to traffic, parking, and noise

Recreation

- Envision golf as a central activity of the site, ensuring safety as a priority when looking at integration with other uses
- Provide golf and golf learning opportunities equitably to youth and other underrepresented community members
- Diversify recreation and create unique experiences on the site to meet the goals of the MPRB park system, including year-round activities.
- Enhance gathering spaces on the site to be welcoming and fun for all community members and be fiscally and environmentally responsible

Connectivity and Circulation

- Create connections between the site and the community, the regional park and trails, and the lake and creek
- Create cohesive and complementary solutions for site issues and design ideas
- Reduce barriers and encourage access to a more diverse and broader set of park users



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommended Master Plan

