



THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD PLAN FOR CEDAR LAKE AND LAKE OF THE ISLES

A PORTION OF THE MINNEAPOLIS CHAIN OF LAKES REGIONAL PARK

FINAL - OCTOBER 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board is grateful to the many community members, advisory committee members, organizations, consultants, MPRB staff, and partner agency staff who contributed to this park plan.

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Dock at Lake of the Isles. Source: TEN x TEN

We collectively acknowledge that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board system is located on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of Indigenous people. This land holds great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for its original stewards, the Native nations and peoples of this region.

We also acknowledge that restrictive covenants were used to deny Black, Indigenous, Asian and in some cases Jewish individuals access to property in surrounding neighborhoods. This had an impact on who was and was not officially welcome in this area.

Cedar-Isles Plan Native land acknowledgment co-created by MPRB project staff and CAC members.

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Bench at Lake of the Isles

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.2 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

1.3 ABOUT THIS PLAN

1.4 RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

1.1 OVERVIEW

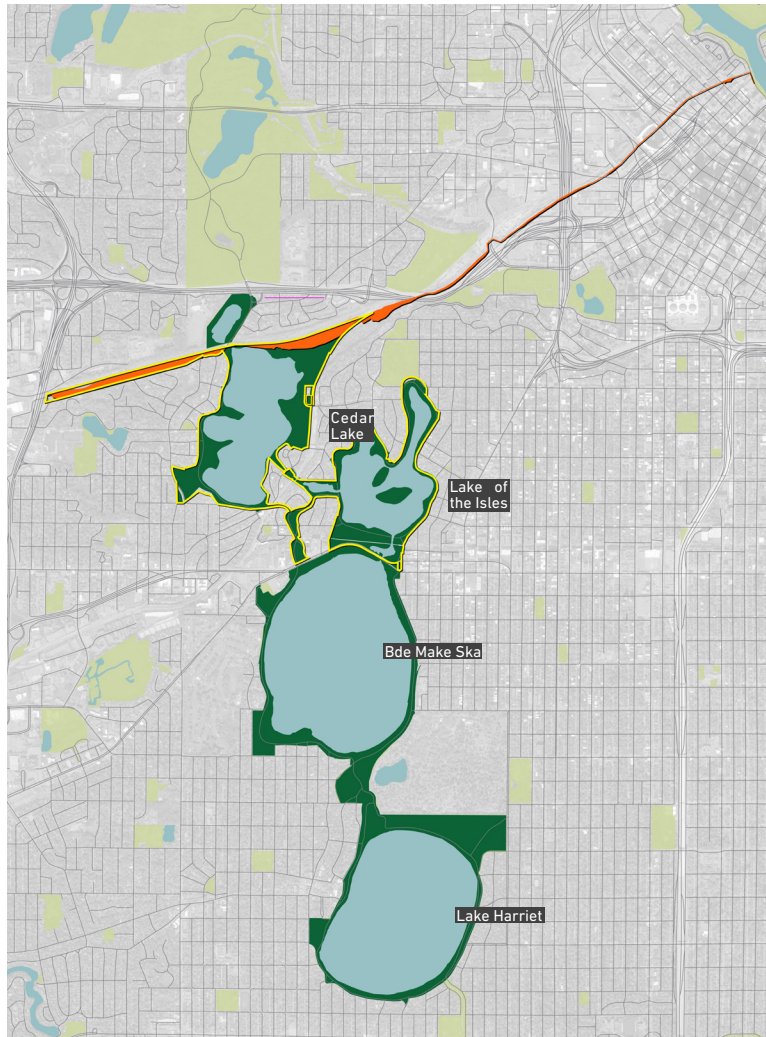





Figure 1.1: The Cedar-Isles Plan Area within the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park

Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles, Dean Parkway, the Kenilworth Channel, and the Cedar Lake Regional Trail are destinations for millions of local and regional visitors each year. People who visit these parks enjoy a multitude of year-round activities including walking, biking, swimming, fishing, canoe/kayaking, cross-country skiing, and ice skating. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board spent more than three years creating a community-centered vision for this area of parkland to be implemented over the next 20 to 30 years.

LEGEND

-  Cedar Lake Regional Trail
-  The Cedar-Isles Plan Area
-  Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park

1.2 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) oversees neighborhood and regional parks in the City of Minneapolis. MPRB's twenty regional parks and trails received an estimated 24.2 million visits in 2021 according to the Metropolitan Council's Annual Use Estimate, its highest visitation ever. Park types range from local neighborhood play lots to large natural areas to the 55-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. MPRB provides administration, planning, development, maintenance, and protection for parks and recreational facilities in the system. Environmental, recreational, and other programs and services are provided for park users of all ages and abilities.

Established in 1883, MPRB is the governing agency responsible for improving, operating, and maintaining Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. The nine-member Board of Commissioners is an independently elected body responsible for ensuring that the Minneapolis Park system meets the needs of Minneapolis community members. Every four years, commissioners are elected to this Board: one from each of the six park districts within the city and three that serve at-large. This unique structure allows for independent decision-making so MPRB can efficiently oversee a diverse system of land and water.

REGIONAL PARK PLANNING

Two agencies approve regional park plans: the Metropolitan Council and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The Metropolitan Council guides regional parks in the seven-county Twin Cities area. These regional parks have many purposes, from preserving green space and wildlife habitat to providing a wide range of natural resource-based recreational opportunities. They are significant to their local and regional communities. The Regional Parks and Open

Space System (MPOSC) was established in 1974. It was created in response to state legislation and is supported by the Metropolitan Council in partnership with ten implementing agencies representing cities, counties, and special park districts who operate regional parks and trails.

The regional parks are funded in large part by the State of Minnesota and the Metropolitan Council. They are considered the state parks of the metropolitan region, and as such are meant to be enjoyed by everyone: people that live in the adjacent neighborhoods, people who live in Minneapolis and adjacent cities, and people visiting from outside of the region. As dictated by Minnesota Statute 473.313, the Metropolitan Council requires a plan to be developed and updated regularly for each regional park, park reserve, trail, and special recreation feature in the seven-county Metro Area.

As the implementing agency for the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park, the MPRB is therefore responsible for developing this plan for this park. Plan approval is necessary to be eligible for regional parks system capital funding for land acquisition and development, as well as planning, funding, and advocacy support from the Metropolitan Council. The Brownie Lake Plan was adopted by MPRB in 2012 and the Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Park Plan was completed and adopted by MPRB Commissioners and the Metropolitan Council in 2017. There have been several previous planning efforts completed for portions of parkland within the project area, however, this will be the first officially adopted plan for the Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles area.

1.3 ABOUT THIS PLAN

PLAN PURPOSE

Park planning plays a critical role in the Park Board's mission. Objectives of a park plan include the following:

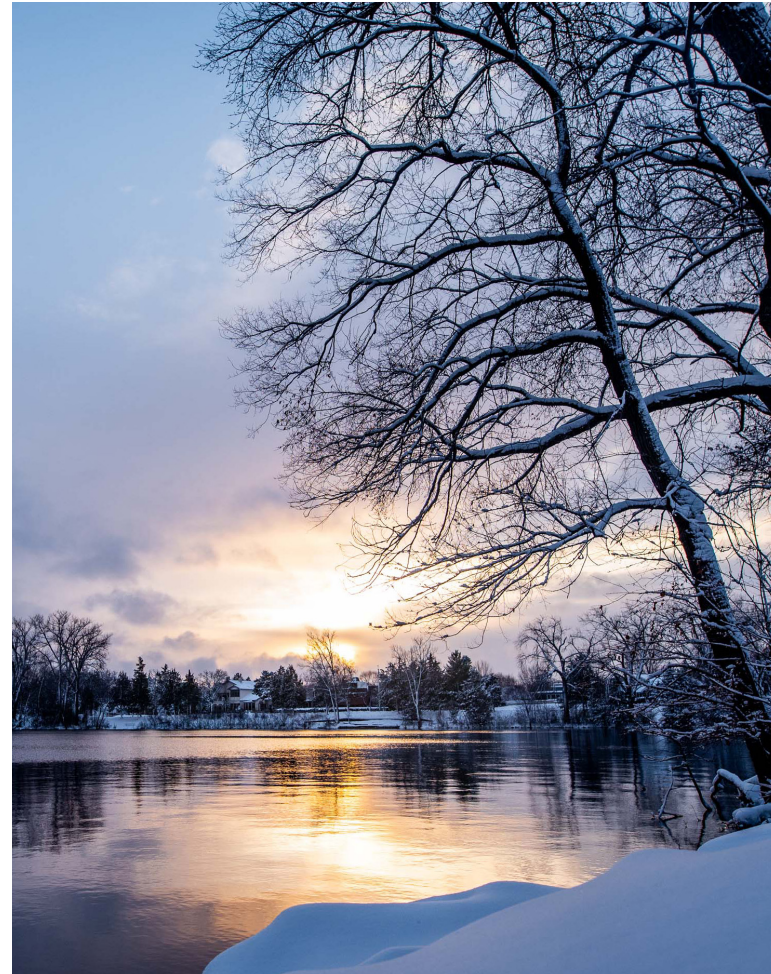
- Set a vision to guide long-term development and improvements to a park or group of parks,
- Guide stewardship and help ensure that park features and amenities reflect the needs of the communities they serve,
- Help ensure long-term financial and ecological sustainability,
- Involve extensive engagement with individual and group stakeholders, other community partners, and governmental entities, and
- Foster and include extensive review and comment by the public through a variety of methods, and achieve approval by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) of Commissioners.

The completed park plan will direct policy and design implementation for the park land in the project area for the next 20 to 30 years.

RENAMING OF THE "MASTER" PLAN

Over the last few years, universities, organizations, and government institutions have begun to grapple with their role in institutional and systemic racism. One facet of this is the power of language. The term "master," which is often defined as commanding control or being eminently skilled, has been identified as a word to remove in certain contexts due to its connection with the history of masters and slavery in the United States¹. In addition, "master" connotes an inability for the general public to impact decision-making, as opposed to responsive planning by an accountable public agency. As MPRB continues to acknowledge its role in systemic racism, staff plans to eliminate the term "master" when referring to MPRB planning processes and final plan documents. This current plan is

titled The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. Though MPRB is changing its naming procedures moving forward, this planning document still refers to previously named "master" plans and images as applicable.



Sunset at Cedar Lake

¹ Christian Science Monitor, June 2021. "As English evolves, so too does the word 'master'"

STUDY AREA

The Cedar-Isles Plan includes Cedar Lake and the surrounding parkland, Lake of the Isles and the surrounding parkland, Dean Parkway, the Kenilworth Channel that connects both lakes, and a portion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail beginning at Highway 100 in St. Louis Park and running east to where the trail connects to the Kenilworth Regional Trail (see Figure 1.3).

WATER QUALITY FOCUS

Water quality was consistently identified as a top theme and priority by the public throughout the planning process. During the spring of 2022, additional water quality-specific CAC meetings were added to the schedule in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the health of the lakes and establish robust goals. The final recommendations and plan were developed through the lens of addressing and improving water quality within the project area.

TIMELINE

Park planning processes generally take 18-24 months to complete. Due to challenges outside of the project's control, this plan process took 36+ months with the longest timeline extension happening in 2020 to respond to statewide COVID-19 shutdowns (see Figure 1.2).

Though this process took longer than usual, a number of residents, organizations, and Community Advisory Committee members stayed engaged throughout the entire process

IMPACT FROM GLOBAL ISSUES

The Cedar-Isles planning process officially launched in December 2019, a few months before the Minnesota statewide COVID-19 shutdowns. The COVID-19 shutdowns, alongside the murder of George Floyd and racial reckoning that followed in May 2020, completely upended social norms and protocols throughout the city of Minneapolis and across the country. Due to these realities, MPRB staff adapted, delayed, and extended original timelines to better respond to current situations. These delays had their own impact, both positively and negatively, on who was able to engage throughout the planning process.

The Cedar-Isles Community Advisory Committee (CAC) gave guidance to proceed forward virtually in the fall 2020 and MPRB staff ultimately began the plan process virtually, which included all community engagement and meetings.

As COVID-19 guidelines continued to shift in 2021 and 2022, MPRB began to offer a combination of virtual, outdoor in-person, and eventually indoor in-person meetings and engagement to account for as many people's comfort levels and safety concerns as possible.

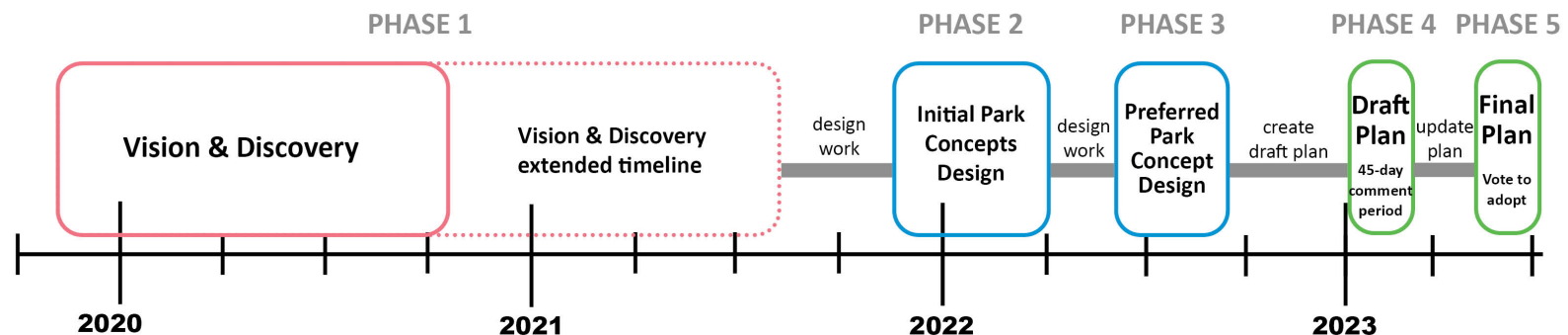


Figure 1.2: Timeline of plan process

1.4 RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

MPRB PLANNING EFFORTS

A number of recently adopted MPRB plans have informed and are informed by the Plan for Cedar-Isles, including:

PARKS FOR ALL: MPRB COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2021-2036 (2021)

This document sets policy direction for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board from 2021 through 2036. It includes an updated mission, vision, and values along with subsequent goals and strategies.

SOUTHWEST SERVICE AREA MASTER PLAN (2020)

A 20 to 30-year vision for the neighborhood parks located south of I-394 and west of I-35W that will guide park improvements, provides cost estimates for improvements, and includes operations and maintenance cost estimates. A number of the parks in the planning document are in the neighborhoods adjacent to the project area for this park plan.

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM PLAN (2020)

A plan that provides a system-wide framework for how environmental considerations can be addressed in ongoing planning efforts for MPRB and outlines how MPRB can partner with other local, regional, and statewide organizations to achieve shared environmental goals.

NATURAL AREAS MANAGEMENT PLAN PHASES 1 & 2 (2017 & 2021)

Phase 1 identifies a preliminary inventory and definition of plant communities throughout the 2,800+ acres of natural areas within the MPRB system. Phase 2 lays out methods and strategies to manage natural areas and the resources needed to accomplish this.

GRAND ROUNDS CANAL SYSTEM AND LAKE OF THE ISLES HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN (2023)

This planning document has been created alongside the Cedar-Isles Plan to meet 106 requirements to mitigate adverse affects from the southwest light rail project on parkland. MPRB has a Memorandum of Understanding with Metro Transit to complete this portion of the work. The final document is included as Appendix A.

OTHER CURRENT PLANS OF NOTE

- Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) planning process and construction (currently underway)
- City of Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan (2020)
- Minneapolis 2040: The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Minneapolis (2018)
- The Metropolitan Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan (2018)
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Watershed Management Plan (2018)
- MPRB's Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan (2017)
- MPRB's Brownie Lake Plan (2012)

Figure 1.4: Image created for CAC Meeting #4 depicting how other MPRB plans inform the Cedar-Isles Plan

