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MINNEAPOLIS PARKWAY SYSTEM
CONCEPTS for the FUTURE

PREPARED BY ■ ECKBO, DEAN, AUSTIN & WILLIAMS
Landscape Architecture and Environmental
Planning
San Francisco, California

Garrett Eckbo - Principal
Charles M. McCulloch - Project Manager
Robert H. Foster - Associate

PREPARED FOR ■ MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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FOREWARD

TOPICS OF INVESTIGATION

The parkway system is an important part of open space, conservation areas, lakes and streams of the Twin Cities area. People place demands upon its quantified reserves in direct relation to the anticipated fulfillment of their needs. The parkway land affects the city in other ways; it provides visual relief from city forms, it defines edges of the city, it is a waterway-drainage system, and it affects the quality of adjacent land use.

The following topic headings identify specific demands upon the parkway landscape while it is recognized each is interrelated.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND THE METROPOLITAN REGION

The following relationships will be examined:

- The parkway system as a visual element in the city.
- The demands upon the open space system for uses other than recreation.
- The effect of adjacent land use upon the maintenance of quality recreation space.
- The parkway-recreation system as part of the citywide use patterns.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND TRANSPORTATION

- The analysis of transportation routes and systems to the park land and within the parkway land.
- The relationship between parkway traffic and city traffic.
- The relationship between motorized, manual, and pedestrian traffic on both land and water.
- The relationship between linear transportation systems and recreation use areas. How are the recreation areas served by transportation?

- The relationship between transportation systems and the storage of land and water vehicles.
- The relationship between adjacent land use and accessibility to the park land.
- The parkway road system as a continuous recreation experience.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND RECREATION

The following relationships will be examined:

- The relationship between the intrinsic suitability of the land and its potential use.
- The relationship between active and passive recreation. Active implies organization, a beach; while passive is usually more informal.
- Relationship between activities and their effect upon adjacent city land use.
- The relationship between location and design of facilities and the administration of those facilities.

INVESTIGATION METHODS

The development of the concepts presented in this report required the assimilation of data. This data directly related to the relationships to be investigated and the Park Board's instructions. Depending upon the information needed, various methods were used to obtain material.

A comprehensive site survey was conducted to determine uses of the land, physical condition, continuity of the park land, the road system, and investigation of lighting and graphics. Almost the entire parkway land was walked. A canoe was rented at Lake Calhoun, and paddled to Brownie Lake and Cedar Lake, where muskrats, turtles, and nesting birds were seen. The parkway roads were driven many times at night, at rush hours, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and early mornings. We drove to an unfamiliar part of the metropolitan area and attempted to find the parkway system.

We talked to many people in the park lands while observing activities on the weekends and during the week.

We own much to Sgt. Toomey of the Park Police Department who so graciously drove us through the parkway system and discussed user patterns with us.

The parkway system was discussed with the City Planning staff conducting the River Study.

The traffic and city road system was discussed with Mr. David R. Koski, Director of Traffic Engineering, City of Minneapolis.

CHRONOLOGY

Work began in March, 1970 with a 7-page General Study Outline.

July 9 rough working notes were sent to Mr. Wittman. In summary they said:

Was the Grand Rounds concept now out of scale with regional possibilities?

Might this be true in summer but not in winter?

How much should the auto intrude into the park-parkway open space system?

There is a triangular relationship between pleasure driving, through traffic, and recreational-pedestrian use.

On July 29th we sent a 7-page letter detailing road sections which could be repaved at once as is or with minor modifications, a review of the entire system, a discussion of design questions, a listing of average daily parkway traffic by sections, and a listing of principal points of conflict between parkway and city traffic.

On July 30th we sent a letter listing 8 parkway sections which might be closed to auto traffic.

At about the same time we produced a five-page report on Signing.

September 4 we sent in five pages of impressions and thoughts derived from our visits to the system.

September 29 a five-page letter commented on reactions to our suggestions.

October 6 a six-page letter commented in more detail.

November 18 a seven-page letter responded to adverse reactions to our suggestions. It commented on the communication process and on the basic issues in the letters and petitions which were coming in. The two chief issues were freedom of movement by auto, and the preservation of existing natural beauty. We said:

"We are not taking sides on the auto question... the only question: how much, or what portion, of the system should be given over to autos?"

and on natural beauty: "We, of course, never had any intention of destroying it. Our intention was, rather, to enhance it."

Two presentations were made to the Park Board, In June and August of 1970.

On March 17, 1971, the Board adopted a Summary of Citizen Response to the Parkway Concepts. This our final report conforms to this as a statement of policy. The basic points are:

No new islands or peninsulas in lakes.

Recreation facilities appropriate only to parkway lands.

Full road access maintained around lakes.

No parking facilities where they may have negative effect on adjacent properties.

No realignment of Victory Memorial Drive.

We would like to emphasize that throughout this study our intention has not been to promote controversy, or to propose change for its own sake. We feel that we have carried out the consultant's basic responsibility, which is to place before the client the maximum alternative potentialities in the situation as the consultant sees them. In order to do this the consultant must observe the existing situation both objectively and critically, not accepting it as it is. We feel that the Park Board and Staff have also carried out their basic responsibility, which is to place the alternatives before the true client, the citizens of the community. This has been done, the citizens have responded, and we have completed the report as directed. The Citizen's Advisory Committee appointed by the Board to assist with the implementation of the report is a positive and constructive action.

We are grateful for the time and effort of the members of the Board, Superintendent Ruhe, and the Park Board staff, for their unfailing assistance, and for serving as a sounding board for our ideas. Without this combined effort this report would have lacked the content and meaning which enable it to become the resource we intended it to be.

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Parkway System of Minneapolis has grown, changed and developed through the efforts of many dedicated people. A legacy of resolve, articulated so well by H. W. S. Cleveland, F. L. Olmsted, Theodore Wirth, Dr. William Watts Folwell, Charles M. Loring and many others, has been responsible for the establishment of this magnificent parkway system. New development plans were established and modified, and the present configuration is the result. A physical system within a metropolitan area cannot hope to remain static. It changes with the demands upon its services. This report endeavors to record these demands today and discuss the appropriate response in terms of alternative solutions.

The report is intended as a resource to be used as a guide to resolve future conflicts in a thoughtful and rational manner. Therefore, we are not advocating a specific design style or form, however specific solutions are presented to illustrate typical situations. The parkway road system plan is a recommendation for the immediate solution to an existing situation. But this does not imply that these roadways will always be used exclusively by cars.

Sensitive design plays a significant role in the preservation of the parkway landscape. In a dense woods which is an established bird sanctuary, no design by man is necessary to continue the function of a bird sanctuary. In contrast, a densely used area requires man's assistance to design the organization of the area in order to prevent the destruction of the natural landscape. Precise studies are made to reveal the implications of land use by humans and to create a responsible program of redevelopment to reinvest the intrinsic values of the natural landscape. Such studies reveal the necessity to make the assumption that there are areas more suitable for a certain kind of use because of their physiographic characteristics and natural process patterns. This scientific information, combined with measurable needs is only part of the process necessary to establish a pleasurable environment. The sensitive designer is then required to sequentially connect the physical elements of the landscape into an understandable and dramatic environment. This excitement cannot be found by the application of measurable predictions alone. Therefore, the designer must use other values and standards in combination with these predictions to create a product to fit within the limits of the natural environment. Some of these values are an understanding of visual perception, social values, uniqueness and

character. The direct application of these values can result in the emergence of a form that will allow people to pursue their individual pleasures and interests safely.

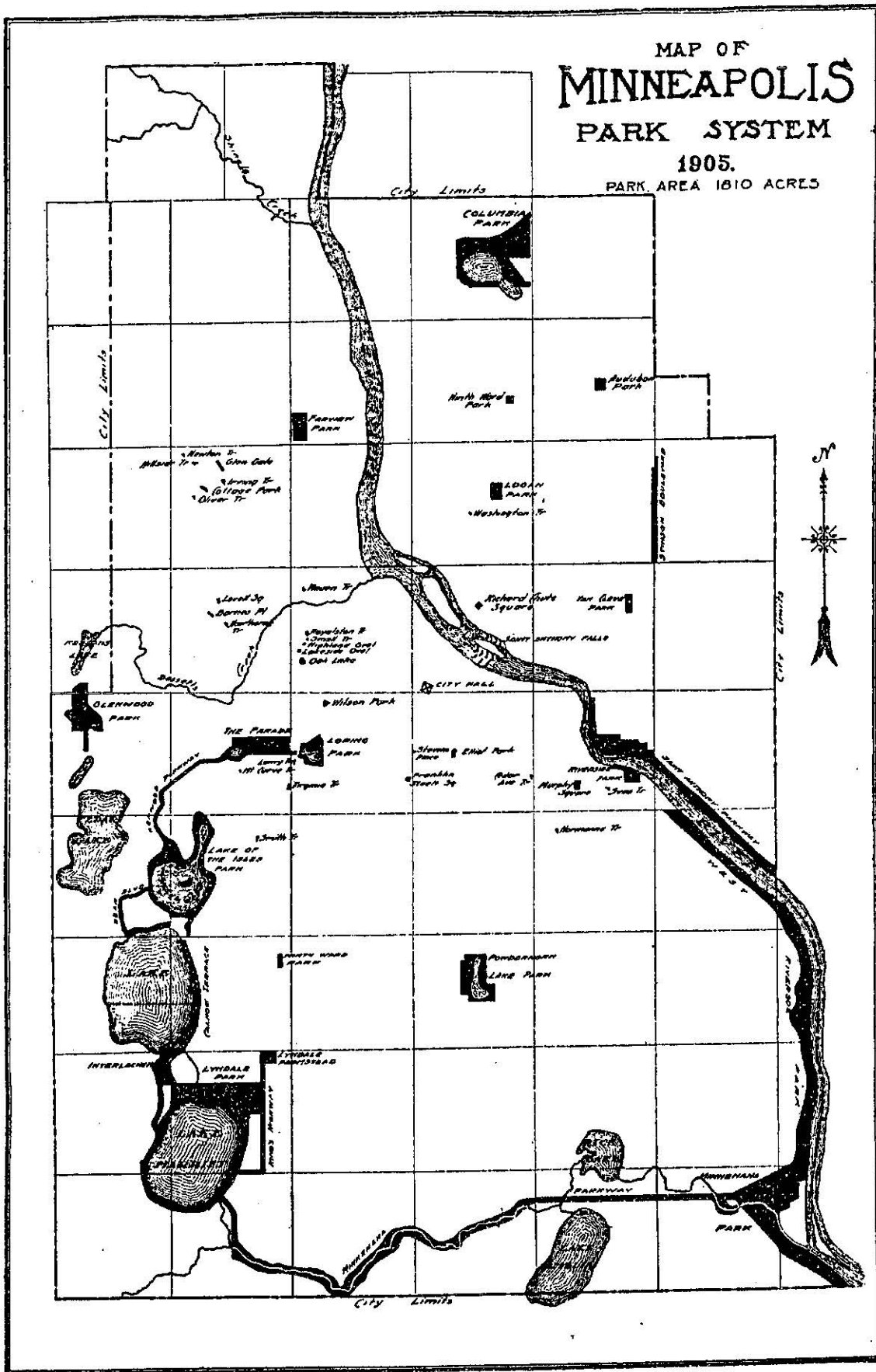
The present parkway system is to a large extent a fulfillment of the plans of those remarkable visionaries of the past. It is a magnificent record of their wisdom, perhaps unequalled by any city in the United States. Let us of the present perpetuate the resolves of the past and insure a legacy for the future.

HISTORY

Legislative authority for the designation, acquisition, layout, and improvement of lands in the City of Minneapolis for a system of public parks and parkways was approved in February, 1883. At this time, H. W. S. Cleveland was retained to develop the design for the parks and parkways system. He recognized that the existing interconnected natural drainage pattern of swamps, creeks, lakes and small ponds should become the framework of a park system. He also made a strong case for "an extended system of boulevards, or ornamental avenues, rather than a series of detached open areas or public squares" in the inner city. These boulevards were seen as things of dignity and beauty and were to be comprised of a continuous "succession of pretty gardens enlivened by the constant passing of throngs of pedestrians".

Frederick Law Olmsted added to this concept in a letter to the Park Commissioners in October, 1886, where he states that parkways are "the means of communication between the new semi-rural residence quarters of a city. . . . and its business quarters of such character that passage along them shall be a pleasing and refreshing element of daily life". He goes even further to define parkways: "If judiciously designed (they) are likely to become the stems of systems of streets which will be the framework of the permanent residence quarters of our cities in the future".

These two factors, the concepts of the early planners for a continuous system of parks and parkway roads in the city and the existence of the natural water system, resulted in the development of the present



parkway system. The arguments for the preservation of the waterways were strong enough to convince many property owners to deed or sell their land to the Park Board for development of a continuous natural open space system. The development pressures of the inner city have passed over the concept of inner city landscaped boulevards except in some locations. The parks of the inner city are "discontinuous" but the Parkway System has been retained.

F. L. Olmsted in the same letter to the Park Board in 1886 stated "Furthermore the most important characteristic of a park is: That is shall be self-contained (that is, that the recreation of its natural scenery shall not be disturbed and neutralized by the mingling with its proper scenes of objects of a different character, such as houses situated on high ground about it, and that cannot be planted out)."

"There is no more important rule in park making to be derived from the principle that has been laid down, than that roads must be regarded simply as implements for making the enjoyment of natural scenery available and must be laid out at the least practicable expense to the scenery."

So rich are the early writings about the Minneapolis park system that one could easily find many additional meaningful quotations. Those above, however, seem to record the essence of the early concepts. To these must be added the concept of "The Grand Rounds Parkway System" credited to Dr. William Watts Folwell (1881). It is described as "a feature that would provide an outer belt, of encircling parkways to connect and pass through several large proposed park areas."

The "Grand Rounds" was never really completed as a continuous outer belt but some means should be found to complete the concept. This will probably involve the use of selected city streets.

Magnificent as the system is the problems which surround it cannot be overlooked. A system of parks designed for the carriage age, with the pedestrian its prime patron, has difficulty absorbing the automobile. On a summer day the multitude of cars may reach such large proportions that they seriously detract from the very beauty that one went there to enjoy.

The use from the recreational driver is not the only burden which the parkways now bear. Many of the streets are general purpose traffic carriers, which, during busy travel hours, preempt recreational enjoyment. Roads in parks should be there only to make the enjoyment of natural scenery possible. They must not themselves destroy it. The parkway system has always been a popular recreation resource for the people of the city. Today the car enables ever increasing numbers of people to frequent the parkway. Delicate ecological conditions, such as the lake shore are showing signs of deterioration and fatigue, and cannot forever withstand the level of human impact without careful design. While problems do exist, the parkway system is extensive and in some places could be designed for passive uses thereby relieving heavily used locations. The basic principles of park design can be revived, and applied today. The main goal for the parkway system was well stated by F. L. Olmsted, "the kind of recreation that these large parks supply. . . . is that which a man insensibly obtains when he puts the city behind him and out of this sight and goes where he will be under the undisturbed influence of pleasing natural scenery."

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PARKWAY SYSTEM AND RECREATION

DEFINITIONS

Parkway System - The land, lakes and roads.

Parkway Roads - All roads within the Parkway System .

Primary Roads -The major automobile connections throughout the Parkway System. Primary Roads become the Grand Rounds.

Secondary Roads - The access roads to sections of the Parkway System not served by the Grand Rounds.

Park Land - The landscape.

Landscaping - Planting: trees, grass, shrubs.

Open Space - Unbuilt upon land in the city usable for recreation.

MAJOR POLICIES

In summary, we are recommending a program of renewal in the parkway system such that its design responds to both the needs and the pressures of contemporary society. A plan must be based on a knowledge of future and present needs for various uses. There will be conflicts between similar uses of parkway land relating to personal differences. Some people will want more comforts and development while other people prefer to be removed from any reminders of the city. The specifics of such challenges are all dealt separately in more detail, but it is possible to record here major principles.

- The Parkway System should contribute to and be a part of the regional metropolitan open space system.
- The Parkway System should retain its essential characteristics as a corridor of natural scenery within the city.
- The Parkway Land should accommodate appropriate leisure needs of the city to the degree such opportunities can be adapted to the landscape without destruction of the intrinsic qualities of the land.
- The Parkway System should continue to function as a continuous park system, and every measure should be taken to insure this concept.
- The Parkway System should be designed to preserve the delicate ecology of the landscape.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND THE METROPOLITAN REGION

PARKWAY SYSTEM AS A VISUAL ELEMENT

The natural landscape of the Parkway System is a contrast to the constructivist forms of the city streets and buildings. This contrast places a significant role upon the parkway lands as a major element in the form and image of the city. The chain of lakes of the west, southwest and south is a dominant city form. The Mississippi River passing diagonally through the city creates a strong edge between St. Paul, northeast Minneapolis and the western section of Minneapolis. As an almost continuous form around the city, the parkway land defines the external system

distinguishing it from the city's internal system of neighborhood parks, major shopping districts, downtown, and industrial districts. Many major access routes pass through the parkway land, and this land becomes an identifiable gateway to the city. However, major components of the parkway system are used as internal geographical references; "I live near Lake Harriet", "John's mother lives on the East Side of Lake Nokomis", etc. This use of park land as an identification depends upon accessibility, use and visibility. Each part of the parkway land has a distinctive character and visual structure. Some areas have been developed, maintained and are beautiful, and some areas, such as Bassetts Creek and Shingle Creek, have a potential as yet unrealized. The undeveloped areas can become a distinctive part of the image and form of the city as are the other city lakes by sensitive design of the natural landscape.

GOALS

- The Parkway System should continue to enhance the quality of the city's environment.
- The Parkway System should be designed and improved to reinforce the visual order and distinctiveness of the city and its districts.
- The landscaping should continue to provide visual relief from the surrounding city.
- The parkway lands should be clearly visible to motorists and pedestrians. The park lands can act as orientation points and convey information about the location of recreation spaces.
- The recreation system along the Mississippi should be designed as a continuous experience between St. Paul, Minneapolis and the northern suburbs.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND LAND USE

As the land use patterns develop, there are more demands upon the undeveloped landscape for conversion to housing, industry and transportation systems. Park land has always been a favorite source of available land within urban areas for these uses. TH 55

route was originally designed to pass through Minnehaha Park on an elevated berm. TH 55 would have destroyed a significant portion of Minnehaha Park and eliminated direct access from the westerly residential neighborhood. A portion of northwest Lake Calhoun land was sold for an office building site. The building and its parking lot is occupying land that might have been used to relieve the congestion at Lake Calhoun's north shore. Other constructed roadways of the city have divided parkway land destroying continuity. Cedar Avenue bridge and Olson Memorial Highway are examples.

GOALS

- No parkway land should be converted to a use detrimental to the continuity of the parkway system or to a process of nature essential for the preservation of the natural landscape.

THE PARKWAY SYSTEM AND ADJACENT LAND USE

The quality of the recreation use can be reduced by intrusions from adjacent land uses. The physical and visual experience in the Parkway System derives strength from its contrast to the city experience. Therefore, the landscape should be contained and visually separated from the city. Masses of natural vegetation, water elements of varying form and scale, irregular ground forms and special recreational facilities are the essence of the parkway experience. This experience can be interrupted and confused by seeing incompatible structures, freeways and hearing noises of the city. Noise interferes with relaxation and thought, creates stress and destroys the serenity of the outdoors. Impact studies should be made to determine sources of noise and the remedy of the situation.

Adjacent land use has a direct effect upon the maintenance of the natural landscape. Pollution by air and pollution of water systems can destroy leisure opportunity. Any waste discharged into water must meet the standards set for such water.

These detrimental hazards to man and the landscape are not confined within legal boundaries, and require jurisdictional cooperation to solve them. Shingle Creek doesn't begin at the Minneapolis

City limits and end at the Mississippi River. Bassetts Creek's recreation potential is negated by industries along the banks. The water is full of scrapmetal, chemical pollutants and the banks are unsafe.

Some portions of the Parkway System are narrow strips of land and its best use is part of the Grand Rounds. These portions need to be carefully evaluated and landscaped as boulevard streets. As will be discussed subsequently in detail, views to industries can be good or bad. The most objectionable results of industry should be screened.

Another large structural mass intruding in the landscape is the freeway system. The bridge at Broadway Avenue over Victory Drive is an example where plant materials could soften the effect of the structure.

The Nicollet Avenue Bridge over Minnehaha Parkway is an example where planting and a beautiful structure have combined to create a dramatic visual event.

GOALS

- The Parkway System should be protected from adjacent land use that deteriorates the visual and physical quality of the use areas.
- Existing visual intrusions in the Parkway System should be screened from park land by landscaping and if possible removed or relocated.
- The maintenance of natural processes should be insured by protection programs established according to the orderly analysis of these natural processes. The Park Board should join with other jurisdictional entities to develop quality standards for air, water, and all types of waste disposal as might effect the Parkway System from outside the parks boundaries.
- The Park Board should be a part of any land use review process that determines proposed uses of adjacent land that is critical to the Parkway System.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND TRANSPORTATION

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND CITYWIDE ACCESS

The Parkway System is more directly and intimately accessible, more refined and concentrated, than a comparable landscape in open country away from the city, and therefore has a greater impact on the user.

While it is necessary to exclude certain urban elements from the parkway system, the park land must be accessible. This involves the sequence of origin - method of travel - destination. Consequently, the parkway and the city are intimately connected as part of one system by transportation routes. The access routes linking major land use districts of the city and the parkway system must be understandable and available to all people. We recommend that the Park Board conduct a study to determine access patterns to the parkway system. Such questions relevant to accessibility are:

Where did people come from before coming to the park?

What is the nearest main street intersection to that place?

How did persons get here? Walk, drive, bicycle, bus, boat?

How long did it take?

This determination would establish present routes and methods of transportation, and also reveal sections of the city where access is confusing and difficult. The access deficiencies can be identified and a program established to eliminate them. Such would also indicate what distance is average for walking, bicycling and the time to travel in an automobile.

GOALS

- The city transportation systems be designed to provide identifiable and consistent access routes to the parkway system.
- The Grand Rounds Parkway Road be connected to a scenic drive system along the Mississippi River and including an East West cross town connection.

- Major city streets be developed as boulevard streets and appropriately landscaped and signed as major connections to the parkway road system.
- The Mississippi River be used by boats to provide transportation to activity centers on the river.

TRANSPORTATION WITHIN PARKWAY SYSTEM

The city transportation systems are generally functional and utilitarian whereas the parkway transportation systems should be for pleasure. The main activity areas in the parkway system should be connected by roads, and other means should be used within these areas for access.

Other appropriate means are bicycling, boating, walking and canoeing. Cities seem to require land uses to adjust to the impact of transportation system; but in a park the position and type of transportation should be adjusted to preserve the recreation potential of the landscape and eliminate any conflicts between the automobile and the manual and pedestrian circulation patterns.

Modern transportation has changed the scale of time and scope resulting in greater personal flexibility so that a day's pleasure trip by automobile may cover 100-300 miles. The original Parkway Grand Rounds was designed as a full day pleasure trip by horse and buggy. However, the Parkway Grand Rounds can be driven in about 2 hours and 3 or 4 segments of the park land can be experienced in depth. Even though most people today only use segments of the parkway roads, the continuous road system should be maintained.

GOALS

- A continuous automobile road system should be provided throughout the parkway system as the official "Grand Rounds Parkway Road".
- The manual and pedestrian circulation system should be established to provide continuous access between and within contiguous park areas.
- The automobile system will be designed so as to preserve and help establish continuous manual and pedestrian circulation system.

- The parkway roads should be designed as a homogeneous system in order to protect it as a continuous recreation experience.

TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION USES

One primary use of the parkway land is to circulate through it; another is the use of the land for relaxation and use outside the automobile. During peak user days, motorized land traffic interferes substantially with the opportunity to relax and enjoy the park facilities outside the car. These conflicts should be eliminated by the careful redesign of the relationship between automobile and use space.

GOALS

- The major road systems should be designed to preserve the quality of the landscape and the quality of the parkway uses.

PARKWAY SYSTEM AND RECREATION

The Park Board stated in Park and Recreation Standards 4/16/69 Goals and Objectives 2. "Recognizing that the harmonious relationship of man to nature is crucial to human life, an equally important objective is to conserve nature and make natural beauty paramount. Thus, the Board will do everything within its power to encourage and provide opportunity for people to enjoy, appreciate, protect and strengthen their ties with the natural and aesthetic values of the neighborhood, community and urban environment in which they live".

Designed around a system of large lakes and water ways, the Minneapolis Parkway system accommodates unique recreation for the people of the city. The activities of swimming, hiking, wildlife observation and preservation, bicycling and boating are all compatible with the intrinsic suitability use of this natural landscape of lakes, waterways, forests and grass.

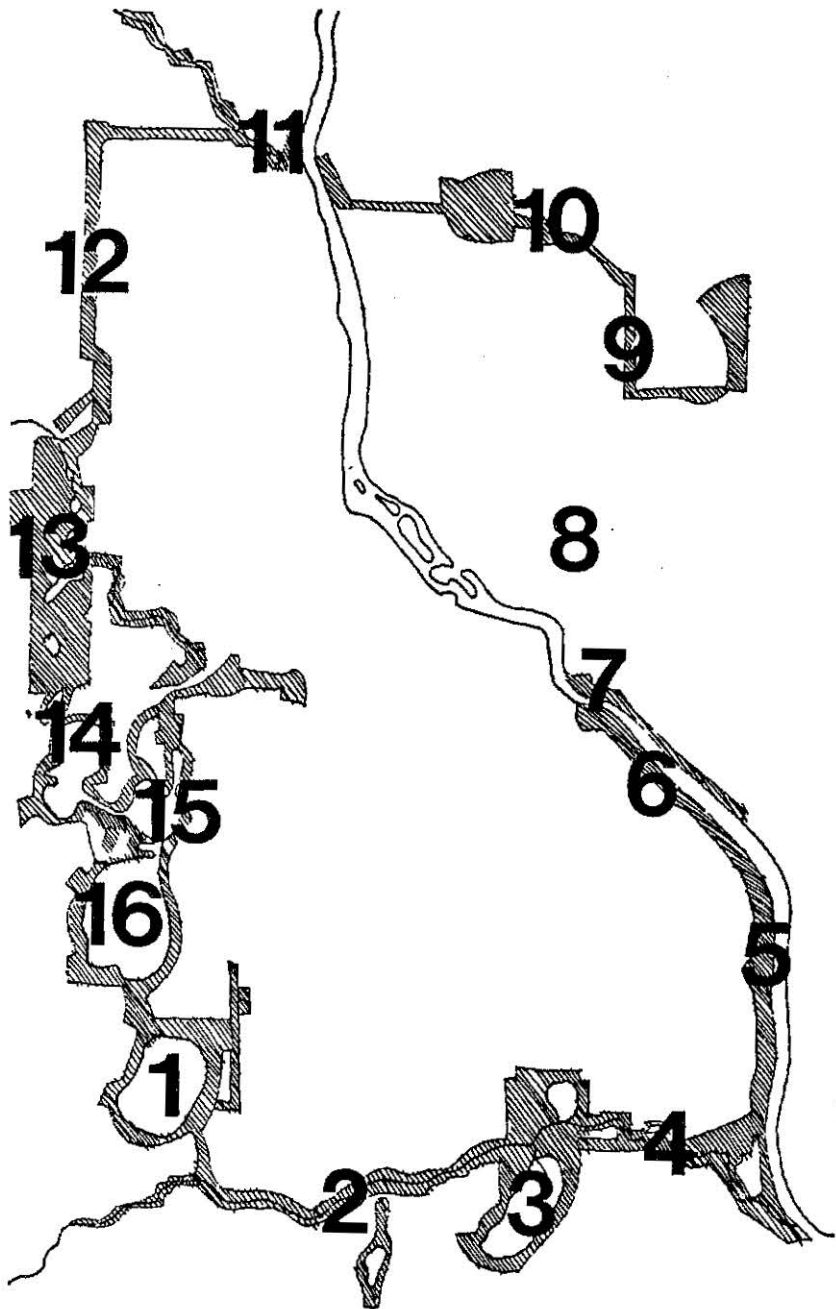
However, user demands have produced evidence that the existing physical design of some recreation areas is in need of redesign in order to preserve the landscape and the potential for passive use. The redesign may range from rehabilitation to complete new arrangements of physical elements.

This report does not deal with social demands but has recognized that these demands exist and are a necessary part of the analytical process before physical design will have a comprehensive context. A sensitive physical design process should strive to allow the maximum opportunity for individual expression and choice without sacrificing the safety and well being of others.

GOALS

- Recreational facilities should be designed and located only where the activity will not impair the continuation of natural processes.
- Recreational facilities should be consolidated by function and location for efficient and effective management purposes
- Recreational activities should be located where it will have the least impact upon adjacent land use.
- The recreation spaces should be designed so there is minimum interference between incompatible park uses.
- The design and location of the use spaces should convey the impression that the space can be used for its intended function.

KEY MAP OF PARKWAY SECTIONS



1. Lake Harriet
2. Minnehaha Parkway
3. Lake Nokomis
4. Minnehaha Parkway
5. West River Drive
6. West River Drive
7. East River Drive
8. East Connection
9. Stinson Blvd.
10. St. Anthony Parkway
11. Webber Park
12. Victory Drive
13. Theo. Wirth Park
14. Cedar Lake
15. Lake of the Isles
16. Lake Calhoun

