

Minutes Minnetonka Park Board Wednesday, March 3, 2021

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park Board Members Present: Elliot Berman, Korey Beyersdorf, James Durbin, Chris Gabler, David Ingraham, Katie Semersky and Chris Walick.

Ben Jacobs was excused.

Staff members in attendance: Darin Ellingson, Carol HejlStone, Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka. Information technology staff: Jeff Dulac and Gary Wicks.

Gabler called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea had no reports.

4. Approval of Minutes

Walick moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Feb. 3, 2021 as submitted. Durbin abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

Heather and Brent Holm, Minnetonka residents gave a PowerPoint presentation on their neighborhood restoration project. The PowerPoint presentation is attached to the end of the minutes.

Gabler asked if they would come to an area in his neighborhood.

Brent Holm thought it was a template that could be replicated in other areas. It's not obvious in the beginning of all that needs to be done, but it is something they would be interested in fostering. They want to see the model spread.

Gabler added that it is a worthwhile community goal. He knows that area and noticed the work being done, but didn't know what was happening.

Walick thought everything about it was awesome. He asked why the Holm's suggested July for touring the site.

Heather Holm answered that the May park board tour is postponed so that is why she suggested July. It will look very pretty then, but they welcome them to come at any time during the growing season.

O'Dea commented that the May tour was postponed and is looking to be rescheduled in late June or early July. He said if the park board wanted to add that as a site for the tour, it could be added to the tour itinerary.

Walick would be interested in adding it to the tour.

Ingraham would also like it added. He thinks what they did was a fantastic effort. He drives by the site fairly frequently and it is definitely an incredible transformation.

Heather Holm said perhaps they can come by on their tour.

O'Dea commented that there might be a similar update at the next meeting for the Cullen Nature Preserve. There is a group of volunteers who would like to provide a similar update. He thanked Heather and Brent Holm for the update.

Heather said she serves on the Cullen Nature Preserve board so she may be involved at the next meeting.

Ingrid Berkholtz presented on behalf of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks. She wanted to introduce the park board to their volunteer association and to express their interest in being a ready, public resource for the upcoming Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP), Parks Open Spaces and Trails Plan (POST) and park signage updating. Friends of Minnetonka Parks is a volunteer association of residents advocating for the natural environment and landscapes that are the foundational amenity of Minnetonka's parks and trails system. Their current network of volunteers represents Big Willow, Jidana, Kinsel, Lake Rose, Lone Lake, Meadow, Purgatory, Victoria-Evergreen Parks as well as the Cullen Nature Preserve.

They all enjoy Minnetonka's parks and green spaces, in fact many of them moved here because of the green spaces and their priority in the city. We are park neighbors, visitors and volunteers who believe it is imperative that the city of Minnetonka protects, preserves and restores the unique biodiverse natural systems and features of the parks and trails. Friends of Minnetonka Parks formally banded as a volunteer association at the start of 2021. They are currently finalizing their vision and mission and values statement. They like a parks system that 1) honors and builds on our city's heritage of preserving and restoring 2) that respects our distinctive high-value natural species 3) that addresses current and emerging needs for both active and passive recreational opportunities. They would like to present their finalized Friends of Minnetonka Parks statement to the park board at an upcoming meeting.

Berkholtz also expressed their interest in working with the park board as a ready, public resource on the NRMP and the POST plan. This is to ensure that the quality of our high-valued species, park preserves, wetlands, meadows, and woodlands which provide ecological functions supporting a diverse array of species and play a role in treating storm water and improving air quality. Also, that resident's usage and enjoyment of these spaces remain harmonious with natural resource functions and values and that residents who appreciate these natural amenities have a voice in the process. The updating of the POST plan was communicated to residents via the March Minnetonka Memo. We ask that the NRMP update process includes multiple opportunities and methods for gathering interest as well. We value that our parks, preserves and trails are inclusive for all residents and that they all feel welcome and everyone is respectful of each park's biodiverse natural features.

Park communications use of signage, rules, education and interpretation is an existing practice. Friends of Minnetonka Parks recently conducted an informal survey asking park users and neighbors the following: why they visit the parks, what are their favorite things, what issues do they have, what concerns do they have. Responses common across multiple parks illuminated that park signage is not affecting patrons behaviors. It also identifies inconsistencies between signage and specific park and trail rules. Friends of Minnetonka Parks supports the educational signage if key to the sustainability to our parks, parks system and community. They would welcome the opportunity to participate in the park signage update project. Their association includes individuals with interpretive signage development and implementation experience. They have a commitment to Minnetonka's future and are willing and able to roll up their sleeves and contribute to these park planning processes. Once the plans take effect, they can contribute through their volunteer work in the parks. On behalf of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks she thanked staff for the opportunity to address the board. Friends of Minnetonka Parks can be reached via email at mtkaparks@gmail.com.

Ingraham commented that there are multiple friends groups. He asked if they consolidated all those friends groups.

Berkholtz responded that yes, this is a consolidation of all of those groups and also some groups that are just emerging or smaller. They are banding together as an overall organization.

Ingraham thinks the level of interest or involvement is terrific. It is great to come together specifically for city staff. Having a unified or somewhat unified friends group vs individual groups representing different parks is probably easier.

6. Business Items

A. Adoption of the 2021 Park Board Strategic Plan

O'Dea gave the report. He shared the draft of the Strategic Plan that displayed the changes they made.

Gabler asked if users of the parks such as baseball programs need to provide their safe to return to play or their guidelines to the city in order to use Big Willow Park. He was referring to the goal, "To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs", objective 3, the last sentence that mentions continue to provide safe accommodations following Covid guidelines.

O'Dea replied that last year each organization provided kind of their Covid safe plan. He thinks organizations should look at those to make sure they still make sense. Some of the guidelines have probably changed a little bit but Covid is still here. He thinks it would be appropriate to have some guidelines in place for those organizations.

Gabler questioned that because he wondered if the city has a plan that user groups could mimic when creating their safety plan.

O'Dea replied that the city does and it follows the state guidelines. Certain organizations may have different changes such as baseball and softball have dugouts and a soccer's

bench is more open so they have different guidelines or regulations. The city does follow the state guidelines but each association might have some small differences.

Gabler said the other reason he brought that sentence up is because what happens if someone is participating at a park and something happens. Then they try and go back on the park saying they didn't see their guidelines. He thinks it is more on the user end rather than on the landlord end.

O'Dea thinks we would make sure that each association had our guidelines in their requirements.

Walick and Semersky think the revisions look good.

Walick moved, Semersky seconded a motion to approve the 2021 Strategic Plan. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Park Signage

Natural Resources Manager, Leslie Yetka gave the report.

Public Works Operations Manager, Darin Ellingson reported that the other parts of signage they are going to work on are 1) park rules signage 2) wayfinding and 3) park monument signs. There are different things going on already with the new Ridgedale Park and there will be wayfinding there. Staff is in the early stages of wayfinding and trail development in Opus. As Yetka mentioned with this whole process, staff is going to come up with a way to unify what is going on at these newer parks and tie it into our existing parks. There will be a lot of signage opportunities and what this will do is give us a standard for how we want these to look like throughout our parks. Ellingson added that staff would look at new park monument signs. The existing ones are simple, they are two wooden boards on posts with the name of the park. Staff is looking at doing something more significant as far as a more visible and larger sign. Something like the new sign that was done at Shady Oak Beach or a smaller scale of the new city gateway sign on County Road 101 by the Gray's Bay Causeway. There is a new monument sign there entering the city which is much bigger than what we would be looking at for the parks signs but has a similar look. Once staff has a standard monument size, it would be put in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for future use as that is a much bigger project.

Ingraham thinks it is a great effort. He is a big proponent of the interpretive signs and appreciated when Yetka talked about the effort there and how it is being laid out. He likes the idea of having updated sign standards for branding and building perspective. Ingraham also encouraged history. He said that a lot of our interpretive signs have history on them today but there may be a chance to incorporate more elements of history. He is thinking of things such as the ruins with brick pillars at Big Willow Park. When you are at the park you wonder what those things are. There are some fun things that could be incorporated such as on the other side of Big Willow where it talks about mills. Ingraham shifted gears to talk about the park rules and regulations, in particular at Purgatory Park. It is a very popular park especially with dog owners and now with Covid there is more usage than ever. There seems to be a lot more conflict than usual recently between people that are using the exterior maintained paths and dogs that are running loose from the interior. There is a thread on NextDoor that has over 130 comments about issues. The park board received a letter from a local resident and he has spent a

lot of time over there himself with his wife and grandkids and their dog. He really feels strongly that there needs to be better education and more signs about what the rules are. Dogs are loose in the parking lots. Last year there was a gentleman who was knocked off his bike while biking on the maintained path and had to have surgery. Ingraham thinks we can't do it soon enough with spring coming based on the interaction going on the NextDoor thread. Relative to prior years, the theme on the NextDoor thread seems to be more about people using the maintained trails being extremely frustrated with dogs and dog owners from the interior off-leash. In the past, it was much more balanced about the beliefs of both. He would guess that over ¾ of the comments or more were people on the maintained trails experiencing situations not unlike the letter that was sent to the park board. He would strongly encourage staff to look hard and quickly at those issues.

Ellingson replied that staff is going to put up some more signs at each of the park entrances. Staff will put up the signs about the dog rules as soon as the snow is gone and the frost is out of the ground. This would be temporary but as the sign project is in progress staff will look at doing something more along the brand. This gets some signage up regarding the rules in the meantime.

Gabler commented that it sounds like it's not so much an issue of signage but either disrespect by people or how it gets enforced.

Ingraham responded that Community Service Officers used to drive the trail and obviously that hasn't been going on. Regarding the comments on the post, some of it is just pure disrespect but he thinks the biggest thing is to educate. Everybody thinks their dog is great off-leash and everyone believes their dog is under voice control and most of them have no idea what voice control is. He has been in that park for over 30 years with multiple dogs and until his recent dog, every dog was a great dog. Our dog is a great dog but his dog is not safe off-leash with other dogs. They've had a professional trainer and everything and it is clear that it was just the way it was bread. When you have your dog on a leash and someone else with their dog off-leash on the maintained trail says, "oh, don't worry my dog is friendly" that might be great but my dog might not be and his dog is under control. If Ingraham's dog is rushed by another dog it isn't going to be a pleasant thing. He thinks the big thing is education because people just don't understand. Our rules are clear that you have to have your dog leashed in the parking lot but people pull in, open the door and let their dog jump out and run into the center. The parking lots are clearly an area of issue. He thinks the other area of confusion is on the south end of the main open area when you go down to get to the main trail to go across the bridge. Experienced people know they should be leashing their dog there but a lot of people are thinking they are going to cross the bridge and go up into the woods so they don't. Even a sign right there where you exit what he calls the center, right before the bridge, it wouldn't be a bad idea to reinforce that your dog must be leashed at this point.

Durbin added that the park board has discussed this for years. He thanked Ingraham for bringing it up. It is a problem and there are much more dog owners now with Covid than there ever was before. He hopes there is a good solution for educating because many people are unaware. We have to give people the benefit of the doubt but maybe they just need a little bit of a nudge or peer pressure. The other thing regarding the signage for the monument signs, he thinks staff should hire the person who designs the state parks signs. They are way too big but each state park has a little picture of something that makes that state park really cool and helps remind you why you went there. He

knows they probably spent way too much money on that but he hopes to make them more Minnetonka than just the new symbol and two boards that says Minnetonka Parks and the name of the park. Try to make it more original and more like a cool destination. Every time he goes to the state parks and he sees those signs, they always get their picture taken in front of them because they are cool. Maybe there is some kind of affordable option that we can consider when we design these new generation signs and incorporate that throughout all of our parks.

Ellingson said that is definitely something we can mention as we get through the process. The one thing is that we have to stay in the boundaries. There is the Minnetonka sign ordinance and that is fairly restrictive so we don't have a lot of space to do a whole lot. We will do as much as we can with the space that we have.

Gabler hopes the signs will work especially with people with their dogs on and off leash.

O'Dea commented that Yetka and Ellingson were talking about future signage. Staff will address the concern dealing with dogs whether it is with signage, education and/or enforcement. Staff can also talk to the police department and address that sooner than the other park signage.

C. Bike Month Activities

Park and Trail Planner, Carol HeilStone gave the report.

Beyersdorf mentioned that in Florida they would do an annual slow-roll bike ride. It was called the Tweed Ride and everybody would get dressed up in tweed or vintage clothing. It could be fun if you were to do a slow-roll and do some sort of themed event around it. Maybe that would gather more interest. She asked if the city has ever thought about doing a bike share program or investing in something like that.

HejlStone replied that there are a couple of us that participate in a monthly bike share meeting that is hosted by Minneapolis and St. Paul. However, it is really meant to be a learning and inclusive group including suburban communities surrounding Minneapolis and St. Paul. Bike sharing is something that we are kind of looking into now. Staff is looking at partner cities or adjacent cities to see how they operate and look for any issues that come up for potential consideration in the future.

Beyersdorf asked if there has ever been any sort of bike rental company that has come in and worked with the city.

HejlStone replied that there hasn't been one while she has worked at the city of Minnetonka. That is something that we know may become more of a push with the implementation of the LRT. She liked Beyersdorf's idea of a themed slow-roll ride.

Semersky is thrilled that they city is getting behind bike month and planning to promote it and get people involved. Her understanding is that the bike industry is another one that is booming right now during Covid so the timing is fantastic. She is happy to volunteer whether it is for brainstorming, marketing help or if you just need hands to help.

Walick asked if staff has considered activities for kids such as helmet distribution. Or looking into ways where kids could do bike things since families are always looking for things to do and kids love riding bikes.

HejlStone responded there are some bike safety courses for children in the summer months. For bike month, looking at that slow-roll ride staff could choose a distance to be achievable for youth to participate. If the park board has other ideas to enhance youth participation, she would love to hear them.

Walick apologized if that was discussed already with the slow-roll ride, he wasn't sure what that was.

HejlStone explained that a slow-roll ride means that it is not a race and is not meant to be a quick trip. There is a leader or two at the front setting a leisurely pace as well as folks at the rear making sure nobody drops off and everyone is being safe.

Ingraham asked if in the past the Minnetonka Middle School had a bike to school day that was tied into bike month. He thinks Tony Wagner might have mentioned last year that Groveland Elementary was going to do that except Covid got in the way. Ingraham asked if that is something that might be coordinated with bike month, if kids are in school.

HejlStone answered that school wasn't in session last year during May so they were unable to participate. She will reach out to schools to see if there are any planned bike to school events that we can partner with as well.

Semersky asked if there is a grand opening being planned for the Lone Lake Park Mountain Biking Trail.

HejlStone doesn't think it is planned for May. We are planning on a grand opening event but the date is yet to be determined. That is still being planned and staff is really looking at when the trail would be in good condition and a time when youth would be practicing.

Ingraham is aware that the mountain bike course is closed now. It was open for fat tires snow but now with the change in condition it is closed again. Ingraham is curious where people can look to find an update on whether or not the trails are open versus closed so people don't drive a long way to get there to find it closed and then go around the gate.

HejlStone replied that there are trail conditions, and trail openings and closure updates through the MORC website. They city's Lone Lake Mountain Bike Trail webpage is linked to that page as well.

Beyersdorf asked if there has been any thought to somehow help individual neighborhoods within Minnetonka to create maybe a slow-roll bike ride for their neighborhood. In her area, there are a lot of kids and the families might not be able to attend a sponsored event in Minnetonka but maybe there are ways to help them start their own neighborhood slow-roll event during the month.

HejlStone said they can look into it and see if we are able to support that or help encourage it.

Gabler would be happy to volunteer when he can that month.

7. Park Board Member Reports

There were none.

8. Information Items

Natural Resources Annual Update - 2020 Activities

Yetka gave the report.

Walick questioned the cause of the tree shortage.

Yetka responded that when talking to our city forester, her understanding is that it is an increased demand and supply change issue. There are a lot of industries workers shortages due to Covid perhaps because of illnesses or restrictions. The horticultural industry for a while has been short on staff and technicians to be growing and producing the materials. She thinks there are a lot of different factors but the bottom line was that the nurseries couldn't guarantee us the stock. To avoid multiple distribution events, staff decided to move it to fall when we had a better chance of having all of the material at the same time.

Ingraham commented that this is a great update and there were an impressive amount of achievements last year. It is great to go through that all and see all the progress that has been made.

Glen Lake Cross Country Ski Trail

O'Dea gave the report.

9. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

10. Adjournment

Walick moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline

Recreation Administrative Coordinator

Oric Ave Outlot Restoration

A collaborative effort between city staff, residents, and the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District





Restore Land with Native Plants

Watershed Grant

Cost-share grant 75% matching up to \$25,000

25% obligation can be offset with in-kind (volunteer) contributions

100 volunteer hours committed so grant funds applied for ~ \$5700

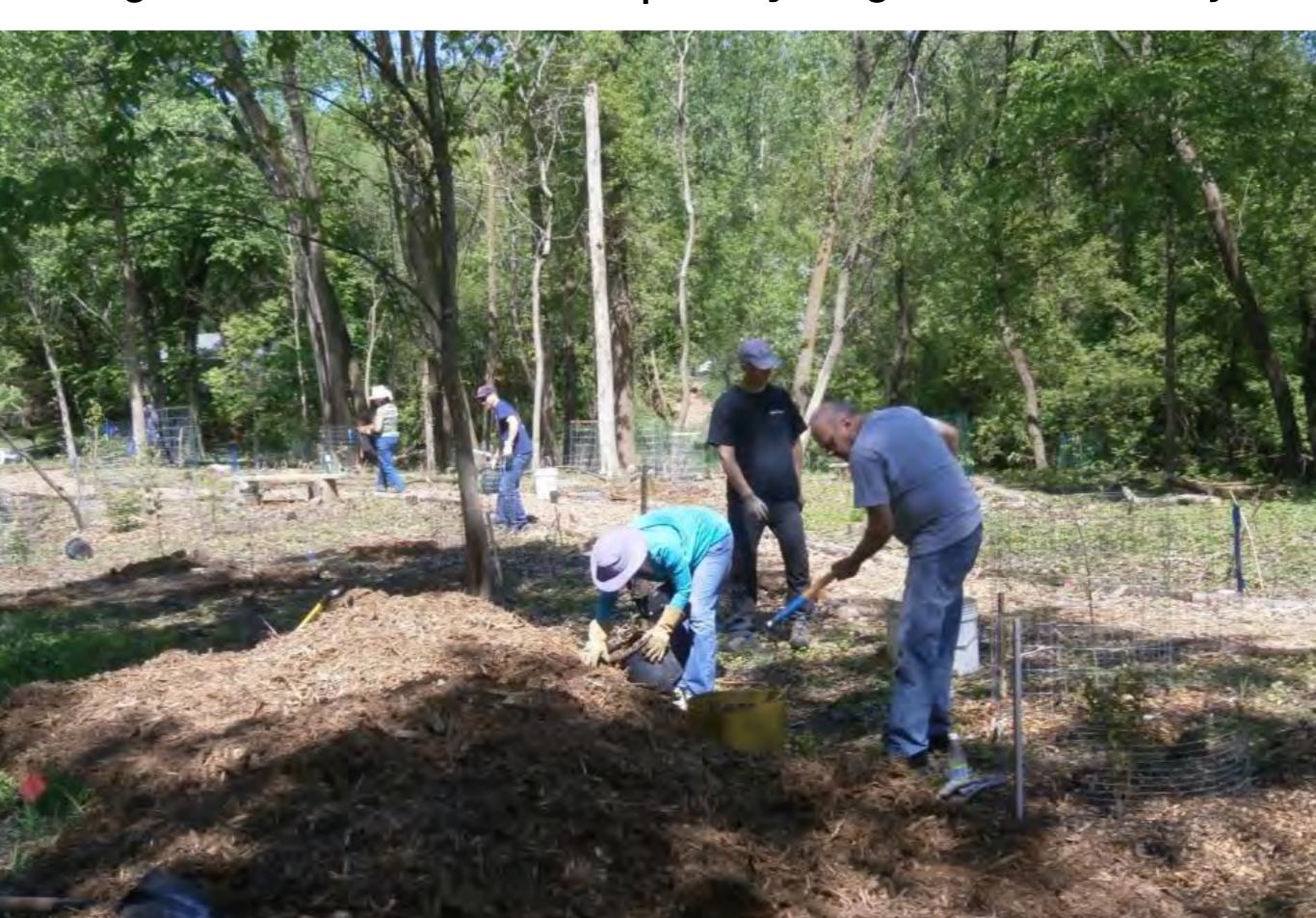
Grant approved by the City (property owner)

Acquire Funding



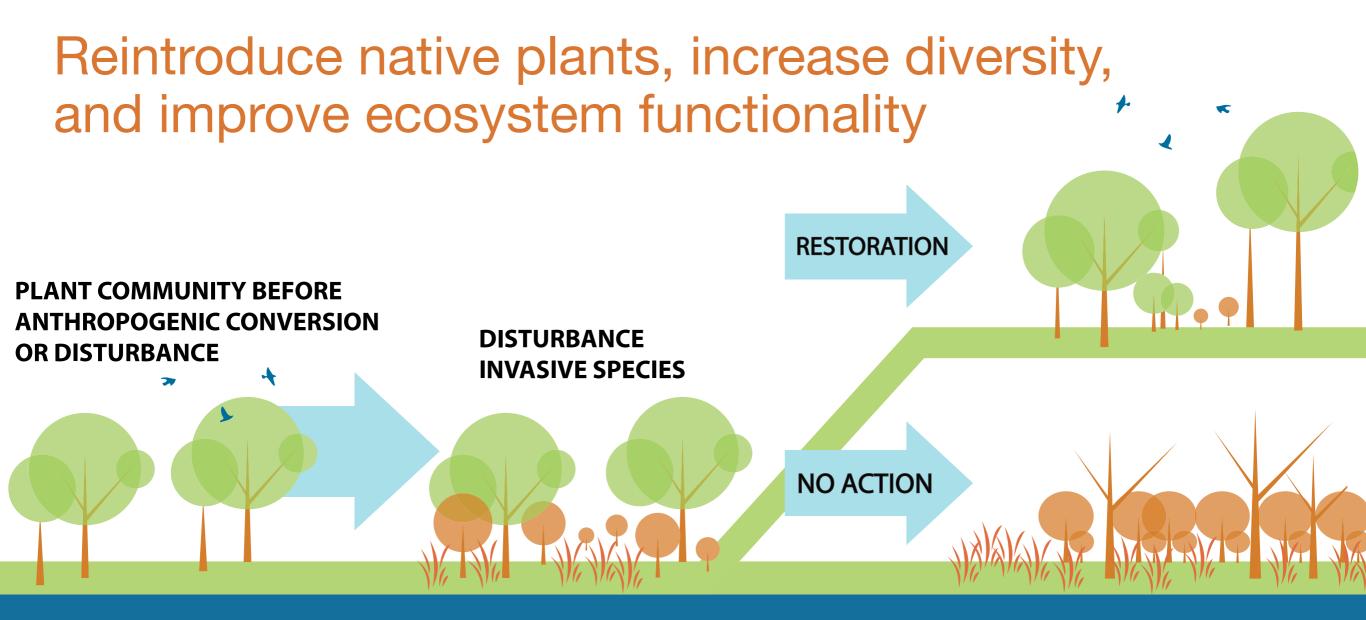


Gauge Volunteer Involvement | Notify Neighbors About Project



Restore Degraded Land with Native Plants

Remove invasive plants



Outlot Location and Siting in the Watershed



History of the Site



Trolley/Streetcar Tracks Until 1940

Between rail abandonment and power line installation, used as a dumping site

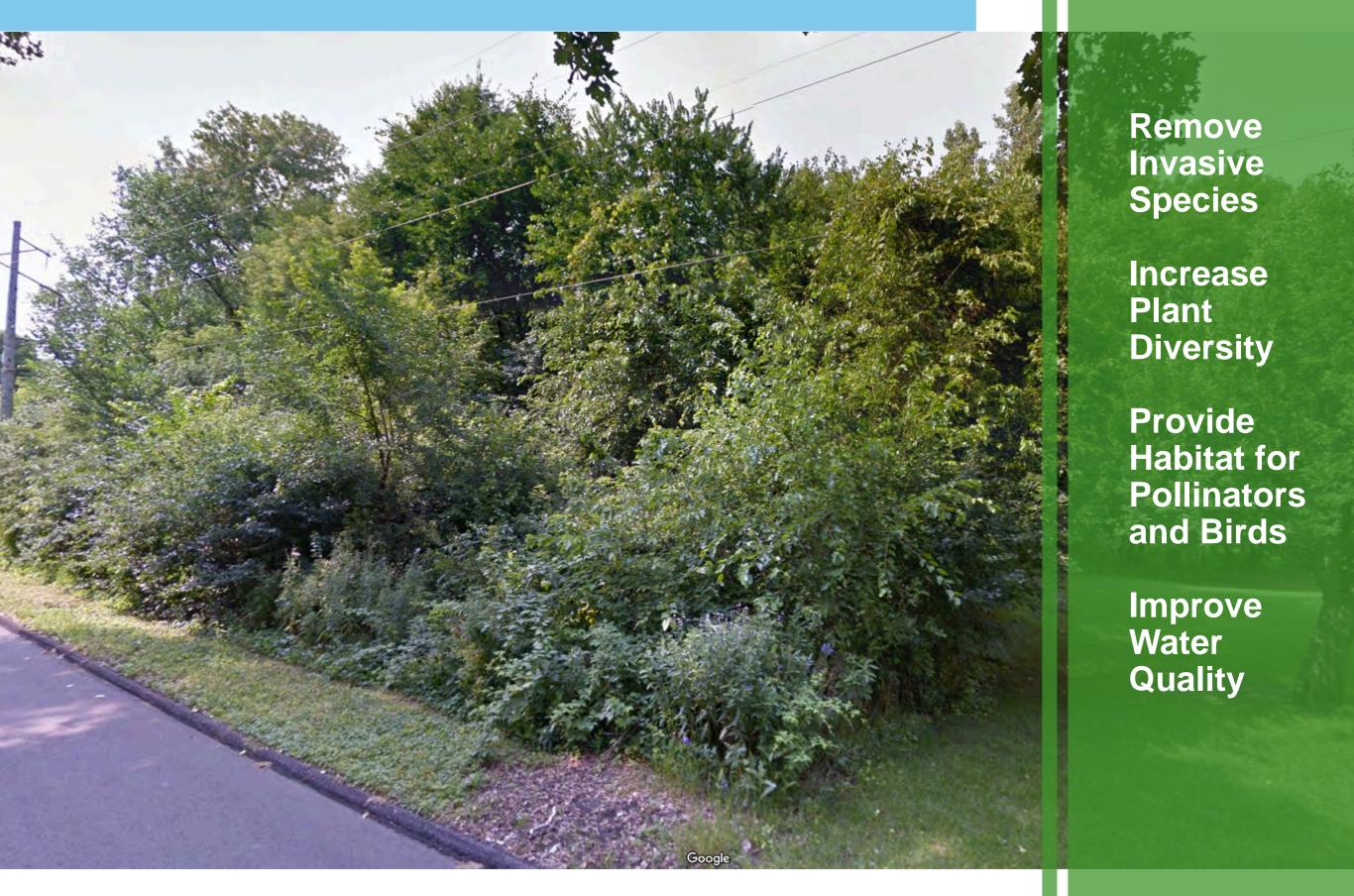
State power utility installed power lines on rail footprint in 1960s

Power lines decommissioned in 1990s (company no longer did any clearing under power line)

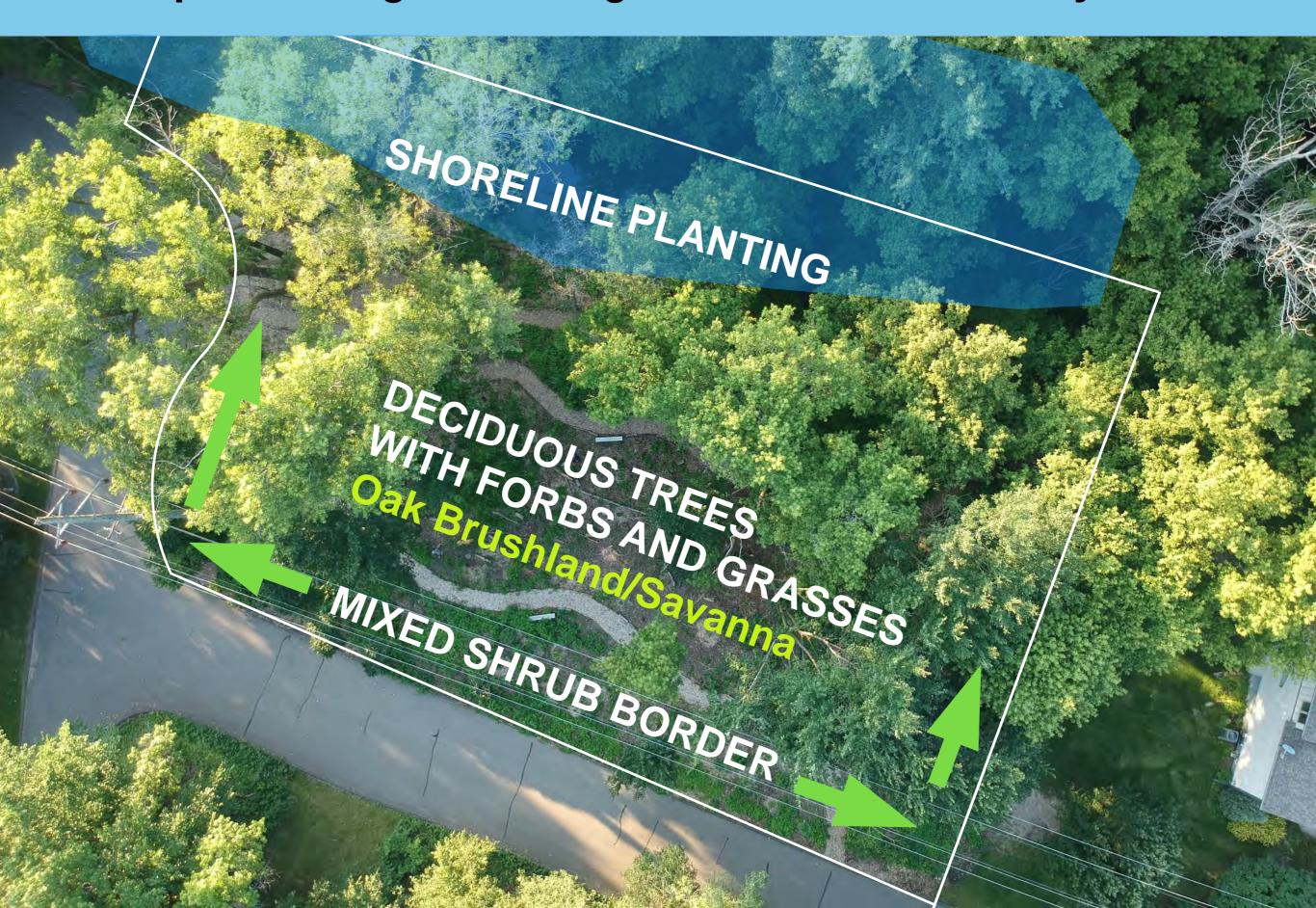
Deemed an unbuildable lot by the municipality



Establishing Goals for Grant



Develop a Planting Plan Using Local Plant Community Models



Pre-restoration Plant Survey



Native Tree Species

Native Shrub Species

Native Forb,
Grass, and Sedge
Species

Total Native Species

Remove Invasive Plants

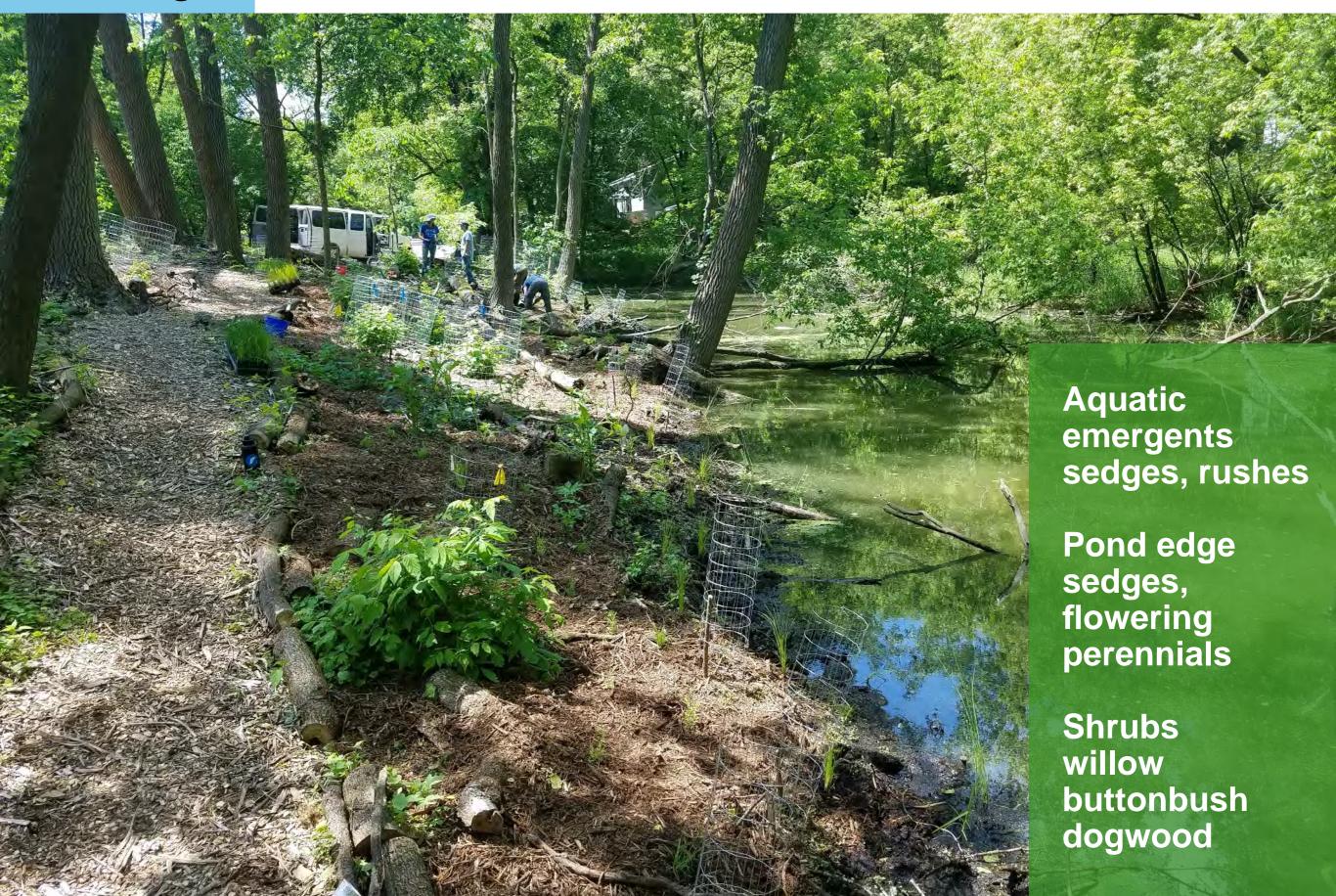
Late Fall Ideal Time



Shoreline Planting

GOALS

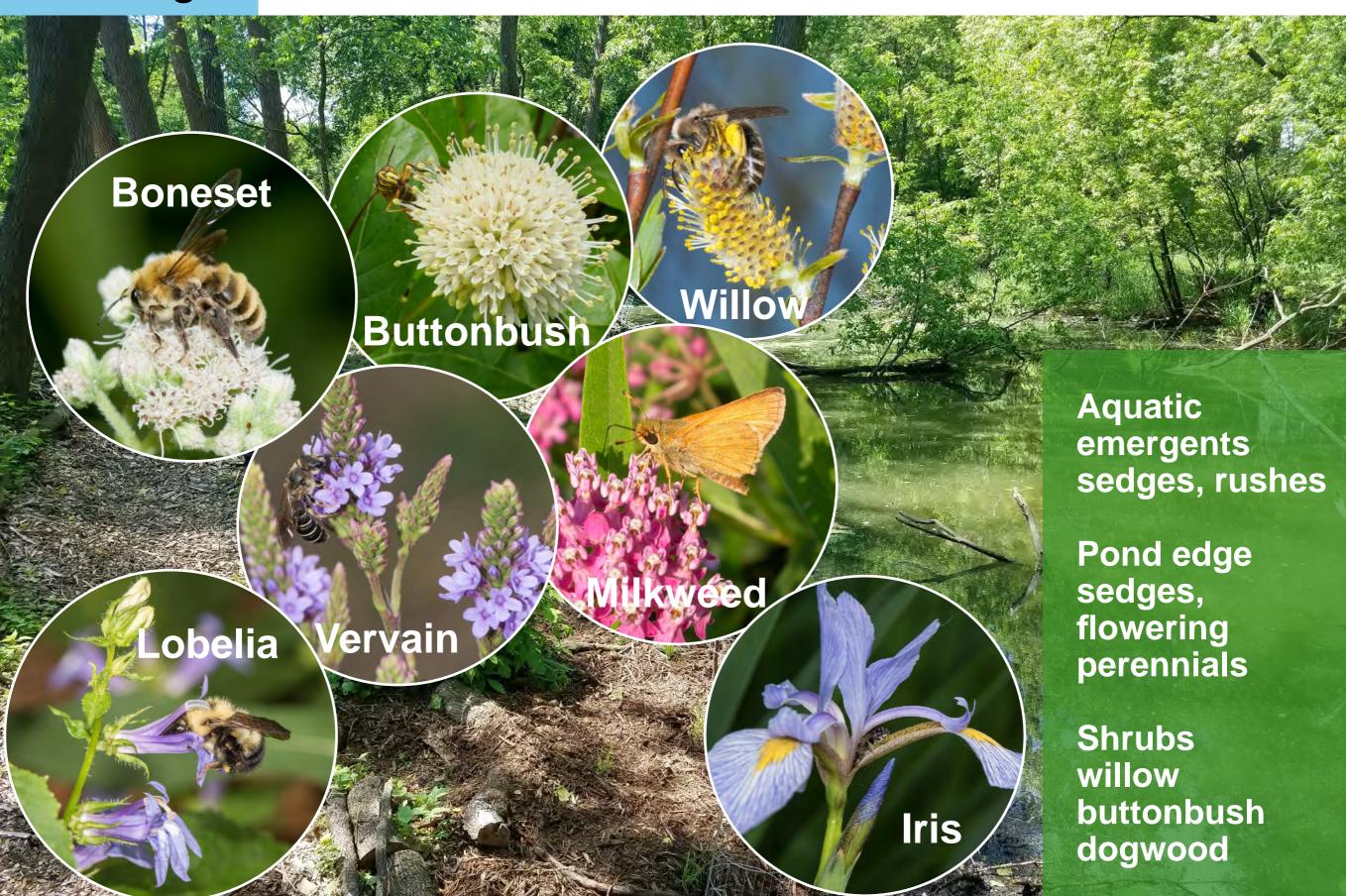
Stabilize edge, filter pollutants from the water, and prevent flow of nutrients into the water



Shoreline Planting

GOALS

Stabilize edge, filter pollutants from the water, and prevent flow of nutrients into the water



Mixed Shrub Border

GOALS

Shrubs provide a sense of enclosure and remain below the power line above

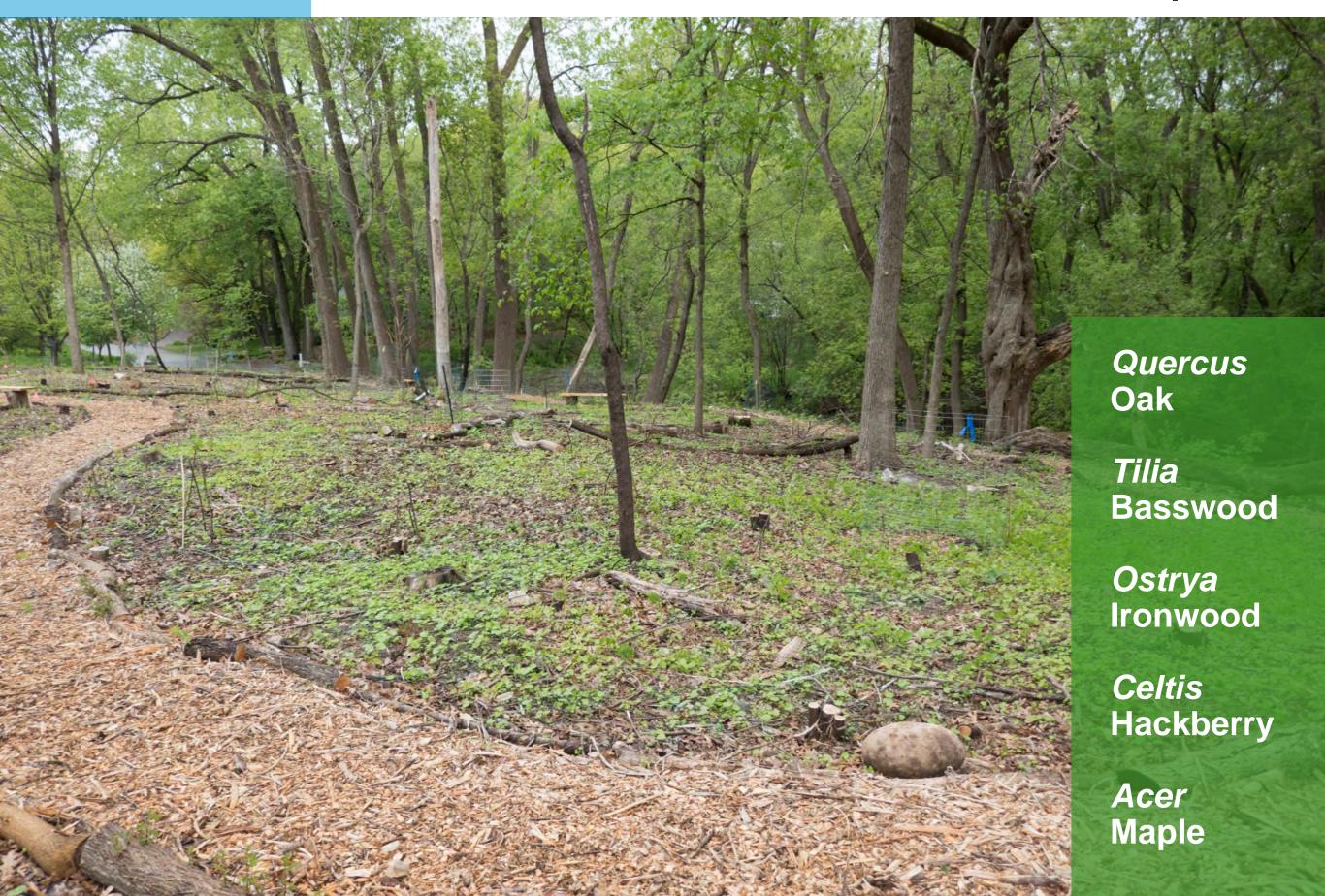




Open Interior

GOALS

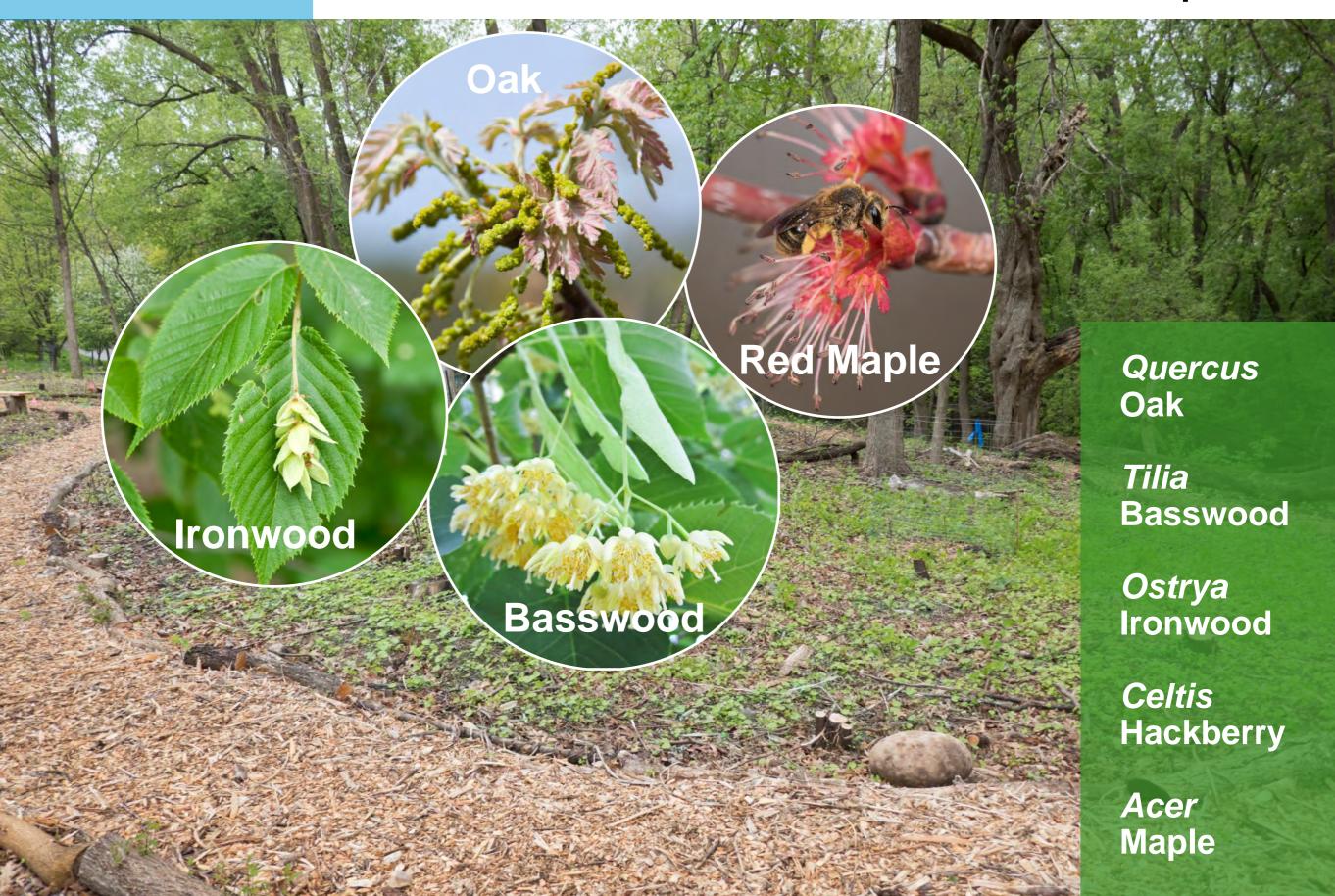
Provide flowering perennials for pollinators and introduce more hardwood tree species



Open Interior

GOALS

Provide flowering perennials for pollinators and introduce more hardwood tree species



Snow Seeding Native Forbs and Grasses

Open interior and edge



Snow Seeding Native Forbs and Grasses



Winter 2017

Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan)

Verbena (Vervain)

Asclepias (Milkweed)

Solidago (Goldenrod)

Monarda (Bergamot)

Zizia (Golden Alexanders)

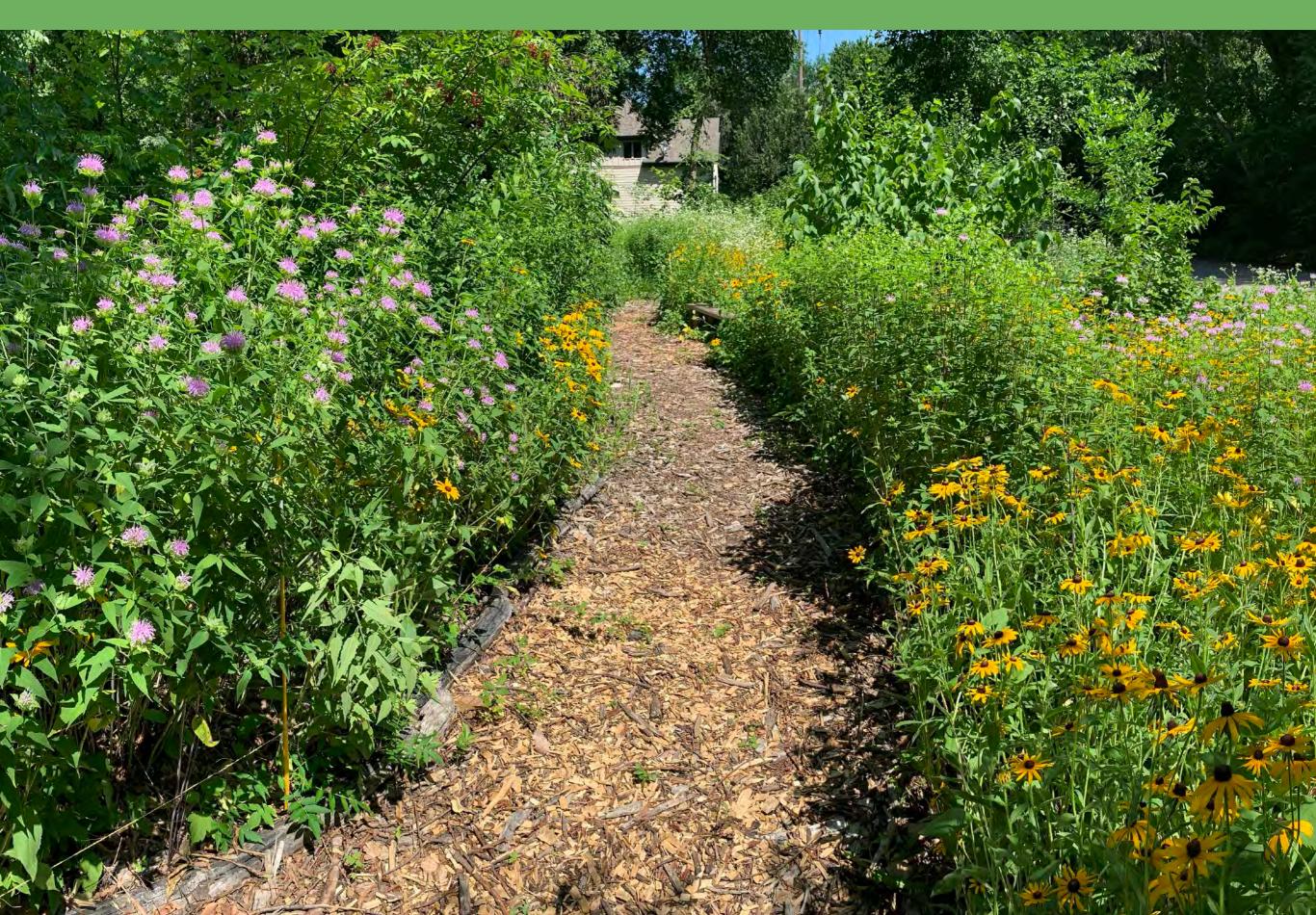
Liatris (Blazingstar)

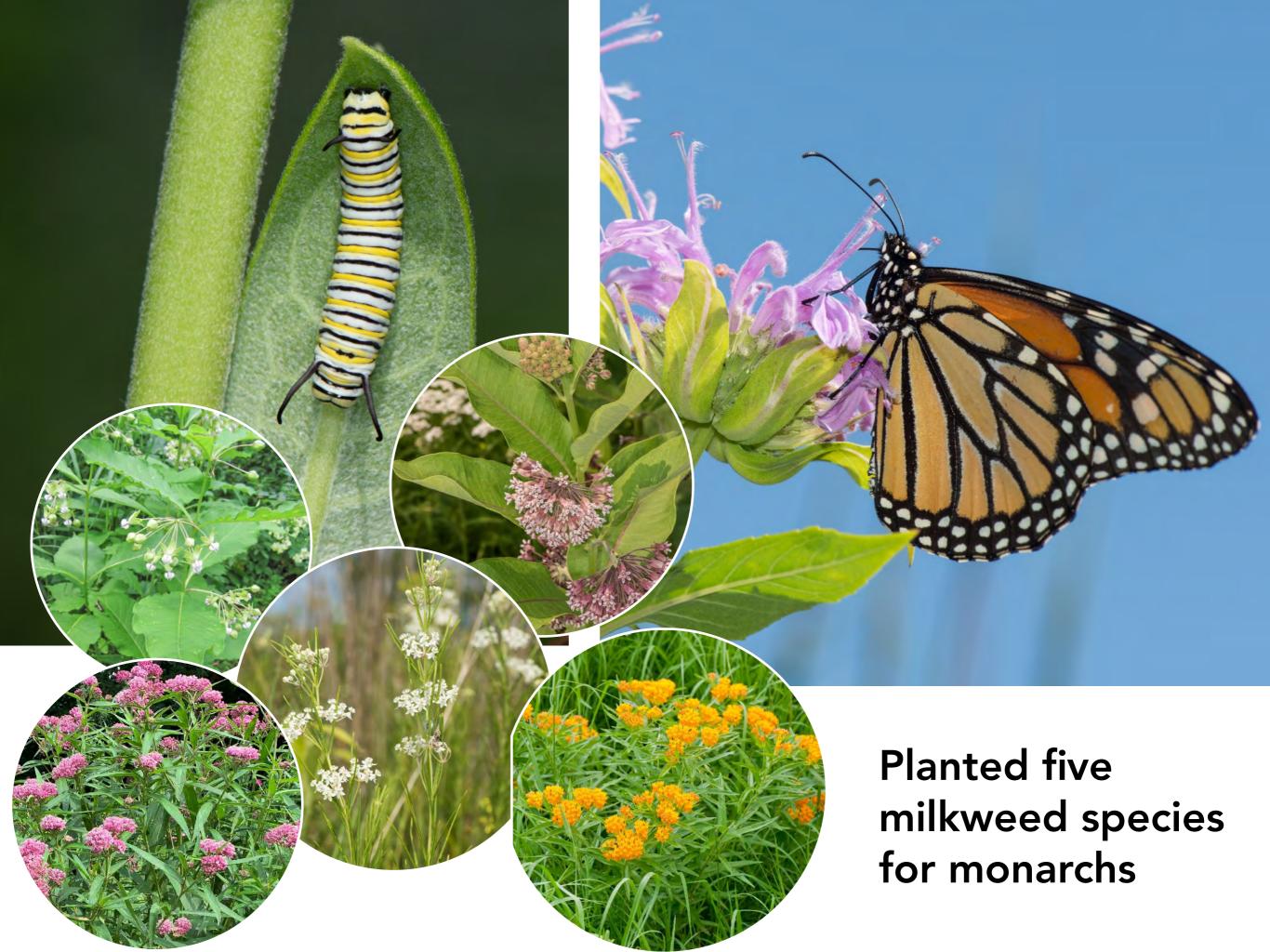
Agastache (Hyssop)

Symphyotrichum (Aster)



Summer 2020

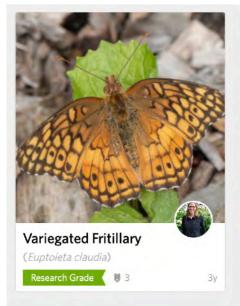


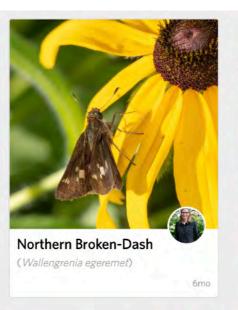




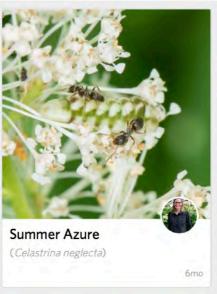
Summer 2020

18 species of butterflies





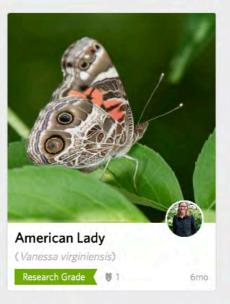




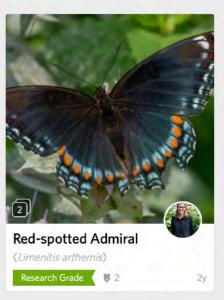


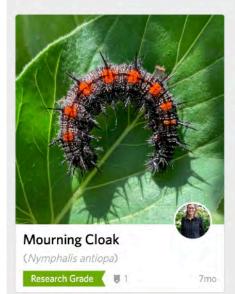


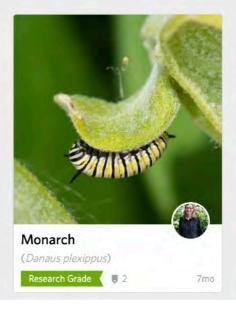


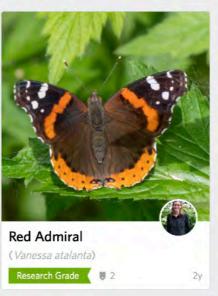




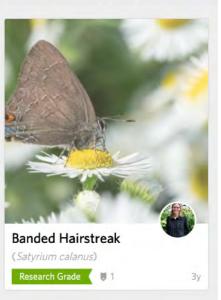












Minnetonka is a "Monarch Champion!"

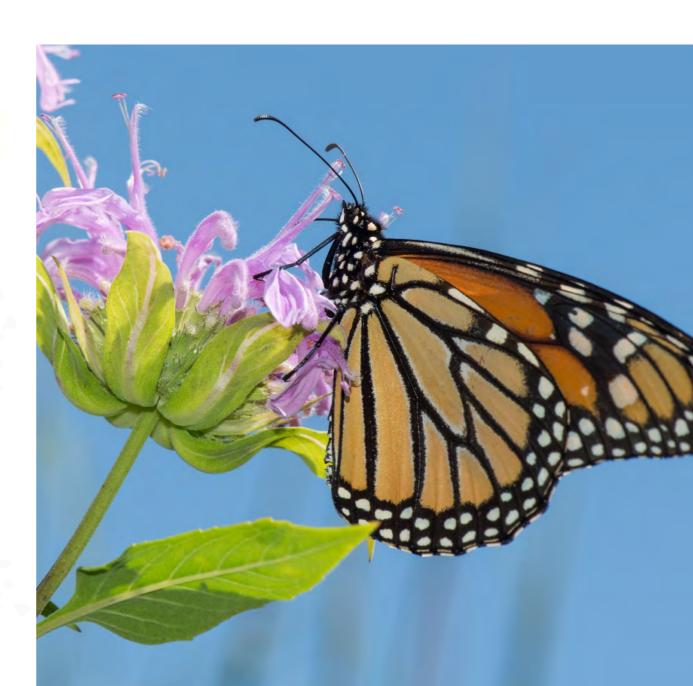
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City of Minnetonka Reaches "Monarch Champion" Milestone

The National Wildlife Federation recently acknowledged the City of Minnetonka and Mayor Brad Wiersum for completing all 24 action steps in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge (MMP). The MMP program's diverse measures – including strategic planning and education – increase habitat and awareness of monarch butterflies, whose population has declined by more than 90 percent since the mid-1990s. Minnetonka has participated in the pledge since 2017, and now becomes only the ninth of approximately 600 MMP signatory cities in North America to achieve Monarch Champion status.

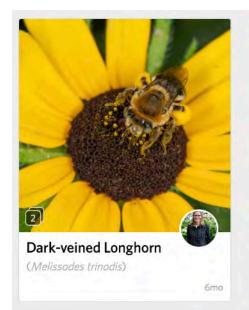
Oric Ave Outlot Restoration Project was one of 24 action steps completed for the city to attain Monarch Champion status

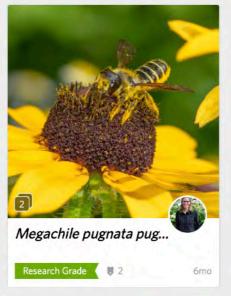


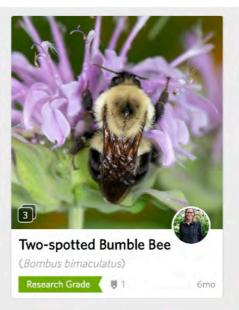


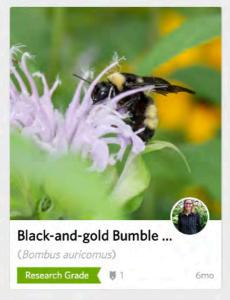
Summer 2020

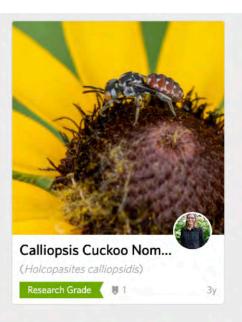
43 species of bees

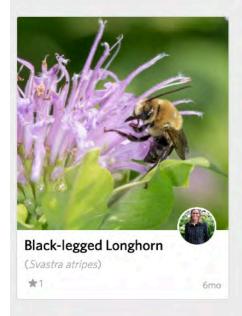


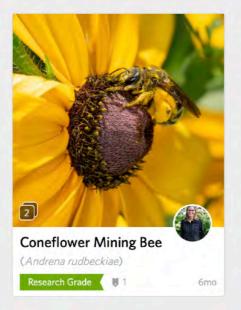






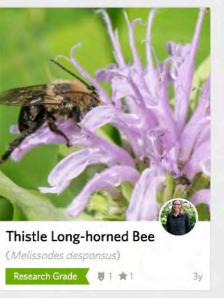




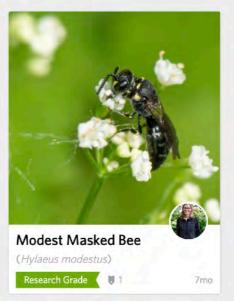




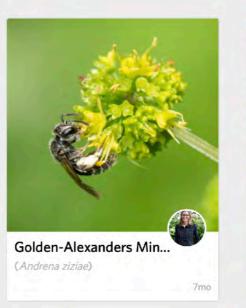


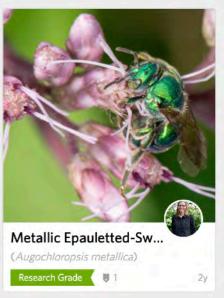














River Otters in the pond!!



Painted and Snapping Turtles Laid Eggs in the Outlot

Change in Plant Diversity





Pre-restoration
Native Tree Species



Post-restoration
Native Tree Species



Pre-restoration
Native Shrub Species



Post-restoration
Native Shrub Species

9

Pre-restoration Native Forb, Grass, Sedge



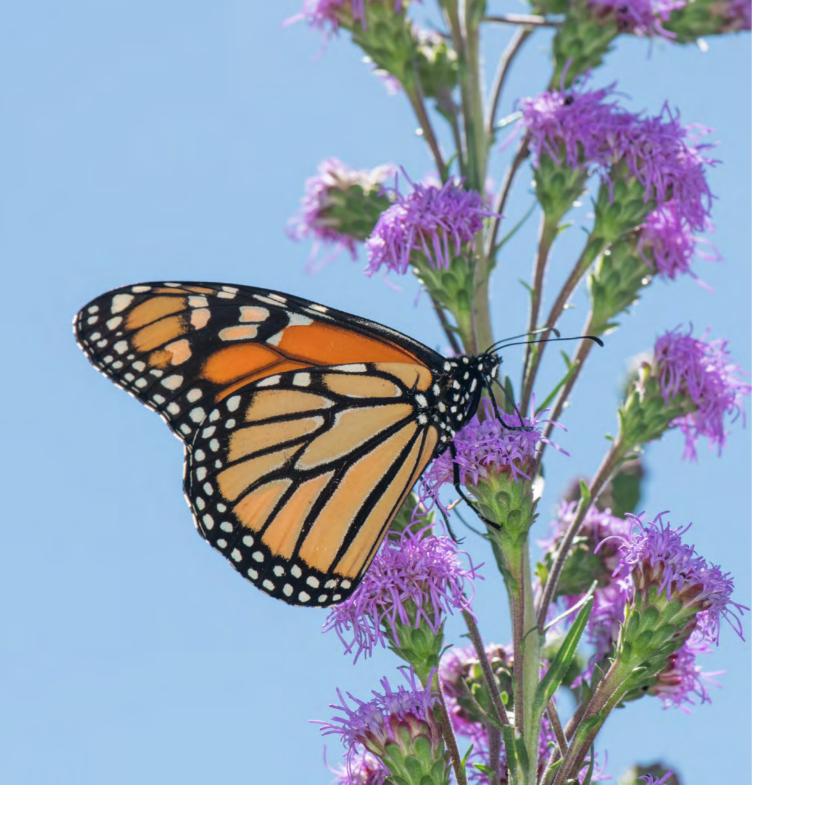
Post-restoration
Native Forb,
Grass, Sedge Species

Grant Reporting Exceeded volunteer expectations (100 hours)

Total 313 Hours October 2016 - June 2017

32 Residents donated time or plants





445 Volunteer Hours

July 2017 - December 2020

Next Steps

Schedule a date in July for a Park Board tour of the site

Draft proposal to turn site into a monarch butterfly mini-park that would continue to be maintained by the neighborhood