



# Agenda

## Minnetonka Park Board

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 7 p.m.  
Minnetonka Community Center—Council Chambers

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1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Elliot Berman
  - \_\_\_\_\_ David Ingraham
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Korey Beyersdorf
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Ben Jacobs
  - \_\_\_\_\_ James Durbin
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Katie Semersky
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Chris Gabler
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Chris Walick
3. Reports from Staff
4. Approval of Minutes
  - A) October 6, 2021
  - B) November 3, 2021
5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda
6. Special Matters
7. Business Items
  - A) Natural Resources Overview
  - B) Natural Resources Master Plan
  - C) POST Plan - System Plan Goals & Initiatives (DRAFT)
8. Park Board Member Reports
9. Information Items
10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items
11. Adjournment

### Board Vision:

A city with outstanding parks and recreational opportunities within a valued natural environment.

### Board Mission:

The mission of the Minnetonka Parks & Recreation Board is to proactively advise the city council, in ways that will:

- Protect & enhance Minnetonka's natural environment
- Promote quality recreation opportunities and facilities
- Provide a forum for citizens interested in our parks, trails, athletic fields and open space.



**Minutes  
Minnetonka Park Board  
Wednesday, October 6, 2021**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

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

Staff members in attendance: Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

**3. Reports from Staff**

Kelly O'Dea, Recreation Director reported there was an addendum.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 1, 2021 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

**5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda**

There were none.

**6. Special Matters**

There were none.

**7. Business Items**

**A. POST Plan draft Mission Statement and Guiding Principles**

Sara Woeste, Assistant Director gave the staff report. Park board members gave feedback.

**The Mission statement and guiding principles – draft:**

Durbin states that community engagement doesn't belong in the mission statement but it belongs somewhere else.

Woeste replied that there is some talk about community engagement in the guiding principles. There was one guiding principle that talked about diverse communities and making sure to reach those that aren't always reached out to. Woeste thought there might be language that the board may want to add regarding engaging neighbors deeper into

the POST Plan itself. Woeste added that there were comments about adding the language about nature-based activities and not just recreational oriented activities.

Jacobs thought if you included that in there, then this section would be good.

Semersky asked how they want Minnetonka to be different than other surrounding communities. She questioned if the mission statement says how they want to lead or be different than other surrounding communities. She suggested adding a statement in the mission statement about what they want to lead in.

Durbin asked Semersky what she wants to lead in.

Semersky responded that a memorable quote from the last meeting was that we don't want to be good, we want to be great. When she reads that statement, multiple suburbs come to her mind.

Berman said reading this draft POST Plan mission statement plus the suggested changes, what really stands out to him is restoring and enhancing our unique natural amenities. He gave an example of the creek this summer and how it was not at a level for us to use it so we can't preserve that anymore, we have to restore something like that. There is probably many more examples throughout Minnetonka of things that are past preserving and we could re-enhance or restore.

Gabler thinks the mission statement is too long. He thinks they could shorten it and have it still say the same things. It would probably have more impact because people could remember it.

Durbin asked if the mission statement was drawn from the Minnetonka Park Board's mission statement because they should have to align somewhere. He thought maybe there was a compromise between brevity so people know the mission statement and not leaving anything out of it. They should know our mission statement really well and that is a lot to memorize.

Woeste replied the park board's mission and this one are different but they should somewhat reflect each other.

Gabler used to write a lot of mission statements and said that they should be simple. The guiding principles is where there should be more details.

Durbin supports what Gabler is saying about keeping the mission statement shorter but providing more details in the guiding principles.

Woeste thought that was helpful. On one hand we are hearing make it shorter and on the other hand we have to add a few things so there is a challenge there. One example is making the sentence shorter, "the parks system shall enhance the quality of life for all residents, workers and visitors." That could get shortened to say, "by making the park accessible." What we were trying to address is being inclusive to not only the residents but also to visitors and anyone that comes to our park system. That is one way to make it shorter but it may look less inclusive. To go back to the nature-based activities, there was feedback that was kind of across the board. Should we get more specific and add nature-based or should we say, "providing activities" so it isn't geared towards either one.

Walick views mission statements as staying pretty general and then addressing things maybe in the guiding principles. He feels like cleaning up language to make things a little more readable is always good. Overall, the content is solid because it does hit on those broad areas which are divided up.

**Guiding Principles: Advance Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency**

Jacobs likes adding in the word restore. He doesn't know about taking out the word protect though or keeping all three words but he thinks restoration is important.

Semersky asked if the reason why restore wasn't included was not because it might have a negative connotation but because it is said so many times in these meetings.

Woeste said there was no specific conversation about leaving it out. It is a good suggestion if the board would like to see it in there.

Semersky's assumption is that the word funding doesn't belong in the guiding principles necessarily. She can see the point that is being made by the feedback but it is probably intended to be in another place in the plan.

Woeste said as we move forward, there will be goals and recommendations and that perhaps would be more fitting there.

Semersky agreed.

Durbin was trying to think of what we have done for these things while he has been on the board for the past few years. He asked staff to provide an example of what they have done to promote environmental resilience throughout the park system to address the effects of climate change.

Woeste is going to turn this question over to Natural Resources Manager, Leslie Yetka. Also, she asked Yetka to address the last bullet regarding support for the city's Natural Resources Master Plan.

Yetka said a good example of something that we do often times and talk about a lot is habitat restoration and thinking about making sure we have a diverse amount of species on the landscape; think of trees or putting in pollinator plantings. When we have a diversity of species, think of a woodland and if you have all the same species and there is an event such as a flood or a storm or something comes through and wipes it all out, that is a less resilient community type. In all of the activities we do in restoring the habitat and in removing invasive species, she would say that is an example of environmental resilience our park systems. One reason is to restore a habitat to something that was historically there but another reason since climate change and the effects of climate change are becoming more prevalent, the added benefit of doing what we already do is that it is more resilient to those changes in climate. The second point Woeste mentioned was regarding the Natural Resources Master Plan. Staff is currently putting together the draft chapters of that plan and it will be made available to the public through Minnetonka Matters for review. There will also be a draft document for review at the November meeting. That will have its own goals and objectives specifically related to habitat



restoration and protection of our natural areas and our high quality natural areas within our park system.

Woeste said the only comments she was hearing on this page is to add the word restore.

**Provide Connections to Parks and Trails:**

Durbin asked what bullet number three means, “improve accessibility to park facilities and programs by reducing physical and financial barriers.”

Woeste thought they were looking at any time we build anything now, we are looking at any type of physical barriers. It could be looking at what the financial barriers are as we look to connect trails, parks or getting people there. This could also be program-based and looking at how we can get more people who can't financially afford to be in a soccer league. We want to make sure there aren't any barriers for people participating in our parks. We already do a good job on that but we are always looking for new ways to get away from financial barriers. One issue is always transportation and that is a really hard one to tackle. If people can't afford to get themselves to a park or program, long-term we could look at transit. One thing we looked at when we did our inventory assessment was the lack of transit stops at some of the parks. Some of the bigger parks you can take a bus to but not every park. As we build a new park at Ridgedale Commons, we hope there is a Metro Transit stop there.

Beyersdorf said that kind of goes along with promoting and advertising park programs and events. One financial barrier is that people don't realize that there is access to scholarship funds but it may allow people with financial issues to be able to participate. She thinks that is something that would be really helpful.

Woeste said that would be the fifth bullet where they talk about promoting and advertising. How can we advertise to some communities that are telling us that they don't know about our programs? Yes, that is a challenge for us and we need to address it. As a city as a whole, just trying to figure out better ways to do that. An example would be creating marketing in other languages.

Berman said he is looking at the last bullet point, increase connectivity to neighboring communities in Minnetonka. He asked if we should make that more narrow by saying who should do that. Such as, board members talking to other board members of other cities to set up programs together or should staff communicate with other staff to connect to those neighborhoods.

Woeste responded that there are two ways to read that. There is physical connectivity which she thinks is what we were focusing on here as we look to put a Three Rivers trail from Plymouth to Eden Prairie and from Wayzata into Minnetonka. That is a different angle if you want to discuss it.

Durbin commented that it is both. We have Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation and we do that outreach. Sometimes having things vague is good and it allows people to interpret and move in a direction that makes sense.

Woeste commented that these are guiding principles that the board and a future board is going to use to make decisions moving forward.

Gabler added that if you get too specific you end up in that trick box of “well you said you are going to do that.” That kind of hamstringing everybody such as staff, park board, even city council moving forward if we get too specific.

**Promote Community Health and Wellness:**

Walick said looking at the first one, it states to support mental health and wellbeing but could it state mental and physical health. Because you address mental health specifically, throwing physical in there would encompass that.

**Promote Equity and Inclusion:**

Semersky asked while staff was writing these, if they found overlap between the connections guiding principle and this one.

Woeste replied that there are some things that overlap. Some things from this section are sprinkled throughout all of the language but it was a good stand-alone section to have as well.

Durbin wanted clarification of what “prioritize equity throughout the parks, open space and trail system to support all users celebrate diversity and embrace inclusiveness” means. He wondered how they would take that as a guiding principle and what that actually means for something they would work on.

Woeste thinks as we make decisions that we need to prioritize. An example, let’s say we are making a decision about a skateboarding park, we need to know if we are bringing in the right people to make decisions and if we have heard from the broad audience. As a whole, are we making decisions to provide amenities and features throughout our system that meet a variety of needs? You can kind of take these and look at them in different ways and use them in different ways.

Durbin responded that his takeaway of this is that if a group comes in and they want to do something, they should be very open and take in all viewpoints. They should try to think of everyone in Minnetonka and do what is right for everybody.

Woeste replied that it is embrace inclusiveness. Are we building, maintaining, and providing amenities or features that are inclusive when we make decisions. She thinks we all want to be doing that and hearing all voices.

Gabler would get rid of that bullet point all together mainly because he still doesn’t understand it even though she explained it. We do celebrate diversity so are we talking about the citizenry of Minnetonka because you get parts of Minnetonka where it’s a different demographic. What they want in a park is going to be different than maybe what somebody else wants in another part of the city which is a different demographic. Do we include those in both or what do we do? He struggles with that bullet point because he doesn’t know what it means.

Woeste thinks it is important to state that we support all users, especially as we diversify and we have user groups in the park that don’t feel welcome. That is one argument to why we should keep that.

Durbin asked if we could come up with something else. After Gabler's explanation, it should be clear but you could take that in any direction.

Gabler said he would use that line, "we support all users."

Durbin asked if we could come up with maybe potential edits to how Woeste explained it, rather than those words. He kind of understands Gabler and it should be clearer than mud and state what it needs to state. You could take this any direction in the world and he isn't sure next year he is going to remember what direction we need to take with this.

Woeste asked if we are thinking something simpler, for instance instead of using "prioritize equity", we can say "support all park and program users and embrace inclusiveness." It says that we as a board, a park system and as staff want to be inclusive to all.

Durbin said that it basically says that they listen and care without actually saying that.

Walick added that he knows equity is a word that's out there more now but he thinks it is important to have that in there because it shows more forward movement and intentionality. You are actually showing forward movement and consideration with things you may not have thought about before. It is ok that it is unclear because it's more of a way of thinking than a series of bullet points. We are putting it out there that when we make decisions, we are going to consider this. We don't know what we are going to consider but we kind of have a general idea of what it is, what we need to look for and the questions that we need to ask. You can't have all those questions listed in here. He thinks it is something to strive for and he thinks it is important to have in there so he wants to keep it.

Durbin knew what Walick was saying and he thinks it is a valuable comment, he just doesn't know if it could be written clearer. He gets equity and he believes in it. Let's say we have park "x" and some people want to do activity "y" and some people want to just stand around and do "z". How do you make that so this park can be enjoyed by different diverse groups and where would you put the funding? That is very important and is something we do as a park board. He is just a little confused on the language.

Semersky asked if we strive for a balanced system within what you are explaining.

Durbin said he thinks our goal is that they want everybody to feel comfortable and welcomed to use our parks. Everybody should want to go there to do something and there should be a little bit for everybody to enjoy there. We should be able to design our parks or trails so everybody has that feeling of being welcomed. He thinks that is what it is trying to say.

Beyesdorf said maybe the word prioritize could be changed to something a little lighter. Maybe it is something like consider equity or something saying that we are thinking about it. When it says prioritize, it seems like we are making it our top priority. However, she thinks we are trying to say that we are always going to keep it in the conversations. Maybe just changing the wording of that would soften it a little bit.

Woeste said maybe promote instead.

Gabler thought that every park is a little different and is probably going to cater to a different demographic. He just doesn't know how we would measure that. How do you try and measure success?

Durbin answered that he doesn't know. It is very ambiguous and thinking of our entire park system, we kind of balance that ambiguity throughout. You can't quantitate it.

Berman explained that equity is different than equality. Equality is balance where equity is going to underserved communities and bringing them back up to where served communities have been. For communities that feel like they haven't been promoted to in the past, making sure extra resources go there to make sure that they are brought to where everybody else currently is; not making them anymore special but making sure that we are actually reaching them in that moment and bringing them to the same level. It's programs in the past that haven't been served that have asked for funding, not because they are worse than any other program but just because maybe the board at that time or whoever was in charge didn't see any value in that; now bringing value to that because they are community and they are members. He thinks it is very important for us to be careful with that, specifically that bullet point as a whole and especially the word equity. As a fully white presenting board, if equity gets cut out, it doesn't look great.

Walick thinks we shouldn't leave it in solely for optics, he thinks it needs to be something we believe in. He also wants to say this discussion has been good but this is a guiding principles plan and they shouldn't get caught up too much in the details on how they are going to do this. There will be people who have recommendations and then we'll break it down. This is something that we as a park board should strive for and that is why he thinks it is super important to keep it in.

Gabler thinks this is a great conversation because everyone is going to read things differently based on our age differences. He is really glad Berman chimed in on that because part of our biggest demographic is age. He thinks some of this kind of goes into the next bullet point as well. It highlights an area of confusion that we are going to have all throughout because you and I will look at something and read it totally different based on our lives.

Woeste said she thinks there is still a little disagreement about prioritize or promote or changing that word. She thinks what Berman is saying is that we should prioritize equity. An example, let's say there is a park in a maybe less affluent neighborhood and we don't hear from those neighbors so much. We need to make sure that we have our eye on parks that are not in the rich neighborhoods or don't get as much attention.

Durbin says the third bullet really hits home of how it is done. He likes to think two steps forward of how we are going to implement things. He doesn't want to just come up with these lovely phrases and then it is just word salad. If they are going to be coming up with these guiding principles, how do they as a park board take this and make it an action. How can we work with the staff and actually do this? If we don't all agree or understand exactly what we are supposed to do with that bullet than that bullet is not as strong. That is why he wants to discuss it.

Woeste doesn't think that every decision you make is going to be able to run through every one of these and check them off. Guiding principles will fit in some of the boxes but

you aren't going to be able to go through this for every decision you make and be able to say it checks all boxes.

Beyersdorf went back to the third bullet point where it is talking about community engagement and future park planning. Maybe going back to that second point and bringing it back to current, such as relooking at current parks that we have. Otherwise, making sure we are going back and making sure we are including everyone in what we currently have available.

Durbin said it's almost like you could combine those two bullets. Why are you expanding community engagement to traditionally underrepresented groups? Are you doing that because you want to promote or prioritize equity? They are so connected they could almost be the same bullet.

Walick added that the third one is park planning and he thinks the second one is more utilizing the parks.

Durbin didn't understand what Walick was saying.

Walick explained that the second one is expanding equitable use and outreach to those existing parks. Then the third one is the planning process for those in the future.

Gabler said you could add the word current so it reads, "expand community engagements in current and future park planning."

Durbin said there might be some way of getting the same meaning with less words combining them. It is something to think about. He thinks the board is going to do this no matter if it is written or not, however, as a formal plan we probably want to make sure it is clear and that is what we are going to do.

Berman questioned the fact that we've been using this term word salad and we didn't want it in the mission statement and now we are talking about how there are too many words here so he wondered where that expansive information will be.

Woeste responded that we were hearing that the mission statement should be a little more concise and the details should be within the guiding principles and in the bullets.

Berman asked if we should expand here.

Woeste said the entire plan will go into more details. Some people like their information differently and you all are going to have a little different opinion on how you want to see this. The city has a plain language style that staff tries to write in when we communicate to the public. There needs to be some details in here but it should also be concise too. What she is hearing is that the second bullet is important, however, there may be a little confusion about prioritizing equity and maybe it should be promote. We'll bring that one back. She doesn't know if that should go away, but she thinks it is important even if we think it is a little bit repetitive with the next one. The one after it is a little more focused just on community engagement for future planning. We could include current or future planning.

Semersky said words are really powerful and the words diversity, equity and inclusion should all come through in these guiding principles. It is part of our city plan, and is part of many things in city government right now.

Woeste added that even if there isn't a perfect definition on what that will mean or how you are going to use it, it is a good lens to look through as you make decisions.

**Support Excellence and Innovation:**

Berman thinks there is some good added language in the fifth bullet point, explore opportunities for partnerships to help fund and restore parks. He would say to help restore park space, open space and trail in high quality natural areas, in addition to maintaining facilities, programs and events.

Berman added that there are so many great places like Hennepin County to partner with to restore our parks and natural areas. To put that in there as a priority would be great.

Gabler said you have a great track record with doing that with pickleball courts and with the mountain bike trail. Those were really good public/private partnerships and it was well done.

Durbin commented that the restoration, invasive species restoration is restoring the parks. He thinks that is definitely a spot to put that word because that is what we are doing. In the last few years, we have taken that very far in the amount of volunteers that are working to get rid of invasive species and really protect the parks. He likes the word protect too but he doesn't know if we need to keep that one in there because restore is the word we've been using. He agrees with Berman that it is a solid spot for that and we will probably expand that in the next five to ten years.

Gabler thinks the last bullet point is excellent.

Semersky likes the last bullet that the friends group wrote. She was thinking about what innovation is and what it means to them. The nirvana in her mind is wow, how can we approach changes so that we are adding amenities and protecting and preserving at the same time.

Durbin thinks we have done that in practice too when designing a new park. They try to think about restoration, preservation and even with Lone Lake, they've done things with pickleball and bike trails and now doing restoration and protecting bee habitats. Ten years ago we weren't talking about bee habitats but we are flexible to be able to do that.

Woeste mentioned to Semersky that she talked about being leaders in the mission statement and she thought some of that language could come out such as being innovators in the guiding principles. She doesn't know if it will come out in the mission statement as they try to make it more concise but she thinks it could come out in something like the guiding principles.

Durbin said the city is signatory to a few things such as the butterfly proclamation. He thinks that maybe is where we could put that leadership. Maybe they can lead by doing those things.

Gabler asked if we could rearrange the order of the guiding principles.

Woeste replied yes, they are in no particular order.

Gabler thought when people look at the guiding principles, one is going to be the first thing, then two and so on. If people read it that way, would it make sense to reorder the guidelines especially when this one deals with innovation and leadership?

Woeste replied that it kind of wraps it up as well. She asked Semersky for clarification on if she liked the language about innovation and if she liked the entire statement that they added about ensuring that nature spaces are enhanced not to compromise in the process. She is just wondering if she is looking more at being innovative in general or specifically.

Semersky liked how it touches on our dichotomy challenge that we often have. The language doesn't have to be this strong. This is worded as nirvana, as she said, so it doesn't have to be not compromised ever. Enhanced, protected or maintained you could change a little bit.

Woeste said she is seeing and hearing that people like the language of being innovative as we make decisions. She was just wondering of the entirety of that bullet that was proposed.

Gabler doesn't like the last part of it because he thinks it locks us in and it also sets precedent that the Friends of Minnetonka Parks are great. It suggests that we need friends, but we need people to take action in things and we need them to suggest and not to dictate is the way he would look at it. He loved the first part of it but he is not crazy about the last part. While ensuring nature space from there, he gets a little concerned because you never know, you lose flexibility then.

Walick added that he reads enhanced, not comprised in the process and that can be interpreted in many ways. Legally that seems like a rocky area to cross. He likes the innovative part but maybe that second half can be changed or softened.

Durbin commented that the bullet they want added to the POST Plan, maybe they could add innovative opportunities for partnerships to fund and restore. It seemed like they are almost rewording that bullet in their own language. He's not sure if we need the word innovative because that is what they do.

Woeste pointed out that she is hearing that some people want to show they are being innovative and are being leaders in all of their decision making. So maybe make that a little broader or perhaps work it into one of the other bullets?

Beyersdorf said you can work it into the bullet point the Friends created, "Create innovative approaches to parks, open spaces and trails" then add to provide a variety of new or improved, etc...from the first bullet.

Woeste asked where she was going to add innovative.

Beyersdorf explained that you can take the beginning of what the Friends of Minnetonka Parks added, "Create innovative approaches to parks, and open spaces and trails" and

then add part of the first bullet and say, “to provide a variety of new or improved active and passive parks and programs that are accessible to all park users.” It just combines the two.

Woeste asked for more feedback.

Durbin said when he was talking about leadership and the signatories, he doesn't think this would be the right section to put that. If we are talking about leadership and what the park board wanted to lead on, he doesn't think this is the spot.

Woeste was happy to hear they aren't thinking staff was way off or that there was a lot of work to do on this. We will bring this back to the technical advisory committee that we meet with internally as we are trying to come up with all of our language for the document. It's still going to be in draft form when you see it in November. You are not going to approve this plan until January next year so she thinks this is a nice way for you to have some good conversations. That way we don't have to do it all at once and also the community has time to give feedback throughout the process and not all at once when we have the final draft form. We will likely look at where we are headed for goals and recommendations in the document at the next meeting and get some feedback on that and then continue to come back with information throughout the process.

## **8. Park Board Member Reports**

Walick said the open house yesterday was awesome and his kids had a great time. They loved the glowing sticks and fireworks.

Semersky said her family had a tremendous time as well. They loved the farmer's market and music concerts. She appreciated that the park and recreation department provides family activities that are free and accessible to everyone. They aren't free for the city and you have to budget for them. They are very expensive but she likes that you sprinkled them in throughout the seasons; some free activities that seem to be really well attended and enjoyed by families.

Gabler was in Chicago at the beginning of the month and saw a skateboard park. It was part of Grant Park and must've been at least a half mile long. It was more than what we could ever do because I don't think we have the turf but it was really cool. He believes the day he was there it was nice out and there must've been 300-400 people using the facilities. He saw bikes, skateboards and scooters. The youngest person he saw might've been five or six years old and then he saw a guy older than him.

Gabler also commented that everyone at the meeting was so smart and he learns something every time he is there. When they have a discussion like that, that is the reason why he wanted to be on the park board. He thought that was awesome and he learned a lot.

Durbin complimented the tennis courts because many of them have been resurfaced and are awesome. When tennis courts are in disrepair nobody uses them but when they are new and shiny, more people use them. One thing that he noticed is that when people aren't



playing tennis, people are using these as mini skateboard parks. They weren't using them when they were torn up but now you see people using them. There is this silent demand that he looks forward to talking more about regarding skateboard parks. He is thinking that if we build it, they will come. People are really innovative and use them for skateboarding, playing fetch with their dogs or doing yoga. He has played tennis on them with his son and they are gorgeous. That was money well spent and hopefully we can keep those in really good shape in coming years.

## 9. Information Items

### Robinwood Park

O'Dea gave the report.

### Oric Avenue Right of Way

O'Dea gave the report.

### Futsal Court

O'Dea gave the report.

### Ridgedale Commons

O'Dea gave the report.

Durbin asked when Ridgedale commons is scheduled to be completed.

O'Dea said we are hoping fall of 2022.

## 10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

## 11. Adjournment

Jacobs moved, Durbin seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathy Kline*

Kathy Kline  
Recreation Administrative Coordinator



**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the  
Minnetonka Park Board and City Council  
Wednesday, November 3, 2021**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

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

Council Members Present: Mayor Brad Wiersum, Deb Calvert, Kissy Coakley, Brian Kirk, Rebecca Schack, Bradley Schaeppi, Excused: Susan Carter.

Staff members in attendance: Jeff Dulac, Mike Funk, Corrine Heine, Jesse Izquierdo, Kathy Kline, Will Manchester, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

Gabler called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

O'Dea announced there was an addendum and that audio recording was taking place.

**3. Business Items**

**A. Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Plan Update**

Assistant Recreation Director, Sara Woeste gave the staff report.

Principal, Jeff McMenimen and Landscape Architect, Rachel Blaseg from Damon Farber Landscape Architects gave a presentation that included the following:

1. Needs assessment – key takeaways
  - A. Community engagement summary
    - o Key takeaways
  - B. Trends
  - C. System components and condition
    - o Park audit and NRPA key takeaways
2. Draft mission and guiding principles

McMenimen asked for any questions regarding the community engagement summary and there were none. They continued to talk about trends and he asked for questions.

Calvert commented about the trend moving away from organized team sports. She questioned if COVID-19 exacerbated that or if it was a trend that has been happening longer than that.

McMenimen responded that it is a longer trend than COVID-19.

Wiersum asked if there was any transition to different sports such as from baseball to soccer or if it was a general decline. He was curious if it was certain sports declining whereas others are staying or growing.

McMenimen replied that you will see as our communities diversify, we are becoming more culturally and ethnically/racially diverse; the programs and facilities are changing as well. There are other sports that are gaining in popularity like soccer. Lacrosse is the fastest growing sport in high school across America right now.

Wiersum added that he was at the Al-Amaan Center a few years ago and a gentleman made a point of talking to him about cricket.

Blaseg commented that one of the things they heard was people wanting more multi-use fields. They specifically heard that at the Al-Amaan Center.

McMenimen talked about changing demographics.

Blaseg talked about the park audits and the NRPA metrics audit that was conducted.

Wiersum asked how peer communities was defined.

McMenimen responded that those peer communities are defined through the NRPA metrics audit. They are comparing Minnetonka to communities across America that are similar in population, household income and demographics.

Wiersum mentioned that Minnetonka has 53 parks and 24 acres per thousand residents. Minnetonka's population is around 53,000 so that means there is a park for every 1,000 residents. He asked how that compares with peer communities in terms of number of parks per thousand.

McMenimen responded that he would have to search the NRPA metrics results for an answer. However, he thinks Minnetonka has a fair share of parks.

Blaseg added that according to the national standards it is quite a bit higher, however, Minnetonka is similar to neighboring communities such as Eden Prairie and Chanhassen.

Wiersum asked if that is acreage or actual numbers of parks.

Blaseg responded acreage.

Wiersum thinks about the comparison to Eden Prairie and Chanhassen. Minnetonka is a fully developed community, whereas, both of those communities have a lot of open space so he feels like the dynamics change a little bit.

McMenimen said that the number of parks is important and their distribution across community is important. A community wants to try and provide a park within a quarter of a mile to every home in the community.

Blaseg added that there is a high amount of undeveloped land within those parklands too.

McMenimen went through the draft mission statement and guiding principles. He explained that a lot of the guiding principles were supported by all of the input they received from the community in the early part of this planning process. They are working through the system plan recommendations now and they will provide more support on how you actually achieve those guiding principles.

Gabler looked at the emerging trends and he is trying to figure out how to define something as a trend or a fad. He asked how you maintain flexibility if you put resources into something in a park that people may find interesting for only a year such as ninja warrior courses.

McMenimen answered that trends and fads are similar but trends probably last longer than a fad. The ninja warrior park was something that came out of the community input survey and he isn't sure if it is a trend or not.

Blaseg said ninja warrior parks have been wildly successful in neighboring communities but she isn't sure how long that is going to last. Keep in mind flexibility as you design future spaces. As things age, different things come in. Think about emerging trends and how you might be able to use existing areas as they need to be repurposed.

McMenimen added that more multi-use or multi-functional facilities are a trend. He advised them to dial into the community for input on what their desires are. Nationally and locally, they have heard the desire for climbing walls, ninja parks and skateboard parks.

Schaeppi was trying to understand how the choices were presented to the community, such as anticipating true passive additional use of a park. He gave an example of Terrace Oaks Park in Burnsville, Minnesota. A few community members brought him there and it was previously a heavily forested area with a lot of buckthorn. The buckthorn was removed and it is now used differently. He sees Minnetonka also having these large open areas and as we think of these ideas, he wanted to know how the community engagement worked with giving options as a more improved ecological passive use in a park.

McMenimen replied that it was kind of a system wide set of input and recommendations. One of the things you will see in the systems plan recommendation is to prepare a master plan for individual parks in the future whether they are new parks or if you're proposing to improve facilities in an existing park or an open space. For instance, this does not provide a master plan for each of the 53 parks and open spaces in the community. Each park is very different so that is something that should be done at that time so it can be more location specific.

Woeste asked Schaeppi to clarify if he is asking if all of the natural areas will be assessed and how they will be used in the future.

Schaeppi replied that they will be making a lot of decisions based upon this very comprehensive data of what the community is telling us. They have a separate track of really looking at our natural resources parks and his observation is that some of what we are anticipating in our parks may not be in here. His concern is as it relates to programming and active versus passive recreation. For instance, the consultant's data mentioned about 69 percent support for natural areas for passive recreation and about 42 percent for parks with recreational amenities. He just wanted to make sure if they are

making decisions based upon the results of community engagement that it properly reflects what they are doing in a separate process.

Woeste commented that it is a master plan so any decisions going forward would go through the process. The consultants are going to tell staff that this is what they've heard from your whole system and now staff can say here are our priorities. Staff heard that people wanted a skate park and that natural areas and open spaces are very important to the public. However, staff isn't going to put in a skate park in our natural areas. Staff also heard that we need to maybe reprioritize their active areas. For example, maybe look at an existing ice rink and refocus something there.. We are going to go through the process and evaluate the spaces that we are looking at. The key thing is multi-use space and repurposing and reimagining areas that are already active spaces; not going into our natural areas that we know are high quality and an importance to our community.

Schack stated that surveys tend to get traction with certain folks and they may not reflect a majority of the community, however, they are the ones that participate. There is a page on diversity and inclusion but what we are hearing in the survey isn't going to hit on what those needs are. As this is being worked on, space should be left for what we don't know. For instance, council has been hearing from a small group of folks that would really like an accessible playground structure for kids with differing abilities. That is never going to get traction like a group such as MORC that has hundreds of people supporting it. She is conscience of keeping in mind to honor this whole page that we have as our guiding principles. She doesn't want people to get so much tunnel vision on the majority that we don't honor what people who don't have as strong of a voice need to meet their needs. Also, maybe there are people that aren't even part of the community yet but we are looking to attract them.

Ingraham said having sat through the advisory committee meetings, it was really important that the concepts that were offered by the community are ideas. However, he doesn't believe most of them are ever going to be actionable. He wouldn't want people getting excited about all of these amenities and then wonder where all the money is going to come from. He thinks they have to pick and choose which ones are going to do the most good and hopefully manage people's expectations on both sides.

McMenimen added that they also understood that they don't get the full spectrum of people in your community participating in a survey. Email blasts were sent out but they also went out into the community to get younger people's perspectives. They went to Shady Oak Beach and conducted a pop-up event and got input that they never would get in a survey. They have to remember that demographic is what they are planning for in a long range plan. It is really important to reach out and engage with as many people as possible. Also, you have to continually engage as long as you are stewarding this plan throughout the future. You will see the importance of engaging with everybody in the community whenever you are doing a new park master plan.

Wiersum commented that there is a lot of art involved in designing parks and amenities. If we just use a survey and we need to have a threshold to do something, then we wouldn't do a lot of things. Even if we don't meet a threshold, there are people who will really advocate for it. He thinks there is the art in terms of assessing what the ideas are and then what the critical mass necessary is for the city to invest without overinvesting in things. Wiersum also mentioned that once you do something and build infrastructure, it is really hard to get rid of it because there will be advocates.

Calvert thinks Shack's comment is really on point. One thing she thought was interesting was the page about natural habitat and what people were or weren't concerned with. What struck her is that people have ideas about what is going on in the city and they might not know the actual condition or the actual importance of something; it's just a feeling they have. She thinks it is really important to sort of pick through the actual scientific data and not just people's perceptions of what they should be concerned about but also taking their concerns into consideration. Calvert wondered what some of the comments were about cultural differences or cultural practices prohibiting people from interacting in our parks. Generally this is filtered into a sort of a generalized statement but is there a way for them to come up with specific ways to address the concerns.

Blaseg replied that one example is being able to promote existing programming and parks to the entire community because some people don't know that they exist. Another example is areas for community gatherings. At the Al-Amaan Center, they heard that they will go to neighboring communities to have larger group gatherings just because it is more supported at other parks than it is within Minnetonka.

McMenimen added that the people at Al-Amaan said it would be great if Minnetonka had a park where they could have a couple of hundred people gather for an event or community gathering. Other suggestions they heard were more picnic shelters, more seating areas and actual cooking facilities like a kitchen in a park facility.

Coakley was glad that this was being discussed tonight because these are some of the things she has been talking about since being on the council, such as creating programming that isn't typically offered in Minnetonka. She has lived here for a long time and she still struggles with trying to find programming. When she thinks about clay pot making or instrumental lessons she thinks of community centers. Those are at a community level which are not high priced fees that some BIPOC folks can't afford. She is glad we are talking about programming and services that we could provide in our city. It is really important especially when discussing the times we are in and how our city is becoming more diverse. We have to constantly keep that on our mind because everybody can't afford all the different programs that we have here because of the fees.

Kirk said at his day job he just got done spending a fair amount of time trying to find out why the BIPOC community is not accessing outdoor recreational activities. Two resources that they came across were the Three Rivers Park District and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Department. Both have done extensive studies on why outdoor recreation is difficult to access for people of color. It would be nice to try and get some specific resources if we want to dig into this reason of why and what they can do to make changes in how we program. This would include what is offered, how it is scheduled and what it costs.

Kirk wanted to comment on Schaeppi's previous remark regarding passive versus active recreation. He thinks about 10-15 years ago, people saw the environmental impacts differently in our city. Now we have a lot more focus thanks to the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and the Sustainability Commission. He thinks there are some examples across the city where we need to figure out the definition of passive vs active and clearly map it out so that our community knows. He gave an example of Big Willow being a passive park and another example about Purgatory Park and whether a certain area should have natural resources or if it is a dog run area. His point was that they have to make a

decision on what areas are and call it out so people know what it is and aren't arguing about it. He thinks that clarity and verbal word transparency are important as we move forward.

Durbin added that he has noticed since being on the park board that everybody wants to use the parks and there is a higher demand. There are a lot of people that want to use them for active recreation and there is just as strong input for natural resources and passive use. The balance is quite hard and he thinks what Kirk just said is a very fascinating problem and he wonders how they can try to manage that. Also, regarding equity and the people who don't contact the city or don't come to park board meetings, they may never consider things because it was never brought up. It's really hard to know what you don't know. There is a lot that everybody wants and it's quite challenging to figure out what we should do.

Gabler asked if we have a working definition of diversity, equity and inclusion because he thinks it means different things to different people. He's struggled with that because he doesn't know what it means sometimes.

Coakley replied to Gabler that the DEI task force is working on that right now because that is one of the things that they also struggle with.

Calvert thought back to comments she has received over the last several months about the need for accessibility at parks. She thinks about friends that are differently abled and she also thinks about the people that have written in. Some people have mentioned that they don't access their neighborhood parks because of off-leashed dogs. They've been bitten or their dog that was on a leash was attacked. In regards to Kirk's comment about deciding what we are doing, she thinks it is really important and they should take those comments really seriously. She thinks that we have to be cognizant and that it is almost an empathy thing. You need to be able to imagine what people need and not necessarily hear from them sometimes. We know there are people who are differently abled in our community, we know there are differently abled children that need to be able to get on a swing and we know there are people that would like to take their dog somewhere safe. She thinks we do have to be courageous and start making some really difficult decisions about how we are using some of our parks. We also need to realize that even if we turn a park into a dog park that it doesn't mean that it is no longer an actual natural resource and some biodiversity can't be maintained there. She totally agrees with needing a better definition about what is active and what is passive. She thinks we saw that in the battle over the mountain bike trail at Lone Lake Park. We have several large parks that are considered preserves and we should make sure we honor and better define what a preserve is and note what we are preserving and how. If we have to change what we are doing or change what the park is, we can make those decisions. However, she thinks definitions are really important so we know what we are dealing with.

## B. Natural Resources Master Plan Update

Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager gave the report.

Fred Rozumaski, Landscape Architect from Barr Engineering gave a presentation on the following:

- Background
- Existing conditions

- Top five 'Grand Challenges' for managing natural resources in Minnetonka
  - Issues
  - Strategies
- Feedback received to date
- Next Steps

Yetka asked for questions.

Wiersum appreciated the compliments on our tree sale made by the consultant. He thinks our tree sale is a great program, however, he would like it to be bigger. He is really proud of the fact that we have around 58 percent tree coverage. He used to own a cabin in Bayfield, WI and every year at their annual meeting they got free seedlings of native plants. He has a Tamarack tree that was a foot long seedling and is now 20 feet tall. As he thinks about wanting us to plant more trees, if the city had a program of very low cost or free seedlings maybe we could make those available. He has this vision that if we did that, maybe we could keep track of exactly how many trees are cut down in Minnetonka every year and make sure that we plant that many every year. We don't have to retain every tree to retain our 58 percent cover, but at the same time he thinks we would be breaking even in terms of tree removal and tree additions. He's just not sure the seedlings would do well in this area.

Rozumaski said he thinks that is a great idea. Especially with equity issues, seedlings are much less expensive. One thing to consider is they would have to be protected because deer, rabbits and mice are going to chew on them. The ones you really want are the ones they love to eat.

Calvert noted that her husband is a retired wildland firefighter and did control burns a lot, which were mentioned in the packet. Some of the invasive species in the wetlands are easy to get rid of if you can do a control burn, it helps the pH in certain kinds of wetlands. They were at Hilloway Park and he would not feel comfortable doing a controlled burn there because of the proximity to structures, but it was something that was talked about in the natural resources plan. She questioned if that is something we are planning on doing because it is kind of exciting. It is definitely a restorative process that is missing along with larger animals that would've contributed by trampling on it.

Yetka answered that it fits with their restoration goals and if it is appropriate for that habitat and habitat type at specific parks then they would like to use it. There are some limitations in terms of timing, weather and getting crews to be able to actually do the burns. We have to work with the fire department and with the residents that are adjacent so there are always hurdles that we have to jump over. Rozumaski mentioned this idea of transitioning some degraded woodland areas towards savanna, which is something staff is looking at doing and working on at the Cullen Nature Preserve. One idea is that fire will become a useful management tool that can basically do more than individual hands can.

Durbin commented that the tree sale takes place in the spring but he is ready to plant trees in the fall. When his daughter was in kindergarten, her teacher gave her a little seedling. Deer started chewing on it but he built a cage around it. She is now in sixth grade and the tree is almost 15 feet tall. He believes one way to get trees in the ground is to engage kids and give them seedlings. Parents will then find a place for this tree you



got for free. There are three school districts in Minnetonka and we can educate the kids. We have a natural resources person who loves to volunteer in the schools.

Yetka replied that their plan is to install or build a gravel bed nursery. There is an area identified but it is just the matter of constructing it. This will allow us to essentially produce our own stock. It would be a smaller stock than what you would see at the tree sale but it would allow us to have stock available all through the seasons so we can replace trees. For instance, if somebody loses trees to disease, we can offer replacements for that. We could also use it for maybe events where we want to engage kindergartners in planting. That is something we are working on now and we intend on offering smaller trees but more trees.

Durbin asked where they are going to put that.

Yetka answered that right now she believes there is an area identified on property we own by Minnetonka Middle School East, near the water treatment plant. It will be tended by us in Public Works but it won't be physically located at Public Works.

Calvert always thinks about ecosystems and that is what is really broken down. Ecosystems really rely on plant communities and not just trees. She really appreciated the analogy of it being sort of like a giant garden that needs tending. Some of the resident comments they received had to do with doing a wildlife inventory. She knows that we kind of have one but wondered about it. One interesting thing about this report is that it separated out for instance the water from the land and it is also interconnected. It talked about the flora but didn't include the fauna or aquatic because that is a separate thing, yet it all works together. The fauna has to do with how we have over browsing but we also have things that contribute to the survival by being present. She is just wondering how are we going to approach that as a city and if that was part of the plan.

Yetka replied that natural resources are a part of every square inch of our city in essence. In some way we have to kind of focus our efforts and make the most impact. This plan is really focused on restoring the habitats so plants, and the soil that supports the plants have the right species and structure of those communities. The fauna, the wildlife and the birds will come back. In the past, we haven't had the resources to do mammal surveys or formal bird surveys. We haven't felt that's where our efforts should be really spent because we know they are using the resources. The way to influence what is here is by the habitat piece. For instance, birds are going to come to a place that will support them in terms of food and nesting habitat. Instead of focusing on the birds themselves, staff is focusing on what they need to survive and thrive. In terms of the water piece, water is also like climate, it is everywhere and it shapes our landscapes. We can manage water in terms of vegetation and sort of that aquatic community but it is also really impacted by storm water, storm water runoff and storm water management. We have a whole water resources management plan for the city that also talks about water and water quality to really improve the aquatic habitats. This plan can't do it all so that water resource management plan can also influence the things we do and is an important plan that the city has.

Calvert commented that any savanna or prairie was like that because buffalo trampled on it, which does not happen anymore and is one reason why it is so hard to regenerate a prairie. How did the species that we have contribute or degrade? The regeneration part of it is not happening because we don't have the right species to help regenerate what is

there. We can build certain kinds of habitat for certain kinds of birds but when it comes to the whole ecosystem and the regeneration piece of it, she guesses that is where it becomes a giant garden and they kind of have to keep working on it. Regarding the earthworm issue, is there anything we can do to stop it once it is here?

Rozumaski said there is nothing we can do. There has been research on it and they are working on it. Lee Frelich, a Forester at the University of Minnesota who has done a lot of earthworm research promotes that it is controlling the deer population. He thinks the native plants would do ok if it was just the earthworm damage. The issue is having both the earthworm damage and the deer chewing on the plants. The best thing you can do is control the deer population at this point.

Wiersum commented that he lived in the south and knows what kudzu looks like. He doesn't want to see it here and wondered if there has been any evidence of that in Minnetonka or nearby.

Rozumaski said he has seen it nearby and around the metro area.

Wiersum asked him for a recommendation on how to deal with it.

Rozumaski answered that as soon as you see it, dig it out or treat it.

Wiersum asked if you use an herbicide, dig it out or burn it.

Rozumaski replied that with most of these plants, the best thing to do is to mow them during the growing season and apply an herbicide in the fall. Then it will pull the herbicide into the root and kill it.

Kirk said his question has to do with sort of the recovery of some of these areas and whether it is worth it. They took a tour of the Cullen Nature Preserve and talked about bringing back the oak savanna, which he thinks is a great goal but it requires cutting down a lot of trees in order to create it. It is an example of how we can maybe take a targeted area and make that kind of investment happen if we have the resources and the interest from volunteers to really make it sustainable. He wondered at what point do they need to turn our back a bit on what was or what could be and start to create habitat out of what is more sustainable. He asked if Yetka had any comments about how we are turning the corner and needing to diversify species in a way like trees that may not necessarily lend itself well to recreating habitat from pre-settlement.

Yetka answered that is something they struggle with internally. Are we trying to restore back to what was here historically or are we trying to restore to the future? Unfortunately, the answer is that it depends on the specific piece of land, the interest of the community and the interest in volunteers to maintain that type of habitat. We are going to continue to have climate change and invasive species coming in and there is going to be constant pressure on our landscapes that will not change. For instance, with Cullen Nature Preserve they want to try transitioning that to an oak savanna and staff knows it requires some trees being removed to get there. Ultimately, if that is in a manageable community type where we can burn, than that is something that we want to look towards. It is only going to be possible if the soils are going to support it and if the human capacity and labor can support it. It is something that we are always thinking about.

Rozumaski added that Appendix A has plans for each of the top priority parks. They have maps that show the existing play communities, ecological quality and the target plant community. In their professional opinion these could reasonably be restored. There is a strategy of where to start and how to move through it for those top priority parks.

Kirk asked how staff is responding to emails from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other comments that they have received regarding the community survey and how we are integrating some of those comments. He also questioned the influence of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks on this plan. He feels that there is an obligation as a councilmember to make sure we are clearly communicating that either these goals can't be met or they can be met and how we are going to move forward. He also asked for staff's perspective on how we are going to partner with them or if they will be treated any different than just another voice in the community.

Yetka talked about the public engagement that has happened so far, some comments staff has heard and their next steps in the process. The draft plan was put on the Minnetonka Matters website on October 22 and it will be up through November 19. This will be going to the park board as a draft in December. Staff hasn't gone through line item by line item of the comments yet to address each one but will do that when they start to finalize the draft. Staff has heard from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other community members that the goals are appropriate for this community and there doesn't seem to be any concerns or issues with them. There is an interest in including private land owners; recognizing that they play an important role. Moving into Appendix A, we start to dive into individual parks and sort of high level restoration masterplans. That is one place where we really hope to gain a lot of feedback from the friends groups who are very active in these parks. Staff also had an overarching sense that what they are dealing with are critical elements of our city and we need to be doing more and we need to be doing it faster. That is something that is in some way a policy decision, how fast do we want to go and how fast is the council wanting to accelerate some of the activities that we are proposing. Staff has also been hearing that this is too ambitious and there is no way to achieve all of it. Yetka explained that they are already doing almost everything in this plan to some degree. This plan acts as a guiding compass, focusing our efforts and making sure we are addressing the important pieces and the grand challenges that will impact our natural resources over the next 10-20 years. It also makes sure that we are actually putting our efforts and resources in the right places that we think are important. To answer Kirk's question, staff sees the Friends of Minnetonka Parks group as strong advocates and have been working behind the scenes with all of the individual friends groups for the different parks. Staff has been helping them host events such as the Buckthorn Blitzes. That takes prep time on our staff to help host those and make sure they are doing the projects and doing the work that aligns with our goals. The volunteer program structure that is kind of outlined in one of the Appendices in the plan is certainly a place where we see a huge roll for the friends groups and the Friends of Minnetonka Parks. Staff views them as sort of the eyes and ears and hands of implementing a lot of this work on public lands but we also recognize the influence that they have in the community with their neighbors and other community members. In regards to this plan in particular, we still have the ability through November 19 to receive comments and staff has talked to some of the people in the friends groups about this. Staff expects more comments and will take them into consideration and adapt the plan appropriately. Then moving forward, we do see them as a vehicle to help us achieve these goals so we would continue to work with them.

Kirk had a couple of requests. He said it would be helpful for him and others that communicates with the friends groups that when the report comes back if staff could articulate what areas have been influenced by those comments. Then if their comments are not appropriate, call it out so council and park board knows that it has been turned down. Kirk also was questioned by someone in a friends group about two meetings that were scheduled earlier in the year that specifically allowed feedback for this report but they never happened and weren't rescheduled. He asked staff to address that.

Yetka answered that back in January when staff initially described what the outreach plan and public engagement plan might be for developing this plan, we referenced the idea of potentially having one to two input sessions in the spring. It was also stated on there that it was dependent on the POST Plan public engagement process and timeline and that may influence what they do. One thing that we didn't have at the time was the Minnetonka Matters platform, which allows public input in different ways than a typical web-based platform. Staff chose to go to the park board in April, joined the POST Plan survey and used Minnetonka Matters to include questions related to natural resources. From the survey, they found out what was important to people, what their attitudes and beliefs were and also what they wanted to see happen. At the park board meeting, public comment was taken but she doesn't recall anyone attending the meeting. Currently there is opportunity for public engagement on Minnetonka Matters. This is a technical document and staff welcome's public input. In some ways she feels like it is easier to have something to react to and focus on than it is to adjust here and there with comments, interests and desires. Staff thought it was more efficient to have something for the public to react to versus starting at the ground and building it with them.

Kirk responded that the friends groups would love to have some greater interaction. Maybe having them come in and really explain their position would eliminate some of these emails going back and forth. He's also received feedback that some of the friends group didn't realize that this joint meeting wasn't going to be televised and were disappointed in that.

Ingraham asked if this was a public meeting and if they could attend.

Kirk added that they didn't realize it wasn't televised so due to COVID-19 they were at home waiting for it to come on.

Schaeppi said that we have this challenge of buckthorn and focusing on our public parks and also having these guidance documents such as the Natural Resource Plan. We are using all of our human resources in volunteers to do our best, however, it seems like things are growing faster than we can get to it. He asked as we get into the Appendices that talk about restoring certain parks and certain areas and costs, if they can get more information of where we think we might need more of the high-intense mechanical removal versus the volunteers assistance. He also asked what other cities are doing. He wondered if we are too ambitious or are they going to need grants from the DNR.

Yetka said Appendix A is focused on what we are calling sort of high-level master restoration plans for individual parks. Within that they still need to dial in on what it will actually take to reach our goals for that individual park. At this point staff can't answer where they want to do intensive buckthorn removal with contractors verses volunteers. The reason is because we need to sort of dial into these individual parks and create more focused management plans. However, there is criteria for sort of ranking the priority

parks. The original plan from 1997 only focused on the five community parks. We are focusing our efforts on more than five community parks so we also wanted this plan to help us prioritize which parks we should be working in. Certainly our community parks are high priority but we have other parks that we want to continue working on and maybe capture some of these high quality habitat pieces. This is a way for staff to make a decision such as having a contractor doing the work versus volunteers at a high priority park that has extensive amounts of buckthorn. Then maybe there is another park that doesn't rank quite as high on the priority list but is still important to community members and is more amenable to having volunteer efforts take place.

Rozumaski added that you could think of this as green infrastructure versus grey infrastructure, which is our utilities, streets and transportation. There is a lot of energy and resources that goes into the grey infrastructure and what we get from that. Then look at the resources that go into natural resources and what we get from that, it is not balanced. We have not valued the natural resources long enough to give it the same kind of attention that we give our grey infrastructure. This is not just Minnetonka but nationally.

Schack mentioned that Public Works Director, Will Manchester has a list of street improvement projects that will happen when they are prioritized and that they are all very specific. Sometimes things pop up and we can address that. Likewise, O'Dea also has a trail plan that is a very linear process that they use to implement things. She believes we are getting there according to the appendices but maybe we can focus and develop it more by saying these are our priorities, this is where we are going to start and how we are going to branch off. Schack is also struggling with the friends group because we have a lot of people who are really engaged and have a lot of knowledge but to have 22 environmentalists come in and tell Yetka how to do the environmental work seems counterproductive. Her opinion is that she needs to trust our staff, the people we hired to do the job for this city to help us make those decisions after the input comes into play. She mentioned that because of the next agenda item where they implemented something and then they keep coming back to talk about how it might've been wrong. She thinks we need to have a process, own it and then move through it deliberately or we are going to continue spinning our wheels. The Mayor says this at almost every meeting, "perfect can't be the enemy of the good" because we will never get anywhere if we keep talking about how to make it perfect.

Yetka appreciated that comment. This plan is intended to be a master plan and it's intended to be our guide. The most effective and efficient way we could operate and continue to engage groups like the Friends of Minnetonka Parks is to ensure we are focusing on this plan. This plan represents the priorities at a policy level of this community. In this plan, we have criteria for prioritizing parks and we've listed the parks that we feel our efforts should be put first. That is an area where as a park board and as a council, you have the ability to say these are the parks where we should focus our efforts or we are not going to worry about those right now. We are hoping that this plan can answer those policy questions and be our guide when we have these groups proposing projects to us. There was a struggle with the park board because they weren't sure how those proposed projects were fitting in with our grander plans. We see this as being that guide that can answer whether or not the proposed project is meeting the priorities and if it fits within our plan. If the answer is yes, than maybe that is where we put our efforts and that is where we collaborate and we put our money. If the answer is no, maybe there is an alternative and they'll have to find some other mechanism, funding or sources of labor.

That is sort of how we are hoping this plan down the road is going to get used and help us achieve our goals.

Calvert commented on fragmentation of habitat and how she thinks about the exciting things we have done this last year such as the pollinator lawn ordinance and starting to think about beyond our parks or city natural resources. There are neighborhoods and groups that are generating interest in things like pollinator lawns. She thinks we have an opportunity to create corridors and sort of mini parks in people's yards because we have willing residents to do that with their property. Is there a way to make native plantings more available? There are specific nurseries that specialize in native plants and we could have more information available on our website. Her anniversary is on Earth Day and she always wants to do something for it. She is on the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee for the National League and they are always pushing them to have our city push Earth Day events. She feels like we might be able to develop themes like that for people to do. There is so much opportunity here and we have pictures of actual groups in our engagement section that have a wealth of interest and she thinks we could build on this and find positive interactions for education. She loved the Adopt-A-Spot program. There were so many good things in this report and so many good ideas and she agrees with staff that this is achievable. She thinks we have a lot of good will in our community. She also agrees with Schack that we have wonderful professionals on our staff and ultimately after the input from residents is taken, she will rely on staff's professional expertise to guide the work. She thinks that we have people with good ideas and she wants to make sure that we get their input but she also thinks that at some point we have professional staff for a reason.

Gabler said as you are describing the master plan, in a way this is our guide and you are taking input of what to put into the guide. It kind of sounds like we are getting into the weeds a little bit, drilling down really into specifics of what we want the plan to be. If he looks at our action items, he wondered if they have seen anything that should be in there that isn't. He thinks we've addressed some of those and that some will always come up especially through feedback. He guesses that people will really be interested in the criteria we are going to use to prioritize projects. At the last park board meeting, they were all over the place because none of them are experts.

Yetka replied that no action was requested for tonight but there were some questions that were posted in the report. She actually added one asking if the timeframe of the proposed plan was in line with the park board and council goals. It will be coming back to the park board for more review but she is happy to take any comments.

Wiersum thought that conversation that we just had was helpful and he thinks we have to think about roles and expectations. The friends groups are clearly passionate and they do a lot of great work for our parks. He thinks they do have to keep roles in perspective and that is a challenge because he thinks they have a lot of great ideas and we rely on them. They play multiple roles, one of them is that they provide a lot of elbow grease as volunteers and they are passionate about our parks and we frankly couldn't be as successful in our parks without people willing to do that. Because they are so involved, it is kind of dangerous for policy groups like the park board and the city council to try and start executing this strategic plan. Similar to the policy makers, the friends groups shouldn't get into the executional details because they lack the expertise. We have to kind of apply the same rules to people who are volunteering but we want to listen to them and respect them. We want public input but at the same time we don't want to pass the

responsibilities of our paid staff to our volunteers. Wiersum wants to be respectful of the friends groups, however, when he hears from residents, he goes with the professionals because he is an amateur at so much of this. He thinks we have to apply that same standard to our staff and to people from the community who have good ideas but at the same time we trust the professionals to tell us whether or not those ideas make sense for Minnetonka.

Kirk thinks how Wiersum described the friends group is accurate. He questioned if the friends are going to be perceived as a partner moving forward or another group in the community to receive feedback from. If we want them to be partners, then we need to make sure that we are recognizing their input at a different level. If we don't want them to be partners, than let's call that out.

Wiersum thinks that is a fair point but he doesn't know the answer to the question.

Schaeppi asked if the friends are just community advocates. He understands that this is super high-level and we've talked about staff being the experts and he agrees but if we are talking about another 15 years, he wants the opportunity to actually go through these parks. He would love to have staff or a consultant walk him through each of these parks and see why this is a good idea. In terms of timing, he will leave it to the park board for them to talk about. He doesn't understand why it should be done in December and how they should know if this is what they should be doing by then. For him, the timeline is too fast.

Ingraham thought the friends input was appropriate and appropriately timed. He thinks that their perception is that they were behind the curve, but when he looks at the timeline for input and where we are at in the development of the plan it seems like that came at the right time. This is not a plan yet, it is a plan in development. He thinks they made a lot of good points and that it needs to be considered and taken into consideration and done. He's not sure how you weigh one groups input more than others. Clearly in the concept of giving input and giving suggestions, he looks at the friends as being more knowledgeable and more engaged but you could have an individual who is as knowledgeable and engaged. He thinks the biggest difference is the added value of volunteers. Clearly, when you go on the tours and you see the amount of engagement, they are very valuable to us and our natural spaces. The one thing about the plan that was hard for him was if you go to the budgeting part in the Appendix, it is hard for him to know what our commitment is and how much resources there are. He wasn't sure if it is at this point or later when the plan is done that they need to know what they can afford to do. We have a pretty good size budget today to begin with but he doesn't have the sense that it's adequate and he thinks the comments they've had around the table support additional investment. His question was how much are we investing today and how much should we be investing.

Yetka stated that what she is hearing is that there is an interest in having more information in terms of the resources we have now and what it would take to get where we want to be. There is some of that in here, the budget information that is presented is focusing on the parks that were prioritized in the table and what it would achieve over 20 years to have high-quality habitat in all those areas and be maintaining that year after year. There was information on a slide related to our existing budget for the natural resources division. Our stewardship fund, we spend about \$140,000 a year we have allocated for maintenance activities, plus we have ICW crew which is a crew that we use and we access once a week to help us do maintenance activities. We have forestry funds

that go towards the woodland and tree component of the activities that we do. She assumes you would like to see sort of a better understanding of what we have now and the resources we have relate to where we want to get to. She can't necessarily answer that today because we first have to figure out if this is what we want to do to achieve these priorities, do we have the resources that it will take or do we want to accelerate this process. Assuming this plan gets adopted at some point, we would get into the implementation phase. That's where we would start to dial in on the actual projects that we want to be implementing, whether it means we would need to request more funds that would go through the budgeting process or if we would use the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to identify funds for specific large scale restoration pieces for instance. She thinks it is hard to answer that question because some of that will come down the road once this plan is adopted but she does hear that you would like to see a better explanation and connection.

Calvert thought the goals and objectives were appropriate, the criteria were good and the elements were pretty comprehensive. She is also aware that there are members of the community including people in the friends groups that feels that it is an aggressive timeline. She doesn't want the perfect to be the enemy of the good but she feels like we need to get started on something. Climate change is not stopping to wait for us to make a decision and you know we kind of need to do the things we need to do. It's a high-level plan that we can shape as time goes by and take all of that input in. Calvert is not entirely uncomfortable with it because she thinks we can keep shaping it and we'll be deciding on funding as we go through the process because economic conditions are going to change and so are environmental conditions. We may be reacting to things that we don't even know. Page two says to revisit habitat quality assessments every five to ten years. The climate is changing faster than it used to and we have a natural resources plan from 1997, she thinks we need to revisit that on a more aggressive timeframe. In terms of the groups that are providing feedback, the thing that we have to remember is that the friends are passionate about our parks and they do wonderful work. She thinks we need to value it, honor it and use it but there are also other groups that did more restoration work in Lone Lake Park than the friends. One of them is the mountain bike group that did 500 plus hours of actual habitat restoration and she thinks they are not the only partner. She thinks we can view them as a partner but they aren't going to be the only partner. The thing she loves about this plan is that there are various interest groups such as a gardening group or sports group that have invested interest in restoring habitat and we have to view them all as partners. Maybe the friends groups will become more important to parks in some ways but we have a lot of partners that do a lot of work and they are all very valuable.

Schack thought it was also important to reassure people that this is fluid and that we work on budgeting as we go and staff will tell them what it takes to implement things. An example is the trail plan and how Schaeppi presented a good argument from moving some things around and reprioritizing based on community feedback. They were compelled by that and made it happen. That is how she envisions this will work as well. Things will come up or opportunities or grants that they will want to take advantage of and they'll move things around and prioritize in real time. She is comfortable making a decision now knowing that it is not written in stone.

Wiersum thinks their eyes are bigger than their stomachs to a certain extent. We have a lot we want to do and we are going to run out of resources before we get this done. He doesn't think that is a reason not to move forward because as Calvert mentioned, climate



change is not going to wait for us. He thinks because of climate change that as a city, decisions are going to be made in years ahead. Some of us may not even be here when these decisions get made but a greater portion of our budget is going to have to go towards natural resources and climate mitigation because that is the situation we are confronted with. We may have to narrow the scope and focus on one or two items and get that done. The job is going to be big and we are going to need resources, grants and volunteer groups to say they believe in this. We are going to need all of the above but he thinks we want to get moving; keep it high-level but then focus on some areas where we can execute and really get some things done.

Yetka reiterated that staff is still accepting comments and this will be coming back to the park board as a more final draft plan. Staff can be very clear on the comments and the information received and how it is influencing the plan. She thinks we've already seen some good ideas that we can incorporate into the plan. Staff will provide a reason if there is an area that they can't incorporate. The anticipated date for the final draft to come back to council is December 20. Staff would like to stick with that date as a goal and at that point it would become our adopted plan. It would then be put on our website and moved into the implementation phase where we would start to propose projects, go through the budgeting process and capital improvement process to sort of weigh some of those decisions and have the council and park board weigh in.

#### C. Lone Lake Park Multi-use Mountain Bike Trail Metrics

Woeste, Jesse Izquierdo, Recreation Program Manager and Yetka gave the report.

Durbin did some calculations and said the average daily use when the trail was open was about 80-90 users. He was impressed with that being the first year and because they weren't really sure if it was going to be used. In regards to the metric on who is biking versus driving there, he wouldn't mind not seeing that metric next year. He wondered how long they are going to have this ultra-intense look at Lone Lake Park. As this becomes more established and more accepted, we might not have to need such a detailed look at this in a couple of years.

Ingraham complimented people that went thru the process to do the trail because he wasn't on the park board yet. It has been a huge success and he thinks the amount of volunteer efforts of all those involved is really impressive and much appreciated. He uses Lone Lake Park at least three days a week. He doesn't mountain bike but he was familiar with the informal trails and was there at least two days per week before the trail was built. He thinks a huge success is the amount of people that are accessing areas they couldn't access before. Going back to the earlier discussion on active versus passive recreation, he really doesn't know where you draw the line between the two. He knows soccer or pickleball would be active but for passive he isn't sure if walking, hiking or running is passive. In this case, we've opened up a significant amount of space for people to experience a kind of environment that they couldn't have otherwise experienced in Minnetonka.

Wiersum remembered the night where the concept of doing a review report came up at the city council. Then councilmember Mike Happe said that it isn't their goal to wreck the park, which, he thought wouldn't happen with the mountain bike trail. He thought it would be good to do a post analysis to see how we were doing. Along with what Ingraham said, we haven't wrecked the park in any way and he thinks it has been very successful. He is

mostly proud of the fact that it gets kids off their phones. It is bringing people to a level of activity that can be done in our city that is distinctive and he doesn't think the aesthetics of the park have been hurt. He wanted to say that the change is not significant but the benefit is significant. He thinks that is a big win and it took a lot of guts for a lot of people to support this. Our staff made it happen and dealt with a lot of push-back from our residents. It was a divided issue and that park board meeting on August 26, 2018 was 50/50. It was not clear but he thinks we did something that benefited the city and he thinks anybody and everybody who had something to do with it should be proud of that. He also thinks that we probably have developed new relationships with the Friends of Lone Lake Park and certainly with MORC. He thinks there are some positives in that too. As we move forward, he isn't worried that we ruined the park so he thinks perhaps we could work to simpler reporting on an annual review because he thinks we've demonstrated that. He doesn't like to put the staff through unnecessary work and wants to focus those resources on getting this plan moving forward and implementing it and use that time more effectively.

Kirk said Lone Lake Park is in Ward 1 and Friends of Lone Lake Park are in Ward 1 so he wanted to sum up their concerns on side casting, berming the trees and wider trails. Also he wanted to ask the council whether or not the trail met the definition that was presented to the council three years ago. They are worried about the fauna being disturbed because of the side casting, both the dirt and the brush and they are concerned about the trees being bermed and whether or not the trees will be damaged in any way. Also, they are concerned with the width of the trail, which hopefully will be resolved as more of the trail closes after construction. He has seen a number of these mountain bike trails and they do end up looking like every other mountain bike trail. He also wanted to address the number of volunteer hours that Calvert brought up earlier because he thought it was a bit negative towards the friends groups. He was actually happy to see that the friends were volunteering because they were pretty disgruntle a year or two ago. He would have expected that MORC was there in force because that was kind of part of the agreement. He didn't think any of them had an expectation that the friends and MORC would be out there pulling buckthorn the next day together but he was happy that the friends were still putting time and effort into the park. He agrees that we don't need a full report next year but it is nice to hear how a program we made this big investment in is going. He thinks trying to define what active means is going to be important. As we describe an area that we want to try and leave in a more preserved state that everybody can feel comfortable that they don't have to risk something that they would perceive as being active. He had the same argument a few years ago on whether or not everyone walking through the woods is any less active than mountain biking through the woods. Now it is mountain biking or walking through the woods in a more controlled way. The only comment he had was that a few people had concerns about it being a multi-use trail. He will ask if they walk the trail and if they do walk it, do they come across bikers. They're sometimes a little reluctant to say that they are friendly and polite and that they greet people when they go by. The only comment he had was that a few people had concerns about it being a multi-use trail. If you walk the trail and come across bikers, they are always friendly and polite and they usually greet people when they go by. His question is whether or not we should post something telling walkers to walk against the bike traffic. Overall, he thinks it has been a great success.

Calvert stated that she wanted to make very clear that when she makes a positive comment about a group that is not the friends, it is not a slam against the friends. She is allowed to call out the good work, her whole point was that in addition to the work that the

friends does, there are other groups in our city that do great work in our parks so please don't put words in her mouth. She also lives in Ward 1 and was on the council conversing with the people that are now the friends as a councilmember as this came up so please don't put words in her mouth because that was not a slam against the friends. She wanted to make sure the friends understand that's not a slam, she is just saying there are other people, groups, organized groups that also contribute to the health and success of our parks.

Coakley commented that Kirk summed up the questions she also received from the friends group. One thing that she requested is to be really clear with them on what has happened and what the city has done to address these questions so they don't have to keep coming back to it. As a councilmember, she doesn't mind getting into the weeds if they have residents contacting them because that is the only way we can get something solved.

Woeste said we can put together a response.

Schack had her reservations about the trail and she thinks it has been wildly successful. Her concern was more on calling it a multi-use trail given the density but it has been proven that it's worked out. She thinks that is really positive and she is glad to hear it. She thinks the width issue may have something to do with the multi-use component and that there has been a lot of foot and snowshoeing traffic. She is satisfied with hearing that some of the berming has been addressed by the forester. She is also comfortable that the goals have been met and we can move on from getting into this deep on an annual basis.

Schaeppi wanted to confirm that everything has been hashed out. He thinks what we are finding out is that individual active sports separate from team sports are going to have a future in Minnetonka and we are going to see what those are, whether it is skateboarding or other items. He looks forward to the park board's discussion on these and bringing their ideas to the council. He concurs with the comments before about getting young kids off their phones and doing something challenging. All of this is healthy stuff so he looks forward to more of these active uses as well.

Wiersum is really intrigued and interested in the ebike question that was raised tonight and he thinks it deserves a look. He knows someone who is 70 years old and was a big skier but had to have part of his foot amputated and he isn't as able to do a lot of things now. He got an ebike and it set him free. He gets a little concerned about somebody trying to whip around on the trails at 28 mph on an ebike. That does give him some hesitation and that is probably not what is going to happen because it is impractical that it will go that fast. On the other hand, he thinks that from a mobility perspective it is kind of a cool concept. The mobility aspect to him is a reason to do it but he can go both ways.

Calvert agrees with mobility. This is something that we said no to and she can feel it, she can hear it and she thinks she would have some grave reservations about it. This has been very contentious and it clearly remains really contentious and she just doesn't feel like tangling with it. She has taken a hard vote for something that she felt committed to and she thinks for herself she is kind of at her limit and we are good. In terms of the berming and constantly coming back, we made a commitment and she thinks we really do need to look periodically at the impact on the trees and make sure that we did what we said we were going to do on the trail. She does think there is some need to move on. The

natural resources staff told us the berming is not a concern anymore and that they've looked at all the trees. She just walked a good portion of the trail the other day with her husband who worked with natural resources for 40 years and he had no concerns with the berming. She is going to take her natural resources professional staff at their word. We looked at runoff, erosion and the erosion socks and they have done what they need to do. If the side casting really is going to be a problem for native species regeneration then we need to take care of it but if it's not, she will leave it to natural resources. As far as she is concerned, she would love to be able to move on but she also wants to make sure we are meeting our obligation. She feels like we've met the promises that we made. She thinks in large that the trail meets the goals that we sought so she will leave it to the natural resources staff to make sure the trail is healthy and that we are doing what we promised to do, not only to the Friends of Lone Lake Park but the rest of the community.

Kirk supports ebikes but he thinks there may need to be some kind of governor on it like a speed limit. For the sake of accessibility, he thinks it is inarguable if we have the ability to have people with mobility issues still enjoy the trail.

Scheappi asked if staff knows MORC's opinion on ebikes.

Izquierdo replied that they are currently one of only two trails in the Twin Cities or maybe state that doesn't allow ebikes. They have a classification system, which he believes is one through three. All of the other trail systems follow a similar guideline and he believes class two is allowed. People that buy these ebikes know it is a mountain bike specific bike that regulates the speed and has a lot of other regulations. It is the type of bike that the industry is building to meet these certain standards to reduce any potential impact to the trails. There are people out there that will probably say there's hard data and science that supports an impact of an ebike being equivalent to a non-ebike. We haven't necessarily seen that, we also haven't dug super deeply into it. The industry is pushing for it and we are seeing more of these types of bikes being sold in the stores and more of a desire for them. If this was something that we wanted to pursue, staff would go out there and talk to people and try to bring in as much information as possible.

Gabler asked if staff would have that information when it comes to the park board.

Woeste said we just wanted to take the temperature on the subject of ebikes tonight. We got a little bit of mixed feelings but if we are trying to be inclusive and accessible, we will do some research and at least bring it to the park board for review.

Schaeppi is open to the ebike discussion because he would be surprised if an older person on an ebike is going faster than the 25 year old bombing through the trail.

Wiersum said the park board should take a look and he thinks staff should look into it. He questioned what the unattended consequences are. You think about allowing ebikes and setting the rules and then electric mini bikes come along and someone follows suit against the city because electric mini bikes aren't allowed but the ebike is. We should see what experiences at other places are like. It's what you don't know that gets you. Let's take a thorough look so that we can think through the unattended consequences if we were to make a change. He sees Calvert's point as well on relaxing the rules on something that has been this challenging. He thinks that is something he wants to be careful with as well.

Gabler said his very first park board meeting was the first meeting this subject was brought up so he got to live through the whole thing. It is worth having the discussion.

Durbin commented that if we are talking ADA compliance, they could get someone who would like to use an ebike for that argument and also get input from the city attorney. We could go through and have the discussion and get the pros and cons, information from MORC and any other information in one package so the park board could make an informed decision. He definitely wants to hear it out because it's not an urgent need and we time to get more information.

Dane Kromer, MORC representative, wanted to make clear that they are talking about a class of ebikes that only allows pedal assist which only gives you added power of about 10 watts of whatever you are actually peddling. They are no faster downhill and they do help people pedal up the hills which are steep at Lone Lake. They are on board with it and they kind of have been all along because of all the people that can't bike except with pedal assist.

Ingraham said it would be interesting to get Three Rivers Park District's perspective. If they aren't having issues, they should have one soon. The Lake Minnetonka Trail is non-motorized vehicles but now there are people on the non-pedal assist bikes. They just crank the throttle and keep their feet steady. They are D-Class bikes and people are commuting to school on the Lake Minnetonka Trail going 20-25 mph. This is not about Lone Lake but it would be interesting to know Three Rivers Park District's perspective on ebikes relative to trails too.

#### **4. Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathy Kline*

Kathy Kline  
Recreation Administrative Coordinator

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 7A  
Meeting of December 1, 2021**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                      | Natural Resources Overview   |
| <b>Park Board related goal:</b>      | To protect natural resources and open space  |
| <b>Park Board related objective:</b> | Promote the city's efforts of protecting and enhancing the community's natural resources by creating awareness and supporting educational strategies |
| <b>Brief Description:</b>            | Provide information about the Natural Resources Division and natural resource management work in the city  |

**Summary**

The City's Natural Resources Division, established in 2005, manages the planning, development and stewardship of the community's natural resources. With nine full-time professional staff, five interns, and a \$1.8M operating budget, the division is responsible for urban forest and disease management, natural resource conservation and protection, enforcement of natural resource ordinances, public land stewardship and ecosystem restoration of over 310 acres of public land. Citizens and private landowners are engagement in protection efforts through environmental education, outreach, volunteerism, public seminars, events, and resident consultations.

Staff will provide an overview of the Natural Resources Division to help educate park board members and residents on current natural resource management work in the community.

**Recommended Park Board Action:** Receive presentation and provide feedback.

**Attachments:**

- Copy of 2020 Natural Resources Updates for reference

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 8  
Meeting of March 3, 2021**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                      | Information Items  |
| <b>Park Board related goal:</b>      | N/A  |
| <b>Park Board related objective:</b> | N/A  |
| <b>Brief Description:</b>            | The following are informational items and developments that have occurred since the last park board meeting. |



**Natural Resources Annual Update – 2020 Activities**

The Natural Resources Division of Public Works is responsible for activities related to:

- Habitat restoration and management
- Water resource protection
- Natural resource ordinance compliance during private development
- Urban forestry programs
- Natural resource education

The following annual update highlights staff accomplishments for 2020:

**Habitat Restoration Activities**

Over 310 acres of city land in parks and natural areas are actively being managed, with the goal of developing healthy ecosystems. Notable items include:

- Annual buckthorn, garlic mustard and weed control continues in highest value restoration areas by contractors, ICW crew, staff and volunteers.
- Volunteer coordination: Volunteer opportunities were canceled in the spring due to COVID restrictions, but resumed with social distancing in late May:



- Local groups continue to provide the greatest benefit. Groups that were standouts in 2020 are Friends of Cullen Preserve, Minnetonka Mountain Bike Trail Advocates, Friends of Lone Lake Park, River Valley Church and Boy scout Troop 409
- Adopt-a-Spot volunteers collectively contribute hundreds of hours annually working independently. Standout work has been done for more than a decade by long-term volunteers at Kinsel and Lake Rose Parks bringing restoration to an invasive-free quality not achievable without them.
- Restoration activities continued around the Lone Lake Park pickle ball courts including:
  - Rain garden improvements
    - 608 wildflowers planted to benefit pollinators (including Rusty Patch Bumble Bee super-foods) and monarch butterfly favorites
    - 256 prairie grasses planted
  - Preparation for conversion to prairie in no-mow areas was completed by contractors, staff and volunteers. Conversion will take several years.
- Lone Lake Park plant survey completed by staff and botanist
- Native plant salvage over five weeks during mountain bike trail building at Lone Lake Park. Wildflowers, sedges and smaller woody plants were dug, planted, potted and stored for 2021 park plantings. Notable uncommon plants saved are spikenard, lily-leaved twayblade orchid and numerous winterberries. Preserving local genotypes of declining native plants is essential to ecological restoration and preservation of our habitats.
- 2020 was the fourth year of partial habitat restoration at the Cullen Nature Preserve.
  - Plant survey and list of existing species completed for “before-restoration” history
  - Photo-documented extensive herbivory by deer
  - Applications completed for two grants for expedited restoration would not have been possible without extensive work by and collaboration with the Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve
    - Hennepin Co. Good Steward Grant
    - MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant
  - Restoration contractor removed 8.8 acres of buckthorn along the east and north sections and the ICW crew continued work along the sewer line.
- Between July and October, restoration staff responded to noxious weed complaints and worked to control many problem species including thistle, poison ivy and Japanese knotweed.



- Habitat management challenges:
  - New invasive species recently discovered in Minnetonka require new control measures on top of many invasive species controlled annually.
    - Hellborine *Epipactis hellborine*, an invasive orchid, has been found in three parks: Big Willow, Jidana and Lone Lake
    - Wild parsnip found along two county roads and MN Hwy 7
    - Common valerian in Hilloway Park
  - Garlic mustard and thistle expanded in some long-term control areas in 2020 due to ICW crew absence for months and cancellation of spring volunteer events during COVID restrictions.
  - Herbivory by deer and rodents, besides deer antler rubbing continue to be a significant setback to restoration of native plants, causing the disappearance of wildflowers and much woody plant damage.

### **Water Resource Protection**

- Annual release of insects for biological control of wetland invasive species purple loosestrife has occurred since 2006. Beetle populations fluctuate with environmental conditions and release sites adjust accordingly. Thirteen sites have been photo documented for the past six years, including in 2020.
- The city continues to monitor the health of Minnetonka’s wetlands using volunteers in Hennepin County’s Wetland Health Evaluation Program. Having monitored 34 sites to date. Due to pandemic-imposed restrictions, the county has temporarily stopped this program, and appears likely that the program will not resume until summer of 2022.
- The city obtained a grant through the Metropolitan Council to develop a rebate program for smart irrigation controllers. The intent is to conserve groundwater resources by reducing outdoor irrigation during summer months when demand is high. Staff reached out to numerous homeowners’ associations to offer irrigation audits, which will take place in 2021, and began planning a rebate program for private property owners who install WaterSense-certified smart controllers and/or sprinkler heads.

### **Development Review, Inspection and Compliance**

- Staff reviewed 352 permits including 44 new homes, 19 pools, 8 grading permits, and 7 commercial permits (HC Medical Examiner, Shady Oak Crossing, Fire/Police Addition, Chase Bank, Eagle Ridge Gym Addition, SWLRT Station, and Oakcroft Townhomes).

- Conservation easements were acquired over wetland buffer and tree preservation areas on 6 sites.
- Staff reviewed 15 wetland delineations and had around 200 responses to requests for information about wetlands.

### **Forestry Activities**

- Minnetonka's annual tree sale has sold about 17,000 young trees since 2007, increasing the diversity and resilience of the community forest. In 2020, 456 buyers purchased 816 trees of 15 species.
- In 2020, 155 young trees of 30 different species were planted Minnetonka's parks to improve species diversity of our urban forest and increase resilience to climate change.
- Forestry staff completed the Healthy Canopy grant through Hennepin County by removing ash trees in advance of emerald ash borer (EAB) and replanting in the same area as those removals. Tree planting was a part of the City's Arbor Day celebration and sixth grade volunteers from The International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA) helped plant 30 replacement trees.
- For the third year in a row, staff conducted tree pruning in city parks. Proper tree pruning can extend the life of local trees by many years. In conjunction with this, the city also the second year of participating in a University of Minnesota conservation arboriculture study, designed to critically examine pruning techniques that lead to better tree health. Twelve trees in six different parks were evaluated and pruned as part of the study
- The rate of Dutch elm disease in Minnetonka has decreased by more than 75% since 2004, thanks to consistent implementation of the shade tree disease control ordinance which requires proper sanitation of diseased trees and wood. Overall, tree removal in 2020 consisted of:

| <b>Species</b>     | <b>Total</b> | <b>Location</b> |                     |                |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                    |              | <b>Public</b>   | <b>Right-of-Way</b> | <b>Private</b> |
| Elm                | 184          | 66              | 23                  | 92             |
| Oak                | 74           | 11              | 5                   | 55             |
| Ash*               | 485          | 258             | 227                 | --             |
| <b>Risk/Hazard</b> | 459          | 305             | 153                 | 1              |

*\*Pre-emptive removal for EAB*

**Education Activities**

- Minnetonka continued its pollinator protection efforts through habitat restoration and protection, multifaceted public outreach efforts and events, partnership with other agencies, and long-range planning for sustainable practices on city properties. As part of participating in the Mayor’s Monarch Pledge(MMP) in 2020:
  - Natural Resources staff worked with the city attorney to amend the lawn maintenance ordinance, permitting pollinator lawns and pollinator meadows as lawn alternatives and providing signage where these installations are in public view. With this in place, the city has completed all 24 of the program’s action steps, becoming the ninth city in North America to reach Monarch Champion status.
- Staff worked with local watershed districts to promote smart-salting training to businesses, associations and other groups.
- Annual garlic mustard and buckthorn control workshops continue to draw on average 50-75 new residents who wish to learn best techniques and restore habitat on their private property. In 2020, the garlic mustard workshop was added as a video presentation on the city’s YouTube channel.
- The city continued its partnership with watershed districts to promote Adopt-a-Drain, which encourages residents to clean local storm drains to reduce pollutants in runoff. Fifty new adoptions were added to 69 from the previous year (for a total of 264 storm drains) across Minnetonka’s four watershed districts.

- New interpretive signage was installed in Lone Lake Park. This 20-post “Tree Trek” introduces visitors to tree diversity, function and ecosystem connections, and offers tips on maintaining these trees if planted on private property.
- Outreach covered topics related to stormwater reduction and surface water protection, soil health, water efficiency, tree diversity and preservation, planning for EAB and other pests and diseases, habitat restoration, invasive species control, pollinator and wildlife protection, community resilience, NR events, and more:
  - Monthly articles in the Minnetonka Memo newsletter
  - Monthly e-blasts reaching almost 2,400 readers, with an average of 33 percent engagement
  - Electronic highway billboards that changed approximately bimonthly
  - Social media promoting events and seasonal themes

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 7B  
Meeting of December 1, 2021**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                      | Update on the Natural Resources Master Plan  |
| <b>Park Board related goal:</b>      | To protect natural resources and open space  |
| <b>Park Board related objective:</b> | Continue to review and comment on the implementation of the natural resources stewardship plan |
| <b>Brief Description:</b>            | Present a revised draft Natural Resources Master Plan for review and recommendation            |

### **Background**

In 1995, the City of Minnetonka commissioned a study of natural habitat in five major parks (Big Willow, Lone Lake, Purgatory, Meadow, Civic Center) and three creek corridors (Minnehaha, Nine Mile, Purgatory) to assess their environmental health and quality. The study indicated that all vegetation types throughout the city were deteriorating and in decline. Without human intervention, the overall quality would continue to trend downward.

As a response, the city adopted a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) in 1997 and Council Policy 11.11 in 1999 (updated in 2003) to help guide habitat restoration and open space preservation activities. A primary component of the plan and related policy includes the Natural Resources Stewardship Program, which focuses on an ecological systems-based approach to restoration and management.

The 1997 Natural Resources Management Plan and the resulting stewardship program have generally provided the guidance needed for prioritizing restoration activities, resources and funds for the Natural Resources Division. In 2003, an effort was undertaken to re-assess habitat quality in the parks, with annual restoration planning by city staff to date.

### **Summary**

In 2019, city staff hired Barr Engineering, an environmental consulting firm with expertise in natural resources master planning efforts, to update the existing plan. A plan update helps fulfill a recent council strategic priority and key strategy of developing and implementing long-term plans to mitigate threats to the natural environment.

Specific goals identified in the plan are:

- 1) Improve the quality of habitat in Minnetonka parks and open spaces, striving for more resilient and sustainable ecological systems while providing multiple benefits to the community.
- 2) Manage and improve the community forest ecosystem on both public and private lands, including natural woodlands and the altered ecosystem of the traditional managed landscape.
- 3) Engage the public to support ecological restoration and management on public property, and promote voluntary application of practices on private property.

The plan generally includes:

- Specific goals and objectives related to natural resources management
- A natural history and current assessment of habitat and conditions of natural areas in Minnetonka parks and open spaces
- Natural resource issues and stressors
- Natural resource protection strategies
- Appendices, including park restoration strategies and budgets

**Project Process:**

Draft goals and objectives, issues, and potential strategies were presented to the Park Board in April, 2021. These goals and objectives developed through input from city staff, including natural resources, parks, and recreation. Information on public attitudes and perceptions related to natural resources was gathered as part of the POST Plan public engagement process, and reaffirmed an interest and desire within the community to protect natural resources and green spaces. Since that time, a draft plan has been developed that lays the groundwork for prioritizing and allocating resources for natural resources management work throughout the community.

This draft plan was reviewed by at the joint Park Board/City Council meeting on November 3, 2021 for comments and feedback. The draft plan was also available for review and comment on the city's Minnetonka Matters public engagement platform between October 22 and November 19, 2021. Notice of the comment period was distributed to over 3,000 individuals, with a total of 361 site visits and 22 engaged participants. The Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other individuals also submitted feedback via email.

To date, approximately 250 individual comment statements were submitted on the plan. Main themes included a request for more information related to priorities and available resources, more clarity on how the NRMP relates to other city plans, support of programs such as enhanced volunteer programming, technical assistance and incentives, and clarification on some technical statements throughout the plan. A detailed description of each comment and staff response or action taken is attached to this report. Edits have been made to the draft plan, and a new appendix added.

Overall, very few substantive changes were requested in the comments. However, city staff are continuing to work with individual "Friends" groups on edits to Appendix A, which contains the individual park restoration plans. Final edits will be included in a final draft of the plan before it is submitted to the city council for adoption.

The current revised plan will be presented to the Park Board for additional feedback a recommendation to the city council. The goal is to present a final draft at the December 20, 2021 council meeting for final adoption. While the intent of the master plan is to guide the city's planning efforts, specifics related to funding, following a final approved plan, would be proposed in upcoming annual budget and CIP cycles for park board and council consideration.

**Recommended Park Board Action:** Receive presentation and provide a recommendation of approval of the Natural Resources Master Plan to the city council.

**Attachments:**

1. Revised Draft Natural Resources Master Plan, with appendices
2. Table of comments received with staff responses and actions taken
3. Copy of comments received during the public comment period



City of Minnetonka  
Natural Resources  
Master Plan

November, 2021

**DRAFT V.2**





# City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan



Restored native prairie in Tower Hill Park

Developed by

## City of Minnetonka

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# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1 Introduction.....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Goals and Objectives .....   | 2         |
| <b>2 Natural History and Current Conditions.....</b>                     | <b>3</b>  |
| 2.1 Historic Ecological Communities .....                                | 4         |
| 2.2 Current Conditions .....   | 5         |
| Topography and Soil Texture.....   | 7         |
| Land Use (2016) and Land Ownership.....                                  | 8         |
| Impervious Surface with Natural Water Bodies.....                        | 9         |
| Land Cover (Impervious, Lawns/Turf, and Natural Water Bodies).....       | 10        |
| Heat Island and Tree Canopy.....   | 11        |
| 2.3 Natural Resources Inventory & Assessment of City Owned Property..... | 12        |
| Plant Community Inventory.....   | 12        |
| Existing Plant Communities and Ecological Quality.....                   | 13        |
| 2.4 Wildlife.....  | 14        |
| Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka.....                            | 14        |
| Guidelines for Wildlife Management.....                                  | 15        |
| 2.5 Cultural Resources .....   | 16        |
| <b>3 Natural Resources Issues and Opportunities .....</b>                | <b>17</b> |
| 3.1 Habitat Fragmentation.....   | 18        |
| 3.2 Reduced Native Plant Diversity .....                                 | 19        |
| 3.3 Soil Degradation.....  | 20        |
| 3.4 Community Forest Alterations.....                                    | 20        |
| 3.5 Pollinator Species .....   | 22        |
| 3.6 Invasive Species .....   | 22        |
| 3.7 Native Plant Herbivory .....   | 23        |
| 3.8 Urban Heat Island Effect .....                                       | 24        |
| 3.9 Climate Change.....  | 25        |
| 3.10 Altered Hydrology of Natural Areas & Landscaped Greenspaces .....   | 26        |
| 3.11 Human Perception of Natural Resources .....                         | 27        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>4 Natural Resources Management Strategies.....</b>                 | <b>28</b> |
| 4.1 Public Properties Natural Resource Management .....               | 29        |
| Vegetation Management Prioritization .....                            | 29        |
| Natural Resources Management Approach .....                           | 33        |
| Community Forest Management .....                                     | 34        |
| 4.2 Private Properties Natural Resource Management .....              | 36        |
| Strategies for Managing Natural Resources on Private Properties ..... | 36        |
| 4.3 Climate Change .....  | 38        |
| Climate Adaptation Strategies .....                                   | 38        |
| 4.4 Natural Resources Policies and Ordinances.....                    | 40        |
| 4.5 Engagement with People.....                                       | 41        |
| Partnerships.....   | 41        |
| Outreach, Education and Engagement .....                              | 41        |
| Technical Assistance and Incentives.....                              | 42        |
| 4.6 Future Planning, Research, and Monitoring .....                   | 43        |

## Appendices

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Appendix A | - Management Strategies for Minnetonka Owned Properties  |
| Appendix B | - Management Budgets for Priority Public Properties  |
| Appendix C | - Budget Changes Necessary to Implement Primary Initiatives Identified in this Natural Resources Master Plan |
| Appendix D | - Grant Sources  |
| Appendix E | - Volunteer Program Structure  |



# 1

## Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to set direction and priorities for Minnetonka’s Natural Resources Division. To that end, the plan presents opportunities for ecosystem regeneration and capitalizes on the holistic benefits (ecological, societal, and economic) of improving and maintaining natural resources in the city. The plan addresses climate adaption and resilience, but not climate mitigation or reducing carbon footprint. It also addresses goals and strategies to protect and improve natural resources on public property, and ways to encourage such action on private property.

This plan focuses on aspects of natural resources management under the purview of the Natural Resources Division within Minnetonka City government. Issues such as environmental contamination, air quality, and public health are overseen by the Community Development’s Environmental Health Division and not addressed in this document. Flooding, surface waters (lakes, wetlands, and streams), and stormwater management are addressed in the 2019 Water Resources Management Plan for Minnetonka. The 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail (POST) plan addresses park master planning, park classification, intensity of use, land acquisition and park amenities for City-owned property.

Minnetonka addresses natural resources protection and management through this plan, the POST plan, and the Water Resources Management Plan. Topics addressed include:

### Protection & Management Topics

| Protection & Management Topics  | Natural Resources Master Plan | Parks, Open Space & Trail (POST) Plan | Water Resources Management Plan |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Climate adaptation, resilience, sustainability                                    | ✓                             | ✓                                     | ✓                               |
| Invasive species control  | ✓                             |                                       | ✓                               |
| Ecological communities’ restoration and maintenance planning                      | ✓                             |                                       |                                 |
| Community forest management and planning  | ✓                             |                                       |                                 |
| Wildlife guidance   | ✓                             |                                       |                                 |
| Stormwater infrastructure and flood management                                    |                               |                                       | ✓                               |
| Stormwater Utility fees   |                               |                                       | ✓                               |
| Lake, wetland, and groundwater protection (e.g. projects, ordinances, regulation) |                               |                                       | ✓                               |
| Individual park mater planning guidance   |                               | ✓                                     |                                 |
| Park classifications  |                               | ✓                                     |                                 |
| Open space acquisition  |                               | ✓                                     |                                 |
| Recreational amenities  |                               | ✓                                     |                                 |
| Determining park intensity of use   |                               | ✓                                     |                                 |
| Education/outreach/engagement   | ✓                             | ✓                                     | ✓                               |

## 1.1 Goals and Objectives

There is broad community understanding that having healthy and high quality natural resources is essential to supporting a healthy and thriving community. This sentiment is expressed in the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the council's Strategic Profile, the Parks, Open Space, and Trail Plan, and input received via the annual community survey. To that end, goals and objectives related to natural resources management and protection were identified for this plan to guide future priorities and allocation of resources for the Natural Resources Division and the city. The goals and objectives are:

### A. Improve the quality of habitat in Minnetonka parks and open spaces, creating more resilient and sustainable ecological systems while providing multiple benefits to the community.

- Identify current conditions, prioritize areas, and describe restoration and management strategies, including required resources
- Identify and implement strategies to address known stressors that inhibit restoration and preservation of sustainable ecological systems, such as pests and disease, invasive species, herbivory, extreme storm events and climate change
- Promote habitat diversity, plant biodiversity, and healthy soil systems in natural areas to increase resilience and adaptation to Minnesota's changing climate
- Engage in collaborative partnerships with local organizations and groups to facilitate restoration of natural areas
- Monitor ecosystem health
- Revisit habitat quality assessments and prioritization of parks and other natural areas every five years as necessary to determine progress on meeting restoration goals, and realign resources where necessary

### B. Manage and improve the community forest ecosystem on both public and private lands, including natural woodlands and the altered ecosystem of the traditional managed landscape.

- Implement strategies to increase species diversity, facilitate natural regeneration, reduce the impacts of pests and disease, and mitigate climate change
- Identify opportunities to increase tree canopy cover to mitigate the urban heat island effect
- Identify strategies to manage stormwater and soil in open spaces to adapt to changing precipitation patterns and increasing storm intensities

- Promote tree species diversification in lawns and other managed spaces
- Promote the regeneration of the entire community forest structure including soils, ground plain herbaceous vegetation, shrubs, midstory, and tree canopy

### C. Engage the public to support ecological restoration and management on public property, and promote voluntary application of practices on private property.

- Through education and outreach, increase Minnetonka residents' knowledge and understanding of natural resource management principles, practices, and benefits to the community

- Engage citizens and community-based organizations in habitat restoration and management activities on public property through volunteerism
- Implement programs that facilitate citizen involvement in habitat restoration and management on private property, including workshops, trainings, technical assistance, and incentives



Jidana Park - Minnetonka, Minnesota



# 2

## Natural History and Current Conditions

Minnetonka has been addressing natural resources issues for decades through efforts such as land preservation, natural areas restoration, protection ordinances and policies, and the creation of the Natural Resources Division with City staff fully dedicated to natural resources management. This positive momentum will continue as issues are addressed.

1940 Aerial Image - Lone Lake Park Minnetonka

Source: MnDNR



## 2.1 Historic Ecological Communities

This map was developed from the original 1846–1848 land survey of Minnesota. It depicts ecological communities encountered by surveyors at that time. Note that oak openings were the dominant ecological community. Minnetonka was not forested as it is today.

Oak openings, also referred to as oak savanna and oak barrens, are described as grasslands having from one tree per acre to 50-percent tree canopy cover. The ground layer receives sun and shade, which permits growth of diverse grasses and flowering plants. Usually, enough sun reaches the ground to permit the growth of typical prairie species, such as big and little bluestem grasses and many wildflowers.

Understanding the historic ecological communities of the region is helpful in planning for climate change. Oak savanna was present just prior to Euro-American settlement. It could have a greater role in future Minnetonka natural areas.



Oak savanna was present and extremely common in the area we now call Minnetonka prior to Euro-American settlement.

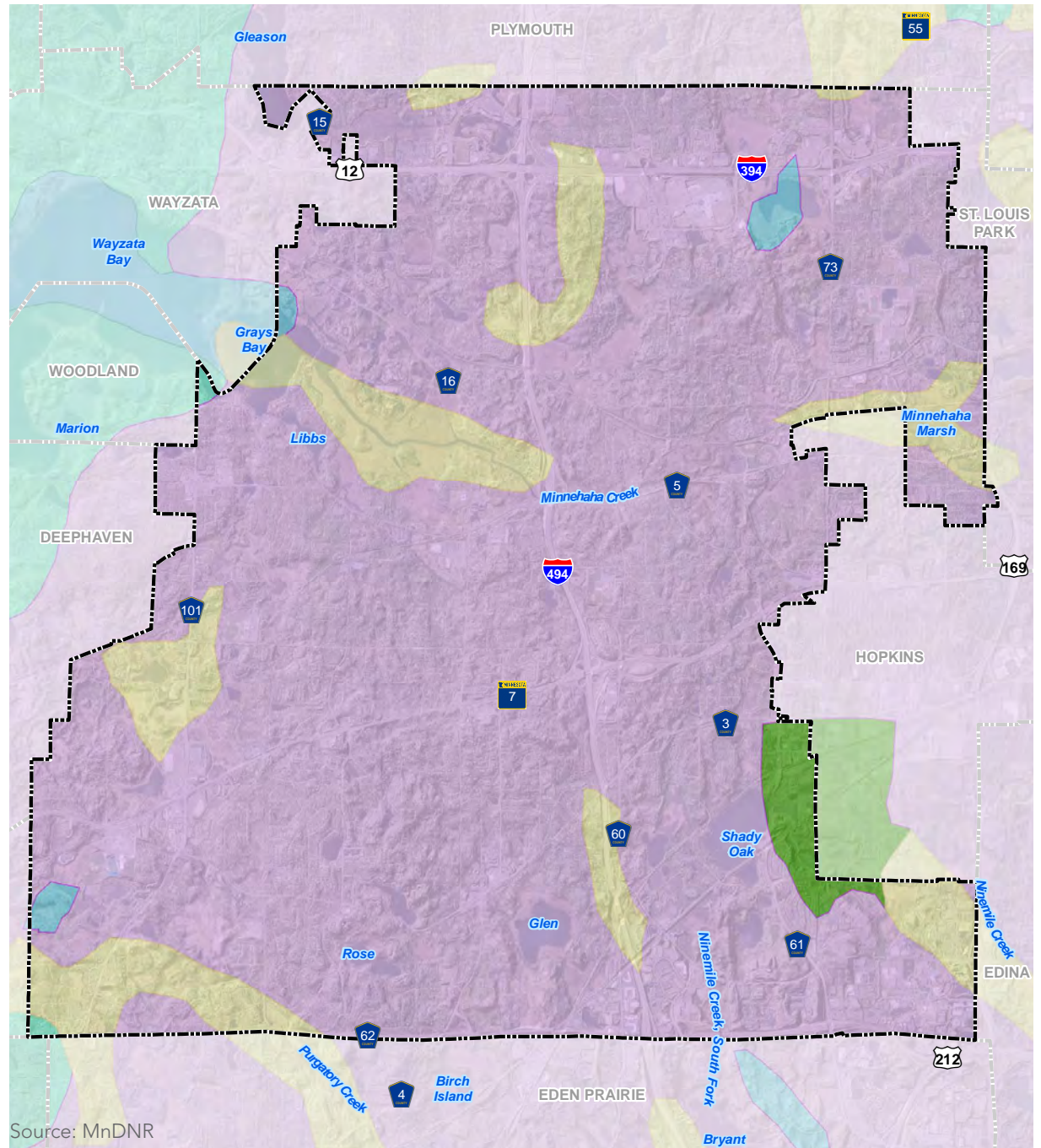


Figure 2.1 - Marschner Presettlement Vegetation Types (1846-1848)



## 2.2 Current Conditions

Figure 2.2 depicts present-day publicly owned natural areas in proximity to Minnetonka Boulevard. Only intentionally preserved landscapes reflect our natural heritage. It is important to preserve remaining natural areas and old-growth trees as places to learn about the natural landscape. Building from these landscapes we can further restore the urban fabric to enhance ecological quality and improve our quality of life.

The 1940 aerial photograph shows the agricultural landscape of the time. Open fields are visible as well as areas of scattered trees. These areas were often grazed. By this time agriculture had significantly impacted native plant communities.

The 2020 aerial photograph shows the current suburban landscape in the areas around Big Willow Park. Note the density of urban forest, which has greatly expanded since the end of agriculture.

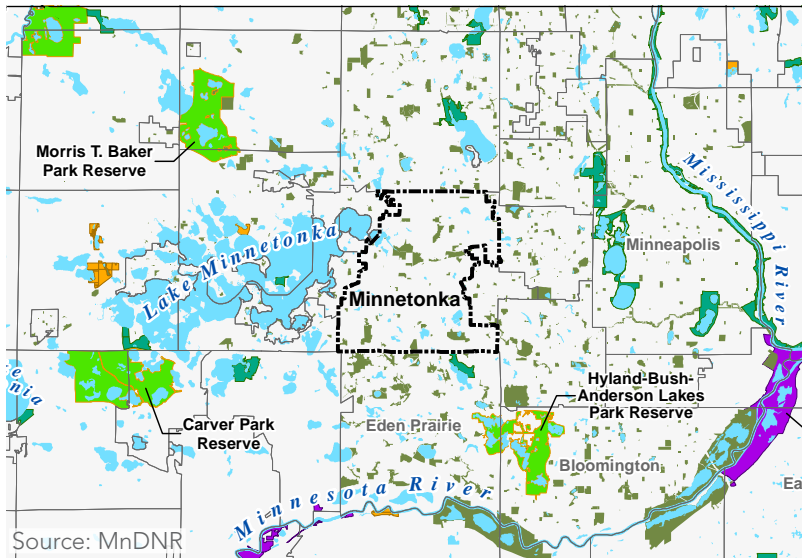


Figure 2.2 - Regional Natural Areas in Proximity to Minnetonka

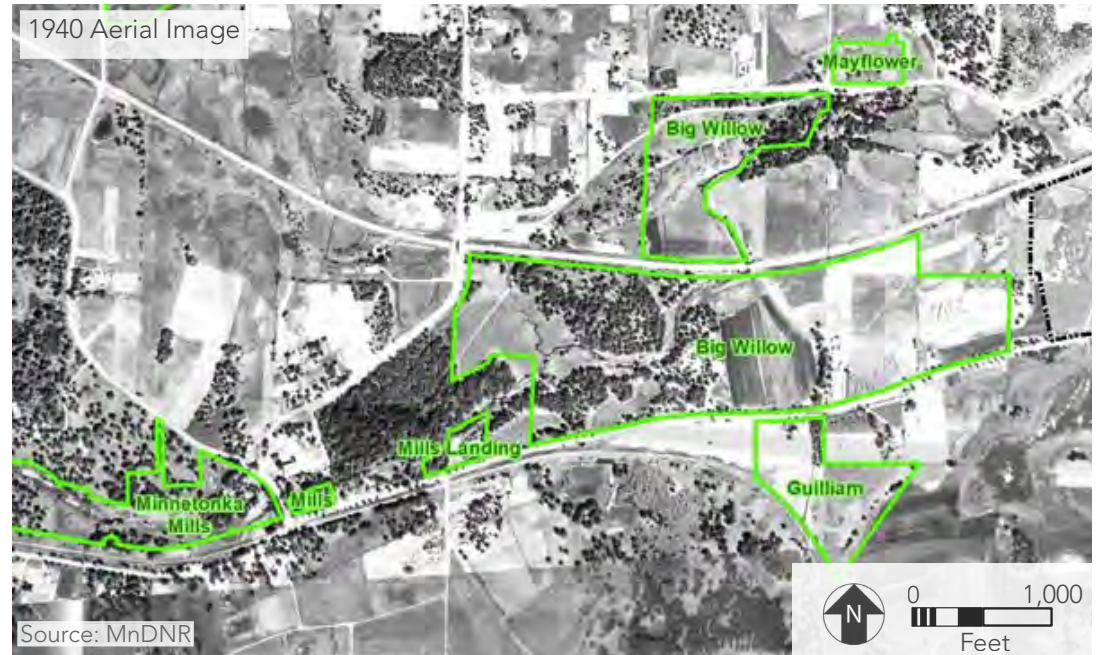
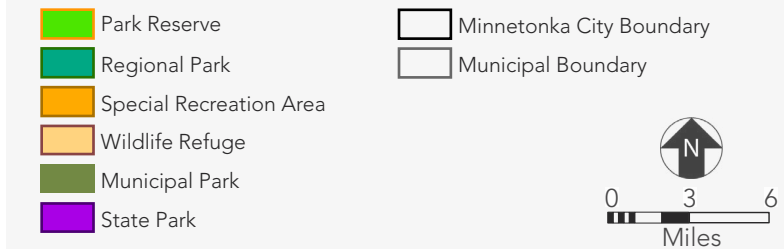
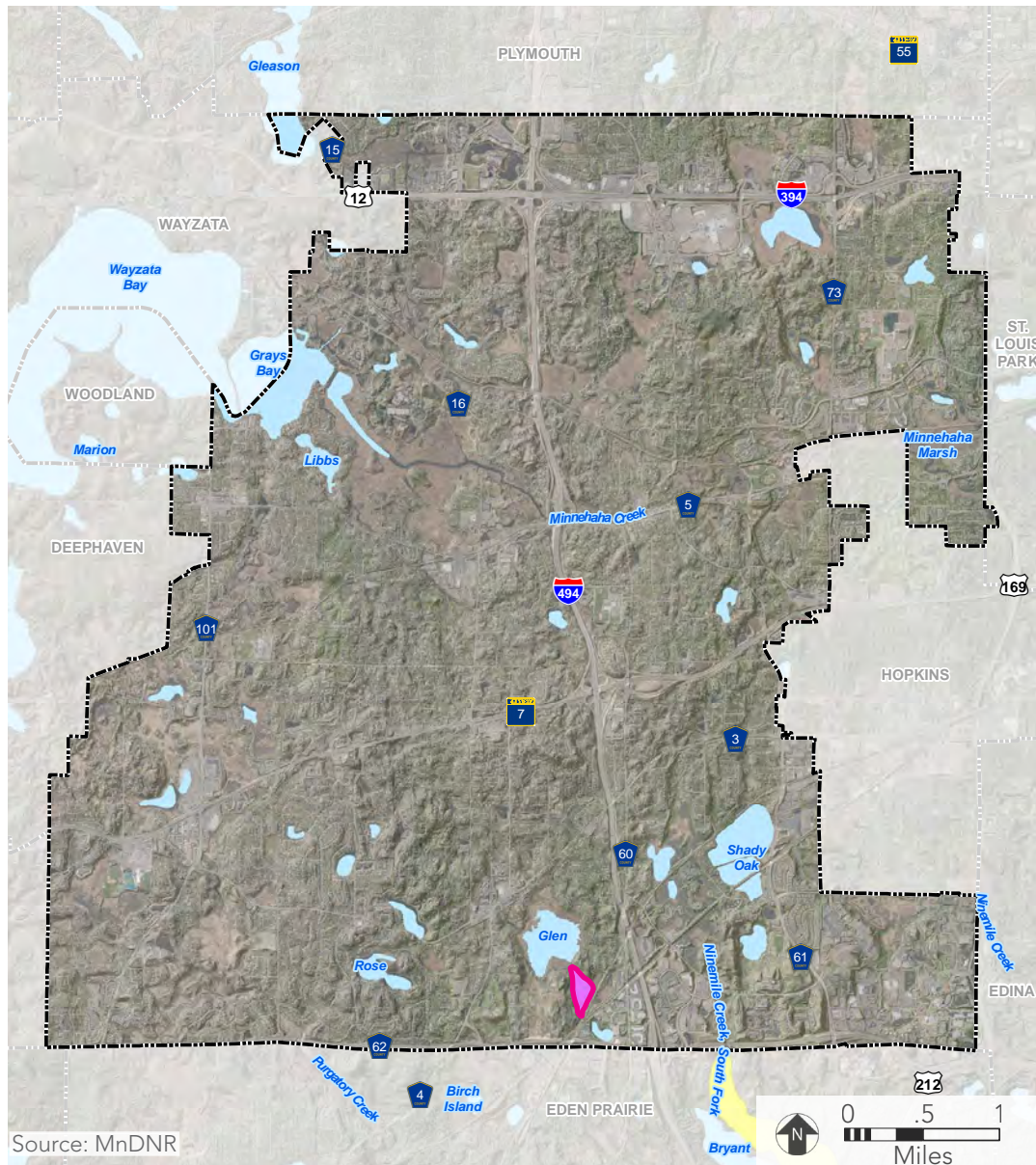


Figure 2.3 - Land Use Change

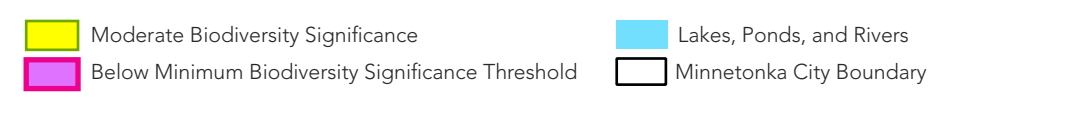
Minnetonka Park Boundary





Source: MnDNR

Figure 2.4 - Sites of Biodiversity Significance



Sites of Biodiversity Significance is a designation given by ecologists to rank biodiversity significance throughout the state of Minnesota. Assessment rankings are used to identify areas of native biological diversity significance to guide conservation and management practices. (Source: MnDNR)

**Sites of Biodiversity Significance designations:**

**Outstanding** - sites contain the best occurrences of the rarest species, the most outstanding examples of the rarest native plant communities, and/or the largest, most ecologically intact or functional landscapes.

**High** - sites contain very good quality occurrences of the rarest species, high-quality examples of rare native plant communities, and/or important functional landscapes.

**Moderate** - sites contain occurrences of rare species, moderately disturbed native plant communities, and/or landscapes that have strong potential for recovery of native plant communities and characteristic ecological processes.

**Below** - sites lack occurrences of rare species and natural features or do not meet MBS standards for outstanding, high, or moderate rank. These sites may include areas of conservation value at the local level, such as habitat for native plants and animals, corridors for animal movement, buffers surrounding higher-quality natural areas, areas with high potential for restoration of native habitat, or open space.

As depicted in this map, like other suburban communities, Minnetonka has only one site of biodiversity significance. This is the case because of land development since European settlement. First through the process of establishing agriculture and then urbanization, people have greatly altered Minnetonka, eliminating plant and animal species and degrading habitats. This has occurred throughout Minnesota and the United States. Minnetonka is now at a point of understanding how this effects our quality of life. We may choose to restore some of the original biodiversity, that requires consistent funding. It must be understood that continual management is necessary to restore biodiversity because of consistent degrading forces – from invasive species, to over browsing, to soil alterations, to climate change.

This document sets a framework for restoring biodiversity in Minnetonka. The success of this effort is up to the citizens of Minnetonka to support City leadership in directing financial resources to natural resources management.



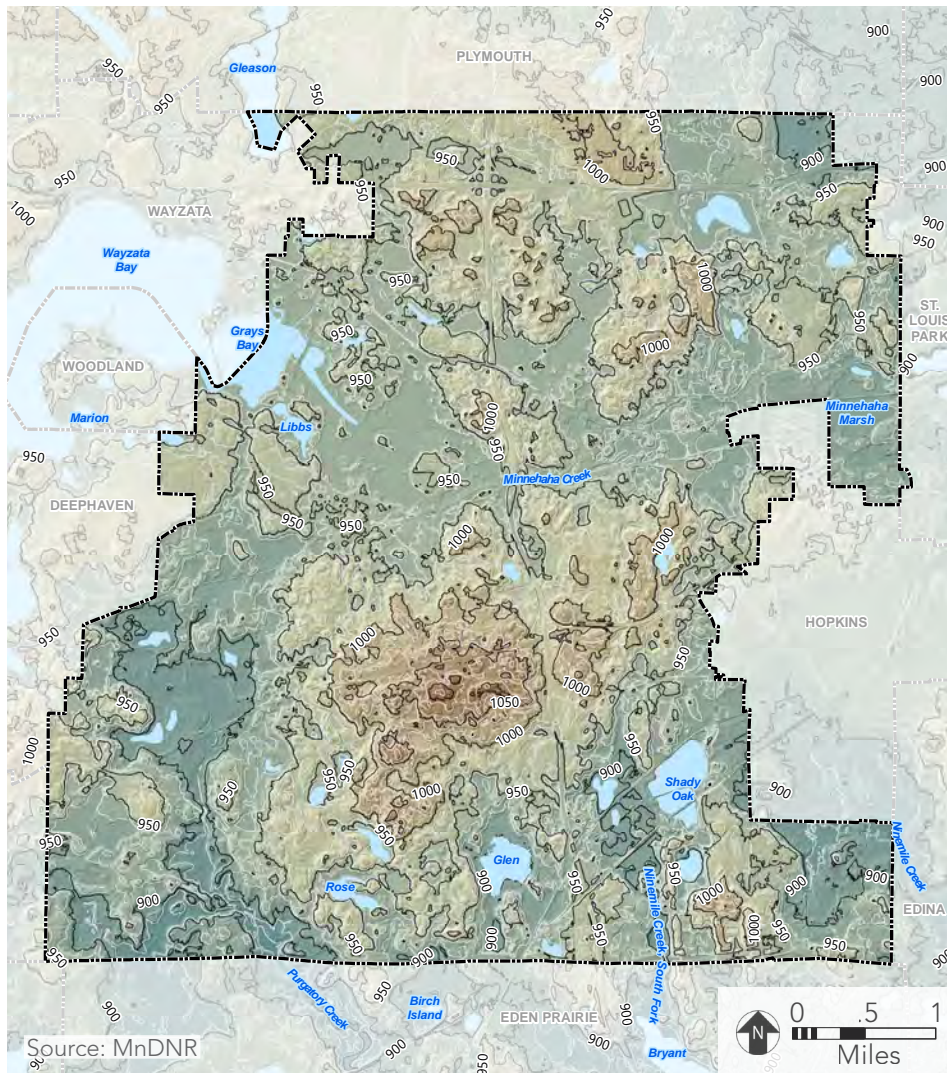
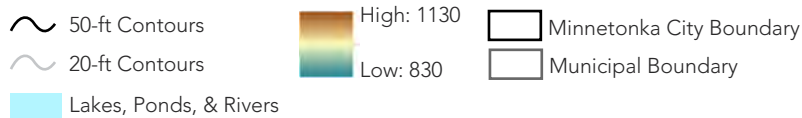


Figure 2.5 - Topography



### Topography and Soil Texture

These maps illustrate broad patterns of soil moisture and drainage. Areas that are high and dry contrast with low, wet areas of Minnetonka. Generally, silty and sandy soils are well drained, whereas soils containing clay hold water longer. Differing soil types and moisture levels support differing ecological communities.

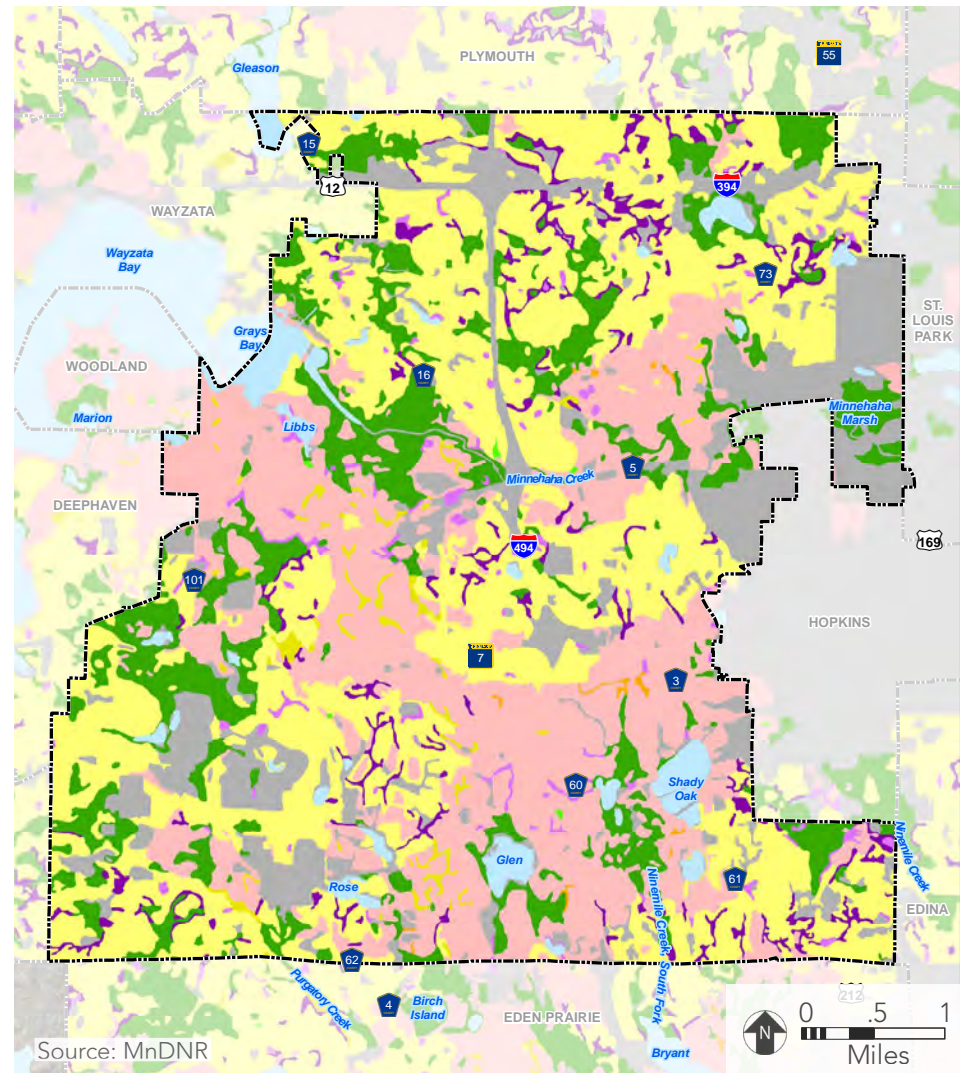
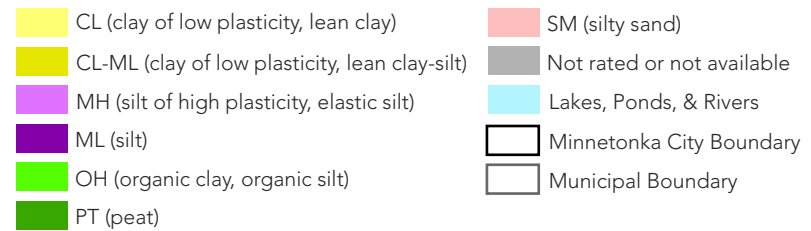


Figure 2.6 - USCS Soil Texture USCS (Unified Soil Classification System)





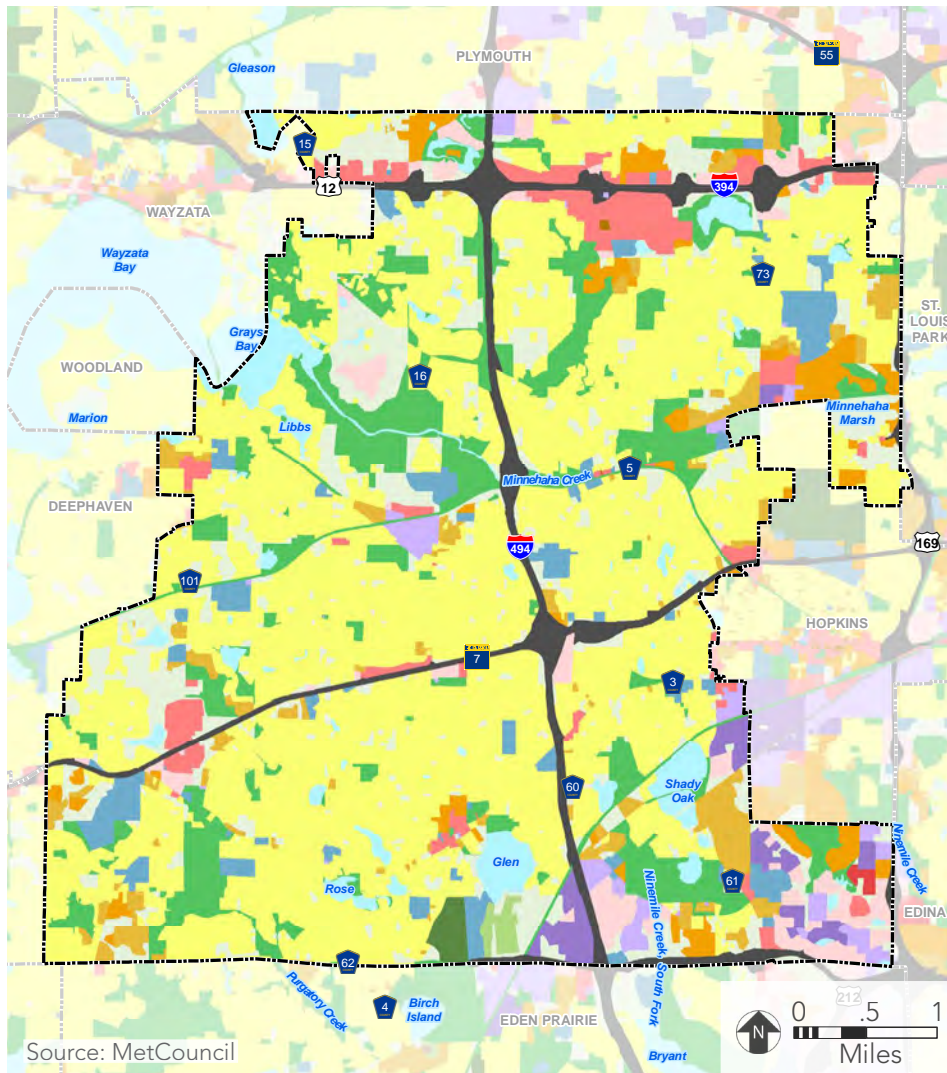


Figure 2.7 - Land Use (2016)

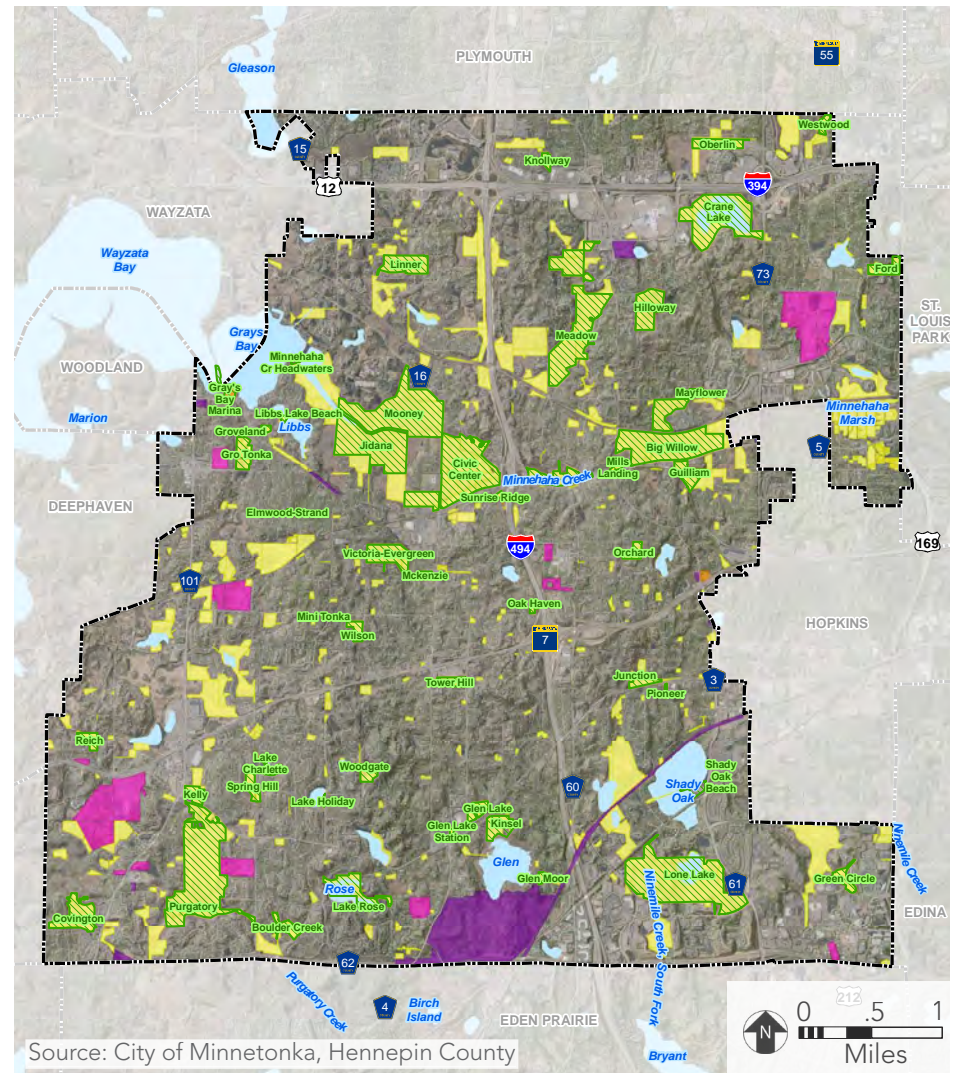


Figure 2.8 - Land Ownership



### Land Use (2016) and Land Ownership

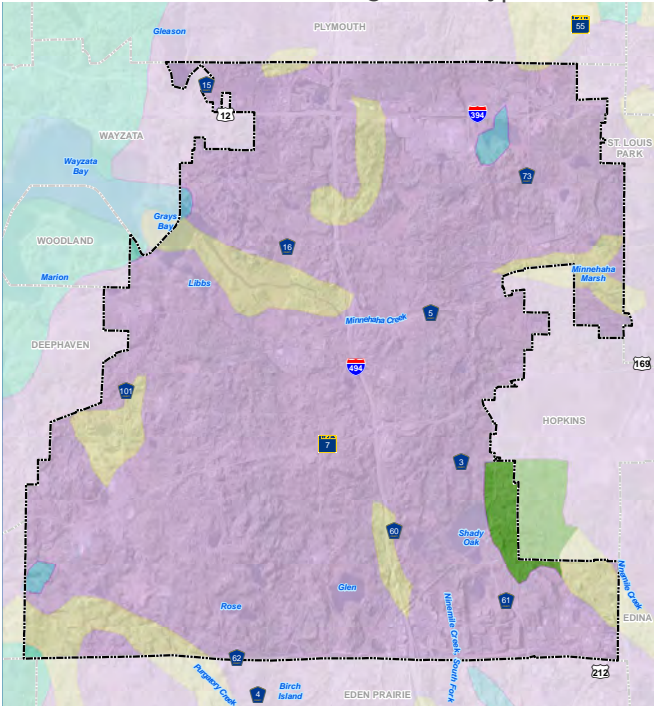
A majority of Minnetonka's land use is residential. Intensive commercial development exists along the I-394 corridor and in the southeast corner of the city. These land-use patterns present two opportunities for natural resources development: 1) to work with residential landowners to promote ecological improvement and 2) to further implement stormwater management facilities and expand the tree canopy in areas of intensive commercial development.



## Impervious Surface with Natural Water Bodies

The hydrology of Minnetonka has changed since the time of European settlement through suburban development and the construction of impervious surfaces. Today, nearly 28% of landcover in Minnetonka is impervious surface (Figure 2.9). The wet prairies identified on Figure 2.1 have, over time, received greater stormwater runoff - converting them to permanent wetlands holding larger volumes of water. Today, Minnetonka's wetland plant communities are degraded and invasive species of narrowleaf cattail and reed canary grass have greatly reduced biodiversity.

### Manschner Presettlement Vegetation Types



'Manschner Presettlement Vegetation Types  
 Wet Prairie     Oak Openings and Barrens

### Impervious Surface & Natural Water Bodies

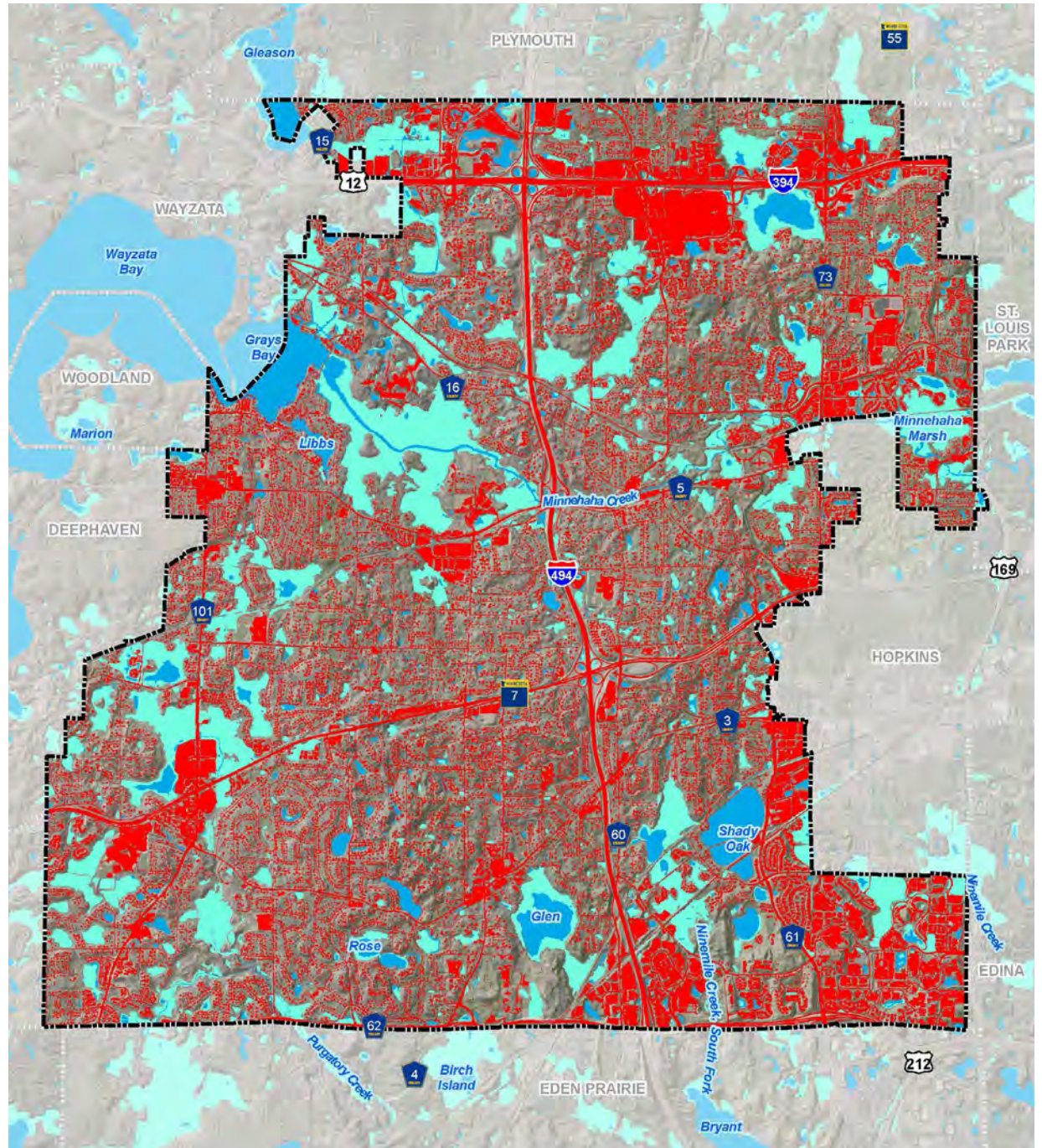


Figure 2.9 - Impervious Surface with Natural Water Bodies



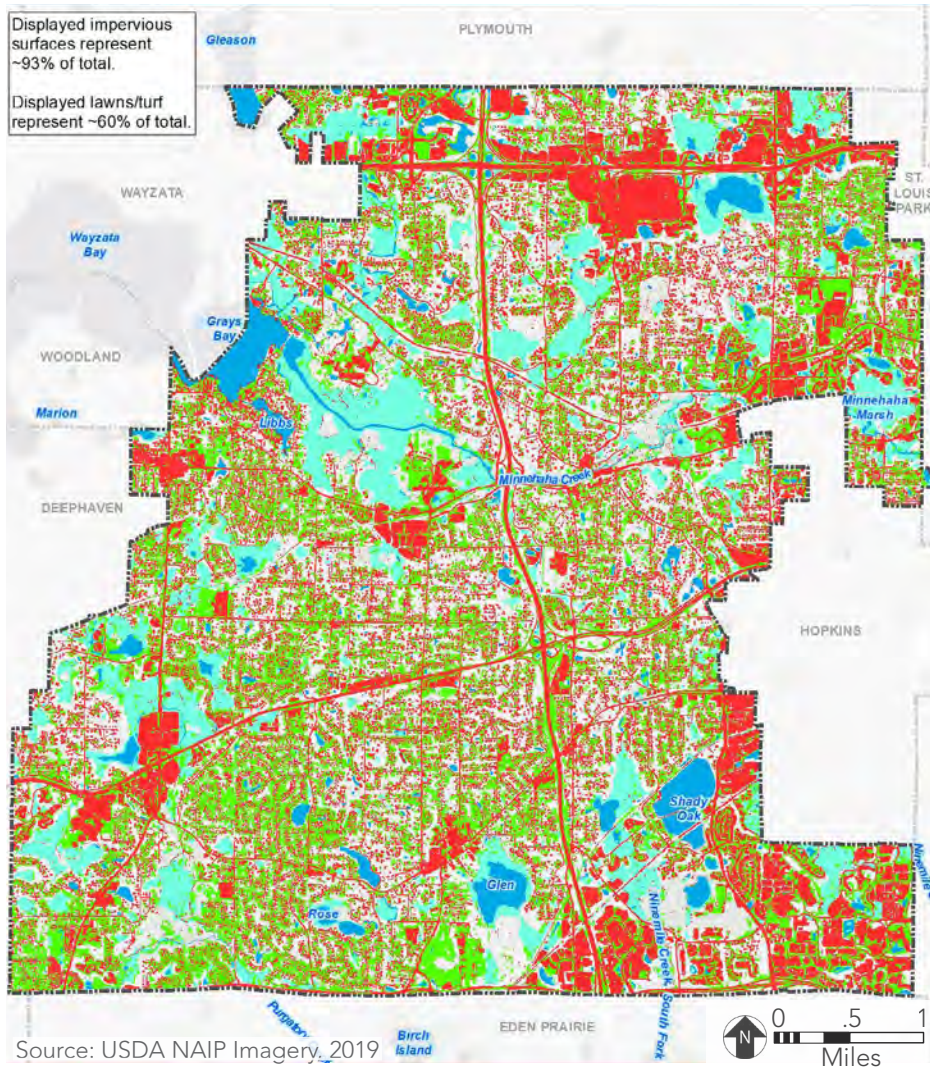


Figure 2.10 - Land Cover: Impervious, Turf, & Wetlands/Water

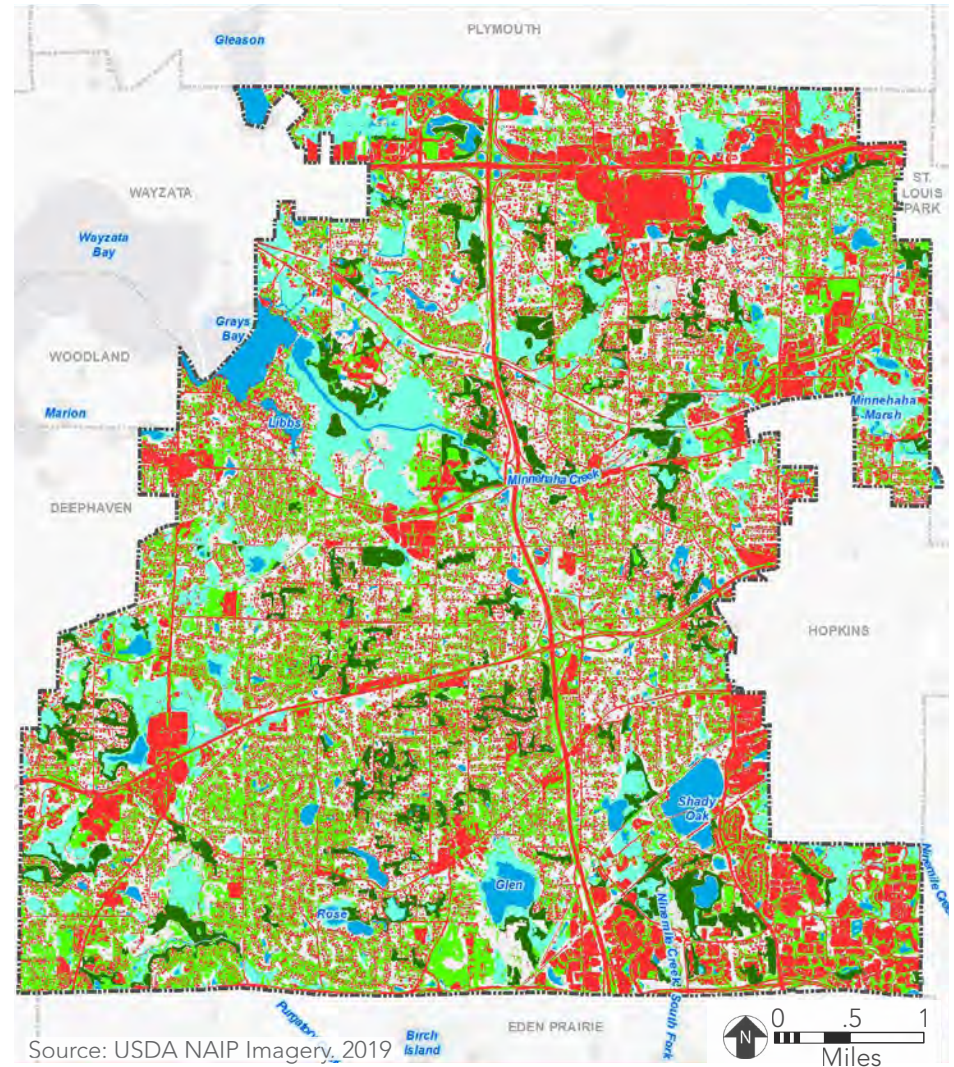
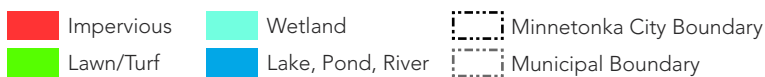


Figure 2.11 - Land Cover: Impervious, Turf, Woodlands, & Wetlands/Water



### Land Cover (Impervious, Lawns/Turf, and Natural Water Bodies)

These maps were developed from aerial imagery. The extent of lawn and impervious surface is underestimated because trees extend over houses, streets, driveways, and lawns obscuring land cover beneath. It is thought that lawn is underestimated by as much as 30% (confirmed through small-area ground truthing) and impervious surface is underestimated by approximately 10%.

Figure 2.10 shows the extent of lawn in comparison to natural woodlands. See Figure 2.12 for the extend of the entire urban forest. Although Minnetonka has a significant urban forest, most trees do not exist within a naturally reproducing woodland ecosystem. Most trees in lawns do not naturally reproduce but are intentionally planted. This has huge implications for Minnetonka's future forest.



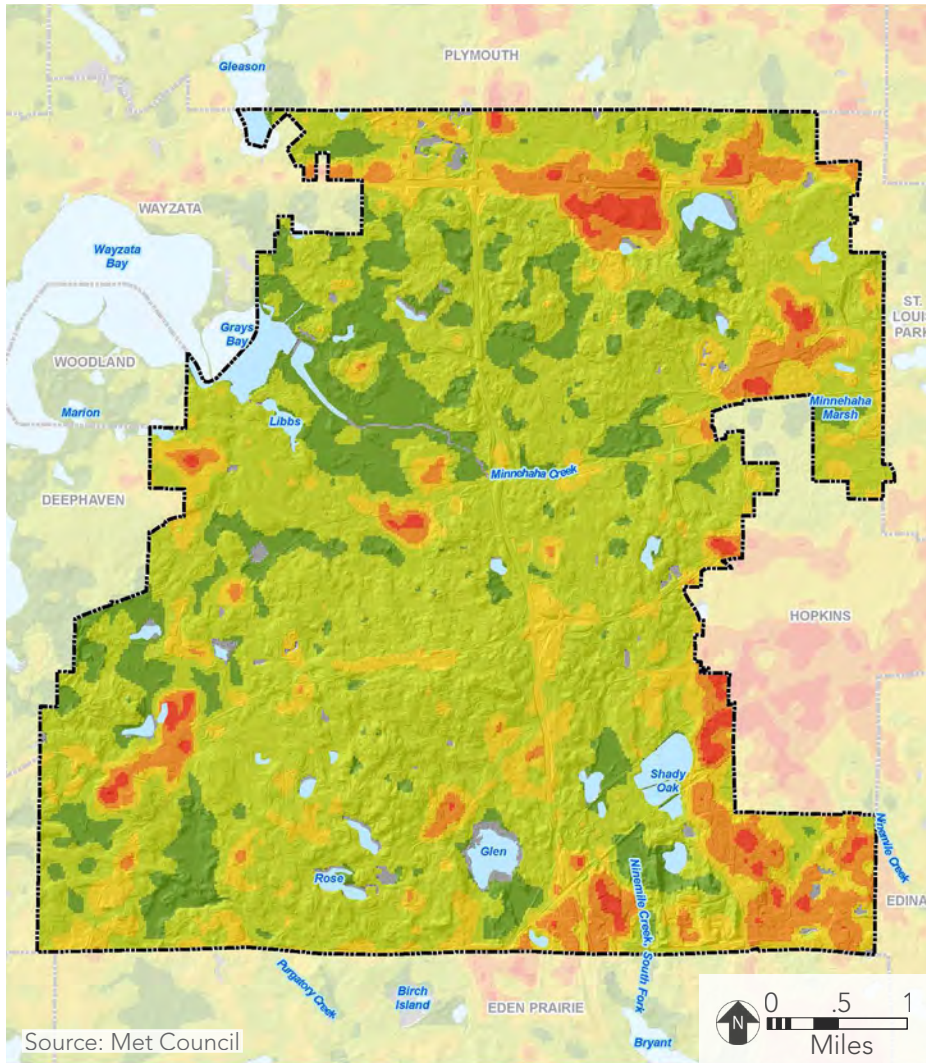


Figure 2.12 - Heat Island

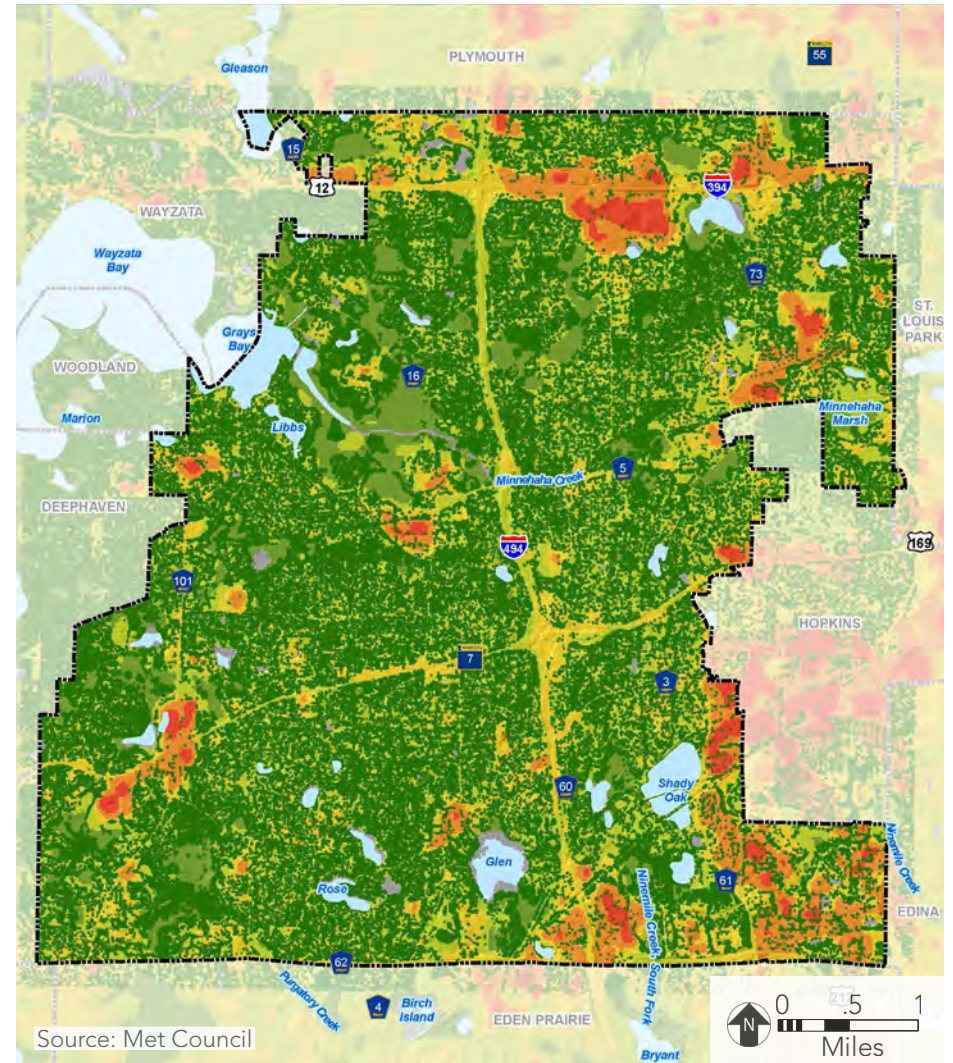
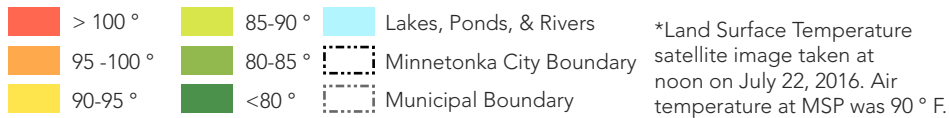
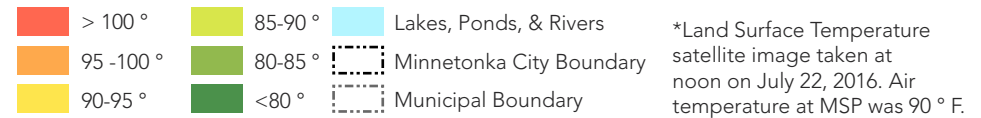


Figure 2.13- Heat Island & Tree Canopy



## Heat Island and Tree Canopy

These heat island maps were developed by the Metropolitan Council by recording and mapping land surface temperatures at a single point in time (July 22, 2016, 12pm) when the air temperature was 90 degrees. Red and orange areas depict greater heat accumulation. Higher surface temperatures correlate with greater impervious surface due to the capacity of hard surfaces to accumulate heat and the lack of trees. This can be mitigated by reducing impervious surfaces and by shading hard surfaces with trees. The payoff is reduced air conditioning, lower energy bills, less energy generation, and increased human comfort.



## 2.3 Natural Resources Inventory & Assessment of City Owned Property

### Plant Community Inventory

In 2020, natural resources investigations were conducted as part of this planning process. The goals of the assessment were to review the existing land cover classification data, assess ecological quality, and inspect for other environmental issues such as erosion, soil degradation and invasive species.

First, all City owned natural areas were identified and assessed through desktop analysis. Analysis consisted of reviewing GIS data related to land cover type, habitat quality, hydrology, soil type, topography, and historical vegetation. Specific data reviewed included but was not limited to the 2003 Minnesota Land Cover Classification (MLCCS) survey, the National Wetlands Inventory, the Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO), and the DNR's Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS).

Following the desktop analysis, field investigations were conducted by professional landscape architects who observed all the City-owned natural areas. While in the field, notes, photographs, and plant community boundaries were recorded on tablet computers using GIS mapping software. Investigators recorded information related to plant community type, species observed, percent of species cover, plant community quality, and environmental issues. During field checking, the MLCCS methodology, Version 5.4, and Minnetonka Ecological Communities Quality Ranking Description (Table 2.1) was utilized to classify existing land cover and determine habitat quality. The results of the field investigations were then compiled, analyzed, and mapped.

Table 2.1 - Ecological Communities Quality Ranking Description

| Quality Ranking | Priority                   | Ground Plane Species Diversity  |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---|
| A               | Preserve and Restore       | Remnant natural communities of high ecological value with unique or rare species compared to other Minnetonka and metro area parks. Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) designation or City-purchased land for the purpose of preservation based on MLCCS recommendations.   |
|                 | Continue Restoration       | Remnant natural communities with species richness and/or abundance, with minimal signs of disturbance or have recovered since the time of Euro-American settlement and subsequent superficial disturbances; with natural contours, without grading or topsoil removal and still clearly recognizable as native plant communities as identified in MLCCS. Invasive species composition is lower (5-40%) due to restoration management.   |
| B               | Restore with Conditions    | Natural communities or potential green corridors with variable diversity and variable signs of disturbance or past use (such as grading, soil removal, fill) and/or invasive plants, which may be priority for restoration. Continue restoration if reasonable long-term invasive species control measures are effective.   |
| C               | Lower Priority Restoration | Natural communities that may have been disturbed through actions such as clearing, fragmentation, grading, soil removal, dumping and/or the shrub and/or groundcover layers are dominated by invasive species (>50%). These communities generally have a low diversity of native plant species, although a native tree canopy may be intact. These communities are restorable, but a considerable effort and cost is required to restore and maintain native plant diversity. |

\* Disturbance within Minnetonka historically may have occurred through partial logging, clear cutting, plowing to create agricultural fields, or livestock grazing among other forms of disturbance.

### Minnetonka Ecological Communities Quality Ranking Inventory Examples

**A.** Jidana Park's remnant native woodland contains a valuable stand of oaks, hickory, ironwood, and other hardwood trees. The ground plane is mostly Pennsylvania sedge and contains little to no invasive species.

**B.** Ongoing buckthorn management has been occurring within Purgatory Park's woodland areas. Removing buckthorn allows for more sunlight and less competition for resources. This benefits tough and deer-resistant native woodland species. Bare soils, resprouting buckthorn and garlic mustard will be issues without ongoing management.

**C.** Previous land disturbance that occurred throughout Minnetonka has resulted in woodland understories dominated by buckthorn. These low-diversity woodlands provide very little forage and poor habitat for wildlife.



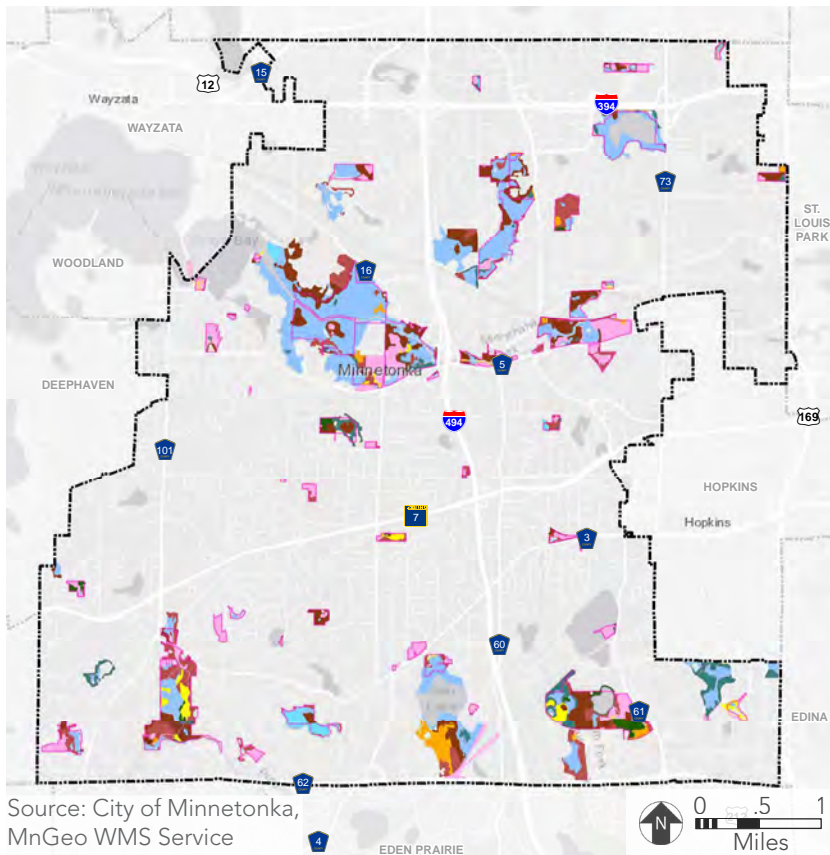


Figure 2.14 - Existing Plant Communities

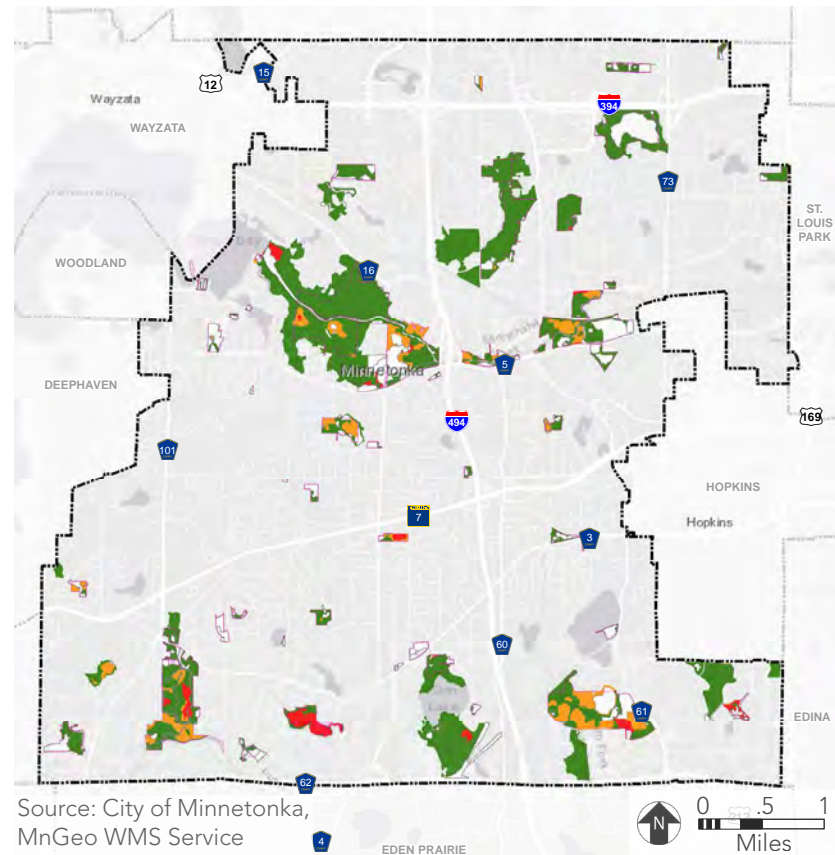


Figure 2.15 - Existing Plant Ecological Quality

- |                           |                        |                          |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Altered/Non-Native Forest | Grassland - Native     | Wetland - Non-Native     |
| Cultural                  | Grassland - Non-Native | Minnetonka City Boundary |
| Deciduous Forest          | Oak Forest             | Municipal Boundary       |
| Floodplain Forest         | Wetland - Native       | Minnetonka Park          |

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| A                          | Minnetonka City Boundary |
| B                          | Municipal Boundary       |
| C                          | Minnetonka Park          |
| NA (Cultural & Open Water) |                          |

### Existing Plant Communities and Ecological Quality

A 2020 inventory of native plant communities and a ranking of the ecological quality of those communities on City of Minnetonka land is depicted here. Ecological quality rankings are defined as follows:

**A.** Natural communities of high ecological quality. Human disturbance and invasive species are limited (invasive species <5%). Habitat structure is intact and native plant species diversity is high, but some areas may have slightly limited diversity. These communities should be protected, and disturbance should be minimized or undertaken with extreme care. Monitor these areas for invasive species and control as they establish.

**B.** Natural communities that show signs of disturbance since the time of Euro-American settlement but are still clearly recognizable as native plant communities. Invasive species encroachment is somewhat low (5–50%). These areas could be enhanced, or at least be managed to avoid further damage. Native plant community restoration is highly feasible.

**C.** Natural communities that have been disturbed through actions in the past, such as such as clearing or grazing. The shrub and/or groundcover layers are dominated by invasive species (>50%). These communities generally have a low diversity of native plant species, although a native tree canopy may be intact. These communities are restorable, but a greater effort is required.



## 2.4 Wildlife

### Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka

While no official survey data was used to determine the current status of wildlife in Minnetonka, it is assumed that wildlife populations are similar to those of typical urban, developed landscapes, and that restoring habitat will attract those wildlife species that depend on it for survival. Wildlife often found within the Minnesota River Valley and nearby urban areas include residential and migratory birds (Canada goose, mallard, blue-winged teal, etc.), reptiles (common garter snake, red-eared slider, snapping turtle, etc.), mammals (white-tailed deer, coyote, raccoon, opossum, bats, etc.), and amphibians (salamanders, frogs, and toads). These species are often generalists that can adapt to densely populated human areas with fragmented habitats.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resource (MnDNR) National Heritage Information System (NHIS) database identified four threatened or endangered species within Minnetonka: the rusty patched bumble bee, eastern spotted skunk, red-shouldered hawk, and the Blanding's turtle. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool is used for project planning by streamlining the environmental review process. The tool identifies listed species found within the county of a proposed project; therefore, the species are found within Hennepin County and may be found in Minnetonka as well. Three terrestrial species were identified by the IPaC tool: the northern long-eared bat (threatened), monarch butterfly (candidate for listing), and rusty-patched bumble bee (federally endangered). The USFWS classified land south of Minnetonka Boulevard as high potential zones where rusty-patched bumble bees are likely present, and low potential zones to the north.

Publicly sourced data, through eBird, were analyzed to identify areas with a high density of bird species. Six scattered hotspots, ranging from 29 to 89 species, were found along Interstate 494 and Minnetonka Boulevard. Locations with the highest bird diversity were Purgatory Park, Lone Lake Park, and Big Willow Park—with counts ranging from 100 to 133 different species. Minnetonka is within the Mississippi Flyway, used by 325 different bird species. Approximately 40% of shorebirds and waterfowl in North America (Three Rivers Park District 2020) and nearly 50% of the bird species in North America spend part of their lives in the flyway (National Audubon Society). The birds use Minnetonka waterbodies, from shallow marsh wetlands to open water lakes. Invasive aquatic vegetation, like hybrid cattails and purple loosestrife, reduce available habitat for water birds by choking out wetlands.

Data from iNaturalist, a publicly sourced database, and City survey efforts related to the rusty patched bumble bee includes 1,741 species observations since January 1, 2020. These observations identified 576 species in Minnetonka, and are comprised of the following:

- Birds – 230 observations of 65 different species, including wild turkeys, house finches, northern cardinals, and American robins.
- Amphibians – 85 observations of nine different species, including the American toad, tiger salamander, and northern leopard frog
- Reptiles – 41 observations of six different species, including the common garter snake, painted turtle, and common snapping turtle
- Mammals – 67 observations of 17 different species, including raccoon, white-tailed deer, eastern gray squirrel, and eastern chipmunk
- Insects and arachnids – 3,488 observations of 479 different species, including various bee, butterfly, and beetle species

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Threatened or Endangered Species



**Rusty Patched Bumble Bee**  
*Bombus affinis*



**Eastern Spotted Skunk**  
*Spilogale putorius*



**Red-shouldered Hawk**  
*Buteo lineatus*



**Blanding's Turtle**  
*Emydoidea blandingii*

Image Sources: All images are from USFWS - fws.gov  
Rusty-patched bumblebee - USFWS (Midwest Region)  
Eastern spotted skunk - Grayson Smith/USFWS  
Red-shouldered hawk - Lamar Gore/USFWS (Northeast Region)  
Blanding's Turtle - Courtney Celley/USFWS



The iNaturalist data also identified multiple species found in the NHIS and IPaC databases: 10 observations of the rusty-patched bumble bee, 13 observations of the monarch butterfly, and one observation a red-shouldered hawk. Considerations should be made before utilizing this data for management strategies because the data was not professionally obtained, which may lead to misidentification, favoritism for desirable species, and lack of data on elusive species.

Pollinators and other beneficial insects have been an area of concern; threats to these species are primarily due to loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation. Native prairies and oak savannas, once full of rich nectar and pollen-producing plants, have been replaced with buildings, pavement, and lawns. In the current residential landscape manicured lawns, often consisting of turfgrasses, have replaced native plants that support pollinators. Minnetonka's natural areas help support pollinator populations, but habitat fragmentation limits the resources required to support an abundance of these species. Since Minnetonka is located within high and low potential zones for the rusty-patched bumble bee, additional considerations should be taken prior to development projects to minimize impacts to the species, while the replacement of lawns (or portions of lawns) with native plants could replace destroyed habitat.

The increase in human growth and urban development has caused wildlife populations to differ greatly from the species that would historically have been found in Minnetonka. Natural disturbances, such as fire, have often been eliminated from urban settings, negatively impacting habitats dependent on these disturbances. Additionally, human encroachment and habitat destruction increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict and the labeling of certain species as nuisance animals or pests. These include white-tailed deer, raccoons, skunks, bats, and squirrels. Due to the local extinction of many predator species in the area, these populations often grow unchecked, resulting in more human-wildlife conflicts. For example, white-tailed deer in Minnetonka lack a natural predator, and populations are difficult to control. This leads to an increase in damages caused by herbivory and vehicle collisions. Additionally, geese are often viewed as pests, resulting in cities developing goose management plans. The highest number of human-geese conflicts are often seen near waterbodies with no natural buffer along the

shore. The reduction in suitable habitat and habitat fragmentation has led to many species experiencing a lower carry capacity, limiting how many individuals or species can be supported within the region.

Other threats to urban wildlife include pets, such as cats and dogs, that can wreak havoc on local wildlife populations. Dogs primarily impact mammalian populations, such as raccoons and squirrels, while free-ranging cats decimate small mammal and bird populations due to their instinct and drive to hunt. A study conducted by the Smithsonian Institution and the USFWS estimated that domestic cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion small mammals each year (S. Loss, T. Will, and P. Marra 2013). Additionally, threats to wildlife populations from human encroachment and development include collisions with buildings and vehicles, pollution (including light and noise), and lack of resources leading to inconsistent diets.

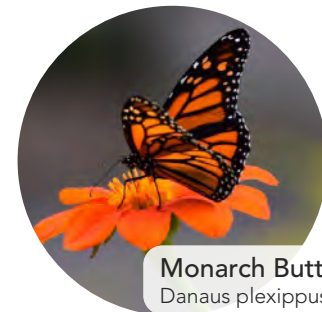
## Guidelines for Wildlife Management

- Do not intentionally feed deer and other wildlife.
  - » Feeding wildlife increases the chance of human-wildlife conflict because it causes wildlife to become more acclimated to humans. This includes leaving trash cans open and hand-feeding or leaving feed out for animals. Additionally, allowing fallen fruits from trees and shrubs to remain in yards increases the chances of conflict with nuisance or pest species.
  - » While bird feeders are the exception, careful considerations should be made to minimize negative impacts. These include regular cleaning and maintenance of feeders and baths, placing feeders away from windows and reflective surfaces, and removing feeders if regularly visited by potentially sick or diseased individuals. Landowners may also consider adding native plants that host insects and produce seeds, which are key sources of food for wildlife.
- Create habitat by planting a diversity of species, including trees, shrubs and other insect host plants.
  - » Care should be taken to ensure that habitat does not increase human-wildlife conflicts. For example, planting mast-producing tree species along busy roadways could potentially increase traffic accidents caused by deer.

- Transition from manicured lawns to native landscapes.
  - » Replacing lawns with native vegetation will provide additional habitat for insects and birds and create natural corridors for wildlife.
- Minimize habitat fragmentation.
  - » Reducing habitat fragmentation by creating wildlife corridors will allow wildlife to access additional resources and reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflict.
- Refer to the city's goose and deer management plans for addressing nuisance populations.
- Tree removal is recommended between November 1 and March 31 to ensure minimal impacts to the northern long-eared bat during roosting season.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Threatened or Candidate for Listing



**Monarch Butterfly**  
*Danaus plexippus*



**Northern Long-eared Bat**  
*Myotis septentrionalis*

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has identified two additional species of note that may be found in Minnetonka. The northern long-eared bat (threatened) and monarch butterfly (candidate for listing) are both found within Hennepin County.

Image Sources: All images are from USFWS - fws.gov  
Monarch Butterfly - City of Minnetonka  
Northern Long-eared Bat - USFWS - fws.gov (NPS/Steven Thomas)

## 2.5 Cultural Resources

People and nature are inseparable. Nature provides materials we use, services that sustain human communities and the planet, and experiences that restore our spirits.

Among small cities in Minnesota, the City of Minnetonka is unique in having a dedicated Natural Resources division. Nine full time staff members, with the support of seasonal interns, provide leadership and expertise in:

- Forestry
- Wetlands and water quality management
- Habitat restoration and invasive species control
- Construction review, monitoring, and compliance
- Outreach, education and community engagement

The Natural Resources division has a \$1.8 million annual budget that supports policy development, partnerships, and implementation of strategies to protect natural resources on public lands. This work includes identifying and planning for future challenges – such as climate change and emerging invasive species – and identifying opportunities to prevent or reduce them. Because a large proportion of the city's natural areas are on private property, the Natural Resources division also emphasizes programs that inform and empower residents to take action.

Through Minnetonka's annual community survey and the 2021 Parks & Open Space planning process, residents shared these perceptions of Minnetonka's natural environment and their priorities to maintain or improve it. Below are common perceptions identified from surveys:

- Natural areas are important to the overall quality of life in Minnetonka; many residents regularly visit parks, trails and open spaces.
- Minnetonka's open spaces offer a restorative connection to nature, nature-focused activities such as hiking and birdwatching, outdoor exercise, and places to enjoy with family and friends.
- Most of Minnetonka's natural areas are in good or excellent condition.
- The City is doing just the right amount to protect the environment – but we must continue to focus on (1) trees and the community forest; (2) invasive species; and (3) water quality and stormwater management. Many residents are also concerned about native plant diversity, wildlife habitat, planning for climate resilience, and expanding the amount of restored area (including connectivity between parcels).
- Residents are divided about the best use of Minnetonka's natural areas. About 46 percent feel that natural areas should be protected, with low-impact activities allowed in designated areas, while 42 percent want a balance between protection and recreational uses. Smaller numbers of residents want either full preservation (with no recreational access) or no preservation to allow wider recreational access.
- The top suggestions to involve residents in natural resources management include more volunteer opportunities for groups and individuals, improved access to programs for underserved areas of the community, and educational programs on tree selection, planting and maintenance.



City of Minnetonka is unique in having nine full time staff members in its Natural Resources division with an annual budget of \$1.8 million that supports policy development, partnerships, and implementation of strategies to protect natural resources on public lands. Above are few of the many species Minnetonka's Natural Resource division is working to support.

Image Source: City of Minnetonka





# 3

## Natural Resources Issues and Opportunities

Minnetonka has addressed natural resources issues for decades through land preservation, natural area restoration, and protection ordinances and policies. The City also created a Natural Resources division with staff fully dedicated to natural resources management. This positive momentum will continue as the City addresses further impacts to natural resources. Current issues of concern and opportunities for improvement are discussed throughout this chapter.



## 3.1 Habitat Fragmentation

In every city, original landscapes have been impacted by highways, homes, industrial and commercial buildings, and parking lots. It is important to recognize that this supports our lifestyles and economies. Human impacts have greatly diminished habitat. The results are negative impacts to clean water, clean air, natural heritage, and beautiful vistas. The process of bisecting and isolating habitats is called habitat fragmentation and results in isolated "islands" of habitat that are highly vulnerable to disturbances and stressors.

As our climate changes, the stresses of heat, heavier precipitation and drought impact the remaining habitat islands of Minnetonka's natural areas. This will force some species out of the region and cause new species to colonize. A solution to recolonization is to create corridors of habitat that connect islands of remnant natural areas. Making this happen in Minnetonka is tremendously difficult because it means removing portions of the urban fabric. A viable alternative is to introduce new species to islands of habitats (parks), especially plant species, to facilitate ecological changes in response to climate change.




Thoughtful development and upgrading of existing City infrastructure can reduce habitat fragmentation through the creation of corridors that can start to relink habitat islands.

### Opportunities:

- Protect existing Minnetonka habitats.
- Expand native plant community restoration efforts on City properties. Prioritize high-quality areas and areas with previous restoration efforts. Focus on expanding core habitat (natural areas away from roads/structures) and corridors (along waterways).
- Control invasive species that will likely fill niches left open as native species no longer tolerate changing growing conditions.
- Monitor for species that may be disappearing from Minnetonka natural areas.
- Determine which species native to regions beyond Minnetonka, particularly from warmer climates, might best colonize Minnetonka natural areas to improve biodiversity as the climate continues to change.
- Develop plans to assist the migration of plant species through planting into Minnetonka natural areas. Trees and herbaceous plants are a good place to begin because they are the basis for wildlife habitats.
- Increase public awareness of habitat fragmentation through education and outreach. Encourage residents to create habitat through planting in their yards.



Figure 3.1 - Habitat Fragmentation

 Habitat Boundary

Bisecting and isolating habitats through the process of suburban development is called habitat fragmentation. The diagram above does not represent a physical location but rather illustrates how habitat fragmentation can occur through development over time. Habitat fragmentation results in isolated "islands" of habitat that are highly vulnerable to disturbances and stressors.



## 3.2

### Reduced Native Plant Diversity

Native plant diversity and abundance have greatly declined from historical levels and are on a trajectory to continue to diminish in Minnetonka. Most local extinctions have occurred in the last half of the 19th century as the land was converted to agriculture and then to residential development in the 20th century. Today, populations are declining due to invasive species encroachment, predation, new development within remaining natural areas, competing priorities for people, and climate change (as described below).

Of note, in Minnetonka, the forest floors

of park woodlands were once covered in an abundance of wildflowers, ferns, and sedges. Today, much of the herbaceous layer has been impacted by many forces resulting in limited cover. Highly diverse stands of herbaceous plants exist only minimally in Minnetonka parks today (see Figure 2.15).

#### Opportunities:

- Minimize soil disturbance when developing parks and other City lands. Prioritize soil protection and restoration as part of all City development projects.
- Restore a variety of native habitats. Oak savanna was the dominant presettlement habitat of Minnetonka, yet today, almost none remains. This and other habitat types could be restored to increase ecological diversity and complexity.
- Continue to work with organizations and community members to achieve natural resources goals presented in Section 1.1 and support natural resources protection efforts in the surrounding ecoregion.
- Allocate additional resources to support natural resources management on City properties to build on past restoration successes. Leverage grant opportunities whenever applicable.
- Increasingly implement fire as a management tool, especially in woodlands and savannas.
- More aggressively manage existing invasive species.
- Monitor and aggressively control new invasive species. For example, oriental bittersweet is just establishing in the region.

- Develop a “pest detector” program for volunteers to scout new invasive species and report to the MnDNR and Minnetonka natural resources staff.
- Use integrated pest management (IPM) principles to guide thoughtful and limited pesticide use.
- Identify and re-introduce locally extinct plants as appropriate to increase species diversity.
- Provide incentives for private landowners to control invasive vegetation on their property. Introduce cost-share programs for landowners who plant native plants.
- Continue managing white-tail deer populations to protect plant communities from over-browsing.



Land dominated by invasive plant species loses native plant diversity, such as in this dense stand of common buckthorn. Besides a lack of native tree species, notice the lack of herbaceous diversity covering the ground.



### 3.3 Soil Degradation

Soil in its natural state is loose, easily crumbled, and contains a healthy populations of microbes and fungi that, in turn, support diverse native plants. Ideally, soils comprise approximately 25 percent air, 25 percent water, 47 percent minerals and 3 percent organic matter. Healthy soils readily infiltrate precipitation and circulate air which supports vigorous plant growth.

With urban development, much of our urban soils have been bulldozed, driven upon (compacted), or scraped away. The damaged and compacted soil left behind lacks oxygen, sheds precipitation, lacks healthy populations of microbes, and struggles to support plants. Pesticides and fertilizers spread on landscapes further damage soil life, which also results in soil compaction. In addition, the soils of natural areas are impacted by earthworms (see section 3.7, below), resulting in compaction and erosion.

Soil degradation is common throughout the U.S., but measures can be taken to reduce impacts and regenerate soils. Many benefits and cost savings result from improving soil quality. These benefits include healthier trees, reduced tree-maintenance costs, better pavement shading (cooling cost savings), and deeper root systems for drought tolerance and carbon sequestration. Improved soil quality also results in cleaner water bodies due to reduced pollutant runoff and erosion, and healthier vegetation resistant to disease and pests. Healthy soils also improve groundwater recharge because porous soils increase stormwater infiltration.

#### Opportunities:

- Continue to promote soil protection/improvement.
- Continue with City efforts to reduce pesticide and fertilizer use on public properties and right of ways.
- Initiate soil regeneration practices on city-sponsored construction projects.
- Educate private property owners on the importance of soil regeneration and low-input lawn maintenance.
- Educate private property owners about planting lawn alternatives that can sequester carbon, reduce fossil fuel use, build soil and add pollinator habitat.



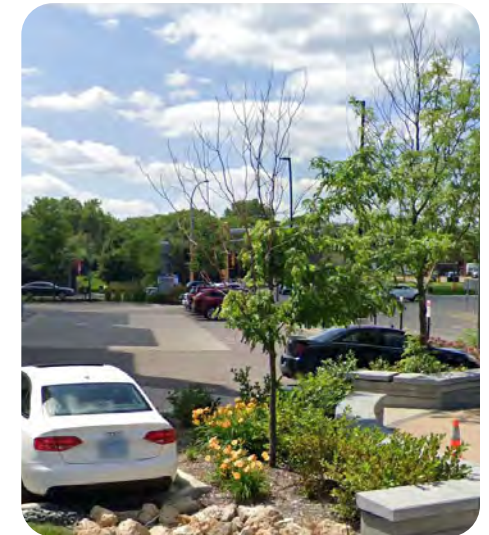
These images compare a typical understory ground cover (left) with an earthworm infested ground cover (right). Earthworms are destructive to the soil structure as they consume vast amounts of ground surface organic matter. This results in soil moisture and nutrient loss and prevents the reproduction of native tree and wildflower species.

### 3.4 Community Forest Alterations

The term community forest ecosystem includes not only Minnetonka's trees but the entire environment from which trees grow: water, air, soil, microbes, insects, wildlife, shrubs, tree seedlings, ferns, and wildflowers. Both growing situations require management to ensure a healthy tree canopy for Minnetonka. Trees within the built environment require active planting and soil management to nurture their health.

Minnetonka's community forest ecosystem is facing several challenges. Tree growth in developed areas, for example in parking lot islands, is challenged by limited rooting space. It is important to provide a significant volume of soil when planting these trees to support them

to maturity. Insect damage, disease, and structural damage also negatively impact Minnetonka's community forest despite diligent efforts by Minnetonka's natural resources staff. Emerald ash borer and diseases on oaks are impacting the community forest, resulting in expensive removal costs. Property owners' and developers' limited knowledge can also limit tree diversity and proper care of existing trees and woodlands. Continue to provide tree management information to Minnetonka property owners would improve the quality of the community forest ecosystem.



A parking island tree struggling with limited rooting space becomes susceptible to insect damage, disease, structural damage, and drought.

Our changing climate is presenting conditions that challenge the health of individual trees and woodland systems. We rely on trees to shade streets and buildings to mitigate the urban heat island effect. Areas of the City most affected by urban heat islands are sparsely covered by trees (see Urban Heat Island below). This could be a primary focus of new tree plantings.

Native woodlands are also facing challenges. Woodlands naturally go through a progression of change as they mature, called succession, where a series of tree species establish, mature, die, and are replaced with other species. This natural process is inhibited in Minnetonka (as throughout the metro area) by several factors. The problem is with native plant re-establishment. Minnetonka's oak woodlands are not regenerating. Oak seedlings are eliminated or out-competed in a variety of ways. Herbivory by deer, rabbits, and rodents has a significant impact. Earthworms voraciously consume duff (decomposing leaf litter) on the forest floor, which is necessary for the reproduction of many species of trees and woodland wildflowers. Invasive species out-compete young native species or prevent their germination through allelopathic processes (a common biological phenomenon by which one organism produces biochemicals that influence the growth, survival, development, and reproduction of other organisms).

#### Opportunities:

- Make Minnetonka's heat islands (see Figure 2.12 & Figure 2.13) priority tree-planting areas. Open pavements where possible and develop appropriate soil volumes.
  - Restore woodlands and other native plant communities as per the Park Restoration Plans presented in Appendix A.
  - Further fund disease management programs.
  - Further fund and systematize tree pruning efforts.
  - Continue planting trees on public land.
    - » Consider altering policies to allow tree planting within 15–20 feet of streets.
    - » Continue to increase species diversity.
  - Continue and expand the replacement of trees lost insects, flooding and drought.
  - Increase volunteer tree-planting events.
  - Expand the city's annual tree sale to increase tree planting on private property.
  - Grow trees less commonly planted in the city's new gravel bed nursery, such as native oaks or climate-adaptive species.
  - Develop a climate-adapted tree list.
- Continue the deer management program to protect young trees.
  - Develop a tree auditing program (analogues to an energy audit) to instruct property owners on the first steps for improving tree growth.
  - Expand the community forest ecosystem education initiative.
    - » Advocate for planting and preservation of the right tree in the right place.
    - » Advocate for increased species diversity and the planting of appropriate native trees.
  - Continue to support research to inform urban forestry best practices.
    - » Support the conservation arboriculture study to preserve heritage trees.
    - » Support field studies such as practices to protect bur oaks from bur oak blight (BOB), street tree protection, and wood utilization.
  - Enhance the urban forest monitoring initiative.
    - » Monitor for new pests and evaluate current insect and disease levels.
    - » Monitor the species planted on public and private properties.
    - » Look for shifts in species composition in select Minnetonka woodlands.



Parking lots like these in Minnetonka are an opportunity for pavement reduction and the introduction of trees in parking lot islands.



The parking lot islands at Minnetonka Civic Center demonstrate the benefits of shading pavement, collecting stormwater, and providing a pleasant environment.



The Minnetonka Community Forest Ecosystem includes not only Minnetonka's tree canopy but the entire above and below ground urban forest environment (water, air, soil, humus, microbes, insects, wildlife, midstory trees, shrubs, tree seedlings, ferns, and wildflowers). The community forest reaches across the City from highly developed commercial areas, through residential neighborhoods, to natural woodlands.



## 3.5 Pollinator Species

Across the U.S., habitat for many pollinator species has been degraded or eliminated; with our growing population, this trend is increasing. Pollinators are an important set of species whose habitat can expand within Minnetonka. Native plant community restoration provides habitat for wild bees, butterflies and moths, beetles, wasps and ants, hummingbirds and other species that pollinate flowers. Planting food sources in the landscape and preserving or creating nesting and overwintering habitats for these species will support their survival and maintain their diversity.

### Opportunities:

- Continue to enforce the native plant requirement within the landscape ordinance.
- Include a diversity of pollinator plant species in all City landscape projects, including trees and shrubs.
- Continue working to restore native plant communities in Minnetonka parks and eliminate invasive species that displace pollinator host plants.
- Formalize an annual native plant sale, offering native wildflowers, grasses and sedges that provide food for pollinators.
- Ensure that the annual tree sale includes trees and shrubs that are nectar sources and host plants for pollinators.
- Continue to educate residents on the value of pollinator species and how to enhance and restore pollinator habitat on their properties.
- Provide an incentive program for property owners to plant to plant nectar sources and host plants on their property.

## 3.6 Invasive Species

An invasive species is an organism introduced to a new region, accidentally or intentionally, which negatively impacts the economy, environment or human health. Invasive plants displace native plants and degrade wildlife habitat by eliminating or displacing cover and food sources. Invasive species can also cause topsoil erosion, leading to the degradation of water quality in lakes and streams. They often establish in previously disturbed areas and form single-species stands that limit movement through dense or thorny growth. Invasive species that have colonized in Minnetonka include (but are not limited to):

**Upland:** garlic mustard, black locust, Siberian elm, common buckthorn, Tartarian honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, Amur maple, Norway maple, yellow and white sweet clover, Japanese hedge parsley, common burdock, wild parsnip, leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, creeping Charlie, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, crown vetch, alfalfa, and smooth brome.

**Wetland and Lakeshores:** narrowleaf cattail, yellow iris, purple loosestrife, common reed, and reed canary grass.

Minnetonka natural resources staff diligently control invasive plant species, especially common buckthorn, Tartarian honeysuckle, and garlic mustard in parks. It is important to watch for newly arriving invasive species identified on the MN DNR Early Detection Watch List. Species on this list have limited distribution in Minnesota but have been identified as high risk for broad establishment. Some species on the list include black swallow-wort, British yellowhead, Dalmatian toadflax, giant hogweed, Grecian foxglove, tree

of heaven, teasel, Japanese hops, and multiflora rose. This list is dynamic. As of the summer of 2020, these species were not observed in Minnetonka parks.

### Opportunities:

- Further fund a comprehensive invasive species management program. Pursue grants to supplement funding.
- Minimize the extent of soil disturbance when developing in parks and on other City property. Prioritize soil protection and restoration as part of all City development projects.
- Continue restoring native plant communities to promote native plant diversity and potentially out-compete some invasive plants.
- Continue to use volunteers to control invasive species within parks.
- Monitor and aggressively control new invasive species. For example, oriental bittersweet is just establishing in the region. Now is the time to get ahead of this newly introduced invasive species with diligent monitoring and immediate control upon discovery.
- Develop a Pest Detector Program, using volunteers to scout for new invasive species and report to the MNDNR and Minnetonka natural resources staff.
- Use integrated pest management (IPM) principles to guide thoughtful and limited pesticide use.
- Provide incentives for private landowners to control invasive vegetation on their property.
- Teach park users about the impacts of invasive species and show them how they can be identified and controlled.



**Garlic Mustard**  
*Celastrus orbiculatus* Thunb



**Purple Loosestrife**  
*Lythrum salicaria*



**Spotted Knapweed**  
*Centaurea stoebe*



**Oriental Bittersweet**  
*Celastrus orbiculatus*



**Canada Thistle**  
*Cirsium arvense*

Image Sources:  
USDA Forest Service - [fs.usda.gov](https://fs.usda.gov)  
iNaturalist - [inaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org)  
Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board - [nwcb.wa.gov](https://nwcb.wa.gov)  
Minnesota Wildflowers - [minnesotawildflowers.info](https://minnesotawildflowers.info)  
Invasive Species Council of British Columbia - [bcinvasives.ca](https://bcinvasives.ca)



## 3.7 Native Plant Herbivory

Herbivory and overbrowsing are impacting Minnetonka's natural areas in many ways. Overbrowsing occurs because of an imbalance between predators and prey. There is a lack of predators (for good reason) in Minnetonka, and an overabundance of native herbivores such as deer, rabbits, rodents, and invasive earthworms results in overgrazing.

Deer overabundance is an issue throughout the region. Deer are significantly impacting native tree, shrub, and wildflower populations with their voracious appetites. Overbrowsing prevents these plants from regenerating; we lose the beauty of woodland wildflowers, lose native tree reproduction, and have reduced food sources for pollinators.

Deer herbivory is compounded by earthworm activity that limits vegetation regeneration. Earthworms are an invasive species not native to the Midwest. Our forests did not evolve in the presence of earthworms, which rapidly consume the decomposing leaf litter (duff) on the forest floor, leaving it bare by mid-summer. This results in soil moisture and nutrient loss and prevents the reproduction of native tree and wildflower species that require the protection of the duff to regenerate. Forests colonized by earthworms lack wildflowers, ferns, and young native trees. Unfortunately, there are no effective earthworm management techniques. It is important to keep deer populations low to keep them from further stressing a forest already weakened by earthworms. Deer also impact ornamental landscape plants. Minnetonka staff currently monitor and manage deer populations in collaboration with the Minnetonka Police Department.

Jumping worms have recently arrived

in Minnetonka. These unusually active earthworms were unintentionally released from worm composting bins and are powerfully destructive to the soil structure. They consume vast amounts of ground surface organic matter, leaving the top six inches of soil the consistency of coffee grounds. Because leaf litter and landscape mulch are quickly devoured, soil infested by jumping worms is vulnerable to erosion. Once washed off, this leads to contamination of natural water bodies. There is no known control for jumping worms, which have been found in Minnetonka.

### Opportunities:

- Continue the existing deer monitoring and management program.
- Work with neighboring communities to synchronize deer management programs to reduce the number of deer moving into Minnetonka through these communities.
- Educate Minnetonka citizens about

- the natural role of deer and how people can best nurture balanced populations of plants and animals.
- Establish a jumping worm awareness program to alert residents to the hazard of importing potentially infested soil and plants into their landscapes.
- Plant native forest species that can tolerate the presence of earthworms such as Pennsylvania sedge, zig-zag goldenrod, columbine, and jack-in-the-pulpit.
- Educate park users about the impact of earthworms and how they affect Minnesota forests.



Overbrowsing by deer prevents native plants from regenerating, directly impacting the quantity and quality of herbaceous plants.

Image Source: MnDNR - [www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/deer/management](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/deer/management)

### Invasive Worm Comparison



Nightcrawler Worm (*Lumbricus terrestris*)  
Image Source: PetSmart LLC - [petsmart.com](http://petsmart.com)



Jumping Worm (*Amynthas agrestis*)  
Image Source: The Oregonian - [oregonlive.com](http://oregonlive.com)

#### Nightcrawler Worm (*Lumbricus terrestris*)

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Color:     | Pink/Reddish   |
| Body:      | Thick, Slimy, Floppy   |
| Size:      | 6-8 inches long  |
| Clitellum: | Slightly raised from body, partially encircles body, and red/pink in color |

#### Jumping Worm (*Amynthas agrestis*)

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Color:     | Brown/Gray   |
| Body:      | Sleek, dry, smooth, and firm   |
| Size:      | 4-5 inches long  |
| Clitellum: | Flush with body, relatively close to head, encircles body, and light (compared to body) in color |



# 3.8

## Urban Heat Island Effect

Hard surfaces (such as streets, parking lots and rooftops) are necessary for urban life. However, these hard surfaces cannot absorb water and they increase the volume and rate of stormwater that carries pollutants into lakes, streams and wetlands. These impervious surfaces also accumulate heat that stresses people and the urban environment. Accumulated summer heat impacts outdoor workers and increases energy use through extended air conditioning. High summer temperatures also facilitate the formation of air pollutants such as ozone. Warmer winter temperatures allow the overwintering of tree pathogens and pests that host pathogens such as ticks and mosquitoes.

The urban heat island effect can be reduced, and Minnetonka’s quality of life can be improved by limiting the amount of new impervious surface constructed, reducing unnecessary impervious surface, and creating green space with trees in its place. In the near future, opportunities to remove pavement may occur as people increasingly work from home, resulting in fewer cars on the streets. The imminent advances in the autonomous car will also reduce traffic and the need for parking spaces.

### Opportunities:

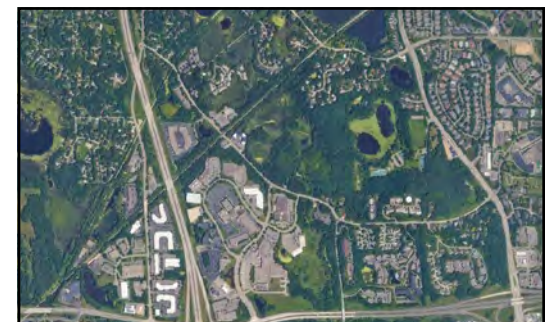
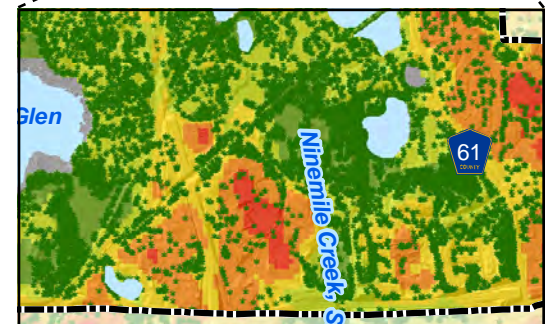
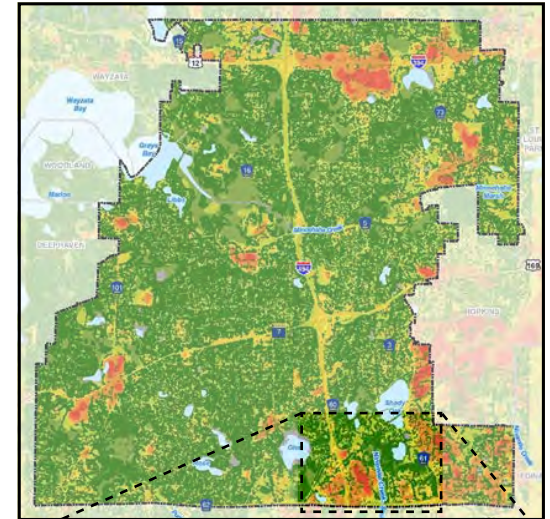
- Plant trees along streets and in parking lots. This may require changes in Minnetonka policy to allow street trees to be planted closer than 15 feet to curbs.
- Assess City parking requirements for commercial/office developments and determine how many stalls are required. The City has relaxed its parking requirements (per project) over the last several years, and should continue to explore even more definitive ordinance requirements that further that effort.
- Consider white or green roofs on all City building projects in Minnetonka. Plant more than the required number of trees on City construction projects. Plant trees with each street reconstruction project.
- Consider the use of light colored pavement in City construction projects to reflect light.
- Ensure the longevity of street and parking lot trees by providing adequate soil volumes in highly paved areas.
- Further fund the community forest management program and plant more trees.
- Continue to educate private property owners on the advantages of planting trees and their ideal locations for energy savings and pavement shading.
- Continue to amplify the City tree sale. Further fund the city’s gravel bed nursery as a healthy source of trees for planting on City property.
- Consider developing a heat-island-mitigation bank for projects where there is not enough space to replace pre-existing trees. Funds deposited in the heat-island-mitigation bank would be used for planting trees in difficult areas that are highly paved.



Growing trees in a gravel-bed nursery (rather than a soil-based nursery) can triple the density of roots (image to the left). This allows gravel-bed nurseries (image to the right) to grow larger, healthier, and more resilient trees in a shorter time. Source: Mississippi Watershed Management Organization - mwmoo.org

### Urban Heat Island Diagram

The imagery below shows an enlargement of Figure 1.4.7 - Heat Island & Tree Canopy. Impervious surfaces directly result in higher temperature values can be seen in the third image below.





Climate change is impacting Minnetonka and will increasingly negatively affect the region. In Minnesota, climate change manifests with warmer winters (especially increasing nighttime lows), increasing precipitation and storm intensity (more heavy rains and fewer slow soaking events), and greater snow events. According to the DNR State Climatologist office, increased summer daytime temperatures and increased occurrence of drought have not yet been experienced in Minnesota (although nighttime lows throughout the year have been increasing). However, drought and summer daytime temperatures are predicted to increase within the next 10 to 20 years.

Climate change exacerbates all the ecological issues discussed above. As the City experiences greater swings in

temperature and precipitation, living organisms, including people, insects, birds, trees, wildflowers, and soil microorganisms, are forced to tolerate conditions beyond those through which they have evolved. Stressed plants and animals are more vulnerable to disease. As a result, some native plant species are predicted to die out, with invasive species taking their place. Thus, we lose our rich natural heritage. Degraded air and water quality as a result of climate change also affect human health.

Native plant communities serve to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration. This occurs through the process of photosynthesis as CO<sub>2</sub> is sequestered from the atmosphere to build plant tissues; leaves, stems, trunks, roots, etc. This material, especially roots, over time dies and decays leaving behind a portion of this carbon in the soils in the form of organic matter. This is the 'black' of black dirt. Native plant communities are efficient at sequestering carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

Greenhouse gas emissions are prevented in native plant communities in comparison to lawns which require intensive maintenance. Considerable greenhouse gas is released through the pumping of water for irrigation, the production of fertilizers and pesticides, the manufacturing of mowers and other equipment, as well as the fuel burned in the operation of lawn equipment. In comparison, native plant communities are not watered or fertilized, and only occasionally require mowing (in urban landscapes). They may be burned which releases greenhouse gasses, but below-ground plant organic matter stays in place and carbon is sequestered. Prairies and savannas are also much less expensive to maintain than lawn once they are established. Lawns are a cultural asset where they are actively used, but unused lawns could be converted to more diverse and ecologically productive native plant communities.

Minnetonka residents and managers must be alert to the effects of climate change and take proactive action to address negative impacts.

#### Opportunities:

- Work with Minnetonka's Sustainability Commission to develop a climate action and adaptation plan for the city.
- Carefully balance growth and development with preservation efforts that protect our community's highly valued water and woodland resources. Develop a plant and animal monitoring program to track changes in species. Appropriate measures can be taken as changes occur. Evaluate the monitoring program periodically for fit and efficiency along with staffing capacity.
- Increase plant and habitat diversity in natural areas. Increasing species diversity establishes resilient plant communities because different species are adapted to different niches and will tolerate different stresses. For example, some prairie species can handle cool, wet conditions better than hot, dry conditions, while others tolerate the opposite. In a diverse ecosystem, species alternate in dominance as environmental conditions shift. They go dormant or store in the soil seed bank when the conditions they prefer are not present.
- Convert select woodlands to savanna. Oak savannas are more resilient to over-browsing, invasive species, heat, drought, and wind. Since oak savannas were the dominant plant community in Minnetonka before European settlement, it makes sense to restore them here.
- Teach residents about the impacts of climate change and instruct them on how they can act through volunteer activities.
- Implement the recommendations to mitigate the urban heat island effects described above.
- Monitor vectors for human diseases, such as mosquitoes and ticks. Educate the public on the connection between the increase of these illnesses and climate change.
- Continue to protect City staff from extreme heat and storm events.



Oak savannas are resilient plant communities that can withstand extremes in wet and dry conditions. They must be burned regularly.



## Altered Hydrology of Natural Areas & Landscaped Greenspaces

Impacts to our green spaces—from past agriculture to suburban development and earthworm action to lawn management—have fundamentally changed how water flows in and through our landscapes. This affects our forests and grasslands as well as lakes, streams and wetlands. Therefore, we must adjust the management of our natural areas and landscaped greenspaces.

In 2019, a Minnetonka Water Resources Management Plan was developed that focused on stormwater management infrastructure and development for the built environment. However, the plan did not address issues of stormwater interaction within green spaces. The topic of managing stormwater within green spaces has not been considered because it was assumed that hydrologic management within greenspaces was unnecessary. After all, it has been raining and snowing on natural areas throughout history without human intervention. But people have directly and indirectly altered the hydrologic conditions of our green spaces (both natural areas and traditional landscapes). They have disturbed natural areas through past logging and grazing, eliminating healthy plant communities. The introduction of invasive plant and animal species (such as buckthorn and earthworms) has compacted the soil and inhibited plant growth, and soil structure has been degraded through crusting, erosion, and compaction. A reduction in soil organic matter results in increased water runoff and decreased water infiltration and storage in the ground. Healthy soils and plant communities are essential for efficient hydrologic cycling within both landscaped and natural areas.

A complicating factor altering greenspace hydrology is climate change. Minnesota's annual precipitation is increasing, and the intensity of storms is amplifying, with heavy downpours occurring more frequently. Intense downpours impact uncovered soil (lacking plants, mulch, or duff to break the force of raindrops), causing erosion and soil crusting, which allow precious topsoil to be washed away leaving the soil surface crusted by fine materials. Crusting prevents air circulation and rainwater infiltration into the soil which is essential for plant growth. Our goals for greenspace hydrology are to:

- Support healthy vegetation
  - » Plants improve soil structure by keeping soil porous through root action and supporting robust populations of essential soil microbes.
  - » Plants intercept the heavy force of raindrops that can erode, crust, and compact soil.
- Protect soils from erosion
  - » With healthy plant growth.
  - » With coverings of mulch, duff, or thatch.
- Support open soil structure
  - » With good air circulation and water infiltration.
  - » With a healthy soil food web (microbes, invertebrates, insects, mammals).

Lawns and traditional landscaped areas are typically composed of altered and compacted soils due to the construction process. We then compensate by fertilizing, applying pesticides, and irrigating to maintain healthy-appearing landscapes. The negative impacts of this type of management are evident.

### Opportunities:

- Nurture soils in traditional landscapes and natural areas (see Soils section above) to support stable plant communities and healthy soil structure.
- Control invasive species in natural areas, such as common buckthorn, that negatively impact herbaceous vegetation.
- Transition degraded forests to open plant communities with light reaching the ground plain to nurture a complete vegetative soil cover (this compensates for the earthworm issues). Thin trees to establish a savanna plant community structure. Plant appropriate native herbaceous plants to develop a complete ground cover and restore native hydrology.
- Continue to manage deer populations to prevent overgrazing and the destruction of native vegetation.
- Strive to rectify eroding footpaths within parks to reduce soil erosion.
- Nurture healthy lawns through low-input management techniques. For instance, this can be done by diversifying lawn species to include low-growing perennials and limiting fertilizer use. Mowing high at 3-3.5 inches also supports healthier lawns.
- Manage landscape beds for dense vegetative cover and keep beds mulched to protect soils.
- Educate property owners on both low-input landscape management and the management of natural areas they may own. Encourage the restoration of vegetation, the regeneration of soil, and the restoration of hydrologic function.
- Continue partnerships with local organizations to share education efforts and obtain funding for initiatives.



This image of forest soil in Lone Lake Park shows a lack of duff and the resulting soil erosion and soil surface crusting that occurs with large storm events.

## 3.11 Human Perception of Natural Resources

Minnetonka is fortunate to have strong citizen support for its natural resources. Polls consistently show that natural resources protection ranks high among the community’s list of priorities. Leadership is also supportive, as evidenced by a long history of natural resources funding, planning, and project implementation. And, the City has been able to take advantage of partnerships with governmental agencies such as Hennepin County, and watershed districts that share goals to protect natural resources.

One question is whether Minnetonka’s efforts to protect and restore natural resources have led to complacency. Has the community taken natural resources for granted, assuming that they will keep giving life-essential benefits? Currently, we see very few diverse ecological communities, limited naturally regenerating urban forests, and almost no high-functioning wetlands in Minnetonka.

The topic of natural resources is complex and, therefore, often misunderstood. Natural resources involve the entire ecosystem that surrounds us. We use them to support our lifestyles, but the supply of Minnetonka’s natural resources is not limitless. When we negatively impact soil, water, forests, wildlife, etc., we deplete natural resources and often prevent them from regenerating.

The citizens of Minnetonka perceive the condition of natural resources differently. Some see streets and buildings woven between a matrix of wetlands and beneath a beautiful forest. In contrast, others see a degraded and fragmented ecosystem infested by invasive species and diminishing species diversity. These competing perceptions often lead to inaction and can create a sense that natural resources are lower priority.

Misperceptions observed in Minnetonka are not unique, and apply to most areas of the U.S. They include:

Table 4.3 Common Natural Resource Misperceptions

| Misperception   | Results  |
|---|--|
| A lack of understanding about the function of ecosystems; people don’t know the difference between a healthy environment and one that is degraded/nonfunctioning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People believe that everything is ok in the environment and see no need to support additional funding to protect or regenerate natural resources.</li> <li>• People negatively impact natural resources without awareness.</li> <li>• There is a misunderstanding of the role of wildlife in ecosystems that leads to populations that are out of balance, with negative impacts to natural resources.</li> </ul> |
| Green is good.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degraded ecological communities infested with invasive species are sometimes perceived as natural and not in need of regeneration.</li> <li>• There is a belief that every tree is sacred—seeing tree harvesting efforts that benefit forest regeneration as an irreplaceable loss.</li> </ul>  |
| An attitude that “I can do what I want”, resulting in people-centric structures and activities that take priority over natural resources protection.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degraded forests, effaced soil, degraded wetlands, and poor ecosystem function are outcomes of this attitude.</li> <li>• Buildings and pavement are interspersed with degraded natural areas.</li> <li>• Altered natural areas cannot regenerate.</li> </ul>  |

### Opportunities/Recommendations:

- Build on current education efforts to deepen the understanding of ecosystems and natural resources in Minnetonka.
- Continue to demonstrate good stewardship through regeneration of ecological communities, urban forest management, clean water efforts, soil improvement projects, and wildlife management.
- Use multiple approaches to encourage citizen participation in activities that allow them to learn about the environment.
- Engage leadership in educational programs and on-the-ground efforts that benefit natural resources.

Section 2 of this report (Current Conditions) documents past impacts on Minnetonka’s natural resources. Section 5 sets forth a plan to protect and replenish natural resources through the powers available to City government.



A public bench in Jidana Park slowly being swallowed by the invasive species, buckthorn.



# 4

## Natural Resources Management Strategies

This section describes possible strategies for the management of natural resources in Minnetonka for the near future. This is an extensive list of strategies and not all can be accomplished due to limited budgets and staffing. Priorities for implementation will be determined at the time of annual budgeting and as needs arise.

# 4.1 Public Properties Natural Resource Management

This section presents management strategies and management priorities for city-owned natural areas, most of which are in parks. Implementation of these strategies will allow managers to effectively utilize funds and to focus on the protection of the most ecologically significant sites first. This will serve to preserve Minnetonka’s natural heritage and build upon past ecological communities’ regeneration successes.

## Vegetation Management Prioritization

The prioritization of management activities on city-owned properties is essential to efficiently direct work. Given the amount of public natural areas within the city, a method for resource prioritization was developed to be strategic with restoration and management efforts. Eight criteria were developed to rank priorities. Table 4.1 scores and ranks management priorities for individual Minnetonka public properties. Table 4.2 shows the ranking scores for individual city-owned properties, and Figure 4.1 maps priority properties. All rankings were based on the conditions of properties and ecological communities at the time of this report. Each property was ranked with the following eight criteria:

Table 4.1 Prioritization & Ranking Criteria

| Criteria | Prioritizations   | Ranking     | Description   |
|----------|---|-------------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b><u>Current Ecological Quality of Natural Community:</u></b><br>Sites of higher ecological quality are ranked higher for protection and management. Quality was defined based on field assessments (see section 2.3, Table 2.1 for quality ranking criteria).   | 0<br>1<br>2 | 0 — Dominated by altered/non-native plant community (Nothing higher than ecological quality C within the site)<br>1 — Moderate natural communities present (ecological quality B found within the site)<br>2 — High ecological quality (ecological quality A found within the site) |
| <b>2</b> | <b><u>Current Management Efforts:</u></b><br>Areas with recent or on-going restoration/management are prioritized to build upon past success.   | 0<br>1<br>2 | 0 — No current restoration efforts<br>1 — Evidence of previous restoration efforts but no current restoration activities<br>2 — Restoration ongoing or detailed plans for restoration exist for the site  |
| <b>3</b> | <b><u>Public Access and Use:</u></b><br>Sites that are highly utilized are given higher rank.   | 0<br>1<br>2 | 0 — Natural areas not easily visible or accessible to the public<br>1 — Natural areas accessible but are not highly visited or park is dominated by lawn or recreational land cover<br>2 — Natural areas are highly visited   |
| <b>4</b> | <b><u>Located within Conservation Corridor:</u></b><br>The MN DNR has designated potential conservation corridors that identifies lands that could be protected or restored to unify a connected habitat network within the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. Minnetonka natural areas within these corridors are prioritized. | 0<br>1      | 0 — Site not located within a MN DNR Metro Conservation Corridor<br>1 — Site is located within a Metro Conservation Corridor  |
| <b>5</b> | <b><u>Size of Natural Area within a Site (Not including open water or cattail wetland):</u></b><br>Large natural areas are prioritized because restoration efforts are cost effective and because large habitat areas provide greater ecological value.   | 0<br>1<br>2 | 0 — 0 - 1 acres<br>1 — 1 - 10 acres<br>2 — 10+ acres  |



Table 4.1 Prioritization & Ranking Classifications (Continued)

| Criteria | Prioritizations  | Ranking  | Description |
|----------|--|--|-------------|
| <u>6</u> | <p><u><i>Priority for Restoration per City Council Open Space Policy (Policy Number 11.11):</i></u><br/>                     The City Council has prioritized park improvements through this policy to ensure that changes and investments to parks, trails and open space fit into the bigger picture of serving the needs of the entire community.</p> | <p>0 — No<br/>                     1 — Yes</p>   |             |
| <u>7</u> | <p><u><i>Presence of significant, sensitive species or special plant community:</i></u><br/>                     Rare and unique ecological communities within Minnetonka are prioritized for management to ensure their long-term viability.</p>  | <p>0 — No presence<br/>                     1 — Remnant native herbaceous plant populations (example: bloodroot, trillium)<br/>                     2 — Unique, intact Minnetonka ecological plant community (Example: bog, fen, tamarack swamp, sugar maple/basswood forest)<br/>                     3 — Species uncommon or rare to City of Minnetonka (Management required to prevent species loss or habitat degradation, (for example orchids, heritage tree, hickory island))</p> |             |
| <u>8</u> | <p><u><i>Volunteer participation within park:</i></u><br/>                     Sites with active volunteer participation are prioritized</p>   | <p>0 — No active participation<br/>                     1 — Periodic involvement<br/>                     2 — Consistent volunteer work</p>  |             |



Lone Lake Park ranks highest in the prioritization and ranking of select Minnetonka parks and natural areas. This park receives higher rankings than Jidana Park and Big Willow Park due to its high quality natural areas, active volunteer engagement, and priority restoration per council open space policy (see Table 4.2).



Table 4.2 Prioritization and Ranking of Select Minnetonka Parks and Natural Areas

| Park or Natural Area            | Current Ecological Quality of Natural Community | Current Restoration Efforts | Public Access & Use | Located within Conservation Corridor | Size of Natural Area within Park Site (Not including open water or cattail wetland) | Priority Restoration per Council Open Space Policy | Presence of Significant/Sensitive Plants or Community | Volunteer Involvement within Park | Total* |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Lone Lake Park                  | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 3   | 2                                 | 15     |
| Jidana Park                     | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 0  | 3   | 1                                 | 13     |
| Big Willow Park                 | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 1   | 2                                 | 13     |
| Purgatory Park                  | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 1   | 2                                 | 13     |
| Cullen Nature Preserve          | 1   | 2                           | 0                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 3   | 2                                 | 12     |
| Minnetonka Mills Park           | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 1   | 2                                 | 11     |
| Civic Center                    | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 1   | 0                                 | 11     |
| Hilloway Park                   | 1   | 2                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 2   | 0  | 3   | 1                                 | 11     |
| Meadow Park                     | 1   | 1                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 2   | 1  | 1   | 1                                 | 10     |
| Victoria Evergreen Park         | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 1   | 1                                 | 10     |
| Kinsel Park                     | 2   | 1                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 2                                 | 9      |
| Orchard Park                    | 1   | 2                           | 1                   | 0                                    | 1   | 0  | 3   | 1                                 | 9      |
| Lake Rose Park                  | 2   | 2                           | 0                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 1   | 2                                 | 9      |
| Tamarack swamp south of Mtka HS | 1   | 1                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 3   | 0                                 | 8      |
| Reich Park                      | 1   | 2                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 2   | 0                                 | 8      |
| Tower Hill Park                 | 2   | 2                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 1   | 0                                 | 8      |
| Green Circle Park               | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 0                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 7      |
| Kelly Park                      | 0   | 1                           | 1                   | 0                                    | 2   | 0  | 3   | 0                                 | 7      |
| Headwaters, Minnehaha Creek     | 2   | 2                           | 2                   | 1                                    | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 7      |
| Oberlin Park                    | 1   | 1                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 1                                 | 6      |
| Gray's Bay Marina               | 2   | 2                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 6      |
| Woodgate Park                   | 0   | 1                           | 1                   | 0                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 1                                 | 4      |
| Linner Park                     | 0   | 1                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 4      |
| Mooney Park                     | 0   | 1                           | 0                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 1                                 | 4      |
| Covington Park                  | 0   | 0                           | 1                   | 1                                    | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 4      |
| Whited Marsh - 5639 Whited Ave. | 2   | 0                           | 0                   | 0                                    | 0   | 0  | 2   | 0                                 | 4      |
| Ford Park                       | 0   | 0                           | 1                   | 0                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 2      |
| Crane Lake                      | 0   | 0                           | 0                   | 1                                    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0                                 | 2      |

Only community parks, preserves, and some neighborhood parks have been ranked for prioritization. Some neighborhood parks and mini parks with little to no natural areas were excluded from prioritization.

\*Refer to Table 4.3 (Management Prioritization for Public Properties).

Table 4.3 Management Prioritization for Public Properties

| Designation Descriptions  | Overall Score |
|---|---------------|
| High priority for restoration; active restoration occurring; high volunteer interest and involvement; continue restoration work         | 10+           |
| Medium priority; intermittent restoration occurring; intermittent volunteer involvement but opportunities exist                         | 6-9           |
| Lower priority for restoration; little to no restoration occurring but opportunities exist for more; little to no volunteer involvement | 1-5           |

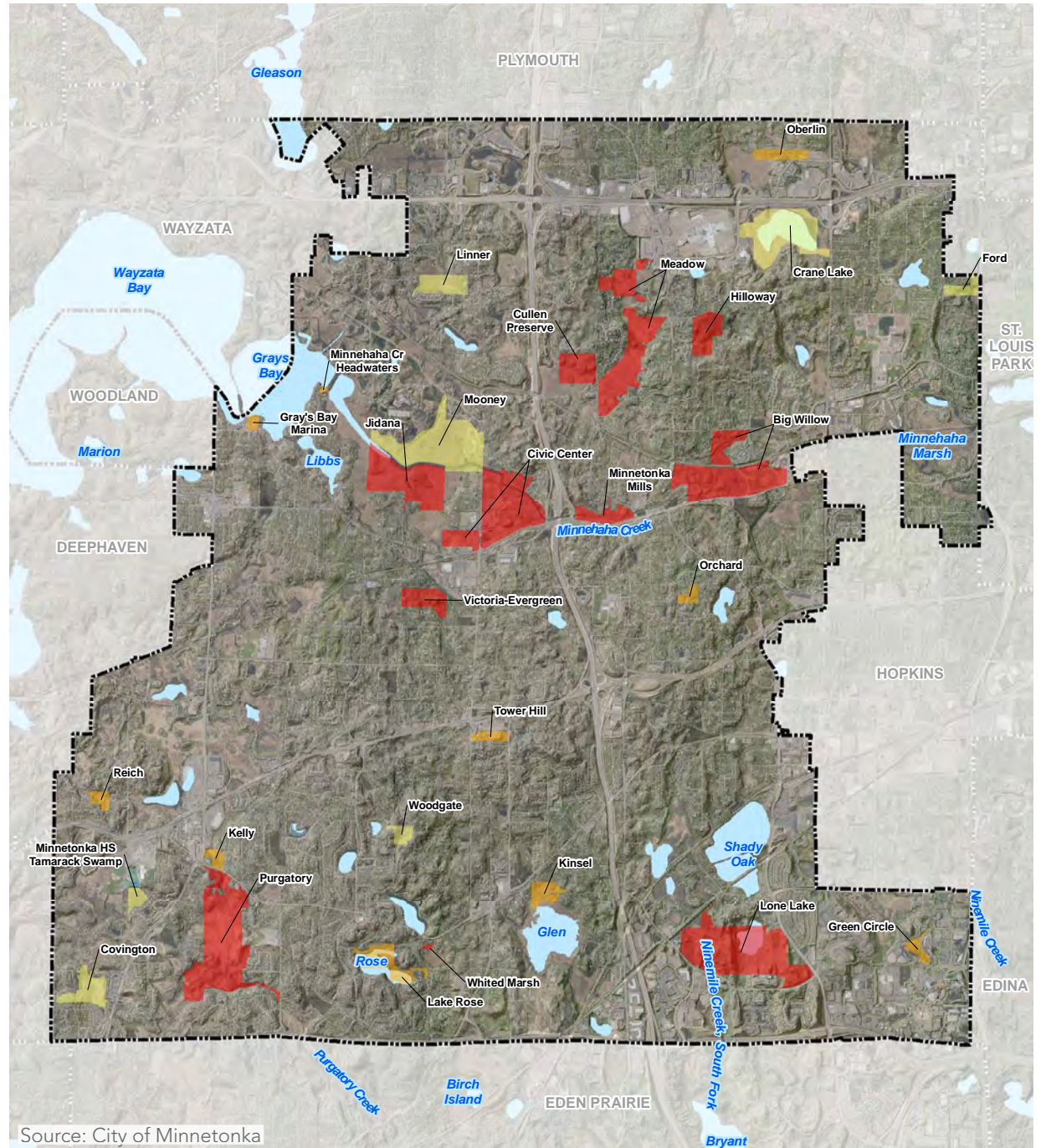
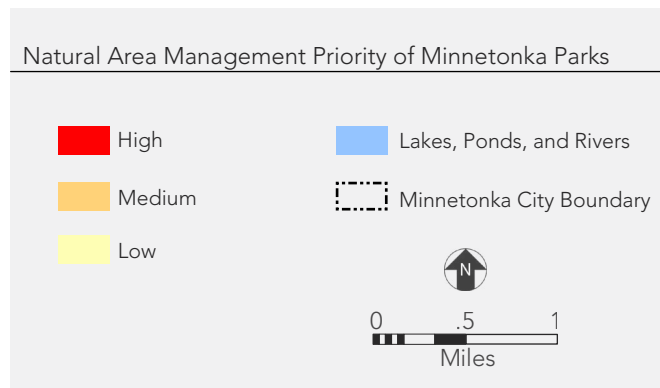


Figure 4.1 - Public Land Priority Ranking for Resource Allocation



## Natural Resources Management Approach

Management strategies for individual sites with a priority score of 10 or greater (Table 4.2) have been developed and are presented in Appendix A. The intention of the individual site strategies is to guide the natural areas to increase species diversity and to be more resilient.

The management strategies presented in Appendix A are guided by the following:

### 1 The protection, diversification, and expansion of existing high quality ecological communities:

Within each public property the management strategy is to first protect the highest ecological quality areas (areas of greatest native plant diversity) and then to move management efforts out to lower diversity areas as indicated within the management maps (Appendix A). The management effort required in the highest ecological areas might be minimal since invasive species presence is often low. Moving away from the areas into degraded habitats will likely require more intensive efforts.

Eventually an entire property may be restored and transition to a maintenance phase where burning, supplemental planting, and other management activities will encourage native plant proliferation and discourage invasive plant establishment. The speed at which ecological community restoration may be implemented will depend upon funding, volunteer engagement, and City staff capacity to oversee the process. It is critical that these activities be conducted concurrent with deer management to avoid damage to regenerating vegetation.

### 2 Monitoring to evaluate management success:

Long term monitoring and the use of an adaptive management approach to steward Minnetonka's natural areas will institutionalize management resilience by allowing adjustment to changes seen on the ground.

Adaptive management is the process of testing a management technique in each unique landscape, monitoring its effectiveness, and then adjusting management in response. This iterative process takes time and results in long term success. Adaptive management involves observations of:

- » Weed control and eradication success
- » Native plant establishment failure and success
- » Disturbance by people and wildlife
- » Climate impacts

An adaptive management approach will continue for Minnetonka's public lands to preserve and enhance natural resources.

### 3 The evolution of highly degraded woodlands (such as buckthorn thickets) to communities that are resilient and economical to manage such as oak savanna:

Once buckthorn is removed from degraded woodlands, it is an ongoing and expensive process to establish native woodland plants and keep buckthorn at bay. Using burn management as a tool to control invasive species is a viable solution. Historically in oak savannas and open woodlands, fire was the force that kept the tree canopy open and allowed light to hit the ground plain. This builds herbaceous fuel to carry fire which is an economical tool for managing buckthorn. Converting Minnetonka's severely degraded woodlands to open native plant communities is a sustainable long-term solution. This is because oak savannas are quick to establish (compared to woodlands) and more resilient to the degrading forces of herbivory, heat, drought, and wind. Also, regenerating oak savanna restores Minnetonka's natural heritage because oak savanna was the predominant ecological community in Minnetonka prior to European settlement (see Figure 2.1).

## Degraded Woodland Restoration Sequence



The top image (#1) is an example of a Minnetonka park undergoing buckthorn removal. The second image (#2) shows an open understory after buckthorn removal that can allow for native vegetation to establish. In the third image (#3), an additional thinning of trees, allows more light to reach the ground which in turn allows for native vegetation growth and burning as a management tool. In this situation herbaceous plant seeding is typically necessary.

## Community Forest Management

Minnetonka holds the most extensive tree canopy of any Minneapolis/St. Paul metro community, which provides great benefits. This advantage, however, requires a proportional impetus of funding to properly manage our community forest.

The community forest can be sorted by three primary growing situations:

- **Natural areas:** somewhat undisturbed woodlands where trees and other vegetation can reproduce naturally
- **Traditional landscaped areas:** where trees grow in lawns and must be planted and maintained
- **Urban plantings:** where trees grow in constricted spaces in urbanized areas with significant amounts of pavement (above 85%) and typically poor soils

Each of these sectors of the community forest require management to maintain forest health and resilience to natural aging and the effects of climate change. Sector management strategies are listed below.

### Natural Areas Forest

As discussed throughout Section 3, forests in natural areas are facing many challenges including disease and insect infestations, invasive species competition, degraded soil conditions, extremes of wet and dry weather, as well as limited economic resources for active forest management. Minnetonka forest management strategies include:

*On public property:*

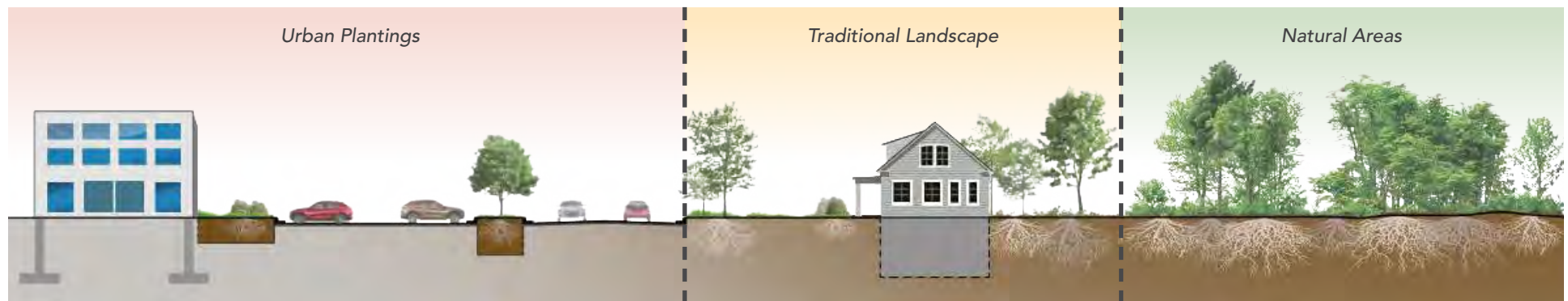
- Working with City leadership and the citizens of Minnetonka to promote the value of our community forest and discuss the need for adequate funding to maintain this great asset.

- Developing a community forest inventory and management plan to identify forest composition and to direct future management activities.
- Regularly inspecting and monitoring for tree issues (structural, insect infestations, disease, etc.).
- Managing deer populations to reduce browse damage.
- Controlling tree insect infestations and disease.
- Regular pruning and the removal of hazardous trees. Good tree structure can reduce ice and wind damage which may become more prevalent with climate change.
- Planting of new trees:
  - » Lead volunteer efforts to plant trees.
  - » Strategically place trees to shade paved areas and buildings.
  - » Select species and cultivars that are less susceptible to insects, disease and climate change.
- Managing invasive species:
  - » Lead volunteer efforts to manage invasive species.
  - » Follow strategies for individual properties outlined in Section 4.
- Provide research and experimentation on pertinent forestry topics.

*On private property:*

- Expanding the City tree sale to increase tree planting. Provide species that are more resistant to insects and disease as well as climate adaptive species.
- Developing a tree auditing program (analogous to an energy audit) that serves to instruct property owners through an in-person site visit on the first steps recommended for improving tree growth on their properties. This may result in a recommendation for professionals to continue to advise the property owner and develop an in-depth tree management plan for the property.
- Providing educational programs and materials to Minnetonka citizens pertaining to the status and importance of trees in Minnetonka and the need/techniques for management.

## Forest Management Primary Growing Groups



The diagram above shows example locations of the three community forest growing types. Urban plantings are defined as areas with 85% or greater coverage of pavement, typically have poor soils, and small and restricted rooting zones. The traditional landscape are environments where trees are planted and maintained within in lawns. Natural areas are somewhat undisturbed environments where vegetation can naturally reproduce.

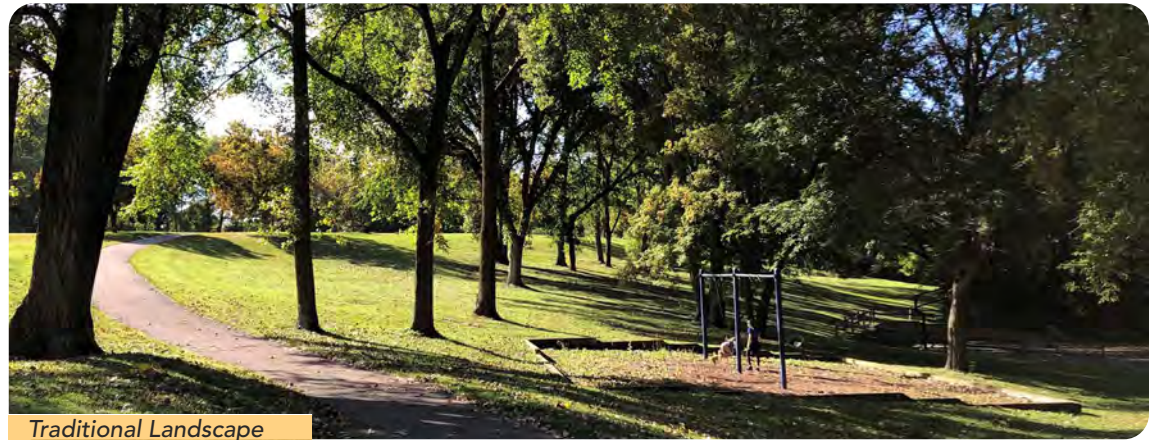


### Trees in Traditional Landscaped Areas

- Enforcing soil management and improvement ordinances through the development process to establish an adequate soil profile for tree growth.
- Managing lawns using organic methods that improve the soil biome/soil structure. This will greatly benefit trees.
- Planting a diversity of tree species and introducing climate adaptive species that will tolerate changing growing conditions.
- Expand the City tree sale.
- Managing stormwater to direct runoff to water trees. For example, runoff from driveways and streets can be directed to bioretention facilities where trees are planted.
- Regularly inspecting trees for insect infestations and disease so that proactive treatment can occur.
- Regularly pruning trees especially during the first 15 years after planting to develop a structure resilient to wind and disease.
- Providing educational programs and materials about tree protection, planting, and maintenance.

### Trees in Urban Areas

- Focusing new tree planting in areas indicated as red in the Urban Heat Island map, Figure 2.12 & 2.13.
- Developing a heat island mitigation program to collect fees for trees impacted during building development projects to provide funds for planting in urbanized areas of impervious surfaces greater than 85%.
- Locating new tree plantings in areas that will shade pavement such as the south and west sides of streets, drives and parking lots. Shade the east and west sides of buildings for best energy savings.
- Designing planting islands in highly urbanized areas to ensure adequate rooting volume. A general guideline is to provide two cubic feet of soil per one square foot of tree crown area at maturity.
- Manage stormwater to direct runoff to islands with tree plantings. Salt tolerant tree species should be planted in these situations.
- Selecting tree species that tolerate tough growing conditions. Irrigation may be necessary in some situations.
- Regularly pruning trees especially during the first 15 years after planting to develop a structure resilient to wind and disease.
- Inspecting trees for insect infestations and disease so that proactive treatment can occur.



Above are examples of the three primary community forest growing situations within Minnetonka: traditional landscaped areas (trees within a lawn - Covington Park), urban plantings (treelawn in a streetscape - Plymouth road near interstate 394), and natural areas (Jidana Park).



## 4.2 Private Properties Natural Resource Management



Municipalities can guide individuals to protect natural resources through incentive programs, cost-share programs, education programs, and establishing policies and ordinances. The image of a rain garden above is an example of private and public partnership created to enhance natural resource quality.

### Strategies for Managing Natural Resources on Private Properties

Most land in Minnetonka is privately owned. Therefore, many different individuals are stewards of Minnetonka’s natural resources, whether they know it or not. City government can coax, motivate, and mandate individuals to protect natural resources by implementing incentive programs, cost-share programs, education programs, and establishing policies and ordinances. Below is a list of opportunities for Minnetonka to address natural resources on private properties. Policies and ordinances are discussed in section 4.4.

Table 4.4 Opportunities for Private Property Natural Resource Management

| Topic                          | Education & Outreach  | Technical Assistance & Incentives/Cost-Share  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Habitat Fragmentation          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase public awareness of habitat fragmentation through education and outreach. Encourage residents to help create habitat in their yards.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of Hennepin County’s conservation easement program and its benefits</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a landscape auditing program (analogous to an energy audit) to instruct property owners on the first steps for controlling invasive species and planting natives on their properties.</li> <li>• Develop cost share opportunities for restoration in targeted spaces that connect fragmented habitats. Include technical assistance.</li> <li>• Promote similar resources available through partners, such as local watershed districts and the state Lawns to Legumes program.</li> </ul> |
| Reduced Native Plant Diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use vehicles such as the Minnetonka print newsletter, natural resources e-newsletter, Minnetonka Matters, and in-person classes to teach property owners about the advantages of native plants and how to plant and maintain them.</li> <li>• Identify and promote native species that thrive in areas where buckthorn has been removed.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide incentives for private landowners to control invasive vegetation on their property.</li> <li>• Introduce cost-share programs for landowners who plant native plants in conjunction with technical assistance.</li> <li>• Develop a landscape auditing program (analogous to an energy audit) to instruct property owners about the first steps for controlling invasive species and planting natives on their properties.</li> </ul>   |
| Soil Degradation               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate private property owners on the importance of soil regeneration and low-impact lawn maintenance.</li> <li>• Teach landowners about soil structure and the soil food web, along with techniques for regenerating soil.</li> <li>• Teach landowners about planting alternatives to lawns; these alternatives can serve many purposes, including carbon sequestration, reducing fossil fuel consumption, soil building, and providing pollinator habitat.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of a tree auditing program (described in the cell below), instruct property owners on the first steps for improving soils on their properties.</li> <li>• As part of a landscape auditing program (analogous to an energy audit), instruct property owners on the first steps for improving soils on their properties.</li> <li>• Offer technical assistance for soil erosion mitigation.</li> </ul>   |
| Community Forest               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the community forest ecosystem education initiative.</li> <li>• Advocate for planting the right tree in the right place.</li> <li>• Advocate for increased species diversity and the planting of appropriate native trees.</li> <li>• Teach about tree maintenance.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the City tree sale to increase tree planting on private property.</li> <li>• Develop a tree auditing program (analogous to an energy audit) to instruct property owners on the first steps for improving the tree canopy on their properties.</li> </ul>  |

Table 4.4 Opportunities for Private Property Natural Resource Management (Continued)

| Topic                                 | Education & Outreach  | Technical Assistance & Incentives/Cost-Share  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Pollinator Species                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate citizens on the value of pollinator species and how to enhance and restore habitat on their properties.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an incentive or cost-share program for property owners to plant pollinator species on their property.</li> </ul>   |
| Invasive Species                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach about the impacts of invasive species and how they can be identified and controlled.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide incentives for private landowners to control invasive vegetation on their property.</li> <li>Develop a landscape auditing program (analogous to an energy audit) to instruct property owners on the first steps for controlling invasive species and planting natives on their properties.</li> </ul>  |
| Herbivory                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate Minnetonka citizens on the natural role of deer and how to nurture balanced populations of plants and animals.</li> <li>Promote the state's jumping worm alert program to alert residents to the hazard of importing potentially infested mulch, soil, and plants into their landscapes.</li> <li>Teach about the impact of earthworms and how they affect Minnesota forests.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote tree protection measures within the tree sale, including the sale of tree protection items.</li> </ul>   |
| Urban Heat Island Effect              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate private property owners about the advantages of planting trees and the ideal tree-planting locations for energy savings and pavement shading.</li> <li>Teach about the best roofing and pavement materials to reduce heat accumulation.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a heat island mitigation program to collect fees for trees impacted during building development projects. Funds would be used to plant trees in urbanized areas with greater than 85% impervious surfaces.</li> <li>Develop incentive/cost share programs for properties reducing total pervious surface footprint. Continue and amplify the City tree sale.</li> <li>Develop an urban heat island plan. Investigate appropriate pavements and roofing materials for City projects.</li> </ul> |
| Climate Change                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach citizens about the impacts of climate change and instruct them on how they can act to prevent issues on their properties and through volunteer activities.</li> <li>Raise awareness on innovative practices/adaptations that both Minnetonka and other communities have been exploring to combat and adapt to climate change</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a climate adaptation and mitigation plan for Minnetonka.</li> <li>Amplify the City tree sale and native plant sale.</li> <li>Develop an urban heat island plan. Investigate appropriate pavements and roofing materials for City projects.</li> </ul>  |
| Altered Hydrology within Green Spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate property owners about low-input landscape management.</li> <li>Teach about the management of natural areas within private properties. Encourage the restoration of native plant communities, the regeneration of soil, and the restoration of hydrologic function.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of a tree auditing program, instruct landowners on the first steps for improving soils on their properties.</li> <li>As part of a landscape auditing program (analogous to an energy audit), instruct property owners on the first steps for green space improvements and maintenance on their properties.</li> </ul>  |



## 4.3 Climate Change

### Climate Adaptation Strategies

The Issues and Opportunities section (Section 3) presents climate adaptation opportunities. Much of what we can do to protect our existing natural resources also helps these resources adapt to climate change. By improving the health of ecological communities, they become more resilient to the stresses of climate change.

Here's what we can do in Minnetonka:

#### *Watch for Changes*

Be aware of changes to natural resources so we can proactively address unwanted impacts of climate change.

- Monitor and aggressively control new invasive species to reduce competition and allow for reproduction and perpetuation of native plant communities.
- Scout new invasive species by developing a volunteer pest-detector program.
- Develop an urban forest monitoring initiative to be conducted by City staff.
  - » Monitor for new pests and evaluate current insect and disease levels.
  - » Monitor changes in tree species on public and private properties due to flooding, temperatures, and drought.
  - » Look for shifts in species composition in select Minnetonka woodlands.
- Monitor human pests and diseases such as mosquito and tick-borne illness.

#### *Reduce Stress on Natural Resources*

Reducing stress on natural resources will allow for vigor and resilience in the face of degrading forces of climate change.

- Restore a diversity of native habitats to meet the lifecycle requirements of diverse plant, pollinator and wildlife species.
- Work to rejuvenate soils in urban and natural areas to support resilient plant communities, build healthy soil structure, allow for stormwater infiltration, and prevent erosion.
- Allocate additional funding to support natural resources management on City properties, focusing on high priority areas and building on past restoration successes.
- Increase the use of fire as a management tool, especially in woodlands and savannas. Fire is a natural disturbance that builds community resilience.
- Manage existing invasive species and control new invasive species more aggressively to allow native species to proliferate.
- Promote the state's jumping worm alert program to alert residents to the hazard of importing potentially infested soil and plants into their landscapes.
- Continue managing white-tail deer populations to protect plant communities from herbivory.
- Provide incentives for private landowners to control invasive vegetation on their property. Introduce cost-share programs for landowners who plant native plants.
- Continue planting a diversity of tree species on public land and offer a diversity of species for planting on private property via the tree sale and other incentive programs.
- Manage landscape beds for dense vegetative cover and keep beds mulched to protect soils.



Increasing the use of fire as a management tool can build community resilience and help to reduce stress on Minnetonka's natural resources.

#### *Allow and Facilitate Species Movement*

Plant and animal species need to shift their natural range. Nurturing appropriate habitats will accommodate their lifecycle needs.

- Develop plans to assist the migration of plant species through plantings in Minnetonka natural areas. Trees and herbaceous plants are the structure for wildlife habitat and will accommodate shifting wildlife movement.
- Develop a climate-adapted tree list and make available to the public, developers, and project managers.
- Purchase or grow climate-adaptive tree species in the city's gravel-bed nursery and make available for planting in public and private property.
- Replace unused lawn with alternative plantings that provide habitat.
- Promote conservation easements to preserve habitats.

### Protect Ourselves

The health and wellbeing of Minnetonka citizens are in jeopardy from intense storms, weather extremes and prolonged stresses on our immediate environment.

- Prioritize planting trees in Minnetonka's heat islands map (see Figure 2.12 & 2.13). Remove unused pavements wherever possible and develop appropriate soil volumes to allow for full tree growth.
- Plant trees to shade pavement along streets and in parking lots.
- Ensure the longevity of trees on streets and in parking lots by providing adequate soil volumes in highly paved areas.
- Assess City parking requirements for commercial/office developments and determine how many parking spaces are required. Consider changes to Minnetonka development requirements that reduce required parking spaces.
- Provide additional funding for the community forest management program to maintain the significant number of trees in Minnetonka.
- Continue to protect City staff from extreme heat and storm events.

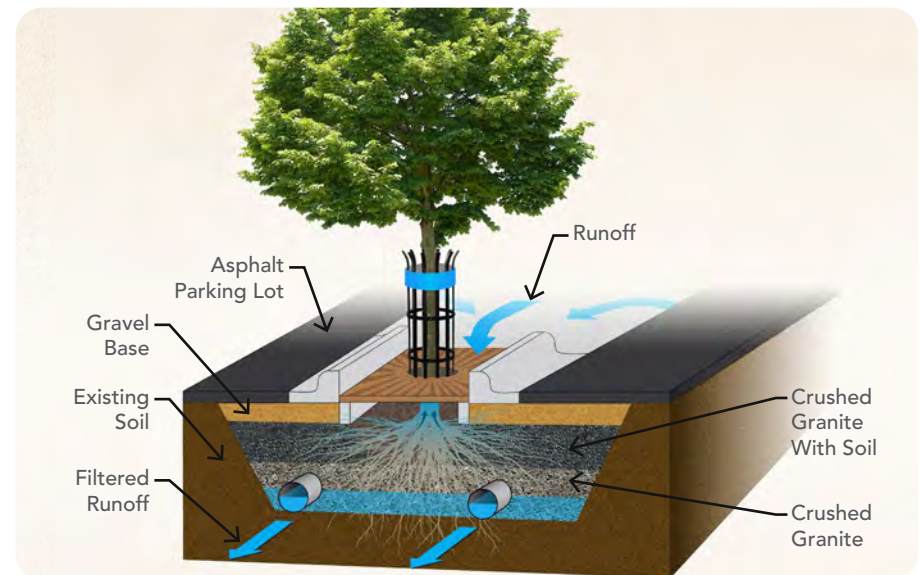
### Educate Ourselves

- Educate citizens about the impacts of climate change and instruct them on how to take action.
- Plant lawn alternatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (through reduced maintenance requirements) and facilitate the growth of plants that sequester carbon. Teach about planting alternatives to lawns which can serve many purposes, including carbon sequestration, reduced fossil fuel consumption, soil building, and pollinator-habitat creation.
- Educate the public on the importance of soil regeneration to promote vegetation health and resilience.
- Educate citizens about low-input lawn maintenance, organic landscape care, and managing natural areas on private property. Encourage the restoration of vegetation, the regeneration of soil, and the restoration of hydrologic function.
- Educate the public about invasive species and out-of-balance native species and how they affect Minnesota forests.
- Educate property owners on both low-input landscape management and the management of natural areas they may own.

### Lead by Example

Show how citizens of Minnetonka can address climate adaptation.

- Alter development ordinances to reduce carbon footprint and better protect natural resources.
- Restore and manage city-owned natural areas.
- Demonstrate alternative landscape design and practices on City properties.
- Reduce the amount of pavement on City projects.
- Capture stormwater in landscapes and regenerate soil on all City projects.



To mitigate the accumulation of heat in paved areas tree trench technology can be implemented to provide structural support of the pavement while providing adequate rooting volume for trees.



The photo above is native plantings on the Minnetonka City Hall campus. The image illustrates how Minnetonka can continue to demonstrate environmentally sound landscape practices and lead by example.



## 4.4 Natural Resources Policies and Ordinances

The following are the policies and ordinances that regulate the management of natural resources in the City of Minnetonka. Some of these policies are implemented by the city's Natural Resources Division staff while others are a collaboration with other City divisions. Many of them have recently been updated.

### Policies

- Plant Pest Program, Council Policy 8.3 amended June 18, 2018
- Private Uses of Public Easement Areas, Council Policy 11.3 amended April 16, 2018
- Open Space Preservation Program, and the Management of Natural Resources, Council Policy 11.11 amended August 25, 2003
- Lake and Pond, Council Policy 12.11 amended Nov. 5, 2018
- Deer Population, Council Policy 9.3 amended May 19, 2014

### Ordinances

- Tree Protection, Section 300.28.19 amended October 18, 2021
- Wetland Protection, Section 300.23 amended March 24, 2008
- Shoreland District, Section 300.25 amended June 25, 2012
- Landscaping, Section 300.27 amended July 22, 2019
- Special Provisions – Lawn Maintenance, Section 845.03 amended June 8, 2020

### Opportunities for the Development and Improvement of Policies and Ordinances

#### *Develop a Soil Protection and Regeneration Ordinance*

Soils are a foundation for natural resources. When managed well, they facilitate climate resilience for both the planted and natural landscape. Conditioning healthy soils also reduces maintenance costs because the soils are more fertile and hold more water and oxygen. Plants are healthier and more disease/insect resistant in healthy soils. Minnetonka may consider both an ordinance and a policy:

- Ordinance—An ordinance to address soils improvement should focus on construction projects, but could be explored to be broader. Such an ordinance could address site-design considerations to reduce impacts to soil and address actions necessary to regenerate damaged soil after construction.
- Policy—From buildings to roads, the City could develop a policy to reduce soil impacts and regenerate soils on city-sponsored construction projects.

#### *Amend the Private Uses of Public Easement Areas Policy*

This policy restricts the planting of trees within 15 feet of streets, limiting the opportunities to use trees for shade and address the urban heat island effect. Consider changing this policy to allow trees to be planted closer to streets.

#### *Revise Parking Stall and Street Width Policies*

Impervious surfaces impact our urban ecology in many ways, and limiting the extent of new pavement will prevent conditions such as heat accumulation. As cultural changes influence our need for driving and parking—for example, more people working from home and more online shopping—less pavement may be necessary. Consider reducing the number of parking stalls required in new developments and consider developing a “complete streets” policy that may reduce the size of streets.

#### *Consider Setting a “Do-Not-Exceed” Turf Percentage in the Landscaping Ordinance*

When actively used, turf is a great groundcover. However, much lawn is never used and could be replaced with alternative plantings that sequester carbon, reduce the use of gas-burning mowers, eliminate the need for irrigation and pesticides, and provide habitat. The City could amend its Landscaping Ordinance to limit the planting of resource-consumptive lawns.



Adopting an ordinance that limits the amount of unused turf would provide essential habitat for many species, especially birds, bees, and butterflies.

Image Source: City of Minnetonka



## 4.5 Engagement with People

### Partnerships

Minnetonka's extensive natural resources goals are made more achievable by partnering with agencies and organizations that share similar goals. The City should continue partnerships with the following, and foster additional partnerships as warranted:

**Local/Nonprofit:** Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other community Friends groups, Minnetonka and Hopkins school districts, geocache enthusiasts, Minnesota Off Road Cyclists (MORC), neighboring municipalities, Metro Watershed Partners, GreenStep Cities, Metro Blooms/Blue Thumb

**County:** Hennepin County Environmental Services, Three Rivers Park District

**Watershed:** Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Basset Creek Watershed Management Commission, Watershed Partners

**State:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Public Health, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

**Federal:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Outreach, Education and Engagement

Minnetonka's Natural Resources division works with other City departments and partner agencies and organizations to enact programs that protect and enhance the city's natural resources. Because most of Minnetonka's undeveloped and natural spaces are on private property, residents, businesses, and industries are also key partners in natural resource protection.

#### Outreach

Outreach is the creation of public awareness of City policies, programs, goals and opportunities, such as special events, volunteer programs, trainings, and grants. Outreach is also conducted through publication in the city's monthly print newsletter, the Minnetonka Memo, which is mailed to households citywide. Electronic and virtual forms of outreach, including monthly e-newsletters, social media, highway billboards, and the City website are also used to reach out to Minnetonka residents.



Minnetonka's natural resources goals are made more achievable through partnering. The top shows volunteers planting trees in Green Circle Park. The bottom image is a group of Nature Works volunteers that removed garlic mustard at Purgatory Park.

Image Sources: City of Minnetonka



## Education

Natural Resources staff strive to offer diverse educational experiences – from workshops and webinars to handouts, story maps, videos and interpretive signage – and will continue to explore new approaches, technologies, audiences, and partnerships. Developing an Education and Outreach Plan soon can deepen this process.

Teaching provides information and skills to residents to better understand and take action on behalf of natural resources. Topics the Natural Resources division addresses include:

- community resilience
- stormwater runoff reduction and surface water protection
- water use efficiency
- soil health
- tree diversity, planting and maintenance
- planning for emerald ash borer and other pests and diseases
- habitat creation, restoration and preservation
- invasive species control
- pollinator and wildlife protection
- other emerging issues.

## Engagement

Engagement takes education and outreach to the next level. It transforms awareness into action, and creates partnerships between the City government, residents and other stakeholders invested in natural resources protection. Natural Resources engagement currently includes events (such as the annual tree sale, native plant sale, and the Pollinator Field Day), cost-share grants, and a robust volunteer program. This aspect of natural resources programming will continue to grow.

Volunteerism is an especially crucial form of engagement in Minnetonka. Volunteers bring their enthusiasm, energy, and time to City projects. In turn, they enjoy social connection, gain new skills (or apply prior skills and experience), and a way to create change in the community.

Generally, natural resources volunteers can serve individually or in groups, and choose from a variety of roles, including:

- Habitat restoration – invasive species control, planting and maintenance
- Adopt-a-Spot – year-round restoration work in a particular park
- Wildlife steward - build and/or maintain habitat boxes, monitor species as determined by Natural Resources staff, and related tasks
- Forestry – tree planting and maintenance

In 2021, volunteer work was valued at \$28.54 per hour. Several hundred people collectively contribute about 1,600 hours per year. Volunteers significantly extend the Natural Resources division's capacity and potential impact in the community. Individuals and groups, including park Friends groups, girl scouts and boy scouts, geocachers, local business groups, City elected and appointed officials, church groups and others regularly participate in volunteer events.

A robust volunteer engagement program recognizes the importance of recruiting, training, and empowering volunteers to achieve their goals while providing a benefit to the community. A program Logic Model (Appendix E) outlines the necessary components of the further developing Minnetonka natural resources volunteer program to enhance volunteer engagement.

## Evaluation

Program evaluation is an important process to determine if engagement strategies are meeting intended goals. Routine evaluation should be conducted (e.g surveys, interviews) to inform future programs and activities.

## Technical Assistance and Incentives

One significant way to engage property owners in natural resource protection on private property is by providing technical assistance to those who seek it, along with incentivizing protection activities. The City should consider several strategies for accomplishing this, including:

- Utilize staff technical expertise by providing technical training events and on-site consultations related to tree protection and landscaping projects that promote natural resource enhancement and protection, as staffing allows.
- Pilot a Minnetonka cost-share grant program to provide an incentive to landowners wanting to incorporate natural resources management practices on private property.
- Continue to make trees and native plants available and promote similar programs offered by local watershed districts, the state, and other partners.
- Specific technical assistance an incentive programs are described in Table 4.4 Opportunities for Private Property Natural Resources Management.



A critical form of engagement is volunteerism. Above are volunteer groups (Geocachers and Girl Scouts). These groups provide enthusiasm and energy, and are an effective way to create a positive change in the community.

## 4.6 Future Planning, Research, and Monitoring

Additional planning is recommended to develop more comprehensive strategies for protecting and improving Minnetonka's natural resources. Further planning may include:

- Develop maintenance plans for priority public properties ( (Table 4.2 Prioritization and Ranking of Select Minnetonka Parks and Natural Areas) that include specific action plans (e.g. contracted services, volunteer efforts) and annual budgets.
- Update the Parks Management Prioritization table (Table 4.2) every 2-3 years to incorporate accomplishments and reconfigure prioritizations.
- Develop a Community Forest Inventory and Management Plan that focuses on threats to forest health, increasing tree diversity, increasing tree canopy in heat-island areas, and the impacts of climate change.
- Develop a natural resources climate adaptation and mitigation plan that prioritizes natural resources protection.
- Develop an urban heat island mitigation plan that includes strategies and funding for heat dissipation in priority areas.
- Develop a soils management plan that will identify actions to regenerate soils throughout Minnetonka.

Understanding the condition of natural resources and developing action plans that address the threats to those resources requires the collection of data. Potential research and monitoring initiatives include:

- Develop an urban forest monitoring initiative.
  - » Monitor for new pests and evaluate current insect and disease levels.
  - » Monitor the species planted on public and private properties.
  - » Look for shifts in species composition in select Minnetonka woodlands.
- Update the park prioritization and ranking rubric for select Minnetonka parks every two to three years.
- Provide research and experimentation on pertinent forestry topics.
- Continue monitoring deer populations.
- Monitor for new invasive species, including through a volunteer pest-detector program.
- Monitor vectors of human disease, including mosquitoes and ticks.
- Work with volunteer naturalists to monitor bird and wildlife populations.



Planning, research, and monitoring provide intention, critical information and momentum to protect and restore Minnetonka's natural resources.

Image Source: City of Minnetonka





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# Appendix A

## Management Strategies for Minnetonka Owned Properties

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# Management Strategies for Minnetonka Owned Properties

The following management strategies are developed for individual Minnetonka-owned public properties with a vegetation management priority score of 10 or greater (see table 4.1). These strategies are for planning and management prioritization purposes. Detailed management plans should be developed for each site with specific direction on techniques, phasing, and budgets for management efforts.

## Management Strategies have been developed for the following properties:

- Lone Lake Park
- Jidana Park
- Big Willow Park
- Purgatory Park
- Minnetonka Mills
- Civic Center
- Meadow Park
- Hilloway Park
- Victoria-Evergreen Park
- Kinsel Park
- Orchard Park
- Lake Rose Park
- Tower Hill Park
- Green Circle Park

## The Management Strategies include:

### Site overviews

- A brief summary of 2020 existing site conditions.
- Primary challenges identified during the 2020 site visit.
- Opportunities for future management efforts as well as unique features identified within the site.
- Site specific restoration priorities to focus future management actions.

### Figures for each site

- Existing Plant Community: A 2020 inventory of existing plant communities
- Habitat Quality: A 2020 inventory of existing plant community's ecological quality
- Target Plant Community: Ideal native plant community based on overall management goals and existing site conditions (slope, aspect, soil, sunlight, past disturbance, and existing species).
- Restoration Priority: Site specific strategy for phasing and prioritizing restoration efforts based on existing plant community, ecological quality, current restoration efforts, site access, habitat size, and adjacencies to areas of high ecological quality and ongoing management activities (existing plant communities and plant ecological quality are shown in figures 2.1 and 2.2 in section 2 of the Natural Resources Management Plan).

**\*Does not represent all comments; staff are continuing to work with community groups on edits to individual park plans which will be incorporated into the final plan.**



# Lone Lake Park

Popular park for recreation with significant topography and native tree stands.

## Condition Summary

- Extremely popular park. Restoration highly valued by public; wildflowers, ferns and orchids; eight deer enclosures.
- DNR classification upgraded in 2019 to 3% remnant of MN Big Woods region woodland habitat.
- Rambling topography, mature oak stands, and remnant basswood.

## Challenges

- Heavily used park
- Buckthorn – ongoing management efforts have been significant
- Reed canary grass dominate wetlands
- Pioneer and invasive tree species thriving near disturbances
- Pressure from residents for more active recreation opportunities (e.g. pickleball courts).

## Opportunities

- Existing higher quality forested areas should be expanded and understory growth encouraged
- High visibility of the park can help leverage support for additional resources for on-going management efforts

## Restoration Priorities

- Continue restoration of water tower ridge, lone lake ridge, 9-mile ridge, prairies, maple/basswood forest, trails around the lake
- Open up and restore areas where pioneer and invasive trees dominate
- Oak forests consist of large historic specimens
- Intensive ground cover restoration would be needed here
- Control deer browse

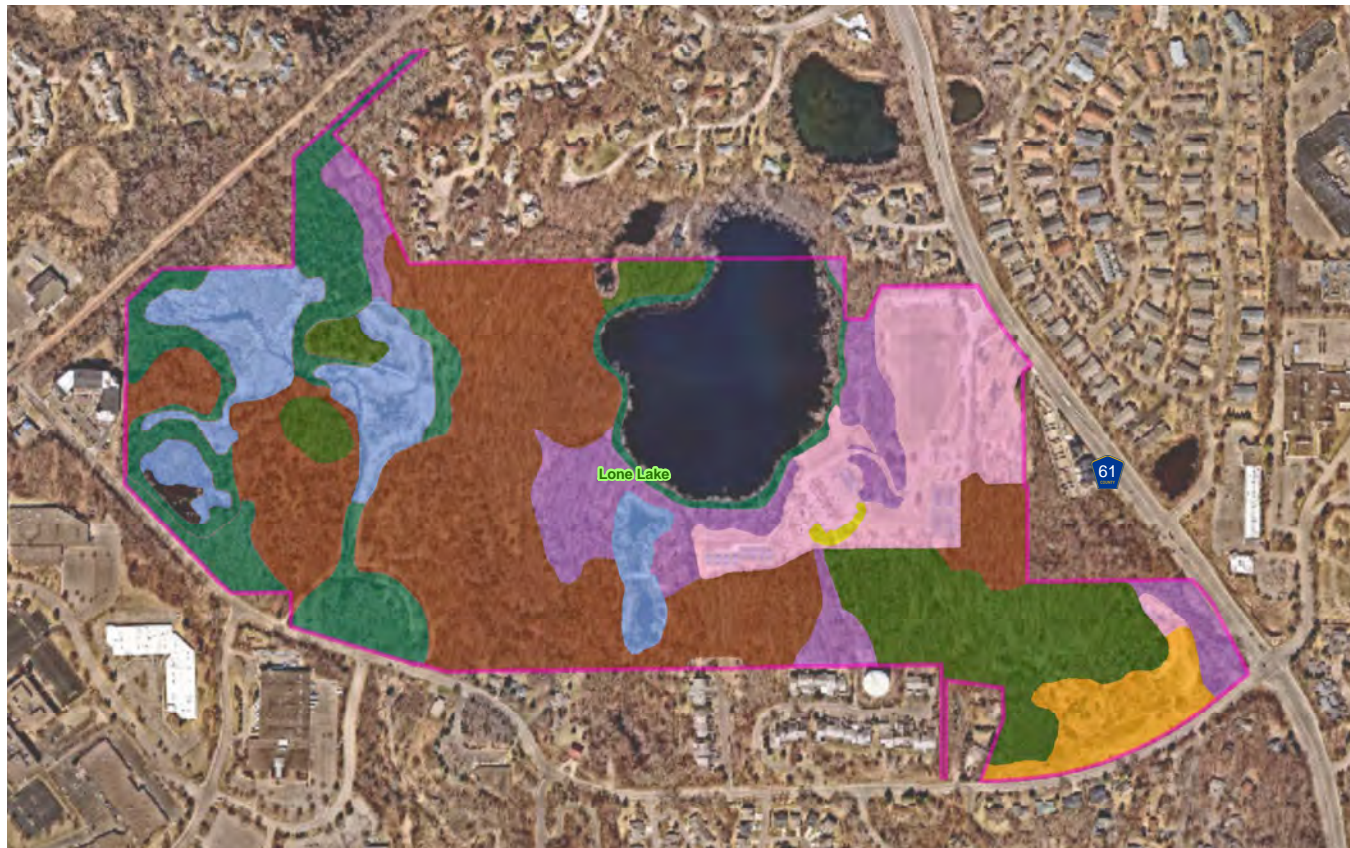


Above: Buckthorn management has been successful in areas of maple and basswood canopy.

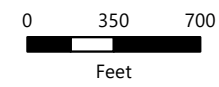


Above: Areas where buckthorn persists, open soil can be seen.

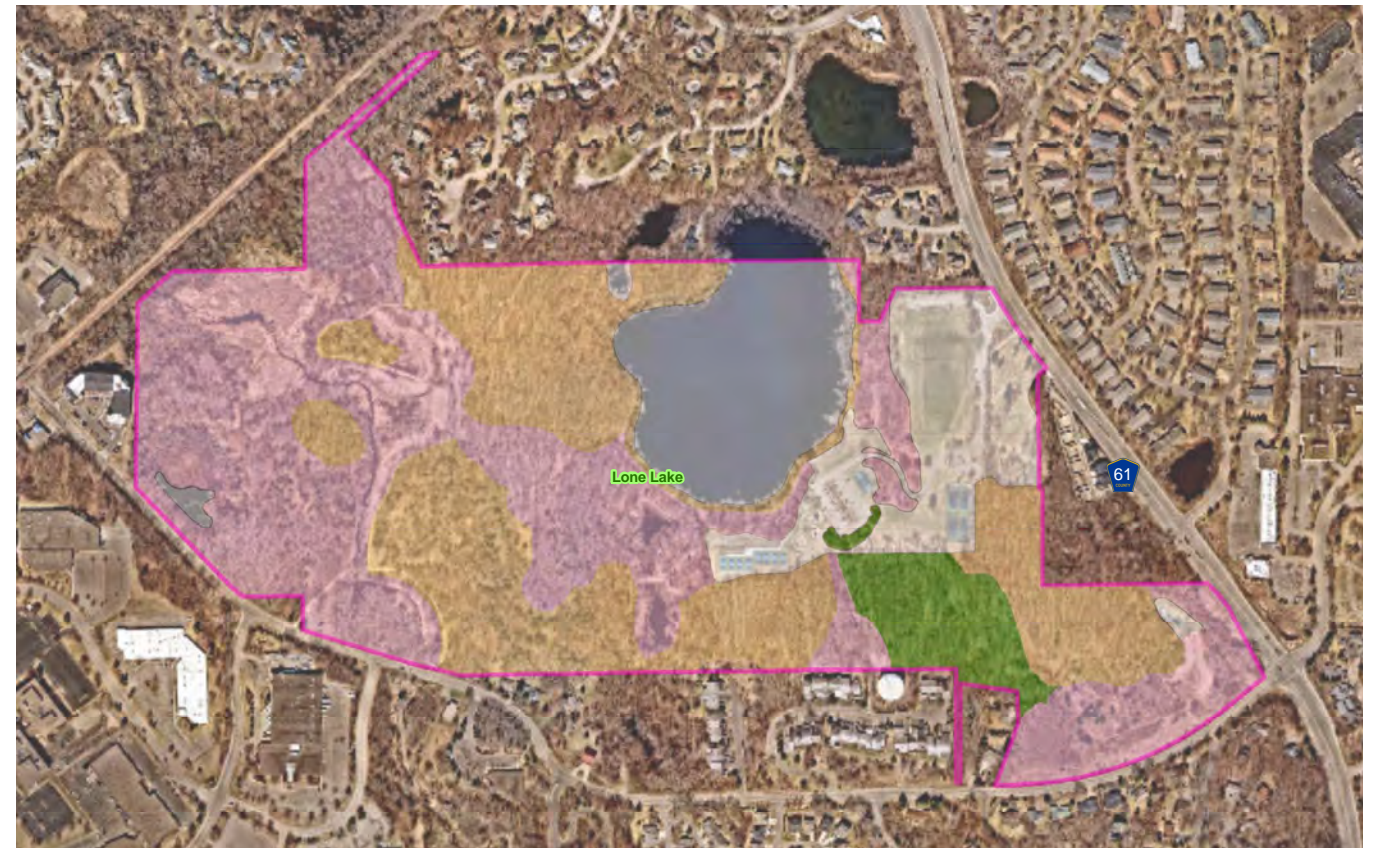




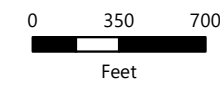
**Existing Plant Community**



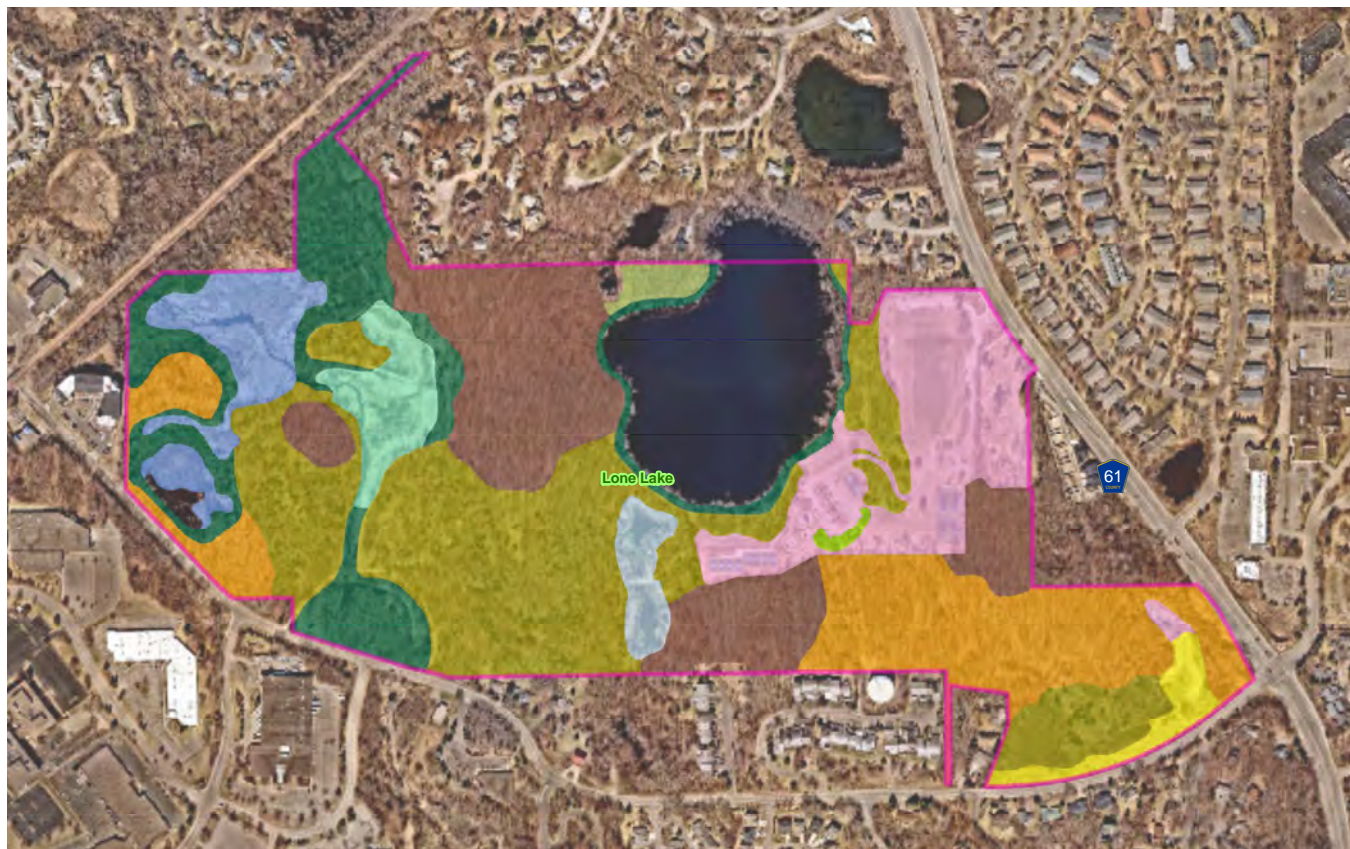
- |                   |                           |                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Cultural          | Grassland - Native        | Minnetonka Park |
| Deciduous Forest  | Grassland - Non-Native    |                 |
| Floodplain Forest | Oak Forest                |                 |
|                   | Wetland - Non-Native      |                 |
|                   | Altered/Non-Native Forest |                 |



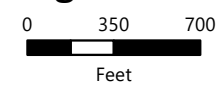
**Habitat Quality**



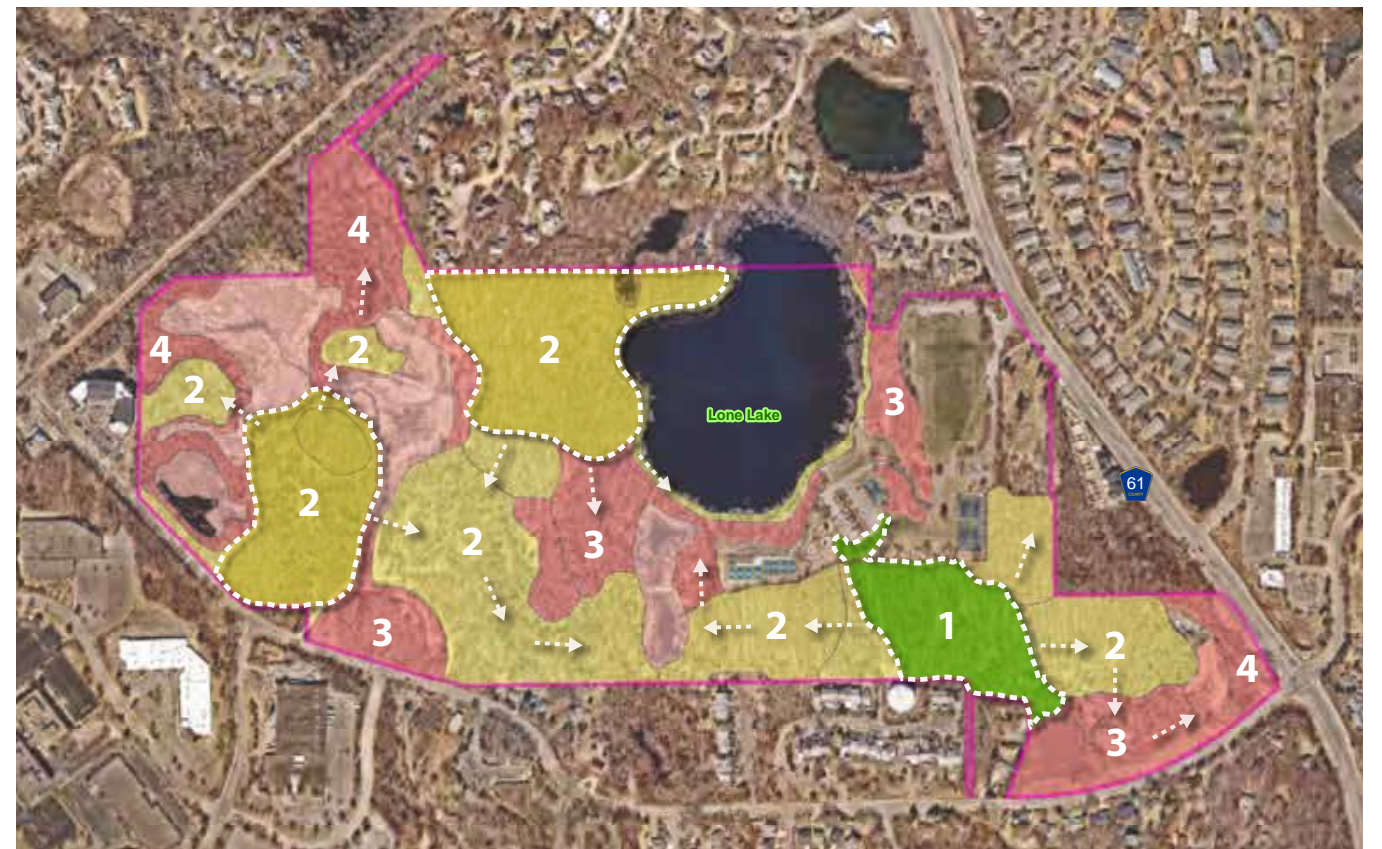
- |                            |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| A                          | Minnetonka Park |
| B                          |                 |
| C                          |                 |
| NA (Cultural & Open Water) |                 |



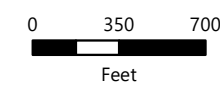
**Target Plant Community**



- |               |                         |                           |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cultural      | Floodplain Forest       | Oak Savanna               |
| Deep Marsh    | Mesic Hardwood Forest   | Grassland - Mesic Prairie |
| Shallow Marsh | Maple - Basswood Forest | Grassland - Dry Prairie   |
| Wet Meadow    | Oak Forest              | Minnetonka Park           |



**Restoration Priority**



- |        |                 |                 |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| High   | Lowest Priority | Minnetonka Park |
| Medium | NA              |                 |
| Low    |                 |                 |



# Jidana Park

Adjacent to Minnehaha Creek, Jidana Park includes “Hickory Island”, an ecological gem.

## Condition Summary

- Hickory Island is less accessible through surrounding cattail marsh but with note-worthy intact stand of mature trees. Rare stand of mature bitternut hickory trees with seedlings in ground layer; rare bladdernuts in shrub layer; isolated in Minnehaha Creek wetland; possible Native American history.
- Jidana Park is a very popular with dog-walkers and neighbors and has seen significant disturbance from human activity (off-leash dogs, mountain bikes, campfires, day camp activities).

## Challenges

- Buckthorn – nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park have been infested, but have ongoing management efforts
- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate wetlands
- Phragmites seen along boardwalk
- Purple loosestrife abundant and going to seed

## Opportunities

- The boardwalk trail that runs east-west through cattail wetland was a key recreational feature
- Boat landing and a day camp area exist in north central part of park. Campground area has nice historic bur oak canopy (+80%). Only accessible area to have native woodland ground cover species
- Hickory Island is not accessible by public trails. Could serve as a nice sanctuary or reserve for wildlife. Tree canopy was very diverse and well established. Leaf duff layer still present in August suggests earth worms have not made it out here

## Restoration Priorities

- Open up and restore areas where pioneer trees dominate
- Oak forests consist of large historic specimens
- Intensive ground cover restoration
- Control deer browse
- Manage for phragmites in wetland areas, not yet a lost cause here



Above: “Hickory Island” contains a stand of valuable oaks, hickory, and other hardwoods with invasive species actively managed. Native penn sedge carpet the forest floor.

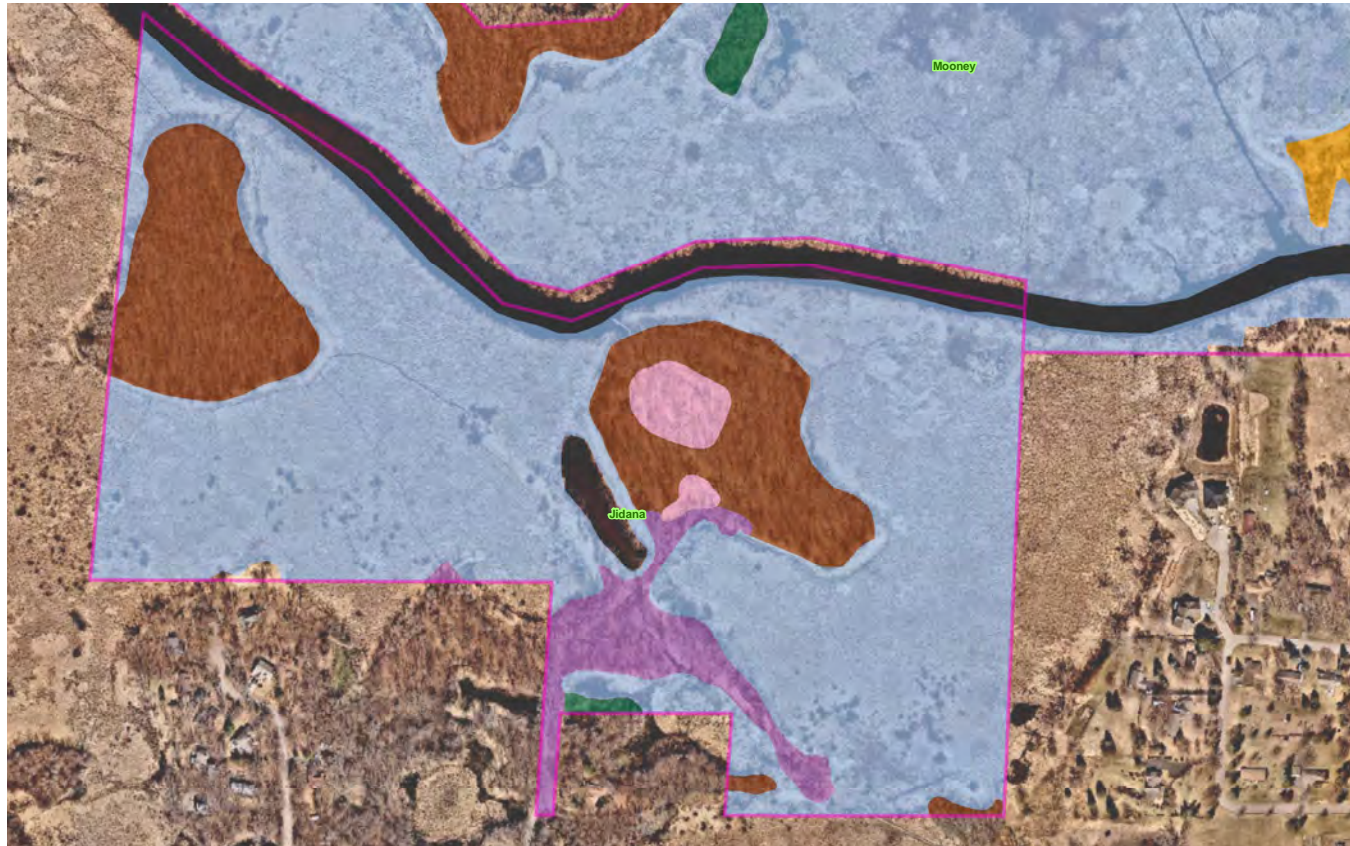


Above: A large mown turf area in the center of the park is surrounded by mature white oaks but severe foot traffic has disturbed the soils down to Minnehaha Creek.



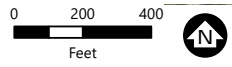
Above: Forested wetlands separate Jidana and Hickory Island. Where full sun exists, the wetlands are predominantly cattails. Some native sedges and forbs were present.





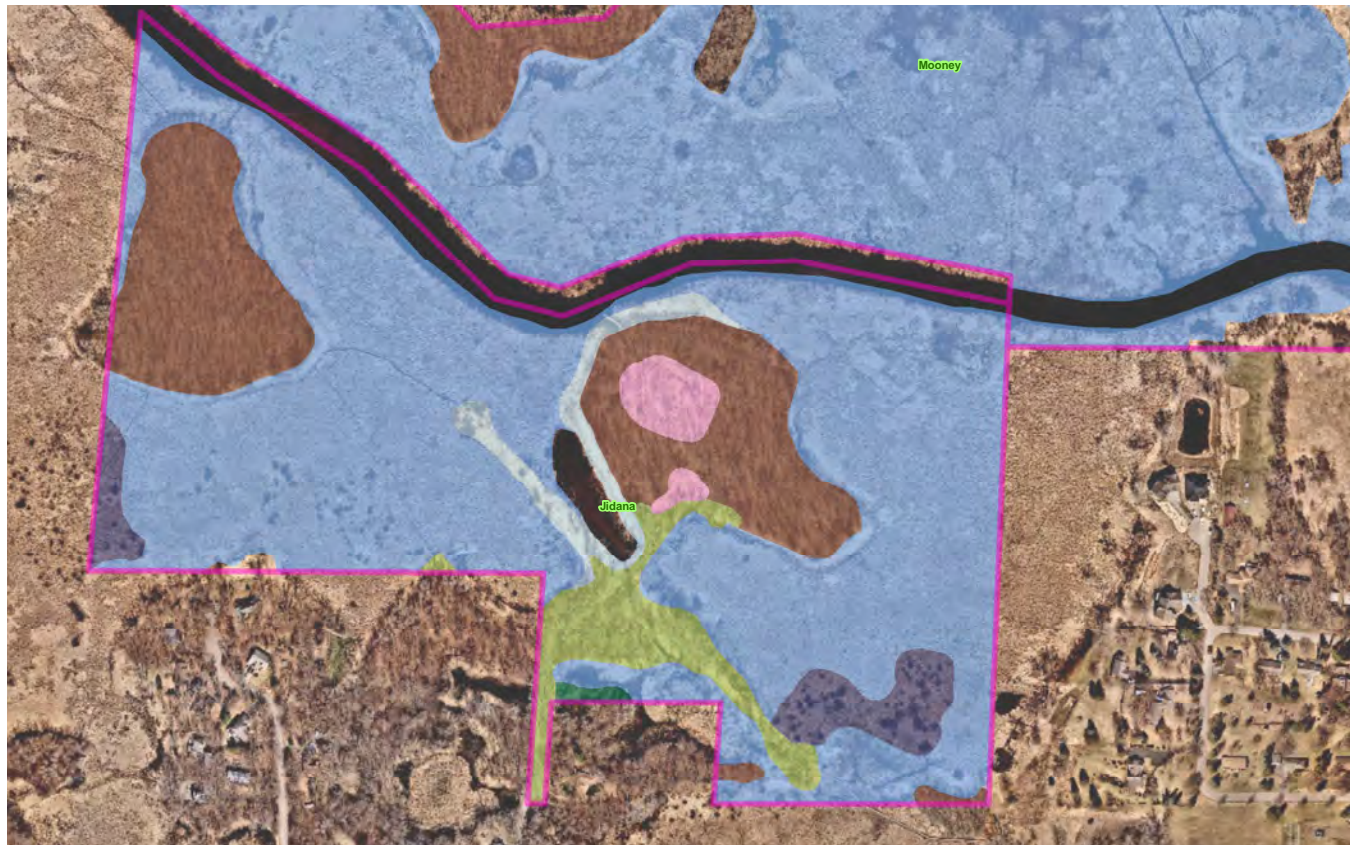
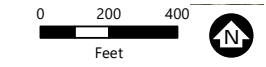
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Cultural
- Floodplain Forest
- Grassland - Non-Native
- Oak Forest
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



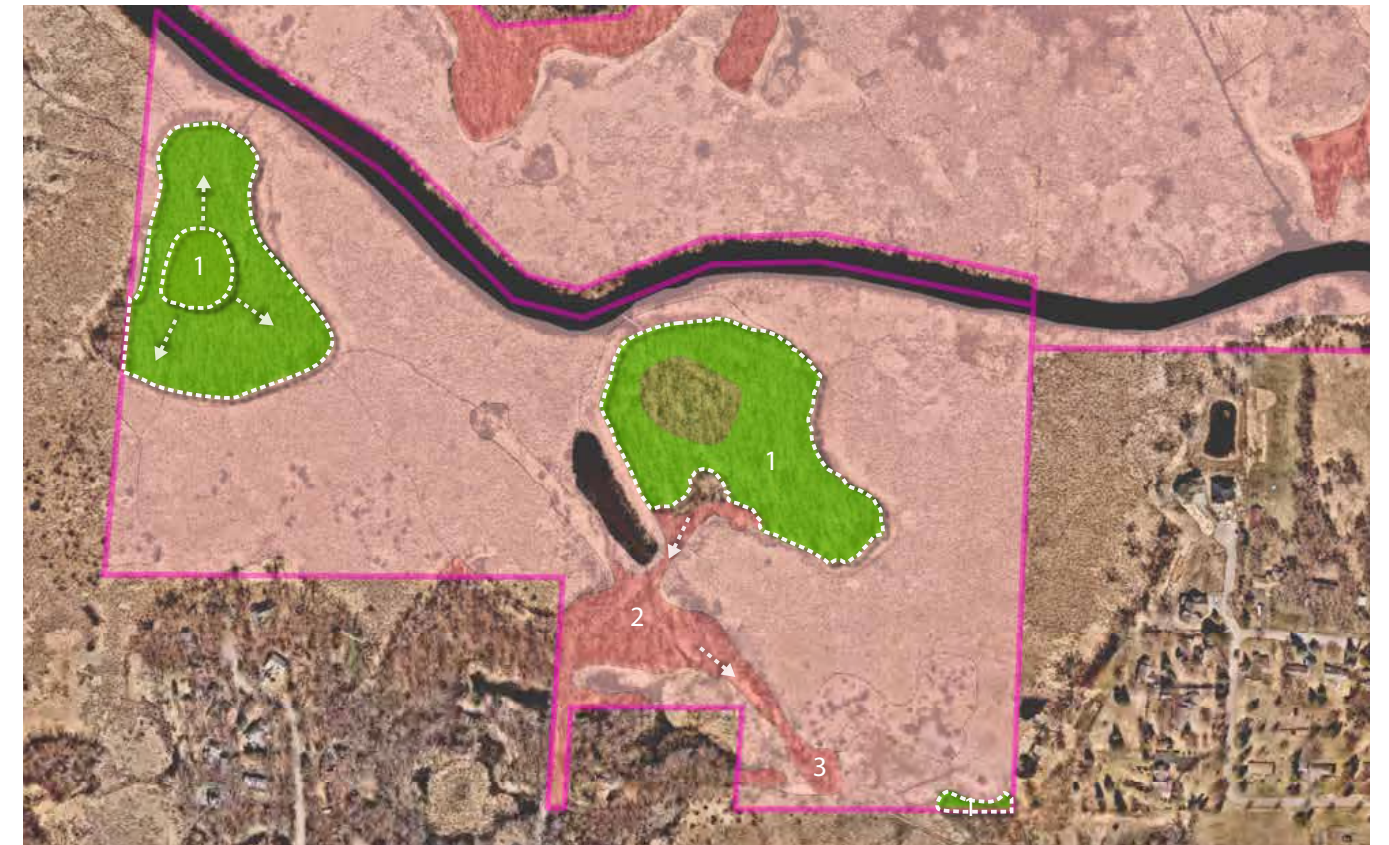
**Habitat Quality**

- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



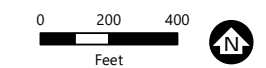
**Target Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Grassland - Non-Native
- Cultural
- Floodplain Forest
- Oak Forest
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park





# Big Willow Park

Big Willow Park's 95 acres make it the smallest of the city's five community parks.

## Condition Summary

- Highest valued area located just west of parking lot.
- Majority of the emergent wetland plant community dominated by reed canary grass and cattails.
- Oak forests canopies were well established and nearly enclosed by historic red and bur oak trees.

## Challenges

- Oak wilt and bur oak blight observed on west side of park near the Minnehaha Creek bridge crossing.
- Phragmites observed in wetland north of the rail road.
- Purple loosestrife abundant at wetland edges, despite biological control over many years.
- Woodland edges around sport fields are a considerable source for weed species (garlic mustard, buckthorn, burdock, thistle, etc.)

## Opportunities

- Extensive buckthorn management has been ongoing for years.
- This park is large and has a lot of nice loop trails for different types of users. Potential for additional recreation trails in lower quality areas to the north.

## Restoration Priorities

- Continue focus on restoring high quality oak forest areas.
- Reduce lawn areas around historic homestead and convert to savanna.
- Remove all infected oak trees.
- Restore areas around sport fields to prairie.
- Control weeds within existing deer exclosures.
- Leave wetlands alone for now, extensively degraded by reed canary grass and cattails.



Above: Purple loosestrife can be seen amongst volunteer soft wood trees in the wetland of Big Willow.



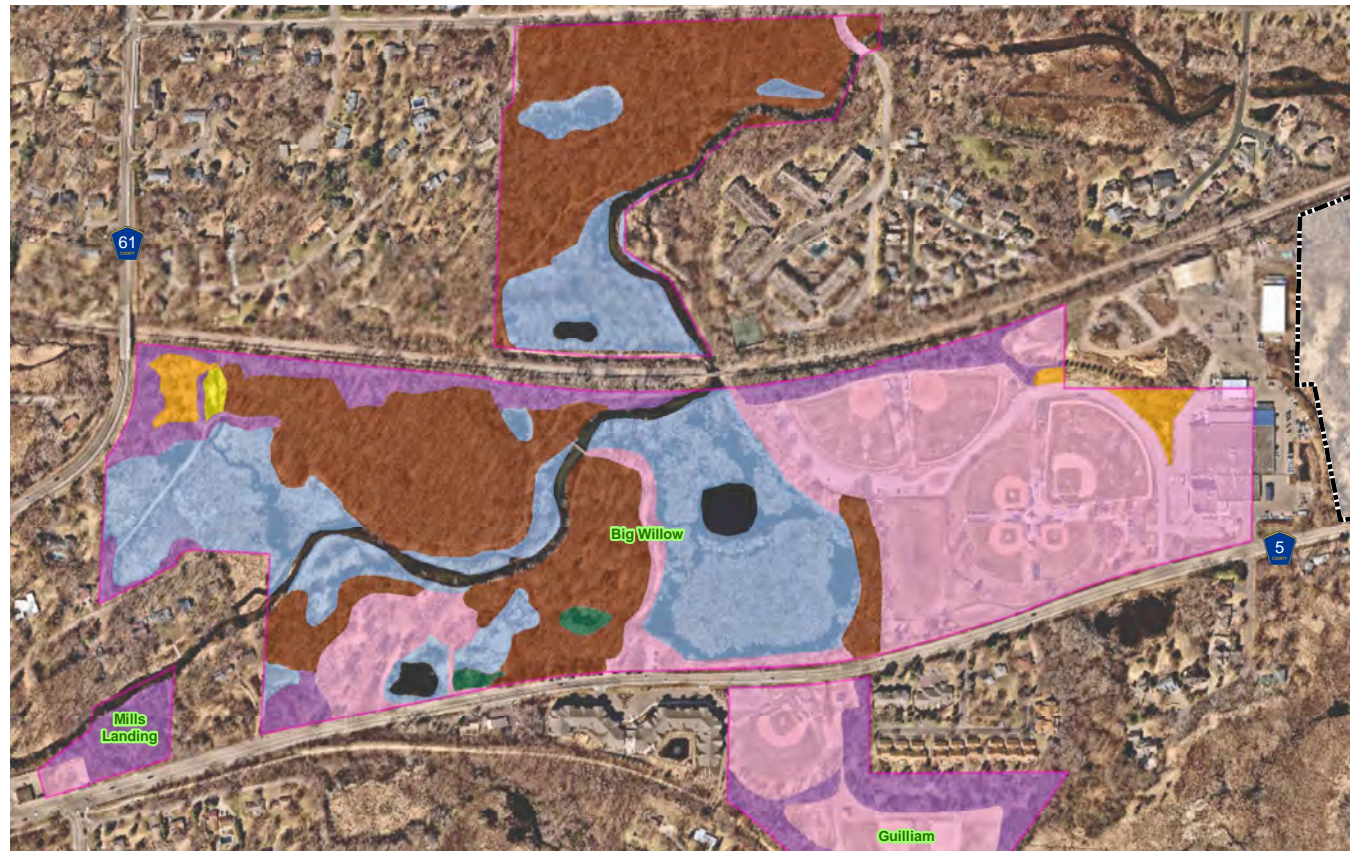
Above: The numerous, highly used walking trail are areas where invasive species can take hold but are also the most visible for removals.



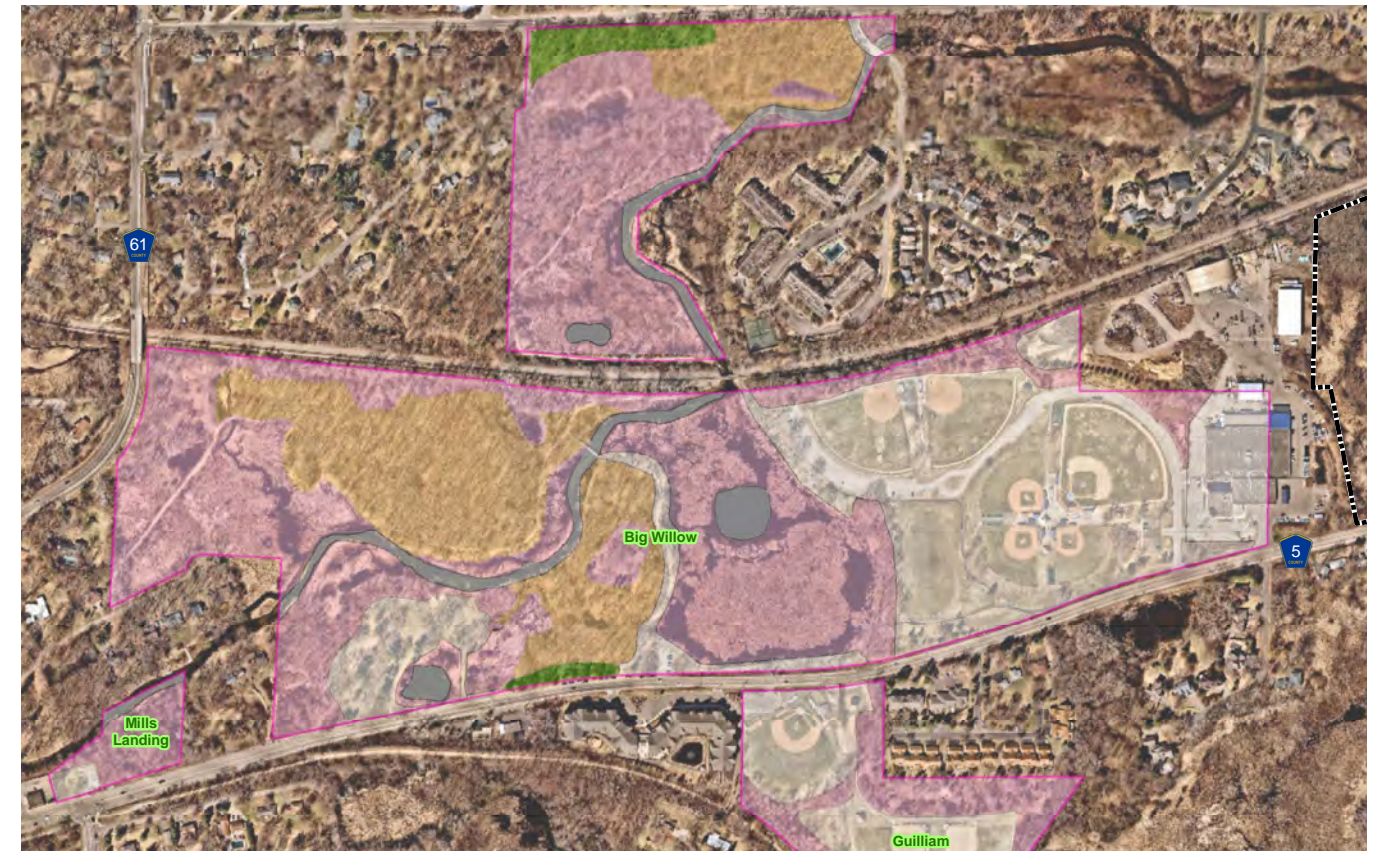
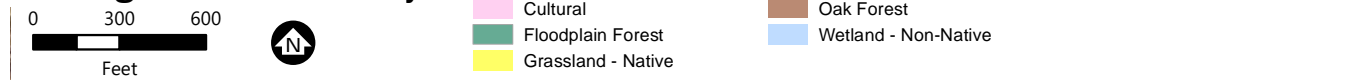
Above: Despite removal efforts, the dried seed heads of garlic mustard are clearly visible from the trails.



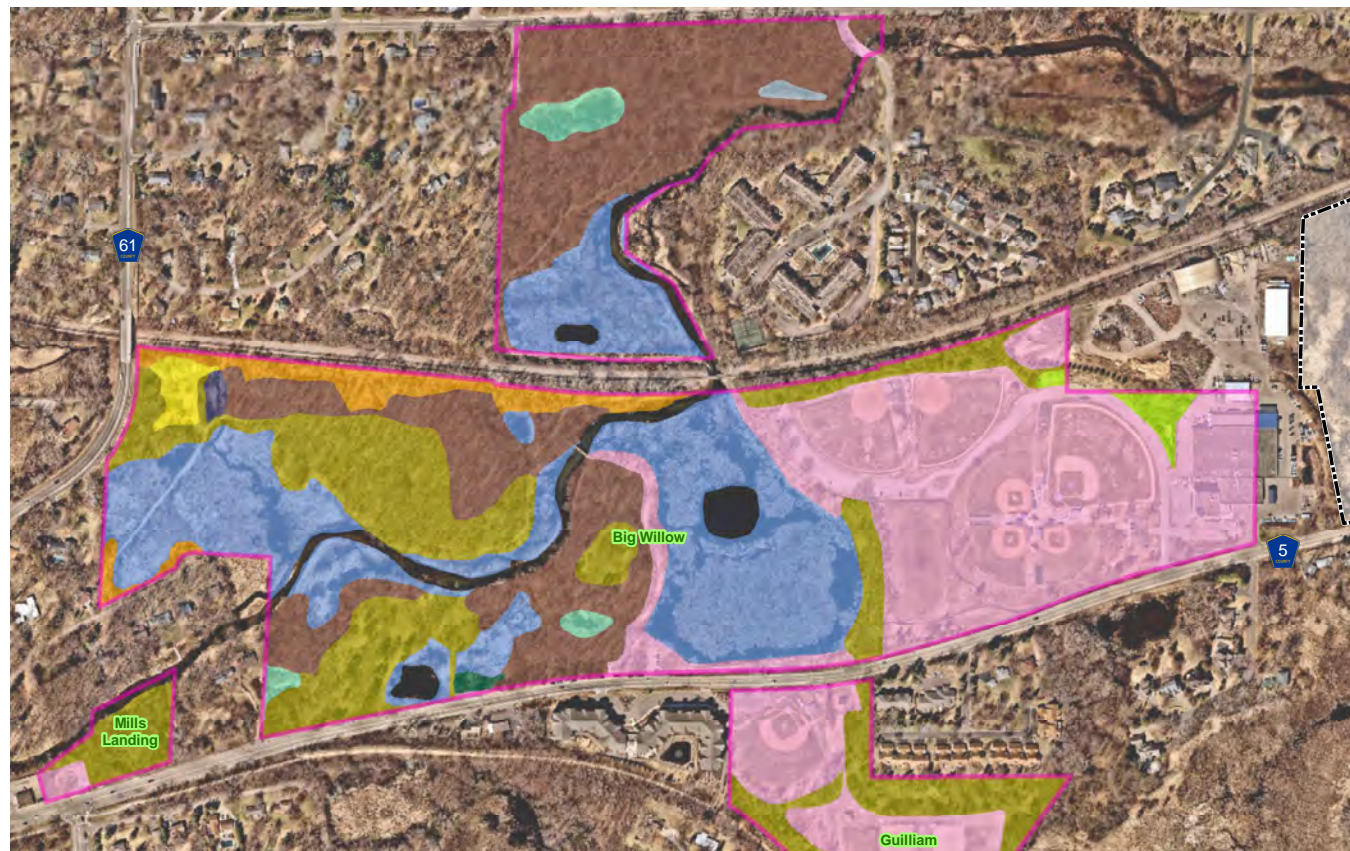
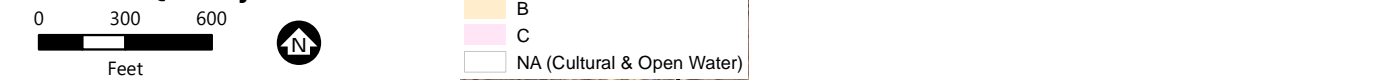
# Big Willow Park Assessment and Planning Maps



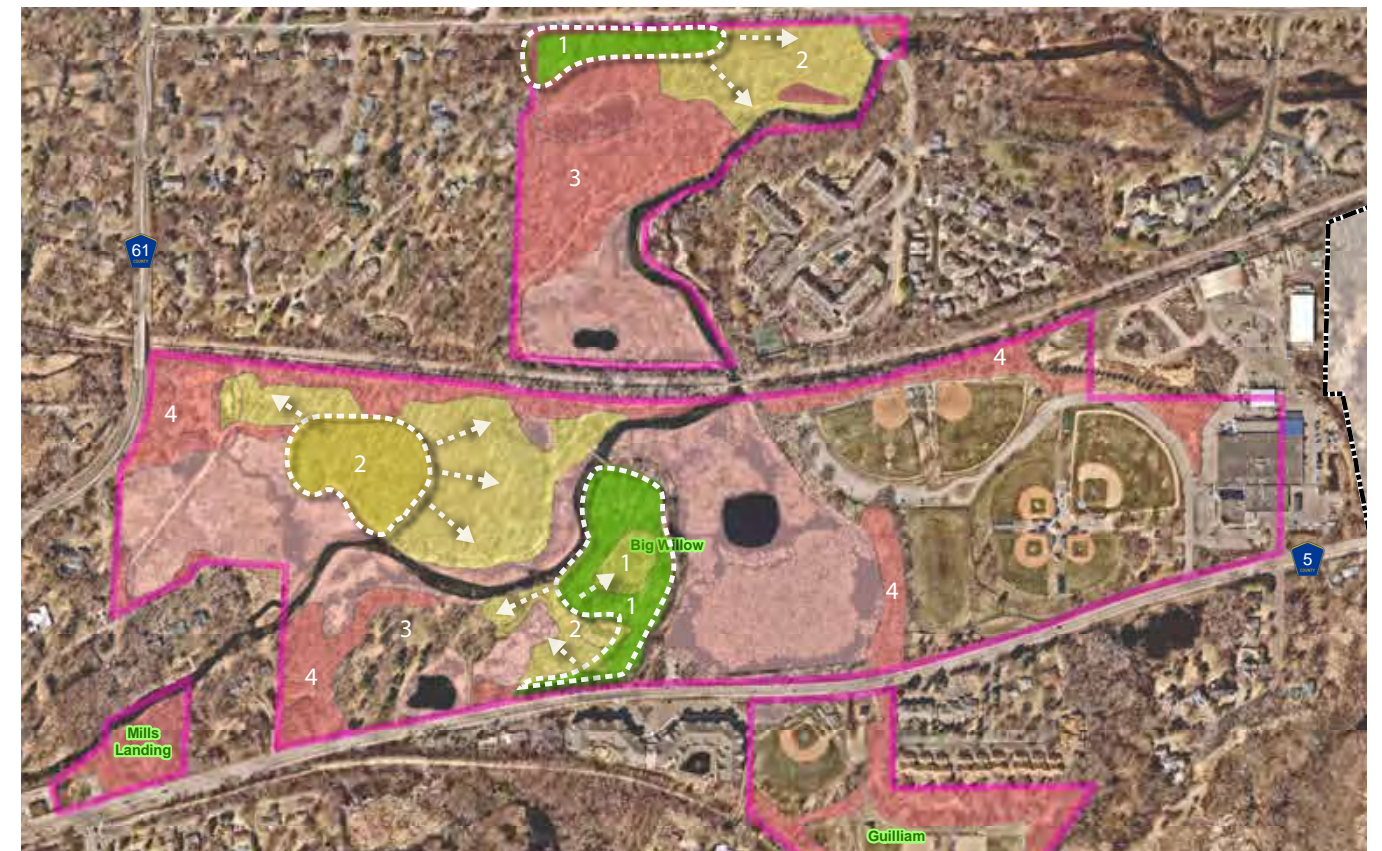
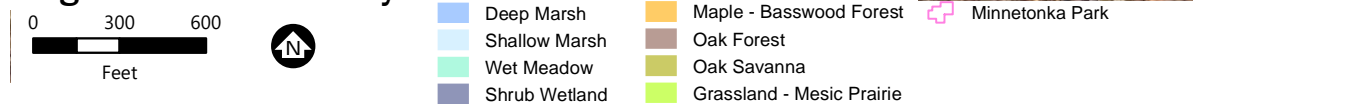
**Existing Plant Community**



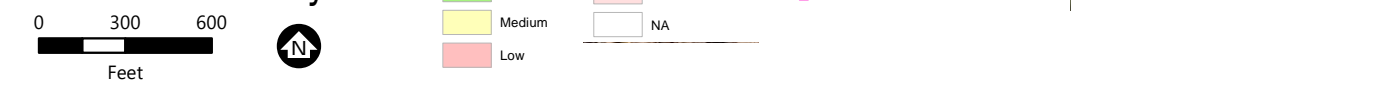
**Habitat Quality**



**Target Plant Community**



**Restoration Priority**





# Purgatory Park

Community preserve with a passive recreation focus. Purgatory park showcases a number of habitats and plant communities including a remnant and restored prairie, floodplain, creek, and a forested ridge dominated by oaks. It is a highly utilized park with an informal off-leash dog area and an extensive informal trail network.

## Condition Summary

- Unique shortgrass prairie remnant, near the eastern side of the park, has woody encroachment which is reducing the diversity and viability of the prairie remnant.
- Large tallgrass prairie restorations have created a diverse core within the center of the park but are showing signs of becoming less diverse due to the dominance of big bluestem, overuse from off-leash dogs, dog walkers, and woody encroachment.
- Surrounding woodlands contain pioneer trees, invasive species, and disturbed areas.
- Unique restored maple-basswood forest next to Excelsior Boulevard with buckthorn encroachment on the eastern side and along the old trolley corridor.
- On-going buckthorn management has occurred but prioritization of certain areas should be undertaken to reduce impacts to higher quality areas.

## Challenges

- Buckthorn - nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park have been infested and have ongoing management efforts.
- Invasive Amur maple needs control, especially east of the main trail and south of the main parking lot.
- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate the wetlands.
- Foot traffic and off-leash dogs have caused disturbance and erosion within restoration areas and along creek banks.
- Extensive network of informal trails with increased widening and erosion.
- New areas of disturbance and subsequent invasive species and erosion from structural installations such as benches and stairs located on the prairie remnant knoll.

## Opportunities

- Continued management of the restored tallgrass prairie area. Prescribed burning to knock back undesirable woody species as they move into the prairie. Remove existing Siberian elms and other pioneer tree species from the prairie. Strive for continued diversification of forbs by interseeding after disturbance events.
- Continue management of the unique shortgrass remnant prairie by removing woody encroachment and augment for species richness.
- Expansion of restored areas offer an opportunity to create one of the bigger diverse prairies in Minnetonka.
- Higher topography areas dominated by large oaks and black cherries should continue to be controlled for buckthorn, seeded, and monitored for ground layer vegetation establishment. Young successional tree regeneration should be protected from deer browse.
- Allocate the low-quality northwest section of the park as designated new off-leash area.
- Restore and selectively close eroded and widened footpaths.

## Restoration Priorities

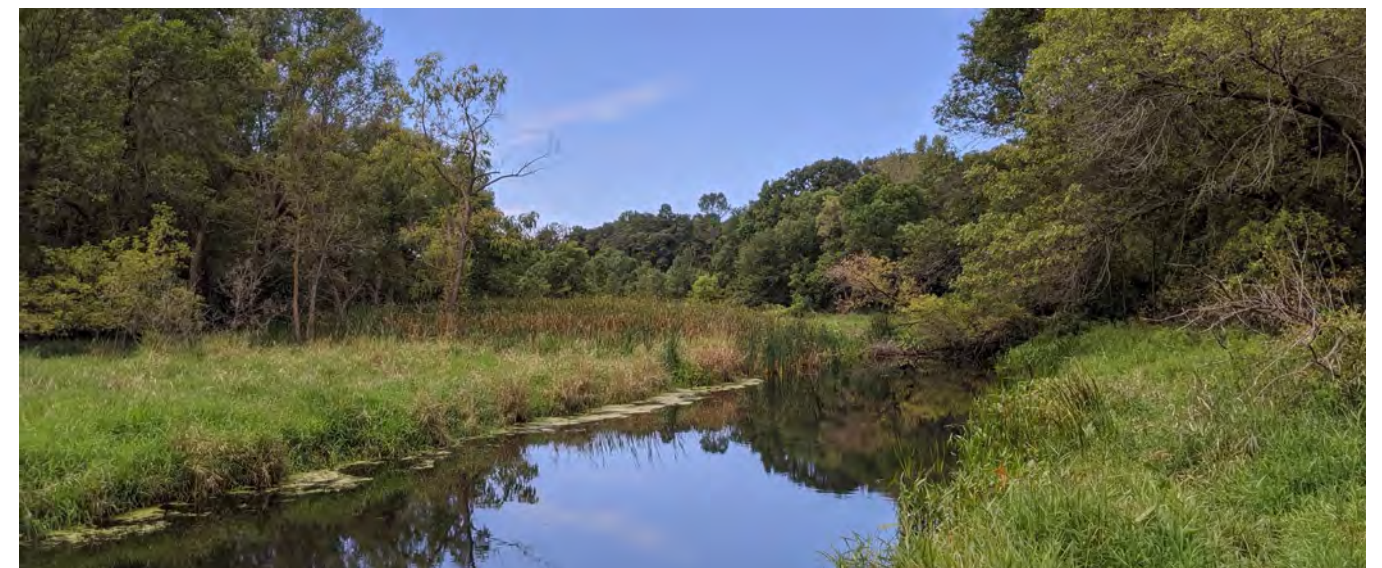
- Open up and restore areas where pioneer and Siberian elm trees dominate on the northwest side of the park to provide a new off-leash dog area.
- Expand existing restoration areas in the eastern portion of the park to connect prairie/savanna plant communities with the restored school forest.
- Return established prairie to on-leash only to allow for restoration. Increase diversity within the established prairie and savanna core of the park to build resilience and promote stability in the face of disturbance.



Above: Large areas of high quality big bluestem dominated mesic prairies.



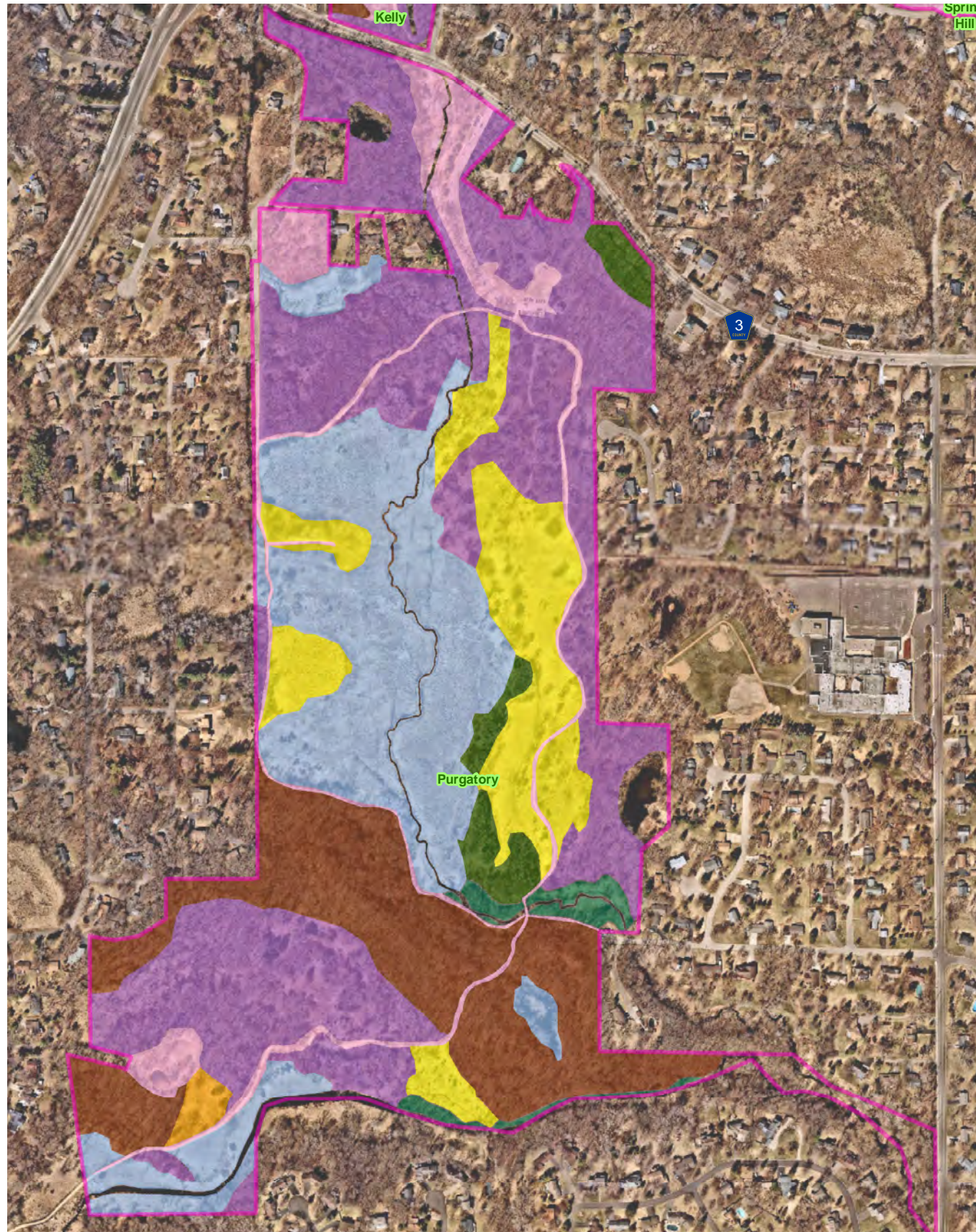
Above: Buckthorn recently cleared along walking path (September 2020).



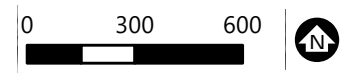
Above: Reed canary grass and cattails dominate wetland areas within the park.



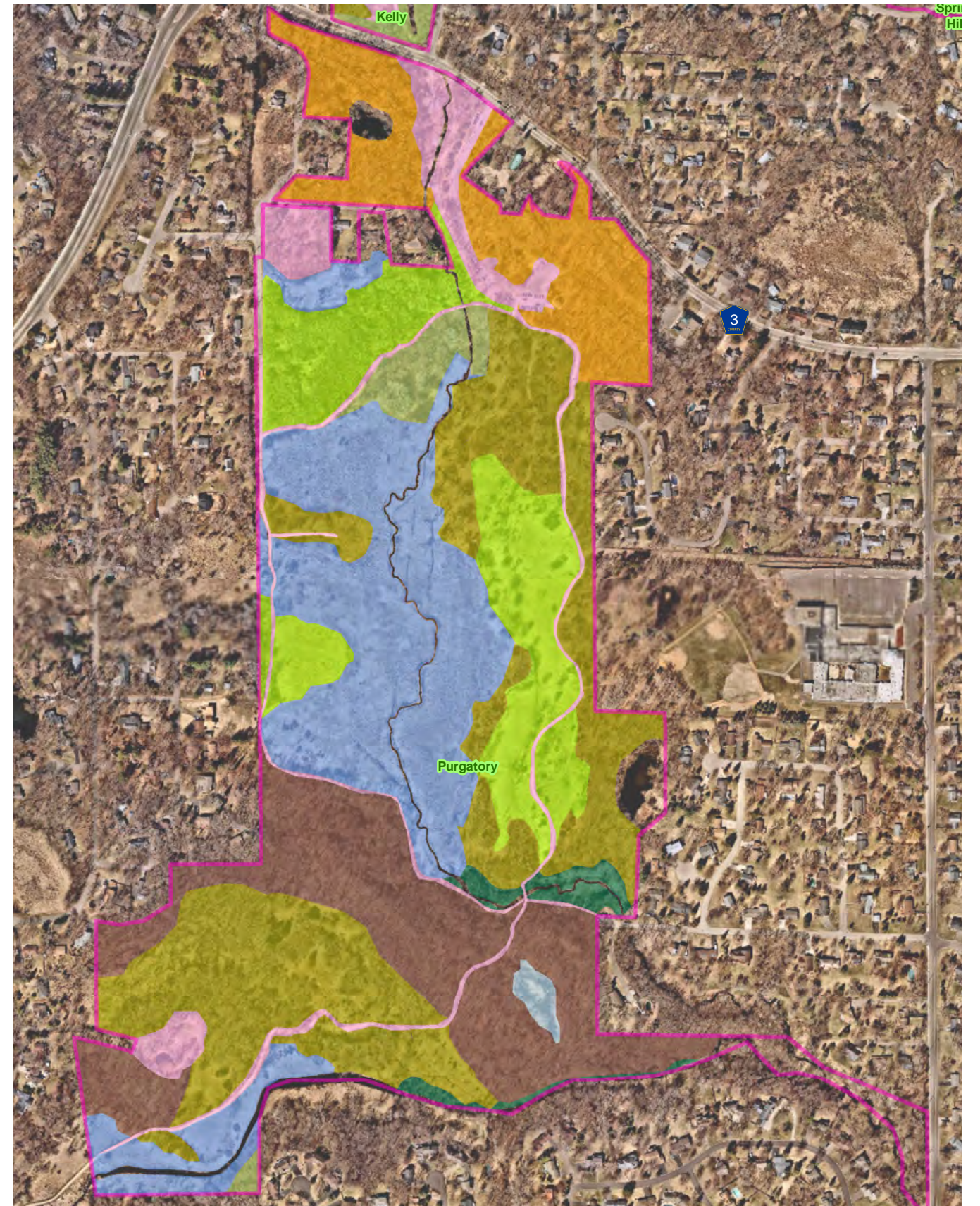
# Purgatory Park Assessment and Planning Maps



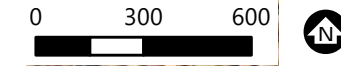
**Existing Plant Community**



- |                           |                        |                 |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Altered/Non-Native Forest | Grassland - Native     | Minnetonka Park |
| Cultural                  | Grassland - Non-Native |                 |
| Deciduous Forest          | Oak Forest             |                 |
| Floodplain Forest         | Wetland - Non-Native   |                 |



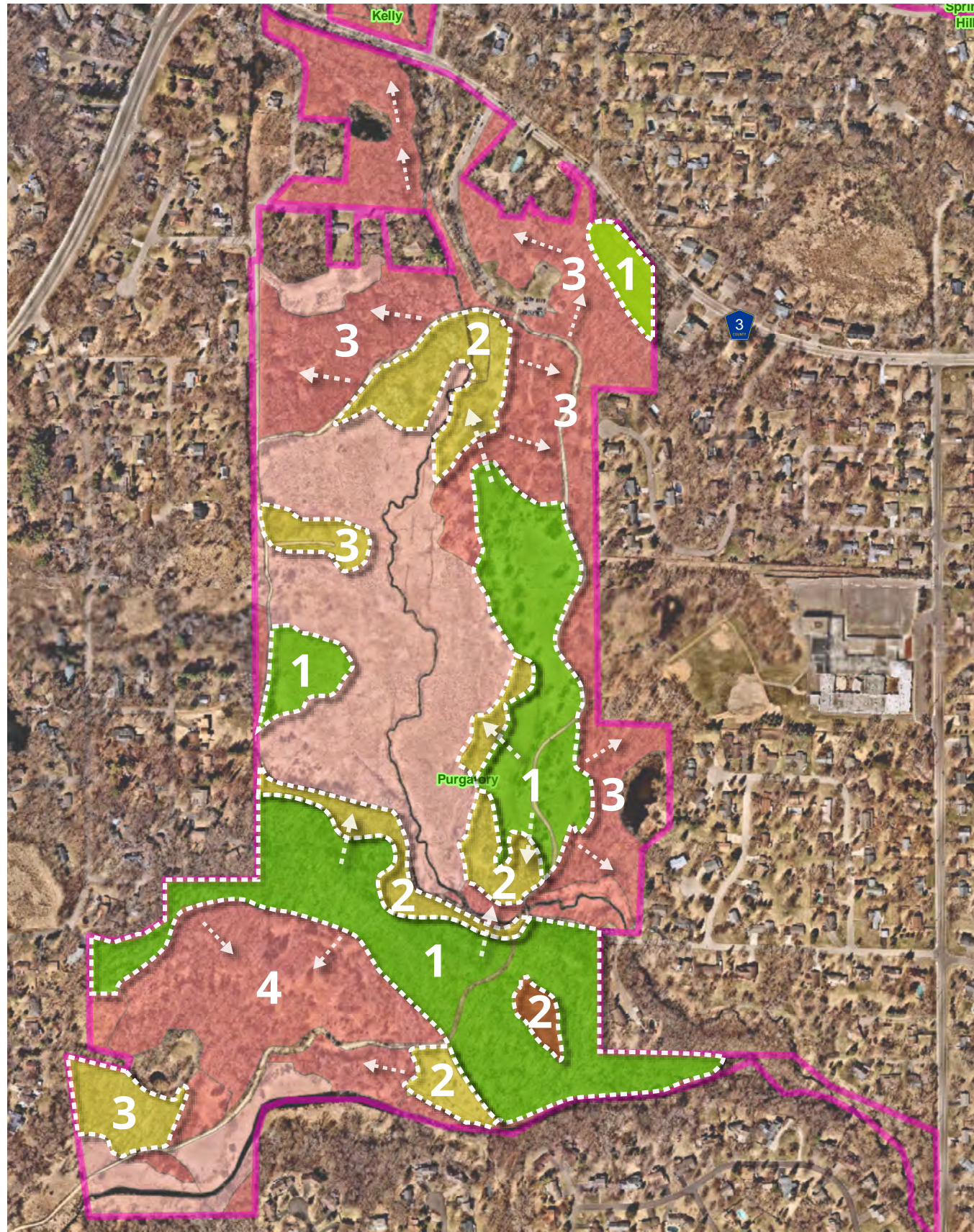
**Target Plant Community**



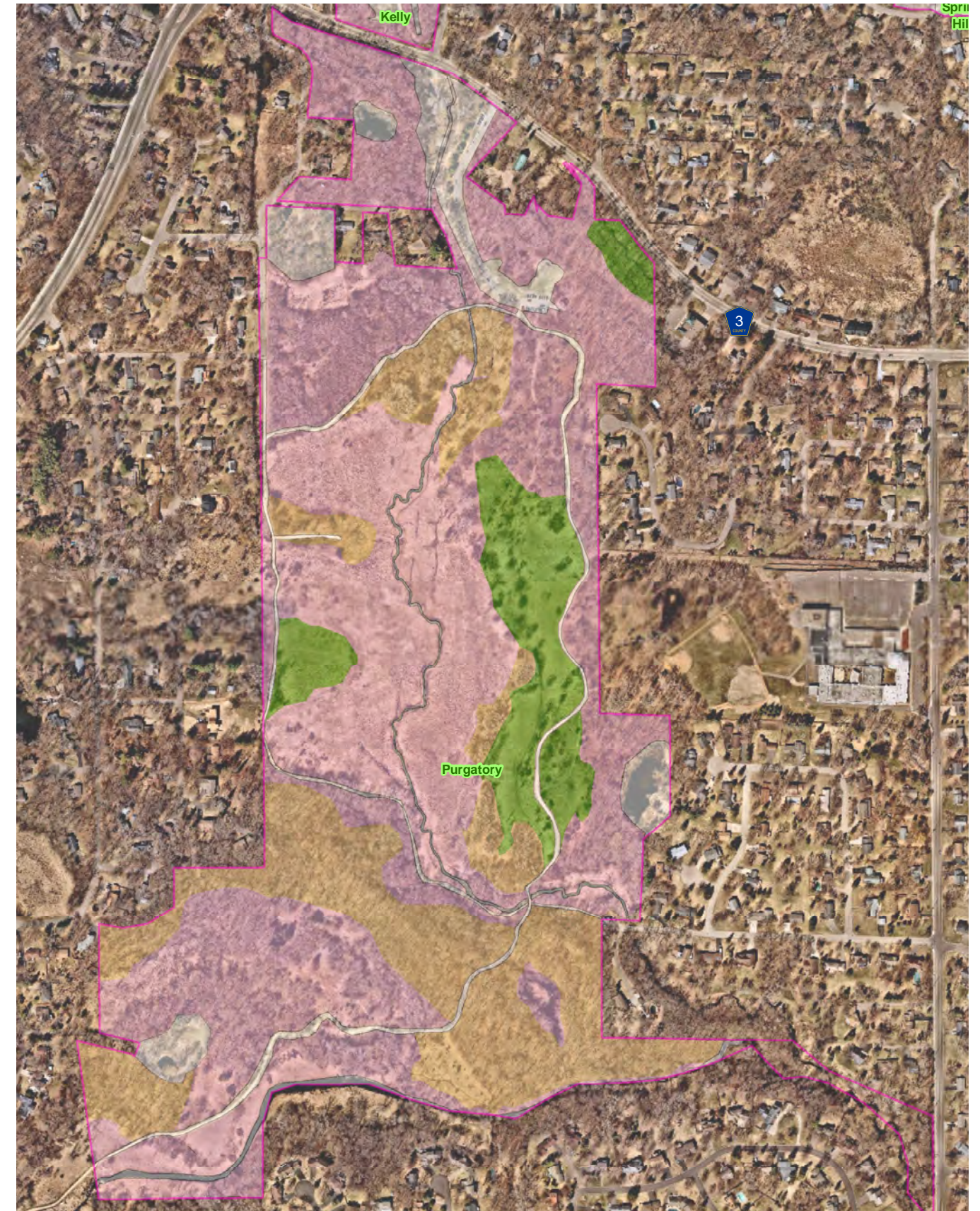
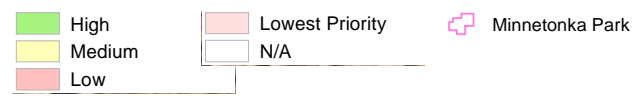
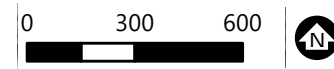
- |                       |                           |                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Cultural              | Maple - Basswood Forest   | Minnetonka Park |
| Deep Marsh            | Oak Forest                |                 |
| Shallow Marsh         | Oak Savanna               |                 |
| Floodplain Forest     | Grassland - Mesic Prairie |                 |
| Mesic Hardwood Forest |                           |                 |



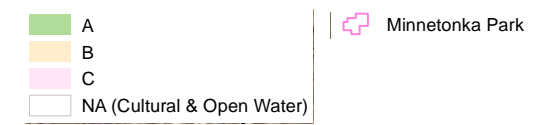
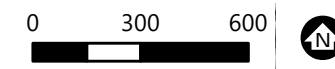
# Purgatory Park Assessment and Planning Maps



## Restoration Priority



## Habitat Quality





# Minnetonka Mills

Historic homestead with high-quality cultural gardens. Limited park access in native areas.

## Condition Summary

- Highest publicly valued area located along creek near the Burwell house
- The majority of the park is not accessible by trail
- Habitat quality decreases as you move west along the creek
- Oak woodland restoration in progress near the Burwell House
- Very few native groundcovers recovering in the park

## Challenges

- Buckthorn – Nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park is infested
- Little to no recovery of herbaceous native plant species in areas cleared of buckthorn
- Black walnut trees are inhibiting black cherry growth
- Reed canary grass is an issue along the creek
- Garlic mustard is an issue in the woodlands

## Opportunities

- Additional trail access to “Burwell Woods”
- Nice mix of natural and cultivated gardens on the east side of the park
- Some higher quality riparian vegetation on the west side of the park
- Nice oak canopy trees throughout the park
- Black cherry starting to out-compete buckthorn in restoration areas
- Improve riparian areas

## Restoration Priorities

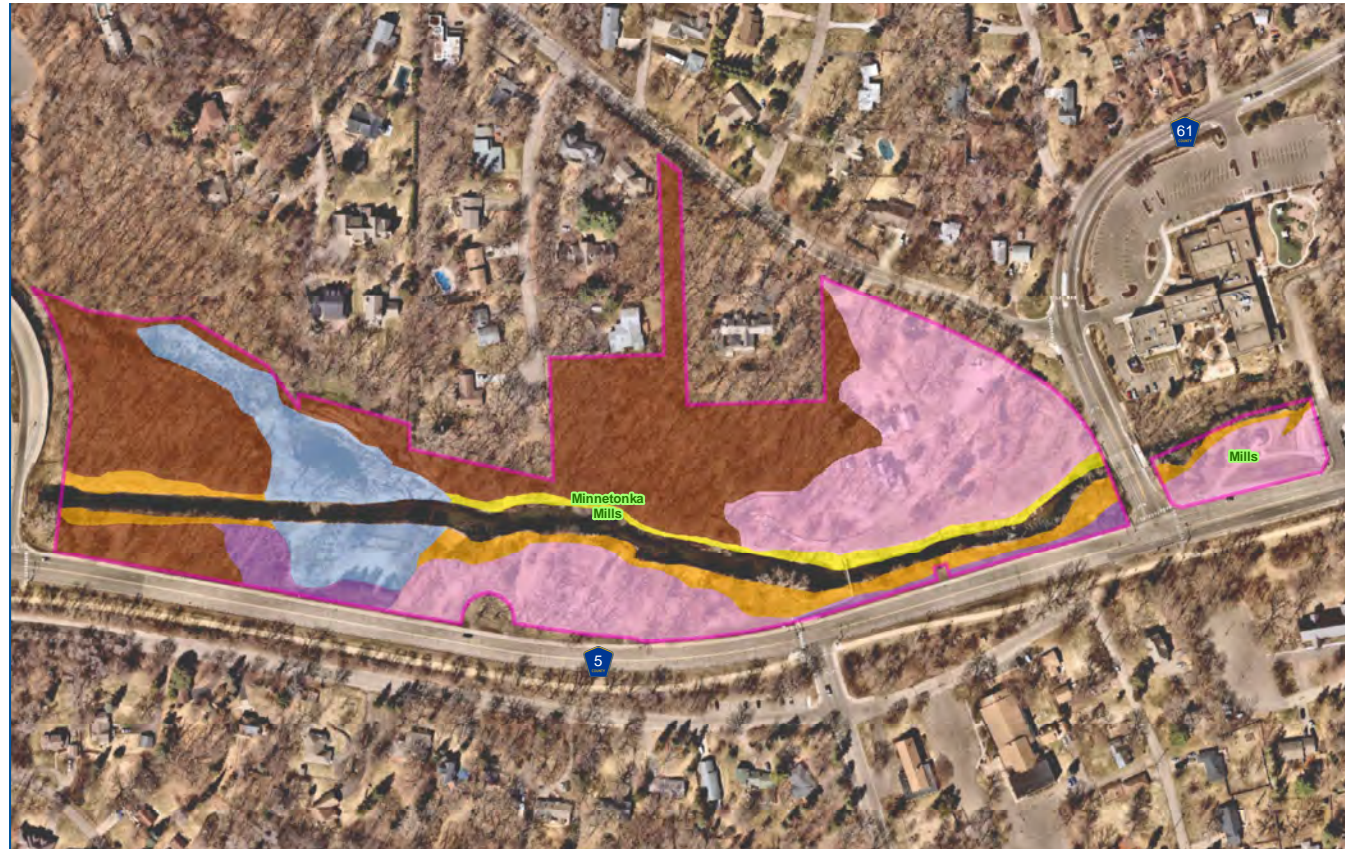
- Continued woodland restoration
- Riparian edge is in moderate condition, additional and continued restoration efforts needed to maintain diversity
- Recommendations for future plant communities:
  - Continue on restoring higher quality oak forest areas on the east side
  - Reduce lawn on south side of creek
  - Intensive ground cover restoration of oak forests consist of large historic specimens
  - Intensive ground cover restoration would be needed here
  - Increase riparian restoration efforts (move east to west)



Above: Mown turf grass forms the edge of a native buffer along Minnehaha Creek.

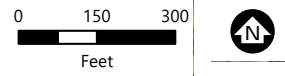


# Minnetonka Mills Assessment and Planning Maps



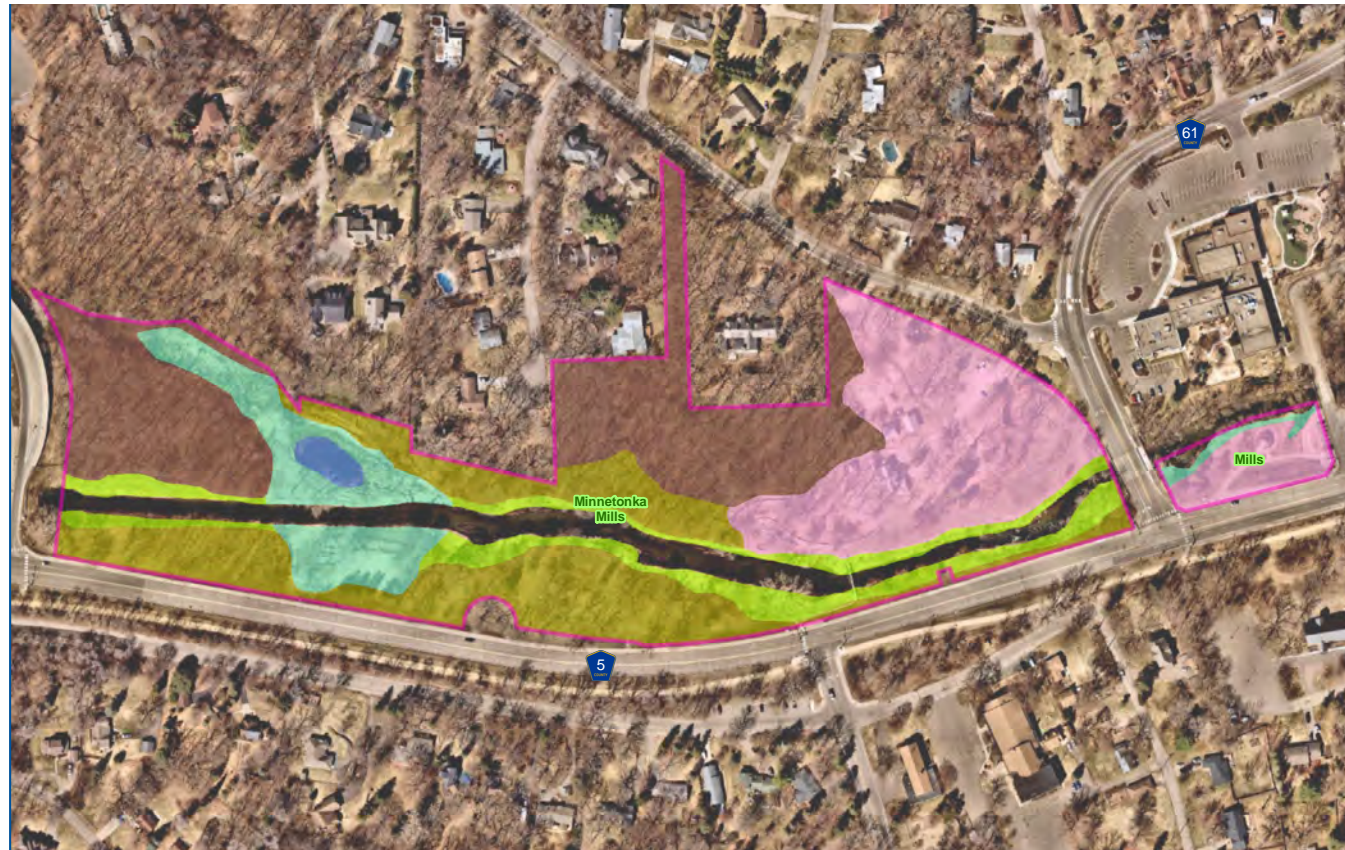
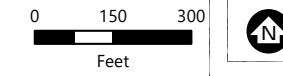
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Oak Forest
- Cultural
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Grassland - Native
- Grassland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



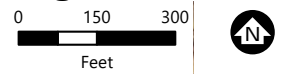
**Habitat Quality**

- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



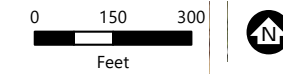
**Target Plant Community**

- Cultural
- Deep Marsh
- Wet Meadow
- Maple - Basswood Forest
- Oak Forest
- Oak Savanna
- Grassland - Mesic Prairie
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- NA
- Minnetonka Park





# Civic Center

Native areas surround the landscaping of the Civic Center and on-going efforts to control invasive species have paid off.

## Condition Summary

- The built landscapes surrounding the Civic Center buildings are a mix of cultural plantings and native areas.
- The on-going management of invasive species have kept these plantings looking good

## Challenges

- In the wooded areas buckthorn persists but its management has kept the ground plane from eroding
- Adjacent areas have not been managed as well as the Civic Center grounds and invasive species have been able to move in from the edges
- Poor access to island in the wetland between the fire department and creek have reduced their priority for restoration
- Weed control in areas intended for prairie

## Opportunities

- Connections to other regional parks to make ecological corridors
- The establishment of prairie-like areas as well as oak forested areas provide a unique opportunity to demonstrate a variety of restoration successes in one location
- Leveraging past and on-going buckthorn management can only enhance the diversity
- Collaborate with adjacent land owner to restore a small pocket of private property near board walk from Civic Center to Jidana Park

## Restoration Priorities

- Continue to control buckthorn in management areas
- Open up and restore areas where pioneer trees dominate
- Enhance prairie and woodland plantings by continuing to control invasive species such as thistle and buckthorn
- Control deer browse
- Manage for reed canary grass along the creek corridor.
- Increase restoration efforts along trail from Civic Center to Jidana Park



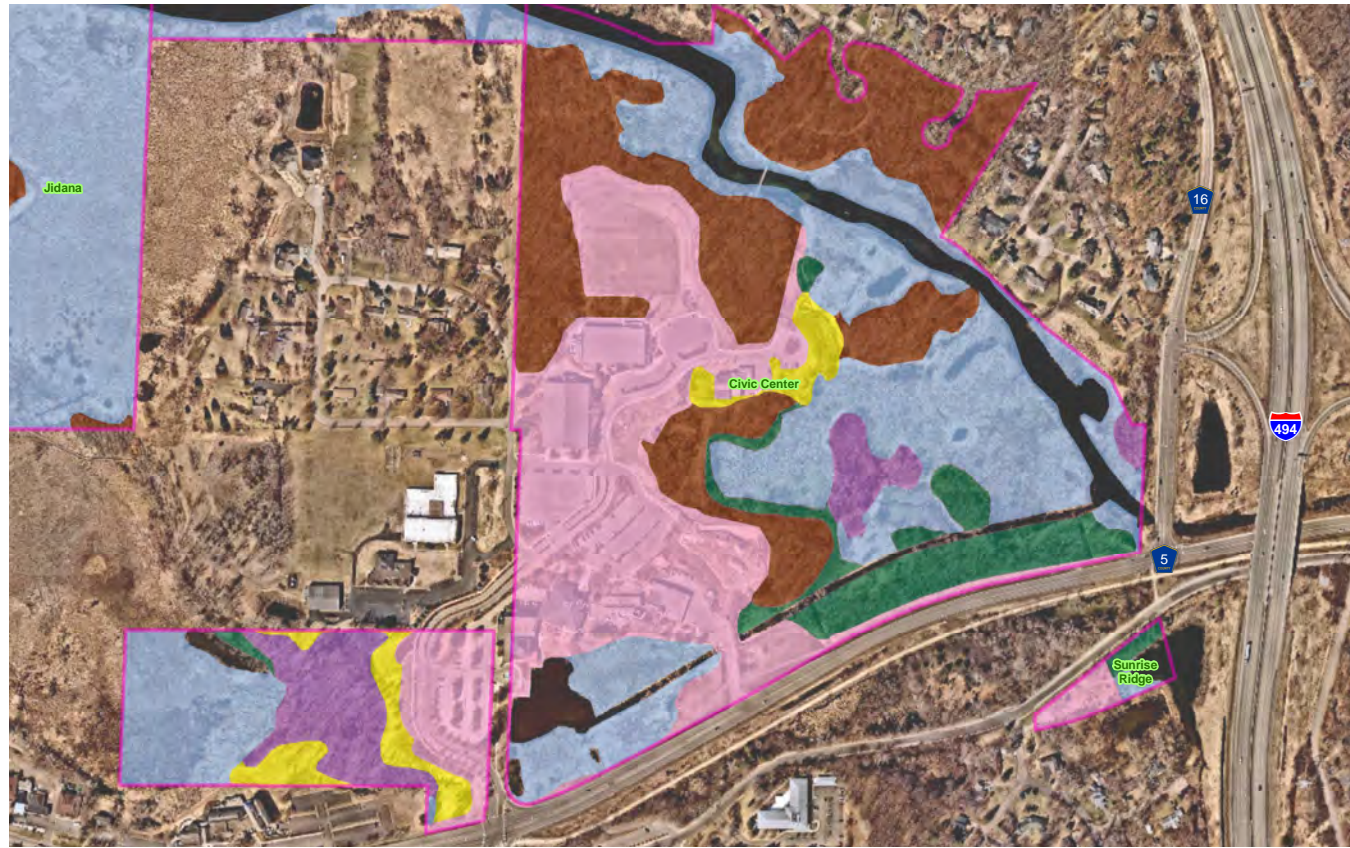
Above: On-going management for invasive species continues on the east side of Civic Center Drive.



Above: The walking path between Jidana Park and the Civic Center is fairly degraded with wetland tree species including black willow.

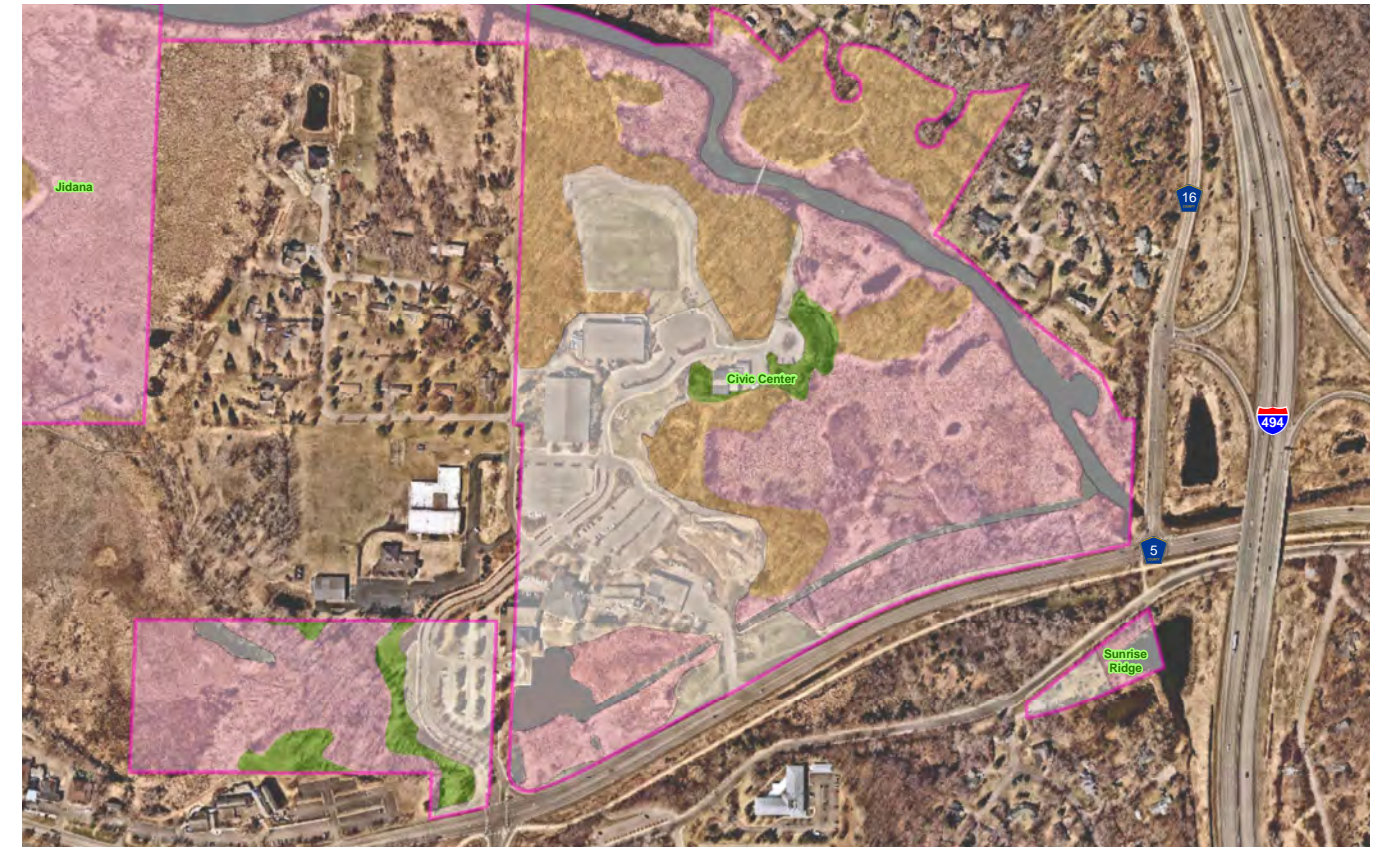
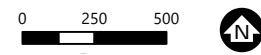


# Civic Center Assessment and Planning Maps



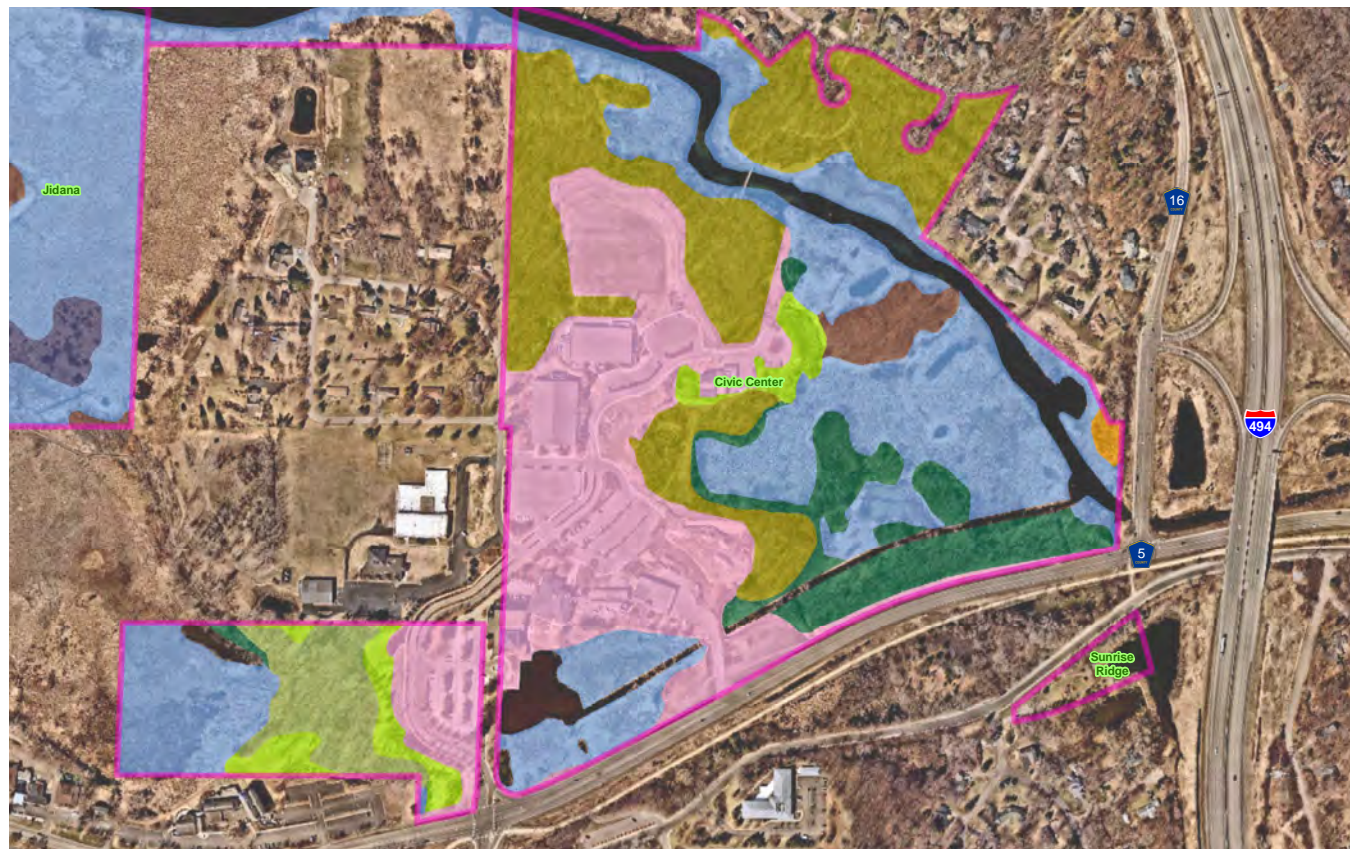
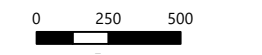
**Existing Plant Community**

- |                           |                      |                 |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Altered/Non-Native Forest | Oak Forest           | Minnetonka Park |
| Cultural                  | Wetland - Non-Native |                 |
| Floodplain Forest         |                      |                 |
| Grassland - Native        |                      |                 |
| Grassland - Non-Native    |                      |                 |



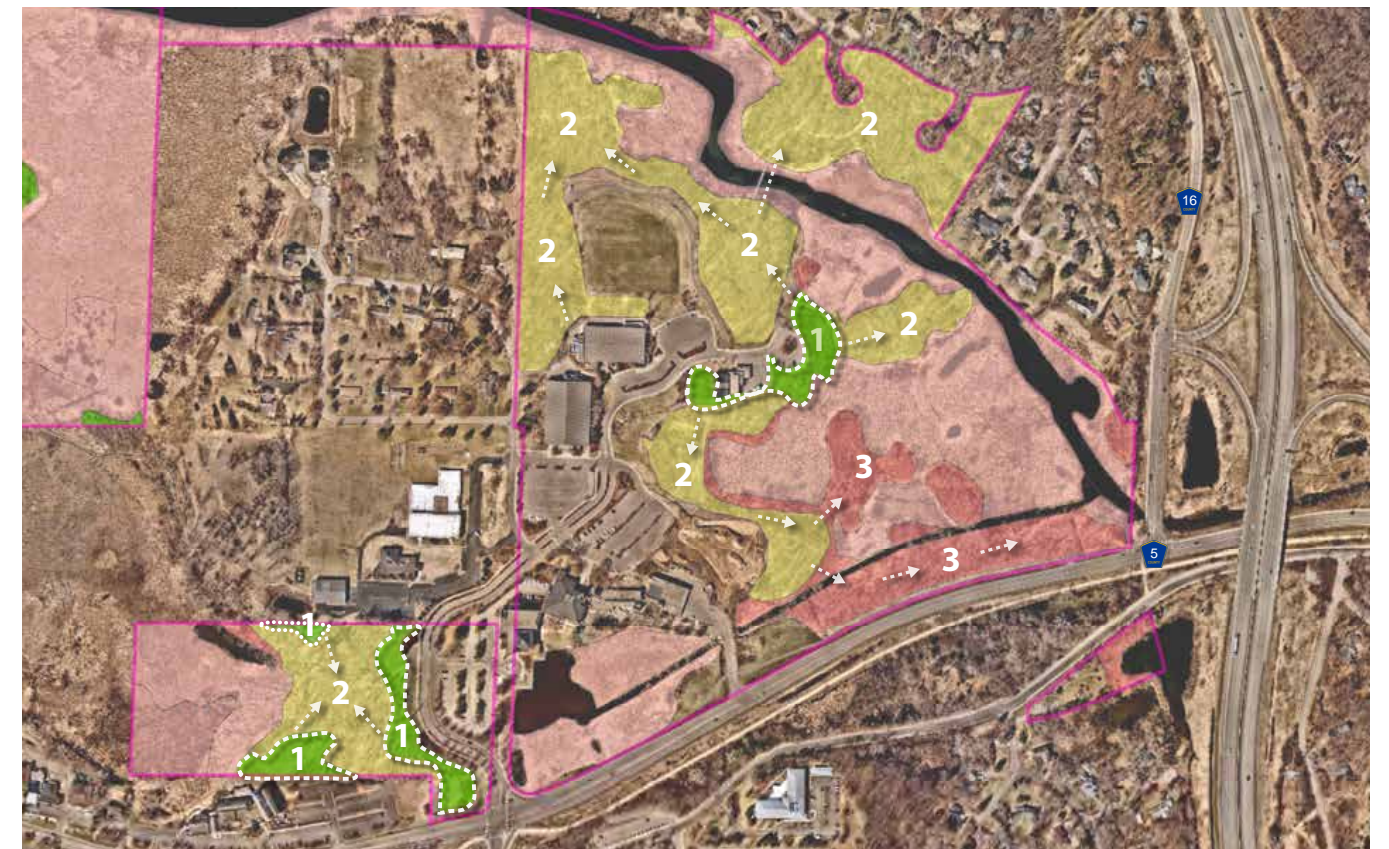
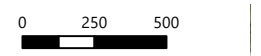
**Habitat Quality**

- |                            |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| A                          | Minnetonka Park |
| B                          |                 |
| C                          |                 |
| NA (Cultural & Open Water) |                 |



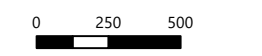
**Target Plant Community**

- |                   |                         |                           |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cultural          | Mesic Hardwood Forest   | Grassland - Mesic Prairie |
| Deep Marsh        | Maple - Basswood Forest | Minnetonka Park           |
| Shrub Wetland     | Oak Forest              |                           |
| Floodplain Forest | Oak Savanna             |                           |



**Restoration Priority**

- |        |                 |                 |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| High   | Lowest Priority | Minnetonka Park |
| Medium | NA              |                 |
| Low    |                 |                 |





# Meadow Park

Large wetland park with a playground area and walking trails. Oak forest remnants have an understory dominated by buckthorn.

## Condition Summary

- Large wetlands are dominated by cattail. Some pockets of wetland plant diversity exist but are limited
- On-going purple loosestrife management occurring with variable results
- A small pocket of higher quality wetland east of the playground is worth managing

## Challenges

- Buckthorn – Nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park are infested with no ongoing management efforts
- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate wetlands
- Purple Loosestrife abundant

## Opportunities

- Large oaks in woodland areas could be managed and buckthorn cleared out in the under-story
- The small higher quality wetland east of the playground hosts some native diversity

## Restoration Priorities

- Continue woodland restoration in southwest of park near Oakland Rd, along Stone Rd, and along trails
- Manage for wetland diversity in the existing higher quality area east of the playground
- Oak forests contain of large historic specimens
- Continue to manage for spread of purple loosestrife through biological control releases



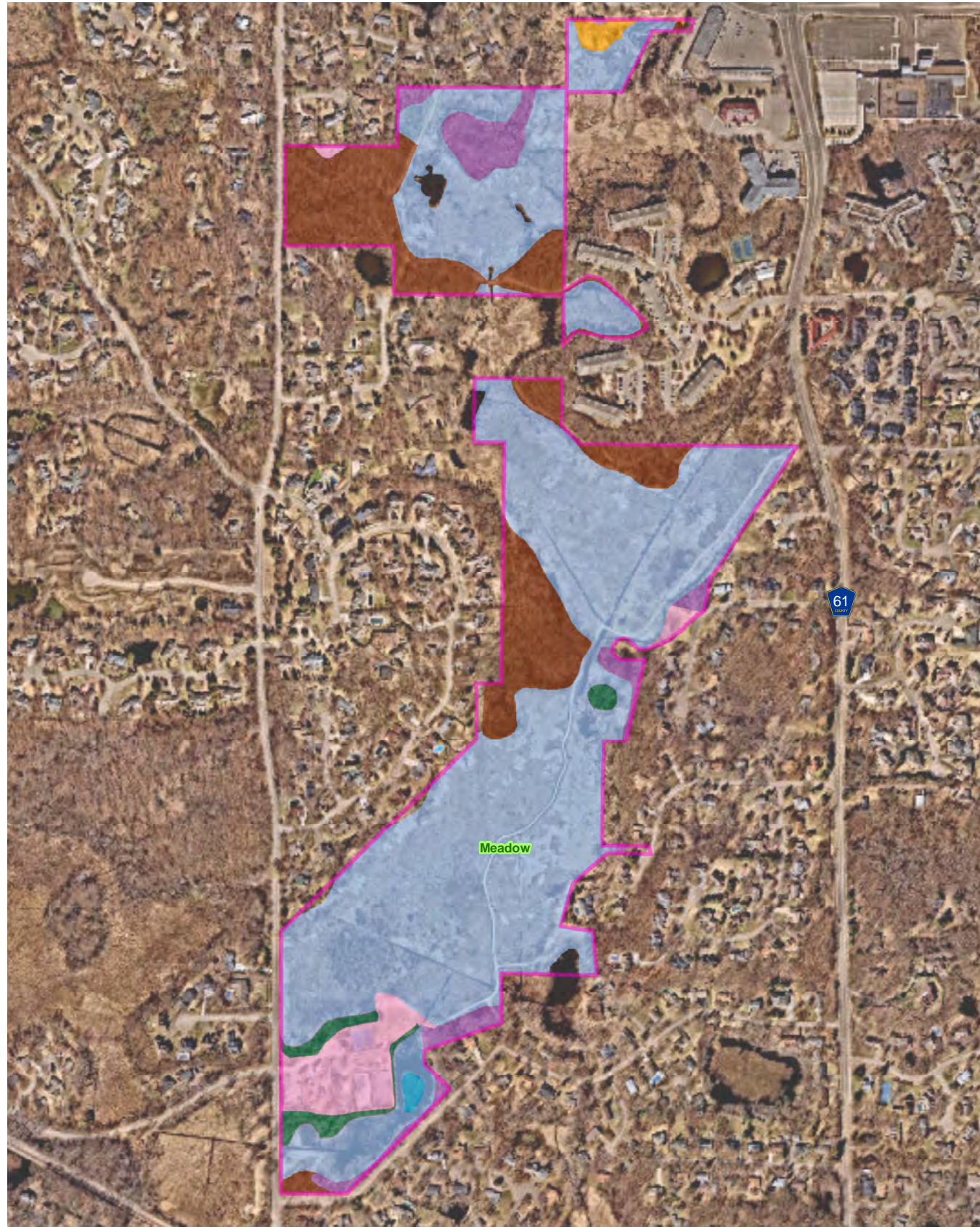
Above: The walking path through the wetland is fairly degraded with cattails and purple loosestrife



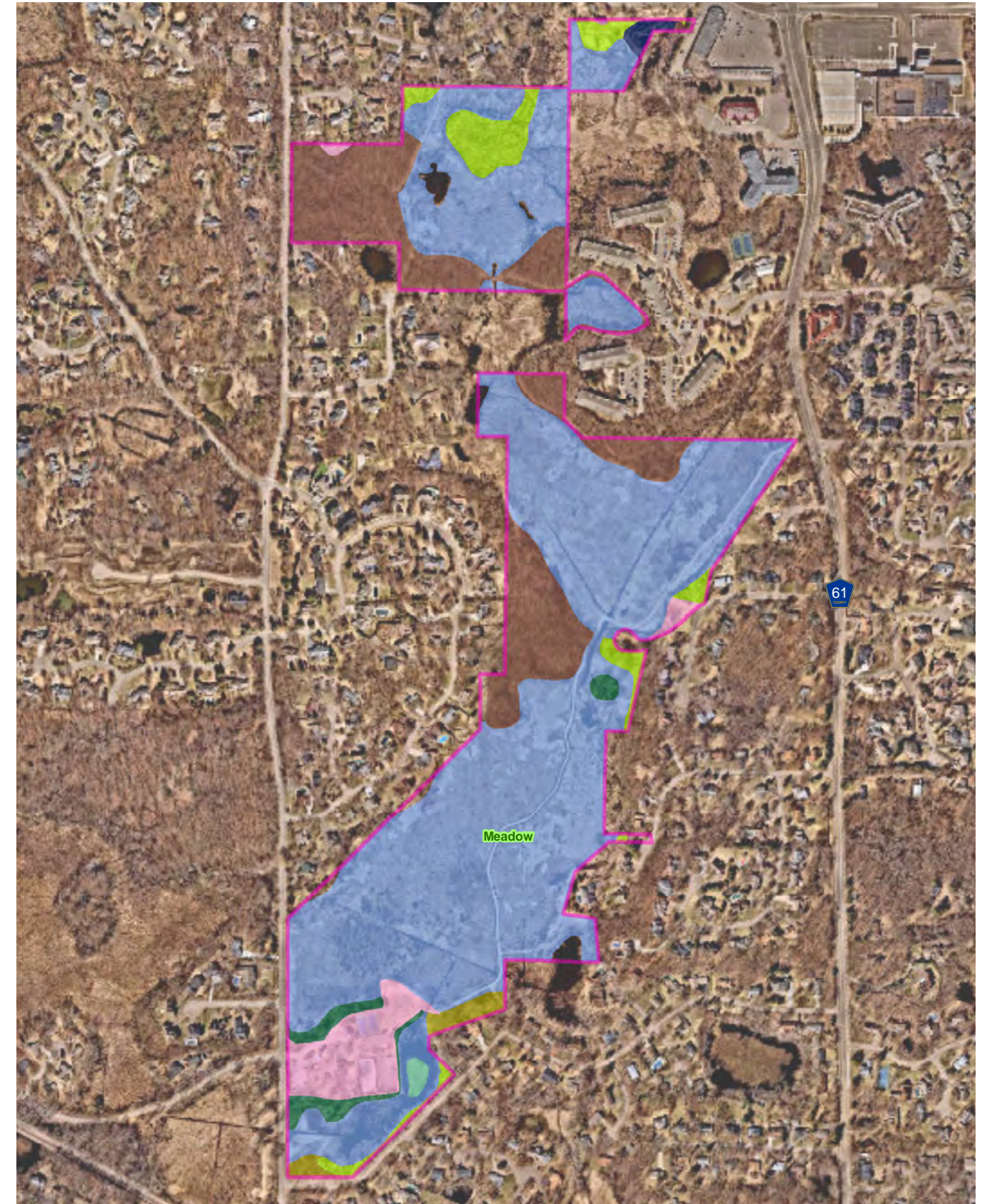
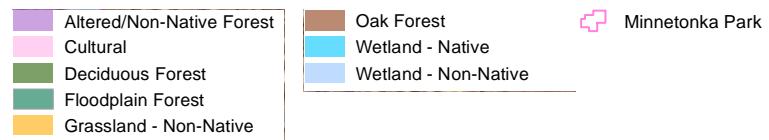
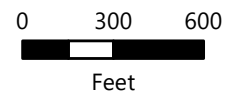
Above: Consider converting unnecessary turf grass areas into a native prairie or savanna



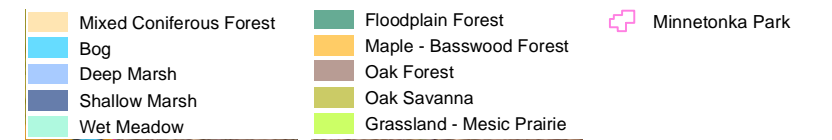
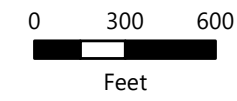
# Meadow Park Assessment and Planning Maps



## Existing Plant Community

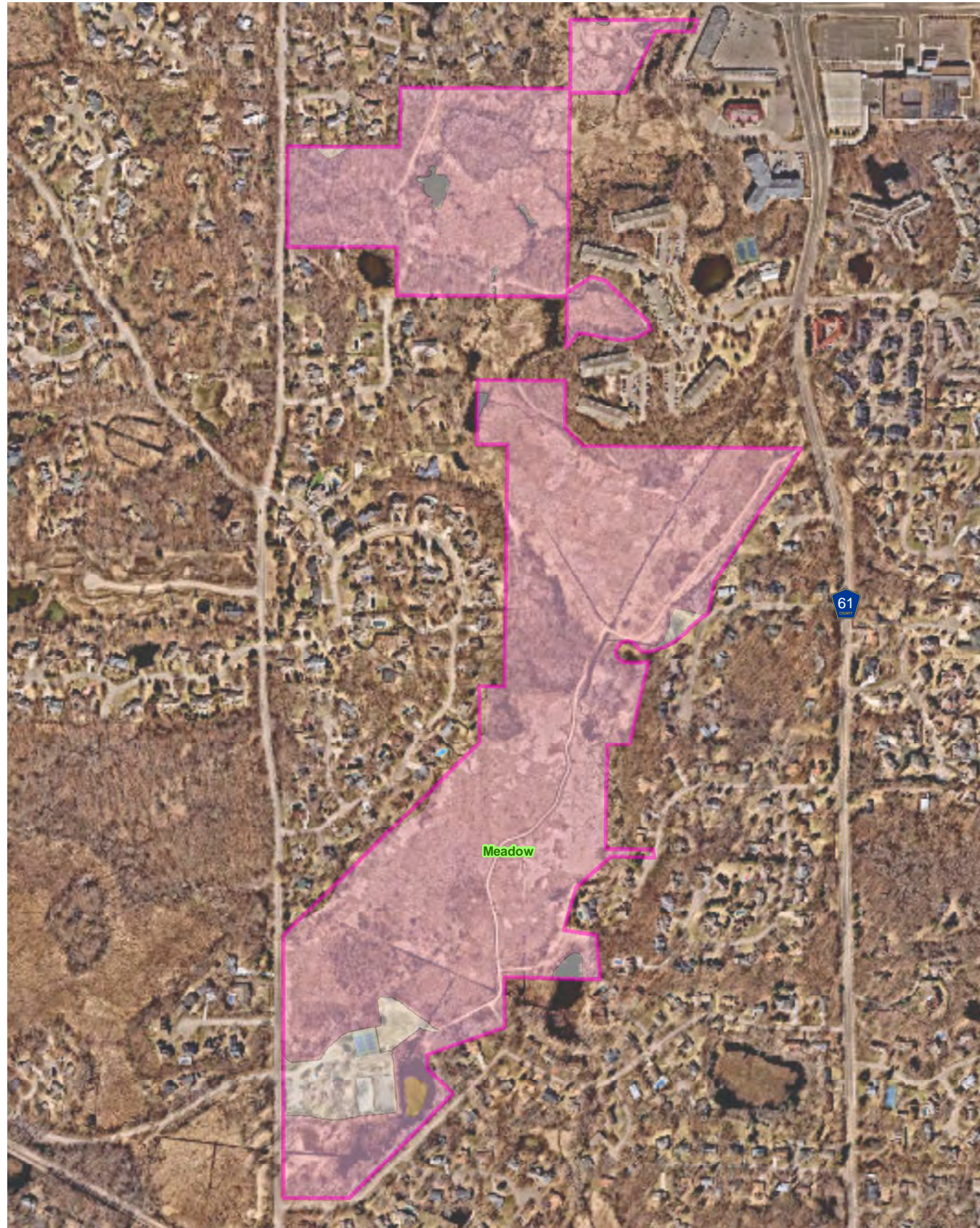


## Target Plant Community

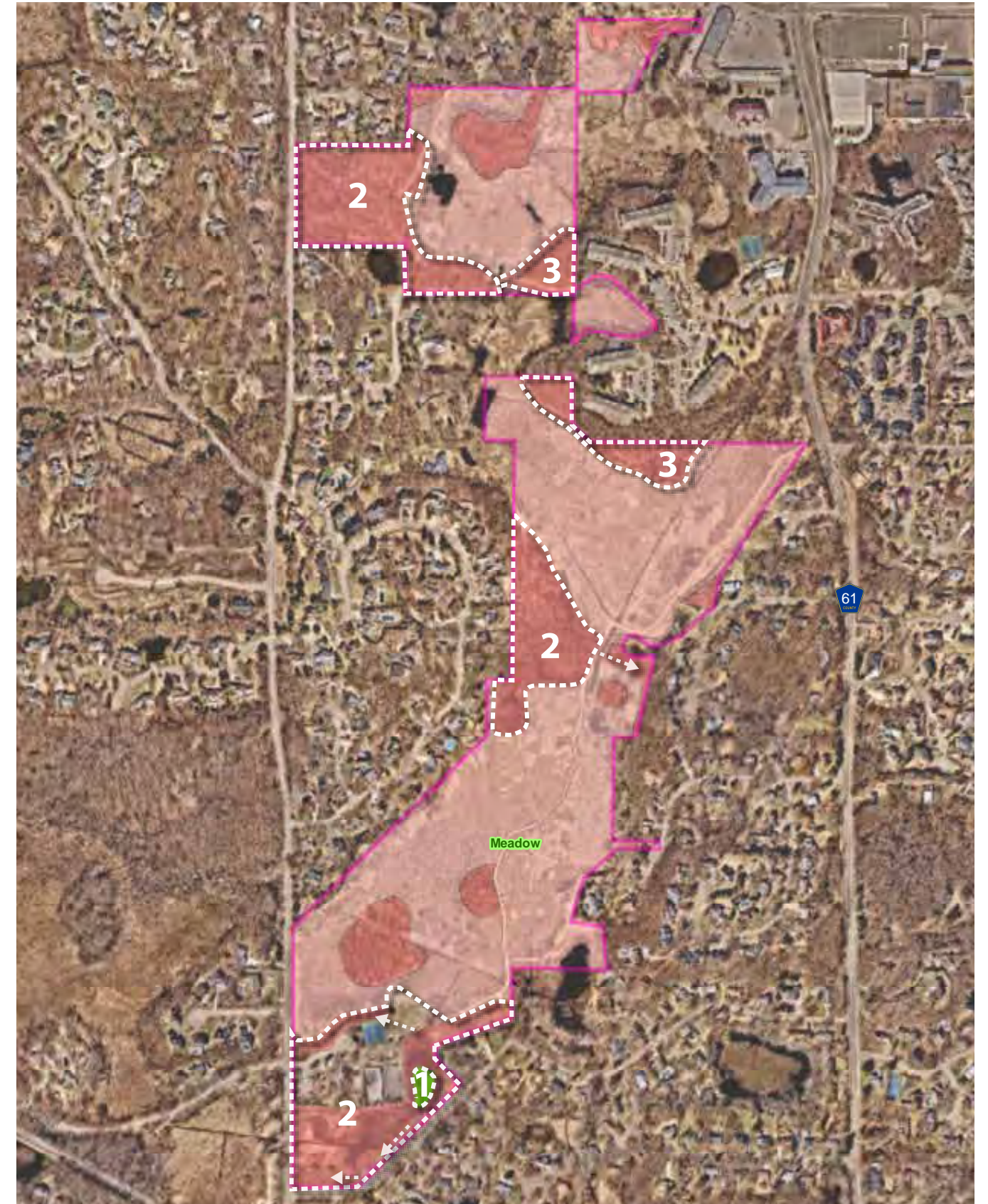
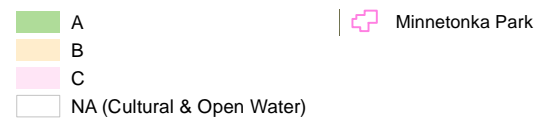
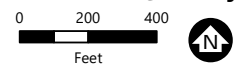




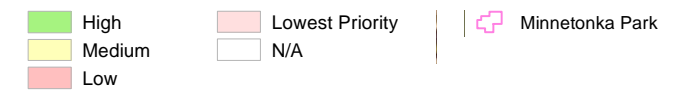
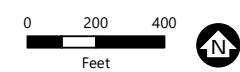
# Meadow Park Assessment and Planning Maps



## Habitat Quality



## Restoration Priority





---

# Hilloway Park

A woodland park with dense stands of mature evergreens

## Condition Summary

- North portion of the park contains a dense planting of conifers
- Woodland along the south edge is dominated by large maples, black cherry and oaks

## Challenges

- A regime of thinning has not occurred within the conifer plantings. This has resulted in spindly, weak yet tall trees packed close together. These trees are susceptible to disease, drought damage, and wind throw.
- Garlic mustard is especially bad in the north east corner of the site
- The floating bog is inaccessible without a boat

## Opportunities

- Floating bog contains great diversity
- Hilloway Park contains a mature pine plantation unlike any found within the park system

## Restoration Priorities

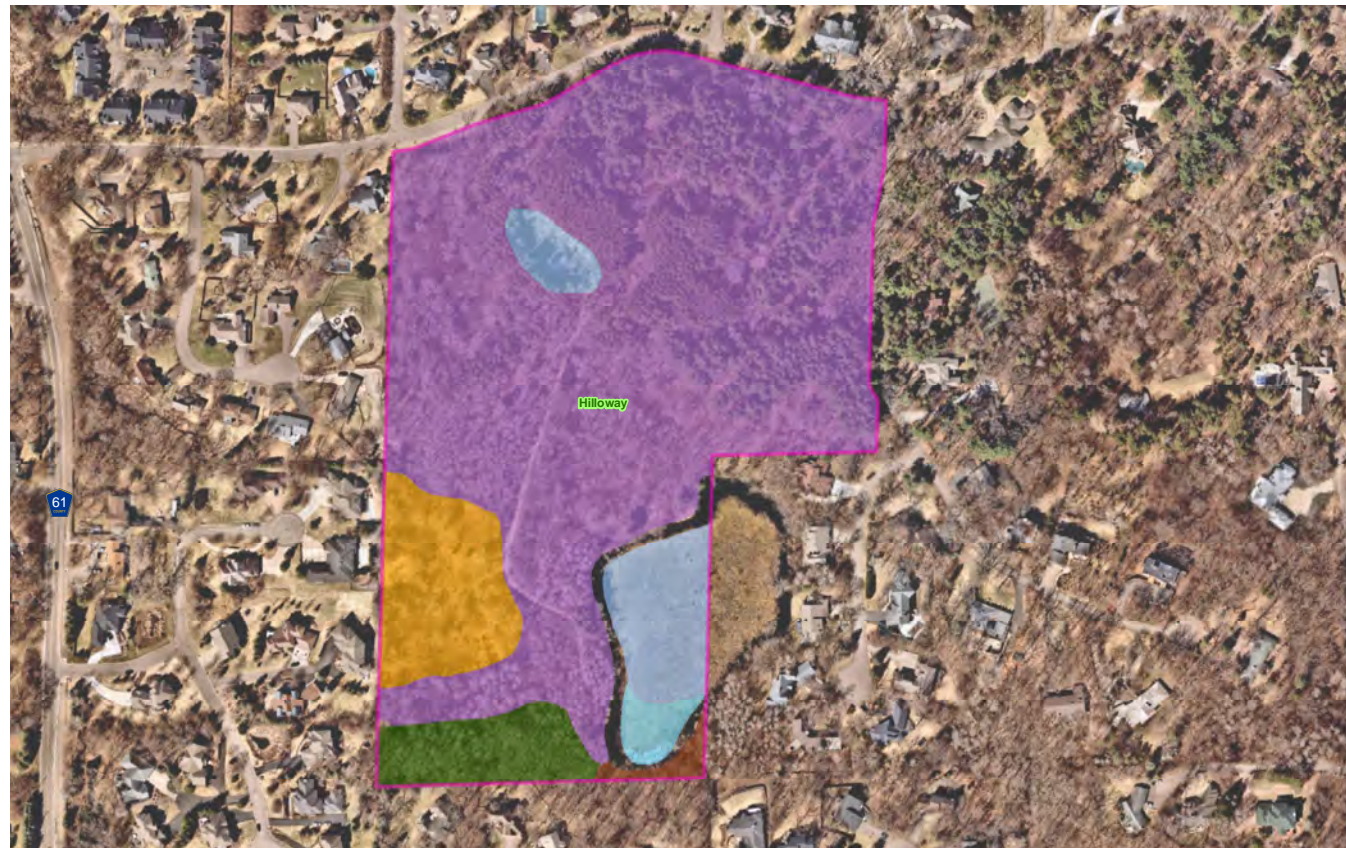
- To best preserve the conifers in the park it is essential to begin thinning as soon as possible. It is recommended to have a professional forester consult on the process of thinning for each stand.
- Protect high quality bog from cattail intrusion
- Begin regime of prescribed burns to manage buckthorn and honeysuckle in the existing grassland



Above: Coniferous planting with invasive species dominating the ground plain.

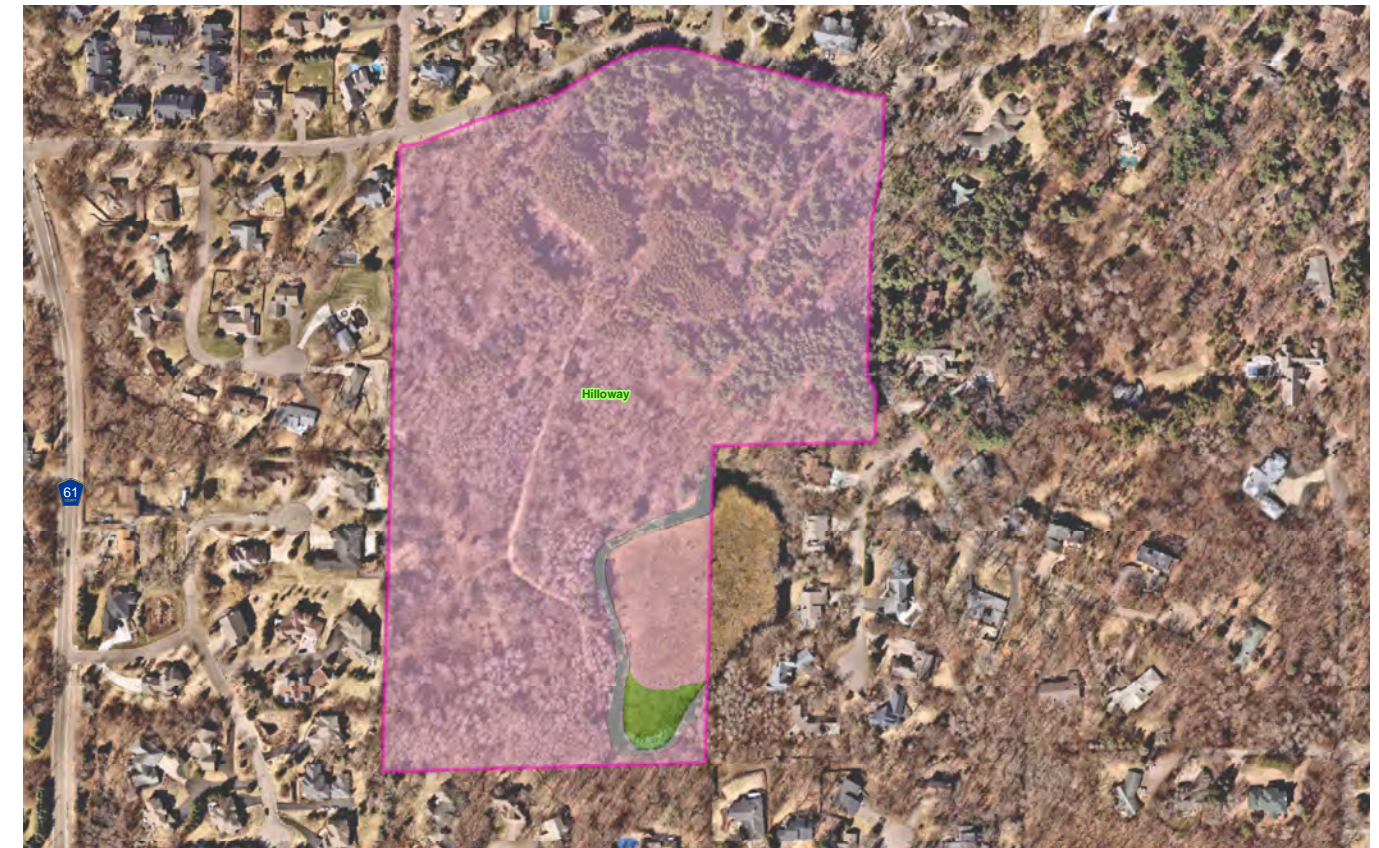
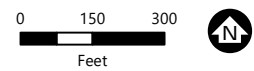


# Hiloway Park Assessment and Planning Maps



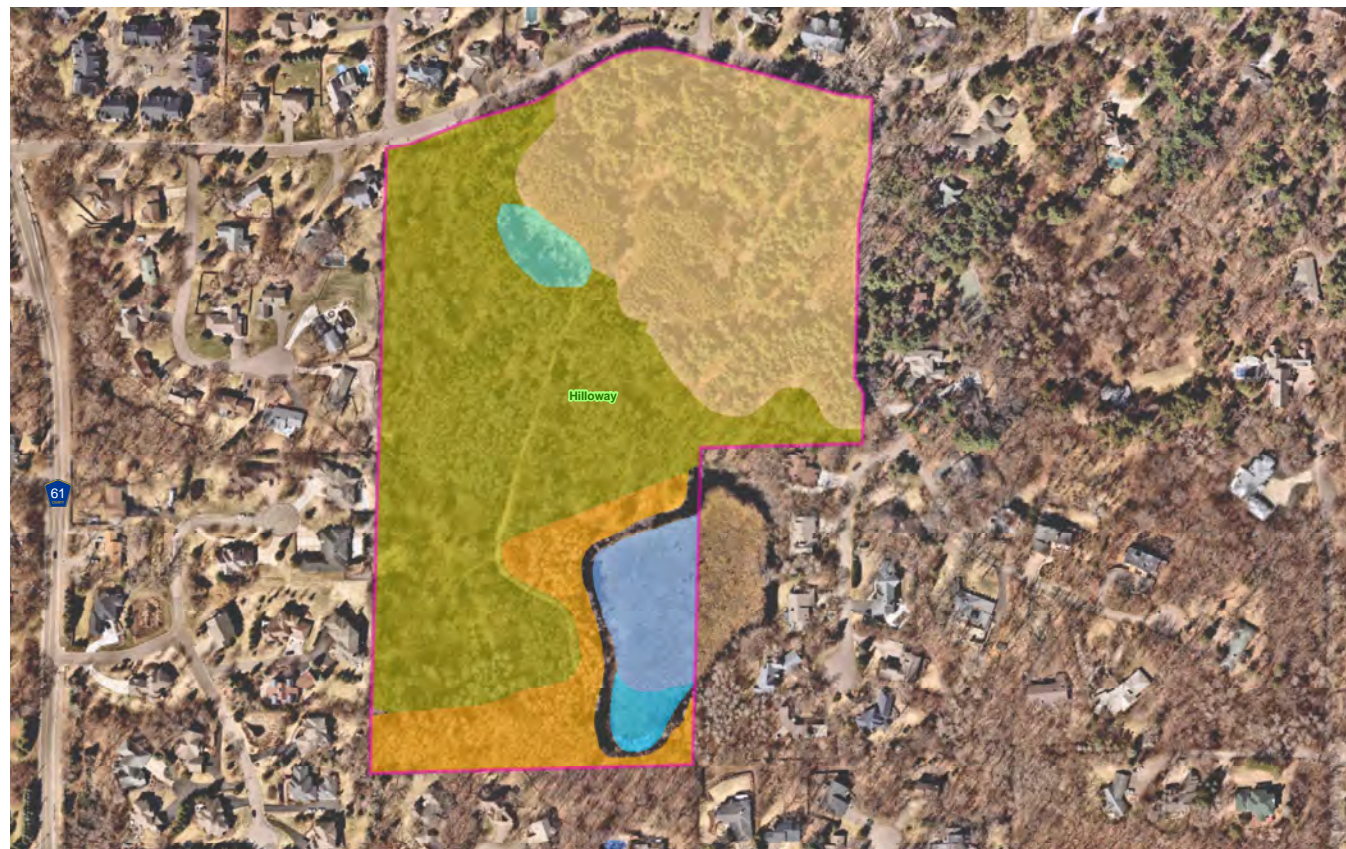
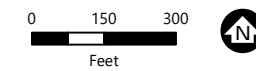
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Wetland - Native
- Minnetonka Park
- Deciduous Forest
- Wetland - Non-Native
- 
- Grassland - Non-Native
- 
- Oak Forest



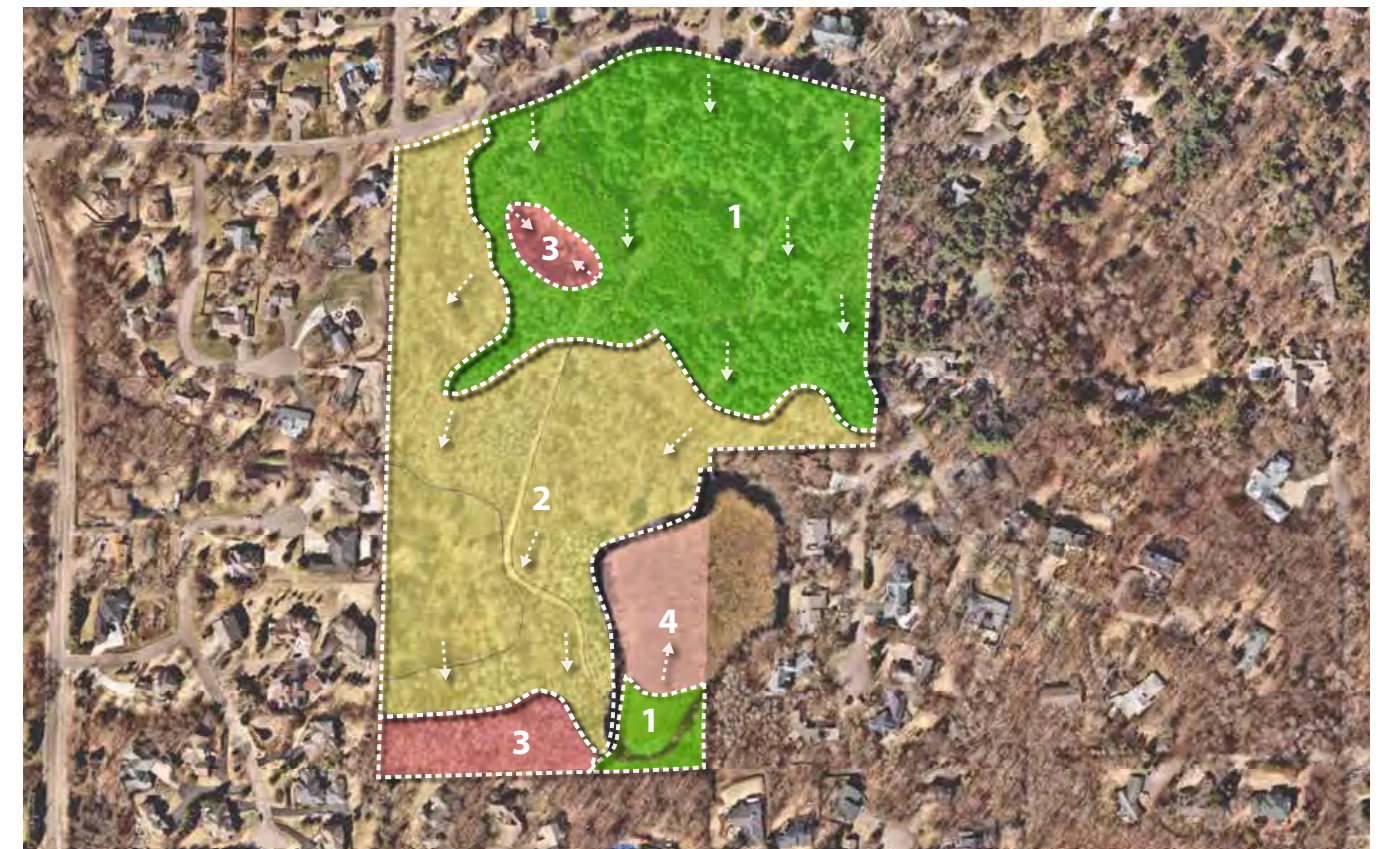
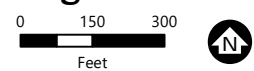
**Habitat Quality**

- A
- Minnetonka Park
- B
- 
- C
- 
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)



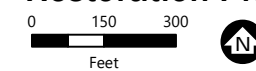
**Target Plant Community**

- Bog
- Maple - Basswood Forest
- Minnetonka Park
- Deep Marsh
- Oak Forest
- 
- Wet Meadow
- Oak Savanna
- 
- Mixed Coniferous Forest



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Lowest Priority
- Minnetonka Park
- Medium
- N/A
- 
- Low





# Victoria-Evergreen Park

Victoria-Evergreen Park is a preserve type park with multiple walking trail loops

## Condition Summary

- Densely wooded park that has ongoing buckthorn management throughout
- Wetland on the south side is mostly open water with little cattail intrusion (not dominated by cattails like other wetlands in the city)

## Challenges

- Reed canary grass present along wetland edges
- Extensive buckthorn management occurred in the past, but has since been abandoned due to lack of resources
- Nearly all parts of the park are dense with buckthorn resprout (2-3' tall)
- Wet forest areas may be hard to access and maintain

## Opportunities

- Woodlands have low plant diversity but previous buckthorn management opened up the forest understory for regeneration of native plants
- Some higher quality wetland and woodland vegetation on the west side of the park
- Oak savanna restoration opportunities in the center of the park

## Restoration Priorities

- Protection of the oak trees and oak regeneration should be priority
- Use of forestry mower to quickly clear buckthorn and garlic mustard possible
- Control reed canary grass and purple loosestrife in wetland areas. Invasive species within the south wetland are manageable at this point and should continue to be managed to prevent the loss of existing quality vegetation.
- Garlic mustard is a major issue within wooded areas. Focus on reducing seed bank prior to additional restoration efforts.



Above: Desirable canopy species such as red oak, black cherry and ironwoods persist despite buckthorn on the ground plane.



Above: Areas adjacent to the wetland are dominated by pioneer tree and shrub species.



# Victoria-Evergreen Park Assessment and Planning Maps



**Existing Plant Community**

|                   |                      |                 |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Cultural          | Wetland - Native     | Minnetonka Park |
| Deciduous Forest  | Wetland - Non-Native |                 |
| Floodplain Forest |                      |                 |
| Oak Forest        |                      |                 |

0 100 200 Feet



**Habitat Quality**

|                            |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| A                          | Minnetonka Park |
| B                          |                 |
| C                          |                 |
| NA (Cultural & Open Water) |                 |

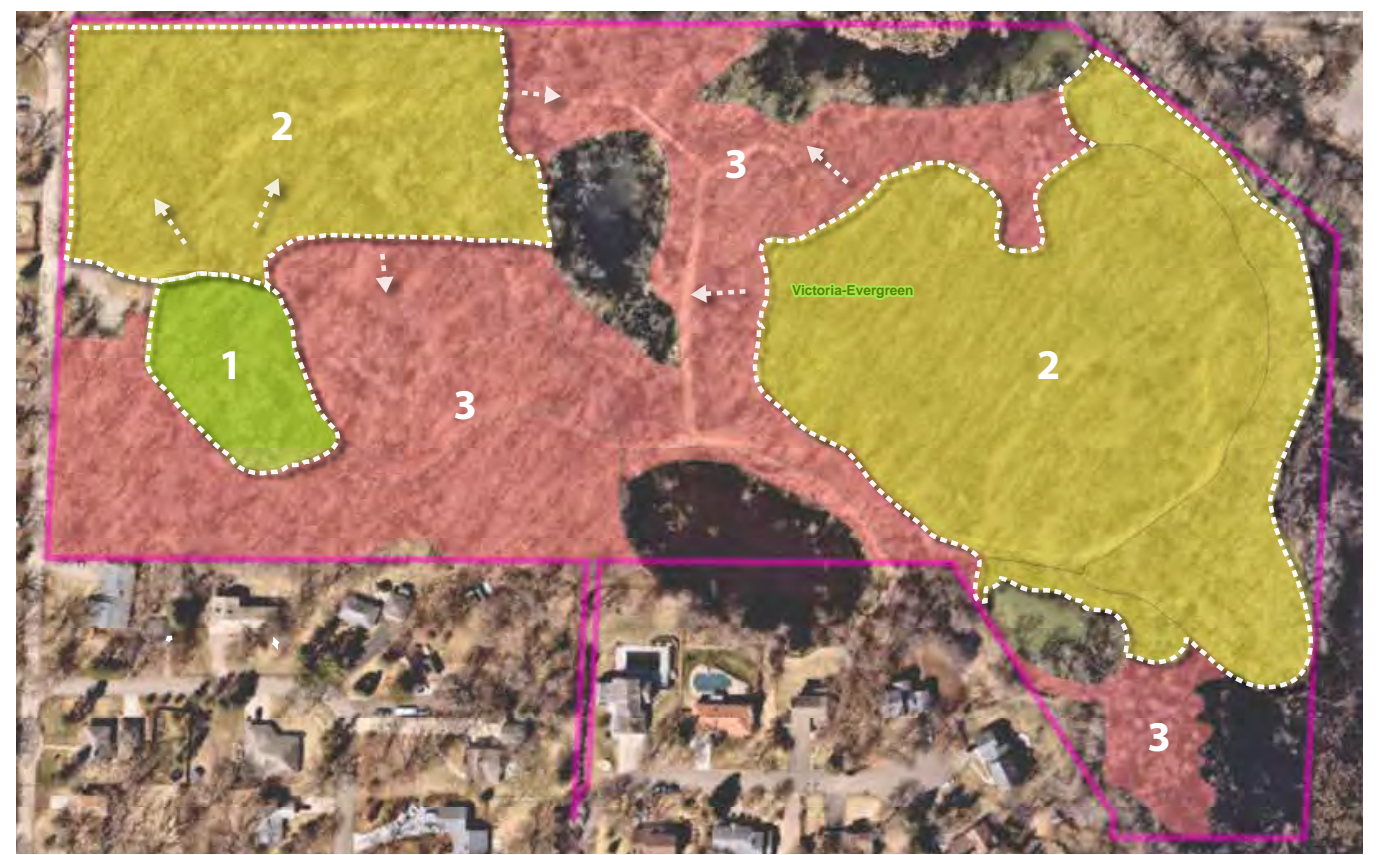
0 100 200 Feet



**Target Plant Community**

|                       |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Cultural              | Mesic Hardwood Forest | Minnetonka Park |
| Shallow Marsh         | Oak Forest            |                 |
| Floodplain Forest     | Oak Savanna           |                 |
| Mesic Hardwood Forest |                       |                 |

0 100 200 Feet



**Restoration Priority**

|        |                 |                 |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| High   | Lowest Priority | Minnetonka Park |
| Medium | NA              |                 |
| Low    |                 |                 |

0 100 200 Feet



# Kinsel Park

Years of volunteer restoration efforts have created small pockets of higher quality native areas in this small park.

## Condition Summary

- Near the parking lot and trail head the efforts of volunteers and staff have removed invasive species and installed native plants.
- The majority of the park is cattail wetland with recent changes in hydrology that have caused mortality in many boxelder trees adjacent to the wetland.
- A larger stormwater pond near the parking lot has a native buffer worth protecting.

## Challenges

- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate wetlands
- Phragmites seen along boardwalk
- Purple Loosestrife abundant and going to seed

## Opportunities

- Expand existing volunteer base to continue buckthorn management and native plant introduction efforts North and East of the wetland

## Restoration Priorities

- Good park for native forest community restoration demonstration
- Open up and restore areas where pioneer trees dominate
- Control deer browse
- Control for reed canary grass and phragmites intrusion



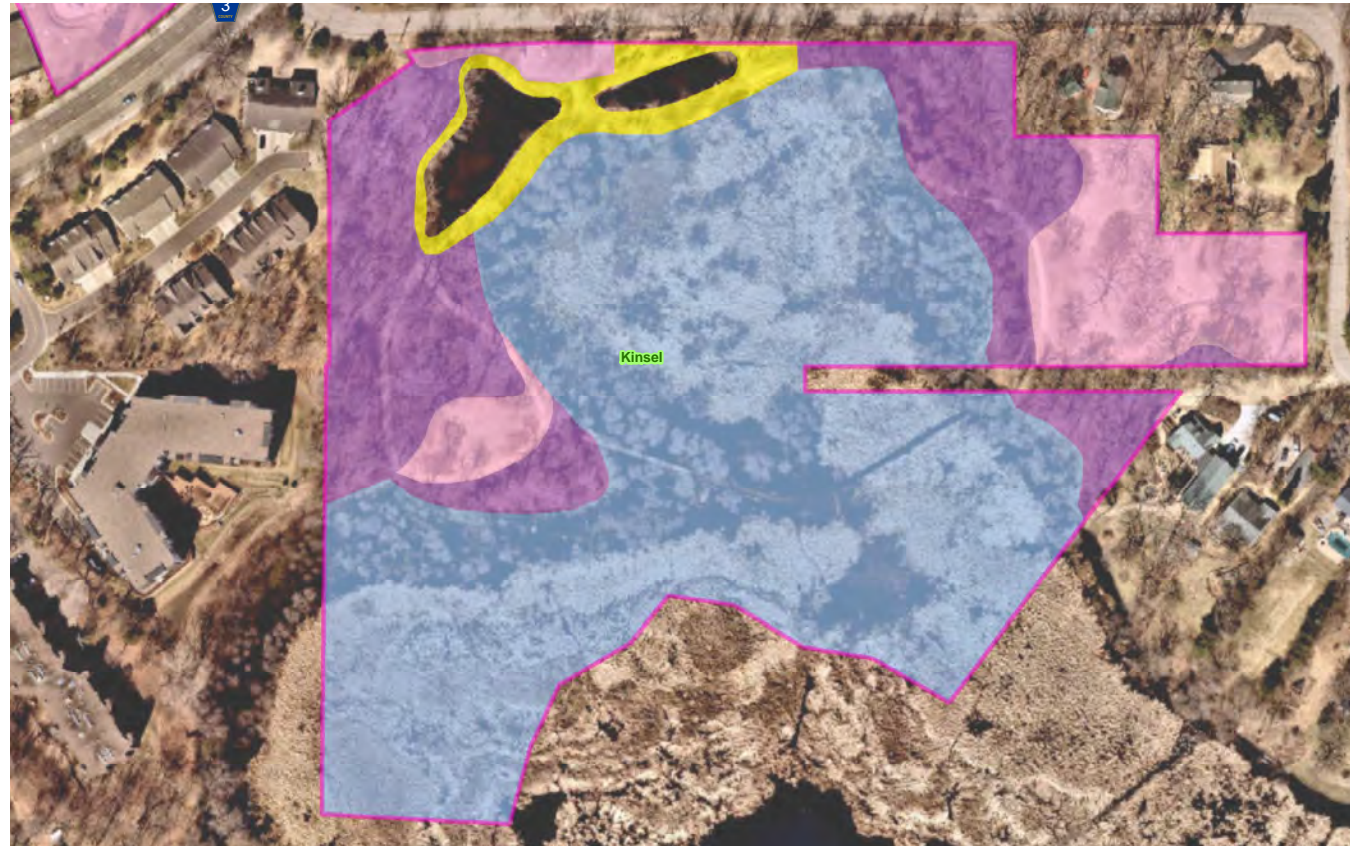
Above: Changes in hydrology have caused tree mortality while cattail persist.



Above: A stormwater pond near the parking lot has a managed buffer of native species.

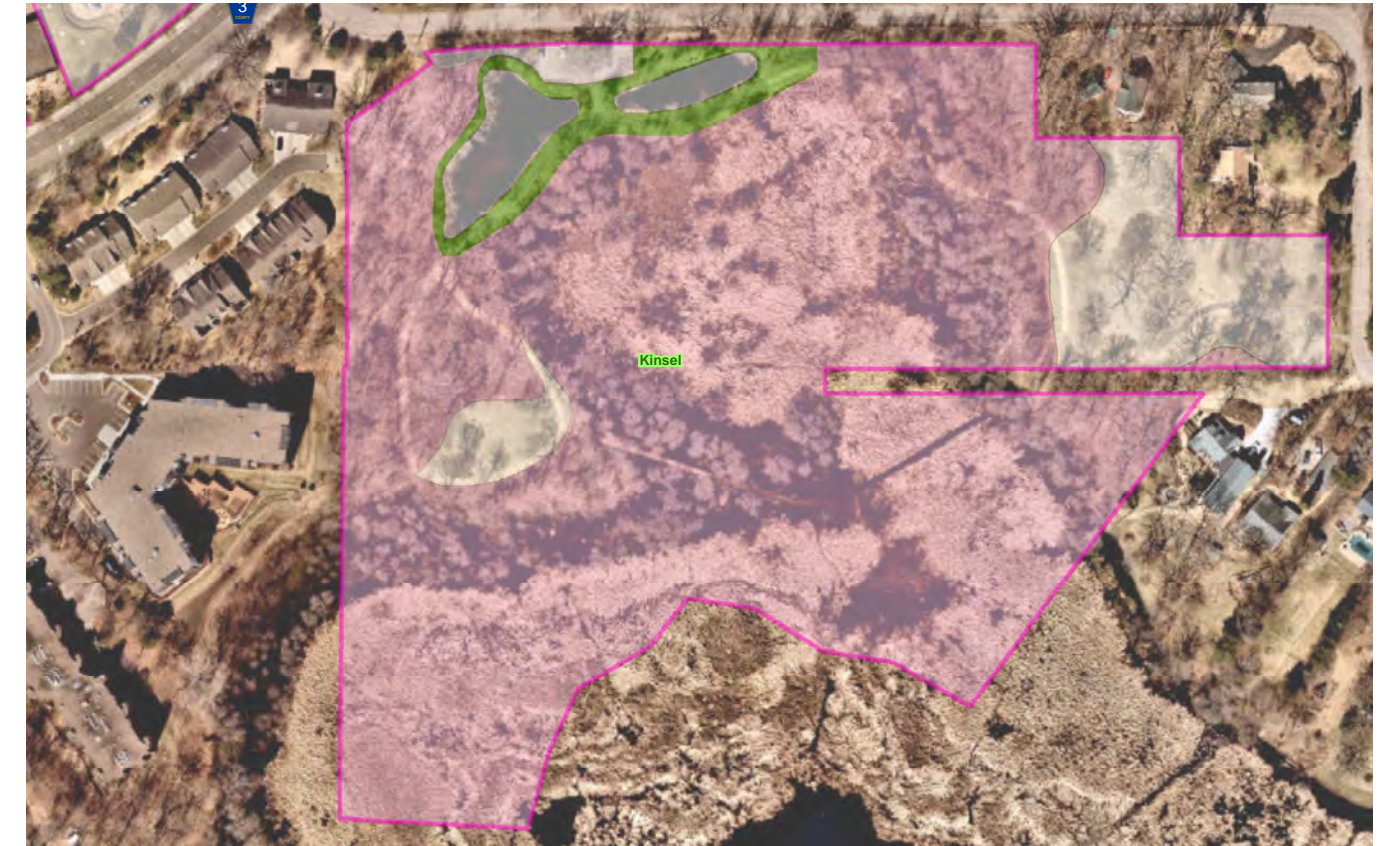
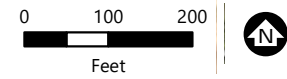


# Kinsel Park Assessment and Planning Maps



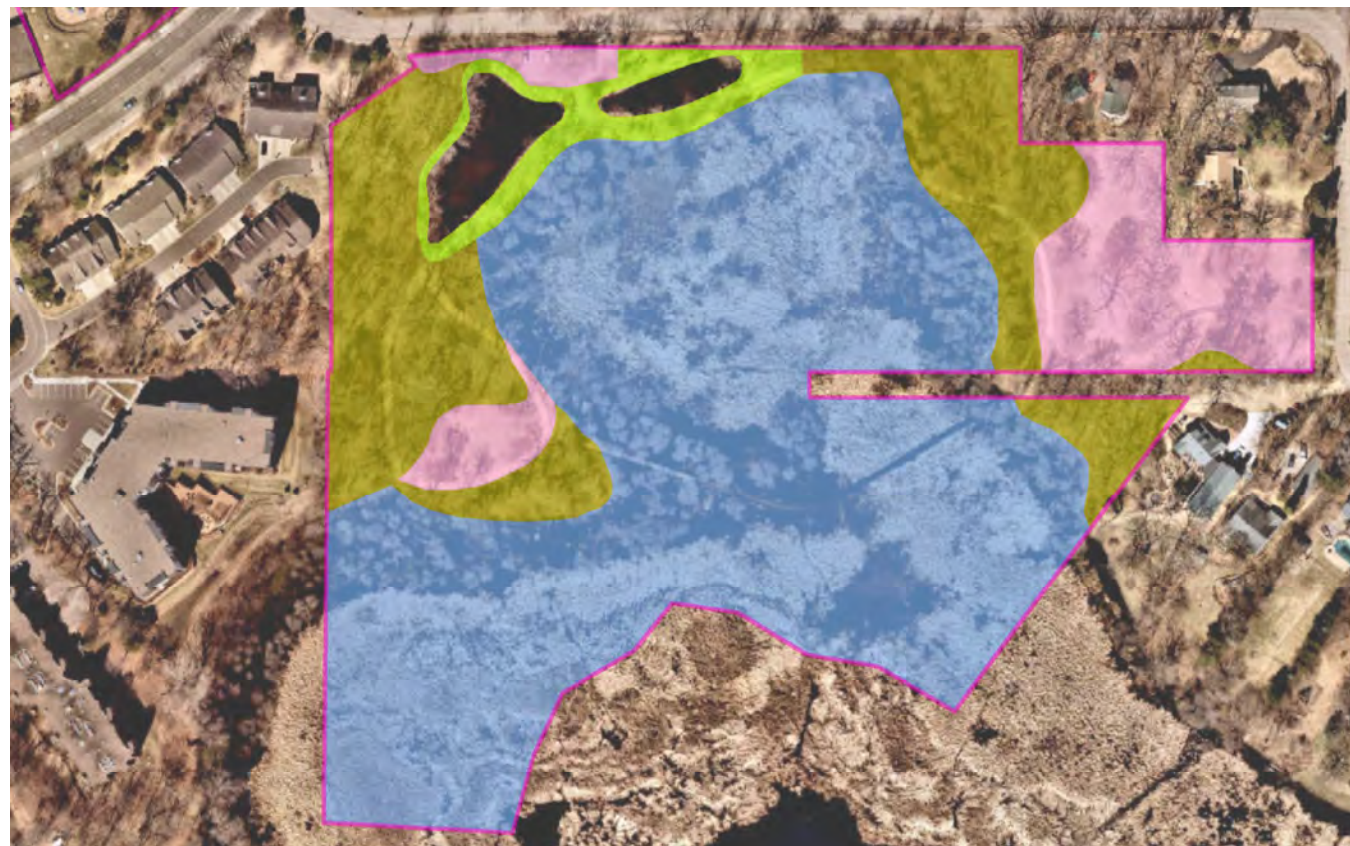
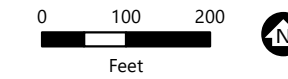
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Cultural
- Grassland - Native
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



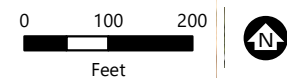
**Habitat Quality**

- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



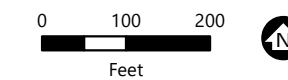
**Target Plant Community**

- Cultural
- Deep Marsh
- Oak Savanna
- Grassland - Mesic Prairie
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park





# Orchard Park

Neighborhood park with large oak trees

## Condition Summary

- Medium sized neighborhood type park with playground, lawn, and picnic gazebo area on north side of park
- Floating bog/fen mat in southwest pond with 17+ bog/fen species including numerous orchids, sundew and plants rare to Minnetonka; important ecological community. Also contains thriving hardhack (*Spiraea*), poison sumac and downy arrowwood which are rare and uncommon.
- Invasive woody species have impacted regeneration of desirable hardwood canopy (except for black cherry)
- Continue purple loosestrife bio-control (completed 2021).
- Very large oak trees located in center of park

## Challenges

- Oak wilt observed and is being controlled by forestry staff
- Purple loosestrife abundant at wetland edges

## Opportunities

- Extensive buckthorn management has occurred in the past, but has since been abandoned due to lack of resources
- Very large showcase oak trees can be opened from buckthorn fairly simply
- High visibility parkland with intact soils despite persistent woody invasives

## Restoration Priorities

- Continue restoration on and around the floating bog/fen mat in southwest pond. Recommend designation as a preservation areas due to rare species and habitat.
- Woodlands have typically low plant diversity and high amounts of buckthorn
- Wetland edge is in moderate condition, additional and continued restoration efforts needed to maintain diversity
- Protection of the huge oak trees should be priority. Easy to access; can be cleared using a forestry mower resulting in a large visual impact and better perceived safety (park users commented on how open the park used to be).



Above: Floating bog/fen mat in southwest pond at Orchard Park

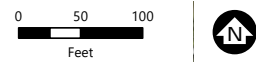


# Orchard Park Assessment and Planning Maps



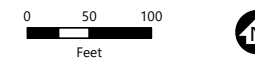
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Cultural
- Floodplain Forest
- Oak Forest
- Wetland - Native
- Minnetonka Park



**Habitat Quality**

- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



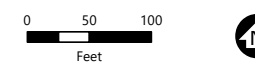
**Target Plant Community**

- Cultural
- Bog
- Floodplain Forest
- Oak Forest
- Oak Savanna
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park





# Lake Rose Park

Isolated woodland has been well managed by local volunteers

## Condition Summary

- A high quality woodland dominated by large oaks, black cherry and maples has been managed by volunteers to encourage a native ground cover of sedges and forbs. The mid-story is dominated by ironwood and on-going recruitment of native trees can be observed.

## Challenges

- The park is isolated between single family homes and a large wetland. Intrusion of invasive species will be on-going.
- Steep slopes down to Lake Rose have potential for erosion if soil is left bare due to deer browse or ongoing invasive species removal.
- Limited access to park via narrow paths.

## Opportunities

- Leveraging the management done by local volunteers to promote continued forest restoration.
- A fine example of volunteer forest restoration and native diversity enhancement.

## Restoration Priorities

- Protect woodland edges from woody invasive intrusion.
- Wetland edges can be enhanced with native species if the volunteer base can be maintained. Focus on reed canary and purple loosestrife management as these species have established in disturbed areas along the shoreline.
- Plant aggressive herbaceous and woody shade tolerant plants on steep slopes (Diervilla, Ribes, Cornus, Dirca, Anemone, Carex, Asarum, Elymus, Maianthemum, etc.).
- Coordinate and prioritize restoration efforts made by local volunteer groups.



Above: Pennsylvania sedge carpets the ground plane where buckthorn has been managed successfully.



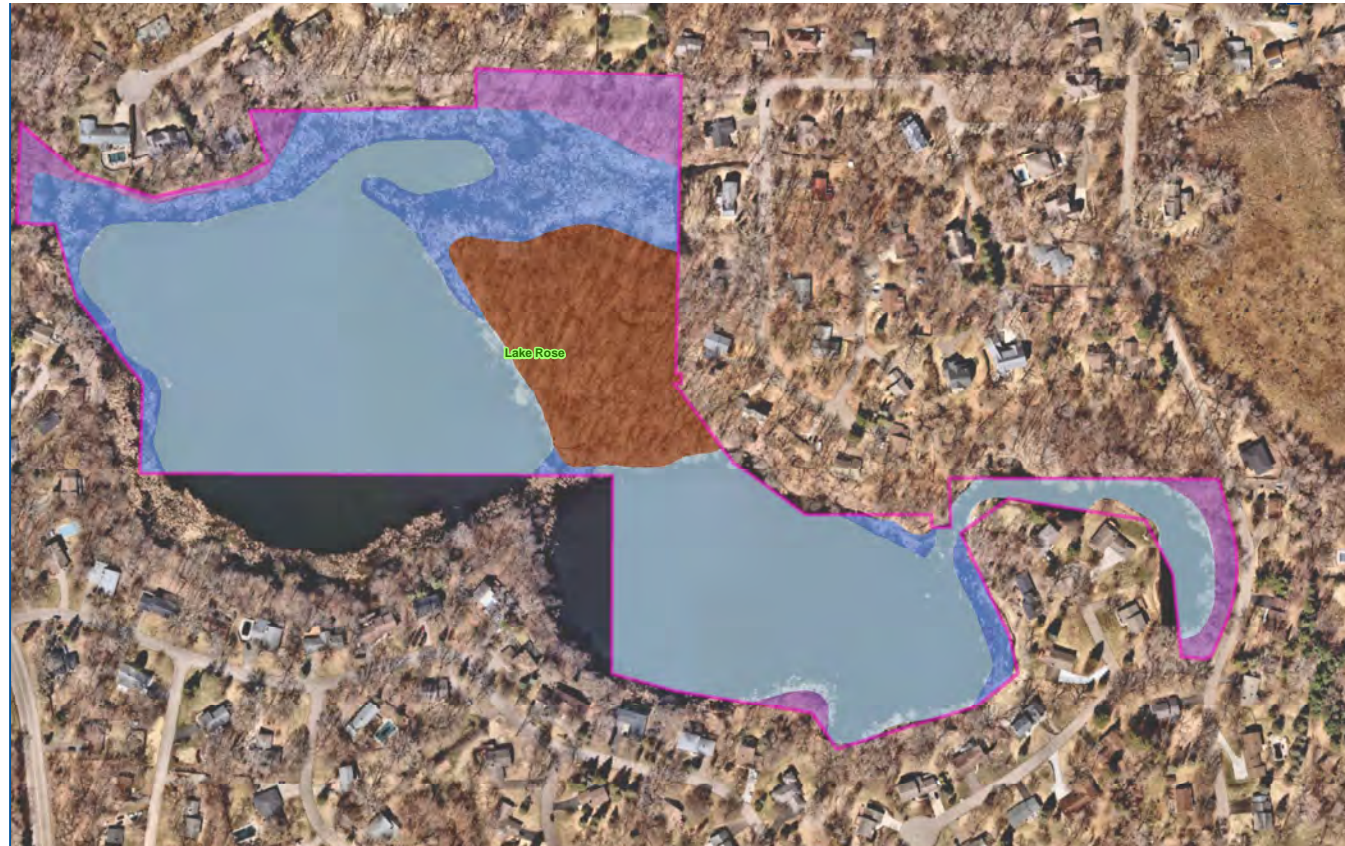
Above: Volunteers have lined the trails with downed wood while black cherry grows where buckthorn once persisted.



Above: Emergent vegetation on Lake Rose

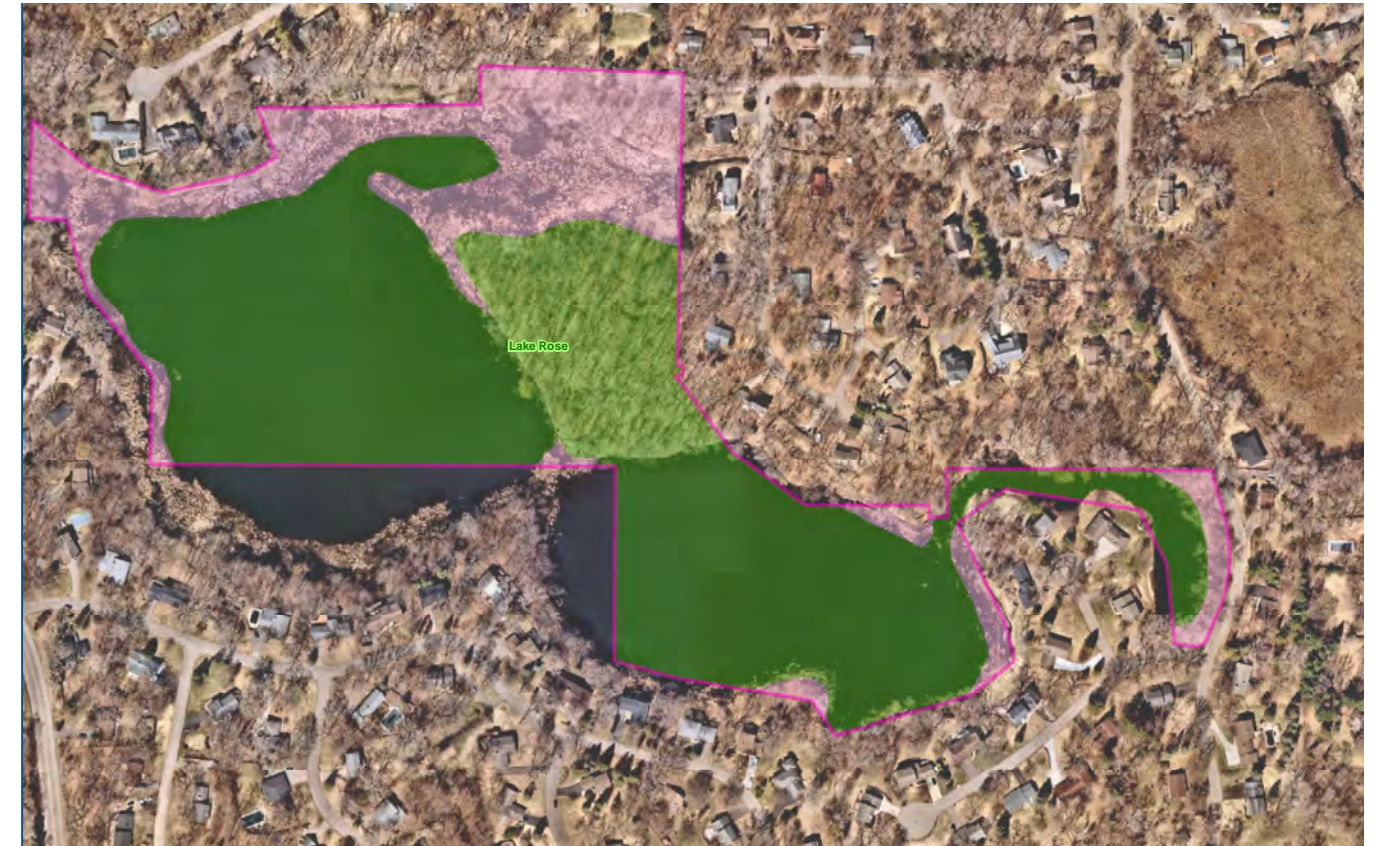
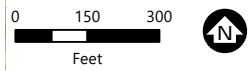


# Lake Rose Assessment and Planning Maps



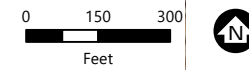
**Existing Plant Community**

- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Oak Forest
- Wetland - Native
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



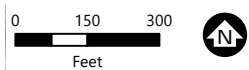
**Habitat Quality**

- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



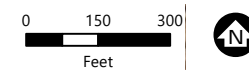
**Target Plant Community**

- Deep Marsh
- Maple - Basswood Forest
- Oak Forest
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park





# Tower Hill Park

Large prairie area in a park that does not see much foot traffic.

## Condition Summary

- The center core of the park is a good quality short grass prairie
- Surrounding is forested areas with some quality hardwood tree species as well as pioneer species and invasive buckthorn

## Challenges

- Invasive woody species including buckthorn and tartarian honeysuckle surround the short grass prairie area
- Leafy spurge, despite biological control releases

## Opportunities

- The diverse prairie area should be managed for species richness
- Expansion of short grass prairie and oak savanna habitat possible
- Limited park visitors help protect against foot traffic damage

## Restoration Priorities

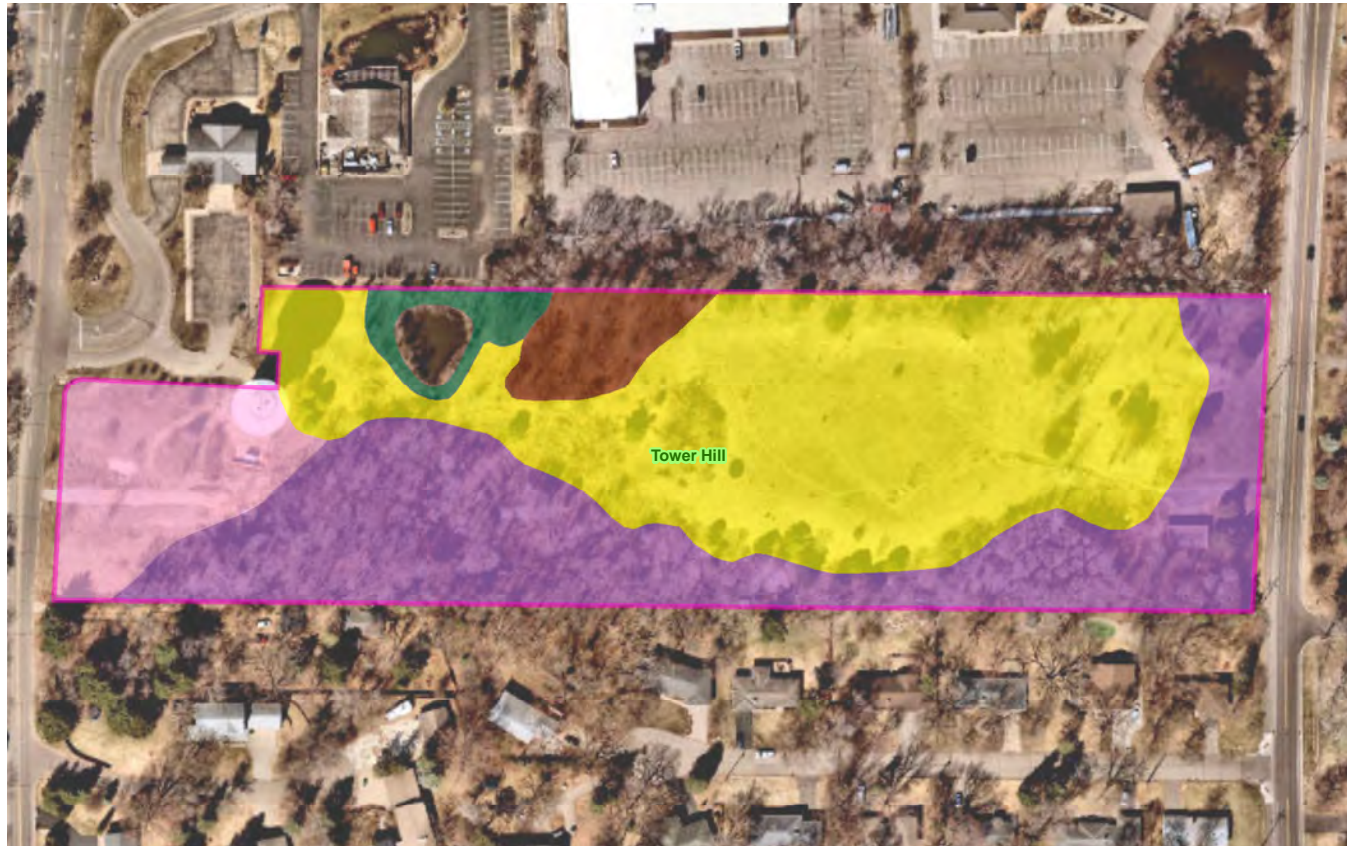
- Open up and restore areas where invasive or pioneer trees dominate
- Continued to manage the prairie to keep invasive woody species from intruding



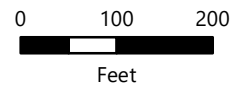
Above: Short grass prairie area is dominated by little bluestem but surrounded by invasive plants.



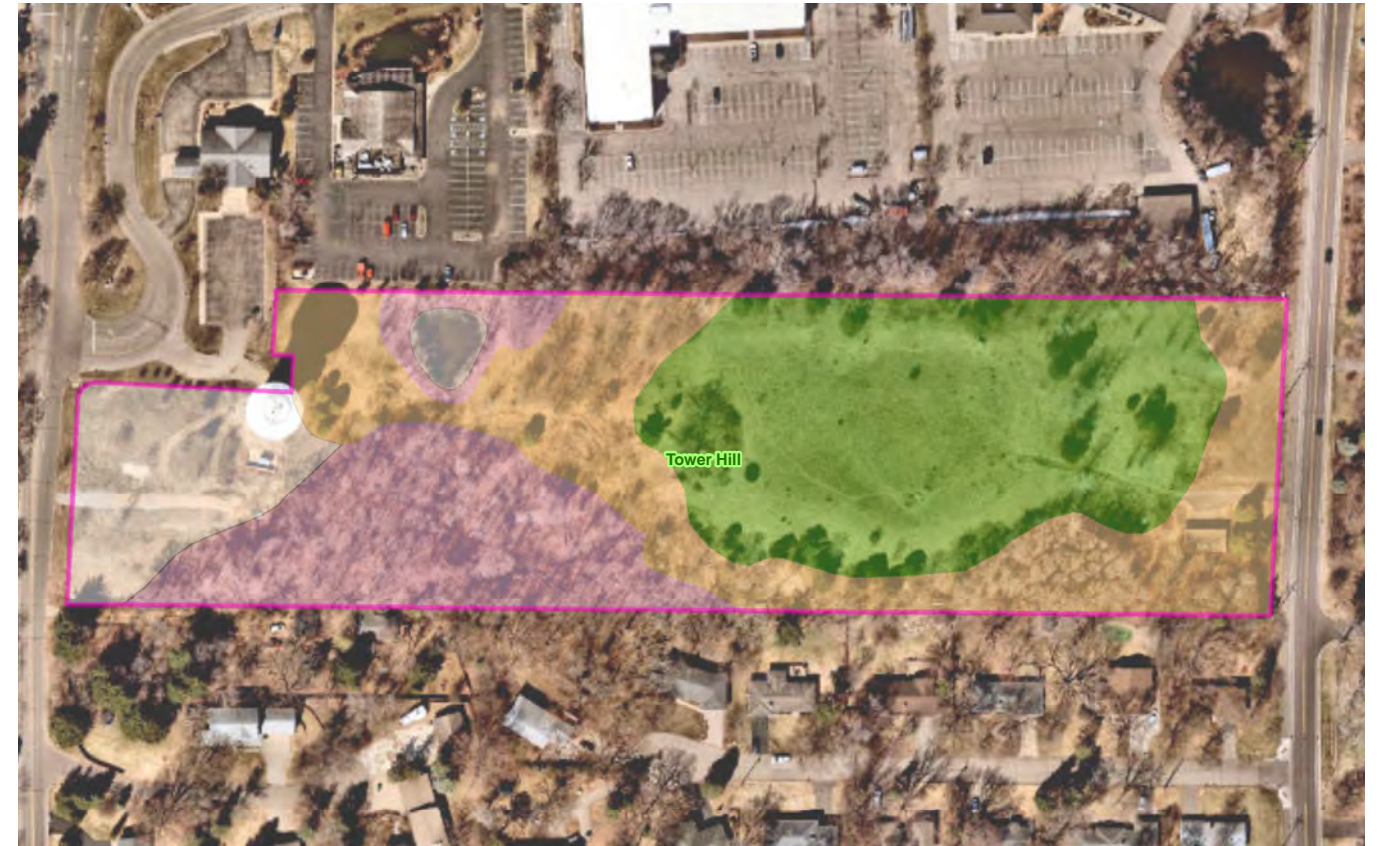
# Tower Hill Park Assessment and Planning Maps



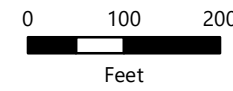
**Existing Plant Community**



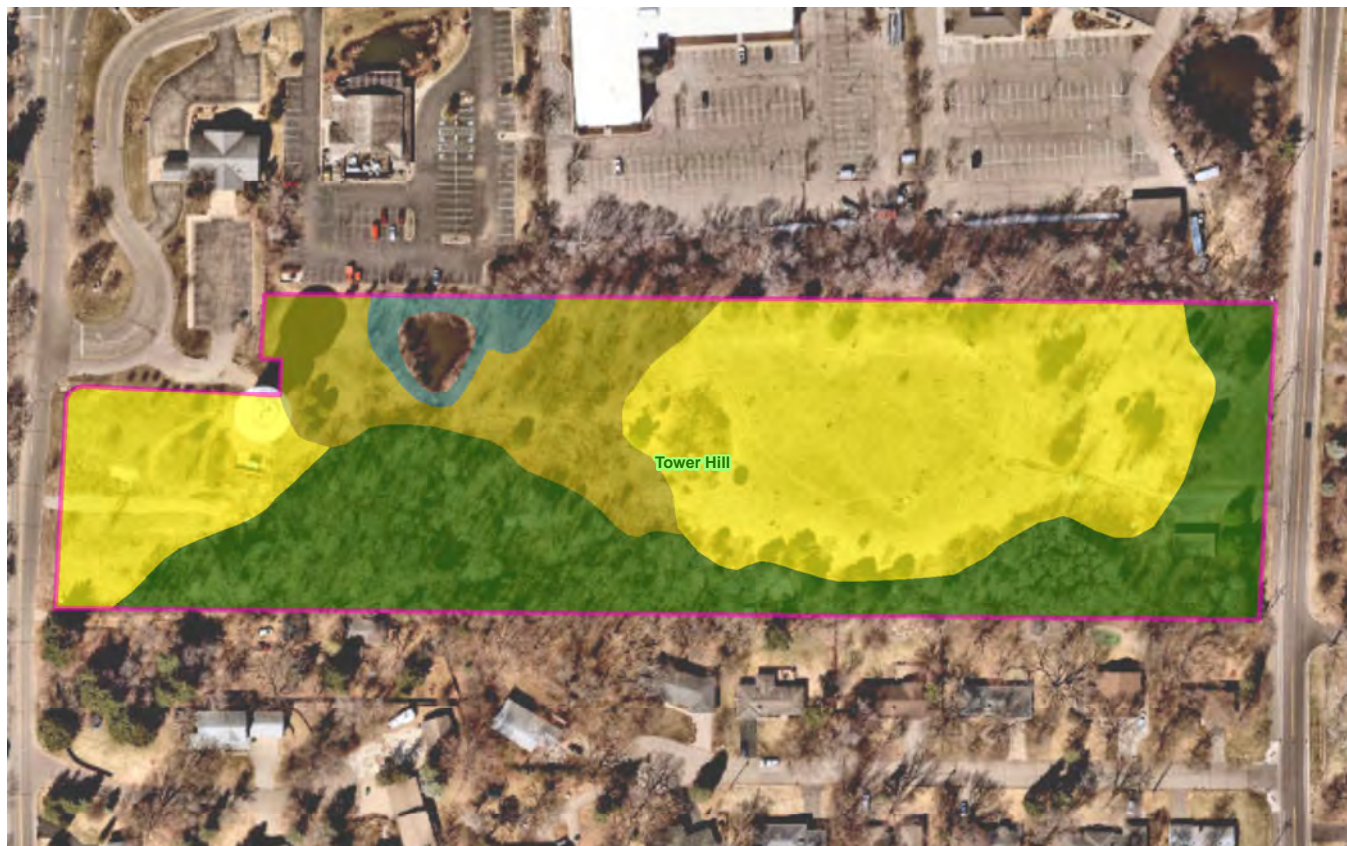
- Altered/Non-Native Forest
- Cultural
- Floodplain Forest
- Grassland - Native
- Oak Forest
- Minnetonka Park



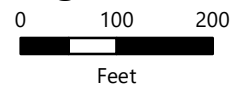
**Habitat Quality**



- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



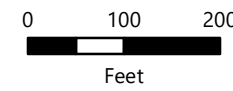
**Target Plant Community**



- Floodplain Forest
- Maple - Basswood Forest
- Oak Savanna
- Grassland - Dry Prairie
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**



- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park



# Green Circle Park

Green Circle Park's central pond has a high quality and well maintained native buffer with walking trails all the way around.

## Condition Summary

- Wetland buffer surrounding the pond is of high quality with very little invasive and woody species encroachment.
- Native goldenrod species dominates mesic prairie areas.
- Tree canopy is a mixture of native and cultivated species.
- Open water area is ringed completely by non-native cattails.

## Challenges

- Accessing and managing cattails would be difficult and would remain an ongoing issue.
- Goldenrod may be out competing other native plant species. Consider introducing other plants that could compete and add additional diversity.

## Opportunities

- Site is heavily utilized by adjacent office developments. Leverage adjacent businesses to increase resources available for management.
- A great example of a well maintained wetland buffer restoration with native plant diversity.

## Restoration Priorities

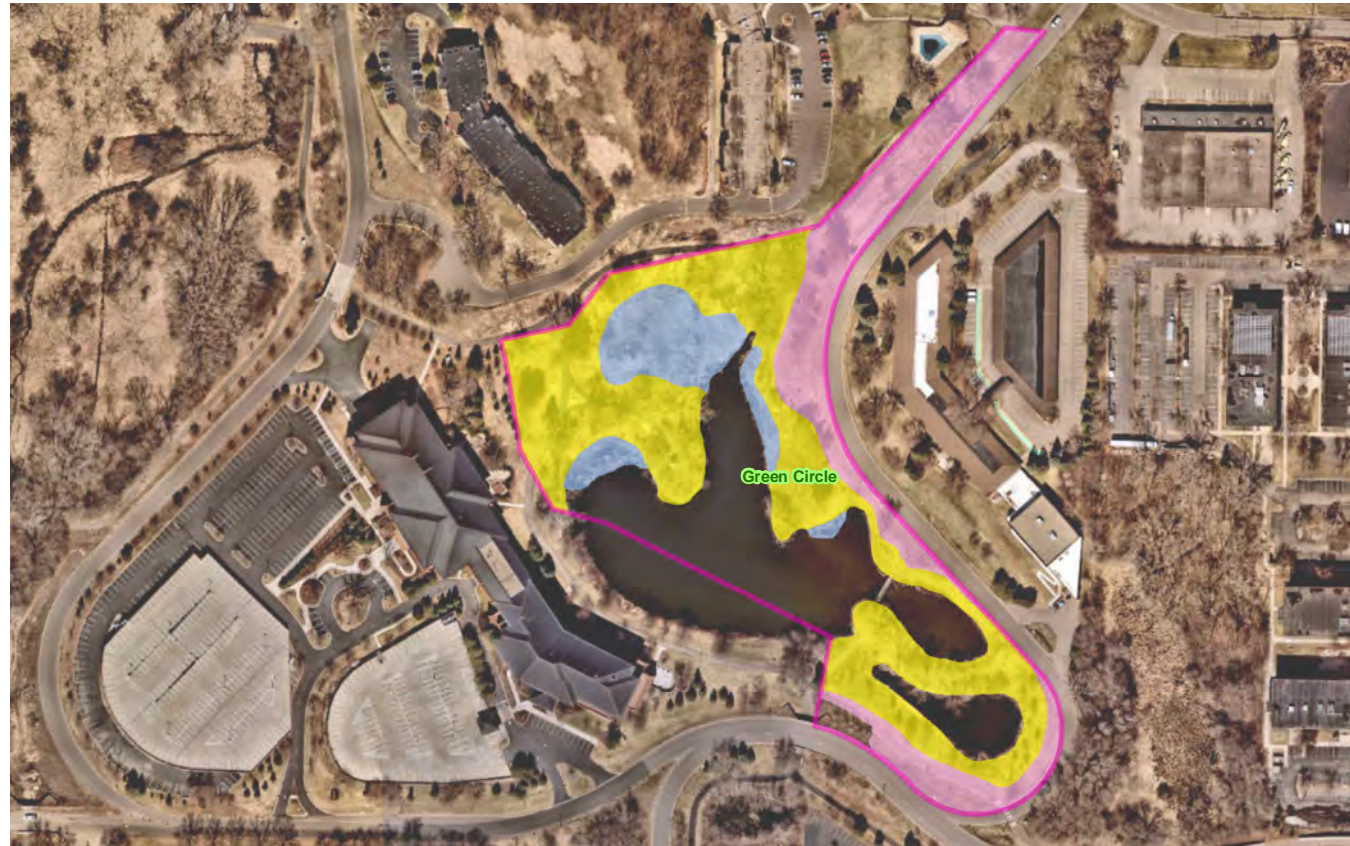
- Protect existing high quality wetland buffer plantings from woody and invasive plant intrusion.
- Wetland edges could be enhanced with aggressive native species.



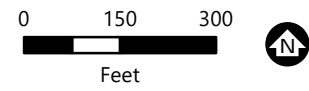
Above: Diverse wetland buffer plantings



# Green Circle Park Assessment and Planning Maps



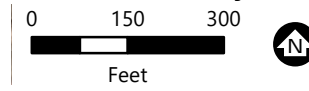
**Existing Plant Community**



- Cultural
- Grassland - Native
- Wetland - Non-Native
- Minnetonka Park



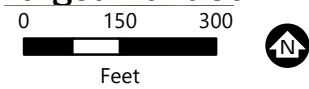
**Habitat Quality**



- A
- B
- C
- NA (Cultural & Open Water)
- Minnetonka Park



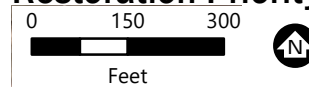
**Target Plant Community**



- Cultural
- Deep Marsh
- Grassland - Mesic Prairie
- Minnetonka Park



**Restoration Priority**



- High
- Medium
- Low
- Lowest Priority
- N/A
- Minnetonka Park





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# Appendix B

## Management Budgets for Priority Public Properties

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# Management Budgets for Priority Public Properties

The tables below project costs for the restoration and management of native plant communities within 14 priority Minnetonka owned natural areas prioritized in Table 4.2 and described in Appendix A. Additional cost projects should be developed for remaining parks as time and resources permit. Costs for the 14 priority natural areas are to help determine planning level budgets for a 20 year period. Management is divided into four phases: Phase 1 (years 1-5), Phase 2 (years 6-10), Phase 3 (years 11-15), and Phase 4 (years 16-20).

The tables are sorted into restoration and maintenance costs. Restoration costs represent an average price for initial intensive invasive plant removal, site preparation, and native plant seeding. Once an initial restoration effort is complete, regular maintenance will be required to nurture species diversity and minimize invasive species encroachment. Mowing, herbicide treatment, and prescribed burning are typical costs associated with the maintenance of natural areas.

Restoration and maintenance costs were developed from costs incurred from similar projects within the region for the years 2017-2021 and are generalized for the planning purposes. Future, detailed budgeting for individual parks should be conducted separately. Costs shown in the following tables reflects work to be done by either City staff or professional restoration contractors. City staff efforts in supervising volunteers are taken into account.

**Table B-1 Restoration and Maintenance Cost**

| <b>* Restoration Cost per Acre</b>          |                |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|   | Low            | High           | Average Cost   |
| Prairie                                     | \$2,000        | \$4,000        | \$3,000        |
| Savanna                                     | \$4,000        | \$8,000        | \$6,000        |
| Woodland                                    | \$2,000        | \$8,000        | \$5,000        |
| Forest                                      | \$1,000        | \$3,000        | \$2,000        |
| <b>Average Cost</b>                         | <b>\$2,250</b> | <b>\$5,750</b> | <b>\$4,000</b> |
| <b>* Maintenance Cost per Acre per Year</b> |                |                |                |
|   | Low            | High           | Average Cost   |
| Prairie                                     | \$300          | \$1,000        | \$650          |
| Savanna                                     | \$300          | \$1,300        | \$800          |
| Woodland                                    | \$300          | \$2,500        | \$1,400        |
| Forest                                      | \$200          | \$800          | \$500          |
| <b>Average Cost</b>                         | <b>\$275</b>   | <b>\$1,400</b> | <b>\$838</b>   |

**\*Notes:**

- These costs have been reviewed and approved by Minnetonka staff. Costs were initially developed by Barr Engineering Co. based on recent restoration projects of similar size and scope.
- For planning purposes only: These cost ranges are intended for planning. Costs will vary depending on individual project size, phasing, material costs, inflation, etc..
- This estimate does not include costs for survey, permitting, or design.
- Costs are comprised of labor and material at a 1:1 ratio. The ratio of material vs labor costs can vary greatly depending on the specific restoration/maintenance activity, location, and date of construction.



**Table B-2 Summary Cost Per Phase**

| Resource Allocation     | Park             | *Total Restorable Acres | Phase            |                  |                   |                  |                    |                  |                    |                  | Total (Phases 1-4; Over 20 Yrs) | Phase          |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
|                         |                  |                         | 1<br>(1-5 Years) |                  | 2<br>(6-10 Years) |                  | 3<br>(11-15 Years) |                  | 4<br>(16-20 Years) |                  |                                 | 5<br>20+ Years |                  |
|                         |                  |                         | Restore          | Maintain         | Restore           | Maintain         | Restore            | Maintain         | Restore            | Maintain         |                                 | Restore        | Maintain         |
| High Priority Ranking   | Lone Lake Park   | 96.2                    | \$88,880         | \$24,807         | \$88,880          | \$43,416         | \$88,880           | \$62,025         | \$88,880           | \$80,568         | \$566,336                       | \$0            | \$80,568         |
|                         | Jidana Park      | 20.0                    | \$19,100         | \$4,753          | \$19,100          | \$8,375          | \$19,100           | \$12,563         | \$19,100           | \$16,750         | \$118,840                       | \$0            | \$16,750         |
|                         | Purgatory Park   | 97.3                    | \$84,500         | \$28,412         | \$84,500          | \$46,104         | \$84,500           | \$63,797         | \$84,500           | \$81,489         | \$557,802                       | \$0            | \$81,489         |
|                         | Big Willow Park  | 43.5                    | \$43,500         | \$9,108          | \$43,500          | \$18,216         | \$43,500           | \$27,323         | \$43,500           | \$36,431         | \$265,078                       | \$0            | \$36,431         |
|                         | Minnetonka Mills | 10.4                    | \$10,400         | \$2,178          | \$10,400          | \$4,355          | \$10,400           | \$6,533          | \$10,400           | \$8,710          | \$63,375                        | \$0            | \$8,710          |
|                         | Civic Center     | 42.6                    | \$42,600         | \$8,919          | \$42,600          | \$17,839         | \$42,600           | \$26,758         | \$42,600           | \$35,678         | \$259,594                       | \$0            | \$35,678         |
|                         | Meadow           | 36.0                    | \$36,000         | \$7,538          | \$36,000          | \$15,075         | \$36,000           | \$22,613         | \$36,000           | \$30,150         | \$219,375                       | \$0            | \$30,150         |
|                         | Hilloway         | 26.2                    | \$26,200         | \$5,486          | \$26,200          | \$10,971         | \$26,200           | \$16,457         | \$26,200           | \$21,943         | \$159,656                       | \$0            | \$21,943         |
| Victoria-Evergreen      | 21.5             | \$21,500                | \$4,502          | \$21,500         | \$9,003           | \$21,500         | \$13,505           | \$21,500         | \$18,006           | \$131,016        | \$0                             | \$18,006       |                  |
| Medium Priority Ranking | Kinsel           | 4.5                     | \$4,500          | \$1,445          | \$4,500           | \$2,387          | \$4,500            | \$3,329          | \$4,500            | \$3,769          | \$28,929                        | \$0            | \$3,769          |
|                         | Orchard          | 6.7                     | \$6,700          | \$1,403          | \$6,700           | \$2,806          | \$6,700            | \$4,208          | \$6,700            | \$5,611          | \$40,828                        | \$0            | \$5,611          |
|                         | Lake Rose        | 5.9                     | \$7,200          | \$3,434          | \$0               | \$4,941          | \$0                | \$4,941          | \$0                | \$4,941          | \$25,458                        | \$0            | \$4,941          |
|                         | Tower Hill       | 7.9                     | \$4,600          | \$2,764          | \$4,600           | \$4,690          | \$4,600            | \$5,653          | \$4,600            | \$6,616          | \$38,123                        | \$0            | \$6,616          |
|                         | Green Circle     | 4.0                     | \$0              | \$3,350          | \$0               | \$3,350          | \$0                | \$3,350          | \$0                | \$3,350          | \$13,400                        | \$0            | \$3,350          |
| Sub Total By Phase      |                  |                         | <b>\$395,680</b> | <b>\$108,096</b> | <b>\$388,480</b>  | <b>\$191,528</b> | <b>\$388,480</b>   | <b>\$273,054</b> | <b>\$388,480</b>   | <b>\$354,011</b> |                                 | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$350,661</b> |
| Total By Phase          |                  |                         |                  | <b>\$503,776</b> |                   | <b>\$580,008</b> |                    | <b>\$661,534</b> |                    | <b>\$742,491</b> | <b>\$2,487,810</b>              |                | <b>\$350,661</b> |

**\*Notes:**

- Total restorable acres do not include cultural areas, open water, & cattail wetlands.
- Costs do not account for inflation over time.
- The Cullen Smith Property is not included but is recommended to be included in future budgeting once it is designated as a public park.
- Costs are presented for all top priority parks. Other medium priority parks have also been estimated. These include medium priority parks with management strategies.



**Table B-3 Restoration Summary**

| <b>Cost to Maintain Natural Areas per Phase</b> |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| Restoration Phase                               | Existing and Newly Restored Acres to Maintain | Cost Estimate    |
| 1 (Yrs. 1-5)                                    | 129   | \$108,096        |
| 2 (Yrs. 6-10)                                   | 229   | \$191,528        |
| 3 (Yrs. 11-15)                                  | 326   | \$273,054        |
| 4 (Yrs. 16-20)                                  | 423   | \$354,011        |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>423</b>                                    | <b>\$926,690</b> |

| <b>Cost to Restore Natural Areas per Phase</b> |                        |                    |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|
| Restoration Phase                              | Total Acres to Restore | Cost Estimate      |
| 1, Yrs. 1-5                                    | 99                     | \$395,680          |
| 2, Yrs. 6-10                                   | 97                     | \$388,480          |
| 3, Yrs. 11-15                                  | 97                     | \$388,480          |
| 4, Yrs. 16-20                                  | 97                     | \$388,480          |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>390</b>             | <b>\$1,561,120</b> |

| <b>Maintenance and Restoration Combined Costs</b> |                               |                    |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Restoration Phase                                 | Acres to Restore and Maintain | Cost Estimate      |
| 1, Yrs. 1-5                                       | 228                           | \$503,776          |
| 2, Yrs. 6-10                                      | 326                           | \$580,008          |
| 3, Yrs. 11-15                                     | 423                           | \$661,534          |
| 4, Yrs. 16-20                                     | 423                           | \$742,491          |
| <b>Total</b>                                      |                               | <b>\$2,487,810</b> |

\*Notes:

- Costs do not account for inflation over time.





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# Appendix C

Budget Changes Necessary to Implement Primary Initiatives Identified  
in this Natural Resources Master Plan

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# Budget Changes Necessary to Implement Primary Initiatives Identified in this Natural Resources Master Plan

| Initiative   | Priority over next five years (High-Medium-Low) | Anticipated Budget Impact (- reduction, 0 remain the same, + increase) * | Anticipated Staffing Change (- reduction, 0 remain the same, + increase) ** |
|--|---|--|---|
| Develop community forest inventory and management plan   | H   | +  | 0   |
| Develop an Education and Outreach Plan that incorporates plan education and outreach opportunities                 | H   | 0  | 0   |
| Develop and implement a robust natural resources volunteer program   | H   | +  | 0   |
| Develop maintenance plans for priority public properties   | H   | +  | 0   |
| Develop a climate vulnerability and adaptation plan for parks/ public lands, including heat island mitigation plan | H   | +  | 0   |
| Enhance city replanting efforts (e.g., gravel bed nursery, replanting on public property)                          | M   | +  | 0   |
| Create and implement a pilot cost-share program  | M   | +  | 0   |
| Create and implement a pilot technical assistance program (tree audits etc.)                                       | M   | +  | +   |
| Develop and implement a 'pest detector' citizen science program  | M   | 0  | 0   |
| Develop a soil protection and regeneration ordinance   | M   | 0  | 0   |
| Conduct habitat assessments (every 5th year)   | L   | +  | 0   |
| Develop a soils management plan  | L   | +  | 0   |
| Update existing natural resource-focused ordinances as needed  | L   | 0  | 0   |

\*Initiatives requiring more budget primarily include one-time costs associated with consultant hiring. Required additions to the annual operating budget would be addressed through the annual budgeting process with City Council and the Park Board.

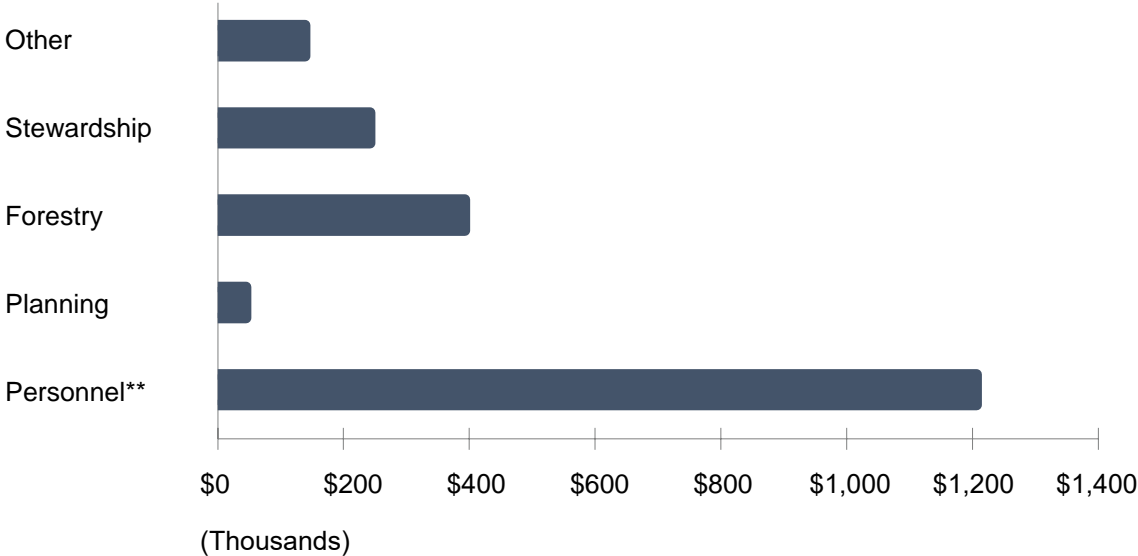
\*\*Most initiatives fall within existing staff workplans, however some planning efforts may identify a need to hire additional staff, which would be requested through the annual budgeting process.



# Synopsis of the 2022 Natural Resources Division Budget

## 2022 Proposed Budget - \$1.8M\*

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\*Some forestry costs are not in the Natural Resources Division budget. They are included in the annual Capital Improvement Plan.

\*\*Nine full time technical staff and up to five 5 seasonal interns.





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# Appendix D

## Grant Sources

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# Grant Sources

This appendix lists a variety of grant funding sources that are available for natural resource improvement projects in Minnetonka.

| Grant Program  | Sponsor Agency  | General Information  | Eligibility  | Link to Website  | Contact Information  |
|--|-----------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Conservation easements funding</b>                            | Hennepin County | Hennepin County has funding to acquire conservation easements on the best remaining natural areas in the county and conduct habitat restoration on protected properties. Funding is also available to agricultural landowners to permanently remove certain environmentally sensitive lands from production to protect surface water and groundwater   | Private land owners  | <a href="http://www.hennepin.us/residents/conservation/land-protection-restoration">www.hennepin.us/residents/conservation/land-protection-restoration</a>   | Kristine Maurer<br>kristine.maurer@hennepin.us<br>(612)-348-6570   |
| <b>Good Steward Grant</b>  | Hennepin County | Hennepin County Environment and Energy works to protect water, land, and air to conserve our natural resources for future generations. Through Good Steward Grants, Hennepin County supports landowners, businesses, government agencies, and organizations with matching grants to implement conservation practices to preserve and restore critical habitats, reduce erosion, protect groundwater, and improve water quality.  | Local, state, or regional government agencies, non-profit organizations, landowners: citizens or business owners | <a href="http://www.hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal">www.hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal</a><br><br><a href="http://www.hennepin.us/residents/environment/natural-resources-funding">www.hennepin.us/residents/environment/natural-resources-funding</a> | Supplier Portal Help Desk for Assistance<br>(612)-543-5412<br>(Mon-Fri, 8:00am-4:30pm)<br>supplierportal@hennepin.us |
| <b>Healthy Tree Canopy Grants for Cities</b>                     | Hennepin County | Healthy Tree Canopy Grants were established to help communities make positive changes in the tree canopy and engage residents in taking action to protect trees.   | Cities in Hennepin County  | <a href="http://www.hennepin.us/trees">www.hennepin.us/trees</a>   | Jen Kullgren<br>jen.kullgren@hennepin.us<br>(612)-235-0744   |
| <b>Conservation Corps Minnesota Clean Water Fund: Crew Labor</b> | BWSR            | Funds are available for Conservation Corps crew labor only for the purpose of protecting, enhancing and restoring water quality in lakes, rivers and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water sources from degradation. Project proposals should demonstrate measurable outputs to achieve water quality objectives through the implementation of BMPs. Projects that focus on retaining water on the land through native plantings versus habitat restoration are preferred. | Counties, Cities, SWCDs, Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations                              | <a href="http://www.conservationcorps.org/clean-water-funding">www.conservationcorps.org/clean-water-funding</a>   | Brian Miller<br>(651)-209-9900 ext. 19<br>brian.miller@conservationcorps.org   |



| Grant Program  | Sponsor Agency | General Information   | Eligibility  | Link to Website  | Contact Information   |
|--|----------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Forest Stewardship Program</b>  | MN DNR         | Cost share program to provide technical advice and long range planning to interested land owners. Forest stewardship plans are the outcome of the program- plans are designed to meet landowner goals while maintaining the sustainability of the land.   | Financial assistance to woodland owners for completing projects to practice good forest stewardship on their land. A typical project is between 3 and 20 acres but could be smaller or larger depending on land goals.   | <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/woodlands/cost-share.html">www.dnr.state.mn.us/woodlands/cost-share.html</a>   | Private Forest Program Coordinator<br>DNR Forestry<br>500 Lafayette Road, Box 44<br>St. Paul, MN 55155<br>(651)-259-5261  |
| <b>Community Forest Bonding</b>  | MN DNR         | Removal, disposal and replacement of dead or dying shade trees located on public property that are lost to forest pests or disease.   | Cities, Counties and Townships, and Park and Recreation Board in cities in of the first class.   | <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/forestmgmt/commforestbondgrant/index.html">www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/forestmgmt/commforestbondgrant/index.html</a> | Ken Holman<br>DNR Forestry<br>500 Lafayette Road, Box 44<br>St. Paul, MN 55155<br>ken.holman@dnr.state.mn.us<br>(651)-259-5300  |
| <b>Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program - Metro Projects</b>         | MN DNR         | Grant program to restore or enhance prairies, wetlands, forests, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. Program provides competitive grants of \$5,000-\$400,000 with a 10% non-state match requirement and a total project cost cap of \$575,000. Restoration and enhancement projects will only be funded on lands in public ownership or waters designated as public waters. | Eligible applicants are limited to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations, including government entities. Projects must be located within the 7 county metro area or within city limits of cities with a population of 50,000 or greater (Duluth, Rochester, St. Cloud). Private individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply for these grants. | <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/habitat/cpl/metro-grant-cycle.html">www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/habitat/cpl/metro-grant-cycle.html</a>               | Jessica Lee<br>Grant Program Coordinator<br>Conservation Partners<br>Legacy Grant<br>MN DNR<br>500 Lafayette Road<br>Box #20<br>St. Paul, MN 55155<br>LSCPLGrants.DNR@state.mn.us<br>(651)-259-5233 |
| <b>Metro Conservation Corridor Partnership Habitat Restoration Program</b> | MN DNR         | Great River Greening is seeking partners to implement habitat restoration on protected lands and waters, with priority given to projects that 1) protect and restore water quality (projects must include monitoring), 2) protect, restore, and enhance land and habitat, and 3) reduce the spread of invasive species along streams, rivers, and land transportation routes.                 | Partners can be counties, watershed districts, cities, non-profits and others within the 12-county metropolitan area. Projects must be within a mapped Metro Conservation Corridor   | <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/metroconservationcorridors/index.html">www.dnr.state.mn.us/metroconservationcorridors/index.html</a>                       | Kristina Geiger<br>Minnesota Land Trust<br>kgeiger@mnland.org<br>(651)-917-6295 Bart<br><br>Bart Richardson<br>MnDNR,<br>bart.richardson@state.mn.us<br>(651)-259-5796                              |
| <b>Minnesota ReLeaf Program</b>  | MN DNR         | Program to assist communities with planting and caring for their trees, to increase energy conservation, to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, and to achieve other environmental benefits.   | Local units of government, nonprofit organizations, and schools.   | <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/forestmgmt/releaf.html">www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/forestmgmt/releaf.html</a>                                       | Ken Holman<br>Program Coordinator<br>DNR Forestry<br>500 Lafayette Road, Box 44<br>St. Paul, MN 55155<br>ken.holman@dnr.state.mn.us<br>(651) 259-5269   |



| Grant Program  | Sponsor Agency                        | General Information   | Eligibility   | Link to Website   | Contact Information   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Environmental Initiative Program</b>                    | Laura Jane Musser Fund                | The Fund's goal is to promote public use of open space that improves a community's quality of life and public health, while also ensuring the protection of healthy, viable and sustainable ecosystems by protecting or restoring habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species.  | Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, local units of government within the following states: CO, HI, MN, TX, WY.   | <a href="https://musserfund.org/environmental-initiative-program/#:~:text=environmental%20initiative%20THE%20LAURA%20JANE%20MUSSE%20FUND%20assists.owned%20open%20spaces%2C%20while%20encouraging%20compatible%20human%20activities">musserfund.org/environmental-initiative-program/#:~:text=environmental%20initiative%20THE%20LAURA%20JANE%20MUSSE%20FUND%20assists.owned%20open%20spaces%2C%20while%20encouraging%20compatible%20human%20activities</a> | Mary Karen Lynn-Klimenko<br>Grants Program Manager<br>THE LAURA JANE MUSSE FUND<br>admin@musserfund.org<br>(612)-825-2024 |
| <b>Five Star &amp; Urban Waters Restoration Program</b>    | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation | The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships focused on improving water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats they support. Projects include a variety of ecological improvements including: wetland, riparian, forest and coastal habitat restoration; wildlife conservation; community tree canopy enhancement; and/or water quality monitoring and stormwater management; along with targeted community outreach, education and stewardship. NFWF may use a mix of public and private funding sources to support any grant made through this program and priority will be given to projects that advance water quality goals in underserved communities. | Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes and educational institutions. Ineligible applicants include: unincorporated individuals, businesses, international organizations and U.S. Federal government agencies.                                      | <a href="http://www.nfwf.org/apply-grant">www.nfwf.org/apply-grant</a>  | Chloe Elberty<br>Coordinator<br>Community Stewardship<br>Chloe.Elberty@nfwf.org<br>(202)-595-2434                         |
| <b>Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund</b> | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation | <p>Technical Assistance for Private Working Lands: Funding in this category will support implementation of technical assistance to increase the number of private landowners engaged in monarch butterfly and pollinator conservation practices on working lands.</p> <p>Habitat Improvement: Funding in this category will support on-the-ground work to increase the quality, quantity and connectivity of habitat for the monarch butterfly and other native insect pollinators.</p>   | <p>Eligible applicants include nonprofit 501(c) organizations, U.S. federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.</p> <p>Ineligible applicants include businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations.</p> | <a href="http://www.nfwf.org/programs/monarch-butterfly-and-pollinators-conservation-fund?activeTab=tab-1">www.nfwf.org/programs/monarch-butterfly-and-pollinators-conservation-fund?activeTab=tab-1</a>  | Crystal Boyd<br>Manager of<br>Pollinator Programs<br>Crystal.Boyd@nfwf.org  |





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# Appendix E

## Volunteer Program Structure

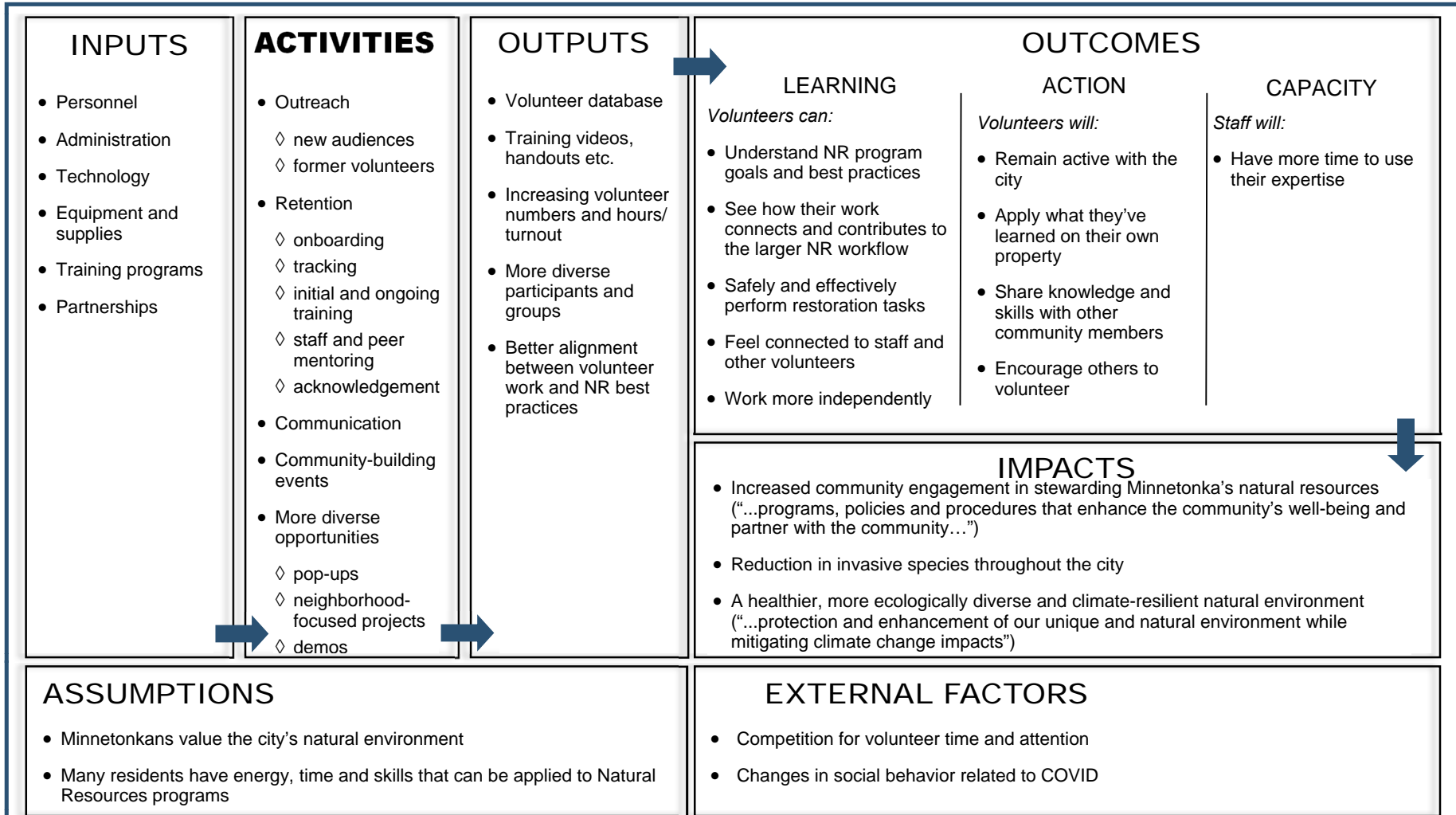
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# Volunteer Program Structure

The city of Minnetonka has engaged volunteers in natural resource work for many years, with many individuals and groups taking advantage of the opportunity to contribute to their community. The proposed volunteer program structure will provide the necessary elements to take the volunteer program to the next level by 1) recognizing the importance of what drives people to volunteer their time, 2) what they need to accomplish their goals in terms of training and support, 3) records management to ensure transparency and accountability, and 4) visual recognition of volunteer efforts. Similar to existing natural resource-based programs (e.g. Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Water Stewards), a more structured volunteer program will attract and retain more volunteers over time, resulting in tremendous benefits to the volunteers themselves and to the community.


The Program Logic Model below outlines necessary elements (inputs, activities, outputs) to achieve both short and long term goals, leading to positive impacts to the community. The logic model is a tool that will be used to guide program development and allow for program evaluation for reaching intended goals.



## NATURAL RESOURCES VOLUNTEER PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL





| Section | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|---------|--|--|---|
| General | The plan could state the size of the changes needed that staff have articulated more consistently to drive home the need for leadership, new thinking and financial support. We are concerned as the plan sometimes takes an incremental approach to the issues we face in our parks when what is needed is a transformational approach.   | Staff feels the plan provides a guide for the future in terms of management and protection of natural resources throughout the community. City staff currently address almost all of the elements in the plan to some degree. The overarching goal of the plan is to re-prioritize and re-direct resources where needed to achieve the plan goals.   |   |
| General | The city's Natural Resources Division is a peer of the Recreation Department in the organizational hierarchy and a stand-alone entity and includes a new position of city restoration ecologist/grant writer. The Natural Resources staff have representation to the Park Board and submit funding requests. Natural Resources has a full seat at the table.   | The NR Division is housed within the Public Works Department, because most of natural resource-based work involves management of the city's 'green' infrastructure. The NR Division has a dedicated operating fund; being raised to the level of a department would not likely be a significant change. NR staff regularly participate in Park Board activities, including setting agendas and being present at meetings. Being a department per se would not change that. |   |
| General | How will the city successfully work on so many needed initiatives without a compelling vision to guide the actions described and an organization with more significant resources available to accomplish the tasks? To start to close this gap we believe the proposed NRMP could develop an inspiring vision that makes a stronger link between how people have degraded our parks over time and our role in reversing the process not just managing what is left better. | The city council has set a guiding principle in their strategic plan that includes committing to a beautiful, sustainable and healthy environment, and supporting both short and long-term initiatives that lead to protection and enhancement of the city's unique and natural environment while mitigating climate change impacts.   |   |
| General | As an invested community stakeholder group, FoMP could not help but notice our name missing from the engaged volunteer groups listed in the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) draft document.   | The list of local partners includes community Friends groups to recognize all current and future Friends groups, as there are too many to list. We can add FoMP specifically.  |  |
| General | Minnetonka demonstrates a strong leadership position in restoring and preserving our natural amenities setting a new standard for other cities and becoming a magnet for visitors, new home owners and business.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| General | Minnetonka demonstrates that its parks and their high quality nature areas (amenities) are central (core) to our prosperity and future.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |






| Section | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|---------|---|---|--------------------------|
| General | Minnetonka funds natural amenities and recreational amenities in a more equitable way requiring a transformation in budgeting and resource allocation creatively using city resources and external grants.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |                          |
| General | I don't see anything specific about labeling park preserves and other parks with their appropriate designations. The language for preserves is especially important so we don't lose them to recreational development. We also need designation labeling for all parks so that park descriptions and signage can explain and reinforce what different parks are for and the park's rules for usage.   | Park designations and definitions will be included in the POST plan.  |                          |
| General | Comparing the new NRMP draft to the previous plan has led to a list of questions which are listed below: 1. What did we learn from the last twenty years of restoration work? Were we in maintenance mode or trying to restore?<br>2. What are we going to do differently in terms of budget or methods to achieve desirable outcomes and move the restoration of our parks into maintenance mode?<br>3. Have we incorporated the latest scientific research in regards to restoration management into the NRMP (Natural Resources Management Plan)?<br>4. Have we implemented the recommendations from the previous NRMP? One example is the detailed plan for working with volunteers. Will staff incorporate these ideas into their new volunteer structure?<br>5. What is still remaining to accomplish from the last NRMP?<br>6. How will we monitor for desired outcomes? Have we monitored for desired outcomes in the past? | Responses:<br><br>1. Varies based on location; areas with previous restoration happening are in maintenance phase, some new areas added are in an earlier phase of restoration.<br>2. Allocate resources (funding, staff priorities) based on plan goals and specific strategies to address the issues we face.<br>3. Yes<br>4. The new plan is more expansive than the old plan, which only focused on five community parks. The volunteer program structure outlined in the logic model is based on current best practices related to volunteer programming, and contains more elements than the previous plan.<br>5. The last plan only focused on five community parks, did not include forestry related goals, policies and ordinances, climate change, or put an emphasis on working with private property owners.<br>6. Future habitat assessments every five years will be used monitor outcomes and make changes in priorities, as part of an adaptive management process. |                          |
| General | FoMP is keenly interested to learn how budget and/or restoration methods will change to reach desired outcomes due to the poor biodiversity and quality ratings in many park areas.   | The plan is intended to focus efforts and allocate resources towards restoration and preservation of habitat  |                          |




| Section | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|---------|---|--|--------------------------|
| General | The current plan (1995-96) has very specific information on volunteers and a plan for volunteering. It could be cut and pasted into the proposed plan. Has anyone bothered to go back and read that plan? Why reinvent the wheel when what is there is very good and not just covering volunteers?  | The volunteer program logic model in Appendix D describes a program structure that will meet the short and long term goals of the program itself, and is based on research and best practices in volunteerism as described by the Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administration (MAVA) and other successful programs such as Master Gardners and Master Naturalists.   |                          |
| General | What is in the current plan is really good. The proposed document is much less specific and strategic.  | Comment received   |                          |
| General | There seems to be a lack of volunteer engagement during the development of this plan.   | Draft elements of the plan were presented to the Park Board in April, placed on the Minnetonka Matters public engagement website for feedback in October for four weeks, a revised draft will be presented to the Park Board on December 1, and a final draft will be presented to the City Council on December 20 for final adoption. Staff feels there has been adequate time for public feedback on all elements of the plan. |                          |
| General | FoMP's on-the-ground knowledge can bring key insights to the park specific recommendations regarding opportunities and restoration priorities especially in Appendix A.   | We look forward to seeing comments and will incorporate where appropriate.   |                          |
| General | The city takes a much stronger role in assisting residents with the heavy lifting through increased public education as to the importance of our parks and ecological systems and supports and celebrates resident efforts and volunteerism with city resources and ongoing ecological research.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| General | The plan states that a high percentage of residents believe that the natural areas in our parks are in good condition. Clearly more education and outreach is needed since the evaluation of natural areas demonstrates otherwise. FoMP has stated repeatedly and the current NRMP states that, "most citizens have a very limited understanding of the ecological condition of the city's natural resources," Current NRMP, pg. viii. We do not expect our residents to be experts but we can do far more to educate them so that they are better equipped to judge the health of our parks and make informed decisions about their views and actions. | Noted; the plan recommends developing an education and outreach plan to guide these efforts and increase the level of understanding among Minnetonka residents.  |                          |
| General | Minnetonka forms true partnerships with residents and resident groups to reshape funding for park projects and the use of volunteers to focus on projects that matter ecologically and are noticeable and important to the community.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |



| Section                | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)   |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I think the plan does address climate mitigation too – what about the impact of increased forest cover and other natural plant communities resulting from natural resources management practices in parks and other natural areas?   | Agreed. Climate mitigation in terms of reduced greenhouse gasses does result from an expanding urban canopy, however this plan is primarily focused on adapting to changing climate and increasing community resilience.   |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | The plan sets natural resources management goals and priorities – what is the time frame for the plan? 5, 10, 15, 20 years? I think it is 20 years but it should be very clearly pointed out in the Chapter 1 introduction.  | For habitat restoration in priority areas, it is a 20 year plan, with monitoring/assessment every 5 years depending on site-specific conditions. This is clarified in the plan.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | How will this plan work in conjunction with the Water Resources Management Plan? Stormwater runoff (flooding) is impacted by land management practices on public and private lands. Also, the 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail Plan has connections with the Natural Resources Plan. <u>The connections between the various plans should be shown in this plan.</u>   | Thank you. More clarification is provided in plan on the connections between plans.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Why is the community forest ecosystem given its own goal – what about all the other plant ecosystems that are found in Minnetonka such as wetlands? All these systems are interconnected.  | The plan includes the community forest because it is a dominant feature in the community and covers not only natural areas/parks, but also developed landscapes (private property, commercial development etc.). Wetland protection is primarily address in the Water Resources Management Plan.             |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Also, it gives an objective to identify strategies to manage stormwater but the introduction says that stormwater is not a part of this plan.  | This plan address stormwater runoff impacts on the landscape. The Water Resources Management Plan addressess stormwater runoff via storm drains, pipes and ponds.  |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Also, it talks about an objective to promote species diversification in lawns – the primary focus should be to reduce lawns and replace them with more natural plant communities – this is mentioned several times in Chapter 4.   | The goal is refering to diversification of trees in lawns, not of the lawns themselves. This has been clarified in the plan.   |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Goal of promoting voluntary application of practices on private property – this has been encouraged for decades however most individuals do not apply these practices – need to look at cost- share, and other financial incentives to change behavior – I have recommended that the storm water drainage fee be modified depending to what degree the private landowner is implementing natural resources management strategies on their property – these financial incentives should be brought up in this section – they are discussed in Chapter 4 | Incentives are included in the plan strategies. Stormwater utlity fees fund infrastructure to manage water from public lands such as streets etc. While installing stormwater features on private land is beneficial, it does not negate the need to have and maintain public infрасtecture on public lands. |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I have participated in habitat restoration in a Minnetonka park. It would be benefecial to recap the current condition of the area(s) to gage the long term benefit.   | This information is found in 'current conditions' section of the plan.   |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | All good.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |  |




| Section                | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I agree   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | this goal is CRITICAL if the other goals are to be achieved.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I agree with this, and I think it would be beneficial to add full or at least part time staff to help with this, provide more workshops and training, especially as volunteer groups such as "friends of parks" groups keep growing.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Could desired native species be focused on in the annual tree sale? Like chokecherries, dogwood, etc? I know those species are already included but could there be more of a focus on them? And on species that serve as food sources for animals and humans (apples, crabapples, hazelnuts, etc)?  | Agreed. This would be determined during program implementation.  |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Perfect. Question answered. When people can see the improvements (especially Buckthorn removal), they can feel hopeful it is possible to restore land and might therefore think it is worth their effort. The city will need more well-defined volunteers.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | 1) All of these are good goals. My biggest concern and comment is about how our city emulates these principles and practices. The city is certainly not all "ON BOARD" with this as we see different departments work without regard to their impact on the natural environment. I would include the replacement of native landscaping with non-native, potentially invasive landscaping at the fire station on Excelsior Blvd. and the over mowing along paths opening it up to invasive species and stifling native species growth and regeneration, and can we consider putting moratorium on the benches along paths? Every time a bench gets put in it creates a degradation of the plant communities around the bench. Could we have memorial trees planted instead? Let's get more creative about this and not just okay every request. 2) I have had difficulty actually getting the technical assistance when I have requested it. There needs to be a more streamlined channel of communication and action. | Comment received; While we continue to strive for achieving natural resource protection goals, there is always room for improvement. |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Bio-diversity is crucial going forward. With a changing, warmer climate, and an increase in pests and plant diseases, we just don't know which species will thrive going forward. We need them all, not just the highly desired species we have focused on in the past.<br>I grew up in Minneapolis when mature American Elms arched over all the boulevards. We know how well that worked.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |




| Section                | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | This goal seems to have an overlap with Goal 1 and is confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should address public lands and Goal 2 should address private land.  | Goal one relates to habitat quality, while goal two is specific to trees and woodlands because they are a very important and prevalent resources in natural areas as well as landscaped/manicured/developed areas.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | no comments or concerns  | Comment received  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I agree  | Comment received  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I like the idea of species diversification in lawns. The city should be encouraging people to not get rid of leaf litter as well to improve soil health, nutrient cycling and to benefit insects and other wildlife.   | This is referring to tree species diversification, not turf plants. This has been clarified in the plan.  |  |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | The idea of a perfect lawn needs to change in Minnetonka.....it is far from perfect for our native insects. Turf grass is highly over rated.   | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Absolutely LOVE the species diversification in lawns idea!   | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I guess goals can be achieved on public lands with the aid of FoMP. How can this be approached on private lands? Can we educate enough people to help with the work?   | Yes, through education, outreach, volunteerism, and incentives, which are included in the plan.   |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Define or give examples of "natural" woodlands, managed landscapes   | Natural woodlands would be intact oak woodlands, a mesic hardwood forest for examples. Managed landscapes are more traditional suburban areas such as lawns or parking lot islands that are maintained or mowed around and where there is little to no natural tree regeneration happening.   |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | 1) Again, the generality of species diversity does not seem to support our Natural Resources. Could we please specify native species? 2) Again, I would like to see that this is directing us to NATIVE species as it is the native species that support our insect populations and our birds and every other level of our ecosystem. 3) "Species diversification" in lawns is also pretty broad. This could include non-native species of clover which do not support our local native bee population - it does support honey bees at the expense of our native bees - our native bees, as you no doubt realize - are absolutely imperative to the ongoing health of our native eco-system. 4) I am unclear about what you mean by the regeneration of the entire community forest structure. I know this is supposed to be more general than specific, but it would good to be clear about the intent towards "native" habitats. | Responses:<br>1) Agreed, however the philosophy of native plants, everywhere, all of the time is not always realistic in a suburban community where aesthetics is sometimes a criteria. We have to be cognizant at times of what people will be willing to plant/maintain over time as well. There are examples of native plantings beings completely removed because they look unkempt or untidy. Human perception is at times a barrier as well.<br>2) See above<br>3) This is referring to tree species in a lawn setting, not the lawn itself. This has been clarified in the plan.<br>4) We have natural woodlands where trees are able to sprout and grow, and then we have trees in a turf area that is mowed, thus natural regrowth is not happening. |   |



| Section                | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | This all sounds good. The last component, revisiting habitat quality assessments and prioritization of parks, is an important part of the process. What was good five years ago often needs adjustment.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | How will you do this with the current budget? What percent increase will you be requesting? How many new staff positions will be created to tackle so many issues?   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I like the goals set forth but I think residents need to be updated on progress more frequently  | One of the goals is to assess habitat quality every five years.  |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | These are good high level goals.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | no concerns or comments  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | I agree  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Adding more green spaces and natural areas as opposed to keep building more and more and keep losing natural areas is very important to mitigate climate change and help protect native species.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | The goals are detailed and if they are accomplished our environment will resist further degradation and more individuals will see they can make a difference.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | <p>Would be helpful to define some terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Define or provide examples of "open spaces"</li> <li>--Define or provide examples of "multiple benefits" and "the community"</li> <li>--Does quality habitat include animals and organisms as well as plants?</li> </ul> <p>What is the criteria for prioritizing areas in parks and open spaces?</p> <p>What is the process for stakeholder residents to provide input regarding scope of restoration and management in nearby parks or open spaces?</p> | <p>Open space is (will be) defined in the POST plan update. Multiple benefits generally refer to the 'triple bottom line'...ecological, social, and economic benefits. Habitat quality generally refers to the structure of the habitat (ground, mid-story, and canopy structure) and the ability of the habitat to provide necessary resources to insects and wildlife. The criteria for prioritization of parks is included in Chapter 4 of the plan. Residents can provide input on the plan at Park Board and City Council meetings, or by contacting natural resources staff.</p> |                          |





| Section                | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | <p>1) I like that the plan will be revisited. Though every 5-10 years may prove to be inadequate. I would like to see some way of triggering this review which would include public input or concern. 2) I am concerned about the "promote habitat heterogeneity, plant biodiversity.... Hopefully it is not just plant diversity, which could include invasives, non-native plants that offer little towards supporting native insects and birds. 3) I like that the impact of pets might be addressed. The high density of pets in our parks and the inconsistent removal of their feces is a concern - especially as it can impact our clean water - streams and lakes as well as the health of the soil. ( I hope we can establish a dog park and limit the damage done to a specific area. )</p>  | <p>Response:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The plan clarifies that habitat will be assessed every five years</li> <li>2) Habitat heterogeneity refers to having multiple types of habitat, like a mosaic of habitat (wetlands, woodlands, grasslands) in a park or area. Plant biodiversity generally refers to native plants.</li> <li>3) Pets and pet use in general will be addressed in the POST plan.</li> </ol> |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | <p>I support these efforts, but is there significant overlap between the goals here and similar goals in the POST Plan? The POST Plan discusses balancing "enhance and preserve" while "preserve" is also focused on here. Is there another plan somewhere to focus on development / enhancement of outdoor activities / resources (trails, etc)?</p> <p>Will automobiles be considered when "addressing known stressors"? It seems automobiles have an outsize impact on wildlife (turtles, frogs, squirrels, deer, geese, turkeys, raccoons, opossums, etc). In addition, consideration of cars seems to be a primary driver of culling the deer herd. I understand culling is one kind of "management technique", but? I know it would be unpopular (reducing speeds) and resource intensive (adding critter underpasses) but automobiles seem to be the largest overall impactor on natural resources within MInnetonka.</p> <p>Is focusing on restoring oak savannah the best approach when oak wilt is so prevalent?</p> | <p>Response:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The goals of the POST plan and the NRMP are complimentary</li> <li>2) While automobiles and collisions are a definite impact of wildlife, this plan mostly focuses on habitat in parks and areas that are not streets.</li> <li>3) In an oak savanna, oaks are typically more widely spaced, thus oak wilt cannot spread as easily.</li> </ol>                             |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | <p>Climate mitigation – what about the impact of increased forest cover and other natural plant communities because of natural resources management practices in parks and other natural areas?</p>  | <p>Increased forest cover can help mitigate greenhouse gasses, however this plan mostly addresses climate adaptation and resilience.</p>  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | <p>The plan sets natural resources management goals and priorities – what is the time frame for the plan? 5, 10, 15 years? At most the plan should cover 10 years. We suggest a set tenure for the new plan, perhaps 10 years.</p>   | <p>For habitat restoration in priority areas, it is a 20 year plan, with monitoring/assessment every 5 years depending on site-specific conditions. This is clarified in the plan.</p>  |  |



| Section                | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Why is the community forest ecosystem given its own goal – what about all the other plant ecosystems that are found in Minnetonka such as wetlands? All of these systems are interconnected. Also, it gives an objective to identify strategies to manage storm water but the introduction says that storm water is not a part of this plan.  | The plan includes the community forest because it is a dominant feature in the community and covers not only natural areas/parks, but also developed landscapes (private property, commercial development etc.). Wetland protection is primarily address in the Water Resources Management Plan. |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Good high level goals, Goals 1 and 2 seem to have a lot of overlap and are confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should focus on public land and Goal 2 on private land?  | Comment received. Goal 1 refers more about habitat in general, and goal 2 is more specifically focused on trees and woodlands in the community.  |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | This plan says that it doesn't address water resources because it's addressed in the 2019 Water Resources Management Plan. However, throughout this document there are many references to wetlands – invasive species like purple loosestrife. How will this plan work in conjunction with the Water Resources Management Plan? Storm water runoff (flooding) is impacted by land management practices on public and private lands.                 | The NRMP addresses vegetation management in wetlands to a limited degree. Wetlands and quality of wetlands are primarily driven by water and changes in hydrology (e.g. flooding during storms, drawdown during drought). Stormwater and flood management are addressed in the WRMP.             |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | The 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail Plan has connections with the Natural Resources Plan. The connections between the various plans should be shown in this plan.   | This will be clarified in the plan   |    |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Please update information in map key on p. 4 to describe oak openings and barrens as oak savanna. The three plant community descriptions are used and this is confusing.  | Agreed   |    |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | The color coding in Table 2.1 is not consistent with color coding in Appendix A.  | Noted; will consider amending in the final draft   |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Goals/Objectives. I am looking for more active verbs. It isn't enough to Identify and Promote. Words like Develop, Restore, Redesign, Educate would be stronger.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Goal of promoting voluntary application of practices on private property – this has been encouraged for decades however most individuals do not apply these practices – need to look at cost- share, and other financial incentives to change behavior – I have recommended that the storm water drainage fee be modified depending to what degree the private landowner is implementing natural resources management strategies on their property. | Thanks for the comment. Technical assistance and cost-share is included in the plan as recommended strategies to engage people on private property, along with education and outreach.   |   |
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | Section 2.4, p. 14. No mention of survey data for rusty patched bumble bee in Lone Lake Park.   | Survey data has been incorporated into the known wildlife data.  |  |


| Section                | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Intro/Goals/Objectives | iNaturalist data cited is inaccurate because endangered and threatened species have location data obscured. There are multiple confirmed sites (multi-year) documentation of the rusty patched bumble bee not reflected in this report. This report should have robust management recommendations for threatened and endangered species. | The benefit of this data is to educate residents and identify rare species presence or absence, but not intended as research-based data collection. |                          |



| Section            | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Current Conditions | The Natural Resources Division has \$1.6 million annual budget to support activities – is that enough? Shouldn't the need be pointed out that it will be extremely critical to increase spending to achieve the ambitious goals being put forth?  | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.   |    |
| Current Conditions | Regarding the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment of City Owned Property, who, where and how were the natural resources investigations performed to create the Plant Community Inventory? More specifics on this inventory will be essential – if the plan covers 5 to 10 years, then there needs to be comprehensive data on all areas owned by the city.   | Clarity on methodology has been added to the plan.  |    |
| Current Conditions | The objective regarding limiting tree removal between Nov 1 and March 31 for the northern long eared bat conflicts with what forestry says that this is the best time to remove oaks that have been impacted by oak wilt and other diseases. Staff need to make sure that urban forest/tree strategies are very clear especially for the private landowner.   | This was an error in the text, which has been changed. Removal is suggested between Nov. 1-March 31, which does not conflict with forestry practices  |    |
| Current Conditions | Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka. There needs to be official survey data for wildlife species in Minnetonka to guide future management priorities. There are other wildlife surveys that are conducted: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, has the DNR had volunteers do the annual frog/toad survey in Minnetonka? What about annual butterfly count?   | The city has not historically monitored wildlife other than biannual deer counts, and instead puts resources into habitat restoration to support wildlife.  |   |
| Current Conditions | There is contradictory information here about the health of the parks. Here it says they are in decline. In another section it says that city residents are split on their view of their health and in another area it says the city is doing a good job managing the health of the parks. at is the health of the parks? Perhaps the city could use an external expert to render an opinion?                                     | The assessment of existing conditions is based on species presence and quality. The information related to residents is focused on people's perceptions on quality, and may or may not match data gathered in the field. It demonstrates a need for education and outreach on what good quality habitat looks like. |   |
| Current Conditions | The plan says that there are natural resources staff that have expertise in wetlands and water quality management – in the beginning of the plan it states that wetlands and water resources are addressed under the Water Quality Management Plan – it is extremely important that surface waters and wetlands are integrated into the overall natural resources management plan – all the natural resources are interconnected. | Wetland management as it relates to water and runoff falls under the pervue of the Water Resources Management Plan. Clarity on this is has been added to the plan.  |  |


| Section            | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|--------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Current Conditions | I think it is very important to be very clear on any conclusions drawn from the 2021 Parks and Open Space Planning Process – only a very small segment of Minnetonka’s population was involved in the surveys and other strategies for collecting information.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Current Conditions | What other types of human disturbance have also occurred within Minnetonka – further residential and commercial development has impacts on natural communities – what about the impact of human use on natural communities in Minnetonka?   | Residential and commercial development does have impacts on natural communities. In fact, most natural resource issues can be related to human use to some degree.                   |                          |
| Current Conditions | Improve wildlife habitat in Minnetonka parks by looking at management plans to see where turf can be removed to increase native plantings.  | Agreed. Incorporating a do-not-exceed turf percentage in landscaping is an identified strategy in the plan.  |                          |
| Current Conditions | This section is informative. I like map 2.8, where parks are indicated on the map. It would be nice if parks were indicated on every map. It's hard to locate small parks when they aren't identified by name. All of the data in this section is in contradiction to the survey finding on p. 14: Most of Minnetonka’s natural areas are in good or excellent condition.           | Unfortunately some maps would be too cluttered if all of the parks were show. Regarding the survey finding on page 14, it is unclear what that is referring to exactly.              |                          |
| Current Conditions | I like the part where the city will work with private landowners. It would be interesting to see if work can be done with business owners too, maybe they can plant natives around their businesses or sidewalks and place a sign that they are helping improve the ecosystem quality of the city or get "ecological points" for a small reduction in taxes or something like that. | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Current Conditions | This overview is clear and interesting, and the quality ranking descriptions (where to spend your time) make good sense. In the land use pattern section (map of impermeable surfaces etc) I was a little puzzled not to see a "key opportunity" be one of addressing how the impermeable surfaces might be made more permeable to minimize runoff etc.                             | Stormwater runoff best practices such as permeable pavement is a strategy identified in the Water Resources Management Plan, which is focused on managing stormwater infrastructure. |                          |
| Current Conditions | The city built Mountain biking trails in the most diverse habitat that exists in Hennepin county--the Preserve area of Lone Lake Park. This is not low impact given how many trail were built and the type of soil it disrupted ( sandy). I suggested closing these trails.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |





| Section            | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Current Conditions | <p>1) Interesting to see maps, however, the ones presented here (I have not gone to the documents) are difficult to interpret. It is discouraging to me to see how relatively poor quality our Existing Plant Ecology is. And yet, to the un-educated eye, it appears that everything is wonderful. We have become inured to the presence of buckthorn, garlic mustard, sumac, and other invasive species crowding out our native wildflowers and habitats. The people that KNOW need to be educating others. Perhaps that is our greatest downfall. The city does not seem to be unified on the importance of supporting the native habitat. The property owners cannot be expected to put in the work to support the native habitat on their own land if the city does not demonstrate this in every way possible. Newsletters are fine. A demonstration of replacing ornamental landscaping with native landscaping and making a big deal of it might gain some interest. When each department gets to decide (fire station on Excelsior Blvd) to do what they want, property owners learn from what they see the city doing. The city has done a lot - we need to be consistent! 2) How is the city going to interpret these maps? My concern is that we embrace support for native habitat at all levels of the city and educate the residents. Residents that have no expertise should not be determining the direction the city takes. That would be co-opting your responsibility.</p> | <p>Comment received. A significant strategy identified in the plan is to continue to increase awareness on habitat quality and the benefits it provides.</p>  |   |
| Current Conditions | <p>It says that there are natural resources staff that have expertise in wetlands and water quality management – in the beginning of the plan it states that wetlands and water resources are addressed under the Water Quality Management Plan – it is extremely important that surface waters and wetlands are integrated into the overall natural resources management plan – all the natural resources are interconnected.</p>   | <p>The plan addresses wetlands primarily in terms of invasive species management. Wetlands are significantly impacted by water and how water moves through a wetland as well as how much water goes up and down. These traits are all a result of stormwater runoff the infrastructure that manages water, which is addressed in the water resources management plan. Along with wetland protection ordinances. Clarity has been added to the plan.</p> |  |
| Current Conditions | <p>I think it is very important to be very clear on any conclusions drawn from the 2021 Parks and Open Space Planning Process – only a very small segment of Minnetonka’s population was involved in the surveys and other strategies.</p>   | <p>Comment received. Thank you.</p>   |   |
| Current Conditions | <p>Improve wildlife habitat in Minnetonka parks by looking at management plans to see where turf can be removed to increase native plantings.</p>  | <p>Comment received. Turf removal is a benefit to habitat and wildlife, and should be limited where able.</p>   |   |



| Section            | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification                                | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|--------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Current Conditions | There are other wildlife surveys that are conducted: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, has the DNR had volunteers do the annual frog/toad survey in Minnetonka? What about annual butterfly count? | Comment received. We have not looked at other data sources. |                          |



| Section              | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Issues/Opportunities | Develop a climate adapted tree list! It is encouraging that a suggestion from FoMP made it into the plan (the discussion was held when the Tree Ordinance was in front of the Planning Commission and Council).   | Agreed. A climate adapted tree list should be included on the city's webpage for climate resilience resources. This is a task better suited for annual workplans versus a master plan.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | A very thorough list of opportunities, but overwhelming. Does Minnetonka have the resources to do all of this? If not, is there a document with specific plans?   | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.   |  |
| Issues/Opportunities | YES to more \$ to work on invasive species! This will be necessary for quite some time, given how much work there is to do in parks and other public land.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Target assisted migration/planting of southerly plant species in cultural areas in parks, heat island locations, not restored, natural areas.   | Assisted migration should occur in any place where diversity is needed in light of climate impacts, not just in cultural areas.   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Minnetonka is not unique in having a dedicated NR division. Burnsville, Apple Valley, Chanhassen, St. Louis Park, and Andover are others (and there could be more). Just like Mtk's is housed in Pub Works, other cities house theirs in Park/Rec, Pub Works, Maintenance, etc. | Minnetonka has nine full time staff dedicated to natural resource management work. Of the other cities referenced, Burnsville has the second most staff at three.   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | p. 22 "staff diligently control invasive species". This would be more accurately stated as manage (not control).  | Noted   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Why was no official data used to determine the current status of wildlife? Using iNaturalist isn't really reliable because it is hit and miss.  | The intent of the plan was to assess habitat, not specifically wildlife species. The city does not allocate resources to conduct wildlife monitoring beyond biannual deer counts  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Some good ideas here, but "more aggressively manage existing invasive species" is weak. We should be working to eradicate them. Also, FoMP could be mentioned here.   | We will not be able to eradicate invasive species from a practical sense; most property in the city is privately owned.   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | YES to more \$ to work on invasive species! This will be necessary for quite some time, given how much work there is to do in parks and other public land.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Please replace suggested clover in lawns to a native species.   | Existing research demonstrates the benefits of Dutch white clover to pollinators in a lawn environment that is regularly mowed. There is very little likelihood of DWC expanding into natural areas. There is limited research on other native species in their ability to support pollinators while also withstanding the harsh environment of turf grass. |   |

| Section              | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Issues/Opportunities | Enforce an ordinance. Will the council actually go for that? Typically, residents are told that enforcement is impossible because of staffing.  | Comment received. Some ordinances are enforced on a complaint basis, such as lawn maintenance.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Strengthen landscape ordinance (and clearly tie in the Tree Ordinance?)   | Both the landscape ordinance and the tree ordinance have been updated in the past two years to reflect a need for more pollinator species, and added protection on trees by limiting more tree removal. |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | iNaturalist is a platform that could be used as the 'pest detector' program suggested for volunteers to scout new invasive species. This was proposed to NR staff in 2015.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | Continue to use volunteers, but make sure they are working on coherent plans in the parks and remember they can't do it all. Most major projects will need contractors to get it started and then volunteers can maintain it.   | A robust volunteer program structure should aid in ensuring that volunteers are working on projects and plans that align with city goals.   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | RPBB comment: any lawn replacements must use plants that the RPBB is known to forage on.  | Comment received. Outreach conducted by the city regularly encourages the use of pollinator plants, especially the RPBB 'super foods'.  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | I like the ideas of reducing the heat island effect with trees/plants. I look forward to seeing islands of green in large parking lots, such as Ridgedale. BTW, on p. 25 of the chapter, a bullet reads "continue to protect city staff from extreme heat and storm events." What does this mean? I don't think this goes in a master plan. | Because the plan is intended to provide direction for NR Division staff, human health is worth mentioning as a reminder. It is also an important element in a future climate action plan.               |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | This section seems very comprehensive in its list of opportunities, but it seems overwhelming. Does Minnetonka's NR dept. have the resources to do all of these things? If not, which ones will they do? It would be nice to see more specific action plans, broken down by park, with at least general timeframes and budget.              | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.   |  |
| Issues/Opportunities | Fine as far as it goes, but I don't think, under the last section, that "Natural areas are altered by logging and grazing" means much to an urban dweller. We're not logging or grazing in the historic sense. Is there an example of more current impacts?   | Clarity added to plan to convey that land was historically altered by logging and grazing, not currently.   |  |



| Section              | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>These are all very concerning issues. I think we need planning and development policies that are much more protective of our wetlands and forested areas. We need to be planning those corridors into the property development and make sure it is done correctly, that the water flow is not disrupted and that a greater percentage of trees are conserved. Perhaps we also need some tough changes to what is expected of property owners and what they can do on their own property. Right now someone can purchase a property with many oak trees and decide to remove them all because they want sun for their swimming pool, or because they are tired of raking leaves.(I have witnessed both.) Any reason is okay because they own it. Perhaps we could have a review process if more than 1 tree is going to be removed. It is a tough balance between property rights and what is good for the habitat and community. EDUCATION and the City being completely behind these policies will be key to any changes.</p> | <p>The tree protection ordinance was recently updated to increase protection on trees and put more limits on tree removal. However, there is a need to balance that with personal property rights as well. Education is always key to increase awareness about the benefits trees provide.</p> |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>The city tore up a virgin field and sold the great soil for pickle ball courts. Instead there were old tennis courts in the city that could have been transitioned to pickle ball and the field could have continued to be a lovely green space for habitat and people. This was a grandiose project that tore up all this lovely natural garden for cement courts and drain tanks to be used for 6 months a year. Makes me wonder if any of this plan is sincere.</p>   | <p>Comment received. The use and reuse of recreational amenities is an item that is addressed in the POST plan.</p>  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>Increasingly implement fire as a management tool in wetlands</p>   | <p>Agreed in general, but fire in wetlands dominated by cattail is usually not possible. It produces a tremendous amount of smoke which can be a health hazard, and doesn't get rid of the cattails as the roots and rhizomes are below the water.</p>   |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>Reduce the invasive vegetation found <u>along city trails</u></p>  | <p>Comment received. This would be a level of detail best suited for an individual park restoration plan.</p>  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>urban heat island: There is more surface water runoff from lawn turf areas than from native vegetated landscaped areas</p>   | <p>Comment received</p>  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>Trees removed from road construction projects involving city and private property should be replaced with native trees and other native plants. Landowners could be provided with tree sale vouchers allowing them to replace the impacted trees.</p>  | <p>Replanting efforts are currently focused on public property; with education and incentives for replanting on private property as well.</p>  |   |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>Upland: Japanese knotweed should be included in the list – all invasive species found in Minnetonka should be listed</p>   | <p>Added to the list in the plan</p>   |  |
| Issues/Opportunities | <p>Wetland and Lakeshores: Yellow iris should be included in this list – found in some Minnetonka parks and wetland areas</p>   | <p>Added to the list in the plan</p>   |  |




| Section              | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|----------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Issues/Opportunities | Is there a goal to increase tree cover in the city? Should this be a priority and mentioned here?   | Yes, goal two, and especially in areas of urban heat island impacts.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Continue to use volunteers to control invasive species within city parks, natural areas, and trail rights-of-way  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Expand native plant community restoration efforts on all city properties – focus expanding core habitat corridors (along waterways and wetlands – a significant acreage of city property is wetland and very little management has taken place in wetlands – work should be coordinated with the various watershed districts)       | Agreed and addressed in the plan.  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Encourage residents to create habitat through planting in their yards – there needs to be incentives (financial/cost-share) for residents   | Agreed and addressed in the plan.  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | <u>Wetlands</u> should be included within the focus of the Natural Resources Division   | Wetland vegetation and invasive species is addressed in the plan and currently a focus of the Natural Resources Division, along with enforcing the wetland protection ordinance. Wetlands are primarily impacted by water and runoff, which is addressed in the Water Resources Management Plan. |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | A significant amount of wetland acreage is found in Minnetonka. If Minnetonka has very little high-functioning wetlands how can natural resource management strategies be implemented to improve the quality of these wetlands? How can the city increase its capacity to work with the watershed districts on wetlands management? | Agreed. Partnerships are identified in the plan, including working with watershed districts  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Include a diversity of pollinator <u>NATIVE</u> plant species in all city landscape projects  | We will continue to use native and native cultivar plants to support pollinators in city projects, including monarch host plants.  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Not sure that there can always be a <u>BALANCE of growth and preservation</u> of community's highly valued water and other natural resources. We have reached a point that we need to preserve these remaining natural resources which are necessary to maintain our community's ecological integrity.                              | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Encourage residents to create habitat through planting in their yards – there needs to be incentives (financial/cost-share) for residents   | Incentives are included in the plan  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Educate the public regarding the native plant requirement within the landscape ordinance and enforce the requirement  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Educate residents on how to do natural resources management on their property   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |





| Section              | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|----------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Issues/Opportunities | Need to provide more than education to city residents/businesses regarding natural resources management. Education involves behavioral change. Various incentives including financial will also be needed to change behavior.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Work with school districts that are located with the city to help them with resource management information/education. The school properties encompass a large amount of acreage where more effective natural resources management practices could be implemented. These relationships should also include the watershed districts. | Comment received. Partnerships, including schools, are listed in the plan.                             |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Educate and provide financial incentives and cost-share opportunities to residents  | Noted and included in plan   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Continue to use volunteers to control invasive species within city parks, natural areas, and trail rights-of-way  | Noted and included in plan   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Educate landowners and provide incentives (cost-share, fee reduction regarding stormwater) where natural resource management strategies are implemented   | Noted and included in plan   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Extirpation is also occurring due to continued turf utilization which depends on herbicides, pesticides, energy use and significant water utilization   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Look at all city parks and properties to determine where turf can be removed and replaced with native vegetation  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Alternatives to lawns can also serve to reduce use of pesticides, herbicides, water, and energy   | Agreed. Comment received   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | City parks and properties should be inventoried to determine which lawn/turf areas could be removed that do not impact activities and can be converted to more diverse and ecologically productive native plant communities   | Comment received. Turf removal is a level of detail appropriate for individual park restoration plans. |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Need to move away from highly managed lawns – encourage the reduction of lawn acreage to more native landscaped areas – no mow fescues – increased lawn acreage will not remediate issues involved with climate change such as increased stormwater runoff  | Agreed, and is part of education and outreach efforts.   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | There should be some discussion of the impact of past deer management practices in th city  | Deer browse is noted as a significant impact to habitat quality  |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | What about the impact of feeding deer by city residents?  | This is addressed by ordinance   |                          |
| Issues/Opportunities | Educate citizens on how to compost without increasing worm populations.   | Agreed.  |                          |

| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)            |
|------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Strategies | Improve eroding footpaths? We thought they were unmaintained. What about rogue bike trails?  | Added clarifying language in the plan  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategies | Table 4.2. Change Meadow Park and Hilloway Park to 2 for Volunteer Involvement (established Friends group and organized volunteerism in each park)   | This is a recent development, however it will not likely change the ranking as they are already in the top tier of priorities., try changing and see what happens; clarify that this table is an interactive tool to use over time | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategies | Monitoring to evaluate management success – observations of returning wildlife species diversity should be included in adaptive management   | Agreed. Wildlife observations could be conducted by volunteers.  |                                     |
| Strategies | Climate Change. Monitoring – what about changes in native wildlife species?  | The plan is based on the premise that habitat improvement will support wildlife.   |                                     |
| Strategies | Natural Resources Management and Maintenance plans <u>SHOULD</u> be developed for <u>ALL</u> of Minnetonka’s public properties. Priority public properties should be developed first <u>but this plan should provide a timetable for the development of all parks, natural area plans</u> especially if this plan is intended for 10-20 years. | The plan prioritizes parks based on criteria outlined in the plan, and states that additional park areas will be added over time.  |                                     |
| Strategies | You promise “technical assistance” – how will staff provide this when they are already too busy to do just about anything we ask?  | Existing natural resources staff currently provide some technical assistance. An 'audit' program or more in-depth assistance could be carried about using contracted services to supplement staff time.                            |                                     |
| Strategies | I'm glad to see a public, formal way to prioritize restoration for parks. But I have to say that this set of ambitious goals will never be carried out by the current department, which is underfunded and understaffed.   | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategies | the priority ranking criteria are excellent. I like the whole section.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                                     |
| Strategies | This is again, not going to happen with your overworked staff. Who really has time for these observations/monitoring activities? Casual observations won't be good enough. Is there a designated person? I also wonder about leading by example. It is a good wish list goal to have, but how will Mtka actually get to this point?            | Habitat assessment work every five years would be handled by a consultant.   |                                     |
| Strategies | Admirable, but, once again, how can the current staff do all these things? We can't even get the buckthorn workshop on video to share in the off season!   | Comment received. A volunteer program structure with training is identified in the Appendices.   |                                     |



| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------|---|--|---|
| Strategies | Who will come to people's homes to provide technical assistance? Is there a restoration landscaper on staff and/or one that has time for this? Cost sharing would be an incentive, so that is pretty easy to carry out, but planning a yard's restoration is more time consuming and requires someone with broad expertise.   | Existing natural resources staff currently provide some technical assistance. An 'audit' program or more in-depth assistance would be carried about using contracted landscape design services.  |   |
| Strategies | That is a lot of plans! Again, sorry to sound like a broken record, but who has time to do this? For years I've heard nothing but "we don't have time" or "I'm the only one and I'm too busy." How exactly will this change?  | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.  |    |
| Strategies | Prioritization and Ranking Criteria. How were the point totals for each criteria determined?  | The criteria were identified by staff, and the points were used as a way to prioritize the criteria using staff knowledge and expertise. The point totals are arbitrary as a way to weight certain items more than others.   |   |
| Strategies | What was the reason for assigning such a high point criterion for areas with high visitation? Maybe an area of high ecological quality needs to be managed/protected and developing them for high visitation may have impacts on the ecological quality. Shouldn't an area that has significance within a Metro Corridor have a greater overall point value then if the area is highly visited? | Public access is a criteria because these are public lands, and restoration activities present an opportunity to educate and promote habitat improvement throughout the city. Council Policy 11.11 related to open space and habitat stewardship places a priority on parks or areas that are in or adjacent to public access, such as trails. |   |
| Strategies | <u>Climate Change. Work with the city sustainability commission and other county and regional governmental and NGO's</u>  | Agreed, and added to plan.   |    |
| Strategies | Two statements that begin "Lead volunteer efforts to..." not sure what that means.  | City staff would lead the development and implementation of volunteer activities.  |   |
| Strategies | Table 4.4 Pollinator Species – right. Replace bee lawn photo with sample planting in heat island. A bee lawn does not improve natural resource quality nor is a 'key piece' in climate adaptation.  | Changed in plan.   |  |
| Strategies | How will staff 'empower volunteers' going forward? (p. 42). Many of the park evaluations note in the Restoration Priorities that intensive ground cover restoration is needed. Question: What new strategies will be employed that haven't been used to date to increase ground cover diversity and plant cover?  | Enhanced training of volunteers is a significant way to help volunteers feel empowered to do their work. An emphasis on restoring oak savanna in certain areas results in a more efficient management of plant cover, and is a new strategy for Minnetonka.  |   |


| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------|--|--|---|
| Strategies | the Minnetonka Memo could be MUCH better utilized, though it is getting better. Every month I "have issues" with space that is wasted on unimportant topics, though I COMPLETELY understand that lots of pictures and little text is essential in this format! I really question the money being spent on the Senior Services insert; that item could be spent on a "sustainability" insert every month. It's time for a reallocation of printing budget, in my opinion. And I'm a senior. | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Strategies | Under Criteria 6 – what is meant by serving the needs of the <u>ENTIRE</u> community? Like ecological integrity and stability?   | Council Policy 11.11 focuses on open space preservation and stewardship, and prioritizes areas that are on public land or open to/visible by the public.   |   |
| Strategies | Criteria 8 – Volunteer Participation within park: Again – why is consistent volunteer work receive such a high point total? Maybe other areas that are extremely important are not known to the city residents/volunteers and an effort needs to be made to educate citizens and encourage volunteering.   | Volunteer participation is a criteria to recognize high involvement, and where there might be opportunities to encourage more involvement. For example, if a park begins to have more consistent volunteer involvement, that park will rise in priority based on scoring, which will influence future resource allocation. |   |
| Strategies | Does the point total mean that management will take place on just the areas that have received a score of 10 and above? What is the time period? Many of these parks/natural areas are not very well known to citizens but are very important to protect in regard to their ecological significance.   | The point total is used to guide where the city will allocate resources, primarily contractor funds and volunteer efforts. The time period is outlined in Appendix B.  |   |
| Strategies | How does Gray's Bay Marina receive an ecological quality of 2?   | Comment received. This will be reexamined.   |   |
| Strategies | Please include missing nonprofits in Partnerships, p. 41: Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary, Friends of Minnetonka Parks.   | Added Friends of Minnetonka Parks to plan as it has been represented as an 'umbrella' organization.  |  |
| Strategies | In that right column of the chart, 5th row it says, "Develop a climate adaptation and mitigation plan" and I thought the Sustainability Commission would be working on that as part of the Climate Action Plan. They should say they will work with the SC.  | Correct, and added to plan.  |  |
| Strategies | Under Community Forest – increase the number of trees/shrubs (greater than 2) that can be purchased in the tree sale   | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Strategies | Continue and increase the amount of appropriate native trees and plants planted on public and private lands  | Agreed. The is part of the city's current reforestation efforts.   |   |
| Strategies | seems fine to me. getting tired of reading...  | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Strategies | yep, yep, all good   | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |



| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Strategies | agree.   | Comment received. Thank you.  |                          |
| Strategies | We're concerned about encouraging clover in lawns. What if it really is invasive? (See comment in Ch. 3.)  | Existing research demonstrates the benefits of Dutch white clover to pollinators in a lawn environment that is regularly mowed. There is very little likelihood of DWC expanding into natural areas. There is limited research on other native species in their ability to support pollinators while also withstanding the harsh environment of turf grass. |                          |
| Strategies | The focus should be on <u>planting NATIVE</u> pollinator species   | Agreed in most situations. Private development landscape requirements include pollinator species, but cultivars may be used too.  |                          |
| Strategies | Introduction – City-Owned Natural Areas – does this include other areas that are not found in parks? What about waterways and wetlands not located in parks? These waterways and wetlands are an integral component to the overall ecological integrity of natural resources in Minnetonka.  | Agreed. Wetlands are protected by ordinance and policies outlined in the Water Resources Management Plan  |                          |
| Strategies | Under criteria 5 why is open water or cattail wetlands included with the natural area. Are other wetland types included? Open water and wetlands are integrated with the land based natural communities.   | Yes, all wetland types are included.  |                          |
| Strategies | Under Headwaters of Minnehaha Creek, the open water and wetlands (cattails and other aquatic species) are the natural area! This area has a very high diversity of wildlife species, only wild rice bed in Minnetonka and a very important migration route in spring and fall. What is the plan in conjunction with other agencies to protect this area? The management of city-owned wetlands need a long-term natural resources management plan. | Wetland protection strategies are identified in the city's Water Resources Management Plan, including the wetland protection ordinance and collaboration with other organizations/agencies.   |                          |
| Strategies | Considering the last Planning Commission and City Council discussion of the Tree Ordinance, I do not have high hopes for new, more restrictive ordinances. The city seems too concerned about what developers think to actually care about the long term environmental issues. How will your department handle this? Can you educate the members of council and commissions?   | We will continue to work to educate councilmembers and commissioners on natural resource-related topics   |                          |
| Strategies | <u>Opportunity – All of these policies and ordinances should be updated to reflect the strategies and objectives listed in this updated Natural Resources Management Plan</u>  | Comment received. Thank you.  |                          |


| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)            |
|------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Strategies | Consider Setting a Do-Not Exceed Turf Percentage in the Landscaping Ordinance  | Agreed. It is a strategies identified in the plan.  |                                     |
| Strategies | The city <u>should modify</u> the Do-Not Exceed Turf Percentage in the landscaping ordinance. <u>It should be a recommendation in this plan.</u> The resource issues related to the amount of turf lawn on city and private property is mentioned throughout the plan. There is a very limited amount of residential acreage in the city available for development. What financial incentives, policies and ordinances can be developed to reduce the existing amount of turf areas currently found in Minnetonka? | The city does not currently have a do-not-exceed limit on turf. This is an opportunity as identified in the plan. |                                     |
| Strategies | Important to list the date of each policy and ordinance – when were they updated?  | Added to the plan for clarity.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategies | Table of Misperceptions is good and should be emphasized as part of a public education program.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |                                     |
| Strategies | You need to expand City tree sale to include gravel bed grown and bare root trees.   | Comment received and noted in plan  |                                     |
| Strategies | A thorough list of strategies. We're most interested in how the public can get involved volunteering in the parks. A fellow FOMP member has sent an email to you about this.   | Comment received. Thank you.  |                                     |
| Strategies | Once buckthorn is removed (fully removed and daubed), volunteers could be engaged to adopt areas, monitor new growth and remove it. This is a perfect "Adopt an Area" opportunity.   | Comment received. Thank you.  |                                     |
| Strategies | The photo of the homeowner's rain garden couldn't have been taken in Mtka. When we asked how the city could help us create one, we got shuttled to the 9 Mile Creek Watershed District. NO help whatsoever. I hope that changes, but without better resources to this dept, it will not. I hope to see better support for homeowners who are trying to do the right thing. Too late for us...but a good idea. Will native plant sales be resumed? Hope so.   | A strategy using incentives such as a cost-share program is included in the plan.                                 |                                     |
| Strategies | I really like the idea of a landscape auditing program analogous to an energy audit (which we had done and found very helpful).  | Comment received. Thank you.  |                                     |




| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------|---|--|---|
| Strategies | as currently described the proposed amendments and revisions seem reasonable to me. People love their lawns. I would start with carrots rather than sticks. Most people need to SEE garden designs (before and after photos) before they understand how their manicured lawns might actually be more attractive with less "green cement"  | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Strategies | I hope that the development of a new volunteer program structure will be a process that includes the very volunteers you hope to keep and increase. We are stakeholders who want input into a process that will affect our time and efforts. Can you create a steering committee of sorts that can work together on this?   | Noted; the plan includes a logic model describing the program structure based on volunteer programming best practices. |   |
| Strategies | One thing that is missing is including volunteer groups in the development of a new process. Without our input, staff will be missing a huge part of the info gathering. This also seems incredibly time consuming and ambitious. Along with all the other efforts, how will staff actually carry this out? For example, right now there is a lot of momentum in the Friends of Parks groups, but we are being told to put on the brakes while the city figures out how to handle it. You might lose volunteers that way; people may go on to find other things to do while they wait for answers to "can I adopt this area of this park?". | Noted; the plan includes a logic model describing the program structure based on volunteer programming best practices. |   |
| Strategies | This is a lot for staff to take on. Consider identifying a neighborhood for a "pilot project" to test out strategies for education, involvement, monitoring, etc. Then develop the Education and Outreach Plan accordingly.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |   |
| Strategies | <u>The Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other Friends of various Minnetonka Parks SHOULD be included in this list.</u> These groups have supported the City's natural resources management efforts by their volunteering and helping to secure grant funding for city natural resources management projects  | The Friends of Minnetonka Parks has been added to the list.  |  |

| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| Strategies | <p><u>It will be extremely important to develop a comprehensive education and outreach plan in 2022.</u> This plan will prioritize which programs should be implanted and the timeline. Does the City have adequate funding and staff to implement the desired education programs and outreach activities? How can volunteers be utilized to implement these programs and activities. The Natural Resources Division should explore the utilization of more college and university interns to focus on programming and outreach.</p>  | Noted and included as a recommendation in the plan.                   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>*On private property - Why not develop a total natural resources management auditing program that includes trees, water resources management, native landscaping, etc.? Additional staff may be needed – <u>however a training program could be established to train A major effort needs to be made reducing the amount of lawn acreage on city and residential properties. These areas should be replaced with native vegetation (trees, shrubs, sedges, forbs, etc.). No mow fescues. Reduce the amount of fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and water. volunteers like the master naturalist or master water steward program. University interns could be hired in the summer too to perform audits.</u></p> | Noted and included in plan.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Providing education and materials is very important but it needs to be supported by financial incentives for the landowner (cost share programs, reduction of stormwater fees, etc.)</p>   | Noted and included in plan.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Stormwater Management. Review the fee structures based on acreage – there is a difference between .25 acres and 5 acres – they now have the same quarterly fee – also reduce the fee for landowners that implement natural resources management strategies on their property that address stormwater runoff – a financial incentive can change behavior – other municipalities in the metro and throughout the state have implemented stormwater fees structures based on natural source management practices on private property</p>  | Stormwater fees are addressed in the Water Resources Management Plan. |                          |



| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------|---|--|---|
| Strategies | The city should explore the development of a natural resources management auditing program that can be used to provide technical assistance to private landowners. The natural resources division would need additional staff to oversee the implementation of the program. It could utilize a training program where volunteers could be trained to work with landowners. It might be developed like the University of MN – master gardener, master naturalist programs and the master water steward program. Volunteers would participate in the training program and then be responsible to complete a certain amount of volunteer hours each year. College and University interns could also be utilized in this program. | Noted, and could be part of the volunteer program structure.   |   |
| Strategies | The city needs to work with the various watershed districts and other agencies/organizations to increase the amount of information/education to city residents for natural resources management cost/share programming  | Noted and included in plan, along with partnerships.   |   |
| Strategies | Volunteers – the implementation of most of the opportunities and strategies in this plan will require a larger volunteer commitment of Minnetonka’s citizens – does the Natural Resources Division currently have the staff capacity and financial support to implement a robust volunteer engagement program?  | A new appendix is added to reflect resources and potential needs at a high level.                        |  |
| Strategies | Photo on page 36 – 4.2 What does Minnetonka currently do in terms of incentives, cost-share, policies, ordinances, and fee reduction for private property natural resource management? How many raingardens are there currently on private property in Minnetonka? They could be highlighted as BMP examples. How many cost-share and other grants have been received by Minnetonka residents from watershed districts and other governmental agencies for natural resources management on their properties – an evaluation measure for many of the recommended strategies in the plan could be the increase of the number of grants over the next several years.   | Noted; we do not currently track that information related to cost-share grants from other organizations. |   |
| Strategies | <u>Need to get beyond awareness – greater focus on education that leads to active behavioral change</u>   | Comment received   |   |

| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed)  |
|------------|--|---|---|
| Strategies | The city provides a lot of excellent natural resources information to its citizens. It does offer education programs. What has the impact been from these education programs on the citizens who have participated? Have the programs been evaluated to see if objectives have been, behaviors changed, and natural resources management strategies implemented? The goal of education is to modify behavior to achieve desired outcomes | The need for education program evaluation has been added to the plan.   |  |
| Strategies | Love the idea of a cost-share grant program, but you might want to first incentivize landowners in certain neighborhoods that are most impactful or vulnerable.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | Need to keep stormwater on the property. Native landscaping with a variety of plant species is much more effective in allowing water infiltration than traditional lawns.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | On public property – reduce the amount of turf area in city parks and other city properties and plant more native tree species and their cultivars   | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | A major effort needs to be made reducing the amount of lawn acreage on city and residential properties. These areas should be replaced with native vegetation (trees, shrubs, sedges, forbs, etc.). No mow fescues. Reduce the amount of fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and water.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | We need to <u>REDUCE the amount of lawn acreage</u> – more natural resource management strategies on private land. Another purpose that is served by reducing lawns and utilizing native plant vegetation is stormwater management   | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | Climate Change. Monitoring – what about changes in native wildlife species?  | The city has not historically monitored wildlife other than biannual deer counts, and instead put resources into habitat restoration to support wildlife. |   |
| Strategies | Work with other governmental and NGO’s involved with monitoring wildlife populations (Audubon Christmas Bird Count, MN DNR Wildlife Surveys (frog/toad, etc.), butterfly counts  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |
| Strategies | As new residents of Minnetonka, we are very impressed with all the parks. We also notice all the work to be done. We’ve joined FoMP, and have actively attended Buckthorn Blitz events. Our focus is on nature.  | Comment received. Thank you.  |   |



| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Strategies | <p>appreciate the thorough description of the current state of each park with clear, objective prioritization focused on maintaining high quality native areas. I am particularly pleased to see that Meadow Park is included in the plan, and I would like to see funding for restoration of the Oak areas at Meadow Park. I have been an active volunteer with Friends of Meadow Park to help remove Buckthorn in the fall and garlic mustard in the spring. We have made significant progress on the hill east of the playground, and there are more Oak areas in the north section of the trails that also need attention. I appreciate the recognition from the MTKA NR dept that volunteers have value and can be engaged and educated in restoration efforts in their local, beloved parks. I think this effort at recruitment and engagement of volunteers could be increased on a city level.</p> | Restoration priorities are outlined in Appendix A for Meadow Park.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Missing: work to develop volunteer groups in each park to work with the city on the park restoration.<br/>If there is a friends group working on the park the city should prioritize that interest by working with the friends group</p>  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | Help with meadow park as we have volunteers willing to work with city  | Noted.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>As I drive though Minnetonka, I see so much buckthorn on private property. Is there a way to clean up some properties as an example?</p>  | Education, outreach, technical assistance and incentives can be used to encourage buckthorn removal on private property.         |                          |
| Strategies | <p>As a homeowner, I love the tree sale, and am disappointed when the trees I want sell out so quickly! Expansion of the tree sale should be prioritized. Please also consider adding a sale of native understory, groundcover and pollinator plants as well, whether in conjunction with the tree sale or separately. As buckthorn removal is incentivized and ongoing, it needs to be replaced. I also like the idea of providing landscape, tree and soil type/quality audits for homeowners as a way to provide a valuable service and education.</p>  | Expansion of replanting efforts by developing a gravel bed nursery and offering younger stock throughout the season is underway. |                          |

| Section    | Comment  | Staff Response/Clarification  | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Strategies | <p>like: that you want to work with the residents to inform us about what we can do to promote native landscaping.</p> <p>don't like: mandate, we have had enough of those.</p> <p>missing: work with developers with some criteria or incentives about landscaping with native species.</p>   | Noted. The current landscaping ordinance requires 25% native plants.                            |                          |
| Strategies | <p>In addition to plantings with climate resilience in mind, I like the reassessment of city parking requirements in high pavement areas. While not a natural resource consideration, I would like to see an increase in visible solar in public areas, such as panels on the roofs of park buildings to power their clocks or lights at night. Increased solar visibility will indicate to residents and users that the city takes climate change seriously (where tree selection and other strategies may be less visible)</p> | Comment received. Thank you.  |                          |
| Strategies | <p>sounds good: but please continue to prioritize parks with friends groups working with the city as a resource for education as people stop by and ask.</p>   | Comment received. Thank you.  |                          |
| Strategies | <p>What potential negative impact could planting trees in easements have on public utilities and streets? As an example, an access trail on the east side of Meadow park into the Woodbridge neighborhood just had some old trees cutdown because their roots ruined the walking path and the path needed to be rebuilt.</p>   | Noted. Need to balance impacts to infrastructure with heat abatement, runoff management etc.    |                          |
| Strategies | <p>I like the idea of the 'not to exceed' turf requirements for new developments and businesses, but I would expect resistance in existing residential areas if that were to be extended.</p>  | Agreed. Not to exceed requirement would be for new development, not existing residential homes. |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Any leeway to add a reduced placement requirement for long driveways leading to 3 car garages? When they stay the full garage width for the length of a lot they can be excessively large, ugly and contribute to urban heat increase and runoff. Parking width may be difficult as cars are large now, but reducing quantity or increasing quantity of compact spots up front would be feasible</p>  | Comment received and noted.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Meadow park needs to be included</p>  | It is included in the plan.   |                          |
| Strategies | <p>Partnerships can be helpful if implemented appropriately. Local churches, girl scout and boy scout troops, and garden clubs could be other resources</p>  | Agreed. The city already partners with many of the groups listed.                               |                          |



| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification   | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Strategies | sounds positive: but I continue to express where there are groups working on the park the city prioritize those park. I am part of the friends group of Meadow Park; and it appears you have given up on that park; mostly low to no priority, instead of restoring what is worth saving. Had this park been prioritized for buckthorn as well as loosestrife earlier it could maybe in better health. I live across the street and it gets a lot of use. | Meadow Park is listed in the highest tier of priorities.   |                          |
| Strategies | There is room for the city to improve in communication as the Minnetonka memo is limited to a small number of pages and only distributed monthly. As someone passionate about parks, natural resources, habitat restoration, volunteering and local city involvement, this is the first time I've heard about a native plant sale or Pollinator Day, which means those communications did not reach me.   | Noted. Another source of information on natural resources and events is the Natural Resources e-Blast. I hope you consider signing up! |                          |
| Strategies | I have lived in my home for 34 yrs. and there has not been any signage for Meadow Park except the entrance. I think education for park user would be great. To understand the degradation of Meadow is important, and could be inspiring to get more people involved to work toward a more restored wet land and surrounding forest.  | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | I've been impressed with the volunteer resources as they do make a difference. We need more volunteers to undertake the massive efforts or Minnetonka will be renamed Buckthorn City. Volunteer efforts can grow when people see the difference they make. We need to see improving our environment isn't a lost cause.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | Love this   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | Support your volunteers by supporting their park. it's discouraging to have worked on Meadow Park for 2 years and see that you have given it such a "low" status  | Meadow Park is listed in the highest tier of priorities.   |                          |
| Strategies | Yes, yes, yes, love all of this!!   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | encourage developer in this outreach. there have been a number of developments in my area that have taken down lots of the large old trees and replaced them with often small non-native trees.   | Comment received. Thank you.   |                          |
| Strategies | support volunteers that search out funding from the DNR or other resources that would help fund the some of the work besides working with the city.   | Agreed. Grant funding opportunities must align with plan goals and be approved by city staff for work on public property.              |                          |

| Section    | Comment   | Staff Response/Clarification                             | Plan Amended (if needed) |
|------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Strategies | please give Meadow Park a higher priority. With some work by the forester; who will be working in the Cullen preserve just right up the road, and the help of volunteers it could regain it's huge oak trees by the dangerous curve sign and encourage the native wet land species. | Meadow Park is listed in the highest tier of priorities. |                          |



# Summary Report

22 October 2021 - 21 November 2021

# Minnetonka Matters

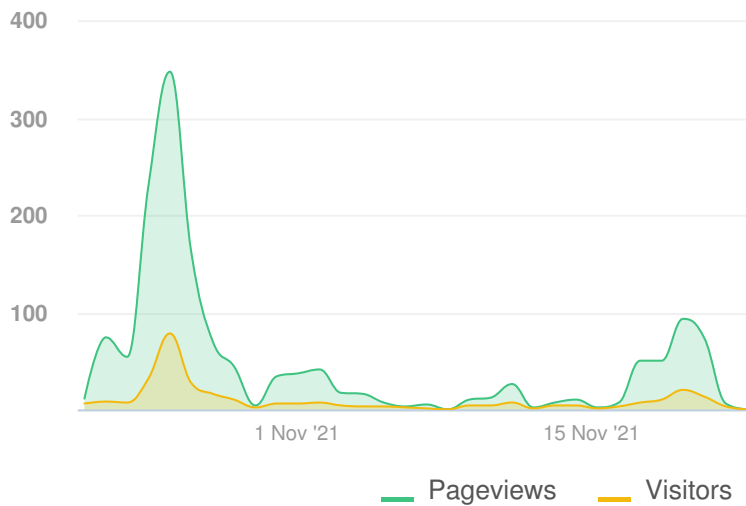
PROJECTS SELECTED: 1

Natural Resources Master Plan

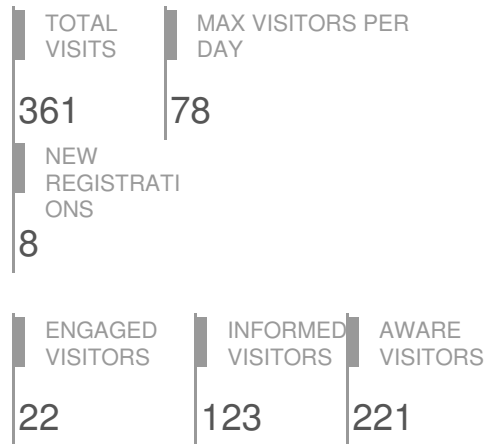
FULL LIST AT THE END OF THE REPORT



## Visitors Summary



## Highlights

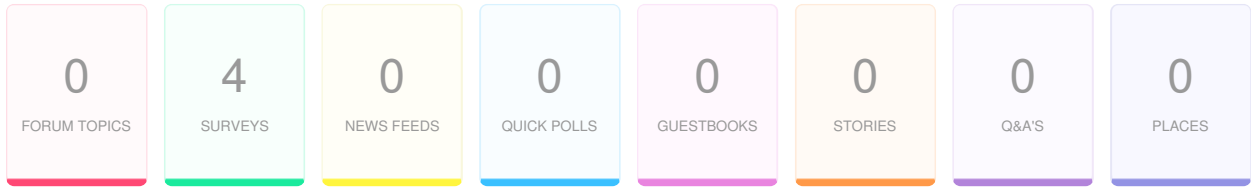


# PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

|  |   |              |           |  |
|--|---|--------------|-----------|--|
| <b>ENGAGED</b>                             | <b>22 ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS</b>  |              |           | (%)  |
|  | Registered  | Unverified   | Anonymous |  |
| <b>INFORMED</b>                            | Contributed on Forums   | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Participated in Surveys   | 20           | 0         | 2  |
|  | Contributed to Newsfeeds  | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Participated in Quick Polls   | 0            | 0         | 0  |
| <b>AWARE</b>                               | Posted on Guestbooks  | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Contributed to Stories  | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Asked Questions   | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Placed Pins on Places   | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | Contributed to Ideas  | 0            | 0         | 0  |
|  | <i>* A single engaged participant can perform multiple actions</i>          |              |           | <i>* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project</i> |
| Natural Resources Master Pl... 22 (10.0%)  |   |              |           |  |
| <b>ENGAGED</b>                             | <b>123 INFORMED PARTICIPANTS</b>  |              |           | (%)  |
|  |   | Participants |           |  |
| <b>INFORMED</b>                            | Viewed a video  | 0            |           |  |
|  | Viewed a photo  | 0            |           |  |
|  | Downloaded a document   | 61           |           |  |
|  | Visited the Key Dates page  | 0            |           |  |
| <b>AWARE</b>                               | Visited an FAQ list Page  | 0            |           |  |
|  | Visited Instagram Page  | 0            |           |  |
|  | Visited Multiple Project Pages  | 107          |           |  |
|  | Contributed to a tool (engaged)   | 22           |           |  |
|  | <i>* A single informed participant can perform multiple actions</i>         |              |           | <i>* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project</i> |
| Natural Resources Master Pl... 123 (55.7%) |   |              |           |  |
| <b>ENGAGED</b>                             | <b>221 AWARE PARTICIPANTS</b>   |              |           |  |
|  |   | Participants |           |  |
| <b>INFORMED</b>                            | Visited at least one Page   | 221          |           |  |
| <b>AWARE</b>                               | <i>* Aware user could have also performed an Informed or Engaged Action</i> |              |           | <i>* Total list of unique visitors to the project</i>              |
| Natural Resources Master Pl... 221         |   |              |           |  |



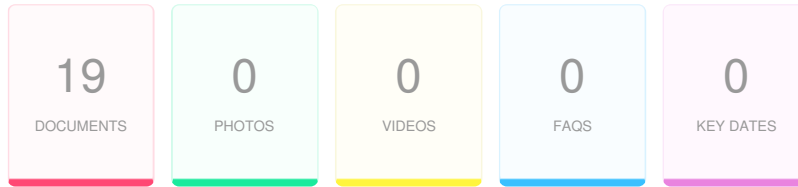
## ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



| SURVEYS SUMMARY |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 4               | Surveys      |
| 22              | Contributors |
| 36              | Submissions  |

| TOP 3 SURVEYS BASED ON CONTRIBUTORS |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 15<br>Contributors to               | 8<br>Contributors to                               | 6<br>Contributors to                              |
| Chapter 1. Goals and Objectives     | Chapter 4. Natural Resources Management Strategies | Chapter 2. Natural History and Current Conditions |

## INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



| DOCUMENTS |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 19        | Documents |
| 61        | Visitors  |
| 296       | Downloads |

| TOP 3 DOCUMENTS BASED ON DOWNLOADS                           |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 50<br>Downloads  | 28<br>Downloads  | 27<br>Downloads  |
| Appendix A_Park Management Strategies for Select Parks_DRAFT | Chapter 3_Natural Resources Issues and Opportunities_DRAFT.pdf | Chapter 2_Natural History and Current Conditions_DRAFT.pdf |



# Survey Responses

22 October 2021 - 21 November 2021

## Chapter 1. Goals and Objectives

# Minnetonka Matters

Project: Natural Resources Master Plan



|              |            |           |            |            |           |
|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| VISITORS     |            |           |            |            |           |
| 63           |            |           |            |            |           |
| CONTRIBUTORS |            |           | RESPONSES  |            |           |
| 15           |            |           | 15         |            |           |
| 15           | 0          | 0         | 15         | 0          | 0         |
| Registered   | Unverified | Anonymous | Registered | Unverified | Anonymous |



**Respondent No:** 1

**Login:** Oriana

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 07:34:58 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 26, 2021 14:19:07 pm

**IP Address:** 156.142.51.170

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Adding more green spaces and natural areas as opposed to keep building more and more and keep losing natural areas is very important to mitigate climate change and help protect native species.

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I like the idea of species diversification in lawns. The city should be encouraging people to not get rid of leaf litter as well to improve soil health, nutrient cycling and to benefit insects and other wildlife.

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I agree with this, and I think it would be beneficial to add full or at least part time staff to help with this, provide more workshops and training, especially as volunteer groups such as "friends of parks" groups keep growing.

---





**Respondent No:** 2

**Login:** SHarvey

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 09:53:23 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 13:45:44 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.150

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

These are good high level goals.

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This goal seems to have an overlap with Goal 1 and is confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should address public lands and Goal 2 should address private land.

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---



**Respondent No:** 3

**Login:** Jackal25

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 09:56:06 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 26, 2021 16:55:13 pm

**IP Address:** 156.142.48.36

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---





**Respondent No:** 4

**Login:** BJordan

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 11:23:19 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 26, 2021 18:17:08 pm

**IP Address:** 165.225.63.42

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Love the idea of incentives to foster adoption of restoration. Encourage pollinator friendly lawns instead of the typical suburban grass that needs loads of water.

---



**Respondent No:** 5

**Login:** VintageEyes

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 12:32:19 pm

**Last Seen:** Oct 26, 2021 19:25:34 pm

**IP Address:** 68.46.79.197

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I like the goals set forth but I think residents need to be updated on progress more frequently

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

The idea of a perfect lawn needs to change in Minnetonka.....it is far from perfect for our native insects. Turf grass is highly over rated.

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I have participated in habitat restoration in a Minnetonka park. It would be beneficial to recap the current condition of the area(s) to gage the long term benefit.

---





**Respondent No:** 6

**Login:** Yockers

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 27, 2021 04:54:16 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 27, 2021 16:13:49 pm

**IP Address:** 68.46.78.158

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---



**Respondent No:** 7

**Login:** lindamtka

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 27, 2021 06:32:57 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 19:07:16 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.68.205

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

How will you do this with the current budget? What percent increase will you be requesting? How many new staff positions will be created to tackle so many issues?

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This goal is about the forest ecosystem, so I don't see what lawns have to do with it. Maybe a separate goal should be developed that addresses turf grass in both public and private areas.

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

A completely new way of recruiting and managing volunteers is necessary. That should be part of this goal. If that appears somewhere else, then ok. I do see the Appendix D, but that overarching structure goal needs to be stated in one of the big goal sections.

---





**Respondent No:** 8

**Login:** Lena

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 27, 2021 09:27:08 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 27, 2021 16:25:24 pm

**IP Address:** 174.53.255.96

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I agree

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I agree

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I agree

---



**Respondent No:** 9

**Login:** JaneT

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 31, 2021 11:44:23 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 18:40:45 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.106.137

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

no concerns or comments

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

no comments or concerns

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

this goal is CRITICAL if the other goals are to be achieved.

---





**Respondent No:** 10

**Login:** jimind

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 01, 2021 15:53:29 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 01, 2021 22:31:37 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.69.42

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This all sounds good. The last component, revisiting habitat quality assessments and prioritization of parks, is an important part of the process. What was good five years ago often needs adjustment.

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Bio-diversity is crucial going forward. With a changing, warmer climate, and an increase in pests and plant diseases, we just don't know which species will thrive going forward. We need them all, not just the highly desired species we have focused on in the past. I grew up in Minneapolis when mature American Elms arched over all the boulevards. We know how well that worked.

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

All good.

---



**Respondent No:** 11

**Login:** MaryBall

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 07, 2021 17:11:02 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 17, 2021 15:21:41 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.184

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

The goals are detailed and if they are accomplished our environment will resist further degradation and more individuals will see they can make a difference.

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I guess goals can be achieved on public lands with the aid of FoMP. How can this be approached on private lands? Can we educate enough people to help with the work?

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Perfect. Question answered. When people can see the improvements (especially Buckthorn removal), they can feel hopeful it is possible to restore land and might therefore think it is worth their effort. The city will need more well-defined volunteers.

---





**Respondent No:** 12

**Login:** Kpardoe

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 13, 2021 13:35:41 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 13, 2021 21:33:05 pm

**IP Address:** 73.242.48.89

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

---



**Respondent No:** 13

**Login:** CelticChica

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 16, 2021 18:11:56 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 17, 2021 00:03:23 am

**IP Address:** 73.65.60.24

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Would be helpful to define some terms: --Define or provide examples of "open spaces" --Define or provide examples of "multiple benefits" and "the community" --Does quality habitat include animals and organisms as well as plants? What is the criteria for prioritizing areas in parks and open spaces? What is the process for stakeholder residents to provide input regarding scope of restoration and management in nearby parks or open spaces?

---

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Define or give examples of "natural" woodlands, managed landscapes

---

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Encourage increased volunteerism among neighborhood residents by involving those interested in the planning process as well as in the implementation. Encourage residents to volunteer for restoration and management in their neighborhoods by conducting workshops specific to the neighborhood activities.

---





**Respondent No:** 14

**Login:** CindyE

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 18, 2021 14:50:10 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 22:05:08 pm

**IP Address:** 97.116.75.64

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

1) I like that the plan will be revisited. Though every 5-10 years may prove to be inadequate. I would like to see some way of triggering this review which would include public input or concern. 2) I am concerned about the "promote habitat heterogeneity, plant biodiversity.... Hopefully it is not just plant diversity, which could include invasives, non-native plants that offer little towards supporting native insects and birds. 3) I like that the impact of pets might be addressed. The high density of pets in our parks and the inconsistent removal of their feces is a concern - especially as it can impact our clean water - streams and lakes as well as the health of the soil. ( I hope we can establish a dog park and limit the damage done to a specific area. )

**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

1) Again, the generality of species diversity does not seem to support our Natural Resources. Could we please specify native species? 2) Again, I would like to see that this is directing us to NATIVE species as it is the native species that support our insect populations and our birds and every other level of our ecosystem. 3) "Species diversification" in lawns is also pretty broad. This could include non-native species of clover which do not support our local native bee population - it does support honey bees at the expense of our native bees - our native bees, as you no doubt realize - are absolutely imperative to the ongoing health of our native eco-system. 4) I am unclear about what you mean by the regeneration of the entire community forest structure. I know this is supposed to be more general than specific, but it would good to be clear about the intent towards "native" habitats.

**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

1) All of these are good goals. My biggest concern and comment is about how our city emulates these principles and practices. The city is certainly not all "ON BOARD" with this as we see different departments work without regard to their impact on the natural environment. I would include the replacement of native landscaping with non-native, potentially invasive landscaping at the fire station on Excelsior Blvd. and the over mowing along paths opening it up to invasive species and stifling native species growth and regeneration, and can we consider putting moratorium on the benches along paths? Every time a bench gets put in it creates a degradation of the plant communities around the bench. Could we have memorial trees planted instead? Let's get more creative about this and not just okay every request. 2) I have had difficulty actually getting the technical assistance when I have requested it. There needs to be a more streamlined channel of communication and action.



**Respondent No:** 15

**Login:** LVS

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 04:05:15 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 11:48:12 am

**IP Address:** 73.65.60.13

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I support these efforts, but is there significant overlap between the goals here and similar goals in the POST Plan? The POST Plan discusses balancing "enhance and preserve" while "preserve" is also focused on here. Is there another plan somewhere to focus on development / enhancement of outdoor activities / resources (trails, etc)? Will automobiles be considered when "addressing known stressors"? It seems automobiles have an outsize impact on wildlife (turtles, frogs, squirrels, deer, geese, turkeys, raccoons, opossums, etc). In addition, consideration of cars seems to be a primary driver of culling the deer herd. I understand culling is one kind of "management technique", but? I know it would be unpopular (reducing speeds) and resource intensive (adding critter underpasses) but automobiles seem to be the largest overall impactor on natural resources within MInnetonka. Is focusing on restoring oak savannah the best approach when oak wilt is so prevalent?

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**Q2. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Absolutely LOVE the species diversification in lawns idea!

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**Q3. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Could desired native species be focused on in the annual tree sale? Like chokecherries, dogwood, etc? I know those species are already included but could there be more of a focus on them? And on species that serve as food sources for animals and humans (apples, crabapples, hazelnuts, etc)?

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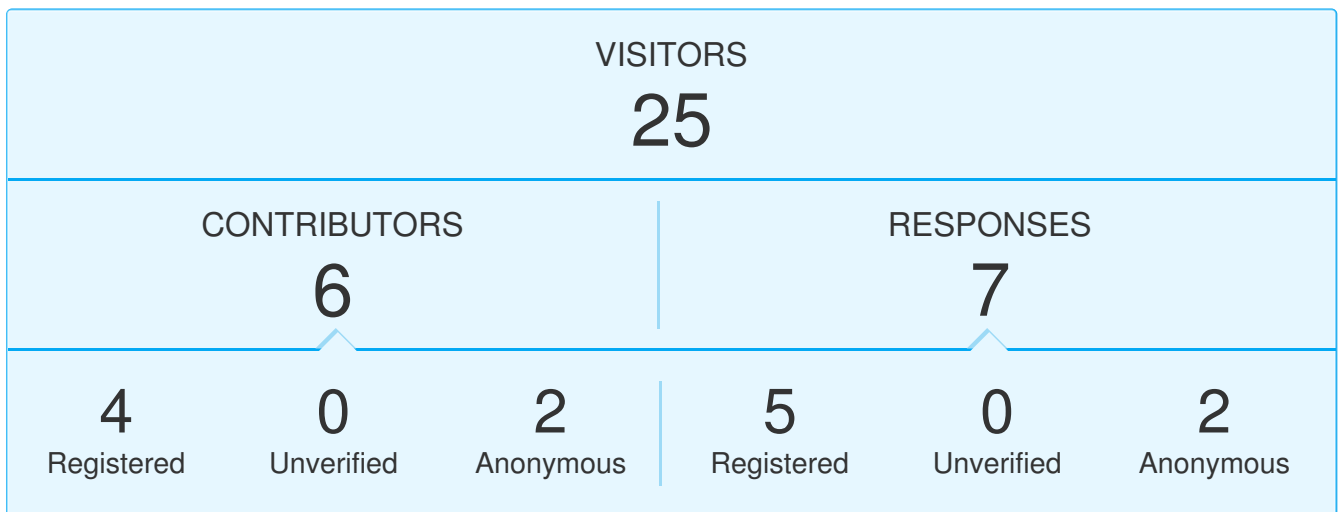
# Survey Responses

22 October 2021 - 21 November 2021

## Chapter 2. Natural History and Current Conditions

# Minnetonka Matters

Project: Natural Resources Master Plan





**Respondent No:** 1

**Login:** SHarvey

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 09:57:48 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 13:45:44 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.150

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This section is informative. I like map 2.8, where parks are indicated on the map. It would be nice if parks were indicated on every map. It's hard to locate small parks when they aren't identified by name. All of the data in this section is in contradiction to the survey finding on p. 14: Most of Minnetonka's natural areas are in good or excellent condition.

---





**Respondent No:** 2

**Login:** SHarvey

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 10:23:42 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 13:45:44 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.150

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

There is a lot of good information in this section. I wish all the maps identified the parks, like map 2.8 does. It's difficult to locate small parks when they're not identified on the maps.

---



**Respondent No:** 3

**Login:** JaneT

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 02, 2021 13:04:59 pm

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 18:40:45 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.106.137

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This overview is clear and interesting, and the quality ranking descriptions (where to spend your time) make good sense. In the land use pattern section (map of impermeable surfaces etc) I was a little puzzled not to see a "key opportunity" be one of addressing how the impermeable surfaces might be made more permeable to minimize runoff etc.

---





**Respondent No:** 4

**Login:** Anonymous

**Email:** n/a

**Responded At:** Nov 05, 2021 13:00:46 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 05, 2021 13:00:46 pm

**IP Address:** n/a

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I like the part where the city will work with private landowners. It would be interesting to see if work can be done with business owners too, maybe they can plant natives around their businesses or sidewalks and place a sign that they are helping improve the ecosystem quality of the city or get "ecological points" for a small reduction in taxes or something like that.

---



**Respondent No:** 5

**Login:** CindyE

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 18, 2021 15:33:36 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 22:05:08 pm

**IP Address:** 97.116.75.64

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

1) Interesting to see maps, however, the ones presented here (I have not gone to the documents) are difficult to interpret. It is discouraging to me to see how relatively poor quality our Existing Plant Ecology is. And yet, to the un-educated eye, it appears that everything is wonderful. We have become inured to the presence of buckthorn, garlic mustard, sumac, and other invasive species crowding out our native wildflowers and habitats. The people that KNOW need to be educating others. Perhaps that is our greatest downfall. The city does not seem to be unified on the importance of supporting the native habitat. The property owners cannot be expected to put in the work to support the native habitat on their own land if the city does not demonstrate this in every way possible. Newsletters are fine. A demonstration of replacing ornamental landscaping with native landscaping and making a big deal of it might gain some interest. When each department gets to decide (fire station on Excelsior Blvd) to do what they want, property owners learn from what they see the city doing. The city has done a lot - we need to be consistent! 2) How is the city going to interpret these maps? My concern is that we embrace support for native habitat at all levels of the city and educate the residents. Residents that have no expertise should not be determining the direction the city takes. That would be co-opting your responsibility.

---





**Respondent No:** 6

**Login:** Anonymous

**Email:** n/a

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 05:30:23 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 05:30:23 am

**IP Address:** n/a

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

The city built Mountain biking trails in the most diverse habitat that exists in Hennepin county--the Preserve area of Lone Lake Park. This is not low impact given how many trail were built and the type of soil it disrupted ( sandy). I suggested closing these trails.

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**Respondent No:** 7

**Login:** JRG

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 09:47:17 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 16:55:15 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.125.81

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

The report seems to indicate our natural areas are not in good shape yet the comment on page 14 "most of Mtka. areas are in good or excellent condition" is inconsistent Perhaps this reflects a lack of education on the monocultures (e.g. buckthorn, garlic mustard) that have developed in our natural areas. People may believe that "all green is good". As the canopy dies and there's no replacement then I think it will really hit people.

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# Survey Responses

22 October 2021 - 21 November 2021

## Chapter 3. Issues and Opportunities

# Minnetonka Matters

Project: Natural Resources Master Plan



|              |            |           |            |            |           |
|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| VISITORS     |            |           |            |            |           |
| 20           |            |           |            |            |           |
| CONTRIBUTORS |            |           | RESPONSES  |            |           |
| 6            |            |           | 6          |            |           |
| 5            | 0          | 1         | 5          | 0          | 1         |
| Registered   | Unverified | Anonymous | Registered | Unverified | Anonymous |



**Respondent No:** 1

**Login:** SHarvey

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 10:02:13 am

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 13:45:44 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.150

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

This section seems very comprehensive in its list of opportunities, but it seems overwhelming. Does Minnetonka's NR dept. have the resources to do all of these things? If not, which ones will they do? It would be nice to see more specific action plans, broken down by park, with at least general timeframes and budget.

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**Respondent No:** 2

**Login:** lindamtka

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 27, 2021 06:45:37 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 19:07:16 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.68.205

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

I like the ideas of reducing the heat island effect with trees/plants. I look forward to seeing islands of green in large parking lots, such as Ridgedale. BTW, on p. 25 of the chapter, a bullet reads "continue to protect city staff from extreme heat and storm events." What does this mean? I don't think this goes in a master plan.

---



**Respondent No:** 3

**Login:** JaneT

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 02, 2021 13:12:18 pm

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 18:40:45 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.106.137

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

Fine as far as it goes, but I don't think, under the last section, that "Natural areas are altered by logging and grazing" means much to an urban dweller. We're not logging or grazing in the historic sense. Is there an example of more current impacts?

---





**Respondent No:** 4

**Login:** CindyE

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 18, 2021 15:48:19 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 22:05:08 pm

**IP Address:** 97.116.75.64

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

These are all very concerning issues. I think we need planning and development policies that are much more protective of our wetlands and forested areas. We need to be planning those corridors into the property development and make sure it is done correctly, that the water flow is not disrupted and that a greater percentage of trees are conserved. Perhaps we also need some tough changes to what is expected of property owners and what they can do on their own property. Right now someone can purchase a property with many oak trees and decide to remove them all because they want sun for their swimming pool, or because they are tired of raking leaves.(I have witnessed both.) Any reason is okay because they own it. Perhaps we could have a review process if more than 1 tree is going to be removed. It is a tough balance between property rights and what is good for the habitat and community. EDUCATION and the City being completely behind these policies will be key to any changes.

---



**Respondent No:** 5

**Login:** Anonymous

**Email:** n/a

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 05:34:52 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 05:34:52 am

**IP Address:** n/a

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

The city tore up a virgin field and sold the great soil for pickle ball courts. Instead there were old tennis courts in the city that could have been transitioned to pickle ball and the field could have continued to be a lovely green space for habitat and people. This was a grandiose project that tore up all this lovely natural garden for cement courts and drain tanks to be used for 6 months a year. Makes me wonder if any of this plan is sincere.

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**Respondent No:** 6

**Login:** JRG

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 09:58:17 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 16:55:15 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.125.81

**Q1. Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?**

There are a lot of good ideas and opportunities for education in this section. Specific objectives, measurement and timeline would be helpful. One other area that is a threat to our natural resources are the burgeoning of companies (e.g. Mosquito Shield, Mosquito Crush) that spray pyrethrins and pyrethroids on private property. This is supposedly to control for mosquitos yet we have a robust control program through the metropolitan district. The pyrethrins and pyrethroids kill all insect life - including pollinators and caterpillars that bird need to feed their young. I realize that the city can't do much to regulate this. Perhaps educating homeowners about the effects would be helpful. Also, if the city could remove the lawn signs that are illegally placed on public property that would be helpful.

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# Survey Responses

22 October 2021 - 21 November 2021

## Chapter 4. Natural Resources Management Strategies

# Minnetonka Matters

Project: Natural Resources Master Plan



|              |            |           |            |            |           |
|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| VISITORS     |            |           |            |            |           |
| 37           |            |           |            |            |           |
| CONTRIBUTORS |            |           | RESPONSES  |            |           |
| 8            |            |           | 8          |            |           |
| 8            | 0          | 0         | 8          | 0          | 0         |
| Registered   | Unverified | Anonymous | Registered | Unverified | Anonymous |





**Respondent No:** 1

**Login:** Susan B.

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 26, 2021 12:58:02 pm

**Last Seen:** Oct 26, 2021 19:53:10 pm

**IP Address:** 107.2.119.39

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered



**Respondent No:** 2

**Login:** lindamtka

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Oct 27, 2021 09:56:46 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 19:07:16 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.68.205

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

I'm glad to see a public, formal way to prioritize restoration for parks. But I have to say that this set of ambitious goals will never be carried out by the current department, which is underfunded and understaffed.

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

The photo of the homeowner's rain garden couldn't have been taken in Mtka. When we asked how the city could help us create one, we got shuttled to the 9 Mile Creek Watershed District. NO help whatsoever. I hope that changes, but without better resources to this dept, it will not. I hope to see better support for homeowners who are trying to do the right thing. Too late for us...but a good idea. Will native plant sales be resumed? Hope so.

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

This is again, not going to happen with your overworked staff. Who really has time for these observations/monitoring activities? Casual observations won't be good enough. Is there a designated person? I also wonder about leading by example. It is a good wish list goal to have, but how will Mtka actually get to this point?

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

Considering the last Planning Commission and City Council discussion of the Tree Ordinance, I do not have high hopes for new, more restrictive ordinances. The city seems too concerned about what developers think to actually care about the long term environmental issues. How will your department handle this? Can you educate the members of council and commissions?

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

I hope that the development of a new volunteer program structure will be a process that includes the very volunteers you hope to keep and increase. We are stakeholders who want input into a process that will affect our time and efforts. Can you create a steering committee of sorts that can work together on this?

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

Admirable, but, once again, how can the current staff do all these things? We can't even get the buckthorn workshop on video to share in the off season!

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

One thing that is missing is including volunteer groups in the development of a new process. Without our input, staff will be missing a huge part of the info gathering. This also seems incredibly time consuming and ambitious. Along with all the other efforts, how will staff actually carry this out? For example, right now there is a lot of momentum in the Friends of Parks groups, but we are being told to put on the brakes while the city figures out how to handle it. You might lose volunteers that way; people may go on to find other things to do while they wait for answers to "can I adopt this area of this park?".



**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

Who will come to people's homes to provide technical assistance? Is there a restoration landscaper on staff and/or one that has time for this? Cost sharing would be an incentive, so that is pretty easy to carry out, but planning a yard's restoration is more time consuming and requires someone with broad expertise.

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**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

That is a lot of plans! Again, sorry to sound like a broken record, but who has time to do this? For years I've heard nothing but "we don't have time" or "I'm the only one and I'm too busy." How exactly will this change?

---



**Respondent No:** 3

**Login:** JaneT

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 02, 2021 13:58:56 pm

**Last Seen:** Oct 31, 2021 18:40:45 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.106.137

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

the priority ranking criteria are excellent. I like the whole section.

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

I really like the idea of a landscape auditing program analogous to an energy audit (which we had done and found very helpful).

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

seems fine to me. getting tired of reading...

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

as currently described the proposed amendments and revisions seem reasonable to me. People love their lawns. I would start with carrots rather than sticks. Most people need to SEE garden designs (before and after photos) before they understand how their manicured lawns might actually be more attractive with less "green cement"

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

yep, yep, all good

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

the Minnetonka Memo could be MUCH better utilized, though it is getting better. Every month I "have issues" with space that is wasted on unimportant topics, though I COMPLETELY understand that lots of pictures and little text is essential in this format! I really question the money being spent on the Senior Services insert; that item could be spent on a "sustainability" insert every month. It's time for a reallocation of printing budget, in my opinion. And I'm a senior.

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

agree.

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

Love the idea of a cost-share grant program, but you might want to first incentivize landowners in certain neighborhoods that are most impactful or vulnerable.

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

This is a lot for staff to take on. Consider identifying a neighborhood for a "pilot project" to test out strategies for education, involvement, monitoring, etc. Then develop the Education and Outreach Plan accordingly.





**Respondent No:** 4

**Login:** MaryBall

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 17, 2021 07:29:53 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 17, 2021 15:21:41 pm

**IP Address:** 75.72.73.184

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

As new residents of Minnetonka, we are very impressed with all the parks. We also notice all the work to be done. We've joined FoMP, and have actively attended Buckthorn Blitz events. Our focus is on nature.

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

As I drive though Minnetonka, I see so much buckthorn on private property. Is there a way to clean up some properties as an example?

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

I've been impressed with the volunteer resources as they do make a difference. We need more volunteers to undertake the massive efforts or Minnetonka will be renamed Buckthorn City. Volunteer efforts can grow when people see the difference they make. We need to see improving our environment isn't a lost cause.

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered



**Respondent No:** 5

**Login:** sally

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 17, 2021 09:15:34 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 17, 2021 15:40:10 pm

**IP Address:** 66.41.35.244

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

Missing: work to develop volunteer groups in each park to work with the city on the park restoration. If there is a friends group working on the park the city should prioritize that interest by working with the friends group

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

like: that you want to work with the residents to inform us about what we can do to promote native landscaping. don't like: mandate, we have had enough of those. missing: work with developers with some criteria or incentives about landscaping with native species.

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

sounds good: but please continue to prioritize parks with friends groups working with the city as a resource for education as people stop by and ask.

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

sounds positive: but I continue to express where there are groups working on the park the city prioritize those park. I am part of the friends group of Meadow Park; and it appears you have given up on that park; mostly low to no priority, instead of restoring what is worth saving. Had this park been prioritized for buckthorn as well as loosestrife earlier it could maybe in better health. I live across the street and it gets a lot of use.

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

I have lived in my home for 34 yrs. and there has not been any signage for Meadow Park except the entrance. I think education for park user would be great. To understand the degradation of Meadow is important, and could be inspiring to get more people involved to work toward a more restored wet land and surrounding forest.

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

Support your volunteers by supporting their park. it's discouraging to have worked on Meadow Park for 2 years and see that you have given it such a "low" status

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

encourage developer in this outreach. there have been a number of developments in my area that have taken down lots of the large old trees and replaced them with often small non-native trees. support volunteers that search out funding from the DNR or other resources that would help fund the some of the work besides working with the city.

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

please give Meadow Park a higher priority. With some work by the forester; who will be working in the Cullen preserve just right up the road, and the help of volunteers it could regain it's huge oak trees by the dangerous curve sign and encourage the native wet land species.





**Respondent No:** 6

**Login:** thomas

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 18, 2021 06:12:21 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 14:07:55 pm

**IP Address:** 66.41.35.244

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

Help with meadow park as we have volunteers willing to work with city

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

Meadow park needs to be included

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered



**Respondent No:** 7

**Login:** Hannam01

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 18, 2021 15:03:02 pm

**Last Seen:** Nov 18, 2021 14:35:07 pm

**IP Address:** 165.225.57.74

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

I appreciate the thorough description of the current state of each park with clear, objective prioritization focused on maintaining high quality native areas. I am particularly pleased to see that Meadow Park is included in the plan, and I would like to see funding for restoration of the Oak areas at Meadow Park. I have been an active volunteer with Friends of Meadow Park to help remove Buckthorn in the fall and garlic mustard in the spring. We have made significant progress on the hill east of the playground, and there are more Oak areas in the north section of the trails that also need attention. I appreciate the recognition from the MTKA NR dept that volunteers have value and can be engaged and educated in restoration efforts in their local, beloved parks. I think this effort at recruitment and engagement of volunteers could be increased on a city level.

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

As a homeowner, I love the tree sale, and am disappointed when the trees I want sell out so quickly! Expansion of the tree sale should be prioritized. Please also consider adding a sale of native understory, groundcover and pollinator plants as well, whether in conjunction with the tree sale or separately. As buckthorn removal is incentivized and ongoing, it needs to be replaced. I also like the idea of providing landscape, tree and soil type/quality audits for homeowners as a way to provide a valuable service and education.

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

In addition to plantings with climate resilience in mind, I like the reassessment of city parking requirements in high pavement areas. While not a natural resource consideration, I would like to see an increase in visible solar in public areas, such as panels on the roofs of park buildings to power their clocks or lights at night. Increased solar visibility will indicate to residents and users that the city takes climate change seriously (where tree selection and other strategies may be less visible)

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

What potential negative impact could planting trees in easements have on public utilities and streets? As an example, an access trail on the east side of Meadow park into the Woodbridge neighborhood just had some old trees cutdown because their roots ruined the walking path and the path needed to be rebuilt. I like the idea of the 'not to exceed' turf requirements for new developments and businesses, but I would expect resistance in existing residential areas if that were to be extended. Any leeway to add a reduced pavement requirement for long driveways leading to 3 car garages? When they stay the full garage width for the length of a lot they can be excessively large, ugly and contribute to urban heat increase and runoff. Parking width may be difficult as cars are large now, but reducing quantity or increasing quantity of compact spots up front would be feasible

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

Partnerships can be helpful if implemented appropriately. Local churches, girl scout and boy scout troops, and garden clubs could be other resources



**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

There is room for the city to improve in communication as the Minnetonka memo is limited to a small number of pages and only distributed monthly. As someone passionate about parks, natural resources, habitat restoration, volunteering and local city involvement, this is the first time I've heard about a native plant sale or Pollinator Day, which means those communications did not reach me.

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**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

Love this

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**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

Yes, yes, yes, love all of this!!

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**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

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**Respondent No:** 8

**Login:** JRG

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Responded At:** Nov 19, 2021 10:17:52 am

**Last Seen:** Nov 19, 2021 16:55:15 pm

**IP Address:** 73.94.125.81

**Q1. Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

There are a lot of good ideas here. The key is objectives, measurement, timeline and investment. How do we know when we are being successful? A specific point in regard to Hilloway Park it states there's no volunteer work but that's not true - there's been a lot of volunteer work done at Hilloway. Also, a bit of perspective. I believe we need to invest in our natural areas. Although the park at Ridgedale is a creative use of parking lot space when you look at the cost involved it's very revealing. The Ridgedale park cost approximately \$4,000,000 per acre. To restore a natural area it's approximately \$7,000 per acre. That means for the total Ridgedale cost of \$8.5 million we could restore over 1,200 + acres of natural areas - I believe that would restore a great deal if not all our natural areas.

**Q2. Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q3. Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q4. Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q5. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q6. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q7. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q8. Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered

**Q9. Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?**

not answered



## Leslie Yetka

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**From:** Mary Hammill [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 18, 2021 1:17 PM  
**To:** Leslie Yetka; Christine Petersen  
**Subject:** Fwd: Comments on Natural Resources Plan

Sorry for the typo in the email address.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Mary Hammill [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Thu, Nov 18, 2021 at 1:15 PM  
**Subject:** Comments on Natural Resources Plan  
**To:** <[llyetka@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:llyetka@minnetonkamn.gov)>, <[cpetersen@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:cpetersen@minnetonkamn.gov)>

Leslie and Christine,

I appreciated the opportunity to provide comments on the City's comprehensive Natural Resources Management Plan and have done so. Minnetonka has an amazing park system that sets it apart from other urban areas of the State and it is so important to provide the funding that is necessary to continue the work.

In July, my husband and I moved from our home in Hopkins to the Regency Woods apartment complex. While living in Hopkins, we often walked at Lone Lake Park and then we discovered the gem of Purgatory Park. After we moved to Minnetonka, we discovered 2 lovely walking trails right outside our door that we subsequently learned were parts of Meadow Park. The trails are readily available to us. During the summer months, in the early hours of the morning, we would go for a walk along what we called the "marsh trail." In the heat of the afternoon, we would walk the "wooded trail" that I now refer to as the buckthorn trail.

In September, Jim and I attended Janet's workshop on buckthorn. Jim and I joined the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and Jim participated in the Buckthorn Blitz events at Lone Lake, Purgatory and Meadow Park. The experience of controlling buckthorn at our Hopkins house provided needed experience. The difference the volunteers have made at those 3 parks is very noticeable. The progress in reducing the amount of buckthorn that is flourishing throughout the city is amazing – but, there is so much more to do.

Sally and the Meadow Park volunteers have made great progress in removing buckthorn and garlic mustard from the Oakland Road entrance. The entrance to the park is now very attractive even though there are some sporadic places where buckthorn hasn't been removed along the trail leading to the marsh walk. However, on the "wooded" side, one doesn't even realize there is marsh until all the leaves have fallen because the growth of buckthorn is all one sees. One unexpected beauty of the wooded side is that if I stop to look up, I see a number of beautiful, mature oak trees rising above the buckthorn.

I applaud Minnetonka's efforts to retain the beauty of their city and parks. Both sides of the Meadow Park trail are used by many living in the general area. The gateway into the park from Plymouth Road is very inviting. However, that area is heavily infested with buckthorn. I encourage the City to adequately fund restoration of the entire Meadow Park trail(s). We need multiple possibilities of showcase restoration efforts so that others realize we can actually make real progress in controlling buckthorn and garlic mustard.

Mary Hammill

2210 Plymouth Road, #303

Minnetonka, MN 55305





FoMP's Response to the City's NRMP  
October 31, 2021

**I. Needed City Overarching Goals to Ensure the Success of the NRMP**

We believe that city goals are necessary to ensure the success of the plan. We suggest that the city consider the following:

- A. A dramatic increase in city funding for high quality nature spaces (amenities) in our parks.
- B. Restructuring the Natural Resources Division as a stand-alone department apart from the Public Works Department at the same management level as the Recreation Department and adding a position of grant writer/restoration ecologist.
- C. More strategic use of volunteers by the city to work to restore high value areas as demonstration sites and adopt-a-spot areas.
- D. Much stronger city driven public education and outreach.
- E. Guaranteed execution of the plan with proven deliverables by city leaders.

*This document [NRMP] sets a framework for restoring biodiversity in Minnetonka.  
The success of this effort is up to the citizens of Minnetonka to support city  
leadership in directing financial resources to natural resources management, NRMP, pg. 6.*

**II. The Need for a Bold City Driven Vision and Transformational Plan with an Action Agenda and Metrics**

*Minnetonka has only one site of biodiversity significance. This is the case because of land development since European settlement; first through the process of establishing agriculture and then urbanization, people have greatly altered Minnetonka, eliminating plant and animal species and degrading habitats. This has occurred throughout Minnesota and the United States. Minnetonka is now at a point of understanding how this effects our quality of life. We may choose to **restore some of the** original biodiversity, but requires **consistent funding**. It must be understood that **continual management** is necessary to restore biodiversity because of consistent degrading forces – from invasive species, to over browsing, to soil alterations, to climate change. NRMP, pg. 6.*

We agree with many of the ideas and initiatives contained in the proposed plan. And we appreciate that staff agrees (see above) with our assessment (*FoMP Interview Report*, March, 2021) that our parks are in serious decline and need immediate and significant attention. The last Natural Resources Restoration and Management Plan (prepared for the City in 1995-1996) also noted “that all vegetation types are seriously



deteriorated or deteriorating throughout the city.” We all (residents, park users, city government and businesses) share responsibility for this decline. Our basic question is:

***How will the city successfully work on so many needed initiatives without a compelling vision to guide the actions described and an organization with more significant resources available to accomplish the tasks?***

The gap between ideas in the plan and the resources currently available to solve the issues is daunting. To start to close this gap we believe the proposed NRMP could develop an inspiring vision that makes a stronger link between how people have degraded our parks over time and our role in reversing the process not just managing what is left better. It could also make a stronger link between the vitality of the natural amenities of our parks and the character of our city and its economic and social quality of life. Finally there may need to be significant financial and human resource investment in our parks and Natural Resources Division. These financial and organizational investments need to be considered.

The plan could state the size of the changes needed that staff have articulated more consistently to drive home the need for leadership, new thinking and financial support. We are concerned as the plan sometimes takes an *incremental approach* to the issues we face in our parks when what is needed is a *transformational approach*. (See language above highlighted in red for examples of incremental language. These words could be replaced by *restore significant amounts, dramatically increased funding* and *transformational leadership* which would change the message in the quote). The language needs to be more consistent throughout the document pointing to what really needs to happen for the plan to be fully realized. The reversal of this decline is in our hands. We believe that Minnetonka should consider taking a more bold leadership approach to the restoration and preservation and celebration of our natural amenities as they differentiate us from many other cities in our area and are at the core of our city’s character.

We offer to help the city revise the report to one that moves **FROM** a report that is mostly incremental in its language **TO** one that describes a bold leadership role in revitalizing our parks, the ecology of our city and defining its character; a transformational change perspective to close the gap between what is needed and what currently exists. This will clarify for residents what is at stake and what needs to happen to ensure its success. **Doing only a little more programmatically, adding a few dollars to a budget or relying mostly on volunteer labor, means that we may merely be slowing down the degradation of our parks and revisiting this issues for the foreseeable future. Is now the time to take bold action to break the cycle of decline and make a lasting and positive change to our high quality park spaces?**

The report could be edited following the ideas in this **From To Chart** ensuring that language that describes the transformational change that is needed to surmount the concerns raised in the report are addressed with foresight, energy and resources. FoMP is excited about the opportunity to contribute further to this plan and dedicated to the work needed to transform our parks making Minnetonka a true leader.





| From: Incremental Change   | To: Transformational Change (Leadership Position)  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The city views its parks as in decline like those of other cities and there is nothing we can do but slow down the eventual slide (like other cities) to mediocracy and beyond.</li> <li>• Minnetonka views its parks as just one element of its social and economic fabric and not as a core element.</li> <li>• The city makes only incremental investments in our park's natural amenities.</li> <li>• Minnetonka uses volunteers to provide stop gap help in stemming the decline of our parks.</li> <li>• The city's Natural Resources Division is a part of the Maintenance Department and below Recreation in the management hierarchy constricting its perspective and limiting its voice in city policy decisions. The Natural Resources staff continue to have no representation to the Park Board so cannot make any recommendations. They have no seat at the table.</li> <li>• Community education efforts place much of the heavy lifting in our parks on citizen volunteers and citizen science to stem the decline of our parks.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minnetonka demonstrates a strong leadership position in restoring and preserving our natural amenities setting a new standard for other cities and becoming a magnet for visitors, new home owners and business.</li> <li>• Minnetonka demonstrates that its parks and their high quality nature areas (amenities) are central (core) to our prosperity and future.</li> <li>• Minnetonka funds natural amenities and recreational amenities in a more equitable way requiring a transformation in budgeting and resource allocation creatively using city resources and external grants.</li> <li>• Minnetonka forms true partnerships with residents and resident groups to reshape funding for park projects and the use of volunteers to focus on projects that matter ecologically and are noticeable and important to the community.</li> <li>• The city's Natural Resources Division is a peer of the Recreation Department in the organizational hierarchy and a stand-alone entity and includes a new position of city restoration ecologist/grant writer. The Natural Resources staff have representation to the Park Board and submit funding requests. Natural Resources has a full seat at the table.</li> <li>• The city takes a much stronger role in assisting residents with the heavy lifting through increased public education as to the importance of our parks and ecological systems and supports and celebrates resident efforts and volunteerism with city resources and ongoing ecological research.</li> </ul> |

### III. Section by Section Comments

#### Overall Comments

- The report is full of generally good and needed ideas. What will it take to adequately fund this plan? Staff this plan? Measure the success of the plan? Gain community support for the changes required to make the plan a success?
- What is in the current plan is really good. The proposed document is much less specific and strategic.
- The plan states that a high percentage of residents believe that the natural areas in our parks are in good condition. Clearly more education and outreach is needed since the evaluation of natural areas demonstrates otherwise. FoMP has stated repeatedly and the current NRMP states that, “most citizens have a very limited understanding of the ecological condition of the city’s natural resources,” Current NRMP, pg. viii. We do not expect our residents to be experts but we can do far more to educate them so that they are better equipped to judge the health of our parks and make informed decisions about their views and actions.
- As an invested community stakeholder group, FOMP could not help but notice our name missing from the engaged volunteer groups listed in the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) draft document.
- I don’t see anything specific about labeling park preserves and other parks with their appropriate designations. The language for preserves is especially important so we don’t lose them to recreational development. We also need designation labeling for all parks so that park descriptions and signage can explain and reinforce what different parks are for and the park’s rules for usage.
- There seems to be a lack of volunteer engagement during the development of this plan.
- FoMP’s on-the-ground knowledge can bring key insights to the park specific recommendations regarding opportunities and restoration priorities especially in Appendix A.
- Comparing the new NRMP draft to the previous plan has led to a list of questions which are listed below:
  1. What did we learn from the last twenty years of restoration work? Were we in maintenance mode or trying to restore?
  2. What are we going to do differently in terms of budget or methods to achieve desirable outcomes and move the restoration of our parks into maintenance mode?
  3. Have we incorporated the latest scientific research in regards to restoration management into the NRMP (Natural Resources Management Plan)?
  4. Have we implemented the recommendations from the previous NRMP? One example is the detailed plan for working with volunteers. Will staff incorporate these ideas into their new volunteer structure?
  5. What is still remaining to accomplish from the last NRMP?
  6. How will we monitor for desired outcomes? Have we monitored for desired outcomes in the past?





- FoMP is keenly interested to learn how budget and/or restoration methods will change to reach desired outcomes due to the poor biodiversity and quality ratings in many park areas.
- The current plan (1995-96) has very specific information on volunteers and a plan for volunteering. It could be cut and pasted into the proposed plan. Has anyone bothered to go back and read that plan? Why reinvent the wheel when what is there is very good and not just covering volunteers?

### **Chapter 1 - Intro/Goals and Objectives**

- Good high level goals, Goals 1 and 2 seem to have a lot of overlap and are confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should focus on public land and Goal 2 on private land?
- The plan sets natural resources management goals and priorities – what is the time frame for the plan? 5, 10, 15 years? At most the plan should cover 10 years. We suggest a set tenure for the new plan, perhaps 10 years.
- Climate mitigation – what about the impact of increased forest cover and other natural plant communities because of natural resources management practices in parks and other natural areas?
- This plan says that it doesn't address water resources because it's addressed in the 2019 Water Resources Management Plan. However, throughout this document there are many references to wetlands – invasive species like purple loosestrife. How will this plan work in conjunction with the Water Resources Management Plan? Storm water runoff (flooding) is impacted by land management practices on public and private lands.
- The 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail Plan has connections with the Natural Resources Plan. The connections between the various plans should be shown in this plan.
- Why is the community forest ecosystem given its own goal – what about all the other plant ecosystems that are found in Minnetonka such as wetlands? All of these systems are interconnected. Also, it gives an objective to identify strategies to manage storm water but the introduction says that storm water is not a part of this plan.
- The draft plan talks about an objective to promote species diversification in lawns – the primary focus should be to reduce lawns and replace them with more natural plant communities. Focus on sustainable lawn care education so residents consider reducing fertilizer, pesticide, and water use.
- Goal of promoting voluntary application of practices on private property – this has been encouraged for decades however most individuals do not apply these practices – need to look at cost- share, and other financial incentives to change behavior – I have recommended that the storm water drainage fee be modified depending to what degree the private landowner is implementing natural resources management strategies on their property.

## Chapter 2 - Natural History/Current Conditions

- Interesting, though depressing, information about the decline. Map 2.8 is helpful, on which individual parks are identified on the map. Because it is hard to locate small parks, it is good to identify individual parks on the map.
- There is contradictory information here about the health of the parks. Here it says they are in decline. In another section it says that city residents are split on their view of their health and in another area it says the city is doing a good job managing the health of the parks. What is the health of the parks? Perhaps the city could use an external expert to render an opinion? The objective regarding limiting tree removal between Nov 1 and March 31 for the northern long eared bat conflicts with what forestry says that this is the best time to remove oaks that have been impacted by oak wilt and other diseases. Staff need to make sure that urban forest/tree strategies are very clear especially for the private landowner.
- Regarding the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment of City Owned Property, who, where and how were the natural resources investigations performed to create the Plant Community Inventory? More specifics on this inventory will be essential – if the plan covers 5 to 10 years, then there needs to be comprehensive data on all areas owned by the city.
- Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka. There needs to be official survey data for wildlife species in Minnetonka to guide future management priorities. There are other wildlife surveys that are conducted: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, has the DNR had volunteers do the annual frog/toad survey in Minnetonka? What about annual butterfly count?
- Improve wildlife habitat in Minnetonka parks by looking at management plans to see where turf can be removed to increase native plantings.
- What other types of human disturbance have also occurred within Minnetonka – further residential and commercial development has impacts on natural communities – what about the impact of human use on natural communities in Minnetonka?
- The plan says that there are natural resources staff that have expertise in wetlands and water quality management – in the beginning of the plan it states that wetlands and water resources are addressed under the Water Quality Management Plan – it is extremely important that surface waters and wetlands are integrated into the overall natural resources management plan – all the natural resources are interconnected.
- I think it is very important to be very clear on any conclusions drawn from the 2021 Parks and Open Space Planning Process – only a very small segment of Minnetonka’s population was involved in the surveys and other strategies for collecting information.
- The Natural Resources Division has \$1.6 million annual budget to support activities – is that enough? Shouldn’t the need be pointed out that it will be extremely critical to increase spending to achieve the ambitious goals being put forth?





- Goals/Objectives. I am looking for more active verbs. It isn't enough to Identify and Promote. Words like Develop, Restore, Redesign, Educate would be stronger.
- Please update information in map key on p. 4 to describe oak openings and barrens as oak savanna. The three plant community descriptions are used and this is confusing.
- The color coding in Table 2.1 is not consistent with color coding in Appendix A.
- Section 2.4, p. 14. No mention of survey data for rusty patched bumble bee in Lone Lake Park.
- iNaturalist data cited is inaccurate because endangered and threatened species have location data obscured. There are multiple confirmed sites (multi-year) documentation of the rusty patched bumble bee not reflected in this report. This report should have robust management recommendations for threatened and endangered species.

### Chapter 3 - Natural Resource Issues/Opportunities

- A very thorough list of opportunities, but overwhelming. Does Minnetonka have the resources to do all of this? If not, is there a separate document with specific plans?
- Why was no official data used to determine the current status of wildlife? Using iNaturalist isn't really reliable because it is hit and miss.
- RPBB comment: any lawn replacements **must use plants that the RPBB is known to forage on.**
- Minnetonka is not unique in having a dedicated NR division. Burnsville, Apple Valley, Chanhassen, St. Louis Park, and Andover are others (and there could be more). Just like Mtkka's is housed in Pub Works, other cities house theirs in Park/Rec, Pub Works, Maintenance, etc.
- Some good ideas here, but "more aggressively manage existing invasive species" is weak. We should be working to eradicate them. Also, FoMP could be mentioned here.
- Develop a climate adapted tree list! It is encouraging that a suggestion from FoMP made it into the plan (the discussion was held when the Tree Ordinance was in front of the Planning Commission and Council).
- Enforce an ordinance. Will the council actually go for that? Typically, residents are told that enforcement is impossible because of staffing.
- YES to more \$ to work on invasive species! This will be necessary for quite some time, given how much work there is to do in parks and other public land.
- Continue to use volunteers, but make sure they are working on **coherent plans** in the parks and remember they can't do it all. Most major projects will need contractors to get it started and then volunteers can maintain it.
- Strengthen landscape ordinance (and clearly tie in the Tree Ordinance?)
- Target assisted migration/planting of southerly plant species in cultural areas in parks, heat island locations, not restored, natural areas.

- iNaturalist is a platform that could be used as the ‘pest detector’ program suggested for volunteers to scout new invasive species. This was proposed to NR staff in 2015.
- p. 22 “staff diligently control invasive species”. This would be more accurately stated as manage (not control).
- Please replace suggested clover in lawns to a native species.

#### **Chapter 4 - Natural Resources Management Strategies**

- A thorough list of strategies. We’re most interested in how the public can get involved volunteering in the parks. A fellow FOMP member has sent an email to you about this.
- Nice description and photos on p. 33!
- Improve eroding footpaths? We thought they were unmaintained. What about rogue bike trails?
- We’re concerned about encouraging clover in lawns. What if it really is invasive? (See comment in Ch. 3.)
- Table of Misperceptions is good and should be emphasized as part of a public education program.
- Once buckthorn is removed (fully removed and daubed), volunteers could be engaged to adopt areas, monitor new growth and remove it. This is a perfect “Adopt an Area” opportunity.
- Two statements that begin “Lead volunteer efforts to...” not sure what that means.
- You promise “technical assistance” – how will staff provide this when they are already too busy to do just about anything we ask?
- In that right column of the chart, 5<sup>th</sup> row it says, “Develop a climate adaptation and mitigation plan” and I thought the Sustainability Commission would be working on that as part of the Climate Action Plan. They should say they will work with the SC.
- Table 4.2. Change Meadow Park and Hilloway Park to 2 for Volunteer Involvement (established Friends group and organized volunteerism in each park)
- You need to expand City tree sale to include gravel bed grown and bare root trees.

#### **Appendix A: Park Management Strategies for Select Parks**

- Is the focus of Appendix A to be vague recommendations or do these recommendations have teeth? Given the extensive research showing that low diversity promotes low stability, the target plant communities should attempt to be biologically diverse, especially on the ground layer, to help reduce invasibility. Monitoring for diverse outcomes should reduce maintenance costs over the long-term. Target plant communities should also anticipate climate changes and adapt to more resilient communities over time.





- The first paragraph states: Detailed management plans should be developed for each site with specific direction on techniques, phasing, and budgets for management efforts. Question: Will you be referencing the current (2000) NRMP that includes detailed methodologies and specifications, missing from the new plan?
- Please include missing nonprofits in Partnerships, p. 41: Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary, Friends of Minnetonka Parks.
- Also noted in Restoration Priorities is the removal of pioneer trees. Question: Will this priority be included in the park-specific plans and budgets?
- Jidana Park. “Severe foot traffic has disturbed the soils down to Minnehaha Creek.” Comment: Add compaction from camp vehicle traffic. Hickory Island is not accessible by public trails. Comment: extensive footpaths through cattails providing access to island. Target Plant Community. Opportunities - mention of existing boardwalk trail. This is a recreational feature (not an opportunity)
- Table 4.4 Pollinator Species – right. Replace bee lawn photo with sample planting in heat island. A bee lawn does not improve natural resource quality nor is a ‘key piece’ in climate adaptation.
- How will staff ‘empower volunteers’ going forward? (p. 42). Many of the park evaluations note in the Restoration Priorities that *intensive ground cover restoration is needed*. Question: What new strategies will be employed that haven’t been used to date to increase ground cover diversity and plant cover?
- Opportunities in Big Willow. “Extensive buckthorn management has been ongoing for years” Comment: what opportunity does this provide? “Potential for additional recreation trails in lower quality areas to the north.” Comment: This is a recreational opportunity, not a natural resources restoration opportunity. Both ‘opportunities’ noted for this park are not opportunities for improving the park’s ecology. Target Plant Community. Comment: The last NRMP noted that Big Willow was primarily historically savanna. Why is it recommended to keep the highest quality area west of the parking lot as an oak forest when the last assessment indicated that it should be restored to an oak savanna?

## Natural Resources Plan – City of Minnetonka

Reviewed by:

Dr. Dennis Yockers, Professor Emeritus  
Natural Resources Management and Environmental Education  
College of Natural Resources  
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

3648 Hazelmoor Place, Minnetonka, MN 55345  
[REDACTED]

### Chapter 1

The plan sets natural resources management goals and priorities – what is the time frame for the plan? 5, 10, 15, 20 years? I think it is 20 years but it should be very clearly pointed out in the Chapter 1 introduction.

I think the plan does address climate mitigation too – what about the impact of increased forest cover and other natural plant communities resulting from natural resources management practices in parks and other natural areas?

This plan says that it doesn't address water resources because it's address in the 2019 Water Resources Management Plan. However, throughout this document there are many references to wetlands – invasive species like purple loosestrife. **How will this plan work in conjunction with the Water Resources Management Plan?** Stormwater runoff (flooding) is impacted by land management practices on public and private lands. **Also, the 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail Plan has connections with the Natural Resources Plan. The connections between the various plans should be shown in this plan.**

#### 1.1 Goals and Objectives

B. Why is the community forest ecosystem given its own goal – what about all the other plant ecosystems that are found in Minnetonka such as wetlands? All these systems are interconnected. Also, it gives an objective to identify strategies to manage stormwater but the introduction says that stormwater is not a part of this plan. Also, it talks about an objective to promote species diversification in lawns – **the primary focus should be to reduce lawns and replace them with more natural plant communities – this is mentioned several times in Chapter 4.**

C. Goal of promoting voluntary application of practices on private property – this has been encouraged for decades however most individuals do not apply these practices – need to look at cost- share, and other financial incentives to change behavior – I have recommended that the storm water drainage fee be modified depending to what degree the private landowner is implementing natural resources management strategies on their property – these financial incentives should be brought up in this section – they are discussed in Chapter 4



## Chapter 2

### Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment of City Owned Property

Plant Community Inventory – Who, Where and How were the natural resources investigations performed? **I think there needs to be more specifics on this inventory – if the plan covers 20 years, then there needs to be comprehensive data on all areas owned by the city.**

What other types of human disturbance have also occurred within Minnetonka – **further residential and commercial development has had major impacts on natural communities in Minnetonka** – what about **the impact of human use on natural communities in Minnetonka?**

### 2.4 Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka

There needs to be **official survey data for wildlife species in Minnetonka to guide future management priorities.**

There are other wildlife surveys that are conducted: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, has the DNR had volunteers do the annual frog/toad survey in Minnetonka? What about annual butterfly count?

Improve wildlife habitat in Minnetonka parks by looking at management plans to see where turf can be removed to increase native plantings.

### Guidelines for Wildlife Management

Objective regarding limiting tree removal between Nov 1 and March 31 for northern long eared bat – forestry says that this is the best time to remove oaks that have been impacted by oak wilt and other diseases – need to make sure that urban forest/tree strategies are very clear especially for the private landowner.

### 2.5 Cultural Resources

It says that there are natural resources staff that have expertise in wetlands and water quality management – in the beginning of the plan it states that wetlands and water resources are addressed under the Water Quality Management Plan – **it is extremely important that surface waters and wetlands are integrated into the overall natural resources management plan – all the natural resources are interconnected.**

**I think it is very important to be very clear on any conclusions drawn from the 2021 Parks and Open Space Planning Process – only a very small segment of Minnetonka’s population was involved in the surveys and other strategies.**

It says that the Natural Resources Division has 1.6 million dollars annual budget to support activities – **is that enough? Shouldn’t the need be pointed out that it will be extremely critical to increase spending to achieve the ambitious goals being put forth?**

## Chapter 3

### Natural Resource Issues and Opportunities

#### 3.1 Habitat Fragmentation

Opportunities:

**Expand native plant community restoration efforts on all city properties – focus expanding core habitat corridors (along waterways and wetlands – a significant acreage of city property is wetland and very little management has taken place in wetlands – work should be coordinated with the various watershed districts)**

**Encourage residents to create habitat through planting in their yards – there needs to be incentives (financial/cost-share) for residents**

#### 3.2 Reduced Native Plant Diversity

**Extirpation is also occurring due to continued turf utilization which depends on herbicides, pesticides, energy use and significant water utilization**

Opportunities:

**Look at all city parks and properties to determine where turf can be removed and replaced with native vegetation**

Increasingly implement fire as a management tool in wetlands

**Reduce the invasive vegetation found along city trails**

#### 3.3 Soil Degradation

Opportunities:

**Alternatives to lawns can also serve to reduce use of pesticides, herbicides, water, and energy**

**Educate and provide financial incentives and cost-share opportunities to residents**

#### 3.4 Community Forest Alterations

**Is there a goal to increase tree cover in the city? Should this be a priority and mentioned here?**

Opportunities:

**Reduce the amount of turf in all park areas where trees and other natural vegetation can be utilized without impacting other park uses.**



**Expand the replacement of trees impacted by city construction projects (roads, etc.) involving private property**

### 3.5 Pollinator Species

Educate the public regarding the native plant requirement within the landscape ordinance and enforce the requirement

Opportunities:

Include a diversity of **pollinator NATIVE plant species** in all city landscape projects

**Reduce the amount of turf areas in parks that do not affect other uses and replace those turf with native species**

### 3.6 Invasive Species

**Wetlands should be included within the focus of the Natural Resources Division**

Upland: **Japanese knotweed** should be included in the list – all invasive species found in Minnetonka should be listed

Wetland and Lakeshores: **Yellow iris should be included in this list** – found in some Minnetonka parks and wetland areas

Remember that **invasive species are not just an issue in city parks – they are an issue along many of the city's trails**

Opportunities:

Continue to use volunteers to control invasive species within city parks, natural areas, and trail rights-of-way

### 3.7 Native Plant Herbivory

There should be some discussion of the impact of past deer management practices in the city.

**What is the current deer management and monitoring program in the city?**

What about the impact of feeding deer by city residents?

Educate citizens on how to compost without increasing worm populations.

### 3.8 Urban Heat Island Effect

Opportunities:

**There is more surface water runoff from lawn turf areas than from native vegetated landscaped areas**

**Trees removed from road construction projects involving city and private property should be replaced with native trees and other native plants. Landowners could be provided with tree sale vouchers allowing them to replace the impacted trees.**

### 3.9 Climate Change

**City parks and properties should be inventoried to determine which lawn/turf areas could be removed that do not impact activities and can be converted to more diverse and ecologically productive native plant communities**

Opportunities:

**Not sure that there can always be a BALANCE of growth and preservation of community's highly valued water and other natural resources.** We have reached a point that we need to preserve these remaining natural resources which are necessary to maintain our community's ecological integrity.

Educate residents on how to do natural resources management on their property

### 3.10 Altered Hydrology of Natural Spaces and Landscaped Greenspaces

Opportunities:

**Need to move away from highly managed lawns** – encourage the reduction of lawn acreage to more native landscaped areas – no mow fescues – increased lawn acreage will not remediate issues involved with climate change such as increased stormwater runoff

**Educate landowners and provide incentives (cost-share, fee reduction regarding stormwater) where natural resource management strategies are implemented**

### 3.11 Human Perception of Natural Resources

**A significant amount of wetland acreage is found in Minnetonka. If Minnetonka has very little high-functioning wetlands how can natural resource management strategies be implemented to improve the quality of these wetlands? How can the city increase its capacity to work with the watershed districts on wetlands management?**

Opportunities:

Need to provide more than education to city residents/businesses regarding natural resources management. Education involves behavioral change. **Various incentives including financial will also be needed to change behavior.**

**Work with school districts that are located with the city to help them with resource management information/education. The school properties encompass a large amount of acreage where more effective natural resources management practices could be implemented. These relationships should also include the watershed districts.**

## Chapter 4

### Natural Resources Management Strategies

#### 4.1 Public Properties Natural Resources Management

Introduction – City-Owned Natural Areas – **does this include other areas that are not found in parks? What about waterways and wetlands not located in parks? These waterways and wetlands are an integral component to the overall ecological integrity of natural resources in Minnetonka.**

Table 4.1 Prioritization and Ranking Criteria

**How were the point totals for each criteria determined?**

**What was the reason for assigning such a high point criterion for areas with high visitation?** Maybe an area of high ecological quality needs to be managed/protected and developing them for high visitation may have impacts on the ecological quality. **Shouldn't an area that has significance within a Metro Corridor have a greater overall point value then if the area is highly visited?** Under criteria 5 why is open water or cattail wetlands included with the natural area. **Are other wetland types included? Open water and wetlands are integrated with the land based natural communities.** Under Criteria 6 – what is meant by **servicing the needs of the ENTIRE community? Like ecological integrity and stability?** Criteria 8 – Volunteer Participation within park: Again – **why is consistent volunteer work receive such a high point total? Maybe other areas that are extremely important are not known to the city residents/volunteers and an effort needs to be made to educate citizens and encourage volunteering.**

Table 4.2 Prioritization and Ranking of Select Minnetonka Parks and Natural Areas

Does the point total mean that management will take place on just the areas that have received a score of 10 and above? **What is the time period? Many of these parks/natural areas are not very well known to citizens but are very important to protect in regard to their ecological significance.** How does Gray's Bay Marina receive an ecological quality of 2? Under Headwaters of Minnehaha Creek, the open water and wetlands (cattails and other aquatic species) are the natural area! This area has a very high diversity of wildlife species, only wild rice bed in Minnetonka and a very important migration route in spring and fall. What is the plan in conjunction with other agencies to protect this area? **The management of city-owned wetlands need a long-term natural resources management plan.**

### Natural Resources Management Approach

2. Monitoring to evaluate management success – **observations of returning wildlife species diversity should be included in adaptive management**



## Community Forest Management

### Natural Areas Forest

On public property – reduce the amount of turf area in city parks and other city properties and plant more native tree species and their cultivars

**\*On private property - Why not develop a total natural resources management auditing program that includes trees, water resources management, native landscaping, etc.? Additional staff may be needed – however a training program could be established to train volunteers like the master naturalist or master water steward program. University interns could be hired in the summer too to perform audits.**

### Transitional Landscaped Area Trees

**A major effort needs to be made reducing the amount of lawn acreage on city and residential properties. These areas should be replaced with native vegetation (trees, shrubs, sedges, forbs, etc.). No mow fescues. Reduce the amount of fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and water.**

**Need to keep stormwater on the property. Native landscaping with a variety of plant species is much more effective in allowing water infiltration than traditional lawns.**

Providing education and materials is very important but it **needs to be supported by financial incentives for the landowner (cost share programs, reduction of stormwater fees, etc.)**

## 4.2 Private Properties Natural Resource Management

### Strategies for Managing Natural Resources on Private Properties

#### Introduction

City government can educate, motivate and mandate – remove the word – coax

Opportunities:

**Need to get beyond awareness – greater focus on education that leads to active behavioral change**

We need to **REDUCE the amount of lawn acreage** – more natural resource management strategies on private land

Another purpose that is served by reducing lawns and utilizing native plant vegetation is stormwater management

Under Community Forest – **increase the number of trees/shrubs (greater than 2) that can be purchased in the tree sale**

Photo on page 36 – 4.2 **What does Minnetonka currently do in terms of incentives, cost-share, policies, ordinances, and fee reduction for private property natural resource management?**

**How many raingardens are there currently on private property in Minnetonka? They could be highlighted as BMP examples. How many cost-share and other grants have been received by Minnetonka residents from watershed districts and other governmental agencies for natural resources management on their properties – an evaluation measure for many of the recommended strategies in the plan could be the increase of the number of grants over the next several years.**

#### Pollinator Species

The focus should be on **planting NATIVE** pollinator species

#### Climate Change

**Work with the city sustainability commission and other county and regional governmental and NGO's**

#### 4.3 Climate Change

**Monitoring – what about changes in native wildlife species?**

#### Reduce Stress on Natural Resources

The city has a significant amount of wetlands acreage on city-owned properties – **these wetlands should have management plans** – fire can be used as a management tool in wetland areas – cattails have taken over as a dominant species in many wetlands systems

Continue and increase the amount of **appropriate native** trees and plants planted on public and private lands

#### Allow and Facilitate Species Movement

Develop a climate-adapted **NATIVE** list of trees species and other plants – we don't need gingkoes

Replace unused lawn areas on public property with alternative native plantings that provide habitat

#### 4.4 Natural Resources Policies and Ordinances

Important to **list the date of each policy and ordinance** – when were they updated?

Opportunity – **All of these policies and ordinances should be updated to reflect the strategies and objectives listed in this updated Natural Resources Management Plan**

#### Opportunity – **City Fees – Stormwater Management**

**Review the fee structures based on acreage** – there is a difference between .25 acres and 5 acres – they now have the same quarterly fee – **also reduce the fee for landowners that implement natural resources management strategies on their property that address stormwater runoff – a financial incentive can change behavior** – other municipalities in the metro and throughout the state have

implemented stormwater fees structures based on natural source management practices on private property

Consider Setting a Do-Not Exceed Turf Percentage in the Landscaping Ordinance

**The city should modify the Do-Not Exceed Turf Percentage in the landscaping ordinance. It should be a recommendation in this plan.** The resource issues related to the amount of turf lawn on city and private property is mentioned throughout the plan. There is a very limited amount of residential acreage in the city available for development. What financial incentives, policies and ordinances can be developed to reduce the existing amount of turf areas currently found in Minnetonka?

#### 4.5 Engagement with People

##### Partnerships

Local/Nonprofit: **The Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other Friends of various Minnetonka Parks SHOULD be included in this list.** These groups have supported the City's natural resources management efforts by their volunteering and helping to secure grant funding for city natural resources management projects

##### Education

The city provides a lot of excellent natural resources information to its citizens. It does offer education programs. **What has the impact been from these education programs on the citizens who have participated? Have the programs been evaluated to see if objectives have been, behaviors changed, and natural resources management strategies implemented?** The goal of education is to modify behavior to achieve desired outcomes. **It will be extremely important to develop a comprehensive education and outreach plan in 2022.** This plan will prioritize which programs should be implanted and the timeline. Does the City have adequate funding and staff to implement the desired education programs and outreach activities? How can volunteers be utilized to implement these programs and activities. The Natural Resources Division should explore the utilization of more college and university interns to focus on programming and outreach.

##### Engagement

**Volunteers – the implementation of most of the opportunities and strategies in this plan will require a larger volunteer commitment of Minnetonka's citizens – does the Natural Resources Division currently have the staff capacity and financial support to implement a robust volunteer engagement program?**

##### Technical Assistance and Incentives

**The city should explore the development of a natural resources management auditing program that can be used to provide technical assistance to private landowners. The natural resources division would need additional staff to oversee the implementation of the program. It could utilize a training program where volunteers could be trained to work with landowners.** It might be developed like the University of MN – master gardener, master naturalist programs and the master water steward program. Volunteers would participate in the training program and then be responsible to complete a certain amount of volunteer hours each year. College and University interns could also be utilized in this program.



The city needs to work with the various watershed districts and other agencies/organizations to increase the amount of information/education to city residents for natural resources management cost/share programming

#### 4.6 Future Planning, Research, and Monitoring

**Natural Resources Management and Maintenance plans SHOULD be developed for ALL of Minnetonka's public properties. Priority public properties should be developed first but this plan should provide a timetable for the development of all parks, natural area plans especially if this plan is intended for 10-20 years.**

Work with other governmental and NGO's involved with monitoring wildlife populations (Audubon Christmas Bird Count, MN DNR Wildlife Surveys (frog/toad, etc.), butterfly counts

#### Appendix A – Management Strategies for Minnetonka Owned Properties

It is OK to prioritize the development of plans for city-owned properties however a goal for this plan should be the development of natural resources management plans for ALL city-owned properties – including wetlands. There should be a timeline for the development of these management plans. What happens over 20 years to other city-owned parks, natural areas and properties if they are not addressed?

#### Appendix B – Management Budgets for Priority Public Properties

**What about the restoration and maintenance cost for wetlands that are found within these public properties? The wetlands located within these properties are interrelated ecologically to the other plant communities found within the property. The wetlands should be a part of the overall program.**

#### Table B-2: Summary Cost Per Phase

**Many of the parks include open water, riparian, and wetland acreage. These areas need to be included in the overall management plan and cost. All these components are an integral component of the ecology of the area.**

#### Appendix D – Volunteer Program Structure

Under the category of activities there needs to be acknowledgement and **recognition** – it must be more than a form letter from the city – natural resources program volunteers should be **RECOGNIZED with meaningful methods if their retention is desired.**

Based on this plan there is a **DEMONSTRATED need** for an enhanced and robust volunteer program that will assist the city in achieving the goals and objectives that have been proposed.

**There will be an increased need for the development of specific programs, training, and coordination for the volunteers. The current natural resources division will need additional staff to address these**

**needs – especially a full-time coordinator to oversee volunteers in all areas – outreach, education, and resource management activities. The budget for volunteer programs will need to be increased.**

Summary and Recommendations – Dr. Dennis Yockers

The City of Minnetonka especially the Natural Resources Division continues to make a strong commitment to the natural resources found within our borders with the development of this natural resources management plan. Significant financial resources and staff time have been utilized in developing this draft document. I have appreciated the opportunity to review and provide input into the draft plan. Over the past week and a half, I have spent a significant amount of time reading and reviewing the document.

The 20-year plan is very comprehensive and ambitious. There are countless opportunities and recommended actions that are presented in the plan. **The 20-year plan needs to also include a timeline for the recommended activities. Which of the recommendations and activities should have the greatest priority? First year, Years 2-5, Years 6-10, and Years 10-20.** These activities will guide the annual work plans of the Division as well as their budget. The current annual budget will not address the magnitude of the recommendations and activities. **The city should begin the process to expand the operating budget of the Natural Resources Division to address the increased costs associated with implementing the plan.**

When developing a plan that includes goals with objectives, the objectives need to be specific in terms of the audience, intended behaviors, strategies/conditions and the degree needed for accomplishment. What are the financial aspects associated with each objective/activity? There needs to be an assessment/evaluation component that covers the 20-year plan.

There is a very short time frame for the review of this plan by Minnetonka residents before the decision is made at the December City Council meeting if that is still the target date. The average citizen will not spend the time to review the plan. It would be worthwhile to hold a couple of public meetings (day and evening) that present the plan to citizens and allow for comments. **This plan will have a major impact on the future of Minnetonka's natural resources and the process should not be rushed until adequate feedback is gathered from citizens.**

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding comments on my review and recommendations.

Dr. Dennis Yockers, Ph.D  
Professor Emeritus, Natural Resources Management and Education  
College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point  
Address: 3648 Hazelmooor Place, Minnetonka, MN 55345



**From:** [Linda Russell](#)  
**To:** [Leslie Yetka](#)  
**Subject:** Park Specific comments for NRMP  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 23, 2021 11:14:55 AM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)

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Hi Leslie,

I am floored that you are surprised that you did not get park specific feedback on the NRMP draft. You have said repeatedly that this document is so high level that our detailed questions would be handled at some other point. But I can certainly give you Lone Lake Park feedback if you would like it now. I hope that you can incorporate it before the city council approval meeting.

What I noticed in the Lone Lake Park plan is that the two projects that were approved by the Park Board on August 1 are not in it. I assumed a consultant created the maps and priorities, so I thought we'd tackle those missing things after the new year.

The Aspen Grove area should be indicated as a high priority area since we've already held 3 work sessions there in 2021 and it is on the schedule for 2022. The Playground Pollinator Walk should also be labeled. Please see the map below for reference. Please label them as Aspen Grove and Playground Pollinator Walk on the maps in the NRMP.



I would also like to suggest that if the writer of the park specific appendix uses labels such as water tower ridge, lone lake ridge, 9-mile ridge, prairies, and maple/basswood forest, that those areas are clearly labeled on any maps that are included. The general public has no idea where those areas are. Another suggestion would be to use maps that are readable. These are so small, and when you enlarge the document, everything just gets blurry.

Thank you,  
Linda Russell





**From:** [sabrina Harvey](#)  
**To:** [Leslie Yetka](#); [Christine Petersen](#)  
**Subject:** Response to NRMP  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 27, 2021 7:15:10 AM

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Hello Leslie, Christine,

My name is Sabrina Harvey - I am the “park leader” for Friends of Hilloway Park. I’ve only held this “position” since this spring, so I’m learning a lot.

I’ve been reading the Draft Natural Resources Master plan, and I think it has a lot of great information. I tried to submit comments, but the website only seemed to take my comments for Chapter 1. I’m not sure if my comments got through, so I’ll repeat them here.

Chapter 1. Good high level goals, Goals 1 and 2 seem to have a lot of overlap and are confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should focus on public land and Goal 2 on private land?

Chapter 2. Interesting, though depressing, information. I like map 2.8, where individual parks are identified on the map. I think the individual parks should be identified on each map because it’s hard to locate small parks on the map.

Chapter 3. A very thorough list of opportunities, but overwhelming. Does Minnetonka have the resources to do all of this?

Chapter 4. A thorough list of strategies. I’m most interested in how the public can get involved volunteering in the parks. A fellow FOMP member, Diana Houston, has sent an email to you about this.

I’d like to make some comments about the section on Hilloway Park, in Appendix A. First of all, I’m THRILLED that Hilloway was rated a top priority for restoration. I think Hilloway could showcase several distinct ecosystems - oak savanna, aspen grove, wetland, pine plantation - if it got some TLC. I’ve copied the text from the Hilloway page below - my suggestions are in red.

### Condition Summary

- North portion of the park contains a dense planting of conifers.
- **The northeast side of the park includes a garlic mustard research area.**
- Woodland on the south portion of the park includes large maples, black cherry, and oaks.

## Challenges

- A regime of thinning has not occurred within the conifer plantings. This has resulted in spindly, weak yet tall trees packed close together. These trees are susceptible to disease, drought damage, and wind throw.
- Garlic mustard is not controlled in the research area and is spreading to other areas in the park.
- The woodland in the south and east portions of the park is inundated with buckthorn.
- The floating bog is inaccessible without a boat.

## Opportunities

- Floating bog contains great diversity.
- Hilloway Park contains a mature pine plantation unlike any found within the park system.

## Restoration Priorities

- To best preserve the conifers in the park it is essential to begin thinning as soon as possible. It is recommended to develop a forest management plan and have forestry staff consult on the process of thinning for each stand
- Protect high quality bog from cattail intrusion. (Cattails just beginning to grow along edges).
- Begin a regime of systematic, sustained invasive species control (particularly buckthorn and garlic mustard), and restoration.

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback.

Sabrina

## Leslie Yetka

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**From:** sabrina Harvey [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 3:10 PM  
**To:** Leslie Yetka; Christine Petersen  
**Subject:** Important feedback on NRMP - Hilloway Park

Hi Leslie, Christine,

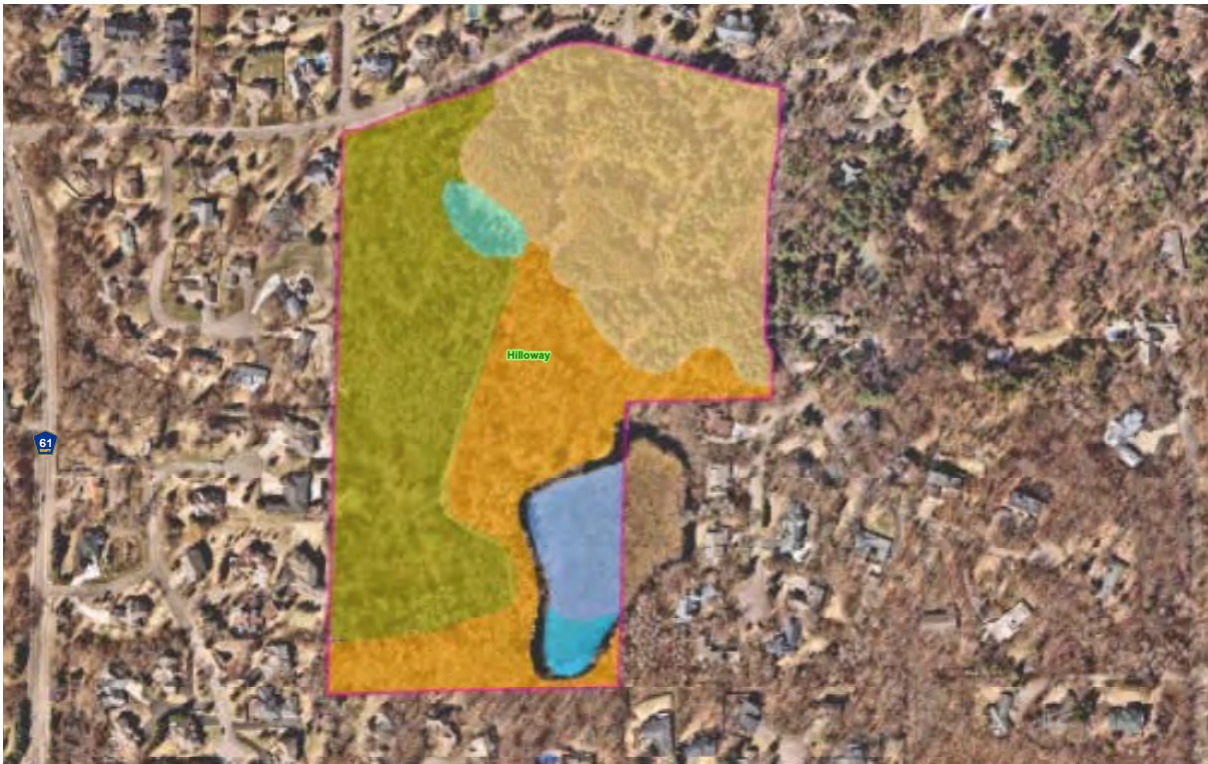
I sent some earlier feedback to you regarding Hilloway - but I missed something very important. On p. 36 of Appendix A, there is a map showing Hilloway's target plant community (see a copy below) The target community for part of the park is maple basswood forest. I believe the target for that area should be oak savanna. Actually, the whole area was originally oak savanna until the pine plantation was planted. The area north of the fen is a south facing slope and I believe it's too hot and dry to be a maple basswood forest. Plus, maple basswood forests will not be resilient to a hotter, drier climate.

Could you have the consultant re-look at that area? It's important that the target plant community be correctly established.

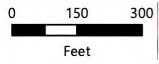
Thank you.

Sabrina





**Target Plant Community**



- |                         |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Bog                     | Maple - Basswood Forest | Minnetonka Park |
| Deep Marsh              | Oak Forest              |                 |
| Wet Meadow              | Oak Savanna             |                 |
| Mixed Coniferous Forest |                         |                 |

*Here are the comments to the section regarding Purgatory Park in Appendix A. It would be helpful to include the definitions or descriptions of the target plant communities as an addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan.*

## Purgatory Community Park and Preserve

Community preserve with a passive recreation focus showcasing a number of habitat and plant communities including a remnant and restored prairie, flood plain and creek, and a treed ridge dominated by oaks. It is a highly utilized park with an informal off-leash dog area and extensive informal trail network.

### Condition Summary

- Unique shortgrass prairie remnant near the eastern side of the park has woody encroachment which is greatly reducing the diversity and viability of the prairie remnant.
- Large tallgrass prairie restorations have created a diverse core within the center of the park, but are showing signs of becoming less diverse due to dominance of big bluestem, overuse from off-leash dogs, dog walkers, installation of benches within the prairie that have changed traffic patterns, and woody encroachment.
- Surrounding woodland areas contain pioneer trees, invasive species, and disturbed areas.
- Unique restored sugar maple basswood forest next to Excelsior Blvd with substantial buckthorn encroachment on the eastern side and along the old trolley corridor.
- On-going buckthorn management has occurred but prioritization of certain areas should be undertaken to reduce impacts to higher quality areas and turn managed areas to maintained areas.



*Center tallgrass prairie looking south with main trail on the left, showing widening of interior footpath and trampled prairie from dog walker gathering spot*

## Challenges

- Buckthorn - nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park have been infested and have ongoing management efforts or are currently infested.
- Invasive Amur maple is becoming dominant, especially within eastern portion of the park and interior area south of the main parking lot.
- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate the wetlands.
- Foot traffic and off-leash dogs have caused disturbance and erosion within restoration areas and along creek banks.
- Extensive network of informal trails with increased widening and erosion.
- New areas of disturbance and subsequent invasive species and erosion from structural installations such as benches and stairs located on the prairie remnant knoll slope.



*Bench installation and woody encroachment on the prairie remnant*

## Opportunities

- Continued management of the restored tallgrass prairie area. Prescribed burning to knock back undesirable woody species as they move into the prairie. Remove existing Siberian elms and other pioneer tree species from the prairie. Strive for continued diversification of forbs by interseeding after disturbance events.
- Continue management of the unique shortgrass remnant prairie by removing woody encroachment and augment for species richness.
- Expansion of restored areas offer an opportunity to create one of the bigger diverse prairies in Minnetonka.
- Higher topography areas dominated by large oaks and black cherries should continue to be controlled for buckthorn and seeded and monitored for ground layer vegetation return. New oak regeneration should be protected from deer browse.
- Designate key restoration areas such as the tallgrass prairie area as on-leash to minimize dog damage.



- Allocate the low quality northwest section of the park as designated new off-leash area and restore areas on the northwest hill to shortgrass prairie.
- Restore and selectively close eroded and widened foot-paths.

## Restoration Priorities

- Open up and restore areas where pioneer and Siberian elm trees dominate on the northwest side of the park to provide a new off-leash dog area.
- Expand existing restoration areas in the eastern portion of the park to connect prairie/savanna plant communities with the restored school forest.
- Increase diversity within the established prairie and savanna core of the park to build resilience and promote stability in the face of disturbance.

Return this area to on-leash only to allow for restoration.



*Birdseye view of the Northwest corner of the park showing vegetation dominated by Siberian Elm and Buckthorn*

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 7C  
Meeting of December 1, 2021**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                      | POST Plan update – System Plan Goals and Initiatives   |
| <b>Park Board related goal:</b>      | To renew and maintain parks and trails   |
| <b>Park Board related objective:</b> | Participate in the park & trail projects process and make recommendations to the city council. |
| <b>Brief Description:</b>            | Review the draft POST Plan System Plan Goals and Initiatives                                   |

## **Background**

The purpose of the Minnetonka Parks, Open Space, and Trail System (POST) Plan is to provide a comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable system of parks, open spaces/natural areas, trails, and recreation-oriented activities/programs for city residents to use and enjoy in as cost effective manner as possible. The outcome of the POST plan update will be a concise and useable document that will align with complementary studies and planning documents, and provide a framework for implementation.

The Park Board received updates on the Community Survey summary and draft Mission Statement and Guiding Principles at their September and October Park Board meetings. The project consultants reviewed current park trends and the system components and conditions at the November joint Park Board and City Council Meeting.

## **Draft System Plan – Goals and Initiatives**

Based on the needs assessment, input from the community, and the mission statement and guiding principles, a set of system plan goals and initiatives have been created to provide guidance for future parks, open space and trail improvement planning and implementation. The goals and initiatives are high-level statements intended to support the vision and guide decision-making over the next 10-20 years.

Staff will present the attached draft System Plan Goals and Initiatives and consider edits based on the submitted public feedback and park board comments.

The next part of the POST plan is the implementation plan which will prioritize the goals and initiatives. Draft documents will continue to be shared with the public via Minnetonka Matters and the final plan will be presented to the Park Board and City Council for approval in February.

## **Recommendation Action:**

Review the draft POST Plan System Plan Goals and Initiatives and provide comments and feedback.

## **Attachment**

1. POST Plan System Plan – Goals and Initiatives draft
2. Public feedback on goals and initiatives

# System Plan - Goals and Initiatives (DRAFT)

The Parks, Open Space, and Trail (POST) system plan recommendations were prepared based on key takeaways from community input, needs assessment, NRPA metrics audit, review of the Comprehensive Plan and other related documents and policies, Technical Advisory Committee discussions, and input received from the Park Board. The recommendations are organized into goals and initiatives intended to support the vision and guiding principles expressed in Chapter 4. **Goals** are high-level statements that describe the desired outcomes necessary for the park system's guiding principles to be achieved over the next 15-20 years. **Initiatives** describe the general course of action that will guide City decision-making to achieve the goals.

## Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency

Environmental sustainability and resiliency in the parks, open space and trail system focuses on the preservation and protection of natural resources by supporting environmental stewardship and conservation and building long-term sustainability of the park system. This includes a wide range of activities aimed at reducing consumption of natural resources, minimizing impacts to waterways and natural areas, promoting sustainable management of resources, and building stewardship through the practice of preservation, restoration, and education. With more than 1,400 acres of parkland, the majority of which are natural open spaces, and over 100 miles of trails, there are many opportunities to positively impact the City's ecosystem and be a model for sustainability and resiliency. The goals and initiatives presented here are in support of the goals and objectives of the City of Minnetonka Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) and the Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP).

### **Goal 1 Promote sustainable design practices and build environmental resiliency into the park system to mitigate the effects of climate change**

#### **Initiatives:**

- Increase biodiversity in parks and open spaces and utilize plant species more adaptable to climate change.
- Explore ways to integrate green infrastructure into parks to manage stormwater runoff generated from rainfall.
- Consider ways to create multi-functional park spaces that incorporate environmental benefits including habitat, stormwater management, air quality, thermal heat island, etc.
- Develop sustainability education campaigns to educate residents on the benefits of minimizing chemical use and reduced park maintenance in strategic areas that may have significant environmental value.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to parks to encourage alternative modes of transportation to parks, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality, and promoting healthy lifestyle choices.



- Use sustainable building practices when developing, expanding, or renovating park facilities.
- Improve energy efficiency when renovating or constructing new facilities.
- Showcase sustainability best practices in the parks such as water and energy conservation practices, green infrastructure, native and pollinator plantings, etc. in highly visible locations accessible to the public.
- Raise awareness about sustainability and best practices through social media, interpretive elements, and marketing information.
- Develop a park resilience action plan as part of any city-wide efforts to efficiently adapt to climate change effects.
- Continue to engage and support volunteers to expand capabilities and encourage environmental stewardship.

**Goal 2 Reduce negative impacts to Minnetonka’s waterways and natural resources**

**Initiatives:**

- Incorporate stormwater best practices (rain gardens, bio-swales, water retention, and permeable paving) in park and facility design.
- Explore the use of permeable surfaces in the future design of parks and park facilities.
- Establish native vegetation buffers around wetlands, creeks, ponds, and lakes on public lands and parks to filter stormwater runoff.
- Incorporate natural streambank erosion control methods.
- Continue to manage the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides to control weed and insect problems.
- Protect, preserve, and restore high quality waterways and natural resources.

**Goal 3 Balance the preservation of Minnetonka’s natural resources with recreational programs and facilities**

**Initiatives:**

- Create an equitable balance between the preservation of Minnetonka’s natural resources with the development of recreational programs and facilities.
- Prioritize the development of recreational programs and facilities in already developed areas of parks or low-quality natural areas.
- Balance natural resource protection with human use and access for recreation.
- Continue to protect, preserve, and restore sensitive lands within the city’s park preserves.
- Limit development in park preserves to improvements that support passive uses or address water quality and habitat.

## **Goal 4 Promote sustainable maintenance practices**

### **Initiatives:**

- Utilize native plant materials to reduce maintenance and irrigation needs.
- Continue to minimize the application of chemicals to turf to reduce leaching of chemicals into ground and surface water.
- Offer recycling programs/facilities in neighborhood, community, athletic, and special use parks.
- Utilize integrated pest management strategies to control nuisance plants, weeds, insects, rodents, etc.
- Explore options to implement a turf conversion program to transition underutilized turf areas to forest or other native ground cover.
- Continue to implement vegetation management practices to protect water quality.
- Design future parks and park improvements to include low maintenance, durable, and recycled materials as much as possible.

## **Connections to Parks and Trails**

Access to parks, natural areas, and outdoor recreation is vital to the long-term sustainability and livability of a community. Parks, open spaces, and trails enhance property values, provide community gathering places, provide environmental benefits, and opportunities for people to connect with nature. They contribute to more active lifestyles throughout the community and reduce the need for automobile transportation. Providing better access to parks and trails will contribute to a higher quality of life for park users. The recommendations provided here offer a guide for not only enhancing connections to parks and trails, but also ways for community members to better connect with each other and with nature.

## **Goal 1 Ensure all park users have safe and convenient access to parks, open spaces, and trails**

### **Initiatives:**

- Implement trail recommendations provided in the City's Trail Improvement Plan and explore options to accelerate funding for trail improvements.
- Prioritize the elimination of gaps in the city's trail, bikeway, and sidewalk system to better connect park users to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Enhance trail connections to parks and open spaces from existing trail systems.
- Explore options to improve pedestrian crossing safety at roadway intersections that connect people to parks, open spaces, and trails (i.e. traffic calming, traffic signals, marked crossings, signage, lighting, etc.).
- Emphasize safety, convenience and comfort when designing new trails or rebuilding those that already exist.
- Improve connections to public transportation facilities near parks and trails.

- Increase awareness and expanded trail use through maps and trail wayfinding to help identify locations, destinations, and distances.
- Reduce financial and physical barriers to access parks, facilities, and programs.
- Improve access for people of all ages and abilities by ensuring ADA access to parks and trails.
- Support trail accessibility through the identification of easily accessible routes that do not have steep slopes, gaps, or challenging transitions.
- Provide accessible play areas and park facilities where feasible in neighborhood and community parks.
- Improve the trail user experience through improved maintenance, wayfinding, and trail amenities (i.e. seating, signage, public art, bike parking and repair facilities, etc.).
- Consider grade-separated crossings to better connect trails across busy transportation corridors/barriers.
- Preserve abandoned or vacated rights of way for future trail expansion.

**Goal 2 Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming**

**Initiatives:**

- Continue to program events, festivals, and community gathering opportunities in Minnetonka's parks.
- Collaborate with cultural groups to provide community events in the parks.
- Promote and advertise park programs and events within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- Incorporate additional picnic facilities and park shelters in neighborhood and community parks to encourage community gathering in parks.
- Incorporate multi-generational park facilities and programs into parks.
- Provide flexible spaces for special event programming.
- Ensure parks are accessible, safe, and welcoming to all residents, visitors, and employees in the community.
- Consider opportunities to create new park spaces intended to accommodate community gatherings.

**Goal 3 Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature**

**Initiatives:**

- Expand opportunities for more nature-based programs and facilities, such as bird watching, canoeing, hiking or interpretive trails in Minnetonka's natural areas and waterways.
- Provide more boardwalks in wetland areas.



- Expand the number of natural surface trails in park preserves.
- Create more opportunities for people to access and recreate on Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka, and other water bodies in the park system.
- Improve access for people of all abilities by incorporating accessible trails in parks and preserves where feasible.
- Incorporate interpretive features in parks and preserves to provide information about the environment, history, or culture of natural places.
- Build stewardship for the natural environment through volunteerism and educational programs.
- Encourage interaction with natural areas by providing signage, wayfinding, and maps to guide people to natural areas.

#### **Goal 4 Improve access to neighboring communities of Minnetonka**

##### **Initiatives:**

- Enhance trail connections to surrounding communities and the broader regional trail system.
- Continue partnering with surrounding communities, regional park organizations, and schools to program recreational opportunities on joint-use facilities.
- Explore opportunities to partner with neighboring communities to share parks and park facilities for similar programming.

## **Community Health and Wellness**

Parks, open spaces, and trails help keep park users fit and healthy. All people need physical activity to maintain fitness and health. Physical activity increases strength, flexibility, and endurance; relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety; improves mood; and enhances psychological well-being. Parks provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Park and recreation facilities support good health for people of all abilities, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and ethnicities. They foster community health and wellness in the following ways:

- Help reduce obesity, diabetes, and chronic disease by providing opportunities for physical activity
- Provide connections to nature which can relieve stress, build relationships, and improve mental health
- Provide access to nutritious food
- Foster overall wellness and healthy lifestyle habits

The following goals and policies are recommended to ensure that all park users have access to park facilities and programs essential to community vitality, health equity, improved individual and community health, and enhanced quality of life.

**Goal 1      Ensure that park programs and facilities support public health and wellness for all park users**

**Initiatives:**

- Provide activities that contribute to physical, mental, and spiritual health, and social wellbeing.
- Support healthy living by providing a well-connected park, open space, and trail system.
- Provide facilities and programs that support year-long activities and recreational opportunities.
- Enhance access to healthy foods by incorporating additional community gardens in the park system.
- Incorporate facilities and programs that reflect the diverse health and wellness needs of multi-cultural communities in Minnetonka.
- Provide multi-generational facilities and programs to attract park users of all ages and abilities to enjoy the health benefits of outdoor activity and recreation.
- Offer increased opportunities for health enhancing recreational activities.
- Consider improvements to and maintenance of, existing and new park facilities, programs, and environments to optimize health benefits.

**Goal 2      Provide for a healthy park experience that is accessible, enjoyable, and relatable to all park users**

**Initiatives:**

- Provide a well-connected pedestrian and bicycle trail network throughout the community.
- Enhance public transportation connections to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Provide accessible, safe, and convenient connections to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Enhance opportunities for community gatherings at parks through event planning and programming.
- Provide programs and facilities that meet the needs of the surrounding neighborhood by engaging with neighborhood stakeholders during the park planning and design process.

**Goal 3      Promote health and wellness through education and park programming**

**Initiatives:**

- Increase awareness and understanding of how parks and trails can contribute to health and wellness through educational campaigns and park programs.

- Promote health and wellness as an interrelated system linking physical and mental health to physical activity, social interaction, and connection to nature.
- Provide interpretation and educational features in parks that communicate the health benefits of parks and natural environments.

**Goal 4 Strengthen relationships with partners to improve overall health outcomes**

**Initiatives:**

- Explore opportunities to share resources and expertise with the health sector to pursue common health education goals.
- Partner with health sector organizations to fund, program, and facilitate events and recreational opportunities.

## **Equity and Inclusion**

Parks and recreation facilities and programs help to build diverse, equitable and inclusive communities where people from all walks of life can come together to learn, experience, interact and to grow. The goal of this plan is to create a park system that provides quality parks and connections to green space, recreation facilities and programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant, and welcoming. Just and fair access to high-quality parks creates healthier, cohesive, and stronger communities. Minnetonka is an aging community with a lower concentration of households with children. It's also becoming more culturally diverse, attracting thousands of residents of color in the past 20 years. Facing a more ethnically diverse and aging community, it is important to acknowledge the different needs of these user groups to ensure Minnetonka's parks reflect the needs of all residents and are welcoming, inclusive places.

**Goal 1 Develop park programs and facilities that fit the needs of the community through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

**Initiatives:**

- Identify opportunities to address and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in park programs and facilities.
- Provide opportunities for the community to communicate their needs and concerns regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Coordinate with the other entities within Minnetonka to promote and celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Goal 2 Encourage recreation participation by all park users regardless of race, age, gender, or ability**

**Initiatives:**



- Provide park facilities and recreation programs that reflect a multi-cultural, aging demographic that is representative of the community.
- Engage diverse community groups and all potentially impacted stakeholders in setting balanced priorities for park-related matters.
- Minimize physical, financial, and social barriers to accessing parks, facilities, and programs.
- Improve access for people of all ages and abilities by ensuring ADA access to parks and trails.
- Provide accessible play areas and park facilities where feasible in neighborhood and community parks.
- Provide parks, facilities, and programs that are well-distributed throughout the community.
- Provide multi-generational park facilities and programs to provide opportunities for recreating for all ages and abilities.
- Celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion through community event programming and historical and cultural interpretation.
- Incorporate public art and interpretative features in the park system.
- Explore using multi-lingual text in marketing and on park signage.

**Goal 3 Expand access to parks and build and repair parks in underserved communities**

**Initiatives:**

- Prioritize funding projects that increase park access for low-income communities and communities of color in terms of proximity and the quantity of park space available per person.
- Invest in creating, improving, and expanding programming that serves low-income communities and communities of color.
- Explore the use of transportation and public safety funding to address mobility and safety concerns that limit accessibility and usability of parks by low-income communities and communities of color.

**Goal 4 Engage community members meaningfully in the design and planning of parks to ensure that parks and park programming reflect community values and priorities**

**Initiatives:**

- Create park planning processes that provide meaningful opportunities for community residents to shape decisions about future park system planning and investments.

- Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse park system workforce that is representative of the community to ensure parks are inclusive environments and are better equipped to meet the needs of the diverse communities they serve.
- Partner with schools, neighborhood groups, service providers, faith-based institutions, and other community-based organizations to connect to underserved residents and engage them in decision-making processes.
- Seek funding sources to deepen inclusion and cultural relevance across the park system.
- Engage in marketing campaigns that promote parks as safe and inviting places for all members of the community to recreate and enjoy the outdoors.

## Excellence and Innovation

The Minnetonka parks, open space, and trail system must strive to meet the range of recreational needs and expectations for all park users. While this plan provides a guide for ways to provide excellence in the park system, incorporating current trends in park planning and design, change is inevitable and park facilities and programs should be adaptable to changes in community demographics, user needs and desires. Future park improvements should also be resilient and flexible enough to address the economic, social, and environmental impacts of climate change. Innovative, forward-thinking solutions to park design and maintenance that incorporate best practices should be encouraged in order to achieve those goals.

### **Goal 1 Explore and prioritize a variety of new or improved active and nature-based passive park facilities and programs that reflect community values and desires**

#### **Initiatives:**

- Meet an increasing demand for more informal, passive and nature-based recreation opportunities.
- Study the feasibility of adding a year-round swimming facility to the park system.
- Consider the following amenities in future park improvements:
  - Rock climbing or bouldering features in the parks
  - Nature play areas in community and neighborhood parks
  - A more significant and permanent skateboarding park
  - Accessible playgrounds
  - Ninja warrior playground in one of the community parks
  - Additional pickleball courts
  - Bicycle playground/pump track
  - Off-leash dog parks
  - Community gardens
  - More natural surface trails
  - More boardwalks in wetland areas

**Goal 2 Support year-round recreation by improving access to outdoor winter facilities and programs**

**Initiatives:**

- Provide at least one type of winter recreational opportunity in each Community Park.
- Increase winter trails for hiking and snowshoeing. Explore a cross-country ski trail in the park system.
- Provide warming facilities for winter activities such as ice skating, hockey, and cross-country skiing to encourage winter recreation.
- Provide winter trail signage.
- Provide community gathering opportunities through winter event planning and programming.
- Consider fewer neighborhood ice rinks to focus on higher quality ice rinks in the community.

**Goal 3 Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, and volunteers**

**Initiatives:**

- Establish partnerships and stakeholder involvement with a variety of agencies and citizens in the community to perpetuate natural resources in Minnetonka and surrounding areas.
- Create opportunities for people to feel a greater sense of ownership/volunteerism.
- Support volunteer engagement and participation to enhance stewardship, programming, social cohesion, and ownership.

**Goal 4 Expand marketing and awareness of park facilities and programs**

**Initiatives:**

- Create marketing strategies and branding materials intended to create a greater sense of identity and awareness of park facilities and programs.
- Design and implement consistent and branded park amenities (benches, bike racks, shelters, trash receptacles, lighting, etc.) and wayfinding signage.
- Promote and advertise community events, park programs, and recreation opportunities within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- Send email reminders, social media notifications, and newsletters about upcoming events.
- Encourage diverse communities to register for events and recreation opportunities.



**Goal 5 Model sustainable practices in park construction, maintenance, and operations**

**Initiatives:**

- Incorporate best practices in the operations and maintenance of park facilities.
- Continue to manage invasive plant species in the city's parks and open spaces.
- Incorporate maintenance strategies that are flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate changes due to climate, community demographics, user needs and desires.
- Account for seasonality and climate resiliency in the design, maintenance, and programming of park and recreation facilities to maximize activity throughout the year.
- Improve safety in existing and future parks through design, maintenance, and programming.
- Use data driven evaluation of park facilities to develop a maintenance and replacement schedule, and plan for future budget needs.

**Goal 6 Create new park master plans as the need for new parks and park improvements arise**

**Initiatives:**

- Engage community members in the planning and design for new parks and park improvements.
- Incorporate park programs and facilities that reflect community needs and desires.
- Incorporate best practices in the planning and design of new parks.
- Incorporate multi-functional park spaces that provide environmental, social, economic, and health benefits.
- Ensure that new parks and park improvements incorporate as many of the abovementioned goals and objectives as is possible.

# Please share your feedback on the Draft System Plan - Goals and Initiatives

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## **SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT**

07 June 2021 - 22 November 2021

### **PROJECT NAME:**

Plan Your Park System



SURVEY QUESTIONS



## Q1 | Draft System Plan - Goals and Initiatives

Anonymous

11/09/2021 09:55 AM

Would like to see you add a fenced in dog park in Minnetonka. Our surrounding cities have several fenced in dog parks and we do not. Perhaps buy an acre lot (14317 Excelsior Blvd) and change it to a fenced in dog park.

Anonymous

11/12/2021 05:17 PM

The whole plan needs a glossary. Clearly define terms such as active use, passive use, sensitive lands, preserve, cleaner environment etc. The Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency section lacks stated desired outcomes. Consider adding enhancement and expansion of natural resources (not just management of). Goal 1 Add ecological restoration best management practices to goal. Use native plant species. Provide multiple mechanisms in parks and electronically to educate residents why high priority/high quality natural resources are valuable. Goal 2 Add the following bullets to initiatives: Provide opportunities for the community to communicate their needs and concerns regarding the preservation and restoration of natural resources. Coordinate with the other entities and community partners within Minnetonka to promote and celebrate the value, restoration and ecological management of our natural resources. Goal 3 Develop new interpretive signage to educate park users on high quality natural amenities. Clearly define expectations of how these amenities should be used. Bullet 2 - add that low-quality natural areas will be improved (ecologically) if developed (planning to fund this with project) Connections to Parks and Trails Goal 3 - expand the number of natural surface trails in park preserves. The NRMP recommends closing off and restoring natural surface paths reducing the overall number in parks. This goal contradicts the NRMP. Community Health and Wellness Bullet 2 - add and develop an appreciation of nature Goal 1 Support healthy living by providing a well-connected park, open space, and trail system. Add: providing biodiverse natural areas and preserves Excellence and Innovation The Minnetonka parks, open space, and trail system must strive to meet the range of recreational needs and expectations for all park users. Add: preservation and restoration of natural resources, Goal 1 Initiatives Add More restored natural areas Goal 3 Add nonprofits Goal 4 Expand marketing and awareness of park facilities and programs ADD and value of natural amenities Goal 5 Add goals and objectives of NRMP. "managing invasive species" is too vague.

Anonymous

11/13/2021 09:08 AM

Seems like a great plan! I'm really hoping that we'll get trails alongside Excelsior Blvd. between 101 and the Glen Lake area either as part of this plan or sometime soon. Right now, even with the planned widening, it's too dangerous for my family to use. Trails would add a great deal of walkability to our community!

Anonymous

11/22/2021 02:24 PM

I agree on emphasizing plant species that are more adaptable to climate change. These should be native species that support the insect, bird and animal bio diversity of our parks and open spaces. An effort should be made to protect as many oaks as possible - oaks are climate resilient and most of the original habitat of Minnetonka. For example, planting ginko trees or non native linden trees will not support Minnetonka's bio diversity. "Natural surface trails" is mentioned twice and is an ambiguous term. We already put a mountain bike course in a community preserve. Hopefully, this term isn't code for additional mountain bike courses. When introducing "improvements" I think we have to be aware of the unintended consequences. For example, the stairway that divides the remnant prairie in Purgatory has introduced invasive species that are fanning out in both directions. This is one of the only remnant prairies we have in Minnetonka and great care must be taken when introducing anything into it.

CelticChica

11/22/2021 09:58 PM

Overall, I think the emphasis on only USERS of the parks should not be the only consideration. Adjacent or nearby residents can be very negatively affected by development of facilities/amenities, addition of passive and active human use, etc. to their privacy and enjoyment of their homes and property, which I submit is the main reason most people choose to live in Minnetonka. The City must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater with over aggressive efforts to develop parks and trails to the detriment of the property owners themselves. Environmental Sustainability Bullet 5: What does "improve" bicycle and pedestrian access mean? And does it apply to any and all parks no matter the need or the level of development appropriate to each individual park? Bullet 8: Does "in highly visible locations accessible to the public" mean that any and all restoration or sustainability efforts will be accessible to the public" no matter the level of development to accomplish this is appropriate to each individual park? Bullet 3: Expand establishment of native vegetation buffers around wetlands, creeks, ponds and lakes to include private property (with the permission of owners when it's determined to be critical to filter stormwater runoff. Goal 3 - Overall Where feasible or appropriate are critical considerations. Which entity (parks or natural resources) prioritizes and or decides what is equitable balance of natural

resources, recreation, development or improvements incorporating human use (passive or otherwise)? Will adjacent property owners or nearby residents of parks have any input or involvement in these decisions? Goal 4: All admirable initiatives! Connections to Parks and Trails - Overall Where feasible or appropriate are critical considerations. Connection and improvements to a park or trail are not always appropriate given the individual park. Adjacent property owners or nearby residents of parks need to have input or involvement in expanding and providing human use opportunities for social gatherings, people to connect with nature; signage, wayfinding, maps and promotion of such. Community Health and Wellness "Provide programs and facilities that meet the needs of the surrounding neighborhood..." Again, all the emphasis is on the USERS of parks and trails of the surrounding neighborhood with no mention of balancing it with the surrounding property owners. Equity and Inclusion Initiative 4 should be a bullet point in every Goal and Initiative; "Create park planning processes that provide meaningful opportunities for community residents to shape decisions about future park system planning and investment." Excellence and Innovation Initiatives 1 and 5 : Where feasible or appropriate are critical considerations in this, in collaboration with nearby residents and adjacent property owners in planning for park development or improvements.

**Mandatory Question** (5 response(s))

**Question type:** Essay Question



**From:** Dennis Yockers <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 6:23 AM

**To:** Sara Woeste <swoeste@minnetonkamn.gov>; Leslie Yetka <lyetka@minnetonkamn.gov>; Mike Funk <mfunk@minnetonkamn.gov>; Brad Wiersum <bwiersum@minnetonkamn.gov>; Deborah Calvert <dcalvert@minnetonkamn.gov>; Susan Carter <scarter@minnetonkamn.gov>; Brian Kirk <bkirk@minnetonkamn.gov>; Rebecca Schack <rschack@minnetonkamn.gov>; Kissy Coakley <kcoakley@minnetonkamn.gov>; Korey Beyersdorf <kbeyersdorf@minnetonkamn.gov>; James Durbin <jdurbin@minnetonkamn.gov>; Chris Gabler <cgabler@minnetonkamn.gov>; David Ingraham <dingraham@minnetonkamn.gov>; Ben Jacobs <bjacobs@minnetonkamn.gov>; Katie Semersky <ksemersky@minnetonkamn.gov>; Christopher Walick <cwalick@minnetonkamn.gov>

**Subject:** Review of Minnetonka Draft POST Plan - Dr. Dennis Yockers, Ph.D

Park Board Members, City Council Members and City Staff:

The City of Minnetonka and park and recreation staff have devoted significant financial resources and time in the development of this draft POST Plan. I have appreciated the opportunity to review and provide input into the draft plan. Over the past few days, I have spent a significant amount of time reading and reviewing the document.

The 20-year POST Plan is very comprehensive and ambitious. There are goals with countless initiatives that are presented in the plan. **The 20-year plan needs to also include a timeline for the recommended goals and initiatives. Which of the goals and initiatives should have the greatest priority? First year, Years 2-5, Years 6-10, and Years 10-20.** These activities will guide the annual work plans and budgets of the Parks and Recreation program, Natural Resources program and Public Works program. The current annual budgets will not address the magnitude of the goals and initiatives. **The city should begin the process to expand the operating budgets of these programs to address the increased costs associated with implementing the plan.**

When developing a plan that includes goals with objectives/initiatives, the objectives/initiatives need to be specific in terms of the audience, intended behaviors, strategies/conditions and the degree needed for accomplishment. What are the financial aspects associated with each objective/activity? **There needs to be an assessment/evaluation component that covers the 20-year POST plan.**

There is a very short time frame for the review of this plan by Minnetonka residents before the decision is made at the December City Council meeting, if that is still the target date. The average citizen will not spend the time to review the plan. It would be worthwhile to hold a couple of public meetings (day and evening) that present the POST plan to citizens and allow for comments. **This plan will have a major impact on the future of Minnetonka's park and recreation resources and the city's natural resources. The process should not be rushed until adequate feedback is gathered from citizens.**

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding comments on **my review and recommendations which are attached.**

Dr. Dennis Yockers, Ph.D  
Professor Emeritus, Natural Resources Management and Education  
College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point  
Address: 3648 Hazelmoor Place, Minnetonka, MN 55345

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Draft Minnetonka POST System Plan – Goals and Initiatives

Review by Dr. Dennis Yockers, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus of Natural Resources Management and Environmental Education  
College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point  
3648 Hazelmooor Place, Minnetonka, MN 55345

Draft Introduction – There eventually needs to be a timeline for the 15-20 year POST plan that prioritizes initiatives and when they will be addressed. All initiatives that are decided upon should have an assessment strategy. **The integration of the POST plan with the Natural Resources and Water Resources Plans is essential.**

### **Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency**

The connections between the POST, NRMP and Water Resources Management Plan should be clearly pointed out. An appendix should be created that presents the connections between the plans.

Goal 1:

Initiative 1 – utilize native plant species

Initiative 2 – Delete explore ways and just say Integrate green infrastructure

Initiative 3 – Delete consider ways and just say Create

Initiative 4 – Delete the word may and just say have significant environmental value

Initiative 7 – Improve energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy practices

Initiative 9 – add educational programs

Initiative 11 – add community groups

Goal 2:

Initiative 1 – add native landscaping

Goal 3: **Minnetonka’s natural resources should be preserved and have the highest priority when considering the development of recreational programs and facilities.**

Initiative 1 and Initiative 3 – **Again what does it mean by equitable balance? The importance of natural resources and their management should always guide the development of recreational programs and facilities**

Goal 4:

Initiative 1 – and increase wildlife biodiversity

Initiative 5 – Delete explore options to and just say Implement a turf conversion program

What about restoration maintenance?

### **Connections to Parks and Trails**

Introduction – **there is a need to address the natural resources management issues along city trails – major problems with erosion and invasive species**

Goal 2:

Initiative 2 – collaborate with cultural groups and community organizations

Initiative 4 – Assess the need for additional facilities – how are current facilities being utilized? – should conduct use surveys

Other initiative – provide volunteer opportunities

Goal 3:

Initiative 3 - assess the need for the number of natural surface trails in park reserves

Initiative 6 – also include the maintenance of these interpretive features – many of the present features are in poor condition

Initiative 7 – need a coordinated and vibrant volunteer program

Goal 4:

**It is important to always explore any partnering opportunities with surrounding communities before ANY decisions on recreational opportunities and park facilities**

### **Community Health and Wellness**

Introduction – **how do parks provide for a cleaner environment? This should be clearly explained. Not sure how a highly maintained turf focused park that utilizes a lot of resources such as water and energy along with fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides is a sustainable environment**

Bullet 2 – add ecological understanding

Goal 1:

Initiative 2 – define well-connected park and add natural areas and preserves



Initiative 8 – Improve and maintain existing parks and new park facilities, programs, and environments to optimize health and environmental benefits

## Equity and Inclusion

Goal 3: **Improve access to parks for unserved communities**

## Excellence and Innovation

Introduction – **All desired park uses can't be met – they need to be evaluated from many different perspectives – resiliency of Minnetonka's natural resources should be a priority lens that all park initiatives should be looked at**

Goal 1:

Following amenities in future park improvements:

Skating board park – this initiative should be looked at in conjunction with neighboring communities

Ninja warrior playground – reevaluate existing playgrounds if they can be modified to see if varying challenges can be added

We do not want to flood the parks with lots of trails especially rock components – need to be very careful with the quantity of trails throughout natural areas – might lead to an increase of invasives and edge effect

Restored natural areas

Goal 3:

Initiative 1 – Establish and Enhance partnerships – add non-profit organizations – to manage and restore natural resources – delete: perpetuate

Goal 4: add: and natural amenities

Initiative 1- park facilities, programs and add: natural amenities

Goal 5: Model sustainable practices in and provide funding for

Initiative 1 – Incorporate best sustainable practices

Initiative 2 – add: and trail systems

Initiative 6 – Use data driven evaluation of park facilities and natural resource management strategies

**From:** Friends of Minnetonka Parks <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 2:58 PM

**To:** Brad Wiersum <[bwiersum@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bwiersum@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Bradley Schaeppi <[bschaeppi@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bschaeppi@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Brian Kirk <[bkirk@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bkirk@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Kissy Coakley <[kcoakley@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:kcoakley@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Rebecca Schack <[rschack@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:rschack@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Deborah Calvert <[dcalvert@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:dcalvert@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Korey Beyersdorf <[kbeyersdorf@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:kbeyersdorf@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Chris Gabler <[cgabler@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:cgabler@minnetonkamn.gov)>; David Ingraham <[dingraham@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:dingraham@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Ben Jacobs <[bjacobs@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bjacobs@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Katie Semersky <[ksemersky@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:ksemersky@minnetonkamn.gov)>; James Durbin <[jdurbin@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:jdurbin@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Susan Carter <[scarter@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:scarter@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Christopher Walick <[cwalick@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:cwalick@minnetonkamn.gov)>

**Cc:** Mike Funk <[mfunk@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:mfunk@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Leslie Yetka <[lyetka@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:lyetka@minnetonkamn.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: FoMP Response to POST Plan Goals and Initiatives

My apologies. Here is the complete email.

1. The council should vote on the two plans at the same time. The POST Plan and NRMP were promised to *\*dovetail* together. Could you please show us how they do that with specific examples?
2. What is the overall vision for natural resources in Minnetonka? Long term plans should be organized into 3-year, 5-year and 10–20-year time increments stating the vision and measurable goals for each. Every park should have its own plan for restoration. What is the budget and staffing plan for this over the next three years?
3. What is the current state of our natural resources since the last evaluation? Are we making progress or backsliding?
4. The Friends of Minnetonka Parks ask for the inclusion of several **\*\*examples** of nature-based program amenities in the POST Plan *Excellence and Innovation*, Goal 1: Explore and Prioritize... (page 9). Currently there are none. We propose that the city staff and FoMP work together to create actionable initiatives for these ideas including goals, target audience and a budget. When will it be feasible to begin work on these nature-based initiatives with FoMP?

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\*There is not only a lack of a dovetailing document or appendix, but there are also examples of confusing statements between the two documents. Here is one that is especially concerning to us.

NRMP, p. 26 (section 3.10). *Improve eroding footpaths within parks. Eliminate unnecessary and redundant footpaths.* POST, Connections to Parks and Trails, Goal 3: *Expand the number of natural surface trails in park preserves.* What is the goal for footpaths and trails and why expand the number of trails in nature preserves? FoMP has raised concerns about the degradation of our preserves and about further, unplanned development of these high-quality nature areas.

**\*\*Examples of Nature-Based Program Amenities**

- Guided bird watching/bird counts.
- Nature photography.
- Flora/Fauna documentation using citizen scientist platforms such as iNaturalist and eBird.
- Guided nature walks.
- Nature-based therapies and Shinrin Yoku (Forest Bathing).
- Family-based nature learning curriculum and programs.
- Tai chi or yoga in the parks.
- Adopt a spot restoration efforts.
- Seasonal nature workshops for scout leaders, teachers, or faith leaders to train them how to use the seasonal materials that are developed.

We look forward to more discussion and collaboration with city staff and policy makers on these ideas.

On Wed, Nov 17, 2021 at 2:50 PM Friends of Minnetonka Parks <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
All, Here is our response to the POST Plan Goals and Initiatives.

1. The council should vote on the two plans at the same time. The POST Plan and NRMP were promised to *dovetail* together. Could you please show us how they do that with specific examples?
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**\*\*Examples of Nature-Based Program Amenities**

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**Minnetonka Park Board Item 9  
Meeting of December 1, 2021**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                      | Information Items  |
| <b>Park Board related goal:</b>      | N/A  |
| <b>Park Board related objective:</b> | N/A  |
| <b>Brief Description:</b>            | The following are informational items and developments that have occurred since the last park board meeting. |

**Burwell Spooktacular**

The second annual Burwell Spooktacular took place on Friday, October 29 from 5 – 8 p.m. in Minnetonka Mills Park. The weather was beautiful and it is estimated that over 1500 people attended the event. Those in attendance enjoyed games, crafts, bonfires, a magician, the fire department inflatable slide, Burwell House tours and food vendors.



**Farmers Market**

**Season Summary:**

- 17 weeks, 1 cancelled due to weather
- Tuesdays, June 8 - Sept 28, 2021; 3-7 p.m.
- Market Location: Civic Center Campus, Ice Arena B parking lot

**Vendors:**

- 48 rotating vendors
- 32 returning vendors
- 16 new vendors

**Community Booths:**

- 11 community booths
- 6 city depts. & commissions: Sustainability, Fire, Police, Elections, Natural Resources, POST plan

- 5 non-profits: Commuter Services, Girl Scouts East Waters, CMRS, ARC, Hennepin County Master Gardeners

**Products Overview:**

- Farm Produce: 11 farms brought a wide variety of seasonal fruits, vegetables, herbs & cut flowers. One certified organic produce farm was available at the market.
- Proteins: organic beef, pastured: pork, chicken, lamb, goat, duck, rabbit & goose.
- Eggs: chicken, duck & quail.
- Value-added/Pantry: Honey, maple syrup, salsa, hot sauce, BBQ & other sauces, spices, popcorn, mixing syrups, fresh juices, kombucha, coffee beans, pickled & canned goods, jams, jellies.
- Baked goods: cookies, granola, variety of breads, pretzels, confections, scones, alfajores, cakes.
- Ready to eat: empanadas, pad thai, fried rice, egg rolls, Thai tea, Vietnamese salads, iced coffee, honey lemon iced tea.
- Other: dog treats, houseplants, potted mums, soaps & botanical self-care products, candles, greeting cards, crafts.

**Drought Effects:**

- The drought had a noticeable effect on most of our produce and livestock farm vendors, delaying some crops, shortening or lengthening the season for some, and reducing the yield in others. Ex: It was a bad year for strawberries, and a great year for tomatoes.
- Farms that were able to irrigate put in extra labor to produce their crops, farms not able to irrigate had significant crop loss.
- Customers noticed some of these changes from the norm, and most were receptive to a conversation about the drought and the effect on the farmers, showing their support for the market and the farmers.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Attendance</b> | <b>Weekly Average</b>          | <b>Best Day</b>               |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>2021</b> | <b>11,541</b>     | <b>721/market (16 markets)</b> | <b>800 attended 7/20/2021</b> |
| 2020        | 11,107            | 653/market (17 markets)        | 1,005 attended 8/4/2020       |
| 2019        | 7,728             | 483/market (16 markets)        | 705 attended 7/30/2019        |
| 2018        | 7,215             | 481/market (15 markets)        | 724 attended 7/17/2018        |
| 2017        | 6,890             | 510/market (13.5 markets)      | 631 attended 8/15/2017        |
| 2016        | 4,225             | 338/market (12.5 markets)      |                               |

**Customer and Vendor Feedback:**

- Some vendors did better sales than others this year.
- Produce was the most popular category, prepared (hot) food, proteins, and bakery also did well.
- Value-added/pantry items were hit and miss, depending on the product.
- Vendors are excited about the idea of moving the market to a more visible location in the future.
- Customers were very happy to have the Power of Produce club back this year.
- Attendees enjoyed the live music, as well as the synergy between the farmers market and nearby Music in the Park events.
- Kids & parents enjoyed a weekly scavenger hunt, which took participating families on a full tour of the farmers market each week.
- We heard often that the farmers market is an important part of customers' weekly routines.
- Parking at the farmers market is still a challenge on busier days.
- SNAP participants told us that they appreciate the token and matching market bucks service and the ability to shop at the farmers market.



Winter Markets:

- The 2021-22 winter market season began on Saturday, November 13th.
- Approximately 228 residents and 22 vendors attended the market.
- Upcoming winter markets: Dec 4, Jan 8, Feb 12, Mar 12.

Upcoming for 2022:

- Begin planning to move the summer market to Ridgedale Commons in spring of 2023
- Given a new location, survey customers and vendors throughout the 2022 season requesting:
  - preferred day(s) of the week for a market
  - preferred time(s) of day
  - length of season
- Based on customer and vendor input, try a pop-up farmers market in fall 2022 at new Ridgedale Commons Park, if park construction schedule allows.





**Minnetonka Park Board Item 10  
Meeting of December 1, 2021**

| <b>Upcoming 6-Month Meeting Schedule</b> |             |                     |   |                      |
|--|-------------|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| <b>Day</b>                               | <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting Type</b> | <b>Agenda Business Items</b>  | <b>Special Notes</b> |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 1/5/22      | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of chair and vice-chair</li> <li>• POST Plan</li> <li>• Park Maintenance Overview</li> <li>• Park Recycling</li> </ul> | 6:30 pm start        |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 2/2/22      | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of 2022 Park Board Strategic Plan</li> <li>• POST Plan</li> <li>• Guidelines for Funding Park Projects</li> </ul>    |                      |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 3/2/22      | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>   |                      |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 4/6/22      | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Resources Education and Outreach Plan</li> </ul>   |                      |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 5/11/22     | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>   | Park Board Tour      |
| <b>Wed</b>                               | 6/1/22      | Regular             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of 2023-2027 Capital Improvement Plan</li> </ul>  |                      |

**Other meetings and activities to note:**

| <b>Day</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Description</b>                | <b>Special Notes</b>                          |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sat</b>  | 12/4/21     | Winter Farmers Market             | Community Center, 9 am – 1 pm                 |
| <b>Tues</b> | 12/14/21    | Winter/Spring Registration Begins | Tues – General & Ice<br>Thur (12/16) – Senior |

**Items to be scheduled:**