

Committee Report

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Community Development Committee Meeting: Jan. 16, 2024

For the Metropolitan Council: Jan. 24, 2024

Business Item: 2024-8

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and Cedar Lake Regional Trail Long-Range Plan Amendment

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the Cedar Lake Regional Trail Long-Range Plan Amendment.
3. Require Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager prior to initiating any construction.
4. Advise Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to consider implementing the recommendations for solar resources and transportation in the Advisory Comments section of the business item.

Summary of Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Discussion

Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on January 4, 2024. Emma Pachuta and Adam Arvidson, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), were in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Dillenburg sought clarification on issues raised by a community member, sent via email to Commissioners. Chair Yarusso provided additional context, noting the message focused on encroachments and public access on the southeast shore of Cedar Lake. Pachuta responded the area between the Kenilworth Channel and Cedar Lake Parkway was the subject of a great deal of discussion during the planning process, and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) ultimately chose to recommend restoring the shoreline to native habitat. Pachuta added there are 14 residential properties that abut the parkland, a number of which have legal encroachments. During the planning process, people expressed a variety of perspectives about the future of this shoreline, from restoring native habitat to a soft surface pedestrian connection to a hard surface walking and biking trail. Given technical challenges of siting a trail and the plan's focus on natural system restoration and water quality, the CAC recommended restoring the shoreline to native habitat.

Chair Yarusso asked whether the encroachments would be removed and sought clarification on shoreline restoration. Pachuta responded the encroachments would be removed when funding was available to do the shoreline restoration work, which would include some grading, removal of walls, and naturalization of shoreline. Pachuta added the CAC would revisit the idea of a trail once the shoreline was restored.

Commissioner Dillenburg asked whether there would be any issues with removing the encroachments. Arvidson reiterated the legality of the encroachments, but added the MPRB Board had taken two actions that will have an impact on encroachments going forward. First, if there is any change in property ownership, new owners must reapply for an encroachment. Second, the

Board adopted a new policy that strongly discourages encroachments immediately adjacent to water bodies. Arvidson also reiterated the technical challenges to siting a trail in this space.

Chair Yarusso acknowledged that a trail may not be practical to build in this space, but said public land should be publicly accessible. Yarusso encouraged MPRB to use signage in the vicinity to clarify the land along the shoreline is public and to share its future restoration vision.

Commissioner Harris asked if the plan included parking for the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. Pachuta responded that the plan does not add or remove parking for the regional trail. Commissioners Dillenburg and Bouska responded there is street parking available. Bouska followed up that there are parking lots along the northwest shore of Cedar Lake and suggested some additional wayfinding signage could be beneficial in this area.

Chair Yarusso sought clarification around the number and location of additional restrooms called for in the plan. Pachuta responded one permanent restroom would be added at East Cedar Lake Beach and three restrooms would be added at Lake of the Isles: two on the north side and one on the south side. Arvidson noted that the prospect of adding restrooms was also a subject of great discussion during the planning process, with some people proposing none and others proposing several. The CAC sought to balance the varying perspectives.

Chair Yarusso referenced the varying perspectives and asked if MPRB staff was confident the plan strikes the appropriate balance overall. Yarusso also asked how additional engagement would occur. Pachuta responded MPRB extended its engagement by a year to reach more and diverse voices, and that the CAC is tasked with weighing all of the input received and making final recommendations. (The MPRB Board approved the Plan on July 5, 2023.) Arvidson added that it is MPRB policy to reengage the community before it implements capital improvements.

Chair Yarusso asked if MPRB engaged people outside of the project's immediate vicinity. Arvidson responded MPRB's Community Engagement policy for the regional parts of their system requires that more than half of CAC members are from beyond the immediate vicinity.

Commissioner Harris suggested the Council should consider sharing information about public meetings for regional park and trail planning efforts. Council Parks Manager Emmett Mullin responded that this is something the Council Parks unit will look into.

Commissioner Bouska thanked MPRB staff for their work.

Chair Yarusso reiterated his suggestion that MPRB install signage about shoreline restoration on the southeast shore of Cedar Lake.

There was not a quorum present at the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting, but those present signaled the plan should advance to the Community Development Committee, acknowledging the issues and suggestions in this summary.



Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission: January 4, 2024

Community Development Committee: January 16, 2024

Metropolitan Council: January 24, 2024

Business Item: 2024-8

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and Cedar Lake Regional Trail Long-Range Plan Amendment

District(s), Member(s):	District C, Tess Bouska District D, Vacant District 6, Robert Lilligren District 8, Anjuli Cameron
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

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Background

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has submitted a Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles, also known as the “Cedar-Isles Plan,” for Council review. This plan includes portions of two adjacent Regional Park System units: Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail are centrally located in the Regional Park System in southwest Minneapolis (Figures 1 and 2). The plan amendment focuses on the park spaces surrounding Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles, and Dean Parkway, and a segment of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail (Figure 3).

Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles are defined by their unique characteristics within Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. Cedar Lake is known as the wilder and more natural lake of the two, while Lake of the Isles has formal lawns with walking and biking trails.

The Cedar-Isles Plan includes recommendations focused on water quality, natural resources, access and circulation, accessibility, safety, historical and cultural resources, and amenities and programming.

The Cedar-Isles Plan updates and replaces the portions of the 1978 Council-approved Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Long-Range Plan that address Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. The Cedar-Isles Plan also proposes minor facility updates and prairie enhancement in the Cedar Lake Regional Trail corridor, which has a 1993 Council-approved long-range plan. Because both units have Council-approved long-range plans on file, Council staff consider the Cedar-Isles Plan to be an amendment to the two existing plans.

A long-range plan focused on Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet was approved by the Council in 2018 ([Business Item No. 2018-112](#)). An amendment to the Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet plan was approved by the Council in 2023 ([Business Item No. 2023-169](#)).

Rationale

The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail long-range plan amendments are consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* including Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail long-range plan amendments advance the Thrive outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region. The plan amendments also advance the Stewardship outcome by responsibly managing our region’s finite resources including lakes, wetlands, and natural habitats.

Funding

The total estimated cost to implement the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail long-range plan amendments is approximately \$39,955,348 to \$58,381,708. The majority of the estimated costs is for water quality and natural resource improvements (Table 1).

Of this total estimated cost, an estimated \$2,317,860-\$2,587,860 is specific to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail corridor (Attachment 2).

The estimated acquisition cost is the estimated market value for one of two proposed acquisitions, a 0.27-acre parcel of vacant residential land. The other proposed acquisition, a 33.85-acre parcel known as the “remnant lands,” is owned by the Metropolitan Council and does not have an estimated market value. Proposed acquisitions are discussed in the Analysis.

Table 1: Total Estimated Costs

Item / Activity	Estimated Cost
Water Quality	\$20,333,460 - \$23,879,820
Natural Resources	\$9,765,960
Access and Circulation	\$4,338,768 - \$17,778,768
Amenities and Wayfinding	\$3,892,160 - \$4,832,160
Historic Preservation	\$1,500,000
Acquisition	\$625,000
Total Estimated Costs	\$39,955,348 - \$58,381,708



Figure 1. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail location in the Regional Park System

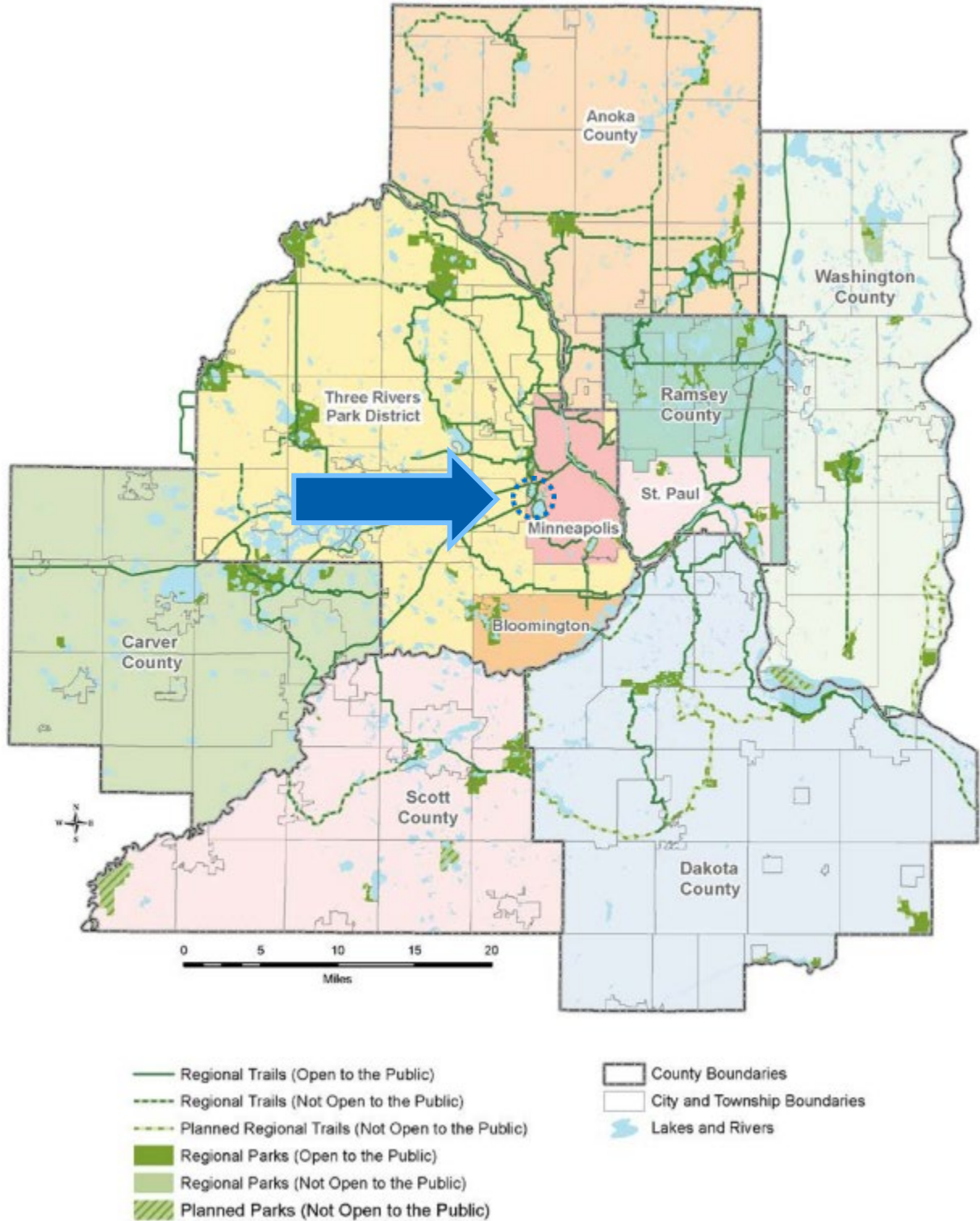


Figure 2. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park location in Minneapolis

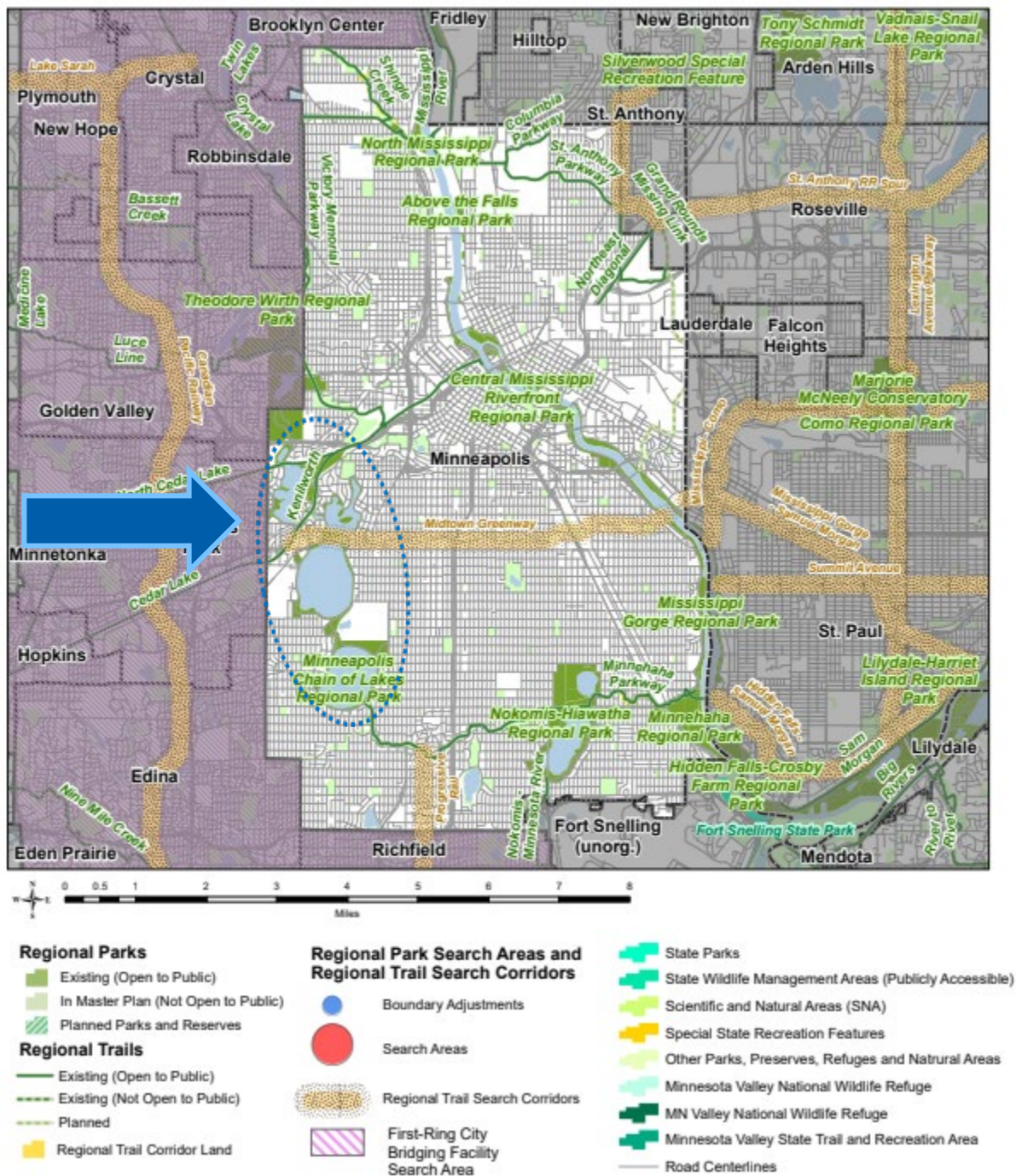
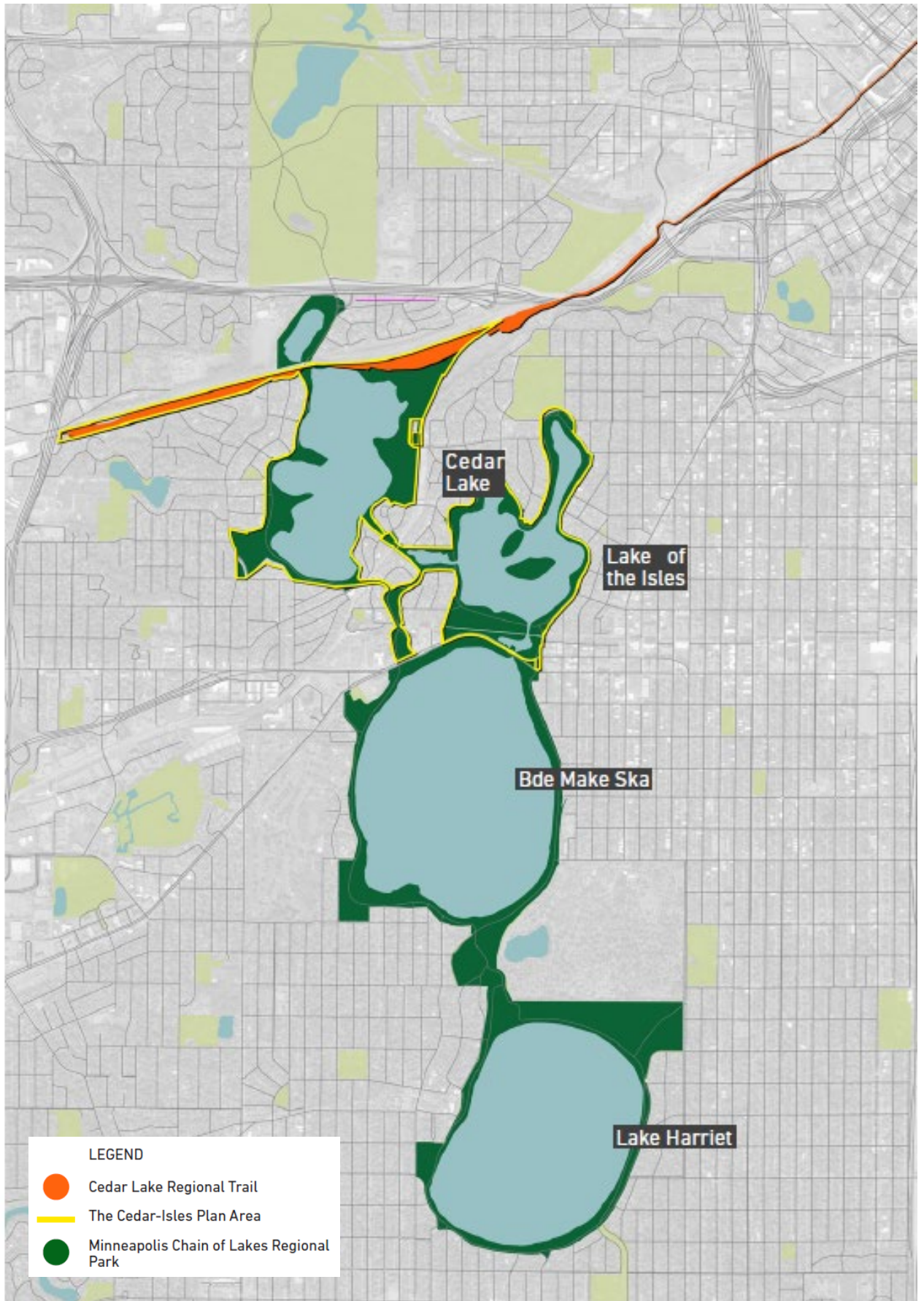


Figure 3: The Cedar-Isles Plan Area within Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park (LRPA pg. 8)



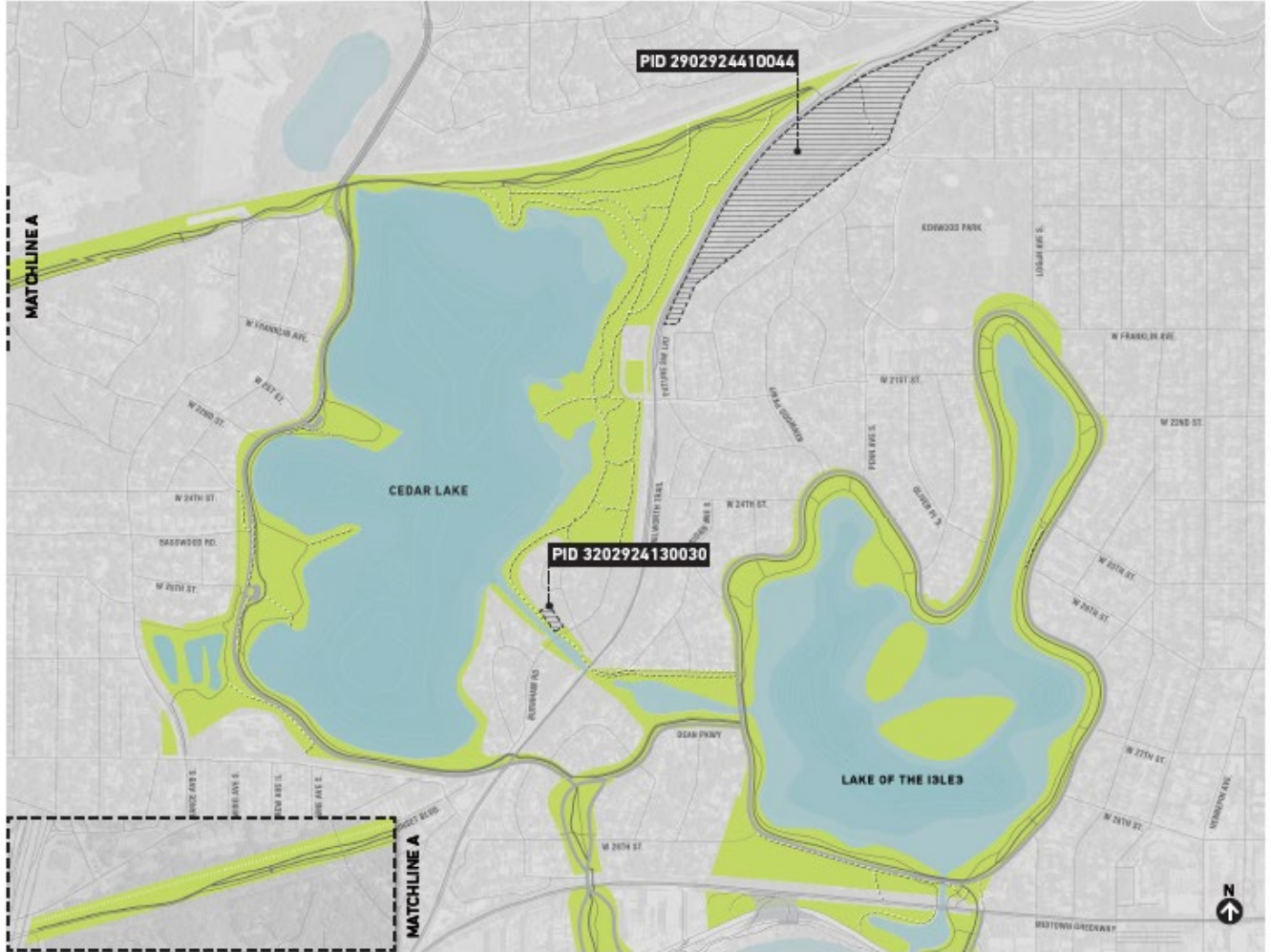
Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires long-range plans for regional parks to address 13 items: boundaries, acquisition costs, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, equity analysis, public awareness, accessibility, and natural resources. The following analyzes the long-range plan against those requirements.

Boundaries

The Cedar-Isles project area includes Cedar Lake and the surrounding parkland, Lake of the Isles and the surrounding parkland, the Kenilworth Channel that connects both lakes, Dean Parkway, and a portion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Proposed Acquisition Map (LRPA pg. 231)



Acquisition Costs

During the planning process, two parcels of land not currently owned or managed by the MPRB were identified as future acquisition sites, Parcel 3202924130030 (Parcel 320-) and Parcel 2902924410044 (Parcel 290-) (Figure 4). Formal assessments have not been completed for either parcel at this time and there is currently no timeline for acquisition of either parcel.

Parcel 320- is a privately owned vacant 0.27-acre lot adjacent to the Kenilworth Channel. When the property was purchased in 2018, the new property owner tore down the house that was on the site and returned the property to habitat, adding a semi-public brick path with benches and stairs that connect Burnham Road to an ad hoc trail along the north side of the Kenilworth Channel. New trees, shrubs, and plants were also planted. If acquired, this parcel would complete a public pedestrian connection from Burnham Road bridge to Cedar Lake along the north side of the channel. The plan proposes formalizing this public connection.



Parcel 290- is a 33.85-acre property adjacent to the project area, located to the east of the Cedar forest on the northeast side of Cedar Lake. This parcel, known as the “remnant lands” to many, is currently an unmanaged forested area with minimal ad hoc trails. It was identified as a parcel for MPRB to acquire during the METRO Green Line Extension planning process. The Cedar-Isles Plan formalizes this by proposing to acquire the parcel, maintaining the majority of the land as a natural area, plus formalizing an existing ad hoc pedestrian connection that begins at Douglas Avenue and Kenwood Parkway, connecting down to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail and future light rail stop.

The “remnant land” parcel is currently owned and managed by the Metropolitan Council. A Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council titled “Preservation of Kenilworth Corridor in Public Ownership and Control” states:

“The Council intends that any property located in the Kenilworth Corridor that is now owned or subsequently acquired from BNSF Railroad by the Council that will not actively be used either for the Project or freight rail... shall be conveyed to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for use as parkland upon terms and conditions that are agreeable to both the Council and the Board. The Council intends that any property located in the Kenilworth Corridor that it may acquire from HCRRA (Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority) that it will not actively use for either the Project or freight rail shall be conveyed to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for use as parkland upon terms and conditions that are agreeable to both the Council and the Park Board. This refers to the ‘excess’ or ‘remnant’ pieces of land and does not include any land that will actively be used for the Project, freight rail or the bicycle and pedestrian trail.”

Acquisition for Parcel 290- should be pursued following the completion of METRO Green Line Extension construction.

Demand Forecast

According to Metropolitan Council regional forecasts, the regional population will grow from 3,163,104 as of 2020 to 4,001,000 by 2050, a 26% population increase. In addition to population growth within the region, the annual estimated visits to the regional park system have continued to increase over time. The 2021 Annual Use Estimate includes the highest number of visits on record at 64.9 million. Of these 64.9 million visits, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park makes up an estimated 7.6 million visits, which is almost double the number of the next most visited park, Como Regional Park Zoo & Conservatory, at an estimated 4.6 million visits. Additionally, the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park has consistently been the most visited regional park for at least the last 15 years based on previous Use Estimate numbers, and will continue to maintain high visitor numbers in the years ahead.

The METRO Green Line Extension project includes two stops that are close to or immediately adjacent to the project area. The Bryn Mawr and West 21st Street Stations will both bring new users to Cedar Lake. When completed, it is projected that this line will carry 17,450 to 20,975 passengers a day.

To meet the needs of increased user demands, recommendations will clarify mobility modes and increase the capacity of the parkland through widening existing bicycle and pedestrian routes where appropriate, adding new spur trails where needed to improve access to the parks, and proposing measures to expand pedestrian and bicycle accessibility while slowing vehicular traffic.

Development Concept

The Cedar-Isles Plan includes a vision and guiding principles for the project area, which lays the foundation for recommendations both project-wide and within identified locations. Recommendations prioritize improving water quality and preserving natural areas; aim to honor the unique character of each lake; and respond to Community Advisory Committee (CAC), community, MPRB staff, and agency feedback.

Goals and recommendations in the Cedar-Isles Plan are divided into the following topics: Water Quality, Natural Resources, Access and Circulation, Accessibility, Safety, Historic and Cultural

Resources, and Program and Amenities.

Where broader goals (versus more specific recommendations) are included for these topics in the Cedar-Isles Plan, the goals are included in this staff report. Where broader goals are not included in the Cedar-Isles Plan, recommendations are included in this report instead.

Water Quality and Natural Resources goals are located in the Natural Resources section of the Analysis on pages 16-17 of this report. Accessibility recommendations are located in the Accessibility section of the Analysis on page 15 of this report. Historical and Cultural Resources recommendations are located in the Equity Analysis section on pages 12-15 of this report.

Access and Circulation goals include:

1. Align circulation infrastructure and amenities with the park plan's vision and guiding principles.
2. Improve circulation and access for park visitors while protecting water quality and wildlife habitat and prioritizing visitor safety in this order: pedestrians, bicycles/roller skaters/ skateboarders, electric micro-mobility (ex: scooters, bikes, hover boards), motorized vehicles.
3. Clarify circulation networks and links among people, wildlife, and natural resources with low-impact signage and other tools.
4. Preserve and protect natural and cultural assets to protect the regionally unique and character-defining features of the project area.
5. Provide clear, intuitive ways for people to move through the project area in light of the anticipated increase in visits from the new 21st Street Light Rail Station.
6. Expand mobility, access, and accessibility for people of all abilities, backgrounds, and choice of transportation.
7. Enhance user safety and reduce conflicts.
8. Enhance existing connections and thoroughfares frequently used to enter the park. Visitors should feel welcomed, engaged, and confident in navigating their route and experience upon entering the park.

The plan formalizes a number of well-traveled ad hoc soft surface walking paths through the forest on the north, northeast, and east side of Cedar Lake.

A new pedestrian trail is proposed along the Kenilworth Channel between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles, increasing park visitors' ability to connect between both lakes as was originally intended in the initial design of the park system.

Though ideas to create a path around Cedar Lake were discussed during the engagement process, no trail connection is proposed due to the technical challenges that exist in making a full connection on land with the existing width of parkland available. This was coupled with strong opposition to adding a boardwalk from some members of the public. Ultimately, the CAC recommended adding an expanded littoral edge and improved shoreline buffer along the southeast shoreline. Existing encroachments would be removed at the time of project implementation and homeowners would have to apply to the Board of Commissioners for a new encroachment license if they were interested in using public land for private use again in the future. Once the shoreline is restored, MPRB should then assess whether a future path connection is possible amidst the shoreline restoration.

Along the west side of Cedar Lake, the plan proposes widening the walking and biking trails adjacent to Cedar Lake Parkway. Additional pedestrian-specific trail segments are proposed to give people walking direct access to trails and amenities. The parkway and parking lots will be retained to maintain vehicular access to the park. To improve safety for park visitors crossing the parkway, a number of enhanced intersections have been proposed.

Lake of the Isles will retain the current paved bike and pedestrian trails, the parkway, and parking bays in their same general location. The existing paved bikeway will continue to be one-way,



opposite vehicle traffic, and will be complemented with a one-way on-street bikeway traveling the same direction as vehicle traffic.

The paved bike and pedestrian trails and parkway along Dean Parkway will be retained. In areas where possible, the trails should be widened to improve safety. The plan also proposes to improve safety for all transportation modes with enhanced intersection improvements where Dean Parkway intersects with Cedar Lake Parkway, Lake of the Isles Parkway, and on both sides of the Midtown Greenway.

In order to mitigate effects of seasonal flooding on circulation, all proposed trails will be designed at an elevation above seasonal flood levels. Existing trails will be raised to this level during routinely scheduled rehabilitation.

Safety recommendations include:

1. Provide lighting in accordance with The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials guidelines.
2. Consider providing emergency buttons at locations where less lighting is intended or in less traveled areas.
3. Increase sightlines through the forest to enhance visibility along paved and soft surface trails through removal of understory invasive species like buckthorn.
4. Revisit safety conditions at Cedar Lake East Beach once the METRO Green Line Extension is up and running. Evaluate current park police presence and consider other safety improvements such as programming, lighting, signage, etc.

Amenities and Programming goals include:

1. Take cues from how people use the parks and lakes today to maintain, improve, and in some cases build upon existing amenities within the project area.
2. Retain existing year-round and seasonal activities and enhance safety at entry points and areas with grouped activities.
3. Honor the unique qualities of each lake and connect visitors to these distinct experiences.
4. Respect and celebrate the history of the landscape through programming and interpretation.
5. Balance protection of and access to previously disconnected areas of parkland with careful circulation, amenity, and wayfinding planning.

New amenities for Cedar Lake include a dock, several formalized water access points, viewing spots, a picnic area, and enhanced signage.

New amenities at Lake of the Isles include a dock, a few formalized water access points, some picnic areas, and enhanced signage.

With the many activities available through the project area, amenities that support comfort, accessibility, welcome, and the ability for people to stay in the park for longer periods of time, are important considerations for the future. One of the ways the plan supports these considerations is by modifying and expanding restroom options. A change from a portable to a permanent restroom is proposed at Cedar Lake East Beach where there are many activities and programming, both recreational and educational, that could benefit from having a permanent option. For Lake of the Isles, the plan proposes to expand the number of restrooms near existing and proposed amenities: at the northern arm, near the dock at the northwest side of the lake, and the multi-use fields to the south.

The plan adds a few enhanced welcome entry points for Cedar Lake Regional Trail and Dean Parkway that will support navigation through these transportation-heavy portions of the project area. These entry points will build upon existing signage and include welcome and wayfinding

signage and some locations may include other amenities such as seating areas, bike racks, city bikes, gardens, and/or water fountains.

Conflicts

The Chain of Lakes Regional Park and Cedar Lake Regional Trail exist in the context of Minneapolis neighborhoods with a broad mix of existing uses. The park is compatible with and, in many cases, a benefit to existing uses. This portion of the park system inherently has conflicts considering the current railroad lines, public infrastructure, utilities, and development uses. MPRB anticipates there will be a need for continued dialogue with community and agency partners as MPRB implements projects and acquires park land in identified areas. As the owner and operator of the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and the Cedar Lake Regional Trail, MPRB will often play a lead role in coordination efforts for projects on parkland.

Projects that involve direct impact to the lakes and stormwater will require coordination with Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and other agencies with jurisdiction. Where implementation involves curb and gutter improvements, signage and wayfinding installation, and stormwater outlet improvements, the City of Minneapolis or St. Louis Park will serve as a collaborator or project lead. Projects involving transit service will require coordination with the Metropolitan Council. Projects that involve Sites of Significance will require coordination with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

The METRO Green Line Extension project that is currently under construction will improve access to the area and potentially increase park visitor numbers and therefore have an impact on parkland. MPRB will continue to stay in communication with Green Line project staff to ensure that park benefits and concerns are addressed throughout construction and implementation.

Public Services

Recommendations in the Cedar-Isles Plan can largely be accomplished with the existing non-recreational public services and facilities. Extensions to existing utilities may be needed in some areas to accommodate future visitor amenities in the park such as drinking fountains and lighting.

MPRB will coordinate with the City of Minneapolis, City of St. Louis Park, Hennepin County, Metro Transit, and other agencies as applicable for intersection and trail improvements and connections to other transportation infrastructure as applicable. It will continue to be important to coordinate with the Metropolitan Council as the METRO Green Line Extension project nears completion and specifically with Metro Transit as new or improved bus rapid transit stations are planned, as well as any future regional transportation access points within or adjacent to the park.

MPRB should continue to coordinate with the City of Minneapolis and Saint Louis Park on future public stormwater improvements that connect to the Chain of Lakes. East Cedar Lake Beach is a location that will require an update to public utilities since a new plumbed restroom is proposed within the plan.

Operations

MPRB has adopted a code of ordinances that include park rules and regulations for the Minneapolis park system. They are available online: <https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about-us/ordinances-park-rules/>. Information is also posted throughout the park system and includes park hours, fees, permitted and prohibited activities, maps, and emergency contact information.

MPRB requires a permit for any construction on MPRB property or use of MPRB property for construction on nearby properties. In addition, the City of Minneapolis reviews all construction projects within parks and parkways for compliance with city zoning ordinances and permit requirements, such as erosion control. Any development that may impact stormwater runoff and water quality may also trigger review and/or permitting by MCWD.

MPRB recently adopted a new Land Policy that provides specific information on park use, including encroachments. Under this policy, all encroachments must possess a valid license, and these licenses are revocable by the Board of Commissioners at any time. In addition, a 2021



Board-adopted resolution requires that any licensed encroachments adjacent to or within water bodies will see a termination of that license when the property changes hands.

Partner Engagement

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was made up of staff from different agencies and organizations that have a connection to the project area. Most representatives on the TAC worked for agencies that have a city, region, or state-wide focus. TAC members provided feedback on the proposed design ideas and shared how their respective agency processes may overlap with the design. The TAC also provided information about work their agencies were doing that may overlap or require future coordination.

MPRB also utilized a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) during the planning process. The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was made up of MPRB staff representatives from departments across the organization. The PAC provided insight and expertise about existing conditions, maintenance, and programming within the project area and shared feedback on draft materials. PAC members were a resource to answer community questions during community engagement and distribute information with other staff.

The Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles, which included commissioner amendments, was approved by the MPRB Board of Commissioners on July 5, 2023 (Attachment 1).

Public Engagement and Participation

Community engagement for the Cedar-Isles Plan began in the winter of 2019 and continued through the 45-day comment period from January 23 – March 10, 2023. Throughout the process, MPRB aimed to engage as many stakeholder groups as possible to ensure the plan reflected a diversity of voices. The project team worked directly with stakeholders to ensure their perspectives were consistently understood, considered, and reflected in project decisions.

Engagement for the project included “local” neighborhoods, defined as those immediately next to the park, along with people from all over the region. The local neighborhoods included: Bryn Mawr, Cedar-Isles-Dean, East Isles, Kenwood, and Lowry Hill. Everywhere outside of these five neighborhoods was defined as “regional.”

MPRB used a variety of ongoing project communication methods including a project page, storymap, email announcements, direct communication, lawn signs, and virtual walking tours.

The TAC and PAC were referenced in the Partner Engagement section. MPRB also used several other advisory committees to engage with community and the public during the planning process including the CAC, Water Quality Subcommittee, and Circulation Subcommittee.

The CAC was made up of 17 community members, nine appointed by MPRB Commissioners and eight appointed by a selection committee of staff and community representatives. CAC members were meant to represent a wide variety of perspectives and are geographically distributed within the local and broader regional area.

CAC meetings were hosted virtually and, towards the end of the process, in person. All meetings were open to the public with meeting materials shared on the project webpage.

During early phases of community engagement, staff implemented a number of strategies to gather community input on the vision, opportunities, and challenges within the project area. Due to COVID-19 shutdowns, staff extended the original timeline through the summer of 2021. This allowed staff to spend additional time engaging a broader audience of community members about their vision for this area of the park system. During this engagement phase, participation from stakeholders ranged from Inform to Involve on the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.

Overall themes of early engagement included:

- Support for and the importance of elevating water quality within the plan



- Appreciation of the nature and the beauty on site
- Support for preserving and expanding the natural and forested areas
- Support for the preservation of old growth trees and planting of new trees
- Interest in retaining open green space for programming and views
- Appreciation for the existing walking and biking network
- Interest in improving safety for pedestrians/bicyclists
- Appreciation for existing programming and amenities on site

Later phases of community engagement focused on initial and preferred park concepts. During this engagement phase, participation from stakeholders ranged from Consult to Involve on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

Engagement on preferred park concepts was outlined in the Plan according to the method used: online survey, social media, and in-person engagement, including both open houses and youth engagement. Some of the themes included:

5. Support for improved natural areas
6. Concern about cost of maintenance and improvements
7. Suggestion to further improve walking and biking access
8. Support for and opposition to formalization of ad hoc forest trails near Cedar Lake
9. Concern that there is not a path proposed around Cedar Lake
10. Concern that accessibility is not adequately represented in the concept
11. Suggestion for a permanent restroom
12. General support for winter amenities
13. Support for preferred park concept

Feedback from the public was foundational to the development of the plan. The final plan was informed by the CAC recommendations and a number of additional items raised throughout engagement. Water quality, for example, was identified as a top priority early in the process, and the final plan was crafted through this focus.

The CAC worked diligently to find consensus amongst many topics, and often, a consensus meant identifying a “middle ground” between differing perspectives.

Equity Analysis

Project Data

To understand MPRB engagement goals, demographics were assessed for the adjacent neighborhood, the City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County. MPRB outlined several target audiences who have historically been underrepresented in planning processes to engage during the process to ensure their voices were included:

- Cultural communities
- Seniors/elders
- People with disabilities
- Renters
- Youth
- People who do not currently visit the Cedar-Isles area

The area that includes what is now known as Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles was inhabited by Indigenous people for thousands of years. Following the forced displacement of Dakota people, European settlement and urban development occurred, which eventually included establishment of the city of Minneapolis in 1867. Today, the land and water within the park system, including the

Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles project area, continues to hold significance for the Dakota people.

Indigenous community members face several contemporary barriers to be able to access this area of the park system. Barriers include but are not limited to an inability to connect with this area; feeling unwelcome; not seeing themselves represented in current park users or amenities; inability for elders to access the natural areas due to difficult terrain; and the cost of using the park due to parking, rentals, permits, watercraft fees, etc.

Additionally, the legacy of redlining and racial covenants have shaped access to this area by informing where people lived based on the color of their skin and/or income. Today, the homeownership rate for the land around both lakes is about 7.2% higher, average income is about \$70,500 more, and the population is about 26.7% whiter compared to Minneapolis as a whole, according to the American Community Survey 2017-2021.

Public Engagement

Project staff sought paid services from institutions, nonprofits, and cultural organizations to design and implement engagement within specific audiences. This Community Collaborator initiative was a paid opportunity that had two engagement rounds during Phase One. Audiences engaged included:

14. Residents in Loring Park, Steven Square, Whittier that included renters; those who identify as LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, or having a disability
15. Somali residents in Minneapolis
16. Local youth ages 10-17
17. People with disabilities and their caretakers outside of Minneapolis
18. Indigenous youth and adults alongside Minneapolis residents
19. Community members who live in or are associated with North Minneapolis

Community Collaborator themes included:

20. Desire for greater accessibility for people of all abilities and races
21. Acknowledgement that there is a lack of diversity in the area
22. Interest in elevating Indigenous legacy through education and interpretation
23. Concerns about safety, specifically for people of color
24. Support for additional art and culture

Historical and Cultural resources recommendations include:

1. Work with tribal advisors to connect people with the full story and broad history of the lakes, including indigenous history. Develop appropriate strategies to amplify indigenous stories, cultural practices, and connection to the land.
2. Protect current and desired use of the landscape by indigenous people
3. Add culturally important plants through guidance by tribal representatives.
4. Provide a connection to exiled communities today by:
 - Increasing partnerships and programming with tribes and indigenous community members.
 - Providing spaces for ceremonies and interpretation.
 - Creating events and experiences that invite indigenous community members to the area.
 - Considering indigenous land management.
 - Offering reduced or free parking, rentals, programming, and other costs associated with parkland.
5. Expand opportunities for Minnesota Dakota community members to connect with the lakes.
6. Use Dakota language on site signs to improve understanding that this is Dakota homeland and help indigenous people feel more welcome.



7. Preserve archaeological sites by discouraging visitor use at those locations. Some archaeological sites are currently in active use, so limit development and avoid ground disturbance in those areas.
8. Consider incorporating native plans to improve ecological health while maintaining the historic waterbody outline that was created in the early 20th century.
9. Complete documentation of historical features whenever they must be substantially altered or removed as part of plan implementation projects, such as WPA-era walls and other features.
10. Appropriately document archaeological resources, including any below the water's surface, according to professional best practices, and conserve findings in accordance with applicable rules and laws.
11. Repair the ecological condition and littoral edge of the lakes by improving habitat for animals and adding native plants.
12. Protect significant cultural resources and historic features that characterize the design and development of the parks.
13. Retain the historic design intent of being able to travel between the lakes, either by water or other means.
14. Preserve portions of the lawn around Lake of the Isles that are at key intersections and provide views across the lake, as seen in park plans.
15. Maintain the historically created topography and contoured edge of Lake of the Isles.

Evaluation Summary

In addition to the residents and organizations who opted in to engage with the Cedar-Isles process, MPRB actively worked to reach voices oftentimes left out in planning processes through different communication channels and the MPRB Community Collaborators program. This feedback was consistently shared with the CAC, however, many of these voices were not actively represented at MPRB public meetings or events.

MPRB also hosted several conversations and site tours with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) that informed the final plan. Though the THPOs allowed most of their feedback to be shared in the documented public process, they requested that MPRB staff keep some feedback confidential, especially specific sites of significance; for this reason, some ways that the document responds to the Indigenous feedback is not directly stated in the plan.

Similar to other planning processes, staff learned that it was often easier to engage residents who live in the adjacent communities than to engage people who live in other parts of the city or region. MPRB staff found that many neighboring residents shared input numerous times through several engagement avenues; specifically, the online survey and public comment time at CAC meetings were overrepresented with local voices and underrepresented with regional voices. Because the neighboring residents engaged strongly throughout the process, it was often difficult for staff to adequately incorporate and support ideas from underrepresented voices in meetings, such as people of color or people who lived outside the adjacent communities.

Following adoption of the plan, further community engagement will be completed as funds become available and projects are implemented. It will be important for outreach to continue to include a local and regional audience to ensure a diversity of perspectives. It will also be important for staff implementing the park plan to keep in mind that not everything included in the plan had universal support. Some of the more contentious items that moved forward in the plan had greater support from a more regional and diverse perspective.

Public Awareness

Awareness of existing facilities and services is communicated through the MPRB public website, posted on MPRB kiosks within the project area and connecting trails, and through gateway and trail signage. Programs are communicated through similar methods.

The public awareness requirement also asks agencies to discuss how visitors can access the park by transit, if applicable. According to MPRB, the parks in the Cedar-Isles project area are well served by existing local bus lines that run frequently, including several routes along Lake Street and Hennepin Avenue. A major bus transfer station is located at Hennepin Avenue and the



Midtown Greenway, just a few blocks from Lake of the Isles.

The extension of the METRO Green Line will create a new station at 21st Street, about two blocks away from Cedar Lake. This will fundamentally change the relationship of the park to transit and may make Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles the most transit-accessible regional park area in the entire system. Additional investments within the project area are also being made to increase bus regional transit, including new Bus Rapid Transit stops at Dean Parkway on Lake Street and another at Lagoon Avenue and Bde Maka Ska Parkway.

Transit recommendations include:

1. Following the opening of the light rail station at 21st Street, evaluate trail network for potential modifications to mitigate any potential negative impacts to the park and natural spaces.
2. Provide well-located wayfinding signage identifying the nearest park or trail access points and attractions near frequently used transit stops to facilitate travel and help generate awareness of the park and trail area for transit riders.
3. When redesigning an intersection, consider the location of the current transit stop and ensure that it is sited in an ideal location; has easy, well-signed, ADA-accessible connections to the project area; and is designed with rider comfort in mind.

Accessibility

The number of people who have a disability is constantly in flux; it is the one population segment that someone can join at any time. But accessibility is not just about meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A person born with a condition that impairs their mobility, someone with arthritis, a woman 8-months pregnant, a dog walker, a double-stroller wielding parent, and a senior or elder all have different needs when using parks and trails. For this reason, it is important to provide both accessible and ADA accessible routes, amenities, and features that allow all people to feel welcome, safe, and comfortable accessing and using the Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles Park.

Accessibility recommendations include:

1. Utilize design cues to clearly mark transitions to different surface materials.
2. Provide even-footed, soft surfacing on trails to maintain permeability while providing accessibility to as many users as possible.
3. Provide alternative ways to experience parkland in areas where only soft surface trails exist or where trails cannot be made universally accessible.
4. Include information on maps and signage about trail slope and surface, as well as alternate accessible routes, loops, entrances, and exits.
5. As intersections get safety upgrades, adjust crossings to be more accommodating of all users through proper alignment of curb ramps, adequate landing areas, and tactile warning strips for wheelchair users and the visually impaired.

Natural Resources

The existing land-based (terrestrial) communities at Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles are heavily impacted by human use. About 56% of the land area within both Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles parks is devoted to areas typically used regularly and/or intensively by people such as turf grasses, beaches, paved roads and trails, and highly trafficked areas of bare earth. Turf grass areas are heavily compacted, which can have a detrimental impact on stormwater runoff.

According to the 2018 Land Cover data, wet to mesic hardwood forest is the current predominant natural plant community around Cedar Lake. In the northeast wooded areas around the lake, the plant species composition has been drastically altered over time due to infrastructure improvements, making it difficult to assign a comparable native plant community and it is therefore described as "Altered Forest/Woodland".



The most common canopy species observed are cottonwood, box elder, green ash, hackberry, and sugar maple, as well as oaks, elm, and basswood, in approximate order of abundance. The understory is full of non-native species that can be disruptive to a healthy ecosystem. The primary non-native species is common buckthorn followed by glossy buckthorn, white mulberry, and Tatarian honeysuckle. In some areas that are currently managed by volunteers, there are small pockets of forest that have a diversity of plant species.

Lake of the Isles is interspersed with pockets of habitat, including a narrow, naturalized buffer that hugs the shoreline, and two densely wooded islands. The parkland is comprised of mowed turf grasses with an open canopy of native and ornamental trees including maples, elm, oak, and basswood mixed with tamarack, spruce, and cedars. Because much of the parkland was built on lake-dredged peat and muck, the lawns along the northside of the lake have shallow depressions that collect enough water to support wetland species like common spikerush along with flood-hardy turf grasses. The naturalized buffer ringing the shore has a variety of native shoreline plants including prairie cordgrass, sedges, and bulrushes as well as a large component (20-30%) of non-native reed canary grass and giant reed.

The strip of restored prairie along the Cedar Lake Regional Trail is one of the highest quality native plant communities within the park plan boundaries. While lacking in diversity compared to remnant, undisturbed prairies, it is dominated by native grasses including big bluestem, switch grass, little bluestem, Indian grass, side oat gramma; and forbs such as: butterfly weed, goldenrod, white prairie clover, bee balm, hoary vervain, and lead plant. Compared to the forested areas of the park, the regional trail has well marked, paved trails for bicyclists and pedestrians. This activity, as well as the fact that a prairie is easy to observe and experience without leaving a trail, helps to preserve the integrity of this habitat.

Natural resources goals include:

1. Prioritize protection of sensitive natural resources to foster resilient and biodiverse natural areas.
2. Utilize current conditions of soils and plant communities to inform recommendations; this is an urban forest with a history of disturbance which impacts restoration strategies.
3. Restore diversity by using the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Native Plant Community Guides as the best model of pre-European plant communities containing high biodiversity and low human disturbances.
4. Maximize, improve, and restore habitat (both land- and water-based) to improve the health of the parkland and lakes.
5. Provide inclusive and innovative programming that builds community and connects diverse park visitors with each other and to nature while protecting the natural environment.
6. Retain historically significant lawns while also increasing natural areas.

The plan proposes enhancing natural areas and improving the tree canopy in large swaths of existing forested areas, including the forests around Cedar Lake, the islands at Lake of the Isles, and forest area south of Lake of the Isles.

Cedar Lake includes some pockets of lawn, allowing visitors to picnic at tables or on the ground, and partake in free play or other uses. The plan also identifies areas where the existing prairie could be enhanced along South Upton Avenue and a large swath of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

While Cedar Lake and the Cedar Lake Regional Trail include more natural area options and minimal lawn, Lake of the Isles contains historically significant lawn areas, which have been preserved along with strategically kept lawn spaces for informal activities. Several lawn areas shift to other uses, including rain gardens and prairie/pollinator plantings to address water quality, flooding, and pollinator connectivity. The southern portion of Lake of the Isles includes some marsh restoration areas near the athletic fields and the lagoon.

The Cedar-Isles Plan includes water quality goals at three scales, from smallest to largest: Lake



Management, Park Plan, and Watershed. The goals included in this report focus on the Park Plan level.

Park Plan-level goals for water quality include:

1. Address stormwater runoff from all hard surfaces on parkland
2. Reduce chloride, trash, sediment, and other pollutants from entering the lakes.
3. Maintain and stabilize shoreline with native vegetation in all areas except for formal access points and identified view sheds.
4. Maximize and restore habitat (terrestrial and aquatic) to improve health of the lakes and have spaces for wildlife.
5. Continue to meet state aquatic recreation standards at Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles.

Other Council Policies and Systems – Advisory Comments

Community Development – Solar Resources and Access Protection – (MacKenzie Young-Walters, 651-602-1373) Council staff encourage consideration of stand-alone solar and battery storage for meeting the energy needs of any new/refurbished permanent restroom and lighting installations. The inclusion of amenities utilizing renewable energy sources aligns with the stated plan purpose to “Help ensure long-term financial and ecological sustainability” and may be appropriate to include as an amenity recommendation on page 135 of the long-range plan amendment.

Environmental Services – Wastewater Services (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119) The construction of any new or updating of existing paths, trails, bridges, or any other construction project may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system; prior to initiating any project, preliminary plans should be sent to Tim Wedin, Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager (651-602-4571) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.

Environmental Services – Water Resources (Joe Mulcahy, 651-602-1104) The plan amendment appears to be complete for review, water quality and natural resource recommendations are reasonable, and surface water resource impacts appear to be addressed.

Metropolitan Transportation Services (Joe Widing, 651-602-1822) Council staff suggest MPRB coordinate with Metro Transit on signage and wayfinding to the park from the West Lake Station. While the West Lake Station is not directly adjacent to the park like the Bryn Mawr and 21st Street stations, it is less than ½ mile and will also be a stop for the B-Line and other local routes.

Related to the 21st Street station, Council staff also suggest a dedicated pedestrian connection to Cedar Lake East Beach south of 21st Street.

Council staff suggest MPRB be explicit about pedestrian-scaled lighting, as both the height and orientation of lighting fixtures can play a big role with perceptions of safety. Additionally, MPRB should consider some lighting along the trails that do not run adjacent to parkways.

Finally, Council staff suggest MPRB consider widening existing one-way bike paths around Lake of the Isles to provide for two-way movements around the lake.

Attachment 1: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Resolution 2023-123





Resolution 2023-123

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD PLAN FOR CEDAR LAKE AND LAKE OF THE ISLES: A PORTION OF THE MINNEAPOLIS CHAIN OF LAKES REGIONAL PARK WITH MODERATE IMPACT AMENDMENT S, COMMISSIONER SHAFFER AMENDMENT #1 AND COMMISSIONER SHAFFER AMENDMENT #2 AS APPROVED DURING THE JUNE 21 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Whereas, The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is the steward of the Minneapolis parks;

Whereas, MPRB was founded in 1883 by an Act of the State Legislature, and has the responsibility to design, improve, and manage parks in Minneapolis;

Whereas, MPRB owns and operates the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park, including parkland around Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles, Kenilworth Channel, and Dean Parkway, all as a part of the larger regional park;

Whereas, MPRB has completed a community-driven park planning process for the MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles, which includes Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles, the Kenilworth Channel, Dean Parkway, and a portion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail;

Whereas, The MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles (the Plan) sets an innovative and overarching 30-year vision for a portion of the Chain of Lakes Regional Park and a portion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail that addresses environment, recreation, and connectivity;

Whereas, The Plan is based on the recommendations of an appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which in turn are based on extensive community engagement over the course of more than three years;

Whereas, The MPRB project team has refined the Plan document based on comments received from MPRB staff, stakeholders, and from the general public during a comment period that concluded on March 10, 2023;

Whereas, A public hearing has been scheduled to allow additional public comment on the final Plan; and

Whereas, This resolution is supported by Parks for All, the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2021-2036, under Goal 1: "Foster belonging and equity;" Goal 2: "Steward a continuum of nature and recreation;" and Goal 6: Strengthen ecological connections;"

Attachment 1, continued: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Resolution 2023-123





RESOLVED, That the Board of Commissioners approves the MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles; and

RESOLVED, That the President of the Board and Secretary to the Board are authorized to take all necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.





Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board

December 15, 2023

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Minneapolis, MN 55411-2227

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To: Colin Kelly,
Planning Analyst, Metropolitan Council

From: Emma Pachuta
Senior Planner, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

CC: Emmett Mullin - Regional Parks and Natural Resources
Manager Metropolitan Council; Adam Arvidson - Director of
Strategic Planning, MPRB

Date: 12/15/2023

Subject: Memo outlining improvements proposed for the Cedar Lake
Regional Trail within the MPRB Plan Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles

This memo has been created to outline the costs and improvements that have been proposed for the Cedar Lake Regional Trail (CLRT) within the MPRB board-approved Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles (Cedar-Isles Plan). Refer to the Cedar-Isles Plan for further details and context. The boundary for the Plan includes Cedar Lake and the surrounding park area, Lake of the Isles and the surrounding park area, the Kenilworth Channel, Dean Parkway, and a portion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail to the west of Cedar Lake.

Proposed improvements include enhanced prairie, adding soft surface trails to connect the paved trails along CLRT to formalized soft surface paths in Cedar Woods, adding three new enhanced welcome entry points (see the Natural Resource diagram, Circulation and Access diagram, and Program Amenities diagram on pages 147, 151, and 157 respectively within the Cedar-Isles Plan).

Costs associated with these future improvements are outlined on the following page:

President
Meg Forney

Vice President
Cathy Abene, P.E.

Commissioners
Becky Alper
Billy Menz
Steffanie Musich
Tom Olsen
Charles Rucker
Elizabeth Shaffer
Becka Thompson

Superintendent
Al Bangoura

Secretary to the Board
Jennifer B. Ringold



Metropolitan Council



CEDAR LAKE REGIONAL TRAIL				
TAG	#	PROJECT NAME	SHORT / MEDIUM / LONG TERM COMMUNITY PRIORITIES	ESTIMATED COST
NR		Natural Resources		
NR	1	Enhanced Prairie	Short	\$ 1,799,600
C		Access and Circulation		
C	7	Soft Surface Trails, east side of Cedar Lake	Short	\$ 20,950
A		Amenities and Wayfinding		
A	6	Enhanced Welcome Entry Point (3 locations)	Short	\$75,000-\$300,000
A	7	Wayfinding and Signage	Short	\$ 12,000
A	8	Interpretation	Medium	\$ 24,000
		Contingency (20%)		\$386,310 - \$431,310
		Grand Total		\$2,317,860 - \$2,587,860

