

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: July 7, 2015

For the Community Development Committee meeting of July 20, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 12, 2015

**Subject:** Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

**District(s), Member(s):** MPOSC District D, Anthony Taylor

**Policy/Legal Reference:** MN Statute 473.313

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Jan Youngquist, AICP, Manager (651-602-1029)

**Division/Department:** Community Development, Regional Parks and Natural Resources

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development within the regional park, preliminary plans must be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
3. Inform the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board that costs associated with the development of a skate park and modifications or improvements to the Nokomis Community Center and the athletic fields are not eligible for regional parks funding.
4. Encourage the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to incorporate the necessary staff changes and training to properly manage and support natural landscapes as soon as feasible, so that naturalization/restoration projects described in the master plan can begin to be carried out when funding becomes available.

### Background

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has submitted a master plan for Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park for Council review and approval. The master plan is intended to guide the development and use of the park for the next 25 years. Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is a 660 acre park that is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and is located in southeast Minneapolis, just north of the border with Richfield. The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail travels through the regional park and the planned Intercity Regional Trail travels south from the park, providing a connection to the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail in Richfield and the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway in Bloomington. The master plan puts a strong focus on improving the natural setting and quality of the park, improving trail experiences and connectivity, and enhancing and adding recreational amenities.

### Rationale

The Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies. The master plan requirements outlined in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* have an effective date of July 1, 2015, so master plans submitted to

the Council prior to July 1, 2015 will be reviewed subject to the requirements outlined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

### **Funding**

The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$18,735,500 for development. The master plan includes estimated development costs of \$5,500,000 associated with the expansion of the Nokomis Community Center building, upgrading and revising the arrangement of athletic fields, and the development of a skate park. These development activities are not eligible for regional parks funding, since they are for facilities that are not identified as regional parks system activities in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Therefore, the estimated costs for development that is eligible for regional parks funding total \$13,235,500.

Approval of this master plan makes the development costs eligible for regional parks funding, with the exception of costs as noted above, but does not commit the Council to any additional funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to the MPRB for the eligible development activities and associated costs.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners adopted the master plan on March 4, 2015. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

## **Analysis**

The effective date for the master plan requirements outlined in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* is July 1, 2015 in acknowledgement of master plan planning processes that were already underway when the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* was adopted, on February 11, 2015. Because the Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan was submitted to the Council prior to July 1, 2015, it was reviewed subject to the requirements outlined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that regional park master plans address the items listed below.

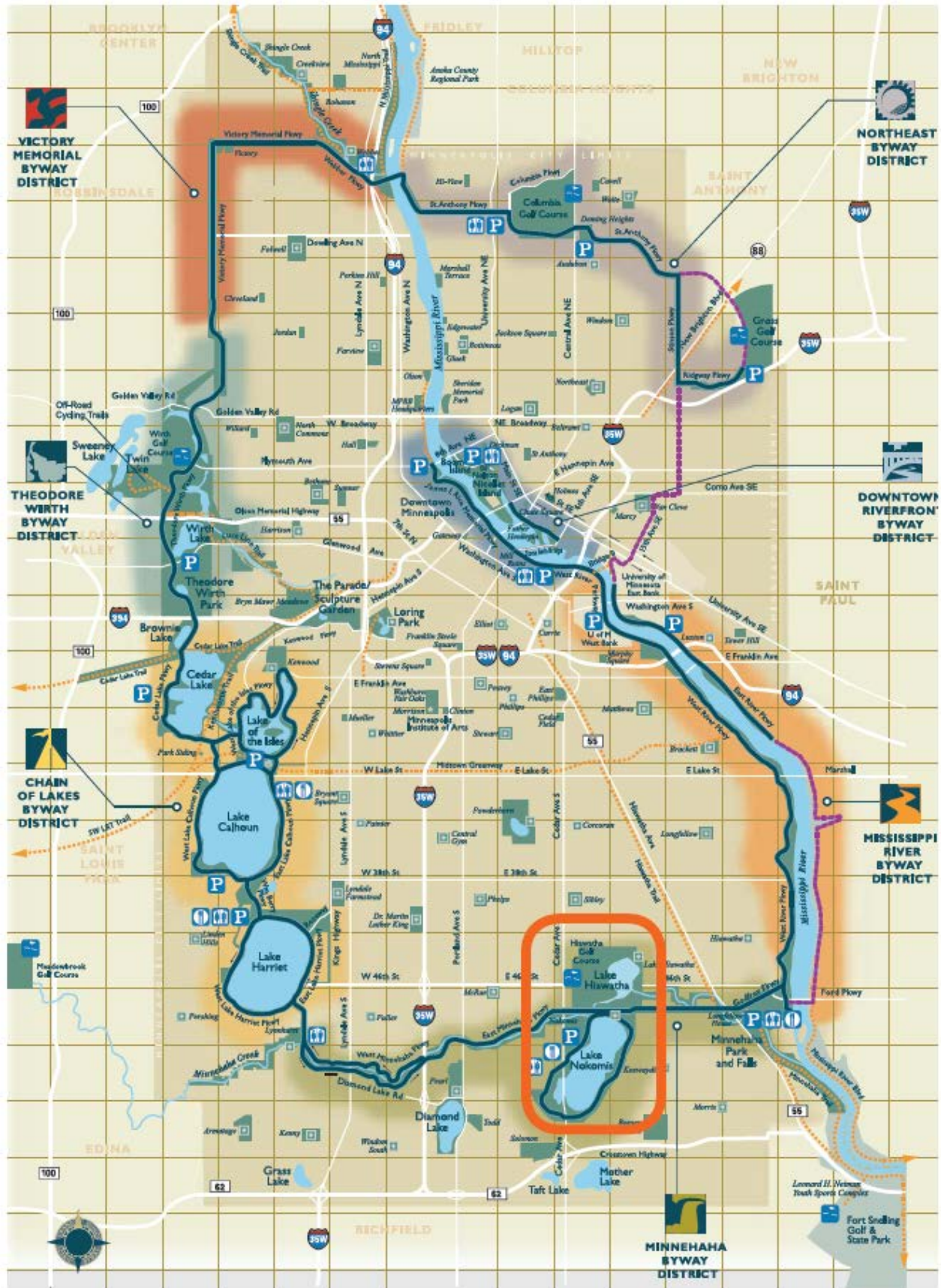
### **Boundaries and Acquisition**

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is located in southeast Minneapolis and is generally bounded by 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to the north, Edgewater/Woodlawn Boulevards to the south, 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east, and Cedar Avenue to the west. Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is a component of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, which consists of a series of regional parks and trails as well as parkways that form a ring around the city of Minneapolis. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail crosses through the regional park, with Lake Hiawatha on the north and Lake Nokomis on the south. *Figure 1* shows the park location circled in red, in relation to the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, which is shown in blue. The purple lines on *Figure 1* represent the area that the MPRB is planning for the completion of the Grand Rounds.

*Figure 2* shows the regional park boundaries. Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park consists of 660 acres of land and water. Land acquisition for the park began in 1900, and in 1908 the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) secured 409 acres, including nearly 300 acres of water around Lake Nokomis, which was known as Lake Amelia at the time. In 1910, MPRB Superintendent Theodore Wirth presented a plan for Lake Nokomis, which involved a large amount of dredging and grading to reshape the lake and surrounding parkland. This design reduced the open water from 300 acres to 200 acres and increased the lake's average depth. Subsequent land acquisition occurred over time.

The long term vision for the regional park is to maintain its current boundaries; therefore, this master plan does not propose any acquisition of additional land.

**Figure 1: Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park location (circled in red) in relation to the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway (shown in blue)**



**Figure 2: Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Boundaries**



*Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park  
Existing Conditions*

## **Stewardship Plan**

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that a master plan include a plan for managing land prior to developing the property for recreation purposes. Since Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is an established park, this requirement does not apply to the master plan.

## **Demand Forecast**

The master plan cites demographic trends, including an aging and increasingly diverse population and recreational trends, including an increased interest in walking, cycling, running, and nature and wildlife oriented activities such as birding, fishing, and wildlife viewing, as well as the demand for more social gathering places.

According to the Council's 2013 Use Estimate of the Regional Parks System, Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park received approximately 1.5 million annual visits, which is expected to grow as new park facilities and improvements described in the master plan are implemented.

Use of recreational trails within and linking to the regional park is also projected to increase, consistent with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources report, *Ten Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Recreation Activities 2004-2014*, which states that trail activities such as walking, hiking, and bicycling will remain steady or increase. As mentioned earlier in this staff report, Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail crosses through the regional park and the planned Intercity Regional Trail will provide additional trail access to the park when constructed.

## **Development Concept**

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities, and includes two supervised beaches, one unsupervised beach, a beach house, restaurant, sailboat buoys, a boat launch, canoe and kayak storage and rental, fishing piers, playgrounds, picnic areas, and a multi-use trail system. Because the park existed before the creation of the Regional Parks System, it includes facilities more appropriate for a local park. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* acknowledges the existence of these facilities and allows them to continue to operate legitimately, but states that they are not eligible for regional parks funding for improvement or expansion. These facilities include two community recreation centers, athletic fields, as well as tennis/pickleball and basketball courts. Hiawatha Golf Course is also located within the regional park. Golf is not considered a regional parks system activity, although the golf course provides cross-country skiing opportunities in the winter. The golf course was excluded from the study. The overall development concept for the park is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Development Concept



The master plan organized the development concept around three categories, including Circulation and Connectivity, Recreation, and Natural Resources. The Natural Resources concept is described in a later section of this staff report (beginning pg. 21).

Connectivity and Circulation: the vision for this concept is to offer premier trail experiences that knit the park together. Recommendations in the master plan include:

- Adding or improving trail connections between neighborhoods and the park through additional trails, accessibility improvements and street enhancements. This includes improved pavement and signage, limiting informal trails that destabilize soils, and a bicycle bypass around the Nokomis Main Beach and Nokomis Community Center.
- Adding a walking trail loop parallel to the existing bicycle trail near Nokomis Parkway at the southwest portion of the park and adding trail access to the Cedar Avenue Bridge at both the north and south ends.
- At Lake Hiawatha, adding a bicycle and pedestrian trail around the perimeter of the golf course, adding a seasonal walking trail on the west side of Lake Hiawatha that will be accessible when golf is not in season, adding more access gates for cross country ski trails at the golf course, and building a new pedestrian bridge over Minnehaha Creek to fully separate trails at the southeast corner of Lake Hiawatha.
- Improving roadway crossings at Cedar Avenue and at Minnehaha Parkway near the Nokomis Community Center for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as developing an additional crossing of the parkway near the existing parking lot.
- Continuing involvement in the ongoing study led by the City of Minneapolis and/or Hennepin County regarding improvement of transportation and safety around the Cedar Avenue/Nokomis Parkway/Edgewater Boulevard intersections at the south end of the park.

Figure 4 shows the Connectivity and Circulation Framework Plan. Pink lines on the map show pedestrian only trails, black shows bike trails, and orange shows multi-use paths. The connection to the planned Intercity Regional Trail, which travels south from the park, providing a connection to the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail in Richfield and the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway in Bloomington is also shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Connectivity and Circulation Framework Plan

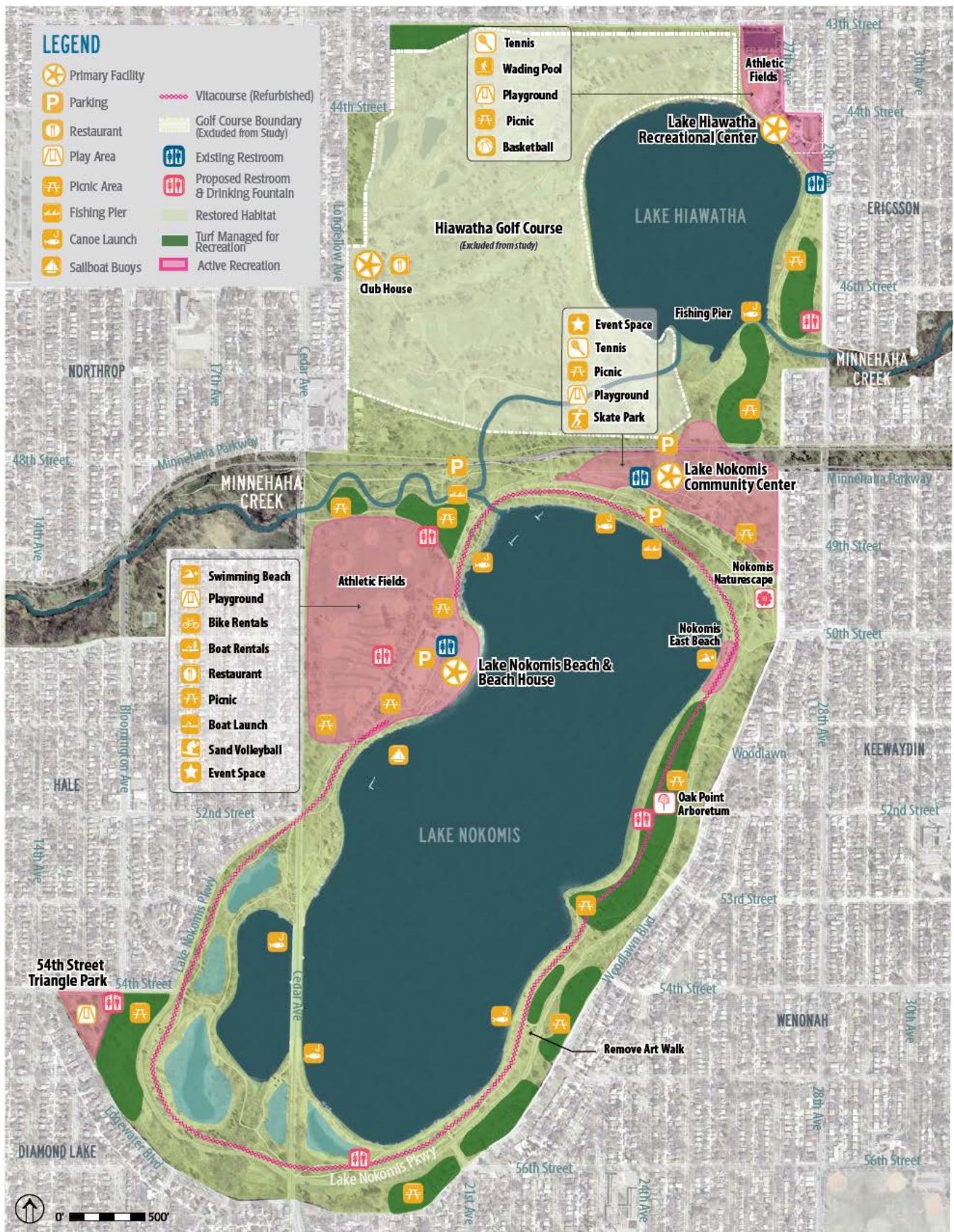


Recreation: the vision for this concept is to continue to ensure quality recreation for everyone by enhancing existing amenities and addition key new facilities. The following recommendations were made for park-wide recreation:

- Focus recreation in existing Activity Centers.
- Expand and improve the number of dedicated and informal picnic areas throughout the park.
- Add more portable restrooms, especially in the south and east sides of Lake Nokomis.
- Refurbish the vitacourse.
- Enhance the arboretum with signage and events.
- Remove the Art Walk and related signage.
- Redevelop the play area at 54th Street Triangle Park with nature themed equipment and play space.

The Recreation Framework Plan is shown in Figure 5. The active recreation areas are shown in pink.

Figure 5: Recreation Framework Plan



The master plan includes specific recommendations for three identified activity centers, which include Nokomis Main Beach and Athletic Fields, Nokomis Community Center and East Beach, and Lake Hiawatha Recreation Area.

The master plan recommendations for the Nokomis Main Beach and Athletic Field are described below and shown in Figure 6.

- Maintaining a cluster of smaller buildings at the main beach.
- Renovating or redeveloping the beach house building.
- Adding more picnic pavilions.
- Expanding the beach's swimmable area to the north and adding shade structures.
- Reconfiguring and expanding the existing parking lot to add approximately 30 spaces and include methods to manage and clean stormwater.
- Adding ADA accessible water access at the north side of beach.
- Adding sand volleyball south of the parking lot.
- Moving the existing boat storage away from this Activity Center and relocating it below the hill near the Nokomis Community Center.
- Regrading and reconstructing the athletic fields, with layout to be determined at time of implementation.
- Adding a new parking lot with approximately 60 spaces west of Nokomis Parkway, ensuring this new lot includes stormwater management Best Management Practices.
- Adding a new bike path between the reconfigured parking lot and Nokomis Parkway to bypass the Nokomis Main Beach area; enhance the trail crossings (with signage and markings) of the parking lot access drives to increase bike visibility and safety.
- Establishing a slow-speed shared trail (with signage and markings) for bike and pedestrian use between the reconfigured existing parking lot and the beach house, and adding more bike parking at the beach.
- Relocating the boat rentals and related concessions to the north side of beach.

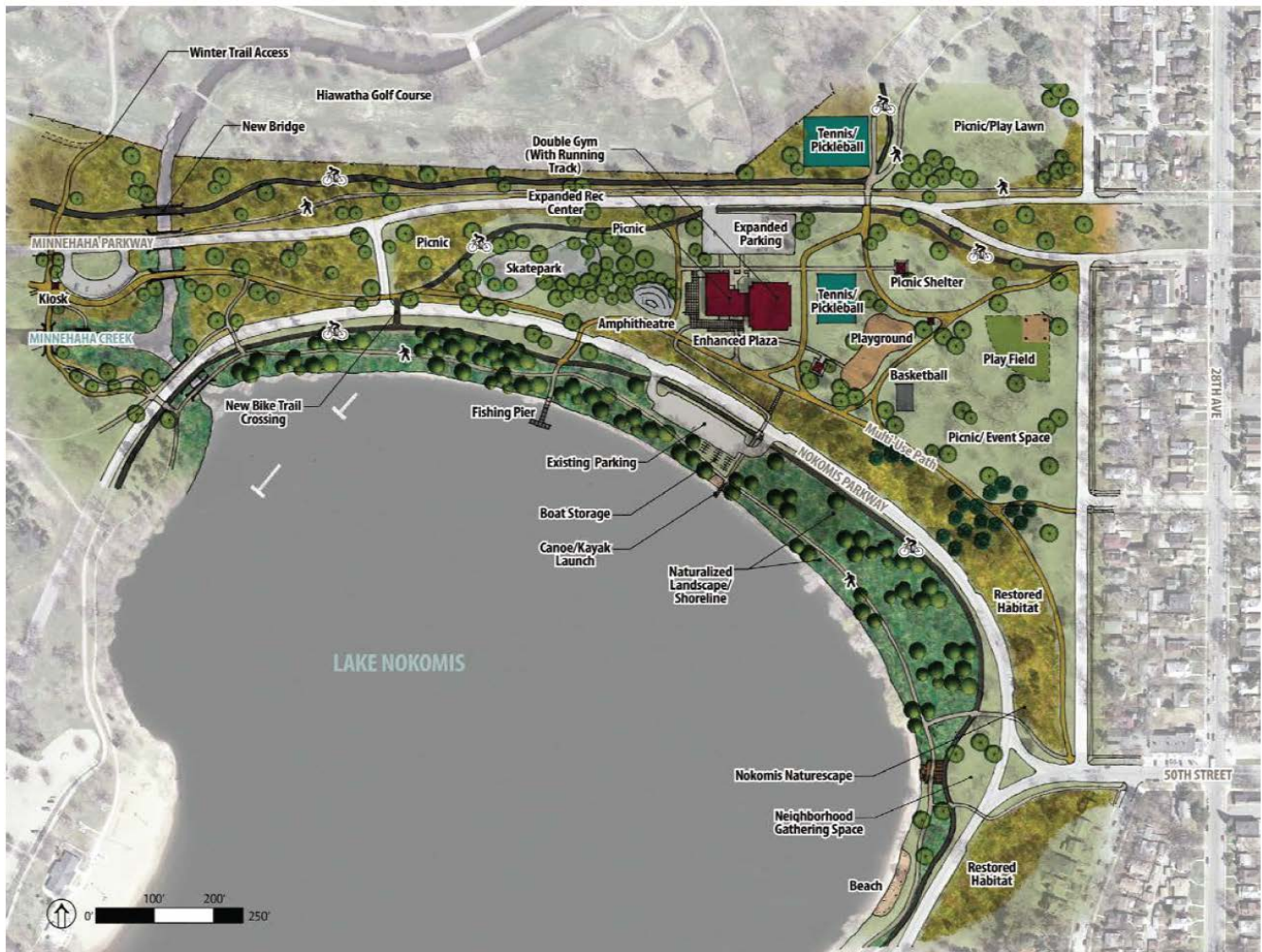
**Figure 6: Nokomis Main Beach and Athletic Field Plan**



The master plan recommendations for the Nokomis Community Center and East Beach area are described below and shown in Figure 7.

- Expanding the Community Center building to add a double gym and meeting rooms, and a larger plaza at the southwest corner of the building. The new building should meet improved environmental performance standards.
- Adding a small amphitheater to accommodate approximately 150 people.
- Building a skate park integrated within the landscape that includes stormwater management.
- Resurfacing both sets of courts and striping for both tennis and pickleball.
- Reconfiguring pedestrian and bicycle trails within this activity area to reduce pedestrian/bicycle/vehicle conflicts.
- Extending the bike trail on the south side of Minnehaha Parkway east to connect with Woodlawn Boulevard.
- Removing the existing parking lot to the east of the tennis courts and converting to a picnic area.
- Expanding the existing parking lot to replace parking spaces lost by removal of the east parking lot (no net loss of existing parking availability). New construction should incorporate stormwater management and landscaping designed to minimize the visual impact of the larger parking lot.
- Maintaining an open lawn with a small backstop for pickup field games.
- Relocating the event and gathering space from along the lake to the top of the hill near the playground.
- Updating the playground equipment.
- Keeping historic picnic grounds in place.
- Adding a formal canoe and kayak launch near the existing lakeside parking lot.
- Relocating community boat storage for canoes and kayaks from the Main Beach area to a new canoe launch location.
- Establishing a neighborhood gathering area at the 50th Street park entrance, with possible seating and stairs down to the water's edge.

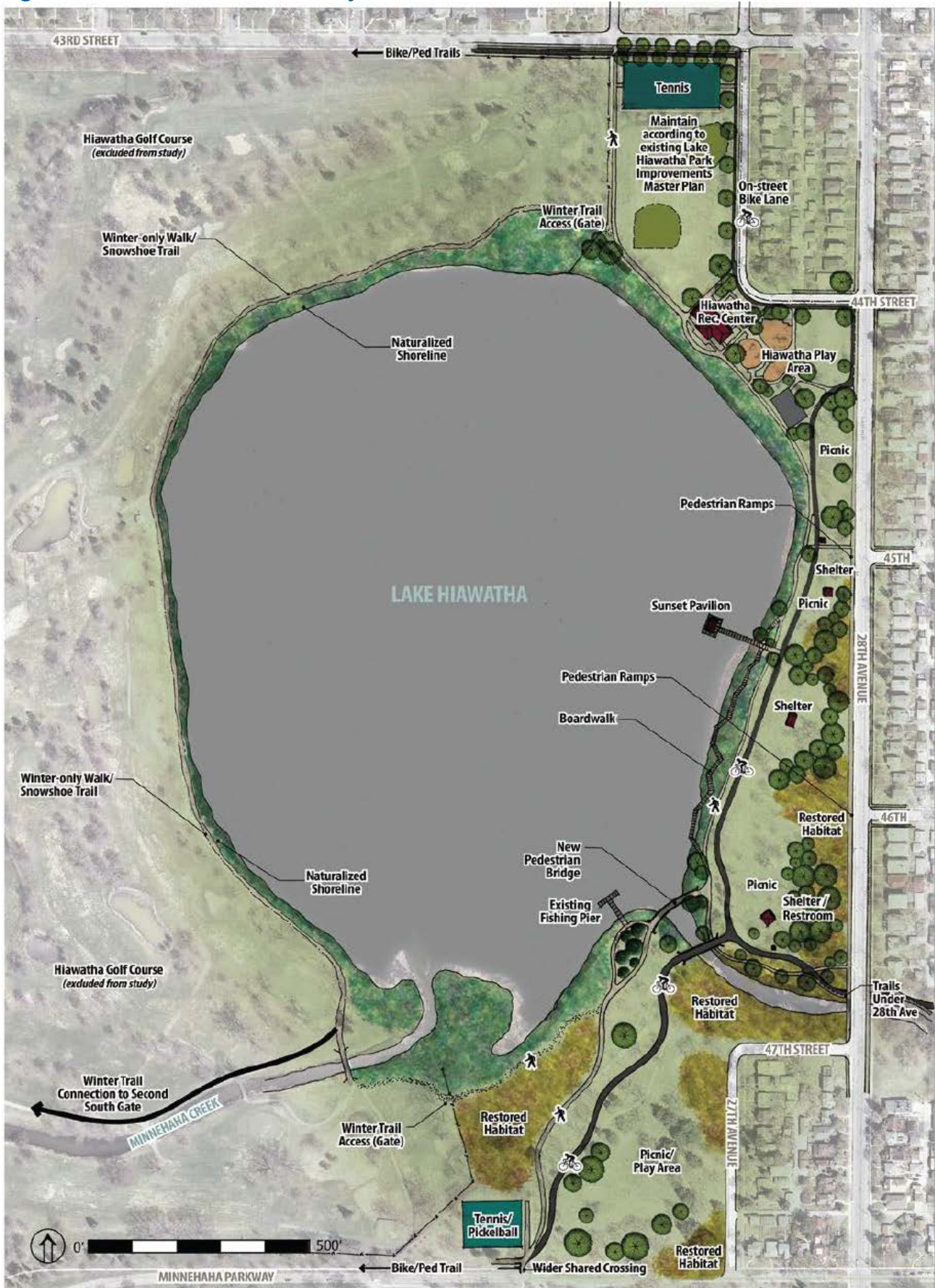
**Figure 7: Nokomis Community Center and East Beach Plan**



The master plan includes the following recommendations for the Lake Hiawatha Activity Center, as described below and shown in Figure 8.

- Reconfiguring trails at the existing Minnehaha Creek Bridge.
- Connecting bike trails with on-street city bike routes.
- Installing additional gates for cross-country skiing access through the golf course.
- Adding bike and pedestrian trails under the 28th Avenue Bridge when that bridge is reconstructed.
- Maintaining the existing picnic areas and add picnic shelters.
- Adding a trail system around the perimeter of the golf course.
- Diverting the bike path around the recreation center area.
- Adding a winter-only walking/snowshoe trail around the west side of Lake Hiawatha.
- Adding a new bridge for pedestrians over the creek in the southeast part of the lake.
- Replacing the Lake Hiawatha Beach with a naturalized shoreline, boardwalk, and a sunset pavilion.
- Adding a designated canoe/kayak launch and storage racks near the lakeshore.
- Adding curb-cuts for trail access across from 45th and 46th Streets on the east side of Lake Hiawatha.

**Figure 8: Lake Hiawatha Activity Center Plan**





The total estimated development costs to implement the master plan are \$18,735,500, as shown in Figure 9. The master plan includes estimated development costs of \$5,500,000 associated with the expansion of the Nokomis Community Center building, upgrading and revising the arrangement of athletic fields, and the development of a skate park. These development activities are not eligible for regional parks funding, since they are for facilities that are not identified as regional parks system activities in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Therefore, the estimated costs for development that is eligible for regional parks funding total \$13,235,500.

**Figure 9: Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Estimated Development Costs**

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan  
Implementation Prioritization and Cost Estimates

Update 4 March 2014

Improvement Project	Framework/Activity Area	Preferred Prioritization	Total Cost	Cost Notes
Repair degraded paths	Circulation	ONGOING	\$675,000	Assumes resurfacing and repair of existing trails and bridge reconstruction on south side of the lagoon
Conversion of lawn to habitat	Natural Resources	ONGOING	\$2,800,000	Costs dependent on grades, soil conditions, and type of habitat
Naturalized shorelines	Natural Resources	ONGOING	\$880,000	3000ft Hiawatha; 5800ft Nokomis
Additional drinking fountains	Recreation	ONGOING	\$185,000	Costs dependent on location and distance from water source
Additional restroom enclosures	Recreation	ONGOING	\$15,000	Includes enclosure only; portable restrooms cost excluded; installation by MPRB
Improved picnic grounds and additional shelters	Recreation	ONGOING	\$350,000	Assumes traditional shelters
Additional gates for winter access to golf course	Circulation	SHORT	\$24,000	Assumes installation by MPRB
Additional neighborhood connections	Circulation	SHORT	\$104,000	Includes bike connection from Community Center to Woodlawn, connections at 52nd and 55th Streets, and sidewalk at 54th Street Triangle Park, from 50th to Main Beach
Seasonal trail around Lake Hiawatha	Circulation	SHORT	\$5,000	To cover signage and marking; gate access cost in separate line-item
Removal of Art Walk	Recreation	SHORT	\$5,000	Removal of signs and restoration of landscape
Enhance the arboretum with signage	Recreation	SHORT	\$5,000	Plant tags and identification signage
Canoe/kayak launch and boat storage relocated to north end of lake	Nokomis Community Center	SHORT	\$5,000	Include relocation of boat storage; labor by MPRB
Revise trails to reduce ped/bike/vehicle conflict	Nokomis Community Center	SHORT	\$70,000	Trail removal and landscape restoration (700ft) and new trail construction (1400ft)
Accessible water access at Nokomis main beach	Nokomis Main Beach	SHORT	\$12,500	Trail construction and dewatering
Provide shade on and near Nokomis main beach	Nokomis Main Beach	SHORT	\$30,000	Assumes canvas single post structure; Cost with installation
Revised ped/bike trail routing to Cedar Avenue bridge	Cedar Avenue Crossings	SHORT	\$80,000	Includes new trail access to bridge only
Pedestrian-only loop around Lake Nokomis lagoon	Circulation	SHORT	\$92,000	New trail construction
Reconfigure trails to reduce conflicts at creek bridge	Lake Hiawatha	SHORT	\$28,000	Trail reconstruction only
New ped-only bridge over Minnehaha Creek	Lake Hiawatha	SHORT: major capital	\$300,000	Dependent on design and construction
Enhanced crossings of Cedar Ave at Nokomis/Edgewater, Nokomis/52nd Street, 50th Street, Minnehaha Parkway	Cedar Avenue Crossings	SHORT: major capital	\$200,000	Includes reconstruction of trail approaches to intersections, curb cut revision, sign relocation and striping
New playground near Nokomis Community Center	Nokomis Community Center	SHORT: major capital	\$250,000	Dependent on size and design
Ped/bike trails around Hiawatha golf course	Circulation	SHORT: major capital	\$785,000	Dual trail system: 1.6 miles of 10ft bike trail, 3400ft of 8ft ped trail; and 900ft on-street bike path along 27th Ave; new bridge over creek; Assumes coordination with City of Mpls
Expand Nokomis main beach to north and relocate rental vendor	Nokomis Main Beach	SHORT: major capital	\$150,000	Includes added sand, markings, and signage
Refurbished vita-course	Recreation	SHORT: major capital	\$150,000	Cost for 15 stations with installation
Convert overflow parking to picnic area	Nokomis Community Center	MEDIUM	\$180,000	Removal and restoration
Expand Nokomis Center parking lot	Nokomis Community Center	MEDIUM	\$100,000	Replace number of stalls at overflow parking
New amphitheater	Nokomis Community Center	MEDIUM	\$500,000	Assumes open stage and seating
New skate park	Nokomis Community Center	MEDIUM	\$500,000	Concrete design integrated with landscape
Add 3 sand volleyball courts near Nokomis Main Beach	Nokomis Main Beach	MEDIUM	\$30,000	New court construction
Add parking west of Nokomis Parkway near athletic fields	Nokomis Main Beach	MEDIUM	\$120,000	To include stormwater management
Reconfigure existing parking at Nokomis main beach	Nokomis Main Beach	MEDIUM	\$60,000	To include stormwater management
Revise pathway system near Nokomis main beach	Nokomis Main Beach	MEDIUM	\$90,000	Trail reconstruction
Upgrade and revise arrangement of athletic fields	Nokomis Main Beach	MEDIUM	\$2,000,000	Maximum Cost; Dependent on field configuration and design
Replacement of Hiawatha beach with nature, boardwalk, pavilion, and new boat launch	Lake Hiawatha	LONG	\$600,000	860ft boardwalk; new pavilion; beach removal; canoe launch
New beach house at Nokomis main beach	Nokomis Main Beach	LONG	\$4,000,000	Maximum Cost; dependent on building design, construction plans, and timing.
Dedicated bikeway on Cedar Bridge	Cedar Avenue Crossings	DEPENDENT	\$26,000	Include striping of existing trail on bridge
Pedestrian paths under Cedar Bridge	Cedar Avenue Crossings	DEPENDENT	\$84,000	Assumes trail foundations built with new bridge and structures by others
Ped/bike trails under 28th Avenue	Lake Hiawatha	DEPENDENT	\$25,000	Dependent on City of Minneapolis bridge replacement project; assume built with bridge and structures by others
Re-meander Minnehaha Creek	Natural Resources	DEPENDENT	\$170,000	Dependent on involvement and funding from Minnehaha Creek Watershed District; costs for collaborative habitat restoration
Expand Nokomis Community Center building	Nokomis Community Center	DEPENDENT	\$3,000,000	Maximum Cost; Dependent on full building design and construction plans
Upgraded tennis/pickleball courts	Nokomis Community Center	DEPENDENT	\$50,000	Assumes resurfacing, striping, and nets
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$18,735,500</b>	<i>(Maximum cost estimate)</i>

NOTE: Estimates based on 2014 Dollars; costs are subject to change as project plans and designs are finalized at time of implementation

NOTE: "Dependent" projects rely on coordination with other agencies for implementation.

## **Conflicts**

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is surrounded by existing neighborhoods with a mixture of uses. In general, the regional park is compatible, and in many cases, a benefit to existing uses. The regional park boundary was determined largely as urban development in south Minneapolis was growing during the early 1900s. Care is taken in park development to provide a separation between the park and private property through either physical space or landscape features.

Land use conflicts arise primarily through safety issues related to vehicle traffic and roadway crossings at Cedar Avenue and Minnehaha Parkway. Cedar Avenue runs north-south along the western edge of the park and bridges over the southwest portion of Lake Nokomis. This major arterial roadway creates barriers to bicycle and pedestrian crossings, introduces high-speed traffic to the park, and presents challenges to water quality through stormwater runoff. The master plan acknowledges that any changes or improvements that impact the roadway will require coordination with the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

Minnehaha Parkway runs east-west through the regional park and can act as a barrier dividing Lake Nokomis from Lake Hiawatha. Trail crossings of the parkway require enhancement to strengthen the connections between the two portions of the park. The master plan proposes to improve crossings of the parkway by enhancing two crosswalks.

## **Public Services**

The master plan indicates that it can be implemented with no additional public services such as electricity, gas, water or sewer, since the regional park is located in an urban area. Stormwater improvements will occur as part of development projects such as the expansion or construction of parking lots, the location of new wetlands, or the addition of native landscapes. These projects will be implemented by the MPRB in partnership with other organizations such as the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the City of Minneapolis.

## **Operations**

**Ordinances:** Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park is operated under the MPRB Code of Ordinances which address the rules and regulations regarding use of MPRB parkland and facilities for safety, enjoyment of the park, and protection of property, facilities, and natural resources. Rules and regulations are posted through the park. Posted information includes park hours, permitted and prohibited activities, fees, maps of the park and its trails, and emergency contacts.

**Staffing:** The MPRB provides oversight for facility operations, recreation and educational programs. Staffing levels are increased in the summer and as needed, through the use of seasonal staff. City of Minneapolis and MPRB Park Police provide public safety services.

**Maintenance:** Typical maintenance in a traditional urban park primarily consists of mowing large expanses of lawn. The proposed inclusion of more naturalized landscape areas in the park will require a shift in landscape management. For example, maintenance workers may need plant identification training to learn how to properly manage natural areas. While additional skills may be required of MPRB workers, management of natural areas can be targeted to specific periods, making the time similar or less than traditional maintenance efforts. Prairie, meadow and savanna plantings are drought tolerant and need to be mowed only a few times per growing season. In addition to mowing, mulch replenishment and weed removal are the common management tasks. Specialized management

activities such as controlled burns or targeted invasive removal may be needed through contracted maintenance.

The master plan recommends that a written management plan should be developed that prescribes specific protocol for care of parkland as restoration efforts occur as well as for managing and preventing the spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.

*Estimated costs:* The total current annual operations and maintenance costs to MPRB for Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park are approximately \$234,000. This includes staff time, equipment rental, water quality monitoring, environmental programming, administration, and other activities. It does not include operations and maintenance of the golf course or athletic fields.

The expected increase in annual operations and maintenance costs upon full build-out of the master plan is estimated at \$1,090,000, for a total annual O&M burden at build-out of \$1,324,000. This estimated cost is based on the assumption that annual maintenance should cost 10% of a project's development cost, to ensure high quality facilities and sustainable replacement after an average 10 year life. This figure reflects the understanding that some plan elements, like beaches and natural habitat, will require more regular or ongoing maintenance while others, like parking lots and buildings, will have little annual maintenance but will require major capital inputs over time. This figure does not include recommendations associated with the skate park, athletic fields or expansion of the Nokomis Community Center.

Annual operating costs are primarily funded through the MPRB general fund budget, with property taxes as the main source of funds. Revenue is also received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation administered by the Metropolitan Council. All operations and maintenance costs are subject to annual operating budget development that is administered by the MPRB Superintendent and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

### **Citizen Participation**

The MPRB community engagement process for development of the master plan included a number of efforts. A 19 member Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed by elected officials and area neighborhood associations. The CAC met 7 times over 4 ½ months to discuss planning concepts. The public was invited to attend and participate in CAC meetings, which allowed a designated time for public comments. Public attendance at CAC meetings was typically around 20 people. Meeting summaries were included in the master plan.

The CAC and community members worked together to identify issues, conflicts, and current successes within the regional park, which was followed by an online questionnaire polling respondents about recreation, trail use, and water quality. More than 900 people responded. The survey results shaped the design alternatives reviewed as well as the subsequent recommendations for the master plan.

Technical meetings were held to focus planning around water quality, transportation and recreation with staff from the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

Two open houses that were hosted at the Nokomis Community Center also provided opportunities for public comment. Approximately 60 people attend each of the open houses. The MPRB website included ongoing project information and updates regarding the development of the master plan. Gov-delivery and social media also kept citizens informed about the process and opportunities for input.

The draft master plan was available for a 45 day comment period and the final document was approved by the MPRB Commissioners as part of a public hearing on March 4, 2015.

### **Public Awareness**

The MPRB will publicize and promote Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park through a variety of established channels, including its website, publications, community newspapers, and other media. Grand openings, press releases, and integration of parks with school and recreational programs will also expand awareness. Within the regional park, trails will be signed and existing MPRB system maps will be updated as progress is made in extending trails.

### **Accessibility**

The MPRB's 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan identified the following three strategies related to accessibility:

- Build or renew facilities to meet or exceed standards for accessibility
- Ensure recreation opportunities are available for persons with disabilities
- Identify and reduce physical and financial barriers to participation in programming

The master plan indicates that in the development of new parks elements, care will be taken to design facilities that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as principles for universal accessibility. Existing facilities that do not meet ADA requirements include steps at some trail access points. These will be rehabilitated to meet ADA standards as resources allow.

Cost can also be a barrier to park and recreation use. Most facilities at Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park will not require a fee for participation. Amenities such as trails, community gathering places, and public water access points are generally provided free of charge. Some proposed amenities may have associated user fees, such as boat storage at Lake Hiawatha, reservation fees for large gathering spaces or picnic pavilions. Users generally have the option of purchasing a permit or using meters for parking. Reduced fee arrangements are available for recreational programming.

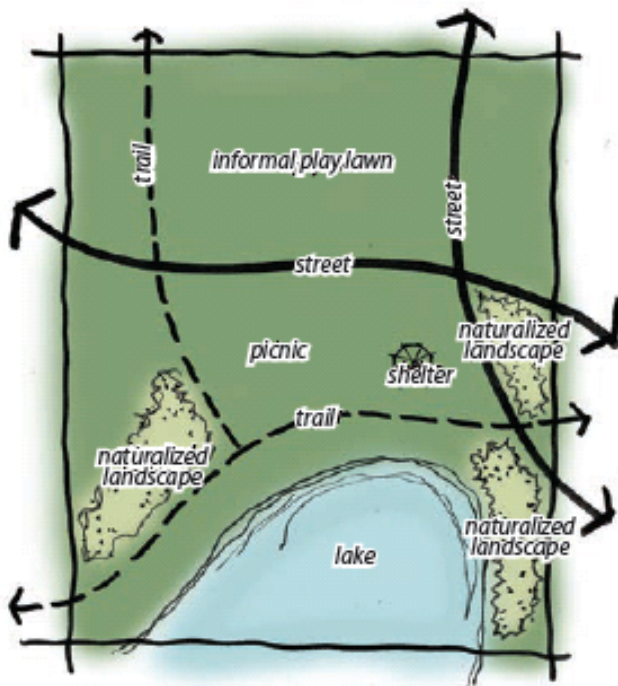
### **Natural Resources**

The vision of the master plan is to improve the natural setting and quality of the park. During the planning process, two broad design styles were discussed—a Campus Style and a Naturalized Style, which are described below and depicted in Figure 10.

The Campus Style maintains the park primarily as mowed turf, with designated areas of naturalized landscape inserted within it. These naturalized areas—rain gardens, wetlands, or other plantings—could contribute to wildlife habitat and stormwater management.

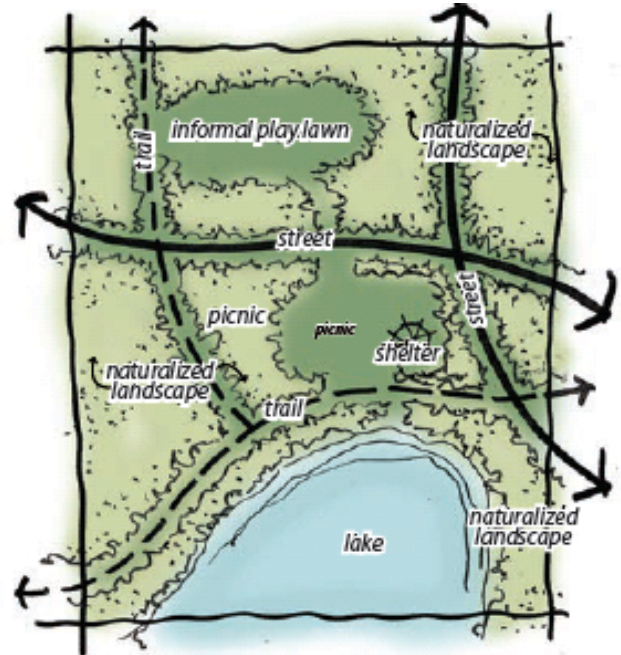
The Naturalized Style maintains the park primarily as native/ naturalized landscape in the form of savanna, meadow, prairie, woodland, and wetlands, with designated areas of managed turf inserted within it. The naturalized landscape would contribute in greater significance to improved wildlife habitat and stormwater management.

**Figure 10: Campus Style and Naturalized Style Design**



**“CAMPUS STYLE”**

A campus style park features open, mown lawns and patches of plantings that shape space and draw the eye to different views. This type of park requires a lot of mowing, but less intensive planting maintenance. Due to its open layout, spaces are highly flexible and can accommodate a variety of uses; however, there is little habitat value to this type of park.



**“NATURAL STYLE”**

A natural style park features lawns, open spaces, and clearings tucked into a matrix of vegetation. Gathering areas may be surrounded by grassland or prairie, overlooking wetlands, or wooded. This type of park is composed of native habitats that require specific maintenance; however, mowing is less necessary. Care must be taken to counter natural areas with enough open space to accommodate flexible play. This type of park offers more habitat value than a campus style park.

Community input and feedback through the CAC indicated a strong preference for implementing the Naturalized Style, as long as the plan included ample areas of managed turf for passive recreation, informal play, and picnicking throughout the regional park. The master plan proposes approximately 50 percent naturalized parkland and 50 percent managed turf and recreation areas. The naturalized landscape is envisioned to be comprised of mesic prairie, savanna, and meadow, utilizing native plants and grasses.

Increasing the amount of naturalized vegetation within the park can help improve stormwater management and water quality. These habitat improvements will have a significant impact on the park’s wildlife. Native plants attract pollinators, insect, birds and small mammals, forming the basis of a food chain that supports Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park’s ecosystem.

Water quality will be improved by increasing the number of wetlands in the park, managing pollution from Canadian geese and dogs, exploring solutions to reduce trash in Lake Hiawatha via Minnehaha Creek, and supporting ongoing efforts to monitor water quality.

The master plan includes a Natural Resources Framework Plan, which makes the following recommendations:

- Maintain active recreation primarily in existing activity areas
- Limit turf grass to identified turf areas managed for picnicking, unprogrammed uses, and passive or informal recreation
- Create naturalized landscape opportunities:
  - Along shorelines
  - Outside active zones
  - In low-lying areas
  - Integrated with stormwater systems
  - Within the lakes
- Transition gradually from approximately 10% to 50% restored landscape
- Study and manage the effects of non-native carp in the lakes

The Natural Resources Framework Plan is depicted in Figure 11. On this map, pink shows actively managed recreation areas, dark green is managed turf, light green is restored habitat with integrated local stormwater features and blue shows regional stormwater wetlands. The Hiawatha Golf Course was excluded from the study.

Figure 11: Natural Resources Framework Plan



## Natural Resources Framework Plan



## *Review by Other Council Divisions*

**Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management** (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) The project proposes in part, to naturalize the vegetation in many areas of the regional park, potentially increasing the percentage of native landscape from its current 10% level to 40-50% coverage. Council staff is highly supportive of this plan recommendation. Some of the areas proposed for vegetation conversion are in low-lying areas that were historically wetland, and others are either along the shoreline or in between areas that currently see high recreational use. Elimination of groomed turf areas adjacent to shorelines in favor of development of native vegetation, will discourage congregating and movement of geese and will improve pollutant filtering and infiltration of stormwater runoff that moves toward the lakes, and will ultimately result in an improvement of lake water quality. Expansion of native vegetation within the regional park will also promote and support a more diverse variety of insects, birds, and animals in the area, returning it to a healthier, more self-supporting ecosystem. It will however, take some time to realize lake water quality improvements through conversion of non-native monoculture turf grass areas to naturalized vegetation. Therefore, Council staff recommends that the MPRB incorporate staffing changes that the plan indicates will be necessary to be able to properly manage and support natural landscapes as soon as possible, so that naturalization/restoration projects like those proposed in this master plan can begin to be carried out within the regional park at the earliest possible opportunity that funding becomes available.

**Environmental Services – Sewers** (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – The construction of any new or updating of existing trails or structures may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in several locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any proposed project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment. The Metropolitan Disposal System has adequate capacity for this project location.

**Transportation/Aviation Planning** (Russ Owen 651-602-1705) – No comments.

**Metro Transit** (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No comments.

## *Conclusions*

1. The Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The regional park is located in the vicinity of several Metropolitan Council Environmental Services facilities. Any construction may have an impact on these MCES Interceptors. In order to maintain the integrity of the regional sewer interceptor system, preliminary development plans for the regional trail must be submitted to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.
3. The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$18,735,500 for development. The master plan includes estimated development costs of \$5,500,000 associated with the expansion of the Nokomis Community Center building, upgrading and revising the arrangement of athletic fields,

and the development of a skate park. These development activities are not eligible for regional parks funding, since they are for facilities that are not identified as regional parks system activities in the Regional Parks Policy Plan. Therefore, the estimated costs for development that is eligible for regional parks funding total \$13,235,500.

4. Approval of this master plan and grant request does not commit the Council to any additional funding at this time. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to the MPRB.
5. The master plan proposes to naturalize the vegetation in many areas of the regional park, which will have positive impacts on water quality and the ecosystem, but will take time to achieve. The MPRB should incorporate the necessary staff changes and training to properly manage and support natural landscapes as soon as feasible, so that naturalization/restoration projects can begin to be carried out within the regional park when funding becomes available.