

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: September 2, 2021

For the Community Development Committee meeting of September 20, 2021

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of October 13, 2021

Subject: Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Review File No. 50226-1

MPOSC District, Member: District C, Cana Yang; District D, Assata Brown

Council District, Member: District 6, Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson; District 8, Abdirahman Muse

Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*: Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1; Chapter 7, Recreation Activities and Facilities strategies 1-3

Staff Prepared/Presented: Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361)

Division/Department: Community Development/ Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, including the addition of two parcels detailed in this report and the supplemental information provided in the submittal letter dated June 7, 2021, with the exception of classifying existing tennis courts as "regional."
2. Require Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Background

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's (MPRB) Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail is located near the center of the Regional Parks System (Figure 1) in the southern portion of the City of Minneapolis (Figure 2).

The project area spans a roughly 7-mile stretch of Minnehaha Creek through Minneapolis between Zenith Ave at 54th Street and Longfellow Gardens (Figure 3). Though this entire area constitutes Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail, paved pedestrian and bicycle trails and the parkway road only currently exist from Lake Harriet eastward. The western segment of the project area (west of Lynnhurst Park) does not feature a formal network of trails or the Parkway road along the Creek.

The section of Parkway through Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park was master planned as part of the 2015 Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan and is not included in the project area for this plan.

The master plan includes a proposed boundary change that would add Lynnhurst Park, MPRB-owned land currently classified as a local park, into the regional trail corridor boundary. More information on this proposed boundary change is available in the Analysis.

The submittal of the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan was accompanied by a letter outlining which amenities MPRB proposes to be fully included in the regional trail corridor and therefore eligible for funding and visitor counts (Attachment 1). As noted on the third page of the letter, local park



amenities in Lynnhurst Park would continue to be classified as local and excluded from Regional Parks System funding and visitor counts.

Rationale

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, particularly Planning Strategy 1 (Master plan requirements) and Recreation Activities and Facilities strategies 1-3 (Balance conservation and recreation, Range of recreation opportunities, Equitable use), and other Council policies.

The June 7, 2021, submittal letter proposes classification of the existing tennis courts in the regional trail corridor as “regional.” However, the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* clearly states that “ball diamonds and tennis courts... are not eligible for regional funding for improvement or expansion” (pg. 99). Therefore, Council staff do not recommend classifying existing tennis courts in the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail corridor as regional.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan advances the Thrive outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region. The master plan also advances the outcome of Stewardship by responsibly managing our region’s natural resources and investing in natural resource restoration.

Funding

The total estimated cost to implement the master plan over a 30-year period is \$108,385,853.

It is important to note that not all of these costs will be borne by MPRB. The master plan includes costs from a variety of elements that may be jointly implemented with partner agencies. Examples of such projects include road modifications, creek meanders, and stormwater best management practices (BMPs). The master plan and its cost estimates are meant to guide the efforts of multiple agencies.

Annual operations, maintenance, and public safety costs are funded through MPRB’s budget and Metropolitan Council’s Operations and Maintenance Program. The budget is administered by the MPRB’s Superintendent and approved annually by the MPRB Board of Commissioners.

Known Support / Opposition

In November 2020, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s Board of Commissioners adopted Resolution 2020-330, a Resolution Adopting the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan (Attachment 2).

Figure 1: Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail location in the Regional Parks System

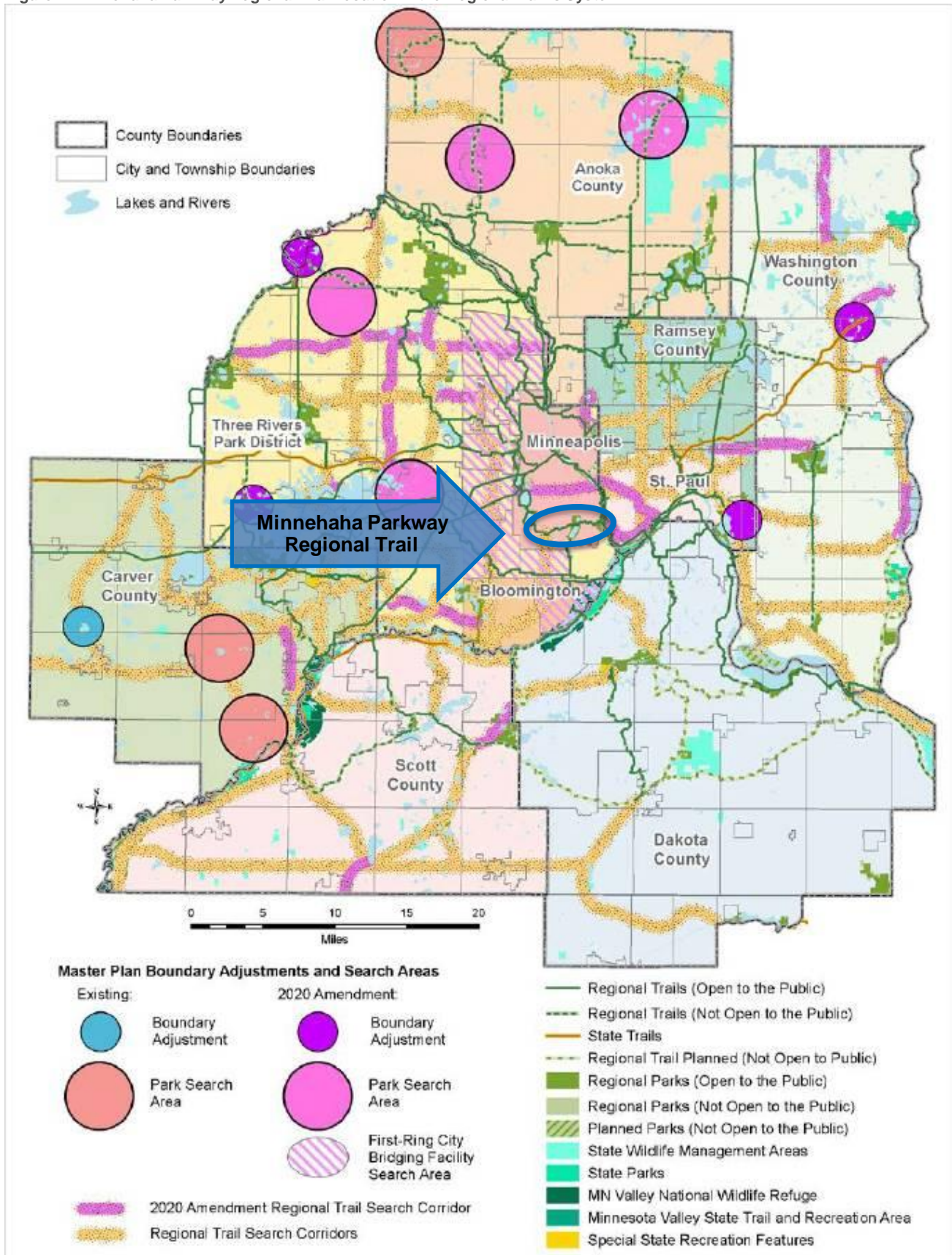
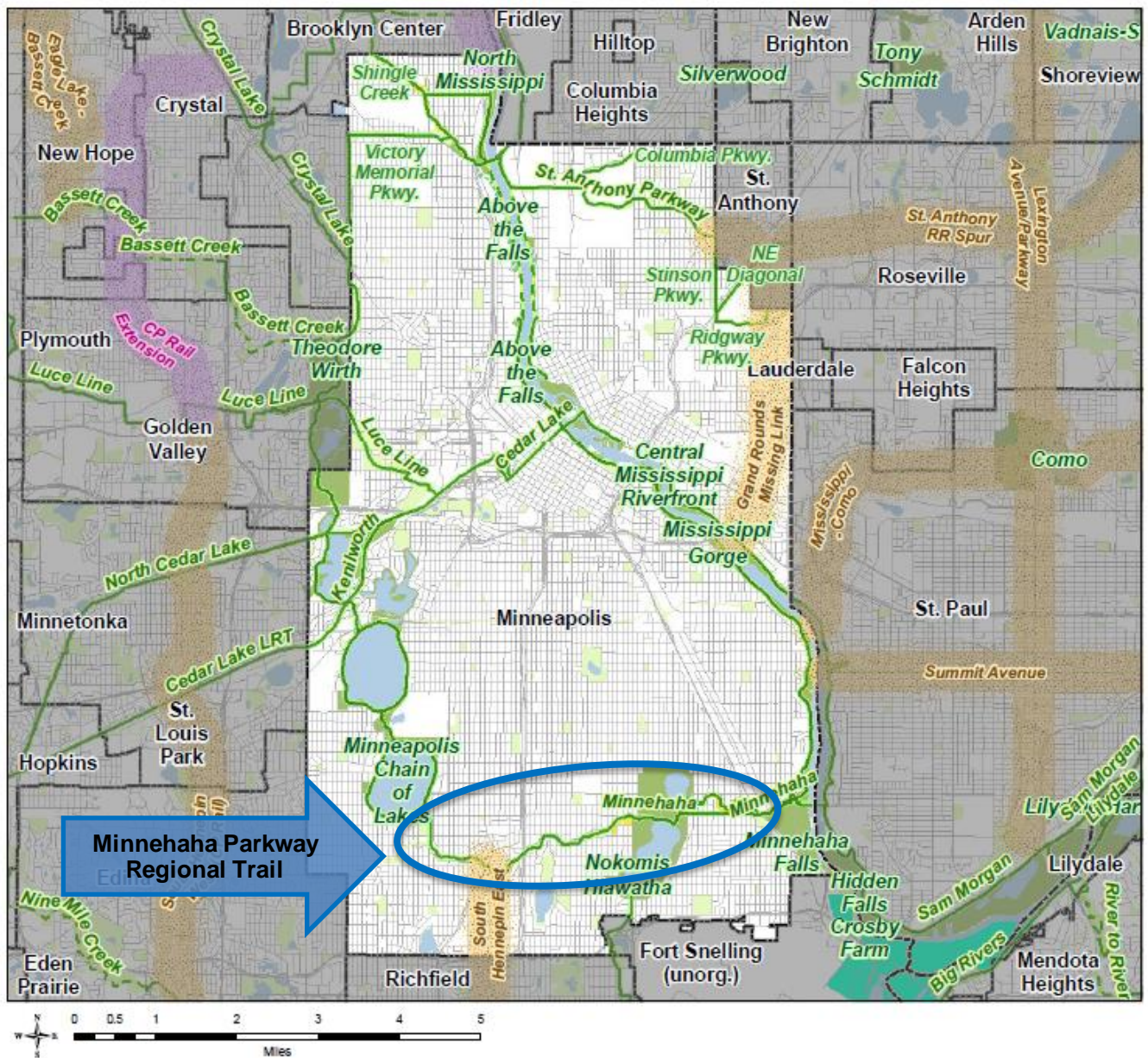


Figure 2: Regional Parks System, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County – Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail location



Regional Parks

- Existing
- In Master Plan
- Planned Parks and Reserves

Regional Trails

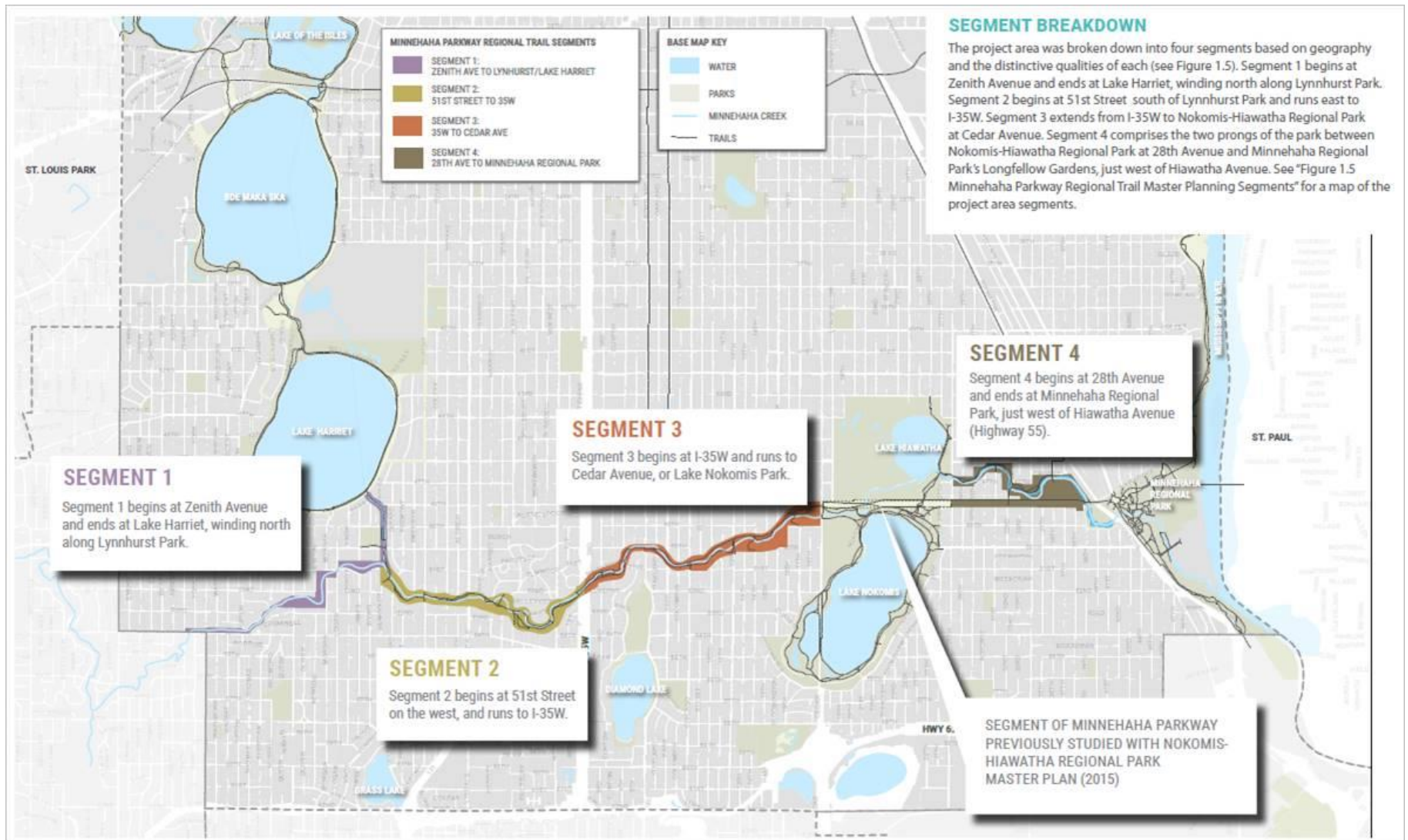
- Existing Regional Trails
- Planned Regional Trails
- Regional Trail Corridor Land

Regional Park Search Areas and Regional Trail Search Corridors

- Boundary Adjustments
- Search Areas
- Regional Trail Search Corridors
- Regional Trails - 2040 System Additions

- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- State Parks
- State Wildlife Management Areas (Publicly Accessible)
- Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA)
- Other Parks and Preserves
- Existing State Trails
- Street Centerlines (NCompass)
- Lakes and Major Rivers

Figure 3: Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Planning Segments (MP Fig. 1.5)



Analysis

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

Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

There are no new property acquisitions necessary by MPRB to implement this master plan. At Lynnhurst Park, MPRB is proposing a boundary change to the regional trail, though additional land to be added to the regional facility is wholly owned by MPRB. Such a change would accommodate future development of the proposed environmental-themed community center, the construction of a new bridge/overpass at 50th Street, and the daylighting of the tributary from Lake Harriet.

The two parcels to be added to the regional trail boundary are 8.27 acres (PID 160282424001) and 0.8 acres (PID 1602824310080) in size, and are immediately adjacent to the existing regional trail boundary.

Demand Forecast

According to a November 2019 Metropolitan Council Regional Forecast, the population of the seven-county metro is projected to increase by approximately 15% between 2020 and 2040. In 2017, Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail was estimated to have had more than 1.3 million visits annually, based on the Metropolitan Council's annual use estimates. If the population of the seven-county metro increases as projected and park usage rates remain the same, the regional trail could see an additional 232,335 visitors each year by 2040.

By 2040, 1 in 5 Minneapolis residents will be 65+ years old, making this cohort the fastest growing segment of the population. Older adults tend to have more free time than other segments of the population, but face health challenges at greater rates, making passive outdoor recreation an important offering. Trail use is a low-impact activity that has positive impacts on health and wellbeing. Additionally, the connectivity provided by a cross-city trail network like the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail offers a safe and convenient way to travel for those who cannot or choose not to operate a motor vehicle. In order to accommodate an aging user population, providing additional trail amenities like restrooms, seating, wayfinding, shelters, and drinking fountains at reliable intervals would help ensure a comfortable experience. Designated loop trail routes with wayfinding that identifies distances and rest areas would make it easier to design trips that cater to different ability levels.

By 2040, 40% of residents in the Twin Cities metro area will be people of color, up from 24% in 2010. The MPRB has identified lower rates of nature-based park usage among non-white populations as a concern. According to the MPRB, overcoming a lack of awareness of the regional park system and its offerings was found to be the most significant barrier among communities of color. Addressing this issue as well as perceptions about the safety of wild-feeling natural corridors like Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail will be critical if this valuable amenity is to continue to be enjoyed by a changing future population.

Households are projected to increase in size by 2040, as a result of rising housing costs and multi-generational cohabitation. Reductions in available personal space make access to the outdoors a desirable amenity. When members of a household recreate together, first-come first-served picnic areas and shelters with nearby amenities help accommodate family gatherings. Larger picnic grounds with convenient parking and transit access are a great way to welcome new visitors into the regional

park system, create space for heritage and holiday celebrations, and increase awareness of formerly unfamiliar parks and trails so that people are comfortable visiting on their own in the future.

Development Concept

The Regional Trail is divided into four segments for planning purposes. Additional detail about each segment, as well as focus areas within those segments, is included below.

Segment 1

Segment 1 is the westernmost section of the regional trail, extending from the border of Minneapolis and Edina at Zenith Avenue to Lynnhurst Park and north to Lake Harriet, along the tributary between the lake and the creek (Figure 4). Segment 1 has two focus areas:

- Penn-Newton-Morgan
- Lynnhurst

This segment is unique in that it is not bounded by the parkway road and lacks paved trails for the majority of its length. Instead, Minnehaha Creek winds past backyards and a somewhat disconnected grid of residential streets for much of this segment. Without the parkway's visual proximity or the coherent network of crossings and access points elsewhere in the corridor, Segment 1 lacks legibility as a public park. No additional acquisitions are planned in this part of Segment 1.

The plan for Segment 1 responds to its lack of legibility or formal trail network by implementing a broader "Western Creek District" intended to improve wayfinding, promote access, and increase use of this segment. The District is bounded by Morgan Avenue on the east, Zenith Avenue on the west, 54th Street on the south, and 50th Street on the north.

The Western Creek District will provide enhanced wayfinding on city streets, sidewalks, and bikeways to Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail and Minnehaha Creek at key intersections.

Entry points to the Western Creek District's trail network will be defined by signage, wayfinding kiosks, and trailhead amenities like bike parking where active recreation or natural surface trails are present.

New creek access points for paddling or tubing are proposed at 54th Street and Vincent Avenue, east of Penn Avenue, at Morgan Avenue south of 51st Street, and near the realigned Minnehaha Parkway intersection south of Lynnhurst Park.

A new waterside lounge and picnic area is proposed north of the Creek near Newton Avenue. Active recreation in this segment consists of tennis at the Morgan Avenue tennis courts, sledding on the hill at 51st and Newton, and traditional neighborhood park activities at Lynnhurst Park and Burroughs Elementary School.

No new active recreation is proposed in Segment 1, except at Lynnhurst Park.

Segment 1 where Penn Avenue meets the Creek is one of the most essential locations for flood mitigation within the corridor. Opportunities for creek re-meanders around Penn and James Avenues, repair of storm sewer outlets and overland flumes (most of which are in very poor repair), and the construction of best management practices (BMPs) will all contribute to increasing habitat, gaining flood storage, and improving water quality in Segment 1.

At the Lynnhurst Focus Area, the existing culvert carrying the tributary from Lake Harriet across 50th Street to the Creek is undersized and contributes to flooding problems near 49th Street. The master plan proposes daylighting and re-meandering the tributary from Lake Harriet.

Figure 4: Segment 1 (MP Fig. 5.8)



Segment 1 – Penn-Newton-Morgan Focus Area

The area between Penn and Logan Avenues represents a transitional space for Segment 1 and the creek corridor as a whole, as it moves from the isolated network of natural surface trails at its western-most edge to the new paved trail that is the recognizable regional trail route east of Morgan. In order to make up for the lack of accessible trails here, the proposed Penn Avenue Interpretive Overlooks will provide exceptional views and a visual connection to Minnehaha Creek for those unable to use the natural surface paths.

The area around the Morgan Avenue bridge will include bike parking for those who wish to continue west on foot, and wayfinding for those hopping on or off of the paved Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail. When this project is initiated, trail route options between Morgan and Logan will be considered in detail before a trail is constructed.

Additional improvements proposed include the addition of a shelter and picnic area along the creek where players and onlookers can relax, and a nature play area, which fills a service gap in the recreation system.

The area around Penn Avenue is a prime location for stormwater management. West of Penn, a braided channel restoration will increase flood storage, while east of Penn, a stormwater BMP and creek re-meander will help treat 230 acres of stormwater runoff, reduce the volume of water entering the creek directly from pipe outfalls, and slow flow velocities, while creating habitat.

An existing concrete spillway between Newton and the creek is proposed to be replaced with a multi-cell, stormwater runoff BMP, which will detain and treat runoff rather than discharging it immediately into the creek untreated.

Segment 1 – Lynnhurst Focus Area

This focus area is unique because Lynnhurst Park is a neighborhood park, and was planned jointly as a part of the Southwest Service Area Master Plan (Figure 5). As noted in the Background, the master plan includes a proposed boundary change that would add Lynnhurst Park into the regional trail corridor boundary.

Lynnhurst Park and its surrounding neighborhoods are very vulnerable to flooding. The park offers the most available space to store floodwater, but is also beloved for its field recreation offerings. The joint planning process resulted in a flexible rearrangement of Lynnhurst's fields and courts and the proposed integration of underground water storage, which will maintain space for multi-use diamonds and hockey. Active uses are grouped safely out of the floodplain while land along the tributary is reclaimed for restored habitat and floodable passive recreation.

The master plan proposes a reconnection of park function and ecology, relinking Lynnhurst Park and its community center by moving the building north of 50th Street, and daylighting the tributary by constructing a new raised bridge at 50th Street in order to accommodate the channel and bike and pedestrian trails underneath.

ADA-accessible paved trails are proposed throughout this focus area, including along 5 1st Street, where there are none currently. This area also includes an accessible fishing pier and water access.

Paved pedestrian trails are separated from bike trails throughout the Lynnhurst Focus Area. A new pedestrian bridge south of Burroughs Elementary allows the primary pedestrian route to remain along the west side of the tributary for easy access to recreational amenities at Lynnhurst Park. A new pedestrian bridge over the tributary provides access to the Community Center from 50th Street.

Bike trails generally remain on the east side of the tributary. A new bike bridge is proposed on the north side of the project area to facilitate this.

Lynnhurst Park has the westernmost ADA-accessible creek access in the project area. Located just downstream of the tributary's confluence with the creek, the launch will have sidewalk access from nearby ADA parking spaces along Minnehaha Parkway.

The new community center will function as a recreation and activity hub along Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail. The facility is proposed to have an environmental learning focus, which leverages its location next to the tributary as an educational tool that will enable visitors to learn about the challenges and wonders of urban ecology.

Segment 2

Segment 2 runs from Lynnhurst Park to I-35W and is fully bounded by Minnehaha Parkway roads (Figure 5). It is surrounded by residential homes and has one focus area – “Nicollet Hollow” – between Girard Avenue and Minnehaha Parkway east of Nicollet Avenue.

The master plan for Segment 2 focuses on maintaining the natural feel of the trail network, while improving access and safety for trail users. Where possible, the MPRB separates bike and pedestrian trails throughout the segment.

The MPRB reroutes many of the trails in Segment 2 in order to accommodate stormwater BMPs and restored meanders along Minnehaha Creek, interventions that add flood storage and are intended to reduce the frequency and duration of inundation. In order to maintain passage during flood conditions, alternate trails are made available on higher ground where possible.

MPRB proposes two new creek access points, one on the north side of the creek between Garfield and Harriet, and another east of the Nicollet Avenue underpass, which will be ADA-accessible.

According to the plan, new path connections around 51st Street should be designed to maintain access to the existing sledding hill in the winter. Other trail additions, including boardwalks and interpretive overlooks, will supplement the trail network and offer better access to natural resources and wildlife viewing.

A proposed picnic area in the knoll between the Minnehaha Parkway roads near Valleyview Drive offers a peaceful creekside gathering place.

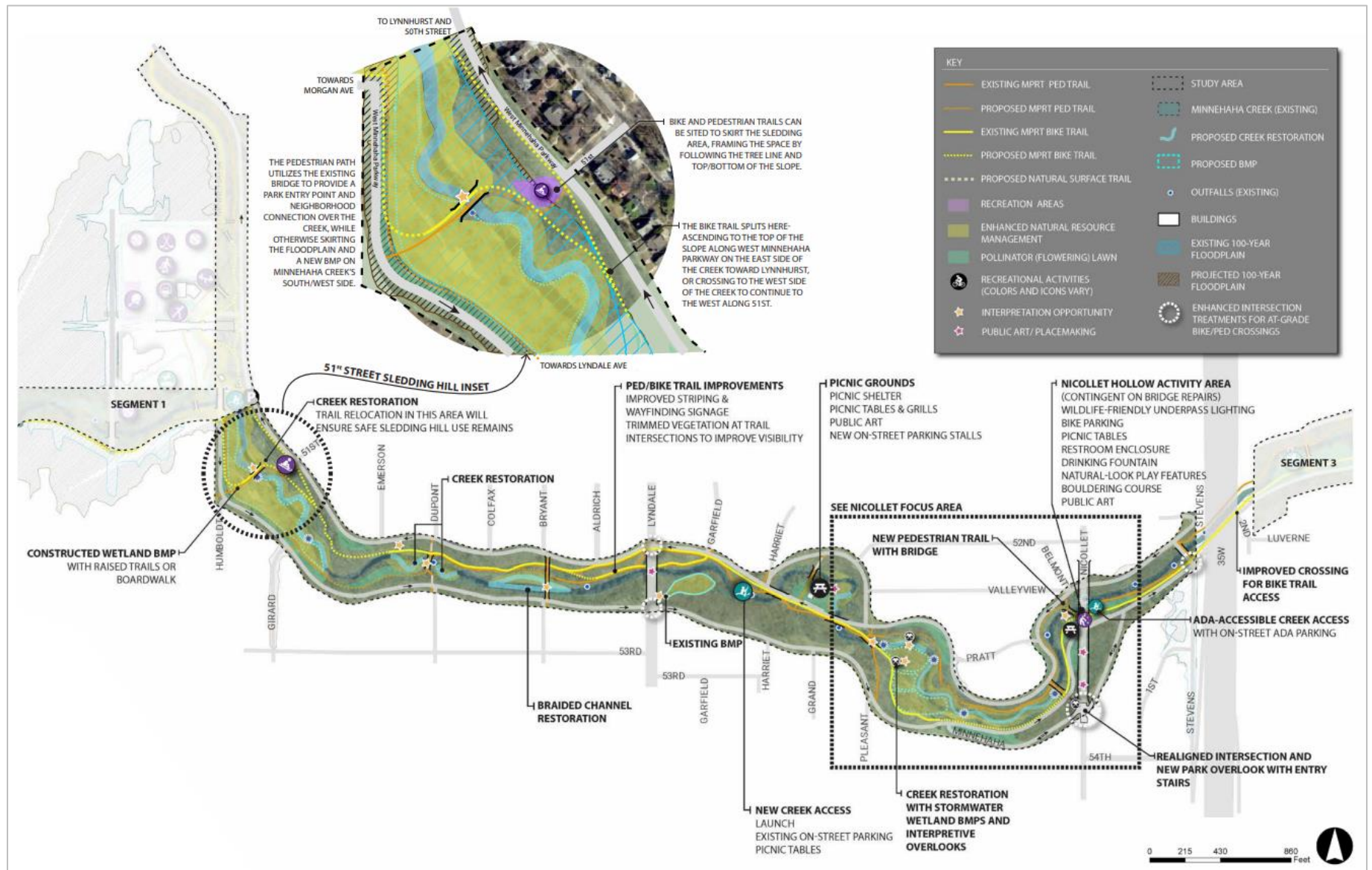
Segment 2 – Nicollet Focus Area

ADA-accessible paved trails are proposed throughout this focus area. Nicollet Hollow also includes the regional trail's central ADA-accessible water access.

The Nicollet Focus Area is the only area where new active recreation is proposed. This area is a key rest stop between existing trail amenities at Lynnhurst Park and Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park, and will have water, a restroom enclosure, seating, and picnic tables, in addition to the ADA-accessible water access. Nature-themed play features and public art will enliven the space and mark the area as a worthwhile trail stop.

Pedestrian trails are separated from bike trails throughout the Nicollet Focus Area. New segments of pedestrian trails respond to a re-meandered creek alignment and are moved farther from the creek in order to avoid flooding. A segment of the bike trail is relocated closer to the lower Parkway road, in order to remain outside of the floodplain and make room for creek restoration. Bike parking and multi-modal options should be made available at Nicollet Hollow as part of the activity area.

Figure 5: Segment 2 (MP Fig. 5.11)



The reconstruction of the Nicollet Avenue underpass presents a unique opportunity to integrate play as part of the bridge. A bouldering course fits the theme of nature-based active recreation and would offer a no-cost introduction to climbing as the sport gains popularity. MPRB is also considering swings, creative lighting, and public art in the bridge's design to make the underpass more welcoming and enhance the recreational potential of Nicollet Hollow in addition to holding traffic above.

Situated at a mid-point between Lynnhurst Park and Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park, Nicollet Hollow is an ideal location for comfort amenities and gathering space. Picnic tables, seating, drinking water, and a restroom enclosure will all be available. In the event of inclement weather, the bridge will provide trail users with some temporary protection from the elements.

Segment 3 – Overall

Segment 3 runs from I-35W to Cedar Avenue (Figure 6). West of Park Avenue, it is predominantly bounded by Minnehaha Parkway roads, while east of Park Avenue Minnehaha Parkway runs along the north side of Minnehaha Creek. The segment is surrounded by residential homes, and there is a small commercial node at Cedar Avenue where Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail enters Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park. Segment 3 has one focus area, referred to as “Portland and the Parkway” near the iconic bunny sculpture.

To promote safety, the MPRB is recommending intersection improvements at many locations. Specific interventions will be determined in the detailed design phase.

A one-block segment of MPRB-owned frontage road is proposed to be removed west of Cedar Avenue. This road is used as a cut-through for vehicles, but is otherwise functionally redundant from a traffic standpoint. Removal of this excess impervious surface to make way for a stormwater BMP that will provide water quality and flood benefits.

Proposed intersection enhancements include features like larger landings for queueing, mode separated crosswalks, and signal timing adjustments that will make biking and walking Segment 3 safer and more convenient.

Additions to the trail network include a new bridge near 10th Avenue that will connect bike and pedestrian paths to a proposed water access point on Minnehaha Creek. A proposed bike tunnel beneath Cedar Avenue will allow grade-separated crossing of the busy county road into Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park, eliminating the need to cross at a high-conflict intersection.

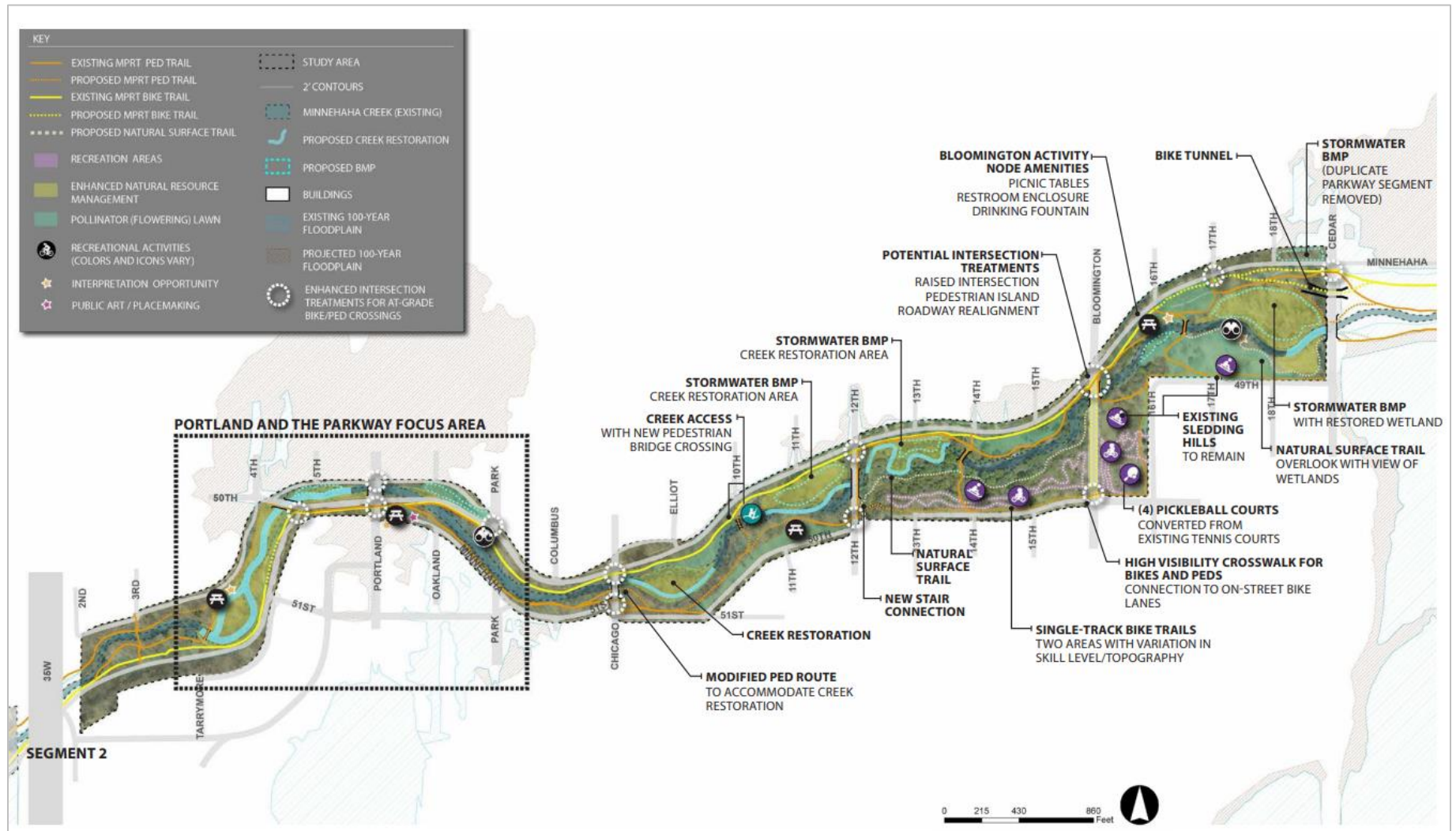
A proposed picnic ground on the north side of the creek at 16th Avenue will provide restroom and water access to support the active recreational uses around the Bloomington Activity Node. These include a sledding hill, four new pickleball courts that will replace the existing tennis courts, and a new course of single-track bike trails between 12th and 16th Avenues, on the south side of Minnehaha Creek.

Segment 3 – Portland and the Parkway Focus Area

ADA-accessible paved trails are proposed throughout this focus area.

This section of Segment 3 has the corridor's most complicated roadway network. As a cross-town pinch point, it experiences a lot of congestion at peak hours and can feel unsafe no matter which mode of travel one prefers. Proposed medians at Portland Avenue and conversion of the Parkway's frontage roads to opposing one-ways endeavors to restrict the cut-through traffic that plagues this area during rush hour.

Figure 6: Segment 3 (MP Fig. 5.13)



West of 50th Street, bike and pedestrian trails are proposed to be rerouted in order to make room for a creek re-meander and maintain mode separation. Intersection realignment, vegetation management, and the addition of stop signs will greatly improve safe crossing of Minnehaha Parkway and 50th Street.

A new creekside overlook at Park Avenue provides a welcoming feature for visitors entering the trail from the north. A revitalized rest area at “The Bunny” will be fortified with permeable pavers, and offer working drinking water, seating, bike racks, and picnic tables for visitors. South of 50th Street on the west side of the creek, a new picnic grounds will provide inviting views of a newly restored braided channel.

Segment 4 – Overall

Segment 4 runs from the border of Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park at 28th Avenue to 39th Avenue S (Figure 7). This segment is unique because the parkway roads form a boulevard south of Minnehaha Creek, while the regional trails run along the creek itself. The two prongs connect at the blocks around 34th Street, but pockets of residential homes keep the parkway and trails separate elsewhere in the segment.

The trail network generally remains the same, except where existing trails are relocated to make room for creek re-meanders or stormwater BMPs, as is the case between 28th and 30th Avenues, and between 36th and 39th Avenues.

From a water access perspective, the final takeout before Minnehaha Falls is located just south of the Minnehaha Parkway bridge east of 39th Avenue. It is proposed to be converted to an ADA-accessible water access with available on-street parking, a new curb ramp, and an accessible path.

Segment 4 currently has several underutilized tennis courts that are in poor condition. In order to diversify recreation offerings here, the westernmost court is proposed to be removed and converted to an open pollinator play lawn, the courts at 32nd are slated to be repaired, and the courts at 34th are proposed to be converted into a bike skills park.

The master plan proposes the addition of a Storywalk, which will connect Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park to Longfellow Gardens. The new natural surface trail will provide a more direct route between Lake Nokomis Recreation Center and Minnehaha Regional Park, and offer a unique interpretive program along the way. For cyclists, protected bikeways will be installed on Minnehaha Parkway to connect the two parks.

The proposed Storywalk will provide a place where traditional foods and medicines, and other native plants can ground visitors in a facet of Dakota culture that is rooted in the land. Here, indigenous artists can create and showcase artworks, and choose to speak to culture in their own way.

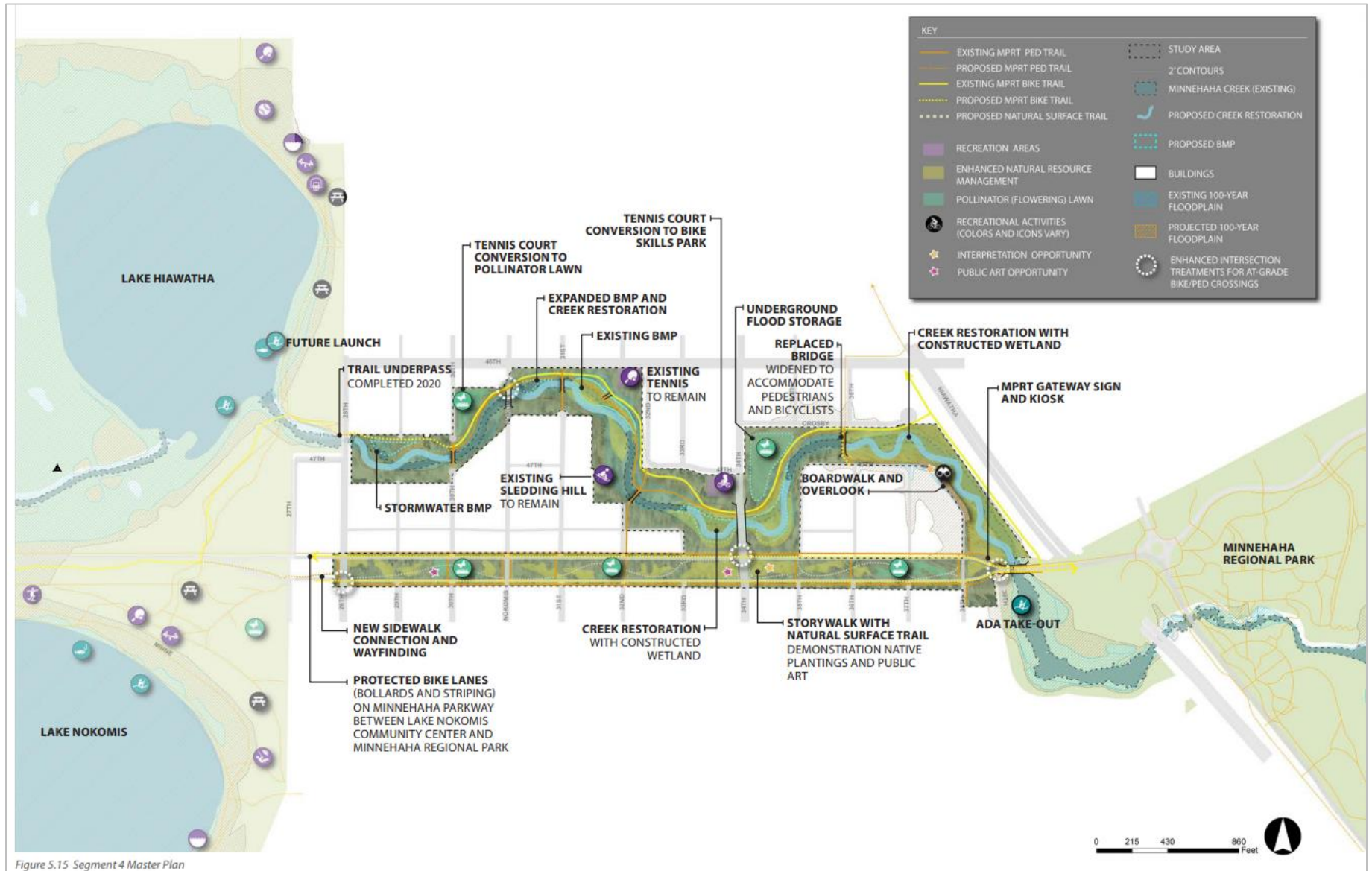
Conflicts

Uncontrolled intersections, where vehicles are not required to stop at stop signs or traffic lights, can pose a barrier for trail users. Crosswalk markings, signage, and sometimes flashing lights indicate where trail users have the right-of-way, but for families with children walking or biking together, intersections like this present a concern. There are a number of intersections that require trail users to trust that vehicles will see them and yield right of way.

Busy intersections like those around 50th and Portland are cited by residents and trail users as a particular concern, as drivers are often in a hurry to make a turning movement and do not stop ahead of a trail crossing, or fail to take the time to look for trail users.

Public input also underscored the general desire for separate bicycle and pedestrian paths, to reduce the potential conflict between dog walkers and bicyclists.

Figure 7: Segment 4 (MP Fig. 5.15)



Public Services

The plan identifies many intersections that would benefit from improvements to increase safety for all modes moving through the regional trail corridor. Recommendations include:

- Improve safety at intersections, especially where the trails cross roadways, through the use of innovative signage and wayfinding information, and provide facility upgrades like:
 - High visibility, mode-separated striping at crosswalks
 - Forward stop bars at all stop signs
 - Curb extensions
 - Signage alerting drivers of trail crossings
 - Speed tables/raised intersections
 - Limited or prohibited right turns for vehicles
 - Pedestrian/bicycle signal timing standards
- At roadway crossings of the trail, widen curb ramps, and expand waiting area to accommodate increased queuing at intersections.
- Visibility of trail users from roadways at intersections is a priority. Avoid siting new elements that obstruct drivers' vision of trail users and ensure vegetation is trimmed to maintain views.

MPRB, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD), and the City of Minneapolis will continue to coordinate on stormwater infrastructure and opportunities to implement BMPs.

Additionally, MPRB has identified as essential continued communication between MPRB, MCWD, and the City of Minneapolis' Public Works Department about planned capital improvement projects. The Plan includes the following recommendations:

- Examine existing stormwater outfalls and overland flumes and schedule repair and replacement. Utilize BMPs suited to the existing conditions, water volume, and location.
- Daylight the buried section of tributary between Lake Harriet and Minnehaha Creek.
- When repairs to existing infrastructure are planned or new projects are designed, assess the feasibility of water and sewer connections to provide additional drinking fountains and/or restroom facilities.
- Limit views of electrical transformer boxes and other utility infrastructure via considerate site selection, burying, camouflaging, or otherwise screening from view in order to maintain a natural aesthetic along the corridor.
- Design new bridges over the Creek to minimize debris and ice buildup, and to maintain safe passage beneath for paddlers.

Partner Engagement

The master plan was created through a joint effort between MPRB, MCWD, and relevant departments at the City of Minneapolis. Implementation will need to occur with continued collaboration with all relevant agencies. As the owner and operator of the regional trail, MPRB will take a lead in coordination efforts. Projects that involve direct impact of the creek and stormwater, daylighting of new waterways, changes to permeable surfaces, and addition of creek access points will require coordination with MCWD. Where implementation involves re-alignment of local roadways, curb and gutter improvements, signage and wayfinding installation, and stormwater outlet improvements, the City of Minneapolis will serve as a collaborator or project lead. Projects involving county roadways, or transit service will require coordination with Hennepin County, Metro Transit, adjacent municipalities, and the Metropolitan Council.

In order to accomplish an efficient and comprehensive stacking of functions within the space of the parkway, which falls within several jurisdictions, MPRB, MCWD, and the City of Minneapolis established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Approved in 2017, the MOU outlines how the agencies will work together to achieve the following goals:

- Enhancing the ecological and recreational opportunities of the creek corridor
- Reducing flooding
- Achieving regional pollutant load reductions identified in Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)
- Reducing runoff volumes and peak flows to Minnehaha Creek
- Eliminating combined sewer outflows

Public Engagement and Participation

Community engagement for this planning process began in the spring of 2018 and continued through the approvals process and plan completion. The overall engagement goal for the project was to be collaborative with as many stakeholder groups as possible. This means that the design team and MPRB staff worked directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that perspectives were consistently understood, considered, and reflected in project decisions.

In order to achieve these goals, the project process involved a variety of means of gathering community input from a wide variety of events and methods. Those methods included a series of kick-off open houses and attendance at 23 community events throughout much of 2018. Participants were invited to provide feedback on things they like and where they had concerns, and to share their ideas for the future. Efforts were made to range farther afield of the creek itself, to ensure participation by those not in close proximity. This also brought more racially and ethnically diverse voices into the process because the neighborhoods along the creek tend to be less diverse. In total, hundreds of comments were collected over the course of these events.

A web survey was launched during the same time. The intention of the survey was to gather broad community feedback on ideas, concerns, and missing activities and programs along Minnehaha Creek. 252 people participated.

“Social Pinpoint,” a web-based map platform, was also used throughout much of 2018. Like other engagement activities, participants were able to call out items that were working, share ideas, and voice concerns by placing a variety of icons on a map and providing additional comments. 327 comments were collected.

Four common themes emerged from early engagement including trail quality, roadways, natural resources, and programs/facilities. Some of the feedback included:

- Separate trails for bikes and pedestrians throughout
- Street level bump-outs, leading pedestrian intervals, and separate crossing signals for bikes and pedestrians were common suggestions at nearly every intersection
- Concern about invasive species, especially buckthorn, along the creek
- Improved path lighting throughout the trail corridor was frequently suggested

Additional community open houses, meetings, and web surveys were used in 2019, along with a project team design charrette, creek tours with youth, and a traffic study.

A Community Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of 19 community members, provided guidance and support for the master plan. Committee members were appointed by MPRB Commissioners, City Council members, and neighborhood groups. MCWD was also asked to appoint a CAC member. The

CAC members were intended to represent a mix of viewpoints that includes residents, park users, stakeholder groups, and others.

The CAC met three times in 2018, seven times in 2019, and twice in 2020. CAC meetings were open to the public with time allotted for public comment. All meeting minutes are located on the project website, and summaries of feedback and meeting minutes are located in the appendix of the master plan.

A 45-day comment period began on June 19, 2020 and concluded on August 17, 2020. At the close of the public comment period, MPRB staff compiled and reviewed all comments. Recommendations for modifications to the document were reviewed by the project team and revisions were completed. A public hearing was conducted and the final plan was presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval on November 18, 2020.

Equity Analysis

Project Data

The following local and regional stakeholders were identified early on and confirmed throughout the planning process through demographic information gathered through surveys and in-person engagement events. These stakeholders represent the primary user stakeholders for the regional park. There is significant overlap between these stakeholders, as the high number of regional park users and potential users encompasses a wide and broad demographic. In the case of Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail, the most underserved stakeholders are likely those that are not frequent users or nearby residents.

Local Stakeholders

- The majority of residents in immediately adjacent neighborhoods are aged 40-64 years old. Census block data shows that approximately 35-45% of residents within 2 miles of the Creek Corridor fall within this age range.
- Residents in immediately adjacent neighborhoods to the Creek Corridor report lower percentages of disabilities than other areas of the city of Minneapolis.
- Adjacent neighborhoods to the Creek Corridor show some of the lowest levels of racial or ethnic diversity in the city, with the majority (70-95%) reporting as White/Caucasian.
- While the population immediately adjacent to Minnehaha Creek is primarily older residents, the number of youths (under 18 years old) who live further away from the Creek (between 3-4 miles) is higher (30-40%).
- Youth in the Powderhorn, Phillips, North Minneapolis, and Northeast Minneapolis neighborhoods tend to live in lower-income households (0-20th percentile income levels), versus residents immediately adjacent to the Creek (80-100th percentile).
- The above-mentioned neighborhoods are far more diverse than other parts of the city, with the highest concentration of all other races other than white. A significant (42-46%) number of Hispanic residents live in the Phillips neighborhood and a significant number of Black residents live in Near North/North Minneapolis (39-67%).
- Through the Mapping Prejudice project, we know that the areas surrounding Minnehaha Creek had some of the highest levels of racial covenants, when compared to other parts of the city. The area around the Creek benefitted from the practice of redlining, as most of this area was rated as 'best'. Contrasting diversity in other areas of the city, such as in Powderhorn and the Phillips neighborhood, are reflective of how these covenants have influenced generations of potential inequities over time throughout the City.

Regional Stakeholders

- Just outside of the 2-mile service area, there are increased numbers of residents who report disabilities (20-24%), which appears to correspond to a higher number of senior housing developments. People who experience disabilities tend to rely more on public transportation and non-motorized modes for transportation and recreation.
- Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail has some of the highest bike and pedestrian user counts in the entire city, with an estimated daily bicycle traffic of 1,090 riders and an estimated daily pedestrian traffic of 650 pedestrians (2016, City of Minneapolis).
- Within the 3–4-mile area surrounding Minnehaha Creek, the income levels of residents tend to be much lower than the neighborhoods immediately along the creek. People with less money tend to rely more heavily on public transportation and non-motorized modes (biking, walking).

Public Engagement and Participation

Of the primary stakeholder groups identified, two of the three could be categorized as underserved: Youth in Other Parts of the City and Non-motorized Transportation and Recreational Trail Users. Engagement for the regional trail master plan was conducted at a number of scales and with a broad and targeted approach to understand ideas, feedback, and concerns of all interested stakeholders.

Youth Engagement

The main method for engaging with youth who live in other parts of the city was conducted through creek tours with middle and high school age youth during the summer of 2019. General topics surrounding inclusion, access, stewardship, and outdoor recreation were discussed, and in-process site concepts were shared with the youth with feedback collected.

According to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum, the role that this stakeholder group played in the development of the master plan ranged from Consult to Involve.

Some of the higher-level themes that emerged from youth who live in other parts of the city included:

- In general, youths expressed an experience of calm, quietness, and serenity while touring Minnehaha Creek.
- The outdoor environment presented a new experience for many youths, with responses ranging from discomfort to enthusiasm and curiosity.
- In general, youths expressed a frustration that there weren't very many amenities or features that were relatable to them within the park.
- Some youths expressed discomfort in the park, not feeling that it was designed or meant for their use.

Non-Motorized Trail User Engagement

There were a variety of methods for gathering input from non-motorized trail users as this stakeholder group is more spread out throughout the region and represents a wider variety of ages, abilities, and preferences.

According to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum, the role that this stakeholder group played in the development of the master plan ranged from Consult to Collaborate.

Some of the higher-level themes expressed by the non-motorized trail users included:

- General desire for separated trails for slower trail users (e.g., pedestrians) and faster trail users (e.g., bicyclists).
- This group quickly identified a number of high-conflict intersections in the planning process, which influenced much of the scope of the master plan and subsequent recommendations.

- Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail is a heavily used corridor by non-motorized users for both transportation and recreational purposes. This use should continue in to the future with more attention paid to sustainable trail design and location of areas that are frequently flooded.
- A variety of facility types and experiences are desired, such as skills courses for young bicyclists, single-track mountain biking, and natural surface hiking trails.

Evaluation Summary

The master plan is the result of a robust public participation process that occurred at a variety of scales over the course of more than two years. The most prominent results of equitable engagement in the master plan focus on accessibility and race/ethnicity. With regard to accessibility, one key feature is the system of accessible canoe and kayak launches at three locations in the corridor. Another accessibility enhancement is the extension of trails farther west in the corridor.

Specific desires for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community members were harder to come to understand in the project. According to MPRB, it was thought the generally low participation by those identifying as BIPOC was because of the location of the corridor and because of the series of high-energy and contentious meetings that took place during the summer of 2019. Despite efforts made by the CAC, MPRB staff, and consultants, the master plan notes that these meetings were not welcoming places for anyone not interested in talking about the roadway itself. The meetings were overwhelmingly dominated by those that live along or very close to the corridor, an area that is not demographically or economically diverse. Staff's work with city-wide youth at this time was a counterpoint to those meetings. The direct outcome of this engagement responds to the mostly BIPOC youth's frustration about a lack of relatable amenities in the regional trail corridor. The new recreation facilities in the Nicollet Focus Area specifically address this concern.

Ongoing implementation of the master plan will require continued engagement. MPRB intends to reach beyond the corridor itself when engaging around detailed design projects.

Public Awareness

As MPRB implements projects as funding becomes available, neighborhood organizations and identified stakeholder groups will be engaged by the MPRB to complete the next level of design development or construction. Projects and general outcomes are identified in this master plan that demonstrate these ideas. As conditions change over the years, some items that seemed like a priority during the master planning process may be replaced by more immediate needs to address, and further detail will need to be determined for implementation of any of the projects identified.

Community engagement will continue to follow the equity standards set forth by MPRB in the Community Engagement Policy, which embeds the use of a racial equity toolkit into the community engagement plan required for every project. Approaches may involve convening neighborhood focus groups or committees, hosting pop-up or open houses, or gathering feedback through online engagement.

Today, public awareness of existing facilities and services is communicated through the MPRB website, posted on MPRB kiosks along Minnehaha Parkway and throughout the Grand Rounds, and through gateway and trail signage. Programs are communicated through similar methods. Future implementation of wayfinding improvements as planned for the Western Creek District and for new activity areas will be designed further with community/neighborhood input and in coordination with the City of Minneapolis and local affected agencies. Collaboration with Metro Transit will continue to occur to raise awareness along bus routes that intersect Minnehaha Parkway.

Accessibility

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan provides an ADA-accessible trail throughout the length of segments 2-4. ADA-accessible paved trails are proposed in Segment 1 where they do not currently exist. At Penn Avenue in Segment 1, overlooks are proposed on the bridge in order to offer a safe and convenient place to take in the views up and down Minnehaha Creek. Recommendations include:

- Provide alternative ways to experience the Creek corridor in areas where only natural surface trails exist or where trails cannot be made universally accessible.
- Employ design cues to clearly mark all transitions to non-accessible trails.
- Include information on trail maps and signage about trail slope and surface, as well as alternate accessible routes, loops, entrances, and exits.
- As intersections get safety upgrades, adjust crossing 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.
- Locate pedestrian signal buttons so that they are reachable by wheelchair users, no higher than 42" from the ground.

In addition to trail standards, the master plan includes recommendations for accessible seating intervals, drinking water, restrooms, ADA-accessible creek launches.

Stewardship Plan

MPRB and MCWD will continue to serve as partner agencies to manage the creek corridor. Trail, facility, and grounds maintenance will continue to be the responsibility of MPRB, through the direction and operation of the MPRB Environmental Stewardship Division.

Today, there are active neighborhood groups, bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups, and natural resource stewards that are working to advance their special interests along the creek corridor. MPRB is committed to working alongside these groups to promote volunteerism, outreach, and support equitable access to the resources provided through the Regional Trail corridor.

Natural Resources

The area surrounding Minnehaha Creek as it flows through Minneapolis has been under development for over a century. The creek's course, while disturbed, is generally stable and has decent grade control. The flow of the creek is influenced by the discharge at Gray's Bay Dam, although a majority of the creek's flow in Minneapolis is also attributed to watershed runoff. Extensive land development and impervious land cover, coupled with far-reaching storm sewer pipe-shed, direct large volumes of water into the creek very quickly, resulting in fluctuating flows that contribute to erosion and sediment deposition within the project area.

Within the Minnehaha Creek corridor, the channeling of the stream, loss of wetlands, corridor fragmentation and increasing levels of impervious surfaces have disrupted the fluvial processes of the creek. This has increased runoff volumes and pollutant loads, decreased infiltration and baseflow, and fragmented and degraded habitat. All of these changes have negatively impacted the ecological integrity of Minnehaha Creek and its riparian system. As a result, Minnehaha Creek is listed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) as an impaired water body for multiple parameters. Further, due to the sediment and nutrient loads transported by Minnehaha Creek, the MPCA has listed Lake Hiawatha as impaired for excess nutrients and along with the creek itself, has an approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

The project area is largely covered with deciduous tree canopy over turf or mixed shrub understory. More densely vegetated areas are typically found along the banks of the creek, where roots help to hold the shoreline in place.

The Minnesota County Biological Survey shows no remaining natural communities, rare species, or sites of biodiversity significance in the project area. Still, Minnehaha Creek functions as a valuable habitat corridor and is a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources-designated conservation corridor for birds and other urban wildlife.

Assessments of fish communities along the creek consistently return classifications of degraded and poor, indicating stream disturbance and lack of conditions that support healthy riverine fish communities.

The overall strategy for protecting the water quality within Minnehaha Creek is to reduce pollutant loading and stormwater runoff volume from the landscape. Stormwater management will focus on reducing runoff volumes and rates as well as reducing pollutant loading from runoff-producing rain events.

Investments in BMPs at select locations along the regional trail have the potential to significantly improve the ecological function of the creek corridor and the flood resilience of surrounding neighborhoods.

MPRB, MCWD, the City of Minneapolis, and other public agencies will continue to study surface water, groundwater, and their interactions with each other across the City and the broader watershed.

Consistency with Other Council Policies and Systems

Community Development – Forecasts (Todd Graham, 651-602-1322) – The Park Board has identified that the current Master Plan includes park visitation estimates and connects that to the forecasted population growth rate. Further, the Park Board discusses expected aging of the population and changing trail user needs (page 3.32). Council staff concur with this demand assessment.

Community Development – Housing (Hilary Lovelace 651-602-1555) – The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the Council's *2040 Housing Policy Plan*.

The plan doesn't require the acquisition of private residential land that could impact housing. Within a half-mile of the trail there are at least six affordable housing developments serving various household income levels at or below 30-80% of Area Median Income. The proposed trail would directly affect various populations living in these developments—many residents have families with children, are seniors, live with disabilities, and/or need supportive services at their residence. The public engagement process detailed in the plan seemed to rely on youth engagement to reach anyone other than long-time white homeowners for perspectives on the project. Residents of affordable housing nearby were not explicitly listed as a target audience in engagement or the equity analysis.

Community Development – Solar Energy and Natural Resources (Cameran Bailey, 651-602-1212)

Regarding the plan's Infrastructure Recommendations for Stormwater, Council staff recommend coordinating with the stated partners of the Creek's three-agency partnership (MPRB, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and the City of Minneapolis) to address upstream stormwater management practices impacting Minnehaha Creek to complement the stated Infrastructure Recommendations. Examples include an integrated network of native vegetated bioswales within residential boulevards, integrated residential and commercial rain barrels, integrated front lawn conversions into native

vegetated bioswales, commercial and multi-family residential applications of green roofs, sub-grade retention and filtration chambers for roadways, etc.

Council staff also recommend as part of future planning efforts that the MPRB consider strategically acquiring properties adjacent to the creek for wildlife and habitat restoration and transportation connectivity improvement as an additional strategy.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119) – The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has submitted the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan for review. 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.

Portions of Metropolitan Council Interceptors (1-MN-344 and 1-MN-345) are within Minnehaha Park. The interceptors were built in 1928 and 1929 and are 33-inch and 30-inch Vitrified Clay Pipes with Cured In Place Pipe linings. There are specific processes that must be followed before encroachment on Metropolitan Councils assets can occur. Before activities near our assets can occur, copies of the preliminary plans related to the proposed project need to be submitted to Tim Wedin, Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager (651-602-4571) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review to assess the potential impacts to our interceptors.

A portion of Metropolitan Council Interceptor 1-MN-345, near the intersection of Girard Avenue South and Minnehaha Parkway West, is deteriorated and needs rehabilitation. To rehabilitate the pipe and maintain existing capacity, the Council is restricted to removing and replacing the pipe, coating it, or installing a cured in place pipe (CIPP) liner. All these methods require temporary conveyance of wastewater around the pipe segment being rehabilitated.

The Metropolitan Council Environmental Services will be working with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to coordinate the two projects.

Environmental Services – Water Resources (Joe Mulcahy, 612-913-8864) –The Master Plan is comprehensive and ambitious. It appears to be accurate and complete in regards to water resources, and potential water resource impacts appear to be addressed. Full implementation of the projects in the Plan could improve existing water resource issues in the area.



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June 7, 2021

Mr. Emmett Mullin
Metropolitan Council
390 North Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Submittal of Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan

Dear Mr. Mullin:

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board would like to request review and approval of a new master plan for all the lands associated with Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail.

This master plan is the result of more than two years of community engagement. The comprehensive master planning process included input from both local and regional stakeholders throughout each of the planning stages. This plan was also developed in partnership with the City of Minneapolis and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to accomplish shared goals within the master plan area through a memorandum of understanding. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail provides critical trail connections and recreational exposure to users throughout the region as part of the Minneapolis Grand Rounds. The new Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan provides opportunities to introduce new users to the regional system, meet changing recreational needs, and foster equitable use, all while playing to the strengths of this urban creek corridor.

The plan also includes a proposed boundary change that would add Lynnhurst Park, MPRB-owned land currently classified as a local park, into the regional trail boundary. Please see pages 5-12, 5-20, and 7-30 in the document for a map of the location and more detail on this proposed change.

Following my signature line is a clarification of MPRB's master plan submittal, related specifically to which amenities we are requesting to be fully included in the regional park (eligible for funding and counting) and those that will not be. The tables and paragraphs on the following pages list and justify each amenity proposed for full inclusion in the regional park system. It also lists those amenities identified in the master plan that would remain local.

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have on this master plan and to provide additional information, should that be necessary.

Sincerely,

Adam Regn Arvidson, PLA, FASLA
Director of Strategic Planning
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Regional Trail Evaluation of Amenities

Master Plan Amenity	Page #	Regional	Justification and Notes
Enhanced Natural Resource Management Zones	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks (natural resource enhancement)
Furniture and furnishing such as benches, shelters, wayfinding, bike racks, drinking fountains, lighting, restroom enclosure, etc.	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Interpretation, overlooks, and creek access points (ex: launches, piers, trails to the water)	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Pollinator (Flowering) Lawn	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
BMPs, creek restorations, and daylighted tributary	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks (natural resource enhancement)
Trails (including bikeways and bike lanes), bridges, stairs, roads, parking, and drives	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27-, 5-29, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Winter Sledding Hill	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-27, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Picnic Area	5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25, 5-27, 5-29	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Play Areas	5-17, 5-20, 5-23, 5-25	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Nature Play	5-17, 5-19, 5-20	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Existing Tennis Courts	5-17, 5-19, 5-31	YES	See "Justification of Courts" below

Master Plan Amenity	Page #	Regional	Justification and Notes
Creekside Nature Play and Natural Water Play	5-17, 5-20	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Environmentally- Focused Community Center	5-17, 5-20	YES	This community center will function similarly to a nature center by bringing park users in direct contact with natural resources. It will serve as a gateway or bridging facility into the regional park system for community members who may typically come to this area for more recreational focused activities. By bringing this community center into the regional park system it also helps to balance the distribution of nature centers across MPRB's regional park and trail units and expand facilities for environmental education programming. This community center will complement primary activities, included in the Policy Plan, approved within regional parks such as biking, hiking/walking/trail running, nature appreciation, swimming, and wildlife viewing. Supported by Policy Plan page 101 and 102: Strategy 2: "...focus heavy recreational use in the more developed parts of the system...." And Strategy 3: "Strengthen equitable use of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents..."
Open play pollinator lawn with floodable skating rink	5-17, 5-20	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Multi-Use Diamonds and Multi-Use Fields with underground stormwater storage below (Lynnhurst Park)	5-17, 5-20	no	
Basketball Courts (Lynnhurst Park)	5-17, 5-20	no	
Tennis Courts (Lynnhurst Park)	5-17, 5-20	no	
Boardwalk	5-20, 5-23, 5-31	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Bouldering Course	5-23, 5-25	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Bike Tunnel	5-27	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Single-Track Bike Trails	5-27	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks
Pickleball Courts	5-27	YES	See "Justification of Courts" below
Bank Stabilization	5-29	YES	Allowed and typical in regional parks (natural resource enhancement)

Master Plan Amenity	Page #	Regional	Justification and Notes
Bike Skills Park	5-31	YES	A bike park is a play area that can meet the needs of a wide age range of users. Bike parks can be designed to manage their own stormwater runoff and can reference nearby natural features in their design, just like play areas. They can also provide steppingstones in bike education and training with a range of elements that are for beginners up to more advance bike users. The location for the Minnehaha Creek bike park is in an area where there is strong community interest and support. It will replace an existing bank of tennis courts and is located near, but not directly adjacent to Minnehaha Creek. A bike park creates a continuum of space for youth as they age and multigenerational activity, bringing visitors back to the regional park over many years. Supported by Policy Plan page 98 and 101: "Meet the changing recreational preferences to increase use of the Regional Park System...." And Strategy 2: "...focus heavy recreational use in the more developed parts of the system...."

Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Justification of Courts

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan envisions three separate court areas, that hold particular benefits to the community and the ability to increase park use among underserved communities. The tennis and pickleball courts are relatively small improvements in the parks, in terms of land area, meaning they will have limited impact on the adjacent natural resource. All will be designed with stormwater management in mind, to protect Minnehaha Creek from runoff. All will exist within the regional park boundary.

Reviewers will note that MPRB is requesting only the inclusion of courts that currently exist within the fabric of the natural corridor of the creek. All three banks of courts (at Morgan Avenue, Bloomington Avenue, and 46th Street East) are existing—the Bloomington courts are proposed as a conversion of an existing tennis court to pickleball. MPRB is not requesting inclusion of any courts within the Lynnhurst Park area. The key difference between the Lynnhurst courts and the creek corridor courts is the type of use that occurs. The dispersed courts in the creek corridor function similar to ad-hoc ball diamonds currently permitted in regional parks, in that they are home to casual play for users typically arriving by trails along the creek. The Lynnhurst courts are used for league, competitive, and programmed play and are therefore clearly in the realm of a local park.

The creek corridor courts provide benefits to regional parks users in the following ways:

- Providing recreational amenities not commonly found in regional parks but desired in the community. If regional parks provide only nature recreation, numerous users will forgo regional parks and never discover them.
- Providing recreation in close proximity to natural areas. Though a natural area is not necessary to enjoying a game of pickleball or tennis, as it is to canoeing, for instance, recreation of any kind near natural areas has similar mental and physical benefits. Many people play impromptu games of volleyball or soccer near lakes. The connection between these courts and the adjacent waters and woods will be healthful for these users.
- Drawing new users to the regional system and then linking those users to other parks and trails. Families coming to the tennis or pickleball courts may also then decide to walk along the creek, or bike longer trails. Wayfinding signage will communicate the opportunities available within the area even beyond the Minnehaha Creek corridor. These courts, especially pickleball will be a regional draw and will connect people to the regional parks.
- Creating multi-activity recreational spaces for all ages. Courts are often one part of a family's recreational activities when they visit parks. Pickleball and tennis players are likely to have social time afterwards, which could occur within other portions of the regional park.
- Providing desired recreation for underserved groups. Pickleball's largest user group is seniors. This group is under-represented in the regional parks.

Inclusion of these creek corridor courts is supported by the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Recreation Activities and Facilities Policy, in the following ways:

- Strategy 1: Balance Conservation and Recreation
 - "Avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects and restore and enhance environmental quality:"
 1. Stormwater runoff will be managed from the courts prior to impacting Minnehaha Creek.
 2. The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan collectively envisions significant environmental enhancement and these courts constitute a very small percentage of the land area of the park.
 3. The courts exist in areas that are currently managed as tennis courts, meaning no existing natural habitat will be removed to implement them.
 - "Be compatible with other uses and activities, minimizing user conflicts and preserving user experiences:"
 1. The locations for these courts support the use of existing trails and activities proposed nearby: nature play and picnicking.
 2. The primary trail routes through the park will not be impacted by the implementation of these courts.
 3. The more nature-focused areas of the park, where the noise of active recreation would be less welcome, are located at the western end and in Segments 2 and 3 (west of the proposed pickleball courts), far from the proposed court locations.
 - "Help conserve, enhance, and/or restore the natural-resource base while balancing user access through facility development:"
 1. Courts are currently located and will remain outside of the park's core environmental corridor (the creek and adjacent woodlands).

2. Users desire these facilities, based on MPRB's community engagement, and they can be re-built and maintained without impact to natural resources.
- "Meet the changing recreational preferences to increase use of the Regional Park System by all the residents of the region, across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability:"
 1. Pickleball is growing significantly in popularity among seniors. Providing this popular activity in a park that is already a hybrid of natural resource and active recreation will connect these users to the regional trail system.

■ Strategy 2: Range of Recreation Opportunities

- This strategy calls on implementing agencies to "focus heavy recreational use in the more developed parts of the system."
- It also states that "residents of the region are best served when then individual units that make up the system play to their strengths rather than trying to be all things to all people."
- Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail is and always has been an active urban park with a mix of recreational amenities arranged along a semi-natural creek corridor. It is highly developed and offers only minimal immersion in nature. Though the plan calls for significant natural resource enhancement, it is also an appropriate place for more formal recreational options, such as courts.
- Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail's strength is to serve as a gateway to the system as a whole by connecting people to regional facilities within and beyond Minneapolis after drawing them in with desired recreational facilities.

■ Strategy 3: Equitable Use

- This strategy says: "If needed, new facilities and/or programs should be designed to increase use of the Regional Park System by all the residents of the region...."
- Later, the strategy lists ways the Council will enhance equitable usage, including: "Continue and expand convening stakeholder meetings...to enhance knowledge and continuous improvement" and "Require regional park implementing agencies to incorporate public engagement process that includes involvement from individuals representing diverse ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, national origins, and abilities when developing or amending master plans."
- Retention of existing tennis courts and the addition of pickleball courts proposed in the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan arose from extensive community engagement over two years of planning. A variety of voices were included in those efforts, including seniors, youth, and people of varying races and incomes. Tennis and pickleball courts specifically address needs expressed by underserved groups in the regional parks.
- The strategy goes on to "encourage regional park and trail design that meets changing recreational preferences, including amenities for the aging population and those with limited mobility, and clustering of amenities for multigenerational family gatherings."
- The pickleball courts address changing recreational needs and are targeted toward an aging population.
- The strategy also includes "... to remove or reduce barriers which prevent use of the regional system. Barriers may include... transportation...".
- In addition to proximity to the primary bike and pedestrian trails, the tennis and pickleball courts are located within 3 blocks of Metro Transit stops and are adjacent to streets with free parking.



Resolution 2020-330

Resolution Adopting the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan

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 has completed a community-driven master planning process for Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail, which includes all the lands along Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis from the western city limits to Hiawatha Avenue;

Whereas, The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan (the Plan) sets an innovative and overarching 30-year vision for this regional park that addresses recreation, environment, and connectivity;

Whereas, The Plan was created in collaboration with the City of Minneapolis and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, under a memorandum of agreement between these three agencies, but was primarily led by MPRB;

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 nearly two 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 August 17, 2020;

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

Whereas, This resolution is supported by the MPRB 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan, which envisions "Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate," "Recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community," "Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs," and "A safe place to play;"

RESOLVED, That the Board of Commissioners approves the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan; and



9.B.1

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

Resolution 2020-330

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