



COTTAGE GROVE PARKS, RECREATION AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH  
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016  
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:00 PM

February 9, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Roll Call
- 3 Approval of the Agenda
- 4 Approval of Minutes
  - A November 10, 2025
- 5 Open Forum
- 6 Presentations
- 7 Action Items
  - A Still Ponds Park Natural Resources Management Plan
  - B Peterson Park Concept Master Plan Review
  - C Grant Application Letters of Support
  - D Public Landscapes Initiative Program
  - E Commissioner Term Review
  - F Facility Use Reclassification of Special Olympics
- 8 Action Updates
  - A Denzer Park
  - B CG Trailway Corridor Restoration
  - C Oltman Park
  - D Mississippi Dunes Park
  - E Peterson Park
  - F Still Ponds Park
  - G 2025 Park Playground Donation
  - H Ice Arena Naming Rights
- 9 Donations
- 10 Staff Reports and Materials

A Staff Reports

11 Commission Comments

12 Council Comments

A Council Agendas

13 Workshop

14 Adjournment



# Minutes

## City of Cottage Grove

### Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission Meeting

#### November 10, 2025

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Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Cottage Grove Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission Meeting was held on November 10, 2025.

**I. CALL TO ORDER & READING OF MISSION & Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm at City Hall

**II. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Susannah Brown, Kelly Glasford, Adam Larson, David Olson, Debra Gustafson.

**Members Absent:** Samantha Crabtree, Shane Waterman, Justin Waterman

**Others Present:** Zac Dockter Parks & Recreation Director, Jim Fohrman Parks & Recreation Superintendent, Dave Clausen Council Liaison.

**Approval of Agenda**

A Motion to approve agenda made by Commissioner Brown & seconded by Commissioner Olson. Agenda approved.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve minutes from September 8, 2025. Motion made by Commissioner Brown & seconded by Commissioner Glasford. Minutes approved.

**IV. Open Forum-None**

**V. Presentations-None**

**VI. Action Items**

**a. Ice Arena Remodel Design Review**

- i. Over the past few months, we have been looking at the Cottage Grove ice arena and trying to solve some of the logistical problems we are having. The original rink was built in 1973 that included the barrel roof and the added onto it with the square flat roof section in 2008. One of the areas we have never touched since the building was built is from the offices to the concession stand and into the

old restroom, which was converted to storage for the concession stand. Some of the problems we are trying to solve is improving the office space as right now the workspaces are severely cramped, and we have multiple staff sharing very small workstations. The concession area is very inefficient, so that needs some improvement since that is obviously a revenue generating operation. The lobby is quite aged, it looks like 1973, so we would like to improve the aesthetic look as well as the traffic flow. And then of course we can always use more storage areas. We are currently working with Ortel Architects who are familiar with this design. Zac presented the concept design to the Commission and the improvements we are looking to do including a new reception area, expanded office area, renovated concession area, expanded storage for concessions and general purpose, extended viewing platform for the north rink, an enclosed heated viewing area for the south rink, expanded stairs for locker room access, & updated floors and lighting. Commissioner Larson asked if we would keep skate sharpening in the office. Zac confirmed yes, we would but it will end up being tucked back away from the reception area to lessen the noise for staff. Commissioner Larson asked why the mezzanine is proposed to be so short & wondered if it could be extended further. Zac explained that the high school is looking to build a JV locker room in the future that would come from the other direction and space might be compromised. We can look into this more as we go through the design process to see if there is room to extend it, or if they are looking to attach to the existing beams and footings. We did look at trying to ease the bottle neck at the stairway, but right now we would have to remove a section of bleacher seating and not sure if we would like to do that, so we are looking to see if there is a better way to do it. The project right now is estimated to be under \$2 million, but we will see where we are after completing the design. The ice arena generates revenue and is typically self-sustaining, so we are hoping to pay for this through that ice arena revenue. It would be a bond, and the ice arena would pay the bond through revenue. City Council still needs to give their approval, so tonight we are just looking for Commission feedback. We are still a couple months out from making any major decisions but would like the Commission's feedback about the design to make sure we are going down the right track with your experiences at the arena. Commissioner Gustafson likes design, as she

recently has been taking her son to skating lessons, she has learned how busy the facility can be. Commissioner Larson also liked the look and the openness and the access to the concessions. Having a warming spot on the south rink is going to be a great addition. A motion was made to approve the concept design by Commissioner Gustafson. Seconded by Commissioner Glasford. Motioned passed.

**b. Ice Arena Naming Rights Service Proposal**

- i. The Council has expressed the desire for marketing rights for the Cottage Grove Ice Arena. We have had the option to sell those naming rights since the expansion in 2008, but we just haven't had any takers, with the exception of CG Logistics who partnered with the city and re named the north rink to the CG Logistics Rink. We reached out to a few other potential partners but have been unsuccessful on our own. This is why most cities partner with advertising agencies. We reached out to one of the most successful agencies that we know in the area which is Front Burner Sports. We received their presentation on what they have done for other communities, brought that to Council in the form of two different workshops. The Council said to move forward with the proposal. Currently we are working on the final proposal from Front Burner Sports, will then bring it to Council, negotiate those terms, and see if it moves forward from there. Zac shared the full presentation of what the company does and history of success stories. It is a big endeavor, it takes a lot of work, and at the same time it changes the facility. If there were to be a company that wanted naming right for the whole facility, then it would no longer be called the Cottage Grove Ice Arena, and you would lose part of your identity and direct ties to the community. So, this is a pretty big deal, but it also brings in quite a bit of revenue to support operations. Looking for comments and feedback from the Commission. Commissioner Glasford asked if someone has naming rights, is it just monetary, or do they have a say in what goes on or what is done to the facility. Zac stated that no, they do not have any ownership beyond signage. Commissioner Brown asked about evaluating partners, and what types of things do they take into consideration, is it just who is willing to pay for it, or do we look at company values and visions to make sure it aligns with the city? Zac stated that one of the first steps in the process is meeting with the marketing agency and telling them what our policy

and procedures are. Currently some of our policies are no gambling, no alcohol, no smoking, and we lay this information out ahead of time to make sure they are finding partners that make sense with our policies and our expectations. Commissioner Olson wanted to know more about the CG Logistics rink contracts and if there are any potential things with that contract that may impact our ability to move forward with others, and do these companies need to play nice with one another? Since CG Logistics is local here in town Commissioner Olson would want them to know we value their partnership, and this is in no way trying to diminish the value for us. Zac agreed with Commissioner Olson. Zac explained that when CG Logistics entered into the agreement it was less about marketing and advertising and more about community support. To the backside of Commissioner Olson's questions, Zac stated that in the future we would have to make sure that different partners play nice together and we will figure out those things as we go. Commissioner Olson also wanted to express that it would be great to have a local business (Cottage Grove or Washington County) to have as a partnership. He has a little resistance to changing the name of the arena itself, as Cottage Grove is known for this arena. So, what are we losing and how do we value the loss of that name recognition around town. Commissioner Olson wanted to make sure that the Council takes that into consideration. Zac agreed with Commissioner Olson's statement that he himself has tangled with this as well and will share with the Council. Commissioner Larson asked the average length of a contract. Zac stated on average it is 10 to 15 years. Commissioner Glasford asked what is the expected monetary value of something like this to the city. Zac stated that an entire facility could range anywhere from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million over the life of the contract. A sheet of ice would be more towards the \$500,000 to \$850,000 range, so it is quite a significant amount. Commissioner Gustafson asked what happens if you go through all of the phases and the city is out that amount of money that is listed in their presentation. Zac confirmed that yes that is true, but there is a 30-day opt in the contract at any time. A motion was made by Commissioner Gustafson to support the Ice Arena Naming Rights Service Proposal. Seconded by Commissioner Olson.

**c. 2024-2027 Work Plan Review**

- i. Zac submitted the work plan review to remind the Commission of our mission and our goals. This is a document used to guide our conversations, and we want to make sure we are addressing all the goals that you have set forth. Looking for reaffirmation that the work plan doesn't need to change. The Commission had no comments to change the current plan. As there are no changes there is no action needed.

**d. Commissioner Term Review**

- i. Zac presented Commissioner terms. Commissioner Crabtree's term will expire in February 2026, so we will be looking for one new Commissioner to serve a 2-year term. We are also seeking 2 youth seats ages 13 and up. No action needed.

**VII. Presentation of Information-None**

**VIII. Action Updates**

**a. Denzer Park**

- i. The homes around the area are being built and the apartment complex is interested in property near the park again. So now that development is moving, we are going to look to next year to start the construction of the park. Construction of the park will take a year to a year and a half to complete.

**b. CG Trailway Corridor Restoration**

- i. We have been burning some piles and finally getting those large piles of brush and debris out of there. Once the snow is on the ground, we will be able to burn the remainder down. We lost some trees to some over spraying unfortunately from Arbor Day. Most of the trees survived, but there are patches that didn't make it, so we will plan on doing another Arbor Day planting again next year to fill out those areas and continue with some of the forest management and seeding.

**c. Oltman Park**

- i. The three fields are pretty much done. They were out dormant seeding today, so the park is about 99% complete. Our crew will go out and excavate the playground which should be delivered and begin construction next week. The fields will have a year of rest and growth and then can be used starting in 2027. Commissioner Olson requested that this be on the tour schedule for next year. Zac stated that this will be one of the stops.

**d. Mississippi Dunes Park**

- i. Continuing to work on different funding options. We did submit for a grant for State Park Road Access, which if we received this grant

and get the road into the park, that will open everything up as that was money that we were not projecting we could get without the 3M settlement dollars. We should know by the end of the year whether we will receive this grant or not.

**e. Kingston Park Building**

- i. No updates

**f. Peterson Park**

- i. The developer has started to build homes. We do not own all the land around the lake yet, as the developer has not dedicated the land to us yet. Zac has had the privilege of walking all the way around the lake and it's an awesome trail around the lake.

**g. Still Ponds Park**

- i. No major updates

**IX. Donation and Acknowledgements-None**

**X. Staff Reports & Educational Materials**

- a. Each manager has submitted division updates and Zac included information from his recent MN Recreation Park Association Conference. Zac shared with the Commission that one of the classes he attended by accident was a social media influencer class, which was a mind blowing experience and showed how incredible the impact is from influencers compared to the government.

**XI. Commission Comments-None**

**XII. Council Comments**

- a. Council Member Clausen shared that one of the big topics that came before the Council and will be for the next few years is the Nelson Amrize Holcim mining proposal. Grey Cloud Island currently has a mining operation. They will be exhausting their current supply in about five years, so they have put a proposal to expand the mine out into another area in the Mississippi, which has created some comments within the community and people that live on both sides of the river. The environmental impact study was recently brought to the Council to approve the statement. The only thing the Council was asked to approve of were very narrow questions; did we follow the state law and did the citizens receive enough time to make their comments. The Council approved that the document was done properly and followed the law. We did not approve of them to start mining, that will be years in the future. Commissioner Clausen expressed gratitude to the Commission for the comments about the naming rights of the ice arena. The Council is divided on whether to move forward or not as if we do not find a partner, the cost to the city at minimum would be \$20,000 as well as losing our identity if

the facility is renamed. Commissioner Clausen also forewarned the council of the upcoming 80<sup>th</sup> street project that will be starting in the spring.

XIII. **Adjournment-** Motioned by Commissioner Olson.

Seconded by Commissioner Glasford Meeting Adjourned at 7:45pm



**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**Date:** January 27, 2026  
**Subject:** Still Ponds Park Natural Resource Management Plan

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### **Introduction/Background**

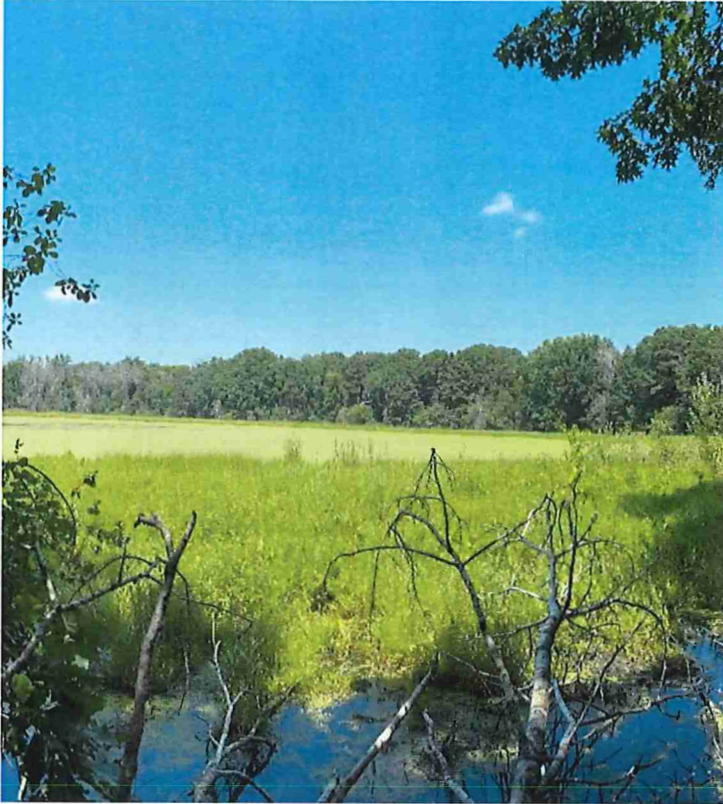
The City acquired Still Ponds Park in 2022 and has since been managing this open space. Currently, it is minimally maintained with a combination of paved and natural trails around the pond. Given the intention to keep this park focused on passive and natural recreational opportunities, the City coordinated with South Washington County Watershed District and the Washington Conservation District to develop a natural resources management plan.

The goal of the Natural Resource Management Plan is to study existing vegetation and then develop a comprehensive restoration and management strategy to enhance native plant communities. Doing so provides essential ecological functions including pollinator and wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, water filtration, flood regulation and soil development/enrichment.

Upon approval, the City will utilize this plan to acquire grant funding support for future restoration activities.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Approve the Still Ponds Natural Resources Management Plan.



# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE  
Still Ponds

Washington Conservation District  
2025

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# Executive Summary

## Project Description

The City of Cottage Grove aims to enhance the quality of its existing vegetation through comprehensive ecological restoration and management strategies. Native plant communities provide essential ecological functions, including pollinator and wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, water filtration, flood regulation, and soil development and enrichment. However, increased urban development and land use intensity has significantly diminished these native habitats. The Washington Conservation District has assessed the project site in order to offer insights into the current plant community composition and structure and to develop targeted restoration strategies. Restoration of Still Ponds will enhance pollinator foraging resources, improve water quality, reduce erosion, support pollutant uptake from urban runoff, increase climate resilience, and contribute to the aesthetic and recreation use of this public outdoor space.

The project area encompasses 42.5 acres consisting of cultivated pine stands, woodland, stormwater basins with upland buffers, wet meadows, and open water features. This management plan utilized the current vegetation, soil conditions, and topography to offer strategic guidance on woody invasive species control, hazard tree removal, enhancement of the understory and ground layers, management of invasive herbaceous species, and shoreline improvements throughout all project units. The recommendations outlined for each management unit represent the initial stage in establishing a robust, long-term approach to land stewardship.

## General City Background and Context

### Location

The City Cottage Grove is located 10 miles southeast of Saint Paul in Washington County, positioned on the east bank of the Mississippi River, just north of its confluence with the St. Croix River. Along with adjacent suburbs, Cottage Grove comprises the southeastern segment of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area. The city features a mix of residential, agricultural, and commercial land uses with a population exceeding 38,000.

Cottage Grove maintains an extensive park system, encompassing nearly 2,000 acres of designated parkland and open space across its jurisdiction. These resources are intended to support policies, programs, and facilities that foster active living—enhancing the health, well-being, education, and vitality of the community. Park amenities also include Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, which is owned and managed by Washington County Parks. The city's natural areas act as important corridors for wildlife movement and provide protection for valuable natural resources such as habitats, wetlands, woodlands, and drainage ways.

Cottage Grove lies within the ecological subsection of St. Paul Baldwin Plains of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province which consists of upland terrain between the valleys of the Mississippi and St. Croix River. The city is situated within the southwest corner of the South Washington Watershed District. Located in a developing residential district, Still Ponds plays a critical role in influencing surface water dynamics and

supporting ecosystems with varying levels of functionality. Its utilization by the local community further highlights the importance of ecological restoration and sustained management initiatives.

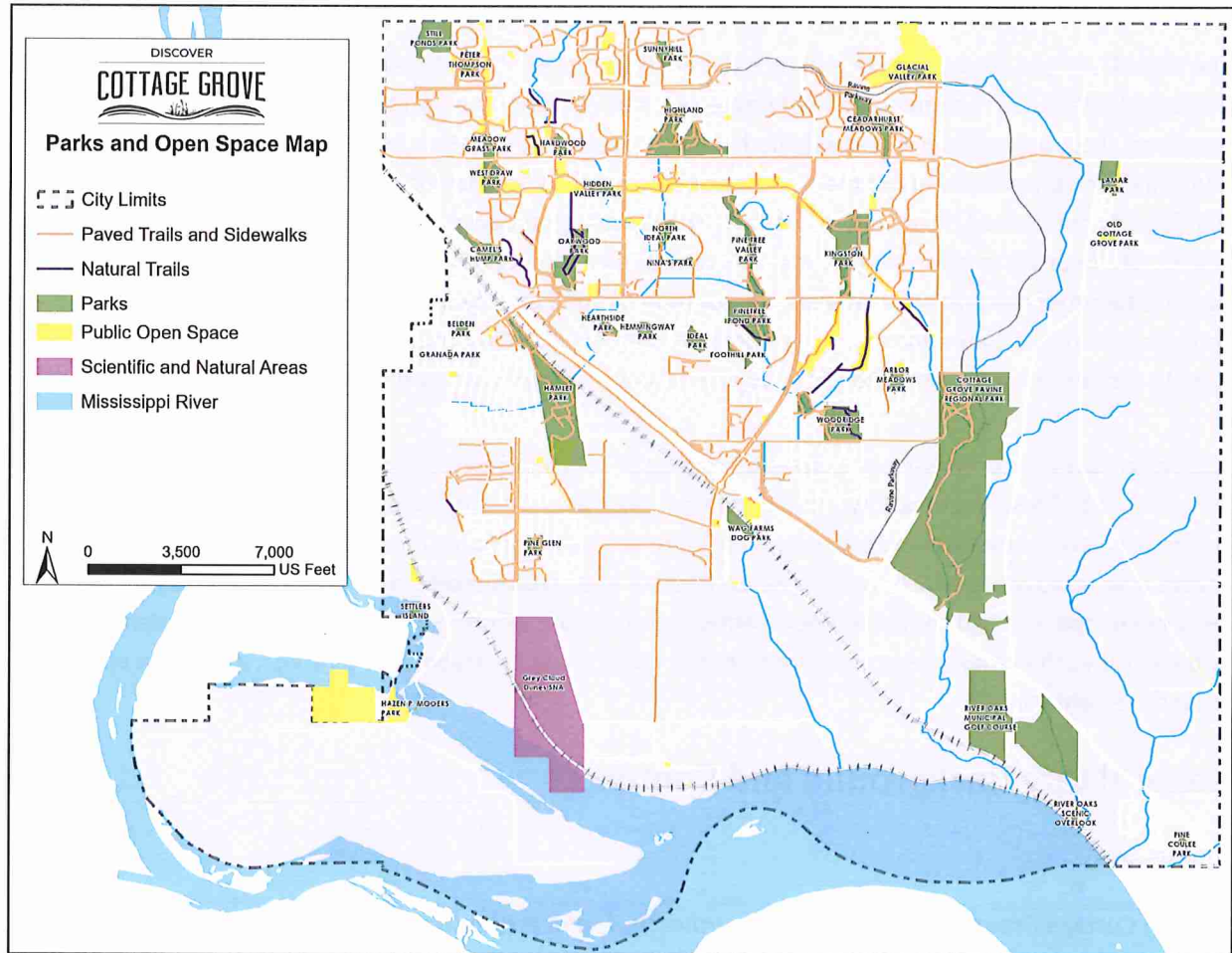


Figure 1. The parks of open spaces in the City of Cottage Grove. Still Ponds is located in the NW corner of Cottage Grove.

## History

Cottage Grove, was originally inhabited by the Dakota and Ojibwe Native American tribes who were stewards of the vast prairie landscape, interspersed with oak groves. Activities such as fishing, mound building, and wild rice harvesting were an essential part of the indigenous cultures of this region. The only known indigenous settlement in Washington County was a village called Grey Cloud Island, just west of Cottage Grove, established by Chief Medicine Bottle in 1830. However, the Treaties of 1837 led to the ceding of Dakota land east of the Mississippi, resulting in their forced relocation of the settlement.

The first European settlers arrived in 1843, and the township was organized in 1858. The arrival of the railroad in the late 1800s significantly increased trade and economic growth. Cottage Grove's proximity to

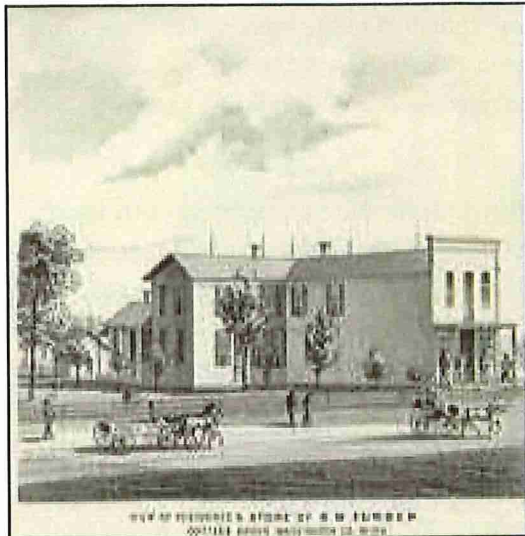


Figure 2. Historical Image of Old Cottage Grove.

the Mississippi River also contributed to its economic prosperity, making it an important transportation hub. The city's population grew from about 100 residents in the 1850s to over 35,000 today. Cottage Grove continues to thrive as a suburban community with a strong sense of community and a variety of economic opportunities.

The first European settlers arrived in Cottage Grove in 1843 from New England, bringing Greek Revival architecture and establishing a government style that earned the township the nickname "New England of the West." Most were grain farmers who prospered due to fertile soil and access to markets via the Mississippi River and wagon roads.

In 1851, a road linked Grey Cloud Island to Stillwater via Old Cottage Grove and Afton. The Military Road, authorized in 1850, passed through the area from Point Douglas to Fort Ripley by way of St. Paul. Hastings Avenue connected the township with St. Paul until it was replaced by Highway 61 in the 1940s. The St. Paul & Chicago Railroad built a line through the township in 1869, establishing the Langdon station (present-day Cottage Grove), which quickly became a thriving trade center with businesses, a school, and a Catholic church built in 1873.

The 1870s saw many German immigrants arrive, leading to increased farming and a shift toward dairy production. By 1875, Langdon had one of Minnesota's first creameries, marking the rise of the local dairy industry.

Key routes like the Military Road and Hastings Avenue connected Cottage Grove with surrounding towns, enhancing its role as a transportation hub. In 1869, the St. Paul & Chicago Railroad expanded through the township, with Langdon (now Cottage Grove) developing rapidly as a trade and shipping center.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the township—including its two rural villages, Langdon and Old Cottage Grove—had an estimated population of 100. For over one hundred years, Cottage Grove retained its rural character. However, the development of Thompson Grove in the 1950s, a community of ranch-style homes initiated by real estate developer Orrin Thompson, marked the onset of suburban



Figure 3. Orrin Thompson Developments that led to the rapid development of Cottage Grove in the 1950's

expansion in the area. Thompson subsequently constructed more than half of the homes in Cottage Grove. The population increased significantly, rising from 833 residents in 1950 to over 4,800 by 1960, and exceeding 13,400 by 1970. By the year 2000, Cottage Grove had become one of Minnesota's fastest-growing communities with approximately 30,000 residents.

Due to extensive conversion of pre-European settlement land first to agriculture and subsequently to development, only a limited number of intact vegetation communities currently remain in Cottage Grove. However, the city still maintains several key natural resources including ponds, wetlands, woodlands, prairie, savanna, and the Mississippi River outflow. Many parks within the city also have preserved natural areas alongside recreational facilities. The city also promotes ecologically responsible development and establishment of greenspace within new residential and commercial developments.

### Overall Goal for Habitat Restoration and Enhancement

Due to substantial changes in land use and fragmentation of the landscape, reconstructing native plant communities based solely on pre-settlement vegetation data may not be feasible. As a result, this plan references pre-settlement conditions as one data point and incorporates current vegetation, land use, soils, topography, future climate conditions and existing limitations to recommend a plant community that is ecologically functional, supports habitat, and maintains resilience over time.

Historical data on plant communities prior to European settlement indicates that Still Ponds was characterized by oak openings and barrens, commonly known as oak savanna. Given the complexities inherent to restoration within highly disturbed metropolitan areas, the primary goals for habitat restoration emphasize the establishment of diverse, climate-resilient plant communities and the creation of natural spaces that are both equitable and accessible to the public. Restoration objectives for each management unit are tailored to reflect specific land use influences and are detailed in their respective sections below.

# Still Ponds

## General Location

Still Ponds is a 42.5-acre park in Cottage Grove, MN, located east of Highway 61 and north of 65th Street. The park features trails linking neighborhoods through woodlands, wetlands, stormwater basins, and pine trees. The area now known as Still Ponds was previously used for agricultural purposes before becoming a community natural area. Over the last 35 years, the land cover has undergone notable changes.

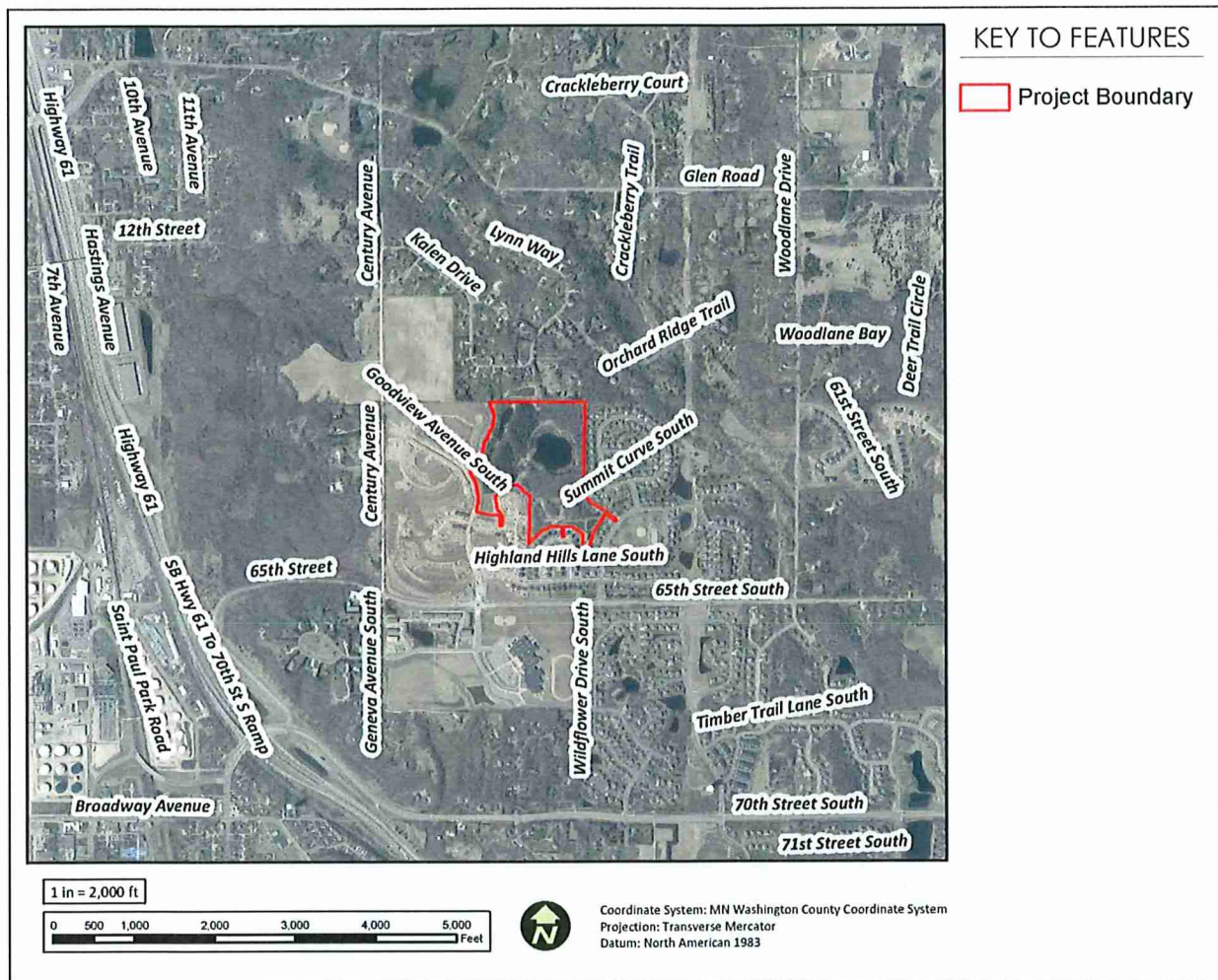


Figure 4. Regional view of Still Ponds Park in Cottage Grove.

## Background and Site History

### Pre-Settlement Vegetation

Surveyors with the General Land Office recorded the size, species, and distribution of trees as well as general descriptions of the physical geography of the landscape they traversed throughout 1848-1907. Francis J. Marschner interpreted these notes to create a detailed map depicting how Minnesota looked at the time of European settlement.

Still Ponds falls within the St. Paul Baldwins Plains and Moraines ecoregion. The pre-settlement vegetation surrounding Still Ponds consisted of oak openings and barrens or savanna and was likely dispersed with a complex mosaic of wet prairie and oak savanna. Oak openings and barrens consisted predominantly of scattered trees and groves of oaks in scrubby form with patches of open prairie and areas of brush and thickets. Present day communities in this category include oak savannas and woodlands.

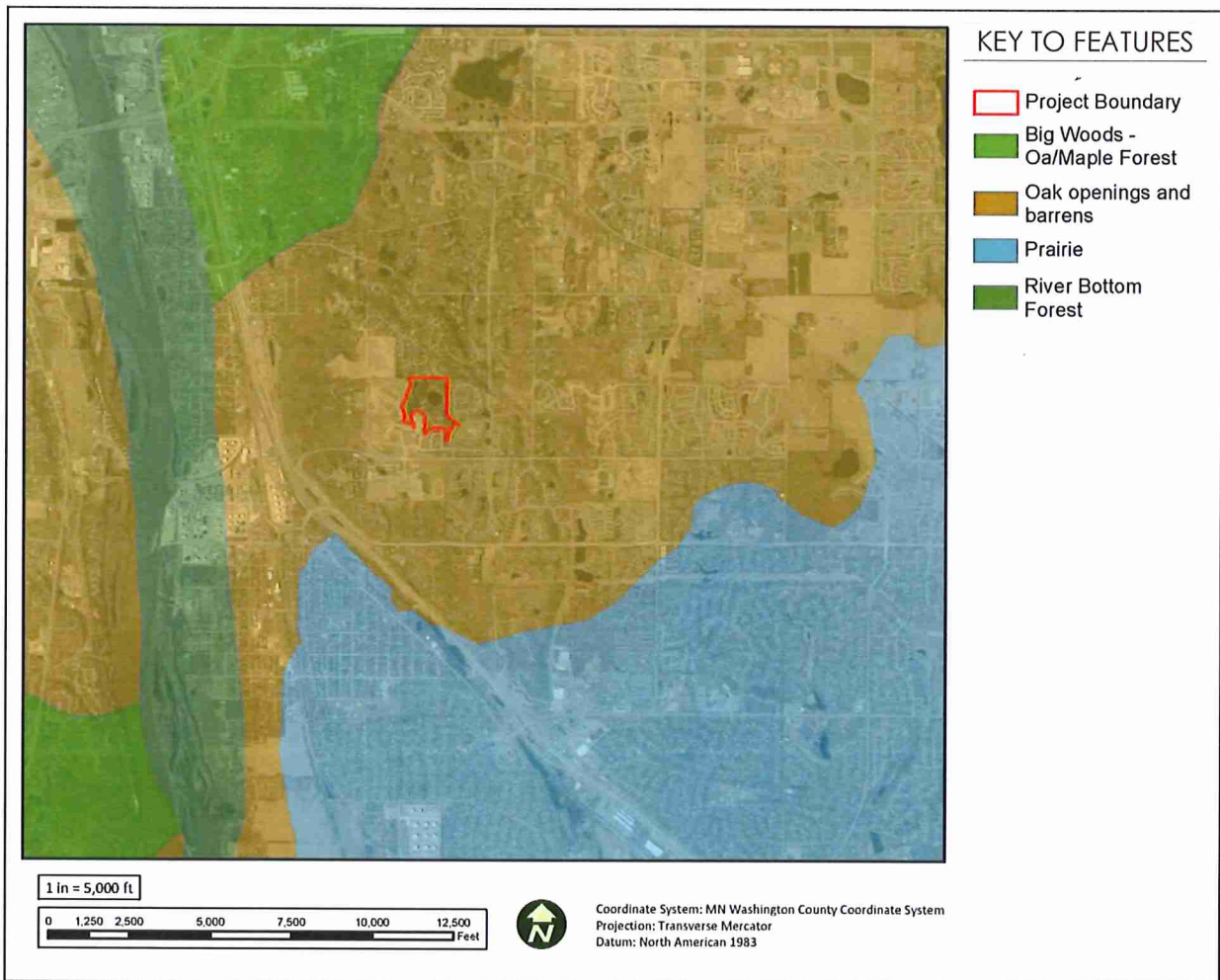
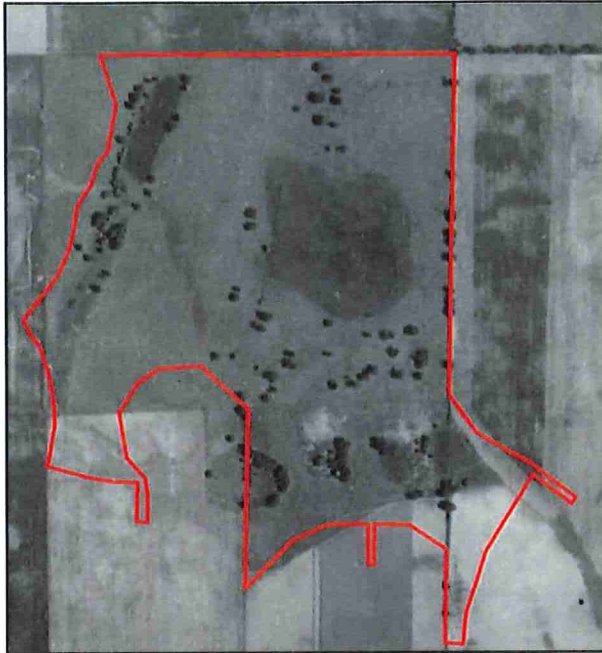


Figure 5. Pre-European settlement vegetation.

## Post-settlement land use

Aerial photos from 1937 to 2024 show Still Ponds and the surrounding landscape shifting from agricultural to residential land use. Also, during this time, previous landowners planted approximately 8-acres of red pine trees in the former row-crop fields. Pine planting began sometime after 1964.



*Figure 6. Aerial Image 1937*



*Figure 7. Aerial Image 1964*

## Soils

According to the USDA Web Soil Survey, eleven soil classifications occur within Still Ponds. Overall soil throughout Still Ponds tends to be a composition of silt loam and considered prime farmland. With one area of ponded soils. Major soil types include Santiago silt loam, Freeon silt loam, and Richwood silt loam, each comprising 90% of their respective map units. Minor components contribute 10% to the map units, with specific soil types like Kingsley and Freeon. The elevation for these soils' ranges from 670 to 1,950 feet, with mean annual precipitation between 28 to 36 inches. Special Line Features (SLP) are delineated on the soils map; these are narrow bands of contrasting soil areas that are too small to map but significant enough to influence land use and management due to slope or contrasting soil texture.

Soil textures range from silt loam to sandy loam, reflecting differences in drainage and nutrient retention. Dry, sandy upland soils are deep and drain quickly, while loamy upland soils offer moderate drainage and higher pH and water capacity than sandy soils. Loamy lowland soils retain moisture but do not stay saturated, and mucky swamp soils, rich in decomposed organic matter, have poor drainage and are permanently wet and acidic. A summary of soil classifications follows, with details in Appendix A.

## Map Unit Legend

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
49B	Antigo silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	2.1	5.0%
49C	Antigo silt loam, 6 to 15 percent slopes	3.8	9.2%
120	Brill silt loam	1.7	4.1%
153B	Santiago silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	4.2	10.2%
153C	Santiago silt loam, 6 to 15 percent slopes	2.6	6.4%
264	Freeon silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	5.9	14.4%
266	Freer silt loam	1.6	3.9%
298B	Richwood silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	0.4	0.9%
367B	Crystal Lake silt loam, 1 to 6 percent slopes	1.8	4.3%
411B	Waukegan silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	2.7	6.5%
454C	Mahtomedi loamy sand, 6 to 12 percent slopes	0.1	0.3%
468	Otter silt loam	7.8	18.9%
1055	Aquolls and Histosols, ponded	6.3	15.2%
W	Water	0.3	0.8%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>41.3</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

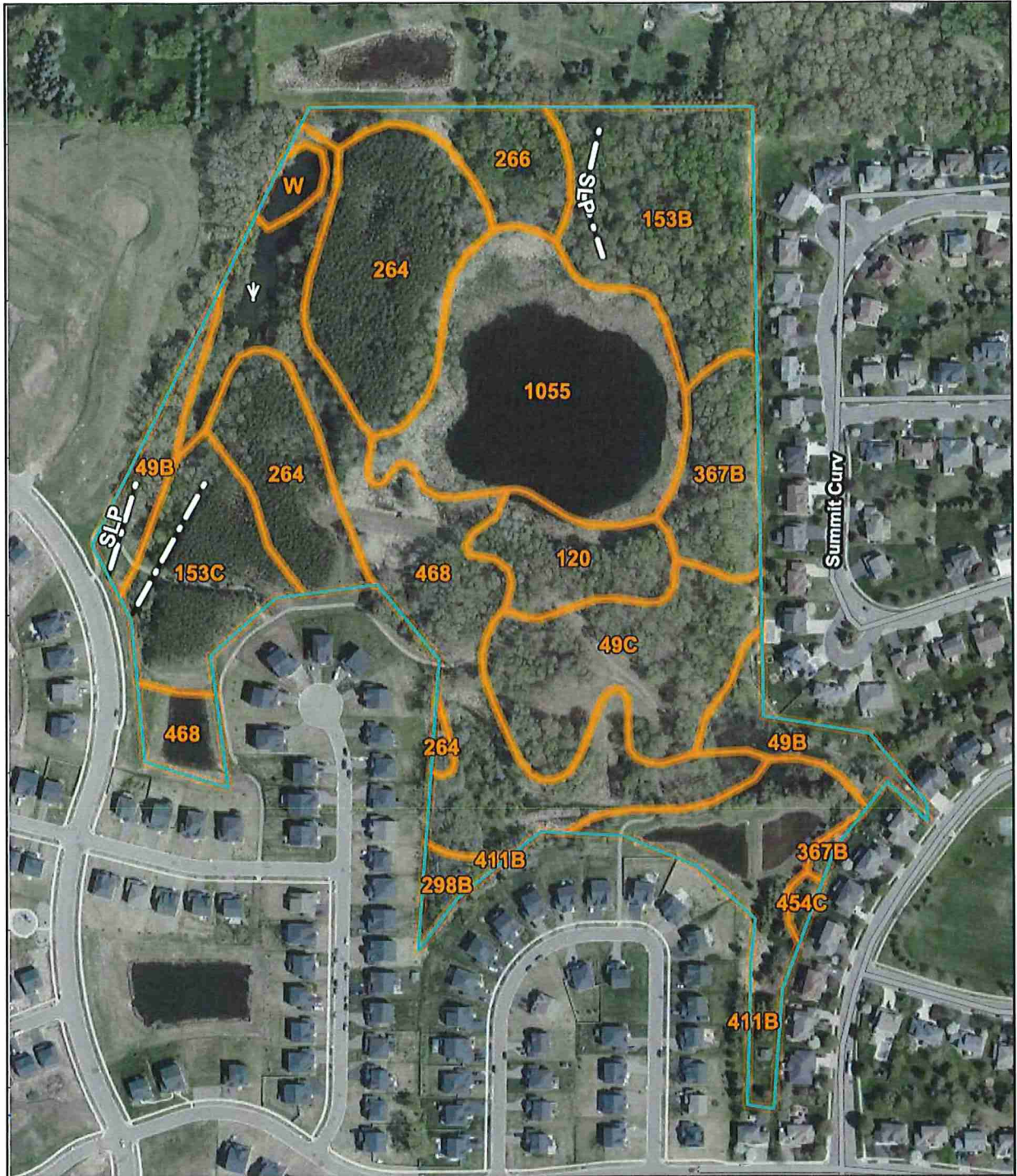


Figure 8. Table and soil map for Still Ponds

## Topography

The topography of Still Ponds consists of gently rolling slopes with natural and stormwater basins in low-lying areas. Most of the terrain is flat to relatively flat with slopes ranging from 2-6% with some areas ranging from 6-15% slopes. Aspects face all cardinal directions but most of the steeper slopes have an aspect of east, southeast, or south.

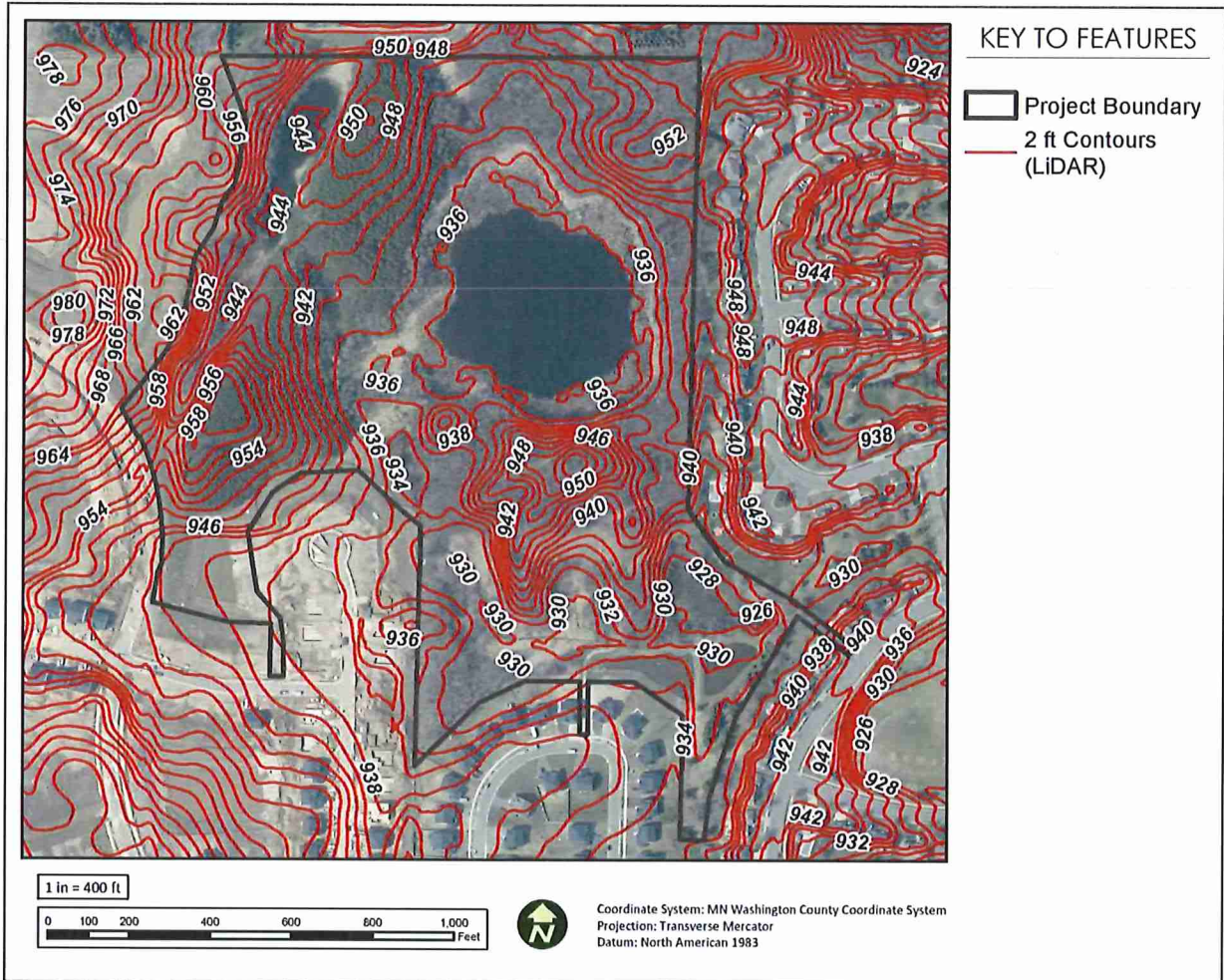


Figure 9. The topography at Still Ponds.

## Geology and Hydrology

Still Ponds is located within the ecological subsection of St. Paul Baldwin Plains in the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province. The northern boundary of this subsection is defined by a Superior Lobe end moraine complex known as the St. Croix Moraine. To the west, terraces linked to the Mississippi River mark the separation from the Anoka Sand Plain subsection. The southern boundary aligns with the southern edge of the Rosemount Outwash Plain. This subsection is small in size and extends into Wisconsin. It features a large moraine and areas of outwash plain, although it is lower in elevation compared to other regions in the state. The subsection includes part of the seven-county metropolitan area and experiences effects from urban development.

The region surrounding Still Ponds contains Paleozoic bedrock overlying a thick sequence of Mesoproterozoic rocks that formed about 1,100 million years ago and are associated with the Midcontinent Rift. The Paleozoic rocks in this area consist of relatively thin, widespread layers of sandstone, shale, and carbonate deposits formed in shallow seas approximately 500 to 450 million years ago. Throughout Washington County, bedrock units are slightly tilted (less than 1°) to the southwest, toward the central Twin Cities metropolitan area, which is part of what is identified as the Twin Cities basin. Still Ponds straddles three geological subsections: Opg and Os and Ops.

- **Opg:** Platteville and Glenwood formations (upper Ordovician) – the Platteville formation primarily consists of tan to gray, fossiliferous limestone and dolostone. This is the dominant uppermost bedrock that spans across a large extent of the southwestern part of the county. The underlying Glenwood Formation is predominantly a green-gray sandy shale. The combined thickness of these formations is approximately 30-35 ft (9-11 m).
- **OS:** St. Peter Sandstone (Middle to lower Ordovician) – The uppermost formation is primarily a white to tan, fine- to medium-grained, quartzose sandstone. Glacial sediments are thin throughout the southern half of the county, exposing patchy outcrops of this formation adjacent to Season's Park. Bedding and structures are typically absent. The lowermost section of this formation, referred to as the Pigs Eye Member, consists of white to gray feldspathic shale and siltstone interlayered with coarser sandstone. While the Pigs Eye Member is not exposed anywhere throughout Washington county, the basal contact of this formation with the underlying Shakopee Formation (Ops) has significant erosional unconformity. This buried erosional surface separates these two rock formations indicates that sediment depositional is not continuous.

- OPS:** Shakopee Formation (Lower Ordovician)—A heterolithic unit composed mainly of light brown, thin- to medium-bedded dolostone, sandy dolostone, sandstone, and shale. It contains oolites, intraclasts, fossilized microbial mounds, chert nodules, quartz sandstone, and green-gray shale partings. Thickness of the Shakopee Formation beneath the St. Peter Sandstone is quite variable within the area of the Hudson–Afton horst, ranging from almost absent to nearly 200 feet (61 meters) thick. It appears to be thickest in the most southeast part of the county, east of the Hastings fault, where it is nearly 200 feet (61 meters) thick. On the opposite side of the horst, on the west side of the Cottage Grove fault, it reaches thicknesses of 115 feet (35 meters) and appears to progressively thin towards the northwest. Based on a limited amount of drill cuttings and geophysical data within the Hudson–Afton horst, it appears that the Shakopee Formation thins to less than 50 feet (15 meters) and may even be absent beneath the St. Peter Sandstone at several locations.

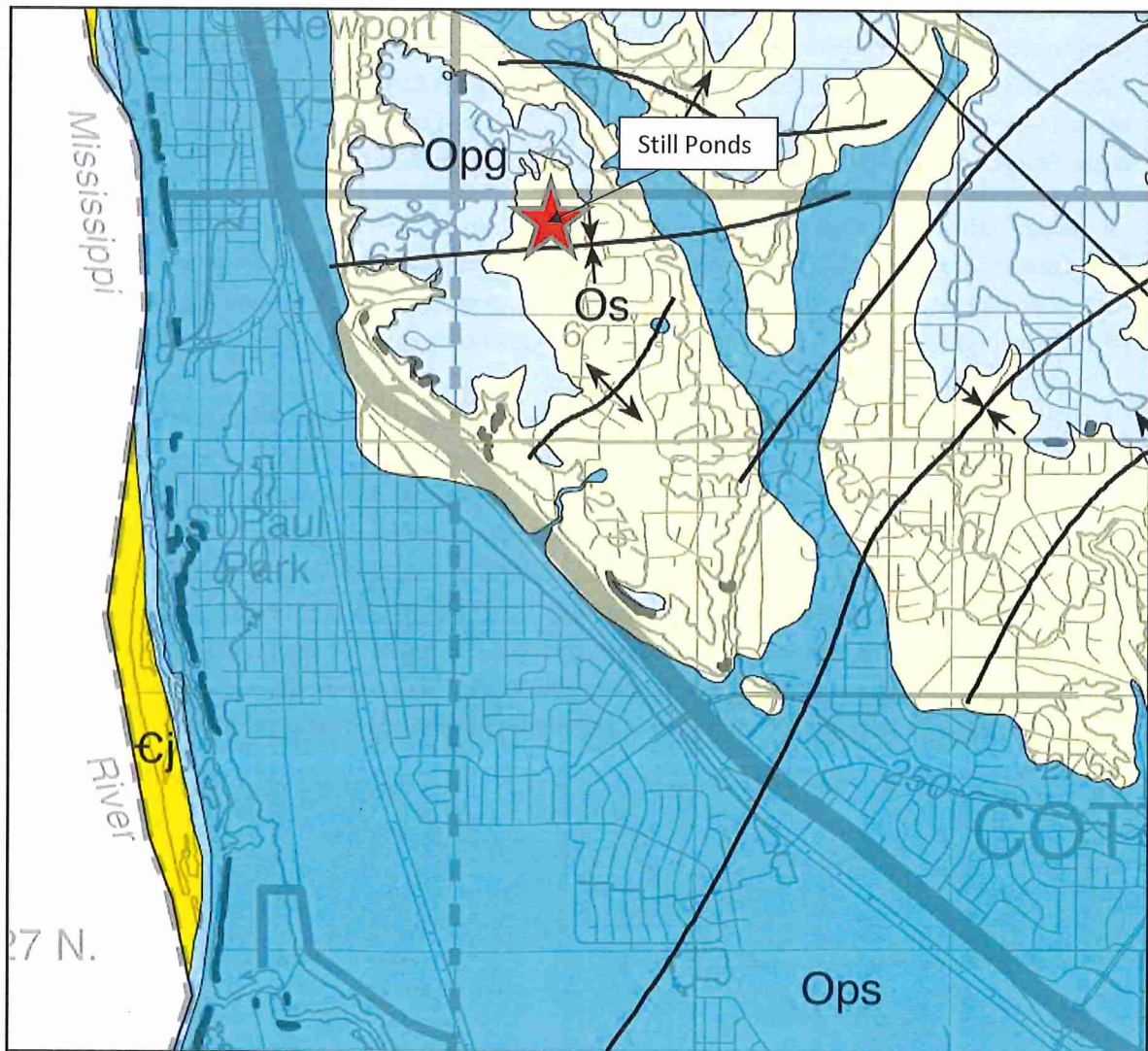


Figure 10. Geological subsections surrounding Still Ponds.

## Water Features

The soil structure indicates that Still Ponds contains a mosaic of soil conditions. Soil moisture is an estimation of the fluctuating water content in soils and greatly influences vegetation types, physical properties of soils, and chemical interactions and transport. Still Ponds can generally be classified as having moderate to high infiltration rate as they consist of mainly hydrologic soil group B, with some A and C soils and combinations of C/D and B/D. Hydrologic soil groups are based on estimations of runoff potential and consider the rate at which water infiltration occurs. Approximately 15.2% of Still Ponds soils are classified as ponded, having slow or very slow infiltration rate, particularly lowland areas surrounding open water. Although flooding frequency is minimal in this area, occasional to frequent ponding occurs in soil section 1055 (Aquolls and Histosols). Ponding is defined as standing water in a closed depression. The aerial photos suggest that open water in the ponds was either rare, or was not present. This increased ponding frequency is likely due to the inflow source from residential development in combination with low infiltration rate of the soil surrounding this area. Ponding occurs at a depth of 80 inches. Still Ponds has three freshwater emergent wetlands and two freshwater ponds. There are also three stormwater detention basins on the south ends of the property.

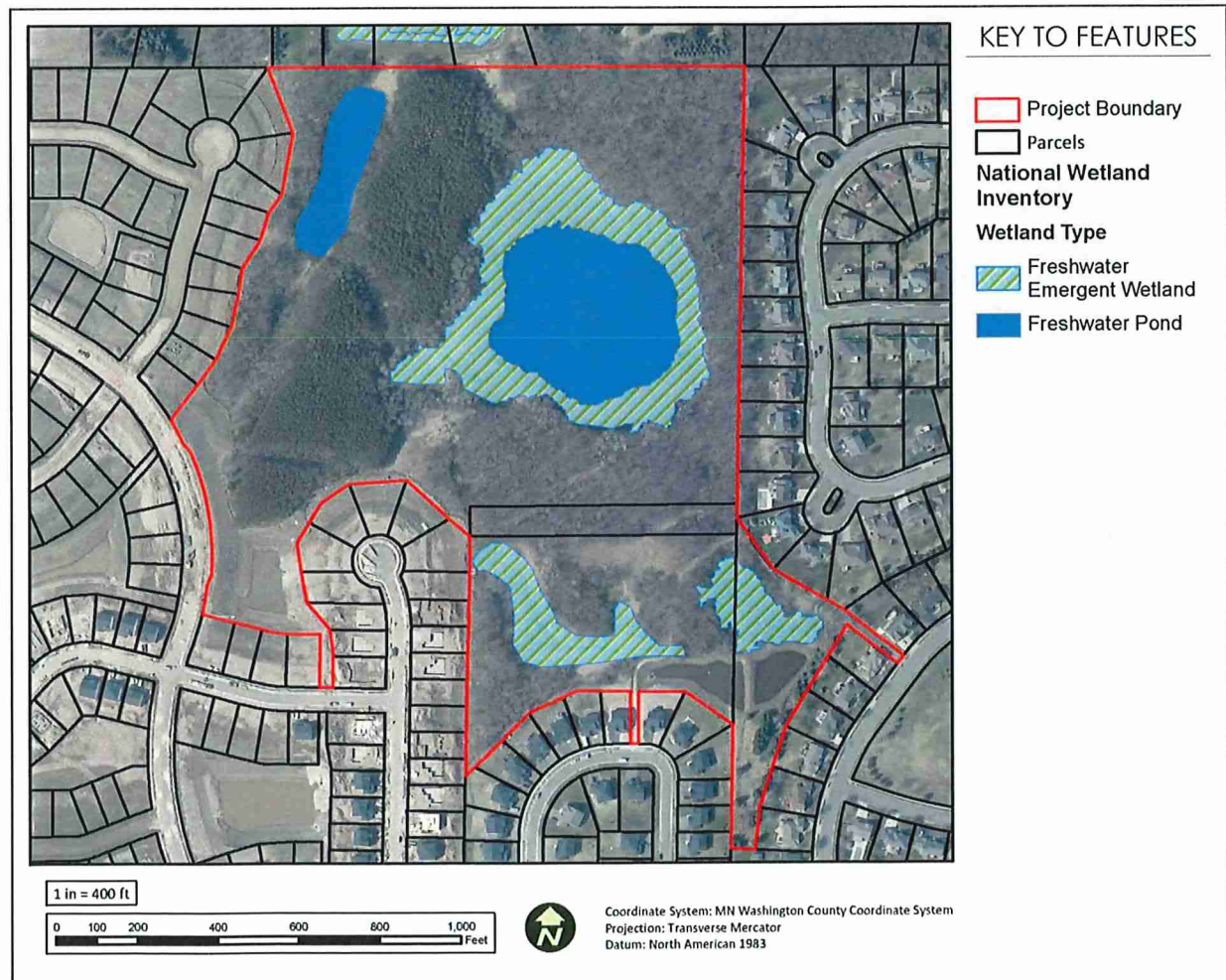


Figure 11. Water features at Still Ponds.

## Project Site Vegetation and Habitat Assessment

### Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS)

The Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) maps land cover based on historical plant community inventories and aerial photos from the 1990s. Because MLCCS relies on older data and past technology, it may not reflect recent land use changes, leading to differences between mapped and current vegetation. More precise descriptions of current vegetation are provided in the following Management Units Vegetation section. The MLCCS survey identified six different land cover types within Still Ponds, shown below in Figure 15. Most of the site is mapped as oak forest dry subtype, cattail marsh, and cultivated coniferous trees. The former surrounding agricultural fields have been converted to residential housing.

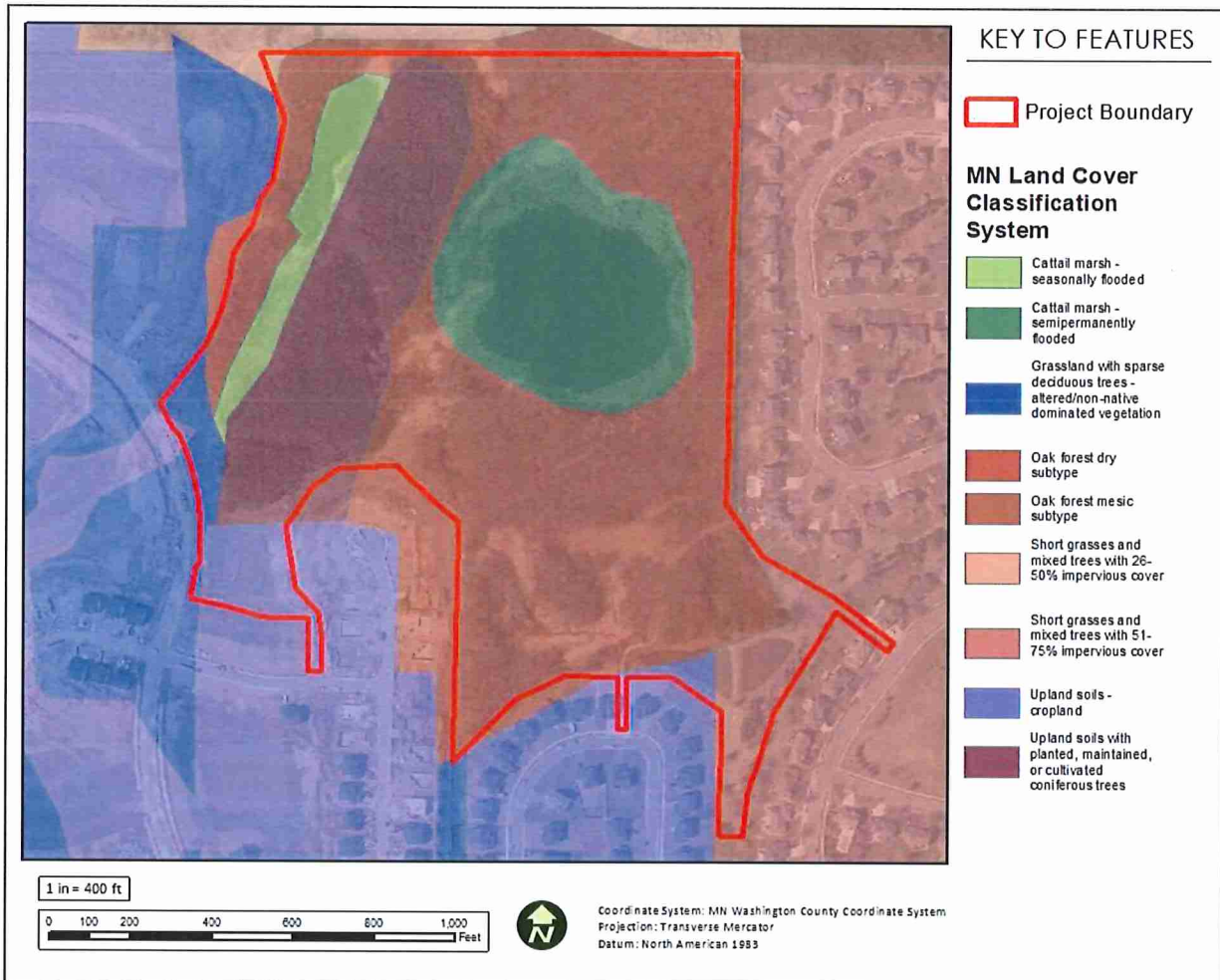


Figure 12. Land cover mapping at Still Ponds.

## Minnesota Native Plant Community Classification and Goals

Similar to MLCCS mapping, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource's Native Plant Community Classification relies on analysis of comprehensive field data collected during the 1990s, 2000s, and considers key environmental variables such as azimuth, soil composition, and hydrology. In contrast to MLCCS, this system employs a hierarchical framework, organizing vegetation according to broad, landscape-scale ecological systems and incorporating ecological processes as a guiding principle. Native plant community types are identified based on dominant canopy species, substrate variations, and detailed environmental factors such as moisture and nutrient availability. Subtypes reflect more nuanced differences in canopy structure, substrates, or additional environmental variables. Native plant community classifications are often used to describe current or desired vegetation and provide guidance for the goals and objectives of stewardship activities. More Detailed descriptions of each plant community can be found in Appendix B.

### *Southern Dry-Mesic Oak (Maple) Woodland (FDs37)*

These dry-mesic forests are found throughout the Eastern Broadleaf Forest in the transition between the prairies which frequently burned in the southwest and the mesic hardwoods which rarely burned. Oak woodland was probably one of the most extensive community types in Minnesota, comprising much of the vegetation described as oak barrens, brushland, and thickets by the early surveyors. Often found on sand and sand-gravel soils associated with moraines, these historically occurred where there were firebreaks in fire-prone regions. The Canopy of this community is interrupted to continuous (50-100%) with dominant canopy species are either bur oak or northern pin oak, with quaking aspen often present. Hazelnuts, chokecherry, gray dogwood, and raspberries are common to abundant in the understory. Historically, disturbance in the form of fire affected these communities about every 10 years

### *Southern Mesic Maple-Basswood Forest (MHs39) and Southern Wet-Mesic Hardwood Forest (MHs49)*

Mesic hardwood forests are present throughout the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province in upland areas where wildfires are less common and soils have greater water retention. The canopy cover is mostly continuous from 50-100% and dominated sugar maple with basswood, northern red oak and occasionally red and American elm. Ironwood, sugar maple, basswood and Bitternut Hickory are present in the subcanopy. The shrub layer is patchy to interrupted with tree saplings, chokecherry, and gooseberry. The ground-layer varies from patchy to continuous with Virginia waterleaf, bloodroot, wild leek, blue cohosh, early meadow rue and Spring ephemerals. Wet-mesic hardwood forests MHs49 overlap with the MHs39 communities and are present in areas protected from wildfires and have high water tables. Basswood, Black ash, Sugar maple green ash, hackberry and Boxelder are common in the canopy and subcanopy. The shrub layer and ground layer are similar with waterleaf and wood nettle are often common and abundant

### *Northern Wet Meadow/Carr (WMn82)*

Wet Meadow/Carr communities are present throughout Minnesota, and are common in wetland basins, and along streams and shorelines. Occurrences of Wet Meadows along stream courses or adjacent to lakes often have fairly constant water levels relative to Wet Meadows in depressions or basins. These communities occur on wet mineral soil, muck, or shallow peat where standing water is present in the spring and after heavy rains. However, the water table is generally beneath the surface of the soil for

most of the growing season. The Northern Wet Meadow/Carr is composed of dense, closed stands of sedges such as lake sedge, tussock sedge, beaked sedge, and grasses such as bluejoint. Forb cover is variable with species such as tufted loosestrife, marsh bellflower, and marsh skullcap. Shrub cover varies depending on the subtype; the Willow – Dogwood Shrub Swamp (WMn82a) typically has shrub cover greater than 25% with species such as willows (*Salix* spp.), red-osier dogwood, and speckled alder. This subtype tends to occur on drier wet meadow sites, or when the water-table has been lowered by drought or ditching

*Northern Bulrush-Spikerush Marsh (MRn93) and Open Water*

The marsh communities are common throughout the region in wetland basins or along sheltered lakeshores and streams. These are forb- and graminoid-dominated wetland communities that have standing water for most of the growing season. The water level is typically stable but can vary in marshes that are rooted into floating mats. Nutrients tend to be readily available, especially following a drawdown in the water level providing organic matter an opportunity to oxidize. The Northern Mixed Cattail Marsh (MRn83) is typically dominated by cattails with other forbs such as broad-leaved arrowhead and marsh skullcap. Graminoid cover is variable with lake sedge (*Carex lacustris*) and bristly sedge (*Carex comosa*) often present. The Northern Bulrush-Spikerush Marsh (MRn93) tends to be dominated by bulrushes (*Scirpus validis*, *S. fluviatilis*), and submergent aquatics. Floating-leaved and submergent aquatic plants are limited in cover with species like duckweeds (*Lemna* spp.), water lily (*Nymphaea* spp.), and pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.)



Figure 13. *Scirpus Validis* at Still Ponds.

## Restoration and Enhancement of Still Ponds

To establish management unit objectives based on existing vegetation structure, vegetation surveys were conducted during the spring and summer of 2025. These surveys documented the dominant species in canopy, sub-canopy, and ground layers. Findings were compared with historical imagery and prior vegetative surveys to assess current vegetation and to identify the most appropriate native plant community goals for the site, where appropriate.

The park's location within an established metropolitan area result in varying extents of habitat modification, the presence of invasive species, alterations in hydrology, and diminished frequency of natural disturbance regimes that are essential to native ecosystems. These factors, combined with recent intensification of land use in residential development and stormwater infrastructure, have led to notable changes in vegetation that diverge from those described in Native Plant Communities (NPCs). Restoration planning should address historical, current, and potential future environmental conditions. Consequently, not all management units are assigned an NPC target, and some areas may be better suited to alternative management objectives that still provide ecological functions and recreational opportunities. Management activities to achieve desired plant community goals are detailed within each management unit and more thoroughly described in the Management Activity section.

This section provides restoration and management recommendations based on the desired Native Plant Communities and composition (referred to as Management Units), as well as recommendations for management activities that are considered priorities (Management Priorities). The following section (Management Activities) provides an overview of the implementation of specific management activities that are recommended. Management units have been identified based on the current vegetation and land cover types. The management units are labeled on maps with associated plant community goals including NPC's where applicable. A description of the current conditions of each unit is provided in addition to desired conditions. Desired conditions range from high quality native plant communities as described in the Field Guide to Native Plant Communities to reconstructed urban ecosystems. The following summary of current conditions reflects the dominant and notable species identified throughout Spring and Summer 2025 at Still Ponds and does not reflect a comprehensive survey of all species within the project site.

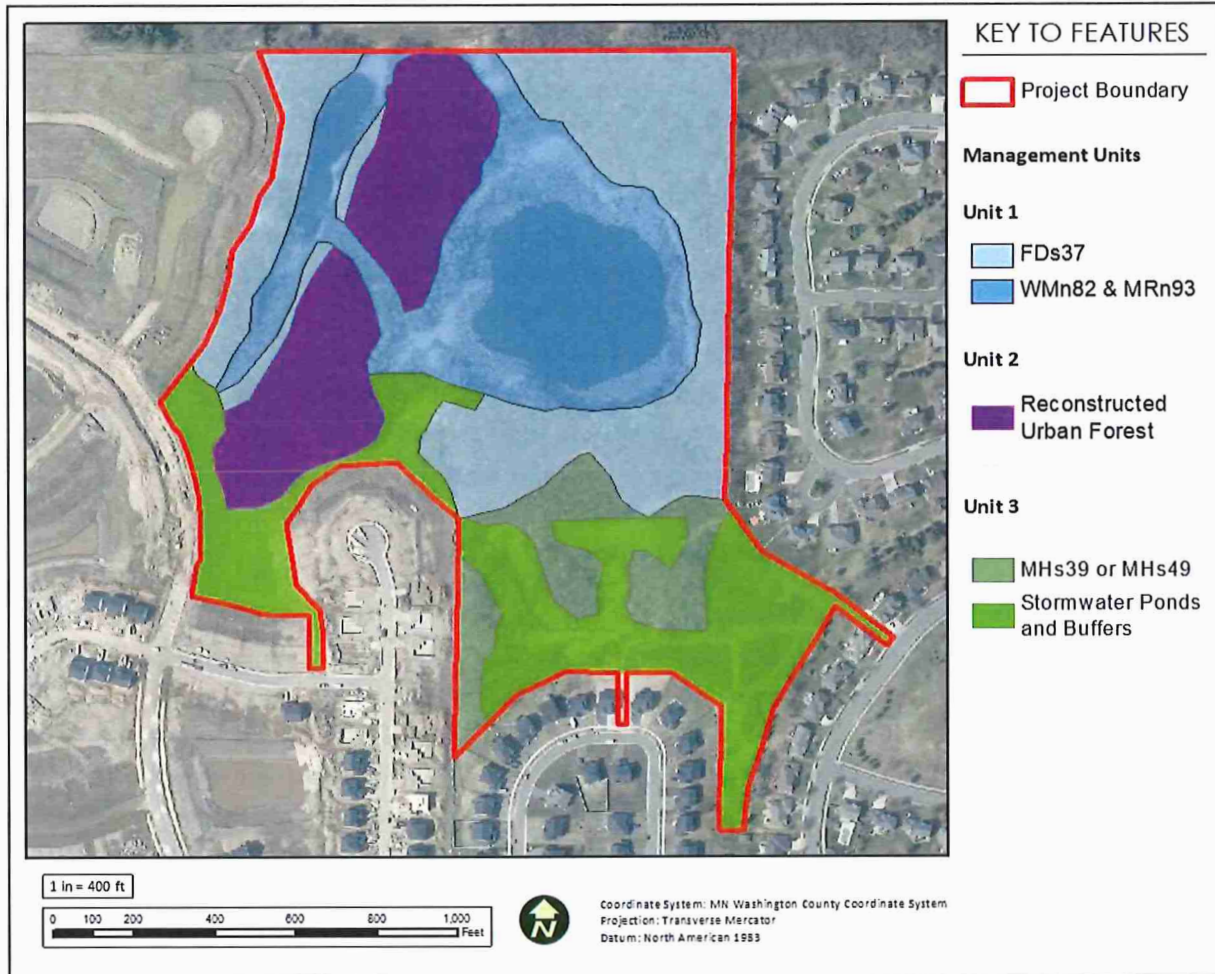


Figure 13. Management units and target plant communities at Still Ponds.



## Management Unit 1

### General Description and Current Conditions

Management Unit 1 consists of 11.4 acres of open water and wetlands and 8.5 acres of degraded oak woodlands. Based on the aerial imagery, the wetland basins have varied hydrologically with period of open water in present times but historic drawdowns that allowed the area to be farmed. The soils are the Otter silt loam and ponded aquasolls. Currently the open water is surrounded by wetlands that include a mosaic of wet meadow and marsh vegetation with generally high diversity and intact native species. Species such as tussock sedge, lake sedge, woolgrass, waterdock, marsh fern, touch-me-not, Joe pye weed, and sensitive fern are present. However, numerous stands of dense reed canary grass as well as scattered patches are present. Some patches of purple loosestrife and narrow leaf cattail also occur on the shoreline.

The dry-mesic oak woodland is a fire-dependent plant community that has developed on upland soils on the ridges that surround the wetland basins. Soils are silt loams (Antigo, Brill, Crystal, Freer and Santiago) with relatively shallow slopes (2-6%). The woodland has a mix of canopy species including large bur oak trees, red oak, pin oak, red maple, aspen, basswood, and black cherry. Much shrub layer in the uplands in this unit is dominated by common and glossy buckthorn, a few individuals of Tartarian honeysuckle, and native species such as prickly ash, prickly gooseberry, red raspberry, and red-berried elder. The herbaceous layer included species such as Pennsylvania sedge, graceful sedge, pointed-leaf tick trefoil, Canada mayflower, wild geranium, lady fern, Virginia creeper, wild grape, and jack-in-the-pulpit. Non-native herbaceous species also included fescue, Canada thistle, garlic mustard, dame's rocket, burdock, and bird's foot trefoil.

### Desired Future Conditions

A target condition has been described for each of the management areas. The target condition is a description of a healthy plant community based on the MNDNR Native Plant Community description. Recommended restoration and management activities are designed to guide the existing community towards a plant community that resembles the target condition described. The target condition should be considered a long-term goal that will be achieved incrementally over time with sustained management effort. The desired future conditions for Unit 1 include:

- Reconstructed Southern Dry-Mesic Oak (Maple) Woodland (FDs37) Native Plant Community. Canopy cover should be interrupted to continuous (50–100%). Bur oak and northern pin oak should continue to be the most common tree species. Northern red oak, white oak, and red maple should also be maintained.
- Enhanced Northern Wet Meadow/Carr (WMn82) and Northern Bulrush-Spikerush Marsh (MRn93) Native Plant Communities.
- Restored habitat to provide provisions for humans and wildlife, such as the production of food, water, and shelter.
- Removed woody and herbaceous non-indigenous species to prevent continued habitat degradation. The shrub layer should be patchy with 25-50% cover by native shrub species typical of an FDs37 NPC. Dense non-native invasive shrub cover should be <5%.
- Increased diversity with additional ecologically appropriate trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. The herbaceous layer should be continuous up to 100% cover such that it is sufficient to carry periodic prescribed surface fires along with oak leaf litter.
- Climate resilient woodlands and wetlands that can withstand environmental changes in an urban environment.

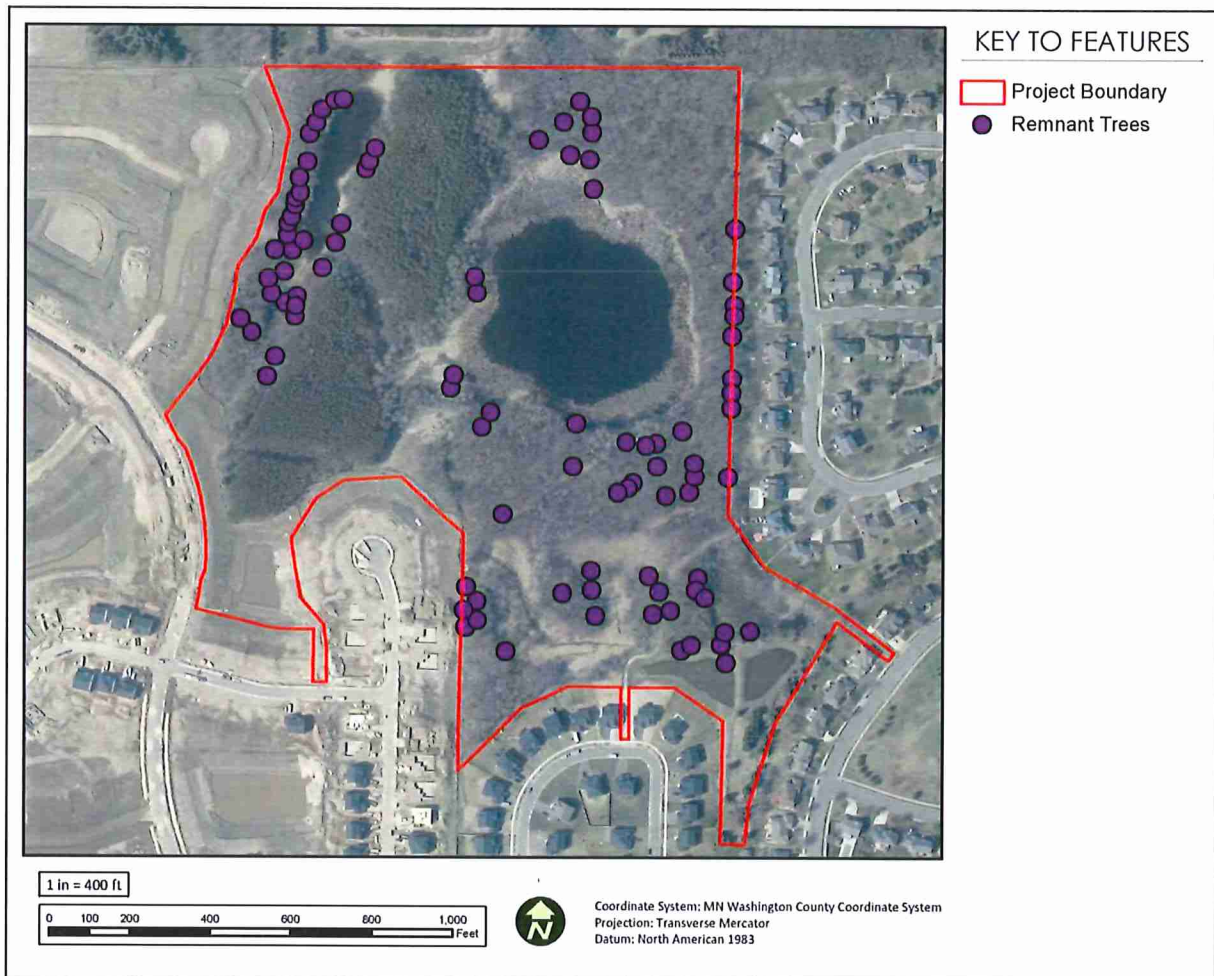


Figure 14. Locations of scattered trees identified in 1937 and 1964 aerial photography on 2022 aerial imagery.

## Priority Level: High

### Management Unit Goals

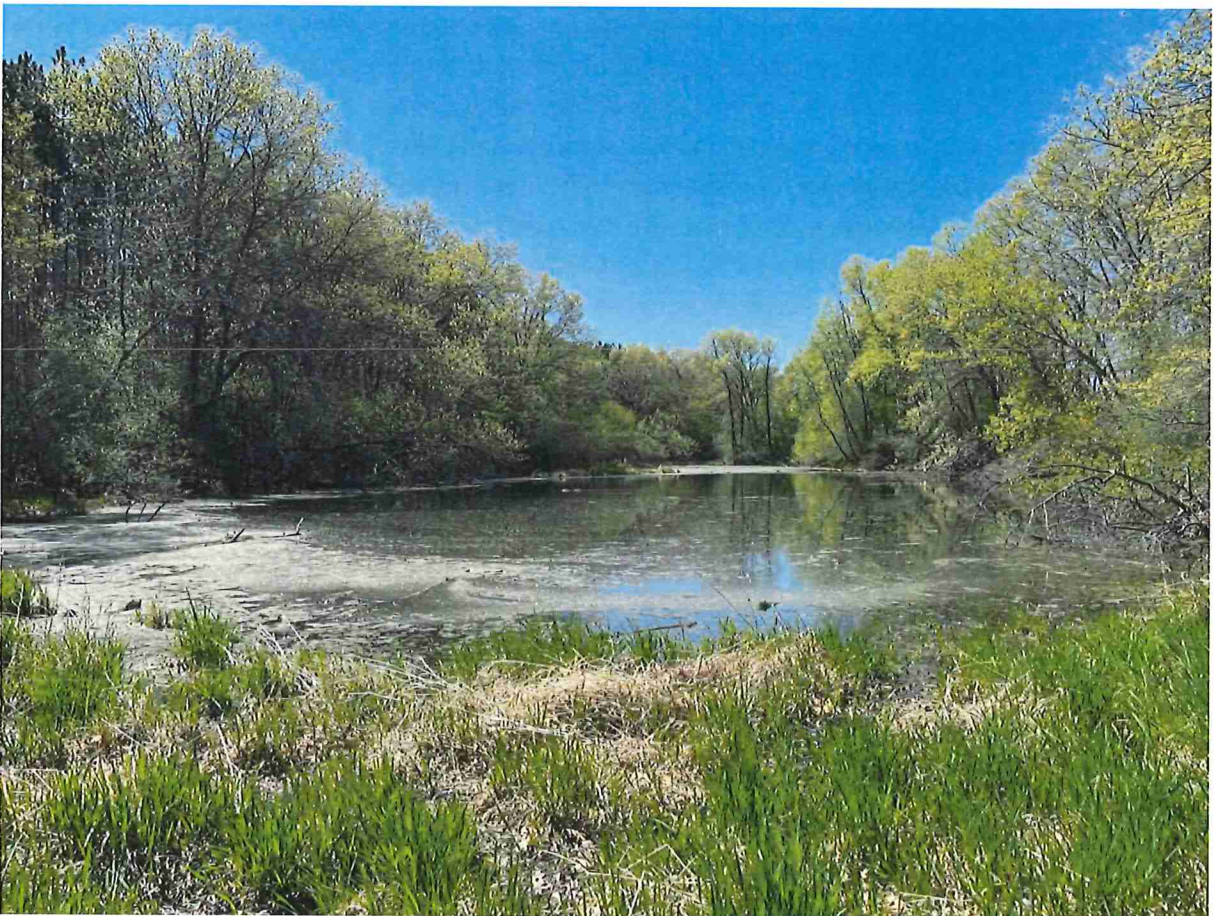
- Unit 1 was likely an oak openings and barrens, also referred to as oak savanna, historically. The 1937 aerial photos and map (Figure 18) show the locations of the original oaks found on site include scattered trees within the existing woodland. Currently the plant composition more closely resembles a southern dry-mesic oak (maple) woodland (FDs37) with a canopy of bur oak, pin oak, and maple and sub-canopy of cherry, chokecherry, dogwoods, and prickly ash. Long term management will need to address the ash trees that have died due to the Emerald Ash Borer; the density of buckthorn present in the subcanopy; and the die off of large canopy trees from construction disturbance. The uplands in Unit 1 need the re-establishment of a natural disturbance regime to control extensive overgrowth by non-native invasive shrubs such as buckthorn and to promote a diverse ground cover by native herbaceous species. Native tree species such as red maple, black cherry, hackberry, and basswood that would typically be susceptible to fire have been allowed to regenerate. Unfortunately, this recruitment is at the expense of oak regeneration and replacement. Periodic surface fires (every 10 years or so) and woody invasive shrub control will support better oak regeneration and native plant diversity.

### Management Unit Activities

To maintain and enhance the open water and wetland plant communities in addition to the dry-mesic oak woodland, the main activities should be:

- Remove non-indigenous wetland herbaceous species such as narrow leaf cattail, reed canary grass, and purple loosestrife.
- Remove non-indigenous woody species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle and ecologically inappropriate woody species such as prickly ash.
- Remove non-indigenous herbaceous species such as garlic mustard, burdock, fescue, Canada thistle, garlic mustard, bird's foot trefoil and dame's rocket (Appendix C).
- Remove ecologically inappropriate species such as black locust and boxelder and aspen in areas. Dead ash should be removed where considered hazardous.
- Thin or remove the less desirable trees species around desirable trees, enhancing the health of the remaining trees and promoting oak regeneration. Species that are fire-intolerant in seedling and sapling stages, including box elder, birch, black cherry, hackberry, and elm should be thinned and minimized.
- Interplant with ecologically appropriate tree species from FDs37 (Appendix B).
- Maintain any native shrub species already present at the site including American hazelnut, grey dogwood, gooseberry, raspberry, and chokecherry.
- Planting a shrub layer of chokecherry, chokeberry, Juneberry, and hazelnuts would provide provisions for humans and wildlife while diversifying the structure and composition of FDs37.
- Maintain and enhance herbaceous species including the native species currently on site such as wild geranium, interrupted fern, sedge species, etc.

- Prescribed burning should be implemented after tree and shrub removal once the fuel loads will support the movement of fire through the unit. In the long-term, the implementation of burns on an approximately 8- to 10 –year cycle restores natural processes such as the cycling of nutrients and the prevention of (re)establishment of fire-intolerant woody species.



*Figure 15. Wet meadow on NW side of Still Ponds.*



## Management Unit 2

### General Description and Current Conditions

The cultivated pine stand occurs on uplands with well-drained and moderately well-drained soils including the Santiago and Freeon series. These soils were developed in loess over sandy till. Topography is relatively flat in the northern section with slopes less than 6%. The southern section has slopes ranging from 6-15% with aspects facing east and south. Pre-European settlement vegetation suggests this area was oak openings and barrens or oak savanna. Prior to 1964, the area appears to have been utilized for agricultural purposes.

Currently the unit consists of an even-aged stands of 30- to 40-year-old planted red pine. The dominant canopy species was red pine, with individual white pine and a small stand of Norway spruce in the northeast corner. Some quaking aspen, eastern red cedar, black cherry and boxelder were also present in the canopy. The subcanopy and shrub layers were heavily infested with non-native, invasive common buckthorn including both common and glossy buckthorn. While buckthorn comprised at least 50-75% cover under the pines, additional shrub cover included gooseberry, prickly ash, black raspberry, and red-berried elder. The herbaceous layer was generally lacking in areas with the lack of light due to the heavy buckthorn cover. However, some areas contained a few native herbaceous plants such as lady fern, Pennsylvania sedge, Virginia creeper, and enchanter's nightshade as well as numerous ash seedlings. Garlic mustard, an invasive herbaceous species, was found in scattered patches in the understory.

### Desired Future Conditions

- Reconstructed Urban Forest that is compatible and complementary to the surrounding oak woodland communities in Unit 1. The composition of a Southern Dry-Mesic Pine-Oak Woodland (FDs27) can be used as a transitional native plant community goal. The canopy cover would be patchy (25-75%) and dominated by white pine, bur oak, northern pin oak, white oak, paper birch, quaking aspen, red oak, and basswood.
- Restored habitat to provide provisions for humans and wildlife, such as the production of food, water, and habitat.

- Removed woody and herbaceous non-indigenous species to prevent continued habitat degradation. The shrub layer should be patchy with 25-50% cover by native shrub species typical of an FDs27 NPC. Dense non-native invasive shrub cover should be <5%.
- Increased the diversity with additional ecologically appropriate trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. The herbaceous layer should be continuous up to 100% cover such that it is sufficient to compete with woody and herbaceous species and contain species such as sweet cicely, northern bedstraw, wild geranium, heart-leaved aster, Canada mayflower, bracken fern, and Pennsylvania sedge. Climate resilient woodland that can withstand environmental changes in an urban environment.

Priority Level: Moderate

### Management Unit Goals

Unit 2 was likely an oak openings and barrens or oak savanna historically. However, it is now mostly a monoculture of red pine. Overgrowth of invasive shrubs, mostly common and glossy buckthorn, have impacted the development of a diverse herbaceous ground layer. As is typical of pine plantations from this era, the even-age stand generally lacks any regeneration. Selective thinning has not occurred, and many mature trees are weak and susceptible to wind-throw during high winds or storms. Within this monoculture are pockets of pine experiencing die off and wind throws. In developing management goals and activities, the site was reviewed the DNR Forester Karl Mueller to assess the health and recovery of the pine stands. With two consulting DNR Foresters, they provided the recommendations to clearcut the pine stand and convert it to a native plant community, leaving some pine in the pine enhancement areas depicted on the map (Figure X). In these areas where thinning the pine is an option, the pine is slightly larger and spaced out more, intermixed with adjacent hardwoods. The younger pine stand at the southern end would not be a possibility for thinning as it would result in a stand prone to windthrow. However, the edge of this pine stand could be retained as there are spruce and hardwoods partially protecting them from the wind. The designated removal area is 10.8 acres and the thinning area is 1.3 acres.

Ideally, the cultivated pine stand would be removed or thinned where designated on the map and transition towards a southern dry-mesic pine-oak woodland (FDs27). This would connect to the surrounding woodland in Management Unit 1 and create a larger tract of contiguous habitat. Incorporating climate ready woods species (Appendix D) may also be advantageous as it is an urban reconstructed woodland ideally, timber harvest would utilize the pine logs for lumber or other marketable wood products. However, it is very unlikely that there would be interest given the lumber market. The size and quality of the pine is below what is desired, and the size of pine stand is not large enough to make it financially viable project in this part of the state. If a near clearcut of the pine is planned, The DNR recommends connecting with: [Call Before You Cut — Minnesota Forestry Association](#); a program between the MN Forestry Association and the MNDNR. The MFA foresters would have a better understanding of the local markets and could provide some guidance prior to removal.

## Management Unit Activities

To maintain sections of enhanced pine stand or to transition to a native plant community with clearcutting with a long-term goal of connectivity to the existing FDs37 community, the main activities should be:

- Remove non-indigenous woody and herbaceous species such as buckthorn, and amur maple.
- Remove ecologically inappropriate species such as black locust and boxelder.
- Remove non-indigenous herbaceous species such as garlic mustard, burdock, and dame's rocket (Appendix C). Thin or remove the planted pine stands, enhancing the health of the remaining trees and promoting pine and oak regeneration.
- Consider coppicing aspen in the NE section of site or on fringe areas to provide valuable wildlife habitat.
- Seed and plant herbaceous material and shrubs as a transitional plant community to set the foundation for future savanna/woodland
- Interplant with ecologically appropriate species from FDs27 (Appendix B) or with ecologically appropriate species from the University of Minnesota Climate Ready Woods program [Managing woodlands in the Anoka Sand Plain, Big Woods, and St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines | UMN Extension](#). Incorporate southern species as an assisted migration model to further enhance the resiliency of the unit [Region 7: Anoka Sand Plain, Big Woods, St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines](#)
- Planting chokecherry, chokeberry, wild plum, and hazelnuts would provide provisions for humans and wildlife while diversifying the structure and composition of the cultivated pine stands.



### Management Unit 3

#### General Description and Current Conditions

Management Unit 3 is a mosaic of constructed stormwater ponds surrounded by upland buffers of both grassland and woodland. In addition to the open water of the ponds, the soils include mostly silt loams (Freeon, Otter, Richwood, Waukegan, Crystal Lake, and Antigo) and a small amount of sandy loam (Mahtomedi). Slopes are largely flat and under 6% with a few west- and south-facing slopes ranging up to 15%. Similar to management unit 1, Unit 3 was likely an oak openings and barrens or oak savanna historically. The 1937 image and Figure x show the original oaks found on site, some of which remain today. Currently, the plant composition more closely resembles a southern mesic maple-basswood forest with canopy trees of bur oak, pin oak, and maple, ash, elm and boxelder and with a subcanopy of maple, ironwood, and ash saplings. The forest transitions to a wet-mesic hardwood system in lower lying areas along wetlands. The understory of the mesic hardwoods is dominated by buckthorn, a portion of which on the east side was forestry mowed in the winter of 2024-25. The buffers are a mainly composed of non-native cool season grasses including brome, fescue and reed canary grass. Burdock and Canada goldenrod are the most common forbs present. Some southern mesic prairie species are present with sedge meadow species such as lake sedge and soft-stemmed bulrush along the water's edge.

#### Desired Future Conditions

- Enhanced mesic hardwoods that resemble MHs39 and MHs49 Native plant Communities and will be resilient moving into the future. Canopy cover should be interrupted to continuous (50-100%) and dominated by sugar maple, basswood, northern red oak.
- The restoration of habitat to provide provisions for humans and wildlife, such as the production of food, water, and habitat.
- Restored subcanopy structure in the forest with the removal of woody to prevent continued habitat degradation. The shrub layer should be rare to interrupted (5-75%) cover by native shrub species typical of MHs39 such as gooseberry and chokecherry. Dense non-native invasive shrub cover should be <5%.

- Removed herbaceous non-indigenous understory species in the open areas surrounding the stormwater basins and increased diversity with additional ecologically grasses, sedges, and wildflowers.
- Climate resilient plant communities that can withstand environmental changes in an urban environment.

Priority Level: Moderate

### Management Unit Goals

This unit has experienced quite a bit of disturbance in the transition from oak savanna prior to European settlement, through logging and agriculture, and more recently in the construction trails and stormwater basins. Ash trees in the canopy of the forested areas are experiencing die off from Emerald Ash Borer; the sub canopy is strongly dominated by buckthorn. There is additional die off of large existing canopy trees and newly installed trees from construction disturbance. While native plant community goals have been assigned to this unit, the restoration of the structure and composition of the native plant communities will be challenging. Efforts in these areas should focus on minimizing the cover of non-indigenous species and increasing the overall diversity.

### Management Unit Activities

- To enhance the southern mesic maple-basswood forest (MHs39) in the wooded areas and southern mesic prairie (Ups23) and northern bulrush-spikerush marsh (MRn93) along the stormwater basins, the main activities would be: Continued removal of non-indigenous woody such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, and amur maple.
- Remove canopy species that would be considered hazardous or ecologically inappropriate species such as ash, dead oak, black locust, and boxelder.
- Remove non-indigenous herbaceous species such as garlic mustard, burdock, dame's rocket, and cool season grasses (Appendix C).
- Interplant the forested areas with ecologically appropriate species from MHs39 or MHs49 (Appendix B) or with ecologically appropriate species from the University of Minnesota Climate Ready Woods program [Managing woodlands in the Anoka Sand Plain, Big Woods, and St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines | UMN Extension](#)
- Incorporate southern species in the forested areas as an assisted migration model to further enhance the resiliency of the unit [Region 7: Anoka Sand Plain, Big Woods, St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines](#)
- Planting chokecherry, gooseberry, and nannyberry in the shrub layer of the forested areas would provide provisions for humans and wildlife while diversifying the structure and composition of the hardwoods.
- Consider prairie and wetland restoration in the open areas surrounding the wetland basins. This would involve the removal of existing vegetation with site preparation methods such as spraying, burning, soils disturbance, and seeding. Establishment maintenance would include mowing, spot-treating and prescribed burning.



*Figure 16. Stormwater Retention Pond at Still Ponds*

## Restoration Management Phasing & Cost Estimate Summary

Total management costs were based on 4-year management plans. Total 4-year costs for all vegetation management are \$693,050.00. Cost estimation is based on current 2025 market rates, contractor rates from 5 different companies, for a similar project, were averaged to get cost estimates. Management unit nuances may influence costs totals and should be considered. Continued Enhancement is recommended beyond the 4 year estimate.

Existing Land Cover	Acres	Priority	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Management Unit 1</b>		<b>High</b>				
Altered non-native Woodland FDs37	8.5		\$112,200	\$28,900	\$28,900	\$17,000
Open Water & Wet Meadow	11.4		20200?			
<b>Management Unit 2</b>		<b>Moderate</b>				
Pine Tree Planting removal areas FDs37	10.8		\$82,400	\$32,400	\$77,240	\$47,000
Pine Tree Planting Thinning and Enhancement FDs37	1.3		\$17,230	\$6,240	\$6,240	\$2,600
<b>Management Unit 3</b>		<b>Moderate</b>				
Stormwater Ponds and Buffers UPs24	8.9		\$33,300	\$24,400	\$23,800	\$18,900
Woodland MHs39 or MHs49	6.6		\$69,800	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$12,000

Table 1. 4-year management cost projections by Management Unit and Sub Unit

## Restoration Management Activity Phasing

Total management costs were based on 4-year management plans. Total 4-year costs for all vegetation management are \$693,050.00. Cost estimation is based on current 2025 market rates, contractor rates from 5 different companies, for a similar project, were averaged to get cost estimates. Management unit nuances may influence costs totals and should be considered.

Existing Land Cover	land Cover Goals	Recommended Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Notes and Assumptions
<b>Management Unit 1</b>							
Altered non-native Woodland 8.5 Acres	FDs37	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$44,200				\$5,200/Acre
		Canopy thinning of unhealthy and Ecologically Inappropriate Trees & around Save Trees	\$68,000				\$8,000/Acre
		Understory Enhancement seeding and planting		\$11,900	\$11,900		\$2,800/Acre
		Continued Enhancement		\$17,000	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$2,000/Acre; 2 visits per year.
Open Water & Wet Meadow 11.4 Acres	Opn92 & WMn82	Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass	\$5,000	\$5,000			2 visits per year
		Invasive Species Management- Purple Loosestrife Bio control	\$1,200	\$1,200			
		Vegetation enhancement		\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	
<b>Management Unit 2</b>							
Pine Tree Planting removal areas 10.8 Acres	FDs 39	Tree Removal-Canopy Removal	\$82,400				\$8,000/Acre
		Invasive Species Management- Herbaceous		\$21,600			2 visits per year

	Prairie Restoration- Site prep	\$10,800			
	Prairie Restoration- seeding		\$30,240		
	Establishment- Tree and Shrub Planting		\$15,000	\$15,000	20 trees/ Acre
	Establishment- Maintenance		\$20,000	\$20,000	
	Establishment- Tree and shrub maintenance		\$12,000	\$12,000	
Pine Tree Planting Thinning and Enhancement 1.3 Acres	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$6,730			
	Tree Removal- Canopy thinning of unhealthy and Ecologically Inappropriate Trees and save trees	\$10,500			
	Enhancement- Understory seeding and planting		\$3,640	\$3,640	
	Restoring Ecosystem processes- Continued Enhancement		\$2,600	\$2,600	\$2,600
<b>Management Unit 3</b>					
Stormwater Ponds and Buffers 8.9 Acres	Invasive Species Management- Herbaceous	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$10,000
	Interseeding	\$6,000	\$6,000		
	Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	
	Prescribed Burning	\$8,900			\$8,900

Woodland 6.6 Acres	MHs39/49	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$17,000		
		Tree Removal- Canopy thinning of unhealthy and or Ecologically Inappropriate Trees and around save trees	\$52,800		
		Enhancement- Understory seeding and planting	\$12,000	\$12,000	
		Restoring Ecosystem processes- Continued Enhancement	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$12,000

*Table 2. Restoration Activities and cost estimate*

## Management Activities

The descriptions below are intended to provide the land steward with an introduction and overview of management activities that could be implemented on the land to help achieve the objectives of the Conservation Values. These activities are specific to the land at the time this HMP was developed. If interested in implementing any of these activities, contact the Land Trust for more information or to develop an Action Plan, as necessary.

### Climate Resiliency

Climate resiliency refers to the capacity of a landscape to respond, recover and maintain its structure and function under changing climate conditions such as extreme weather events, increased wildfires, or additional non-indigenous species. Washington County has historically been vulnerable to the effects of climate change and trends show that Minnesota will experience increased precipitation, hotter summers, warmer and wetter winters, and more severe weather events in the next 50 years. This threatens natural resources by adding additional stressors to native plants and giving advantages to non-indigenous species.

Many non-indigenous species benefit from the increased humidity in summers and warmer winters, extending the ranges of species that used to be limited by the colder temperatures. Non-Indigenous species also have a higher tolerance for flooding and large fluctuations in water levels. They degrade native plant communities in a variety of ways including loss of species diversity, increased erosion, reduced water quality, and altered nutrient cycling and soil health.

Non-indigenous species often employ reproductive strategies that increase dispersal whereas native species have more limited abilities to expand their range. Hindered by this inability of the natural world to adapt, scientists are concerned that natural areas will degrade to non-indigenous and generalist species and lose the ecosystem functions that intact native plant communities provide. Fragmentation and habitat loss of natural areas further limit the movement of species across the landscape.

Much of the work on climate resiliency has focused on landscape scale processes. Models incorporate geophysical characteristics such as soils, bedrock geology, landforms, and elevation with measures of how connected a natural area is to other natural areas in the landscape. Microclimates differ even with small differences on the landscape. Sites that have more diverse landscape features may allow for more species to move and persist at a local scale. The same is true for natural areas that are more connected to landscapes at higher latitudes. This work highlights the importance of protecting and creating corridors to allow for climate adaptation.

With a conservation easement in place, the protected land will contribute to connectedness and species adaptation to climate change on the landscape scale. There are stewardship activities at the site level that can also increase climate resiliency. Many of these activities have been mentioned elsewhere in this plan but also have importance through the lens of climate resiliency.

*Climate resiliency strategies for a site:*

- **Adaptation.** Natural plant communities can adapt to changing conditions through natural processes such as succession and colonization. Restoration and management goals on native plant communities should focus on native plant communities that are well suited to the conditions using historic native plant communities as a reference. However, there are sites and species that may benefit by the process of assisted colonization, or the act of moving species to a habitat where it may not have previously occurred. Using the adaptive management framework (See Adaptive Management section), management activities are adjusted based on monitoring the outcomes of an activity.
- **Restoring and Maintaining Diversity.** Species diversity plays a critical role in a healthy ecosystem. Generally, the greater the biodiversity, the more ecosystem services that are provided. Species diversity also provides greater stability and adaptability to climate change; a diverse native plant community will have more resources to help it recover from flooding, drought, or insect diseases. Species diversity can be encouraged by restoring native plant communities; reintroducing natural disturbance regimes such as prescribed burning; and enhancing species diversity by planting native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers.
- **Reduce impacts to soil and nutrient cycling.** Maintaining both soil quality and nutrient cycling can improve the resiliency of ecosystems to adapt to new conditions. Land management in combination with the effects of climate change such as fire drought and flooding can impact ecosystem processes. Best management practices have been developed to protect soil and water such as retaining coarse woody debris to maintain moisture and nutrient cycling; limiting compaction in areas used for recreation and allowing heavy equipment only under frozen conditions; and maintaining and restoring due recreational access; and maintaining and restoring native herbaceous groundcover following management activities.
- **Promoting Natural Disturbance.** Disturbances play a key role in maintaining native plant communities. Conservation grazing, selective harvesting and prescribed burning are all techniques that can be used to mimic natural disturbance. Fire, for example, was once commonplace across much of the landscape. The suppression of fire has shifted the structure and composition of native plant communities; prescribed burning has become a common management tool for restoration purposes. It can reduce non-indigenous species and understory completion. The seasonality of these prescribed burns may need to shift to align with projected changes in seasonal precipitation. Wildfire season is expected to lengthen and become more frequent in much of the Midwest. The risk of wildfire can be reduced by using prescribed burning in those areas.
- **Managing non-indigenous Species.** Climate change is expected to increase habitat for many of these non-indigenous species. Early detection and rapid response strategies are critical for control. Special attention should be paid to highly mobile non-indigenous species. Increase monitoring for known or potential non-indigenous species to ensure early detection, especially

at trailheads and along roadsides. Quickly eradicate existing populations or seed sources of non-indigenous plants and clean equipment prior to entering natural areas to prevent the spread. Once a species has become well-established, management efforts will need to be prioritized based on species, locations, time of year, etc. Integrated Pest Management can be used to manage non-indigenous species while decreasing the use of herbicides or improving their methods of use.

## Invasive Species Management

Urban sites are inherently susceptible to a variety of invasive species vectors. At Sill Ponds, several pre-existing infestations present the potential for further spread throughout the area. In addition to these established populations, seeds may be introduced via pedestrian traffic (including footwear and pets), and maintenance equipment. Wildlife can also contribute to the migration of invasive materials. Accordingly, it is recommended that site management efforts prioritize comprehensive invasive species removal, with ongoing early detection and mitigation measures forming a core component of regular maintenance activities. In the long term, establishing resilient and competitive native vegetation will provide the most effective defense against invasive species colonization, thereby reducing the risk of monoculture development.

### Prevention

Preventing the introduction of invasive species that are currently not found on the land should be prioritized. Since the protected land will primarily be used for recreational purposes, “Play, Clean, Go” provides a useful framework:

- Remove plants, animals, and mud from boots, gear, pets and vehicles.
- Clean your gear before entering or leaving.
- Stay on designated roads and trails.
- Use certified materials such as firewood, straw, seed.

For more information on specific activities, visit the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website on [Invasive Species](#)

### Integrated Pest Management

The goal of Integrated Pest Management, often referred to as IPM, is an approach to managing non-indigenous species that considers a suite of management options and attempts to reduce the use of pesticides. Tools include biological (such as the introduction of a biocontrol agent), mechanical (such as mowing or pulling), or chemical (such as herbicide). In order to minimize the use of chemicals and the harm to plants that are not the target, IPM strategy uses the biology of the life cycle of the invasive species to determine the best course of action. The target species at Sill Ponds include:

- Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*)
- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Honeysuckles (*Lonicera* sp.)

- Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
- Amur maple (*Acer ginnala*)
- Dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
- Crown vetch (*Securigera varia*)
- Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*)
- Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula* L.)

Species that are not currently on the land but are in the area and occur in the current or desired native plant communities include:

- Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)
- Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)
- Grecian foxglove (*Digitalis lanata*)
- Barberries (*Berberis* sp.)
- Roundleaf bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

See Appendix C for more information on the species listed above. More general information on invasive species can be found online at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources webpages.

### Public disturbance

As a public site bordered by development and interconnected trails, Still Ponds experiences significant pedestrian traffic. It is important to recognize that certain areas within the park have been utilized for personal purposes, such as compost dumping and the construction of a tree house. While some of these activities may have occurred prior to the park's designation and were possibly well-intentioned, they can adversely impact restoration outcomes and require attention.

Engaging local residents in restoration efforts aligned with the management objectives set by the City presents opportunities for meaningful community involvement. Examples include organized volunteer planting events and the development of City-approved soft trails using chipped materials generated during restoration activities, such as woody debris removal. Continuous communication and public engagement are essential for ensuring the sustained success of restoration initiatives.

## Enhancement

Ecological restoration is an indefinite long-term commitment to a set of activities that initiate or accelerate the transition to a more integral, healthy, and sustainable landscape. The concept of restoring ecosystems has increased in importance as more natural landscapes become degraded or converted to other uses with consequences on the services they can provide, from habitat to groundwater recharge, fisheries, pollination, etc.

The activities involved in restoration are on a continuum of less intervention and disturbance to a complete overhaul of an area, such as in reclamation of a mining site. Enhancement describes an activity that focuses on improving ecological function often by increasing species diversity with planting or seeding. It is often in conjunction with a management activity, for example, interseeding a prairie after a prescribed burn.

## Interseeding

Interseeding is the practice of setting back the existing vegetation to allow new seeds a chance to grow; with the goal of increasing stand diversity, reducing weed populations, and habitat enhancement. Considerations for interseeding include the following:

- Set back existing vegetation temporarily if the existing vegetation is desirable; this can be done by mowing, grazing, or burning the vegetation. If the current vegetation is undesirable, for example a weed dominated patch in or amongst a high-quality plant community, the vegetation should be set back permanently. This can be accomplished using solarization, herbicides, or physical removal.
- Thick vegetation or duff layer may need to be removed prior to seeding, most of the seed should be touching bare soil.
- If soils are compacted aeration or soil loosening may be necessary for seed to soil contact and seed germination.
- Ideal seeding times are in the spring or in fall during the dormant season. When dormant seeding, seed does not need to be raked in unless the soil is excessively compact. The winter freeze-thaw cycle will “rake” the seed in for you. When spring seeding, the seed should be lightly raked into the soil. This will prevent the seed from washing out, drying out in the sun, and predation from birds.
- For large sites, typically greater than an acre, a no-till drill will reduce seeding time and eliminate the need for soil loosening and raking soil in.
- New seeds should be seeded at the recommended rate for each new species. If possible, consider sourcing seed from nearby native plant communities.

## Prairie Restoration

The goal of restoration is often returning a landscape to its condition prior to disturbance or improving ecological function at a large-scale. For the purposes of this document, it is used to describe the process of converting the landscape to a native plant community that would be appropriate to the soils, geographic location, hydrology, current tree cover, etc. The process is a more comprehensive form of

management that often involves removing the current vegetation and reintroducing the native species through seed or plants.

In the context of prairie and wetland restoration, it involves a site preparation, seeding and maintenance. The goal of the site preparation is to kill existing vegetation and prepare the surface to ensure that the seed is in contact with the soil. However, once the existing vegetation has been removed, the soil should be disturbed as little as possible to reduce the germination of any weed seed in the soil. Often land managers resolve this conflict in one of two ways:

- 1) Preparing the soil and broadcasting- vegetation is killed off and removed (often with prescribed burning); the soil surface is prepared with tilling, disking and/or harrowing; the restoration area is left to allow the weeds to germinate and be re-killed; seed is broadcast and lightly incorporated with harrowing and any erosion control is added.
- 2) Drill seeding - vegetation is killed off and removed (often with prescribed burning); this step is often repeated until the weeds are considered under control; seed is drilled into the area with a seed drill and any erosion control needed is added.

There are variations to the above strategies and each strategy has benefits and shortcomings. The decision to disturb the soil versus drill into existing soil often depends on the land use history, the type and quantity of invasive species present, the soil type, and the time of year of the seeding. The time of year of the seeding will also influence the outcome of the prairie. Spring seedings are completed prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix E). These seedings tend to favor the prairie grasses and provide stable, but less diverse prairie plantings. Dormant seedings occur after November 1<sup>st</sup> and freeze up; frost seedings occur when the ground is frozen. These seedings tend to have more diversity and abundance of flower species, but less germination of the native prairie grasses.

Management of the prairie installation is critical to the success of the restoration, especially for the first two growing seasons. Depending on the timing of the seeding, the 1<sup>st</sup> growing season will be the first few months for a spring seeding or the following spring and summer for a dormant or frost seeding. The flush of vegetation that emerges after seeding is often the cover crop that has been planted for erosion control and annual weeds. To ensure that the cover crop and weeds do not prevent sunlight from reaching the germinating prairie seeds, it is recommended to mow the prairie for the first two growing seasons. When the planting reaches 12-15 inches in height, the prairie is mown to a height of 6-8 inches. Typically, this is needed about 2-3 times per growing season. Prescribed burning is recommended at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> growing season and then at 3-5 year intervals, depending on the management goals. Some amount of IPM is needed every year to ensure the long-term success of the prairie.

When a retired or current agricultural field has the goal of savanna restoration, a prairie restoration will be completed first and the trees and shrubs will be planted after establishment. Often, a degraded oak woodland is the current land cover for savanna restoration. That approach often involves tree and shrub removal, prescribed burning, and enhancing with interseeding.

## Restoring Ecosystem Processes

### Prescribed burning

Historically, fire played one of the key ecological roles in the development of prairies, savannas and woodlands. The frequency of fire varied from annually to every 50 years and was started by lightning or was set intentional by American Indians. Fires set back the woody growth and encouraged the prairie grasses and flowers. Since European settlement, fire on the landscape has largely been suppressed. Many of the prairies and savannas that depend on fire have now become overgrown with woody vegetation.

Prescribed burning is used to mimic these historic fires and can be one of the most efficient and effective tools to manage prairies, savannas, and woodlands. On the protected land, fires could be used for the following objectives:

- Reduce encroachment of woody species (non-indigenous or otherwise).
- Reduce the cover of non-indigenous herbaceous species.
- Encourage growth of native grasses and flowers.
- Remove standing dead material.
- Invigorate brushlands.
- Improve wildlife habitat.



The objectives of a burn should be established to determine factors such as the location of the burn, the time of year to implement, the weather conditions and intensity of the burn. Generally, it is not recommended to burn more than a third of a given area in any one season to maintain habitat for desired species that may not be tolerant of burning. Trails are often used as firebreaks, but firebreaks can be installed and temporary if necessary.

### Grazing

In addition to fire, grazing by animals such as bison or elk has long played a role in shaping the North American grassland ecosystems. Historically, grazers were responsible for creating patch disturbances on the landscape that allowed for a greater number of flowering species to flourish. Today, conservation grazing, or “managed grazing” utilizes animals such as goats, sheep, cattle, and bison to mimic historical disturbance regimes, provide weed suppression, and



increase habitat diversity or “heterogeneity” on the landscape. Animals used for prescribed grazing are selected based on their grazing habits and food preference. Goats tend to target soft material from

woody species off of the ground, whereas sheep and cattle target grasses and softer herbaceous growth. Results with these different animals will have a range of results and should be selected accordingly based on desired outcomes. The feasibility or efficacy of grazing as a management tool depends on several factors, including:

- The size of the land parcel
- Number of grazable acres
- Desired type of livestock
- Allowable stocking rate based on grazable acres
- Nearby shade and water sources
- Quarantine and enclosure areas
- Perimeter fencing requirements; etc.

One common approach to conservation grazing is to use brief intensive grazing events when a non-indigenous plant is at its peak growth or when the plant may be more susceptible to defoliation. Often one of the most challenging issues in prairie restoration is the dominance of non-indigenous cool season grasses such as brome, reed canary grass, and Kentucky blue grass. These grasses can become so dominant that they start outcompeting native vegetation, eventually leading to a decline in overall plant diversity. Because cattle graze primarily on grasses, they can help reduce the cover of these non-indigenous cool season grasses and release other plants from competition. The timing of the grazing application typically occurs in spring and/or fall when the cool season grasses are active.

Conservation grazing can also enhance the structure of the grassland community by creating a diversity of cover types—from short to tall, thick duff to open ground layer, or a combination in close proximity. This diversity or “habitat heterogeneity” in turn favors a diversity of wildlife with unique habitat preferences and requirements. It is important to consult with a qualified rangeland or natural resource manager to determine if grazing is an appropriate management tool for your land.

## Haying

In addition to, or in place of grazing, haying can be used to achieve many of the same management objectives in grasslands. Mechanical harvest through haying can be used to remove non-indigenous species, remove biomass and reduce nitrogen, and manipulate growth stages of habitat. The timing of the haying event is the most critical factor. Similar to grazing and prescribed burning, haying should occur when the undesirable species are at their most vulnerable stage of growth, typically peak. The following are some general recommendations:

- If grassland birds are heavily using the area for nesting, avoid haying during the nesting season of May 15th-August 1st.
- To maximize the yield of palatable forage and its protein content, cut when the warm season grasses are sending up their flower stalks, usually late July or early August.
- To favor spring and early summer-blooming flowers, hay in mid-summer. The late summer and fall blooming species are harvested before they can flower and produce seed.

- If haying before August 1st, leave corners, odd areas, or 30 to 60 foot borders along field edges from getting hayed to provide for ground nesting wildlife.
- Typically, less than 1/3 of any given site will undergo management in a single year.
- Leave all regrowth following haying for winter and nesting cover.

## Tree Removal

Managing woodlands and savanna using tree removal is an important part of restoring the structure and composition of that plant community. Selective harvesting should use the following guidelines:

- Try to mimic natural disturbance patterns such as wind throws and fire. These disturbances create forest openings to provide sunlit patches.
- Ensure the presence of snags (dead standing trees) and fallen logs to provide habitat. Over 85 North American bird species feed, nest or roost in decaying trees. Many reptiles and amphibians live under rotting logs on the forest floor and feed on the invertebrates that are supported by the decaying wood.
- Limit the construction of logging roads and skid trails and favor harvest techniques that minimize soil disturbance to reduce mortality and loss of suitable habitat.
- Postpone timber harvests within or adjacent to valuable oak forests in the high-risk zone when oaks are most susceptible to infection, from April 1 through July 15.
- Practice “Come clean, Leave clean” (See Appendix F) to prevent the spread on terrestrial invasive species.

## Record-keeping

Keeping accurate records of management activities will be critical in understanding how the landscape is responding. In addition to recording activities, surveying ecological conditions is critical to set a baseline while ecological monitoring provides feedback for the ecosystem response to restoration and management activities. Below are some of the surveying and monitoring activities:

### Surveying

- Distribution of buckthorn– Survey data would not only include location, but information on density of coverage and size class to determine the number of years before becoming reproductive as well as the removal approach.
- Distribution of garlic mustard - Survey data would not only include location, but information on density of coverage to prioritize removal.
- Species presence absence – Vegetative sampling of species presence absence by management unit to determine ecological health and for potential seed collection sources.

### Monitoring

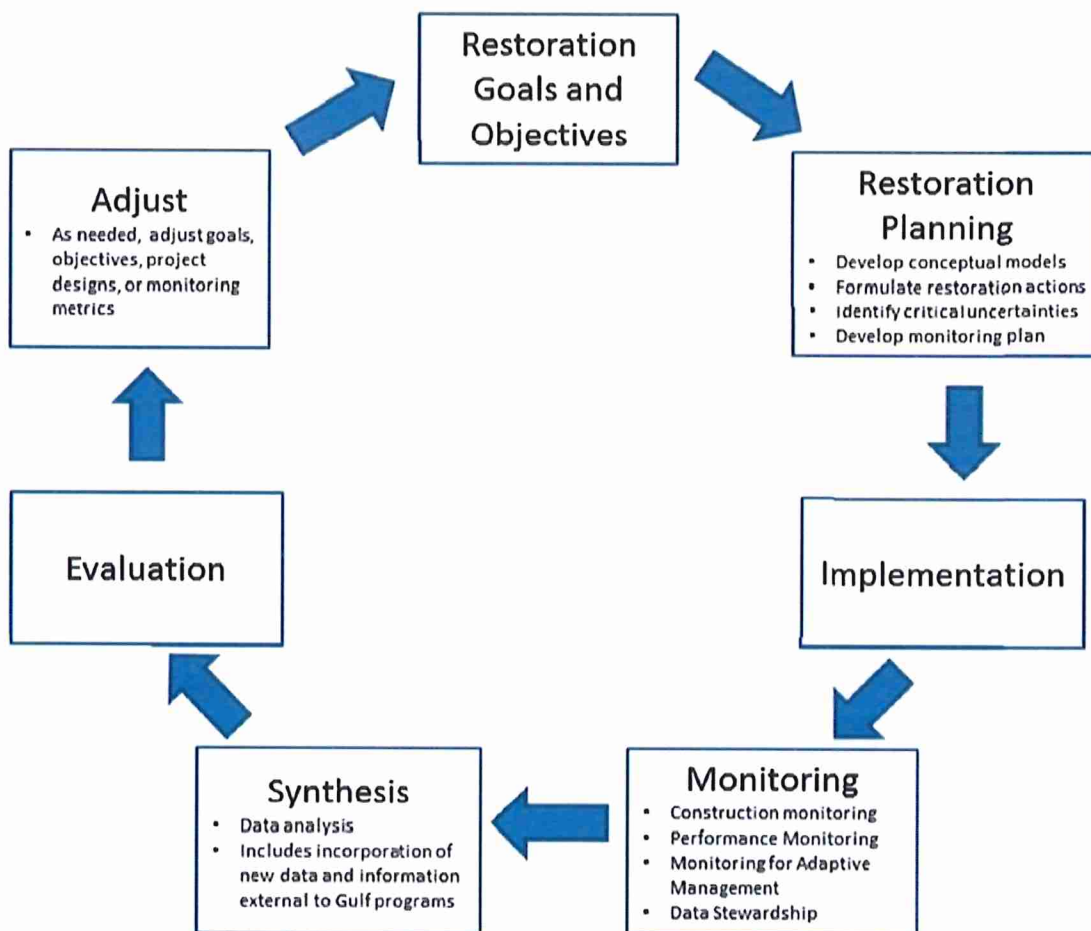
- Photo documentation – Qualitative monitoring using a photo point program uses photos at fixed reference points to document changes on the landscape. Because buckthorn is the most prominent

non-indigenous species, the recommended timing for the photos to be taken is in October when buckthorn still holding it leaves but native shrubs and trees have gone dormant.

- Vegetation plots/transects – Quantitative monitoring to determine the vegetative response to restoration and management activities. Potential monitoring data includes the percent cover of invasive species pre- and post- treatment, native species diversity pre- and post- treatment, and size and distribution of pine and oak regeneration in the understory.

### Adaptive Management

While surveying and monitoring are important to document baseline conditions, evaluating response of the ecosystem using research is necessary to make management decisions considering uncertainty. Adaptive management consists of a cycle of implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment which leads to more implementation and repeats indefinitely



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## List of Appendices

Appendix A: Soil Classifications

Appendix B: Native Plant Communities

FDs37

WMn82

Mrn93

MHs39

MHs49

Appendix C: Invasive Species

- Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*)
- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Honeysuckles (*Lonicera* sp.)
- Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
- Amur maple (*Acer ginnala*)
- Dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
- Crown vetch (*Securigera varia*)
- Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*)
- Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula* L.)
- Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)
- Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)
- Grecian foxglove (*Digitalis lanata*)
- Barberries (*Berberis* sp.)
- Roundleaf bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Appendix D: Climate Ready Woodlands

Appendix E: BWSR Recommended Restoration Seeding Dates

Appendix F: Clean Play Go; Come Clean, Leave Clean.





**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**Date:** January 27, 2026  
**Subject:** Peterson Park Master Plan Concept

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### **Introduction**

In 2025, the City acquired land for the future Peterson Park from the Lochridge development area. The first step in park development is to produce a master plan. A draft of the master plan concept is attached and ready for review by the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission.

### **Background**

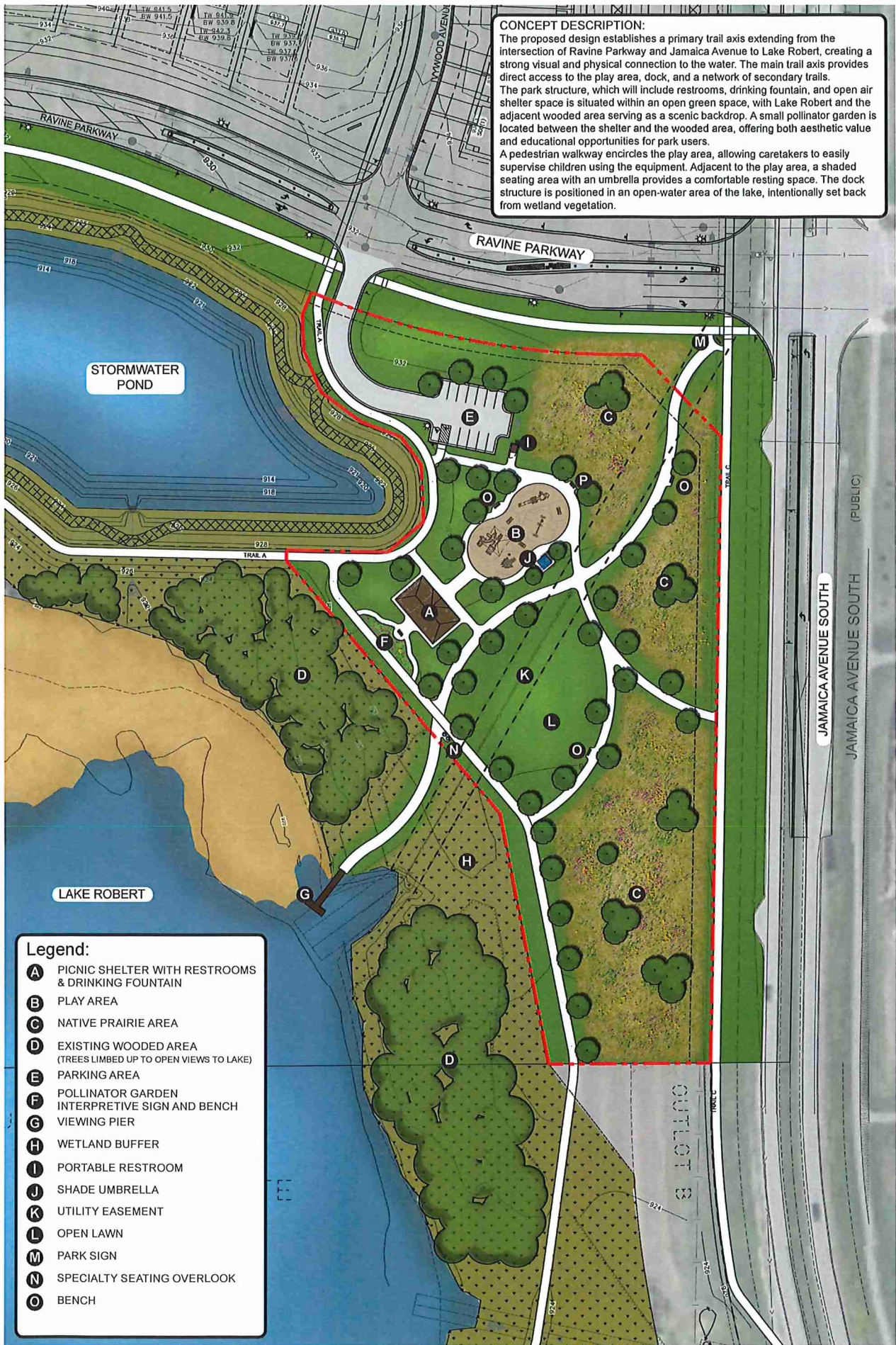
Peterson Park's concept design centers on the natural elements of the park landscape. Most notably, the lake acts as the focal point of the park with a 1-mile lake looping trail. The land around the lake will undergo a future natural resources management study to assure habitat preservation and restoration are a top priority. The smaller active portion of the park is scheduled to include a playground, picnic shelter, open lawn, dock/water access, benches/tables, landscaping, signage and a small parking lot.

Upon approval a park master plan, staff will utilize this concept for future grant applications as well as for marketing and communications with future residents of the neighborhood and community.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Provide feedback for the Peterson Park Master Plan concept.

**CONCEPT DESCRIPTION:**  
 The proposed design establishes a primary trail axis extending from the intersection of Ravine Parkway and Jamaica Avenue to Lake Robert, creating a strong visual and physical connection to the water. The main trail axis provides direct access to the play area, dock, and a network of secondary trails. The park structure, which will include restrooms, drinking fountain, and open air shelter space is situated within an open green space, with Lake Robert and the adjacent wooded area serving as a scenic backdrop. A small pollinator garden is located between the shelter and the wooded area, offering both aesthetic value and educational opportunities for park users. A pedestrian walkway encircles the play area, allowing caretakers to easily supervise children using the equipment. Adjacent to the play area, a shaded seating area with an umbrella provides a comfortable resting space. The dock structure is positioned in an open-water area of the lake, intentionally set back from wetland vegetation.



- Legend:**
- A** PICNIC SHELTER WITH RESTROOMS & DRINKING FOUNTAIN
  - B** PLAY AREA
  - C** NATIVE PRAIRIE AREA
  - D** EXISTING WOODED AREA (TREES LIMBED UP TO OPEN VIEWS TO LAKE)
  - E** PARKING AREA
  - F** POLLINATOR GARDEN
  - G** INTERPRETIVE SIGN AND BENCH
  - H** VIEWING PIER
  - I** WETLAND BUFFER
  - J** PORTABLE RESTROOM
  - K** SHADE UMBRELLA
  - L** UTILITY EASEMENT
  - M** OPEN LAWN
  - N** PARK SIGN
  - O** SPECIALTY SEATING OVERLOOK
  - P** BENCH

MASTER PLAN DESIGN INSPIRATION IMAGERY



PICNIC SHELTER WITH RESTROOMS  
Similar layout to the park shelter at Oakwood Park



SPECIALTY SEATING OVERLOOKING LAKE



VIEWING PIER ON LAKE ROBERT



POLLINATOR GARDEN WITH INTERPRETIVE SIGN



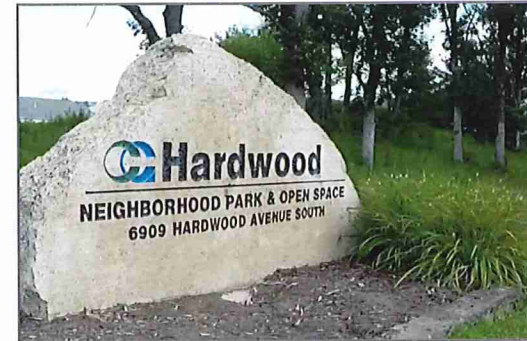
UMBRELLA SHADE



NATIVE PRAIRIE



OPEN LAWN



PARK SIGN





**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**Date:** January 27, 2026  
**Subject:** Grant Application Letter of Support

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**Introduction/Background**

The City is intending to apply for up to \$750,000 from the MN DNR's Outdoor Recreation and/or Local Trail Connections grant programs for the construction of Peterson Park. As a part of that application process, letters of support from community partners express a shared enthusiasm to complete the project. Staff respectfully request Commissioners consideration to authorize the letter of support included with this memo.

**Staff Recommendation**

Approve the Peterson Park letter of support.

February 9, 2026

We, the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission of Cottage Grove support the City of Cottage Grove's proposal and grant application to develop Peterson Park and Robert's Lake Trail Loop.

For decades, the City has identified recreational access to Robert's Lake as a key element within its' Comprehensive Plan and Upper East Ravine Park and Trail Plan. The City recently acquired over 20 acres of lakeside property to preserve it for habitat preservation and recreational opportunities. The park master plan for the site includes both passive and active recreation opportunities within a uniquely natural setting. This parks connectivity to both local and regional trailways and greenway corridors is extremely significant and will further weave nature into our community. To connect nature, recreation, history and social opportunities is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that Cottage Grove is dedicated to bringing to the community and region.

We enthusiastically support this grant application and hope that the DNR shares in this enthusiasm with the award of their grant.

Sincerely,

Cottage Grove Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission



**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**CC:**  
**Date:** January 27, 2026  
**Subject:** Public Landscapes Initiative

---

### **Introduction/Background**

Staff periodically reviews the Public Landscapes Initiative program with the Commission to assure the details and prioritization remain consistent with the City's development goals and schedules. At this time, staff is recommending amendments to the Public Landscapes Initiatives Plan. Changes would result in adjustment to the Capital Improvements Plan during its next review process.

Further, at its' Strategic Planning Workshop on January 10, City Council received information from staff that proposed rebalancing right of way landscaping designs. City Council was supportive of the staff proposal in the attached report. This rebalancing effort is supported within the right of way project prioritization in the Public Landscapes Initiative program provided.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Adopt the Public Landscapes Initiative as recommended and place on file.



**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator

**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
Gavin Hochstetler, PW/Parks Project Manager  
Cole Holmes, Parks Public Service Worker (Horticulturist)

**Date:** November 25, 2025

**Subject:** City Landscaping

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### **Introduction**

As the community grows, the resources exhausted for maintaining public gardens to appropriate standards of care has become increasingly difficult to manage. With over 300 landscaping beds across parks and right of way spaces, staff has been strategizing on the most sustainable approach to achieving the end goal of beautifying our public landscapes in high traffic areas of the community.

### **Background**

Across the community, gardens vary in size and content to assure a dynamic public landscape. Beginning in the early 2000's, these landscaping features became a priority for city beautification. As such, the City grew from 25 gardens in the year 2000 to 325 in 2024. City Council has been supportive of this initiative by providing necessary funding for labor, equipment, fuel and materials (plants, mulch, fertilizer, irrigation, etc.). After spending thousands of hours in the field maintaining these features, staff is suggesting an alternative planting strategy to reduce maintenance resources of labor, equipment, materials and fuel while concurrently improving employee safety and maintaining higher quality landscaping features that draw visual appeal and highlight our community's beauty. In terms of public road right of way specifically, over the past 20+ years staff has realized the following challenges with large scale landscaping efforts:

1. Survivability is low due to urban heat island effect, soil compaction, salt and drought stress.
2. Constrained root space, poor soil aeration and road reflective heat stunt tree growth.
3. Safety concerns with staff working in busy right of ways for long periods of time. This ultimately limits amount of time spent in gardens and thus diminishes proper care for gardens (weed growth, plant die-off, deteriorate appearances and improper mulch cover).

### **70/30 Strategy**

Staff has developed a 70/30 strategy which it feels will help guide future planning for large road right of way and building/facility projects. This strategy suggests use of 70% hardscape materials versus 30% softscape materials. Hardscape materials may consist of landscape rock, concrete, stamped concrete, boulders or cut rock, signage and more. Softscape materials are plants (annual and perennial), trees and mulch. Staff will highlight examples at the Strategic Planning Session to illustrate this concept.

The end goal of the 70/30 strategy is to:

1. Increase plant survival rate due to increased care within smaller softscape focus areas.
2. Increase visual appeal with color and fullness of planted areas (because survivability is high).
3. Increase employee safety by focusing beautification efforts to strategic eye-catching spaces.

4. Use of high-quality hardscape varieties to support the overall appearance of public landscapes. When properly planned, hardscapes can provide visual appeal while also drawing attention to the softscapes that “POP” with color.

**Action Plan**

With support of City Council, staff advises utilization of the Public Landscapes Initiative program to prioritize and fund these improvement and rehabilitation projects. The program currently schedules one right of way project and one park project annually to balance the fund’s cash flow.

In terms of process, each year Parks and Public Works staff prioritize projects and funding for a 5-year period. The draft plan is reviewed by the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission. Upon Commission approval, the landscaping projects are then scheduled into the Capital Improvements Plan for final review and approval by City Council.

**Staff Recommendation**

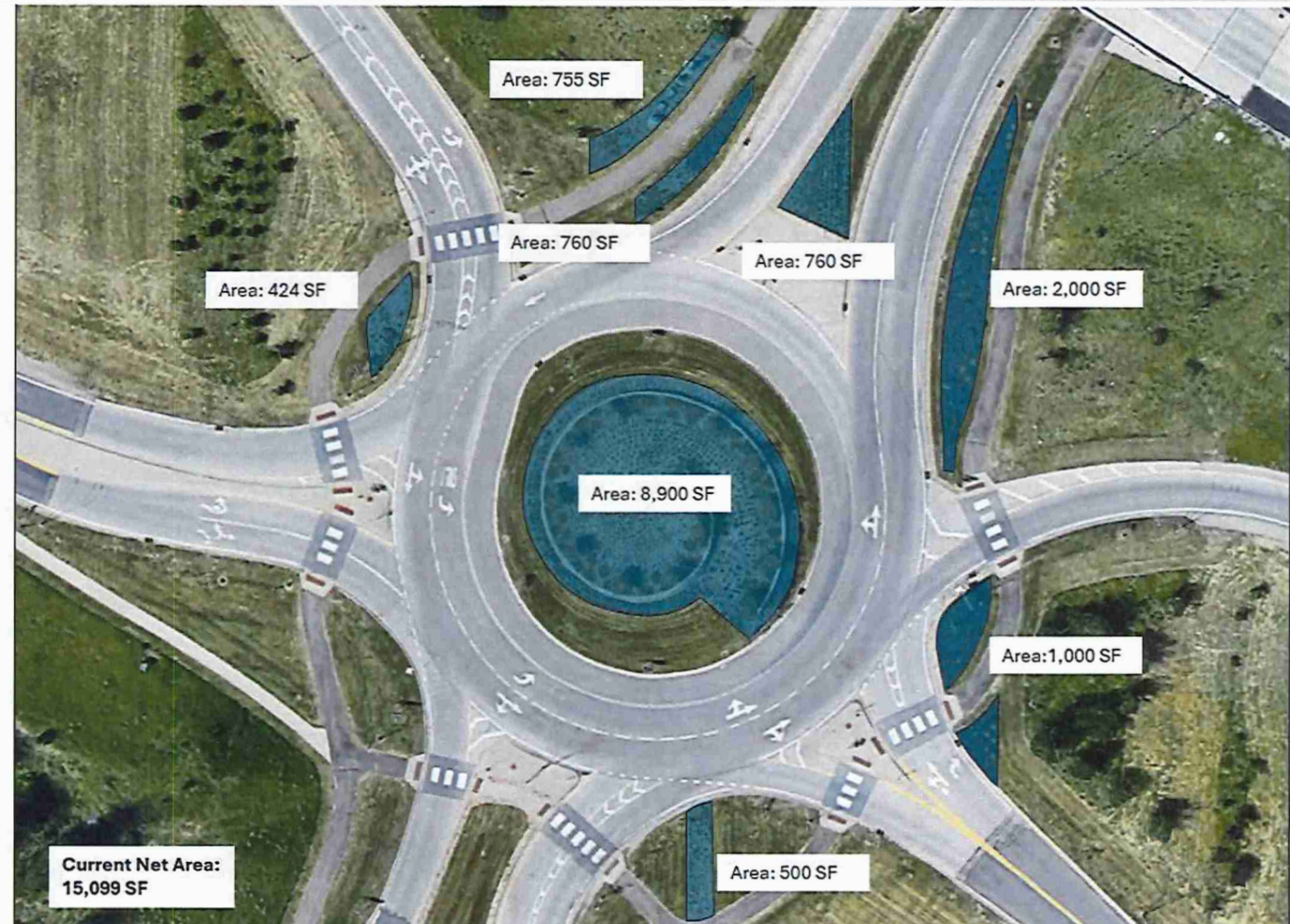
Receive information regarding the future of public landscaping practices and provide guidance to staff.

# City Landscaping

## Jamaica Avenue

### Roundabout Challenges:

1. Over ½ acre of landscaping
2. Dangerous Work Zone
3. Plant Volume
4. Woodchip Volume
5. Soil Salinity
6. Soil Compaction
7. Plant Freeze
8. Heavy Labor/Few Eyes

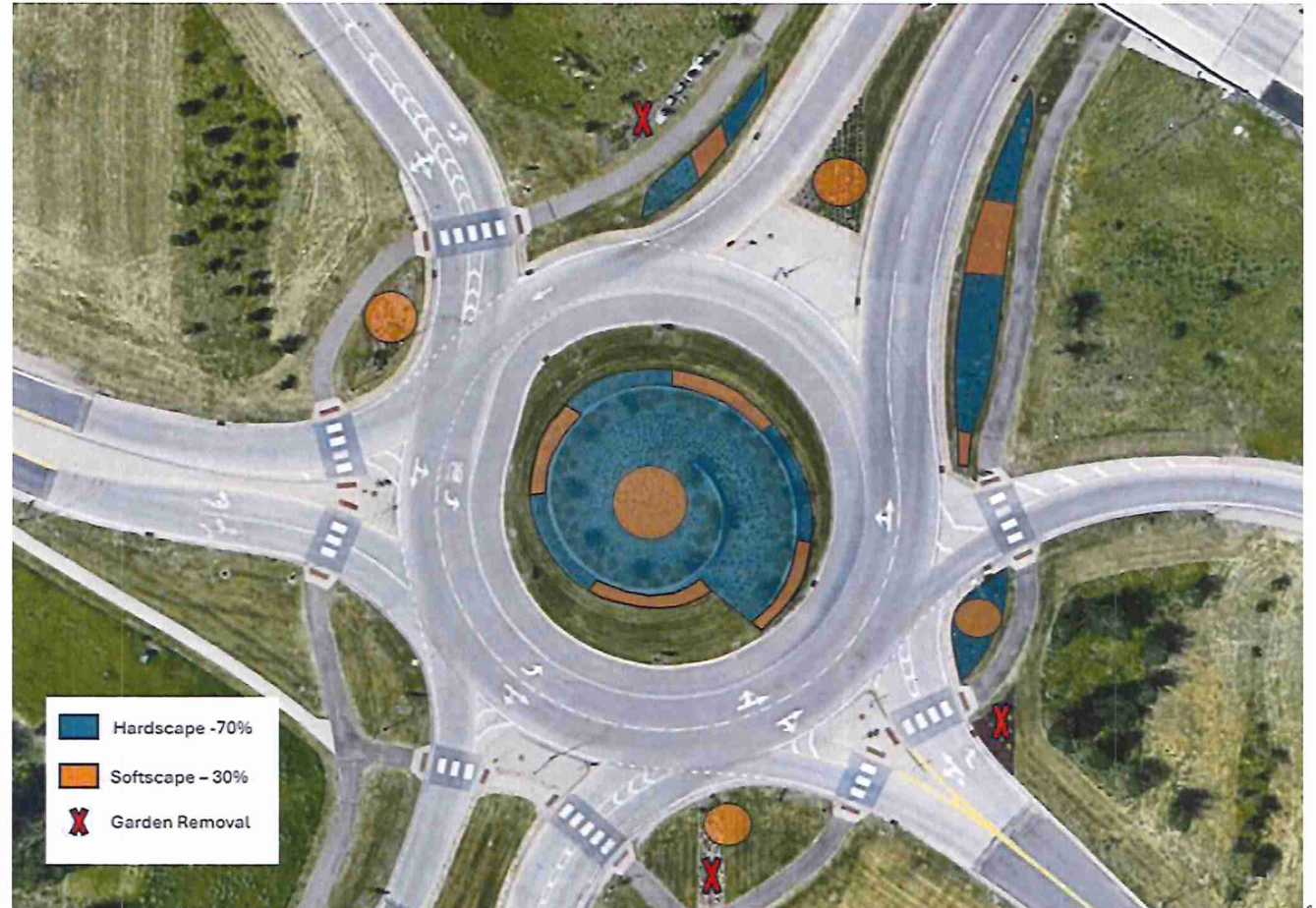


# City Landscaping

## Jamaica Avenue

### Roundabout Solution:

1. Reduce Plant Area to 1/10 acre
2. More labor time per bed
3. Increase plant volume/bed
4. Maintain woodchip cover
5. Pre-treat weeds
6. Treat soil salinity
7. Increase plant replacement
8. Reduced labor, increased visual appeal with quality beds



# City Landscaping

## Jamaica Avenue/70th St Modified Approach

### Remaining Challenges:

1. Highly dangerous work zone
2. Tight planting spaces
3. Low survival rate
4. Time better invested into key sitelines
5. Clean look

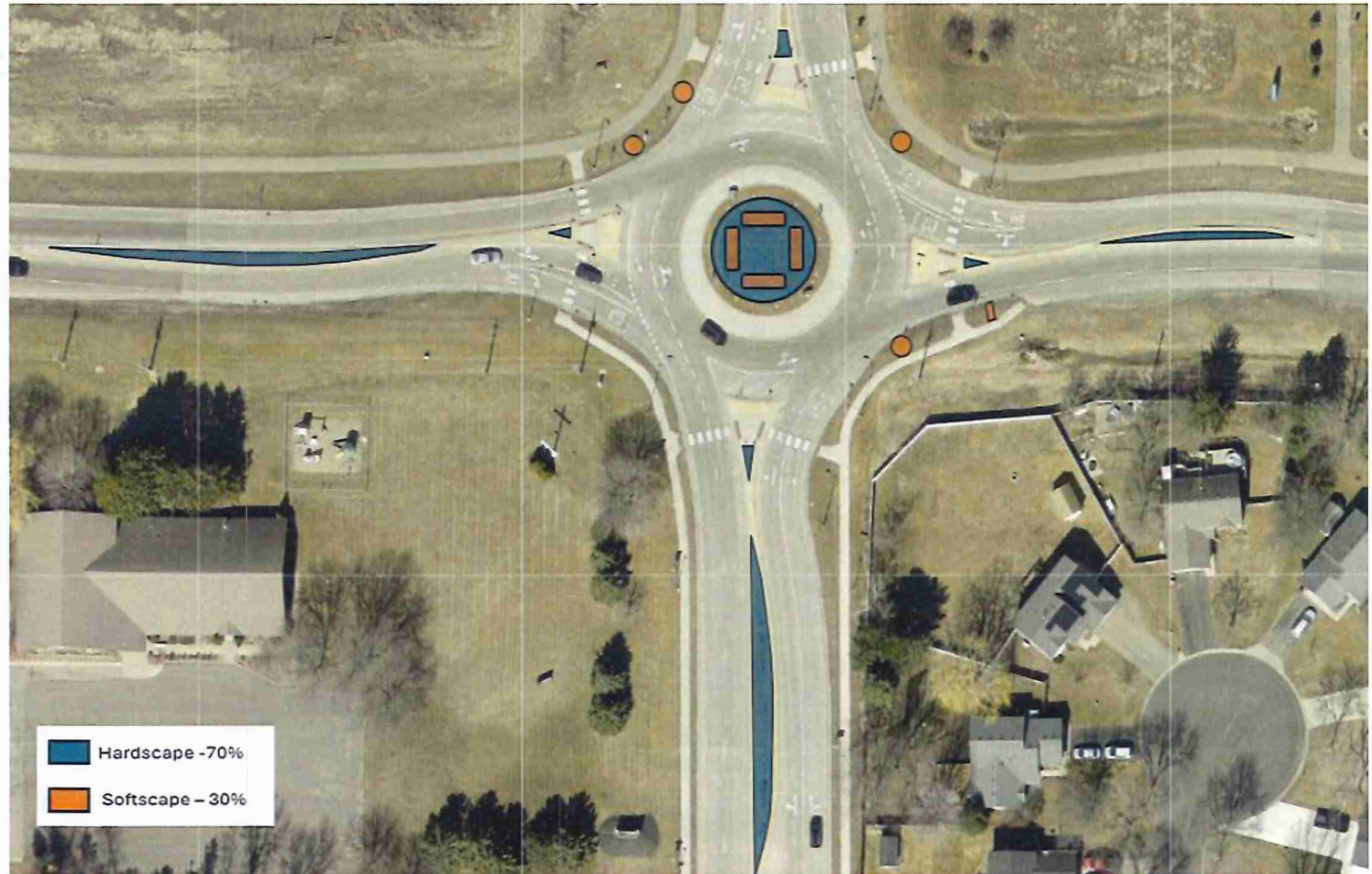


# City Landscaping

## Jamaica Avenue/70th St Modified Approach

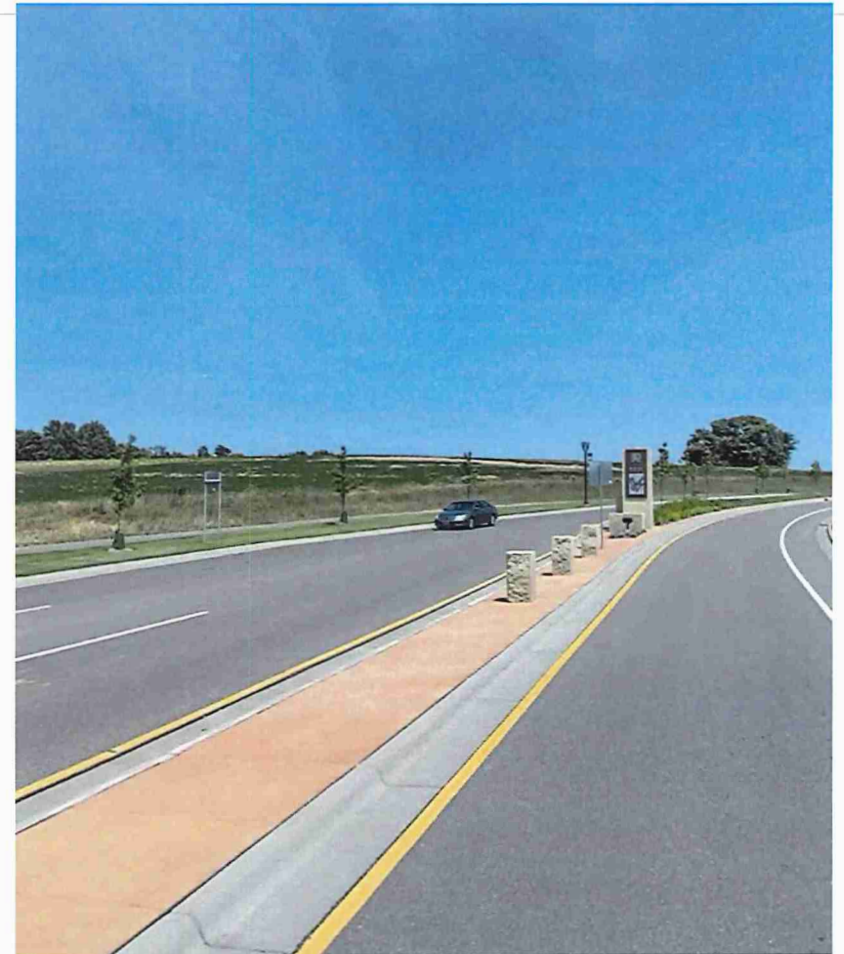
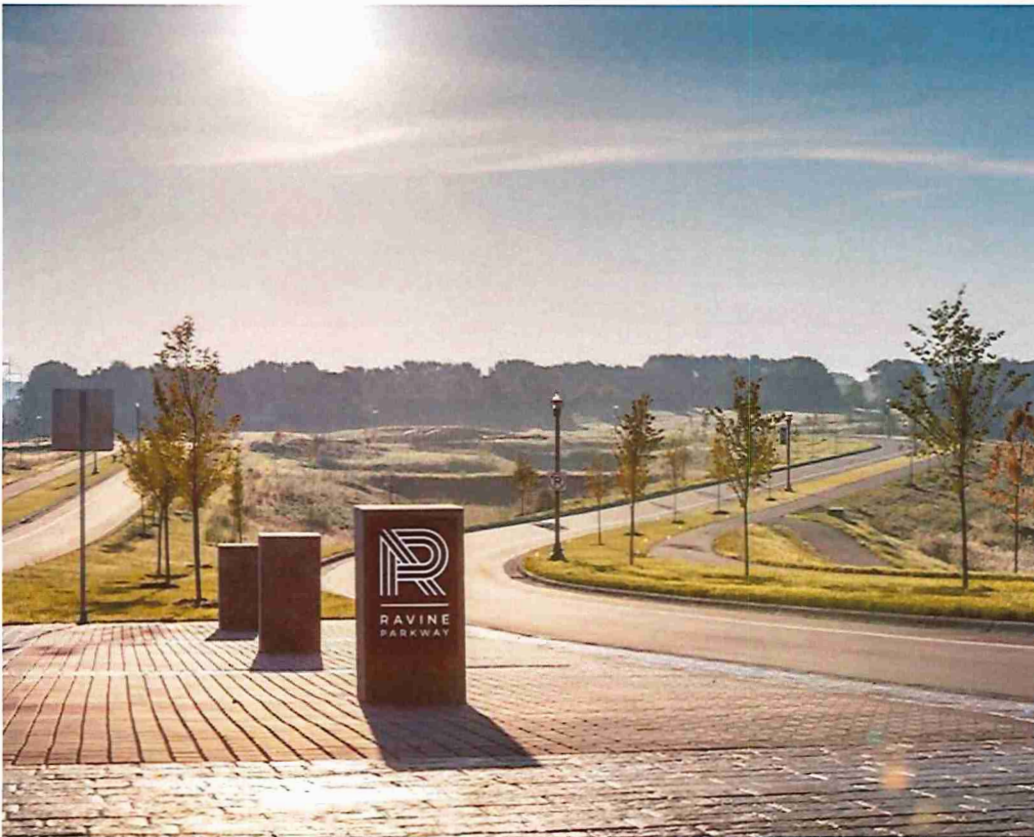
### Proposed Solution:

1. Reduce safety risk
2. Increase survival rate
3. Improved color
4. Clean look



# City Landscaping

- Good Use/Balance of Hardscape and Softscape



## Public Landscapes Initiative

The Public Landscapes Initiative was originally developed in 2006 as an outgrowth of the Tree Mitigation program initiated in 2003 and the Development Enhancements Initiative in 2004. The Tree Mitigation program was created to provide an opportunity to replant the urban forest in situations where development impacts had occurred. The Development Enhancements Initiative was the spring board for the Gateway Aesthetic Controls policy, the Gateway District Parks and Open Space Master Plan and the Gateway Corridor Enhancement Project which expands the Master Plan to include beautification efforts along the Highway 61 corridor.

The goals of the Public Landscapes Initiative are as follows:

- A. Community Beautification
- B. Active management of the urban forest
- C. Provision of biodiversification of the urban forest
- D. Reforestation of highly visible community parks, public lands and transportation corridors
- E. Enhance landscape features of entry points into the community
- F. Provision of a beautification / landscaping element for community scale infrastructure projects
- G. Provision of tree planting / landscaping employee team building and community volunteer opportunities

Program expenditures are restricted to plant materials and outside contract tree planting / landscaping costs.

The Public Landscapes Initiative (fka Tree Mitigation) has two components: 1) volunteer tree planting or landscaping improvement opportunities in large community parks; and 2) contract or professional staff tree planting or landscaping improvement efforts in high visibility roadway corridors. Past budgets have included general fund allocations of up to \$30,000 annually into this fund. Allocations have changed from year to year based on Council discretion. The year end 2024 estimated fund balance was at \$537,000. The fund may also receive periodic infusions from donations or tree mitigation exactions from developers. Corridor projects would be anticipated to comprise about 80% of the CIP dollars dedicated from this fund in any given year.

### Corridor Projects

Corridor Projects are to be located in high visibility developed areas of the community. They are intended to provide for mitigation of denuding of the urban forest that may have occurred through past development activities. These projects are not intended to provide for enhancements within rural or future development areas. Identified projects and their current priority/projected year of development are as follows:

- A. Jamaica Avenue from 100<sup>th</sup> Street to highway 61 ramp area: Rebalance landscaping to 70% hardscape, 30% softscape design principle. This includes

enhancement of the landscaping that occurred as part of the 2008 roundabout project.

**Priority: 1    Budget Year: 2026**

- B. 80<sup>th</sup> Street from Highway 61 to Ideal Avenue: Plantings would be for roadside and center median beautification as a part of the pavement reconstruction project.

**Priority: 3    Budget Year: 2026**

- C. Jamaica Avenue and 70<sup>th</sup> Street: Rebalancing of landscaping to 70% hardscape, 30% softscape principle.

**Priority: 2    Budget Year: 2027**

- D. East Point Douglas and Keats Avenue: Rebalance landscaping to convert median landscaping to hardscape while enhancing roundabout center feature.

**Priority: 4    Budget Year: 2028**

- E. Public Facilities: Rebalance landscaping with a more efficient design approach. Does not need to conform to 70/30 principle in facility spaces not within the right of way.

**Priority: 5    Budget Year: 2029**

### **Park Projects**

It is proposed that for community park projects development occurs in concert with timing of storm water and other park improvements to allow “public landscapes” projects to provide an aesthetic enhancement opportunity to these infrastructure and structure improvements in order to arrive at a projected CIP year. These projects are intended to be of a scale appropriate for City and/or community volunteers. Larger scale projects would be funded through an outside project fund. Identified projects and their current priority/projected year of development are as follows:

- A. CG Trailway Corridor: This is an infill project from Hinton Avenue to Imperial Avenue. The intent would be to provide varying pedestrian experiences through the trail corridor. The primary habitat would be prairie, with some additional opportunities for shade trees, forested areas and/or wetland restoration.

**Priority: 1    Budget Year: 2025/2026**

- B. Mississippi Dunes Park: Restoration of Oak Savanna, woodland, wetland and shores of the park. Funding should be used as a match towards a DNR CPL Grant or similar.

**Priority: 2    Budget Year: 2026**

- C. Oakwood Park: This could be the landscaping element of the storm pond construction and/or the band shell/park shelter construction projects as well as restoration and protection of the woodlands. Planting in a manner to support disc golf play should be considered.

**Priority: 3      Budget Year: 2027**

- D. Woodridge Park: Restorative work to protect and enhance the parks old Oak forests, ornamental Crabtree gardens and pond areas.

**Priority: 4      Budget Year: 2028**

- E. Pine Tree Valley/Pine Tree Pond Parks: Prairie/wetland restoration to enhance the natural open spaces habitat of these connected parks. This work should be complimented with restoration grant funding. Funding should include tree plantings as part of the Pine Tree Pond upgrades planned to provide shade and beautification to the park.

**Priority: 5      Budget Year: 2029**

- F. West Draw/Bike Park: Install low-grow prairie along berms and open spaces to improve pollinator habitat, reduce mowing/maintenance, reduce erosion and improve aesthetics of the park.

**Priority: 6      Budget Year: 2030**

- G. Public facilities including City Hall, Ice Arena, Golf Course, Fire Station(s), Community Hall based on need.

**Priority: 7      Budget Year: 2031**

**Maintenance Plan**

The goal of the program is to have an 85% survival rate of planted tree stock. Requisite actions toward this goal include:

- A. Mulch beds as part of every planting
- B. Contractor warranties for a minimum of one year
- C. Contractors responsibility for regular watering commitments for one year
- D. Public Works staff responsibility for regular watering through the third full growing season
- E. Public Works staff responsibility for fourth and fifth growing season watering during periods of severe drought

**Project History**

- 2001 – Industrial Park Tree Planting
- 2003 – Industrial Park Tree Planting
- 2005 – Meadow Grass Park Tree Planting
- 2006 – Highland Park Tree Planting
- 2006 –Hardwood Avenue Tree Planting
- 2007 – Hamlet Park North Tree Planting
- 2008 – Jamaica Avenue (west triangular public space) Tree Planting
- 2009 – Kingston Park and Ice Arena Tree Planting
- 2010 – Hamlet Park South Tree Planting
- 2011 – Lamar and Pine Glen Park Tree Planting

2013 – Pine Tree Valley, North Ideal and Nina’s Park Tree Planting  
2013 – West Draw Park Prairie Restoration/Tree Planting  
2014 – Hardwood Park Oak Woodland Restoration  
2014/15 – Camel’s Hump Oak Woodland and Prairie Bluff Restoration – Phase I  
2015 – Sunnyhill Park  
2015 – Pine Tree Pond Park Prairie Restoration  
2015 – 80<sup>th</sup> Street; Jamaica to Co Rd 19  
2015 – Hidden Valley Park Prairie/Wetland Restoration – Phase I  
2016 – Oakwood Park Hillside Prairie Restoration  
2016 – Arbor Meadows Park Tree Planting  
2016 – Hidden Valley Park Prairie/Wetland Restoration – Phase II  
2016 – Camel’s Hump Woodland and Prairie Bluff Restoration – Phase II  
2017/18 – Hidden Valley Park and West Draw Native Habitat Restoration  
2017/18 – Camel’s Hump Phase III Native Habitat Restoration  
2018/19 – LaBathe Settler’s Island and Camel’s Hump Phase III Restoration  
2020 – Kingston Park Habitat Restoration  
2021 – Oakwood Park (restoration), Glacial Valley Park and N Ideal/Nina’s Landscaping  
2022 – Hemingway Park Nursery Planting/Grey Cloud Arbor Day Planting  
2023 – Strawberry Fields Arbor Day Planting  
2024 – CG Trailway Corridor Restoration and Sunnyhill Park Arbor Day Planting  
2025 – CG Trailway Corridor habitat plantings between Hinton and Imperial Ave.

Public Landscapes 082406

Amended 60708  
Amended 72010  
Amended 71112  
Amended 10413  
Amended 51115  
Amended 2816  
Amended 31317  
Amended 91118  
Amended 81219  
Amended 62921  
Amended 8122  
Amended 21024  
Amended 2926



**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**CC:**  
**Date:** January 30, 2026  
**Subject:** Commissioner Terms

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### **Introduction/Background**

Below is a list of the new term details for each Commissioner. Reminder that each Commissioner may serve up to four full terms before their term limit.

<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Term Expiration</b>
Larson	Final	February 2027
Brown	Final	February 2027
Gustafson	2nd	February 2027
Glasford	2nd	February 2027
Crabtree	Final	February 2026
Olson	2 <sup>nd</sup>	February 2026
Samual Larson (Y)	1 <sup>st</sup>	February 2027
Youth Seat	Open	

### **Recommendation**

No action required at this time.



**To:** Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Commission

**From:** Noah Ranem, Recreation Specialist

**CC:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director

**Date:** January 30, 2026

**Subject:** Blazing Stars Special Olympics

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### **Introduction**

The City of Cottage Grove currently recognizes two athletic associations- Cottage Grove Athletic Association (CGAA) and East Ridge Athletic Association (ERAA). These associations are considered a Priority 3 classification when allocating fields and facilities for each season. Staff are recommending to recognize Blazing Stars Special Olympics as an athletic association and re-classify as a Priority 3 organization.

### **Background**

Priority 3 athletic associations are invited to the City of Cottage Grove's annual fields and facilities preparatory meeting each year in January.

Blazing Stars Special Olympics is a non-profit organization affiliated with Special Olympics Minnesota. They have been a tremendous partner and user of Cottage Grove fields/ facilities for nearly 20 years as a Priority 4 classification. Currently, Blazing Stars Special Olympics have expanded their programs at Lamar and Arbor Meadows Parks to include kickball, bocce, football, and cornhole for local athletes. Reclassifying Priority 4 status is primarily concerned with the time-intensive process of re-allocating fields and facilities following the City's annual preparatory meeting with Priority 3 athletic associations. By designating Blazing Stars as a Priority 3 organization enables concurrent field scheduling with CGAA and ERAA and eliminates the need to reallocate field usage from the delay in facility use requests.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Recognize Blazing Stars Special Olympics as a Priority 3 athletic association for their impact on the Cottage Grove area Special Olympics community and equivalence to pre-existing Youth Athletic Associations.

## City of Cottage Grove Recreational Facility Use Policy

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines for priority use of outdoor athletic facilities in the City of Cottage Grove.

The priority system is a listing from highest to lowest in terms of reserving specific times and facilities by organizations or groups. Each priority details the following:

- Requirements of the organization/group
- Fees

The City of Cottage Grove reserves the right to determine if an outdoor athletic facility shall be considered "a scheduled facility" or not. It may be in the public's best interest to periodically not schedule specific outdoor athletic fields. Examples for needing to rest a field might include unsafe conditions, maintenance activity or to make a field available for non-scheduled public general use.

None of the policies herewith in apply to the Ice Arena or River Oaks Golf Course.

### **PRIORITIES**

#### **Priority I: City of Cottage Grove Programs**

Activities directly organized as part of the City of Cottage Grove or directly sponsored by the City as a cooperative program.

*Use* - Use will be based on the needs of the program. Needs will be established annually and typically communicated prior to the Annual Field Scheduling Meeting.

*Fees* – Class 1 (see reservation forms for detailed fees)

#### **Priority II: Public and Private Schools**

Schools must be located within Cottage Grove and there must be an agreement in place that provides the City with reciprocal use of the school's outdoor athletic facilities. If no agreement is in place, priority for that school shall be placed in Priority III.

*Use* - Use will be limited to weekday activities and concluding prior to or at 3:30 p.m. The types of uses allowed will be for organized school programs and physical education classes, provided there is no disruption to the City's normal maintenance of the facilities. Permits after 3:30pm Monday – Friday or on weekends will be considered Priority III use.

*Fees* – Class 2 or 3 based on event type (see reservation forms for detailed fees).

**Priority III: Recognized Community Youth (18 and younger) Recreational and Traveling Programs**

The ~~two~~three currently recognized Priority III organizations in Cottage Grove are the Cottage Grove Athletic Association (CGAA), ~~and~~ East Ridge Athletic Association (ERAA) and Special Olympics Blazing Stars.

Priority III recognized association requirements are detailed in Exhibit A of this policy for CGAA and ERAA. Because of the Special Olympics Blazing Stars regional draw and specialized programming need for the community, the exhibited requirements do not apply to this organization.

*Recreational programs:* Defined as those programs consisting of youth where travel outside of home facilities and versus teams outside of the recreational league is less than 20%.

*Competitive/Traveling programs:* Defined as those programs consisting of youth where travel outside of home facilities and versus teams outside of the recreational league is more than 20%.

Priority III status applies to in-season sports to assure efficient utilization of athletic fields and further assure that in-season sports are given priority access to facilities over off-season sports. Off-season permits will be Priority IV or V.

Seasons are defined as:

Spring/Summer Season (April – July)

1. Baseball
2. Softball
3. Soccer
4. Lacrosse

Fall (August – October)

1. Football
2. Fall Soccer (with all local association players and volunteer coaches)
3. Fall Softball (with all local association players and volunteer coaches)
4. Fall Baseball (with all local association players and volunteer coaches)

*\*Spring/Summer schedules are to be submitted prior to March 1 and Fall schedules prior to July 1. After that deadline, the City will open facilities for rent to Priority IV and V groups.*

*Use –* Fields will be allocated based upon the number of Cottage Grove residents in each sport requesting outdoor athletic facilities and shall not interfere with Priority I and II use. An Annual Field Scheduling Meeting will be held to allocate fields for Priority III programs.

If there are unresolved scheduling conflicts, facilities will be allocated based upon the percentage of Cottage Grove residents within a sport.

For example, if ERAA Baseball has 15% of the combined CGAA/ERAA Cottage Grove residents rostered within the sport, it would have Priority III access to 15% of total baseball fields in Cottage Grove.

Where splitting of facilities between CGAA and ERAA occurs, the goal should be to prioritize servicing those teams that have the most Cottage Grove residents.

For example, if an ERAA U10 Baseball team has the largest percentage of Cottage Grove residents in its baseball program, that team should receive a higher priority for utilizing Cottage Grove fields as opposed to a team with very few or no Cottage Grove residents.

*Fees* – Class 2, 3, or 4 based on event type (see reservation forms for detailed fees).

NOTE: Class 2 fees only apply to games that involve one or more CGAA/ERAA team. If a team permits for multiple games where two non-CGAA or non-ERAA teams are playing one another (typically as a result of double-header league scheduling systems), Class 3 hourly field rental fees will be charged for those specific games assuming CGAA or ERAA is providing complete oversight of the entire days use.

**Priority IV: Cottage Grove Resident Groups**

Cottage Grove based organizations, businesses, teams, residents not meeting requirements of Priority III.

*Use* - Use shall be limited to availability of athletic facilities and shall not interfere with Priorities I-III and will be processed after Priority I-III permits are in place.

*Fees* – Class 4 (see reservation forms for detailed fees).

**Priority V: Non-Resident Groups**

Organizations, businesses, teams, and individuals not residing in Cottage Grove

*Use* - Use shall be limited to availability of athletic facilities and shall not interfere with Priorities I-IV and will be processed after Priority I-IV permits are in place.

*Fees* – Class 5 (see reservation forms for detailed fees).

**GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES:**

- The Parks and Recreation Department determines priority and class fee levels based on criteria.
- Reservations and changes throughout the season will be made with one field coordinator per sport.
- Any organization which fails to follow the guidelines or provides false information is subject to revocation of its priority status at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- No organization or group will be allowed to sublease athletic facilities to any other users other than teams that are considered a part of their organization and are fully governed by that organization's bylaws and covered by the same insurance policy.
- Field maintenance:
  - Monday through Friday, fields are prepped each day between 7am and 3pm. The City does not guarantee the general public will not use the facilities between the time of maintenance and scheduled events.
  - Saturday through Sunday, fields will be prepped on Friday. If users want to assure fields are prepared prior to their game, they will have to request and pay for the two-hour maintenance fee detailed in the reservation form.

**WEATHER PROCEDURES:**

In the event of inclement weather or saturated ground\*, fields will be closed to ensure the safety of participants and prevent turf damage. Inclement weather includes:

- Thunderstorms (thunder, lightning and/or hail)
- Heavy rainstorms and/or saturated ground\*
- Heavy frost or snow cover
- Extreme Temperatures
- Any weather condition that may be dangerous to participants or may damage facilities

*\*Saturated ground refers to standing water on a field or conditions when the ground is so wet that use of the field will damage the turf.*

The decision to close outdoor athletic facilities will be made by City of Cottage Grove Parks and Recreation Department staff. If closed, the Parks & Recreation Department will send an e-mail to the Field Scheduling Coordinators and update the weather hotline. It is each sport's Field Scheduling Coordinators responsibility to contact all their teams involved with cancellation information.

Weekdays, when possible, the decision to close outdoor athletic facilities will be made by 3:00 p.m. On weekends and/or if inclement weather conditions develop later in the day, the umpire/referee or the park maintenance staff on duty will make the decision to close fields.

City of Cottage Grove and ISD833 personnel reserve the right to close outdoor athletic facilities under special circumstances. If fees have been assessed; credits will be issued if fields are closed by the City of Cottage Grove. Fees will not be refunded if sport coaches cancel a reservation without the fields being closed due to weather or field conditions.

Organizations/Groups will be held financially responsible for any turf damage caused by the use of fields/facilities during inclement weather, by the use of fields with saturated ground or by the use of fields in a negligent or inappropriate manner at any time. (i.e. hitting balls into fences (soft toss), overuse of a turf area, batting practice when not using mound or home plate).

**EXHIBIT A**

Priority III Recognized Association Requirements

1. Must be a Cottage Grove and/or ISD833 boundary based, non-profit, 501c3 organization as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Proof of 501c3 status (letter from IRS) will be required by the City of Cottage Grove along with annual certification of status by an office of the organization.
2. Participation shall be ninety percent (90%) Cottage Grove residents and/or attending school within ISD833. A listing of organizational members may be requested by sport to the City of Cottage Grove with names and addresses to prove residency requirements prior to the scheduling meeting.
3. A copy of the current board of directors and contacts shall be submitted to the City of Cottage Grove.
4. The organizations board of directors must consistently be able to provide following the items:
  - a. A copy of the current bylaws policies and procedures, which govern the operations, shall be made available to the City of Cottage Grove or any resident of the community upon request.
  - b. The association may not discriminate based on race, ethnic background, or religion, or ability, however, may make team assignments based on ability. There will be a policy in place describing the formation of teams.
  - c. The organization shall have a coach's certification training program in place for head coaches of all sports and it shall address sportsmanship values, safety, background checks, and liability
  - d. All board meetings are open to the public. The election of the governing body shall be a process open to all members as defined by the bylaws of the organization.
  - e. The organization shall have a policy in place for dealing with members that have special economic, physical and/or social needs.
  - f. The organization shall be able to present the organization's program offerings, participation, youth development, skill/team development and positive representation of the community.
5. The organization shall have liability insurance in place in an amount equal to the statutory maximum liability of a government unit with the State of Minnesota as set forth in state law naming the City of Cottage Grove as an additional insured. A copy of this insurance must be submitted to the City of Cottage Grove Parks & Recreation Department at the time of field reservation. The current statutory limits are \$1,000,000 for each occurrence.
6. The organization agrees to indemnify and defend it from any claims brought or actions filed against the City for injury or death to any third person or persons, or damage to property of third person, arising out of the negligent acts of the agents, employees, and representatives of either party as they relates to the shared use of the fields and facilities that are reserved under this policy. The intent of the indemnification requirement of this Article is to impose upon the party against whom a claim is being brought, subject to the City's limits of liability under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 466.

Priority III status of organizations shall be considered static unless written evidence is brought before the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission which warrants a review of priority designations. The Commission shall provide a detailed review of all applicants and submit a recommendation to the City Council for final approval of priority status.



**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director  
**CC:**  
**Date:** January 30, 2026  
**Subject:** Action Updates

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### **Introduction/Background**

Staff will present on the following topics:

1. Denzer Park
2. Cottage Grove Trailway Corridor Habitat Restoration
3. Oltman Park
4. Mississippi Dunes Park
5. Kingston Park Building
6. Peterson Park
7. Still Ponds Park
8. Park Playground Donations

### **Staff Recommendation**

Receive information.



**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Jim Fohrman, Parks Superintendent  
**Date:** February 2026  
**Subject:** Park Maintenance Activity Update

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Below are the projects for the Parks Maintenance division. The projects are either in the process of being completed or have been completed.

**January:**

- Ice rink flooding
- Building maintenance
- Remove chair and mailbox at City Hall
- Trash run
- Plowing
- Install ice resurfacers blade
- Tree cutting
- Removed cords from City Hall trees
- Chainsaw maintenance
- Clean equipment
- Remove hose reels from trucks
- Fecon at North Ideal and Pine Tree Valley

**February:**

- Trash run
- Building maintenance
- Clean equipment and bay
- Put together benches and tables
- Plowing
- Tree cutting
- Post seasonal staff positions
- Equipment replacement
- Ice rink flooding/maintenance
- Building cleaning
- Remove hockey nets

**Memo**

To: Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission

From: Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Services Manager

Date: 2/2/26

Re: February: Puzzle Competition

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Please feel free to call or email with any questions or comments, 651-458-3404.

This past weekend we held our 4<sup>th</sup> Puzzle Competition at Glacial Valley Park. Teams of four players compete to put together a 500-piece mystery puzzle as fast as they can. There is a two-hour time limit – however, most can finish in less than 45 minutes. Speed puzzle competitions are becoming very popular, and we look forward to hosting a youth competition with the City of Woodbury this spring.





**To:** Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission  
**From:** Jordan Hirman, Facility Services Manager  
**CC:**  
**Date:** March, 2026  
**Subject:** Update on Ice Arena Activities

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Below is an overview of Ice Arena Activities that are complete, projects/programs we are working on, and upcoming projects/programs:

#### **COMPLETED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS**

- Completed 2025/26 High School Hockey season with 34 home games scheduled.
- Scheduled shut down with contractor for the West Refrigeration on March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Turf scheduled to install on March 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Scheduled 6 summer tournaments.
- Winter Skating Lessons with 129 participants.
- Hosted District 8 PWB1, U15B, and U12B2.
- Completed registration for our new 3v3 Grizzly League working with Minnesota Athletic Club to increase our registrations for the league.
- Themed Valentine skate night February 14<sup>th</sup>.

#### **CURRENT PROJECTS/PROGRAMS**

- West Rink Ice removal is scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Working on scheduling teams for the Grizzly League.
- Booking Spring/Summer clinics and schools for 2026.
- Current scheduled turf time has 217 hours with over \$21,000 in revenue.
- Planning brochure for Summer Skating Lessons.
- Spring Skate School programming with 123 participants.
- Scheduling City programs for the Fall and Winter.
- Working with past customers to book Spring/Summer/Fall ice time.
- Marketing Egg Hunt hosting at the Ice Arena March 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Marketing bounce house event partnership between Recreation and Ice Arena held on March 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Marketing Skate and Ice Paint event partnership between Recreation and Ice held on May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Working with Park Boys Boosters and CGHA for a potential locker room build in CG Logistics Rink.

#### **UPCOMING PROJECTS/PROGRAMS**

- 2025 Cottage Grove Ice Show "Enchanted Toy Box" May 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Spring turf rentals.
- Removal of CG Logistics and South Rink scheduled for May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Scheduled ice install for the West Rink the week of May 5<sup>th</sup> with first ice on May 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Install West Rink for week of April 20<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 651-458-3400.



<b>To:</b>	Honorable Mayor and City Council Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission
<b>From:</b>	Dennis Neitz, River Oaks General Manager
<b>CC:</b>	Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
<b>Date:</b>	February 2, 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	River Oaks January 2026 Update

**Introduction**

Discover one of the Twin Cities' most scenic and versatile destinations—where exceptional golf, unforgettable events, and elevated dining experiences come together.

**Golf Like Never Before**

River Oaks isn't just a golf course, it's an experience. Our breathtaking 18-hole layout winds through the Mississippi River Valley, offering stunning views and unmatched playability. Whether you're here for a casual round, a competitive league, or a memorable tournament, you'll enjoy a course consistently ranked among the best municipal courses in Minnesota. Add in our practice facilities and expert lessons, and River Oaks is the perfect place to elevate your game.

**Celebrating in Style**

Our practical Event Center is designed to make every occasion extraordinary. With space for up to 250 guests, customizable layouts, and panoramic views, River Oaks is the ideal setting for weddings, banquets, corporate meetings, and special celebrations. Our in-house culinary team crafts menus that impress, while our dedicated staff ensure every detail is flawless. From intimate gatherings to grand events, we make your vision a reality.

**Dine & Unwind**

The Eagles Bar & Grill is more than a restaurant; it's a destination during the summer. Enjoy a full menu of chef-inspired dishes, and refreshing drinks in a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Step out onto our scenic patio and take in sweeping views of the golf course and Mississippi River Valley. Seasonal favorites start in February, like our famous Fish Fry!

**January Update**

**Golf Reporting**

Update	2025	2026
January Revenue	\$4,804	\$113,191*

\*Number not official

### **Golf Summary**

Excitement is building for the 2026 season! Leagues, lessons, and memberships are already filling up, and our pro shop will be stocked with the latest merchandise. If the snow cooperates, we're aiming for a start in March—so get ready to hit the course!

### **Event Center - Eagles Bar & Grill Reporting**

Update	2025	2026
January Revenue	\$37,408	\$25,247*

\*Number not official

### **Event Center - Eagles Bar & Grill Summary**

We're thrilled to kick off the season with the return of our famous Fish Fry and a refreshed menu for the summer golf season. With a new look to the patio, we are excited about the upcoming season. And don't forget—March is packed with exciting winter sports events, making River Oaks the place to be all season long.

### **Maintenance - Summary**

Our dedicated golf course team has been hard at work completing our equipment, so it is prepped and ready—and we're thrilled to introduce **brand-new Yamaha golf carts** for a smoother, more enjoyable ride. Plus, we're clearing select areas to promote better turf health and maintain the pristine beauty you expect at River Oaks. Everything we do is focused on delivering the best golf experience in the Twin Cities!



COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL  
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH  
COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA 55016  
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:00 PM

January 7, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
- 7 Consent Agenda
  - A City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2025-12-17)  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the December 17, 2025, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.*
  - B Planning Commission Meeting Minutes (2025-11-24)  
*Staff Recommendation: Accept and place on file the minutes from the November 24, 2025, Planning Commission meeting.*
  - C Rental License Approvals  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties listed in the attached table.*
  - D Single-occasion gambling permit and liquor permit - St. Rita's Church  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a single-occasion gambling permit and liquor permit to St. Rita's Church to serve alcohol and conduct bingo at 8694 80th Street, on February 14, 2026, from 6 pm to 9 pm.*
  - E Designate a Newspaper  
*Staff Recommendation: Designate the St. Paul Pioneer Press as the official newspaper for the City of Cottage Grove for 2026.*
  - F 2026 Business Licenses  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-008 approving the Business Licenses listed in Attachment A.*
  - G Worksite Wellness Grant Application  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize the Wellness Committee to apply for the Worksite Wellness Grant through Washington County.*
  - H Compensation Study - Paypoint HR  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the proposal for Paypoint HR to conduct a compensation study in 2026 in the amount of \$30,000.00.*

- I 2026 Pay Plan and Benefits Non-Union - Revised  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-011 adopting the 2026 Pay Plan and Benefits for non-union employees.*
  - J Public Purpose Expenditure Policy  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-001, approving the public purpose expenditure policy for 2026 as presented.*
  - K 3rd Quarter Donations 2025  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-010 approving the 3rd Quarter Donations for 2025.*
  - L Designate Depositories of City Funds  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-002, Designating Depositories of City Funds and Authorizing the Investment of Surplus Funds.*
  - M Delegate Authority to Pay Certain Claims and Allow Electronic Fund Transfers  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-003, Delegating authority to pay certain claims and allowing electronic fund transfer transactions.*
  - N Accept Donation - LSP  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-004, Accepting donation from LSP Cottage Grove, LP to the Economic Development Trust Fund.*
  - O Community Garden SHIP Grant Application  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Statewide Health Improvement Partnerships grant application to Washington County for \$3,700.*
  - P Electrical Inspection Professional Agreement  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the Agreement for Professional Services with River Heights Inspections, LLC for electrical inspector services to include completion of plan reviews of electrical permits for commercial properties.*
  - Q Prioritized Bridge Replacement List  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-007 creating a Prioritized Bridge Replacement List.*
  - R 80th St Rehabilitation Project - Approve Plans and Specifications and Authorize Bidding  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-006 approving the plans and specifications and authorizing bidding for the 80<sup>th</sup> Street (TH 61 to Ideal Ave), East Point Douglas Road (80<sup>th</sup> Street south to tee intersection), and TH 61/80<sup>th</sup> Street Interchange Rehabilitation project.*
  - S Ravine Parkway 85th Street to Keats Avenue - Approve Feasibility Report  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-009 approving the feasibility report for the Ravine Parkway – 85<sup>th</sup> Street to Keats Ave project.*
- 8 Approve Disbursements
- A Approve Disbursements  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 12-12-2025 through 01-01-2026 in the amount of \$5,774,660.08.*
- 9 Public Hearings
- A 2026 Pavement Management Public Hearing  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-005 ordering the 2026 Pavement Management Project.*
- 10 Bid Awards
- 11 Regular Agenda
- 12 Council Comments and Requests
- 13 Workshops - Open to Public



COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL  
RIVER OAKS GOLF COURSE AND EVENT CENTER  
11099 US 61 SOUTH  
COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA 55016  
- 8:00 AM

January 10, 2026

- 1 Doors Open & Continental Breakfast (7:30 AM)
- 2 Welcome by Mayor Myron Bailey and City Administrator Jennifer Levitt (8:00 AM)
  - A 2025 Strategic Plan Update
- 3 Warm-up: Wins for the Year. (8:15 AM)
- 4 Discussion: Fund Balance Allocation and Future Revenue (8:45 AM)
- 5 15-minute Break (9:15 AM)
- 6 Community Development Strategic Plan (9:30 AM)
  - A Community Development Department Staffing Report
- 7 Discussion: City Development Update (10:15 AM)
  - A Economic Development Strategic Plan Report
- 8 City Landscaping (11:00 AM)
  - A 2025 Strategic Plan - Landscaping
- 9 Update: Public Works/Parks Building Relocation Project (11:15 AM)
  - A Public Works & Parks Building Relocation Project
- 10 Lunch and Discussion on City Communication Strategy (11:30 AM)
  - A 2026 Communications Priorities
- 11 Fire Department Standard of Cover Study Presentation (12:15 AM)
  - A Fire Safety Standard of Cover Study
- 12 Cottage Grove Parks, Today and Tomorrow (1:15 PM)
  - A East Ravine Park Planning
- 13 Break (1:45 PM)
- 14 Financial Management Plan (2:00 PM)
  - A Financial Management Plan Review
- 15 Recap and Closing (3:00 PM)
- 16 Adjournment (4:00 PM)



COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL  
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH  
COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA 55016  
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:00 PM

January 21, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Adoption of Agenda
- 5 Presentations
- 6 Consent Agenda
  - A City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-01-07)  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the January 7, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.*
  - B Gambling License — Public Safety Board  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a single-occasion gambling permit to the Cottage Grove Safety Board (Julieann Rice) to conduct a raffle at City Hall (12800 Ravine Parkway) on May 11, 2026, at 6:00 PM.*
  - C Gambling License — Strawberry Fest  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a single-occasion gambling permit to the Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest (Loriann Olsen) to conduct a raffle at Oltman Middle School on June 22, 2026, at 6:00 PM.*
  - D Transcription Agreement - Judith Graf  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the 2026 transcription agreement with Judith Graf.*
  - E Rental License Approvals  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties listed in the attached table.*
  - F Woodridge Park & Arbor Meadows Park Court Resurfacing  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize resolution 2026-012 awarding the Woodridge Park and Arbor Meadows Park Court Resurfacing Project to Court Surfaces & Repair Inc in the amount of \$26,750 for Woodridge Park and \$3,750 for Arbor Meadows Park and authorize the service agreement between Court Surfaces & Repair Inc. and the City of Cottage Grove.*
  - G Woodridge Park Pickleball Court Resurfacing  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize resolution 2026-013 awarding the Woodridge Park Pickleball Court Resurfacing Project to C&H Sport Surfaces, Inc. in the amount of \$20,495 and authorize the service agreement between C&H Sport Surfaces, Inc. and the City of Cottage Grove.*
  - H DEED Redevelopment Grant Application – Ross Home  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-014 authorizing the application for redevelopment grant funds through the Minnesota State Department of Employment and Economic Development.*
  - I Nomination to South Washington Watershed District  
*Staff Recommendation: Nominate Sharon Doucette to the South Washington Watershed District Board of Managers.*

- J Declaration of Intent to Bond for 2026 Projects  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-019, Declaring the official intent of the City of Cottage Grove to reimburse certain expenditures from the proceeds of bonds to be issued by the City.*
- K Municipal State Aid Street Funds Advance Resolution  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt resolution 2026-020 requesting Minnesota State Aid Street Funds Advance.*
- L Van Meter - CUP for Exterior Storage at 7601 100th Street, Suite 100  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-017 to approve a Conditional Use Permit for exterior storage of materials at 7601 100th Street South, Suite 100.*
- M Van Meter Site Plan Review for Building Expansions and Variance Request  
*Staff Recommendation: A) Adopt Resolution 2026-016 to approve the variance to allow the proposed building addition for Expansion A to be 64 feet from the north property line when a 100-foot setback to the residential property line is required, located at 7450 95th Street South. B) Adopt Resolution 2026-015 to approve a site plan review for two building additions and associated site work for Van Meter Inc. located at 7450 95th Street South. C) Adopt Resolution 2026-023 rescinding, terminating, and releasing the Stormwater Management Agreement recorded July 16, 2015 as document number 4033928. D) Approve the Encroachment Agreements for items within the drainage and utility easements, Stormwater Management Agreement, and the Hydrant Access Easement Agreement for Van Meter Inc, located at 7450 95th Street South.*

7 Approve Disbursements

- A Approve Disbursements  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 01-02-2026 through 01-15-2026 in the amount of \$2,000,055.06.*

8 Public Hearings

9 Bid Awards

10 Regular Agenda

11 Council Comments and Requests

12 Workshops - Open to Public

13 Workshops - Closed to Public

14 Open Forum

15 Adjournment



COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL  
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH  
COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA 55016  
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:00 PM

February 4, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
  - A Swearing-In and Badge Pinning Ceremony  
*Staff Recommendation: Perform the Swearing-in and Badge Ceremony for Rebecca Dziki, Timothy Gunderson, and Ryan Sheak.*
  - B Proclamation - February 2026 Black History Month  
*Staff Recommendation: Proclaim February 2026 as Black History Month.*
- 7 Consent Agenda
  - A City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-01-21)  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the January 21, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.*
  - B Commissioner Reappointments  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the reappointment of the Commissioners detailed in the memo to their designated Commissions.*
  - C Rental License Approvals  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the addresses listed in the attached table.*
  - D 4th Quarter Donations  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-018, accepting the 4th Quarter Donations.*
  - E 2026 Legislative Agenda  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the City of Cottage Grove's 2026 Legislative Agenda.*
  - F USPCA Reunite K9 COP Grant Acceptance  
*Staff Recommendation: Accept and approve the grant award in the amount of \$7,500.00 from the United States Police Canine Association.*
  - G Authorize the Order of Replacement Ambulance  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize the purchase of a Ford E-450 Road Rescue Ultramedic from Everest Emergency Vehicles with an estimated cost of \$299,627.00 and an estimated delivery of January 2027.*
  - H Washington County SHIP Grant  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize the Statewide Health Improvement Partnerships grant agreement for \$3,700 to be used for expansion of the existing Meadowgrass Park Community Garden.*

- I LCCMR Grant for Mississippi Dunes Park  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize staff to apply for the Minnesota LCCMR grant for funding to assist in the completion of the Mississippi Dunes Master Plan.*
- J FEMA - Assistance to Firefighter Grant  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize the Fire Department to apply for a FY25 FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grant in the amount of \$380,585.*
- K Ice Arena Remodel Plans & Specification Agreement  
*Staff Recommendation: Authorize service agreement with Oertel Architects for Ice Arena Remodeling Project final design services.*
- L Recycle Surplus Equipment  
*Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the City Council authorize River Oaks to proceed with recycling the equipment listed in the memo.*
- M 2026 Fuel Pricing  
*Staff Recommendation: Receive the fuel pricing for 2026 under state contract number 281983.*
- N Forestry Bucket Truck - Budget Increase and Purchase Authorization  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve the increased budget amount of the bucket truck from \$210,000 to \$236,000 & authorize purchase.*
- O Mississippi Landing 3rd Addition – Final Plat, Development Agreement, and Plans & Specs  
*Staff Recommendation: 1) Adopt Resolution 2026-024 approving the Mississippi Landing 3rd Addition final plat, which is an approximate 10.82-acre residential development with 66 single-family lots. 2) Approve the Mississippi Landing 3rd Addition Development Agreement with Rachel Development, Inc. and authorize execution of all easements, deeds, and agreements required for the plat and project. 3) Adopt Resolution 2026-025 approving the Mississippi Landing 3rd Addition Development Plans dated January 26, 2026, prepared by Alliant Engineering, and as modified by request of the City Engineer.*
- P Front Desk Security Upgrade  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-027 awarding the Front Desk Area Security Upgrade contract to RAK Construction in the amount of \$96,955, and authorize the service agreement between RAK Construction and the City of Cottage Grove*
- Q County 19A/100th Street Realignment – BUILD Grant Application  
*Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-022 supporting the City's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant application for the County 19A/100th Street Realignment Project.*
- 8 Approve Disbursements
  - A Approve Disbursements  
*Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 01-16-26 to 01-29-26 in the amount of \$5,489,440.95.*
- 9 Public Hearings
  - A Cedarhurst Historic District Nomination to City Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks  
*Staff Recommendation: 1) Hold the public hearing for the nomination of the Cordenio Severance House (Cedarhurst) Mansion and the Gardener's Cottage to the City Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks. 2) Adopt Resolution 2026-026 to place the Cordenio Severance (Cedarhurst) Mansion and significant outbuildings located at 6940 Keats Avenue South, and the Gardener's Cottage located at 9912 70th Street South on the City Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks to be known as the "Cedarhurst Historic District."*
- 10 Bid Awards
- 11 Regular Agenda
- 12 Council Comments and Requests
- 13 Workshops - Open to Public