



**COTTAGE GROVE PARKS, RECREATION AND
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016

COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:00 PM

September 14, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Roll Call
- 3 Approval of the Agenda
- 4 Approval of Minutes
 - A June 8, 2026
- 5 Open Forum
- 6 Presentations
 - A Washington County Land & Water Legacy Program
- 7 Action Items
 - A Still Ponds Natural Resources Management Plan Amendment
 - B MN DNR Conservation Partners Grant Letters of Support
- 8 Presentation of Information
 - A 2050 Comprehensive Plan
- 9 Action Updates
 - A Denzer Park
 - B Cottage Grove Trailway Corridor Habitat Restoration
 - C Oltman Park
 - D Mississippi Dunes Park
 - E Peterson Park
 - F Hazen P Mooer Park
 - G Military Trailhead
 - H Capital Improvements Plan 2027-2031
- 10 Donations
- 11 Staff Reports and Materials
 - A Staff Reports

- 12 Commission Comments
- 13 Council Comments
 - A Council Agendas
- 14 Workshop
- 15 Adjournment

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE MN, 55016
COUNCIL CHAMBER - 6:30 P.M**

Date: June 8, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER
Meeting called to order at 6:30pm at City Hall

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Adam Larson, Dave Olson, Kelly Glasford, Debra Gustafson, Shane Waterman, Jordan Dibich, Sam Larson, Susannah Brown

Members Absent:

Others Present: Zac Dockter, Parks Director, Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Supervisor, Council Members Dave Thiede, Justin Olsen and Myron Bailey along with about 20 other community members.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion to approve agenda after striking item VIII.A was made by Commissioner Brown & seconded by Commissioner S Larson. Agenda approved as amended.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve minutes from May 11, 2026 with the inclusion of the emailed financial analysis regarding business plans by staff was made by Commissioner Olson & seconded by Commissioner Waterman. Minutes approved as amended.

5. OPEN FORUM
None

6. ACTION ITEMS
None

7. PRESENTATIONS
B. Staff lead a bus tour and provided information regarding the following sites: East Ravine future parks, Glacial Valley Park, Cedarhurst Mansion, Cottage Grove Trailway Corridor, Oltman Park, Denzer Park and Woodridge Park.

8. ACTION UPDATES
None
9. DONATIONS
None
10. STAFF REPORTS & MATERIALS
None
11. COMMISSION COMMENTS
None
12. COUNCIL COMMENTS
None
13. WORKSHOP
None
14. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Glasford. Second by Commissioner Dibich.
Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm



To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission
Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator

From: Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director

Date: September 4, 2026

Subject: Still Ponds Park Reserve Natural Resources Management Plan Amendment

Introduction

The City acquired Still Ponds Park Reserve in 2021. This site is comprised of 42.5 acres of cultivated pine stands, woodland, stormwater basins with upland buffers, wet meadows, and open water features. As with most natural spaces acquired by the City, staff developed a Natural Resources Management Plan to study existing habitat and develop a preservation/restoration plan for the land. This Natural Resources Management Plan was completed in 2025 by the Washington Conservation District (WCD) in partnership with the South Washington County Watershed District (SWWD). The plan was approved by both the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission and City Council over the summer of 2026. As follow up to plan approval, staff held a neighborhood meeting on August 10 on the site to discuss the plan and answer questions and concerns from adjacent residents.

Background

A significant portion of the plan includes the removal of the Red Pine stand that was planted by the previous landowner in the 1960/70's. As the plan states, this part of the forest is severely diminished, provides little habitat or environmental value and increases risks to the City in terms of safety (both human and property) and escalated costs from maintaining this portion of the forest as well as the eventual need for full removal of the forest. The plan aimed to remove this forest and all of the invasive undergrowth in order to replant with a combination of native prairie and woodland habitat to restore the land to its pre-settlement vegetation to improve water, soil and the overall environment for this park and surrounding areas. However, it is understood that the loss of this particular woodland has an immediate visual and screening impact to adjacent homeowners.

Due to significant concern voiced by residents, staff is suggesting the plan be modified to include a phasing option for restoration. This addendum to the plan serves as a tool in managing those resident concerns.

The phased plan (figure 1) would prioritize management units 1 and 3 which requires significantly less woodland reduction and are currently the most meaningful zones to restore given the proximity to the lake. Management unit 2 (Red Pine Forest) would be a secondary priority for restoration. By prioritizing in this manner, staff can continue to improve the park's environmental value while mitigating the resident concerns from the surrounding neighborhood. However, it should be noted that doing so results in a majority of the park moving to a classification C in our Public Open Space Management Program while the Red Pine Forest will remain a Class E. Class E areas receive little to no maintenance activity within that section of forest unless there is a public safety risk or trail hindrance. Because of the overplanting of the Red Pines, it is very challenging for crews to access any forest-related maintenance concerns without removing swaths of trees to allow equipment access. Attached

with this report is the City's Public Open Space Management Program which further details management principles.

The proposed phased approach will focus on management units 1 and 3 for the first five years or more while also monitoring conditions of the Red Pine forest. Once the Red Pine forest deteriorates to a point of necessity for removal or restoration, staff can revisit this plan for proposing implementation of management unit 2. Timing of that would be based on forest conditions.

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant

The City has a proud history of partnering with the MN Department of Natural Resources for projects similar to Still Ponds Park through their Conservation Partners Legacy Program.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant program has a mission of restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetlands, prairie, forest and habitat for fish, game and wildlife. The CPL Grant is designed by the DNR to partner with regional and local organizations to achieve said mission through Legacy Grant funding. Funding for the CPL program is from the Outdoor Heritage Fund created by the people of Minnesota. This fund receives 33% of the sales tax revenues resulting from the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Constitutional Amendment passed by the voters in the November 2008 election. The CPL Grant program offers an excellent opportunity for the city of Cottage Grove to continue its efforts of restoring historical landscapes within Still Ponds Park Preserve.

The application will consist of restoring management units 1 and 3 in the amended plan. If the application is successful, staff will bring the grant agreement back to City Council for final review and approval.

Grant Budget

The estimated 3-year project cost for restoration of Still Ponds units 1 and 3 is approximately \$480,000. The CPL program offers funding for at least three years of restoration work. The grant application will closely reflect the grant budget below:

Total Project Cost	\$480,000
DNR Grant Share	\$432,000
City In-Kind Contribution and/or Cash(10%)	\$48,000

City contribution/match would come from some combination of cash and in-kind support. In-kind support includes project management labor, park maintenance labor/equipment, volunteer labor and more. Cash contributions include items like trees purchases, contractor payments, seed enhancements and more. Cash matches are typically sourced from the Public Landscapes Initiative Fund.

Staff Recommendation

1. Approve Still Ponds Natural Resources Management Plan Amendment.
2. Approve grant application for the MN Department of Natural Resource's Conservation Partners Legacy grant in the amount of \$480,000 to restore Still Ponds Park management units 1 and 3 in accordance to the amended Natural Resources Management Plan.

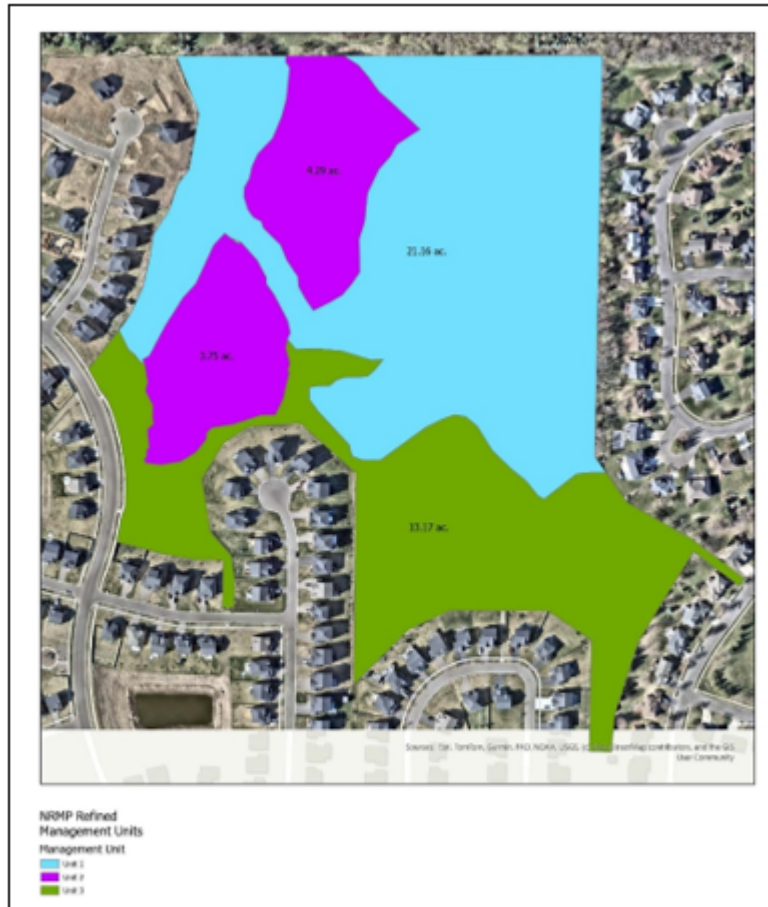
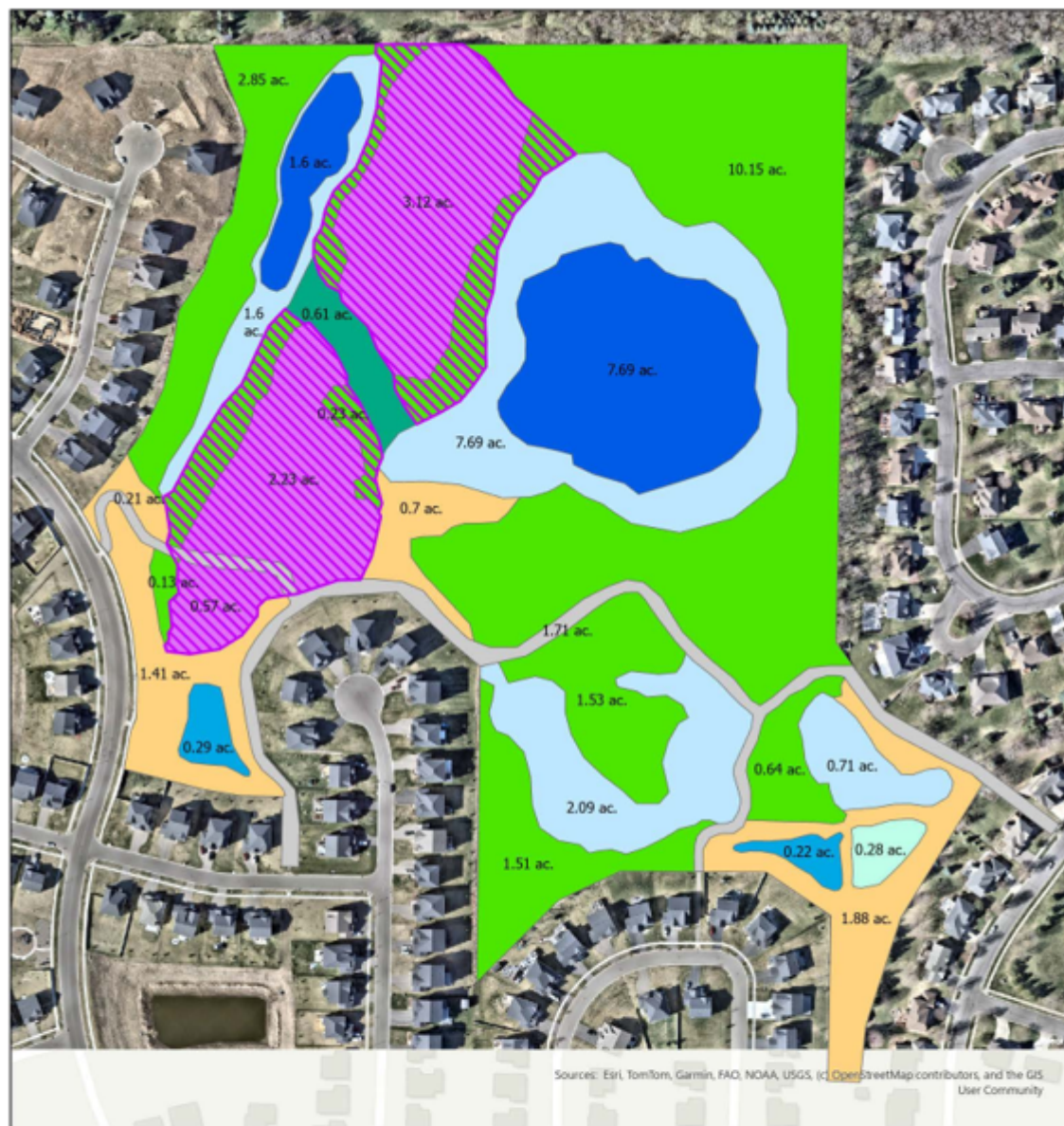


Figure 1. Still Ponds Management units update.



Management Type

Restoration Type

- Buffer (upland): 4.2 acres
- Infiltration Basin: 0.28 acres
- Lowland Forest: 0.61 acres
- Pine Plantation (phase 2): 5.92 acres
- Pond: 0.51 acres
- Trail and edge: 1.71 acres
- Wetland: 12.09 acres
- Oak Woodland: 17.04 acres
- Open Water: 9.94 acres

Phasing

Project Phasing

- Phase 2: 8.04 acres

Figure 2. Still Ponds Management Goals

Project Budget Estimate

Existing Land Cover Cover Goals		Recommended Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Notes and Assumptions
Management Unit 1							
Altered non-native Woodland 11.4 Acres	FDs37	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$59,280				\$5,200/Acre - mowing, spot cutting, initial herbicide
		Canopy thinning of unhealthy and Ecologically Inappropriate Trees & around Save Trees	\$79,200				\$8,000/Acre - Canopy Thin and cutting + removal of material
		Understory Enhancement seeding and planting	\$0	\$31,920	\$31,920		\$2,800/Acre - two year seed rain + selected plantings (trees and shrubs)
		Continued Enhancement	\$0	\$22,800	\$22,800	\$11,400	\$2,000/Acres; 2 visits per year. Post emergence treatment of invasives
Open Water & Wet Meadow 9.9 Acres	Opn92 & WMn82	Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass	\$7,500	\$5,000	\$2,500		summer seed reduction mowing and fall herbicide
		Invasive Species Management- Purple Loosestrife Bio control	\$1,200	\$1,200			Loosestrife Beetle Releases
		Vegetation enhancement	\$0	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	Overseed and Diversity Planting
Management Unit 3							
Stormwater Ponds and Buffers 7.58 Acres		Invasive Species Management- Upland Herbaceous	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$8,000	\$4,000	To Include mowing and herbicide treatments (multiple year seedbanks)
		Interseeding		\$5,200		\$5,200	Oveseed after burns
		Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass/Narrow-Leaved Cattail	\$7,200	\$2,400	\$2,400		Lowland sites RCG control - seedset mowing, fall herbicide treatments
		Prescribed Burning	\$8,900			\$8,900	Final year to reset for second overseed
Woodland 3.66 Acres	MHs39/49	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$19,032				To Include mowing and herbicide treatments (multiple year seedbanks)
		Tree Removal- Canopy thinning of unhealthy and or Ecologically Inappropriate Trees and around save trees	\$29,280				\$8,000/Acre - Canopy Thin and cutting + removal of material
		Enhancement- Understory seeding and planting		\$10,360	\$10,360		\$2,800/Acre - two year seed rain + selected plantings (wetland herbaceous)
		Continued Enhancement / Restoring Ecosystem processes		\$13,000	\$13,000	\$6,500	Focus on post emergence treatment of invasives + grazing or prescribed fire as appropriate to site conditions

STILL PONDS NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

TO: City of Cottage Grove
FROM: Tony Randazzo, South Washington Watershed District
Tara Kelly, Washington County Conservation District
Elissa Thompson, Washington County Conservation District
DATE: September 4, 2026

RE: Still Ponds Restoration Work

The Still Ponds Natural Resource Management Plan was completed in 2025 and was approved by the Cottage Grove City Council summer of 2026. On August 10th, a neighborhood meeting was held to discuss the management recommendations in the plan and the process for applying and implementing a MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant. Based on the feedback from residents in attendance, the plan will prioritize management units 1 and 3 at this time. The pine plantations in Unit 2 will remain untouched until conditions merit further action.

The restoration work will affect how these units are classified by the City of Cottage Grove in its' Public Open Space Management Plan. If the Conservation Partners Legacy grant is received and implemented, Units 1 and 3 will be shifted to a C classification while Unit 2 will remain an E classification. This is due to the challenges of getting staff or equipment into an unmanaged forest to clear any fallen trees.

The proposed application will include Units 1 and 3 as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Areas immediately adjacent to the pine stands in Unit 2 will also not be restored in order to preserve protection against windthrow within pines. The timeline and budget for this work have been adjusted to reflect changes in acreage and included in Table 1.

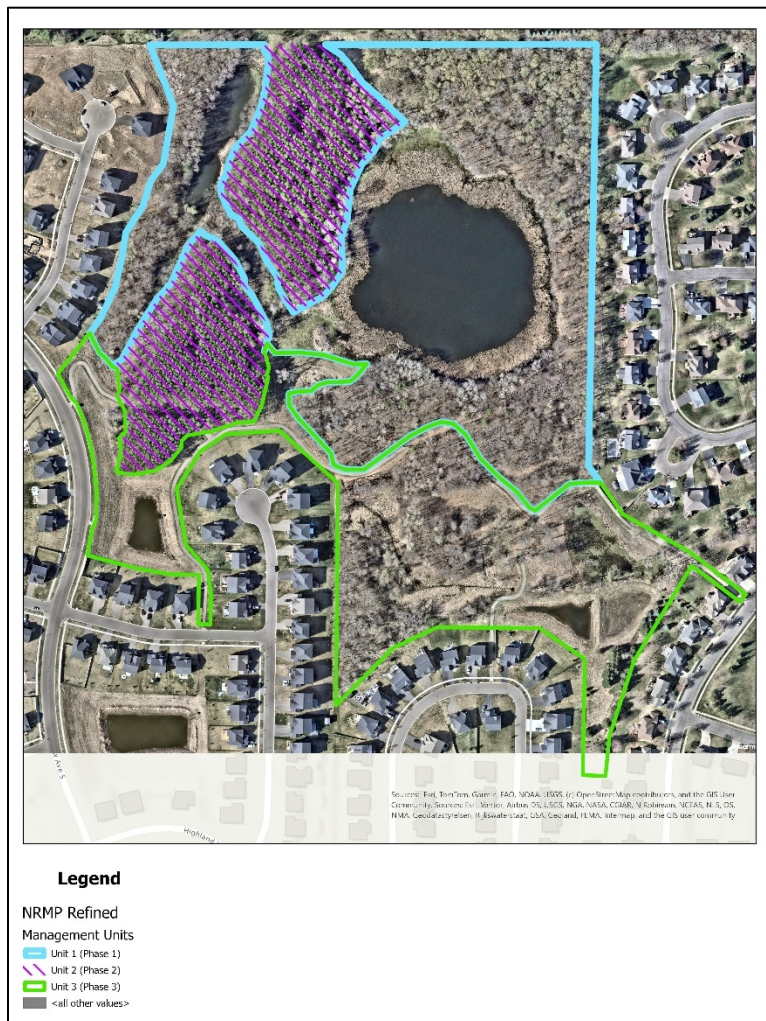


Figure 1. Still Ponds Management units update.

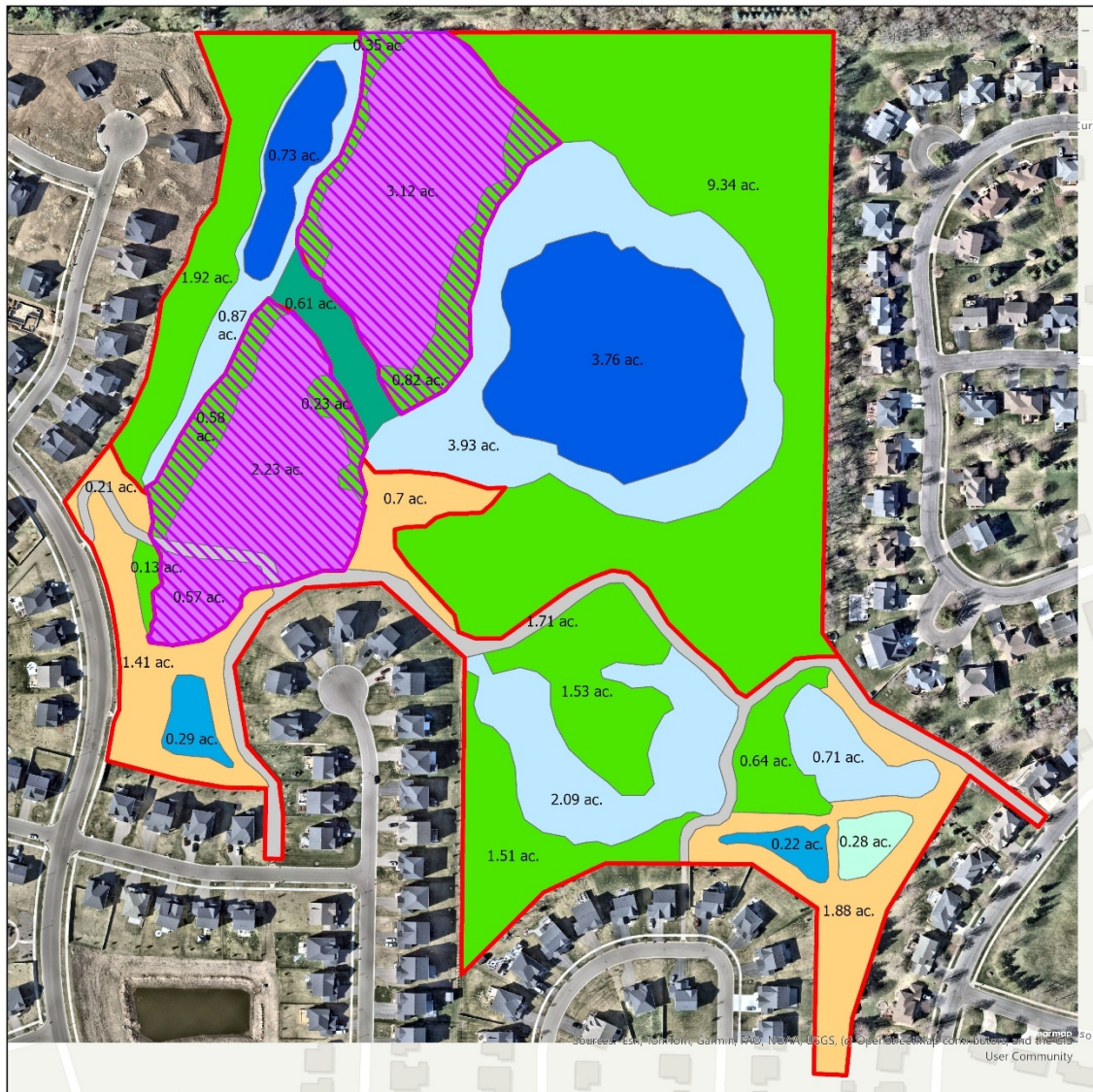


Figure 2. Still Ponds Management Goals

Table 1.

Existing Land Cover Acres		Priority	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	TOTAL
Management Unit 1		High					
Altered non-native Woodland FDs37	11.4		\$ 138,480.00	\$ 54,720.00	\$ 54,720.00	\$ 11,400.00	\$ 259,320.00
Open Water, Wet Meadow & Lowland Forest	9.9		\$ 8,700.00	\$ 10,700.00	\$ 11,500.00	\$ -	\$ 30,900.00
Management Unit 3		Moderate					
Stormwater Ponds and Buffers UPs24	7.6		\$ 32,100.00	\$ 23,600.00	\$ 10,400.00	\$ 18,100.00	\$ 84,200.00
Woodland MHs39 or MHs49	3.7		\$ 48,312.00	\$ 23,360.00	\$ 23,360.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 101,532.00
							\$ 475,952.00

Existing Land Cover	Land Cover Goals	Recommended Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Notes and Assumptions
Management Unit 1							
Altered non-native Woodland 11.4 Acres	FDs37	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$ 59,280.00				\$5,200/Acre - mowing, spot cutting, initial herbicide
		Canopy thinning of unhealthy and Ecologically Inappropriate Trees & around Save Trees	\$ 79,200.00				\$8,000/Acre - Canopy Thin and cutting + removal of material
		Understory Enhancement seeding and planting	\$ -	\$31,920.00	\$31,920.00		\$2,800/Acre - two year seed rain + selected plantings (trees and \$2,000/Acres; 2 visits per year. Focus on post emergence treatment of invasives
		Continued Enhancement	\$ -	\$22,800.00	\$22,800.00	\$11,400.00	summer seed reduction mowing and fall herbicide
Open Water & Wet Meadow 9.9 Acres	Opn92 & WMn82	Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,500.00		Loosestrife Beetle Releases
		Invasive Species Management- Purple Loosestrife Bio control	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00			Overseed and Diversity Planting
		Vegetation enhancement	\$ -	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	
Management Unit 3							
Stormwater Ponds and Buffers 7.58 Acres		Invasive Species Management- Upland Herbaceous	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$8,000	\$4,000	To Include mowing and herbicide treatments (multiple year)
		Interseeding		\$5,200		\$5,200	Oveseed after burns
		Invasive Species Management- Reed Canary Grass/Narrow-Leaved Cattail	\$7,200	\$2,400	\$2,400		Lowland sites RCG control - seedset mowing, fall herbicide treatments
		Prescribed Burning	\$8,900			\$8,900	1st year to set site for restoration. Final year to reset for second
Woodland 3.66 Acres	MHs39/49	Invasive Species Management- Woody	\$19,032				To Include mowing and herbicide treatments (multiple year)
		Tree Removal- Canopy thinning of unhealthy and or Ecologically Inappropriate Trees and around save trees	\$29,280				\$8,000/Acre - Canopy Thin and cutting + removal of material
		Enhancement- Understory seeding and planting		\$10,360	\$10,360		\$2,800/Acre - two year seed rain + selected plantings (wetland herbaceous)
		Continued Enhancement / Restoring Ecosystem processes		\$13,000	\$13,000	\$6,500	Focus on post emergence treatment of invasives + grazing or prescribed fire as appropriate to site conditions



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
Still Ponds

Washington Conservation District
2025

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Project Description	4
General City Background and Context	4
Location	4
History	5
Overall Goal for Habitat Restoration and Enhancement	7
Still Ponds	8
General Location	8
Background and Site History	9
Pre-Settlement Vegetation	9
Post-settlement land use	10
Soils	11
Topography	13
Geology and Hydrology	14
Water Features	16
Project Site Vegetation and Habitat Assessment	17
Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS)	17
Minnesota Native Plant Community Classification and Goals	18
Restoration and Enhancement of Still Ponds	20
Management Unit 1	22
General Description and Current Conditions	22
Desired Future Conditions	22
Management Unit Goals	24
Management Unit Activities	24
Management Unit 2	26
General Description and Current Conditions	26
Desired Future Conditions	26
Management Unit Goals	27
Management Unit Activities	28

Management Unit 3	29
General Description and Current Conditions	29
Desired Future Conditions	29
Management Unit Goals	30
Management Unit Activities	30
Restoration Management Phasing & Cost Estimate Summary	32
Restoration Management Activity Phasing	32
Management Activities	36
Climate Resiliency	36
Invasive Species Management.....	38
Prevention	38
Integrated Pest Management.....	38
Public disturbance	39
Enhancement	40
Interseeding	40
Prairie Restoration	40
Restoring Ecosystem Processes	42
Prescribed burning.....	42
Grazing	42
Haying	43
Tree Removal	44
Record-keeping	44
Surveying	44
Monitoring	44
Adaptive Management	45
Information Sources	46

List of Tables

Table 1. 4-year management cost projections by Management Unit and Sub Unit.....	32
Table 2. Restoration Activities and cost estimate	35

List of Figures

Figure 1. The parks of open spaces in the City of Cottage Grove..	5
Figure 2. Historical Image of Old Cottage Grove.....	6
Figure 3. Orrin Thompson Developments that led to the rapid development of Cottage Grove in the 1950's	6
Figure 4. Regional view of Still Ponds Park in Cottage Grove.	8
Figure 5.Pre-European settlement vegetation at Still Ponds.....	9
Figure 6. Aerial Image 1937	10
Figure 7. Aerial Image 1964	10
Figure 8.Table and soil map for Still Ponds	12
Figure 9. The topography at Still Ponds.	13
Figure 10. Geological subsections surrounding Still Ponds.....	15
Figure 11. Water features at Still Ponds.	16
Figure 12. Land cover mapping at Still Ponds.	17
Figure 13.Scripus Validis at Still Ponds.....	19
Figure 14. Locations of scattered trees identified in 1937 and 1964 aerial photography on 2022 aerial imagery.....	23
Figure 15. Wet meadow on NW side of Still Ponds.	25

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.

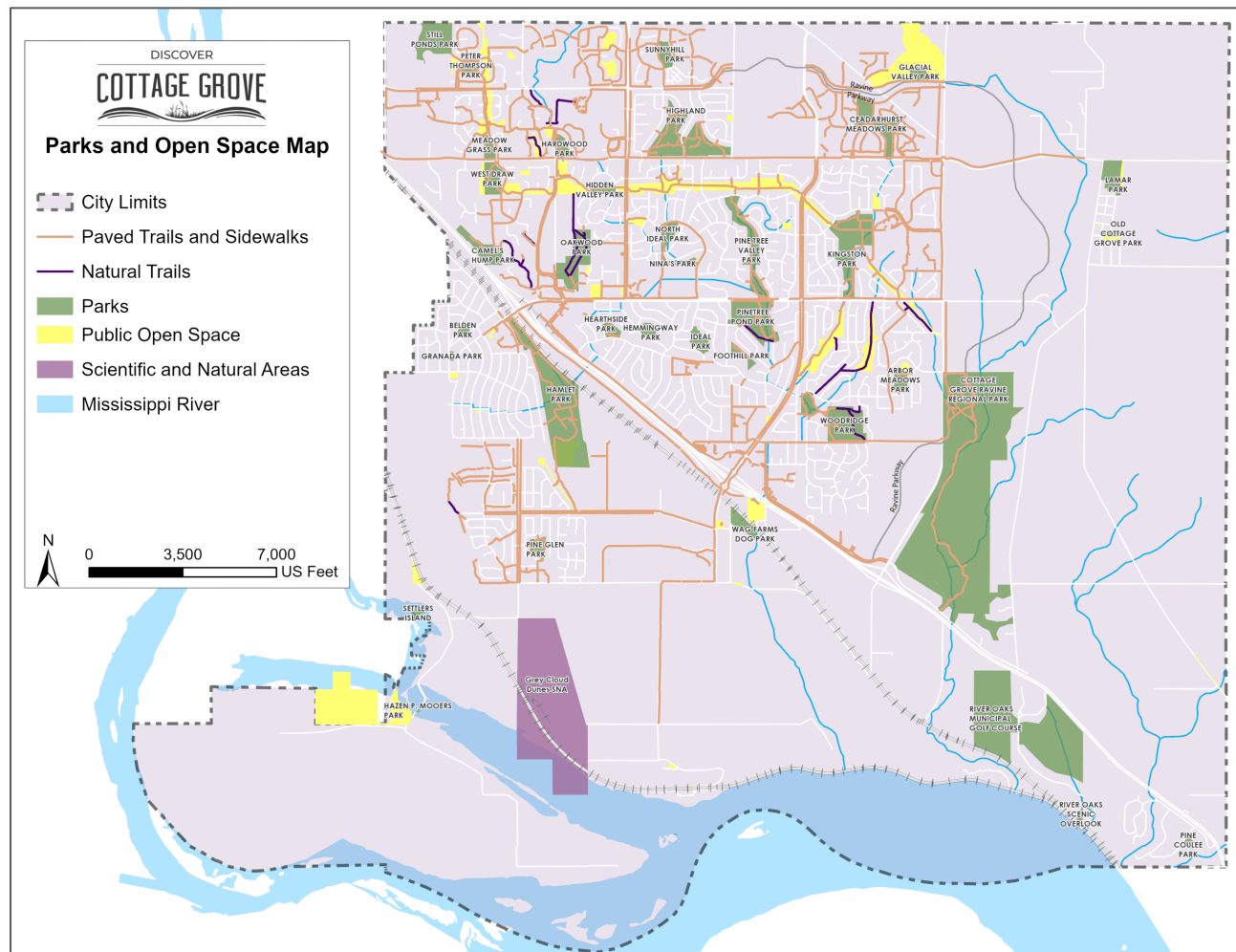


Figure 1. The parks of open spaces in the City of Cottage Grove. Still Ponds is located in the NW corner of Cottage Grove.

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 1950s to over 41,000 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.

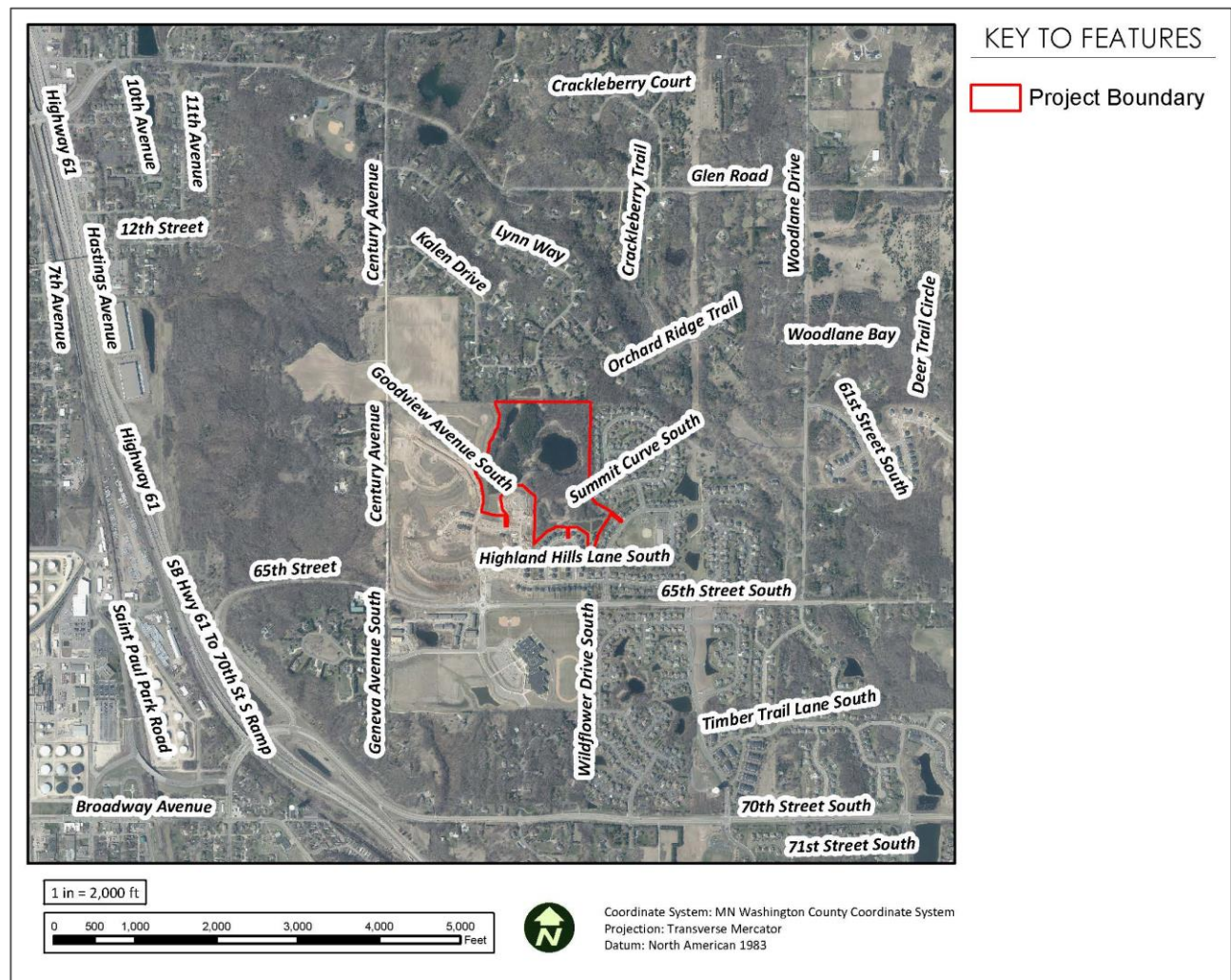


Figure 4. Regional view of Still Ponds Park in Cottage Grove.

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.

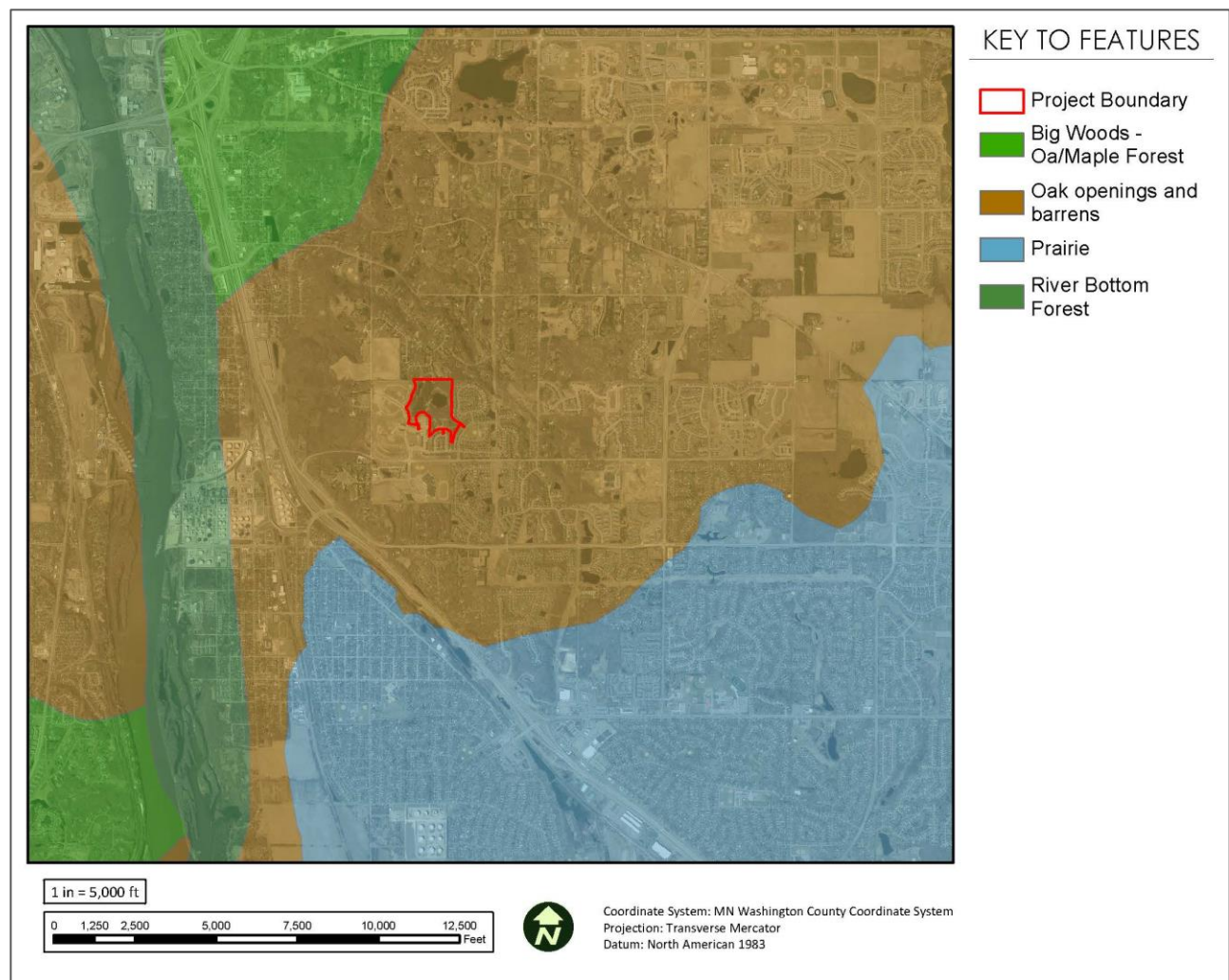


Figure 5. Pre-European settlement vegetation.

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%
Totals for Area of Interest		41.3	100.0%

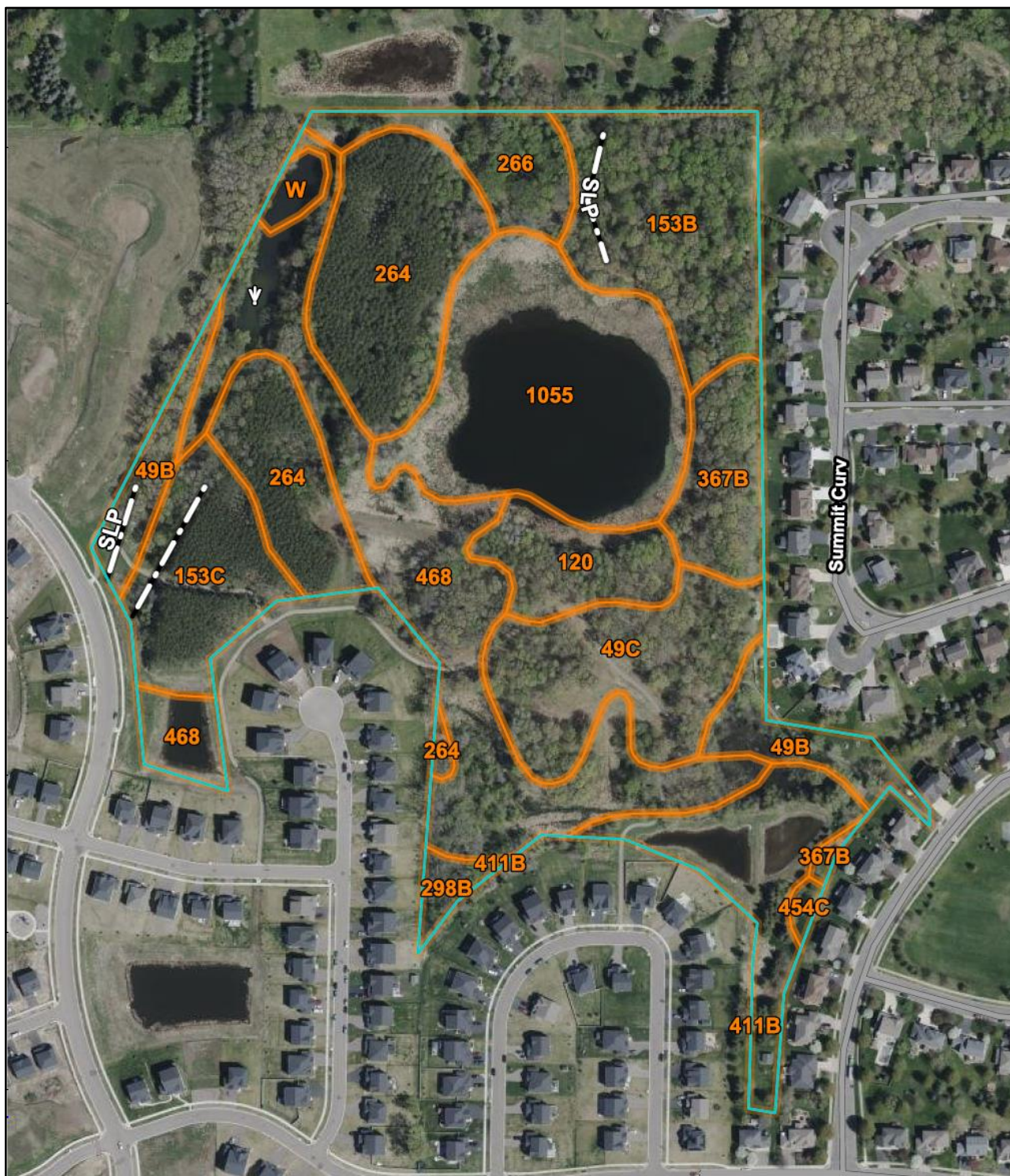


Figure 8. Table and soil map for Still Ponds

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.

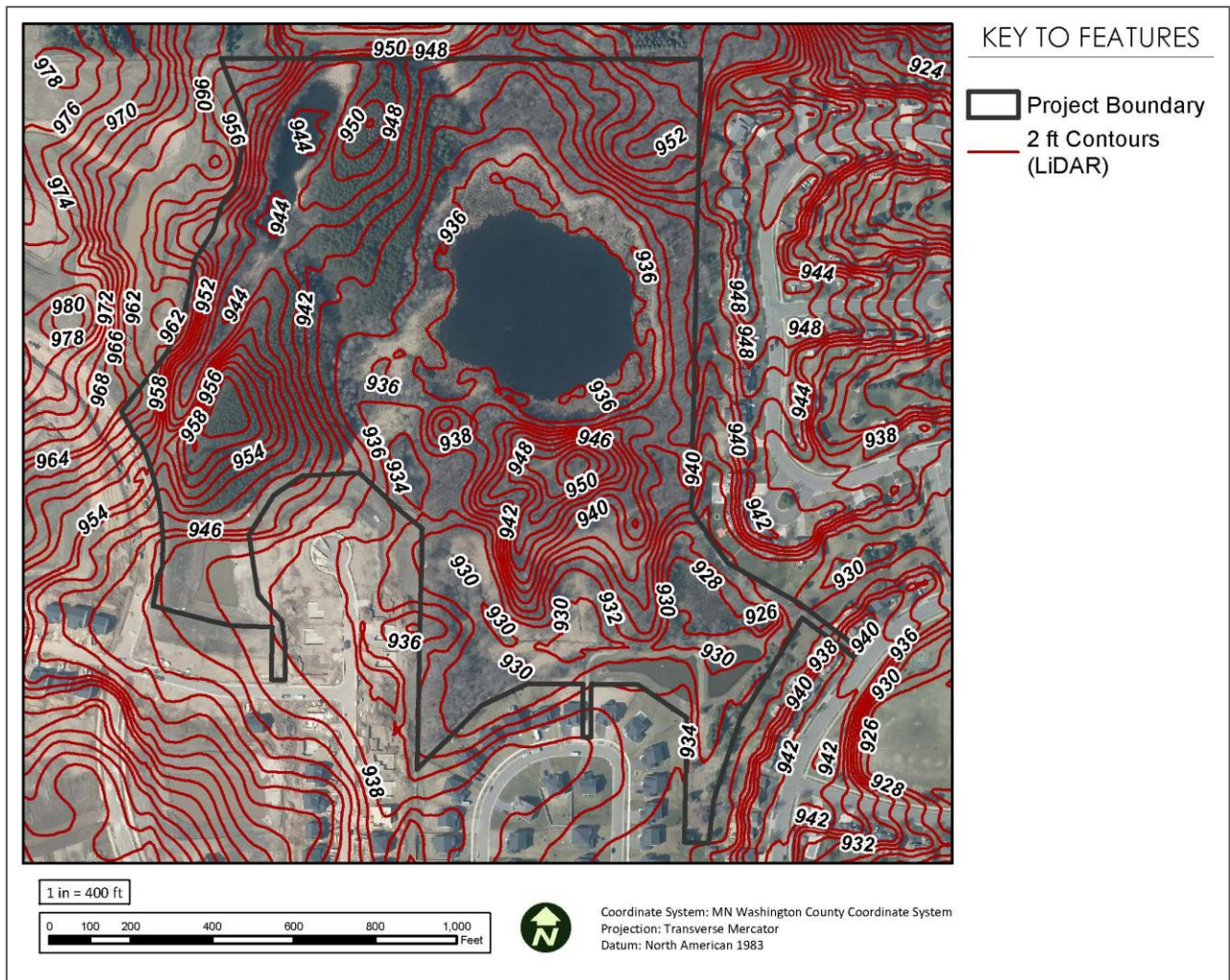


Figure 9. The topography at Still Ponds.

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 indicating that sediment deposition 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.

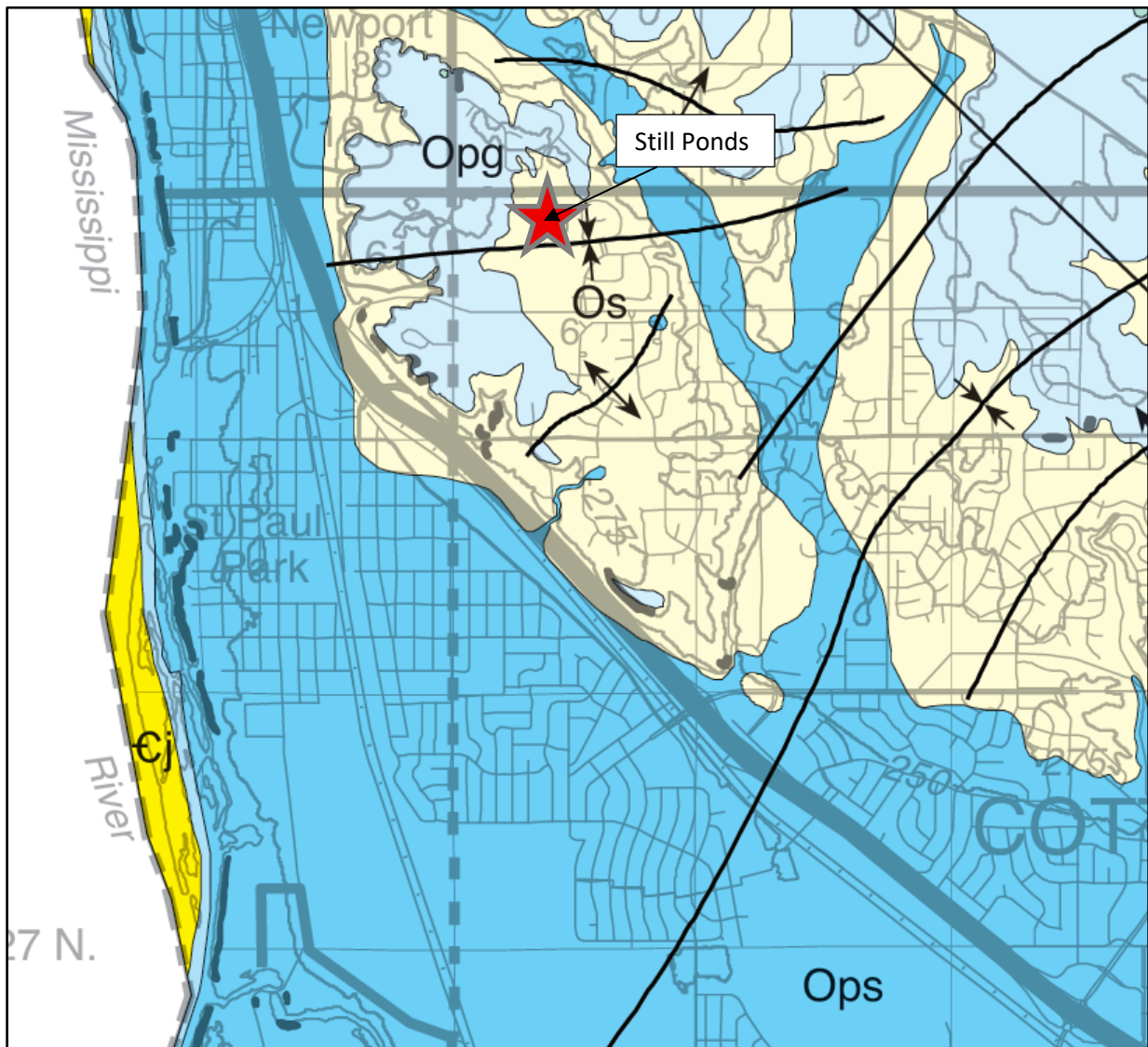


Figure 10. Geological subsections surrounding Still Ponds.

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.

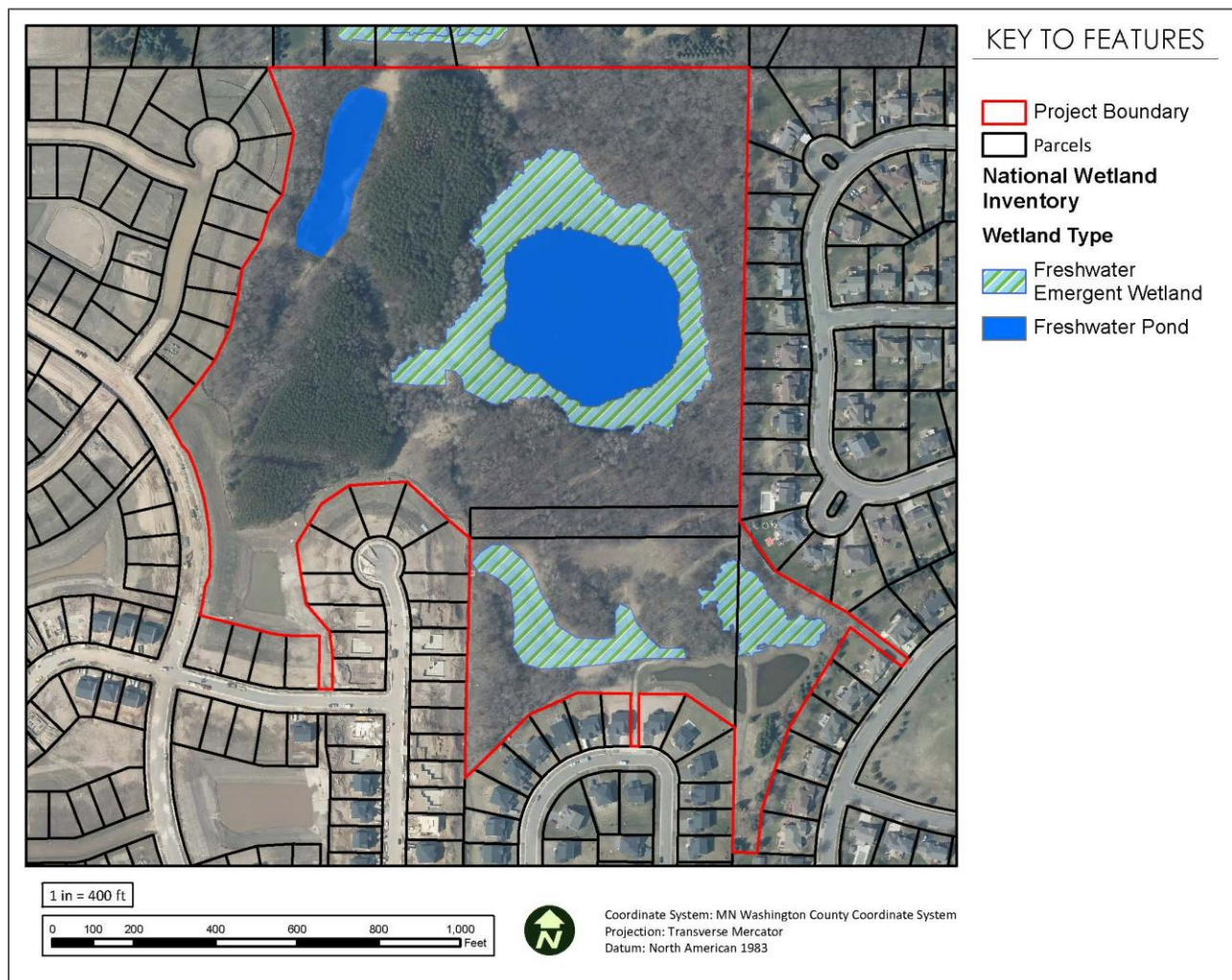


Figure 11. Water features at Still Ponds.

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.

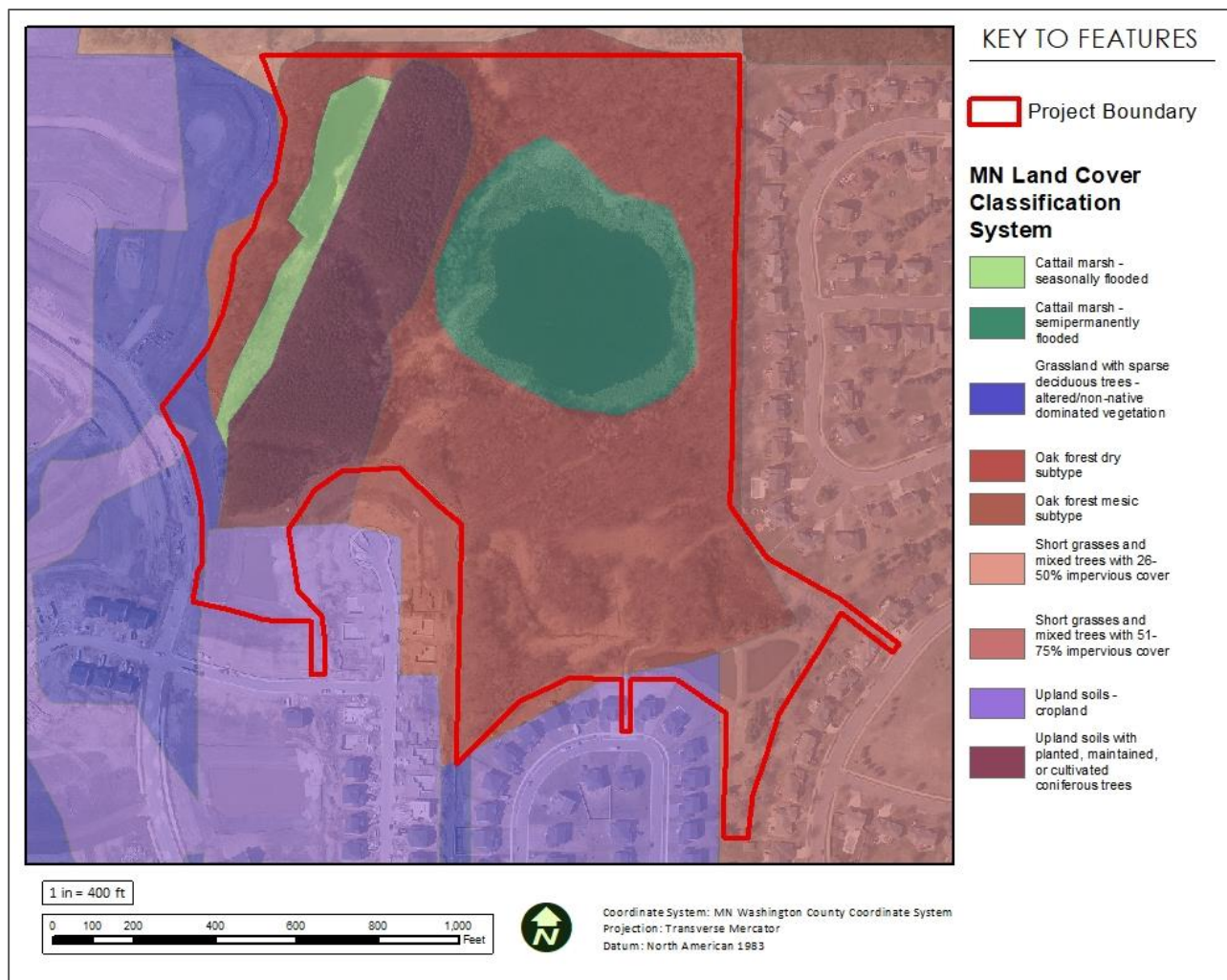


Figure 12. Land cover mapping at Still Ponds.

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.

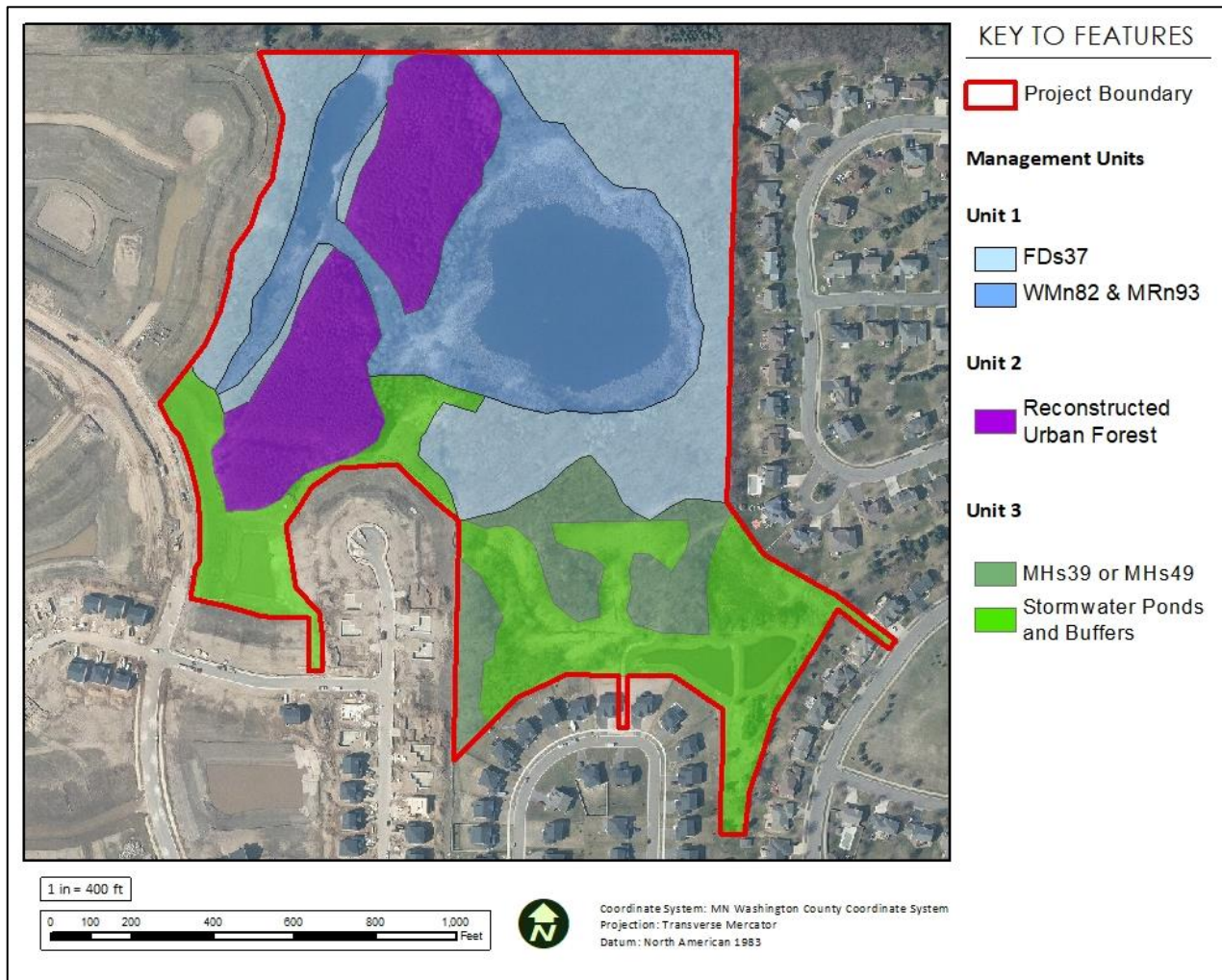


Figure 13. Management units and target plant communities at Still Ponds.



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.

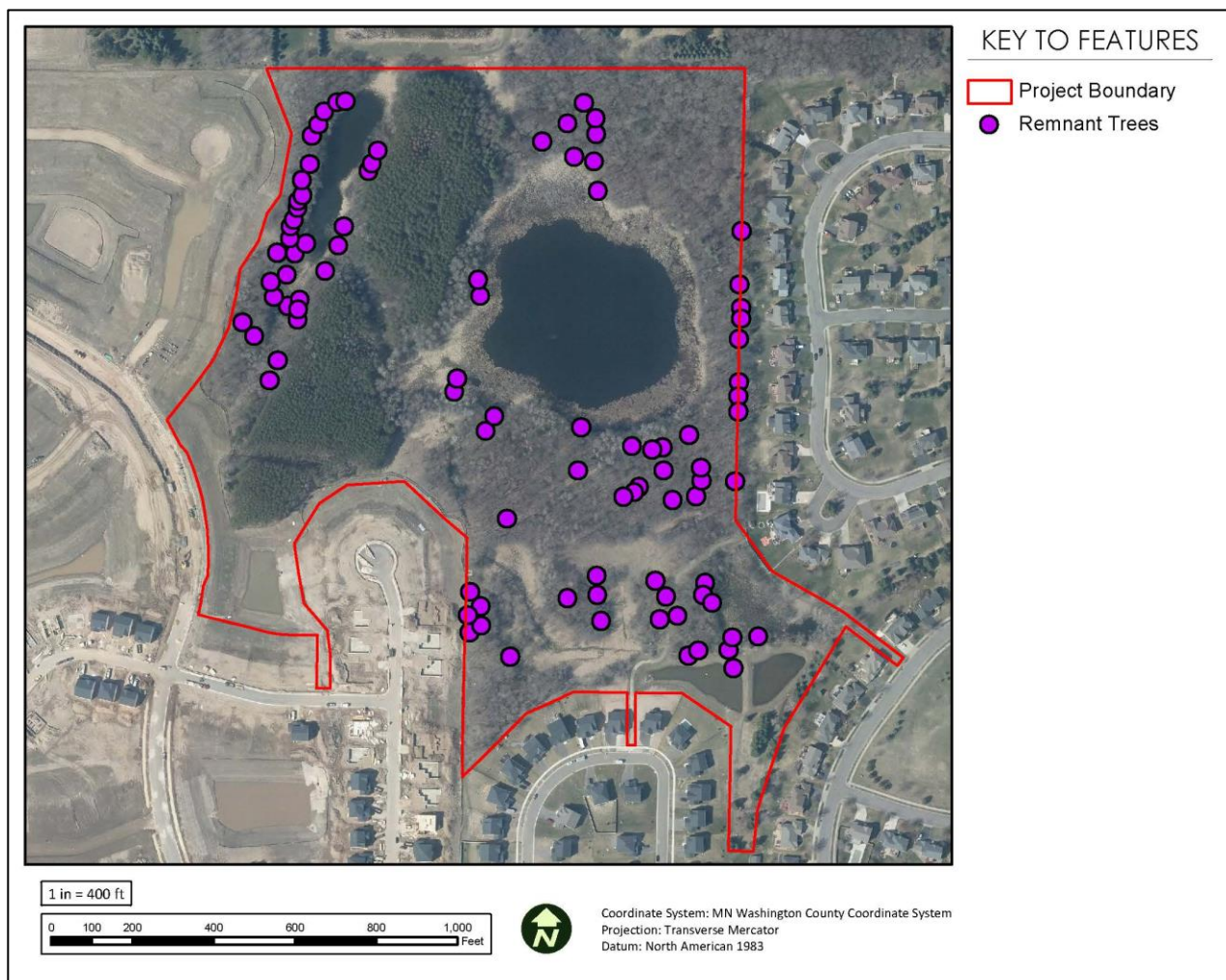


Figure 14. Locations of scattered trees identified in 1937 and 1964 aerial photography on 2022 aerial imagery.

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 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
Management Unit 1		High				
Altered non-native Woodland FDs37	8.5		\$112,200	\$28,900	\$28,900	\$17,000
Open Water & Wet Meadow	11.4					
Management Unit 2		Moderate				
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
Management Unit 3		Moderate				
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
Management Unit 1							
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	
Management Unit 2							
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	
Management Unit 3						
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.

Being a city park, this 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 30th (see Appendix E). These seedings tend to favor the prairie grasses and provide stable, but less diverse prairie plantings. Dormant seedings occur after November 1st 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 1st 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 3rd 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:

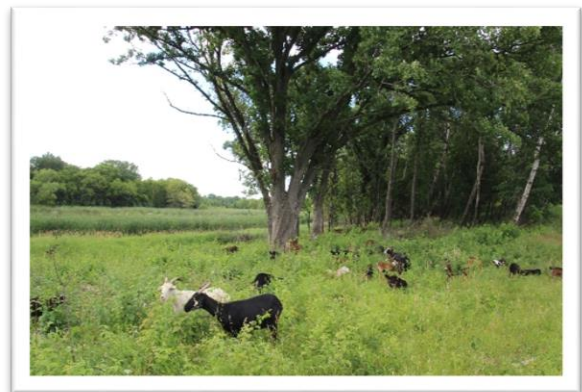
- Reduce encroachment of woody species (non-indigenous or otherwise).
- Reduce the cover of non-indigenous herbaceous species.
- Encourage growth of native grasses and flowers.
- Remove standing dead material.
- Invigorate brushlands.
- Improve wildlife habitat.



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 exclosure 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

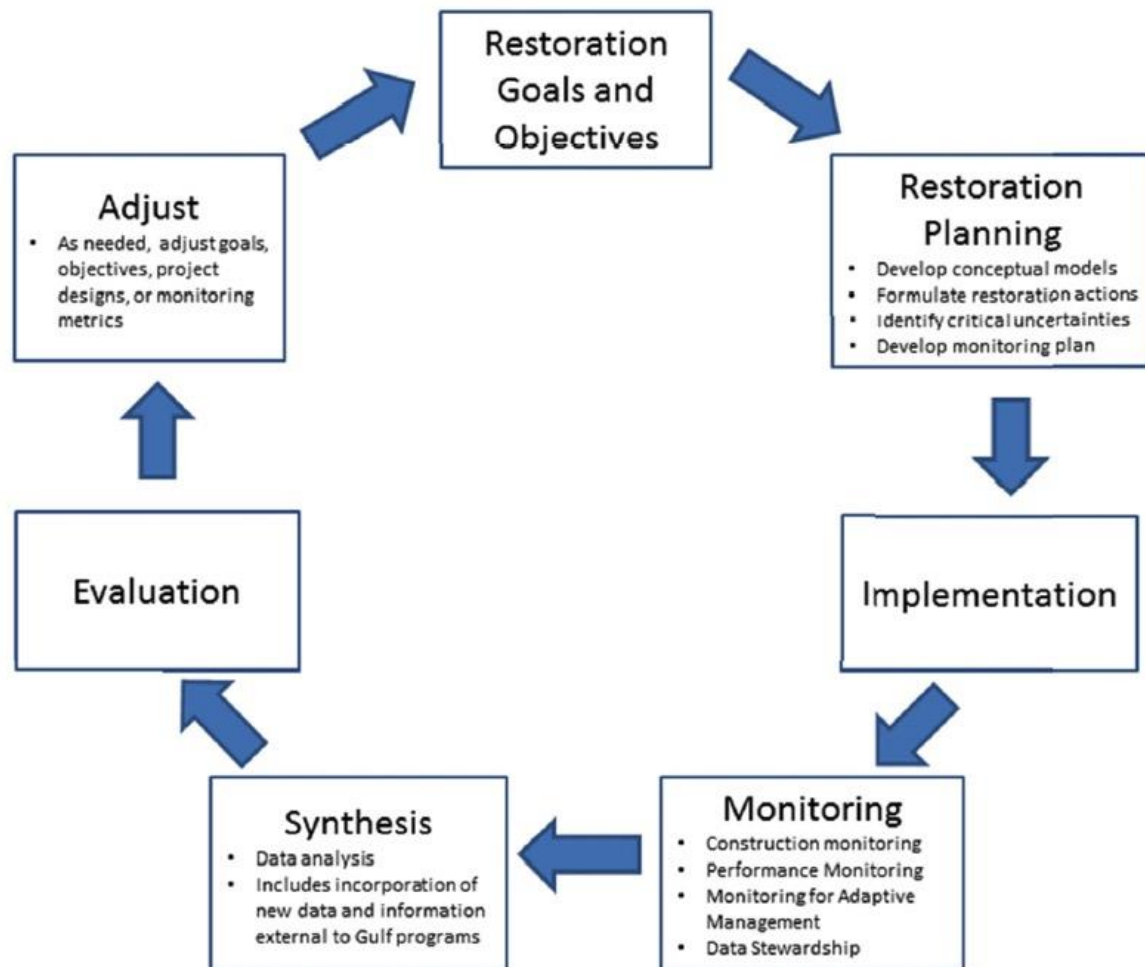
- Photo documentation – Qualitative monitoring using a photo point program uses photos at fixed reference points to document changes on the landscape. Because buckthorn is the most prominent

non-indigenous species, the recommended timing for the photos to be taken is in October when buckthorn still holding its 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



Information Sources

County History | Washington County, MN - Official website. (n.d.).

<https://www.co.washington.mn.us/102/County-History>

Minnesota Planning (Agency). (n.d.). Minnesota Land use and cover: historic. MN IT Services.

https://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/chouse/land_use_historic.html

White, D. (n.d.). Level III and IV maps and descriptions. Ecological Regions of Minnesota.

https://gaftp.epa.gov/EPADDataCommons/ORD/Ecoregions/mn/mn_eco_desc.pdf

MHAPO. (n.d.). <https://apps.lib.umn.edu/mhapo/>

St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines Subsection. (n.d.). Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ecs/222Md/index.html>

Bedrock Geology. (n.d.). University of Minnesota Geological Survey.

<https://conservancy.umn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/bde71cad-4215-44af-9cda-18c45d5cde6e/content>

Web Soil Survey. (n.d.). <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

Generalized Land Use 2020 - Minnesota Geospatial Commons. (n.d.). <https://gisdata.mn.gov/dataset/us-mn-state-metc-plan-generl-lnduse2020>

MNDNR. 2004. Minnesota Land Cover Classification System User Manual. Version 5.3. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Central Region.

Native Plant Community Classification. (n.d.). Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/npc/classification.html>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Field Guide to the Native Plant Communities of Minnesota: The Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province*. Ecological Land Classification Program, Minnesota Biological Survey, and Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program. MNDNR St. Paul, MN, 2005.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Living with Wildlife: Nuisance Animals*.

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife/index.html

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*. Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. MNDNR, St. Paul, MN, 2006.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Play, Clean, Go*.

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrial/prevent_the_spread.html.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. *Terrestrial Invasive Species - Identification and Management*. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrial/id.html>

Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Noxious and Invasive Weed Program.
<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/noxious-and-invasive-weed-program>

St. Croix Valley Foundation. *North woods and Water of the St. Croix National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. St. Croix Valley Foundation. 2014.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *North American Model of Wildlife Conservation*.
<https://www.fws.gov/hunting/north-american-model-of-wildlife-conservation.html>

Wovcha, Daniel S, *et al.* *Minnesota's St. Croix River Valley and Anoka Sandplain: A guide to Native Habitats*. University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Cottage Grove Parks and Recreation- Official website. [Parks & Recreation | Cottage Grove, MN](#)

Washington County Historical Society- Cottage Grove- Official website [Cottage Grove – Washington County Historical Society](#)

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: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
From: Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director
CC:
Date: September 3, 2026
Subject: MN DNR Conservation Partners Grant Letters of Support

Introduction

The City recently acquired the former Mississippi Dunes and Still Ponds Park spaces. Both sites would benefit from habitat restoration efforts to eliminate invasive species and foster growth of native prairie, wetland and Oak Savanna habitat. Doing so improves parkland habitat and ecology while also beautifying community open space.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant program has a mission of restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetlands, prairie, forest and habitat for fish, game and wildlife. The CPL Grant is designed by the DNR to partner with regional and local organizations to achieve said mission through Legacy Grant funding. Funding for the CPL program is from the Outdoor Heritage Fund created by the people of Minnesota. This fund receives 33% of the sales tax revenues resulting from the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Constitutional Amendment passed by the voters in the November 2008 election. The CPL Grant program offers an excellent opportunity for the city of Cottage Grove to continue its efforts of restoring historical landscapes.

Background

The City Council and Commission approved the Mississippi Dunes Stewardship Plan in 2023 which would act as the guiding document for any restorative work at this site. This document met City, County and State approvals during the acquisition of the property.

The Still Ponds Natural Resources Management Plan was approved by the City Council and Commission in 2025. However, the plan is currently under review by both governing boards to add an addendum which prioritizes management units 1 and 3, while preserving the pine stand in unit 2. Should that plan receive approval, staff will develop a grant application that utilizes the amended Natural Resources Management Plan as the guiding document for restoration work on the property.

Current habitat restoration project estimates for each site are as follows:

Mississippi Dunes Park (20 acres)	\$450,000
Still Ponds Park (44 acres)	\$500,000

The grant match requirement is 10%. The match can be a combination of labor, equipment, volunteer work and/or cash. Typically, the City will contribute half the match in cash and half with in-kind contributions. In this case, the cash match range for each will likely be \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Staff Recommendation

Authorize letters of support for a MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant for Mississippi Dunes and Still Ponds Parks.

September 14, 2026

We, the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission of Cottage Grove support the City of Cottage Grove's proposal to expand their native habitat restoration efforts into Mississippi Dunes Park.

The city has been working for over 7 years to protect this shoreline of the Mississippi River for public enjoyment while building a habitat corridor that connects to the Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area. These 20+ acres being restored to native plant communities aid in returning previous land usages of golf course and agriculture back to its pre-settlement biomes of prairies, woodlands and wetlands. Upon completion, this park site offers a terrific opportunity to improve habitat for animals, birds and insects of all kinds and is of particular priority given its proximity to the Mississippi River flyway. Just as importantly, the recreational connection to the active portion of the park offers residents and visitors the opportunity to experience this habitat up close while learning from and enjoying all that nature has to offer.

We enthusiastically support this grant application and hope that the DNR shares in this enthusiasm.

Sincerely,

Cottage Grove Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission

September 14, 2026

We, the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission of Cottage Grove support the City of Cottage Grove's proposal to expand their native habitat restoration efforts into Still Ponds Park.

The city has worked hard to protect this natural area for public enjoyment while building a habitat corridor that allows the wetland and surrounding areas to thrive. These 40+ acres are proposed to be restored to its pre-settlement biomes of prairie, woodland and wetland. The habitat value of this site is currently quite diminished due to invasive overgrowth and previously unmanaged forests (prior to public acquisition). Upon completion, this park site offers a terrific opportunity to improve habitat for animals, birds and insects of all kinds and is of particular priority given its inclusion of one of the largest wetland features in Cottage Grove. Just as importantly, the recreational trail connection offers residents and visitors the opportunity to experience this habitat up close while learning from and enjoying all that nature has to offer.

We enthusiastically support this grant application and hope that the DNR shares in this enthusiasm.

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: September 3, 2026
Subject: Comprehensive Plan 2050

Introduction/Background

Every city in the Twin Cities metro region is required to have a comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan is a formal, long-term document that sets a community's vision for the future, outlines goals and policies for growth and change, and serves as the primary framework for guiding land use, development, and public services. Comprehensive plans are one of the primary tools of local governments to:

- Achieve a community's vision for the future
- Regulate land uses and guide future investments
- Protect valued resources and improve areas needing enhancement
- Coordinate growth with regional systems (housing, transportation, parks, utilities)

Comprehensive plans must be updated every 10 years. The City is currently consulting with the Bolton & Menk team to guide development of the 2050 plan. This team will be present at the November Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission meeting to inform and engage Commissioners into this important community process. Schedules, tasks and processes will be provided and discussed in a workshop format with the Commission.

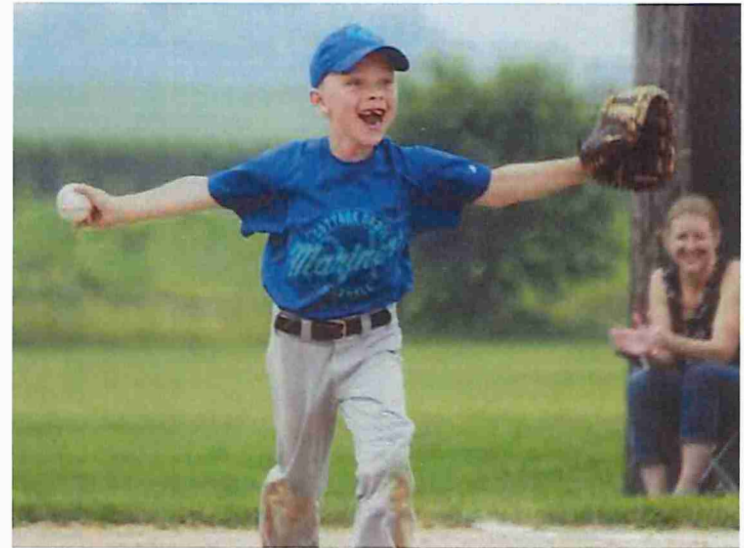
To prepare Commissioners for the workshop, this memo includes the Parks and Open Space section of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 5). If Commissioners wish to see the document in its entirety, it can be found on the city's website at [2040-Comprehensive-Plan](#)

No formal action will be taken at the September meeting. The planning team will return winter/spring of 2027 with a more formal request for action.

Staff Recommendation

Workshop the Comprehensive Plan 2050.

COTTAGE GROVE 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

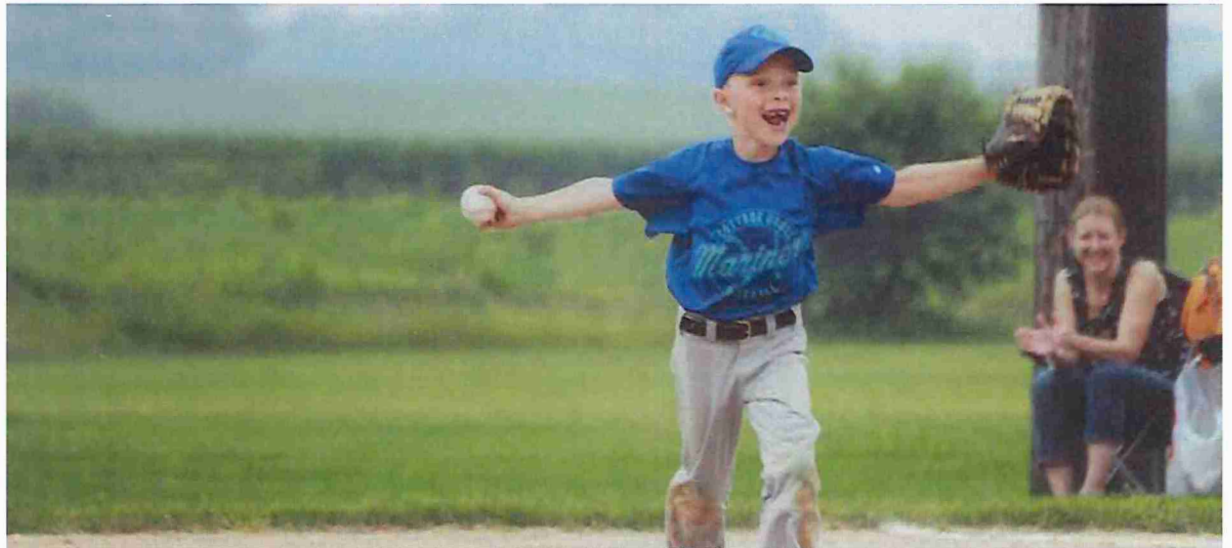
1	COMMUNITY GROWTH AND VISION	3
2	LAND USE	13
3	HOUSING	35
4	HISTORIC PRESERVATION	49
5	PARKS AND OPEN SPACE	56
6	TRANSPORTATION	72
7	WATER RESOURCES	97
8	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	116
9	RESILIENCE	128
10	IMPLEMENTATION	141

Appendix A - Market and Development Context
Appendix B - Mississippi River Critical Area Plan
Appendix C - 2018-2022 Capital Improvement Plan
Appendix D - Intercommunity Service Agreements

5

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Parks and Open Space chapter provides information on existing and future parks, open space, and trail facilities in Cottage Grove. These facilities are a major asset in the community and important features to maintain and expand as the city develops. This chapter also addresses Cottage Grove as part of a regional system of parks, trails, and open space.



INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Open Space chapter provides information on planning for acquisition, development, and functionality of a signature parks and open space system. Included is an inventory of existing parks, open space, and recreation facilities and a guide for future park land. This chapter builds upon previous park plans, the 2006 Park and Open Space Study, the East Ravine Master Plan, My Future Cottage Grove Bike/Ped and Parks Commissions, and incorporates new ideas and standards that reflect a shifting public expectation on design, function, and maintenance of public facilities.

The Comprehensive Plan lays the ground work for assembling and maintaining a first-class park and recreation system for the city and presents some of the tools needed to make sound planning decisions. The acquisition, development, and maintenance of the Cottage Grove parks, recreation, and open space system should continue to be a community priority in the governing and development process.

As part of the established Community Vision, the City of Cottage Grove strives to address these key themes related to Parks and Open Space:

- **Parks, Trails, & Recreation** – continue to build the City's parks and trail systems as a source of pride for residents.
- **Mississippi River Access** – work to provide public access to the river and appropriate development opportunities on Lower Grey Cloud Island.
- **Environmental Stewardship** – continue to protect and enhance the natural environment, including air quality, groundwater resources, stormwater management and energy usage.

TRAILS, BICYCLE, AND PEDESTRIAN ISSUES IN COTTAGE GROVE

On March 26, 2018, the City of Cottage Grove hosted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Forum, identifying key issues and opportunities for recreation and alternative transportation in the city. The forum was attended by a variety of stakeholders including members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Parks Commission, and Planning Commission. The forum began with a presentation, educating attendees on the existing trail network in Cottage Grove and bicycling and walking issues.

Finally, forum attendees used maps of the city to identify existing destinations and desired connections to those destinations. This was replicated online using an ArcGIS interactive mapping tool. The online tool and in-person map activity identified key barriers and opportunities in the bicycle and pedestrian network. The routes identified by the public have informed the future trail network, discussed later in this chapter.

The City of Cottage Grove also hosted an online survey to replicate the Form online. The survey was open between March 27, 2018 and May 9, 2018. The online survey received 71 responses addressing bicycling and walking preference in the city and areas for improvement. Key highlights from the survey are listed below.

- 45% of participants walk in Cottage Grove every day
- 55% of participants walk for exercise, but only 3% walk to get to a destination
- 67% of residents rank the trail system as good or excellent
- A lack of sidewalks and destinations are too far are the biggest factors keeping people from walking
- Participants support the development of a trail network and building off-road trails
- 72% of participants would support a nominal or significant increase in funding to support trails

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Acquire and preserve necessary park and open space areas.

- POLICY 5.1 Parkland and open space areas will be acquired through park dedication, purchase, or donation. Private developers will be required to dedicate a portion of their land for public use when a development includes areas planned for park and open space acquisition. Full dedication credit is not given for lands with steep slopes, tree preservation areas, wetlands, bedrock, or other areas that are development constrained.
- POLICY 5.2 When feasible, the acquisition of parks, open space, and other recreational facilities should be accomplished at an early date, so that appropriate sites can be obtained to meet long-range public recreational needs before development pressures render the property too expensive.
- POLICY 5.3 The City will coordinate its recreation plan with bordering communities, South Washington County School District 833, Washington County, South Washington Watershed District, Washington Conservation District, the Metropolitan Council, and the State of Minnesota.
- POLICY 5.4 Whenever practical, parks shall include conservancy open space in areas that preserve and protect woodlands, wetlands, prairies, natural or cultural resources, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Goal 2: Develop an integrated system of parks and open space areas that offers a variety of facilities and programs to all residents of the city throughout the year.

- POLICY 5.5 The City will prepare a master plan for each component of the park and recreation system based on the criteria established in this comprehensive plan. The park master plans shall be the basis for site acquisition, development, and use, and upon establishment, be reviewed in connection with updates to capital improvement plans and budgets.
- POLICY 5.6 All park and open space facilities will be designed to be environmentally friendly. Appropriate measures will be taken during construction to mitigate any negative environmental impact.
- POLICY 5.7 Design and maintain park facilities and programs to be as accessible as possible to all ages, backgrounds and lifestyles of Cottage Grove residents, with special consideration for the needs of young people and senior citizens. Best management practices will be utilized during all grading and construction activities.

Goal 3: Create a coordinated network of trail routes that are designed to accommodate a variety of users while providing for integrated links to neighborhoods, the community, the Mississippi River and associated backwaters, the region, and other special points of interest.

- POLICY 5.8 New trail installations shall include the identification of future replacement and maintenance programs and appropriate funding sources for these programs.
- POLICY 5.9 The trail system will be separated from roadways whenever feasible.
- POLICY 5.10 For safety reasons, the trail system will include incorporate security lighting where needed.
- POLICY 5.11 The trail system will include landscaping, informational signage, directional signage, educational signage, benches, bike racks, garbage receptacles, pet waste disposal bags, and other similar amenities where reasonable or necessary.

- POLICY 5.12 The trail system will include a variety of surfaces, slopes, and linear distance that will accommodate the needs of all segments of the general population. The system will be implemented to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act, except when topography or other environmental constraints prohibit meeting the majority of the standards. 
- POLICY 5.13 The trail system within the Mississippi River Critical Area will be limited to links to scenic overlooks, public property, and other points of interest unless the existing railroad right-of-way is abandoned and a linear trailway can be established along the river.
- POLICY 5.14 Transportation sidewalks and trails shall be installed by developers along all collector and minor arterial streets, or on roadways that are determined to generate sufficient traffic to warrant concern for either pedestrian or bicycle use within the street right-of-way.
- POLICY 5.15 The trail system will be implemented by creating links between all new and existing developments in the city, through the acquisition of easements, right-of-way dedications, purchase, eminent domain, or donations.
- POLICY 5.16 The trail system will include the establishment of a set of rules of operation that is actively provided to the public and is periodically updated to reflect current usage needs, problems, and trends.
- POLICY 5.17 The individual components of the trail system will be monitored for volumes of usage and safety factors to determine if additional improvements are required.
- POLICY 5.18 Preservation of unique resources and amenities and provide for public enjoyment in an environmentally-friendly manner. 
- POLICY 5.19 The park system should provide a diversity of experiences.

DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

Development of a Park Open Space and Trail System relies on standards for the systematic approach to providing facilities.

Definitions and standards have been created to help communicate and coordinate park and open space facility development standards. It should be noted that standards are relative guidelines, not absolute requirements when dealing with unique park and open space components and landforms. A proper understanding of the following terms is essential for correct interpretation of this chapter:

PARK AND OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATIONS

Public Park

An area dedicated to recreational use and generally characterized by its natural, historic, topographic, or landscape features. It may be used for both passive and active forms of recreation and may be designed to serve a neighborhood, larger community, or as a local link with regional systems. Encroachment on lands within a public park by adjacent neighbors is not permitted.

Public Open Space

A relatively undeveloped area which may be located within or outside of the urbanized development area. Open space may include utility easements, drainageways, ravines, holding ponds, treed slopes, and steep slopes, and may also include any land unsuitable for building. Open space may be used general recreational activities. Encroachment on lands within a public park by adjacent neighbors is not permitted.

Private Open Space

Privately-owned land, which because of certain limiting conservation easements, are permanently protected from development. Privately owned recreational facilities, such as golf courses, would not be considered private open space because of future development potential.

Mini-Park

Mini-park is the smallest park classification and is used to address limited or specific recreational needs. Examples of where a mini-park may be located include areas of concentrated populations, isolated development areas, landscaped public use areas in an industrial/commercial area, scenic overlooks, and play areas in shopping districts. Although demographics and population density play a role in location, the justification for a mini-park lies more in servicing a specific recreational need or taking advantage of a unique opportunity. In a residential setting, the service area is usually less than a quarter mile in radius and the park is generally one acre or less in size.

Site selection criteria should include ease of access from the surrounding area and ideally be linked to a community pathway system. Given their size, they are typically not intended to be used for programmed activities, and off-street parking is not provided.

Neighborhood Park and Open Space

The neighborhood park and open space is the basic unit of the City's park system and is designed to serve as the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods. They include active and passive recreation activities geared specifically for those living within a half mile service area. The park should be centrally located and easily accessible by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets. Five acres is the accepted minimum standard necessary to provide space for recreation activities. Seven to ten acres are considered optimal. The site should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreation uses including suitable soils, positive drainage, varying topography, and a variety of vegetation and natural resource areas. Sites should be connected to schools and other park system components such as natural resource areas, lakes, ponds, and greenways.

Potential active recreation facilities include play structures, creative play attractions, game courts, ball fields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, horseshoe courts, bocce ball, pickle ball, basketball, and general ice skating areas. Cedarhurst Park is illustrated in Figure 5-1.

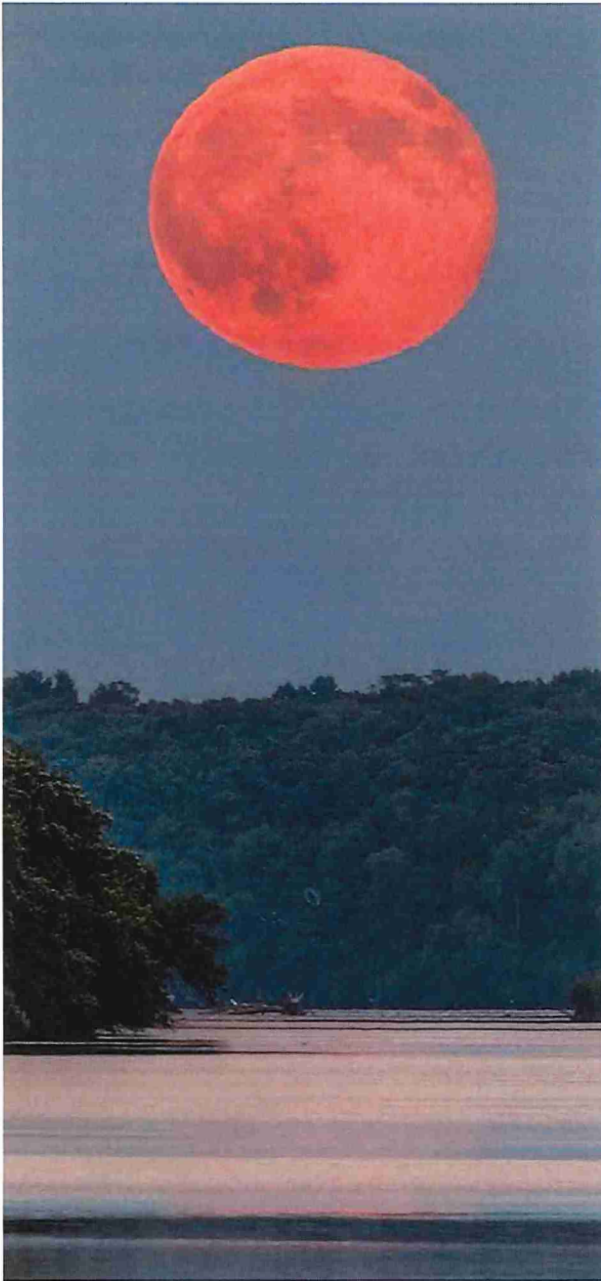
Passive activity facilities include networks of recreation and nature trails, individual and group picnic/sitting areas, general open space and unique landscapes/features, nature study areas, and ornamental gardens. The ability to hold cultural activities, such as plays and concerts, is also appropriate for a community park. Distribution of land area between active and passive recreation is determined on a site-by-site basis. Parking lots of limited size should be provided as necessary to accommodate user access, and park lighting should be used moderately due to proximity to residential units.

Figure 5-1: Playground in Cottage Grove



Source: City of Cottage Grove

Figure 5-2: Hazen P. Mooer Park



Source: City of Cottage Grove

School Commons

A school commons allows for expanded recreation, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Depending on its size, one school site may serve in a number of capacities such as a neighborhood park, youth athletic fields, and the obvious outdoor active area for the school. The important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and the park system benefit from shared use of facilities and land area. When planning efforts coincide, attempts should be made to coordinate the needs of the school district with that of the park and recreation system. The criteria established for neighborhood park and community park classifications is the basis for determining how a school commons site should function and be developed.

Community Park and Open Space

Community parks and open space are typically larger than 50 acres in size and serve a broad audience of users and purposes within the City park and open space system. Multi-functional design and facilities are found within the boundaries of these parks and focus on meeting the recreation needs of large sections of the community. Preservation of unique landscapes and open space is possible on a grand scale in community parks, and management of community parks require special attention and fiscal resources because of the size and amount of facilities and the intensive community use.

A community park should serve two or more neighborhoods with a service area of one to three miles in radius. Ideally, the site should be serviced by arterial and collector streets and be easily accessible from throughout its service area by way of interconnecting trails. Selection of community park sites should take into consideration existing private conservancy areas, natural resource areas, and regional parks and schools, each of which may provide recreational opportunities normally provided in community parks.

The site should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for both active and passive recreation uses. It should have suitable soils, positive drainage, varying topography, and a variety of vegetation and include natural resource areas, greenways, lakes, ponds, and woodlands.

Potential active recreation facilities include large play structures, creative play attractions, game courts, ballfields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, horseshoe courts, bocce ball courts, ice skating areas, archery ranges, disc golf areas, aquatic features, and amphitheaters.

Passive activity facilities include extensive recreation and nature trails, individual and group picnic/sitting areas, general open space and unique landscapes/features, nature study areas, and ornamental gardens. The ability to hold cultural activities, plays, and concerts, is also appropriate for a community park. Distribution of land area between active and passive recreation is determined on a site-by-site basis, and active field areas should be sized large enough to accommodate a field rotation maintenance program. Landscaped parking lots should be provided as necessary to accommodate user access. Park lighting should be utilized as appropriate for security, safety, lighting facilities, and extending the hours of use/scheduling of active athletic areas.

Regional Park

Often a regional park includes outdoor recreation such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses. The sites are normally contiguous to or encompass existing natural resources.

The Metropolitan Council recommends that regional parks shall be of 200 or more acres, though occasionally an exception may be made because of the quality of the resource, and a regional park may be as small as 100 acres. Due to their size, they can provide a wider array of activities, some of which cannot be found in a community park. Their size also dictates that they have several parking areas and good access, and often they contain some type of park shelter. An example is Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, 553 acres of varied topography and an usual variety of vegetation and habitats.

The placement of regional park facilities within Cottage Grove should only occur after careful consideration of the regional facility's impacts on local traffic, transportation routes, infrastructure and General Fund and the creation of assurance that negative consequences will not occur.

Regional Park Reserve

An area of natural quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping, and trail uses. May include some minor active play areas. Generally 80 percent of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management. Desirable characteristics include unique or diverse natural resources such as lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna, and topography.

The Metropolitan Council recommends that regional park reserves shall be of 1,000 or more acres.

Greenway Linking Corridors

Greenway linking corridors are lineal oriented public open spaces that are designed to provide buffering, transition, continuity and access between adjacent parks and open space areas, neighborhoods, and schools. The minimum cross dimension of greenway corridors is 30 feet in width, and shall contain a Class III recreational trailway. Larger corridors may contain a combination of trailway classifications. Spacing of major community wide greenway linking corridors is based on a square mile grid section offset one-half mile from the major transportation grid.

Greenway Buffer Areas

Greenway buffer areas are lineal oriented open spaces along minor arterials and major collector roadways that are designed to provide buffering, transition, and continuity along the roadway. The minimum average cross dimension of the corridors is 75 feet in width and shall contain a combination of trailway classifications. The buffer area can be publicly owned or under the control of a private homeowners association with an overlying public trailway/access easement. Buffer areas are required to be extensively landscaped with a variety of native or formal vegetation and may include existing natural areas, lakes, wetlands, and stormwater ponds.

Natural Resource Areas

The City's Natural Resource Inventory categorized local natural resources as compared to those found in the state and also based upon a local value categorization of natural resource areas identified as having significant natural resources woodlands or remnant landscapes. Many of these areas serve as habitat corridors. The natural resource areas identified as the highest quality in the Natural Resource Inventory should be given priority in access or preservation efforts. Development impacts should be kept to a level that preserves the integrity of the resource. One such example is the Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area. Figure 5-2 on the previous page illustrates the unique, isolated location of Hazen P. Mooer Park on Grey Cloud Island on the Mississippi River.

Figure 5-3: Highlands Park Splash Pad



Source: City of Cottage Grove

Golf Courses

One 18-hole daily fee golf course is recommended for each 25,000 population. A daily fee golf course may include a semi-private facility that draws from the golfing element who use the public facilities.

Approximately 75 acres are recommended for a 9-hole course and at least 180 acres is considered necessary for regulation courses. An example is the River Oaks Golf Course near the Mississippi River.

Swimming Pools and Splash Pads

A standard of one pool per 20,000 population is recommended. The deck area should be twice the area of the water surface. Year-round swimming facilities should be considered when deciding to construct a pool in the community. Splash pads provide another unique water recreation opportunity for communities. Figure 5-3 illustrates the splash pad at Highlands Park in Cottage Grove.

Recreation Buildings

Sun Structure

The sunshade structure is an open-sided canopy of limited size that provides shade for a passive or waiting area. The shaded area may be hard or soft surfaced. No kitchen facilities, electricity, water or restrooms are included in the design.

Picnic Structure

The picnic structure is a large open-sided facility of a size that provides shade and picnic activity areas for larger groups. No kitchen facilities are included in the design, but electricity, water, and restrooms may be included.

Neighborhood Center

The neighborhood recreation center is a smaller community-based recreation service facility in the City. It should serve the neighborhood in which it is located by providing a facility for general neighborhood organizations as well as supervised recreation programs. The building is approximately 3,000 to 5,000 square feet in size and typically includes meeting, game, and multi-purpose rooms; an office; limited kitchen facilities; a storage area; and restrooms. The mechanical equipment necessary for year-round use should be included in the design.

Community Center

A community center provides an opportunity for year-round programming of leisure time activities. A wide range of social, cultural, and physical programs typically take place in community centers. Building sizes varies from 30,000 square feet to 60,000 square feet and typically include multi-purpose rooms, performance space, community education, gymnasium, indoor playground, and administrative offices. A community center facility serves the needs of the entire community, for that reason, location and access are key to facility siting. A community center is often located in close proximity to housing and commercial amenities, therefore the Shoppes at Cottage View the proposed master planned area at East Point Douglas Road and County Road 19/Keats Avenue will provide a community center visibility and proximity to commercial amenities and additional natural features such as Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

Sports Complex

A sports complex consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities at larger sites strategically located throughout the community. This allows for economies of scale and higher quality facilities, improved management and scheduling, and improved control of facility use, and reduces the number of areas dedicated to sports facilities. The greatest advantage, if planned appropriately, is the City's ability to control negative impacts to neighborhood and community parks such as overuse, noise, traffic congestion, parking, and in some cases, domination of facilities by those outside the neighborhood.

Sports complexes should be developed to accommodate the specific needs of user groups and athletic associations within the community based on demands and program offerings. Sport complexes are community-wide facilities and attempts should be made to centrally locate the site. Because it serves the greater community, access from arterial collector streets is desirable. Demographic profiles, age group population forecasts, and participation rates should be used to determine the types of facilities to provide.

Potential sites should exhibit physical characteristics appropriate for developing athletic facilities. Topography and soils are of the utmost concern. Although extreme topographical change should be avoided, some elevation is desirable to allow for drainage and to give the site some character. Natural vegetation along the perimeter of the site and in non-field areas is desirable to buffer their impact on surrounding land uses. Currently, there are several areas in the community both inside and outside the MUSA that would appear to meet the designated locational parameters for a sports complex.

Sports complexes are intended for programmed athletic use, such as youth and adult softball, baseball, and soccer leagues and tournaments. Sports complexes increase tourism, drawing both tournament participants and spectators. Potential facilities include ballfields, soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, play structures, hard courts, and volleyball courts. Internal trails should provide access to all facilities as well as connection to the citywide pathway system. Group picnic areas and shelters should also be provided along with support facilities such as multi-purpose buildings, restrooms, and common space.

RECREATION STANDARDS

Sound principles of recreation planning include standards and more general elements:

- Designating areas for differing age groups and abilities, rather than just children;
- Consideration of aesthetics in addition to function; and
- Creating a proper balance between private and public recreation activities.

Recreational activities are generally divided into two types – active and passive. Facilities for both active and passive recreation should be available to the public on three levels:

- Neighborhood Level: Facilities intended for use by those within a half-mile radius and bounded by major streets.
- Community Level: Major facilities designed for residents of the entire community. Immediate service radius of 1-mile is used for Community Parks.
- Regional Level: Major facilities utilized by residents of the metropolitan area.

Figure 5-4 shows the Existing Park and Open Space System and Table 5-1 shows an Inventory of Existing Facilities.

Figure 5-4: Existing Parks, Open Space, and Trails

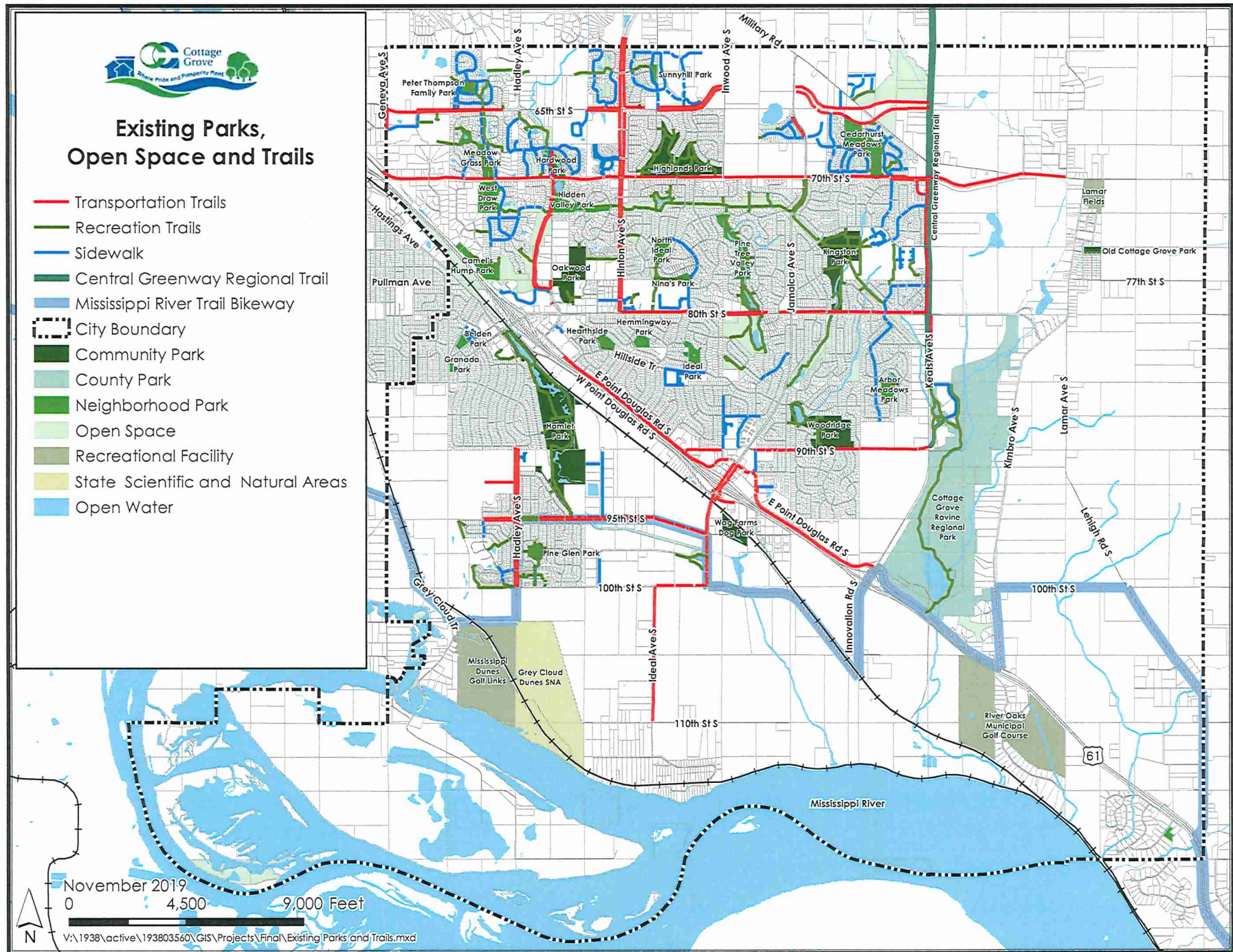


Table 5-1: Existing Parks Inventory



	Acres	Archery Range	Baseball/Softball Field	Basketball Court	Bike Path	Boat Launch	Bocce Ball Court	Building	Disc Golf Course	Dog Park	Fishing Pier	Football Field	Golf Course/Range	Grill	Horseshoe Court	Lacrosse Field	Pickleball	Picnic Shelter	Play Structure	Skate Park	Skating Rink	Sliding Hill	Soccer Field	Swimming/Wading Pool	Tennis Court	Trails	Undeveloped	Volleyball Courts
Arbor Meadows Park	12.0		1	1											•				•		•		1			•		
Belden Park	3.7		2																•		•		1			•		
Camel's Hump Park & Open Space	19.1																									•		
Cedarhurst Meadows Park East	3.3																									•		
Cedarhurst Meadows Park West	1.7		1	1														2	•							•		
Foothill Park	7.8																									•	•	
Granada Park	1.8																•	•	•						3			•
Grey Cloud Dunes State SNA	238.0																										•	
Hamlet Park	158.0		4	2L				•				2 (1L)		•				•	•	•	•		1 (1L)		2L	•		•
Hardwood Park	11.0																									•		
Hazen P. Mooers Park	0.5									•																		
Hearthside Park	6.5		1	3L				•											•		•	•			1L			
Hemmingway Park	5.6		1																•		•		2					
Hidden Valley Park	26.0									•									•							•		
Highlands Park	63.0		1	3				•						•				•	•	•	•	4		2L	•			
Ice Arena	16.0																				•							
Ideal Park	9.1																		•		•	•						
Kingston Park	57.0			2				•						•				•	•				11		2	•		
Lamar Fields	20.0		4 (2L)				•	•										•	•									
Meadow Grass Park	16.0																		•									
Nina's Park	5.0																	•	•									
North Ideal Park	10.0																		•		•					•		
Oakwood Park	37.0		1						•					•				•				•				•		
Old Cottage Grove Park	4.0		1	1															•		•							
Peter Thompson Park	6.4		1	1				•						•				•	•	•	•	1			•			
Pine Coulee Park	2.9		1															•			•							
Pine Glen Park	8.8		2	1															•				2					•
Pine Tree Pond Park	44.0	•		1															•							•		
Pine Tree Valley Park	36.0		1					•											•		•					•		
Ravine Regional Park	553.0																											
River Oaks Golf Course	220.0												•															
River Oaks Scenic Overlook	2.2																										•	
Sunnyhill Park	12.0			1														1	•							•		
WAG Farms Dog Park	14.0									•									•	•								
West Draw Park	21.0				•													•	•				3			•		
Woodridge Park	57.0		2	2L				•						•				•	•		•	•			2L	•		•
SCHOOLS																												
Armstrong Elementary	5.0		2	1															•		•							1
Cottage Grove Junior High	52.5		4	1								1											3					
Cottage Grove Elementary	35.0		2	1															•				2			•		
Crestview Elementary	40.0		3	1															•				1					
Grey Cloud Elementary	52.5		5																•				2			•		
Hillside Elementary	9.0		4									1				1			•				2					
Park Senior High	63.0		4									2											3		5	•		
Pine Hill Elementary	4.0		2	1															•							•		

FUTURE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Plans for future park acquisition and development are based on two basic assumptions. First, there will be a continued increase in demand for park and recreation services and facilities for our youth population and a dramatic increase in recreational demands from the adult segment of the population. Second, as the city continues to grow, parklands and open space areas will become more important for their growing recreational, aesthetic, and conservation values.

Demographic data suggests that Cottage Grove will continue to be a community dominated by families with children. At the same time, the age structure of the community is changing; even though the proportion of children to adults is predicted to slowly decrease. If the city continues to grow, the total number of children will probably remain stable or increase. In light of this, future parks, trails, and open space acquisition and development plans are predicated on the vision of a city where both the total population and the average age of the citizens will continue to increase.

Cottage Grove cannot afford to stop investing in parks, trails, and open space. The engagement found that the parks and open space system is a source of community pride and that residents approve of acquiring, developing, and maintaining a quality park and recreation system in Cottage Grove. The general public consensus appears to be that parks are a critical factor in assessing the “quality of life” in the community. Figure 5-5 shows the 2040 Future Parks and Open Space System.

TRAILS

Existing Trail Network

The trail network in Cottage Grove consists of a combination of routes designed for pedestrian and non-motorized use that links neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools, parks, points of interest, scenic overlooks, unique natural and historical features, and other public gathering places. The trail network is accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, non-motorized uses, and persons with disabilities; and has connections with other transitway components of the network.

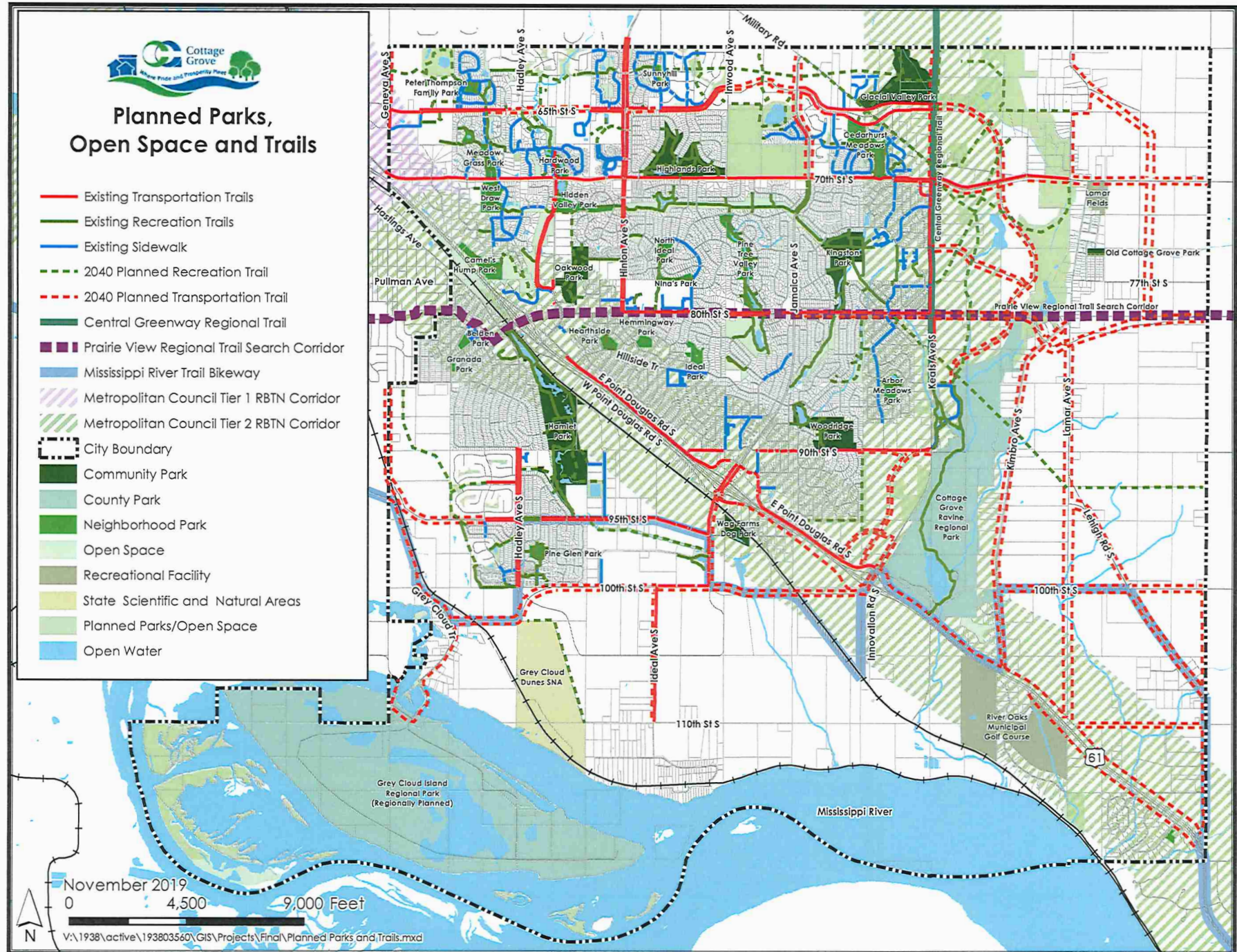
The purpose of the trail network is to offer the residents of Cottage Grove the safest possible access route for pedestrian and non-motorized uses. The City has been actively working to improve the trail network to one that offers a greater variety of access opportunities. Each segment identified on the trail network is a vital component of the whole trail network. The major routing emphasis of the trails plan correlates directly with the future transportation network and ties higher class trails with collectors and minor arterials. However, roadways that function as residential collectors or provide access to schools, parks, and other gathering spots should also be considered for some type of pedestrian access. The trail network provides residents with not only recreational access, but also with alternative transportation options to the major destination points in the city.

Where feasible, it is preferable to develop off-road trails, which provide facilities for both bicyclists and pedestrians. Trails along rivers and through parks and natural areas are always highly desirable routes, if and when they can be attained, as they provide a more scenic experience for the user. An off-road trail is one that is physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier either within the road right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. According to AASHTO guidelines, the minimum width of a trail that provides for two-way bicycle traffic and allows for pedestrian use is eight (8) feet with two-foot shoulders on each side. Where traffic volumes are higher, ten (10) feet is the desired width.

Adequate space is not always available within the existing right-of-way for an off-road trail. Where it is necessary to develop continuous trail segments, it is recommended that the City work with residential developers and owners of commercial properties to obtain easements in areas where the road right-of-way is insufficient or in areas with topography constraints.

In cases where funding or right-of-way is limited, an on-road bicycle trail can present a more economical solution. The provision of an on-road bicycle trail can be accomplished through the restriping of existing roadways or with extra consideration during the design of a new roadway. The City does not currently have any on-street bikeways. Similar to a functional classification of roadways, trail facilities also have a hierarchy of structure. The following classification helps to define the different facilities available for trails.

Figure 5-5: Planned Parks, Open Space, and Trails



Trail Facilities

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are installed on public right-of-way, constructed of concrete, five to six feet in width, and are located along local streets, sub-collectors, and collector streets. On neighborhood local streets, sidewalks may be located on only one side of the street. On collector and arterial streets, sidewalks or a combination of sidewalks and trails are required to be located on both sides of the street unless prohibited by topography or other engineering constraints. Pedestrian curb ramps are required at the terminus of the sidewalk with public or private roadways, driveways, and parking lots. Due to a sidewalk's width, pedestrian use has right-of-way over bikes and other non-motorized use.

Transportation Trails

Transportation Trails are installed in public right-of-way or in trailway easements adjacent to collector and minor arterial streets and are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic. Class II construction consists of asphalt bituminous material with a minimum width of eight feet. Microsurfacing is periodically performed on transportation trails. Pedestrian curb ramps are required at the terminus of the transportation trails with public or private roadways, driveways, and parking lots. Transportation trails are designed for bicycle, other non-motorized, and pedestrian uses.

Recreational Trails

Recreational Trails are installed in public parks and open-space and other natural areas of the community. Recreational trails are located in and adjacent to a variety of different landscapes in the community including wetlands, woods, prairies, and other passive areas. The recreational trail system also links the different active areas of the city park and open space system to provide for accessibility and cohesiveness of the facilities. Class III construction consists of asphalt bituminous material with a minimum width of eight feet. Microsurfacing is periodically performed on recreational trails. Pedestrian curb ramps are required at the terminus of the recreational trail with public or private roadways, driveways and parking lots. Recreational trails are designed for bicycle, other non-motorized, and pedestrian uses.

Natural Trails

Natural Trails are installed in public parks and open space and other natural areas of the community. Natural trails are located in and adjacent to a variety of different landscapes in the community including wetlands, woods, prairies, and other passive areas. Trail construction consists of woodchip, grass, or crushed rock material with a width of four to eight feet. Natural trails are located in areas of future Recreational Trail corridors that have yet to be completed, or in other areas that cannot be hard surfaced due to steep slopes, tree massing, water features, or other environmentally sensitive features. Tree trimming, erosion control, and surface restoration are required to be periodically performed on natural trails. These trails are designed specifically for pedestrian use and some limited bicycle use.

REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities abound to connect regional systems with inter-community non-vehicular trailways. However, such linkages along minor arterial road systems and utility easements will only occur as urban expansion occurs toward the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park or toward future federal or regional park acquisitions on Grey Cloud Island. Urban expansion can occur through upgrading of various roadway systems with associated sidewalk or trailways, through parkland dedication of utility easement areas, or future park bond land and trail acquisition and development programs. Highway 61 complicates the connectivity of the network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the City of Cottage Grove.

The Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN) established by the Metropolitan Council identifies two corridors within the City of Cottage Grove for prioritization of bicycle infrastructure. Most of the identified sections within the City are identified as Tier 2 Corridors, indicating that these corridors should be given second highest priority for transportation investment. A small area in the north west corner of the City has been identified as a Tier 1 corridor. The RBTN corridors are shown in Figure 5-5, and existing portions of the Mississippi River Trail and Central Greenway Regional Trail are located within the Tier 2 RBTN corridors.

Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

Outside the time frame of this plan as urban development crosses Keats Avenue and development occurs contiguous to this regional facility, pathways and street access points will need to be coordinated with Washington County Park Department's interpark trail systems and park master planning. More than likely, future trail connections will occur along an NSP transmission line easement that enters on the northwest portion of park. Roadway connection opportunities also exist opposite the 90th Street and Keats intersection and at several other points along Keats Avenue.

Washington County updated the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Master Plan in 2017 that established a new park entrance road and contact station, updating the existing network of bike/pedestrian and cross-country ski trails, and preserved remaining natural areas for wildlife habitat.

Grey Cloud Island Regional Park

Lower Grey Cloud Island has been identified and approved as a regional park by Washington County, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The current infrastructure to Lower Grey Cloud Island will not support the estimated level of visitation as referenced in the Grey Cloud Island Regional Park Master Plan. However, the Master Plan also states that projections of usage and resulting traffic volumes are speculative due to the timing of proposed park development. Existing access to this area is inadequate for park use due to winding narrow causeways, low railroad bridges, and older minimally designed rural roads. Any federal or regional acquisition and development of land on Grey Cloud Island must be accompanied with funds to upgrade the complete transportation system.

Although the City's overall sanitary sewer study shows engineering potentials, present and future residents on the Island are not expected to receive sanitary sewer or municipal water without additional study of future land uses overall on the island.

The Cottage Grove Comprehensive Plan designates the majority of Lower Grey Cloud Island as a Transitional Planning Area. The Transitional Planning Area is intended to indicate areas of the city that require additional review than allowed under the scope of the comprehensive plan. The City should develop a master plan in advance of establishing land use classifications and potentially opening the area for any non-regional park related development.

Mississippi River Trail

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) runs through the southern part of Cottage Grove on Hadley Avenue, 97th Street, Jamaica Avenue, 100th Street, Miller Road, and Keats Avenue. The Trail is a segment of a larger system that follows the Minnesota portion of the Mississippi River roughly 600 miles from its source at Itasca State Park to the Iowa border. The City is planning for an improved, more direct routing of the bicycle facility. The planned reroute would provide a bicycle/

pedestrian path or protected route along 100th Street South between Hadley Avenue South and Jamaica Avenue South that is more direct and reduces potential conflicts between vehicles and Trail users in an area for future industrial business development.

Prairie View Regional Trail Search Corridor

The Prairie View Regional Trail Search Corridor crosses Cottage Grove east-west along or near 80th Street, connecting into St. Paul Park on the west and Denmark Township on the east. There is already an off-road paved trail on 80th Street for a significant portion of the corridor.

UPCOMING PARK AND TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The City of Cottage Grove and Washington County have developed capital improvement plans to identify future park and trail development. Projects taking place in the next five years are listed below.

Cottage Grove Projects

- Skate Park Maintenance and re-design - Hamlet Park
- Playground Equipment Replacement - Pine Tree Valley Park
- Cottage Grove Trailway Corridor, Public Landscape Initiative - Citywide
- Park Design and Master Planning - Citywide
- Hamlet Park South Development

Washington County Parks - Upper East Ravine Park Development; Eastbrooke, Sunnyhill Park, Glacial Valley Park

- Pedestrian Trail - CSAH 18 to Ravine Park in Cottage Grove
- Central Greenway Regional Trail (Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park to Lake Elmo Reserve)



To: Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission
From: Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director
CC:
Date: September 3, 2026
Subject: Action Updates

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. Peterson Park
6. Hazen P Mooer Park
7. Military Trailhead
8. Capital Improvements Plan 2027-2031

Staff Recommendation

Receive information.

Park and Public Landscapes Capital Improvements 5-Year Plan

Year	Project	Estimated Cost	Funding	Status
2026	80th Street, Highway 61 to Ideal Avenue	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	CG Trailway Corridor Restoration	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Jack & Marlys Denzer Park Development	700,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hamlet Skate Park Surface Replacement	100,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Bike Park Jump Line Improvements	75,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Sports Lighting Improvements (Hamlet Football/Soccer, Courts and Ice Rink)	355,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Building Automation Locks - P Thompson & Woodridge	30,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Zamboni Replacement	150,000	Ice Arena Fund	
2027	Jamaica Ave, 100th Street to Hgwy ramps	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Mississippi Dunes Park Landscaping and Restoration	30,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Peterson Park Development	750,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Lamar Park Sports Lighting Replacement (LED & Poles)	350,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hamlet Park Shelter Replacement	60,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Nina's Park Shelter Replacement	30,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hamlet Park Skateboard Park Equipment Upgrade	300,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Pine Coulee Court Replacement	20,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	P Thompson Hockey Rink Boards Replacement & Sport Court (s)	300,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Trash Containers	40,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Building Automation Locks	35,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Kingston Building Replacement	5,000,000	Bonded Debt	
	Mississippi Dunes Park Development w/Building (\$5M for 3M Settlement Request)	7,000,000	3M Settlement/Bonds	
	Ice Arena Water Treatment System	100,000	Ice Arena Fund	
	Ice Arena Floor Scrubber	15,000	Ice Arena Fund	
	Ice Arena Office and Interior Commons Remodel	2,500,000	Ice Arena Bond	
2028	Future Right of Way Beautification	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Oakwood Park Restoration	30,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Still Ponds Park or East Ravine or 100th Street Neighborhood Park Development	500,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Old CG Park Sports Lighting Replacement (LED)	35,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	P Thompson Park Roof Reshingle	15,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Highlands Park Tennis Court Replacement	100,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Building Automation Locks	35,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Pine Tree Pond Park Improvements (including court replacement)	500,000	3M Settlement \$	
	Mississippi Dunes Park Development w/Building (\$5M for 3M Settlement Request)	2,000,000	3M Settlement/Bonds	
	Zamboni Replacement	150,000	Ice Arena Fund	
2029	80th Street Planting: Ideal Ave to Highway 61	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Woodridge Park Woodland Restoration	30,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Military Trailhead	200,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Vandenberg Lake Preserve Development	500,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hemingway & North Ideal Playgrounds	150,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Building Automation Locks	35,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hearthside Improvements	100,000	Pavement Mgmt	
	Mississippi Dunes Park Development w/Building (\$5M for 3M Settlement Request)	7,000,000	3M Settlement/Bonds	
	Commons Area Rooftop HVAC Unit	75,000	Ice Arena Fund	
	Ice Arena Steel Roof (Temp Hold)	500,000	Ice Arena Fund	
2030	Future Right of Way Beautification	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Pine Tree Valley & Pine Tree Pond Park Open Space Restoration (Grant Match)	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	East Ravine or 100th Street Future Neighborhood Park Development	500,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Picnic Shelter Shade Fabric Replacement: Hamlet, Highlands, Granada	30,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Woodridge Inclusive Playground Surfacing Replacement	500,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Woodridge Park Court Replacement	150,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Pine Tree Valley Park Ice rink Board Replacement	150,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Ice Arena Office Office/LR Furnace and AC Replacement	60,000	Ice Arena Fund	
	Pine Glen Park Improvements	100,000	Pavement Mgmt	
2031	Future Right of Way Beautification	50,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Diseased Tree Mitigation	10,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	West Draw Park Landscape Enhancements/Restoration	30,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Arbor Day Planting	15,000	Public Landscape Initiative	
	Park Master Planning	15,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Vandenberg Lake Community Park Land Acquisition (rest from dedication/bonding)	500,000	Park Trust Fund	
	Matching Fund Grant Program	10,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	Hamlet Park Backstop Netting Fields 1-4	150,000	Park Improvements Fund	
	River Oaks Scenic Overlook Park Development (Parking lot and trail)	100,000	Pavement Mgmt	
	Ice Arena Locker Room 6/7/8 Furnace Replacement	15,000	Ice Arena Fund	



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

The following is an update on recent, ongoing, and upcoming activities at the Ice Arena as we prepare for the 2026/2027 season.

COMPLETED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

- Coordinated with CGHA and area high school programs to establish ice schedules for the 2026/2027 season.
- Successfully hosted and completed summer AAA hockey programs.
- Scheduled City recreational programs for the fall and winter seasons.
- Continued outreach to returning customers to secure fall ice rentals.
- Completed interior painting of the South Rink, including the main walls and locker rooms.
- Completed hiring for seasonal concession staff for the 2026/2027 season.

CURRENT PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

- Evaluating spring and summer ice usage to identify opportunities to maximize facility utilization and develop next year's schedule.
- Continuing coordination with CGHA and area high school programs regarding 2026/2027 ice scheduling.
- Marketing and promoting Winter Skate School.
- Working with returning customers to secure spring and summer ice rentals and build the upcoming schedule.
- Exploring options to enhance and update the Cosmic Skate lighting system in the South Rink.

UPCOMING PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

- Conducting training for seasonal staff in preparation for the 2026/2027 season.
- Taking delivery of the new Zamboni, anticipated at the end of October.
- Installing level-ice equipment in preparation for the new Zamboni.
- Ordering, stocking, and preparing the concession stand for the upcoming season.
- Reviewing and updating vendor pricing in preparation for concession and vending operations.

- Completing seasonal facility maintenance, including cleaning rink glass and boards; washing bleachers and locker rooms; performing compressor and resurfacer maintenance; completing routine ice maintenance; and replacing miscellaneous lighting as needed.

The Ice Arena staff will continue to focus on maintaining a safe, clean, and welcoming facility while maximizing ice utilization and providing quality recreational opportunities for the community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 651-458-3400.



Memo

To: Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission

From: Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Services Manager

Date: 9/4/2026

Re: Season Summer Staff & Volunteers

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

Working with our summer seasonal recreation staff and volunteers is truly my favorite part of the job because their energy and enthusiasm bring so much life and love to our programs.

I love seeing young staff grow in confidence, develop leadership skills, and make meaningful connections with the community and kids. Volunteers add an extra layer of heart to everything we do, showing such genuine dedication to our programs. Together, they create a positive, supportive atmosphere that makes every event and program feel special.



Our staff and volunteers worked on several events this summer: Mud Run, Safety Camp, Bike Rodeo, Fish Camp, Tennis Lessons, Pickleball Lessons, Supervised Playgrounds, Adventure Camp, Zombie Run, Strawberry Fest 5k and Softball Tournament, and many more.

Total this summer we had 26 Seasonal Staff and a 30 youth volunteers, it was an amazing summer and cannot wait to do it all over again in 2027.



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

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

August

Mow Dog Park and Oakwood
Clean Kayaks
Power Wash splash pad
Playground Weeding
Adventure camp setup
Seasonal exit interviews
Paint fields
Trash run
Tree/landscape watering
Mow outlying areas
Adventure camp cleanup
Pressure wash shelters
Irrigation repairs
Mound repairs and rebuilds
Barricades to fair grounds
Pressure wash Kingston
Phase 2 49er training
pressure wash splash pad
playground mulch
Paint fields
Fall soccer
Paint fields

September

Ballfield prep for fall leagues
Close splash pad

Field maintenance
Paint fields
Pressure wash shelters
Trash run
One Family prep and clean up
Irrigation at Denzer Park
Spray ballfields
Remove barricades from fairgrounds 9/8
Build new benches and tables
Fall flower bed/pot plantings
Brush cat: Camels Hump, Eastbrook, natural trails
Remove RPZ's prior to irrigation blowout
Rough cut dog park, Oakwood, old cemetery
Food truck prep
Food truck cleanup
Spray rinks
Ballfield prep for fall leagues
New targets at archery range
Irrigation at Denzer Park
Phase 3 49er training
NRPA conference



To:	Honorable Mayor and City Council Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission
From:	Dennis Neitz, River Oaks General Manager
CC:	Zac Dockter, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Date:	September 4, 2026
Subject:	River Oaks August 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 started in May, as our patio is open for the season – weather permitting!

August Update

Golf Reporting

Update	2025	2026
August Revenue	\$361,908	\$390,512*

*Number not official

Golf Summary

August was a better month with the heat and humidity. Mother nature has made us work a bit harder this year with the ups and downs of heat and the challenging humidity. We have invested time and money in making sure our product will be in excellent condition as soon as possible. We had 8322 rounds played in August, which is up from 7852 in August 2025.

Event Center - Eagles Bar & Grill Reporting

Update	2025	2026
August Revenue	\$181,995	\$198,464*

*Number not official

Event Center - Eagles Bar & Grill Summary

August is always busier with events and we were able to increase our grill business with a new look patio, we are excited moving forward.

Maintenance - Summary

We’re clearing select areas to promote better turf health and maintain the pristine beauty you expect at River Oaks along with replacing areas of cart paths. 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

July 15, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
 - A Public Safety Swearing-In Ceremony
Staff Recommendation: Perform the Swearing-in and Badge Ceremony for Peyton Taylor and Michael Tobritzhofer.
 - B Public Safety Board Scholarship Award
Staff Recommendation: Present the Public Safety Board Scholarship Award to Alayna Adamez, Brett Salmonson, and Wyatt Beaurline.
 - C 2026 Night to Unite Proclamation
Staff Recommendation: Proclaim August 4, 2026, as Night to Unite.
 - D 2026 Parks and Recreation Month Proclamation
Staff Recommendation: Proclaim July 2026 as Parks and Recreation Month.
- 7 Consent Agenda
 - A City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-06-17)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the June 17, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - B Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes (2026-02-24)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the February 24, 2026, Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes.
 - C Planning Commission Meeting Minutes (2026-04-27)
Staff Recommendation: Accept and place on file the minutes from the April 27, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting.
 - D Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission Appointment (Rediske - Youth Seat)
Staff Recommendation: Appoint Aaron Rediske to the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission.
 - E Rental License Approvals
Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties listed in the attached table.
 - F Tobacco License - Smoke Leaf (7155 Jorgensen Lane South #120)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Tobacco License application for Sherif Amr Elbarawi, Smoke Leaf, located at 7155 Jorgensen Lane S, Suite 120, Cottage Grove, Minnesota.

- G Election Judge Appointment - Primary Election (August 11, 2026)
Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-102 and the appointment of the election judges listed in Exhibit A for the Primary Election on August 11, 2026, and authorize the City Clerk to appoint additional election judges, as needed, to fill vacancies.
- H St. Rita's - Gambling License
Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a Single Occasion Gambling Permit for St. Rita's Church to conduct a raffle, bingo and/or pull tabs at 8694 80th Street South for their annual Fall Festival to be held September 11–13, 2026.
- I St. Rita's - Temporary Liquor License
Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a Temporary Intoxicating Liquor License to St. Rita's, located at 8694 80th Street South Cottage Grove, for their annual Fall Festival to be held September 11–13, 2026.
- J 2026 Data Practices Policy
Staff Recommendation: Adopt the 2026 City of Cottage Grove Data Practices Policies and Procedures.
- K 2026 Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update
Staff Recommendation: Receive the 2026 Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update.
- L Firefighters Labor Contract Memorandum of Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Memorandum of Agreement as an addendum to the 2025-2026 Firefighters Labor Contract.
- M Professional Services Agreement - GMP Consultants
Staff Recommendation: Approve the professional services agreement with GMP Consultants in the amount of \$5,500 plus expenses.
- N Stryker PROCARE - LUCAS Device
Staff Recommendation: Approve the attached quote at the price of \$11,112.00 (\$5,556 per year) for a 24-month renewal of the Stryker ProCare Plan for our LUCAS devices.
- O Building Access Controls Maintenance Upgrade
Staff Recommendation: Approve of the attached service agreement and proposal from Pro-Tec Design Solutions, as outlined in the attached quote, with all work to begin and conclude in 2026, at a project cost of \$40,152.92.
- P 8077 River Acres Road Accessory Structure – Variance
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-105 approving the variance request for a reduced corner yard setback of 10 feet when 20 feet is required at 8077 River Acres Road.
- Q 10590 East Point Douglas Road South - Accessory Structure Exterior Materials Variance
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-104 denying the variance request to allow for the exterior of an accessory structure to be constructed of metal in a residential district at 10590 East Point Douglas Road South.
- R 9165 West Point Douglas Road (Majestic) Demolition
Staff Recommendation: 1) Adopt Resolution 2026-099 making certain findings with respect to a structurally substandard building located at 9165 West Point Douglas Road South. 2) Approve the deferred assessment waiver agreement with Mike McGrath. 3) Adopt Resolution 2026-100 awarding the demolition and site restoration of 9165 West Point Douglas Road South to the low quote supplied by JM Hauling LLC in the amount of \$121,023.50. 4) Authorize execution of the service agreement with JM Hauling LLC. 5) Adopt Resolution 2026-101 approving an interfund transfer from EDA Trust Fund to EDA Operating Fund in the amount of \$121,023.50 for the demolition and site restoration cost.
- S Ravine Ridge – Final Plat, Development Agreement, and Development Plans
Staff Recommendation: 1) Adopt Resolution 2026-106 approving the Final Plat for Ravine Ridge, subject to minor modifications as approved by the City Attorney. 2) Approve the Ravine Ridge Development Agreement with M/I Homes of Minneapolis/St. Paul LLC, subject to minor modifications as approved by the City

- Attorney. 3) Adopt Resolution 2026-107 approving the Ravine Ridge Development Plans dated 5/27/2026, prepared by Hill Incorporated, subject to final approval by the City Engineer in writing.
- T First Amendment to the Lochridge Development Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the First Amendment to the Lochridge Development Agreement with Pulte Homes of Minnesota LLC, DRP Odin 16, LLC, and Rachel Development Inc., with minor modifications as approved by the City Attorney.
- U Low Zone Water Treatment Plant Project - Change Order #5
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #5 in the amount of \$245,159.06, for the Low Zone Water Treatment Plant project, funded by the 3M Settlement, increasing the current contract amount from \$40,632,818.93 to \$40,877,977.99.
- V 2026 Pavement Management Project – Change Order 1
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #1, decreasing the contract amount by \$23,787.50 for the 2026 Pavement Management Project, and authorize the City Engineer to sign the Change Order.
- W 2025 Sewer Lining Project - Change Order #2
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #2 for the additional cleaning of the pipe. This will increase the contract total by \$30,688.00 to a total revised contract amount of \$810,436.90.
- X Jamaica Avenue-Ravine Parkway All-Way Stop
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-090 approving stop signs for north and southbound Jamaica Avenue at Ravine Parkway. The installation of these stop signs will make the intersection an all-way stop.
- Y Bolton and Menk Imagine 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update Scope of Work
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Scope of Work with Bolton and Menk for the Imagine 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Z Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) – Proposal Selection and Consultant Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Authorize the selection of Stantec Consulting Services Inc. and execute the agreement for professional services related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All project. The appropriate officials are hereby authorized to sign all necessary documents to effectuate these actions.
- AA First Amendment to the Amended and Restated Site Lease Agreement, Woodlane/West Draw Water Tower Site
Staff Recommendation: Authorize the signing of the amendment to the lease agreement held between the City of Cottage Grove and New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC.
- BB Cintas Settlement Payment Number 2
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Cintas settlement checks in the amount of \$1,509.24.
- CC Track Loader Lease Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the two-year lease agreement with John Deere Financial for a track loader in the amount of \$14,884.83 per year.
- DD Final Payment for City Hall Front Desk Remodel
Staff Recommendation: Approve \$5,048.30 to RAK Construction Inc for the final payment for the City Hall Front Desk Remodel Project.
- EE Replacement of Parking Lot Lights at City Hall
Staff Recommendation: Approve the service agreement with Killmer Electric in the amount of \$17,129.40 to replace the parking lot lights at the City Hall/Public Safety Building.
- FF Jamaica Landscaping Reduction Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-096 awarding the Jamaica Landscaping Reduction project to Valdes Lawn Care & Snow Removal in the amount of \$45,810.72, and authorize a service agreement between the City of Cottage Grove and the contractor.

GG Dowdle Puzzle Sales Contract

Staff Recommendation: Approve the new Professional Services Agreement with Dowdle Studios, LLC authorizing online sales assistance for the remaining inventory of City of Cottage Grove jigsaw puzzles.

8 Approve Disbursements

A Approve Disbursements

Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 06-16-2026 through 07-09-2026 in the amount of \$6,580,972.67.

9 Public Hearings

A Property Tax Abatement for a portion of the 2026A General Obligation Bonds

Staff Recommendation: 1) Hold the public hearing for property tax abatements in connection with the bond issuance for the Oltnan Park Improvements. 2) Adopt Resolution 2026-095, approving the property tax abatements.

10 Bid Awards

11 Regular Agenda

12 Council Comments and Requests

13 Workshops - Open to Public

14 Workshops - Closed to Public

15 Adjournment



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

August 5, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
 - A 2026 Green Garden Award Presentation
Staff Recommendation: Receive presentation of the 2026 Green Garden Awards from Park and Recreation Staff and award the winners of the Residential and Sustainability Garden Awards.
- 7 Consent Agenda
 - A City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-07-15)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the July 15, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - B Public Services Commission Meeting Minutes (2026-05-18)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the May 18, 2026, Public Services Commission Meeting minutes.
 - C Response to Open Forum - Millard
Staff Recommendation: Receive the response letter addressing Open Forum inquiries from the July 15, 2026, meeting.
 - D Rental License Approvals
Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties listed in the attached table.
 - E Temporary Intoxicating Liquor License — Cottage Grove Lions Club
Staff Recommendation: Authorize issuance of a temporary intoxicating liquor license to Kimberly Rose Raymond on behalf of the Cottage Grove Lions Club for the Food Truck Festival on September 19, 2026.
 - F Tobacco License Application - 8711 East Point Douglas Road #106 (iVape Depot)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Tobacco License for iVape Depot located at 8711 East Point Douglas Road South #106, Cottage Grove, Minnesota.
 - G Designated Hunting Areas
Staff Recommendation: Approve the 2026-2027 firearms and archery hunting maps.
 - H Surplus Firearms Sale
Staff Recommendation: Approve the sale of surplus Public Safety Equipment to Gun Smith Arms in the amount of \$550.00 per handgun.
 - I Grant Request - FY2027 Office of Traffic Safety Traffic Enforcement Grant
Staff Recommendation: Authorize the Cottage Grove Police Department to apply for the FY2027 Office of

Traffic Safety Traffic Enforcement Grant, which supports the department's traffic enforcement efforts and enhances public safety within the community.

- J Washington County Joint Powers Agreement - Record Management System Data Sharing
Staff Recommendation: Approve Amendment #1 for Contract No. 15026, the Record Management System Data Sharing Joint Powers Agreement between Washington County and the City of Cottage Grove.
- K EMS Public Service Area
Staff Recommendation: Authorize the application to the Office of Emergency Medical Services to retract the Cities of Newport and St. Paul Park from the City of Cottage Grove's EMS PSA. The retraction will allow Fairview EMS to expand their PSA to cover the Cities of Newport and St. Paul Park and assume primary EMS operations for the two cities.
- L Lehigh Road (Biscoe) Minor Subdivision
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-108 approving the Minor Subdivision of a 44.95-acre parcel of land on Lehigh Road South into one 3.09-acre buildable parcel, one 0.32-acre parcel for right of way and one 41.54-acre parcel.
- M KLM Engineering - Utilities Professional Services Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the professional service agreement services with KLM.
- N High Zone Raw Water Main Project - Change Order #3
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #3 for the raising of the sanitary sewer manhole. This will increase the contract total by \$7,500.00 to a total revised contract amount of \$4,901,598.00.
- O Intermediate Zone Water Treatment Plant - Change Order #3
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #3 in the amount of \$95,710.00 for the Intermediate Zone Water Treatment Plant project, increasing the current contract amount from \$90,411,603.29 to \$90,507,313.29.
- P 80th Street & East Point Douglas Road Rehabilitation Project - Change Order #2
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #2, increasing the contract amount by \$29,575.12 for the 80th Street, East Point Douglas Road and TH 61/80th Street Interchange Rehabilitation Project, and authorize the City Engineer to sign the Change Order.
- Q Final Payment - 2025 Sewer Lining Project (Hydro-Klean, LLC)
Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-109 in the amount of \$44,167.89 to Hydro-Klean, LLC for the 2025 Sewer Lining Project

8 Approve Disbursements

- A Approve Disbursements
Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 07-10-2026 through 07-30-2026 in the amount of \$8,762,282.12.

9 Public Hearings

10 Bid Awards

11 Regular Agenda

- A Sale of \$5,035,000 General Obligation Bonds, Series 2026A
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-110, authorizing the issuance and awarding the sale of \$5,035,000 General Obligation Bonds, Series 2026A, pledging for the security thereof special assessments and tax abatements and levying a tax for the payment thereof.
- B 10590 East Point Douglas Road South - Accessory Structure Exterior Materials Variance
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-104 denying the variance request to allow for the exterior of an accessory structure to be constructed of metal in a residential district at 10590 East Point Douglas Road South.

12 Council Comments and Requests

13 Workshops - Open to Public

A 80th Street & East Point Douglas Road Rehabilitation Project Banners

Staff Recommendation: Receive information regarding the 80th Street & East Point Douglas Road Rehabilitation Project corridor banner options and provide direction to staff regarding aesthetic enhancements and preferred banner design themes.

B Draft 2027-2031 Capital Improvement Plan

Staff Recommendation: Receive information on the draft 2027-2031 Capital Improvement Plan and provide feedback to staff.

C Local Sales Tax

Staff Recommendation: Recommend staff pursue a Local Sales Tax for the future Public Works Building Expansion.

14 Workshops - Closed to Public

15 Adjournment



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

August 19, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
 - A Public Safety Swearing-in Ceremony
Staff Recommendation: Appoint Brad Petersen as Public Safety Director and Chief Law Enforcement Officer at Non-Represented Pay Plan Grade X02, Step 5. City Administrator Levitt will administer the Oath of Office.
 - B Recognition of Reserve Officer - Matt Jordan
Staff Recommendation: Recognize Matt Jordan's retirement by presenting him with a badge and certificate of appreciation.
- 7 Consent Agenda
 - A City Council Special Meeting Minutes (2026-06-17)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the June 17, 2026, City Council Special Meeting Minutes.
 - B City Council Special (Budget) Meeting Minutes (2026-07-22)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the July 22, 2026, City Council Special (Budget) Meeting Minutes.
 - C Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation Meeting Minutes (2026-04-14)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the April 14, 2026, Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation (ACHP) meeting minutes.
 - D Planning Commission Appointment - Koerner
Staff Recommendation: Appoint Pete Koerner to the Planning Commission with a term ending on February 28, 2027.
 - E Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission Appointment (Kemper-Youth Seat)
Staff Recommendation: Appoint Kasen Kemper to the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Commission.
 - F Rental License Approvals
Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties listed in the attached table.
 - G Accept 2nd Quarter 2026 Donations
Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-117 accepting the 2nd Quarter Donations.
 - H 2027-2028 Cottage Grove Police Officers Labor Contract
Staff Recommendation: Approve the 2027 - 2028 labor contract with the Police Officers Union. All wage and benefits costs have been budgeted for in the 2027 budget.

- I 2027-2028 Cottage Grove/LELS Sergeants Contract
Staff Recommendation: Approve the 2027 - 2028 labor contract with the Sergeants Union. All wage and benefits costs have been budgeted for in the 2027 budget.
- J Mississippi Dunes Tree Planting Contract
Staff Recommendation: Adopt resolution 2026-114 awarding the Mississippi Dunes Tree Planting Contract to Wilson's Nursery in total amount of \$31,965 and authorize the service agreement between Wilson's Nursery and the City of Cottage Grove.
- K Kingston Park Site Power Update Project Final Payment
Staff Recommendation: Authorize resolution 2026-115 approving final payment to Killmer Electric Company, Inc. in the amount of \$10,335.19 for the Kingston Park Site Power Upgrade Project.
- L 2-acre property purchase - WAG
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-118 to approve buying 2.0 acres from WAG in the amount of \$78,408.00 (Parcel ID: 21.027.21.43.0005).
- M Lehigh Culvert Replacement Project
Staff Recommendation: Authorize resolution 2026-116 awarding the Lehigh Culvert Replacement Project to Dynamic Earth & Civil LLC in the amount of \$37,800 and authorize the service agreement between Dynamic Earth & Civil LLC and the City of Cottage Grove.
- N Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) - State Grant Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the State of Minnesota Federal Transportation Grants Technical Assistance and IIA Discretionary Match Grant Agreement related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All project.
- O Lochridge Second Addition – Final Plat, Development Agreement, and Development Plans
Staff Recommendation: 1) Adopt Resolution 2026-119 approving the Final Plat for Lochridge Second Addition, subject to minor modifications as approved by the City Attorney. 2) Approve the Lochridge Development Agreement with Pulte Homes of Minnesota LLC and DRP Odin 16, LLC, subject to minor modifications as approved by the City Attorney. 3) Adopt Resolution 2026-120 approving the Lochridge Second Addition Development Plans dated July 14, 2026, prepared by Alliant Engineering Inc., subject to final approval by the City Engineer in writing.
- P Lateral Water Line Execution and Quote Award - 9998 90th St Water Service (Christ the Lord Evangelical Lutheran Church)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Agreement to Construct Lateral Water Line between the City and Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and adopt Resolution 2026-122 awarding the 9998 90th Street Water Service work to Burschville Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$91,450.00.
- 8 Approve Disbursements
 - A Approve Disbursements
Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 07-31-2026 through 08-13-2026 in the amount of \$3,858,069.27.
- 9 Public Hearings
- 10 Bid Awards
- 11 Regular Agenda
- 12 Council Comments and Requests
- 13 Workshops - Open to Public
- 14 Workshops - Closed to Public
- 15 Adjournment



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

September 2, 2026

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Pledge of Allegiance
- 3 Roll Call
- 4 Open Forum
- 5 Adoption of Agenda
- 6 Presentations
 - A Public Safety Swearing-in and Badge Ceremony
Staff Recommendation: 1) Perform the Swearing-in and Badge Ceremony for Deputy Public Safety Director/Police Captain Nickle, Deputy Public Safety Director/Police Captain Henseler, Sergeant Swanson, Sergeant Mulvihill and Officer Pfeiffer. 2) Effective September 3, 2026, appoint Patrick Nickle and Justin Henseler as Deputy Director Public Safety/Police Captains at Non-represented Pay Plan Grade X01, Step 4. Also, effective September 3, 2026, appoint Rob Swanson and Travis Mulvihill as Police Sergeants at step D as detailed in the Sergeants labor contract. City Administrator Levitt will also administer the Oath of Office to all four and Police Officer Cole Pfeiffer.
 - B Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation
Staff Recommendation: Proclaim September 15-October 15, 2026 as Hispanic Heritage Month.
- 7 Consent Agenda
 - A City Council Special Meeting Minutes (2026-07-29)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the July 29, 2026, City Council Special Meeting Minutes.
 - B City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-08-19)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the August 19, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - C Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-05-12)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the May 12, 2026, Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - D Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-07-14)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the July 14, 2026, Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - E Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes (2026-07-27)
Staff Recommendation: Approve the July 27, 2026, Economic Development Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - F Rental License Approvals
Staff Recommendation: Approve the issuance of rental licenses to the properties in the attached table.
 - G Cannabis Lower-Potency Hemp Edible Business Registration - Banks Distro LLC
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Cannabis Lower-Potency Hemp Edible Business Registration for Banks Distro LLC located at 7769 95th Street South, Unit A, Cottage Grove, MN 55016.

- H Criminal Justice Data Communications Network Systems - Joint Powers Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve Resolution 2026-113, authorizing the City of Cottage Grove to enter into Joint Power Agreements with the State of Minnesota, Department of Public Safety, and Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to provide access to essential criminal justice data communications network systems and tools, and authorizing the necessary network connection costs over the five-year agreement term.
- I Joint Powers Agreement with the City of St. Paul Park – Geneva Meadows Second Addition
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Cottage Grove and the City of St. Paul Park relating to the extension of public utilities from St. Paul Park into Cottage Grove for Geneva Meadows Second Addition and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the Agreement on behalf of the City.
- J Shop Remodel Change Order #4 and Final Payment
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #4 decreasing the contract sum by \$1,496.60 due to actual costs and adopt resolution 2026-123 approving the Final Payment Request of \$2,637.27 for the Public Works Facility Mechanics Shop Remodel project.
- K Sale of Surplus Property
Staff Recommendation: Authorize Public Works to advertise and sell surplus property on Cranky Ape and or MNBid.
- L Ice Arena Rental Cancellation Policy
Staff Recommendation: Approve Ice Arena Rental Cancellation Policy
- M Extension of WAG Dog Park Lease
Staff Recommendation: Approve the third amendment for WAG Dog Park lease which extends the lease by one additional year under the current terms.
- N National Park Service Dock Grant
Staff Recommendation: Authorize grant agreement between City of Cottage Grove and United States Department of the Interior National Park Service to install a paddler dock and launch system at Hazen P Mooer Park within the National Park's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.
- O Mississippi Dunes Park Habitat Restoration Grant
Staff Recommendation: Authorize staff to apply for a MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant for Mississippi Dunes Park native habitat restoration for a total project cost of \$450,000, requesting \$405,000 in grant funding with a required 10% local match consisting of \$30,000 in City cash and \$15,000 in City in-kind services.
- P Xcel Energy Photovoltaic Demand Credit Rider Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Authorize Amendment No. 1 to Electric Service Agreement between Northern States Power Company and City of Cottage Grove regarding Xcel Energy Photovoltaic Demand Credit Rider.
- Q Low Zone Water Tower Project Change Order #1
Staff Recommendation: Approve Change Order #1 for the Low Zone Water Tower project, decreasing the contract total by \$9,277.00 to a total revised contract amount of \$5,173,723.00.
- R Explore Minnesota 2027 Tourism Grant Agreement
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau to execute the grant agreement between Explore Minnesota and the Cottage Grove CVB.
- 8 Approve Disbursements
- A Approve Disbursements
Staff Recommendation: Approve disbursements from 08-14-2026 through 08-27-2026 in the amount of \$7,765,872.45.
- 9 Public Hearings
- 10 Bid Awards

11 Regular Agenda

A Adopt Preliminary Property Tax Levy

Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution 2026-124, Adopting the Preliminary 2026 Property Tax Levy Collectible in 2027.

12 Council Comments and Requests

13 Workshops - Open to Public

A Imagine 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update Kickoff

Staff Recommendation: Receive overview of Imagine 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update and engagement plan.

14 Workshops - Closed to Public

15 Adjournment