DULUTH PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION:

LESTER-AMITY-HAWK RIDGE NATURAL AREA DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

~~MAY 14, 2025~~ MARCH 11, 2026

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Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory

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South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District

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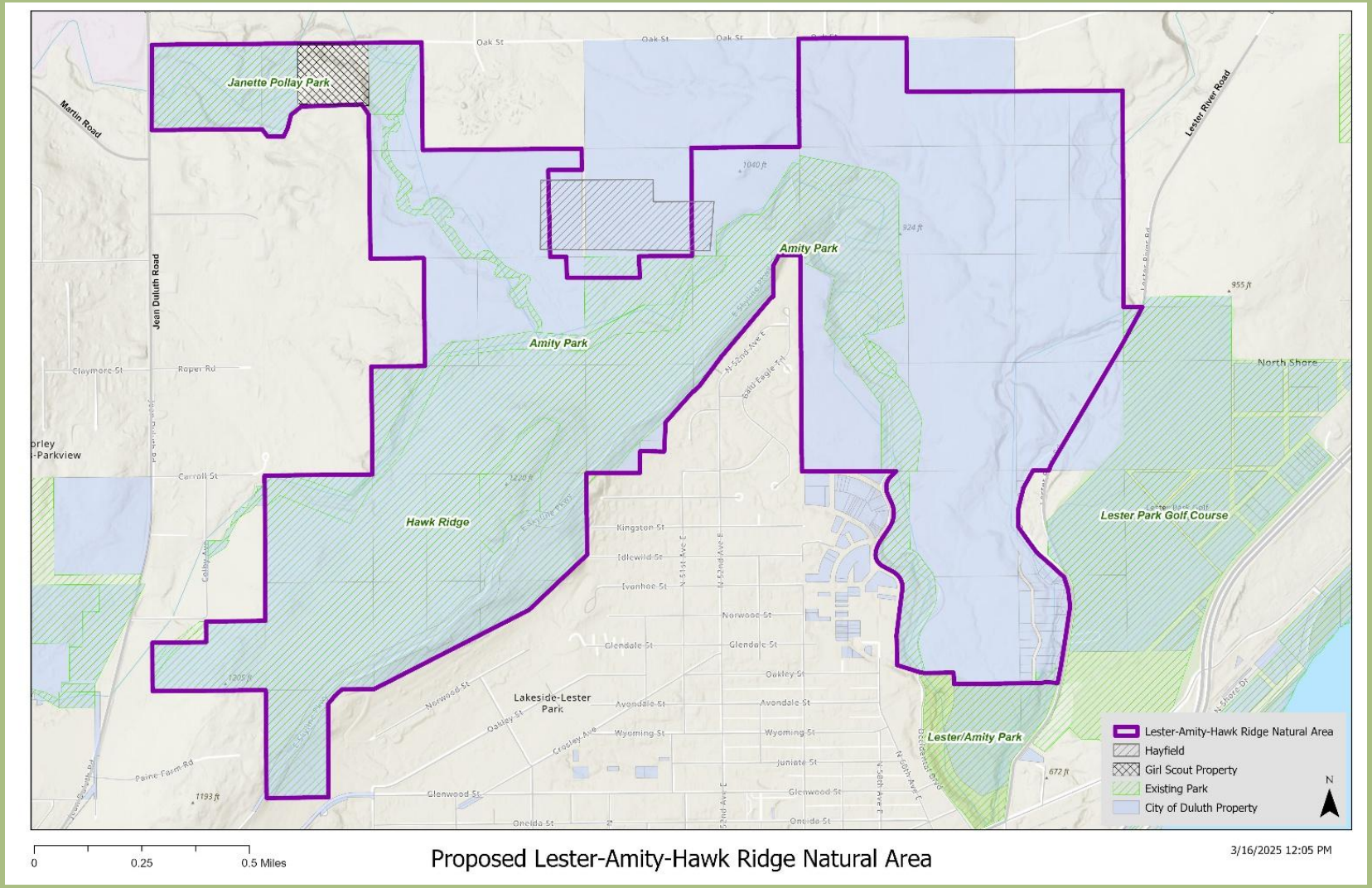
Minnesota Trout Unlimited

A QUICK REVIEW OF THE NOMINATION…

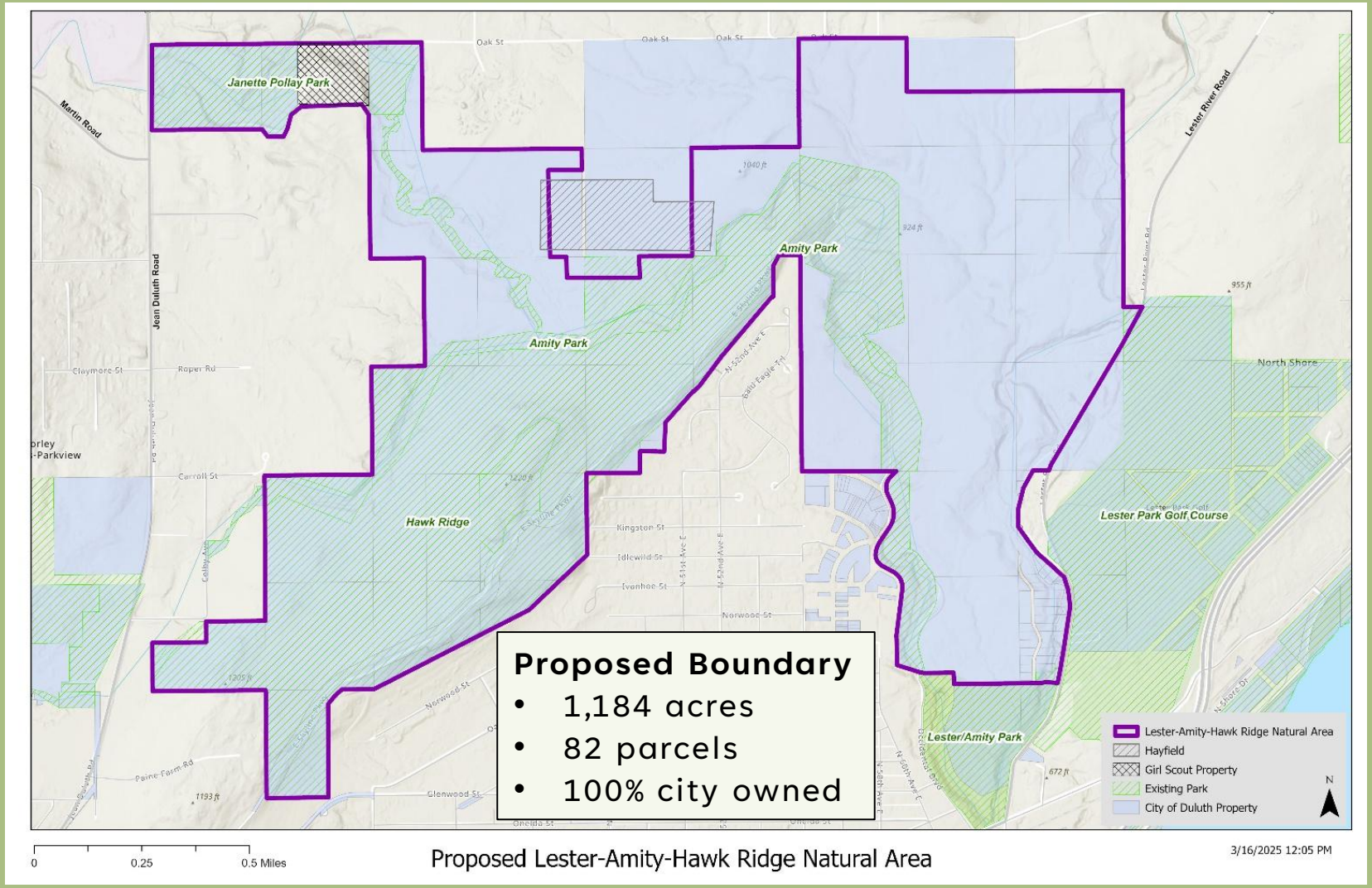


Duluth Natural Areas Program (DNAP) is established within Duluth City Code (*Legislative Code, Chapter 2, Article XXIX, Sec. 2-152)*

DNAP Purpose:

- Preserves Duluth's natural heritage
- Supports a resilient, outdoor-based economy
- Enhances community health and quality of life
- Reduces long-term public infrastructure risk
- Delivers critical ecosystem services: Recreation, clean water, flood mitigation, carbon storage

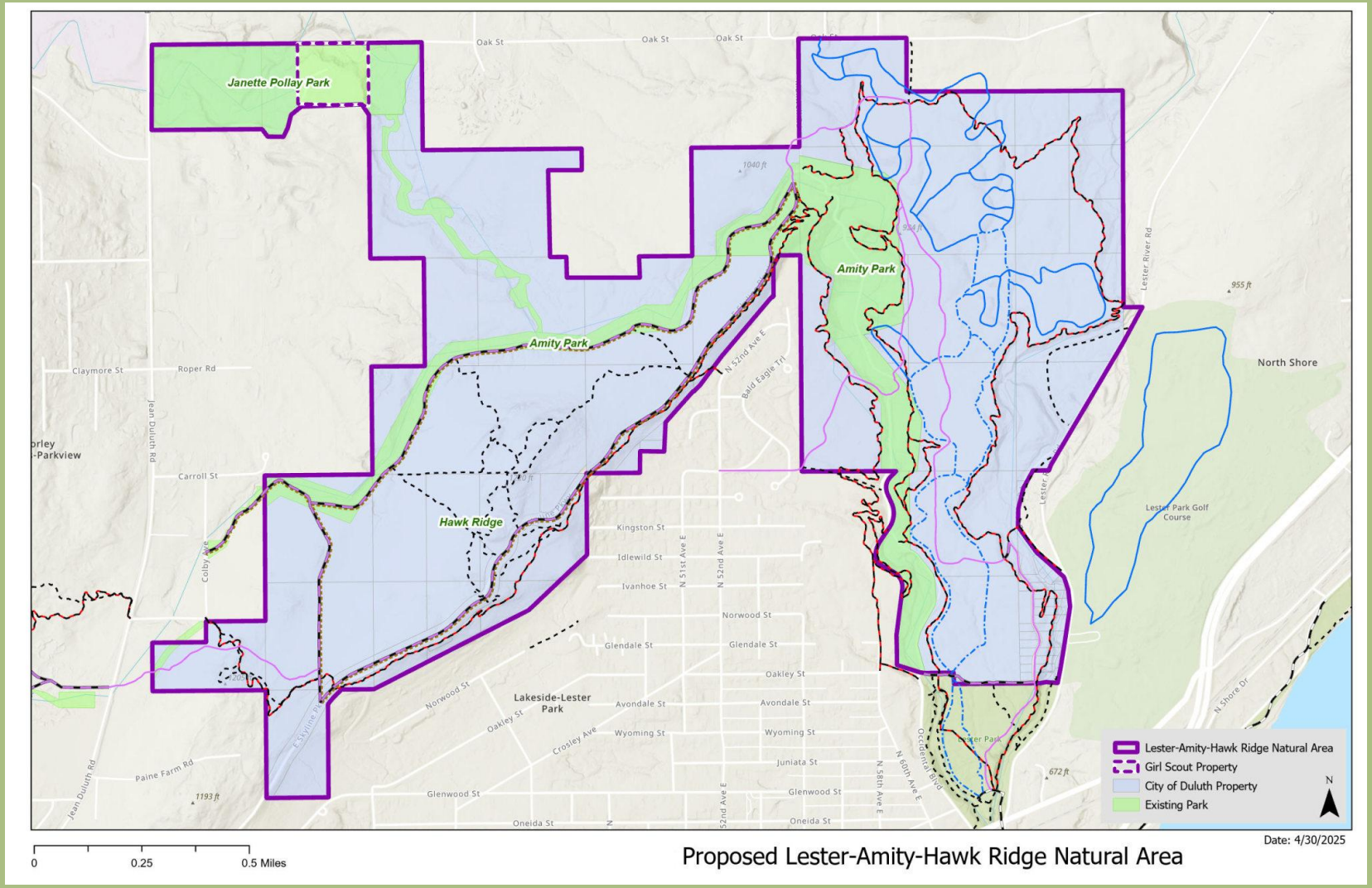
THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST ECOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT LANDSCAPES IN THE CITY



Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area (LAHRNA) Significance:

- Important bird congregation area – over **200 species documented** annually
- Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve was the first **Important Bird Area** designated in Minnesota
- Special species area – **three species have been identified** (soapberry, barren strawberry, and pale sedge)
- **60%** of the MN **Bird Species in Greatest Conservation Need** have been documented
- Significant native plant community areas – **Eighteen native plant communities recognized**
- Natural water feature area – **three designated trout streams** with significant groundwater contributions (Amity Creek, East Amity Creek, Lester River)
- Geologic landform area – **Duluth's 1.1-billion-year geological history** represented in the natural area's landforms

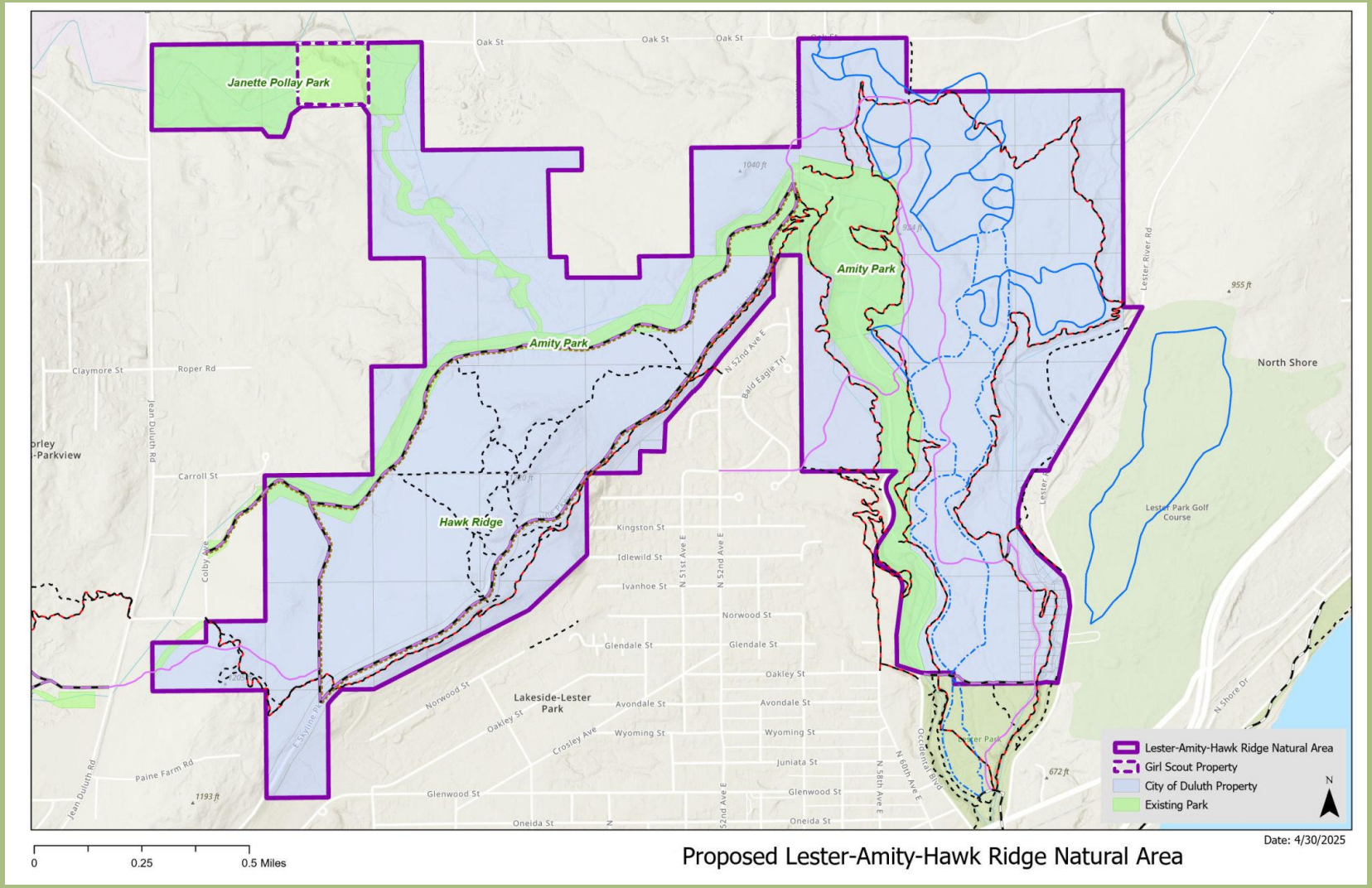
WHAT THE LESTER-AMITY-HAWK RIDGE NATURAL AREA *WILL NOT* DO



The Natural Area WILL NOT:

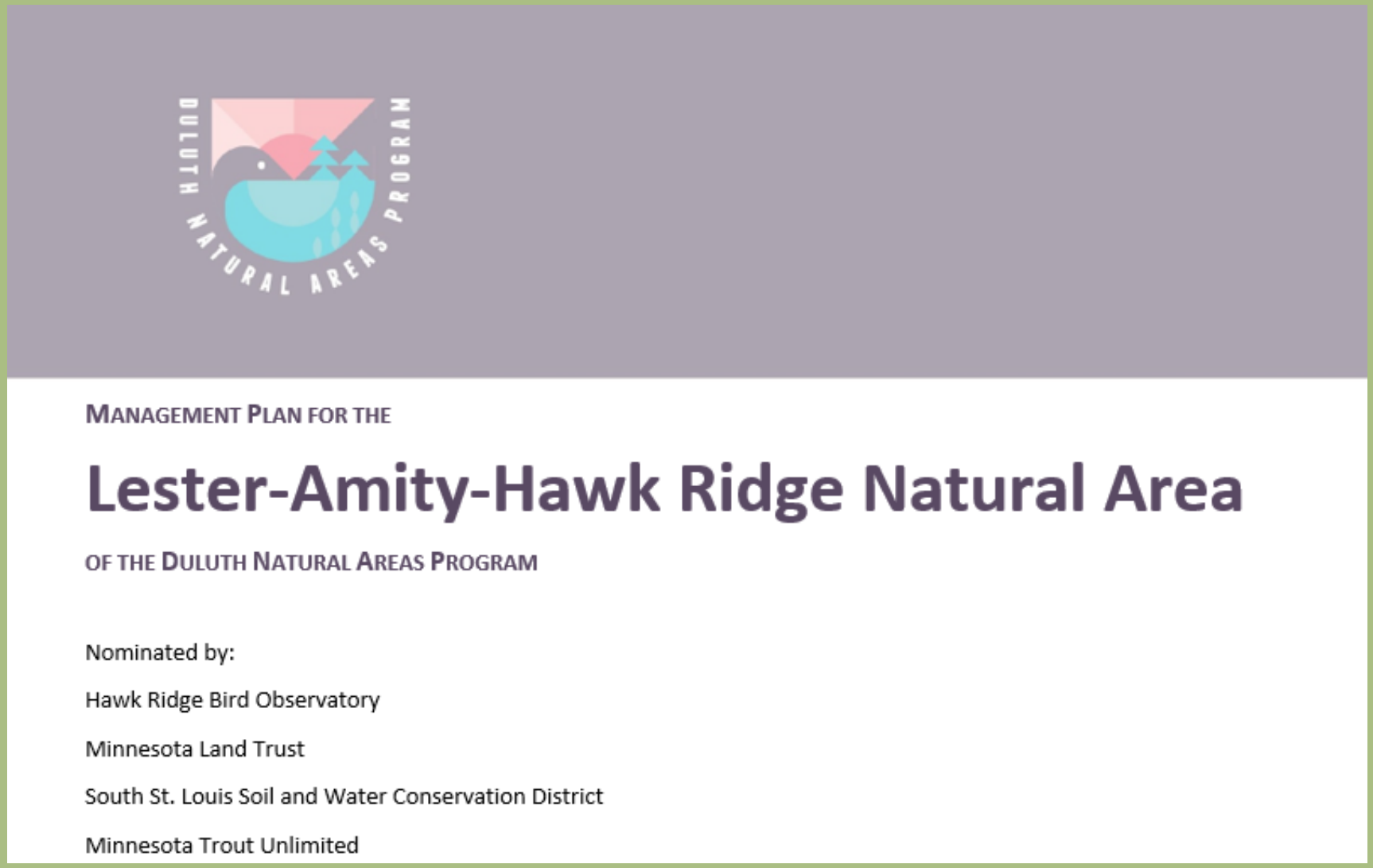
- Alter established trails or otherwise reduce this area's significance as a **hub of outdoor recreation**
- Place limitations on the development or sale of private property adjacent to the Natural Area
- Create new regulatory authority
- Freeze the landscape in time

WHAT THE LESTER-AMITY-HAWK RIDGE NATURAL AREA *WILL* DO



The Natural Area WILL:

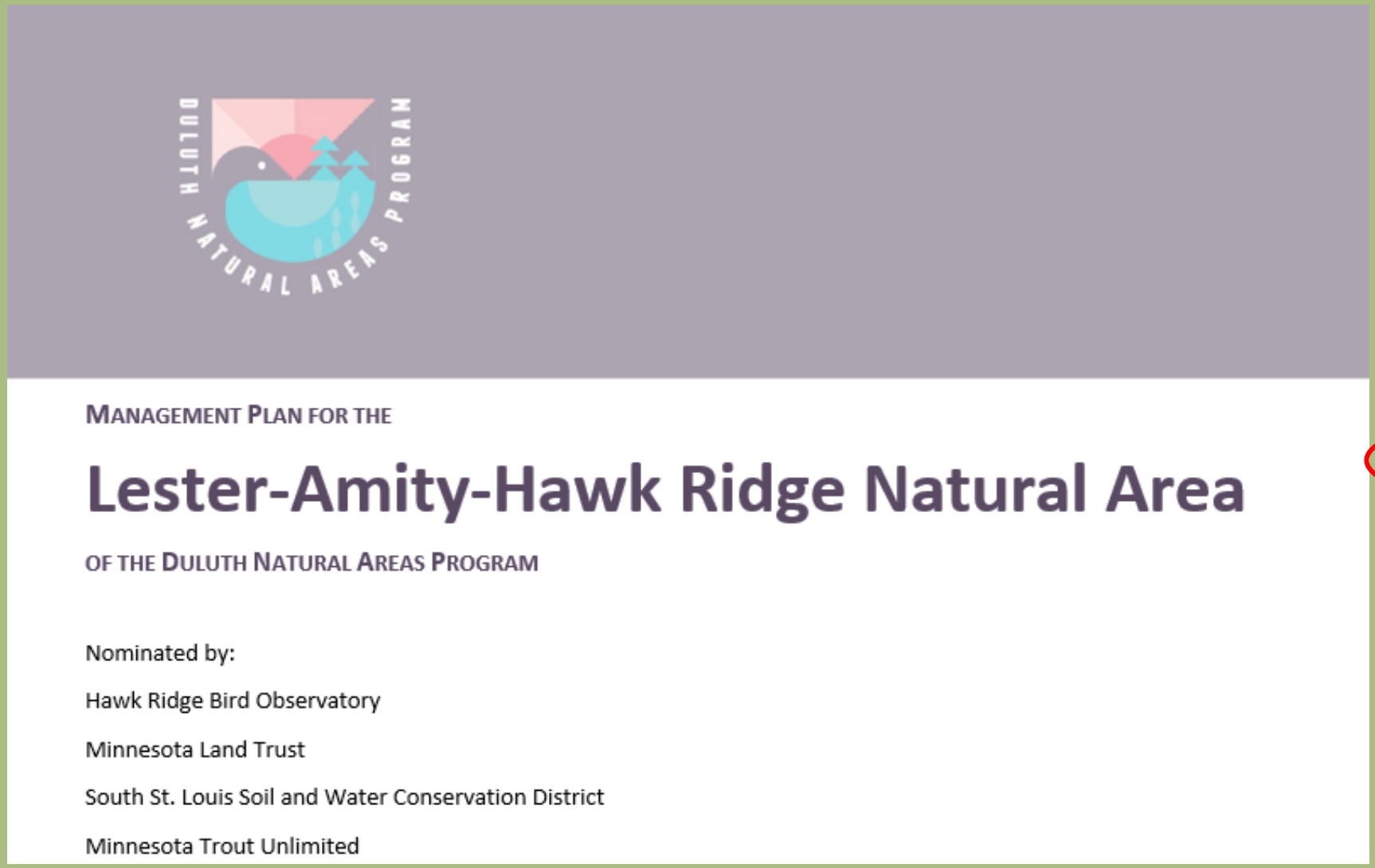
- Promote Duluth's "Best Outdoor City" Brand
- Protect valued City-owned open space from sale and development
- Assure park and trail plans are consistent with natural resource conservation
- Lead to a management plan that provide for protection and restoration
- Serve as a focal point for partners to assist the City with management activities



Draft Management Plan - Nearing Completion

Outline:

1. Natural Area Conditions
2. Threats
3. Strategies
4. Prioritized Action



1. Natural Area Conditions
2. Threats
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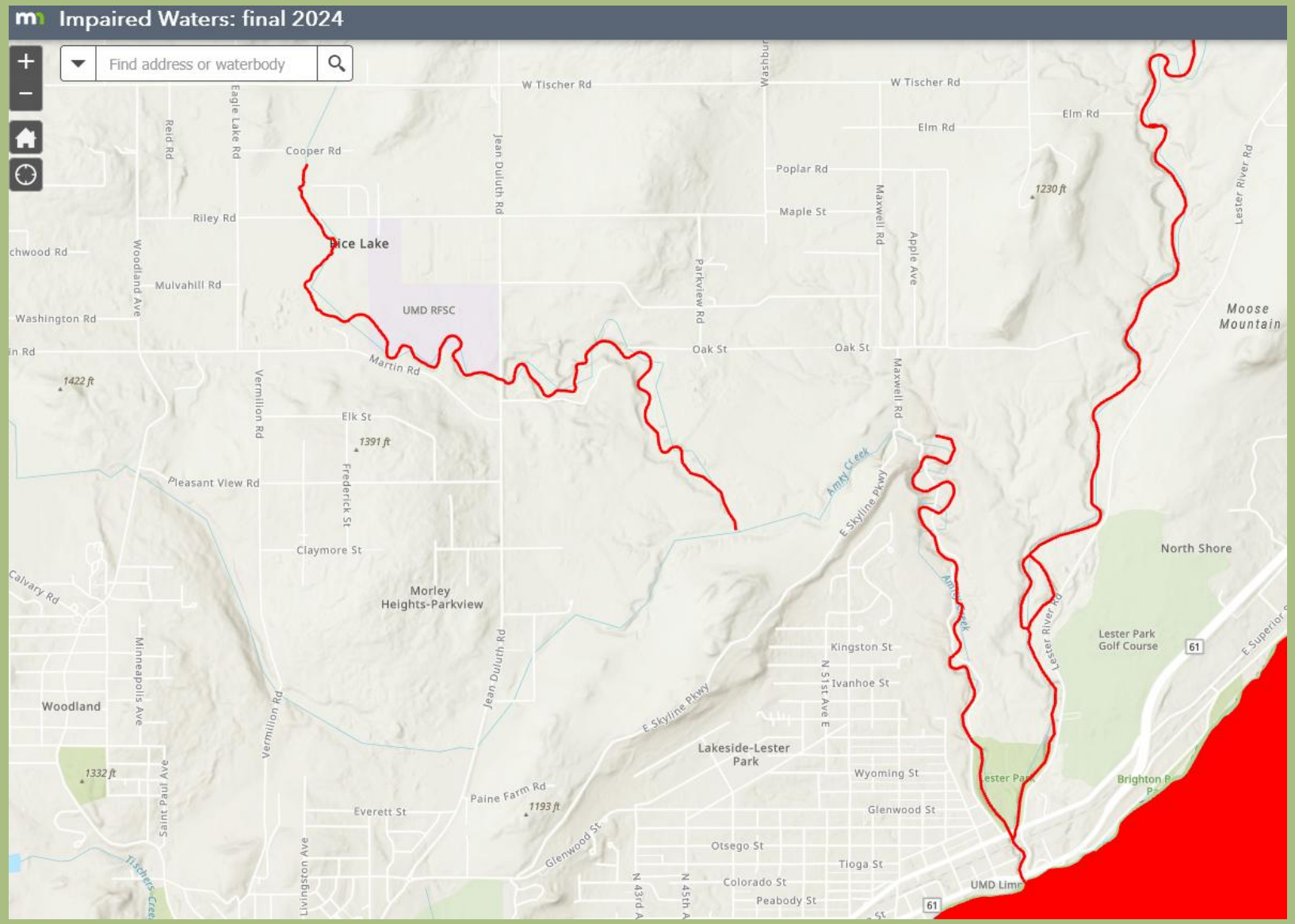
Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area



THREATS

- Channel Instability and Excess Sediment Loading

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

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- Climate Change and Increasing Storm Intensity

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

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Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

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- Degraded Riparian Corridor

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

THREATS

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- Invasive Species

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

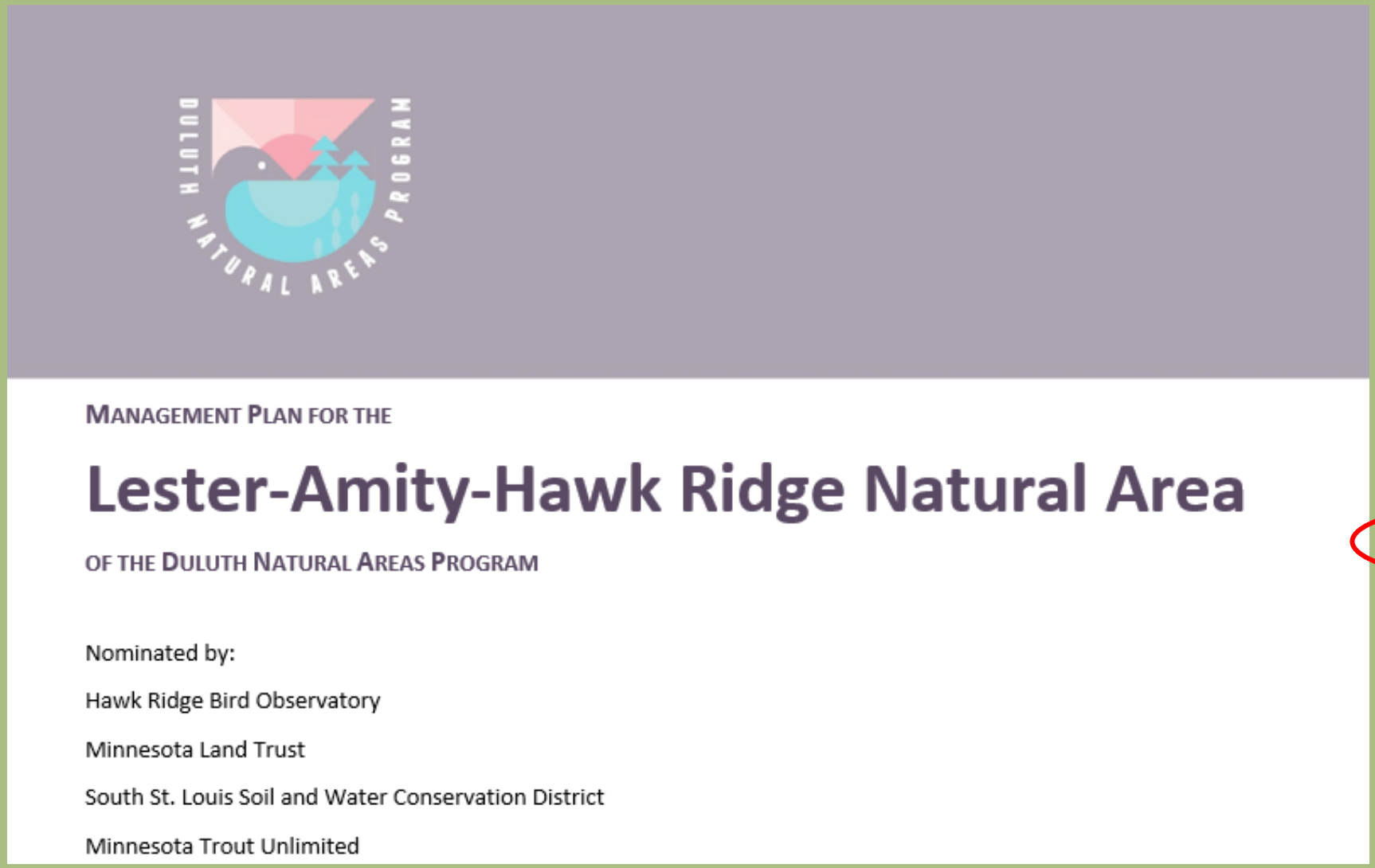
THREATS

- Channel Instability and Excess Sediment Loading
- Climate Change and Increasing Storm Intensity
- Barriers to Aquatic Organism Passage
- Degraded Riparian Corridor
- Invasive Species
- Habitat Degradation and Loss

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

THREATS

- Channel Instability and Excess Sediment Loading
- Climate Change and Increasing Storm Intensity
- Barriers to Aquatic Organism Passage
- Degraded Riparian Corridor
- Invasive Species
- Habitat Degradation and Loss
- Human Uses

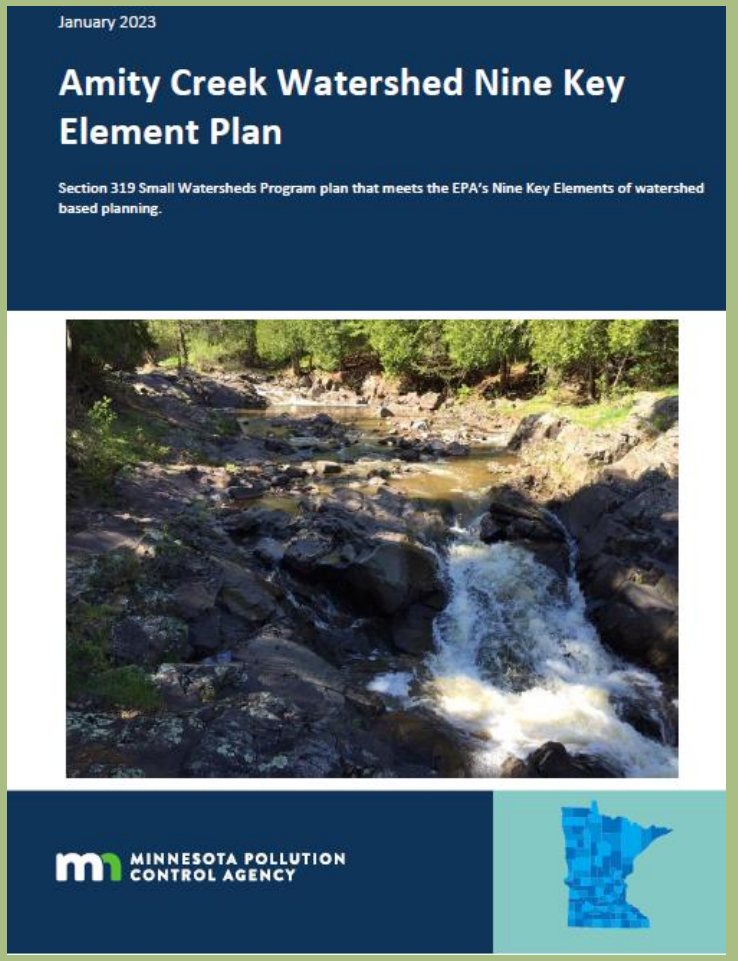


1. Natural Area Conditions
2. Threats
3. Strategies
4. Prioritized Action

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes



Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
- Water Features: Barrier Removal

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
- Water Features: Barrier Removal
- Water Features: Replant Riparian Corridor

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
- Water Features: Barrier Removal
- Water Features: Replant Riparian Corridor
- Plant Communities: Restore Processes

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
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- Plant Communities: Restore Processes
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Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
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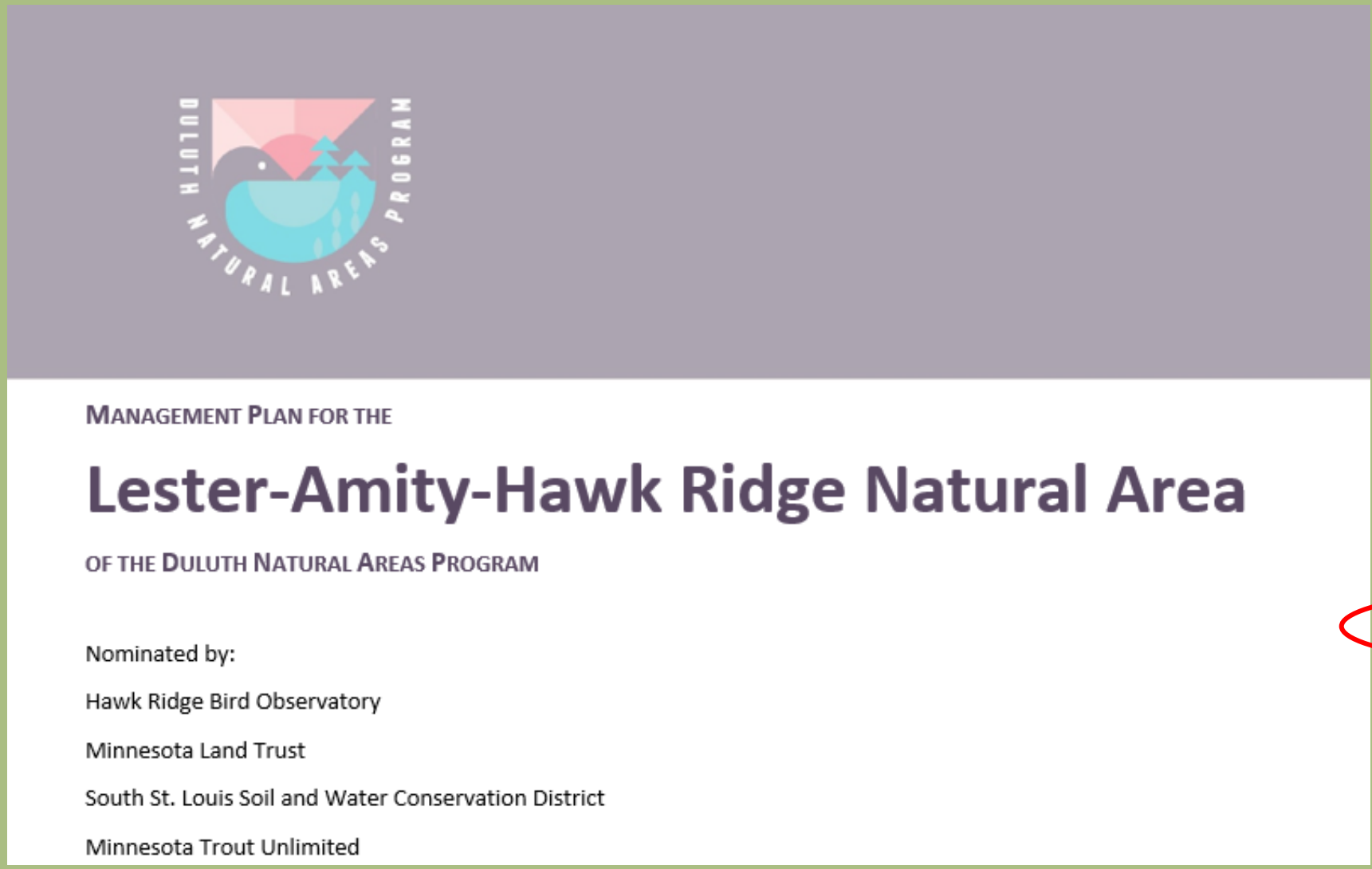
- Water Features: Replant Riparian Corridor
- Plant Communities: Restore Processes
- Plant Communities: Invasive Removal and Replacement
- Plant Communities: Bird-Friendly Forest Management (Maintain Structural Complexity)

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

STRATEGIES

- Water Features: Restore Processes
- Water Features: Barrier Removal
- Water Features: Replant Riparian Corridor
- Plant Communities: Restore Processes
- Plant Communities: Invasive Removal and Replacement
- Plant Communities: Bird-Friendly Forest Management (Maintain Structural Complexity)
- Human Uses: Trail Management



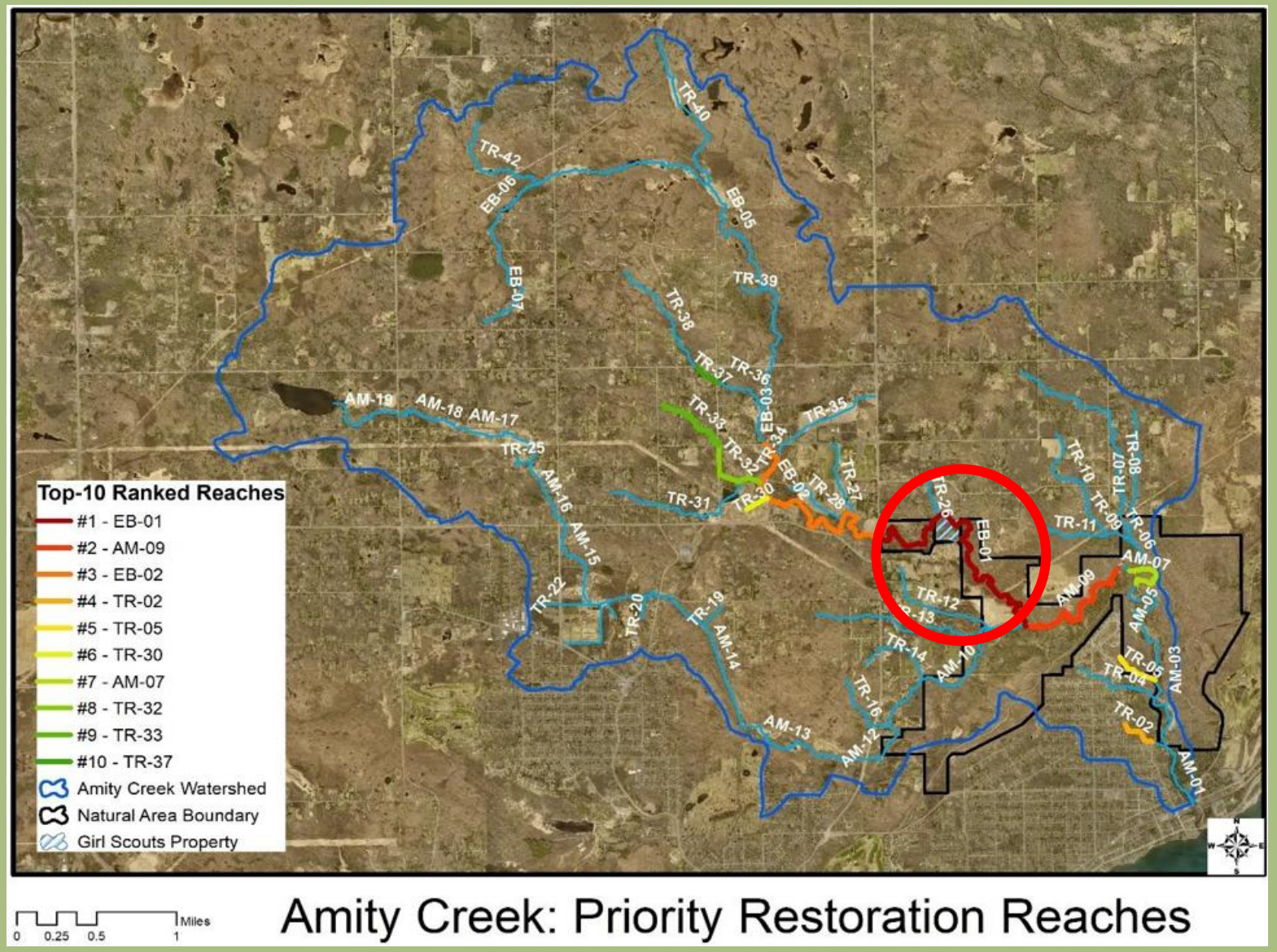
1. Natural Area Conditions
2. Threats
3. Strategies
4. Prioritized Action

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Complete Forest Stewardship Plan for Lester-Amity Forest
- **Cost**: $60,000
- **Responsible Parties**: MN Land Trust (lead), City of Duluth
- **Target Completion Date**: 2026
- **Funding**: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund (LSOHF)

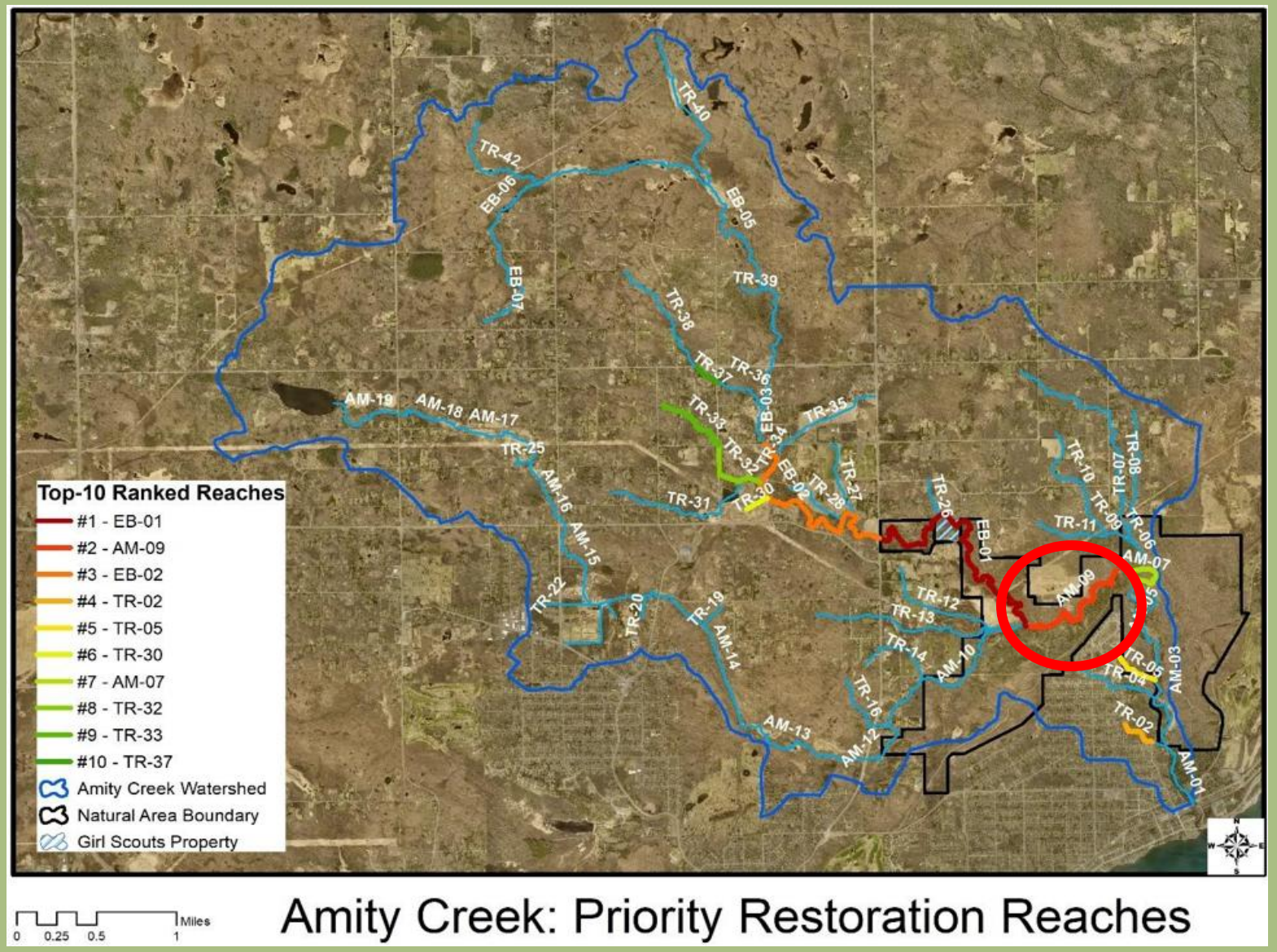
Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area



PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Stream and floodplain restoration on East Amity Creek Reach EB-01
- **Cost**: $2.5-3.75 million ($750k secured, $500k pending)
- **Responsible Parties**: South St. Louis SWCD (lead), MNTU, City of Duluth, MNDNR, MPCA
- **Target Completion Date**: 2030
- **Funding**: Section 319, LSOHF, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program, Clean Water Fund

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

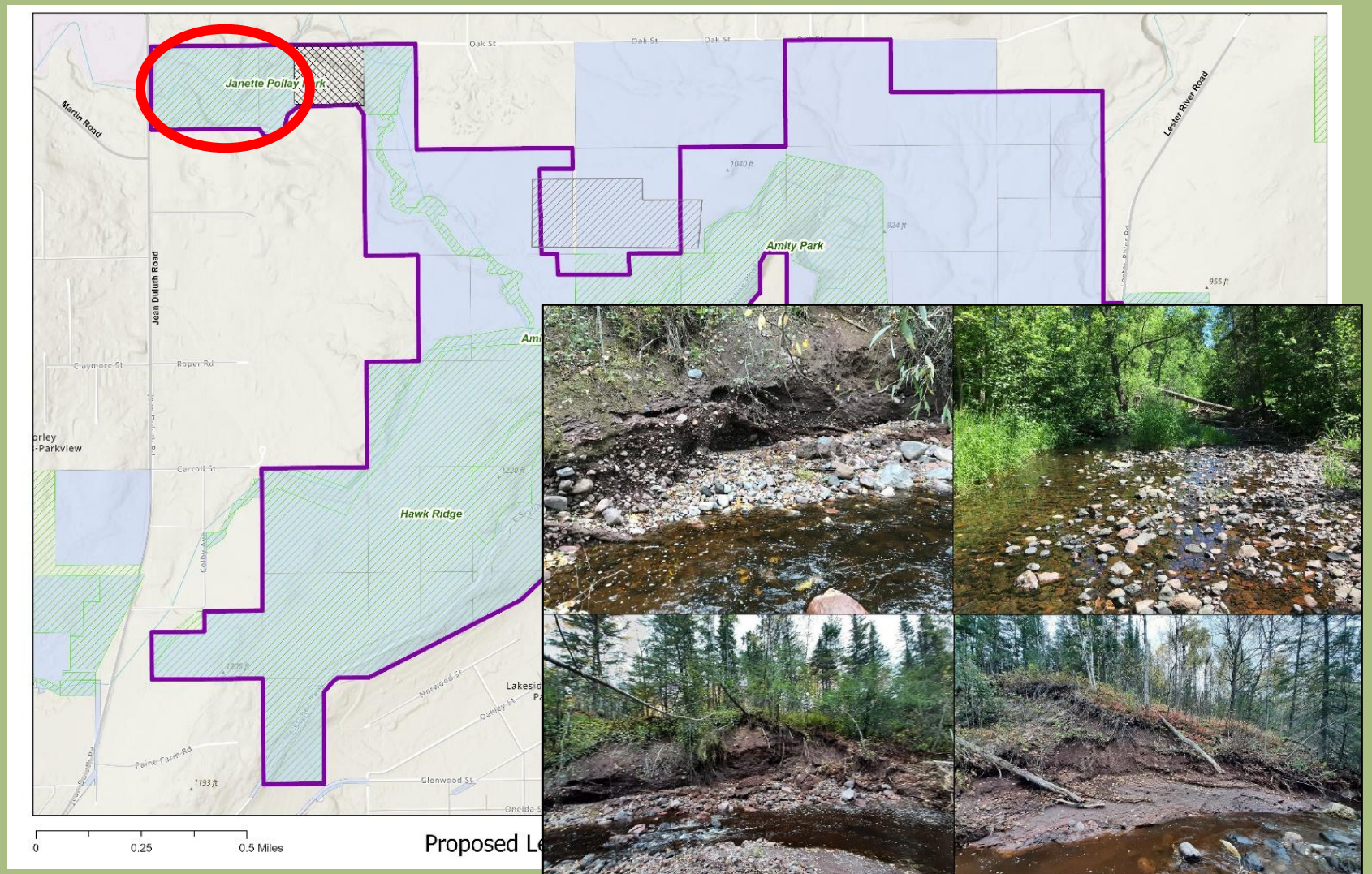


Amity Creek: Priority Restoration Reaches

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Stream and floodplain restoration on Amity Creek Reach AM-09
- **Cost**: $1.2-1.8 million
- **Responsible Parties**: South St. Louis SWCD (lead), MNTU, City of Duluth, MNDNR, MPCA
- **Target Completion Date**: 2035
- **Funding**: Section 319, LSOHF, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program, Clean Water Fund

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area



PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Phase 1 - East Amity Creek Reach EB-01
- **Cost**: $1.25 million ($750k secured, $500k pending)
- **Responsible Parties**: South St. Louis SWCD (lead), MNTU, City of Duluth, MNDNR, MPCA
- **Target Completion Date**: 2027
- **Funding**: Section 319, LSOHF, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Stream restoration effectiveness monitoring
- **Cost**: $50,000–$250,000 over multiple years
- **Responsible Parties**: MNDNR (lead), MPCA, South St. Louis SWCD, MNTU
- **Target Completion Date**: Ongoing
- **Funding**: Section 319, partner capacity

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

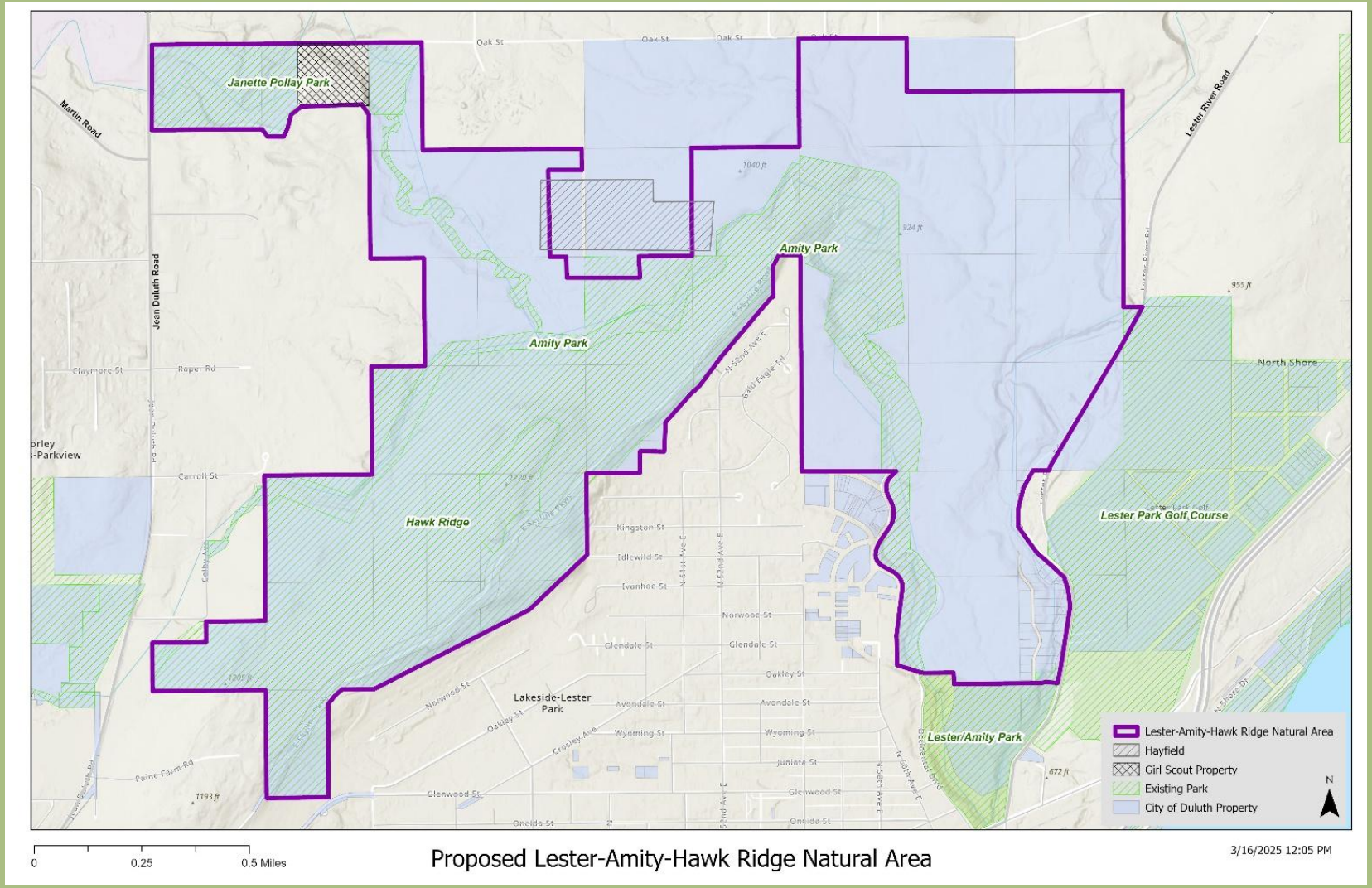
- **Action**: Implementation of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan for Facilities Improvements
- **Cost**: $2.5-$3.5 million
- **Responsible Parties**: City of Duluth, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
- **Target Completion Date**:
  Phase 1 – 2026
  Phases 2 & 3 – 2035
- **Funding**: Phase 1 - ENRTF/LCCMR ($155K secured), Lloyd K Johnson Foundation ($25K secured), LSOHF, MN Legacy Parks & Trails Funds, Private Donors, etc.

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- **Action**: Continue long-term bird monitoring efforts
- **Cost**: $50,000 annually
- **Responsible Parties**: Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
- **Target Completion Date**: Ongoing; coordinated with restoration projects
- **Funding**: Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area



ADDITIONAL PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

- Preservation of the highest quality plant communities
- Removal of seed producing invasives
- Restoration and underplanting of desired tree species
- Protection and restoration of rare species like Soapberry
- Introduction of fire as a management tool in fire adapted plant communities
- Where applicable, trail maintenance to reduce natural resource impacts

QUESTION FOR THE COMMISSION: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE IN THE MANAGEMENT PLAN, ESPECIALLY FROM A TRAILS/PUBLIC USE PERSPECTIVE?




MINNESOTA TROUT UNLIMITED

South St. Louis SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

HAWK RIDGE BIRD OBSERVATORY DULUTH, MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

PARK POINT RECREATION AREA DRAFT PLAN

03.11.26 | PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PRESENTATION

LHB

PRESENTER BIO

HEIDI S. BRINGMAN, PLA, LEED AP, MWPCP

Heidi is a Senior Landscape Architect and Project Manager at LHB with more than 20 years of experience. She specializes in community engagement, master planning and the design of resilient landscapes throughout the Northland.

Heidi has been working with the City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Department on planning and implementation initiatives since 2005. Most recently, she completed the restoration of Lincoln Park in west Duluth, as well as the restoration of Brighton Beach Park along the shores of Lake Superior.

She holds a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Minnesota's College of Design.

AGENDA

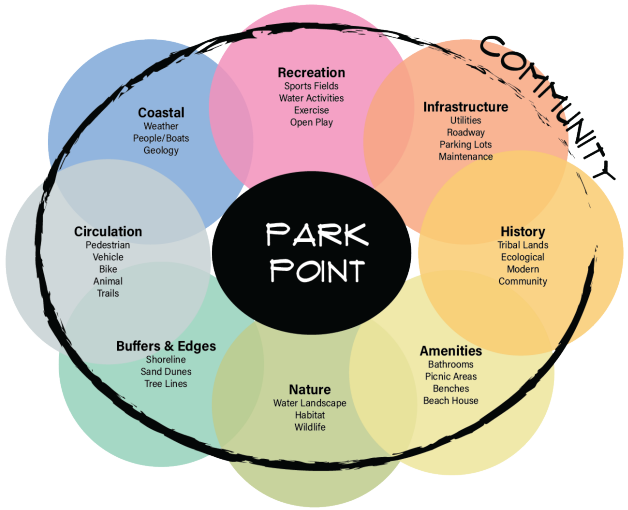
- Project Overview
- Draft Plan Contents
  - Chapter 1: Introduction
  - Chapter 2: Existing Conditions
  - Chapter 3: Community Engagement
  - Chapter 4: Park Improvement Plan Recommendations
  - Appendix: A - H
- Next Steps
- Questions & Answers

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose and Need

- Picks up from previous 2023 Shoreline Mitigation Feasibility Study
- Acknowledges entire park space (not just shoreline)
- Needs recommendations for future improvements
- Addresses the need for a fully comprehensive planning document that looks at the Rec Area through multiple lens:

- ✓ Recreational
- ✓ Environmental
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Historical



1 – Year Planning Process

- April 2025: Kick-off
- Spring 2025: Site Analysis & Needs Assessment
- Summer 2025: Community Engagement
- Fall 2025: Concept Development
- Winter 2025: Park Recreation Plan Development

- **March 2026: Today's Presentation**

DRAFT REPORT CONTENTS

Chapters Summary

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

TIMELINE

REC AREA EVOLUTION

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

1936 – Works Progress Administration (WPA)

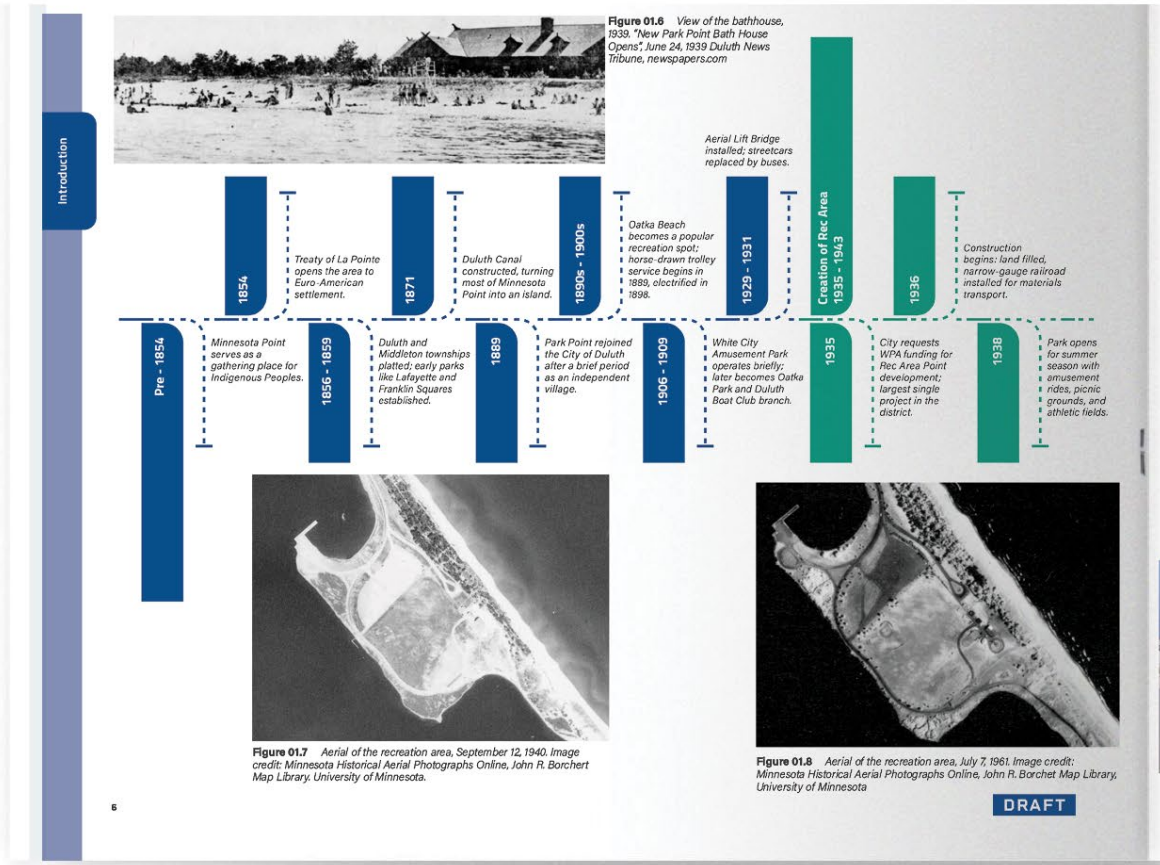
- Construction of Bath House in 1939
- 150,000 cubic yards of fill was hauled in to raise land above water level
- Development promised modern amenities, including beaches, picnic grounds, athletic fields, and amusement zone

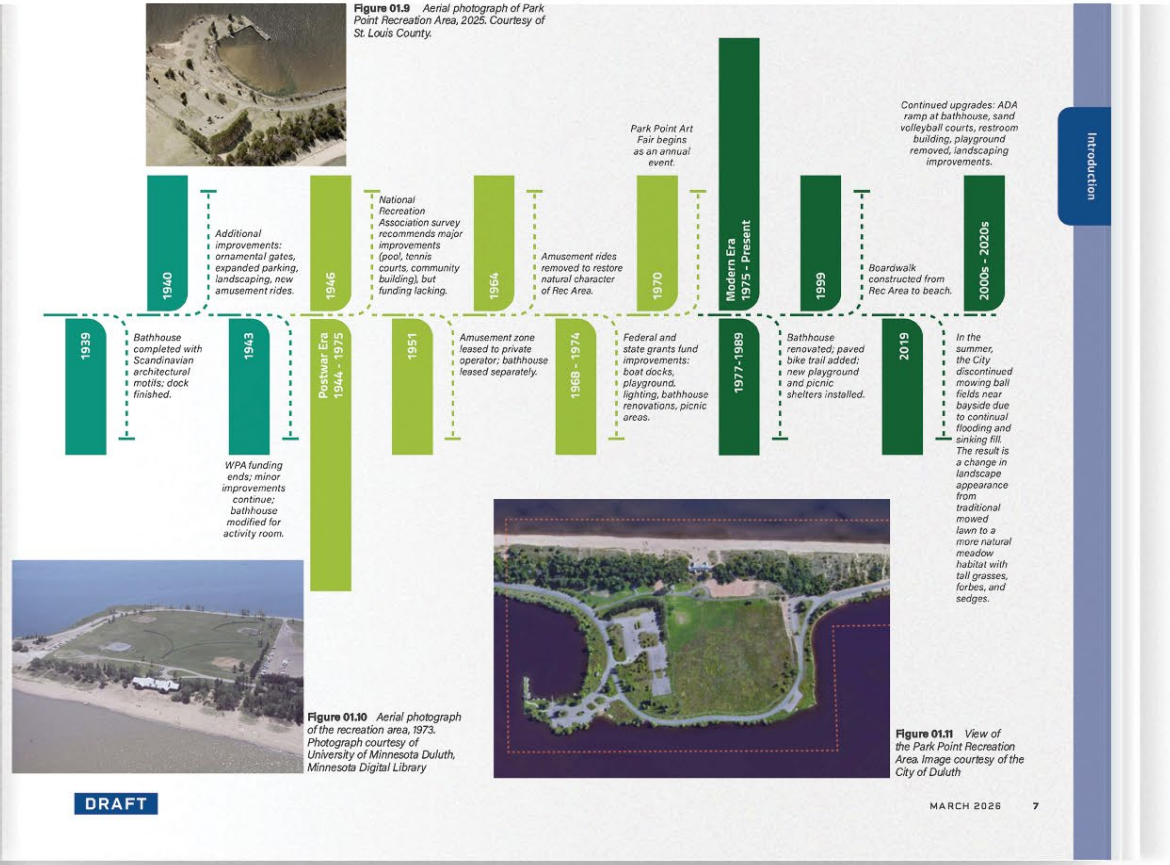
Figure 4. View of the bathhouse, 1939. "New Park Point Bath House Opens," June 24, 1939 *Duluth News Tribune,* newspapers.com.

Figure 7. Aerial photograph of the recreation area, September 12, 1940. Image retrieved from Minnesota Historical Aerial Photographs Online, John R. Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Historical and Cultural Context | Timeline





HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Evolution of the Park Point Recreation Area 1975- Present

- Late 1970's
  - Parking lot paving
  - Regrading and site lighting at ballfield
  - Upgrades to Beach House
- 1980's & 1990's
  - Construction of paved bike trail
  - Picnic shelters
  - Restroom building near boat dock
  - Sand volleyball courts
  - Removal of sport facilities (lighting, goal posts)
  - ADA accessible improvements

Figure 9. Aerial photograph of the recreation area, 1973. Photograph courtesy of University of Minnesota Duluth, Minnesota Digital Library.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

SPECIFIC USE AREAS

ASSESSMENTS

KEY CONCERNS

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Specific Use Areas

- Site Circulation & Parking
- Watercraft Hub & Harborside
- Recreation & Programming
- Habitat Areas
- Beach House & Beach Area

REC AREA HIGHLIGHT MAP

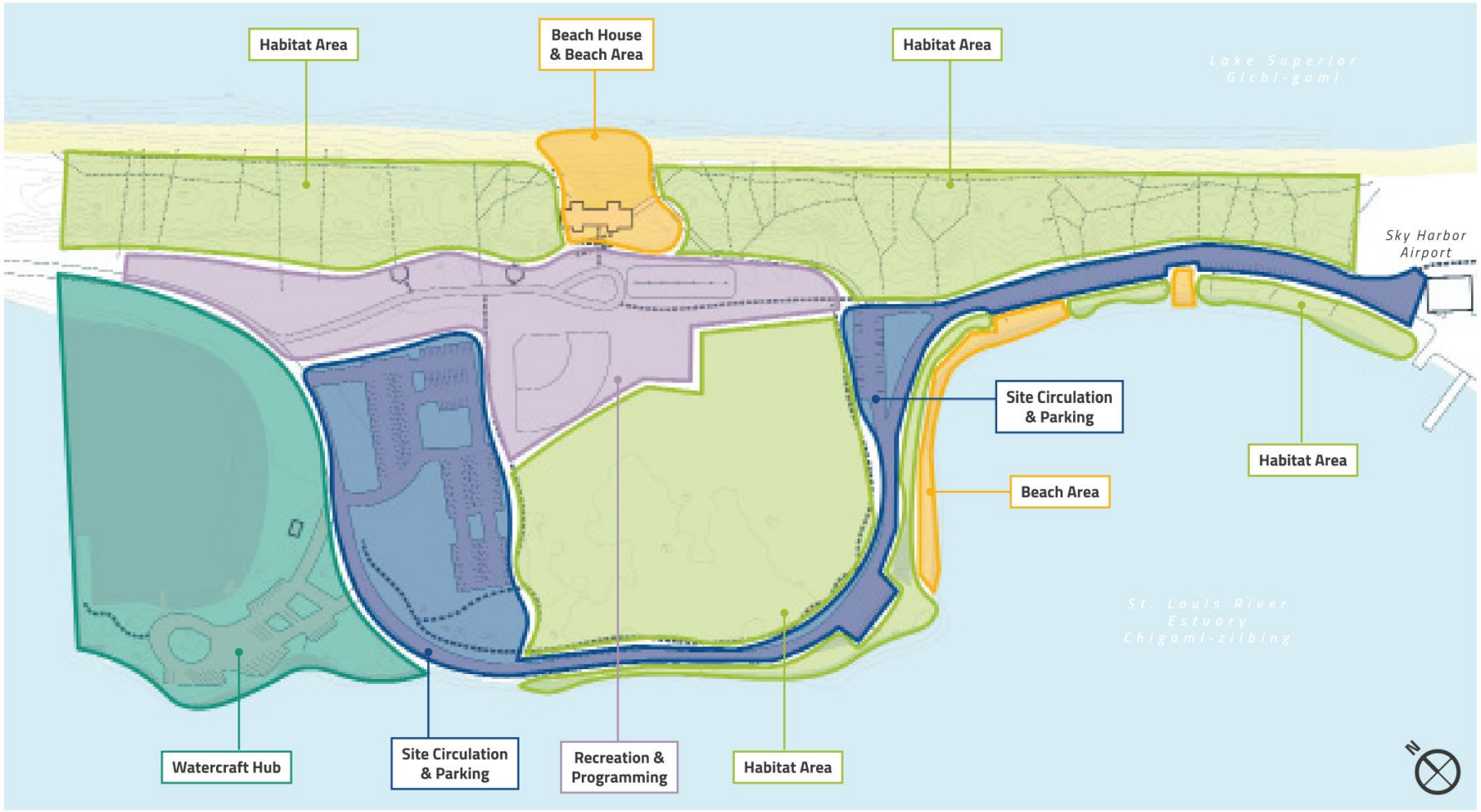


Figure 02.2 *Rec Area with use area highlights*

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Assessment – Key Components | Key Concerns | Narrative | Existing Photos

Site Circulation & Parking

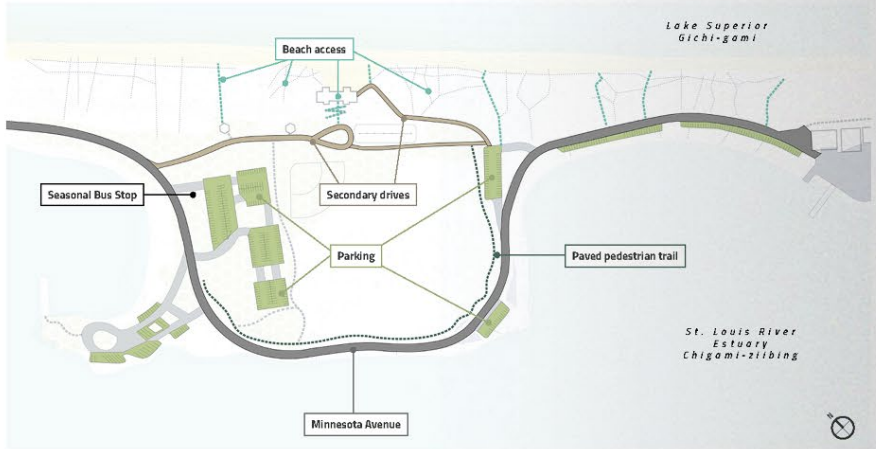


Figure 02.3 *Overview of Site Circulation & Parking Highlights*

KEY COMPONENTS

+ Minnesota Avenue
+ Secondary drives
+ Parking
+ Paved pedestrian trail
+ Beach access
+ Seasonal bus stop

KEY CONCERNS

+ Minnesota Avenue is at risk of additional erosion and wash-out, and is in poor condition
+ Parking areas are not well connected to key amenity spaces and are poorly designed
+ Some pedestrian paths are not accessible or continuous, some areas are in need of full replacement
+ Excessive informal beach access points put the dune and dunegrass habitat at risk and reduce coastal resiliency
+ Lack of intuitive site circulation and wayfinding throughout site

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MINNESOTA AVENUE

The Rec Area is organized around Minnesota Avenue, which provides vehicle access to parking areas and site amenities. There is no dedicated bike lane within the Rec Area boundary. However, the north shoulder of Minnesota Avenue is used as a seasonal bike lane between the canal and the Rec Area, with parking restricted to the south shoulder during the summer months. Minnesota Avenue was added as part of the original Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1937-1938 and was mostly dirt and gravel material. In 1971, the portion of Minnesota Avenue that runs through the Rec Area (from 40th Street to the airport) was paved with bituminous pavement. Over the years, the City has conducted various roadway improvement initiatives to other portions of the roadway, but no significant reconstruction or overlay projects have occurred in the past 55 years within the Rec Area. As a result, the roadway pavement is in relatively poor condition. The proximity of Minnesota Avenue to the water's edge, combined with increasing storm damage and changing climate patterns, puts the road at high-risk for eroding into the bay or being completely washed-out during a major storm event.

Figure 02.4 *Minnesota Avenue*

SECONDARY DRIVES

The site circulation includes two secondary drives, both of which are gated and serve the Beach House. The drop-off loop in front of the building is primarily used for special events and unloading materials and equipment. The drive leading directly to the building is an important connection, with a primary purpose of providing access for maintenance vehicles. Yet, blowing sand frequently collects along the drive and requires regular clearing to maintain access.

Figure 02.5 *Secondary drives*

PARKING

There are several parking lots in the Rec Area, which vary in size and layout, and that combined provide approximately 275 parking stalls for the Rec Area. The largest, primary lot has approximately 173 stalls and is notably far away from the Beach House, at 500 feet. Other parking lots provide vehicle parking for the watercraft launches and un-lifeguarded beach areas. At the southern point of the harborside is a small parking lot that provides informal

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EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTOS

Condition of paved trail

Condition of vehicle and trailer parking lot

Invasive species signage

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

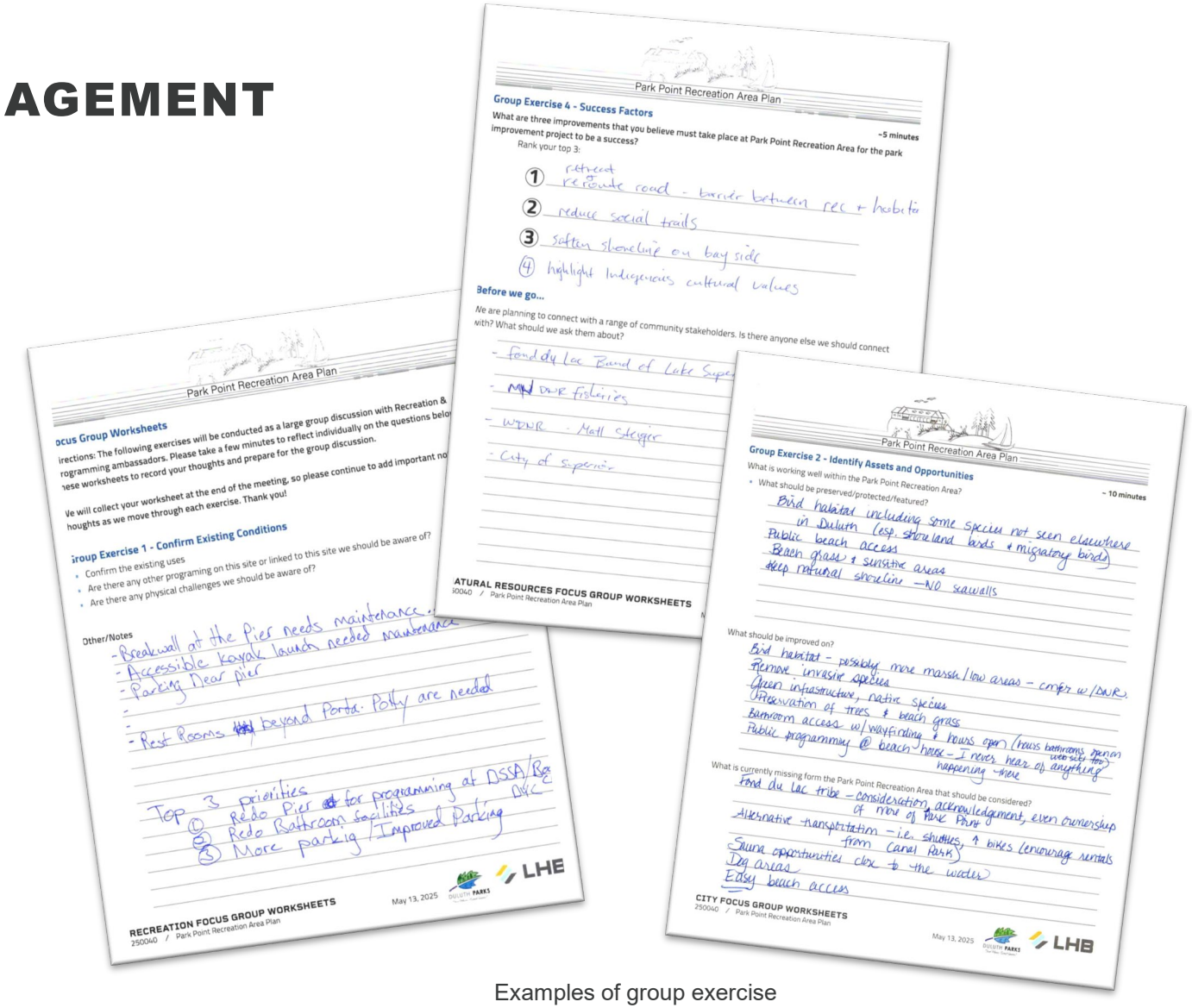
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

KEY TAKE AWAYS

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Establishing Priorities

- Small Group Engagement
  - Focus Groups (4) – Natural Resources, Recreation, City Departments, Tribal

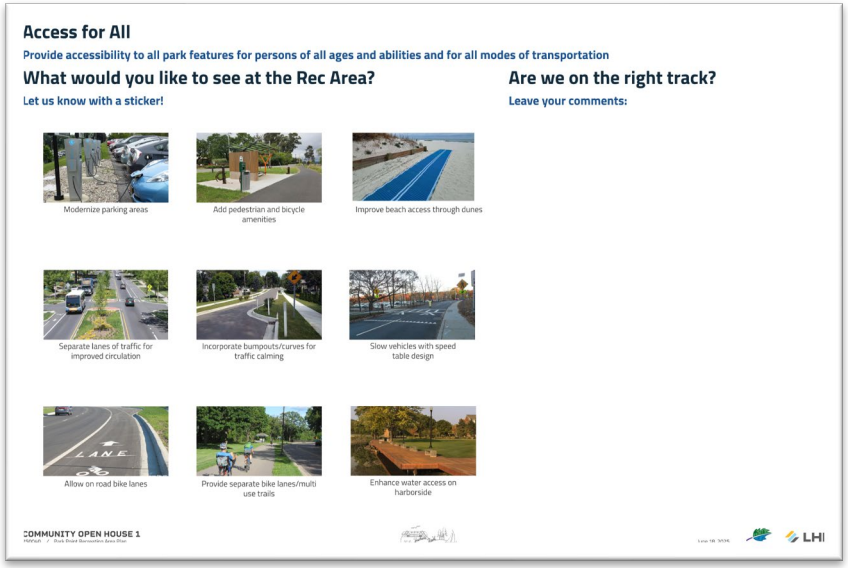


Examples of group exercise

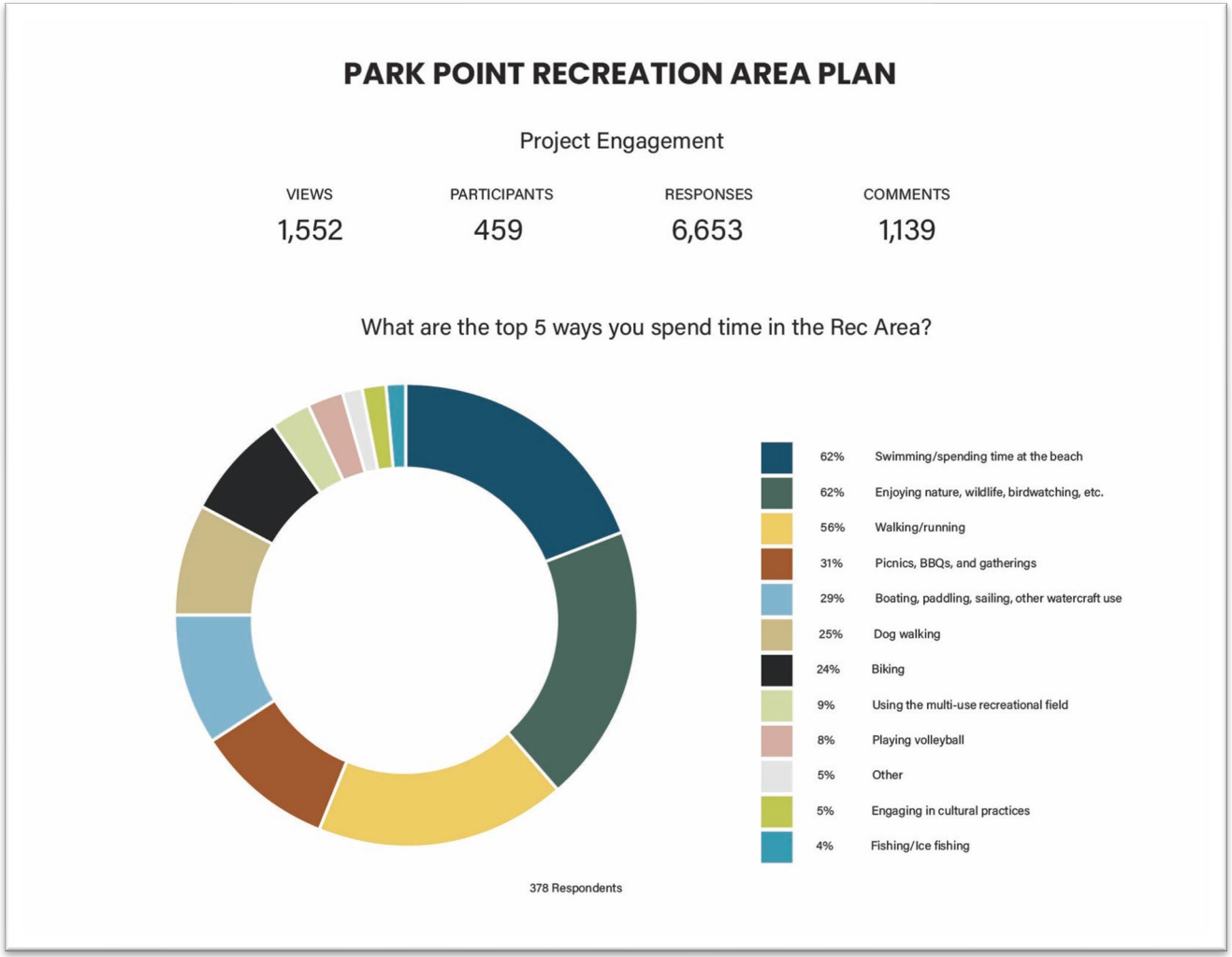
CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Establishing Priorities

- Community-Input Session 1
- Online Survey 1



Community-Input Board

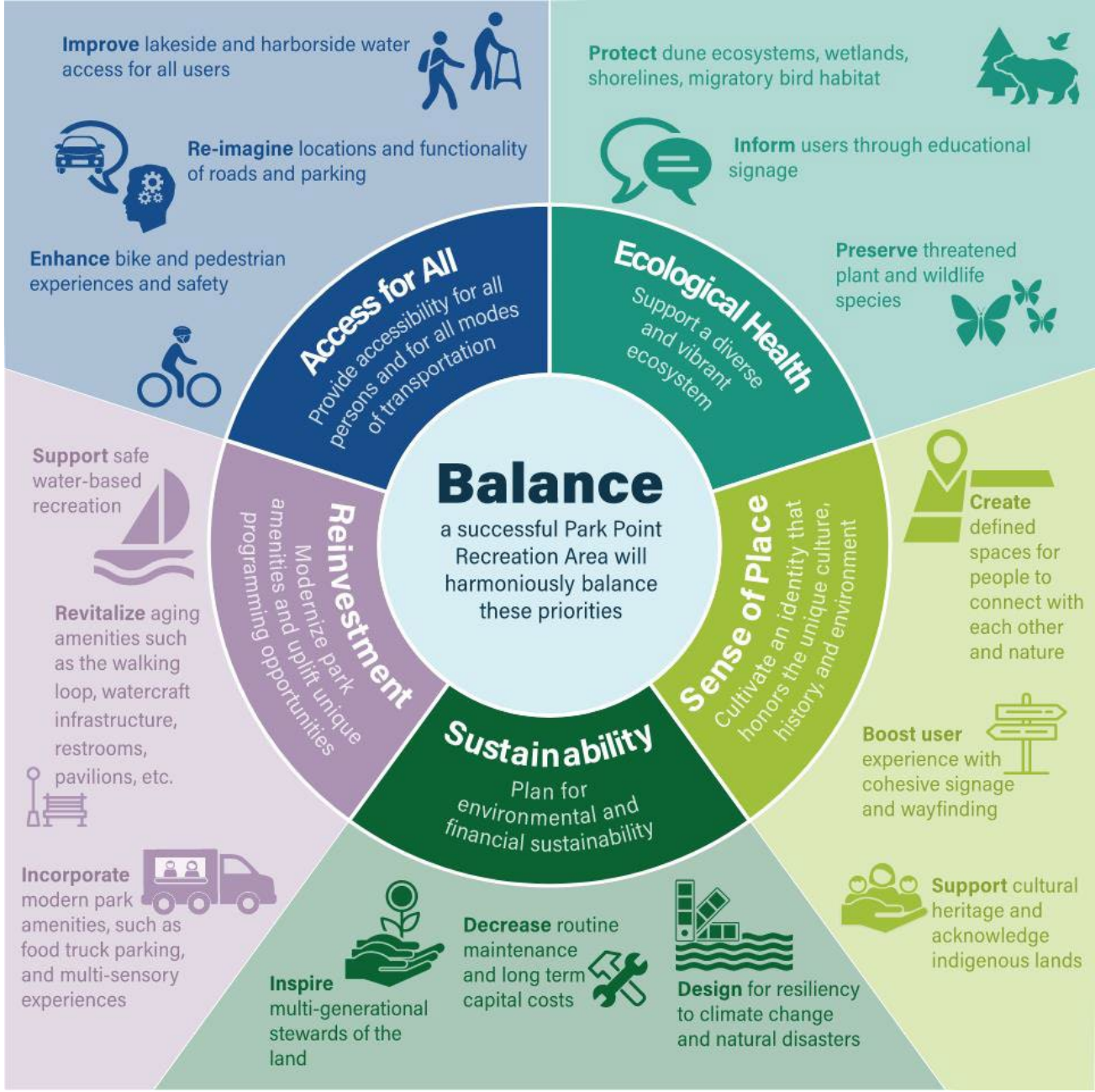


Sample of online community survey results

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Project Priorities Summary

- Access for All
- Ecological Health
- Sense of Place
- Sustainability
- Reinvestment



CHAPTER 3:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Concept Development | Design Charrette

- Day One:
  Presentation of four preliminary concepts (with discussion)
- Day Two:
  Presentation of three revised concepts (with wrap-up)

CHAPTER 3:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Concept Development | Community

- Community Input Session 2
- Online Survey 2

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Preliminary Concept Summary– Big Moves | Community Feedback | Maintenance Considerations

Concept 3 | Linear Flow

The Linear Flow concept transforms the Rec Area into a linear park, with recreational amenities, parking, and the roadway organized along a longer, narrower corridor, maximizing naturalized areas and open green space.

Figure 03.11 *Concept 3 Plan*

BIG MOVES

- Linear parkway configuration with three separate parking bays, provides 375 parking stalls and parking close to each recreational amenity space
- Roadway hugs active park space and is the furthest away from shoreline, retreated approximately 450 feet
- Provides largest area for naturalized habitat
- Creates multiple open lawn spaces for events/programming including a large field, small field, and festival lawn

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The Linear Flow concept was seen as the most nature-integrated and flexible design, but received the strongest set of mixed-reactions to key features.

The community most liked:

- Maximization of natural space, green areas, and habitat preservation – feeling that nature and recreation are effectively integrated
- Close parking to recreational activities and lack of an obtrusive parking lot
- Large playground and proximity of playground to restroom facilities
- Pedestrian and traffic flow – feeling that it would slow traffic and better support pedestrian movement

The community was most concerned with:

- Unappealing nature of driving along a continuous parking lot and oversized parking
- Pedestrian safety due to the proximity of recreational amenities to parking lot and drop-off loop, particularly the playground
- How the number of paths and roadway through the natural area fragments and disrupts natural habitats
- Distance of some picnic shelters from parking and other amenities
- The need to cross the road to access the multi-use field spaces
- Pedestrian safety and traffic flow – the feeling that the design may cause visibility issues and encourage unsafe driving behavior

PARK MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Maintenance challenges for the Linear Flow concept include:

- Pedestrian paths and trails to be maintained appear to have increased
- Recreational amenities that call for maintenance and trash services are disbursed, may result in unnecessary maintenance burdens and duplication of services
- Areas requiring mowing are widely disbursed throughout site

Maintenance advantages include:

- Volleyball court location aligns with natural sand movement
- Maintenance service drive to the Beach House is maintained
- Improved vendor spaces and rent-able pavilions will support earned income at the Rec Area

Key Take-a-ways

Collectively, the community did not gravitate strongly towards any one concept plan. Instead, specific elements and qualities of each concept plan stood out as highly desired by community members, including:

- Centralized recreational facilities that are within close proximity to parking areas, but not so close that they cause safety concerns, especially for families with small children
- Diverse and accessible recreational facilities, including re-establishing a playground, maintaining an open field space and volleyball courts, and providing an improved and expanded watercraft hub
- Inclusion of picnic facilities, flexible plaza space, and restroom facilities that support opportunities for community events and social gatherings
- Reinvestment in multi-use paths to ensure accessibility, connectivity, and safety
- Maximizing natural space and providing opportunities to appreciate the Rec Area's natural beauty without overly fragmenting and disrupting natural habitats and ecosystems
- Retreating the road for long-term sustainability and climate resiliency, and designing the road to improve circulation, reduce congestion, and with bike and pedestrian safety at the forefront
- Inclusion of a drop-off loop, right-sized parking areas, and safe pedestrian crossings

These key factors, along with maintenance and funding considerations, helped guide the development of a revised, preferred concept plan for the Rec Area, which will be reviewed in detail in the next chapter.

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Community Engagement

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

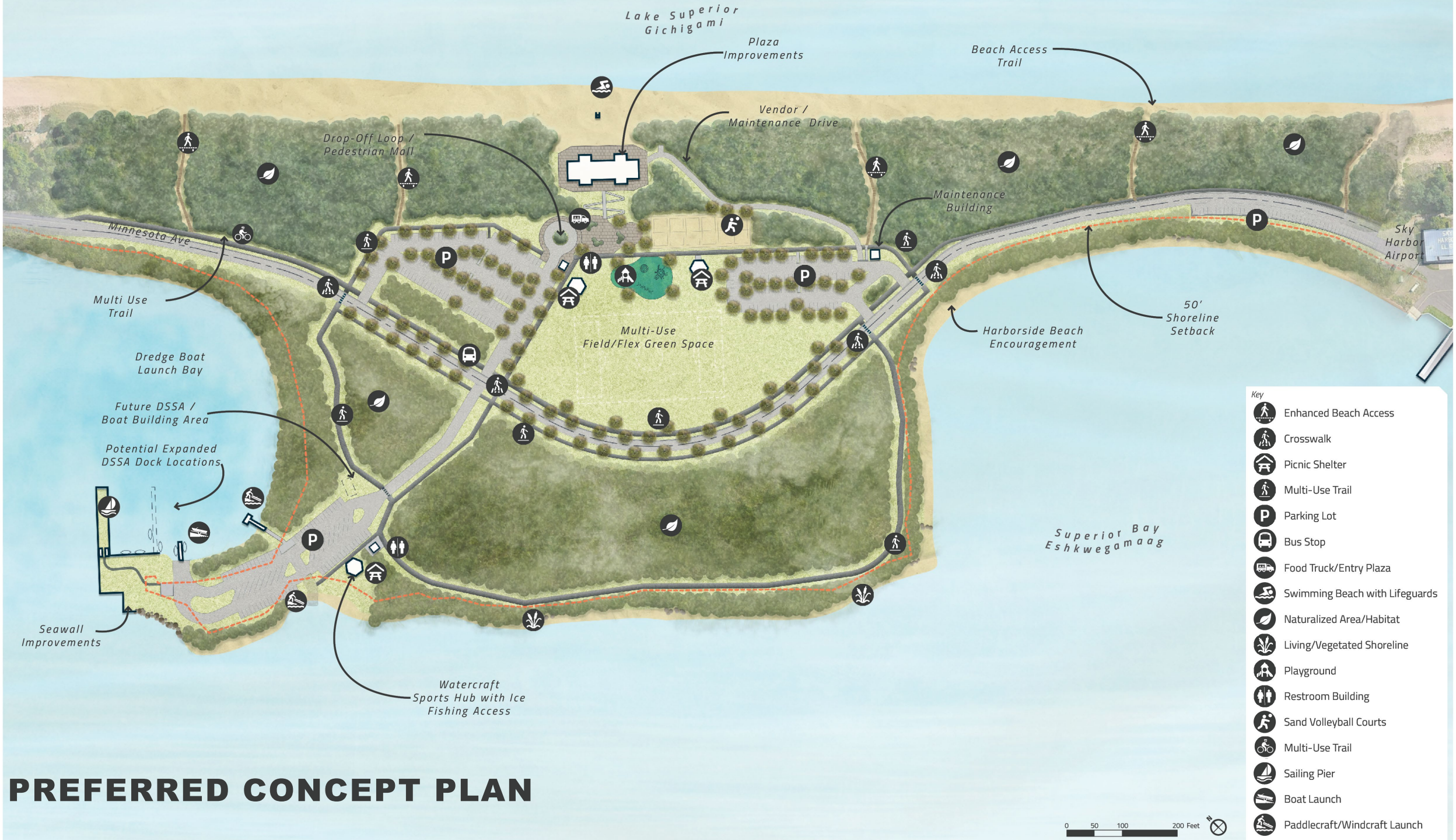
PREFERRED CONCEPT

USE AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

OPINION OF COSTS

OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS & TIMELINE

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

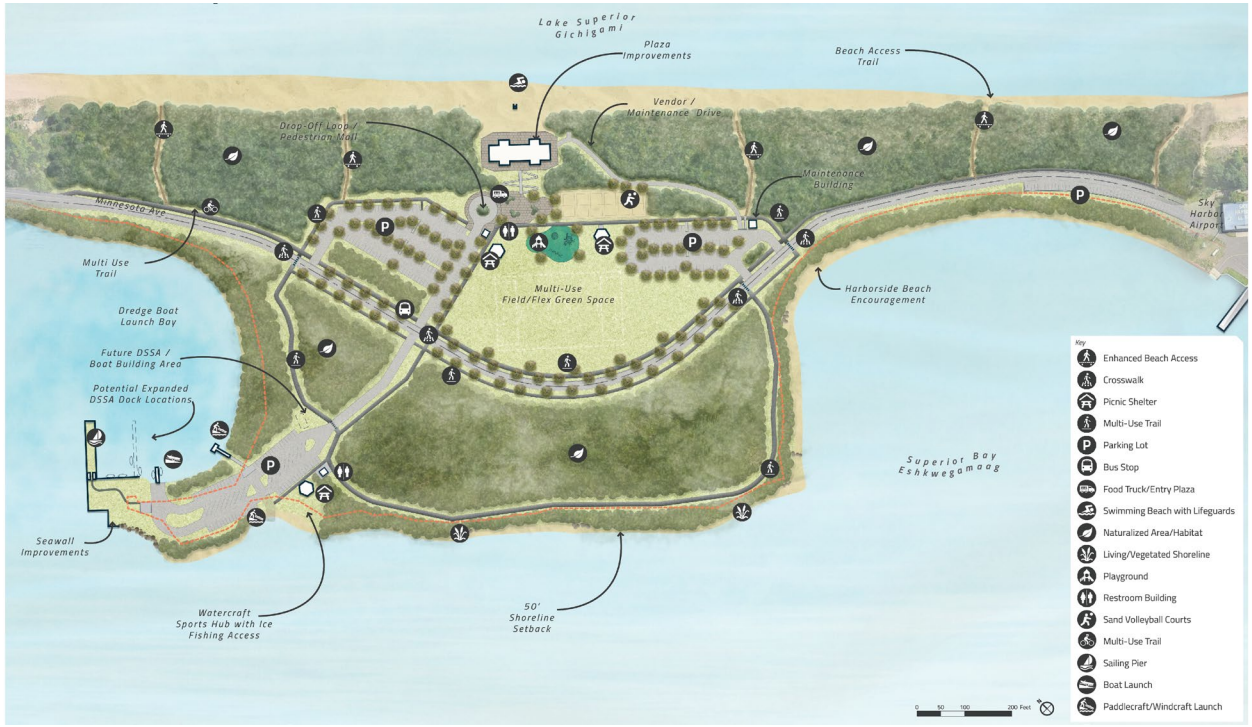


PREFERRED CONCEPT PLAN

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Preferred Concept | Big Moves

- Centralizes recreational amenities and flexible pedestrian-oriented spaces
- Provides safe, uninterrupted connections throughout park
- Provides two right-sized parking lots (with drop-off loop)
- Retreats roadway 400 feet inward from shoreline
- Roadway acts as a divider between more active and passive park uses
- Enhances watercraft area – renewed parking, restrooms, a pavilion and improved harborside beach
- Reduces number of dune crossings to protect sensitive habitat
- Provides for large, unfragmented naturalized area to limit habitat disruptions



CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Use Area Overview | Site Circulation & Parking

Preferred Concept Overview

The Preferred Concept is a compilation of design elements and qualities that were most liked by community members and key stakeholders throughout the engagement and design process. The Preferred Concept reflects a balanced, realistic, and sensible approach to meeting the project priorities of access for all, ecological health, sense of place, sustainability, and reinvestment.

BIG MOVES

+ Centralizes recreational amenities and flexible pedestrian-oriented spaces
+ Provides safe, uninterrupted, and accessible pedestrian connections throughout the park
+ Provides two appropriately sized parking lots for the primary recreational area, with a drop-off loop near the Beach House
+ Retreats roadway approximately 400 feet, roadway acts as a divider between more active and passive park uses
+ Enhances the watercraft area, including renewed parking and restrooms, a pavilion and an improved harborside beach area
+ Reduces the number of dune crossings to limit erosion and protect sensitive habitats
+ Provides a large, unfragmented naturalized area to limit habitat disruptions

Revisiting the use areas outlined in Chapter 2, the following sections describe the recommended improvements for key park elements in each use area.

Site Circulation & Parking

MINNESOTA AVENUE

Perhaps the most significant recommendation of this plan – one that sets the stage for the rest of the park's redevelopment – is retreating Minnesota Avenue inland by approximately 400 feet, as well as raising the road grade and associated areas by re-using dredge material approximately 1'-2' high for further protection from adjacent fluctuating water levels. Preliminary engineering analysis shows that the site could utilize up to a net fill volume of 28,000 cubic yards of clean fill for subgrade material to help raise the site back to its original elevations. Sustainability and resilient design are top community priorities for the Rec Area, and this critical move will better protect the roadway from on-going shoreline erosion and storm-induced damages.

This plan proposes two-way vehicular travel lanes on Minnesota Avenue, with shoulder space only. Because the parking lots have been adequately sized and after consulting with the City's engineering team, street parking is not recommended. Additionally, this plan recommends bicycle travel on a separated shared use path adjacent to the roadway, but an on-street bike lane could be considered and reevaluated during future phases of design. Low-impact, surface runoff stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as grassed swales and filter strips, are recommended.

SECONDARY DRIVES

The drop-off loop at the Beach House was identified as an important and meaningful park element supporting special events, community programming, and accessibility needs. This plan recommends retaining the drop-off loop, but with an off-set location so that pedestrian uses, rather than vehicular traffic, are the central feature of the recreational area. This plan also recommends improving the gated secondary drive that leads directly to the Beach House, providing necessary access for maintenance, vendor, and emergency vehicles.

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PARKING

Parking at a destination park, like the Rec Area, is an important consideration. This plan recommends right-sizing the parking areas, safer vehicular and pedestrian travel design, accounting for landscape and stormwater treatment requirements, shifting parking areas closer to amenities without creating conflicts with park users, and adding bicycle parking. This plan includes four parking areas with a combined 400+ parking stalls, compared to the existing 275 stalls. Two primary lots serve the beach/beach house area and the recreational area, one serves the watercraft area, and one serves the harborside beach and trails. Parking lot lighting and associated pedestrian lighting is necessary to accommodate frequent evening events that are held at the Beach House. Lighting is recommended to be wildlife friendly and to follow dark sky practices.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

This plan recommends continued considerations for expanded site connectivity and improved accessibility throughout the park. Ideal improvements would include a paved multi-use path along the north shoulder of Minnesota Avenue. This aligns with the existing use of the road's north shoulder as a seasonal bike lane and, if future road improvements allow, could act as a starting point for inclusion of a multi-use path along the entirety of Minnesota Avenue. Additionally, this plan recommends uninterrupted multi-use paths that connect parking areas to all amenities and replacement of the existing path around the naturalized area. These multi-use paths may vary in size and material depending on the location and maintenance implications, but all should meet accessibility standards for a recreational facility. Finally, enhanced crosswalks with traffic calming techniques should be considered at all proposed crossings along Minnesota Avenue.

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BEACH ACCESS

Finding balance between recreational uses and protecting the Rec Area's ecological health was among the top community priorities. Improving formalized beach access routes and reducing the number of informal trails is imperative for protecting the park's sensitive pine forest and sensitive dunegrass habitat. This plan emphasizes the use of renewed boardwalks to provide accessible routes to the beach. To provide predictable and controlled access points, spacing between boardwalks is planned at approximately 350 to 400 feet, for a total of 5 boardwalks. The proposed beach access closest to the park entrance should be further evaluated for use patterns, as it may or may not be necessary to retain. Informal trails should be restored and replanted with habitat appropriate species, and entry points should be carefully obliterated and protected from re-opening. Appropriate signage should be added to direct beach users to formalized access points and encourage protection of sensitive habitats.

While outside the scope of this plan, a future study is recommended to explore the feasibility of adding boardwalk though the pine forest, running parallel to the Lake and extending from the far edge of the Rec Area to the end of Minnesota Point, to further protect the dunes and old growth forest in this general area.

SEASONAL BUS STOP

This plan retains a seasonal bus stop within the Rec Area. Based on discussions with Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) staff, the stop is recommended near the far side of the first parking lot, near the multi-use field and the multi-use path that leads to the Beach House. Buses can use the half-circle drive of the second parking area or the watercraft area parking lot to turn around.

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Use Area Overview | Watercraft Hub & Harborside Area

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Cultivating a sense of place within the Rec Area was identified as a top community priority. Wayfinding and interpretative signage should be used to enhance user orientation, celebrate cultural identity, and deepen visitor understanding of the site. The City's Gate, Wayfinding, and Signage Plan should be implemented in the Rec Area, particularly for signage intended to welcome visitors, assist with site circulation, and provide rules and regulations. Existing signage that is redundant, unnecessary, or outdated should be removed. Additional interpretative signage should highlight culturally significant landmarks and stories, historic points of interest, and ecologically significant features. Interpretative signage should be developed collaboratively with input from tribal community members and historians.

Figure 04.3 *DSSA programming on Sailing Pier*

Watercraft Hub & Harborside Area

PUBLIC WATERCRAFT LAUNCHES

Supporting water-based recreation in the Rec Area includes providing safe and accessible watercraft launches. This plan provides for more intentional use of the sandy beach area as a non-motorized watercraft hub in warmer months and an ice fishing access point in colder months. This plan also recommends maintaining the existing boat launch in the existing location, but with improved ramp access on either side, and a slight relocation of the accessible, non-motorized paddlecraft launch, also with improved ramp access.

SEAWALL & SAILING PIER

Seawall repairs are a major capital expense for communities with this type of public waterfront infrastructure. Due to unknown underwater conditions of the seawall, a dive inspection with associated bathymetric survey is recommended to fully assess conditions, identify obstructions, and determine potential dredging needs. Given the age of the structure, a partial repair or full replacement of the existing seawall with a new cantilevered sheet pile wall is likely needed. This project may be difficult to fund with the more common grant sources used to support the park spaces, and collaborative fundraising efforts with community organizations may be necessary. Before any improvements are completed, the City and the Duluth-Superior Sailing Association (DSSA) should develop a plan to address anticipated disruptions for programming that relies on the sailing pier and surrounding area. See Appendix F for more detail on the seawall analysis.

WATER DEPTH

The recreation community has made it clear that, in order for successful watercraft activities to continue in the protected launch area, collected sediment must be removed to allow for an increased water depth. Dredging in the protected bay that provides access to the sailing pier and watercraft launches will alleviate water depth issues and help with overall water quality. Because this area is outside of the federal navigation channel that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for, dredging in this area will need to be conducted as a separate, individual project managed locally. Much like the Rec Area's seawall, this type of project may be more challenging to fund with typical grant sources. The City and community organizations should work together to identify potential funding sources and fundraising efforts that could be used to complete this work in both the near- and long-term, as repeated dredging overtime will be necessary.

VEHICLE & TRAILER PARKING

Currently, sections of the watercraft area parking lot are eroding into the water and there is continual parking capacity challenges. This plan recommends redesigning and slightly relocating the parking area. Parking is recommended to be located behind the 50' shoreline setback, and a vegetated buffer is recommended between the water and parking areas to better protect this infrastructure. Additionally, the lot should be redesigned to provide additional vehicle and trailer parking, allow for improved circulation, and provide better ramp access to launches.

AMENITIES

Given the significant distance between the watercraft area and other recreational amenities on this site, it is appropriate and reasonable that this space have its own set of supporting amenities, such as a restroom, picnic shelter, grills, seating, and trash/recycling hub. Replacing and relocating the recently removed restroom facility will more safely and effectively support watercraft users, including youth participating in sailing programming. By co-locating the restroom with a new picnic shelter, duplicate trash/recycling hub services is eliminated. It should be noted that the picnic shelter will be a net add to the park system's current infrastructure. However, given the popularity of picnic shelter rentals in the Rec Area, and the likely support of outside funding for implementation, the revenue generated may result in a net-positive for the park system. One consideration for the City to explore, as a way to maintain this new set of amenities, is to collaborate with the DSSA or another third-party to manage and caretake this set of facilities. The City should evaluated the revenue generation trade-off with the maintenance expenses associated with this set of amenities.

FUTURE COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED PROJECTS

In collaboration with DSSA, this plan supports and accounts for the future implementation of community-based and community-supported projects in the watercraft area. DSSA has indicated a desire to one day add a second dock location to allow for additional sailboat docking and help expand their programming capabilities. Additionally, DSSA has desire for an indoor classroom space. This plan provides a recommended, but flexible, location for that future building space. As fundraising efforts evolve, DSSA and the City should work closely to determine preferred investment locations on Minnesota Point, and to

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Use Area Overview | Recreation & Programming Area

develop detailed designs and implementation strategies for any community-supported projects.

HARBORSIDE VEGETATED SHORELINE

To ensure the Rec Area is resilient to changing climate patterns and shoreline erosion, this plan recommends restoring grade and re-stabilizing the harborside shoreline with dredge material, where possible. Shoreline Best Management Practices (BMPs) should also be designed and implemented to improve shoreline stability, protect water quality, and increase the resilience of harbor-edge infrastructure. These BMPs may include:

+ Living Shoreline: A living shoreline is a way of managing coastal areas to protect, restore, and enhance habitat by using plants, and other soft materials in a way that does not interrupt the natural relationships between land and bodies of water. By strategically placing sand, rock, dredge material, and coir fiber logs with live stakes and plugs, a living shoreline helps prevent erosion, while increasing water quality and habitat diversity.
+ Vegetated Riprap: This BMP involves the placement of riprap along the shoreline to prevent further erosion. The riprap should be designed and installed in a manner that allows for shrub and tree plantings in voids between the stones.
+ Hard Armor: Hard armoring eliminates shoreline erosion by placing properly sized and properly designed stones from the toe of the bank to the top of the bank.
+ Armored Toe: Armoring the toe of the bank will prevent the undercutting and sloughing of the bank. The toe armor will extend from the lake bed to the ordinary high-water level (OHWL) with vegetation being place above the OHWL. The armor material may be natural debris, such as root wads or other woody debris, or gray materials such as stone or concrete.

Shoreline BMPs may be integrated with public access improvements, interpretive elements, and habitat enhancement measures to provide both functional and educational benefits, while reinforcing the Rec Area's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable design.

Figure 04.4 *Successful implementation of shoreline BMPs at Brighton Beach Park, Duluth*

HARBORSIDE SANDY BEACHES

To support more diverse recreational uses within the Rec Area, this plan recommends enhanced beach areas along the harborside. Much like the vegetated shoreline, there are shoreline BMPs that can be implemented to assist.

Including:

+ Stone Bulkheads: Stand-alone stone bulkheads are installed near the OWHL. The bulkheads would be roughly C-shaped and would generally parallel to the shoreline with additional sand placed behind them. This would result in a beach that undulates in both depth and elevation. The bulkheads, and the additional sand behind them, would ensure that the beach is still present during high-water periods and would provide a source of beach sand to address any erosion that occurs. With enough sand behind the bulkheads, shoreline sediment transport can be reduced.
+ Rock Sill: A rock sill is a coastal stabilization feature designed to reduce wave energy and protect vulnerable shorelines. In this application, the rock sill would be constructed entirely on land, positioned along the back edge of the sandy beach. This placement creates a natural buffer that preserves the park's landscape and recreation areas. To maintain long-term shoreline stability, a secure, anchored toe would be built at the base of the rock sill structure. This prevents the complete loss of beach material over time. In front of the sill, sand would remain free to shift and reorganize in response to changing water levels, storms, and seasonal conditions. This design supports a dynamic beach system while providing the greatest flexibility in shoreline shape and natural movement.

See Appendix F for additional information on shoreline and beach protection BMPs.

Recreation & Programming Area

PLAYGROUND

Throughout the community engagement process, requests for bringing a playground back to the Rec Area were heard time and again. Given the destination quality of the Rec Area, a playground is a fitting amenity for this park space. This plan recommends a mid-sized playground, with accessible and multi-sensory features, that would act as the centerpiece of the recreation and programming area. The playground's location was selected with intention. The playground is located near restroom facilities and provides strong sightlines for caregivers from the picnic shelters, plaza space, volleyball courts, field space, and even the Beach House. To further increase safety, the playground is distanced from parking areas with other amenities in-between acting as a buffer. To reduce sand maintenance needs on the fall zone surface, the playground is separated from the volleyball courts by a multi-use path. The addition of a playground, alongside other area improvements, will encourage and allow for more youth-oriented programming opportunities at the Rec Area.

Figure 04.5 *Example of a similar Duluth destination playground in Lincoln Park neighborhood*

In the context of the larger park system, the City currently has more park assets than it can afford to maintain over the long term. Because adding a new playground to the park system would only worsen this problem, this plan recommends that, existing playgrounds on Minnesota Point be evaluated to determine which locations will provide the greatest community benefit. The evaluation should consider the removal of one or more of the other playgrounds on

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CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Use Area Overview | Habitat Areas

once again, be considered for beneficial reuse of dredge material to increase elevation and ensure the long-term usability of this field space.

OTHER MOWED GREEN SPACE

Today, to accommodate dispersed recreational amenities and parking areas, nearly three acres of green space outside of the primary field area are mowed by maintenance staff. This plan recommends consolidating recreational amenities and increasing naturalized field spaces, significantly reducing mowing burdens down to only 1.25 acres of mowed green space.

PICNIC SHELTERS

Picnic shelters not only support the community's wishes for gathering spaces, they also act as a revenue generator for the park system. This plan recommends replacing and relocating the two picnic shelters in the programming and recreation area. By centralizing the picnic areas, users/renters will have greater access to recreational amenities, restrooms, and parking. Revenue that the City collects from these rentals is reinvested into park amenities for smaller maintenance and repairs overtime. This plan recommends that pattern continues with new pavilions.

AMENITIES

As exists today, other amenities in the programming and recreation area should include appropriately placed grills, tables and seating, trash and recycling hubs, and pedestrian lighting. Additional amenities desired by the community, such as a drinking fountain/ bottle-filler station, permanent restroom facility, and a wash-off station, should also be considered. Should seating be incorporated into the final site design, the City should strive to utilize Memorial Bench waiting list inquires as a means of honoring requests for benches and aligning those with the actual need for this park space

Habitat Areas

SAND DUNES & BEACHGRASS

Protecting the dune habitat on Minnesota Point is a form of climate resiliency. As described in the Site Circulation & Parking section, the intentional placement of formalized boardwalks and the removal of informal trails is key to protecting the Rec Area's sensitive dune and dunegrass habitat. Alongside access improvements, this plan recommends the implementation of redundant sand control measures, utilizing a combination of vegetation and fencing placement to minimize sand migration, better protect the dune habitat, and reduce maintenance. Additionally, regular monitoring and removal of invasive species should occur to ensure the native dunegrass is not displaced.

Figure 04.9 *Existing sand dune revitalization area protection and education*

PINE FOREST

This plan recommends retaining the stretch of pine trees, allowing it to act as a natural buffer and dune stabilizer, supply shade, wildlife habitat, and as a stopover for migratory birds. The City and local community clubs should work together to fill any notable canopy gaps with appropriate species, ensuring plantings are located behind the primary dune ridge and not on the active dune face, which can destabilize the dune system. Additionally, regular use of fire in the pine stand is a best practice for maintaining this habitat as a resilient system. Traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous land management practices should be reintroduced in this space.

NATURALIZED FIELD

During the community engagement process, community members expressed appreciation for the naturalized field space and saw an opportunity to create a peaceful, nature-focused user experience. Providing the opportunity to appreciate the Rec Area's natural beauty without overly fragmenting and disrupting habitat areas, this plan recommends placing the naturalized field space entirely on the lower side of Minnesota Avenue, with a multi-use path around the perimeter. The bayside portion of the multi-use path is intentionally located to mimic the original road alignment, so that it may serve as an interpretative trail that honors the history of the Rec Area. This type of thoughtful infrastructure planning may be necessary to receive state and federal grant funding, which typically includes significant historic preservation and mitigation efforts.

This plan recommends the reuse of beneficial dredge materials within the naturalized area to create vegetated berms, which can then be planted with pollinator-friendly species. While the initial establishment period may temporarily increase maintenance needs, over the long-term this naturalized field space will be low-maintenance and provide a much needed balance to the higher-maintenance recreational field space. Once the naturalized field is reestablished, the City should consider this site for prescribed burns to reestablish natural ecological processes, potentially in partnership with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

Figure 04.10 *Existing wet meadow species naturalize around storm swale*

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Use Area Overview | Beach House & Beach Area

Beach House & Beach Areas

BEACH HOUSE

Specific building improvement recommendations for the Beach House are not included in the scope of this plan. However, this plan does include recommendations that better support the use and functionality of the Beach House (improved parking, for example) and surrounding areas and activities. This plan also recommends exploring alternate models for managing, operating, and leasing the Beach House that may better serve the community and increase revenue generation.

PATIO SPACE

This plan recommends upgrades to the pavement surfacing around the Beach House to improve accessibility, reduce maintenance burdens, and provide a more welcoming space for programming and community gathering. Like other spaces in the Rec Area, sand control measures are critical for improving user experiences and reducing maintenance needs of the patio space. To minimize sand entering the patio space, this plan recommends replacing the failing timber retaining walls at the dune side slopes and implementing other sand control measures based on repeated wind patterns. Covered seating options should be considered for this space to improve functionality and the comfort of beach users.

BEACH AREA WITH LIFEGUARDS

Access to the beach and the lifeguarded area could be improved with better wayfinding signage. They City may wish to consider beach-oriented revenue opportunities, such as cabana rentals operated by a third party.

Figure 04.11 *Beach House facade and entry plaza current condition*

Figure 04.12 *Duluth Parks & Recreation event taking place during lifeguard hours*

Maintenance Considerations

Maintenance advantages of the Preferred Concept include:

+ Retreating Minnesota Avenue will better protect the road infrastructure from damage, lessening maintenance and repair demands in both the near- and long-term
+ Overall lawn area to be maintained is reduced and consolidated, allowing for less and more efficient maintenance efforts
+ Recreational amenities that call for maintenance and trash services are more consolidated, allowing for more efficient use of time and the elimination of duplicated costs and services
+ Improved vendor spaces and rent-able pavilions will support earned income at the Rec Area
+ Volleyball court location aligns with natural sand movement, keeping maintenance needs lower
+ Maintenance service drive to the Beach House is maintained and improved
+ This plan will provide a complete reset for much of the Rec Area's infrastructure, which in turn will reduce deferred and on-going maintenance burdens by millions of dollars.

Maintenance considerations to be further discussed during the final design phase include:

+ Multi-use paths: Balancing the amount and type of multi-use paths with maintenance capacity will be critical for moving this plan forward. The preferred concept shows an ideal, perfectly connected site with the understanding that concessions may be necessary.
+ Playground: A playground at the Rec Area is a net add to what is in the system today. This plan recommends an evaluation of the long-term need for other playgrounds on Minnesota Point, with the goal of maintaining or reducing the total number of playgrounds in the park system.
+ Restrooms: This plan recommends a permanent, vault toilet restroom building, rather than the use of portable toilets. Park maintenance may wish to further evaluate the long-term costs and maintenance needs both at this site and within the larger context of the park system.
+ Establishment Period: There is a potential for initial increases in maintenance costs/efforts as plant and site establishment takes place. However, after the establishment period, there should be a reduction in mowing and general landscape upkeep, as the naturalized area and the vegetated shoreline are designed to be largely self-sufficient and require minimal maintenance.

Management & Operations

Implementing the preferred plan for the Rec Area will require intentional short- and long-term investments for operational sustainability, ecological stewardship, and recreational value. Recommendations of this plan prioritize sustainable and resilient infrastructure that will better balance stewardship of natural resources and access to recreation opportunities. The commitment to accessibility must be reflected in all future developments in the Rec Area to better provide recreation for people of all ages and abilities through universal design principles. As the City of Duluth moves through design and implementation of the preferred plan, there will need to be continued focus on strategies that reduce long-term maintenance and operation costs, including incorporating energy

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Opinion of Probable Costs

- Assumes construction in 2031
- Based on similar recent projects & local economic conditions
- High-level estimations based on preliminary concept-level plan only
- Useful for future planning & decision-making during final design process

PARK IMPROVEMENT	ESTIMATED COST
SITE PREPARATION	***$975,000***
Pavement & infrastructure removals	$300,000
Earthwork & grading modifications	$250,000
Dredge Material Mobilization & Logistics	$125,000
Erosion control, sand, & stormwater management	$300,000
SITE CIRCULATION & PARKING	***$5,375,200***
Enhanced beach access points (4 new)	$900,000
Retreat & reconstruct Minnesota Avenue (including Hub entrance)	$2,450,000
Parking lots (4)	$1,560,000
Accessible multi-use trail networks	$465,200
WATERCRAFT AREA	***$2,100,000***
Seawall improvements	$1,850,000
Hub expansion launch improvements	$100,000
Restroom building (vault)	$90,000
Picnic Pavilion	$60,000
RECREATION & PROGRAMMING AREA	***$1,185,000***
Restroom building (vault)	$90,000
Entry plaza	$350,000
Playground	$425,000
Sand volleyball courts enhancement	$50,000
Picnic Pavilions (2)	$120,000
Soil amendment & landscaping	$150,000
HABITAT AREAS	***$1,695,000***
Shoreline protection	$650,000
Enhanced naturalization areas	$845,,000
Site restoration & establishment period maintenance	$200,000
BEACH HOUSE & BEACH AREA	***$350,000***
Perimeter plaza and access improvements	$350,000
COMPREHENSIVE SITE AMENITIES	***$775,000***
Site lighting	$450,000
Site furnishings	$75,000
Wayfinding & signage	$250,000
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST	**$12,455,200**
OTHER PROJECT COSTS	
Surveying, testing, additional studies, & tribal monitoring	$550,000
Final design fees (10% of construction costs)	$1,245,520
Permitting and regulatory work (5% of construction costs)	$622,760
Contingency (20% of construction costs)	$2,491,040
TOTAL PROJECT COST	**$17,364,520**

CHAPTER 4: PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Additional Chapter Content & Considerations

- Management & Operations Summary
- Project Funding & Partners
- Putting It All Together
- Implementation Timeline
  - **2026: Plan Adoption**
  - 2026 - 2029: Secure funding, work with partners
  - 2028 - 2030: Site investigations, surveys, entitlements/regulatory approvals, final design
  - 2031+: Construction documents advertised for bidding, contractor award, project implementation
- Prioritized Park Improvements
  - Priority 1: Use of Dredge Material and Site Circulation for All
  - Priority 2: Recreation and Programming Improvements
  - Priority 3: Shoreline Stabilization and Enhanced Naturalized Areas
  - Priority 4: Seawall Improvements

APPENDIX ITEMS

Appendix Summary

- Eight supplementary documents
- Contains 94 pages

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Appendix

A. Historical Evaluation of Park Point Recreation Area
B. Online Survey 1 Summary
C. Design Charette Summary
D. Community Input Session Summary
E. Online Survey 2 Summary
F. Coastal Memo on Bayside Beach Protection
G. Grant & Technical Support Opportunities Descriptions
H. Summary of Public Comments

NEXT STEPS

DRAFT PLAN TO FINAL PLAN ADOPTION

Public Comment Period

- Draft Plan will be posted on City website on Thursday, March 12th for public review and comment period
- Design team and City will incorporate any necessary changes based on public comments received

Final Plan Adoption

- Final Plan will be returned to the Parks & Recreation Commission for approval
- Final Plan will go to City Council for Adoption (anticipated April 2026)

Questions & Answers

Thank You!