



Cedar · Isles · Dean
Neighborhood Association

Transmittal via email

Date: March 10th, 2023

To: Emma Pachuta, MPRB Senior Planner
EPachuta@minneapolisparcs.org

From: Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association

Re: Comments on the Draft MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles (issued January 2023)

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) works for the benefit of its residents (renters and owners) and the community at large by promoting civic engagement, encouraging social and cultural exchange, working for the preservation and enjoyment of the natural environment and residential properties, and supporting a vibrant commercial district. CIDNA's vision is that the Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood is an inclusive, safe, and peaceful community, where residents are good stewards of their homes, enjoy and safeguard the natural environment, and care about each other's wellbeing. Many in the area do not have backyards and the nearby MPRB parklands are a shared natural area and wildlife habitat in the urban setting. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the January 2023 draft MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles (the Draft Plan).⁽¹⁾

I. Follow Community Engagement

In 2021, CIDNA conducted a resident survey to identify community priorities.⁽²⁾ Approximately 200 residents participated in the outreach, which revealed the highest priority is for Environmental Preservation. Specifically, the following environmental priorities were identified and are shown in order of importance with Nature Preservation being the lead priority:

- Preserve Nature
- Engage in volunteer park stewardship
- Mitigate South West Light Rail Transit project (SWLRT) environmental impact
- Improve Park Maintenance
- Identify Strategic Park Improvements

Specific parkland priorities and initiatives requested by community are:

- Improve Cedar Lake water quality
- Protect and enhance tree canopy
- Expand pollinator friendly plantings
- Remove invasive species (i.e., buckthorn, cattails, and phragmites)

The results of the CIDNA survey directly translate to the Draft Plan and serve to identify priorities and desired outcome for the parklands and lakes. The survey has been used to inform the following comments which advocate for natural park assets and resist overdevelopment. State and regional funding sources are readily available for natural areas. This emphasis correlates highly with the call to protect water quality and natural green space shown in the MPRB Community Engagement Summary documented on the Project web site ⁽³⁾:

- Community Engagement Summary - Part 1. Key takeaway: Participants identified poor water quality as a top concern.
- Community Engagement Summary - Part 2. Key takeaway: Participants from underrepresented communities stressed the desire to engage with nature and the need for decisions to be guided by “what’s healthy for the water.”

II. Prioritize Protecting, Restoring and Maintaining Ecosystems and Habitat

“If you wish to make a difference in the world, try ecological restoration. Seek to heal the earth, its cities, ecosystems, and human communities—and in the process bring meaning to everyone involved. At the outset, we should recognize that the term “ecology” means the study of interrelationships between organisms, elements, and systems; it does not mean “landscape,” “nature,” or “natural.” Thus, “restoration ecology” is the study of restored ecosystems, while “ecological restoration” is the practice of restoring natural ecosystems that have been lost, degraded, or otherwise disrupted.”

- From *Successful Ecological Restoration: A Framework for Planning/Design Professionals* by Lee R. Skabelund et al ⁽⁴⁾

“Landscape architecture and ecological restoration are really different disciplines, but increasingly these fields are working together in fascinating ways. In a session at the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) conference in Madison, Wisconsin, Rutgers ecologist Steven Handel organized a group of landscape architects and restoration ecologists to discuss why collaboration is vital. In a mutual lovefest, the ecologists explained how landscape architects are important to work with because they communicate well with clients and communities. The landscape architects argued that ecologists are critical to making the new wildlife habitats that form sustainable landscapes actually work and measuring their success over time. The restoration project has a few key goals. One is that nature takes precedence over the built environment.”

- From *The Dirt, Lovefest: Landscape Architects and Restoration Ecologists* by Jared Green ⁽⁵⁾

Recommendations:

- **Develop detailed, location specific Natural Resources Management Plans (NRMP)**
Prioritize the immediate development of NRMPs for the Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles geographic footprint(s) as set forth in the MPRB Natural Areas Plan – Phase II document: 'Before starting park master plans, a Natural Resources Management Plan should be prepared so the natural resource priorities and projects can be integrated into the planning process.' ⁽⁶⁾ This is foundational, all other park uses can happen within this priority. Specifically recommend that all Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles plan concepts be evaluated through an ecological restoration lens. Ensure that all NRMPs ⁽⁷⁾ address the recently discovered problem of jumping worms ⁽⁸⁾.
- **Focus on Lake Water Quality**
 - Establish metric for lake waters being safely swimmable by humans and providing healthy habitat for wildlife

- Address the algal bloom problem at Cedar Lake with better data, public education, intra-municipal collaboration, and funding; treat Cedar Lake with alum to prevent Cyanobacteria harm to people, pets, and wildlife ⁽⁹⁾
- Identify trash and plastics as pollutants to be mitigated; evaluate, improve and maintain the catchment basins around the lakes; strategically deploy camouflaged boom systems to support removing trash from the lakes.
- Anticipate impact of Southwest LRT on water quality including water temperature changes (i.e., may affect winter freezing and usability of Kenilworth Channel).
- **Expand Tree Canopy**
 - Protect existing native trees and expand urban forest plantings
 - Require environmental impact study prior to removal of any trees, even if not required by Minnesota Statute.
 - Eliminate the proposed construction of a redundant bike trail running parallel to an existing bike trail amenity (pages 152-153) which would necessitate the removal of mature trees. Recommend priority of the natural resource be protected over the construction trail through precious urban forest.
 - Implement program to monitor and mitigate for urban heat island effects
 - Identify approved native tree species for planting and implement natural resources management plan
- **Rewild Remnant Land**
 - Support the proposed transfer of approximately 40-acres of nearby land is held by Metropolitan Council (page 150-151). This area is suitable for forest and prairie restoration, which is vital to mitigating climate crises in an urban environment.
 - Develop a Natural Area Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan for this new area.

III. Evaluate Hardscape, Structures and Programming

Limit infrastructure and optimize programming. There is great hesitancy about adding more infrastructure which may present challenges to maintain as our regional parks have been consistently underfunded and struggle with keeping up the hard, tangible assets currently established. Prioritizing ideas that require additional ongoing financial commitment when our regional parks don't have the fiscal support needed now seems imprudent. Many of the desired outcomes documented in the Draft Plan Community Engagement priorities can be achieved with robust programming as shown in the Draft Plan Section 4.7 (pages 98-101) on Demand Forecast, Trends, and Future Needs.

Recommendations:

- **Minimize impact of excessive wayfinding signage** – residents want to enhance the natural aspects of Cedar as opposed to introducing more human artifacts and clutter of signage. Most people of all economic strata have smart phones - - enhanced GIS mapping could be implemented now by in-house MPRB experts to improve way finding immediately. This would provide an immediate service to park users, reduce future costs of purchasing and maintaining signage.
- **Require an environmental impact statement for any new or modified hardscape (i.e., structures and trails) even if exempt from Minnesota Statute.**

- **Protect the natural resource of the unique and precious urban forest and eliminate the proposed construction of a redundant bike trail** running parallel to an existing bike trail amenity (pages 152-153) as the proposed trail would necessitate the removal of mature trees in the Cedar Lake Park forest.
- **Remove the proposed dock at Cedar Lake South Beach (pages 160-161) – an extensive, MPRB public engagement process was completed for this area circa 2014+. Community input led to design guidelines that call for clear sightlines at the lakes edge. As this area is a designated swimming location, fishing and launch docks being located nearby are not suitable.**
- **Correct the designation of the Lake of the Isles warming house to be a seasonal structure as opposed to a temporary structure (page 219 and elsewhere in the Draft Plan).** The designation of a temporary structure implies that a future permanent structure is anticipated. Community engagement does not support the permanent placement of a structure.
- **Amend the proposed Cedar South Point picnic area (page 222, exhibit A1) and relocate to the area on the “upper lawn” adjacent to the parking lot, within 100 yards of ADA toilet facility. This area would serve well as a picnic area and programming node with ADA accessibility.**
 - The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board manages parkways, lakes, beaches and pools, neighborhood parks and community centers for the residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Seven of the 27 city parks were identified as having accessible sites that meet the Access Board guidelines. These seven parks were included in this study: Lake Harriet, Lake Nokomis, Linden Hills, Minnehaha Falls, West River Road, and Rice Park."
 - South Cedar Point currently has six excellent, accessible picnic tables. All, but one, have pleasant views. The “upper lawn” and has a very gentle slope. A handicapped toilet facility and parking area are within 100 yards. The tables themselves are not special handicapped tables but could be replaced following U of M study on Functional Aspects of Accessible Picnic Elements ⁽¹⁰⁾
 - *Draft Plan Proposal* -the area is on the north lawn (see map Page 161). This area is designated as a mesic forest (see map Page 151). This area is included in the Tree Preservation recommendations as an area for an enhanced tree canopy and for an area to preserve and maintain existing tree canopy (see map page 152). Access to this area is limited and amounts to a walking path that is akin to 2-3 blocks from the South Cedar Point parking lot and toilet facility.
 - *Improved Proposal* – locate picnic upper lawn adjacent the parking lot and restroom. The views from the upper lawn are fantastic. The area already has two picnic tables and is contiguous with established picnic tables near the boat ramp and fishing dock
The area is accessible for both picnickers and maintenance. The impact on the Natural Area and tree canopy will be much less than at the proposed site.
 - Other examples of community accessibility programs:
 - Birdability <https://www.birdability.org>
 - Therapeutic Recreation <https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities-events/therapeutic-recreation/>

IV: Delete Section 3.9

This extraneous section insults the many neighboring residents, including CIDNA residents and board members, who participated in the public engagement process. If included in the plan, its effect would be to delegitimize participation of our neighborhoods.

Neighboring residents worked hard to ensure that water quality and related environmental considerations, as well as maintenance of existing amenities, were prioritized above the new construction preferred by staff. If it were not for neighboring residents, this long-range plan would not include a focus on saving the already eutrophic Cedar Lake and the lakes it feeds. Section 3.9 wrongly frames that policy tension, between neighboring residents and park board staff, in racial terms. In fact, documents show that some participating communities of color, including a Native American group, also prioritized environmental preservation. The inclusion of this section in the document is gratuitous, misleading and offensive. In addition, it needlessly promotes community tension. We ask that it be removed.

We recognize the complexity of managing the master planning process for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. The diligence and care shown by you and your colleagues are greatly appreciated. Please utilize the preceding comments to refine the final plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles.

Notes

(1) **Draft Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles Plan project page**

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park-care-improvements/park-projects/current_projects/cedar-lake-lake-of-the-isles-cedar-isles-master-plan/

(2) **Cedar-Isles- Dean Neighborhood Association Resident Survey**

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17su5FxH4s_So2OY1fwBI7b4SV4pmvE8L/view

(3) **MPRB Cedar Lake – Lake of the Isles Master Plan Community Engagement Summary**

<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-08-31-Cedar-Isles-CE-Summary-Final.pdf>

<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Phase-1-Community-Engagement-Part-2.pdf>

(4) **Successful Ecological Restoration: A Framework for Planning/Design Professionals**

https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Practice/Research_Reports/ASLA_Research_EcologicalRestoration_2008.pdf

(5) **The Dirt, Lovefest: Landscape Architects and Restoration Ecologists**

<https://dirt.asla.org/2013/10/14/lovefest-landscape-architects-and-ecologists/>

(6) **Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Natural Resources Plan – Phase II**

“Before starting park master plans, an NRMP should be prepared so the natural resource priorities and projects can be integrated into the planning process.”(page ix)” https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MPRB-Natural-Areas-Plan-Condensed-Version-Phase-II_2021.pdf

(7) **Sample Natural Resources Management Plans -**

* <https://fmr.org/updates/stewardship-education/neighborhood-takes-lead-restoration>

* Nicollet Island East Natural Resource Management Plan

https://fmr.org/sites/default/files/attachments/ni_eastrnmp_final.pdf

(8) Jumping Worms

<https://jwp.cfans.umn.edu>

(9) Friends of Cedar Lake Comments on the Minneapolis Stormwater Management Program July 2019

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56cf50e8044262b0f7bd5d05/t/621b9a8249fd8264194a1cf6/1645976194863/FOCL+Mnpls+Stormwater+Program+2019.pdf>

(10) University of Minnesota study on Functional Aspects of Accessible Picnic Elements

https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3103/Picnic_Study_Final_Report.pdf?sequence=1

CC: Commissioner Schaffer, District 4, eshaffer@minneapolisparks.org

Commissioner Abene, District 6, cabene@minneapolisparks.org

President Forney, At-large, mforney@minneapolisparks.org