



Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan | Design Advisory Committee Meeting # 3

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: July 19, 2023

Meeting Time: 5:00-7:00 pm

Meeting Location: Como Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Pkwy N, Saint Paul, MN 55117

Committee Members Present

Britta Beldon (CRWD), Theodore Budd (resident), Allison Cole (resident), Grant Cooper (MnDOT), James Cowles (resident), Sasha Mackin (former president, Hamline-Midway Coalition), Zack Mensinger (St. Paul Bike Coalition), Dave Montgomery (resident), Christopher Tabisz (Twin Cities German Immersion School / resident)

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Staff

David Ronzani (Project Manager), Anne Gardner (Supervisor), and Katie Hamerlinck (Landscape Architect)
Presentation was conducted with questions interjected throughout. Discussion points are grouped by topic for simplicity.

Introduction and Project Overview

- Introduce “Big Idea” – what is driving this Plan?
 - *Como Regional Park is the largest, most visited Regional Park in Saint Paul. Our Long-Range Plan will identify and provide prioritization of projects that will clarify wayfinding for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, improve safety and accessibility for all users, enhance lake water quality, and promote equity in design to provide amenities that can be maintained sustainably and reflect the evolving recreational interests and diversity of park visitors.*
- Introduce Guiding Principles
 - Update trail system emphasizing safety, accessibility, convenience, and comfort
 - Promote the ecological function of open space and unprogrammed areas
 - Improve the environmental sustainability and resiliency of Como Regional Park
 - Design, program, and maintain to promote year-round activity
 - Embrace and integrate emerging cultural and recreation trends
 - Reduce barriers caused by financial, physical, language, and perception issues
 - Provide interpretive elements to educate
 - Improve wayfinding and Grand Round reinforcement and branding within the existing Como Regional Park wayfinding system
 - Coordinate improvements with regulatory agencies, previous plans, and studies
- Cultural History
 - Discussion of Como Regional Park as Dakota homeland and its significance to the Dakota people in the past and in the present



- Design team to continue process of understanding indigenous history and providing opportunities for interpretation and representation through planning process and design.
- European settlement, City acquisition of parkland
- Original park design by Horace Cleveland
- Other sources for historical information can be found on the District 10 website (<https://district10comopark.org/history/>), and on the City website regarding the Woodland Classroom (https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/CWOC_Guidebook.History_March2017.pdf).

*** Committee Discussion:**

- *Question* – is there an active project working on integrating indigenous history and interpretation at Como Regional Park? *Response* – previous work has looked into history of Como and this can be listed as a future project to include. The City has done work throughout the system to interpret, include, understand indigenous culture and will apply to project work for the Como Area.
- *Question* – has the design team been in touch with MIAC? *Response* – yes, the design team has been in touch with MIAC.
- Committee members can provide contact information for indigenous groups and individuals who may be able to provide additional information.
- Units of the Regional Park System
 - Special Recreation Features have their own master (long range) plans and are not included in this long-range plan. This includes the Como Zoo and Conservatory.
 - Enterprise Facilities fund their own activities and are not eligible for Met Council fundings. These are also not included in the long-range plan. This includes McMurray Fields and the Como Golf Course.

*** Committee Discussion:**

- *Question* – are these areas (special recreation features and enterprise facilities) off limits for this project? *Response* – this long-range plan will not be proposing major changes in these areas, some small improvements may be allowed. For example, a sidewalk connection will be considered as part of this Plan. The design team will seek clarity from Met Council. Note: even if Met Council cannot provide funding for these improvements, other funding sources can be considered.

Community Engagement Update

- Engage Saint Paul website: not much traffic since last DAC meeting, website link was advertised at Ice Cream Social Event – people from this event may take the survey or visit the website in the coming weeks.
- Engagement with other groups:
 - Completed:
 - Como High School
 - Hmong Prep Academy
 - German Immersion School
 - Events:
 - District 10 Ice Cream Social



- Ongoing – Follow-up needed:
 - Hmong Prep Academy
 - German Immersion School
 - Indigenous groups
 - Karin Organization of Minnesota
 - Metro Deaf School

*** Committee Discussion:**

- Lots of people don't know about the Grand Round – how can the City be more intentional about outreach?
- Lexington Pkwy is a barrier for use for school groups
- Wayfinding is needed
- Winter programming is important
- Desire for access to lakeshore from Pavilion (Lakeside Pavilion Vision coming this summer for public review)
 - Pavilion doesn't seem as busy or popular as other local park restaurants (Sea Salt at Minnehaha Regional Park)
- Updates to golf course clubhouse needed
- Ensure areas are reserved in Como Park for unprogrammed greenspace
- Site furnishings are needed around the lake (benches, drinking fountains, etc.)

Focused Map Analysis

- **Como Lake North**
 - One-way/two-way trails are confusing
 - Proposal to provide clarity and align with Grand Round design standards (two-way bike traffic with adjacent, separated pedestrian sidewalk)
 - Connect spur on Lexington Pkwy to fill in gap in paths

*** Committee Discussion:**

- There are beautiful fragrant trees in this area – desire to protect these
 - Add sidewalk that goes east of existing path 'stub' (east on E Como Dr.)
 - Consider closing access of E Como to Lexington Parkway –It was suggested that Nebraska and other routes are sufficient for traffic needs.
 - On-street parking is rarely used here (E Como connection to Lexington Area)
 - Staff will discuss this with PW as planning and design progress
 - Trail crossings at North Pavilion parking lot are not as wide as trail - Improve crossing experience by matching curb cut to trail width for accessibility and safety.
 - Vehicle access near the Pavilion was not done during the parking lot improvements – this area is in very bad shape and should be a priority.
 - With new construction projects, include trail improvements to address crossings, trail wayfinding, and safety. Find ways to identify these issues ahead of a planned project so they are included.
 - Discussion about crosswalks across Lexington Pkwy – coordination with District 10
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- **Lakeside Pavilion**
 - Circulation improvements proposed throughout this area
 - Consolidation of redundant trails



- Improved wayfinding
- Continue Grand Round style trail (as space allows)
- Two-way trail exists in this area but does not have adjacent pedestrian path – study to determine best alignment for all uses.
- Add path markings to provide clarity

*** Committee Discussion:**

- Engagement – could signs with the website QR code be put up around the lake? This way people walking/biking around the lake could add comments as they are thinking of them
- Where will information about the Pavilion update be unveiled?
 - Council president Brendmoen is leading the visioning project – aiming to have August event at the Pavilion with concepts and renderings of ideas
 - Anne will relay information to the DAC – date, time, and location are still TBD
 - Project goals include more accessible restrooms, more welcoming to the public, more options for food and refreshments, etc.
- Desire to improve crossings where trail crosses the entrance to the parking lot
 - Drivers don't stop at the stop sign
 - Drivers coming from the parking lot are only looking for other cars coming from the roundabout, not for bikers and pedestrians.
 - Ideal for tables crossing here – more tactile and noticeable for drivers.
 - Include signage for drivers to watch for pedestrians/bikers
- **Streetcar Station**
 - Two-way bikeway along lakeshore, attempt to keep pedestrian path close
 - Reduce redundant paths
 - Remove unnecessary impervious surfaces
 - Incorporate stormwater BMPs – new impervious surfaces will necessitate this

*** Committee Discussion:**

- Consider Grand Round trail continuing straight on Horton to meet up with Lake paths
 - Staff to study this area more closely
- Trail under bridge – very icy in the winter due to poor drainage
 - Could permeable pavers be considered in this area? Improvements to the bridge or area around path may be another solution.
- **Nagasaki Road**
 - Continue Grand Round alignment. Potential for space within existing right of way to provide more space for updated bike/ped paths.
 - Steep slopes around lake – may need retaining wall
 - Pinch point – narrow area to fit pedestrian path, two-way bike path, and roadway
 - Lots of overstory trees here, makes it difficult to grow understory plants to stabilize slopes

*** Committee Discussion:**

- CRWD:



- Lakeshore Management Plan – long term plan for CRWD – management of resources, Considerations include runoff, habitat, providing shading to water and pedestrians
- Trees being removed this winter, more invasive removals coming over the next few years
- Vegetation inspection in this area happening now
- Ecosystem types have been determined for each section of shoreline, more information coming soon.
- CRWD working with the City this fall on seeding and plantings along the shoreline
- Fall 2024 – stormwater outfall project happening – 18 of 31 pipes that drain into the lake will be replaced
 - Largest impacts will be near eastern parking lot
 - Impacts to paths and lakeshore
 - Erosion control will be important
 - Project will impact entire lake
- Timing of this Plan should be considered with timing of CRWD project
- Question about CRWD project requiring road closure?
 - Most likely, on south side of lake
 - Will E Como Blvd be closed? Timing of this would be helpful to monitor how this impacts traffic patterns during non-pandemic times.
 - Trail detours will be important for people bike-commuting
- Largest improvements will most likely take place in late fall (balance of lower water levels and lighter traffic)
- Suggestion to widen pedestrian path around ‘the wedge’ – this is heavily used by people in the neighborhood.
- Roadway (Nagasaki) could change
 - If roadway is reduced, it would be challenging for bikers to share the road with drivers
 - Could do an “enhanced shared lane” – staff to discuss this with Public Works
- Eliminate slip lane at intersection
- Could a roundabout be considered here?

- **E Como Lake Drive**

- Consider closing the road here
- Benefits would include water quality improvements, bike/ped. safety, and shade opportunities.
- Analysis/study required to determine feasibility.
- Grand Round alignment (two-way bicycles adjacent to separate pedestrian path)

*** Committee Discussion:**

- Include sidewalk connection south of dotted line at the top of the map
- Triangle at NE feels like a forgotten space
 - Could add signage, furnishings, amenities here
- CRWD outfall repair occurring in this area
- Major goal of the lakeshore plan is to formalize and stabilize information paths



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- Potentially using boulders to provide better access to the lake and reduce erosion (similar to Lake Nokomis)
 - Select more heavily used points for these improvements; close off less used access points
 - Funding is available for this project
 - Will swimming ever be available in Lake Como?
 - Lake is shallow – likely full of aquatic plants
 - Most of the water comes from stormwater
 - No beach or lifeguards currently
 - In terms of water quality – this lake is perfectly safe, the main water quality issue is phosphorus which is not harmful to health (although it can cause harmful algae blooms).
 - Can dog waste bags be put around the lake?
 - Probably not, management of these is difficult
 - **Picnic Grounds**
 - Continuation of Grand Round
 - Ballfields are underutilized – this is an item that will be brought up with the TAC to determine the best use for this space.
 - Disc golf, dog park, pickleball, are potential uses
 - More study of the trails around the picnic grounds is needed
 - Many of these trails don't have clear beginnings or endings and wayfinding is difficult.
 - Provide crossings where necessary.
 - Include pedestrian lighting along Como Avenue per Grand Round Implementation Plan.
 - **Woodland Classroom**
 - Woodland classroom has its own long range plan
 - Clarify wayfinding and signage.
 - Long range plan looks to acquire area of land south of Jessamine, north of train tracks for future uses, such as additional parking space.
 - Future stormwater management areas within this area.
 - Maintain open, unprogrammed space here

*** Committee Discussion:**

- Can trees grow on stormwater BMP areas?
 - Depends on the BMP type, but often not. Trees can make access and maintenance difficult for equipment and roots can sometimes be harmful to infrastructure.
- Desire for sidewalk on Beulah – would provide necessary connections.
- Additional pedestrian bridge over train tracks leading to Beulah would be nice – would lead to schools and other destinations
 - Challenging to coordinate combined infrastructure with railroad
 - Staff to review Bike Plan draft and coordinate with proposed bike routes

*** Committee Discussion – General comments:**



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- Make paths wider, separate modes, improve crossings, close E Como Lake Dr – these ideas are priorities and support first guiding principle
 - Accessibility improvements are needed throughout the park
 - Putting porta potties throughout the park during the pandemic made parks more useable year-round – consider restrooms for increased use
 - If paths could be designed to make plowing easier, more paths could be plowed (bike and pedestrian)
 - ‘WELCOMING’ is missing from guiding principles
 - Como Park is one of the friendliest parks
 - There is something for everyone here
 - Additional bike parking is missing from plan
 - Identify location for bike parking that makes sense with traffic patterns
 - Secure bike parking is important
 - Desire for more seating with sun protection, especially near Pavilion
 - People like to hang out at the dock but it’s difficult for people to use
 - Picnic tables are heavily used – it is obvious that people want to be in these spaces.
 - Create spaces where people want to hang out for a long time
 - Park needs more drinking fountains
 - Water fountain (decorative) in roundabout is nice, but not accessible, consider this during planning
 - It is difficult to find out about events at Como Park. Each space has a separate website which is frustrating to use.

Meeting End: 6:45pm

Notes:

- Meeting minutes are intended to capture overall participation and summarize comments from City Staff and Advisory Member participants.
- Visit (stpaul.gov/como-regional-park-projects) for more information and presentation graphics

This document shall serve as the official record of the community meeting and information shared. If there are additions or modifications that are required, please contact Katie Hamerlinck via email at katie.hamerlinck@ci.stpaul.mn.us.