



COMO REGIONAL PARK Long-Range Plan

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA | 2024

90% DRAFT | SPRING 2024



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Land Acknowledgment

Saint Paul stands on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Dakota homelands.

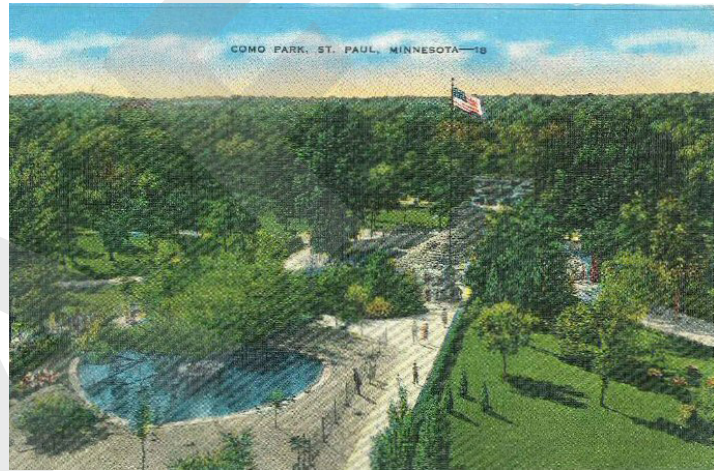
As we consider that the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement has brought us to current day, we commit to understanding, respecting, supporting, and advocating for Indigenous People and for this land.

Let this land acknowledgment be more than a reminder. Let it be a marker in time of dedicating ourselves to be better and do better. Through this land acknowledgment, let us lead to make changes which respect history.



Chapter 1

Planning Framework



Introduction

Como Regional Park is the largest, most visited Regional Park in Saint Paul with nearly 3.8 million visitors in 2022 and 4.5 million visitors in 2021.¹

This Long-Range Plan identifies issues and opportunities within Como Regional Park, and provides recommendations for prioritization of future projects at the Park. Goals of this Plan include clarifying wayfinding for pedestrians and bicyclists, improving safety and accessibility for all users, enhancing lake water quality, and promoting equity through design with the intent that the Park can be maintained sustainably and reflect the evolving recreational interests and diversity of Park visitors.

¹ : Metropolitan Council MetroStats. <https://metro council.org/Data-and-Maps/Publications-And-Resources/MetroStats/Land-Use-and-Development/Twin-Cities-Forecasted-to-Reach-Four-Million-Resid.aspx>

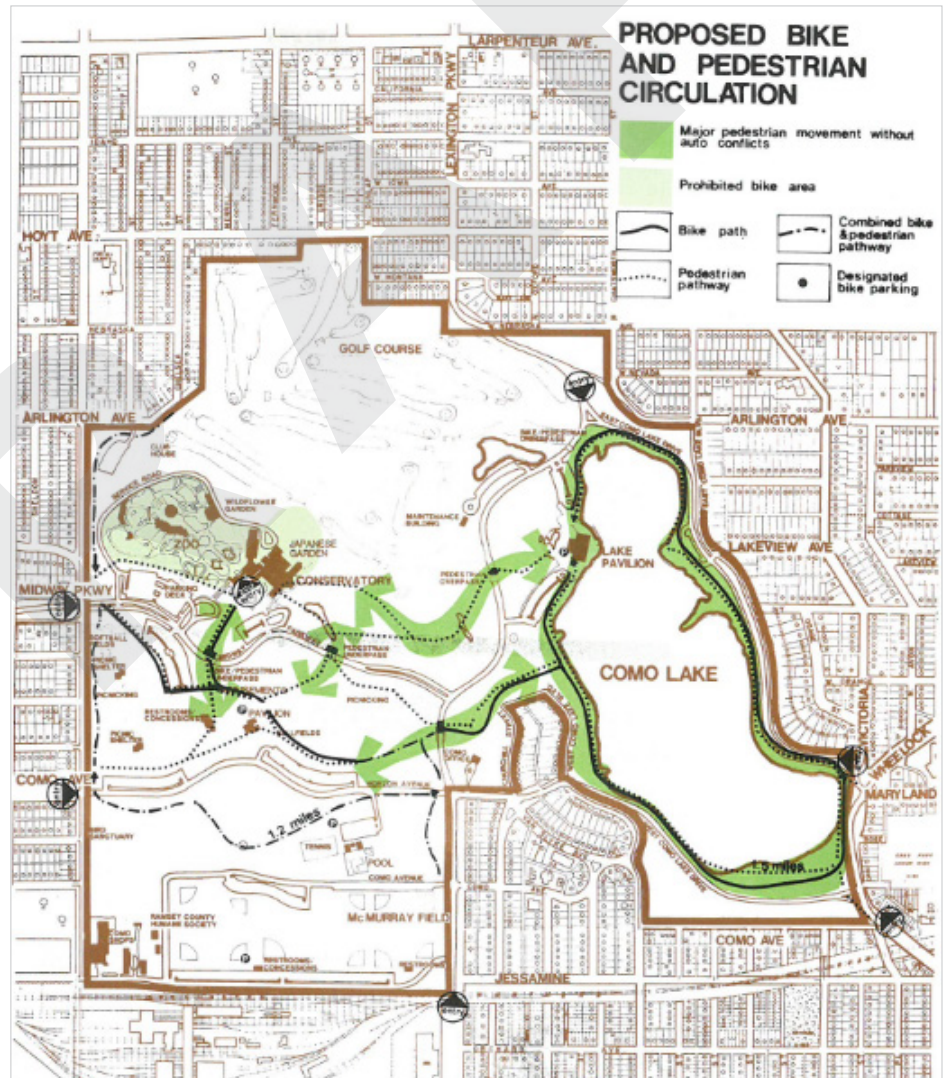
Introduction

1984 Como Park Master Plan

The last long-range planning document for Como Regional Park was adopted by the Saint Paul City Council in 1984. This 'Como Park Master Plan' laid out a vision for future park planning, similar to the process that is being done for the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan. Updates to the Park since the adoption of the 1984 Plan include:

- Lexington rerouted to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians; creating more pedestrian spaces near the Pavilion and Lake
- East Como Lake Drive: conversion to one-way heading north to reduce roadway width and create more space for pedestrians and cyclists

- Elimination/simplification of internal Park roads to clarify circulation and reduce conflict zones
 - Transition from mown turf to native shoreline vegetation along the perimeter of Como Lake
- Additional improvements have been implemented throughout the Park since 1984. This Long-Range Plan seeks to build on the original vision of the Park, and update recommendations to meet the needs of current and future Park users.

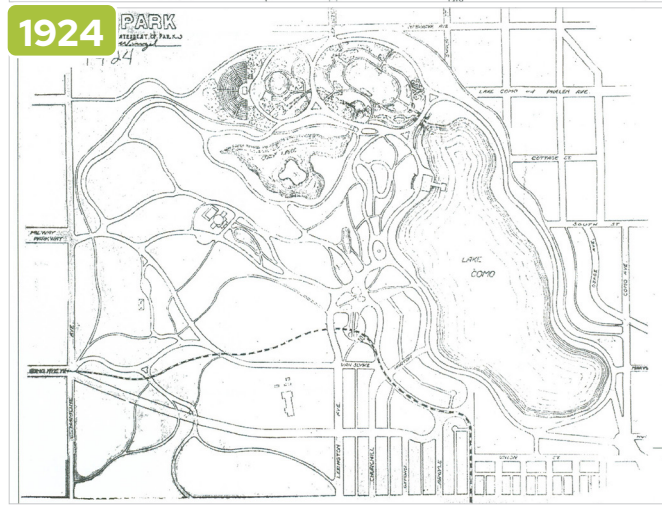
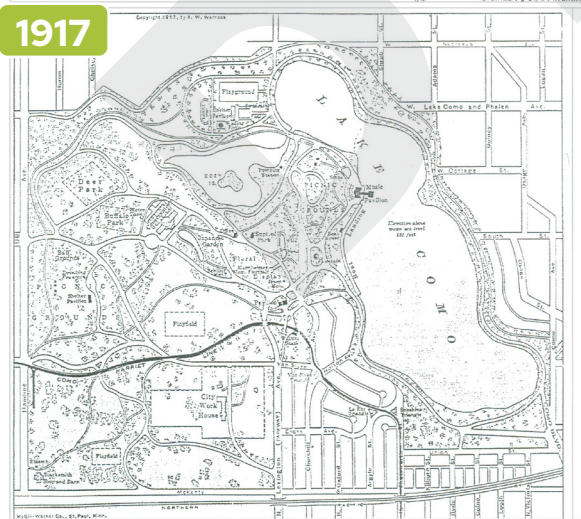
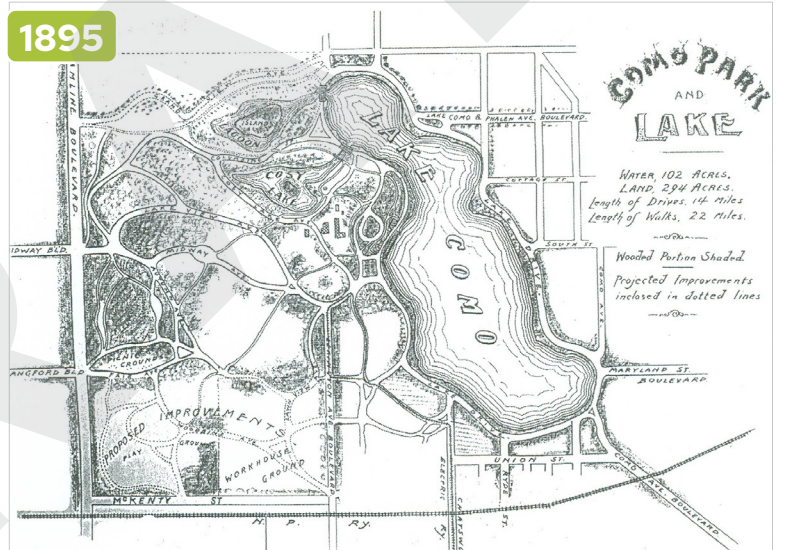
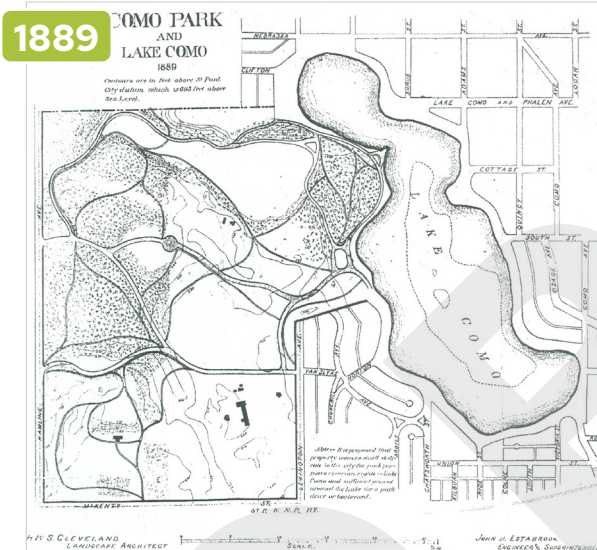


Examples of recommended improvements from the 1984 Como Park Master Plan

Introduction

Previous Park Plans

Since the late 1800s, Como Regional Park has had a well-documented history of development and numerous accounts of the significance of the park space within Saint Paul. Accounts of this landscape indicate that the original Como Lake was much larger and more shallow than what is known today and included an additional open water body known as Cozy Lake. Records show the City of Saint Paul purchased the land for the public park in 1873. Under the guidance of Horace Cleveland's 1885 plan for Saint Paul, the hills and topography overlooking the lake were preserved to provide a respite from urban life in a naturalistic location. Decisions such as the draining of Cozy Lake for the development of the golf course, the expansion and rerouting of Lexington Avenue, and the enlargement of the features of the zoo and conservatory have had major influences on the park landscape. However, preserved woodland areas, meandering recreational pathways, and Como Lake itself still remain as prominent features in the park today.



Project Context

Historic and Cultural Context

Minnesota (Mni-sota-a), a Dakota Sioux word meaning 'cloudy water' or 'sky-tinted water' is homeland to the Dakota. There is evidence of Indigenous people living here dating back 12,000 years. Living ancestors of these Indigenous communities call this home today and consider this land sacred.

Prior to European immigration and takeover of the land, and the eventual development of Como Regional Park, the Dakota and Ojibwe lived within this region moving throughout the seasons of the year to locations along the rivers and lakes of what we now know as Minnesota. A path system connected the lakes, rivers, and villages in the region, many recognized today as sacred sites including: Como Lake; the Bdote which is the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi River and the area of the Dakota creation story. Other notable landmarks are: the Wakáŋ Tipi cave, the dwelling place of the sacred and place of flowing springs; Indian Mounds burial area of the Dakota; and the permanent village of Kaposia near what we know as South Saint Paul. Many of these pathways were later used as the basis for Euro-American development.

Como Lake and the smaller lake to the north which is no long in existence, Cozy Lake, were shallow bodies of water so it is unlikely that fishing was productive. However, the plant communities in this area provided medicinal and food sources. Como Lake was likely a camping location for Indigenous

Peoples where they could also gather items to bring with them. In 1888 Frederick Nussbaumer, a gardener in Como Park, noted that there was a wide variety of berries, nuts, forbs, roots and tubers.

As fur trading became more prevalent, the Dakota lifestyle changed and hunting and traveling lifestyle shifted. The Treaty of 1837 stripped the Dakota of their lands east of the Mississippi River, including the Como Lake area. This made way for new inhabitants - loggers, farmers, and speculators. During the US-Dakota War of 1862, most of the Dakota were exiled from Minnesota. Limited groups of Dakota who stayed in the state are representatives of a continuous occupation of their homeland.

There are many stories and legends of this area, and more to uncover and study as we seek to fully understand and represent the indigenous significance and inhabitation of this region.

Como Park History Report, Andrew Schmidt, 2002 – Pleasure and Recreation for the People, Planning St Paul.

“The City Itself a Work of Art:” A Historical Evaluation of Como Park for the City of St Paul, 106 Grout, LTD, Cultural Resources Report.

Chronological Illustrated History of Como Park, by Timothy V Gadban . 2015.

Como Outdoor Woodland Classroom Guidebook, Saint Paul Natural Resources, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, City of Saint Paul. 2016.

Westerman and White, Mni Sota Makoce, 35.

Nick Coleman and John Camp, The Great Dakota Conflict (Pioneer Press).

Quinn Evans, Indian Mounds: A sacred Place of Burial Cultural Landscape and Messaging Plan, 2020



Indigenous Nations of the Upper Midwest c. 16th century (Klumpenhower, 2022)



1853 Illustration of a Dakota camp. (Harper's New Monthly Magazine, MHS)

Project Context

Como Regional Park is located on the Northwest side of Saint Paul within Wards 4 and 5, District 10 (the Como Neighborhood). The Saint Paul Grand Round connects to Como Regional Park at the intersection of Wheelock Parkway and East Como Boulevard, on the east side of Como Lake, and again at Como Avenue and Hamline Avenue North on the west side of the Park.

Lexington Parkway - Regional Trail Search Corridor

Lexington Parkway is designated as a Regional Trail Search Corridor in the Metropolitan Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan. Search corridors are defined as potential regional connections between other existing or proposed regional amenities. As plans are developed in the future for the Lexington Parkway Regional Trail, planners should

consider connections between the proposed regional trail and the trails at Como Regional Park. A regional trail along Lexington Parkway provides an opportunity to strengthen the connections between Como Regional Park and other local and regional park and trail amenities. Future considerations for the regional trail search corridor should include:

- Alignment with internal trails within Como Regional Park as well as coordination with Saint Paul's Bicycle Plan
- Physical barriers along the Lexington Parkway corridor including topography and existing utilities
- Safe and accessible facilities that encourage users of all ages and abilities to feel comfortable accessing regional parks and trails.

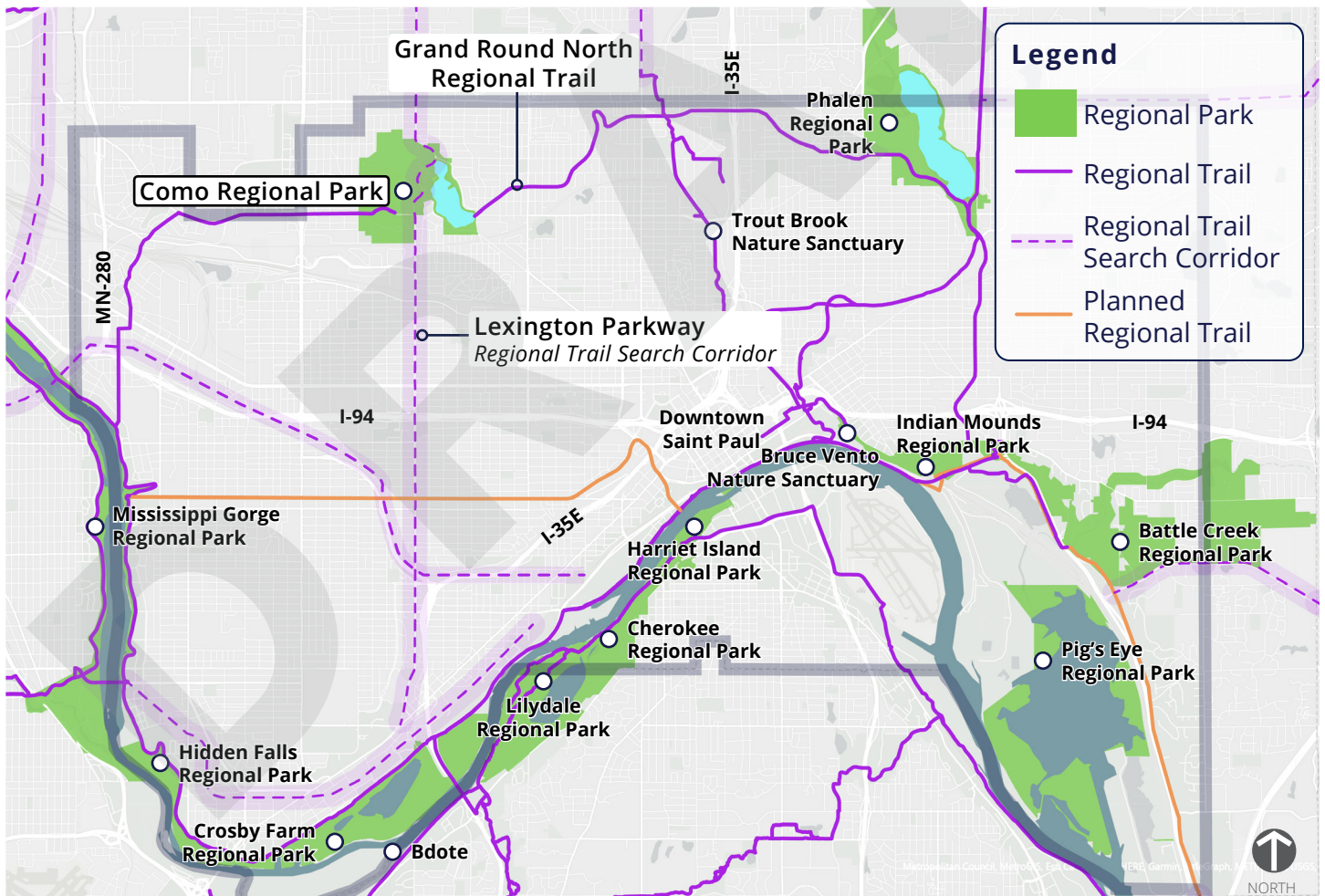


Fig. 1-1 | Regional Parks and Trails

Park Overview

Project Area



Project Focus Areas:

- Como Lake Area**
Lake paths, Streetcar Station, Lakeside Pavilion, fishing pier, Duck Point, Compass Point
- Ballfields**
- West Picnic Grounds**
Midway Picnic Pavilion, play area, mini-golf
- Woodland Outdoor Classroom**
Como Pool, Como Shops, Kilmer Memorial Fireplace
- Central Park Area**
Lilypond, Labyrinth, Excedra

Other Park Features:

- Special Recreation Features**
Como Zoo & Conservatory*
- Enterprise Facilities**
Como Golf Course and McMurray Fields*

*Not-included or partially included in analysis

Fig. 1-2 | Project Area

Areas of the Como Regional Park System

The Como Campus is made up of three units of the regional park system:

- Como Regional Park
- Como Park Zoo
- Marjorie McNeely Conservatory

Both the Como Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory are considered special recreation features and have their own Long Range Plans. Special recreation features are defined as Regional Parks System opportunities not generally found in the regional parks, park reserves, or trail corridors. Special recreation features often require a unique managing or programming effort¹. Como Park Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory are two of the eight special recreation features in the Regional Parks System.

Enterprise Facilities

There are two enterprise facilities within Como Regional Park (1) Como Golf Course, (2) McMurray Fields. Enterprise-fund recreation facilities include any facility that is expected to generate sufficient revenue to pay its own costs, such as golf courses, downhill ski areas, and water parks. These facilities are not eligible for regional park funds from the Metropolitan Council because they are expected to raise money for their development and operation in the same way as their private sector counterparts.

†**Como Golf Course is a three-season enterprise facility. Winter activities at the golf course are eligible for regional park funding.**

¹ : Metropolitan Council, 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, [https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-\(2020-version\)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx](https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-(2020-version)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx)

Related Projects and Planning Documents

The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan is being developed within the context of a number of other City, neighborhood, and regional planning documents. These documents provide guidance and recommendations that are incorporated into this planning document in an effort to augment the existing systems and networks within the City, and Como Regional Park. These planning documents are outlined below.

Grand Round Design & Implementation Plan

Adopted by the Saint Paul City Council in 2017, the Grand Round Design & Implementation Plan's vision is as stated: *"The Saint Paul Grand Round connects people to parks, nature, neighborhoods, and businesses with scenic parkway facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists"*.

Several of the paths in and around Como Lake and Como Regional Park are part of the Grand Round network. The Plan also identifies specific areas that overlap with the Como Regional Park Long Range Plan including Como Avenue (Pascal St. to Midway

Pkwy.), Horton Avenue (Midway Pkwy. to Gateway Dr.), and Nagasaki Road (West Como Blvd. to Como Blvd.). Recommendations in the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan for these areas will align with the Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan.

stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/GR_DraftDesignImplementationPlan.pdf

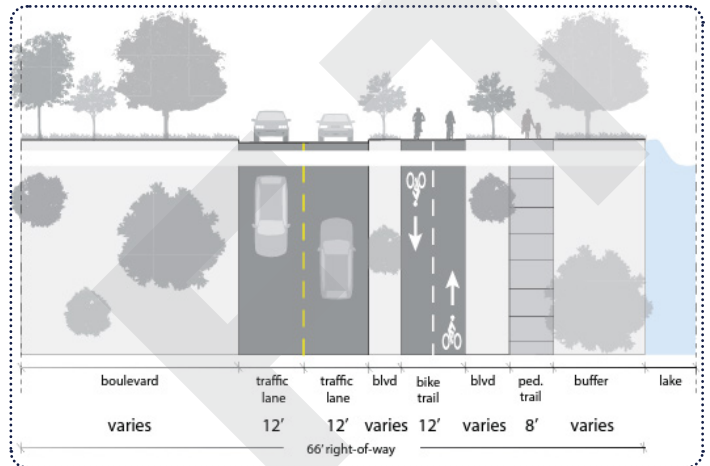


Fig. 1-4 | Recommended cross-section at Nagasaki Rd. (from Grand Round Design & Implementation Plan)

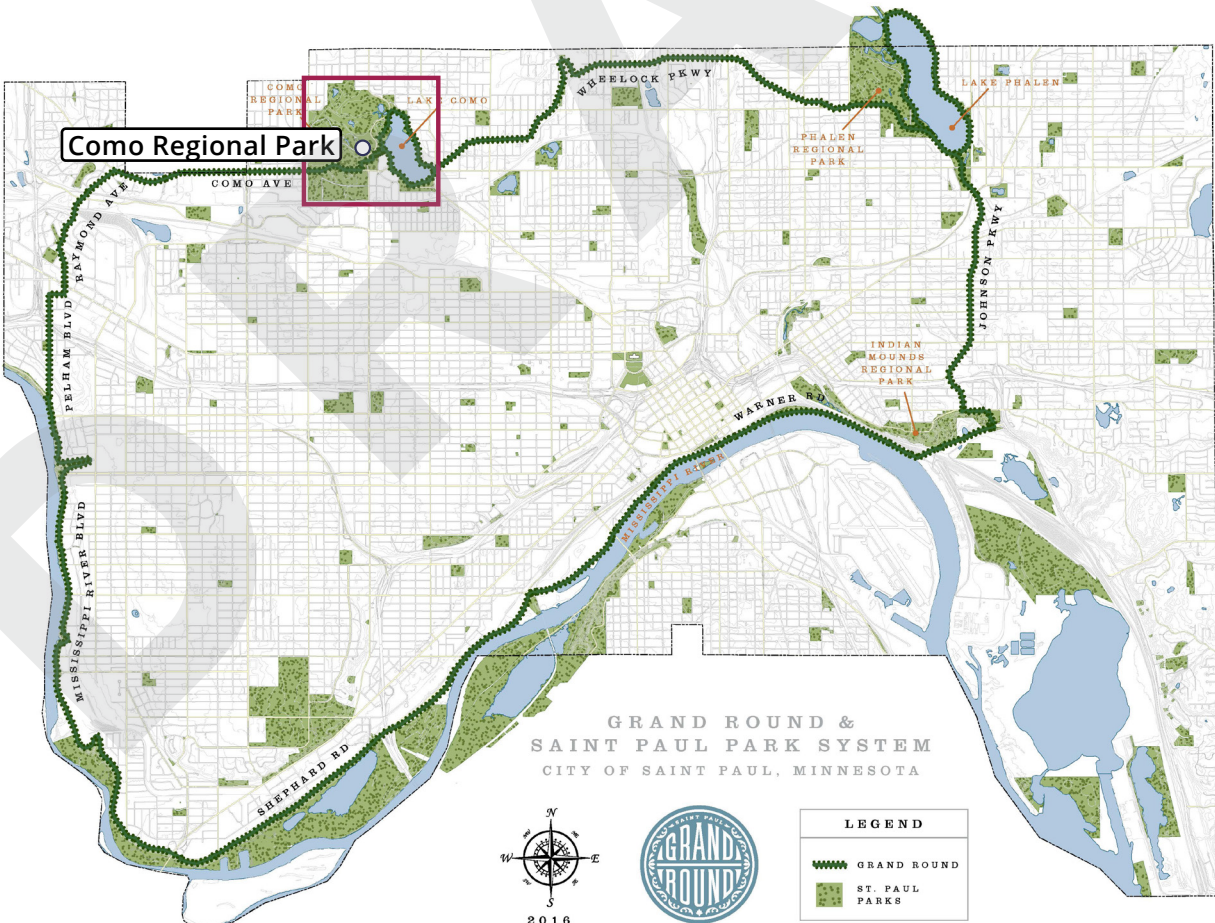


Fig. 1-3 | Saint Paul Grand Round Network Map

Related Projects and Planning Documents

Metropolitan Council 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan

Metropolitan Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan serves as a development guide for the regional components of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, including Regional Parks and Trails. Como Regional Park is classified as a Regional Park; Como Park Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory are classified as Special Recreation Features by the Metropolitan Council. This planning document also outlines the requirements for Long-Range Plans to be developed by implementing park agencies.

[metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-\(2020-version\)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx](http://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-(2020-version)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx)

Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is Saint Paul's blueprint for guiding development for the next 20 years, from 2020 to 2040. It outlines policies that address city-wide physical development, and contains chapters on Land Use; Transportation; Parks, Recreation and Open Space; Housing; Heritage and Cultural Preservation; and Water Resources. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Chapter sets broad policies to create an equitable, safe, connected and sustainable park system for all users. This policy aligns with the Guiding Principles of the Como Regional Park Long Range Plan, found in Chapter 4.

stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/CSP_2040_CompPlan_FinalAdopted_Updated_091322.pdf

Saint Paul Bicycle Plan

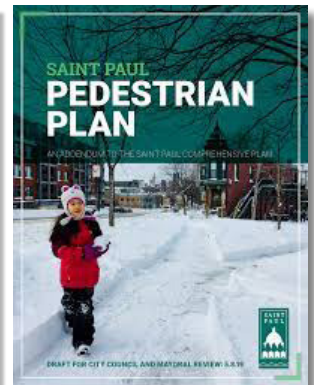
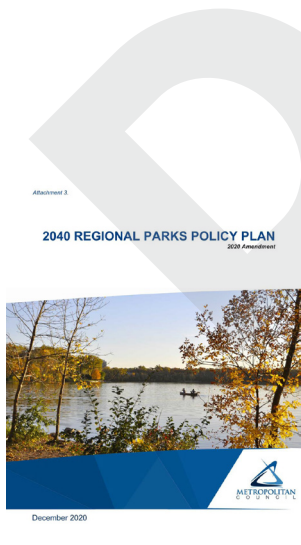
In addition to Como Regional Park's connection to Saint Paul's Grand Round, there are several access points to the park from Saint Paul's major and minor bikeways. These bikeways are part of the bike network described in the 2024 Saint Paul Bicycle Plan. The Bicycle Plan establishes a vision for how and why bicycles will play an important role in the future of the city with the goals to make biking more comfortable, more accessible, and more connected.

stpaul.gov/bikeplan

Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan

The Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan "addresses citywide walking needs such as connecting the sidewalk system, providing safer ways to cross streets, and education and enforcement programs to support safe walking." The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan outlines a number of recommendations that prioritize pedestrian safety including improved pedestrian crossings, connecting incomplete paths, and providing more clear signage and methods of wayfinding in the Park. Other improvements focused on pedestrian safety include additional lighting and wider paths for a more comfortable pedestrian experience within the Park.

stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Public%20Works/Saint%20Paul%20Pedestrian%20Plan%206.13.19%20Compressed.pdf



Related Projects and Planning Documents

Saint Paul Climate Action and Resilience Plan

This Plan outlines a series of strategies to achieve the City's ultimate goals of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050. Specific strategies in the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan that align with the goals and objectives in the Climate Action and Resilience Plan include:

- Increase bike and pedestrian infrastructure to reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles.
- Ensure equitable pedestrian and bicycle access to the Park with continuous sidewalk that are ADA accessible.
- Maintain and augment the existing tree canopy
- Reduce stormwater runoff and continue to monitor and improve water quality in Como Lake.
- Support electric forms of transportation by providing e-vehicle and e-bike charging stations.

www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Mayor%27s%20Office/Saint%20Paul%20Climate%20Action%20%26%20Resilience%20Plan.pdf

District 10 Como Community Plan

Como Regional Park lies at the center of the Como Park Neighborhood. Largely residential, the neighborhood also houses a commercial district, businesses, schools, and borders the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. This plan has been submitted by the neighborhood to provide a cohesive path for future development that considers the needs of the various neighborhood stakeholders.

district10comopark.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/District-10-Como-Community-Plan-2015.pdf

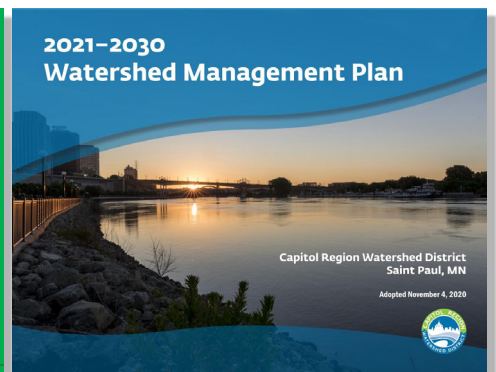
Capitol Region Watershed District Watershed (CRWD) Management Plan

Como Lake is a popular regional destination for recreation including fishing and paddling. Like many lakes within the metro, it has its share of water quality issues ranging from excessive nutrients to invasive species. The primary purpose of CRWD's Watershed Management Plan is to "develop a holistic and adaptive lake management strategy that will be used as a framework for CRWD, local partners, and community stakeholders to improve Como Lake over time."

www.capitolregionwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Updated_CRWD_WatershedManagementPlan_MainBody.pdf

Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan

Como Regional Park has a variety of signage types. Wayfinding and navigating the Park will improve after key areas for signage and added "standard" signs are implemented. This plan describes signage standards, hierarchy, and suggested locations for signage at Como Regional Park. The Como Long Range Plan will follow the guidelines set forth in the Signage and Wayfinding Plan.



Related Projects and Planning Documents

Safe Routes to School, August 2023

Considering Como Regional Park's proximity to both Como High School and Como Elementary School, the paths in and around the park should be considered important connections for students and staff to get to and from school. The Safe Routes to School Plan indicates that the intersection of Como Ave and Rose Ave W is a high priority opportunity zone for Safe Routes to School. The Plan recommends "a pedestrian crossing on the south side of the intersection, including high-visibility crosswalks, median refuge island, and school crossing signs, as well as a connection to the Como Lake trail."¹ Priorities within the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan include the recommendations from the Safe Routes to School Plan.

stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/Como-Park-SRTS-Plan.pdf

Como Lakeside Pavilion Vision Plan

Concurrent with the development of the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation worked with a consultant to analyze the Como Lakeside Pavilion and create a vision to upgrade and improve the facility to better accommodate public use and operations. Design goals for the Como Lakeside Pavilion Vision Plan are as follows:

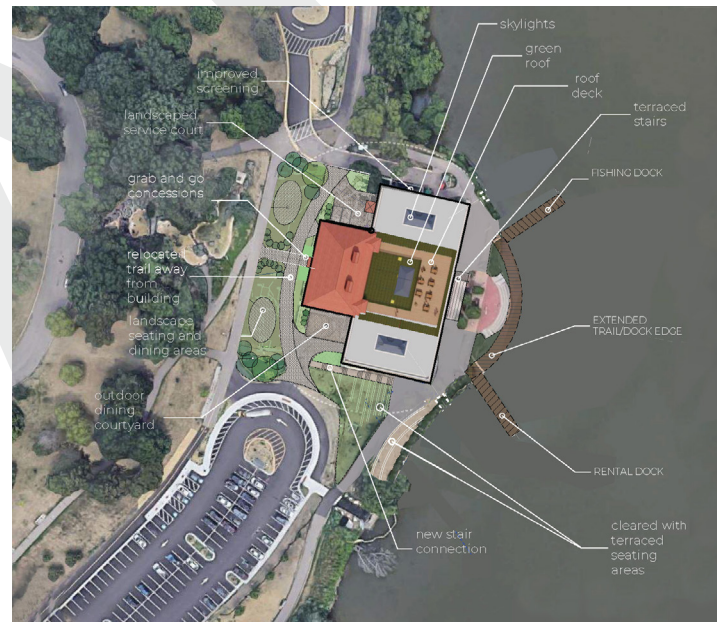
- Renovate and relocate bathrooms for accessibility.
- Maximize all space for public use.
- Add vendors and services for year round use.
- Appropriately size spaces to meet community needs.
- Maintain the historic quality of this landmark building and upgrade overall aesthetics.
- Promote community events and connection to Como Lake.
- Direct amplified sound toward natural sound breaks.

As identified in this Long-Range Plan, the Lakeside Pavilion is an integral piece of the Regional Park, and provides opportunities for community events, recreation, and leisure on Como Lake. This Plan identifies the overall needs for this building and site while the Como Lakeside Pavilion Vision Plan aims to provide a more in-depth look at the building, site, and programming of the Pavilion and how improvements to the building can provide better public facilities to serve more Park users.

Infrastructure Recommendations



Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Recommendations for areas near Como Regional Park



Conceptual site plan for the Renovated Como Lakeside Pavilion



Conceptual rendering of the Renovated Como Lakeside Pavilion

Partner Engagement

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) group was comprised of multiple professionals from different City divisions including Parks and Recreation, Planning and Economic Development, and Public Works. Individuals shared their expertise in the planning process by giving feedback and proposing ideas for the Long-Range Plan.

TAC members attended two meetings with project staff during the project.

Meeting 1:

Project overview, update on community engagement, group discussion.

What we heard:

- Discussion about wayfinding signage and need for updates to existing signage (parking lots)
- Discussion of potential dog park location on west side of Park; consider parking, proximity to other Park amenities
- Discussion about CRWD stormwater project and potential location west of Lexington Parkway
- Discussion about benefits of connecting isolated trail along Lexington Pkwy, as well as potential conflicts with Golf Course
- Discussion about closure of East Como Lake Drive: concerns about accommodating traffic on high attendance days or during events; closing the road would solve operational issues; more comfortable space for walkers and bikers without vehicles; ecological benefits to closing the road

Meeting 2:

Update on community engagement, recap from TAC Meeting#1, group discussion.

What we heard:

- Discussion about coordination with Public Works projects - connection to Grand Round, alignment with Bike Plan update, etc.
- Potential closure of E. Como Lake Dr. - differing priorities - closure would benefit ecological function of Como Lake, more space for pedestrian and bicycle safety; concern about high vehicular traffic on event days or for other large events (traffic study needed to assess benefits/drawbacks of road closure)
- Discussion about Lexington Pkwy Regional Trail Search Corridor - valuable regional and local connection
- Sidewalks connections needed between Park and adjacent neighborhoods
- Discussion about shared-use trail along Horton Avenue to provide a more direct connection to the Lake from the West
- Discussion about east/west trail connection on south side of Golf Course
- Discussion about e-bikes and future transportation needs - rules and regulations, enforcement, charging
- Potential locations for temporary restrooms (south end of Lake, Duck Point parking lot)

Partner Engagement

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD)

The Capitol Region Watershed District has placed a high priority on improving the water quality of Como Lake. Their commitment has been demonstrated with several management plans and studies focusing on Como Lake water quality improvements, ongoing project partnerships with Saint Paul Parks, and project collaborations within the Como Lake Subwatershed. CRWD is currently working with Saint Paul Parks and Recreation on a proposed storm sewer diversion project for a future harvesting and reuse system with a goal of improving the water quality and reduce phosphorus loading to Como Lake. The proposed best management practices (BMPs) will collect stormwater runoff from the upstream drainage area via the 48" trunkline located within Lexington Parkway and reusing that water to irrigate the softball and soccer field. The system is proposed to be placed adjacent to McMurray Fields along Wynn Avenue. Additional collaborations and management plans include:

- Como Lake Strategic Management Plan (2002)
- Como Park Stormwater Inventory and Watershed Analysis (2016)
- Como Lake Water Quality Drivers Analysis Study (2017)
- Como Regional Park Stormwater BMPs Feasibility Study (2018)
- Como Lake Management Plan (2019)
- Como Golf Course Wetland Delineation (2019)
- Como Lakeshore Management Plan (2022)
- Stormwater treatment at Como Golf Course
- Alum and herbicide treatments
- CRWD's Targeted Watershed Program (TWP)
- Ongoing Como Lake shoreline restoration projects
- Informational signage

Saint Paul Public Works

Collaboration with Public Works staff has helped guide the development of this Long-Range Plan. Specific topics of coordination with Public Works include:

- Alignment with the Saint Paul Grand Round
- Coordination with Saint Paul Bicycle Plan
- Discussion about sidewalk connections between Como Regional Park and adjacent neighborhoods
- Discussion about streets and traffic on Nagasaki Road and East Como Lake Drive and the potential for future improvements to these streets to increase safety for all modes of transportation, and to benefit the ecological functions of Como Lake

Continued coordination with Public Works and other City departments will be necessary as projects within and around the Park progress through design and implementation.

Demand Forecast

Current Park Use

Como Regional Park is the most visited park in Saint Paul, and the second most visited park in the Metropolitan Council Regional Park System. Visitation for the last two years is included below:

2021 Visitation¹

- The Regional Park System received an estimated 64.9 million visitors, a 2.6% increase from 2019 and the highest estimated visitation to date.
- Overall trail visits in the system grew 11% compared to 2019.
- Saint Paul Regional Parks and Trails received 13.4 million visitors.
- There were a total of 4.6 million visitors to Como Regional Park, Como Zoo, and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory (second-most visited regional park).

2022 Visitation¹

- The Regional Park System received an estimated 69 million visitors, a 6.4% increase from 2021 and the highest estimated visitation to date.
- Overall trail visits in the system grew 14% compared to 2021.
- Saint Paul Regional Parks and Trails received 8.7 million visitors.
- There were a total of 3.8 million visitors to Como Regional Park, Como Zoo, and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory (second-most visited regional park).

City Population Trends

Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes the following estimates on the City's forecasted population trends²:

- The overall population of Saint Paul is expected to increase by approximately 9.2% between 2020 and 2024.
- Saint Paul is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of people of color in Saint Paul increased from 36% to 46%. This trend line suggests Saint Paul became majority people of color in 2017.

Regional Population Trends

A 2021 report from the Metropolitan Council predicts that between 2020 and 2050³:

- The Twin Cities region will gain 818,000 residents.
- Black, Latino, and Asian populations will more than double.
- The population of residents over 75 years old will double by 2030, and triple by 2050.
- By 2050, 44% of Twin Cities residents will be people of color, and that 22% of Twin Cities residents will be over the age of 54.

A 2016 visitor survey conducted by the Metropolitan Council found that 80% of regional trail users come from within five miles of the trail. Consequently, population growth in Saint Paul and the greater Metropolitan region is expected to increase usage of the Como Regional Park Trails, and visitation to Como Regional Park over time.

In order to accommodate increased visitation to the Park, this Long-Range Plan recommends improvements that will support more visitors, and more diverse visitors.

¹ : Metropolitan Council Annual Use Estimates. <https://metro council.org/Parks/Research/Annual-Use-Estimates.aspx>

² : City of Saint Paul, 2040 Comprehensive Plan. www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/CSP_2040_CompPlan_FinalAdopted_Updated_091322.pdf

³ : Metropolitan Council MetroStats. <https://metro council.org/Data-and-Maps/Publications-And-Resources/MetroStats/Land-Use-and-Development/Twin-Cities-Forecasted-to-Reach-Four-Million-Resid.aspx>

Chapter 2

Existing Conditions



Como Regional Park serves as a recreational hub for residents of Saint Paul and the Twin Cities region, as well as visitors from around the world.

Existing amenities in the Park include:

- Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
- The Lakeside Pavilion and other picnic shelters
- Paved and non-paved trails
- McMurray Athletic Fields
- Como Lake, fishing pier, boat launch, and recreation rentals
- 18 Hole Golf Course and Mini Golf
- Outdoor Classroom
- Historic Streetcar Station
- Ski Center
- And many others

Using a variety of scales, this chapter analyzes the existing conditions within and adjacent to the Park including circulation and access, natural resources, and the historic and cultural history of the Park and region. On the next page, project areas are identified, named after the distinguishing features within them. These are used throughout this document to provide a more detailed analysis of the components of the Park.

Through the community engagement process, opportunities and challenges were identified within the existing conditions of the Park. Feedback from community members is noted on the following plans and has guided the project priorities outlined throughout this Long-Range Plan.

Existing Conditions

Project Areas

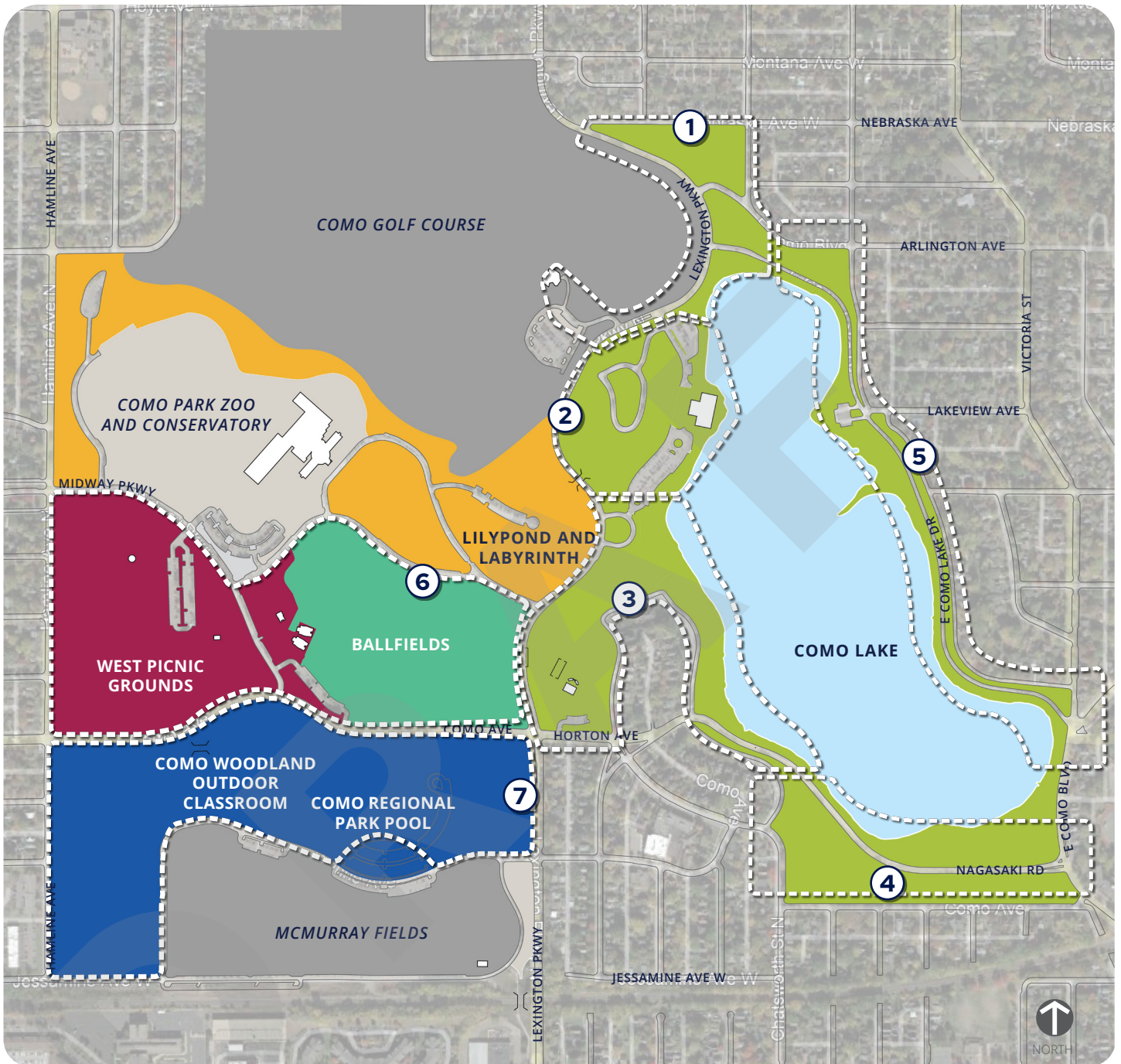


Fig. 2-7 | Overall Park Map

FOCUS AREAS

- ① Como Lake North
- ② Lakeside Pavilion Area
- ③ Historic Streetcar Station
- ④ Nagasaki Road
- ⑤ East Como Lake Drive
- ⑥ Picnic Grounds
- ⑦ Woodland Outdoor Classroom and Aquatic Facility

Special Recreation Features
 Como Park Zoo & Conservatory*

Enterprise Facilities
 Como Golf Course and McMurray Fields*

*Not-included or partially included in analysis

Existing Conditions

Como Lake North

Key Map



Legend

- Park Boundary
- Two-Way Bicycle
- One-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

This area serves as the northern gateway to the Park. Although this is an important pedestrian connection between the neighborhood and the park, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is lacking. Community feedback indicated that priorities for this area are improving intersection safety for all modes, and improving connections between the Park and the neighborhood

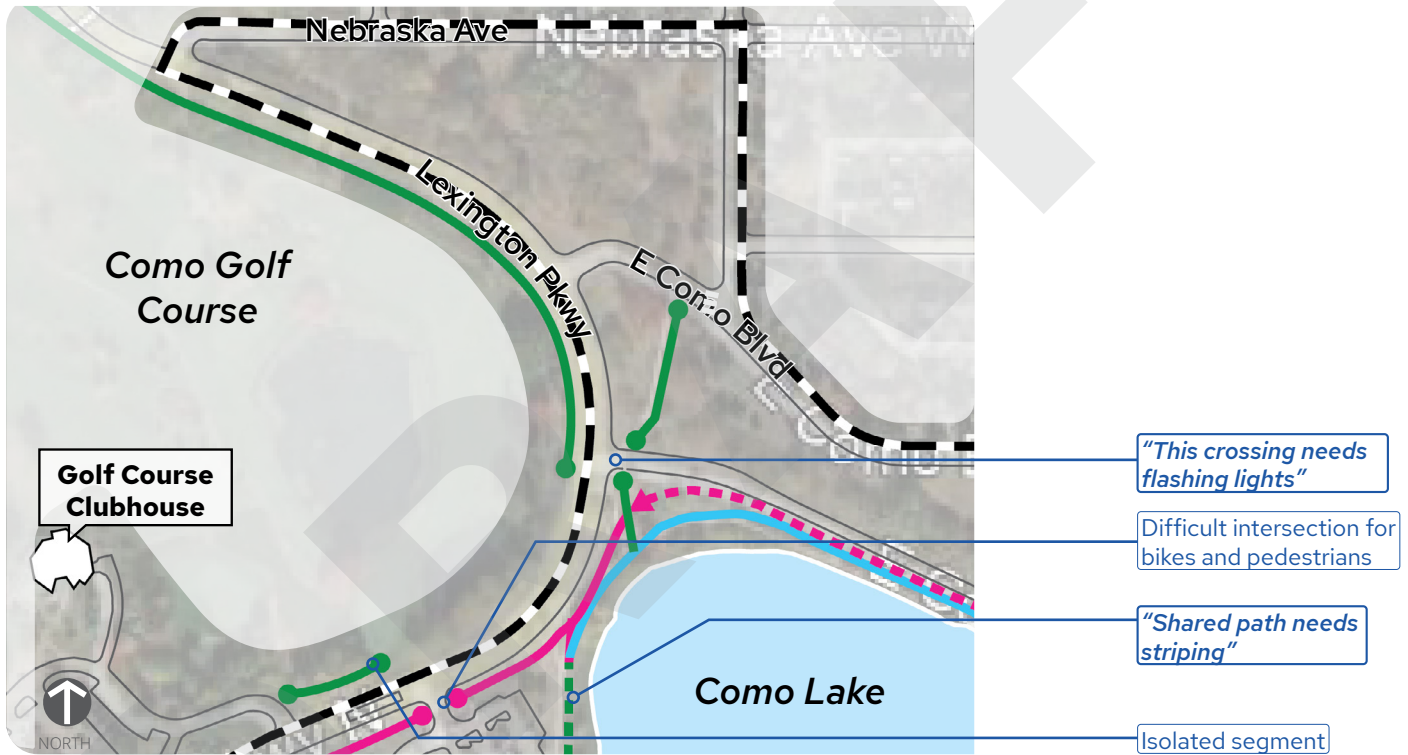
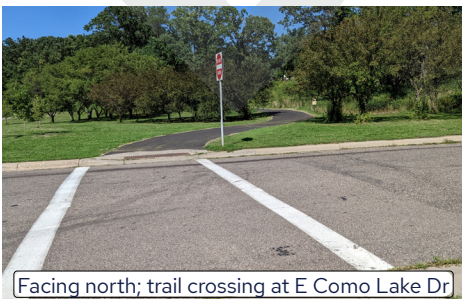


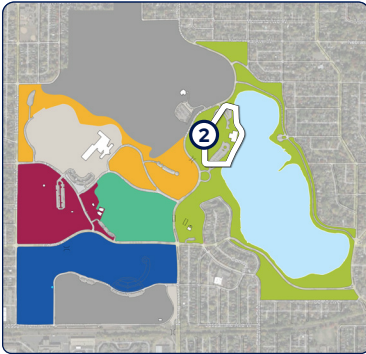
Fig. 2-8 | Como Lake North | Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

Lakeside Pavilion

Key Map



Legend

- Park Boundary
- Two-Way Bicycle
- One-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

The Lakeside Pavilion serves as the anchor of this section of the Park. Community feedback indicated that circulation to and around the Pavilion should be improved to provide a welcoming and publicly accessible amenity here. Circulation should be improved to provide two-way trails for bikes, and more effective wayfinding signage should be provided for all modes.

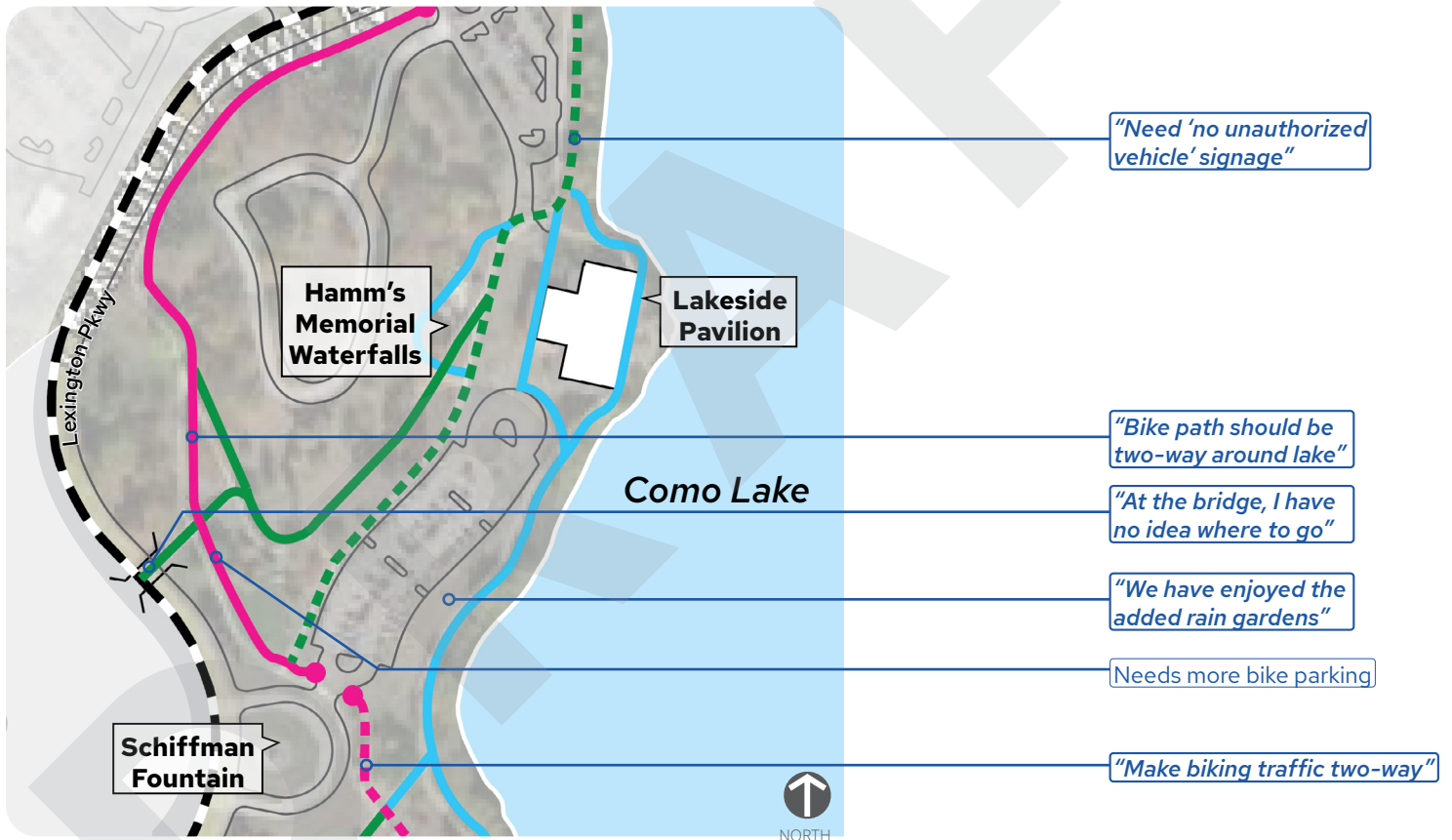


Fig. 2-9 | Lakeside Pavilion | Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

Streetcar Station

Key Map



Legend

- — — Park Boundary
- — — Two-Way Bicycle
- - - One-Way Bicycle
- — — Pedestrian
- — — Shared-Use
- - - One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

Like other areas of the Park, community feedback indicated a desire for two-way bicycle traffic and more clear and accessible paths in this area. Connections to other bike facilities such as the Grand Round and potential future Lexington Parkway Regional Trail are also critical here.

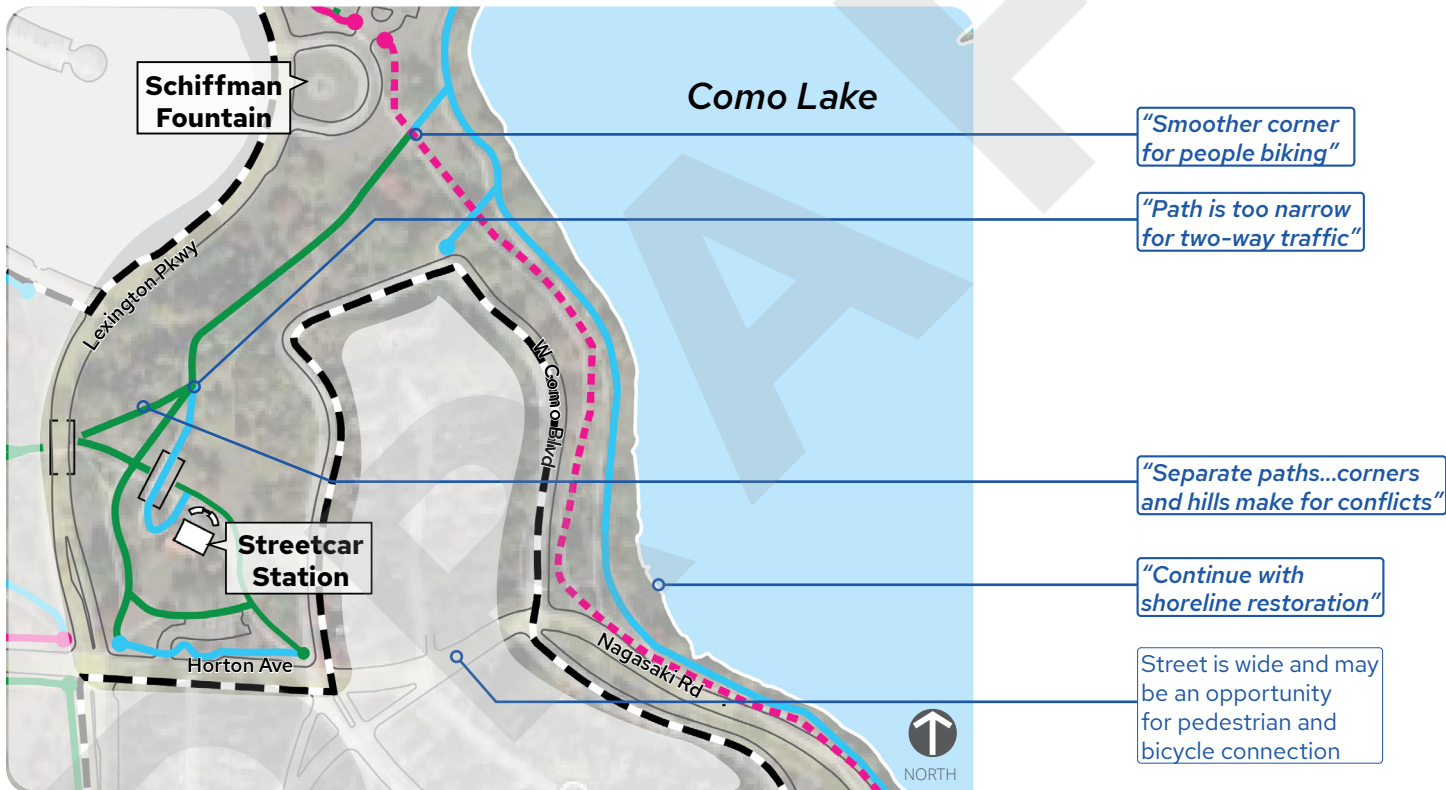


Fig. 2-10 | Streetcar Station | Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

Nagasaki Road

Key Map



Legend

- — — Park Boundary
- — — Two-Way Bicycle
- - - One-Way Bicycle
- — — Pedestrian
- — — Shared-Use
- - - One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

The south side of Como Lake provides an important connection to the Grand Round - a connection point to the citywide bike network. The narrow space between the lakeshore and Nagasaki Road where the pedestrian and bike paths are located form a bottleneck, making the future improvements to these facilities a challenge. Conflicts with traffic along this road, and at the intersection of Nagasaki Road and E. Como Boulevard are critical, along with other safety upgrades including lighting.

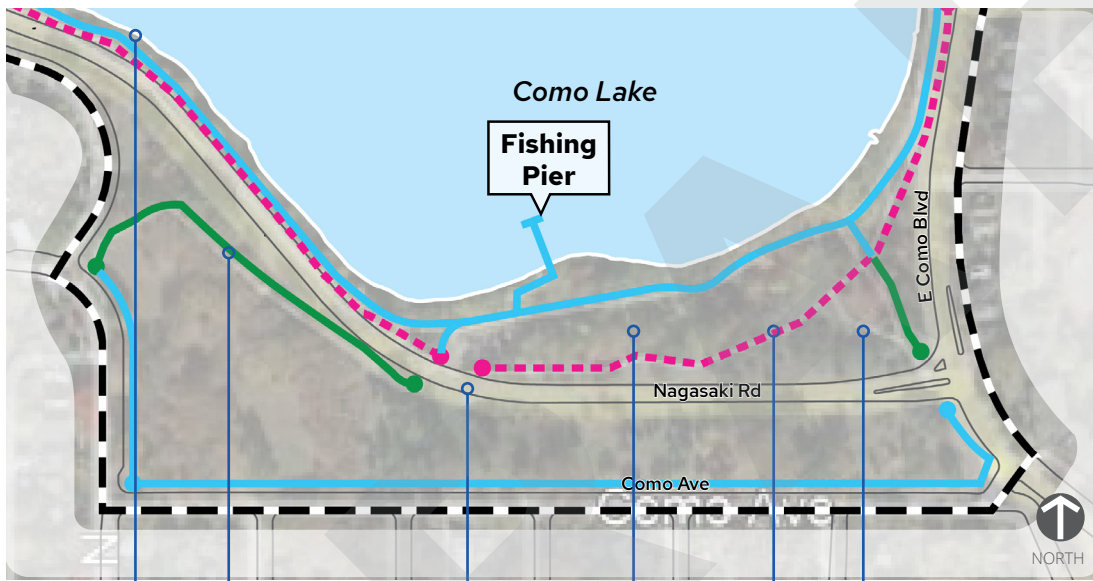


Fig. 2-11 | Nagasaki Road | Existing Conditions

- "Path too narrow for intended use"*
- "Continue with shoreline restoration"*
- "I avoid this area due to lack of light"*
- "Traffic calming needed this side of Como"*
- "Bikers ride here, please pave this path"*
- "Southern path needs ability to head west"*



Existing Conditions

East Como Lake Drive

Key Map



Legend

- Park Boundary
- Two-Way Bicycle
- One-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

Similar to the paths along Nagasaki Road, space is limited for the pedestrian and bicycle facilities between the lakeshore and East Como Lake Drive. Feedback received during community engagement reflected interest in closing East Como Lake Drive to vehicular traffic to create wider paths and dedicate more space to shoreline restoration and supporting other ecological functions of the Lake.

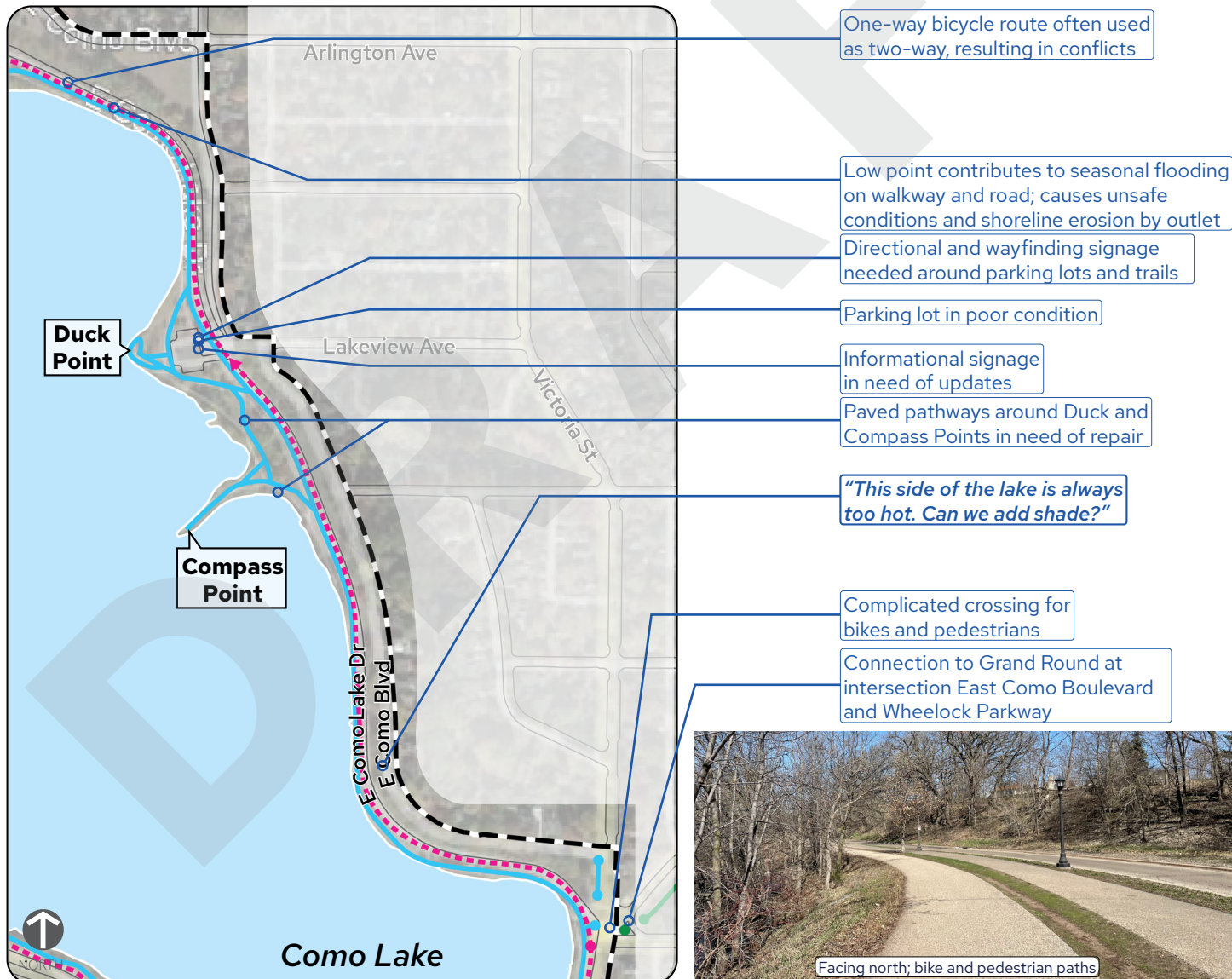


Fig. 2-12 | East Como Lake Drive | Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions

Picnic Grounds

Key Map



Legend

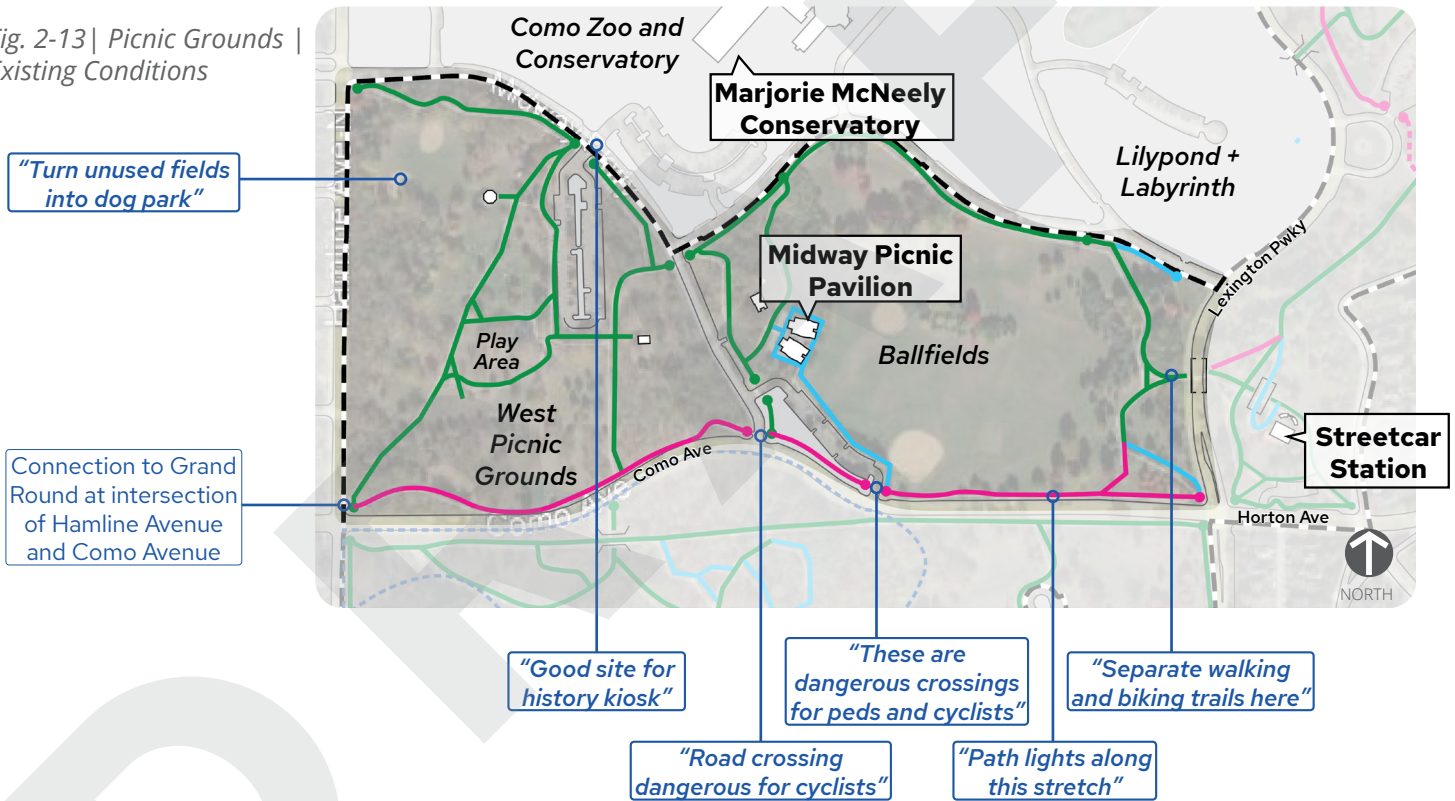
- Park Boundary
- Two-Way Bicycle
- One-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- One-Way Shared

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

This area of the Park includes the west picnic grounds, ball fields, a play area, the Midway Picnic Pavilion, open greenspaces, and connection to the Grand Round at the intersection of Como Avenue and Hamline Avenue.

Community comments in this area focused on pedestrian safety measures including increase pathway lighting, safer crossings at intersection and parking lots, and separation of pedestrian and bicycle paths.

Fig. 2-13 | Picnic Grounds | Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

Woodland Classroom

Key Map



Legend

- Park Boundary
- Two-Way Bicycle
- One-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- One-Way Shared
- Woodland Outdoor Classroom Boundary

Annotations in quotations reflect feedback heard during community engagement.

This area of Como Regional Park includes many popular and well-loved features. These include Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom, Como Regional Park Pool, and McMurray Fields. Community feedback indicated that improvements to signage frequency and clarity are needed in this area to direct Park users to other Park features, including the Como Park Zoo. Other safety and accessibility needs were also noted during community engagement.

"A map to illustrate paths and signage"

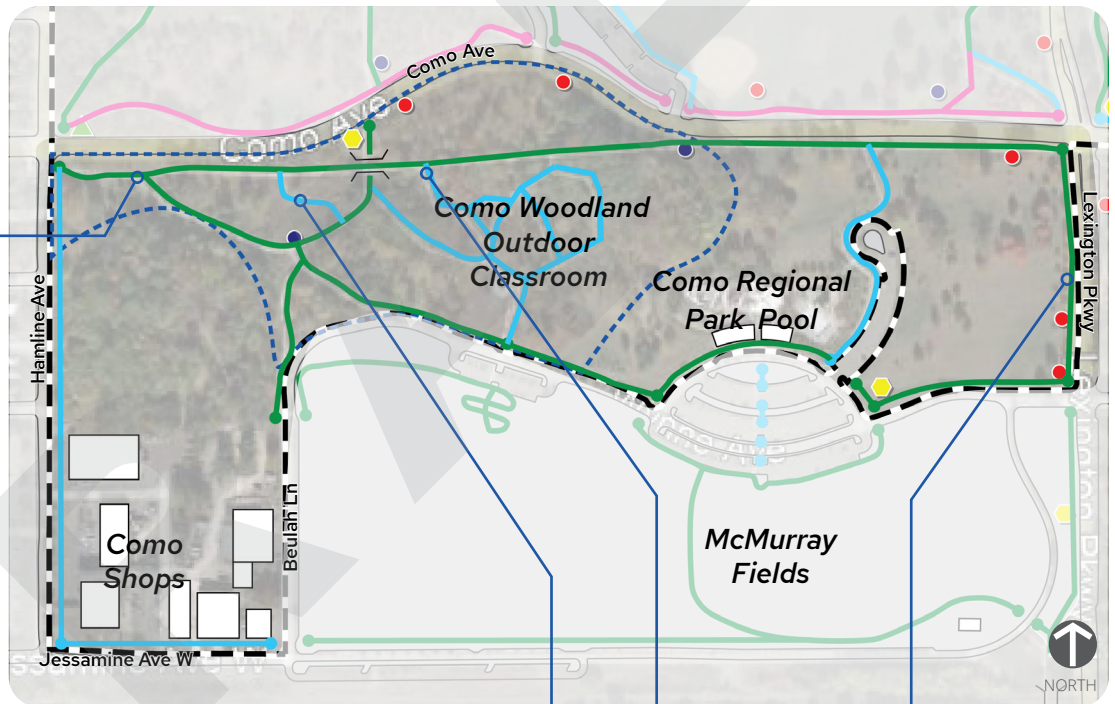


Fig. 2-14 | Woodland Classroom | Existing Conditions

"Very dark here. Need lighting."

"Paths along Lexington in poor condition"

"Need a convenient way to get between trails"

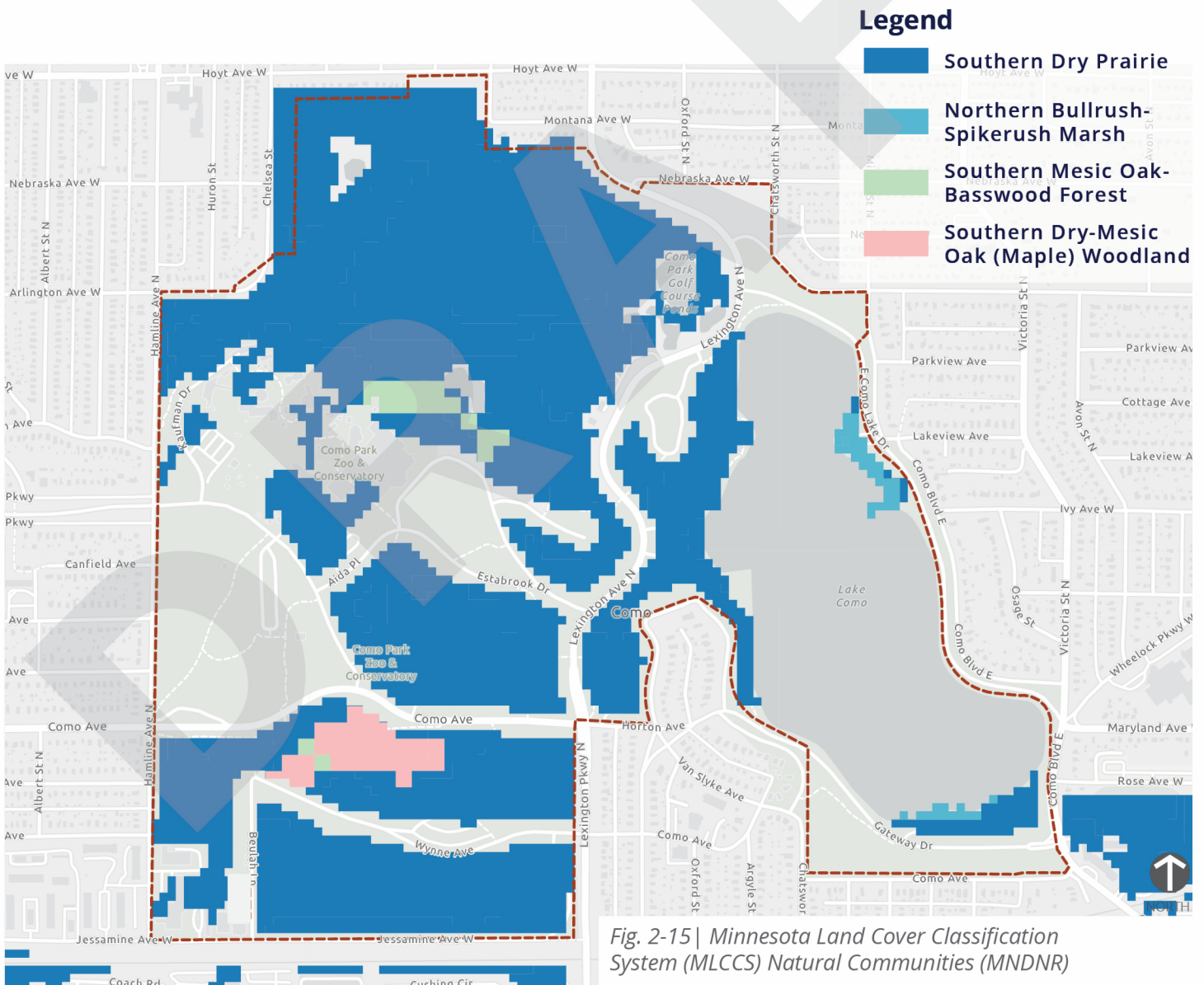


Natural Resources

Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)

Land Cover

The information on the map below illustrates the land cover of the project area and beyond. Most of the Park is identified as “Southern Dry Prairie,” with a small area of “Southern Mesic Oak-Basswood Forest” north of the Como Zoo, a small area of “Southern Dry-Mesic Oak (Maple) Woodland” near the Como Pool and Woodland Outdoor Classroom, and a small pocket of “Northern Bullrush-Spikerush Marsh” on the east side of the Lake.



Natural Resources



Priority Waters - Como Lake

Priority Waters are defined by the Metropolitan Council in order to sustainably manage waterbodies within the Metro region. Rivers, streams, and lakes included on the Priority Waters List provide significant use and benefit to the region based on seven categories:

1. Recreation and tourism
2. Healthy habitat
3. Drinking water protection
4. Tranquil connection
5. Equity
6. Industry and utility
7. Science and education

The Priority Waters list helps allocate resources to management of these waterbodies, and helps to develop policies that align with and inform the Water Resources Plan. Como Lake is included on the Priority Waters list due in large part to its recreation and tourism value¹.

Tree Canopy

The Metropolitan Council, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy and Tree Trust, have developed an interactive mapping tool that includes data on tree canopy cover in the metro area. The tool provides data and analysis on how existing tree canopy relates to the issues of climate change, environmental equity, and others. Below is information from this “Growing Shade” mapping tool regarding the Como Park neighborhood (including Como Regional Park):

- Como Park has an existing tree canopy coverage of 33.6% (2021). The average tree canopy coverage in Saint Paul is 30.7%; the regional average is 37.6%.
- Como Park has an average temperature on a hot summer day of 94.1F; the regional average is 93.5F.
- Percentage of people with income <185% of the poverty threshold in Como Park is 19.2%; the regional average is 18.2%.

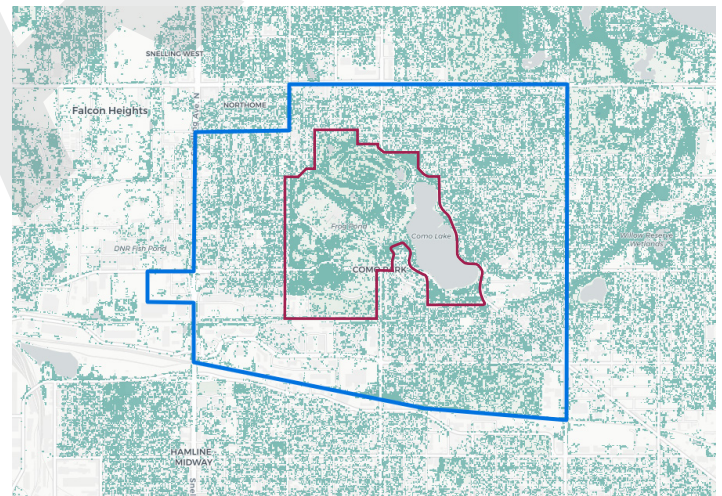


Fig. 2-16 | Existing Tree Canopy

Legend

- Existing Tree Canopy
- Project Area
- Como Park Neighborhood

¹ : Metropolitan Council, 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, [https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-\(2020-version\)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx](https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-(2020-version)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx)

² : Growing Shade Tool, <https://metrotransitm.n.shinyapps.io/growing-shade/>

Natural Resources

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD)

Como Lakeshore Management Plan

Developed by the CRWD, the Como Lakeshore Management Plan seeks to build on previous plans to focus on improving the ecological health, resilience, aesthetics, and functionality of the strip of land immediately surrounding Como Lake.¹ The Management Plan assesses the existing conditions of the Como Lake lakeshore, identifies issues and concerns, outlines goals and objectives, and includes recommendations and strategies for implementation.

¹ : Capitol Region Watershed District. (2022). Como Lakeshore Management Plan. https://www.capitolregionwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Como-Lakeshore-Mgmt-Plan_adopted_04-06-2022.pdf

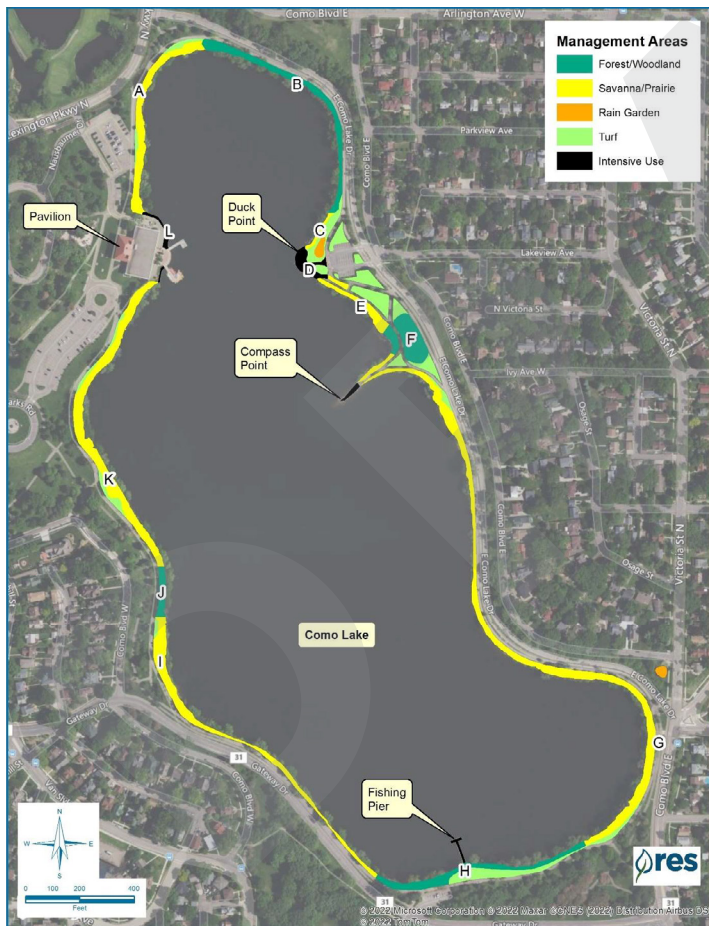


Fig. 2-17 | Como Lakeshore Management Areas (CRWD Como Lakeshore Management Plan, 2022)



Fig. 2-18 | Como Lakeshore Access Paths (CRWD Como Lakeshore Management Plan, 2022)

Natural Resources

Wetlands

The map below depicts the 'Circular 39' classification system of the updated National Wetlands Inventory, developed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This system categorizes wetlands predominantly based on depth and vegetation. Como Lake and the shoreline is managed by CRWD, in collaboration with local and state governmental partners including Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. This Long-Range Plan recommends alignment with the CRWD Watershed Management Plan, which focuses on improving the health, resilience, aesthetic, and functionality of the strip of land immediately surrounding Como Lake.¹ The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan has also identified potential areas where shoreline can be increased for greater ecological and water quality benefit in coordination with the Capitol Region Watershed District Shoreline Management Plan.

Como Park encompasses six designated wetland areas. Como Lake is categorized as having an unconsolidated bottom, with open waters directly adjacent to it featuring emergent vegetation acting as a filtration strip. This vegetation serves to intercept contaminants before they reach the lake. A known issue of Como lake includes excessive

phosphorus which leads to algal blooms and overgrowth. The habitat quality in Como Lake has been one-dimensional, lacking diverse planting communities that could positively impact natural habitats. The lake currently consists mainly of submergent aquatic vegetation, with minimal emergence of vegetation that it once had included elodea, coontail, and native water milfoil. The absence of diverse vegetation communities limits the variety and amount of wildlife that will thrive in and around Como Lake.

The upland zone of the shoreline differs significantly from the in-lake zone. Existing shoreline vegetation predominantly includes canopy and sub-canopy trees, shrubs, forbs, grasses, vines, and managed turf areas. Riprap currently protects most of the shoreline. The CRWD in partnership with the City of Saint Paul has implemented management plans aimed at restructuring the system and replacing non-native vegetation with a more native planting palette. This initiative is intended to directly enhance the habitat, creating a more diverse and beneficial environment for wildlife.

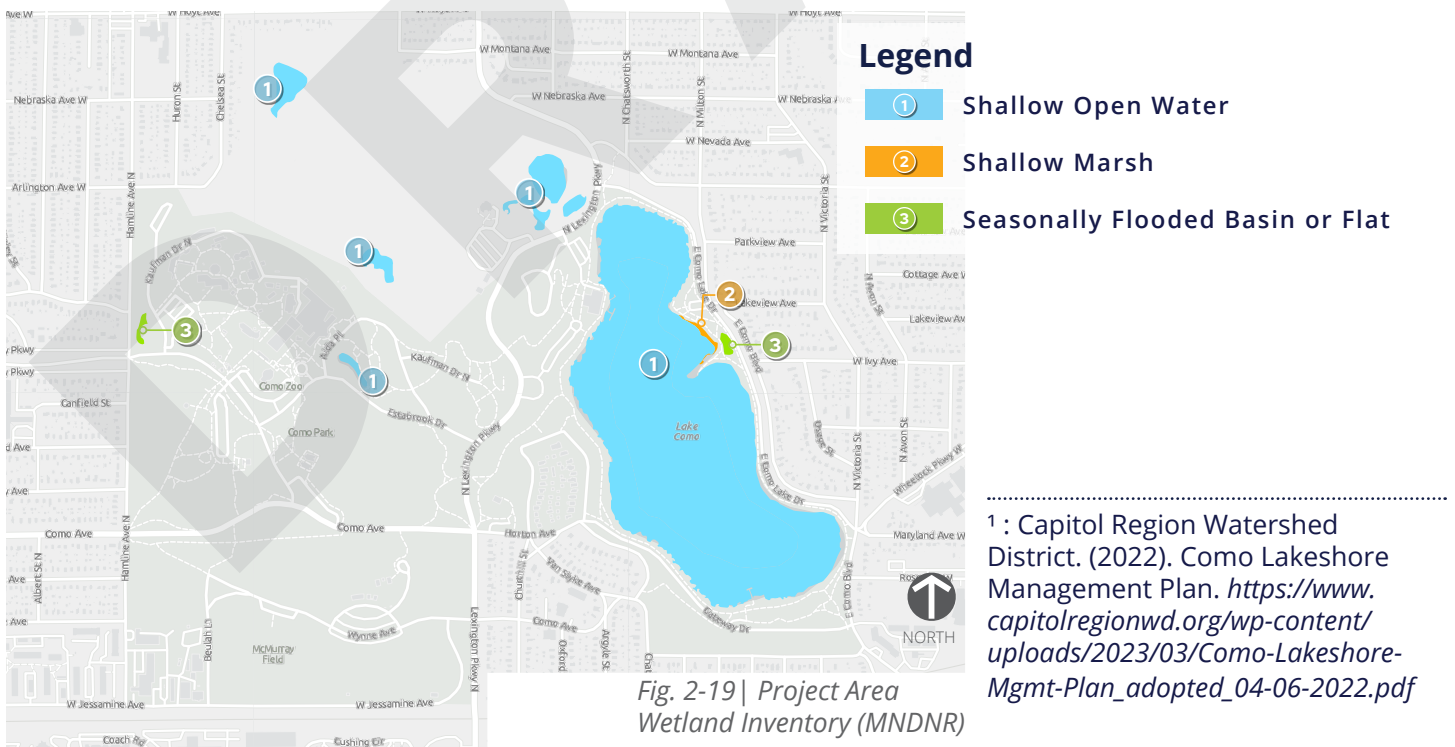


Fig. 2-19 | Project Area Wetland Inventory (MNDNR)

Natural Resources

Invasive Species and Vegetation Management

Invasive animals pose significant challenges to natural areas, and in some cases, controlling their impact is more realistic than complete eradication. Some invasive animals, like invasive earthworms, are difficult to remove or manage cost-effectively. The primary invasive animals affecting or having the potential to impact the Como Lakeshore are as follows:

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB): Since 2010, the City of Saint Paul through its EAB Management Program has been working to mitigate the devastation caused by the Emerald Ash Borer. A strategy of “Structured Removal” of ash trees has been used to significantly reduce the number of ash trees on boulevards and in Saint Paul Parks. In 2024, the majority of the ash tree removals and new tree plantings within Como Park have been completed.

Spongy Moth (formerly “gypsy moth”): A federally- and state-regulated pest, the Gypsy Moth is rare in Minnesota, but has been detected in nearby Twin Cities communities. Careful management of cut trees is important in preventing further spread of the moths¹.

Invasive Earthworms: Present in City forests and presumed to be around Como Lake, these non-native, invasive animals were introduced, in part, through discarded fishing bait. Recently, the emergence of “jumping worms,” another invasive earthworm species, has been identified in the Twin Cities. These earthworms exhibit aggressive consumption of organic matter on the soil surface, altering soil structure and composition. As a result, they change the quantity and variety of plants thriving on the forest floor, with unknown effects on the regeneration of the future forest tree canopy. Effective management strategies are needed to address these invasive earthworms and mitigate their impact on the ecosystem.

Note: Although Como Regional Park is not within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), planners acknowledge the purpose and importance of this designation and its requirements.

¹ : Capitol Region Watershed District. (2022). Como Lakeshore Management Plan. https://www.capitolregionwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Como-Lakeshore-Mgmt-Plan_adopted_04-06-2022.pdf

Existing Conditions

Park Access

Connecting to existing transportation facilities is an important piece of creating an accessible Regional Park. The southern edge of the Park is well-served by bus transit; transit route 3 connects to both downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis while transit route 83 provides a north/south connection across Saint Paul.

The pedestrian sidewalk network is shown on the map below. The green lines represent existing sidewalks. Neighborhoods on the east side of the Lake, particularly the northeast side, have limited sidewalk access between the residential areas and Como Regional Park.

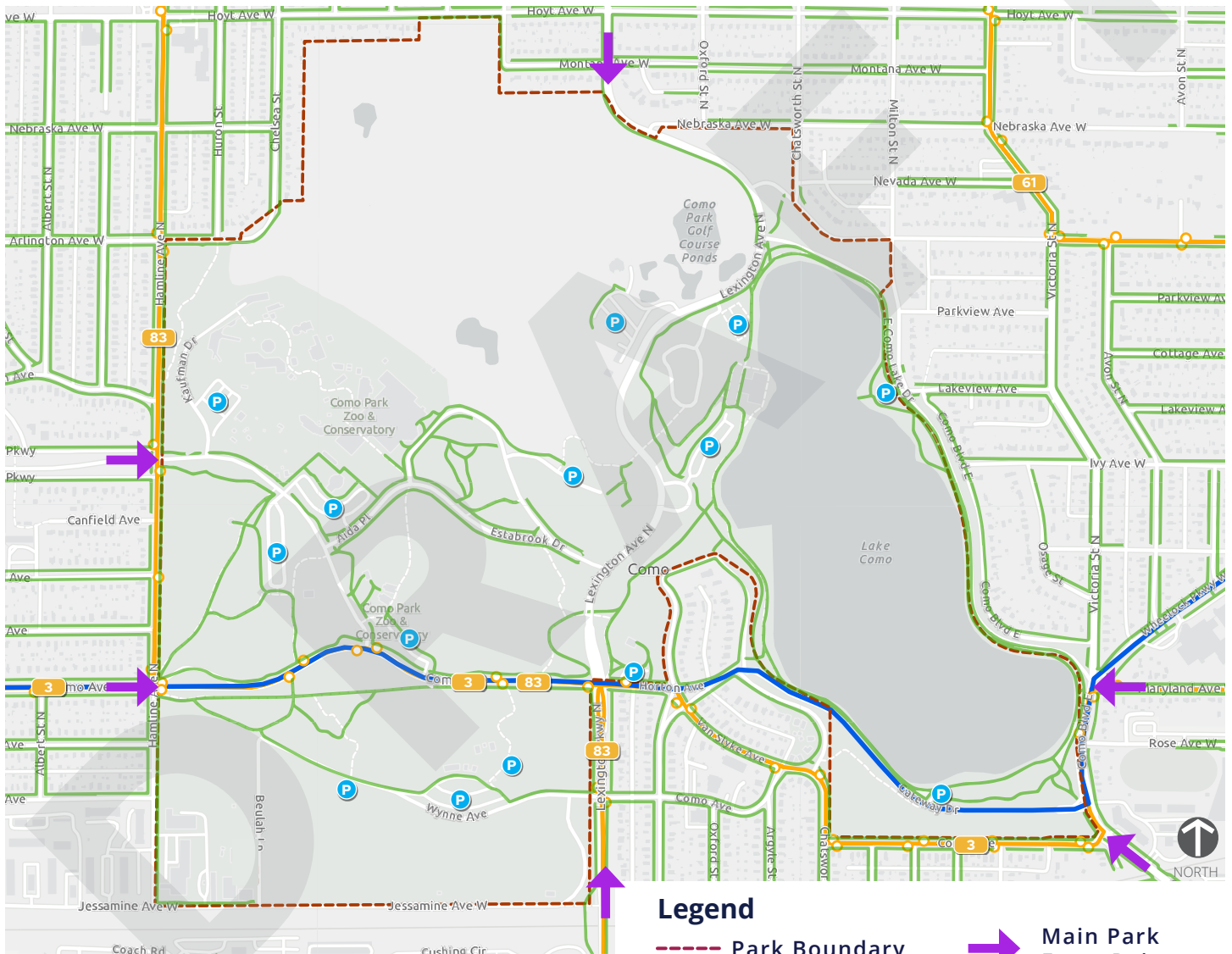


Fig. 2-20 | Park Access

Existing Conditions

Designated Historic Districts and Individual Historic Properties

Historic districts and properties in and adjacent to Como Regional Park may require special consideration at the time of design and implementation for various proposed projects. Two notable historic properties within the Como Regional Park boundary are the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory and two bridges near the Historic Streetcar Station.

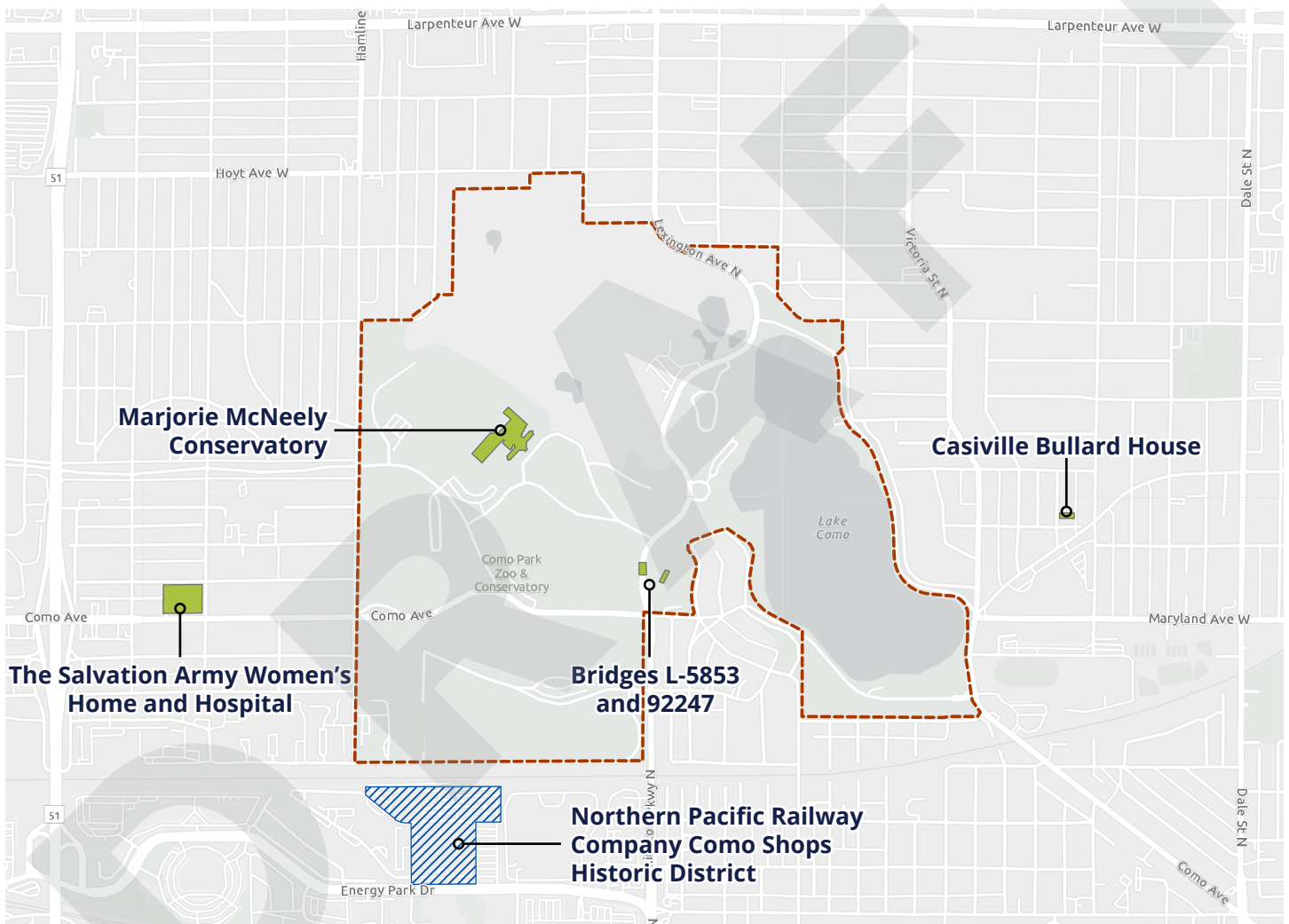


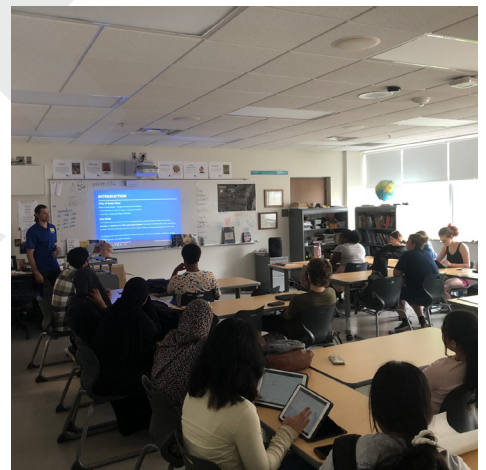
Fig. 2-21 | Historic Sites and Districts (Saint Paul Historic Preservation Commission)

Legend

- Project Boundary
- Historic Site
- Historic District
Locally and nationally listed

Chapter 3

Community Engagement



Introduction

This chapter outlines the process and outcomes of the community engagement process for the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan. Project staff met with community members, students at local schools, Park neighbors, and hosted an online engagement site visited by stakeholders from across the region to determine priorities for future implementation at Como Regional Park. Recommended projects with priority ranking can be found in Chapter 4. These recommended projects were developed through the engagement process, and their priority ranking was directly influenced by feedback from a variety of community voices.

Equity Analysis

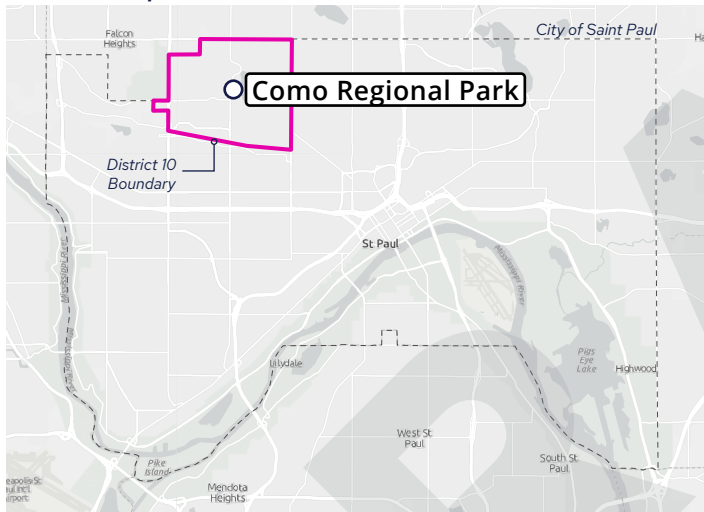
Project Data

Scope: What are the boundaries and demographics of the public engagement area? Please consider neighborhoods adjacent to the park or trail, travel sheds, and agency/regional boundaries.

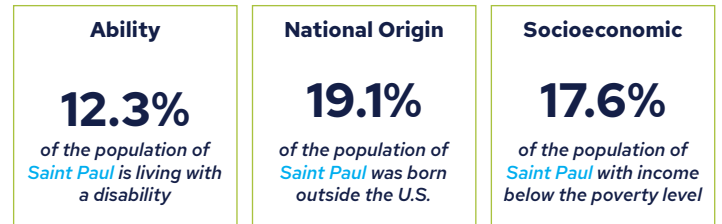
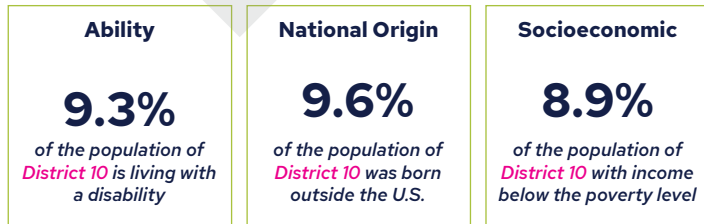
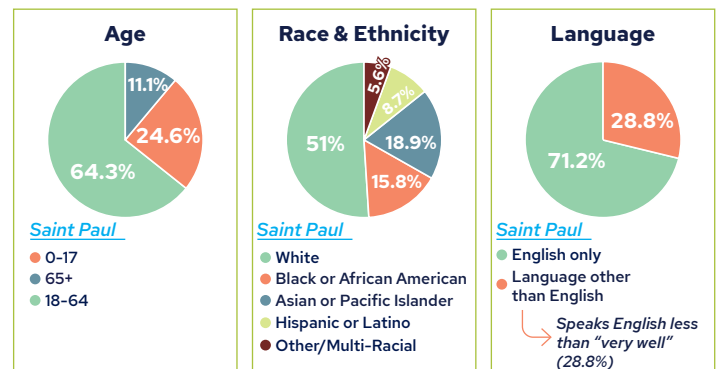
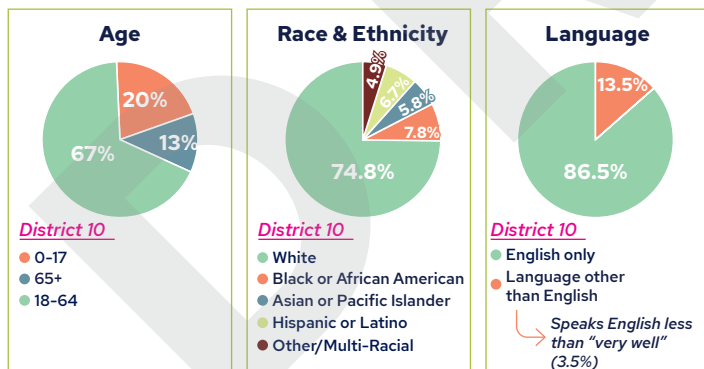
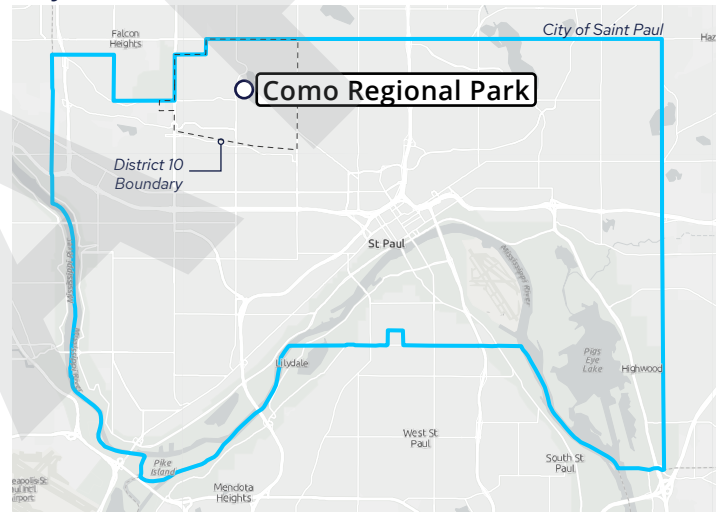
¹ : Minnesota Compass, Saint Paul Data. <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/saint-paul>

Engagement efforts for the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan focused on both a local and regional scale. Como Regional Park is within District 10 which is the Como Park neighborhood. Several focused engagement events were held here, and a majority of the Design Advisory Committee members reside in this neighborhood. At a more regional scale, the project team was able to reach a broader engagement audience throughout Saint Paul and the region through the project’s online engagement platform, and attendance and participation at other community events around the City. The information below includes demographic information specific to District 10, as well as the City at large.

District 10 | Como Park ¹



City of Saint Paul ¹



Equity Analysis

Project Data

Context: What is known about future stakeholders, underserved populations, and how the region's history created present-day inequitable outcomes?

Racial Covenants

Racial covenants are clauses that were inserted into property deeds to prevent people who were not white from buying or occupying land.¹ Real estate developers and urban planners implemented covenants under the idea that “mixed-race residential areas were hazardous and should be eliminated.”¹ The use of racial covenants in the Twin Cities region has contributed to continuing racial inequities, particularly as they relate to homeownership. While white households in Saint Paul constitute 67% of all households in the City, they comprise 82% of home-owning households.⁴ Although racial covenants were deemed unenforceable by the Supreme Court in 1948, property records still include the language used in the covenants.³

Other discriminatory housing practices such as redlining have been used in tandem with racial covenants to restrict homeownership among non-white people. Between 1935 and 1940, federal agents of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation assigned grades to different areas of cities across the U.S. to reflect “mortgage security,” with cities or neighborhoods receiving a grade from A (minimal

risk to banks), to D (considered hazardous).² These practices were informed by racial discrimination and made homeownership for non-white people more difficult.

Although racial covenants and redlining are no longer enforceable practices, their impacts can still be seen today and highlight the demographic inequities in the City and region. It is critical to recognize the impacts of discriminatory zoning and real estate practices, and consider marginalized residents when planning present and future regional amenities.

¹ : Mapping Prejudice. <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/racial-covenants/what-is-a-covenant>

² : Mapping Inequality. <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>

³ : Furst, R., Hargarten, J., Webster, M., & Tribune, S. (2022, June 16). Racial covenants found embedded in Ramsey County property deeds. Star Tribune. <https://www.startribune.com/the-racist-covenants-embedded-in-ramsey-county-deeds/600182442/> <https://www.startribune.com/the-racist-covenants-embedded-in-ramsey-county-deeds/600182442/>

⁴ : Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan, https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/CSP_2040_CompPlan_FinalAdopted_Updated_091322.pdf



Legend

- Racial Covenant
- Como Regional Park Boundary

Much of this data comes from the Mapping Prejudice project, based in the University of Minnesota Libraries. To date, the project has transcribed 80,000 property deeds in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

Equity Analysis

Future Stakeholders

The Metropolitan Council projects that the population of Saint Paul will grow by 30,000 residents, 13,000 households, and 20,000 jobs between 2020 and 2040. The population of Saint Paul and the Metro Region is also projected to become more diverse over this period of time. Between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of people of color living in Saint Paul increased from 36% to 46%. During this same time period, the percentage of people of color living in Ramsey County has increased from 13% in 2000 to 30% in 2014. The Metropolitan Council estimates that by 2040, people of color will comprise 40% of the region. The Metropolitan Council projects that people aged 65 and older will be the fastest growing segment of the region's population, and will be one in five of the region's residents by 2040 (21% of the population).¹ Based on these estimates, it can be inferred that future stakeholders will be older, and more racially and/or ethnically diverse than Park users are today.

Public Engagement and Participation

Participants: Which stakeholders discussed above contributed to the planning effort?

Project staff connected with a variety of groups during the engagement process for the Long-Range Plan, with a focus on future stakeholders and under-represented groups. Project staff engaged with youth at local schools including Como High School, Metro Deaf School, and the Hmong College Prep Academy, as well as members on the Saint Paul Youth Commission. Additionally, engagement with adjacent community groups played a significant role in shaping the Plan. Staff were able to connect with residents of District 10 at a number of local community events and through online surveys. The demographics of District 10 as a whole are included in page 34 of this document.

Engagement: What engagement, outreach, and communication was conducted for stakeholders described in above?

In an effort to connect with as many stakeholders as possible, engagement opportunities were posted on both the City webpage as well as an interactive website for users to take surveys, make notes in a project map, ask questions, or share concerns. The project team participated in community events organized by others, and also held events with groups of community members that focused on future stakeholders and underserved populations. The purpose of this engagement was to learn more about the recreation preferences of these groups, to help minimize barriers, and to make Como Regional Park a more welcoming space for all. A summary of the types of engagement events is below:

- Engagement held in conjunction with other community events
- District Council meetings
- On-site and online surveys
- Engage Saint Paul engagement website
- Transportation Committee (comprised of residents and City representatives)
- Safe Routes to School meetings
- Design Advisory Committee (comprised of resident representatives)
- Community Open House

The design team bolstered their community engagement phase by focusing extra attention on connecting with historically underrepresented groups. A summary of this focused engagement, and the priorities identified during meetings with those groups, is outlined on the following pages. Full agendas and meeting minutes can be found in the appendix.

¹ : Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan, https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/CSP_2040_CompPlan_FinalAdopted_Updated_091322.pdf

Equity Analysis

Public Participation: What did you learn from the engagement conducted in 2b?

After the project team met with the groups listed above, feedback was compiled and project improvements were categorized into the following themes:

- Paths and Trails
- Programming
- Habitat
- Streets and Intersections
- Miscellaneous

The suggested improvements under these categories were then included onto a score sheet to determine stakeholder priorities. Highest priority would receive a score of 5, while lowest a score of 1. The project team went back to the focused engagement groups listed on the previous page and asked stakeholders to share their feedback on project priorities.

Overall Project Priorities

The projects that received the highest average score from participants are as follows*:

1. Improve safety at trail crossings and transitions; update ramps to match trail width; improve ADA accessibility; increase measures to prevent vehicle entry on pathways.
2. Plant and maintain trees for added shade and add more native prairie and plantings for native habitat.
3. Increase pedestrian lighting for safety; add site furnishings such as benches, bike parking, picnic tables, drinking fountains where appropriate.
4. Consolidate trail system, remove unnecessary paved surfaces, resurface and widen paths to accommodate appropriate designations. Improve accessibility to lakeshore and to other park features.
5. Consider closure of East Como Lake Drive to improve water quality and bike/pedestrian safety.

*A full list of recommended projects that were included in the survey can be found in Ch. 4 of this document.

raised map (relief) for deaf blind kids to "feel" the map

After School, breakfast the park by Gabe' to tunnel experience heavy traffic with bikes, mtb, and runners.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
 Add more green space/open opportunities for the youth to clean up the area replant.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
 I feel like you add more fields for different types of sports like soccer/volleyball/basketball etc. these should also be handicapped or quad's hand should or be set up some handicap can be use a ball case or a cone left. There's a lot of cones, something so I feel like there should be a lot of events and transitions for friends or give money with good service, make a game a job for teens like myself I want there to work for "earn" money. Thank you!

WHAT'S MISSING?
 Describe other items that may not have been covered and should be considered for the project - additional space on next page
 Included space for additional sports aside from golf + pickleball. Sports like tennis, basketball (maybc), etc.

Sample of surveys received from Youth Commission members and staff at the Metro Deaf School

Equity Analysis

Priorities by Engagement Group/Event

Open House (Community Members)

1. Increase pedestrian lighting for safety; add site furnishings such as benches, bike parking, picnic tables, drinking fountains where appropriate.
2. Design paths for improved snow plowing
3. (tie) Consolidate trail system, remove unnecessary paved surfaces, resurface and widen paths to accommodate appropriate designations. Improve accessibility to lakeshore and to other park features.
3. (tie) Lakeside Pavilion: Update to make more visitor friendly; improve access to lakeshore; provide diverse seasonal interest; improve bike and pedestrian circulation around facility.
5. Improve safety at trail crossings and transitions; update ramps to match trail width; improve ADA accessibility; increase measures to prevent vehicle entry on pathways.

Metro Deaf School (staff)

4. Improve safety at trail crossings and transitions; update ramps to match trail width; improve ADA accessibility; increase measures to prevent vehicle entry on pathways.
5. Consolidate trail system, remove unnecessary paved surfaces, resurface and widen paths to accommodate appropriate designations. Improve accessibility to lakeshore and to other park features.
6. Increase pedestrian lighting for safety; add site furnishings such as benches, bike parking, picnic tables, drinking fountains where appropriate.
7. Additional temporary/seasonal restroom facilities needed.
8. Seed and stabilize shoreline with native plantings to reduce erosion.

Saint Paul Youth Commission (9th-12th grade Saint Paul students)

1. Increase pedestrian lighting for safety; add site furnishings such as benches, bike parking, picnic tables, drinking fountains where appropriate.
2. Plant and maintain trees for added shade and add more native prairie and plantings for native habitat
3. (tie) Improve wayfinding; improve path

markings and other wayfinding signage for all users. Improve signage accessibility *including raised relief maps and tactile strips*.*

3. (tie) Additional temporary/seasonal restrooms needed.
 5. Lakeside Pavilion: Update to make more visitor friendly; improve access to lakeshore; provide diverse seasonal interest; improve bike and pedestrian circulation around facility.
- *The raised relief maps and tactile strips were added to the survey after the Metro Deaf School Visit.

What We Learned:

- The top priorities for the groups taking the survey differed, though safety and accessibility were primary concerns for many participants.
- Categories that received the highest average scores were improvements to the paths and trails, and habitat around Como Lake.
- Many youth were unfamiliar with the Grand Round.
- Though there was overwhelming support to close East Como Lake Drive, it only ranked as a 'medium' priority compared to other project priorities.
- Winter programming was also a consistent theme, though it was also ranked a 'medium' priority.
- Lexington Parkway and East Como Lake Drive are barriers for activities and users could benefit from safety improvements, particularly at crossings.

Evaluation Summary

Transparency: How did the public participation from 2c impact the decisions and policies made?

The project priorities identified during the community engagement phase of the planning process informed the proposed projects outlined in Chapter 4 of this document. Projects that community members ranked higher, will be a higher priority for funding and implementation after the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan is approved and funding becomes available. Comments received are documented in this Plan, and will guide future development and improvements to the Park.

Equity Analysis

Accountability: How will the planning effort create better outcomes?

Through the community engagement process, a number of current barriers to underserved communities were identified, most notably safety and accessibility with Como Regional Park. To create a park that is more welcoming and that better confronts the needs of future users, this Plan aims to address the issues identified by engagement participants and to serve as a guide for future development.

Level of Public Impact (International Association for Public Participation’s Public Participation Spectrum)

The table below illustrates the key types of engagement used by the project team during the planning process, as well the outcomes of this engagement, and the level of public impact for each of these engagement types.

Engagement Events	Level of Public Impact	Outcomes
Online Engagement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> StPaul.gov Project Website 	<i>Inform</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff shared updates on the project and upcoming events. Meeting minutes, presentation materials, and other documents were available to be viewed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage Saint Paul Engagement Website 	<i>Consult/Involve</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public could share comments and ideas about the project, pin ideas on an interactive project map, and participate in surveys. Survey data and public comments identified project priorities and community ideas for the Long-Range Plan.
Community Partner Events		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saint Paul Classic Bike Tour District 10 Ice Cream Social District 10 Harvest Festival District 10 Community Council Meeting 	<i>Inform/Consult</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff connected with community members who attended these events to share information about the project and answer questions. Feedback from community members was documented and then influenced recommendations in this Plan.
Project Specific Engagement Events		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Advisory Committee Meetings (3) Community Open House Engagement with Youth (Metro Deaf School, German Immersion School, Hmong College Prep Academy, Como High School, Saint Paul Youth Commission) 	<i>Collaborate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued engagement with these groups allowed project staff to share details about the project, and ask for feedback and ideas from these focused groups. The Design Advisory Committee (DAC) helped shape the overall priority themes for this document, and all participants shared their priorities for future projects. Priorities shared by this group have directly influenced this Long-Range Plan.

Public Engagement and Participation

Design Advisory Committee (DAC)

The Design Advisory Committee served an important role in the shaping of the Long-Range Plan. At the beginning of the project, the project team selected 15 representatives to be members of the DAC. The committee was made up of residents of the Como area, community leaders, representatives of local organizations, and other stakeholders. The role of the Design Advisory Committee was to:

- Help determine the community needs and desires for the site
- Review plan concepts and provide input on major design elements and themes
- Bring suggestions from the community, stakeholders, and respective organizations to the attention of the project team
- Help communicate project progress to community members
- Provide guidance to City staff on final design recommendations for the project
- Ensure that the full range of issues were discussed during the design process

DAC members attended three meetings with project staff during the course of the project. The full meeting agendas, presentations, and minutes can be found in the appendix of this document. Feedback summaries for each meeting are included below:

Meeting 1:

Meeting Goals:

Introduce the project, review existing site conditions, group discussion.

What we heard:

- Improve trail hierarchy; reinforce with improved signage and wayfinding.
- Activate Park during winter season: improve winter path maintenance, consider fat tire biking, luminary events, etc.
- Improve access to and circulation around the lakeside pavilion.
- Consider the closure of East Como Lake Drive.
- Include amenities on south side of the lake.

Meeting 2:

Meeting Goals:

Project overview, update on community engagement, review of DAC meeting #1, review proposed improvements, group discussion.

What we heard:

- Clarify path types; retain natural surface paths in woodland outdoor classroom; ensure accessible loops exist throughout the Park; reduce impervious surfaces where possible
- Concern about dog park near zoo; suggestions for recreation near West Picnic Ground include a disc golf course, bicycle pump track, and skills course for young or new bicyclists
- Additional Park amenities including restrooms, drinking fountains, play area near lakeside pavilion, and bicycle parking are needed
- Consider closure of East Como Lake Drive
- Improve winter maintenance of Park trails
- Wayfinding, accessibility, and signage are critical for Park improvements

Meeting 3:

Meeting Goals:

Project overview, update on community engagement, review of DAC meeting #2, review proposed improvements and project focus areas, group discussion.

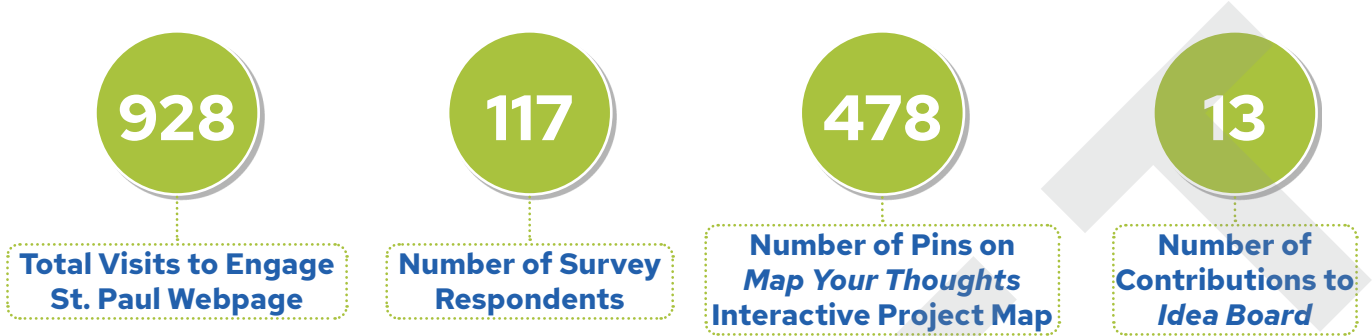
What we heard:

- Better understand indigenous history and current significance of the Dakota Land on which the Park sits, and work with local indigenous groups for a cultural study and future considerations for interpretation and representation.
- Incorporate access to Lake from pavilion.
- Provide paths to connect isolated trail sections and to connect to the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Improve crossings to reduce conflict points between vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Align trail types in Como Park with the Grand Round.
- Coordinate proposal at the Park with the CRWD Watershed Management Plan.
- Make existing paths wider and more accessible, improve trail markings, implement two-way bicycle traffic to safely separate bicycles and pedestrians.

Public Engagement and Participation

Online Engagement

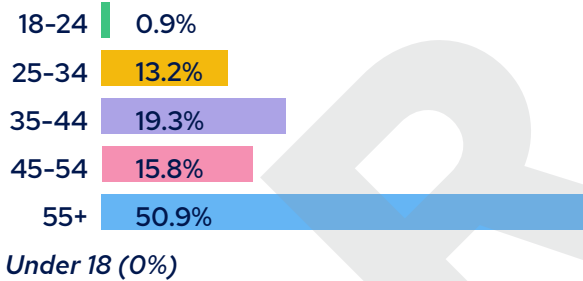
Summary of Online Participation:



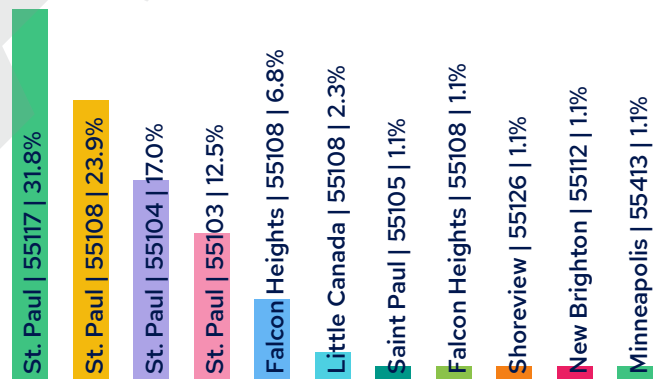
Online Survey Response Summary

Community members were invited to participate in an online survey to share ideas, concerns, and feedback about the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan. The survey responses below were collected between August 2022 and December 2023. In total, the survey received 117 responses. Responses to the survey are below and on the following pages.

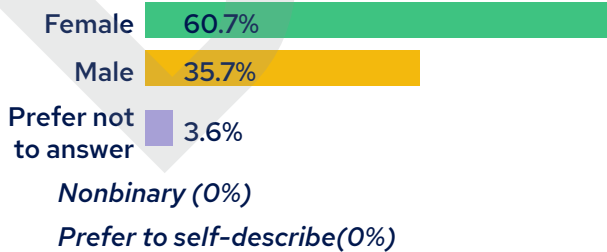
Please select your age.



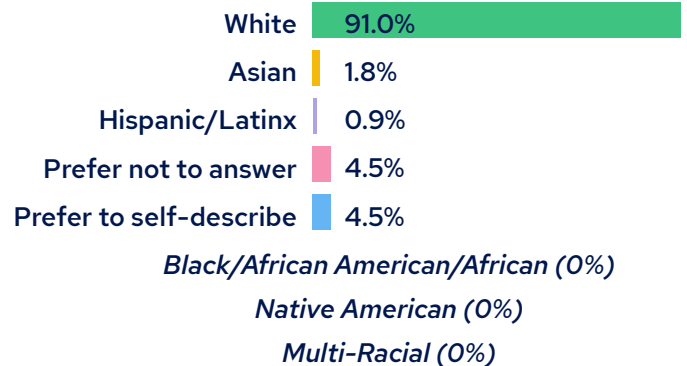
Please enter your zip code.



What gender do you identify as?



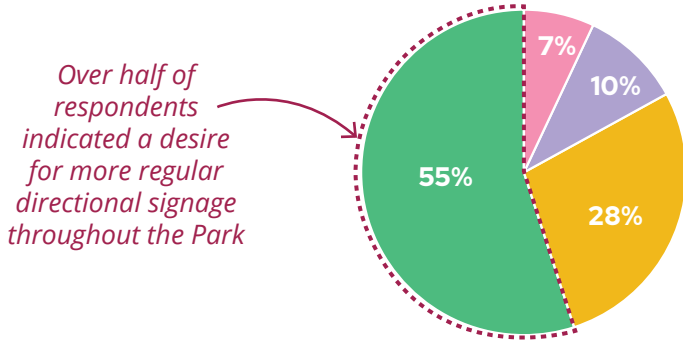
What best describes your race/ethnicity?



Public Engagement and Participation

Online Engagement

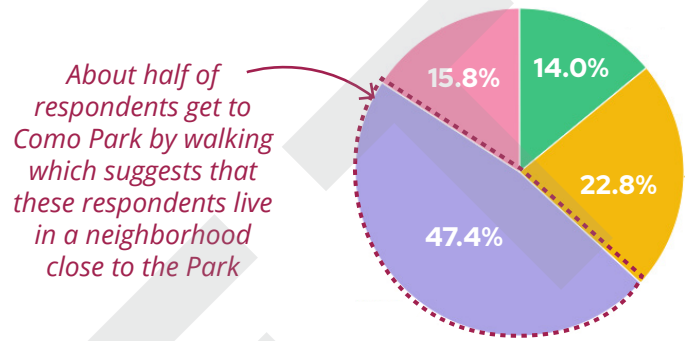
What would help you navigate Como Regional Park more easily?



Over half of respondents indicated a desire for more regular directional signage throughout the Park

- Regularly placed directional signs and map kiosks
- Color-coded paint on trails indicating different routes to attractions.
- Noticeable thresholds between areas of use of different "themes" to define each area
- Other

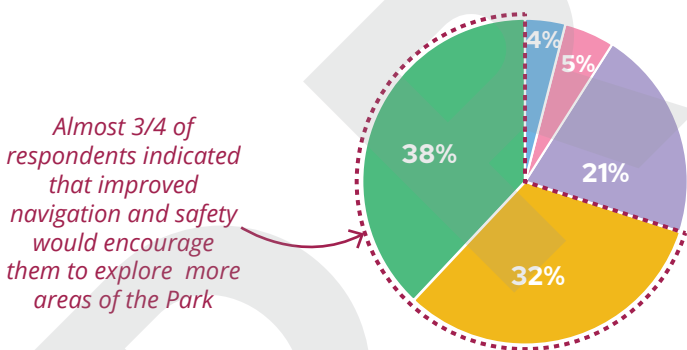
How do you get to Como Regional Park?



About half of respondents get to Como Park by walking which suggests that these respondents live in a neighborhood close to the Park

- Drive/shuttle
- Bike
- Walk
- Other

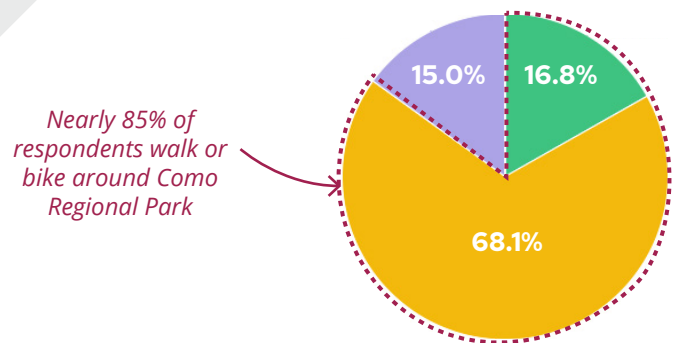
Which of the following would encourage you to explore a new area of Como Regional Park?



Almost 3/4 of respondents indicated that improved navigation and safety would encourage them to explore more areas of the Park

- **Navigation** - awareness of interesting, unique attractions or amenities I know how to reach
- **Safety** - routes I feel comfortable taking alone between dawn and dusk
- **Maintenance** - poor conditions keep me away from certain areas of the Park
- **Access** - example: I am unsure if I can visit the ballfield/pool area if I don't want to participate in those activities
- **Parking** - additional vehicles spaces allow me to explore smaller pieces of the Park

Once you've arrived, how do you get around Como Regional Park?



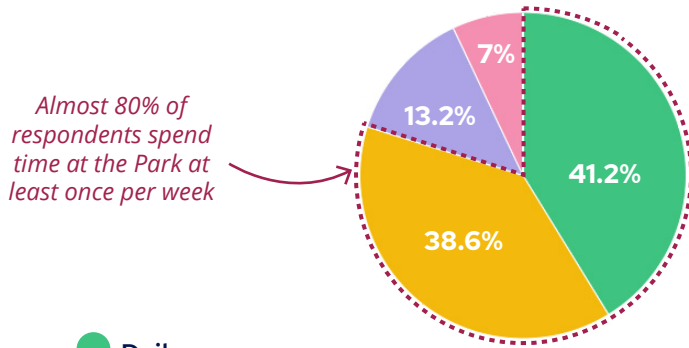
Nearly 85% of respondents walk or bike around Como Regional Park

- Bike
- Walk
- Other

Public Engagement and Participation

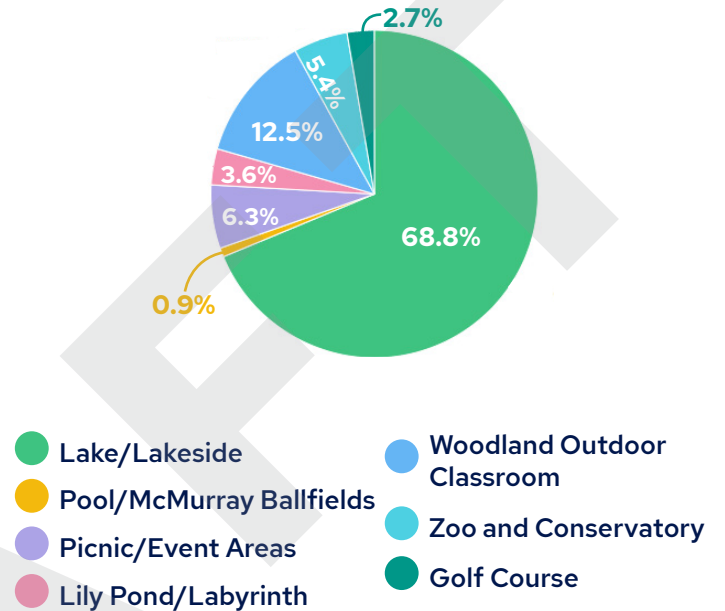
Online Engagement

How often do you spend time at Como Regional Park?



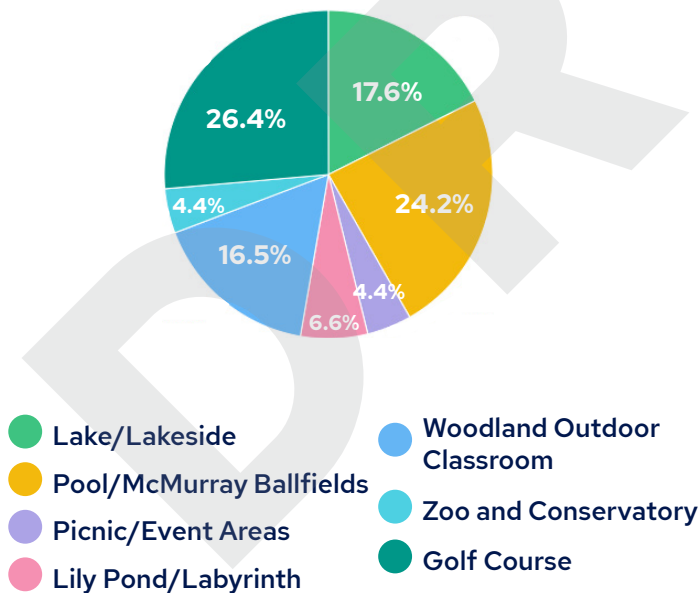
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seasonally/Occasionally

Which area of Como Park do you visit most often?



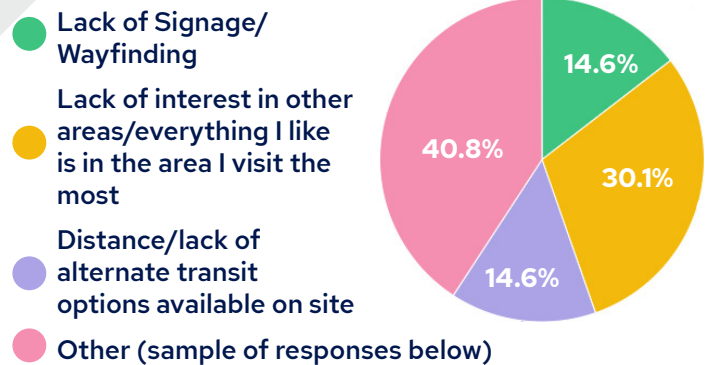
- Lake/Lakeside
- Pool/McMurray Ballfields
- Picnic/Event Areas
- Lily Pond/Labyrinth
- Woodland Outdoor Classroom
- Zoo and Conservatory
- Golf Course

Which area do you believe is the most difficult to access from the area you visit most?



- Lake/Lakeside
- Pool/McMurray Ballfields
- Picnic/Event Areas
- Lily Pond/Labyrinth
- Woodland Outdoor Classroom
- Zoo and Conservatory
- Golf Course

What keeps you from reaching the other areas of Como Regional Park?



- Lack of Signage/Wayfinding
- Lack of interest in other areas/everything I like is in the area I visit the most
- Distance/lack of alternate transit options available on site
- Other (sample of responses below)
 - “There are broken links in paths that make it much more difficult for walking/biking from one area to another”
 - “Lack of convenient paths between points”
 - “Traffic from cars”
 - “Many of the bike trails are currently in poor condition, poorly maintained, don’t have good signage, and feature rough, unsafe crossings at parking lots and other crossroads. All sidewalk and path crossings should feature smooth, raised crossings to slow down traffic and give priority to people walking and biking in this PARK.”
 - “Circuitous, indirect trails without wayfinding signage”
 - “Lack of sidewalks leading to lake from neighborhoods”

Public Engagement and Participation

Online Engagement


Idea Board

The online idea board allowed visitors to make comments and share ideas for the Park. The comments received are included below.

  a year ago



I'd like to see dedicated walking trails in the park, so we walkers don't always need to be alert to bicyclists coming up from behind.

Share 2 Comments 1 

  a year ago


To serve park users of all ages -- elderly or younger adults with children or pets in tow -- I'd like a shuttle service throughout the park.

Share 0 Comment 0 

  a year ago

Portapotties and garbage/recycling containers at regular intervals would be helpful to visitors and regular walkers.

Creature comforts



Share 0 Comment 0 

  a year ago

Improved trail surfaces for roller-skiing and inline skating


Some trail sections are rough for roller-skiing and inline skatin...



Share 1 Comment 1 

  a year ago

Parking lot signs not helpful


The illuminated availability signs for parking spaces at picnic a...

Share 0 Comment 0 

  a year ago

Improved trail surfaces for roller-skiing and inline skating

Some trail sections are rough for roller-skiing and inline skatin...



Share 0 Comment 1 

  a year ago

One section on the bike/ped trail (that I am aware of) needs lighting.


Not sure if this issue applies to this particular survey... But o...

Share 0 Comment 0 

  a year ago

Better bike connection to lake

I'd like to see a better bike connection between Como Lake and th...

Share 1 Comment 2 

  2 months ago

A lot more people in the neighborhood have dogs. An off leash dog park would be a great addition.

Share 0 Comment 0 

  a year ago

I would like to see stop signs on the bike trails wherever there is a stop sign on the road. Too many bikers don't stop at intersections.

Dangerous when bikers don't stop

Share 2 Comments 0 

Public Engagement and Participation

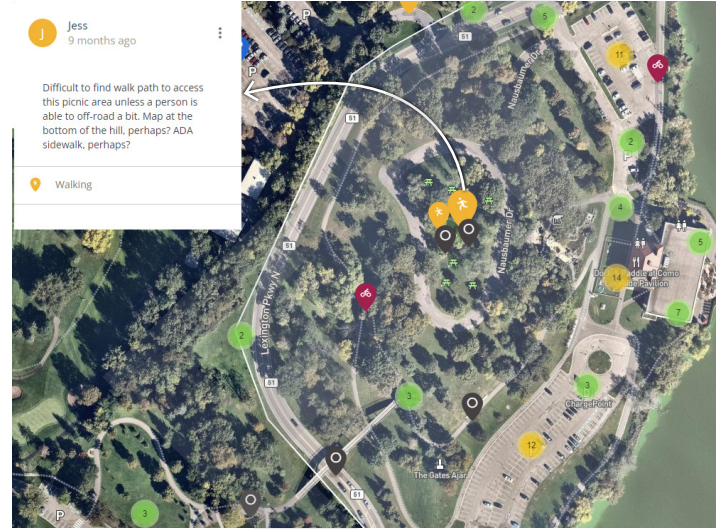
Online Engagement

Interactive Map

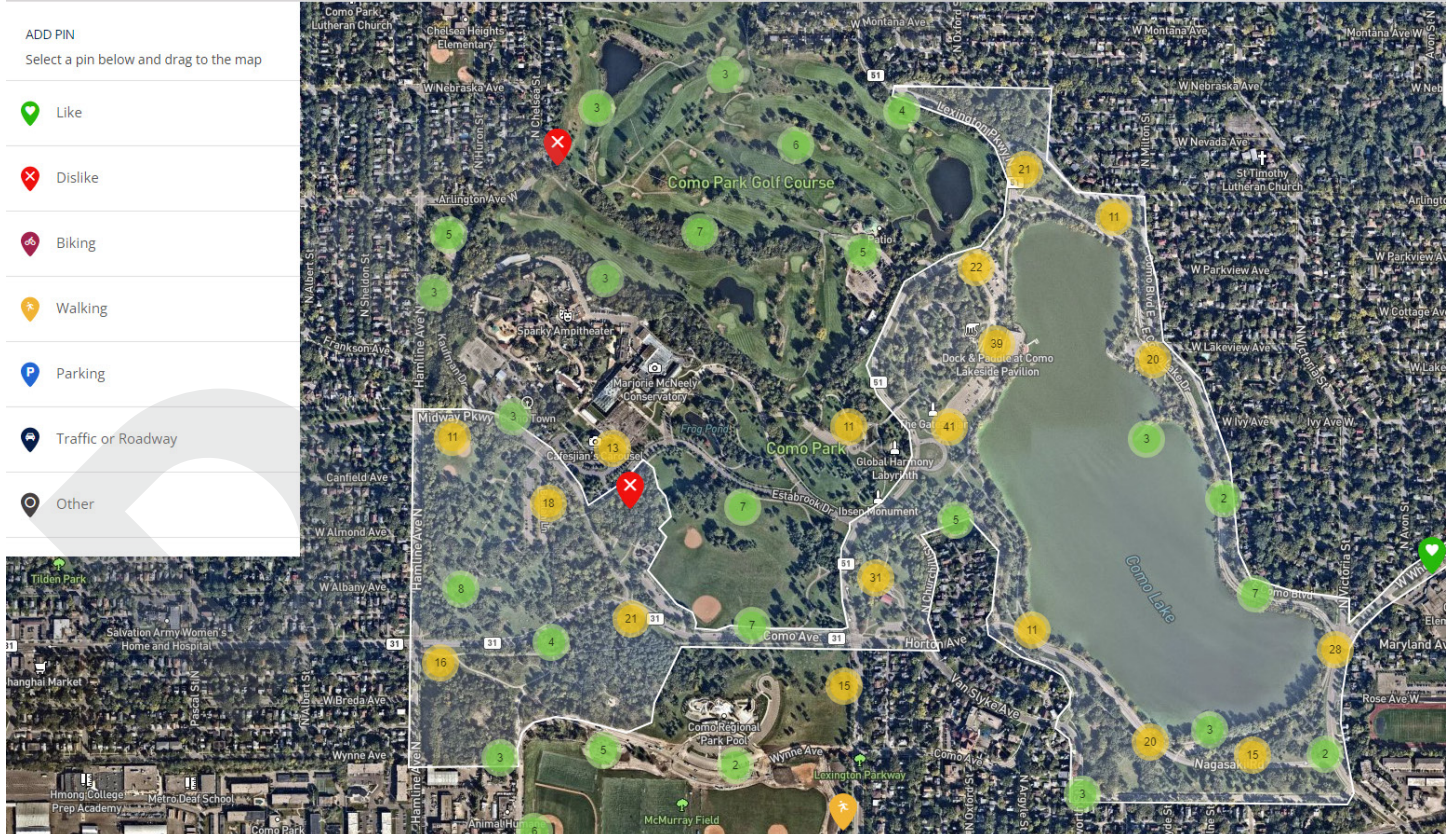
Located on the project engagement website, an interactive project map invited website visitors to post pins related to the following categories:

- Like (37 pins)
- Dislike (110 pins)
- Biking (80 pins)
- Walking (72 pins)
- Parking (57 pins)
- Traffic or Roadway (34 pins)
- Other (87 pins)

Many of the comments from the interactive map can be found in Chapter 2 on the focus area maps of existing conditions. These ideas also influenced the project priorities, particularly with areas and ideas that received multiple comments. The map below shows an overview of comments received on the 'Map Your Thoughts' activity. The numbers within the colored circles represent the number of comments within the approximate area of the circle.



Example comment from 'Map Your Thoughts' Activity



Chapter 4

Implementation



Plan Approach

The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan is the result of a collaborative effort and multi-faceted approach to planning. The recommendations in this chapter have been shaped by community engagement, and further explored by City staff and technical professionals. Previous planning documents including the 1984 Como Master Plan, the Metropolitan Council 2040 Parks Policy Plan, and other documents outlined in Chapter 1 provide the framework for this and other long-range plans.

Throughout this chapter, Como Regional Park is explored at different scales, and from different perspectives. Themes identified through community engagement guide the recommendations made, and help define priorities for future implementation.



Plan Approach

The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan is meant to guide development at Como Regional Park for the next twenty years and beyond. The recommendations included in this document consider the current needs of Park users, and try to anticipate the needs of future Park users in the coming decades. Considerations for both current and future Park users are outlined below:

Current Park Users

- Design for people of all ages and abilities; use principles of Universal Design to accommodate all users.
- Focus on safety and comfort for all.
- Ensure water quality, habitat management, and environmental stewardship are incorporated into all Park projects.

Future Park Users

- Design for Park users that are becoming older, and more racially and ethnically diverse.
- Consider different forms of transportation such as e-bikes.
- Design for climate resilience; plan for more severe weather events including extreme heat, flooding, and drought.
- Plan for flexibility and anticipate change.



As outlined in Chapter 3, community feedback has been a foundational piece in the development of this Long-Range Plan. The planning team worked with a variety of community groups, students at local schools, and technical advisors to identify project priorities at Como Regional Park. Through this chapter, different areas of the Park are highlighted, and the proposed improvements within those areas are noted. Project priorities that were discussed throughout community engagement are included, ranked by low, medium, and high priority, along with the associated project cost estimates. Other overall Park improvements that support the project goals are outlined in this chapter, such as wayfinding and accessibility. Additional information regarding Park boundaries and acquisitions, operations and maintenance, and stewardship are also included near the end of this



Development Concept

Project Vision

Como Regional Park is the largest, most visited Regional Park in Saint Paul. The Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan will serve as an update to the existing planning documents and provide a framework for design to guide the future growth, development, and maintenance of Como Regional Park.

The focuses of the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan are to review and improve the trail system within Como Regional Park, particularly around Como Lake and its connections to Saint Paul's Grand Round trail network, as well as to identify and prioritize additional amenities for future inclusion within Como Regional Park.

The improvements included in the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan are intended to impart clarity for pedestrians and bicyclists, improve safety and accessibility for all users, enhance the water quality of Como Lake, promote equity in design, and to provide amenities that can be maintained sustainably to support the evolving recreational interest and diversity of park visitors.

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.
- Welcome, 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 reinforce Grand Round branding within the existing Como Regional Park wayfinding system.
- Coordinate improvements with regulatory agencies as well as previous plans and studies.

Implementation Toolkit

These icons can be found throughout the Development Concept to organize recommendations by the general themes outlined here:



Improve Wayfinding



Provide Consistent, Intuitive Trails



Implement Two-Way Bicycle Traffic Around the Lake per the Grand Round Implementation Plan



Update Existing Park Amenities



Improve Safety and Accessibility



Improve Water Quality, Manage Stormwater, and Restore Shoreline per CRWD's Watershed Management Plan

Development Concept

Project Area

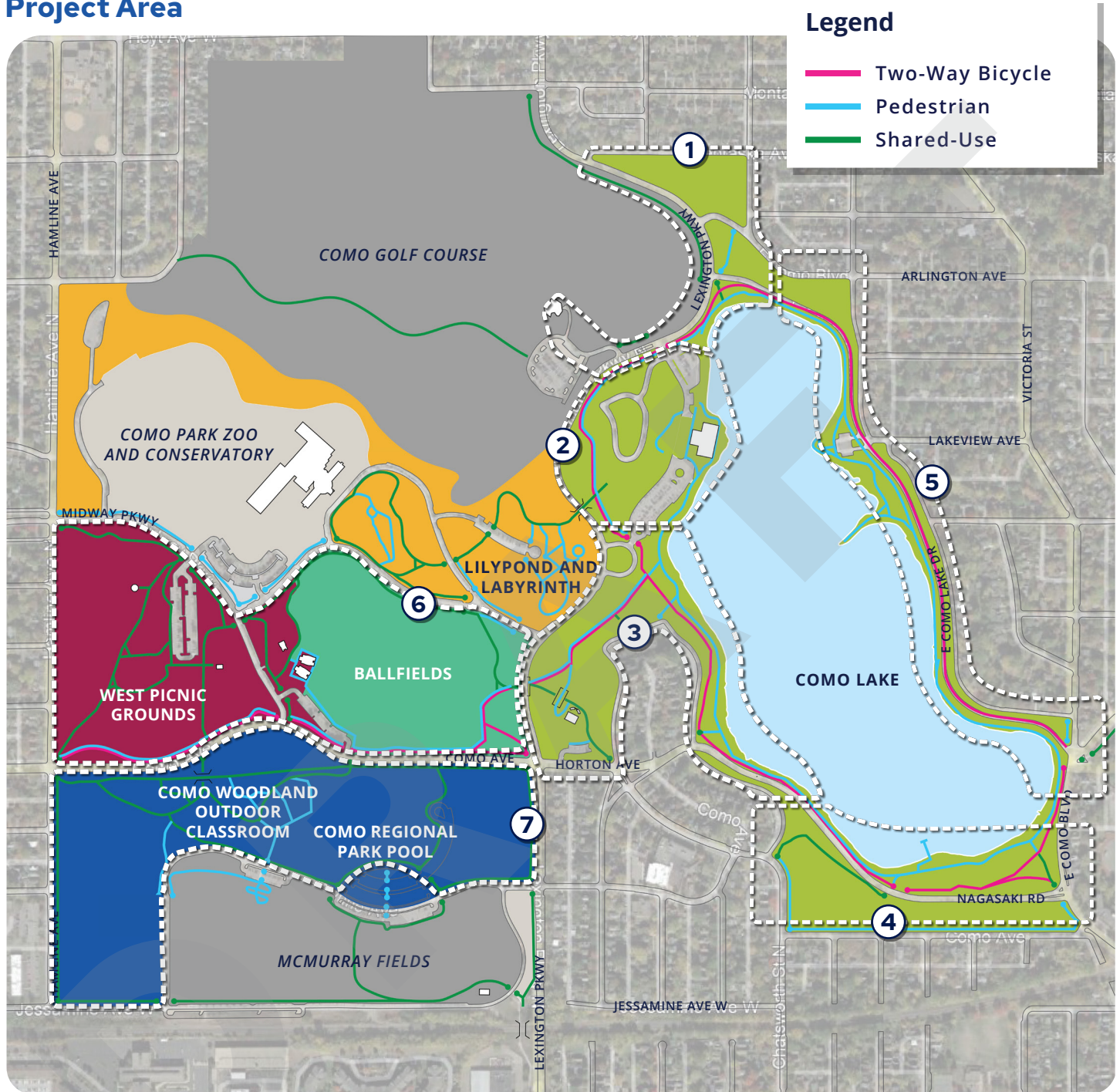


Fig. 4-14 | Overall Park Map

FOCUS AREAS

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| ① Como Lake North | ⑤ East Como Lake Drive |
| ② Lakeside Pavilion Area | ⑥ Picnic Grounds |
| ③ Historic Streetcar Station | ⑦ Woodland Outdoor Classroom and Aquatic Facility |
| ④ Nagasaki Road | |

Special Recreation Features
Como Park Zoo & Conservatory*

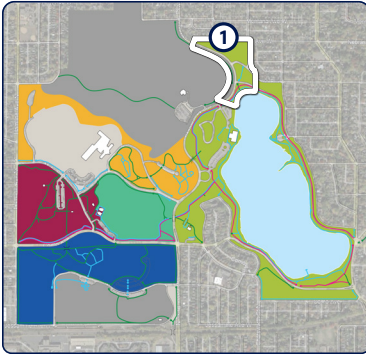
Enterprise Facilities
Como Golf Course and McMurray Fields*

*Not-included or partially included in analysis

Development Concept

Como Lake North

Key Map



SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Connect incomplete trail segments
- Implement two-way bicycle traffic around Como Lake
- Provide sidewalk connections to Park from adjacent neighborhoods
- Improve safety for all modes at intersections

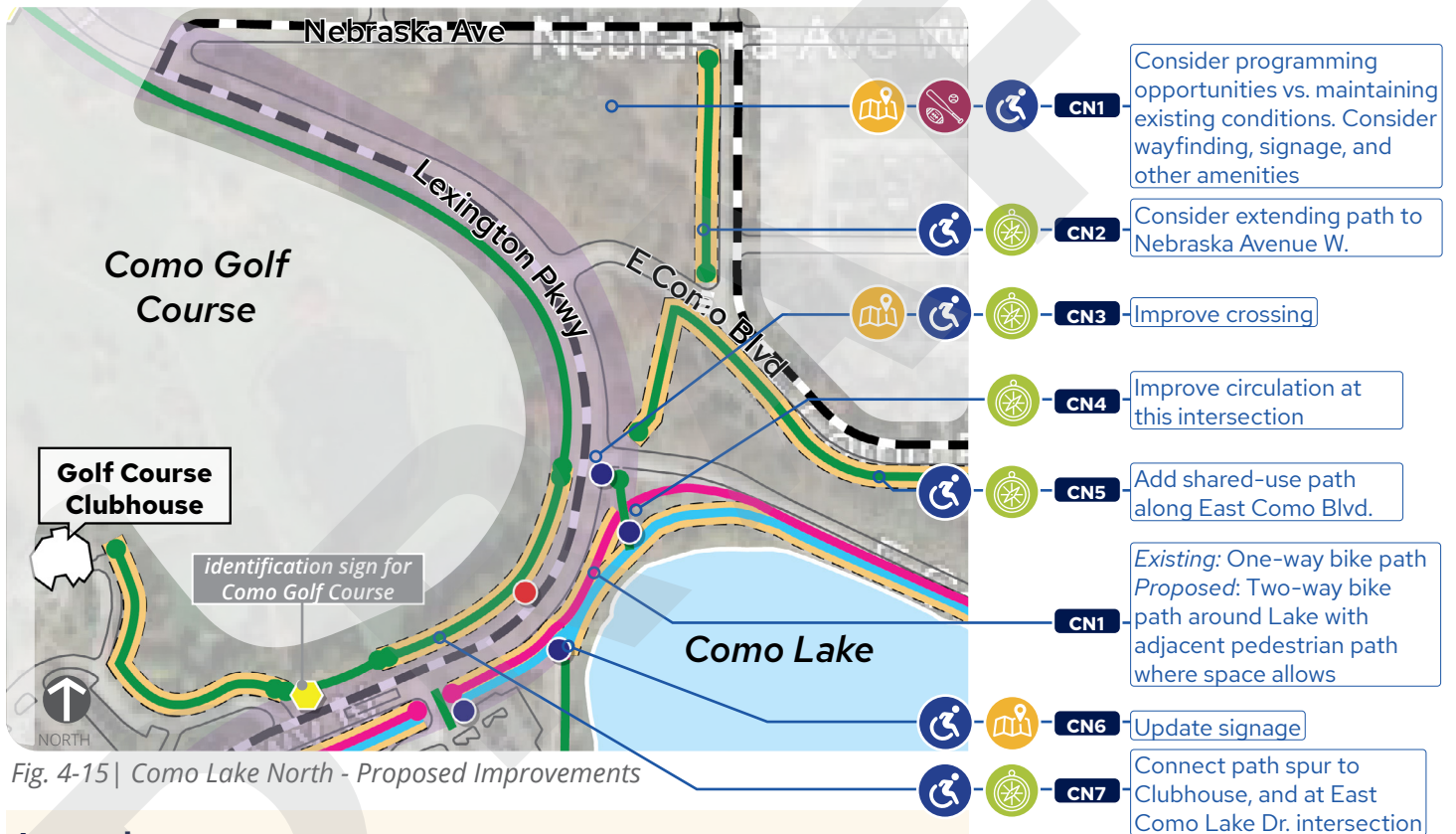
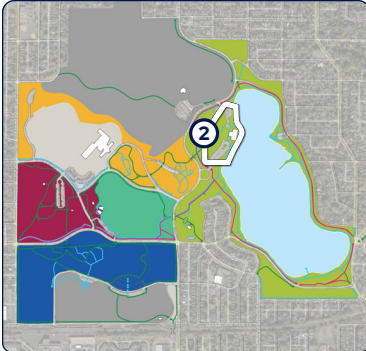


Fig. 4-15 | Como Lake North - Proposed Improvements

Development Concept

Lakeside Pavilion

Key Map



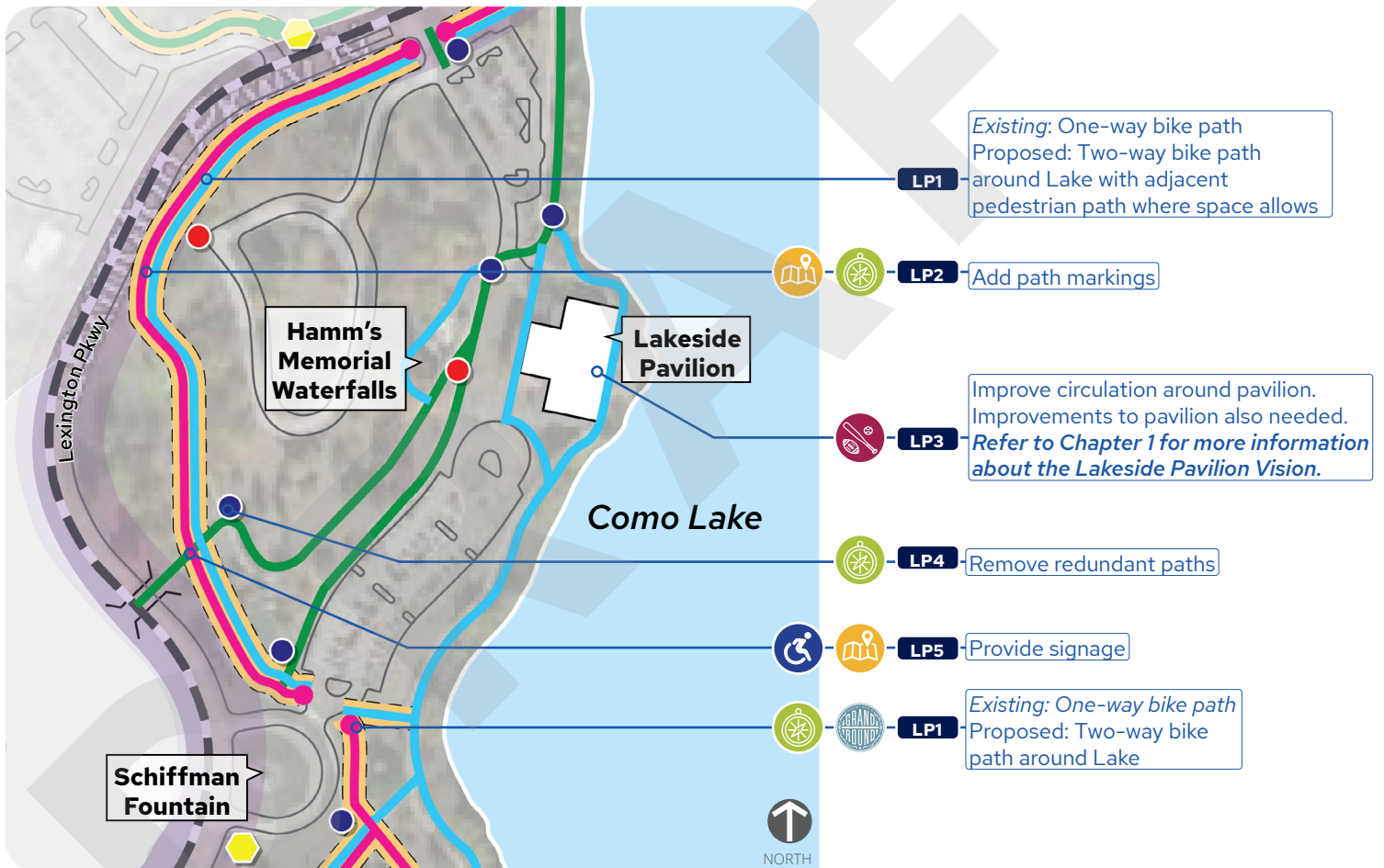
Legend

- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◀▶ Identification Sign
- ▲ Historic Specialty Plaque

**Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan*



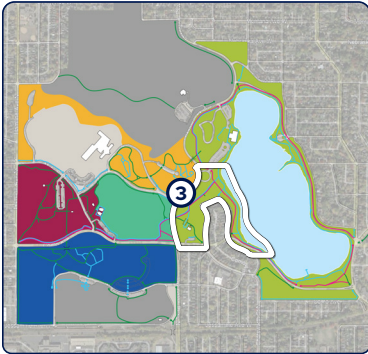
SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Implement two-way bicycle traffic around Como Lake
- Clarify paths by removing redundancies and improving wayfinding signage
- Improve circulation around Lakeside Pavilion

Development Concept

Streetcar Station

Key Map



Legend

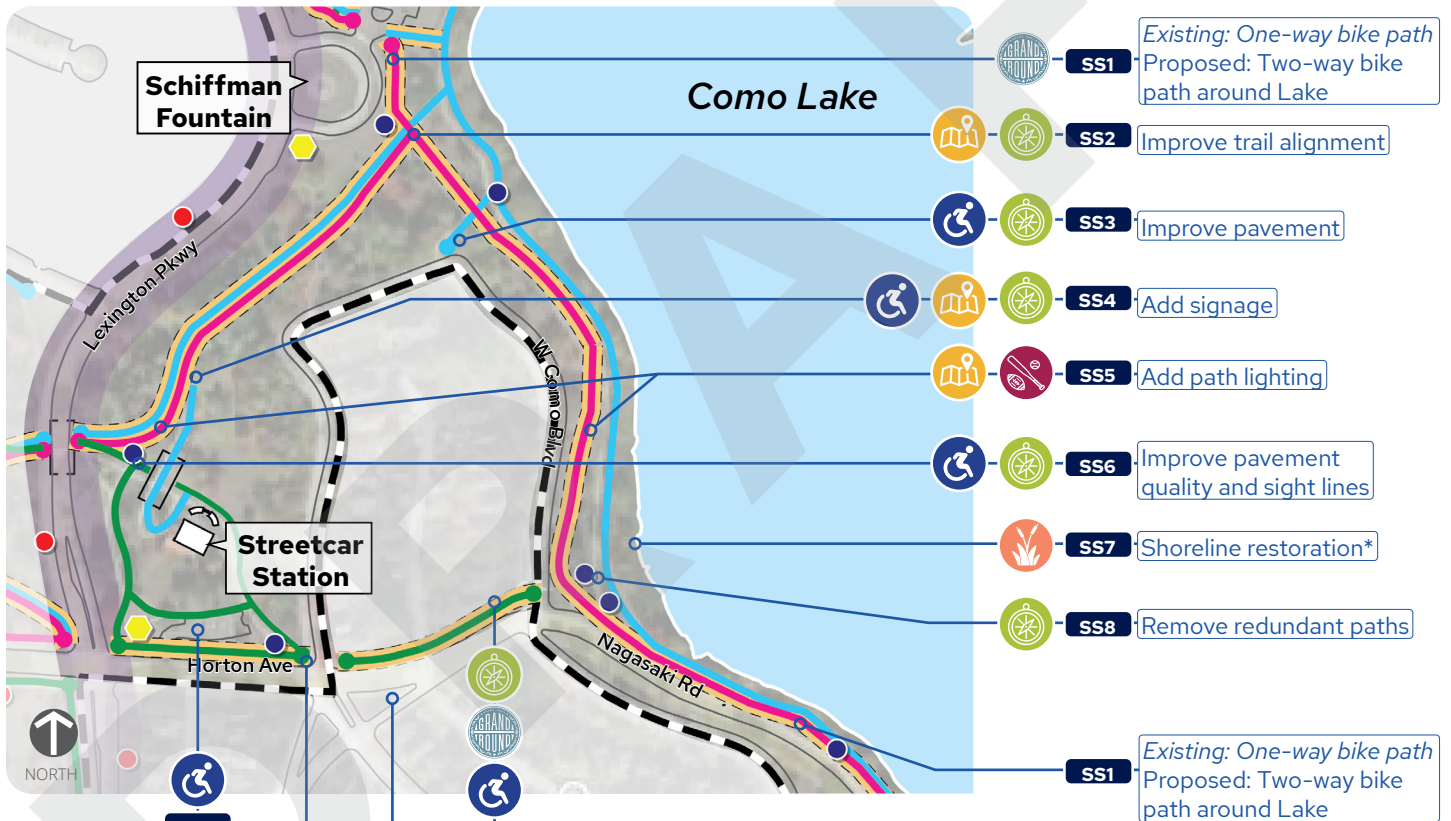
- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◊ Identification Sign

**Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan*

**Coordinate Shoreline Restoration With CRWD*



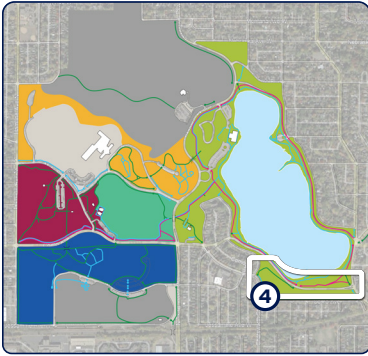
SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Implement two-way bicycle traffic around Como Lake
- Clarify paths by removing redundancies and improving wayfinding signage
- Coordinate with Public Works to improve connections to Lake on Horton Ave and improve roadway conditions for all modes

Development Concept

Nagasaki Road

Key Map



Legend

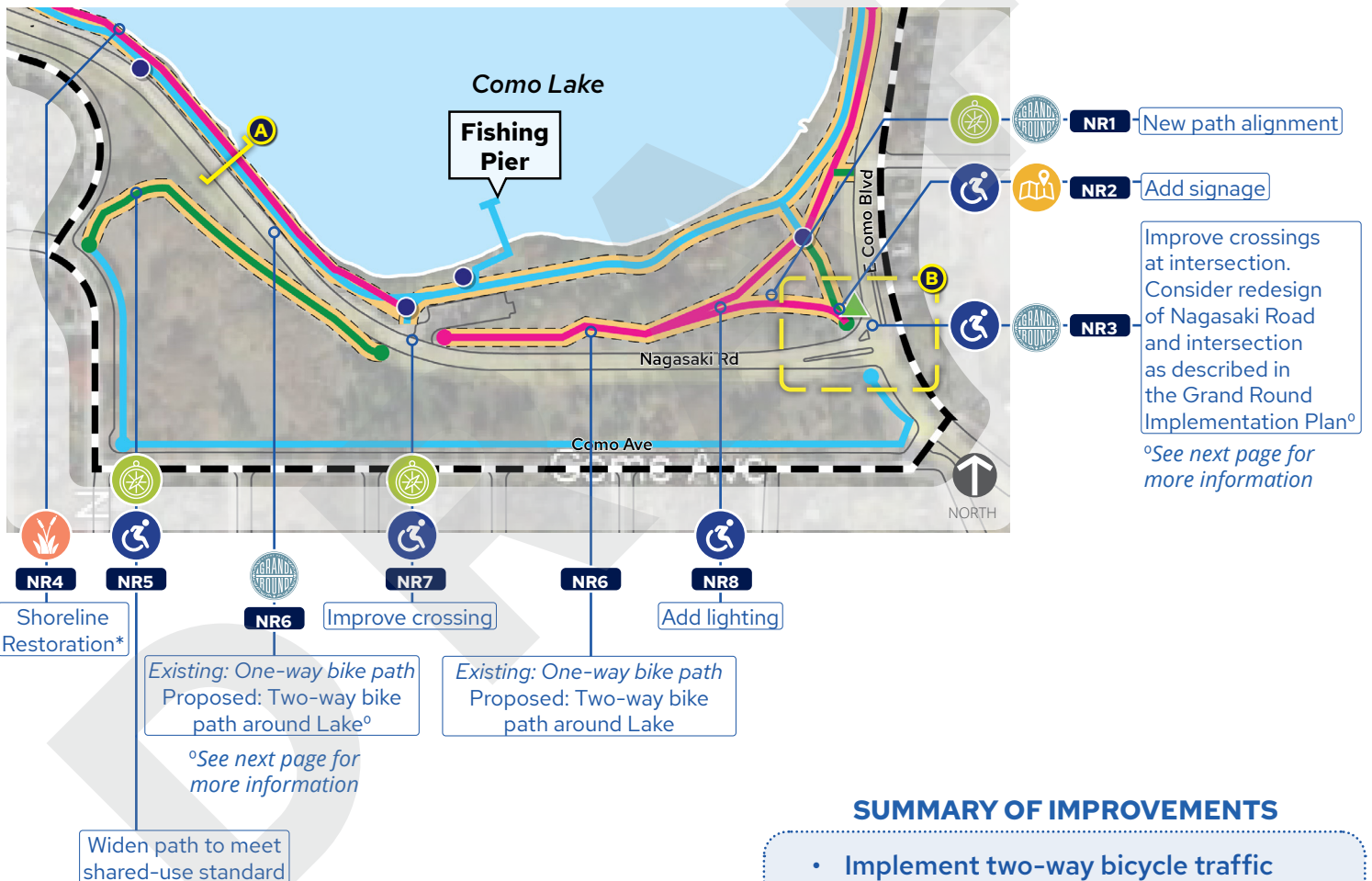
- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◊ Identification Sign
- ▲ Historic Specialty Plaque

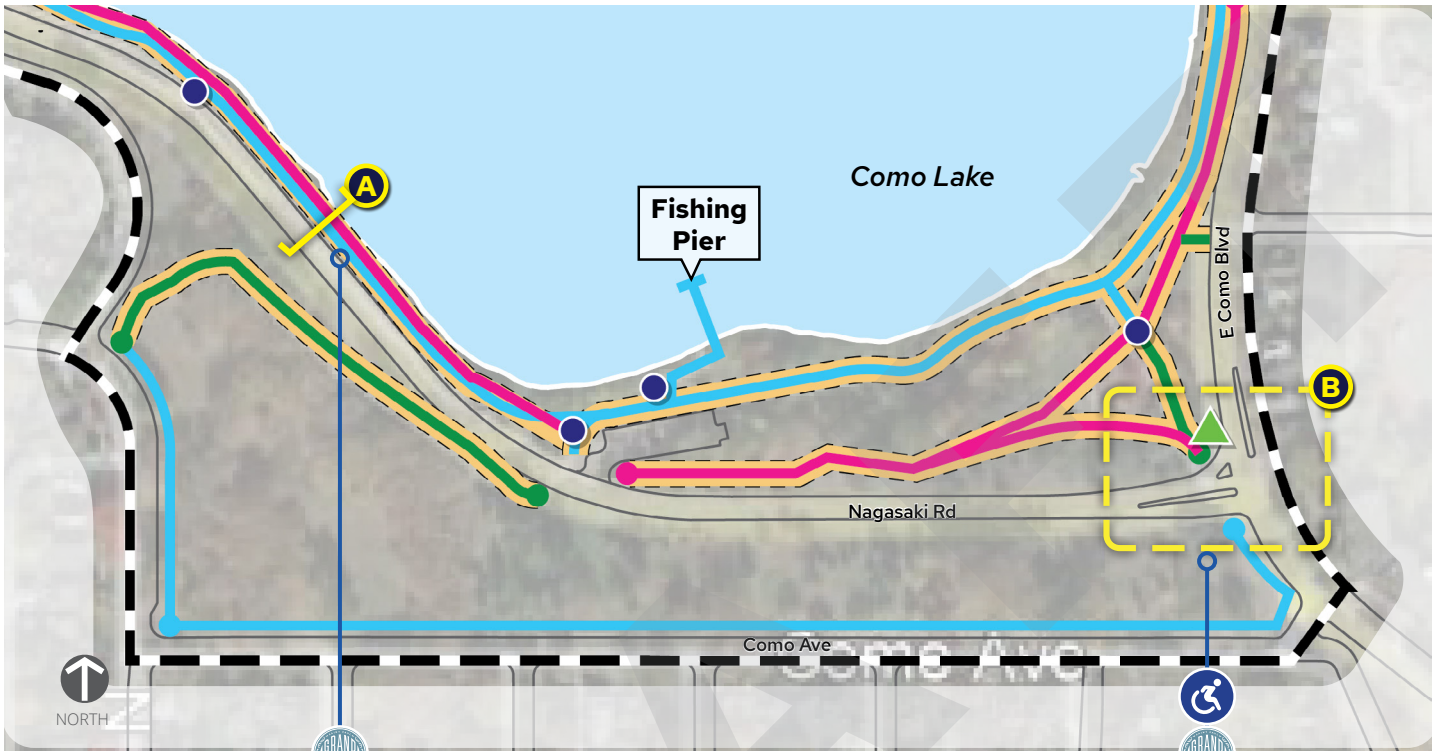
*Coordinate Shoreline Restoration With CRWD

*Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan



Development Concept

Nagasaki Road (continued)



Two-way bike

Improve crossings at intersection. Consider redesign of Nagasaki Road and intersection as described in the Grand Round Implementation Plan

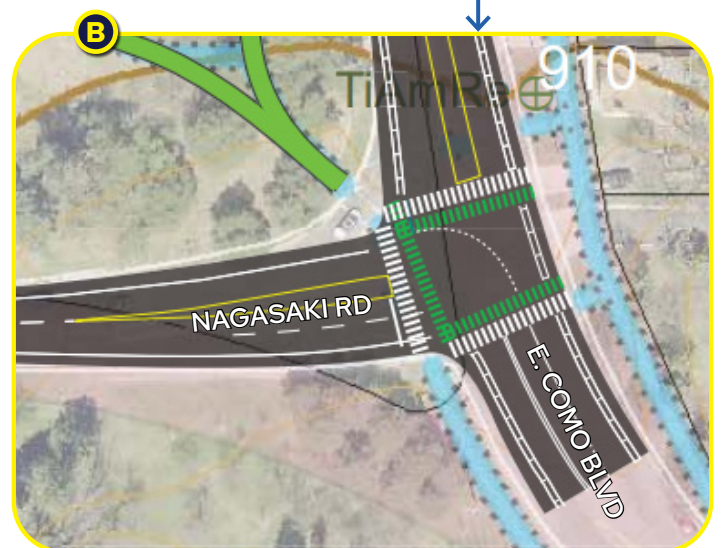
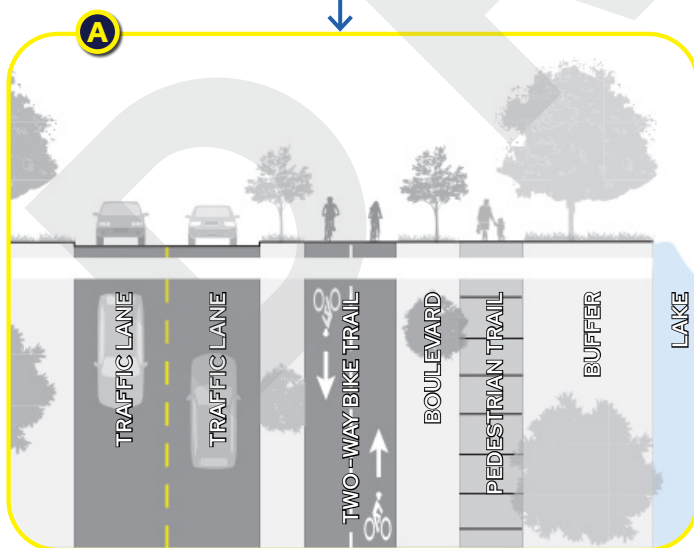


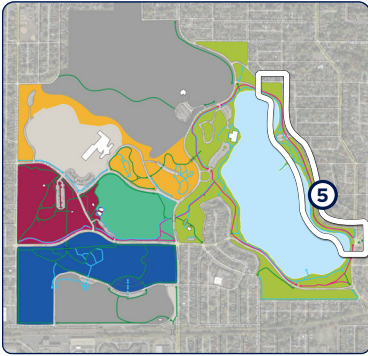
Fig. 4-17 | Grand Round typical section along Nagasaki Road near Como Lake

Fig. 4-16 | Intersection re-alignment from Grand Round Implementation Plan

Development Concept

East Como Lake Drive

Key Map



Legend

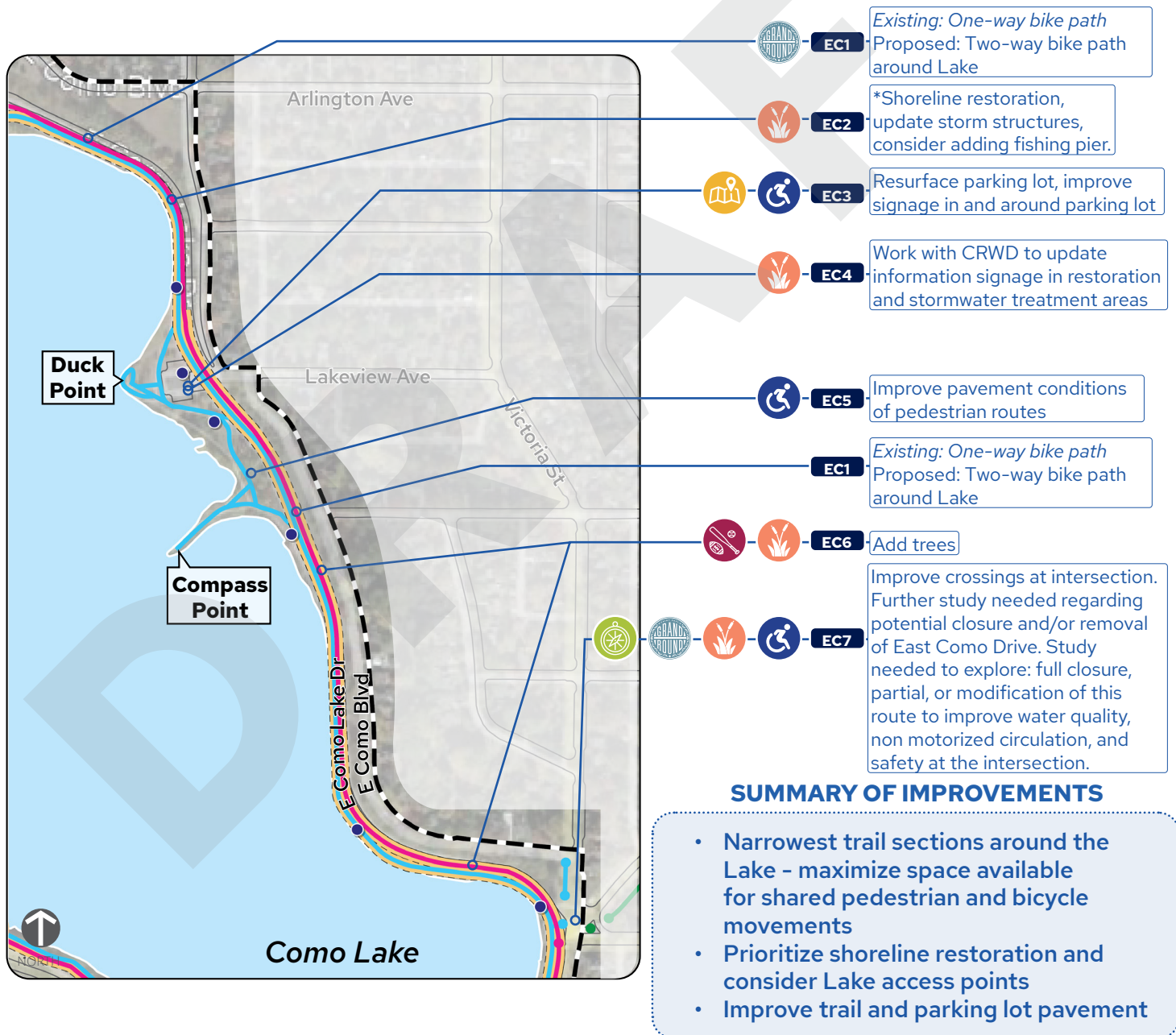
- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

*Coordinate Shoreline Restoration With CRWD

Proposed Signage*

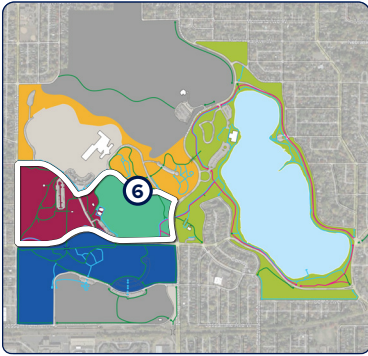
- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◆ Identification Sign

*Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan



Development Concept

Picnic Grounds



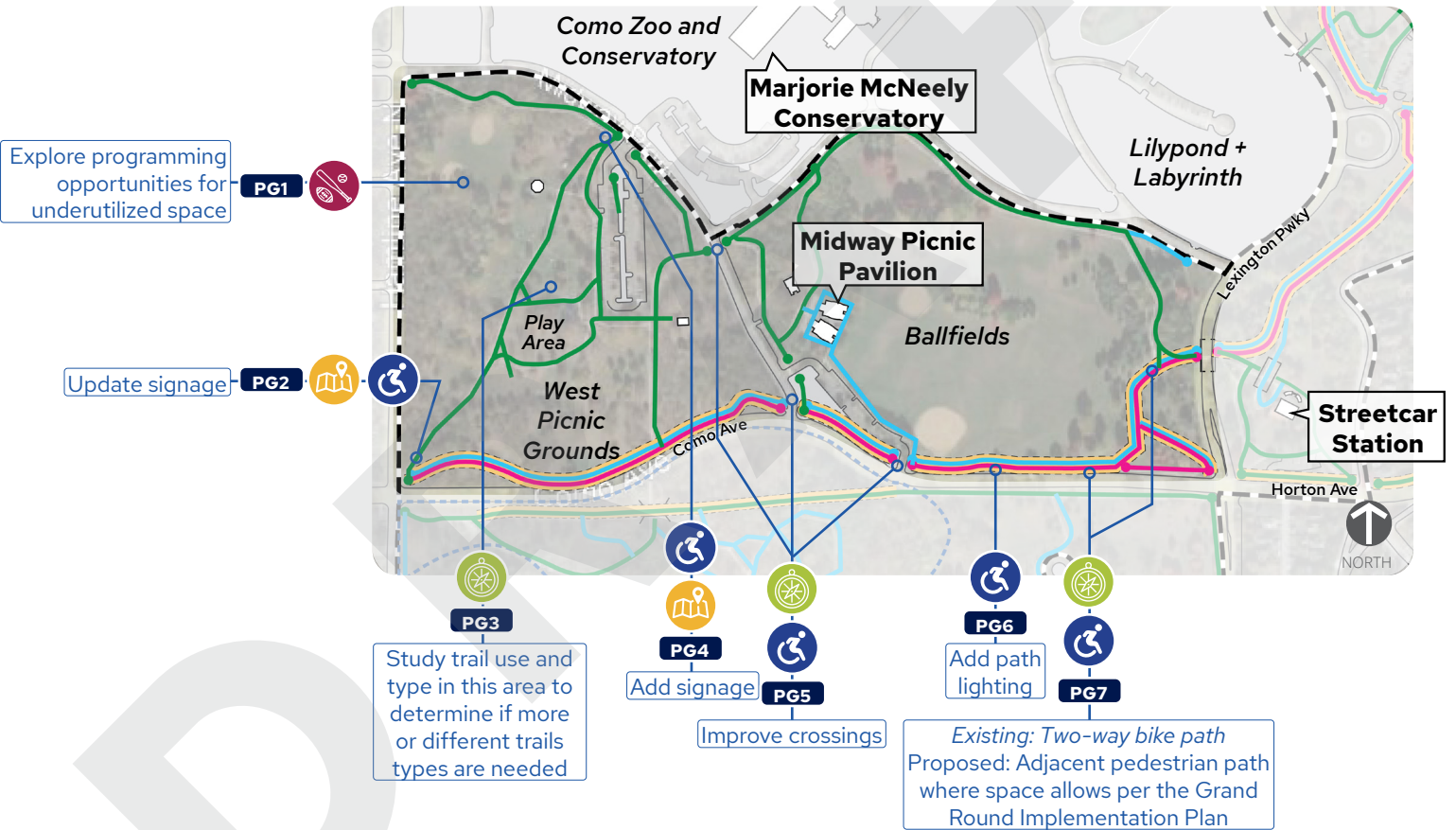
Legend

- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◊ Identification Sign
- ▲ Historic Specialty Plaque

*Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan



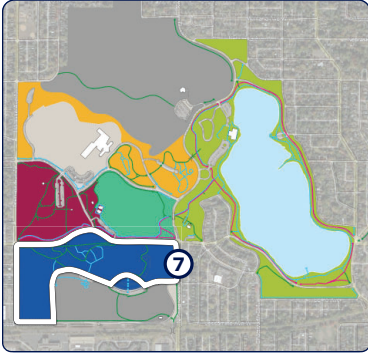
SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Include path accessibility - add and clarify signage, improve crossings, add lighting
- Study trail use - determine if redundant trails exist or if additional trails are needed

Development Concept

Woodland Classroom

Key Map



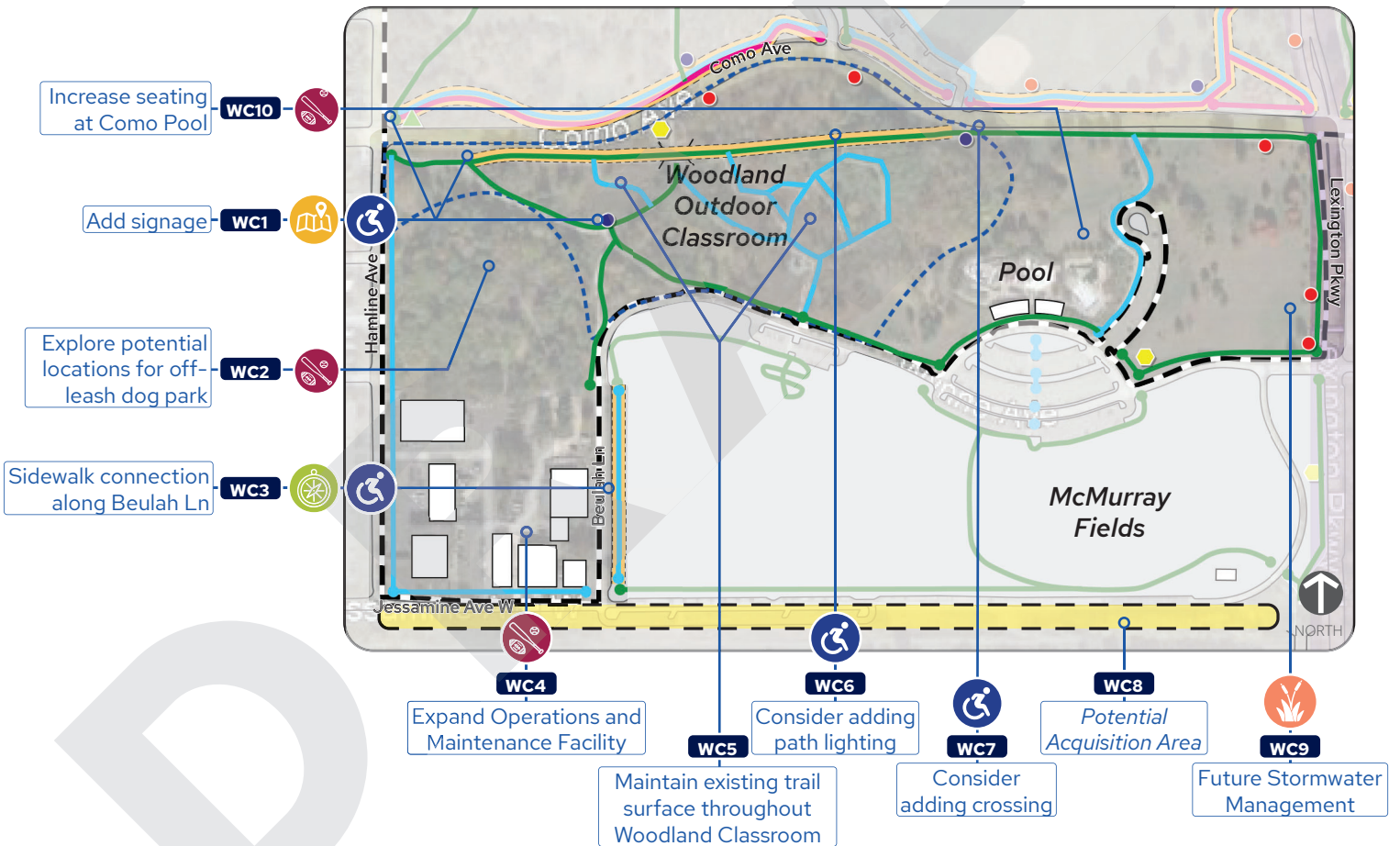
Legend

- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Woodland Outdoor
Classroom Boundary

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◆ Identification Sign
- ▲ Historic Specialty Plaque

**Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan*



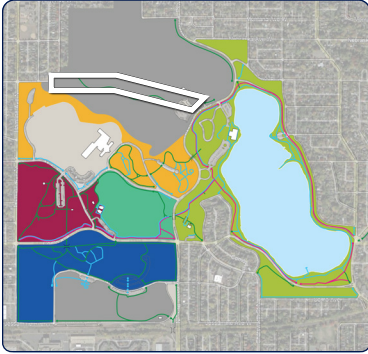
SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Clarify path signage
- Provide missing sidewalk connections; maintain natural trail surface in Woodland Outdoor Classroom

Development Concept

Additional Considerations | Winter Recreation at Como Golf Course

Key Map



Legend

- Two-Way Bicycle
- Pedestrian
- Shared-Use
- Improvements
- Lexington Parkway -
Regional Trail Search Corridor

Proposed Signage*

- Pedestrian Directional
- Vehicular Directional
- ◊ Identification Sign
- ▲ Historic Specialty Plaque

**Proposed signage locations were identified in the Como Park Recommended Signage and Wayfinding Plot Plan*



GC1

Provide path connection to parking lot (Wolf Lot)



GC2

Explore potential locations for warming house



GC3

Update existing path from Chelsea Street N. to provide pedestrian access to regional park features

SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Improve 'Hogsback Trail' through golf course to provide access to regional park features and provide accessible connection to parking area
- Support winter activities in golf course; explore potential for warming house and snow making for winter recreation

Project Priorities

Long-Range Plans for Regional Parks are meant to guide development for 20 or more years after Plan adoption. To represent both the current needs of Park users as well as the anticipated needs of future users, project staff met with community members of different ages, abilities, and backgrounds to understand the priorities of current Park users, and potential challenges for those who don't currently visit Como Regional Park. Feedback gathered from community members directly informed the projects included in this chapter as well as the proposed prioritization of these projects for future implementation.

Identification of Priorities

The projects listed below are the culmination of feedback heard from community members during in-person and online engagement, recommendations from City and agency staff including members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and ideas from members of the Design Advisory Committee (DAC).

Ranking of project priorities

After compiling project priorities and organizing them by general theme, project staff asked community members to rank the projects from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to reflect how they feel each project should be prioritized. The following groups gave feedback by ranking potential projects:

- Staff at the Metro Deaf School
- Members of the Saint Paul Youth Commission
- Open House Attendees
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members
- General Public (survey available via website link)

The project priority rankings below are based on the feedback from the 65 respondents from the events above. Also included in the table below are estimated project costs for the identified projects. These costs are approximate and are subject to change.

Project Implementation Timing

The proposed timing for implementation of each project included correlates to its priority as either 'high', 'medium', or 'low'. An estimate of project timing is included below:

- Projects ranked '**high**' priority - implementation within 10 years
- Projects ranked '**medium**' priority - implementation within the next 10 - 15 years
- Projects ranked '**low**' priority - implementation within the next 15-20 years

Other factors that may change the proposed timeline include funding source and availability, project sequencing, and logical combinations with other City projects.

Project Priorities

Keynotes here reference the specific projects noted on pages 50-58.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT	PRIORITY RANKING	ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	KEYNOTES AND ASSUMPTIONS
PATHS AND TRAILS			
<p>A1 Consolidate trail system, remove unnecessary paved surfaces, resurface and widen paths to accommodate appropriate designations. Improve accessibility to lakeshore and to other park features.</p>	HIGH	<p>\$894,000 does not include Grand Round segments</p>	<p>EC5 NR5 SS8 LP4 SS3 SS10</p>
<p>A2 Increase pedestrian lighting for safety; add site furnishings such as benches, bike parking, picnic tables, drinking fountains where appropriate.</p>	HIGH	<p>\$900,000</p>	<p>WC6 SS5 PG6 NR8</p>
<p>A3 Connect incomplete trail segments: west side of Lexington Pkwy, trail connection to Golf Course club house, sidewalk at Beulah Lane.</p>	LOW	<p>\$568,000</p>	<p>CN2 WC3 CN7 NR1</p>
<p>A4 Implement two-way bike traffic along Grand Round route and around the lake.</p>	MEDIUM	<p>\$14,500,000</p>	<p>EC1 CN6 LP6 SS1 NR6 LP1 PG7</p>
<p>A5 Improve wayfinding: Improve path markings and other wayfinding signage for all users. Improve signage accessibility including raised relief maps and tactile strips.</p>	MEDIUM	<p>\$680,000</p>	<p>CN6 PG2 WC1 LP2 PG4 SS4 LP5 NR2</p>
<p>A6 Design paths for improved snow plowing.</p>	MEDIUM	-	<p>Route to be determined by proposed path improvements</p>
PROGRAMMING			
<p>B1 Increase seasonal programming opportunities. Example: create groomed trails for winter activities.</p>	MEDIUM	IN PROGRESS	<p>Route to be determined by proposed path improvements</p>
<p>B2 Reserve areas for unprogrammed greenspace.</p>	LOW	-	<p>Cost determined by annual maintenance requirements CN1</p>
HABITAT			
<p>C1 Plant and maintain trees for added shade and add more native prairie and plantings for native habitat.</p>	HIGH	<p>\$85,000 for trees +\$20,000 annually for establishment and maintenance of native habitat</p>	<p>EC6</p>
<p>C2 Incorporate stormwater best management practices with added improvements to trail infrastructure.</p>	MEDIUM	<p>\$4,660,000</p>	<p>EC4 Includes approximate cost for future stormwater BMP. Other items incorporated into trail costs.</p>
<p>C3 Seed and stabilize shoreline with native plantings to reduce erosion.</p>	HIGH	<p>\$20,000 annually for establishment and maintenance of native habitat</p>	<p>EC2 SS7</p>

Project Priorities

Keynotes here reference the specific projects noted on pages 50-58.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT	PRIORITY RANKING	ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	KEYNOTES AND ASSUMPTIONS
STREETS AND INTERSECTIONS			
D1 Consider closure and/or removal of East Como Lake Drive to improve water quality and bike/pedestrian safety.	HIGH	\$12,000,000	EC1 EC7
D2 Update Nagasaki Road to provide more space for off-street pathways; improve intersection at Como Avenue.	LOW	\$1,000,000 <i>Stand alone project</i> \$6,800,000 <i>paired with roadway improvements</i>	NR6
D3 Combine efforts with Saint Paul Public Works to expand sidewalk infrastructure and improve access to park.	MEDIUM	\$3,100,000	SS12 SS11 CN5
D4 Improve safety at trail crossings and transitions; update ramps to match trail width; improve ADA accessibility; include measures to prevent vehicle entry on to pathways.	HIGH	\$950,000	CN3 LP1 WC7 PG5 NR7
MISCELLANEOUS			
E1 Lakeside Pavilion: Update to make more visitor friendly; improve access to lakeshore; provide diverse seasonal interest; improve bike and pedestrian circulation around facility.	HIGH	\$38,400,000	LP3
E2 Improve bike parking and storage such as permanent secure facilities, electric bike charging stations, and racks to accommodate larger cargo bikes and bike trailers.	LOW	\$120,000	
E3 Alternative recreation activities: i.e. disc golf, skills park, dog park, bike pump track, fitness stations, pickleball courts, etc.	LOW	\$65,000 - \$800,000	WC2 PG1
E4 Public Art: For example, murals on the walls of the tunnel under train tracks along Lexington Parkway.	LOW	varies	
E5 Additional temporary/seasonal restroom facilities needed.	MEDIUM	\$12,000 - \$1,200,000	

Project Priorities

Keynotes here reference the specific projects noted on pages 50-58.



RECOMMENDED PROJECT	ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	KEYNOTES AND ASSUMPTIONS
UNRANKED		
F1 Acquire area south of Jessamine Ave to support facilities on west side of Park.	\$422,000	WC8
F2 Expand Parks Operations and Maintenance facility.	\$4,300,000	WC4
F3 Improve parking areas.	\$380,000	EC3 SS9
F4 Construct warming house for winter activities.	\$1,920,000	GC2
F5 Conduct cultural landscape study.	\$500,000	
F6 Update existing path from Chelsea Street N. to provide pedestrian access to regional park features.	\$590,000	GC3
F7 Provide path connection to parking lot (Wolf Lot)	\$60,000	GC1
F8 Increase Seating at Como Pool	\$166,000	WC10

Accessibility

An important component of the Long-Range Plan is ensuring that all areas of the Park are accessible to all, regardless of ability. A number of strategies will be implemented through the park to ensure compliance with accessibility guidelines:

- Improve pavement conditions so all trails meet ADA accessibility requirements.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle ramps at all grade changes.
- Clearly delineate trail uses through signage and pavement markings.
- Provide accessibility upgrades at all intersections through implementation of curb ramps, landing areas, and tactile warning strips.
- Consider benches and seating areas near amenities and along trails to provide areas for rest.
- Ensure wayfinding signage adheres to accessibility guidelines.
- Create comfortable pedestrian and bicycle trails for users of all ages and abilities.
- Provide connections to existing pedestrian and bicycle trails with familiar design queues and signage to encourage users to feel safe and comfortable.
- Provide adequate parking near trail access points and Park amenities.
- Update parking areas to provide the adequate number of parking stalls, loading zones, EV charging stations, and accessible ramps throughout the Park.
- Add lighting to path segments with low visibility.



Improve pavement conditions



Improve accessibility at crossings



Improve crossings



Clarify path markings



Update wayfinding



Connect dead end paths



Improve parking lot pavement

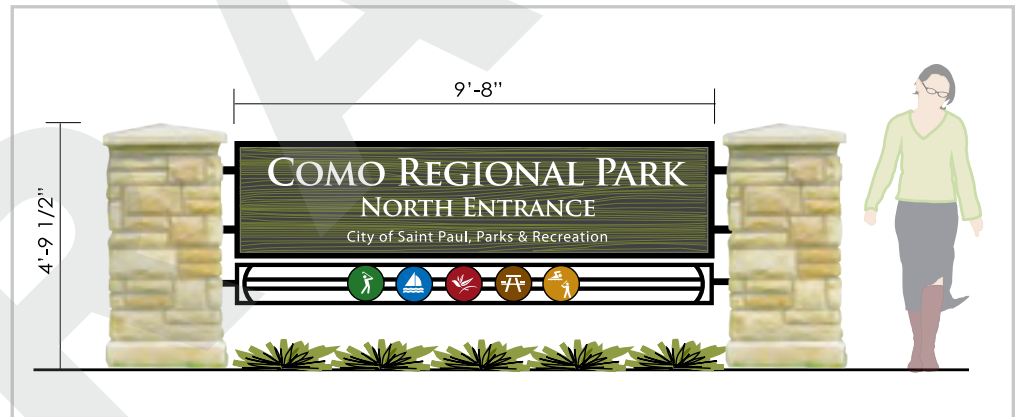
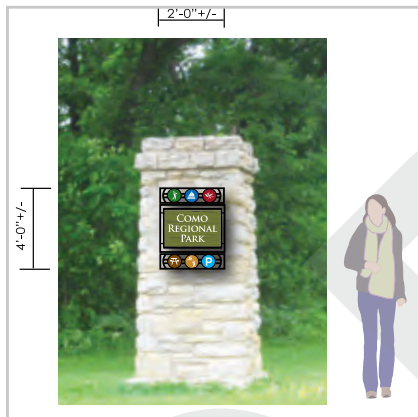
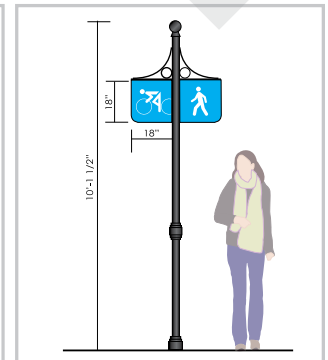
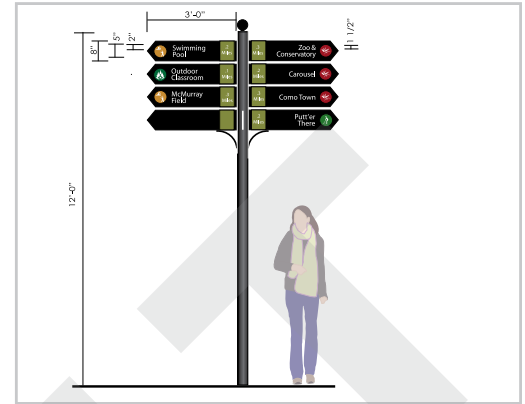


Update path markings

Wayfinding

Overall wayfinding recommendations:

- Remove and replace existing wayfinding signs that are incorrect or irrelevant.
- Add signage at trail decision points where wayfinding does not currently exist.
- Where appropriate, add colored striping, pavement markings, and tactile strips to provide visual and tactile indications of path use type and intersections; delineate pedestrian/bicycle paths to reduce conflicts between uses.
- Como Regional Park wayfinding signage locations, branding, and hierarchy to be based on the Exterior Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan (2012).
 - ◊ Signage identified in the Exterior Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan that has not been implemented should be installed as part of future Park improvement projects.
- Wayfinding signage located along the Grand Round to follow the recommendations included in the Grand Round Implementation Plan (2017).



Selection of sign types identified in the Exterior Signage Design & Standards



Existing direction and wayfinding signage and striping at Como Regional Park

Conflicts

Balance of Uses Within the Park

Como Regional Park is comprised of a collection of several highly programmed facilities including the Como Zoo, Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, Como Pool, the Como Park Golf Course, McMurray Fields, and the Lakeside Pavilion, as well as other picnic, recreation, and education spaces. Through community engagement, staff heard a desire for additional program spaces including a dog park and pickleball or other sport courts, but also heard a desire for more unprogrammed spaces and the importance of maintaining unprogrammed and more “natural” areas of the Park. As both programmed and unprogrammed spaces attract millions of visitors annually, and since this Park serves both a regional and local population, the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan seeks to balance the desire for programmed, high-use spaces while also maintaining the Park’s original vision as a space for respite from the surrounding urban environment.

Other considerations related to Park uses include coordination with other staff and vendors at the Como Regional Park facilities, as well as City and agency staff who manage the Park. Examples of this include:

- Partnerships with vendors at Golf Course and Lakeside Pavilion
- Unique management and operations needs at the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
- Partnership with Capitol Region Watershed District regarding Como Lake the lakeshore

Roadway and Vehicular Conflicts

The larger volume roadways within and adjacent to the Park provide an accessible way for visitors to enjoy all parts of Como Regional Park. However, vehicular traffic can also create conflicts with pedestrian and bicycle traffic around the Park and Como Lake. A consistent

theme throughout community engagement was the need for safer pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Clearer signage and wayfinding to reduce conflicts between uses, additional lighting, and improved safety at crossings were top priorities among the group that shared feedback for the Como Regional Park Long-Range Plan.

Lexington Parkway: Lexington Parkway is a high volume roadway that bisects the Park. Bridges that cross the road in some areas help create safe crossing areas for pedestrians and bicyclists, but conflict areas still exist. Improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety are recommended along Lexington Parkway.

Nagasaki Road: Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular uses are in very close proximity along Nagasaki Road. Future improvements on Nagasaki Road led by Saint Paul Public Works should be coordinated with Parks and Recreation to ensure safe facilities for all users in this area while also considering the impact that roads and paths will have on the lakeshore.

East Como Lake Drive: Feedback from some community members and Technical Advisory Committee members has indicated a desire to close East Como Lake Drive to vehicular traffic. Eliminating vehicles from this area would provide the opportunity to enhance pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure here. Removal of the road would provide more space for shoreline restoration adjacent to the Lake. Concerns have also been raised by community members and members of the TAC about the potential traffic impacts that this might have on other roads, and on the neighborhoods on the east side of the Lake.

Boundaries and Acquisitions

Park Boundaries



Fig. 4-19 | Management Boundary

Administrative Boundary

IN PROGRESS

Management Boundary

IN PROGRESS

Como Regional Park is bisected by two county roads; Como Avenue which runs east-west, and Lexington Parkway North that runs north-south. Additionally, Lexington Parkway is a considered Regional Trail Search Corridor. Regional Trail Search corridors are general search corridors intended to connect for new regional trails to connect to existing regional parks and trails. This regional trail search corridor was approved by the Metropolitan Council as part of previous Regional Parks Policy Plans and also approved as part of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan.¹ This plan will support future opportunities for alignment of the Lexington Avenue search corridor as it passes through Como Regional Park. The Grand Round North Regional Trail extends through Como Regional Park along Como Avenue, and continues to the east along Wheelock Parkway.

¹ : Metropolitan Council, 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, [https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-\(2020-version\)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx](https://metrocouncil.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/POLICY-PLANS/2040-REGIONAL-PARKS-POLICY-PLAN-(2020-version)/2040-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan.aspx)

Boundaries and Acquisitions

Acquisitions

The parcel bordering the south side of Jessamine Avenue is currently owned by BNSF Railway Company. This parcel, (tax ID: 272923140028) section 27, Town 29, Range 23, is 10.6 acres in size and is currently utilized as an active railway corridor. Acquisition of this narrow parcel should be considered and would be beneficial for use as visitor parking for programming and large events such as the Hmong Freedom Festival held annually at McMurray Fields. Adding this space would help alleviate the pressures put on the surrounding neighborhood streets during these times and help an otherwise underutilized space. The proposed acquisition area is described on the map below.



Parcel ID	Total Parcel Area	Acquisition Area	Total Estimated Cost
272923140028	10.6 acres	2.87 acres	\$421,603

Stewardship Plan

Vegetation Management

The City of Saint Paul will continue to manage and maintain the vegetation and habitat areas within the Park by working through available grants, volunteer opportunities, and partnerships. Continued coordination between Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, City and State Natural Resource Offices, the Capitol Region Watershed District, and others will ensure the natural vegetation areas will be maintained through the implementation of future projects.

Water Resources

The Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) completed the Como Lakeshore Management Plan in 2022. This document focuses on improving the ecological health, resilience, aesthetics, and functionality of the strip of land immediately surrounding Como Lake.¹ The Plan also describes an ecological approach to restoring and managing the natural areas. Parks and Recreation will continue coordination with CRWD to implement the recommendations of the Como Lakeshore Management.

Historic and Cultural Resources

A cultural landscape study is needed at Como Regional Park to fully understand the history of this Park and the surrounding area, particularly the Indigenous history prior to European settlement. As additional layers of history are revealed, in a similar way that the post-settlement history is well-represented in the Park through architecture and site design, indigenous and natural history should also be highlighted and integrated into the design of new features and amenities. Consultation with indigenous community and advisory groups should be conducted to understand perspectives and priorities for culturally appropriate Park features.

Stormwater Management

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) identifies several best management practices for stormwater management including flow controls, vegetation stabilization, bioengineering, structural stabilization, rip-rap stabilization, and filtration practices. All future projects at Como Regional Park will comply with the MPCA regulations, and the requirements of the City of Saint Paul, Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD), and other agencies.

¹ : Capitol Region Watershed District. (2022). Como Lakeshore Management Plan. https://www.capitolregionwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Como-Lakeshore-Mgmt-Plan_adopted_04-06-2022.pdf

Public Services

Roadways

Saint Paul Public Works manages several roads adjacent to and within the boundary of Como Regional Park. Throughout the engagement process for this Long-Range Plan, questions, concerns, and feedback have been noted about specific roadways related to Como Regional Park.

Lexington Parkway

As mentioned previously, Lexington Parkway is a Regional Trail Search Corridor. As planning occurs for a future regional trail here, considerations for safety regarding the roadway should be studied as part of the proposed regional trail, as well as for existing paths in Como Regional Park.

Nagasaki Road

In this area, the roadway, the pedestrian and bicycle trails, and the lakeshore are in very close proximity. As improvements occur to Nagasaki Road in the future, considerations of these other uses should be taken into consideration.

East Como Lake Drive

Closure and/or removal of this road has been discussed throughout community engagement, as well as by City and partner agency staff. Future studies should be conducted to explore the benefits and drawbacks of closing this road. Considerations should include traffic patterns and volumes, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and water quality and habitat.

Sewer Interceptor System

Managed by the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES), interceptor systems collect and convey wastewater flows to treatment plants. A sewer interceptor line currently exists along the east side of the Park, following East Como Lake Drive, Nebraska Avenue, Montana Avenue, and Hoyt Avenue. Coordination with MCES is recommended as projects begin design.

Lighting

One of the highest ranked priorities for community members is the need for lighting throughout the Park. Existing lighting should be inventoried and augmented where lighting levels are inadequate. Existing lights that are no longer working should be fixed or replaced. Currently, copper wire theft and vandalism to lighting in parks and throughout the City are creating issues regarding comfort and safety in many Saint Paul Parks, including Como Regional Park. As solutions to prevent or deter wire theft and vandalism become available, safety considerations, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists, should be prioritized.

Amenities

- Restrooms (seasonal and/or temporary)
- Bicycle storage
- Seating, especially shaded
- Drinking fountains
- Other park amenities such as dog park, pickleball court, etc.



Operations

Operations Overview

Como Regional Park is currently maintained and operated by the City of Saint Paul, Department of Parks and Recreation. Funding for general Operations and Maintenance (O&M) comes from the City of Saint Paul general fund which is approved through the annual budgeting process. The budget for Como Regional Park is currently limited and as use of the park increases, new sources of funding will need to be identified to keep up with the maintenance needs of the park.

Building Trades, Park Maintenance and Natural Resources are the three primary work units with O&M costs for Como Regional Park. Currently, Building Trades (heating, masonry, electrical, plumbing, painters, and carpentry) is budgeted for approximately \$4.2 million annually for the entire Parks system, which includes vehicle expenses. Annually, approximately 25% (\$1.05 million) is needed to support Como Regional Park. This does not include any operational expenses for Como Zoo and Conservatory and any other lease facilities that are operated by other agencies on Parks and Recreation properties. Como Regional Park does receive a higher volume of visitation year-round because of the many amenities that are nearby. Expenditures are significantly higher in the summer to support seasonal amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountains, benches, gates, and repairs from winter months. Because park infrastructure is nearing the end of its lifespan, and considering the number of proposed improvements, the Building Trades group will require an increase of \$750,000 for labor costs, vehicles, maintenance, and upgrades to existing infrastructure.

In addition, Park Maintenance and some supporting maintenance efforts are budgeted for approximately \$6.3 million annually for the entire parks system. Annually, approximately 12.5% (\$790,000) is needed to support the Como regional system.

The following is a list of items included in annual park maintenance:

- Plowing snow (Nov- April)
- Salt/sand for ice
- Portable toilet rental
- Mow grass (May-Oct)
- Weed whip (May-Oct)
- Minor tree maintenance
- Storm damage cleanup
- Litter pick up (May-Oct and Oct-April)
- Empty trash barrels (1 or 3 times per week depending on season)
- Clean restrooms and shelter
- Custodial supplies
- Amenity upkeep/repair
- Clean out culverts
- Patching/pothole repair
- Pressure wash shelter (2 times per year)

Lastly, the Natural Resources work unit manages all natural areas and flowering beds across the city. They do provide a great deal of support to the natural resources side of park maintenance and rely on several grants and partnerships for supporting the environmental management work in this and other parks. The annual Natural Resources budget is approximately \$1.5 million for the entire parks system. Annually, approximately 10% (\$790,000) is needed to support Como Regional Park. Approximately \$150,000 is budgeted for Natural Resource Management, which does not include any additional grant funds that can vary from year to year.

Currently, there is no comprehensive recycling/compost program that supports the entire park system. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation desires to provide recycling more consistently. Efforts are made to work with groups to have recycling receptacles for the duration of special events. If a future budget allows for additional labor and vehicle time, it is recommended that Parks and Recreation provide the option for recycling and compost facilities to give visitors the ability to responsibly handle waste generated in the parks.

Operations

Public Awareness

Notices are posted to the facility websites if park closures occur. Occasionally, park facilities or trails may be closed due to a permitted event:

- Como Regional Park <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/como-regional-park>
 - » Como Central Services Facility
 - » McMurray Fields
 - » Como Picnic Areas
 - » Como Aquatics Center
 - » Como Lakeside (Pavilion is leased by another entity)
 - » Como Streetcar Station

Information about Como Lake, Como Lakeside Pavilion, and Como Park Zoo and Conservatory are also linked on this webpage. Como Park rentals, reservations, and picnic information can also be found here.

Currently, closures of the Lakeside Pavilion for events, performances, and private rentals are not always published or publicly advertised. As projects are implemented, particularly improvements to the Pavilion or other event spaces, improvements to public communication are needed.