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PARKS, TRAILS & ENVIRONMENT

The City of Excelsior contains established parks and several other designed gardens and undeveloped open spaces. These spaces vary in size, location and service. Parks play an important role, not only in their overall recreational benefit to the residents of Excelsior but, as a crucial destination point directly related to the establishment of trails. All are interrelated, and each portion of the park land plays an important role in completing a recreational line, therefore adding to the comprehensive system. The City has identified improvements for existing facilities within its Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which is attached as Appendix E.

THE MAIN GOAL OF THE PARKS,
TRAILS AND WALKWAYS PLAN IS TO
PRESERVE AND ENHANCE
EXCELSIOR'S PARKS AND OPEN
SPACES TO PROMOTE ACTIVE AND
HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Existing Parks and Open Spaces

Currently, the Excelsior parks and open space system is comprised of approximately 21.8 acres. In addition, 9.4 miles of sidewalks, walking and biking trails throughout the community are maintained by the City. The Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail also bisects the community for a 1.1 mile segment of its total 15.4 mile course. Maps identifying the location of park and trail systems within the community are found on following pages.

The Commons/Port of Excelsior

The most significant aspect of Excelsior is its extensive shoreline on Lake Minnetonka. The Commons and Port of Excelsior are historic, dating to the origins of the City, and are widely recognized as Excelsior's chief assets. The 13 acre park includes open recreation areas, picnic sites, playgrounds, two swimming beaches, tennis courts, baseball fields, a band shell, bathhouse, public restrooms, docks, buoys, and docking for public excursion boats that provide lake access. In addition to traditional park uses, such as picnics and family gatherings, the Commons and Port of Excelsior serve diverse recreational opportunities for all age groups with the annual Art Fair, 4th of July celebration, organized sports, and other large events.

Park Classification: Community Park

Location Northeast edge of Central Business District on a peninsula between Excelsior and Gideon Bays

Size 13.06 acres

Physical Features

The Commons dominant physical characteristic is its extensive Lake Minnetonka shoreline, resulting in dramatic

lake views and other beachfront areas. Topography varies from rolling hills to flat shallow spaces. Spaces within the park vary from narrow shorelines along the southern leg to more generous areas within the northern central area.

Vegetative Features Mature canopy of trees are scattered through much of the park. Trees vary in their species and vitality.

Notes The Commons is the most heavily used park in Excelsior, providing beaches, a playground, docks, playfield, as well as space for a wide range of active and passive areas.



Excelsior – Studer Parkland

Excelsior – Studer Parkland is a 15.5-acre park located on Oak Street (Highway 19). The park currently includes rental garden plots and a large wetland, Studer Pond, which is bordered by trees and vegetation that is habitat for woodland animals. As a park, Excelsior - Studer Parkland provides a significant and desirable opportunity to observe and study the natural world, a feature which should be maintained and enhanced. In addition to Studer Pond, College Lake, Mitten Pond, Mud Lake, and Galpin Lake also provide opportunities for observing and appreciating the natural world.

Park Classification	Neighborhood Park
Size	South of County Road 19 on the western edge of Excelsior.
Physical Features	Significant wetland area, referred to as Studer Pond, surrounded by
Vegetation with undeveloped land and garden plots.	
Vegetative Features	Wetland aquatic community, limited canopy except at parcel edges.
Notes	The Excelsior-Studer Parkland is currently used for garden plots and as a passive use in a natural setting. The site is a former landfill site with environmental issues that have been mitigated.

Fire Lanes

Ten public fire lanes exist at the ends of Excelsior streets. These were historically established by the City for an accessible water supply in fire-fighting. Although the fire lanes are no longer needed for fire-fighting, Excelsior residents value and appreciate these neighborhood public

access points to Lake Minnetonka and Galpin Lake as a part of the unique quality of life in a lakeside community.

Hidden Lane Two fire lanes (On St. Albans Bay)	One, twelve-foot-wide fire lane on east side of marina One area, 200 feet of lakeshore with dock for two boats and slide for four boats, access off Excelsior Boulevard, Hidden Lane No parking
Lafayette Avenue (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 66 feet of lakeshore and slide for four boats Limited on-street parking
George Street (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 49½ feet of lakeshore with four slides Limited on-street parking
3 rd Street (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 66 feet of shoreline Observation platform on top of old pump house building Steps leading down to grassy slope at concrete seat wall Limited on-street parking
Bell Street (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 60 feet of lakeshore with four slides Limited on-street parking
Linwood Avenue (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 50 feet of lakeshore with four slides Parking meters
1 st Street (On Gideon Bay)	Approximately 50 feet of shoreline, adjacent to City beach area Metered parking

Linden Street / Elm Place Two fire lanes (On Galpin Lake) Two rights-of-way areas on Galpin Lake
 Limited on-street parking

Excelsior Cemetery On Excelsior Boulevard at the eastern border of Excelsior

Mitten Pond The pond and surrounding area is at Water Street and County Road 19. It is owned by the Minnetonka Public Schools.

Other Open Space and Cemetery in Excelsior

Veteran’s Memorial Park Near Lake Street and Second Street. Maintained by Men’s Garden Club

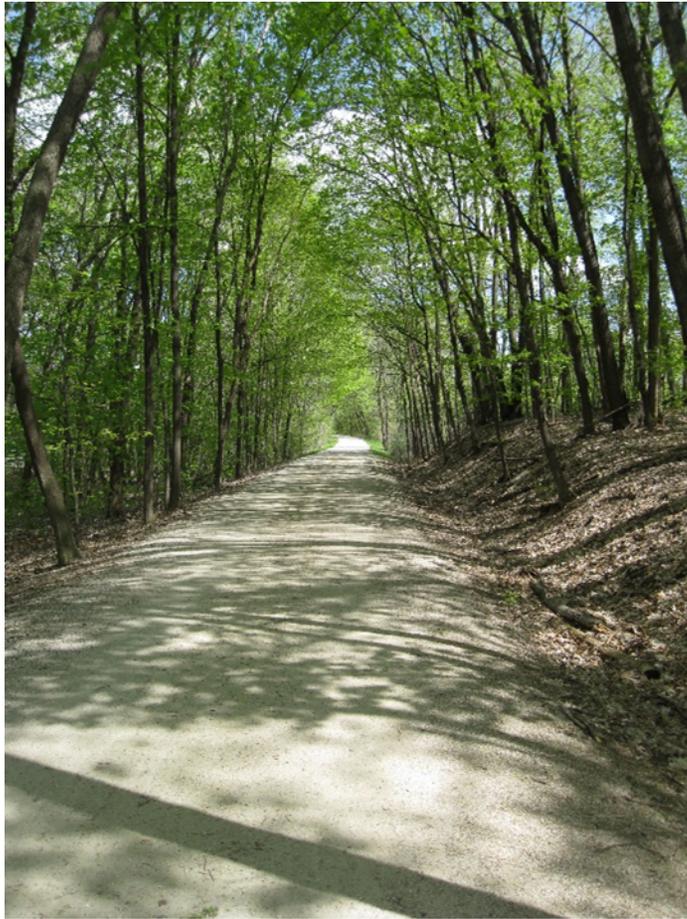
Arey Memorial Triangle Near County Road 19 and Water Street. Maintained by Men’s Garden Club

College Lake Open Space On Water Street, adjacent to College Lake

Lake Minnetonka This body of water is a series of lakes interconnected by channels. Providing more than 14,000 acres of water and more than 125 miles of shoreline, Lake Minnetonka serves as the dominant physical feature in the area. Residents benefit from this natural feature and visitors are drawn to Excelsior to enjoy lake sports and activities in that Excelsior is perceived as a destination point and has public facilities.

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve, protect, enhance and maintain for public use Excelsior's parks, lakes, ponds, and open space. To promote active and healthy lifestyles, provide a walking and biking network, provide recreational facilities and open areas for all ages of residents of Excelsior and its visitors.



PARK PLANS

The Commons/Port of Excelsior

The Commons is known for the access it provides to Lake Minnetonka, its sweeping open areas, its woods and hills, its beach, its port area and its recreational facilities. What is lesser known is the history of the park, the fact that it is as old as the City itself and the role it has played as a community gathering place. Promoting that legacy should be an important part of any park planning.

In 2015, the Community of the Commons was established by residents who wanted to support the park. A 501(c)(3) "conservancy" non-profit was created with the purpose of raising funds. In 2016, The Community for the Commons identified the need for a master park plan and a committee was appointed by the City Council. Three studies were commissioned to develop a final master plan.

- The Parenteau-Graves Public Opinion Study was conducted to better understand residents and businesses vision, priorities and concerns for The Commons.
- An Existing Conditions Park Site Assessment was conducted by SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
- A Site Inventory and Period of Significance Study was conducted by PVN Preservation Design Works, LLC.

In early 2017, a request for proposals was created to identify a design team to assist in the development of the final master plan and supporting documents. MSR (structural architecture) and DF/Damon Farber (landscape architecture) were selected.

Public meetings were conducted on July 19, 2017 and September 20, 2017 and a final presentation to the City Council is expected by the end of 2017. The design plan is entitled the Excelsior Commons Conceptual Guide Plan. This plan as well as the three supporting documents will serve as the park plan for The Commons and Port of Excelsior.

Excelsior - Studer Parkland

Excelsior - Studer Parkland combines active and passive uses within an attractive natural setting. The usable space for active use is limited, but the community garden plots were expanded as part of the environmental mitigation. Previous plans have included an ice skating rink, skate park and open area for a dog park. The primary issue with this parkland is its inaccessibility. For that reason, planning activities for young adults and adults is preferable to gearing the park improvements for children.

The City could make significant improvements for accessing the parkland by providing the following. The map on the following page highlights the access improvements.

- Work with Hennepin County on a possible crossing under or over County Road 19, near the Public Works facility, when major utility and roadway improvements in this area are done.
- Construct a trail on the southeast side of the park, connecting the trail along County Road 19 to a point at the intersection of College Avenue and Glencoe Road.
- Provide an extension of the trail completely around Studer Pond. An easement may be required from property owner(s) to achieve this access or the City could construct a dock from the berm as a trail connection.

The ideal uses and improvements for this park include the following. The map on the following page reflects these planning objectives.

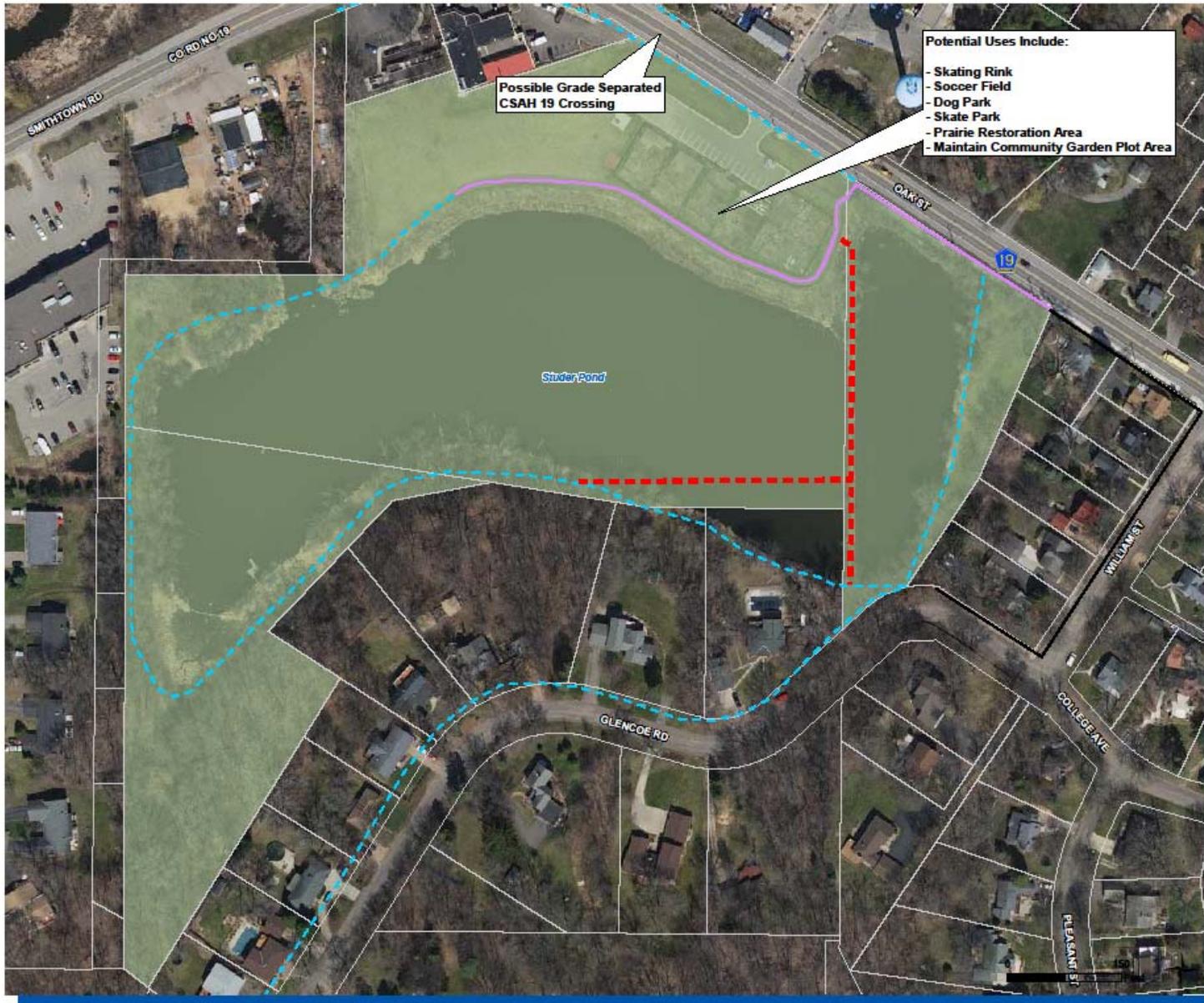
- Maintain and improve the community garden plot area.
- Naturalize the park with trees and a prairie restoration area.
- Leave the open area clear of trees and promote as a dog park, soccer field, and active recreation area.
- Maintain a pleasure ice skating rink in the open recreation area.
- Develop a skate park.

Southeast Neighborhood Park / Play Area

The City has identified the need to provide recreational facilities in the southeast corner of the City. The City does not control adequate property in this area to provide a park facility. The Excelsior United Methodist Church, at 881 Third Avenue has recently constructed playground equipment. This playground is directly across Third Avenue from the largest concentration of multiple family units in the City.

Issues remain with adequate and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections across Highway 7, Mill Street and the five corners intersection. The City will continue to work to improve these connections to ensure access for residents of the southeast neighborhood.

Excelsior - Studer Parkland Master Plan



Fire Lanes

The 10 fire lanes in the City provide public access to the lakes as well as open space areas throughout the community. All of the fire lanes have been surveyed and the City has actively pursued removal of private improvements in the fire lane properties and to sign the lanes as public use areas.

Other than providing continued public access and areas for boat docks and slides, there are no improvements projected for the fire lanes.

OTHER OPEN SPACE IN EXCELSIOR

Veteran's Memorial Park

This park area, near Lake Street and Sunset Street, provides an attractive welcome into Excelsior at the Five Corners intersection. The park includes a Veteran's memorial and historical lighting. The park area is maintained by the Men's Garden Club. No additional projects are planned at this time, but the signage could be replaced to a design consistent with all the park system.

Arey Memorial Triangle

This park area, located near the intersection of County Road 19 and Water Street, also provides an attractive welcome into Excelsior. The park area is maintained by the Men's Garden Club. The area is within Hennepin County right of way. The existing garden and gazebo have been allowed by Hennepin County with no formal agreement. Roadway improvements to the intersection of County Road 19 and Water Street may impact some of the landscaped areas. Any future improvements to the park would require an agreement with Hennepin County. After the roadway

improvements have been completed, a plan should be created for this area.

College Lake Open Space

An open area at the south side of College Lake, along Water Street, is maintained by the City. The City will continue to maintain this as open space and may consider an ice skating rink and warming house in the Winter.

Mitten Pond

A joint effort of the Rotary Club of Excelsior, Minnetonka Public Schools and the City Parks and Recreation had resulted in a plan for the area around Mitten Pond that would include walkways, observation areas with seating and interpretive kiosks, and a water's edge platform/dock. Implementation of the plan will depend upon funding sources.

Excelsior Cemetery

The cemetery, owned and maintained by the City of Excelsior, is located between State Highway 7 and Excelsior Boulevard at the east edge of the City. The historical cemetery provides open space and the roadways for walking paths.

Lake Minnetonka and Other Lakes and Waterbodies

Lake Minnetonka, as well as Galpin Lake, Mud Lake, College Lake, Mitten Pond, and Studer Pond provide recreational opportunities, significant open space, and potential for natural study/educational areas. Protection of these waterbodies from encroaching development and construction of facilities to pre-treat the stormwater prior to release is of the highest community goal.

The City owns a small point of land on the east side of Galpin Lake. There is no deeded land access to the parcel.

The City will continue to explore options for sale or use of this property.

TRAILS AND WALKWAYS PLAN

The trails and walkways plan can be found in the Transportation Chapter of this plan.

Parks, Trails & Environmental Goals and Objectives are located in Appendix A.

