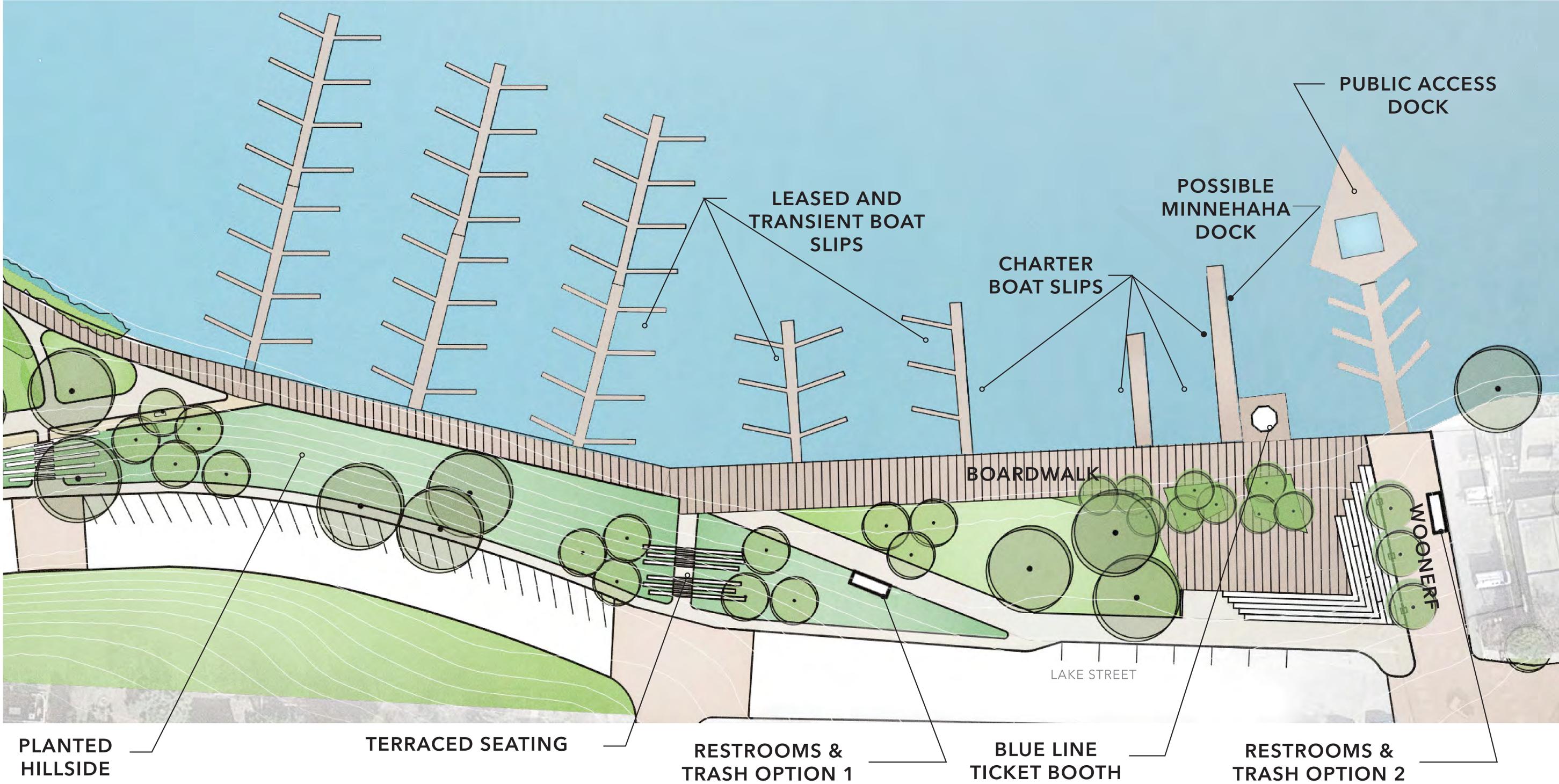




PORT AREA EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Port Area is the first impression of The Commons for many people. The flow of people to and from downtown on Water Street creates important synergy between the park and downtown. The Port Area serves the needs of charter and private boat users. The old Blue Line ticket booth provides a visual connection to the historic lake-front and nearby concessions provides an important amenity for people gathering in the Port. The following issues were identified as areas for improvement within the Port:

- Connection between the Downtown District and The Commons
- The Blue Line ticket booth is in an inopportune location
- Lack of community gathering opportunities
- Port does not accommodate summer dockage of the Minnehaha Steamboat
- Shoreline erosion and water quality issues
- Unsightly garbage storage and lack of restroom
- Bottleneck exists between the Port and the rest of The Commons



PORT AREA IMPROVEMENTS

DESIGN PRINCIPLES PORT AREA

IMPROVEMENTS:

The Master Plan envisions a reconfiguration of the Port area that places an emphasis on community gathering space. A central boardwalk provides flexible space for a wide variety of Community activities and extends the Port into the water, mitigating a bottleneck. The Blue Line Ticket Booth is located adjacent to a dock that could accommodate summer dockage of the Minnehaha. The Water Street extension is transformed from a bituminous road into a pedestrian friendly woonerf while still accommodating vehicular traffic. Other proposed improvements include:

- New refuse/restroom building location options
- New boardwalk adjacent to the Lake to better connect the docks and restore historic Port experience
- Terraced seating along Lake and Water Streets provides seating for Port activities and community events
- Open green space for passive activities
- Steps that realign key neighborhood access points
- Consideration of converting Lake Street to one way traffic (subject to public input and a traffic study) would allow a sidewalk to be constructed at the top of the slope that improves access for residents and users parking on Lake Street.



PORT AREA EXISTING

Currently, residents accessing The Commons must navigate steep slopes, inconvenient stair locations, and challenging street crossings. The steep slope is a hazard for parks maintenance staff and is prone to erosion.



PLANTED SLOPE

PARK PROMENADE

BOARDWALK

PORT AREA IMPROVEMENTS

CONNECTING TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Terraced seating is integrated into the hillside with expanded steps creating a more dynamic and welcoming entry into The Commons. Wider sidewalks with seating and public art help make the park entry experience more cohesive. The mowed hillside is converted to native plantings helping to reduce maintenance and improve the overall aesthetics of the park.



PORT AREA EXISTING

Water Street appears as a typical roadway that spills directly into Lake Minnetonka. The Port lacks a central gathering area or town square. Service trucks have access to the heart of the Port area creating conflicts with pedestrians and boat users. Erosion along the shoreline is evident. Kayak and paddle-board rental is sandwiched between the charter boats and resident and transient docks, generating safety concerns.



PORT AREA IMPROVEMENTS

TRANSFORMING THE PORT: SUMMER

The central feature of the Port is the development of a new boardwalk. Large areas of green space begin to break down the scale of this area while framing different use zones within the space. Water Street has been transformed into a quality first impression from downtown to the Lake. New sidewalk along Lake Street allows for continuous movement and access from the perimeter of the park. The Blue Line Ticket Booth and Minnehaha dock are important focal points of the plaza and also important links to the heritage of Excelsior. In this rendering, the restroom and refuse storage facility is illustrated on the hillside near the Lawn.



PORT AREA IMPROVEMENTS

TRANSFORMING THE PORT: WINTER

The Port area has the opportunity to become a winter destination for community events. This illustration depicts a winter market concept that could invigorate this space during cold winter months. The existing vehicle access to Lake Minnetonka is maintained. In this rendering, the restroom and refuse storage facility is illustrated on or near the Woonerf.