

WALK-THROUGH OF THE 2005 LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

VISION FOR LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK:

A group recreation destination that offers a diverse range of day activities and overnight camping, with emphasis on water-based recreational activities.

OVERARCHING CONCEPT FOR THE LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN:

A home-base for recreation in the Cannon River Valley.



OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

Lake Byllesby Regional Park is a regional park in the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space System, and is located on the Cannon River and Lake Byllesby in southern Dakota County, near Cannon Falls. The park is 620 acres in size, with 366 acres on the western shore of Lake Byllesby and 254 acres on the eastern shore of the lake. The two park areas are separate and roughly two miles apart. Park landscapes include floodplain forests, lakeshore, river terraces, and prairie. The eastern park includes an operating hydropower dam constructed in 1910, the Lake Byllesby Dam.

The Cannon River Valley is becoming an important regional recreation destination and Lake Byllesby is envisioned to be one of the primary recreational hubs of the valley. Lake Byllesby is the largest recreational lake in the far southern metro area and in southern Minnesota. Lake Byllesby Regional Park has been a Dakota County recreational facility since 1970.

Acquisition Status: 73 percent of the land within the park boundary is in private ownership, mostly in the park's western segment. The more actively used eastern segment of the park is mostly in public ownership.

Last Master Plan: 1987.

Current Recreational Uses: Swimming, Hiking, Picnicking, Bird Watching, Camping (RV and tent), Boating.



GOALS FOR THIS PLAN

The Lake Byllesby Master Plan reflects the site history, geographic setting, and recreational needs of the region, and the natural and cultural resources of the park itself. The plan sets a vision for the park and guides its physical development for appropriate and enriching recreational use. The planning process specifically sought to:

- ✓ Create a place for active recreation in the highly-visited eastern segment of the park to provide campers and day visitors with a range of fun things to do
- ✓ Balance general and specialized recreational use of the park
- ✓ Beautify the park and manage/restore its ecosystems
- ✓ Maximize educational opportunities to "tell the park's story"
- ✓ Have a regional focus to draw from a regional visitor base
- ✓ Celebrate the park's location on the Cannon River and Lake Byllesby

The master plan is the first step in realizing the vision created for Lake Byllesby Regional Park.





High quality forest below dam



Buckthorn understory

NATURAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

Inventory: The plan reviews and reports on park ecosystems, toward gaining a better understanding of the park’s overall “health.” Existing plant communities include:

Disturbed Native Forest
Floodplain Forest
Oak/Red Cedar Woodland

Disturbed Temporarily Flooded
Shrubland
Cultivated/Planted Fields

Old Field Community
Wetlands

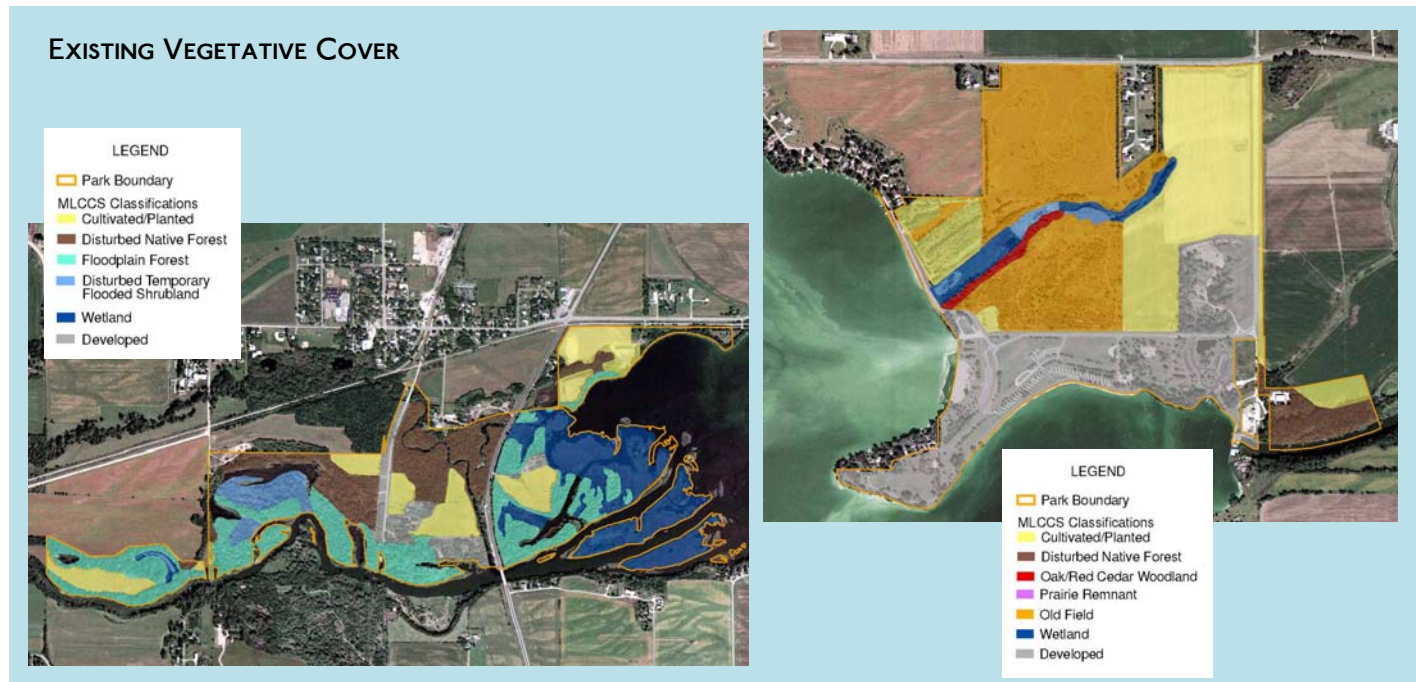
The eastern and western areas of the park are distinctively different landscapes. The western park is largely forested with very little park development. Buckthorn has overgrown much of the western park’s floodplain forests. Weedy species are common throughout much of the park (east and west). The eastern park is mostly an open field landscape that includes the park’s active development areas. Its native ecosystems have been highly altered by previous agricultural uses– the native prairie areas were extensively cropped in the past and the fields long since abandoned. Native prairie habitats generally will not come back naturally because native seed sources have been eliminated and compacted soils are less able to support plant diversity. The eastern park’s highest quality natural area is the woodland area in the river gorge below the dam.

The plan also studied water resources, with the following findings:

- ✓ High nutrient levels, particularly phosphorous, and sediment loads impair water quality in Lake Byllesby. Algal blooms are frequent and water clarity is low.
- ✓ Lake Byllesby is a rough fish-gamefish lake, with mostly warm water gamefish (carp, redhorse, bluegill, and crappie).
- ✓ Siltation at the western end of the lake has created extensive mudflats that are exposed seasonally and provide unique habitat for migratory shorebirds.

Stewardship: Includes these priorities:

- **Conduct targeted plant community restoration:** selected areas are prime opportunities for prairie, savanna and forest restoration.
- **Control invasive species:**
Buckthorn – concentrate on hot spots.
Purple Loosestrife – biological control in the Western mud flats.
Amur Maple – remove from areas of the park where development or habitat restoration are proposed.
- **Naturalize shoreline from Echo Point to the Dam:** Control erosion, enhance aesthetics and habitat.
- **Plant native trees and groundcovers:** To limit fertilizer and watering needs, bring plants into character with the landscape, and give plantings a chance for survival in the park’s sandy soils.



CULTURAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

The history of Lake Byllesby Park is a story of both continuity and change. It illustrates how the Cannon River has drawn people to the area over thousands of years, and how human presence has altered the natural landscape. The planning process drew on research into the park's past as another element in building an overall understanding of the park. The plan's cultural resource stewardship chapter provides an historical/archaeological overview of the park area, discusses known cultural resource sites within the park; establishes cultural resources zones for avoidance, preservation, interpretation, and additional research; and presents potential interpretive themes.

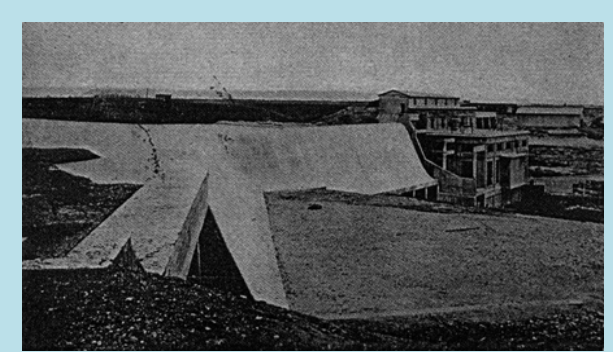
Suggested interpretive themes for the park are:

Theme 1: Provider of Life and Place of Death – the Cannon River and Native Americans

Theme 2: Wheels in Motion – the Cannon River and early Euro-American Settlers

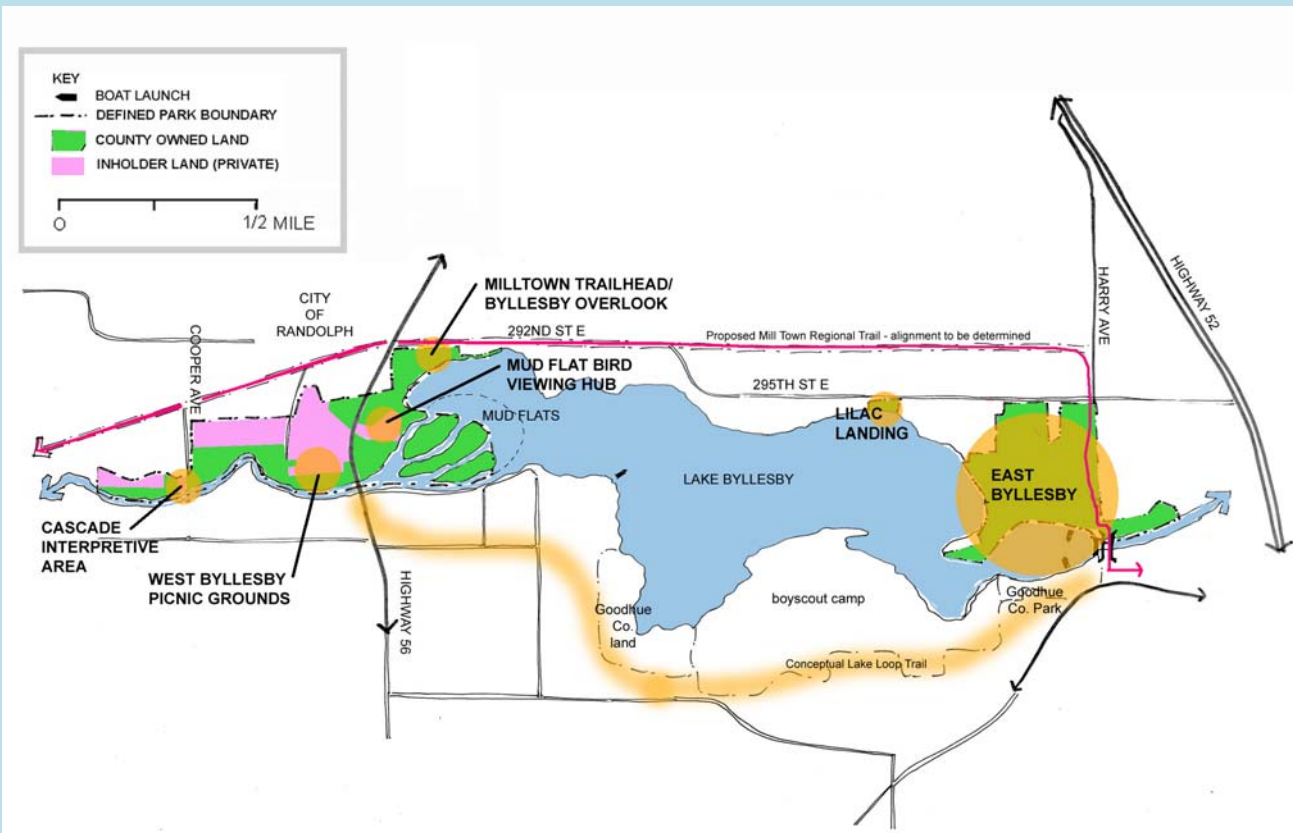
Theme 3: Powering Minnesota – Henry Byllesby and the Lake Byllesby Dam

Theme 4: The Power of Attraction – Lake Byllesby Regional Park



Lake Byllesby Dam circa 1912

DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN – EAST AND WEST



DEVELOPMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

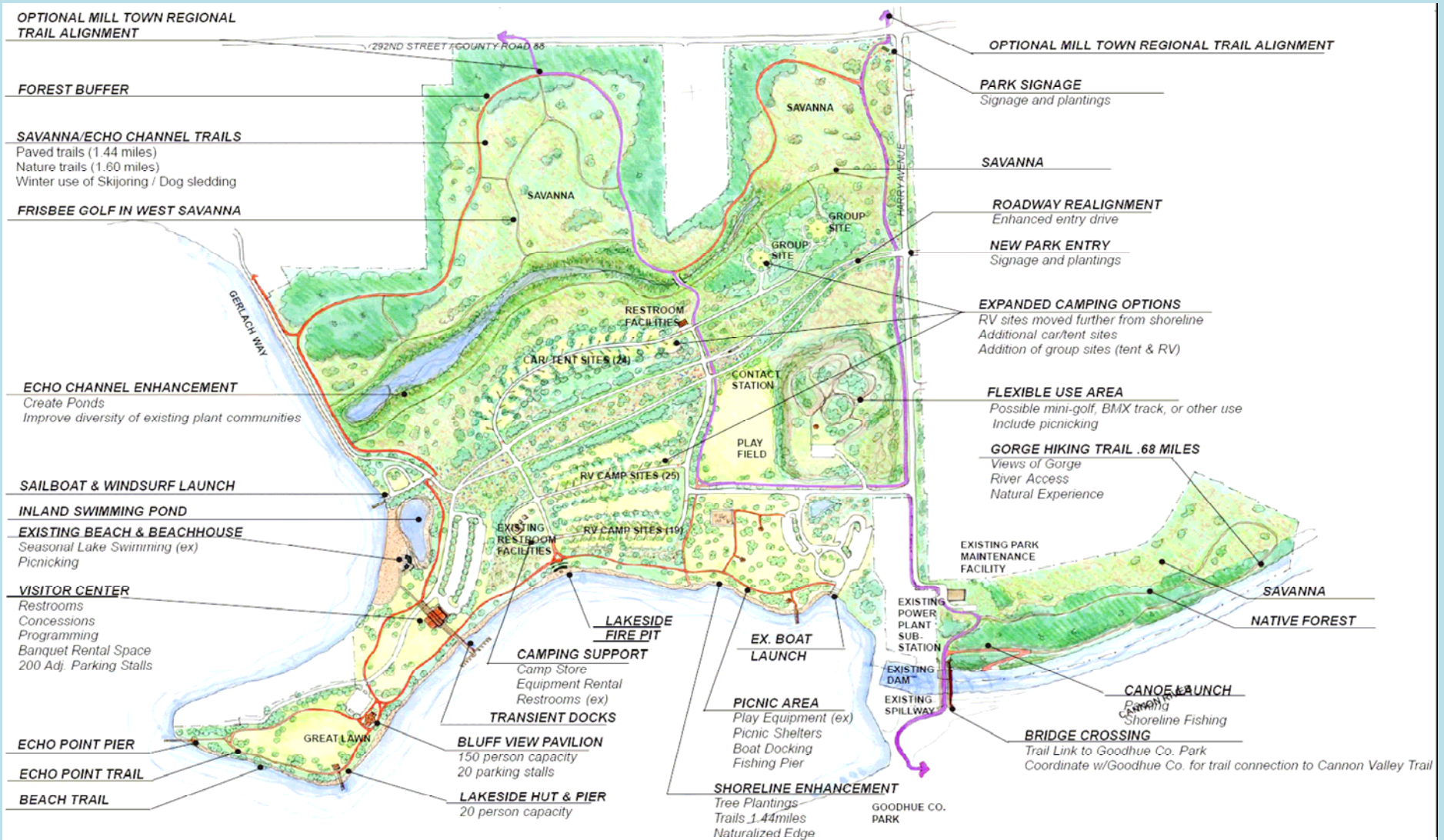
The development plan is based on park resource analyses, public input on desired activities, and analysis of regional recreation needs. The plan unifies the park, while maintaining the distinct characters of the eastern and western areas to offer complementary experiences to visitors.

Proposed recreational trails present an opportunity to connect the eastern and western parks. The Mill Towns State Trail's proposed route from Faribault to Cannon Falls skirts the northern edge of the western park and passes through the eastern park, providing another recreational link between the two park areas (red line, map at left).

Major park features in the plan include:

- Visitors Center*
- Inland Swimming Pond*
- Restroom Facilities*
- Campers Store*
- Trailheads*
- 11.9 miles of Trails (4.34 miles paved)*
- Pedestrian Bridge over Cannon River*
- 70 Camp Sites (44 RV sites)*
- Picnic Areas*
- Fishing Piers/Boat Dock*
- Boat and Canoe Launches*
- Residential Learning Center*

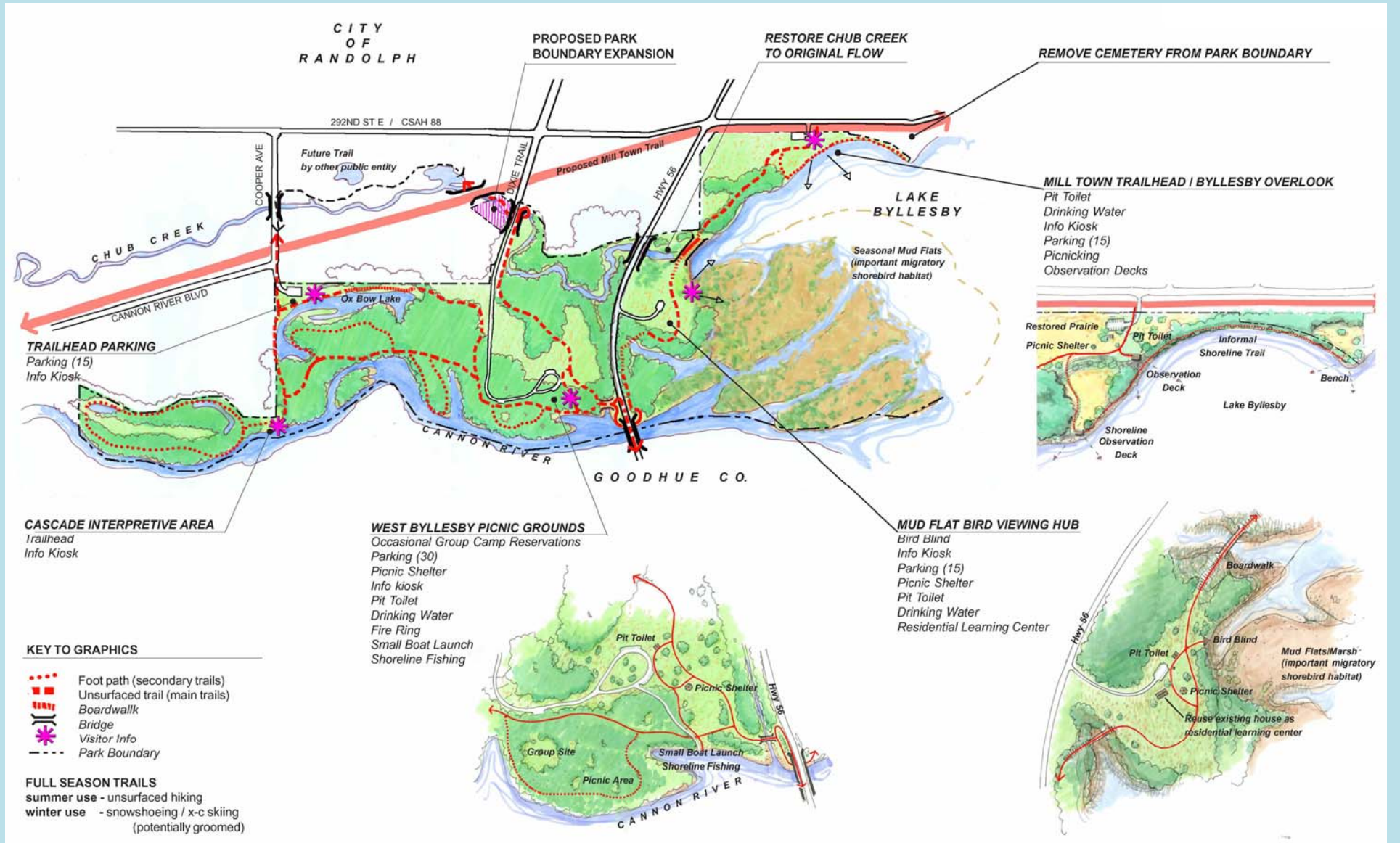
LAKE BYLLESBY EAST - DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN



EAST BYLLESBY: The master plan for the eastern park (above) builds on existing uses in a highly developed park. Camping is expanded and improved to include car and tent campsites and group sites in a more natural landscaped environment. An inland swimming pond is located next to the existing natural

beach. To expand the gathering function in the park, a Visitor Center is proposed that would offer lake views, all seasons programming and rental for community celebrations. The lakeshore experience is further improved by providing opportunities to walk along the shoreline, naturalizing the edge, and providing much-desired piers and boat docking.

LAKE BYLLESBY WEST - DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN



WEST BYLLESBY: The master plan for the western park focuses on nodes for bird viewing, trailhead parking, picnicking, Cannon River access and interpretive opportunities for the former City of Cascade historic area. These nodes are

connected through a series of trails, allowing visitors to be engaged in their environment between nodes.

Development Priorities:

The plan's top development priorities for early to mid-range implementation are:

East

1. Rebuild park entry and road
2. Expand and relocate RV campsites
3. New tent & group campsites, roads, restrooms
4. Echo Point trails, picnic area enhancement
5. Disc golf
6. Active recreation area in quarry (BMX, other)
7. Cannon River bridge, below dam
8. Canoe launch below dam
9. Paved shoreline trail
10. Park wayfinding, signage
11. General landscaping and beautification

West

1. Mill Towns Trailhead
2. Mud Flat birding hub with blinds, residential learning center, shelter, entrance
3. Boardwalk system

Suggested Outdoor Education Opportunities:

Cultural Themes

- Wheels in Motion
- Powering Minnesota
- The Power of Attraction

Stewardship

- Mud Flat Birding
- Cannon River Landscape
- Cannon River Watershed
- Restoration of Old-Field

Recreation

- Skijouring
- Fishing
- Bike Tours
- Stargazing
- Wind-Powered Recreation
- Disc Golf
- Campfire Storytelling

Estimated Costs:

Inholding Acquisition (based on assessed values)	\$2,302,000
Park Development	\$16,317,161
Natural Resource Stewardship	\$654,720
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Total Implementation Cost	\$19,274,211

PLANNING PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

The master plan update for Lake Byllesby Regional Park began in early 2004. The planning team included Hoisington Koezler Group, Inc. as the primary consultants and park planners, Ingraham and Associates as park planners, Barr Engineering and as ecological consultants, and The 106 Group as archeological and cultural resource consultants. The project management team included staff from the Dakota County Office of Planning and the Parks Department. Members of the Dakota County Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC) participated throughout the process. Natural and cultural resource experts from local, state, and federal agencies generously contributed their time and shared their knowledge at a series of workshops and with review of the plan. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2005 Master Plan for Lake Byllesby Regional Park on July 12, 2005.

The plan is available at Dakota County Libraries and online at www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks

Please direct e-comments to: DC2020@co.dakota.mn.us (that's DC 2 zero 2 zero@...), or mail comments to: Dakota County Office of Planning, 14955 Galaxie Ave., Apple Valley, MN 55124.

