



Mendota County Park

MASTER PLAN

Dane County, Wisconsin

October 19th, 2016



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1-Public Input Summary

2-Preferred Alternative Master Plan Graphic

3-Proposed Channel Retaining Wall Cross Section

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mendota County Park is located in the Town of Westport just east of the City of Middleton. The vision for Mendota County Park began in June of 1951, with the purchase of seven acres of land approved by the Dane County Board. This park is unique to Dane County Parks in its urban setting, but still offers open space within walking distance to a large population of Dane County residents that may not otherwise have their own recreation space or backyards.

Perhaps one of the greatest attributes of Mendota County Park is the public access it affords to Lake Mendota. Located at the park are a swimming beach, small watercraft boat landing, and 5 boat camping sites. Mendota County Park is used extensively by ice anglers for lake access in the winter and by a variety of water recreation enthusiasts during the spring and summer.

This Master Plan process evaluated existing conditions of the Mendota County Park planning area and incorporated public, stakeholder, and staff input to create the recommendations found within this report. The planning process included an interactive website and series of public information, local unit of government, and stakeholder meetings from October of 2015 through October of 2016. In addition, staff from Public Health Madison & Dane County assisted with further outreach efforts to the community and surrounding area. Based on the public input process, the following vision statement was prepared for Mendota County Park:

Mendota County Park will remain a rural character park that emphasizes passive recreation uses and quiet areas to escape the surrounding urban environment. Bicycle and pedestrian access to the park will be enhanced through improved cross walk treatments on CTH M. Provision of internal pathways and reorganizing the parking layout will provide for better circulation of users, greater accessibility and improved treatment of storm water runoff. Education opportunities include history of Lake Mendota, importance and function of groundwater springs and pre-settlement Native American inhabitation. Facility upgrades, particularly the campground, are necessary to meet public expectations and provide a safe park environment. Improving and expanding multi age playground areas are a priority, with an emphasis on natural, creative play elements. Regional connectivity to surrounding parks and trails will improve awareness and appreciation of the park. Additional and enhanced opportunities for informal rest areas in the park, particularly along the shoreline are critical to the urban escape nature of this park.

Major plan recommendations include:

PARKING AND PATHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

- A paved trail system throughout the park with fitness nodes.
- Relocating existing trailer and visitor parking spaces more centrally within the park to improve accessibility and storm water runoff treatment.

-Addition of crosswalk enhancements on CTH M at two locations north of the park to improve pedestrian access.

CAMPGROUND

- Flush toilet near campground.
- Remodel 4 RV sites to “pull through” design and add 5 rustic tent sites.

LAKE MENDOTA SHORELINE & CHANNEL

- Add breakwall and pier to ramp.
- Add demonstration spring and educational signage to beach area.
- Add firepit and hammock posts to shoreline zone.
- Replace park shelter with timber frame shelter.
- Replace channel retaining wall and walkway.

PARK AMENITIES

- Replace un-numbered shelter with same size timber frame shelter/labyrinth.
- Add dry sediment removal basin east of volleyball court.
- Add additional natural playground areas.
- Consider art in park options.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Water Walk” trail connection to Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Future bicycle pedestrian ferry to downtown Madison.
- Multi-use trail connections to North Mendota Trail and Middleton trail network.

Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be completed for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to reflect current recreation trends and natural resource preservation needs.



II. PROPERTY BACKGROUND

Historically, lands surrounding what is now Mendota County Park were first occupied by Native Americans, likely attracted to the area for the multiple waterways and rolling hillsides more than 1000 years ago. Located just west of the park at 3119 Waconia Lane in Middleton is the historic site of an early trading post originally owned and operated by Wallis Rowan, then sold to Michel St. Cyr. The trading post was open from 1832 to 1837. In addition to trade, the post served as a hotel for travelers to stay in for two dollars a night after being purchased by St. Cyr.

Mendota County Park originated in 1951 with County Board approval for the purchase of 7 acres of land on the north shore of Lake Mendota. In 1962, the park grew by another 3.5 acres before reaching the current 19 acre size by 1969.

Camping became extremely popular at this park in the 1960's and at times the entire park was overtaken by campers. Mendota County Park was one of the original 'Caretaker Parks' with a residential home located on site that provided housing for a full time park maintenance person until 1970. In the 1970's the campground was reduced to thirty camp sites. A 1975 dredging project in the lagoon to the east of the park made 5 overnight boat camping sites on Lake Mendota a possibility.

During the 1990's the existing beach was relocated to the current location and the lagoon was dredged again. In the mid 1990's, a subcommittee was established with representation from the County Board, Town of Westport and City of Middleton to discuss the future of the park. Main topics of discussion were the possibility of transferring the park to the City of Middleton, and eliminating camping at the park. Neither would come to fruition, the Town of Westport strongly felt the park should remain under County ownership and the County citing it offered the only camping opportunity on Lake Mendota. In 2003 the playground was updated through a generous donation by neighborhood residents.

The tennis courts were removed in 2014 due to declining use and ongoing water damage. In 2016, a beach restoration project was completed that included installation of a water filtration system that greatly improves water quality during the summer months. The campground continues to be very popular and has the second highest occupancy rate in the Dane County Park system. Perhaps the highest seasonal use of the park is in the winter for ice fishing access to Lake Mendota.

III. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The master planning process began with a public kick off meeting held at the Town of Westport in November of 2015. Following the kick off meeting, Dane County Parks planning staff met with the City of Middleton, the Town of Westport, the Dane County Park Commission, neighboring property owners and Public Health Madison and Dane County staff to gather input and ideas for the master plan. A follow up public information meeting was held at the Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church and School adjacent to the park in August of 2016 to present draft plan recommendations being considered for inclusion in the plan.

Notifications of public information meetings were sent to all landowners adjacent to the planning area boundary and press releases were printed in the Middleton newspaper. Dane County Parks also created a website for the master planning process that included all project information and an online feedback form. In addition, staff from Public Health Madison & Dane County assisted with further outreach efforts to the community and surrounding area.

The following hope/concern/comment themes were heard throughout the public input process:

- Interest maintaining the rural, non-urban feel of the park.
- Support for creating regional connections to other parks and trails.
- Importance of improving bicycle/pedestrian crosswalk improvements for non-motorized access to the park.
- Support for addition of off road walking trails in the park.
- Need for additional and natural playground areas.
- Concerns regarding stormwater runoff from park onto neighboring properties.

A summary staff and stakeholder input heard during the planning process is presented under Attachment 1.



IV. RESOURCE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

TOPOGRAPHY

The majority of the topography within Mendota County Park is extremely flat with the exception of a gentle hill on the west side of the park that could afford a view of the lake with minimal tree clearing.



Opportunities:

- Wide open views, self surveillance
- Ease of creating accessible facilities

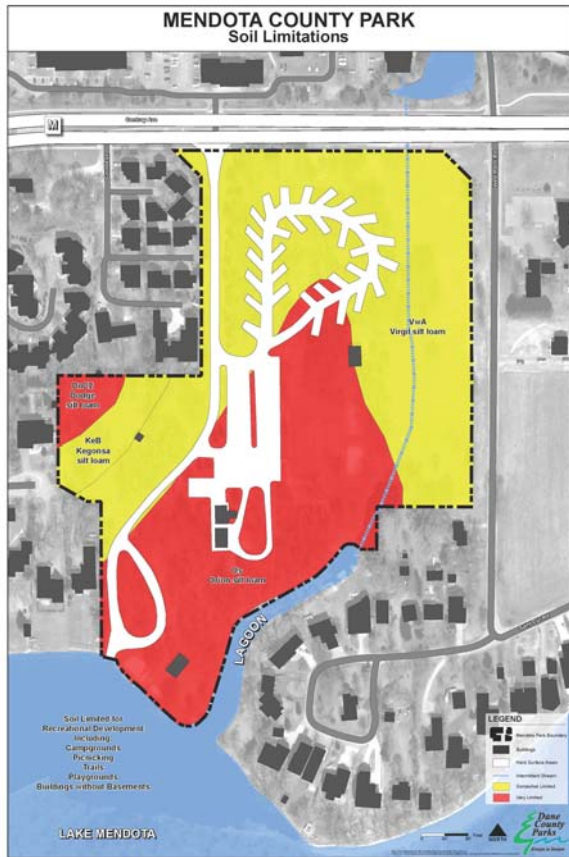
Constraints:

- Challenge to properly drain stormwater runoff



SOILS

The majority of the soils in the park has relatively shallow depths to the water table and is poorly drained.



Opportunities:

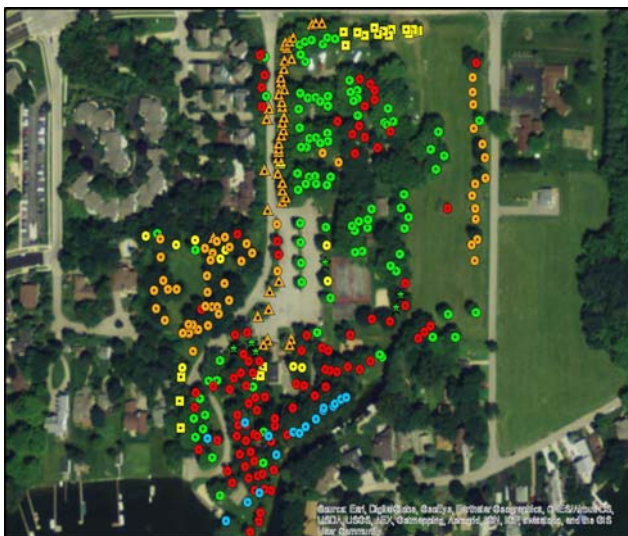
- May be opportunities to expand the existing lagoon further into the park.
- Creating wetland buffer zones for stormwater runoff.

Constraints:

- Buildings and other park infrastructure projects must be designed to withstand hydric conditions.
- Natural surface paths/lawn maintenance issues.

VEGETATION

The trees of Mendota County Park consist primarily of ash (red dots), silver maple (green dots) and cottonwood (blue dots). Emerald Ash Borer will result in removal of a large number of ash trees, replace with diverse lowland species.



Opportunities:

- Reuse harvested ash/cottonwood trees for park infrastructure building and playground materials.
- Provide open area for reconfiguring parking lots.

Constraints:

- Labor intensive ash removal.

- Park is isolated within dense



Opportunities:

- Public water and park access in close proximity to many homes.
- Potential connections to other public lands and trails.

Constraints:

- Proximity of adjacent homes to park.
- Park is isolated within dense urban land uses.

Surrounding Land Use

MENDOTA COUNTY PARK
Surrounding Land Use & Existing Public Lands



TRANSPORTATION

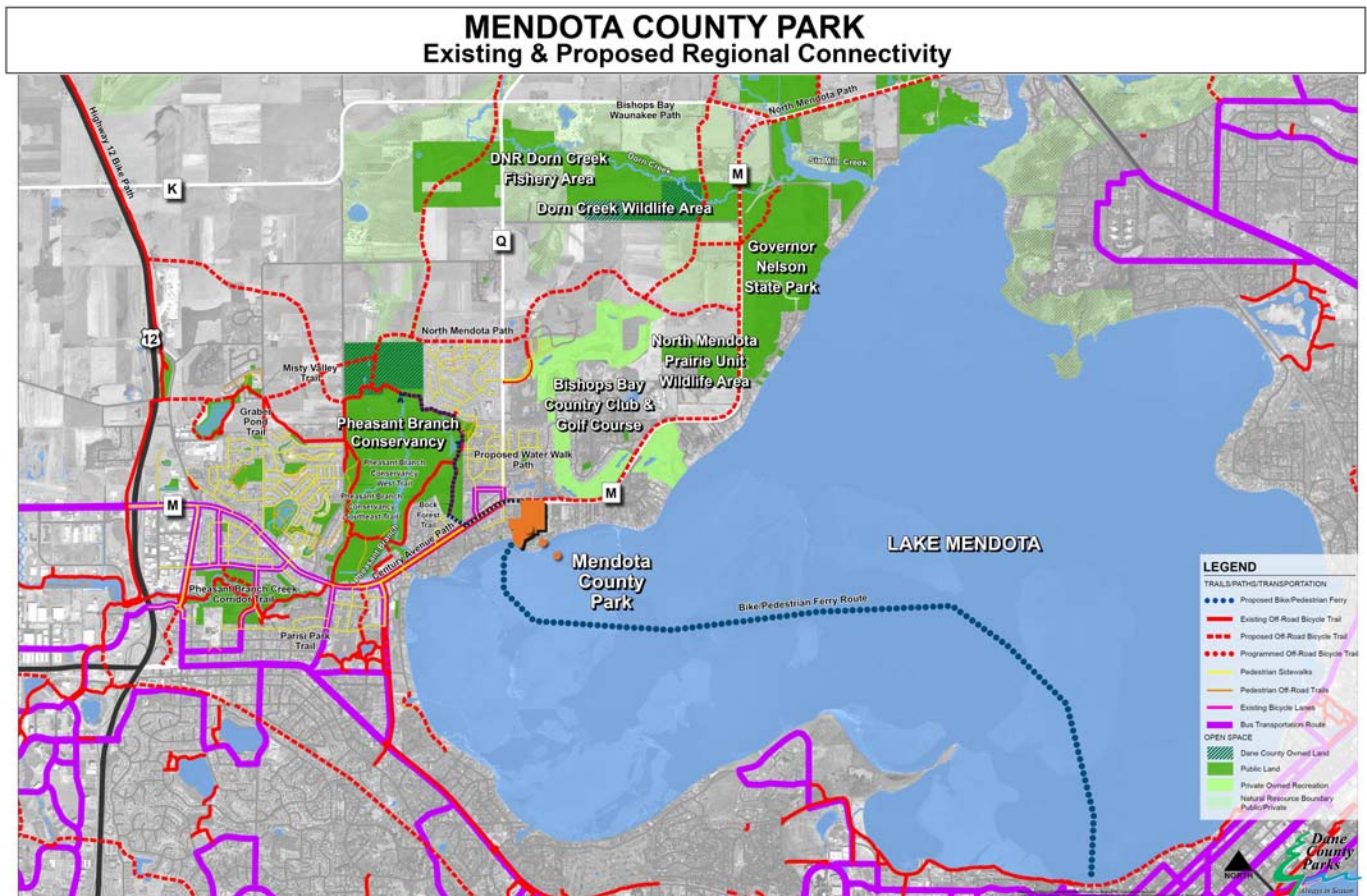
Access to Mendota County Park is primarily limited to motorized vehicles and foot due to the adjacent CTH M on the north boundary of the park and limited bicycle/pedestrian crossing improvements. The City of Middleton has been actively planning and developing a comprehensive off road multi use trail network that should eventually connect to Mendota County Park. The Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan identifies a proposed trail connection from Mendota County Park to Governor Nelson State Park and beyond. There is also a recommendation for a future bicycle pedestrian ferry that would provide service from the park to the downtown isthmus area.

Opportunities:

- Provide signed “Water Walk” on existing sidewalks/paths to spring at Pheasant Branch Conservancy.
- Provide connectivity to other trail networks.
- Improve bicycle/pedestrian crosswalks at CTH M.

Constraints:

- CTH M limits non-motorized access to the park.
- Lack of pier and suitable non-campsite mooring areas limit boat access to park.



VI. PLANNING PURPOSE

The original and only planning for Mendota County Park was completed in the mid 1970's. Most of the existing park facilities have become dated and in need of repair or replacement. Surrounding land uses, recreation trends and general use of the park has changed greatly since the original park plans were drafted.

The purpose of this plan is to create a long term vision for the park through a consensus building process that will guide future use, facility development and land management while balancing resource protection with public access.

VII. PARK VISION STATEMENT

Mendota County Park will remain a rural character park that emphasizes passive recreation uses and quiet areas to escape the surrounding urban environment. Bicycle and pedestrian access to the park will be enhanced through improved cross walk treatments on CTH M. Provision of internal pathways and reorganizing the parking layout will provide for better circulation of users, greater accessibility and improved treatment of storm water runoff. Education opportunities include history of Lake Mendota, importance and function of groundwater springs and pre-settlement Native American inhabitation. Facility upgrades, particularly the campground, are necessary to meet public expectations and provide a safe park environment. Improving and expanding multi age playground areas are a priority, with an emphasis on natural, creative play elements. Regional connectivity to surrounding parks and trails will improve awareness and appreciation of the park. Continued and enhanced opportunities for informal rest areas in the park, particularly along the shoreline are critical to the urban escape nature of this park.



VIII. MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following plan recommendations are also presented graphically on the preferred alternative master plan exhibits at the end of the document.

Major plan recommendations include:

PARKING AND PATHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

- Paved trail system through the park to improve safety and access.
- Relocating existing trailer and visitor parking spaces more centrally within the park to improve accessibility and storm water runoff treatment.
- Addition of crosswalk enhancements on CTH M at two locations north of the park to improve pedestrian access.

CAMPGROUND

- Addition of water sources throughout campground.
- Relocated campground host site.
- Flush toilet near campground.
- Remodel 4 RV sites to “pull through” design.
- Add 5 rustic tent sites.
- Improve vegetative screening surrounding campground.

LAKE MENDOTA SHORELINE & CHANNEL

- Add breakwall and pier to ramp.
- Add demonstration spring and educational signage to beach area.
- Add firepit and hammock posts to shoreline zone.
- Add canoe/kayak racks.
- Replace park shelter with timber frame shelter.
- Replace channel retaining wall. See attached cross section.

PARK AMENITIES

- Replace un-numbered shelter with same size timber frame shelter.
- Add grass paver labyrinth to un-numbered shelter.
- Add dry sediment removal basin east of volleyball court.
- Add additional natural playground areas.
- Add non-reservable picnic opportunities.
- Consider art in park options.
- Add fitness stations to internal pathway system.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Water Walk” trail connection to Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Future bicycle pedestrian ferry to downtown Madison.
- Multi-use trail connection to North Mendota Trail and Middleton trail network.

Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be completed for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to reflect current recreation trends and natural resource preservation needs.

IX. FUTURE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

Consider partnering with the Town of Westport and/or City of Middleton on acquiring open space parcels east of park and south of Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church for development of a regional storm water treatment basin.

X. ACTION PLAN

The action plan identifies major capital park improvement and planning projects to be carried out over the next 10 years and beyond. Items prioritized as “immediate” could occur within 1-3 years, “pending” within 3-5 years and “future” could occur within 5-7 years or as necessary milestones are realized. All estimated costs are general and should be revised after detailed plans and specifications are completed for each project. **Actual implementation schedule may vary and is dependent on when funding becomes available.**

TASK	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PROJECT SCOPE	COMMENTS/COST
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for Channel Wall Replacements.	Immediate	Consultant/DCP	Site development, waterway permits and cost estimates for proposed sea wall replacement.	Estimated Cost: \$15,000
Replace Sea Wall and Retaining Wall at Channel.	Immediate	DCP/Contracted(?)	Limited removal of cottonwood trees, replace existing retaining wall and sea wall. Replace existing crushed stone path with concrete, add boat tie down cleats.	Estimated Cost: Pending completion of cost estimate and construction approach.
Install paved internal path within park with fitness stations.	Immediate	Contracted	Install 6' wide paved walking paths/fitness nodes.	Estimated Cost: \$50,000
Add pedestrian crosswalk improvements to CTH M.	Immediate	Contracted.	Work with Dane County Highway on acceptable treatments.	Estimated Cost: Pending Highway design/approval.
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for parking reorganization.	Immediate	DCP/Consultant	DCP finalizes concept site development plan, Consultant prepares final construction documents/permits/cost estimates.	Estimated Cost: \$60,000
Construct Natural Playground Area of Harvested Cottonwood Trees	Immediate	Consultant/HCN	Hire playground consultant to design/construct natural playscapes that utilize harvested Cottonwood/Ash Trees.	Estimated Cost: \$40,000

TASK	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PROJECT SCOPE	COMMENTS/ COST
Relocate existing trailer/vehicle parking toward shelter more centrally within park.	Pending	Contracted	Remove pavement at existing parking lot, construct proposed parking areas. Add storm water management features.	Estimated Cost: \$200,000 *Pending completion of cost estimate.
Construct dry sediment removal basin.	Pending	LWRD/Consultant/Contracted	Hire Consultant to prepare plans/permits with LWRD oversight, contract installation.	Estimated Cost: \$120,000
Replace un-numbered shelter, add labyrinth.	Pending	PW/Contracted	Remove existing shelter, replace with timber frame of same size, add labyrinth constructed of pavers set in lawn.	Estimated Cost: \$130,000* Includes \$30,000 design cost.
Add demonstration spring, "Water Walk" and educational signage to beach.	Pending	LWRD/DCP	Create spring, water play area at beach, work with PBC and Middleton on wayfinding "Water Walk."	Estimated Cost: \$40,000
Add floating pier to boat ramp.	Pending	DCP	Add floating pier to launch area.	Estimated Cost: \$35,000
Replace Shelter 1 with Timber Frame Shelter and add Shoreline Firepit.	Pending	Contracted	Remove existing shelter and slab. Construct timber frame shelter with local materials, firepit.	Estimate Cost: \$200,000
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for Flush Toilet at Campground	Pending	Consultant	Construction/bid documents, permits, approvals for prefab restroom building.	Estimated Cost: \$30,000
Construct flush toilet near campground.	Pending	Contracted	Prefabricated restroom building similar in character to beach filtration building.	Estimated Cost: \$60,000
Remodel 4 RV sites and add 5 rustic camp sites.	Pending	DCP	Construct road/camp site improvements per master plan.	Estimated Cost: \$25,000
Planning break wall at beach/boat ramp.	Future	Consultant	Planning, Permits, Construction Documents	Estimated Cost: \$50,000
Implement regional bicycle pedestrian ferry.	Future	Contracted	Pontoon boat with bike racks.	Estimated Cost: Unknown.

XI. SUMMARY

Mendota County Park is located amidst a very rapidly growing residential region of Dane County that will undoubtedly result in higher use as awareness of the park continues to increase. Future planned trail and park facility program areas within this master plan strive to maintain balance between public use and preservation of the rural character and nature of this park. Maintaining this rural character was a primary planning objective and achieved through conservative future recommendations that relate to improving park function and passive recreation uses.

This master plan is meant to serve as a guide for future acquisition and phased development of the park. Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be prepared for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to address changing adjacent land uses and current recreation trends.



Mendota County Park Draft Master Plan-Public/Stakeholder/Staff Input Summary

Ideas and Issues

Comments/Questions/Concerns

Staff Response

Draft Plan Recommendation

1. Sea wall at channel is in need of repair, consider full or partial removal of mature Cottonwood trees to prevent roots from damaging repaired wall in the future.	Neighboring property owners at 9/17/16 PIM were not in favor of full Cottonwood removal.		Remove Cottonwoods closest to the channel to approximate crest of slope, replace existing retaining wall with a 2-3' high wall and slope back to crest of hill. Consider adding ladder escapes along sea wall.
2. Labyrinth	Attendants at 9/17/16 PIM were not in favor of the proposed labyrinth, concerns over location and impervious surface. Three comments of support for including a labyrinth were received citing other parks in Wisconsin where they have been successful, the spiritual component benefits and low maintenance/pervious surface alternatives.	Staff has done additional research on labyrinths in parks. See https://labyrinthociety.org/labyrinths-in-places .	Recommend inclusion of a labyrinth constructed of donor paving blocks that can be mowed over and allow water to infiltrate. An ideal location is intimate, serene and segregated from other park activity areas, a small leveled area immediately adjacent the non reservable shelter could be a suitable site and would leave open hill available for open play.
3. Lake shore firepit.	Some concerns over late nights/noise heard from adjacent neighbors, supporting comments also heard.	The proposed firepit would replace an existing one near the boat camping. The park closes at 10pm, so should not be late night activity. The firepit could be a great amenity for shelter users, boat campers and the general public.	Maintain the proposed firepit as a draft recommendation.
4. Recreation and facilities.	Be sure to continue maintaining what we have. Keep existing volleyball/basketball courts. Keep existing small shelter, eliminate shelter #2. Consider adding bocce ball and pickle ball courts. Consider adding splash pads. Maintain open lawn areas for pick up games of varying types.	Concern of adding more recreation program areas due to small size of park.	Replace existing small shelter with same size timber frame shelter. Maintain volleyball and basketball courts. Do not add bocce ball/pickleball courts. Natural wading/informal splash area is included as a mock spring at the beach.
5. Community Gardens	Access, parking is limited. Park is too small. Questioned need for this based on existing available garden space near the park.		Remove draft community garden recommendation.
6. Park Setting	Strong support heard for keeping natural/rural setting, enjoy country feel of park amidst urban setting.		Maintain similar park character, limit any additional new park program areas to non-intensive, passive activities.
7. Walking paths and trails.	Strong support for the addition of a designated off road path network in the park. Question need for paving the trail, and keeping width to a minimum.	Narrow limestone trails can be maintenance intensive, especially in sloped or wet areas.	Consider 6' wide paved paths with 1' gravel shoulders.
8. Relocated internal parking area.	Concern by some adjacent neighbors regarding visibility of parking lot. Concern of more development toward lake.	Utilize berms and plantings to help visually soften parking lot from neighbors and park users. Not adding to the amount of parking, and will result in reduction of existing pavement area. Project will greatly enhance functionality of the park and allow for better treatment of stormwater.	Maintain the proposed internal parking lot improvement as a draft recommendation. Investigate green design approaches that treat stormwater and improve aesthetics.
9. Playgrounds	Strong support for more variety and additional play areas, especially natural playscapes. Consider eliminating swings, takes up a large space for few users. Consider some type of fencing to provide a barrier between playground areas and the channel.		Utilize removed cottonwoods for natural play elements (dugout canoes, tunnels, etc.). Maintain plan recommendation to replace swings with natural play area, expand natural play nodes away from existing playground. Add split rail fencing between playgrounds and channel.
10. Lake	Expand on "quiet zone" and mental respite areas at lake shore.		Incorporate benches, hammock posts, paths and niches along shoreline areas. Consider additional canoe/kayak rack space, concessions.
11. Lowland Discovery Area	Strong concerns regarding mosquitoes and ability to maintain artificially created wetland areas. Support incorporating fish spawning area into sediment removal area if possible.		Eliminate Lowland Discovery recommendation. Investigate sediment removal stormwater facility that is dry except during major rain events that will allow area to continue to be mown. Provide educational component.
12. Regional Connections	Strong support for expanding connectivity of the park to surrounding park lands and trail networks. Coordinate efforts with the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.		Maintain regional connectivity plan recommendations.
13. Access to the Park	Strong support for crosswalk improvements on CTH M, and signage/stripping improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians entering the park.		Work with Dane County Highway on possible improvements to CTH M. Add path and crosswalk treatments to park entrance.
14. Drainage	Several comments pertaining to drainage issues/standing water.		Incorporate stormwater treatment areas within the park, investigate re-routing/redefining drainage way near boat launch.
15. Beach and Boat Launch	Strong support for mock spring at beach and provision of small pier at launch site.		Maintain spring/pier recommendations, align pier parallel to neighboring property line. Add future bin wall parallel to property line to launch area to provide wave protection for the boat launch temporary tie-up space along one side of the structure and confinement of the sand beach. Add stone headland adjacent to tree to further protect beach if boom needs additional stabilization.
16. Signage	Investigate bi-lingual signage in the park.		Incorporate at kiosks, information areas.
17. Campground	Several comments heard in support of the campground and rural character it provides to the neighborhood, enjoy campfire smell. Requests from campers and staff for additional electrical sites, more water locations, a toilet closer to the campground, pull through RV sites, and some additional tent sites.		Maintain existing draft master plan recommendations.

MENDOTA COUNTY PARK

DRAFT Preferred Alternative Master Plan



LEGEND

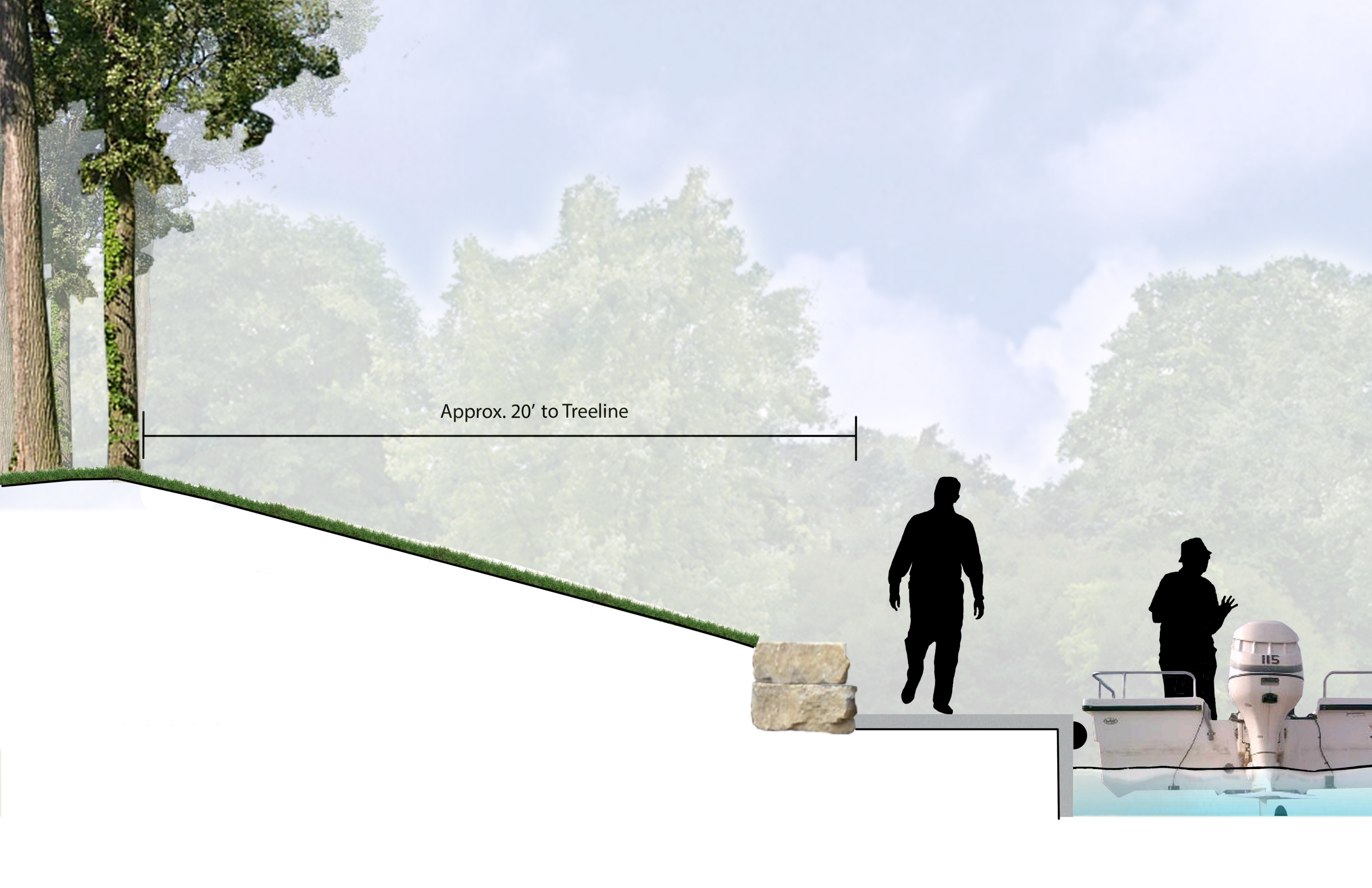
- Mendota Park Boundary
- Buildings
- Lake Loop Paved Trail
- Access Points
- Fitness Nodes
- Water Walk Trail

Playground & Expanded Natural Play Includes:
 Hollow Logs
 Tree Pods
 Teeter Totter
 Cottonwood Canoe
 Boulder Play

Date: September 20, 2016
 0' 60' 120' Feet



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