

Date January 24, 2022

RECEIVE AND FILE COMMUNICATION FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD REGARDING APPROVAL OF THE SW INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION OF DEDICATION OF GRAY'S LAKE WETLANDS PROJECT AREA AS PARKLAND

WHEREAS, on August 23, 2016, by Resolution #16-065, the Parks and Recreation Board voted to approve the updated Gray's Lake Park Master Plan which identified the parcels shown in the attached exhibit for wetland and supporting park improvements; and

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2016, by Roll Call No.16-1535, the City Council approved the updated Gray's Lake Park Master Plan Areas A through G, with Area G shown as wetland and supporting park improvements as shown in the attached Exhibit A; and

WHEREAS, a Gray's Lake wetlands, located south of and adjacent to Gray's Lake Park, is proposed as part of the Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study by Felsburg Holt & Ullevig, to be presented to the City Council for approval; and

WHEREAS, on August 24, 2021, such proposed plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Board for review and recommendation; and

WHEREAS, on September 28, 2021, by Resolution #21-062, the Parks and Recreation Board voted 13-0 to approve the proposed Southwest Infrastructure Plan, subject to the condition that the land adjacent to Gray's Lake Park be dedicated as parkland.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, that the above described approval of the Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study and recommendation of dedication of the Gray's Lake Wetlands Project Area as parkland from the Parks and Recreation Board is hereby received and filed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City staff is directed to prepare the necessary documentation to allow the City Council to dedicate such land as parkland at the time of the Council's approval of the Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study.

Attachment: Exhibit maps of proposed wetlands area south of Gray's Lake Park
Attachment: Letters of support.



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

15

Date January 24, 2022

MOVED BY _____ TO ADOPT.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Ann Di Donato

Ann DiDonato, Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
GATTO				
SHEUMAKER				
MANDELBAUM				
VOSS				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED		APPROVED		
_____ Mayor				

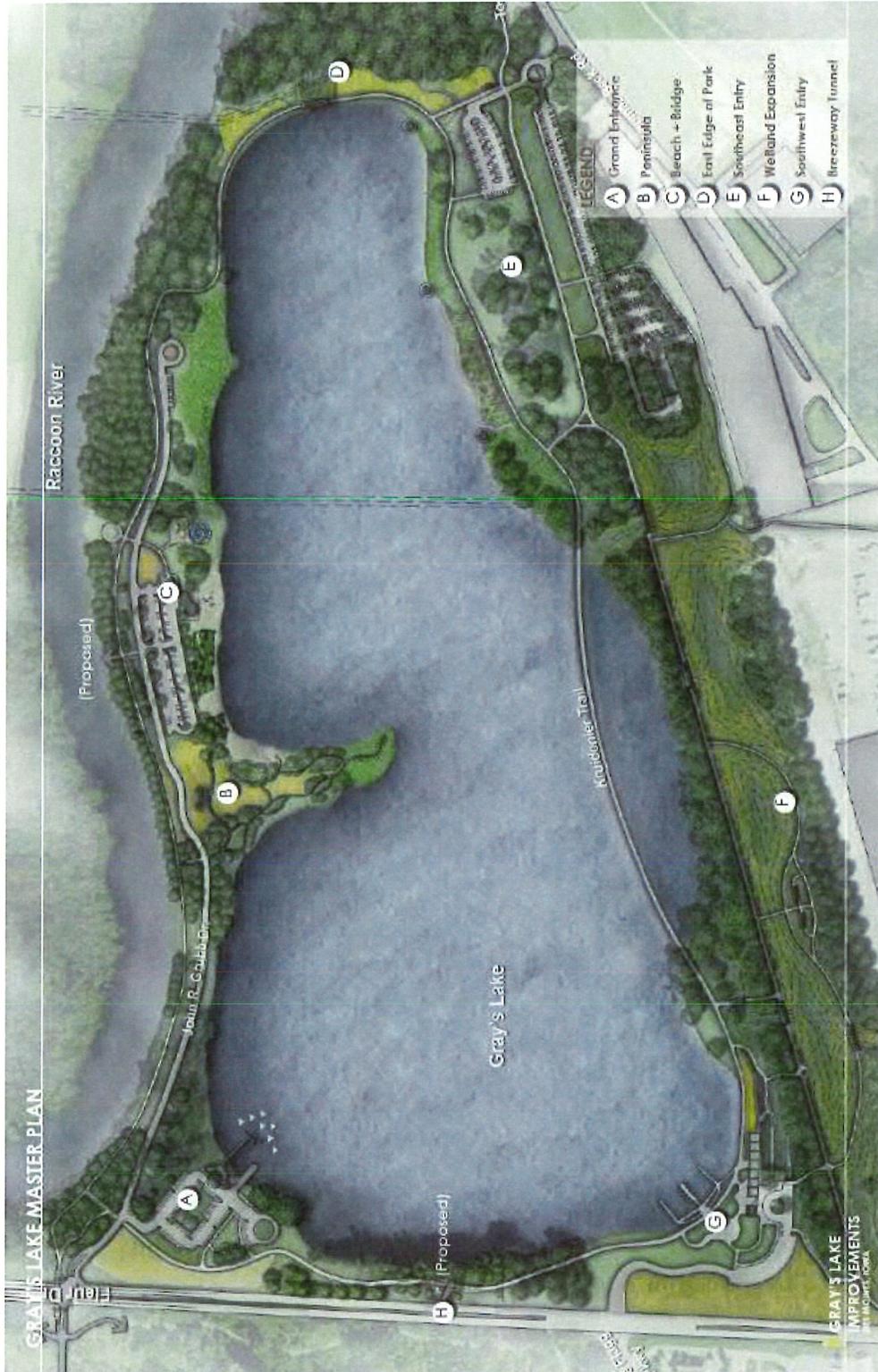
CERTIFICATE

I, P. Kay Cmelik, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ City Clerk

Map exhibits for:
RECEIVE AND FILE COMMUNICATION FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD REGARDING
APPROVAL OF THE SW INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION OF
DEDICATION OF GRAY'S LAKE WETLANDS PROJECT AREA AS PARKLAND



2016 Gray's Lake Park Master Plan - Areas A through G including Area F as expanded parkland

final master plan

South of Gray's Lake Master Plan

The more detailed master plan created for the South of Gray's Lake area shown in Figure 4.1 is focused on the main portion of the study area.

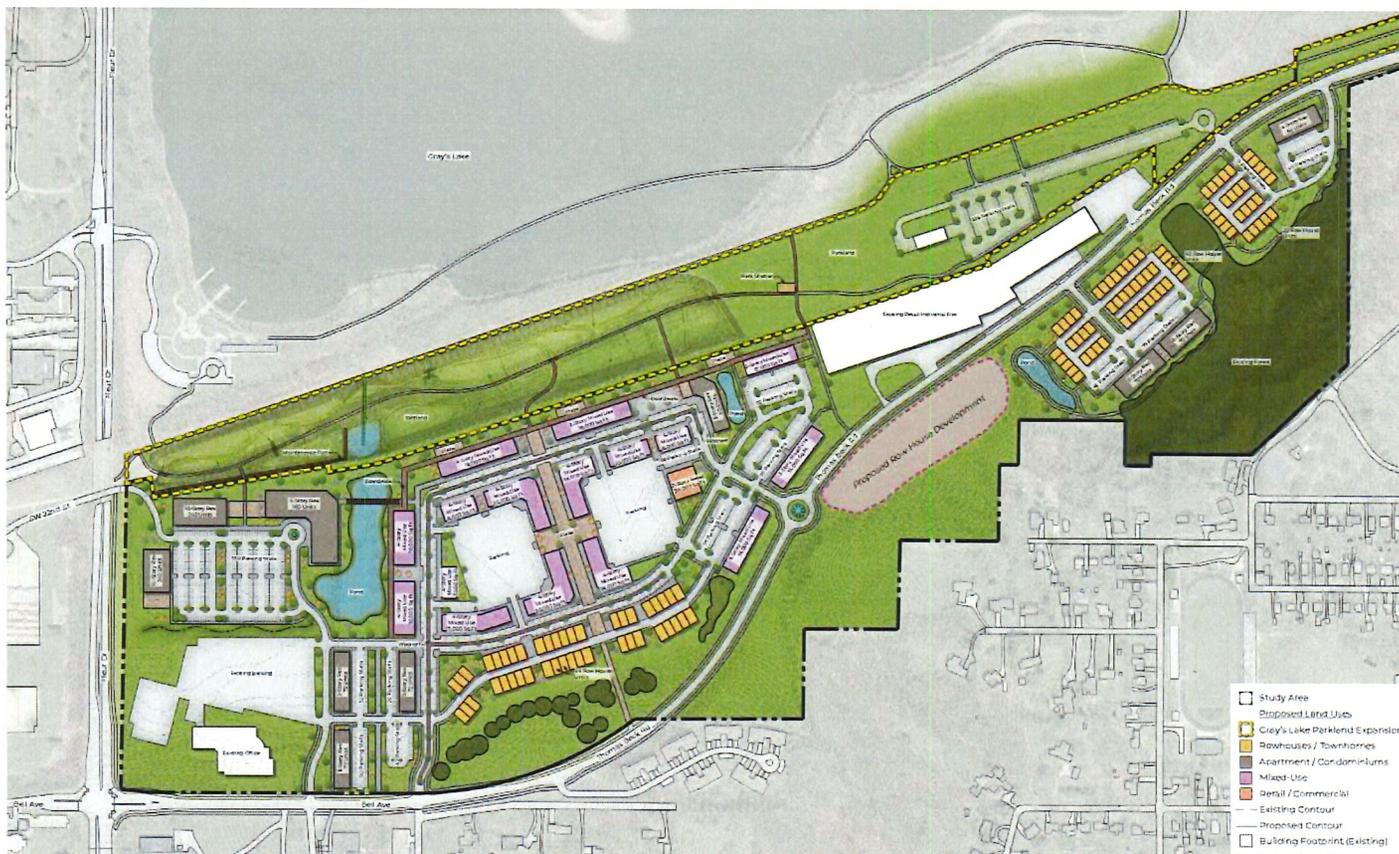


Figure 4.1 Final South of Gray's Lake Master Plan

2021-22 South of Gray's Lake Master Plan – preferred concept indicating extent of parkland expansion (from the final draft report)

Map exhibits for:
 RECEIVE AND FILE COMMUNICATION FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD REGARDING
 APPROVAL OF THE SW INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION OF
 DEDICATION OF GRAY'S LAKE WETLANDS PROJECT AREA AS PARKLAND

Map exhibits for:
 RECEIVE AND FILE COMMUNICATION FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD REGARDING
 APPROVAL OF THE SW INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION OF
 DEDICATION OF GRAY'S LAKE WETLANDS PROJECT AREA AS PARKLAND



City Interest Properties and Parcels as shown in Des Moines Maps

The Honorable Mayor
Members of the City Council
Scott Sanders, City Manager

Re: Gray's Lake Park Southern Expansion

I am writing this letter based on my long-time interest and involvement in the planning, development and management of Gray's Lake. Gray's Lake Park is a crown jewel of our City and its park system. It is an important Gateway to our community. It has over one million trail uses per year by people from all walks of life. The combination of parks, trails and water from Water Works Park, through Gray's Lake and Meredith Trail to the Des Moines River corridor constitutes one of the nation's great urban parks.

The City has a historic opportunity to claim the abandoned rail yard south of Gray's Lake as part of the Park and park system. The potential expansion area is now owned by the City as right-of-way, the Southwest Connector concept has been abandoned by the City and long-term planning by the City for the adjacent area for commercial and residential development is underway. The potential expansion area and a vision for its use is described in the report by Confluence dated September 12, 2016 entitled "Gray's lake—A Historical Review and Vision for the Future." This report was approved by the Parks and Recreation Board on August 23, 2016.

The hills to the south of Gray's Lake constitute a large watershed that drains towards the Lake which causes water management issues and affects water quality of the Lake. A solution is a wetland water management area directly south of the Lake which can enhance both the Park and development planned for the adjacent area further to the south. This Park expansion can provide a new park experience for walkers and bikers demonstrating the beneficial use of water filtration and new walkways, paths and views. It solves a water management problem for development while enhancing the Park as a highly attractive amenity for that development. Even if the wetland project is delayed or

is determined to be infeasible, the rail yard should be claimed as Park green space. Either way, the abandoned rail yard becomes an attractive asset for passersby on Fleur and enhances the Park for its many users and adjacent property owners.

The first step is to formally designate this area, as shown in the drawing below outlined in dashed red, as part of the Park. This designation costs the City nothing. With this formal designation in hand, planning for the area can begin in earnest. The project will no doubt be planned in phases over time with a combination of federal, state and local government contributions, as well as private contributions, yet to be determined. Thank you for your consideration.

Please take action now to have the City formally designate this area as part of Gray's Lake Park. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Neumann

Cc Des Moines Parks and Recreation Board
Benjamin R. Page
Jenny Richmond





Friday, October 1, 2021

Brooke Avila
President

Laura Smidt
Vice President

Jenna Bates
Treasurer

Andy McCoy
Secretary

Rex Coble
Beth Pargulski
Dylan Lampe
Tami Wingert
Erin Muir
Andrea Boulton
Amal Barre
Chris Lightfoot
Adam Ibrahim

Ex Officio:
Cynde Fanter
Jane Hein
Janis Ruan

Honorable:
Dr. Michael Eberle

ATTN: Honorable Mayor Cownie
Members of City Council
Scott Sanders, City Manager

On behalf of the Friends of Des Moines Parks, our organization requests your support of the Gray's Lake Wetland expansion proposal that would transfer property currently designated as right-of-way to parkland. The cancellation of the Southwest Connector roadway project provided an opportunity for the City's Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments to consider alternate development in this area. The resulting Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study included a comprehensive study of this parcel and a detailed process to convert this unused land to a wetland.

Gray's Lake Park is a signature park in the Des Moines park system, drawing visitors from near and far who come to enjoy its numerous amenities and activities, which include: water recreation, a stroll on the walking loop, a picnic on the terrace with incredible views of downtown, a family photo shoot, or yoga on the lawn and so much more. The opportunity to acquire the land south of this area, which is currently in a dismal state in appearance and usefulness, is a win-win for both the City and the park system.

We strongly support this proposed initiative and the opportunity to transfer the abandoned land that runs the length of the trail on the south side of Gray's Lake to parkland for three reasons.

- Improved Water Quality of Gray's Lake — This land is currently owned by the City of Des Moines with no known plans to improve or enhance the area. The wetland project that is being proposed creates a natural wetland management system that will improve the water quality of Gray's Lake. The large watershed that feeds directly into Gray's Lake reaches far beyond the perimeter of the Park, but by establishing a natural wetland, the water will run through a natural filtration process before flowing into the Lake.
- A New Park Feature — Implementing a wetland in this area provides a new feature to the park system that will also serve as an unparalleled opportunity for environmental education for residents and visitors of all ages.
- Beautification and Increased Biodiversity — The proposed wetland project will enhance natural beauty and increase the environmental health and biodiversity of the greater parkland. Investment in this area is critical to improving the aesthetics of Fleur Drive as the major gateway to downtown.



Brooke Avila
President

Laura Smidt
Vice President

Jenna Bates
Treasurer

Andy McCoy
Secretary

Rex Coble
Beth Pargulski
Dylan Lampe
Tami Wingert
Erin Muir
Andrea Boulton
Amal Barre
Chris Lightfoot
Adam Ibrahim

Ex Officio:
Cynde Fanter
Jane Hein
Janis Ruan

Honorable:
Dr. Michael Eberle

If the parcel of land is deemed parkland and the wetland project is stalled, the space can alternately be converted to green space and will be far more attractive to trail users and traffic that brings visitors along the Fleur corridor to downtown Des Moines.

We kindly ask that you consider the transfer of this right-of-way parcel south of Gray's Lake Park owned by the City to parkland. The comprehensive wetland study executed under the Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study proves this is an exciting opportunity for the City and Parks Department to convert an underutilized piece of land into a home for pollinators, urban flora and fauna and an attraction for years to come. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sarah Lohmeier
Executive Director, Friends of Des Moines Parks
1551 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Pkwy
Des Moines, Iowa 50317

Brooke Avila
Board Chair

October 11, 2021

Honorable Mayor Cownie
Members of City Council
Scott Sanders, City Manager

I write on behalf of Urban Conservation Committee in support of the Gray's Lake Wetland expansion proposal that would transfer property currently designated as right-of-way to parkland. The cancellation of the Southwest Connector roadway project provided an opportunity for the City's Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments to consider alternate development in this area. The resulting Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study included a comprehensive study of this parcel and a detailed process to convert this unused land to a wetland.

Gray's Lake Park is a signature park in the Des Moines park system. The opportunity to acquire the land south of this area that is currently an eye sore is a win-win for both the City and the park system.

We strongly support this proposed initiative and the opportunity to transfer the abandoned land that runs the length of the trail on the south side of Gray's Lake to parkland for three reasons.

- Improved Water Quality of Gray's Lake – This land is currently owned by the City of Des Moines with no future plans to improve or enhance the area. The wetland project that is being proposed creates a natural wetland management system that will improve the water quality of Gray's Lake. The large watershed that feeds directly into Gray's Lake reaches far beyond the perimeter of the Park, but by establishing a natural wetland, the water will run through a natural filtration process before flowing into the Lake.
- A New Park Feature – Implementing a wetland in this area provides a new feature to the park system that may also serve as an important environmental education opportunity for residents and visitors.
- Beautification and Increased Biodiversity – The proposed wetland project will enhance natural beauty and increase the environmental health and biodiversity of the greater parkland offering an unparalleled opportunity for environmental education for all ages. Investment in this area is critical to improving the aesthetics of Fleur Drive as the major gateway to downtown.

If the parcel of land is deemed parkland and the wetland project is stalled, the space can alternately be converted to green space and will be far more attractive to trail users and traffic that brings visitors along the Fleur corridor to downtown Des Moines.

We kindly ask that you consider the transfer of this right-of-way parcel south of Gray's Lake Park owned by the City to parkland. The comprehensive wetland study executed under the Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study proves this is an exciting opportunity for the City and Parks Department to convert an underutilized piece of land into a home for pollinators, urban flora and fauna and an attraction for years to come. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Victoria Facto
Chair of the Urban Conservation Committee