

Chapter 6: Park Boundaries and Acquisition

Introduction

The Metropolitan Council’s Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan indicates that the agency’s two priorities for acquiring park and park reserve lands include:

- Lands essential to protect the natural resources that define a park or park reserve and make it usable to the public as planned.
- Lands that are essential for the park or park reserve to reach its full regional natural resource based outdoor recreation service potential as defined in the Council’s regional park system plan and the park unit’s master plan.

The current acreage of Lake Elmo Park Reserve does a good job of protecting the park’s natural resources and allows management of ecological systems as required to upgrade the quality of those resources. Lands immediately adjacent to the park are largely developed or scheduled for development with the exception of several parcels located along 10th Street North and along Lake Elmo Avenue North. This chapter includes recommendations for acquiring some of the undeveloped parcels.

Site Context and Adjacent Land Uses

Lake Elmo Park Reserve is located entirely within the City of Lake Elmo and is surrounded, primarily, by residential properties, most of which have been developed or are in the process of being developed. There are significant frontages along Inwood Ave. on the west side of the park, along a railroad corridor paralleling Hwy. 5 on the north and along County Rd. 17 on the east side of the park.

Potential Land Acquisition

The Park Reserve’s 2165 acres is contiguous with the exception of a few relatively small inholdings located at the southeast corner of the park. The plan recommends that the county acquire the inholdings to complete the park acreage and prevent any possibility of future conflicts between park users and private property owners. The inholding parcels are shown on Figure 6.1 and are described as follows:

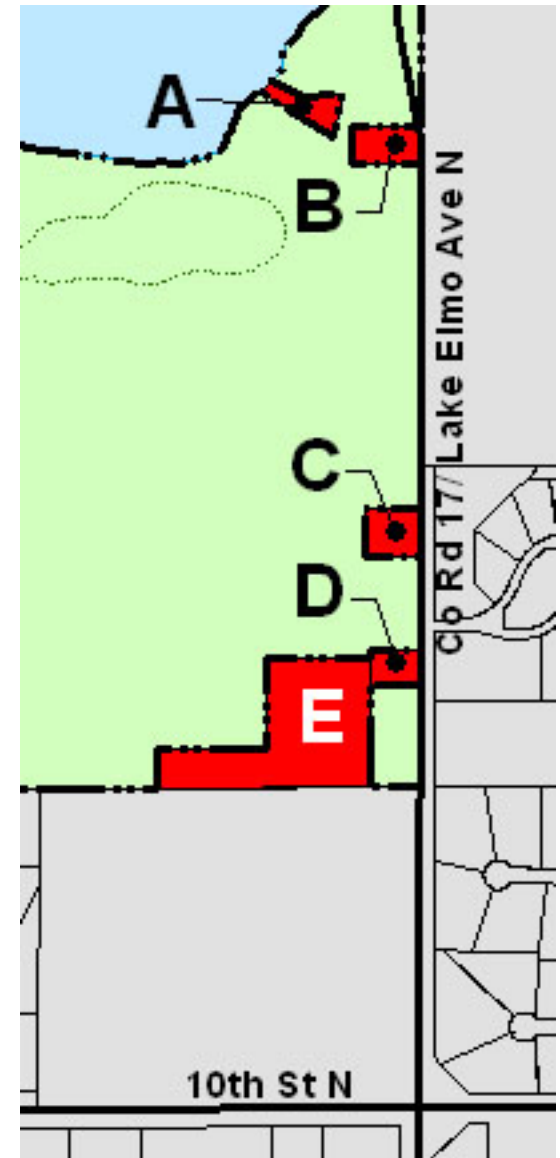
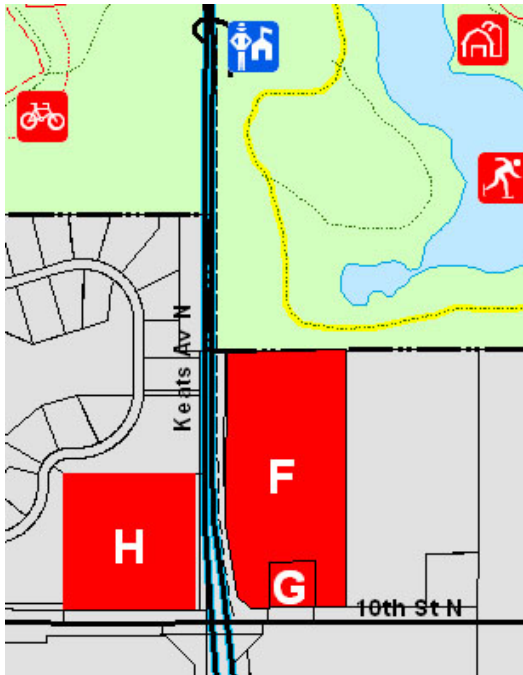


Figure 6.1 - Potential Land Acquisition at Southeast Corner of the Park

Chapter Six – Park Boundaries and Acquisition



- Parcel A (0.75 acres): The property is an inholding with 65 feet of lakeshore frontage on Lake Elmo. The east boundary is within 55 feet of the west boundary of parcel B. The site contains a residence and related improvements. The residence should be removed and the shoreland and upland areas of the property should be restored to blend with aquatic and woodland vegetation on surrounding park property.
- Parcel B (1.0 acres): The property is an inholding with 140 feet of frontage on County Rd. 17. The south boundary is within 1,460 feet of parcel C. The site contains a residence and related improvements. The residence should be removed and vegetation restored to blend with the woodland on adjacent park property.
- Parcel C (1.0 acres): The property is an inholding with 200 feet of frontage on County Rd. 17. The south boundary is 400 feet from the north boundary of parcel D. The site contains a residence and related improvements. The residence should be removed and the vegetation restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan included in the master plan amendment.
- Parcel D (0.75 acres): The property is an inholding with 140 feet of frontage on County Rd. 17. The site contains a residence and related improvements. The property separates a 2 ½ acre parcel of park land, also having frontage on County Rd. 17, from the main body of the park. The residence should be removed and the vegetation restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan included in the master plan amendment.
- Parcel E (6.8 acres): The property is an inholding with 1500 feet of frontage on 10th Street North. The site contains a residence and related improvements. The property adjoins parcel C and separates the 2 ½ acre parcel of park land from the main body of the park. The vegetation should be restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan included in the master plan amendment.

The plan further recommends that the county acquire three parcels, E, F and G, flanking the east and west sides of Keats Ave. N. Ownership of the parcels would allow the Parks Division to manage the lands in a manner consistent with the park reserve and bring an expression of the park character and image to the main entrance at the intersection of Keats Ave. and 10th Street N. If native vegetation is established on the sites, motorists approaching on 10th Street or on Keats Ave. will view a sample of the park environs as opposed to the residential developments to the east and west on 10th Street. The native landscape would

also be consistent with prairie plantings maintained by the Parks Division in the Keats Ave. median south of 10th Street. The properties are shown on Figure 6.2 and are described as follows:

- Parcel F (15.3 acres): The site is largely disturbed with no significant natural resources. It has 318 feet of frontage on 10th Street North and 1,340 feet on Keats Avenue North and abuts parcel G on three sides. The vegetation should be restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan.
- Parcel G (1.2 acres): The site contains a residence and is largely disturbed with no significant natural resources. It has 232 feet of frontage on 10th Street North and 660 feet on Keats Avenue North. The residence should be removed and the vegetation restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan.
- Parcel H (10 acres): The site is largely disturbed with no significant natural resources. It has 660 feet of frontage on 10th Street North and 660 feet on Keats Avenue North. The residence should be removed and the vegetation restored to be consistent with the Restorative Landscape Plan.

There are several methods for land conveyance to county ownership. The following might be considered for acquisition of the identified properties:

- Fee simple: The outright purchase of full title and all rights by the county from the land owner. The transaction is generally handled with a negotiated purchase agreement that is based on an appraisal of the full market value of the land.
- First right of refusal: A contract between a landowner and the county which provides that, if the landowner chooses to sell, it must offer the land first to the county.
- Life estate: The land may be sold to the county and the owner may continue to occupy the residence and all or a portion of the property for the duration of the owner's lifetime.
- Donation: A private land owner may convey all or a portion of a property at no cost to the county and the owner can take advantage of tax benefits associated with the donation.
- Eminent domain: This, generally least desirable method of land acquisition, allows the county to purchase, at fair market value, the property of an unwilling seller.

Chapter Six – Park Boundaries and Acquisition

The rapid escalation of land prices and development pressures in the area suggest that the county should proceed as quickly as funding will allow to act on the purchase of properties identified for acquisition.

In addition to the land acquisition described above, easements or use agreements will be required to construct the trail underpasses proposed beneath the railroad tracks and highway on the north side of the park. The State of Minnesota may require the county to secure an easement to construct a trail and underpass beneath Highway 5 and the Union Pacific Railroad will require the county to execute an agreement, in some form, to construct a trail and underpass beneath its tracks.

Property Values

The following table includes the appraised values (for tax purposes) of land and improvements on properties identified for possible acquisition in the master plan amendment. The values are used for tax purposes and are intended only as a cost reference. If plans for acquisition proceed, budgeting for purchase will be based on research of the market values for the properties.

| | Acquisition | Appraised Value |
|----|--------------------|------------------------|
| a. | Parcel A | \$321,100.00 |
| b. | Parcel B | \$238,900.00 |
| c. | Parcel C | \$251,900.00 |
| d. | Parcel D | \$232,700.00 |
| e. | Parcel E | \$124,000.00 |
| f. | Parcel F | \$279,500.00 |
| g. | Parcel G | \$233,500.00 |
| h. | Parcel H | \$446,900.00 |
| | Total | \$2,128,500.00 |