

Minnesota River Valley Master Plan

OPEN HOUSE



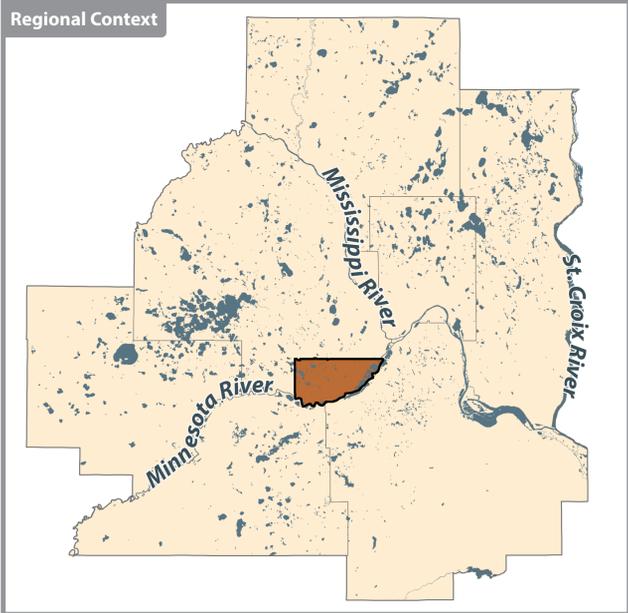
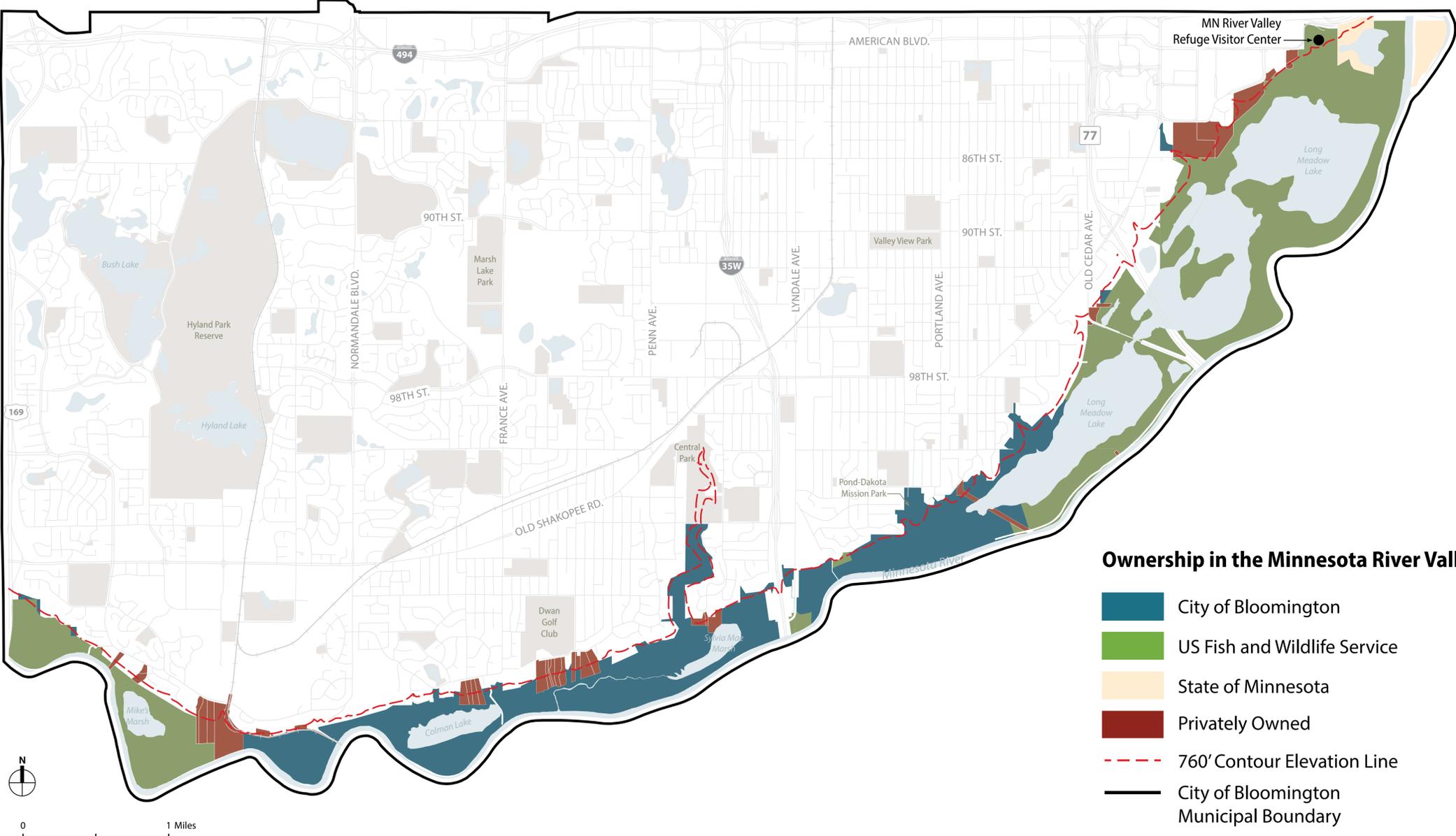
VISION AND GOALS

Vision Statement

To enhance awareness, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Minnesota River Valley by ensuring that City-owned land in the Valley is used and managed in a manner that balances resource preservation with appropriate access and utilization.

Goals

1. Enhance access to recreational opportunities
2. Increase awareness and understanding
3. Improve utilization of land and resources
4. Ensure protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources



RECOMMENDATIONS: System Plans

Comprehensive Maintenance Plan

Why do we need a Comprehensive Maintenance Plan?

Regular maintenance of City facilities will improve utilization of the Valley and is an important part of protection and preservation. The City needs a comprehensive maintenance plan for the Valley to:

- 1. Identify the level of funding needed for maintenance
- 2. Ensure funds are spent strategically
- 3. Establish routine maintenance schedules

What would a Comprehensive Maintenance Plan include?

- 1. Use the results of the Park Asset Inventory to assess the condition of existing facilities.
- 2. Prepare a schedule and cost estimates for facility upgrades and replacements
- 3. Identify and prioritize routine maintenance needs and prepare schedule for implementation
- 4. Identify the necessary level of funding to perform routine maintenance of Valley property
- 5. Identify opportunities to work with partners to address maintenance needs for both existing and proposed facilities
- 6. Explore the creation of a process to identify and report maintenance issues via the web or mobile phone technology

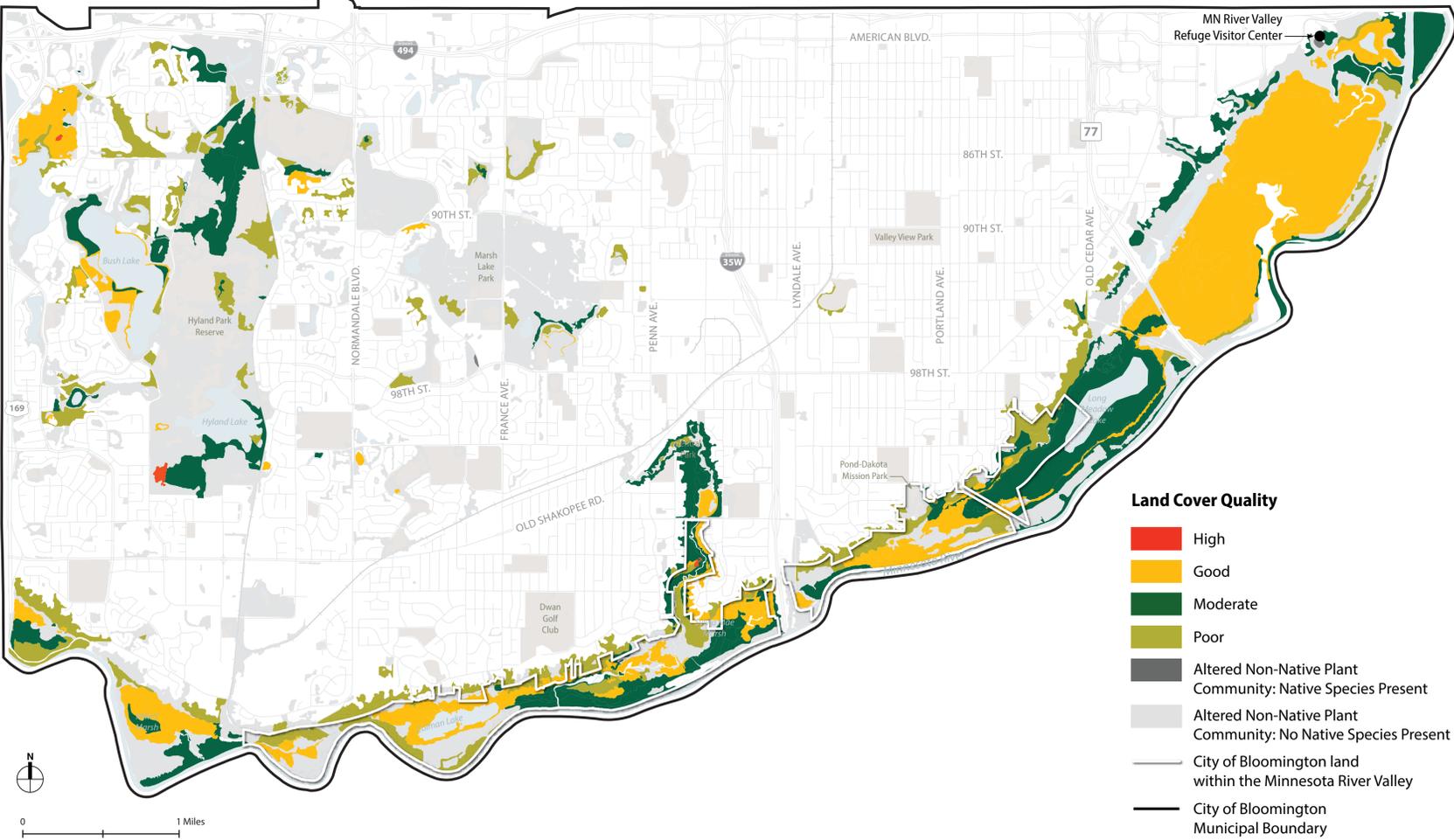
Resource Protection Plan

Why do we need a Resource Protection Plan?

The Minnesota River Valley contains a vast number of native plant and animal communities, unique soils, and numerous cultural and historic resources. A Valley-wide plan is needed to identify best management practices and set priorities to ensure stewardship of these resources.

What would a Resource Protection Plan include?

- Summarize existing natural resource data
- Summarize existing cultural resource data
- Identify and prioritize areas for protection
- Define best practices to achieve the desired level of protection



SOURCE: Quality ratings based on Minnesota Department of Natural Resource's Natural Heritage Element Occurrence Rank

RECOMMENDATIONS: System Plans

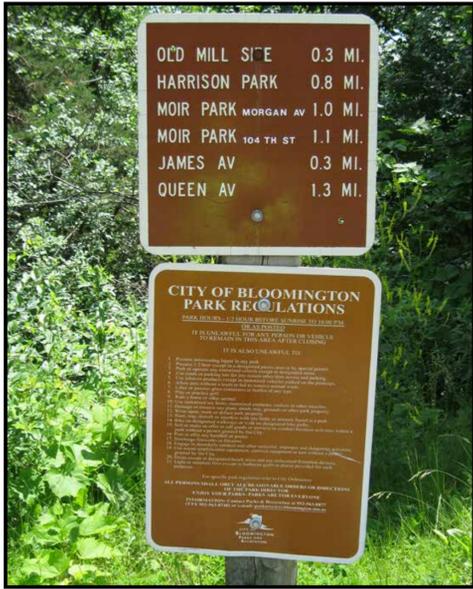
Master Signage Plan

Why do we need a Master Signage Plan?

Signs in the Valley often lack visual coherency and are unwelcoming. Also, many are old and deteriorating. The City needs a sign plan to develop guidelines for sign design and content and to establish a plan for sign replacement.

What would a Master Sign Plan include?

- Inventory of existing signs and assessment of condition
- Schedule for upgrades and replacements
- Identify conflicting regulations and coordinate with partner agencies to address inconsistencies
- Build on work completed as part of the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge to develop a consistent signage brand
- Hire a sign design consultant to prepare sign design guidelines



Examples of unclear and unwelcoming signage in the Minnesota River Valley.

Master Trail Plan

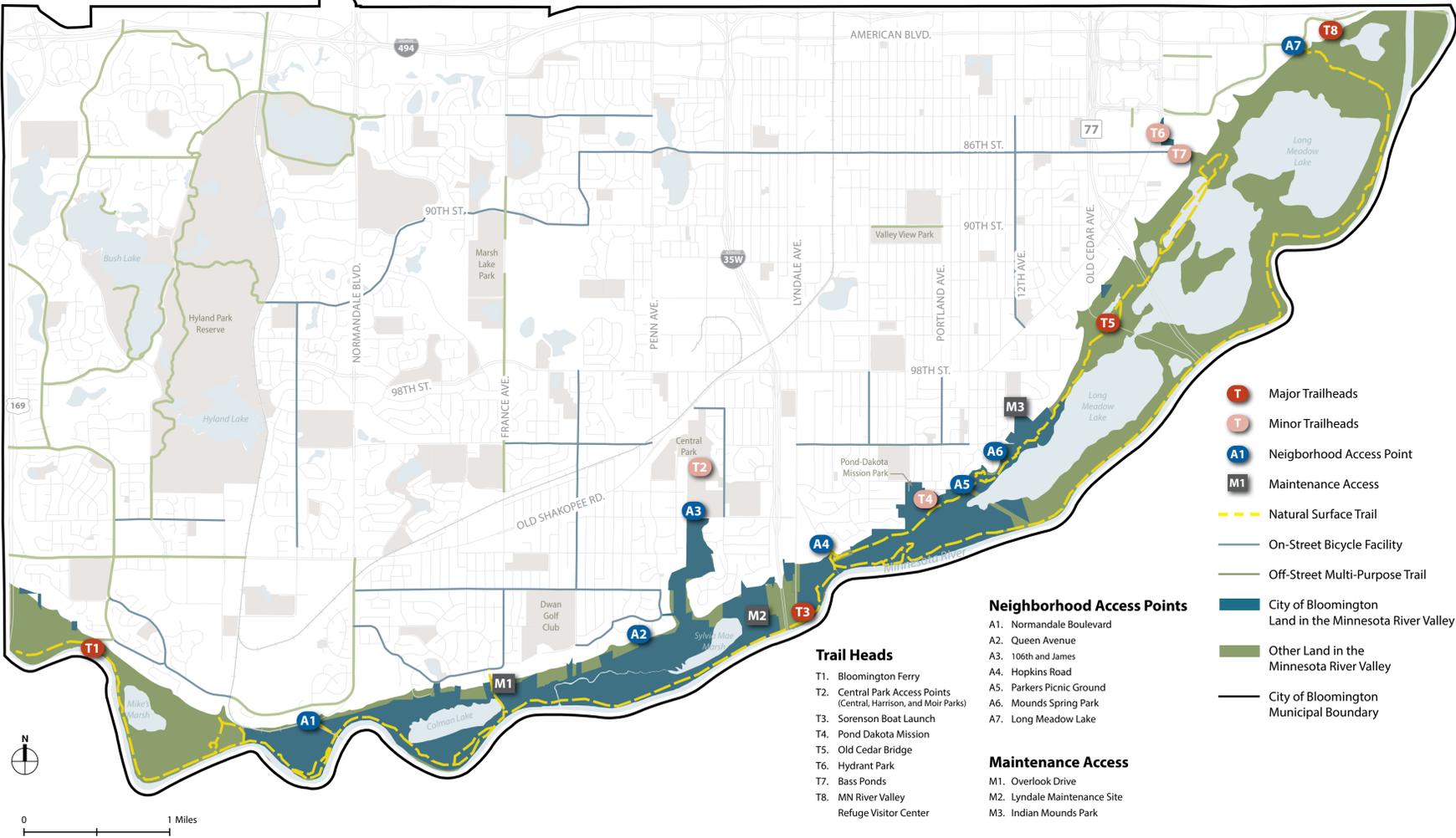
Why do we need a Master Trail Plan?

To assess existing trails and trail heads, plan for future trail connections to local and regional trails, and identify priorities for improvements.

What would a Master Trail Plan include?

- Inventory of existing trails and trailhead facilities
- Identify and map where trails encroach on significant natural areas
- Identify trails to be improved, realigned, and/or abandoned over time
- Identify local connections between the State Trail and other regional trails
- Identify areas for specialized mountain biking use (i.e. a mountain bike skills course, mountain biking loops, etc.)

Existing Trail Facilities



RECOMMENDATIONS: Process and Management

Strengthen partnerships with other agencies and interest groups

Why should we strengthen partnerships?

Interest groups and other government agencies provide important services in the Valley such as trail maintenance and invasive species removal. Strengthening partnerships will provide more opportunities for future collaboration.

Partner groups in the Valley include:

- Izaak Walton League of America
- Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC)
- Friends of the Minnesota River Valley
- Great River Greening
- Pond Dakota Heritage Society
- The Bloomington Bicycle Alliance



Volunteers perform trail maintenance (left); Signage in the Valley provided by MORC, a Valley partner organization (right).

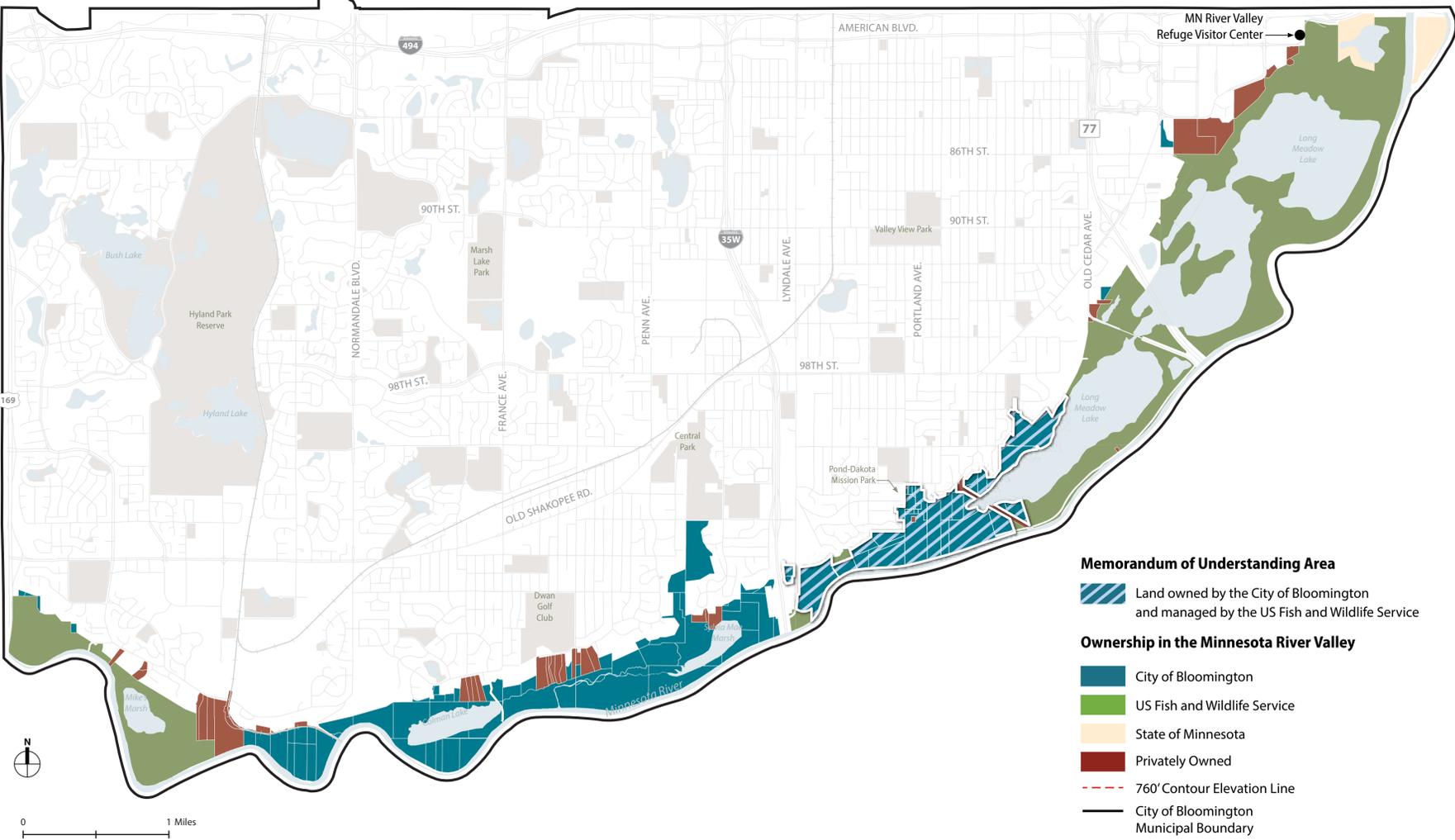
Update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Why should we update the MOU?

Under the MOU, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages a large portion of the City owned land in the Valley. The MOU was last updated in 1997.

The update is needed to:

1. Address recent changes in the Valley (i.e. Old Cedar Bridge reconstruction, etc.)
2. Clearly define City and U.S. Fish and Wildlife roles and responsibilities
3. Address differences between City and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies and regulations



Memorandum of Understanding Area
Land owned by the City of Bloomington and managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service

Ownership in the Minnesota River Valley
City of Bloomington
US Fish and Wildlife Service
State of Minnesota
Privately Owned
760' Contour Elevation Line
City of Bloomington Municipal Boundary

RECOMMENDATIONS: Process and Management

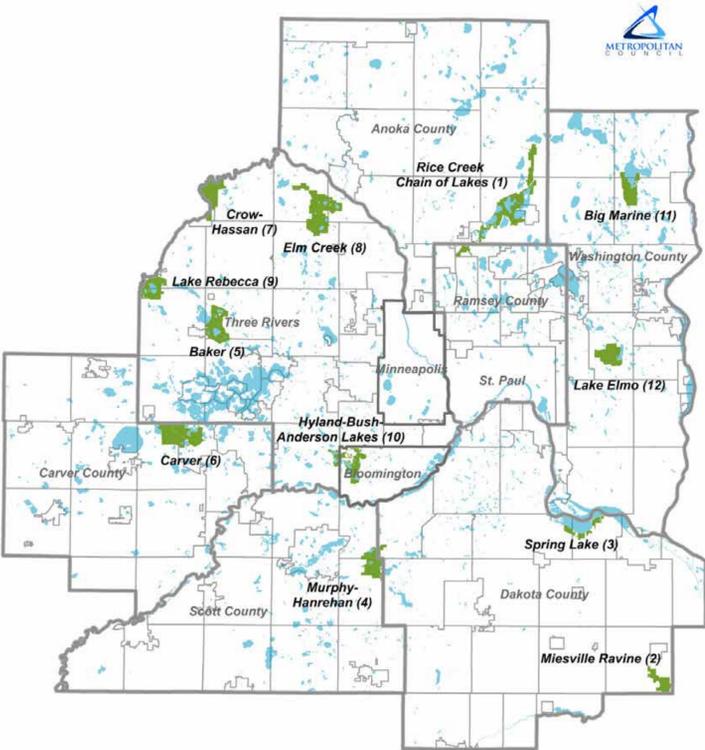
Pursue Metropolitan Regional Parks Preserve designation

Why should we pursue Metropolitan Regional Parks Designation?

The designation promotes regional awareness of the facility, provides additional conservation protection as well as additional funding.

What needs to be done to pursue a Metropolitan Regional Parks designation?

- Verify that the area meets the Metropolitan Regional Park requirements
- Hire a consultant to prepare required application materials, including master plans regarding trails, resource protection, and maintenance



As of 2014, the Regional Park System included 12 park reserves, including Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve

Leverage existing communication tools to promote awareness of the Valley

Why should we leverage existing communications tools?

The City has an established communication network (i.e. Bloomington Briefing, City website, etc.). Using these networks to consistently promote the Valley will increase resident awareness and understanding of this resource.

How can existing communications tools be used to promote awareness?

- Develop a comprehensive public communications plan to promote the Valley
 - Develop a web page on BloomingtonMN.gov focused on the Valley. Include information on: history, current activities, events, maps, regulations, links to affiliated agencies, and means to routinely solicit input
- Establish a regular column in the Briefing devoted to Valley topics, stories, and “fun facts”
- Update and distribute the City’s Hiking and Biking Guide

STATE TRAIL UPDATE

The Bloomington segment of the Minnesota Valley State Trail will run approximately 13 miles between the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and Bloomington Ferry Bridge.

What we know

- The Minnesota Valley State Trail was authorized in 1969 by the state legislature to establish a continuous 72-mile trail corridor extending from Fort Snelling State Park to the City of Le Sueur.
- The MnDNR is currently developing construction plans for the State Trail in Bloomington, which will consist of two trails:
 - A natural surface trail, and
 - An ADA-compliant paved multiple-use trail.
- The MnDNR's goal for the paved multiple-use trail is to accommodate the maximum range of users.
- Last fall the Bloomington City Council passed a resolution of support of the two trail concept for the State Trail.
- The state legislature recently changed state statute regarding the trail to read:

"That portion of the trail on the north side of the Minnesota River, lying between the Bloomington Ferry Bridge pedestrian crossing and the Cedar Avenue Bridge, must be a paved trail developed primarily for hiking and bicycling."
- In 2014, the state legislature approved \$2.165 million to construct the Bloomington segment of the State Trail.
- The MnDNR's current construction estimate for the project is \$2.5 million
- The MnDNR is currently developing construction plans and anticipates the 60% trail design and alignment details will be ready for review this fall.
- The City of Bloomington will have the opportunity to review the plans and provide input.
- The MnDNR will conduct an environmental review of the proposed trail.
- The MnDNR has stated that, at the earliest, construction of State Trail would begin in fall 2016. Bridges and culverts would be constructed first.