



To: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board and Staff

Re: Southwest Service Area Master Plan

From: West Calhoun Neighborhood Council

Dear Board Members and Staff:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Southwest Service Area Master Draft Plan as proposed February 14, 2020. We commend the Park and Recreation Board and staff for engaging in an open and collaborative planning process.

We strongly support the recommended park in the West Calhoun Neighborhood (currently referred to as the West Calhoun Bus Layover) and urge the Board and staff to move forward with the necessary work and collaboration to make this park a reality.

We believe that one of the guiding principles for the park planning process should be that all children in Minneapolis have walkable access to a park or playground. Indeed, this was a goal of Theodore Wirth, considered the visionary for the Minneapolis park system. Currently, the West Calhoun Neighborhood is the only neighborhood without a park.

Residents living in the specific area where the new park is proposed have no practical access to any city park with playground equipment. The area is effectively cut off from Bde Maka Ska by railroad freight tracks and the adjacent Greenway. Crossing over the Lake Street Bridge on a very narrow sidewalk next to heavy traffic is not a safe option for families. Some families with children currently cross through the trees and lift their strollers over the freight rail tracks. With the coming adjacent Southwest Light Rail this will become impossible.

There are a growing number of families with children in this neighborhood. The predominant housing is apartment buildings with 11 apartment complexes within 2 blocks and 30 complexes within 1 mile. The area near the specific proposed site of the park has a high percentage of middle- and low-income underserved residents, with a significant number of African-American and Latino families.

The area recommended for the park is currently a vacant area owned by Hennepin County. It has a few older trees which could be retained and provide shade. However, most of the lot is covered by brush/scrub trees (including a Buckthorn infestation). The area to the west has been discussed as a possible future site for affordable housing. A small park (likely, a playground at the southern end of the lot) is entirely consistent with affordable housing in this area. There is sufficient room for both and,

indeed, the addition of affordable housing would only increase the need for a park for families. The area has space for playground equipment, picnic tables, and flowers/landscaping.

The West Calhoun Neighborhood will have a significant amount of park dedication fees as the Calhoun Towers and other developments have been approved or are currently being constructed. These fees could be used to pay for all or part of the cost of the park.

This is a great opportunity for the Park and Recreation Board to create a new park that would serve citizens of Minneapolis in an area of the city where a park is sorely needed. In addition, people entering Minneapolis from Highways 7 and 100 could be greeted by a park instead of a vacant run-down lot. That would send a great message about the type of progressive green city that Minneapolis strives to be.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Allan Campbell

Chair, West Calhoun Neighborhood Council

CC: Jono Cowgill, President, Park and Recreation Board  
Brad Bourn, Commissioner, Park and Recreation Board  
Meg Forney, Commissioner, Park and Recreation Board  
Linea Palmisano, Minneapolis City Council Member  
Marion Greene, Hennepin County Commissioner  
Colleen O'Dell, Minneapolis Park and Recreation