

# Appendix H

## Parks and Trails

This appendix provides supporting content for regional parks and trails related policies and satisfies the Metropolitan Council requirements related to regional parks and trails.

### REGIONAL PARKS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis has received top ranking for parks systems among the 100 largest U.S. cities from the Trust for Public Land multiple years in a row as of 2018. This recognition is based on several different factors, including total acreage within the city. Regional parks within Minneapolis dramatically increase the total acreage of the city reserved as parks and open space while serving many different functions for residents and visitors.

The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes is perhaps the most prominent of the regional parks, a very popular destination that features a number of different amenities and activities, including swimming, boating, concessions, programmed performances, and more. Connected to the Chain of Lakes by the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park provides further variety in this vein, offering opportunities to swim, ski, play ball, picnic, and more. Theodore Wirth Regional Park similarly acts as a regional destination for a great deal of outdoor activities, with a particular bent towards outdoor sports such as hiking, mountain biking, and skiing.

Several regional parks span the length of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis: Minnehaha, Mississippi Gorge, Central Mississippi Riverfront, Above the Falls, and North Mississippi regional parks. As with the Chain of Lakes, public access to the river has been preserved along much of its length as a result of prudent planning. Minnehaha Regional Park provides a strong draw for visitors through many different amenities including Minnehaha Falls, a full service restaurant, several historical sites, and an expansive off-leash dog park. The Mississippi Gorge provides a scenic experience where visitors can experience the river from the parkways or hike down to the shore. The Central Mississippi Riverfront allows visitors easier access to the water via trails, landscaped parks, and other improvements. In the Above the Falls area, agencies are cooperating to restore public access to the river where it has been lost in order to create a more cohesive park experience in this portion of the city. North Mississippi Regional Park provides a mix of improved and natural areas

falling somewhere between that of the Central Riverfront and the Gorge.

### REGIONAL TRAILS AND SEARCH CORRIDORS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis' award winning park system and Regional Parks in Minneapolis are supported by a robust network of regional trails serving both transportation and recreation purposes. As the City of Minneapolis seeks to further expand and improve its bicycle network to serve people of all ages and abilities, the regional trail system of off street paths in Minneapolis helps form the foundation of this network.

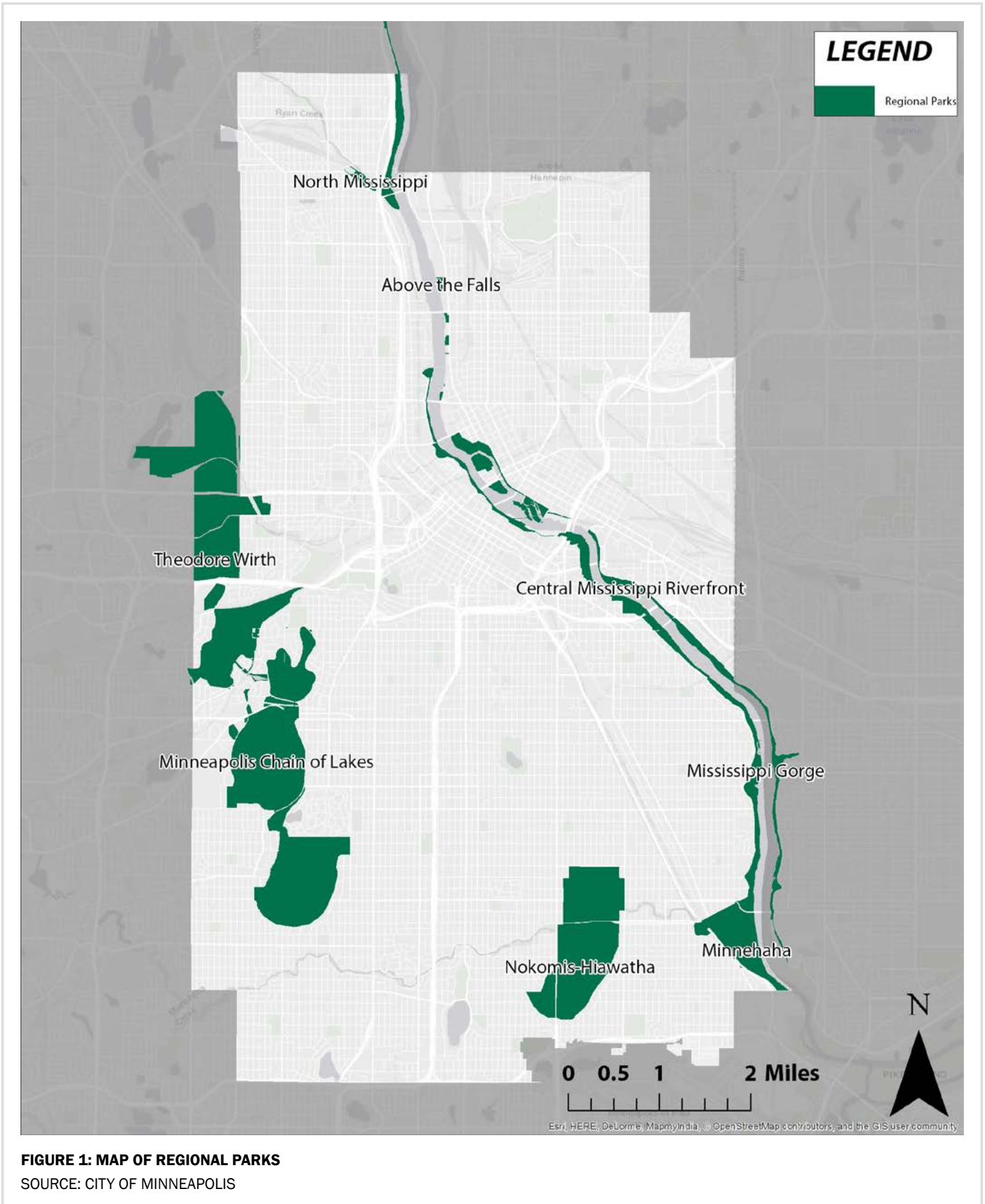
Several of these trails, including the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Trail, Minnehaha Parkway, East and West River Parkways, and others provide easy access to and along the Mississippi River and Minneapolis' lakes. These trails are just as important to the long-term preservation of public access to natural features in Minneapolis as the setting aside of the land itself, as the easy access they provide helps reinforce the value of these Minneapolis parks to the public. These trails also serve as important transportation corridors to and within Minneapolis

A number of other regional trails also form important connections for transportation and recreation around the city and region. The Cedar Lake Trail leads out of Downtown Minneapolis to the southwest, connecting with the Luce Line and Kenilworth Regional Trails to give users access to destinations in surrounding suburbs. Farther North in Minneapolis, a number of Trails including Columbia Parkway, the Northeast Diagonal, Ridgeway Parkway, Victory Memorial Parkway, St Anthony Parkway, and Shingle Creek Regional Trails all provide important connections into, out of, and along the top most portion of the city. Local bike and trail facilities provide connections between these two areas for cyclists and pedestrians.

A number of these mentioned trails and parkways comprise the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway System, described by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board as "one of the

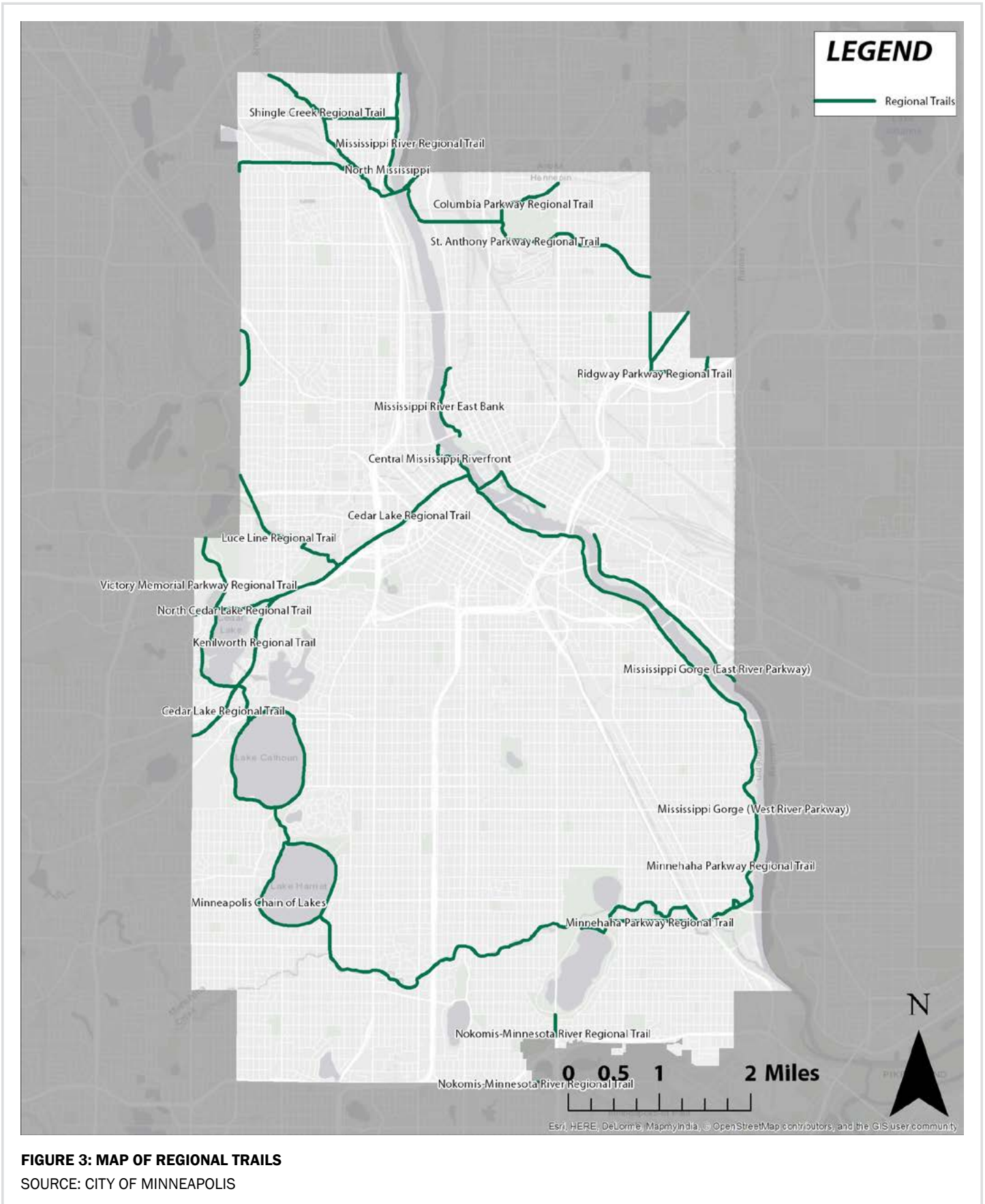
country's longest continuous systems of public urban parkways." The Grand Rounds, an invaluable asset to Minneapolis and the region, however, remains incomplete, as there is currently a gap from the University of Minnesota to north of Interstate 35W at Stinson Boulevard and Ridgway Parkway. This gap has been identified as Regional Trail Search Corridor, and is also known as the Grand Rounds Missing Link.

Planning Work has been carried out by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board regarding the Grand Rounds Missing Link. A Master Plan for the Missing Link was created in 2009. That Plan is being updated as part of the East of the River Park Master Plan, a draft of which was open for public comment from November 13 to December 18 of 2018.









**FIGURE 3: MAP OF REGIONAL TRAILS**  
SOURCE: CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS