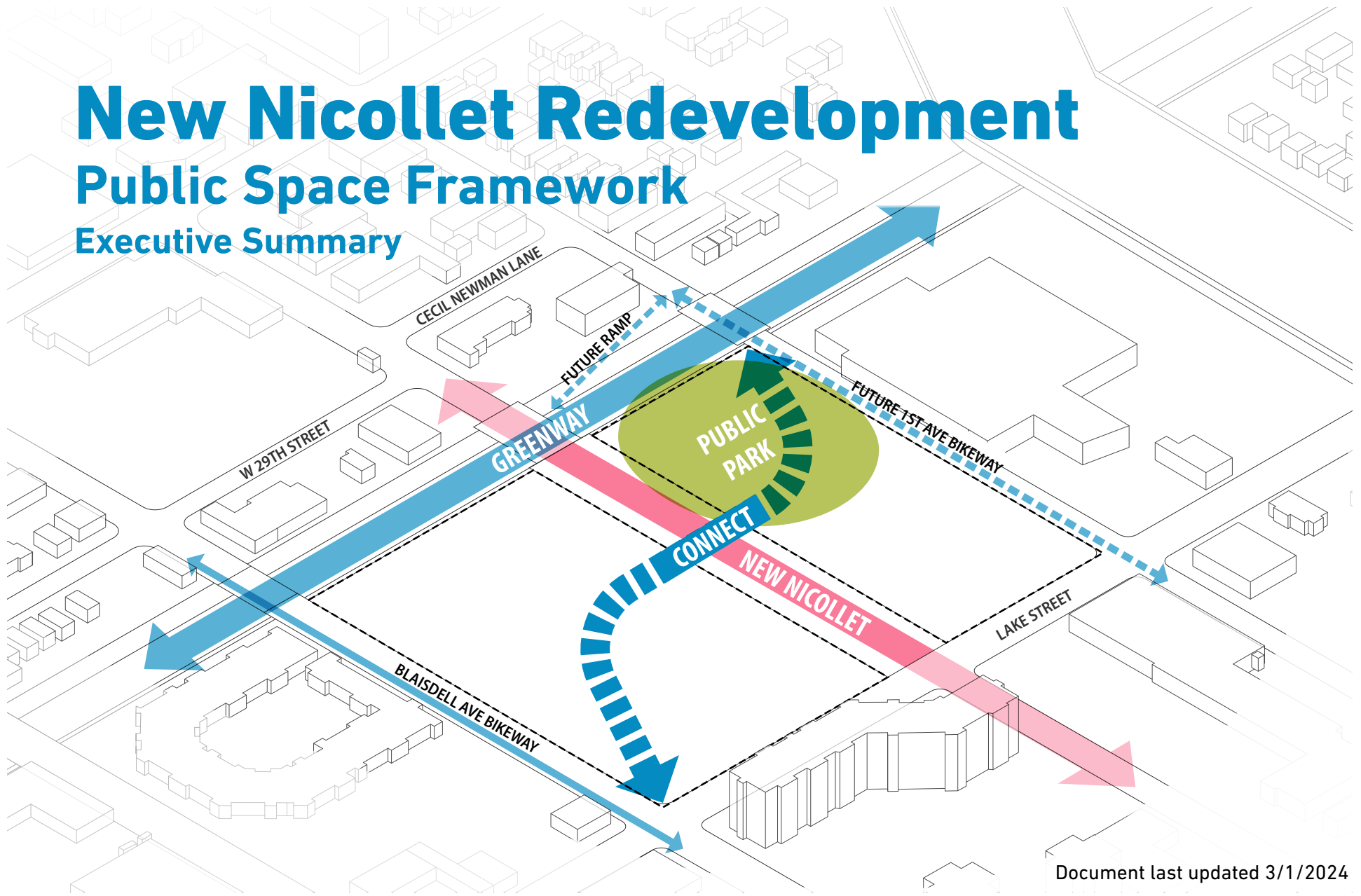


# New Nicollet Redevelopment Public Space Framework Executive Summary



Document last updated 3/1/2024

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact Adrienne Bockheim in the Community Planning & Economic Development Department at [NewNicolletRedevelopment@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:NewNicolletRedevelopment@minneapolismn.gov), 612-673-5028. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. TTY users call 612-263-6850. Para asistencia, llame al 311. Rau kev pab 311. Hadii aad Caawimaad u baahantahay 311.



# A Vision for Public Space on the New Nicollet Redevelopment Site

*The City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) engaged communities and coordinated with partner agencies to identify a vision for public space on the site.*

## **What is this document?**

This Public Space Framework report guides the design of future public space on the New Nicollet Redevelopment site.

## **What the Public Space Framework does:**

- Identifies the **interests and priorities of communities** for uses and features of public space(s)
- Recommends **locations** on the site for public space(s)
- Identifies themes for **public art**
- Explores opportunities for **sustainable** stormwater management

## **What Public Space Framework does not:**

- Provide a **detailed design of each public space**.
- Make recommendations for **buildings** on the site.
- Make recommendations for new **Nicollet Ave** that the City will build through the site -- this is being done through the New Nicollet Concept Layout Plan being led by Public Works. The Plan shows the basic elements of the street. Public Works and CPED worked together to ensure a seamless public realm on the New Nicollet Redevelopment site. For more information on Nicollet Ave, see the project webpage: [www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet).
- Make recommendations for changes to the **Midtown Greenway**. A 2012 study identified a future transit line in the Midtown Greenway trench. The Hennepin County Railroad Authority (HCRRA) owns the trench with the intent of saving space for future transit and, at this time, would not allow

a direct connection from the New Nicollet site to the Midtown Greenway. However Public Works proposes to **move the Greenway ramp** that currently enters/exits on the north side of Nicollet Ave one block to the east to directly connect to a future bikeway on 1st Ave.

## **Document Contents:**

- 1. Public Engagement:** what the project team heard from the public and nearby communities during two rounds of engagement.
- 2. Public Space Strategies:** strategies for how this site can create meaningful public spaces on the site.
- 3. Recommended Public Space Concept:** the recommended public space features on the site.
- 4. Future Public Community Park:** activities that could be accommodated in a future park on the site and how the City of Minneapolis will continue to coordinate with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

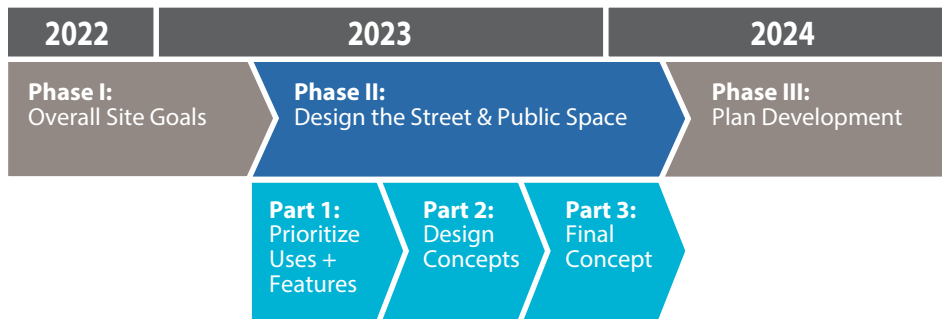
## **Next Steps**

City staff will present the final version of this document to the Minneapolis City Council and Mayor for approval in spring 2024. After approval, City staff will begin implementing this Framework. They will also begin the next and final phase of engagement for the New Nicollet Redevelopment project: to study and create a Development Plan for future building development at this site. More information can be found on the project webpage.

# Community Engagement

*The project team asked the public and other stakeholders to prioritize public space uses and features and to rate three design concepts for public spaces on the site.*

## Engagement Timeline



### Phase I Engagement: Overall Site Goals

During the first phase of engagement in 2022-2023, the project team opened up dialogues with people who live, work, and visit the New Nicollet Redevelopment site area, with a goal of understand the communities' overall priorities for the site. **Parks or other green public space was a top priority for the site.** Priorities for public space included:

- Community gardens/edible landscapes
- Playground equipment
- Indoor and outdoor recreation and sports
- Spaces for kids and youth especially
- Trees, greening, landscaping
- Community gathering and event spaces

### Phase II Engagement: Public Space Framework

The second phase of engagement (June - Nov 2023) focused on planning the new Nicollet Ave and public space on the site. Public space will be part

of the walkable mixed-use district on the site. To develop a vision -- or framework -- for public space, the project team engaged with communities in two rounds. Outcomes from both rounds of engagement informed the final design recommendations. **For more detailed information about the public engagement process, see the Engagement Document on the webpage.**

### Prioritizing Public Space Uses and Features

In the summer of 2023, the project team asked communities to prioritize the public space features, activities, and amenities that were identified in the first phase of engagement.

#### Engagement questions and top responses:

1. What activities are most important to have on this site?
  - **Flexible space (market, etc.)**
  - **Community gathering space**
  - **Community gardens**
2. What useful features/facilities should be included in this space?
  - **Shade trees**
  - **Open green space**
  - **Ecological & pollinator garden**
3. What size of community gathering space is most important?
  - **Small**
  - **Medium**
  - **Promenade space (for walking)**

## Community Engagement continued

Community feedback was organized into nine overarching themes, which guided the design of the three design concepts developed for the next round of engagement.

### Key Themes of Public Feedback:



### Rating Three Design Concepts

In the Fall of 2023, the design team developed three different concepts for public space on the site based on previous community feedback and themes. These concepts aimed to explore how amenities and activities could be arranged to create distinct experiences. The project team asked

stakeholders to rate the three design concepts (1-5 stars). **The three concepts can be viewed on the following page.**

### Engagement questions and top responses:

1. Which design features are the most important in this concept?

#### Concept A:

- **Linear park along the Midtown Greenway**
- **East-west pedestrian connection through site**

#### Concept B:

- **A linear park along Nicollet Ave**
- **Wide pedestrian promenade along Nicollet Ave**

#### Concept C:

- **Typically-shaped park for flexible uses**
- **Park adjacent to Midtown Greenway**

2. What features or activities in this option do you like most?

#### Concept A:

- **Native gardens**
- **Pedestrian and bike connection through site**
- **Flexible plaza for events**

#### Concept B:

- **Promenade along Nicollet Ave**
- **Stormwater gardens with paths**
- **Public art**

#### Concept C:

- **East-west bikeway through site**
- **Community gardening space**
- **Public art**

## Community Engagement continued

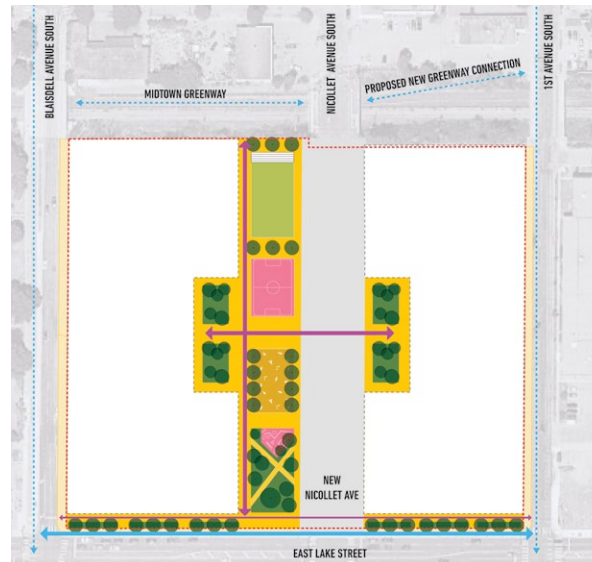
*Of the three concepts, Concept C received the highest scores and most interest.*

### Three Design Concepts:



**Concept A: Linear Park Along Greenway** celebrates the Midtown Greenway as an amenity.

**Engagement results:** Less favored because the park is split in two by the future Nicollet Ave. There were also concerns that the park would feel more private because it would be located in front of future buildings.



**Concept B: Linear Park Along Nicollet Ave** celebrates Nicollet Avenue with a linear public park and pedestrian promenade along the future commercial street.

**Engagement results:** Less favored because how close it is to vehicular traffic, the narrow feel of the space, and potential to be shaded out by buildings.

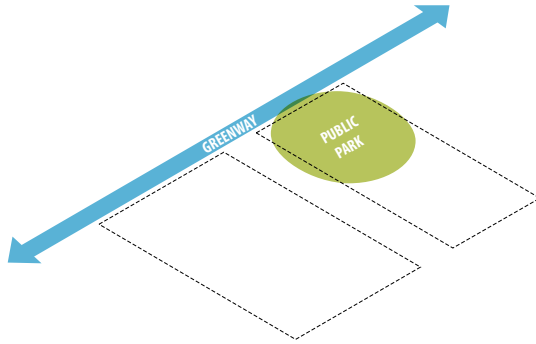


**Concept C: Square Park with Diagonal Connection** features a square park on the northeast quadrant of the site and a diagonal walking and biking connection through the site.

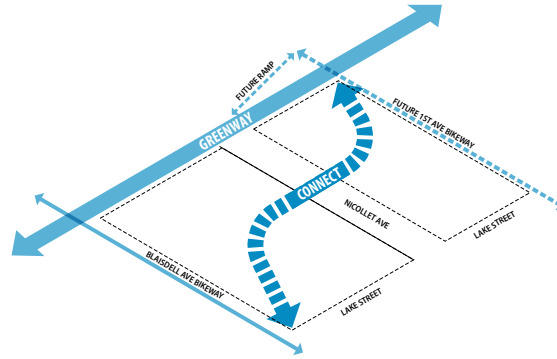
**Engagement results:** Received the highest scores for the flexibility of the more typically-shaped park. Many liked the unique feel of the diagonal walking/biking connection.

# Public Space Strategies

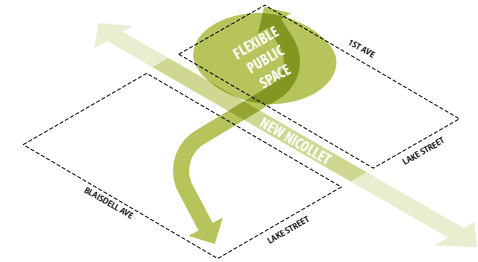
*This plan recommends six key strategies for how this site can create meaningful and equitable public spaces on the site for the communities it will serve.*



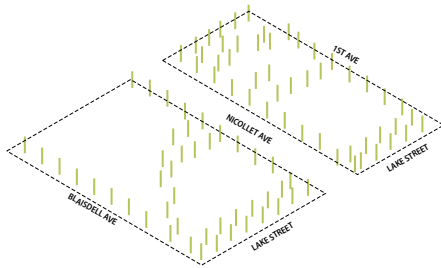
**1 Make a public park adjacent to the Greenway for access, visibility, and safety**



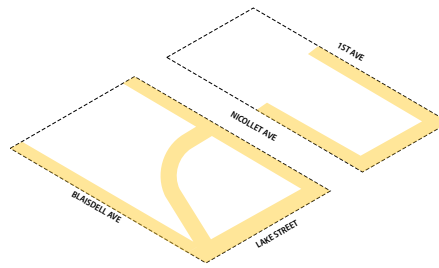
**2 Connect people walking + biking through the site with a mid-block east-west connection**



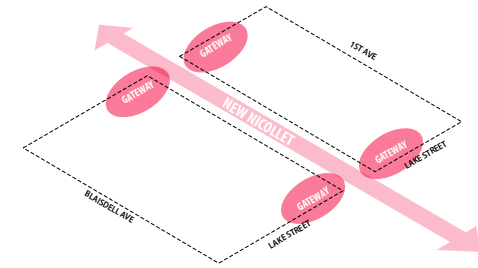
**3 Design public gathering spaces to be flexible to support many different activities**



**4 Promote public health through shade trees, open green space, and gardens**



**5 Find opportunities for additional small gathering spaces throughout the site, especially in locations that support businesses**



**6 Create welcoming entries on Lake St. and the Greenway through public art and architecture**

## Recommended Public Space Concept

Based on stakeholder engagement, technical studies, and City policies, the City's Department of Community Planning and Economic Development is recommending Concept C with added flexibility for future development.

### **Concept C with Added Flexibility**

City staff are recommending that the City move forward with public space design concept C, which features a public community park, pedestrian and bike connection through the site, a mid-block crosswalk on Nicollet Ave. Indoor recreation space and opportunities for additional small green and gathering spaces throughout the site are also possible.

The diagonal shape of the promenade may be difficult for future developers who want to build on the southwest corner. To address this, the recommended concept offers **more flexibility on the west side**. The east-west path through the site will connect Lake & Blaisdell to Nicollet Ave. Developers will be allowed to adjust the path's layout in different ways. This flexibility will help developers design their parcels to meet practical needs like vehicle access and trash removal.

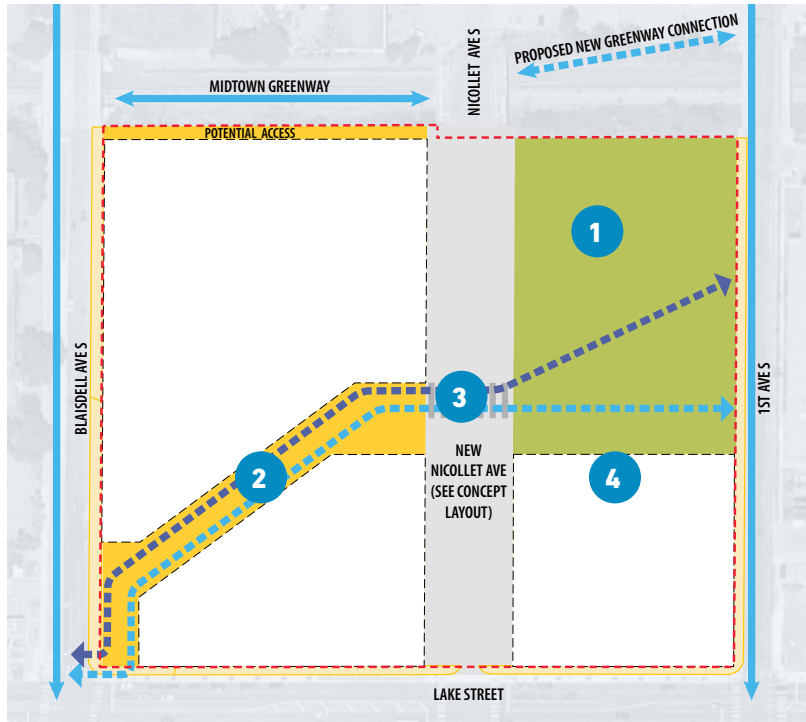
### **How this concept was chosen:**

1. **Public Engagement:** Concept C was the highest rated concept during public engagement. This concept was popular because of the traditional park size/shape and the dynamic nature of the diagonal walking and biking connection through the site.
2. **Technical Studies:** Professional consultants analyzed how public space may impact or be impacted by pedestrian and bicyclist movements and human behavior, shadowing from future buildings, future development needs (ex: back-of-house operations), potential stormwater management systems, noise from the surrounding area,

and heat island effects. These studies will continue to inform decisions around the development of the New Nicollet Redevelopment site.

3. **Coordination with Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board:** Concept C was also the most popular with the City's critical partner agency for owning and operating public parks: the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). A legal ruling determined that the City of Minneapolis cannot own parks. Because of this, City staff coordinated with MPRB staff throughout the development of the Public Space Framework. Both MPRB staff and commissioners **identified Concept C as preferable for developing an MPRB-owned and operated park** on the New Nicollet Redevelopment site due to its more typical size and shape.
4. **City policies:** Existing City policy documents, such as Minneapolis 2040 and the Transportation Action Plan, guide this project. More information can be found in the Project Expectations document on the project webpage: [www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet/goals-expectations/](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet/goals-expectations/)

# Recommended Public Space Concept



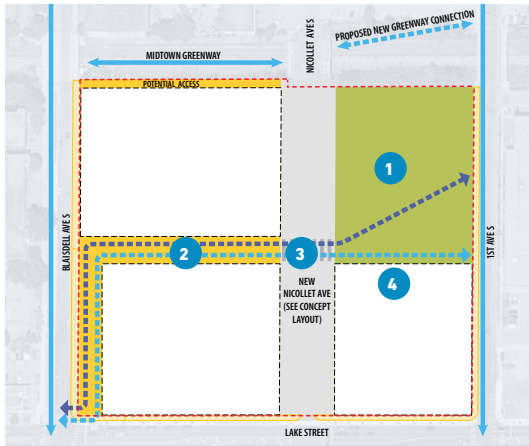
Community Planning and Economic Development is recommending Concept C. This concept provides the greatest flexibility for meeting many different community priorities for public space.

*This concept provides:*

- 1 **A proposed new Minneapolis Park and Rec Board (MPRB) park:** This highly visible public park will be located along the Midtown Greenway and between new Nicollet Ave and 1st Ave. It will be open to all and provide space for flexible community gathering and recreation. *The detailed design of the park will be determined through a later planning process by MPRB.*
- 2 **A walking and biking connection through the site:** will directly connect the intersection of Lake St & Blaisdell Ave to the park and the future relocated Midtown Greenway ramp entrance on 1st Ave. *The exact location of this route will be decided through later design processes.*
- 3 **New Nicollet Ave mid-block crosswalk:** allows safe walking and biking and across the new Nicollet Ave.
- 4 **Recommended location for possible Minneapolis Parks and Rec Board “storefront” recreation space:** introduces indoor community and recreation space in a mixed-use building on the site that MPRB would rent rather than own. *This will be determined in a future process with developers and MPRB staff.*

**Additional small green or gathering spaces:** could be designed and created by future development throughout the site (*locations to be determined later*).

## Example Alternative Implementation of Concept



### LEGEND

- Existing or planned bicycle circulation
- Proposed pedestrian circulation
- Proposed bicycle circulation
- Project boundary
- Suggested developable areas\*

### NOTES:

\*Exact development parcel shapes and sizes will be determined through the next phase of planning.  
 Details about new Nicollet Ave can be found on the project webpage: [www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/new-nicollet)



## Future Public Park

*Engaged communities were most interested in the following types of uses and features in a future park: recreation, nature/gardens, flexible gathering space, and walking/biking connections.*

### Coordination with Minneapolis Park and Rec Board

City staff will continue to coordinate working toward an MPRB-owned and managed park in this location. MPRB staff will use this document as a starting point for the planning of a park at this location. The **specific design of the park will be determined during a process led by MPRB.**

### Potential Elements in a Future Public Park



**Indoor Recreation + Programming**, was identified by the community as an important priority during the first phase of engagement. MPRB is exploring the possibility of introducing a **new, alternative type of indoor recreation space** that could be introduced on the site.



**Nature + Garden** includes trees, gardens, open lawn space, community gardens, and rain gardens. These elements are important to the community. They can provide shade for visitors, reduce run-off and heat island effect, invite habitat for pollinators, and create a welcoming space.



**Flexible Gathering** includes flexible green or plaza space in a range of sizes, specifically prioritizing small and medium sized gathering spaces. Spaces that can accommodate events such as festivals, farmers markets, and temporary food truck parking are important to the communities.



**Pedestrian + Biking** includes features that connect people from place to place. These are walking paths, promenades, and bikeways that can also support gathering, seating, and planting.



**Outdoor Recreation + Play** includes active activities such as sports fields, playgrounds, a splash pad, fitness equipment, and sport courts. These spaces could be located adjacent to indoor community recreation space.

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