

If you are a resident of Highwood or a supporter of parks and open space this is about the Highwood Plan to retain 71 acres of publicly owned open space for public enjoyment and resource protection. We need your voice in support of keeping the beautiful bluffs, oak savanna, lake and wetlands open to the public.

The Highwood Plan calls for retaining Boys Totem Town (BTT) as public open space when it is no longer needed by Corrections. Corrections use of the property has greatly diminished and may discontinue. The adopted plan to retain this property as open space has been developed through a lengthy and open to the public neighborhood process with the assistance of the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County and Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District. The plan has been reviewed and approved by the neighborhood, District Council, Planning Commission and City Council. It has been recertified by the City as recently as 2009.

The Totem Town property is located in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area unit of our National Parks. Highwood residents have been active working partners with the National Park Service, MN DNR, City, County and Watershed District to protect and enhance the natural resources and recreational opportunities of our neighborhood and the river corridor. Highwood Nature Preserve and Henry Park are good examples of neighborhood efforts that include raising funds from individuals, corporations, foundations and the legislature to acquire and enhance public open space in Highwood. Totem Town is publicly owned open space. Planning should focus on how we can best protect and enhance this resource for public enjoyment and future generations.

Ramsey County is the most fully developed and densely populated county in Minnesota. Totem Town is a stunningly beautiful property on the bluffs of the Mississippi. The majority of Totem Town contains oak savanna that predates European settlement, natural rugged steep slopes, lake and wetlands. The property is undulating terrain with 80 feet of rise in elevation. State, County, and City natural resource protection plans call for the protection and enhancement of these natural resources.

Some argue this natural open space should be treated like polluted heavy industrial sites (munitions and auto assembly). This is a false equivalency. Totem Town is a much smaller property. Totem Town has undulating natural terrain, rare native habitat, and extensive vegetation. The industrial property is largely bulldozed flat, denuded, and polluted. Totem Town is zoned R-1 single family residential compared to heavy industry zoning. Recent work of Ramsey County to add 152 acres

of park and open space in south Maplewood is equivalent and provides a good example to follow.

Ramsey County has a good track record in Maplewood in suburban Ramsey County. Across McKnight Road from Highwood, Maplewood had 206 acres of parks and open space. Ramsey County chose to add 84 acres to parks in 2004 when the property was no longer needed for corrections. In 2013, the County helped Maplewood purchase 68 acres for open space from a private developer that planned to develop housing. The County increased park acreage on the east side of McKnight by 152 acres for a **total of 358 acres**. In Highwood there are 94 acres of parks and open space. With Totem Town, Highwood parks and open space will **total 165 acres**. Saint Paul residents should expect no less than Maplewood.

Saint Paul residents pay property taxes to fund Saint Paul operated regional parks. Saint Paul residents also pay property taxes to fund Ramsey County operated regional parks throughout suburban Ramsey County. Suburban Ramsey County residents do not pay property taxes to fund Saint Paul operated regional parks. There is no suburban property tax funding for the vast majority of Saint Paul regional parks. With Saint Paul residents paying property taxes to fund parks in the suburbs including the expansion of parks across McKnight in Maplewood the County should at least support the retention of public open space in Saint Paul.

There are those that are advocating selling the public open space and re-zoning the property as commercial and high density. Current R-1 single-family residential zoning, the adopted Highwood Plan, and Mississippi River Corridor currently provide protections for this property.

Other neighborhoods have rec centers, skating, skiing, hiking and biking trails, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, swimming beaches, picnic pavilions, golf courses, club houses, fitness centers, driving ranges, boat rental, trails, marinas, environmental learning centers, conservatory and zoo. Highwood does not have any of these amenities. Retaining existing publicly owned open space is the least Highwood residents deserve.

Ramsey County Parks goals and strategies include: promote healthy and active living, provide early learning opportunities with a nature-based curriculum, promotes environmental stewardship through preservation and restoration of natural resources, strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well being, cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods, enhance access to opportunity and mobility.