



## Goal 2: Parks matter.

We are essential to vibrant, healthy and livable communities.

Our impact on the community is much greater than simply providing outdoor recreation and education. We have the potential to positively influence many trends with otherwise disheartening outcomes, including declining health and wellness, loss of habitat, degrading air and water quality and reduced interest in nature. By staying true to our mission and rethinking how, when and where we deliver services, we can become better connected to the communities we serve and grow our impact by providing the following benefits:

- **Environmental benefits:** Protecting natural habitats; improving air and water quality; managing resilient ecosystems.
- **Social benefits:** Enhancing communities; improving the health and wellness of our visitors; connecting residents to each other, nature and the greater region.
- **Economic benefits:** Increasing property values near parks, trails and open spaces; providing a nationally recognized quality of life that attracts and retains entrepreneurs, businesses and workers.

### We will:

- Prioritize the protection, restoration and management of natural resources.
- Integrate Three Rivers directly into the communities we serve.
- Serve our residents in creative, mission-driven ways.

### We will accomplish this by:

- Collaborating with partners to:
  - Identify, protect, restore and manage natural resources to create a connected system around our most significant natural areas (page 15).
  - Create new park and trail units where [access](#) is currently limited (pages 16 & 17).
  - Develop nature-based education programs and recreation offerings in first-tier communities.
- Employing a collaborative culture of creativity, responsiveness and flexibility.

### Key Performance Indicators:

Quality of natural resources, health trends and indexes, and property values in suburban Hennepin County.

### **i** What we mean when we say:

**Access:** anything that enables a person to feel welcome and participate in Three Rivers' offerings, such as location, rules, cost, accessibility, hours, equipment and awareness.





## 2040 System of Natural Resources, Parks and Trails

**More than ever before, things happening outside our park boundaries have a greater influence on what is happening within our parks. We are at a time of great change in respect to continued suburban expansion, population growth and in the composition of our population. Each of these changes influences how we protect natural resources and best serve our community members moving forward. Because parks and trails are important to communities, one way we can address these changes is with the physical locations in which we focus our natural resources efforts and expand our parks and trails.**

Over the last 60 years, we have gone through several transitions of focus, with each transition marking the end of one era and start of another. Our first focus was acquisition; followed by the development of basic recreation facilities, then environmental education; and most recently, the development of specialized recreation offerings, regional trails and piloting several bridging and partnership park models. While it may appear that our system is mature and we should be entering an era focused on taking care of our resources and facilities, there is still work to do to ensure all people have an opportunity to connect with nature.

As open space is converted to homes, businesses and roads, the threat to the natural resources we've worked so hard to protect and restore grows. Moving forward, we must recognize the importance of protecting and restoring natural resources that may be outside our parks, but are directly connected to the plant communities, waterways and wildlife inside our system.

As the population grows, we must continue to resist the pressure to overdevelop our parks and remain committed to providing a diversity of offerings and experiences. In recognition of future demand, we must grow and evolve, identifying and securing additional park and trail search areas to meet the needs of the growing population.

As our population ages and becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, we need to focus our efforts on listening to the needs of these community members and actively work to remove the long-standing barriers to outdoor recreation and access to nature. This calls for creativity in not only how but also where we provide regional, nature-based recreation and education offerings so that everyone has access to our system and feels welcome and comfortable using it.

With this in mind, we will place greater effort on developing park and trail experiences close to where people live. Bridging and partnership parks will serve as entry points into our system, especially for those not yet connected to Three Rivers.

Since this work extends our focus and system beyond what it is today, success will be founded on thoughtful coordination and partnerships with community leaders, local, regional and state agencies and non-profit organizations. This work will likely span the entire 20-year timeframe, and we will remain receptive to exploring and embracing other opportunities not yet anticipated as resources allow.





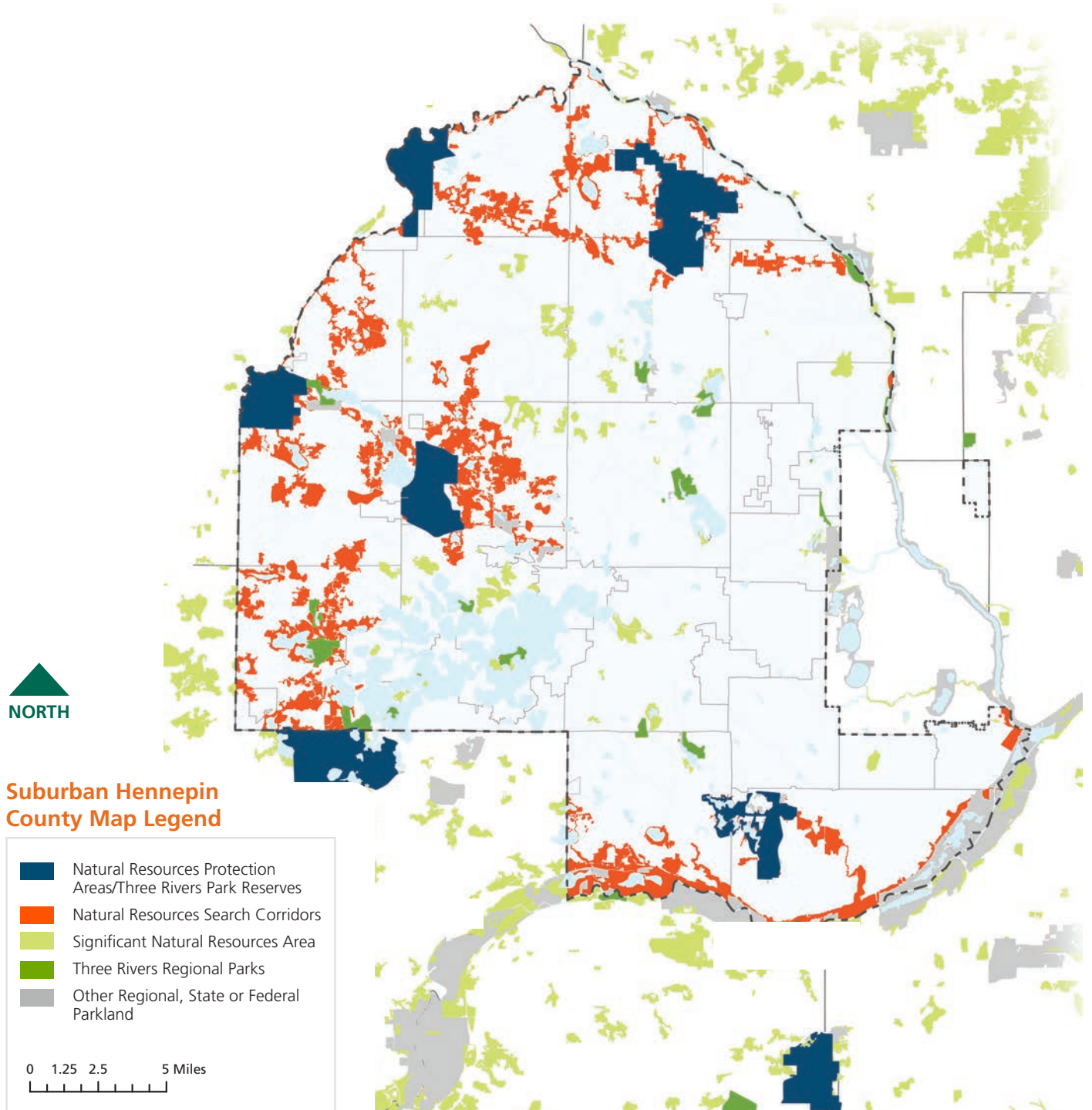


# 2040 Natural Resources System

Three Rivers Park District was developed as a natural resources-based system and will continue protecting our resources today and into the future. The vision of the 2040 Natural Resources System is to protect our existing high-quality natural resources and connect them to each other. This map illustrates some of the key focus areas for natural resources protection, restoration and management efforts. The identified areas in orange and light green are intended to create buffers around and connect our most significant natural areas, some of the region's last best natural resources.

In addition to what is identified on the map, our protection efforts may also include other natural resources areas that help preserve and improve water quality, combat the effects of climate change, create resilient ecosystems and connect people to nature close to where they live.

Partnerships will be key to successfully preserving these important natural resources throughout the region. We will convene and collaborate with our natural resources partners to accomplish this work (partnership details on page 18).



# 2040 Park System

The vision of the 2040 Park System is to ensure all existing and future community members have convenient access to a diversity of offerings and natural areas. This map denotes the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (explained on pages 20 & 21) classification for each existing park unit and identifies search areas for additional regional parks and bridging and partnership parks.

Additional opportunities for both regional parks and bridging and partnership parks will be explored in partnership with local communities. The search areas of focus include:

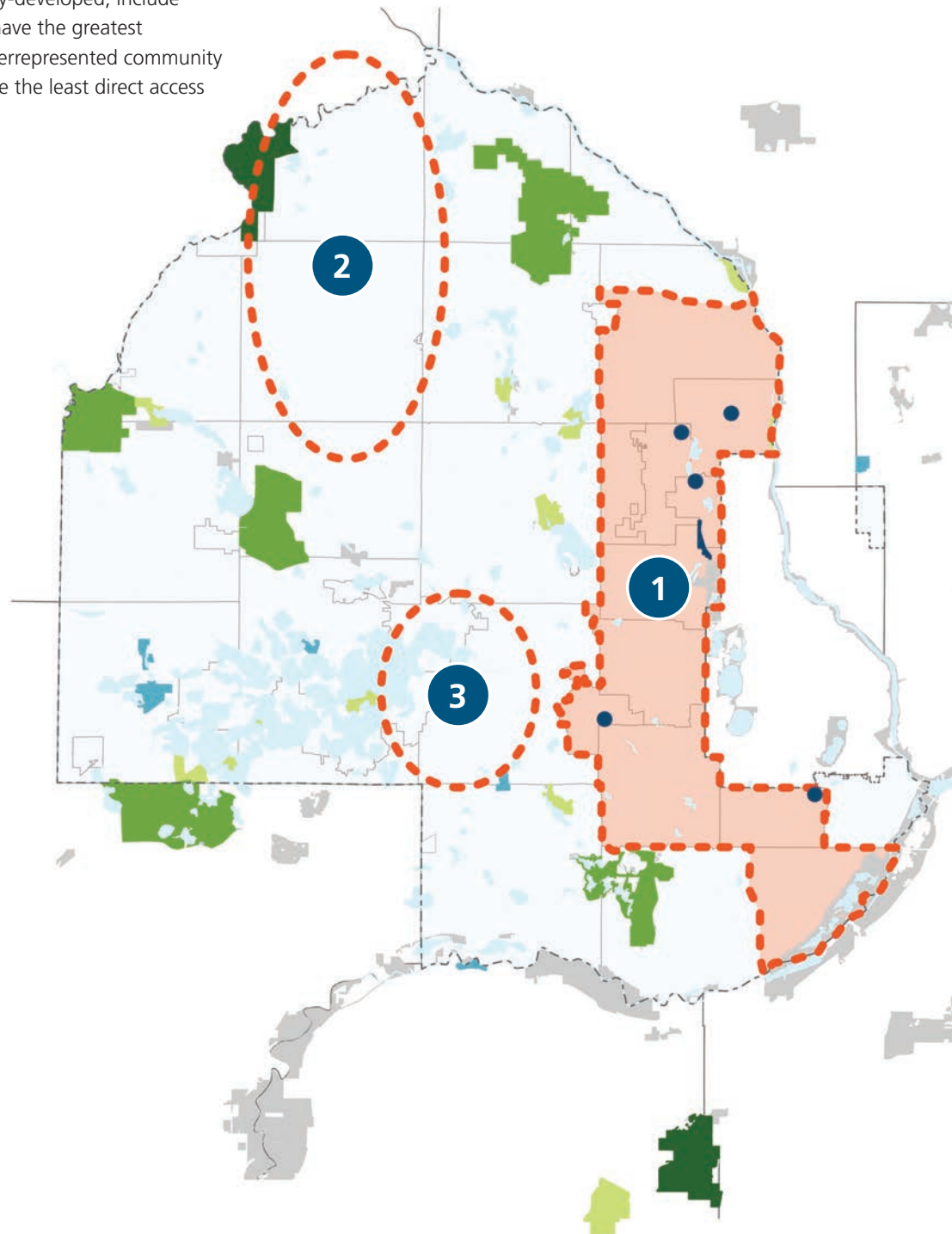
**1 First-tier communities** are fully-developed, include the most populated areas and have the greatest concentrations of currently underrepresented community groups. These communities have the least direct access to current Three Rivers parks.

- 2** The **northwest quadrant of Hennepin County** is on the edge of current development and is anticipated to see some of the greatest increases in population within the county over the next 20 years.
- 3** The **area east of Lake Minnetonka** is generally developed with more challenging access to existing Three Rivers parks than other communities.



## Suburban Hennepin County Map Legend

	Suburban (Regional Park) Search Area
	Bridging & Partnership Park Search Area
<b>ROS: Park Classification</b>	
	Special Recreation Feature
	Bridging & Partnership
	Suburban
	Semi-Developed
	Natural
	Other Regional, State or Federal Parkland
0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles	



# 2040 Regional Trail System

The creation of the 2040 Regional Trail System was guided by the Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan and includes many existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian trails and facilities already recognized in local comprehensive plans. In addition to serving a regional recreation purpose, the regional trail system also serves as the backbone of the bicycle transportation network within Hennepin County.

This map illustrates the vision of the regional trail system, featuring 395 miles of trails and facilities.

- 165 miles of **existing regional trails** are already in place and open to the public; however, some segments may still be under local jurisdiction.

- 58 miles of **planned regional trails** have an approved route and master plan developed in partnership with the local communities.
- 172 miles of **search corridors** illustrate where future regional trails are envisioned, but the master plan is not complete and the route is not yet defined.

Implementation, long-term maintenance and funding of the 2040 Regional Trail System are envisioned to be core focus areas of a regional trail partner collaboration (described on page 18).



## Suburban Hennepin County Map Legend

