

The Future of Lake Hiawatha and Hiawatha Golf Course

There are two significant water problems at Hiawatha: stormwater pollution flowing into the lake and more frequent and severe flooding of the low areas of the golf course. I recommend addressing the stormwater pollution problem affecting Lake Hiawatha *immediately* and pausing on proposed changes affecting the golf course. Having spent time around Lake Hiawatha – seeing and hearing about the volume of trash that is flowing into the lake from 900 acres of neighborhood streets to the north of the lake as well as from the Minnehaha Creek – I view the pollution as the urgent priority.

The stormwater pollution must be tackled in full partnership with the city's Department of Public Works. While the Park Board has responsibility to protect and maintain the city's natural resources, stormwater management is the city's stated role.

With an approved stormwater system plan targeting neighborhoods north of the lake and along Minnehaha Creek, the city and MPRB can begin to secure regional/state funding to update the woefully inadequate stormwater infrastructure. Such a plan should include best management practices to address silt, trash and chemicals before they enter the creek or Lake Hiawatha, and include the full participation of the city and the Minnehaha Watershed District.

By acting on the pollution problem now and pausing on the rest of the project, the MPRB can reconsidering some of the most controversial pieces of the failed master plan. I have more to learn and would like to hear more impartial scientific analysis from hydrologists, geologists, environmental entities, government agencies and golf course experts about the land, water and history. As Park Board Commissioner, I will be listening carefully, probing deeply, seeking community input and making the best possible decisions for people, parks and the environment.

Concerns about the failed Hiawatha master plan

- The desire of Black golfers and others to maintain the historically significant 18-hole course
- Lack of natural areas and habitat in the failed Hiawatha master plan
- The funding sources for the \$43 million estimated cost of the master plan
- Environmental and ecological impact of pumping as well as sustainability
- Financial viability of a public nine-hole golf course
- The need for clarification around flood risk to nearby homes for all scenarios
- Shared ownership of the pollution problem and the appearance that the MPRB is responsible for the city's stormwater management
- How a different kind of proposed park would be responsibly maintained and managed
- The community's current mistrust of the MPRB on this issue

What does equity look like for Hiawatha?

The lake: Environmental injustice is real and the equity issues at this site are complex. If needles, trash and microplastics were flowing into Lake of the Isles or Lake Harriet, as they are

at Lake Hiawatha, I believe the city would have addressed the problem long ago. Lake Hiawatha should be a clean, safe natural resource for people and wildlife.

The golf course: Black golfers and others value the history, accessibility and affordability at this 18-hole course in the heart of South Minneapolis. The course is active with diverse summer youth leagues; golfers of all incomes, races and ethnicities; local high school golf teams and it employs staff from the community. And yet, like many golf courses, there is a fence around it and these 100+ acres are off limits to all but those who pay to play.

This fall I met with a group of Black golfers who play weekly at Hiawatha. Many have generational memories and important stories about the course. Regardless of the eventual outcome for this site, those who have a deep personal affinity to the course should be involved in planning for how to honor its history. They should also be part of discussions about any new building or facility at the site.

This land, once known as Rice Lake, has a rich Indigenous history as well. Let's learn it and honor it, with Indigenous voices at the center.