



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 7/20/2021

REGULAR

TO: City Council
FROM: Ben Prchal, City Planner
AGENDA ITEM: Reroute of Trails within Sunfish Lake Park
REVIEWED BY: Marty Powers, Public Works Director
Parks Commission

BACKGROUND:

In the summer of 2020 mountain bike trails were completed within Sunfish Lake Park. With the completion of the trails the number of users within the park has increased, primarily mountain bikers. The addition of the new trails has generated some growing pains. The initial trail was designed to mitigate the number of interactions between different users. Though the majority of the trail system achieves this goal, a Community User group has identified an area(s) that could be reworked to further improve the usability of the park. At the April 19th 2021, Parks Commission meeting Staff was able to provide a presentation on the concerns of the Community Group and provided some recommendations as to how the City could correct the identified issues.

ISSUE BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL:

Does the City Council believe trails should be rerouted and reworked in Sunfish Lake Park to further reduce trail user interaction?

PROPOSAL DETAILS/ANALYSIS:

The Community group has been very active in identifying issues with the trails and has produced recommendations as to how the City should address them. In this particular discussion the group has done their due diligence and found volunteers and funding to fully cover the costs of the proposed trail project.

Tim Wegner, who initially built the mountain bike trails, has volunteered his time to run equipment and build the trails with the help of MORC (*Who has a maintenance agreement for the bike trails*), and volunteers. MORC has also secured funding to cover the costs of construction. The Nature Center has stated they would cover the cost to amend signage within the park.

Re-route Proposal:

Aspects of the Trail:

The work is intended to correct issues with the trails at the entrance(s) of the park. From the parking lot all trail users are forced to share close to 400 ft. (*If they follow their trails*) of trail but because some bikers do use the main hill 600 ft. (*Circled in yellow*) would be a more accurate figure. It is this section of trail that spurred the need to make corrections. The proposed amendment will separate walkers and bikers from the start of the parking lot.

The trail reroute also will help eliminate a section of trail that has been prone to erosion since its inception. By removing activity from the hill it will allow vegetation to grow in and hopefully curb the continuation of gullies.



Comments from Minnesota Land Trust:

Staff has reached out to the Land Trust for two reasons. To first inform them that the discussion is happening and secondly to understand if the design/redesign of the trails would follow the same process as the original trail build. The proposed re-route discussed later in the report has not been formally reviewed by the Land Trust. However, I was informed that the total trail length within the park cannot increase. This stipulation is likely the most impactful in terms of design and figuring out which trails need to be “closed” to allow the new trail construction. With that in mind Staff incorporated the suggested layout from the Sunfish Park Community Group and began reworking the trails so there would not be a net gain in overall trail length in the park.

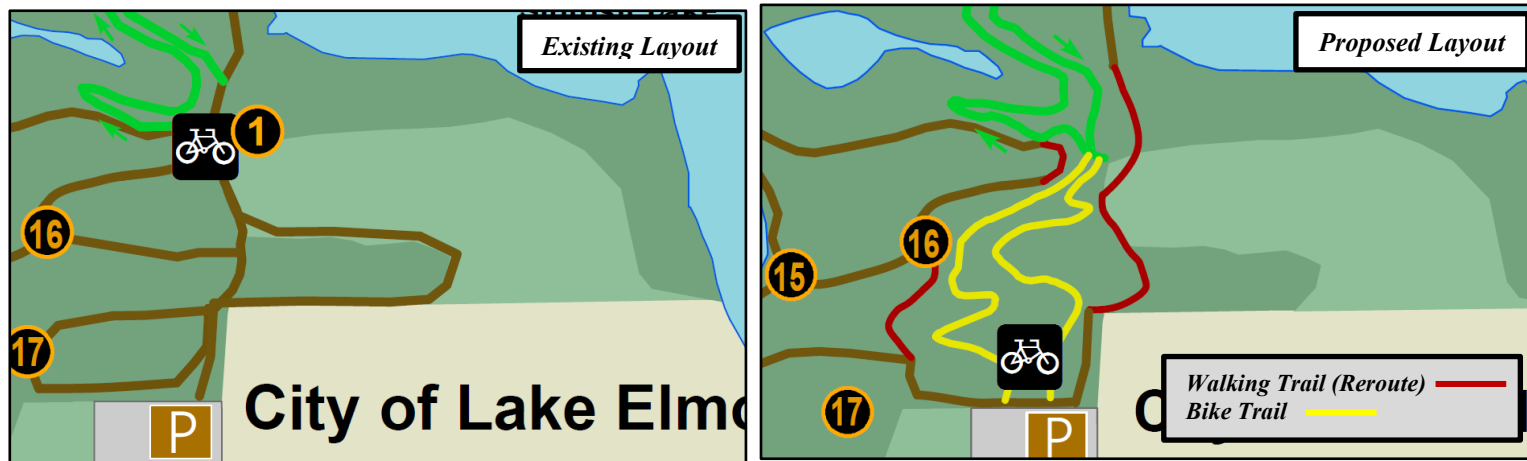
Regarding the construction of the trail, the requirements of the original RFP will be used. Also, the builders of the original mountain bike trails will also be involved with the re-route and build of the newer trails.

Signage:

With the addition/reconfiguration of trails it will force a change of signage within the park. The Community Group/Nature Center asking for the trail changes stated to Staff that there is also a sign budget to make corrections to signage within the park. However, the City should be prepared to reserve funding to finish the project.

Recommended Re-Route:

The primary focus from the group was to separate bikers from certain walkers/hikers within the park. With that in mind, the recommendation is to remove two sections of walking trail and add in two new sections of bike trail so a designated entrance and exit can be established. From there a new, but short walking trail segment will be installed so that walkers/hikers can still access the trails. The proposed trail re-route and addition comes out with a net change of zero. The bike trail is estimated to add 1,989 ft., the rerouted trails comes to 1,214, and the removed walking trail comes to

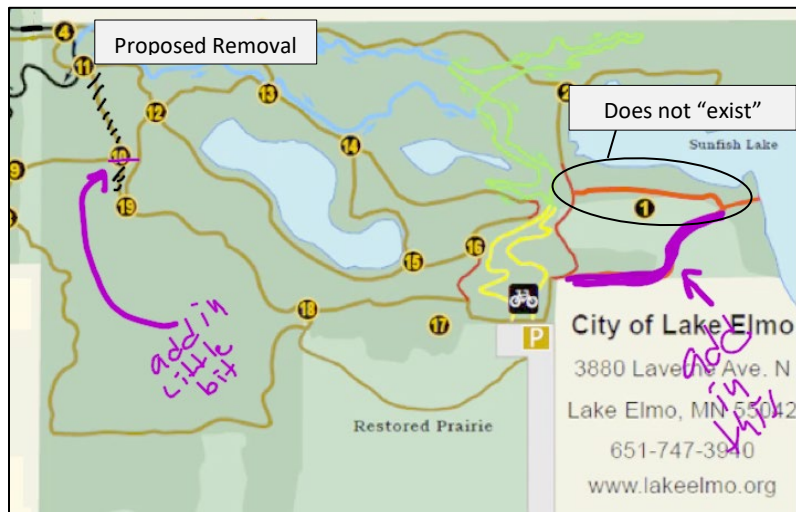


3,220 ft. Based on the requirements of the Land Trust the proposal has a high likelihood of being accepted. Staff has included an exhibit to further explain the math and method used to calculate the figures. Although this proposal meets the objectives of the Community Group there was some opposition to the removal of the trail that loops east and then back west.

Comments from the June 21st Park Meeting:

To create a trail network that achieved the goals of the community group, the loop to the east will need to be removed (as shown above). At the meeting a representative of the group stated that this was not a desirable outcome and they would like to keep the eastern loop. Since that meeting they have identified a trail elsewhere within the park (intersection 11-19) that they would like to recommend for removal to re-establish an eastern stub. After speaking with the Land Trust it is understood that as long as there is no net gain of trail length they would likely not have an issue with the reconfiguration.

The Community Group would like to recommend removing the black dashed trail and insert the purple stub. It should be known that the circled orange does not “exist.” (*Email request attached with report*). But they would also like to add the orange trail back in. To achieve this goal additional trail length elsewhere will need to be removed as this would result in an increase of trail length. To summarize, removal of the trail from 11-19 and addition of the purple stub would not result in an increase of trail length. But the full loop of purple to orange would result in a gain in trail length. Staff’s recommendation includes the removal of the intersection 11-19 and the addition of the purple stub.



The Group would also like to see the addition of “no biking on hiking trails” added to the rules sign, the addition of “icon” signs, and the use of a sandwich board for seasonal information.

Staff recommends that the Council direct staff to add icon signage where appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT (Estimated):

Based on conversations with the groups Staff is not expecting a fiscal impact to the City, though some should be set aside in the instance that the plans fall through. MORC has secured funding to perform the work for the trail installation and reroute while the Community Group/Nature Center has expressed there is money set aside to update and replace signage. However, if the signage is not installed in a timely manner the Council should direct Staff to purchase and install signage as necessary. Staff is requesting to reserve \$6,000 to install signage as needed.

OPTIONS:

The City Council may:

1. Approve the trail reconfiguration in Sunfish Lake Park.
2. Direct Staff to make amendments and then approve the reroute.
3. Deny the trail reconfiguration project.

RECOMMENDATION:

Parks Commission (*June 21, 2021 Meeting*):

The Parks Commission recommended approval of the trail reconfiguration project and would like to see it started this year and take advantage of what is left of the 2021 construction season.

Should the City not move forward with the trail reconfiguration, Staff is likely to suggest placing a barrier on top of the sledding hill to push bikers east on the desired route. Walkers would be able to easily move around the barrier but it would be cumbersome and require an intentional action for a biker to do so. Otherwise, if the City Council approves the trail reconfiguration, Staff will suggest requiring financial sureties/proof of funding from the group for the trails and updates to the signage along with an MOU that will further outline expectations. With funding being secured and money available to create new maps, Staff believes this is a good opportunity for the City to accept assistance to change the trails.

Removing the trail segment from intersection 11-19 would eliminate two intersections. Which would likely help with navigation within the park. Staff is considers this removal to be within the approval of Resolution 2021-082.

Recommended Motions:

Recommended motion for the trail construction.

“Motion to approve Resolution 2021-082 which allows the reconfiguration of walking trails and installation of entrance and exit trails for mountain bikes in Sunfish Lake Park as outlined by Staff, subject to verification of project funding and the execution of an MOU between the City and MORC.”

Recommended motion for signage donation.

“Motion to approve Resolution 2021-083 accepting signage donation from the Sally Manzara Nature Center.”

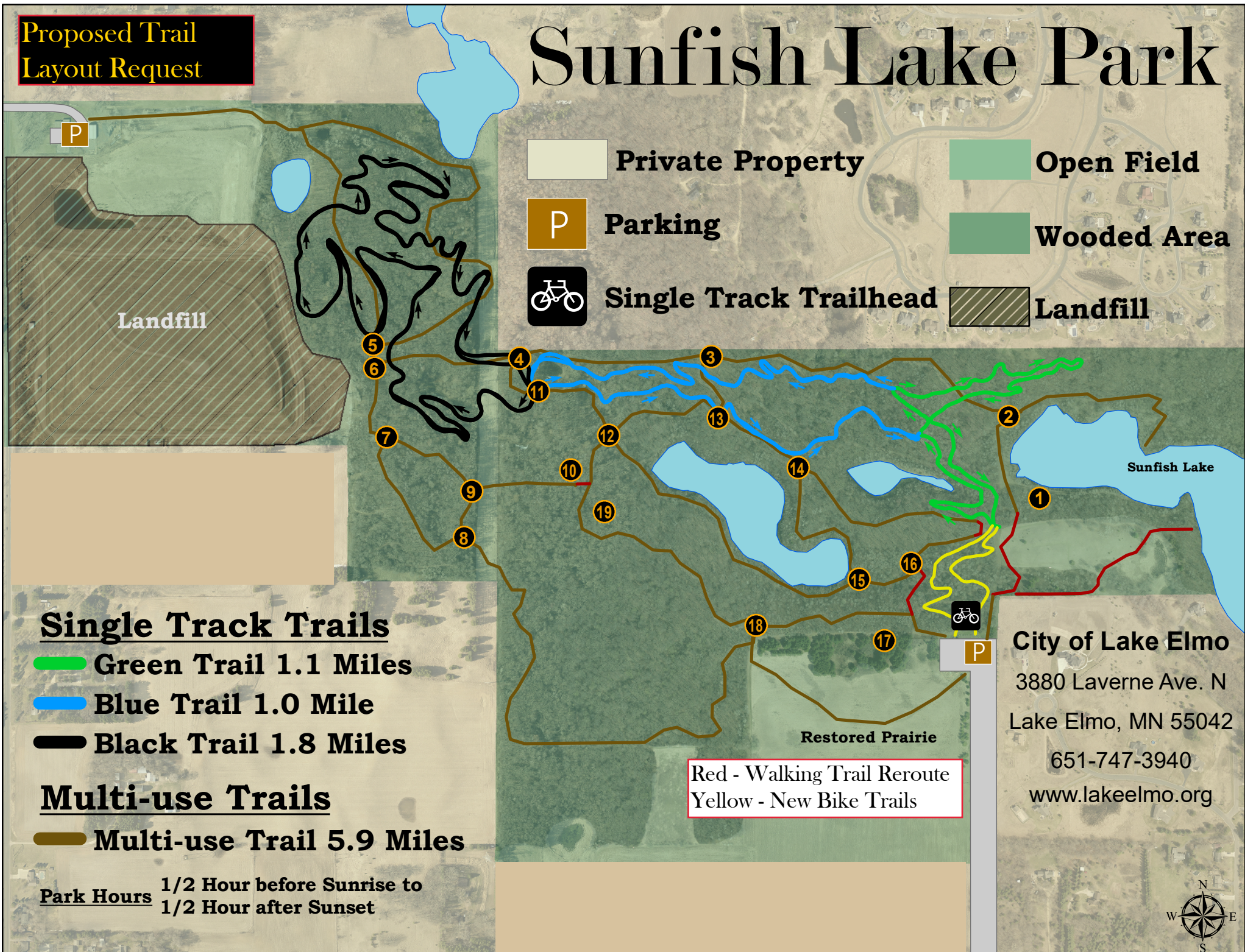
“Motion to allocate \$6,000 from the Park Dedication Fund for updated signage within Sunfish Lake Park, only to be used if the donated signs are not installed to the expectations of Resolution 2021-083.”

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Trail Map
- Exhibit for Trail Lengths
- Community Group Email Request
- Resolution 2021-082
- Resolution 2021-083

**Proposed Trail
Layout Request**

Sunfish Lake Park



Trail Calculation Methods:

Method 1:

To calculate the trail distances Staff used two methods. The first method strictly worked off of the trails that were being added, amended, or removed

ID in Data Table	Added Bike Trails
5	936
6	1053
Total in Ft.	1989
	Rerouted Walking Trails
89	604
91	278
93	106
94	1096
96	68
Total in Ft.	2152
Total of Added and Rerouted Trails	4141
	Removed Walking Trails
11	377
12	201
13	218
16	788
19	460
35	1152
41	222
47	141
52	335
56	134
57	103
58	72
Total in Ft.	4203

Method 2:

The second method consisted of taking the existing trail network as a whole and then comparing it to what the proposed would be. Comping the math between the two methods the difference is only 20 ft. Considering that different data sets are used for the trail network this difference is negligible and is likely the difference of moving one vertex (trail point).

	Existing Lengths		Proposed		Difference
Bike Trails	19,663		21,652		-1,989
Walking Trail	32,358		30,287		2,071
Totals	52,021		51,939		82

Ben Prchal

From: Ami Voeltz-Schakel <liberashun@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, July 10, 2021 6:34 PM
To: Ben Prchal
Cc: Tim Wegner; Ami Voeltz-Schakel
Subject: ITEMS TO CITY COUNCIL - Sunfish Lake Park User Group
Attachments: Additions and Subtractions.png

Caution: This email originated outside our organization; please use caution.

Hi Ben,

The Sunfish Lake Park User Group met to discuss a solution to adding back in the east loop hiking trail section. Please see the map with markings attached and the language the user group would like to see presented at the city council meeting on the 20th.

Will you be presenting this to the city council and will we attend to answer questions and give support to these motions?

Is the most up to date map the map at the parking lot? Our user group and Tim was having a difficult time with identifying current trails and the numbering system because there are so many different maps out there at this time.

Thank you for working with the user group to help bring these items to city council for approval.

Thanks,
Ami

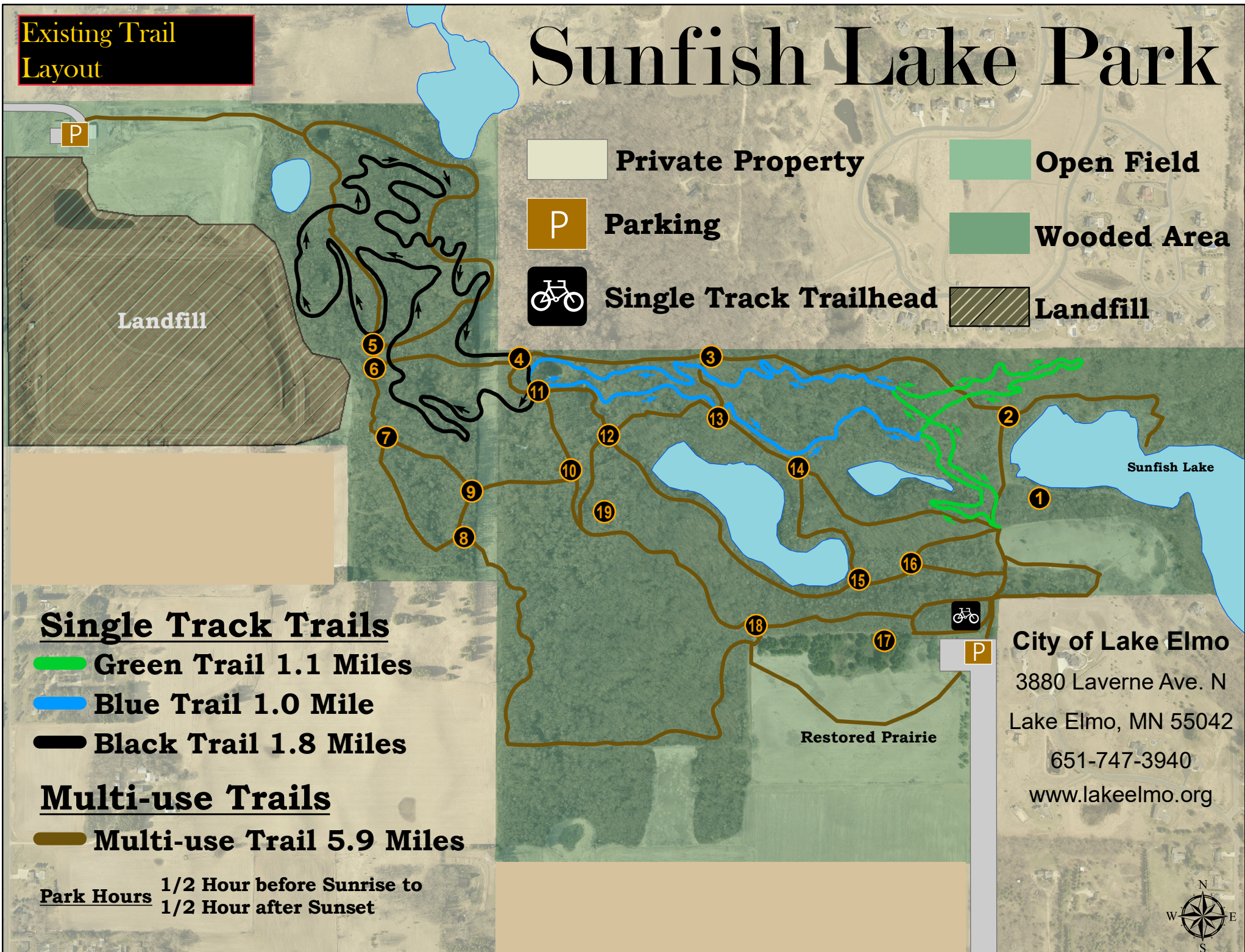
Sunfish Lake Park User Group asks the city council to approve the following:

1. Approve new trail connector development to get bikers to and from the existing trailhead without riding on hiking trails (in yellow on map)
2. Approve adding back in the east hiking loop in purple (that was removed by the city planner) and removing points #10-11 and #10-19 with black hashes in order to keep the east hiking loop
3. Approve this sign plan:
 - Add to parking lot rules board: No biking on hiking trails.
 - Add posts and icon signs to all trailheads in the park (about 6) indicating user information such as No bikes, No horses, Hiking trail, Biking trail
 - Use sandwich board at parking lot to indicate seasonal information for park users

Thank you,
Ami

**Existing Trail
Layout**

Sunfish Lake Park



**CITY OF LAKE ELMO
WASHINGTON COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION NO 2021-082

*A RESOLUTION APPROVING A REROUTE OF WALKING TRAILS AND CONSTRUCTION
OF MOUNTAIN BIKE ENTRANCE AND EXIT BIKE TRAILS WITHIN SUNFISH LAKE PARK*

WHEREAS, the City of Lake Elmo is a municipal corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, The Sunfish Lake Park User Group has requested that walking trails be rerouted and entry and exit mountain bike trails be added into Sunfish Lake Park; and

WHEREAS, the Lake Elmo Parks Commission reviewed the request at its June 21st, 2021 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Lake Elmo Parks Commission has submitted its report and recommendation to the City Council as part of a Staff Memorandum dated July 20th, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the City Council considered said matter at its July 20th, 2021 meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED based on the testimony elicited and information received, the City Council approves the following:

That after execution of an MOU, specific to the discussed project, MORC and their selected volunteers shall have permission to reroute walking trails and build mountain bike entrance and exit trails in Sunfish Lake Park as presented to the City Council on July 20, 2021.

Passed and duly adopted this 20th day of July, 2021 by the City Council of the City of Lake Elmo, Minnesota.

Mayor, Charles Cadenhead

ATTEST:

Julie Johnson, City Clerk

**CITY OF LAKE ELMO
WASHINGTON COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION NO 2021-083

*A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING DONATED SIGNAGE FROM THE SALLY MANZARA
INTERPRETIVE NATURE CENTER AND APPROVAL TO INSTALL SIGNAGE WITHIN
SUNFISH LAKE PARK.*

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes Section 465.03 provides that donations to the City be accepted by resolution of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the City is specifically authorized to accept gifts and bequests for the benefit of recreational services pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 471.17; and

WHEREAS, Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center has requested to donate signage within Sunfish Park (intersectional and kiosk); and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Lake Elmo agrees that said contribution would be of benefit to the citizens of Lake Elmo; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council does hereby approve the signage project donation request for Sunfish Lake Park subject to the following conditions:

1. Signage location and design for all signs shall be approved by the Lake Elmo Public Works Director.
2. Signage (intersection and kiosk) must be installed by September 30th, 2021. If signage has not been installed by this time the Lake Elmo Public Works Department will finish the project.

Passed and duly adopted this 20th day of July, 2021 by the City Council of the City of Lake Elmo, Minnesota.

Mayor, Charles Cadenhead

ATTEST:

Julie Johnson, City Clerk