

An aerial photograph of a small town with various colorful buildings, including a prominent yellow domed structure. Overlaid on the image are several stylized outlines of human figures in yellow and red. The text "EMPOWERING SMALL MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES" is centered in large white letters.

EMPOWERING SMALL MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES

Knife River Community Meetings | Aug 5, 2025



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™

Knife River Community Meetings - Aug 5, 2025

Agenda

ESMC Effort Updates & Knife River Context (15 min)

- Comments from KRRC
- Gateway to the North Shore
- Importance of Natural Assets

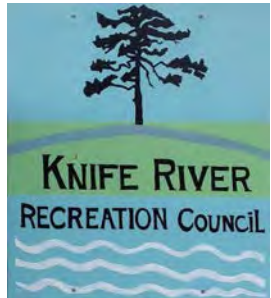
Design Scenarios (30min)

- Program
- Case Studies
- Site Considerations
- Scenarios 1-4

Funding Possibilities and Strategies (15 min)

- Public Pre-Design Process
- Construction Pathways and Costs
- Next steps

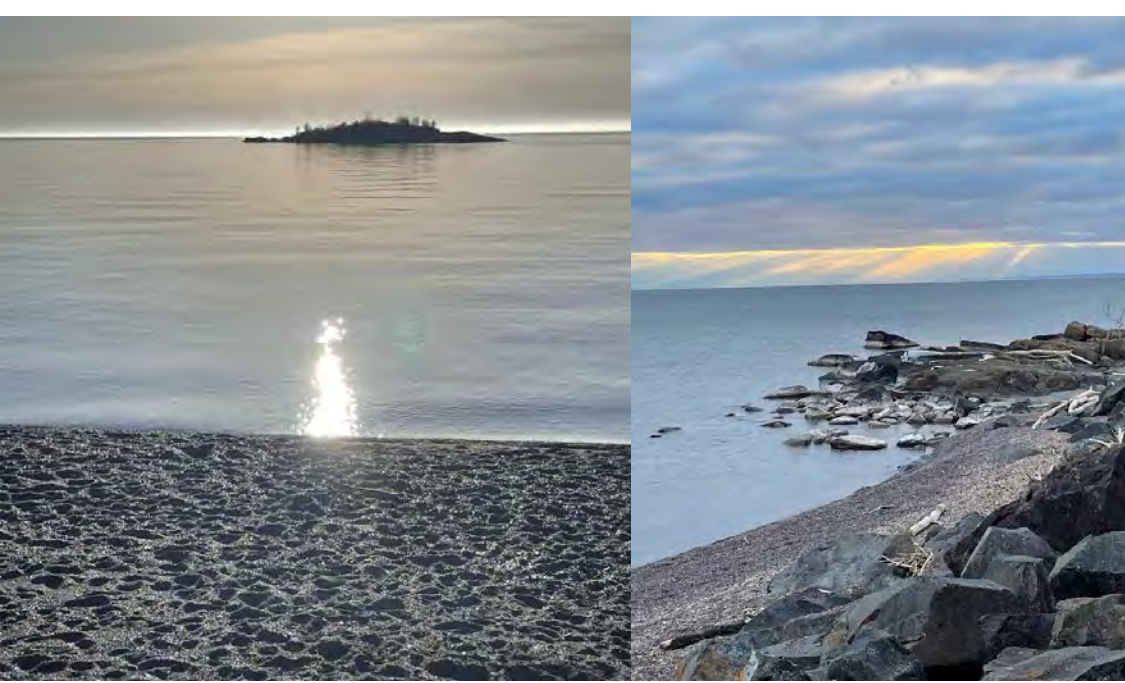
Questions + Answers (30 min)



Knife River, MN

June 30, 2025

Presentation to IRRR



Knife River Public Beach:
Importance to the community to
maintain public access to Lake
Superior



Public hiking trails



Public fields



Playground





Julebyen



ESMC: Community Futures Approach

Aims of the program from the State of Minnesota:

- Invest in better infrastructure projects, and better coordinated projects
- Help identify and prioritize a set of actionable, fundable projects communities can carry forward

Our approach:

- **Asset-based** - *focus on community assets (recognized, and sometimes unrecognized)*
- **Design Thinking** - *iterative and responsive to constraints and possibilities*
- **Build community capacities & partnerships** - *within and beyond community*

Process: Knife River Community Futures

ESMC Timeline

Phase 1: Discovery

Research and community assets, challenges and opportunities

Phase 2: Strategy

Develop a community strategy with priority areas

Build out the scope of the issue/problem and identify resources/partners

Phase 3: Projects to Carry Forward

Identify specific projects, share early design ideas, funding strategies, collaborations and partnerships

Knife River Community Futures

Context & Strategies

North Shore Scenic Drive: All-American Scenic Byway as important context

- Gateway to the North Shore - potential to welcome visitors to this very special nationally recognized byway
- Public access in the context of privatizing lakeshore
- An industrial past, and a recreational present - evolving over time

Importance of the Knife River

- Improving water quality, building on the efforts of many partners
- Fisheries and protecting wildlife habitat
- Public access to experience the unique relationship between river and lake

Next steps: Share design scenarios, developed within/in response to this context

Design Scenarios: **Program**

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)

- Community Room - 100 people
- Teen Center
- Shared Kitchen
- County Health+Wellness Services

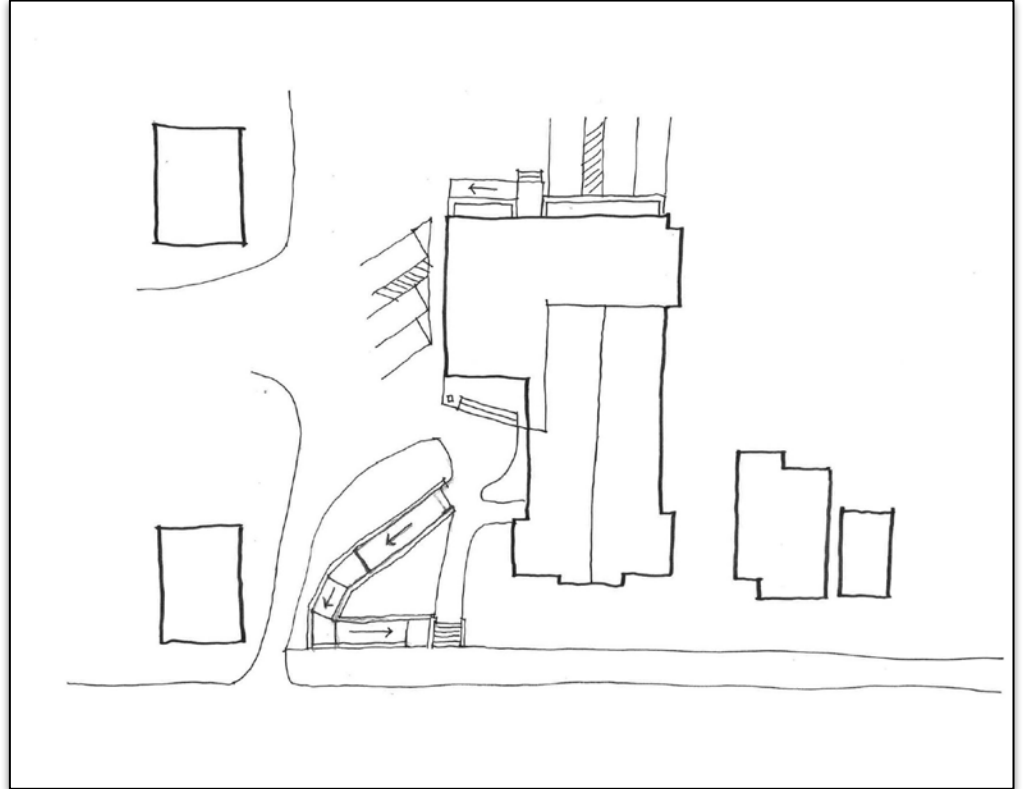
Design Scenarios: **Program**

Pelican Rapids Community
Center (Renovation)



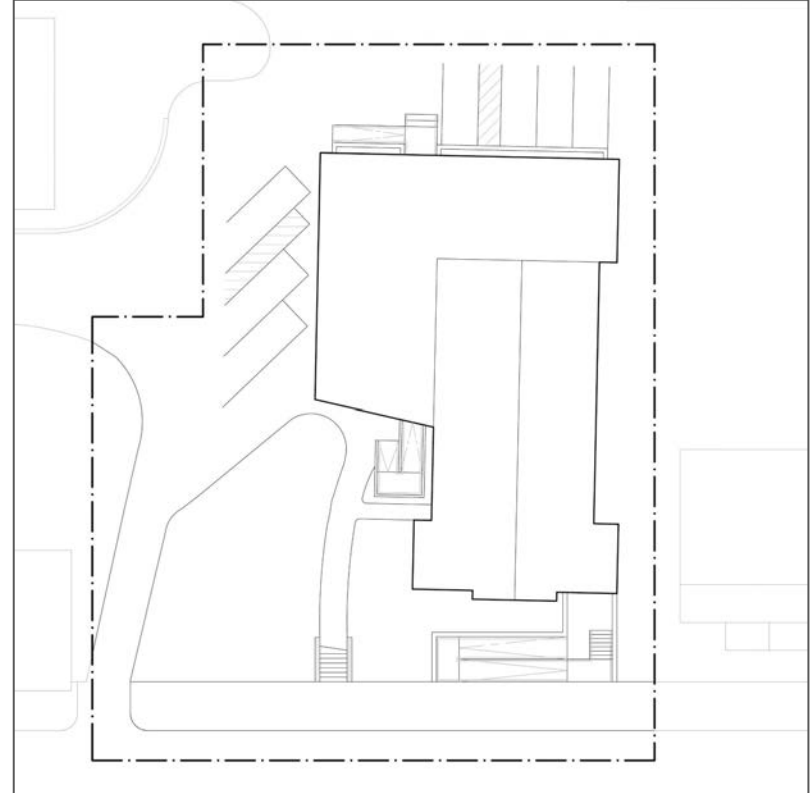
Design Scenarios: **Program**

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)



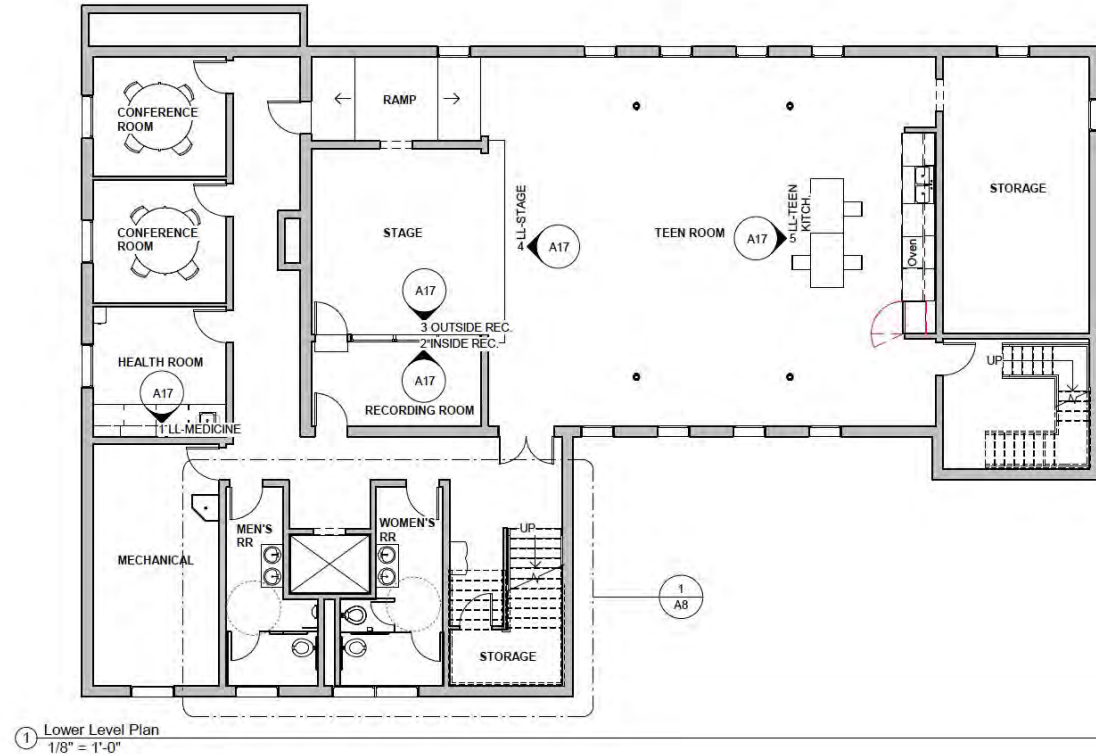
Design Scenarios: **Program**

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)



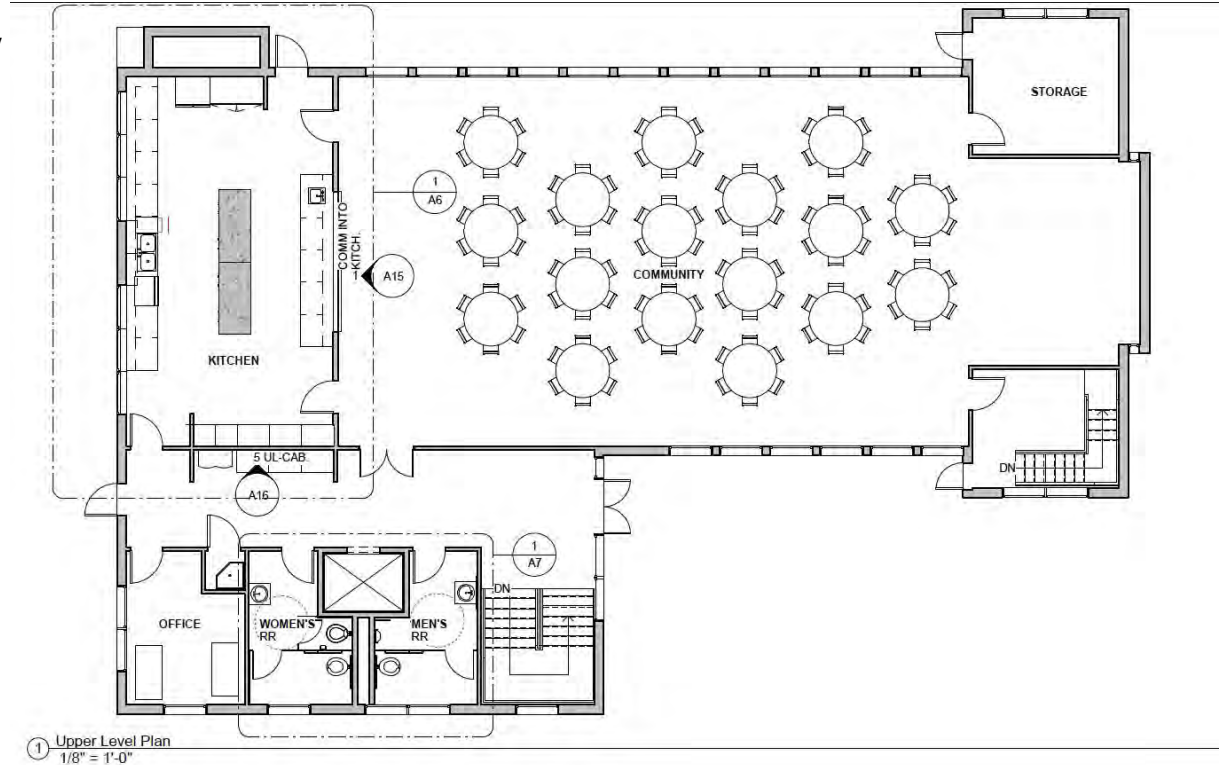
Design Scenarios: Program

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)



Design Scenarios: **Program**

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)



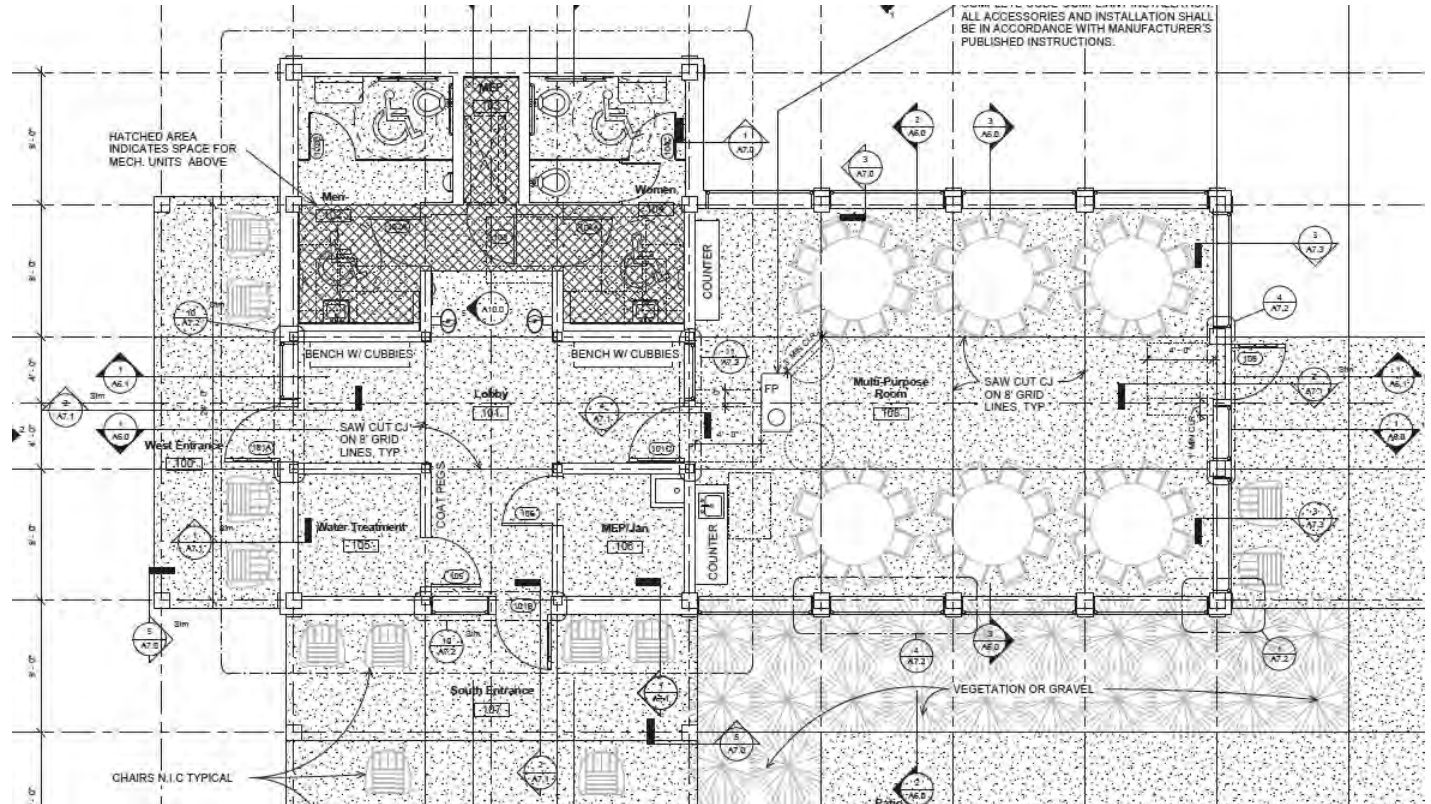
Design Scenarios: Program

Pelican Rapids Community Center (Renovation)

- New Building
 - Building Construction = \$2,750,000 (9,000sf x \$300/sf)
 - Site Construction = \$550,000 (~20%)
 - Subtotal Construction = \$3,300,000
 - Soft Costs @ 30% = \$1,000,000
 - **TOTAL COST** = \$4,300,000 to \$5,600,000 (+/- 30%)
- Renovation
 - Building Construction = \$1,500,000
 - Site Construction = \$150,000
 - Subtotal Construction = \$1,650,000
 - Soft Costs @ 30% = \$450,000
 - **TOTAL COST** = \$2,100,000 to \$2,750,000 (+/- 30%)

Design Scenarios: Case Studies

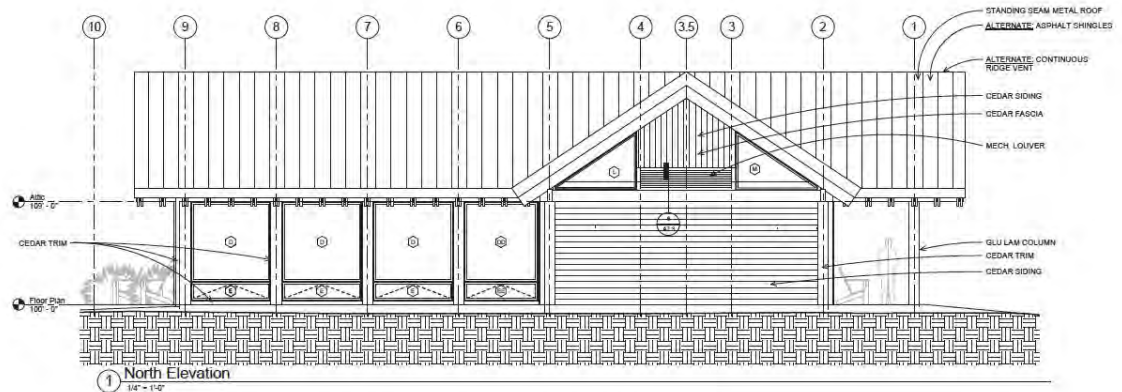
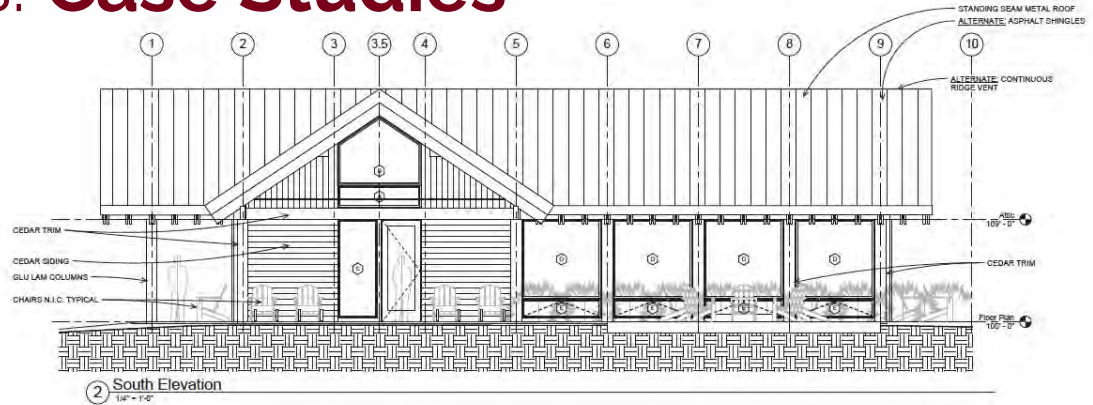
Bear Head Lake



Design Scenarios: Case Studies

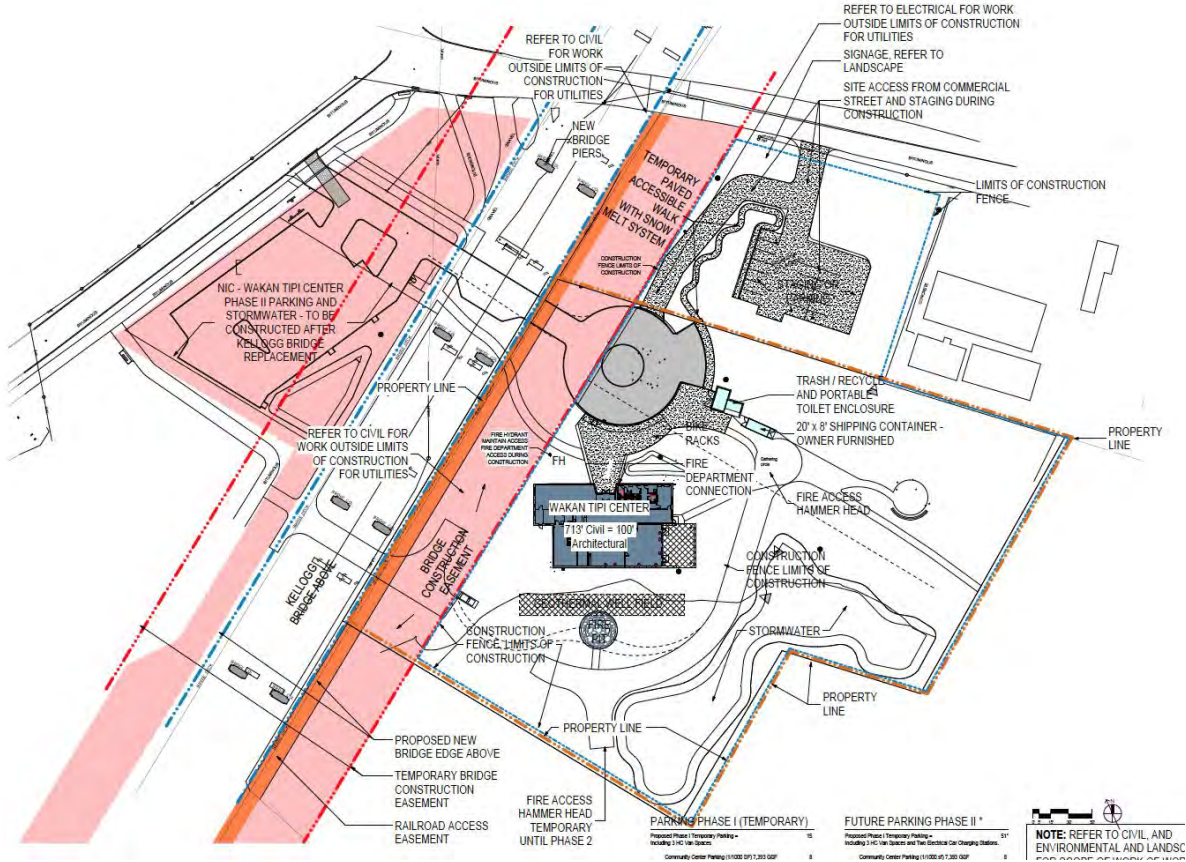
Bear Head Lake

- Multi-Purpose Room (48 people)
- 1,600sf
- \$375/sf = ~\$600,000?



Design Scenarios: Case Studies

Wakan Tipi



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

Wakan Tipi

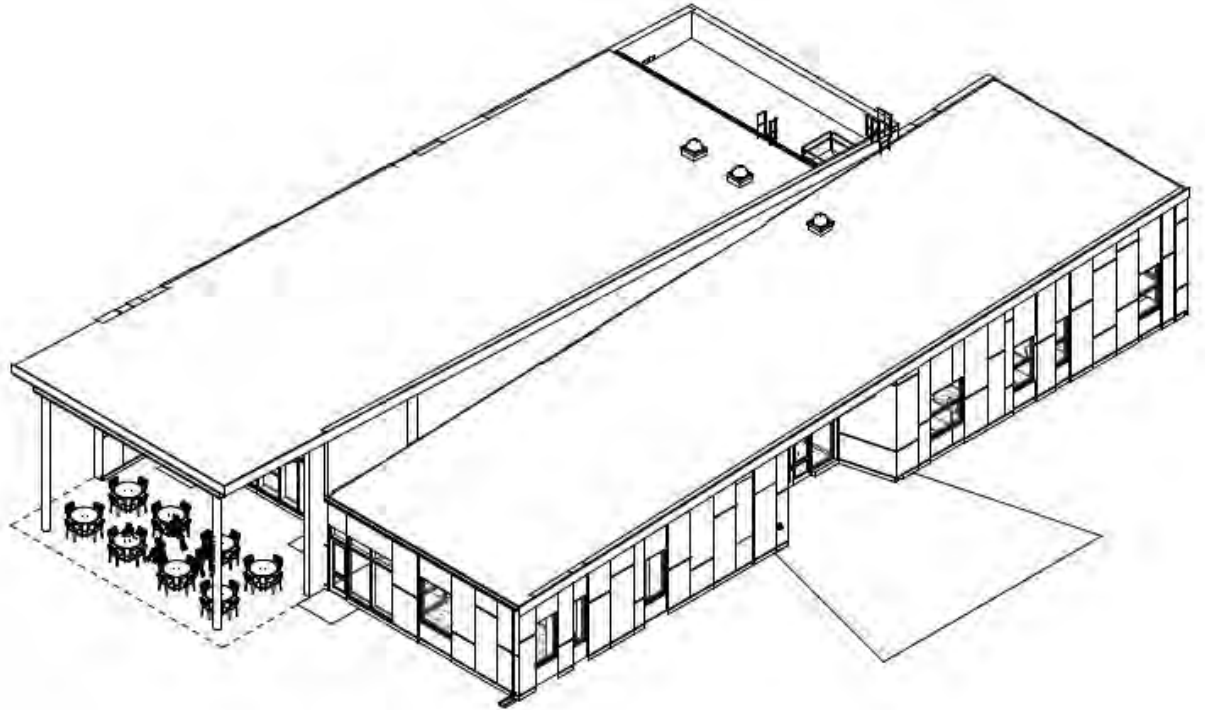
Multi-Purpose Room (110 people)

Outdoor Gathering

7,500 sf

\$13,500,000 (Building)

\$14,300,000 (Total)



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

Clair Nelson Center

Weddings and Other Rentals

The Clair Nelson Center is an ideal venue offering space for rentals and use for groups up to 300 people. Located in Finland Minnesota, the Center offers access to the Baptism River, Superior Hiking Trail, North Shore State Snowmobile and ATV Trail, and is close to many area attractions. With six different rooms to choose from, it is the ideal setting for meetings, workshops, conferences, weddings and other parties. Built in 2010 utilizing cutting-edge green building techniques, the Clair Nelson Center is a unique venue for hosting events in a location midway between Duluth, Grand Marais, and the Iron Range.

- Wedding packages
- Kitchen rental for business purposes
- Contact us for availability.



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

Clair Nelson Center



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

Clair Nelson Center

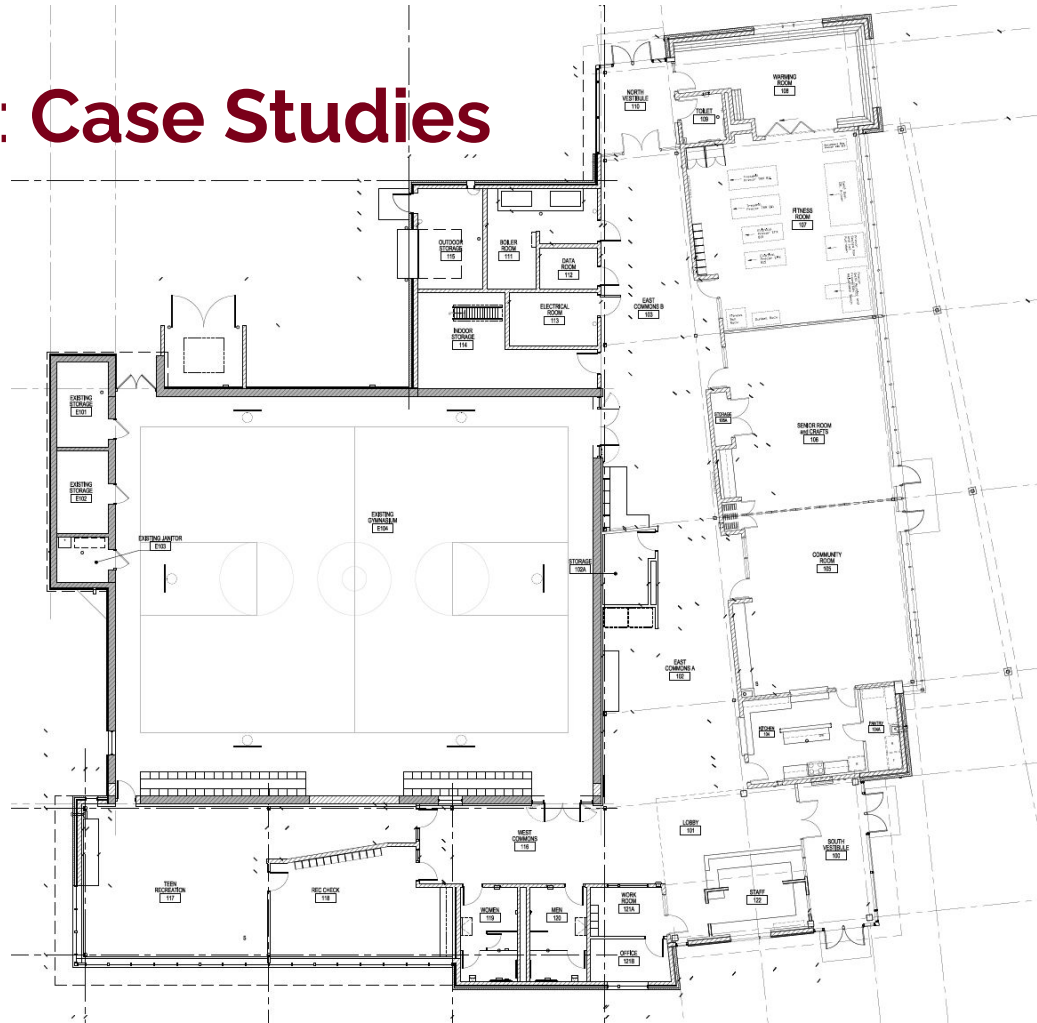
- Commercial Kitchen
- Meeting Rooms
- Gymnasium
- 11,500sf?



Design Scenarios: Case Studies

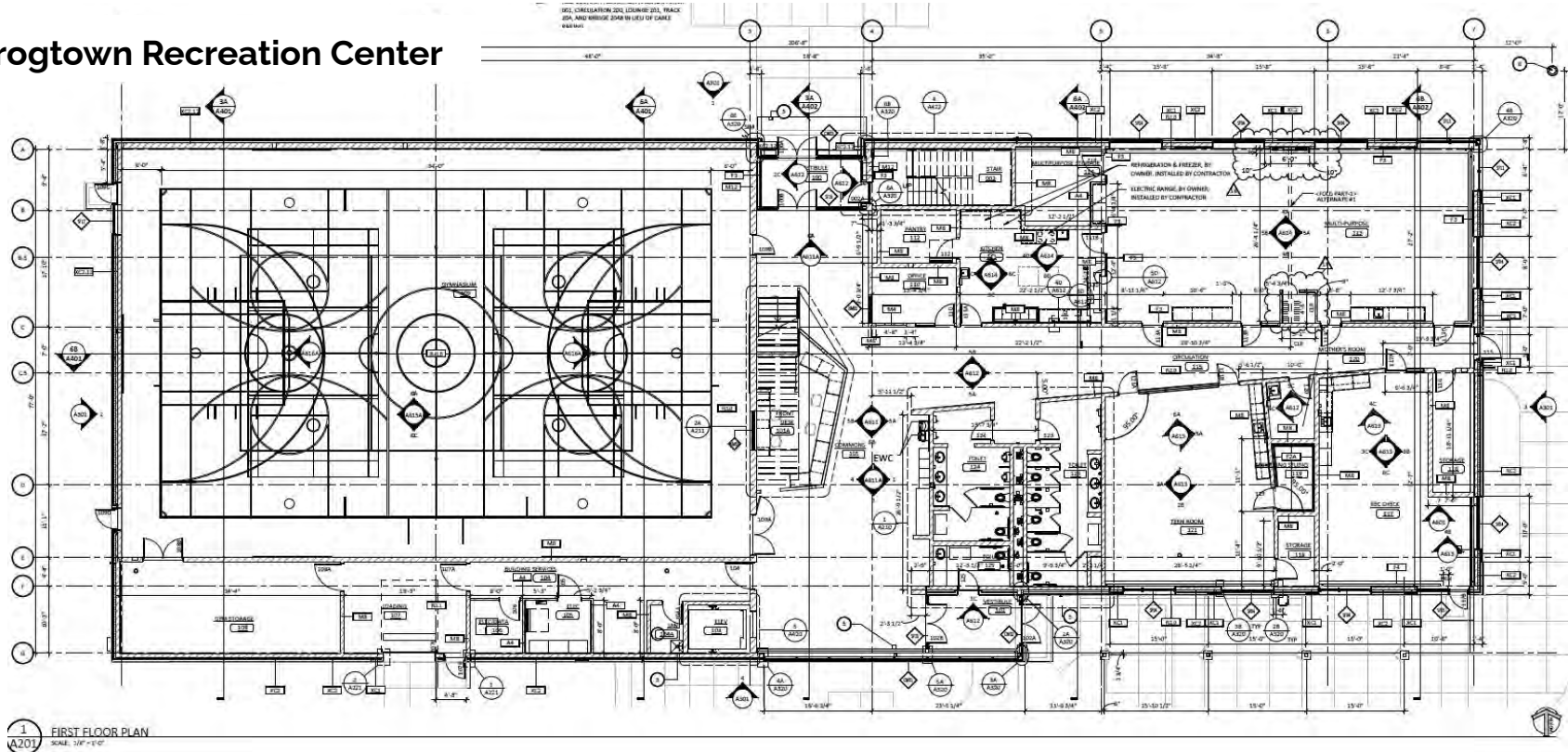
Palace Recreation Center

- Gymnasium
- 4 Multi-purpose Rooms
- Locker Rooms
- 17,000sf?



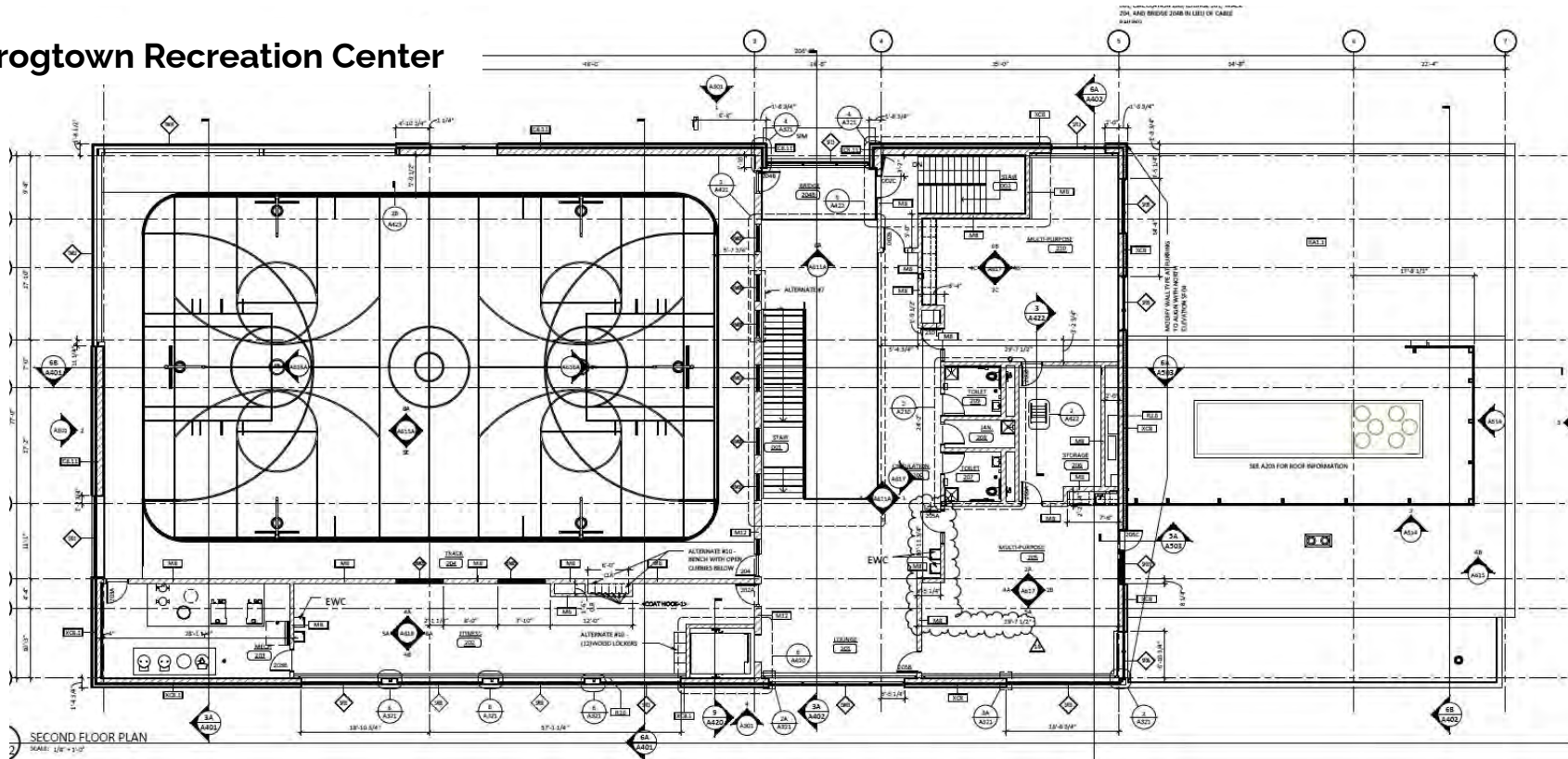
Design Scenarios: Case Studies

Frogtown Recreation Center



Design Scenarios: Case Studies

Frogtown Recreation Center



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

Frogtown Recreation Center

- Gymnasium
- Walking Track
- 6 Multi-purpose Rooms
- Community Kitchen
- Locker Rooms
- 26,000sf?



Design Scenarios: **Case Studies**

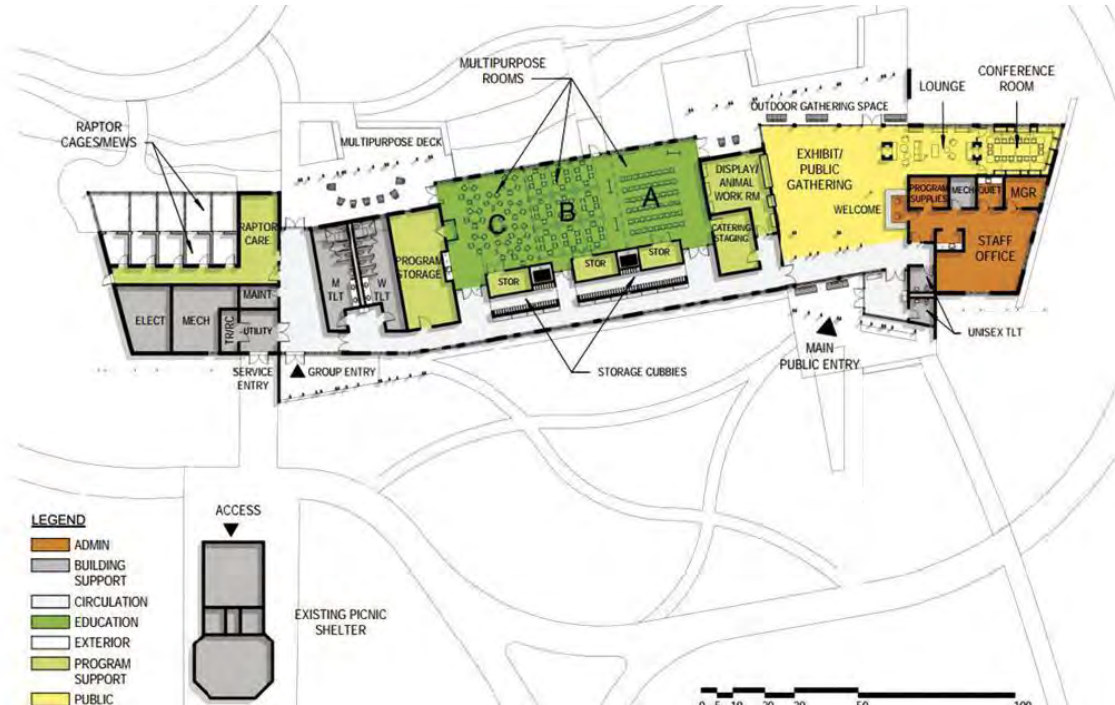
Westwood Hills Nature Center



Design Scenarios: Case Studies

Westwood Hills Nature Center

- 3 Multi-purpose Rooms
- Exhibit Space
- Raptor Care
- 13,500sf?
- \$14,000,000



Design Scenarios: **Context**



Design Scenarios: **Community Considerations**

- **Importance of community volunteerism** - Over the past several decades, Knife River community has a demonstrated record of committed and passionate volunteering, building on a long history of this sense of community in place, including:
 - Knife River Recreational Council
 - Knife River Heritage and Cultural Center (estimated \$250,000 plus thousands of volunteer labor hours)
 - Save Our Ship Leif Erickson Project (\$300,000 to date and volunteer labor)
- **Julebyen as a key community event**, and how best to support this through design options (storage for much of the year; activities and requirements of the event itself, and the immediate preparations and aftermath).
- **Considering residents, visitors and travelers** - Each group has a variety of overlapping and conflicting needs, especially in relation to public access, landscape ecology improvement and protection, and development pressures pushing for increasingly privatized access to Lake Superior and surrounding areas.
- **Indigenous presence: past, present and future** - Consider how best to include Indigenous perspectives within Knife River Futures work.
- **Celebrating what is special and unique about the Knife River Community** is central to each scenario.
- Consider at multiple scales the ways designs could **support community resilience**.

Design Scenarios: **General Site Considerations**

Soil conditions

clay and variable depth to bedrock

Environmental conditions

wind, sun, seasons, climate & climate change

Surface water management & plan

ensuring water quality for Knife River & Lake Superior

Utilities and infrastructure

municipal sewer/water; septic/well; renewable power potential - solar, wind, geothermal

Zoning

Conditional Use Permit process (Lake Co. Planning Commission)

Max. allowable buildable area across parcel

Accessibility (ADA)

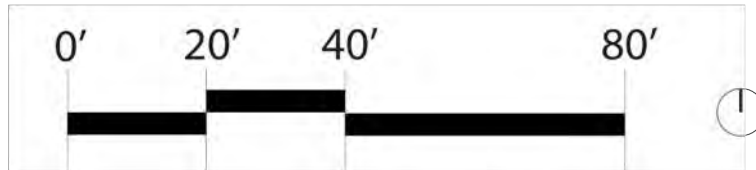
Parking & Traffic flow

everyday use and special events parking needs

Circulation

vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, ATV/snowmobile

Test Program/Building Footprint



Flexible community space for big or small gatherings, meetings, programs, events

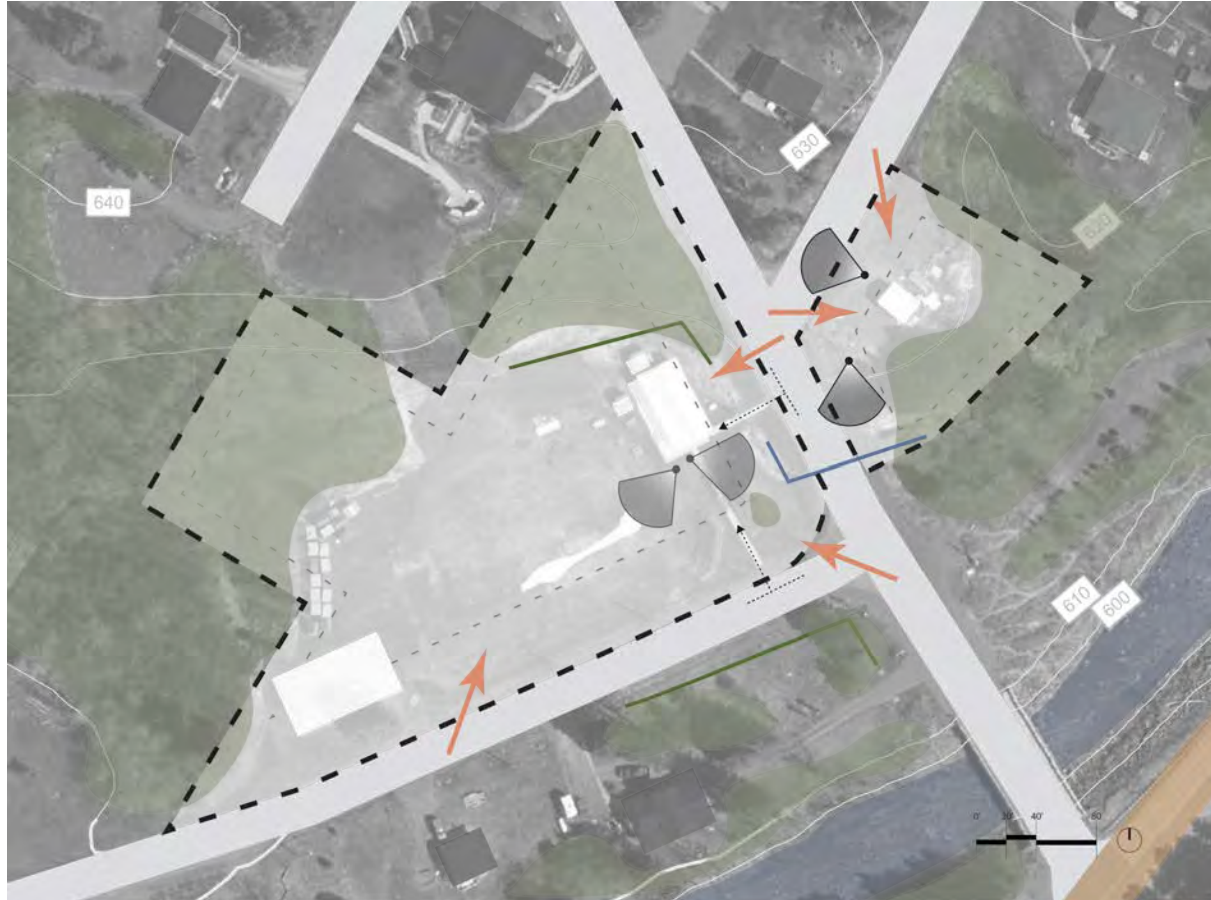
Kitchen
Entry/Lobby
Office
Restrooms (3)

Parking for everyday use and accessibility

Options for additional parking on/off site

Outdoor site design TBD, eg, patio, seating, sheltered gathering spaces

Scenario 1: Maximize KRRC Rec Center Parcel



This is the **site plan**.

Dashed lines show property lines and setbacks.

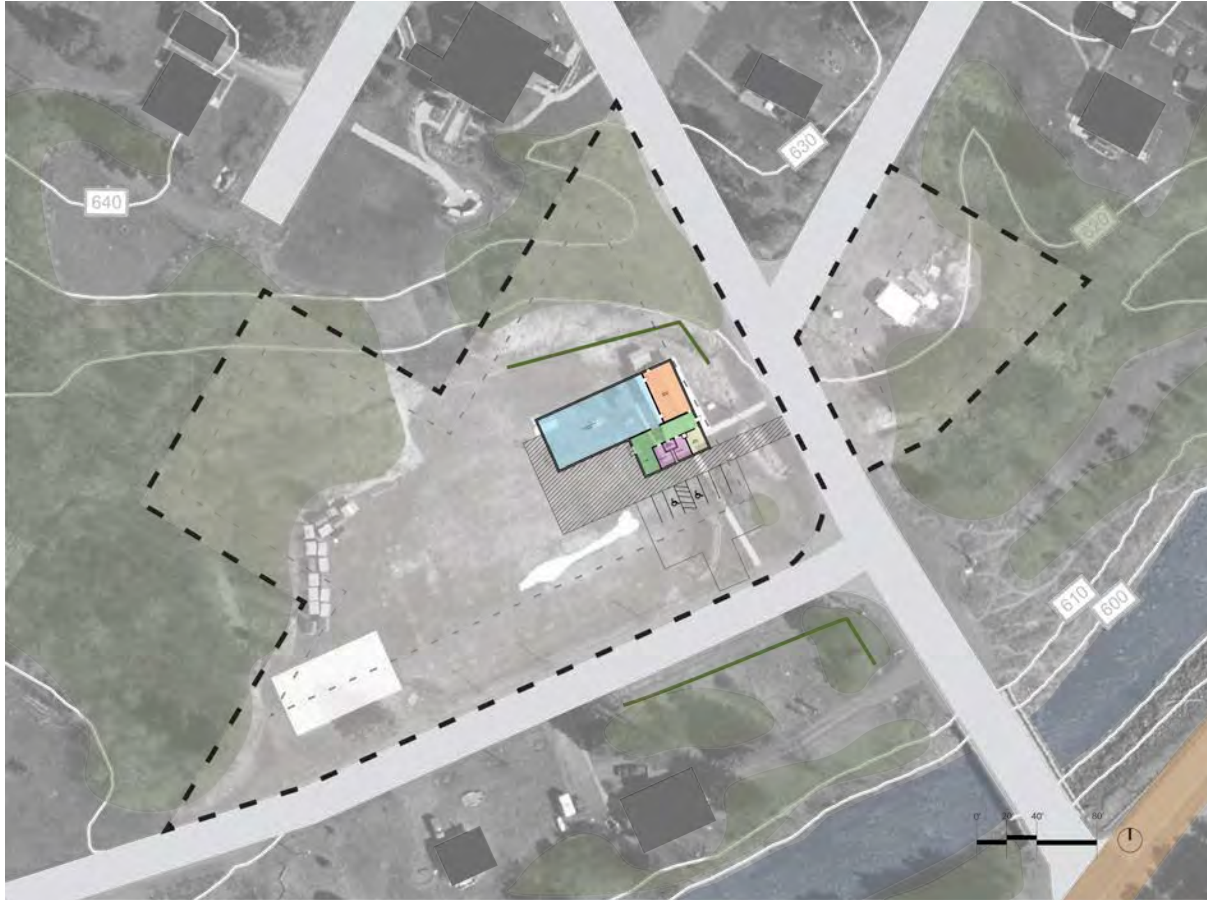
Cones show viewpoints of interest.

Arrows show potential access points.

Green bar is proposed stormwater management berm/swale.

Blue bar is proposed stormwater culvert.

Scenario 1: Maximize KRRC Rec Center Parcel



This is the **test fit of possible new building footprint**. Design and exact site planning TBD.

New building located to preserve and maximize open green space.

This includes improved everyday parking and loading access.

Special event parking would need additional plans (could potentially be on street or other arrangements TBD).

No new property acquisition for this Scenario 1.

Public beach parcel remains as is.

Scenario 2: **Public/Community Ownership of Campground Parcel**



This is the **site plan**.

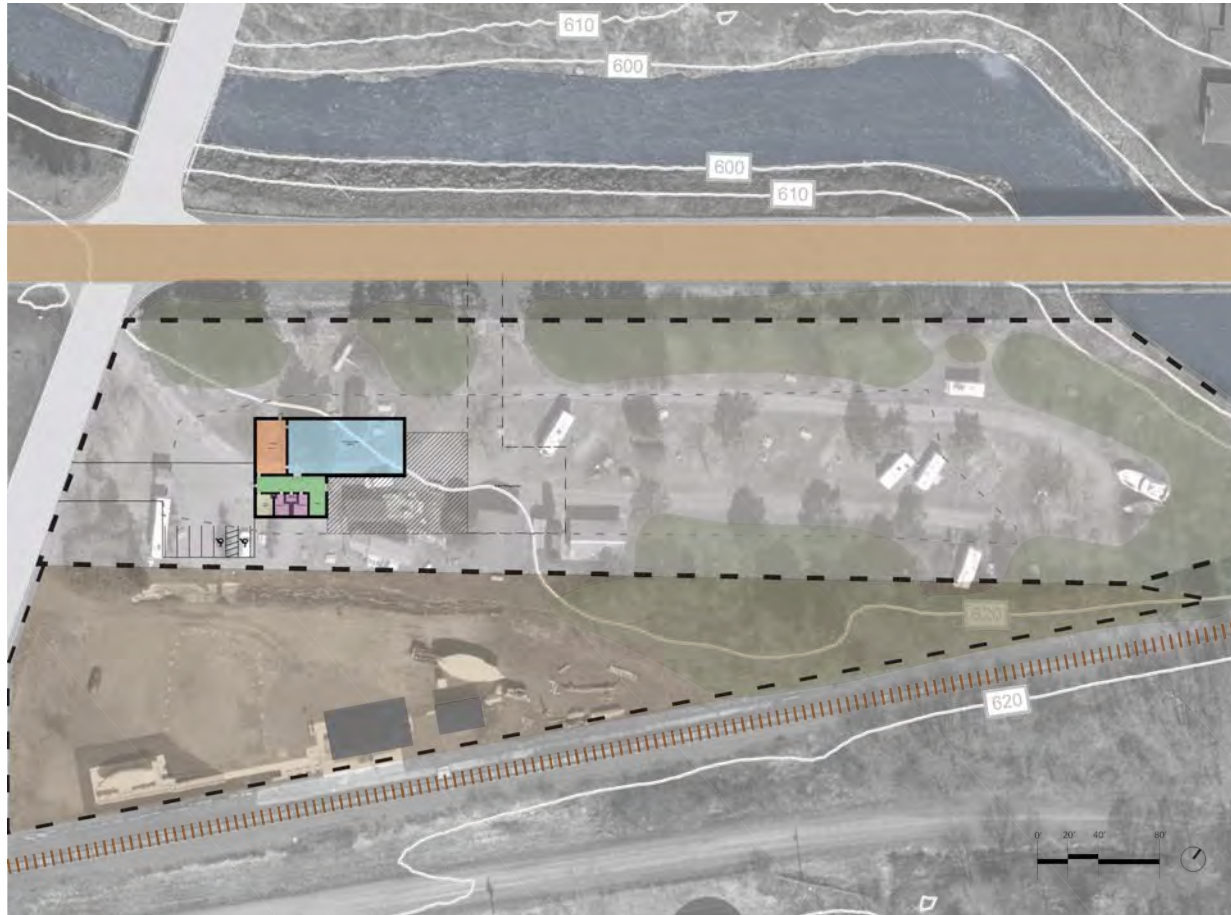
Dashed lines show property lines and setbacks.

Cones show viewpoints of interest.

Arrows show potential access points.

This Scenario 2 would require property acquisition.

Scenario 2: **Public/Community Ownership of Campground Parcel**



This is the **test fit of possible new building footprint**. Design and exact site planning TBD.

New building located to preserve and maximize open green space and river access.

This includes improved everyday parking and loading access.

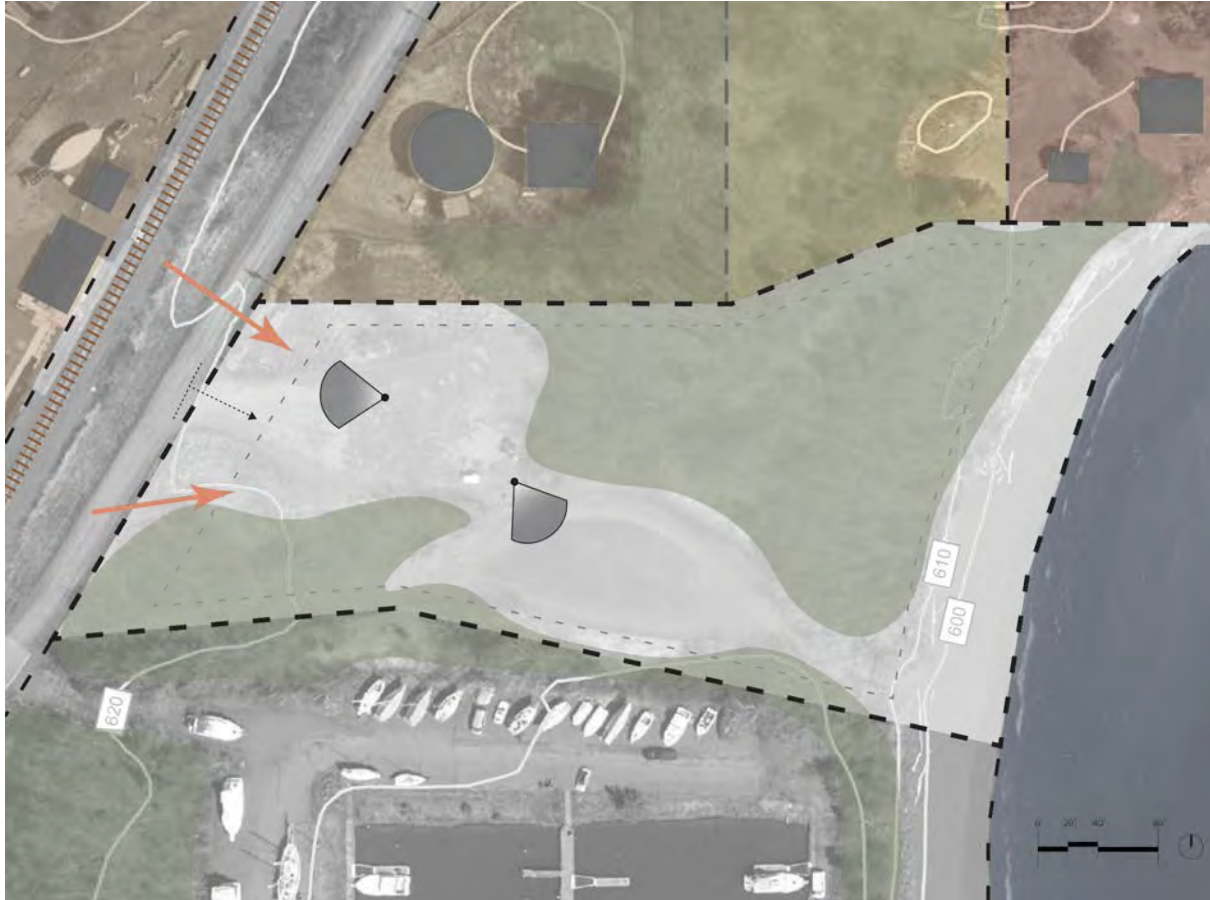
Special event parking and potential connections to RR property TBD.

New property acquisition required for this Scenario 2.

Existing KRRC Rec Center could be adapted to focus on sports equipment and access, or other uses. Field could remain open for sports or other uses.

Public beach parcel could remain as is.

Scenario 3: KRRC Public Beach Site



This is the **site plan**.

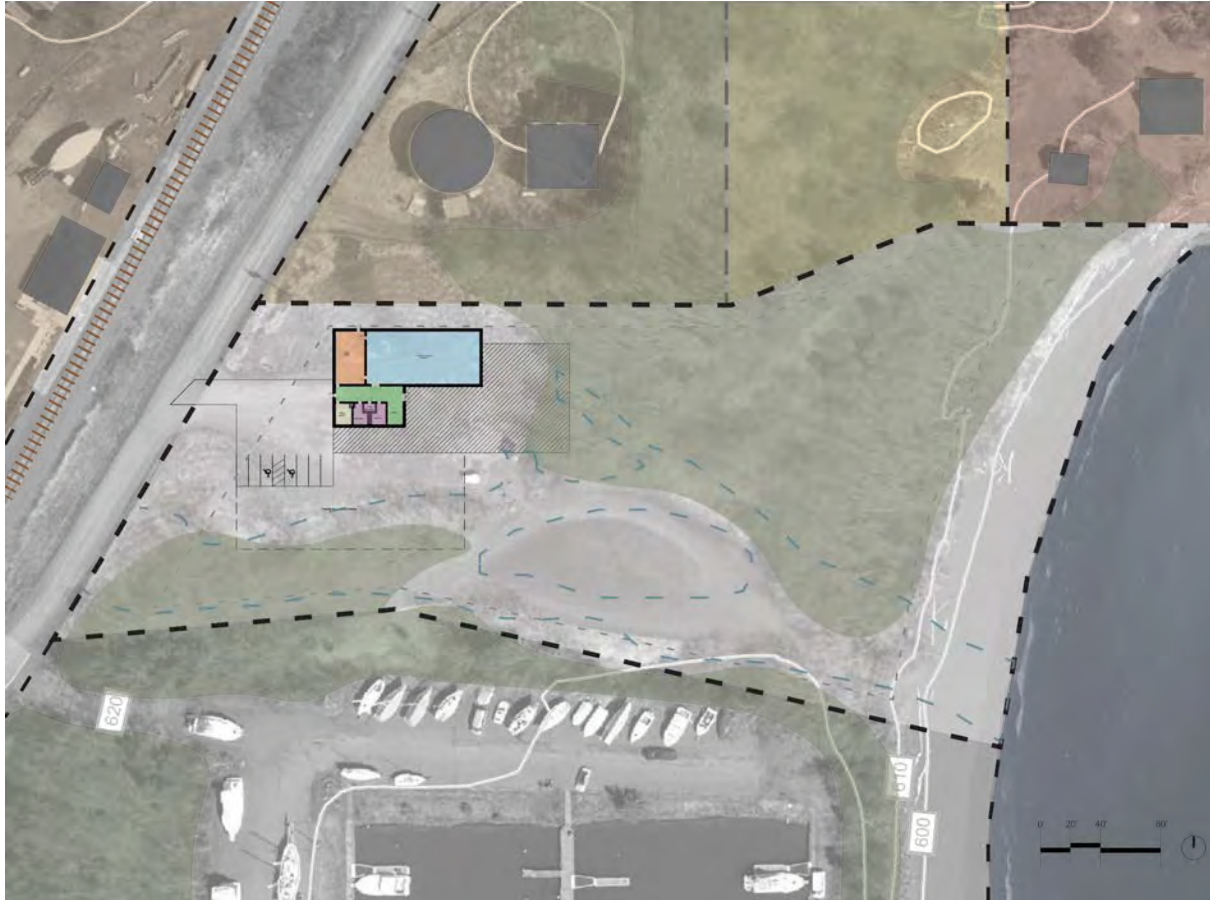
Dashed lines show property lines and setbacks.

Cones show viewpoints of interest.

Arrows show potential access points.

This Scenario 3 would require no new property acquisition.

Scenario 3: KRRC Public Beach Site



This is the **test fit of possible new building footprint**. Design and exact site planning TBD.

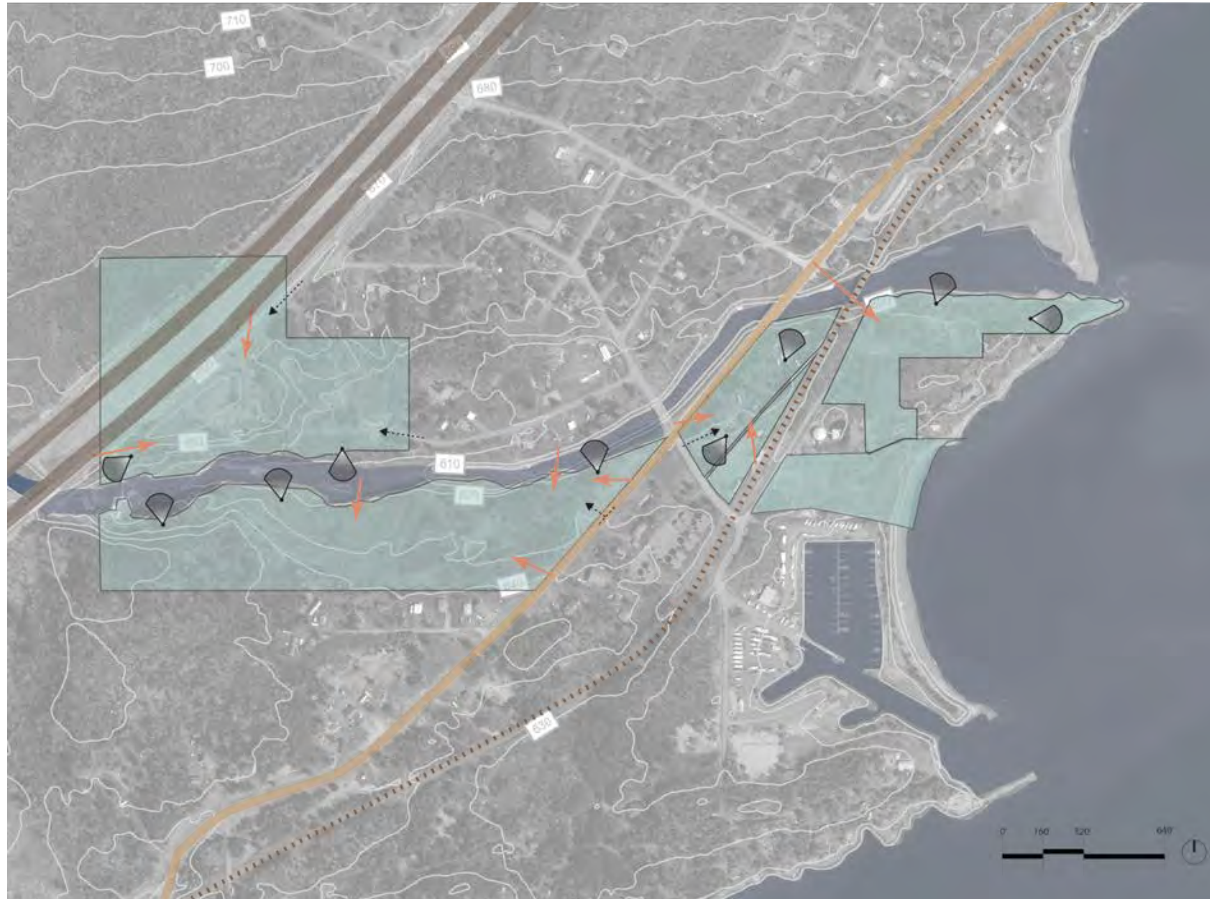
New building located to preserve and maximize vegetation areas along lakeshore as is.

This scenario includes improved everyday parking and loading access. Public beach parking could be incorporated into this scenario, TBD. Special event parking TBD.

No new property acquisition required for this Scenario 3.

Existing KRRC Rec Center building could be adapted to focus on sports equipment and access, or other uses. Field at that site could remain open for sports or other uses.

Scenario 4: Celebrating Nature's Gateway: Public Access/State Park



This scenario is ambitious and speculative. The scenario connects all the existing public and community parcels, and could include a variety of partners: MN DNR, MNDOT, MNHS, Lake County, others.

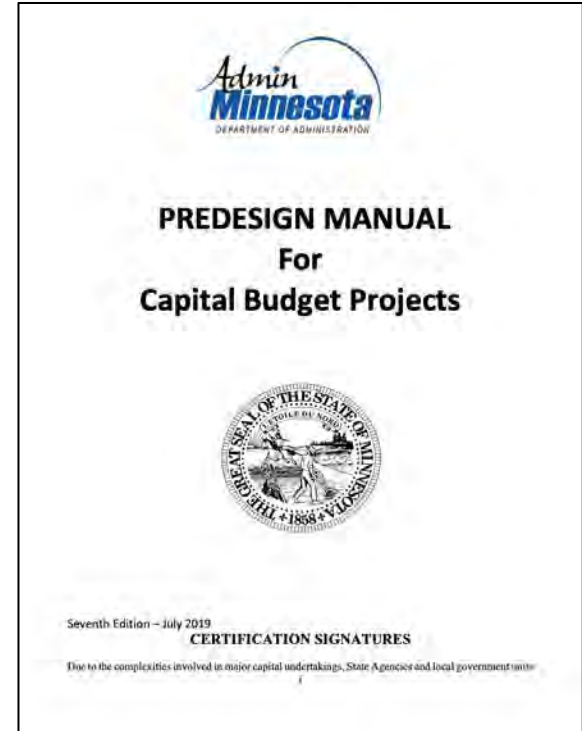
Details would be worked out with these partners. A larger diagram for a community center is shown, that would include spaces to support those other partners' needs.

(Alternatively, this is something that could be developed alongside the other scenarios.)

Funding Possibilities: Pre Design Process

Funding Possibilities and Strategies

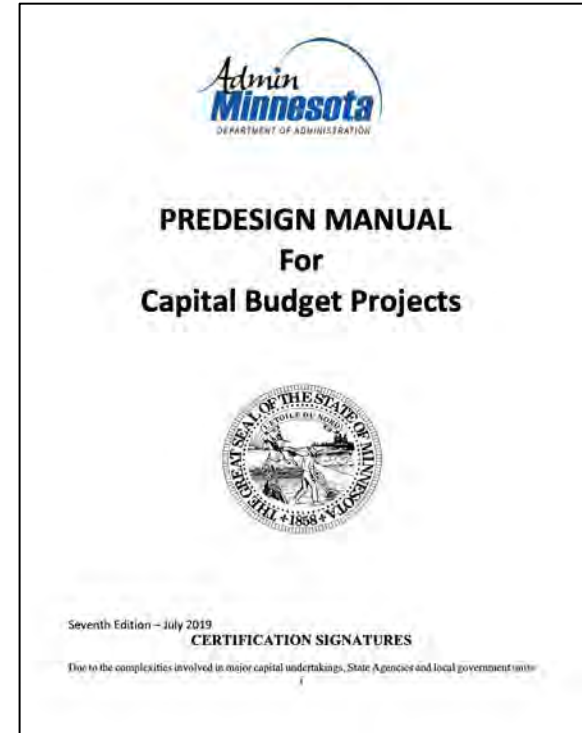
- Public Pre-Design Process
- Construction Pathways and Costs
- Next steps...



Funding Possibilities: Pre Design Process

Public Pre-Design Process

- Before Pre-Design
 - Agency Planning
 - Exploration of Assets, Roles and Partnerships
 - Identification of Need
 - Project Organization



Funding Possibilities: Pre Design Process

Elements of a Pre-Design

- Basis of Need
- Organization Planning
- Project Description
- Site Analysis
- Financial
- Schedule

PREDESIGN - continued	
Complete	N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Design requirements (i.e., American Correctional Association standards) d. Operating Standards (required State, Federal, & Industry standards) e. Federal Statutes/Laws/Requirements f. Significant Building Code or land use/zoning requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 34. Section 4 G Specialty Requirements: Review the need to conduct a security and/or vulnerability assessment for the project. Include the study in the predesign document along with associated costs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 35. Section 4 G Specialty Requirements: Include any unique requirements that are applicable to the specific project. i.e. performance requirements, unique testing requirements, environmental reports, assessments, impact statements, facility condition audits that may have been done, hazardous materials surveys, unique construction, restrictions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 36. Section 4 G Specialty Requirements: For renovations and demolitions, verify if the building or structure or ancillary is on the register of historic places and/or within a historic district. Meet with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine requirements. Include all SHPO requirements in the pre-design as well as all specialty consultants (historic preservationist, archaeologist) required for the future design team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 37. Section 4 H Project Procurement and Delivery: Provide a written statement and recommendation of the proposed construction delivery method to be used on the project. Include the reasons for this selection. Options include: Design-Bid-Build, Best Value, Construction Manager at Risk, Design-Build.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 38. Section 4 I: Project Design Services and other Owner Costs: Provide a listing of all costs that will be incurred in order to build the project.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 39. Section 4 J: Quality Control Plan: Provide a listing of all quality control services and costs that are needed and will be incurred in order to building the project.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 40. Section 5 Site Analysis and Selection: Provide a narrative on why the preferred site was selected for the project based on the locations that best meet pre-identified site criteria. For State-owned buildings/State Agency projects, coordinate this effort with the Department of Administration, Real Estate and Construction Services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 41. Section 5 Site Analysis and Selection: When locating or relocating or when proposing a new building or renovation, the Pre-design Document must include an analysis of the agency's location(s) using "Criteria for Locating State Offices and Agencies" located at: http://on.govadmin/government/construction-projects .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 42. Section 5 Site Analysis and Selection: If the proposed project is a new building that will be in a campus setting (i.e. school, university, prison, extended care), review location options on the campus in regards to efficient operation and programs provided on the campus. (i.e. Agency masterplanning of a campus should occur in order to give direction as to future growth and organization - Note: Masterplanning is not a bondable activity).

Funding Possibilities: **Construction Pathways**

Private / Non-Profit Funding (4-?? years)

- Design Concept and Initial Fundraising: 6 to 12 months
- Architecture and Design: 12+ months
- Fundraising: 18 to 24 to ?? months
- Construction (Phases): 12 to 24 months
- Move In and Occupancy

Funding Possibilities: **Construction Pathways**

Public / Bonding (6 to 12 years)

- Public Owner and Contracting Required
- Design Concept and Initial Fundraising: 6 to 12 months
- Architecture and Design (Pre-Design): 12+ months
- Fundraising: 18 to 24 to ?? months
- Bonding Process: 2-6 years (2027-2031)?
- Architecture and Design (Public Bidding): 12 months to 24 months (2028-2032)
- Construction Phase: 12 to 24 months (2028-2032)
- Move In and Occupancy
- Operations

Funding Possibilities: **Construction Pathways**

Hybrid

- Non-Profit Receives Public \$\$\$ through Bonding and/or Grants
- Non-Profit/Local Funding for 50%
- Public sector contracting procedures
- Public Land Owner may be required

Funding Possibilities: **Costs**

Funding Possibilities and Strategies

- Building Construction = \$2,100,000 (6,000sf x \$350/sf)
- Site Construction = \$420,000 (20%) to \$630,000 (30%)
- Subtotal Construction = \$2,520,000 to \$2,730,000
- Soft Costs @ 30% = \$800,000 to \$820,000
- TOTAL COST = \$3,300,000 to \$4,600,000 (+/- 30%)

Funding Possibilities: **Next Steps**

Use Public Pre-Design Process as a Guide

- Before Pre-Design
 - Agency Planning
 - Exploration of Assets, Roles and Partnerships
 - Identification of Need
 - Project Organization

Community plans: **Next Steps**

- **Community discussions about next steps**
- **Community decision-making process?**
- **Community capacity and organization**

Invitation to get more involved...

Watch out for communications from KRRC!

- **email newsletter, special events & announcements.**

More meetings will be planned for this fall to get into next steps...

- **Team going forward will depend on community interest and effort**

Please sign up, leave your comments and contact information.

Summary of this presentation can be sent after meeting.

(ESMC Partnership will be wrapping up this fall, but projects will continue...!)

Please add your feedback!

For each scenario...

What about this scenario do you like?

What about this scenario concerns you?

What questions do you have about this scenario?

UMN Team

Ursula Lang, Research Fellow - Minnesota Design Center, UMN College of Design, lang0294@umn.edu

Mary Vogel, Senior Research Fellow - Minnesota Design Center, UMN College of Design, vogel001@umn.edu

Tracy Chaplin, NE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership of UMN Extension, tracyumn@umn.edu

Richard Graves, Director - Center for Sustainable Building Research, rmgraves@umn.edu



MINNESOTA DESIGN CENTER | MDC

Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs



Regional Sustainable
Development Partnerships

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

