

DRAFT SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

NEW STILLWATER PARK (UNNAMED)

I. DESCRIPTION OF SECTION 4(F) RESOURCE

The Section 4(f) resource that could be affected by the proposed action is the New Stillwater Park, a planned park at South 2nd Street and Nelson Street to be donated to Stillwater. The park is yet unnamed, thus for the purposes of this document will be referred to as the New Stillwater Park.

A. DETAILED MAP

Figure E-12 shows the relationship of the Build Alternatives to the New Stillwater Park.

B. SIZE AND LOCATION

The New Stillwater Park is located at the southeast quadrant of South 2nd Street and Nelson Street intersection at the top of the Minnesota bluff near downtown Stillwater. The New Stillwater Park is about 0.4-acre in size and is also located within the Stillwater Commercial Historic District and the Stillwater Cultural Landscape District. The Stillwater Commercial Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Note: Separate Section 4(f) Evaluations also have been completed for the Stillwater Commercial Historic District and the Stillwater Cultural Landscape District.)

C. OWNERSHIP AND TYPE

The parcel for the New Stillwater Park is currently owned by a private party. The site will be designed and developed by the owner and upon completion will be donated to the City of Stillwater.

D. FUNCTION OF AND/OR AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES

The New Stillwater Park property is currently unused but is planned as a future city park. While park plans are still preliminary, activities on the site would be in the form of passive recreation, including play areas for children, walking, and an amphitheater for outdoor performances.

Figure E-12 – Location of New Stillwater Park and Build Alternatives (8.5x11 – b/w)

E. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING AND PLANNED USES

The New Stillwater Park parcel was originally part of the Joseph Wolfe Brewery, a contributing element to the Stillwater Commercial Historic District. The Joseph Wolfe Brewery, located at what is now the Main Street (Trunk Highway [TH] 36/95)/Nelson Street intersection, was originally constructed in 1872 and included the brewery building and tunnel/cave system. The Joseph Wolfe Brewery office was later added in 1878. The top two stories of the brewery building were added in 1898-1902. The contributing structures and buildings are still standing and have most recently been used as a commercial/restaurant establishment.

In the mid-to-late 1930's, the site was converted to an auto repair business and salvage yard. The site remained as an auto repair business and salvage yard for the next six decades. The site is no longer used as a salvage yard; it has been cleared and declared safe for use by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

The New Stillwater Park site is not identified as a future park property in the Stillwater Comprehensive Plan or on the city's proposed land use map. The proposed park's site is identified as commercial property in the city's zoning map and proposed land use map.

In 2003, Stillwater announced the donation of the park from local residents. As noted in the revised plan for the New Stillwater Park (March 26, 2004), "the overall design intent of the New Stillwater Park is to have it relate to and connect with the unique architectural history and landscape character of Stillwater... the goal is to create a park that is attractive both because of its Victorian features and because it accommodates interesting, entertaining, and relaxing activities".

The New Stillwater Park is planned to include play equipment for three different age groups (infants and toddlers; preschool [4-5 years old]; and school age [6-7 years old]), a terraced amphitheater with seating for 80 people (including wheelchair locations), and pathways. A future gazebo could be located at the center of the planned park. An amphitheatre looking over downtown Stillwater is planned for the southwest corner of the site. Terraced retaining walls are located along Nelson Street and are planned for planting areas. Plantings are also planned for along South 2nd Street and the southern property boundary. A potential future stair could be located at the park for a connection to Nelson Street and downtown Stillwater. The proposed park plan for the New Stillwater Park is shown on Figure E-13.

F. ACCESS AND USAGE

Vehicle access to the park is provided by Nelson Street and South 2nd Street. No parking areas are planned for the park. Several parking areas are located east of the New Stillwater Park along Main Street for downtown businesses and facilities. A parking area is also located directly west of the proposed New Stillwater Park on the west side of South 2nd Street, adjacent to the 2nd Street/Nelson Street intersection.

Figure E-13 – New Stillwater Park (8.5x11 – b/w)

The New Stillwater Park would be easily accessed by pedestrians and bicyclists, as it is located in near downtown Stillwater. A bicycle rack is planned for the entrance at the Nelson Street and South 2nd Street intersection. A paved sidewalk is currently located along the north side of Nelson Street. Pathways are also planned throughout the park.

G. RELATIONSHIP TO SIMILAR LAND IN THE AREA

Lowell Park is located directly adjacent to downtown Stillwater and the Lift Bridge. This park is heavily used and developed. Lowell Park is landscaped and has several park amenities, including a pavilion, picnic tables, park benches, restroom facility, walkways, and drinking fountains. Lowell Park is located northeast of the proposed New Stillwater Park, and may be visible from some viewpoints on the proposed park property. Access from the proposed New Stillwater Park to Lowell Park would be possible via Nelson Street.

Across the Lift Bridge in Wisconsin is Stillwater-owned Kolliner Park. Kolliner Park is a relatively large property (about 49 to 58 acres, depending on the level of the river) located adjacent to the St. Croix River. The park is relatively undeveloped and is valued primarily for its natural setting. The park may be visible from some viewpoints at New Stillwater Park on top of the Minnesota bluff. Access to Kolliner Park is provided from downtown Stillwater and Lowell Park via the Lift Bridge. Pedestrian/bicycle access across the bridge is provided via a narrow 5-foot sidewalk on the south side of the bridge.

The Stillwater Municipal Barge Facility property, located along the St. Croix River just southeast of the New Stillwater Park, is designated as future city parkland. Although the property has been used for barge and commercial operations until recently, Stillwater has identified the site as future parkland and completed a Master Plan for the property in December 1998. The Master Plan proposes the development of the site into a waterfront park with a focus on passive recreation. The city would eventually like to connect the Stillwater Municipal Barge Facility property to Lowell Park, creating a continuous strip of park/open space along the St. Croix River. A small, undeveloped trail currently links the two properties; however, it passes through two privately-owned properties.

Several other parks are located along the St. Croix River in this area. The major developed facilities include Interstate State Park, William O'Brien State Park, and Afton State Park in Minnesota, and Wisconsin's Interstate State Park. Smaller public facilities include St. Croix Boomsite Park and Mile Long Island in Minnesota. Less developed public parks include Kinnickinnic State Park and St. Croix Islands Wildlife Area in Wisconsin, and several game refuges in Minnesota. These parks are considered to be natural recreation areas, oriented towards hiking, camping, canoeing, and swimming. In contrast, the New Stillwater Park would be an urban park located near downtown Stillwater with planned passive uses.

H. APPLICABLE CLAUSES AFFECTING OWNERSHIP

The site is currently in private ownership and is planned to be donated to Stillwater. There are no known restrictions on property ownership relevant to Section 4(f) considerations.

I. UNUSUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Stillwater has a rich history as the “Birthplace of Minnesota”. Downtown Stillwater has a multitude of historic sites and structures and has been locally and nationally designated as an historic district. The New Stillwater Park is located within the southwest corner of the downtown Stillwater Commercial Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Views of downtown Stillwater may be possible from some locations at the New Stillwater Park.

Views of the Lift Bridge may also be possible from some locations at the New Stillwater Park. The Lift Bridge is one of two remaining examples in the Upper Midwest of a tower-and-cable highway lift bridge with truss spans and is considered an icon by Stillwater.

Another unusual characteristic of the proposed New Stillwater Park is that it is located adjacent to the St. Croix River. The river in this area is part of the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (itself a Section 4(f) resource), so designated for its outstanding scenic and recreational values. The river is a popular place for boating, camping, and other water-related recreational activities. The proposed New Stillwater Park is located on top of the Minnesota bluff, adjacent to the St. Croix River, and could provide a view of the river and its activities.

II. IMPACTS ON THE SECTION 4(F) RESOURCE

A. NO-BUILD

A new bridge across the St. Croix River would not be constructed under the No-Build Alternative. While the No-Build Alternative would not require the acquisition of any property from the New Stillwater Park, use of the park could be affected by increasing congestion on TH 36 and the Lift Bridge. Congestion is currently a problem in downtown Stillwater and across the Lift Bridge to Wisconsin, and it is projected to become even more problematic without changes to the existing conditions. The noise, visual intrusion, and difficult access resulting from this congestion, which could intrude upon the pleasurable use of the park, would worsen under the No-Build Alternative. An amphitheatre (see Section I.E) is among the proposed park amenities. Traffic noise associated with downtown congestion could also impact the pleasurable use of this proposed amenity under the No-Build Alternative. Access to the park, particularly from downtown Stillwater and Main Street could also be problematic with increased congestion under the No-Build Alternative.

B. BUILD ALTERNATIVES

Construction of the Build Alternative bridges would not require acquisition of property from the proposed New Stillwater Park. Below is a discussion of each Build Alternative and their impact on the proposed parkland.

Alternatives B-1 and C

A beneficial impact of Alternatives B-1 and C on the New Stillwater Park would be the reduction in motor vehicle congestion caused by through-traffic. However, the Lift Bridge could

remain open under Alternatives B-1 and C to local vehicular traffic, resulting in traffic congestion in downtown and contributing to traffic impacts on the proposed parkland. Year 2030 traffic levels for Alternatives B-1 and C with local traffic using the Lift Bridge are lower compared to the No-Build Alternative. Despite this, Nelson and Chestnut Street intersections with Main Street would operate beyond capacity (level of service F) in year 2030 with the Lift Bridge open to local vehicular traffic under Alternative B-1. The congestion in downtown Stillwater associated with maintaining the Lift Bridge for local vehicular traffic would contribute to visual intrusions, as well as access concerns, upon the New Stillwater Park. If the Lift Bridge is converted to a pedestrian/bicycle facility with Alternative B-1 or Alternative C, there would be no local traffic entering downtown Stillwater via the Lift Bridge, thereby minimizing downtown congestion.

Alternative D

A beneficial impact of Alternative D on the New Stillwater Park would be the reduction in motor vehicle congestion caused by through-traffic. The Lift Bridge would be converted to a pedestrian/bicycle facility with Alternative D, eliminating local traffic entering downtown Stillwater via the Lift Bridge.

However, the Alternative D river crossing would be located near the New Stillwater Park, leaving the Minnesota shore to the southeast of the proposed park from the northern portion of the Stillwater Municipal Barge Facility property. Views from the New Stillwater Park to the St. Croix River would be affected by the addition of a new river crossing with Alternative D. The Alternative D bridge would be located within the viewshed directly east of the proposed park over the St. Croix River.

Although the Alternative D river bridge is in closer proximity to the New Stillwater Park relative to Alternatives B-1 and C, air and noise emissions from traffic on the new Alternative D river bridge would likely not affect the pleasurable use of the proposed park. However, as noted above for the No-Build Alternative, an amphitheatre is among the proposed park amenities. Noise associated with Alternative D downtown could impact the use of this amenity. Refer to Chapter 8 of the SDEIS for detailed information on noise and air emissions in downtown Stillwater.

Alternative E

Under Alternative E, westbound traffic from Wisconsin would continue to travel through downtown Stillwater, resulting in increased motor vehicle congestion compared to the other Build Alternatives where the Lift Bridge is converted to a pedestrian/bicycle facility.

Capacity improvements are not feasible in downtown Stillwater due to the existing narrow streets, proximity of the buildings to the street, and high levels of pedestrian activity. Thus, Alternative E would result in increased future traffic congestion in downtown Stillwater compared to the other Build Alternatives. The increased periods of traffic congestion could impact both pedestrian and vehicular access to the park from downtown Stillwater.

Similar to Alternative D, the Alternative E river bridge is in closer proximity to the New Stillwater Park relative to Alternatives B-1 and C. However, noise and air emissions from traffic on the Alternative E bridge would likely not intrude upon the pleasurable use of the proposed park. Diversion of eastbound TH 36 traffic from downtown Stillwater would result in slightly lower noise levels for Alternative E compared to the No-Build Alternative. However, as noted above for the No-Build Alternative, an amphitheatre is among the proposed park amenities. Noise associated with Alternative E downtown could potentially impact the use of this amenity. Refer to Chapter 8 for detailed discussion of noise and air emissions.

Construction of Alternative E would itself not result in the direct acquisition of land from the proposed New Stillwater Park. Similar to Alternative D, the Alternative E river crossing would be located near the New Stillwater Park site, leaving the Minnesota shore just to the southeast of the proposed parkland. Views from the New Stillwater Park would be affected by the addition of a new river crossing with Alternative E.

C. POTENTIAL MITIGATION ITEMS

Potential mitigation items applicable to all Build Alternatives are summarized in the introduction to the Section 4(f) evaluations and described in Chapter 14 of the SDEIS. Upon identification of a Preferred Alternative, a mitigation package will be identified by the lead agencies from the list of mitigation items as well as additional mitigation items identified by agencies or the public during the SDEIS comment period. Additional potential impacts associated with the mitigation package items for the Preferred Alternative will be presented in the Supplemental Final EIS.

III. AVOIDANCE ALTERNATIVES

Construction of all Build Alternatives would avoid acquisition of property from the New Stillwater Park. However, given that an amphitheatre is one of the proposed elements of this park, noise impacts may potentially impair this use. Any potential 4(f) “use” of this resource resulting from the Preferred Alternative will be evaluated in the final 4(f) evaluation.

IV. MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

As noted above, none of the Build Alternatives would result in the permanent use of land from the New Stillwater Park.

Impacts on the proposed New Stillwater Park would result from traffic congestion in downtown Stillwater and the associated intrusions (i.e., visual, access concerns) on the proposed park. The continued use of the Lift Bridge for vehicular traffic would contribute to downtown congestion and associated impacts. Thus, Alternatives B-1, C, and D, where the Lift Bridge is converted to a pedestrian/bicycle facility, would not completely avoid congestion impacts but would minimize congestion related impacts on the proposed park. Congestion-related impacts on the

proposed park would also not be completely avoided with Alternative E, as eastbound TH 36 traffic would be diverted from downtown Stillwater, but westbound TH 36 traffic would continue to travel through downtown.

The visual setting from the New Stillwater Park could be affected by Alternatives D and E due to their proximity to the New Stillwater Park. The bridge type selected will attempt to provide a complementary fit with the surrounding landscape and visual setting of the Stillwater area to minimize harm to the Stillwater Commercial Historic District. The design will also attempt to maintain a link to the historic character of downtown Stillwater and the natural features of the St. Croix Valley.

V. COORDINATION

Extensive agency coordination has occurred throughout the SDEIS process in regards to the Section 4(f) resources, as described in the Introduction to the Draft Section 4(f) Evaluations. With respect to the New Stillwater Park, primary coordination has occurred with the City of Stillwater, as future owners of the park property, and the federal, state, and local government agencies and non-governmental groups through the Stakeholder Resolution Process. Further coordination will continue with Stillwater as recipients of the donation and future owners of the park development.