

Briarwood Nature Area

Location: 2500 Unity Avenue North

Nature Area Size: 20.06 Acres

Description

Briarwood Nature Area is located within a residential neighborhood in the northernmost portion of the City. Bassett Creek runs along the west side of the nature area, and large portions of the site is floodplain and used for flood storage. There is a mix of coniferous and deciduous trees within the nature area. The terrain is relatively level for walking. City trails and social trails connect to the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly the multi-family residential area located on the southwest side.

Three storm water ponds are present within the nature area, and treat runoff from outside the nature area boundary. The ponds have been naturalized, which allows the primary function of water quality treatment to remain, but adds native vegetation as a buffer component.

Forest and Woodlands

Forest and woodland communities are present throughout the Briarwood Nature Area, and are a dominant land cover type. The woods on the northern portion of the site are a mixture of hardwood trees composed of green ash, box elder, maple, basswood, and oak. The trees are mixed ages, and are secondary growth. Buckthorn is very high density.

The far southern portion of the site contains a floodplain forest, which transitions to wetland as the area nears Bassett Creek. Hardwoods such as box elder and cottonwood are prevalent in this area.

Floodplain forest habitat is also present along Bassett Creek, including an assemblage of large cottonwood trees, mixed with American elm, green ash, and box elder. This appears to be a fragment of a historically larger community.

Wetlands

Wetland are present in association with Bassett Creek, and include the previously described floodplain forest, and areas along the creek are wet meadow habitat. Reed canary grass is a dominant species within these wet meadow habitats.

Aquatic Resources

Bassett Creek flows through the Briarwood Nature Area and is the primary aquatic resource. Bank stabilization projects have been completed in this area, with portions of riprap and bioengineered banks present. Live dogwood stakes and willow wattles (bundles of willow shrubs anchored into the stream banks) have also been used to stabilize the banks, and establish rapid establishment of vegetation. A riffle section of the creek is present near the pedestrian bridge over the creek and the eastern entrance provides a very scenic view of these resources.

Prairie and Grassland

Native prairie is present around the storm water treatment ponds. The northwest storm water pond is located in a shadier area, and is subject to ongoing establishment. This is a MnDOT pond and is not part of the City's annual contract for native vegetation management. The pond located on the east side of the nature area is maintained by the City's native landscape contractor and is located in an open area with few trees, which is more conducive to prairie conditions and consequently the vegetation is more established.

Grassland is present within the southeast portion of the site, and is essentially overgrown field, not prairie.

Invasive Species

Invasive species are present within the Nature Area, and include both upland and wetland habitats. Buckthorn is the primary species of concern, and some control has been attempted within the nature area previously. Buckthorn density is very high in the northern third of the nature area, where buckthorn is so dense it is difficult to even access the area. Buckthorn density decreases as you go south, and as it gets wetter, is general not a concern. Buckthorn density is light under the hardwood trees in the south, and effective control may be able to keep them at low density, although a 10% increase has been observed since the 2003 inventory.

Reed canary grass is dominant within the wet meadow habitats along Bassett Creek, and with the creek regularly supplying new seeds, it is unlikely that this area will be controlled without extensive and diligent management.

Description	%Cover2003	% Cover 2013	% Change
Common Buckthorn – NE woods	60	85	+25
Common Buckthorn – Central floodplain forest	60	50	-10
Common Buckthorn – Southern woods	30	40	+10

Site Recommendations

The Briarwood Nature Area contains a variety of habitats, and a number of recommendations can be made to improve the ecological health of this area.

Natural Resources

Manage buckthorn (high priority)

Buckthorn is present within the Nature Area, and some areas have the greatest density within the City. Removal of buckthorn within the park would be a significant undertaking, but would transform this area if it could be controlled.

Maintain high quality wetland buffer and native prairie (high priority)

Exiting buffer around the storm water ponds should be maintained. Prairie can be expanded upon by extending the prairie around the southern pond to the south and east and doubling the area of prairie within the nature area.

Enhance the wooded upland and floodplain forests (medium priority)

The floodplain forest and upland woods contain many mature species, including some of the oldest trees within the City. The health of the woods would be enhanced if some of the box elder were removed and replaced with a diverse assemblage of native tree species.

Amenities

Install entry signs (high)

Briarwood Nature Area has one entry sign along Unity Avenue North. Signs should be installed at each of the main entrances, including the access off of Dawnview Terrace using approved style type.

Install pet waste disposal system (high)

Briarwood Nature Area should include waste disposal systems for their dogs; one at each main entry. This not only keeps the park clean and attractive but it helps to maintain the water quality of Bassett Creek.

Improve physical and visual access (high)

While there is easy access to the nature area, there could be additional access provided by formalizing public use of the trails by possibly obtaining a trail easement for connections on the southern end of the nature area off of Unity Avenue. Connection could also be made to the proposed Minnaqua Greenbelt to the south. Improve vantage points to observe Bassett Creek, and possibly identify canoe or kayak access to the creek.

Upgrade bench (medium)

The benches within the nature area are functional but when time comes to replace, they should adhere to an approved bench style for nature areas. This would provide visual continuity within the nature area system and also strengthen user distinction that Briarwood is a Nature Area.

Install educational sign (low)

Briarwood Nature Area has educational sign near Bassett Creek bridge that describes the creek bank restoration project. Additional signs may be added that discusses habitats and wildlife that can be found in the nature area along with trail distance.

Install interpretive sign (low)

In addition to the interpretive sign near the Bassett Creek pedestrian bridge. There are other opportunities to educate the user on a number of topics including wildlife habitat, buckthorn removal and native prairie and woodland restoration.

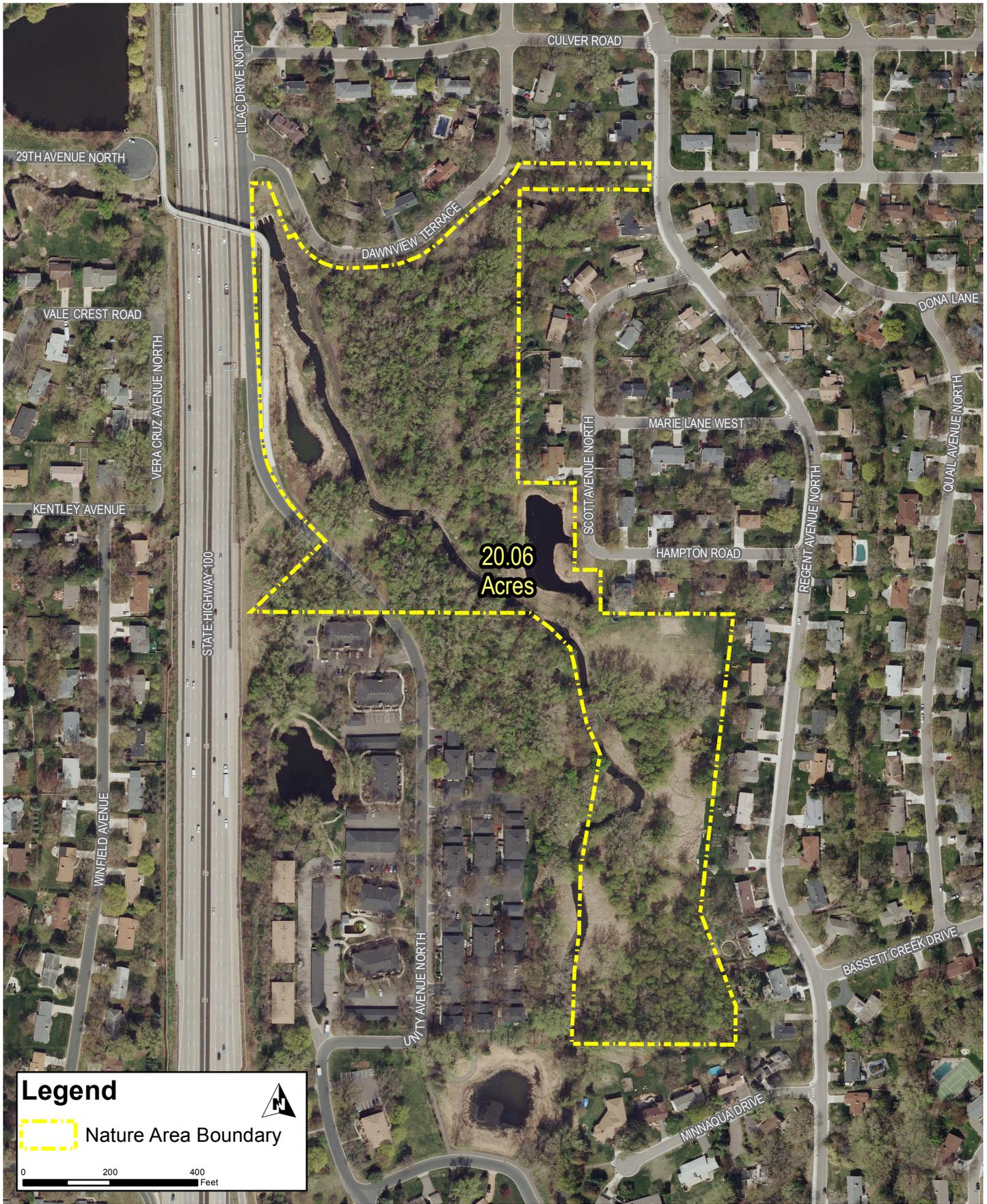
Upgrade trash Receptacle (low)

The trash receptacle is one of the first amenities viewed upon entering the nature area. As such, it should not only provide maintenance functionality and efficiency but should also be attractive and reflect the image of the Briarwood Nature Area. Three should be located within the park; one on the north side on Unity Avenue on north central side of nature area, one on the southern side off of Unity Avenue and the other at Dawnview Terrace.

Table 5.6 Briarwood Nature Area Improvement Priorities

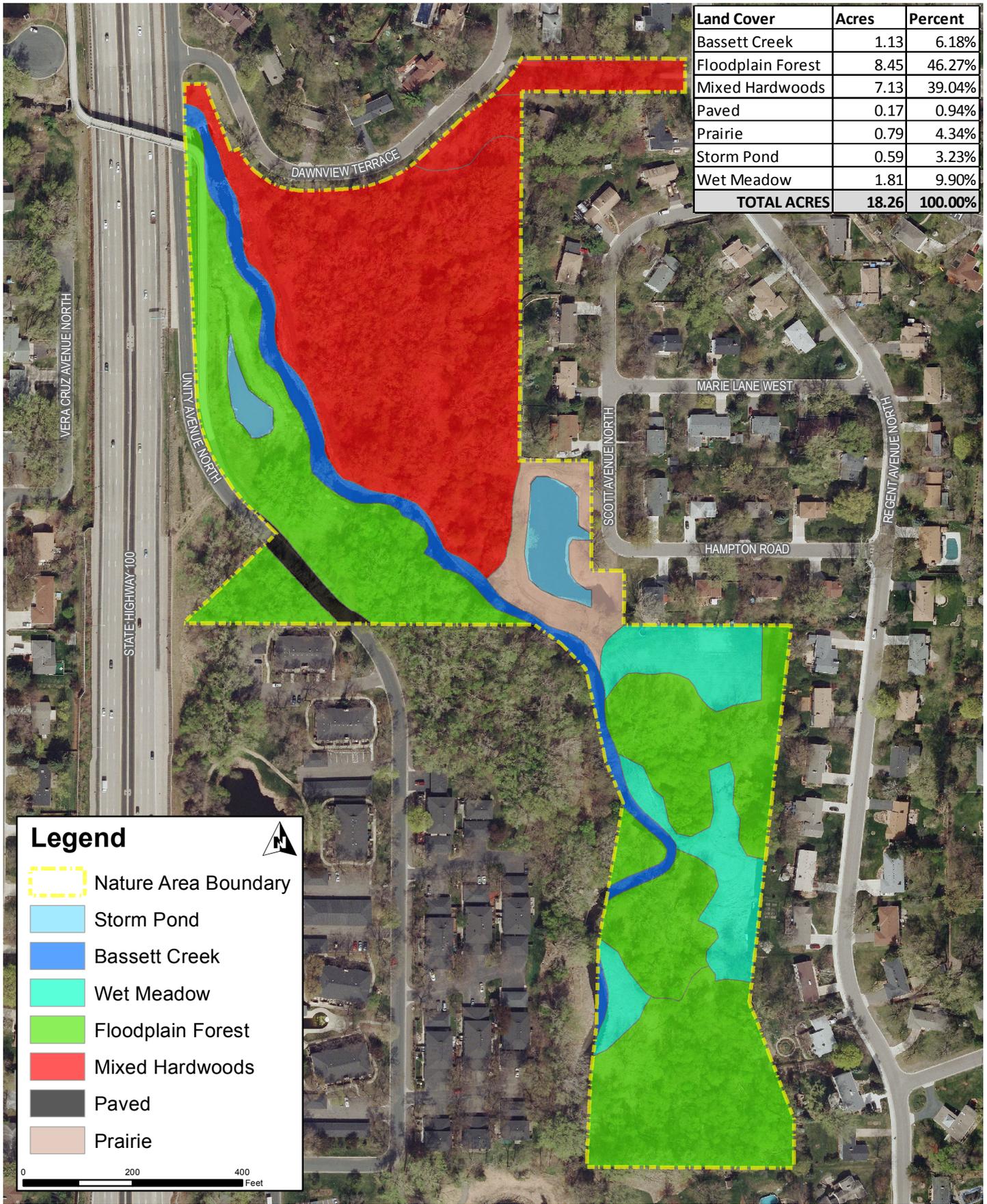
Priority	Management Type	Description	Action	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Cost Opinion
High	Upland woods	Buckthorn management	Remove buckthorn	12	Acre	\$2,500	\$30,000
Medium	Native prairie	High quality native prairie	Controlled burns, herbicide applications, periodic reseeding	5	Acre	\$5,000	\$25,000
Medium	Upland woods and floodplain forest	Forest health	Remove damaged trees, plant younger and more diverse trees	5	Acre	\$2,000	\$10,000
High	Amenity/Access	Physical access	Obtain easements or complete land exchange to formalize social trails as formal access points	1	Each	\$10,000	\$10,000
High	Amenity/Access	Physical access	Extend trail, pavement improvements	750	LF	125	\$95,000
Medium	Amenity	Bench design continuity throughout nature area system	Install benches at regular intervals or at key viewpoints	4	Each	\$1,500	\$6,000
Low	Amenity	Trash/recyclable receptacle design throughout nature area system	Install waste/ recycle trash receptacle at entries	3	Each	\$2,000	\$6,000
High	Amenity	Entry sign design continuity throughout nature area system	Install sign at entries	3	Each	\$5,000	\$15,000
High	Amenity	Pet waste disposal system at key access point	Install pet waste disposal system at entries	3	Each	\$600	\$1,800
Low	Amenity	Natural resources education; design	Install additional interpretive signs	2	Each	*\$3,000	\$6,000

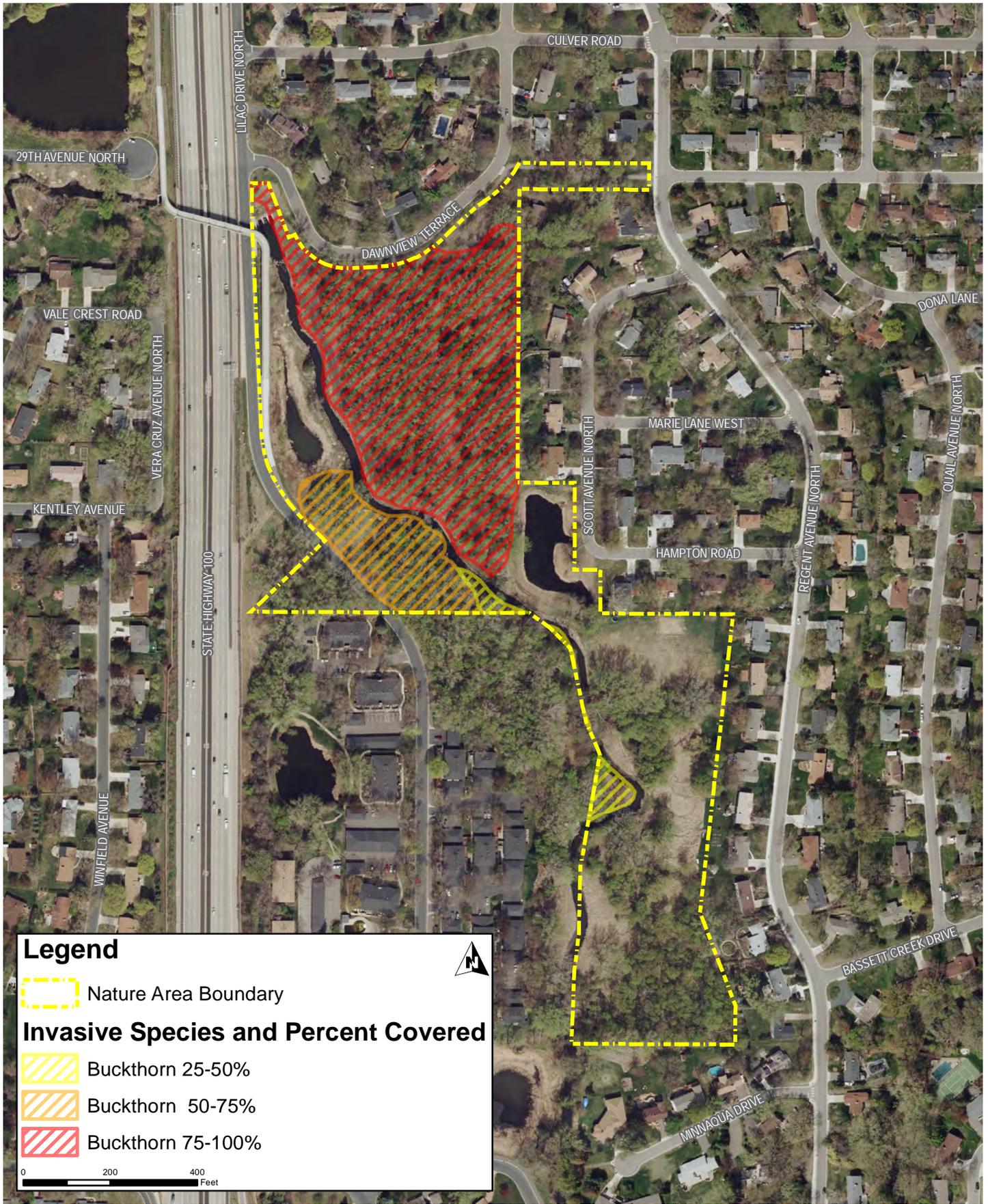
		continuity throughout nature area system	along trail				
Low	Amenity/Access	Physical access	Identify and construct canoe access				\$5,000

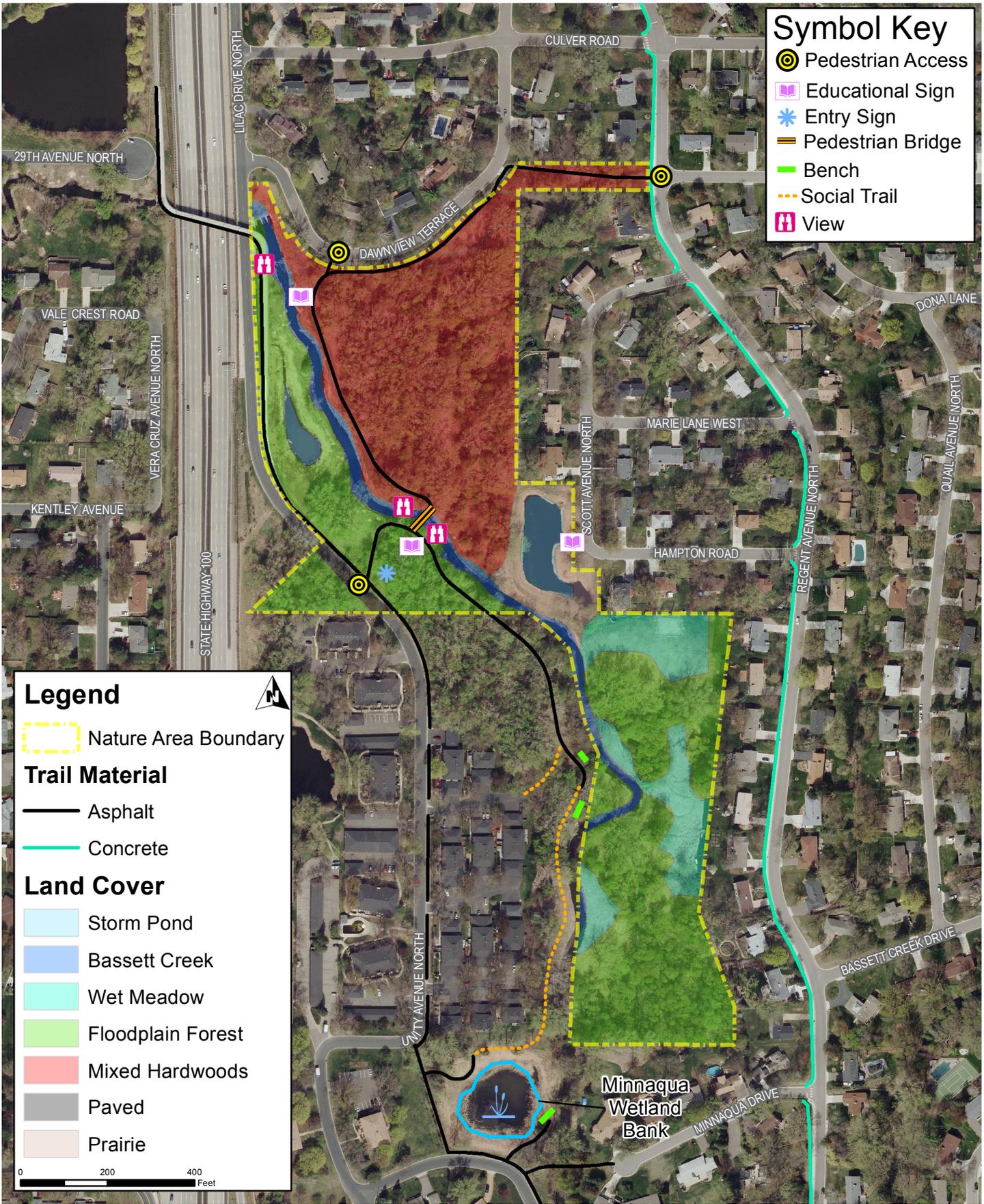


Briarwood Nature Area - 2012 Aerial
 Golden Valley Natural Resources Management Plan

FIGURE 5.12









Legend

- Nature Area Boundary
- Trail Material**
- Asphalt
- Concrete
- Land Cover**
- Storm Pond
- Bassett Creek
- Wet Meadow
- Floodplain Forest
- Mixed Hardwoods
- Paved
- Prairie

Symbol Key

- Pedestrian Access
- Educational Sign
- Entry Sign
- Bench
- Natural Surface Trail
- Possible Easement Area
- Dog Waste Disp Sys
- Trash Receptable

Briarwood Nature Area - Photographs



