

Laurel Avenue Greenbelt

Location: 6900 and 7100 Laurel Avenue South

Nature Area Size: 33.1 Acres

Description

The Laurel Avenue Greenbelt is located on the south side of the City along Laurel Avenue. The nature area contains three distinct areas; East and West Ring ponds (14.54 acres), the central Cortlawn Pond (17.27 acres), and a smaller Dakota/Brunswick Avenue area (1.30 acres). The greenbelt is located within a variety of land uses including residential, commercial/retail, light industrial, and rail corridors. There are trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

Forest and Woodlands

The majority of the land cover within the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt is wooded. The majority of the trees are mixed hardwoods including green ash, maple, basswood, and oaks in upland areas, and cottonwood and box elder along the wetter pond edges.

Wetlands

Wetland is present within the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt as three large ponds. These are deep water habitat, and have very little to no wetland fringe. These ponds were constructed for flood storage and rate control purposes, and not as natural features, although they have been naturalized and provide many important wetland functions.

Aquatic Resources

Although classified as wetland, the three large ponds within the Greenbelt are an aquatic resource, constructed for flood control and rate control purposes in the late 1970's. The two western ponds each have a small wooded island.

Prairie and Grassland

Along the trails and adjacent Laurel Avenue are areas of maintained turf grasses, but no areas of native prairie are present.

Invasive Species

Buckthorn density is generally low overall within the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt, and densities of buckthorn have decreased since the 2003 inventory was completed. Dense pockets of buckthorn remain present, however, as portions of the greenbelt have seen an overall decrease.

Table 5.11 Invasive Species Cover Percent Change 2003-2013			
Description	%Cover2003	% Cover 2013	% Change
Common Buckthorn – Ring Ponds	0	0	No change
Common Buckthorn – Cortlawn Pond, west side	60	45	-15
Common Buckthorn – Cortlawn Pond, east side	60	30	-30
Common Buckthorn – Dakota/Brunswick	60	30	-30

Site Recommendations

Recommendations related to natural resources apply to all of three areas.

Natural Resources

Manage buckthorn (high)

Buckthorn is present within the nature area, but is at relatively lower density than other natural areas overall. Where present, it is dense, which provides a good management target to lower the overall density, and concentrate in localized portions of the greenbelt. Maintaining a low density would be an ongoing goal for this area.

Complete tree inventory (low)

The City completed an inventory of public trees in active parks and boulevards around 2010; however, the inventory did not extend into nature areas. The original landscaping and planting plan for the areas immediately adjacent to the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt ponds is on file. This plan, as well as field inventory and observation should assist in making future decisions about vegetation and tree management. The inventory should be reviewed when completed and management should focus on planting appropriate native species when actions are taken.

Amenities

Amenity recommendations for the three Laurel Avenue Greenbelt areas (Ring Ponds, Cortlawn Pond and Dakota/Brunswick Avenue area) will be discussed separately, however there is a common consideration to formalize 600 feet of six foot wide natural surface trails (\$12,000) or eight foot wide paved trails (\$30,000).

East and West Ring Ponds

Install entry signs (high)

No signs exist to this area. Signs (3) should be installed at each of the entrances at Western Avenue, Louisiana South and Colonial Road, and Laurel and Pennsylvania (within open space easement).

Install pet waste disposal system (high)

The Ring Ponds area of the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt include pet waste disposal systems; one at each of the access points. This not only keeps the park clean and attractive but it helps to maintain the water quality of the ponds.

Install educational sign (medium)

Install sign that describes the history of the area and the pond project.

Install benches (medium)

Install/replace four new benches along the trail that follow City approved bench style standards.

Install trash/recyclable receptacle (low)

Install three new trash receptacles that follow approved trash receptacle standards near each of the signs (see locations above)

Cortlawn Pond

Install entry signs (high)

No signs exist to this area. Signs should be installed at each of the entrances.

Install pet waste disposal system (high)

The ring pond area of the Laurel Avenue Greenbelt include pet waste disposal systems; one at each of the access points. This not only keeps the park clean and attractive but it helps to maintain the water quality of the ponds.

Install educational sign (medium)

Install sign that describes the history of the area and the pond project.

Install benches (medium)

Install four new benches along the trail that follow City approved bench style standards.

Install trash Receptacle (low)

Install three new trash receptacles that follow approved trash receptacle standards near each of the signs (see locations above)

Install canoe access (low)

The ponds are of sufficient size to allow limited recreational use via canoe, provided an access is available.

Dakota Brunswick Avenue Area

Install entry signs (high)

No signs exist to this area. Signs should be installed at each entrance to the greenbelt.

Table 5.12 Laurel Avenue Greenbelt Improvement Priorities

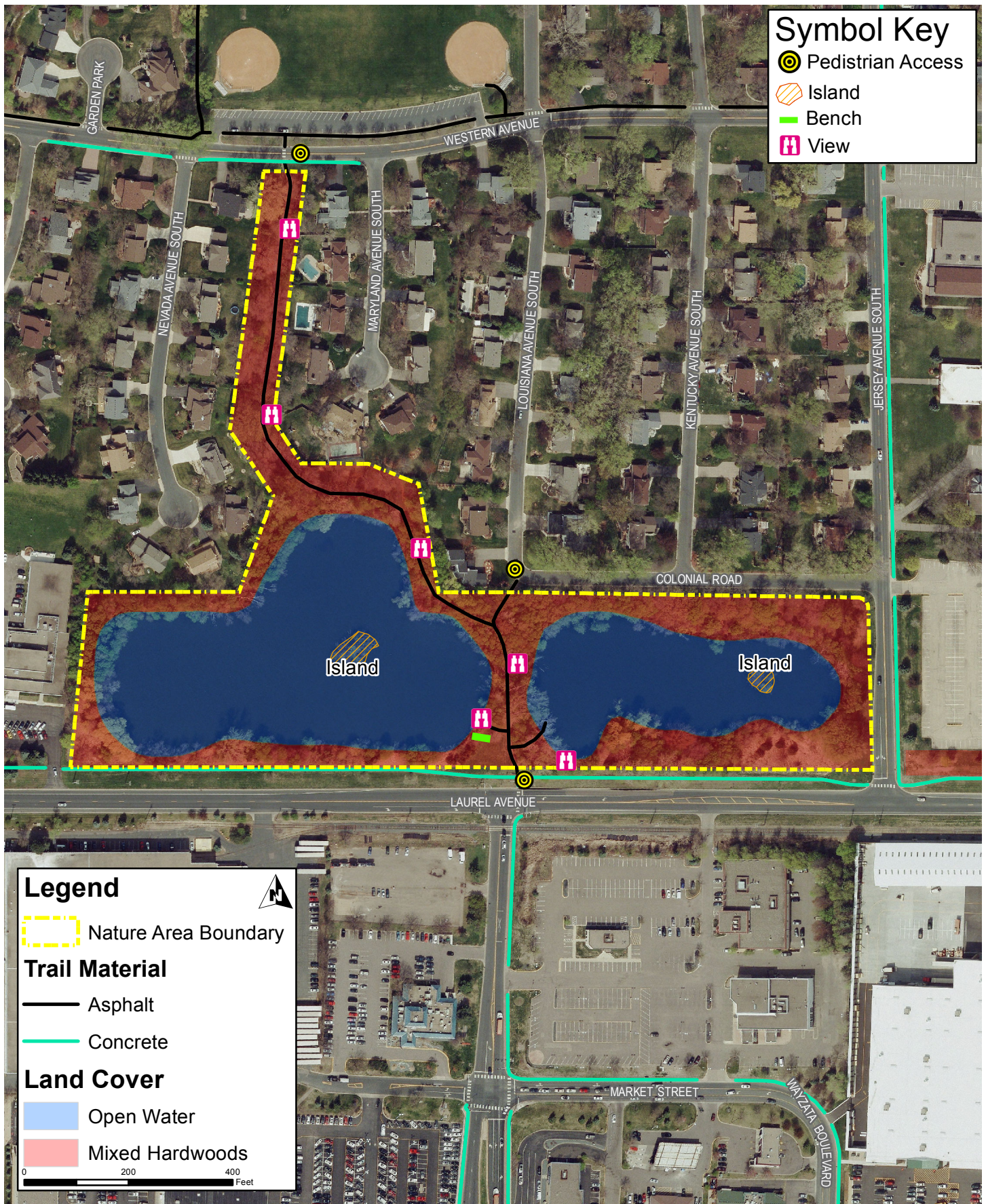
Priority (H, M, L)	Management Type	Description	Action	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Cost Opinion
<i>Ring, Cortlawn, and Brunswick/Dakota Areas – Natural Resources Improvements</i>							
High	Upland woods	Buckthorn Infestation	Remove buckthorn	2	Acre	\$4,000	\$8,000
Low	Forest Health	Data Collections	Tree Inventory	33	Acre	\$200	\$6,600
<i>Ring, Cortlawn, and Brunswick/Dakota Areas – Amenity Improvements</i>							
High	Amenity	Entry sign design continuity through nature area system	Install sign at entries	5	Each	\$5,000	\$25,000
High	Amenity	Pet waste disposal system at key access point	Install pet waste disposal system	5	Each	\$600	\$3,000
Medium	Amenity	Bench design throughout nature area system	Install benches along the trail at regular intervals or at key viewpoints	8	Each	\$1,500	\$12,000
Low	Amenity	Natural resources education; design continuity throughout nature area system	Install interpretive sign along trail at key vantage points	3	Each	\$3,000	\$9,000
Low	Amenity	Trash/recyclable receptacle design throughout nature area system	Install waste/ recycle trash receptacle at entry	3	Each	\$2,000	\$6,000
Low	Amenity/Access	Trail access/extension	Natural surface trail, consider pavement improvements (6')	600	LF	\$200	\$12,000
Low	Amenity/Access	Trail access/extension	Paved trail improvements	600	LF	\$500	\$30,000
Low	Amenity/Access	Recreation	Install canoe access	2	Each	\$5,000	\$10,000

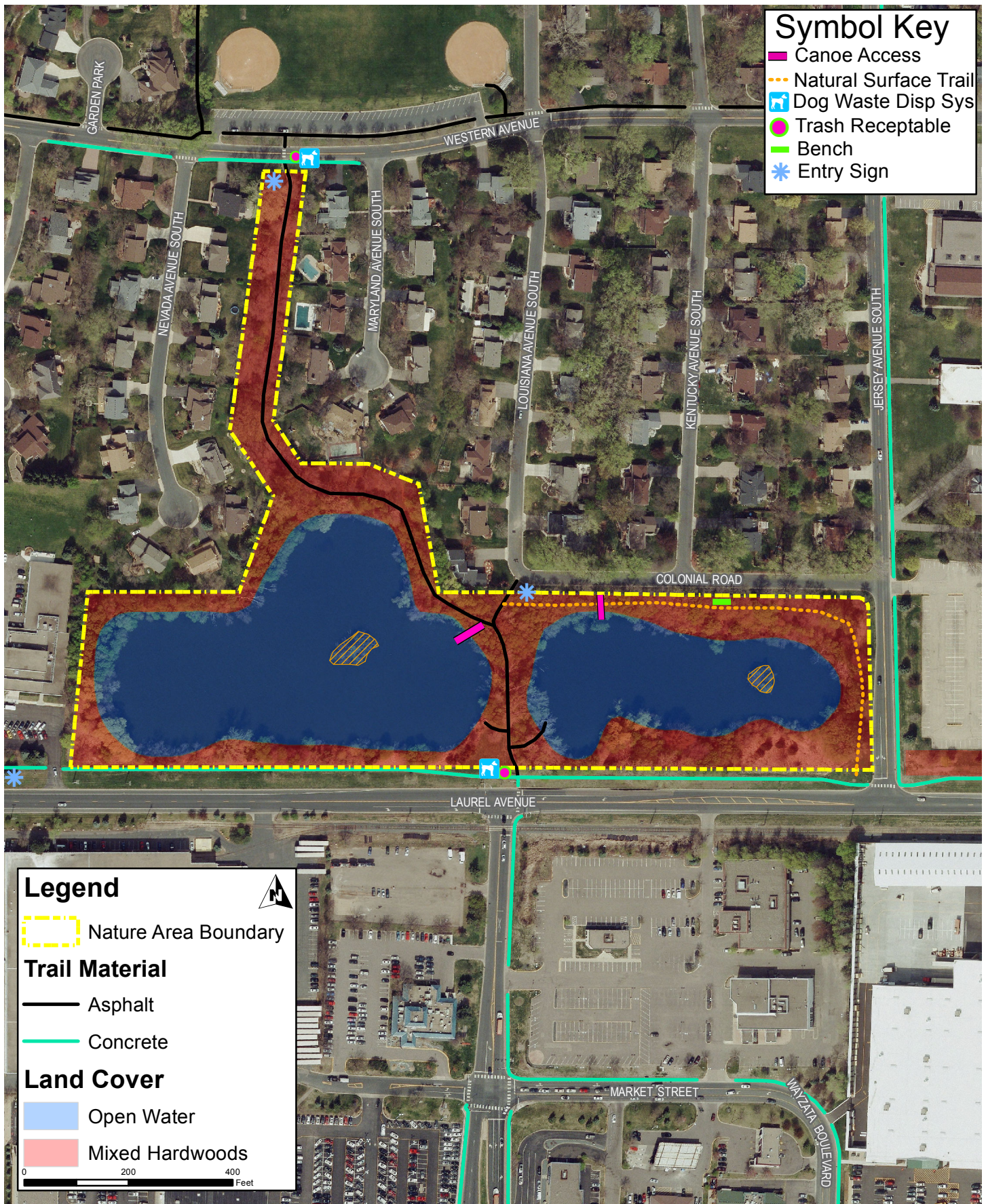














Legend

 Nature Area Boundary

0 150 300 Feet

