Mary Hills Nature Area

Location: 2190 Bonnie Lane
Size: 15.87 Acres

Description

Mary Hills Nature Area is located within a residential neighborhood in the northeast corner of the city and adjacent to railroad tracks. The nature area provides a great example of a mixed hardwood forest, with inclusions of wooded and emergent wetlands. Bassett Creek cross through the nature area, and although not publicly visible from the trails, is a significant resource.

A single trail winds through the park, and passes through the wooded upland areas with a connection to the City of Robbinsdale Sochacki Park. Many of the smaller habitats are not visible from the trail. The nature area is identified by an entry sign, has cable and wood fencing that adds to the aesthetics of the nature area. It also has picnic and seating areas along the trail.

Forest and Woodlands

Forest and woodland communities include upland woodland. Disturbed deciduous forests and woodland with mixed species canopy of cottonwood, green ash, and box elder are also widespread. Overall, the forested portions are very mixed in species, ages, and quality, and reflect a moderate level of disturbance.

Wetlands

Wetland is present within the Mary Hills Nature Area, including large areas of reed canary grass-dominated wet meadow, cattail marsh, and shrub swamps dominated by willow. Areas of hardwood swamp and floodplain forest are also present. In general, the wetlands are not accessible by from the trail system, and tend to blend in and not be noticed. The wetland is composed of common species, but is unique in the connectivity to Bassett Creek, the dominance of shrubs, and the relative diversity within a relatively small space. Mary Hills contains one of the larger shrub swamps in the City.

Aquatic Resources

Bassett Creek flows through the park, although it is not visible from the trails within the park. Bassett Creek is visible from along Bassett Creek Drive, where it also connects to the adjacent Rice Lake Nature Area. Bassett Creek is an important resource, as are the multiple wetlands and floodplain areas associated with it.

Prairie and Grassland

No areas of prairie or grassland are present within the nature area. Open areas dominated by reed canary grass are considered to be wetland.

Invasive Species

As Mary Hills Nature Area is dominated by wooded habitat, buckthorn is a primary concern. Indeed, the majority of the nature area has buckthorn, with densities ranging from relatively sparse, to impenetrable. Wetland also contain buckthorn, including the less common glossy buckthorn, which is present within the shrub swamp habitats. Reed canary grass is also present with Mary Hills, but is shade limited, so it is only dominant is the wet meadow habitats present within openings in the tree canopy.

Table 5.13 Invasive Species Cover Percent Change 2003-2013

Description	%Cover2003	% Cover 2013	% Change
Common Buckthorn	50	70	+20

Site Recommendations

Mary Hills Nature Area is a great example of a mixed hardwood forest, with inclusions of wooded and emergent wetlands. The deficiencies within the Mary Hills Nature Area are primarily related to vegetation.

Natural Resources

Manage buckthorn (high priority)

Buckthorn is prevalent throughout the park, and all areas could be managed to control this species.

Enhance the wooded upland and floodplain forests (medium)

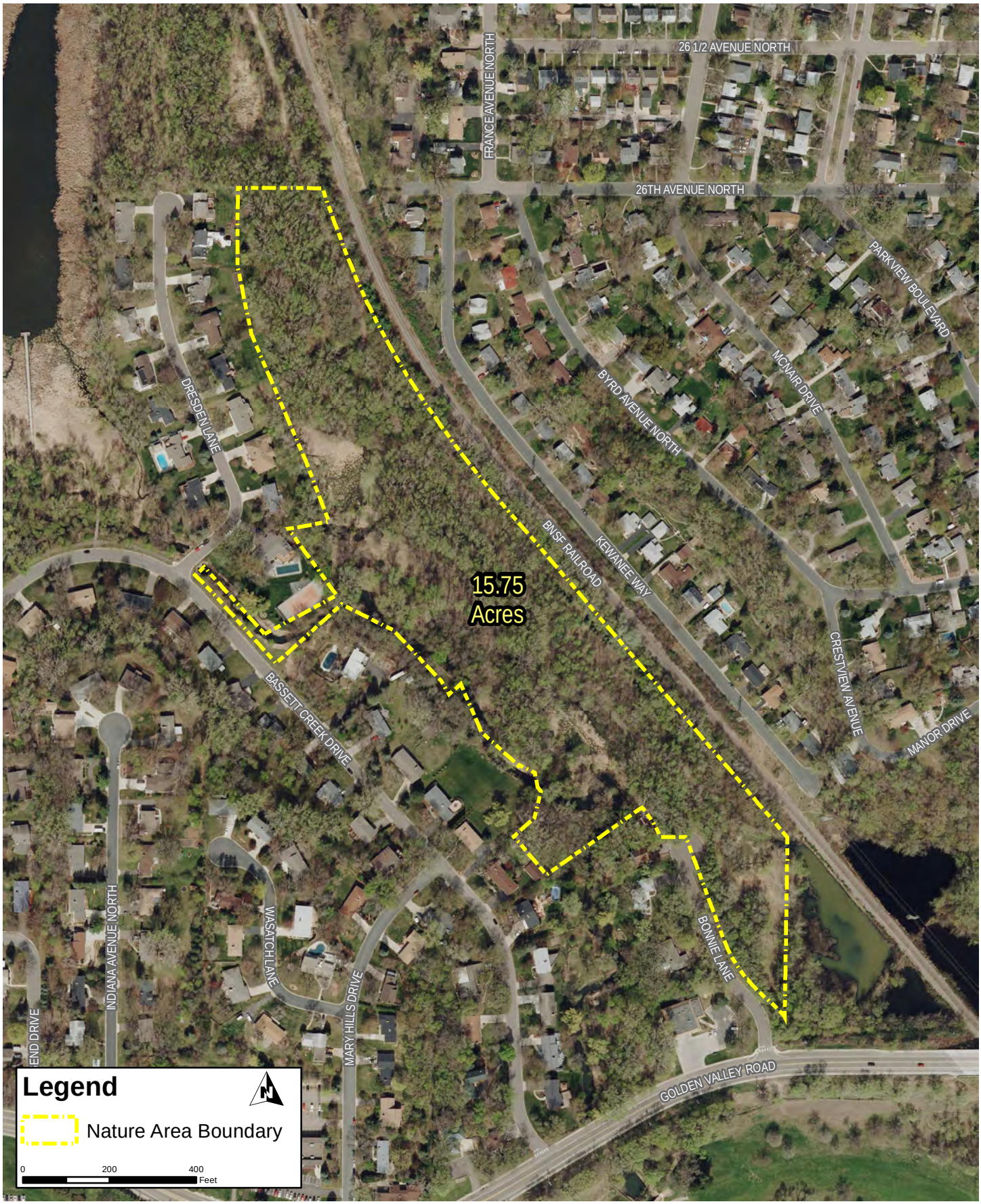
The health of the woods would be enhanced if younger trees could be planted to offset the eventual loss of some of the older trees.

Amenities

A concept plan has been developed as part of the Sochacki Park/Mary Hills/Rice Lake Nature Area, which includes collaboration between Three Rivers Park District, the City of Robbinsdale and the City of Golden Valley. This natural resource management plan should support the efforts of that collaboration. Recommendations include ensuring that pet waste is addressed, and that opportunities are provided to view Bassett Creek.

Table 5.14 Mary Hills Nature Area Improvement Priorities

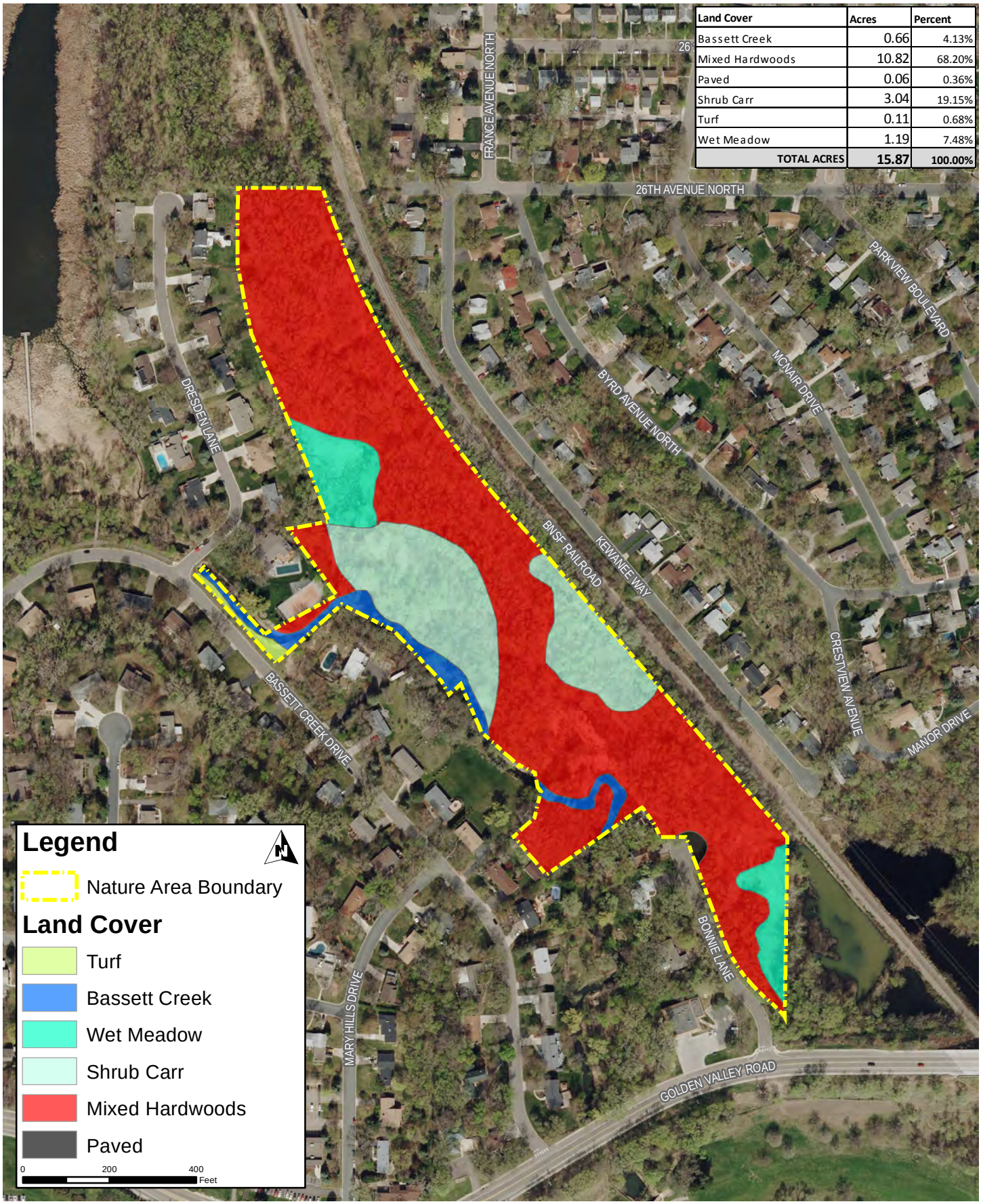
Priority (H, M, L)	Management Type	Description	Action	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Cost Opinion
High	Wooded uplands, shrub swamp	Mixed hardwoods, shrub swamp	Buckthorn eradication/control	12	Acre	$3,500	$25,000
Medium	Upland woods and hardwood swamp	Improve forest health, diversity	Remove undesirable trees, replant with native species	6	Acre	$3,500	$20,000



Mary Hills Nature Area- 2012 Aerial

Golden Valley Natural Resources Management Plan

FIGURE 5.43

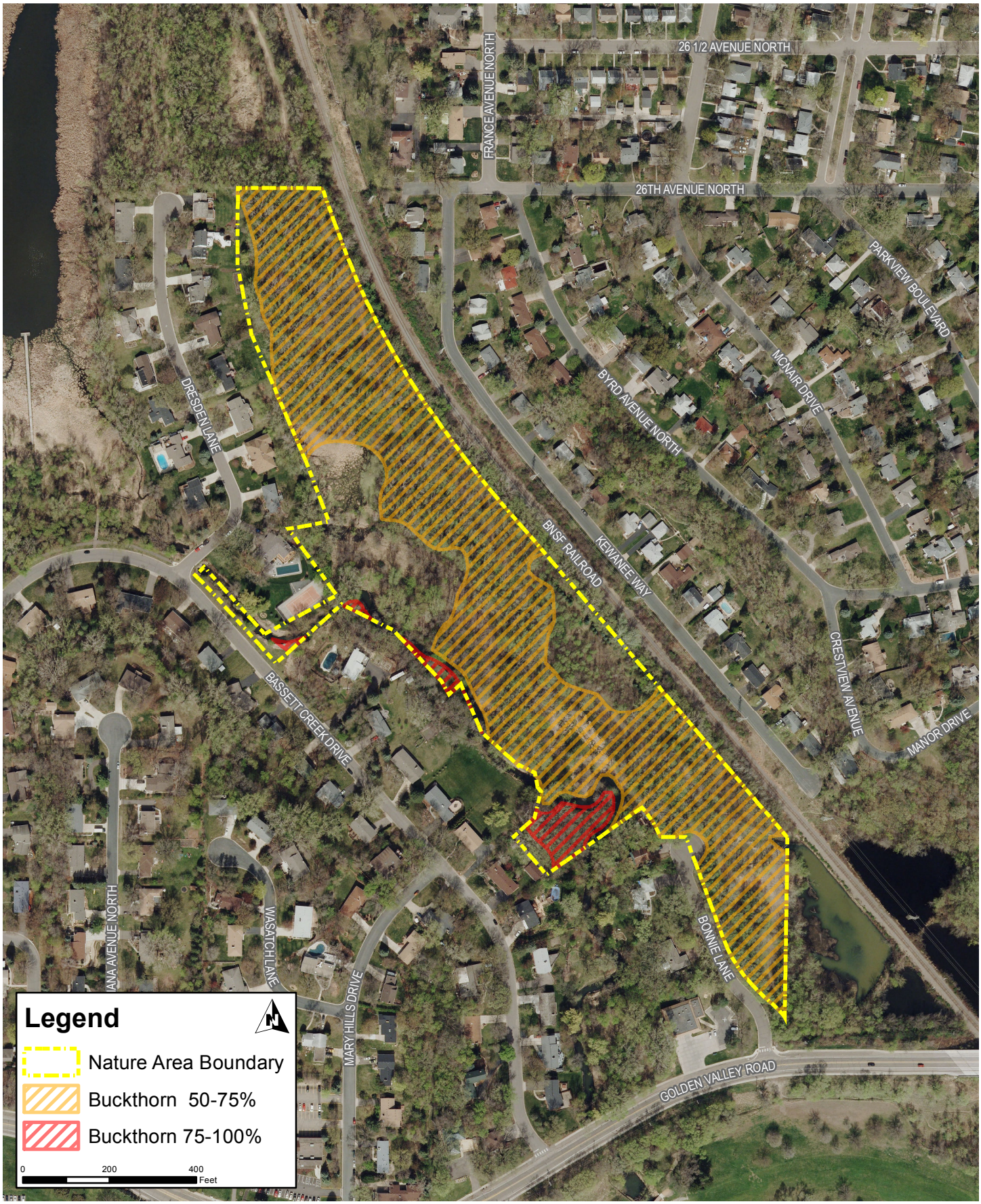


Land Cover	Acres	Percent
Bassett Creek	0.66	4.13%
Mixed Hardwoods	10.82	68.20%
Paved	0.06	0.36%
Shrub Carr	3.04	19.15%
Turf	0.11	0.68%
Wet Meadow	1.19	7.48%
TOTAL ACRES	15.87	100.00%

Mary Hills Nature Area- Land Cover

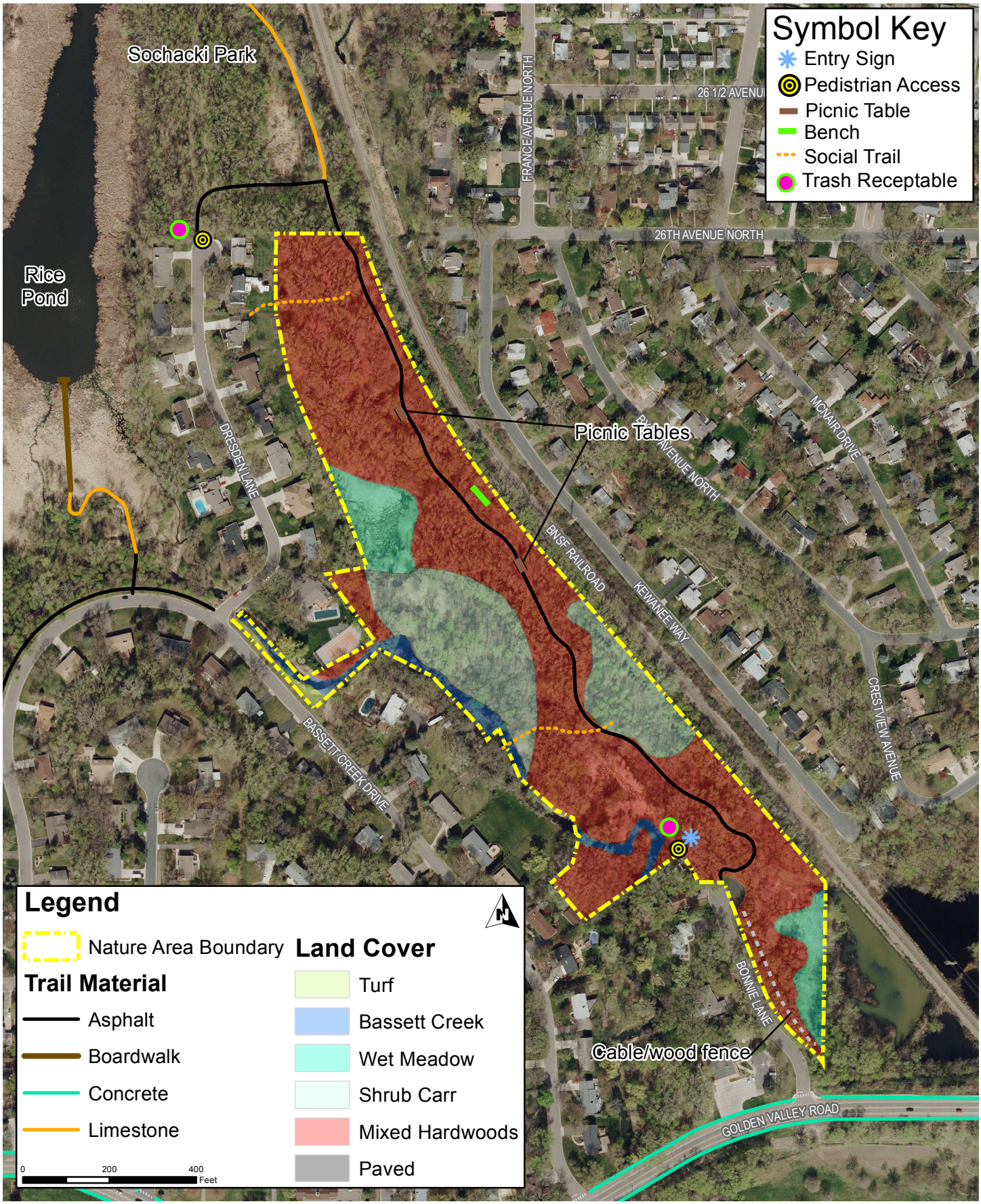
Golden Valley Natural Resources Management Plan

FIGURE 5.44



Mary Hills Nature Area- Invasive Species
Golden Valley Natural Resources Management Plan

FIGURE 5.45



Mary Hills Nature Area- Existing Amenities
Golden Valley Natural Resources Management Plan

FIGURE 5.46

MARY HILLS
NATURE AREA
GOLDEN
VALLEY