



PVN
PRESERVATION
DESIGN WORKS, LLC

Site Inventory and Period of Significance Study

Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior
Excelsior, Minnesota

November 3, 2017



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Prepared for:

City of Excelsior

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Executive Summary

In 2017, the City of Excelsior retained PVN (Preservation Design Works, LLC) to determine a Period of Significance for the Excelsior Commons (“The Commons”) and to complete a survey of extant historical material and character defining features of The Commons and also The Port of Excelsior (“The Port”).¹ This work will supplement and inform the City’s current master planning project for The Commons and The Port.



Excelsior Commons and The Port of Excelsior, 2017. Background image via Mapquest.

¹ Abbreviating Excelsior Commons to “The Commons” and the Port of Excelsior to “The Port” with both words capitalized is standard practice in the City of Excelsior; this report follows that convention. The Port refers to Lot 204, Auditor’s Subdivision 120.

Excelsior Commons is a local historical landmark for the City of Excelsior and The Port of Excelsior is a contributing property to the locally-designated Excelsior Downtown Historic District. Both also function as city-operated public park land. Alterations to The Commons and The Port of Excelsior are reviewed by the Excelsior Heritage Preservation Commission, the Excelsior Parks and Recreation Board, and the Excelsior City Council.

At the time of local designation, a formal designation study for The Commons was not undertaken. Thus, The Commons does not have an agreed upon Period of Significance or set of Character Defining Features. In 2002, historic consultants Hess, Roise and Company completed a designation study for the Excelsior Downtown Historic District.² The designation study concludes that the period of significance for the Excelsior Historic District “extends from the 1870s, the date of the earliest surviving buildings in the district...to about 1955.”³

Excelsior Commons has existed as long as the City of Excelsior. The Commons was platted as “public ground” on the City’s original 1854 and 1855 plat maps, and has existed as public property ever since.⁴ Similarly, The Port of Excelsior saw its first dock installed in 1854.⁵ Presently and historically, The Commons and The Port have functioned as a continuum of public space where park and port uses have existed on both pieces of land.⁶ The park and port have been popular destinations for the local community throughout their history – playing host to public events and private enterprises ranging from picnics, baseball games, camping and bathing, to a boat works, casino, concessions stands, and pleasure boat cruises.

Through archival research at the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, review of existing narrative historical documentation of the site (particularly *On Excelsior’s Waterfront*, by Scott McGinnis), and a comparison of the park today and the park as seen in images, aerial photographs, site maps, and other visual material from the past 100 years, PVN worked to determine a Period of Significance for The Commons and set of Character Defining Features for The Commons and The Port.⁷ The assessment was informed by the National Park Service’s “Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.”⁸ Cultural Landscapes are generally defined by the National Park Service as “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein) associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic

² Marjorie Pearson (Hess, Roise and Company), *Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study*, Excelsior, Minnesota, Prepared for The City of Excelsior, 2002. Thomas R. Zahn, *City of Excelsior Preservation Design Manual*, Prepared for The City of Excelsior, 2016.

³ *Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study*, 8.

⁴ Scott McGinnis, *Excelsior’s Waterfront: A History of the Excelsior Commons and Excelsior Docks*. Self-Published. 2008. 3-4.

⁵ Ibid. 23.

⁶ Appendix E shows the boundary of the Excelsior Downtown Historic District, as provided by the City of Excelsior; City of Excelsior, “Designation of Heritage Preservation Sites,” <http://www.ci.excelsior.mn.us/index.aspx?NID=186>

⁷ With thanks to the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society for their research suggestions and assistance in accessing visual materials in their collection and to the City of Excelsior staff for providing access to city files and past reports related to the property.

⁸ National Park Service. “Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/landscape-guidelines/>

values.”⁹ The Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study does not identify specific character defining features of the Port.

Research and evaluation outcomes include the following:

Period of Significance

The suggested Period of Significance for Excelsior Commons is 1854-1937.

The Period of Significance for the Port of Excelsior as established in the 2002 designation study for the Excelsior Downtown Historic District is 1870s-1955.

Character Defining Features

The suggested Character Defining Features for Excelsior Commons and The Port of Excelsior are listed below, organized according to broad categories as recommended by the National Park Service:

- Overall Continuity of Spatial Organization and Land Patterns
 - The Commons and Port of Excelsior Property Boundary (landmass)
 - Use Pattern of “Active” and “Passive” Spaces
- Topography
 - Change in Grade Along Lake Street
 - The Knolls
 - The Lawn
- Vegetation
 - Tree Cover on Knolls
 - Manicured Grass on Lawn
 - Lawn West of Lake Street
- Circulation
 - Circulation Parallel to Lake Street
 - Vertical Circulation at Lake Street Slope
 - Circulation at the Water Street Terminus
- Water Features
 - Active Use of Lake Minnetonka – Bathing Beach Location, Children’s Beach Location and The Port of Excelsior Location
 - Shoreline
- Structures
 - Ball Field Location
 - Ball Field Seating
 - Blue Line Ticket Booth/Blue Line Launch Livery (As part of Downtown Historic District)
- Site Furnishings
 - The Commons and The Port of Excelsior do not retain any Character Defining Site Furnishings
- Objects
 - The Commons and The Port of Excelsior do not retain any Character Defining Objects

⁹ Ibid.

Period of Significance Recommendation and Justification – Excelsior Commons

The purpose of a **Period of Significance** (POS) with respect to an historic property is to codify the period of time when a property attained the characteristics that qualify it for historic designation. A property's POS should have a symbiotic relationship with the property's historic integrity – meaning that the property needs to retain historic integrity dating to the POS.

The suggested POS for Excelsior Commons is 1854-1937. 1854 marks the platting and founding of The Commons, while 1937 marks a major work effort by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which saw The Commons settle into the overall site boundary and topography that it retains to this day.

Prior to 1937, The Commons saw frequent construction and demolition of structures located on the property and alterations to the shoreline as portions of the bay were dredged and infilled. Despite these changes, the overall Spatial Organization, Land Use Patterns, Vegetation, Circulation Patterns, and Water Features that contribute to The Common's integrity remained relatively consistent between the park's founding and 1937.

No major changes to The Common's Topography have taken place since 1937. Newer Structures, Objects and Site Furnishings in the Commons have not yet achieved 50 years of age, and are generally "reversible" alterations. With the exception of the community-funded Bicentennial Band Shell (1973, not 50 years old), none of the newer structures, objects, or site furnishings located within The Commons exhibit notable design features, or are related to important events or activities within the history of Excelsior Commons or the city in general, thus there is no more recent date than 1937 that makes a logical end for the POS.

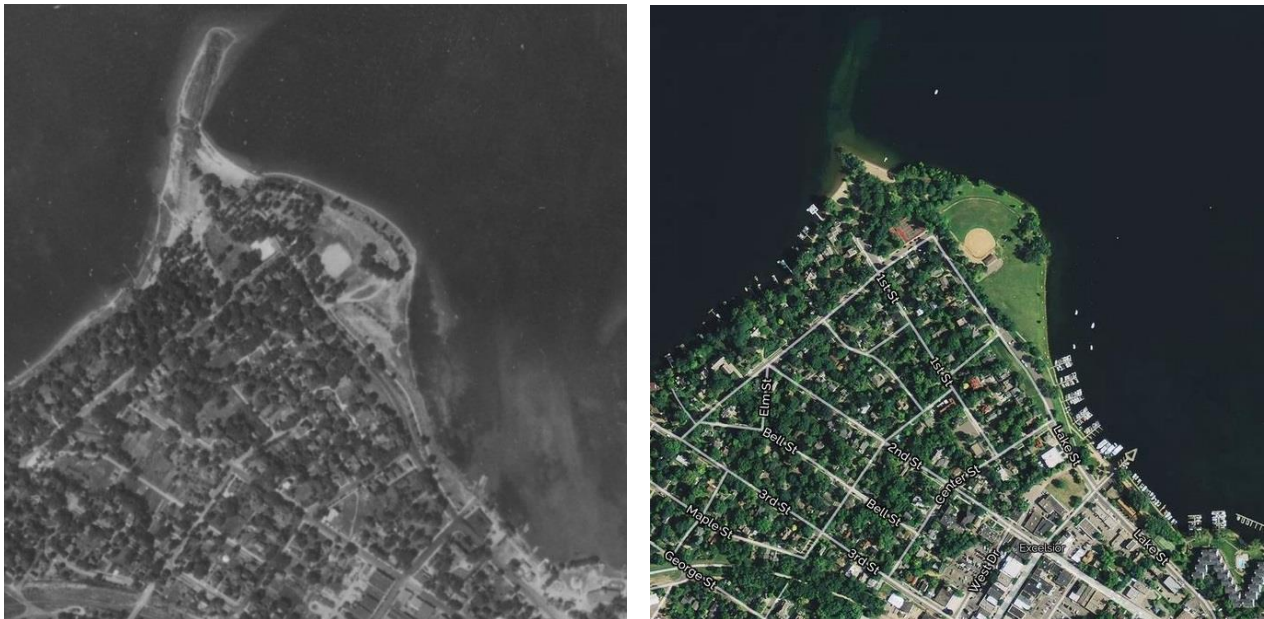


Figure 2. Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior in 1937 and 2017. Additional and more detailed aerial images available in Appendix C of this document.

Site Inventory, Character Defining Features, and Integrity – Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior

On site inventory was completed on June 5, 2017 by Michael Bjornberg, FAIA, Historical Architect and Laurel Fritz, Architectural Historian, both of PVN. The site inventory area includes The Commons and The Port. The area is bounded by Lake Minnetonka to the north and east, and 1st Street, West Lake Street, and Water Street to the south and west. Between Courtland Street and Center Street, a portion of The Commons extends west of Lake Street. The site inventory area is graphically depicted below. Purpose of the site inventory is to identify elements of The Commons and The Port dating to the period of significance, and determine which of these elements retain historic integrity and are character defining features.



Excelsior Commons and Port of Excelsior, 2017. Background image via Mapquest.

Integrity of a property refers to the property's ability to convey its historic significance through its physical features.¹⁰ The National Park Service identifies seven aspects of integrity:

- Location
- Design
- Setting
- Materials
- Workmanship
- Feeling
- Association

These aspects of integrity can also be used to evaluate Character Defining Features. It is not necessary for a property or individual feature to possess all seven aspects of integrity in order to retain overall integrity. However, it is necessary to possess several, usually the majority, of the seven aspects.¹¹

Character Defining Features are those features of an historic property that provide a physical representation of important elements of the property during its Period of Significance. The suggested Character Defining Features for Excelsior Commons have been evaluated and organized according to broad categories as recommended by the National Park Service's "Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes."

All extant features of The Commons and The Port – both character defining and non-character defining are documented and evaluated in the site inventory, which begins on the following page of this document.¹²

¹⁰ Patrick W. Andrus and the Staff of the National Register of Historic Places, *National Register Bulletin 115: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. 2002. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² All images included in the site inventory by PVN, 2017, except for aerial image used to illustrate "Overall Continuity of Spatial Organization and Land Patterns" via MapQuest.

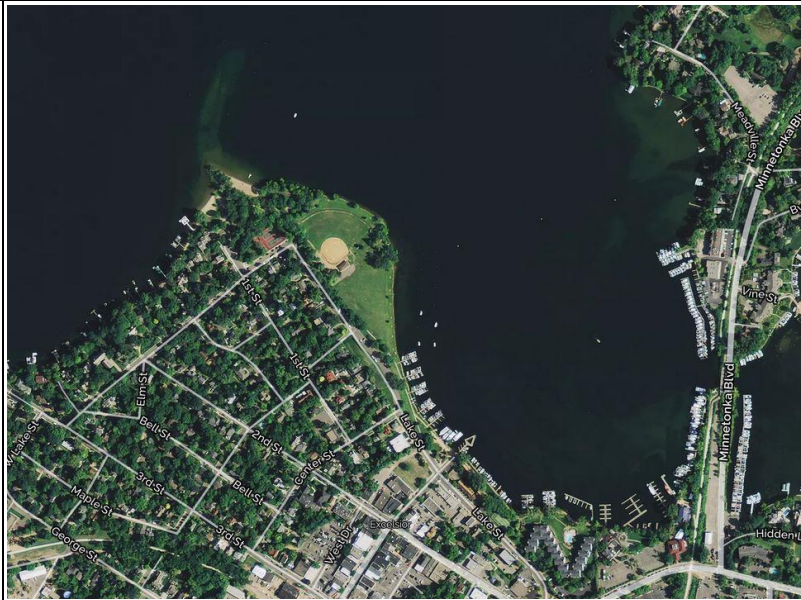
Excelsior Commons Site Inventory – June 2017

Overall Continuity of Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

Commons and Port Property Boundary

The Commons and The Port have had the same general property boundary since they were gifted to the people of Excelsior in the 1850s. The boundary of the Commons includes the “wedge” of land west of Lake Street between Courtland and Center Streets.

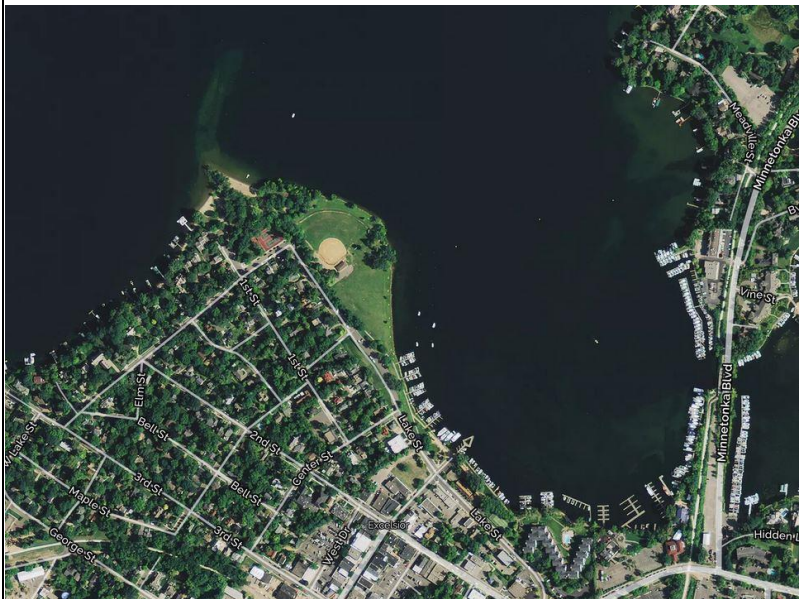
The overall Commons and Port landmass **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons and the Port of Excelsior.



Use Pattern of “Active” and “Passive” Spaces

The Commons and The Port have retained their general pattern of spatial organization since their early use – with The Port and some public/private commerce located to the south, the open lawn and ball field at the center, heavily wooded areas at the Knolls, and other “active” uses such as the swimming beach and playground to the north.

The overall spatial organization of the Commons and the Port **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons and the Port of Excelsior.



Topography

Change in Grade Along Lake Street

The change in grade down from Lake Street to the rest of the Commons is present in photographs and aerial images of the park throughout its history.

This change in grade along Lake Street **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



The Knolls

The Commons features four Knolls – two located to the northeast of the band shell, one located north of the ball field, and one in the northwest portion of the park where the bathhouse is currently located. The knolls are present in photographs and aerial images of the park throughout its history.

The knolls **ARE** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.





The Lawn

The expansive, relatively level lawn located to the north of the Port is present in historic photographs, aerial images and written descriptions of the park from throughout the Commons' history.

The Lawn **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Vegetation	
<p>Tree Cover on the Knolls</p> <p>The existence of relatively dense tree cover on the Knolls is visible in historic photographs, aerial images, and written descriptions of the park from throughout the Commons' history.</p> <p>The quality of the tree cover on the Knolls IS a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.</p> <p><i>Determining the age and variety individual trees was beyond the scope of this study. The Knolls may include individual heritage trees, but none have been identified at this time.</i></p>	
<p>Manicured Lawn</p> <p>The expansive, grass covered lawn located to the north of the Port is present in historic photographs, aerial images and written descriptions of the park from throughout the Commons' history.</p> <p>The manicured nature of the lawn IS a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.</p>	

Restored Shoreline Planting

The restored shoreline planting near the bathing beach was installed in 2009.

The restored shoreline planting does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Composed Plantings

Composed planting beds are located throughout the Commons. In particular, beds are located near the Port entrance and ticket booth, the band shell, and in boxes next to some electrical equipment housings.

These composed plantings do not meet the 50 year rule and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Hedge and Lawn West of Lake Street

An evergreen hedge is present at the “wedge” of Commons land west of Lake Street. The hedge extends from Courtland Street to a little over half way to Center Street. The remainder of the “wedge” property is a grassy lawn.

Historic aerial photos of the Commons suggest that the “wedge” has generally been lawn. Trees are present in some images. The hedge is not present in historic aerial images. The hedge **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons. Historic aerial images suggest that this area has always been lawn, it is likely that the presence of a lawn at this area **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Circulation

Path Parallel to Lake Street

A paved concrete walking path extends along the bottom of the Lake Street Slope generally parallel to Lake Street. Historic images and aerial photographs of the Commons suggest that a path has existed in this location since at least 1937.

The location of the path **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons. The specific materials used to construct the path **ARE NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Vertical Connections At Lake Street Slope

Two sets of stairs provide vertical circulation along the Lake Street Slope. The stairs are concrete with metal hand rails. The date of installation of these stairs is unknown.

Historic images and aerial photographs of The Commons suggest that some type of vertical connections have existed at the Lake Street slope since the Period of Significance.

The two extant sets of stairs **ARE NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons. The existence of vertical connections at the Lake Street slope **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Paths Through the Northwest Portion of Park

Multiple gravel and concrete paths exist in the northwest portion of the park connecting the bathing beach, playground, bathhouse and northern knolls. Historic images and aerial photographs of the Commons do not provide any evidence that these paths follows historic circulation patterns.

The paths through the northwestern portion of the park **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Diagonal Path at the Corner of Water Street and Lake Street

A pedestrian entry path to The Port currently extends north from the corner of Lake Street and Water Street providing a circulation route to the lake front and charter boat services.

Aerial images dating to the period of significance for The Port show the presence of sidewalks along Water Street and Lake Street, however a path extending north from the corner of Water and Lake Streets is not legible.

The diagonal path **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of the Port of Excelsior.



Water Street Terminus

Evidence of access to Lake Minnetonka and The Port at Water Street is visible in historic aerial images dating back to 1937 (within the period of significance for the Excelsior Downtown Historic District). Aerial images also show that docks in various configurations were present at the terminus during the period of significance.

Circulation at the Water Street Terminus, including Lake and Port access and the existence of public docks **IS** a Character Defining Feature of the Port of Excelsior.

The terminus's existing docks and their configuration **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of the Port of Excelsior.



Water Features

Active Use of Lake Minnetonka


Throughout its history, Excelsior Commons has benefitted from active use of Lake Minnetonka. Historic images, aerial photographs, and written documentation show that the Commons has utilized this water feature through existence of a bathing beach located at the northwest shoreline of the park, additional beach front at the west shoreline of the park, public and semi-private dock located at the Port area. While the specific materials, arrangement of docks, and structures serving the beach and dock uses have changed over time, the location of these functions and general relationship to the lake have not.

A bathing beach located at the northwest portion of the park **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons. Specific extant features of the beach, including the life guard stands (2006, 2008) and light fixtures **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.

Additional beach located at the western edge of the park, adjacent to the playground (see page 24) currently functions as a children's beach. Historic aerial images of The Commons suggest that beachfront was



<p>present in this location during the period of significance for the park. It is unknown at this time if this area of beachfront has a specific use during the period of significance.</p> <p>The area currently known as the Children's Beach IS a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.</p> <p>Docks located at The Port ARE a Character Defining Feature of the park. The specific arrangement of and materials used to construct the extant docks ARE NOT Character Defining Features of The Port of Excelsior.</p>	
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<p>Shoreline</p> <p>The current shoreline configuration was completed as part of the 1937 WPA work in The Commons (Appendix D). Riprap was installed along portions of the shoreline at this time.</p> <p>The overall alignment of the shoreline IS a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons. Individual components of the riprap ARE NOT Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.</p> <p><i>Addressing the long-term environmental impacts of the existing shoreline treatment throughout the park is outside the scope of this report.</i></p>	
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Structures

Docks and Gates

Historic images, and aerial photographs show that while docks have existed in this general location throughout the Commons' history, these specific docks post-date a 1976 site map (Appendix C) which shows that at that time The Commons and The Port had 10 dock structures whose locations do not align with the current 5 dock structures.

The existing docks and their gates do not meet the 50 year rule and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or The Port of Excelsior.



Port of Excelsior Entry Plaza

The entry plaza at the Port (including arch, stairs, paved plaza, plantings, and dedicated benches) was installed between 1996 and 1998.

The entry plaza in general does not meet the 50 year rule, and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of the Port of Excelsior.



Blue Line Ticket Booth/Launch Livery

The original construction date of the Blue Line Ticket Booth is unknown – the structure is visible on Sanborn maps from 1911, though it may be older. Circa 1945, the ticket booth was removed from its original location in The Port of Excelsior and installed at the Excelsior Amusement Park. The ticket booth remained at the Amusement Park until 1973, and then was moved to a local resident's yard and later a storage facility before being reinstalled at The Port in 1997 (Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study). In 1997, the ticket booth was replaced in a different location than the one it occupied during the Period of Significance for the Downtown Historic District.

The Ticket Booth retains its historic footprint, roofline, metal roof, and stucco exterior.

The Ticket Booth **was deemed a Contributing Structure to the District by the Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study**, and is the only extant feature of The Port that was present during the

Period of Significance for the District. However, the Ticket Booth is currently located in a different position than the one it occupied during the District's Period of Significance. If in the future the Ticket Booth is moved to yet another location within The Port, the move would not further damage the Ticket Booth's historic integrity.



Concession Cart

For-profit concessions located in the Port area have been a part of the Port and Commons throughout the park's history.

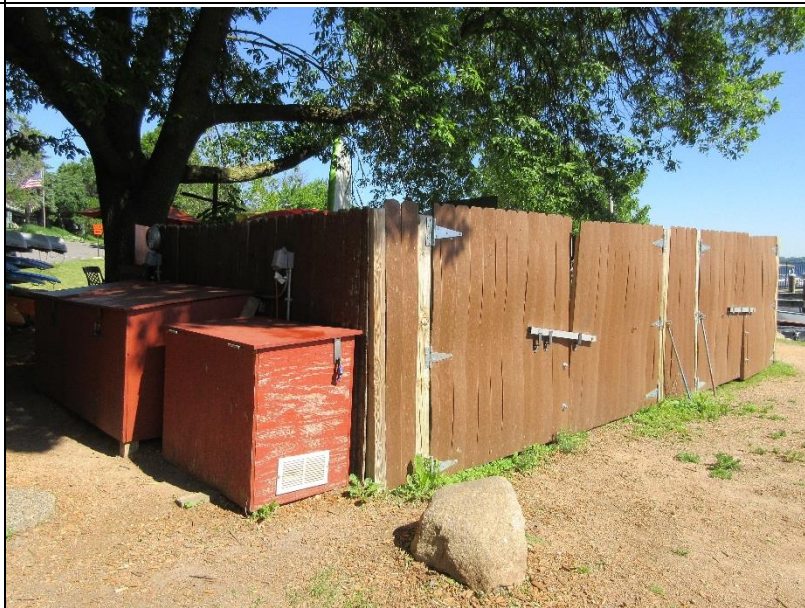
The current concession stand is mobile and can be removed from the park. The current concession stand does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Garbage Enclosure

A wood garbage enclosure serving the concession stand and the rental boat launches is located between the concession stand and the lake.

The garbage enclosure does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Band Shell

The band shell was constructed in 1973 as part of the City of Excelsior's celebration of the United States' Bicentennial. The structure is concrete with a flat membrane roof.

The band shell does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.

The band shell **may achieve historic significance** as part of Excelsior Commons or as an individual structure and is recommended for re-evaluation when it reaches 50 years of age.



Concession Stand Building

The concession stand building was constructed in 1987. (Today, the building is commonly known as the concession stand building – at the time of its design and construction, the building was referred to as the maintenance building.) The building has concrete walls and a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. The building is utilitarian in nature and does not exhibit exceptional architectural design.

The building does not meet the 50 year rule, and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Bathhouse

The current bathhouse was constructed in 1968, replacing multiple earlier iterations of bathhouses located within the park. The building has concrete walls and a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. The building is utilitarian in nature and does not exhibit exceptional architectural design.

The building does not meet the 50 year rule, and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Swing Set

The remnants of a swing set are located between the western knoll and the bathhouse. Historic images and site maps show that the swing set dates to at least 1976.

The swing set does not retain historic integrity and does not meet the 50 year rule. The swing set **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Playground Equipment

Playground equipment is located at the northern edge of the park and adjacent to the bathhouse. City records indicated that existing playground equipment was originally installed in 1994, with components upgraded over time as use and safety regulations require.

The playground equipment does not meet the 50 year rule, and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Baseball Field

Historic photographs, aerial images, and written documentation confirm that a ball field has been located in the same general location within the Commons since the 1920s.

The general location of the baseball field **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.

The specific materials used to construct the current baseball field - i.e. sand, grass, metal fencing - **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Baseball Field Seating

The baseball field seating was installed in 1937 by the WPA – the seating retains its original location, shape (design), and setting. Additionally, the seating continues to feel like WPA-era construction, and to be easily identifiable as seating for the baseball field (association). Modern finish materials have been installed over or replaced the original stone construction.

The baseball field seating retains integrity, and **IS** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Tennis and Basketball Courts

Historic documentation places the construction of the tennis and basketball courts between 1962 and 1971.

The tennis and basketball courts was not present in 1937 and may not meet the 50 year rule. The tennis and basketball courts **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Site Furnishings

Benches

37 benches are located throughout the Commons. According to city records, the majority of the benches were installed between 1987 and 2013, with three benches relocated from downtown Excelsior at an unknown date.

The benches are generally constructed of metal and wood. Some exhibit dedication plaques.

The benches do not meet the 50 year rule and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Grills

5 grills are located throughout the Commons. According to city records, the grills date to 2012.

The grills located throughout the park are not permanent structures, do not meet the 50 year rule, and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Light Fixtures

Light fixtures located throughout the park appear to be modern installations and do not exhibit a standard design language.

Light fixtures located throughout the park likely do not meet the 50 year rule. Light fixtures located within the park **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Picnic Tables

According to city records, the park's 29 picnic tables were installed between 1987 and 2008. The picnic tables are generally constructed of metal and painted wood.

The picnic tables located throughout the park are not permanent structures, do not meet the 50 year rule, and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Garbage/Recycling Receptacles

According to city records, the park's 25 single-opening garbage receptacles were installed in 2011 and the 4 double-opening garbage/recycling receptacles were installed in 2015.

The garbage/recycling receptacles found throughout the park are not permanent structures, do not meet the 50 year rule, and **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Signage

The typical modern city-provided signage is located throughout the park.

Signage does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Baseball Field Score Board

An electric score board is located next to the baseball field. The score board was installed in 2017.

The baseball field score board does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Water Fountain

A single water fountain is located within the park near the tennis and basketball courts. The installation date of the water fountain is not known.

The water fountain **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Fencing

Metal and wood fencing is located throughout the park – surrounding the tennis and basketball courts, baseball field, and restored prairie among other locations.

The various fences found throughout the park **ARE NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Bike Rack

A single metal bike rack is located between the bath house and play ground. Historic photographs and site maps confirm that the bike rack has existed since at least 1976.

The bike rack **IS NOT** Character Defining Features of Excelsior Commons.



Electrical Equipment

Electrical equipment (boxes, transformers, panels, etc.) is located throughout the park. These housings are utilitarian in nature, and were not specially designed to integrate with the park environment. It is unlikely that they meet the 50 year rule.

The electrical equipment found throughout the park **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons or the Port of Excelsior.



Objects

“Sails”

The Sails sculpture, created by local artist Katherine Nash, was installed in the Commons in 1980.

Sails does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.

Recommendation to re-evaluate in future.



“Debbie’s Bench”

Mosaic bench/sculpture designed by local artist David Cooley, and installed in 2014.

This bench/sculpture does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of Excelsior Commons.



Geological Marker

A geological marker is present to the west of the Port of Excelsior Entry Plaza and adjacent to the public sidewalk along Lake Street.

The geological marker originally dates from 1953, and was first located at the MNDOT right of way along Highway 7. In 1998, the marker was relocated to its current location by Excelsior residents and business owners. The marker is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

The marker does not meet the 50 year rule and **IS NOT** a Character Defining Feature of the Port of Excelsior.

Following their review of a draft of this report, the Excelsior Heritage Preservation Commission has requested it be noted that while the marker does not meet the criteria to be a Character Defining Feature of The Port, the marker does contain important and relevant historical information and should be retained in the Port area.



Appendices

- A. APPENDIX A:** Research Process and Works Consulted
- B. APPENDIX B:** Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties
- C. APPENDIX C:** Historic Images
- D. APPENDIX D:** *Minnetonka Record* Articles, 1937
- E. APPENDIX E:** Map Showing Excelsior Downtown Historic District Boundary (via City of Excelsior)

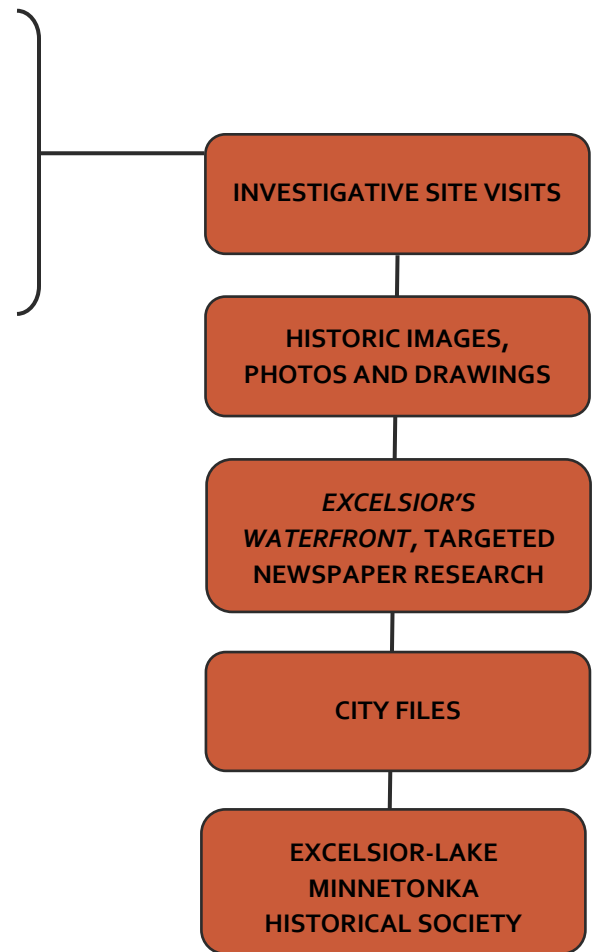
APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PROCESS AND WORKS CONSULTED

Research Process

The purpose of our research is to identify preservation concerns that will impact the cost, duration, or design of the project. In order to develop a timeline of the building's recent history, and to identify preservation design issues that arose during past rehabilitation proposals, PVN completed research utilizing the following sources:

Resources used specific to this project:

- Investigative site visits
- City of Excelsior files – including older site plans, architectural drawings for bandshell, previous planning reports
- Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study, Hess, Roise and Company 2002
- *Excelsior's Waterfront* by Scott McGinnis
- Targeted historic newspaper research – *Minnetonka Record* (Excelsior)
- Sanborn Fire Insurance maps
- Archival research at the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society – historic photographs, newspaper articles, and previous planning documents
- Photo Research at the Minnesota Historical Society
- Aerial Photo research through University of Minnesota Historical Aerial Photographs Online (www.lib.umn.edu/apps/mhapo)



APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PROCESS AND WORKS CONSULTED

Works Consulted

- Andrus, Patrick W. and the Staff of the National Register of Historic Places, *National Register Bulletin 115: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. 2002.
<https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>
- City of Excelsior. Planning Department Files – Excelsior Commons.
“HPC Review of Changes at The Commons and The Port.” Memo - Patrick Smith, Planning Director to Excelsior HPC and Park and Rec Commission. October 25, 2016.
“Park Equipment List 2017.” Memo – Tim Amundsen, Public Works Superintendent. January 24, 2017.
“Criteria for Designation of a Landmark or Inclusion to a Historic District – Port of Excelsior Blue Line Ticket Booth” and associated historic images. Commissioner Bob Bolles to HPC. July 28, 2017.
“Commons Park Improvements.” Drawing. McCombs-Knutson Associates, Inc. June 15, 1976.
- Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections
Excelsior Commons Subject File.
Excelsior Commons Photo File.
- McGinnis, Scott. *Excelsior's Waterfront: The History of the Excelsior Commons and Excelsior Docks*. Self-Published, 2008.
- Minnetonka Record*, (Excelsior, MN)
“Park Improvement Project is Going Well,” October 29, 1937.
“Park Improvement Project Starts Soon,” August 20, 1937.
- National Park Service. “Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.”
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/landscape-guidelines/>
- Pearson, Marjorie (Hess, Roise and Company). *Excelsior Downtown Historic District Designation Study, Excelsior, Minnesota*. Prepared for the City of Excelsior. 2002.
- Ratzloff, Tom. “Excelsior breaks ground for new Commons building.” *Excelsior-Shorewood Sailor*. (Excelsior, MN), October 6, 1986.
- Thomas R. Zahn and Associates LLC. *City of Excelsior Preservation Design Manual*. Prepared for the City of Excelsior. 2016.
- University of Minnesota Historic Aerial images Online. <https://www.lib.umn.edu/apps/mhapo/>
Image WM-17-1469, 1937.
Image A-11-032, 1945.
Image HHJ-581, 1956.
Image AA-19-45, 1962.
Image CLK-1-131, 1971.

APPENDIX B: SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

For further information and interpretation of the guidelines:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/landscape-guidelines/index.htm>

Preservation Brief 36 - Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes

<https://www.nps.gov/TPS/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1897.

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Ca. 1920s.

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

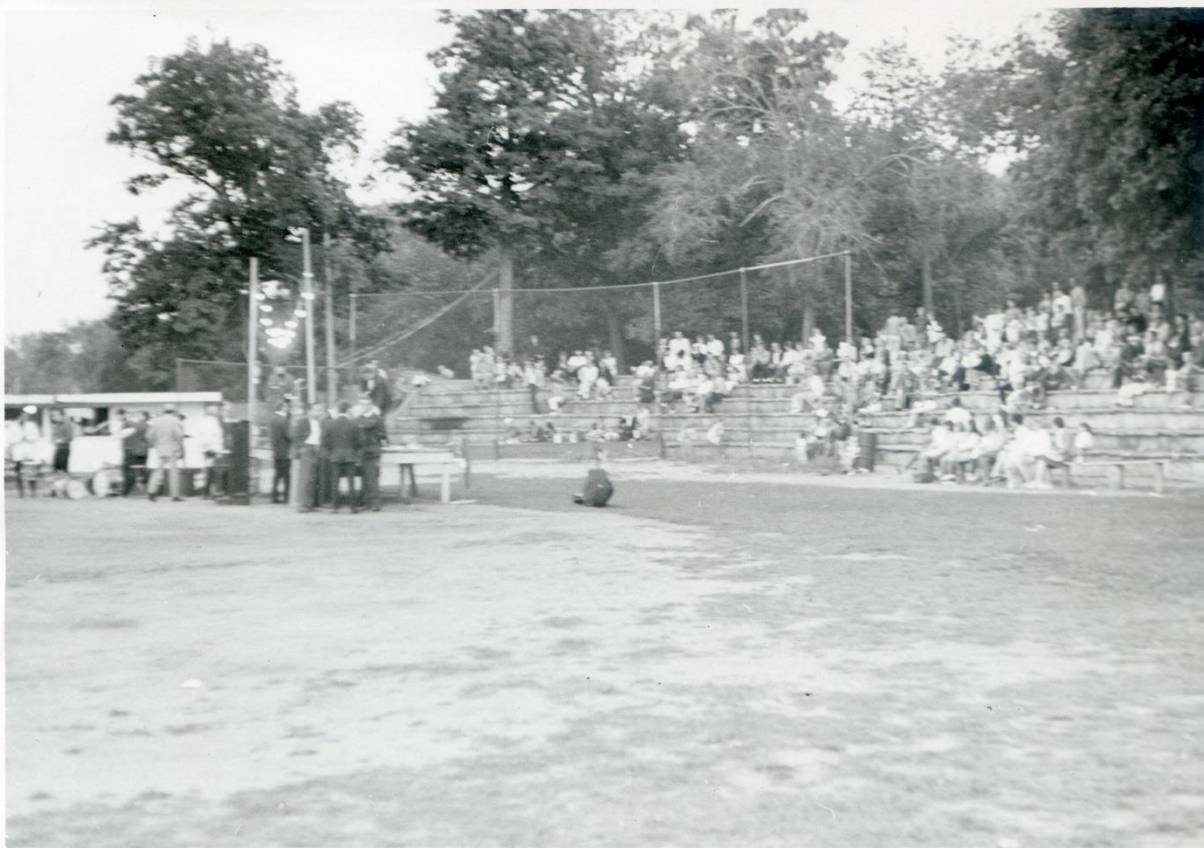
APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1937

University of Minnesota Historic Aerial Images Online (MHAPO), Image WM-17-1469, 1937.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Post 1937.

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Ca. 1940

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Ca. 1944

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Date Unknown – Pre 1945.

Image Via Excelsior HPC.

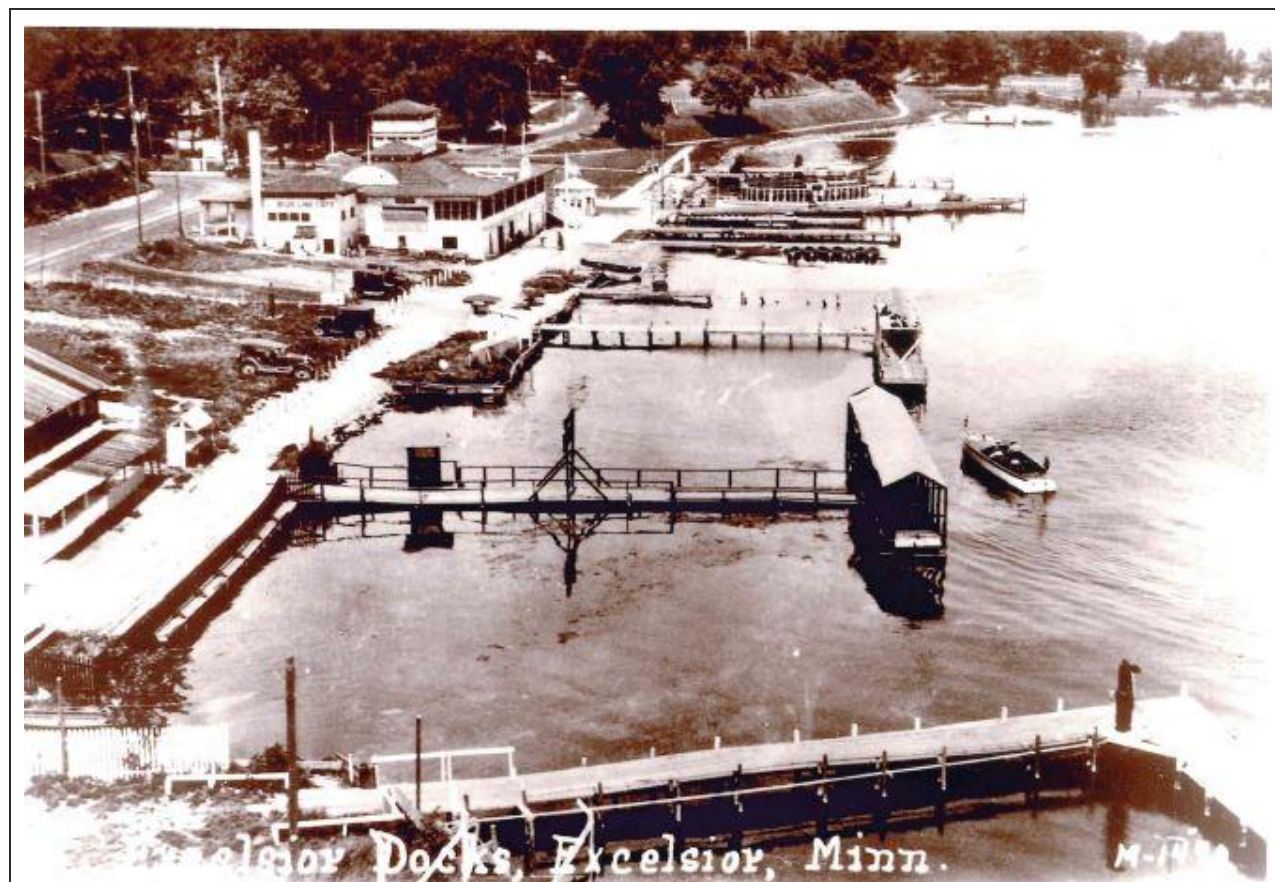
APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Date Unknown – Pre 1945.

Image Via Excelsior HPC.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



Date Unknown – Pre 1945.

Image Via Excelsior HPC.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1945

University of Minnesota Historic Aerial Images Online (MHAPO), Image A-11-032, 1945.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1956

University of Minnesota Historic Aerial Images Online (MHAPO), Image HHJ-581, 1956.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1962

University of Minnesota Historic Aerial Images Online (MHAPO), Image AA-19-45, 1962.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1971

University of Minnesota Historic Aerial Images Online (MHAPO), Image CLK-1-131, 1971.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1976. City of Excelsior.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1985.

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

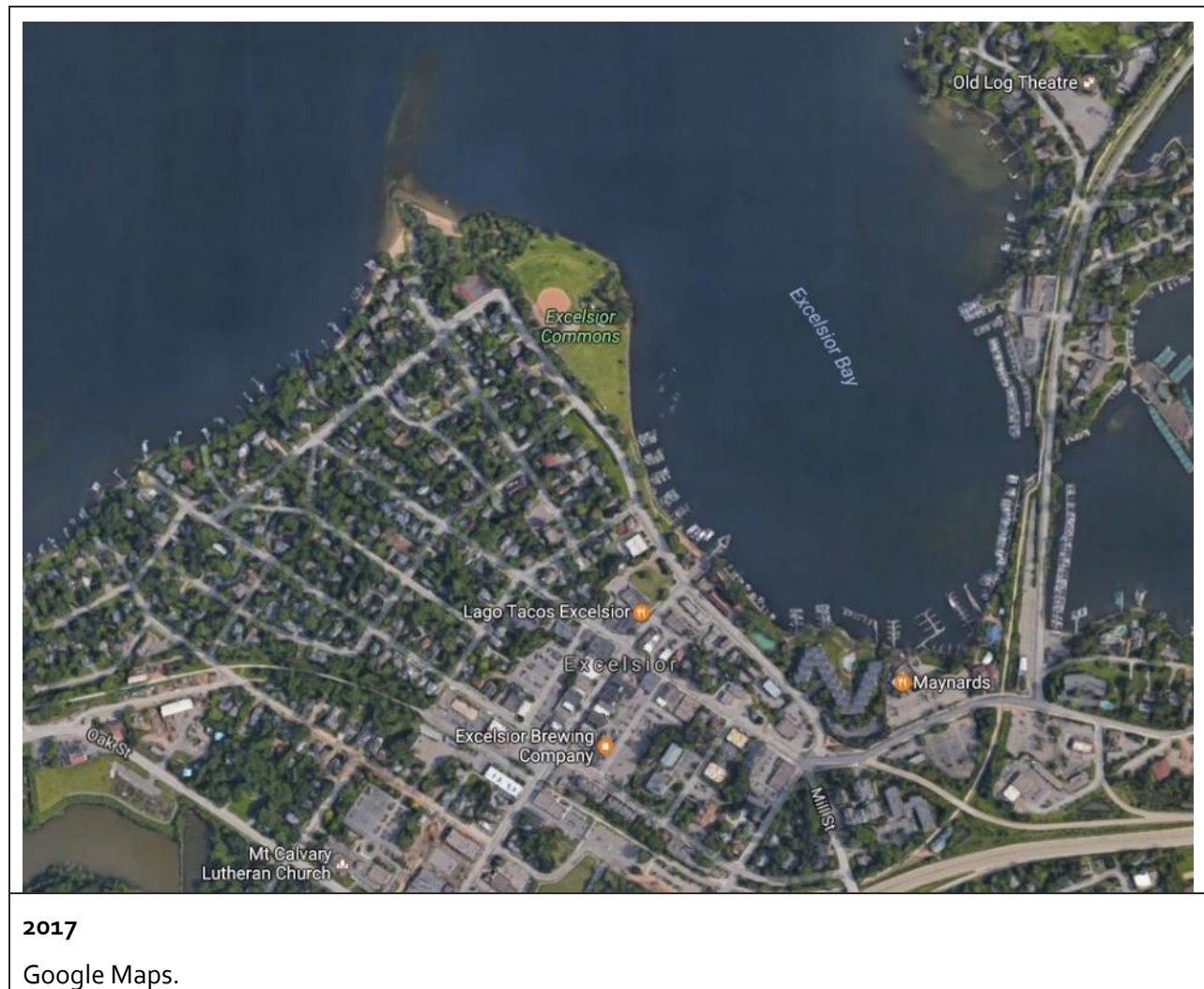
APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



1985.

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Collections.

APPENDIX C: HISTORIC IMAGES



APPENDIX D: *MINNETONKA RECORD* ARTICLES, 1937

Transcriptions of articles from the *Minnetonka Record*, 1937. Original available on microfilm at the Minnesota Historical Society Gale Family Library.

Park Improvement Project Starts Soon (Vol. 37, N. 3, August 20, 1937)

Next Thursday, August 26, work is scheduled to begin on an important improvement project at Excelsior Commons. A crew of 23 men will start a job that will continue to late this fall. The project calls for the work of 23 men for 180 days. The total cost of the project as approved is \$9,772, 90 per cent of which is Federal funds and 10 per cent funds of the local sponsors.

The technical language describing the project is, 'Rehabilitation of Excelsior Park, including grading, seeding, tree planting, riprapping, and playground construction.' This is a general description and changes may be made as the work progresses. The more essential improvements will be taken first and other in the order of their importance in order to derive the greatest benefit possible from the money available.

The entire grounds will be gone over, smoothed and re-seeded where trees removed and others trimmed. Some improvement is contemplated on the baseball diamond. Gravel and tar walks will be laid where desirable. In short a general park improvement project is contemplated.

Richard Turnham of Long Lake is the WPA engineer in charge of the project.

The project has been advanced to its present state by the efforts of the Excelsior park board with the co-operation of the village council.

Park Improvement Project is Going Well (Vol. 37, N. 13, October 29, 1937)

Citizens who have not visited Excelsior commons recently have quite a gratifying surprise awaiting them upon their next visit.

The rehabilitation project is coming along well. One would say that the work is fully half done.

The shore line from the band stand west has been evenly filled in and seeded. The new land that was made in connection with the filling of the old lagoon has been levelled off, drained, enriched with black dirt and seeded.

The old gates to the parking space have been moved further east and have been hung on sturdy rock cairns three feet square and 1 foot [sic] high.

The most revolutionary work performed thus far is the new system of seats for baseball spectators. The hillsides have been cut into suitable terraces and series of stone seats and risers have been built. The new seating will accommodate about 500 persons.

In the park proper much grading and seeding have been done. Stumps have been removed and some undesirable or dying trees have been taken out.

The work of lowering the crest of the bluff and eliminating its dangers to picknickers [sic] will be left until the last. It consists mostly of what is termed deep excavation and can be carried on late in the fall.

Mr. E.D. Dawson, president of the park board, has spent most of his spare time keeping in touch with the work. He predicts a beautiful park when plans, immediate and tentative are carried out.

APPENDIX E: EXCELSIOR DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP



Excelsior Downtown Historic District Boundary Map, via City of Excelsior,
<http://www.ci.excelsior.mn.us/index.aspx?NID=186>