Factors Impacting the Perception of Safety at Grassy Point

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Background

Location and History

Grassy Point is located in West Duluth's Irving neighborhood along the St. Louis River. Grassy Point had once functioned as a saw mill in the late 1800's and early 1900's during the timber boom but was eventually shut down when the surrounding land had been stripped bare. The saw mill left behind excessive wood waste in the river that negatively impacts the ecosystem of Grassy Point.

Image Credit: Duluth News Tribune

Image Credit: Minnesota Historical Society

Current Conditions

Habitat Quality

Grassy Point features an environmentally degraded habitat, resulting from excessive sedimentation and wood waste. The impairment of wetlands and shorelines is due to changes in the site's water flow and the conversion of open water wetlands to shallow marsh that is largely dominated by invasive species. Grassy Point ecosystem is also currently impaired by abandoned industrial infrastructure and debris.

Park Amenities

The park features a board walk, a kayak/canoe launch, an overlook and a parking lot. The amenities at Grassy Point are currently in a dysfunctional state.

- The board walk at Grassy Point is currently unusable as a result of flood damage and vandalism
- The featured kayak/canoe launch is located far away from the parking lot and is difficult to find
- The overlook was vandalized and is currently inaccessible

Image credit: Duluth News Tribune

Image credit: Duluth News Tribune

Restoration Plans

Image Credit: Minnesota department of Natural Resource

The overall goal is to restore coastal wetland habitat. The specific actions to do this include:

- Remediation of wood waste
- Deepening of shallow areas with excessive sedimentation
- Construction of habitat features to create a sheltered bay
- Repairs to the boardwalk and viewing platforms
- Improve directional signage to Grassy Point and the canoe/kayak launch
- Provide a viewing platform for the sunken barge and paper mill history

Next Steps

Existing Research

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) on the Kingsbury Bay-Grassy Point habitat restoration project. The HIA analyzed the current conditions of the site, including the identification of potential factors that may be impact the recreational use and the well being of users at Grassy Point. This study is part of the monitoring and evaluation step of the HIA.

Approach

- Conduct a literature review to gain a better understanding of the existing research surrounding green spaces with an emphasis on the benefits of green space, the barriers in decision making about green space, and critical thinking about green space.
- Hold two workshops for data collection using participatory methods to examine the relationship between neighborhood preferences and habitat restoration
- Analyze the data collected to share results with the decision makers and users of Grassy Point
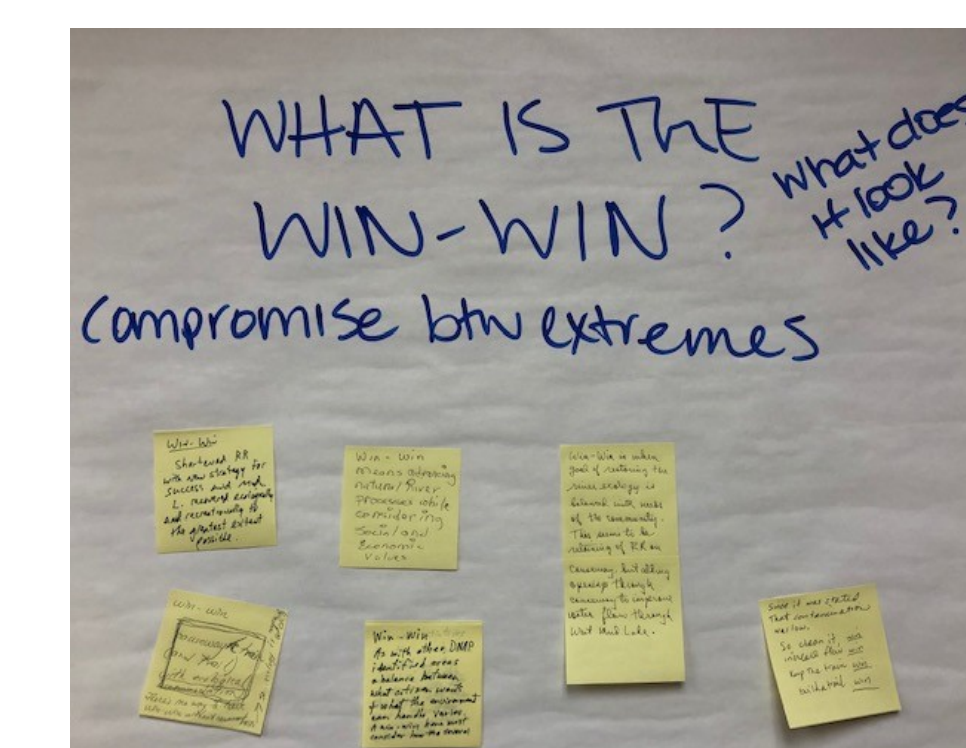
Next Steps (cont.)

Literature Review
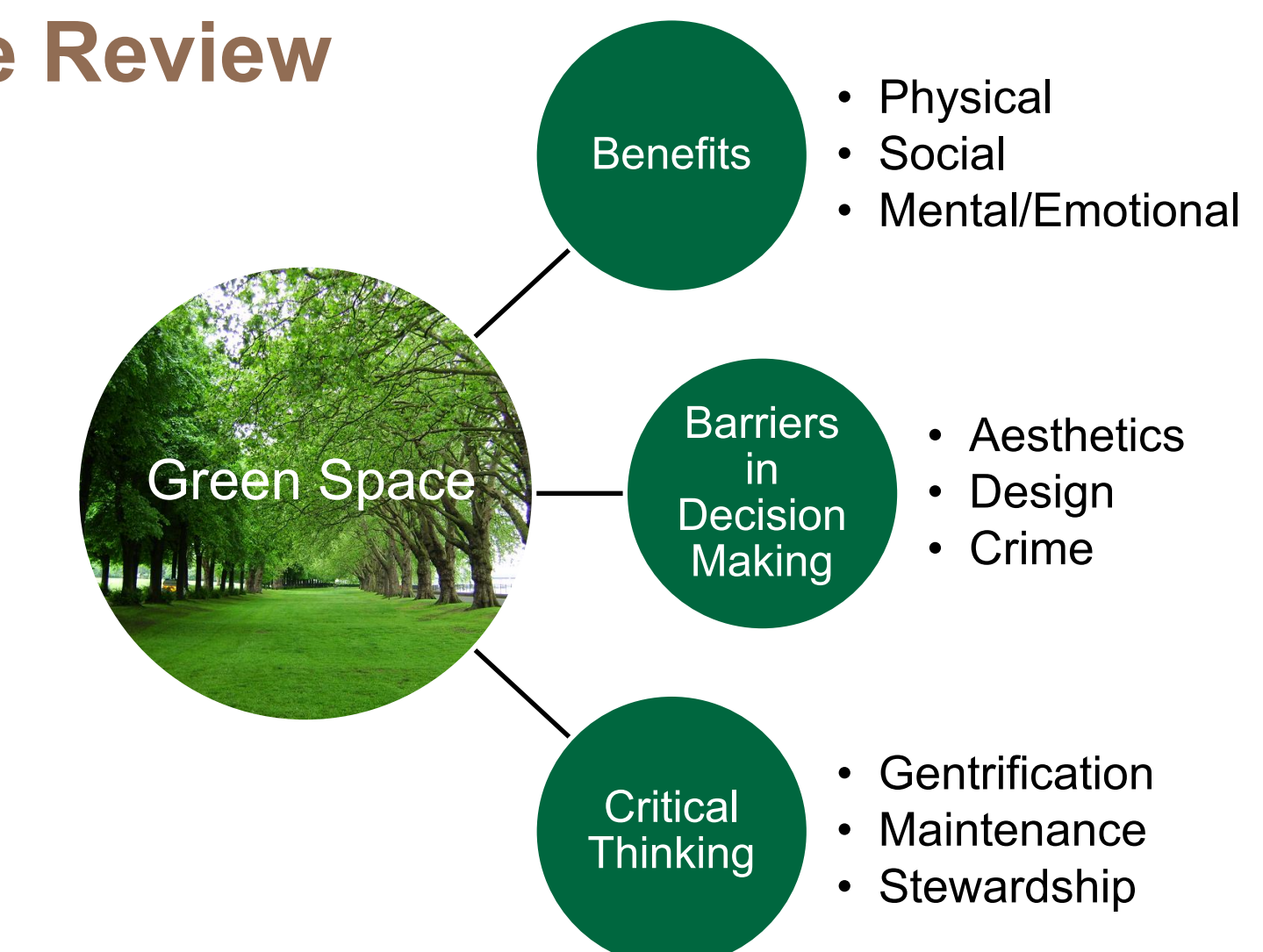
Data Collection

Data will be collected using participatory mapping and other methods to capture input from the neighborhood and recreational users of Grassy Point on what safety means in the context of parks and recreation, as well as the factors that are currently inhibiting the desired perception of safety.


Flip Chart Exercise from Mud Lake

Participatory Mapping Exercise from Mud Lake

Analyzing the Data

The data will be analyzed by coding the information according to the Neighborhood Model (Williams et al 2018). Coding the data is a way of categorizing qualitative data, in this case using an established framework, that identifies themes and the relationships between them. The goal is to identify relationships between different perspectives, input, and the resource.
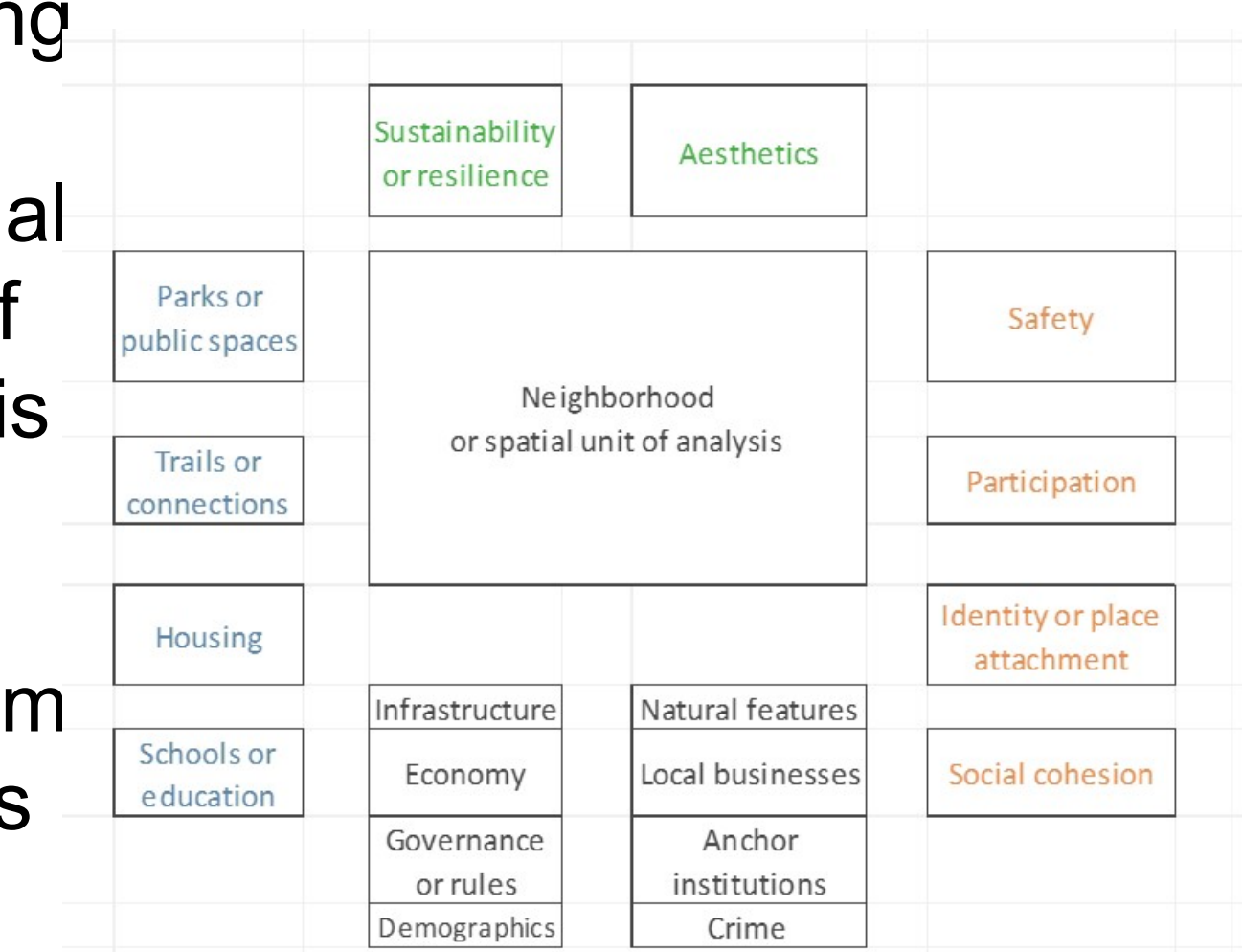
The Neighborhood Model (Williams et al. 2018).

Sharing the Data

Initial results will be shared at the second workshop with the users of Grassy Point about the factors that are impacting the perception of safety and the features or conditions that users identified as important to creating a safer and more equitable green space. The data will then be revised to share with the decision makers as they plan to improve access to the site.