

# Lake Nokomis

Difficulty: Easy – 3.2 mile walk around the lake on paved park trails

The non-profit, Friends of the Lake Nokomis' mission is to protect, preserve and improve Lake Nokomis and its surrounding park. [friendsoflakenokomis.com](http://friendsoflakenokomis.com)



**About Your Guide:** Steffanie Musich started Friends of Lake Nokomis with other neighborhood residents in 2010. She has immersed herself in the park's history.

Discover the wonders of Lake Nokomis. You'll learn about the park's history, landscape, and wetland ecosystem, as well as a vision for its future and the work already being done as we adapt to changing climate.

★ **Start: Lake Nokomis Community Center,**

**2401 E Minnehaha Pkwy** – Looking out over this popular urban park, it is challenging to imagine how it might have looked when the Minneapolis Park and Recreation board acquired it in 1907. The land then was largely undeveloped marsh and wetland flanked by grazing pasture and small farms growing strawberries, cranberries and other food to be sold to city residents.

In 1910, the park board renamed the lake to Nokomis after a character in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. At this time, the lake's wetland and marshes were dredged to around 15 feet, thus creating a true lake. The first plan for improving the lake and its surrounds was created in 1913, which included a boat house, connection to Minnehaha Creek extensive trails, and an island.

**A. Nokomis Weir** – Walk southwest along the trail towards to the Weir, or small dam to control the upstream water level, which was renovated in 2013.

1970's research on wetland restoration and its impacts prompted agencies to address water quality in the city's lakes. The Blue Water Commission was formed in 1996 and worked to change maintenance practices for the city's streets, create stormwater ponds, and implement this Weir separating Nokomis from the creek to prevent nutrient and bacterial loading, as well as introduction of invasive species.

**B. Nokomis Main Beach** – Continue your walk along the lake trail towards the popular Lake Nokomis beach. The beach was originally placed in this location to take advantage of the nearby streetcar stop on Cedar Avenue.

The first bath house at Nokomis was built in 1919 followed soon after by athletic fields, trails, and the epic water toboggan that was removed in the 1930's. After the original bath house was torn down in 1966, it was rebuilt the following year and remains in its place to this day.



**C. Stormwater Ponds around Lagoon** – As you keep walking towards the southern end of the lake, you'll see three formal stormwater treatment ponds that treat incoming runoff from the surrounding neighborhoods. As Minneapolis has experienced wetter than normal conditions over the past decade, we begin to see the impacts of our changing climate on landscapes created during drier periods.

**D. Nokomis Arboretum** – On the east edge of the lake lies the Nokomis Arboretum, planted in 1999 to help restore tree cover lost in a storm that took down hundreds of trees in the park and surrounding neighborhoods. The area has been added to over the years as more tree species diversity has been identified as an important resiliency strategy for this urban forest.

**E. Nokomis Naturescape** – The Nokomis Naturescape is a 4-acre native planting installed in 1998 on the northeast shores of Lake Nokomis. These spectacular gardens are primarily maintained by volunteers and were the impetus for the annual Monarch Festival which is held adjacent to the gardens and recreation center each fall during the Monarch's migration to Mexico.

**Continue around the lake back to the community center.**



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