



A view of Ohéyawahe/Historic Pilot Knob from the north.

Oheyawahe/Historic Pilot Knob | City of Mendota Heights PRESERVATION SITE

About the Site

Oheyawahe is located in Mendota Heights overlooking the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Considered a sacred site by many Dakota people, the Dakota name Oheyawahe can be translated as, “A sacred place much visited; the place where people go for burials.” The area was inhabited by the Dakota and other Native Americans prior to the establishment of Fort Snelling in 1820, and continues to be an important place for the Dakota community and other indigenous peoples, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After the land of Pilot Knob hill was offered for sale by the U.S. government in the 1800s, it was purchased by a variety of private owners. In 2002, developers announced plans to build 157 town homes on the north slope. Native Americans, local residents, historians, archaeologists, faith communities and environmental groups united to preserve the land as a public natural area.

The City of Mendota Heights acquired the first 8.2 acres in 2006 and acquired a contiguous 14.4-acre parcel adjacent to the 1.8 acres of existing City property in 2008. The City acquired an adjacent one-acre residential parcel in 2020.

Project Information

A primary goal of the proposed project is to provide for safe and improved visitor access to and within the site. Current access to the site is via a former city street with no provisions for buses and provides limited ADA-accessibility to the best vistas.

Project Costs

\$1.891 million is requested to pre-design, design and construct improved access and to provide cultural and natural resource improvements to the federally-recognized site.



Photo courtesy of Bruce White

Looking northwest at Historic Fort Snelling and the Minneapolis skyline.



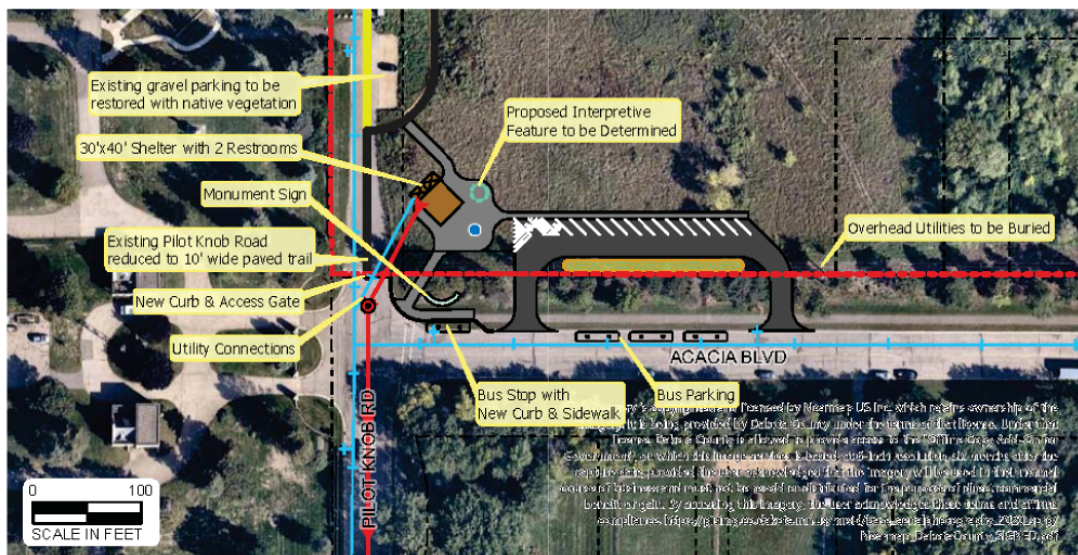
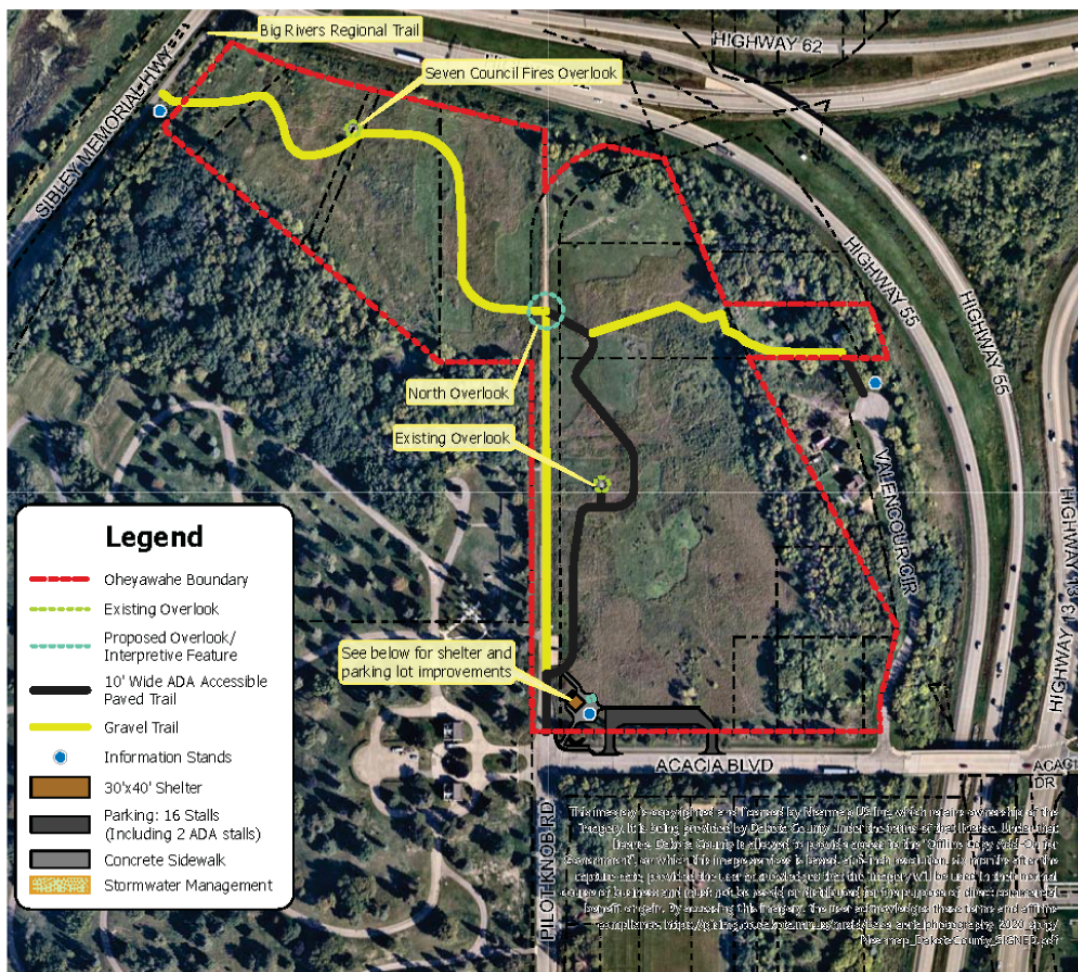
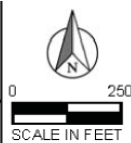
Looking west from Seven Council Fires overlook.

Proposed Improvements:

- Entry Area/Bus Drop-off with ADA-accessible path, entrance sign, vehicle gate replacement, landscaping and interpretive signage.
- ADA-accessible gathering area, providing a multi-purpose plaza as the primary visitor contact site for visitors; adding parking, a drinking fountain, bicycle loops, restroom facilities, and a bio-infiltration water management feature.
- Multi-purpose gathering area at North Overlook.
- Additional visitor seating at the Seven Councils Fire site.
- Evaluation of existing garage structure for re-purposing as an outdoor educational gathering facility.
- Trail improvements, in cooperation with Dakota County, to provide connection with the existing MN River Regional Greenway Big Rivers Trail.
- Trail connections at existing trails.
- Historical Area interpretive and other signage along eastbound MN Hwy 55/62 on the Mendota Bridge.
- Natural resource restoration and enhancement.

Oheyawahe Capital Improvements Preliminary Recommendations

Date: 2/21/2023



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