



Parks and Recreation Commission

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, 6:15 PM
106 Center Street

Members of the Public may attend the meeting either in-person or by joining via Zoom either online or by telephone at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82835623772?pwd=Rsf4BlmpkVd4XAE6GnovyTTXZ7J0ju.1>

Meeting chat link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/jc/82835623772>

Meeting ID: 828 3562 3772

Passcode: 004651

One tap mobile

+16469313860,,82835623772#,,,,*004651# US

+19292056099,,82835623772#,,,,*004651# US (New York)

Some items on this agenda are important enough to the City Councilmembers that a quorum of the Council may be present to receive information leading to their future deliberations and eventual decision.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
 - A. Agenda Approval
2. Minutes of the Preceding Meeting(s)
 - A. Approve June 9, 2026 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
3. Citizen Reports or Comments
4. Unfinished Business
 - A. Men's Garden Club Proposal for Garden Statuary
5. New Business
 - A. Bench Donation - John "Punk" Seamans
 - B. Bench Donation - Michael McNulty
 - C. Oak Hill Cemetery National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Review
6. Communications and Reports
 - A. City Council and Park Project Updates - Mini Master Plan and Playground Design

- B. Message Board Content Guidelines
 - C. Cinema in The Commons Update - Event Dates: 8/15 and 8/29
 - D. Upcoming Events:
 - Rotary Concerts: 7/15 and 7/29
 - Crazy Days: 7/16-7/19
 - E. June Financials
- 7. Miscellaneous/Commissioner's Comments
 - 8. Adjournment

City of Excelsior
Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

106 Center Street, Excelsior, MN 55331 – Entrance located on Center Street
6:15 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Wolfe called the June 9, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:15 P.M.

Present: Vice Chair Wolfe, and Commissioners, Baker, Bolles, Radziej, and Schmidt
Absent: Chair Sobiech

Also present: Parks Manager Quinn

a. AGENDA APPROVAL

June 9, 2026 Parks and Recreation Commission Agenda

Bolles moved, Baker seconded to approve the June 9, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting agenda. Motion carried 5/0.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) May 12, 2026 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Schmidt moved, Bolles seconded to approve the May 12, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting minutes. Motion carried 5/0.

3. CITIZEN REPORTS OR COMMENTS

None

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

(a) Men's Garden Club initial proposal for garden statuary

Gary Birnbaum of the Excelsior Men's Garden Club presented to the Parks and Recreation (PNR) Commission proposing statuary installations in the garden spaces they maintain, which includes: The Port of Excelsior, Veteran's Memorial, and Arey Garden. The PNR Commission discussed the proposal and requested the Men's Garden Club present again at the July PNR meeting with a more detailed proposal.

(b) Oak woodland educational signage

Manager Quinn discussed the community desire for oak woodland education signage to inform park goers on the oak woodland restoration project in The Commons. The PNR Commission viewed examples and discussed the signage project. PNR discussed finding a location for the sign that will not be impacted by future changes to the area.

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

(a) City Council and Park Project Updates – Sponsorship Policy Update

Manager Quinn discussed that the Sponsorship Policy was approved by City Council at the May 18th City Council meeting.

(b) Cinema in The Commons update (event dates: 8/15 & 8/29)

Manager Quinn discussed that Cinema in The Commons was discussed by City Council at the May 18th City Council Meeting and that City Council approved to fund the two events for this year. The PNR commission discussed the decision City Council made to fund Cinema in The Commons and to keep it a city event.

(c) Park Message Board update

Manager Quinn discussed the PNR message board recommendation that was approved by City Council at the June 1st City Council meeting. The PNR Commission discussed how to set guidelines and manage the message board content. The PNR Commission discussed adding message board content guidelines to the July agenda.

(d) Upcoming Events – Rotary Concerts 6/17 & 7/1. Mini Master Plan and Playground Design Community Engagement at 6/17 Rotary Concert. Art on the Lake 6/13-14. Firecracker Race 7/4, Fanfare for The Commons 7/7.

The PNR Commission discussed the upcoming events in June and July.

(e) May Financials

No Comments.

7. Miscellaneous/Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Radziej proposed putting out informational historic signs in The Commons leading up to the 4th of July. The Commission discussed and agreed with Commissioner Radziej's idea. Manager Quinn discussed bringing the idea for discussion at The Community for The Commons/City workgroup the following day.

Manager Quinn discussed an inquiry for a bench donation above the ballfield seating area. The Commission discussed bench donations and the desire to have them above the ballfield seating.

The PNR Commission discussed the challenges involved with The Minnehaha Steamboat logistics and launching.

8. Adjournment

Bolles moved, Baker seconded to adjourn the June 9, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting at 7:49PM. Motion carried 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Quinn, Parks Manager

ITEM REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Kevin Quinn, Parks Manager

Meeting Date: July 14, 2026

Department/Office: Public Works

Item Name: Men's Garden Club Proposal for Garden Statuary

Summary:

Gary Birnbaum from the Men's Garden Club sent the following images of garden statuary for review and discussion along with the following links to artists' websites:

Keith Dorn [Dorn's Designs | Facebook](#)

Sharon Miller Thompson [Yardly Art](#)

Judd Nelson [Decatur Sculpture Tour - Decatur Sculpture Tour](#)

1.



2.



Metal Heron Garden Statues Set of 2 for Patio La...

★★★★★ (133)

\$175.94 ~~\$234.59~~ (25% off)

Ad by Etsy seller

FREE shipping

3.



aja Sculpture Bronze Resin by Christine
axter. Classic beauty is timeless.

Large Concrete Koi Fish Statue 17 inch Garden Sc...

★★★★★ (1,105)  **Star Seller**

\$279.99

NationalStatuary

FREE shipping

4.



5.



Metal Heron Standing Bird 34 Inches Tall

★★★★★ (10,117)  Star Seller

\$279.00

Ad by Etsy seller

FREE shipping

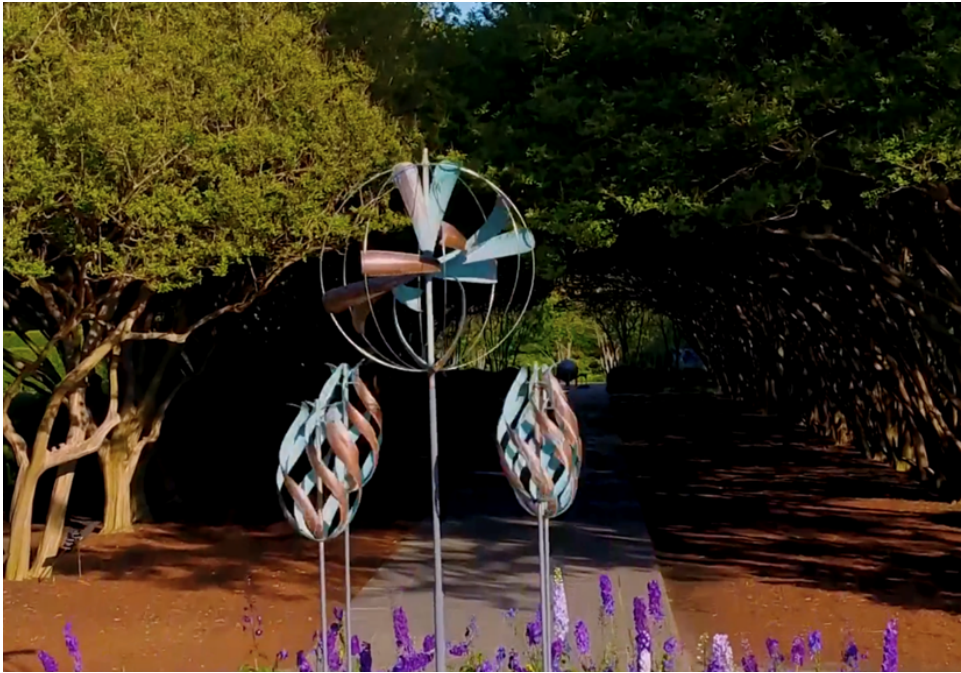
6. **the park, turtles crawling in the river**, and **tortoise fountains** de specifications.



Why

Why

7.



8.

LEOPOLDgallery + ARTconsulting

Email Us
816.333.3111

[SHOP FOR WIND SCULPTURES](#) [KINETIC ART FOR YOUR GARDEN](#) [EXHIBITS](#) [GIFTS OF REMEMBRANCE](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Desert Flame



Desert Flame



Nebula



Single Helix Oval



Single Helix Oval

Agave

Mandala

Lotus



Bean Pole



Star Dancer Horizontal



Double Dancer



Mirinda IV

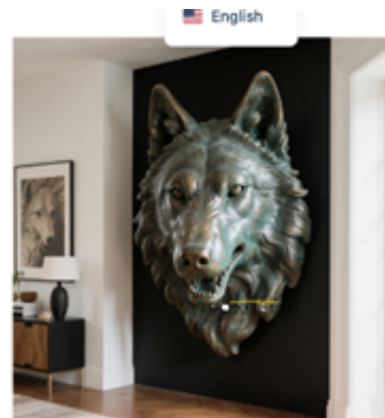
9.

Wolf Statue Styles & Poses

Wolf statues come in various styles and poses to suit different tastes and decor:

- **Howling Wolves:** A classic pose, often on a cliff or mountain base, symbolizing the call of the wild.
- **Sitting/Standing Wolves:** Realistic, watchful poses available in many sizes, including life-like versions.
- **Wolf Packs/Families:** Depicting a mother with pups or a group, representing loyalty and family bonds.
- **Fantasy & Mythical:** Featuring werewolves, winged wolves, or designs inspired by Celtic, Viking, and steampunk themes.
- **Themed/Historical:** Famous works like the Capitoline Wolf—a cultural icon with replicas available worldwide.

SCULPT YOUR OWN WOLF STATUE



Wolf Statues in Different Materials



Stainless Steel Wolf Sculpture



Bronze Wolf Sculpture



Fiberglass Wolf Statue



Marble Wolf Sculpture

More Patterns of Wolf Statues



Outdoor Large Bronze Garden
Decor Sculptures of a Group of
wolves



Unleashed Wildness Ferocious
Snarling Beautiful Natural Patina
Copper Realistic Wolf Sculpture



Large Decoration High-Quality
Detailed Life Size Bronze Dire
Wolf Sculpture for Sale



Two wolves sculpture fierce br
statue



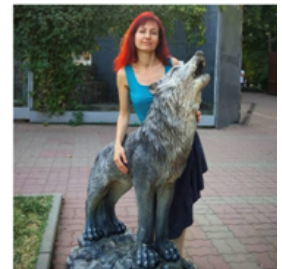
Vivid Running bronze black wolf
sculpture



Inner Tranquility Peaceful Lifelike
Antique Bronze Sculpture Sleeping
Wolf Curled In Sleep



Upward Gaze Weathered Copper
Verdigris Geometric Angular
"Verdigris Howl" Large Outdoor
Wolf Statue



Large Life-Sized Popular Outd
Bronze Wolves Statue



11.



Good Fortune Self-Contained
Fountain Freestanding Bronze Metal
Heron Garden Sculpture

Good Fortune Self-Contained Fountain
Freestanding Bronze Metal [...]



Beautiful Garden Yard Art Decor
Bronze Blue Heron Statues

Beautiful Garden Yard Art Decor Bronze Blue
Heron Statues [...]



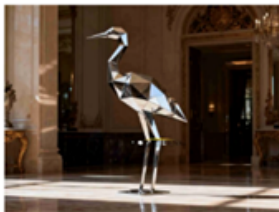
Soaring Upward Bird Weathered
Finish Bronze Metal Heron Yard Art
Wings Outstretched

Soaring Upward Bird Weathered Finish Bronze
Metal [...]



Stunning Garden Giant Heron "The
Serene Wader" Bronze Egret
Sculpture In Flight

Stunning Garden Giant Heron "The Serene
Wader" [...]



Indoor Art Sophisticated Modern
Bird "Geometric Muse" Stainless
Steel Egret Metal Sculpture

Indoor Art Sophisticated Modern Bird
"Geometric Muse" [...]



Harmonious balance lifelike bronze
wildlife duo antique natina heron



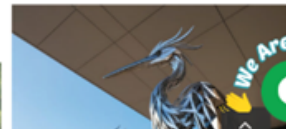
Beautiful Art of Bronze Heron Pair
Statue

Beautiful Art of Bronze Heron Pair Statue [...]



Flower Border Wading Bird Ethereal
Grace Cast Bronze Egret Garden
Sculpture

Flower Border Wading Bird Ethereal Grace
Cast [...]



12.

Turtle Statues in Feng Shui

In Feng Shui, a turtle sculpture symbolizes longevity, protection, wisdom, and stability. The turtle's natural ability to withdraw into its shell represents the power to guard against negative energy and misfortune. It is often placed in the north or back of a home or office to provide support, enhance career luck, and attract steady, grounded energy. The turtle is also one of the four celestial animals in Chinese culture, embodying endurance and the harmony between heaven and earth.

SCULPT YOUR OWN TURTLE STATUE



Star Turtle Sculptures



Art Turtle Statue Decor



Garden Turtle Statue



Bronze Turtle Fountain Statue



We are in different time zones, so we may not be currently at work. Please leave Your contact details (Email or WhatsApp), and we will provide you with detailed information. Our email address is: info@aongking.com

More Turtle Statues

13.



**Inner Decoration Bronze Art Horn
Koi Fish Sculpture Fountain**

Inner Decoration Bronze Art Horn Koi Fish
Sculpture Fountain [...]



**Faceted Concave-convex Abstract
Stylized Stainless Steel Koi Fish
Lawn Ornament**

Faceted Concave-convex Abstract Stylized
Stainless Steel Koi [...]



**Capturing Grace and Resilience
Bronze Koi Fish Statue**

Capturing Grace and Resilience Bronze Koi
Fish [...]



**Highly Weather Resistance Rust-
proof Stainless Steel Abstract Koi
Fish Garden Sculpture**

Highly Weather Resistance Rust-proof
Stainless Steel Abstract [...]



**Charming Water Feature Mouth
Spray Fountain Bronze Playful
Swimming Koi Sculptures**

Charming Water Feature Mouth Spray
Fountain Bronze [...]



**Ascending Koi Ornamental Tiered
Fountain Copper Garden Koi Fish
Statues**

Ascending Koi Ornamental Tiered Fountain
Copper Garden [...]



**Royal Decor Openwork Scales Brass
Koi Fish Statue Ornamental
Fountain**

Royal Decor Openwork Scales Brass Koi Fish
[...]



**Abundance and Wealth Weather-
resistant Bianco Carrara Marble
Textured Stone Koi Statues**

Abundance and Wealth Weather-resistant
Bianco Carrara Marble [...]



14.



15.



W

W

16.



Large Outdoor Ornament Famous Open Wings Detailed Bronze African Fish Eagle Sculpture Catching a Snake

Large Outdoor Ornament Famous Open Wings Detailed Bronze African [...]



Outdoor Decoration Flying Open Wings Bronze Thunder Lightning Eagle Statue Bald Eagle Garden Statue

Outdoor Decoration Flying Open Wings Bronze Thunder Lightning Eagle [...]



Artistic home interior focal point national bird American eagle figurines collectible



Outdoor Hot Sale Standing on Tree Bronze Bald Eagle [...]



Promenade focal point perched bald eagle species focused AI observation eagle outdoor bald eagle statue

Promenade focal point perched bald eagle species [...]



Public Art Animal Monumental Bronze Bald Eagle Statue

Detail English Eagle Statue

Majestic Powerful Open Wings Outdoor Modern Decoration [...]



Large Aongking's Brass Bald Eagle Statue Bird of Prey Majestic Symbol of Strength and Pride

Large Aongking's Brass Bald Eagle Statue Bird [...]



17.

mu uy clay spinner ★★★★★ (5.9k) \$59.25 \$79.00 (25% off) FREE shipping  Patina Steel Metal Sculpture Garden Sculpture L... ★★★★★ (568) \$175.00 FREE shipping	mu uy clay spinner ★★★★★ (100) \$845.00 \$1,300.00 (35% off)  Kinetic Metal Garden Art Sculpture Grouping of ... ★★★★★ (2.7k) \$59.00	mu uy clay spinner ★★★★★ (159) \$47.12 \$68.00 (20% off)  Large Metal Wind Spinner, Colorful Triple Moon ... ★★★★★ (1) \$112.50 \$150.00 (25% off) FREE shipping	mu uy clay spinner ★★★★★ (859) \$219.00 FREE shipping  Wind Spinners Outdoor, 75" Large Metal Kinetic ... ★★★★★ \$150.00 FREE shipping
 Rust Metal Wind Spinner Garden Stake - Kinetic... ★★★★★ (1.2k) \$156.00 \$195.00 (20% off) FREE shipping	 Kinetic Copper Dual Spinner - Dancing Willow L... ★★★★★ (2.7k) \$371.95 FREE shipping	 Metal Bluebell Flower Wind Chime Garden Stake... ★★★★★ (1) \$34.50 \$46.00 (25% off) FREE shipping	 Vintage Farm Tractor Metal Windmill, John Deer... ☆☆☆☆ (2) \$37.34 \$74.68 (50% off)

Recommended Action:

Review the Men's Garden Club proposal.

Budget:

Attachments:

None

ITEM REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission
From: Kevin Quinn, Parks Manager
Meeting Date: July 14, 2026
Department/Office: Public Works
Item Name: Bench Donation - John "Punk" Seamans

Summary:

Mary Seamans would like to donate for a memorial bench at The Commons ballfield in honor of her late husband, John "Punk" Seamans.

Mary provided the following details about her husband:

"John Spencer "Punk" Seamans, born April 26, 1942, in Minneapolis, MN, was a Minnetonka High School graduate (class of 1960) and a lifelong sports enthusiast. Before his softball career, he was an all-conference football player and played preseason football with the Houston Oilers [Legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com).

Seamans built a strong reputation as a coach and organizer in the Minnetonka School District, dedicating 25 years to 7th & 8th grade football and several years to baseball. He also ran the South Shore Softball League for over five years, earning the Minnetonka Community Ed Adult Program Volunteer of the Year award in 2008 - 2009 [Legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com).

*His contributions to the sport of softball were recognized in **2010** when he was inducted into the **Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame** [Facebook+1](https://www.facebook.com/minnesota.softball.hall.of.fame). The Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the game in Minnesota, and Seamans' induction celebrated his decades of coaching, organizing, and community involvement.*

Seamans retired from sales at Zero-Max Inc. in 2001 and remained active in sports and community life until his passing on January 17, 2025, in Shorewood, MN [Legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com). He is remembered as a dedicated mentor, a passionate sports fan, and a respected figure in Minnesota's softball community."



The proposed location is along the top of the ballfield seating. Staff would purchase and install the bench.

Recommended Action:

Approve memorial bench donation for John “Punk” Seamans.

Budget:

Attachments:

None



Item: 5.B.

ITEM REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission
From: Kevin Quinn, Parks Manager
Meeting Date: July 14, 2026
Department/Office: Public Works
Item Name: Bench Donation - Michael McNulty

Summary:

Nicole McNulty would like to donate for a memorial bench overlooking The Commons ballfield near right field in honor of her son, Michael McNulty.

Nicole provided the following details about Michael:

"We are interested in purchasing a commemorative bench in The Commons in memory of my son, Michael McNulty, who passed away on the lake."

Michael spent his childhood and adolescence in Excelsior attending school, playing baseball, boating on the lake, eating lots of Lick's ice cream, and being with his friends 😊

We saw a possible space we'd love for the bench. Attached is a photo.

If this space is available or a similar one, please let us know and we will fill out the application form, send in payment, etc.

Thank you for your consideration and for all you do to make Excelsior Commons a great park for our community."

All the best,
Nicole McNulty
Michael's Mom



The proposed location is on top of the knoll near right field. Staff would purchase and install the bench.

Recommended Action:

Approve memorial bench donation for Michael McNulty.

Budget:

Attachments:

None



Item: 5.C.

ITEM REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Kevin Quinn, Parks Manager

Meeting Date: July 14, 2026

Department/Office: Public Works

Item Name: Oak Hill Cemetery National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Review

Summary:

Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions has completed the first draft of the Oak Hill Cemetery National Register of Historic Places Registration form. The cemetery committee met with Lindsay Hannah from Row 10 on July 8 to provide feedback on the draft.

The National Register Questionnaire was submitted to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MNSHPO) in April 2026. The cemetery committee is awaiting feedback from MNSHPO which may guide edits or additions to the registration form.

Recommended Action:

Review the Oak Hill Cemetery National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Budget:

Attachments:

1. 5(c) Attachment_Oak Hill Cemetery Nomination - DRAFT

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Oak Hill Cemetery

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: Excelsior Boulevard at Maclynn RoadCity or town: Excelsior State: MN County: HennepinNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Oak Hil Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☐

District

☒☐

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Name of Property

Site

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

1

structures

1

objects

2

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: _STONE/granite, marble

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Oak Hill Cemetery is a 6-acre active cemetery located on Excelsior Boulevard in the cities of Excelsior and Greenwood, Hennepin County, Minnesota. With an earliest recorded burial of 1855 and continuing to receive burials today, Oak Hill has a mix of marker types and styles representative of the years since its founding, including Civil War-era military markers, marble and granite headstones, family markers with associated family stones, and flat stones flush with grade. A steep hill contains the oldest section of the cemetery; a curving road around the hill up to the peak provides access to view of nearby Lake Minnetonka. The cemetery historic district includes the markers, monuments, headstones, and associated sculptures of the cemetery, one contributing structure (the vault), and one contributing object, the Soldiers' Monument. An inventory of the headstones and markers was not undertaken as part of this nomination.

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Narrative Description

Location

Oak Hill Cemetery straddles the boundary between Excelsior and Greenwood; the majority of the cemetery is located within Excelsior, but an approximately 0.8 acres section in the eastern portion of the cemetery lies within Greenwood city boundaries. The cemetery is bound by Excelsior Boulevard and residential development along Lake Minnetonka to the north, a State of Minnesota Driver & Vehicle Services building to the east, Highway 7 to the south, and the River Valley Montessori of Excelsior school building to the west.

General Description

The cemetery (Figure 1) is not fenced or enclosed; a simple metal picket fence with square posts marks the boundary between the cemetery and the school on the western side of the cemetery. The remaining sides are open. Oak Hill does not possess elaborate entrance gates or similar features. A simple, modern sign with the name of the cemetery and a founding date sits at the entrance on Excelsior Boulevard.

Visually the cemetery presents as one cohesive property despite two formal expansions. The original section of approximately 4.5 acres (Section 1, Figure 2) near the center of the property dates to ca. 1854. The expansion to the east of approximately 0.8 acres (Section 2, Figure 3) happened with the acquisition of the adjacent property in 1918. The expansion to the west (Section 3, Figure 4) of approximately 0.7 acres occurred in 1944. Sections 1 and 2 have notably steeper topography than Section 3. Marker types and styles vary between the sections due to the phases of development, but the cemetery does not have any internal divisions or fences indicating the different sections. The different section names are largely used by City of Excelsior staff for identifying burial plots and recording burials.

Oak Hill Cemetery lacks elaborate sculptures or above ground tombs. It contains approximately 476 plots. A standard plot contains 4 to 6 burials. The plots cover almost the entire cemetery despite a topography that does not lend itself well to in ground burials. The plots in Sections 1 and 2 are neatly laid out in rectilinear shapes, but are configured to accommodate the hilly topography of those sections. The plots of Section 3 are more regularly configured, but lack the narrow aisle between plots found in Sections 1 and 2. As individual plots do not have fences or visual barriers, the unique configuration of each plot is more evident on a map than in the cemetery, but a handful of plots do have low perimeter markers of stone or concrete to delineate the boundaries of individual plots. In Section 2, several plots have large metal urns with distinctive bulbous shapes and angular handles, but most plots lack associate sculpture or commemorative figures.

Unlike the garden cemeteries of the same time period, Excelsior has a more functional than designed landscape. As a result, the cemetery does not have the benches, fountains, lawns, or gardens found in other cemeteries.

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Name of Property

Markers

The markers at Oak Hill Cemetery exhibit a range of sizes, material, and iconography (Figures 5-11). In Sections 1 and 2, the headstones, footstones, and associated sculptures are mostly above grade while many of the markers in Section 3 are flush with grade. The markers are in keeping with the prevalent styles popular over the years as the cemetery received burials and expanded. Obelisks, upright headstones set in a stone base, and rounded headstones are all found in Oak Hill Cemetery. The markers appear carved or manufactured by professional masons and artisans. Most of the markers are marble or granite as typically found in cemeteries of this age. One modest marker in Section 2 appears to be the work of an artistically-inclined amateur with concrete and small stones spelling out the name.

As the plots can accommodate multiple burials, many of the plots feature one larger marker featuring the family name at the center or rear of the plot and smaller markers at the perimeter with the names and other information for the interred individuals.

Typical iconography is found on markers across the cemetery. Plant motifs, such as ivy traditionally symbolizing fidelity or immortality and lilies for innocence, are found on markers along with other traditional symbols such as clasped hands for matrimony, a hand pointing upward indicating the deceased has risen to heaven, and a dove for peace or purity.

Oak Hill Cemetery has several Civil War-era upright marble markers with the distinctive recessed shield relief and arched top initially adopted for use in national cemeteries in 1873 and later made available for private interments in 1879.¹ The markers are not contained within a single plot but dispersed across the cemetery in various family plots.

Contributing Elements

Oak Hill Cemetery has two contributing elements: the vault and the Soldiers' Monument.

Vault

The one-story vault is sited on the west side of the hill in Section 1. Constructed in 1905, the vault once served as a temporary holding facility for bodies awaiting burial during the cold Minnesota winters and now serves as cemetery storage. Oriented towards the west, the vault is mostly set within the hill with a portion of the roof and side elevations exposed. Rubble, uncoursed stonework covers the west elevation and forms three distinctive points along the roofline.

Access to the interior of the vault is provided via a set of modern wooden stairs and a double leaf, wooden plank door installed at a slant; the doors were installed in 2026, replacing previously deteriorated doors. The interior of the vault is concrete with a concrete floor.

¹ "History of Government-Furnished Headstones and Markers," National Cemetery Administration, updated 8 October 2024. Available online at <https://www.cem.va.gov/history/hmhlist.asp> (accessed 29 June 2026).

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Name of Property

In 1920, the Oak Hill Cemetery Association paid almost \$200 for cementing the top and interior of the vault. The entry also notes “doors,” but did not qualify if it was for repair of the existing or replacement doors.²

Soldiers’ Monument

The Soldiers’ Monument is currently located within Section 3; it was installed at the top of the hill in Section 1, likely in 1905, but was relocated to its current location in 1962. The zinc monument serves as a focal point for the cemetery and gathering place for the Village of Excelsior’s annual Memorial Day services. The monument has a base fabricated to resemble rusticated stone but the remaining sections have a smooth surface. The upper shaft section is wrapped in a draped fabric motif with tassels and topped by a projecting pyramidal cap. On flat panels on the base, the memorial features iconography typical of a post-Civil War memorial for soldiers, including a draped flag, soldier’s head in profile with a flat cap, and classical decorative motifs.

The monument was likely manufactured by The Monumental Bronze Company out of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The company was the sole manufacturer of white bronze monuments and allowed for extensive customization as each monument was made to order. The term “white bronze” was primarily a marketing term as the resulting materials with largely zinc with a bit of tin.³ Within an 1882 catalog from The Monumental Bronze Co. are several components, such as the base and the Grand Army of the Republic badge emblem, that are visually identical to the Oak Hill Soldiers’ Monument.⁴

Landscape

The landscape of Oak Hill Cemetery does not feature the stylized, planned landscapes features of a garden-style cemetery. The cemetery has mature oak trees, particularly throughout Sections 1 and 2, providing shade to the property. Grass blankets the cemetery, covering over and obscuring any divisions between individual plots

The roadways and paths follow the existing topography. Access to the cemetery comes via Excelsior Boulevard on the north side of the site. The roadways loop through each section and curve around the hill; at the top of the hill is plot number 0, a burial-free spot that affords view of Lake Minnetonka (Figures 14-16). The roadways are largely paved with the exception of the uppermost portion of the main access to the peak of the hill.

² Financial records of the Oak Hill Cemetery Association, Entry for 28 July 1920. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

³ Carolyn Ivanoff, “Monuments Everlasting – Bridgeport’s Monumental Bronze Company,” n.d. Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Library. Available online at <https://bportlibrary.org/hc/business-and-commerce/monuments-everlasting-bridgeports-monumental-bronze-company/> (accessed 29 June 2026).

⁴ Catalogue of The Monumental Bronze Co, October 1882. Available online at https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WhiteBronzeMonument_Cat_1892.pdf (accessed 29 June 2026).

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☒ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1855-1962

Significant Dates

1855

1918

1944

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Oak Hill Cemetery is eligible for inclusion in the National Register at the local level under Criterion A: Social History. As the only burial ground in Excelsior and one of the few remaining extant links to the earliest days of Excelsior's settlement, Oak Hill Cemetery is an important part of the historic character of Excelsior. The cemetery reflects Excelsior's history as a modest village tied to farming before becoming a tourism destination and ultimately a bedroom community for Minneapolis. The cemetery has continuously a part of Excelsior's history through these changes as well as an anchor for the annual Memorial Day commemorations.

The cemetery has a period of significance of 1855 to 1962, from the first recorded burial to the relocation of the Soldiers' Memorial to its current location.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Excelsior, Minnesota, was founded in 1853 by the members of the Excelsior Pioneer Association, a group from New York seeking rich farmlands in the territory of Minnesota.⁵ White settlement of Minnesota had escalated following the formal creation the Minnesota territory in 1849 and treaties with Native American tribes. An 1849 census of the territory listed 4,535 white residents, likely including many people of mixed European and Native American ancestry.⁶ The Dakota requested Lake Minnetonka and the surrounding areas be set aside for them as part of the Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, signed in 1851, but their efforts were unsuccessful.⁷

White settlement along the shores of Lake Minnetonka commenced in 1852 with the establishment of a land claim by Simon Stevens to build a sawmill at the source of Minnehaha Creek, Grays Bay, in Lake Minnetonka.⁸ That year, a small group led by George Betram visited Lake Minnetonka with an eye to future settlement; Betram wrote of the crystal-clear waters of the lake, fertile soils, plentiful timber, and proximity to the growing settlements of St. Anthony and Minneapolis.⁹ After returning to New York, Betram formed the Excelsior Pioneer Association to expedite the settlement of the site he had selected. By spring 1853, Betram has returned with carpenter Robert McGrath in tow to start construction on homes

⁵ Lake Minnetonka Historical Society (LMHS), "A History of the South Lake Minnetonka Area," 2022. Available online at <https://www.elmhs.org/area-history.html> (accessed 16 June 2026).

⁶ Rhoda Gilman, "Territorial Imperative: How Minnesota Became the 32nd State," *The North Star State: A Minnesota History Reader*. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002. pg. 49-50, 52.

⁷ LHMS, "A History of the South Lake Minnetonka Area,"

⁸ Frederick Johnson, *The Big Water: Lake Minnetonka and Its Place in Minnesota History*. (Minnetonka, MN: Deep Haven Books, 2012), p. 11.

⁹ Johnson, p. 12; ELMHS "History."

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and businesses, despite the fact McGrath knew “nothing of log-cabin building or of woods life”.¹⁰
Additional settlers soon followed to Excelsior.

Excelsior started as a small grid of streets hugging the southern shore of Lake Minnetonka. The main commercial thoroughfare of Water Street ran perpendicular to the lakefront. Notably, 13 acres along the lakefront were set aside as public grounds called the Commons. Agriculture initially dominated the Excelsior economy with farmers growing apples, strawberries, and raspberries among other fruits. Farmers also quickly identified that soil closer to the lake was rocky and difficult to farm while land a few miles away was easier to cultivate.¹¹ By 1890, the Village of Excelsior had a population of 619 people and the surrounding township another 468 people.¹²

Early maps of Excelsior indicate a “Public Cemetery Grounds” on Second Street (present day Excelsior Boulevard) in the current location of Oak Hill Cemetery, but the maps only vaguely indicate boundaries and do not contain detailed information on the cemetery. Its inclusion suggests the cemetery was either active or at least set aside for future burials by 1854.¹³ The first recorded burial at Oak Hill was in 1855 when Thomas Pease died of tuberculosis and was subsequently interred at the cemetery.¹⁴

The cemetery’s establishment is contemporaneous with other cemeteries in the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Martin Layman accepted burials on his property in Minneapolis starting in 1853; the cemetery would become known as the Minneapolis Cemetery when formally platted in 1860 as well as Layman’s Cemetery, but is now known as Minneapolis Pioneer and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery.¹⁵ The Oak Grove Cemetery, now a portion of Bloomington Cemetery, began in 1856 in association with the First Presbyterian Church of Oak Grove.¹⁶ Groveland Cemetery in Minnetonka followed a similar development to Oak Hill; the first recorded burial occurred in 1855 but formal organization didn’t happen until 1871 with the establishment of the Groveland Cemetery Association.¹⁷ The Union Cemetery Association purchased property in 1861 for the establishment of the Union Cemetery in Long Lake.¹⁸ As with Oak Hill, the early, original sections of these cemeteries contain many modest markers for early settlers and lack

¹⁰ Johnson, p. 12.

¹¹ Plat Map of Excelsior, Minnesota, 1854, Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society; Johnson, p. 38-39.

¹² Census Bulletin: Population of Minnesota, Census Office, Department of the Interior, 24 November 1891. Available online at <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1890/bulletins/demographics/147-population-of-mn.pdf> (accessed 28 June 2026).

¹³ Plat Map of Excelsior, Minnesota, 1854, Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society; Snell’s Addition Plat Map, 1855, Collections of Hennepin County Library. Available online at <https://digitalcollections.hclib.org/digital/custom/home> (accessed 27 June 2026).

¹⁴ Oak Hill Cemetery Walking Tour, Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, 2025.

¹⁵ National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Minneapolis Pioneer and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota, National Register 02000612.

¹⁶ National Register of Historic Places Nomination, First Presbyterian Church of Oak Grove Cemetery, Bloomington, Hennepin County, Minnesota. National Register 14000956.

¹⁷ “History of Groveland Cemetery,” Groveland Cemetery, n.d. Available online at <https://www.grovelandcemetery.org/history.html> (accessed 29 June 2026).

¹⁸ “History of Long Lake,” City of Long Lake, n.d. Available online at <https://www.longlakemn.gov/community/page/history-long-lake> (accessed 29 June 2026).

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the elaborate markers and landscaping found in later cemeteries in the Minneapolis area, such as Lakewood Cemetery.

Despite the cemetery being referred to as “public” and multiple plots designated as potter’s fields, Excelsior involvement in the cemetery may have been limited, short-lived, or non-existent. A review of the 1850s records of the Excelsior did not identify entries about the cemetery or any related maintenance or management activities. The earliest records are limited to annual town meetings that are largely preoccupied with the poor condition of fences that allow cattle to freely roam, but no mention is made of the cemetery.¹⁹ In September 1867, local residents formed the Oak Hill Cemetery Association (OHCA).²⁰ A week later, OHCA purchased “the tract known as Cemetery Hill” from Edmund Phiney and his wife, Rosetta, for the consideration of \$5.²¹ The 1867 deed triggered problems about 80 years later when an investigation into the transaction revealed the deed identified the cemetery as within Lot 4 of Auditor’s Subdivision No. 120. In reality, the cemetery is located in Lot 3 of Auditor’s Subdivision No. 120 (Lot 4 within Auditor’s Subdivision No. 120 does not exist in Excelsior).²² Despite the legal irregularities, the OHCA acted as owners of the property and likely assumed management and maintenance of any burials and graves at that time. Initial plot sales starting in 1867 are recorded by the “Excelsior Cemetery Association” suggesting the Oak Hill name may have been adopted slowly.²³

Initially, Oak Hill Cemetery comprised a single section of approximately 4.5 acres, currently Section 1 of the modern cemetery. A 15 foot-wide “Carriage way” provided access from the main entrance on the former Second Street to the top of the hill. The peak of the hill was “open space” and not set aside for burials.²⁴ A newspaper item in 1885 described the appearance of the cemetery as “little better than the wild woods” but a few plot owners “have fixed their lots very nicely.”²⁵ Substantial improvements undertaken a few years later included terracing several plots including adding sod, grading the walkways, additional plantings, and potential expansion of the site to connect with the adjacent roadways.²⁶ Further improvements were undertaken in 1890 along with additional efforts to transfer the cemetery to the Village.²⁷

By the late nineteenth century, Excelsior had transitioned from primarily a small farming community to a tourist destination. Hotels had begun cropping up on the shores of Lake Minnetonka as early as 1869 with the construction of the Rustic Lodge boarding house. The late 1870s and 1880s witnessed the construction

¹⁹ Review of Town of Excelsior Records, 1854-1862, Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

²⁰ Articles of Organization of Oak Hill Cemetery Association, Excelsior, Minnesota, 11 September 1867, filed 13 September 1867. Certified copy dated 23 March 1950 by Hennepin County Register of Deeds. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

²¹ Deed, Edmund and Rosetta Phiney to Oak Hill Cemetery Association, 18 September 1868, filed 23 September 1867, Book 16, Page 532. Hennepin County, Minnesota.

²² Charles B. Howard to O. W. Lundsten, 16 October 1943. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

²³ Records of Excelsior Cemetery Association, Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

²⁴ Oak Hill Cemetery Plat Map, 1869, Collections of Hennepin County Library. Available online at <https://digitalcollections.hclib.org/digital/collection/p17208coll17/id/3901/rec/44> (accessed 27 June 2026).

²⁵ *Northwestern Tourist* (Excelsior, MN), 30 May 1885.

²⁶ *Northwestern Tourist* (Excelsior, MN), 15 June 1889.

²⁷ Grace Knowlton, *Historic Excelsior*, Second Printing. (Excelsior, MN: Excelsior Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, 1988), p. 35.

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of larger hotels and more boarding houses, including several in Excelsior. Improved railroads and a fleet of steamboats to take visitors around the lake encouraged tourism in the area.²⁸ Excelsior became “the center of summer attractions,” drawing visitors to the Commons for picnics, to the lakefront Casino for games and activities, and to the lake for sailboat races.²⁹ Oak Hill Cemetery is not identified as an attraction for visitors like St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 in New Orleans or Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston, so the cemetery evidently remained primarily a burial place and not a tourist destination for Excelsior.

Oak Hill Cemetery was the only cemetery in Excelsior until several community churches in the Village added columbaria in recent years. As a result, significant persons in Excelsior history are buried in the cemetery, including the earliest settlers, Civil War veterans, and the notable horticulturist Peter Gideon. Information on select important people from Excelsior’s history is available in Section **TBD**.

For Excelsior, Oak Hill Cemetery served as a linchpin element to annual Memorial Day celebrations. Memorial Day originated from “Decoration Day,” when communities decorated the graves of Civil War soldiers with flowers in springtime. The holiday was codified by General Orders No. 11, also known as the Memorial Day Act, issued by Major General John A. Logan on May 5, 1868, and scheduled for the end of May. Local chapters of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) fraternal organization led many of the commemoration activities including parades and public presentations.³⁰ Throughout the years in Excelsior, Oak Hill Cemetery served as the focal point for Memorial Day activities. Excelsior’s Memorial Day parade terminated at the cemetery where veterans and the public convened to hear recitations, lay flowers, and honor the military dead. For example, Decoration Day in Excelsior in 1896 featured a procession from town hall to the cemetery, led by Civil War veterans from the Frank W. Halstead Post of the GAR. The parade included the Excelsior band, school children dressed in white bearing flowers, and civilians following on foot and in carriages. At the cemetery, following various readings and recitations, flowers were laid on soldiers’ graves while the assembly sang “America.” Following the ceremony, lunch was provided at the Universalist church by the Mary Halstead Circle, the ladies auxiliary of the Halstead Post.³¹ At the Memorial Day commemoration in 1905, the white bronze Soldiers’ Monument was formally dedicated.³² Decoration Day and the subsequent Memorial Day commemorations in Excelsior followed similar patterns through the twentieth century and expanded to include the recognition of soldiers from later wars and conflict. The Memorial Day commemorations continue to this day in with the annual parade ending at the cemetery and the Soldiers’ Monument.

Over the years, improvements to the cemetery were paid for by subscriptions and donations. Further funds were raised by the Ladies Cemetery Improvement Association (LCIA). In 1896, the LCIA hosted a dinner “in which eggs are to be the principal features” at the town hall to raise money for the windmill fund to help irrigation at the cemetery. Dinner cost 25¢ for adults and 15¢ for children under 12.³³ The

²⁸ Johnson, p. 37, 58, 73.

²⁹ *Picturesque Lake Minnetonka*. (Minneapolis, MN: S. E. Ellis, 1906; reprint Excelsior, MN: Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, 1975), p. 12, 14.

³⁰ “Memorial Day History,” National Cemetery Administration, updated 17 June 2026. Available online at <https://www.cem.va.gov/history/Memorial-Day-history.asp#MemorialDay> (accessed 28 June 2026).

³¹ G.B. Halstead, “Decoration Day,” *The Excelsior Cottager* (Excelsior, MN), 5 June 1896.

³² Minnetonka news, *The Minneapolis Journal*, 30 May 1905.

³³ *The Excelsior Cottager* (Excelsior, MN), 27 March 1896.

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LCIA regrouped in 1913 and took on a more formal role in maintaining the cemetery, including hiring a cemetery sexton, paying for landscaping, and preparing the cemetery for the annual Memorial Day event; the cemetery legally remained in the possession of OHCA despite the LCIA's increased role.³⁴ In 1905, a "fine vault" was constructed, lots replatted, and several trees uprooted and relocated to "more-needed places".³⁵

Oak Hill Cemetery had two major expansions, once in 1918 (current Section 2) and again in 1944 (Section 3). The expansion was likely predicated on need for additional burial space; a letter from the president of the OHCA noted that all but one of the lots in the original cemetery had been sold by 1945.³⁶ The first expansion to the east added an additional 34 plots to Oak Hill while the second expansion to the west added another 250 plots. Further deed issues plagued Section 3 when deeds were filed incorrectly by the Highway Department, but a quit claim deed submitted in 1948 resolved the confusion.³⁷

At the time the cemetery was expanding, OHCA faced chronic problems of not only getting lot owners to pay but also owners and descendants of those buried at the cemetery unhappy with the conditions at the cemetery. Lot owners paid annual fees to OHCA for maintenance and care of the cemetery. OHCA recognized "a great deal of work is needed" at the cemetery and established an annual fee of \$1 for each lot owner to go towards ground maintenance.³⁸ In 1941, OHCA sent pleading letters to the lot owners for payment of dues as the current funds were insufficient to pay the caretaker through the summer.³⁹ However, by the 1940s, OHCA had identified 135 lots with early burials that did not have a known descendant or owner; therefore, those plots did not result in any annual fees for OHCA. Lot owners living in Excelsior were charged \$3 in annual fees while those outside Excelsior paid \$5, giving OHCA an annual income of about \$400. In 1943, OHCA paid \$150 for removal of leaves and preparation of the cemetery for the annual Decoration Day events, leaving very little money left over for maintenance.⁴⁰ In 1944, OHCA could not locate anyone to complete the work at the cemetery and opted to not collect any dues at all from lot owners, leading to the cemetery presenting a "very ragged appearance."⁴¹ By 1949, maintenance costs had ballooned to \$750.⁴² Despite these increased costs, lot owners often found their plots in disrepair, with one owner claiming a bonfire had been built over a family grave and thieves had stolen part of an Odd Fellow's marker.⁴³

³⁴ Knowlton, p. 36.

³⁵ *Minneapolis Journal*, 27 November 1905.

³⁶ H. A. Morse to George Schmidt, 6 February 1945. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

³⁷ O'Neill J. Grathwol to O.W. Lundsten, 24 November 1948. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

³⁸ R. G. DeGroodt to Lot Owners of Oak Hill Cemetery, 25 June 1937. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

³⁹ Treasurer [O. W. Lundsten] to Lottie S. Belnap, 22 July 1941, Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁴⁰ Treasurer [O. W. Lundsten] to Mrs. Arthur Hanson, 11 May 1943. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁴¹ Treasurer [O. W. Lundsten] to Cora Larson, 16 May 1945. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁴² Treasurer [O. W. Lundsten] to Cora Larson, 12 May 1949. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁴³ Cora Larson to Oak Knoll [sic] Cemetery Association, 8 May 1949. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

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Faced with dwindling funds and growing maintenance obligations, OHCA sought assistance from the Village of Excelsior. In 1939, the Village Attorney for Excelsior, O'Neill Grathwol, contacted the Attorney General for the State of Minnesota regarding whether or not Excelsior could contribute funds for maintenance of the cemetery. Rollin Smith, Special Assistant to the Attorney General, responded that a village in Minnesota did not have the authority to contribute towards the maintenance of a private cemetery, barring special legislative action.⁴⁴ Grathwol followed up shortly thereafter, asking if Excelsior could acquire a leasehold in the cemetery as it was owned by a private corporation. Smith responded that as the 1885 laws of Excelsior allowed for the Village to purchase and hold cemetery grounds, the potential leasehold of the cemetery was legal as the cemetery was wanted for "lawful municipal purpose." Details of the lease would be up to the Village and the cemetery corporation to work out, but the State had no objection to the potential transaction.⁴⁵ By 1944, Grathwol asked the Attorney General if complete acquisition of the cemetery by the Village was a viable option.⁴⁶

In 1949 and 1950, OHCA formally sought legal advice on transferring the cemetery to the Village of Excelsior.⁴⁷ In 1955, the OHCA Board of Trustees voted to transfer "all the funds, trust funds for perpetual care, and property" of OHCA to the Village. Ninety-seven of 181 members authorized the vote and approved the transfer.⁴⁸ On May 2, 1955, Warren Morse formally requested the Village take over the cemetery at the meeting of the Excelsior Village Council; the mayor requested to have an informal meeting the next week about the matter.⁴⁹ At the next meeting, the mayor motioned for the Village to accept Oak Hill Cemetery as of January 1, 1956; the motion passed with five ayes and no nays.⁵⁰ An inventory likely taken at around the time the cemetery was transferred to Excelsior noted the cemetery had 122 plots with absentee owners, 44 non-resident known owners who did not pay dues, 18 local owners who did not pay dues, and 143 lot owners who paid dues. OHCA collected \$450 in annual dues, had annual expenses of \$700 and assets of \$2,751.⁵¹

The Village passed an ordinance regarding the cemetery in 1956 codified the sales of cemetery lots, burial permits, duties of the cemetery superintendent, and cemetery hours. The ordinance required all monuments and markers to be made from bronze, granite, or marble with foundations "of sufficient depth and stability to support the proposed structure," perhaps in response to the condition of older monuments at the cemetery. Under the Village, lot owners were allowed to determine the plantings for their lots, but the superintendent had the authority to remove any trees threatening the condition of the cemetery. Furthermore, lot owners could not alter the grade nor impede upon the general plan of the cemetery.⁵²

⁴⁴ Rollin L. Smith to O'Neill J. Grathwol, 1 April 1939. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁴⁵ Rollin L. Smith to O'Neill J. Grathwol, 3 May 1939. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁴⁶ O'Neill J. Grathwol to J. A. A. Burnquist, 13 October 1944. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁴⁷ Charles B. Howard to O. W. Lundsten, 3 December 1949, Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

; Charles B. Howard to O. W. Lundsten, 8 March 1950. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁴⁸ Copy of Resolution of Oak Hill Cemetery Association to transfer property to the Village of Excelsior, 20 April 1955. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁴⁹ Minutes, Regular Meeting of Excelsior Village Council, 2 May 1955.

⁵⁰ Minutes, Regular Meeting of Excelsior Village Council, 6 June 1955.

⁵¹ [Data] Concerning the Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Minnesota, n.d. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁵² Ordinance Regulating the Maintenance and Use of the Oak Hill Cemetery, Village of Excelsior, 7 May 1956.

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The Village wrestled with its new obligations as the owners of a cemetery, facing many of the same issues that plagued OHCA. Lot owners raised concerns about erosion exposing graves, insufficient maintenance, and flower removal.⁵³ The Village was frustrated with the fee system inherited from the OHCA, as well as the constant problem of lot owners neglecting to send in annual payments and sought to impose a new fee structure for burials and maintenance. The limitations of the inherited Perpetual Care Fund that prevented money being used for capital improvements such as a fence around the cemetery further aggravated Village officials as did the associated paperwork around burial permits.⁵⁴

In 1956, when Greenwood was carved out from Excelsior, the new boundaries included the eastern portion of Section 2 of Oak Hill; the Village of Excelsior continued to manage the cemetery despite the boundary change.

As the Village settled into cemetery ownership, the cemetery experienced a number of changes, including relocating the Soldiers' Monument in 1962 from the center of the hill in Section 1 to its current location in Section 3 out of concerns for the safety of Memorial Day parade participants and other visitors due to the steep access to the top of the hill.⁵⁵ The relocation effort was undertaken by the Clarence Clofer American Legion Post out of Excelsior with assistance from the Village. A new concrete foundation was laid for the monument at the time of the relocation.⁵⁶

To expand the number of additional available burial spots, the City of Excelsior passed a resolution to allow for burial plots to be subdivided to accommodate cremated remains in 1974.⁵⁷ The boulder wall was extended along the hillside to minimize future erosion in 2005.⁵⁸

At a Village Council meeting in 1956, the Village Attorney noted the quit claim deed from OHCA to the Village to transfer the cemetery had been filed with the Register of Deeds.⁵⁹ The Village proceeded to act as the owners of the cemetery. However, 54 years after the transfer in 2010, Excelsior discovered the property remained in the name of the now defunct OHCA.⁶⁰ Following title clearance and a decision by the Fourth Judicial District Court of Hennepin County, the City of Excelsior⁶¹ finally became the legal owners of Oak Hill Cemetery in 2014.⁶²

Statement of Significance

Oak Hill Cemetery is eligible for inclusion in the National Register at the local level under Criterion A: Social History. As the only cemetery in Excelsior, Oak Hill Cemetery presents the link between Excelsior's early

⁵³ Jerry Dular to B. J. Dahl, 26 March 1970, Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota; S. Allen Friedman to Alice M. Johnson, 19 August 1963. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁵⁴ S. Allen Friedman to James N. Grathwol, 10 December 1963, Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota; Roy Swenson to Salisbury Adams, 22 November 1974. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁵⁵ Oak Hill Cemetery Walking Tour, Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, 2025.

⁵⁶ Knowlton, p. 37.

⁵⁷ Resolution No. 74-51: Resolution Regarding Cemetery Lots, 23 September 1974, City of Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁵⁸ "Cemetery wall to be completed," *Lakeshore Weekly News*, 23 August 2005. Collections of Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Wayzata, Minnesota.

⁵⁹ Minutes, Regular Meeting of the Excelsior Village Council, 6 February 1956.

⁶⁰ Rolfe A Worden to Cheri Johson, 4 January 2010. Collections of City of Excelsior, Excelsior, Minnesota.

⁶¹ In the 1970s, the State of Minnesota converted all "Villages" to statutory cities.

⁶² *City of Excelsior v. Oak Hill Cemetery Association*, Court File No. 27-CV-14-5833 (2014).

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period of settlement and growth to its modern day. The cemetery contains the burials of the founders and farmers that built Excelsior; the doctors, Civil War veterans, store owners, and steamboat captains that grew Excelsior from a farming community to a tourism destination; and the residents and their families that shepherded the village through the twentieth century. As Excelsior continues to grow and change, Oak Hill Cemetery provides a vital link to its earliest days, particularly via the annual Memorial Day commemorations.

Oak Hill Cemetery retains the necessary aspects of integrity for listing in the National Register. The integrity of location, association, and design are unchanged, as the cemetery retains its original plot configuration blanketing the hill overlooking Lake Minnetonka. As the cemetery expanded, the main road curving to the top of the hill and the general plan of rectilinear plots separated by alleys continued. The most notable change to the overall design is the relocation of the Soldiers' Monument from the top of the hill to Section 3 in 1962; however, as this change was undertaken to allow for better access during the annual Memorial Day celebrations, the relocation is keeping with the purpose of the Monument within the cemetery. The cemetery continues to serve as the only cemetery for Excelsior, providing burial space for those with ties to the city.

Oak Hill Cemetery retains integrity of materials and workmanship as the original monuments and makers have largely remained intact and in situ. Some markers show signs of deterioration and damage typical of their age, but, for the most part, the markers have not been replaced, recarved, or relocated.

Feeling and setting for Oak Hill Cemetery have been somewhat compromised by the expansion of nearby Highway 7 and the accompanying noise, but the large trees, views of Lake Minnetonka, and distinctive topography remain unchanged.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Lake Minnetonka Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6 acres

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property consists of those properties identified by the Hennepin County Property ID numbers 3511723240003 (Lot 3, Auditor's Subdivision No. 120), 3511723240044 (Oak Hill Cemetery 3rd Addition Excelsior), 3511723120002 (Oak Hill Cemetery 2nd Addition), and 3511723120014 (Lot 18, Partridge Heights Addition). See attached map.

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries reflect the historic boundaries of Oak Hill Cemetery following the two expansions during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Lindsay S. Hannah / Partner
organization: Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions, LLC
street & number: 8215 Sycamore Place
city or town: New Orleans state: LA zip code: 70118
e-mail lindsay@row10hps.com
telephone: 504.266.2098
date: _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Oak Hill Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Excelsior

County: Hennepin

State: Minnesota

Photographer: Lindsay Hannah

Date Photographed: March 25-26, 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 16: General view of Oak Hill Cemetery from northwest corner of property. Section 3 is in the foreground and Section 1 is in the background. The Soldiers' Monument is on the right side of the image. Camera pointed southeast.

Photo 2 of 16: General view of the original section of Oak Hill Cemetery (Section 1). Camera pointed northeast.

Photo 3 of 16: General view of eastern portion of Oak Hill Cemetery (Section 2) and entrance from Excelsior Boulevard. Camera pointed southwest.

Photo 4 of 16: General view of western section of Oak Hill Cemetery (Section 3). Camera pointed south.

Photo 5 of 16: Example of marble headstone at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed east.

Photo 6 of 16: Example of family monument at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed northeast.

Photo 7 of 16: View of back of repaired headstone at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed west.

Oak Hill Cemetery - DRAFT

Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Photo 8 of 16: View of rounded headstone at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed east.

Photo 9 of 16: View of example of flat headstone at Oak Hill Cemetery.

Photo 10 of 16: General view of Section 1 of Oak Hill Cemetery with range of type, style, and condition of headstones. Camera pointed northeast.

Photo 11 of 16: View of urn and marker in Section 2 of Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed southeast.

Photo 12 of 16: View of vault at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed northeast.

Photo 13 of 16: View of Soldiers' Monument at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed west.

Photo 14 of 16: View of roadway leading to top of hill at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed west.

Photo 15 of 16: View of headstone and Lake Minnetonka from top of hill at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed northeast.

Photo 16 of 16: View of roadway lined with boulders on north side of Section 1 at Oak Hill Cemetery. Camera pointed southeast.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Oak Hill Cemetery



4/7/2026

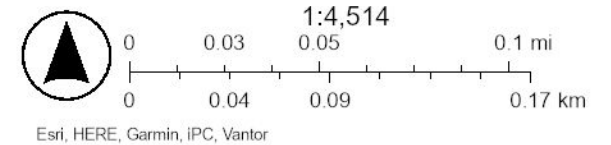




Figure 1, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 2, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 3, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 4, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 5, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 6, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 7, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 8, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 9, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 10, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 11, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 12, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 13, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 14, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 15, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.



Figure 16, Oak Hill Cemetery, Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota. March 25-26, 2026.

**City of Excelsior
Park Capital Improvement Fund
6/30/2026**

	<u>2026 Budget</u>	<u>JUNE Actual</u>	<u>2026 YTD Actual</u>	
PARK IMPROVEMENT FUND				
Park Improvements				
Revenue				
Interest Earnings			-	
County Grants	30,000		20,596	
				Donation for Baseball
Contributions and Donations	40,000	110,665	110,655	Field
Charitable Gambling - Designated Donations	22,000	189	20,904	
Park Dedication Fees				
Miscellaneous (Winter Storage)	30,662	7,470	22,410	
Transfers From Other Funds	-		-	
	<u>122,662</u>	<u>118,324</u>	<u>174,565</u>	
Expenditures				
Professional Services	10,000	161	1,129	
Engineering Fees	10,000	50,560	111,868	
Other Equipment	67,000	10,950	11,718	
Charitable Gambling Expenditures - C4C				
Improvements Other Than Bldgs	340,000	5,157	5,157	
Improvements - Playground Equip				
Improvements - Charitable Gambling				
Transfers To Other Funds	30,000			
	<u>457,000</u>	<u>66,828</u>	<u>129,871</u>	
Net Change in Fund Balances	<u>(334,338)</u>	<u>51,496</u>	<u>44,694</u>	
Cash Balances				
Cash Balance -06/30/2026			844,430	
Designated for Playground Equipment			3,926	
Committed for Commons Master Plan - Charitable Gambling Projects*			138,752	
Committed for Commons Master Plan			-	
Balance Available for Park Projects			<u>701,752</u>	
Fund Balance			<u>844,430</u>	