



# Department of Planning and Economic Development

Staff Report to the Planning Commission

September 25, 2025

**Nowicki Park**  
**PSP2025-0014 - Site Plan Approval**  
**PTP2025-0010 - Tree Removal Permit**  
**PWEP2025-0003 – Wetland Use Permit**  
**PNFSM2025-0003 Natural Features Setback Modification**

<b>REQUEST</b>	Site Plan Approval Tree Removal Permit Approval Wetland Use Permit Recommendation Natural Features Setback Modification Approval
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Steve Sutton Nowak & Fraus Engineers (on behalf of the City of Rochester Hills) 46777 Woodward Ave. Pontiac, MI 48342
<b>LOCATION</b>	670 N. Adams Rd. and Parcel Nos. 15-08-151-001 and -002, and 15-08-100-006, -007 and -008, located on the east side of Adams and south of Tienken Rd.
<b>FILE NO.</b>	J2025-0235, PSP2025-0014, PTP2025-0010, PWEP2025-0003, and PNFSM2025-0003
<b>PARCEL NO.</b>	15-13-427-002
<b>ZONING</b>	R-1 One Family Residential District
<b>STAFF</b>	Chris McLeod, AICP, Planning Manager

## Summary

The applicant, Steve Sutton from Nowak & Fraus, on behalf of the City, has applied for Site Plan approval, a Tree Removal Permit, a Wetland Use Permit and a Natural Features Setback Modification for the development of Nowicki Park. Nowicki Park is located at 670 N. Adams (along with several other parcels), which is on the east side of N. Adams Road, south of Tienken Road.

Currently, the approximate 34-acre Nowicki Park is largely undeveloped and consists of natural areas and largely unimproved trails. The site plan proposes a completely redesigned Nowicki Park that includes the following amenities:

- A centrally located main building that will serve as a gathering space for recreational events as well as serve as a community space, potentially for other City functions. This building will also include an extensive raised patio area at the rear of the building, that will provide an overlook to the wetland (i.e., water feature) on site.
- An open-air pavilion and dedicated restroom building will be located towards the southern end of the site.
- The City’s first dog park will be located on the north end of the site and will include dedicated areas for both smaller dogs and for larger dog breeds. The dog park area will be fenced and will also include dog wash facilities.
- A parks office/maintenance building will be constructed near the Adams Road frontage near the dog park area.
- A new outdoor play area will also be developed at the south end of the site, adjacent to the pavilion and restroom building.
- Unique recreation features will also be provided on the eastern side of the site, including a beehive mound that provides a unique walking experience, through pollinator gardens that are integrated into the mound itself, via a winding pathway.
- A hammock area in the northeast portion of the site, where park users can utilize a hammock for rest and

relaxation.

- The overall park will include extensive pathways made of various materials, including pathways that are paved, aggregate and some which are constructed as boardwalks as they traverse wetland areas.

The Park will be accessed by a boulevard entrance that is flanked by parking areas on each side. The entry/exit drive will have right and left turn exit lanes to help minimize stacking that may occur for those leaving the park. The drive will also include dedicated acceleration, deceleration and bypass lanes on Adams Road.

It should also be noted that with the park development, Adams Road will be expanded to 3 lanes in this area, from the Park entrance, north to Tienken Road. This is being done with input from one of the City's engineering consultants, HRC, who conducted a study to determine the best configuration for the Adams Road alignment and the park entrance itself in an effort to allow traffic to move more efficiently and safely. This project is being coordinated with the Oakland Country Road Commission and will be subject to their permitting and approval process.

The overall park will be serviced by a total of 214 parking spaces, including 9 universally accessible spaces. These parking spaces traverse from north to south along the Adams Road frontage providing access to most areas of the park. The City's parking ordinance only requires parking spaces based upon the occupancy of buildings and does not require spaces based upon park usage alone, and therefore further consideration is required to determine the need for appropriate parking onsite. The applicant has provided occupancy numbers for each of the main buildings onsite and has provided adequate parking for each of these, based on a parking rate of 1 space for each 3 persons allowed within their maximum occupancy. Based on the noted occupancy, a total of 124 parking spaces are required. However, given the main use of the site is open park area, further consideration is needed to determine the true parking needs for the park overall. Therefore, the Planning department relied on the knowledge and expectations of the City's Parks staff, and their experience from the City's other park sites, to determine the additional number of spaces that may be necessary, above and beyond those required for the buildings. The site plan, as noted, provides a total of 214 spaces, which is 90 spaces more than what would be necessary for just the buildings. The Ordinance allows for a maximum of 125% of the total number of parking spaces required to be provided onsite. The proposed 214 spaces exceed that allowance by the 59 spaces and therefore a parking modification is required from the Planning Commission. Again, given the unique nature of the park and it being largely natural and having an undefined capacity, Planning staff has no objections to the parking modification and relying on Parks staff to determine what the adequate number of parking spaces should be for this site based on their experience with other parks in the City.

In regards to landscaping, the proposed landscape plan provides an extensive amount of landscaping throughout the site. The landscape planting schedule indicates a total of 416 deciduous trees and 193 coniferous trees being planted throughout the site.

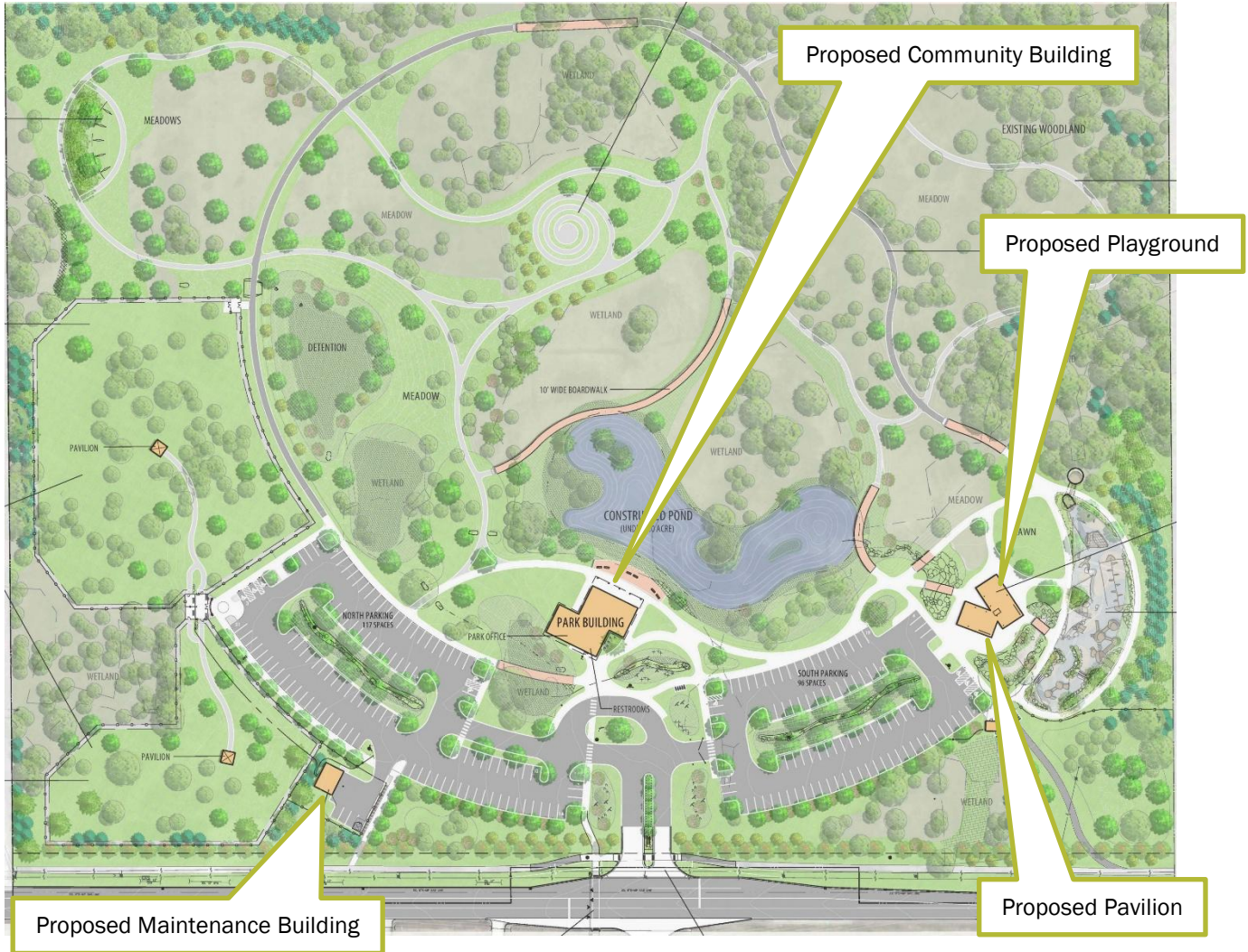
The Adams Road frontage will include a significant number of deciduous trees. These trees will include both larger canopy trees, such as Green Gable Black Tupelo trees and small, more decorative ornamental trees such as Autumn Brilliance Serviceberries. These trees will be planted along the full extent of the Adams frontage in a uniform street tree alignment.

Along the south property lines, surrounding the proposed playground area, will be a landscape berm that is approximately ten (10) feet in height. While not technically required by Ordinance, this berm is being proposed in an effort to help screen the proposed playground from the residences to the south. The berm will also be planted with a series of White Pines, White Spruce and Black Hills Spruces. Near the top of the berm will also be a fence to help further define the active area from the screening area, keeping park patrons to the north side of the berm and park area.

Along the north border of the property, additional plantings, including both deciduous and evergreen trees, are being planted to supplement the existing trees that will be preserved in this area and will be planted around the preserved wetland areas. The main park usage near the north end of the site is the dog park, walking paths and the hammock area. These uses should be adequately screened from the large lot residential property to the north.

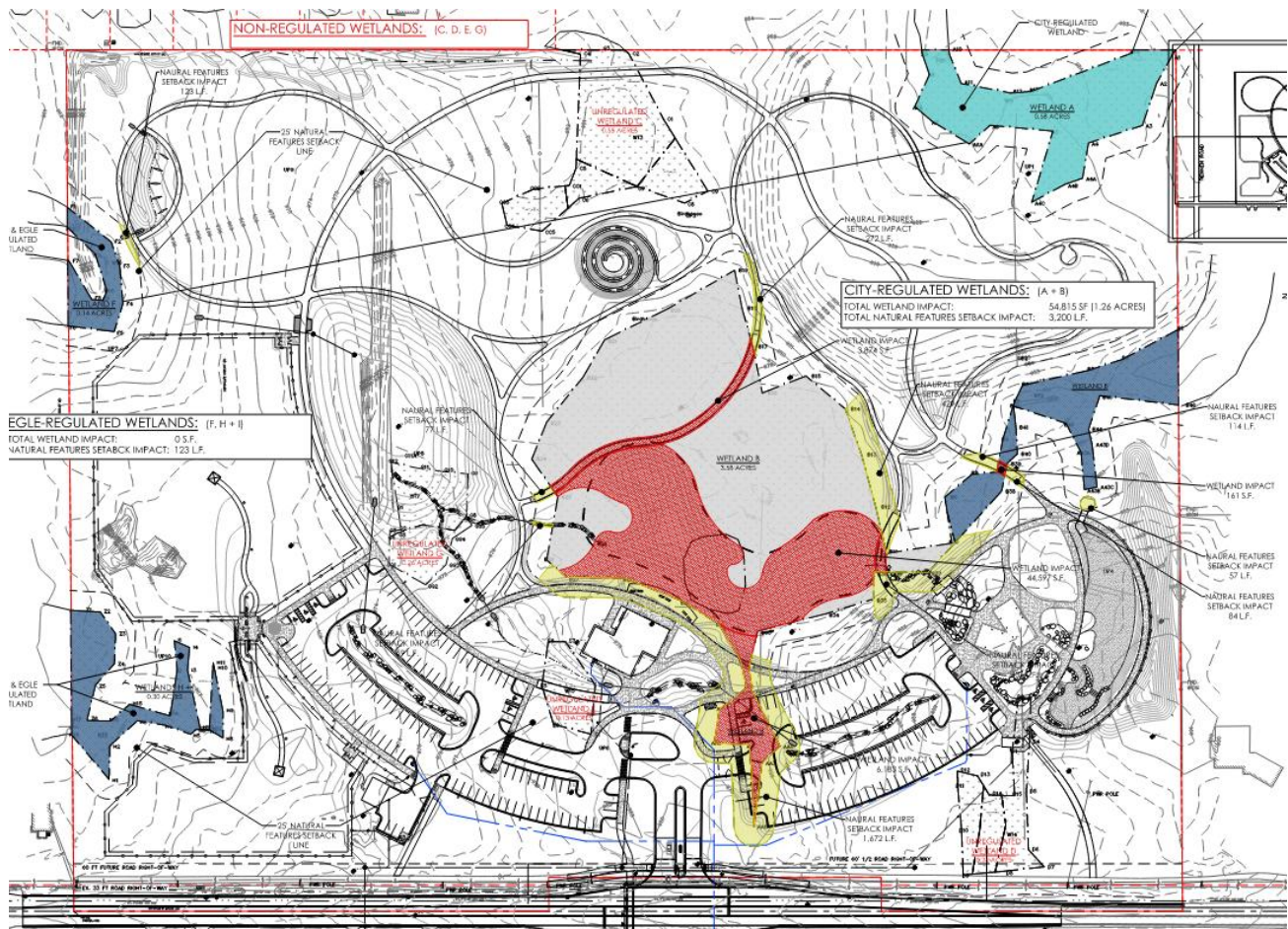
Along the eastern property line, the landscape plan shows a number of Eastern Hemlocks and White Spruces. These trees will also be planted to supplement the existing vegetation that can be found in this area. The northeast corner of the parking area is also proposed to be reseeded, with a prairie mix, to provide a much more natural setting.

## Site Plan / Landscape Plan





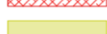




## Wetland/Natural Features Impact Plan



### LEGEND

	HIGH QUALITY WETLAND TO REMAIN
	MEDIUM QUALITY WETLAND TO REMAIN
	LOW QUALITY WETLAND TO REMAIN
	WETLAND ENROACHMENT
	NATURAL FEATURE SETBACK ENROACHMENT

As a part of the proposed development of Nowicki Park, the City is proposing to fill and/or modify several different wetland areas on the existing park property. The wetlands onsite were originally delineated by ASTI the City's environmental consultant on April 25, 2025. The proposed site plan has also been reviewed by ASTI as a part of the City's standard site plan review process. ASTI provided a review letter, based on the proposed site plan, including proposed impacts/modifications to the identified wetland areas, dated September 16, 2025.

A total of eight (8) different wetlands (labeled A-H/I) were identified onsite, as described below. It is noted which wetlands onsite are regulated and which are not. The City's wetland regulation generally includes those wetlands that are 2 acres or more (either onsite or if the wetland extends offsite). Several of the identified wetlands were relatively small in size and isolated and therefore were not regulated.

Wetland Identity	Type	Location	Ecological Quality	Valuable Natural Resource
Wetland A	Forested	Southeastern portion of the site	Medium	Yes
Wetland B	Forested and Emergent	South-central portion of the site	Forested – High Emergent - Low	Forested – Yes Emergent - No
Wetland C	Forested and Emergent	East-central portion of the site	Low	No
Wetland D	Forested and Emergent	Southwestern portion of the site	Low	No
Wetland E	Forested	West-central portion of the site	Low	No
Wetland F	Forested	Northern portion of the site	Medium to High	Yes
Wetland G	Forested and Emergent	Central portion of the site	Low	No
Wetland H/I	Forested	Northern portion of the site	Medium to High	Yes

Wetland	City Regulated	Total Wetland Area Impacted	Total Natural Feature Impact
Wetland A	Yes	None	None
Wetland B	Yes	1.26 Acres Total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44,597 sq. ft. for wetland viewing platform</li> <li>• 4,035 sq. ft. for boardwalk crossings</li> <li>• 6,183 sq. ft. for parking area.</li> </ul>	3,200 linear feet (l.f.)
Wetland C	No	NA	NA
Wetland D	No	NA	NA
Wetland E	No	NA	NA
Wetland F	Yes	None	123 l.f.
Wetland G	No	NA	NA
Wetland H/I	Yes	None	None
Total		1.26 acres	3,200 l.f.

**Synopsis**

The current Nowicki Park plans have been reviewed by ASTI and based on the review letter provided, ASTI recommends that the City approve the current plans, including the proposed impacts shown. This is a result of the additional information that was provided by the applicant in regards to the overall soil composition of the area immediate to Wetland B as well as review of the hydrology and topography. Upon review ASTI determined that the hydrology of the high-quality portion of Wetland B will not be adversely affected from the creation of the pond area in the low quality portion of Wetland B. In addition, it was determined that the impacts caused by boardwalk crossings provide a positive benefit, providing park and wetland access while minimizing the overall long term physical impact.



## Renderings









## Elevations – Community Building

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## Elevations – Pavilion

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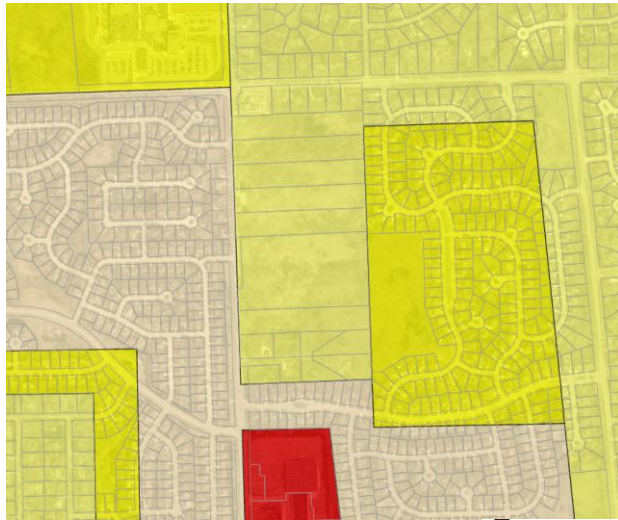


## Elevations - Restroom

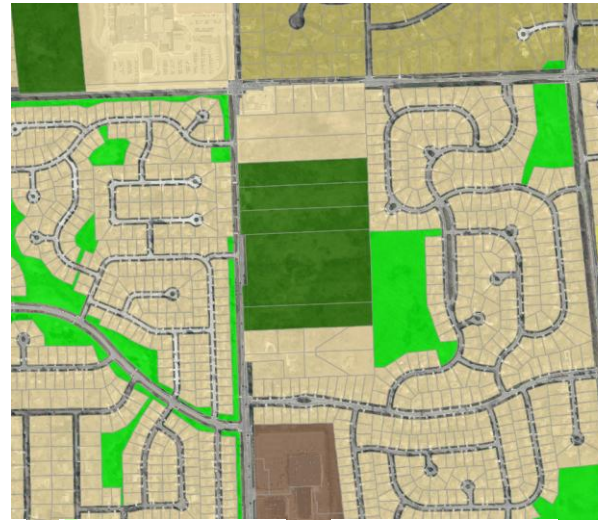
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**Zoning Map** **Master Land Use Plan**



- RE One-Family Residential District
- R-1 One-Family Residential District
- R-2 One-Family Residential District
- R-3 One-Family Residential District
- R-4 One-Family Residential District
- RCD One-Family Residential Cluster District
- RM-1 Multiple-Family Residential District
- RMH Manufactured Housing Park District
- NB Neighborhood Business District
- CB Community Business District
- HB Highway Business District
- BD Brooklands District
- O Office District
- I Industrial District
- SP Special Purpose District
- EC Employment Center District
- FB Flex Business Overlay District
- MR Mixed Residential Overlay District
- PUD Overlay



- Estate Residential
- Residential 2
- Residential 2.5
- Residential 3
- Residential 4
- Residential 5
- Mixed Residential Overlay
- Multiple Family
- Residential Office Flex
- Auburn Road Corridor
- Commercial Residential Flex - 2
- Commercial Residential Flex - 3
- Office
- REC Workplace
- REC Technology and Office Image Corridor
- REC Interchange
- Regional Commercial
- Industrial
- Special Purpose
- Park/Public Open Space
- Private Recreation/Open Space

	Zoning	Existing Land Use	Future Land Use
<b>Site</b>	<b>R1 One Family Residential District</b>	<b>Existing Nowicki Park</b>	<b>Park / Public Open Space</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>R1 One Family Residential District</b>	Residential / Vacant / Premiere Academy	Residential 3
<b>South</b>	R1 One Family Residential District	Residential	Residential 5
<b>East</b>	R2 One Family Residential District	Shadow Woods Sub. No. 2	Residential 3 / Private Recreation Open Space
<b>West (across Adams Rd.)</b>	R3 One Family Residential District	Brookedale Woods Sub. No. 4	Residential 3



## Public Comments

The Tree Removal Permit was noticed for the public meeting and no public comment has been received to date on that item.

The Wetland Use Permit was noticed for the public meeting and no public comment has been received to date on that item.

The Parks staff held a number of meetings and input sessions regarding the design of Nowicki Park. The last public input meeting that was held regarding the proposed park layout and design was held on August 21, 2025. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting, including residents from Arrow Wood Ct., Shadow Woods, Adams Road, and landowners to the north. There was discussion on the need for a dog park (both for and against), the need for additional tree plantings for the purposes of screening of the dog park area, the location and potential impacts of the playground location and parking within the neighborhoods.

## Staff Site Plan Recommendations

Department	Comments & Waivers/Modifications	Recommendation
Planning		Approval
Engineering	Land Improvement Permit is required Noted utility comments being addressed Noted traffic comments being addressed	Approval
Fire	Revising Fire Department Connection (FDC) location	Approval
Building	Code compliant pathway materials	Approval
Forestry		Approval
Assessing		Approval

Based on the application provided, Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed site plan, tree removal permit, wetland use permit and natural features setback modification. If the Planning Commission agrees that the proposed public park will be harmonious and compatible with the surroundings, below is a motion for approval for your consideration.

## Tree Removal Permit

The tree survey provided by the applicant indicates a total of 1,882 regulated trees were surveyed on the site. Of this total, twenty-two (22) specimen trees, four hundred and sixty-six (466) regulated trees and seventy-seven (77) exempt trees are proposed to be removed as a result of the proposed site plan. This would result in 1,317 trees being maintained onsite or essentially seventy percent (70%) of all trees.

Given the 466 regulated trees and 22 specimen trees proposed to be removed, a total of 601 replacement trees are required. This total however, is further modified by the total number of specimen trees that are proposed to be preserved (136). The preservation of these specimen trees reduces the number of replacement trees required to 465 trees (601-136).

Given the uniqueness of the use and recreational features proposed, the Forestry Department has requested that the Planning Commission consider a blanket tree removal permit that would allow for additional trees to potentially be removed should the need occur once site development commences. The Planning Commission did grant a similar type of blanket permit for the initial construction of Innovation Hills. The blanket request would allow a **total** of 550 trees to be removed. Even if fully utilized, this blanket approval would still result in an overall tree preservation percentage of nearly 67% for the entire site. Tree replacements would occur on a tree-for-tree basis, pursuant to Ordinance, for any trees above and beyond the initial 488 (466 regulated plus 22 specimen) trees requested for removal.

## Motion to Approve Site Plan

**MOTION** by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, in the matter of City File No. PSP2025-0014 (Nowicki Park), the Planning Commission **approves** the proposed **Site Plan**, to allow for the construction of an upgraded City Park, including a community building, open air pavilion, restroom facilities, dog park area, outdoor playground, pathway systems, parking areas, and associated infrastructure systems in the R-1 One Family Residential District, based on plans received by the Planning Department on September 11, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

### Findings

1. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that all applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements, can be met subject to the conditions noted below.
2. The proposed project is being constructed in a manner that provides for dedicated parking areas that provide adequate parking and the site will be accessed via an entrance/exit with dedicated exit turn lanes, directly to Adams Road, which is a major roadway, thereby promoting current and future safety and convenience of vehicular traffic both within the site and the general area.
3. Off-street parking areas for the general public are being provided for the park site based on the occupancy of the proposed buildings and structures in addition to general attendees of the park.
4. The proposed development and associated improvements should have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship with the existing development in the adjacent vicinity since the park is being left largely natural with structures taking up a small portion of the site area, is being heavily landscaped, and design accommodations in excess of ordinance requirements have been made in an attempt to reduce impacts to surrounding neighbors.
5. The proposed development will not have an unreasonably detrimental or injurious effect upon the existing characteristics and features of the site or those of the surrounding area. The proposed improvements will bring newly desired recreational opportunities, including a dog park, to a portion of the City that has not historically had an improved park and the Parks department has determined that 90 additional parking spaces over those required for building occupancy onsite will be sufficient to accommodate parking needs generated by general park users.
6. The Planning Commission finds that a modification to allow the required number of allowable parking spaces to be exceeded is appropriate, given the size and unique nature of the park that requires additional parking above and beyond those spaces solely required for the buildings.

### Conditions

1. The applicant shall address all remaining comments and notations as depicted on the reviewed site plans.

## Motion to Approve a Tree Removal Permit

**MOTION** by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, in the matter of File No. PTP2025-0010 (Nowicki Park) the Planning Commission **grants a Tree Removal Permit** based on plans received by the Planning Department on September 11, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

### Findings

1. The proposed removal of regulated trees is in conformance with the City's Tree Conservation Ordinance.



2. The applicant is proposing to remove a total of four hundred and sixty-six (466) regulated trees and twenty-two (22) specimen trees as a part of site development, and replant a total four hundred and sixty-five (465) trees onsite.
3. Further, the applicant has requested an overall blanket approval to remove an additional number of trees to not exceed an overall total of five hundred and fifty (550) trees and with that have a total potential replacement total not to exceed five hundred and twenty-seven (527) trees, to allow additional flexibility in overall site development. Given the scope of this project, the public benefit being provided, and the City's desire to work with abutting property owners to address concerns that may require minor modifications to the plans, the Planning Commission finds that this flexibility is necessary to allow the appropriate development of the site.

#### Conditions

1. Tree protective fencing, as reviewed and approved by the City staff, shall be installed prior to temporary grade being issued by Engineering.

## Motion to Approve Natural Features Modification

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**MOTION** by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, in the matter of City File No. PNFSM2025-0003 Nowicki Park, the Planning Commission **grants a natural features setback modification** for approximately 3,200 linear feet of permanent impacts to two (2) different wetland areas identified on the site plans to construct the proposed building and associated overlook area, parking areas, and pathways, and associated development infrastructure, based on plans received by the Planning Department on September 11, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

#### Findings

1. The impact to the Natural Features Setback area is necessary for construction activities related to the proposed development; further, the applicant has minimized the impacts to the natural features.
2. ASTI has reviewed the subject plans and proposed impacts to the natural features setbacks associated with Wetland B and Wetland F along with the proposed mitigation efforts to help reduce the impacts to those natural features and has indicated that the plans as proposed are satisfactory.

#### Conditions

1. Work to be conducted using best management practices to ensure flow and circulation patterns and chemical and biological characteristics of wetlands are not impacted.
2. Site must be graded with onsite soils and seeded with a City approved seed mix.
3. Those areas identified as "Temporary Impacts" must be restored to original grade with original soils or equivalent soils and seeded with a City approved seed mix where possible, and the applicant must implement best management practices as detailed in the ASTI review letter dated September 16, 2025 prior to final approval by staff.

## Motion to Recommend a Wetland Use Permit

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**MOTION** by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, in the matter of City File PWE2025-0003 (Nowicki Park) the Planning Commission **recommends to City Council** approval of a **Wetland Use Permit** to permanently impact approximately 1.26 acres of wetlands to construct Nowicki Park, including the proposed building and associated overlook area, parking areas, and pathways, and associated development infrastructure based on plans received by the Planning Department on September 11, 2025, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions.

#### Findings

1. Of the approximate 4.6 acres of regulated wetland on site, the applicant is proposing to impact approximately 1.26 acres.
2. The most significant area of wetland impact, being the area where the main building and wetland viewing area will be constructed and the associated modifications to the overall wetland depth and makeup, is within the low-quality portion of the wetland. In addition, the soil borings that were provided and analyzed by the City environmental consultant indicate the soils are conducive to isolating impacts to other areas of wetland area B and finally, much of the impacted area of wetland area B will remain a water feature, with overall wetland-like

qualities.

3. In part, the proposed wetland impacts to construct a boardwalk system over the wetlands will help long term preservation of the wetland by providing access to additional areas of park and not requiring at grade pathways or users to traverse the area outside of defined raised pathway areas.
4. The proposed wetland impacts required as a part of the parking lot construction are limited and are located within a low-quality portion of the wetland.
5. ASTI has reviewed the subject plans and proposed impacts to Wetland B along with the proposed mitigation efforts to help reduce the impacts to those wetlands and has indicated that the plans as proposed are satisfactory.

**Conditions**

1. City Council approval of the Wetland Use Permit.
2. That the applicant receives an EGLE Part 303 Permit (as applicable) prior to issuance of a Land Improvement Permit.
3. That the applicant provides a detailed soil erosion plan with measures sufficient to ensure ample protection of wetlands areas, prior to issuance of a Land Improvement Permit.
4. That any temporary impact areas be restored to original grade with original soils or equivalent soils and seeded with a City approved wetland seed mix where possible, and the applicant must implement best management practices, prior to final approval by staff.
5. The applicant shall abide by all conditions and recommendations as outlined in ASTI's review letter of September 16, 2025.