



Mitchell Lake History

From Dakota Homeland to Modern Sanctuary

Mitchell Lake: Journey Through Time

- **Discovering Our History**

Exploring the history of Mitchell Lake and the surrounding landscape.

- **Honoring Our Roots**

Recognizing the Dakota homeland and the pioneer families who shaped early Eden Prairie.

- **Connecting Past and Present**

Linking historic places to the names, neighborhoods, and lake we know today.



1854 survey of Eden Prairie Township

Source: United States Bureau of Land Management General Land Office.



Indigenous Roots

- **Dakota Homeland**

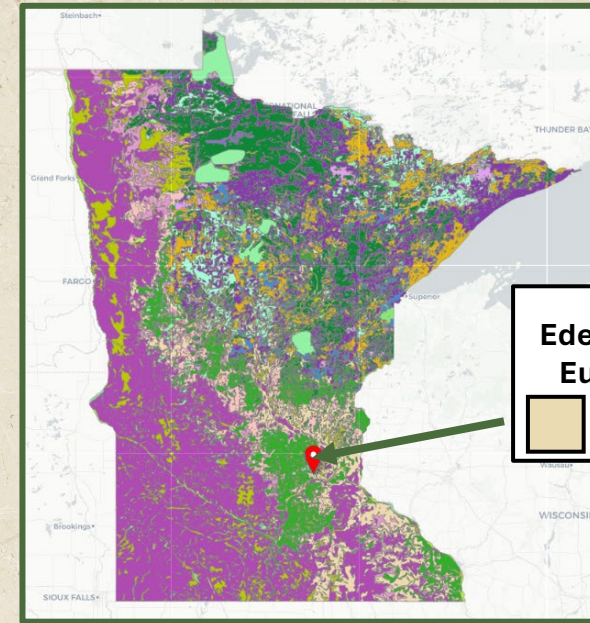
For generations, this region was part of the Dakota homeland, including the Mdewakanton.

- **Landscape Before Euro-American Settlement**

Oak openings and tallgrass prairie shaped the landscape around present-day Mitchell Lake.

- **Living with the Land**

Prairies, woodlands, wetlands, and waterways provided food, transportation, habitat, and resources for daily life.



**Edén Prairie landscape before
Euro-American settlement:**

 Oak Openings and Prairies

Source: Minnesota Natural Resources Atlas



Seth Eastman, View of Mendota, 1848, oil on canvas, MN Historical Society.



Treaty

1851

• 1851 | Dakota Land Cessions

Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota ceded vast areas of Dakota homeland to the United States, opening this region to Euro-American settlement.

- 1862 | U.S. – Dakota War

Years of broken treaty promises, delayed payments, and growing hardship culminated in six weeks of conflict.

- 1863 | Forced Removal

After the war, most Dakota people were forcibly removed from Minnesota. Some remained or later returned, rebuilding communities that endure today.



Credit: Ominsky (1999). Source: MNHS Press.



The Pioneer Legacies

Founding of Eden Prairie

- **1853 | A Name Takes Hold**

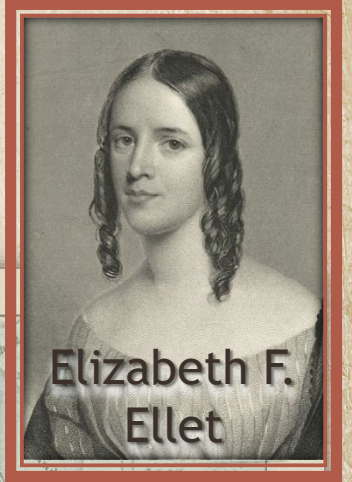
Writer Elizabeth Fries Ellet described the area as the “garden spot of the territory,” helping inspire the name Eden Prairie.

- **1858 | The First Town Board Meeting**

On May 11, 1858—the same day Minnesota became a state—Eden Prairie held its first town board meeting.

- **A Growing Community**

Early settlers established farms, schools, churches, and businesses across the prairie—many leaving names that remain familiar today.



1873 Township Map



The Mitchell Family

- **1852 | David Mitchell Arrives**

Irish immigrant David Mitchell, purchased land along the south shore of the lake.

- **A Lakeside Homestead**

Mitchell built a log cabin and established a farm on the surrounding prairie.

- **A Name That Endures**

The lake became known as Mitchell Lake, preserving the family name more than 170 years later.



1873 Township Map

In 1870
David Mitchell
sold the
lakeshore land
to Fred and
John Miller



David Mitchell Log Cabin on Mitchell Lake



Mitchell Family Legacy

- **Early Methodist Services**

David Mitchell's log cabin hosted the area's first Methodist church services.

- **School and Cemetery**

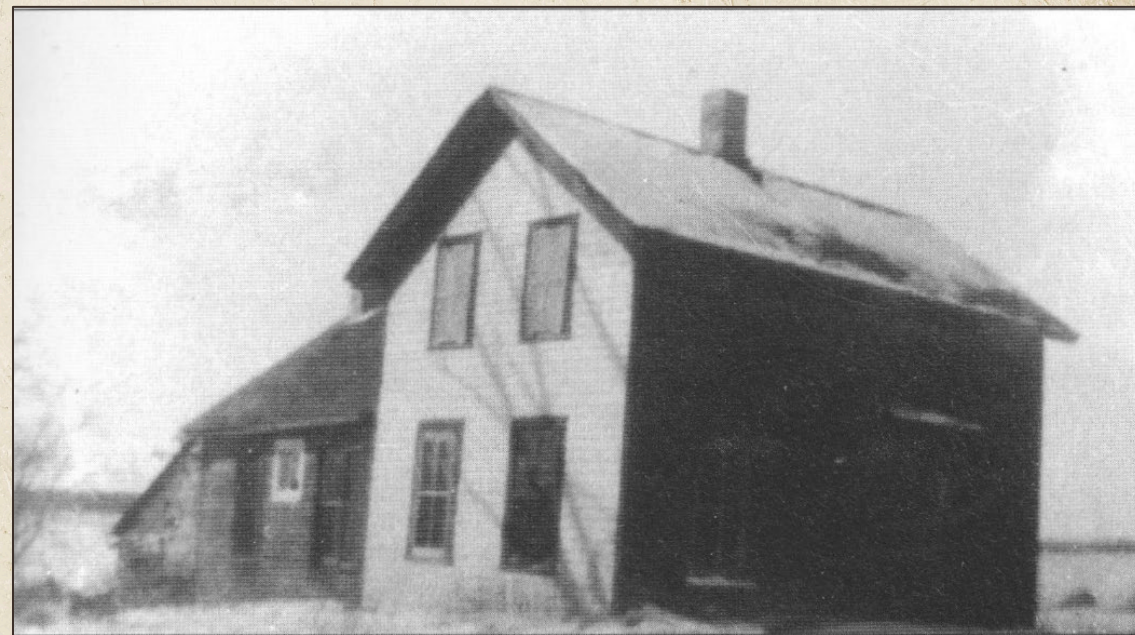
The Mitchell family helped establish Eden Prairie Cemetery and Gould School.

- **The Mitchell Name Today**

Mitchell Lake and Mitchell Road carry the family name.



Gould School, operated 1858-1924

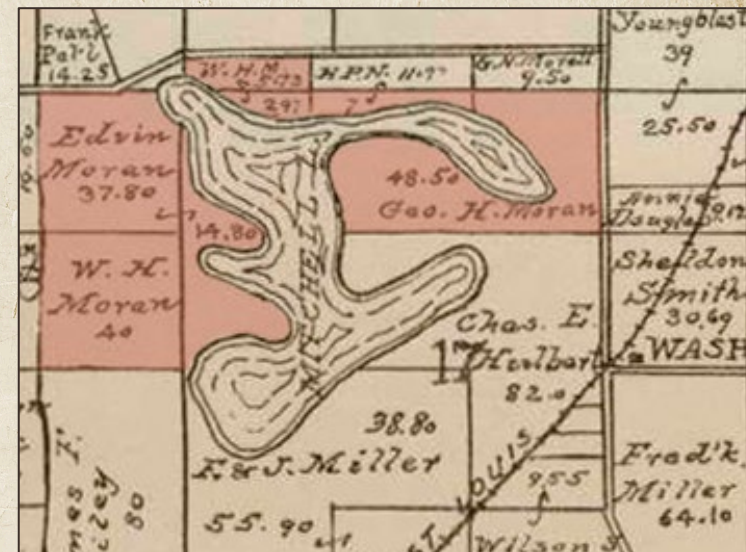


Alexander Mitchell Sr House on Mitchell Lake



The Moran Family

- **1854 | A New Homestead**
Canadian immigrant George Moran settled along the western shore of Mitchell Lake.
- **Generations on the Lake**
Four of Moran's children later built homes along the lakeshore.
- **A Legacy Still Visible**
One of those early homes survives today, while George Moran Drive preserves the family name.



1913 Eden Prairie Township Map



Moran Family

Preserving the Moran Farmstead

- **An 1870 Home Restored**

Marcia Kolb and Johnny Severson restored the Alice Moran Niblett home and adapted it for modern living.

- **2024 Preservation Award**

Eden Prairie honored their work with its Heritage Preservation Award.

- **Landscaping That Protects the Lake**

Native landscaping helps capture and filter runoff before it reaches Mitchell Lake.



Historic view (home built in 1870)



Home in 2025

The Railroad Arrives

- **1871 | A New Connection**

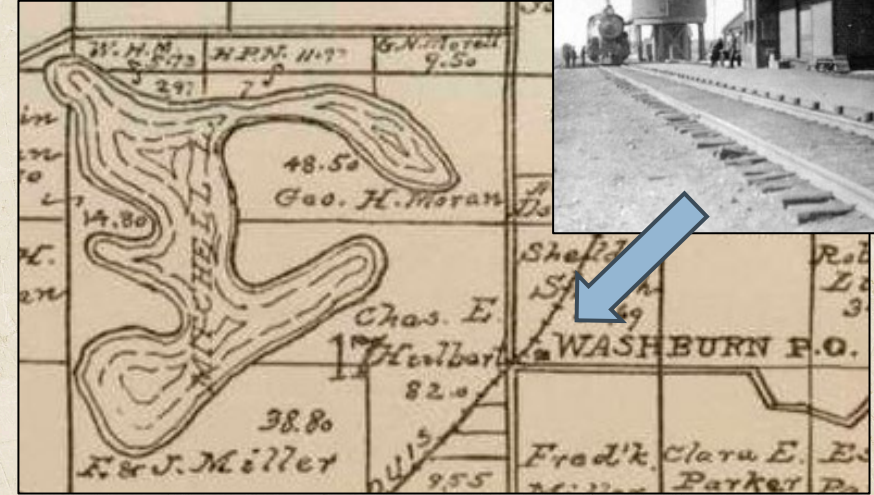
The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad arrived in Eden Prairie, connecting the rural community to growing regional markets.

- **A Community Hub**

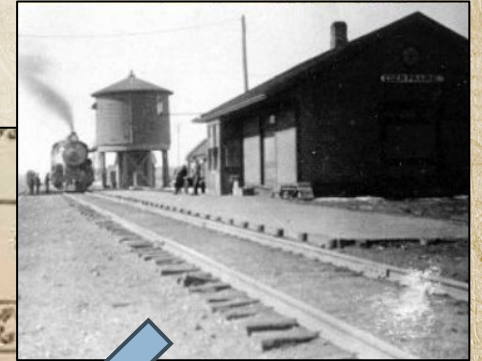
The Washburn depot area became a center of activity, with shops, a creamery, and blacksmiths serving local residents and farmers.

- **The Railroad Corridor Today**

The Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail follows the former railroad corridor. A nearby reservoir facility echoes the historic depot design.



Historic Washburn depot and location



Reservoir facility, 2022 (depot-inspired design)

The Miller General Store

- **1871 | The Store Opens**

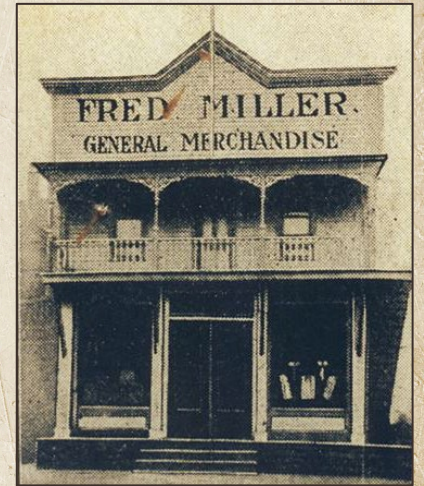
After the railroad arrives, Fred Miller buys the strategically located store site near the railroad hub and establishes Miller's General Store.

- **A Center of Community Life**

Groceries, postal services, an upstairs town hall, and Eden Prairie's first telephone brought residents here.

- **1950 | The Store Closes**

The store served as a gathering place until 1950. Fire destroyed the building in 1963.



Interior of Miller Store

Miller Family Legacy

- **1969 | Preserving the Spring**

Eden Prairie took ownership of the historic Fredrick-Miller Spring in 1969 for preservation.

- **1979–1981 | Preserving the Shoreline**

Eden Prairie acquired Miller family land along Mitchell Lake, protecting an important stretch of lakeshore from development.

- **Miller Park Today**

The land became Miller Park, providing public access to Mitchell Lake and preserving natural shoreline.



Fredrick-Miller Spring



Miller Park on Mitchell Lake



The Smith Family

- **1877 | A Home Near the Depot**

Sheldon and Mary Smith built their home near Eden Prairie's growing railroad center.

- **A Welcoming Stop**

The Smith home welcomed travelers passing through Eden Prairie.

- **The Historic Home Today**

The restored home now houses Smith Coffee & Cafe.



Smith Douglas More House



Smith Coffee & Cafe

A landscape painting featuring a central pond. On the left, a large, leafy tree stands on a grassy bank. In the foreground, a brown, tilled field with rows of small plants is visible. The background shows a dense line of trees and a small, dark-roofed house partially obscured by foliage on the right. The sky is a mix of grey and blue tones. The title 'A Changing Landscape' is written in white serif font across the middle of the image.

A Changing Landscape



The Foresight to Preserve

- **1968 | Planning for Growth**

With most of Eden Prairie still undeveloped, city leaders adopted a long-range plan to guide the community's rapid growth.

- **Natural Areas as Community Assets**

The plan recognized lakes, streams, forests, and other natural areas as essential community assets worth preserving.

- **Acquiring Land for Preservation**

Eden Prairie began acquiring key natural areas and shoreline, protecting them from future development.



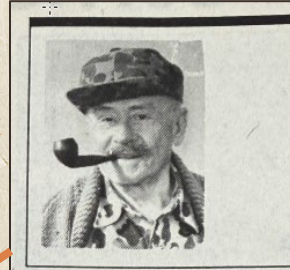
Mitchell Lake 1920



Mitchell Lake, Painting by Dotty Nye

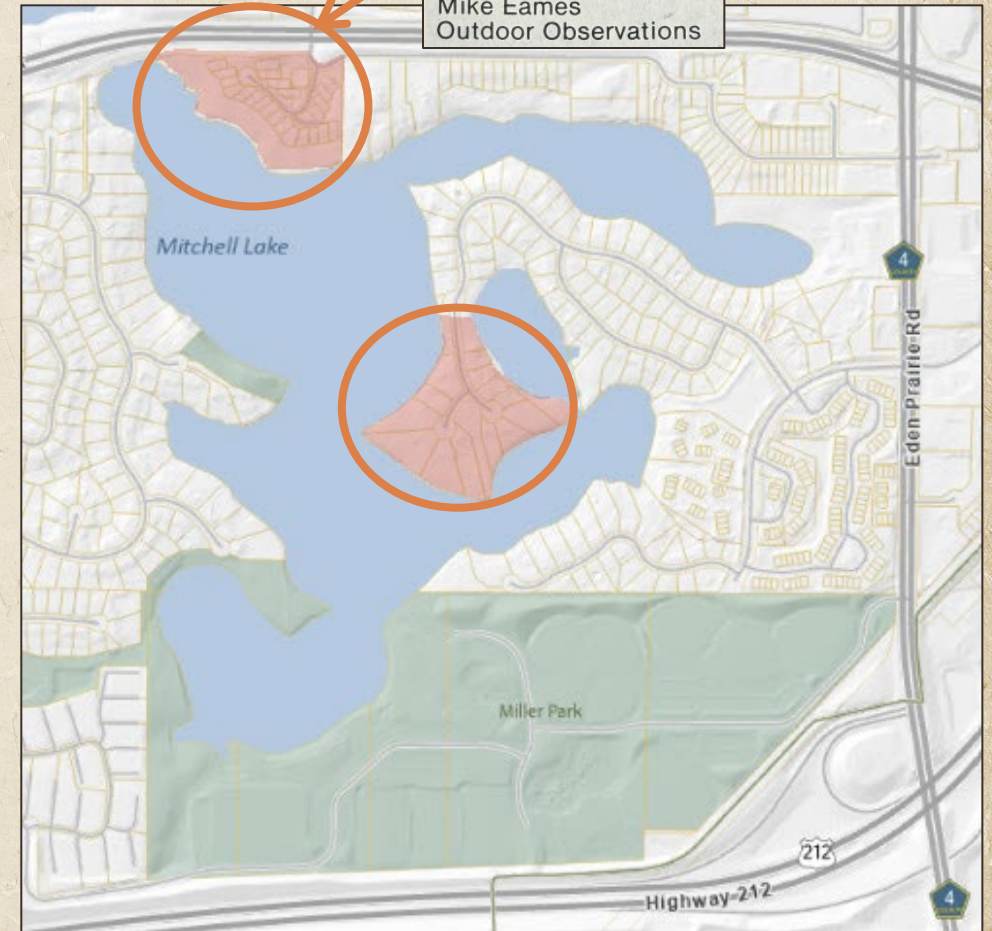
A Lake in Transition

- **1975–1976 | An Island Park Proposal**
Eden Prairie actively considered purchasing the lake's island for a public park.
- **1979–1981 | Protecting the Shoreline**
The City acquired Miller family land along the lake—the future home of Miller Park.
- **1984 | A Changing Neighborhood**
As residential development surrounded the lake, Eden Prairie ended hunting on Mitchell Lake.



Mike Eames,
Eden Prairie
News columnist
and longtime
north-shore
resident

Mike Eames
Outdoor Observations



Connecting a Changing Lake

- **1988 | Managing High Water**

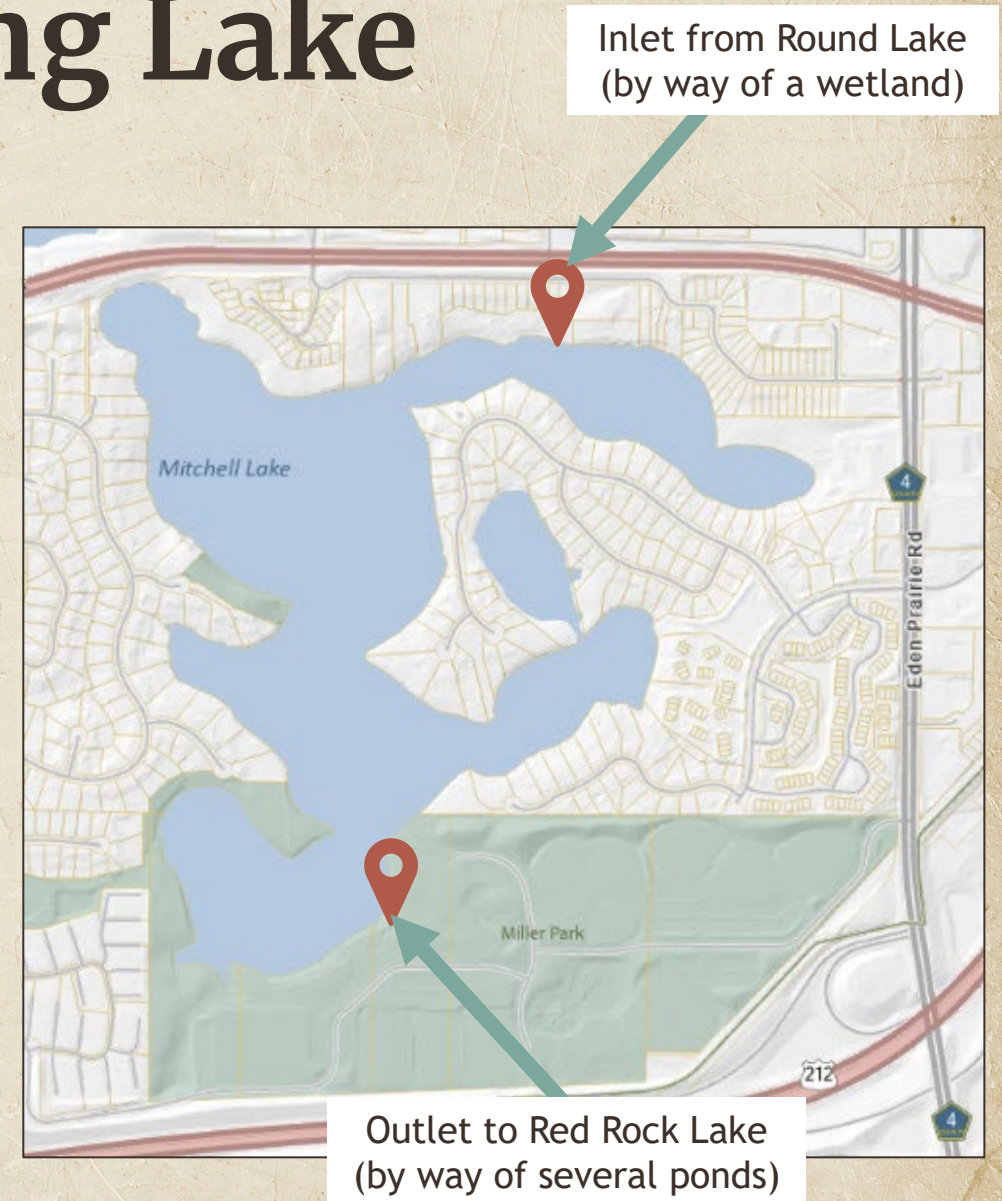
New inlet and outlet connections linked Mitchell Lake with Round and Red Rock Lakes, helping manage high-water conditions.

- **1995 | Miller Park Opens**

Miller Park opened to the public, providing access to Mitchell Lake and its protected shoreline.

- **New Transportation Corridors**

Expansion of Highway 5 and later Highway 212 transformed access to the Mitchell Lake area as Eden Prairie continued to grow.



The Suburban Boom

• 1980s–2000s | A New Lakeshore

Farmland around Mitchell Lake gave way to neighborhoods marketed for lakeside living and a natural setting.

1981

Mitchell Lake Estates

\$61,900+
TWIN HOMES
OPEN 1:00-5:00
Mitchel Lakes Estates
\$1550 down FHA-O down VA.
Unique 2BR, 2 story - double
garage - 1008 Sq. Ft., finished
plus full basement!
\$66,300 - split level 1425 Sq. Ft.
immed. poss. Choose your own
carpeting etc! Views of Mitchell
Lake-canoe-sail-shopping and
bus line across street! COM-
PARE OUR PRICES! Hurry we
have 4 lots left! Dir: Hwy. 5,
West, South on Co. Rd. 4 (Eden
Prairie Road) West on Terrey
Pine Drive.
448-4355 Nancy Raddohi 448-5480
TONKA WEST

1984

Timber Lakes

The Ice Is Gone
Come Pick The
Best
Lakeshore
Homesite
In Town!



TIMBER LAKES

- NORTH BAY TOWNHOMES from \$69,800
- SOUTH BAY TOWNHOMES from \$99,700
- SINGLE FAMILY HOMES \$129,900 to \$400,000
- LAKESHORE LOTS from \$36,900

MODEL HOMES OPEN
Sat & Sun 10-6pm
Weekdays 12-5pm
937-9600 / 937-9608
Full Realtor Participation Welcome

Timber Lakes is conveniently located just 3 miles west of I-494 on Highway 5, then ¼ mile south on Eden Prairie Road (County Road 4) to Timber Lake Drive.
IMAGINEERED BY
RICHARD MILLER HOMES

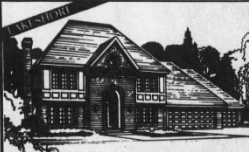
1987

Weston Bay

**EDEN PRAIRIE'S
BEST KEPT SECRET MAY BE
YOUR NEXT HOME**

Ever drive around Lake of the Isles or Lake Harriet and wish you could live on or near such an interesting lake - perfect for canoeing, sailing, swimming and quiet summertime walks? Well now you can in a brand new home and also enjoy the conveniences of suburban living in close-in Eden Prairie.

The neighborhood is Weston Bay and the lake is Mitchell Lake. A tucked away beauty, Mitchell Lake is noted for its many arms and bays and woody shoreline. A future city park will become a reality along its southern and eastern shores. Weston Bay is a limited edition neighborhood of 24 homesites located between the lake and the future park where you can custom design and build your new home with The Pentom Company.



You have a wide selection of lakeshore, pond view or park view homesites, all with lake access privileges. Homes (including homesite) start from \$150,000. Please come this weekend for more information.

This magnificent Tudor 2-story home on a lake lot is now completed and available for immediate possession at \$274,900.

GRAND OPENING!
WESTON BAY
A waterfront community

Directions to model home: Take Highway 5 west of 494 to Eden Prairie Road (4) and turn left. Watch for Weston Bay signs on your right approx. ½ mile. Turn right at Timber Lakes Drive and follow signs to sales center. Open weekends 1-5PM and weekdays except Fridays 1-7PM. 934-6894 or main office: 934-9542. Ask for Margaret Pfling-Bellman.
Realtor Participation Welcome

 **The Pentom Company** 

1998

Elim Shores



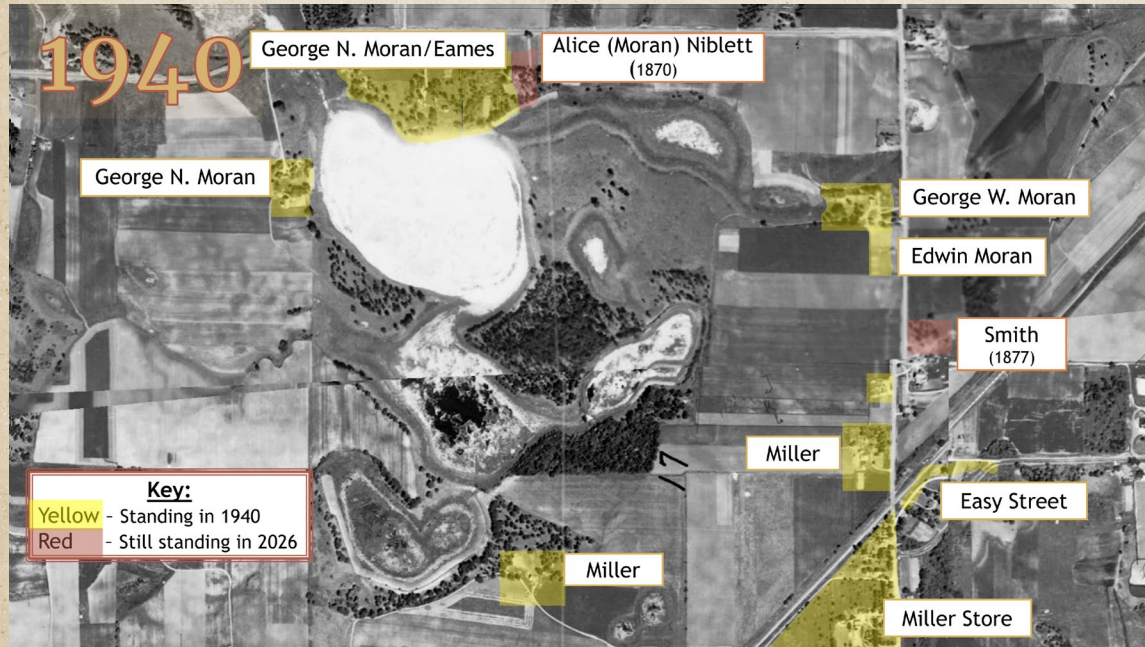
elimshores
Independent & Assisted Living

2001

Villas of Mitchell Lake

**EDEN PRAIRIE
OPEN DAILY AT 1:00
Villas of Mitchell Lake
Rambler Plans**
**3 CAR GARAGE
DOCKS AVAILABLE**
Custom Villas by award winning Jasper Homes. Wooded sites, located on the shores of beautiful Mitchell Lake. Outstanding plans or customized if desired. Priced from \$295,000-\$550,000. Dir: Co Rd 5 to Co Rd 4, go south 1 block, go west on Terry Pine 7/10 of a mile. Watch for "Go West" signs. Open daily at 1:00. Thurs and Fri by appt.
Don Lanners
Jasper Homes
A respite from the ordinary
934-8814
B1 000173, E.H.O.

1940→1989: Farms to Neighborhoods



- **1940: Family farms & open land**
Only 2 structures still standing in 2026



- **1989: Development in progress**
New neighborhoods had transformed much of the eastern and northern lakeshore.

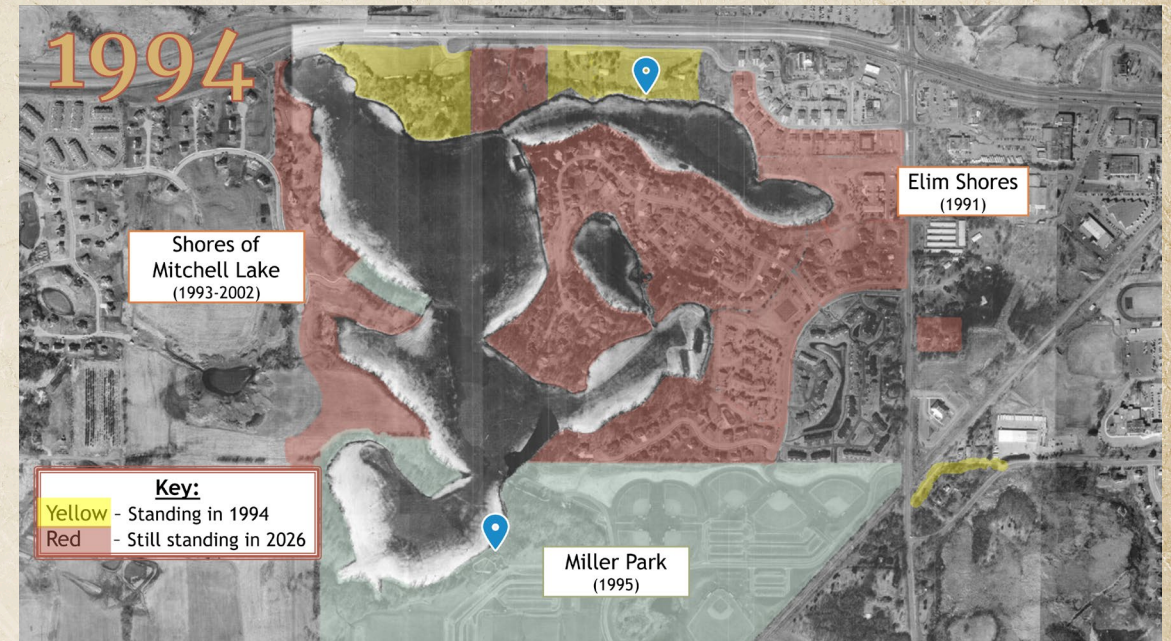
Mitchell Lake - 1986



1989→1994: Development Expands

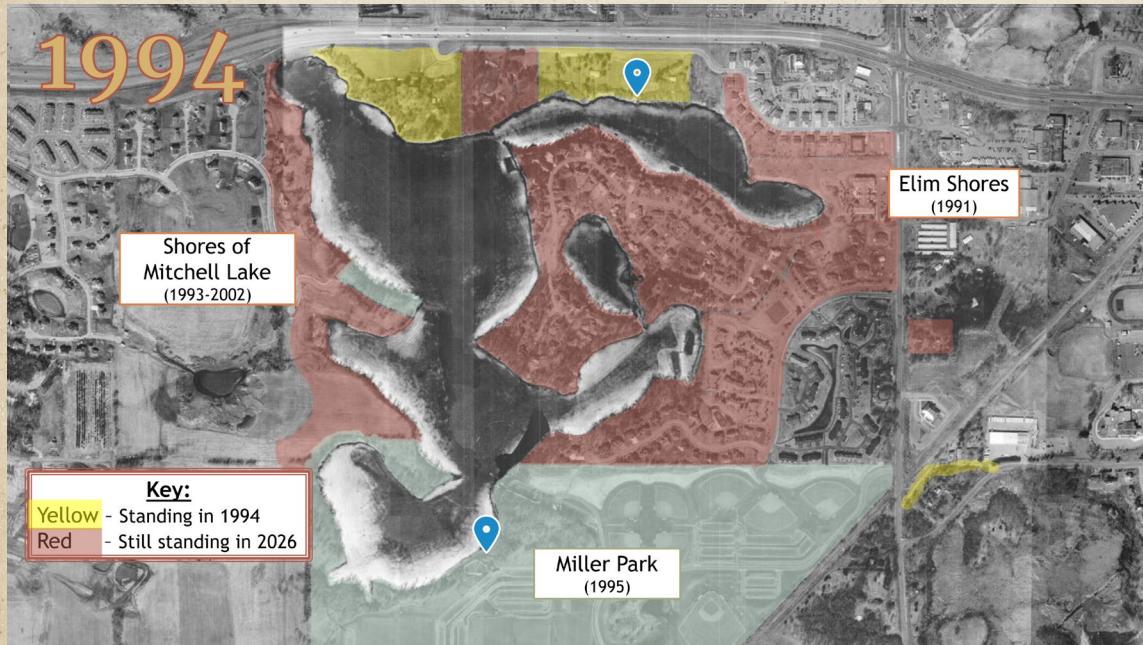


- 1989: Development in progress

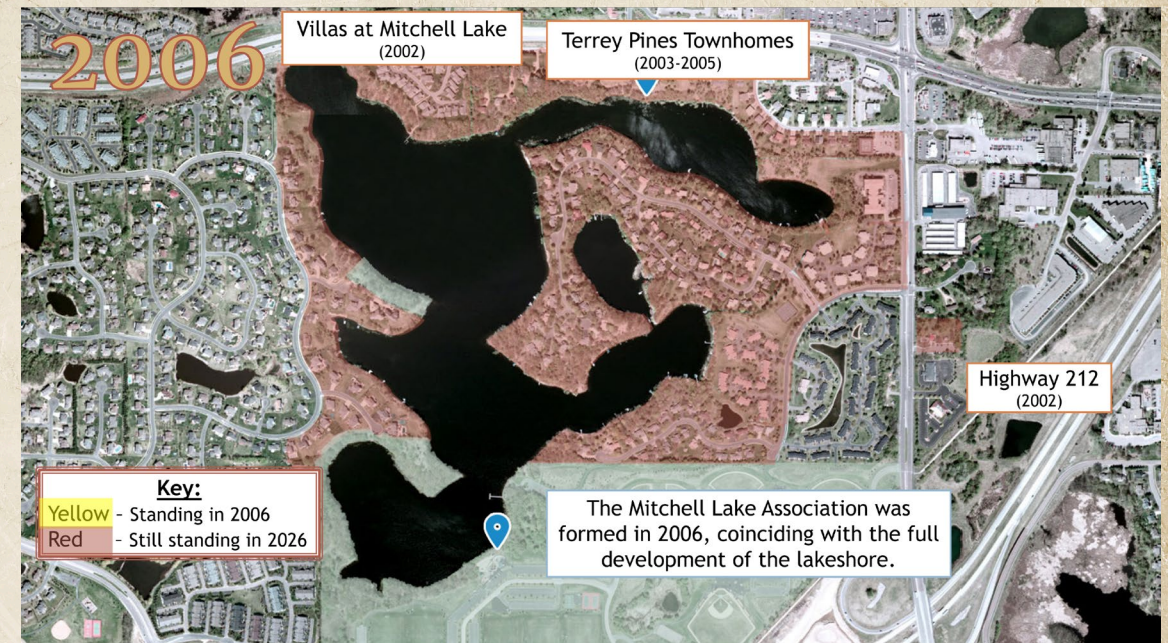


- 1994: Development continues
Western shore development in process and Miller Park nearly complete.

1994→2006: Development Complete



- 1994: Development continues



- 2006: Development complete
Neighbors form the Mitchell Lake Association.

A photograph of a calm lake at dusk. The foreground is filled with a dense field of wildflowers, including yellow Black-eyed Susans and purple Echinacea. The lake's surface is still, reflecting the soft, dim light of the twilight sky and the dark silhouettes of the trees on the far shore. The overall mood is peaceful and quiet.

Mitchell Lake Today



Protecting Mitchell Lake Together

- **Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek Watershed District**

Monitors water quality, water movement, and aquatic plants to guide lake protection.

- **City of Eden Prairie**

Protects public land and shoreline and manages parks, infrastructure, and environmental programs.

- **Mitchell Lake Association**

Connects residents through lake education, shoreline restoration, and community activities.



One lake. Three partners. A shared commitment to its future.



2006–2026 | 20 Years of Stewardship

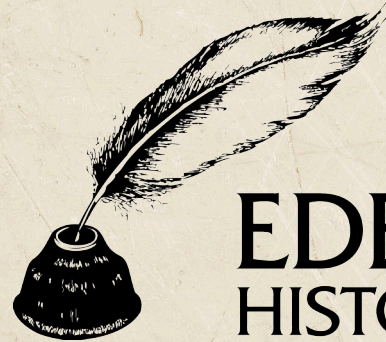
- **Celebrating 20 Years of the Mitchell Lake Association**

For 20 years, neighbors have worked together to:

- Protect our water
 - Restore our shoreline
 - Care for our habitat
 - Strengthen our community
- **Our legacy is the lake we leave to those who come next.**



Special Thanks to



**EDEN PRAIRIE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Questions?

Backup



References and Sources

Cartographic & Historical Public Records

- 1854 Survey Map: United States Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office (GLO) Records.
- 1873 Township Map: Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota.
- 1913 Plat Map: Hennepin County Plat Books, Eden Prairie Township Section.
- Historical Aerial Photography: Comparative landscape analysis maps (1940, 1953, 1969, 1989, 1994, 2006, 2025). (gis.hennepin.us)
- Pre-Settlement Vegetation Map: Minnesota Natural Resources Atlas. (mnatlas.org)
- Historical Treaty Map Asset: Minnesota Historical Society (mnhs.org)
- Eden Prairie City Council. City Council Meeting Minutes, various dates. Eden Prairie Laserfiche WebLink.

Historical Literature & Artwork

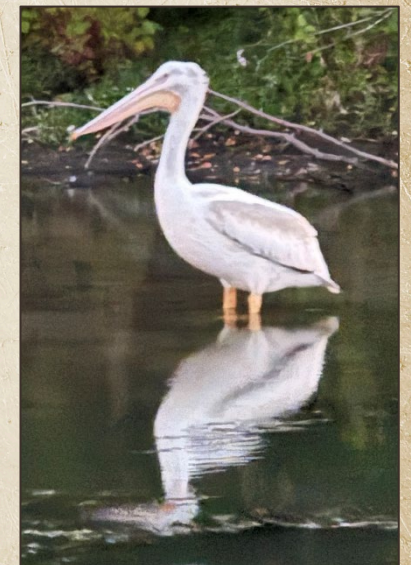
- Ellet, Elizabeth F. Provided the historic name "Eden Prairie" in 1853, documenting the beautiful landscape.
- Eastman, Seth. *View of Mendota* (1848), oil on canvas. Object collection of the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS).
- Ominsky (1999). *Indian Land Cessions and Reservations to 1858* map. Published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press (MNHS Press).

Local Media & Archival Photography

- Eames, Mike. *Outdoor Observations* columns, *Eden Prairie News* (EP News).
- Eden Prairie Historical Society archival files: Family photographs and historical information relating to the Mitchell, Moran, Miller, and Smith families, local buildings, and community history.
- Real Estate Historical Advertisements: Archival print ads for *Timber Lakes Homes* (1981), *Weston Bay Waterfront Community* (1984), *Mitchell Lakes Estates/Twin Homes* (1987), and *Villas of Mitchell Lake* (2001).

Mitchell Lake Area Timeline

Year	Event
1851	Treaties ceded vast areas of Dakota homeland, opening the region to Euro- American settlement.
1852	David Mitchell purchased land on the lake's south shore gave the lake its name— Mitchell Lake .
1871	Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad laid tracks through Eden Prairie and built a depot near Eden Prairie Road.
1968	City of EP established a long-term plan to preserve the natural shoreline.
1977-1992	Timberlake Home HOA development (paused 1980-1984 due to legal issues).
1978-1979	Timberlake Townhome HOA development.
1979-1981	Eden Prairie purchased land for Miller Park from the Miller family
1980-1981	Terrey Pines Twin Homes (aka Mitchell Lake Twin Homes) development.
1983-1992	The Townhomes of North development.
c.1987-88	Highway 5 expanded to four lanes by Mitchell Lake.
1988	Pipe was installed to connect Mitchell Lake to the wider chain of lakes .
1987-1993	Weston Bay development.
1991	Elim Shores senior living opened.
1993-2002	Shores of Mitchell Lake/Lake Forest development.
1994	Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail opened (original 1871 railroad bed).
1995	Miller Park opened to the public and the public boat launch was installed.
1998-2002	Villas at Mitchell Lake development.
2003-2005	Terrey Pines Townhomes development (separate from the 1980-81 twin homes).
2006	<i>Mitchell Lake Association (MLA) was formed.</i>
2007	Highway 312 from Eden Prairie to Chaska opened to traffic (renamed Highway 212 once completed to Carver)



An aerial photograph showing a large, irregularly shaped lake in the center-left. The lake is surrounded by a mix of agricultural fields, some of which are divided into smaller plots by roads or fences. There are some darker, wooded areas near the lake's edges. The overall tone is grayscale, with varying shades of gray representing different land uses and vegetation.

Mitchell Lake: 1940 to Present

17

1940

George N. Moran/Eames

Alice (Moran) Niblett
(1870)

George N. Moran

George W. Moran

Edwin Moran

Smith
(1877)

Miller

Easy Street

Miller Store

Key:

Yellow - Standing in 1940

Red - Still standing in 2026

Miller

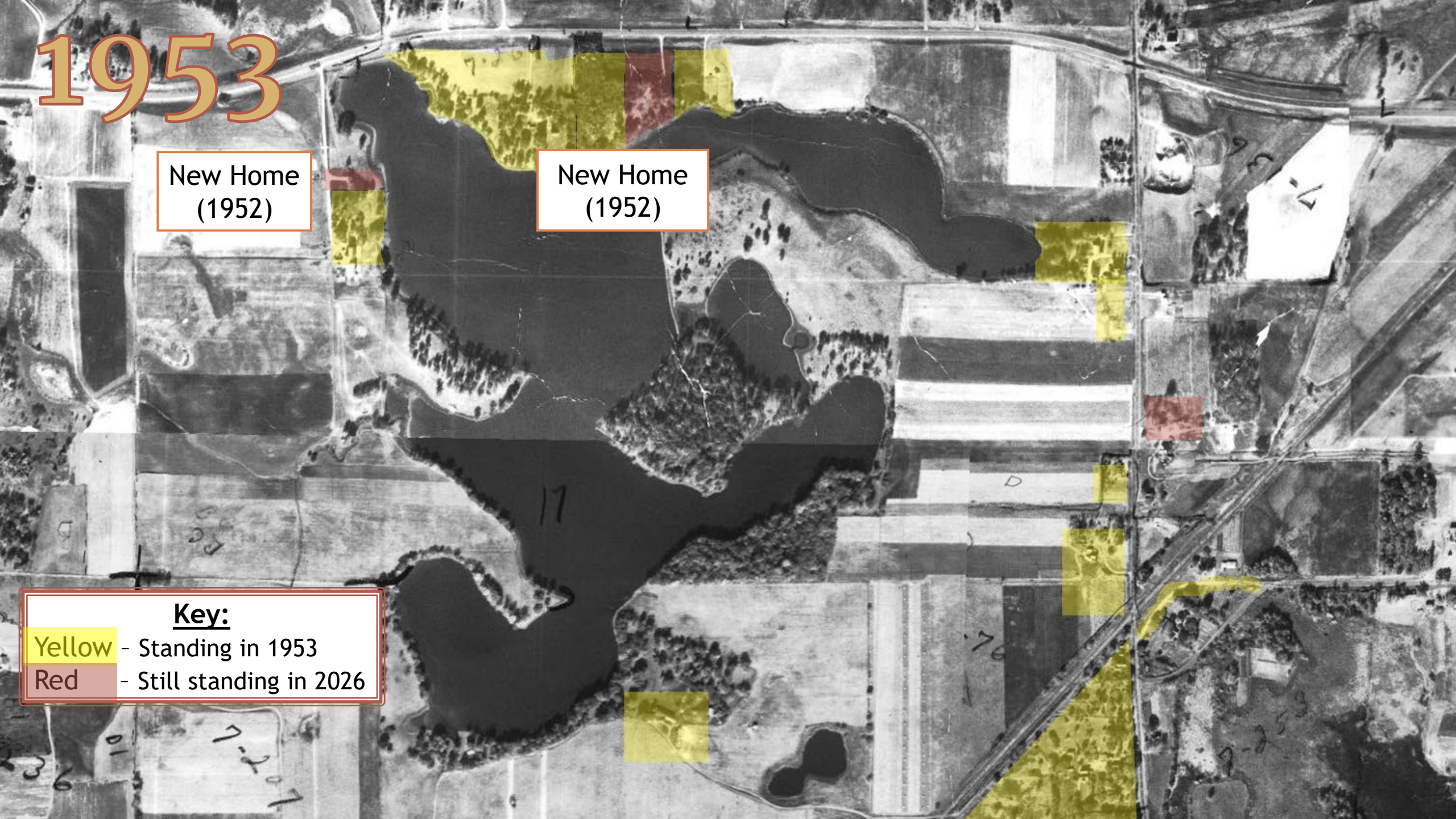
1953

New Home
(1952)

New Home
(1952)

Key:

Yellow - Standing in 1953
Red - Still standing in 2026



1969

New Homes

MITCHELL
LAKE

Key:

- Yellow - Standing in 1969
- Red - Still standing in 2026



1989

Inlet from
Round Lake
(1988)



Terrey Pines
Twin Homes
(1980-1981)

Timber Lakes
Homes
(1977-1992)

Town Homes
of the North
(1983-1992)

Timber Lakes
Town Homes
(1978-1979)

Weston Bay
(1987-1993)

Outlet to Red
Rock Lake
(1988)



Park Land Acquired
(1979-1981)

Key:

- Yellow** - Standing in 1989
- Red** - Still standing in 2026

1994

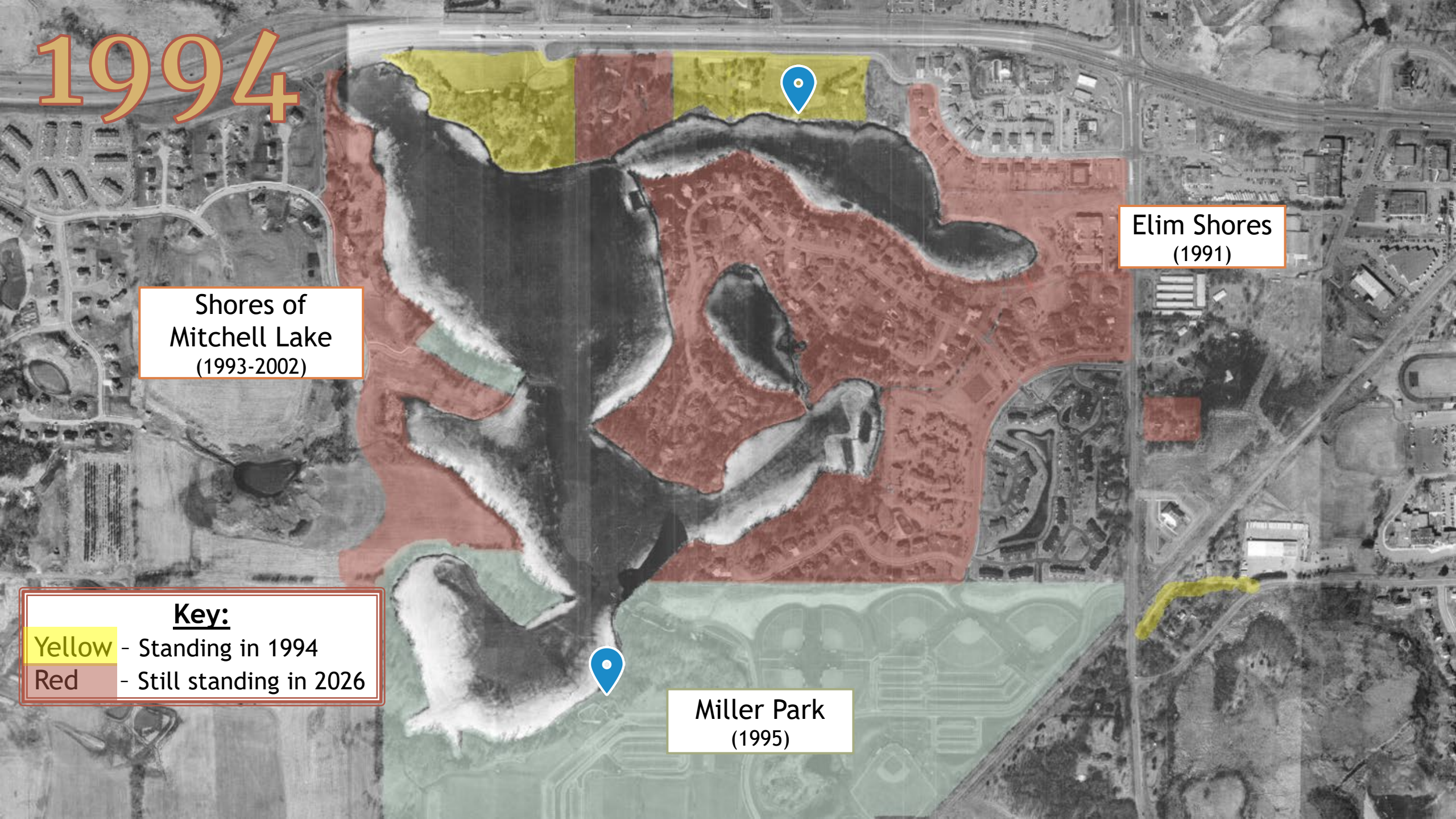
Shores of
Mitchell Lake
(1993-2002)

Elim Shores
(1991)

Key:

Yellow - Standing in 1994
Red - Still standing in 2026

Miller Park
(1995)



2002

Villas at Mitchell Lake
(2002)

Highway 212

Key:

Yellow	- Standing in 2002
Red	- Still standing in 2026



2006

Terrey Pines Townhomes
(2003-2005)

Key:

- Yellow - Standing in 2006
- Red - Still standing in 2026

The Mitchell Lake Association was formed in 2006, coinciding with the full development of the lakeshore.

2025

Key:

- Yellow - Standing in 2025
- Red - Still standing in 2026

The Ellie
(2024)

New Depot
(2022)

