CITY OF TONKA BAY
ITEM NO. 9C

Memo

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Joe Kohlmann, City Administrator

Date: August 13, 2013

Re: Children at Play Sign – Brentwood Avenue

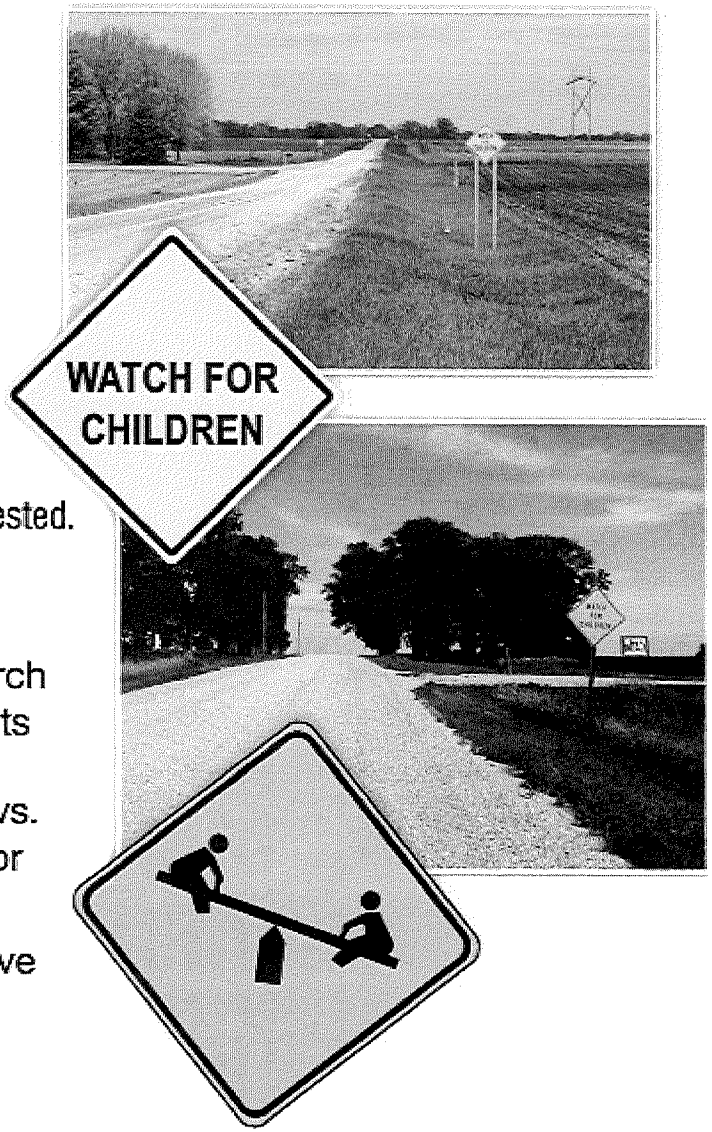
Some cities have posted "CHILDREN AT PLAY" signs in residential areas despite studies showing that generalized signs warning of Normal Conditions such as children in a residential area fail to achieve the desired safety benefits. "CHILDREN AT PLAY" signs may give parents and children a false sense of security as the sign is assumed to provide protection which in reality it does not. Due to these serious considerations, federal standards no longer recommend the use of "CHILDREN AT PLAY" signs. Special conditions such as warnings of school zones, playgrounds, parks and other recreational facilities, do warrant signing as these are not easily anticipated by drivers.

There are currently two speed limit signs located on Brentwood Avenue, both facing drivers heading east. They are located on the attached map with an "X".

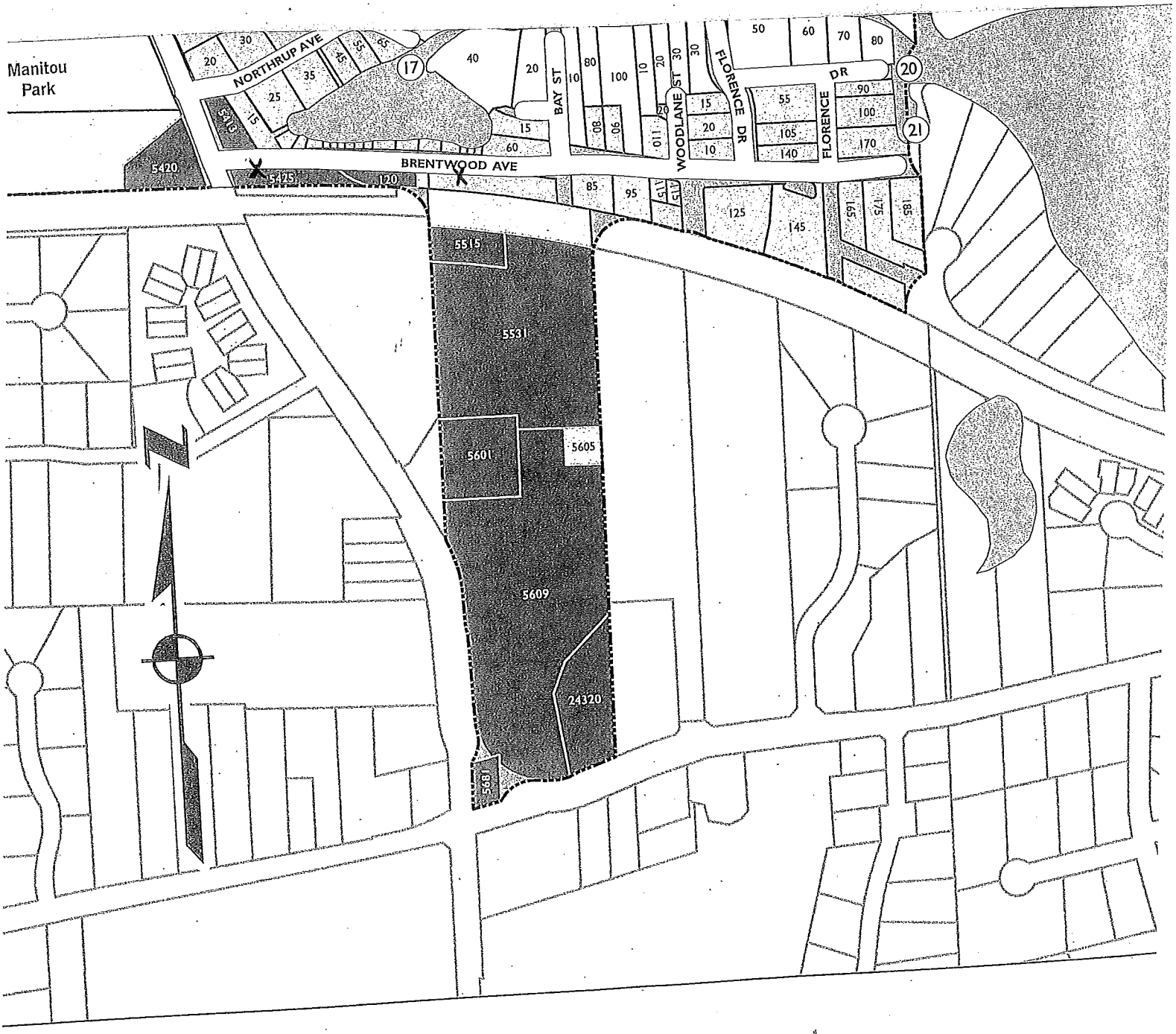
Council Action Requested:
Review and Discuss signage on Brentwood Avenue.

Effectiveness of Warning Signs – Children at Play

- A research synthesis prepared for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation[1] found that there is no evidence that special warning signs of this sort either change driver behavior (reduce travel speeds) or improve safety (reduce crash frequency).
- The synthesis supplements the research with common sense observations that such signs:
  - Do not give clear and enforceable guidance to drivers.
  - Provide a false sense of security to parents and children that may increase risk
  - Give the false impression that areas without signs do not have children
  - Represent an unnecessary cost that then propagates as additional signs are requested.
  - Violates the principle that signage should be based on engineering, not political, judgement.
- The Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Local Road Research Board are currently conducting a research project to determine the effects on driver behavior associated with placing a playground warning sign along a 30 mph city street in Bloomington. Preliminary results of Before vs. After speed study found this sign had no effect on the maximum, mean or 85th percentile speed.[2]
- Traffic control devices are intended to change driver behavior and improve safety – these special warning signs have been found to do neither.



1 *Wisconsin Department of Transportation. "Effectiveness of Children at Play" Warning Signs. Transportation Synthesis Report. 2007*
2 *Unpublished MnDOT document dated July 1, 2010. Office of Research Services. Investigation 890*


Manitou Park
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BRENTWOOD AVE
BAY ST
WOODLANE ST
FLORENCE DR
FLORENCE DR
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