

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: November 19, 2018

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of November 28, 2018

Subject: Accept the Public Comment Report and Adopt the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.147

Staff Prepared/Presented: Libby Starling, Director of Regional Planning (651-602-1135); Emmett Mullin, Parks Manager (651-602-1360); Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst (651-602-1548)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Accept the Public Comment Report on the draft update to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*; and
- Adopt the revised final update of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Background

Minnesota Statutes § 473.147 requires the Council to engage in a comprehensive review of its *Regional Parks Policy Plan* at least once every four years. The Council has consulted with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, regional park implementing agencies, other partners and stakeholders, and the general public in the development of the update to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

At the recommendation of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, the Council released a draft update to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for public comment on July 25, 2018. The Council held a public hearing on the draft for public comment at the September 17, 2018 Community Development Committee, and the public comment period concluded on September 27, 2018. During the public comment period, the Council received comments from 115 individuals, organizations, and local units of government via letters, e-mails, phone messages, and public testimony. At the October 1 joint meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Council's Community Development Committee, Commission and Committee members provided policy direction on some of the overarching comments received. After this joint meeting, staff worked with the Regional Parks Policy Plan Council Member Work Group to confirm policy direction and finalize language. Recommended revisions in response to the comments and other minor text edits have been incorporated into the plan.

The Public Comment Report documents the comments received, Council responses, and proposed changes to the draft Regional Parks Policy Plan. The Public Comment Report and the proposed final update to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* can be found at:

<https://metro council.org/Parks/Planning/2018-Regional-Parks-Policy-Plan-Update.aspx>

Rationale

State statute requires the Council to review and update its *Regional Parks Policy Plan* at least once every four years.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update* advances the Thrive Outcome of Livability through increasing access to natural resource-based outdoor recreation, which enhances the quality of life throughout the region. It also advances the Thrive Outcome of Equity through strengthening equitable use of the regional parks system by reducing barriers to participation across race, ethnicity, income and ability.

Funding

Updating the Regional Parks Policy Plan is a regular item in the Community Development Division work plan.

Known Support / Opposition

The public comment period provided an opportunity for input on the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* update. The Public Comment Report documents that comments indicating support and opposition to sections of the draft plan, along with revisions incorporated in response to the comments. The Public Comment Report provides a list of individual comments received during the public comment period.

Summary of Discussion

At the November 8, 2018 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, there were a number of questions about the final proposed policy plan.

Commissioner Fleming asked whether the plan requires public engagement as part of the acquisition process; Council staff stated that land acquisition requires a public resolution of support from a locally elected board.

There were numerous questions about Finance Chapter Eight and the administrative and programmatic sections that were removed from the policy plan. Staff stated that these sections were moved from the Policy Plan to the draft Regional Parks Funding Allocation Policy and the draft Fund Distribution Policy to allow for annual review and updating of programmatic and administrative processes. Both of these items were subsequently discussed during the information section of the MPOSC meeting.

Commission Theisen asked about the new equity analysis tool and its relationship with park master planning. How would this new tool define who benefits and is the assessment a zero-sum game? Staff responded that this new tool will work in coordination with public engagement efforts. At a high-level the new equity tool will require agencies to connect what they are proposing in the master planning process with who is expected to benefit. The Council will develop this tool collaboratively with the regional park implementing agencies and stakeholders.

Commissioner Moeller asked whether the Community Development Committee (CDC) supports the current policy plan language to remove project prioritization from the equity toolkit process. Staff stated that while they do not know the status of CDC members on this topic, the direction from the Joint October 1 CDC-MPOSC meeting and a later Council Member Work Group meeting supports this direction, with the new equity analysis tool focusing the Council's attention on strengthening the advancement of equity through the master planning process.

Commissioner Moeller asked how the set aside, competitive equity grant program will be funded. He and other commissioners want to go on record to highlight the importance of supporting non-capital activities with this program. Non-capital equity work requires a funding source other than (or in addition to) the current proposal of regional bonds, which allow only capital projects. Chair Yarusso requested monthly progress reports in 2019 on the development of this program.

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission recommended approval of the recommendation with five Commissioners voting in favor and one Commissioner abstaining.

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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