

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: November 18, 2019

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of December 11, 2019

Subject: Equity Grant Program Pilot, 2019 Project Recommendations

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Chapter 8, Strategy 4

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jessica Lee, Senior Parks Planner (651-602-1621)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

1. That the Metropolitan Council approve funding three projects totaling \$300,000 for the 2019 Equity Grant Program Pilot for the Regional Parks System, as shown in Table 1 below.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreements on behalf of the Council.

Table 1. Recommended Projects

| Recommended Projects | Applicant | Award Amount |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Dakota Homeland Interpretation Along the Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail | Dakota County | \$90,000 |
| 2. Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento (Regional Trail) Nature Sanctuary Equitable Enhancements | Saint Paul | \$154,255 |
| 3. Bde Maka Ska Cloud Man Memorial Interpretive Signage (Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park) | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | \$55,745 |

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Total Recommended | \$300,000 |
| Total Available | \$300,000 |
| Total Remaining | \$0 |

Background

The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan committed the Council to develop a set-aside, competitive equity grant program in 2019. This program was designed to explicitly strengthen equitable usage of the Regional Parks System. To develop this grant program, the Council worked in collaboration with Regional Parks Implementing Agencies, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and other partners to formulate criteria and measures for awarding grants to regional park implementing agencies for projects aimed at advancing equitable usage of the Regional Parks System.

Regional park implementing agencies submitted applications in August of 2019, which were then reviewed internally for eligibility and completeness. A formal review committee met on October 17, 2019, to discuss the program and process, as well as receive the applications, which they then individually scored using evaluation criteria established in the 2019 Fund Distribution Plan. Examples of the evaluation criteria include impact on equitable use, community partnerships, community engagement, capacity building, as well

as several others. Additionally, the 2019 proposals all had to address one or more of the following four equity focus areas: welcoming underserved populations; accessibility for people with disabilities; racial equity; and equitable use of regional trails. The review committee began their deliberations by discussing the quality and thoughtfulness of all the applications. On November 5, the committee met again to discuss their scores and develop a funding recommendation, which is shown in Table 1 above and described in detail below.

Recommended Projects

In this pilot year, implementing agencies submitted 14 eligible applications requesting \$1,256,755, with 3 being recommended for funding for a total of \$300,000.

1. Dakota Homeland Interpretation Along the Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail, Dakota County: this project will assist with the implementation of the Minnesota River Greenway Cultural Resources Interpretive Plan, which includes the conceptual design for interpretive installations focused on connecting visitors to the land and the heritage of the Dakota people, working with four Federally recognized tribes.
2. Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento Regional Trail, Nature Sanctuary Equitable Enhancements, Saint Paul: this project will help tell the story of the Dakota people. It is part of the Bruce Vento Regional Trail Master Plan which was developed in partnership with the East Side of Saint Paul. The project includes cultural exhibits, environmental costs, cultural art and architect fees.
3. Bde Maka Ska Cloud Man Memorial Interpretive Signage, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB): This project helps fund five panels and concrete pads at four locations around the lake, as well as associated research, writing, and graphic design. It will help interpret Cloud Man’s Village by welcoming visitors into a space to learn, contemplate, and celebrate people of diverse backgrounds. This story was included in the recently completed Bde Maka Ska/Harriet Master Plan. The total project request was \$136,500. As this was the third recommended project, only partial funding of \$55,745 was available. Council staff reached out to MPRB, to offer partial funding, and they enthusiastically accepted.

Projects Not Selected for Funding

The review committee developed feedback to share back with the regional park implementing agencies on projects that were not included in the funding recommendation. The review committee encourages these agencies to consider this feedback and refine their projects for future submission. Projects that were not selected for funding are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Projects Not Recommended for Funding

| Agency and Project Name | Amount Requested | Project Summary |
|--|------------------|--|
| Anoka County Accessible Dock at Wargo Nature Center (Rice Creek Chain of Lakes PR) | \$90,000 | Design, purchase and install accessible dock and kayak/canoe launch. |
| Carver County Lake Waconia RP, Beach Area, and Coney Island ADA Access | \$63,000 | Materials, installation, and professional design for an ADA accessible walkway across the beach area and an accessible boat dock for Coney Island. |
| Dakota County Accessible Non-Motorized Boat Launch at Holland Lake in Lebanon Hills RP | \$35,000 | Design, engineering, construction, and installation of an accessible non-motorized boat launch. |

| Agency and Project Name | Amount Requested | Project Summary |
|---|------------------|---|
| Dakota County Inclusive Play Tree Walk at Whitetail Woods RP | \$90,000 | Construct an inclusive Tree Walk. |
| MPRB Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden Accessibility Improvements (Theodore Wirth RP) | \$200,000 | Design, engineering, and construction of accessible pathways and overlooks. |
| MPRB Roberts Bird Sanctuary Multi-Lingual Signage and Sound (Mpls Chain of Lakes RP) | \$48,000 | Design of interpretive signage and outdoor-resilient sound system. |
| Ramsey County Keller RP Archery Range Improvements | \$110,000 | Paved walkway, ADA shooting lanes, platform for shooting and backstops, signage and installation. |
| Scott County Community Engagement in Support of the Development of the Lakefront Zone at Spring Lake RP | \$30,000 | Fund the hiring of a consultant to assist in preparing a community engagement process to further equity in the Lakefront Zone at Spring Lake Regional Park. |
| Scott County Recreational and Cultural Interest Sign Improvements (Jurisdiction-wide) | \$35,000 | Fabrication and installation of signs with universal messaging. |
| TRPD Adapted Paddling Station | \$100,000 | Accessible paddle station with self-serve adapted boat lockers and boat launch. |
| Washington County Cottage Grove Ravine RP Lower Landing Area Improvements | \$75,000 | Self-serve paddle sport equipment sharing station; shore fishing platforms; interpretive signs. |
| <i>Total unfunded (*includes unfunded portion of MPRB's Cloud Man Memorial project)</i> | \$956,755 | |

Rationale

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Finance Chapter 8, Strategy 4 states that equity is a consideration in the Regional Parks System funding and investment. The equity grant program is one Council strategy for advancing equity in the region.

The *Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program 2019 Fund Distribution Plan* states that the review committee will recommend project selections to the Council for their approval in 2019.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The competitive equity grant program seeks to advance the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of equity by increasing the equitable usage of the Regional Parks System by all residents of the region.

Recommended projects advance equity by creating spaces that are useful and welcoming to Native people as well as all residents of the region, providing educational and contemplative places that will increase awareness and understanding of Dakota and indigenous history.

Funding

There is \$300,000 for the Equity Grant Program in the Council's adopted 2019 budget. The [*Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program 2019 Fund Distribution Plan*](#) also states that the Council may award up to an additional \$331,000 in 2020 regional bonds during this initial round if the quantity and quality of applications are sufficiently robust. In the spirit of a pilot program, the committee

recommends using only the \$300,000 from 2019, with the desire to use lessons learned from this first year to improve the program for the next cycle.

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Information Item

Jessica Lee, Senior Parks Planner, presented these recommendations as an information at the November 7, 2019, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Meeting. Ms. Lee provided a summary of the application and review process and highlighted the three projects recommended for funding. Chair Tony Yarusso and Commissioner Todd Kemery, both of whom served on the review committee, also discussed the review process and shared insights on the review process to the rest of the commission. Commission members expressed support and excitement for this first ever Equity Grant Program funding recommendation.

Known Support/Opposition

There is no known opposition.