

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: August 3, 2020

Subject: Research: Connecting Youth with the Regional Park System

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.242, *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

Staff Prepared/Presented: Ellie Hohulin and Lucia Marquez Reagan, Interns and Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Analyst (651-602-1669)

Division/Department: Community Development / Research

Proposed Action

None; information and discussion only.

Background

The youth and parks research project was realized through a collaborative process among five research interns, Council staff, four park implementing agencies and five youth serving organizations. Together, they collected data for the Council, implementing agencies, and other stakeholders to better understand how to improve access to the Regional Park System for youth ages 14 to 20.

In fall 2019, research team members attended in-park experiences and analyzed data to answer four primary questions. Youth of color were centered in the research, completing data analysis and advising on the validity of research findings. The research answered four questions:

1. What are obstacles to youth access?
2. What does a great day in the park look like?
3. What advice, assets do youth have for advising the park about connecting the next generation of Minnesotans with the outdoors?
4. How can park implementing agencies and the Council build connections that remove barriers to park access and create outdoor access for young people?

The presentation will describe the research process, key findings, and recommendations. Council Members will be invited to provide feedback and discuss:

- What information from this report connects most directly with your priorities for the Council?
- How can Council collaboration with agencies and budget investments support connecting youth and parks?

Thrive Lens Analysis

The youth and parks research project and findings contribute to efforts to strengthen equitable use of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability. By 2040, 53% of residents younger than age 18 will be people of color. Youth access to park programming, amenities, and planning processes are essential to build future support of the park system (Sustainability outcome) and achieve equitable use (Equity outcome).